

Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists



Illustration by Ashley Burke, age 11, from "Brutal Deluge," page 12

THE VIEW FROM SANTA CHIARA

Francesca's parents want her to stop painting, but how can she?

MARCH/APRIL 2005

\$5.75 US \$7.50 CANADA

Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists

VOLUME 33, NUMBER 4

MARCH/APRIL 2005

STORIES

The View from Santa Chiara by Mariel Dempster 5

Francesca and the old man spend their Saturdays together, painting

Brutal Deluge by Steven Lu 12

It's flood season, and Deer Mountain seems angry

My Last Summer's Night by Katherine Roth 15

Trish's mom remembers a special night with her best friends

Where Time Forgot by Sophia Stid 19

Nature brings peace and contentment in Sophia's secret place

Dreams by Justin Mai 23

A powerful force pulls Berg back to the land of his ancestors

My City by Maya Vilaplana 32

Maya appreciates San Francisco, but she loves New York

Muslim Girl by Elena Tennant 36

Why shouldn't Leyla be allowed to wear her headscarf in school?

Surprises at Sunrise by Maria Lohr 45

Maria summons her courage to rescue the baby sea turtles

POEMS

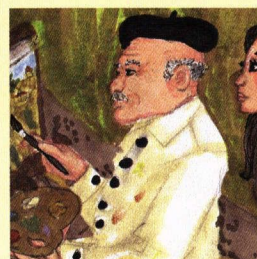
Magical Moments by Jean Hope Sack 30

Company by Maya Koretzky 43

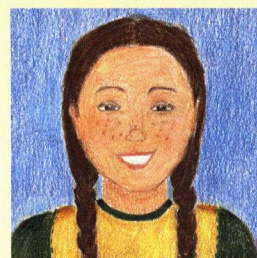
BOOK REVIEWS

Powerful Words reviewed by Celia Arguilez Smith 10

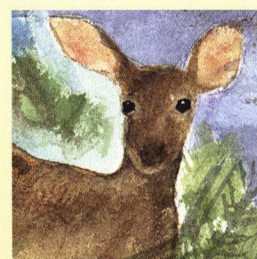
The Wanderer reviewed by Charlotte Kugler 34



page 5



page 15



page 19



page 45



Available from the Library of Congress in braille for visually handicapped readers. Call 800-424-8567 to request the braille edition

Stone Soup is printed on recycled paper

GERRY MANDEL
WILLIAM RUBEL
Editors

LAURIE GABRIEL
Subscription Director

STEPHEN POLLARD
Production

BARBARA HARKER
ELIZABETH CHURCH
Administrative Assistants

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 4. 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: Ashley Burke, of Cedar Park, Texas, is a talented 11-year-old artist whose work is appearing in *Stone Soup* for the first time. Ashley has a passion for expressing herself through art, and she especially enjoys drawing vivid images in colored pencil.

The Mailbox



LBP, 9

Earlier in my years, I was surfing the Web and found the *Stone Soup* Web site. I glanced over it and since the magazine sounded satisfactory, I ordered a year's worth, never knowing it would be something I never even bothered to dream of! With the greatest articles, book reviews, and drawings, I was absorbed and obsessed.

ALLISON MCCLURE, 10
Richardson, Texas

I would like to congratulate Juliet B. Quaglia for her *beautiful* poem, "To Sleep" [January/February 2005] and to thank you greatly for publishing it. It is absolutely *gorgeous*, helping me to envision everything the talented poet describes. At first glance I *truly* thought it was written by a thirteen-year-old! It was *stunning*!

ALEXANDRA GRIMM, 9
Canandaigua, New York

I have been receiving *Stone Soup* since I was eleven years old, and even though I'm afraid I'm a bit too old to be submitting work any longer, I enjoy every issue of your magazine. I never fail to be amazed at the illustrations and literature that are produced by the adolescent artists and writers that appear in *Stone Soup*. I would also very much like to compliment Natalie Fine for her poem, "Night Lives," published in the July/August 2004 issue. It was simply amazing; I loved it. Her free-form style of poetry and beautiful descriptions made me feel as if I were traveling right alongside her characters through that enchanted night she so eloquently created. Keep writing, Natalie, you definitely have a great future as a poet.

ALANA KELLEY, 16
Uxbridge, Massachusetts

I would just like to compliment Marian Homans-Turnbull on her wonderful story, "Water All Around" [November/December 2004]. I loved the way she wrote it, adding little things about the characters or settings while creating an image of the story. I can't say how much I enjoyed her story.

MOLLY SELIGMAN, 10
San Francisco, California

I would like to comment about the story "Himalayan Adventure" in your January/February 2003 issue. I am particularly impressed by the cinematic effect with which the author, Reid Plumley, skillfully imbued his story. The numerous bits of vivid details of mountain climbing, together with the feeling of being hopelessly lost in the snow, give this fiction an extraordinary sense of cruel reality and gripping suspense. The plot is studded with unexpected twists and turns. Of course, the encounter-with-yeti (Himalayan Snowman) part was much of a fantasy that could have been reinforced with more convincing evidence. Another missing element that could have made this story more moving would be Jack Graham's strong wills to survive and reunite with his loved ones. The contrast of facing death in the isolated mountain and the surprise rescue could have made this story heart-melting. Despite these minor flaws, it is very inspiring to see that a kid wrote such a good story and got published.

AUSTIN WANG, 11
Piscataway, New Jersey

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.



Francesca sat secluded in a corner, thinking, in self-pity

The View from Santa Chiara

By **Mariel Dempster**

Illustrated by **Claire Neviaser**

ONE THING WAS FOR CERTAIN, she never wanted to go. She never wanted to go to Santa Chiara.

Francesca stared out the huge windows of the dining hall; the rain beat harder and harder against the window, making it almost impossible to hear the nun as she said grace. The ancient Madonna in the painting over the fireplace looked as tranquil as ever.

As the girls started their dinner so did their chatter, almost drowning out the sound of the storm.

Francesca sat secluded in a corner, thinking, in self-pity.

She was suddenly woken out of her reverie by Sister Angelica, who was standing over her.

"If you are done, I will show you around the school. Put your dishes in the kitchen and follow me," she said.

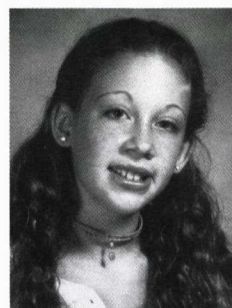
Francesca did as she was told and followed Sister Angelica out of the dining hall.

"These are the classrooms. You will be paired with one of the other girls so they can show you to each of your classes," Sister Angelica informed her.

Sister Angelica showed her the nuns' hallway with the nuns' rooms and the office. She showed Francesca the courtyard, the student lounge, and the kitchen. Finally, Francesca was shown the room where she would be sleeping with the three other thirteen-year-old girls. Her room looked out over the courtyard and the courtyard looked over the Tuscan countryside and a castle pricked the sky on one of the highest hills.



Mariel Dempster, 12
Austin, Texas



Claire Neviaser, 13
Madison, Wisconsin

Francesca sat on her bed, staring out the window, wondering why she was here, but she knew why she was here. It was her paintings. Francesca was the daughter of the owner of the largest bank in Rome, and her parents thought it hardly suitable that she should paint. They considered painting a useless occupation, so she was sent to a highly recommended boarding school in the tiny town of Castiglion Fiorentino. And here she was in Santa Chiara where the school was taught by nuns.

It was about an hour before the three other girls came in. As they got ready for bed, they laughed and talked, almost completely ignoring Francesca until they were almost in bed. A girl named Sofia told Francesca that she would be showing her around the next day.

It took a long while, but finally the stars calmed Francesca and she slipped into the dark folds of sleep.

The next day was very uneventful, as was the rest of the week. Surprisingly, Francesca was quite happy. She liked the quietness of Castiglion compared to the buzzing streets of Rome. The classes were good and the nuns were tolerable. The only thing she really wanted was a friend, but that could wait. She quickly established that her favorite spot was under the huge shady tree in the courtyard. She liked to look out over the countryside. She drew too, but she was not entirely certain she was allowed to.

One day Francesca was again sitting alone in a corner of the dining hall at

lunch. She was eating mechanically, not really seeing or tasting what she was eating, when a flash of color caught her eye. It was the Madonna that was always at the head of the dining hall. Francesca had never noticed, but the painting had a placid sort of beauty about it. She whipped out a piece of paper and pencil and started drawing the beautiful Madonna. She was so involved in her drawing that she didn't even notice Sister Lucia standing over her.

"Although I am glad to see you take an interest in the Virgin Mary, your parents specifically sent a note saying that you are not to draw or paint in any form," she said and whipped the paper out of sight with one sweep of her gnarled hand.

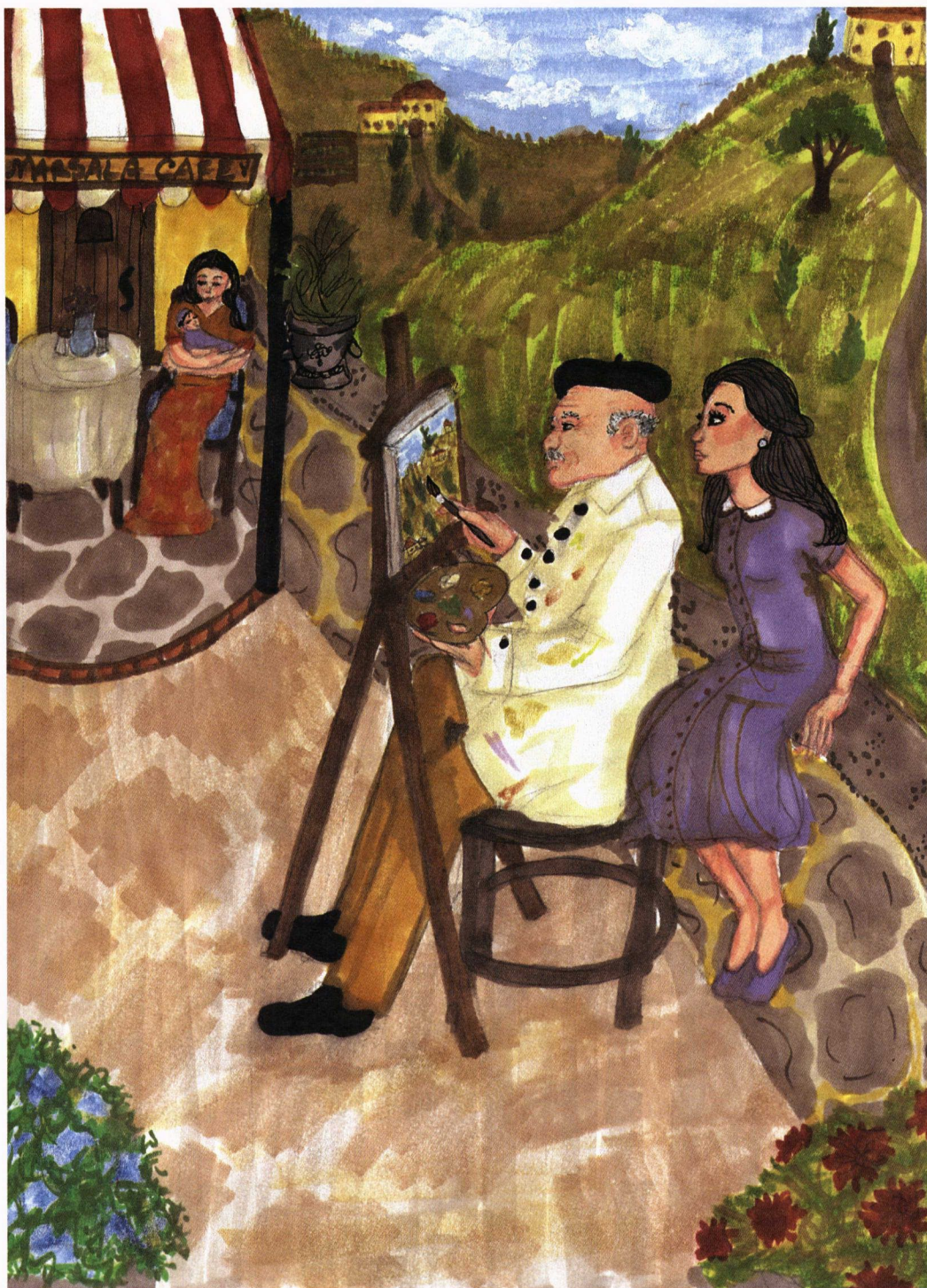
ON SATURDAY morning, Sister Angelica took the girls to the town plaza.

