

The Peeking Chick

written and illustrated by

Hazem Nassar

Dedication

To the real-life Peeky, my little Nadine. To my most favorite beta-reader of all time, Rhonda. To all my nieces and nephews whose feedback is always extremely valuable! To all family members and friends who were kind enough to help me with their opinions. And finally to the amazing editor, Brooke Vitale, who I learnt so much from.

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ISBN: 9781953190000

Once, there were five chicks—

four ordinary ones, and
one special chick.



The special chick was named Peeky.
Peeky had a tiny hole in her shell
that she could see through.

The other chicks could only see
inside their shells, but Peeky
could see the world!




Peeky was a strong chick.
She could roll out of her
nest and turn around.



Peeky enjoyed peeking at
the blue sky, the sun, the
clouds, the birds, the
trees, and the flowers.



A night sky scene with a large, bright moon in the upper left, a shooting star streaking across the center, and a large, white, curved object in the lower right. The background is black with many small, bright stars. The text is in a yellow, serif font.

In the evening, she
liked peeking at the
shining moon, the
starry sky, and even
shooting stars!

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When she went to sleep,
she'd dream beautiful
dreams.

In the dreams she was out
of her shell. She could see
the world. She didn't have
to only peek.



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Peeky grew and grew
inside her shell. She
got stronger and
stronger every day.
Then, one day. . .

She felt stronger than
ever. She started
pecking at her shell.
It was time to hatch!



Peeky pecked all night. Finally, she decided to take a break.

Peeky was tired. She'd get back to pecking in the morning.

But, when she woke up, she saw something strange.

Everything had lost its color: The sky, the grass, even her sister chicks.

The trees and the flowers had disappeared—

except for one flower.

Could this flower know something?



Peeky rolled closer to the flower.
"Hello there. I'm Peeky," she said.

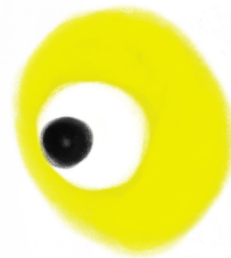
"Hello, Peeky. I'm Rosey," said
the flower.

"How come everything changed!?"
Peeky asked.

"Wow, you can see through your
shell?" Rosey asked.



"It's the smoke! It replaced
everything! It must be
coming from somewhere.
Maybe the birds know."



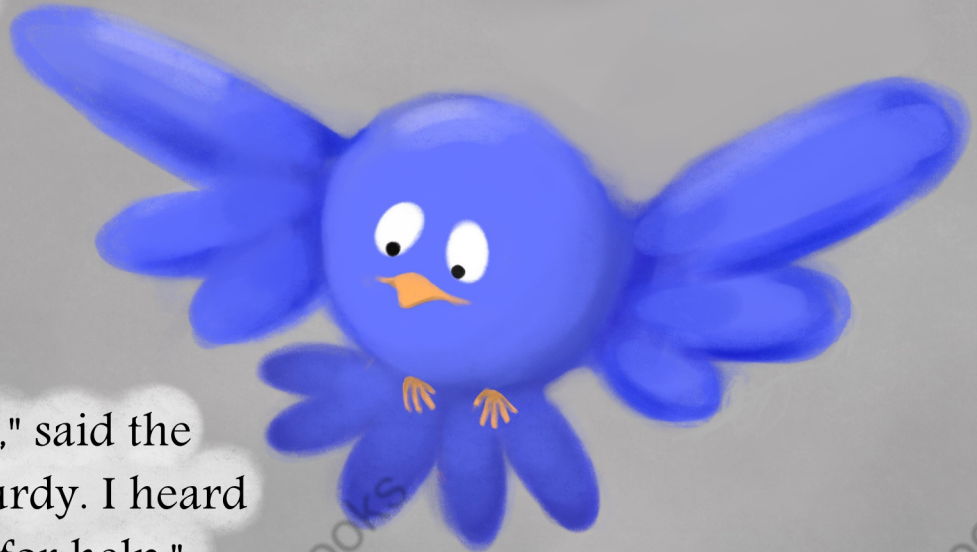
Peeky searched the sky.
In the distance, she spotted
one bird.



She shouted as loud
as she could.
She really needed
that bird's attention!



The bird heard her and flew down.



"Hello there," said the bird. "I'm Burdy. I heard you calling for help."

"Thank you for answering, Burdy!" Peeky said. "I wanted to ask you, where did the smoke come from?"




"It's the new factory," Burdy said.

Its smoke is so thick, you can't
see behind it!
Soon it will paint everything
grey!"

