

Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists



Illustration by Maya Work, age 10, for "Thank You, Mr. Huffington," page 19

FACE YOUR FEARS

Why are Katherine's parents leaving her? Where are they going?

THANK YOU, MR. HUFFINGTON

Josh is having a hard time coping with his dad's death

Also: Isabella and her family go mushroom hunting

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Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists

VOLUME 44, NUMBER 2
NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2015

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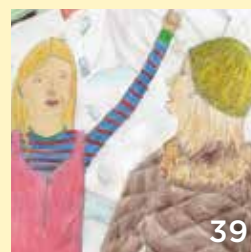
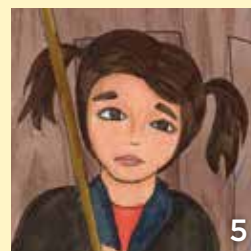
Pasta with wild chanterelle mushrooms—yum!

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Editor's Note

Like all close relationships, the sibling relationship has its good and bad parts. If you have a sister or brother, you may recognize aspects of your relationship in three stories in this issue. "Face Your Fears" is the story of two sisters abandoned by their parents. Lily, the younger sister, knows Katherine, the older sister, better than anyone. It's Lily who helps Katherine finally accept reality so she can move on. In "The Fire of Diwali," a happy celebration turns frightening when Kamina's little sister Liliana's hair catches on fire. All of a sudden, Kamina realizes how much she loves Liliana. On a lighter note, in "Frustration, Happiness, and Pure Amazement," Isabella reveals to the reader that her little sister isn't the perfect angel she appears to be to outsiders. How do you feel about your sibling? Are you close? How has she/he helped (or annoyed) you? Tell us about it in a story.

— Gerry Mandel

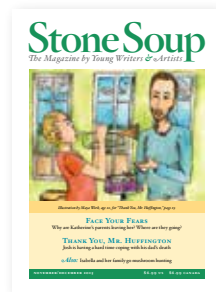
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ON THE COVER Maya Work, who also made the cover art for our May/June 2015 issue, has been drawing since she could hold a pen. She especially enjoys drawing people in pen-and-ink, and she recently started adding watercolors to her drawings. When she grows up, Maya wants to be an artist, a writer, and an actress.



The Mailbox



Thank you for the opportunity to get my writing published. I really love your magazine. I'm really glad that all the authors and artists have the opportunity to show the world their talent.

Also, I'd love to thank you for creating the Honor Roll. I really appreciate that all the people who were close to getting their work published have a chance for people to know that they have talent. I wish I had the talent of some of the people who illustrate for *Stone Soup*. I can't believe the illustrations sometimes.

Sarah Ellis, 12

Woburn, Massachusetts

Thank you for publishing such a marvelous magazine! I enjoy each and every edition and eagerly check my mailbox each month! I have shown many of my teachers *Stone Soup* and encouraged many of my friends to submit their work.

Madeline Thompson, 13

Sun Prairie, Wisconsin

I want to be a civil rights attorney when I grow up, and I enjoyed the book review on *I Am Malala* [May/June 2015] immensely. I would like to be a book reviewer so I can share the joy of reading my favorite books with fellow bookworms, because I know the exhilaration brought by reading a wonderful book. I also am always looking for a good book to read and on multiple occasions, *Stone Soup* has put an end to my search.

Sylvie Florence Liss, 10

New York, New York

I absolutely LOVE *Stone Soup*! But I found myself offended by the description to the deaf man in "A Mysterious Package," by Lukas Bacho, in the May/June 2015 edition. I started to lose my hearing when I was three, and I am now completely deaf. I do use cochlear implants, but I have met many people of the deaf community. Some sign, some speak and lip-read, some have one or two hearing aids... but even though there may be a bit of an "accent," slurred speech, or simply a very quiet voice, words have never in my experience come "jumbled, stuttering, and mumbling at a high speed." I don't have anything against a deaf person who does that, if there is one, but that is simply not the instinct that we have. And deaf people don't jumble words any more than regular hearing people. I suppose I wouldn't really be offended as much if the man was assumed to be deaf because of (blank), but when mumbled, jumbled, stuttering words are taken as a sign of being deaf, *that* I disagree with.

Angeliki Vassilatos, 12

Chicago, Illinois

My sisters and I have read your magazine for about three or so years, and I have always wanted to submit something to it. Your magazine seems to be a free and creative place, especially for people who have never published before, and all of the contributions are alive and personal.

Jade Tulk, 13

Boulder, Colorado

Stone Soup welcomes your comments. Send them to editor@stonesoup.com.



Why were they leaving her? Where were they going?

Face Your Fears

By **Jem Burch**

Illustrated by **Angelica Devers**

KATHERINE LOOKED UP into the smiling faces of her parents. Though they appeared to be cheerful on the outside, she could sense the worry that hung about their shoulders and the urgency in their movements. She watched as they put on long black overcoats and dark hats with brims that obscured their eyes.

“Mommy, Daddy, where are you going?” Katherine asked anxiously.

“To somewhere safe. Don’t worry, sweetheart, we’ll come back for you. I promise.” Her father hugged her tightly, giving her a soft kiss on the cheek in the process.

“But why?” Katherine queried. She was confused. Why were they leaving her? Where were they going?

“Honey, we cannot stay here, we must keep moving.” Katherine’s mother sighed heavily. “Everything will turn out all right.”

Katherine watched as her parents ran off into the rainy night, droplets of water hitting their overcoats like shafts of silver arrows. When they were almost out of earshot, she heard her father call, “Take good care of baby Lily for us.” And then he rushed away, a dark shadow moving with expert stealth.

Katherine felt a tear escape her eye and run down her cheek. She sniffled and looked at the sign on the door behind her: Mulberry Orphanage. She looked at her baby sister, asleep in a little bundle on the doorstep, unaware of the confusing world around her. Once again, she looked out into the night, hoping



Jem Burch, 12
Van Nuys, California



Angelica Devers, 12
Kapolei, Hawaii

that her parents would return soon. She stood there for a long time, smelling the earthy aroma of storm, the noxious fume of gasoline, and listening to the rain beat out its arbitrary time signature on the roof. Finally, when it became clear that her parents were not returning anytime soon, Katherine curled up next to her sister and slowly, painfully, heart-wrenchingly, cried herself to sleep.

EIGHT YEARS LATER...

KATHERINE AWOKE suddenly. Her body was tangled in her sheets and soaked in a cold sweat. The last few moments of her dream lingered fresh in her memory. She desperately wanted to see her parents again, but interacting with them in a recurring dream ad nauseam made her long for her life to return to the way it once was.

"Kkkbhonkh." Katherine looked over at the sleeping figure of her younger sister and smiled. Lily was sprawled across the bed, the blankets wrapped around her torso like a bedcover toga. Her long auburn hair was spread across her round face in knotted clumps, and her mouth was open, exposing a number of pearly white teeth.

Katherine nearly giggled, but her face regained its now familiar solemnity when she thought of how innocent her once baby sister had looked, sleeping in that little bundle on the doorstep of the orphanage.

Silently, Katherine stepped off the edge of the bed and stole carefully across the

floor, trying not to make any noise. It reminded her of the times when she snuck out of bed to get some extra food for Lily from the orphanage pantry. She remembered how underfed the kids at the orphanage had been, each one subsisting on only a tiny bowl of porridge, a cup of chicken broth, and a few pieces of bread and cheese a day. It had been awful living in the orphanage. The director had been a cruel man. He had hated the kids; the only reason he had decided to run an orphanage in the first place was the prospect of money. He had been strict too, and punished the kids for no particular reason. The whole situation had been almost too horrible to endure. But Katherine and Lily had had to bear it... and for eight whole years they did, accumulating calluses all over their hands and feet and growing skinnier by the week. Each day had been the same: short, dull, and hazy. Work, study, eat, work, study, eat; that had been their life. But then there was the joyous day when a woman had come to the orphanage. And she was nice; very kind. Katherine had liked her... and she liked the woman even more when she decided to adopt Katherine and Lily.

Now, Katherine quietly slipped out of her bedroom and into the living room. In the ghostly moonlight, she could see the faint outlines of the furniture. She tiptoed across the floor to the window, her nightgown ballooning about her knees. Silently, she eased open the creaky window, allowing the delicious nighttime scent to waft into the room.

Outside, Katherine could see the lights of the city spread out in front of her like the bioluminescent scales of a fish. Each one glittered and sparkled, one infinitesimal spot of color in a gown encrusted with sequins. Beyond the city, Katherine could just make out the chain of mountains on the horizon, a jagged line frozen forever in a state of hazy evanescence. And beyond that, into the ebony heavens above, Katherine saw the stars, twinkling and shimmering, like their cousins, the lights of the city, reflected in a tranquil pond.

“Oh, Mommy, Daddy, where are you?” Katherine asked aloud. “Why did you leave me?”

Katherine thought of what her father had said: “We’ll come back for you. I promise.” Had he been making a promise he couldn’t keep? It was hard to know for sure. He had seemed so sincere, so honest. But no one was exactly the way they seemed. It was a hard mystery for Katherine to ponder, for deep down she wanted to believe that her parents had been good people, and yet she was shrouded in the gray veil of doubt.

A single teardrop dribbled down Katherine’s cheek. “I wish things were simpler,” she whispered, more tears escaping from her eyes.

“Oh, Katherine, don’t cry, everything is OK.” Katherine felt a warm hand on her wrist. She looked up, expecting to see Amber, the woman she and Lily now lived

with. But no, it was her sister, Lily, whose hazel eyes gleamed in the soft moonlight. “Everything is OK,” Lily said again, her voice dropping to a whisper. Katherine felt herself calm down, but then anger began to boil in her veins.

“How can you say that?” Katherine spat, tears flowing down her cheeks like miniature waterfalls. “How can you say that everything is OK when it isn’t, when it will never be. You just don’t know because you don’t even remember our parents.” Katherine’s words stung, she knew by the tightened, pinched look

that bridged Lily’s face, but she didn’t care. Rage bubbling up in her heart, she went on. “The only reason you dare is because all you have is blank fuzz, no real memories. And I bet that if you knew you wouldn’t pity me like this. So stop it. Stop it right now. I’m perfectly fine without your charity.”

