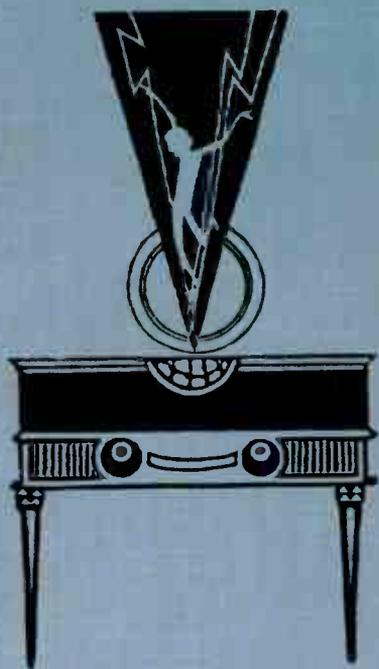


SPARKY-FOR-SHORT



MARTHA BENSLEY BRUÈRE

Sparky for Short

words and pictures by

Martha Bensley Bruère



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SPARKY-FOR-SHORT



I. ENTER SPARKY

JANE and Bo were standing in front of the new radio.

“I want to hear a lady sing,” said Jane, pushing the buttons.

“I want to hear a man talk,” said Bo, and he pushed the buttons the other way.

“I’m two years older than you and I want to hear the lady first,” cried Jane as she pushed the buttons back.

And while they were both pushing different ways at once and the radio was wider open than it ought to be, there was a sound that started with a little whisper and grew to a whistle, and the whistle grew to a roar and stopped with a wail, and a very little, very new voice said:

“Oh, Jane! Oh, Bo! thank you for letting me in. I was whizzed along for miles and miles and couldn’t stop till your radio opened wide and I slipped in here!”

The children were startled. They looked behind them but nobody was there, and up to the ceiling



and down to the floor and out of the window but nobody was anywhere.

“Where are you?” asked Jane, in a frightened voice. She was older than Bo. It made her feel very brave just to hear herself talk.

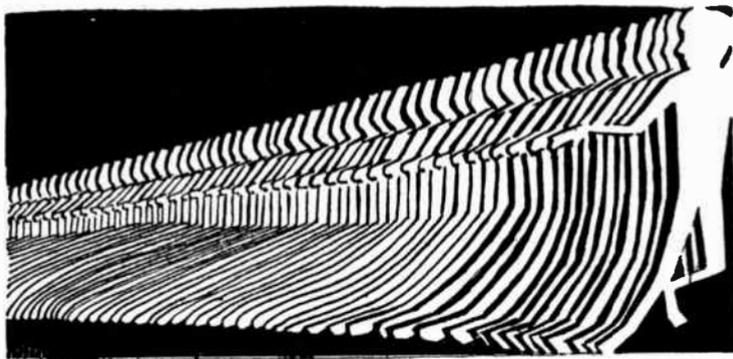
“Let me have a piece of white paper, quick,” said the little new voice. “I’ll be where it is.”

“We mustn’t open Mother’s desk where the box of paper is,” said Bo.

“But you can’t see me without a piece of paper. Just get one sheet out of the desk, just one! It won’t take you a minute,” pleaded the voice, which was growing stronger.

“Mother doesn’t let us,” repeated Bo, who was five.

But Jane, who was seven, opened the desk and took out a sheet of her mother’s best writing paper—the kind with 422 East Avenue printed at the top. And as she held it in her hand, dots and spots began to come on it and they grew thicker and came faster and looked blacker and made themselves into eyes and a nose and shoulders and legs,



and there was a boy with 422 East Avenue printed straight across his forehead, and Jane was holding him by the hand! And as they stared at him he drew in a great breath and grew higher and wider till he was a little larger than Bo but not quite so tall as Jane. But he looked so funny that Jane laughed at him and Bo laughed too, and the boy laughed with them, and the more they looked at him the more they laughed, for though he had a head and arms and legs and was as tall as a real child, he was only as thick as a sheet of paper; and while Jane had brown hair and blue eyes and Bo's eyes were brown and his hair was yellow, the new boy was all black and white like the printing on a newspaper even to his head and his hands and his shoes and his stockings.

"What's your name?" asked Bo when they had done laughing.

"I haven't any name," said the boy, and his voice had grown to be almost like a real child's voice, louder than Bo's and not quite so loud as Jane's.



“But somebody always gives everybody a name—my aunt gave me hers,” said Jane.

“I haven’t got an aunt—or anybody—I’m only a spark that came down from Benjamin Franklin’s kite.”

“Then I’ll call you ‘Sparky’ for short,” said Jane,

*“Sparky for short—Sparky for long,
“Sparky for Sunday and Sparky for Monday,
“Sparky for nighttime and Sparky for day,
“Sparky for work and Sparky for play.*

“All that is you,” said Jane.



II. MR. BENJAMIN FRANKLIN'S KITE

"WHERE did you come from first?" asked Bo.

"Down from a big cloud all full of thunder and lightning that I was sitting on."

"Weren't you scared?"

Sparky was eager to tell him all about it.

"Oh, no—I'd been sitting on clouds a lot before that—big clouds or little clouds it was all the same to me. I'd sat on almost all the clouds there are, I guess. I was tired of clouds. There wasn't anything for me to do but jump back and forth and there wasn't any place for me to jump to but another cloud like the one I was on before. If I had been a very big spark—as big as a flash of lightning—I could have hopped down to a high church spire or a tree, I could even have shot down to a wave in the ocean; but a little spark like me couldn't leap any farther than the nearest cloud. I watched and I waited, and waited and watched for something to jump on that wasn't a cloud. I'd seen lots of kites up in the sky, but whenever one got so near me that I thought I might get onto it, the boy who



owned it knew it was going to rain and wound up his string and pulled it down so it wouldn't get wet. But one day I saw a kite coming higher and closer even after it began to rain. It was a man not a boy who was holding the string. He had big horn-rimmed spectacles, his hair hung down over his collar and he didn't mind getting wet. He let his kite come so near me that I skipped right onto it and slid down the string. It was a long, smooth, slippery string. I couldn't stop sliding and I went faster and faster and faster till—plop—I bumped against a large hard door key. It was a terrible jounce but I had to stop because the key was at the end of the string. Beyond it there was nothing but a silk ribbon that the man—he was Mr. Benjamin Franklin—had tied to the string he held his kite by. I couldn't possibly slide along a silk ribbon—a spark can't, you know—so I jumped off the key into a glass jar that Mr. Benjamin Franklin held out for me.”

“I can slide down a hill but nobody ever let me slide down a string,” said Bo.



“Was it nice in the jar?” asked Jane.

“It wasn’t nice at all! It was a Leyden jar and not nearly so big as a cloud. Almost to the top it was lined with shiny tinfoil and I couldn’t get any higher up than the tinfoil went. There was a shiny ball up above the rim and I did climb up on that, but there wasn’t any place for me to go to when I got there.”

“I’d have jumped off,” said Bo.

“If you’re a spark you can’t jump unless there’s some place to jump to. The jar was just exactly like a prison. I couldn’t get away. If I’d known that Mr. Benjamin Franklin was trying to catch me I’d never have jumped on his kite or slid down his old string. I was pretty mad I can tell you when he carried the jar into the house and set it on his table. When he put out his hand toward the shiny knob I pricked him with a sharp spark—but he liked it! He said ‘Good—this is an electric spark as I supposed.’ And then he put some alcohol in an iron spoon and held it out to me and when I jumped at it there was a blue fire and the alcohol



burned up and Mr. Benjamin Franklin said, ‘Good’ again. Every time he held anything out to me I jumped at it. But after a while he went away and left me shut up in that old jar so I couldn’t get out.”

“Tell us some more,” cried Jane. “Tell us what came next.”

“Well, I was shut up in that Leyden jar a long, long time—days and days I guess—or it might have been years and years. I thought I wouldn’t ever get out again, but one day a man held a piece of wire up close to the shining ball on the top of my jar. Of course being a spark I jumped at it with a snap—and there I was running along on that wire till I came to a bell and when I hit the bell it rang. I thought I was free again but I wasn’t at all. I was just as much in prison as when I was in the Leyden jar, for that man had put me on an insulated wire so I couldn’t get away and made me do things I’d never done before.”

“What’s ‘insulated’?” asked Bo.

“Oh, don’t you know a little thing like that? It’s being all wrapped in something like rubber that



a spark can't get through. Why I've been shut up in a wire so tight that I couldn't get out no matter how fast I ran. I had to do everything that the man who put me there wanted me to do. Sometimes I went up onto poles in the air and sometimes I had to go into people's houses to make lights for them and ring their telephones. I could go along on wires faster than anything but I didn't have any voice—only a little snap—and there wasn't any one for me to talk to anyway. And then there was another man found out how to make me go around without any wire to go on. At first I thought I was going to get away again, but I found that I had to do what that man wanted me to just as though I was still on an insulated wire. He kept making me carry wireless messages but instead of being shut up I was out in the sunshine and I could see New York City and London, and I could see children playing and hear them talk but I couldn't play with them because they couldn't see me or hear me, and besides I had to keep working all the time. I got pretty tired and pretty lonesome



and so to-day when he sent me out on wireless to carry the picture of a boy that has got lost around to the newspapers and I saw your radio open wide enough to get two stations at once, I just slipped in here. And now I can talk as well as you can!"

"Show us the picture of the Lost Boy," said Bo.

"Look at me—I'm it," answered Sparky.

"But it isn't your picture—it doesn't belong to you. You took it away from the Lost Boy—it's his," cried Bo.

