

STORY-TIME

with
Zorro the Mouse



The Springtime Collection

With another special addendum

Compiled and edited by DotRot

Many thanks to VacaDude, without whom the
chatroom would not exist.
Without the chat, the chatters would not have
remained together.
Without the chatters, the stories would never
have happened.
Without the stories, life would be much duller
and more humorless.
And many thanks also go to Zorro for bringing our
stories to life in his own inimitable way.

The stories are presented as written with only
minor editing to preserve continuity of owl
gender and verb tense and to correct
punctuation. The plots (or lack thereof) have not
been changed.

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The Winter Collection

With another special addendum

A collection of stories written Round-Robin style by the chatters in the VacaChat chatroom. The collective minds, wit and humor of the chatters have blended into thirteen funny, touching and delightful tales.

Compiled and edited by DotRot

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Zorro Gets Email

Mary came home from work to find numerous packages on the doorstep. They were all marked "Perishable," and were all from firms like Cheezes R Us, Cheeze Loverz, Curdz and Way, and The Breezy Cheezy.

All were addressed to either Z. R. Atkinson, or Zorro Rodenticus. Mary yelled, "JOHN!!! I tried to tell you that giving Zorro his own e-mail and internet account was a mistake! Where did he get money??"

Zorro heard the commotion. He quickly cleared his browsing history and shut down the computer. Then he dove for the toy box. John came into the office carrying the pile of boxes.

"Zorro! Come out here now! You've got some 'splainin' to do!" Zorro burrowed a little deeper and thought . . .

Zorro grabbed his shirt and wiped the sweat off his brow. "Ah, gee VacaDude, I was just . . . well . . . just trying to do what your chatters do. I wanted to go on the internet and search all the owl boxes to warn my country cousins but this ad popped up and suddenly . . .

there was all these fabulous cheese ads bargains!!!! I just couldn't resist as they made me so hungry and all were great sales! I was completely overwhelmed with all these delicious cheese items!!! They even said I didn't have to pay, I could have it COD, whatever that is!"

So . . .

Zorro decided COD was not fish. "What we need to do is get rid of these pop-ups. If we are to do the email the way it is supposed to be done, we need someone super smart like one of the chatters. Maybe we could call . . .

Curiosity Kitten!!! That's it! CK is very clever . . . she can help us figure out how to block these pop ups. In fact, let's send her an email now! Vaca, do you have CK's email address? Let's send a message and say . . .

"HELP!" But then Vaca had second thoughts . . . hmmm . . . He is getting away with this. I am going to have to give him a little punishment. The next 5 story lines he has to read in a Russian accent!

"That's it for me!!" cried Zorro and he packed his little tiny red kerchief with all his cheeses and worldly goods and . . .

scurried out of the VacaRoom. Vaca said, "I hope I wasn't too hard on the little fellow - he's not used to being scolded or punished, and he really didn't know what he was doing. I'd better go look for him." So Vaca hurried through the door and, seeing no sign of Zorro, went out the front door. "Now where would he have gone?" Vaca asked himself. "It's much too far to the Owl Box from here. Maybe he decided to . . ."

Meanwhile, Vobble went into the VacaRoom and saw the cheese crumbs and computer. "Hmm, what's going on here? Could I order a special gift for Vinky? Or me? Maybe some snake gravy or . . . maybe some . . . but just then he heard a noise, it was . . .

VacaDude walking into the room. "I've been looking everywhere for Zorro! I can't find him."

Vobble said, "I have an idea!"

"Oh good, what's your idea?" VacaDude replied. "I'm so worried about Zorro." Vobble said, "I can use my towlons to dial CC's Cafe on your phone. Maybe Zorro is hiding from you there. Although Zorro WAS sending emails, so I hope he's not trapped somewhere in cyberspace!" Vobble said.

Vobble looked up and saw the sad face on VacaDude. "Awwww, Dude," Vobble said. "We can get him back. Let's get to CC's right away. She always serves him cheese soufflé and cheeze puffs. And so off they went to the cafe. But just then VacaDude received an email on his "I-don't" Phone - it was from Zorro.

The e-mail went like this: "VacaDude - you have been so good to me all these years and I can't find anyway to make it up to you for spending sooo much moohla \$. . ."

Vaca emailed Zorro back. "But Zorro, I spend all the Mowla because I love you - and if you don't come back who will tell the story tonight? But we will have to make arrangements for you to pay me back for all that cheese! Please come home and we can talk about it."

Zorro emailed Vaca back and said . . .

"Ok, in the email I'll have to be honest and say that the 'payback' isn't as important as the 'giving'. True - we love one another, so are we gonna' be like the two-leggers around the beach that doesn't really care about the "cheeze, the whatever". We are above all that and should be kind and help each other. If we collect on a debt . . . pay it forward . . . cheeze, schmeeze . . . let's be faithful to one another and be thankful for what we got . . . HOW DID WE GET THIS FAR?"

Zorro remembered all the MODs & VODs would be so disappointed if he was not there to read aloud the story! How could he let them down? VacaDude would work it out with him! Perhaps he could work around the VacaOffice! VacaDude needs help keeping his office neat and clean!

So off Zorro went to return to VacaDude's and work everything out! When he arrived . . .

at VacaDude, he found that no one was around . . . no Vaca, no Vinky, no Vobble, not even Mary . . .

"Oh, my!", thought Zorro. "Why has everyone gone?" He set out to clean up Vaca's office . . .

"Vaca will see how sorry I am when he returns to find a clean office!" Zorro said aloud to himself!

As Zorro was cleaning around the computer, he couldn't help but be drawn to a pop-up ad on the screen . . . yuuuummm . . . Cheesey Poofs! And then Zorro did something he probably shouldn't have . . . he . . .

quickly got on line and ordered himself up some more cheezy items!!! "Oh that does it!" popped up Zorrina. "Look, I am the understudy here and anything you can do i can do better! I will read the story on Tuesday night. You see the extra time gives me more chance to practice." So she started to prepare her outfit and make up for Tuesday night.

But Zorro said, "No, no - reading the story is my responsibility! If I don't read it I will be letting VacaDude down, and I've already caused enough trouble with ordering the cheese!" Zorro wrung his paws worriedly. "I think we really do need to get CuriosityKitten to fix my e-mail so I don't get any more of those PopTarts, or whatever they are called. But it's very nice of you to want to help. Maybe you could . . ."

Just then, Vaca and the gang came into the room. "Wow! My office looks great . . . so neat . . . HEY! Wait a minute! Who's been ordering more cheese? Zorro, what have you done?"

"Vaca," said Zorro, "I've cleaned your room and then I ordered you and Mary some cheese, I know you love cheese with your soup. So now I'm ready to get back to work, right after you call CK to order me some "PopTarts." They sound yummy."

Suddenly, Zorro was zapped back into cyberspace! Vaca thought, "Oh no! What happened to Zorro?! Who will read the story?" VacaDude hitched up his steam punk rocket ship and blasted into cyberspace to rescue Zorro. He found Zorro hanging out with Creepy Cheeze Kidz who were trying to steal his cheeze Pop Tarts! Mmm, cheddar cheeze, Mozilla Firefox (er, mozzarella) cheeze.

Having rescued Zorro and worked out their differences, VacaDude sat with Zorro, munching on cheese, crackers and fruit, and they talked about nothing much at all.

Then Zorro wondered, "Dude, there's gotta be a way for you to use all your contacts in the industry to get me more commercial spots. I could be rich! I could be rolling in clover (clover flavored cheese, that is). I was a great success in the Meadow Mutual ad. I know I could do more. Maybe I could even star in an adventure series . . . a masked mouse who carries a whip saves people and . . . "

Vaca said, "I'll tell you what Zorro. I'll see what I can do to get you a spot on PBS. Maybe you could read stories to children or perhaps we could arrange for a sequel to Ratatouille. But for now, let's just relax and enjoy this cheese. I'm beginning to feel a little creepy, ya' know. Cheeze! Must have cheese . . . "

The End

Vobble Worries About Taxes

Vinky looked at Vobble curiously. His little wings were flapping wildly, papers were scattered all around him and he was working frantically. "Vobble? What are you doing?" Vinky asked.

"I found out that I can make a lot of money stuffing envelopes and I need to make a lot of money so I'm stuffing envelopes," Vobble said with scorn, thinking it was rather obvious what he was doing.

"But why do you have to make a lot of money?" Vinky asked. Vobble looked shocked. "Haven't you heard? The government is in trouble. They need lots of money. Everyone has to pay Texas."

"I don't really understand why I have to pay Texas, though. I've never even been there, have I? Although, I sometimes go places without even knowing I've gone anywhere and then . . ."

You know that kind of sigh that is really long and drawn out and sounds like the sigher's patience with you is stretched about as far as it can be stretched? Vinky sighed one of those sighs.

"You've been sneaking over to Uncle VacaDude's to watch the news again, haven't you? Let me clear this up. Yes, the government is in trouble. Everyone has to pay TAXES, not Texas."

"But we're barn owls, not big two-leggers. We DON'T have to pay taxes." Vobble looked relieved for a moment and then gasped, "But Uncle Dude and our other two-legger friends DO!"

"We've got to help them pay Texas . . . I mean TAXES! What can we do?" Vinky sighed again and said . . .

"Well, Vobble, I have a great idea. I mean I really have a GREAT idea!"

"We could get VacaDude to draw cartoons of people at the Wildzlife Bird Sanctuary with their favorite birds. And then sell them and make money. But there is a problem - we have to do it by April 15th which is this Friday."

"Maybe Uncle Vaca can sell all the VacaChat stories we've written. That way his work is already done. Do you suppose it would be okay with Zorro?"

"Well, let's go ask him." So off they went, when suddenly . . .

Vinky got another great idea. I mean a GREAT idea! She said, "Look Vobble! Remember the ransom money, the reward for the lost portfolio? Well, we could zoom around looking for it to the tune of "You're Gonna Fly, you're gonna fly" and we can wrest it from the clutches of the evil thief and return it, thus winning the prize money. Then we will be able to help pay Texas. (My grandmother from the old country had an accent she would have said Vinky Vobble, pay Texas! hahah!)

"We all can also practice singing and put on a free concert for donations. Maybe we could get Johnny and the Horkerz."

So, two plans were being developed to help raise money to pay the government: look for the rascal that stole Uncle Vaca's portfolio and raise money by having a concert in the park.

Vinky asked "How can we be in two places at once?" Vobble sighed again and said, "We will have to get help from some of our friends. Let's start by recruiting Zorro, Rocky, and Kyle. Oh . . . and the big white owl too - whatever her name is."

"Okay." Vobble pulls a portable white board from his "pocket" and starts to make a "To Do" list.

"Okay, let's map out our strategies," he says. "Zorro can scurry very very fast, so he should be in charge of searching for the scoundrel who stole the portfolio. Maybe he can round up some of his mousie friends to help."

"And Vinky . . . you will be in charge of flying reconnaissance to help Zorro on the land . . . " Now . . . who should be in charge of the concert? . . . hmmm . . .

Then Vinky said, "But that only leaves Rocky to arrange the concert. I don't think he can do it alone. Let's see, Glowz is really good at sets and lighting and stuff like that, but who would be really good at finding performers?" Vobble said, "Well, do you think Uncle Vaca has time to help Rocky? And maybe all the Horkerz could help too." "Hmmmm," said Vinky. "I think that

Uncle Vaca is too busy trying to find that portfolio. We can get Kyle and Tauntz to help. One thing for sure, we don't want our friend Willie Nelson to help because he's been in enough trouble with the government and his taxes, and we need to be careful so we won't get audited. Has anyone seen Kyle lately? He's been hiding out a lot but I think he would help." Just then . . .

Kyle jumped up from behind a large green collard plant. "Okay, I have been listening to you trying to put this show together all day to raise the Texas. But you forgot one important part . . .

The real master of organization is none other than Carlos Royal. And he has an RV and a whole gang of owls who could help us throw the biggest shindig Texas ever saw. But there is one major problem . . .

"Phew, all this thinking and organizing is making me hungry. I sure could go for a BGN sandwich. (Bacon, gopher, and nutella, that is.)"

"How can we find Carlos? Do you think Molly and McGee can find him?"

"I know!" said Vobble. "I bet Uncle Vaca knows where he is. Let's go tell Vaca to call him and tell Carlos to head south to Texas right away. I know Texasgrandmadarlene will be sure to fix him a bacon, nutella, minus the gopher sandwich when he gets there!"

"What a great idea!" said Vinky. "I noticed from Carlos' blog that they went over a big bridge into a new domain! But they will be happy to turn right around and come back to help us. He and Donna rule when it comes to organizational skills. Also," Vinky said, "I have a new brainstorm."

We can quickly buy some formaldehyde and put all our horks in it, then have a big sale!! Classrooms all over the world will buy them from our new website, www.hork.org.

"We could sell them at the concert too. We could sell snake gravy, with buzzard biscuits and we'd have money in no time. Because it's hot out we can make frozen honeysuckle and mint juleps."

The plans for the concert were falling into place. Vobble was just about to e-mail VacaDude as to the status with Carlos' and the shindig when his cell phone rang.

Vinky was calling to update him about the progress being made with the thief, scum, not nice person who took Vaca's portfolio.

Zorro and Vinky had quickly discovered that it was not going to be so easy. There are many suspicious, kooky looking people in and around San Francisco. And that's just the people from the convention Vaca just came from - Wondercowlm?

Vobble told Vinky that if anyone can do the job, she and Zorro can! Vinky and Vobble end their call. Vinky lets Zorro know of Vobble's confidence in them both.

Hoping that Vinky and Zorro would be able to handle their task, Vobble turned his attention back to planning the concert. There was still so much to do! Glowz was coming up with good ideas for more stage design, so that was good. And CCz had the food concession well in hand. But if anyone was coming up with enough performers, they hadn't reported back to Vobble about it, and he was getting worried. "Well," he thought, "If all else fails, everyone will have to perform. But wait a minute -- Mockz!" There was a really fantastic musician! "And I bet he has a lot of musical friends, too. I'll ask him to recruit some." With that critical issue settled, Vobble . . .

was calling Mockz to see if he could perform when they heard a delighted scream from Uncle Vaca's office! "What was that?" They flew quickly and found Mary dancing around with glee saying, "I found it! I found it!" "You found WHAT?" asked Vinky. Mary laughed and said, "The portfolio, it was here all the time! I found it under Vaca's latest clay sculpture! He must have been using it as a base for his special broadcast. Now we can finish our taxes and find out how much we are going to have to pay. Thank goodness we are having the concert to make some money." The phone rang and . . .

She ran to answer it. It was Vaca with more news. All of the fund raising efforts turned out to be a fantastic success. They raised more than anyone dreamed. Now all that remained was the counting.

Vinky and Vobble were seated at Vaca's kitchen table with Zorro, Kyle, Rocky, Glowz, Vaca and Mary. Piles of bills and coins were all around them. They were busy counting the money that had been collected.

They were discussing how the money could be used. They couldn't just send it straight to the government, could they? Didn't it have to have some forms and

copies of forms and copies of copies . . . ?

That's when Kyle had a great, and I mean GREAT idea. He said "I know! Let's use the money to get a barn owl (and maybe a mouse and a carrot too) elected to Congress! They could help make changes!

Now who could we elect? Who would be best? Then it was obvious! VOTE MOLLY!! With that, the group was busy with plans for campaigns and slogans and appearances and speeches and . . .

The End (or to be continued - who knows?)

Vinky and Vobble Visit the Palmz

"Vobble! Vobble! Wake up!!!" Vinky cried excitedly. "Today's the day! Today's the day of the big surprise! I've been waiting for this day for soooooooooo long!"

"Wh . . . Wha . . . What? What surprise? You never told me about any surprise," Vobble murmured groggily. "It's still dark out! Why are you getting me up so early?"

"Well, gee, Vobble, it wouldn't be much of a surprise if I'd told you about it, would it? Now get up! We've got a long, wonderful day ahead of us. We're going to The Palmz!"

"The Palmz?! We're going to The PALMZ?! How did you arrange THAT?! That place is really exclusive!"

Vinky grinned smugly. "It's a trial membership. They're gonna give us a whole day to try out all their services - massages, facials, stylists, meals, aroma therapy, mani-pedi . . . "

"Okay," said Vobble, "I'll go. I'll go. I'll get ready to go now, but I'm NOT getting my talons painted! "

Vinky said, "That's fine!" But you have to try their meals - they're the best!