"You may go around the town," she announced, "but be back here by one o'clock."

As soon as Sister Angelica had finished her announcement, the girls scattered. Francesca wandered down a narrow alley and came out two blocks away from the plaza. She did not think about where she was going, she just simply wandered along the cobblestone streets.

She stopped to rest in a plaza that overlooked the Tuscan countryside.

The tiny plaza was wedged between two stone buildings. There were only a few people in the plaza; a woman and her baby, two boys play-fighting and an old man. Francesca sat on the stone wall and watched the old man intently. He was



"What are you painting?" she asked timidly

painting a picture.

He seemed oblivious to the world around him, only concentrating on the stroke of his brush and the sound of silence.

Francesca approached him and stood looking over his shoulder. He didn't notice her standing there and she might have thought him asleep if it wasn't for the fact that his eyes were open.

"What are you painting?" she asked timidly.

"Life," he answered without looking up.

The countryside that he was painting did look like the definition of life. The hills were green and dotted with houses and his painting looked as perfect as the real thing.

I could never paint anything as beautiful as that, she thought.

Suddenly, with practically a physical jolt, she was struck with an idea.

"Could you teach me to paint?" she burst out in a rush and clapped her hand over her mouth in horror.

Finally he looked up at her. His face was a mass of old memories and old smiles. He stared at her for several moments and Francesca stared back, mesmerized by his gaze. "I will teach you," he said finally, "under one condition. You will paint forever, no matter what."

Francesca thought it an odd request, but she agreed and sat down on the wall next to him. "Now before you ever start to paint," he began, "you must learn the rules before you start to break them." He handed her a pencil and a paper and said,

"Show me what you can do."

She obeyed and started drawing the little café in the plaza. When she was done, Francesca handed him the sketch. She was quite proud of herself and thought it was one of her best ones yet until he announced, "This is awful, although I have seen worse." In the end, he ticked off seven things that were wrong about it.

Francesca was mortified but managed to obtain a half-decent expression. Before they were done, the old man had criticized Francesca's work about seventeen times. At about 12:45 the old man said, "Today was good, but next week will be better." Francesca nodded and took off quickly back to Santa Chiara.

FRANCESCA WENT to the little plaza every Saturday and the old man was always there, painting placidly. If there was one thing Francesca had learned about the old man, it was don't talk to him, let him talk to you, which was occasionally, and only when he had to. He never said anything about his past or anything about anything besides art. There were times when his eyes clouded over and he became more oblivious to the world around him as though he was remembering something. Other than that, his face resembled one of the stones that made up the street.

Francesca's life fell into a pattern: school, eat, sleep, old man; school, eat, sleep, old man. And she went on very happily for about five months. She grew very attached to the old man and, even though he tried hard not to show it, she knew

that the old man was attached to her too. She never learned the old man's name but every time they departed, he said, "Today was good, but you'll do better," and he was right. Every day she improved until the day came that she was to go back to Rome.

Francesca ran crying into the plaza that she had come to love so much. She sat down heavily next to the old man and choked out, "I . . . I have to go back to Rome. I d- don't want to. I'll . . . I'll . . . I'll have to stop painting and . . ."

"Now you listen to me, young lady, you are not going to stop painting. That was our bargain. Now dry those tears and let's talk this out." Francesca had never heard him be so kind. If someone had been looking down on the plaza they would have seen an old man and a young girl whispering in a corner.

The next day, Francesca could be seen in the courtyard waiting for her mother to arrive to take her away from Santa Chiara. When Francesca's mother arrived, she was marched straight to the courtyard where Francesca was waiting. Francesca stood and confronted her mother.

"Are your bags packed, Francesca? Your father has an important meeting with some business associates coming over for dinner and I want to be home by six at the latest,"

she said without looking at her daughter.


"Mother," Francesca said, her voice shaking, "I'm not going back to Rome."

Finally her mother looked at her daughter's white face. "What?" she said, confused.

"I'm not going back. Here I learned to paint and it's not the nuns' fault. It's mine. An old man taught me," Francesca said into the silence. "And look," she began again, "look at this painting."

It was one of the last paintings she had done, and the old man had said some very good things about it. The painting was one of the castle on the hill. Its dark intimidating figure contrasted well with the bright sky.

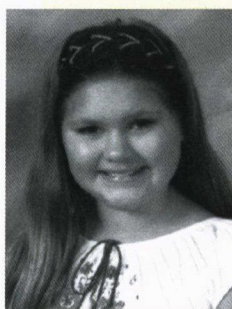
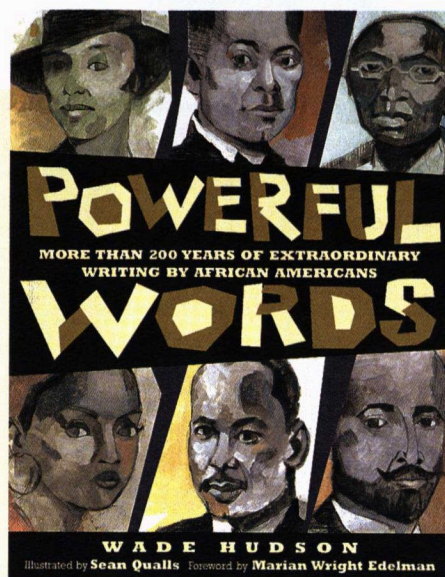
Francesca's mother sat down on a bench, for once at a loss for words.

THAT NIGHT, Francesca was staring out her bedroom window in Santa Chiara. Her mother had finally consented after much haggling, and Francesca was staying at Santa Chiara. She couldn't sleep, but as she looked down from the window into the countryside, and finally at the tree in the courtyard, sleep overcame her. The last thing she remembered seeing that night was the view from Santa Chiara. 

Book Review

By Celia Arguilez Smith

Powerful Words by Wade Hudson; Scholastic Inc.: New York, 2004; \$19.95




Celia Arguilez Smith, 11
San Diego, California

THIS BOOK IS A COLLECTION of poetry, rap, historical speeches, stories and biographies on the struggles and triumphs of African Americans. This book intrigued me because it was the ideas and thoughts from the eighteenth century to the edge of the twenty-first century. I could read the book part by part. I like rap music so I read the section about hip-hop star Lauryn Hill first. She expresses her feelings with music. I read the lyrics of a song about a person wondering where his life is going, "And I made up my mind to define my own destiny." But she is not the first to express her feelings.

Benjamin Banneker, an inventor, surveyor and astronomer, wrote a letter to Thomas Jefferson. It said, "We are a race of beings who have long laboured under the abuse and censure of the world, that we have long been considered rather as brutish than human and scarcely capable of mental endowments. The color of the skin is in no way connected with strength of the mind or intellectual powers." Mr. Banneker died in 1806. Then I read about the first black newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*. Publisher John Russwurm wrote, "We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us." It lasted two years. By the Civil War, there were twenty-four African-American newspapers.

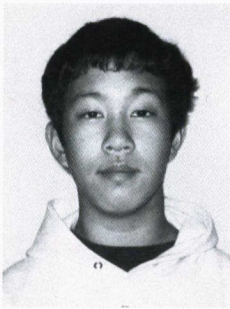
One of my favorites was a story by Toni Morrison. The story is about an old, wise, blind woman who teaches a lesson about mockery and power. Mrs. Morrison's biography informs the reader that she was presented a National Humanities Medal by President Bill Clinton and is the first African-American woman to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature. Her story was very different from Mary McLeod Bethune's story. I never heard of this brilliant woman who started a public school for African Americans. Five little girls started in 1904. By 1923, it became Bethune-Cookman College and she was president. Many African-American children received educations because of her. I wish this had been the experience for Native Americans who instead were sent to government boarding schools where they could not speak their native language and were given Christian names.

I would recommend this book to everybody who has a different culture and can compare their experiences. As a Native American, I learned about how we had some of the same experiences and different ones too. We share a history of discrimination, but we have succeeded in keeping our culture alive—our foods, music and traditions. That's what makes all of our cultures different but very interesting. I sit with my mother and sister when they sing and play the pow-wow drum and I connect with my heritage. In the same way, African Americans connect with their culture with the gospel music composed by Thomas A. Dorsey, the son of a minister. He wrote, "Precious Lord, take my hand, Lead me on, let me stand, I am tired, I am weak, I am worn; Thru the storm, thru the night, lead me on to the light." Read this book! The powerful words will teach you how many African Americans struggled and achieved great things, making America better for all of us. 

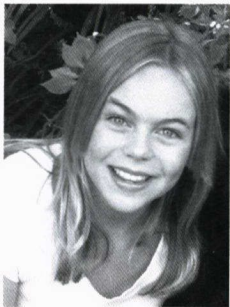
Brutal Deluge

By **Steven Lu**

Illustrated by **Ashley Burke**



Steven Lu, 12
Anaheim, California



Ashley Burke, 11
Cedar Park, Texas

I LOOKED THROUGH THE small window of my new room, watching heavy streams of water galloping through the streets. Fortunately for me, our house was located high on a hill. My parents had run down to try to help the other villagers. Flood season had come.

All I could do was stare, and watch in amazement and horror. Waves and waves of powerful water were streaming down the mountains, tearing everything. It was terrible. I lifted my head, seeing the great Deer Mountain. The Deer was tall, elegant, and dangerous—especially now. What had once been the beautiful white snow of the peak of the Deer's horn was now gone, and the watery wrath of the Deer was upon us.

I did not know why the great Deer was doing this. Perhaps it was because spring had interrupted his peaceful winter sleep. I closed my eyes, hoping that the Deer would find it in his heart to cease. If the Deer would not forgive us, or whatever the cause, our little settlement would soon become a watery grave.

My head turned away from the window, eyes red with fright. I walked over to my small bed and lay down. However, I could still hear the splashes outside and the occasional scream. The Deer was especially angry. What a pity.

I heard a knock on the door. I didn't budge. To me, the *tap! tap!* sounded like the galloping Deer, calling to me. Calling me outside, to its wave of terror. I did not open the door. I would be brave.