The smoke is so harmful, all
the other birds have moved
away," Burdy continued.

"The people don't know this
yet. If they don't act soon, we
will end up in an all-grey
world!"

A landscape illustration showing two dark, conical smokestacks on a light-colored, rounded hill. A massive, dark, billowing plume of smoke or ash rises from the stacks, filling the upper two-thirds of the frame. The sky is a pale, clear blue. The overall mood is one of environmental pollution and its impact on the atmosphere.

"People need clean air to survive. Their lives will be affected, too.

Their children need a clean planet!"

The grey sky saddened Pecky.
She couldn't see what she liked
any more.

Even the night sky had lost its
beauty.

The moon, the shooting stars,
even the stars, were all gone!



"Even if I break out of my shell, what will I see?"

Peeky wondered.

"There's nothing left to see."



Peeky stopped pecking at her shell.

She even stopped peeking.

Burdy saw how Peeky felt.

"Rosey, Peeky is giving up,"
Burdy told the flower. "We
should help her!"



Rosey saw how sad Pecky was, too.

"Pecky," she said. "You shouldn't give up! You have a gift."

You're a strong chick. You can also see things earlier than others. We need your help!"

"Look at me! How am I still here? I refuse to give up!"



Peeky thought about it.
Yes, she knew she was strong.
Yes, she could see things early.
Yes, she could help!

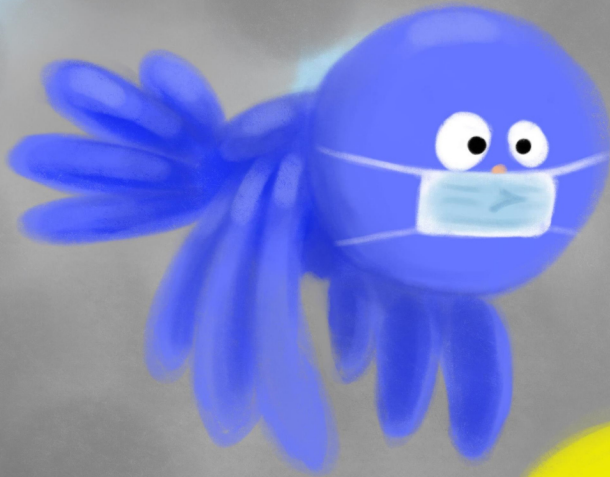
Peeky gathered her strength
and started pecking again.
She knew it was time!



Peeky broke out!



"Let's get to work!"
she shouted.



Peeky knew she couldn't do it alone.

Burdy and Rosey joined her. They headed to the factory singing:



"Oh, smoke, you painted life grey, and took the beautiful colors away. But here we are. Never give up, we say!"



People heard their voices.
They found them, and saw
what the smoke was doing.

People spread the word on TV,



in the newspapers,



and on the internet.



The people wrote letters to the factory owners.

They stopped buying their products.

They even sang along with Peeky, Burdy, and Rosey!
The singing was so loud and strong!

News channels aired the protests. More and more people joined.



And it worked!

The factory owners listened.
They changed their ways,
and the smoke went away.



The sky cleared up, and the colors returned!



Oh, wait! Peeky's sister chicks got their color back, too. They even hatched!



Peeky was amazed. It was her first time seeing the world.

"It's absolutely beautiful!" she said.

Of course, Burdy and Rosey were with her. It was their teamwork that did this.

Who knows? Maybe they will team up again in the future for more adventures!



About the author

Hazem Nassar was born in late 1979 to Palestinian parents in Kuwait, where he also grew up and completed his undergraduate education. He then graduated from medical school in Karachi, Pakistan, before moving to the United States, later on, to work as an internal medicine physician.

Ever since childhood, Hazem has had a passion for cartooning and storytelling, which he eventually managed to dedicate more time to after completing medical residency, leading to the selection of many of his works for several international theme-based exhibitions in different countries around the world. Growing up an immigrant with Palestinian roots in an extremely diverse neighborhood, along with life in a once-war-torn Kuwait, heavily influenced his ideas and subsequently, his works.




Since I'm famous now, I decided
to keep my shell for a hideout.
I can always return when the
world needs me!



The author would love your feedback
and suggestions. Send them to:
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Good night!





Do chicks dream about the outside world while they're still inside their shells? Peeky does.

She is one special chick who is able to see the beautiful world even before breaking out of the shell. But there's one big challenge that lies ahead!

Join Peeky and a couple of friends as they team up to take on that challenge to save the day, and the planet!