



QUEEN BEE

a collection of short stories

by
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and
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ALL ABOUT READING
Level 2 Vol. 2

This book belongs to



QUEEN BEE
a collection of short stories

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Copyright © 2010 by All About Learning Press
Printed in the United States of America

All About Learning Press
2038 E. Anvil Lake Road
Eagle River, WI 54521

ISBN 978-1-935197-10-2

Cover Design and Page Layout: David LaTulippe
Illustrations: Donna Goeddaeus and David LaTulippe
Story idea for *Pumpkin and the Kitten*: Jon Stenschke

Queen Bee: a collection of short stories is part of the
All About Reading program. For more books in this
series, go to www.All-About-Reading.com.

To the reader –

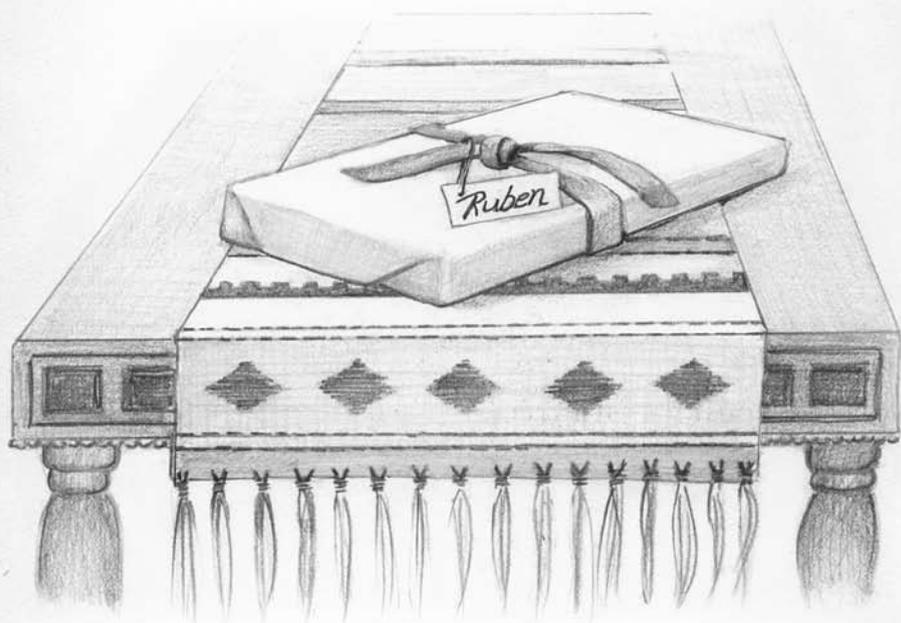
*may you be inspired
to embark on
your own adventures*

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Ruben and the Secret Gift



“What’s in this box?” Ruben said to Mom.

“You will have to open it to find out,” Mom said.

“Is it a gift for me?”

“Your name is on the tag. But it’s not from me. Open it and see what it is,” said Mom.

“A hand lens!” said Ruben. “And here’s a note:

*“With this hand lens
you will find
fun and secrets
that never end.”*

“Is this gift from Dad?” Ruben said.

“No.”

“Is it from my sisters?”

“No. I can’t tell. It’s a secret. You need to find the truth yourself,” said Mom.

Ruben held the hand lens. It had black plastic trim and a glass lens.



“This is the best gift ever! I am glad it’s mine! It will be fun to use.”

“Yes, I think you will have fun with it.”

“Mom, can I have paper and a pencil? I will keep notes on what I see under the lens,” said Ruben.

Mom gave him paper and pencil.



With a sly grin, Ruben said, “I am off to find *fun and secrets that never end*, just like the note said!”

He slid the hand lens, paper, and pencil into his bag. "I will see what I can find in the desert."

"Fine," said Mom. "Don't get lost. And here is a cheese sandwich for your lunch."

Ruben stuck the sandwich in his pocket.

