

Our Never-Ending Story for 8/14/2017

The small girl awoke when the large dog jumped into her bed and began to howl. "Mr. Bojangles, go back to sleep," Jocelyn groaned, pulling the covers over her head. "I've told you a zillion times - there aren't any monsters in the closet!" Mr. Bojangles flopped down next to her, put his furry head between his paws, and whimpered, keeping his eyes fixed on the closet door. Jocelyn's hand reached out from under the covers and patted his nose. Soon the only sounds in the room were the ticks of the wind-up Cinderella clock on the bedside table and the soft snuffle of Jocelyn's rhythmic snores. Mr. Bojangles' eyes grew heavy and finally closed. Then, slowly and silently, the closet door inched open. (Jackie Minniti)

Mr. Bojangles sensed the movement of the door, and quietly raised his head, sniffing the air. Protective of his young friend, Jocelyn, he gazed around the room, focusing on the closet door. Sensing that something had changed, but not sure what, he decided to take a closer look. He quietly slipped down from the bed and approached the closet, sniffing gently to avoid discovery. The door opened further. (Sherrill Cannon)

Mr. Bojangles sensed the movement of the door, and quietly raised his head, sniffing the air. Protective of his young friend, Jocelyn, he gazed around the room, focusing on the closet door. Sensing that something had changed, but not sure what, he decided to take a closer look. He quietly slipped down from the bed and approached the closet, sniffing gently to avoid discovery. The door opened further and a small boy stepped gingerly onto the pink shag rug. The rub of his corduroy pants was loud enough to wake Jocelyn but she slept on even when the long-haired boy retrieved the bitten end of a hot dog from deep inside his trouser pocket. He fed it to the eager Mr. Bojangles and waved him out the door and onto the landing. The boy slid a leash from another pocket, clipped it onto the dog's collar, and the two descended the staircase. At the bottom of the staircase the boy bit off another piece of meat to lure Mr. Bojangles down a side hallway to the basement door. (Susan Doherty Hannaford)

Although protective of Jocelyn, Mr. Bojangles seemed to follow the long-haired boy not because of the pieces of hotdog only, but because of what appeared to be a familiarity between the boy and the dog. Mr. Bojangles was a rescue dog from the local shelter, and when Jocelyn went with her family to pick out a dog there was an immediate, and somewhat mysterious, attraction to the dog. She knew right away that Mr. Bojangles was the dog for her, and from watching the dog's reaction it was as if he was waiting for her. As Mr. Bojangles and the long-haired boy were heading towards the basement, they were unaware that they had awakened Jocelyn who was now quietly following them. They entered through the doorway to the basement and descended the stairs without turning the lights on, still unaware of their companion. Just as Jocelyn was about to call out for Mr. Bojangles, the long-haired boy looked down towards the dog and asked if he was ready. To Jocelyn's astonishment, the dog appeared to nod! Just then, the boy pushed on the wall and a door proceeded to open that Jocelyn didn't even realize was there. There was a bright light that filled the basement that came from the other side of the door, and then the long-haired boy and Mr. Bojangles walked through the opening. Immediately, the door shut and the basement was once again dark and quiet. (Troy Kent)

Jocelyn pounded on the closed door. "Mr. Bojangles!" she yelled. "Mr. Bojangles, come back!" Tears stung her eyes, but she wiped them away. She had to find her dog. She had to know who the boy was and why he'd taken Mr. Bojangles. Jocelyn gripped the doorknob of the mysterious door and gave it a turn. But the door remained closed. Maybe I can break the lock with a screwdriver, she thought. She felt her way through the dark basement, so dark she may as well have been blindfolded. She knew where her

father stored the tools, and as she stumbled toward the cabinet. Her foot caught on something solid, and she fell to the floor and hit her head. After some time had passed, she moaned and opened her eyes. The first thing she noticed was light spilling into the room from the crack beneath the mystery door. She stood quickly. Her head throbbed with pain, but she rushed to the door. She turned the knob, and the door opened! She ran through into a world filled with bright light. A golden path lined with beautiful flowers lay before her. And there, in the distance walking on the path, were Mr. Bojangles and the boy. She called out and began to run toward them. A shadow suddenly blocked the sun. Jocelyn looked up. Swooping down from high above her was a large creature. As it got closer, she saw it was a gryphon, with the body, tail, and back legs of a lion and the head, wings, and sharp talons of an eagle. Jocelyn screamed. (Linda Covella)

