



# N<sup>The</sup>CTURNALS

## The Chestnut Challenge



Tracey Hecht  
Illustrated by Josie Yee

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# The Chestnut Challenge

by

Tracey Hecht

Illustrations by  
Josie Yee

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New York

# Chapter 1

The sky was dark.

The stars were sparkling.

Many animals were sleeping,  
but three friends were wide awake.

They were playing a game of  
chestnut checkers!





“Tobin, it’s your move,”  
the sugar glider said.

He snapped his small fingers.



He tapped his tiny foot.



“Hurry up!”  
the sugar glider chided.



“Bismark,” the fox said.

“Let Tobin take his time.

Deciding which chestnut to move is not easy.”

“Oh goodness!” Tobin sighed.

The pangolin scratched his chin.

The pangolin chewed his claw.

Finally, Tobin moved a chestnut.



“Ah-ha! You have fallen into my trap!” Bismark said.

“I will be the chestnut champion now! Watch this!”

Bismark moved one of his chestnuts.

“But Bismark,” Tobin said,  
“now I can do this.”

Tobin jumped a chestnut across the board—  
and captured all of Bismark’s chestnuts!



“Chirping chickadees!” Bismark cried.

“I am not a chestnut champion.



I am a loser.

A failure.

A flop!”



“Oh Bismark.” Tobin laughed.

“You are too serious about chestnuts.

It is only a game.”

“ ONLY A GAME ?”

a voice called from the shadows.

“ NOT TO THIS  
CHAMPION !”





# Chapter 2

“Hello, chums!” a chinchilla said.

“I am Chandler.

The real chestnut champion!”

The chinchilla was one cheeky chap.



Bismark scrunched his nose.

“I am not sure we should play  
with this chinchilla,”  
Bismark whispered to his friends.



“He seems a bit braggy.

A bit boastful.”



“Bismark,” Dawn said.

“Let’s give him a chance.

Chandler,” Dawn said to the chinchilla.

“Which one of us would you like to play?”







Chandler picked  
up a chestnut.

Chandler tossed  
the chestnut  
from paw to paw.



Chandler placed the  
chestnut on the board.



“I choose him!”

Chandler pointed to Tobin.

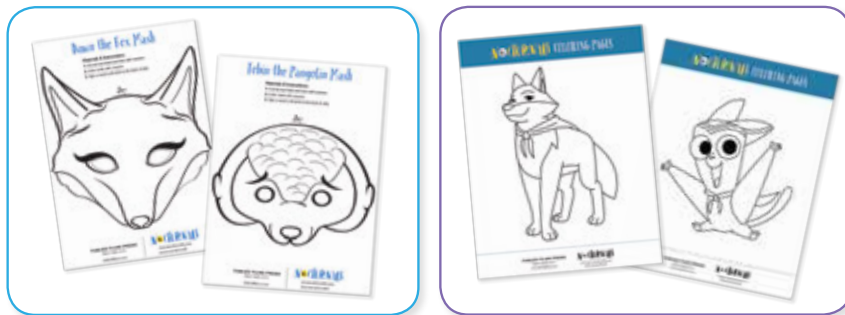
“I challenge your champion  
to a competition!”

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## What are The Nocturnal Animals?



**Pangolin:** The pangolin is covered with keratin scales on most of its body except its belly and face. A pangolin sprays a stinky odor, much like a skunk, to ward off danger. It then curls into a ball to protect against attack. Pangolins have long, sticky tongues to eat ants and termites. Pangolins do not have teeth.

**Red Fox:** The red fox has reddish fur with a big, bushy tail and a white tip. Red foxes are clever creatures with keen eyesight. They have large, upright ears to hear sounds far away.



**Sugar Glider:** The sugar glider is a small marsupial. It looks like a flying squirrel. It has short gray fur, black rings around its big eyes, and a black stripe that runs from its nose to the end of its tail. Sugar gliders have special skin that stretches from the ankle to the wrist. This special skin allows sugar gliders to glide from tree to tree to find food and escape danger.

**Chinchilla:** Chinchillas live in the mountains and have soft, dense fur that protects them from the cold. They have thick, bushy tails and resemble kangaroos, with front legs that are shorter than their back legs. Chinchillas are social animals that bark, chirp, and grunt to talk to their herd.



## Nighttime Fun Facts!

Nocturnal animals are animals that are awake and active at night. They sleep during the day.



The chestnut, which is a fruit, has a green husk until it becomes ripe and turns brown. The Nocturnal Brigade uses them to play their favorite game: chestnut checkers.





## About the Author

Tracey Hecht is a writer and entrepreneur who has written, directed and produced for film. She created a Nocturnals Read Aloud Writing Program in partnership with the New York Public Library that has expanded nationwide. Tracey splits her time between Oquossoc, Maine and New York City.

## About the Illustrator

Josie Yee is an award-winning illustrator and graphic artist specializing in children's publishing. She received her BFA from Arizona State University and studied Illustration at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco. She lives in New York City with her daughter, Ana, and their cat, Dude.

## About Fabled Films

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Great For Kids Ages 5-7



Level 2



Level 3

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