

Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists



"Feeding Chickens," by Yun Hue Xing, age 12, Hualien, Taiwan

THE TALE OF TAWRET

Will the hippo mother, Tawret, ever be reunited with her family?

STRANDED

Three boys struggle to survive when their boat is destroyed in a storm

Also: Illustrations by Carolyn Burnett and Devon Cole

JULY/AUGUST 2005

\$5.75 US \$7.50 CANADA

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The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists

VOLUME 33, NUMBER 6

JULY / AUGUST 2005

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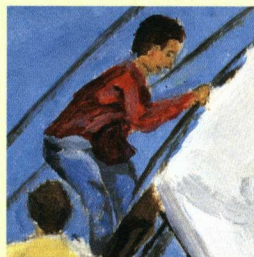
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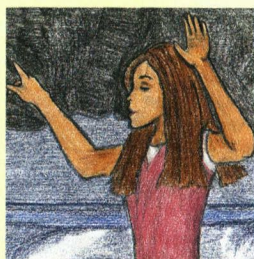
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Stone Soup is printed on recycled paper

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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 6. 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: "Feeding Chickens" was loaned to *Stone Soup* by the Association for Education through Art in Taipei, Taiwan. Every year the Association holds an international children's art competition. The winning pieces are exhibited, and they are published in a beautiful book. Special thanks to Chi-Feng Chung and Tiffany Chung.

The Mailbox



LBP, 9

I just thought that I would tell you, and the writer and illustrator of “The View from Santa Chiara” [March/April 2005], how very much I enjoyed the story and pictures. The story by itself was powerful, moving, and deep. When illustrated, though, it came alive like someone took a needle and jabbed the story with shots of emotion and realism. I could feel the detailed simplicity—such as the warmth of the fire, the cool stone floor, and so on. I thought it was excellently done.

EMMA LOPATA, 12
San Diego, California

I would like to compliment Emily Rappleye for her illustrations for “My Last Summer’s Night” [March/April 2005]. I thought her delicate details and talented shading techniques were *truly* the work of an artist. The pictures matched the wonderful story perfectly, and really made the story come alive. I wish I had your talent, Emily. Keep the good work up, I won’t be surprised if you become a famous artist someday!

JESSICA VAN HORN, 13
Millboro, Virginia

I was thrilled to see my story [“A Bird’s Prophecy,” September/October 2004] in *Stone Soup* and I thank you again for publishing it. Please also thank Nicholas on my behalf for his beautiful illustration—I thought it really brought Venky’s story to life! All my friends loved the magazine and my School Counselor said they would discuss it during their next staff meeting and would consider whether they should subscribe.

ANNAM NAYAK, 14
Mysore, India

First of all, I would like to thank you for publishing this magazine. Secondly, I would like to commend Marian Homans-Turnbull for her story, “Water All Around” [September/October 2004]. I thought the illustrations were superb, and the story was incredibly detailed and lifelike.

MICHAEL LABIN, 10
Round Rock, Texas

I know that you must hear this all the time but your magazine is wonderful! I often look for it in the mail. When I get your magazine, I stop whatever I am doing and read it, usually cover to cover. Some of the stories are sad or tragic, and for some strange reason, I enjoy those, but everything is wonderful. I would like to comment on some stories, poems and letters. I very much liked “Characteristic Property” [September/October 2002] by Rachel Marris Reeves. I have written futuristic stories too, but I enjoyed her story a lot. “Guts and a Few Strokes” [March/April 2002] was wonderful, by Eve Asher. I loved Ben Amoss’s “One Snake’s Life” [January/February 2004]. The ending, in particular, was spectacular. Finally, I found Lauren Ison’s letter about the story to do with Kentucky [January/February 2003] extremely interesting. I like that she was not afraid to show her feelings. My compliments to all the authors of the stories, poems and letters in this incredible magazine!

SERENA SOLIN, 11
St. Leonia, 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.



Tawret had always been a wonderful hippo mother. Loving, yet stern

The Tale of Tawret

By **Emily deLisle**

Illustrated by **Jana Bernard**

A LARGE GRAY HIPPO WADED in the clear, cool Nile River. His name was Akitomen. Akitomen's wife, Tawret, glided alongside him. The couple both watched their children, Khufem and Maketuman. The kids played happily in the papyrus reeds, Tawret and Akitomen talked while keeping an eye on the kids. Tawret had always been a wonderful hippo mother. Loving, yet stern.

During the middle of a discussion about the Nile's flood, Tawret checked on the kids. She saw a papyrus hunting boat off in the distance. Knowing they might be in the mood for hippo, she warned the others.

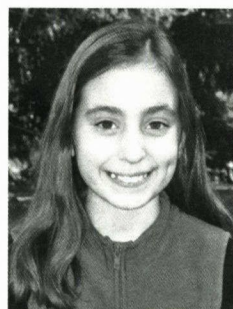
"Khufem! Maketuman! Hunters!" The family rapidly climbed into the sand-mud structure they lived inside.

Back at the boat, the Egyptian men were arguing in fierce, fast Egyptian.

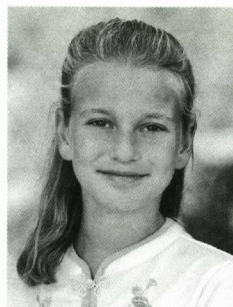
"They got away, you moron!" the first man yelled.

"It's your fault! You should have lowered the net at least five seconds earlier!" the second one exclaimed.

There was another person on board. She was a young woman, about seventeen in age. Her name was Cleometrapen. Cleometrapen had dark silky hair that cascaded to her waist. She had dark, smooth skin. At a quick glance, she looked like any other mildly attractive servant girl in a plain blue linen dress. Well, except for the golden flute tucked within the folds of her skirt. If you looked closely enough, you could see her eyes: celery green with thick lashes encircling them. One *could* look even



Emily deLisle, 10
Villanova, Pennsylvania



Jana Bernard, 10
Far Hills, New Jersey

harder and see the swirling specks of blue and purple within the green. But nobody ever did. She was a simple servant, an accessory to take on hunting trips, a person existing solely to cater to whims. No more. Possibly less, but no more.

While the two men were fighting, Cleometrapen took out her flute and put it to her lips, with their perfectly applied red ochre. She began to play. Cleometrapen's fingers flew on the marble-rimmed holes. She played and played, the sweet, woody notes covering the unpleasant noise of the argument. Attracted to the music, the hippo family glided over.

Sadly, the men noticed the hippos and threw their weapons randomly in the water. A weapon was headed straight for Khufem. In a split second, Tawret jumped over. She saved Khufem, but the spear punctured her hide. With a cheer from the men, they hauled Tawret out of the water and onto the boat. Cleometrapen cast an apologetic glance at the hippos as the boat sped off.

Khufem, Akitomen, and Maketuman mourned. The Egyptians had bread and vegetables. Why did they need Tawret?

Every night, after the children fell asleep, Akitomen would pray to the god Osiris, leader of the underworld. He begged for the gods to return his wife.

During the second week, Cleometrapen sat in the servant hutch. It was a very modest place, made of mud brick. Against one wall a bed stood, its headrest a simple stone structure. Against the opposite wall, there was a small table with a piece of

bread. Pushed neatly under the table was a stool.

This room was just like the servant girl who lived in it. At a quick glance it appeared modest, plain, nothing really special. But, also like Cleometrapen, at a second look you found something very interesting. There was a papyrus basket, complete with a delicate golden lock hidden carefully under the bed. A bit unusual (just like the girl's celery-green eyes), yet still nothing *really* special. If one would actually *take* the locked basket from beneath the bed and snap the fragile lock, they would find a tiny sparkle of light inside. The same thing would happen if you cared to look deeper into Cleometrapen's eyes.

And at this moment, Cleometrapen looked into the sparkle. She saw Ra's face and began to speak to him.

"Ra, this is Isis here." Yes, you heard that right. Cleometrapen was Isis, visiting her people in the form of a servant girl.

"Greetings," Ra replied in his deep, loud voice.

"You must be hushed," Isis replied. "I have another servant girl living near my hutch."

"Yes," Ra agreed. "Now why is it you contact me, Isis?"

"I have spoken with my husband, Osiris. He has said that river horses of the Nile have begged for their missing family member." Cleometrapen began her story, making sure to include the fact that it was she who was to blame and the part when Tawret saved her child, Khufem. Isis said



"Ra, this is Isis here"

all this because she knew that the god and goddess council had decided that a goddess of motherhood and home was needed, and preferably in animal form. Many divine creatures had the head of an animal, but none were *pure* animal. They felt they needed at least one to represent the non-humans on the earth.

Ra listened carefully. He was particularly impressed with the part when Tawret saved her children. He too was thinking exactly what Isis was: animal goddess. However, they would have to consult Osiris. He had Tawret in the Valley of Laru.

"We will consider giving her goddess power. Isis, you should talk to your hus-

band, Osiris. He should have input."

"Thank you." Cleometrapen looked away for a second to hide the basket further, and when she looked back, Ra's face had left and the spark was plain once more.

Following his ritual, Akitomen prayed that evening. Cleometrapen stayed up later than usual waiting. She had the basket in her arms, yet this time it was to be used as a communication with common creatures, not with her fellow gods and goddesses.

Khufem and Maketuman went to sleep, and Akitomen knelt on the hard-packed dirt floor. He pleaded for his wife, though

at this point he had lost hope.

"Will my wife be returned to me, Great Ones?" Akitomen asked.

Cleometrapen, sitting on her bed, heard the prayer through her spark. She said one sentence: "She may return, yet not in the form you remember." Isis then shut off the connection and climbed into bed.

Akitomen was amazed by the words he had heard. By this time he was so sleep-deprived and depressed that he believed without question that the gods had contacted him. This was true of course, but fully sane people rarely believe things like that. For the first night since Tawret's death, he climbed onto his papyrus hammock and slept contentedly.

Isis's job had been done. She had to go to a God and Goddess Council meeting. She locked her hutch door and flew out the roof in a beam of holy light.

In three seconds, Isis (alter ego Cleometrapen) arrived at a pure gold table with silver, gem-encrusted chairs. It had been a while since she had seen this sort of splendor (having lived as a servant girl), and it was still delightful. She took her place at the head of the table, next to Ra. She saw only fruit, bread and vegetables for refreshments and was relieved. If there was hippo meat the conversation might be difficult and awkward.

Isis glanced to her right and saw her husband, Osiris. He gripped her hand.

It was a long, difficult meeting. The council finally decided that Tawret, given her acts of kindness during her life and

bravery at the end, would be the perfect goddess. Osiris was second to sign the agreement, and just as he put the flourish on the s, he vanished, only to return moments later with a white-faced hippopotamus with tears down her cheeks.


