

Singing for Winter

by

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Gil was a cricket with a problem: He did not like to sing.

"All boy crickets sing," declared his father. "It's how I met your mother."

"I'd rather paint," said Gil.

Gil's friends made fun of him. "Who ever heard of a cricket that doesn't sing?" they said.

"Your father is the best singer around," they said.

"You have to sing to pair up with a girl for winter," they said.

At first, Gil avoided singing. When the boys gathered at night to practice, Gil went to bed. When the sun rose, he painted. He painted fields of daises. He painted bustling anthills. He tried to paint a bird, but it wanted to eat him.

Gil's father said, "You're a cricket, and crickets sing. Join us tonight, or I will throw away your paints."

Gil walked slowly to the meadow that evening. He hated standing in the cold and dark. Singing tired his wings.

He crouched next to Sherman who sang so loud no one could tell Gil wasn't making a sound. When his father glanced over, Gil shuffled his wings a little.

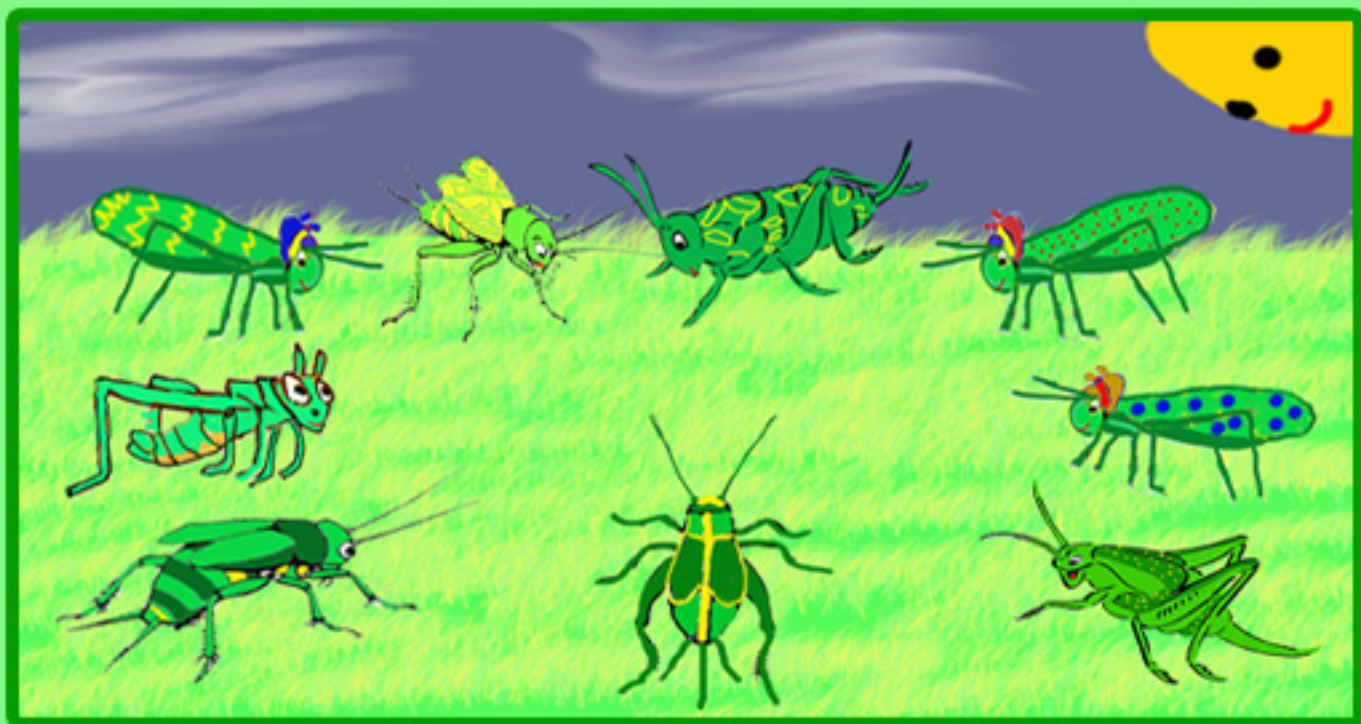
Afterwards Gil crept to his art studio inside a log where

Gil was snoring.

His father took him home.

"I'll never be as good as you, Dad," said Gil.

"No one expects you to. Singing is my life's joy—it doesn't have to be yours,"



he painted while his family slept. He barely slept himself.

One night, Gil couldn't keep his eyes open during practice. Sherman stopped singing. "What's that noise?" he asked.

his father said. "But the Fall Chorus is soon, and everyone sings to find a partner for winter. If you don't sing, you'll end up alone," he warned. "Can you at least say you tried your best?"

Gil could not. He decided to give singing another chance and asked Sherman for help.

Gil was a tough student. His wings tangled up. His chirps were out of tune. He became distracted by colorful sunsets. Mostly, he longed for his cozy studio.

Gil approached his father. "Singing is not for me, Dad. I want to paint." He hesitated. "Even if it means I'm alone all winter."

Gil's father sighed. "Well, the choice is yours."

Gil painted with a burst of fresh energy. His brush whizzed across the canvas in shades of crimson, orange and gold. Paintings filled his tiny studio.

The days grew shorter, and

the Fall Chorus was all Gil's friends talked about. "The girls are going to love our songs," they said.

"We're ready to pair off for winter," they said. "What will you do?"

Gil started to worry. What would he do? Was there another way to find a partner?

The Fall Chorus arrived with the harvest moon. The boys gathered in the meadow. As night fell, they chirped loud and long, singing the best song of their lives. Girls were drawn to the sweet sound.

Gil was also in the meadow. Yet instead of singing, he painted. He used bold, glow-in-the-dark paints on his biggest canvas. He was painting a pair of crickets holding

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No



hands inside his log studio.

Gil noticed others pairing off, but he continued to paint. The sound of his brush sweeping across the rough canvas made its own melody. When the moon was high, Gil added the finishing touch to his image.

He painted the words: A cozy winter.

Gil turned around and gasped.

In front of him stood a line of girls, smiling and hoping to be his partner.

