

Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists



"Missing My Father," by Sasha Kutasin, age 8, Russia

SECOND CHANCE

Mina loved her life in Jordan; why did her family have to move?

THE TIME MAGICIANS

Gareth has mixed feelings about learning Time Magic from his uncle

Also: Illustrations by Sofia deGraff-Ford

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2007

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VOLUME 35, NUMBER 3
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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.

Cover: "Missing My Father" was loaned to *Stone Soup* by the International Museum of Children's Art in Oslo, Norway. Established in 1986 by Rafael and Alla Goldin, the museum is a wonderland of floor-to-ceiling art by children from over 150 countries. Special thanks to Angela and Alla Goldin.

The Mailbox



LBP, 9

We have been best friends since we were six. We've both been getting *Stone Soup* since we were ten. In a funny way, it has made our friendship stronger. We love to discuss the stories and the art contained within the creamy, white pages. We always look forward to receiving our issues so we can talk about what we really liked and what we weren't so fond of. Some of our favorite stories are "Liberty and Justice for Some," by Libby Nelson [January/February 2002], "Kisses from Cecile," by Marie Agnello [May/June 2002], and "A Window by the Sea," by Alison Citron [September/October 2003]. We love the illustrations by Jesyka Palmer and we're sad that she is too old to submit. Long live *Stone Soup*!

EMILY RIIPPA AND MARJORIE BIEL, BOTH 14
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Emily's poem, "Mountain," appeared in our November/December 2006 issue.

Though I haven't read any hard copy issues of *Stone Soup*, the number of enchanting stories and wonderful poems I have come across while surfing the Internet has mesmerized me. I particularly like the story "Rescue," by Miranda Neubauer [March/April 2002], because it was very touching and it shows true friendship. I was also enchanted by the poem "The Moon," by Stewart Hoelscher [July/August 2000]. It shows the intimate beauty of the night. Keep writing, young budding authors.

SWEDHA RAJARAM, 10
Singapore

One would think that after reading the book review by Katherine Long of *The Waterless Sea* [May/June 2006], I would curse it. However, although my favorite book is *Eragon*, I realized that she was

half right. When I read Isabel Bartholomew's letter [September/October 2006], I realized that she was half right too. Let me explain. Yes, *Eragon*, after careful consideration, *is* sappy. Yes, Paolini has created a new culture, a different world, in his book. I can point out many things from other literature and mythology. Human-sized elves, true-word magic, talking ravens, and dwarf cities can all be found elsewhere (some are even from history). But nearly all of the stories we know nowadays have "sappy" elements. Probably even primal myths are "sappy." For example, look at Odin. He is in hundreds of legends, each of these evolving through the centuries. So how is it that "sappy" is separated from "un-sappy?" Who said "sappy" is bad? Even George McDonald didn't make up everything in his stories. I think Katherine and Isabel need to rethink. In a lighter vein, I congratulate Ashley Burke on her amazing illustrations [September/October 2006, and others]. As an artist myself, I am awed by the shading of her creations.

WIL GEIER, 13
Corvallis, Oregon

For the past two years, I've been searching for an alternative to *Stone Soup*, where I can submit my growing collection of works. I have successfully located a few candidates, but none can match the quality of your magazine. When I need inspiration, it beckons me from any corner of the room and engrosses me. Although I'm two years beyond the reach of *Stone Soup*, I cannot not be enveloped. Thank you.

CHLOE SCHEFFE, 16
Bellingham, Washington

Chloe illustrated "In the Knights' Absence" in our July/August 2004 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.



"That was very nice of you, dear," said his mom

They're Pigs!

By Adam Jacobs

Illustrated by Karina Jivkova

IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL morning in California. The ocean sparkled... the trees were a lush green... what a perfect time for the loud, unwelcome buzz of the alarm clock. Ryan got out of bed and shut the thing off. A little too suddenly, he decided, as he began to grow dizzy and weary. He staggered across the room to the door. He needed breakfast. Now. *What day is it, anyway?* he wondered. The calendar said it was Thursday. Thursday! Thursday was wake-up-the-family-in-a-weird-and-obnoxious-way day! He had been waiting for this day since... well, last Thursday! Quick as lightening, he got dressed and ran downstairs, grabbed his special bucket, and dashed into his parents' bedroom.

And sure enough, there they were. Two little bumps under the sheets. He walked up next to them, leaned way over the bed, tipped the bucket over, and out came pounds upon pounds of cold, wet mud. But he didn't hear surprised screams. He didn't hear a sharp gasp. What he heard was an "Ahhh... thank you son..."

"Dad?" Ryan gulped. "What did you say?"

"I said, *'Thank you son!'*"

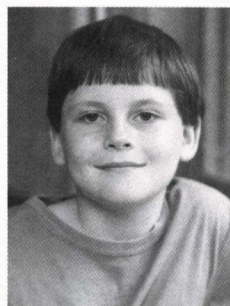
"Can you say that one more time?"