But, I noticed the cease of splattering and yelling. There was

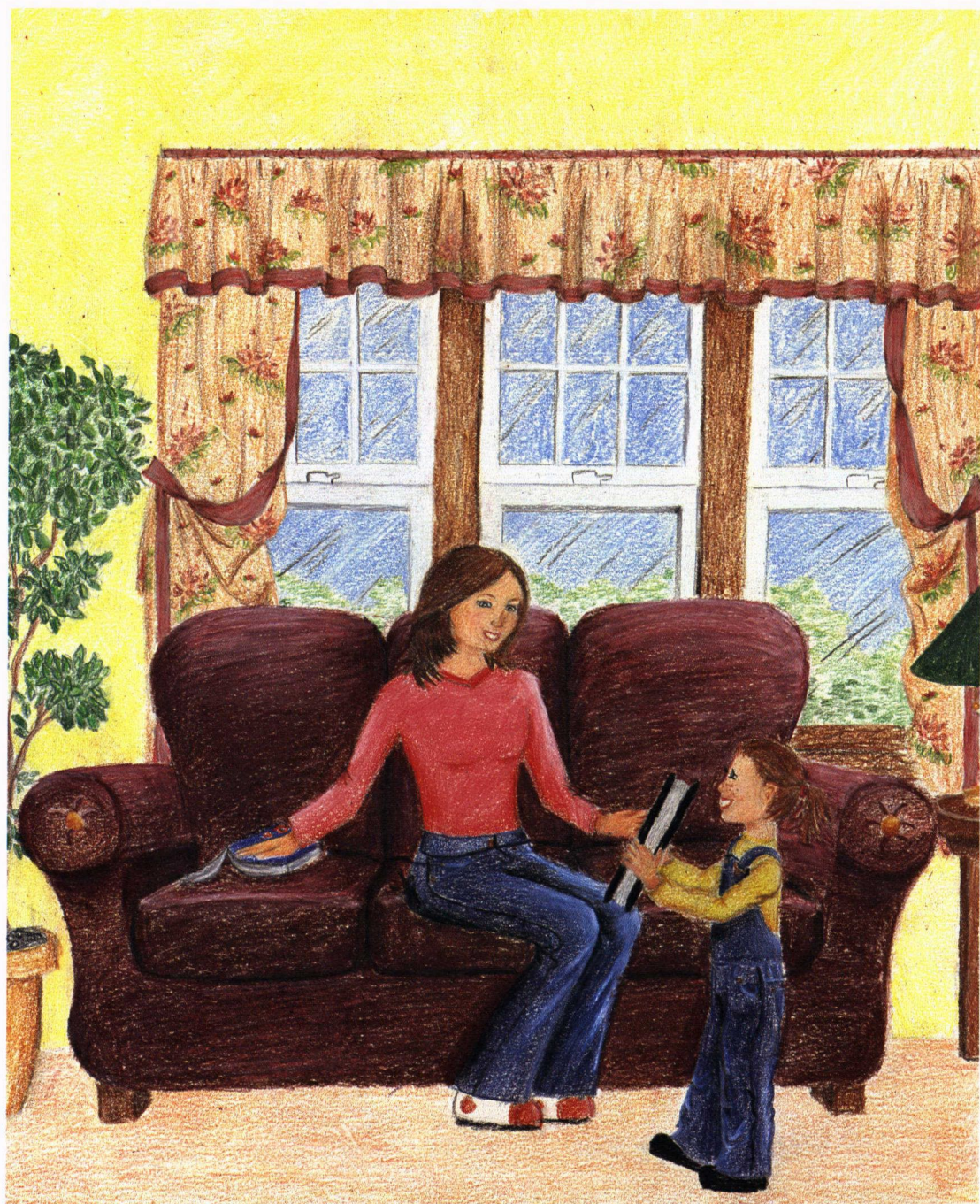


All I could do was stare, and watch in amazement and horror

hope. Was it possible that the invisible bear had come, and defeated the Deer? I found the small portion of courage re-

maining in my heart, and opened the door.

It was my father, and he was smiling. ☸



"Mommy! Mommy! Look what I found!"

My Last Summer's Night

By Katherine Roth

Illustrated by Emily Rappleye

"MOMMY! MOMMY! Look what I found!" Trish squealed as she entered the living room, dragging behind her what appeared to be a giant book. I set down the magazine I had been flipping through; there was something familiar about that book, but I couldn't quite place my finger on it.

"What do you have there?" I asked.

"It's a photo album." Trish plopped down next to me on the couch. "And look, it has your name on it."

Sure enough, there was my name scribbled on the cover.

"Oh my, I used to keep this when I was just a few years older than you. I haven't seen this in years," I murmured wonderingly, running my fingers over the worn and creased edges. As I opened to the first page, deeply buried memories came flooding back.

"Who's that?" Trish asked, pointing to a middle-aged woman smiling up at us.

"That's my mother, your grandmother, way back when I was a kid."

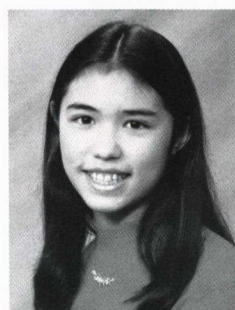
"That's Grandma?" Trish said doubtfully.

"Yep."

"And who's that?"

"That's my old dog, Suki."

Next, Trish pointed to a trio of young girls. Their arms were linked together and they wore huge smiles from ear to ear. "Is that you?" Trish asked, pointing to the middle girl.



Katherine Roth, 13
Rochester Hills, Michigan



Emily Rappleye, 12
Barrington, Illinois

"Yes it is. And those two girls are Clara and Megan. We were the best of friends up until high school."

"What happened at high school?"

"Oh, nothing. We were just districted for different schools and after that we kind of drifted apart . . . we were such good friends . . ." As my voice trailed off, my mind drifted back to that last summer's night I had spent with those two . . .

NIGHT HAD already set in when we stumbled out of the movie theater, doubled over with laughter.

"Did you see that guy?" Megan squealed in between giggles.

"He was such an idiot!" I agreed.

"What are you talking about?" Clara cried indignantly, wearing an expression of mock disbelief. Then she leaped forward and brandished an invisible sword, mimicking the character perfectly. "Art thou thy dragon I musteth slay?"

"Musteth?" I inquired.

"Whatever."

And we all fell over in another wave of laughter.

I lifted my jacket sleeve and wiped away mirthful tears. "When's your dad getting here?" I finally managed to ask once we had settled down a bit.

Clara glanced at her watch. "We still have about ten more minutes."

"Any of you have some money left?"

Both Clara and Megan shook their heads solemnly.

"Sorry, spent mine on that last bag of

popcorn," Clara said.

I sighed deeply and sank down onto one of the steps leading to the theater entrance. "Well, what do we do now?"

We all stared down at the ground, the same thought passing through our minds, but no one wanting to speak it aloud. Finally, Clara whispered out the painful words, "You know, school starts up tomorrow. I guess we won't see each other for a while."

I bit my lower lip and nodded.

"It sucks we all have to go to separate high schools," Megan muttered, sadness and rage blended deep within her tone.

"Sure does," I said.

Thinking back, I tried to recall just how long ago we all had met. Was it second grade? Maybe. But ever since that fateful day many, many years ago, the three of us had been inseparable. It seemed a rather cruel punishment to split us apart this late in our friendship.

"But it's not like we can't still be friends," I added, my voice brimming with hope. "I'll call you both right when I get home tomorrow."

"Yeah, I guess," Clara sighed.

No one spoke for a long while. I glanced from one sad face to the next, not sure of what to do or say. Our silence was only broken when the theater door swung open behind us, and two people strode out.

Megan quickly shielded her face with her hand and whispered through gritted teeth, "Look away! Look away!"

Almost instinctively, I turned to see who it was. Clara grabbed my arm and



"We were the best of friends up until high school"

tried to yank me back, but not before I had caught a glimpse of them. The two most irritating people, Shauna and Zack, were walking hand in hand down the theater steps. I waited a few moments, making sure they were far enough away, then turned to my friends and raised an eyebrow. We watched as they walked off, slowly being swallowed by the night. Once again alone, we were consumed by another fit of hysteria.

I was clutching my stomach, giggling

like crazy, when Clara's dad pulled up in his old wreck of a truck. Most of the paint had chipped off, revealing a thick layer of rust, and the engine made a mysterious clunking noise at spontaneous moments throughout the ride. We didn't give it a second thought. Rising from our seats, we piled into the dilapidated truck.

"So how was it, gals?" Clara's dad asked as I pulled the door shut and strapped myself in. For some odd reason he always emphasized the last word of every sentence.

But we were used to it by now.

"Not worth the time," Clara said.

We both agreed.

"Ah, well. So are you gals ready for school tomorrow? First day of high school, that's a big deal. Shame you're all going to different places."

"Yeah . . . a shame," Megan said. Then, we all grew quiet, each staring out their own window into the dark, moonlit night. Regret hung heavily in the air, nearly choking me. Why did it have to be this way? Why did we have to be split up now?

Clara finally ended the mesmerizing silence. "You won't believe what I saw this morning . . ."

And the spell was broken, our words slurring together in our haste to get them out.

"No way . . ."

"Did you guys see that show . . .?"

"Are you sure that wasn't . . .?"

"I saw something like that a week ago . . ."

On and on and on. Just like old times. We laughed and giggled and lost ourselves in the moment. No worries, no cares, just us and the open road ahead. If only there were some way I could pause time, making this moment last just a bit longer. But all too suddenly, Clara's dad was pulling up to my house.

"I'll call you tomorrow," I said as I swung open the door and stepped out.

"Good luck!"

"Have fun tomorrow!"

"See you soon!"

"Bye!"

They both were leaning dangerously out the car windows, waving wildly at me. I smiled and waved back. I don't believe there could have been two better best friends.

I gazed after them, still waving, even when the taillights dimmed from view and the clunking of the engine faded. It once again struck me just how much I would miss my friends. I sighed deeply and gazed up with longing at the stars and the moon and the dark velvet sky. As my last summer's night drew to a close, I could not help but wonder what my future might hold and whether these moments would mean anything in the years to come . . .

THE GARAGE DOOR rumbled open and you could dimly hear the puttering of an old Honda Civic pulling in.

"Daddy's home!" Trish cried gleefully as she leaped off the couch and darted toward the garage.

My eyes lingered for a moment on the picture, a smile playing across my lips. I couldn't help but wonder what Clara and Megan were up to these days, if they were as happy and contented as I was. Slipping my finger beneath the plastic covering, I removed the picture from the photo album and slid it into my purse. Rising from the couch, I went to join my family. ❀

Where Time Forgot

By **Sophia Stid**

Illustrated by **Melissa Moucka**

"SOPHIA, HONEY, WHERE are you going?"
My mother's voice rises above the creak of the screen door.

"Outside," I call back. The door slams behind me as I step out into the purpling spring evening. I smile. How could "outside" describe where I'm going?

Stepping off the edge of lawn, I run through the woods. Moss is thick and damp beneath my feet. Weeds grip onto my legs, friendly greeting hands. Trees rustle, in infinite patience. The sultry air fogs my glasses, and leaves drops of dew dazzling a spider web.

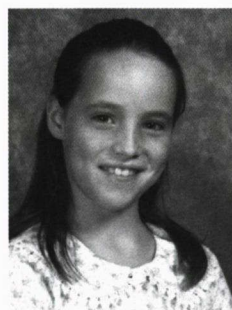
I walk across Jordan Creek, hopping from ancient rock to ancient rock. Water sighs its way down the waterfall, and then sings into a small pool, hidden by softly curling ferns. The water shines with a light from beneath its surface, dreamily glowing to an orchestra of crickets.

My feet squish on mud. One by one my worries sink into the mud; I grind my heels into their ghoulish faces for revenge. And I smile.

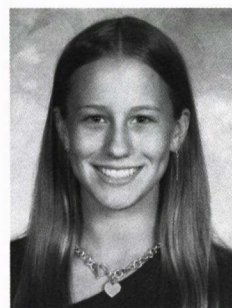
The ground shakes as deer leap through the forest. I watch them, their eyes constantly searching for something that never was, ears swiveling in anxious questions, tails held tense, stiffened with warnings and apologies and regrets. They lope out of sight, and I look ahead.

I'm almost there.

Almost.



Sophia Stid, 11
Potomac, Maryland



Melissa Moucka, 13
Hinsdale, Illinois



The ground shakes as deer leap through the forest

And then, finally, I'm there!

I relax into the constant tide of peace that splashes about my shoulders and sit cross-legged underneath a small maple tree.

The clearing is small, surrounded by thick-leaved trees. It maintains seclusion from the world, a secret place that time passes by, but still I can feel waves of energy whistling through. High in the slender, supple branches of a wild apple tree, a squirrel sways in her nest of dead leaves.

I close my eyes and suddenly I am that squirrel.

I can feel the dead leaves damply frail against my fur; feel the heavily lazy wind raking over the branches, spilling into my nest. I chatter my annoyance at a curious magpie that comes too close, and swell with aching pride over the nestful of innocently pink, squalling babies beneath me.

My eyes snap open. And I lose my thread of connection to the gray squirrel. I lie on my back, raise myself up by my elbows and gaze up at the dusk-thick sky.

A robin flies ahead and in a moment of looking I am that robin.