Jocelyn screamed and fell to the earth, her heart pounded as loudly as her head throbbed. The gryphon screamed, too, but continued its downward glide. It landed directly in front of the long haired boy and Mr. Bojangles. The boy assumed a fighting stance as Mr. Bojangles bared his teeth and growled low in his throat. The gryphon towered over the boy and the dog, but took no aggressive action. Swiftly, the boy whispered to Mr. Bojangles, who immediately dropped at his feet. The boy then bowed deeply to the gryphon, who bowed in return. The boy grabbed the creature's mane, leapt up on the gryphon's back, and off they flew toward the distant mountains. With the gryphon no longer blocking his view, Mr. Bojangles saw Jocelyn. He loped to her side and gently licked her tear-stained face. "What do we do now?" Jocelyn said. (Penelope Anne Cole)

Mr. Bojangles tilted his head to the side, as though listening to something, and then turned and bounded off through the flowers to her left. "Wait!" Jocelyn called, cupping her hands over her mouth. "Wait for me!" She chased after the cane corso into the field of flowers, dancing around Amaryllis and Aster buds and careful not to step on any of them. After a few minutes she was breathless and tired yet still Mr. Bojangles ran on. Finally, he stopped at a pool of water surrounded by a copse of gnarly trees and began growling at the surface. Jocelyn could hear the faint toning of chimes around her, washing over her, and it was as though the sound was spilling out of the water. She watched, fascinated, and slowly the surface began to ripple... (Lincoln Cole)

The ripple continues-slowly and quietly at first, and becoming louder and more violent with each passing second. The aquamarine water began to change, becoming more brilliant, and sparkling with colors and warmth. Jocelyn gasped and stumbled backwards, at the same time Mr. Bojangles ran back toward her. He stood in between Jocelyn and the rumbling pool, poised to protect her, and yet seeming comfortable and curious at the same time. The pool made one last loud sounding gurgle, as it spewed thousands of brilliantly sparkling objects into the air. Mesmerized by the intensely beautiful flying objects, Jocelyn crept closer. "Fairies!" she squealed in delight. (Jacqui Letran)

"You've returned to us! You're home!" the Fairies cried out in unison. Jocelyn's wide smile quickly faded and was replaced by a puzzled and bewildered look.

"Home?" she repeated quietly. She crossed her arms over her chest and suddenly grew agitated. "What are you talking about?"

The Fairies began to circle her and examine her closely. The soft fluttering noise of paper thin wings grew loud in her ears and tickled them ever so slightly when the little Fairies drew near and then suddenly darted away. Jocelyn was now surrounded by these sparkling beings and poor Mr. Bojangles was not sure what to do. He growled softly and at times made an attempt to snap at the flying objects as if they were but one of those delicious treats that Jocelyn often tossed to him. (Darla Woodley)

A particularly ugly faerie, with a long nose and feet so big they tangled in his wings' tips, landed on Mr.

Bojangles. The dog froze. Jocelyn swiped at the faerie to knock it off her dog. But the faerie made a rude noise and sat down on the dog's neck.

"He's mine, you know," the faerie said swiping long hair out of his eyes and then sticking his hands in the pockets of his corduroy pants. "He wandered away, and got lost, and didn't come home. And now he is home. So you can't have him." The faerie looked sideways out of the corners of his eyes. "Unless you can answer a riddle." (Kath Boyd Marsh)

A riddle? Jocelyn hesitated, her mind whirling. She was horrible at riddles. Simply awful. She wouldn't know the answer to a riddle if it bit her. Why did it have to be a riddle? Why couldn't it have been something else? Like an arm wrestling match. She could take down that faerie with one pinky finger. But a riddle? She couldn't do it. She would just look stupid. Jocelyn was about to open her mouth and tell Mr. Ugly Faerie what he could do with his dumb riddle, when she looked into Mr. Bojangles eyes. And suddenly she knew what she had to do. (Bailey Baxter)

"I'll answer your riddle, if you can make Mr. Bojangles do a trick," she said.

