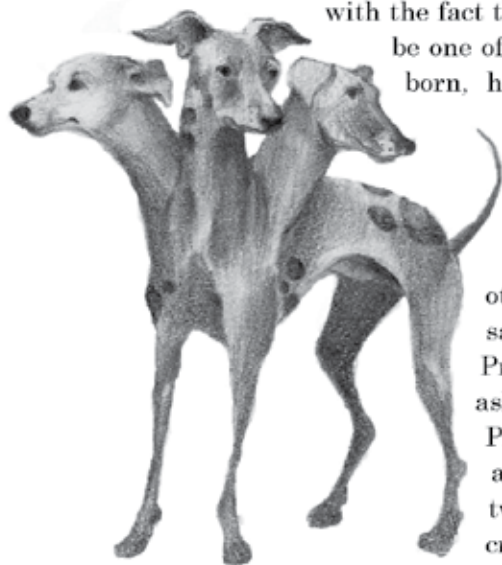


horses colored red, pink, and blue; a cheetah with the face of an ape; and a three-headed dog. There are also a few animals from storybooks: the lion from *The Jungle Book*, an elephant from *Babar*, and a couple of monsters from *Where the Wild Things Are*.

"How could such a cute baby dream up so many monsters?" everyone always asks. "And why did she receive her gift so early?"

Miss Sara says that it probably has something to do with the fact that Eden was supposed to be one of twins. But when she was born, her twin was dead. Miss



Sara believes that the energies of the lifeless twin are in Eden and therefore she developed her gift much faster than other children. Miss Sara says it reminds her of Elvis Presley, whoever that is. I asked my mom about Elvis Presley. She told me he was a man who sang songs and twisted and turned like a crazy man when he was singing, and that his twin

died at birth. Everyone said he had the energy of his twin.

Ima told us that Eden's parents, Jacob and Tamar, do try to control Eden's creativity. They went to Miss Sara for advice and she told them to be careful of what books they read to Eden before she goes to sleep. Miss Sara even arranges for volunteers to spend some evenings in Eden's room so her folks can get some sleep themselves.

Jacob and Tamar don't want strangers from outside of

the village to find out about Eden's amazing gift. They've posted "Keep Out" signs all over the wooden fence to help keep curious people away.

Jacob comes out of his house wearing heavy black leather boots. We follow him across the street. "You ought to consider wearing other shoes," he comments as he opens the gate to the first pen. We look down at our favorite sport shoes and then into the cages. Muck is everywhere. Our shoes squelch as we walk into the zoo.

"We're searching for a zoo or safari to buy the animals," Jacob explains while he rakes a cage.

As we step outside of the cage, a tall man with big arms and shoulders comes up the path. "Just in time," Jacob says to him. "Meet our new helpers."

The man is dressed in brown work pants, a blue tee shirt, and a brown baseball cap. He stares at us through small, squinty blue eyes.

"Jordan, Ziv, meet Mordechai." The muscular man steps forward and shakes my hand. I feel a shock wave move up my spine. The man looks strangely familiar. Where have I seen him before? I look over at Ziv. He has a puzzled look on his face. I know he's wondering the same thing.

Jacob interrupts our thoughts. "Follow me. I'll show you where we keep the equipment you'll be using."

We follow Jacob across the gravel into a small wooden shed he built in one corner of the zoo. It's filled with the shovels, rakes, and brooms we'll use for cleaning the cages.

"Over there—" Jacob points toward the opposite fence, "—are the bales of hay we lay down after the floors of the cages are clean. Now I'll show you how we deal with the animals."

A cold fist grips my stomach. I try to put on a brave face as I follow Jacob toward one of the cages.

"You have to coax them out into the holding pens," Jacob explains as he unlocks the cage of the three-headed dog.