

Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists



"Survakari (Carnival)," by Elena Dimova, age 9, Bulgaria

LOSING GRIP

Alex finds friendship and adventure on a rock-climbing expedition

THE THIEF OF BUBASTIS

In ancient Egypt, a young girl is falsely accused of a crime

Also: Illustrations by Natalie Chin and Vivien Rubin

A review of *The Whale Rider*

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2005

\$5.75 US \$7.50 CANADA

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The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists

VOLUME 33, NUMBER 3
JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2005

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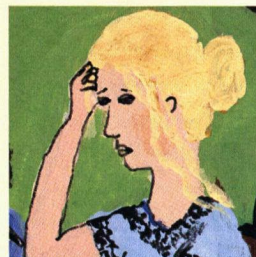
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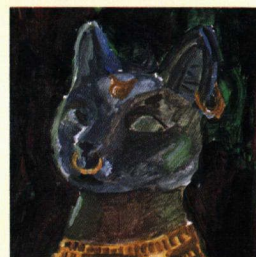
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Stone Soup is printed on recycled paper

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Stone Soup (ISSN 0094 579X) is published six times a year by the Children's Art Foundation, 765 Cedar Street, Suite 201, Santa Cruz, CA 95060. Phone: 800-447-4569. It is published bimonthly in January/February, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, and November/December. Volume 33, Number 3. Copyright ©2005 by the Children's Art Foundation. All rights reserved. Reproduction of the whole or any part of the contents without written permission is prohibited. *Stone Soup* is mailed to members of the Children's Art Foundation. Eighty percent of the membership fee is designated for subscription to *Stone Soup*. In the United States, a one-year membership costs \$34, two years \$55, three years \$75. Rates to Canada and Mexico are an additional \$6 per year. Rates to all other countries are an additional \$12 per year. Please remit in U.S. funds or the equivalent amount in your own currency. Please send SUBMISSIONS, SUBSCRIPTIONS, and ADDRESS CHANGES to: *Stone Soup*, P.O. Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063. POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to *Stone Soup*, P.O. Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063. Periodical postage paid at Santa Cruz, CA and additional offices. Printed in Canada.

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: "Survakari (Carnival)" was loaned to *Stone Soup* by Paintbrush Diplomacy of San Mateo, California. For over 25 years, Paintbrush Diplomacy has worked to promote children's artistic expression around the world and to raise awareness of children's causes. Special thanks to Louise Valeur and Char Pribuss.

The Mailbox



LBP, 9

I really enjoyed the story "A Bird's Prophecy" [September/October 2004] by Annam Nayak. The way it was written made it sound like a fairy tale that should be passed on from generation to generation. And what story would be complete without vivid and colorful illustrations from someone like Nicolas Hugon? Both did a wonderful job together, thank you for publishing it!

JULIA WHITE, 10
Tacoma, Washington

Nice kick, Hudson Jetton. You've got skill in both soccer and writing.

MAGGIE BELOKUR, 13
Towanda, Pennsylvania

Hudson's poem, "Penalty Kick," appeared in our July/August 2004 issue.

I have been an avid fan of your magazine since I was nine. It was about that time that I decided I really wanted to be an author. I have sent in countless stories over the past year and a half, without success. Thank you so much for inspiring me to be an author. I read the stories of other children and I want so much to be like them and see my story in a magazine for thousands to read. I have every single issue printed since 1999 and I read stories from them often. Not only has reading these stories helped me, but sending in my stories has helped me gain confidence for my writing. Showing my stories to others and seeing their approval has helped boost my goal to be an author even more. Thank you so much for your influence.

ERIN WRIGHTSON, 13
Lexington, Kentucky

I really like your magazine. I read a sample copy and that would have to be the best kids' magazine that I have read. I think your magazine has a great combination of different ways of writing. I especially like the poem called "Diego" [July/August 2003]. I hope your magazine will never go out of business because I love your magazines so much!

MICHAEL AVGERINOS, 11
Piscataway, New Jersey

I would like to congratulate Talia Lester on her excellent review of *The Sight* [March/April 2004]. I read *The Sight* and thought it would be a "good vs. evil, love vs. hate" story, with the heroine living happily ever after. At first I thought Morgra was good!! Wrong, wrong, and wrong again! Talia made some *awesome* points about this book, and described it very well. Good job! She should think about becoming a book critic!

ARADIA KELLEY, 13
Eugene, Oregon

When I got my *Stone Soup* magazine I packed it in my suitcase to take to camp. When I got to the story "Persistence" by Preston Craig [July/August 2004] I loved it! The story showed a lot of persistence but it also teaches kids a lesson: it teaches kids to keep on trying and that everyone is good at something and when you are good at something you don't have to be the best!! Preston Craig, I loved your story, keep on writing!!

VANESSA YOUNG, 11
Middletown, Connecticut

Preston's new story is on page 5 of this issue.

All the work mentioned in The Mailbox can be found 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.



"Times are tough all over," Father said slowly and reluctantly

A Second Beginning

By **Preston Craig**

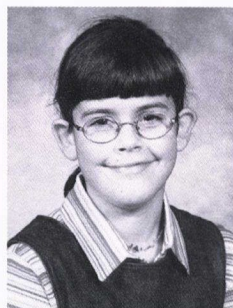
Illustrated by **Natalie Chin**

IT WAS A DARK, CLOUDY evening when Father told us the news. Our family was gathered around the worn dinner table in the small kitchen of our farmhouse. My father was sitting in his usual seat at the head of the table, his callused hands clasped together and his elbows resting on the faded tablecloth. He looked from me to my eleven-year-old brother, James, and finally to my mother. Her eyes looked sad as she met his nervous gaze. They had been strangely quiet all through dinner. As eleven- and thirteen-year-old children, my brother and I rarely spoke at the table unless we were spoken to.

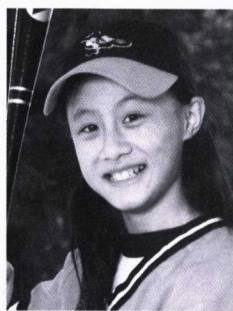
Mother took a deep breath. "Jack," she said quietly. "What's done is done. We must tell the children." She sighed and brushed a strand of blond hair out of her brown eyes.

Father nodded. His face was lined with sorrow, which startled me. He was a strong man. Everything about him seemed sturdy. He stood six feet tall, broad-shouldered and muscular, with sun-burned skin from years of working in the cornfields of our farm in upstate New York. It was usually hard to tell his inner emotions because he never let them show.

"Times are tough all over," Father said slowly and reluctantly. "These past few years have been hard on all the farmers around here." I knew this was true. Although my parents didn't talk to my brother and me about it, we had overheard our parents talking. Our crops had been doing badly for the past two years, and we had been able to sell very little of our harvest. I knew my father had had to borrow money from the bank in town just



Preston Craig, 10
Mount Pleasant, South Carolina



Natalie Chin, 12
Bellevue, Washington

to keep the farm going. He was a proud man and hated to do it, but he had had no choice.

"We've lost the farm," he finally said. He looked down and shook his head.

James froze with shock. I was thunderstruck, clutching the edge of the old wooden table to keep from falling out of my chair. James and I were both born in the little farmhouse. It was all we had ever known.

There was a long silence. We all expected Father to continue, but he seemed unable to. My mother, sensing this, said softly, "We owed the bank more money than we could repay. We held on as long as we could." She paused. "The bank is taking the farm."

"Where will we go?" James asked fearfully, his voice shaking. I looked at Father, wondering what would become of us.

"West Virginia," Father replied quietly. "We're going to West Virginia. There was a man in town last week from a coal mine down there. He says they have jobs, and the coal company will pay for our train tickets and give us a house when we get there. Your mother and I have discussed it, and we think it's best. There's always a job open there, and if I do good work, I'll be well paid." He paused and looked at each of us. "We leave on a train next Wednesday."

No one said anything for a long time. I turned and looked at James. His dark green eyes were full of a sadness deeper even than mine, and he looked as though he might cry. I restrained myself from

reaching out to grab his hand, though I wanted to badly. But I knew that he didn't like me touching him, now that he was eleven and "growing up" as he put it.

Mother cleared her throat. "It's getting late," she said briskly. "James, Anna, you should be in bed."

James and I silently got up from the table and cleared and washed the dishes, as we did every night. Then we went upstairs. We stood at the top of the stairs, not knowing what to say. James whispered, "Anna, I don't want to move."

I replied, "Neither do I. But there's nothing we can do about it. At least we'll all be together."

Later, as I pulled my thin blanket tight around me, I tried to imagine what West Virginia would be like. It was my last thought as I drifted off to sleep.

THE DAYS until we left passed quickly. Everything was a blur. A man from the bank came, and there was an auction to sell off the farm equipment and what little furniture we had. Father stood outside, stony-faced, watching as things were carted away. James, Mother, and I remained inside, unable to watch. We busied ourselves, packing the few things we would be taking with us into trunks. Sadly, we bid our few neighbors farewell.

It seemed that only a few minutes had passed from the moment of Father's announcement that we were moving to the time that we were boarding a crowded train to West Virginia. I had never been on a train before, and for the first time in

days I was looking forward to something. The journey was to last five days, Father told us, for the train would make frequent stops along the way to pick up passengers.

My excitement soon wore off, for the train was stiflingly hot and crowded, and it moved sluggishly. I tried to begin a conversation with James not five minutes from the start of the journey, but it was difficult to hear each other or concentrate on what we were saying. There was so much noise, and so many people who couldn't seem to keep from treading on my feet.

As we neared New York City, James and I stared in awe through the grimy window at the bustling city. We had never seen such big buildings before, or so many people. As we disembarked from the train to get some air and something to eat, Mother seemed nervous and cautioned us to stay close. We bought some sandwiches from a street cart and sat on a wooden bench to eat them. As we ate, people swarmed toward the train, speaking loudly and excitedly in foreign languages that I had never heard before. Father called them "immigrants."

