

Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists



"After the Tsunami We Had School in a Tent," by Lanita Qamarani, age 9, Indonesia

SECRETS IN THE FOREST

Will an alliance be formed between the princess and the strange young man?

A DOG OF WAR

Jack, a German shepherd, is sent to help the troops in World War II

Also: Illustrations by Annalise Nurme and Anton Dymtchenko

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2006

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VOLUME 35, NUMBER 2
NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2006

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Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists

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



Jessie Moore, 12

Contributors' Guidelines

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

Story and poem authors: Please do not enclose a self-addressed envelope with your submission. Send copies of your work, not originals. If we decide to consider your work for a future issue, you will hear from us within four 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 three samples of your artwork, 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.

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The Mailbox



LBP, 9

I recently read the May/June 2006 edition of your magazine. I must say, when I opened up to page 5, the illustrations held me breathless. "Iristerra" was the story, and it was also spectacularly done. But I could not tear my eyes from the pictures by Anton Dymtchenko. At first, I thought that someone much older had done them, but then I realized that if Anton had put his mind to it, he could have done it. And he did. Congratulations, Anton!

JANE FOX, 10
Holden, Maine

Anton's new illustrations appear with the story on page 11 of this issue.

In the May/June 2006 issue of *Stone Soup*, I loved "Friendship," by Sophia Pellegrino. She has a good imagination. And Marci Lessman is a very good artist. I like the way she puts in every single little detail. "Shannon," by Makayla Hentges, was great! I read the story, like, ten times! And Emily Rappleye is a very good artist. I like the way her art shows the kind of person she is. And "Homesick," by Soujourner Salil Ahebee, really went into my heart. It showed me how much she misses Africa, and her father. I sort of know how she feels, for I was adopted from China, and my birth parents left me in the busy streets of China.

MALLORY MCFARLAND, 9
New York, New York

It was interesting to read that story set in India, "The Shifting Sands" [November/December 2005]. However, the names Jaidev and Tarang are Hindu names. Perhaps the young writer may not be very familiar with Indian names. However, the story was a good one.

ABHIJIT SEN GUPTA, JOURNALIST
Hyderabad, India

I have been receiving *Stone Soup* for about two years now. I just wanted to thank all the authors and illustrators that make all the issues possible. I have had a passion for writing since I was a little girl, and I am thinking about submitting a story. I just wanted to tell Molly O'Neill that her story, "Revenge Is Bittersweet," from the July/August 2006 issue really inspired me to want to submit a story, which I have been scared to do for a while. I love the way she tells the story about Brianna and her love of basketball, and the way she finds out a girl that she thought was mean and snobby turns out to just want a best friend, and be really misunderstood. I got so wrapped up in her story, I felt like I was really in Brianna's life. I felt that the story was really happening to me, in real life! Great work, Molly!

ASHLEIGH BRAUN, 10
Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

I would like to thank you for giving us kids an opportunity to get our various works published. I think it is great how you can send books to book reviewers (like me) and allow them to keep them. Your magazine really gives kids a jump start to writing. This shapes and creates better and more responsible people in the future. I hope there will always be people like you giving kids opportunities in all fields in the future. Thank you!

JACOB JARECKI, 13
Chino Hills, California

Correction: We accidentally published Wujun Ke's poem "Dawn" twice, once in the January/February 2006 issue and once in the July/August 2006 issue. Her new poem, "The Sea," appears on page 17 of this issue.

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.



"Oh, don't worry about that. This ship surpasses all others before it. It won't be a problem"

Of Governesses and Greasers

By Adam Rowe

Illustrated by Annalise Nurme

LARISSA! GET BACK from there." The voice cut into Lacey's musings like a knife, ripping her daydream and dumping her back in the present. To be precise, 1912.

"I won't have you standing that close to the edge of the deck," Lacey's governess, Mrs. Etchman, said apprehensively. "What would your mother think?"

"She'd probably be standing there with me," Lacey muttered.

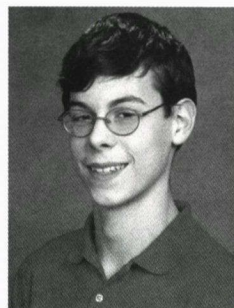
Mother had taken a ship to New York three months ago, saying that Lacey should come when she had set up a home there. Now five-year-old Lacey and her slightly overprotective governess were over halfway there. Despite the fact that this was one of the safest ships in the world, Mrs. Etchman still harbored doubts.

"I hate these engines! In my day, ships had sails or, at the very least, oars. Not these big clunky hunks of metal pumping out smoke. Why, I remember..."

"Mrs. Etchman!" Lacey interrupted. She knew these one-sided conversations could go on forever. "Can I go to our cabin?"

"Yes, you *may*. I'll come with you, of course."

When they got to their first-class rooms, Lacey belly-flopped onto the bed. Despite the ship's restaurant, lounge, reading room, gymnasium, swimming bath, and squash court, Lacey was bored. She let the gently rocking ship roll her around the bed, wishing that she didn't have to have a guardian all the time. Suddenly, she sat up.



Adam Rowe, 13
Renton, Washington



Annalise Nurme, 13
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

"Mrs. Etchman, *may* I go to the bathroom?"

"Yes, you may," Mrs. Etchman approved.

Once out of sight, Lacey headed for the main hall, away from the bathrooms. She wandered up corridors and down stairs, not sure where she was going. Presently, she came upon two women talking to an officer. Lacey heard one of the women address him as chairman. He was reading a telegram, trying to sound important.

"Icebergs and large quantity of field ice 41.59 N 49.9 W.' Oh, don't worry about that. This ship surpasses all others before it. It won't be a problem."

Lacey passed them without noticing. She was thinking about her governess. Her spiteful, rude, malicious governess. Lacey had thought that her first trip overseas would be enjoyable. But not with Medusa's mother-in-law watching her like a vulture. The voyage had got off to a bad start in Queenstown, anyway. She'd been seasick the first few days, while Mrs. Etchman, perfectly well, watched disapprovingly. As if it was her fault she was sick! Mrs. Etchman was always pointing out problems and correcting manners. Larissa, tuck in your shirt. Larissa, don't bolt your food. Larissa...

Suddenly, Lacey's thoughts were scattered when the floor beneath her changed from lush, dark red carpet to gray, metallic steel. The cold sheet metal sent shivers up her bare feet and rang faintly when she stepped on it. She jumped up and down on it. Booom! Booom! This was fun. She

walked farther down the corridor to see whether it sounded louder over there.

EVENTUALLY, she got tired and decided to go back. But wait. Was that dead-end there last time? And that door wasn't locked. Lacey was suddenly aware that the engine sounded much louder than it always did. In fact, she could feel the vibrations through the walls. It was coming from a door ahead. The opening door ahead.

Out of the door stepped a young man in grimy coveralls. He was a rangy six- or seventeen-year-old; easily recognized as a mechanic because of the trademark oily rag in his back pocket.

"Hey," he said, surprised. Then, more gently and with a grin, "What's a nice girl like you doing in a place like this?"

The young mechanic radiated goodwill and, against Mrs. Etchman's command to not talk to strangers, Lacey soon found herself telling him everything.

"Well, it seems like this governess of yours is really mean," the greaser theorized. "Or, so you seems to think. But didja consider that maybe she's just being too possessive? She is suppos'd to take care of ya, after all. I'm sure she doesn't do all those things to you to be cruel, just to help your welfare," he went on. But Lacey wasn't to be moved so quickly. She was five years old, after all. The mechanic talked to her longer, telling her his name (Axel) and his occupation (greaser).

"Ya know," Axel remarked, "people can be very prejudiced. Why, there's a couple

in second class who were frightened just last night because it was the thirteenth. They were prejudiced against a number, but you're prejudiced against a person."

Lacey was having trouble following the conversation, perhaps because she didn't know what "prejudiced" meant.

"See if you can find something nice about her. Try asking where she grew up. That usually works."

Axel winked and got up from the pipe they'd been sitting on. "I've got to get back to work. You head in that direction and stay to the right, and you should get back to the deck."

Lacey watched Axel walk back to the engine room. Then she turned and walked back, thinking about what he'd said.

By the time she reached her room, she had decided that Axel was right. Maybe she had been too hard on Mrs. Etchman. But when she opened the door, her resolve dissolved.

"Where have you *been*?" Mrs. Etchman shrieked. "I've looked all over the first-class area. I was getting ready to call on the captain. If you've been..."

Lacey tuned her out. Maybe Axel was wrong. Mrs. Etchman seemed plenty mean to her. She decided to try one last time.

"Mrs. Etchman, where did you grow up?"


Mrs. Etchman stopped her tirade and stared at Lacey. "Where did I- now, don't try to change the subject. We were discussing your shameful behavior."

"Yeah, just answer this an' I won't interrupt or disagree or anything," Lacey pleaded. "Pleeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeease?"

"Oh... very well. But don't think you'll get away with this, because you won't. Let's see... where did I grow up? In the country, by a small lake. Lake Adam. I had my very own sailboat. I used to have such fun flying over the lake, with the wind in my face and sea spray drenching my skirt. But then I had to move to a city." Mrs. Etchman sighed. "That's about it. I became a governess, and had to punish naughty little girls who disappear. What do you have to say for yourself?"

