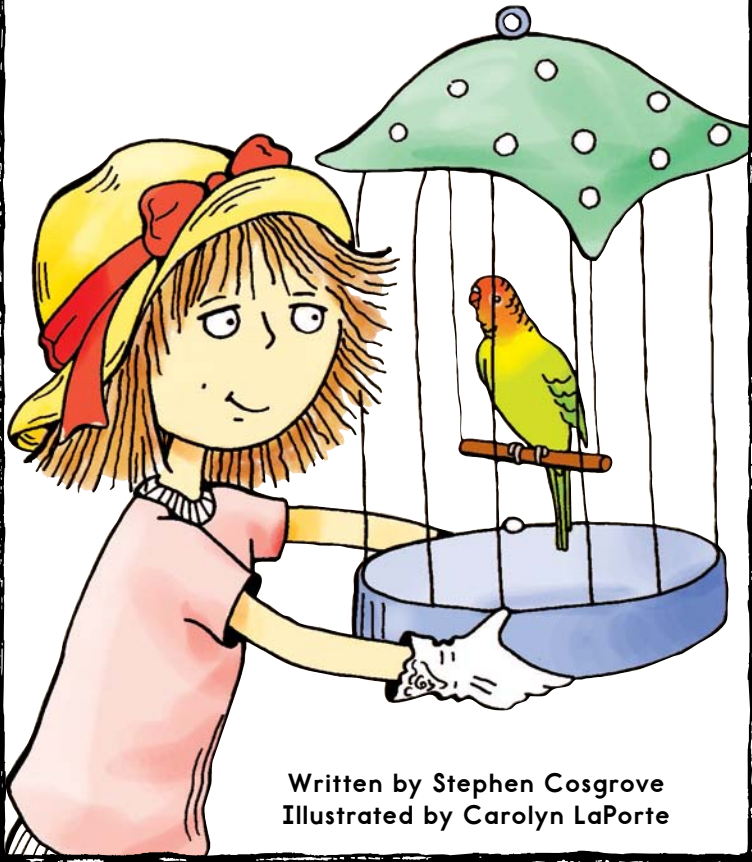


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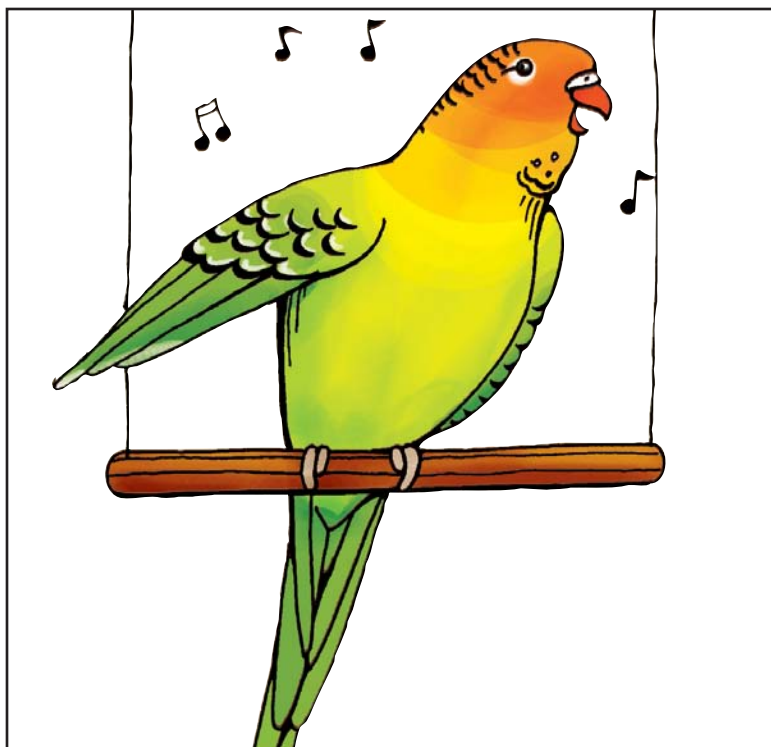
A Late Night Chat with a Parakeet



Written by Stephen Cosgrove
Illustrated by Carolyn LaPorte

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A story from Hattie MacGruder's Diary



