

THE CHASING OF THE LARK:

A Poem in Five Fits

After Lewis Carroll's The Hunting of the Snark

Fit the First

The Dream



"You've a brain that's quick! A mind that's keen" Lexi B.'s teacher said.

"You really ought to board some ship, not just journey in your head."

So that night, though all seemed right, Lexi felt disquieted. For she was sorely afraid of water (though she was a sailor's daughter). At half-past

Eight, tucked in tight, when Lexi went to bed, she dreamed that friends

and foes alike helped her face her aqueous dread. "It's only water!"

Exclaimed her father, four sheets to the wind, and he dunked her under, as the sky broke thunder, so Lexi moved her legs!

"I'm swimming!" she thought, "I'll pinch myself; surely this can't

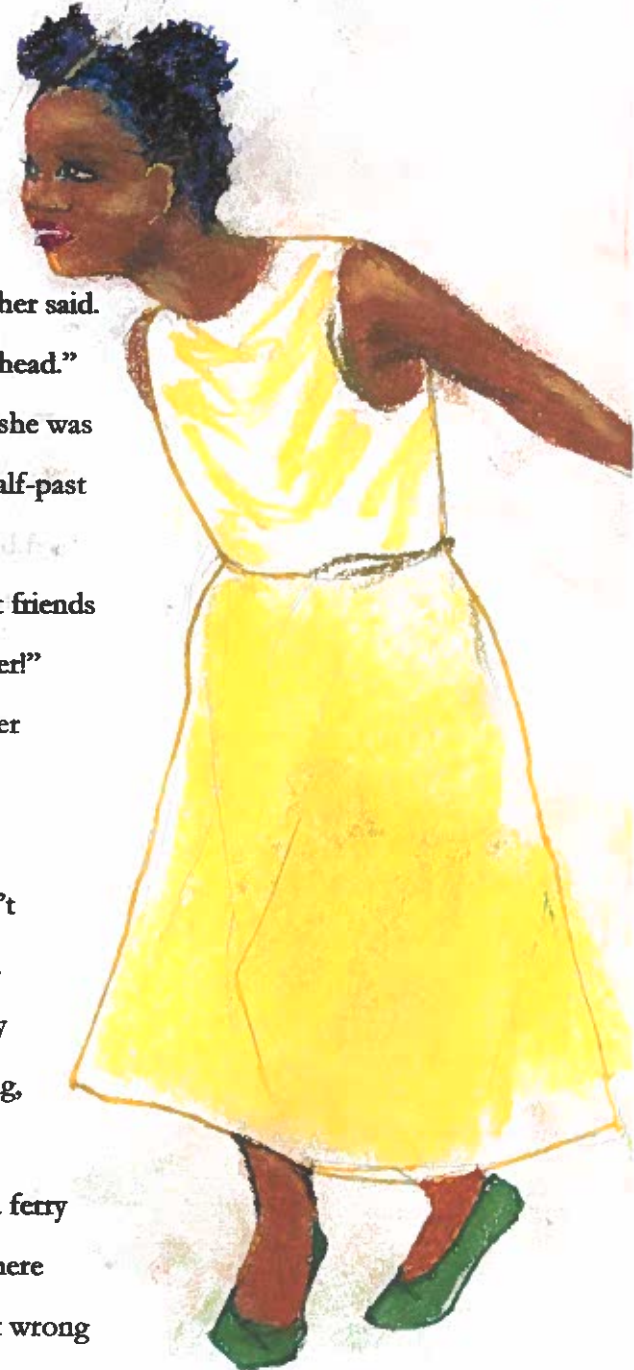
only be a dream." Then her father produced a swimsuit stitched rather poorly at the seams, and plopped Lexi in it, thus our story

begins, far from the shores of sleep. "Farewell, father!" Lexi sang,

Swimming along her merry way. After a while, Lexi longed for a ferry

"or something to carry me any which way; I don't much care where

I go; only that it not be very far from home." My direction's not wrong



anyway, thought Lexi. I should barter this bird for the price of her song.

It's so pretty, and so stark." And Lexi looked up, and there was a lark, flying, not very far off the mark. It was so small, with shades of brown and some of palest white. It flew high as the highest kite; sang so sweet and true, that Lexi wanted its song in her heart, so she endeavored to follow the lark!

Fit the Second

Classification of the Lark

"The lark is not a kind of swallow bird; that would be quite absurd"

Lexi grinned as she stirred. "It is a creature of air, with very little cares, sorrows or sins. It lives in dry regions, dislikes rainy seasons, and feeds on insects and seeds. To capture its song is the bravest of deeds!"