LATER, LACEY stood on the deck, leaning against the railing and thinking. Mrs. Etchman's attitude towards boiler engines was explained by her love for sailboats. Why, that almost justified her tedious talks about the evils of machinery.

Well, almost. And it still didn't explain why she was so stern, either. But then, she had seemed really upset when she couldn't find Lacey. Maybe it was all for Lacey's protection. Whatever the case, if Mrs. Etchman got lenient enough to allow Lacey evening strolls on the deck by herself just by being asked a few questions, Lacey wasn't complaining. Besides, being overprotective could be a blessing in some conditions. If anything happened on this voyage, Lacey was sure Mrs. Etchman could handle it.

And the *RMS Titanic* glided onward through the sea. 

Puppy

By Emina S. Sonnad



Emina S. Sonnad, 12
Snohomish, Washington

The little brown dog
huddled up against me
breathes deeply
knowing he is safe.

Crickets chirp outside
an owl hoots
frogs croak
but he sleeps through this
snoring on my lap.

His body is so warm
with each slow breath he heaves
his body pushes against mine
and he knows
that I am still with him.

But as my body stays
with the dog
reassuring him
that all is well,
my thoughts travel
and I think back to our
first day together.

He barked at every neighbor
jumped on the table
ate all our good food
chewed up the couch.
No one understood
why we kept him.

But I do now.

His paws are tucked in
his snores are little whistles
he is deep in sleep.
He is completely at ease
peaceful
because he knows I am with him
holding him
keeping him safe and warm.

Where would this little brown dog be
without me?
And where would I be
without him?

He stirs sleepily
and I hug him close
his head drops down
resting in my lap.

And our breathing is now
synchronized.

Like the chirping
of the crickets



Casping shivered as the cold winter wind blew open the curtains

Secrets in the Forest

By **Eleyna Rosenthal**

Illustrated by **Anton Dymtchenko**

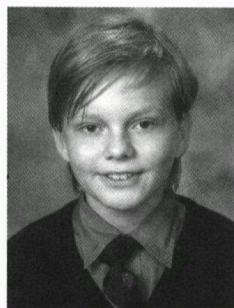
CASPING PEERED OUT of the curtains hiding her in the carriage speeding down a gravel road. A guard on the seat beside her grunted and reached over to pull her back inside. With a sigh of grief and understanding, Casping sat back against the silk-covered seat. She hung her head and let the burning sensation behind her eyes ascend. She let her soft blond hair cover her pale, angelic face as she wept.

The carriage took a sharp turn, stopping her in the middle of a sob. She quickly reminded herself this was all for the best. She needed to stay hidden, and stay safe. Death was not an option; she needed to survive long enough to rule her parents' kingdom. If she did not hide, then surely her family's enemy, the powerful Rasha, would find and kill her. Casping knew she must accept her fate. Besides, her family must really love her to go to these measures of safety. Casping shivered as the cold winter wind blew open the curtains. She caught a glimpse of frost-covered trees and bushes and wondered what it would be like living in the middle of a deserted forest. At least she would have a cabin to live in and the two guards riding beside her to protect her.

Sighing, now out of boredom and impatience, Casping turned to ask the guard on her right how much longer it would be. Suddenly an arrow came flying through the curtains as they burst into flames. The arrow was on fire! It struck the guard in the chest and he immediately fell. Casping let out a terrified scream, jumping up in panic. She turned to find her left guard was already dead as well. She turned her wide silver eyes to the



Eleyna Rosenthal, 13
Media, Pennsylvania



Anton Dymtchenko, 13
Montreal, Canada

man who was leading the horses. He was slumped over in the seat, bleeding from a very recent wound.

Casping's heart seemed to stop, but her mind didn't. She jumped into the front seat and pushed the body out of the way with a muttered "sorry." She urged the horses into a full gallop. Racing down a slope, she could hear more arrows being shot towards her, and the orange flames just missing her. As the carriage suddenly erupted into flames, Casping knew she was done for. She saw her only chance of escape to her left. It was a forest, dark and mysterious. Everything seemed to slow down as she jumped out of the carriage. She rapidly undid the leather straps connecting the horses to the carriage and jumped atop the one who was the fastest, Kundra. The other horse ran in the opposite direction, towards the enemy. Casping cringed as she heard it let out a last whinny, but she didn't stop. She coaxed Kundra into a blinding run towards any ounce of safety the forest held and prayed they'd make it.

The moon was already up by the time Casping was sure she and Kundra were alone. The over-exercised horse's sides were heaving as he wheezed. Casping staggered off the sweaty black horse.

Tying up Kundra by his bridle, she murmured soft words, "There, there, good boy. It'll be all right." Her once melodic voice was now oozing with mental pain and emptiness. Kundra whinnied hoarsely in reply. A strong wind began to blow, sending shivers to caress Casping. Clouds overhead were as dark as thick smoke and

full of threatening snow. Only moments later, the promised snow began to glide down to earth. In an attempt to shield herself from winter's unforgiving embrace, Casping pulled her soft robe over her head. Kundra was sleeping by the time Casping had created a reasonably warm fire. She knew she could not cry, for the water might freeze her face even more. Instead, she lay down beside the fire and gratefully gave herself up to her dreams.

It must have been in the wee hours of the morning when Casping woke up. Something was wrong. She never woke up this early without a reason. Then the sound that had awakened her repeated. It was howling. The howl sounded like it was coming from one lonely wolf. "Calm down, Kundra. I won't let it hurt you," Casping whispered, trying to soothe the panicking horse. He bucked, then froze with wide, rolling eyes. "What is..." Casping began to ask, but a growl interrupted her from a few yards at least behind her. Kundra yanked on his bridle, cutting his mouth on the bit. Casping untied the reins, about to ride him out of the forest. But, with other intentions, Kundra sped off into the woods.

Casping heard the trample of hooves on the undergrowth and howling that was moving towards the trampling. Suddenly, a sickening whinny sounded across the forest to Casping, making her cringe. She wanted to run after Kundra, bring him back to safety, but feared what she would see. Fearful of the wolf's return, she built up another fire and fell into a freezing sleep.

Movement woke Casping. She opened her eyes in a confused daze. She couldn't feel her face! What was going on? Her fingers were stiff and felt frozen. Casping finally realized someone was carrying her. She looked into an unfamiliar face. He was handsome and young, only a few years older-looking than her. He looked down at her, concern in his sharp eyes. His eyes were odd. They were golden brown colors, but that wasn't the odd part. They didn't look... very human. After a few minutes, or so it seemed, Casping realized she was in a hut, and a very warm and cozy hut at that. She was placed on a soft blanket, one made of brown fur. The stranger had his back turned to her. She watched him weakly, feeling some warmth creeping around in her body. He turned around, watching her intently, almost studying her. She looked away and felt her eyes grow heavy. Before she knew what was going on, the stranger was putting some foul-tasting syrup into her mouth and making her swallow it. Everything was getting fuzzy because her vision was blurring. She could feel him watching her, though. She wanted to sit upright and yell at him to turn his eyes away, but all she could do was get a moan out of her mouth and then sleep overcame her.

Casping awoke to find herself alone. Her head throbbed and her throat felt parched. She opened her eyes slowly, and then blinked a few times. Lying there for a moment, just looking up at the wooden ceiling, Casping tried sitting up. To her relief she found she could with almost no

pain. She sat upright, taking in her surroundings. Once she felt sure she was alone and safe for now, she stood up on wobbly legs. She used the only table in the large hut to help keep her balance.

A loud creaking sound erupted behind her. She turned around almost too fast to find that unfamiliar stranger facing her. He looked surprised as if he didn't assume she would wake up. Over his shoulder was a leather bag stuffed with furry animals Casping could not make out.

Casping reached for her pocket, only now remembering she had a sheathed knife at her side. Only then did she realize it was missing. She looked around frantically in case she had dropped it. Seeing it was nowhere within sight, Casping turned on the stranger while looking for any other ways to escape besides the door which he blocked. There was none.

"Whoa, calm down. Why would I save you just to hurt you?" the stranger asked, obviously taking in Casping's protective stance.

Casping didn't reply immediately. After studying her "savior," she straightened up to look more like the princess she was. "I am Princess Casping," she replied with a confident voice and shaking hands. "I demand to know who you are and where I am... and why I am here." She crossed her arms to show she meant business.

"First of all, I answer to no one's demands; I am not a servant for the royal household. I will tell you my name, and not because you asked, but because I was planning to tell you anyway. I am Troyce. To an-



"So, what brings a princess to the forest?" Troyce asked

swer your next question, I would expect it is obvious you are in the forest on the edge of your kingdom." Troyce paused here to close the door as a cold wind came towards the hut. He turned around again to answer the last question. "As to why you were in the forest in the first place, I haven't a clue. But, I brought you here because you were going to freeze. Plus, you no longer... had means of transportation," he concluded with a sly grin that made Casping want to ask a hundred more questions.

It took a few minutes for Casping to register all of this information. "So, you're saying that you saved me from certain death?" she asked, raising her eyebrows like it was hard to believe.