The fairy squinted at her and wiped a dirty sleeve across his nose. "What kind of trick?"

Jocelyn shrugged. "What kinds of tricks do dogs perform here? Where are we anyway?"

"None of your business," snapped the fairy. "And dogs don't do tricks. They obeys orders."

"Obeying an order can be a trick," Jocelyn said. She stared hard at Mr. Bojangles who looked up at her with adoring eyes.

"All right then," said the fairy, swaggering back and forth across the dog's back. "Dog, go!"

Mr. Bojangles sat down, and the tiny passenger tumbled across his shaggy back. The fairy hissed and grabbed a handful of fur. "Let me see you do better!" he spat. (Joyce McPherson)

Jocelyn buckled over in laughter. "Do better?" she choked out between giggles. "I could hardly do worse!"

"Well let's see, then," said the ugly fairy, his fists planted firmly on his hips, his pointed chin raised.

As soon as she had control of herself, Jocelyn winked at Mr. Bojangles and said, "Mr. Bojangles, roll!" The dog immediately dropped down and rolled from side to side.

When Mr. Bojangles stood back up, the ugly, cantankerous fairy was buried deep in the dog's thick fur, his wings tangled in the hair, a frown pressed across his face. He immediately began struggling to disentangle himself, growling as he did so. "You'll regret you did that," he said between clenched teeth as he straightened out his wings. "Mark my words, you'll regret you ever did that!" he repeated as he lifted off Mr. Bojangles' back and flew toward the pond, disappearing into its sparkling water with a tiny splash. (M.J. Evans)

Jocelyn waited for the ugly fairy to reappear, but there was no sign of him. "Any idea what we do now?" she asked Mr. Bojangles. "I almost think I should jump in after him and—." Before she could finish, the dog sprang from where he'd been sitting and bolted towards the pond. After several long strides, he lunged forward and dove into the water, making a much bigger splash than the ugly fairy had.

"Mr. Bojangles!" Jocelyn finally managed to cry. As she ran to the edge of the pond, she called out for him again. She frantically looked for some sign of him. Nothing. Her eyes darted across the still surface and stopped when she looked at her reflection in the water before her. That can't be right. She thought as she jumped back in surprise. Slowly, she stepped forward and leaned over again to get another look. This time, she lifted her hand to feel her face. It was when she watched it in the reflection below that she gasped. That's impossible! But it was right there and she could see it very clearly. Yes, it was her reflection. She recognized her head and hair. But then how...why...did she have the face of a fairy now? (Suzanne Roche)

Jocelyn leaned perilously close to the shimmering surface of the pool. Maybe, she thought, it was just a trick of the light. Surely her ears weren't really so pointed or her chin elongated. She definitely did not have such a thin, bony nose. She was so busy studying her reflection that she tipped right over and fell headfirst into the pond. To Jocelyn's great surprise, the pond wasn't water at all. There was a momentary sensation of trying to press through a giant layer of plastic wrap, and then she fell face first onto soft purple grass. She blinked. Yes, those grass blades just millimeters away from her eyelashes were, in fact, a brilliant shade of violet. When she pushed herself to a sitting position, she realized she was in the middle of a ring of giant standing stones. Each of the stones was easily twice her height and was made out of gleaming copper. A few feet away, but still inside the ring of stones, sat Mr. BoJangles. He cocked his head to one side.

Then her adorable dog opened his long muzzle and said "About time you joined us." (Cassandra Davis)

After all she'd been through, a talking dog seemed normal enough, so she just crossed her arms. "Enough of this. What is going on? Where are we?"

Bojangles sighed. "We're in a dream."

"You mean that I'm dreaming?" Of course. It was obvious.

"No, no, no." Bojangles huffed. "I didn't say your dream. I said a dream. I'm honestly not sure whose dream it is, but if I had to guess it would be the young boy who lured me in with hotdogs. The thing is, he might not actually be a young boy anymore than you are actually a fairy or I can actually talk." He yawned and scratched his ears. "Things look different here."

Jocelyn considered this. "So what do we do about it?"