"Tawret, you are now pronounced . . ." Ra paused for a moment. This was partly for the dramatic portion, partly to give Tawret time to calm down. ". . . Goddess of Motherhood and the Home."

She smiled politely, thanked Ra, took a bow, and sat down. Within seconds, when the gods were discussing the finer details, Isis (sitting beside Tawret) heard her cry. It was soft, but you could definitely hear it. Isis leaned over.

"Are you all right?" she asked.

"Akitomen . . . Khufem . . . Maketuman . . . my family . . ." Tawret's voice trailed off. Isis understood. Tawret wanted her family with her. All the other gods and goddesses had their loved ones, so why couldn't Tawret have them? They weren't gods, but still.

Tawret left the table to go to bed. The Council talked for a bit longer, and it was arranged that Akitomen, Khufem, and Maketuman would join Tawret.

Unlike real life, fairy tales end the way they should. And this one does. Tawret lived forever with her family, carefully tending to her duties as goddess and mother. She has led her long career to this day, where we learn about her from the Egyptians' tales. Yes, this truly is a happily ever after. 

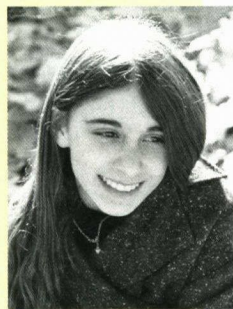
My Landlord on an August Morning

By Alyssum Quaglia

My landlord wakes to a dawn
where everything is silent, and even the trees
still linger in the unconsciousness of night.
Dewy grass dampens his shoes
as he strolls out over to his most used patch of land:
the garden. The smells are soft and fresh
and the rain's clear drops
from the night before
are a blanket strung with pearls,
that drape over the green leaves of lettuce
as he walks over to tend them.

A cricket sounds in the strawberries,
awakening the rustle of wings,
but the bird passes over,
gliding on an invisible thread
through the air.

My landlord's hands,
rough, yet tender in his work,
soften the moist earth
at the roots of the unwanted,
allowing him to
pull them up,
and let his green, leafy children
live on.

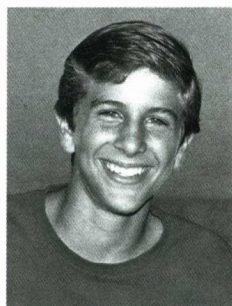


Alyssum Quaglia, 12
Piermont, New York

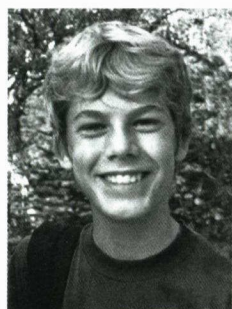
A Shore Thing

By **Charlie Patten**

Illustrated by **Devon Cole**



Charlie Patten, 13
Bernardsville, New Jersey



Devon Cole, 13
Monroe, Maine

I LOOKED DOWN AT MY WATCH; it was already five past six. *Where are they?* It was starting to annoy me that they were late again. The plan was that we would meet at the bench under the third streetlight at exactly six o'clock to go swimming. The ocean was at low tide at exactly six so every minute that ticked by, the tide came in and the waves became rougher and rougher.

I stuffed my hands in my pockets and rolled onto my side. The bench was hard and creaked under my weight. I stared up into the dull light of the old streetlight. Hundreds of mosquitoes swarmed around it. My eyelids drooped and felt ever so heavy.

“HEY, MARTIN! Sorry we're late. Let's go!”

Martin's eyes popped open and he sat up with a jolt. A boy was sprinting down the street towards him and was shouting at the top of his lungs. A much smaller boy was trailing behind him, huffing and puffing as he struggled to keep up.

“What took you two so long? I've been waiting here for at least fifteen minutes!” Martin said, as he got up and started running alongside them.

“It wasn't my fault. Danny couldn't find his dumb flip-flops.”

The three friends raced all the way up the street, onto the path and right onto the beach. None of them stopped until they were at the water's edge.

A dark wave swelled on the rolling ocean and crashed down



"Hey, Martin! Sorry we're late. Let's go!"

upon the sandy shore where the three best friends stood and were staring out into the deep blue ocean. The youngest of them, Danny, was only eight years old, with thick layers of dark hair covering half of his face. He was the shortest of the three, no more than four feet tall. His eyes lay hidden beneath the mat of hair, but they were constantly moving. Left, right, left, right, always taking in the surroundings.

Next, was his older brother, Steve, who was just over four years older than Danny. If one looked at the pair of them standing right next to each other as they were then, it would be impossible to determine any family relationship. Steve was Danny's exact opposite. He was tall and slender, almost six feet in height, and stood like a giant to the other two kids. Steve also had a short crew cut and deep blue eyes; almost as dark as the ocean they were staring into.

Finally, there was Martin. He was Steve's age but was always very dull with a blasé expression on his face. His hair was a wild mess that hadn't been washed or combed for weeks. Martin's eyes never seemed to be able to look at something directly; they were always staring off into the distance.

Another wave swelled and crashed down, this one more powerful than the one before, and managed to knock Danny off his feet. This small incident seemed to send a spark of life into the trio.

"Let's go in the water!" Steve exclaimed, as he yanked off his shirt and tossed it in

the sand at his feet.

"I think I'll pass," mumbled Martin with his usual lethargy. "I might have wanted to go in at six, but since you guys were so late, now I don't want to. Besides, the lifeguards left hours ago and it's already starting to get dark."

"So what?" Steve kicked off his flip-flops and dashed into the dark water. Danny rolled up his pants above his knees and slowly waded out into the shallows. He had to hop over the rolling waves to avoid getting his clothes soaked.

Martin lazily flopped down and buried his hands and feet in the cool sand. When Steve got smashed by a wave and fell under water, Danny started to laugh out loud and Martin let a smile slip. But, after a moment, neither of them saw Steve come back up and their shared laughter subsided. With the exception of the usual waves crashing upon the shore, there was no sign of movement in the water.

"Steve?" Danny called in a soft voice. He frantically started searching in the water, forgetting about his wet clothes, as he went farther out. "Steve?" Danny called again in a much louder voice. All this while, Martin was still sitting in the sand. He stood up and used his hand as a shield to block the small amount of remaining sunlight as he stared out into the vast ocean, searching for Steve.

Then, at the exact spot where Steve had gone under, the ocean changed colors as if someone had just put dye into it. The color of the water in that area had changed from a dark blue to a deep red,

the color of fresh blood. Danny was about to let out a scream, when suddenly something that looked like a finned hand from Martin's perspective emerged from the water and wrapped its scaly fingers around Danny's ankle. The thing made one sharp tug and pulled him down. Just before he was yanked under water, he managed to suck in a breath. Martin's eyes were wide with fear and his jaw hung agape as he slowly inched his way from the water. He wasn't able to see Steve or Danny who had both been standing right next to him just moments ago.

Suddenly, a small hand shot out of the water, desperately groping for something to grab hold of, something it could not find. But, as another wave rolled by, the hand slipped back under the water, almost as quickly as it had come out. After a brief pause of absolute silence, except the steady lapsing of waves, Danny's head broke the surface. He had a deep gash on his forehead and was rapidly losing blood. He was struggling to get air and was choking on the ocean's water. A monstrous wave crashed over him, sending his body swirling into the shallows. He managed to

crawl out of the water and flop down on his back. Danny's breathing was labored and he was constantly coughing up seawater, unable to move from his position at the edge of the ocean.

Meanwhile, Martin had turned away from the scene and was sprinting off the beach, screaming for help . . .

“HEY, MARTIN! Sorry we're late. Let's go!”

My eyes popped open and I sat up with a jolt. A boy was sprinting down the street towards me and was shouting at the top of his lungs. A much smaller boy was trailing behind him, huffing and puffing as he struggled to keep up.

I pulled my hands out of my pockets, my palms were wet. I noticed that my shirt was drenched with sweat and beads of water were running down my forehead. I glanced at my watch; it was quarter past six. The two figures slowed as they came to me.

“Hey man, what's wrong? You don't look so good.”

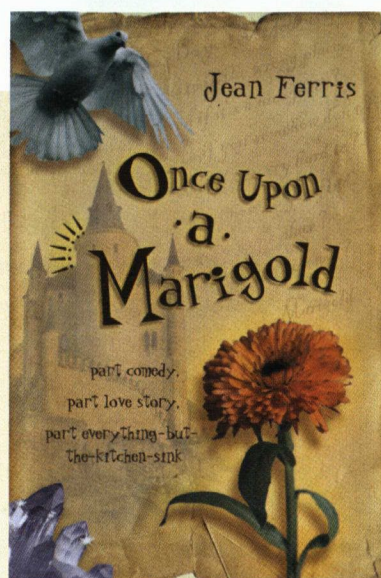
“Steve, I'm not so sure we should still go to the beach tonight.”



Book Review

By Kaitlyn Gerber

Once Upon a Marigold, by Jean Ferris;
Harcourt, Inc.: New York, 2002; \$17



Kaitlyn Gerber, 12
Ridgefield, Connecticut

WHAT IF YOU WERE a princess who lived a perfect, happy life except for one minor problem—your mother kept trying to marry you off to a boring royal suitor so she could become queen? What if you had never met or talked to your best friend except by letter? And what if, after too many boring suitors to count, you fell in love with someone you weren't allowed to marry?

