

## **At Home with Martin & Sylvia**

All Story Descriptions by Season

The playhouse is a spaceship. The garden is a jungle. And the brook is a home to fairies and other magical creatures. Join Martin and Sylvia — two delightful and all-too-familiar children — as they explore the infinite possibilities of their sweet home in the woods. These stories follow the rhythms of family life through the four seasons, delighting in the creative endeavors and sweet adventures of the much-loved brother and sister.

### **Autumn Season:**



*This is a collection of 13 autumn stories, for the 13 weeks of autumn.*

### **Art Walk**

In this year's downtown Art Walk, it's not only Daddy that has artwork on display — Martin and Sylvia do too! Brother and sister decide that they are going to be artistic in everything they do during the Art Walk — from what they wear to what they eat. They even find “art” in their especially unique treat at the end of the day!

### **Treasure Indeed**

When Martin and Sylvia learn about legendary treasure buried by pirates, they begin to wonder if pirate treasure might be buried in their own yard. Brother and sister don their explorers hats and belts and set out to look for clues as to where treasure could be. Their expedition takes many twists and turns but eventually leads them to an unexpected treasure, but treasure indeed.

### **Dog Show**

Daddy discovers that the local fairgrounds are holding a big dog show where visitors can bring their own dogs! Brother and sister are excited to bring their old dog Billbill, though they understand he will need lots of rests throughout the day. At the show, they see all sorts of dogs — big, little, fluffy, short — dogs that jump high, dogs that jump long, racing dogs and hunting dogs — but it is on the way home they realize what kind of dog they own — a snuggling dog!

### **A Better Bird Feeder**

Brother and sister are curious why bird feeders look the way they do. They don't look like anything in the natural world. Why would birds be drawn to them? Momma suggests they take a nature walk and study how birds eat — and then — perhaps design a better bird feeder. Martin and Sylvia enthusiastically take up the challenge, but they meet with unexpected trouble: squirrels!

### **Rainy Day Help**

Martin and Sylvia's family gets a phone call one chilly afternoon from Mr. Brown, wondering if they could help him pick the last apples in his orchard before a hard frost arrives. Brother and sister don't want to leave their cozy couch to potentially get wet in the rain on a chilly afternoon, but they join Momma and Daddy anyway. Over the course of the next few hours, they are filled with the special warmth and strength that come from helping a friend in need. And the special treat at the end of the day fills them up too!

### **School**

What is that sound? Martin and Sylvia hear children's voices next door at the Brown's farm! When they investigate further, they find that a 'field trip' from the local school has come to help with farm chores. Mr. Brown welcomes brother and sister as his helpers, and the two enjoy conversations with the other children about school-at-home and school-at-school.

### **Trash Fairies**

One dark and stormy night, Martin decides to cut his weekly chores a little short and leave the trash bag by the garage instead of fetching the plastic garbage bin. In the morning, he discovers that something has gotten into the bag and has spread trash all about. "Was it a bear?" wonders Sylvia. "Too big," says Daddy. "A mouse?" wonders Sylvia. "Too small," answers Daddy. "I know," she says, "it was Trash Fairies!"

### **A Very Big Mess**

Momma is away for two days, and Daddy has some fun things planned. But before they go on any adventures, Daddy needs a nap. He charges brother and sister with the responsibility of making a snack while he snoozes on the couch. "Just make sure it has something substantial ... and please clean up after yourselves, no big messes." Well, Martin and Sylvia makes some creative and innovative snacks and then are faced with clean up. My, what a mess!

### **Living Room Camping**

Brother and sister look out at the gray late autumn landscape and long for summer again. They miss the easy play, the summer adventures - and most of all, they miss camping. "You can still go camping!" says Daddy, "You can go living room camping. It's the same as outdoor camping, but just ... inside." Martin and Sylvia are inspired and immediately set to preparing.

### **The Special Magical Day**

There are days that are special because they are holidays or birthdays or celebrations of important events. And then, once in a while, there are special days just because they are special. One morning Martin wakes with the singular thought that it is going to be a Special Magical day. And so he and his sister spend the rest of the day discovering the magic around every corner.

### **A Frosty Walk**

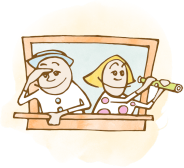
Brother and sister wake one morning to see that everything in their yard is covered in shimmering frost crystals. It looks like a frost fairy paradise! When Daddy takes them on a walk to their neighbor's house, they discover Jack Frost's work along the sides of the brook, on the tips of every branch, and especially at the edges of a pond. They are so grateful for the beauty and wonder, that they decide to give the frost fairies a gift of their own making.