Katherine stopped and stared defiantly at her younger sister. She thought that Lily would have been in tears by then, but no, Lily was staring at the floor, shifting her feet. Finally, she said something. “If you truly do not want me, I’ll go back to bed right now. But first, please allow me to say something.”

Katherine thought. Was her sister going to get really angry with her? She couldn’t tell. Lily wasn’t your average eight-year-old. She knew a lot more than she let on. Katherine wasn’t sure if she

**The whole situation
had been almost
too horrible to endure.**



"You need to embrace your worst fear, sister. It is time to realize the truth."

would harass her or explain something. Unsure whether to tell her to go back to bed or to let her say what she wanted to say, Katherine looked into Lily's eyes, which were wise and all knowing. They reminded Katherine of the eyes of owls, so... so... *sapient*. Katherine took a deep breath. "Go on," she finally said.

"I know that you want to see our mom and dad again. There is a hungry look in your eyes that I have interpreted to mean that you would do anything to see them again. But now I think that it is time that you faced the fact that they are not coming back. And even if they are, you need to stop thriving on that sliver of hope. It is tearing you apart. Look at you, Katherine. You have wild eyes and matted hair. Your mouth is forever pursed in a line of solemn defiance. You are no longer the dependable person I used to know you as. Life at the orphanage has hardened you. You need to..."

"Wait, you can't..." Katherine sputtered.

"Please don't interrupt." Lily spoke firmly but calmly. "You need to embrace your worst fear, sister. It is time to realize the truth."

"But I don't want to!" Katherine shouted crazily. "They can still come back, you know they can!"

"I do know. But I also know this: the longer you choose to live off of this minuscule hope, the more depressed you will become. Please choose to come back to me. I miss the person you once were." Lily was crying now.

Katherine sighed. She could do this. She just had to Let. It. Go. To let it all go. All her pent-up feelings and emotions, and all the things she had kept to herself. She could feel a bundle of potential energy pressing against her heart, like a dammed-up river about to burst through its bonds. She took a deep breath. Exhaled. And then... it came.

IN A SEA of tears, Katherine felt different days of her life float before her. Trying to escape through the thick wall of shrubbery next to the orphanage. Laughing as the orphanage director slipped on a banana peel. Sitting on the windowsill in the orphanage and laughing as she and her sister thought up different, funny reasons why her parents had left. Finding two chocolate chips in the pantry and eating them. Running with Amber in the park. Meeting a boy and a girl at a restaurant and improvising a game of tag outside. Picking out vegetables at the supermarket. The look on Lily's face as she first tried a dragon fruit. Harvesting cherries at an orchard. Chasing, and finally catching, an escaped rabbit. Looking at dinosaur bones at the Natural History Museum. Spotting a kangaroo-shaped cloud. Getting accidentally locked in the orphanage director's study. Playing peek-a-boo with Lily using the bedcovers. Swimming in a lake with Amber. Digging in the sandbox at the park and discovering an old dime. Eating ice cream at the tiny cafe where Lily lost her first tooth. Meeting a white dog named Quinny who

licked Katherine on the nose. Climbing a sycamore tree and then getting stuck. The warm hugs her mom and dad used to give her.

When Katherine's sobs turned to sniffles and the sniffles to hiccups, Lily asked, "Feel better?"

"Much," replied Katherine, standing up. "Wow. I feel light as a feather."

"Everything was weighing you down." Lily grinned.

"Wahoo!" Katherine yelled giddily, leaping around the furniture with fairylike grace, despite how dark it was.

"Shh, you'll wake Amber," Lily whispered, but she giggled in spite of herself. "Shall we go back to sleep."

"Nah. I'm not ready yet. Let's nibble on those blackberries in the refrigerator. Crying always makes me hungry."

"Roger that!" Lily yelled, running towards the stairs. "Last one to the kitchen is a rotten egg!"

"Hey, no fair, you had a head start!"

AMBER AWOKE slowly. She closed her eyes to try to go back to sleep. But then she was up again a couple minutes later; her alarm clock had just sounded.


Blairily, she rubbed her eyes and got out of bed. She stumbled out of her room and down the stairs to the kitchen. She was greeted by a sight so surprising that it jarred the grogginess right out of her. Katherine and Lily were lying in a heap on the kitchen floor, blackberry stains on their lips and a couple uneaten berries scattered on the floor. They were sound asleep.

Something must have happened last night, Amber thought. Katherine certainly looks a lot better—less worried.

Amber silently picked up the blackberries on

the floor and dropped them into the sink, chuckling quietly to herself. *Good thing it's not a school day. These two would be wiped out.*

As she eased open the cabinet door to get a bowl, Amber glanced back at the sleeping children. *They sure do look comfortable.*

Suddenly, Amber walked briskly out of the kitchen, up the stairs, and back down again. When she re-entered the kitchen, she was carrying a pillow and blanket. Happily, she spread the blanket on the floor beside the kids, lay atop it, and stayed there until they woke up. 

Was her sister
going to get really
angry with her?

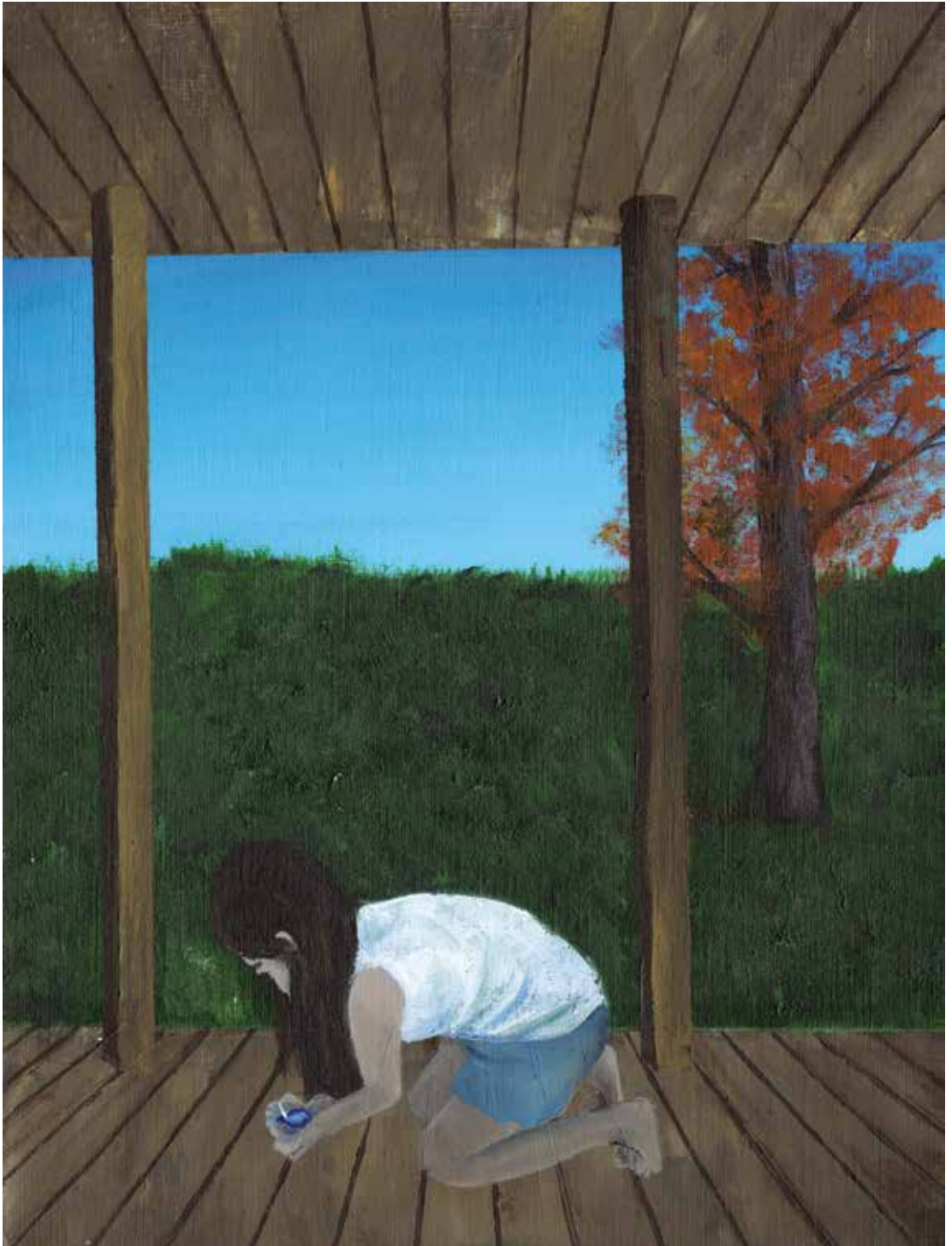
Camping in the Fall

By **Sonja Minge**

Dark skies
The Milky Way shining through
The once bright blue sky
Toasty fire
Turning white marshmallows
To golden brown
Silent wind nips my nose
The occasional hoot of an owl
The yellow-orange flicker brings
Peace to the family
Optimism to the air
Light dew begins to form
Across the sloping grass
Leaves slowly float to the ground
Nature's music soothes me
Minnesota's northern lights cast an eerie glow
Across the forest
It's half past ten
Crawl into the tent
Waiting for the early light of the morning



Sonja Minge, 11
Minneapolis, Minnesota



The candleholders were simply beautiful

The Fire of Diwali

By **Asha Baudart-Gehlawat**

Illustrated by **Sanjana Chimata**

A TRUE STORY

KAMINA GRINNED. Finally, it was Diwali! She had been longing for this day since she had come with her family to her grandparents' house, and now she could hardly wait to start the celebration! Diwali was an Indian holiday, celebrating the return of the prince Ram. The story was that Ram had been exiled from the kingdom to battle demons, and when he came back, the people of India lit candles to guide him home.

"Kamina, Kamina, where are you?" a familiar voice squealed. It was Liliana, or Lili, Kamina's little sister. Kamina looked around for a place to hide. She spotted a tall tree, its branches easy to climb on but leafy enough so Liliana wouldn't find her. Quickly, she grabbed the nearest branch and swung onto it, hooking her feet in the small crevices of the trunk. Soon, she had climbed on a branch where she could see Liliana but Liliana couldn't see her.

