



WILLIPUT

By Sam Gayton
Illustrated by Alice Ratterree

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PEACHTREE
ATLANTA



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To Mum,
who is also Boss
—S. G.

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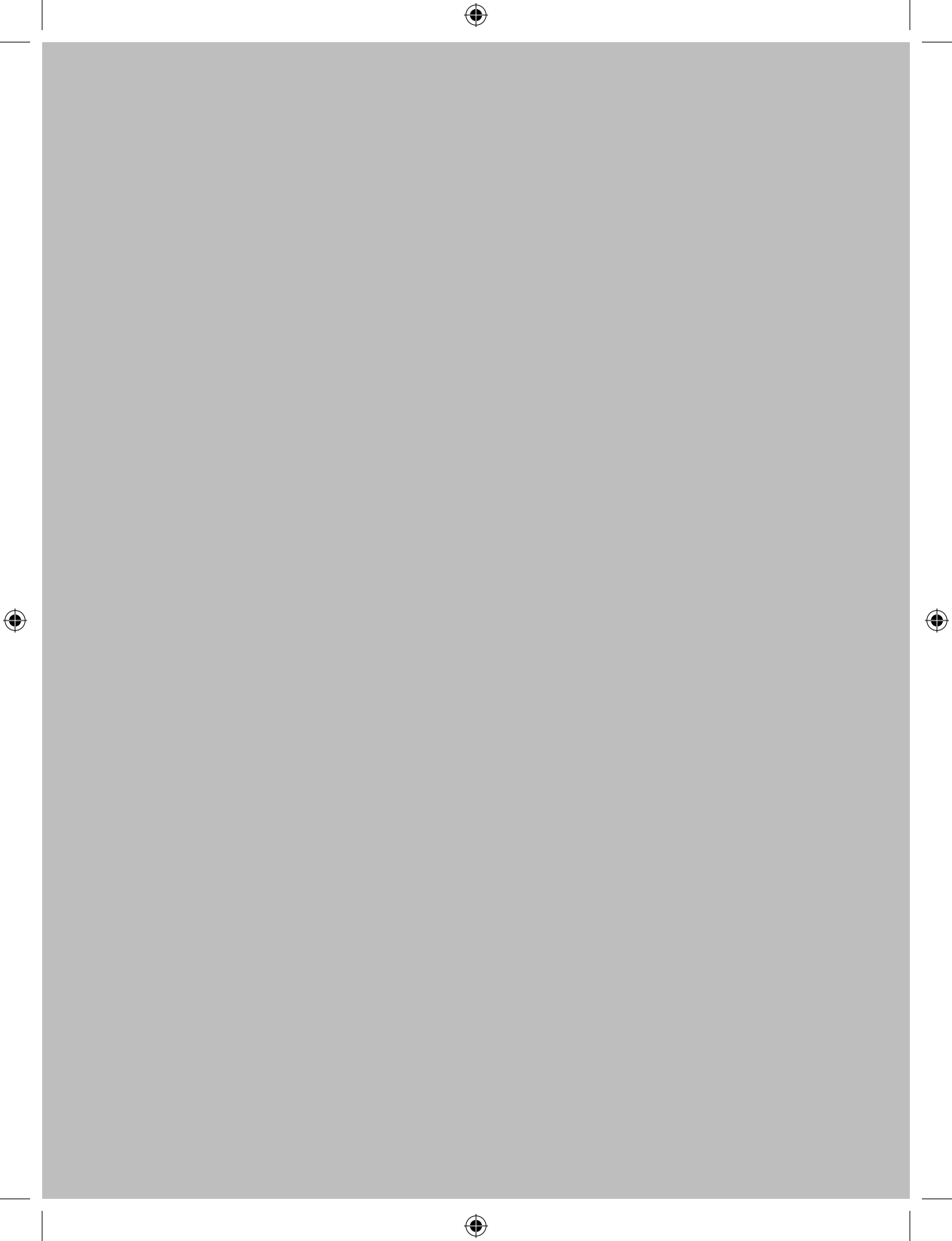
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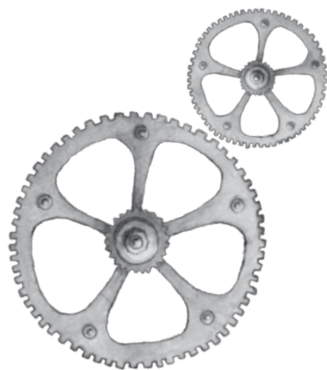
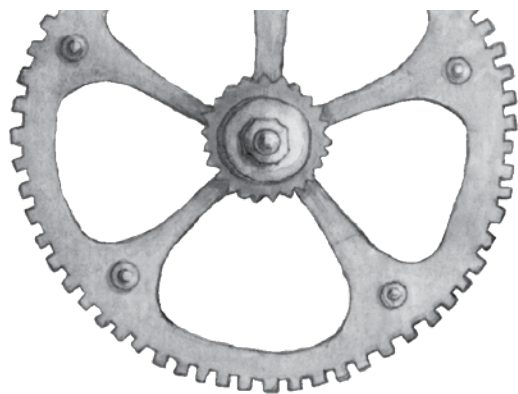