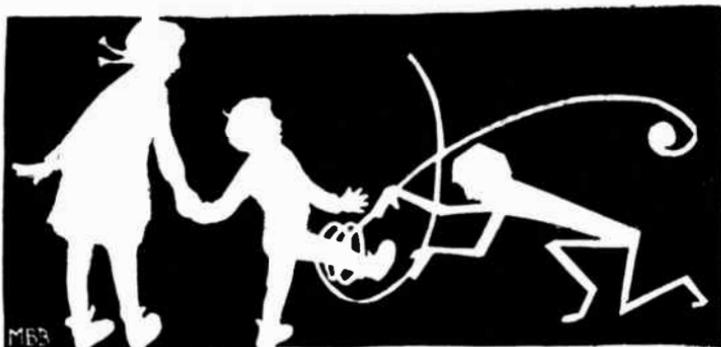
"They won't find him if you keep the picture, will they?" asked Jane. "Boys don't like to be lost."

"But I don't like to be working all the time either—doing errands for everybody else! People let real boys play. I've seen them in China and Chicago and everywhere. They have homes and toys and sometimes aunts. I don't see why I can't keep on being the Lost Boy's picture even if I can't be a real boy. I don't see why I have to keep riding him round on wireless."



“When you’re sent somewhere you have to go there,” said Bo.

“I will if I ever get to be a real boy, but now I’m just a wireless picture. I never could play with any children or talk to anybody before, and now I’m going to stay and play with you.”



III. HITCH-HIKING IN THE SKY

“WHAT’LL we play?” asked Jane.

“Let’s go walking on the air,” said Sparky.

“How’ll we do it?” asked Bo.

“I’ll insulate you. I’ve seen them do it in the laboratory where I used to be. And Mr. Einstein said that electricity that goes along the wires might be the same as gravitation that makes you fall off a chair and I know it really is the same because I’m made of electricity myself—all except this piece of paper that the Lost Boy’s wireless picture is on. The rest of me is electricity. That’s what makes me go. I can insulate you all over and cut off the gravitation that pulls you down, then we can go walking right up from the sidewalk into the air.”

“I don’t believe it—we’d fall down,” said Jane.

“You’re telling a wrong story,” said Bo.

“I’m not either! When I was nothing but electricity myself I kept trying to get through the insulation all the time and I couldn’t. If you put rubber around a wire electricity can’t get through and if you put rubber around yourself electricity



that's like gravitation can't get through either. I can insulate you with rubber just as easy!"

"Where'll we get the rubber?" asked Jane.

"My rubber coat's in the hall closet. It stayed there since the day the sun didn't come out," said Bo.

"So's mine," said Jane.

They went to the hall closet and put on their rubber coats and their overshoes, and Bo took his umbrella because he always did take his umbrella when he wore his overshoes. But the rubber coats weren't very long and the overshoes weren't very high, and there were their bare legs in between without any insulation at all. But they found a little basket in the corner of the closet with pieces of electric wire and old sockets and string and nails and hammers that the janitor used when he fixed up things that something had happened to, and with them was a roll of rubber tape that he wrapped around wires.

"That's just what we need!" cried Sparky.

He wound the rubber tape round and round their



legs from the tops of their overshoes right up to their knees. Then he pulled up the collars of their rain coats and buttoned them under their chins.

“Lift up your right foot, Bo,” Sparky said, “I must cut off the gravitation.”

He scraped along the sole of Bo’s shoe as though he had a knife. He did the same thing to his left foot and to both of Jane’s feet and the children began to feel so light that they could hardly keep on the stairs as they went down to the street.

“Stand on this dry spot, Bo,” said Sparky. “Now give me your hand and wait till your toes begin to tingle.”

“They feel like a frosty morning!” cried Bo.

“That’s all right, then. Now step up as high as you can into the air, slowly, till you find a thick place where the air hasn’t got any holes in it.”

Bo put up first one foot and then the other and found that the air was like soft sand. Then he opened his umbrella because he always did put up his umbrella when he had his rubbers on and walked up over the street.



“Come Jane, let me show you how to walk on the air,” cried Sparky. “First step on this dry spot because insulation isn’t any good if it gets wet through; then take hold of my hand and wait till your toes tingle.”

“Oh it feels as if my foot’s asleep!” said Jane.

“Then it’s time to put your right foot down very slow till you get it firm on the air—that’s it! Now the other foot—higher than that! Now see if you can pull loose from the sidewalk and go up by yourself.”

After a long strong pull Jane got her feet away from the sidewalk and went up into the air and Sparky fluttered after her.

“Look what long steps I can take!” cried Jane.

“Little sparks are going up my legs. I *like* it!” said Bo.

Sparky was very happy. Walking in the air was as new to him as it was to Jane and Bo. He’d been up in the air most of his life jumping about in the clouds and rushing through very fast on wireless, but he’d never just *walked* till he came in over the



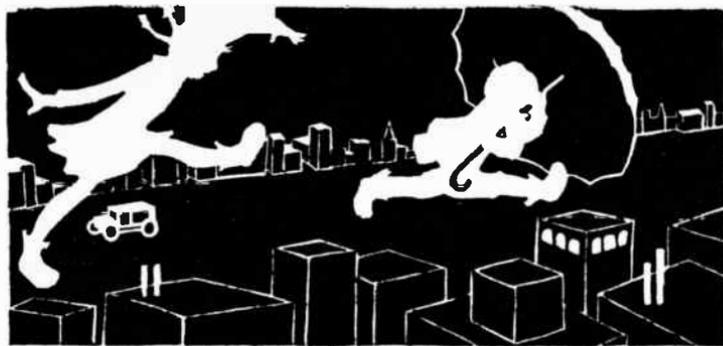
radio and got to look like a real boy. But he was only as thick as a sheet of paper, so the air kept pushing him about more than it did Jane and Bo. As they went higher and higher they learned to lift their feet very high and put them down very slowly and they all sang together:

*“Sparky for short—Sparky for long,
“Sparky for Sunday and Sparky for Monday,
“Sparky for nighttime and Sparky for day,
“Sparky for work and Sparky for play.”*

This song made Sparky very happy. He had never been in a song before and as they walked across Fifth Avenue way up above the red lights he sang:

*“One automobile is bright, bright blue, an-
other one is red,
“The busses are painted all green and new,
but the taxis get in ahead!”*

As they kept on going higher, people leaned out from the windows, left the desks where they were writing, left the wheels where they were working



and the telephones that they were talking to. The men stopped cutting children's clothes, the girls stopped making boxes, their engines all stopped running and the office boys stopped too.

"You'll fall down if you aren't careful," cried a man who reached out toward them. "You'll get hurt if you keep going up so high!"

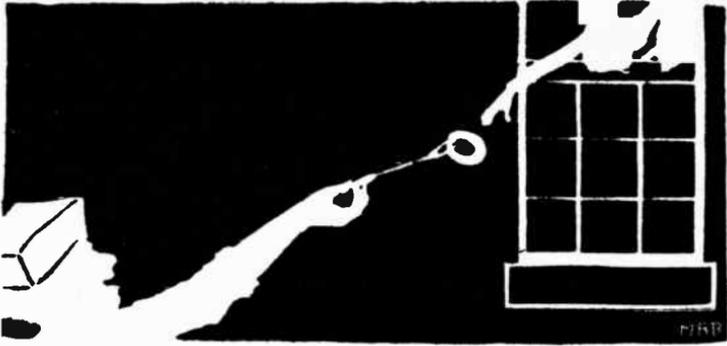
"We're quite safe up here," said Sparky. "There is nothing that can touch us!"

So they kept on walking upward toward the sky.

When they were as high as the fifth story they came upon a big wire going into a large building.

"That," said Sparky, "is a cooking-by-electricity wire. That's why it's so big. If we go along where it's going we'll find out what they're cooking."

They walked along beside the big wire and pretty soon they smelled the most wonderful smell. Jane and Bo hadn't had their lunch so they hurried to a window open at the top and Jane put her head in over the sash. There right below her was a long row of cooks in white caps taking doughnuts out



of sizzling fat—dozens and hundreds and thousands of doughnuts.

“Couldn’t we have some?” she asked the beautiful cook who stood at the end of the line.

“I guess a girl that can look over the top of a fifth-story window deserves a doughnut,” he said and handed her one on the end of a fork.

“But there are two more of us outside.”

The beautiful cook handed up two more.

“I always thought doughnuts were cold,” said Jane, when they were safe in her hands.

“They are in the bakery,” said the beautiful cook.

“See what we’ve got!” said Jane, taking her head out of the top of the window.

“We mustn’t eat between meals,” said Bo, reaching out his hand.

“This is lunch. It’s our day for carrots and tomato juice, anyway, so it’s just as well,” said Jane.

Sparky put his hands behind him when Jane held out his doughnut.

“How can I eat a doughnut when I’m only as



thick as a sheet of paper and haven't any stomach to put it in?"

"Well that's just as well too," said Jane politely, and to be on the safe side she began to eat the two doughnuts at once.

They had started walking on again when a large shadow and a noise made them look up.

"It's only an airplane," said Jane.

"Let's go and ride in it!" shouted Sparky. "I never rode in an airplane or an automobile or anything like that—only on clouds and wires."

"We're not allowed to ride in other people's airplanes unless they ask us," said Bo.

"Then let's go up and ask him to ask us," suggested Sparky.

Jane looked at him very severely, but they all started walking up the air, higher and higher to where the airplane was flying about. A little wind was blowing and as Bo had his umbrella up, it took him above the tall buildings before the others got there. When the air pilot, whose name was Albert, saw Bo, he brought his plane over to him and said:



“Don’t try to hitch on behind. I don’t like to have children stealing rides and hitch-hiking. If you want to fly for a while, you can get in here with me,” and he reached out his hand and helped Bo into the seat beside him.

It took Bo so much time to get his umbrella shut that they had gone up pretty high before he remembered.