"Kaminaaaaa! Where are youuuuuuuuu?" Liliana's voice echoed up to the branch where Kamina was hiding. Kamina stifled a laugh. "Kamina, if you don't come down now, we will prepare for Diwali wiwout you!" Kamina couldn't help but notice that Liliana had pronounced "without" wrong. As much as Kamina liked to annoy her little sister, she did *not* want her family to prepare for Diwali without her. So, she climbed down, trying to stay out of Liliana's eyesight. But, as soon as her feet touched the ground, Liliana yelled, "Found you!"



Asha Baudart-Gehlawat, 10
Berkeley, California



Sanjana Chimata, 13
Basking Ridge, New Jersey

So much for sneaking away, thought Kamina, disappointed. But her disappointment flew away as she saw her *dadi*, the Indian word for grandma, taking out the boxes of beautiful candleholders. Her dadi handed her one of the boxes.

"Here," she said, as Kamina took the box from her hands with the greatest care. "Put these on the porch for me, will you?" she asked.

"Of course, Dadi!" exclaimed Kamina, already heading towards the porch. Kamina carefully placed the box on the porch, then opened it to make sure none of the exquisite candleholders were broken. Kamina gasped. The candleholders were simply beautiful. Some were blue, some were green, some were so decorated they burned Kamina's eyes! But if she was impressed by these, she was completely unprepared for the second box of candleholders her dadi gave her. Dashes of rainbow, sunlight, and joyful thoughts filled Kamina's mind until she had to close the box. Skipping this time, she went back to her dadi to see if there were any more boxes to be carried.

"No, there are no more boxes to carry," said her dadi when Kamina asked. "But," she continued, seeing Kamina's disappointed face, "you can help me clean the kitchen."

"Uhhhh, no thanks, Dadi," said Kamina. "No offense, but I'd rather be bored than clean the kitchen."

Her dadi smiled. "Off you go then!" she replied.

Kamina ran into the house to find her-

self face-to-face with Liliana. Uh-oh, I better get out of here, thought Kamina, but it was too late. Kamina found herself playing dolls with Liliana.

A few hours later, Kamina's dadi called them in her room. "I have a surprise for you girls!" she exclaimed. When they entered Dadi's room, the first things Kamina saw were two gorgeous Indian dresses. "Do you like them?" asked Dadi, watching the girls' reaction.

"Oh, Dadi, they're wonderful!" exclaimed Kamina. "Are they for us?"

Their dadi smiled. "Do you think I would order dresses that small for me?"

Liliana squealed and picked up the smaller dress, one that was gold-embroidered with fiery-colored threads that shined. "Oh, thank you, Dadi!" she squeaked happily and ran to the bathroom to try on her new dress. Kamina stared at hers. It was the most beautiful piece of clothing she owned. Speechless, she carefully smoothed it out and hugged her dadi. Then she ran to the bathroom as well, to put it on.

A few minutes later, Kamina was staring at herself in the mirror. She looked amazing. The dress was black with golden stones and threads that brought out the golden highlights in her brown hair. She loved it. Soon, the family was almost done preparing. The fireworks were out, the food was almost cooked, everybody was dressed up, and Kamina's dadi had taken out her camera, ready to take photos. Liliana was bouncing in excitement. To calm Liliana down, Kamina asked

her if she wanted to play hide-and-seek. Liliana agreed, and soon Kamina found herself looking around the house for her annoying little sister. “Found you!” she exclaimed, as Liliana came out of a closet.

“Girls! Time to eat!” called Kamina’s mother. Sure enough, Kamina smelled the scent of spices floating through the air. She licked her lips and headed towards the dining room, where delicious-looking food awaited her. Kamina sat at the table, grabbed her fork, and dug in.

After the feast (which was as delicious as it smelled), Kamina and her family went outside to light the candles. Kamina and Liliana weren’t allowed to light any candles but they *were* allowed to watch. As Kamina’s uncle lit the last candle, there was a terrible scream. Kamina turned around and saw Liliana leaning over a candle, her bangs on fire. Kamina, not knowing what to do, also screamed. Her mother was racing towards Liliana, but Kamina’s grandpa, her *dada*, had gotten there first. He used his bare hands to pat out the fire as quickly as possible. Her dada was soon joined by Kamina’s mom, and soon they extinguished the fire. Kamina’s heart was racing. She was trembling in terror. As much as she thought Liliana was annoying, she was her sister, and she loved her very much. Kamina watched as her mom raced into the house with a crying, screaming Liliana in her arms. Quickly, Kamina raced after her. When she got there, her moth-

er was pouring water on Liliana’s forehead. Kamina stared at the sink, where lay blackened bangs, crumbling as she touched them. Kamina looked up. Liliana wasn’t scarred, luckily, but there was a small red mark on her forehead. Still, it must have been terrifying for her. Sobbing, Kamina went out and stared at the sky, wondering how such a perfect holiday

could have turned into a fiery disaster. Kamina sighed. She was about to go back in when she saw her mom coming out with Liliana.

**It must have been
terrifying for her.**

“Should I... start the fireworks?” Kamina’s uncle asked uncertainly. Kamina’s mother nodded and went to sit down on a chair to watch the fireworks. Kamina hesitantly sat down next to her. *BOOM!* A flash of multicolored sparkles flew in the air as her uncle ran away from the firework. But Kamina wasn’t paying attention to the fireworks. The sound of Liliana’s scream kept repeating itself in her head. Kamina’s eyes became blurry as she stared blankly at the fireworks. Then she felt something on her lap. It was Liliana. Tears rolled onto Kamina’s cheeks as she realized how close her sister had come to the end of herself. Kamina hugged Liliana and together they stared at the night sky, which was now lit up with the colors of the rainbow, and at that moment Kamina felt a fierce pain in her chest and decided that, to her, nothing, nothing else mattered but her love for her little sister. 🍁

Book Review

By Adelle C. Macdowell

The Spy Catchers of Maple Hill, by Megan Frazer Blakemore; Bloomsbury Children's Books: New York, 2015; \$7.99



Adelle C. Macdowell, 11
Johnson, Vermont

IN 1953 HAZEL KAPLANSKY is a fifth-grader who wants badly to be a detective. She has read all the Nancy Drew books in her library, feels that she is the perfect sleuth, and is prepared to solve any mystery that comes her way. But none ever do. Until... rumors of communist spies in Hazel's own town, Maple Hill, begin to float around.

Hazel is very eager to help find these potential spies. Finally, she will have something interesting to put in her so far boring Mysteries Notebook. So when she has a hunch that Mr. Jones, the hired gravedigger at the cemetery that her parents run, is up to no good, she starts doing some sleuthing. With the help of Samuel, a new boy in town, who is maybe, possibly, even smarter than Hazel, she uncovers many clues, but, as Samuel says, no concrete evidence.

Even though there is no solid evidence, Hazel is absolutely sure "The Comrade," as she calls Mr. Jones, is a spy. Otherwise, how can the locked safes he receives from Mr. Short, the father of a mean girl in Hazel's class, be explained? Or the objects he leaves at a grave? This grave, marked "Alice, Ten Years Old," seems to be a drop-off spot for information.

Then there is the mystery of Samuel himself. Everyone seems


to know something about his mother that they won't tell Hazel. Even Hazel's classmates know. Hazel wants to find out and believes Samuel's mother must be a communist spy. Then Hazel realizes that thinking every other person in her town is a spy is getting her nowhere, and she is hurting more than one person's feelings.

I connected to Hazel a lot, because I live in Vermont like she does, and I like to climb trees, ride my bike, and I am in fifth grade. Also, she is something of a tomboy, as am I.

The Spy Catchers of Maple Hill got me interested in McCarthyism and the Red Scare. I did some research about the time period, and I thought it was interesting to learn about when some people were afraid the U.S. would become a communist nation, and Senator Joseph McCarthy made their fears seem real.

When I asked my grandfather about the Red Scare and how it affected his family, he said what he most remembered were extended hearings on television almost every day, where Senator McCarthy sat, making accusations. Also, he said a local priest, who was determined to root out all communists, accused the principal at the high school he went to of having communist ties. It was neat talking to him and hearing about what he remembered from the early 1950s. I liked learning about a time that seems long ago about which I formerly knew so little.

I really loved this book because I changed my mind so many times. Sometimes I thought Hazel was completely correct, and everyone else was wrong; sometimes I was convinced Hazel was not being observant enough, and she might be mistaken.

My favorite thing about this book was that it has a surprise ending. The ending was not at all what I imagined. Also, the author did something very rare: she ended this book in the perfect place. I do not think this book needs a sequel at all, not even an epilogue, because the end is entirely satisfactory. 



"Awesome!" Mr. Huffington said, clapping his hands

Thank You, Mr. Huffington

By **Nadia Suben**

Illustrated by **Maya Work**

OCTOBER

“**C**OME ON, JOSH,” Mom urged one day. “It won’t kill you if you join band.”

“Yes, it will,” I retorted.

“I’ll take away your video games,” Mom threatened.

“OK, fine!” I finally gave in after weeks of argument. “I’m sure the way to fit in at my new school is to be a band geek, so that’s exactly what I’ll be. Then you’ll be happy.”

“Josh, we both know that’s not what this is about,” Mom said sharply.

I grabbed my comic book from the table, ran to my room, and slammed the door behind me. I jumped onto my bed and crossed my legs. Angrily, I flipped the pages, sighing and shaking my head. Mom never got me. Not since I turned ten, not since we moved, not since I joined fifth grade, and especially not since Dad died.

I lay there for a while, staring miserably at a small chip in the ceiling. Then I heard Mom call, “Josh, time for dinner!” Glancing at my watch, I realized an hour had passed. I threw my comic book off my stomach and ran to the kitchen. Mom was listening to those jazz recordings, like always, though she turned them off quickly when I entered the room.

Another hour passed, and Mom and I had finished dinner without speaking one word to each other. I went back to my room and resumed my position on the bed, until the chip in the ceiling started getting blurry. My eyelids got heavy.



Nadia Suben, 10
Mamaroneck, New York



Maya Work, 10
Terrasse-Vaudreuil, Quebec
Canada

“Good night, Mom,” I murmured. I fell asleep in my clothes but woke up when I heard Mom shuffling into my room. I closed my eyes again and pretended to be asleep. Mom ruffled my hair and kissed my forehead. It was just as well she was acting so affectionate. By tomorrow, I’d be a band geek. By tomorrow, she would have ruined my life.

