

A PUDDLEBEND STORY

CINDER and the MISSING MOON



WREN MARLOWE

PUDDLEBEND



Cinder and the Missing Moon



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PUDDLEBEND

For those who wait for one more look.



Cinder and the Missing Moon

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Pip had waited all afternoon for the moon. Waiting with his eyes shut had turned into a nap.

“Tonight,” Cinder promised, “I’ll show you a moon in our little pond. You can look as long as you like.”

The pond was a still pocket beside the creek.
Cinder knew its moon: bright and close
enough to nose.

But tonight, Pip found only leaves.

“Where is it?”

Cinder’s tail bent into a hook.

“I saw it here last night. It filled this
whole little patch.”





Bramble tipped his nose toward the leaning gum tree.

“Look up. Through the branches.”

Pip looked. Leaves filled his whole patch of sky.

Cinder sniffed along the bank toward a silver wink.

“Ooh, what’s there? One peek? Just one?”

Pip waddled between them. He was a moon finder too.

The wink came from Cinder's bark bucket, a curled piece of bark holding rain.

"It's in your bucket," he whispered. "You caught it."





Cinder braced her paws against the bark.
“Can I take it home?” Pip asked.
Cinder nudged the bucket toward him.
The water sloshed. Its moon broke into
wiggly bits.
Pip tucked his bill against his chest.
“Oh. I broke it.”

“Steady. Hold still.” Bramble whispered.

“We can watch it mend,” Cinder said. “Keep your toes still.”

The wiggly bits joined into a round moon again.

Pip lifted his bill.

“Can I break it twice?”

Cinder swallowed a laugh. It was late.





Beyond the low branches, the moon hung
above the reeds.

“The real one’s still up there,” she said.

“The water shows its picture.”

Pip looked from sky to bucket.

“Then your bucket isn’t big enough for the
real one.”

Bramble leaned over the bucket.

“Only a nose. My nose. That won’t do.”

Pip giggled into his feathers.

Bramble leaned back. The moon returned.

Cinder looked toward the pond. Its water was covered too, with lily leaves.





“Under those,” Cinder said. “That’s where we need to look. Come here, Pip. Stay on the moss.”

Pip and Bramble followed Cinder back to the nearest leaf.

“One peek? Just one?”

Her paw slipped beneath its edge.

Something underneath made a tiny squeak.

Bramble stopped short of the leaf.
“We check first. Listen.”
Cinder kept her paw still.
A bubbly snore followed the squeak.
Pip pressed close to the reeds.
“That’s my sister. She snores through her
bill. You can hear her all the way across
our bed.”





Cinder eased the leaf down over the sleeping ducklings.

“I nearly woke them.”

Pip’s eyes watered.

“I wanted my moon.”

Bramble stayed beside him.

Bramble patted the moss twice. Cinder sat back on her paws. “Shall I fetch the bucket?” “I wanted the pond one,” Pip whispered. “You said I could look.” Bramble peered along the water’s edge. “Beside their bed. That part is empty.” Between two leaves, a thin silver line trembled.





Cinder crouched at the silver line. One loose leaf overlapped the water. The sleeping ducklings lay farther along the bank. She turned to Pip.

“Does anyone sleep under this one?”

He checked the moss.

“No. That bed’s empty.”

“One peek? Just one?” Cinder asked.
Pip nodded.
She waited for his nod before
touching anything.
She slid the loose leaf sideways by a
paw’s width.
A little window opened. Cinder leaned
over it, but all she saw was her own nose.





Cinder pulled her nose back.

“Your turn. Try here. A bit nearer? Keep your toes on the moss. I’ll stay beside you.”

Pip settled beside her.

The water wrinkled where the leaf had moved. He waited for it to smooth.

Then his bill opened without a sound.

“Can you see it?” Bramble whispered.
“It’s looking at me. Look, it’s got my bill.”
Pip nodded so hard that his picture
nodded back.
He held still again.
The moon floated between the leaves.
Pip stretched one wing toward it, then
rested that wing against Cinder.





“You found my moon,” Pip whispered. Cinder’s tail lifted. “Shall we leave your window open?” “Yes. A little one.” She left the loose leaf beside the gap. The leaves above his sisters stayed tucked in place. Pip leaned against her and took one last look.

When Pip yawned, Bramble settled
beside Cinder.

His eyes closed halfway, then opened for
another peek.

In the little window, the moon wore a
duckling's bill.

Above the reeds, the real moon shone on.



EVERYONE AT THE CREEK



Bramble

COMMON
WOMBAT

The steady big-
kid guardian



Skip

MUDSKIPPER

The tiny little
brother who
cannot wait his
turn



Cinder

COATIMUNDI

The nosy
neighborhood
explorer



Sora

SANDHILL
CRANE

The tall
watchful big-
sister neighbor



Hush

TAWNY
FROGMOUTH

The tall
nervous big
cousin who
thinks nobody
can see him



Tuck

SHORT-BEAKED
ECHIDNA

The littlest
cousin who is
always a bit too
close



Nix

SUGAR GLIDER

The littlest
rocket sibling

ABOUT THE CREEK

Puddlebend is a slow bend in a warm creek where the water is shallow enough to stand in and the mud is soft enough to sit down in. Everyone who lives there is small. Everyone who lives there is working something out.

These stories are about the ordinary, difficult business of being a friend: waiting your turn, going back for what you dropped, letting someone hold you when you are all spikes.

WREN MARLOWE

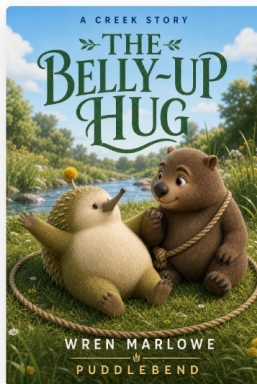
Wren Marlowe makes quiet, funny picture books at the water's edge: small creatures working out how to be together.



ALSO IN A CREEK STORY



The Clacking Lid



The Belly-Up Hug



Cinder's Paw Band



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puddlebend.com

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Cinder and the Missing Moon

One promised moon. One curious nose. One very small window.

Cinder promises Pip a moon in the pond. But tonight, the water is hidden beneath leaves.

A wiggly moon in a bark bucket and a sleepy squeak lead Cinder and Bramble to a way for Pip to peek.



Written and illustrated by Wren Marlowe

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