“Will you go back for Jane and Sparky, if you please?” he asked Albert.

“Who are they and where do we pick them up?”

“Jane’s my sister and Sparky came in over the radio. There’d be plenty of room on the back seat if they’d scrunch down.”

So Albert brought his plane round again and swooped down over Jane and Sparky.

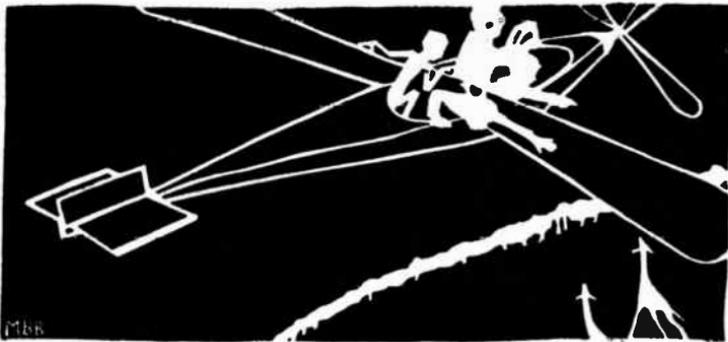
“He lets me sit on the front seat, you have to go in the back,” said Bo.

“I’m just out for a little fresh air and all directions are alike to me,” said Albert, when they had got settled, “so if there’s any place you’d like to fly to, we can go there.”



“I don’t want to take you out of your way,” said Jane very politely, “but I always like to go to the zoo. Perhaps you don’t like animals, though.”

“I like all animals except birds—gulls and storks and ducks are a perfect nuisance! Every time I go flying they try to light on the wings, and if a lot of heavy birds like gulls sit down on a wing, the whole plane tips sidewise and is very hard to steer. Last year a flock of grackles came dodging back and forth through the propeller—playing tag with each other. They got me so confused that I bumped into Brooklyn Bridge, and that’s no way to keep your plane bright and shiny! The air is full of all kinds of things anyway—actually crowded. You don’t see anything but maybe a cloud or a butterfly and all the time it’s packed full of long wave lengths that swing you up and down like a big, slow rocking-chair, and short wave lengths that jiggle you back and forth, and light waves that go so fast that you can’t see them coming and don’t know they’ve hit you till they’re gone, and wireless pictures that come through with a swish and a bang. Not one



of these things do you know about till it bumps against you. Why, there's a wireless picture of a Lost Boy that got away into the air. All the air pilots have been asked to watch for it. I shouldn't be surprised if we bumped into it any minute."

Bo looked big-eyed and solemn. Jane pretended not to hear. Sparky jumped up and down with fright.

"You mustn't rock the plane—you're as bad as a bird," said Albert. "There's no getting away from the birds wherever you fly—sparrows and robins down low, gulls and storks up high! They bother so that sometimes I think the air isn't a bit safer than the ground. No, I don't like birds."

"We don't have to look at the birds," said Jane. "We can just look at the deer and the tiger and the crocodile and the giraffe. They'll be quite different I expect when we look at them from the top."

"We'll look at everything but the birds from the top—I don't like birds."

So they flew round and round and round and looked at the animals from the top. Sparky was so



happy that he couldn't even talk. Riding in an airplane was quite different from riding on a cloud. Albert could make the airplane go anywhere he wanted it to but nobody can steer a cloud. They went round and round over the zoo as though they were swinging at the end of a string and the camels and giraffes stretched up their necks, and the crocodile turned over on his back to see better, and the lion gave a beautiful surprised roar. Sparky leaned out over the side to look at the animals. He had never been so near to wild animals before. When he was a spark up in the clouds he could never get near them because when the animals saw the cloud coming they knew it was going to rain and went into their caves or under the trees where they could keep dry. And when he had been sent with wireless messages he wasn't ever sent to the places where wild animals live. Everything he saw was new to him; he was as happy as though he were a real boy, as happy as Jane and Bo.

They were coming around in a great smooth curve with the plane tilted, 'way up on one side and



everybody holding on tight, when a flock of ducks that had been having lunch at the edge of the pond set up a quack, quack, quacking and flew up in the air.

“Just my luck!” said Albert. “I’m not going to dispute the right of way over this pond with any duck. They never obey the traffic rules. We’ll have to go home.”

Jane and Bo weren’t afraid of ducks and they hadn’t got all the animals looked at from the top, but they knew that when a person is taking you to ride in his airplane it isn’t polite to fuss about going back when he’s ready to take you home. But Sparky had never been riding in an airplane before, so he cried out:

“I’m going to stay here!”

“But when I take people for a ride I always take them home safe again. Shall I leave you at that number, 422 East Avenue, which you have on your forehead?” said Albert.

“That isn’t my home. I haven’t got any home for you to take me back *to*. I haven’t got a father



or a mother or even an aunt. I can do anything I like. Nobody tells me not to. And I never played with an animal, not even a kitten, so I'm going to stay here and do it now."

Sparky stepped out over the side of the airplane without even thanking Albert for the ride.



IV. WILFRED THE ELEPHANT

SPARKY walked slowly down through the air trying to decide which animal to play with first. The bears were all asleep, and you can't have much fun with an animal that's not awake. The lions were having their lunch and nobody likes to be interrupted at lunch. But the very largest elephant was walking round and round his paddock on a constitutional. Sparky had seen real children ride on elephants, so he stepped down onto the elephant's head.

Wilfred, for that was the elephant's name, stopped short. He was quite used to having children ride on his back when he had his red and gold howdah on. He was used to kneeling down beside the block where they waited to climb up. This was quite a different matter. Something had lit upon his head. He had not seen it get there and he didn't know what it was. It felt like a boy but he couldn't be sure. Wilfred raised his great gray trunk up in the air and curled it back nearer and nearer to Sparky. It came feeling and feeling



about, back and forth, and just as it almost touched him, Sparky reached out his finger and there was a tiny flash. Wilfred felt a sharp prick on the tip of his trunk. He did what other people do when they are frightened and hurt—he squealed loudly and began to run round and round his paddock—round and round and round. Whenever his trunk would stop stinging Wilfred would raise it up toward Sparky again, and Sparky would reach out a finger and give it another spark and the elephant would squeal louder and run faster than before.

The Head Keeper who took care of Wilfred heard his voice and came running, and the Second Keeper who gave him his lunch, and the Third Keeper who gave him his bath, and the Boy who brought water for him to drink.

“Come, Wilfred, come, Wilfred!” cried the Head Keeper and the Second Keeper and the Third Keeper together.

“Come, Willie, Willie, Willie—I’m bringing you a drink!” said the Water Boy.

But Wilfred paid no attention. He ran and



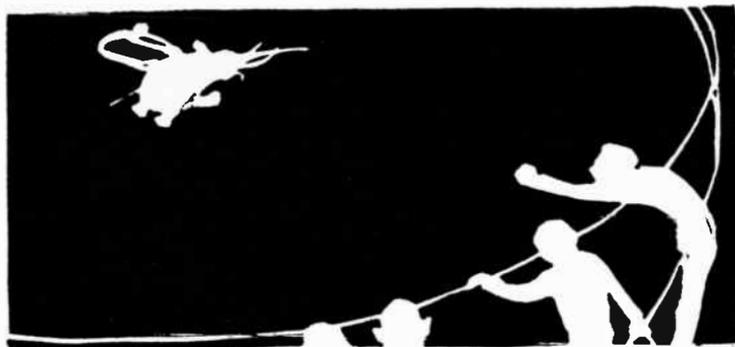
squealed and squealed and ran, round and round and round. And every time he put up his trunk Sparky pricked him again with an electric flash, and every time Sparky pricked him, Wilfred ran faster and squealed louder.

“Who’s that riding him?” cried the Head Keeper and the Second Keeper and the Third Keeper all together.

“It’s a kid!” said the Water Boy. “Say, it looks like a boy I know that got lost! Maybe it *is* him! Only this one’s as thin as a sheet of paper and all black and white like printing.”

“Hi you, get off his head! Wait till I lay my hands on you!” roared the Head Keeper.

Sparky was terribly frightened. What would happen if the Head Keeper caught him? When Mr. Benjamin Franklin caught him he shut him up in a Leyden jar. When the man in the laboratory caught him he shut him up in an insulated wire. Would the Head Keeper shut him up somewhere else? He couldn’t jump off Wilfred’s back and get away because he wasn’t just a spark any longer.



He was as tall as a real child and he couldn't get off that piece of paper with 422 East Avenue printed on it unless he went back through the radio the way he came. Oh, how he wished he were a real boy, so that Wilfred would be glad to have him riding on his back!

"Come Willie, Willie, Willie!" cried the Head Keeper and the Second Keeper and the Third Keeper again.

Wilfred heard the voices of his friends and began to run slower and slower. The Head Keeper climbed up on the gate, the Second Keeper reached over the fence to catch Sparky when Wilfred came by, the Third Keeper took up a long stick. What could poor Sparky do! Slower and slower the elephant ran. When they got to the place where the Head Keeper was holding out his hand Wilfred would certainly stop. Sparky wrung his paper hands in terror. Slower and slower, nearer and nearer!

At that very moment the flock of ducks that had frightened Albert and his airplane came circling



back over the zoo. Sparky stood up on Wilfred's head and reached as high as he could. The first duck was too high for him and the next and the next! Wilfred was going slower and slower and the Head Keeper's hand and the Third Keeper's stick were coming nearer and nearer. The ducks were almost gone by now and Sparky had given up hope when there was a pitiful quacking just above him and there was a very little, very young, very tired duck who hadn't been able to keep up with the flock! Sparky gave one leap into the air and caught the very last of its tail feathers as it went by and with one foot he kicked the Assistant's stick out of his hand, and with the other he kicked the hat off the Head Keeper as he swung low over the fence and out of the paddock, holding fast to the tail of the duckling.

