

Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists



"To the Rhythm of the Cajon," by Analí Salazar, age 13, Lima, Peru

THE SEA LION WALTZ

The two people Ally loves most are headed in opposite directions

IN A MOMENT IT WAS NO MORE: 1963

A sad day in history is seen through the eyes of a young boy

Also: A story about a Hanukkah hat

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2004

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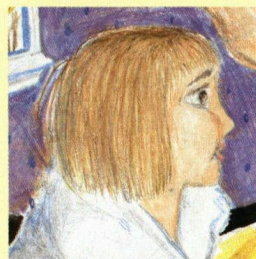
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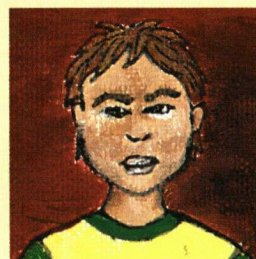
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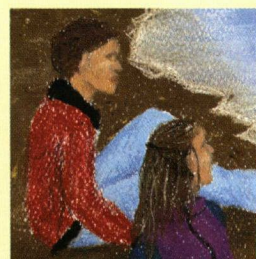
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GERRY MANDEL
WILLIAM RUBEL

Editors

LAURIE GABRIEL

Subscription Director

STEPHEN POLLARD

Production

BARBARA HARKER

Administrative Assistant

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Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists

WELCOME TO ALL OUR READERS, old and new! We've had the pleasure of publishing *Stone Soup* for over 30 years. It is our belief that, by presenting rich, heart-felt work by young people the world over, we can stir the imaginations of our readers and inspire young writers and artists to create.



Jessie Moore, 12

Contributors' Guidelines

Stone Soup welcomes submissions from young people through age 13. For our complete guidelines, please visit our Web site at www.stonesoup.com.

Story and poem authors: Please do not enclose a self-addressed envelope with

your submission. Send copies of your work, not originals. If we decide to consider your work for a future issue, you will hear from us in four to six weeks. If you do not hear from us, it means we were not able to use your work. Don't be discouraged! Try again!

Book reviewers: If you are interested in reviewing books for *Stone Soup*, write editor Gerry Mandel. Tell her a little about yourself and the kinds of books you like to read. Enclose an SASE for her reply.

Artists: If you would like to illustrate for *Stone Soup*, send Ms. Mandel some samples of your art work, along with a letter saying what you like to draw most. Enclose an SASE for her reply. We need artists who can draw or paint complete scenes in color. Please send color copies of your work, not originals.

All contributors: Send us writing and art about the things you feel most strongly about! Whether your work is about imaginary situations or real ones, use your own experiences and observations to give your work depth and a sense of reality. Send your work to *Stone Soup*, Submissions Dept., P.O. Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063. Include your name, age, birthdate, home address and phone number.

Cover: "To the Rhythm of the Cajon" is part of *Stone Soup's* permanent collection of children's art. It was donated to us by Shankar's International Children's Competition in New Delhi, India, which has been held every year since 1949! To learn more about Shankar's, visit www.childrensbooktrust.com. Special thanks to Mrs. Srinivasan.

The Mailbox



LBP, 9

I get your magazine at my school library and absolutely love it! The stories and poems are amazing and the art is beautiful! One of my favorite parts is the book reviews. If I have recently finished a book and don't know what to read next, I will look in an issue of *Stone Soup* and get ideas. I have always dreamed of being an author and getting my work published. But when I discovered *Stone Soup*, I realized that I could get my work published now, at the age of 10.

CLAIRE BOBST, 10
Arlington, Virginia

Every day last week I woke up to the familiar sound of my mother calling up from the first floor, "Olivia . . . are you up?" Fifty percent of the time I was up, and on the remaining days I was "in the process." After my before-breakfast routine I fumbled down the stairs to join my three siblings. Several minutes later, with a satisfied stomach, I rode my bike down to the mailbox to fully wake up. On my return I was ready for "Stone Soup time" with my youngest sibling, seven-year-old Seppi. He was usually waiting for me on the wicker couch on the porch overlooking the pond. If he wasn't, I called to him, and in a moment he was there. Then we began. I opened up the newest *Stone Soup* issue and read the next story while Seppi gulped up every word of it. Sometimes I had to stop and clarify a difficult sentence, but neither of us ever lost our patience. The stories we read were like delicate creatures that we were welcomed to observe and learn from, but not disturb.

OLIVIA GRUGAN, 13
Alexandria, Pennsylvania

Olivia's story, "The Lone Straw Hat," was published in our September/October 2004 issue.

Thank you for printing "Night Lives" by Natalie Fine [July/August 2004]. I love to write poetry and stories and her descriptions of sound, sights and smell make me almost feel like I was there.

JEAN HOPE SACK, 12
Eureka, California

I wish to thank *Stone Soup* for publishing "Red Comet" by Philip Grayeski [March/April 2004]. This story warmed my heart and reminded me that family should be treasured and responsibility always taken seriously. I would also like to compliment Devon Cole on his unique illustrations. I was awestruck at the detail and touching portrayal of his wonderful artwork. It had a magical essence I couldn't quite grasp . . . Encore! Encore!

CHLOE SCHEFFE, 13
Bellingham, Washington

Chloe illustrated "In the Knights' Absence" for our July/August 2004 issue. See "In a Moment It Was No More: 1963" on page 27 of this issue for Devon's latest illustrations.

Believe me, *Stone Soup* is the best magazine for young writers and artists. Writing is the exclusive quality found in few out of many. It is a good and beautiful way to express our feelings. But expressions need space to be poured out. And *Stone Soup* gives the same to young inspired writers and artists. I pray that there be no hindrance in the progress way of *Stone Soup*.

AFTAB YUSUF, 14
Mumbai, India

You can read all the stories and poems mentioned in The Mailbox on our Web site: www.stonesoup.com

Note to our readers: Send us your letters! We are especially interested in detailed comments about specific stories, poems, book reviews, and illustrations. We'd also like to receive anecdotes (150 words or less) about interesting experiences you'd like to share with our readers. Send letters to The Mailbox, *Stone Soup*, P.O. Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063. Include your name, age, address, and phone number.



"The UPS man just brought this for you"

Elf Hat

By **Molly Dektar**

Illustrated by the author

I TOOK THE SHINY RED scissors and stuck the blades into the tape that mummified the brown package. I love getting packages in the mail. I love the smell of tape and cardboard, the promise within the shadowy depths of packing peanuts and something to pull out and unwrap.

As I worked at the tape, I remembered one time that I had gotten a package just like this. I had been seven years old.

“ELIZA, COME HERE!”

I ran to the kitchen on my seven-year-old legs. My mom thunked a brown package onto the table. “The UPS man just brought this for you,” she said.

My fingers scrabbled at the tape, with no success. My mother brought out a big pair of red scissors, and deftly slit the tape.

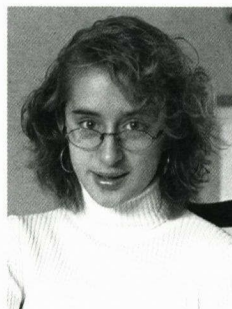
I reached into the warm packing peanuts. I pulled out a soft, floppy something wrapped in gray tissue paper. I shook the peanuts off—it reminded me of our shaggy old dog, Clancey, shaking off snow.

“Open the envelope first,” Mom reminded patiently, handing me a blue envelope.

“Happy Hanukkah,” said the card. “Love, Grandma and Grandpa.”

I impatiently tore open the tissue paper. A faultless hat rolled out, hand-made by Grandma. It had blue and white alternating stripes, knitted with soft, bright yarn.

“My Hanukkah hat!” I shrieked. I remembered when my sis-



Molly Dektar, 13
Durham, North Carolina

ter Becky had gotten her Hanukkah hat a few years ago. My younger sister who we called Puff could hardly wait for hers. She came skidding into the room to admire my hat.

The next day my mom proudly pulled it on over my straight light-brown hair. I was wearing my Hanukkah mittens that I got last year in honor of the occasion.

In school I enthusiastically showed off my hat. "Look at this!" I shouted, strutting down the center of the classroom. I noticed that the class was silent but not with admiration.

Three girls watched me from the front of the room, my old friends from last year. Annie, June and Brenna. June was the head of them.

"Eliza," she said, her hand on her hip. She giggled. Annie and Brenna obediently giggled too.

June waited for them to stop, and then said, "What exactly is that on your head?"

"A Hanukkah hat!" I said uncertainly.

She giggled again, even more smugly. From her backpack she pulled out four hats. And not normal hats either, but glowing, white-trimmed, crimson elf hats. She pulled hers on.

"*This*," she said, "is a hat."

She passed one to Brenna and one to Annie. Faced with the three of them, sinisterly identical, like Santa's sweet little helpers gone bad, I stepped backwards. I put my mitten in my mouth, an old habit.

June smiled at me. "Would you like one?" she asked, smiling. She was missing her two front teeth.

"Yeah!" I said. Who needed a Hanukkah hat anyway? They weren't all that special. Plus, they were handmade. Not at all like the beautiful, identical elf hats.

She held it out in front of me. I could smell the tantalizing store-new scent. I reached for it with a mittened hand.

She danced backwards, smiling. I reached for it again. She stepped back again, twitching it in front of me by the furry ball on the tip of the hat.

"Sorry," she said. "People with *Hanukkah* hats can't have pretty hats like mine."

She tossed it in the trash can, stinky with yesterday's food. Immediately Annie and Brenna buried it beneath half-empty milk cartons and sandwich crusts. I watched the glowing crimson and the snowy white disappear. Tears burned in my eyes, at the injustice of it all. I hardly noticed, and didn't fight back, when June snatched my Hanukkah hat from my head.

JUNE HAD moved from town last year, to somewhere in Texas or something.

Now I am in eighth grade, and wiser than at age seven. But I still remember . . .

I finished, finally, opening the package. It came from an address I didn't know. Maybe someone had ordered me a present.

I reached into the packing peanuts. "Card first," I said. Clancey came bounding into the kitchen. "Hello, you monster," I said, pulling him into my lap, where he sat, tongue hanging out. His wagging tail almost knocked the letter out of my hand.

It was in a green envelope.

"Dear Eliza," it said in round, fat letters. "You probably don't remember this, but I've remembered ever since. I hope that this makes you feel a bit better about . . ." (here something was heavily crossed out) "what happened."

It wasn't signed.

I pulled open the packing peanuts and grabbed something wrapped in white tissue paper. I unrolled it.

Out fell a pristine, ruby-red elf hat. The white trim was enormously fluffy, right up to the downy ball on top. But that wasn't all.

I unrolled a second white-tissue-paper

object. Out came my original Hanukkah hat. It was so small by now, the indigo fading to a lighter shade, the sharp lines losing their clearness.

Clancey settled warmly into my lap. I laid them both out on the table. One so crimson and factory-made, the other lovingly completed over many hours. One I scorned, one I loved. But which was which? My heritage, or my need to fit in?

