There's Going to Be a Baby

by John Burningham

illustrated by Helen Oxenbury

A conversation with the creators about their first-time creative pairing

Please describe your process of working together and what it was like collaborating as a couple to create There's Going to Be a Baby.

We now realize that it has taken over ten years to complete There's Going to Be a Baby. We started with a much longer text, and for the sections in which the boy is exploring the baby's future in his imagination, Helen drew realistic babies in adult clothing, which looked very bizarre and not entirely appealing. We can't even begin to remember how many times we had another try at getting it right! Finally, Helen had the idea of depicting the baby as a comic-strip character, which removed some of the obstacles, and gradually the whole book came together.

Were you inspired by your experience as parents to tell this story? What do you hope parents and children will take away from this story?

Fortunately we didn't experience (we think) this problem with our own children, but one does see all around how some children never come to terms with their new sister or brother. We hope this book, which is a celebration of there being a new baby in the family, may also help a young child to come to terms with the new arrival.

Are you planning another team effort in the near future? (We sure hope so!)

We too hope we will one day manage to do another project together, but of course it has to be the right one.

John Burningham, a two-time winner of the Kate Greenaway Medal, is the author-illustrator of many acclaimed picture books, including the Candlewick titles It’s a Secret! and Harvey Slumfenburger’s Christmas Present. His work is also featured in the collectors’ volume John Burningham. He lives in London.

Helen Oxenbury, also a two-time winner of the Kate Greenaway Medal as well as many other awards, has illustrated such Candlewick books as Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, Alice Through the Looking-Glass, Big Momma Makes the World, Farmer Duck, We’re Going on a Bear Hunt, and So Much! She is also the illustrator of Mem Fox’s Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes. Helen Oxenbury lives in London.