Then VacaDude asked, "Where are you guys going this early in the morning?!" Then Vinky said, "We're going to The Palmz!!!" Then Vaca said, "You Lucky's! I wish I could go!" Then Vinky said . . .

"Oh Dude, why don't you join us?" VacaDude looked down at his clothes. "Gee, I can't go dressed like this. Not to that Ritzy Palmzy Palace."

"Well, then," said Vobble. "We could wait for you to get dressed but you have to hurry - we need to leave before sunup."

"OK," said VacaDude. "Wait right here." And off he ran to his bedroom, but on the way he tripped over Mary's song sheets and suddenly . . .

fell flat on his face! "Yikes! I hope I do not have to go back to that chiropractor!" he yells. He tenderly gets up, dusts himself off and realizes he is perfect! So he put on his long sleeved t-shirt which he painted to look exactly like a tuxedo!

Vobble said, "What can I do to look all fancy? Maybe you could paint on a tie for me, but it needs to look special. How about painting it red? Then all of a sudden Vaca . . .

looked down at the ground again. "Oh, I just remembered something! That music on the floor - Mary's - she has a performance tonight. And guess what! It is at the theater next to the Ritzy Palmz!"

"So, if we go to the Palmz before sun up and stay all day, then I can go to her performance right after that. Vinky! Is that okay with you? Vobble, let me get some paint and Photoshop a great outfit. Who would you like to look like in your costume?"

Vobble bobbed and turned his head as he pondered the possibilities. Vobble decided, believe it or not, that he'd like to look like Zorro! "Vaca, please create a brown furry outfit with big mousey ears and whiskers. And finish it off with a tuxedo outfit and hat just like Zorro wears."

Vaca chuckles . . . "Why yes, I believe I can make a Zorro outfit for you, Vobble. No problem." Vaca exits to find more grey furry felt for the costume, all the time pondering what sound effect he will use for a mouse playing an owl playing a mouse . . . hmmm.

But he finally decided that he might as well just use a random sound effect, since the chatters always liked those anyway.

He returned with the fuzzy felt and quickly finished the Zorro costume for Vobble. And then without further delays, they were off to the Palmz! But unfortunately . . .

the sun was already coming up and Vinky and Vobble looked very frightened. Then Dude said, "I have an idea. Don't be afraid. I'll get that big basket like the one Elf was saved in. You can go into it and I will carry you both there. That pleased Vobble and Vinky so much and they agreed by bobbing their heads and jumping into the basket. Now VacaDude pondered how to get the big basket into his Vehiclez - too square for the trunk - too big for the back

seat. But that Brain Cell lit up: tie the basket onto the roof with duct tape.

Vaca placed the basket onto the roof and ran into the garage for duct tape. Luckily there was a special at Wal-Mart... a 20 pack of duct tape for only \$2! So after much struggling and sweating and using bad words . . . Vaca taped the box to the roof of the car and away he SPED! Varoom!!!

Not wanting Vinky and Vobble to be late for their first appointment - a hot stone massage . . . better make that pebble massage . . . Vaca's speed was up to 70 mph!!

"Whoa! Weeeee!" yelled Vobble and Vinky from the box . . . this ride is better than an amusement park!!!! Hey! . . . but what is that sound we hear??"

Oh no! The engine started to hork, so Vaca panicked and got out. Steam was coming out of the engine. "OK, you gutz," he said, balancing the basket on his head and trudging the remaining five feet to The Palmz. He took out his folding ladder and climbed and climbed carefully up the palm and . . . guess what?

Molly and McGee were not only there too, but they were dressed in the same outfits as Vinky and Vobble. They brought snake gravy and . . .

Molly, always the caring mother, said, "Let's have a bite to eat before we start our day of pampering." Vinky looked at Molly and thought to herself, "Will I ever get that massage?" Just then, the concierge said, "This way please! Follow me!"

The concierge led Vinky to a fancy room where she could get a massage. Vinky noticed the background music in the massage room - the Molly Song, Molly Bobble, the second Molly song, Johnny and the Horkerz, BugGirl's song, and all the other music from the owl box. After her massage, Vinky was soooo relaxed. The concierge came to escort her to the manicure room. Would you like to get your towlonz painted now?

"Oh no, getting my towlons painted sounds unpleasant! I don't know why those two leggers love it so much." Just then, Vobble hopped over and . . .

said, "I'm not getting my towlons painted either. But I'd really like to try the aroma therapy. Do you have kangaroo rat scent? I've heard that it's very relaxing, but also stimulates the imagination. The concierge said, "Oh dear, I'm

not sure. I'll have to go check."

Just then VacaDude rushed into the room, saying . . .

"Oh my! I wish Mary could have been here for this. She loves this kind of thing and she'd have a blast trying to choose from all the various nail colors they have!"

After seeing the wonderful array of colors available, Vinky decided that maybe having her talons painted might not be so bad after all.

All the owls enjoyed their time of pampering. Vobble was thrilled with his new Vaca-like hairstyle. Vinky couldn't stop admiring her beautiful "Kiss Me Passionate" pink talons.

Molly was just glad to have a time to relax and enjoy some time off. Even VacaDude was feeling pretty spiffy after his hot seaweed body wrap and tall glass of carrot and sea grass juice.

But they all knew that this wonderful experience couldn't last forever. Vaca had to get back to work and the owlets were needed in the owl box to entertain the chatters!

They hurried back to Vacaville and settled in, ready for life to get back to normal (as if that were really possible). Vaca rushed off, ready for some major multitasking - Google Earth, maps, steampunk . . .

The owlets settled back in the box, content and happy to be home, surrounded by those they love and who love them back.

Vobble said, "Ya' know Vink, that was really fun. It seems we have always have such a quiet week and then every weekend, we seem to have some grand adventures. I wonder why that is?"

The End

Is Tauntz the Easter Bunny?

Tauntz gathered his children around him at bedtime and told them, "I have a wonderful tale to share with you. It's the story of an important part of our family history. Do you know what tomorrow is?"

"I know!" said the eldest, Andy. "It's Sunday!" "Is tomorrow the day we go visit Grandma?" said, Jamie. Finally, Hobby, the youngest bunny, asked tentatively, "It's Easter, isn't it, Daddy?"

"Yes! Tomorrow is Easter," said Tauntz. "It's a very BIG day for our family. Do you know why?" "It's because of the big room at the end of the dark tunnel in our burrow, isn't it, Daddy?" asked Adam.

"It is. There your older relative have been gathering eggs and decorating them in rainbow colors. They've been collecting candy, toys, books and other surprises for children around the world."

"You're old enough to know our family secret. Each year, a member of our family is appointed to deliver those Easter goodies. That bunny is granted extreme speed and powers for just one day.

"It's quite an honor to be chosen. One day YOU might even be selected. "Now, it's bedtime. Go to sleep now and tomorrow there might be a big surprise for you! Good night. I love you."

Early the next morning . . .

Adam was the first rabbit to wake up and go into the dinning room and to sit down and get some breakfast. Then Tauntz woke up to find everyone else up!

Then Tauntz said, "Lets go to CC's Cafe to get breakfast!" Andy said, "Lets go!" But Tauntz stopped them and said, "Hobby gets to deliver the eggs this year!"

Hobby burst open with joy all the way to CC's Cafe. When they got there, CC said, "Hey guys! Happy Easter!" Then Tauntz said, "Happy Easter to you too!" Then CC asked them what they wanted.

Then Hobby said . . .

"Well, I have to start my breakfast off with eggz and toast and butter and jam." "Oh," Hobby said, "not on Easter Sunday. You need to order something very special."

Hobby thought about what was special and looked at the CC Cafe Menu . . . "Hmmm . . . grimey carrots doused in flaming Nutella with snake gravy potato pancakes . . . OK," said Hobby. "I'll have that." Just as CC went to the back to order the scrumptious breakfast, a bird flew at the window and . . .

scared everyone! It bounced off the glass and all of them flew out the door to see if it was OK. CC noticed the beautiful Easter like colors on it. What could it be! Hobbs said, "Maybe it's an Easter pigeon. You know there are lots of them around . . .

"Or maybe its the magical kestrel that is always over at the Royal's." But then . . .

once the bird shook all of its feathers into place, they realized it was an owl. All the bunnies became scared that they would be eaten. But this was a very special owl.

Its feathers were every color of the rainbow, and best of all, it was an herbivore! The bunnies were no longer scared, but very intrigued.

Hobby whispered to Tauntz, "Why is this owl so different than all the other owls we see?" Tauntz replied

"Maybe it's a Mardi Gras owl from LA. They are very colorful, ya' know. Or maybe one of those New York City owls . . . they are colorful too. Why don't you ask him why all the colors?"

CC started to clean up the mess as the tauntzlets went to ask.

Suddenly, the very colorful owl said, "I will take you, Hobby, on your journey around the world. Hop on and let' get going!" The rest of the family of taunzlets said, "But Daddy, we want to go, too! Hobby is so young. Let's get the VacaJet and we can follow him around - you know how fast that is!"

Andy said "I will gather the books - let's take Molly the Owl books for all the children of the world!" Jaime said, "I will take some VacaMugs so everyone can have a VacaSip on Easter day!" Tauntz, a good daddy, said . . .

"I don't think Vaca would mind if we borrowed his jet. Sure, we can follow and it will be a trip to remember." In the meantime, the colorful owl gathered Hobby on his back and they took to the skies. "You see, Hobby, the world is full of beautiful colors."

"We can gather many colors from different places and sources. For instance, I eat herbs and plants. When I eat a hibiscus flower that is tropical red, I lay a beautiful egg that color. This amazing bird continued to describe to the sweet little Hobby all she ingests to create the fantasy of colors. Meanwhile, back at the jet, Jamie and Adam have begun to bicker. "We don't even know our birth order! We are the middles!"

So they keep trying to sit in the same small seat. The stewardess, Donna, arrived. She had reached her limit. "Okay, you gutz! You sit over here and you over there!"

"Most colorful owl" said Hobby, "Can we stop by Kanga's and give Easter gifts to owlets?"

"Of course, Hobby," she said, "do you think they'd like some of these Nutella filled eggs that I laid after eating hazelnuts?"

"Oh yes!" said Hobby. "I might like some of those, too . . . well, of course, if there are any leftover . . .

All of a sudden, the jet passed Colorful Owl and Hobby, and then headed straight for the ground, "Oh, I hope they're not going to crash!" cried Hobby.

"Not to worry, Hobby!" cried Colorful Owl. "Not only am I a colorful egg laying owl, but I am also a Super Herowl!"

"One of my many superpowers," Colorful Owl continued, "is my super-speed and strength!" With that, Colorful Owl began to glow with ALL of the colors of the world!!! "Hold tight Hobby! We're off to save your family!!!!" Colorful Owl and Hobby flew so fast that a colorful rainbow was created in their wake!

When they reached the plane they could see Andy banging on the window. He was saying something, but Colorful Owl and Hobby could not hear. He screamed, "HELP US!!!!" Then . . .

Colorful Owlhero reached the plane just in time to crack open the window and

reach in with her talons to take out the Middle Bunnies, but now SuperOwlHero had a bigger problem - how could she carry all four bunnies on her wingz without one of them falling off?

Just then from behind a bush popped up Tauntz munching on a carrot (not Kyle).

"Why nothing to worry about SuperHeroOwl and my little baby bunnies. Because I have just been named "Easter Bunny Magical 2011". And with that Tauntz . . .

put his ears as straight up in the air as he possibly can! And out poured a magical rainbow - it reached up clear to the jet plane!

Colorful OwlHero saw the rainbow reaching up. She realized she didn't have to try to figure out how to save all the taunzlets! She went down to the top of the rainbow and guided it up to the undercarriage of the plane and The Colorful Owl balanced on the top of the rainbow, got the bunnies out of the plane, and they all slid down on the rainbow with giggles galore! When they landed at Tauntz feet, he said, "You bunnies shouldn't be laughing, that was a very dangerous situation."

Then The Colorful Owl spoke up and said, "Tauntz, have you ever ridden on a rainbow?" Tauntz shuffled his feet on the ground and said, "Well, no." The Colorful Owl said

"Follow me, I will show you the ride of your life. Touch my wing and let's soar to the top." As they approached the top, Tauntz let out a girly scream that could be heard around the world. "Get me down!!!" They zoomed to the bottom with lighting speed

Tauntz said, as he kissed the ground, "Gimme' a honeysuckle mash. I am outta' here!" Just then . . .

as Tauntz stood up, having kissed the ground, he saw a large group at the other end of the rainbow. There was a large picnic blanket spread out. He saw the stewardess, Donna, holding hands with someone who had just stepped out of an RV. The VacaJet was parked, undamaged, next to the rainbow.

Just then, out of the RV came Vobble, wearing a red tie, and Vinky. Glowz had on her red tango dress and high heeled black shoes.

"It's magic!" cried Tauntz. The colorful Owl said, "Yes, all the Easter gifts have been delivered and we can enjoy the rest of the day at our picnic."

They were all so excited that everyone was safe. Vinky and Vobble were dancing to a happy Easter jingle. CC was getting all the food set up for the picnic.

Carlos asked Hobby, "Well, Hobby, how did you enjoy being this year's Easter Bunny?" Hobby looked at Carlos with large, sparkling eyes and said, "It was magnificent!"

And then something amazing and wonderful happened! A stage was set up with a curtain. The curtains parted and there was Jamie! She is a girl, with the most gorgeous Easter bonnet on, sorta' like Carmen Miranda's with all the fruits and vegetables.

Hobby looked at Adam and Andy and said, "I'm getting hungry and those fruits and veggies on Jamie's hat look delicious."

"Do you think she'd share them, or just wear them?" asked middle rabbit #1. "Well, I'm the oldest and biggest" said Andy. "I'll tell her to share, or else!"

Jamie overheard Andy's comments to Middle Rabbit #1... affectionately known as Middle Rabbit #1 . . . and Jamie walked up to Andy and said, "I would gladly have shared with you, Andy, but since you seem to be a bully, I do not think I will share with you after all!"

Jamie then took off her colorful vegetable hat and passed it around to Hobby, Vinky, Vobble, Donna, Carlos, Middle One and Middle Two, Tauntz, Mrs. Tauntz, etc. etc. By the time the hat reached Andy there was nothing left but the straw hat!

Andy realized how selfish he was and apologized to Jamie. Because he was being so grown up about it, Colorful Owl, who had been hanging around quietly in the background, gave Andy the last colored egg! This egg had all the colors of the rainbow and the world.

After the picnic they all enjoyed a many hours of games and stories and just general all-round fun.

His adventures done, Hobby returned to the rabbit burrow. When he arrived,

Tauntz handed him a huge feather quill pen and told him about the fabulous journal that their family had maintained for centuries recording the events of every single Easter. It was now his job to record all the events of this day. He thought back.

This would be the most fantastic addition to the record yet. Tauntz was certain that this story would be preserved in bunny memory and lore forever. Future bunnies would grow up hearing the tale of the legendary "Hobby the Bunny and Colorful OwlHero." Little bunnies would dream of flying on the back of an owl and riding a rainbow.

After recording his adventures, Hobby and his family shared a wonderful snack of carrots (not Kyle), lark's lettuce, and pigeon peas. They then said their prayers and everyone went to bed happy and smiling!

The End

Polez and the Maypole

"Vinky?" said Vobble. "I just don't get it. I heard Uncle VacaDude talking to Mary about celebrating May Day today. Why would anyone want to celebrate being in danger? Isn't that just kinda weird?"

"Well, Vobble, there are TWO kinds of May Day. You're right that when someone is in danger, they will call for help by hollering, 'Mayday! Mayday!', but there is another MayDay too. Today is May 1st."

"People all around the world celebrate today in many ways. For most, it as a celebration of spring. They give flowers and dance around May Poles and . . ."
 "May Polez!???" interrupted Polez.

"That sounds intriguing. What's a May pole?" "Oh, Polez, you'd love it!" Vinky replied. "Children with colorful streamers dance around a tall pole weaving the streamers until the pole is so beautiful."

"Oh my," said Polez, "that sounds so wonderful. I wonder . . ."

"what I'll do during this month then." Cardsfan came in and asked, "What are you doing?" Then Polez said, "Vobble said people all around the world celebrate today in many ways. For most, it is a celebration of spring. They give flowers and dance around May Poles!"

Then Cardsfan said " Lets go to the new CC's Cafe on Market Street in San Marcos with Carlos, Donna, Molly, and McGee! Then . . .