Clancey's wagging tail swept the blue one into my lap. The elf hat lay silently on the table. That was someone else's story, someone else's belief. I stroked his shaggy fur fondly. "I think," I said to him, "that you made the right choice." ❁





"You have never said good night to me. Never in my life"

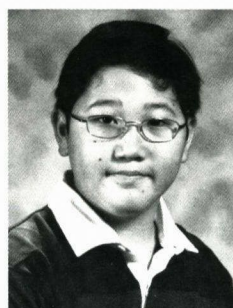
Good Night, Son

By **Felix Zhang**

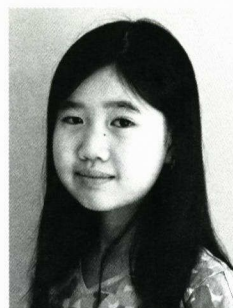
Illustrated by **Courtney Lam**

THE SOFT PATTTER OF RAINFALL filled the attic of the tiny house in Boston. Peter Carrol sat alone in the attic, surrounded by old photos and clothing. All of the memorabilia belonged to his son; a son who was no longer alive, a son who was his pride and joy; a son who was cruelly taken away. The man shed bitter tears as he looked at the different photos. He could not believe that his boy was dead. He and his son had never truly been as close as he wanted to be, he blamed himself for that. Peter Carrol's childhood was no cakewalk. Raised in New York, he had to fight for any success. Peter was determined to succeed in life, and so he had never given up. With each opportunity, he squeezed out a double return. He would never forget how hard it was to become the man he was today.

Peter decided a long time ago that his son would not be raised as a spoiled child. No, his son would grow up and learn how to work for success. And so, ever since little Ryan Carrol was born, Peter gave him no breaks. Anything Ryan did, it had to be perfect, otherwise Peter would force upon Ryan countless chores and homework problems. Eventually, Ryan was able to become more and more of a man. Ryan learned values the hard way, just as Peter had. Ryan learned the power and the importance of money, the gentlemanly manners, all aspects of academic life, and music. Music gave Ryan a secret sanctuary in which he could be free. His father had never played an instrument, and so music was where Ryan could be free of criticism, hard looks, and constant pressure. It was that sense of freedom that propelled Ryan



Felix Zhang, 13
Berwyn, Pennsylvania



Courtney Lam, 12
Vancouver, British Columbia,
Canada

to become a piano prodigy.

Every musical concert, Peter would sit in the back of the room, smiling in pure pride as his son dazzled the audience. However, when Ryan approached him, beaming, waiting to be congratulated, Peter would turn stony-faced, and simply nod and say "good." Eventually Ryan gave up on his father, and after concerts, he would talk with other musicians, and not even give a glance toward his father. Peter had pushed too far. Ryan no longer looked upon Peter as a father, but as a fierce enemy. One night, Peter and Ryan got into a huge argument, and Ryan broke down. With tears rolling down his cheeks, he and his father argued about Ryan's upbringing. At the end, Ryan stormed up the stairs, but halfway, he turned back and looked at his father, and coldly said, "You call yourself a father. You have never said good night to me. Never in my life."

It was those words that struck the most pain in Peter's heart. He slowly realized the truth in the words. Even when Ryan was a small boy, he had never said good night to him. He sat alone in the kitchen, thinking about his son. One could not argue against the fact that Peter's raising technique had seriously helped Ryan. Ryan was now a high school senior, valedictorian, student-council president, A-plus student, a dedicated scientist and had received acceptance letters from every single Ivy League school. Peter decided that the reward Ryan would harvest was much more important than the suffering he was going through now. Thus, Peter

decided to continue his harsh upbringing of Ryan; however, he vowed that he would start saying good night to his son.

The summer slipped by, and each night, Peter would realize that he had forgotten to say good night. This lasted all four years of Ryan's stay in Harvard, and then the next three years Ryan spent in medical school. Within those seven years, Ryan had maintained a sparse relationship with his father. After Ryan graduated from medical school, he came back to visit his father. He thought that after seven years, his father would have changed. He was wrong. As he walked through the door, he expected a surprise party, with all his friends congratulating him, and shaking his hand. Instead, he walked in and found his father sitting alone at the counter reading the newspaper. Disappointed, and angered, Ryan simply walked to his old room and shut the door. What he did not know, was that hours before Ryan's arrival, Peter had called everyone he knew and told them of Ryan's graduation from medical school.

That night, the father and son discussed Ryan's plans for the future. Peter wanted Ryan to go on and become a big CEO of a pharmaceutical company. Ryan, on the other hand, wanted to help people himself. After an hour of discussion, Ryan stood and said, "Dad, I've already made up my mind. I was approached by a team of doctors from India when I was in med school. I'm going to India to help the people there. I'm leaving next week." Peter was shocked. How could Ryan do this?



Tears flowed from Peter's eyes, as he apologized for every harsh moment in their relationship

How could he waste his education and his effort in India? But before Peter could refute, Ryan said good night and walked away. Peter merely grunted to Ryan's farewell. Ryan chuckled and said, "There you are, Dad, same as always." Peter didn't understand at first, but an hour later he realized what had happened. Once again, he had forgotten to say good night.

Ryan arrived in India the following Sunday, and was amazed at the clash of cultures that faced him. It was obvious the West had influence here, but the Indian culture was just as strong. He found his way to the hospital that he was to join. There, he saw the team of doctors he had met at med school. He worked alongside these doctors for three years. Together

they faced the problems and sicknesses that arose in India. Thousands of Indians came to their hospital in search of Western medicine. They received nationwide fame, and they received awards from the Indian government, and love from most of the Indian people. However, there were still those in India who thought their country was controlled by the West, and they wanted all westerners out of their country.

One day, at the hospital, Ryan received a message that summoned him to one of the neighborhoods of his past patient. Fearing that his patient was in desperate need of assistance, Ryan left without informing anyone, and hurried to the neighborhood. When he knocked on the door to the house, he wondered what possibly could be wrong. Suddenly, the door opened, and a man stood there with a gun. He pulled Ryan in, and beat him senseless. Terrified and confused, Ryan struggled to get up, but there seemed to be three assailants. The whirlwind of images flew through his head. He saw three men armed with bats and clubs, poised at attacking. He heard one scream, "Never shall the whites enter our country." He felt a sudden pain in his waist, and his ears heard a loud crack. Within seconds, he was passed out on the floor. A few hours later, he awoke in the street gutter, trash and dirty waste piled up on top of him. He felt woozy, and felt sticky blood on the back of his head. No one was to be seen, he was alone and about to die. It was with that thought that he passed out again.

When Ryan awoke again, he found himself on a military transport plane. A doctor saw him, and came to him. Ryan found out that he had been shot in the waist, and suffered severe beatings to the head and chest regions. He had been found by a group of Indian boys who recognized him. They quickly called the hospital, which took him in and stabilized him for transport to a U.S. facility, for he needed serious treatment immediately at an American hospital. He nodded, and gave a feeble response before he once again passed out.

When Ryan awoke again, he found himself in a hospital room. His father was sitting next to him. Ryan was amazed at the look of serious concern and fear on his father's face. Ryan did not know that he was slowly dying, but his father knew. Peter held Ryan's hand tightly. Tears flowed from Peter's eyes, as he apologized for every harsh moment in their relationship. Soon, Ryan's eyes were filled with tears, and within minutes, Peter and Ryan were hugging for the first time in fifteen years. The two were finally father and son. Three hours later, Ryan could tell that he was close to death. He looked up, and studied his father's eyes. He realized he never took the time to really study his father's eyes, now it was too late. He took his father's hand and whispered, "Thank you, Daddy, for all you have done. But I'm very tired . . . and . . . good night . . . Daddy." With tears rolling down his cheeks, Peter looked down, and for the first time he said, "Good night, son." ❀

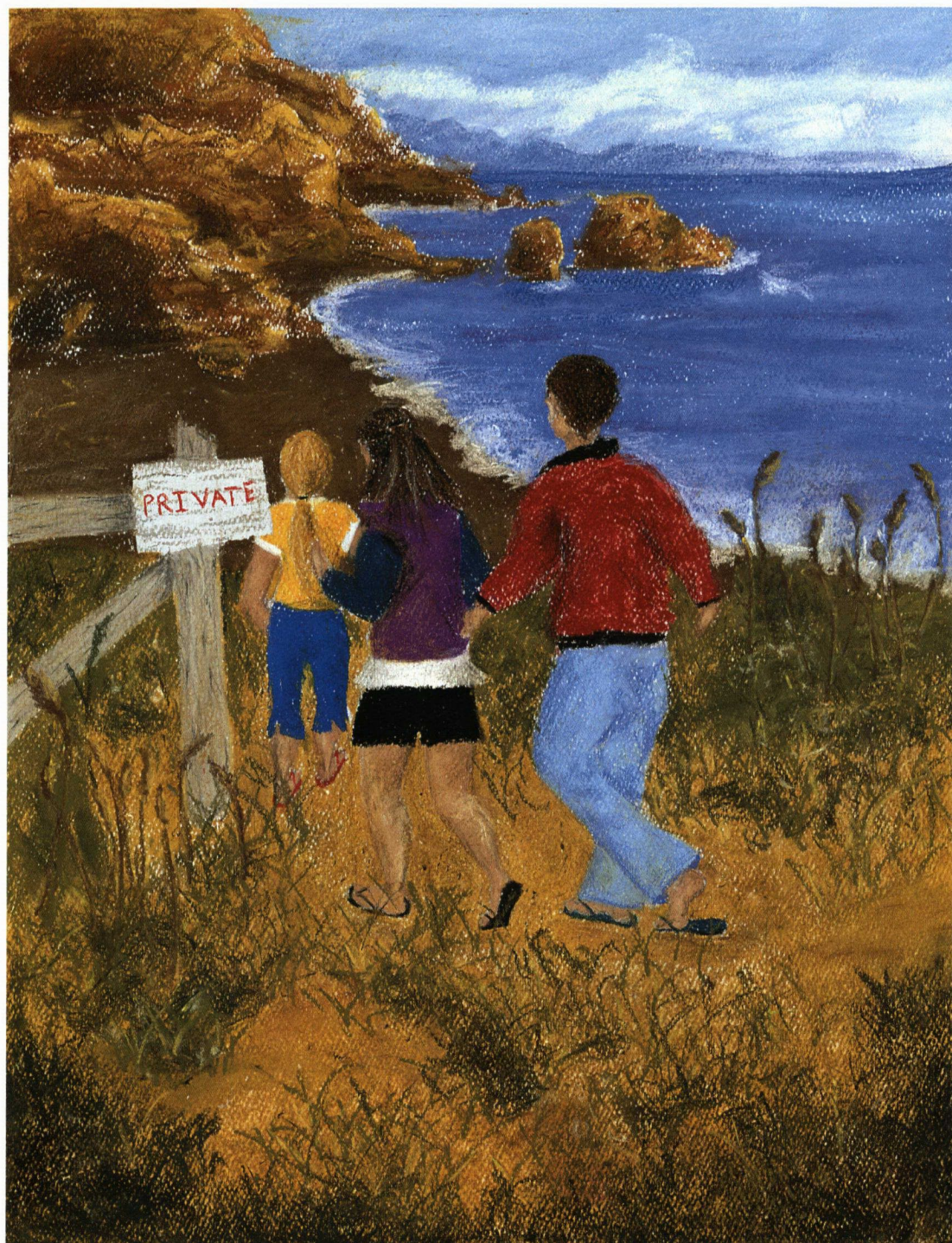
The Tide of Happiness

By Mira Bernstein Kaufman

I was pulled up,
Only to be sucked back down.
The sea lurched and charged!
My hand reached to clasp my father's.
Instead I dove
With a new strength,
Fooling the incoming wave.
As I surfaced,
Gasping, laughing,
My father's hand met my own,
And together we ducked,
The sand churning beneath our feet,
While happiness knocked me over.



