

- 1 One day in June, Rachel, a sixteen-year-old, was walking through New York City's Central Park on her way to my office for a medical appointment. Her attention was suddenly caught by a small black object struggling in the grass. As Rachel came closer, she saw it was a young bird with its wings spread, gasping for breath as it weakly attempted to move forwards. The small creature was nearly dead of heat and exhaustion. Nearby lay a very battered torn nest that held the dead body of one of its nest mates.
- 2 Touched with pity, Rachel carried the bird to my medical office in her cupped hands. Thus Caliban, a homely little grackle, came into our lives.
- 3 When Rachel brought Caliban to me, I was certain that he was going to die, because he was unable to raise his head and open his mouth. Gently opening his beak,

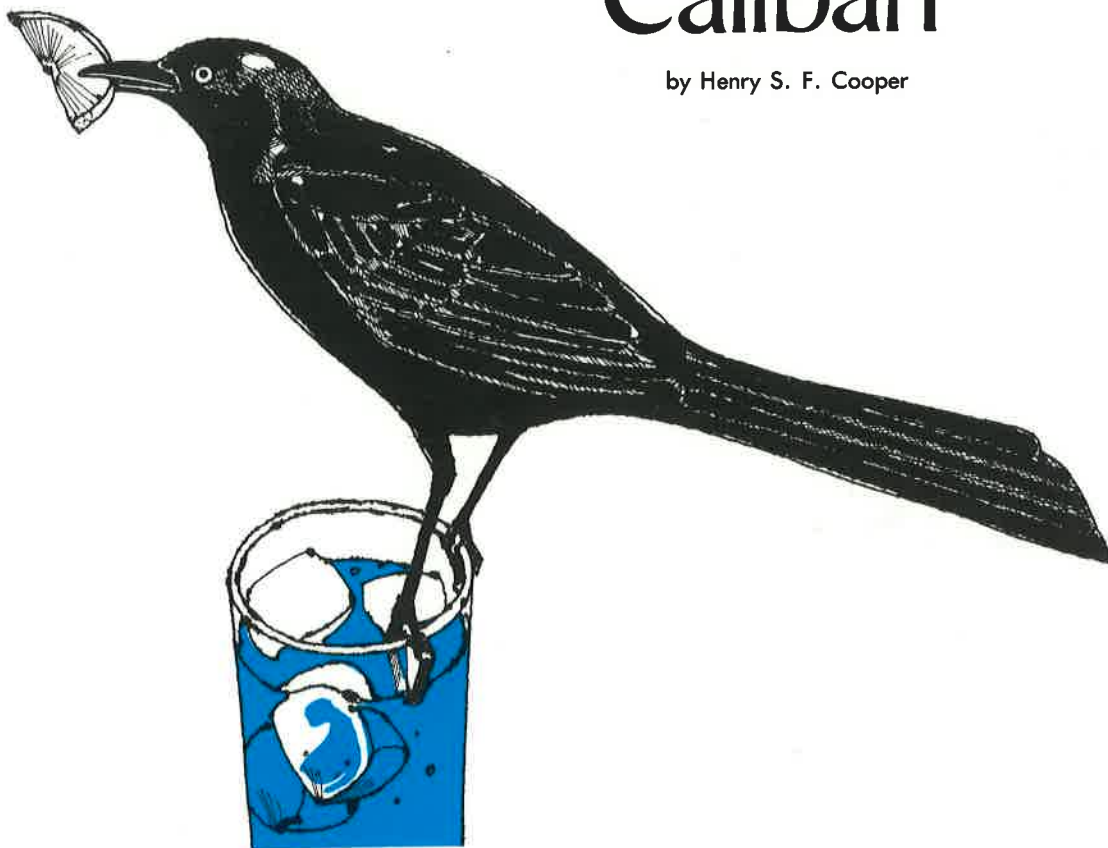
we pushed some soft moistened bread down Caliban's throat and after we had made a nest of cotton for him in a box, Rachel left my office with the bird.

- 4 Eleven days later Rachel telephoned. Caliban was alive, but he had grown so big and his wants had become so numerous that he had been assigned the only bathroom in the apartment. Worst of all, Rachel's mother wanted her to get rid of him. Rachel did not want to release Caliban in Central Park, because he still was unable to feed himself, although he could fly after a fashion. Fortunately, I was leaving for my vacation the following day, so I took Caliban to Cooperstown, New York, with me.

- 5 The first morning, when I released Caliban in our garden, I suddenly realized that he could fly only up and not

Caliban

by Henry S. F. Cooper



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down. Luckily, as he headed for the sky, he managed to catch on to the top of a very tall tree and there he sat. When hunger got the better of him, however, Caliban began answering my calls, but this time, instead of trusting his wings, he *climbed* down the tree by hopping from limb to limb.

