

FLAT STANLEY



The Flying Chinese Wonders
by J. Greenhut



Flat Stanley

Josh Greenhut

**Jeff Brown's Flat Stanley:
The Flying Chinese Wonders**

«HarperCollins»

Greenhut J.

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FLAT STANLEY

The Flying Chinese Wonders

Created by Jeff Brown
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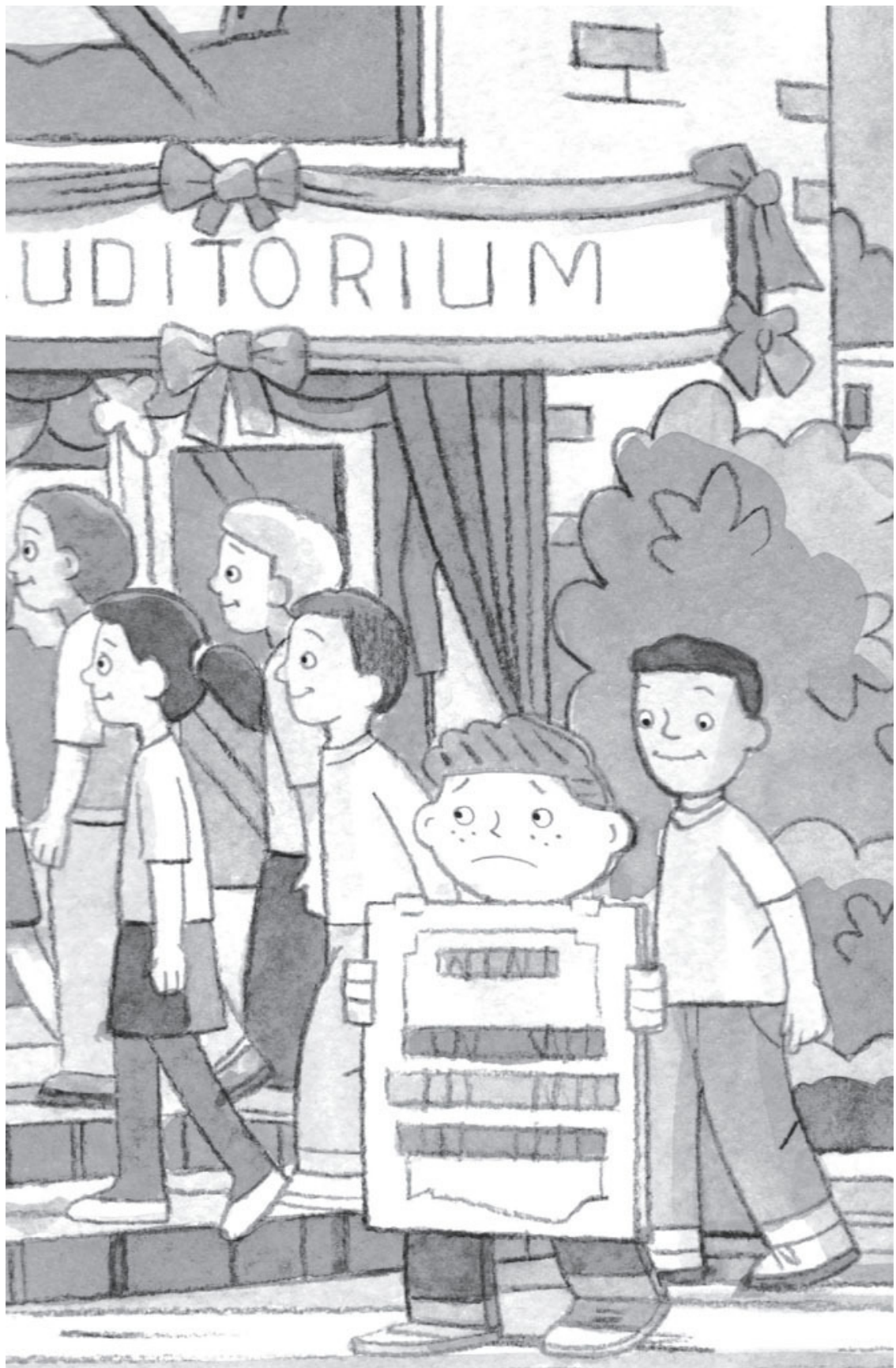
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Unlucky Day

The fact that Stanley Lambchop was flat did not mean he enjoyed being treated like a poster. Stanley trudged back and forth outside the school auditorium with a giant piece of cardboard taped to the front of his body. It read:



People streamed inside. A beefy boy from Stanley's class called out, 'Look, it's the poster boy for flat kids!'

Stanley grimaced. He hoped no one else would notice him.

'Well, hello there, Stanley Lambchop!' It was Doctor Dan, whom Stanley had visited just after he was flattened. It wasn't long ago that he'd woken up to find that his bulletin board had fallen on him in the middle of the night. 'Helping out with the big performance, are we? Well, good for you for making positive use of an unusual condition!'