"If you want me to..."

"Can I have that in writing?" Ryan grinned.

"I just said thank you, OK?" he cried. "It's nice to wake up to something cool and refreshing once in a while!"

"That *was* very nice of you, dear," said his mom. And slowly,



Adam Jacobs, 11
Brooklyn Park, Minnesota



Karina Jivkova, 13
Sofia, Bulgaria

the bump underneath the sheets began to make its way towards the head of the bed. It reached the end of the sheets, then out popped a round, pink nose, two little black eyes, four little legs, and one curly little tail. All in all, a chubby little pig popped out instead of the tall slender figure of Ryan's mother. Ryan wasn't grinning anymore.

"Mom?"

"Yes, dear?"

"What on earth is wrong with you?"

"What's wrong with her? Why son, that's very, very rude!" His father poked his head out from under the sheet to reveal yet another pig, just as fat as the last one.

"Are you guys, you know, really there? Or is this some kind of joke?" Ryan said.

"What are you talking about?" The pigs were definitely moving their mouths to form the words. Freaky. Then the one that was talking and acting just like his mom looked at the clock. "Oh my goodness! It's eight o'clock already! We're going to be late for work!"

And before Ryan could stop them, both pigs ran out of the bedroom, grabbed some documents, and headed out the door. Two pigs driving a car in the middle of rush hour. Oh dear.

He had to do *something*. But what? He could take the bus and meet his parents at their workplace and stop them from being seen... but the nearest bus stop was over a mile away. Then again, the nearest bike and equipment rental was just down the street. And they happen to specialize in

motor scooters. Yeah. That would work. Just one more obstacle in his way. The s-i-s-t-e-r. Anxiously, he knocked on the door to his sister's bedroom. "Sis? I've got to go... to, uh, take a special summer-school class that I forgot to tell you about... uh, really... and I'm going to be gone for a while so I thought I should tell you. Bye!"

"Wait just one minute there, Buster! You promised to make me breakfast today!"

"Really? Well, not now, OK? I'm already very late! Is it OK if I make you lunch instead?"

"No!" She pulled open the door. And out stepped another chubby little pig, complete with lipstick and a bad hairdo.

"Not you too!" Ryan ran downstairs and bolted outside, entirely forgetting his promise to make her breakfast.

FIFTEEN MINUTES later, he was on the bus, riding the twenty miles between his house and his parents' workplace. He knew he shouldn't have left his sister like that, but he also knew that if he had spent the time to make her a couple of waffles and an iced glass of orange juice there would have been no chance of bringing his parents home before they were seen.

And, he thought, what would have happened then? Would they have been captured and placed on some farm out in the middle of nowhere? Has someone seen them already? And will they even make it to work without crashing into something, with those little piggy hooves of theirs on the steering wheel? He tried not to think

about all the ifs and maybes, but they kept nagging at him. What if it really was a prank that his family was pulling? What if this was all just a nightmare? Yes, that's it. It's just a bad dream. And he was really still snuggled in bed, safe and sound. And it was a Monday. Yeah! It wasn't even wake-up-the-family-in-a-weird-and-obnoxious-way day after all!

The bus came to a halt. It was time to get off. He got out of the bus and stepped onto a large parking lot before an ominous black building. He was there.

The bus pulled away and Ryan was left alone in the lot. It was filled with thousands of shiny cars but there wasn't a single person in sight. And it was impossible to see anything the size of a pig behind those rows and rows of automobiles. Not to mention a *talking* pig carrying a bunch of documents.

But then... what was that over there? He squinted towards the entrance to the building. Yes, there were definitely two little pink dots making their way across the sidewalk. He had to get them away from there before they were seen. Ryan began to run as fast as he could. The pigs were too far to catch in time. If he was lucky, there would be no one stand-


ing next to the entrance and he could catch them inside. He came to a halt on the sidewalk as he saw his parents inside through the glass door, talking to a tall man in a white suit. Ryan's head began to spin. What would happen now? Would the man call the pound? Would his parents be slaughtered?

Without thinking, he burst into the building. "*Stop!*" he said. He could hear some distant murmurs in front of him, the concerned voices of his parents, mixed with the shouts of angry workers. His eyes went out of focus. Everything became a blur. He screamed as loud as he could, "*No!*" The word echoed into the back of his head.

"No..."

AND THEN he awoke. He saw his parents hovering over him, concerned looks on their faces. "Ryan?" They were both in their normal human form. "Ryan, did you have a bad dream?" his mother said.

"Yeah... I guess..." he said. The concerned look vanished and was replaced with a stern frown.

"And can you tell me why there's mud all over our bed, young man?" 