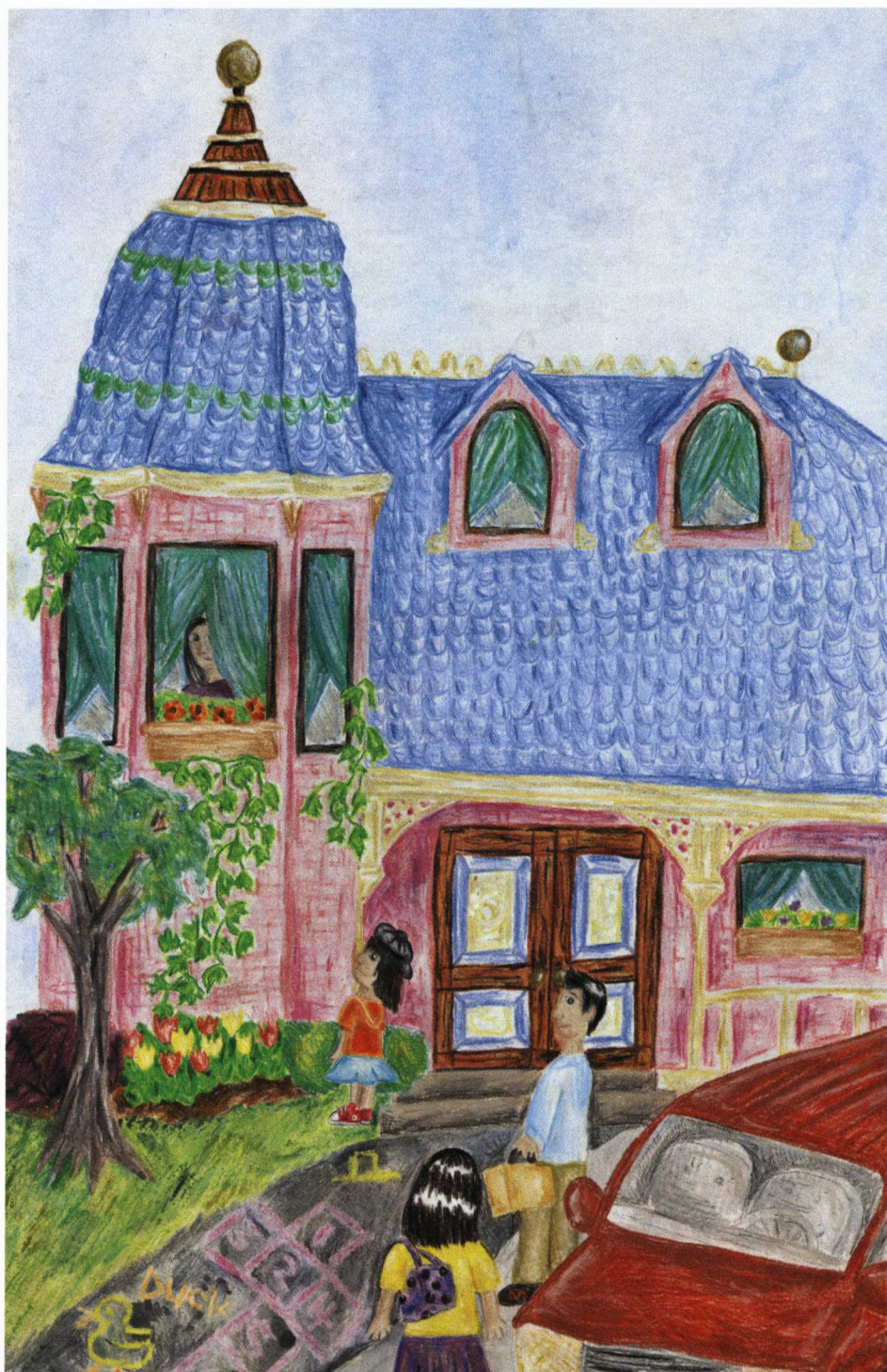
Once Upon a Marigold is a riches-to-rags fantasy about a young runaway boy, a plain, unpopular princess, and a four-foot-tall troll. Christian is only a small boy when he runs away from home, tired of living in stiff suits, with too many siblings and too many rules. However, when he is found by Ed, a short, friendly troll, he becomes a young inventor living in a beautiful cave with his troll foster father. Through a small telescope, Christian can watch King Swithbert's castle, and all the goings-on there. He watches the three beautiful, blond princesses grow up, as well as their smaller, dark-haired sister. He is an uninvited guest at the balls and banquets, and even at the weddings of the three triplets. But Christian is especially attracted to the younger, dark-haired princess. When he finally gets the courage to contact her, through p-mail (pigeon mail), he finds out her name is Marigold, and starts a long correspondence

between them.

Right from the start, I loved reading *Once Upon a Marigold*. Although I've never run away from home, met princesses or trolls, or lived in crystal caves, I can very much relate to many of the feelings and emotions of the characters. Throughout the story, both Christian and Marigold felt restricted by too many rules, and were trying to break free of them and make their own decisions. Christian succeeded in this when he was only six, by running away from home. However, Marigold's life was much more complicated. Her mother, Queen Olympia, was always forcing her into lessons on ruling, manners, and many other "stiff, proper skills," never leaving Marigold any time for herself, or letting her make her own decisions. Even in my daily and ordinary life, I can relate to these feelings often. Whenever I clean my room, I feel restricted from making my own decisions because, being a naturally messy person, I tend to procrastinate and would rather spend the time on other meaningful activities and leave my room as I'm comfortable with it.

Another interesting lesson I was reminded of in *Once Upon a Marigold* was to respect other people's opinions and feelings. Though Queen Olympia's daughters' ideas about ruling were different from her own, that didn't give her the right to ridicule and disregard their ideas. Many of these fairy-tale crises may seem very different from our world and reality, but they really aren't that far from some of the problems in our world today. Consider the quilt of different cultures, religions, and beliefs. Does that necessarily make any of them wrong? Just because your best friend goes to a temple and you go to a church, does that affect your friendship?

Once Upon a Marigold was jammed with many unpredictable turns and surprises so that I never knew where it was going next! The next time you're in need of a good book, I suggest you pick up *Once Upon a Marigold*, by Jean Ferris. ❁



Suddenly I realized she was looking at me

Anica

By Elizabeth Halcomb

Illustrated by Vanessa Campbell

I FELT LIKE MY HEART had been hit by a semi truck. I stared at my parents in stunned silence. They sat across from me; their anxious faces looked at me in hesitant anticipation.

"What?" I choked out. My throat was tight and my stomach was in knots.

"You can't do that!" I said, tears beginning to fill my eyes. My dad leaned forward in his armchair and sympathetically put his hand on my knee.

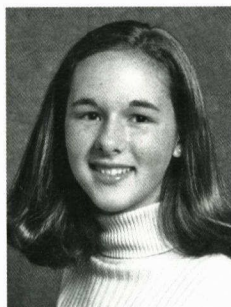
"Listen, Kate. Your mom and I have prayed about this for a long time and we believe this is what God is calling us to do."

I shook my head with a sob.

"But I'm your kid! I'm your daughter!"

"Kate," my mom said, trying to reason with me, "it's going to be OK."

I couldn't believe it. Why do we have to adopt a little girl from Romania? Only ten minutes ago I asked them if I could get my ears pierced and they turn around and tell me I'm getting a sister. Talk about a bombshell! Let's face it; I was an only child. I had always been my daddy's little girl. I was always my mom's closest friend. I didn't want that to go away. Now I have to share it with someone else. Of course this was selfish. I was old enough to take this more maturely and calmly. Even if I was twelve, I didn't like my carefree life to suddenly change so drastically like this. I bit my lip to keep it from trembling. A tear crept down my flushed cheek.



Elizabeth Halcomb, 12
Mission Viejo, California



Vanessa Campbell, 13
Niagara-on-the-Lake,
Ontario, Canada

"I'm sorry, honey," my mom said to me with a sympathetic sigh. "We didn't know you would take it so hard."

I forced myself to be more controlled and asked shakily, "When . . . when is she coming?"

My dad stole a glance at my mom.

"She's coming next month. She is eight years old and her name is Anica."

"Her mother died when she was five and her father was a criminal," my mom explained. "She lived with her aunt for one year. Then her older sister died of a serious illness. Anica was sent to an orphanage."

"She really had a hard life," my dad said. "But hopefully she's young enough to forget it."

"And since we all have dark features, she'll fit right in!" my mom said, trying to lighten the atmosphere.

"So you've already signed all the papers and stuff?" I asked.

My dad looked straight at me and nodded. "It's official."

THE DAY Anica arrived I had made the decision I wasn't going to go down and meet her. From my upstairs window I watched our family minivan roll up the driveway. I slipped behind the curtains as my parents got out of the car. After all the fuss I made I didn't want to seem like I was curious.

Anica jumped out. She stared around at the manicured lawns and the chalk scrawled all over the sidewalk. Suddenly I realized she was looking at me. Annoyed,

I jerked the curtain in front of my face and went back to my book.

Days passed. I was still hard and cold inside and I didn't try to hide it.

I very seldom talked to Anica and when I did, my words were cutting and sharp. Despite my dad and mom's attempts to reason with me, I avoided her as much as I could. I didn't want to admit to myself that I was being very immature and selfish. I didn't want Anica. Period.

My birthday finally arrived. I wasn't going to have a party that year. We were just going to have a celebration at home. My parents tried to make it as nice as possible. Mom made my favorite meal. Dad played my favorite game with me. I got great presents, but I was surprised when I received nothing from Anica. My parents made no comment about it. That night, I was lying on my featherbed, reading a book I got from my dad earlier that day.

Suddenly, I heard a very soft knock on my closed door.

"Come in!" I said, looking up.

The door slowly opened and Anica came in, clutching something small in her hand. She was in her pajamas, holding her doll from Romania.

"What is it?" I asked shortly.

She quickly stepped forward and opened her hand.

"This is for you," she said timidly.

I stared blankly at the simple gold band held in her cupped hand.

I looked up at Anica.

"What's that?"

She looked down at her old patched doll.

"It was my sister's," she said after a pause. "She gave it to me before I was sent to my aunt's. Jenica gave me the ring because she knew that we'd never see each other again. I didn't believe her. I was sure that we would. And then . . . then I heard she died and . . . and . . ." Anica couldn't finish. She began to cry and wiped her eyes with the head of her doll. The memory was too strong for her.

I stared at her in disbelief.

"Why are you giving it to me?" I asked, feeling suddenly ashamed that I hadn't accepted this little girl who just wanted love and a big sister again.

She hesitated and then said, "Because . . . because, even though you don't talk to me very much, you somehow remind me of her. She was my closest friend. When she died, I didn't want anyone to take her place. But then when I saw you . . ." She looked up at me with big, eager eyes and asked, "Can you take the place of Jenica?"

I was speechless. Here I was, a thirteen-year-old who had rejected this little girl, and she wanted me, who had treated her terribly, to replace her . . . her only sister? I didn't know what to do. I stared at her and suddenly saw her as she had been: a little girl who had lost everything. I wanted to cry; I wanted to give her everything that she had lost. I tried to speak, but it was then that I realized I was shy. All these days she had been with us, I didn't even let myself know her.

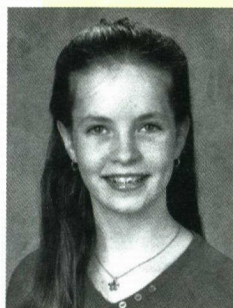
Hesitantly, I pulled the covers back, a smile slowly growing on my face. Anica understood me perfectly and hopped onto the bed. With a grin, she stuck the ring on my finger. I put my arm around her as she snuggled against me, reading my book over my shoulder.

