

CREATIVE SOUP

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Volume 1 Number 5

THE BRAVE LITTLE TAILOR - PT 1

THE BRAVE LITTLE TAILOR

PART 1

The Valiant Little Tailor

Bros. Grimm, updated by Marie Gail Stratford

One warm summer morning, a little tailor sat at his work bench by the window, happily sewing. On the street below, he saw a peasant woman selling jams. "Good jams, cheap! Good jams, cheap!" she cried.

The little tailor thought he might like a sweet treat, so he stuck his tiny head out the window and hollered, "Come up! I will purchase your goods."

The woman dragged her heavy basket up the steps to the tailor, and he had her unpack all her jam pots for him. He inspected each one, lifting them up and smelling them. Finally, he said, "This jam seems good. I'll take four ounces, and if it ends up being a quarter pound, that is fine with me."

The woman, who had expected a much better sale, scowled at the tailor while she measured out his jam and took payment.

As she left, grumbling, the little tailor said a blessing over the jam. Then he got some bread out of the cupboard, cut a piece, and spread the jam. "Ooh, this will be so tasty!" he said to himself, but before taking a bite, he decided to finish the jacket he had been sewing.



As the little tailor sewed, the sweet smell of jam began to attract flies. They flew down to the little tailor's workbench in swarms. "Hallo!" exclaimed the little tailor. "Who invited you?" He waved his arms in an attempt to drive them away, but more and more flies swarmed around him. Finally, the little tailor lost his patience. Picking up a scrap of fabric, he slapped it down over the flies, killing seven at once.

"Would you look at that?" the little tailor exclaimed, quite proud of himself. "Seven in one blow! I will tell the whole town."

The little tailor decided to make a sash to wear for everyone to see. He stitched the sash and embroidered it with the words "seven in one blow." "Now," he thought, "everyone will know of my skill."

The little tailor put on his sash and decided to go on a journey to show off his handiwork and spread word of his great skill in killing pesky flies. Before leaving the workshop, he looked around for anything he should bring with him and found a small piece of cheese, which he slipped into his pocket. On the way out the door, he discovered a small bird stuck in a bush at the entrance to the workshop. He freed it and slipped it also into his pocket.

The tailor walked proudly along the road, which led to a mountain. When he had climbed to the top of the mountain, he saw a giant sitting there. "Good day, my friend," he said, "I see you are sitting here looking out at the wide world. I am on my way to seek my fortune. Would you care to join me?"

The giant stared down at the tiny man. "What sort of ragamuffin man are you? Why should I join you?" he sneered.

This angered the little tailor, who unbuttoned his coat and showed his sash to the giant. "See this! Seven in one blow! How many could you kill at once, even with your large fists?"

The giant stared at the little tailor in surprise, thinking the small man must have killed seven humans in one blow. Although he felt some respect for the tailor, he wanted to test him before setting out on an adventure. The giant lifted a stone in his massive hand and squeezed a drop of water from it. "Are you strong enough to do this?" he asked.

The little tailor took the rock in one hand while slipping the cheese from his pocket into the other. "I'll show you something better." When he squeezed the stone, a drop of water fell from his other fist.

The giant didn't know what to say and was still suspicious of the little tailor, so he picked up another stone. He threw this stone so far that the little tailor could barely see where it fell. "Little man," said the giant, "let's see how far you can throw."

"Okay," said the tailor. "Your stone fell back to the earth. I will throw a stone that will not." Then he reached into his pocket, took out the bird, and threw it into the air. The bird, happy to be free, flew away, out of sight. "Does that throw please you, my friend?" the little tailor asked the giant.

"You certainly have a strong throwing arm," the giant replied. "Now let us see what you can carry."

The giant led the little tailor to a big oak tree that had fallen to the ground. "If you are strong enough, help me carry this out of the forest."

"Of course," said the tailor. "You take the trunk on your shoulders, and I will follow carrying the branches and twigs, which everyone knows is the heaviest part of the tree."

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The giant hoisted the trunk onto his shoulders, but the little tailor hopped onto a branch. The giant, who could not turn around to see what the tailor was doing, dragged both the oak tree and the tailor along. The tailor sang merrily, but the giant grew tired. Finally, the giant stopped. "I can go no farther. I must let the tree fall."