Prologue CATCHING

To the Giants' Country
he lost his way;
They kept him there
for a year and a day.

—William Brighty Rands,
“Stalky Jack”



Pinchers & Plips

All down the pebble path to the beach, Lily sulked about her iron shoes. They clang-clang-clanged on her feet as she made her way to the shore. It was blowy and the waves were high as houses. Bellin was already there with his grumpy older sister Bree. They dug through the sucking wet sand, looking for pincher crabs.

Lily stomped toward them, iron shoes flashing in the sun. Bree scowled and nudged her brother, and Bellin pulled his tweezers from the beach and threw them with a plonk into his bucket. Together they watched her coming down the dunes to the wet sand left by the tide.

“Can I dig with you?” Lily asked, looking at Bellin.

“Suppose so,” Bree muttered, rolling her eyes. She pointed down at Lily’s shoes. “But take those off first.”

Lily hesitated. A part of her wanted to, but the shoes were bound to her feet by more than just leather straps. “I can’t,” she said at last.

“You have to,” said Bree. “All your stomping will

scare off the pinchers. Me and Bellin leave ours over there.” She pointed at two pairs of rusty iron shoes over by the dunes. “Come on, Lily. Don’t be a little’un.”

Lily sniffed and shook her head again. “Can’t,” she repeated.

“You can,” Bree insisted. “It’s not dangerous, as long as you’re careful.”

Lily flung down her bucket and sat on a cockleshell, glaring at her feet. “That’s what I said to Nana. But she never listens. She makes me *promise*.”

Bree threw up her hands in frustration and looked over to her brother, but Bellin just shrugged. He grabbed his giant tweezers again and went back to rummaging.

They all knew why Lily’s nana had made her promise. Catching pinchers was dangerous. The crabs dug themselves into the sucking sand, and if any hands or feet sank down close to them, they would snip off a finger or toe with their claws.

That was why they used giant tweezers to pull up pincher crabs, and wore iron shoes. But iron shoes were heavy and the pinchers always hid when they heard them.

Bree was older than Lily, and Bellin was braver. They always took their shoes off, so they could tiptoe up above the pinchers and take them by surprise.

But Lily never did. Nana made her promise every

time she went out crabbing, and though she sulked, she was also secretly glad. Lily liked her toes and she wanted to keep them.

Picking up her own tweezers, she climbed from the cockleshell, looking for a good spot of sand to rummage in.

"You're still a little'un." Bree folded her arms. "You shouldn't be here."

Lily felt herself go hot with embarrassment. "I'm six moons old," she told Bree angrily. "You're only seven."

"But I know how to catch pinchers."

"Then why is your bucket empty?"

"Come share my spot, Lily," said Bellin, stepping in front of his sister. "There's lots of space by me."

Bree hissed in anger and tugged her bucket farther away to another patch of sand.

"Don't listen to her," Bellin said quietly. "She thinks you're scaring the pinchers away, but you're not. They were dug down deep before you even got here."