"Be home by six," said Mom. "My sister Zumac and her husband will be here, and Don dislikes the desert. Let's make his time as nice as it can be. Don't be late."

"OK. I will be home in time!" He left with a wave.

“I think a cactus will seem different under my hand lens,” said Ruben.
“What will it be like?”



“I see an insect that has taken shelter inside the spines. Hold on while I add you to my notepad!”



“Here is a desert aster! I will get close with my lens.”



“The center of an aster has dust that glitters like fine gold,” he wrote.

“I see a jackrabbit! I will add him to my notepad.”





“A killdeer! To keep her eggs safe, the killdeer pretends she broke her wing. She thinks I will chase her and will not see the nest in the sand.”

“I will add this to my notes.”

After a while, it was time for lunch.
Ruben sat in the shade of a black
sage bush.

As he ate his sandwich, Ruben's
mind went back to the hand lens.
Who was the gift giver?



“Let me think...the gift giver must have left behind fingerprints. I can check for fingerprints!”

Ruben *did* see fingerprints on the hand lens.

“Which prints are mine, and which prints are from the gift giver?”

“Well, those fingerprints on the black plastic must be mine. But I see a fingerprint on the glass. This big print came from a finger that is not mine.”

A plan came to him.

“On TV, in the event of a crime, you can use tape to lift fingerprints from glass. I will do that! I will transfer the print to paper so I can see it better!”

Ruben ran home.



Back inside, Ruben got a pencil and tape.

Steps to lift fingerprints

1. Grind up a pencil tip.
2. Place the black dust over the print on the glass lens.
3. Shake off the leftover dust.
4. Place tape over the fingerprint. Lift the tape and the fingerprint will stick to the tape. You will see the lines of the fingerprint.
5. Transfer the black fingerprint to white paper.

Rap-rap-rap.

It was Zumac and her husband Don!

Mom ran to meet them. Ruben was close behind.



“Zumac! My sister!” said Mom as she gave her sister a big hug. “I am so glad to see you. It has been so long!”

“And I am glad to see you! But Don is not so glad to be in this hot desert.”

“I will not be in the desert for long,” said Don. “I will melt!”

“Well, sit and relax while I get dinner.”

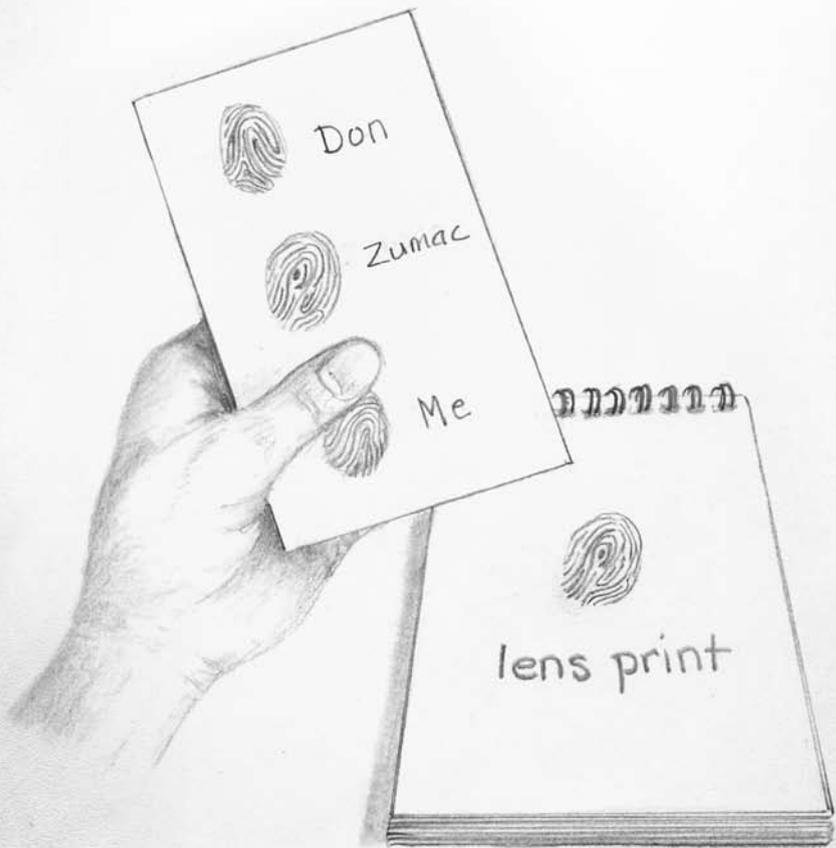
Ruben said to Don and Zumac, “Can I take your fingerprints?”