Troyce only nodded to confirm it. "So, what brings a princess to the forest?" Troyce asked, walking towards Casping and dumping his bag onto the table. "I mean, wouldn't you prefer to sleep in your bedchamber or whatever it is you have...?" he asked, busying himself with unloading the bag.

"For your information, *Troyce*, I was chased into the forest. By Rasha's men, assuming you know who he is," Casping said, wondering why she felt the need to put scorn in her voice.

Troyce visibly stiffened, and then quickly regained control of his emotions and busied himself again with the bag. "I've heard of him... we all have."

"We?"

"My kind, you know? My family, my friends... my pack," Troyce spoke softly.

"Did you say pack?" Casping ques-

tioned with rising frustration resulting from confusion.

"Yeah. It's kind of a long story. You see, well, my pack and I used to live in your kingdom. On Rasha's land to be exact. He didn't like the thought of having 'fantastical' creatures on his land. So he..."

"Whoa, fantastical creatures?" Casping interrupted.

Troyce went on as if she hadn't said a word, "...banished us from your kingdom. It's not like he had the right to, but he certainly had enough soldiers to push us off. Even in our other forms we were no match for them," Troyce concluded with a distant look on his face.

"Hold it just one second. What exactly are you if you aren't human?" Casping asked, backing up a little.

"We're werewolves. Not exactly the correct word, but one that'll do us justice I suppose," Troyce stated so calmly like everyone should know werewolves existed.

Caspig stood silently, mouth wide open. Then she burst out laughing. "Thanks, I really needed some humor right now," she said, wiping the back of her hand over her eyes.

Troyce turned to glare at her. "I'm not joking. Perhaps nowadays people need to see to believe." He gave a weary sigh and then his entire body seemed to shimmer and sparkle. Casping watched in mystified horror. Suddenly a blond wolf nearly twice her size was staring back at her with human-like eyes. It growled, causing a shudder to run over Casping. She realized she could run, she could scream, she could

try to kill the wolf. But she didn't. She just stood gaping at it, unable to wrench away from Troyce's gaze. Her eyes began to hurt from staring so long and she blinked. When she opened her eyes a second later, Troyce stood beside her as if he had never changed. "See?" he said simply and returned to shuffling the furry animals in the bag. Casping could only watch Troyce in a dreamlike fashion. For some reason, she found it was not hard to believe what Troyce said. Of course she had to believe he was a werewolf, she had just seen it.

"So... you hate Rasha, too?" she asked, wondering if perhaps she had just found a powerful ally for her parents.

"Of course! How could we not? They stole what had been rightfully ours for thousands of centuries! But we daren't show our faces to him, at least not on our own. We'll be shot down before we can change into our fanged form," Troyce paused and held his breath, as if remembering a painful memory.

"Well... why don't you all partner up with my parents' army? Then Rasha would be no match for us!" Casping exclaimed, eyes lighting up with excited hope. "Wait,

how many of your kind are there?" she questioned, seeing that a small number of them would not add much to their army.

"Well, in this forest there are... umm, let's see," he paused for a moment to calculate, "probably a couple hundred, maybe a thousand, and within your kingdom, probably a few more thousand. Also, many packs moved farther north."

Caspings jumped up and down like a little girl with a new toy. "Oh, Troyce, don't you see?!" she cried out. "We could come together and rid ourselves of Rasha and his men once and for all! You could gather all the packs up and join the army!"

Troyce stared at her for a moment like she was crazy. Then he smiled faintly and a sly look crossed through his eyes. "Give me a week."

He spoke in a slick voice that made Casping tremble from anticipation of their plan. She knew deep down she had found the answer to her kingdom's prayers. And another soft feeling in her heart told her she had found what she had been seeking all her life, even if she hadn't known it. She was in love with Troyce, but she didn't realize it. Not yet. ❀

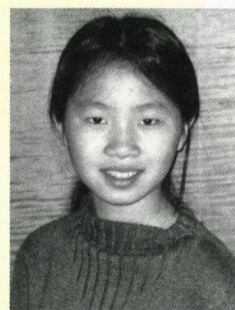


The Sea

By Wujun Ke

Standing on a stretch of glossy rocks
lumps of mussel shells
adorned with seaweed
advance forward into my grasp.
Murky greens color the water
in shady reflections,
the thought of wind and shadows
combined.

There is no divider for sky and sea
they are intertwined
like ivy leaves around each other.
For what is not related,
in this cool, salty,
boundary-less place
where the deep comes alive
from bottomless water

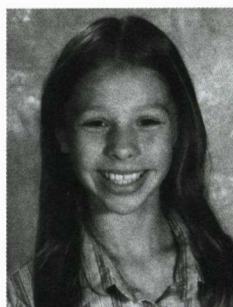


Wujun Ke, 13
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

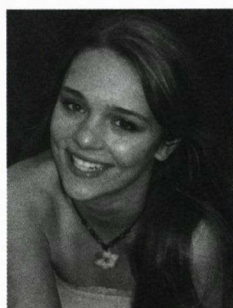
Not Ready

By **Aubrey Lawrence**

Illustrated by **Marsha Trego**



Aubrey Lawrence, 12
Hinckley, Ohio



Marsha Trego, 13
Ford City, Pennsylvania

“**M**OMMY, NOOO! Don’t make me go!” I clutched the leg of my highly embarrassed mother as she tried to calm my fears. It was my first day of preschool and I was terrified. I began to cry even harder when my mom attempted to pry me off of her leg. She told me that she’d be back *very* soon and that my teacher was *extremely* nice, but I held fast. I was unconvinced. The other little children stared at me with wide eyes as they witnessed the scene I was making. It wasn’t pretty. My face was stained with tears and they continued to stream down my reddened cheeks. After a great deal of coaxing, encouraging, and bribing, though, I too was sitting in a little plastic chair inside a room that I was sure to be tortured in. The entire afternoon I refused to fingerpaint, eat a snack, or sing the alphabet.

AS I SAT at the kitchen table a smile spread over my lips and I had to laugh at the old memory. It was hard to believe that the little four-year-old girl had once been me. But deep inside that was really how I felt, unwilling to leave my mother and detach myself from the familiar lifestyle I had lived for so long. I didn’t want to take the next step. I knew that I had to, though. It was only another turn on the winding road of life.

Making my way to my bedroom, the room I had loved for so long, I let out a heavy sigh. When I reached the doorway I was taken aback. There, sitting on my bed, was my mom, my hero, and she was sobbing. I slowly crept to her side and tried to com-



There, sitting on my bed, was my mom, my hero, and she was sobbing

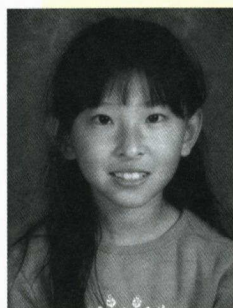
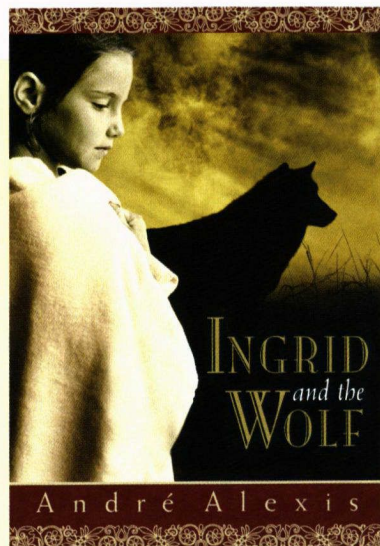
fort her trembling form but soon found myself weeping as well. We cried together for a while, and it was my mom who gathered herself first. She smiled at me, squeezing me close. I returned her smile through

my tears, glancing over at my packed bags and large bundles. I thought about college. What would it be like? I dismissed the thought, all that I wanted now was the comfort of my mother's arms. ❀

Book Review

By Boyu Huang

Ingrid and the Wolf, by André Alexis;
Tundra Books: Toronto, 2005; \$8.95



Boyu Huang, 9
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

WHEN I FIRST looked at the book cover, I imagined how uneventful it would be. But I guess the saying, “Don’t judge a book by its cover,” is true. As soon as I read the first page, I felt like there was some invisible glue that held it to my hands. I just couldn’t put it down.

There were two things that drew me to this book. One was the courage that an eleven-year-old girl named Ingrid showed. The second one was the never-broken promise that was made to Gabor (a special wolf) even after Countess Liliane (Ingrid’s grandmother) forbade her to ever go down to the labyrinth (the place where Gabor lived) again. I am very impressed. Who knew a girl just eleven years old could have such a strong soul? Sometimes I think of her as a saint. I would really want to be friends with her if she was a real person.

In the real world, I think keeping promises all the time is very hard, but I also believe that it is important. I can really understand the pressure that was put on Ingrid when she found out that she might have to break her promise with Gabor. Ingrid is like a role model for me. I will try to keep my promises to people under all circumstances.

As much as I love this book and wish for it to go on and on, never ending, I have my fears as well. I feel sorry for Gabor, who will die now that he is out of the labyrinth, a place where he was born to never age a single day. I hope with all my heart that if this book continues, some magic would work on Gabor and he would never become old and die, living as long as Ingrid lived, being her companion forever.

