

SUNDAY

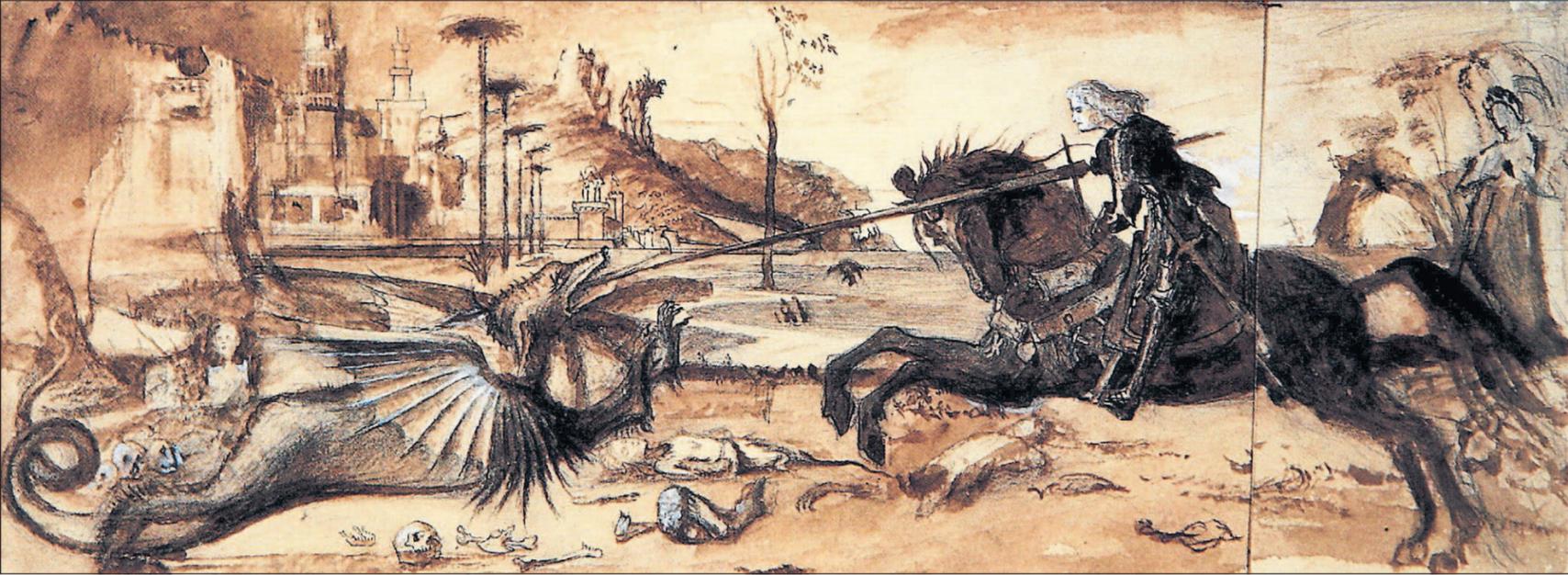
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## LIFESTYLE

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John Ruskin's 1872 study of St. George and the Dragon is shown.

## GENIUS IN THE MAKING

BY LAURA HUNT ANGEL

Now that school is out, it's time to focus, take vacations and relax as much as possible. Even though most of us have jobs to attend to, we can always mix in a little fun in our spare time. You might even discover something new and special that your young ones have picked up during this past school year. Or, perhaps it's something that's been there all along and you just never noticed.

## SMARTY PANTS

There is a line of youngsters in our clan that could effortlessly pass between this world and the world of Miss Peregrine's Home For Peculiar Children. Our father was definitely one of them, as was our Great Uncle Spencer Melton, whom you may have heard tell of. I'm sure there were several before him as well, and my Aaron (also known as the only child in the universe who ever cried for brussels sprouts) was one of them, too.

This is not by any means meant as a brag, for Aaron was my first and only child, and I simply assumed that all children were born this way. It was only later, as he approached high school that I began to understand how special my little boy was. I still regret not having treasured the brief span of time when I made up a big part of his world a little more.

Fortunately, that short time with my own gifted child helped me to become aware of other gifted children more easily. Soon after they were born, it became obvious to me that also following in my father's footsteps are my brother's two boys Joey and William. At the time, my brother and his family lived with our folks, and my mother enjoyed very much spoiling her grandsons. William, the youngest boy, was called "baby" so often that for the first few years of his life he thought it was actually his name. Shortly before kindergarten, his mother started getting him used to his real name, a revelation he was delighted with.

## TODDLER PROFILING

Early on, I could tell that brother Joe's William was going to be a bright one. It was as if somebody took the Greek poet, Homer, a dab of Merlin the Magnificent, a dash of Plato and stuffed the result into the body of an infant. William had only been walking a few months, but could easily pick up on the nuances of conversation and body language. No matter how mundane or profound a thought, nearly everything he said was spoken with an even, matter-of-fact tone that required focused listening.

I was sitting at the dining room table and William, clad in nothing more than a diaper, was standing on the chair next to me. I could see that this one was going to be very much like my father, his grandfather. Not so much in appearance, for by his big feet and sturdy frame it was clear that William was going to



Photos by Laura Hunt Angel

**Above:** Don't let the cream cheese icing fool you, carrot cake breakfast cookies are loaded with carrots, apples and oats. **Below:** Nut butter breakfast cookies are a healthy and yummy breakfast option for picky youngsters.



be a large man one day. He did, however, have the same shock of unruly corn silk hair, but it was his thoughtful, serious nature that made him most like my father.