I thought the train ride would never end, but on the fifth day, during the evening, we stopped at a small town. The sign at the train station read: Red Jacket, West Virginia. James, Mother, Father, and I pushed and elbowed our way out of the train, along with many other riders. "It's the coal camp," I whispered to James. I looked down, and in doing so, I saw that the road's light brown dirt had been thick-

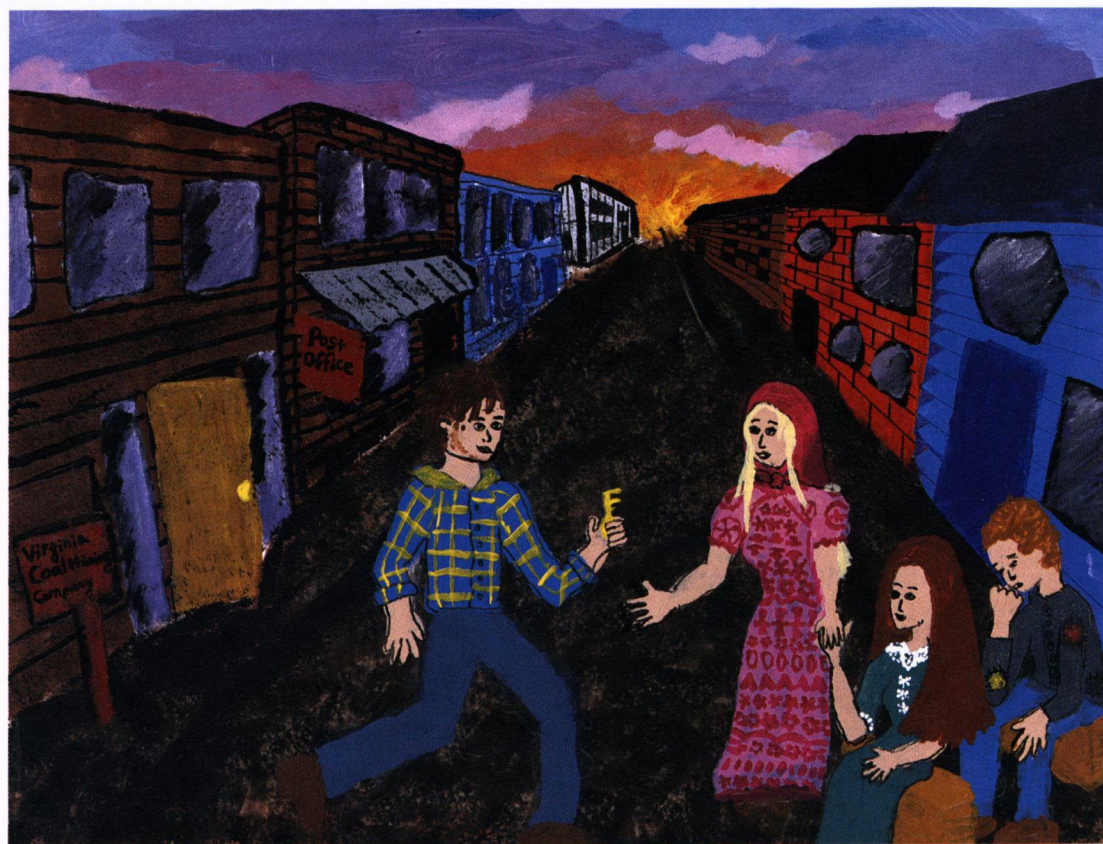
ened and darkened with a black powder. Even though I had never seen it before, I knew what it was. It was coal dust. I was shocked that it coated the streets, covering my shoes and, when a wind blew, blackening my clothes.

James's eyes widened as he stared. He jumped, startled, as Father called, "James! Come help with the trunks."

After James and Father had retrieved the trunks, we started down the street. We walked past large homes with several big windows. They looked even nicer than our old farmhouse. Across the street were neat wooden buildings with signs on posts out front. There was a store, post office, doctor's office, and the mining company's office. "Wait here," Father told us, and he went into the mining company's office. We sat on our trunks and waited. He came out a while later, holding a key. "I've been told where we're to live," he said. "I start work in the mines tomorrow."

We turned off the main street onto a smaller back street. Along this were rows of small, indistinguishable houses that reminded me of the rows of corn back on our farm. Father stopped in front of a little wooden house. It wasn't as roomy as the houses at the front of the street, but it looked sturdy. Though it was small, I didn't dislike it. It was better than my expectations, in fact. It had two stories, one door, and one window on each floor. Father twisted the doorknob and pushed the door open.

Inside, we looked around the room that was the first floor. The room had a bulky,



"I've been told where we're to live," he said. "I start work in the mines tomorrow"

iron, coal-powered stove, a table and four chairs, and a double bed in the corner. At the back wall was a stairway. As we ventured upstairs, I noticed that most of the stairs creaked.

The upstairs room had two beds, separated by a small table. A bare lightbulb dangled from the ceiling. It had one window, which cast dancing sunlight into the room, brightening it and making it seem more cheerful. "What's this room for?" I asked.

"It's the attic, and also where you and James will sleep," Mother said with a smile. "Your father will bring up our

trunks, and you can settle in."

James stared around at the empty space as Mother and Father disappeared down the stairs.

After a moment, Father came into our room, bearing James's and my trunks. We unpacked our few possessions. We had each been allowed to bring one of our personal belongings. James had brought a pad of paper and a pencil, because he loved to draw and was a talented artist. I had brought the one book I owned. We put our trunks at the foot of our beds.

James strode across the room and

peered out of the small window down at the street below. "There are so many people," he said quietly. "I've never seen so many people in one place."

"Neither have I," I replied, following him to the window and looking out, too.

We didn't speak for a moment, just stared down at the people milling around the street. All strangers. I took a deep breath, trying not to feel frightened and intimidated by the presence of so many people.

Father's voice broke into my thoughts. "Anna! James! Come downstairs!"

We went down and helped put things away in the kitchen. Then we ate dinner. Shortly afterward, we went upstairs to bed.

I lay awake for what felt like hours, but finally, I dropped into a restless sleep.

IN THE MORNING, I rose before the sun was up. I dressed and went downstairs to find Mother in the kitchen. Father and James had already left for the mine. In our new home, James and Father would work in the coal mine, and I would stay home and help Mother.


Mother and I went to the company store and bought the ingredients for bread and some dried beans. We paid in scrip, the money issued to us by the coal company. When we returned home, we cooked the beans and made bread for our evening meal.

Around seven o'clock, Father stepped through the door with James at his heels. Their eyes were tired and they clutched

the handles of their lunch pails. Their hair and clothes were black with coal dust. For a moment, we only stared at each other. Then Father put a hand on James's shoulder. "I think we did well for our first day," said Father, a hint of pride in his deep voice. James gave me a small smile, his white teeth glinting in his dusty gray face.

"Father works inside the mine, and I'm a nipper," he said. "I sit by a door in the mine and whenever I hear a coal cart coming, I open the door and close it when the cart's gone past."

After Father and James washed up, I set the table and Mother set out the beans and bread we had prepared. Father began to say grace, and I shut my eyes and folded my hands in front of me. Then, suddenly, a feeling of familiarity overcame me. Father finished saying the blessing and began to eat, leaving me feeling surprised and a little confused. Why had I felt that rush of familiarity? As I looked around the table, as I saw my parents at either end of the table and James sitting across from me, I realized that this was the way we'd been seated in our old farmhouse in New York. And with that realization came the knowledge that, though we were hundreds of miles from our old home, as long as we were together, that was all that really mattered. Life in Red Jacket would be different and probably hard, but we still had each other.

I passed the basket of bread to James, and we smiled as our eyes met. Then I spooned a portion of beans onto my plate and began to eat. 

To Sleep

By Juliet B. Quaglia



Juliet B. Quaglia, 10
Piermont, New York

Because I climb a ladder to sleep,
sometimes I feel it takes too long.
On the bottom rung,
I see the house, shadowed and cozy,
dark and peaceful,
already in another dream.
On the second rung,
I see the town, with each little house
drowning in blankets, and rarely
in silence, usually in snoring,
with families sleeping despite it.
But not me.

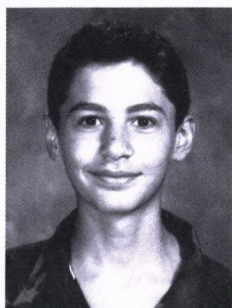
On the next rung, I see the country, amazed at
so many people
driving, walking, running, thinking, climbing
ladders to their own sleep.
On the next rung,
I see the world, and I realize
I'm not alone in my tired efforts
to fall asleep, but mostly,
I see that almost everyone is
snuggling with teddy bears, pillows,
blankets, spouses — anything soft they can grab.

I'm surprised at how fast they climbed
their ladders.
I reach for the next rung, but I
get a mattress instead.
I pull myself up, tuck myself in, close my eyes,
and feel my bed drift
back to the world,
back to the country,
back to the little town where people sleep,
back to the house,
and finally to sleep.

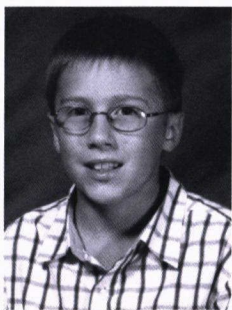
Hellish Beauty

By Zaki Moustafa

Illustrated by Ben Wisniewski



Zaki Moustafa, 13
West Palm Beach, Florida



Ben Wisniewski, 12
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

AS THE NIGHT BREAKS into dawn and the sky comes alive, the morning fog rolls through, dampening my uniform and freezing my skin. It billows and curls around the gnarled maple trees and obscures the leaf-strewn ground from my eyes. My dark, sad eyes. Eyes that have been tainted by war. This place would have been beautiful, had it not been for the hellish act that was to be committed here not long from now. May God forgive me. I pull off my cap and wipe my sweaty face on the sleeve of my tattered gray uniform. My legs ache from the long and miserable nights I have seen, but they continue to march mindlessly. I have no control. My worn and splintered musket rubs the skin on my shoulder raw; as it burdens me more with each step I take. Filthy flies follow us; my face is caked with dirt. My hair is long and unkempt, my hands, callused and rough. The steady sloshing of water in my canteen keeps me awake. The leaves are starting to take color as the sun begins to peak over the horizon. We must hurry. Men around me whistle sad tunes and stare at their feet. Being only fourteen years old, it was my choice to join this militia. I now wonder if I made a mistake.

Our regiment leader raises his fist and points ahead through the now clearing fog. A thick gray smoke is curling up through the trees . . . a campfire. The enemy is near. I can hear them, just waking up and fixing breakfast. They are young, just like me. We are ordered to remain silent and ready our rifles, and I do both, wondering whose young life I am going to destroy as I stuff the



They are young, just like me

lead bullet down the barrel and ready the gunpowder. A wave of nausea rolls over me. I don't want to be here.

We creep forward about forty yards and take up positions behind some large pines. The fog still protects us. From here, I can make out shadowy figures moving about the enemy camp. They are calm and unaware—none carries their weapons. I look over at the regiment leader and he raises his fist. I raise my weapon in the direction of the enemy. He holds up five fingers. I take aim. He proceeds to slowly drop each finger. I take a deep breath, close my eyes, and fire. The loud cracks of gunfire explode around me and the shadowy silhouettes fall. Their cries of pain are unbearable and al-

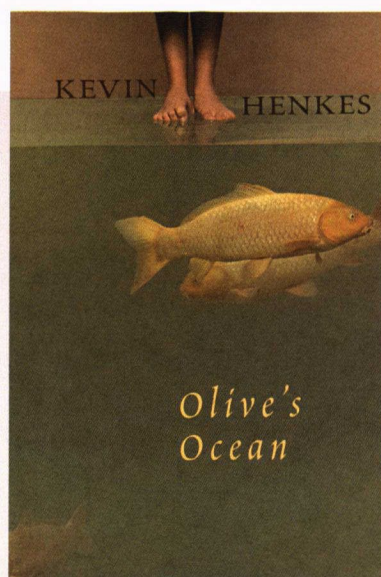
most all of them are dead after the first barrage. I drop my rifle and once again, noise explodes around me. Those who remained alive in the camp drop and lie still.

