

“It’s a Big World: A Bedtime Adventure”
A Children’s Book Series

By: Catherine Taegel
Advisor: Heather McDonald
Spring 2010
University Honors

It's A Big World: A Bedtime Adventure
Book 1: The United States

"Meeeeeggg!" Max screamed from his room. His older sister Meg had just made a bag of popcorn. She was about to watch a movie when she heard Joe scream. She dashed upstairs and burst into his room.

"What's wrong?" she asked out of breath.

"You didn't tell me a story. Mom always tells me a story before I go to sleep," Max said. Meg shook her head.

"You scared me half to death," she said, "but alright pick out a book." Max and Meg's parents were out of town for two weeks. Meg knew that babysitting her little brother during her vacation might drive her crazy. But ever since she went away to college she missed him.

"No, make one up," said Max.

"But I'm so tired," said Meg. She hoped he would just pick a book.

"Meg please. I've read all those books. I want to hear something new," Max insisted.

"Okay, okay" Meg said. She hopped up on the bed next to Max. She thought for a moment.

"Okay Max. Once upon a time there was a girl named Sally who was stuck in a boring old town called Cactus, Kansas. It was in the middle of nowhere. Her parents had gone out of town and she had to babysit her little brother Sam—"

"Meg, this story sure sounds familiar," Max said.

"Hey don't interrupt! Just trust me. It's a good story," Meg said.

"Okay, okay go on," Max said. He wasn't sure if he should believe her. Meg continued.

“So anyway, it was a normal day. The sun was shining and Sally was wondering around inside her house...”

“Ugh it’s so boring here. Like always, there is nothing to do,” said Sally. Her little brother Sam was playing out in the backyard. Sally wished she could play like that and still have fun. But he was six and she was eighteen. She went to college in her town, and the “on-call” babysitter for Sam. She didn’t mind it. Her little brother was entertaining enough. It was just that she had never been anywhere outside of Kansas. She stood at the backdoor watching Sam play and wishing there was some way she could get out of this boring old town and see things. Out of nowhere dark clouds began to roll in. The wind began to whip the tree limbs around.

“Sam, Sam, a storm is coming!” Sally yelled. The wind was so loud Sam couldn’t hear her. So she ran outside to grab him. Right when she grabbed him a huge, black, swirling twister came down. Sally and Sam were lifted right on top of it. They managed to grab on and climb to the top.

“Sally, what do we do?” Sam asked.

“I think we just have to ride it out,” Sally said, “So hold on tight!”

“Okay!” Sam exclaimed. Sally didn’t know it, but Sam had been wishing for an adventure, too. They knew they had to ride it wherever it was going. But where was it going?

“I think we’re going west,” said Sam. The twister quickly hopped. The twister appeared to have a mind of its own.

“Hey I think Felix understood me,” said Sam.

“Who is Felix?” asked Sally.

“The twister we’re riding,” Sam said. Felix gave an approving hop.

“Ohh. Alright Felix, take us west,” Sally laughed and pointed towards the horizon. Felix twisted his way through Arizona.

“I just saw the sign for Arizona,” Sam said.

“Hey, that means we’re at the Grand Canyon!” Sally exclaimed. The Grand Canyon stretched for miles. Sam liked how it looked. He thought the land was perfectly flat across, like a desert, but someone had gone in and scooped out portions of it. He thought the person who did that must have been a giant, because the scoops were so deep and curved all around. Down in the bottom of the Grand Canyon Sam saw a river. It looked so small.

“Oh boy look Sally, there are people travelling on donkeys. And there’s a family of coyotes, but they’re leaving. Where are they going?” Sam asked.

“I don’t know,” said Sally.

“Felix, follow those coyotes,” Sam ordered. Felix hopped into the canyon. Sam and Sally were twisting right along the river they had seen from above. It was much bigger now. Sam spotted prickly cacti, little bare trees, and green bushes. The sun beat down on them as they tried to keep up with the coyotes.

“Those coyotes are fast,” Sally said. The coyotes went around a corner and disappeared into the canyon.

“Hey, they’re gone,” Sam replied.

“I wonder what kinds of things live out here?” Sally asked.

“Look-- a snake and a scorpion!” Sam said. He pointed to a snake with black and red stripes. It slithered across the patchy grass, around bushes and trees, and into a hole in the ground.

“Hey, why did he do that?” Sam asked.

“Probably to keep cool. It’s hot out here,” Sally said.

“It really is,” Max said. He wiped the sweat off of his forehead. All of a sudden they ran into a family riding donkeys.

“Hi folks!” Max yelled.

“Hi there! You all having a good time?” the father of the family yelled back.

“Definitely. Hey, watch out for snakes. I already saw one that is black and red. It could maybe poison you,” Max warned.

“Well, thanks. You two should keep your eyes peeled for the 75 species of mammals. Those are warm-blooded animals like coyotes and squirrels. I’m sure you’ll spot one of 300 species of birds, 50 species of reptiles, and five species of amphibians, too!” the dad exclaimed.

“Whoa! This place has everything!” Sam exclaimed.

“It sure seems like it,” Sally said.

“So did a giant scoop the land out to make the canyons?” Sam asked.

“That’s a good question. Actually, water did this,” the man said.

“Water??” said Sally and Sam in unison.

“Yes, water over millions of years caused erosion, which basically means that the water wore down the earth. That erosion created the things you see around us,” the man explained.

“That must have taken a long time,” Sam said.

“You’re right it did. Some scientists say that the Grand Canyon took 6 million years to form. Other scientists say the Grand Canyon could be 17 million years old! Either way, it’s been here for a long time,” the man said.

“I’ll say!” Max exclaimed. Felix hopped. He was impatient and wanted to explore more.

“Oh, I think we better go. Felix is getting antsy,” Sally said.

“Okay. It was nice meeting you!” Sam yelled to the man.

“It was nice meeting you folks too. Take care,” the man yelled back. Felix took off spinning. They passed through many states.

“Now Felix, we can’t be gone much longer. It’s getting close to dinner time,” Sally said.

Felix twisted his way into the nation’s capital, Washington, D.C.

“Look there’s Abraham Lincoln! I just learned about how he freed all the slaves,” said Sam. Then they passed by the Washington monument.

“Did you know that the Washington monument is 555 feet tall? No other building in Washington D.C. can be built taller than it,” Sally said.

“Really?” Sam asked.

“Yup. And look there are the Cherry Blossoms. They are trees that were given as a special gift from the Japanese almost a hundred years ago. They symbolize the friendship between the United States and Japan. Every year thousands of people from all over come to see these trees,” Sally said.

“They are pretty,” Sam said. He liked how the pink and white flowers on the trees blended together and surrounded the small lake of water. Felix twisted and took them towards the White House. They came upon the White House’s south lawn.

“There’s the First Lady, Michelle Obama, in the garden,” Sally said. The First Lady motioned them to come over. She was showing a class of kids from the local public school all the food she had been growing in the garden. There were all sorts of vegetables.

“It’s good to eat healthy food grown locally. It’s good for the earth and for your body. Eating the right foods and playing outside a lot will help make you big and strong. What’s your name?” she asked Sam.

“My name’s Sam,” he said.

“Hi Sam. Welcome. Would you like to try a carrot,” said the First Lady.

“I’m sorry Mrs. Obama. My brother doesn’t really like carrots,” Sally apologized. She was surprised to see Sam take the carrot. He took a big bite out of it.

“Good job Sam,” the First Lady said as she gave him a big hug.

“If Bugs Bunny likes carrots they can’t be so bad right?” Sam said. They all laughed.

“Where are you two from?” the First Lady asked.

“Kansas,” Sam replied.

“You two sure are a long way from Kansas,” said the First Lady. Felix gave a hop.

“Looks like Felix is ready to go, Sam,” Sally said.

“I think you’re right. Thank you Mrs. Obama,” Sam said.

“Yes, thank you,” Sally agreed.

“You’re both very welcome. Remember to keep running around outdoors and having fun,” the First Lady said as she waved goodbye. Sam and Sally jumped on Felix and waved goodbye. They were both exhausted but happy about their great adventure. As Felix was twisting them home they both fell asleep. Sam awoke in the morning in his bed. He wasn’t sure if it was all a dream or not. He raced downstairs to find Sally watching television. She looked back at him smiling.

“It was real,” she said.

“The end,” said Meg.

“Okay that was pretty good,” said Max.