- 6 Caliban immediately worked his way into our hearts. He utterly and completely trusted us, and was entirely lacking in the fear of human beings that wild creatures seem instinctively to have.
- 7 Although Caliban went free when we were nearby, we put him in an old canary cage at night or when we were not at home. Whenever he was locked up, the house rang with his complaints.
- 8 Gradually we allowed Caliban to remain free for the entire day, shutting him in his cage only at night. Later, when we permitted him to stay out both day and night, he would disappear at dusk and reappear at dawn. In the early morning after his first night out, Caliban came to the kitchen door for a handout. He brought with him ten or twelve other birds that remained in the background, watching curiously while he was being fed. Afterwards he flew away with them but soon returned alone. This was the only time that we saw Caliban with other birds.
- 9 Eventually we believed that Caliban thought of himself as a human being, because human beings had attended to his wants from his earliest memory. If he happened to be in a tree or hedge, he announced his presence with his peculiar croaking call. If he recognized us from a distance, he flew to us and alighted on the head of one of us, or on one of our shoulders.
- 10 He especially enjoyed climbing all over us, pulling at our ears or the buttons of our clothing, or at shiny rings or watches that we wore. He was particularly fond of anything that glittered and loved to tear boxes of matches apart and scatter their contents on the ground. The times when we were drinking iced tea had a special attraction for Caliban. The tall glasses, the shiny spoons and the ice, the fresh mint leaves, and the slices of lemon proved utterly irresistible to him. After he had become tired of playing with these, he would perch on the edge of a glass and try to take a bath in its contents, refusing to move even when the owner raised it to take a drink. Often, instead of drinking the tea or bathing in it, Caliban would preen his feathers with it. Occasionally he used after-dinner coffee for this purpose.
- 11 Caliban was very good at walking and would follow us around by the hour, particularly if we worked in the garden. Whenever we pulled up a weed he would rush in, grabbing any worm or insect that might have been exposed. If we walked too fast, Caliban would fly to one of our shoulders to ride. If he saw us inside the house, he would fly to the windowsill and tap on the glass with his beak. Sometimes when he got tired, he would alight on my shoulder and snuggle up to my neck, and just before falling asleep he would usually talk in a low voice, as if he were telling me about the events of the day.
- 12 For about five weeks Caliban remained our constant companion, giving us much pleasure. Unfortunately, it was obvious that he was better adapted to human society than he was to bird society.
- 13 When I returned to New York, Caliban remained at our home in Cooperstown, but the next day he disappeared. Five days later, when we had about given him up for lost, we learned that he was living by the riverbank a short distance away, but shortly after that he began to range more widely. One little girl said that he awakened her early every morning where she slept on a porch by alighting on her head and pulling her ears. A man said that Caliban spent a week with him, helping him in the garden and riding on his shoulder while he mowed the grass. Other people said that Caliban had joined them at a picnic along the lake.
- 14 In the middle of Cooperstown there is a park frequented by many people in the summertime. Caliban moved there about August and became famous, according to the owner of a refreshment stand who wrote:
- 15 "My only regret is that I didn't have the camera handy when your bird was performing some of his cutest or boldest or sauciest acts—stealing a cigar out of the box and flying off with it to the park, pecking at people's legs from under a park bench, preening himself in the soap-suds, tossing piece after piece of wrapped gum behind the ice-cream freezer, attempting to pull a rose off a woman's hat."
- 16 When summer ended, Caliban moved to the business section of Cooperstown, where he travelled freely in and out of shops, staying in one of them four days, and even flying into the famous Cooperstown Baseball Museum.
- 17 Towards the end of September, Caliban disappeared. Perhaps tragedy overtook him as the result of his excessive trust in human nature. However, his brief existence was all to the good, for what bird ever became so famous? Caliban was the talk of Cooperstown, the subject of several newspaper articles, and even the subject of a paper I presented before a learned group of scholars.

How Well Did You Read?

Write the letter of the phrase that completes each statement best.

- 1 The main character in this story was
 - a Caliban the grackle
 - b Rachel, the girl who found Caliban
 - c the author
- 2 Caliban was
 - a a playful bird
 - b a pest and nuisance
 - c a cross and cranky bird
- 3 Compared with wild birds, Caliban was
 - a a better flier
 - b more trusting of humans
 - c more inclined to sing
- 4 Caliban came into the author's care because
 - a the author found him in Central Park
 - b he flew in the author's window
 - c the girl who found him could not keep him
- 5 The first problem with Caliban was
 - a to find him, for he had disappeared
 - b to bring him back to health, for he was nearly dead
 - c to rescue him from the top of a tree
- 6 When he first got to Cooperstown, Caliban's problem was that
 - a there were no other grackles to play with
 - b nobody wanted to feed him
 - c he could fly up, but couldn't fly down
- 7 Near the end of the story the author expressed some concern about the fact that Caliban
 - a had not yet learned to fly
 - b had difficulty dealing with humans
 - c seemed better adapted to human society than to bird society
- 8 The author's attitude towards Caliban seemed to be that he
 - a disliked but tolerated the bird
 - b liked Caliban and worried about the bird's fate
 - c never really formed an opinion of the bird