"Hi, I'm Hannab... you're the new student from Jordan, aren't you?"

Second Chance

By **Roya Alkamil**

Illustrated by **Emina S. Sonnad**

MINA GAZED ACROSS the playground—over fifty children her age were scattered in front of her, but not one of them would be her friend. It wasn't that they were unfriendly; three of them had already asked her if she wanted to eat lunch with them, but it was Mina who had vowed not to make a single friend at this school, or any school in the entire United States for that matter.

What was wrong with Jordan anyway? thought Mina. Looking at all the other students though, she did half wish she had been friendlier when first introduced to them.

Mina would have stayed at the edge of the playground scowling, wishing the bell would ring, if the girl hadn't approached her. "Hi, I'm Hannah... you're the new student from Jordan, aren't you?" said a girl who looked to be about eleven, with dark brown eyes and a gentle smile. "I saw what you painted in art today, it was really good. I wish I could paint like that..." Mina just glanced at Hannah and then went back to scowling. "I just moved here from Boston a month ago... actually, I think I live across the street from you..." Here Hannah trailed off, looking expectantly at Mina as if waiting for her to say something. If Hannah was expecting a gracious "Nice to meet you" or "Hope to see you around the neighborhood," then she was going to be disappointed. It wasn't too late to say any of these things, but Mina was obviously not going to. Seeing this, Hannah looked at the grass beneath them and muttered, "I think someone's calling me," and sprinted off. As Mina looked at the strong, mature



Roya Alkamil, 12
Auckland, New Zealand



Emina S. Sonnad, 12
Snohomish, Washington

trees around her and the clear blue sky above her, she thought wistfully of how she could paint this place.

Mina was not boasting when she said she could paint. Apart from Hannah, only her parents had commented on her work, but she knew she had talent. Mina's favorite things to paint were the mosques and the gold souk, both of which she knew well from living in Jordan. She had come to the United States thinking her painting days were over, that there would be nothing interesting to paint here, but to find such beauty... no, she thought. In fact, she would paint even more pictures of the sand dunes and the Hajal mountains that were Jordan. Seeing Hannah's pale blue top in the distance, Mina started regretting her cold behavior towards Hannah, but stopped almost as soon as she started. She was going to stay strong on her vow, not to make a single friend. And besides, she liked standing in the shade of the trees, all alone.

"Have you made any friends yet?" asked Mina's mother, at dinner.

"No, and I'm not going to. I hate school. I want to go back to Jordan," answered Mina.

Her parents looked at her, the disappointment shining in their eyes. "We came to America for your future. And now you say you hate it here?" asked her mother, even though she knew the answer.

"What was wrong with Jordan?" asked Mina.

After a pause, her father answered, "Think of the opportunities you will have here. You will have twice as much as you

would in Jordan."

"But everything is different. I prefer my old life to this one," said Mina, thinking her father couldn't possibly have an answer to that.

But seconds later, he put his fork down and, changing his tone, said, "Mina, *habibti*, don't you see? No matter what country we are in, we are ourselves. The only person stopping you having your old life is yourself."

Enraged by his words, and somewhat offended, Mina shouted, "You say you came here to make my life better. All you've done is made it worse." Before she knew it, she was running down the road, away from her house. As she ran, she thought about what her father had said. Though they were in a new country, they still ate lamb, okra and saffron rice, they still spoke Arabic and, most importantly, they still prayed to Allah. Though their lives had changed, how much had they changed? She slowed down as a chilly breeze swept in, and by the time it left, so had her anger. She turned around, and started running back home. As she ran, she started composing what she would say to her father. She ran in, going straight to her father and, kissing his hand, apologized, saying she "hadn't thought before speaking." After being forgiven, she asked if she may go somewhere, and although they were puzzled, her parents told her to go, but to be careful. "I won't be far," said Mina, "I'm just going across the road." She smiled to herself; she knew what to do, and that was to apologize to Hannah.

MINA FOUND herself in front of a one-story, brick house with Hannah's shoes by the door. Mina couldn't believe such a simple house could be so beautiful. The whole section was bathed in shade supplied by a huge oak tree. The tree's bark was cracked, and though it looked very old, it also looked very sturdy. As for the house... Mina just couldn't stop looking at it, with its rustic red bricks, and dark green vine crawling up the side. Mina gave the house one more look, then rang the doorbell. After waiting a few seconds, she was greeted by a woman with dark brown eyes and a gentle smile. It could only be Hannah's mother. "Um, hi... I'm Mina, Hannah knows me from school... could I talk to her?"

The woman's expression suddenly changed and she said, "Oh, Hannah's told us all about you, and how you treated her... well, I'll go and get her," and she walked away. Mina was embarrassed by what the woman had said, but even more embarrassed by how she had treated Hannah.

