

## Q&A with Sands Hetherington

What inspired you to write the Night Buddies series?

**My son John and I had been kicking the red crocodile character (his invention) around at bedtime for as much as a year, and one night while we were doing this it just came to me. At first it was one book, not a series.**

Many parents have nighttime reading rituals with their kids. What was yours?

**I don't know that it rose to ritual level. We'd just get in John's bed at bedtime and I'd read. Eclectic stuff. After maybe twenty minutes he'd have had enough and the lights would go out and that was that. John was a good sleeper.**

How did you come up with the titles of the first two books in the series?

**My editor/publicist advised me that we needed a series look to the books and that the titles should have subtitles that were descriptive. So we looked for some of the main props in each title (e.g. cheesecakes for the first, and impostors and the flying machine for the second) and that was how they came about. Then, organically, the subtitles became part of the main title, Night Buddies.**

Where are the stories set? Apparently, it's New York City, but you don't specify it in the books. Why not? **It's fantasy and I didn't want to particularize it.**

**I realize it has NYC aspects but I just wanted any big city like Superman's Gotham. I read somewhere that fiction has the advantage of presenting universal things rather than the merely particular, so who was I to argue?**

Tell us a little bit about the characters in your second book. How did they come about? How did you come up with the characters of Fast Fanny, Lonnie, and Ronald Ogelsby, for instance?

**I started Fanny out as a pushy, somewhat stereotypical woman car salesman. She definitely stays pushy, but when I needed her later in the main action, I had to give her more talents: mechanic and consummate service-after-the-sale exemplar. I put Lonnie out there so Crosley would have a pineapple cheesecake stand to visit. Basically, Lonnie's just a big,**

**colorful doofus who is there for the Iguana Gang to victimize, among other things. With Rodney, I surely needed someone to have the sauerkraut and jellybean hot dog cart (that was essential to the plot), and I simply wanted another colorful minor character. To flesh him out I tried to give him a bit of a Scottish accent, and make him fat and irascible, and let him be a racing blimp aficionado, as well as giving him a significant part in the action as it turned out.**

**Why did you make Crosley the Crocodile red?**

**I didn't. John (around the age of six) came up with a red crocodile named Crosley. Everybody thought this was so cute, and when I subsequently thought to do a book, it remained to me to figure out why he was red (water allergy, Black Bottom, antidotes side-effect). Once I did this, everything started falling into place.**

**How come John doesn't have a middle name?**

**A family conceit. My kid really doesn't. I thought it would be cute to work it into the story. (With a surname like Degraffenreidt/Hetherington, who needs a middle name? This is addressed in the book. Crosley doesn't even have a surname and this is addressed.)**

**When Crosley gets wet, he does the Black Bottom dance. Where does this dance come from?**

**Popularized in the 20's by Tin Pan Alley. Started well before this by semi-urban southern blacks. The name probably came from a black section in Atlanta.**

**What was the hardest part of writing your first book?**

**A tough one. I think Virginia Woolfe called it "making the first stroke."**

**What were the challenges in bringing the stories to life?**

**Mainly sitting down and doing it. Stuff comes out easily enough. A great deal of it isn't any good and has to be done over and over and then still isn't any good and that's certainly a challenge.**

What would you like kids to take away from reading your books?

**Just excitement and fun. If it gets them to want to read more and more, that would be great too.**

What do you do when you're not writing?

**I keep house and hang out with my longtime companion Ann and the dogs. I also work out at the gym and travel and complain about the state of American politics.**