Immediately, the little tailor jumped down from his branch, grabbed the top of the tree with both arms as though he had been helping all along, and shouted, "You are not very strong for a giant, are you? You cannot even carry a tree with my help."

The giant did not appreciate the little tailor's comment, but the two continued along the road together. When they came to a cherry tree, the giant grabbed the top of the tree where the ripest, sweetest fruit was. He pulled it down to the tailor, but when the giant let go, the tailor could not hang onto the treetop. Instead, the cherry tree bounced back, and the tiny tailor flew into the air.

Once the tailor fell back to the ground, the giant laughed. "You cannot even hold onto a tiny twig. You are not strong."

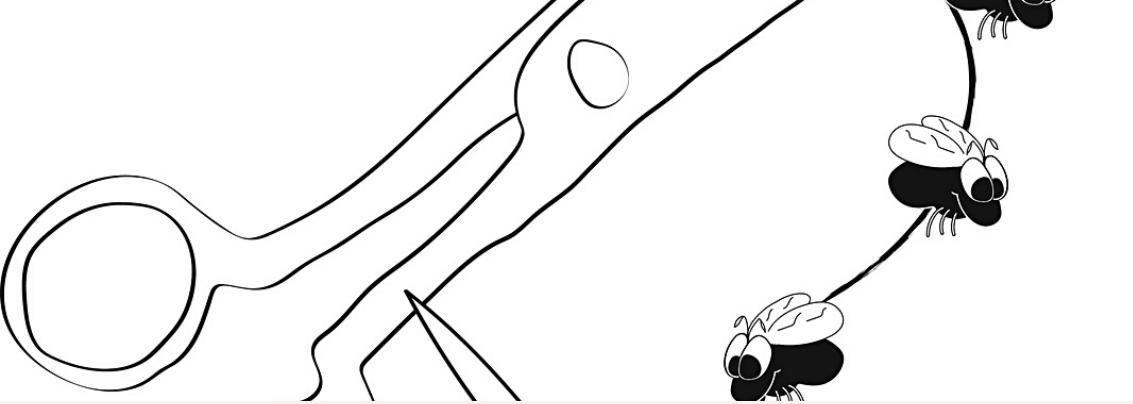
"Of course, I am strong," said the tailor. "Do you think a man who killed seven in one blow cannot hold onto a twig? I jumped over the tree because I heard hunters down in the thicket. We should hurry to get away from their guns. Can you jump over the tree like I did?"

The giant ran and jumped, but instead of soaring past the tree, he got stuck in the branches. Once he managed to get out of the tree, he said to the little tailor, "Since you are such a brave and noble little man, come with me and spend the night in our cave."

The little tailor followed the giant home to the cave. Inside, several other giants sat around a fire, eating their dinner. Looking around the huge cavern, the tailor thought how much bigger it was than his workshop.

The giant showed the tailor a bed where he could sleep. It was huge! Instead of lying in the center, the tailor curled into a corner of it. At midnight, the giant, thinking the tailor was asleep, raised an iron bar over his head and brought it down on the center of the bed, cutting it in half. Certain that he must have killed the tailor, he went back to sleep until dawn, when all the giants left the cavern. The little tailor, whom they forgotten all about, followed the giants from the cave. He soon caught up with them on the road, and all the giants shivered in fright. Then the merry little tailor decided to leave the giants and continue seeking his fortune on his own.

To be continued..



ABOUT "THE BRAVE LITTLE TAILOR"

Overcoming obstacles

"The Brave Little Tailor" features a trickster or Jack character that varies from these tropes in a two key ways. First, the little tailor, although cunning and selective (modern marketers might refer to him as a man of discerning taste), is not malicious except in cases where he has been wronged by someone. Second, the little tailor, unlike many tricksters and Jacks in other tales, is portrayed as hard working rather than lazy.

The Cunning Little Tailor

We first meet the little tailor in his workshop. He is working at his trade when a jam peddler catches his attention. Although he annoys her with his selectiveness regarding the jams, he does make a purchase, which he both anticipates greatly and then enjoys.