“Be polite!” said Mom. “Don and Zumac just got here!”

“It’s OK. It will be fun,” said Don.

Ruben held Don's and Zumac's fingerprints next to the print that came from the hand lens. The fingerprints told him the gift giver was...

...Zumac! Ruben gave Zumac a smile and a hug.



“This hand lens is the best gift I ever got. Thank you!” said Ruben.

He slid his notes from his bag. “And now, this notepad is a gift for both of you!”

Don was silent. His gaze went from one page to the next.

Ruben’s rustic notes held secrets of the desert. It was a side of the desert that Don had never taken the time to see before.

The cactus spines. The insects. The asters. The jackrabbit and the killdeer. The shimmer of the desert sun.

“Ruben, I need to thank *you*! You just gave me the gift of the desert,” said Don.



The End





Pumpkin and the Kitten



Pumpkin was a pet cat. He had orange and black stripes and sharp teeth like a tiger, but there was not a wild bone in him.

Pumpkin did not have to hunt for his supper, and he never felt a twinge of hunger. He did not have to hide from dogs or live in a barn. He had a safe home and lots of snacks. Nick and Kate met all of his needs. Pumpkin was glad to be a pet cat.

Pumpkin had the best places to sleep.

He slept on the porch in the sun.

He slept in a basket in the shade.

He slept in square boxes.

He slept in soft laps.

No place was off limits.



Pumpkin had catnip to find and fake mice to chase. He had yarn to shred. Pumpkin made up fun games for himself like “Hide and Seek,” “Bat the Bed Fringe,” and “Swing on the Drapes.”



He had time to push paperclips and pencils off the desk and see them roll. And he did not have to share a thing.



Life was sweet...

...until the morning that Pumpkin woke up from a nap and Nick had a kitten in his arms. It was a complete shock to Pumpkin. Nick put the kitten in a box with a blanket, and Kate put a dish of milk by her.





Kate said, “She is a cute kitten! She can be your sister, Pumpkin.”

But Pumpkin did not think that was true. A plan came into his mind to rid himself of the kitten.

I will ignore her and pretend she is not there.

Then I will hiss at her and make her see that I am in charge.

I will bare my large teeth at her.

I will chase her and make her run fast.

I will scare her until she hides.

I will bite her and make her cry. I will make her wish she never came. Then, at last, I will be rid of her.



Nick said, “Pumpkin, stop it! I see your glare! You be kind to the kitten! Understand?”

Pumpkin did not understand.

“You will like her after a while. Give it time. And remember that we still love you,” said Kate as she gave Pumpkin a pat.