Dead men with their surprised eyes thrown wide open. I look down and nearly collapse. A boy, no older than I, lies sprawled on the cold ground, a bullet through his chest, as his open canteen slowly leaks its contents out onto the dirt. No one should have to die this young. I run over to the edge of their encampment and vomit. Taking a small sip from my canteen, I proceed back to my place in line and continue to march. I worry. We are planning a similar attack tomorrow, right here, within this hellish beauty. ☸

Book Review

By Isabel Ortiz

Olive's Ocean by Kevin Henkes; Greenwillow Books; New York, 2003; \$15.99




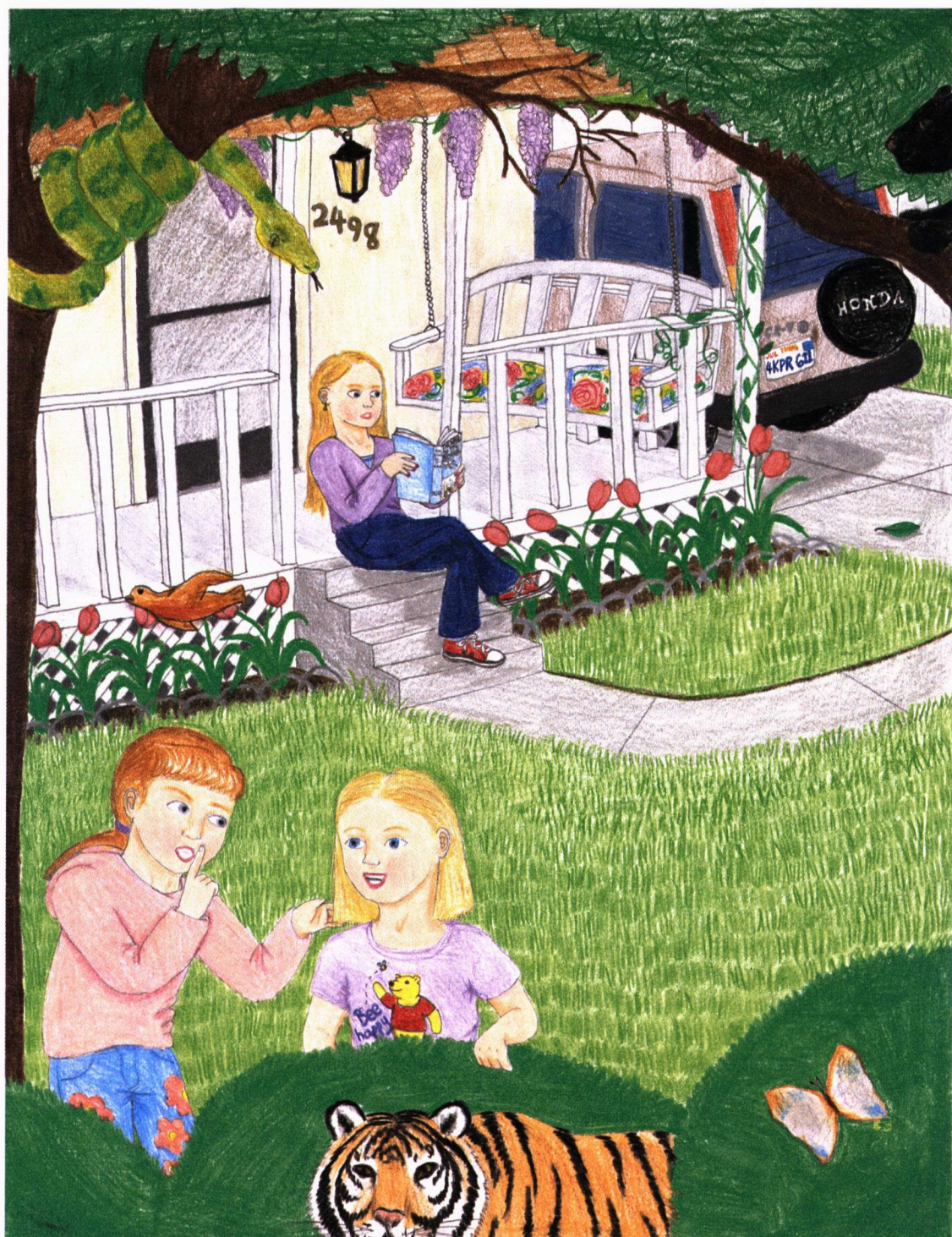
Isabel Ortiz, 12
Davis, California

OLIVE'S OCEAN SHOULD BE sold with a complimentary bag of Kleenex. I could tell from the beginning that this wasn't going to be *The Boxcar Children*. I must admit that I was really prepared for the worst. I've read soooo many books that are supposed to touch your heart and are just boring and predictable. This is not the case with *Olive's Ocean*. You see, Kevin Henkes is a true writer. He's not some sappy poetic writer wannabe. He has this way of writing that's plain but still very powerful. I play the cello, and when I just play a note really in tune and whisk the bow across the string neatly, it sounds just as good as when I wiggle my fingers a lot and do all these fancy flourishes. This lachrymose writing has an elegant simplicity that really works. And I'm not talking about the *Lily's Purple Plastic Purse* Kevin Henkes anymore. (Yes, it is the same author.) This new Kevin Henkes is more grim and sentimental. Just try to picture one of those perky and cute little mice having their classmate, Olive, being run over by a car, almost drowning on a vacation at their near-dead grandmother's beachside house, and being horribly betrayed by their boyfriend. Since the grandmother will die soon, she and our red-haired protagonist, Martha, have talking sessions about each other every day, and through talking with Granny and reading dead Olive's diary, Martha evolves into a

writer. She writes this haunting yet beautiful poem that is even better if you haven't read the book because it's just a chaotic jumble of a bazillion thoughts plopped on a piece of paper. I love that. She even plans to write a book, but we'll talk more about that later. At the beach, Martha finds love with the grandmother's neighbor, Jimmy, who turns out to be a total creep.

One thing that Kevin Henkes did take with him on the path to this tear-jerking read from a world of five-year-old mice, though, was his fabulous understanding of a kid's brain. Only Henkes can capture the feeling of the last day of a trip. I certainly know that feeling, considering the millions of trips my overworked parents are always taking the family on. Haven't we all experienced that sensation of "this is the last time I'll sleep on this pillow, the last time I'll walk through this door, the last glass of orange juice here . . . ?" I always feel like I have to do something special on the last day, but at the same time I want to remember what it was normally like here. I'll never forget choosing the last-dinner restaurant. Whether to pick a new, exciting one, or the boring, humdrum one we went to every day. (Being the more boring, humdrum type, I always choose that second option.)

But back to *Olive's Ocean*, there's only one thing that annoyed me. This is the type of book that you turn a lot of pages afterwards looking for more, and you yell obnoxiously to the poor book cover, "*What? That's it?*" (scaring the cat off the sofa). I am still not at peace as I write this review. What happened to Martha's book? Is Grandma dead yet? Did Martha keep writing? If you read this book, you won't find out. Don't worry though, it's still worth your time. *Olive's Ocean* is the type of book that makes you lean back and sigh. I felt so lucky to know that all my friends are with me, that my life is stable and good, and that I don't know any boys named Jimmy Manning. 



"Shh! You have to be very quiet. There are tigers"

Hermione and Leafy

By **Bethany Johnsen**

Illustrated by **Rachel Stanley**

“WHAT SHOULD WE PLAY?” the little girl asked of her older cousin.

The redhead stood and began walking up and down the bricks, using her arms for balance as if she were a tightrope walker at the circus. She furrowed her brow in concentration. “Sisters,” she said finally.

The little girl beamed with pleasure. She was happy just to be at her hero-worshipped cousin’s house on this beautiful day when she did not have to go to school, this beautiful day with the purple wisteria trees in bloom.

“Orphan sisters,” the redhead continued. “Our parents were explorers and they took us with them to go explore the jungle and they died out there, see? So now we’re two orphan sisters wandering around alone in the jungle. Trying to survive and find our way home.” She plopped down on the front steps with a self-satisfied smile. “My name’s gonna be Hermione; what about yours?”

The little girl spotted a small green leaf in the driveway. “Leafy,” she said.

“Emma, that isn’t a real name. Why don’t you just be . . . Crookshanks or something?”

“My name is Leafy.”

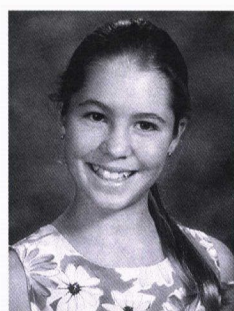
“Ohhh, fine.” The redhead heaved a great sigh. Five-year-olds. “How old do you wanna be?”

“Seven!” with an adoring gaze at her cousin.

The redhead scrunched up her face, trying to think up the biggest age imaginable. “I’m thirteen,” she said decidedly.



Bethany Johnsen, 13
Lindale, Texas



Rachel Stanley, 13
Seal Beach, California

So that was that. Hermione stood, brushing off the back of her floral-print jeans, only suddenly the pattern was camouflage. So was her formerly pink hoodie. She ran through the grass with her body doubled over, beckoning for Leafy to follow. Despite their camouflage clothing and the green and black paint they had smeared under their eyelids, they were still fairly easy for predators to spot. And here in the very heart of the jungle, predators were everywhere.

"What are we . . ." Leafy began.

But Hermione said, "Shh! You have to be very quiet. There are tigers."

Leafy shivered with excitement. "Taahgers!"

They stopped and ducked down in the tangled underbrush to rest and conspire. "It'll be night soon," Hermione whispered, flinching as a brightly colored bird flew uncomfortably low over her head. "We'd better build a fire to keep us warm and keep the wolves and stuff away, or we'll be goners for sure. The matches Mom and Dad brought got wet in the swamp, but we can rub two sticks together. The trick is gathering the firewood without getting *eaten*."

The front door swung open just then,

and a woman in jeans and a sweatshirt stuck her head out. "Alice, Emma, you guys hungry? I can make grilled cheese sandwiches."

"Yes, please," said Alice. They could discover the previously overlooked sandwiches in their backpacks when the fire was built.

"Me too!" added Emma.

The woman went back inside. Hermione said, "Now, what we need is some strategy," but she stopped as she noticed her real-life sister reading on the front porch of the house. "Beth, you wanna play?" she offered.

The girl, thirteen, looked up with a start. She had forgotten about the world outside of her book. "Oh, no thanks, sweetie."

The seven-year-old rolled her eyes, amazed at how anybody would want to read when nobody was making them; but before she could meditate on the mystery any longer, a sleek black panther leaped down at them from a tree overhead. "Watch out!" she shrieked to Leafy, and, grabbing her hand, the two of them ran as fast as their small legs could carry them. ❀

Losing Grip

By **Julia Duchesne**

Illustrated by **Carolyn Burnett**

ALEX CLENCHED HIS TEETH as he heard his sister's taunting voice.

"Look at Alex! Look at him! He's scared to go up!"

With a swift move, Alex wiped the sweat from his forehead, pushing his auburn hair out of his eyes. He had waited all summer to come here to the outdoor rock-climbing center in Alberta, and now he was afraid to start climbing! Stalling, he adjusted the red helmet that protected his head and looked over at his sister Cory angrily. She had their mother's red hair and green eyes that were always full of reckless fun and determination. "I'm not scared, Cory," he said quietly. "I'll race you up!"