“Thank you. Now, lights out,” Meg said as she tucked Max into bed. She turned off the light and began to walk out of the room. She stopped at the door and looked back.

“So, another adventure tomorrow night?” she asked.

“Definitely,” said Max.

It's A Big World: A Bedtime Adventure
Book 2: Argentina

It was bedtime in the Miller household. The sun had set and Meg knew she had let her little brother stay up past his bedtime.

"Okay buddy, bedtime. And I really mean it this time," Meg said.

"Can't I stay up just a liiitttlee longer? Please?" Max asked giving Meg his best puppy dog eyes.

"No, all the other six year olds in the world were in bed hours ago. Now, come on, into bed. You ready for another story?" she asked.

"Oh, alright. Are Sam and Sally going to Disneyworld this time?" Max asked.

"Sorry Charlie. I think Sally and Sam are going past Disneyworld," Meg said. Max looked disappointed, but Meg just shook her head. She climbed into bed next to him and began the story.

"So, Sam and Sally had just been all over the United States. It was a magical adventure. Sally thought it was probably just a one-time thing. I mean twisters named Felix don't just come out of the sky everyday. But Sam thought it was only the beginning...."

It was raining out. This was strange for Cactus, Kansas, but a twister had just come through here. He must have left some clouds behind. Since it was raining out Sam decided to explore the attic. He felt certain that he would find something that would send them on another adventure. Sally had been sitting around reading a magazine. She hated being forced to stay inside. She started to think that maybe the twister wasn't a one time thing. Bored and curious she made her way up to the attic. There were stacks and stacks of old papers. There were trunks of clothes, old furniture, and boxes of photographs. Sally wondered how this all fit up here?

“Who knew all this stuff was up here?” she asked.

“I know. Isn’t it great?” Sam said. He came upon old hats and started trying them on.

“I don’t think all of this stuff is Mom and Dad’s. I wonder where it came from,” Sally said as she began to go through the boxes. In one box she found a piece of paper with the year “1955” written on the top. She realized she was holding a very old piece of paper, but this wasn’t just any piece of paper. This piece of paper said that their house had once belonged to their grandparents.

“Oh man, Sam. You’re never going to believe this,” Sally said.

“What? Did you find something good?” Sam asked.

“Well, you could say that. This piece of paper says that our house used to be grandma and grandpa’s house. This must be all their stuff,” Sally said.

“Wow, then this stuff is *really* old,” Sam said. Sally nodded and they kept looking through the boxes. Sam picked up a bunch of photographs and one fell to the floor.

“Sam, be careful. We don’t want to mess anything up,” Sally said as she picked up the forgotten photo. Sam came over to look.

“Sorry. Who are those people? And what funny dance are they doing?” Sam asked. Sally turned the photo over. The year “1962” and the country named “Argentina” were written on the back of the photo.

“Hmmm, who do we know that would have gone to Argentina in 1962? Where even is Argentina?” Max asked. Sometimes Sally forgets that Sam is just six years old.

“That’s Grandma and Grandpa, silly, and Argentina is in South America. That’s the continent under North America, which the United States is on,” Sally said. Sally turned the photo back over and gasped.

“What’s wrong?” Max asked.

“She- she’s smiling at me,” Sally said.

“What? Let me see that,” Sam said. He grabbed for the photo. He held the photo on one side.

“Hey, she’s smiling at me too. Now she’s waving at us,” Sam said. He was so excited he grabbed Sally’s free hand. All of a sudden the room went dark. Sam was falling into darkness, but he wasn’t scared. He landed still holding Sally’s hand.

“Oh, are you two alright?” a familiar voice said. Sam and Sally opened their eyes. Still holding hands they sat up.

“Grandma? Grandpa? Are you really here? Where are we?” Sally asked.

“We are really here. Welcome to Buenos Aires, Argentina’s capital city. It seems you have found our photo,” Grandma said.

“Yea we did. You were smiling and waving. You were really young,” Sam said.

“Yes, that was a nice trip,” Grandma said.

“How are you here? How are *we* here?” Sally asked.

“I suppose you found a piece of paper saying we used to own that house,” Grandpa said. Both Sally and Sam nodded.

“Well, we aren’t the only ones who have owned that house. I grew up in that house. It’s been in our family for centuries. We couldn’t let it go, because of its magic. We aren’t sure where the magic comes from. But every time my parents were out of town I would be with my sister and we would find something or happen upon something. Then *whoosh!* We were somewhere we’d never been before,” Grandpa explained.

“Wow, that’s so cool. Does that mean no parents equals adventure?!” Sam asked.

“Something like that,” Grandpa said. Sally laughed.

“But how did you get here?” she asked.

“Well, let’s just say we have a few photos of our own,” Grandma said with a twinkle in her eye.

“Now you know about the house. Let us show you some of Buenos Aires,” Grandpa said.

“I’m so hungry,” Sam said.

“Good idea, Sam. Let’s eat. This way everybody,” Grandpa said. Everybody followed. They walked into a small restaurant. It was very quiet.

“Where is everybody?” Sam asked.

“Well, it’s the early afternoon. Everyone is taking a *siesta*,” Grandma said.

“What’s a siesta?” Sam asked.

“In South America it is customary for people to take long lunches which include naps. These are called siestas,” Grandma explained.

“Hey that means I take a siesta everyday at school. Am I actually from South America?” Sam asked. Grandpa thought this was really funny.

“I’m afraid not, Sam. You’re just six. But it’s the same idea. People here need naps just like you do to keep their energy up,” he said.

“Alright, we’re going to eat some good Argentinean food,” Grandma said.

“We’re going to have empanadas. The outside is dough, but the inside can be just about whatever you want. We are going have a few with chicken and a few with beef. They put spices and sauces to make it extra tasty,” Grandpa said.

“Sounds good. Let’s eat,” Sally said. They ordered the food. When it came they were talking, laughing, and having a great time.

“Thank you,” said Sam.

“Ah, ah,” Grandma said with her hand in the air, “They speak Spanish in Argentina. So you would say *gracias* here. That means thank you.”

“Oh, sorry, Gracias” Sam said to the waitress.

“De nada. That means you’re welcome,” the waitress said with a smile.

“She speaks English, too?” Sam asked.

“I’m sure lots of people here do,” Sally said.

“Yes, many do. But it is still nice to make an effort. Here let’s teach you some more Spanish words,” Grandpa said.

“Well, I know thank you. That’s *gracias*. And you’re welcome is *de nada*,” Sam said. He felt very proud of himself.

“Good job, Sam,” Grandma said, “Okay, let’s see. You should probably say please before you say thank you. Please is *por favor*.”

“Por favor,” Sam and Sally repeated.

“Good job you two,” Grandpa said.

“How do you say hello and goodbye?” Sally asked.

“Good question. Hello is *hola* and goodbye, or see you later, is *hasta luego*,” Grandma explained.

“Hasta luego!” Sally teased.

“Good try,” Grandma said.

“We should get going. Do you guys want to see a *fútbol* game?” Grandpa asked.

“Oh boy, are the Chiefs playing?” Sam said. He loved supporting the home football team.

“No not football, *fútbol*. In South America and much of the rest of the world people call soccer *fútbol*. It’s a very important sport here,” Grandpa explained.

“Oh cool. Yea, let’s go!” Sam said. They all left the restaurant and walked up the street. They came to a big stadium. Grandpa brought them to four seats. They were right in the middle of a packed stadium. The game was tied. There was a minute left on the clock. Argentina scores!

“Hoorayy!!” Sam yelled. The crowd began to chant “Olee! Ole! Olee! Ole!” Sam got so swept up. He began to chant too.

“Oleeee!! Ole! Ole! Oleeee!” he yelled. Sally, Grandma, and Grandpa laughed. They joined in too.

“That was great!” Sam exclaimed.

“I’m glad you liked it. It’s starting to get late. We’ll take you to one more place. Then you two should get home,” Grandpa said.

“But Grandpaaa, this is so fun. Aren’t you having fun with us?” Sam asked.

“Of course. But there is plenty of time to have fun. You need to get your rest. You never know what tomorrow will bring,” Grandpa said. Sam looked disappointed.

“Okay. What’s the last place?” he asked.

“Follow me,” Grandma said. They all left the stadium and walked down a street. There were houses in bright colors around them-blue, pink, yellow, and green. There was music playing and they could see people dancing.

“Where are we?” Sally asked.