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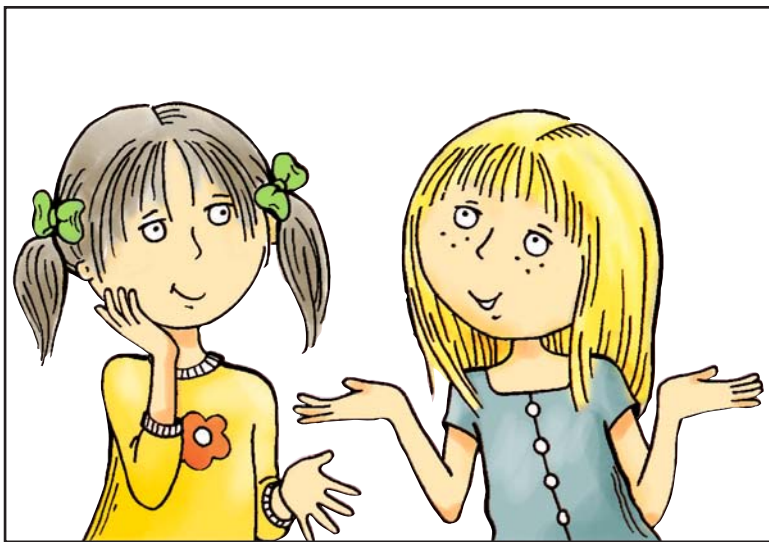
My name is Hattie MacGruder. I am queen and absolute leader of my third grade class, and I have a parakeet!

He's not one of those little silly, singing birds, but a real talking parakeet.

He talks like there's no tomorrow. He
talks about the weather and my friends
and the stupid seeds he has to eat.
He would much rather eat jelly or chili
cheese fries, and he loves Britney Spears.

I am telling the truth.





There are others who are not telling the truth.

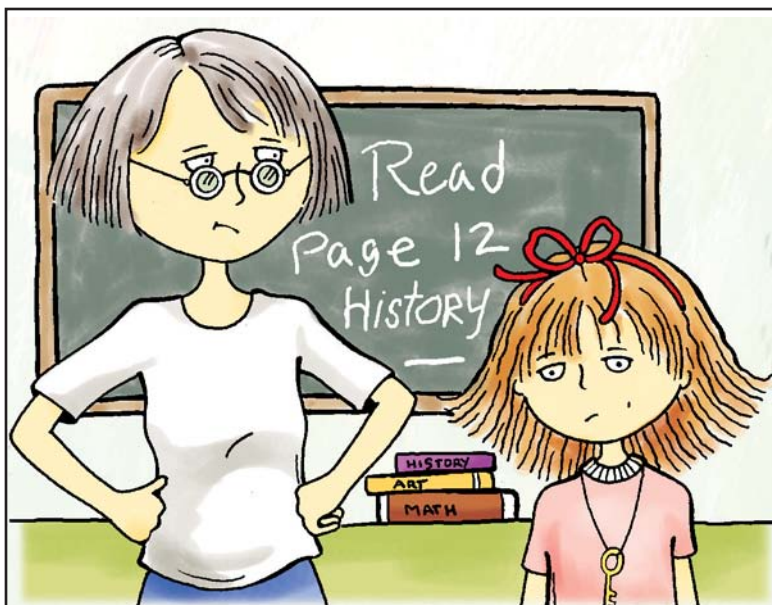
Sybil and Sarah are liars and fibbers and tellers of untruth.

They said that there never was a talking parakeet. They said the parakeet never even tasted a chili cheese fry. Mostly they said that parakeets don't talk. They said that I'd made it all up. That's why they are liars and fibbers and tellers of untruth. Because there really was what I said there was—there always is and . . .

. . . plus, I have absolute proof about the talking parakeet and all the other things that happen to me.