Cory looked surprised but nodded curtly and gripped the first rock. Alex copied her.

Their mum, looking doubtful, pushed back a strand of her loose hair. "Are you sure this is a good idea? Alex has never climbed before . . ."

"Relax, Mum," replied her daughter impatiently. "We're both on harnesses, it's not as if we'll break our necks or anything. Could you say 'go'?"

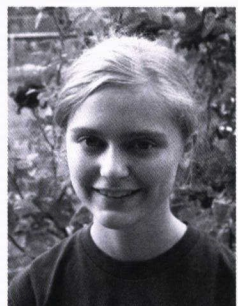
"Oh, all right. Ready . . . set . . . go!"

Alex shot upwards. His small, lithe body twisted and turned as he reached for each new rock nailed in the artificial surface. His feet found tiny footholds to brace his body.

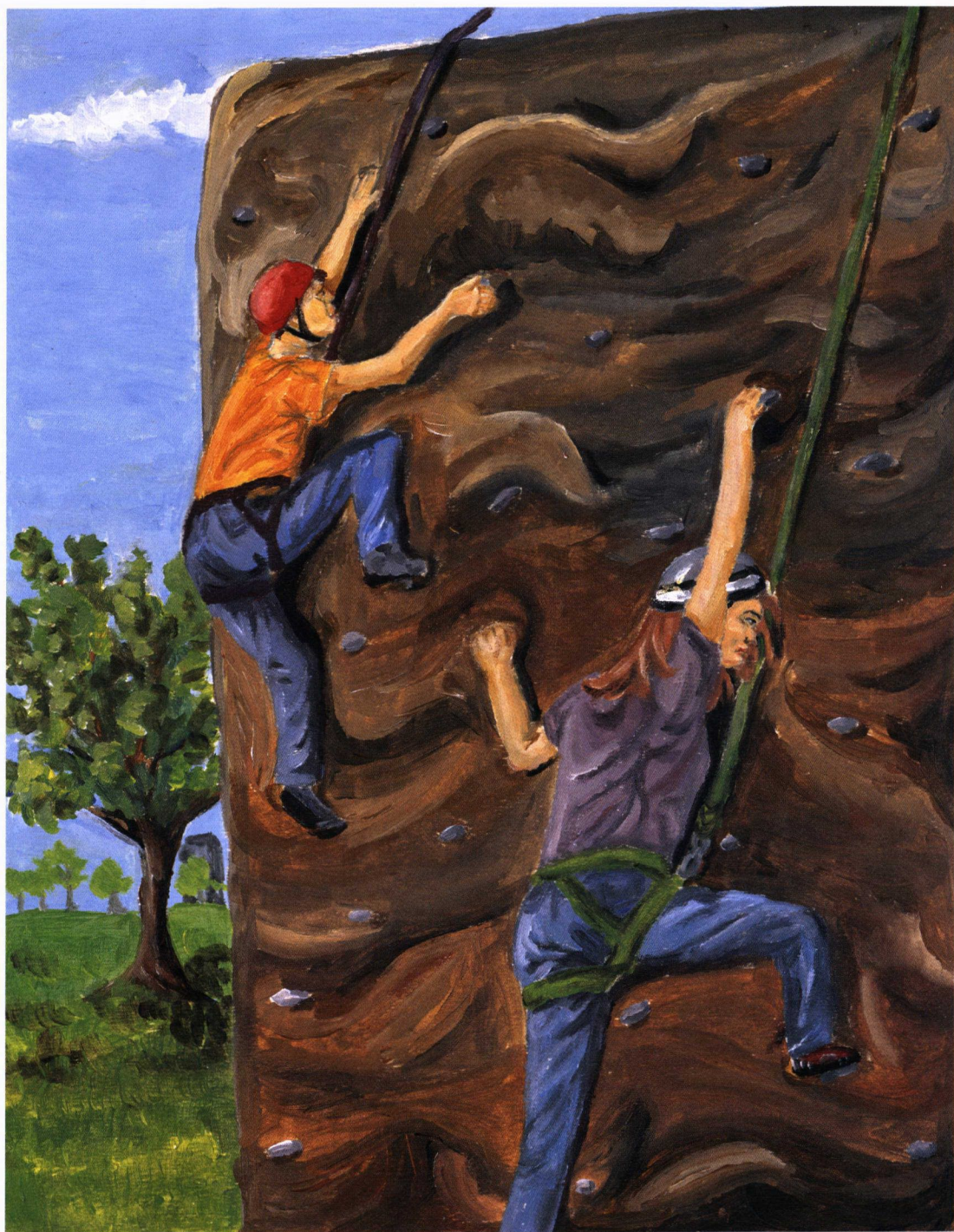
His belayer, holding on to the rope so that Alex would not plummet to the ground, looked at him in surprise. "The kid's good! How old is he? I've never seen someone go that fast in my



Julia Duchesne, 13
Toronto, Ontario, Canada



Carolyn Burnett, 13
Farmington, Utah



"I've never seen someone go that fast in my life!"

life! Did you say he's never climbed before?"

Alex's parents watched their eleven-year-old son as he reached the top of the course; fifteen-year-old Cory arrived quite a few seconds after him. Alex had a small smile on his quiet face as he was let down to the ground by the amazed belayer. Cory then floated down on her harness, looking angry.

"Where did you learn to climb like that, Alex? Why didn't you *tell* me?"

"I- I didn't know I could," said Alex softly, a little scared of this unknown talent. "I didn't know."

Cory's face softened. "Well, what are you waiting for? Try a harder one!"

Cory and I are so different, reflected Alex. She's a daredevil, always pushing her luck. She doesn't care about danger, and it's got her broken bones more than a few times. I like challenges, sure, and I always push myself further, but I'd prefer to read instead. As an afterthought, he added, I wish I were more like her.

DURING THE next two weeks at the Outdoor Climbing Center, Alex's talent flourished. By the last day, he was climbing the hardest courses as if they were horizontal and flat. He almost cried when his parents reminded him that they were leaving the next day. "It's not fair!" he yelled, losing his temper for one of the first times in his life. "I want to stay here forever!"

"Nevertheless, you have school in a month, and you know that we can't stay

here forever, Alex," said his father.

Cory looked at her father. "Come on, Dad. Can't we stay another day?"

"No. We have to . . ."

Her father was cut off by his wife, who wanted her family to stop arguing. She addressed her husband sternly. "I have a compromise. Right now, as you all know, we are going to Greece because I want to see the Parthenon and the Greek islands—and the mountains. The mountains, I have been told, are wonderful, and we can let Alex do some real climbing there." She watched her son's face brighten considerably; he had almost forgotten about the trip to Greece. Alex knew every piece of information there was about the ancient Greek gods and goddesses, and he was eager to see Athens and the Parthenon ruins.

Her husband smiled and said, "I knew you would think of a solution, my dear."

"Honestly," she said to her family. "*What* would you do without me?"

Cory rolled her eyes. "Well," she said, sighing. "I suppose we *have* to see the Parthenon?" Knowing that the answer was yes, she continued. "Alex, we can climb some real mountains now!" Even though she wasn't as exceptionally good at this sport as Alex, she still excelled at it, as she did most sports. Climbing was the one in which Alex claimed victory over her.

LATE THAT NIGHT, the sixth night that the family spent in Greece, they arrived at a small inn near the coast of Greece. They had hired a horse and

cart for the trip, because Alex's mother claimed that she would not travel in cars any more than she had to. Alex grinned. His mother sometimes got carsick on ten-minute drives—a four-hour ride over the rocky roads of Greece's countryside would be torture for her. The past six days had been spent touring the sights of Greece; Alex had been in heaven, but now he was even more excited—the next day would bring mountains! The air was warm and laden with the sweet scent of flowers, and everyone, especially the children, was drowsy.

"The Hestia Inn," murmured Cory sleepily as she saw the small wooden sign hanging on a post. "And down that lane is Artemis Inlet. What is it with these people and the old Olympian gods?" The moment she said it, she regretted it; closing her eyes, she winced slightly as her brother opened his mouth indignantly.

Alex started to talk a mile a minute about Artemis and Hestia. He explained that of course an inn would be named after Hestia, the goddess of the hearth. The owners might want their fire to be always bright and warm, and as Hestia had tended the fire of Mount Olympus, it stood to reason that she would be the one the ancient Greeks called on when they named inns with fires where travellers could be warmed. Perhaps these people were just carrying on the tradition? He told Cory how Artemis had asked her father, Zeus, never to have to marry and for other things: a bow and quiver and a band of nymphs to be her maidens. He loved

the myths behind the Greek goddesses—he said they were more interesting, and their beginnings stranger, than the gods. The Greek gods, goddesses, muses, titans and nymphs were the one thing he liked to talk about with other people; other than that he kept to himself.

Cory glared at him. "I didn't ask you, twerp," she said.

Alex grinned impishly and stuck out his tongue. "I don't *need* your *permission* to speak, Cory." He quickly ducked her swipe and whispered, "Be careful. The man driving the cart is Greek. They probably don't like to hear the old gods and goddesses made fun of."

The old man pulled the reins good-naturedly to halt his sturdy horse. "It is all right, little lady." Obviously he had sharper ears than the two siblings had guessed. "You could not know all of the old gods and goddesses, and it is true many places are named after them. Take Mount Apollo—it rises straight out of the water in the inlet named after Artemis. The moon always shines on the inlet, the sun on the highest point of Mount Apollo. They are always together or close to each other, for they are twins, and each place has the sun or moon—Artemis for the moon and her brother for the sun."

"Well," countered Cory, "that's all very well, but you can't say one of us knows nothing of the old gods. Alex is practically Canada's leading expert on Greek mythology."

The man bowed politely. "True, ma'am. He is a very clever boy." Then, turning to



Alex and Cory stopped to stroke the pony's smooth coat

Alex's father, he said, "The Hestia Inn, sir. It is where you are staying. Did you pay at the airport, sir? Yes? Good." He tipped his hat to Alex's mum.

An unexpected yawn came upon Alex as the weary family climbed down from the man's cart and took their luggage from the back. Alex and Cory stopped to stroke the pony's smooth coat. Then they turned and trudged up to the door of the low white-stone building. The interior was cool, calm and welcoming—a gladly accepted change from the hot air outside the door.

THE NEXT DAY they were up early. Alex begged his mum to let him go

climbing in the mountains of Greece; in the end it was decided everyone would go. Alex's dad sighed and ran a long hand through his dark hair. "My dear," he said, addressing his wife, "I think we have bred a mountain goat."

Alex knew that his dad didn't really mind, though. He was a kind man who loved his family more than anything else and would do anything for his children or his wife.

They met up with their guide at nine in the morning outside the inn. His name was Alen Vardalos and he brought his daughter Marisa with him. Marisa is a nice name, thought Alex. It definitely isn't as common as Alex—lucky Marisa!

Mr. Vardalos, who said he was to be called just Alen, was tall and thin—he was obviously a hard worker. He had a dark complexion and, though he smiled rarely, his grin was broad and his teeth were as white as all the other Greeks'. Marisa was ten, just a month younger than Alex. She was small and slim, with long dark hair tied back in a plait and wide brown eyes that flashed with mischief. Unlike her father, she often grinned—she seemed to have unquenchable cheerfulness.