"If I were you I'd enjoy it. After all, here I can talk, you can fly ... but if you insist on being proactive about it..." He sighed again and shook his head. "The way out is to find the dreamer and wake him up." (H. L. Burke)

Jocelyn sat up and dusted herself off. Her newly talking dog was right. Ever practical, Jocelyn stroked the violet grass as she pondered over possible solutions to their seemingly impossible situation. However could they find a boy (perhaps not even a boy) lost inside his own dream? Her gaze returned to the now empty horizon. Where to start? But then she saw it, as if out of nowhere: there was something on the landscape in the distance. Was that a Ferris wheel? A fairground?

"That's it!" she exclaimed. "The hot dogs: the boy must have come from the fairground." Scrabbling to her feet with renewed energy, she barely waited for Mr Bojangles to join her.

"Come on," she called back to him as she started to run. "We've a lot of ground to cover." (Emma Warner-Reed)

The dog, being a dog, was of course faster than Jocelyn, who had never been a fast runner to begin with. With the fairground still far in the distance, she slowed her pace and put her hands on her thighs, half bent over, and panting.

"It's too much," she said. "We'll have to walk. But then we'll be too late, and the boy will be gone, and we'll never be out of the dream."

Mr Bojangles sat down beside her and scratched his chest with a thumping leg. "You really want to get out of the dream?"

"Of course," said Jocelyn. Her heart was still pounding. She hadn't run since a disastrous Third Grade sprint at her school athletics day had seen her throw up on her best friend. "If you're in someone else's dream, you've got no control over anything."

"What do you mean?"

Jocelyn walked over to a tree and reached up for a leaf. "Well, in normal life, this would just be a leaf on a tree, but in a dream, it could turn into a piece of paper, or... what?" She looked at her hand in

wonder as the green of the leaf turned white and the piece of paper, as it now was, rustled in the breeze.”

“I think you have more control than you think,” said Mr Bojangles. He laughed, which was a strange experience. Jocelyn had never heard a dog laugh before. She had imagined it, of course, because who doesn’t? But it was different from what she expected; smooth, rather than rough, and quite throaty. She looked at the piece of paper.

“I could make it into a paper airplane,” she said, and almost immediately, the paper folded itself into wings and angles and flew away.

She turned to the dog with a smile on her face.

“We can make things happen. Things we never thought possible.” (Cecily Anne Paterson)

“This is amazing,” Jocelyn said. She yanked another leaf off the tree. She put the stem to her mouth and blew on it like it was a balloon. Puff by puff the leaf expanded, growing longer and wider until the weight of it made it droop down and touch the ground. Satisfied, she laid the giant leaf flat and repeated the effort three more times.

“What are you trying to do?” Bojangles questioned, but she was too busy creating giant leaves to answer him.

When she finally finished, she picked up two of the leaves and tied the stems together. She leaned over and pressed that connected center between the shoulder blades on Bojangles back. His coarse fur rearranged itself until the stems vanished. The giant leaves drooped to the ground on both sides of him.

“I feel ridiculous,” Bojangles said. “What have you done to me?”

“You’ll see.” She put a hand under each leaf and lifted it up off the ground. Then she gave them a little fling, and poof! The leaves stayed up. They were beautiful green wings now.

“Give them a try.”

Bojangles closed his eyes and concentrated. A moment later the wings began to flap and he rose off the ground. Bojangles laughed with joy.

Joceyln knelt down and tied the ends of the remaining two leaves together, then looked up at the hovering dog. “Do you have an idea for how to attach them to my back?” (D. G. Driver)

Mr. Bojangles shrugged, as well as a dog could, as he hovered over her head. “What about attaching them to your feet instead?”

Jocelyn frowned at the pair of wings for a moment. She then let out the air until they had deflated to a pair of miniature wings as small the ones the Ugly Fairy had worn. She reached up to the tree and pulled off two more leaves, from which she made an identical pair of fairy wings. She pressed a pair into the backs of each of her ankles, then leaned back to inspect her work.

With a bit of concentration, the wings flapped slowly and then started buzzing with the speed of a hummingbird. Joceyln laughed in delight as they raised her slowly into the air.

However, when she lifted herself just above the treetop, she lost her balance and toppled over backwards. She hovered there, upside down, while her hummingbird-winged shoes buzzed frantically.

Mr. Bojangles soared down easily on his larger wings and peered at Joceyln’s annoyed expression.