- 9 In paragraph 17 the author indicated that
 - a he didn't want to look after Caliban anymore
 - b it was probably just as well that Caliban disappeared
 - c whatever his fate, Caliban had led an interesting life
- 10 Another good title for the story might be
 - a Caliban's Adventures
 - b A Visit to Cooperstown
 - c A Day in the Life of a Grackle

Learn about Words

Vocabulary

- A** You can often tell the meaning of a word by reading the words around it.

Look at each number in parentheses. Find the paragraph in the story with the same number. Then find the word that fits the given meaning. Write the word.

- 1 gift of food (8)
 - 2 landed; perched and settled (9)
 - 3 impossible to resist; extremely attractive (10)
 - 4 smooth or arrange with the beak (10)
 - 5 cuddle; draw close in affection (11)
 - 6 most mischievous (15)
 - 7 extreme; overly great (17)
 - 8 highly educated; knowledgeable (17)
- B** A word may have more than one meaning.
- Look at each number in parentheses. Find the paragraph in the story with the same number. See how the word in **heavy type** below is used in the paragraph. Decide whether it has meaning **a**, **b**, or **c**. Write **a**, **b**, or **c**.
- 9 **raise** (3)
 - a breed and bring an animal to adulthood
 - b get things together for a purpose; collect
 - c lift up or elevate
 - 10 **stand** (14)
 - a small, open-air structure used for doing a retail business
 - b place where taxis stand in line to wait for passengers
 - c strongly held position taken by someone

Word Study

- C** father + **ly** = fatherly (like a father)
cloud + **y** = cloudy (characterized by clouds)
fear + **less** = fearless (without fear)

Many adjectives end in *ly*, *y*, and *less*. Often *ly* means "like," *y* means "characterized by," and *less* means "without." Read the definitions below and then choose *ly*, *y*, or *less* to complete the word in **heavy type**. Write the completed word. (Sometimes you may need to drop the last letter of the word before adding the ending.)

- 11 like a man: **man**_____
- 12 without sight: **sight**_____
- 13 without tact: **tact**_____
- 14 characterized by ice: **ice**_____
- 15 like a ghost: **ghost**_____
- 16 characterized by greed: **greed**_____
- 17 without an odor: **odor**_____
- 18 like a soldier: **soldier**_____

- D** The shaman, **a priest**, advised the cave people.
Anton, **my Dutch friend**, gave me this pen.
He used shantung, **a type of silk**, to make the tie.
Your friend **Alice** won't speak to me.

The words in **heavy type** are appositives. An appositive is a noun or pronoun (and its modifiers, if any) that explains or identifies another noun or pronoun. An appositive is usually (though not always) set off from the rest of the sentence by commas. Read the sentences below. If the word or phrase in **heavy type** is an appositive (if it helps explain the noun it follows) write *App*. If it is not, write *No*.

- 19 Mr. Morris, **the school principal**, came to my house.
- 20 Amy **and Mary** were twins.
- 21 **The Shanes' new car** was stolen.
- 22 My cousin **Beta** came to visit me.
- 23 The **clear and crisp air** made me feel peppy.
- 24 The captain, **assisted by the crew**, brought the ship to safety.
- 25 Grandma made granola, **a type of cereal**.
- 26 The jonquil, **an early spring bloomer**, is my favorite flower.

- E** I love to read **Shakespeare**.
I put a lot of **sweat** into this assignment.

These sentences use a figure of speech known as metonymy. When we use the name of one thing to stand for something closely related to it, that is metonymy. "I love to read *Shakespeare*" really means ". . . to read *Shakespeare's plays and poems*." "I put a lot of **sweat** into this assignment" really means ". . . a lot of *hard work* . . ." Read the sentences below. If the word or phrase in **heavy type** is an example of metonymy, write *M*. If it is not, write *No*.

- 27 At the construction site the **hard hats** were eating their lunches.
- 28 "Don't leave this **room**," said Steven.
- 29 This land belongs to the **crown**.
- 30 My grandfather belongs to a **senior citizens'** club.
- 31 I can go **home** soon.
- 32 The **pig** snorted at the farmer.
- 33 The **White House** issued a directive.

Use Your Imagination

Imagine that you are a grackle who knew Caliban personally. In fact, you are one of the birds who came with Caliban to the Coopers' kitchen door. Give an account of your adventures together and tell what happened to Caliban after he disappeared from Cooperstown. Share your story with a friend or a classmate.