Once the little tailor sets out on his adventures, he uses his wit to his advantage. Unlike other fairytale tricksters, however, he does not seek to harm others along the way. He does stick up for himself, and eventually his antics humiliate the first giant, who has repeatedly looked down on him due to his small size. Later in the story (Spoiler Alert!), when the little tailor is tasked with killing giants, he finds ways to accomplish the task without doing the killing himself.

The Hard-Working Little Tailor

Grimm's tale emphasizes throughout the story that the brave tailor is "little." At the beginning of the story, the Grimm Bros. tale even describes the tailor's head as small and delicate. This hero isn't only small in comparison to the giants. The text indicates that he is actually a little person, and if the character were based on a historical individual, that person certainly would have been diagnosed with dwarfism. In all likelihood, our brave little tailor had to work hard all his life to prove his worth to others. No wonder he developed such discerning taste as well as an admirable work ethic. When the world around you is geared toward people larger than you, you have to be both cunning and hard working to survive.



ABOUT "THE BRAVE LITTLE TAILOR"

The Thriving Little Tailor

At the beginning of our story, the brave little tailor has a pretty comfortable gig. Perhaps with a bit more money coming in he could have afforded to purchase more than a quarter pound of jam. Yes, he had a fly problem in his workshop, but most any shop on his street likely had a similar issue, especially if the occupants made a habit of leaving sweet treats out on the workbench. Still, the little tailor is ambitious and wants more out of life. When he slays seven flies in one blow, he sees an opportunity to improve his life. Like many other fairytale characters, he goes out to seek his fortune.

In the second part of the story (Spoiler Alert!), we will see how the tailor finds his fortune. I'm sure you have already guessed that he continues to use his cunning to get ahead in the world. If there is a moral to this tale, it is that a combination of hard work and cunning will help a person overcome difficult odds.