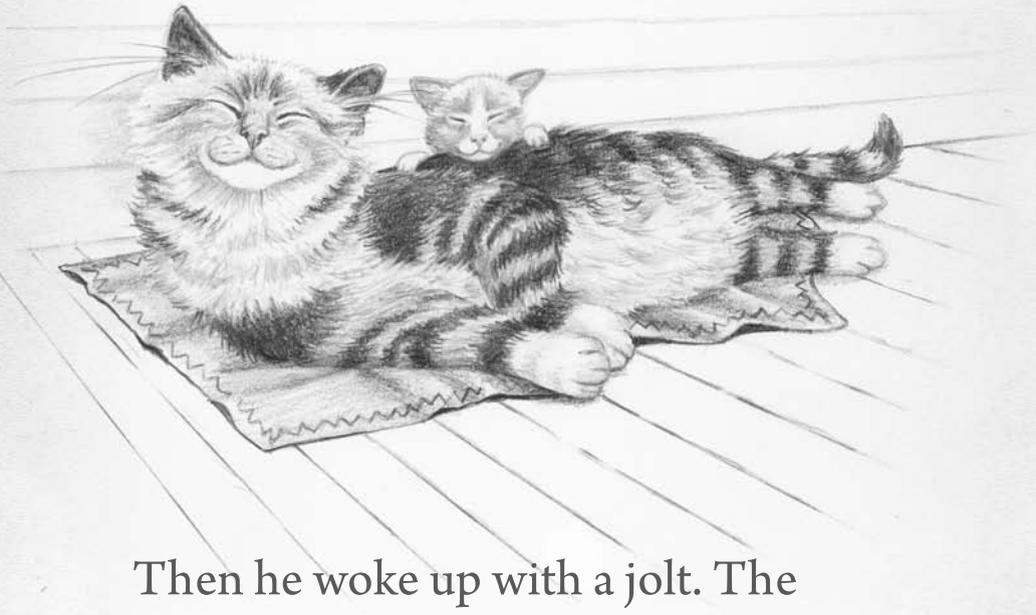
On stiff legs, Pumpkin left to take a nap on the porch.



After a time, it got cold on the porch, but Pumpkin did not go back inside. His legs felt like ice, but he did not even go in for supper. He did not even go in for supper. He did not forgive Nick and Kate. He gave himself a short bath and then went back to sleep, still mad.



Hmm... what is this? In his sleep, Pumpkin began to feel less cold. It felt like a thick blanket was on his back. That feels nice!



Then he woke up with a jolt. The kitten was in bed with him. It was the kitten that made him feel less cold.

Pumpkin was torn. Do I scold her for this, or do I act like she is not here?

OK. The kitten can share the bed
with me for a short time.

Pumpkin forgot to be mad.

He even gave the kitten a lick.

The kitten woke up and gave him
a lick back.



And Pumpkin forgave Nick and
Kate and the kitten.





The End



The Straw Man



FALL

Grace and her sister Sue love the straw man in the center of the lawn. They stuff him full of fresh straw in the fall. Then they put a hat on him and give him blue overalls and huge gloves.

Sue puts corn and big orange pumpkins at his feet.

But the best part of the straw man is his kind face.

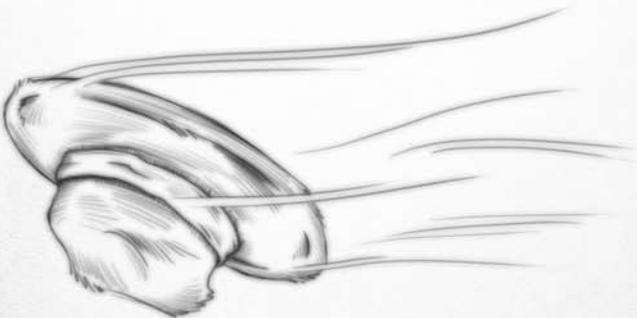
“Let’s call him Sawdust,” said Sue.



Grace and Sue visit Sawdust all the time to mend his flaws and keep him full of straw.

But then on a morning in late fall, a huge storm made the sky dark. Grace and Sue did not go into the yard.

A wild wind stole Sawdust's hat and most of his straw. He was left limp and sad. Just his kind face was the same.



“What can we do for him? We can’t let him live like that!” said Grace.

“But we have no more straw,” said Sue.

And with that, they went in to supper.





WINTER

At dawn the next morning, the sisters saw that the yard was three feet deep in white winter flakes!

“Well, I think I have a plan for the straw man,” said Sue.

Grace and Sue began to roll and roll and roll big white balls.

“Pack it by his feet,” said Sue.

“Pack it on his arms,” said Grace, “and make them nice and fat. But don’t cover his face! I have a plan to finish that part...”