Soon enough, Hannah was there looking coldly at Mina. "Hi," she said flatly.


"I'm sorry about... how I acted," Mina said, and although Hannah tried to look hard, the more Mina explained, the more

it wore off. "I just felt like such an outsider," said Mina, surprised by Hannah's confused face.

After a minute, Hannah asked, "Why?"

"Because I'm so different from everyone at school... from you!" said Mina, stumbling for words.

"But... nobody at school is one hundred percent American. Look at me! My father is Jewish... and Daniel, the boy who sits behind you, his grandmother is Polish, and... and..." Hannah's list of children went on and on, and by the time she had finished neither of them could believe how many there were.

The girls stood in the last light of the sun as evening approached. It struck Mina then, she didn't have to be completely Jordanian, and moving to the United States of America didn't mean that she had to be completely American in her ways either. Actually, she liked the sound of being Jordanian-American. "Can I ask you something?" asked Mina, having to stop herself from laughing, for she had just had a brilliant idea. "Could I paint a picture of your house?" And now both of the girls smiled. After all, neither of them could think of a better way for Mina to start her new life. 

Book Review

By Hannah Sellers

My Last Skirt: The Story of Jennie Hodgers, Union Soldier, by Lynda Durrant; Clarion Books:
New York, 2006; \$16



Hannah Sellers, 12
Chagrin Falls, Ohio

TO BE FREE can have multiple meanings, but to Jennie Margaret Hodgers, in *My Last Skirt: The Story of Jennie Hodgers, Union Soldier*, it symbolizes having no skirts. For her, losing her skirt would mean losing all the limits that come with having the identity of a woman. The first time Jennie Hodgers puts on men's clothing is because, like many Irish families of the time (late 1850s), her family didn't have a lot of money. So she takes the role as a shepherd boy, until, after her father's death, she and her brother Tom move to America.

It is here that you witness betrayal from Tom. When he sees how much more successful she is in America, he reveals her secret to their employer.

This scene was very touching to me. My brother and I are very close. Just picturing him doing something such as that made me feel heartbroken. Although the author, Lynda Durrant, doesn't come out and say it, Jennie, or as she soon changes her name, Albert Cashier, is feeling a similar emotion.

Afterwards, "Albert" knows she can't stay in New York anymore. She gets on a train that takes her to Chicago. It is there that she does the unthinkable: Albert Cashier enlists in the Union Army. The army is the test of whether the skinny Irish shepherd boy Albert Cashier or the tomboy Jennie Hodgers

will survive.

In the end Albert Cashier wins, but not without disadvantages. The years in the army have changed her mental state, which insists that, at times, she really is a man, as well as her physical state. All of the laborious training has changed her gentle lady's body into hard, unnatural muscle. I couldn't help but admire how she keeps going in spite of these drawbacks.

The way the author creates Jennie is remarkable because Durrant has to give insight into Jennie's secret. She has to describe conflicts that prevent Jennie from revealing her identity and the personal pain that comes with the burden of keeping this secret.

As I read, I was in constant argument, as Jennie meets a man, Frank Moore, and will not let herself fall in love. I wanted to yell and say, "Just do it! You've lived a hard life. Do something that will make you happy!" It is in these ways that the author sucks you in.

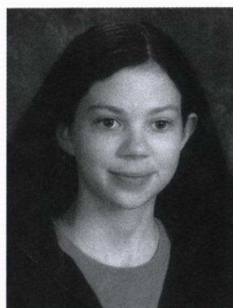
Every author has their own way of drawing the reader in like that. For some, it is with conversation, or with others it could be descriptive details. In Durrant's case, it is with emotions. If something sad or depressing happened to Jennie, I could feel my eyes start to water. If something uncertain or scary was taking place then my hands would tense up around the book.

My Last Skirt: The Story of Jennie Rodgers, Union Soldier is for anyone, boy or girl, mom or dad. There is so much in it, including history, romance and adventure. However, because this book isn't meant to focus on the battles, the action scenes aren't the greatest ever. There is an easy-to-follow plot line, with surprises on every page. You'll find that you walk away with a lot of respect for Jennie (who was a real person) and the other petticoat soldiers who served their country, even though it didn't recognize their contributions. ❀

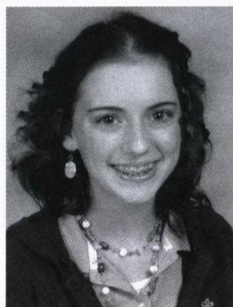
A Different Kind of Lullaby

By Meg Bradley

Illustrated by Julia Seales



Meg Bradley, 13
Dubuque, Iowa



Julia Seales, 13
Nicholasville, Kentucky

HER ROOM WAS QUIET. Too quiet. In fact, the whole house was quiet, and Abby knew why. It was empty—all except for her. There had been a note, of course, there was always a note, waiting on the table after school.