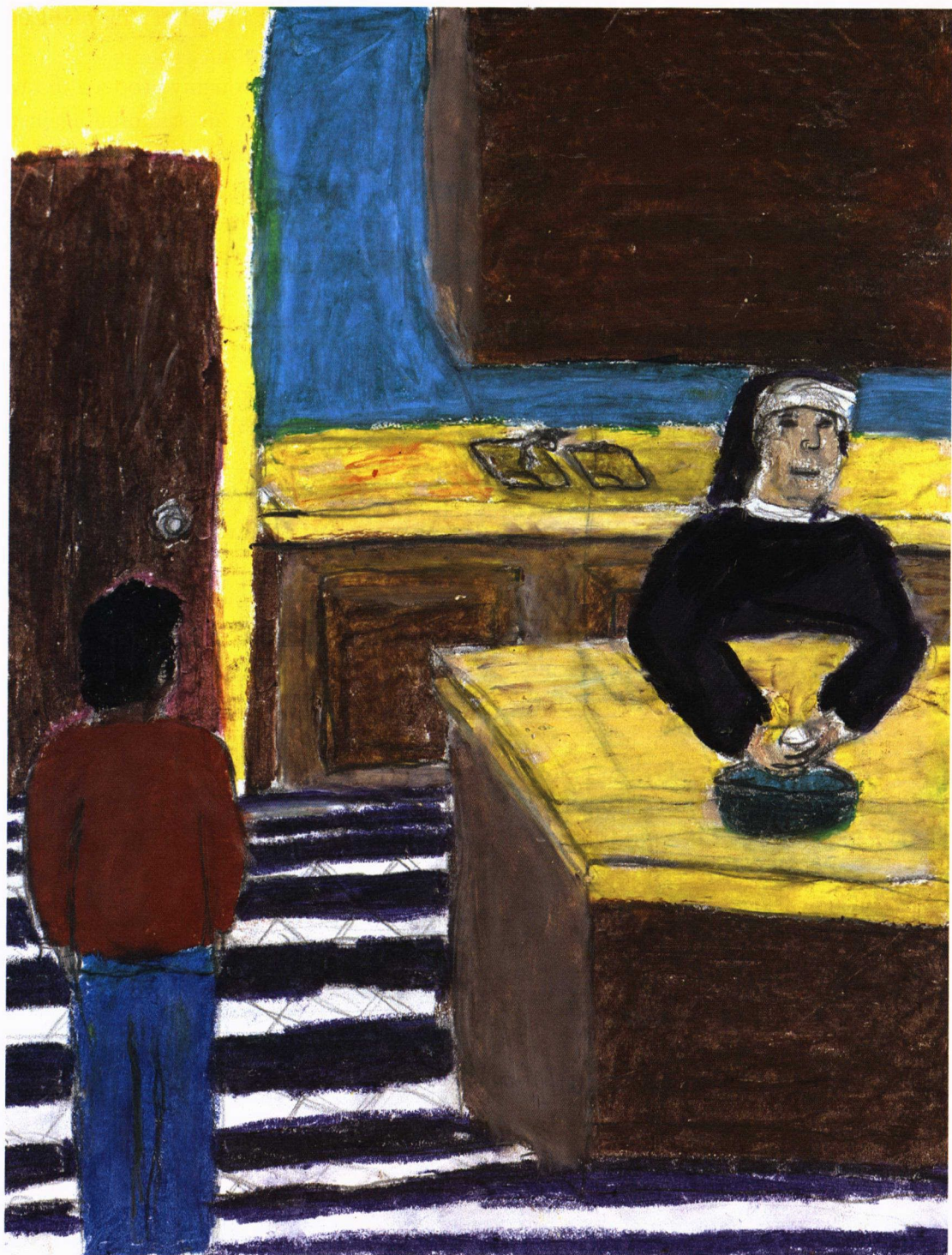
I can feel a twig roughly grooved in my beak, feel the sultry air straining against my wings. I chirp my joy for all to hear, and fester with impatience for the nest to follow the twig, the eggs to follow the nest, and the chicks to follow the eggs.

A blade of grass twitches against my elbow. I become folded into it. I feel my roots soaking up nourishment from the thawing soil; feel crowded by a thousand other grasses. I feel chilled by the lowness and am stretching, stretching, growing, growing to reach the sun.

I expand to my human size. Sighing, I stand up, and begin the journey home. Darkness is beginning to slash over the dusk, and Mom will be worried.

But I smile, straighten my back; swing my arms in uneven rhythms. I am refreshed, rested, in all senses of those two words.

I am ready to stare at the darkly ghoulish eyes of realities, and enter life again. ☸



"The dreams," he said simply, while Sister Amy nodded knowingly

Dreams

By Justin Mai

Illustrated by Alex Hamilton

BERG WOKE UP FOR THE seventh time this week in a cold sweat. That same dream had invaded his subconscious again, the dream where he is in the jungle, where through the thick brush he can make out a light, like a campfire. And there is also the rhythmic throbbing of voices and the steady beat of crude drums being pounded. Each time he had come closer to the fire only to wake up when he is right about to part the ferns that separated him from the circle of people around the fire.

Normally, Berg, being a sensible and down-to-earth kind of person, would have dismissed the dreams, but this was no normal dream, it was very vivid, so vivid that, sometimes, he forgot whether that reality was just a dream, or the dream was a reality.

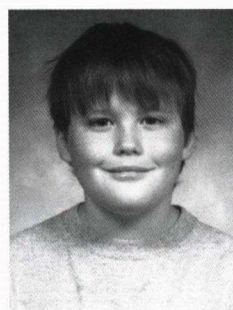
I ought to see a therapist about this, he thought uneasily while climbing out of his rickety old bed, careful not to wake his fellow orphans who were sleeping in the large “nursery.”

Berg climbed down the cold, metal steps that led to the large common room that dominated his orphanage. From there he turned to a hallway that led to the kitchen where his favorite nun was sure to be working on making the children’s breakfasts.

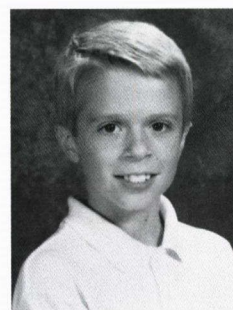
“Well hello, Howard, what are you doing up so early?”

“The dreams,” he said simply, while Sister Amy nodded knowingly. “Also, I’ve asked you, please call me Berg.”

The homely nun rolled her eyes and continued cracking eggs into a large bowl. “I’ll call you by the name this orphanage gave you, not some nickname you made up.”



Justin Mai, 12
Edmond, Oklahoma



Alex Hamilton, 12
Louisville, Kentucky

There was a brief pause, broken by Berg asking hopefully, "Any news?"

Amy looked at him sadly and said, "No, I'm afraid not."

They were talking about the news of Berg's origin. He had been given to the orphanage five years ago, and ever since then he had been obsessed with learning about his past. The nuns did what they could, which was to ask other orphanages around the state if they remembered him, and to pray, of course.

"Darn it," he said, feeling the familiar suffocating grip of hopelessness tighten around his body.

"Oh, don't worry," said Amy. "There's always Fleming's Domicile for the Destitute," she said, squeezing his arm and giving him a wink. He laughed. It was an old joke of theirs. When he had first come and expressed his desire to find out who his parents were, the first orphanage they checked said they had no record of him. It was then that Amy had come and consoled him and said that it was always the most strangely named place that held all the information you needed. They had spent the rest of that afternoon making up different names for this unknown, strangely named orphanage, and Fleming's was his favorite.

Berg got up from the stool he was sitting on and walked out of the kitchen, flopping on a brown, bumpy couch in the commons. He had just gotten a wave of vertigo, that feeling when it seemed like nothing was real. He gripped his hand tightly on the couch armrest until it

passed.

He looked around at the familiar settings of the large room. In the northeast corner there was a ping-pong table that would most certainly be used over a hundred times today. Lining the room were cushy armchairs and rather overstuffed couches, and in the southwest corner was a large bookcase.

Soon though, Berg's relaxation was broken by the sound of a large alarm clock and the thunder of feet stepping down the staircase. Like a large herd of cattle, the student body tromped through the commons and into the dining room, where breakfast was to be served. Berg got up shakily and walked over to where his two best friends were, near the back of the line, as usual.

"Hey, Clare, Nathan," said Berg when he reached them. Nathan nodded in recognition and Clare smiled happily, glad that all of her few friends were around her; Nathan only stuck his hands deep in his pockets and whistled a tuneless song.

Finally, when they had progressed through the line and were sitting at a table, Nathan asked, "So, dreams again?"

Berg smiled. He knew, of course. Nathan was the most normal and predictable person you could and probably ever would meet. It was for this that Berg had liked him so much. It was his normalcy that made him strange, because while everyone had their own unique style, Nathan had none. This in itself was a type of style that Nathan took special pride in.

"Yeah . . . They're getting much more

vivid, ya know?" said Berg after much thought. Clare and Nathan both nodded wisely, although both were hoping that the strange nightmares that had settled on their friend's mind would simply go away.

There was an awkward silence, broken only by Clare looking down at her plate, sighing, as if to change the subject, and pushing it away. "Do they expect me to eat this? 'Cause I am not eating this," she declared, although there was never an answer. It was purely a rhetorical question, more like a ritual really. She looked disdainfully at the gray metal tray that held some sorry-looking eggs and piece of toast with a smidgen of jam on it. Then, as if accepting her fate, Clare picked up her plastic fork and grudgingly took a small bite of the egg.

The school bell was like an old woman, yelling at them hoarsely, telling them to get to class, or suffer the consequences. Because every student knew what the consequences were, they all hurried. Clare and Berg had to part with Nathan as they went to the math class while he went to English for his first hour.

In math they were covering dimensional analysis and many students were having trouble. Just as the teacher was explaining, for the third time, how to multiply with exponents, the familiar feeling of vertigo came to Berg.

His desk seemed to flicker and waver, changing to a small bush and changing back again. The girl in front of him disappeared for a moment and then reappeared but with slightly greenish skin. Then

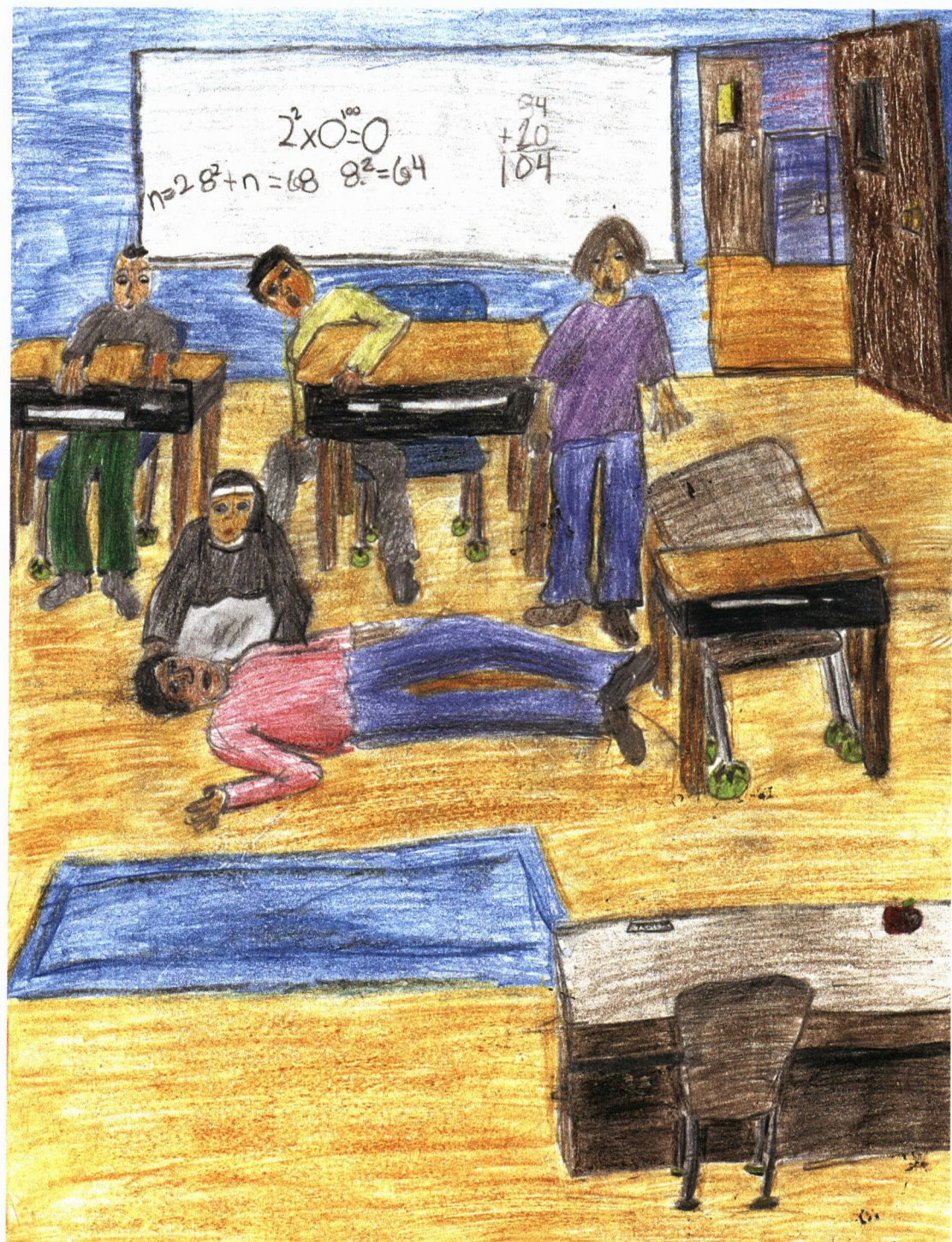
sweat started beading on Berg's forehead; his nose began to bleed. He could hear the distant throbbing of drums. Without noticing it, Berg fell out of his desk. The teacher suddenly looked up to see him writhing on the floor. With a shriek of surprise and fear she came to him and roughly shook him. Almost immediately Berg opened his dark eyelids, but not to reveal the usual brown irises.