### **Fruit Cake**

Momma has a family tradition — all of the aunts and uncles and cousins in her extended family bake a fruitcake every winter and send it to Nanni and Poppi to taste. This year Momma wants to make an extra special fruitcake — one that Nanni and Poppi will never forget! And so she enrolls Martin and Sylvia to help create a new recipe. They talk about all sorts of possibilities — when suddenly Sylvia begins to empty the pantry and refrigerator of everything sweet, nutty and fruity, declaring that they will use “All the Things”. “All the things?” Momma asks. “All the Things,” Sylvia replies - and so they set to work.

### **The Shortest Day**

Where Martin and Sylvia live, the nights are getting longer and the days are getting shorter. When Momma suggests they spend more time outside with the sun, brother and sister decide to invite the daylight into all their play. They go sledding, build fairy houses, do farm chores, and build a bonfire all with an eye on the sun — celebrating its shortest day of the year.



### **Winter Season:**

*This is a collection of 13 winter stories, for the 13 weeks of winter.*

### **A Wintry Walk**

Sylvia discovers some tracks in the snow, and Martin pulls out his animal books to figure out what kind of animal it is. Is it a goat? A deer? A buffalo? A camel? The books only show so much, so they decide to go on a wintry walk. If they follow the tracks, maybe they can find the creature at the other end!

### **Ice Everywhere**

Sledding plans are dashed when brother and sister hear the rat-a-tat-tat of rain on their roof one evening. Rain means no snow, and no snow means no sledding! But when they wake, they find their backyard has become a magical ice village, where everything from tree branches to porch railings is glistening with a layer of ice. And what fun is to be found there!

### **Round the World**

On Martin and Sylvia's weekly trip to the library, they find a book about an explorer named Magellan. The stories in the book inspire them to want their own adventure when they get back home. But it is too cold and snowy outside to use their playhouse. In fact, it is too cold to be outside for long at all. So they

transform the living room into a mighty sailing vessel — and oh, what surprises are found by these two daring explorers!

### **The Laundry**

Martin and Sylvia help around the house in many ways. They put their dishes in the sink, they dust windowsills, and they help with the vacuuming. Their least favorite task is the laundry — that is, until the dryer breaks and suddenly they need to hang laundry around the house. White sheets become ice cliffs, and dark blue towels become trees. And who is that sleeping under a sunset of red tablecloths and yellow pants?

### **Visiting the New Baby**

Momma's assistant Amy has just had a baby, and Martin and Sylvia can't wait to see her. They do all sorts of things to get ready to meet her: they make cards and little fuzzy gifts, and plan out a nutritious meal. But nothing prepares them for the magical moment of seeing a new baby for the first time.

### **Carrying Your Home**

When Momma gets a chance to study a special kind of goose that winters near the cold northern cities, the whole family decides to join her and spend the week staying in a hotel and exploring the city. Daddy encourages them to only bring what they need, "Like a turtle who carries his home on his back". This gets brother and sister excited about finding other ways to bring their beloved home with them.

### **Tree Keeper**

First thing in the morning, when brother and sister go outside to enjoy the winter weather, Martin heads straight to the old oak tree to "check on it." And Sylvia is curious. What is Martin doing? Martin explains that he learned what it is to be a 'tree keeper' at his wilderness school. And he has chosen the oak tree to be his tree to watch over. Sylvia begins the search for her own tree, and she finds that the perfect tree to "keep" is not at all what she expected.

### **Martin's Gold**

Martin discovers a new word from the library: alchemy. When Momma and Daddy explain alchemy, it sets brother and sister into a dynamic day of creative chemistry. Will they find a way to make gold?

### **Maple Perfect**

Three warm days in a row! Martin and Sylvia see only dirty, melting snow — but Daddy has ideas. He suggests they try tapping one of the maple trees to see if the sap is running. When they hear the steady drip-drip-drip of maple sap, they know "sugaring" season has begun! It's time to make maple syrup!

### **The Sudden Storm**

Winter is ending, and Sylvia is delighted to find the first tiny crocuses poking through the wet soil of their thawing garden. Later that day, when Mr. Brown mentions the possibility of a snow storm, she is

astonished — “How can snow come so late?” The storm does come — and Sylvia must discover for herself the treasures of late winter snow.

### **Daddy's Toe**

While carrying firewood from the woodpile, Daddy accidentally breaks his toe. The doctor informs Daddy that he will not be able to do his normal work around the house and instead must rest for a few days. When Momma needs to go into town for a few hours for work, Martin and Sylvia learn how satisfying (and tiring!) it is to do what Daddy does all day.