Vinky said, "But we need to be dressed in our May Dance clothes first. They are having the RedCarpet at CC"s Cafe and we need to look beautiful and festive."

Vobble looked at Vinky and said, "How can we take Polez with us? We need to decorate and bring Polez with us. We need a wrench to take Polez out of the Owl Box. Let's go to Carlos and ask if we can borrow a wrench." Suddenly . . .

they had a brainstorm, they would prop a 2x4 in place of Polez, wrap it in beautiful colorful crepe paper and sneak it out of the owl box!!!

But to everyone's shock, Polez spoke up! "Don't use a board in my place! I want to go! You can put the 2x4 here in place of me instead! It will hold up the box. Boltz will be fine with that. Just ask her." So they did and then . . .

off they went - Polez wrapped in paper. They called ahead to CC's cafe to warn them so they would have lots of honeysuckle pie and snake gravy with buzzard biscuits.

They find a perfect spot to put Polez. Children would be coming from all directions with pretty steamers and plenty of honeysuckle juice for all. Then Cards asked . . .

"Vinky and Vobble, where are Carlos and Donna? Aren't we supposed to stop and get them first?" They turned their owlet heads first one way and then another and then with bobbling heads they exclaimed, "Oh, Yes! Can you ring the doorbell for us Cardsfan? And, by the way, what is the weather report for our May Day celebrations?" Cardsfan rang the bell and . . .

Donna came to the door. When they explained the plan, Donna said, "Oh, what a great idea! We'll be ready right away. But has anyone thought to arrange for music for the children to dance to?" Vinky and Vobble looked at each other in dismay. But then Cardsfan, with the most organized brain cellz in the group, said "How about asking Johnny and the Horkerz to play?" Everyone was delighted with that suggestion, so Vinky immediately called Johnny on her cell phone, and he agreed to round up the Horkerz and come right away. With that detail taken care of, the group proceeded to . . .

CC's Cafe to ask for a catered party. When they got there CC said, "Of course we can cater!" Then Cardsfan said, "Thank you, CC! See you later!" Then . . .

Cardsfan went home to get dressed in his Top Coat and Hat to emcee the great May Pole Dance. On his way Cards saw the First Clutch and Second Clutch teaching the Third Clutch some funny tricks. "Oh, LOL," said Cards. "You all have to come to the May Pole Dance." Max, Pattison, Austin, Wesley, Ashley and Carrie and the "newbies" looked at Cards with bright happy faces and deeted, "Indeed we will do that." Then . . .

the newbies (since they were newbies after all) scattered all around like crazy trying to find pretty things to wear! "Max! Pattison!! What do we do? What do we wear!? Help us!" But Molly - being the wise matriarch she is, gathered them all up and went to the best craft store in town (which also is CC's second

enterprise) to pick some stuff up for them.

They went to CC's craft shop and picked out small sparkle owl jackets and cute bright bow ties. Now they were ready to celebrate. Johnny and the Horkerz were getting tuned up and Cards was . . .

in his Top Hat. Polez was planted in the beautiful fairytale garden in the back of CC's Cafe. There was a rose arbor, white and latticed. Red, pink, purple, white and yellow roses were in full bloom. Donna and Carlos had picked up colorful silk and satin ribbons and were handing them out to all the children and owlets, but they were getting tangled together! "Wait!" said . . .

Cards. "Wait! Lets have some order here! All children and owlets who's names begin with A-G line up to the right of Polez and all of you with names that begin with H-Z line up to the left." But since the Younglings don't have names they just stood there looking sad, so Cardsfan said . . .

so Cardsfan said, "Except for you Younglings, who are special . . . so odd numbers to the right and even numbers to the left for you." The Younglings happily went to the appropriate sides (after a bit of coaching from Max about the matter of "right" and "left"). Then Donna gave a quick lesson on how to do the Maypole Dance. After that, everyone was ready to start. But suddenly . . .

Cards rushed back in with the updated weather report: "Thunderstorms! Thunderstorms! Everyone inside!" All the guests rushed inside just as the rain opened up and everyone got sprinkled on their way in but they laughed and tossed their ribbons about.

But all of a sudden Tauntz, feeling left out of the festivities, streaked through the Cafe and all the owlets started chasing him and as Tauntz raced in circles it was a great dance for everyone in the place!

So Tauntz became the new MayPole! The dance was still one with a little bit of reorganization! The children took their places and Donna decided that since there wasn't enough room that the owlets should fly above the children going the opposite direction. Everyone thought that would work, but . . .

there was noise from out side. It sounded like the Tin Man from The Wizards of Owlz. "Oh, no!" cried Vinky. No one had brought Polez in out of the rain and he was squealing. So everyone ran out and got Polez and brought him in. They used colorful ribbons to dry him and make him festive. Polez was very happy

with his new ribbons. "I want to keep these all the time." When all of a sudden . . .

Cardsfan whipped out a big microphone and said, "Ahem, Ladowls, and Gentowlmen! Let me introduce a special guest speaker, Sir Carlos Royal!"

There was a humming of whispers and chirping, when Sir Carlos announced in his best KOWL voice, "And Now, Let me Crown the Three Queens of May Day!" He looked to the left and said, "Donna, my love, Molly, our love, and Princess Mascot ChatterChopz, let me present you with your flowery crowns!" Vinky said . . .

all dreamy-eyed, "Oh, that's so beautiful!" And then as they were all organizing themselves for the dance (again), Zorro came in, huffing and puffing and pulling a huge wagon, assisted by all of Tauntz' large family of children. In the wagon were dainty flower and ribbon wreaths for all the girls and boutonnieres for all the boys! They were passed out and what a perfect sight it was when all the children had put them on! Cardsfan shook hands (well, hand and paw) with Zorro, as he congratulated the enterprising mouse on thinking of this important detail. Then everything was truly ready, and the music started. The Maypole dance that followed just had to have been the best one ever, as the children wove in and out with their ribbons (or at least no one there had ever seen a better one). Then, when the dance was finally all over,

they all partied all day and all night. They danced until they were dizzy, ate until they could eat no more and laughed until they cried. By the time the day ended, they were all exhausted.

Back at the owl box, Polez said, "Wow! That was soooo exciting. I never dreamed that I'd get to be a May Polez! I've never looked so handsome! Just look at my fancy clothes!"

Boltz was, of course, suitably impressed, as she should be. She looked at Polez and said, "Oh my, Polez! You're looking quite dreamy. I could almost swoon - if I weren't bolted into place."

Polez blushed and said, "This has been a banner year for Polez everywhere (and believe me, I know banners!). We got that wonderful "Upstanding Citizen" award

and today I was the May Pole. What could come next? What could possibly top this?" Vobble grinned and tipped his head sideways (as only owlets can do) and said, "Ya' know, Polez, I have an idea.

One night, I was sneaking around and watching TV through Uncle Vaca's window (please don't tell him and Mary, ok?) and there was a show all about a Pole.

Have you ever heard of a holiday called Festivus???"

The End

Something Special for Mother's Day

"Vobble! Vobble! Wake up! We're in BIIIIIG trouble!" Vinky hollered.

"Huh? Wha. . . ? Trouble? What do you mean? How did they find out about it? I was soooo careful." Vobble murmured sleepily.

"We'll talk about whatever you're talking about later Vobble, believe me! But right now, this is lots more important! Just look at this!" Vinky was waving the calendar over her head in excitement.

Vobble was puzzled, as Vobble often is. "What? It's a calendar. You use it to know what day it is and everything. YOU know that! What am I supposed to be looking at and why does it mean trouble?"

Vinky thrust the calendar under Vobble's beak. "Just look! Do you know what today is!? It's MOTHER'S DAY! And we didn't do anything for Mom! We didn't send flowers, or a card or a mouse or anything!"

"Vinky! Why didn't you say something!? We're in BIIIIIG trouble! We gotta come up with something REALLY special, REALLY quick! Gee! Why do you always let things wait like this? Ok, let's see . . . "

"Do we have time to make something?" asked Vinky. "I think so," said Vobble, "if we hurry. Do you have any ideas?"

"Hmmmm," Vinky says to Vobble. "I wonder just who is our true parental unit, anyway. Let's ask the wise old owl."

"Hmm," the wise old owl says nonchalantly, "now who do you think picked up the pen and began doodling?"

"Oh, we wonder, we wonder, dare we hope that the dude himself, the steampunk dude could be our true and only parental unit?"

The Wise Old owl thought a bit and said, "That is the mystery that you, Vinky and Vobble have to discover! You must leave your sanctuary and find the truth." Then . . .

Vinky and Vobble decided to go to their favorite thinking rock in the middle of the creek where it is quiet.

"Let's use our imagination and make something natural from nature, here from our surroundings. We could use pretty shiny rocks from here in the creek and Vobble is good at weaving with different color plants here in the woods."

Then Vinky said, "What about eating? How about . . ."

we take our Mom (we sure do love her) to CC's Cafe for a wonderful dinner. Let's see if we can get a special table in the rose garden where the MayPolez celebration was held last week. Let's invite all the Mom's we know to come with us and really surprise our Mom!", said Vinky. Vobble tilted his head and said, "That is a good idea, hmmm... now which Mothers do we know?"

Well, there's Molly, of course, and Donna. Then there's Willow, and Lucy, and Syd, and Bonnie, and Owlivia, and Starr Ranch Mom, and Salt, and.... Oh dear, there are so many to remember! And do we have to invite the other kinds of owl moms too? And how about the eagle moms? I don't know where to stop! We have so many friends, and I just don't know what to do!" Vinky shook her head with dismay.

Vobble said, "How about if we just drop flyers into the wind inviting ALL moms?" "Well, said Vinky, "but what if . . .?"

after a pause, Vinky continued her thought. "But what if we drop 1000 flyers into the wind and 1000 moms get the flyers and 1000 moms come to CC's!?!?"

Vobble starts to count the number of chairs at CC's in his head . . . "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight . . . hmmm . . . that's as high as I can count," says Vobble, "since I only have 8 toes!"

So Vobble and Vinky decide that flyers might not be the best idea . . . especially since they want to be good to the environment too! Let's just go with our original list of close intimate friends," says Vinky. "We will have a great time with the Owl Moms and TwoLegged Owl Moms!" Vinky and Vobble then focus their attention back on what type of gift to make for their mom.

So, they cross back over the creek into the gardens and come upon a beautiful saucer magnolia tree in a deep magenta fuchsia color. They say, "Magnolia, could you spare us a few blossoms?"

"Be my guest," she says. So they carefully pluck some flowers and put them on a bonnet with some industrial gadgets hanging off decoratively. "It's a steampunk bonnet! Mom will adore it!"

And so they wrap it in spider web strands and dewdrops that Glowz had so artfully arranged on the rim of the bonnet. Then Vinky and Vobble realize that Glowz is a mom too! "Should we invite Glowz?" they say.

Then up in the tree a great hoot sounds! The Wise Owl is back. "Children - the bonnet is beautiful and your idea of inviting all moms is inspirational - and even though you have considered only inviting a few. I have a idea for you . . . do you know you can broadcast the moms day luncheon? So then all moms will be invited?"

Vinky and Vobble looked up at the wise owl and asked "So how's this for imagination?"

The wise owl said, "You have done well. There is no doubt that this will be a Mother's Day to remember." Then the wise owl said he was so excited he asked his wise old MOTHER owl to join in the party. Wise old GRANDPA owl would bring her soon. So every one . . .

can meet at CC's Cafe. And off they flew . . . next stop, CC's Cafe. In the meantime, ChatterChopz had heard about all this from Mockz, who had been spying on this conversation. So, she was not surprised when the happy group started arriving, one-by-one. Just then, Vinky and Vobble arrived at the door. CC was smiling - beaming from ear to ear.

"Before we start this party, I want you to meet someone so special, so dear, someone who 'Rocks my World!', my wonderful mother! Mom, I would like to introduce you to my friends, Vinky and Vobble.

Vinky and Vobble started to respond with their very best manners, but suddenly there was a big ruckus outside, and everyone ran out to look. When they got there, they saw that their plans would have to be changed big time. But they were confident that it was going to be the best Mother's Day party ever, because what they saw outside was . . .

over 300 chatters come to join the celebration honoring mothers everywhere. They had come from all over to join in this great party. There was music and food and lots of laughter. Everyone had a great time and partied until the

food ran out and it was getting dark. Then they all made their way home, happy and full.

Vinky and Vobble settled back in their box after their wonderful day with their mother and all the other mothers they know. They were tired, but exhilarated too. They really had made the day special.

"Yak' know Vinky," Vobble said, "we're really becoming major party animals, have you noticed that? It seems like almost every week we have a party of some kind. I'm glad they aren't all like this one though!"

Vinky nodded her head and said, "Yeah, I am pretty tired today. This was a big day. I'm glad it only comes once a year. I'd hate to have to repeat this kind of thing anytime soon."

"Uh . . . Vinky," said Vobble with the calendar in his talons, "We may be in trouble again. You might want to' look at this. You see this day in June? It says Father's Day! We'd better start planning now!"

The End

The Owlets Discover Letterboxing

"A . . . B . . . C . . . G . . . E . . . " Vobble rummaged through the box pulling out small items, lining them up and sticking them to Polez. "F . . . D . . . H . . . I . . ."

"Vobble? What are you doing?" Vinky queried. "Where did you get that box and what are those things in it?" Vobble looked up. "I found the box when I was practicing my flying," he replied.

"It was just sitting there on the side of the road. And just look . . . it's all full of letters! I think this must be one of those letterboxes that UncleVaca is always talking about." Vinky peeked into the box.

"Wow! That looks like fun. It's really neat how they stick to Polez like that. May I play letterboxing with you?" she asked. "Maybe if we take the box down to the yard, UncleVaca will play with us."

The two owlets gathered all the letters together, picked up the box in their talons and flew to the ground with it. They had just begun to pull out the letters again when a shadow fell over them.

They looked up and saw that it was Molly and she asked, "What are you doing?"

Then Vinky said, "We found a box on the side of the road!" Then Molly said, "For heavens sake's. Those are not for learning the alphabet. They are used to identify when you find a clue."

"A clue?" said Vinky and Vobble. "What's a clue?" Molly sighed, as mothers do . . . after all, Molly had yet another brood to teach flying and hunting, so she had little time for fun and gamez.

So the owlets spread the letters on the ground: S A R O L M M A. "Hmmm," they think, (especially Vinky who likes that think rhymes with Vinky, kinda) and wondered if it could be . . . Yes! Carlos' command center!

"S A R O L M M A? Carlos' command center? . . . Yes, we could go to Carlos' command center and have them help us."

So they took the box of letters and went to Carlos. Then Vinky dumped the letters on the ground to show Carlos. Carlos looked at them and said, "A S P M M E. "

"Oh . . . take a letter and put it in a box. Vinky chose T. Carlos told Vobble to choose a letter. Vobble chose G and put it in a box. Carlos had Vobble put his box under a tree and told Vinky to put his box in the grass. Carlos gave them letter C and told them to give it to someone as a clue to search. C was for Carlos.

Who could they give the clue letter to? Suddenly, they heard the sound of a Harley Davidson motorcycle behind the house, near the RV in the driveway. Dressed in a black T-shirt and jeans, with a black helmet and a pair of Austin's cool sunglasses, was the cool dude himself, VacaDude! "Hey, everbuddies! Am I late for the Letterboxing Adventure?"

"I heard you found a letterbox on the side of the road! Let me give you the basics. First, never remove a letterbox from where you find it. So, can you remember where you found it? We have to take it back!"

Vobble looked at Vinky and Carlos and Carlos said, "Quick put the letters back in the box - there will be another letterboxer looking for it! Vinky - Vobble - you have to remember where you got it from. Go kids go!" So they picked up the box and flew out of the yard with it - but then Vaca said . . .

"Wait, Vinky and Vobble, come back here! Let me use my one brain cell to help you remember where to take the letterbox!" So Vinky and Vobble flew back to the ground, carrying the letterbox in their towlonz. "Let's get on my computer and use Google Earth to determine the letter box's super secret location!"

Vinky and Vobble happily fluttered behind VacaDude, excited that they would get to use the computer. VacaDude spun the Google Earth in circles, disclosing the super secret letterbox location as high in a palm tree, in the sleeping quarters of M&M's third clutch.

Vinky and Vobble bounced up and down adorably, squealing, "this means we'll get to meet MYBB (Molly's Youngest Baby Boy) when we go to return the letter box." But then, VacaDude started to say . . .