His entire eyes were like windows. In them the children and the teacher saw golden beaches, tigers at play, wild jungles and strange, exotic animals. Soon though, his eyes faded back to their usual luster, but holding a very confused and pained expression.

The room was suddenly very silent, the teacher in mid-shake, the students with their mouths agape. The silence was broken by Clare's overly loud voice. "Did you guys see that?" she said in her usual blunt and straightforward manner. That seemed to snap everyone back to reality.

The teacher stood up, and in a very dignified manner began straightening her habit. She then looked gravely at Berg and said in a very quiet voice that betrayed how scared she actually was, "I think you'd better get to the infirmary."

Berg slowly got up, making sure to use his desk for leverage. Then, silently, he walked out of the room. Once out, he leaned heavily on the wall. He looked silently at his hands, touched his head, and wriggled his toes until he was completely sure he had not broken anything. The pain had been excruciating. It felt like being



With a shriek of surprise and fear she came to him and roughly shook him

digested; his skin burned, and his bones cracked, and yet, there didn't seem to be any lasting harm done to him. Thanking God for the miracle, Berg resolved to head over to the nurse's office anyway. Just as he passed through the hallway that led to the commons though, the vertigo came again.

It seemed as if this time it came with a vengeance, furious that Berg had gotten away last time unscathed. He collapsed and his nose began to bleed profusely. He found that instead of tile, his hands were resting on muddy dirt, and also, that the pain had seemed to go away. A centipede crawled over his outstretched hand, and when Berg looked up, he wasn't in his orphanage anymore. He was in the jungle. The jungle of his dreams.

Although Berg was usually a very cautious person, none of this struck him as odd. He slowly got up and walked carefully to the clearing that he could see through the wild brush. The sound of drums pounding in his ears, he pushed aside ferns and tree branches and he came to the clearing. Instantly the music stopped. There, right in the middle of the clearing, was a small fire. Resting near it was an old man, dressed in what might have been a shaman's robe, and wrinkled beyond compare. Behind him were some old huts that had evidently not been used for decades, and were falling into decay.

Almost as if sensing his presence, the old man looked up sharply and looked at Berg with surprisingly piercing and alert eyes. Upon seeing him, the man seemed satisfied and his gaze softened. Slowly, as

if he had the weight of the world on his shoulders, the old man stood up and approached him. As he walked, Berg could see glimpses of his school. He knew they were in the hallway, but, at the same time they were in South Africa.

Finally, after what seemed like a million lifetimes, they met eye-to-eye. Berg tried to think of questions, but all thought had left his mind completely.

SISTER AMY was walking down the hall when she saw Berg. He was face down on the floor, his arm stretched behind his back. Around his head was a small pool of blood.

"Howard!" she yelled, falling upon him, cradling his head, and gently trying to shake him out of his trance-like state. When it became obvious that her efforts were useless, she bundled him up in her arms and rushed to the nurse's office.

SUDDENLY, just as it seemed that the old man was going to speak, Berg felt a jarring explosion of pain in his body. Instantly, the jungle around him flickered to reveal the orphanage's white walls. He could feel hands on him but that didn't matter, only the pain did. Once again, it was like a giant stomach grinding him up. He could feel his body being ripped apart at the seams. When he finally did open his eyes, it was as if the worlds had been spliced. The floor was made of dirt, the walls were white, the white stone of his orphanage. Around the walls were ferns that seemed to be two-dimensional and

crucifixes just like them. Then, Berg didn't have time to see the other strange things in the room, he only saw black.

When Berg did look up, he was in the jungle with the old man. Only instead of being calm like he was before, he seemed to be concentrating very hard.

His earlier shyness having left him, Berg opened up in a flurry of questions. "What am I doing here? How did I get here? Where are we?! Who are you?!" He said it all quickly, in one breath.

The old man, his concentration disrupted, could only look at him, grimace and grunt, "No questions . . . Your world's too strong. It's trying to break through . . . I gotta . . . keep you here."

Berg could only gape, open-mouthed, until the old man relaxed and settled into a crouching position.

"Now, as for your first question, you are here to do a service to your great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather."

Berg opened his mouth, he was about to open up with another round of questions, but the old man quickly shushed him.

"You got here, through me, and we are in the spirit world," continued the old man. "Also, I am called Darakai," he added as an afterthought.

Berg sat very still for a little while, as if digesting the information he had been given. Finally, he looked up solemnly at Darakai and said, "What would you have me do?"

The old man grinned, then smiled, then laughed out loud, a loud, booming laugh that continued for a long time. After

he had finished, he wiped his eyes and looked up at Berg. "You can't believe how long I've been waiting for someone to say that."

"**N**OW, DON'T WORRY!" said Darakai an hour and a half later. "You are a natural, believe me," he continued.

All Berg could do was nod numbly and ask, "You were really taken as a slave? And that leaf was all that stopped you from living in South Africa?"

Darakai nodded solemnly, "Yes, now, we begin. Remember, once you fold it back, it will disrupt the flow of time. You might black out for a while."

Berg nodded and asked, "And when I come to, it will be as if all of this never happened?"

Darakai said, "Yes," and he drew a bag of greenish powder from one of his belt pouches. The fire had since died down and was now a pile of embers, but when Darakai threw a pinch of the powder into it, the flames sprang up, abnormally long. As instructed, Berg looked deeply into the fire and tried to clear his mind.

The changes were gradual, but they happened all the same. The settings around him seemed to melt away, to be replaced by a starry sky. One small, insignificant light seemed to be rushing toward him. Soon he could see the familiar planet Earth, surrounding his field of vision. He kept rushing toward it until he could make out all of the continents. However, he noticed that once he concentrated on something, he could see it perfectly.



As he walked out through the cool African night he saw his friend, Nakai

He could see a butterfly on North America and the energies it was creating that would soon form a tropical storm in Japan. He could see two dictators shaking hands and the country that would soon be conquered by their combined force. And he could see the fateful fern that his great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather had tried to hide behind when the slavers had come. He could see the one leaf that had been folded over, thus betraying Darakai's position. And, with very tender care, Berg flew down to it, to the scene that had been frozen in place by

Darakai's specially made powder, and with gentle care, he folded the leaf back, and then he only saw white.

IT WAS DARK when Burgta woke up to dreams of a large building and white children. As he walked out through the cool African night he saw his friend, Nakai. Nakai looked up from the fire he was putting out to see Burgta walking toward him.

"What is wrong?" he asked. Burgta just shook his head and replied simply. "Nothing, just . . . dreams." ❁

Magical Moments

By Jean Hope Sack



Jean Hope Sack, 12
Eureka, California

I climb to another branch
in this Sequoia giant
many times older than me.
It has stood through day and night,
through rain and wind and lightning,
yet stands alone strong and tall.

I see a view so stunning
from my high perch way up here,
the valley and the mountains,
with mist pouring over the ridges
shining silver with sunlight
in the early morning sky.

My family owns a tree farm
and this tree is one of ours.
We may fell many others
and send them to the mill,
but we'll never cut this tree
for it's ancient and special.

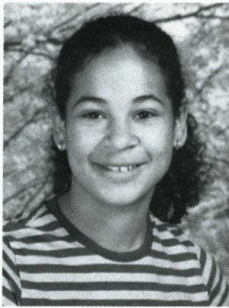
I watch an osprey soaring
over our emerald forest,
over a shaded streamlet
and then, catching a thermal,
the big osprey drifts away
leaving me just a feather.

I catch the feather floating
and set it in my hair.
I smile and write some more
in my book of poetry
that I keep here in this tree
to hold magical moments.

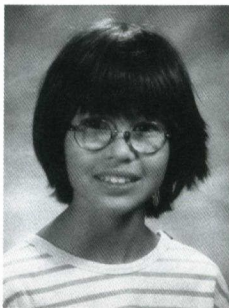
My City

By Maya Vilaplana

Illustrated by Camille Hoang Mai Davis



Maya Vilaplana, 11
New York, New York



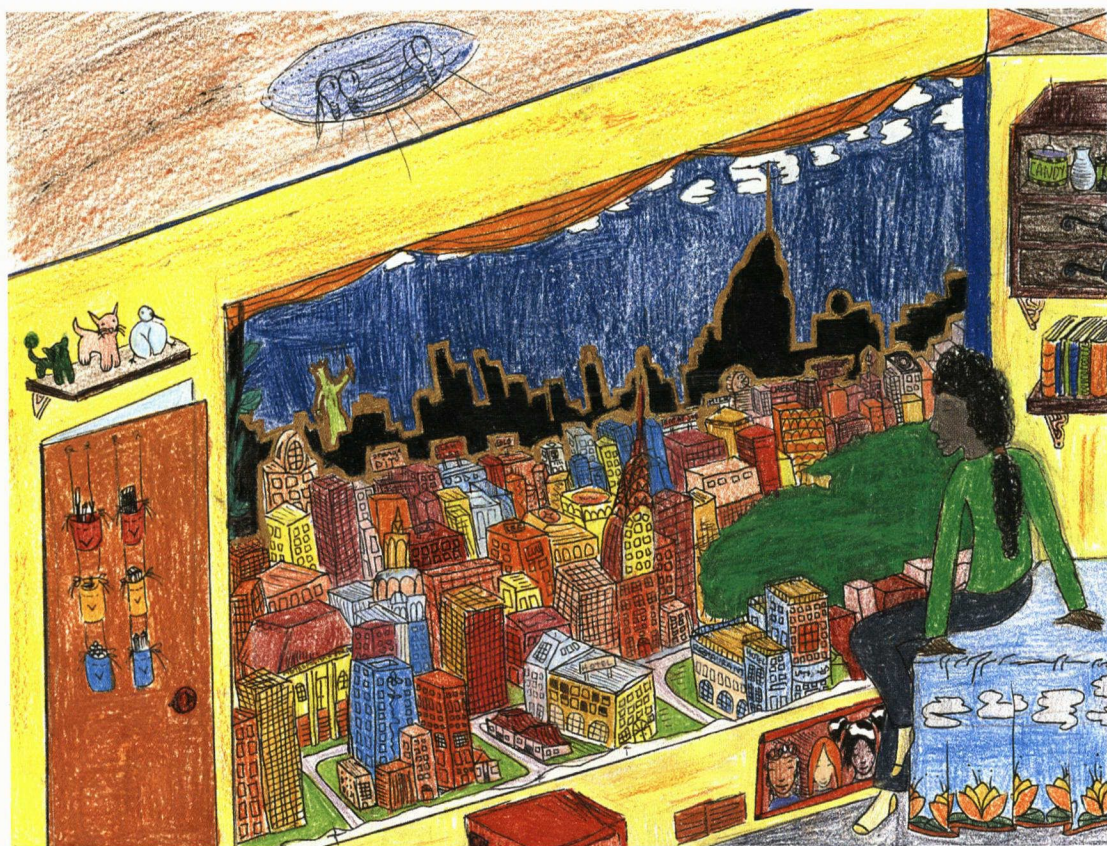
Camille Hoang Mai Davis, 11
Palo Alto, California

AS THE SNOW SEASON ENDS, about two months late, I look out my window and see my beloved city. It is late at night, and still the bustle of the city sounds as alive as the day, more alive possibly. Streetlights shine in a line and light up the darkness. Buildings flicker on and off as the city that never sleeps settles and dims.

