

## A conversation between Jon Klassen and his editor, Liz Bicknell



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**Liz:** It's a bit dizzying to remember that only seven months ago we were waiting for *I Want My Hat Back* to be published, and now the book is a number-one *New York Times* bestseller! How does a person even take that in? How do you feel when you wake up in the mornings?

**Jon:** It's crazy! There's a line in a one poem about treating both success and failure as impostors, or something. I have been trying to keep myself in check about doing that, because it comes in handy when things don't go as well, but I will say that this impostor is a pretty nice one to have around.

**Liz:** Working with you is a little bit like hearing a good joke or watching a great movie; I have this instinctive faith in your work and know I need to keep quiet until you feel done. It's only when we get working on a book that I start pulling everything apart and mentally repacking it. It seems to me that you work very instinctively yourself. Do you think so?

**Jon:** These are very nice questions. I have learned that I am really bad at reading people and trying to calculate what might be wanted of me and working to that. It always looks forced and awkward. So the only other option is to try to not think about that and do what you like and see how it adds up outside when it's done. At the very least you end up with something you yourself kind of like, and if it tanks, you can go down with a ship that you recognize.

**Liz:** I love those moments when we discover something we have in common—like our enjoyment of spot-the-difference puzzles—but one thing I do not share with you, I admit, is a fascination with headgear. What is it with you and hats?

**Jon:** I like them! They organize things for me, I guess. And they are superfluous, most of the time, so they work nicely for stories like these where the characters make such a big deal out of having one. There's no real practical reason to have a hat, so then it just becomes about the character loving it. It's the only reason he wants it. So then it's kind of a love story, and so you know how you want it to end.

**Liz:** OK, so, since *I Want My Hat Back* is the first book that you both wrote and illustrated, how did you feel about being (oh-so-gently) edited? Was it what you expected?

**Jon:** It was much gentler than I expected. I was very nervous to write something. Writing is so hard. I thought there was a chance the text would be torn apart, and I was grateful that you got the tone of it right away and took it into account in the (gentle) editing. It's the hardest thing to try to explain tonal things, and I was so relieved that we never needed that. We skipped right over into a really nice spot where we could discuss things inside it.

**Liz:** We haven't really talked about your second book yet, but I think it would be fair to say that . . . it does feature a hat thief, doesn't it?

**Jon:** Yes. But a different thief, and a different hat.



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