Mira Bernstein Kaufman, 11
Woodbridge, Connecticut



The beach was still, the sand untouched

The Sea Lion Waltz

By **Sophia Veltfort**

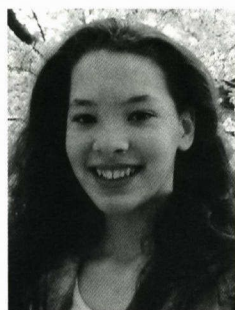
Illustrated by **Jasmin Bowers**

THE BEACH WAS STILL, the sand untouched. The only sounds were the wind and the breaking of the waves on the shore. Ally doubted that she, Olivia, and Jake were allowed there, as it was a private beach, but chose to ignore that piece of information. They continued along the path, finally reaching the sand. Ally reached down and took off her sandals, burrowing her toes deep into the cool sand. Olivia copied her, and lastly Jake, hesitantly.

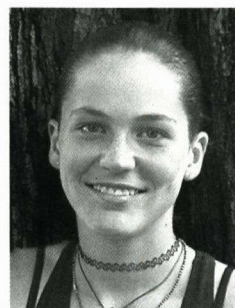
"I'm not sure we're allowed here, Ally. The sign says this is private property," Jake said, looking at a nearby sign. "Besides, there's no lifeguard. Maybe we should just go back. We could walk by the stores." He stopped walking and looked back at the path they had taken. "Come on."

Olivia glared at Jake. "No, it's fine. There's nobody here to mind if we just walk along the water. It's really not that big of a deal." She linked her arm through Ally's and began to walk.

Ally pulled on her brother's arm. "Come on. It'll be fine. If someone comes, we'll just leave. OK?" She pulled on Jake's sleeve and gave a pleading smile, silently apologizing for Olivia. Jake and Olivia never had gotten along, but ever since Ally and Jake's parents had split up, they seemed to be in an everlasting argument. Their father was moving to New York for a new job, and Jake was going with him. But their mother was staying in California, and Ally had been given a choice whether to stay or not. Olivia and Jake both constantly told her their opinions on what to do, often ending with them screaming at each other.



Sophia Veltfort, 13
New York, New York



Jasmin Bowers, 13
Washburn, Wisconsin

Ally was tired of it all, and wished they would stop.

"Fine. Let's just go. I mean, why would it matter if we got in trouble," Jake said, turning to Olivia. "You don't care about messing up people's lives, as long as you get to have fun, first. Let's just go, and if we get punished, hey, so what? Why would I care? It doesn't matter."

Olivia opened her mouth to reply, but Ally answered first. "Jake, leave it. We've been over this so many times, it's getting old. Let's just walk and talk about something, it doesn't matter what." She kicked some sand up, and felt the wind throw it back at her. "Let's walk to the rocks up there, and then we can come back."

Olivia and Jake both nodded, but Ally could tell that her friend was at the beginnings of anger. They had been friends forever, and Ally could detect when Olivia was mad. For the last three months, she had been in a constant state of the beginnings of mad, especially when near Jake. Ally felt more sand hit her leg, this time from Olivia.

A wave crashed on the sand, sending foam rushing to their feet. Ally sighed. "I love how quiet it is here. It would be so nice to own a house here, and be able to sit on the sand whenever you wanted. You could hear the ocean all the time, instead of all the busy cars and things. And you could just stare out at the ocean, all day long."

"Mm," said Olivia, looking happily at the ocean. "It is nice." She smiled, then looked sideways at Ally, her eyebrows

raised. In a tone of mock condescension, she added, "It would be so horrible not to be near the water at all, and be surrounded by tall, ugly buildings. I'm not sure I could handle it, it would be so depressing. But," she shrugged, "I guess some people like it. I feel so sorry for them." She sighed, shaking her head, an expression supposed to look like sad confusion on her face.

"But," said Jake pointedly, as he reached down to brush sand off his pants, "they get to be near technology, resources, and lots of interesting people. I bet they feel bad for people who have nothing but sand and water nearby. But, hey, who knows," he sighed.

Olivia stiffened, and Ally struggled to find a way to stop, or at least delay, the fight. "Let's just sit down for a little. We can go on later, and we don't have to be back for a while. Let's just sit, and look at the water. Just for a bit." She sat, and the others followed reluctantly, one on each side. The water barely touched their toes as they leaned back on the sand, feet extended. The fog was so thick that Ally could only see a short distance out until everything became a swirly gray. She loved this weather, and even though Olivia was in a bad mood, Ally knew she loved it, too. When they had been younger, maybe seven or eight years old, they had come to a beach like this with Ally's parents, and Olivia had been incredibly upset when they weren't allowed in the water.

"No," Ally's mother had said, smiling slightly. "It's too cold. Maybe in a month we'll come back and then it will be warm-

er. No one swims now, see? Look how few people there are!"

But Olivia had stamped her foot, saying, "But I want to swim *now*! I can handle it! I'm like a polar bear. Or a fat sea lion. Right, Ally? We're tough. We're sea lions." And with that, she had marched around, starting to howl, trying to sound like a sea lion. "Ow ow! Owwwwwww!"

"No!" Ally had replied, happily. "They arf! Like this: Arf arf arf! Aruf! Arf! Aruuuf!"

"They do both!" Olivia had said, laughing. "Ow! Arf! Owruf!"

And for the next hour, they had galloped around the beach pretending to be sea lions, dancing sea lions, sleepy sea lions lying on each other, and angry sea lions, charging the sand. They danced around doing different ballroom steps, always owrufing. Everything disappeared for them as they raced gracefully about, and at that moment, Ally had thought that this was just the funnest thing to do, and she couldn't think of anything else she'd prefer. They had made the Sea Lion Waltz their special thing, something that was expressly Ally and Olivia. Ally had hummed the tune to herself sometimes, occasionally adding in an owruf. That day had been incredibly fun. They had even completely forgotten about going swimming, and on the ride home continued to happily be sea lions. But they hadn't done that for a long time. Why did we stop? Ally wondered. They had always found something like the sea lions day to amuse themselves with before, but Ally couldn't remember the last

time. Before the divorce, of course. Since then, what with Ally's awaited decision, there had been a lot less laughter from everyone.

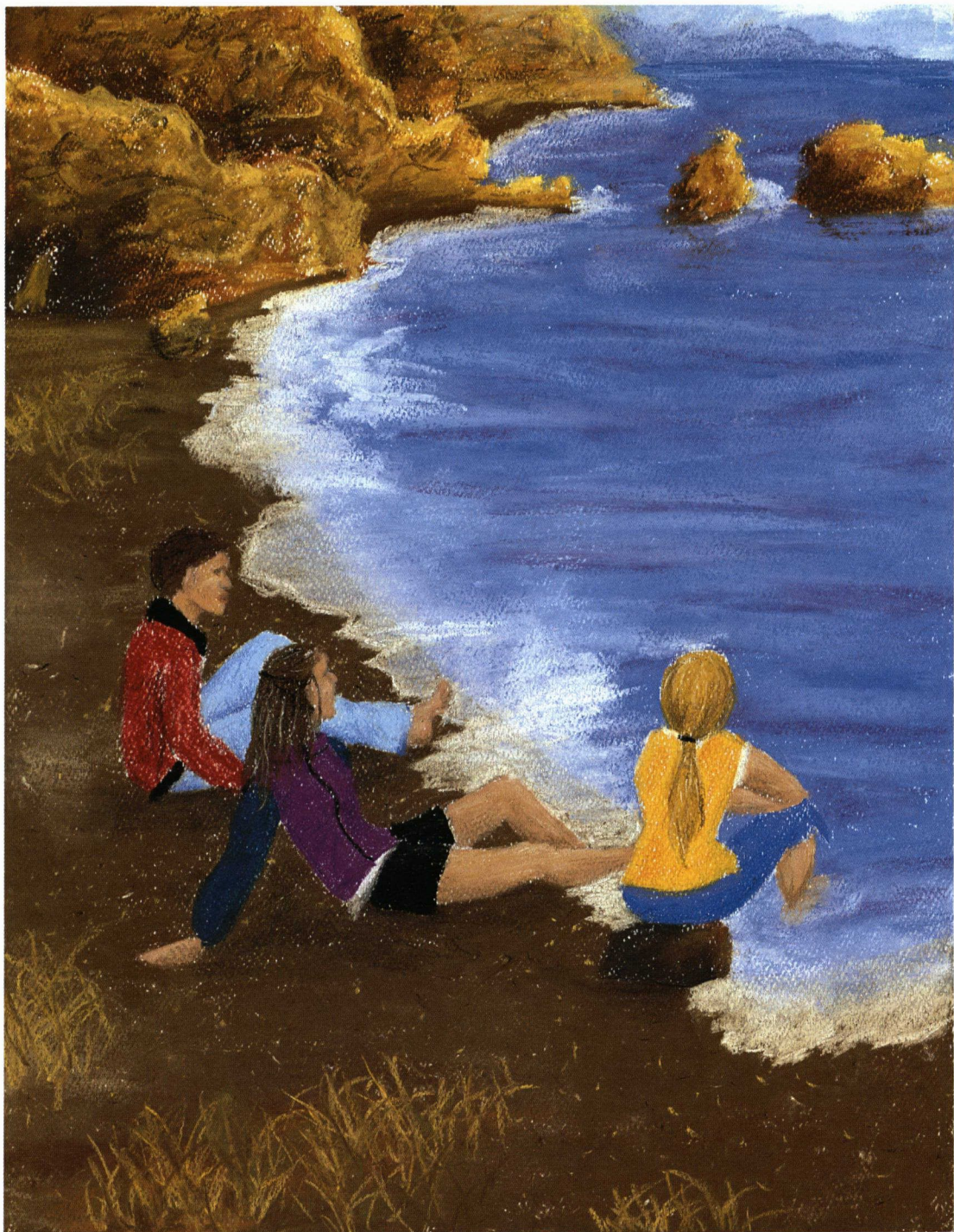
"I wonder if there are any sea lions out there today," said Ally, smiling.

Olivia grinned. "Yeah, and if there are, they're probably dancing, singing owruf."

"Sea lions don't really dance. They eat fish, sleep, and that's about it," Jake said in an irritated tone.

"Well, that shows how much you know about sea lions," said Ally lightly. "For your information, they particularly enjoy the waltz." She picked up a rock, and brushed the sand off it with her thumb, examining it. "But they might be sleeping now. I mean, you can't dance as well in the fog." She looked out at the fog, and considered skipping the rock.

"That's true. I suppose we won't see them dance today. Ah well." Olivia brushed her hand across the sand, smoothing it. "Maybe next time." She paused, considering whether to go on or not. After smoothing the sand even more, she took a deep breath. "Ally, please let there be a next time." She continued to gaze out at the ocean, never looking at Ally. "Imagine never being by the water together, never seeing sea lions whenever you wanted, never being able to lie in the sand. Imagine not being able to see that," she held her hand out to the ocean. "Imagine not being able to hear the sea gulls, and have one steal your sandwich. Imagine not being able to go looking for shells. Wouldn't you miss that? Wouldn't you miss me? At all?"



"I wonder if there are any sea lions out there today," said Ally, smiling

Her voice broke, and she let her hand fall. "You don't need to answer. I know you would. And I don't know how Jake thinks he won't, but even he will. Even a cold person can't help but miss it."

Ally was silent. It was true, she would miss it all, but she would also miss her brother and father. Looking over, she was surprised Jake hadn't responded sharply to Olivia. Instead, he was picking up sand, and letting it drain through his fingers. She saw him watch it fall, and agreed with Olivia. Even Jake had to miss it. True, he had never been as close to the water as most Ally knew, but he seemed to like it in his own way.