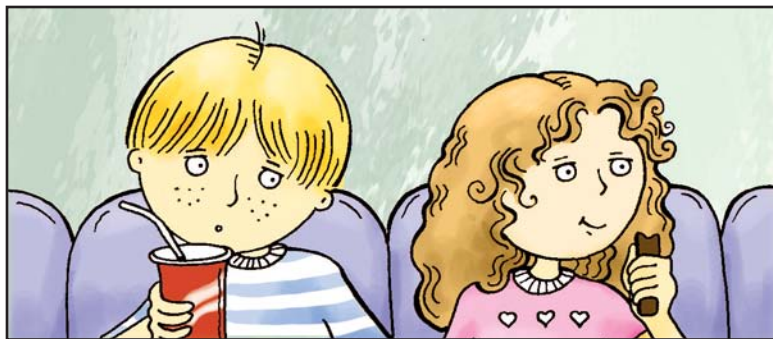
The proof is in my diary. I'm going to let you read it exactly as I wrote it when the parakeet talked. That way you can read, first hand, the truth about this matter.





Special Note:

I am only going to let you read the parts of my diary that are about the parakeet. You won't get to read the stuff about me getting grounded for sassing my teacher—which I didn't do. I swear somebody was playing ventriloquism tricks on me. Mom was so mad that she had to see my teacher. She wouldn't even let me buy the new Britney Spears CD I had been saving up for.

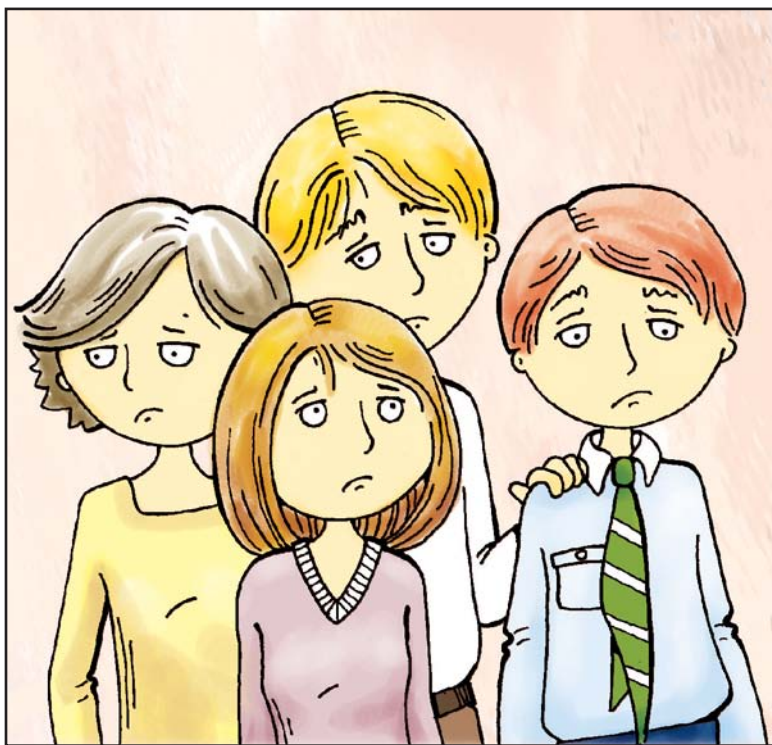


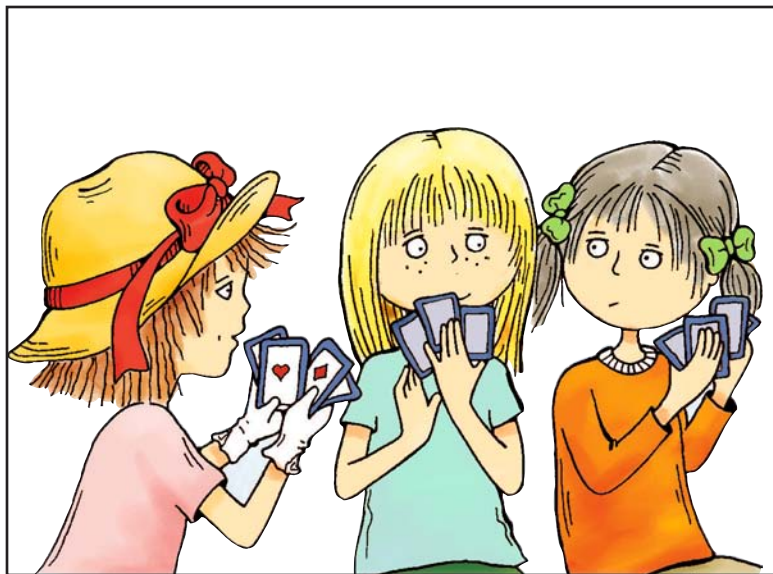
Mostly, you won't get to read anything about Sybil, Sarah, and me going to the movies on Sunday. We saw Libby Thompson, and she was not sitting alone. She was sitting with the geek of all geekers, Davey Brewster, who was supposed to be my friend. But he must have forgotten about our little talk after lunch on Thursday. Libby must have made him go with her—blackmail or something. And I am not going to let you read the part where Davey Brewster got her a soda. Or when he gave her the gumball that fell on the icky movie-theater floor. She ate it! I hope she doesn't get a fatal disease or anything.