The young duck was almost as frightened as Wilfred had been. He quacked in terror and flew with all his might but he was small and tired, and before he reached his home pond, he had to sit down and rest. He chose a green bank near the



Kangaroo's cage and dropped upon it fairly gasping.

"You haven't any right to catch hold of my tail when I'm flying," he whimpered with tears dropping down from his little pink eyes. "Didn't your mother teach you better than that?" and he stamped his yellow webbed feet. "I've only just learned to fly, anyway. It's quite a hard thing to do and I mustn't be frightened or discouraged. Besides, you pulled my tail feathers and that hurts, and I'm going to tell Mother," and the little duck cried harder than ever.

Because Sparky was hurt and angry that Wilfred wouldn't play with him, he was unkind to the little duck who had helped him to get away.

"Cry-baby, cry-baby," said Sparky, pointing his finger and making a sharp spark on the little duck's yellow bill.

"Ma-ma-ma-ma—a!" cried the duckling, exactly like a baby.

There was a long answering "Quack" and "Quack, quack, quack," which is the way a mother



duck has of saying, "Right away—I'm coming right away." And then there was a quick flapping of wings, and the duck came driving straight at Sparky with her bill wide open.

He could see that the old duck was very angry. Her eyes, which were usually a delicate pink like her ducklings', had become bright red, and her quacks sounded more like hisses. Poor Sparky was frightened. It hadn't occurred to him that the mother duck would come to defend her young. When he had met ducks before he had been only a wireless spark in the clouds, and they had either been flying north in the spring before their ducklings were hatched, or flying south again in the autumn after their ducklings were grown up. And besides when he was just a spark no duck could even see him—much less catch him, but now that he was a wireless picture and as big as a child the mother duck could see him plainly enough.

"If I were only a real child I would be all right," he said to himself.

He knew there was no use trying to run away



from the mother duck over the grass because she could fly faster than he could run. It would be still worse if he started walking up the air, for it was as soft as sand and he had to go slowly because he sank into it at every step. In no time at all the mother duck would catch him. Even if he climbed a tree, she could fly to the very highest limb. There was nothing for him to do but to slip through the bars into the cage where the big Kangaroo lived with her newest twins. So, being only as thick as a sheet of paper, he turned edgewise and went through, while the mother duck who was broad and fat came against the cage with a bang.

“You hurt my duckling, just wait till I catch you!” she quacked.



V. THE KIND KANGAROO

SPARKY ran straight to the big Kangaroo.

"Oh, please take care of me," he said; "don't let the mother duck get me, please, please."

"Of course I won't let her hurt you,—a careless sort of a mother she is anyway who lets her babies fly about in the cold, drafty air instead of keeping them in a nice warm pouch where they'd be safe."

The mother Kangaroo picked Sparky up and popped him into her pouch where her twins were taking a nap. He stuck his head out but the mother duck who was comforting her duckling quacked:

"Wait till I catch you. I'll teach you to pull my child's tail feathers."

Sparky lay quietly until the little duck had stopped sobbing and flown away with its mother. Then he started to get out of the Kangaroo's pouch. But the mother Kangaroo pushed him back.

"Stay where you are," she warned him; "you'll have to be a great deal thicker than you are now before it's safe for you to go about with as many dangerous ducks as there are in this zoo. You



can stay here and grow up with my children. They'll both be kind to you." And she pushed him back again into her pouch.

Sparky found himself shut up once more and there was nothing he hated so much as that. Again and again he put his head up and tried to get out but every time the kind Kangaroo pushed him back, saying gently:

"Stay in there till you grow up, for the Mother Duck will get you if you climb out."

Poor Sparky! He was just as much in prison as when Mr. Benjamin Franklin shut him up in the Leyden jar! And he didn't like it at all in the Kangaroo's pouch. It was dark and stuffy and he'd always been used to a great deal of fresh air. But the thing that frightened him most was the idea that if he stayed in the Kangaroo's pouch and lived the way the Kangaroos did he'd grow up to be a Kangaroo.

"I don't want to be a Kangaroo," he sobbed. "I don't, I don't! I'd never be able to walk on the air again or shoot sparks at anything, or have any



fun. I'd never be like a real boy. I'd just be jumping and jumping on the ground the way I did in the clouds when I was nothing but a spark. I won't be a Kangaroo! I won't! I won't!"

The Kangaroo twins were asleep now and it was very still in the pouch. Sparky tried and tried to think of some way to escape but the mother Kangaroo kept watch all the time and was busy hushing the other animals so they wouldn't disturb her babies.

Sparky had an idea!

Slowly he wiggled himself down between the two little Kangaroos and just as they were turning over in their sleep, he gave them each a sharp spark in the side. There was a great thrashing of legs and tails and the little Kangaroos were trying to jump out of the pouch. Their mother caught them with one of her forepaws on each head.

"It isn't time for you to wake up yet. You certainly can't go out and play at this hour of the day," she said.

But while she had her two forepaws on the heads



of her own children, Sparky was able to jump out and flutter to the top of the cage.

“Come right back here,” cried the kind Kangaroo; “you aren’t thick enough to go about alone. Come back and grow up.”

But Sparky slid sideways out through the bars of the cage.

“I don’t want to grow up to be a Kangaroo, I wouldn’t be a Kangaroo for anything,” he cried and walked away on the air.

Sparky was free again. That made him happy. He had always done as he liked when he was a spark in the clouds. He danced and fluttered till a little breeze caught him and threw him over the high wire netting into the yard where the old Ostrich lived. That great bird was hunting around in the sand and gravel for something to eat. He had meals brought to him regularly at the proper time, but he always wanted to eat improperly between meals. When there wasn’t any real food anywhere, he would swallow a few pebbles or a nail or two, and he was especially fond of paper.



The whole of a Sunday newspaper given to him at once made him almost good-natured. When he saw Sparky blow down into his yard, he dropped the pebble he was about to swallow and came running with both wings spread, mouth open and eyes set. Sparky had hardly time to get up into the air and let the ostrich dash by under him. The great bird came round as soon as he could turn and, with the wind behind him, charged back again faster than ever.

“What are you doing that for?” said Sparky, curling his feet to keep them out of the ostrich’s way.

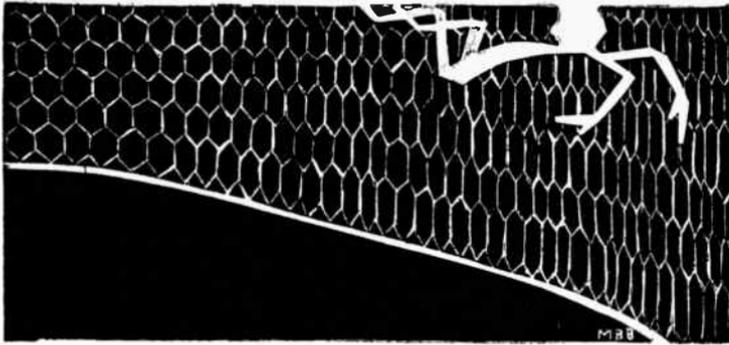
The Ostrich craned his neck high up in the air to look at Sparky.

“Did you speak to me?” he said, crossly.

“I asked why you ran at me in that rude way when you had never seen me before.”

“I *eat* paper,” said the Ostrich, haughtily, “but they keep this zoo so picked up that I hardly ever get any.”

“I’m not paper, I’m a spark that came down



on the string of Mr. Benjamin Franklin's kite."

"It doesn't matter what you used to be; everything gets made into paper sooner or later. There's so much of it that I make myself like it."

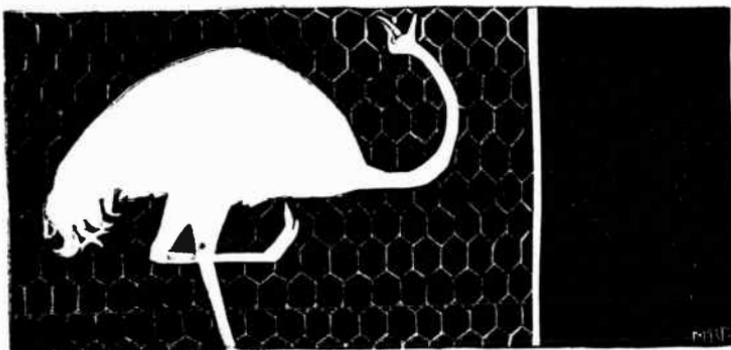
"Then why don't you like me?" asked Sparky as he danced in the air out of the Ostrich's reach. "I never did a *thing* to you!"

"I *do* like you. I like you very much—that's why I want to eat you," said the Ostrich as he leaped and almost caught Sparky by the back.

"I never was eaten. Nothing could eat me when I was a spark. But now that I'm a wireless picture with 422 East Avenue on my forehead, I suppose that an Ostrich could eat me all up. I don't think I'd like it at all."

"Go away quick, then," said the Ostrich, lunging at him. "If I see anything that I can swallow I've simply *got* to have it. Whether I'm hungry or not doesn't matter, I've *always* got to be eating. I was hatched that way—omnivorous! If you stay around I shall certainly eat you."

"Then I shall certainly go away." And Sparky



walked up the air to the top of the fence and down on the other side.

He was so glad to be safe from the omnivorous Ostrich that he danced along close to the ground where the wind wouldn't catch him and blow him back over the fence again. He didn't notice anything till he felt a hand catch him by the back of the neck and crumple him up into a ball and heard the voice of the Head Keeper say:

“You've been blowing around and scaring the animals long enough. You can stay in this waste-paper can till I have time to burn you up.”