When I first read about Gabor, my thoughts wandered to the time when I saw a video about a dog named Lassie. It risked its own life seeking revenge on the person that had killed its owner. Now that I think of it, Lassie and Gabor aren't all that different. Both have a lot of faith and are always putting others ahead of themselves. I dream about having trusted companions like them every day. I imagine that it will be a collie dog, like Lassie. But the only pet that my mom allows so far is my guinea pig, Rusty.

This book not only includes tons of adventures but also many unsolved mysteries and... well, just plain mysterious things! For example, there is a pale green book that can turn to salt and a mysterious servant named Laszlo who can only talk when you hit him every two hours.

Though, if not for these tragedies (and mysteries), the book would be only half as exciting and adventurous. I mean, who would want to listen to a story that was of *a girl that lived in a normal family, who went to visit her grandma, a countess, whom she had never seen before. At her grandma's house, she met a nice wolf. There, they became good friends and had a happy life together ever since.*

Do you think that the book would have been this boring? No! *Ingrid and the Wolf* is actually a story that just about spellbinds you, as André Alexis has changed the dull bones of this book into the most vivid scene anyone could create in one's mind. ❀



The window at the far end of the room provided the best view in the entire world

Like New Jersey

By Whitney Lee

Illustrated by Joanna Stanley

GLORIA TOOK ANOTHER deep breath, no luck. The thick musty air still hung heavy in her room, meek rays of sunlight crept out through the slits in the door and captured millions of dust particles surrounding her. She managed to force open a window that had been painted shut, which only served to create more dust, and to her dismay the air outside was just as smothering. Gloria dug through one of her suitcases and found her copy of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Following the words with her finger, she picked up where she had left off.

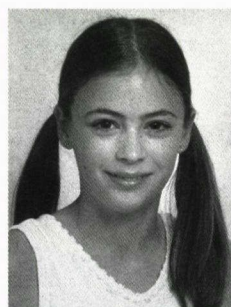
Somehow, it was hotter then: a black dog suffered on a summer's day; bony mules hitched to Hoover carts flicked flies in the sweltering shade of the live oaks on the square. Men's stiff collars wilted by nine in the morning. Ladies bathed before noon, after their three o'clock naps, and by nightfall were like soft teacakes with frostings of sweat and sweet talcum.

Angrily, she shoved the book under her mattress, closed her eyes and tried to sleep. Unfortunately, the last task was just as difficult as the first because as soon she had rested her head, the door flew open, revealing her oddly well-intentioned aunt. Aunt Daisy was a round woman with rosy cheeks and strawberry-blond hair, and she was a woman who would never be seen in public without some form of makeup on.

"Glory, child! Look at how late it is and you're still in bed! Now why don'tcha go on down to the Dixie Maid and meet yourself some friends."



Whitney Lee, 12
South Orange, New Jersey



Joanna Stanley, 13
Seal Beach, California

"Why don't you knock first?"

Aunt Daisy looked hurt for a second, and then changed the subject.

"What about some cake? The least you can do is eat something; put some meat on them bones."

"Whatever."

Aunt Daisy waddled down the stairs and then back up again, this time with a glass of cold milk and a piece of iced lemon cake arranged on her best china. She set them down and kept talking.

"Listen Glory, now I know thatcha would rather be somewheres else right about now. But there ain't nothing I can do till you want to talk about it."

"Later."

"Oh. Well all right then, y'all just give a shout out if you need anything."

"Yeah."

She turned to leave and then stopped as if remembering something.

"Uh, this evening I'm going over to Susanna's house for our weekly bridge game, it'll just be us and a couple others. Her number's on the table if there's an emergency."

"OK..."

Oblivious to Gloria's mood, she continued her conversation.

"You know, you have my permission to go on out tonight. I hear that there's a new picture out."

"A picture?"

"What do you children call it... um... a film."

"I'm not a child, I'm almost sixteen."

"I know that. One last thing and I'll

leave. I just wanted you to know that your room's going to be ready soon. So you can leave this dirty little attic."

Gloria noticed the way she turned up her nose on the word *attic*, and she stifled a laugh at the thought of the pigsty Aunt Daisy called her bedroom.

"I'm fine with this room."

In truth, Gloria disliked everything about that place except for one thing. The window at the far end of the room provided the best view in the entire world. Looking through it felt like she had gone back in time, back to when she was in New Jersey with her parents and sister. When she looked through the window she could see the fields of white daisies, red roses and golden marigolds framed by the beautiful birch trees, which her father had planted ten summers ago. With all of the low points about living with her aunt, she wouldn't even consider leaving her one source of comfort.

"Now are y'all sure?"

"Yes," she said impatiently.

Finally, Aunt Daisy took the hint. Gathering what was left of her dignity, she swaggered out of the door, which was barely big enough to allow her safe exit. Gloria couldn't help but laugh as her aunt squeezed through the narrow doorway and continued down the stairs.

Once she was certain that her aunt was gone and not coming back she fell back onto her bed and got lost within her dreams.

Caramel light filled the room and the air no longer seemed so very hot. She

rubbed her eyes drowsily and glanced at her watch, which read 5:35. She got dressed slowly and crept downstairs. The first thing she noticed was the Rolodex, which stood in the middle of the table and served no purpose other than to cast shadows beside itself. The porch light was on in anticipation of the approaching darkness. It was at this moment she realized that she was alone.

"Aunt Daisy!" she called out. No answer.

She felt a wave of boredom and decided to step outside into the fading Alabama day. Once she had done so, she immediately regretted it. Everything seemed to slow down to a molasses-type pace and she could get a view of the entire town with one glance. Then she felt herself being carried away, past the local high school, past the town center and past the weeping willow trees, which marked the entrance to the town without a name.

Sprays of ocean water licked her cheeks and she emerged from her dreamlike state. Questions ran through her mind like wildfire and she searched the beach for signs of civilization. The sun had set completely and the only lights visible came from the lighthouse, which stood amongst the rocks.

At a speed never before reached, she sprinted towards the light, realizing that the person there could be her only hope.

The stairs, which led to the top of the lighthouse, seemed endless and creaked more with each passing second. Now her search for help had become desperate and

she reached her destination, rather quickly. She threw open the door and fell into the room, knocking over someone who had been standing there.

"Are you all right, Miss?"

"Yeah, I'm fine, just got spooked I guess."

"I can see that. What I can't see is what you was running from."

She blushed and squirmed awkwardly.

"Well... nothing really."

He looked out the window dreamily and she took that opportunity to get a good look at his face.

He was a handsome young man of no more than sixteen; he had copper hair and gentle eyes the color of blue river stones.

"D-Do you know how to get to the main road from here?" Gloria asked him nervously.

"Yes. Head back past the clearing over there and you'll find it real easy..."

"Thank you."

She headed for the door but he stopped her.

"...but I wouldn't be going there if I was you."

She placed her hands on her hips defiantly.

"And why not?"

He pointed to some black clouds on the horizon.

"That there's a thunderstorm coming. You'd be safer if'n you'd stay till it's passed."

She let her shoulders fall with disappointment.

"That's fine."

Gloria sat down on a mattress, which lay in a corner of the room.

"What's your name?" she asked.

"The name's Miller, Jess Miller."

"Well Jess Miller, I'm Gloria."

"What's a pretty girl like you doing out here?"

"In perfect honesty, I haven't a clue."

He waved her statement off. "How long have you lived here?"

"Three weeks."

"Where from?"

"Jersey. I moved after the funerals of my parents and sister."

He attempted to mask his shock. "Really? I'm sorry. How'd it happen?"

"Car accident. I was at school when it happened."

"It's horrible when people die so quickly."

She looked slightly dismayed at his comment. "Um... actually they were alive until the fire hit the gas tank and..." Her voice broke.

"That's awful."

She didn't respond, instead she stared

at her hands and tried to ignore him.

"You want to see something cool?"

"Whatever," she said, not really in the mood.

"Come on."

He pulled her up from the mattress by the hand and to the window.

"Look."

She gasped in amazement.

The moonlight shone through the millions of raindrops falling from the night sky, forming dark rainbows in her eyes.

"I've never seen something so beautiful."

"Just think, these are the exact same water droplets that fall when it rains in New Jersey."

"Not true. There is so much water on the earth that the chances of that are slim to none."

"But what if they were?"

"Yeah, and what if the world was perfect?" she replied sarcastically.

"If the world was perfect there would be no rain, no beauty. What happens here happens for a reason. Like this night."

"Yes. It's perfect, like New Jersey."



Patrick's Boots

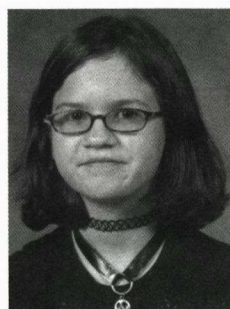
By **Johanna Guilfoyle**

Illustrated by **Ashley Whitesides**

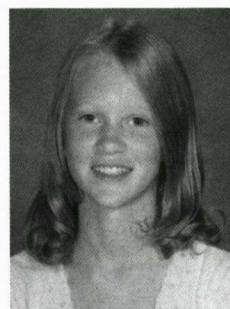
ONE DAY IN 2003, when I was in fifth grade, Ms. Brune partnered me with Brandon so we could quiz each other for an upcoming test. The desks were pulled into pairs, facing each other. I was glad we were by the window because it was hot that day. Brandon sat on his feet the way he normally did, playing with his pencils. I sat cross-legged on my chair. We weren't concentrating very hard because we knew we could study at home. We started talking about the war in Iraq; that's all anyone talked about. It was on the news every night. Teachers talked about it in hallways when they thought we weren't listening. Brandon said that one of his relatives had been in Iraq and was killed by a bomb. I told him that my Aunt Kerri had been there over the summer, but she had come home fine with lots of pictures to show. He said I was lucky.