“Maybe you should put a pair on your head too, for added stability,” he teased. (Meg Trotter)

On her head. Jocelyn snorted. Goofy dog. But it made sense; after all, didn’t the ancient god Mercury have winged sandals and a winged hat? Maybe that was to keep him from flipping over in midair. Hat-- hmmm. Jocelyn didn’t have a hat, and she sure wasn’t going to attach wings to her head: what if they didn’t come off? But she did have a bathrobe, and that bathrobe had a belt, and that belt could-- In an instant, Jocelyn had removed the belt and flattened it over her head, tying it under her chin so it wouldn’t fall off. Two more leaves, blown up and attached to the belt, a little concentration, and--

“Ha!” Mr. Bojangles laughed. “You look like a rabbit! A big silly rabbit with goofy, flapping ears!”

“I do not!” she retorted. “I look like a great rabbit!” Because, yeah, she looked like a rabbit, but it was

an amazingly cool rabbit, a flying rabbit zooming through the air, bathrobe rippling and Mr. Bojangles barking happily as he flapped along behind her. Flyyyyyyinnng! So cool! All too soon they were at the fairgrounds, landing next to the hotdog stand. (Pat Pflieger)

Mr. Bojangles and Jocelyn suddenly felt as if their stomachs would mutiny if they could not acquire a hot dog post haste. Flying sure worked up an appetite. Jocelyn checked her bathrobe pockets, but they were empty but for a piece of used dental floss. Anyway, what kind of currency would they have in a place like this? Hunger soon overcame her shyness, and she marched up to the hot dog seller.

"Excuse me, sir. We're new in town and awful hungry. Is there any way we could get a hot dog?" The seller looked down his beak of a nose ... no, it actually was a beak! In fact, it looked like that gryphon again, but now dressed in a striped jacket.

"I'll tell you what," said the gryphon. "You go to the balloonist and ask if I can get a ride this afternoon, and I'll get you both a hot dog. My wings have been aching for a week and I long to feel the breeze on my face again."

This seemed simple enough.

"Where's the balloonist?" Jocelyn asked.

The gryphon extended a wing. "You'll find him at the other end of the fairground. Right next to the animal tamer."

"Oh. This circus has lions?"

"No. Dragons." (Katherine Ladny Mitchell)

"Dragons," Jocelyn breathed. "Real dragons?"

The gryphon's golden eyes quick-blinked like the lights at the railroad crossing down the street from her school. "Just as real as you, little human."

Jocelyn gasped. "You can see me—the real me? I don't look like a fairy to you?"

"Never," the gryphon sniffed. "I'm not fooled by appearances. Not like humans. And dogs, of course."

Mr. Bojangles growled.

The gryphon hissed, flapping his wings. Jocelyn grabbed Mr. Bojangles scruff.

"Hush, Bo," she snapped then asked the gryphon, "B-but how do you see me as I am? Is there a trick?"

The gryphon glared at the dog, but smoothed his wings and answered Jocelyn. "There's always a trick, little human, when you're in the Dreaming."

"The Dreaming? Do you mean the little boy with the hot dogs? Is he the one dreaming all of this?"

The tip of the gryphon's massive beak quivered as its glowing eyes dimmed. "That one is not a little boy." (Catherine McCarran)

Of course Jocelyn had lots more questions, but the gryphon hissed again and sent her on her way. She could just see the figure of the balloon man on the far side of the fairgrounds, standing before a giant balloon made up of thousands and thousands of small balloons. With her stomach growling and Bo at her side, she started off, puzzling over the boy who was not really a boy. There's always a trick, the gryphon had said.

The muffled quiet is what pulled her from her thoughts. There should have been music. Noise. People.

"This circus is creepy," Mr. Bojangles announced, with an adamant scratch behind his ear, and, really, she had to agree.

"What kind of dream has a creepy circus in it?" she asked, her hunger suddenly forgotten.

"No dream I want to be in."

They passed through a double row of mirrors all facing each other. Not much of a mirror maze, Jocelyn thought. No twists or turns.

"Watch out, Jossy!" Bo suddenly yelped.