And he clapped the cover down on the can.



VI. THE CAT AND THE WHALE

IT was a long time before poor Sparky could even move.

“Oh, what a thing to happen to a wireless boy!” he sobbed. “Here I am just as much in prison as though I were back in the old Leyden jar! Why do men keep catching me and shutting me up? I don’t want to be shut up—I don’t want to! And the Head Keeper said he was going to burn me up with all these old cracker boxes and broken toys and banana skins and peanut shells. I never was burned up and I don’t think I’d like it. It sounds just as bad as being eaten by an Ostrich. If I were an electric spark again the Head Keeper couldn’t catch me and if I were a real child he wouldn’t burn me up. It’s very hard to be only the wireless picture of a Lost Boy! I’d better try and straighten out so he’ll know I’m not just a piece of old newspaper anyway.”

Sparky began to unfold himself a little at a time. He was on stiff writing paper and there were little sounds of “Crack, snap, crack, snap” as he straight-



ened out his creases. A large tomcat who was prowling about in search of something to eat, stopped to listen. “Crack, snap, crack, snap”—there it went inside the waste-paper can. To the Tom it sounded quite as if a rat or a mouse were inside.

“I am so hungry that a rat or even a mouse would taste very good,” thought Tom, and he sniffed round and round the waste-paper can.

“Crack, snap, crack, snap,” went Sparky.

“It must be a very large rat to make as much noise as that,” thought Tom; “a plump rat would make me a very good luncheon.”

Now, this cat had been brought up in New York City and had learned very early how to get the covers off the cans people set out on sidewalks for the garbage man to empty into his cart. So he circled round and round the can, pushing up on the cover, and before he had got round it twice—plop! off it went and Tom jumped into the can to hunt for the rat. And the very first thing he did was to kick Sparky right out onto the grass.



Slowly Sparky picked himself up. He straightened out his neck and his back and his arms and his legs. He gave himself a little shake to be sure that he was still all there.

“I’ll just walk up on the air and stretch my legs,” said he.

When he got above the tops of the cages where the animals live he could see that a storm was coming up. There was a hard wind blowing and the air was full of dust and flying leaves and bits of paper and many little birds were being blown along where they didn’t want to go. Sparky was thinking that perhaps he’d better catch hold of something solid if he didn’t want to be blown away, when an especially hard and angry gust came by and whirled him up above the trees and away from the zoo over toward the high buildings of New York City. Down below him were the tops of the tenements and he could see mothers pulling the clotheslines in at their kitchen windows so that the stockings and dresses and sheets wouldn’t be lost in the storm. Sometimes he could see a



little spot of green down deep between the buildings which he knew was the top of a tree. Then he blew over Central Park which lay out like a great green rug with a pattern on it made up of the big shiny square reservoir and the little silver lakes, and dark spots where trees stood up and bright spots where flowers were blooming, and the long curved lines of the roads with the automobiles rushing along like beetles to get away from the storm. Sparky had hardly time to notice the lovely pattern of the park before he was blown out over the Avenue. He rushed by the high buildings at such a terrible speed that he couldn't even catch hold of one as he went by.

"If only Albert would come by in his airplane!" he thought. But Albert and all the rest of the pilots had seen the storm signals and taken their planes home.

The wind carried him on faster and faster. He could see the people down below rolling up their awnings and running after their hats, and picking up their little children. The small square green



parks flashed by, and almost before he knew it he was rushing straight at the Woolworth Tower.

“This is my chance to stop,” thought Sparky reaching out both arms. But just as he touched the top of the tower a gay gull who always flew out in windy weather just for fun, got in the way and Sparky was blown past the tower, out over the high office buildings, above the bright green Battery at the end of Manhattan Island and across the harbor which was all covered with white waves and spray.

“Maybe I can catch on the Statue of Liberty?” thought Sparky, trying to dash down. But he flew right over Liberty’s torch.

Staten Island swept under him like a moving picture map and almost before he knew it, there was Sandy Hook running away as fast as it could, and nothing in front of him but the Atlantic Ocean.

“I’d better watch out for a ship,” said Sparky to himself. “I’d hate to drop into the water and get wet. I never was wet and I don’t think I’d like it.”



Presently Sparky noticed that the wind wasn't blowing as hard as it had. He was going slower and slower. He looked about for a ship but all he could see was something shiny and dark sticking up through the water. It looked a little like an island made of polished rock. He thought it would be a place to rest on, anyway, so he hurried down through the air and stepped onto it with a strong, sharp spark of delight.

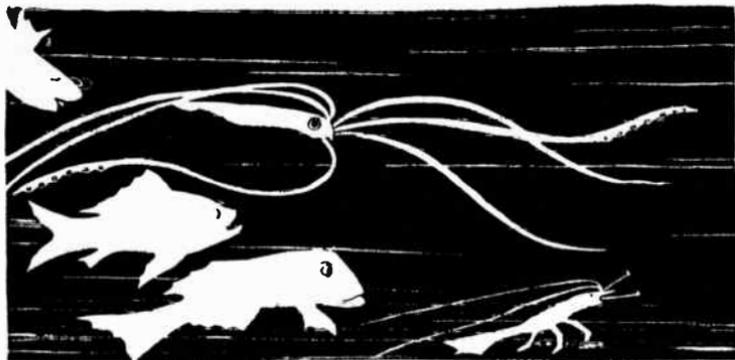
There was a great snort and a splash and the smooth little island rose up on its tail and dived under the waves. It hadn't been an island at all but an old whale who had hunted up a quiet place where his children couldn't disturb him while he took an afternoon nap.

Poor Sparky was in the water now!

He tried to walk up on the air again but you have to have a dry, smooth spot to start from and there wasn't a dry smooth spot in the whole of the Atlantic Ocean. The little waves came up over his feet and when he tried to get his right foot out of the water his left foot went deeper in. Then



both his feet got soaked with water and he sank as deep as his knees—then his knees got wet and he went in to his waist—then the spray dashed as high as his shoulders, the paper that he was printed on was soaked through and a big wave that was going by washed all over him!



VII. IN THE GULF STREAM

SPARKY sank down through the water till he came to the floor of the sea which was covered with soft ooze that his feet sank into. At every step little crabs and squids and sea urchins came out of it and chased him away.

“Do you like it down here?” Sparky said to a large Blue Crab who was walking sidewise.

“What difference does it make whether I like it or not?” answered the Crab. “There’s nowhere else for me to go, is there? I have to stay here, don’t I? You talk foolishness!”

The Blue Crab was going in the same way that the water was pushing Sparky, so he went along beside it.

“Where are we going to?” he asked after a while.

“I don’t know where you’re going to, I’m sure,” said the Blue Crab crossly. “But I’m going to find the Gulf Stream if I can, and it doesn’t seem to be around here any more.”

“What’s the Gulf Stream?” inquired Sparky.



“Well, you’re pretty ignorant I *must* say! Think of not knowing about the Gulf Stream!”

“Tell me about it quickly if it’s so important.”

“There’s nothing to tell about it. It’s just water like everything else, only it has been down to the Equator to get warmed up and now it’s going back toward the North Pole. It is the hot water heating system for the Atlantic Ocean and it brings back jellyfish and squids and sea cucumbers that taste quite different from what a crab gets to eat at home. Whenever I get tired of my food I go along in the Gulf Stream for a change of diet. It makes a great difference in my spirits I assure you.”

“Then let’s hurry and find it!” said Sparky.

They were going downhill and it got darker and darker till Sparky could hardly see where to put his feet.

“Where are we now?” he asked the Blue Crab.

“We are walking down into the Hudson Gorge and if I don’t find the Gulf Stream there I don’t know what I shall do. I always follow it till I get to the seashore where I spend the summer, but if



the Gulf Stream has been moved nobody knows where to go.”

“Isn’t it rather dark down here?” asked Sparky who had stumbled over something.

“What else would you expect it to be in a great deep trench that the Hudson River dug when it used to come out as far as this? But it’ll be lit up for us pretty soon.”

The Blue Crab hurried along and Sparky saw a faint greenish light. It came from what looked like a row of little windows, only instead of being on the side of a house they were on the side of a giant snail that was crawling slowly through the mud. Sparky saw that he was in a forest of seaweed and the branches swung along in the current as a willow tree swings in the wind. He had to make his way in and out among the leaves where strange fishes built their nests. When he put out his hand to touch one of them a fish with bright electric eyes looked over the top.

“My two thousand eggs are just ready to hatch—you mustn’t touch them!” said the fish.



Sparky put his foot on a flat black place in the ooze and it turned over and snapped at him.

“Don’t you know any better than to step on a Sting Ray when she’s at home taking care of her babies? Go away—quick!”

And then Sparky stumbled over a big Oyster and a lot of funny little things that looked like baby Crabs came up around his legs.

“Don’t you step on our mother when she’s taking care of us! *We like* to be taken care of!” they said.

“Why do they keep their babies where it’s so wet?” Sparky asked the Blue Crab.

“How would they get them out where it’s dry?” snarled the Crab.

Then he gave a sharp squeak and dodged behind a branch of seaweed. Sparky saw something sliding through the water beneath them. Its head was like the head of a snake. It was smooth and slippery and wore two shiny spots like lanterns on each side of its head. It pushed its head out this way and that way as though it were hunting for



something to eat. When it was gone the Blue Crab started on again.

“Who was that?” asked Sparky.

“The Electric Eel, and you’d better keep out of *his* way. We’ve just had a very narrow escape.”

“Escape from what?” asked Sparky.

“From being shocked,” said the Blue Crab.

Just then a great wave swirled into their faces.

“What’s this? What’s this?” growled the Crab in the worst of humor, “I never knew the water to come up through here before—it always goes the other way. It must be the Gulf Stream coming back.”