“We are in the part of town called *La Boca*. You know that picture you found of your Grandpa and me? This is where it was taken. Here people tango in the street,” Grandma said. Grandpa grabbed Grandma’s hand and they began to tango. Sally and Sam laughed. They grabbed hands and started to tango too. Then they switched. Grandma was dancing with Sam, and Sally was dancing with Grandpa. Soon a crowd formed. When they finished the crowd clapped. Sam, Sally, Grandpa and Grandma took a bow.

“This was so much fun,” Sally said.

“SO much fun. Can we do it again?” Sam asked.

“I have a feeling you’ll be doing something like this again very soon,” Grandma said. Grandpa nodded in agreement.

“Definitely, but now it’s time to go home,” he said. Sam and Sally were sad. It was so nice to see their grandparents. Everyone hugged each other and said goodbye.

“Now grab hands, close your eyes, and wish for home,” Grandpa said. Sally and Sam grabbed hands.

“Hasta luego,” Sam said. They closed their eyes and wished for home. They fell into the darkness again. When they opened their eyes they were back in the attic. They looked at each other smiling.

“I can’t wait for tomorrow,” Sam said.

“The end,” Meg said. Max yawned.

“Argentina....empanadas, mmmm...” he said. He drifted off to sleep. Meg turned off the light and crept out of the room.

“See you tomorrow,” she said as she closed the door.

It's A Big World: A Bedtime Story
Book 3: France

"Okay got your teeth brushed?" Meg asked her little brother Max.

"Yup. See," he said as he opened his mouth.

"Very clean. Good job," she said. Meg pulled the covers up around Max.

"Another story tonight?" Max asked.

"You're not tired of them yet?" Meg responded.

"Not yet," Max said with a smile.

"Okay. Well let's see. Sam and Sally had been back from their last adventure and almost two days had passed. Their parents would be back in five days. What had happened to the magical house.....?"

"This stinks, Sally" Sam said. He was so frustrated. They had searched everywhere and found old photos and books, but none of it had taken them anywhere.

"There's got to be something around here," Sally said. The worst had happened: they were bored.

"Can we watch t.v.?" Sam asked.

"Sure. How about some 'Go Diego Go'? We can practice the Spanish we just learned," Sally said.

"Si!" Sam exclaimed as he jumped on the couch. They turned on the t.v. They were in the middle of the second episode, and had begun to forget about adventures. Suddenly- *ding dong*- the doorbell rang. Sam and Sally perked up and looked at each other. Their faces were wide with smiles. They jumped up and raced towards the door- each pushing the other to get to

the handle first. Sam slipped in front of Sally, grabbed the door handle, and swung the door open. They both peered out to find there was no one at the door.

“What gives?” Sam asked. Sally wondered the same thing. She looked down and saw a package. She grabbed it before Sam noticed and ripped it open. Two red hats fell out along with a note. Sam picked up one of the hats by the edge.

“What is this?” he asked.

“It doesn’t have cooties, Sam. It’s a beret. When I think of berets I think of people in France. I wonder who sent them,” Sally said.

“Well this note says that they are frooomm....Grandma and Grandpa! Yesss!” Sam exclaimed.

“Let me see that!” Sally yelled. She yanked the note from Sam’s hand.

“These are for your next adventure. Wear with care,” Sally read out loud. Sally and Sam looked at each other. They were so excited. Their boredom had come to an end.

“Okay, Sam. Let’s put them on at the same time,” Sally said. Sam nodded. He took a beret. They both took a deep breathe. They closed their eyes and put on the berets. Nothing happened. They looked at each other confused. *Sam looks so disappointed*, Sally thought, *we should get some ice cream*. She grabbed his hand. The room began to spin.

“Whoa! That was awesome!” Sam exclaimed when the room had stopped spinning. They looked around. They were on a sidewalk of a busy road.

“Sally, look,” Sam said. He pointed down the road.

“That’s the Eiffel Tower, Sam. We’re in Paris,” said Sally.

“Where’s that?” Sam asked.

“It’s the capital of France. We’re in Europe- all the way on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean.” Sally explained.

“Can we go to that tower?” Sam asked.

“Definitely,” Sally said. She grabbed his hand. It didn’t take long before they were in line. They got to the top and walked around until they found an open spot to see the view. Buildings squished together as far as they could see.

“This is a big city,” Sam said.

“Sure is,” Sally agreed, “I wonder where we should go next.”

“Well- I think you should see the Mona Lisa next,” said a small voice with a French accent. Sam and Sally turned around to see a little girl in a blue dress and yellow hat.

“Madeline?” asked Sally.

“Yes, it is me. I just came from my old house here in Paris that is covered with vines. I am the smallest one. I am Madeline!” she exclaimed.

“Hi Madeline! I’m Sam and this is my sister Sally. Can you show us where the Mona Lisa is? And could you tell me what it is, too?” asked Sam.

“Of course. I’d be delighted, Sam. The Mona Lisa is a painting. It’s by a famous artist named Leonardo da Vinci. And it hangs here in Paris, in the one of the world’s largest museums- the Louvre,” explained Madeline. Sally and Sam smiled at each other. Their parents had read them Madeline stories. They couldn’t believe she was here with them. Sam, Sally, and Madeline walked up the street to the Louvre. They entered the museum and walked the halls. The halls were so long and the lights were so low. Sam thought every corner he turned looked the same.

“So this is the Looov. This place is huge,” said Sam.

“Yea, somebody could get lost in here,” said Sally.

“When you travel around with eleven other girls someone always ends up missing. It’s usually me!” said Madeline with a giggle. They were in a large room with high ceilings. Each wall had dozens of old looking paintings. Sam looked across the room to see one picture alone on a wall. A dozen people were standing around it.

“That’s her isn’t it? That’s the Mona Lisa?” Sam asked.

“Yes, Sam. That is the Mona Lisa,” Madeline replied. The Mona Lisa hung in front of them. Sam could not tell if she was smiling or not.

“I wonder what she’s thinking,” said Sally.

“Probably that she’s hungry,” Sam said.

“I guess that means *you’re* hungry,” Sally said. Sam nodded.

“Well then we should get crepes,” Madeline suggested.

“Are those like burgers?” Sam asked.

“No, Sam. The outside of a crepe is like a thin pancake. The inside of it can be something like ham and cheese that you can eat for lunch. Or it can be something like chocolate, ice cream, and bananas, that you can have for dessert- or lunch,” Madeline explained with a smile.

“That sounds great. Let’s eat!” Sam said. They walked to a local café. There were so many people Sally almost lost Sam and Madeline. Luckily, she saw Sam’s red beret. She walked quickly and caught up. *It’s a good thing we are wearing this berets*, Sally thought to herself. It was a nice day so they sat outside.

“So, Madeline. Wee means yes?” Sam asked.

“Wee,” Madeline replied.

“Cool. Can you teach us some more?” asked Sally.

“That is no problem. Let’s see. *Wee* means yes. *S’il vous plaît* means please and *merci* means thank you. *Bonjour* means hello and *au revoir* means goodbye,” said Madeline. As she finished the waiter came over to get their order.

“Bonjour! Three crepes with chocolate, ice cream, and bananas see-voo-play,” Sam said proudly. The waiter nodded and left.

“That was wonderful, Sam!” exclaimed Madeline.

“Yea, good job bud,” said Sally. The waiter returned with the crepes. While the three ate they giggled and practiced French. They were having such a nice lunch when Madeline noticed the time.

“Oh, it is later then I thought,” Madeline said, “I must be on my way. Come, I pass by one of the most beautiful places that you both must see. Will you come?”

“Wee,” Sam and Sally said in unison. The three laughed.

“Or-re-vor,” Sam said as he waved goodbye to the waiter. They walked for awhile up cobbled streets and steep hills.

“My legs are starting to hurt,” Sally said.

“I’m sorry. Paris is a hilly, cobbly city. Don’t worry, we are almost there,” Madeline said. They went around a big building, down a narrow street, and entered a square. It was so crowded with people you could barely get around. There were people sitting outside at cafes. Others were talking in the street. Most were looking at the drawings and paintings that took up the center of the square.

“So where are we?” Sam asked.

“We are in a part of town called Montmartre. This is where much of local art is seen. You can even buy it,” said Madeline.

“It’s so colorful. I love it. I can’t believe how big, beautiful and historic Paris is. Thank you for taking us around today Madeline. Merci,” said Sally.