She stopped right before she ran into one. She wouldn't have even known it was there if not for her

breath fogging up the glass...which had a strange, almost liquid texture. Like a pool of water. Like the pond she'd come through to this strange place. The pond with water that wasn't really water. Her heart was starting to pound again, and she swallowed hard. She could see more mirrors out of the corner of her eye—a whole wall of them completely blocking the way, but she couldn't tear her gaze from the mirror in front of her, because—her heart skipped a beat—her reflection wasn't in it. And neither was Bo's. Only the circus around them was reflected. As if they weren't really there at all. The fog of her breath began to curl and twist and rise from the mirror's strange surface.

Bo was staring into the mirror too, his head cocked to one side, one ear half raised. He glanced back over his shoulder behind them. And then again into the mirror. And then she realized what he was staring at. The circus reflections were all wrong. Where the hot dog seller should have been was the balloon man. Only he wasn't a man either. She peered closer, squinting her eyes. The balloon man was the Gryphon. And there in the next mirror over the Gryphon was reflected again, only this time he was strutting about outside a striped tent proclaiming "Tamer of Beasts". She looked about uneasily. Each mirror reflected the Gryphon in a different spot. Dressed differently. Manning a different part of the circus. And every single reflection was looking straight at her. (Rebecca Hammond Yager)

Jocelyn yelped. She retreated backwards and stepped on Mr. Bojangles' tail, causing the dog to yelp as well.

What kind of magic is this?" Her heart was beating fast; her palms had become sweaty. "Why can't I see my own reflection?"

Jocelyn whirled around, intending to ask the Gryphon or the balloon-man, but there was another row of mirrors behind her, and all of them had various reflections of the Gryphon. She turned again, her head rather dizzy, but the mirrors have surrounded her in a shimmering, opaque wall.

We're boxed in," Mr. Bojangles said, his ears drooping. "We've got to get out. This circus is freaky."

Jocelyn couldn't agree more. She didn't want to force her way out, but if that was the only solution, she would do it.

Let's break down the mirror," she suggested, balling her hands into fists. "On the count of three.

One, two, three, go!"

Jocelyn sprinted forward, expecting to crash into the mirror in front of her. But the smash and shattering never came. The mirror seemed to move with her, keeping a foot's length from her body. Jocelyn darted to the left, and the same thing happened. She couldn't touch the mirrors, but they were still around her. Her stomach growled; she desperately wished for a hot dog. Worst of all, the Gryphon's eyes followed her. He was in various forms, but his eyes remained the same--black, beady, and bottomless. It was eerie and horrifying. It was a nightmare...wait, what did the Gryphon tell her?

We're in the Dreaming, Mr. Bojangles," she said aloud. "There has to be a way, a trick to escape from it."

"There's always a trick," Mr. Bojangles repeated, echoing what the Gryphon had said.

Jocelyn sat down, cross-legged, on the ground. She closed her eyes so the Gryphon reflections wouldn't spook her. She racked her brains, trying to figure out how she could break the spell of the Dreaming. And then, an idea came to her.

"The boy who is not really a little boy," she said. "It's time that you show yourself." (Aya Ling) Jocelyn waited, but no boy appeared. She turned frantically from mirror to mirror, the Gryphon's eyes reflecting back at her. A cold sweat erupted over her skin as she realized she might be trapped forever. Where was the boy? Why couldn't she get away from these strange and horrible mirrors?

"How do I get out of here?" she screamed, struggling to hold back tears. Mr. Bojangles leaned his weight on her leg.

"Answer the riddle," a voice boomed from the direction of the Gryphon's.

Jocelyn closed her eyes. Not the riddle thing again. She was terrible at riddles, but she was also

desperate. "Okay, okay. What riddle?"

"Listen closely," said the deep voice. "The less you consume, the stronger I become. Wait too long, and death will come."

Mr. Bojangles shuddered, and Jocelyn held her breath. The way the Gryphon pronounced the word "death" filled her with dread.

Mr. Bojangles stared at her with eyes the size of saucers. "Do you know the answer?"

"No." Jocelyn's shoulders slumped as she repeated the phrase in her head. The words confused her. She couldn't figure it out.

"I wish we'd eaten those hot dogs before we got locked in here," Mr. Bojangles said, collapsing on the ground.

Jocelyn's stomach rumbled at the mention of food. "That's it!" She jumped up. "The less you consume, the stronger I become..."

Mr. Bojangles cocked his head.