Abby:

Gone out for a while. Be back soon.

Love always, Mom

Abby wondered why her mother couldn't have been a little more specific, and exactly what her idea of "soon" was. That had been approximately three o'clock, now it was around ten o'clock. She lay in bed, tossing and turning. The silence scared her; it seemed to envelope her and swallow her up. The quilt made her too hot; she pushed it off. Now she was shivering; she pulled it back on.

Abigail means "father's joy," she thought angrily. If I was his joy, then why did he leave us?

Groping around in the dark, feeling for the right buttons, she turned on her radio, turning it up as loud as it would go, blasting it through the house, but the emptiness remained inside her no matter what the volume of the music. She eventually turned it off, but found that she could not lie still, could not take the silence any longer.

For one fleeting moment, she screamed, her lungs burning. It made her feel a little better; the screaming gave her an odd sort of sense of power. The feeling only lasted a moment, though,



Ms. Stevens had been right; she did feel better, much better

as her common sense took over—what if someone had heard her? What if they had called the police? The fire department? What if one of the neighbors came over to see what was wrong? What if someone called Social Services when they found out she was alone? What if... What if...

She had to keep herself from thinking these things. Come on, Abby, focus. Green meadows, blue skies, calm river, tweeting birds... She played the game she and her father had played so many times, when she had stage fright before a school performance, envisioning the perfect

place, but this time it only served to make her more agitated. Oh, Dad!

Swinging her legs out of bed, she got up and walked over to the window. She shoved it open, desperate to hear those nighttime sounds that would fill up her room with reminders that summer was not far off. A gust of warm wind rushed in, sweeping back Abby's long chestnut hair. Crickets chirped their evening song, an occasional lightning bug flashed, then receded into the darkness, flying away to new and better things. How desperately Abby wished that she could do the same.

She slammed the window shut with a deafening crash that reverberated against the walls, and then the room was once again quiet. She only heard the bang as if from a distant place, vaguely felt the cold glass beneath her hands, felt her fingers sliding down, down, down. Just how she felt. Her world was going down, down, down.

Abby gently leaned her head against the windowpane, trying to fight the emptiness swelling deep inside her. She wondered what had happened to those times, so long ago, when her mom and dad had sung her to sleep, familiar lullabies, beckoning her to dreamland, step by step. Although she knew that at twelve, many people would consider her too old for lullabies, she still missed them achingly. The soothing sound of her parents' voices had always filled up the silence that haunted her now.

Lullaby. Even just the word was soothing, like someone stroking her hair, holding her hand. Like a hug right when she

needed one.

If I ever needed one, she thought angrily, it's now. Parents, guidance counselors, teachers, they always say they'll be there for me when I need them, but where are they all now?

Abby flung herself face down onto the bed, drowning her face in her pillow to muffle the heart-wrenching sobs that she was sure could not be hers. Gradually, her back still rising and falling, the sobs began to come more softly, in a certain rhythm, a certain pattern, and she began to relax. Her breathing began to come easier, and she drifted off to sleep at last, to a different kind of lullaby; the feel of hot tears running down her cheeks, the sound of her own ragged breathing, her own crying. Her lullaby.

IT WAS MIDNIGHT. Abby knew that she must have fallen asleep at some time, because she had just woken up. She put out her hand and felt her pillow—it was still damp from her own tears. She heard the sound of a car pulling into the driveway, heard her mom come in and get into bed. Abby resented that her mom had been out so late without even specifying where she was going, but she knew that her dad's leaving must have been just as traumatic for her mom as it was for her, alone in the master bedroom, in the queen-sized bed by herself. Even with her mom back in the house, Abby could not shake off the emptiness, and she felt a strange tug inside when she realized that her mom had not come in to say goodnight, as she

always had before. Desperately she insisted to herself that there must be a way to make the loneliness go away, she just hadn't found it yet. Suddenly something her English teacher had told her class just the day before came rushing back.

"Poetry can be therapeutic," Ms. Stevens had said. "Write what you feel. It'll make you feel a lot better afterwards, I promise." The kids in her class had moaned and groaned, saying they would never in their lives write poetry of any kind, but Abby had tucked away that information for future use, thinking there might be a time when she needed something like that.

Abby flicked on her bedside lamp, and reached for a pen and paper. Maybe Ms. Stevens was right, maybe she wasn't. There was only one way to find out. She grabbed up the pen and began scribbling frantically, crossing out, rewriting, crumpling the page, and starting over again until she was finally satisfied.

The lights flicker off,
I listen, but all is quiet—
too quiet.
Where are those days
when someone would sing me to sleep,
gentle notes
luring me slowly to dreamland,
filling the silence,
my lullaby?