Just then Lexi noticed a creature in Lark's beak; an insect to be exact. A caterpillar crawling, squirming and calling, "Help me! I need to get back!" "Back to where?" Lexi asked as she stared, treading the cold clear water. "Dry land, of course!" Caterpillar said. "Quick! Or I'll soon be a snack!"

By sheer force, Lexi reached high above and managed to snatch the creature from Lark's open beak. He was a critter alright, small and bright; in color a verdant green. "I'm made for bark, not for these open seas! This is madness!" The critter cried.

Lexi sighed; the Lark twittered; Caterpillar was all-of-a-jitter

"I was almost gobbled! And I'm covered in slobber!" he exclaimed. Lexi replied, "Well, small sir, though I'm sure it was all a blur, you're safe now, and all is right as rain."

Caterpillar was comforted. "Then I won't complain. But look; the lark leaves, and the sky's in a sieve." And indeed, the sky had gone gray with sorrow. Then Lark sung, and all was undone when she flew off toward tomorrow.



rit the Third

A Ship Appears

Yet soon enough, the sun rose, and the world stitched itself back together. "Caterpillar, look! Sunrise colors come in rows stretching out towards--- who knows! But, still, I'm tired and can barely feel my feet; do I still have all my fingers and toes?"

"Certainly!" said Caterpillar, "I'll count them, you see. One two three---s" when Lexi interjected, "We must have a rest. This swimming's been harder than my school's hardest test! "Harder you say?" "Yes! Much. I always get As on those."

"A rest is no fun. We'll be shunned if we take one!" Caterpillar said. "I beg of you, friend" sighed Lexi again. "But I've six legs; I can run" Caterpillar proclaimed, stretching out his legs towards the tide. But Lexi B. cried, "I wish! I wish! I wish for a sea-born ride"

Just then a ship appeared (though that may sound weird) right in the middle of the sunrise skies! "Oh my stars." Said Lexi, for the ship had come from afar, and it bore the signs of a lengthy sea-ride, with algae clinging to its sides.

Fit the Fourth

Captain Alice Arrives

On its star-ward side stood a girl, about Lexi's age, and every bit as brave. "A person to play with all day" thought Lexi. "Your captain," said the child with grace. "I'm Alice" said she. "And I'm Lexi B." "I'm hungry!"

Said Caterpillar as his stomach grumbled. Then from the back of the ship came a girl rather tall, dressed the best, in ribbons and all. "Hello, Hungry. I'm Anne" she laughed as she planned to pull her new acquaintances from the sea.

But then the sky rumbled, and they all had to rush. Anne ran and Lexi lunged. Captain Alice was humbled but unbowed. She ran around looking for rope and for pulley, for anchor and hope and for string. She threw what she found all the way down

For Lexi and Caterpillar to hold onto (not drown). Shivering and quivering on the deck of the boat, Lexi requested a coat. "A cat?"

Anne asked. "I have one of those." And they whipped around to find prancing on the ground, a black cat, fully grown!

"Who are you?" asked Caterpillar, cold and craving his cocoon.

"I'm the doctor on board, you silly loon." And with that the Cat, grooming her tail, said to Anne, "By the way you look frail.

I'll administer medicine at seven o'clock. Don't be late or we'll fail

In reaching our fate. Remember the chase! Recall the birdsong!"

"We'll start on our way without delay" declared Captain Alice.

"The Lark will not wait. We must set the stage for her capture.

Surely her song will bring rapture."

Fit the Fifth

The Chase

"Land ho!" Cried Caterpillar. "There's no land in sight, and I'm the captain, besides" said Captain Alice sternly.