The next day, a teacher I had never seen before sauntered into my classroom, so tall he had to duck through the doorway to get in. He had gelled-back brown hair, brown eyes, and a huge smile, one that lit up the whole room. His smile almost made me smile. But then that grinning, very tall man introduced himself.

“Hi, everyone. I’m Mr. Huffington, the band teacher.”

Mr. Huffington talked excitedly for forty-five minutes straight, hardly taking a breath, about how awesome it was to be in band. The strange thing was, hearing and watching him, I started feeling like maybe being around a guy like that would almost make being a band geek worthwhile in the end.

MARCH

FIVE MONTHS had passed since I joined band with Mr. Huffington. I was OK with going early every Wednesday morning for practice. I was OK with lugging my trumpet case up and down the stairs every Friday for trumpet lessons. I wasn’t crazy about it all, but it was OK. I wasn’t suffering or anything, at least not the way I do in math.

But I wasn’t very good at the trumpet. I was trying hard but just wasn’t getting the feel for it. The band was scheduled to play at the fifth-grade graduation in June. I’d told everybody I was going to play, and now I couldn’t just drop out, but I wouldn’t be allowed to play unless I got better. So I tried even harder. And absolutely nothing happened.

“Come on, Josh,” Mr. Huffington said encouragingly one particularly frustrating Friday afternoon. “Curl in your lips. Let your air take over.”

I took a deep breath and let the air flow through my curled lips. To my surprise, I hit a pretty high note.

“Awesome!” Mr. Huffington said, clapping his hands. “That was High C. Just try to aim a little lower, for G.”

“OK,” I said, suddenly feeling more confident. I aimed lower and got G.

“Good!” exclaimed Mr. Huffington. “You’ll be playing like a pro in no time.”

“How long is no time?” I asked. “Because I have to play at graduation. Do you think I’ll be able to?”

“Probably,” Mr. Huffington said, “if you practice a little more.”

“Hmm...” It was true I hadn’t practiced much, even when I’d *wanted* to practice. Often I’d pull out my rusty rental trumpet, but instead of hearing my notes flying out of it, right away I’d start to hear the notes from those recordings. My heart would get tight, my eyes would start to sting, and I’d quickly tuck the trumpet away.

But if I practiced, would I ever sound like the recordings? Would I ever be that

good? Was it worth it to even try?

“OK,” I said doubtfully. “I’ll try to practice a little more.”

“Great,” Mr. Huffington said. Then the period was over, so the half of the trumpets I practiced with on Fridays all packed up their stuff. The next half came streaming in through the door. I liked it better on Wednesday mornings, when all the trumpets played in unison. No—I liked it on Wednesday mornings, when the entire band played in unison.

This March was a crisp one, not so cold as to have winter gear muffling your voice, but not too hot, where you sweat like a waterfall. It was a mellow March. The flowers were getting planted, to grow in May, and we weren’t getting too much rain—that was April’s job.

I had forgotten to practice during the week, so I practiced extra the Tuesday before band. Mr. Huffington took special interest in me the next day—how I kept missing notes, struggling with my air, and how my elbows were jabbing my own ribs. How tense I was. How sweat trickled down my forehead. He took special interest in me this time—the time I was failing at the trumpet, more miserably than I ever had. He just looked. He listened. He didn’t speak.

At lunch, I ate fast, threw out the white foam tray, and tapped the table and bounced my knee while waiting for lunch to be over. We weren’t going outside,

because there was still some ice on the ground from a recent storm, and people could slip. We were going to stay inside, playing games like Hangman, Clue, Sorry, and Candy Land. I liked indoor days. It helped the fifth-grade bond.

Suddenly, I saw Mr. Huffington walk in. People chirruped, “Hi, Mr. Huffington!” What was he doing here? I didn’t have band now! Nobody did.

“Could I borrow Josh Brown?” asked Mr. Huffington. The lunch aide nodded toward me. Mr. Huffington took me outside, where I zipped up my jacket and avoided

patches of ice.

Mr. Huffington got right to the point.

“What’s the deal, Josh?”

“Huh?”

“Why don’t you try, Josh?”

I sighed. “Well, I’m trying a little more now. But I don’t want to be in band.”

“Why?” Mr. Huffington asked directly.

“I’m not sure if I should tell you,” I replied uncomfortably. I started to feel my heart get tight, just like it always did when I thought of what happened.

“It’s fine. You can trust me.”

“OK.” I took a deep breath. “My dad... he was a jazz musician.”

Mr. Huffington nodded. He could tell where my story was going.

“But he... he...”

My voice cracked. Tears flew down my cheeks. Mr. Huffington put his strong arm around my shoulder and held me. I

Mr. Huffington nodded.
He could tell where
my story was going.

smelled his good cologne. I felt his soft sweater. I felt his sympathy.

"It's OK," Mr. Huffington said. "Music flows through the world, helping us cope with hard situations life throws our way."

I nodded, wiping my tears off my face. "I don't feel like I can do this."

"You can," Mr. Huffington assured me. His voice persuaded me.

I could.

JUNE

THE WHOLE fifth grade was dressed in black and white. I was going to play a few songs with the rest of the band when the fifth grade came in. After the graduation ceremony was over, we'd play as they walked off. Then we'd take some bows on the stage and leave. The plan was simple. Everybody was ready. I just hoped I could do it, just like Mr. Huffington had told me three months ago.

"Hello," said Mr. Huffington. This year, he was leading the graduation ceremony. I looked up at him, hearing his smooth-talking voice. Seeing his grinning face. Everybody listened. Everybody looked. Nobody could just ignore Mr. Huffington. He was special. He was very special.

"Thank you all for coming out here today. We are here to watch an amazing fifth-grade class graduate." Everybody clapped. "Now welcome the class!"

I took a very deep breath, flipping to the right page in my music book. Mr. Huffington winked at me. I smiled. Just a tiny smile, not like the ones Mr. Huffington smiled. I started playing at the

same time the rest of the band did. We played in perfect unison, thanks to Mr. Huffington's conducting.

When we were done, the whole fifth grade was on stage. Then the band jumped onto the stage to join them. We said the Pledge of Allegiance. We sang "O Say Can You See." Then Mr. Huffington started handing out awards, beginning with academics. The technology award went to Seth Lee, one of the smartest kids in fifth grade. The art award went to Sienna Johnson, a very shy girl, who nearly chickened out of getting her award just because she was afraid to look at the big crowd. The athletics award went to Kevin Peterson. The music award to Judy Madeline. The orchestra award to Evan Rodgers. Finally, it was time for the last award: the band award.

"And the band award goes to..." Mr. Huffington opened an envelope, holding us in suspense, just like they do on the Oscars "...Josh Brown!"

I couldn't believe my ears. I won the band award? Three months ago, I could barely play, and Mr. Huffington was telling me to practice! For a minute I sat frozen on the stage bleachers. Then I stood up and walked to Mr. Huffington as if I was totally calm, which I wasn't.

"Thanks, Mr. H," I whispered. We hugged. I nearly cried in front of that whole audience. I saw Mom, blowing her nose into a tissue. I waved at her, grinning as much as Mr. Huffington did, holding up my award. She took my picture. Then I walked back to the bleachers.

"It's been amazing watching these kids

grow up and develop,” Mr. Huffington said. It was his turn to sniffle a bit. “I can’t believe they’re already leaving.” The entire audience burst out crying. Parents get very sentimental around stuff like fifth-grade graduations. The whole fifth grade hugged each other. Suddenly, I walked back up to the microphone.

“Let’s hear it for Mr. Huffington, the coolest teacher on the planet!” I yelled. Everybody clapped and hooted, including the whole fifth grade. Then the band jumped down and prepared to play the rest of the fifth grade out. Mr. Huffington conducted us as we did.

“Good job, guys,” Mr. Huffington told us at the after-party. We all wrapped our arms around each other. It was our last day. Finally, everybody left except for me.

“Thank you, Mr. Huffington,” I whispered. We hugged again. I felt him crying on my white collared shirt, and he probably felt my tears soaking his. I ran away, because it was too sad to say goodbye to that man. He was too great. It was too sad.

AUGUST

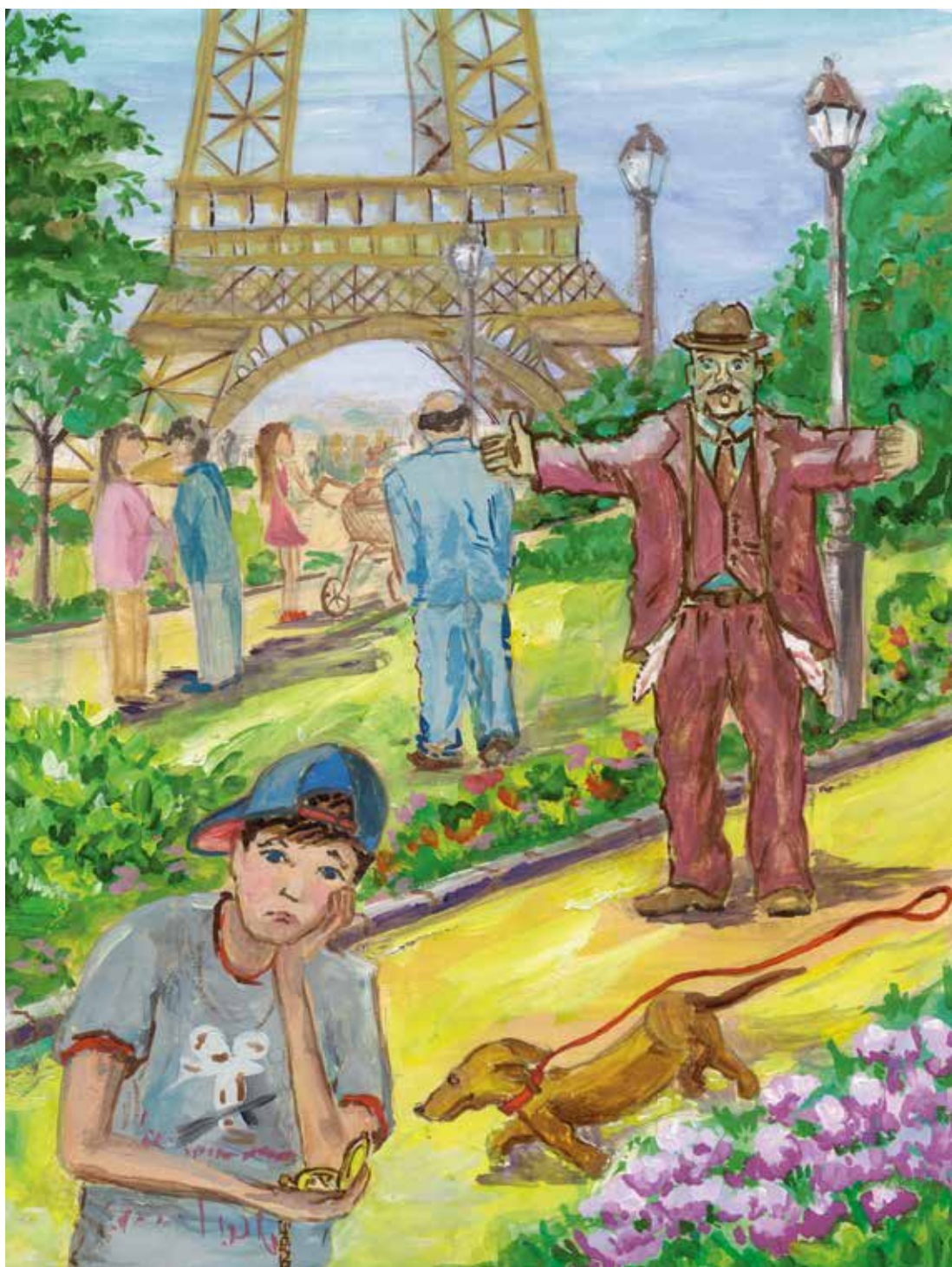
SCHOOL WAS about to start up again. This time, I’d be a sixth-grader. This time, I’d be older, and more experienced.