Nothing
can cover the emptiness
like the sound
of someone singing,
sweetly singing.
I open the window
hoping to hear the sounds
of the summer's night,
but no chorus of crickets chirping
no soothing warm breeze
or flicker of fireflies
can mask the feeling in me,
take away my fears.
I hear
as though from far away,
the window slam shut,
feel the glass
beneath my hands,
and I cry myself to sleep—
a different kind of lullaby.

She read it, and then again and again. Ms. Stevens had been right; she did feel better, much better, as if a huge weight had been lifted off her shoulders. A poem. In a sense, it too was a lullaby, just as her tears had been. But this kind of lullaby helped her give names to her feelings; let her know they were real, that maybe even somewhere there was someone else who was experiencing the same thing. Maybe she would show it to someone, maybe she wouldn't. Not yet, anyway. She wasn't ready quite yet. It was *her* poem, her lullaby, one only for her. ❀



"I know it's not perfect but it just needs a few homey touches," my mom said

The Old Farmhouse

By **Shannon Halpin**

Illustrated by **Min Joo Yi**

THE FARMHOUSE WAS small and old. Its ancient yellow paint was peeling from the clapboard walls. Its black roof was worn and was missing some shingles and sagged in the middle, as if an elephant had once slept there.

"I know it's not perfect but it just needs a few homey touches," my mom said, getting out of the car behind me.

"A lot of homey touches," I said huffily, dropping my bags on the ground.

"This is all we can afford to live in right now and I know it's hard on you and I'm sorry."

We unpacked in silence and when we were finished I sat drinking a cup of juice sulkily at the kitchen table.

"Why don't you go find something to do?" mom said, putting a box of cereal in a cupboard.

"Like what?" I said gloomily.

"Go exploring."

"Fine," I said angrily, getting up and heading for the door.

"Janie?"

"What?"

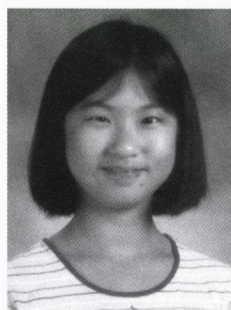
"Don't forget a sweater."

"Whatever!" I said, grabbing a sweater off a chair and shoving it over my head. Then I strutted out of the house, slamming the screen door behind me.

I heaved at the barn doors and they slid open. The first thing I noticed was the smell. The stench of rotting hay and dust filled the air and I sneezed. The barn was also dark.



Shannon Halpin, 12
Bow, Washington



Min Joo Yi, 12
Bellevue, Washington

I fished my flashlight out of my pocket and turned it on. That is when I realized how big the barn was. It seemed to stretch a mile back. On one side four stalls clung to the wall and on the far side a ladder led up to a hayloft.

I headed to the ladder and examined it closely for loose or missing rungs. Surprisingly, it was almost perfectly intact. I climbed up into the loft. Nothing was there, only a few moldy hay bales.

I climbed down the ladder and started to investigate the stalls. They were all the same: same bins, same moldy hay covering the ground. Just as I was leaving the last stall, something shiny caught my eye.

It was a doorknob. I tried it and it opened. I cast the beam of my flashlight into the opening and saw stairs leading down into the earth.

"Mom, Mom!" I yelled, running back to the house, forgetting about my anger about the move for the moment. Mom came running out and looked relieved to

see I was OK.

"Come on, I've got something to show you!" I called.

It was a long walk down the stairs and it was freezing by the time we reached the bottom and I was glad I had brought my sweater.

A small room was at the bottom of the stairs and Mom said, "Wow, this is really old. People a long time ago might have lived down here during storms. That is probably what it's for."

I had remembered my anger and was being quiet again.

"This can be our own secret place," she said, putting her arm around my shoulder and squeezing me close to her. In that moment, I felt my anger evaporate completely and it was replaced by guilt. I realized I had been very selfish and had only been thinking about myself. The move had been as hard for her as it had been for me. Then I did something I hadn't done in a long time. I looked up and smiled at her. 🌸



Night in the Woods

By Amanda Johnson

Smoke rising
Into the dark sky
Crickets chirp
And a twig snaps
Warm air presses against me
And a cold wind
Blows behind my back
The fire crackles
And Mother laughs
As my marshmallow
Blows up in flames
Then it is bedtime
Crawl into the tent
The air is cold
But inside the sleeping bag
It is warm
The glow of the fire
Shines through the tent
As a stick cracks
And I drift asleep



Amanda Johnson, 13
Hanover, Pennsylvania



When I do glance up and see it, I quickly jump back in surprise

Summer of the Sea Turtles

By William Gwaltney

Illustrated by the author

THE SUN IS SETTING over the ocean as I walk out onto the porch. Reflecting the last rays of the sun, the ocean sparkles a bright, brilliant orange. I leave my beach house and walk out onto the sand, which feels cool and slightly damp beneath my bare feet. I glance up at the beautiful soft sky, reminiscent of pink lemonade, which seems to stretch out in every direction. A faint breeze sweeps in off the ocean. It ruffles my hair and tickles my face. It's the perfect night for a walk.