For More Information

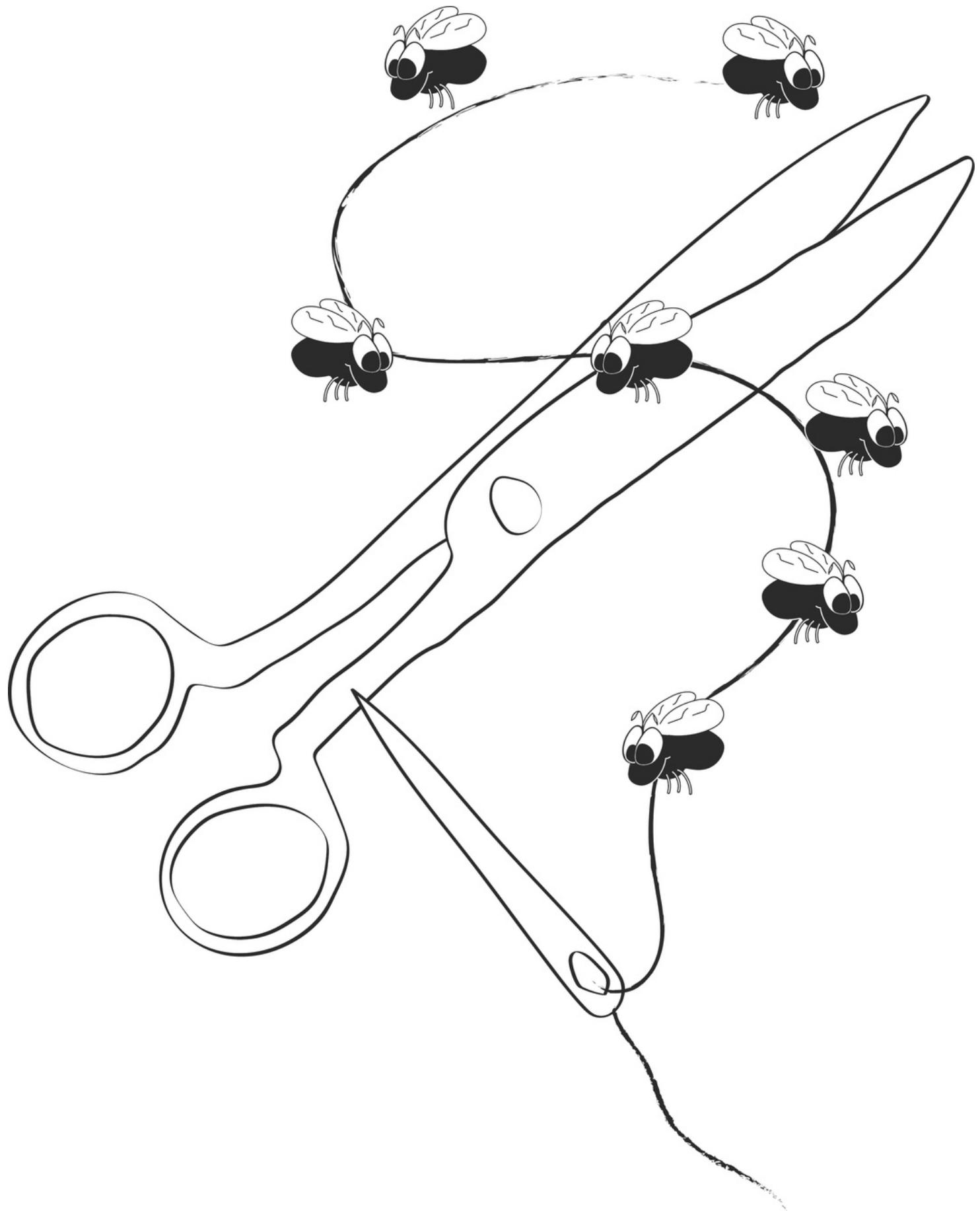
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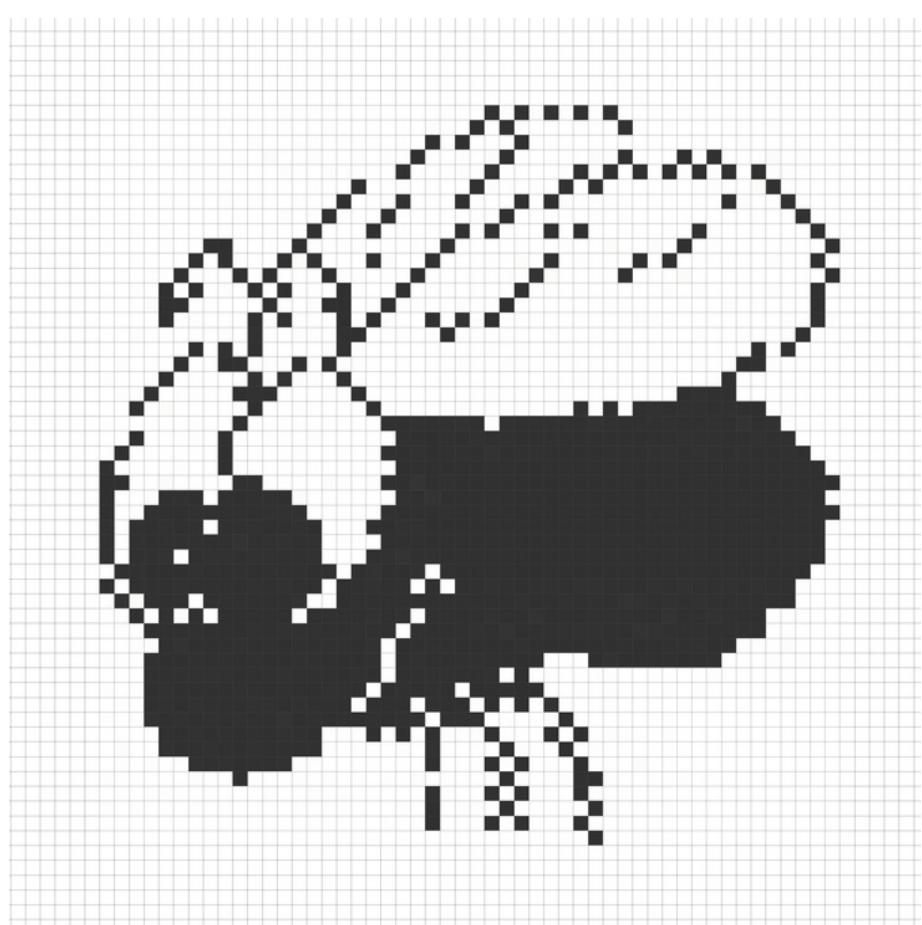
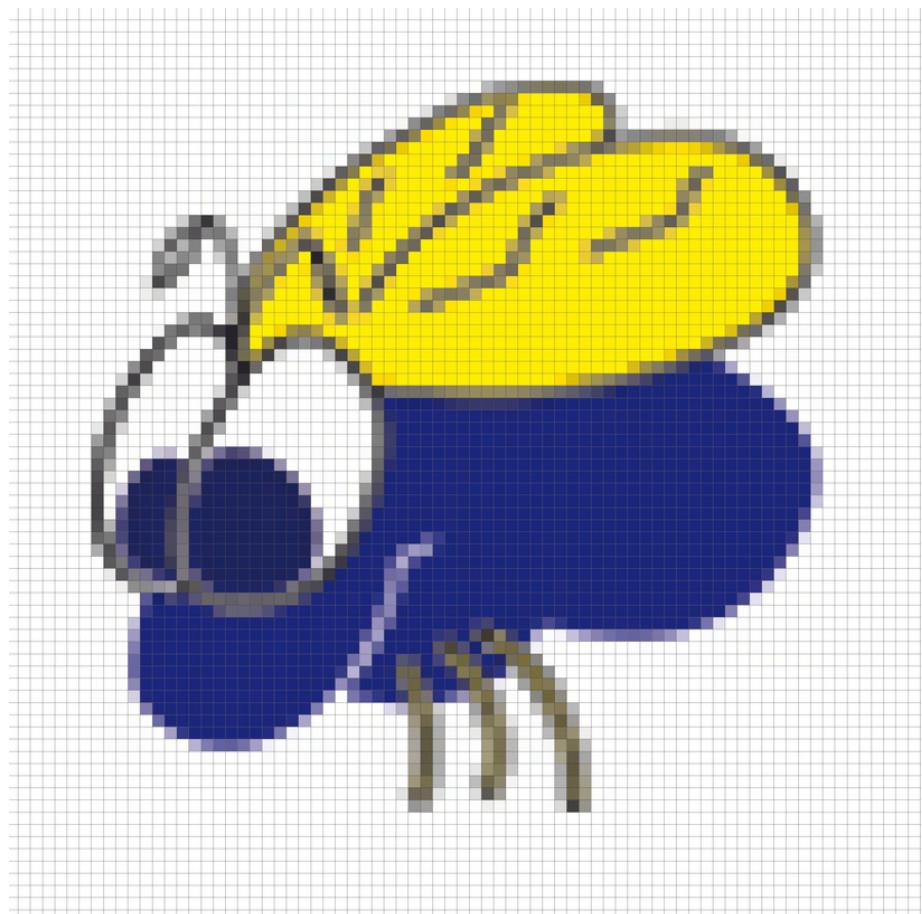
Audio Recording of the Original Grimm Bros. Tale
<https://anchor.fm/silentstories/episodes/1-2-The-Valiant-Little-Tailor-e1aklf9>

Further Reading on the Trickster Trope

<https://www.britannica.com/art/trickster-tale>

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S.H.A.R.E. FOUNDERS



MARIE GAIL STRATFORD

Movement, Painting, Rhythm, Space

Marie Gail "MG" Stratford is a recreational therapist, artist, and holistic creative facilitator whose experience ranges from direct client care in psychiatric facilities to teaching dance to high-risk middle school students in inner cities. Today, she brings her understanding of the healing effects of recreational creativity to individuals of all ages.



PENNY HIGGINS

Cats, Digital Art, Photography, Paleontology

Penny is a paleontologist with a passion for cats. She spends about a month every summer camping and collecting fossils throughout the "Wild West," and the rest of her year is spent caring for cats, drawing pet portraits, and writing the occasional technical manuscript. Her passion is to provide education in science while balancing the deep emotional implications of scientific revelation.