Before the dude had a chance to speak, a large owl was headed to the palmz. "Who is that?" asked Vobble. "It looks like, oh it's . . . it's . . . "

Max!" As Max swooped into the palmz she said, "Vinky, Vobble, thanks so much for finding my box of letters! You know I could have owlets at any time and I want to be able to teach them the alphabet so they can speak to the two-leggers!"

The dude laughed and said, "Vinky and Vobble, this is not letterboxing, this is a box of letters!" "Well, now what will we do Uncle Vaca? We were just starting to have fun." moaned Vinky.

"Well," said VacaDude, "let's leave Max with her box of letters. I was just about to set out on a REAL letterboxing adventure. Would you like to come along?"

Vinky and Vobble were so excited they could hardly contain themselves. Vaca showed them the list of clues he had. The first said they had to go north on I-80 until they got to the 3rd exit. Then he gave them tiny helmets and fastened them securely inside a sturdy pouch attached to the motorcycle. With a deafening roar, they were off. Vaca sped down the highway toward Sacramento, and got off at the 3rd exit. But he no sooner got off the highway, than he heard a strange sound. He looked up into the sky to see a caravan of motley characters.

He was incredulous to see Mel and Syd and their teen owls, Ricky and Lucy and their clutch, Bonnie and Clyde and their youngins; Bear and Willow and their brood, as well as Glowz and Mockz. There were also Molly and McGee and their crew.

"What's going on here?" said Vaca. "Well," said Max, "we all wanted to learn the fine art of letterboxing."

"Ahhh," Max replies, "That is so cool." So they all sift through the letterbox once more and find B S A H A C. "Hmmm," they hiss, ponder and shriek. "I think I've got it!" cries Max! "The Casbah!" "Yayyyy!" they all shout and they decide to board a supersonic jet to Morocco where there are cobras, music, veils . . .

So Vaca, got all the owls, Glowz and Mockz together and they went to the airport - but then discovered they still only had Max's letter box! "Vinky, Vobble! We still don't have the right box! Where is it?" Max picked up the box and said, "No Vaca, it's not just the box of letters, I put the alphabet letters on top of OUR letterbox. So we DO have the correct box!"

"Whew!" said Vaca. "Well, let's go - everyone get in the plane." And so . . .

their journey to find a Letter Box had changed into one of putting a Letterbox somewhere in Casablanca for other Letterboxers to find. The jet took off from Sacramento Airport (near exit 3) - and flew directly over the setting sun. Through the window they noticed that the ocean waves were sparkling with the golden colors on some waves and silver on others.

One of the owlets was enjoying the beautiful, heavenly view when suddenly, he didn't feel so good . . . his tummy was queasy, so he quickly flapped over to the horkstation. Meanwhile, the flight attendantz were getting rather flustered at how the plane's carpet was accumulating many white spotz (because of the owlets' squirtz). Soon, it was mealtime! The owls and owlets had their choice of mousies, snake gravy, gecko gravy, gopherz, and ratz.

Vinky wondered if they had any honeysuckle juice? They were all very thirsty after their long trek. The stewardess said "Of course. This is a VacaJet. She handed out the honeysuckle juice with warm honeysuckle pie. "Oooooooo!" everyone said. Now everyone was starting to calm down and the stewardess handed out feather pillows for everyone to rest their heads on. Vobble was so full of snake gravy and buzzard biscuits he thought the plane was leaning to the left. The pilot came over the speakers and announced, "NO MORE FOOD." Suddenly, the plane started shaking and . . .

Max swooped into action, flying up to the cockpit to see how she could help. When Max got to First Class, she realized that she had missed that day's Pouncing Practice and took aim for one of the passenger's head.

Max's skilled talons grasped a long red wig and flew off with it, sneaking into the cockpit and depositing the wig on the navigator's head. Unfortunately, it did not help the pilot get the plane under control. It's a good thing Vaca brought along his steampunk rocketship. "Everbuddy" he yelled. "Get in my magic steampunk rocketship! I think if you all hork first that everyone will fit."

So the owls horked all the tasty treats they had just devoured, jumped into the steampunk rocket, and with Uncle Vaca at the helm, they zoomed off.

Vaca's rocket ship rapidly covered the remaining distance to Morocco. The rocket ship could land anywhere, so they were able to skip the airport and customs and all that silly stuff and go directly to the spot where the letterbox was supposed to be. They dropped it off and hurriedly reboarded, before

anything else unaccountably weird happened. But their efforts were in vain, because no sooner were they airborne, than Vaca suddenly realized that they had used twice as much fuel getting there than he had figured on. So they had to make an unexpected stop on an aircraft carrier in the Atlantic Ocean to beg for more fuel so they could get home. While they were waiting for the obliging naval captain to make arrangements for the refueling, they chatted with the crew.

VacaDude had a sudden thought, and after consulting his letterboxing clues, realized that there was a letterbox hidden on that very ship!! They carefully followed the clues and found the letterbox! VacaDude stamped his notebook, and marked the record book with his signature stamp. Then they happily took off and headed for home.

As soon as the rocket touched down on American soil again, Vaca, Vinky and Vobble jumped on the motorcycle and headed back up I-80 to finish their original letterbox adventure.

Vaca said, "Vobble, what the next instructions after the third exit?" Vobble read, "Three blocks north, then two blocks east, then four block north again. There's supposed to be a big tree there! There it is!!"

"Okay, now it says that the box is in a hole above the second branch from the bottom on the right. I'll fly up and check."

Vobble flew up and peeked into the hole. There WAS a box there. He pulled it out and flew back to the ground. They opened it and found a notebook and a stamp. The stamp had an OWL on it! They just knew they were meant to find this box.

The owlets each left a talon print in the notebook and Vaca stamped his special stamp. They left a message that read,

"We've traveled owl over and had some great fun.
We've found many friends and shared time in the sun.
We've shared our joys and our adventures too.
Thank you for being here and sharing with us too."

The End

The Owlets Put on a Show

"Vinky?" sighed Vobble. "I'm bored. It's been stormy and I haven't been able to play outside. I've run out of things to read. I've played all the games we have and worked all the crossword puzzles.

I can't even watch TV. Uncle Vaca has cable, but it's like 300 channels of nothing! "I saw a show about owls and those folks have never watched real owls. But anyway, I'm REALLY bored. What can we do?"

I don't know Vobble. I've been kinda' bored too. I wonder what other folks do to keep from getting bored? I'd bet the other owlets are looking for something to do, too. There's got to be something!"

Vobble tilted his head, as only owlets can do. "You know, I just thought of something. Uncle Vaca left an old movie on the other day and in it, some kids were putting on a show. We could do that!"

Vinky bobbed excitedly. "That's a great idea! I can dance. You can sing. We can get others too. We need some singers and someone to tell jokes and an emcee and dancers and scenery and costumes and . . .

of course a Carowlsel to spin us all around with spinning sparklers and fire shooting out. Vobble looked at Vinky thought, "Hmm, Vinky is getting a little out of control with that spinning thing."

"Why don't we ask Dude to get Johnny and The Horkerz to back us up and we can arrive on a stage in eggs like you know who . . . haha!"

"Hmm" said Vobble, "I hear that Mel is an eggcellent dancer, and McGee has great legs, do you suppose he can dance too?"

"We'll just have to ask them," Vinky said. "I think Zorro should be the emcee. And we should ask all the owlets we know to come and spin! Spinning owlets will look owlsome."

"Okay, Vinky! You can spin around, too! We can have Uncle Vaca and ChatterChopz tell jokes! They've got some great ones! We should include cardsfan, too! He can . . ."

Suddenly, Vobble remembered something. "Wait, Vinky! Don't you remember that VacaDude and VacaChick went on their anniversary trip to Bodega Bay? No one is here to help us organize all this! I think that Zorro would give us a hand with everything, but I think we need more help than that! You know who is great at putting on shows - Carlos, the Wizard of Owlz himself! Let's call Carlos and see if he will help!"

Vinky puts in a call to Carlos, but gets a dreaded voice mail message. "We have just taken off for our next RV adventure. Contact us in 3 weeks, please."

So Vinky says to Vobble, "That's it! We will do it ourselves!"

Vinky begins to run a few scales to warm up her voice and Vobble stretches his talonz to play accompaniment for her.

"Let's do a waltz and the gutz can dance!"

"Cool!"

And so they begin . . . hiss 2 3, hiss 2 3, hiss 2 3 . . .

Just then Vobble tripped on the gagshag, which brought up another decision to be made. "Where should we have our show?" asked Vobble. "We certainly can't have a show with dancing here!"

"Oh dear," said Vinky. "And Carlos and Donna are away, so we can't use a room in their house. But wait! We can have it outside in the garden!"

Vobble agreed that the garden would be a great idea. So now they just had to think of more acts. They thought for a while, and suddenly Vinky said...

"I know who we can ask to join our cast - Tauntz with his Magician Act : Tauntzowlholicmagica."

So Vinky and Vobble ran over to the patch below The Owl Box and hissed hissed for Tauntz to show up.

No Tauntz. They looked in the rabbit hole into the warren - no Tauntz. They flew around the outer perimeters of the Royal Playgrounds. No Tauntz. Now what do we do? And both Vinky and Vobble sat and cried into their talonz, when who appeared?

It was Molly, and seeing the owlets in distress, she asked what was wrong. When they explained she said, "Don't worry about Tauntz. Tauntz has gone to visit relatives. He heard that the carrots are especially tasty there. You said you don't have a joke teller yet? I know a joke.

" Knock Knock"

"Hoots There?"

"Owl."

"Owl who?"

"Owl be your valentine, if you'll be mine.... Hiss, Hiss"

Well, Vinky and Vobble laughed so hard, they . . .

horked up their dinner. They said, "Now I'm hungry again! We should sell refreshments! How about some snake and pigeon peas and buzzard and bird biscuits? And we have to have honeysuckle juice and worm juice! We can make lots of money to build more owl boxes!"

Molly was still there, watching Vinky and Vobble, especially after they had horked. She noticed that their eyes were getting sleepy, even as they discussed all these exciting plans.

Molly said, "Why don't you two take a nap. I will stay outside on the Fledge Ledge and guard the box while you sleep and dream more about your Big Show!"

Vinky looked at Vobble and said, "I am tired, but I want the North Corner to sleep in!" Vinky flapped her wingz a bit to move Vobble over and pushed her way into their favorite corner while Vobble exclaimed, "No!"

But they soon drowsed off to sleep, each in his and her favorite corners.

Meanwhile . . . "da da da dummmm!!!"

Molly said, "McGee! Come here please!" McGee flew right in across the moon. Molly pulled out a long black wig and a sparkly, skimpy long dress. McGee said, "WOW!" and he donned a black moustache and funky black hair and they form a duo! Guess who, hooooooo???

That's right! I think you've got it! Sunny and Cher!!!

Quietly. so they won't wake up Vinky and Vobble, Molly and McGee work up an act they've been thinking about for a long time, but kept putting off. Interspersing funny jokes with song and dance routines, they created a hilarious act to add to the show. They decided to make it a surprise, so by the time the owlets woke up, they had whisked off their costumes and stashed them under the gag shag.

Vobble woke up with a head whirling with ideas for the show. "You know what?" he said. "I think we need a high wire act! We'll have Glowz spin us a net, to be sure no one gets hurt, and then we can . . .

put up the Carowlsel below while everyone is looking up at Glowz and then Tauntz can wear his coat tails and hat, hop up on the Carowlsel and do magica for all.

But, said Vinky, we can't find Tauntz. Molly saw their disappointment again and said, let's fly out and find Tauntz. So they all took off from the ledge and scoured the palms looking for Tauntz. On their way Vinky banged into a wind chime in the Royal backyard. Then Vobble smacked his head on a foreign gong Carlos had purchased. "Ouch!" they cried, and Molly . . .

said, "are you okay?" Vinky and Vobble shook their heads and decided they should look where they are going instead of looking for Tauntz. "Don't worry owlets, McGee and I have lots of talonent and are ready to put on a show for all."

Then Tauntz appeared from under the fence. He was so full of carrots (but not Kyle) that he could barely squeeze through. The owlets asked if he would help with the show. "Sure, I have some wonderful things in my magica hat."

So Tauntz grabbed his hat, waved the last carrot over it magically, and pulled out . . .

more carrots!! Then he reached back in and out came a honeysuckle pie and some wonderful green honeycakes for everyone!

It was time for the show to start! Zorro stepped out on stage and said . . .

"Now that we are gathered together, I see our dear Molly and McGee, Tauntz, Glowz (listening nearby on the Lenz), Polez and Boltz (spying), Mockz and the Birdz (on the roof), Glimmerz (camera lenz watching), and anyone else who

might be here in the Royal Gardens, I would like to introduce the Producers and Stars of our Show, Vinky and Vobble!

Just as Vinky and Vobble got up to bow, suddenly, Tauntz waved his wand over the hat once more and out comes a tiny, teeny man. Is it . . . the DUDE??

Yes! It is! He has pulled a guy out of the hat! The guy said, "You will not believe what I have for you all! Tiny, teeny tickets for a ride to the moon on the steampunk rocket! We have rides now too!"

With another wave of his wand, Tauntz shrunk everyone so small that they all fit easily into the steampunk rocket.

The rocket took off with a roar, and they were on their way! What an adventure! On the way they passed the International Space Station and waved to the Space Shuttle astronauts, who were out on a repair assignment. They circle the moon twice, and then head back to Earth. All during the flight, MiniVaca is telling them about all the wondrous sights. At last, when they are about to land in the Royals' back yard, they see...

an overflow crowd! Everyone in the owl world and all the Ustream chatters had shown up for the show. They were stomping and hollering impatiently. The owlets and their friends

went immediately into action. There were songs and dances and jokes and skits and so much entertainment that one could hardly draw a breath!

The show went beautifully and closed to thunderous applause. The crowd called for encore after encore! They were a hit! Each character had played their part to perfection

and all agreed that this was something that they just HAD to do again! No wonder all those old movies were so popular! This was fun!!! Maybe next time they could Austin to film it! And put it on Ustream! A whole new career for everyone!

But then Molly looked at them and said in her most motherly tone, "My dears, we are owls. And as owls, we have a higher calling. We must fulfill our destiny.

Owls are of course one of the higher life forms, as we all know. We are here to share wisdom and joy and love and to populate the world wherever we can!

Now, I must be off!

There is an owl box with my name on it, just waiting to be filled again!

The End

Vinky and Vobble Decide to Hold a Cookout

"Vobble!!! Our neighborhood is on fire!!! There are fires and smoke all over the place! Call Uncle Vaca! Call the fire department! Get buckets! Get water! Get sand! We can't let the whole neighborhood burn!"

"On fire? What do you mean?" Vobble asked. Vinky shrieked again, "Just look. Fires everywhere and no one's doing anything. They're just standing there looking at them! It's up to us to save everyone!"

Vobble, for once the sensible one, said, "Vinky, there's got to be some explanation. Before we get too excited, let's find out more about it. Look! Uncle Vaca's in his backyard and he's got a fire there too."

"He'll be able to tell us what's going on. Just don't panic!" With that, the two owlets flew down and each perched on one of VacaDude's shoulders. They asked, "What are you doing and what's with the fires?"

The Dude replied . . .

"It's a big holiday today. This is how humans celebrate." "By setting everything on fire?" said Vinky with amazement. VacaDude laughed. "No, by cooking our food outside."

Vinky didn't think much of the idea of cooked food, but she was open-minded and wanted to give it a chance. "How does cooked food taste?" she asked?

Vobble shook his head and said, "I have no idea. I mean, I really have NO idea! What are those two-leggers thinking?"

"I guess we'll have to try it to see if we like it," said Vinky. Then both looked at each and started to laugh. "Let's go to the Royal Gardens. They have one of those fire pans."

When they arrived, Austin was hard at work at the fire pan. They asked, "What is wrong with you two-leggers - making your food hot? Are you crazy!?" Austin explained, "You guys like CC's cafe stuff, right?"

Most of her stuff is cooked. For instance . . . snake gravy. That is cooked. Vinky started to spit and mutter, "Yuk yuk yuk . . . You should never have told me. You two-leggers have strange customs! And the honeysuckle pie . . . HA! You can't tell me you cook that too!"

Austin replied, "This is done in an oven."

Vinky and Vobble were beside themselves. Just then Carlos came out with . . .

a huge platter loaded with food. "What are those? asked Vinky. "Why, these are hot dogs, Vinky. America's favorite food, after bacon and Nutella, of course," replied Carlos.

