

THE KIDS' READING ROOM

'Stormy Night'

NICK THOMAS

The wind was whipping off Lake Michigan and furiously rattling Becky's bedroom window. Ghostly shadows dashed across the walls with each blinding flash of lightning.

Several seconds later the growl of thunder seemed to shake the whole house.

"I want Dad," Becky cried to her brother.

"Stop your whining and turn the light off!" yelled Mitch.

"No, I'm scared — Dad!" Becky cried out. Finally, their father appeared at the bedroom door.

"Tell her to stop being a baby, I'm trying to sleep," brother Mitch said angrily.

"Cut it out, Mitch," his dad said sternly. "I seem to recall it wasn't too long ago when you would hide under the bed with Scruffy Bear during a storm."

He pulled the pillow over this head so his sister couldn't see him blushing with embarrassment.

"Now, Becky, there's nothing to be afraid of," her father began. "Why, that lightning is miles away."

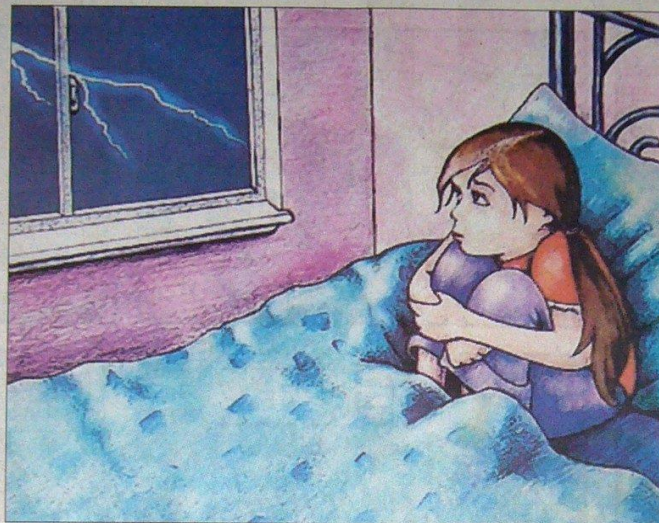
"No, it's not," argued Becky. "It's on top of the house!"

"It may seem close, but it's really a long way off. Let's see, it's —"

After the next bright flash of lightning, Becky's dad began counting. When he reached 11, a loud clap of thunder shook the room. "It's more than two miles away!"

"How do you know that?" sobbed Becky.

"That's easy. Light travels thousands of times faster than sound. The lightning and thunder occur at the same time, but you see the lightning immediately and hear the thunder later. It takes about five seconds for the thunder to travel one mile. So when you see the lightning flash, start counting. If you hear the thunder five seconds later, the lightning is actually about one



JENNIFER OLSON

mile away," explained her father.

"So if you hear it 10 seconds later, it's two miles away! But what if you hear it after two seconds?"

"About half a mile, dummy!" yelled her brother.

"That's enough Mitch!" Dad snapped back. "But he's right, Becky. The closer the storm, the less you have to count. But don't worry, this storm will soon be gone. So come on, let's get to sleep."

Her father walked toward the door and turned off the light.

"As for you, young man," he said, turning back to Mitch, "try and be a little more understanding."

Mitch could hear his sister quietly counting, and he began smiling to himself.

"What are you doing?" asked Becky, who could see her brother throwing things around in the closet, searching for something with a flashlight.

"Here, catch," called out Mitch, tossing something into the air.

Just then, a flash of lightning illuminated the room again, and Becky could see a strange yellow object flying toward her. "What's this?" she

asked.

"That's my old teddy bear — Scruffy Bear. He'll look after you until the storm passes," Mitch said. "Now go to sleep."

"This is just a stuffed toy. I'm not a baby!" Becky said.

Mitch began to count, like their dad had done a few moments earlier.

"Twenty seconds between the lightning and the thunder, now!" said Mitch, trying to sound as reassuring as his dad. "The storm's now four miles away. See, it's almost over."

But Becky didn't answer. Mitch shone his flashlight toward her bed. Scruffy Bear was tucked tightly under his sister's arm. And Becky was sound asleep.

Special thanks to Jennifer Olson for this week's illustration. To see more of her work visit:

childrensillustrators.com/jennifergrayolson.

Next week: A story about space technology courtesy of Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

CREATIVITY CORNER

By the Light of a Silver Clock

Cameron, 9
St. Margaret's Episcopal School
San Juan Capistrano

A field of pumpkins glows in the light of a silver clock, as the smooth wind whispers a song of autumn, of prickly leaves changing their scarves and trees in their bare chipped bones. The scent of warm golden pumpkins tinges the air.

A Day in India

Hannah, 10
Harbor View Elementary
Corona del Mar

The air is redolent with cinnamon, roasted cloves and sweet fennel, as we sit under a white and gold marble pavilion, and slurp mango lassi. The cool, quiet lake shines under the amber sun. An Indian man in a scarlet turban serves a silver platter of hot roti, jasmine rice flavored with saffron, cool mango chutney and spicy chicken curry, so hot we call the fire department. They hose us down with giant hoses and we dance in the rain.

Fall Fog

Ryan, 8
Farragut Elementary
Culver City

There is a place I know where there is a little wooden hut. And where fog comes in at an alarming rate. The oven is made out of wood and the wine bottles are covered from top to bottom with so much fog. Once in a while my friends come down to this little hut owned by everyone and everything.

Heaven

Teague, 12
Cabrillo Middle School
Ventura

Outside my house, toward the road, beyond the Street Eleven, I went someplace special called Heaven. Over the plain, through the forest, at a lane, like a chorus, I went someplace special called Heaven. Above my head, beyond the point outside of the Universe, I was near the end of my journey to Grandma's house — someplace special called Heaven.

Wild

Maya, 10
Coeur d'Alene Elementary
Venice

One part of me is wild, like the ocean waves crashing. And the other side of me is as shy as a star alone. I decided to be wild as the ocean.

Special thanks to heartwarmingart.com in Canada for submitting this week's art.