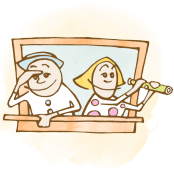
### **Family Portrait**

Every year, Momma and Daddy send out a letter to friends and family telling them about their year — all the achievements and big events. This year, Daddy wants to include a photograph of the family. They decide where to take the picture, choose fancy clothing and all get ready when Daddy breaks the bad news — the photographer will not be able to come. But this does not deter the enterprising brother and sister.

### **Winter Dreams**

In Martin and Sylvia’s house, winter is a time rich in magic and wonder. When Momma suggests that they compare their dreams one morning, brother and sister marvel at how their dreams actually come true in strange and unexpected ways.

### **Spring Season:**



*This is a collection of 13 spring stories, for the 13 weeks of spring.*

### **Westward Ho!**

It is the first sunny day after several days of rain. All the water from the rain and melted snow has flooded Martin and Sylvia’s brook. When the water finally recedes, it leaves behind a trail of mud and hidden treasures!

### **Spring Sillies**

It’s Spring! The birds have lots of energy, the squirrels have lots of energy, and so do Martin and Sylvia. What this family needs is a “Spring Sillies Day” — where everything becomes an opportunity for good laugh. Who will be the silliest of all?

### **The Chicken Coop**

Spring has sprung on the Brown’s Farm, and this year, one of their hens is going to have chicks. Sylvia is particularly excited and counts the days until they will hatch. But when a wind storm blows through and damages the brooding coop, brother and sister have a single day to help the Browns make repairs before the chicks arrive!

### **Go to Sleep Fairy**

Martin is grumpy; he simply hasn't been getting enough sleep. He explains to Momma that he is just not sleepy at night. Everyone has some advice, from warm milk to special stories, but it is his sister who saves the day (or night!) with her delightful introduction to the 'go to sleep' fairy.

### **Stone Soup**

Martin and Sylvia love the classic story so much that one morning, they are inspired to create their own stone soup experience — complete with stones, vegetables and the collaboration of neighborhood friends. At the heart of the stone soup story is the happy accidents of what people bring to the community meal — and though brother and sister have a plan, they are delighted and surprised with the results.

### **Sticks**

Martin is inspired by one of Sylvia's fairy houses and decides to build a child-sized house of sticks in the woods. Sylvia helps collect sticks and then has an exciting idea: "Maybe we should make everything with sticks. We could make stick beds and chairs and toys!" Luckily Momma is into the fun too, and even finds a way to serve lunch on a stick!

### **No Boo Boo Day**

Sylvia notices that there have been a lot of bumps, bruises, scratches and scrapes lately — what with Martin riding his two wheeler bike and Sylvia working with rocks and sticks. So Daddy proposes they have a "No boo boo" day where "safety first" is the goal of the day. The day he chooses, however, is the day they decide to build two raised garden beds. Can they do all the necessary hard work without a single boo boo?

### **Eating Out**

Momma takes the family out to eat at a nice restaurant in celebration of Daddy's big news. There they meet a French mother and her three children who are enjoying their "L'Apertif" at a nearby table. The French Woman invites them to join tables and experience a proper French meal where all the food is tasted slowly in several courses. Though the night lasts longer than they expected, Martin and Sylvia's family come away with an experience to remember.

### **A Case of the Giggles**

Momma is presenting a lecture on "Long Horned Beetles", and the whole family wants to attend. Daddy explains to Martin and Sylvia that they'll need to be still, quiet and attentive during the lecture. Just in case they should be beset by "a case of the giggles", he teaches them a technique to help calm and quiet themselves. But, as it turns out, it is not the children who end up with "a case of the giggles"!

### **Playdate**

It's a beautiful morning, and brother and sister want a playdate. Momma agrees to call their friends Jonathan and Sasha, but Martin and Sylvia can't agree on what to play. They insist on their own ideas,

until Momma gives them a challenge: find a way to incorporate everyone's wishes into one inclusive activity. How do you combine bike riding, imaginative play, drawing and botany?

### **Faces**

One morning Martin notices how Sylvia looks a little like Momma, and a little like Daddy, and then a little just like herself too. This begins a day of appreciating faces — friend's faces, family faces and faces of people downtown. They notice similarities and differences in every face they see — including the face of a boy in a wheelchair they meet in the grocery store. At first they only notice the differences, but it doesn't take long to discover all the things they have in common.

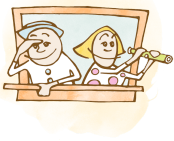
### **The Grumpy Day**

It is a big gardening day, and everyone in Martin and Sylvia's family is feeling grumpy. The air seems heavy and hot and sticky, and brother and sister don't want to work. Daddy can't find his belt, and Momma is concerned about the weather. What are they to do? When the sky darkens and it starts to rain, everyone scrambles to finish the gardening. What with the pouring rain, and some family silliness, they find that their grumpies are washed away.