"That's the answer. It's hunger!" (Laura Wolfe)

When nothing happened. Jocelyn lost all hope. They were trapped—forever.

"I don't know about you," whimpered Bojangles, "but I'm starving. And I'm not getting any stronger."

Jocelyn pulled Bo into her arms, hugging him. "It has to be hunger, Bo. It just has to be."

Her exhausted body melted in his furry side as tears tripped over her eyelids wetting his pelt.

"The Gryphon is getting stronger as we grow weaker," Bo said, and he lapped his thick tongue over Jocelyn's tormented face.

Hearing what Bojangles had to say, Jocelyn's blood torpedoed through her veins. I was right! "It is hunger!" she yelled, her voice adamant. "Set us free right now! I answered your stupid riddle." Feeling invigorated, she pounced to her feet.

There was a strange scratching noise, and then a guttural growl that offensively grated her eardrums. Almost as if she'd made the Gryphon extremely angry. But she stood her ground, not afraid, well, maybe a little afraid, and pinned her knuckles on her hips.

One of the mirrors exploded, and then another one shattered to smithereens. The protective Bojangles leapt and knocked Jocelyn to the ground and covered her with his body. One by one the Gryphon's reflective image fractured into a gazillion shards, raining over them like glittering diamonds. (Cathrina Constantine)

Jocelyn looked at her hands, half expecting them to be cut into ribbons by the falling shards. To her great relief—not to mention a bit of astonishment—she found them uninjured.

She quickly examined Mr. Bojangles, who was examining her right back and looking relieved, in a canine kind of way.

"That was unexpected," he said. "But all's well that . . ."

"Ends well," Jocelyn broke in. "Yes, yes, I know. But I fear this adventure is far from ending, well or otherwise. What do we do now?"

Mr. Bojangles put one paw to his chin, deep in thought, then started peering at the scene surrounding them. "Hmmm," he said. "There's nothing left. No hot dogs. No Gryphons. But. . ." he gestured grandly with said paw. "The balloons are still there."

Jocelyn looked where he pointed. On the horizon, she could see the gigantic bunch of balloons bobbling in the breeze as they strained at their moorings. Then she noticed the wicker basket swaying underneath them

"Let's go up and take a look around, Mr. B. Perhaps we can spot the Dreamer from there. And figure out how to awaken him."

The dog looked worried. "But Jossy, how will we steer. . ."

Jocelyn didn't stop to listen to his concerns. When there is only one possibility for solving a

problem, obstacles must be ignored. Running as fast as she could to the balloons, she helped Mr. Bojangles into the basket below them, and untied all the ropes tying them to the earth.

Faster than she could have imagined, the balloons, the basket, Mr. B, and Jocelyn soared straight up into the sky.

"Uh oh," Jocelyn thought. "This might be a bit trickier than I anticipated."

"And chillier," said Mr. Bojangles, who started shivering under his fur. (Dorothea Jensen)

With the thrust of the balloon, Jocelyn and Mr. B were thrown to the bottom of the basket. "It is a little cold," she thought, but she forced herself to slowly peer over the side.

"Wow!" she yelled. "Bo, you've gotta see this!"

Mr. B put his front paws on the rim of the basket and looked out. Not only could they see the entire festival grounds, which was now, just that, ground, but in the distance, past the violet grass, they could make out the figure of a person walking.

"Look, Bo," said Jocelyn. "There he is! There's the Man Boy! How do we steer this thing?" Jocelyn looked around the basket. "There's gotta be something here I can steer with."

Bo stuck his nose in the air.

"Can you smell that Jossy?" he said.

"We don't have time to smell, Bo." she said as she took a deep breath. "I don't have the sense of smell you do. Help me look for something we could use to make this balloon go that way." She pointed towards where the Man Boy was walking.

"But, Jossy, I smell something strange." (Vicki Tashman)

Waves of smoke wafted towards the basket. Something was happening near Man Boy, but neither Bo or Jocelyn could figure out what it was. "We have got to reach him," said Jocelyn.

"He's moving too fast," said Bo.

"If you put your nose away and help me steer, we may reach him yet."

The wind picked up, favorable to their situation. It pushed the basket in the direction of the smoke. "I think he sees us," said Jocelyn.

"No, I don't think that's Man Boy. It looks like something else."