Anica and I sat on my bed reading my book in perfect peace and contentment. There was no need for words. I just knew that there would never be a happier moment in my life. ❀



Echoes

By Alyssa Fowers

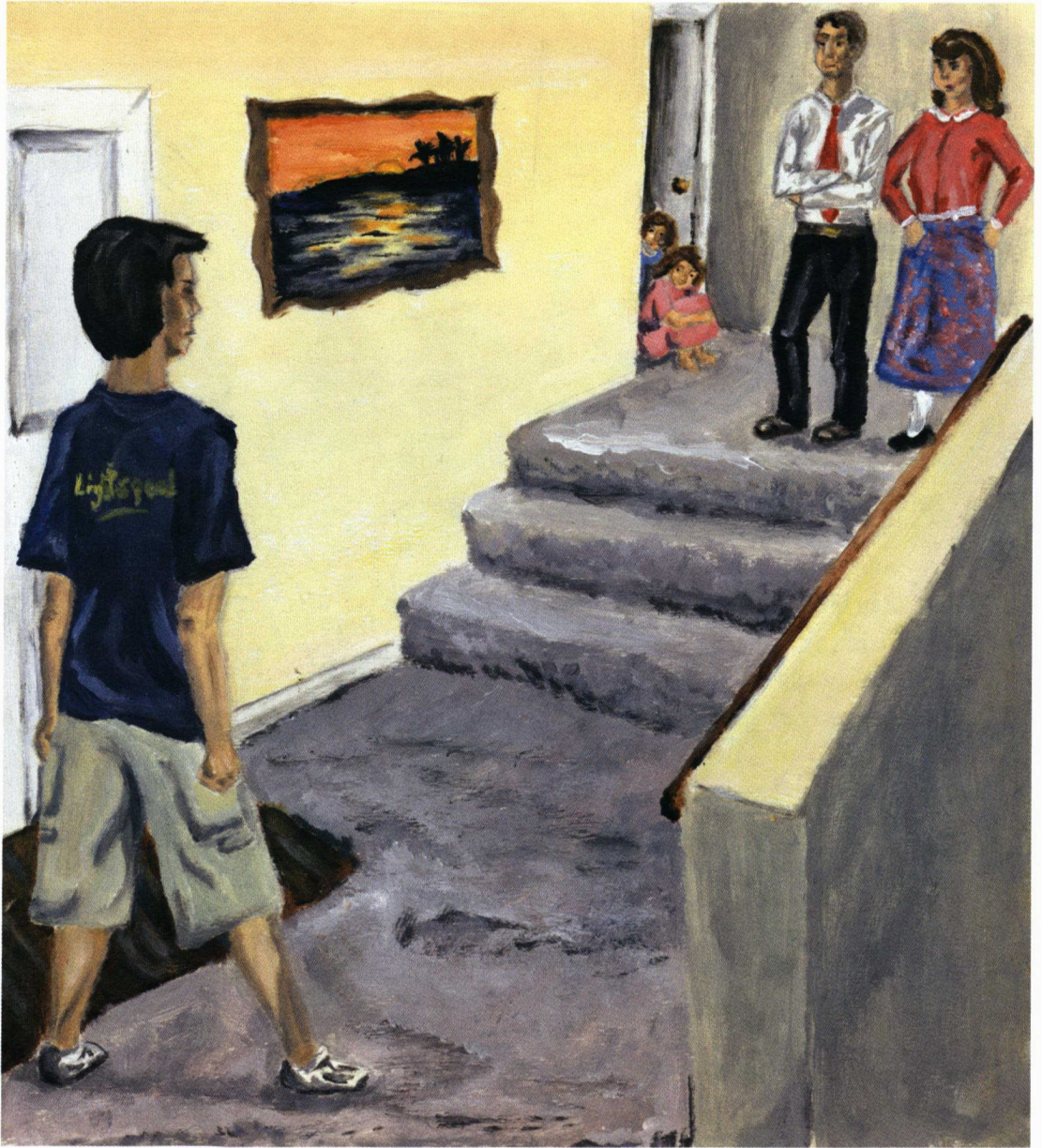


Alyssa Fowers, 13
Pinecrest, Florida

slate
the word itself
is harsh
final
the sound
of rock-on-rock
metal-on-metal
an avalanche's
moaning shriek.

but the stone itself
breathes.
lives.
shadows play
under its skin
the echoes resting
on its surface

palest blue
frailest pink
a whisper
a murmur
a pinch of cloud
twining about
muted rainbows
a breath of sunset
rising
amid a silver sky



All Tom wanted was to run far, far away from here

Stranded

By Joshua Mandell

Illustrated by Carolyn Burnett

PROLOGUE

THE WORDS WERE LIKE white-hot knives plunging into Tom's skin. His mahogany eyes were flaring at his parents' shouts. "You're banned from GameCube!" "You're grounded!" "No allowance!"

All Tom wanted was to run far, far away from here. His two little sisters, Hannah and Beth, huddled in a corner, wide-eyed with fear. Tom could take it no longer. Roaring like an angry lion, he charged out the door and slammed it behind him.

Tom was running like a rocket, his fine-tuned sprinter's legs pounding the ground. He didn't care if he had to slam through a brick wall, he just wanted to run. And it was pure coincidence that the first things Tom slammed into were his best friends, Andrew and Henry.

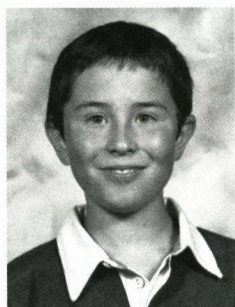
CHAPTER ONE

WHAM! TOM FELL to the ground, stunned by the sudden impact. Andrew lost his balance and started pinwheeling his arms. Henry, who had taken the impact full force, flew backwards and fell flat on his back, the wind knocked out of him. After Andrew regained his balance, he walked over to Tom and helped him up.

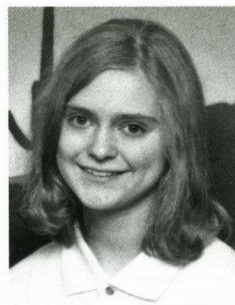
"Are you OK?"

"Fine," Tom replied.

Tom couldn't help feeling a bit envious of Andrew. After ten years of hard training, starting at age three, Andrew had convinced his father to sign a contract with the WWF stating that



Joshua Mandell, 10
Charlottesville, Virginia



Carolyn Burnett, 13
Farmington, Utah

Andrew would be a pro wrestler when he graduated from college.

Henry staggered over, gasping for breath. "Man, you sure know how to rip a person's shirt." He looked down and added, "And his jeans!"

Andrew spoke up. "Why were you running?"

Tom shot a look at him. There was a long silence. Both Henry and Andrew knew what Tom meant. Tom had been failing in math for months. After many comments from the teachers, his parents blew a fuse.

A sudden noise broke the silence. It was the sound of a car speeding down the road.

"It's my mom!" Tom shouted, and they took off down the sidewalk. Henry, who was a little chubby, fell behind the other two.

The SUV pulled up alongside Henry. Tom's mother rolled down the window. Her pumpkin-colored hair was frazzled with stress, and even though she was wearing shades, Henry could tell there was a lot of anger in her eyes.

"Have you seen Tom anywhere?" she asked politely.

"Yes, ma'am. I saw him run past the school a minute ago," Henry lied.

"Thanks, honey," said Tom's mom, and she sped off down the street.

Henry caught up with Andrew and Tom and they decided to hide in the community boathouse.

"I stole the keys to our boat," Tom smirked. "There are plenty of islands off

the coast. I'll just sail over to one of them and stay for a couple of days."

"What about us? You're not getting all the fun!" For the second time in two minutes there was a long silence. The boys' eyes drilled a hole through him as they waited for his reply.

"OK! OK!" Tom sighed. "You two can come along, but it's your own lives you're messing with."

Andrew beamed, "Thanks, dude!"

Grabbing a flashlight from the boat-house floor, Henry smiled, "Be prepared!"

CHAPTER TWO

THE BOYS pulled the boat out onto the beach. Henry was dripping with sweat, muttering something under his breath, while Andrew was lifting it as if it weighed as much as a puppy. As for Tom, he was doing as well as an average twelve-year-old sprinter should, pretty well, but stumbling now and then. Finally, after what seemed like an hour, they set the boat down with a hollow thud.

Henry wiped his forehead. "Man, the only way I could take a step carrying that boat was to say its name over and over. *Salmon, Salmon, Salmon!* It makes my mouth water!"

The *Salmon* was sleek and smooth, like its namesake. The sail had a picture of a fish leaping up a waterfall. Tom smiled slyly at Henry and said, "You know, Henry, you really should get in shape because not all boats have appetizing names. See that one over there? It's called the *Bloody*



Tom smiled as the sea sprayed his face. He knew this was where he belonged

Head.” Henry gave a little gasp of horror when he saw the image on the sail.

Andrew gave a sharp whistle and shouted, “It’s time to cast off.” Giving the *Salmon* a final shove, they scampered onto the boat. Henry went to the navigation room, Andrew to the sails, and Tom to the wheel. Tom smiled as the sea sprayed his face. He knew this was where he belonged.

Henry was deep in thought. He was thinking about his social life, as they called it at school. Ever since kindergarten, every kid but Tom and Andrew had made fun of his chubbiness. Here was

a chance to earn their respect. He was taking part in an adventure that no one in the history of Ponce de Leon Middle School had ever done before. He and his friends were running away; they were outlaws!

CHAPTER THREE

ANDREW WAS looking across the water when something caught his eye. It was a huge mass of clouds moving across the sky. Suddenly the wind started to howl and the thunder boomed. The rain poured down and water churned around the *Salmon*. The *Salmon* creaked and groaned

as she rocked back and forth. Then, out of nowhere there was a sucking sound. The boys looked behind them and saw a fifty-foot wall of water towering above them. Unbelievably, it grew still higher and then with a deafening crash it thundered down upon the *Salmon*.

Tom was flattened against the deck. He felt like he had been body-slammed by a sumo wrestler. With his strength to hold on failing, his last thought was of his fight with his parents. Then everything went black. Tom was now at the mercy of the roaring sea.

CHAPTER FOUR

“OHHH!” MOANED TOM. He was in such agony he almost wished he was dead.

“Arghhh!” another voice answered. Andrew shouted to Tom and his call was returned. The boys dragged themselves towards each other with new strength and hugged.

Andrew dropped down on the sand, exhausted, and told Tom his story. “Do you remember that when the wave hit I was up in the mast? I found myself hanging twenty feet up in the air when it broke off. I thought I was a goner, but the sail caught a wind! I was flying when I saw you on the beach. So I tried to swing down to you, I lost my grip and fell. I think I broke some ribs.”

Suddenly all the events of last night came pouring through Tom’s brain. He wondered how he could have gotten

them all into this trouble over a fight with his parents. “Hey!” he yelled. “Where’s Henry?”

Andrew stared at the ground before he could manage an answer. “He went overboard.”

A knot tightened in Tom’s stomach. Then Andrew reminded Tom how much Henry would hate them acting sad. Tom agreed, but the pain about their friend was still a growing cavern.

