

Mandy in the Pipes

By Emma Bloom

Mandy Milford was the skinniest girl in the entire world. She was thinner than a tree. She was narrower than a flagpole. She was slimmer than a traffic light. Mandy was as slender as a pencil, almost.

Mandy had not been quite so lean her whole life. In fact, up until one special day in June, she was quite the normal-sized girl. On that fateful day, Mandy's class had taken a field trip to a bakery. She had gotten mixed up in the dough and been rolled out for a cinnamon roll. The class had already sprinkled Mandy with cinnamon, and were about to put her in the oven when they finally heard her calls for help, muffled by the dough, in which she was smothered. Mandy was rescued just in time, but she was thin as a string bean.

Her classmates and family tried and tried to fix Mandy's shape back to normal. First, they tried, while she was still at the bakery, to roll her back into shape. "Ow!" Mandy exclaimed.

Next, her friend, Pete, gave Mandy a potion that he swore would make her look like her old self. After drinking the concoction, Mandy was sick in bed all day and couldn't talk. "Oops," said Pete. "I guess I got it mixed up with the one I made my baby brother to stop his crying." That same evening, Baby Jim suddenly blew up like a balloon. Pete's parents were not pleased.

Mandy's parents took her to a doctor who gave Mandy special exercises to do each night before sleep, but the work-outs only made Mandy even skinnier.

Eventually, Mandy and her family came to realize that maybe her new size was a good thing. She could squeeze under the door when they forgot their key and through all kinds of cracks that could fit no one else. They were able to replace her bed with a much skinnier one and each of her old t-shirts could be made into three new ones with the same amount of fabric.

One afternoon, Mandy and her little brother were dressing up. "You can't put on Mom's necklaces," Mandy scolded Jeff.

"Yes I can!" he whined. Mandy tried to grab the jewelry, but Jeff made a run for it. She followed him down the hallway, but he leaped into the bathroom and shut the door.



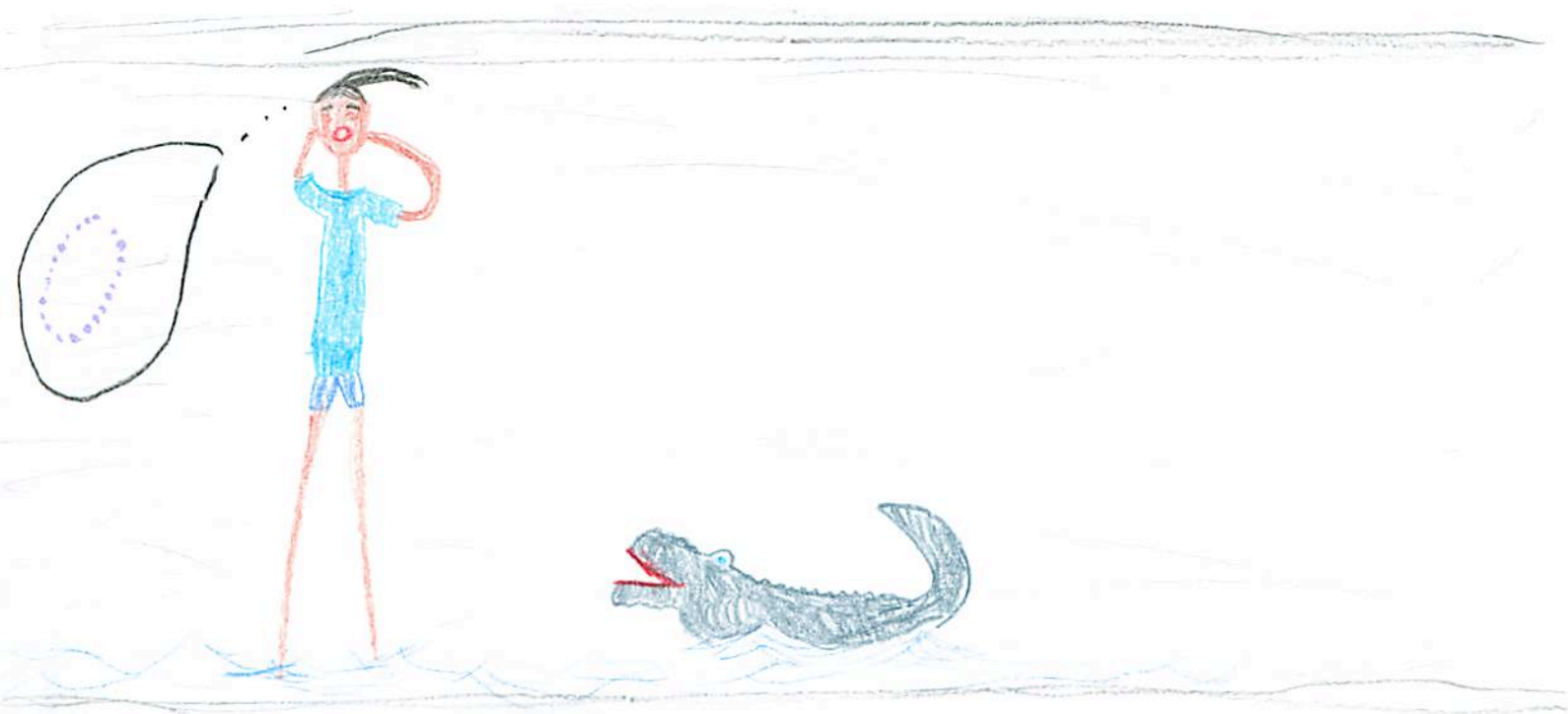
Mandy burst through just in time to see him flush the necklace down the toilet. “Jeff! What are you doing?” she yelled in shock.