We were playing a simple game where I would name a food and William would say which ones he liked. His responses were mostly a simple yes, no or a brief explanation, such as, "I don't like cow-fee (coffee), but my Nana does." Though he was staring intently at the lace-covered windows across from us, the half smile on his face told me that he was enjoying the game.

When I named beans, however, he ruefully shook his head and replied, "I can't like beans."

"You can't?" I asked.

"No, I can't like beans."

He had tried to like them, he said, but just couldn't.

"It's ok," I told him, rubbing his smooth little back. "Don't worry about it."

## HUGS AND CUDDLES

Before long, our serious William was becoming aware of the different relationships between his family members, apart from himself. I found this to be amazing; I'm sure I was much older before I considered that my family related to one another in a way completely separate from me. Yet, William was already learning that his father was also my brother, and that his grandmother was our mother. As

a way of organizing his thoughts, he began referring to us by our relationships to each other instead of by our names. He would look at one of us and, with his customarily quiet poker-face, say something like, "Your brother is outside working on the car," or, "Your mother is in the kitchen feeding the cat."

We generally met William's earnestness with equanimity. Our sober expressions were challenged one evening, however, when bedtime rolled around. My mother had two large comfy couches in her front room, and while visiting I usually slept on one and hubby Chuck on the other. As we pulled up the covers and bid each other goodnight, William quietly crept out of his bedroom and whispered to Chuck, "Is it OK if I cuddle with your wife?"

## PROOF

## Dragons

By William J. Hunt, age 9

Well I win. They have found proof of dragons, and I have learned a lot more about them. In the 15th century, they in fact did exist. Males were rare, I guess, but they did live did you know, in [and] they were friends with the human race. Then the dragons had no food in their habitat, so they stole sheep.

In fact, their wings were too tiny to fly, so their blaters [bladders] produced hydrogen which made

them lighter. Not to mention their skeleton is exactly like a bird's. You see, birds with normal skeletons could not fly, (I guess that has to add up a penguin. They have normal bones and their wings are not able to fly,) but they [dragons] did live.

When the meteorite hit earth that caused dinosaurs to die, you see, the dragons went underwater and adapted to the water. So, their fire flap thing that protects their neck is exactly the same as a crocodile, so they evolved into underwater dragons.

After that, some of the dragons went up to land to evolve into other dragons. The first is the Chinese dragon and the other [is] the natural dragon or, as the 14th century people called it, the mountain devil. So after that, they evolved into others and others, 'till now. But they have no proof if they exist now, but I say they do because one type of dragon evolved into another, which makes more than 1,500 species of dragons, so I wouldn't be surprised if they lived now. So do I win? I say yes.

I for one say yes, William, you do win.

## THE RECIPES

Breakfast cookies. Yep, it's a thing. A batch of either of these recipes will provide several days of breakfast for your little Einsteins, so you can spend more time enjoying their company over summer break. Chocolate chips for breakfast? Pure genius.

## Nut Butter Chocolate Chip Breakfast Cookies

These morning gems are gluten free as long as you ensure that the oats are labeled as such, and can be easily made sugar free. I have not tried using a nut butter substitute such as Biscoff Spread, but since it works for other cookie recipes it should work here for those with nut allergies.

½ cup coconut oil  
½ cup maple syrup (or sugar free syrup)

2 eggs

1 teaspoon vanilla

1 teaspoon baking soda

1 cup nut butter (I chose cashew, but any will do)

2 ½ cups oats

½ cup dark chocolate chips (or more to your liking)

¼ cup sunflower seeds

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Spray a cookie sheet with non stick spray.

Cream together the coconut oil and maple syrup in a large bowl. Blend in the eggs, vanilla and baking soda, then add the nut butter and blend thoroughly. Add the oats, chocolate chips and sunflower seeds, working them in with a wooden spoon or your hands to ensure all is well combined.

Drop by heaping spoonfuls onto the cookie sheet. Bake for 10 minutes, or until barely browned around the edges. Makes about 1 dozen big cookies.

## Carrot Cake Breakfast Cookies

This is my riff on Kristin Marr's version from her blog, Live Simply. I made them a little sweeter and topped them with a glob of cream cheese icing, because who am I kidding? Carrot cake is really just a flavor enhanced platform for getting the cream cheese to your mouth.

You may want to use a mixer with a paddle attachment to mix these; I just used my hands.

½ cup (1 stick) butter

1/3 cup maple syrup

¼ cup brown sugar

2 eggs

1 ½ cups old fashioned oats

1 cup whole wheat flour

2 teaspoons cinnamon

1 teaspoon baking soda

1 cup grated carrots (about 2 medium carrots)

1 finely diced apple (about 1 cup)

½ cup chopped pecans, optional

½ cup coconut, sweetened or unsweetened

## Cream Cheese Icing

8 oz cream cheese, softened

¼ cup butter, softened

1 teaspoon vanilla

4 cups powdered sugar or Stevia for baking

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Spray a large cookie sheet with non-stick spray.

In a large bowl, blend together the butter, maple syrup and eggs. Add the oats, whole wheat, baking soda and cinnamon and blend on low speed, or with hands until well combined. Mix in the carrots, apple and coconut. Divide the dough into 15 golf ball-sized balls and place on the cookie sheet. Wet your fingers and flatten the cookies somewhat. Bake for about 13 minutes, or until the cookies are set. Let cookies cool before icing.

For the icing: In a medium bowl, stir together the icing ingredients and then whip until light and fluffy. This makes plenty of icing, so frost each cookie with as much or as little as you prefer. You'll need to store these super moist cookies in the fridge. Variation: for a less sweet cookie spread with plain whipped cream cheese. Makes 15 cookies.