### **Little Sister**

It is a beautiful day, and Martin is excited about having some friends over to play. His sister Sylvia wants to play too, but older brother is not so interested. When Daddy explains to Martin what it is like to be a younger sister, he realizes the opportunity and responsibility that comes with being older.

### **Summer Season:**



*This is a collection of 13 summer stories, for the 13 weeks of summer.*

### **Midsummer's Eve**

When Martin and Sylvia learn that the Browns will not be able to hold their annual Midsummer's Eve festival, they are very disappointed. But then they realize that they could hold it themselves — in their own back yard! They need to plan it in such a way that Momma and Daddy get excited about it too, so they are faced with the question, "What do grown ups like to do?"

### **Puppy Sitting**

Martin and Sylvia wake one morning to hear Momma talking to a friend on the phone. What's that she's saying? A puppy is coming to visit? For a whole day and night? Brother and sister are thrilled at the idea of having a younger dog around to fetch, play tag and other fun doggies games. They are surprised to learn, however, that puppy sitting is a lot more work than they expect!

### **Night Magic**

Daddy has borrowed Mr. Brown's telescope with the intention of seeing the full moon. They all decide to stay up late that night, but Martin starts to worry he might get scared in the dark. When the sun finally sets, however, he is dazzled by the magic of the night.

### **House in the Brush**

Momma and Daddy decide to turn part of their overgrown side yard into a flower meadow. They enlist Martin and Sylvia's help in clearing out all the weeds, saplings and thicket. Brother and sister begin by making pathways and soon discover big rocks that they claim as their new 'pioneer homes'. But when they realize Momma and Daddy intend to clear the entire field, they must figure out a clever way to save their new homes.

### **Theater Camp**

This summer, Martin enrolls in theater camp, where the campers learn fun drama games and rehearse for a real play to be performed at week's end. Sylvia is not old enough for theater camp, so she reluctantly goes to dance camp. By week's end, she loves dance camp, and is completely surprised and excited when Martin invites her to theater camp for a one-day cameo performance in a very important role!

### **Really Explorers**

One morning Daddy wakes brother and sister early in the morning to hike Mount Mooseberry. He and Momma give them the added challenge of leading the way up the trail to discover magical secrets the mountain may be saving for them.

### **Many Hands**

Martin and Sylvia get a joyful lesson in the importance of working together when they get to sail on a big sailboat with their friends, the Webers. They see how everyone has an important job, and that the boat won't sail properly without everyone's help. The biggest lesson of all is that working together is not only important — but lots of fun.

### **Tag Sale**

Martin and Sylvia's next-door neighbors, the Browns, are clearing out their barn and organizing a tag sale! They invite Martin and Sylvia's family to join them. Martin enthusiastically chooses toys and books he no longer uses to donate to the sale, but Sylvia is troubled by the idea of giving her old things away. In the end, she is surprised how much fun and satisfying it is to see other children love her things as much as she did.

### **Backyard Water Park**

It is hot, and Martin and Sylvia want to cool off. "Can we go to a water park?" asks Martin hopefully. "I don't think we have a water park around here," answers Momma. But Daddy recollects how he and his brother used to make their own water parks in their backyard. This inspires brother and sister to pull out all sorts of materials and structures to create a cool solution to the summer heat.



### **Magic Tricks**

While at the State Fair, Martin marvels over the many amazing disappearing tricks the magician plays on the crowd. From that point on Martin wants to learn tricks and figure out how to make something really disappear and then reappear. Martin, Sylvia and Daddy all demonstrate their best attempts one night, but it is Momma who proves to be the most powerful magician of all.

### **Morning with Momma**

After a long soaking rain, Sylvia is excited about joining Momma on an early morning adventure, foraging for mushrooms in the woods next to the Town Lake. When the morning comes, however, she just wants to sleep later and have pancakes with Daddy and Martin. Reluctantly she gets up joins Momma on the adventure - and what an adventure it turns out to be! Mushrooms, Muffins and a Moose make the Morning with Momma full of Magic.

### **A Map of the Year**

It is the first week of school and in Martin and Sylvia's house, that means transforming the dining room table into the homeschool work table. Everybody is excited about new books, new materials and indeed, new subjects to learn. This year, Martin is nervous that he will not learn the same things as his friend Sasha who attends the neighborhood school. Momma and Daddy suggest they make lists of all the things each family member wants to learn this year. They compile all of the lists into something like a map. A Map of the Year!

### **A Kitchen of Canning**

It's the end of tomato season and the beginning of apple season in Martin and Sylvia's house — which means it is time to can food for the winter. When Sylvia expresses some hesitation about all the work involved, Momma inspires her sense of adventure through every step of the process — including clean up!