How embarrassing, Stanley thought.

After Doctor Dan left to take his seat, Stanley's family appeared. 'My little star!' squealed his mother, Harriet Lambchop.

Stanley tried to smile as she kissed the edge of his head.

His little brother, Arthur, rolled his eyes. 'He's not even *in the show*, Mum.'



‘Now, Arthur,’ said Mrs Lambchop, ‘those behind the scenes are just as important as those onstage.’

‘And nobody is behind the scenes like our Stanley.’ Mr Lambchop winked. Stanley sighed. He’d always liked being in plays. Now, all anyone wanted him to do was move the sets, because his shape made him hard to see when he crossed the stage.

‘I’m not even moving scenery today,’ Stanley grumbled.

‘Why not?’ asked Mr Lambchop.

‘Are you in charge of the giant pandas?’ said Mrs Lambchop hopefully. ‘They have always been my favourite wonders from China!’

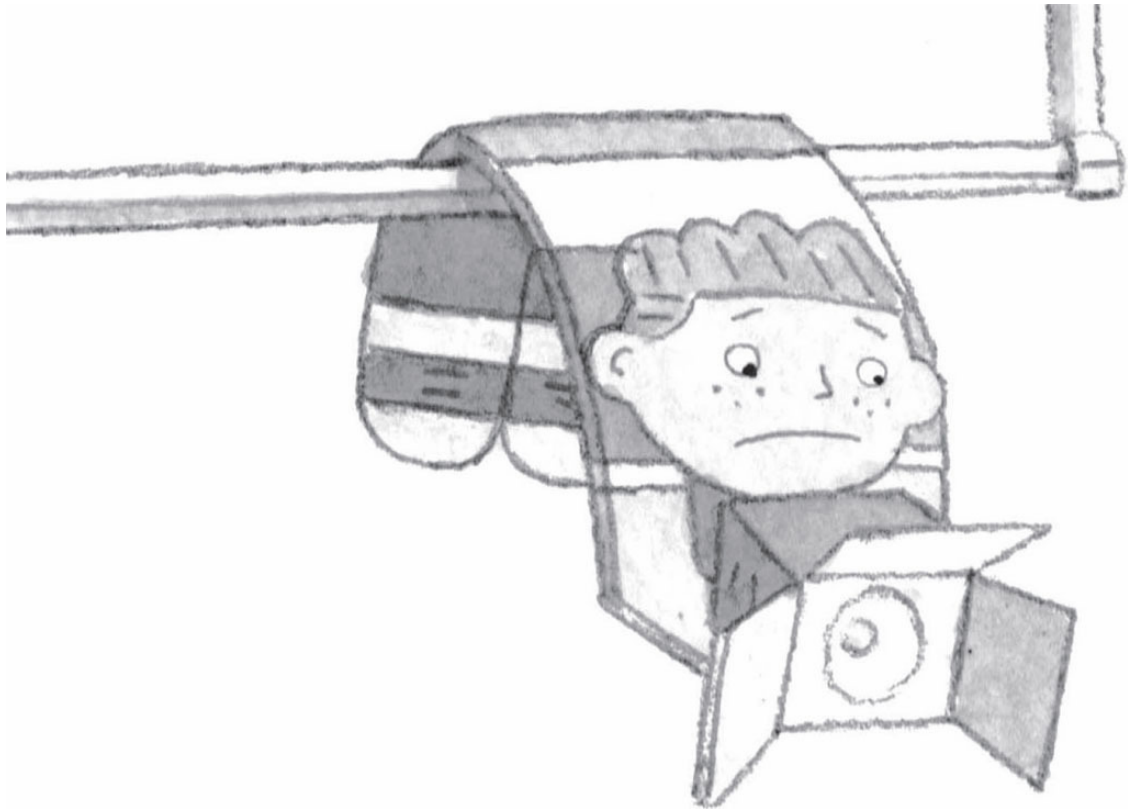
‘No.’ Stanley pouted. ‘There aren’t any pandas. The spotlight blew a fuse, so . . .’ He held up a giant flashlight from behind his poster. ‘I have to hang upside down from the ceiling with this.’

‘Hey, Stanley,’ called his friend Carlos, who lived next door to the Lambchops. ‘Don’t break a leg!’

Stanley’s mother chuckled. ‘He means, “Break a leg,” dear. That’s a common figure of speech in the theatre. It means good luck!’ Harriet Lambchop took great interest in the proper use of the English language.

‘I don’t think so, Mum,’ said Arthur. ‘I think Carlos meant, “Don’t fall from the ceiling and break your leg.”’

‘Be quiet, Arthur,’ huffed Stanley.



Once everyone was seated, Stanley took his place. He hung with his lower body rolled around a bar high over the crowd.