One day, I was spending some time in my living room, where all the photos sat. I saw a picture of Dad, playing his trumpet. I could sort of imagine how he must have felt, because playing trumpet was amazing. I shifted the picture of me holding up my band award closer to his. I felt connected to him, somehow. Connected through the music we would always share.

When school started, I wouldn’t have Mr. Huffington to teach me band, to grow me as a person. But I’d always have Dad, all around me, watching me, telling me I’d done a good job. Dad may have not been at my fifth-grade graduation in person, but he was there in spirit, clapping as I held up my band award. Dad would always be with me, in music. Mr. Huffington taught me that.

Thank you, Mr. Huffington.





"I lost my watch! I lost my father!"

The Gold Pocket Watch

By **Samuel Campopiano**

Illustrated by **Alina Ponomarenko**

THE EIFFEL TOWER was the ideal pickpocketing spot. Tourists were the most likely targets because of their ignorance and trust in the locals. Much of Paris's underworld hung around the Eiffel Tower, preying on unsuspecting, over-trusting visitors. One clean, quick, unseen swipe, and the fool had lost a possession. When that fool found out, it was much too late.

Luc was a young boy, dark-haired with a lanky frame, who was quite advanced in the art of pickpocketing. He spent many of his summer afternoons going to the Eiffel Tower and preying on those unsuspecting fools. He was a regular at the Eiffel Tower but always careful enough to not get noticed as one who comes every day. Luc had seen men taken away by the police, because they were suspected of pickpocketing. If a pickpocket was to survive the racket, he must be alert and cautious at all times. Luc solved this problem by wearing a variety of baseball caps, so he would remain inconspicuous and look like a different boy every day. He would use his different caps and various disguises to look like an American.

One day, on the observation deck at the Eiffel Tower, Luc was observing his next target and was liking what he saw. The target was an old man, too busy seeing the gorgeous view to notice anything else. The old man was very tall and seemed calm and collected. Judging by his facial features, Luc guessed that the old man was German. Indeed the view was gorgeous, and it distracted many people. This was ideal for pickpocketing. The



Samuel Campopiano, 13
San Ramon, California



Alina Ponomarenko, 12
Grapevine, Texas

Eiffel Tower was crowded on the observation deck, so “accidentally” bumping into someone was a great excuse, and it always worked for Luc. The old man was looking east in the direction of Notre Dame and was not guarding his valuables. He was one of the tourists who had too much trust and knew nothing about survival.

It was a warm, sunny day, which also benefited Luc, because the sun blinded his victims. Now, the question was what to steal from the old man. The old man had a gold pocket watch that was hanging out of his pocket. Luc had never seen such a prize. The pocket watch looked old and valuable. Of course, it might not be authentic, but if it was, it would sell for a lot of money. Luc decided to take the chance. He moved in to get a closer position.

The trick to good pickpocketing is to move slowly and not go for the victim immediately. One needs to approach cautiously and not arouse suspicion.

Luc made his way over to the old man carefully, stopping every so often, as though he too was interested in the sights. He was *not* interested in the sights. His eye was always on the prize. The old man walked away from him, towards the west side of the tower, but Luc was not worried. He would catch him eventually. He always did. The old man was talking jovially to a guide and his guard was down. Luc wanted that pocket watch. It was just swinging in the old man’s pocket, taunting him, willing him to come and get it. Luc was not going to fail now. Mercy was for the weak and soft.

Why was it that no one suspected Luc? Was it because he was a child, and children are trusted more? That is one of the mysteries of life: children are marked as immature and naive in the world of adults.

Luc broke through the wide corridor packed with many tourists and was at last alone with the old man. But this would not do. It was far too obvious if he was the only one around the old man. The old man would suspect him immediately, and that would be the end of the road for Luc.

Luc would have to wait for a while. The old man seemed to have no intention of leaving the spot he was infatuated with, so Luc wanted to be productive while he waited.

With an experienced eye, Luc quickly and confidently selected his new victim for the meantime: a middle-aged woman, on the other side of the tower, with her purse unclaspd. It seemed almost too perfect, which caused Luc to hesitate. But a pickpocket needed also to be confident in his work. So, he took his running start, to make it look like he was that naive, ignorant boy that all adults expected him to be. He ran into the woman and at the same time, with a concise swipe of his hand, took her wallet. He apologized to her, but she just muttered, “Boys.”

It took some time, like it always did, but it was finally announced over the loudspeaker.

“Warning: Pickpockets are active in the tower!” Luc grinned at these words, knowing that his job was done. Now, he needed to find his main target: the old

man with the gold pocket watch.

Luc was a little nervous, because he was running out of time, and he was no closer to getting the gold pocket watch than he was when he first discovered it. He closed in on the old man and was finally in a good position. As he passed by the old man, he snatched that gold pocket watch right out of the old man's pocket, and the old man didn't even blink an eye!

Luc was pleased with his success and was in high spirits while he made his way to the lift. As Luc stood in line for the lift, he looked behind him and saw the old man walking slowly to the lift. Luc willed the line to go faster. The last thing he needed right now was the old man to foil his plan.

After what seemed like an eternity, the lift came back up. As the people in line began to file in, Luc knew that he was saved. But, when it was his turn to step onto the lift, he was met by the hand of the lift operator.

"Sorry, this car's full. Looks like you'll have to wait for the next one."

Now, Luc was truly worried. He knew that he would have to stand with the old man before his task was done. Luc tried to avoid any eye contact with the old man but failed to keep his cool. He could feel beads of sweat on his forehead and felt the cool chill from the metal of the pocket watch on his skin. The pocket watch's weight seemed to grow the longer he stood next to the old man. He was aware of a faint feeling in the back of his mind,

something that he had never felt before while pickpocketing. It was the feeling of wrongdoing. Luc ignored it and wanted just to get off the tower. As the lift came up, Luc felt a sense of dread. He was going to have to share a ride in the lift with the old man.

In the lift, despite his beating heart, nothing happened. The old man took no notice of Luc. As the lift touched the ground and the ticket man wished them a good evening, Luc's anxiety faded.

Outside of the tower, when Luc was heading out to the boulevard, the old man went in the same direction.

As they were walking, the old man muttered to himself, "What time is it?" He reached into his pocket for the gold pocket watch that wasn't there. His eyes opened up wide for a moment with shock, and then his eyes filled with tears. He choked, "I lost my watch! I lost my father!"

Luc took one look at the pitiful figure, and that faint feeling that he had felt when he was waiting for the lift returned. This time it was much, much stronger, and he believed it. He saw the grief that he had brought upon the old man, and he no longer wanted the pocket watch. Luc took out the gold pocket watch, drew near the old man, and said, "Monsieur, I believe this belongs to you."

The old man looked at him for a second, still tearful, and said, "You're a good soul, remember that."

