

## Preface

As children, most of us were drawn to worlds far beyond the physical reach and intellectual grasp of our parents. With no money, no transportation and no adults, we could take ourselves miles away from the isolated perimeters of farm life, city apartments and tenements, suburbia, and luxury estate homes where—due to the luck of parentage—our life journeys began.

In these imagined worlds, we could travel to amazing lands with new make-believe friends and creatures. We could engage with animals that could do anything we could do, have conversations with inanimate objects, and do the physically impossible. These were places where we could be safe from our worst fears and, at the same time, be wholly helpless or heroic. We could be as creative, curious, or clever as our imaginations permitted. It was fun. It was freedom!

In *Stories of Wonder for Wondering Minds*, children and animals embark on three adventures of the imagination, leaving young readers with playful, conceptual challenges. Each of the stories is intended to bring out the natural philosophical wonder and curiosity that children have. With little encouragement, children can imagine, wonder, and “stretch their brains” to sort out the real from the fictitious, express their opinions about what’s happening, and explore their own worlds.

In “Leopold and the Magical Mat,” the old cat Leopold flies under the power of a magical mat until he encounters Joanie Maronie, “a winged girl towing a crazily colored, brimming full bus.” Leopold has a strangely wonderful nighttime adventure with Joanie Maronie and her collection of odd friends, after which she returns him safely to earth. At the end of this story, young readers are asked if they think Leopold “dreamed this or not.” They can also think more about the nature of the

imaginary creatures that Leopold met—each one being “A silly, mad mixture of half this and that.” Do Kangapillars really exist, for example, and has anyone ever seen an Alligashark blowing a kiss?

In “A Tale of Halloween Creatures,” Belly-Butt Bee tries to scare his two older sisters by pretending he’s a ghost. His sisters—Butterfly Pinky and Dragonfly Dainty—decide to play a trick on him; after all, it is Halloween. They assume the disguises of humans, named Katie and Sarah, and frighten their little brother who then flies off to his mother. At the end of the story, the Butterfly Pinky and Dragonfly Dainty remove their human disguises and fly off into the night sky. Children will wonder on their own which of the creatures in the story—if any—are real and which ones—if any—are imaginary. They may also explore the nature of other Halloween creatures, cartoon and movie characters, imaginary friends, and other familiar creatures.

In “Goodle Soup,” a sick child is offered a recipe for making Goodle Soup—an imaginary concoction that’s guaranteed to make her feel better. How could it not? The Goodle doughs consist of cares, woes, aches, coughs, bad thoughts and foes. The Goodle soup itself consists of a giggle, daisies, snowflakes, sprinkles of cheer and “your very last tear.” The child smiles at the end of the recipe and, with that, the “Goodles fade out of sight” and “All that is left is a kite in the night.” Children can compare the strange ingredients of this imaginary soup with those of a real soup, and they can discuss whether soup of any sort can help make you feel better. Goodle Soup may also provide children with a safe way to talk with their parents about thoughts and feelings that are quite real for them, but difficult to express. They can be encouraged to add their saddest thoughts and feelings to the Goodle doughs (which take the form of a disappearing kite tail), and add their happiest thoughts and feelings to the Goodle soup (which takes the form of the remaining kite in the night).

Above all, it is my hope that young readers who read or hear *Stories of Wonder for Wondering Minds* will have moments of joy and thoughtful explorations of their fertile imaginations. And if it is true that philosophy begins with wonder, it is my hope that these stories might nurture a philosopher to be.

– *Donna Benedetti*