"Hot DOGS?? Like the ones on the other side of the fence? Only cooked!?"

"On no," chuckled Carlos. "These are ground up meat in a tube, and they are delicious!"

"Well," thought Vinky as she turned her head full circle to get a good look at them. "Are they filled with gopher?"

"Well, not really . . . " said Carlos, trying not to laugh too hard. "Try it, you might like it."

"I don't know, Carlos," Vinky replied. "Well, what are those other things over there on the platter?"

"That is salad," Carlos said. Well, THAT didn't come from the fire things, so Vinky and Vobble decided to fly back to Vaca's to ask him about salad. So, after flying over lots of yards with fire things, they landed at Vaca's and noticed him drawing. So they asked what he was drawing.

Vaca said he was drawing a sketch of the barbecue because it was special to him. It was his fathers and he cooked on it on special days like today. So they asked about salads and Vaca said that they were uncooked veggies and that people ate them when they barbecued.

Everybody eats uncooked vegetables. Vinky said, "There are things that two leggers eat that we eat too . . . like, rabbit. But we never cooked one. Do two

-leggers eat frogs?

I made up some frog burgers but never cooked them. Let's see if Austin would cook them."

Austin put them on the grill and frogs started jumping . . . all over the frying pan. Everyone was laughing. Finally the frogs stopped jumping.

Austin was looking a little pale. "You didn't tell me they were still alive!" he said.

Meanwhile, more salads were appearing along with other dishes, like baked beans. Donna brought out some ears of corn and Austin put them on his grill as soon as he had cleared off the barbecued frogs.

People kept arriving, until there was quite a crowd. Glowz bought some tasty flies, which she asked VacaDude to toast lightly for her. Tauntz came with his special recipe for field greens salad.

It's looked like it was going to be a great cook-out, but suddenly dark clouds gathered and . . .

Tauntz wanted to try BBQ carrots so they put carrots on the grill. Mocks flew down and wanted to BBQ some worms. Cassie and Jackson, not wanting to be left out wanted to BBQ their bones. This was turning into a real Family BBQ. All the gang was there . . . almost. Who was missing?

Just as Molly and McGee flew up and everyone thought all had arrived, the storm broke! The dark clouds let loose with lightning and thunder.

"Oh NO!" said Vinky as the two-leggers started covering their heads with newspapers and running with food back to the house. "Now we'll never get to see a proper cookout!"

"Don't fret, Vinky," said Vobble (the sensible one), "we now know how it's done! And we can go back to Vaca's backyard in Northern California and have our own!"

Vinky was tired of flying back and forth but felt that was a good idea, so they

flew back and their feathers dried out as they got to sunny Vacaville. VacaDude had finished the drawing and had it up. He looked at the bedraggled owlets and said sympathetically, "You must be famished. Here . . . have an uncooked hot dog." Vinky swallowed it whole while Vobble thanked Vaca for his kindness. Then . . .

Vinky looked up at the VacaDrawing and started to laugh so hard she fell over on the ground with half a hot dog still in her beak.

"What's so funny?" asked Vobble. "Look!" said Vinky. And there was the drawing of Dude's Dad's Barbecue Pit and next to it was a drawing of Ashley in the Tutu stage with a barbecue fire on her tummy and little wheels on her legs. "Oh, Dude!" the two of them burst out. "You are amazing and ever so funny."

Vaca looked down at them, smiling, when suddenly, Zorro zipped by them and they . . .

all stopped laughing. Zorro was zipping this way and that. "Fire! Fire! Fire! Someone do something quick!" And Vinky and Vobble and Vaca all started laughing again.

Zorro said, "How can you laugh at this fire?" Vinky and Vobble just said, "Here we go again."

They sat Zorro down and told him of their story of how they learned of this two-legger tradition of cooking outside. They all sat around eating and laughing. Vaca told them that MAYBE someone special may show up and they all agreed that the more, the merrier. Just then . . .

Zorro had an idea. "Vaca," he said, "Can you cook me one of those cheezeburgers, without the burger?"

"OK," Vaca replied. "Oh, look! It's Zorrina! Would you like to join us for burgerless cheezeburgers?" asked Zorro.

Zorrina, dressed in her best red rat dress, looked stunning to Zorro. "Oh, yes, Zorro! And may I have ketchup on mine?" Zorrina replied, batting her long rat eyelashes at Zorro.

Vinky was thrilled to see Zorrina and all the Owl box friends at their barbecue. She and Vobble built their own out of sticks and were pretending to cook the Vole they had caught. All that was left was the flag and Vobble had snagged one from Donna's lemonade glass while she under the mimosa tree, so they stuck the flag next to their very own pretend barbecue and . . .

just then, VacaDude heard the doorbell. It was CC!!! She brought spinach, artichokes, gopher pizza. She put Brussel Sprouts on the grill, but they fell through and burned up!

Just then, Mary, the VacaChick, came out with cold raspberry honeysuckle juice for everyone. She poured some on leaves for the neighboring birds and everyone was happy.

It was then that the sky started to darken in Vacaville. "Oh, NO!" thought Vaca. "Not rain." He looked up and couldn't believe his eyes. The sky was filled with all the owls from all the owl boxes with Molly and McGee in the lead!

They had come to have a BBQ with Vaca since it was still raining in San Marcos. They didn't come empty handed, though. They brought gophers, rats and mice to the BBQ.

(Zorro the mice were no relation to you.) They had brought something else too. What was that on Wesley's back? Tauntz! And bringing up the rear was Mockz. It was then that Kyle . . .

rolled in (it's hard for carrots to get around any other way). He eyed Tauntz warily, but decided that Tauntz appeared to have ample provisions of his own. Still, he positioned himself on the opposite side of the group. He noticed with pride that he appeared to be the only root vegetable present.

All the delicious food appeared to be cooked - or not cooked, as the case may be. Everyone loaded up their plates with the food they liked best. Some were even brave enough to try foods they didn't think they would like. All was going well, until suddenly VacaDude remember that . . .

He and VacaChick had tickets to the opera for tonight! They had to leave NOW! They asked their guests to make themselves at home and enjoy themselves until he returned.

After all the clutter had been cleared away and all the leftovers had been stashed in the fridge (or the pantry), they all sat back and looked up at the emerging stars and enjoyed the sounds of the night.

All around them were the sounds of frogs croaking and crickets chirping and children squeezing in just a few more minutes of playtime in the last remaining bit of light.

Everyone was stuffed! (Especially Zorro!) It had been a great day! The owlets had learned much, much more about two-legger customs (and they were pretty sure that the two-leggers were even more weird than they had guessed.)

They still weren't sure about this strange idea of cooked food, but they did admit, however, that they DID like the things they had tried, especially the hot dogs. They kinda' tasted like gopher tails!

Vinky turned to Vobble and said, "It just doesn't get much better than this. Good food, good times and lots of good company. Do you think Vaca would let us do this every weekend?"

Vobble, again surprising with his sensibility, replied, "Vinky, if we do it every weekend, it won't be special anymore. Besides, I think we've got some other great adventures in store for us each weekend. Just wait and see!"

The End

Graduation Time!

"Vinky! Look at this! Have you ever seen anything so silly in your whole life? The two-leggers in this picture have on the silliest outfits! They've got on long robes that cover everything.

And look - they've got a board on their heads! And look at those little things dangling in their faces. What would make them want to dress like that?"

"Let me see that! Why would anyone wear a board on their head?" Vinky grabbed the newspaper that Vobble had been holding and looked at the picture. "WOW! That's our friend Austin!

And you're right! He IS wearing a board on his head! "Let's see what this says. Hmm - it says that Austin and these two-leggers are graduating, whatever that is.

I guess we need to ask Uncle Vaca about it. I wonder if owls ever graduate? I don't remember others taking about it, but it looks exciting. Maybe we could graduate some day too."

Vobble grabbed the paper back. "It says here that the two-leggers who are graduating get scholarships and gifts! I don't know what a scholarship is, but I like getting gifts! I want to graduate!!!

But I do NOT want to wear a board! Let's go talk to Uncle Vaca about this!" With that the two young owlets flew off in search of Vaca, that wonderful magi who knows all.

Vinky and Vobble found Uncle Vaca sitting in his woodshed shaking his head and crying out loudly, "Oh dratters and fuzzy sprinkled crumpets! I'll never get this to work!"

Vobble looked at Vinky with his beak wide open? Vinky looked back and they both burst into guffaws of laughter.

"Uncle Vaca? What is wrong?" they both asked.

And Uncle Vaca pointed down on the floor at the wood boards laying at his

feet and . . .

The wood reminded Vinky of boards that the two leggers wore on their head for graduation. Vinky said, "Uncle Vaca, the wood reminds me of Austin and the other two-leggers doing something called graduation. They wear boards on top of their heads."

Vobble said, "Graduation? Seems to me it's like when we learn to fly. If we zoom across the field and don't crash, and Molly says we passed then . . . that is kinda like the two-leggers' graduation."

Vinky said, "Duh! We don't crash . . . fall a little bit, but never crash."

Vobble said, "Well . . . if you do something GREAT and it benefits everyone else, then it is time for celebration and the two-leggers celebrate this occasion. Kinda like when you catch your first vole, we celebrate. Let's just watch these strange two-leggers and see what happens next. They can be so funny some times.

And just then . . . wobble wobble wobble . . . here comes Carlos . . .

What is he doing???

He is planning a graduation for all the fledged owlets! First Donna designs a new costume fitting for them. The girls have floral wreaths on their heads and the boys wear fedoras.

Carlos finds an "Eat Me" cookie and becomes miniaturized again! He stands on the platform as he calls out their names proudly. Beaming, they shake wing and hand.

"Well," says Vaca, "that sounds like a great plan! Let me see how I can help Carlos with this platform."

Vaca scooped up all the boards he threw on the floor and started arranging them so that they made stair steps to the platform, easy for pouncing up and back down.

"But wait!" exclaimed Vaca. "Austin's graduating class has a top student called a Valedictorian! Who is going to be in that position?"

Donna stuck her head out the door and said, "Vinky can be the Vowledictorian because I saw her swooping through the air and making a perfect landing on top of the box! In addition to that Vobble can be . . ."

Sowlutatorian."

Vobble replied, "Oh thank you! But, what do I do? Do I get money? Do I get to go to school?"

Vinky looked at Vobble and said, "Remember when Mom tested us and you aced it and she gave you some of CC gopher chops and snake gravy? That was Mom's way of saying happy graduation! You work hard and learn lots and . . .

and . . . I love you!" Vinky and Vobble were so busy discussing all the intricacies of graduation, that they were off in their own world. It was so quiet outside that Vinky suddenly realized that they were all alone. "Where did everyone go!?" Vinky exclaimed. Vobble tilted his head one way and then the other and out of the corner of his eye he noticed the newspaper again.

Suddenly Vobble realized that what he was seeing in the paper was a photograph of Austin receiving a special award for making the DVD of Molly and McGee's first owlet family. He showed it to Vinky, who said that it was wonderful to see how much the two-leggers appreciated Austin and the owls. But meanwhile, where was everyone? All of a sudden there was a loud crash! The owlets jumped and then . . .

Vinky and Vobble looked out after the loud noise scared them. Then they heard a cough cough splut splut from the bushes. Looking down they saw Tauntz carrying off Kyle.

"Wait! Wait, Tauntz!" But it was too late. Tauntz took him into his wabbit warren.

Vinky flew over to the hole. "Tauntz? Remember our special CarlosDonnaAustin Covenant? We don't eat friends, ok! We just don't."

Vinky heard Tauntz laughing. "Eat 'im? LOL! I was saving Kyle from that big Hawk! He was gonna swoop down, pick up Kyle, and use him to open the bluebird box!!"

Fortunately, Vinky prevented some serious circumstances - Kyle being

demolished, if not out right destroyed. The news spread about Vinky's sharp eyesight and quick action to prevent the demise of Kyle. Kyle was so grateful that he did not know how to sufficiently repay Vinky.

Vobble, aware of the facts, suggested to Kyle that he nominate Vinky for an award during the graduation ceremonies. It was important to keep this a surprise from Vinky.

With all the confusion, it was hard to tell who was saving whom. Tauntz and Vinky were both working together only to find out that it was a great surprise for Kyle. Austin, Carlos and Vaca had prepared a surprise for Kyle . . . a graduation of sorts. Vinky and Vobble were just now catching on to this two-legged tradition.

It was decided that of all the folks, rooties, fowl, ani-mules of sorts that Kyle was the one that kept his "roots" and was very, very valuable to the community and that he should get some type of award.

Vobble said, "Think about it. Kyle has stuck by ALL of us. Beautiful, smart and a communications expert between ALL of us. He is as good, if not better than Arnie Swartz-owl-negger. He has gone from a baby root to a wonderful full grown carrot. A diploma of AFWIVC World of Amazement. (All Folks Welcome in VacaChats). At that point a roar of praise erupted and then . . .

"Okay," said the 'powers that be'. "Hmmmm. We think there are three winners here . . . Kyle, Austin AND Vinky. And there is a great prize. They all get to go down to San Francisco and be supernumeraries in the opera "Lohengrin," complete with costumes. They get to hang out in the green room for hours when they are not on and meet other owls, humanz and carrots and find mates of their own to start new families. "WOW!!" they say. "Thanks!"

"WOW! What a graduation present!" exclaimed the three in unison. Just then, they heard another commotion outside. Carefully peering out of the box, they saw Carlos, Donna, Austin and all their friends gathering in the garden for the graduation ceremony. Glowz brought her offering to the celebration.

She had sparkling ropes (webz) to hang around their necks in honor of their accomplishments. CC and all her chief chefs brought many amazing dishes to eat after the ceremony.

The graduates were dressed in their beautiful wabbit wobes . . . robes and

were ready for the descent and prowlcession. Carlos stood up as announcer.

They were in formation and decide to do a loopy loop. Carlos and Donna grabbed their umbrellas and opened them knowing that something would drop from the sky besides just feathers. Then all of a sudden, confetti was everywhere and . . .

everyone laughed out loud and hugged each other and shouted, "Gee this is fun! And, we are a part of it!".

VacaDude signaled to Vinky and Vobble to step off the stage and join him in the Royal Garden at the picnic table. He said, with a tear in his eye, "I am so proud of the two of you. Making it to graduation and all. I want to give you a special gift."

He stood up and told Vinky and Vobble to stand up and close their eyes and hold out their wings.

Gently he placed a new original mug with "VacaVille Owl Box - Graduating Class * Spring 2011" with the best drawings of Vinky and Vobble on the front with each of their wing tips touching.

All the guests oohed and aahed with admiration, and Vinky and Vobble threw their wings around Vaca in their delight! Vobble said, "I had no idea gradowlation would be so wonderful!"

Vinky said, "And now we're gradowlates!" Everyone applauded, and then Austin was given his special award, amid tumultuous applause. Last of all, Kyle and Tauntz were given Special Recognition awards (the hawk, however, received no award at all).

But just when everyone thought the wonderful ceremony was over, Kyle . . .

stepped up to the microphone and said, "I just want to thank all of you who made the effort to "turn up" and "root" for us. We couldn't have done it without your support.

Once again, as always, the guests danced and ate and sang and partied until there was no party left in any of them. They each made their way home, full of joy, laughter and good food.

Vinky and Vobble sat back, looking proudly at the framed diplomas hanging on the wall of their box. They were still in awe and so touched by the ceremony. Who could have known?

They knew this would be a day they would never, ever forget. Could anything ever top it? They read the words on the parchment again. The diplomas read,

"For completion of the requirements set forth by the Royal Tyto Alba Board of Edowlcation and for extraordinary service above and beyond that expected of a young owlet,

we hereby award this Diploma and Award of Meritorious Service. Let it be know to all - avian, mammalian, flora and fauna alike, that Vinky and Vobble are hereby recognized as . . .

Full Members of the Royal Order of Tyto Alban Heroes."

The End

Vinky Tries Out Steam Punk

"Vobble! Vobble! Look! Look at what I found! I was out flying around and saw something sparkling and shiny in the grass. I just HAD to fly down and check it out. It's just too totally awesome!"

"What is it?" Vobble was vobbling excitedly. "Let me see! Let me see!" Vinky held a round object dangling from a broken chain. "Oooooo!" Vobble cooed. "It's a two-legger time-thingy! It's so pretty!"

Vinky nodded. "And what's even cooler is the other side. Look! The back is missing and some of the parts are loose. See? I can take them out and use them to make things or decorate myself!"