Then Andrew’s eyes widened. He noticed Tom’s backpack. Tom told him it was his survival kit. He showed Andrew the contents: a knife, some rope, a first-aid kit and some dry matches. Perfect.

They needed to decide where to live. The first place Tom suggested was the woods. Andrew didn’t think much of that idea. He didn’t like mosquitoes, ticks and other germ-spreading bugs. He said he’d rather live in an igloo.

Tom thought again and his face lit up. He got to work, starting to make large bricks out of the damp sand. Andrew didn’t really get what Tom was up to but he tried to help him anyway.

The procedure was quite simple when Tom explained it. The boys would make sand bricks and leave them to bake in the hot sun. After they were hard, Tom and Andrew stacked them on top of each other. There was plenty of time to talk about their situation.

“So,” said Tom, summing it all up, “we’re stranded on an island with a sunken boat and our best friend is gone. There’s no way we can go back home now, is there?”

"Yeah," said Andrew, "that's right."

The two friends worked till noon in the hot sun. When they were done, they stood back to admire their work.

"Wow!" exclaimed Andrew. "That's like the best sand castle I've ever made."

What they had created looked like an igloo made out of sand. There was room to sleep and stretch out a little bit. There was a small hole in the ceiling for air circulation.

The boys decided to split up and see what else each could accomplish. Andrew set off into the woods to make an air freshener for their salty-smelling home. Tom stayed on the beach and started digging a fire pit. After he was finished he found some driftwood and made a roasting spit.

When Andrew came back, he tied Tom's knife onto a stick and made a fishing spear.

"Man! We like made all of this stuff in like two hours. Your ideas rock!" said Andrew. "I just wish old Henry was here to do all these things with us. I miss him."

Tom crawled into the igloo for a rest and said, "I know, I miss him too much to talk about it."

Some time later Tom lifted his head off the ground. It was evening now, and through the ceiling hole he could see that the moon was up. Far above him a few stars twinkled. He crawled out of the igloo and saw Andrew roasting a large fish over the spit.

"Man, you sure are a sound sleeper, Tom! Come on! I'm just finishing cooking dinner."

"Where did you get all of this food?" asked Tom.

"Well, I was walking in the woods and found some edible plants so I brought them back. Then I nailed this weird fish. So, for dinner we have fresh coconut milk, roasted shredder fish (I named it that), Gift of the Woods salad, and for dessert . . . Guardian Angel Crystallized Fruit."

Tom nodded and munched, "You are a culinary god!"

Suddenly, he saw a light from a nearby island! "Hey, Andrew, what do you think that is?"

Andrew squinted his eyes for a moment, then his mouth dropped open. "That's got to be Henry's flashlight!" he breathed. Andrew sprang into action. "I'll go save him!"

"No!" Tom yelled. "You're not going out there with those ribs of yours!" He untied the knife from Andrew's fishing spear and strapped it to his belt. Then, silent as an otter on the hunt, Tom slipped into the pitch-black ocean.

CHAPTER FIVE

TOM WAS swimming with all his might. He could see Henry lying on the sandy shore, but was he alive? That was when it hit him. Well, it *almost* hit him! A huge sea-beaten log came hurtling past him. Tom ducked, but some other creature was not so lucky.

Thud!

Tom saw a huge shark floating limply in the water. Knowing the shark would soon

regain consciousness, Tom knew he had very little time. Taking the log with him, he swam to shore and found Henry. He was cold and clammy, but breathing. Tom heaved Henry up on the log, took a deep breath and dove back into the water to do battle with the shark.

Tom drew his knife and looked around. He looked left and right but saw no shark. Then a sinking feeling came over him. The shark was below him! Tom looked down and saw two deadly eyes flash back at him. There was a pause as the shark stared at Tom, then it attacked. But Tom was faster than the stunned shark. He dodged to the side and slashed at the shark's back. Then the enraged shark whipped back, its long tail curving to swipe at Tom's arm. Tom plunged the knife into the top of the shark's head. The shark gave one shudder and sank to the sandy bottom, never to rise again.

Tom was victorious, but he did not win the battle unscathed. His right arm had a long wound with a tooth embedded in it. Tom winced as the salt water splashed into his wound. He was dripping a trail of blood through the water and knew he had to get to shore soon, before other sharks followed his scent. On the beached log, Henry was starting to stir.

Tom dragged Henry and the log into the water with him. "What's going on?" asked Henry groggily. A dark fin speeding through the water answered all of Henry's questions. Just then, a shark rammed the log and Tom fell into the water. Henry

bent over and pulled Tom out just in time.

Suddenly they were picked up by a wave. Tom grabbed Henry, held onto a knob on the log's surface and prepared for the ride of his life. The wave dropped them on the shore and the sand rushed up to meet them.

Andrew nearly tackled his friends with joy. Henry gave Andrew a noogie and wrestled him to the ground. While they were at it, Tom found the first-aid kit and treated his wound, pulling out the tooth and dropping it into his pocket. Then he put on some disinfectant and a tight bandage to stop the bleeding. Henry was half-starved, and started to devour the leftovers from their dinner.

CHAPTER SIX

AS HENRY and Tom were horsing around on the beach doing a victory dance, Andrew silently moved off to the woods and returned with two pieces of vine.

"I prepared some entertainment," he smiled. Much to their surprise he lit the ends on fire. He twirled them around and around his head until he let go.

Fooush!!! The vines whirled upwards, two flaming rings against the night sky.

Then suddenly, Bang! The two vines exploded in a flash of fire. The glare lit up the whole island. Seconds later, all that was left were ashes blowing in the wind. Tom and Henry, jaws slack, eyes wide, looked like they were about to pass out.



Fooush!!! The vines whirled upwards, two flaming rings against the night sky

Andrew explained casually, "Remember in history class, when we learned about the Native Americans? Well, they used this weird plant oil as a fire starter and I found a whole patch of it growing next to the river. So I picked some and squeezed it out onto the vines. I'm hoping the cops will see the explosions."

Soon the air was filled with smoke and the noise of exploding vines. Tom was content. He would soon be reunited with his family and somehow he felt everything would be all right. Suddenly a giant wave of fatigue swept over him. He slipped to the ground in a deep slumber . . .

CHAPTER SEVEN

TOM AWOKE but didn't want to open his eyes. He just wanted to stay and sink into the covers and absorb the warmth forever. He finally peeked one eye open and saw four blurry figures standing next to his bed. He rubbed his eyes and they turned into his mother, his father, Hannah and Beth.

He heard his dad pick up the bedside phone. "Yes, Tom just woke up. I want to thank you, Officer Bailey. I'll never forget what you and your coast guard have done for us."

An alarm bell went off in Tom's mind. He wanted to escape.

No, he thought. It wasn't right to run the first time, and it isn't right to run again.

Finally, he summoned enough courage to speak. "Mom, Dad, I'm so sorry I ran away like that. I'll try harder in school, I promise. I am at your mercy. You can ground me, make me give up my allowance, anything, because that's what I deserve."

His parents looked at each other. "Only one wish," his dad said.

"Name it."

"Please be nicer to your sisters."

Tom jumped out of bed, looked at the twins and shouted, "Race you down the stairs!" He charged down the hallway, got to the stairs and jumped on the banister. Meanwhile, Hannah launched off the banister and, while in midair, grabbed hold of Beth's shoulder and gave a slight backwards push. Beth fell down the stairs on her bottom with a soft thump. Then, with the added momentum from her sister, Hannah flew through the air and landed on Tom's back.

Hannah strode over and snapped, "Ha! Who said girls can't play rough?!" And she disappeared into the kitchen.

EPILOGUE

"THE PLANE will be lifting off in five minutes," said the flight attendant.

"Yippee!" said Tom and his friends simultaneously.

"Thanks for persuading your parents to let us come," said Andrew and Henry.

"Don't mention it," said Tom.

After weeks of studying hard, Tom had gotten an A in math. To celebrate, his family was taking a trip to the Homestead Resort in Virginia. Henry and Andrew were invited along.

"Those two days on the island sure were crazy," said Tom.

"I wouldn't have made it through without you," said Henry.

"Same here," said Andrew.

They were all quiet for a moment, thinking how each of them played a part in the game of survival.

"I wouldn't have made it without you guys either," said Tom.

Henry looked Tom in the eye and said, "I didn't do anything important, but I survived through the whole thing, that's what matters."

"No way, Henry!" argued Tom. "You did do something important—you pulled me back on the log after that second shark rammed into us! You saved my life too!"

They were quiet again until the pilot's voice came on the speakers.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we now have clearance for takeoff. Thank you for choosing American Airlines."

And with a mighty roar, the plane's engines propelled it down the runway and lifted it up in the air. Tom looked down and saw the island that they had run away to. In that moment, he realized that part of him would always be stranded there. ❁

A Story to Tell

By Amy Xu

Illustrated by Chloé Hamilton

IMAGINE BEING LOST in the New York City train station with people you don't know. Imagine a four-year-old kid in the middle of the stairway, scared and confused. Imagine a crowd all around you, and there's nowhere to go. Who was that four-year-old kid that got lost in the train station? I was that four-year-old, and I was alone and afraid.

I went to preschool in Chinatown. I always came home at around six o'clock, so my grandma would pick me up. "Let's go and buy some fruits!" my grandma would say every time she picked me up early.

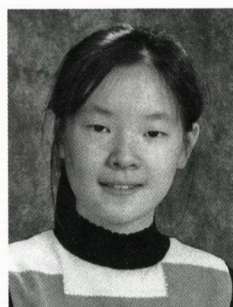
"Look, Grandma! Look at all the fruits we bought!" I said one day.

"Yes, we bought so many fruits! Now let's get home and put them away," my grandma said when we got to the train station.

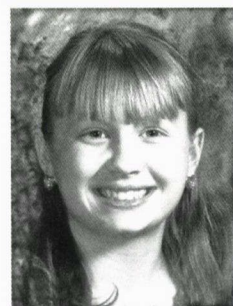
Since there were so many bags of fruits, it was hard for my grandma to see if I was beside her or not. *Ding-dong!* The doors of the train started to close.

I looked up and I didn't see my grandma. I looked from one side to another. Every way I turned were more people, but none of them were my grandma. People pushed and shoved me as they passed by. I thought I would get bruises soon. I got real scared and slumped to the floor. My heart started pounding and my hands started shaking. I got up and started calling for my grandma.

"Grandma!! Where are you?" I yelled. I spoke in all three Chinese languages, but there was no sign of my grandma. I



Amy Xu, 11
New York, New York



Chloé Hamilton, 12
Bakersfield, California



"Yes, we bought so many fruits! Now let's get home and put them away"

started to feel the urge to throw up, but I continued to call.

"Have you seen my grandma? Have you seen my grandma!?"