I always look forward to Aunt Kerri's visits. She says "Hey Kiddo!" and gives me a hug. She travels to cool places and has cool stories to tell. In 2003 she had been to Iraq as part of her job. I noticed right away that her hair had grown longer. She arrived at our house with her laptop computer, her camera, and a plastic bag with some Iraqi money. The money was orange and green and had Saddam Hussein's portrait on it.

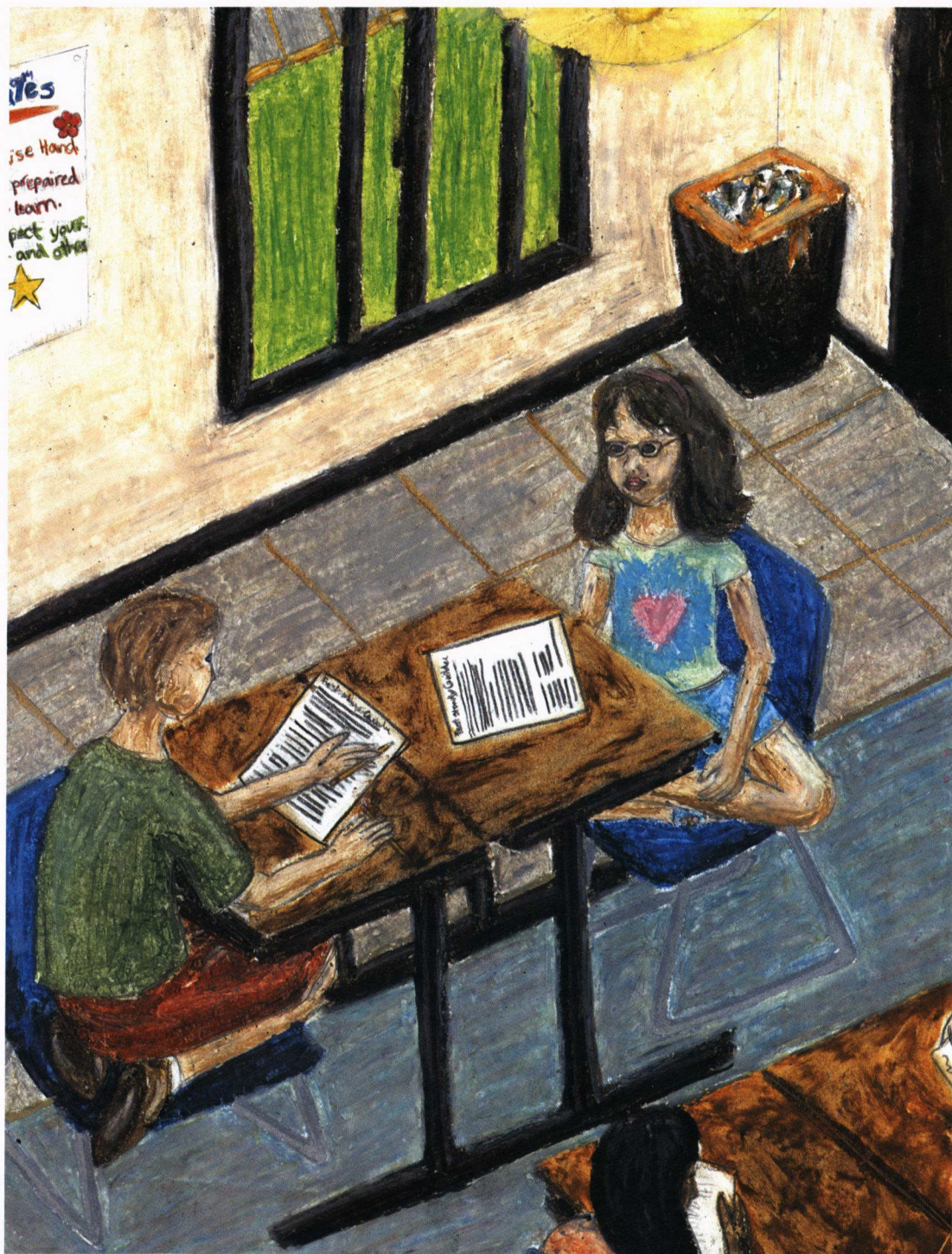
We sat on the couch and looked at pictures. She complained about jet lag, but she didn't seem tired. She pointed excitedly at the pictures, explaining what they were. Some were taken from helicopters whose cockpits looked small and uncomfortable, though their rotors looked large and disproportional. In one



Johanna Guilfoyle, 12
Baltimore, Maryland



Ashley Whitesides, 12
Grand Junction, Colorado



We started talking about the war in Iraq; that's all anyone talked about

picture Aunt Kerri was standing in the hatchway of a humvee by a machine gun. In another she was dressed in camouflage, like a soldier, wearing a helmet and holding a rifle. She was smiling.

The next year, when I was in sixth grade, Mom read in Mom-mom's and Pop-pop's church newsletter that we could send care packages to soldiers who were from her hometown of Bel Air, Maryland. She started gathering things for a soldier named Patrick Adle. He was the nephew of one of Mom-mom's co-workers. The newsletter said to send foot powder and Chapstick, earplugs to keep the sand out of his ears, and other toiletries. The box sat on the dining room table until she had all the stuff together. Then she packed it up and sealed it with a lot of packing tape.


Two months later the package arrived back on our doorstep. When Mom picked me up from school that day, I wanted to tell her about a good grade I got on my math test. Before I could start she told me that the package had come back. When we got home the box was still on the porch. It was dented, the corners pushed in. There was more tape over the tape we had put on. Written on the package in black marker was the word DECEASED.

Mom called her mother. She was al-

most crying. Her voice was higher than usual. We had found out a couple of weeks before that Patrick had been killed in action, but we weren't expecting the package to come back. We thought they would give the things to somebody else who could use them. For me it was a new thing to feel sad about somebody I didn't know.

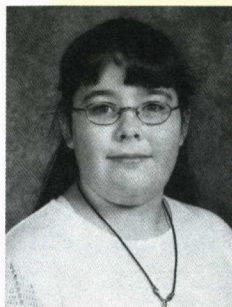
In the summer of 2005, we went on vacation to Seattle where it was sunny and cool. When we got back to Baltimore, it was hot and humid. Mom-mom and Pop-pop picked us up at the airport. I sat in the back seat with Mom-mom. It was dark outside; street lamps cast bars of light across the seats. The air conditioning was on high; I was shivering. I wanted to tell Mom-mom about my trip, but Mom-mom and Pop-pop had been on a trip, too. They had been to Philadelphia where they visited a memorial to honor soldiers killed in Iraq. The memorial included the boots of some of the fallen. Patrick Adle's boots were there.

It was obvious Mom-mom wanted to talk. Her voice was quieter than usual, her hands were still. She had held Patrick's boots in her hands.

I think the war impacts us through the things that have been to Iraq and have come back. 