Once, maybe a year before the divorce, their parents had had another huge fight, and Ally and Jake had walked to the beach and wandered along the sand to be out of their way. Jake had been quiet, letting his feet drag, and Ally had left him alone. But then he had surprised her by talking about what he had been thinking.

"You know," he had said. "Maybe if they spent more time here, by the water, things would be different. It's . . . calming. Maybe if they had spent less time at work, they would still get along." He was quiet

a moment, then burst out, "They *always* fight! It's not fair! Why can't they just get along, like normal people do? It's not that difficult! It would be so much nicer if they were just, I don't know, right." And he was silent again.

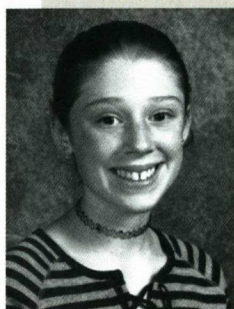
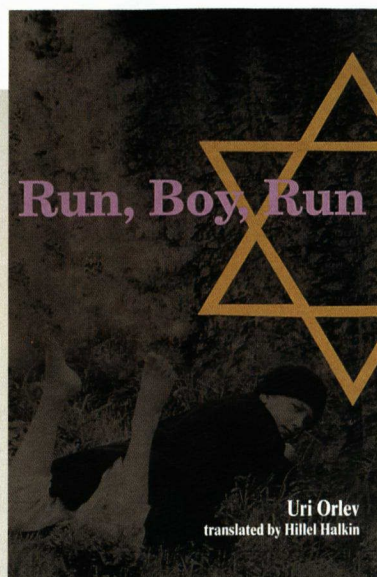
"Maybe," said Ally wearily, "they don't want to be. Maybe we should just let things happen, and try our best. Let's just try." Jake's only response was to kick the wet sand at the water, but with what seemed like less vigor than usual.

As they all now sat on the beach again, Jake was quiet, and Ally wondered what he was thinking. He was a complicated person, and rarely said what was bothering him. But he and Ally were close, and depended on each other. If he went to New York without her, she would miss him as much as the ocean. She didn't know what to do. As she wiggled her toes in the approaching water, she realized she was currently with all that meant the most to her, all that she would miss most. Yet they were all going in different directions. She wanted them all. Stop! she commanded them. Stay here! If only everything could stay how it used to be, everything would be great. ❀

Book Review

By Sophie Silkes

Run, Boy, Run by Uri Orlev, translated by Hillel Halkin; Houghton Mifflin Company: Boston, 2003; \$15



Sophie Silkes, 12
Kinnelon, New Jersey


THE MINUTE I OPENED this book and read the inside book jacket, I couldn't wait to turn to page one and immerse myself in another fantastic read—*Run, Boy, Run*. I even set down *Gathering Blue* so I could read the amazing true story of a boy who refused to give up, even when I know I would have. One of the reasons I decided to review a Holocaust book is because half my family and lots of my friends are Jewish. Some of my ancestors lived in Poland and Russia and migrated to America to escape the Nazis—some didn't make it and were murdered by them. So when I settled down in my living room and opened the book, I just couldn't put it down.

I was pulled into the story of a boy once called Srulik, later called Jurek. The story begins in a ghetto with two brothers planning to go to the Polish side of the ghetto, only to have their plans foiled by German boys. Srulik describes the incident through the eyes of his eager, eight-year-old Jewish body. Then, as he goes on with his tale, I feel the fear and pain as he realizes his mother and father are gone, and when belonging to a gang dubs him Red, and I feel the terror as he gets out of scrapes that should have ended in his death, but thankfully did not.

Srulik's parents want him to have a good life. So when Srulik is escaping Nazis, and he meets his father, dying in a field, his

father gives him the Polish name Jurek Staniak—to blend in more—and promptly sacrifices his own life in exchange for his son's. From the cruel people who either turned him in to the Germans or beat him viciously, Jurek learns, sometimes the hard way, not to trust everyone. But as in our own lives, there are always the good people, in Jurek's case, people who taught him to pray like a Christian, or a German soldier who didn't turn him in, but hid him and kept him safe.

Jurek's life at times reminds me of my own—good people, horrible people, instant friends, and a loyal dog. But something that is unusual to witness today occurs almost per chapter in this book—Jurek has such trust, faith, and optimism that he pulls through predicaments in which even the coolest under pressure would've melted. Uri Orlev writes in a way that makes me forget that it's a man speaking instead of the eight-year-old boy who it seemed to be. He tells the story with the fear and curiosity that Jurek must have been feeling during his amazing experiences. All in all, Orlev writes in such a way that I firmly believe he could become any character he pleased.

While reading, I kept feeling a connection to the story, because of my Nazi-hunted ancestors, and also because of the nickname that Jurek and my grandfather share—Red. Jurek's tale also makes me realize that no matter how hard things get, life goes on. Jurek is amazing at finding a light in the midst of darkness, and because of these elements which Uri Orlev uses to portray the true story of a boy called Jurek, I stand up and applaud this amazing book, *Run, Boy, Run*. 



"If I had to smell one smell all my life, I would smell the vanilla scent of a Jeffrey pine"

A Cedar Morning

By **Sophia Stid**

Illustrated by **Sheri Park**

THE CROW WOKE ME UP. He is perched at the top of the old redwood, his raucous cries circling and drifting, jerking me from my dreams. Half of me wants to shake him for waking me; the other half wants to scatter extra birdseed around his redwood for letting me be a part of this dance of dawn.

From the sleeping platform, I can see the pale gray sky, marred only by the occasional red-winged blackbird's flight. Cedars and pines and redwoods fringe the sky. Trees grow taller, here in this magical place called the Cedars. Birds fly slower as if savoring the texture of the wind. The sun is hotter and higher here and I relish it. The Cedars is a haven for the weary birds, for the straggled plants, for the harassed, tired people, so rushed and choked from the city.

Beside me, Oma and Opa wake up.

"What a beautiful day!" Opa smiles.

"The most wonderful day for our hike," Oma says.

"Shall we play the tree game?" she asks, smiling.

"Yes." I squeeze her hand.

"What is that tree over there?"

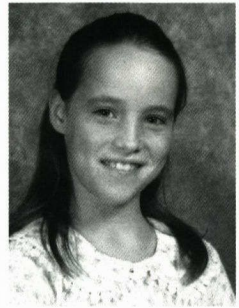
"A Jeffrey pine, I think."

"Good! Later, we'll get some cones," Oma praised.

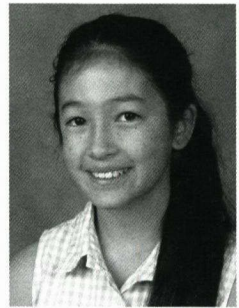
"If I had to smell one smell all my life, I would smell the vanilla scent of a Jeffrey pine," I say.

"Time for the countdown!" Opa warns.

We all stare fixedly at the golden watch on Oma's wrist,



Sophia Stid, 10
Potomac, Maryland



Sheri Park, 13
Redwood City, California

watching the silver hand wheedle seconds away. Soon, the eight o'clock Oh Joe bell will ring. I picture a roustabout, maybe Trevor, maybe Alex, or Justin, or even Kate, walk across the dirt at the low welcoming building we call the Grill. The Grill pulls you in, and holds you before letting you out, I think drowsily. The roustabout will tightly grip the metal rod, recoil at its chill and hold it poised over the huge metal triangle, muscles taut, tense, waiting.

Exactly eight o'clock.

The rhythm starts, ringing across the valleys and meadows of the Cedars. It echoes off trees, slams into boulders, shivers down streams, and slips into the earth until cabins shake.

Bang der-de bang iti bang iti bang, BANG BANG, BANG!

I tap the rhythm on my comforter. Nodding, Opa, Oma and I take a deep breath along with the thirty other Cedarites. We yell, "Ohhhhh Joeeeee!"

I shiver with the rhythm, the beat, the shout.

"Wow. We did it really well that time. I think the old cedar tree shook," I laugh.

"What'll Jim think of that!" Opa grins. "Let's go get dressed."

"Uh-huh. We've got to hurry." I shiver.

"Of course we do! We want to leave by nine o'clock," Oma says firmly.

I leap out of bed. The cold slices through my brisk resolution like a knife. I want to dive back in the covers.

"Brrr! It's chilly! Come on, let's go down to the outhouse."

Oma smiles. I smile back, and the smile warms me up, soft and buttery. I help Oma down the stairs, then grab my jeans, a torn T-shirt, and a dirty sweater. I pinch together my frayed shoelaces and gather my scattered hair into a high ponytail. I'm dressed. At the Cedars, how you look just fades away. All that remains is your personality.

Oma, Opa and I hold hands and jog down the creaking boards and the chilled dirt to the main cabin. A cheery fire crackles in the old, dusty Benjamin Franklin stove, warding out demons of cold. The stove sits like a hunched tiger behind the stained wooden table and chairs. Beside it are the logs that Opa cut and Meggy, Luke, Char, Noah and I stacked behind the lattice, so the bears wouldn't gnaw on them. The plastic bucket, sloshing, filled to the brim with water, sits lifeguard next to the stove. Today, the table has been pushed aside, and Meggy, Luke, Noah and Char have pulled up chairs, dangling their bug-bitten toes. I join them and play peek-a-boo with Sydney, tickling her frayed bit of blanket.

Uncle Nick is talking to Ed. Helene is rocking Ana, with her pale cheeks dimpling. Aunt Ann is standing at the oven, scrambling eggs that sizzle and slide into a creamy paste in the pan. Opa is checking the first-aid kit.

"Hot cocoa?" Oma asks. "It's free for the taking."

"Me! Yes! Yeah! Please?" we clamor. Oma smiles as she stacks cups, and measures powdered milk.

Aunt Ann is dishing out the scrambled

eggs, and I toss pieces of toast at people. Oma places steaming mugs of cocoa in front of us. We eat our fill. Hot cocoa simmers. A log falls in the stove, crumbled to ashes. I feel full and satisfied.

At eight-thirty, the cold is swept away as suddenly as it came. The sun peeks from behind a cedar tree. The clear blue sky spreads, untroubled as our minds. I throw open the Dutch doors, and change quickly into my khaki shorts. Soon, all of us are sitting on the porch table, rubbing on sunscreen. Bug spray passes over us, its tart and toxic aroma tickling our noses. The smoke from the chimney piece falters, in the clear blue sky.

"So I guess we'll go up Parkinson's," Opa is saying.

"Darn, darn, darn it," I mutter.

"What's so bad about Parkinson's?" Ed asks.

"Parkinson's," I explain, "is vertical. Straight up. At least it's shady. Like the devil, it only has one virtue."

"The devil has a virtue?" Ed questions.


"Yeah. He lets us put the blame on him." I slip a bottle of sunscreen into my backpack. "Oh look, guys! Here comes Carly! Hey girl!"

The neighbor's dog wriggles ecstatically under my hand, then deposits her gift at my feet, a spit-saturated tennis ball!

I bend down, get a good grip on the ball, and throw it in a high arc. My neighbor, Mrs. Camerlynck, smiles, calling Carly to her. I grin back. Then I tug on my backpack, and yank on my baseball cap, and wait on the steps for the others to get ready.