I asked many people, but all of them said, "No," or shook their heads. I started to cry, and the noise filled up the station. I was hoping my grandma would show up, and I would be by her side again.

"What is that racket?" the train conductor said. "Huh . . . better open the doors." As the doors opened, I turned around. I saw a familiar figure inside. She had loads of bags. I peered inside and the bags were full of fruits. I looked up at the person. That person was my grandma!

She looked at her side and saw no one beside her. She looked up again, shocked

to see me outside in tears. I ran inside and held her tight. I started to wipe my tears from my eyes.

"Where were you?" my grandma asked.

"I was outside!" I answered.

"I thought you were beside me."

As I held my grandma, I didn't feel fear anymore. I stopped shaking and my heart stopped pounding. All I felt was relief, and I felt safe when my grandma held me. I was glad I got through that, and I was happy to be beside my grandma once again.

"See, Grandma, that was exactly what happened," I said as I ended the story.

"That's quite a story," my grandma said, "but I don't remember that happening when you were four. I think you were three, no four, no three. Hmm . . ."

"But that's the way I remember it," I said, while my grandma and I entered the subway to go to 34th Street.

"Well, I remember it differently. But it's a little hard to remember. I mean, look at you now. You're eleven years old now." She looked at me and smiled.

I smiled back. "So what do you remember?" I asked.

"I remember you were very little, yes, we were coming home from school. There was a crowd in the elevator down on our apartment lobby. You went in and I didn't. Suddenly, the doors closed and you went up," my grandma answered.

"Oh I remember, I went up, you went

down, up, down. Then we finally met," I said and giggled. "But I remember that, and I remember getting lost in the subway too," I said.

"Maybe you dreamt it," my grandma answered.

"But I know it happened," I replied.

"Maybe you remember it, but I don't," my grandma answered, and started to laugh.

"Maybe it was when I went to the laundromat and you were asleep at home. You woke up and couldn't find me. Heh heh . . . you were so small and you opened the big door!" my grandma said.

"Really? I don't remember that," I said.

"Heh heh. You see, you don't remember and I do. You were way too young anyway," my grandma replied.

"I think it was 34th Street. I saw red poles, and Grand Avenue has blue poles. You know, when I got lost," I said.

"Maybe," my grandma said.

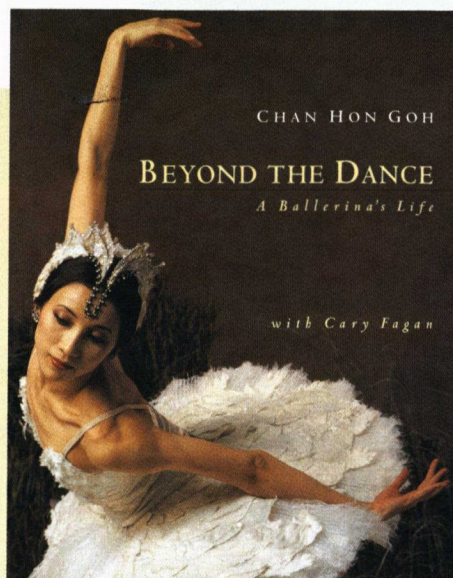
Ding-dong! The doors opened in front of 34th Street. My grandma and I stepped outside. I looked at the train before we got on the escalator. "Maybe it was a dream . . . but it felt so real," I said to myself.

I got on the escalator and it started to go up. That day when I was four was the first time I got scared so badly. I looked at my grandma, and felt safe. I looked back one last time, and smiled. Maybe it was a dream, but it sure gave me a story to tell. ☸

Book Review

By Karlen Schreiber

Beyond the Dance, by Chan Hon Goh;
Tundra Books: New York, 2002; \$15.95



Karlen Schreiber, 11
New York, New York


WHEN I FIRST SAW the cover of *Beyond the Dance*, I thought it might be a book that was just about dance technique. But, as the saying goes, you can't judge a book by its cover. As I started reading, I found that Chan Hon Goh was writing not just about her dance career, but also about her life growing up in Communist China where the government was very unsupportive of artists. I was sad to learn that Chan's parents, who were both dancers, had to split up for a year while Chan's father sought artistic freedom in Canada.

From the moment I started reading, I was rooting for Chan and her family to be successful in their search for freedom. I have read several books before about totalitarian governments, but this book addressed a subject of great interest to me: how artists can be affected by politics. Living in America all my life, I appreciate even more, after reading this book, how fortunate I am to be able to write and dance without opposition from the government.

I feel connected to Chan in several ways. We both love to dance, and take it very seriously. When she was eleven, Chan set high goals for herself as a dancer. I have always had a dream of being a principal dancer in *Swan Lake* or *Giselle*—two famous ballets that Chan has gone on to perform as an adult. There are

things other than dance that Chan and I have in common. One is that we both moved when we were eleven (as I write this review, I am preparing to move). Chan's move from China to Canada was extremely difficult because she spoke no English. My move from Connecticut to Manhattan will involve my getting used to living in an apartment instead of a house, going to a new school, making new friends, and adjusting to life in the big city. But while my move will be only around sixty miles, Chan's move took her halfway around the world.

Beyond the Dance offers great advice to everyone, not just to dancers. The author recommends that people who want to become better at what they do should create personal challenges, and try to believe in themselves. My favorite part of the book was when Chan, at seventeen, auditioned to get into The Prix, a dance school that only had a few openings. She had worked so hard, and made it to the semifinals, but assumed she had not been accepted, and left. Later that day, she went back to one of the judges to ask what she could do to become a better dancer. I admired that, even though she was disappointed, she wouldn't let anything stop her. I won't give away what happened, but I was happy and encouraged by the way things turned out for her.

Chan's life and career are fascinating, so I strongly suggest that you read *Beyond the Dance*. I admired the strong descriptions of both the good and difficult times Chan faced in her life, and how she dealt with each. I found myself relating to so many of her experiences, and was able to appreciate the advice given throughout the book about persevering for what you believe in at all costs. *Beyond the Dance* is a book that truly goes beyond just dancing. It is an autobiography that is great for anyone at any age. 



My first time seeing the ocean and we were going to be right in the middle of it!

Storm Dancer

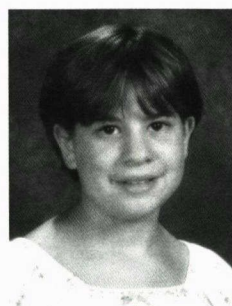
By **Veronica Engler**

Illustrated by **Dana Hareli**

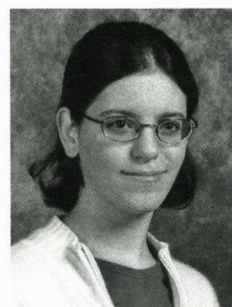
I GAZED OUT FROM THE FERRY, my eyes growing big as we neared the island. It shone like an emerald in the morning sunlight, green trees waving to me in greeting. I could not help but smile. What a wonderful way to spend our vacation—my first time seeing the ocean and we were going to be right in the middle of it!

The ferry docked and my family and I disembarked, all four of us dressed in pastels and dragging bulging suitcases. From the moment I stepped onto the pier I was captivated by the regal splendor of the island. The beaches were carpeted with sand white as sugar and the ocean swelled in a blue rhythm. Clouds began to gather above the water, blocking out the sun every so often. It all seemed so wonderful to me.

My family checked into the hotel and dropped off our luggage. The hotel was luxurious, with soft mattresses and royal crimson and gold decorating our rooms. My brother was completely enthralled by the satellite TV, but my favorite part of the room was the floor-to-ceiling window along the west wall. It overlooked the ocean and it thrilled me to think that I could watch the tides come in and go out. I stood by the window, watching the swells rise and sink, finally gaining enough momentum to rise high enough to touch the cloud-heavy sky and then cave in on themselves in a chaos of foam and saltwater. I was hypnotized by it, and as the cold blue caressed the white sand, it seemed to me that the ocean was breathing. In fact, I fancied I saw a figure in the waves as they collapsed into the



Veronica Engler, 13
Gilbert, Arizona



Dana Hareli, 12
Sudbury, Massachusetts

surf, a figure dancing and moving to the ocean's pulse . . .

"Shelia?"

I jumped at my mom's call and turned to look at her. The entire family was clustered around the door.

"Well, are you coming with us for the tour or what?"

"Yeah—I'm coming!" I said, jumping up to join them.

My mother shook her head as we left the room, muttering, "I swear—sometimes you just get lost in your own head."

"THIS—AS YOU can all see, I'm sure—is the ocean."

The guide swept his hand across the horizon. We all nodded and smiled, adjusting our hats and sunglasses. My family was just a small part of a group of tourists standing on the pier, who came to see the famous Dancer Island. The air was filled with clicks and flashes of light as people took pictures of the setting sun. Not that it was easy to see the sun, with all the clouds.

"Now," said the tour guide, a man named Eddie in his early twenties, "does anyone know why this island is called Dancer Island?"

Everyone shook their heads. My brother, recognizing the beginning of a story, groaned, but I leaned against the railing to get more comfortable. I loved stories and this sounded like an especially good one.

"Hundreds of years ago there lived a woman here who danced to the ocean. It's said that she could change the ocean's

mood—could tame it into a gentle babe or stir it up into a frenzy. She was called the Storm Dancer."

The Storm Dancer, I thought, visions of a beautiful woman dancing to the ocean, auburn hair caught up by the wind and eyes blue as the ocean playing through my mind. What a mysterious and exciting name!

"The villagers living here at that time, though, were pretty superstitious. They called her a witch and sentenced her to death. Burned her at the stake."

The crowd around me gasped. What a terrible thing to do to a person! And all because of a little superstition!

Eddie straightened his hat and continued.

"That's not all. After her death, this island had the worst hurricane it's ever seen. Wiped out the entire population. Weren't any people living here until about fifty years later, when someone came off the mainland to start a tourist spot here. And even after that, people say they've seen her dancing on the beach when there's a storm—dancing to the beat of the ocean."

I was spellbound. I wondered if perhaps the dancer saw the ocean the way I did. I wondered if she felt its breathing and the swells seeming to rise and fall to the beat of her own heart just as I did . . .

"Well, folks, you should be getting back to your hotels now—the weather changes fast around here. Looks like rain," said Eddie and as he spoke a drop of rain fell. A light drizzle started, growing heavier with



I was a part of the ocean, a part of its heartbeat, moving to its rhythm

every second.

"Come on!" I heard my father yell. "Let's get back to the hotel—fast!"

I nodded and began to walk toward the town, but it was raining much harder now. I couldn't see anything in the rain—it was coming down in sheets. I felt for the railing, thinking it would lead me back to the town. The wood was slick and I had to inch my way along. Damp and cold, dripping wet, I found the end of the boardwalk. I took a step forward and slipped, tumbling down in the storm and rain.