The water surged against them, wave after wave, and a dull glow like moonrise showed far on ahead. Great streamers of seaweed that had been lying flat along the current, lifted and swung high overhead on the back rush of the water, then flattened again to the new current that took them the other way. A thin film of mud rose up like smoke and a school of frightened fishes fled by. The Blue



Crab caught hold of a stout seaweed stem and looked down the Gorge.

“I don’t like this—not at all,” he grumbled. “It is without doubt the Gulf Stream coming back and bringing a great multitude of jellyfish to light the seashore on summer nights—it *must* be the Gulf Stream because there is nothing else that it *could* be. But I am an old Crab and I have never seen the Gulf Stream in such a hurry. You had better stay with me, for I do not wish to be alone.”

The Blue Crab caught Sparky by the foot, dragged him down behind a rock, and they both lay as flat as they could.

The light grew brighter and the long strands of seaweed strained at their roots as the water rushed up the Gorge. The glow narrowed to a stream of light that swung from side to side, and nosing slowly along came a great gray thing larger than the very largest whale with *X-A* painted on its side.

“It is a very strange jellyfish!” cried the Blue Crab who was shaking with terror.

“It isn’t a jellyfish—it’s only a submarine,”



said Sparky. "Men can go under the water in submarines the way they go in the air in airplanes."

"Oh, is that all!" The Blue Crab seemed to feel better. "Well, it seems to me that they needn't make the ocean so unpleasant for the rest of us."

The submarine was disappearing up the Gorge and the water it had pushed up before it was racing back through its old channel to the deep part of the ocean carrying Sparky and the Blue Crab and a lot of little fishes who were glad to be taken home again.

It seemed to Sparky that the ocean was a much more dangerous place to live in than the air. You hardly got used to keeping off the fishes' nests before you had to get away from the Electric Eel, and then the submarine came along and pushed the water up the wrong way and frightened everybody.

"How do you get out of the ocean?" Sparky asked the Crab.

"I don't if I can help it. If a wave does wash me up on the sand I hurry back to it as fast as I can



scuttle. The land is much too dangerous for me.”

Poor Sparky was very unhappy. He didn't see any way to get up into the air again unless he could get dry, and he couldn't possibly get dry where there was nothing but water all around him, so he kept on going along with the Blue Crab.

They were out of the seaweed forest now. The bottom of the ocean was covered with stones and shells instead of ooze and it was easier to walk. Suddenly the crab looked up and muttered through his gills, “There's something else coming now!”

A pair of enormous jaws came down above them. They swung and shifted and then closed upon them both and Sparky and the Blue Crab and hundreds of little red fishes and shells and the dangerous Electric Eel were all shut in together. Sparky knew by the motion that they were being hauled up toward the top of the water. Suddenly they came out into the sunshine, the water poured out from between the jaws of the scoop, they were lowered very gently and spilled out onto the deck of a smart little steamer.



VIII. THE DANGEROUS ELECTRIC EEL

SPARKY crawled out from under the shells and ooze and flapping fish as fast as he could. The Blue Crab lay on its back, kicking violently.

“I suppose this is another of those things your men friends do to amuse themselves. There’s no peace anywhere any more!” he grumbled to Sparky.

The squids were staring with their big eyes wide open and moving their tentacles feebly, and the Electric Eel was thrashing about. Sparky was brushing the slime off himself and thinking how fine it was to be up in the sunlight again when he felt himself caught by the neck and held up before the eyes of a tall thin man in glasses.

“Let me go, let me go,” cried Sparky. “You’re pinching me. I’ll spark you if you do it any more.”

He sent a spark at the man’s hand but the spark just bounded back; and then he saw that the man was wearing rubber gloves.

“What kind of an animal are you?” the man



asked, staring as though he couldn't believe what he saw.

"I'm not an animal at all. I wouldn't *be* an animal. I'm a wireless picture that got in over the radio. I'm a spark that came down the string of Mr. Benjamin Franklin's kite, that's what I am. I haven't got any name but Sparky-for-Short."

And wet as he was he began to dance up and down in the man's hand and sing:

"Sparky for short—Sparky for long,

"Sparky for Sunday and Sparky for Monday,

"Sparky for nighttime and Sparky for day,

"Sparky for work and Sparky for play."

All the men who were on the deck of the steamer gathered around him.

"He's the funniest specimen yet," said the tall man in glasses.

"I'm not a specimen, I'm not," shouted Sparky.

"How did you get to the bottom of the ocean then?"

"I blew out, and the island I lit on was a whale, and when it dived I followed the Blue Crab, and

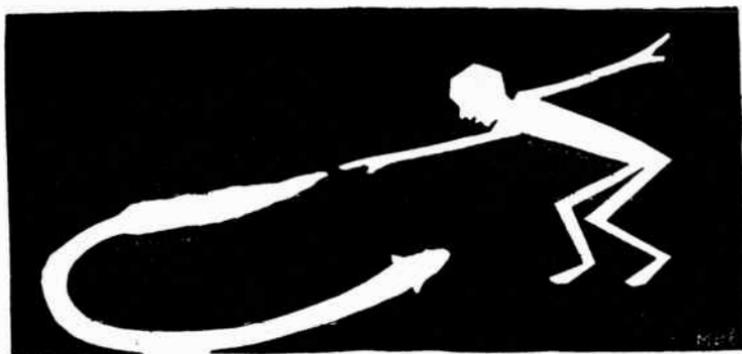


we couldn't find the Gulf Stream, and the submarine *X-A* came up the Hudson Gorge, and then your old scoop brought me up. There! You can see right away I'm not a specimen."

"You certainly aren't like anything else that came up in that haul," said the tall thin man, and then he dropped Sparky and jumped and yelled and started up the rigging. And everybody else but Sparky ran to the sides of the ship or got behind the mast or on the top of the cabin, for the Electric Eel had squirmed out from under the pile of shells and ooze and flapping fishes and was thrashing from side to side like a whip that was alive and had a bad temper. It lashed about and whenever its tail hit any one's leg there was a flash and a bang and the man jumped and yelled.

"Kill it, shoot it, hit it with a belaying pin," cried the men who were on the deck.

"Don't hurt it," cried the tall man in glasses from high up in the rigging. "It's the first Electric Eel we've brought up. Catch it quick or it'll go overboard."



But though the men all had their insulated gloves on, no one was wearing rubber boots and so no one was anxious to try and catch it, for the Electric Eel was a very sly eel indeed. It would lash its tail to one side and the men would jump and the sparks would fly; it would lash the other way and the men there would jump and run. Only Sparky stood his ground. He was almost dry now and full of courage.

“Don’t you know how to behave any better than that?” Sparky said to the Electric Eel. “They’ll be calling you a Specimen in another minute, and quite right, too!”

“Who are you?” asked the Electric Eel, sticking out his lower jaw. “What are you butting in for? You’re no bigger than a child,” and he prepared to lash at Sparky.

But Sparky leaned forward and touched him on the tip of his tail where he kept his battery. There was a flash and a crash and the Electric Eel fell flat on the deck with tears in his eyes.

“You can catch him now,” said Sparky proudly;



“he’s only got electricity in his tail and he won’t have any to spare for a long, long time to come.”

So the men picked up the Electric Eel who was very limp, and hadn’t a word to say, and put him in a tank of water.

“What did you do to him?” asked the tall thin man in glasses, as he came down from the rigging.

“Oh, he was a positive Eel, very positive, indeed, anyone could see that, so I just gave him a negative spark to use up his positive electricity. It’ll take him a long time to be as positive as he was just a little while ago.”

The Eel put his head up out of the tank. There were still tears in his eyes.

“I’d been down in the bottom of the sea for nearly a year storing up that electricity and you’ve taken it all out of me. Now I might just as well not be an Electric Eel at all,” and he sank limply back into the tank.

“We’re very much obliged to you,” said the tall man to Sparky.



But Sparky paid no attention. He was listening to something which nobody else heard.

“What do you hear?” asked the tall thin man.

“It’s a wireless message. I haven’t got it all yet,” said Sparky.

“Our wireless operator is taking his afternoon nap, so there’s no way of telling what it is,” said the man.

“I can get it in a minute,” said Sparky. “I can get wireless as easy as anything. I used to carry wireless messages around myself.”

All the men kept very still while Sparky listened to the wireless. The first message was from Mr. Byrd to tell them how a whale had come to see him at the South Pole—and the tall man in glasses said how wonderful it was that Sparky could subdue the Electric Eel and take wireless messages too. Sparky was delighted. Nobody had ever told him he was wonderful before. The second message was from Mr. Andrews to tell them that he had found another egg that the dinosaur had laid in China hundreds and thousands and millions of years ago—and all



the men said how glad and proud they were to have Sparky with them when he could take wireless messages without waiting for the operator to wake up. And Sparky was happier than ever for no one had ever admired him or said “thank you” to him before. He listened and listened for the third message but when it came he didn’t want to tell them what it was for it told how the Lost Boy’s wireless picture had been stolen and asked anyone who saw it please to send it back so that he could be found. Sparky was afraid that they would see that he had taken the Lost Boy’s picture for himself, and if they called him a thief it would be worse than their calling him an animal or a specimen. So he said:

“It isn’t much of a message; you wouldn’t care about it.”

“Why not?”

“It’s just about—oh, nothing much.”

“Better tell us, Sparky—oh, here’s the Wireless Operator waked up from his nap. He can tell us what it is.”



The tall man in glasses called to the Wireless Operator to hurry before the message got away. Sparky saw that in just another minute he would be telling them about the Lost Boy's picture, so he caught one little knob on the wireless and turned it backward, and another and turned it forward, and pulled out a screw and pushed in a wire. There was a flash and a crash and then silence.