"Well, you say that you like to climb. There are mountains and cliffs down by the coast—perhaps that is where you would like to go first?" Alen spoke quietly, and after some discussion the group of six walked down to the coast, a short half-hour walk.

At first, Alen and his daughter seemed unsure of whether Alex was strong enough to climb the low cliffs around the water line, but when he shot up the hardest path without relying on his harness, all traces of doubt were removed from their minds. They spent the whole day climbing, and Marisa proved almost as adept as Alex in reaching the top of the cliffs quickly. Alex noticed that Marisa was constantly singing one song, very softly, and that she had a very good voice. The song was "Losing Grip," and Marisa evidently had it stuck in her head.

"Girls! Alex! Time to come down! It's getting windy and we have to go back to the inn!" called Alex's mother. Sighing, Alex took one last look around him at the far-reaching view from the top of the cliff,

revelling in the feel of the wind whipping at his cheeks, and climbed down to the solid ground.

OVER THE NEXT wonderful seven days, the trio formed of Marisa, Alex and Cory climbed every mountain within a hundred miles of the cozy Hestia Inn. Alex and Marisa formed a lasting friendship—they discovered that they shared some of the same interests, like Greek mythology. Artemis in particular fascinated Marisa—she had learned at an early age to use a bow and arrow, and so thought of Artemis as the goddess most like herself. It was not an uncommon sight to see the two walking around the inn, arguing good-naturedly about or sharing different versions of myths.

The last day came—the day before Alex and his family packed their bags and headed once more to the airport. The two families decided to climb the steep island of sheer rock that rose out of the Artemis Inlet.

When they arrived, they rowed over to the island in a small boat. The adults sat on the small beach on one side of the island and Alex looked at the climb. It was steeper and smoother than he had thought and he considered putting on his safety harness. He decided against it and climbed up, securing a harness rope at the top for Marisa. He was about to put on one for Cory as he yelled, "Cory! Marisa! Put on your harnesses—it's really steep!"

"All right!" called Marisa, dropping down to earth from a metre above the

ground and putting on the harness. "Cory! Come down!"

"Nah! I don't need a harness. I can get to the top fine, and the other side is easy enough to walk down when I'm done. So there." Cory continued climbing, regardless of the danger she faced.

Marisa shook her head and quickly climbed up. She was able to wedge her body into a small crack that Cory couldn't manage, and reached the top first. They were at least a hundred feet up, she realized. Then she thought, Cory better not fall! The thought was a joke—of course athletic, smart, indefatigable Cory wouldn't fall—but then she heard a grinding noise. The section of rock that held Cory was slipping—falling . . . "Cory! Grab hold of something!" she screamed, whipping around to look down. The picture of the rock sliding from underneath Cory's hands flashed again and again in front of her horrified eyes.

ALEX SAW Cory grab hold of a spar of rock and pull her body free of the sliding rock. The rock fall stopped as quickly as it had started and Cory struggled to regain her balance and her hold on the rock.

"My palms are sweaty!" she yelled. "I'm slipping!"

Alex's reflexes acted quickly as he lay down on the flat area at the top of the mountain and reached his hand out to her. "Grab hold of my hand! Don't fall!" He looked back at Marisa, who had climbed up faster than Cory and was taking a

piece of rope from her pack. "Come on!" he shouted. "I've got to reach her or she'll fall!"

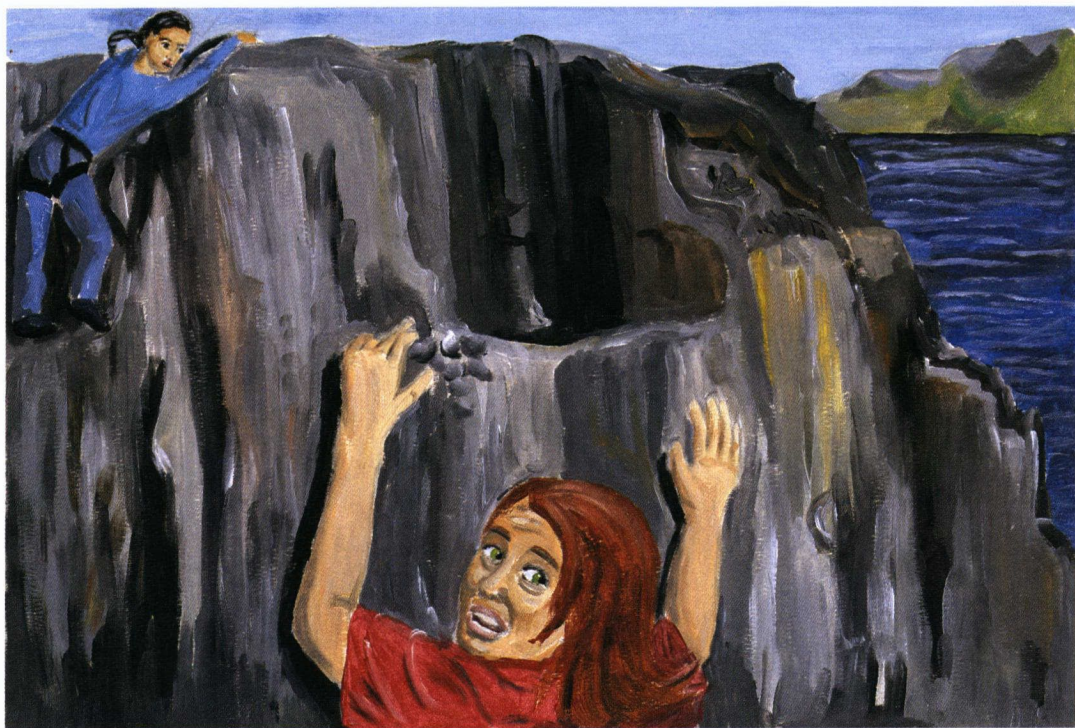
Marisa came over with the rope, winding it around a promontory of rock and knotting it. "Give this to Cory," she said quietly.

Alex was surprised at her calmness—it seemed she had the situation under control. He guessed that she had probably done this before, but thought that she had to be close to panicking, as he was, so he took the rope from her and dangled it as close to Cory as it would come. "Get hold of the rope!" he told her, hoping she would not panic as well.

Alex saw Cory take a deep breath. Then, with one hand, she let go of the spar of rock she was holding on to and grabbed the rope. She was now in a difficult position, if possible worse than before. Her hold on the rope wasn't steady, and only one foot was touching the small ledge of rock she was on. He groaned, but watched Cory try to twist herself around. She succeeded. I should have known she'd be fine, grinned Alex. She could probably hold on all day.

His relief came too soon, however—Cory made a swift grab for the rope and suddenly her full weight was resting on the rope. In horror, Alex saw the rope slither out of the knot.

Marisa blanched and froze. Alex threw himself down and caught the rope—he just stopped Cory from falling to the sharp rocks below. Now he had her full weight resting on him. He dug his toes



"Cory! Grab hold of something!" she screamed

into the ground and held on.

For the first time, Alex heard his mother's voice.

"Alex! Alex! Marisa! Help her! Don't let her fall . . ." Her voice trailed away into silence, and Alex heard crying.

Marisa came to help Alex with the rope. "We've got to hold on to her and pull her up to a ledge," she explained, voice strained with tension.

Alex nodded and the two started to pull Cory up to a small ridge about ten feet above her and thirty feet below the top of the mountain. It took a long time and Marisa started singing the song again.

"I'm starting to trip, I'm losing my grip, and I'm . . ."

She was cut off by Alex. "Umm, Marisa, I don't think that's the best song for this particular moment . . ."

Marisa grinned and ducked her head. "Oops. Sorry," she said, her dark eyes twinkling.

Cory's voice floated up from where she was hanging. "Who tied *that* knot?" she yelled.

Marisa looked at her feet. "I'm sorry. I wasn't thinking—it was the wrong type of knot," she yelled back.

"That's OK," said Alex cheerfully. "At least you *can* tie knots—I hardly even know how to. Just don't try to kill Cory," he said. A thoughtful look came into his eyes. "On second thought, we could just

leave her here . . .”

“Definitely *not!*” Cory’s voice made Marisa jump and she deftly tied a second, surer knot. Now Cory could climb up, aided with a rope that wouldn’t break or slip from the knot. Alex watched his sister wrap the rope around her waist and start climbing, finding small hand- and foot-holds to brace herself with. When she got close to the top, he reached a hand out to her, but she shook her head, saying that she didn’t want to pull *him* over as well. Alex took her point and stood back as she climbed over the edge. Finally, his sister was safe.

ALEX, CORY and their parents were leaving. Alex was loathe to leave—he had never had a better time in his life, nor had he ever had a better friend than Marisa. She stood next to her father, who had come to the airport to see them off. She hugged Cory, telling her not to fall off any more cliffs. Then she said goodbye to Alex’s mum and dad. They thanked her for helping to save their daughter and she said demurely that she had hardly done anything, although they insisted that she had.

Alex turned to Marisa. He was suddenly shy—he had never been good about saying goodbye, especially to *girls*. “We’re going

to come back next summer,” he said quietly. “Will your dad be our guide again?”

Marisa nodded, her two dark braids swinging gently. “Of course he will be. I don’t think he’d let anyone else take you around, now that he knows how crazy Cory is. Has she ever broken bones?”

“Are you joking? She’s practically broken every one in her body already! By the time next summer comes, she’ll have broken a few more.”

Marisa laughed. “I’ll probably see you before then—I’ll be watching any rock-climbing tournaments they have on television.” Then she hugged Alex tightly.

“I hope,” Alex said. “Goodbye, Marisa.”

“Bye,” she said sadly.

Alex’s mother called, “Our plane’s leaving, Alex. Come on!”

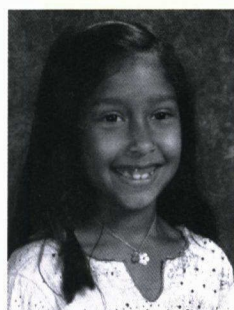
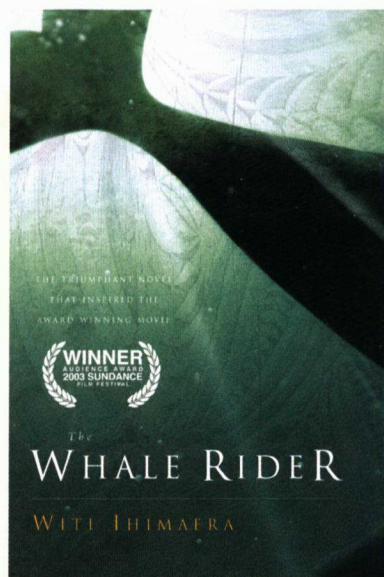
Alex smiled one last smile at Marisa and turned away, running to catch up with his parents. When he boarded the plane, he turned on his headphones, blinking back tears at saying goodbye to Marisa. He looked out of the window and saw her waving wildly. He waved back, but she was lost to sight as the plane taxied away. Through his headphones he heard Avril Lavigne singing, “I’m starting to trip, I’m losing my grip, and I’m in this thing alone . . .”