The Proof:

Diary, Day 117

It was kind of a sad day. My mom's aunt (my great-aunt) died. I didn't know her that well, but I was sad for my mom. I didn't go to the funeral, but my mom and dad did. Then they went over to my great-aunt's house and everybody was sad together.

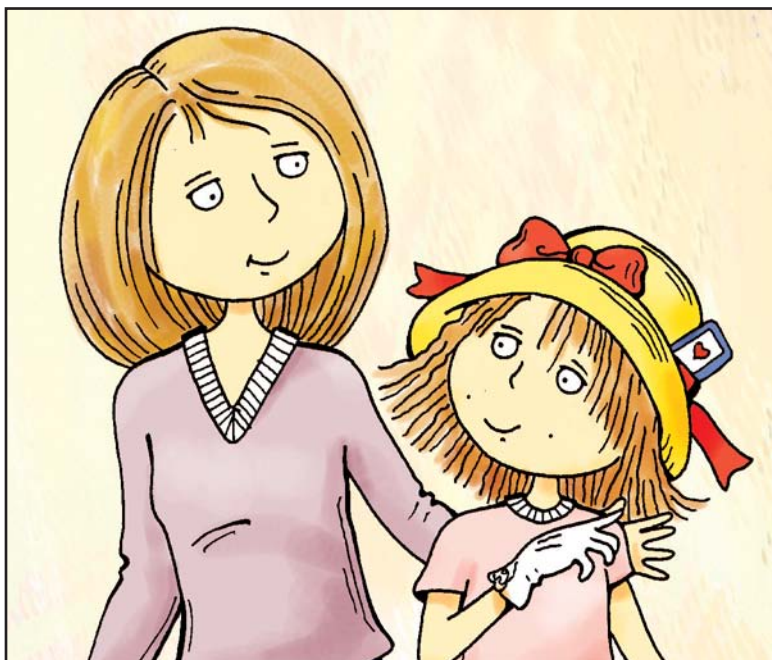




I spent the day at Sarah's house. Sybil came over, and we played cards (Spite and Malice), watched TV, and talked about Davey Brewster. He is so pop. He and I are special buds. We talked about it after lunch on the playground Thursday and decided that it was cool. He said he liked me better than any girl in the third grade. I like him better than any boy in the whole world. Well, except for Debbie Phillips's older brother, who I am going to marry when I retire from my career.

Anyway, I was supposed to spend the night at Sarah's, but my mom wanted me to come home.

She was in a much better mood when I got there. She didn't seem sad at all. In fact, she was pretty happy. She said there was a surprise waiting for me in my room. I thought for sure it was going to be the Britney Spears CD that she wouldn't let me get. It wasn't . . .





The surprise was a parakeet—my great-aunt’s parakeet—which my great-aunt’s husband (my great-uncle) had given to my mother. Mom said the parakeet was very special because it belonged to my great-aunt. She said she knew I would take good care of it.

The parakeet seemed to be happy in my room. I whistled at it, and it whistled back. Wow, can it whistle and chirp and sing. It whistles really loudly. It won't knock it off! I hope that silly bird doesn't keep me awake all night!

I've got to go to sleep now. I'll write longer later!





Diary, Day 117 (later)

What a night!