As I stroll down the beach, I see thousands of footprints in the sand, left over from midday beachgoers. I have never understood why everyone flocks to the beach during the daytime, when the sky is so bright that it hurts your eyes and the hot sand burns the bottoms of your feet... when the beach is crowded, noisy and stuffy. I have always found the beach to be unfriendly and unwelcoming during the day. But in the evening, the beach is soothing and peaceful. In the evening, the beach is mine. I share it only with the pelicans and seagulls, who play tag on the gentle currents of evening wind.

The water remains warm even though the sun has almost set and the air is cooler. I walk close to the water's edge, letting the frothy waves wash over my feet. I am so lost in my thoughts, that at first I do not see the large brown mass lumbering out of the water just ahead. When I do glance up and see it, I quickly jump back in surprise. It takes a moment for me to realize that it is a turtle, a sea turtle, crawling clumsily out of water and onto



William Gwaltney, 11
Englewood, Colorado

land. I wonder why it would leave the water, where it moves so gracefully, for dry land where it must struggle to take every step. It drags itself determinedly across the beach, intent on some important mission all its own. I think of whales and how they sometimes beach themselves, and wonder if this turtle has a similar task in mind. I sit down on the sand to watch.

Once the turtle has chosen just the right spot, it turns around 360 degrees to make an impression in the sand. Then it begins to dig a small hole with its back feet, sending sand flying everywhere. Once it is done it seems to settle down into the hole and lies still. It happens so effortlessly that I miss the arrival of the first few eggs. By the time I realize that this turtle is nesting, there is already a small pile of ping-pong-sized, leathery white eggs on the sand. The turtle continues to lay eggs for several hours. Without thinking, I begin to count. One, two, three... I stop at 100, but the turtle does not. She lays a few dozen more eggs before she is finished. When she is done she fills her nest in with sand and then, without warning, she suddenly drops to the ground. Oomph! She does this several more times. By the third time she drops, I realize that she is using her hard smooth underbelly to pack down the sand over her eggs. Once she finishes this, she flings sand all over the nest and the surrounding beach. Apparently, this is to confuse unwanted visitors about the location of her nest. Once she is satisfied, she begins her long slow crawl back to the

ocean. Of course, as she crawls, she leaves a very distinctive track which will lead others directly to her nest no matter how hard she tries to hide it. I decide to help her. Looking around, I choose landmarks that will enable me to find this spot again. Then, using the old sweatshirt I have tied around my waist, I sweep her tracks from the sand. Once I am finished, I check to make sure her nest is entirely hidden. Then I walk home along the beach, my mind still full of what I have just witnessed.

Even though I was up half the night and am more tired than I could ever have imagined, I get up the next morning before my father leaves for work. He and my mom are surprised to see me, as I usually sleep in until at least nine o'clock in the summer. I eat a bowl of cereal with my parents and my dad asks, "What are you going to do today, Sport?"

"I'm thinking of going to the beach," I tell him.

"What?" asks my dad. "I thought you hated the beach during the day."

I tell him that I am having second thoughts about that, and ask my mother if she will pack me a lunch. She looks surprised, but agrees to do it.

I have a plan. I gather two beach towels, a picnic basket, a water bottle, and my sunglasses. I put on my swimming trunks. The picnic basket is the old-fashioned kind. It is a huge wicker affair that will hold all the rest of my gear. I grab my lunch and the sunscreen my mother insists on, then head out the door, letting

it slam shut behind me. I stop at the garage on my way out and look up on the shelves lining the back wall. I see an old, faded box, strewn with large cobwebs and covered by thick dust. The writing on the side of the box says "Tyler's Toys." I open the box. Inside are things I haven't seen in ages... a ball, a frisbee, an old pull toy, and two ancient stuffed animals named Fluffy and Sticky who slept with me every night until I was seven. Underneath all this, I find what I am looking for... a plastic pail and shovel which were once a cheerful red, now bleached a putrid pink by many summers spent in the sun. I take those out and, after a little thought, add the ball to my pile of stuff as well.