"The wireless is broken—who did it?" asked the operator.

The men pointed at Sparky and the operator snatched at him, but the sun had made him quite dry by now and he walked up into the air again.



IX. THE LONG, LONG WALK

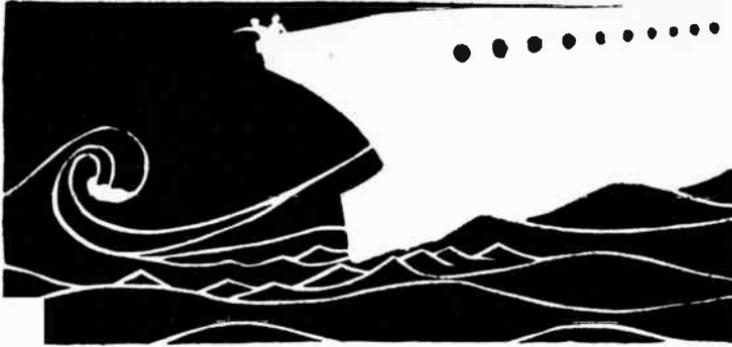
WHEN Sparky was high enough up in the air, he looked this way and that way to see where he was; but all that he saw was the sea and the sky and all that he heard was the waves and the wind.

“I’m just as much lost as the Lost Boy is, and if I don’t get back to New York he won’t be found either. I never knew how bad it was to be lost before. I don’t even know which way to go.”

Sparky couldn’t stand still—you can’t in the air—so he started walking, and he walked and he walked and he walked.

Suddenly, way off on the line where the sea meets the sky, he saw what looked like a little gray feather. It grew higher and blacker and he saw that it was the smoke of a steamer.

But the ship was in a very great hurry. She came so fast that she cut through the waves in front of her before they had time to break into foam, so fast that she left her smoke far behind her in a thick black veil, so fast that Sparky couldn’t get near enough to jump on board.



“Oh stop the ship! *Please* stop the ship! Just wait a minute for me!” he shouted as loud as he could.

Two ladies were leaning over the rail and one of them said to the other:

“Isn’t some one calling for us to stop?”

“I hear a voice,” the other answered, “but all I see is a piece of paper blowing in the wind.”

The ship had hurried by but Sparky called again:

“Oh stop the ship! *Please* stop the ship! Just wait a minute for me!”

Nobody heard him, the ship went on, and he walked and he walked and he walked.

“I wish I could find a place to rest for a moment!” he said.

Just then he saw something on the top of the water. It was the shape of a washbowl, as clear as glass and the color of a sunset cloud. He stepped down upon it very gently so that he wouldn’t make a spark and found that it was soft under his feet and trimmed with ruffles all around.

“Who are you?” asked Sparky.



It began to wave its ruffles and swin through the water but it didn't answer.

“Where are you going?” asked Sparky.

It kept fluttering its ruffles and said nothing at all.

“You might answer when you're spoken to!” Sparky was angry and stamped his foot.

Then all the ruffles stopped fluttering, little waves came up over the edges and Sparky had just time to spring into the air before it went down under the water and out of sight.

“Now why did that fellow do that? Why didn't he answer when I spoke to him? I don't think he was very polite.”

There was nothing for Sparky to do but walk on—and he walked and he walked and he walked.

He was getting so tired that he thought he would have to go down into the Hudson Gorge again, when he noticed that the water below him looked as though it were beginning to boil, and popping up through the waves came a school of flying fish. Quick as a wink Sparky was on the back of



one of them and dashing along at a great rate.

“You don’t mind giving me a lift, do you?” he asked the fish. “I’m very tired and I’ve a long way to go yet.”

“Don’t mention it!” said the fish.

“I want to go to New York,” said Sparky.

“Never heard of it,” said the fish. “It’s probably on the land somewhere and I have to go into the water again as soon as we shake that shark that’s following us. Can you see if he’s still there?”

“Somebody large and gray with his mouth way under his chin is coming along just behind,” said Sparky.

“Then I’ll have to fly faster,” said the fish. “If I don’t he’ll eat me.”

“The omnivorous Ostrich wanted to eat me,” said Sparky. “Does being eaten hurt?”

“Well,” said the fish, “I haven’t been eaten yet so I can’t say positively, but I’m pretty sure to be eaten sometime. I could tell you about it afterward.”



“Thank you for telling me,” said Sparky. “I was riding with somebody else a little while ago but he wasn’t as polite as you are.”

“What did he do?” asked the fish.

“He wouldn’t answer when I spoke to him. He was round and soft and pink and he ruffled himself when he swam.”

“Oh, that was the jellyfish. He hasn’t any ears to hear you with or any mouth to answer you with, so what could he do but keep still and swim? I don’t think he intended to be rude—a jellyfish never intends anything,” said the fish. “What did you do to him?”

“I stamped on his back and he went under.”

“Well, I’m going under in about a minute, so you’d better get off and walk if you don’t want to get wet.”

Sparky had just time to put his feet down firmly on the air before the little fish dived into a wave. Sparky walked on saying to himself:

“I hate to get off and walk at sea!

“My feet get wet and the waves hit me,



“The spray flies higher than I can see

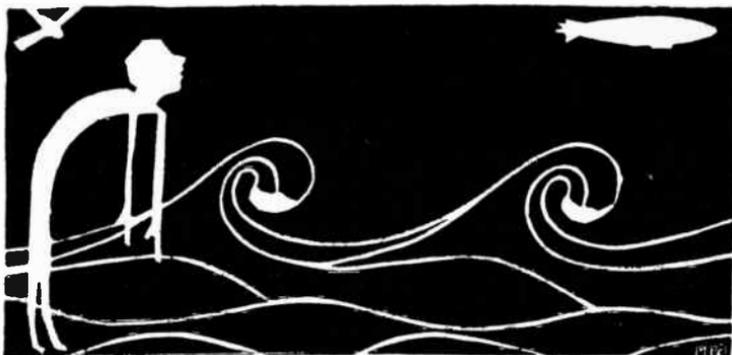
“But nobody comes to rescue me—

“So I’ll have to get off and walk!””

And he walked and he walked and he walked.

He was getting very tired when he heard a soft droning that grew to a great buzzing like a giant bumblebee settling down into a peony, and there way in the east was a tiny spot in the sky. It came nearer till it looked like a silver fish and the buzzing grew to a throbbing, and the throbbing grew to a roaring, and the silver fish became a silver whale and the silver whale became a Zeppelin booming by overhead. Sparky shouted and waved his arms but the great Zeppelin became no bigger than a silver whale again, and the silver whale shrunk to a silver fish, and the silver fish faded to a tiny speck, and the roaring sank to a throbbing and then to a buzzing and a faint droning and the Zeppelin was gone.

“How mean of him not to stop for me,” sobbed Sparky. “Now I’ll have to keep walking on forever or else drop into the ocean and get wet. But I



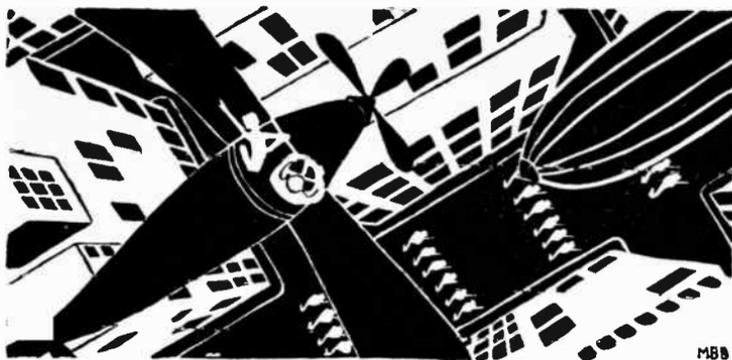
won't go back to the Hudson Gorge with no one to talk to but the cross Blue Crab! I won't!"

So he walked and he walked and he walked.

Sparky was getting discouraged. Nobody would help him and he was very tired. He was almost ready to give up when he heard a sound he knew. There in the sky was Albert giving his airplane its constitutional.

"Albert—Albert—Albert, come and get me quick!" he shouted.

Albert looked over the side of his plane and saw Sparky. Then he came sliding down on a long slant of air and took him aboard.



X. WHEN THE X-A STAYED DOWN

WHEN Albert and Sparky got back to Fifth Avenue there were bands playing and men marching and people standing on the sidewalks to see.

“What is it?” asked Sparky.

“It’s a procession in honor of the man who sent a spark around the world.”

“Pshaw! I used to go round the world without having to be sent at all,” said Sparky. “Let’s look at the procession.”

“This isn’t the kind of airplane that will stand still in the air without anything to tie it to. I have to keep going all the time. If I stop we drop.”

So they began to go round and round in a circle. Then right above the Avenue came the Great Zeppelin shining like silver and zooming along slow and contented. It had come clear across the ocean to be part of this procession and it had got here just in time. A man in the Zeppelin was broadcasting greetings to the man who had sent the spark round the world and the people in the streets listened and cheered. Then he told them that a boy had been



lost and that his wireless picture had been stolen out of the air, and would everybody please look around and see if they could find it

Sparky saw that Albert was looking at him very closely.

“See here, Sparky, don’t you know what became of that wireless picture? Aren’t you that wireless picture yourself?”

Sparky was very much frightened. He didn’t know what Albert would do to him. Every time a man had caught him he had shut him up—and there was nothing that Sparky hated like being shut up. So before Albert could get hold of him he stepped over the side of the airplane and walked down on the air. When he got near the sidewalk he heard somebody call:

*“Sparky for short—Sparky for long,
“Sparky for Sunday and Sparky for Monday,
“Sparky for nighttime and Sparky for day,
“Sparky for work and Sparky for play.”*

And there on the sidewalk were Jane and Bo looking up at him.