Mountain

By Emily Riippa



Emily Riippa, 13
Grand Rapids, Michigan

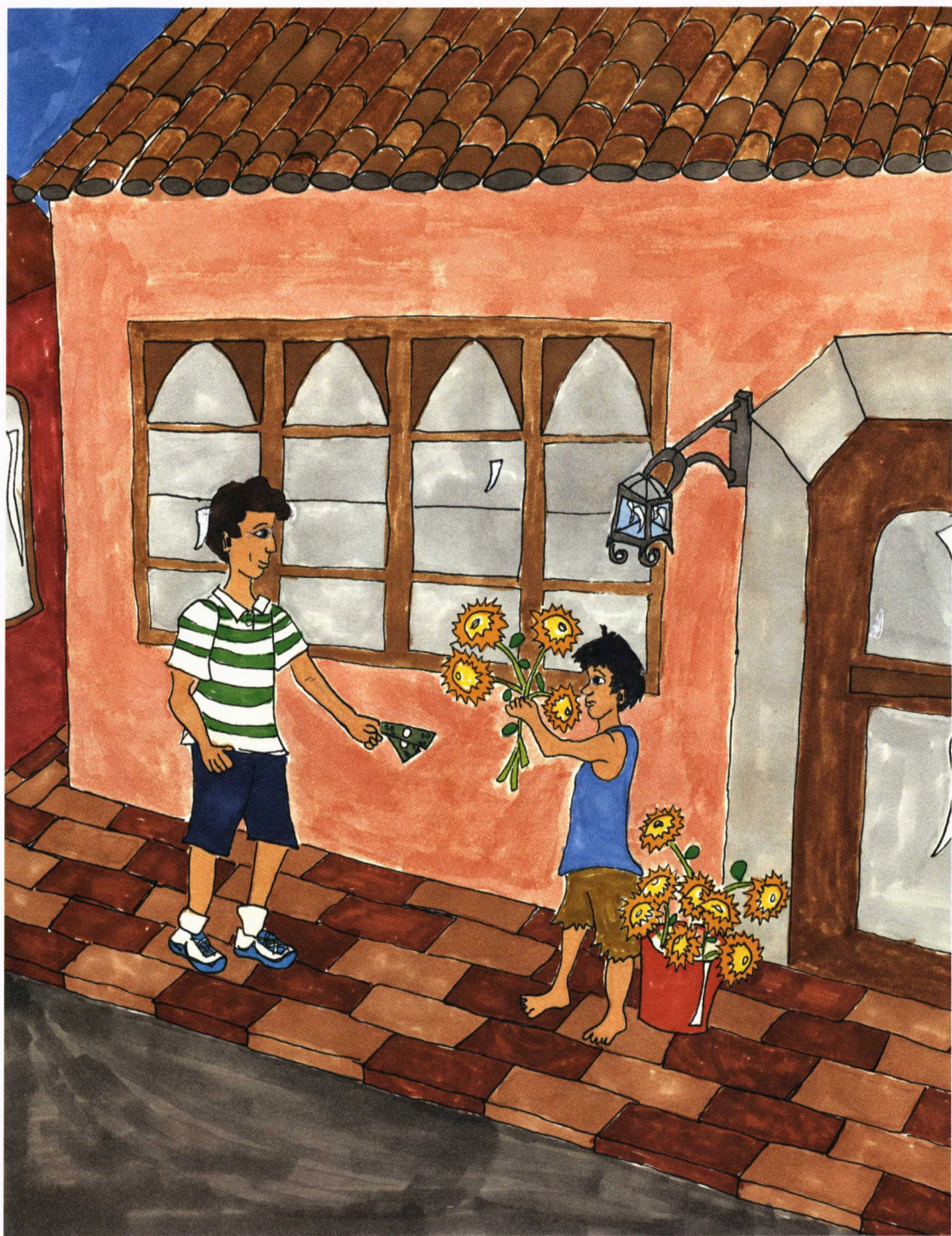
Pure, dazzling white
Miles of ice
blend with
miles of snow and
snow-covered rock
which can be deadly if you
don't know where to look

A solitary climber
winds
his way up this mountain
stopping only now
and then
to adjust his tinted
snow goggles
This high up
he almost feels ill
overwhelmed by the sheer
altitude of this mountain
which he has come to love
in a way
as his own
the altitude of his mountain
can do this to people — make them feel
so ill that they never make it up
to the summit
but he will
he vows this to
himself

Each step is a mountain
in itself
the snow is quicksand
it wants to drag him
down with every step
he takes
but he fights back
and wins this
battle
thinking only
of the summit
the very top
oh the view from the summit
nothing else is on his mind
not even the ever-diminishing
speed
of his steps

He sees the snow is
ending—could it be
the summit is only
fifty yards away?
He quickens his pace
His struggles are pushed like
mere toys
to the back of his mind
with one last step
a step taken more by
determination and resolve
than by the energy of his
body and his feet

He reaches the summit
and looks down



On the way out I reach into my pocket to get my money. I give it to the boy selling flowers

Piggy Bank

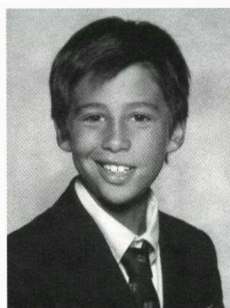
By **Andreas Freund**

Illustrated by **Zachary Meyer**

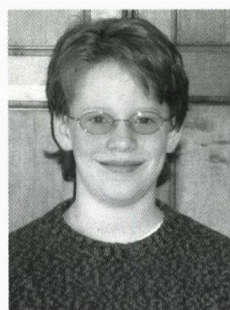
THE AIRPORT IS PACKED. It's so hot! I wish they had air-conditioning inside the Managua airport. Managua is the capital of Nicaragua. It's nighttime. I can't believe it can be this hot at night. I don't want to know how hot it gets to be during the day. When the porter is taking our bags to the exit of the airport, I notice a stand with all these cool toys. I try to convince my dad to buy me a toy, but he refuses. Instead he gives me forty dollars, telling me that I have to spend it on something special. We walk out of the airport, when suddenly all these children come rushing to me and my family. We're now surrounded by kids my age and younger trying to sell me gum. My mom tells me to follow her. I get into the car sadly. The image of all these kids trying to sell me items is stuck in my head. I try to picture me and my friends selling gum to people. I can't.

Our hotel is nice. The people there are friendly. Our room is tiny, but we have a big window. My mom says Nicaragua has changed since she had been here last. I ask her how Nicaragua was when she was growing up. She tells me it's too late and that I have to go to bed. But I can't. How can I go to bed with the images of those kids? How can I? Just when I think I'll never fall asleep, I do.

The next day my mom wants to go to a restaurant she read about for lunch. My dad has to go to the lobby to rent a car. We meet him down in the lobby for breakfast, and then we go to the mall across the street to get some clothes for the hot weather. The mall has all the stores that are in the U.S. but it's run down. I see



Andreas Freund, 11
San Francisco, California



Zachary Meyer, 11
Shelby Township, Michigan

a horsey ride that is missing its nose. The area around it is all messed up and dirty. It makes me want to leave. Later we get into the car that we rented and head for the restaurant that my mom wanted to go to. I can see the soldiers patrolling the streets.

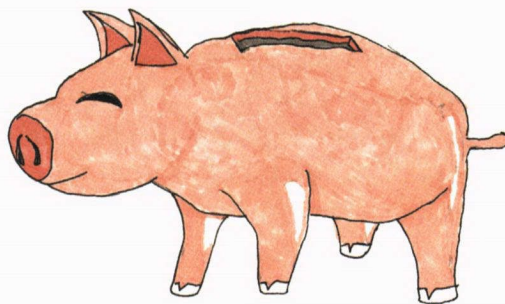
We're at a red light, when all of a sudden all these kids come rushing to our car. They offer to wash our windshields and try to sell us gum. The kids look sad. Some of the bigger boys sniff glue. I wonder why? My mom tells me that sniffing glue kills hunger and brain cells. I can't believe that these kids have to work. It's not fair. Kids like me have play dates, go to the movies and stuff like that, while these kids just try to get food on their tables. Why don't I have to go and sell gum? I want to give these kids all they ever wanted, but I can't. It makes me feel powerless. I want to give them my whole piggy bank.

We're in the restaurant, but I can't eat. The restaurant is adobe red. The food is

good. People are eating *gallo pinto*. A guitar player comes to play us some *mariachi* music. Everyone is laughing and having fun, but I'm just playing with my food. My mom looks concerned. She knows what's bothering me. My mom says that I can't fix everything. I don't want to believe her.

Through the whole meal, I notice a kid outside of the restaurant trying to sell flowers. He's short, about five years old, and has a hopeful and stubborn look on his face. No one is buying the flowers. Then I remember the forty dollars that my dad gave me so I could buy a souvenir.

My dad pays the check. After the waitress returns with my dad's credit card, we thank her. On the way out I reach into my pocket to get my money. I give it to the boy selling flowers. He offers me a flower, but I refuse. He joyfully walks away. I smile, wishing I could do this to whomever I want. I tell my mom that I can fix some things.



Tested Dreams

By **Dominique Maria Spera**

Illustrated by **Leyla Akay**

A NINE-YEAR-OLD GIRL sat on her parents' bedroom window seat looking out at the stormy, gray sky. It's going to rain, thought the girl. It's going to mimic how I feel. Slowly the girl lowered her tear-filled brown eyes to her right knee. It felt a little better now, but just a day earlier she had to be carried off her beloved tennis court because her knee had been so inflamed it could not support her weight.

Blinking back her tears, the girl looked back out the window. It was now pouring so hard that not even the other townhomes across the street could be seen. The girl smiled briefly. Let it rain, she thought as her mind wandered back to yesterday's tennis match.

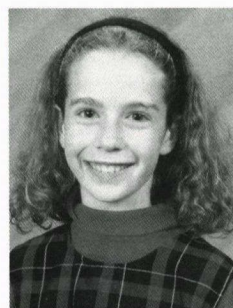
It had been a tough match. No doubt about that. She was playing a boy almost twice her age when a searing pain went through her right knee. Thinking she had just stepped wrong, she shrugged it off like any other self-respecting tennis player would. That was a mistake. A mistake she would have to live with for a long time.

As the match continued, the pain in her right knee worsened, but she fought through it. In her mind, there was no greater shame than saying the words "I quit." The girl looked down at her knee and wiped a stray tear off her face. That had been her second mistake. She had not believed in the saying, "Discretion is the better part of valor," and for that she had paid.

Resuming her gaze at the pouring rain outside the window, she remembered the last point in the match. The point when



Dominique Maria Spera, 13
Altamonte Springs, Florida



Leyla Akay, 10
Sewickley, Pennsylvania



It's going to rain, thought the girl. It's going to mimic how I feel

she knew she had to stop. She remembered swallowing hard as she readied herself for the return of service while trying to block out the throbbing pain from her knee. She just had to finish the game. She just had to play one more point.