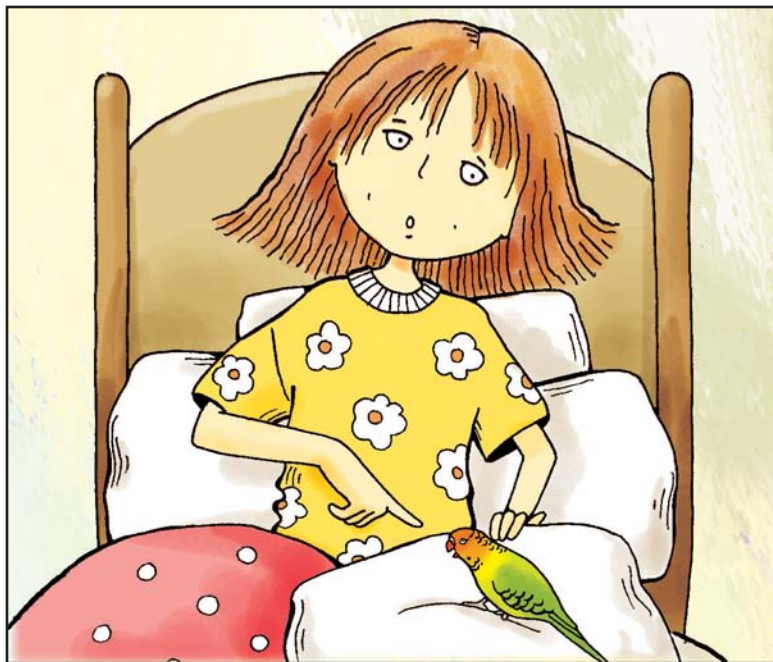
I tried to fall asleep, but that silly parakeet kept being happy—chirping, whistling, and making clicking sounds. When the cat started meowing, I just let it get up on the bed. I thought that maybe the bird was lonely. I turned on my light and looked at it. Actually, I told it to knock it off. But it just sat on its little wooden swing and looked at me, whistling and chirping and making noises.

*I opened the cage door, reached in,
and grabbed it. It stopped singing and
didn't even flutter. My great-aunt must
have taken it out of the cage a lot.
I climbed back into bed and set it down
on my pillow. It kind of hopped around
and then . . .*

. . . it talked.

I mean, he talked.





He said my great-aunt called him Freddie, but he much preferred Fred.

I couldn't believe it! Fred was speaking just as clearly as you or I. "Well, my dear friend, Hattie," he said, "what do you want to do? Play cards? You do play Spite and Malice, don't you? Or maybe we could read a teen magazine or listen to some music. You do have the new Britney Spears CD, don't you?"

He talked on and on and on. He even pooped on my pillow, but I didn't care.

With Fred still talking, I fell asleep. As I drifted off, he babbled on about flying south with the ducks for the winter or something. He thought the life of a gypsy duck was the life for him.