"Oh, wow!" Vobble hollered. "You look just like that owl hanging on the wall in Uncle Vaca's office! He calls him Mechie, but you don't want to look like HIM! Uncle Vaca says he's a real PUNK!"

"But I like it!" Vinky whined. "That owl looks really neat. If Mechie is such a bad punk kinda' dude, why does Uncle Vaca like him so much? Maybe it's something else we need to ask him about.

With that, the two inquisitive owlets flew off to find VacaDude and ask him to again shed some light on yet another oddity of two-legger life.

As the flew along, the time-thingie began to whirr and buzz. Vinky and Vobble looked at each other, puzzled. Suddenly a giant time-vortex opened up in front of them, and despite their attempts to avoid it, they tumbled into the wormhole. Then . . .

they hissed in fright, spinning and spinning further and further in the darkness. Suddenly, everything stopped and they hit the ground hard with a plop.

They looked around at the pink sky, and Vinky cried, "Uncle Vaca, where are you? Where are we? This doesn't look like home."

"This is NOT Kansas. There are three moons, no grass (like Arizona) and walking seems soft," Vinky said. "I don't think there is a CC's Cafe anywhere near."

Vobble said, "Forget that. Where'd we park? I don't remember driving. How do we get back?"

Vinky said, "Let's wait. Let's look all around and see what's here . . . WHAT WAS THAT?" A weird sound was coming from . . .

over that hill. Vinky and Vobble slowly walked in the soft ground and their talons looked like they were covered in - of all things - GagShag.

"Let's try and fly a little, Vinky!" Vobble said. "It might be easier than walking. We don't really walk much, now do we?!"

Flap, flap, flap. Nothing happened at first and then . . . Up, up and away they went until they were flying right over a big moon-like crater! In the center was a building that looked like a geodesic dome. There was movement they could tell thru the windows.

Vinky said, "It's warm here but over there it's hot. How can that be?"

They flew over to the other side and indeed it was colder. "I'm gonna tap on the window," said Vinky. Surely someone can explain what's going on here."

Then this two-legger came and let them in this weird structure. His name was SOLRAC. He looked just like Carlos . . . but somehow different.

Everything seemed reversed. Solrac talked. They noticed it was backwards. Then in walked Annod, his wife and wouldn't you know . . .

she was walking backwards! Vinky bravely walked up to them and said, "Hello, we are Vinky and Vobble from Earth. We don't understand what's going on here. Can you explain it to us?"

But instead of answering, Annod said something to Solrac, and then walked backwards out of the room! And Solrac backed up to a chair and sat down. Vinky and Vobble were mystified and crept quietly out of the house. Vobble looked at Vinky and said "Are you thinking what I'm thinking?"

"Yeah," said Vinky. "Everything in there happened exactly backwards." Vobble said, "Do you suppose that somehow TIME is going backward here? Vinky looked stunned, then stammered . . .

"It could be. Let me see what the time-thingie says." Vinky turned it over, and it hissed and clunked loudly. "Yup! It's going backwards alright."

As they moved away from the dome, they saw another building that had a big machine in it. As they got closer, they saw it was a giant balloon! And it had to be tied to the ground to keep it from flying away. And just as they got close to it, someone emerged from behind it. It was VacaDude!

He said "what are YOU guys doing HERE?"

"Uncle Vaca," cried Vinky. "We are so glad you are here! But where is here? Where are we?"

"This is the world of Steampunk, and we're in Backwards town, I can tell by the pink sky."

"Oh, Vaca, please take us home," Vobble pleaded. "This gagshag just doesn't feel right, and the color is not quite right either."

"I don't think my Dudeballoon will carry all of us. You need to go back into the geodome and look for the steampunk rocketship."



So Vobble and Vinky went back to the geodome, and . . .

they almost got there, but then Vaca realized they were going forwards! They'd have to go backwards to get there! After all this was Backwards Town! If they go forwards, then when they got to the ship it wouldn't be built yet!

So Vaca said . . .

"If we go forwards, we might crash. If we go backwards we may land ok."

Just then the moons changed color to purple. Vobble said, "Let's go stand where we were. Just then a clock-looking-thing with gears appeared and then the guys walk towards the gear and suddenly . . .

they were transported back home, like nothing had ever happened. But, Vinky looked at Vobble, and Vobble looked at Vinky, and they both looked at their pink gagshag covered talons and said in unison "I'm hungry!" Let's try this Steampunk thing again while we are eating something!"

So Vinky and Vobble called CC's cafe, for a quick delivery by cardsfan who was on delivery duty that day. They ordered "Steampunk Chinese dumplings" for delivery.

When cardsfan arrived, they invited him in. As he parked his bike, Vobble thought to himself, "That wheel would make a great Steampunk Lazy Susan! Let's eat!"

So in came the fried food, along with gopher chops and enough snake gravy to feed Southern California. Vaca and Vobble and Vinky were sitting there trying to figure what happened. There were gears, pink soft stuff, "shadows," things that didn't seem should work but were working just fine. Music . . . how in the world did they do that?

Amazing . . . feeling . . . peace . . . the love that could not be explained . . . no harm no foul . . . but reversed somehow . . . beautiful . . . just be-YOO-tiful.

Vobble said, "Let's do it again. Let's go back and discover the . . .

secret to how time can run backward. It's hard to even think about it! But I'm not really sure I want to go back - what if we got sent way back in time and couldn't get home?"

Vinky thought for a bit, and then said, "Well, we don't HAVE to go. We could stay here instead and ask Uncle Vaca to tell us more about Steampunk."

"That would be fun, all right, but I have an even better idea - let's ask Uncle Vaca to explain to us how time can go backward!" said Vobble.

"Oh, that's a super idea!"

So they ran as fast as their talons could carry them over to Vaca and breathlessly asked their question. And Vaca answered . . .

"Well, you see, it's all a part of the dodecahedron analysis of the time-space continuum and then you have to take into consideration the speed of light and sound and the atmospheric conditions and . . . "

Vinky and Vobble said, "Never mind. We don't wanna' know THAT badly!" and returned to their box to contemplate their adventures.

Vinky and Vobble settled in for their good day's sleep, glad to be back in a land with blue skies, only one moon, and green grass all around. At least here things were going in the right direction!

Vinky said, "Vobble, I don't know what that thing we found is, but I'm not sure I wanna mess with it anymore. I don't think I wanna use the parts to decorate with either!"

"If I put them on myself, there's no telling what they could make me do! Or what they could turn me into! I don't think I wanna' walk backwards all my life and be called Ynkiv forever."

Vobble answered, "You think THAT's bad! How would you like to answer to Elbbov?? Besides, we gave that time-thingy to EdudAcav, didn't we? I wonder what he'll make out of it."

But I just thought of something! We never did find out why that owl in his office is such a Punk and why he likes him so much and why he has metal stuff all over him and why . . .

Oh well, we've got lots more time to ask THOSE questions!"

The End

What Should We Give Daddy?

Vinky and Vobble were disconsolate. They'd been trying for weeks to find the perfect gift for their Daddy for Father's Day.

Vinky said, "Vobble, none of these things seem quite right. Sometimes I feel like we don't know Daddy all that well. We really only see him when he shows up each night with food. But, even so, all those gifts we found on the internet just aren't it."

Vobble nodded vigorously. "You're right! We've looked on every site imaginable at all the things that Daddy's usually get on Father's Day. Somehow I just can't see Daddy wearing a necktie. I really don't understand why ANYONE would wear one. They just don't look comfortable at all! And those power drills look really awesome, but I just don't know how he could ever use one."

"I know," Vinky said. "He might like a big grill but I don't know how we'd get it home or how it would fit in the palm tree. I just don't know what would be a good gift. There's got to be something!"

The owlets sat back in dejection, staring at the walls, thinking. Then, suddenly, Vobble sat up and said . . .

"You know, Daddy has always been there for us. He has nurtured us behind the scenes and always provided food when we needed it. He watched us carefully as we fledged - and we only heard a few squawks when he disapproved of something we were doing.

We don't need eBay, or amazon. I think we should give him a surprise "Thank you, Daddy" party. We could compose and sing an owlet quartet perform just for him and Mommy.

We could even scavenger for some large palm leaves and make party hats. I'll bet we could enlist some of those marvelous chatters to contribute some delicious food, like snake stew, and maybe some bunny ear cupcakes drenched in worm juice.

What a delightful party that would be. Noise makers??? Absolutely, we could even . . .

Vinky and Vobble looked at each and began to laugh. "Haven't we been doing a lot of big events this spring? Wow! We could form an OwlYaWantEvent Company!"

"Not a bad idea," said Vinky. "Let's do it and kick the season off with the party for Daddy."

Vinky and Vobble put their heads together once more and decide on a terrific gift - owl pajamas. Dior of course, for Daddy. Then they decide to have a pajama party. But how will they perform a quartet with only a duo?

"Ahhh," Vinky and Vobble say simultaneously, like all great thinkers. "We can enlist Mary. She is an opera singer. A soprano, I think!"

"OK," they decide, "but who is the fourth? Oh well, we can go to San Francisco and get a supernumerary as an understudy."

"Well, I think Johnny from Johnny and the Horkerz might be a great fourth for our quartet" mused Vinky.

"Wait a minute!" Vobble startled Vinky who was in the hammock as well, "What about our two-legger Grampa Carlos?" Do you think he'll come to our party?"

"Gee Vobble" she replied, "Should we get him a gift? Maybe a two legger gift like a tie?"

Vinky and Vobble flew to Carlos' house and Molly was picking out different materials to make McGee a bib.

She said, "What brings you to San Marcos?"

"We were going to ask Carlos about owl PJs?"

Molly said, "Carlos is cooking snake gravy and gopher chops, so maybe you should ask Donna."

Donna suggested that they make something more suited for owls. "Why not gather sticks and wood pulp and make a wicker basket?"

Then all of a sudden . . .

Vinky spotted a really big, big book on Donna's kitchen table. "Look, Vobble!"

That book says on the front that it is the Molly Watcher's Cookbook! Let's see what's inside! Look at that big pot on the cover with a delicious tiny mouse (my favorite appetizer) - I'm getting hungry now."

Vobble said, "Let's flap our wings and see what page opens up!"

Vinky looked at Vobble and smiled a big soft smile. "That sounds like fun". They both started flapping their wings, and the pages started flipping and flapping and opened up to page 305.

"Look at that!" There is a picture of one of us sitting on the dock of the lake fishing and our dear VacaDude drew that!" He needs a Daddy's gift, too. Let's take him fishing!"

All of a sudden, out of nowhere poofs in Martha Stewart. "Fishing is a lovely idea, but you also need a gift that lasts," she said. "I've always been partial to matching tOWL, sets, with monograms, of course."

Vinky and Vobble looked at each other in great eggcitement! "Who will do the monogramming, though," they thought, "and what would they look like??"

"Well," Vinky said, "monograms are woven with cloth similar to how we weave nests. We could make the monograms ourselves. Martha said that she has material that looked like grass and we could use that to weave into the sides of wicker baskets. Just then Austin showed up and thought, if you want the gift to last . . .

"I have an idea. I could shellac the baskets after you weave the monograms. We could also line the inside with your feathers and possibly some cleaner parts of your gagshag."

Martha supplied handkerchiefs for the side of the basket, Vinky and Vobble used the grassy material to monogram the letters in the side.

Then VacaDude showed up. "Wait a minute, gutz! For the finishing touch you could use some of my . . .

sculptering clay to make a bow for the handle of the basket. That should finish the basket. I also thought maybe we could make a pocket on the bib so that when McGee hunts he could bring back more than one treat at a time for us?" Just then Austin, Carlos' grandson, came in. He said, "Carlos has taught me so

much that I would like to contribute to the party. I will make a video of the party! Talk about a gift that will last!" Austin laughed with delight. The details of the party were coming together and everyone was thinking about what to add.

"Yeah, Austin. You rock! AND You can be one of our quartet members! I know!" said CC. "We could get TheDaddyBird to rustle up one of his delicious concoctions."

Vinky looked at Vobble and said, "So we're pretty well set now? A fishing party at the lake, honoring both Daddy McGee and Daddy VacaDude with Carlos and Donna bringing lawn chairs, Martha's monogrammed tOWLs, and fishing bait in the lovely monogrammed wicker basket. Hey, wait a minute, I don't think we can let fish take our worms! We'll feast on the worms and use stale bread from McGee's bib for the fishing bait. Maybe share the worms with elsa. In any case, we should definitely invite everyone to join in."

Now that all the plans were coming together, Vinky and Vobble strutted out onto the pier holding microphones and calling, "Deet Deet! Your attention Pleasssse!"

"We want to present our new song to father's everywhere. Strike up the band, Johnny!"

Father's come and fathers go
but the best of all are the ones who show . . .
da da dum,
us the way to go and grow.

The band kept playing while McGee and VacaDude shook their heads and groaned, "Oh NO!"

Having heard that lovely tune with lyrics by twoclubs, they all piled into a little boat and went for a ride until they spied a grotto.

"Let's go in there," they said. So they entered the cool, dark grotto and found a secret exit! An beyond the exit there was a . . . a . . . a . . . what??

A steampunk rocket ship! So they all carefully made the transfer from dinghy to rocket and with a loud roar, the ship took off higher and higher. Everyone's ears were popping. Then the ship leveled out and you could see San Marcos

and the shoreline of California. VacaDude and Carlos started to get a little nervous. Just then, fireworks went off! They were very colorful and spelled out "Happy Pappy Day!"

The ship started to return when suddenly some booster rockets fired up! "Surprise!" said Vinky. "We are going on a little side trip, just something special for our dear VacaDude." ChatterChopz appeared from the front cargo area of the Steampunk Rocket with a tray of chilled honeysuckle juice for all.

Just as quickly as the rockets fired up, they arrived on the shores of the Mississippi where a Steampunk Steamboat was docked. You could hear a calliope playing as a Steampunk Taxi pulled up. "This way, VacaDude - next stop is Cottage Grove!"

Then Vaca got in the Taxi and went to Cottage Grove. Then when he got out of the taxi . . .

VacaDude was practically in shock. He thanked everyone. They walked around and VacaDude showed everyone the sites and back they went to the Steam punk rocket . . . whoosh!

They stopped along the way, just long enough to stop in and say "hey" to Cardsfan, (since they were that close). They took VacaDude through Branson and Carlos remembered being there as child and showed him all the great show places.

Vaca wanted to stay and play guitar but time was short. They headed west and dropped off CC at her cafe in Sands of Kitty (Kansas City). Dot and TheDaddyBird were cookin up a storm for half the town. Then, whoosh! Again they were off over the Rocky Mountains and down over the Grand Canyon and then back to California. They were all starting to get tired so . . .

they headed home. As they approached San Marcos it was getting dark. They noticed a soft, inviting glow from Carlos' back yard and when they got closer they saw that Glowz had put up a sparking web over the back yard with lights woven in. When they settled in the chairs, Donna came out with some Molly Mocha in cups. They were all reminiscing about the day and their wonderful Father's Day.

I don't know when I have ever had such an amazing time," said Vaca. McGee stretched his wings in agreement and Vaca said, "I'm not even a father, to any

human children, that is, but after today, I feel so loved. Thank you all."

Vinky and Vobble gathered the remaining fish and treats and all the decorations from the party and flew back home. As they hung the decorations on the walls of their box . . .

it was looking a little drab, ya' know . . . they discussed the day's events.

Vinky said, "Vobble? Do you think we made all the dads happy? Do you think they liked the gifts and the party? And the rocket ride? I hope they all had fun. Do you think we did okay?"

Vobble said, "Vinky, I think they loved it all. You know Daddies! They love anything their kids do for them! But, I do think they had loads of fun and really liked the gifts we made them.

It was nice to get to know Daddy a little better, too. Ya' know, he's really pretty kewl, once you get to know him. He sure knows a lot about hunting and about being an owl! He's awfully smart!"

Vinky cocked her head and looked at Vobble quizzically. Vobble said, "WHAT?? What's that look for?? What'd I do NOW??"

Vinky said, "You know, Vobble, one of these days, you could be a daddy! Wouldn't that be awesome?! You could have lots of little owlets of your own and someday they could have a party for YOU!"

Vobble looked aghast! "I'm not ready to be a daddy! I've still got white, fluffy feathers!"

Vinky laughed. "You've got a long time to go, Vobble, but it's sure fun to dream about, isn't it?"

The End

The Big Storm!

