



## **It Was a Dark and Stormy Night (Viking Kestrel picture books)**

*By Allan Ahlberg, Janet Ahlberg*

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After being kidnapped by outlaws, Antonio, an eight-year old boy is asked to tell them a story which he makes up as he goes along.

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### Editorial Review

#### From Publishers Weekly

Meticulously meshing words and pictures, the Ahlbergs ( *The Jolly Postman* ) present an unusually witty yarn-within-a-yarn. Dozing while tending his family's goats, eight-year-old Antonio is kidnapped by a band of brigands and their bored chief, who demands that the boy tell a story to pass the time during, yes, a dark and stormy night. A rather rude bunch, the rogues keep interrupting Antonio (whose tale features these very brigands), heavily editing his narrative ("No crocodiles or sharks--no jaws!"; "No Brussels sprouts!"). With a good-natured "Right-o!," the lad repeatedly starts over. Eventually Antonio tells of a "Thingy" lurking in a castle moat who is about to do in the chief and his cronies. As this distresses them greatly, the boy wisely switches his plot to "something pleasant": a lavish banquet followed by a treasure hunt. But when Antonio's tale has the chief demanding all of the booty, the fictional brigands protest loudly--much to the chagrin of the real brigands, who fear their master's wrath. Mayhem ensues, leading to a very clever finale. As always, Janet Ahlberg's delightfully detailed art offers youngsters lots to look at--and to laugh at. Ages 7-10.

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#### From [Booklist](#)

Ages 5-8. Captured by brigands, taken to their mountain cave, and ordered to tell a story, a plucky lad named Antonio entertains his captors with a tale that captivates the childlike chief and his band of dim-witted desperadoes. Led into acting out the story, the brainless brigands eventually fall into such confusion that Antonio escapes and returns to his loving family. Rather like Colin McNaughton's *Jolly Roger* (1988) in its spacious format and humorous tone, this illustrated story offers the satisfaction of an eight-year-old outwitting a band of outlaws more silly than sinister. The large pages give plenty of space for the detailed, full-color artwork and plenty of room for the text to linger over words, words, words: "Roast potatoes . . . tons of them, all crisp and golden--and piping hot, freshly made spaghetti, tagliatelli, vermicelli, macaroni--and, best of all, perhaps, a huge tureen of delicious and enticing stew." An appealing read-aloud choice with a longer story than most picture books. *Carolyn Phelan*

#### About the Author

Allan Ahlberg, former teacher, postman, plumber's mate and gravedigger, is in the super-league of children's writers. He has published over a hundred children's books and is the author of the prize-winning *Each Peach Pear Plum* and *The Jolly Postman*. He has also written prize-winning fiction and poems for older readers. Allan lives in Bath.

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##### Meredith Butler:

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