**Luc had never seen
such a prize.**

Flight

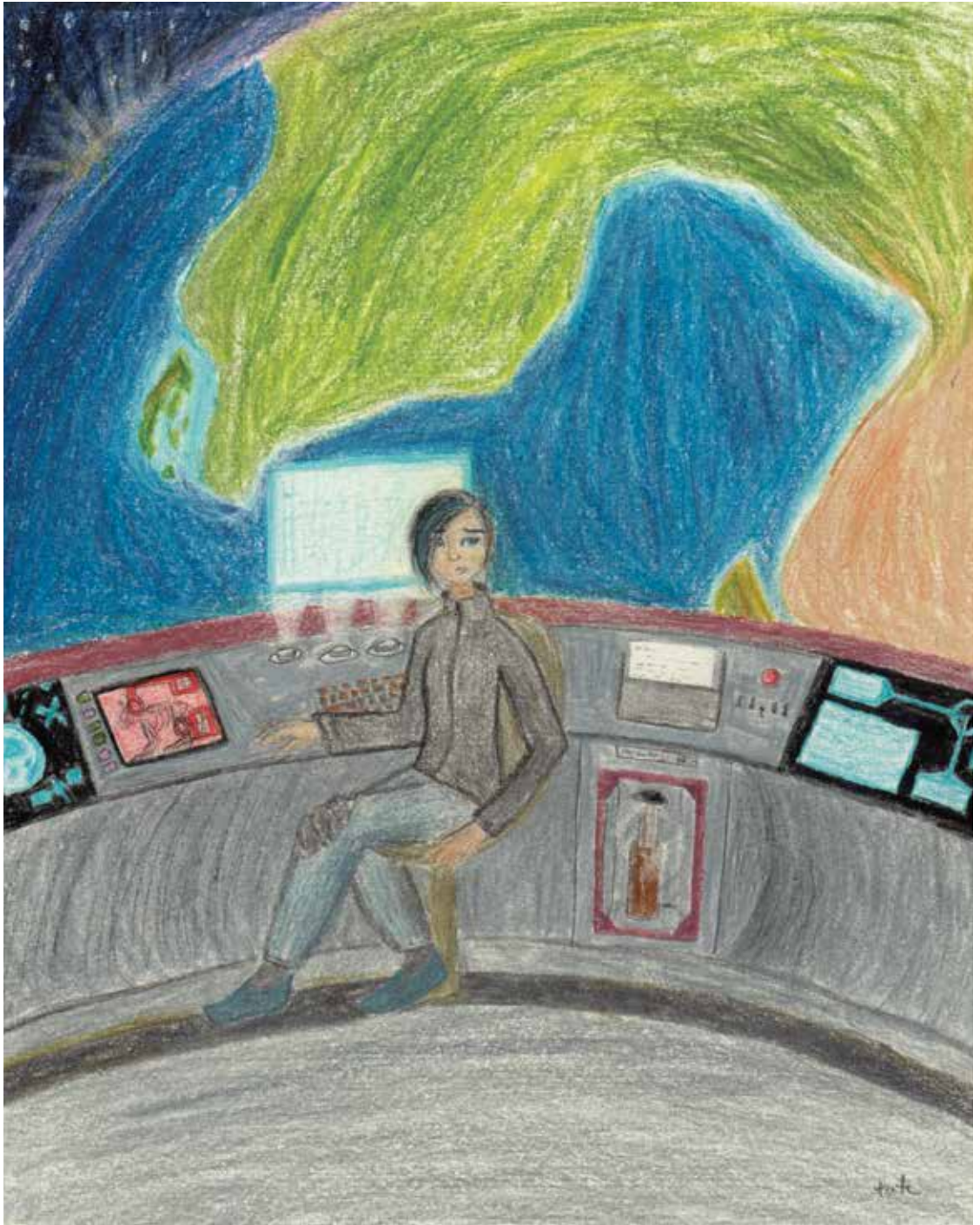
By **Samantha Ji Ping Wainapel**



Samantha Ji Ping Wainapel, 13
New York, New York

I had forgotten what it felt like to fly
I watch as the plane speeds down the runway
A lurch
The wings turn upwards as the wheels retract
The plane flies
gaining height
dips to the right
then the left
now it steadies itself
It climbs higher
reaches a peak
and then climbs higher
touching the clouds
Its blinkers come on
small but strong flashes of light
tumble through the sky
The experience is exhilarating
I am drifting
and the clouds hover below me
a blanket of white

Big towers, only a speck below
Cities, a cluster of little dots
Rivers, a stream of water
The light blue sky a deep blue haven
I am on top of the world
in a special place
a small world
yet on top of the world
My worries left below, waiting
and I let them sit
not wanting to return to the world anytime soon
With one movement
I can shut the world away
but I keep a little window open
And I can see why birds often hang in midair
I want to see it all
I want to fly without the protection of the plane
I want to feel the air surround me
but I am stuck in the plane
with only a pane of glass separating me from the outside world



I wish I could say that life in space is great, but it is far from that

Letters to Bobbi

By Tatum Cocotos

Illustrated by author

DEAR BOBBI,
There is definitely a risk in sending letters. I know that. However, there is more of a risk in trying to visit you or send a holo-message. Then I'd get caught for sure. Holograms always pass through the Big Villa, and they would watch it before you even knew I had tried to contact you, my long-lost cousin. Let me tell you one thing right now: *Do not* try to reply to me.

I wish I could say that life in space is great, but it is far from that. Everyone is becoming restless and sick of being stuck at the space station. Honestly, I am starting to wish that Great-Great-Great-Great-Grandpa never left Earth, even in the state it was in. I should probably stop this first letter now, just to make sure you get it and I don't reveal too much...

Sincerely,
Storm

DEAR BOBBI,
I have waited several weeks to write again for a couple of reasons. First of all, I wanted to make sure you got my letter, though I can only hope you did, but I *assume* you got it since I haven't gotten in trouble for unauthorized communication to the colonies on Planet 236. Second, resources are scarce, including paper, so I had to add it to my ration request list *and then* I had to wait for Headquarters to accept. They probably think I am using it for my experiments.



Tatum Cocotos, 13
Tallahassee, Florida

I really wish I could live in your colony with you, on solid ground with life and weather and open space, even though we don't know each other. It makes me mad that I was named Storm, a weather pattern that I have never experienced.

But enough talk about myself. The real reason I am writing is to warn you. I only just found this out myself, but Headquarters is planning to "help the space station for the better." Whatever that means. But I have done a bit of eavesdropping and there seems to be something wrong. I have a feeling that all of the strange actions of Headquarters are leading up to something. Also, our cap-

tain has cut our rations and said that we also need to cut the rations of the colonies. *Permanently*. I don't know when they will stop sending food, but you may have noticed that you are not getting any new textiles. That is not an accident. So my best advice is to leave your colony with any of your trusted friends and with the necessary supplies. You will have to learn to fend for yourself on Planet 236. Good luck.

Sincerely,
Storm

DEAR STORM,
I will try.
Bobbi



Frustration, Happiness, and Pure Amazement

How I Found Chanterelles

By **Isabella Widrow**

Illustrated by **Anna Dreher**

RAIN SPLATTERED AGAINST ice-cold windows, and fat, foggy, clouds hung low. I was in my dad's twenty-one-year-old Honda Accord, zooming along the highway. It was four-thirty, and I had just gotten out of the two-hour Chinese School that I attend every Sunday.

My dad, sister Mia, and I were on our way to a place in the middle of nowhere to find... mushrooms. Chanterelles, to be exact. My mom would've come, except she was at work.

I sighed. My little sister's chattering did not sound good with Madonna's remix that was quietly coming out of the ancient speakers. Mia Widrow was six years old, and if you (like most of my friends) think she's cute and polite, I have two things to say to you. One: Mia isn't really cute and polite (well, at least with me), and two: looks can be deceiving.

We soon pulled into a small trailhead and parked our car. Last time we had come to this place we had found one and a half pounds of chanterelles. We hoped for better luck this time.

An orange gate blocked the path, and tall fir trees crowded around the trail. The bones of a dead deer lay to the left of us, and to the right a heap of trash.

"This is it," my dad announced loudly.

Soon an elderly couple came into our view. Their faces were tired but happy, and they were carrying baskets of chanterelles. *Wow!* I thought. It looked like there were maybe fifteen pounds of those mushrooms. My dad chatted with the couple for a few minutes, but I wasn't paying attention. If we could find that



Isabella Widrow, 12
Olympia, Washington



Anna Dreher, 12
Portland, Oregon



I held them like they were a bouquet of yellow flowers

many chanterelles, gosh, I could only imagine how happy I would be.

Soon the couple departed, and we trudged farther down the gravel road. We soon went off the path to try and find some chanterelles, but we had no luck. There were only a few russulas and some old brown mushrooms. Our next try was

no better. We tramped through dense undergrowth of fern and salal and still found no chanterelles. My sister kept chattering and chattering, and I got more and more annoyed. I was freezing, drenched, and bored. We had slightly better luck on the third try, and we found a few chanterelles, but not that much.

Soon we came to a bend in the road, and a huge shadow stretched out in front of us like a giant, kneeling on a prayer rug. I looked up and saw a six-by-four-foot half-rotten log. It was the perfect place for chanterelles. My dad, sister, and I ran in ten paces, and then we saw them. The forest floor covered with them. Curved tops, fluted gills, colors a mix of butter yellow and the orange color of Creamsicles.

Chanterelles.

I rushed in and picked a few, then held them like they were a bouquet of yellow flowers. They smelled like apricots, how chanterelles were supposed to smell, and they grew in pine needles, surrounded by ferns, where chanterelles were supposed to grow. They were perfect.

I picked and picked, all the while shouting “OMIGOSH! OMIGOSH! There are soooooooo many!” and “Can you get me another bag, this one’s full!”

Never in my life had I seen so many mushrooms, not even in Safeway where they sell those brown ones that you see on your pizza. Never had I been so excited about seeing that new and unfamiliar orange-yellow color that isn’t very striking until you see it in a dim, dark forest. Hey, you might say I’m exaggerating, but just try experiencing finding rare mushrooms yourself. It’s more addicting than

eating eighty-five-percent dark chocolate. Maybe.

Soon we all tramped back into the car, and I was grinning from ear to ear. True, the day was cold and wet, and the forest was dark and dreary, but none of that mattered because I had found chanterelles.

Later that night, we came home and surprised my mom. We only showed her a small bag with about eight chanterelles in it, and even with that, she was delighted. All of a sudden, my dad said he had “left his hat” in the car, so he went out and came back

**For dinner we ate
chanterelles in pasta,
smothered in
garlic and butter.**

with twenty pounds of chanterelles. My mom’s mouth dropped open in a perfect O, and for a few precious moments, she was completely speechless.

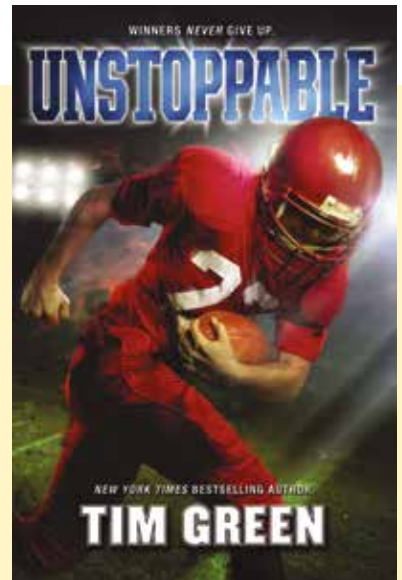
For dinner we ate chanterelles in pasta, smothered in garlic and butter. Yum.