He began to smile.



Book Review

By Nayna Shah



Nayna Shah, 9
Morris Plains, New Jersey

The Whale Rider by Witi Ihimaera; Harcourt, Inc.: New York, 1987; \$17

I ENJOYED READING *The Whale Rider* by Witi Ihimaera because the main character, Kahu, had many characteristics which I admire. She is also a girl whose values I can relate to. Kahu believes that boys and girls would do equally well leading their tribe. She was determined to prove this to her grandfather. He kept kicking her out of the boys' lessons, saying that she cannot be the leader, because she is a girl. When Kahu heard this she got a little sad because she loved her grandfather but she did not want this to get in her way.

Kahu was so determined to learn the ways of her people, she looked through the windows of the classroom to see what the boys were learning. She asked them to teach her, and soon she became very good at fighting and saying some chants that only boys were supposed to know. Although her grandfather did not want a girl to learn a boy's lessons, Kahu continued to do so. Kahu wanted to show him that a girl could do anything that a boy could do. I admire her courage and her strong will to go after what she wanted.

Kahu cared about her tribe and her culture. If her grandfather worried about something that was going on with the tribe then she would worry too. She wanted to learn the traditions, so that if she became leader, she could pass them on. Kahu was trying to show that she was strong and trustworthy. Half of her wanted to impress her grandfather and wanted him to love her even if she was a girl, and the other half was just proving that everyone is equal. I admire the respect that she shows to her grandfather and to the traditions of her people.

Some of the cultural things that Kahu is learning are similar to the ones that I am learning. We are both being taught what gods to pray to, and how to pray to them. The Maori tribe believed that their great ancestor Paikea was able to ride and talk to a whale. That whale was the one they worshiped and believed was a god, as well as Paikea. In our Hindu tradition, we worship many forms of God in our temple. Some of these are named Krishna, Rama, Ganesha, and Hanuman.

We are also learning how to sing, dance, and speak the way the people of our culture do. Kahu learned to speak the Maori language and dance the tribal dances. I am learning to read, write, and speak Hindi, the native Indian language. I am also learning classical Indian dance called Kathak. Kahu and I both go to a special school to learn these cultural things. We both have choral recitals, dance recitals, special places to worship God, and animals that are sacred to our people. The whale is the Maori tribe's sacred animal, while the cow is sacred to Hindus.

It is obvious that Kahu really loves her culture and the ways of her people. Despite her love and respect for her grandfather, she shows courage, strength, and determination when she saves the whale and the tribe. She has taught me that no matter who is against you, you should always keep trying for the things that you want. That is something everyone should remember. ❁

Moving On

By **Caroline Lu**

Illustrated by **Orli Hakanoglu**



Caroline Lu, 10
Friendswood, Texas



Orli Hakanoglu, 10
New York, New York

I STARED OUT INTO THE pitch-black morning. It was about five AM and very quiet. There was a huge lump stuck in my throat and I tried as hard as I could not to let my tears spill out. A single tear rolled down my cheek anyway. We were passing the tennis courts and the park. My eyes wandered from each familiar sight to another, and my hands were trembling. I could hear the quiet sound of the highway and I could see some lights flickering on in some houses. We passed by my friend Jean's house, the house I've played at for so many years, the house of one of my best friends. The house that we had so many parties at, the house that we had pretended was so many things. In my mind, I said a farewell to Jean, to Alanna, to Nancy, Cameron, Roxy, Sarah, and everybody else I knew.

My family was moving from North Carolina to Texas. Moving away from the one place that I would ever call home. I knew that I would miss the cold mountains, the warm beach, all the camping trips, and my friends; I would miss everything in North Carolina.

A couple years before, my dad was notified that, if he wanted to, he would be transferred to Galveston, Texas. I was eight and I didn't mind much. A couple of years later, the choice was final. My father would move to Galveston first and find a new house for us. At the end of the school year, my mom, sister, and I would move to Texas, after selling our house.

I felt like the world was crumbling down, right in front of me. Life was so unfair. North Carolina was my home, my everything.



North Carolina was my home, my everything

Months later, we moved. My head was spinning and I was freezing cold. Not because it was a cold night, it was summer and quite warm, but because the string connecting my home and me had been cut by a big greedy monster. We drove until we came to the very end of North Carolina and started heading into the next state.

"Well, this is it, from this moment on, North Carolina will only be our past, and we're moving on. Say goodbye," my dad said quietly.

Tears stung my eyes, and they spilled out all at once. I didn't try to stop them. They just kept on pouring out.

"Although my body is moving on, my heart and soul will always stay here, no matter what," I said fiercely.

My sister hugged me tight and we drove past the welcome sign. She murmured something and then laid her head down on the pillow beside her. We've been through so much together, and we've always made it through. This wasn't going to be any different.

I was pretty quiet the rest of the ride to Texas. My heart pounded loudly and my head ached in pain. My legs and arms were stiff and my eyes were forcing me to sleep, my mouth was drawn into a thin line, and I refused to accept that we were moving on.

"No, I'm not moving on, where my heart stays is where the real me will always be, this is just my body here, that doesn't mean anything," I whispered to myself. "And that's that."



"Bastet," whispered Maya, kneeling, "please make my father better . . ."

The Thief of Bubastis

By Casey Tolan

Illustrated by Vivien Rubin

KYSEN RAN STEALTHILY and silently to the temple as the chilly night air whipped around him. His black hair and dark clothing let him blend into the night, and his blue eyes scanned the road ahead of him. The buildings of Bubastis were dark, the people sound asleep, dreaming of the festival just four days away.

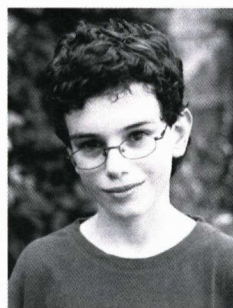
But Kysen could not think of the festival. He had to think about survival.

It seemed to him like just yesterday when his father grew ill. The expert carpenter could no longer work, and they did not have enough money to support the two of them. Kysen had to steal for them to live. So far, he had been stealing little things: bracelets, scarabs, and even a small sculpture. Unfortunately, that wasn't enough. So tonight he was going for something that would sell for hundreds of deben, deben that would pay for a doctor.

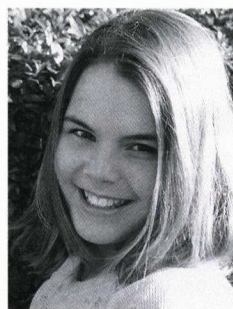
That item was the necklace of Bastet.

I'm only twelve, Kysen thought to himself ruefully, and I'm stealing from the gods.

MAYA'S ELEVENTH birthday, about a full moon ago, was not a happy one. It was the day her mother died. Her father, Khay, was so depressed that he locked himself in his room for much of each day and prayed to Osiris, god of the dead. Even when Khay was not praying, he paid almost no attention to Maya and burst into tears all the time.



Casey Tolan, 11
Shorewood, Wisconsin



Vivien Rubin, 12
Sherman Oaks, California

Of course Maya was very sad, but not as sad as her father, who had been married for thirty years. So Maya decided that he needed help.

One night, when Khay had been crying more than usual, Maya crept out of their large house and walked quickly to the temple of Bastet, which was nearby. Cats, which were sacred to Bastet, ran everywhere in the temple, and green candles, Bastet's sacred color, flickered in their holders.

Maya walked down a long hallway, with the cats rubbing against her legs. Ever since she was little, cats seemed to like her. That was what made her go to Bastet's temple instead of praying to another god.

Soon she saw the statue of Bastet. The god of happiness was portrayed as a large, black cat. It had golden earrings, a scarab carved on its chest, and a beautiful silver necklace hanging from its neck.

"Bastet," whispered Maya, kneeling, "please make my father better . . ." Her prayer was interrupted by a chorus of hisses. Maya whirled around and saw a boy, little older than her, kicking away the cats.

"Who are you?" she called to him suspiciously. She didn't like the fact that he was wearing all black clothing. The boy had been so preoccupied with the cats that he hadn't noticed her at first. He froze and turned to Maya, his blue eyes full of surprise.

Kysen realized that she could report him to the priest and he could be killed. Without thinking, his mind a flood of panic, Kysen leapt at the girl and knocked

her to the stone floor. She blacked out. Then the young thief wrenched the necklace off the statue and ran into the black night faster than he ever had.

SUNLIGHT STREAMED through the temple doors and with it came Pure One Rahotep, the priest of Bubastis. He saw the unconscious girl on the floor and the bare neck of the statue.

"Bring water," he commanded a servant, and walked through the cats to Maya. The servant returned with a bowl full of water.

"Here you are, sir," he said. Rahotep took the bowl and dumped the water over Maya's head unceremoniously. Her eyes flickered open, and she mumbled, "Where am I?"

"In the temple of Bastet where you stole her necklace last night, you fool!" he answered harshly. This shook Maya fully awake, and she stood up. Then she remembered what had happened the night before.

"But it wasn't me! It must have been that boy. He came in and knocked me out," Maya argued.

"You have no proof of that," said Rahotep, "and no one but you was here this morning. Therefore, you must have stolen the necklace. And stealing from the gods can only be punished by execution.

"But there is an alternative. If you can return Bastet's necklace to me before sunset tonight, I will spare you. I'll bet you hid it somewhere. Oh, and don't try to escape: soldiers are posted at every gate." Then he and his servant turned and left.

Maya collapsed into tears: the boy was long gone, and she was going to die at sunset.

THE WORK of a thief was never over. Kysen had done the hardest part, but he still had to find a foreign merchant who would buy the necklace (if the merchant was from Bubastis, he would recognize it), get a good price for it, and pay a doctor to help his father. Most importantly, the soldiers could not capture him. That would mean both he and his father, who would never get a doctor, would die.

People were everywhere in the marketplace of Bubastis. They were trading, shouting, laughing, and thieving. Hiding the necklace under his cloak, Kysen hurried through the crowd to the stalls of the merchants. They called their wares into the crowd, claiming that they had the lowest prices in all of Egypt. Most of them Kysen recognized; they were the local merchants. But there were some others, too, from Cairo and other Egyptian cities. Kysen read the signs: Food, Fabric, Toys. None of those merchants would buy Bastet's necklace.

Finally, Kysen came to a merchant who had no customers. His sign read: Jewelry, Riches, and Other Oddities. Kysen eagerly stepped forward.

"Hello there, son!" cried the merchant cheerily. "I'm Osorkon. Who are you?"

"Kysen," answered Kysen, but instantly regretted it. If Osorkon recognized the necklace, he could tell the soldiers exactly who had it.

"Well, Kysen, would you like to work with me? I just happen to need a helper like you."

"Maybe later," answered Kysen, even though he longed to accept the offer. Before his father had grown ill, he had made Kysen begin training to be a scribe because scribes earned much more than carpenters. But the training was boring. Kysen wanted a more exciting job, one like Osorkon's.

"Now, I'd like to sell you this necklace."

Kysen peered suspiciously around the marketplace, and handed over the jewelry. Osorkon looked it over.

