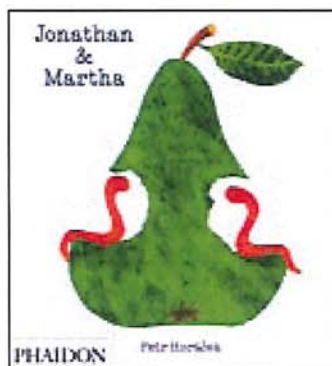


Read this book

Jonathan & Martha

by Petr Horáček, Phaidon, £7.95, 3+



A BIG, RED juicy apple caught the eye of children's author and illustrator Petr Horáček. He was holidaying at the house of a friend in Greece, and that big, red juicy apple was hanging on the wall – an artwork created by his friend's daughter when she was small. "It got me thinking; what might happen inside an apple?" says Petr. Naturally, a fruit so fragrant is a ripe prospect for a hungry worm – or even two

lonesome worms living on opposite sides of the same tree. However, when Petr put paint to paper, something wasn't right. The pink wiggly forms of his two annelid characters were lost against the red of the apple. And so Petr had to substitute it for a big, green juicy pear instead.

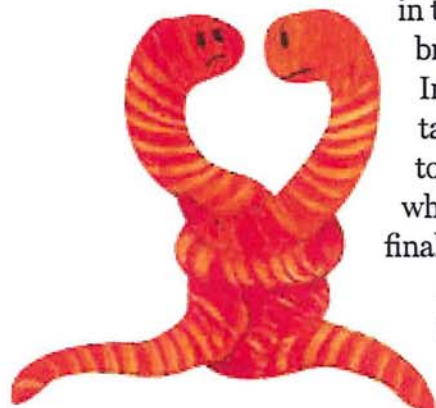
The tale *Jonathan & Martha* bears all the hallmarks of a classic love story – and even in the world of worms, true love doesn't run smoothly, it seems. Things start hopefully enough. When the pear falls to the ground, they both decide to tuck in, wiggling steadily towards each other until they meet nose-to-nose – *Lady And The Tramp* style –



in the middle. But then a fight

breaks out – a consequence of coyness, perhaps.

In the ensuing tussle, Jonathan and Martha get tangled together. And so they have no choice but to spend their days wriggling along together, sharing whatever juicy morsels they happen upon, until fate finally intervenes in the form of a big black crow...



As a young man, Petr worked at an advertising agency in Prague, where he grew up. "The actual work was pretty dull, but my colleagues were really fascinating people," he says. "Every day

we would discuss art and culture." After work, Petr would go home and paint late into the night – large landscapes and abstract works. He eventually left the design agency to study at the city's Academy of Fine Art, where he met Claire, his future wife. It was with the arrival of his daughters – Tereza, now 15, and Cecilia, now 13, that he began creating children's books. Petr became a fan of Eric Carle after his daughter was given a copy of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, and with its

bold, collage style, Jonathan and Martha's tale clearly shows Carle's influence. However, unlike the famed caterpillar, the worms remain svelte. "It is because they have such a healthy diet, apart from their wedding cake," says Petr. "But everyone deserves a treat."

