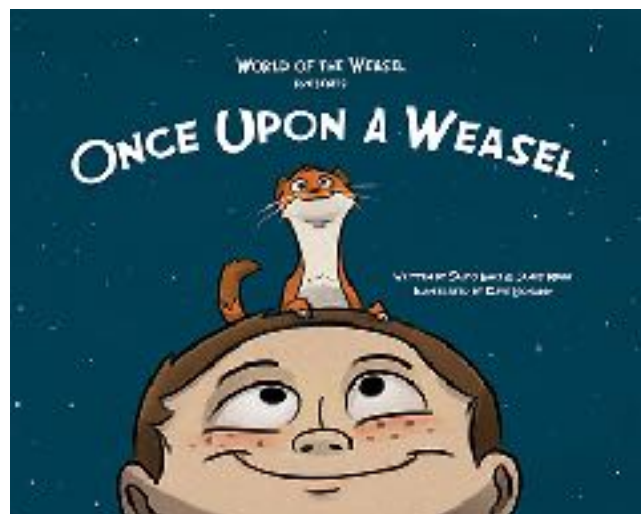


ONCE UPON A WEASEL

WRITTEN BY SALVO LAVIS AND JAMES MUNN • ILLUSTRATED BY DAVE LEONARD

Synopsis

“When I was a kid, I had a pet weasel. I think that’s a rather unusual pet for a kid to have. But I was a rather unusual kid.” Thus begins the story of a misfit boy who, in a spontaneous moment, buys a secret pet that sparks a series of fantasy adventures where the two travel through space and dream of living on the moon. Back on planet Earth, trouble arises when the boy’s pet escapes during a class field trip and turns an entire science museum upside down.



About World of the Weasel

World of the Weasel is a series of books detailing the escapades of a young boy and his loyal, unruly pet. *Once Upon a Weasel* is the first book in the series.

About the Creators

Once Upon a Weasel is a collaboration between two Los Angeles-based writers and a New York-based illustrator working to bring their first children’s book to life.

Salvo Lavis

Salvo is a writer and producer who has worked in online, video, print, and radio. He established the online brand for independent film distributor Cohen Media Group, where he directed social media Oscar campaigns for the Academy Award-nominated films *Timbuktu* and *Mustang*. He has also developed content for Disney.com and Yahoo! Entertainment. Salvo’s personal interests include math, science, and public affairs. Salvo is from Houston and lives in Los Angeles.

James Munn

James is a freelance writer and former editor at *Architectural Digest*. During his decade at the magazine, he produced celebrity home features and edited two books, *Hollywood at Home* and *Private Views*. He has contributed to *Interiors California* and *Angeleno*

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magazines and is currently editing a book on architecture and interior design. James lives in Hollywood, California.

Dave Leonard

Dave is an artist who specializes in illustration and animation. His background in design strengthens his kid-friendly characters with a charming balance of humor and technical skill. Dave's done work for clients across the United States including Nickelodeon, PBS Kids, National Geographic and ESPN. Dave lives in New York City.

Availability of *Once Upon a Weasel*

Once Upon a Weasel is available in hardcover and e-book.

Find retail information on our website at:

<http://www.worldoftheweasel.com/books/once-upon-a-weasel>

Media Assets

For sample pages and an embeddable book preview, please visit:

<http://www.worldoftheweasel.com/press>

Follow the Conversation!

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Sales and Contact Info

For inquires about *Once Upon a Weasel* or World of the Weasel, or to contact the creators, please email us at weasel@spitballstudio.com.

Author and Illustrator Q&A

What was the original idea for *Once Upon a Weasel*?

Salvo and James were co-workers first, then friends. One day they started kicking around ideas for creative projects, James had a bunch of goofy title ideas that involved weasels, and it struck Salvo that they could make for fun children's books. They said, "Let's write it." Over the course of many months, they sketched out a long story arc about a boy who gets a contraband pet weasel which leads to chaos. What they wrote was not one book but a series of books—with plenty of potential for more stories within the master story. They decided to adapt the beginning into *Once Upon a Weasel*, which became the first book in the World of the Weasel series.

How did *Once Upon a Weasel* get published?

Trying to get a book publisher for an illustrated children's book is a bizarre process. Publishers don't want to entertain your submissions unless you're represented by an agent...who don't want to represent you unless you've been published. So there's that chicken-and-egg problem. But also, since publishers want to pair authors and illustrators, they insist that manuscript submissions for illustrated children's books do not contain art or art direction. They want authors to have a comprehensive, fleshed-out idea for a story to be told in a fundamentally visual medium...*without any direction of the visuals*. It makes no sense. After sending off a few publisher queries, Salvo and James felt that waiting for a publishers to pick up the book was a fool's errand. Since James worked for years in design and Salvo worked in the movie business, they both had a strong sense of the visuals they wanted. They decided that we would produce and publish the World of the Weasel books themselves. Salvo and James established Spitball Studio as a production and publishing company for World of the Weasel (and future projects).

How did the team come together?

James and Salvo, as Spitball Studio, started a months-long process of interviewing and auditioning illustrators. Since they are in Los Angeles, they focused almost entirely on illustrators in Southern California, where they ended up meeting with some really talented, interesting, kind people. One day, as they were poking around the website Behance looking for illustrations of comical animals, they came across Dave Leonard's "[Animals By Letter](#)" portfolio piece. Something about the charm and lovability of Dave's animals was palpable, so they decided to reach out to Dave. Only thing—he lived in New York City. But after a series of emails and phone calls, they flew Dave out to LA to talk through the project, and it became clear he was to be the book's illustrator.

What's next?

Together, Salvo, James, and Dave will continue to work on new World of the Weasel books. Also, Salvo and James (under the Spitball moniker) are currently developing a couple fresh ideas for picture book and animation.

What's your favorite children's book?

Salvo: ***The Giving Tree***, by Shel Silverstein. It's a universal truth beautifully told. The story remains poignant as you read it year after year, just like the titular tree.

James: ***Where The Wild Things Are*** by Maurice Sendak and ***Eloise*** by Kay Thompson. The Sendak book has a terrific message for kids, and I love how the illustrations start small, then end up completely overwhelming the two-page spreads. As for Kay Thompson's book, Eloise is simply an irresistible little brat at the center of her own pampered universe. Hillary Knight's illustrations have grace, wit, complexity, and surprise.

Dave: ***No, David!*** by David Shannon. I love the loose, rich, tactile illustration and bright colors. Although it came out when I was a teenager, I still felt a strong connection to the subject matter.