There are a lot of things I remember about our mushroom hunt. The anticipation while I rode on the winding highway, the frustration I had felt when my whole body was soaked and we had not found any chanterelles, the amazement when I finally found those rare, prized mushrooms, and the contentment as I ate them in pasta that my mom had carefully made. But my very favorite part was walking back on that rocky trail and thinking that in that very small fraction of my life, chanterelles were all that mattered. 🍄

Book Review

By Sun-Woo Kang

Unstoppable, by Tim Green; HarperCollins:
New York, 2013; \$6.99



Sun-Woo Kang, 12
Chesterfield, Maryland

UNSTOPPABLE, by Tim Green, is a great book about determination, perseverance, and the value of family. It shows us the inner struggle cancer survivors go through each day, along with the battle they have to fight every minute of their lives.


One of my favorite moments is at the very end. It's when Harrison recovers from his fall from grace and gets back on the football field. Even though he got cancer and his leg had to be amputated, he still manages to gather the strength and willpower to follow his dream. I love it so much because it shows what you can accomplish when you work hard. Whenever I feel like giving up, I remember that moment, and I find the strength to push on.

Harrison and I are two very different characters. Harrison is big, strong, and loves the action and ferocity of football. I'm small, prefer to use my brains, and wouldn't get on a football field if you paid me. However, we're not total opposites. Both of us are stubborn, dedicated, and believe in equality and justice. I know that Harrison believes in equality because even when the other football players were teasing him for being so big, he

didn't think of revenge or beating them up. He just wanted to be treated fairly. If Harrison was my brother, I would be proud.

My favorite character is Justin. He was kind and accepting to Harrison, even when Harrison pushed him away. He also isn't afraid to stand up for his friend. Even when other people try to push him or Harrison around, he still stands up for what he believes in: equality and fair treatment for everyone. I would like to have a friend like that!

Even though we have similarities, I can still find things that I believe Harrison should not have done. For example, when he pushed himself too far and ignored the major's advice, I was yelling at him the whole time. Also, when he was moping around and yelling at his friends, I was on Coach's side. I believed that he should get up and pursue his dream. However, I also agreed with many of the things he did. In the beginning, when Mr. Constable was beating him, I totally agreed with his decision to fight back. In fact, I probably would have done it a lot sooner.

This book will show you a different side to cancer. Most of the time you feel sorry for cancer victims because of the possibility of death, but you never knew that even the survivors may be claimed by the disease. It will also show you the importance of never giving up, and to always keep on fighting. If you're going to go down, go down with a bang! 



“Look up,” I told her, and Grandma Gorden looked up

Snow

By **Brigid and Molly Armbrust**

Illustrated by **Thea Henry**

I NEVER UNDERSTOOD why Grandma Gorden didn't like snow. Maybe it had something to do with spending her whole life in Georgia and not being used to it. Maybe she didn't like that she had to use our car, because hers didn't have snow tires. Maybe she just didn't like being cold. But the fact remains that Grandma Gorden didn't like snow.

Grandma Gorden was born in Georgia. She'd grown up in Georgia. She'd married and had Mama in Georgia. Mama had grown up in Georgia too. But Mama went to college in New York and met Dad. When they got married, Dad wanted to move back to Canada, where he came from, but Mama said she couldn't live without her peach trees, so we moved here, to rural Vermont. In Vermont, peach trees don't bear fruit if it has been a cold winter. Sometimes we get peaches and sometimes we do not. Either way, it's enough for Mama to take care of them, though I do enjoy the fruit.

Anyway, Grandma Gorden didn't like us living up here. You see, it's a family tradition to spend Christmas together, alternating houses. So every other year, Grandma Gorden comes up here for the week of Christmas. When she comes to Vermont, she has to deal with about one and a half feet of snow on the ground, and icy roads. She never complained, but you could tell she didn't like it. Or that's how it used to be...

Everything changed the year I was ten. It was a Vermont year, so everyone was crowding into our little house. There was Mama, Dad, my little sister, Lily, Aunt Gwen, Uncle Tom, the



Brigid Armbrust, 12
White River Junction,
Vermont



Molly Armbrust, 8
White River Junction,
Vermont



Thea Henry, 13
Kingston, Rhode Island

cousins Ella and Will, Grandpa Gorden, and, of course, Grandma Gorden. She'd brought us a gift of her own canned peaches, I remember, as we hadn't gotten any of our own that year. There was only about six inches of snow on the ground, and she was cheerful. Then, on the morning of Christmas Eve, it began to snow. The weather channel said we would get fourteen inches of snow before the next day. Grandma Gorden began to grumble.

At about 8:00 P.M. Dad said he was going out to shovel the walk.

"Please, Dad," I begged, "can't I help you?"

"No, Maria," Dad said, smiling, "you need to get ready for bed."

In ten minutes I had brushed my teeth and hair, flossed, and had my snow pants on over my pj's. I grabbed a shovel and ran out to help. For some reason I always liked shoveling snow.

After a while I stopped for a second and, leaning on my shovel, stared at the sky. Snowflakes were drifting all around

us. Big, fat snowflakes, some two inches across! For a moment I felt as if I were flying through space, zipping past the stars... And suddenly I knew what I needed to do.

"Grandma Gorden?" I called from the door. "Could you come out here for a moment?"

"But, Maria," she said coming to the door, "it's snowing outside."

"Please, Grandma Gorden," I begged, "I need to show you something."

"All right," she said at last, "but only for a minute." Grandma Gorden put on her hat and coat. Then she slid her feet into her boots and followed me outside.

"So where is this thing you are showing me?" Grandma Gorden asked. We were standing in the shoveled part of the walk.

"Look up," I told her, and Grandma Gorden looked up.

For a minute, an hour, or perhaps it was a century, she looked up. Then a snowflake, a single snowflake, landed on her cheek.

And my Grandma Gorden smiled. ❁



Whirling into Whispering Wind

By **Hannah Dastgheib**

I fall into a golden, crisp carpet of leaves
watching as the wind whirls them
into a painting of bronze butterflies
their wings rustle
and I am by the sea again
remembering the summer
I love the aroma of sweet-scented cinnamon
 sprinkled on warm pumpkin pie
crunchy apples and maple leaves
brushing the air with a wash of maple syrup
As Mom calls
the leaves crackle under my boots
and I whirl into the whispering wind



Hannah Dastgheib, 11
Newport Coast, California

Eyes

By **Ella McAuliffe**

Illustrated by **Vaeya Nichols**



Ella McAuliffe, 13
Singapore

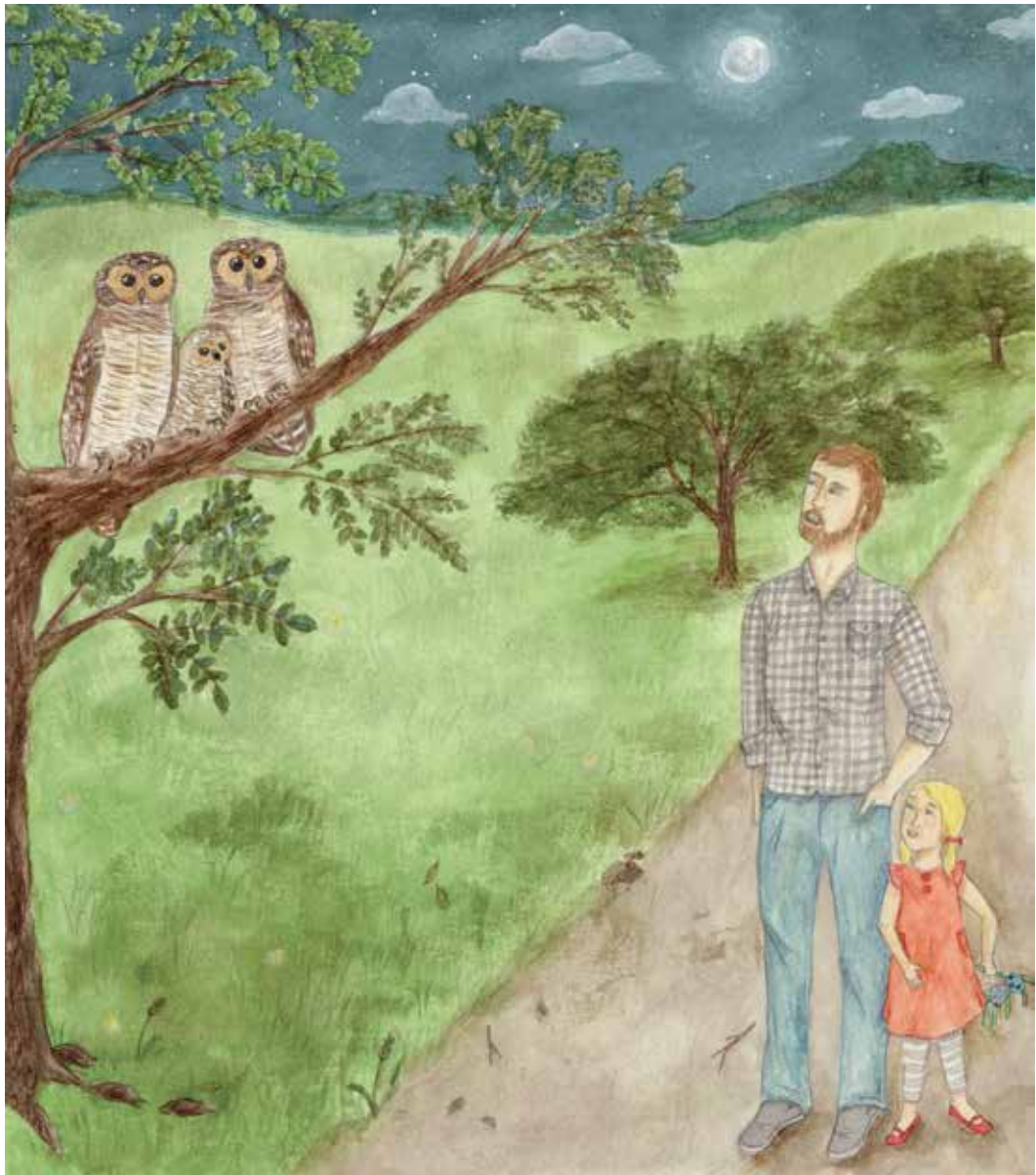


Vaeya Nichols, 12
Ozark, Missouri

EVEN AS A CHILD, I was fascinated by wild things. Some of my first memories are those of my dad marching me into the wilds of the jungle and pointing out troops of monkeys, kaleidoscopes of butterflies, and schools of fish.