“Yea, it was really fun,” said Sam.

“I had fun too, but I must go. I will miss you both,” Madeline said. She gave each of them a hug.

“I think there is a picture you will like over there,” she added. Then she gave them a wave and left. Sam and Sally turned to look at the picture Madeline was talking about. It was a room with a couch, chair, and television.

“It does look familiar,” Sally said as she held the picture

“Yea, it kind of looks like our family room,” Sam said. He grabbed the other side of the picture. The room began to spin again. When it stopped spinning they were back in their family room. They looked back at the picture they were still holding. In the picture Sam and Sally were in their living room with Madeline!

“Can we hang it up?” Sam asked. Sally nodded and they placed the picture over the fireplace.

“Bedtime?” Sam asked.

“Good idea,” Sally said. And they made their way upstairs.

“So you want to go to Paris?” Meg asked her little brother.

“Not now- too tired. Or-re-vor,” Max said as he drifted off to sleep. Meg laughed and made her way to the door.

“Or-re-vor Max,” Meg said and shut the door.

It's A Big World: A Bedtime Story
Book 4: Kenya

It was a particularly rowdy night in the Mitchell household. Six year old Max had been playing pretend all day and was stuck in his role as explorer.

"Max, come ooooo. It's time for bed. Hop in," Meg said. She pulled back the covers and was about to sit on the bed.

"Meg, no!" Max screamed.

"What?" Meg asked.

"There are snakes! Be verrry still and verrry quiet," Max said. He moved slowly towards the bed. He was holding a cup of juice. Once he was close to the bed he threw the cup of juice all over the sheets.

"Max! Are you kidding right now? Why'd you do that?" Meg asked.

"I had to poison the snakes. I saved your life! You should be thanking me," Max said. Meg took a deep breathe, "Thank you, Max. Could you please brush your teeth while I get some snake free sheets?"

"You better check the sheets for other things too- like spiders," Max said. Meg nodded and went to change the sheets. Soon they were settled in Max's bed.

"Okay, I'm ready. Are Sally and Sam still around?" Max asked.

"As a matter of fact they are. It was a really nice day out and Sam decided to play in the backyard. He was digging up dirt searching for buried treasure. He heard a noise from the woods and looked up. A cat was coming towards him..."

Sam loved all animals. He especially loved little kittens. He put his hand out for the cat. The cat came over and rubbed his nose against Sam's hand. Sam knew it was okay to pet the cat.

He began to pet the cat's back. As his hand went over the cat's soft coat the cat began to change. As Sam's hand went down his back the cat got bigger and bigger. All of a sudden the cat wasn't a cat anymore. It was a LION!

"Woah! This cat got biiigg!" Sam laughed and yelled for his sister, "Saaallllyyy!" Sally had just poured herself a cup of juice. She headed outside to see what Sam was yelling about.

"What is it Sam?" Sally asked. She looked over to see Sam on top of a *LION*. She dropped her freshly poured cup of juice.

"Sam. Step. Slowly. Away. From. The. L-l-l-lion." Sam giggled as the lion nudged him with his nose. The lion stretched out his long body and laid down. Sam looked at his new friend. He knew it was okay to climb on. So he did. The lion licked his paws and relaxed in the grass.

"Come on over, Sally. Get on," Sam said.

"Are you crazy? You are crazy. Get off of that thing!" Sally said firmly. Sam laughed.

"Aw Sally, he's nice. Come on. He's part of the house magic. He was a cat. Then I petted him and he turned into a lion. At least come pet him," Sam said. Sally began to walk over. She reluctantly put one foot in front of the other. Once at the lion she petted his mane. She could hardly believe the fur was so soft. The lion turned his head and nudged her towards his back. She looked at Sam and he nodded in agreement. She hesitated at first then swung her leg over the lions back and sat behind Sam. The lion stretched once more and got up. He began to walk towards the woods.

"Sam- what is he doing?" Sally asked nervously.

"I don't know Sally, but isn't this great!" Sam said. He was filled with excitement. The lion began to move faster and faster and faster!

“Saaamm!!” Sally screamed.

“Waahoooo!!” Sam whooped. Leaves began to pass by faster and faster until everything was just a blur. They exploded out of the forest. Sam realized that they weren’t in Kansas anymore. They were in a wide open field. The grass was tall and green. It seemed to swallow them. It was the tallest grass Sam had ever seen. He could barely see above it. Not far in the distance he could see a group of zebras drinking from a small pond of water. The sun reflected off of their bright white and black stripes.

“Sally, stop squeezing me so hard! Open your eyes! This is unbelievable!!” Sam yelled at his sister. Sally didn’t even realize that the lion had stopped. She opened her eyes and released her grip from Sam.

“Sorry, where are we?” Sally asked.

“No idea. Hey look, there’s a car over there,” Sam said. The two of them hopped off the lion and walked towards the car. They got closer and saw a group of people near the car. The leader of the group was wearing a big hat that reminded Sam of the hats his mom made him wear when they went to the beach last summer. The leader also had a on a vest with lots of pockets. Sam watched as the leader took out a band-aid from one of the pockets in the vest and gave it to someone. The leader sensed there was something near him. He turned and spotted Sally and Sam.

“Sam? Sally? Is that you?” the man asked. Sam took Sally’s hand. He knew they weren’t supposed to talk to strangers.

“Uh, yes? Do we know you?” Sally asked.

“Uncle Dave at your service. I see you came in from the house on Joe,” the man said pointing at the lion.

“Uncle Dave? You mean dad’s brother. The guy who leads safaris?” Sally asked.

“The one and only,” Uncle Dave said.

“Then that must mean that we are in...?” Sally asked as her heart began to race.

“Africa. Kenya to be exact,” Uncle Dave said.

“What? That’s awesome!” Sam exclaimed.

“Hop in to the truck. You two must join our group,” Uncle Dave said. The two of them hopped in to the big jeep. There weren’t any doors. Uncle Dave said it was so people could really feel a part of the safari. The rest of the group piled in after them. The group was made up of people in sunglasses, hats, and big boots. Sam laughed at one man who had put bright white sunscreen all over his nose. Uncle Dave got into the driver’s seat and began to drive. He showed them big elephants.

“Remember, keep quiet. We don’t want to spook them,” he cautioned. He kept driving and they saw giraffes. They used their long necks to get the leaves at the very tops of the trees. They kept on driving. A group of zebras came running next to the car. Sam reached out to touch one. Right then they turned and went towards the horizon.

“That stinks,” he said.

“You should always keep your hands inside. You never know when an animal is hungry,” Uncle Dave said. He gave Sam a friendly wink. The car left the fields and came into a city.

“Where are we Uncle Dave?” Sally asked.

“We are in Kenya’s capital city. This is Nairobi,” Uncle Dave replied. There were people everywhere. Lots of women were carrying baskets on their heads. Car horns were honking.

“Sure seems like a busy place,” Sam said.

“It sure is a busy place,” Uncle Dave said.

“Alright, folks. This is the end our adventure. I hope you enjoyed the safari. Please let me know if you have any questions,” Uncle Dave said to the group. He walked away and motioned for Sally and Sam to follow.

“Where are we going now?” Sam asked.

“Follow me,” Uncle Dave said. The three of them took off. They walked down street after street.

“Uh, Uncle Dave? Are we almost there?” Sally asked.

“Just a little further,” Uncle Dave replied. Then they turned a corner. It was the busiest place Sam had ever seen.

“This is the Village Market. It has over 150 stores. The people here are bartering. That’s when you discuss what price you want to pay for a good. They are speaking their native language, Swahili,” Uncle Dave explained. Sam and Sally nodded. They were in awe. They began to walk around looking at all the neat stuff. There were all kinds of jewelry, bowls, scarves, and toys. Most looked like they were made by hand.

“Jambo,” Uncle Dave said.

“What did you just say?” Sam asked.

“I said *jambo*. It means hello in Swahili,” Uncle Dave said.

“Ohh. Can you teach us some more?” Max asked.

“Definitely. Well, *jambo* means hello. *Kwaheri* means goodbye. *Tafadhali* means please and *asante sana* means thank you very much. Those four should get you pretty far here,” Uncle Dave said.

“Being polite always gets you pretty far. At least that’s what Dad always says,” Sam said.