Lily smiled. Her lips were dry and she licked them wet again. She scanned the beach. It was a hot spring day. Just a few squiggles of cloud and all the rest blue. Strange. Usually when it was warm the pincher crabs came up almost to the surface to sunbathe. But not today. Today, they were all hiding.

"Something has them scared," she told Bellin.

He shrugged and wiped the sweat from his brow. "Maybe it's Bree's temper," he whispered.

Lily's giggle became a gasp. Bellin tugged at something, then stood up straight, a huge pincher wriggling and clacking in his tweezers. It was as big as a dinner plate.

"Here's a brave one. It's not hiding like the rest." Bellin dropped it with a rattle into Lily's bucket. "Have it. Take it back to your nana. Everyone in Plips knows she makes the best pincher-crab pie in the village."

Lily grinned. "I will. And I'll tell her to save you the biggest slice. Thanks, Bellin."

Bellin shrugged.

Behind him his sister screamed.

At first Lily thought that Bree had been snipped by a pincher's claw. But she hadn't. She was pointing at the sea. Her body was rigid, and her tweezers lay forgotten in the sand.

Lily and Bellin turned, following her finger to where the waves were galloping back and forth over the shore. They both saw the head rise up from the spray, and the arms. Then the legs, wading out of the water.

He was so enormous Lily couldn't believe it. But there he was. Climbing out of all the stories Nana told her at bedtime.

A giant.

A mountain of a man.

He stood there, sea dripping from his hair, waves roaring at his feet. From the pockets of his coat he took an enormous pair of spectacles, the size and shape of a bicycle, and balanced them on his nose. His head moved left, then right.

And he saw them.

Suddenly Bellin's hand fell into Lily's and it was pulling her, dragging her back up the beach. They left the buckets and tweezers and fled for the dunes.

Lily couldn't keep up. The iron shoes were too heavy and she couldn't stop to untie them. Bellin's hand slipped from hers. Bree was on the shingle path, screaming for them to hurry.

Bellin caught up with his sister, and he turned to shout for Lily, but Bree dragged him off into the dunes. Behind them Lily tripped, fell, rose, and stumbled. She felt the rumbling steps of the giant, coming closer.

Closer, closer, closer, with his hands stretching out.

At last Lily reached the dunes and crawled into a hiding place in the grass. Gasping, she lay down and listened. The waves crashed and the wind blew and each breath rasped in her throat and that was all.

Make him go, she kept praying to the Ender. *Make him turn back to the sea.*

Then everything went darker, but the clouds had all unraveled from the sky.

Lily was sitting in his shadow. It was huge. It stretched out in front of her. Somewhere ahead, Bellin and Bree were screaming.

“Run, Lily! Run, run, run!”


She didn’t even take a step. The giant was too quick. He scooped her into his palm, rough and lined. It bore her up like a flying carpet, and the beach fell away from the sky, and Bellin and Bree’s voices fell away from her ears, and the sand trickled away through the giant’s hand.

“Fair tidings to you, child of Lilliput!”

Lily opened her eyes. The giant was speaking. His voice boomed in her ears.

“If my speech sounds strange to your ears, apologies. I learned to speak Lilliputian over two hundred moons ago, in the court of Emperor Mully Ully Gue the First. No doubt the language since then has altered considerably. Indeed, I imagine almost everything in Lilliput has changed since last I was here. The emperor’s great-great-grandson must sit on the throne now, yes?”

Lily gazed up, dumb with terror. The enormous face hung in the sky like a new moon, with its sloping cheeks, its cragged mountain of a nose, and the thousand little craters that pockmarked his skin.



“My name is Lemuel Gulliver,” the giant continued in Lilliputian. “I should like to explain more to you, but we must leave at once. A great journey looms ahead of us, and the sooner we set sail for England, the sooner we shall arrive.”

His spectacles flashed in the sun. Lily blinked and started, at last, to scream. Gulliver waited some time for her to stop. She did not. She screamed and screamed, then drew in another great gasp and screamed again, until the giant’s palm tipped and Lily fell down into darkness.

Gulliver patted his pocket closed. Then he turned on his heel and began to walk. Back over the dunes, across the beach, and into the sea.