"Hmmm, how about 300 deben?"

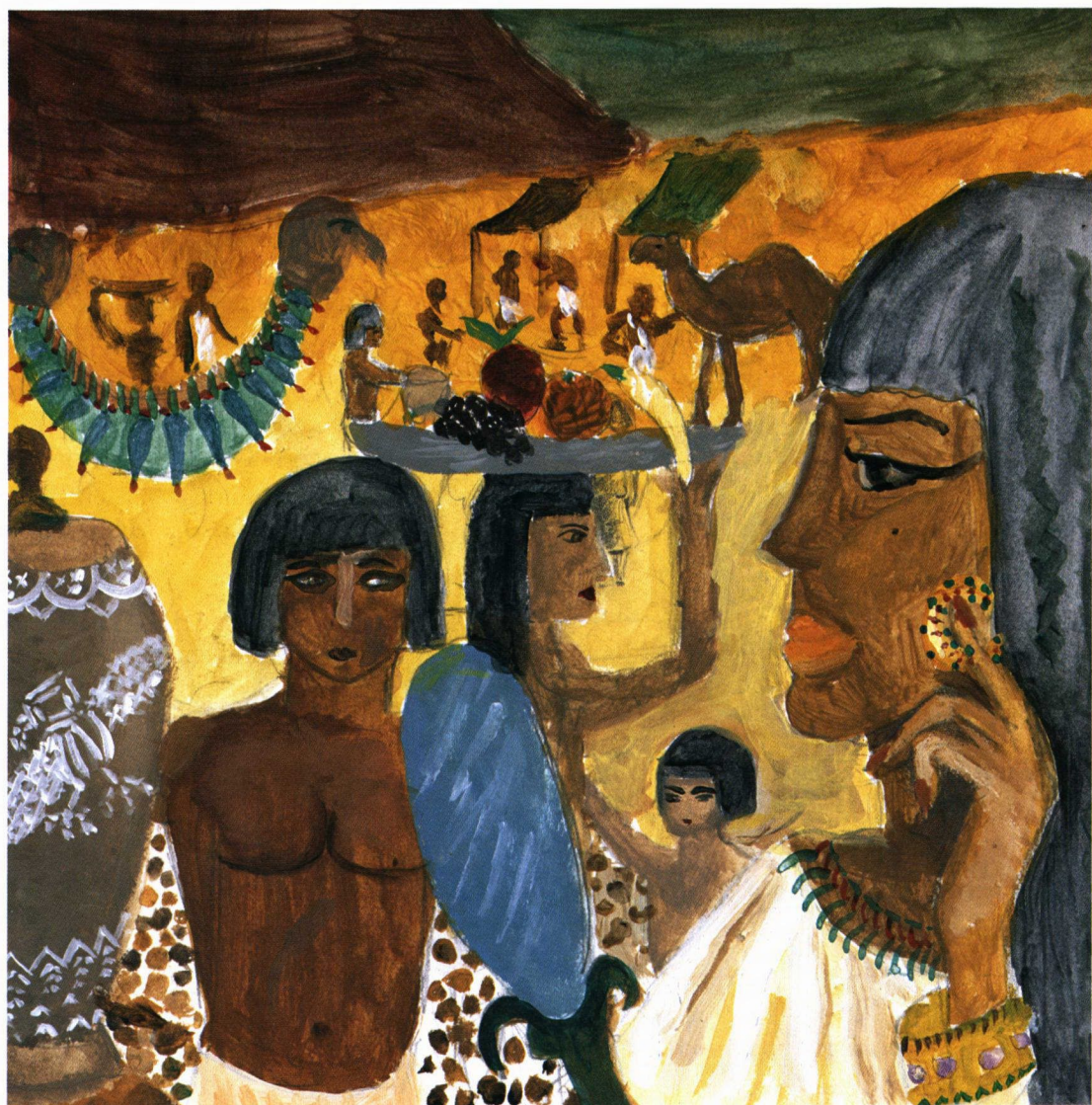
Before Kysen could agree, though, three soldiers strolled to the center of the marketplace.

"Listen, all of you!" cried one of the soldiers. "Bastet's necklace has been stolen by a girl. She has hidden it and is thought to have an accomplice. If she will not return it to Pure One Rahotep before sunset, she will be executed. Keep your eyes out for it."

Kysen panicked. He snatched the necklace out of Osorkon's burly hands and ran pell-mell through the crowd and out of the marketplace.

MAYA PICKED herself up from the temple floor and stumbled to the street. There was still a chance that she would find the boy. She had to try.

"Excuse me," Maya called to a passerby, "have you seen a boy with black hair, wearing dark clothing?"



People were everywhere in the marketplace of Bubastis

"No," answered the man, "and I don't think I'd want to see him, either. Sounds like a thief to me."

"He is," muttered Maya under her breath, as the man walked away.

She searched on, asking whoever she saw. Unfortunately, the answers were al-

ways, "Sorry, I haven't seen him," or "I've never seen him in my life."

By a little after the middle of the day, Maya had searched all over town. She ended back at her house and sat down. Maya considered telling Khay about the necklace, but decided against it. He was

already depressed because of her mother, and this added sadness would make him feel even worse.

Suddenly, she felt a comforting hand around her shoulder. It was Pakhet, Maya's family maid. Pakhet was a slave, but Maya and her father treated her like she was a member of the family.

"What is wrong, child?" asked Pakhet in her smooth, soft voice.

"Pakhet," cried Maya, and started crying again. "Oh, it's terrible. Rahotep thinks I stole the necklace of Bastet, but I didn't! And now he's going to kill me if I don't bring him the necklace by sunset. I've looked everywhere and can't find the real thief."

The slave stood up, and said, "Have you looked at the market? A thief would have to sell it somewhere."

Maya's eyes lit up. "Of course! I forgot the market because I almost never go there. And Pakhet, you do most of the shopping for us, so you would remember." She hugged Pakhet and hurried away.

Run, Maya, thought Pakhet, as she watched the setting sun.

CHECKING for pursuers, Kysen forced his tired body onward into the deserted streets. He ran another minute, and collapsed, his chest heaving.

Kysen lay there for a long time, and thought about what had happened. After he took the necklace, the Pure One must have found the girl and thought she was the one who had stolen it. He told everyone that she had hidden the necklace with

a partner in crime, and decided that she would be executed at sunset if she didn't return the necklace by then. The only problem was that Kysen had the sacred object.

The ethical thing to do would be to hand over the necklace. But without the money it would provide, Kysen's father would not get a doctor. And he seemed sicker than usual. Who did Kysen care more about: some stranger girl or his father?

Kysen had a guilty conscience as he stood up and walked back to the marketplace, but he told himself that a guilty conscience was better than a dead father.

TIME WAS NOT a luxury that Maya had. The sun was close to setting, and she hadn't gotten the necklace yet. Maya anxiously ran along the darkening streets. She pushed past people and jumped over the many street cats of Bubastis, making her way to the marketplace. People grumbled at her pushing, but they didn't have a clue that her life depended on it.

Finally, when the sun was on the rim of the horizon, Maya burst into the marketplace and looked around.

It was deserted. There were only a few sleepy-looking merchants hoping for late customers. Everyone else had already packed up and left. The boy was nowhere to be seen. Maya was too late, and going to die. She was too stunned to cry, so she sat down on the ground, waiting for Rahotep to find her.

Someone did come to the marketplace then, but it was not Rahotep. It was Kysen. The thief slunk to Osorkon's stall

(thankfully, Osorkon was still there) and was about to give up the necklace, when he saw Maya.

She was sitting on the ground, depressed and demoralized, and her expression was of someone who knew she was going to die. Kysen looked toward Osorkon, who whispered, "Do the right thing."

Then Kysen had an idea, a simple, wonderful idea.

He walked over to Maya and dropped the necklace in her lap. She looked up, amazed.

"I'm sorry," said Kysen, "I did it for my father. He's ill and he needs a doctor. I didn't know they would . . . kill you."

"Y- you're giving me this?" Maya stutted. "Even though your father needs a doctor?"

"I think I have a better way to get money," smiled Kysen, glancing at Osorkon. "But you'd better get going. It's almost sunset."

Maya looked at the sun. "But I won't be able to make it to the temple in time! It's too far away."

"Then leave it to me." Kysen took the necklace. "I learned to run from my thievery."

Then Kysen took off in the direction of the temple, going faster than Maya could have ever run. What a strange boy, she thought. He almost gets me killed, and then he turns around and saves my life.


JUST AS THE sun fell below the horizon, Kysen walked through the temple door. Rahotep was waiting. Kysen bowed before the Pure One, and handed over the necklace.

"You're not the girl!" he frowned. "Who are you and how did you get that necklace?"

"I am her personal servant," lied Kysen, "and my mistress is now safe from execution."

"Fine," answered Rahotep. He ceremoniously placed the necklace around the statue Bastet's neck. The former thief could have almost sworn he saw a glint of thanks in the statue's eye.

BASTET HAD answered Maya's prayer. It was three days since the incident, and the festival of Bastet was happening all around Maya and her father as they walked through the marketplace to Osorkon's stall. Maya's father (who was smiling for the first time in a long time) chatted with Osorkon, while Maya paid Kysen (Osorkon's newest helper) for a mini-statue of Bastet. Kysen's father (healed thanks to the doctor Kysen was able to hire with his earnings) looked down proudly from the upper window of his house. Rahotep walked past them, talking to a friend about the almost-lost necklace.

And all of them knew that Bastet was watching them. 

A Second Chance

By **Natania Field**

Illustrated by **Evan Mistur**

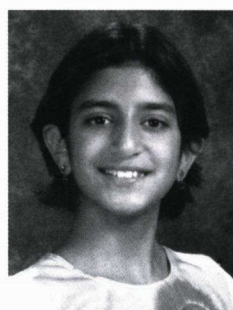
BRIIIING! THE FIRE ALARM screeched. "Hurry Jared, this isn't a drill!" my friend shouted. I excitedly dashed over to the supply closet and yanked on my fireproof suit. I followed my fellow volunteers into the shiny crimson truck just as the driver flipped on the earsplitting sirens. For the first time since I created the volunteer fire company in my community, I was going to actually fight a fire. I started the fire company two years ago, because of the complaints that the nearest fire department was too far away to save some homes in the community. To train the new volunteers, as well as myself, I enlisted some employees from the other fire department. We were finally ready to start fighting fires.

I leapt out of the truck anxiously and ran up to the shivering, sleepy-looking family gathered near a tree.

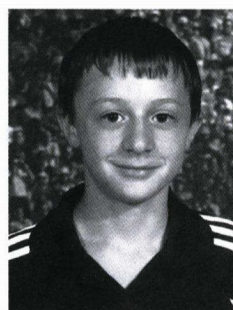
"Is everyone here?" I asked the woman next to me. She was holding a small baby, and she looked very anxious.

"Yes, I think so," the woman responded nervously. "My son isn't here, but I saw him leave the house a few minutes ago. He is probably on the other side of the house waiting for us. Please, find him!"