"No, I didn't," whispered the girl, "I didn't have too. I could have just walked away and retired from the match then and there." The girl sighed as she repositioned herself on the ledge. "But I couldn't," as she paused, a tiny flicker of flame briefly appeared in her brown eyes, "I just couldn't do it. I couldn't give up." Still maintaining her gaze out the window, she recalled the memories of that one last point. How she had painfully dragged her leg to return the tennis balls. How she eventually had made an error ending the point and the game.

But even with all that, the girl thought the toughest thing in the match was to say the words "I retire" to her opponent. She had never quit before, and she hoped she would never have to again. Those two little words were painful to say, almost more painful than her knee, and they had left a bad taste in her mouth.


The girl looked away from the window to look at her injured knee. Oh, how could you do this to me! she thought venomously. Who knows when I can play again because of you! The girl swallowed hard, fighting to hold back her tears. She loved tennis and who knew how long this injury, this first injury, would keep her away from her beloved sport.

Then, for the first time, it hit her.

Injuries are a part of sports. They are what make you or break you. They define your career. They test your love for the game and the will that you have for fulfilling your dreams. And, in some cases, they can even force you to form new loves and new dreams.

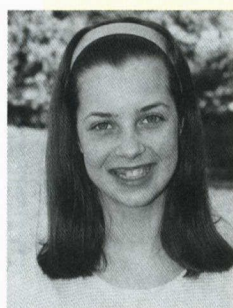
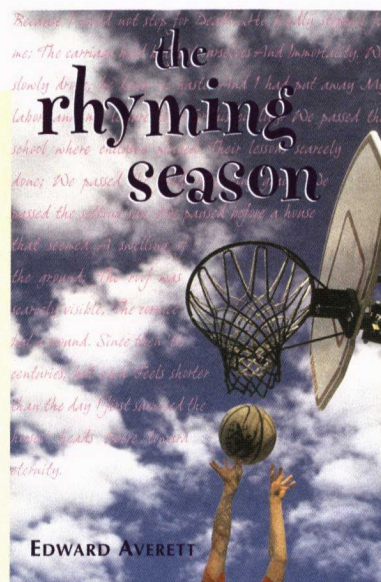
But this was not truly a bad injury. It was one of those injuries that was to test her. Test her love and devotion to her tennis. And, it was with this new realization that she made another one. If she truly loved tennis, if she truly wanted to play again, she would not be sitting up on this ledge moping, but downstairs icing her knee and preparing for her eventual return to the tennis court.

"I will come back," began the girl strongly. "No matter what's wrong with my knee, I won't let it stop me." The girl then raised her head to once again look out the window. The pouring rain had stopped, and amongst what remained of the ugly, gray clouds, a beautiful rainbow was forming in the sky. The girl smiled at this, for now the sky was mimicking her new feelings; feelings not of despair or of self-pity but of strength and determination to return, no matter what, to her precious sport.

"And when I come back," continued the girl softly, an indescribable glow in her brown eyes, "I'm going to be better than ever." And with that the girl got up off the ledge and headed downstairs to get ice for her knee, for now instead of moping she would work as hard as she could to really come back better than ever. 

Book Review

By Alexis Colleen Hosticka



Alexis Colleen Hosticka, 12
West Chicago, Illinois

The Rhyming Season, by Edward Averett; Clarion Books: New York, 2005; \$16

WHEN BRENDA JACOBSEN's brother Benny died, basketball was never the same again. It wasn't just basketball that changed. Her mom and dad didn't get along well and then the lumber mill shut down. The whole town just seemed upside-down, especially when Brenda's high school basketball coach left for a better job at a college.

I can relate to Brenda on how sad, upset, and even a little mad she felt. I used to be in gymnastics and one day my coach just didn't come to practice. Of course there were other coaches there, but I felt like he had just deserted me. He hadn't told anyone about his leaving. It was strange, like he all of a sudden didn't care about gymnastics. I haven't heard from him since he left. Brenda's coach didn't leave without telling all the girls goodbye, but Brenda was still pretty upset.


The dreams of all the girls on the basketball team, of making it to state and winning first place, seemed to be dashed after Mrs. Cochran, their previous coach, left. Especially when they

get their English teacher as a coach. With her coach calling her Emily Dickinson, Brenda begins to learn a new way of playing basketball.

This book showed me how new ways and ideas that you don't agree with aren't always bad. Even though you may think they are at first, try them out and you may be surprised at the results. I take piano lessons and sometimes I don't want to try new things, I'd rather just stick with how I was previously doing it. I think that was probably how Brenda felt.

The new way of playing basketball that Brenda learned is saying poetry at the foul line. "Poetry at the foul line?!" I agreed with Brenda and her teammates, thinking that was ridiculous. But, as I read on, I began to understand, just as Brenda began to understand. The poetry seemed to make all the team's winning dreams come true and shots flow through their bodies. It almost seemed like magic poetry; it worked wonders.

Before reading this book, poetry never meant something to me, it was just verses about a particular subject. This book definitely gave me a new perspective. It seemed to say that poetry could guide you places. It showed me what poetry really is: someone's feelings written down to help other people understand the thing that he or she is writing about. Brenda, now called Emily Dickinson by her coach, is taught the same thing I was. She also learns how her life is like Ms. Dickinson's and how she can learn to change it.

One point in the book that I thought should have been better was the ending. It seemed like author, Edward Averett, should have gone on with the story, like he cut it off at a sudden point. Besides that, this book is very well written and even if, like me, you don't really enjoy basketball, you will still enjoy this book. 



It was his chance to go up on deck for a while, and enjoy the fresh air and sunshine

A Dog of War

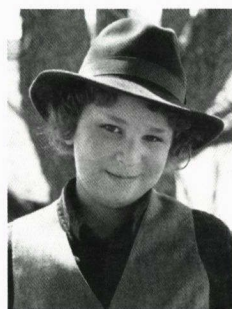
By William Gwaltney

Illustrated by the author

JACK WAS SICK... violently sick. These were the roughest seas they had encountered since leaving Newport News, Virginia, twelve days before. In the hold of the ship, where it was dark and musty, and the smell of diesel fuel assaulted his sensitive nose, Jack and his crate slid this way and that. His thoughts, once again, turned to his family, left behind in Connecticut. Instead of violent seas and uncomfortable crates, he thought of sunny summer days spent running in green fields, and of napping in front of the fire on cool crisp autumn afternoons. Most of all, he thought of his boy, Peter, whom he had played with and protected, and whose bed he had slept in every night since he was a tiny puppy. These thoughts could do little to make him feel better though, when his stomach was pitching and rolling like the ship.

Jack was a handsome German shepherd that had lived with and loved his family for two years. Now World War II was raging and every patriotic American wanted to help support the war effort. His family had purchased war bonds, recycled aluminum, and planted a victory garden. Then they had done the best thing they could think of. They had given Jack to "Dogs for Defense," an organization that acquired dogs from civilians and donated them to the armed forces. The dogs were paired with handlers, trained, then shipped overseas to work.

Jack had spent six months at a training center in Front Royal, Virginia. He'd learned the commands he would need to be helpful to his handler. He had learned never to bark, which might



William Gwaltney, 10
Englewood, Colorado

give his position away to the enemy. He'd learned to ignore the sound of gunfire and the presence of other dogs. His handler had been trained too. He had learned how to take care of Jack and how to read the signals the dog gave when he sensed enemy troops nearby.

Jack was so busy retching that he didn't hear the footsteps approaching his crate. "What's the matter, fella... having another bad day?" Jack looked up. There was his handler, Sergeant Mark Baker. Mark opened the crate. Jack emerged, wobbling slightly on shaky legs but happy to see his partner. This was Jack's favorite time of day. It was his chance to go up on deck for a while, and enjoy the fresh air and sunshine.

Jack rushed up the stairs to the deck, pulling Mark behind. Once on deck, he marched to the railing and put his feet up. Looking over the side, he sniffed the air and growled at the waves. As the pair circled the deck, they heard people calling out to each other or laughing at one another's jokes. Toenails clicked on metal as dogs moved around the deck. A man polishing an anti-aircraft gun called out to them as they passed. Up here, the smell of diesel fuel was still present, though it was not as strong, and it was mixed with the clean fresh smell of the sea. The sound of engines throbbed from deep within the ship.

After an hour, Mark placed Jack back in his crate. "It's OK, Jack," he told him. "Another week or so and we'll be in Morocco. That won't be much fun ei-

ther, I'm afraid, but you'll get to be outside every day, and you won't be seasick anymore." He smiled and left, once again leaving Jack alone in the dim hold.

Ten days later, they arrived in Morocco. Far-off explosions could be heard before they even left the ship. Once on land, the explosions were louder and accompanied by the distant sound of gunfire. Jack was nervous at first, and he leaned against Mark for support. A jeep pulled up. "Get in!" yelled the corporal who was driving. Jack and Mark jumped into the jeep and it roared off. They reached the command post within an hour, a tent city placed close to the liberated town of Fedala.