It's not fair! he thought. *Why do I have to save the day any time somebody needs something flat or flexible?*



On the one hand, Stanley's new shape allowed him to do lots of fun and exciting things, like fit between the walls of an Egyptian pyramid and be a cape in a Mexican bullfight. On the other hand, he was often asked to do uncomfortable, humiliating, and boring things that would never be expected of a rounded person. For instance, he was rolled and tied to the back of a horse in South Dakota and forced to ride with baggage in the cargo hold of an airplane to Africa.

Stanley didn't want to hang high in the air holding a heavy flashlight. He didn't even know what to expect onstage. The performers had arrived only moments before the show was about to begin.

The lights went down. With a sigh, Stanley lifted his flashlight and flicked it on as the curtains squeaked open.

In the centre of the bare stage stood a teenage boy and girl. They wore matching red outfits. 'Lucky people of America!' A Chinese man in a tuxedo stepped on to the stage. 'All the way from the People's Republic of China, we bring to you . . . the Flying Chinese Wonders!'

A few people clapped as Stanley moved his spotlight back and forth between the two performers. They bowed slowly.

This is going to be even worse than I thought, figured Stanley.

Then, in a flash, the boy and girl shot into the air. Flipping high over the stage, they grabbed hands and flattened their bodies, spinning around each other like a sputtering propeller headed straight for the ground. Stanley held his breath as the human propeller spun faster and faster, its descent slowing until finally it hovered a few feet off the ground. They planted their feet and faced the audience with their arms raised in the air. The entire auditorium erupted with applause.

Stanley couldn't believe it! The Flying Chinese Wonders were amazing!



They swooped and sailed through the air. They twisted and flipped and spun like tops. Together, they became a dragon, a comet, and a fish on a trampoline. Sometimes, Stanley couldn't tell where the first Wonder began and the other ended.

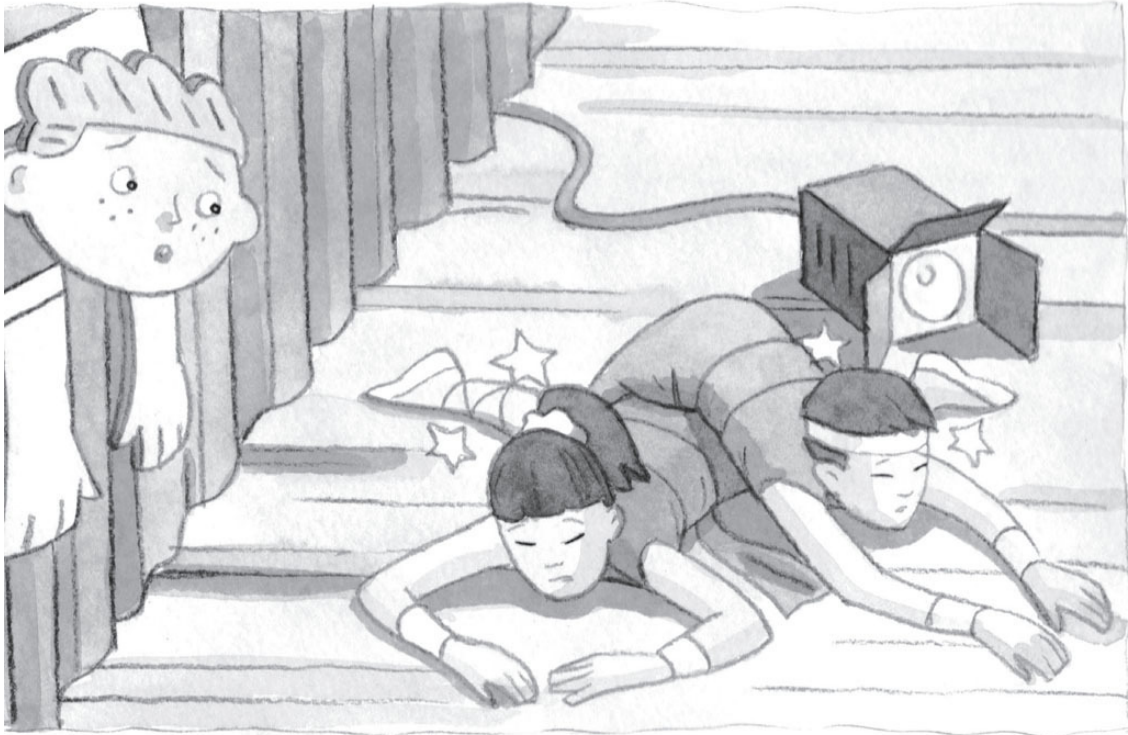
Their bodies can do anything! Stanley thought. His flashlight raced to keep up.

For their grand finale, the Flying Chinese Wonders connected head to toe, puffed out their chests to form a circle, and rolled around the stage. When they came to a stop, each held out an arm and a leg. The giant circle had become the sun.

It was the greatest thing Stanley had ever seen! He shouted, whooped, and clapped his – Stanley's heart plummeted as he watched the giant flashlight drop from his hands.

CRAAAASH!

The Flying Chinese Wonders looked up in alarm. Their circle shook . . . and collapsed to the floor in a heap.



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