"Vinky? Vinky! Wake up! I'm scared!" Vobble kept nudging Vinky, each time a little harder. Finally, Vobble stirred.

"Wh . . .? Wha . . .? What? What the heck's going on? Why did you wake me up?"

"Vinky? Don't you hear that? Someone is screaming and moaning! I think they want in our box! They keep shaking it and shining a light. Sometimes it sounds like they're throwing big rocks at us."

"I'll check it out, Vobble. Just let me wake up a minute, okay?" Vinky looked out the door and pulled back, startled. "Vobble! It's not someone trying to get in. It's a STORM! And it's a big one, too!"

Just then a huge sound echoed all around the box and the landscape was lit up like daylight! The two owlets huddled in the corner, quaking with fear. They'd never experienced anything like this.

There was another loud clap of thunder and a bright lightning flash. The owlets quivered and yelled, "M-O-O-M-M-M-Y-Y!!!" The storm raged through the night, the wind whipping furiously to and fro.

Finally morning came. The storm continued and . . .

then there was a Severe Thunderstorm Warning - storms with hail up to the size of hen's eggs (2 inches) and winds up to 60mph with some weak rotation! An hour later it was still there. Five minutes later it became a Tornado Warning with a Large Tornado on the ground 6 miles west of San Marcos moving to the East at 55mph! Then something HORRIBLE happened . . .

The roof of the owl box rattled and tattled and teetered and flew right off into the sky. As it whirled above their heads, Vinky and Vobble clung to each other with their wingz ever so wide. The rain poured down on them, soaking them to the skin when suddenly

Carlos awoke with a start! He said, "Oh NO you don't! Not after all my hard work building everything!" He rushed out into the storm, his dressing gown open and Dior owl pajamas whipping around in the wind.

He carried the brand new roof he kept on hand in the basement. He put on

the new roof, hammering with enormous nails to keep it sturdy. He then sang a sweet lullaby to the kidz and got Mary on his cell phone to sing along, operatically. Unfortunately, the lullaby was interrupted when the hail got too bad for Carlos to sing on key.

"Lullowl-by and good night - OUCH!"

Carlos told Vinky and Vobble that they would be safe in their deluxe roofed owl box for the duration of the storm. "BUT don't go near the door!" he warned the owlets.

The wind was so strong that it sucked Vinky out the door. Vinky screamed and . . .

suddenly, the eye of the storm passed over and all was quiet, except for Vobble who was screaming, "Vinky, Carlos told you to stay away from the door!"

Vobble suddenly was aware that he was the only one making a noise now, and blushed - a little embarrassed. A hard wind blew up again and Vinky was blown back through the door! "Wow! I hope that storm is over!" Vinky said to Vobble.

Just then, they heard a noise on the new deluxe roof. "Who's there?" whispered Vobble, now afraid of being too loud.

Vobble asked, "Who is up there?" Then a funny noise came . . .

It was Gary, the Cooper's hawk. "Are you gutz ok?"

Vobble said, "Get in here! You scared us to death!"

Gary came in and proceeded to tell of the story about the hunting ground . . . "it was wild, flying mice and gophers spinning around . . ."

Gary said, "I'm just glad you are OK. Carlos said the National Weather Service was in trouble and the only person who could let the nation, or at least our area, know what to expect was Cardsfan. The NWS said it was up to him to warn everyone of any dangers forthcoming.

Then the sky darkened, the street lights came on and . . .

there was the MASSIVE Storm that the Tornado Warning talked about!!!! It produced a Tornado that was 2½ miles wide and had 305 mph winds making it

an EF-5! It was on the ground for over 5 hours! It killed 385 people and injured 15000 people! The damage was tragic. Foundations were cracked! It went over 15 states at over 75mph! Then . . .

Vinky shook Vobble really hard. "Vobble! Wake up! Wake UP!!! You're having a nightmare!"

Vobble blinked and said, "Oh MY! I guess I have seen to many Pete Mertz ads on Uscream!"

Vinky then said, "Vobble, you know what, it does make you think about what we might need to do if a REAL tornado ever came here. We need to be prepared."

Vobble said, "OK. Let's make a "laundry" list of things we need to do. First is . . .

"First we need to snuggle down right now, in the gag shag . . . Ahhhhhhhh . . . and put on our glasses . . . take out our flashlight, pad and pen. Now we can make a list.

- #1 - Shore up the roof;
- #2 - Get a lightning rod installed on the box;
- #3 - Stock up on mice;
- #4 - and reading material; and
- #5 - a tiny cell phone that will reach directly to the US president

"We also need bottled water and some of CC's energy bars. If we have a direct line to the president, then we need one to Cardsfan also. We'll need blankets and bags of gag shag, too.

As Vinky and Vobble were busy making their plans and reflecting on preparations for the next storm, Glowz crawled into the box, bedraggled and wet.

Glowz said, "My, Oh MY! What just happened? One minute I was building a new web for my next clutch of eggies, and the next minute I was being carried down a hole in a torrent of water! It was sooo dark, but just then I was flung out of the water and into a pile of carrots!"

"Hmmm carrots . . ." Glowz had an idea. "If we could get with Kyle maybe he could help us with a good place to build an underground bunker in case another storm comes."

Vinky and Vobble said, "Well, it would be good for tornados." Kyle told them great places to start digging but they would need help from the two-leggers.

"How big should we make it? We need enough room for everyone plus food." Just then. . .

Tauntz poked his head up from his warren under the owl box. "Hey y'all! I think I have just the thing you need! Have you looked at all the rooms we have down here? You'd all be safe from storms here."

They all agreed that Tauntz's home would make the perfect storm shelter for all them. There was plenty of room for them and lots of room for storage. They'd gather their supplies and make plans!

Later, the owlets and their friends all huddled around the TV in VacaDude's office, checking out the reports of the "Storm of the Century." None of them could believe what they had just been through.

Vobble looked at Vinky and said, "I just can't believe this! After all, everyone knows, it never rains in California! How could we have a storm like this? I sure hope all the other owlets are okay."

Vinky assured Vobble that all the owls had come through the storms safely and that there were no casualties and only minor property damage. Vobble looked at Vinky quizzically and said with a grin,

"I just don't get it though. All around us, other owls spend their time hunting and eating and horking and sleeping and hunting and eating and horking and sleeping, over and over and over again."

How come we get to have such grand adventures all the time? I still think there's something special about this box. The only other place I've ever felt this kind of special "energy" is in Molly's box.

I think there's just something or someone out there watching over us all the time, sending us love and good thoughts and . . . Or, maybe it's just my imagination. Good night, Vinky!"

The End

~~MORE~~ The Recipes from
CC's Cafe

Developed and written in the kitchen of DotRot

BGN Sandwich

Bunny Ear Cupcakes

Burgerless Cheeseburgers

Cheezy Poofs

Cheeze PopTarts

Cheese Puffs

Cheese Soufflé

Frog Burgers

Frozen Honeysuckle and Mint Juleps

Gecko Gravy

Green Honeycakes

Honeysuckle Mash

Lark's Lettuce

Raspberry Honeysuckle Juice

Seagrass and Carrot Juice

Snake Gravy Potato Pancakes

Snake Stew

Steampunk Chinese Dumplings

BGN Sandwiches (Bacon, Gopher and Nutella)

8 slices hearty multi-grain bread	Sliced, cooked gopher (can be omitted if desired)
8 Tablespoons Nutella	Butter , softened
16 slices bacon , cooked crisp	

Spread one side of each slice of bread with butter. Spread Nutella on four slices of buttered bread.

Top Nutella with four slices of crisp bacon. Add sliced gopher, if using. Top with remaining slices bread.

Heat skillet to medium high heat. Toast each sandwich lightly in the skillet, just until lightly browned. Serve hot with honeysuckle juice.

Bunny Ear Cupcakes

4 ounces white chocolate	4 cups shredded carrots
2 (8 ounce) package cream cheese , softened	1 cup crushed pineapple
1 cup unsalted butter , softened	3 cups all-purpose flour
4 teaspoons vanilla extract , divided	2½ teaspoons baking soda
1 teaspoon orange extract	1 teaspoon salt
8 cups confectioners' sugar	1 tablespoons ground cinnamon
¼ cup heavy cream	1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
4 eggs, lightly beaten	½ teaspoon ground ginger
2¼ cups white sugar	2 cup chopped almonds
⅔ cup brown sugar	2 cup milk or dark chocolate chips
1 cup vegetable oil	4 cups white chocolate chips
	Red food coloring

Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C). Lightly grease 24 muffin cups (or line with cupcake papers).

In small saucepan, melt white chocolate over low heat. Stir until smooth, and allow to cool to room temperature.

In a bowl, beat together the cream cheese and butter until smooth. Mix in

white chocolate, 2 teaspoons vanilla, and orange extract. Gradually beat in the confectioners' sugar until the mixture is fluffy. Mix in heavy cream. Set aside.

Beat together the eggs, white sugar, and brown sugar in a bowl, and mix in the oil and 2 teaspoons vanilla. Fold in carrots and pineapple. In a separate bowl, mix the flour, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, nutmeg, and ginger. Mix flour mixture into the carrot mixture until evenly moist. Fold in almonds walnuts. Transfer to the prepared muffin cups.

Bake 25 minutes in the preheated oven, or until a toothpick inserted in the center of a muffin comes out clean. Cool completely on wire racks before topping with the icing.

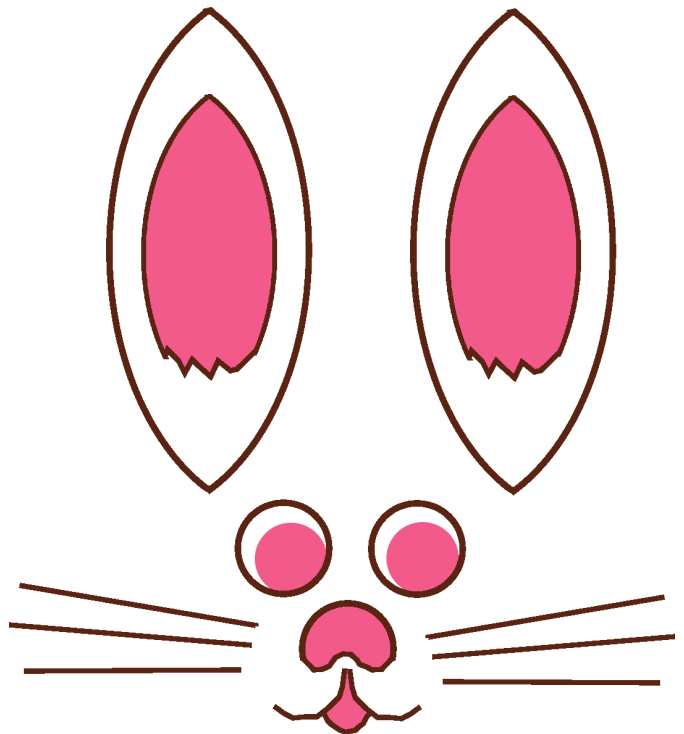
Lay out waxed paper on the counter top.

Melt milk or dark chocolate chips. Transfer to a plastic sandwich bag. Snip off a very small piece of one corner of the bag. Following the diagram shown, outline the ears, eyes, nose and whiskers with chocolate.

Melt 2 cups of white chocolate chips. Transfer to a plastic sandwich bag. Snip off a very small piece of one corner of the bag. Following the diagram shown, fill in the white portions of the ears and eyes.

Melt the remaining 2 cups of white chocolate chips. Add coloring (paste coloring is recommended) until the desired shade of pink is reached. Transfer to a plastic sandwich bag. Snip off a very small piece of one corner of the bag. Following the diagram shown, fill in the pink portions of the ears, eyes, nose and tongue.

Allow to harden on the waxed paper (speed up this process by placing them in the refrigerator). Apply the bunny parts to the tops of the cupcakes, sticking the bottom of the ears into the cupcakes so that they stand up.



Burgerless Cheezeburgers

4 hamburger buns	4 slices American cheese
4 slices sharp Cheddar cheese	4 slices Monterrey Jack cheese
4 slices Swiss cheese	1 jar cheese dip (if desired)

Preheat oven broiler. Lay the burger buns, open on a sheet tray. Place under the broiler for 1–2 minutes, or until just beginning to brown. Remove from broiler.

On each of the bun tops, layer one slice each of Cheddar and Monterrey Jack cheese. On each of the bun bottoms, layer one slice each of Swiss and American cheese.

Return to the broiler. Broil for 1–2 minutes, or until cheese is bubbly and just starting to brown on top. Remove from broiler. Place top and bottom portions of buns together. If desired, slice each burgerless burger into four strips and serve with cheese dip.

Cheezy Poofs

2 cups all-purpose flour	1 cup milk
2 teaspoon baking powder	1 tablespoon sugar
1½ teaspoon dry mustard	1 teaspoon salt
2 large eggs	8 ounces Extra-Sharp Cheddar
3 tablespoons vegetable oil	Cheese, finely shredded

Place oven rack in the center of the oven and preheat it to 375°F (190°C). Line two baking sheets with parchment (or use silpat liners).

Sift the flour, baking powder and dry mustard into a bowl. Add the shredded cheddar cheese and mix. Whisk together the eggs, oil, milk, sugar and salt in a separate bowl. Combine the egg mixture with the cheese mixture and stir just until it all comes together. (Don't over mix. Just stir until the flour is fully incorporated.)

Place the mixture in a large Ziploc bag (gallon size). Cut one corner off of the bag. (the larger the bit you cut off, the larger your Cheesy Poofs will be.) Pipe lines of batter (about 1-1½ inches long) on the baking sheets. Bake for 15 minutes for soft poofs or 18 minutes for slightly crunchy poofs. Remove from oven and transfer to a cooling rack. Try not to eat them all in one sitting.

Cheeze PopTarts

Pastry

2 cups all-purpose flour
 1 tablespoon **sugar**
 1 teaspoon **salt**
 1 cup unsalted **butter**
 1 large **egg**
 2 tablespoons **milk**
 1 additional **egg** (to brush on pastry)

Cheese Filling (other fillings included below)

8 ounces **cream cheese**, softened
 2 teaspoons **lemon juice**
 1 teaspoon **vanilla**
 ¼ cup **confectioner's sugar**
 1 teaspoon **zest of lemon rind**

Make filling. Cream together cream cheese, lemon juice and vanilla. Mix in confectioner's sugar and lemon zest. Set aside.

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, and salt. Cut the butter into small pats. Work the butter into the flour mixture with a pastry blender or food processor until pea-sized lumps of butter are still visible, and the mixture holds together when you squeeze it.

Whisk one egg and milk together and stir them into the dough, mixing just until the flour is incorporated, kneading briefly on a well-floured counter if necessary.

Divide the dough in half and shape each half into a smooth rectangle, about 3×5 inches. You can roll this out immediately or wrap each half in plastic and refrigerate for up to 2 days.

Assemble the tarts: If the dough has been chilled, remove it from the refrigerator and allow it to soften and become workable, about 15 to 30 minutes. Place one piece on a lightly floured work surface, and roll it into large a rectangle ⅛" thick. Trim the rectangle to 9"x12". Repeat with the second piece of dough. Set trimmings aside. Cut each rectangle of dough into thirds on each side - forming nine 3"x 4" rectangles. (If you prefer making PopTart Minis, cut each piece into 16 pieces, sized 2¼"x3" rectangles.)

Beat the additional egg and brush it over the entire surface of the first dough. (This helps "glue" them together.) Place a heaping tablespoon of filling into the center of each rectangle, leaving ½-inch uncovered around each edge. Top each tart with a second rectangle of dough. Using your fingertips to press firmly around the pocket of filling, sealing the dough well on all sides. Press the tines of a fork all around the edge of the rectangle. Repeat with remaining tarts.

Gently place the tarts on a lightly greased or parchment-lined baking sheet. Prick the top of each tart multiple times with a skewer. Place in the refrigerator for 30 minutes. Preheat your oven to 350°F (175°C).

Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, until lightly golden brown. Cool in pan on rack.

Optional Fillings:

Cinnamon Filling (enough for 9 tarts)

- ½ cup brown sugar
- 1–1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon, to taste
- 4 teaspoons all-purpose flour
- 1 large egg, to brush on pastry before filling

Whisk together the sugar, cinnamon, and flour.

Jam Filling

- ¾ cup jam
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch mixed with 1 tablespoon cold water

Mix the jam with the cornstarch/water in a small saucepan. Bring the mixture to a boil, and simmer, stirring, for 2 minutes. Remove from the heat, and set aside to cool.