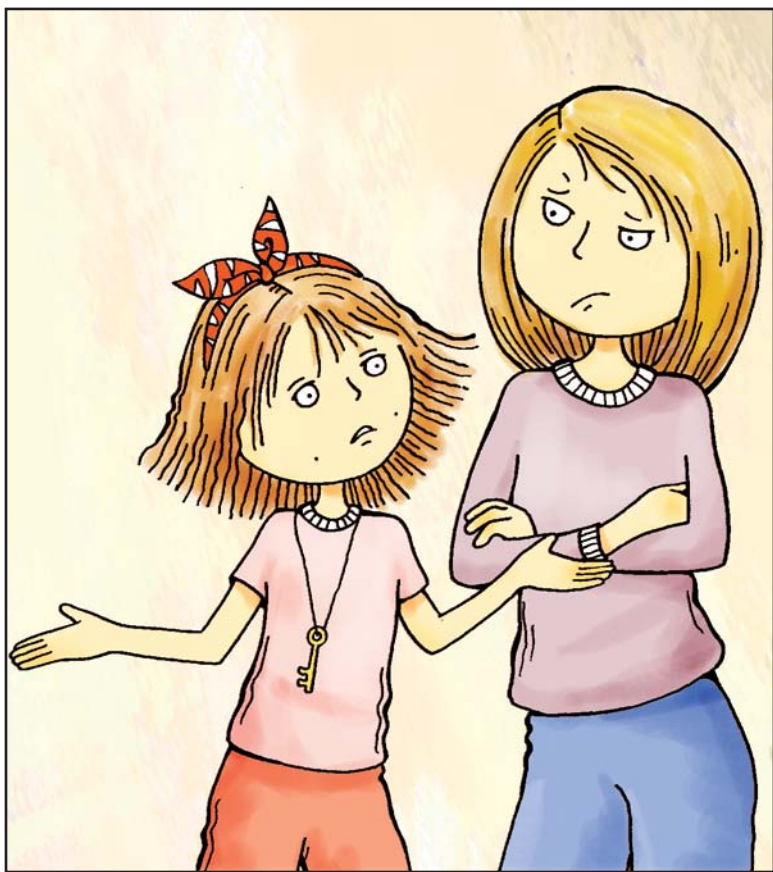




Now, for the bad news. When I woke up, he was gone!

I don't know where he went. The cage was still there, but it was empty. My cat was asleep on the bed, just like she always is. The only things moving in the room were the curtains tossing in a light breeze that blew through the open window. There were some feathers on the floor fluttering with the breeze. But other than that, Fred was gone.

Mom was very upset. I tried to tell her that Fred had been talking about traveling with the ducks. Maybe he slipped out, met up with a big old group of wild ducks, and headed south. I told her he would probably come back in the spring. I'll bet that's what happened.



Nothing was going to get me off the hook because Mom was really mad. She gave me the “responsibility” talk. I cried like I always do.

I am grounded for today, but Sarah and Sybil still got to come over.

I wish they hadn't.





*I told them all about the talking parakeet.
I told them he even wanted to play cards,
and he loved Britney Spears.*

*I am so mad at Sarah and Sybil. They
said I'd made everything up about Fred.
They said the parakeet was probably in
heaven. They even said they thought the
cat ate him.*

*They are liars and fibbers and tellers
of untruth.*

My diary proves it!

I hate them.



Mom felt bad about what happened and said I could go to the movies with Sarah and Sybil tomorrow. I called Davey Brewster to see if he could go, too. He said he had to go to church. We're going to the matinee. It's going to be a lot of fun.

Love,
Hattie MacGruder

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Level P Leveled Book
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Illustrated by Carolyn LaPorte

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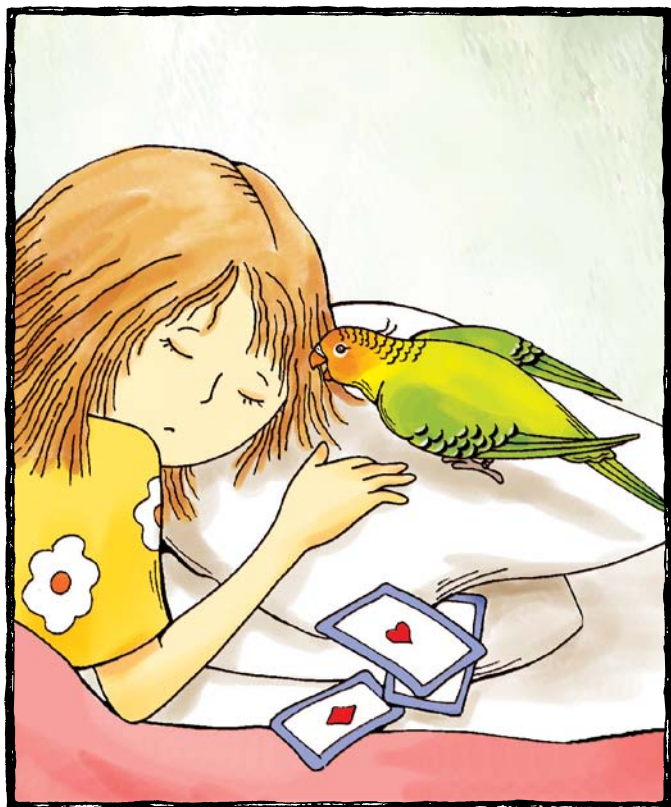
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