“Your dad is a pretty smart guy,” Uncle Dave said. He put one arm around Sam and the other around Sally. They walked through the market for awhile. They picked up all sorts of neat crafts. Sam liked the one of the elephant. It was wooden with big ears. Uncle Dave happily bought Sam the elephant.

“Asanta sana Uncle Dave,” Sam said. He smiled wide.

“You are very welcome, Sam,” Uncle Dave said. They walked around a corner and found an open area with a big hot air balloon. A family had just gotten off and the balloon was ready to go.

“Want to go for a ride?” Uncle Dave asked.

“Really?” Sally asked. Uncle Dave nodded.

“Definitely!” Sam said. He ran and hopped in the balloon. Sally followed behind him. Uncle Dave closed the door of the basket behind them.

“Hands inside guys and hold on,” Uncle Dave said. The three of them held on to the side of the basket. The hot air balloon began to lift up.

“Look there’s the lady who sold us my wooden elephant,” Sam said. He waved down to her. She smiled and waved back. The balloon got higher.

“Look, there’s the group of zebras. They’re back at the watering hole,” Sally said. The balloon got even higher. They could see the whole field and mountains in the distance. They heard a loud a roar.

“Look, there’s Joe. He must be saying goodbye,” Uncle Dave said.

“Kwaheri Joe!” they all said as they waved goodbye. The balloon got even higher. The sun set over the mountains. They could barely see any lights.

“We sure our high,” Joe said.

“And it sure is dark. No lights anywhere. It kind of reminds me of home,” Sally said. Uncle Dave smiled. The hot air balloon began to lower. It got lower and lower and landed softly on the ground.

“Hey are we...?” Sally asked.

“Home!” Sam exclaimed. He jumped out of the basket of the balloon.

“Are you going to come in?” Sam asked Uncle Dave.

“I can’t. My life is Kenya. I have to go to back. But it was so fun seeing both of you,” Uncle Dave said.

“It was so fun seeing you too!” Sam said. He threw his arms around his Uncle and gave him a big hug. Uncle Dave gave Sally a hug, too. Then he got back in the basket of the hot air balloon. The balloon went up into the night sky. All of the stars sparkled around it. Uncle Dave waved down at Sam and Sally. They waved back. They stood out there until they couldn’t see him anymore. Then they went back inside.

“I wonder where we’ll go tomorrow,” Sam said. He couldn’t believe they had just been to Africa!

“The sooner you go to bed the sooner you’ll find out,” Sally said. Sam raced upstairs and jumped into bed.

Max smiled as he sunk into his bed. He looked over at his shelf. On it stood a wooden elephant with big ears their uncle had given him.

“Very creative,” he said to Meg.

“What can I say? I’m inspired by real life,” Meg said.

“Goodnight Meg,” Sam said.

“Uskiki Memwa Sam,” Meg said.

It's A Big World: A Bedtime Adventure
Book 5: Afghanistan

Meg had let her little brother Max stay up way too late. She also let him eat way too much sugar. He was bouncing off the walls and jumping on the bed.

"Max! Get your pajamas on, now!" Meg exclaimed.

"You're not the boss of me!" Max yelled back.

"I am while Mom and Dad are out of town. Now come on. Don't you want to hear where Sam and Sally are going tonight?" she asked. Sam had gotten used to falling asleep to his fictional friends' adventures. He stopped jumping around.

"Alright, alright," Max said. He changed into his pajamas and sat on his bed.

"Thank you," Sally said. She was exhausted.

"Okay Sally....story time now," Max reminded her.

"Oh right, right. So it was a beautiful Sunday. Max and Sally were playing outside. They were running on excitement from their recent trip to Kenya...."

"You're it!" Sam shrieked as he tagged his sister. He couldn't help but laugh as he raced away.

"Get back here!" Sally yelled. They had been playing tag for awhile. Before that they had been digging for 'buried treasure'. They thought they could dig up something that would take them on another adventure. When nothing came up they decided on tag. Sally grabbed her brother.

"You're it," she said. Sam fell to the ground.

"You okay?" Sally asked.

"Yea, just tiiired," Sam said with a laugh.

“Me too,” Sally said. She laid down in the grass next to him.

“The clouds are big and puffy today,” Sally said.

“Yea and that one looks like a dragon!” exclaimed Sam.

“And that one looks like a lion,” Sally pointed out.

“Yea just like Joe!” Sam said. He was referring to their lion friend they met in Kenya.

They laughed and after pointing out a few more clouds. Sam yawned.

“The sun sure feels nice,” he said.

“It sure does,” Sally said. They both drifted into a nice afternoon nap. Sam was having the greatest sleep when a gust of wind threw sand in his face.

“Sally,” Sam said annoyed, “Why are you throwing sand on me?” He didn’t hear a response.

“Sally?” he asked. He realized he was sweating. It was so hot. He sat up and brushed the sand out of his eyes. He opened his eyes, but the sun was blinding. He shielded his eyes to see what was around him. As he looked around he saw sand everywhere. A smile crept across his face. *Another adventure*, he thought. He glanced over at his still sleeping sister.

“Sally, wake up,” Sam said as he shoved Sally.

“Huh? What is it, Sam? Wh-where are we?” Sally asked groggily.

“I have no idea. Let’s explore!” Sam said as he jumped up.

“Explore where? It looks like there’s nothing and no one out here,” Sally said.

“Hey, what are you kids doing out here!” a woman yelled from behind them. Sam and Sally jumped.

“Lisa?” Sally said. Sally thought the woman looked just like their neighbor who was in the army.

“Sally? Sam? Come on. It’s too hot. You can’t just stay here,” she said.

“Wait, who are you?” Sam said.

“Sam, my name is Lisa Sanders. I’m your neighbor and Jacob’s mom. I’m a Lieutenant General in the U.S. Army and you two are in Afghanistan,” she said. Jacob was the older boy who lived next door. He babysat Sam sometimes when Sally was at school.

“We are where? Are we in danger?” Sally asked. She knew there was a war going on here. She grabbed Sam’s hand.

“Don’t worry. We are in a safe part and you are in good hands. But just in case put these on,” Lisa said. She handed them helmets and vests. Sam thought this was great.

“Wow, we’re soldiers,” he said.

“Honorary soldiers,” Lisa said. She brought them to her truck.

“Alright hop in,” she said, “You ran into a good group. We’re heading to Kabul. The capital of Afghanistan,” she said. Sam shook all the soldiers’ hands. He felt very important. They helped him and Sally into the truck. Then the whole group took off. They passed by lots of mountains that seemed to roll along next to them. The mountains were a mix of red and brown and sparkled in the sun. Away from the mounds of sand that Sam woke up in was a flat desert. The ground was full of cracks. An occasional green bush could be spotted. This place had many different looks. Sam had so many questions.

“So, we are fighting bad people here, right?” he asked.

“Yes, we are trying to get rid of the bad people and help the good people. We help build schools so kids your age can learn to read and write,” Lisa said.

“Their mom and dad’s don’t teach them that?” he asked.

“Many of their mom and dad’s don’t know how to read and write either. We are trying to help them, too,” Lisa said.

“That’s sad. In Kansas corn grows nearby that we eat. I don’t see anything like that here. Where do they get their food?” Sam asked.

“Actually, Sam, they do grow a lot of their own food. We are just in an area right now that isn’t able to grow food. In other parts of Afghanistan they grow wheat, corn, and rice. We are helping teach other Afghans how to grow those crops. We are hoping they will then teach their fellow citizen,” Lisa said.

“That’s nice of you. It sounds like you’re helping a lot,” Sam said.

“We sure are trying,” Lisa said. She smiled at Max. She liked his questions. After a few hours the truck came into Kabul. They stopped in front of a large building and got out.

“I didn’t expect this,” Sally said, “There are more people then I expected.”

“Yes Kabul is a bustling capital. Over three million people live here. There are lots of things being done here to help the rest of the country,” Lisa said. A woman passed by them. She was wearing a long black garment, like a coat, that covered her whole body. You could only see her eyes. Sam grabbed Sally’s arm and hid behind her.

“What’s wrong buddy?” Sally asked.

“That woman. She’s so scary. Is she one of the bad guys?” Sam asked.

“Absolutely not,” Lisa said,

“That woman is just a woman. The clothing she is wearing is called a *burka*. She is dressed like that because it is part of her culture. It is just something she wears. It’s like how we were jeans. It’s just a normal piece of clothing. Do you understand?” Lisa asked gently. Sam nodded.