I dashed as quickly as I could to the other side. If the boy was somehow still in the house, it was important to get to him as fast as possible. He was nowhere to be found. I heard a loud shriek coming from above. I immediately looked up at the windows, and saw a small face on the second floor. The boy must have gone back in to find his family! I grabbed a ladder from the



Natania Field, 13
Haverford, Pennsylvania



Evan Mistur, 13
Troy, New York



The boy must have gone back in to find his family!

truck and leaned it against the wall before ascending to the window at record speed.

There was no fire in the boy's bedroom, but I could hear its cackling right outside the door. The smoke was snaking under the door and filling the room like an ominous black cloud. Memories suddenly

flooded back, memories that defined who I had become.

I remember waking up to the sound of my own coughing. When I opened my eyes, I understood why. My room was filled with a thick blanket of smoke that smothered my face and made me choke. I


wiped the soot from my face and slid onto the floor. I had no idea where the fire was, but I knew what to do. I began to crawl out of my room.

The smoke was thicker in the hallway. That meant I was going toward the fire, but I had no choice. Blinded by the smoke, I felt around the floor until my hand closed around the top step. I turned around and carefully descended backwards. By the time I reached the bottom, my head was spinning and my heart was doing a drum roll. I knew I did not have much time before I fainted.

Now I knew where the fire was. I could hear its evil cackling as it swallowed up the only place I had ever called home. It ate through the carpet and devoured the coffee table. Tears began to cut little rivers in the soot on my face. They were tears of hatred toward the hungry fire, tears of fear and sadness. I desperately wriggled toward the door, but every inch seemed like a mile. I had only been awake for about ten minutes, but it felt like I had been stuck here for eternity. I screamed for help, knowing I would never survive on my own. The fire nipped warningly at my right hand. I yelped in pain, and I hoped someone heard me. I was able to stay conscious just long enough to see my sister. She was covered in soot, coughing and wheezing from the smoke. I re-

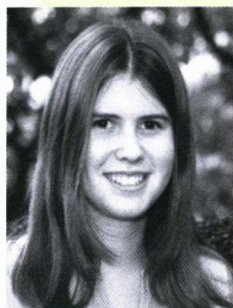
member the way she looked at me. Her face showed sheer panic. Her eyes were wild with fear. It was not fear for herself; it was fear for my safety. She knew the firefighters would not get there soon enough, so she took matters into her own hands. I was unconscious by then, but I know that she managed to save my life, giving me a second chance to live.

A sudden snapping noise, like the crack of a baseball bat hitting the ball, jerked me back to the present. I realized that the fire was slowly creeping its way into the room. It was my turn to be a hero like my sister. I saw the boy, crumpled in a corner, sobbing as if the voracious fire was devouring the floor in front of him. I ran over to him and grabbed him around the waist. Within seconds, we were carefully climbing out the open window and slowly descending the ladder to the boy's relieved family. My foot touched the grass and I gently placed the exhausted boy in his mother's arms.

As the entire family was rushed to the hospital to be examined, I climbed wearily into the truck. The boy was uninjured, except for a small, mild burn on his right hand that he had probably gotten trying to leave his room. I thought of the small burn scar on my right hand and how it helped me realize what I needed to do with my second chance. The little boy's scar would do the same for him. 

My Trixie

By Emma Kilgore Hine



Emma Kilgore Hine, 13
Austin, Texas

Curled on the dining room table
Furry cheek snuggled against the cloth
Trixie purrs
Tail twitching and ears cocked
Waiting for the sound of cat food in the bowl

I rub my face in her tummy
Breathing in rich cat-smell
As she rumbles, happy
To be home
After a trot around the neighborhood

Mrrrrrrrrreeeeeeeeew?
She asks if I'll pet her
I oblige and stroke her back
Telling her I love her
That she'll always be my kitty

She stretches, mouth open
And legs stiff
Always trying to look less fat
Tail curling, eyes open
Then she settles back down
And tucks her head on her paws

Lying there on the green tablecloth
Looking like a beached whale
She sinks deeper in sleep
Her whiskers droop
And yellow eyes close
And I rub my face in her fur again

She's still purring
Even in sleep she's my baby
Paws tucked under her massive body
Cold button nose a bright black
She is my darling
My sweetie
My Trixie-Bixie.



After we've taken about ten steps, I turn to her. "What's wrong?"

A Parting Gift

By Tara Miller

Illustrated by Jean Hope Sack

“**M**ELLY!” MY BEST FRIEND Aisha catches my arm.
“What’s up, Aisha?” I ask, because her big brown eyes tell me that something is up, and it’s not good.

“Will you walk with me?” What she means is can I walk with her around the dirt track that surrounds the soccer field, one of the play structures, and the tire swing, at our school.

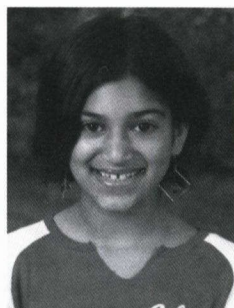
“Sure.” After we’ve taken about ten steps, I turn to her.
“What’s wrong?”

“It’s Rahim.” Now she’s got my attention. She rarely talks to me about family affairs. Except when she has crying spells because of her second oldest brother. He got in a car crash when he was thirteen and didn’t make it. Rahim, her oldest brother, still can’t get over Hassan’s death. He punches walls in the house, and gets into trouble with the police. She and her family also have trouble because they are from Pakistan, and it is very hard to be a Pakistani in our city because many people have been suspicious of them since 9/11.

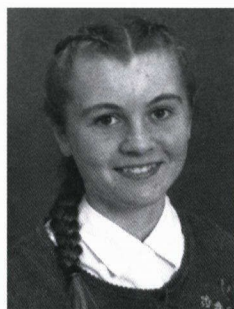
“I’m listening,” I say.

She pulls me over to the side of the track and we sit down in the shade of a pine tree. “Rahim . . . he . . . he . . . he’s in jail.”

I don’t know what to say. I want to say that I know what she’s going through or that she’s going to be OK. But I don’t know what she’s going through, and I don’t want to lie to my best friend. Because the truth is I don’t know if she’s going to be OK. Sitting there, I wonder how I got myself into this. I wonder why I am the one stuck in this position of being



Tara Miller, 12
Portland, Oregon



Jean Hope Sack, 12
Eureka, California

Aisha's best friend. But suddenly I snap back into reality and realize that however it started I *am* Aisha's best friend, and I am proud of it. I also remember that there is a girl who is crying a billion rivers, and who is secretly counting on me to console her. So I don't say anything. I just scoot close to her and hug her. I hug her for a long time and hold her in my arms.

"How long?"

"They're not sure. Maybe five years, possibly two."

"When do they decide?"

"Tonight."

RING, RING, RING! Pick up, pick up, I think to myself. "Hello?" It's Aisha.

"What happened?" I ask, too loudly.

"Shh. My parents are here."

"Sorry."

"I think it's OK. Everyone is acting happy."

I want to tell her to ask instead of just waiting until someone tells her, but knowing her and her family, I figure that it is some Pakistani thing. So instead I say, "Good."

"Listen, I have to go. I'll see you at school."

"OK, bye."

"Luvs." As I set down the phone thoughts are racing through my head. How can she be completely in tears this morning, and totally calm right now. I mean, I would be ecstatic. It could be because of the whole fact that I am not supposed to know about this and her parents are right there, but still!

The next day I run up to her right as her car pulls up to the school. There is Rahim in the front seat. Aisha puts her finger up to her mouth, telling me to be quiet, but a huge grin is on her face. I say hello to Rahim and he waves at me but I can sense sorrow in his smile. Aisha and I walk to our classroom and as we walk she fills me in on the details. She says that he got released from jail last night but the police are still checking his case. Then she pulls me over to the side of the path. "Melly, there is something I didn't tell you yesterday that is really troubling me, but you can't tell *anyone* else." I promise and she continues. "My parents . . . They're the ones that turned Rahim in."

"*What?!*" I practically scream. Aisha puts a hand over my mouth. "Sorry."

"It's OK . . . It is kind of surprising."

"Were you there?"

"They always send me to my room during the fights but I can hear the yelling from miles away."

"What do they fight about?" Tears start to prick Aisha's eyes. "OK, we won't talk about this right now."

"Yeah," she says and puts her head on my shoulder. We walk to class and I wonder what I would ever do without Aisha. Talking about her family problems eases mine. I think about how every time I'm sad I run to her and gush everything but how she is so much stronger. She hardly ever cries but her problems are so much bigger than mine. I sigh and put my books in my locker.

The phone is ringing. I look at the

clock and see that it is one AM on Monday, two weeks before school gets out. "You rang?" I say in my most sleepy voice.

"Melly!" As I had guessed it's Aisha.

"What?!" I yell grumpily.

"We're moving."

"It is too early in the morning for jokes."

"This is not a joke! We are moving in June, after school gets out."

"No. No. NO!"

"We are moving to Singapore."

"This is not happening."

"Rahim is already on the plane."

"Aisha! You can't do this to me!"

"I don't want to but I have to! You know how much danger Rahim is in. The police drive past our house every ten minutes, they will soon have a tap on our phone line, and they stalk me to the grocery store!"

"You can stay with me!"

"I wish!"

"I *mean* it."

"Melly, I love you! I always will! You will always be with me! I'll come back! I have to go! See you at school."

"*Don't leave me!*"

"Bye." I lie on my bed and go back to sleep, hoping it is a dream.

IT'S THE DAY after the last day of school. Everyone in my seventh-grade class and some "special" sixth- and eighth-graders are in my back yard. Aisha's car rounds the corner. "*She's here! Places everyone!*" I open the door and she walks up the steps to my porch. "Hey!" I say in my cheeriest voice.

"Hi . . ." she says because I never talk like this unless something is up. Her father waves and pulls out of the driveway.

I lead her to the back yard and say very loudly, "There is some lemonade out here that I made specially for you!" This is their cue.

"*Surprise!*" Everyone springs from their hiding places and runs over to Aisha and hugs her or throws streamers and balloons and hats into the air.

"We love you, Aisha!" I say and give her the biggest hug ever. Tears are streaming down our faces.

"I'll never forget you, Melly!"

"I'll never forget you, Aisha!" Everyone else is squeezing past me to say goodbye but she manages to press something into my hand. It is a beaded green bracelet that she wears almost every day, and I too will wear it forever as a symbol of her and our friendship. ❁



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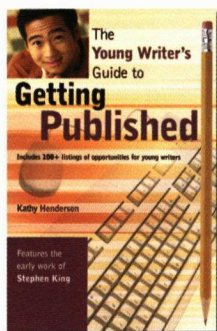
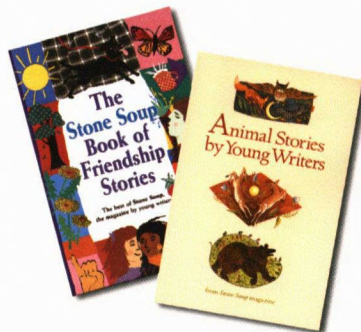
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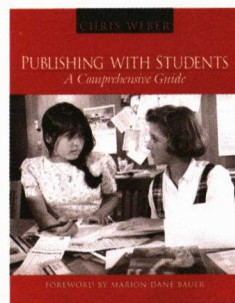
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