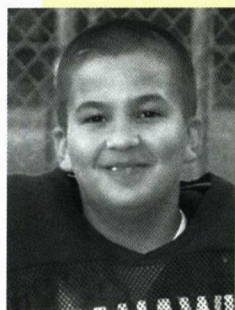
The sun chooses to shine on the most bedraggled trees today. It is comforting the harassed plants back to life. The sun reaches through the bare branches of a cedar, kissing the moss, warming the buds, cajoling the grooved bark back to life, back to happiness, coaxing them to rejoice.

And everything is shining.

It is the beginning of a perfect morning at the Cedars. 

The Boy and His Grammaw

By Timmy McWhirter



Timmy McWhirter, 12
York, South Carolina

Laughing and smiling
And sitting and hugging
A dirty little boy and
A graying woman are
Sitting near a dingy trailer.
Rough steps and an old bike
Rusting before their eyes
Yet their smiles
Can dazzle even
This blank scene . . .

In a Moment It Was No More: 1963

By **Anastasia M. Apostoleris**

Illustrated by **Devon Cole**

“YOU’RE LUCKY, SPENCER. I wish I had a baby brother.”

Ten-year-old Spencer Coleman smiled proudly at his best friend, José Perez, and then down at his month-and-a-half-old brother, Johnny. “I’m glad that he’s a boy,” Spencer whispered. They had to be quiet, or else they’d wake the baby. “Now he can’t turn out like Libby.” Liberty, Spencer’s sister, was nearly thirteen years old and as bossy as a mama hen.

José grinned. “Two Libertys in your family would be a disaster.” He leaned closer to look at the sleeping baby. “Did you name him after the president?”

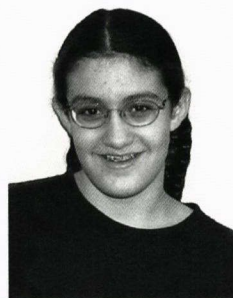
Spencer nodded. “His real name’s John Kennedy Coleman,” he said. “But we call him Johnny for now.”

“Neat.” José put his knee up on the crib ledge and reached in toward the baby.

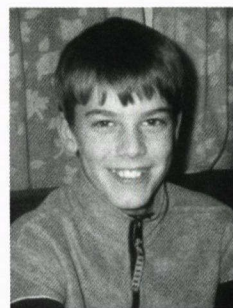
“José!” Spencer hissed. “Don’t touch him, you’ll . . .” Too late. José’s retreating hand brushed against Johnny’s forehead, and his eyes blinked open. Spencer grimaced. “He wasn’t supposed to wake up until 4:30.” Johnny’s face scrunched up, and he let out a loud yell. “Let’s get out of here.”

The two boys dashed out of the room and down the back staircase, nearly falling over each other in their haste to get outside. “Spencer? José? What are you doing?” Mrs. Coleman was calling.

“Um, we’re going to the park, Mom, we’ll be back soon!” Spencer shouted with his hand on the doorknob. He shoved the door open, and he and José tumbled out.



Anastasia M. Apostoleris, 12
Princeton, Massachusetts



Devon Cole, 13
Monroe, Maine



The air smelled familiar, like it always did just before winter arrived

It was a cool, crisp afternoon in late November. Rotten pumpkins left over from Halloween were still out on everyone's doorsteps, but the usual Thanksgiving decorations were starting to appear in windows, too. Spencer grabbed two baseball gloves from his garage and tossed one, along with a ball, to José. "Spencer, where are we going?"

"To the park," Spencer replied shortly. "Like I told Mom."

They turned out of the driveway and fell into silent step. The air smelled familiar, like it always did just before winter arrived. Spencer assumed it had something

to do with decaying pumpkin. "Is anyone coming to your house for Thanksgiving this year?" he asked his friend.

José laughed. "No way. Our apartment's barely big enough to hold us. We're going down to Abuelo's house in Florida." He smiled. "I bet it's nice and warm there."

"Lucky you." Spencer was staying in New York for Thanksgiving. He just hoped it didn't snow.

SPENCER PUT his head down on his desk. Paper-bag turkeys were stupid. They had made those things in kindergarten. Fifth-graders were ten and eleven



"Whaddaya say, kids, should we turn on the radio?"

years old, much too old, in Spencer's opinion, to be pasting googly eyes on a brown bag. He wondered if José's fourth-grade class was being put through the same torture. Mrs. Latham, their teacher, was going around the room praising the children's pasting jobs. The setting reminded Spencer very much of Beverly Cleary's *Ramona* book. Every time he looked down, those stupid wiggle-eyes stared back at him. He flicked the turkey to the far end of his desk with his index finger.

Suddenly, the PA system turned on. Spencer sat up in his chair. Messages from the principal were always interesting.

Sometimes they even meant getting out of school. There was the time last winter that the pipes froze. Then last month, the fire alarm went off, and there was actually a kitchen fire. "May I please request your attention. Could each teacher please turn the class radios to 1130 WNEW. Thank you."

There was a little radio sitting on the teacher's desk. In the younger classrooms, the music stations often got turned on when the kids were working on a project. Sometimes, only on very special occasions, the principal would request that classes turn on their radios to a certain station. They had done that when Spencer

was in third grade, at Kennedy's inauguration. Spencer couldn't remember if they had done it since.

Mrs. Latham stopped praising Becky Halter's fine googly-eye pasting job and stood up straight. "Whaddaya say, kids, should we turn on the radio?"

Eager to get away from turkeys, the class nodded in unison.

The teacher turned the knob so that the arrow pointed to 1130.

Spencer pressed forward in his seat. Surprises were fun.

"It looks like the shots were fired from the fifth- or sixth-floor window..."

The first words alerted Spencer that something was very wrong. The usually calm and smooth voice of the newscaster was panicked and shocked.

"... three shots, at the presidential car... Kennedy got hit, and maybe Governor Connelly, too..."

Spencer heard the screams of police sirens and a buzz of human voices as he tried to piece together what he had heard. He slumped backwards in his seat when it hit him.

Johnny isn't named after anyone anymore. The words formed numbly in Spencer's mind.

He should have known, as soon as the newscaster shouted, "Three shots, at the presidential car." He should have known. "Kennedy got hit."

Their President was dying. He had been shot, while riding in his car through the streets of Texas.

Mrs. Latham slammed her hand on the

knob and the radio turned off in a burst of static. Her face was pallid, and she could barely get out a whisper. "Class dismissed."

"**M**OM! MOM!" Spencer yelled, bursting into the room. "Mom, are you here, Mom?"

Johnny was crying. Mom came up the den stairs as fast as she could, with the baby cradled in her arms. "Your teacher called and told me you'd be home early." Her face was almost as white as Mrs. Latham's. "Liberty's in the den."

Spencer was shaking as he followed Mom. This was scary. This was scarier than last year's Cuban missile problem. At least the Soviets and Cubans were the enemies. An American, from Texas, no less, had shot the President.

The TV was on. Liberty was sitting on the floor, rigid, staring at the picture with a blank look on her face. She looked like a ghost. Spencer felt like a spectator to the rest of the world, watching first his teacher's grief, then the tears of some of his own classmates outside the school, and then his family's shock. Spencer's whole body was numb. His mind was numb.

Mom put her arm around his shoulders. "It's going to be fine, Spence," she whispered in his ear. "Don't worry." Spencer wanted to take comfort in her words, but to him, it sounded like she was trying to comfort herself.

The television picture cut to a shot of the newsroom, where the man Daddy always referred to as Mr. Cronkite was sit-

ting behind a desk. He spoke four words.
"The President is dead."

"**T**HERE WAS *a father with a little boy . . .*"
The Colemans hadn't watched any television for three days, ever since they had turned the picture off at three o'clock on November 22. Spencer didn't even watch "I Love Lucy," which could usually be counted on to occupy his mind and rid him of any internal troubles he may have.

" . . . a little girl, and a joy of each in the other . . ."

Instead he filled his time with math problems, fraction after fraction, begging Mom to create new problems for him after he ran out on his workbook sheet. It seemed to Spencer a fittingly solemn thing to do.

"In a moment, it was no more."

Now the whole family was gathered in the den, around the television. Spencer was curled on the couch. Liberty was sitting on the floor. Mom was sitting on the stairs, bottle-feeding little Johnny. Dad was sitting in the easy chair, smoking a cigarette. These were the funeral ceremonies.


"There was a husband who asked much and gave much . . ."

Eulogies. Daddy had told Spencer what a eulogy was. It was a speech, given at a funeral, in honor of a dead person. A senator was speaking now. Mike Mansfield. Spencer didn't understand what a lot of the sentences meant, but the words were powerful.

" . . . and out of the giving and the asking wove with a woman who could not be broken in life . . ."

Spencer knew he would remember November 22, 1963 for as long as he lived. Even though he had left it on his desk on his way out the door, he would remember the stupid paper-bag turkey. He would remember Mrs. Latham, so chipper one moment . . . "Whaddaya say, kids, should we turn on the radio?" . . . and so grim and pale the next. But most of all, Spencer would remember the feeling of vulnerability, the feeling that nothing can be taken for granted, and the best things can be taken away without warning.

" . . . and in a moment it was no more."

Author's note: The italicized quotes in the fourth and final section are selected parts of Senator Mike Mansfield's JFK eulogy. 

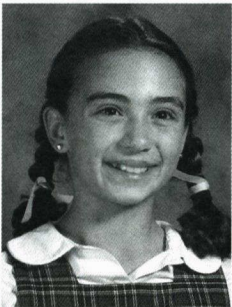
Speaking Up

By Rachel Weary

Illustrated by Leslie Osmont



Rachel Weary, 10
St. Albert, Alberta, Canada



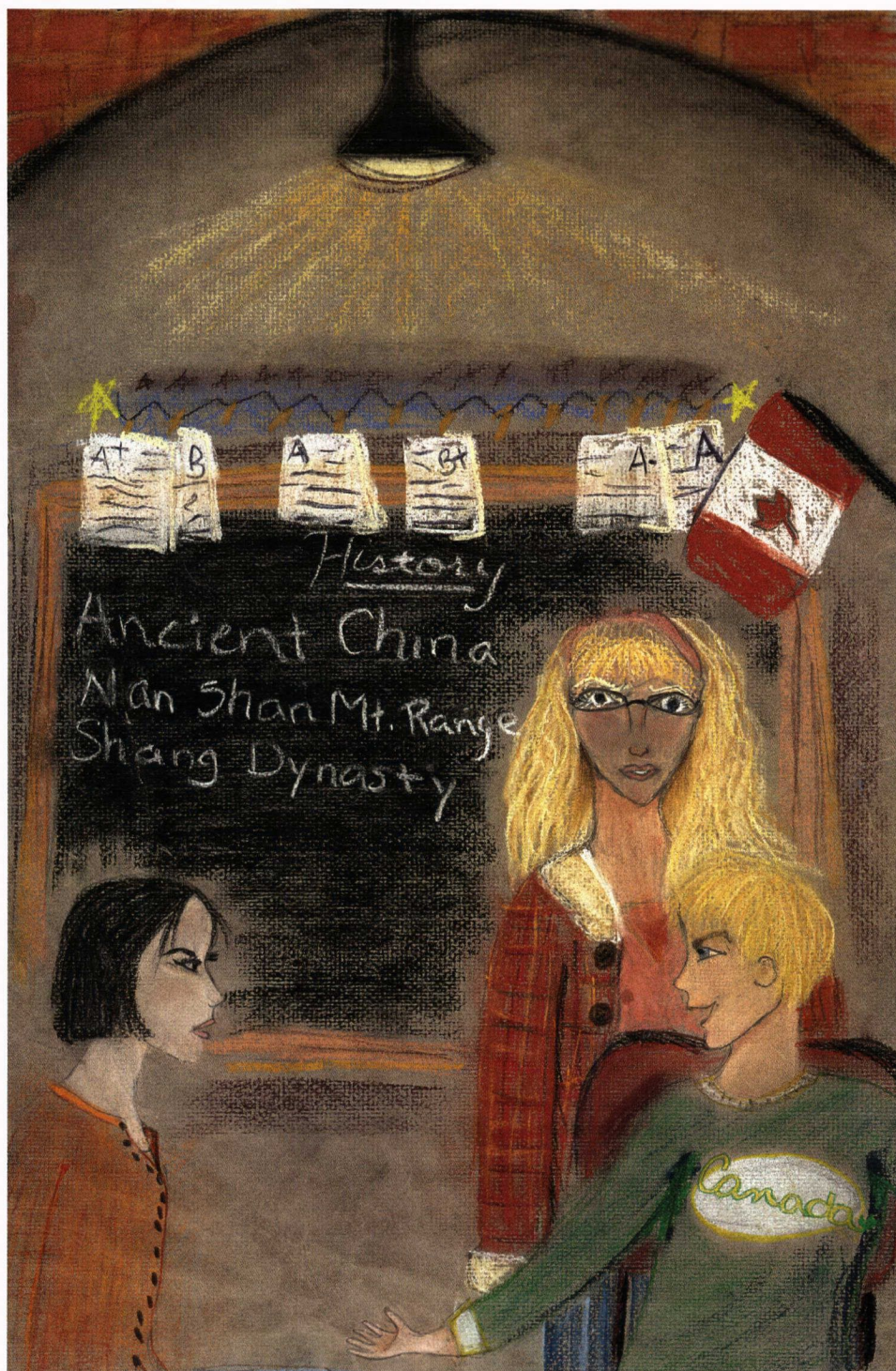
Leslie Osmont, 12
Colts Neck, New Jersey