S'mores Filling

- ½ cup marshmallow fluff
- ½ cup dark chocolate chips
- ½ cup finely crushed graham cracker crumbs
- 4 tablespoons butter, melted

Mix fluff and chips. After brushing the pastry with beaten egg, place a heaping tablespoon of filling on the pastries. Top with another pastry and seal well. Brush tops of pastries with melted butter and press graham cracker crumbs on the surface. Repeat on the bottom surface. Bake as directed above.

Alternate fillings: 9 tablespoons chocolate chips, 9 tablespoons Nutella or other chocolate-hazelnut paste or 9 tablespoons of anything else you can dream up, like salted caramel, peanut butter and jelly.

Savory Tarts: Omit the sugar in the dough and halve the salt. Fill with pesto, cheese, ground nuts or olives, ham and cheese, finely chopped veggies (like broccoli). Brush the tops with additional egg wash and sprinkle with poppy or sesame seeds.

Cheese Puffs

1 stick butter (8 tablespoons or 4 ounces)	1 cup grated sharp Cheddar, Gruyere, or Emmenthaler cheese
1 cup water	2 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme (or rosemary or dill)
½ teaspoon salt	¼ cup crisp, crumbled bacon
1 cup all purpose flour	Freshly ground black pepper
4 large eggs	

Prepare two baking sheets by lining with parchment or silpat liners. Set aside.

Cook bacon crisp. Drain well. After it has cooled, crumble well.

In a medium sized saucepan bring the water, butter, and salt, to a boil over high heat.

Reduce the heat to medium and add the flour all at once. Stir vigorously with a wooden spoon. The mixture will form a dough ball that will pull away from the sides of the pan. The dough will be thick. Continue to cook for about two minutes.

Remove the pan from the heat and let cool briefly, until warm to the touch, but not hot. Stir a couple of times to ensure even cooling.

Add the eggs one at a time, stirring after each addition until the eggs are incorporated into the dough. (This can be done with an electric mixer or by hand with a wooden spoon.) The dough should become rather creamy.

Stir in the grated cheese, herbs, bacon and pepper.

Preheat oven to 425°F (220°C).

Spoon out small balls (about a heaping tablespoon) of the dough onto a Silpat or parchment lined baking sheet, at least one inch apart. Place in oven and bake for 10 minutes at 425°F (220°C). Lower heat to 350°F (175°C) and bake for another 15-20 minutes, until puffed up and lightly golden.

Makes about 2 dozen.

These are delicious at breakfast filled with dilled scrambled eggs or at lunch with a slice of ham, chicken or tuna salad in the middle.

Cheese Soufflé

½ cup unsalted butter , softened - divided	½ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
¼ cup finely grated Parmesan	1 pinch cayenne pepper
¼ cup all-purpose flour	6 eggs , separated, plus 2 egg whites
1½ cups milk	2 cups grated Gruyere cheese
1 teaspoon salt	¼ cup finely chopped chives

Remove the top oven rack and place a rack on the bottom ⅓ of the oven. Preheat the oven to 350°F (175°C).

Create a parchment paper or aluminum foil collar for the soufflé dish; the collar should measure about 2 inches above the top of the dish. Grease the soufflé dish and collar separately with ¼ cup softened butter. Dust the inside of the dish and the collar with ¼ cup of Parmesan. Reserve any leftover cheese for sprinkling on top of the soufflé. Secure the collar to the outside of the dish with butcher's twine.

Melt ¼ cup of butter in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add the flour and stir constantly for 2 minutes, making sure it doesn't brown. Slowly whisk in the milk until smooth, and continue stirring for about 4 to 5 minutes to form a very thick sauce (Béchamel sauce). Remove from the heat and add the salt, nutmeg, and cayenne pepper.

Beat the 6 egg yolks 1 at a time into the hot sauce until fully incorporated.

Stir in the Gruyere and chives. Set aside.

Place the 8 egg whites in an electric mixer fitted with a whisk attachment. Beat the egg whites until stiff but not dry. Stir ¼ of the egg whites into the soufflé base. Fold in the remaining egg whites, being careful not to over mix.

Gently spoon the mixture into the soufflé mold. With back of a spoon, make a groove around soufflé about 1 inch from the edge of the dish.

Bake for 45 minutes, or when a wooden skewer inserted into the middle of the soufflé comes out clean. Minimize opening and closing the oven door. Serve immediately sprinkled with reserved Parmesan cheese.

Frog Burgers

3 pounds ground frog*	Minced garlic
Garlic powder , to taste	Crushed pineapple
Onion powder , to taste	Bacon slices , cooked semi crisp
Thinly sliced or diced red onions	Shredded Cheddar, Swiss, Gruyere,
Thinly sliced or diced Roma	Mozzarella cheeses
tomatoes (or well-drained canned	Ketchup
diced tomatoes)	Mustard
Thinly sliced or diced Zucchini or	Honey Mustard
Summer squash	Sliced Pickles
Shredded cabbage or slaw mix	Sweet and Dill Pickle Relishes
Sliced fresh or canned mushrooms	Mayonnaise

**We usually substitute mixture of 1 pound ground beef, 1 pound ground pork (or pork sausage) and 1 pound ground turkey.*

Mix the meat and the garlic and onion powders. Divide into 6 sections.

Separate each ball of meat into two pieces, one slightly larger than the other.

Flatten the smaller ball until very thin (but not so thin that it breaks or separates). I usually use a saucer to get a good size.

Place small amounts of each desired filling on top of the patty. Each person can personalize their burger the way they want it.

Flatten the larger ball until very thin. Place over the fillings and carefully seal the edges. It sometimes helps to use two saucers and flatten the filled burger between them.

Carefully place the burger on the grill and cook to desired doneness. If you don't have a very wide spatula to make turning easier, slide the burger onto a plate, turn it onto another plate and then place back on the grill.

The burgers can also be cooked in the oven by placing a cooling rack in a baking pan or using a broiler pan.

Serve on toasted buns.

Makes six very generous portions.

Frozen Honeysuckle and Mint Juleps

1 cup sugar , plus more for garnish	8 cups ice cubes
½ cup water	2 cups bourbon*
2 cups packed fresh mint leaves , coarsely chopped	Honeysuckle blossoms , for garnish
½ cup honey	Mint sprigs , for garnish
	Orange slices

Combine the sugar and water in a small saucepan and simmer until the sugar dissolves. Remove from the heat and add the mint leaves. Allow to steep until cooled. Once cooled, strain out the leaves and add the honey.

Combine half of the mint syrup, 4 cups ice, and 1 cup bourbon in a blender. Blend until smooth. Pour into a pitcher. Repeat with the remaining ingredients. Rub the rims of stemmed glasses with an orange slice and dip the rims in sugar, then fill with the frozen mint juleps. Garnish each with an orange slice and mint sprig and serve immediately.

*To make the juleps non-alcoholic, substitute ginger ale for the bourbon.

Gopher Gravy

1 small onion , diced	1 quart low sodium gopher broth**
2 tablespoons butter	2 tablespoons gopher base (not bouillon)***
Diced gopher meat*	Gopher seasoning****
¼ cup cornstarch	Fresh cracked black pepper
½ cup water	

Sauté the onion and gopher meat in butter until meat is cooked through and onion is tender. Remove meat from pan.

Stir cornstarch into the water. Set aside. Add the broth and base to the pan and bring to a boil on high heat. Reduce heat to medium and slowly pour in the cornstarch mixture, stirring constantly as it is added. Continue heating and stirring until the gravy thickens to the desired consistency. Add seasonings to taste. Add the meat back into the gravy. Serve over mashed potatoes, noodles or rice (or add veggies and a pie crust for a gopher pot pie).

*We usually substitute chopped chicken.

**Chicken broth is more readily available than gopher broth.

***Try using chicken base instead.

****We use poultry seasoning.

Green Honeycakes

1 cup packed brown sugar	3½ cups quick-cooking oats
1 cup peanut butter	1 cup chopped peanuts
½ cup honey	½ cup dried cherries or cranberries
½ cup butter	¼ cup toasted wheat germ
2 teaspoons vanilla extract	1 cup green M&Ms
Green food coloring	

Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C). Lightly spray a 9"x13" cake pan with butter flavored nonstick cooking spray.

In a small saucepan, combine the brown sugar, peanut butter, corn syrup, butter and vanilla. Heat until peanut butter and butter are melted, stirring constantly. Remove from heat, stir in green food coloring and set aside to cool slightly.

In a bowl, mix the oats, peanuts, dried fruit, and wheat germ. Pour peanut butter mixture over the dry ingredients and mix well. Fold in M&Ms. Press firmly into the prepared pan. Bake for 15-20 minutes or until fully set and edges are browned. Cool completely on a wire rack. Cut into bars.

These honeycakes are best if allowed to stand, covered, for 1 day before serving.

Honeysuckle Mash

2 packets unflavored gelatin	¼ cup honey
1 20-ounce can unsweetened crushed pineapple	1 teaspoon lemon zest
1 tablespoon lemon juice , divided	2 cups vanilla yogurt
	Grenadine (optional)

Drain 1 cup of juice from the pineapple. Reserve remaining undrained pineapple.

Sprinkle gelatin over pineapple juice in a small saucepan. Let stand 5 minutes to soften, and then add 1 teaspoon lemon juice and honey. Heat just until gelatin melts. Cool to room temperature.

Place undrained pineapple, 2 teaspoons lemon juice and zest in a food processor or blender. Process until pureed. Mix in gelatin mixture. Fold yogurt into mixture. Spoon into serving bowls. If desired, garnish with a few drops of grenadine. If grenadine is not available, a maraschino cherry will suffice.

Lark's Lettuce

2 bunches of fresh leaf lettuce	1 small yellow or red onion , diced
10-12 slices thick-cut pepper bacon	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup cider vinegar
6-8 green onions , diced	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar

Wash lettuce and tear small pieces. Drain well and set aside.

Using kitchen shears, cut bacon into $\frac{1}{2}$ " pieces. Cook in skillet until crisp. Remove from skillet, reserving about $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup in the skillet.

Mix bacon with the lettuce.

To the hot bacon grease, add the onions. Sauté until tender and translucent. Add vinegar and sugar. Bring to boil.

Pour hot bacon dressing over the lettuce. Toss and serve **immediately**.

Raspberry Honeysuckle Juice

1 cup water	2 cups fresh lemon juice (about 15 lemons)
1 cup sugar	
1 cup honey	2-3 quarts cold water (this will vary depending on your taste)
$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups raspberries ; plus more whole berries for garnish if desired	

Make a simple syrup by combining the sugar with 1 cup of water in a saucepan. Place over medium heat and heat until the sugar is completely dissolved; swirl the pan occasionally. Let cool.

Puree raspberries in blender or food processor. Push the raspberry puree through a fine mesh sieve to separate the seeds from the pulp.

Combine the simple syrup, raspberry puree, honey and lemon juice.

Fill one ice cube tray with this mixture. Freeze solid. Chill remaining mixture.

When ready to serve, pour raspberry mixture into a large pitcher. Add cold water to taste.

Place one frozen raspberry cube in each glass and fill with juice.

Sea Grass and Carrot Juice

6 medium carrots*
1 fresh lemon

1 ounce Sea Grass juice**

Juice carrots into a glass. Juice lemon by hand. Whisk lemon juice and wheatgrass juice into carrot juice; serve.

*If you don't have a juicer, look for carrot Wild Veggie product. It is an all natural frozen product and can be found at several natural food stores and Whole Food markets.

**It seems only owls (and imaginative story writers) know where to find sea grass juice. A good substitute is wheatgrass juice. Look for wheatgrass juice in the freezer section of a natural food store; it's generally sold in 12-packs of 1-ounce shots.

Snake Gravy Potato Pancakes

4 large potatoes
1 yellow onion
1 egg, beaten
1 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

Ground black pepper to taste
2 cups vegetable oil for frying
Snake Gravy (see the Winter story book for recipe)

Finely grate potatoes with onion into a large bowl. Drain and/or blot off any excess liquid. (Some like to shred the potatoes with a food processor, but this is not recommended. It releases too much starch and changes the texture of the pancakes.)

Mix in egg, salt, and black pepper. Add enough flour to make mixture thick, about 2 to 4 tablespoons all together.

Turn oven to low, about 200° F (95° C).

Heat ¼-inch oil in the bottom of a heavy skillet over medium high heat. Drop two or three ¼ cup mounds into hot oil, and flatten to make ½-inch thick pancakes. Fry, turning once, until golden brown. Transfer to paper towel lined plates to drain, and keep warm in low oven until serving time. Repeat until all potato mixture is used.

Serve with snake gravy. (Some folks like them served with applesauce.)

Snake Stew

2 pounds snake , cut into bite-size chunks*	1 package onion soup mix
4 carrots , peeled and sliced	1 can cream of celery soup
4 potatoes , peeled and diced	1 can ginger ale
1 bag frozen peas (12-16 ounces)	½ cup red wine (or beef broth)
2 large onions , cut into chunks	Just enough water to cover all ingredients

In a baking dish large enough to hold all, mix all ingredients thoroughly. You don't have to brown the meat. Cover tightly with foil. Bake at 350°F (175°C) for 3 hours. DO NOT PEEK! Great for busy afternoons--use your timed bake on the oven, if necessary.

*We usually substitute top round steak.

Steampunk Chinese Dumplings

2 tablespoons vegetable oil	3 cups shredded cabbage (or slaw mix)
1 inch piece ginger root - peeled and grated	12 ounces shrimp - peeled, de-veined and finely chopped
4 green onions (white part only) - cut in half and sliced thin	1 tablespoon corn starch
4 ounces mushroom tops - finely diced	2 tablespoons soy or Ponzu sauce
1¼ pounds ground turkey (or pork)	Wonton wrappers
	Small bowl of water

Prepare the cabbage by blanching it in boiling water for 1-2 minutes. Remove from the heat and immediately plunge into a bowl filled with ice water. Drain the blanched cabbage in a colander, and squeeze out all the excess moisture.

Heat the oil over medium high heat in a wok or large frying pan. Add the ginger and cook for 1 minute. Add the green onions and mushrooms and cook for 2-3 minutes. Add the ground turkey and cook until no longer pink. Stir in the blanched cabbage and cook for 1 more minute. Drain off any liquid. Add the shrimp, and cook until they just begin to turn pink.

In a small bowl, whisk together the corn starch with the soy sauce. Stir the sauce into the wok and cook for another minute or two.

Remove the wok from the heat. Let the filling cool slightly.

Fill a small bowl with water and place it near the wonton wrappers. Remove 1 wrapper from the package and place it on your work surface. Use your fingers to wet the edges of the wonton wrapper with a bit of water. Place 1 level tablespoon of the filling in the center of the wonton. Fold the wonton in half and crimp the edges of the wonton wrapper, making sure to completely seal the dumpling.

Using a bamboo steamer placed over boiling water in a wok, steam the dumplings. Fill the steamer basket with dumplings, approximately 1 dozen at a time. Place about 2 inches of water in the bottom of the steamer, add the dumpling filled steamer basket to the pan, placed the lid on and turned the heat onto high.

As soon as the water comes to a boil, reduce the heat to medium low, and let the dumplings steam for 8-10 minutes. Remove the basket from the steamer and carefully remove the dumplings to a platter. Be careful, the dumplings will be hot. If you let the dumplings cool too long, they will begin to stick.

Serve the dumplings immediately with your favorite dipping sauce.

On Writing and Story Telling . . .

If you don't know the trees you may be lost in the forest, but if you don't know the stories you may be lost in life.

Siberian Elder

There have been great societies that did not use the wheel, but there have been no societies that did not tell stories.

Ursula K. LeGuin

If stories come to you, care for them. And learn to give them away where they are needed. Sometimes a person needs a story more than food to stay alive.

Barry Lopez, in *Crow and Weasel*

Those who do not have power over the story that dominates their lives, the power to retell it, rethink it, deconstruct it, joke about it, and change it as times change, truly are powerless, because they cannot think new thoughts.

Salman Rushdie

Australian Aborigines say that the big stories—the stories worth telling and retelling, the ones in which you may find the meaning of your life—are forever stalking the right teller, sniffing and tracking like predators hunting their prey in the bush.

Robert Moss, *Dreamgates*

Because there is a natural storytelling urge and ability in all human beings, even just a little nurturing of this impulse can bring about astonishing and delightful results

Nancy Mellon, *The Art of Storytelling*