In the end, Sawdust's face was a ring of white!

“What fun!” Sue said with a wide smile.

The straw man's gloves stuck up like paws, and his feet like frozen tree stumps.

“He seems sort of odd, but I like him!” said Sue.

“Do you think he is cold?” said Grace.

“Put your hat on him to keep him snug!” said Sue.

And so Grace did.



All winter, the kids visit the straw man and fix him up when he needs it.

But then the sun came up. And it came up morning after morning... and the land began to thaw.

Grace and Sue saw the man begin to melt.

And melt...

And melt...

...until he was just a pile of sad wet rags.



SPRING

“Hmm,” said Sue. “Sawdust still has his face and feet and hands, but what do we do with the rest of him?”

“Give me a bit of time. You will see what I invent!” Grace said to her sister.

“OK. I will start with his face then,” said Sue. “All I need is paper, pencils, and glue.”

Grace left as Sue began to draw.

When Grace came back, this is what she saw.



“I like the face!” said Grace. “And while you did that, I went to the shed and made swings from scraps of lumber. What do you think?”

Sue had a big smile. “What fun! A swing for you and a swing for me! I will help you hang them from Sawdust’s arms.”

And Grace and Sue swung on those swings all spring long.



SUMMER

Then came a morning when it was so hot that the kids did not want to swing.

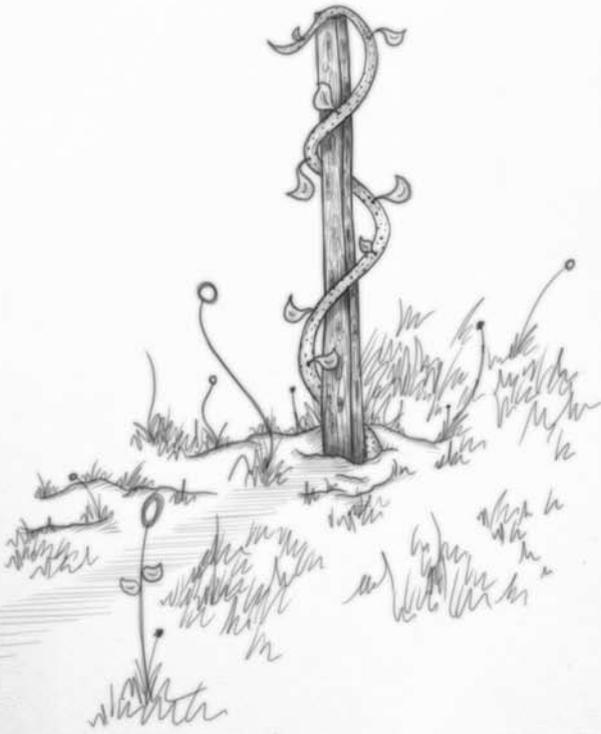
“What shall we do with Sawdust?” said Sue with a yawn. “The sun has put cracks in the swings, and his arms are all broken.”

They sat in the shade to think of things to do.

“I’ve got it!” said Sue as she sprang to her feet. “Let’s plant a grape vine and see if it will make green grapes for us!”

“Yes! We will need lots of water,”
said Grace.

Sue dug a hole and put in a small
vine. Grace ran a hose under
Sawdust’s chin.



“OK, flip the water on!” said Grace with a grin.

Water shot up from the top of the straw man and came back to the lawn to keep the soil moist for the vine.

By the end of August, Grace and Sue had big green grapes to enjoy.



FALL

When fall came, Grace and Sue put fresh straw into Sawdust and gave him a red hat.

The sisters had fun with Sawdust in winter, spring, and summer, but it is nice to see the true straw man back in the yard.

The End



What happens when...



...a new kitten comes to stay?

...a queen bee leaves her hive?

...a scarecrow loses all his stuffing?

...a starfish and a crab hide in a sock?

...a strange bump appears under the carpet?



Find out inside!



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ISBN 978-1-935197-10-2



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