

STORIES FOR A STARRY NIGHT

BY PETER GRAHAME

*What do you see when you
look up into the starry sky?
You can make up your own
story and share it.*

CHARACTERS

CAMPERS 1-8
STAR TELLER
ORION
ARTEMIS
APOLLO
PARENT 1
PARENT 2
OLD MAN
SEVEN CHILDREN
THREE MONKEYS
BIG STAR
STAR 1
STAR 2
SKYGOD
TOUGH STAR
SEVEN LITTLE STARS



SCENE 1

CAMPER 1 This sure is a great campsite, isn't it?

CAMPER 2 Yeah, way out here in the wide open spaces.

CAMPER 3 It's so dark here—but at least we have a clear, starry sky tonight.

CAMPER 4 In fact, I've never seen such brightly burning stars!

CAMPER 5 I guess where we live, the bright lights on streets and in buildings keep the sky too lit up at night.

CAMPER 6 Hey! Look over there. You can see the Big Dipper.

CAMPERS (*ad lib*) Where? Huh? The what?

CAMPER 6 The Big Dipper. See? There are four bright stars that form the cup, and then those three stars there form the handle. It looks like a dipper, for drinking water.

CAMPER 7 Yes, and if you follow the first two stars in the cup, one above the other, they point right to . . .

CAMPER 8 I know! The North Star! There it is!

CAMPER 2 And the North Star is at the end of the handle of . . .

CAMPER 8 The Little Dipper!

CAMPER 1 I wonder who first thought they looked like dippers?

STAR TELLER Well, actually, some people think the Big Dipper looks like a bear.

CAMPERS (*ad lib*) What? Huh? Who said that?

CAMPER 1 Look! Right there! Sitting on that rock!

CAMPER 3 Excuse me. We didn't see you before. Where did you come from?

STAR TELLER Oh, here and there, up and down.

CAMPER 2 Who are you? Why is your robe shining like that?

STAR TELLER Well, you can call me Star Teller. And I'm here to talk about the stars, if you want to. It's my favorite subject.

CAMPERS (*ad lib*) Sure! Wow! You bet! Let's go!

SCENE 2

CAMPER 3 Star Teller, did you say the Big Dipper looks like a bear?

STAR TELLER Yes, to some people. You see, long ago, people looked up in the sky and saw patterns in the stars. You have a word that means "star pattern"—*constellation*. Did you know that? Well, to continue . . . people made up stories about constellations to explain how they came to be in the sky. Many Native Americans thought the first four stars of the Big Dipper could be a bear.

CAMPER 5 It doesn't look like a bear to me.

STAR TELLER Just use your imagination.

CAMPER 5 What about the three stars behind the bear?

CAMPER 6 I know! Bear hunters!

STAR TELLER That's right. Very good! And see that curve of stars over there?

CAMPER 7 Could that be the bear's cave?

STAR TELLER Right again! See? You understand. Let's take a look at another hunter. Look across the sky over there. See those three stars on an angle? That's known as the belt of Orion (uh REYE uhn) the hunter.

CAMPER 3 And those three smaller stars coming down from the belt, could that be his sword?

STAR TELLER Yes, that's right!

CAMPER 4 How did he get up there?

STAR TELLER Well, there are many stories.

CAMPERS (*ad lib*) Tell us one, Star Teller. Yes! Tell us one!

STAR TELLER All right. Now listen carefully. Long ago, people in ancient Greece told of a hunter named Orion.

ORION That's me! I'm Orion. This stick is my sword!

STAR TELLER Okay, Orion. Tell us more about yourself.

ORION Yes, I will. I fell in love with Artemis (AR tuh muhs). She was a hunter too. A most beautiful hunter!

ARTEMIS Here I am, Orion. Here's your Artemis. Oh, how I love you!

STAR TELLER Unfortunately for Orion, Artemis was a goddess, goddess of the moon, in fact. It was her job to ride her chariot, the moon, across the sky each night. Now Artemis had a brother, Apollo. He was a powerful god, the sun god.

APOLLO I am the mighty Apollo! Sister . . . Artemis! You're supposed to be driving your moon chariot across the sky each night.

ARTEMIS Oh, Apollo. You're so stuck up! I'd rather be with Orion!

APOLLO Oh yeah? We'll see about that.