I love my city.

My mother loved her city. San Francisco was her home and she always dreamt of going back to it. More space, more nature, more family, where it is so beautiful with trees and gardens that fill the country with fragrant smells and colorful flowers. I suppose that she missed the silence that greeted her as she drifted off to sleep there. Each time we drove by a house for sale, she would have to pull over and check it out.

I have to admit, it is nice to be there, so close to my family, more space, my own *room*! And recently, I am considering more the life in California, rather than in New York, where in my two-bedroom apartment, I can't run outside to my backyard, or take my dog for a walk (a dog would not like living in my house). But this city is my home, and even though it might not be the most perfect place, with the best smells, or weather, I enjoy the presence of it. I like the busy streets, and the feeling that I get on a spring day walking down the sidewalk, the freedom engulfs me and I love it. Or so I thought. Now it doesn't seem as big of a deal to me. My two opinions bicker and fight over which place I should belong to.



There is beauty when you look out my bedroom window; you just have to find it

But I know that there are different kinds of beauty in the world. There is the natural beauty, that one can't help but recognize, and there is the beauty that you grow to love and live with. The kind that settles in your heart, never to leave. Once you have seen a different place, once you have been a city girl, nothing will ever be the same. It's like when you go to Japan, and when you get back, no sushi can satisfy you because you've had the very best.

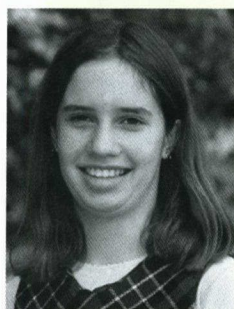
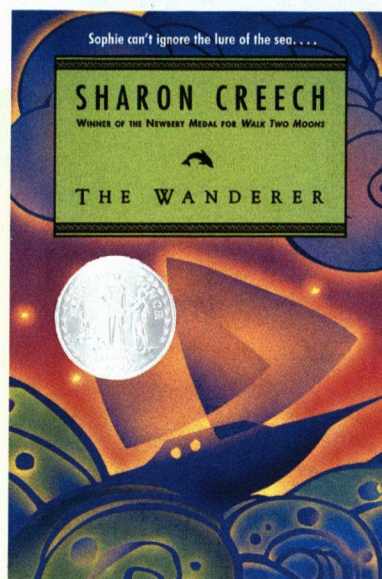
My loyal city is always there. Every night as I lie in bed, I watch my city move, and listen to my city's honking sounds. The sounds ring like the anxious chattering in the schoolroom on a warm spring day.

A home is a place that you love, that you go to after everywhere else, and it greets you with a sense of belonging that you can't get anywhere else.

There is beauty when you look out my bedroom window; you just have to find it. ❁

Book Review

By Charlotte Kugler



Charlotte Kugler, 12
Concord, Massachusetts


The Wanderer by Sharon Creech; HarperCollins: New York, 2000; \$16.99

ABOUT A YEAR AGO, my friend recommended *The Wanderer* to the girls in my Mother-Daughter book club. When she described it to us, I knew right away that it would be the perfect book for me—that I just had to read it. A few months later, when I was on a trip to London for February vacation, we were browsing around Foyles bookstore, and I saw *The Wanderer* on a shelf. I added it to the stack of books accumulating in my arms and bought them all. The day after I got back, I sat down on the couch with *The Wanderer*. I was absorbed from the first page, and didn't move until I finished. One of the reasons I found it so gripping was because of Sophie, the thirteen-year-old protagonist.

Like all the main characters in Sharon Creech's novels (I have read four others), Sophie was so vividly portrayed and well developed that I felt like I *was* her—soaring across the wide Atlantic with my uncles and cousins on a sailboat, answering the call of the ocean that had captivated me every year—forever optimistic about finally meeting my grandfather who was waiting for me in England. She also made me feel haunted by the shadow of her

parents' death creeping back into her memory and stepping in and out of her dreams. I enjoyed every minute of this imaginary voyage because I associate the ocean with adventure, freedom and peaceful consolation, all as endless as time, just as Sophie does. I remember when I went on a whale-watching boat last summer, looking forward to the moment when the thin line of land behind me would disappear below the horizon and I would be surrounded by the wide ocean, stretching away in every direction. I thought of how Sophie eagerly anticipated getting underway and onto the sea.

The most emotionally effective part of the book for me was when Sophie finally met her grandfather, Bompie, and retold stories from his childhood to him as a means of comforting him when he was sick. She also told him the tale that she had pushed aside for so many years, of her parents' death by drowning, only to have it painfully emerge from the fog of forgotten memories and into her consciousness. The way she told this story, mingling it with Bompie's stories, provided insight into her feelings in the moment as she finally discovered the true nature of her own past.

This is a wonderful book for anyone who enjoys a deep analysis into what it means to survive a tragedy that claims someone you love. Even though I have never lost a loved relative or friend, after reading this book I feel as if I know what it would be like because the character of Sophie was so sophisticated and convincingly written. This book changed my perspective on death and helped me understand what was previously so incomprehensible in the way only an outstanding book can do. 

Muslim Girl

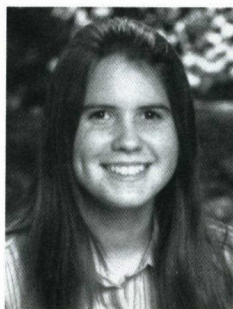
By Elena Tennant

Illustrated by Emma Kilgore Hine

CHAPTER ONE: LEYLA



Elena Tennant, 11
Sonoma, California



Emma Kilgore Hine, 13
Austin, Texas

“WAKE UP, SKYLAR!” hissed my older sister, Robin. “It’s already eight-fifteen!” My groggy eyes adjusted to the early morning light streaming through the window and I glanced at the clock. She was right. I had twenty minutes to get dressed, have breakfast, and brush my teeth and hair. I dragged myself out of bed. I was exhausted. I had stayed up till two o’clock reading a great book about the fall of the Romanov empire. And now I would have to pay the price.

I sighed. Today was the first day of seventh grade. I wasn’t nervous. I’m never nervous on the first day of school. It’s always the same. The work’s easy, and I never make any friends. I don’t have any friends outside of school either.

Unlike Robin. Robin is popular, and has more friends than you can count. Actually, she has fans. That’s all she wants really. Fans.

The morning was a rush, and I just managed to catch the bus, but only by running as fast as I could to the bus stop. I was panting as the bus doors opened to admit me.

I stepped inside and found a seat by the window in the second row. I sleepily stared at the head in front of me. It took me a minute to realize what was different. The head in front of me was wearing a headscarf. It shocked me, but that wasn’t the only thing wrong. She was sitting in the first row.

Kids here will tease you mercilessly if you sit in the front row. Don’t ask me why. I’ve never been able to quite understand the kids that go to Newberry Middle School. But I’ve got a basic



Her eyes were big and brown, with long, dark lashes

idea. They aren't motivated, and because of that, don't try to live up to their full potential.

Because I was different, I got teased a whole lot. But it didn't faze me. Part of it was the fact that they may tease me, but I know that it is not bad to be a nerd or globally aware. I'm proud that I'm not like them.

The girl turned around to look at me. Her eyes were big and brown, with long, dark lashes. The brown was almost black. Like a doe's eyes, or coffee without cream.

"Hi," she said. It was almost a whisper.

"Hi," I squeaked back, but she had already turned around.

A new girl. And she had promise.

CHAPTER TWO

NEWBERRY MIDDLE SCHOOL had seven rooms: the sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade classrooms, the multi-purpose room, the office, and the girls' and boys' bathrooms. I know it seems a little sad, but Newberry is a small town. A very small town. If you live here, your great-great-grandparents probably did too. It's so small, the town sign says Newberry,

Population: 514. So the seven rooms accommodate the ninety students just fine.

Today, I trudged into Mrs. Park's seventh-grade classroom. So did the Muslim girl. I looked around the room. I was sitting at a table in the back, next to Darcy. That was OK. The Muslim girl was sitting at a table across the room.

Mrs. Park walked in, her purple heels tapping the floor as she closed her door and walked to her desk. "Welcome back, to another hopefully great year at Newberry Middle School." Silence followed her words.

"Now before we start, let me introduce you to Leyla Aghdashloo, who will be joining our class this year. Leyla, how about you come up and introduce yourself?" Leyla walked up to the front of the room and stared awkwardly at all of us.

"Hi," she said sheepishly. She took a deep breath and started over, this time sounding more confident. "Hi, I just moved here from San Francisco; I live with my mom and dad and three sisters who are fourteen, ten, and seven. I like to read, write, and act. I also love being out in nature." She walked quickly back to her seat.

"Thank you, Leyla, we are fabulously lucky to have you in our class this year," said Mrs. Park, her smile wide and fake. "Now what did you all do this summer?" Hands shot up, including Leyla's.

I put my head down on my desk and listened to the other kids talk. All I had done all summer was read. And sing in the bathroom when no one was home. I love

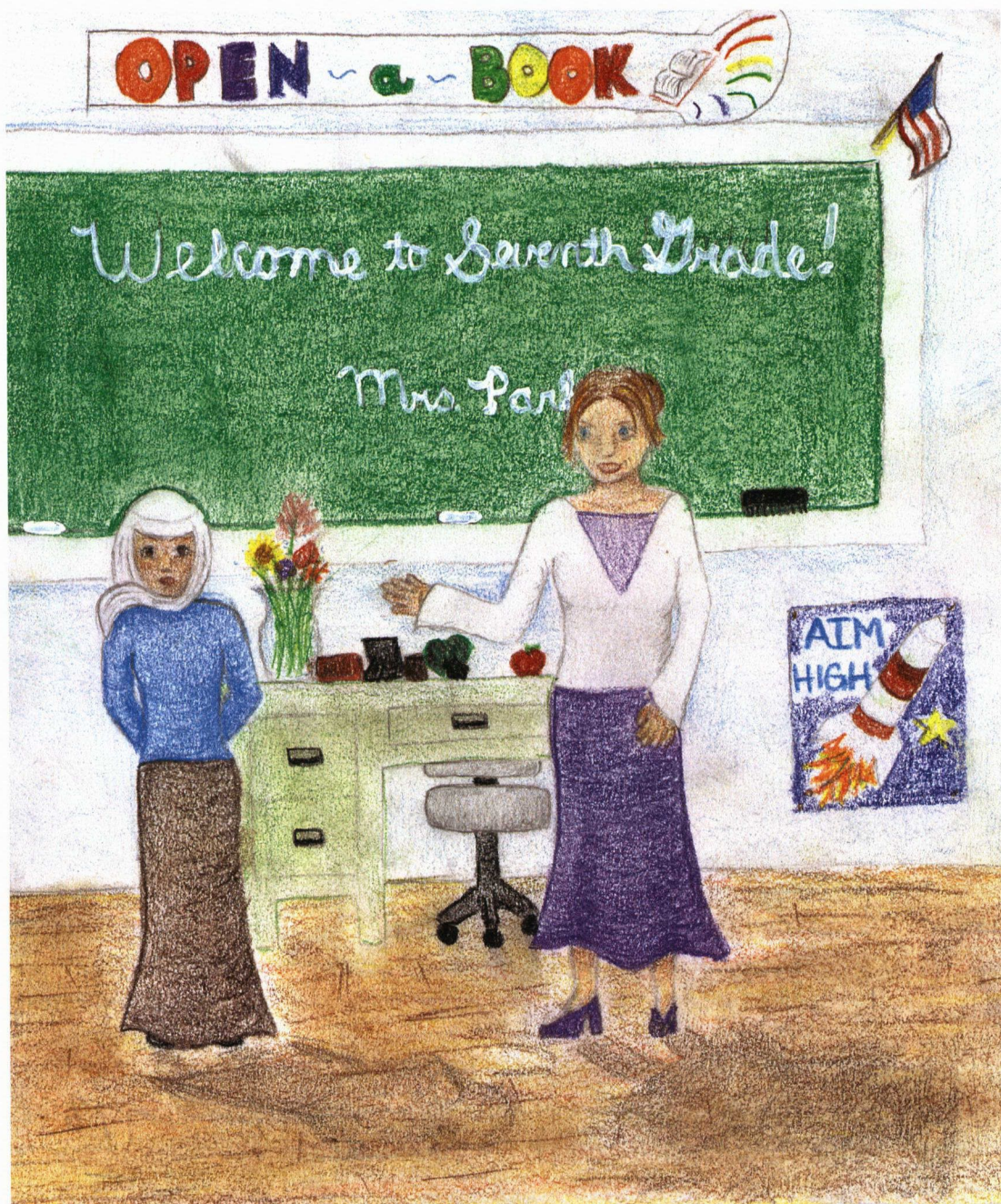
to sing. I could spend my whole summer just singing. But I'm too scared to let anyone know I do. It means so much to me, I would die if just one person gave me the least bit of criticism. This is a big problem for me as my mom is a trained singer. She doesn't sing professionally, but she knows a lot about it. She says her criticism is her way of saying I'm good, and she just wants to make me better. That if I wasn't, she wouldn't even bother. But I know this is not true because of Robin. Robin is tone deaf. She has no range. Her voice wavers when she sings. But she gets criticism. Lots and lots of it. So me, I resort to singing in the bathroom, until I have enough courage to come out of my shell.