“I’m sorry. I’ve just never seen anybody wear anything like that,” Sam said.

“I know. It’s alright. It’s new and different. Things like that can be scary. But we must always try to understand them first. If we don’t we could misunderstand what important things mean. Then it is more likely that we turn our friends into enemies. We must always try to understand each other and help others understand us,” Lisa said. Sam looked at Sally. She smiled and nodded in agreement. They began to walk around. Lisa led them into a park where children were playing tag. Sam looked on smiling. Tag was a fun game.

“So, we always learn a few words wherever we go. Can you teach us some?” Sally asked. They sat down in the grass. The sun was warm on their faces.

“Sure,” Lisa replied, “Well, here in Afghanistan most people speak Farsi. If you were to say hello, how are you- you would say *salaam aleykum*. *Khoda hafez* means goodbye. *Lotfan* means please and *tashakor* means thank you. Also, when speaking many people say *ensha allah* which means God willing. It’s a phrase people may use to say goodbye or within conversations,” Lisa explained.

“This is very different from English,” Sam said. He mouth opened wide and a big yawn came out.

“Very different, but very interesting,” Sally said. She yawned too.

“It’s very warm here. It’s easy to get tired. Drink some water and get some rest,” Lisa said and she handed them her water bottle. They both took big gulps and laid down.

“Do you think you’ll come home soon?” Sam asked Lisa.

“Ensha allah,” Lisa replied. The sun felt nice. Sam and Sally fell into a deep sleep. The wind blew across Sam’s face, but no sand this time. He heard birds tweeting and trees swaying. He opened his eyes. He was in a familiar place- his backyard.

“That was a fast adventure,” Sam said. He wished he could have stayed longer.

“Yea, I know. But Lieutenant General Lisa has important things to do. She has a lot of people to help,” Sally said. She stood up and brushed the sand and grass off of her.

“That’s true. You think we can help them, too?” Sam asked. Sally smiled. Sometimes her little brother surprised her.

“Sure we can. We can gather old clothes we never wear, shoes we’ve grown out of, and canned goods and send them over there. We could even set up a lemonade stand and send them some money,” Sally said.

“Good idea. Let’s start now! Come on!” Sam said. He opened the door and ran inside.

“I’m right behind you!” Sally yelled.

“There are a lot of people who need help over there, huh?” Max asked. His eyelids felt heavy.

“There sure are, Max.” Meg said.

“Maybe we can gather clothes and shoes, too?” he asked.

“That sounds like a good idea. We’ll start tomorrow. Goodnight Max,” Meg said. Little brothers sure are surprising, Meg thought as she turned out the light.

It's A Big World: A Bedtime Story
Book 6: Russia

"You got any fours?" Max asked his older sister. Go Fish was his favorite card game. Not just because it was the only one he knew. It was because he always won.

"Yea, I got a four. Can you see my cards?" Meg asked. She was glad her little brother was low-key tonight. He had been to a birthday party at Krazy Karl's Play Palace earlier in the day. He rode down a water slide, played arcade games, and ate lots of cake. Meg was happy he had burned off all his energy and was willing to just play cards.

"I win!" Max exclaimed.

"Not agaiiin. Well, you know the deal. That was our last hand. Now it's time for bed," Meg said. Max nodded. He opened his mouth up for a wide yawn and climbed into bed.

"This is our sixth night together. Mom and Dad are going to be home the day after tomorrow," Max said.

"That's true," Meg replied.

"Well, then no more bedtime stories," Max said.

"Not a chance. I'll still tell you stories," Meg said.

"Not like this," Max said.

"I do have to go back to college. But hey, I'll make you a deal. College isn't that far away. So once a week I'll come over and tuck you in. Then we can start a new bedtime story tradition," Meg said.

"Yea, alright. That sounds good," Max said. He was pleased his big sister would be coming around more often.

“Okay, good. Now let’s get to Sam and Sally. Sam woke up in his bed with bits of sand around him. There was even sand in his hair from the previous day’s adventure to Afghanistan. He jumped out of bed and shook his head. Bits of sand fell out of his shaggy brown hair.....”

Sam’s parents were going to be home in two days. Time was running out. There was still time though for another adventure. Sam was still running on excitement for his last adventure. He bounced down the stairs, jumping over the last one, and turned into the kitchen.

“Good morning, Sally,” Sam said.

“Good morning to you Sam. You seem happy,” Sally replied.

“I am happy and starving,” Sam said.

“Well, why don’t you go grab the cereal? I’ll get the bowls,” Sally said. She pulled down two bowls and opened the drawer for two spoons. Sam went into the pantry to get his favorite cereal, Frosted Flakes. He stood on his tippy toes and pulled down the box.

There’s something weird about this box, Sam thought to himself, *Tony looks different.* Sam brought out the cereal box and handed it to Sally.

“Doesn’t Tony look different?” Sam asked his sister. Sally looked at it and noticed his name.

“Yea, look Sam, it says Tigr Tony. No “e” in the tiger. This wasn’t the cereal Mom bought last week. I wonder where this is from?” she asked with excitement.

“Let’s google it!” Sam yelled. They raced to the computer and typed in ‘Tigr Tony’.

“It’s from Russia!” they exclaimed at the same time. Sally poured the cereal and they sat down at the table.

“Okay let’s eat it at the same time,” said Sally.

“Remember the trip to Paris? We have to hold hands too,” Sam reminded her. She nodded and they grabbed hands. Then they each grabbed a spoonful of the cereal and looked at each other. Their hearts were racing. They were going to Russia and they knew it. But Russia’s a big place. Where would they end up? They closed their eyes and put the spoonfuls in their mouths. When they opened their eyes and they were sitting at a table, but were not in their kitchen. They were sitting at a table in the middle of a busy restaurant. There were people all around them eating, drinking, and laughing. A woman came over. She started speaking to them in a language they couldn’t understand.

“I’m sorry we only speak English,” Sally said.

“That’s alright. What can I get for you?” the woman asked. Sally realized this woman was their waitress.

“I’m sorry miss. Where are we exactly?” Sally asked.

“Well, you are in the James Cook restaurant in Moscow. Moscow is the capital of Russia,” she said with a thick accent. Sam and Sally looked at each other. The house *had* brought them all the way to Russia.

“Oh you two must try the borsch and sausage,” a woman from another table said. Her voice sounded familiar. Sally and Sam looked over.

“Aunt June?” Sam said. It was their dad’s older sister.

“I thought I might see you guys,” Aunt June said. She smiled. There was a twinkle in her eyes.

“This is a *magical* place, huh?” she said as she took a seat at their table. She was wearing fur from head to toe. A fur hat, fur dress, and even big fur boots. Her face and bright blond hair peeked out from behind all the fur. Sam thought she was going to turn into a bear at any

moment. Her thick gold earrings and diamond rings were weighing her down. Sally thought she looked glamorous- like a Russian movie star.

“Now like I was saying before. You must try to the *borsch*, it’s a cold soup. And how about some chicken legs. Very traditional,” she said to the waitress. The waitress brought the food within minutes. Sam took a spoonful of the soup.

“You weren’t lying. This is some cold soup,” he said.

“Yes, isn’t it delicious?” Aunt June asked. Whenever she spoke her eyes opened widely, her hands were always in the air, and her voice went up and down. She grabbed all the attention. Sam didn’t like the soup at all. He thought the point of soup was that it was supposed to be hot. But he didn’t want to be rude.

“Yes, delicious,” he responded with a smile.

“It’s all wonderful. Wooonderful, wonderful. So have you seen my baby brother, Dave, in Kenya yet?” she asked. Sam and Sally looked at each other shocked.

“We have. How did you know?” Sally asked.

“Well, that old house sure is predictable. I’m sure he showed you all around. It’s my turn now,” Aunt June said matter-of-factly. They finished up their food and got up to leave.

“Put on your coats. There are gloves in the pockets. You think that soup is cold just wait until you get outside,” she told them. On the back of their chairs were big puffy coats with fur around the hood. Next to their chairs were big black boots that went up to their knees. They all bundled up and headed outside. The wind was whipping and snow was falling all around them. Sam and Sally had never seen snow. Aunt June picked up some snow and made a snowball. She playfully threw at Sam.

“Hey!” he laughed. He rolled up a snowball and threw it back.

“Nice throw. Now, come on. We have things to see,” Aunt June said with a laugh. They walked through a few streets and came into a large square. All sorts of interesting buildings were around them. Sam liked one in particular.