ISOMETIMES THINK THAT “if only” must be the two most depressing words in the English language. How many times have you said to yourself, “If only I’d studied harder” or “If only I’d been there five minutes earlier.” If only I’d had the courage to speak up last fall, I wouldn’t be regretting it now.

Marion transferred from out of province into our class last September. She had straight dark hair stopping abruptly at chin-length and one of those porcelain complexions you see in magazines, although she never wore any makeup. Despite her naturally good looks, the better-dressed girls in our class didn’t view her as a serious contender in the fashion stakes as she always wore the same uniform of well-pressed jeans, flat shoes and a cardigan.

Marion sat opposite me in the next row and I could see by her marks that she was no slouch when it came to hitting the books. She kept pretty much to herself, although I would occasionally exchange remarks with her while we were waiting for the next class to start. I learned that her family had emigrated from Korea a few years back. Disliking the big city where they had initially settled, they opted to move to our small midwestern town and open a family business. I was intrigued with her story and once asked her to come over after school, but she replied that she had to work every day directly after school. I thought maybe she was shy or didn’t like me, so I left it at that.

The trouble all started the first morning I wore my new jacket



"So, Marion, tell us. Does your father work in a grocery store or is it a Chinese laundry?"

to school. Earlier in the summer, my mom had said that I would need a new winter jacket for school. Unfortunately, my mom's budget for clothes usually means the bargain basement at the local department store. I knew that the name-brand jackets that some of the kids wore were priced beyond our means, but I thought perhaps I could do better than bargain basement this time. I had done odd jobs all summer and saved every dime. Armed with the cash to hopefully pay the difference, I finally convinced my mom to take me to the local ski shop where there was a sale. My mom was dubious about getting a real bargain in a specialty shop, but at last she agreed. Finally, the red quilted jacket that I'd coveted for weeks in the store window was paid for and safely in my clutches.

As we left the store, my mom must have sensed some of my exuberance because she smiled at me and said, "Well, you certainly look nice in it." Then she sighed a little, her brow furrowing up anxiously and said, "Don't misunderstand me. You know that I want you to have nice things, but don't forget it's what's inside you that counts, not the packaging."

"Sure, Mom," I said absently, thinking only of wearing my fashionable apparel to school the next day.

My new jacket elicited a few surprised stares from the "in" crowd at school the next morning. Even Steve, who sits ahead of me in class, turned around before math and said, "Hey, nice jacket. So, do you ski or what?" I felt myself flushing. Steve had

actually spoken to me! With his streaky blond hair and confident manner, Steve positively exuded cool, or so most of the class thought. Marion looked at me from across the aisle.

"I like your jacket," she said quietly. "I think it's a pretty color."

Steve was still half-turned in his seat, listening. He stared at Marion as if he was seeing her for the first time and then said loudly with a sly grin, "So, Marion, tell us. Does your father work in a grocery store or is it a Chinese laundry?" I was stunned. I could feel my face turning hot in disbelief while the rest of the class sat waiting expectantly.

Marion looked straight back at Steve and then said with a quiet dignity, "My father owns a convenience store. My sister and I help out there after school." Our math teacher came in just then, so no one had a chance to say anything else. I couldn't concentrate on the lesson. How could Steve have said something so intentionally, well, racist? I glanced over at Marion, but she was suddenly absorbed in her math book and didn't look up.

After morning classes, I didn't know what to do. I followed Marion to her locker and began awkwardly, "Listen Marion, I'm really sorry about what Steve said. He had no right to talk to you like that."

Marion looked at me the same way she'd looked at Steve and said calmly, "Maybe you should have told Steve that." She pulled out her lunch bag from her locker and headed down the hall, with-

out so much as a backwards glance. I got through afternoon school somehow and went straight home.

Mom asked cheerfully, "So how was school? Was the new jacket a big hit?"


"Sure," I muttered, but she must have noticed that I was somewhat subdued because she looked at me in a questioning way.

Then she asked, "What's the matter? Did something happen at school today?" I put my books down on the kitchen counter and tried to explain what had happened. Mom listened while I concluded rather lamely about not speaking up on behalf of Marion because I was afraid of being picked on as well, but my argument sounded weak even to me. All my life I had loathed people who tried to put down other people or laughed at their expense. Now I felt like I belonged in that company.

I didn't sleep very well that night. Long before dawn I was awake for good, staring at the darkness and trying to find a way through the maze of trouble that I suddenly found myself surrounded with. When morning came I knew only one thing—that I had to put things right with Marion somehow. I arrived at school early, knowing Marion was usually studying in the library before classes started. Seeing Marion working at one of the study tables, I began to walk toward her with mounting apprehension. When she looked up at me

with an expressionless face, my determination became a little shaky.

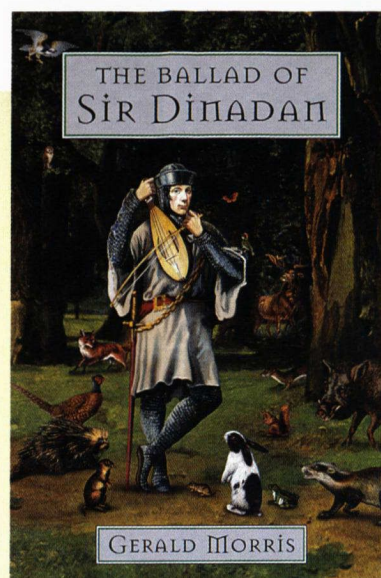
All of a sudden it occurred to me that maybe I was trying to make myself feel better and not Marion. Hadn't I tried to excuse myself to my mom saying that it wasn't me that was directly responsible for Marion's hurt feelings? I had a sudden, painful recollection of my social teacher saying to our class that history should teach us that if you're not part of the solution, then you're part of the problem. My rehearsed excuses died in my throat and I could say nothing at all, except that I was sorry, because now I knew there was nothing else I could say. Marion looked at me with a mild expression, then picked up her pen and continued writing.

THAT WAS three months ago and not much has changed. All that really remains of that day in the fall is a feeling of having let Marion down. Marion keeps pretty much to herself, but then so do I these days. We don't exchange much beyond "hi" in the classroom. I certainly don't think much of Steve anymore, but then the same goes for a surprising number of kids in our class. I'm amazed that we didn't see past the too-cool exterior before. Some days I think maybe there's a chance to still put things right, although I'm not sure how. And that thought fills me with hope. 

Book Review

By Nikki Friedman

The Ballad of Sir Dinadan by Gerald Morris;
Houghton Mifflin Company: Boston, 2003;
\$15



Nikki Friedman, 13
Piedmont, California


“**W**HAT DO YOU WANT TO BE when you grow up?” All of us children have been plagued by that awful question time and time again. Either we dutifully dole out a rehearsed answer, or we smile, saying we haven’t decided quite yet. But what if we really didn’t have a choice? What if our future had been chosen for us, before we were born, and we couldn’t change it, no matter what happened? I’m sure most children today would hate to be in a situation like that. However, this was not uncommon in the times of kings and knights, as is so wonderfully portrayed by Gerald Morris in his book, *The Ballad of Sir Dinadan*.

Dinadan loves to play the rebec, an ancient stringed instrument, and to make up ballads about great knightly deeds. Unfortunately, a minstrel’s life is not for him. Because of his family stature, Dinadan is expected to become a great knight of the Round Table, like his famous brother, Sir Tristram. Dinadan is very upset about this. He would much rather sing about knightly deeds than perform any of his own! But he has no say in the matter, and at age eighteen, Dinadan is knighted and sent out into the world to make a name for himself in King Arthur’s court. Right away, he runs into adventure. From fighting duels to saving damsels in distress, Dinadan is always in a predicament,

and the reader is constantly enthralled by his many adventures.

I loved the way Gerald Morris did not make all of the knights into flawless heroes, like other King Arthur stories I have read. Each of the knights had good and bad personality traits and some were very funny in their stupidity. For example, in some other books, the characters of Sir Kai and Sir Bedivere are very noble and knightly, but they don't have very much personality. However, in this book, Bedivere is a kind person who couldn't hurt a fly, and will go far out of his way to help the most horrible people. His opposite and his best friend, Kai, is pessimistic and sarcastic. I loved reading about the hilarious pair that they made together.

In my history class, I read the love story of Tristram and Iseult. I thought it was very boring, and when I found out that it was in this book, I was unexcited. However, when I read the book, I was pleasantly surprised. The story was much more realistic and funnier than in my history textbook. In fact, one of my favorite characters in this entire book was Dinadan's brother, Tristram. He is a famed knight throughout the land, but when Dinadan meets him, he turns out to be a bumbling idiot who is extremely irritating and talkative.

One of my favorite things about this book was the music. I am a very musical person; I play several instruments, and I sing in a choir. I would love to be able to write music, but I'm a terrible composer. Thus, I was all the more impressed with all the wonderful (and often funny!) ballads that Dinadan made up on his quests. I wish I could make up such great songs like that! This book truly gave me a lot of respect for the minstrels of King Arthur's day. 

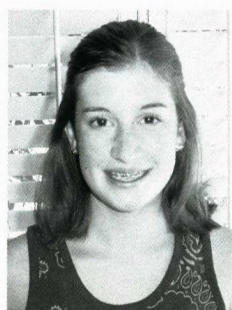
Grandpa's Locket

By Jessica Ro

Illustrated by Kristin Allmon



Jessica Ro, 11
Santa Monica, California



Kristin Allmon, 13
San Jose, California

SO, GRANDPA, HOW'S LIFE been treating you?" my older brother asked cheerfully.

My grandpa just shot back an icy look, looking at him for a long time without a blink.