Mark and Jack received their orders. The landscape of Morocco was well suited to ambushes. The desert made soldiers feel they could see for miles, giving them a false sense of security. Yet scattered scrub brush was perfect for hiding snipers. The Americans were suffering high casualties. Jack and Mark were to accompany troops going out into the field. Jack was to be "on point," or out in front. He would be the first to enter unknown territory, and would alert Mark if enemy troops were nearby. It was a dangerous job, but Jack's sharp eyes and keen sense of smell made him better prepared to do the job than any man.

A private showed Mark and Jack to their quarters. As Mark entered his tent, he saw a man sitting on a cot reading a letter. A smile crossed the man's face. "Hi!" he said. "My name's..." As he saw Jack, however, the man's warm welcome turned to a frightened gasp. "What's that

dog doing in here?!" he shouted. "Get him outta here right now!"

"I can't," said Mark, "I'm his partner. He and I go everywhere together. We're going to be your new bunk mates."

The man shuddered. "All right then," he said. He took a penknife out of his pocket. He flicked it open and reached down to draw a line across the dirt floor of the tent. "You keep that dog on your side of the tent," he said. "I don't want him anywhere near me."

"But why?" asked Mark. "He's a swell dog."

"I don't like no dogs," said the man. "One bit me when I was a kid and I ain't had no use for them since. So just keep him on your side of the tent and we'll get along fine. My name's Al, by the way... Sergeant Al Cooper."

"It's a pleasure, Al, I'm Mark Baker and this is Jack."

Al shuddered again. "It's nice to meet ya, Mark," he said, "but I can't say the same for your big furry friend."

Two days later, Jack and Mark were leading their first patrol. They were climbing a hill when suddenly Jack alerted. Mark heard nothing but the desert wind. He saw nothing suspicious. But he knew better than to ignore his dog. There was no cover on the hill. Mark used hand gestures to urge his men back down the hill, where they took cover in some scrub brush. They had barely concealed themselves when a dozen German soldiers marched over the top of the hill. The Americans stayed hidden until the

troops were almost upon them, then they jumped from their positions and took the surprised men captive. Jack had proven himself in the field.

Jack continued to work hard, and was a valuable member of the team. He often alerted the men to snipers and ambushes. They came to depend on him to keep them safe. But no matter how hard Jack worked, no matter how many lives he saved, Al still hated the dog. Sometimes at night, Jack would move over to Al's cot and try to snuggle up against him. But Al would reward him with a hard kick and harsh words, sending Jack back across the tent to seek comfort from Mark.

They had been in Morocco for seven weeks and were out on another patrol, this time accompanied by their second lieutenant. Jack was once again on point when suddenly, he alerted. They were in an area with little cover. Mark gave the signal to stop. "No," said the lieutenant, "you can see that there's no threat up ahead. I say we keep moving."

"But Lieutenant," said Mark, "Jack just alerted. There must be some kind of danger ahead, even if we can't see it."

"Listen up," said the lieutenant, "You're lookin' at a higher rank, Sergeant. Unless you want to lose those stripes, you'll do as I say, get it?"

"Yes, sir," replied Mark. He knew that something was wrong, but he had no choice but to obey the higher ranking officer.

They had gone no more than a few feet when suddenly, the sound of machine gun



He leaped into the machine gun nest hidden behind it

fire filled the air. The lieutenant fell immediately, along with several other men. Mark and Jack dove for cover, but not before a machine gun round tore into Mark's leg. He cried out in pain as he fell. As he hit the ground, an enraged Jack tore the leash from his hands. The dog ran towards a small bush, dodging bullets the entire way. He leaped into the machine gun nest hidden behind it.

Three German soldiers were inside. One pulled out a pistol. He had time to fire once before Jack was upon him, slashing and biting at his throat. The man tried to escape, but it was no use. He leaped from the nest, still struggling to pull the giant dog off of him. His two companions climbed out with their hands above their heads. Three American soldiers ran forward. They wrestled with the furious dog, trying to pull him away. When they finally calmed him, he ran to Mark, who was wounded, but alive. "You saved a lot of lives today, Jack," said Mark. "We lost the lieutenant, but everyone else is going to be OK."

Back at the post, Mark was attended by medical personnel. "You're very lucky," he was told. "This should heal up in no time. The bullet only grazed you. You'll be back on your feet in just a few days."

"A few days?" asked Mark. He turned to Al, who was standing at his bedside. "Al," said Mark, "I'm going to need you to take Jack out into the field."

"I told you before..."

"I know," said Mark, "you don't like dogs. But the boys are going out on an

important mission tomorrow, and they need a little luck. Jack's an easy dog to read. Besides, you're the only other person Jack might let handle him. He knows you. Because we share a tent together, he trusts you."

"Fine," said Al, "I'll do it. But I ain't gonna like it."

The next day, the patrol went out. Jack seemed a little confused at first, but he settled down quickly and paid close attention to Al. As they walked along, Al talked to the dog. "Now look," he said, "I don't like you, but we both gotta be here. I'll put up with you if you'll put up with me, but no funny business. Got it?" After a while, Al relaxed. He began to talk with Jack about his childhood, his family, and the sweetheart he'd left back home. Jack was a good listener.

They were walking through an area of thick brush, approaching a small clearing surrounded by low hills. Suddenly, Jack alerted. But Al was so busy talking that he didn't even notice. He continued walking, and when Jack planted his feet and refused to budge, Al got mad. "What's gotten into you?" he asked. "We got a job to do." As he came to the end of the six-foot leash, Al entered the clearing. Jack grabbed the leash in his mouth and yanked hard. Al was pulled back into the brush. He stumbled and fell to the ground. "What the..." he exclaimed, as gunfire erupted all around them.

Al called for his communications man. "We're surrounded," he said. "We need to radio for help."

"We can't," the young man replied. "The radio's been completely shot up."

"I've got an idea," said Al. "We'll send Jack for help."

"Sorry," said the communications guy. "I know a little about dogs. Our army dogs are mostly trained to do one job. There are sentry dogs and scout dogs and messenger dogs. This here's a scout dog. How're you going to get him to take a message back to the base?"

"We got one thing goin' for us," said Al. "Jack's partner is back at that base. If I tell Jack to find Mark and turn him loose, that's where he'll go. Our message will go with him." Taking the ammo pouch from the stock of his M1 carbine, Al removed the magazines. He then wrote a brief note that read: "Surrounded. Receiving strong enemy fire. Need help NOW." Looking at a map, Al added their coordinates, then placed the message in the pouch and attached it to Jack's collar. "All right fella," he said. "It's up to you now. Go find Mark!"

Jack streaked off, dodging bullets until he was out of range of the enemy guns. He ran for miles. He finally reached the base, and went directly to the medical tent. A nurse spotted him first and screamed. She tried to chase him out but the dog was determined. He reached Mark's side minutes later. Mark saw the ammo pouch and ripped it from his collar. Jack collapsed... he had been wounded by a bullet after all. Intent on his mission, he never even felt it.

Planes were dispatched to assist the men pinned down in the clearing. The

troops returned to the base the next day. Jack was recovering. Al fell to his knees and flung his arms around the neck of the dog that had saved his life.

Jack and Mark were back in action within a week. Shortly after, enemy resistance crumbled under the allied assault. The Third Armored Division was transferred to Sicily, and Mark and Jack went with them. They fought in Europe until the end of the war.

IT WAS JULY 10, 1945. Jack was once again in a wooden crate, this time on a train. To pass the time, he thought of Mark, whom he hadn't seen in weeks. They had traveled once again on the nasty ship that made him so sick. When the ship had docked in Virginia, Mark had come to say goodbye. Jack had wagged his tail hard when Mark had told him that he was a "good dog." Jack could understand that Mark was sad, but he couldn't understand why.

After Mark left, Jack had been transferred back to the training center in Front Royal. There he had been untrained and taught to be non-aggressive again, before being placed on this train to Connecticut.

As the train sped north, Jack observed many things. Through the cracks in the sides of the railcar, he could see green leafy trees and sparkling rivers. He saw people and cities and long stretches of cool forest. He heard dogs barking and car horns blaring. Eventually, the sound of the train lulled him to sleep.

When he awoke, his crate was being



"Hey Jack! Over here buddy!"

unloaded onto a platform. Suddenly, the door to the crate opened wide. A long forgotten voice yelled, "Hey Jack! Over here buddy!" Jack turned to see Peter. It had been so long that he had almost forgotten the boy. He ran to his young owner and began to lick his face. Peter sounded the same and smelled the same, but he did not look the same. He had grown. Jack did not look the same either. He moved with a slight limp and his muzzle was gray.

Peter threw his arms around the dog and gave him a big hug. "What do you think, boy?" he asked. "Should we go

home?" Home was a word that Jack had not heard in a long time, but he remembered it. Home was family, and the cat to bother, and barking at the mailman. Home was sleeping in Peter's bed and all that was wonderful. The war was over. Jack and Peter went home.

JACK SPENT his remaining years running through green fields on sunny summer days, and lying in front of the fire on cool crisp autumn afternoons. Occasionally, he dreamed of Mark, and his tail wagged as he slept. ❁

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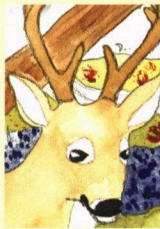
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