The teacher's voice jerked me out of my thoughts. "Leyla, I'm sorry, but headscarves are not allowed in school." Leyla didn't move. "Leyla, please take off your headscarf." Leyla sat as still as a stone, her eyes on Mrs. Park. "Leyla, if you do not take off your headscarf, then I will have to send you to the office." Mrs. Park looked angry now. "Very well then," and Leyla got up and walked right out. No one that I have ever seen has been sent to the office on the first day.

There was a loud silence, until Mrs. Park said, "OK, stand up, it's time to say the Pledge of Allegiance. And boys, please take off your hats."

I stood up, my eyes wandering. I wondered what my classmates thought about what had happened to Leyla.

"With liberty and justice for all," we finished. I sat back down. Liberty. Liberty



"Let me introduce you to Leyla Aghdashloo, who will be joining our class this year"

means freedom. That includes the freedom to practice your own religion. The freedom to worship as you choose. I looked across at Darcy. Around her neck was a silver cross.

CHAPTER THREE: LAND OF THE FREE

LEYLA DID NOT return. I wondered if she had been sent home. At recess, the whole class was jabbering about Leyla.

"What was she thinking, wearing that thing to school," said Ashley. "I mean, duh, did she really think she was going to be allowed to wear it? I mean, it's just so stupid. And the teacher was all, 'Leyla, take it off,' but she just wouldn't listen. What's her problem?"

"I don't know," I said, my face turning red with anger. "But I know what your problem is. You're ignorant and stupid. Leyla had just as much of a right to wear it as anything else. Wearing headscarves is part of a Muslim woman's attire. It's part of their religion. Besides, Darcy wears a cross. If she can wear that, then why can't Leyla wear a headscarf? This is a republic, not a dictatorship. We are allowed to worship as we choose. This is supposed to be the Land of the Free, or so says our national anthem. This rule denies our Constitution or Declaration of Independence. This rule is un-American!"

"Huh?" said Ashley. "Whatever." She flipped her hair and walked away.

I was still burning. I shouldn't have told her that. I knew she wouldn't understand. But it wouldn't have been like me to keep

silent. I would've wanted to try to make them see. It would have been against my beliefs to do so.

"Hi, Mom, I'm home!" I called out as the door slammed behind me.

"Hey, Skylar," my mom said as I entered the kitchen, "anything special happen at school?"

"Nope," I said as I dropped my backpack on the floor. "Unless you count a shocking act of discrimination as something." My mom seemed interested. So I told her.

"What?!" My mom seemed genuinely surprised. "That's crazy! I'll have to take this up with the board." My mom is on the school board.

Two hours later my dad came home. We discussed it with him. We had a plan. I picked up the phone book, found Leyla's number, and dialed.

CHAPTER FOUR: INDIVISIBLE

A MONTH LATER, I walked into Mrs. Park's classroom, and I noticed immediately that something was different. There was Leyla, sitting in her seat, the last table on the right. She was wearing a headscarf.

Mrs. Park came in. She saw Leyla, but said nothing. And I knew why.

After Mom and I had our talk with Dad, I called Leyla up on the phone, and told her that my mom would take her problem up with the school board, and asked if one of her parents could come and talk to the school board about the importance of headscarves to the Muslim re-



I told her my singing was a secret. "Really?" she said

ligion. Leyla said her father would come.

The school board put it on their agenda, and at the next meeting, I came too.

Leyla's father talked about how a headscarf, or *hijab*, was not a symbol of inferior status, that the Prophet Muhammad was quoted saying, "If the woman reaches the age of puberty, no part of her body must be seen but this, and this," pointing to his hands and face. Wearing a headscarf did not mean you were inferior to men, but you must guard your modesty.

When he was done, I got to get up and make a speech.

When my mother first proposed this idea, I was reluctant, but my mom said the school board would be more surprised and willing to listen if a student expressed her displeasure.

I had never spoken in front of adults before. Most of them seem to think that you're just a cute little kid, and shouldn't be taken seriously. But this time, they seemed to really be listening.

I said, "I don't know if you all recall, but last year, when we went to war with Iraq, the sixth-grade class made a poster that illustrated the great things about being an

American. One was the freedom to practice your own religion." Here I paused, letting my words sink in. "This rule goes against that. Today we look back on the ban and discrimination with scorn. There are many things we do not want to be, and one of those things is hypocritical. And what, may I ask, is the difference from wearing another religious symbol such as a cross? Only that a headscarf is more important to the religion." I looked around at the faces surrounding me, trying to glimpse their emotions.

"We need to remember that not everyone in the United States is a Christian. The United States is founded on many different peoples, not just one group. The United States isn't perfect, but let's try and help it live up to its name, the Land of the Free." I walked slowly back to my seat as the people around me clapped.

After my speech, there was a vote, eight-to-one, in favor of Leyla.

As school board meetings were every two weeks, Leyla had to wait a month before coming back to school. During that time, I had been over to her house quite a bit, and we had become friends.

Leyla wasn't like anyone I had ever met. She wasn't narrow-minded, and she didn't believe everything grownups told her, though she always respected them. She's also very funny and imaginative. But most importantly, she's the only one who knows I sing.

We were sitting in her backyard, when I suddenly broke into song. I sang only one verse before realizing that Leyla was sitting right there. "Don't stop," she said, almost sounding annoyed. So I sang the whole song. "That was beautiful," Leyla said softly. I told her my singing was a secret. "Really?" she said.

"Yep," I answered. But it isn't a secret anymore.


"Good morning, everyone," said Mrs. Park, snapping me back to the present. Haley's hand shot up. "Yes, Haley?" said Mrs. Park wearily, as if she knew what was coming.

"Why are you letting Leyla wear that scarf-thingy around her head?" asked Haley in an accusing voice.

"The school board has decided to stop the rule banning headscarves," answered Mrs. Park edgily.

Leyla and I raised our eyebrows at each other. We both decided not to mention her incorrect use of the word "stop."

"Now stand up please, boys, take off your hats, let's say the Pledge of Allegiance."

"I pledge allegiance to the flag . . ." started our class in a dull, half-pronounced monotone. Leyla and I suppressed a giggle. It was always this way, but for some reason, it was funny today. I swept my eyes across the room as the Pledge of Allegiance came to a close. ". . . with liberty and justice for all." 

Company

By Maya Koretzky

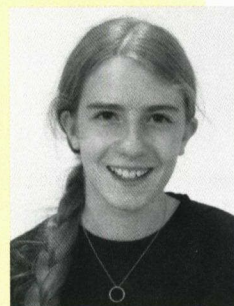
Smoke blackens your face,
Bold paintings line the creases in your skin,
Twisting and turning in the crooks of your elbows.

In the darkness you crouch,
An animal with dark cheeks and sunken eyes,
Next to the smoldering embers of your fire.

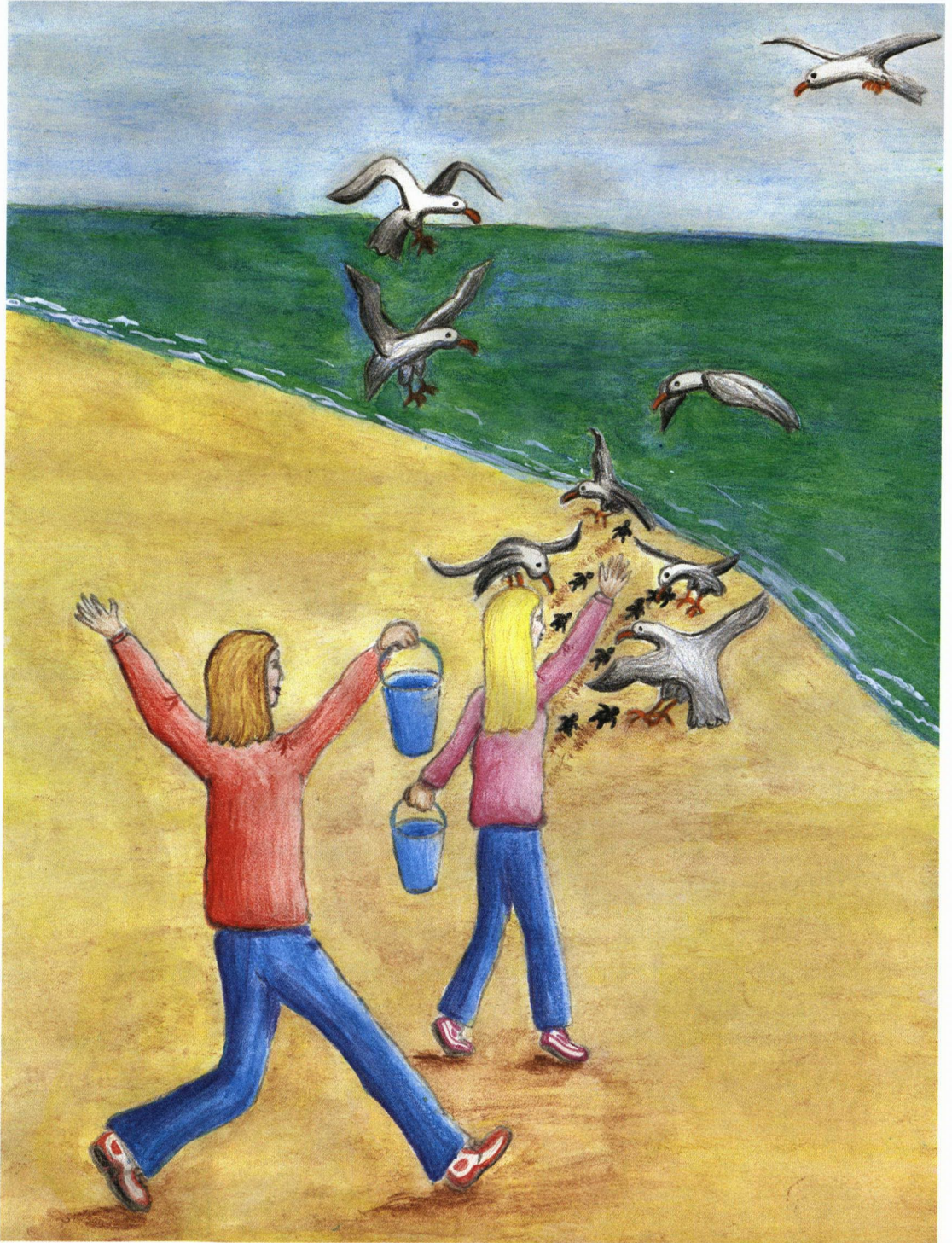
I see you skulking half hidden in the shadows,
The whites of your eyes made clear to me,
In the reflecting shadows.