STAR TELLER It's a sad story. Apollo played a trick on his sister.

ARTEMIS Apollo! You made me shoot an arrow, and I hit Orion by mistake!

CAMPERS (*ad lib*) That's terrible! What happened then?

ARTEMIS I'll show you, Apollo! I'll take Orion and put him in the sky. Then, whenever I drive my moon chariot, I'll be up there with him!

CAMPERS (*clapping, ad lib*) Hooray! Good for her! A happy ending!

SCENE 3

CAMPER 4 Tell us another story, Star Teller!

STAR TELLER Very well. Look up above Orion's right shoulder. Do you see a small group of very dim stars?

CAMPER 2 I do! I think I can count . . . six!

STAR TELLER There are actually seven, but the last one is hard to see. That group of stars is known as the Pleiades (PLEE uh deez).

CAMPER 7 The . . . the . . . PLEE uh deez?

STAR TELLER That's right. And there are many stories from all over the world about how those seven stars came to be.

CAMPERS (*ad lib*) Tell us! Tell us a story! What are they?

STAR TELLER All right. Native Americans of many different tribes tell stories of how those seven stars came to be in the sky. One tribe, known as the Onondaga (OH nuhn DAY guh) tells this story. Once there were seven children . . .

SEVEN CHILDREN (*together*) We love to dance! We love to sing!
We don't care about anything!

STAR TELLER Their parents were worried.

PARENT 1 Our children won't do their chores. They won't do their lessons.

PARENT 2 They won't even come home to eat! They just dance and sing all day and night. What are we to do?

STAR TELLER That night, an old man clothed in shining garments appeared to those dancing children.

OLD MAN Dancing and singing is all very good! But you children must stop now and go home to your parents. If you don't, something very strange will happen!

SEVEN CHILDREN (*together*) You shine so bright, dear old man.
But we will dance as fast as we can!

STAR TELLER The seven children did get hungry, of course, so they ran home to their parents.

SEVEN CHILDREN (*together*) We want some food to take away.
So we can dance all night and day!

PARENT 1 If you want food, then you must come in and sit with us and eat!

PARENT 2 Now be good, like all the other children, and come inside!

STAR TELLER But the children wouldn't listen.

SEVEN CHILDREN (*together*) We've got to dance! We've got to sing!
So we won't eat, or anything! (*All laugh.*)

STAR TELLER That night, as they danced, the shining old man came once more.

OLD MAN I warn you! If you don't go home and be good to your parents, something very, very strange will happen to you!

STAR TELLER The children refused to listen—and then something strange did happen. Because they had not eaten, their bodies became very soft and light.

SEVEN CHILDREN (*together*) We're rising up! We're flying high!
We're going off into the sky! Help us! Help us! Me oh my!

STAR TELLER Their parents came running.

PARENT 1 Here's some food. Come back! Please come back!

PARENT 2 Please don't leave! Return to us!

STAR TELLER But the children could not come back. They had been turned into seven stars. We call them the Pleiades, but the Onondagas called them Oot-kwa-tah (oot KWAH tuh) and knew them to be seven children, forever dancing in a circle in the sky.

CAMPERS (*laughing, ad lib*) That was great! What a way to go! More. More!

SCENE 4

STAR TELLER Why don't you see what you can do with your own imaginations. Now if you look at the left end of Orion's belt and let your eyes continue on to the left, you'll see a very bright star called Sirius (SEER ee uhs). It is also known as the Dog Star.

CAMPER 6 Is it Orion's hunting dog?

STAR TELLER Could be.

CAMPER 7 Is there a story about that star too?

STAR TELLER Well, in India, they tell the story of a dog who followed his master to the Great Sky Land. But the gatekeeper there wouldn't let the dog in.

CAMPER 8 I'll bet the dog's owner loved the dog so much, he said he wouldn't go in without him. That's what I'd do.

STAR TELLER That's a good start. What happens next?

CAMPER 7 The dog wandered across the sky alone forever.

CAMPER 8 No, no, that's not right! The dog's owner wouldn't leave him alone like that.

CAMPER 3 I have a better idea! The gatekeeper was so impressed by the man's love for his dog, that he turned them both into beautiful stars of the night sky!