I landed in something gritty and soft. I opened my eyes and found somehow I had ended up on the beach. I sat up and found

myself staring at the ocean—a raging, screaming ocean that lashed out at me. Its rhythm was no longer slow and steady but angry and unpredictable. Waves rose fierce and black, crashing down in a brawl with the wet sand. The spray hit me full in the face, and I gasped at the overwhelming saltwater.

I cried out and pulled away from the water, trying to crawl away from it. But it followed me, shoving me underneath with damp fury and wrapping me in a chilling embrace. It dragged me further into the clashing elements. I screamed, sobbing with fear, unable to see anything or crawl to safety.

And then in the middle of all the confusion, feet embedded in white sand, skirt whipping about her ankles and auburn hair tossed by the wind, was a woman. She fixed her cool gray-blue eyes on me. I gasped.

She looked away from me and turned to the ocean. She began to sway to a beat and then to dance. She danced like nothing I'd ever seen before, body moving, hips swaying, head held high, mouth whispering verses I could not hear. Her dance was fast, frenzied, to the breathing of the ocean. She danced closer and closer to me, the screaming waves not frightening her or interfering with her dance at all.

Finally, she stopped before me and held out her hand, staring at me with those unnerving eyes. Wordlessly, I took her hand and she pulled me to my feet. Then she began to dance again, swaying to the waves and fury of the water. I closed my eyes, feeling the frantic tempo in my blood rushing through me and I put my hands up and danced.

I was a part of the ocean, a part of its heartbeat, moving to its rhythm. The saltwater did not bother me anymore—the shifting sand beneath my feet no longer a hindrance.

The Storm Dancer and I danced together for what seemed centuries until the ocean began to slow, falling back into its usual regularity. And as it slowed, so did we, until we swayed and stepped one last time and stopped. I looked out at the

ocean, the swells friendly and gentle again, the clouds beginning to disappear.

I turned to the Storm Dancer. She didn't smile, but she nodded in approval.

"Shelia! *Shelia!*"

The call of my name made me look up. My mother was standing on the boardwalk, looking down at me. Her eyes were wide with worry and she raced down the steps to get to me.

I turned to the Storm Dancer. She smiled, holding a finger to her lips. Her eyes sparkled like the sun reflecting off her beloved ocean as she turned and walked into the waves, her footsteps not disturbing the water. A wall of saltwater rose before her and closed around her. When it settled, she was gone.

"*Shelia!* Oh, Shelia!"

My mother rushed to me, holding my soaked body close to her.

"Oh, Shelia, poor baby—what are you doing here? We've been looking for you all night!"

"I got lost," I said, watching the ocean swell and collapse, swell and collapse.

"Let's get you back to the hotel," my mother said, pulling me toward the steps. "Everyone will be so glad you've been found."

As we climbed the steps, I chanced a look back at the ocean. In the falling waves, the cold blue shimmering in the emerging sunlight, I fancied I saw a figure in the water, eyes closed, dancing and moving to the rhythm of the ocean. ❁

I Am a Golden Trout

By Colin Johnson

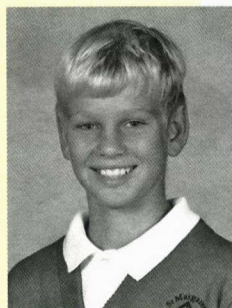
The sound of silence shatters
When a buzzing fly splashes into a cool freshwater lake
The water, like liquid tourmalines, ripples to kiss
the sun-bleached shore

I wait for a delicious, squishy fly to plop into striking range
Anxious yet excited
Each time is as thrilling as the first

I strike like a ravenous eagle
WHAM!

I clamp the sweet, juicy fly between my jaws like a wrench
GULP!

What a luscious fly!
I descend into the liquid silk water
To snooze in my blanket of warm earthy mud

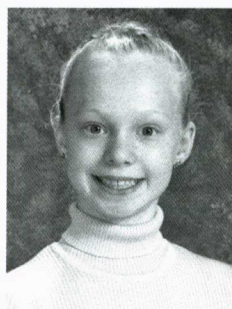


Colin Johnson, 11
Laguna Beach, California

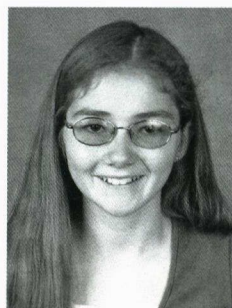
The Sky, the Water, and the Shell

By Emma King

Illustrated by Emma Kim Burbage



Emma King, 11
New York, New York



Emma Kim Burbage, 12
Redwood City, California

MY DAMP HAIR LIES STRANGLER on my sweaty shoulders. The air around me covers every bit of me with heat, and continues to close in on me. My hair clings and knots on my swirly tie-dyed top. It swirls along with the oranges, reds and yellows.

As we bounce up and down along the dusty gray, brown South African road, pictures of my father and sister far away bounce along with my stomach.

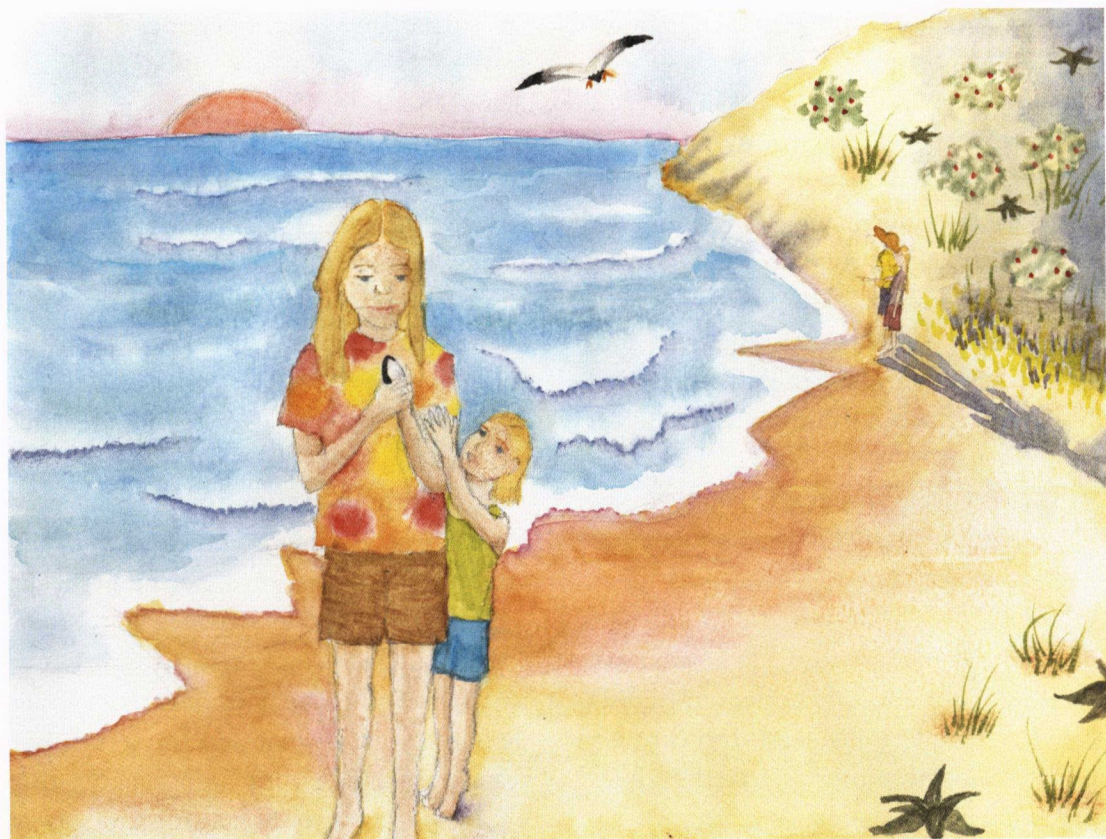
Suddenly the car stops, my mind begins to swirl with thoughts: Did we break down? This can't be good.

My aunt's smooth voice bounces out of the car with her tall dark body. The dust shines in her eyes. As she gleams in pleasure the wind pulls and pushes her, pulling her into its clutches, as if to smother her with a kiss. The dust is rising into the sky, swirling, taking away all hopes of being able to see.

"Calm down, settle back into the ground, dust," my mom whispers to me jokingly. And then, like it knows what she said, the dust gently floats to the ground. From the dust is rising a forest of cactus, rose hips and tiny shrubs. A chorus of sighs rises in the silence. I begin to talk but my mother hushes me. "This place is nothing like the hot busy streets of New York; enjoy it while you have it," she says.

The rose hips have tiny green stems protruding from big luscious fruits, each the size of a golf ball, the color of blood.

I stick my nose out of the car and take a sniff. I smell something salty. Something not at all like the cruddy, cigarette-butt-



The shell seems magical, as it rests in my hand, sending waves through my body

covered sidewalks that I always used to wake up to. This something smells like something salty, but with the same sweetness as a newly unwrapped candy. My aunt says that it is the ocean and I think that it is the love that is in this place.

We stand there against the wind, looking out onto the ocean before us. The wind dries up all the sandy sweat off our bodies, sweeping it off gently. A big gust of wind brings the gritty sand and harsh salt mist into our eyes, making them tear as we walk blinded into the sand.

When the sand finally comes out of

our eyes, gray seagulls hit and dive across the sky, chasing tiny bugs. Their young sit in their nests, cawing for their mother or taking their first flight.

"Each tiny bird spreads its sticky wings and is gone, just like that," my mother snaps, then stares into her hand as she slowly drops it into the sand.

The sun is dipping into its blue blanket, and is making the sky into a fuchsia blob.

"An ocean is a mural, of a part of a big idea, the beginning of a memory." My father used to say things like that. "Life is a canvas that goes on forever right above

the water and anything can be painted on it,” and I would roll my eyes and walk away. But now I know what he meant, and I can see the paintbrush painting.

I stand in the sand, my feet slowly sinking, my mind racing with memories, then like a bullet I run splashing into the white foam, my toes numbed. Then I run crashing out of the waves and rush into my mother’s arms, burying my face in her shoulder, my knees wobbling and my feet blue. I lift my head to her ear and whisper that the water has frozen icicles in my brain. She laughs and blows in my ear.

“I am all better now,” I say.

“Good,” she says and we talk and giggle until I know she’s still a kid inside. We stand there for a second under our fuchsia sky, as pale blue clouds lazily roll through the sky, and my mother’s baked cookies smell fills the air.


I take a deep breath in and smell the sweet, salty ocean, cookies and car sweat—and the corners of the sky seem to lift and say, “I feel the same way.”

