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Opening extract from

Lilliput

Written by

Sam Gayton

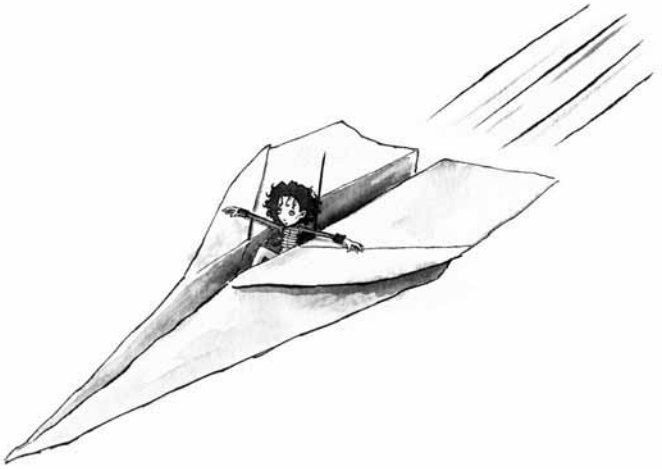
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Pinchers & Slips



All down the pebble path to the beach Lily sulked about her iron shoes. They *clang-clang-clanged* on her feet as she made her way to the shore. It was blowy and the waves were high as houses. Bellin was already there with his grumpy older sister Bree. They dug through the sucking wet sand, looking for pincher crabs.

Lily stomped towards them, iron shoes flashing in the sun. Bree scowled and nudged her brother, and Bellin pulled his tweezers from the beach and threw them with a *plonk* into his bucket. Together they watched her coming down the dunes to the wet sand left by the tide.

'Can I dig with you?' Lily asked, looking at Bellin.

'Suppose so,' Bree muttered, rolling her eyes. She pointed down at Lily's shoes. 'But take those off first.'

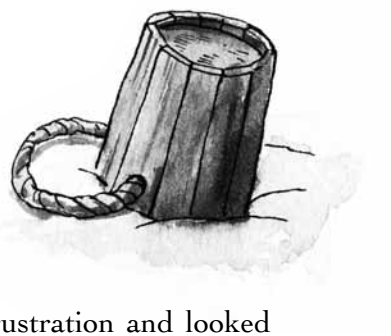
Lily hesitated. A part of her wanted to, but the shoes

were bound to her feet by more than just leather straps. 'I can't,' she said at last.

'You have to,' said Bree. 'All your stomping will scare off the pinchers. Me and Bellin leave ours over there.' She pointed at two pairs of rusty iron shoes by the dunes. 'Come on, Lily. Don't be a little'un.'

Lily sniffed and shook her head again. 'Can't,' she repeated.

'You can,' Bree insisted. 'It's not dangerous, as long as you're careful.'



Lily flung down her bucket and sat on a cockleshell glaring at her feet. 'That's what I say to Nana. But she never listens. She makes me *promise*.'

Bree threw up her hands in frustration and looked over to her brother, but Bellin just shrugged. He grabbed his giant tweezers again and went back to rummaging.

They all knew why Lily's nana made her promise. Catching pinchers was dangerous. The crabs dug themselves in the sucking sand, and if any hands or feet sank down close to them, they would snip off a finger or toe with their claws.

That was why Lilliputians used giant tweezers to pull up a pincher crab, and wore iron shoes. But iron shoes were heavy and the pinchers always hid when they heard them.

Bree was older than Lily, and Bellin was braver. They always took off their shoes, so they could tiptoe up above the pinchers and take them by surprise.



But Lily never did. Nana made her promise every time she went out crabbing, and though she sulked, she was also secretly glad. Lily liked her toes and she wanted to keep them.

Picking up her own tweezers, she clambered from the cockleshell, looking for a good spot of sand to rummage in.

'You're still a little'un.' Bree folded her arms. 'You shouldn't be here.'

Lily felt herself go hot with embarrassment. 'I'm six moons old,' she told Bree angrily. '*You're* only seven.'

'But *I* know how to catch pinchers.'

'Then why is your bucket empty?'

'Come share my spot, Lily,' said Bellin stepping in front of his sister. 'There's lots of space by me.'

Bree hissed in anger and tugged her bucket to another patch of sand.

'Don't listen to her,' Bellin said quietly. 'She thinks you're scaring the pinchers away, but you're not. They were dug down deep before you even got here.'

Lily smiled. Her lips were dry and she licked them wet again. She scanned the beach. It was a hot spring day. Just a few squiggles of cloud and all the rest blue. Strange. Usually when it was warm the pincher crabs came up almost to the surface to sunbathe. But not today. Today, they were all hiding.

'Something has them scared,' she told Bellin.

He shrugged and wiped the sweat from his brow. 'Maybe it's Bree's temper,' he whispered.

Lily's giggle became a gasp. Bellin tugged at something, then stood up straight, a huge pincher wriggling and clacking in his tweezers. It was as big as a dinner plate.

'Here's a brave one. It's not hiding like the rest.' Bellin dropped it with a rattle in Lily's bucket. 'Have it. Take it back to your nana. Everyone in Plips knows she makes the best pincher-crab pie in the village.'