STAR TELLER Good, good! Now you're using your imaginations. You can look at a constellation and make up a story about it. People just like you have been doing that almost since the beginning of time.

CAMPER 5 But what if we get the wrong idea about a constellation? I mean what if we picture something really weird and different?

STAR TELLER My friend, there IS no right or wrong idea. In fact, there is a completely different story about the Pleiades, told by the Polynesian people of the Pacific Islands. They say that there was a Big Star that was very bright.

BIG STAR That's me! Big Star! I am, in fact, the brightest star in the sky!

STAR TELLER He was also very, VERY vain.

BIG STAR Not only that, I am the brightest and most beautiful star in the sky.

STAR TELLER The other stars got rather tired of this.

STAR 1 I wish Big Star would be quiet already.

STAR 2 What a windbag!

STAR TELLER But the Big Star went on and on.

BIG STAR No, not just in the sky. I am the brightest and most beautiful star in the entire universe!

STAR 1 AND STAR 2 Skygod, Skygod, help us!

SKY GOD What? What is it? What do you want?

STAR 1 AND STAR 2 Please, please, Skygod, make Big Star stop bragging!

BIG STAR You can't stop me! I'm the best! Ha, ha!

SKY GOD Oh yes, I see. Well, we'll see about that. You there, Tough Star.

TOUGH STAR Who, me?

SKYGOD Yes, you. You're round and hard as a baseball. How about letting me practice my pitching?

TOUGH STAR Well, okay. I'd be glad to. But don't miss!

SKYGOD I won't.

STAR 1 *(like an announcer)* Skygod picks up Tough Star.

STAR 2 *(like an announcer)* Winding up for the pitch!

STAR 1 AND STAR 2 There it goes!

ALL AVAILABLE VOICES KA-BOOM! *(Ad lib.)* Yay! Hooray! He did it!
Look at that!

STAR TELLER Yes, Big Star was shattered into seven smaller stars.

STAR 1 Well, that's the end of that.

STAR 2 There'll be no more bragging from now on.

STAR TELLER However, the Polynesian people say that if you listen very closely on a quiet night you can hear the voices of the seven little stars.

SEVEN LITTLE STARS (*in tiny voices*) We are the cutest and the prettiest and the brightest little stars in the entire universe! Hee, hee, hee!

STAR 1 AND STAR 2 Oh, no!

STAR TELLER And that's the end of the story!

CAMPER 2 Are there other stories about the Pleiades?

STAR TELLER Many. Native Americans told quite a few. Also people living long ago in Greece, Egypt, and India.

CAMPER 4 Oh Star Teller, tell us those stories now!

STAR TELLER No, I'm afraid my time is running out. But you can make up your own stories and share them. In fact, that's a lot more fun.

CAMPER 5 You mean, choose a star pattern in the sky . . .

CAMPER 6 And then make up a story about it?

STAR TELLER Other people did it. Why not you? Well, I have to go feed Sirius. 'Bye now. And good luck!

SCENE 5

CAMPER 7 Hey! Where did Star Teller go?

CAMPER 8 Vanished, it would seem.

CAMPER 1 Say, do you think Star Teller was serious?

CAMPER 6 No! Sirius was that dog.

CAMPER 1 No, no. I mean, was Star Teller *serious* about us making up our own star stories?

CAMPER 3 Why not? It kind of seemed like we were helping with the storytelling anyway.

CAMPER 4 Yeah! It was strange. Like in a dream or something.

CAMPER 5 Well, I want to try it. I pick those three stars in Orion's belt. I say they are . . . three monkeys in a row!

THREE MONKEYS (*together*) We see nothing, hear nothing, say nothing!

CAMPER 6 And so they got sent to the sky . . .

CAMPER 7 To learn something!

THREE MONKEYS (*together*) Now we know a lot—about the stars in the sky!

CAMPERS (*laughing, ad lib*) Yeah, that's it! That's the idea. This is great! Let's do more!

CAMPER 2 Okay. I'm going to make up my own constellation. See this bunch of people sitting around a campfire?

CAMPERS (*ad lib*) Huh? Who? Where?

CAMPER 2 Right here. All of us toasting marshmallows. And just maybe . . .

CAMPER 1 We'll turn into a constellation, too—the Marshmallow Toasters!

ALL CAMPERS (*together*) Here we go! Up to the sky!