There is only one thing missing: a souvenir, something that I could paint a mural of in the sky when I got home. And then something sparkles, shining like a diamond. I run from my mother’s grasp, and into the icy water. But now I do not feel the coldness or see my feet turn blue. My mind is focused on something.

The water pulls from the sand and the something goes with it, slowly toppling

over itself, and then it is gone. The water pushes towards the sand and it shines like a star. I dash for it and quickly pick it up. I rub it, shining it on my shirt as I walk back up the beach. I move it from hand to hand, massaging it, making it burn my hands. One side has a metallic glaze and the other is just a shiny black shell. The shell seems magical, as it rests in my hand, sending waves through my body.

All of a sudden a little hand reaches from behind me and snags the shell. I turn quickly to see my tiny cousin’s gold locks swiftly moving down the beach and into my aunt’s arms, her pink cheeks flushed and her little body heaving. I want so badly to scream, to run towards her and snatch the shell from her tiny fragile hands. But all I can do is cry. The hot tears stream down my face, making tiny bubbles in my eyes. I rub the tears away and run towards her.

Tiny bits of sand fly in the air behind me, making little whirlwinds. I slide across the sand and kneel before her, pretending to be some humble servant begging for mercy. She smiles but keeps the shell locked in her hand, holding the key in her heart. My eyes are burning and I can hear the laughter of my mother cutting through the air in the distance, but nothing matters. My hand creeps into her palm and slowly pries away at the lock. The key turns and the door opens and the key is in my hand. 

The Run Away?

By **Sarah Jick**

Illustrated by **Sheri Park**

ELIZA OPENED HER BEDROOM DOOR a crack and looked through the small slit into the tan-carpeted hallway. It was deserted. Eliza breathed a sigh of relief. She stuck her head out and listened for any noises that would signify that she was not the only person up. To the left, her little sister Emily's room was silent. Eliza cocked her head the other way to listen for her parents. Nothing. She was the only person awake in the whole house.

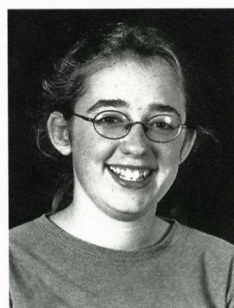
That made sense, though, because it was five-thirty in the morning.

The house was dark; only one long beam of moonlight lit the staircase, leaving the rest of the house in pure and complete darkness.

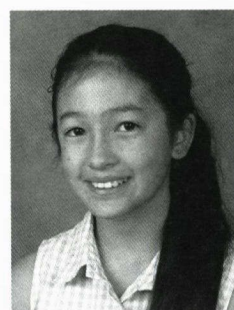
Eliza left her room, a light jacket slung over her shoulder, fully dressed in summer shorts and her T-shirt with the blue-and-white stripes. She crept across the black hallway, clutching at her jacket. Feeling her pocket, she made sure that the note she had written yesterday was still there. Just to check it and make sure it was the right one, she took it out for a second and the words Dear Mom, Pop, and Emily shone across the top for a moment in the moonlight, but then she quickly folded it up again and roughly shoved it back into her pocket.

Eliza started down the carpeted stairs, holding tightly to the banister as she went.

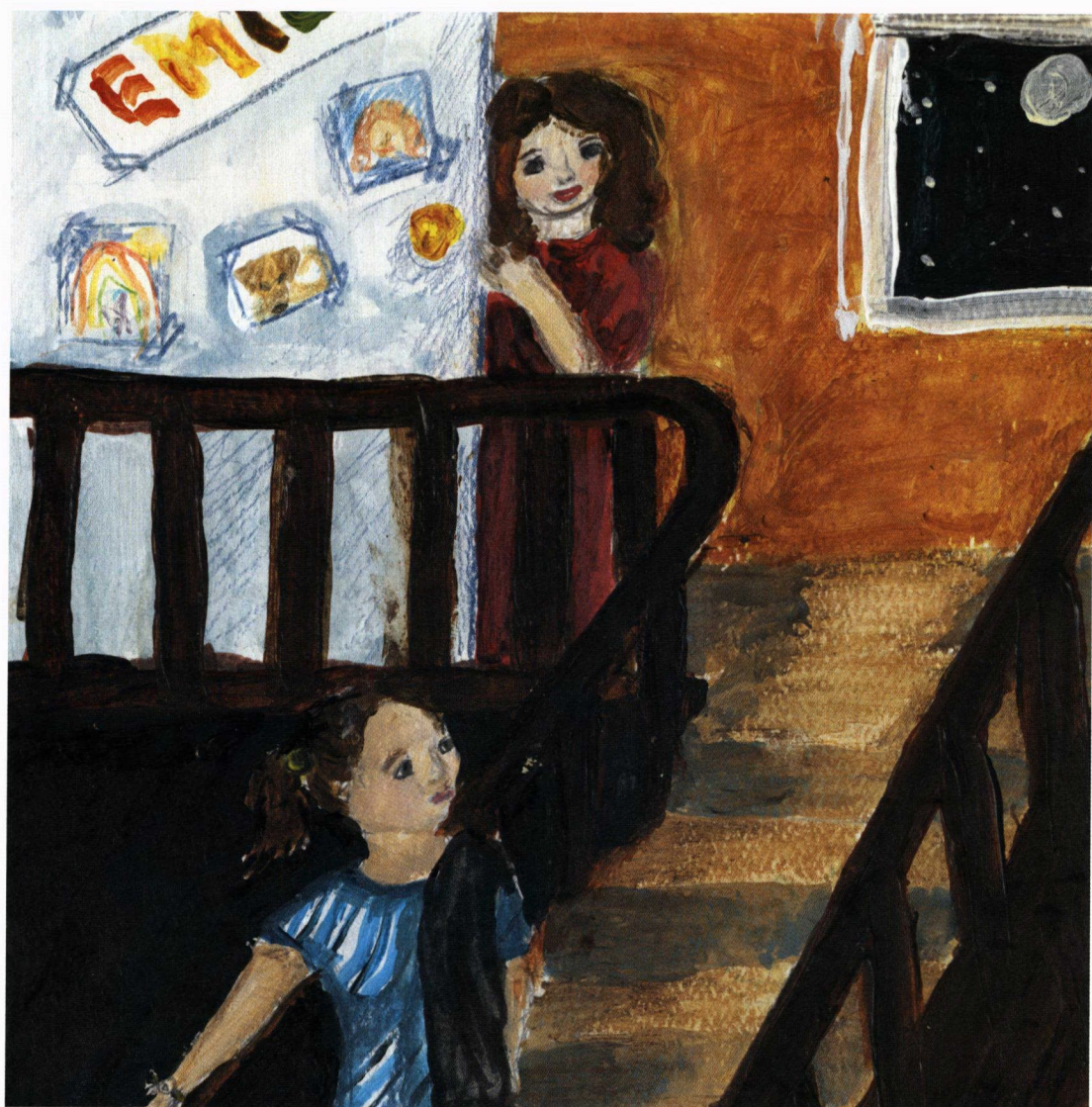
Emily watched through band-aided fingers and her slightly open door as Eliza crept through the silent house. The second-



Sarah Jick, 13
Lexington, Massachusetts



Sheri Park, 13
Redwood City, California



You miscounted, Emily thought gleefully

to-last stair creaked as she stepped on it, and the banister shook as she tried to take all of her weight off of the steps.

You miscounted, Emily thought gleefully, giggling softly to herself. I never step on the creaky stair. This, of course, was not true. Emily had made a hor-

rible racket as she had come up the stairs just the night before, stepping on that creaky step, and the third one down, which was much, much worse, but of course, her five-year-old mind had already forgotten that.

Eliza's head whipped around, hearing

Emily's giggle. "Emily!" she hissed, but Emily didn't catch the harshness in her tone.

"Hi, Liza," she whispered, though it was so loud that Eliza hurried back up the stairs, counting right this time so that none of the steps creaked and complained, and hurried into her little sister's room so they could talk quietly and not wake up their parents.

"Shh, Emmy," she said, gently now. "Don't want to wake Mom and Pop."

"Pop." Emily giggled at Eliza's name for her father. To Emily he was always Daddy. "Pop," she said again. "Pop. Pop. Poppoppoppoppop."

"Emily!" Eliza hurriedly covered her sister's mouth with her hand. Emily strained to see Eliza's painted nails, which were a deep red right now, and had always fascinated the little girl. "You've got to be quiet, 'K?" Eliza looked into her little sister's brown eyes and repeated her demand. "Quiet."

Emily nodded and Eliza's hand retreated from her face.

"Where was you goin', Liza?" Emily asked immediately, but, true to her word, she was very quiet this time.

Eliza looked at her little sister. She thought about when she had been born. She thought about all the times that she had kept the whole family up all night with her relentless wails. She thought about how cute she had been as a toddler, and how much fun she was to play baby games with. And how annoying she was

when she cried when she lost. And when she didn't get just what she wanted right when she wanted it.

Eliza thought about the green duffel bag that was hidden under the bushes by the mailbox. She thought about the red train tickets that were safely hidden away in the inside pocket. And she thought about the hulking black train that was waiting for her at the station across town.

She thought about her little sister, and all of the times that she had wished that she was somewhere far, far away, and all of the good times that she would miss when she was gone. She thought about how her parents loved Emily more than they loved her, and then she remembered the fantastic birthday party they had thrown her when she turned thirteen. She thought about how Emily's present had been a hug and a kiss, and how that had meant much, much more to her than all of her other presents combined.


And she thought about Emily right now, standing there in front of her, waiting with bated breath for an answer from her favorite person in the entire world.

"Where was I going?" Eliza repeated.

"Yeah, Liza, where?"

"Nowhere, Emmy, I'm staying right here."

Emily never questioned the answer that her sister gave. She leaned forward and hugged her tightly. "Good, Liza. That's super good."

Eliza smiled and hugged her tightly back. 

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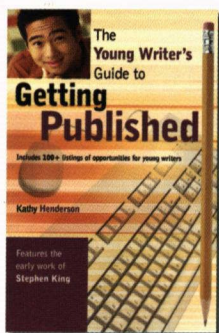
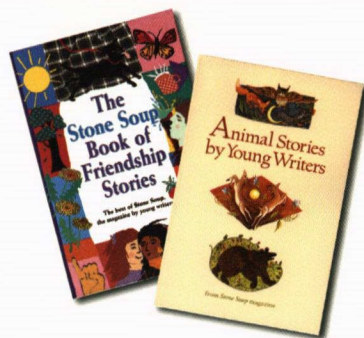
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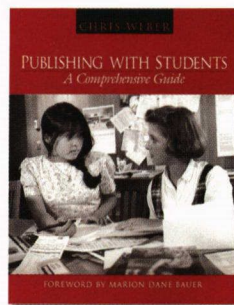
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