"OK," my brother whispered, raising his eyebrows.

"So, Dad," my mom said with a fake smile, "are you planning to go on vacation or something? All you do is roam around your house in Wisconsin. That's no fun."

We were in a nice, Italian restaurant in Hollywood, trying to get Grandpa to at least move. Grandpa is hard to explain. He doesn't like to do really anything, except scratch the back of my dog, Storm, who doesn't even like Grandpa scratching him. He always wears a checkered shirt with gray suspenders and a brown hat that covers his bald head.

Once again Grandpa just stared at my mom with that same look. She moved to the back of the velvet chair, deciding not to talk again.

"Hello, what would you like today from our fine cuisine?" the waiter said as he came in his nice shirt and silk vest.

"You have pancakes?" Grandpa muttered.

"No, sir, but we have scrumptious past- . . ."

But Grandpa interrupted him and stood up, walking away from the table grumbling, "What kind of restaurant is this?"

We drove away from the restaurant into the dark freeway in silence. I flicked my auburn hair away from my eyes as the heater of the car grumbled, warming the cold night.

"Grandpa just ruins everything," I said to myself.

"What did you say?" my mom asked, turning around from the front, with her silver glasses rim on her nose.

"Come on, just think about it," I said with annoyance in my voice. "I'm supposed to be at Emma's party, Kyle's supposed to be at a football game, you're supposed to be at a meeting. We blew off all those events to see Grandpa walk away from a restaurant."

"Your grandfather will always be your grandfather, and when he's in town we'll do anything that he wants, even if it includes missing some pleasurable events."

"God, I wish Grandpa hadn't come. I just wish he'd stay on the farm, he doesn't like us anyways," my brother, Kyle, said as he rubbed his blue eyes from sleepiness.

"Yeah, why does Grandpa always have to bother us? I wish he'd just disappear," I said as I pulled the ribbon on my blue dress.

I was changing from the dress into my pink pajamas when I heard my mom and brother talking softly.

"Why do they always have little conversations without me?" I said to myself.

I walked into the kitchen where they were talking. Mom and Kyle were still in their evening outfits, sitting on the short, wooden stools.

"What are you guys talking about?" I asked, giving a yawn.

"I don't have to stand Grandpa anymore!" Kyle shouted with a huge smile on his face.

"Kyle, that's not the way to say it," Mom said while reading a letter.

"What are you reading, Mom?" I asked as I looked over her shoulder, seeing a long letter with the word "Congratulations!" printed on the top.

"I got accepted into the honor football team in New York! It's for a month! We even get to go on first class of the airplane! I'm leaving in two days, if Mom lets me," Kyle said, standing up from the stool.

"Well, it's summer break. I guess you . . ."

"Yes!" Kyle shouted. "Thank you, Mom!"

My mom gave a sigh and looked at me as he skipped into the room. He stopped to look at me and gave a smirk and muttered, "Good luck with old man grump."

Kyle had left, "generously" giving Grandpa all to me.

"Mom, let me leave too! You got to!" I begged.

"For the tenth time, no!"

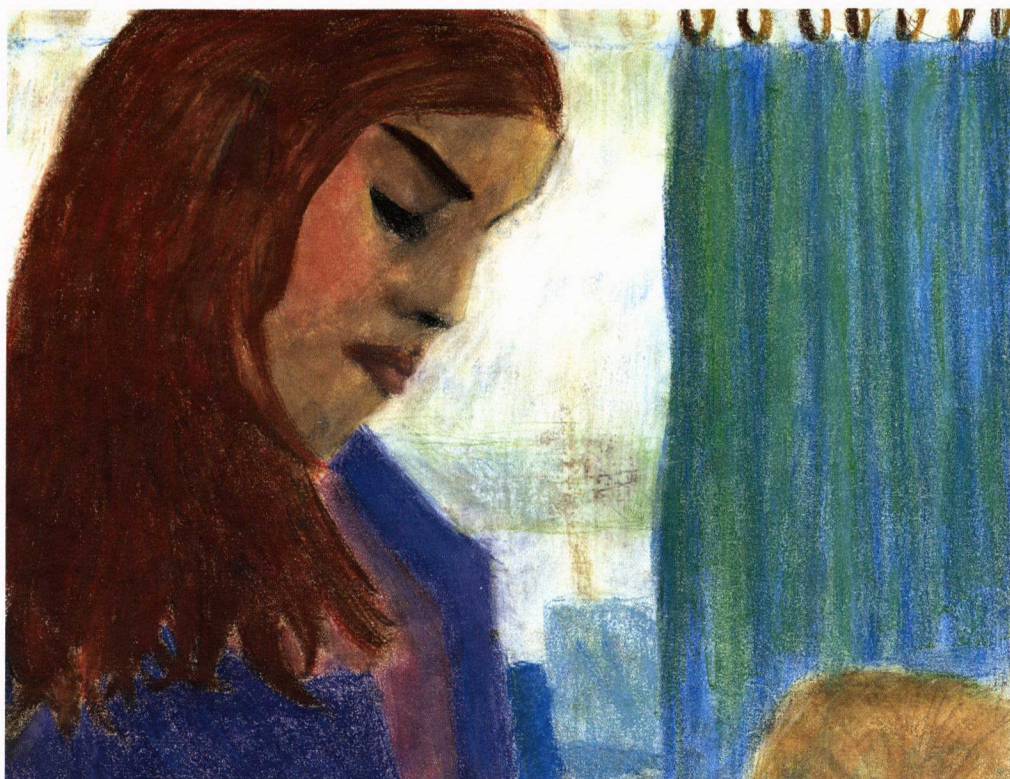
I growled at her and slammed my door as I went into my room. I saw an envelope on my bed. I quickly opened it, hoping it would be a letter that would send me away from Los Angeles. It wasn't, but it was an invitation to Derek's birthday. It was tomorrow.

Gosh, I thought, they should tell us sooner. What if we have plans or something?

The phone rang.

"I got it!" my mom shouted.

I slumped down on my pastel yellow



I opened the little clip and saw a picture. It was Grandpa holding me as a baby

bed and continued to read the invitation. I heard Mom answer the phone with a friendly "Hello," but then she immediately dropped her voice down. I let go of the invitation and walked toward the living room.

"OK, I'm coming as soon as I can," I heard her say.

"Where?" I asked. I saw her wringing the telephone wire on her finger with a worried look on her face. She nodded and hung up the phone.

"Get your jacket," my mom said quickly. "We need to go somewhere."

My mom drove to the hospital nearby. The red ambulance siren was ringing and

I saw a few men carry out an injured man.

"Oh my God, something really bad happened," I said to myself as I thought who could've got injured.

I ran in with my mom as her blond hair flew ahead of mine. We jerked to a stop in front of the emergency room, and saw a nurse with a white gown and a tight bun.

"Excuse me, I'm a relative of Steven Jonas," my mom said to the nurse.

"Follow me," she said.

We walked in and I saw Grandpa in numerous numbers of tubes. I screamed and the nurse quickly led me out of the room.

"What happened?" I asked the nurse.

"Your grandpa had a surprise heart at-

tack," she said in a calm voice.

How could she sound so relaxed? I sunk down into a chair behind me and started crying. Emotions spilled out for a person I thought I hated. Someone I had wished would just go away and stop bothering my family. But Grandpa was family too. I'd just realized that.

"Will he be OK?" I asked in sobs.

The nurse, who was now kneeling next to me, nodded, squeezed my hand and left. Suddenly, my mom walked out and held my hand and led me in the room again.

"Don't be scared," she whispered to me.

I gasped when I saw Grandpa, tangled up in the tubes, looking so helpless. Mom stroked my hair and tried to soothe me but I gave lifeless stares at him, with tears pouring out from my blurry green eyes.

"Grandpa," I whispered, my hands covered over my mouth from shock.

Mom and I had stayed at the hospital overnight, sleeping on the small, lumpy sofa next to the door of the room. We were woken up next morning by the nurse who shook us. I opened my eyes very slowly as she said those awkward words, "Your grandpa wants to talk to you."

First, I forgot where I was, but as I walked in, a pale finger pointed toward me. It was Grandpa. I walked close to Grandpa and sat next to him. He used all his strength to take off a necklace. Taking gasps between words, my grandpa said very softly, "This is for you." He got my hand and put the necklace in it.

I looked at the golden necklace. It was made of a rusty, golden chain, with a small thick heart in the center. The heart seemed to be a locket, so I opened the little clip and saw a picture. It was Grandpa holding me as a baby. I was laughing and clapping my hands in the picture, and Grandpa was giving a soft smile. I never saw this picture before. I began to cry softly when I looked up and saw Grandpa about to speak again.

"This is the most memorable picture I have of you and me. Remember, Sarah, I love you, and I always will," Grandpa said very slowly.

"I love you too, Grandpa," I said, barely able to speak. I never knew I would say those words, but I truly meant it. I loved this man. He was my grandfather. He had loved me. I had never taken the time to go up to Grandpa to figure out if I loved him. I put my head on his shoulder when I heard him say softly, "Remember, I love . . ." I looked up and saw his eyes closed and his body still. I hugged him for a long time, crying quietly.

"I love you too, Grandpa, I hope you know that, I love you," I said. Later on, I began to walk away, with my head down, crying on the necklace that was lying still in my hand. I was sad, but at the same time, happy too. I found the love for Grandpa that I never knew existed.

At home, I sat on my bed and opened the locket. I looked at the picture and kissed it.

"I love you Grandpa, I do."





Sandra knew she'd never leave—Arizona was much too beautiful to ever leave behind

The 54th Rider

By **Veronica Engler**

Illustrated by **Mary Rachel Thompson**

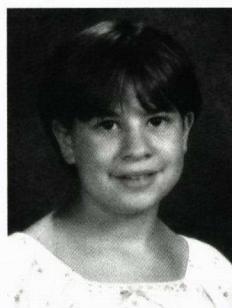
SANDRA LOOKS OUT into the crowd. Her face is firm, her lips set in a straight line. This is it—the moment she’s been waiting for for nearly ten years. She pulls her hat brim down over her eyes and pulls on her gloves, worn from the hard labor back when she helped her father on the ranch. She pats the pockets on her old jeans and straightens her favorite blue shirt. Then she turns and walks to the pen where the bulls are kept.

She climbs on the bull—with help from the rodeo clowns—and begins to tighten the rope around her hand. She looks up and as she does so, sees her brother-in-law, Roger, wave at her from the crowd. She doesn’t smile, just nods, and lets her mind wander to the day this all began.

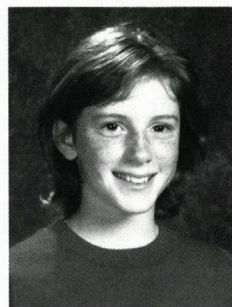
IT HAD BEEN a splendid day; the sun was up and shining down on the red dust that carpeted the ranch and everything on it. She had risen early, wanting to get her chores done so she could have some time to herself.

Sandra had breathed in the deep smell of desert, soaking in the lovely hues of the place everyone called wasteland. Her home had never been that to her—it wasn’t the middle of nowhere at all. On the contrary, it was right smack in the middle of Mother Nature and all her other children. Sandra knew she’d never leave—Arizona was much too beautiful to ever leave behind.

Sandra talked to the horses as she shoveled out their beds of



Veronica Engler, 13
Gilbert, Arizona



Mary Rachel Thompson, 11
Washington, North Carolina

hay and stocked their trough with oats. Her favorite was an amber mare brought in from the wild a few years ago. She had taken to Sandra and Sandra had eventually given her a name—Dawn.