“This looks like a house out of a fairy tale. It looks like it’s a gingerbread house with tons of chimneys. But instead of the chimneys being flat their topped with whipped cream in all colors. There’s a blue and white swirl whipped cream top. And that one is a green and white swirl whipped cream top,” Sam said.

“You have a marvelous imagination, Sam. It is magnificent! That is a cathedral, St. Basil’s Cathedral to be exact. To our right here in this rather small looking red building is Lenin’s Mausoleum,” she said.

“Lenin’s mouse?” Sam asked. Sally giggled.

“His mos-o-lee-um. It’s basically a place where they keep his dead body for people to see,” Sally explained.

“There’s a dead body in there?!” Sam exclaimed. He began to back away.

“Oh don’t worry. It is a great honor. He was a great Russian leader. People want to see him. I would tell you alllll about him, but you’ll have to learn it in school someday. For now you know his name. That’s good enough. Let’s move on,” Aunt June said. She walked around the square.

“What’s behind these buildings?” Sam asked.

“Behind these buildings are the Russian government headquarters. Here the government is called the Kremlin,” Aunt June said.

“The Kremlin? Sounds like a scary movie,” Sam said.

“Well, yes I suppose it kind of does. However, we should obey the government. They are the ones who make the rules. We should be on our best behavior. That’s a lesson no matter where you are, right?” Aunt June said. Sally and Sam nodded in agreement. Sam had been overhearing a few kids. He couldn’t understand them, but he could understand one word, “park”.

“I keep hearing kids talk about a park. Is there one nearby?” Sam asked.

“Oh, they must be talking about Gorky Park. It’s an amusement park with rides during the warmer months. Since it’s winter I’m pretty sure they’re holding an ice sculpture contest. It is close. We should go see,” Aunt June said.

“That sounds great!” Sam exclaimed. They left the Red Square and walked for awhile. When they got to the park there were lots of people.

“Maybe we should learn some Russian words. We don’t want to offend people,” Sally suggested.

“Wonderful idea, Sally. I’ll give you the basics. Now *priyet* means hello. *Da svidaniya* means goodbye. *Pazhalsta* means please and *spasiba* means thank you. The most important phrase for this crowd is *izvi’nite* which means excuse me,” Aunt June said.

“Uh- maybe you should do the talking, Aunt June,” Sam said.

“Well remember *izvi’nite*, okay?” Aunt June said.

“Eez-vin-eee-teeye,” Sally and Sam said.

“Well, done. Now, let’s take a look at these ice sculptures,” Aunt June said. She led them through the crowd. They passed all kinds of sculptures. They were amazing. There were sculptures of bears, caterpillars, and all sorts of people. Sam couldn’t believe how real they looked. He especially liked the one of a Russian man’s head with a warrior hat on. It was the

biggest thing he'd ever seen. It was taller than him. It was taller than his dad! Sam thought that it should win. The artist of the sculpture looked over at him.

"Do you like?" the artist asked Sam.

"Yes, spasiba," Sam answered.

"You are welcome," the man replied with a smile.

"Oh very good, Sam," Aunt June said. She was pleased. Sam and Sally were cold and tired. Russia was exhausting. Aunt June thought they deserved a treat. She led them into a small coffee shop. The three of them sat at a table with a booth. It was tucked away in the back corner of the coffee shop. Sweet smells of chocolate and cinnamon floated under their noses. The waitress came over to take their order.

"Three hot chocolates spasiba," Aunt June said to the waiter. Soon the hot chocolate arrived. The three of them sipped their hot chocolates. Their insides became nice and warm.

"It's really beautiful here," Sally said.

"Yea, I love the snow. It's fluffy and white, but very cold," Sam said. The two of them yawned. They rested their heads on the table.

"I really like it here. I'm glad I got to show you two around," Aunt June said.

"Yea, thanks Aunt June. It was so fun. We wish we saw you more often," Sam said.

"Oh I'm sure we'll see each other again," Aunt June said. Sam and Sally fell asleep on the table. Sam woke up and the sunlight was peeking through the window. He was in his kitchen. Sally was across the table from him. She was still sleeping.

"Sally wake up! We're home!" Sam yelled.

"Huh? Oh, hey. We are," Sally said. She was still tired from their adventure.

“I can’t believe we saw Aunt June- in Russia! What are we going to do today?” Sam asked. He could barely sit still.

“Sleep,” Sally said. And she made her way upstairs.

“The end,” Meg said.

“Well, what’s Sam going to do?” Max asked.

“I guess you’ll just have to wait and see,” Meg said.

“Wait until when?” Max asked.

“Tomorrow night of course. That’s the next bedtime,” Meg said.

“Oh alright,” Max said. He snuggled under his covers. Meg gave him a kiss on the forehead.

“Goodnight buddy,” Meg said. She went to the door and turned out the light.

“Goodnight Meg,” Max said.

It's A Big World: A Bedtime Adventure
Book 7: China

"One more bowl of ice cream. Pleeeeassee?" Max asked his big sister Meg.

"No way. You have had too much sugar," said Meg.

"But this is a special occasion. It's our last night together before mom and dad come home," Max said. He was very good at making his sister do what he wanted. But his sister had a week of practice under her belt.

"Nice try bud. Brush your teeth and get into bed. We've got one more story," Meg said.

"I love you Meggy," Max said.

"Brush. Teeth. Now," she answered. He stomped his way up the stairs. By the time he finished brushing his teeth he had forgotten about the ice cream.

"Okay Meg. I'm ready," Max said. He climbed into bed. Meg sat next to him on the bed. She began the story.

"Well, it was Sam and Sally's last day alone together..."

It had been raining all day. It had been raining big heavy rain drops that went plop! when they hit the ground. They were perfect for making puddles. Sam and Sally had been spending the day jumping in puddles. Each of them would take turns splashing the other.

"There's a big one!" Sam yelled. He raced Sally to the puddle.

"Whoa! Nice splash," Sally said. The water splashed up onto Sally's purple raincoat. She noticed it was starting to get dark out.

"How about we go inside for some hot chocolate?" Sally asked.

“Mmmm that sounds good,” Max agreed. They walked into the house. Sally helped Sam pull off his yellow rain boots. Then she took off hers. They each peeled off their coats and hung them in the laundry room. The lights flickered.

“Uh oh. I think there’s something wrong with the lights,” Sam said.

“It’s just all the rain. We might lose power. How about you go downstairs and get us a flashlight?” Sally asked.

“Okay!” Sam said. He loved being helpful. He bounced down the stairs to the basement. He looked around, but didn’t see a flashlight anywhere.

“Saaaalllyyy!” Sam yelled.

“Whaaat?” Sally yelled down to him.

“I can’t find a flashlight!” he yelled back up to her. Soon Sam heard Sally’s footsteps coming down the stairs.

“Okay, what’s the problem?” she asked.

“I told you. I can’t find a flashlight anywhere,” Sam replied. Sally looked around.

“There’s one” she said. She spotted the big orange flashlight their dad always pulls out during storms. It was in the corner high on a shelf.

“Oh, sorry. I guess I’m too short. I didn’t even notice it,” Sam said. He was disappointed he had to bother Sally.

“No big deal little brother,” Sally said. She walked over and grabbed the flashlight.

“Come on. Let’s go back upstairs and get that hot chocolate,” she said. The two of them began to walk up the stairs. When they were at the top of the stairs the lights went out. Sam gasped.

“Don’t worry. It’s just the storm. Hold on I’ll turn the flashlight on,” Sally said. Sam grabbed her arm. He didn’t like the dark. Sally turned on the flashlight.

“See, we’re okay,” Sally said. She put her arm around her brother and opened the door.

“Whoa!” Sam yelled. In front of them stretched the top of a long wall. It looked like it went on for miles.

“The house. Sally, it knew we only had one day left! Where are we?” Sam asked. He was so excited. He ran out of the door.

“Sam! Slow down! Well, at least wait for me!” Sally yelled. She ran to catch up with him.

“Wait a second. We need to figure out where we are,” Sally said. She had a feeling she knew where they were, but wanted to make sure.

“So ask somebody,” Sam said. There were many people around. Wherever they were this must be something that lots of people like to see. Sam and Sally decided to approach a couple who had been taking lots of pictures of birds. Their parents loved to take pictures of birds. So they thought these people would be okay to approach. Sally tapped the woman on the shoulder.