"Something else?"

"Yes. Not human."

The basket blew faster with another gush of wind, causing Jocelyn to grab the rail.

"Bo, do you see that?"

"It's colorful."

"It looks like another balloon!" she said. "It's heading our direction, toward Man Boy!" (Stephen Kozan)

Jocelyn jumped, suddenly awake, as Bo stood over her barking and licking her face. The smell of bacon and pancakes and maple syrup permeated her room. She rubbed her eyes and remembering every detail of her bizarre dream wondered what she would find just outside her door. Would it be her mother, brother, and father, or the boy who was not a boy? Or a clown, or a gryphon? Was the sky outside filled with hot air balloons? (C.M. Huddleston)

Jocelyn sat up, outstretched her arms and let out a big yawn. She lowered her head to the tip of Bo's nose and reached around his head for a loving scratch behind the ears.

"Okay, Bo, let's get you fed," She smiled as her stomach grumbled. "And me too, apparently."

She swung her feet over the side of the bed and lightly glided into her fluffy bear claw slippers, and opened the bedroom door. Bo bolted down the hall towards the kitchen.

Jocelyn pushed through the swinging door to find the table already set with her favorites. A large stack of chocolate chip pancakes, bacon dipped in maple syrup and a cup of coffee, a dash of cream, two sugars. Bo was busy cleaning his dish of every last morsel of kibble.

"Thanks, Mom. This is awesome." She sat down and took a bite of the pancakes savoring the flavor as a burst of chocolate melted everywhere. "Mom?" (Hayley Rose)

Jocelyn's breath caught in her throat as she looked around at the kitchen. There was something wrong about it. Her heart beating quickly, she rose from her chair and walked towards the sink. She looked at the eight gray tiles on the wall in front of her. While they were normally decorated with thin blue lines, these tiles' lines were jagged, creating a broken pattern all over each one. She raised a hesitant finger to touch one. As she did, the tile seemed to fold in on itself and the walls around her began to collapse. She shrieked and ducked her head, and Mr. Bojangles yelped and pressed himself against her legs as she buried her head in his fur. When the crumbling sound finally died away she risked peeking up only to see she was in a cavernous room filled with ancient furniture that shone like gold. And with a sinking heart, she noticed that before her was another mirror—an giant oval one set in an ornate frame that seemed to be made of burnished bronze. (Lynne Stringer)

The floor creaked beneath her bare feet as she stepped lightly across the wooden floor. She reached for the door nob, it was cold to the touch, she turned it, but it wouldn't budge. She pushed and pushed, finally it gave way. As the door slowly swung open, she saw a figure sitting in her father's chair, but papa was out of town, who could this be? She flicked the light switch, but there was no light. "Why don't you shine the light from your phone?" She recognized the voice, but could it really be? Was it possible? (Carmela Dutra)

Jocelyn turned and, oh yes, she recognized the voice alright . . . it was her! Another Jocelyn. A twin. How could it be? Mr. Bojangles looked from one Jocelyn to the other and then back again. "Hey!" Jocelyn shouted. "You can't be me."

"Of course not," twin Jocelyn said. "I'm me. We all have twins, surely you know that, right? Some people are born with their twin, but others, like us, are mirror twins. I watch you lots of times, but you're always so busy tidying your hair and dress that you never even notice me."

"Silly twin," Jocelyn told her. "A mirror simply reflects an image. The image inside it isn't real."

"Sure it is," the twin told her. "I'll prove it. When you came in, you wanted to know who was sitting in Papa's chair. He's out of town, right?" When Jocelyn nodded, the twin said, "Then use the light from your phone and see who's in his chair."

Using her light, Jocelyn inched closer. As the light settled on the face of the sleeping man, she gasped. (K.S. Jones)

Never before had she beheld a countenance that displayed a more confused array of emotions. While his eyes spoke of pain, his lips curled up into an uncertain smile. Faint wrinkles in his forehead, the lightest etchings of age, suggested indecision, even as he stared at her boldly. She studied that face. Sure, the man looked like Papa in some respects, yet in others, he was as unlike her Papa as any man could be. This man engendered no confidence. This man inspired no warmth. This man was no refuge in a storm. No, she concluded, *this man was the storm.* (Patricia Reding)