"An' how you doin', Ms. Dawn?" Sandra had asked, giving her a loving pet on the nose. Dawn whinnied in reply.

"Yes, I reckoned you'd say that," Sandra replied, looking out the window of the barn. "It sure is a lovely day."

Sandra had been twelve then, just barely blooming into a young lady. She loved flowers and kittens, horses and little children, too. But there was one thing in her life she lived for—bull riding.

Technically, it wasn't bull riding yet—Sandra had barely been a year at riding calves. But someday she would graduate to bulls—if her sister didn't stop her first.

Sandra had just finished her chores and was taking out her favorite calf—Little Yellow Jacket—when her father and Roger appeared at the corral. Sandra didn't mind them—they often came out to the corral to talk about something or another.

Sandra seated herself on Little Yellow Jacket and bent down to whisper to him. "Give me your worst, Little Jacket; I've ridden you every time." With that, she gave his hindquarters a jab with her spurs and they set off in a whirlwind of dust and kicks.

Sandra held her hand high, trying her best to stay on. Most calves went into a wave motion when spurred, so that all the rider had to do to stay on was to move with them. Little Yellow Jacket was dif-

ferent—he'd twist and jump, curving his body into impossible angles and jerking to the sides when Sandra least expected it.

Somewhere in all the melee, Sandra heard Roger say to her father, "Whoa! She's good! You teach her?"

She heard her father reply, "No, she did that all by herself. She is awfully good, isn't she?"

Sandra could hear her sister, Diane, her elder by ten years, yell from the house, "Oh, you boys! Don't encourage her!"

Diane had been the girly-girl, the one who loved cooking and wanted to stay inside all day. Sandra had never been like that—she had always loved the smell of the wind in the evening and the color of the Arizonan dust on her black boots.

After a while, Sandra was finally bucked from Little Yellow Jacket's back. She got up slowly as her dad led the calf away. She dusted the red from her pants and turned to go back to the house. On the way there, Roger stopped her.

"You're good," he said.

"So you say," she answered. She was tired and her throat was aching for a glass of water.

"Would you like to go to the Championships one day?" he asked.

"Yeah, one day." She turned to go back inside when Roger called out to her.

"You could, you know!"

She slowly pivoted on her heel. "What are you saying? That I could go to the Championships?"

He smiled, a bit gap-toothed, his face sweating beneath his rusty orange hair.

"That's what I said."

"But no woman has ever made it to the Championships."

"How would you like to be the first?"

Sandra was silent for a moment. "You really think I could?"

Roger's smile widened. "Sure do."

"How? I don't even have a trainer."

"Sure you do."

Sandra looked around, as though expecting to see a trainer magically appear from behind the crates stacked against the stables. "Where?"

"Well right here!"

Sandra almost giggled. "A funny-looking man like you being my trainer?"

"Yes," Roger nodded. "I don't think Diane ever told you this—I think she might be embarrassed by it, don't know why—but I used to be a bull rider."

Sandra cocked her head. "Really?"

"Yes, I almost made it to the Championships, but," he shook his head, "I got out on the qualification rides. I got paired up with a really old bull—I reckon he had been all ridden-out years before."

"Ah." Sandra scuffed the dirt with the heel of her boot. She understood. Riders were not only judged on their ability to ride, but also by how healthy and hard-bucking their bull was.

"Could we start tomorrow then?"

"What?" Roger looked slightly bewildered.

"Tomorrow. Could we start training tomorrow?"

"Sure." Roger and Sandra walked into the house together, discussing her new

training that would begin the next morning.

THAT WAS HOW she had gotten here today.

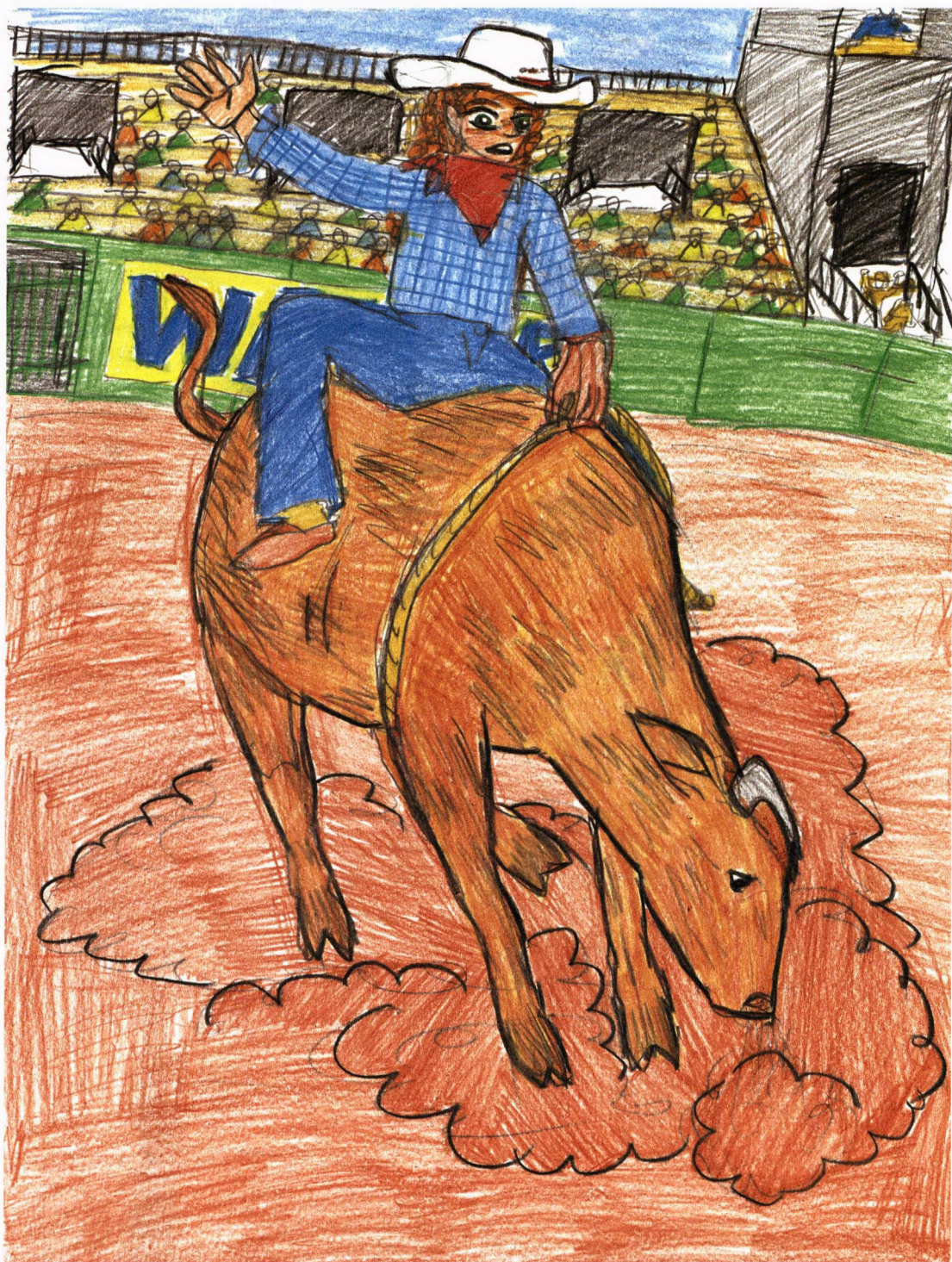
Sandra tightens the rope that connects her hand to the bull's back and looks up into the pink faces of the crowd. They're booing and whispering among themselves. Sandra can't blame them. After all, how did a skinny, freckle-faced, frizzy-haired woman of twenty-two ever make it past the preliminary qualifications anyway? And the bull she is riding doesn't help.

Sandra brings her free hand down to pat the snorting bull, its once-cinnamon hair now graying and coarse. This bull has not been ridden successfully for nearly seven years. Out of the 53 tries to ride the bull for eight seconds, not one cowboy has managed it.

Sandra tenses her body, ready for the pen to open as the announcer blares, "Now, Sandra Allison riding Widow Maker!"

The pen opens and instantly Sandra is thrown into a hurricane of jerks and twists, her body wrenching and slamming into the bull's back. She keeps one hand held high, just as Roger taught her, because if her free hand touches the bull all her training and work will go to waste as the announcers declare it a no-ride.

She tries to concentrate on keeping herself on the bull's back as it twists itself into a complete circle, and a thought vaguely flickers across her mind of the day she first came to Las Vegas. It seems kind



"Now, Sandra Allison riding Widow Maker!"

of ironic to compare a bull to a city, but that's what Las Vegas was like. So full of colors and lights, all blaring and fighting each other for your eye's attention . . .


Widow Maker suddenly bucks into a wave, a classic cattle move Sandra does not expect. Her head slams into Widow Maker's shoulder blades and she begins to slide off. Her head is pounding, but she knows she must stay on. With a mighty show of strength she throws her body weight to the side, letting herself slide back into position.

Quite suddenly, the bell rings out, jogging her out of her concentration. Sandra straightens as best as she can while trying to stay on Widow Maker. Now comes the hard part. She lets go, forcing herself off to Widow Maker's right side. But something is wrong. Her hand is stuck, tied onto the bull's back with coarse rope. Sandra knows this is a common thing to happen, but all the same, that does not make it any less dangerous.

Sandra tries desperately to free her hand, twisting and pulling at it until her palm starts to bleed. She is being pulled alongside the bull now, and every so often an ill-aimed kick flogs her. She has almost

gotten her hand free when Widow Maker makes a sudden turn, throwing Sandra in front of his forelegs.

Sandra's cry is lost in the gasp of the crowd as Widow Maker's left hoof strikes into Sandra's ribs. The force of its blow rolls Sandra onto her back, only to be kicked again by the bull's back legs. She doesn't cry this time, merely groans as Widow Maker's hooves plow into her and he snorts and paws the ground.

Her hand is free now and as she rolls from under Widow Maker's hooves the rodeo clowns jump in front of Widow Maker to distract him and chase him back into his pen. Sandra lies there a moment, then, thinking Widow Maker might come back for her, she crawls over to the side and slowly stands up. She leans against the wall as one of the rodeo clowns brings her hat. She nods gratefully and puts on the hat, tugging the brim of it down to hide her eyes. The rodeo clown helps her as they walk back to the gates. The crowd, which has been silent except for a few scattered gasps, suddenly erupts into cheers as Sandra looks back and smiles, winking at her brother-in-law in the third row. 

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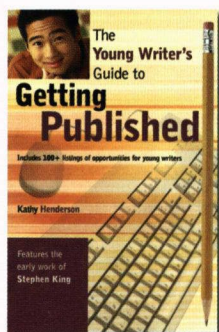
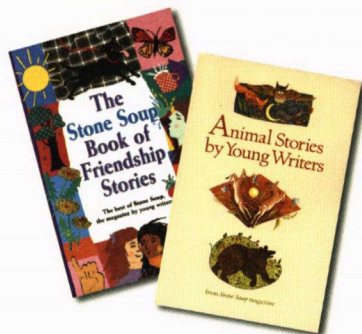
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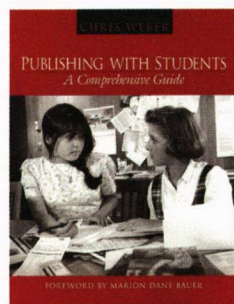
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