“Excuse me ma’am,” Sally said. The woman turned around.

“Sally! Sam!” she exclaimed.

“MOM?! DAD?!” Sally and Sam said at the same time. They threw their arms around their parents.

“Hey guys. We thought you’d never get here,” said Dad.

“I thought you guys went to Hawaii,” Sally said.

“We were there for awhile, but your Mom found an old photo of a trip we went on to China a few years ago,” said Dad.

“So here we are,” Mom added.

“That’s amazing! Wait, we’re in China??” Sam asked.

“Yes, son. We are standing on a great piece of architecture. This is the Great Wall of China. It was built almost two thousand years ago!” said Dad.

“Really?” Sam asked.

“Really. And it’s over five thousand miles long,” said Mom.

“So even if I stand on my tippy toes I can’t see where it ends?” Sam asked.

“Afraid not. Sorry *little* brother,” Sally teased.

“There’s a bus waiting for us at the bottom. It’s taking us to Beijing, the capital of China. There we can get some traditional food,” said Mom. Sally and Sam always liked to eat. The idea of eating in China with their parents made them very happy. They made their way down a set of stairs in the wall, walked outside, and got onto a bus. A few hours later they were in China’s capital city, Beijing. They got off the bus and could feel the city around them. There were tons of people. The sidewalks were crowded and the air was heavy. Sam began to cough.

“Oh I’m sorry darling. I’m afraid the air here isn’t very clean. All around is what is called smog which is basically pollution in the air. Here take this,” Mom said. She handed Sam a cloth to cover his mouth.

“It kind of smells,” said Sally.

“Yes, Beijing has a bit of a problem keeping the city clean. It’s a big place and a lot of people are jammed into it. There’s just too many people and too much dirt and trash,” said Dad.

“It does look like there are more people here than the thousand people who live in Cactus.” Sally said. She was referring to their hometown. Mom and Dad laughed.

“You’re absolutely right, Sally. Now, this place looks good. Let’s go in and get some food,” said Mom. She led them all into the restaurant. They sat down at a small table. Sam

grabbed the seat next to Dad that faced the street. He loved seeing all the people pass by. Sam and Sally had Chinese food all the time at home, but this place smelled different. You could really smell the peanuts and oil it was cooked in. Sam looked at the food on another table.

“The noodles look thinner,” he said.

“Yes, Chinese food here is a little different then the China Prince restaurant at home,” said Dad. The waiter brought their food to the table.

“Xiéxie,” said Mom. The waiter bowed his head and left the table.

“What did you say?” Sam asked.

“I said thank you in Mandarin. That’s the main language people speak here in China,” Mom explained.

“Sheh sheh,” Sam said. He liked Mandarin. It was so different from all the other languages he learned.

“Can you teach us some more?” Sam asked.

“Of course. This is a first,” Mom said. She was used to Sam playing with trucks, not learning new languages.

“All the other places we’ve been to we’ve learned basic phrases- like please, thank you, hello and goodbye,” Sally said.

“Well, I think that’s great. Your dad is excellent at Mandarin. Maybe he can tell how to say those words?” Mom said.

“I’d be happy to. Alright well let’s see. We just learned that *xiéxie* means thank you. *Qǐng* means please. *Ní hǎo* means hello and *zàijiàn* means goodbye,” said Dad.

“Sheh sheh, sheh sheh,” Sam said.

“You’re welcome. I have a feeling we’re going to be hearing a lot of that word when we get home,” said Dad. They all laughed.

“Okay, so eat up. We are having dim sum, which is just a bunch of little light dishes. It is also served with the tea sitting in front of you. The tea is a very important part of the Chinese people’s meal. So be sure to drink some. As far as the food goes we have some beef, broccoli, and rice. I like to keep it simple for my picky eaters,” said Mom.

“What are these?” Sam asked. He picked up what looked like little branches from his backyard.

“Those are chopsticks. People hold them together like this- between their middle finger and thumb,” Dad explained. Sam tried to hold the chopsticks like Dad showed him, but it was so hard. His fingers couldn’t keep them together. Mom smiled and handed him a fork. Sam dug in. The beef was tender and seemed to melt in his mouth. His tummy was very happy.

“But they should try the octopus tentacles,” said Dad. Max’s face dropped.

“Octopus tentacles? Do we have to?” he asked.

“You don’t want to eat octopus tentacles? There so yummy,” said Dad.

“I mean. If you want me to Daddy,” Sam said.

“No, no. I’m just teasing you. But maybe I should keep that around in case you don’t finish your vegetables,” said Dad. He loved teasing Sam.

“I’ll eat them all. I promise!” Sam said.

“Oh Sam, we believe you. Don’t we Dad?” Mom said.

“Absolutely. Super Sam the vegetable eater!” Dad joked.

“Yea!” Sam exclaimed. They all finished up their food and went to drink their tea. Sam noticed there was no handle. He didn’t know how to hold it. He watched as his Mom picked it

up with both hands and sipped slowly. He did the same thing. The whole family put down their cups at the same time. The tea was warm and relaxing.

“That was great. Thanks Mom and Dad,” said Sally.

“It was our pleasure, Sally. It’s so nice to be here as a family,” said Mom.

“It sure is. We should take a walk to the Forbidden City,” said Dad. Sam was in awe. A Forbidden City? It sounded like a perfect place to go to during their adventure. He imagined they would have to give a secret knock on the door to get in. Or maybe they would have to pass a test like walking through fire. They walked for awhile and came to the middle of the city. They came upon a red wall. It was so tall. All you could see was a building peeking over the wall. Sam thought it sort of looked like a house. It had four sides but it had two roofs- one on each floor.

“Is this the Forbidden City? Can just anyone go in?” asked Sam.

“Yes, Sam. It’s open to everyone. The building you see is a palace. It was built 600 years ago in the early 1400s. Twenty-four rulers ruled from that very palace. Now everyone can come in and see the whole place. There are all kinds of gardens and treasures inside,” explained Dad.

“Wow,” said Sam. The four of them walked through the door at the wall and into the grounds around the palace. There were all kinds of flowers and trees around them. Sam loved the yellow flowers. Sally loved the purple ones. They walked into the palace and there was fancy furniture and jewelry all around them.

“This place is amazing,” Sally said.

“It sure is. Why don’t we go down this set of stairs,” said Mom. Dad, Sally, and Sam followed her down the stairs into a room with armor from traditional Chinese warriors. There

were bright swords with emeralds and rubies in the handles. There were red helmets with fur coming out of the top. Sam thought it must have been so cool to be a warrior.

“Did warriors stand on the Great Wall of China?” Sam asked.

“They sure did. Many warriors have stood there,” Dad answered.

“Come on, let’s go back up,” said Mom. Dad, Sally, and Sam followed her back up the stairs. When they got to the top the door was close.

“This stairwell sure is darker than before,” Sam said. Mom stopped at the top of the stairs.

“This is strange. I thought the door was open when we went down,” Mom said. She went to turn the handle. When she opened the door there was carpet in front of her. To her left was a couch and television.

“Oh my,” she said.

“What is it hon?” Dad asked.

“Looks like we’re home,” Mom answered.

“Oh boy!” Sam raced up the stairs past his mom and into the family room. The whole family sat in on the couch and talked about their trip to China. Mom and Dad asked Sally and Sam about the other places they went too. Sam couldn’t stop talking. After awhile he looked over and his sister was fast asleep.

“Adventures are tiring,” Sam said.

“They sure are. I think it’s time to call it a night,” Dad said.

“Yea, okay. Can I ask you guys a question?” Sam asked.

“Anything,” said Mom.

“I thought only kids went on these adventures,” Sam asked.

“Hey, we’re all kids at heart,” Dad replied. Mom laughed.

“All you have to do is be willing and you can go places you’ve never imagined,” Mom said.

“I just have to be ready, right?” Sam asked.

“Right,” said Mom and Dad. Then they all headed upstairs, ready for another adventure.

“The end,” said Meg.

“The story ended with their parents? What kind of adventure is that?” Max asked.

“Being a family is an adventure. Being your sister is one too! When I’m with you, Mom and Dad I’m ready for anything. Aren’t you?” Meg replied.

“Yea, I guess so. So tomorrow when Mom and Dad get home can we have our own adventure?” Max asked.

“Definitely. But you’re going to need your rest. So sleep tight. Goodnight Max,” Meg said, but he was already fast asleep.