The flapping of wings intrigued me most. It didn't matter if the wings were those of birds, bats, or dragonflies. Birds, however, were my favorite. I found it amazing that they were so free. Free to fly, to soar, to go wherever they wanted or yield to wherever the wind took them. These little fragile creatures made of hollow bones and feathers, although so free, could suddenly plummet back to earth and break into a million pieces. Hollow bones snapped, the ability to fly, the one thing that made them so free, snatched so easily. But still they rose bravely into the air. As if suspended by an invisible wire, they rose. They rose.

I will never forget seeing the spotted wood owls in the driveway at school. I was four. And I was excited. My dad had told me about them several times before we actually went to see them. He had heard them hooting and seen them flying in the long driveway some evenings, but not all, around seven. That year the spotted wood owls had come back to nest in the broad rain trees lining the driveway and they had a chick. That evening I was allowed to stay up past my bedtime, an event memorable in itself though. I don't actually remember the drive in the car to the owls, just the excitement. The excitement and the eyes. The big, black, bright eyes that were framed by the beau-



From that moment I became a self-appointed crusader and protector of the birds

tiful dark brown face. The three owls sat side by side together on the branch with the little, fluffy owlet nestled safely between them. The wind had a damp smell to it. It was a smell that hung on the

breeze just as the owls' deep and powerful hoot did. It echoed through the whistling leaves. Excited, I wiggled my toes in my shoes. The baby owl called shrilly for food and looked over, expectantly, at its moth-

er and father, who both in turn returned their gaze. In the dark their eyes glowed with magic.

From that moment I became a self-appointed crusader and protector of the birds, and my first battle was to stop other junior school students from touching the pink-necked green pigeons' nest. My friends, Jasmin, Maya, and Avni, were also involved. Avni mostly tagged along when it suited, and Maya went along with anything. Jasmin, however, was my best friend and my equal partner when it came to our frequent adventures.

Drama unfolded because other junior school students didn't know not to touch nests, which surprised me, because my dad had always told me not to touch the nests. Lifting me up onto the tops of his shoulders to see the birds' nests, high up, he'd say, "Don't touch it," firmly but softly. He has always had a funny way of being able to do that. Then he'd say, "You know why?" I would shake my head. "Because then the mummy and daddy bird will leave the baby and you don't want that, do you?" And I'd shake my head again. It stunned me that other kids didn't know not to touch the nest and that their parents had never told them. It wasn't the kids I needed to worry about though. It was the cat.

One break time, the cat pounced and snatched the egg from the nest. I blamed myself for that and I thought that

I should have done more to stop the cat from eating one of the eggs. We took the remaining egg to the science lab to put in the incubator, thinking the parents had abandoned it because of the cat. Maybe they had, maybe they hadn't; we took it upon ourselves to intervene.

For the next three weeks the egg remained precariously balanced between two sticks of the tattered nest. The whitish-pink speckled egg was cool and just a little rough to the touch.

I would visit that incubator every day. Before school. After school. And

every single break. I'd open the door and stretch up on my tippy-toes to see the silver tray that housed the egg, nestled in the remains of the nest. But the egg never hatched. Sometimes my friends would come. No matter how much we hoped it would, the egg never hatched. So I would close the door.

I could picture the little baby bird clearly in my mind. It flapped. And it cried. In my mind's eye I saw its oversized head fitted with a pair of equally oversized eyes that had not yet opened the whole way. Over time, the chick would gain strength and size, its eyes opening, and the body of the chick growing in around the eyes, making the chick look less alien-like, its feathers shooting, swelling, and sprouting. In my imagination the baby bird was getting ready to fly away from its prison of metal and disinfectant.

No matter how much
we hoped it would,
the egg never hatched.

Then one day it did hatch. Well, it split really. The shell was smooth and breakable, cracked in several different directions. The slightly decomposed body of the chick was left exposed on the tray, the short stubs of feathers sprouting. The stubs that would one day have enabled it to fly free. All of the features were fully formed, ready to hatch. But it hadn't. The eyes were closed. Never to open. Not to hold the beauty that the eyes of the owls had held.

Despite my constant care and attention, the baby bird died and I blamed myself for this failure of the nest. Yet, this did not affect my interest in birdlife very much, it just made me more cautious and taught me not to become so attached to the often cruel fate of many nests. It took until grade seven for me to really look back on the story and realize that it wasn't my fault that the chick didn't hatch. I had to learn that nature takes its course. Things die. Sometimes, this is just meant to happen, and not much can be done about it.

Just as eggs and chicks die, friendships do too. My friend Jasmin, who was my best friend all the way through junior school, was no longer my friend in grade six. She wanted nothing to do with me and no longer wanted to be my friend, and nothing I did could really change her way of thinking. In much the same way I wasn't able to influence what happened to the egg, try as I might, I couldn't persuade Jasmin to hold true to our friendship. Strangely, the day I came to this real-

ization was the day the cat dropped dead. On the AstroTurf. The boys in my class told me. They said he just fell over on the football field. He didn't get up.

Nature's way or retribution? Probably nature's way.

THESE days, another set of eyes haunt me. This time those of Burmese owls. These eyes, however, are trapped. In a cage. These eyes, all cramped close together, sad, and frightened and desperate. They are to be sold so that they can be released and people can watch "their" owl fly away. And that is just what these owls want to do. They want to fly away from the soiled little cage that is keeping them there. None of the magic that was evident in the eyes of the owls in the school driveway is captured in the eyes of those Burmese owls. I wished that the wind would blow, that the cage door would swing open, and that they would alight from the sad little cage and return to where they belonged.

The solution to the problem, unfortunately, is not as simple as the cage door just swinging open.

On that Mandalay teak bridge, a wrinkled old lady sits on a wobbly stool behind the small assortment of wooden cages that imprison these owls. She beckons the passersby to stop and mutters, "One dollar and I let the owl go." She stands and pushes the cage towards me, hoping I will part with my dollar and release one of the owls. The magic that I had seen in the owls' eyes in the driveway was not in

the eyes of these owls. Some of them had scratches on their faces and their eyes seemed to scream with pain, fear, and anxiety.

I look back up into the eyes of the old lady. This life has not been kind to her, she sits all day in the sun, she finds these owls as babies and trains them to always return to her when they are released. How many children must this woman support? How many grandchildren? How many have died? But this life has not been kind to the owls either. Their freedom, stolen. Their spirits, broken. Their enslaved life spent making an income for this woman. I still find myself shaking my head. My eyes drift away from the owls and the old woman. No one is a winner in this situation. The owls will stay indentured and this woman will stay poor, selling owls on the side of the famous teak bridge of Mandalay. The old lady gives up on me, she too can read eyes. She knows what mine are saying. She will not make a sale with me.

She now turns her attention to some locals and speaks in Burmese. The people pull out a crumpled note and hand it over to the lady. They point at a chosen owl in one of the cages, the lady pulls it out. The owl lets out a frightened chirp as the lady's gnarled, broken, dirt-encrusted hands curl around its body. She throws it up into the air. It is released. Its fragile wings beat faster and faster away, taking flight from the lady. For just a moment, it is free. But these owls are trained, I remind myself. They have been trained since they

were snatched from their nests and like slaves serve this woman, and they will always return to this woman. The Buddhist Burmese believe that by releasing something that is caged they gain religious merit. The owl is a symbol of wisdom and freedom, in stark contrast to their reality. It is this belief that keeps these owls here and with this woman who is only trying to make a living.

Since my first sighting of the spotted wood owls when I was four, I look for them often. The volume of excitement may have changed, but the magic in their eyes, and in turn in my eyes, has not. I don't think that will ever change for me. At least, I hope not. It may not be the same for other people, but the four-year-old who first looked up at the owls, her toes wiggling in her shoes from excitement, still watches patiently. This time her thirteen-year-old self watches as the three owls look down on her from above. The owls seem to say, "Who's this?" as if they don't know. Their black eyes blink.

There are fewer branches and trees for the owls to live in now, fewer places for them to look down onto little four-year-olds, so those children can admire their beauty, to know what these owls look like in the wild and not from behind bars and glass walls.

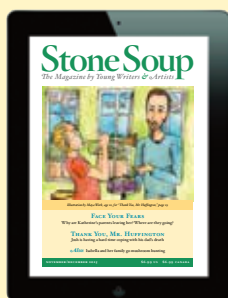
Behind bars and glass walls the owls' eyes have none of the shine that they should. Bars only hold frightened owls, awaiting a shortened lifetime of servitude. They are the prisoners that generate someone's income and create pity



For just a moment, it is free

from naive tourists. No one seems to be able to leave nature be. Their trees are taken, leaving high-rises, roads, and our own school in their wake. Owls can't live in apartments, they live in trees, big and sprawling ones. They don't live in cages. They don't live or die trapped in incubators that smell strongly of disinfectant. They smell just of dirt and damp, of light and dark and the late night hoot that hangs on the breeze. Just as the silver of

the butterflies' wings brushes away as you touch them, every animal does the same, when nature is touched, just more quietly. More subtly. The vibrancy and the colors slowly fade away. You can't catch it, you can't hold it in your hands, because the color is already flying away with the winds. But when left alone, when nature is left untouched and unaffected, it shines through everything, just as the light catches the eyes of owls. ❀



Honor Roll

Bonus Materials

On Our Website

- Editor Gerry Mandel blogs about the featured story from each issue.
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- A feature about child composer Jahan Raymond, including video and sheet music.
stonesoup.com/jahan
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Welcome to the *Stone Soup* Honor Roll! We receive hundreds of submissions every month by kids from around the world. Unfortunately, we don't have space to publish all the great work we receive. We want to commend some of these talented writers and artists and encourage them to keep creating.

— *The Editors*

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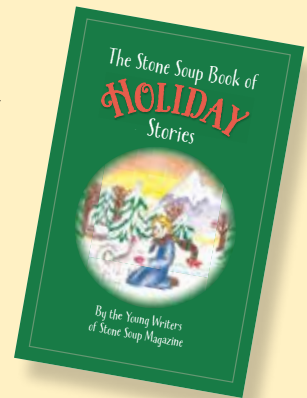
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