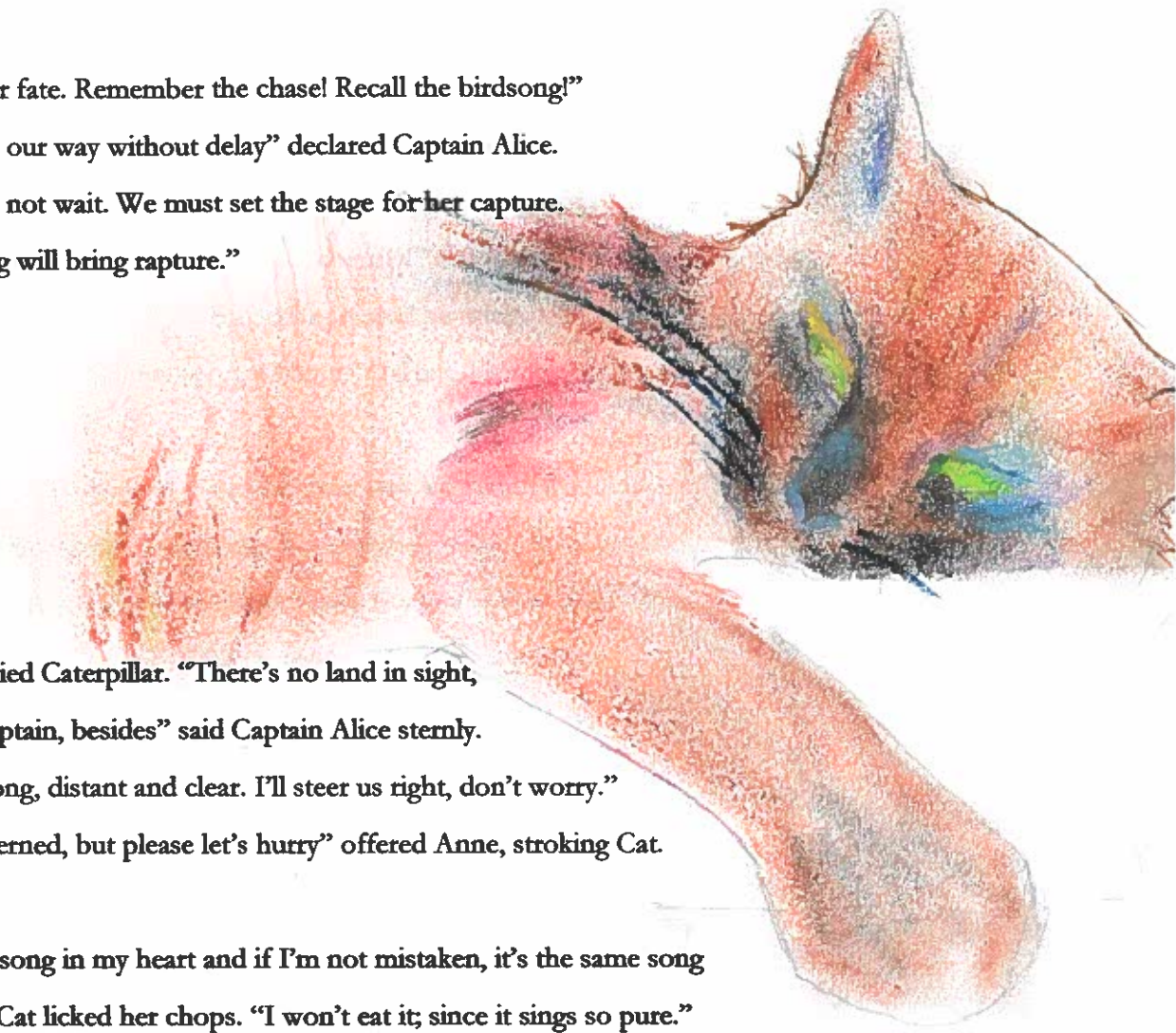
"I do hear a song, distant and clear. I'll steer us right, don't worry."

"I'm not concerned, but please let's hurry" offered Anne, stroking Cat.

"For there's a song in my heart and if I'm not mistaken, it's the same song as the lark's!" Cat licked her chops. "I won't eat it; since it sings so pure."

They navigated by star, and by the rings of Saturn, while Cat cleaned her fur.

"There must be a way to lure her this way" Lexi mused as she paced. "Sir Caterpillar!"



(She'd had an idea). "How fast can you spin your cocoon? The sun's left the sky;
Can you spin by the light of the moon?" Caterpillar thought. "I can spin by the light
Of a candlestick, I can spin at the tick of a clock. I spin right on time, never too soon.
I can spin by the light of the moon!

Caterpillar spun as his shipmates whispered and wrung their hands.
By half past one, the thing was done and they'd nearly reached dry land.
Gussied up in his gossamer cocoon Caterpillar slept, and on the ship crept
towards the silky silent shore. They couldn't hear birdsong above his snores

So they woke him to do his chore. "Caterpillar!" They cried, but there was no answer
from within. So instead they tried, "Mr. Butterfly!" and that was their ticket to ride.
He woke with a start and shed his cocoon, spread his wings and there he was,
a wing-ed thing, a wonderful being, a butterfly bless-ed and blue.

He flew to the sky and found (by and by) the lark who had once tried
to chew him! They knew at once they were kindred, meant to be friends
bosom buddies, not captive and captor. They laughed as they leapt
through the free air, as the shipmates wept on deck, feeling rapture.

"I can hear it" said Lexi. "It sounds so familiar. Like the song my father sings.
He sings it each night as he holds me tight when I wake up from my dreams."
As Lexi B. spoke she opened her eyes and was home in her father's arms.
As the distant dawn rose, she yawned a happy, "Hello, Daddy."