I lie on my back and look up at the stars,
Beside me I feel you creep from the woods and do the same,
I understand.

I feel your spirit tingling my skin,
Open-mouthed I see the stars with the wonder of my ancestors,
Beside the dust of your ancient bones.



Maya Koretzky, 12
Thornton, Pennsylvania



I sympathized with the powerless little turtles who were struggling to survive

Surprises at Sunrise

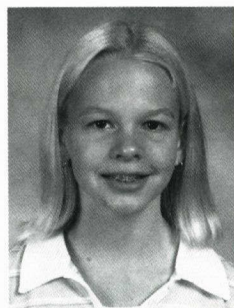
By **Maria Lohr**

Illustrated by **Noel Lunceford**

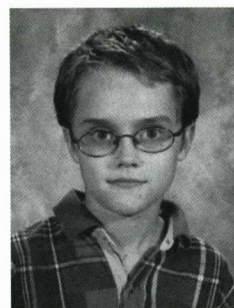
IDROWSILY WOKE UP to the voice of my sister, Emma, instructing me to wake up. I lifted one of my heavy eyelids and saw that my bouncy sister was hovering over me, fully dressed and ready for the day. She held two buckets in one hand, and in another was a stack of clothes for me. In the back of my head, I vaguely wondered what my sister was doing, bursting energetically into my bedroom at six o'clock on a vacation. Suddenly, something clicked. As I slowly crept out of my warm and comfortable bed, I remembered that every morning our family vacationed to Florida, my sister and I had a tradition of running out to the beach to see the beautiful early morning sunrise. The thought of this tradition fully awakened me, and I carelessly threw on my clothes, grabbed a couple of light windbreakers, and took the extra bucket from my sister. Emma and I dashed out the condo door, sprinted down three flights of steps, and then finally arrived at the wooden boardwalk that led to the beach. We skipped over it eagerly, and then plopped ourselves down on the cool, soothing sand, only a few feet away from the receding tide.

Emma and I had made it just in time. As we faced the vast ocean and gazed out into the deep blue sky, the new sun was just becoming visible. The sky changed into a dazzling orange hue, and splotches of pink, yellow, and blue were overhead. I watched in amazement and was awed at the natural beauty of the Earth.

After the sky had reached a pastel blue color, my sister and I decided to stroll along the shoreline. We each held a blue bucket



Maria Lohr, 13
Louisville, Kentucky



Noel Lunceford, 11
Grandview, Missouri

that was empty at the moment, but would soon fill up with unique shells and smooth sand dollars. During our ten-minute walk, Emma and I were too overcome with the beauty of the scene to say anything to each other. Just as we were about to turn back, something caught my interest. Barely fifteen feet away from the coast was a sandbar which was clustered with a large number of seagulls. The seagulls appeared to be circled around some inanimate object. Each gull was screeching at the top of its lungs. Although I had seen many seagulls before, I had never seen anything quite like this. I suggested to my sister that we discover what the commotion was all about.

We waded out to the small sandbar. As I got closer to the rambunctious birds, I noticed that they were pecking at little brownish things. Emma ran to the cluster of gulls, and a few of the birds decided to leave, but most remained. Now I could clearly make out what the birds were fighting over. Ten baby loggerhead sea turtles were helplessly sprawled on the wet sand. The seagulls' sharp beaks were pecking at them angrily, and a couple of the turtles were even dangling from the gulls' mouths. I sympathized with the powerless little turtles who were struggling to survive. I wanted to help them somehow, but I couldn't think of a way. I had tried yelling at the gulls, but they wouldn't budge. Instead, they squawked back at us, as if they were laughing at our pitiful attempts to save the turtles.

After five painful minutes of furrowed

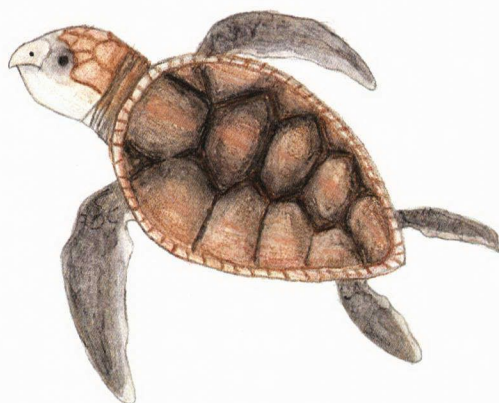
eyebrows, I finally decided to run through the huddle of seagulls, despite my fear of the birds, and try to scare at least half of them away. I recounted my plan to myself over and over, and came to the conclusion that it was the best plan I had. I took a deep breath, and trying not to think about the needle-sharp beaks of the gulls, ran through the circle of screeching birds. Several flustered gulls retreated into the sky, but a good portion of them stayed rooted to the sand. I decided to take another shot at it, remembering the saying, "Failure only occurs if you don't try again." Keeping this quote in mind, I attempted again, and only a few of the gulls remained. I knew I was getting closer to my objective. With Emma's help on my third shot, we were finally successful.

My sister and I hurried over to the remaining baby turtles, which were still struggling on their backs in the sand, confused by what had just happened to them. I was hesitant about moving any of them, since I knew that loggerheads were a threatened species. I also remembered that I had read that sea turtles had to make the journey to the ocean by themselves, so they could recognize their native land when returning from the sea to mate. Anyway, I knew that if we just placed them back in the ocean, the movement of the tide would be sure to trap the turtles back on the sandbar. Emma and I knew that we had to make a move, or else the turtles' chance of survival would diminish to almost nothing when the seagulls returned. After brainstorming together, we

came up with a reliable plan. Emma would run up to our condo to fetch our dad, who would call the Wildlife Society. This way we figured that the turtles would be safe. I waded back to the beach and kept a close watch on the sandbar, watching for any signs of high tide. I stretched out on the warm sand and waited for the return of my sister. As I was about to shut my eyes, I felt something small scuttle over my arm. Thinking it was a crab, I jumped up in surprise. I looked down and saw a little brownish creature. I peered closer at it and saw that it was another baby sea turtle, eagerly crawling toward the blue ocean. I looked around in the sand and saw several more sea turtles, also on the way to begin their lifelong journey. I realized that there must be a nest somewhere in the sea oats. At that moment, Emma appeared, followed by Dad. They brought good news with them. A man from the Wildlife Society was traveling to our beach. He would collect the turtles, and make a journey to the Sargasso Sea, where

the turtles would safely be dropped off.

Within the hour, an official arrived and began to gather the sea turtles. He inquired about where Emma and I found the turtles and how many we saw, and with our answers he was able to find the nest that had once been the home of the turtles. The man also told us that we were lucky to have found the sea turtles, because a few weeks earlier, there had been a tropical storm, and he had been afraid that the high waters had washed away many of the nests along the coast. As a result of the storm, not as many nests had been accounted for as there had been in the past. The man thanked Emma and me again, and left with a bucket of baby sea turtles in his right hand. As the tide started to come in, I remained standing in the warmth of the early morning sun, staring at the nest that had once held many sea turtles, anxious to start their lives in the ocean. It made me extremely happy to realize that I had played a part in starting them on their way. ❁



The Stone Soup Store

By phone: **800-447-4569**

Orders taken Monday–Friday 9:00–5:30 Pacific time*

Messages taken 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; fax: 831-426-1161

By mail: **P.O. Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063, USA**

Online: **www.stonesoup.com**

NOTE: Store items are on the back cover. To order **subscriptions**, use the cards in the center of the magazine, call 800-447-4569, or visit www.stonesoup.com

ORDERED BY		SHIP TO (if different from ordered by)	
Name		Name	
Address (no P.O. boxes)		Address (no P.O. boxes)	
City, State, Zip		City, State, Zip	
Daytime phone ()		(List additional names and addresses on a separate sheet)	

QUANTITY	TITLE	PRICE EACH	TOTAL PRICE

HOW TO ORDER: Mail in this form or a copy of it with your check, money order, or credit card information; fax us your order with your credit card information; visit our Web site; or call us toll free. During non-business hours messages (but not orders) are taken by our voice mail system. Your satisfaction is guaranteed.

***HOLIDAY ORDERS:** From November 21 to December 23, our staff works Monday through Friday 7 am–5:30 pm Pacific time. We recommend special shipping for orders received after December 13.

Subtotal	
Sales tax	
For delivery in CA add 8.25%	
Regular shipping (see below)	
Separate charge for each address	
Special shipping (see below)	
TOTAL	

REGULAR SHIPPING	SPECIAL SHIPPING
Media Mail US addresses only Please allow 2 weeks for delivery up to \$25 \$4.00 \$25.01–\$50 \$5.50 \$50.01–\$75 \$7.00 \$75.01–\$100 \$8.50 over \$100 \$10.00	Priority Mail Add \$2 to shipping prices at left FedEx Overnight Add \$12 to shipping prices at left Canada Add \$2 to shipping prices at left Other Countries Add \$7 to shipping prices at left

METHOD OF PAYMENT
<input type="checkbox"/> Check or money order enclosed (Payable to Stone Soup. US funds only)
<input type="checkbox"/> Visa <input type="checkbox"/> MasterCard <input type="checkbox"/> AmEx <input type="checkbox"/> Discover
Card number
Expiration date
Cardholder's name (please print)
<i>Sorry, no C.O.D. orders</i>

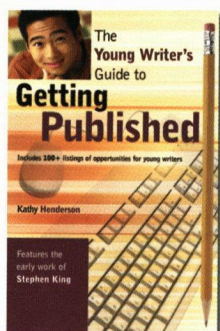
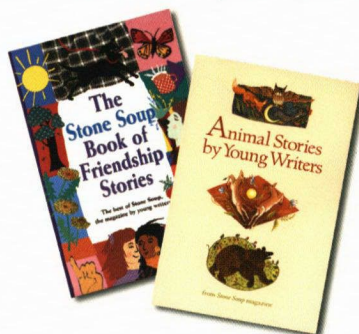
Thank you for your order! Visit our Web site at www.stonesoup.com

The Stone Soup Store

Stories from Stone Soup

If you like *Stone Soup*, you'll love *The Stone Soup Book of Friendship Stories* and *Animal Stories by Young Writers*! These two 6- by 9-inch quality paperbacks present some of the best stories to appear in the pages of *Stone Soup* over the years. Both anthologies provide hours of great reading and make wonderful gifts.

Friendship Stories \$8.95 *Animal Stories* \$9.95



Getting Published

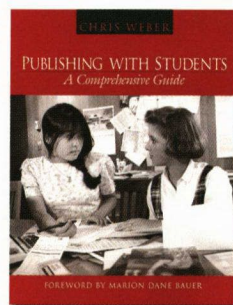
When our writers ask us where, besides *Stone Soup*, they can send their work for publication, we always refer them to *The Young Writer's Guide to Getting Published*. This excellent reference book contains a wealth of information, including over 100 publications and contests, writing tips, how to prepare your manuscript for submission, and profiles of professional editors and young writers. Paperback, 250 pages.

The Young Writer's Guide to Getting Published \$18.99

Publishing with Students

A great book for teachers and librarians! Longtime writing teacher Chris Weber discusses the value of providing your students with opportunities to share their work with a wider audience. He offers practical suggestions and models for how to publish a student-run magazine or newspaper, how to make hand-bound books, and how to publish student writing on the Internet. Paperback, 240 pages.

Publishing with Students \$23.50



Use the order form on page 48, or order online at www.stonesoup.com