

CHAPTER SAMPLER  
THE  
PEACOCK



JENNIFER  
TZIVIA MACLEOD

ILLUSTRATED BY  
JAIMIE MAGGIBBON



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orca Echoes

ORCA BOOK PUBLISHERS

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Published in Canada and the United States in 2024 by Orca Book Publishers.  
orcabook.com

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**Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication**

Title: The peacock / Jennifer Tzivia MacLeod ; illustrated by Jaimie MacGibbon.

Names: MacLeod, Jennifer Tzivia, author. | MacGibbon, Jaimie, illustrator.

Series: Orca echoes.

Description: Series statement: Orca echoes

Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 20230164412 | Canadiana (ebook) 20230164420 | ISBN 9781459836457 (softcover) | ISBN 9781459836464 (PDF) | ISBN 9781459836471 (EPUB)

Classification: LCC PS8625.L4558 P43 2024 | DDC jC813/.6—dc23

Library of Congress Control Number: 2023932491

**Summary:** In this partially illustrated early chapter book set in 1947, when a young girl's father is away in Europe helping refugees, she is left to deal with a stray peacock who has arrived in her family's yard, much to her mother's dismay. The girl devises a plan to earn the peacock's trust and return it to its home at the zoo.

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Orca Book Publishers gratefully acknowledges the support for its publishing programs provided by the following agencies: the Government of Canada, the Canada Council for the Arts and the Province of British Columbia through the BC Arts Council and the Book Publishing Tax Credit.

Cover and interior artwork by Jaimie MacGibbon

Design by Troy Cunningham

Edited by Sarah Howden

Printed and bound in Canada.



*For my grandparents, grandchildren  
and all the beloved generations  
in between.♥ —J.T.M.*



# THE PEACOCK



Mother hated the peacock from the minute it wandered into our yard. “Get this thing out of here!” she shrieked. I ran outside to find a peacock leisurely pecking at her petunias and coleus. Mother was backed up against the wall of the house.

“Dad!” I called. He was upstairs packing.

But when Dad came down, he laughed and tried to calm Mother down. “It’s just a peacock. It won’t hurt you.”

“What’s it doing here?” I asked.

The peacock screeched, making me jump. It didn’t move, but Mother’s eyes widened even more.

“Escaped from the zoo, maybe?” Dad suggested. But the zoo was all the way downtown. And none of our neighbors kept peacocks. We certainly would have heard about it if they had.

The peacock spread out its tail feathers, a glorious, shimmering display. It reminded me of the colors of the sea Dad would be crossing in just a few days.

Dad sighed. “It’s just nibbling a few flowers. Let it be. That train is leaving Union Station tomorrow morning with or without me, so I really must finish packing.”

He left me standing with Mother, who was still backed up against the wall. The peacock stared straight into our eyes, as stiff and formal as the generals whose pictures I’d seen in every newspaper during the war.

It seemed like my father got angry every time he read the newspaper. “If I’d been just a few years younger, I could have gone over to Europe to fight Hitler myself.”

Hitler was gone now. The war was over. But Dad was going anyway. I went up to my parents’ room to watch him pack.

“Tell me again why you’re sailing to Germany if the war’s already over.”

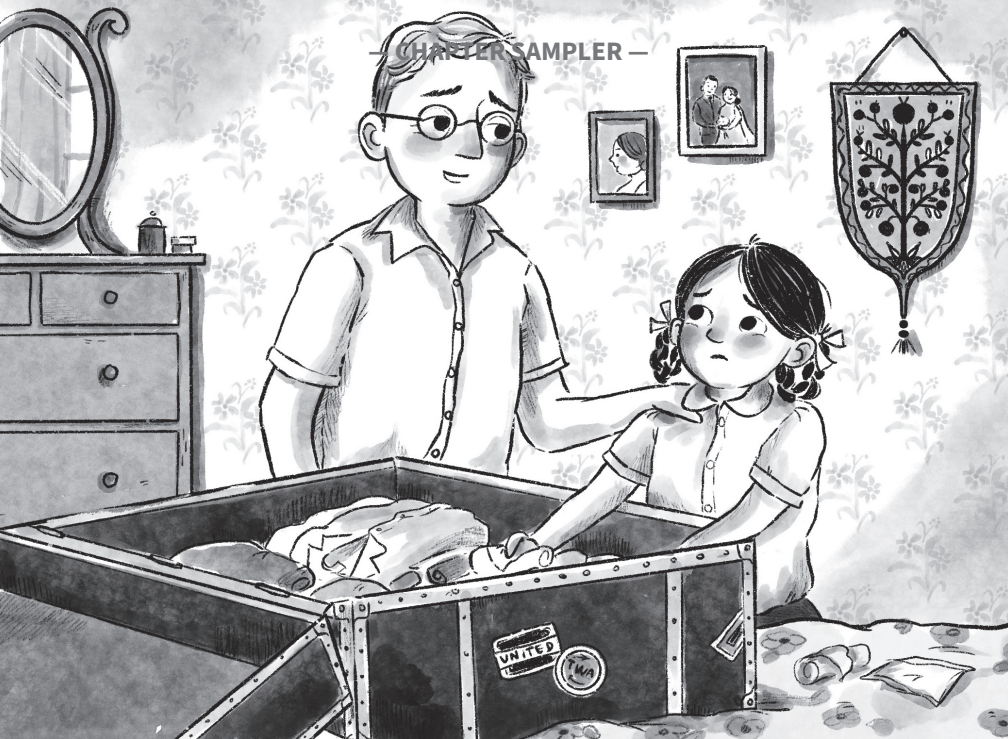
I had overheard enough whispers to know that Germany was where Hitler had killed many, many people like us. Jewish people. I shuddered.