“Come and take us air walking again,” called Jane.

“Take us air walking,” begged Bo. “Albert took us home but we came out to see the big parade.”

“Let me see your insulation,” said Sparky as he fluttered down beside them.

“It’s just the way it was,” said Jane.

“It’s coming loose on Bo’s legs, though,” said Sparky as he patted it down over the top of Bo’s rubbers. “Now step on this dry spot and I’ll cut gravitation off from the soles of your feet!—There! As soon as your toes begin to tingle we’ll start.—All right Bo? Then give me your hand.”

Sparky pulled and tugged and they stepped high and hard. Bo came loose from the sidewalk and in a moment Jane got both feet off the ground, Bo put up his umbrella and the three of them walked up on the air and over toward the Hudson River. When they had almost reached the river Sparky began to quiver and strain as a dog does when he sees a bird.



“Wait, wait! I hear it! It’s coming this way!” he cried.

“What is it?” asked Bo.

“It’s a wireless message, from down deep at the bottom of the river.”

Jane and Bo waited as still as they could in the air, but you can’t stand very still when you haven’t anything solid to put your feet on. They couldn’t hear what Sparky was listening to. All they could hear was the steaming and puffing and whistling and splashing of the steamboats and ferryboats, battleships, and barges and tugs and the spluttering of one little speed boat that sat up like a dog and waved its long tail of spray.

“Oh, goody, goody, goody,” cried Sparky. “It’s that mean old submarine *X-A* that made such a draught in the water coming up through the Hudson Gorge. It has sat down on the bottom of the river and the captain can’t make it get up. The people in it have to come right up through the middle of the river—come quick and we’ll see them.”



So they walked on the air till they came to a spot right over the submarine. Sparky got more and more excited over the messages that kept coming up from the submarine and pretty soon the other submarines in the harbor began to answer that the people mustn't try to get out till they got there, and the airplanes sent word from Long Island and from Staten Island and New Jersey to say they'd be there in a minute. Jane and Bo didn't hear these messages. Sparky told them. But so many messages coming up from the river and in from the flying fields made the air so rough that they had a hard time keeping on their feet. They were balancing and teetering and swinging about, when suddenly a submarine popped out of the water right below them.

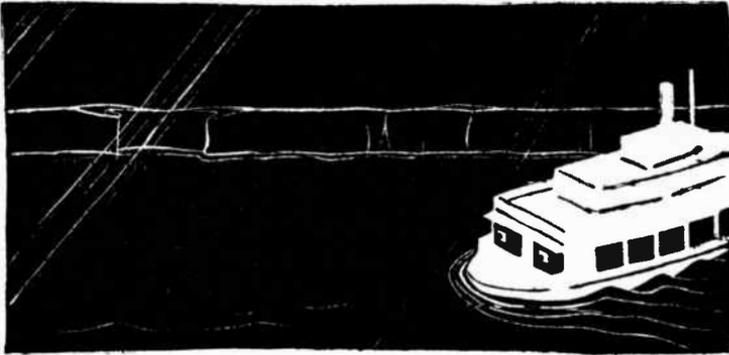
The top was just covered with people—sailors and engineers and cooks and officers and pilots and wireless operators—the funniest people that you ever saw, for each one had on a safety lung all full of air that fitted over his nose and mouth and made him look like the beetles you find in the garden.



The captain had given a safety lung to each one of them as they came out of the submarine and told them to keep their noses shut and breathe through their mouths till they got to the top.

The airplanes were roaring around overhead by this time and Albert, who was in the first one, swooped down over the submarine and caught up some of the people that were on it—sailors and engineers and cooks and officers and pilots and wireless operators—and then the submarine went down for another load. Other submarines began popping up all around them and the airplanes came down like a flock of very big birds and took the people to the shore. It was so exciting that Jane and Bo never noticed how dark it was for so early in the day till Sparky stopped and listened with his hand to his ear.

“Oh, Jane—oh, Bo!” he cried, “we must get back to land as soon as we can, for the weather man is broadcasting that it’s going to rain and if our insulation gets wet it won’t be any good and we’ll fall down into the water.



They started for the wharf but so many wireless messages were hitting against them and bouncing off and then coming on again, and the air was so very soft that they couldn't go very fast. The drops began to fall one or two at a time while they were still far out over the deep water and they began to come faster and faster and thicker and thicker, and Jane and Sparky had a hard time keeping their feet above the river. Finally, Sparky called to Jane:

"Take hold of Bo's foot—his umbrella keeps his insulation dry. You take hold of him and I'll take hold of you."

So Jane caught hold of Bo's foot and Sparky caught hold of her foot and they only kept just above the water. They thought they would surely drop into the waves when they noticed a ferryboat coming over from Hoboken.

"Please let us ride with you," Sparky called to the passengers who were leaning over the side. "We're getting all wet and we don't want to drop into the river. Please wait a minute for us!"

One of the passengers ran and told the captain



of the boat and the captain stopped the engine and the man who plays the accordion reached over the side and caught Bo's hand and pulled them all onto the deck together.

"I'll have to collect five cents from each of you," said the ticket man. "You got on without paying your fare and that's against the rules."

"But we haven't any money," said Jane. "You don't have to pay for it when you go walking on the air."

"I'll give you each five cents," said the man with the accordion. "I brought you on board so of course I ought to pay your fare."

He gave them each five cents and when they had thanked him politely they gave it to the ticket man.



XI. THE LOST BOY IS FOUND

WHEN they had left the ferry boat and got quite dry, Sparky and Jane and Bo walked up into the air again and crossed Fifth Avenue high above the tops of the automobiles.

“When we get to our street we better stop walking on the air, I guess. Mother always tells us to stay on the sidewalk and we haven’t stayed on it hardly a tall,” said Jane. “We’re almost home now, and I expect we’d better,” she continued after a long silence.

They came down from the air and walked along the sidewalk the way they did before Sparky insulated them.

“We don’t go fast,” commented Bo.

“But we’re going home,” explained Jane.

“We did a lot of things, didn’t we, Jane?”

None of them spoke and they walked slower and slower.

“If Sparky hadn’t been here, we wouldn’t of—would we, Jane?”

“No, we wouldn’t of, would we, Bo?”



“Why don’t you go and find the Lost Boy now?” suggested Jane.

“Why don’t you go now—’cause we’ve done a lot of things?”

This made poor Sparky very sad, for though he was only as thick as a sheet of paper there was room for feelings inside him.

“If I were a real boy you wouldn’t treat me like this!” he wailed. “And I can’t go back now. I can’t get back onto the wireless again if you don’t let me out through your radio. Oh, you’re so unkind to me! You don’t want to play with me any more!”

They had come now to 422 East Avenue and the janitor was standing on the steps looking up the street and the elevator man was standing on the steps looking down the street and while their backs were turned the children ran in quickly and up the stairs and around the corners till they came to their own door.

“I guess we better not play with you any more, Sparky,” said Jane. “I expect Mother wouldn’t



let us play with anybody who took things that didn't belong to him—anyway not till he gave them back—I expect she would! She'd tell a real boy to go where they sent him and do what they told him, I expect!"

Sparky sat down flat on the floor and cried.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Then I'd have to go around carrying wireless messages for other people all the time. I'd never have any one to play with or any fun!"

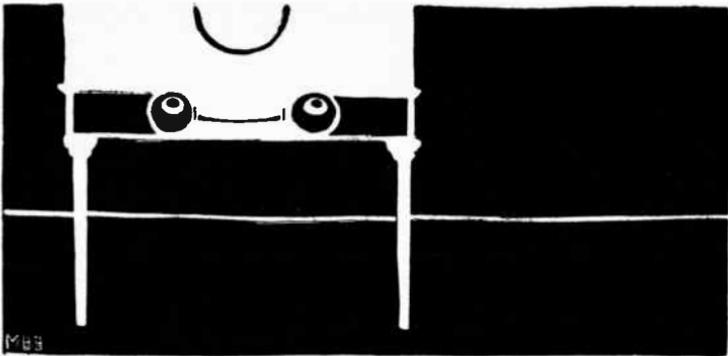
"After you gave them the picture you could come back, couldn't you? We could open the radio and you could get in again."

"After the Lost Boy is found?" asked Sparky hopefully.

"Oh yes we could open it wide! But if you did what a real boy would do you'd be almost like a real boy I expect, and a real boy could come in at the door."

Sparky picked himself up from the floor and dried his eyes.

"I guess I better try anyway. Maybe I'll never



be anything but a spark again, but maybe I will be like a real boy.”

They all went to the radio and began to turn and push the little knobs. Sometimes they got a lady singing and sometimes they got a man talking and sometimes static howled at them, but they kept on trying to get two stations together till Jane cried out:

“Look! There goes Sparky!”

They saw the dots and dashes that made Sparky’s eyes and hands and all the rest of him growing fainter and fainter, and the picture fading and fading. Soon there was nothing left but a sheet of paper with nothing on it but 422 East Avenue. And the paper grew smaller and smaller till it was the size of mother’s best note paper.

Bo began to whimper when he saw that Sparky was really gone, and as soon as Jane had put the paper carefully back in mother’s desk she wiped the tears from his eyes.

They both jumped when the door bell rang, but it was only the man with the evening paper.



“Oh, Jane—look—look!” cried Bo, pointing to the front page.

There was a row of big letters across the top and Jane spelled out slowly, “LOST BOY IS FOUND.” Then her eyes followed Bo’s finger to a picture in the middle of the page.

“See, Jane, it’s him!” cried Bo.

Jane bent over the picture.

“It’s Sparky!” she cried. “And now that he’s a real boy perhaps he’ll come back to play with us!”