“Now you can’t take it away from me!” he replied.

When Mandy’s mother arrived home that evening, she was very upset. “I got that necklace from my mom, who got it from my grandma,” she said. “It was a family heirloom.” The family tried to use the plunger to find the necklace and Jeff was put on a long, long timeout, but still Mandy’s mom was sad.

“I need to do something,” Mandy thought, sitting down on the edge of the tub to think. Suddenly an idea struck. “I’m skinny enough to go down the toilet and find it!” she realized.

Mandy positioned herself in the toilet then reached out to pull the flusher. *Woosh.* The water rushed round and round, and Mandy was pulled down into the pipes with it, until she at last came to rest in a big and cold metal tube. She gave her eyes a minute to adjust to the dark of the pipes, then took a look around. And nearly crashed her head on the top of the pipe when she jumped in fright. There, in front of her, sat a small alligator. “Hi,” it said, grinning at Mandy’s terrified expression. “I’m Annie.”



“Y-you’re an alligator,” Mandy stammered.

“Yes,” Annie replied. “Does that upset you?”

“Well, I suppose not,” Mandy said after a moment’s thought. She still wasn’t sure, really, how she felt about her nearness to the alligator, but figured it would be wise to answer politely.

“Really?” Annie said, beaming once more and talking very, very quickly. “That’s so great because I’m not dangerous at all, I promise I’m not, but sometimes people think I am. The mom of the girl that brought me home from the circus all that time ago flushed me down the toilet because she was scared I’d be bad when I got bigger. That’s how I got here, you know-she flushed me.”

By this time, Mandy really did feel bad for Annie. “Well, I don’t think you seem dangerous,” she said. “In fact, I think you seem rather nice. I’m looking for my mom’s necklace. Would you like to help me?”

“Sure!” Annie said, and with that the pair set off together in search of the missing jewelry.

On and on they walked, for what felt like hours, until at last they saw a group of gold fish swimming slow circles in the shallow water at the bottom of the pipe. "It really was a beauty," one was saying as Mandy and Annie approached.

"Indeed," answered another. "How I'd like to get my hands on a necklace like that one. If I could get one of those for my wife for our next anniversary, I'm sure she'd forget the Joe Montana-signed football I gave her last year."

Mandy's ears had perked up at the word necklace. "Excuse me," she asked the fish, "but what is this about a beautiful necklace?"

"Why do you wanna know?" a third goldfish asked, narrowing its eyes.

The goldfish made Mandy nervous, but luckily Annie spoke up. "Hello friends," she began (for Annie always wanted to make a warm first impression so no one would think her dangerous).

But seeing the alligator open her mouth, the fish bolted in the direction from which Annie and Mandy had come. "See?" Annie said sadly. "This always happens. Everyone always thinks that because I'm an alligator I want to eat them. I'm a vegetarian, you know!"

Mandy comforted her new friend. "I don't think you're scary at all. As a matter of fact, I'd love to take you home to live with me, if you'd like."