“The war may be over, but Jews are still in displaced persons camps,” he said. “They are refugees, with nowhere to go.”

I helped him roll up ten hankies in a neat row in his steamer trunk.

Mrs. Price said last year that more than a million people, not just Jews, got sent to





displaced persons camps—DP camps—after the war because their homes were ruined or taken away. I couldn't imagine so many people—more than everybody here in Toronto!—living in barracks, wondering where to go.

“Is it safe?” I finally asked. There had already been two big wars in Europe—the



Great War and World War II. Sure, Hitler was gone, but what if someone else took over and started up the concentration camps all over again?

“Don’t worry. We’ll be fine. The Red Cross will help us.”

Through the bedroom window I saw that Mother had grabbed a spiky round tomato cage and was holding it up in front of her, even though the peacock hadn’t moved.

“Can’t the refugees just build new houses in Europe?” I asked.

He sighed. “I wish it were that simple, Barbara. In some places they’re still not welcome. And many are too afraid to stay in Europe. But here in Canada, we have all the space in the world.”

“Plenty of room for a few tailors?” I knew the answer already. Dad had explained

that the government only let people come to Canada if they had jobs. But how could you get a job in Canada if you were living so far away? So his clothing company was sending him over there to interview tailors and give jobs to as many as possible so the government would let them come live here.

“For a few *thousand* tailors—and their families.” He glanced outside. “And plenty of room for one peacock, if only your mother would let it be.” He slammed his trunk shut.

Maybe the peacock would leave on its own. But something about the confident, proud way it seemed be ruling our yard told me it was planning to stay.

“I’ll take care of Mother,” I said, then instantly regretted it. My older brothers should do it! But Mickey and Donny were

going off to summer camp, and Avrum was already grown and living in Montreal.

It suddenly hit me how far away Europe was, and how long Dad would be away, and I wished he didn't have to go.

“Can't the DPs just take care of *themselves*?” I blurted.

Dad wrapped me up in a big hug. “It's up to us,” he said sadly.

## CAR TRIP



There was no time to think about the peacock after Dad left. Mickey and Donny spent three noisy, busy days packing mildew-smelling duffel bags for summer camp.

At sixteen, Donny was three years older than Mickey and was excited for his first year as a counselor. “I’m getting *paid* to go to camp,” he’d gloat.

“Good luck making your campers settle down at night!” Mickey would say, sticking out his tongue. “And keeping them all calm after a Sasquatch sighting.”

Two years earlier rumors of a Sasquatch in the forests at camp had sent

two scaredy-cat kids back home to the city. I was pretty sure a made-up creature like that wouldn't scare me, but their camp didn't take girls. And I'd already told my parents I had no interest in the girls' camp up the road. I'd rather have the house to myself while my stinky, obnoxious brothers were gone. And maybe the Sasquatch did have something to do with it.

Dad was usually the one who did long drives, but now it was Mother driving us all. Out in the country the roads got narrow, with steep gravel hills that made the car shudder like the roller coaster at the Canadian National Exhibition. When Dad drove, the boys would raise their hands and pretend to scream, and our stomachs floated up a little like they did on rides.

We knew better than to try that with Mother driving. Or, at least, *I* did.

But after an hour of boring country roads, my brothers couldn't help themselves. With each corner we turned, they swayed from side to side like they were on the Tilt-A-Whirl. At first it was to bug each other. But with a brother on each side of me, I was the one getting squished—so they swayed even harder.

“Quit it!” I hissed as Donny leaned hard into a left turn.

“Cut that out,” I muttered to Mickey next time we turned right.

They both chortled. What could I do? A few more corners, and I'd be a pancake. My arms already felt bruised. But I was *not* going to disturb Mother.

I pulled out my skirt pin and held it out of sight, ready. I didn't have long to wait. The car took another right, and both boys pressed to the left. I waited until





Mickey was right on top of me. Then I struck.

“Aaaaaaaaagh!” he shrieked.

The car spun out as Mother hit the brakes.

“Out of the car! All of you!” she said.

We were on a one-lane road in the middle of nowhere, and the sun was blazing down. But when Mother spoke like that, we had no choice.

We lined up beside the car.

“It was them,” I said.

“It was Barbara,” Mickey said.

“It was gravity,” Donny said wisely.

Mother was not in the mood for wise.

She looked so mad I thought she might spank us. Usually it was Dad who did the punishing, and he’d almost always just send the boys outside for “a constitutional.”

I had to look that word up because it sounded like something to do with the government, but it just meant a long walk for your health. When Dad made the boys take a constitutional, it was probably more for Mother’s health than anything else.



Dad never seemed to mind their noise and mess.

Now even I felt sorry for Mother. But I had to let her know I was innocent.

“I didn’t—” I began.

“Don’t,” she said, her voice quiet. “Just don’t say anything.”

Instead of spanking us or sending us for a constitutional, she walked off down the road. She stood for a very long time with her back to us, not moving. I started to sweat, and my feet ached. I thought about the Jews in Europe forced to march by soldiers and made myself stand still.

Off in the distance a small dust cloud appeared. Someone was coming—and our car was in the middle of this road. Finally Mother started walking back.

Her eyes were red. Had she been crying? Wishing Dad was here instead of away

in Europe? Nobody said anything. We all got in the back, shutting the car doors gently like they were made of crystal, and drove the rest of the way in silence.