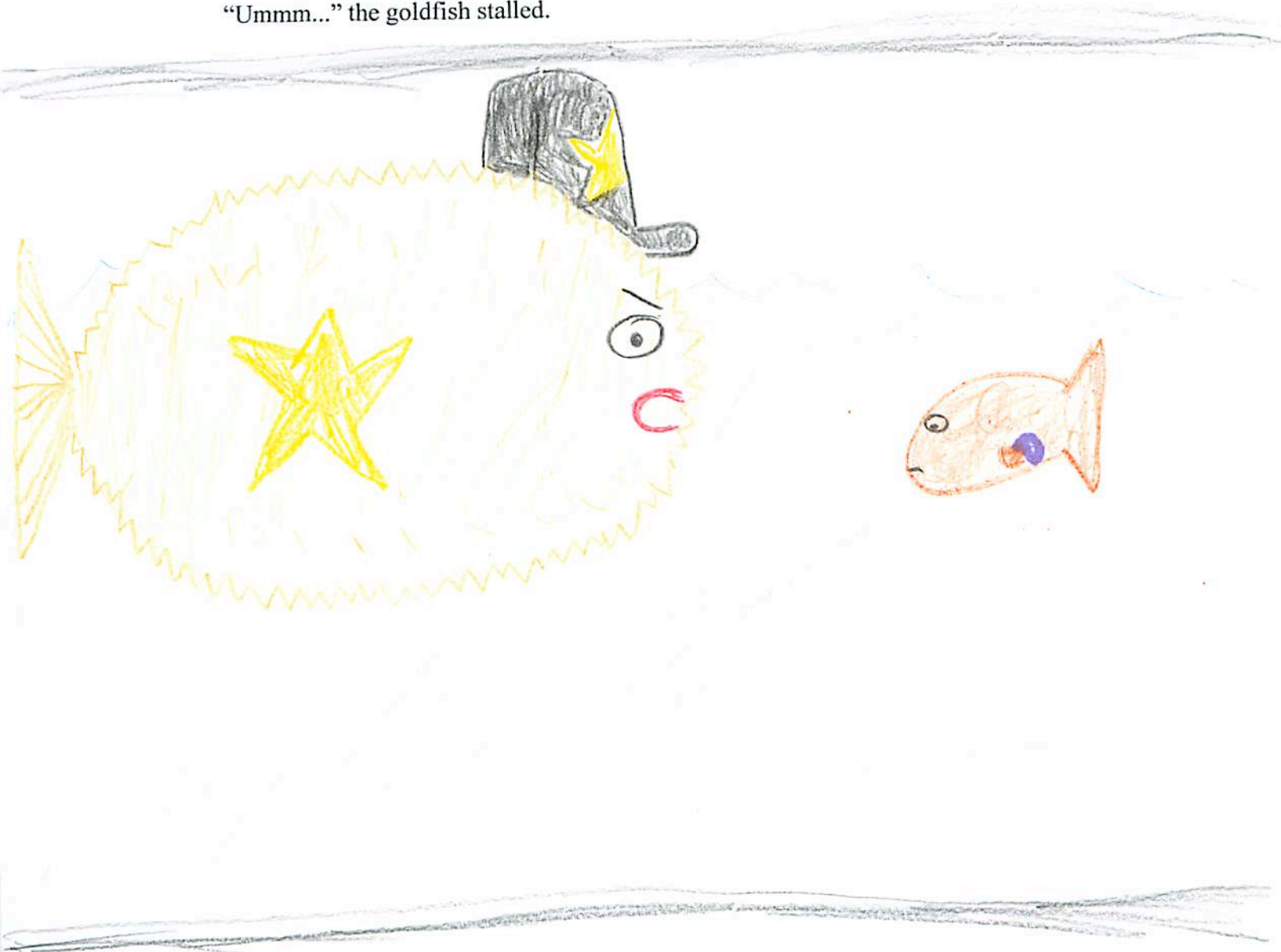
At that, Annie jumped on Mandy with joy and Mandy truly did get a little nervous, but soon she had calmed down a bit and as the two continued their search, now in the direction the fish looked like they had been coming from, they spoke of how much fun they would have as sisters, sharing a room and staying up late telling stories and secrets.

Eventually, the two came to a fork in the pipes and as they tried to decide which way to go, they heard voices up ahead. "Let's follow that noise," Mandy suggested. They walked down the left pipe for several minutes, until they saw a big puffer fish with a police hat and badge standing with yet another goldfish. "Do you know how fast you were going?" the puffer fish demanded.

"No Sir," replied the goldfish. "I don't tend to keep a speedometer on me when I swim."

"Well, maybe you should get one," the policeman said angrily. "Why were you going so fast, anyway?"

"Ummm..." the goldfish stalled.



Suddenly Mandy saw a glint of purple light coming from the top of the goldfish's pocket. "The necklace!" she shouted. The small fish tried to make a run for it, but the policeman caught him just in time. Pulling the necklace from the thief's pocket, he turned to Mandy and Annie. "Does this belong to you?" he asked.

"Yes! Well, no," Mandy replied, too over-joyed to speak properly.

"What she means to say," Annie jumped in, "is that it's her mom's and we've come on quite the journey to get here and have been looking for it all day and we are just so so so very glad you found it because you know what happens now? Mandy gets to go home and I get to go home with her to live in her house with her parents and her little brother, who is very annoying, but can be fun and Mandy and I get to be sisters and best friends and it's going to be the best thing in the world!"

"Um, you're very welcome," said the cop, looking rather shocked.

The hike back to Mandy's own bathroom pipes was long, but eventually they made it. "Uh-oh," Mandy said when they arrived. "We're so close, but how can we get back up the pipes and to the toilet?" They sat and pondered for a good amount of time, then at last Mandy had an idea. "What if we threw one end of the necklace up out of the toilet and used it to lasso the flusher?" she suggested. "Then we could use the necklace like a rope and climb up it and out of the toilet."

"Alright," said Annie. "But we must be very, very careful that we do not pull the necklace too hard or we will pull down the flusher and be down the drain again."

So the friends were agreed and Mandy (because Annie did not have hands, being an alligator and all) twirled the necklace around her head, then holding on to one end, flung the other up and up and out of the toilet, to hook it on to the flusher.

“Wow!” Annie said, impressed. “You got it on your first try.” They climbed up through the pipes, then out of the bowl and when they got into the house, Mandy’s mother was so overjoyed to see both her daughter and her favorite necklace that she didn’t even mind that Mandy had brought over a guest without asking.

The End.