I head out onto the sand and, even though it is early, several people have already staked out their part of the beach. I hurry to the area where I think the sea turtle nest is. After careful consideration of my landmarks, I am sure I have found the exact spot. I take one of the beach towels and drape it over the nest. It is an oversized one so it is big enough to cover the entire area. On the towel, I set my picnic basket, the ball, the pail and shovel. Then, for a finishing touch, I take the sandwich out of my lunch, take a couple of bites, and lay it down on top of the picnic basket. Now it looks as if someone has been here just recently and will be back at any moment. I spread my own towel close by and put on my sunglasses. I lie back and breathe evenly, pretending to be asleep, but really I am keeping a watchful eye on the nest. It is a long, hot, exhaust-

ing day. At about five o'clock, thankfully, the tourists start to leave. It is dinner time and most of them are hungry. I am hungry too, but I feel the urge to stay with the nest a bit longer. I think of all the little baby turtles growing inside and I feel scared for them. I stay until the sun sinks behind the waves, and the last of the light disappears from the sky. I head home tired, sunburned, and weary, but happy that I have done this little thing to keep my turtles safe.

I am determined to watch over the nest every day. On the second day, a woman appears. She has dark brown hair the color of coffee, and blue-green eyes the color of the sea. She's tall and tan and fit. She lays her blanket close to mine. I look up to find her watching me, a puzzled look on her face. I try to ignore her, but she shows up the next day and the one after, and the one after that. She seems to be spending more and more time studying me and the empty towel covering the nest. I am convinced that she wants to put her blanket there. I cannot let that happen.

The next morning I am on the beach even earlier. It's so early that no tourists are out yet. I must make sure that I get the exact same spot. My turtles' lives depend on it. As I walk down the beach, I see something. I am already too late. A dog is digging up the nest. I grab a piece of driftwood and run towards him, swinging my newfound weapon wildly. The dog looks up at me as I run. He has egg yolk dripping from his jaws. I charge at him and swing my piece of driftwood. I miss

the dog, but connect with the ground right next to him. A cloud of sand fills the air. The dog darts a short distance away, turns, and puts his head down on his front paws. He barks. The poor deluded beast thinks this is a game. My rage knows no bounds. I continue to run after him, trying to hit him, but the dog is too fast. I miss again and again as he runs in front of me up the beach. I feel a compelling urge to chase the dog and hurt him for committing this horrible crime. As I run after him yet again, a woman walks over the dunes and onto the beach. "Hey! What do you think you're doing to my dog?" she yells.

Once again rage takes the place of reason. I am furious at her for allowing this to happen. "Don't you know you're not supposed to let your dog run loose on the beach?" I scream. My face is red and my voice is angry. "There are leash laws in this town! Get your stupid mutt out of here!"

"Leash laws or not," she says, "you have no right to hurt my dog."

"If that dog comes back here," I threaten, "I'll do more than just hurt him!"

The look on her face changes then, from defiance to something like fear. I realize that she is wondering if I am crazy. She snaps a leash on her dog and, looking over her shoulder, she hurries down the beach. As she runs away, I feel ashamed. I suddenly realize that she is really just like me... trying to protect an animal she loves.

I drop the piece of driftwood and run to the nest. Luckily the dog has not uncovered very much of it. I see the egg-

shells from only two broken eggs. If the dog ate more, he ate them whole. I cover the nest with sand and pat it down gently. I wonder if the rest of the eggs were somehow traumatized by the dog's digging. I have to make sure that this never happens again.

That afternoon I am sitting on my towel, thinking about ways to keep the turtles safe. Suddenly, the woman who has been watching me all week approaches. "Hi," she says, "My name is Martha. What's yours?" I tell her that I am Tyler. What I really want to tell her is to go away and leave me alone. I am wondering why she is annoying me when there is an entire beach full of other people she could talk to.

"Do you mind if I sit down?" she asks, pointing to the beach towel that is covering the nest.

"Not there," I tell her. "That's someone else's stuff. Sit here." I move over to offer her room on my towel.

"Oh come on," she says smiling, "I have watched you every day this week. You come every morning and lay that blanket down. You put that picnic basket on it. You put out toys. You open your lunch, take two bites out of your sandwich, and then leave it on the picnic basket. That isn't 'someone else's stuff.' It's some kind of elaborate prop. I have got to know what's going on," she laughs, "because I am going crazy trying to figure it out!"

She looks really nice when she laughs. So I tell her about the nest, and my plan to protect the turtles. She acts interested



"I have got to know what's going on," she laughs, "because I am going crazy trying to figure it out!"

and asks a lot of questions. Once I have finished, she tells me, "Well that's some job you've been doing, Tyler. It just so happens that I'm a scientist who studies sea turtles. I'm on vacation this week, and I'm here to enjoy the beach, not to work. Still, every day that I have come to the beach, I've come early to look for tracks. I never saw any."

"That's because I covered them up," I tell her. She seems surprised.

"This means a lot to you, doesn't it?" she asks.

"It sure does," I tell her, "so please... don't tell anyone else."

"But I think I can help you," she says. "There's a local 'Turtle Watch' composed of other people who love the turtles as much as you do. I'm going to call them. They can help you protect the nest."

Things over the next few days get a lot more exciting. People come and put wire mesh over the nest. They bury the edges deep so that no dogs can dig it up. They ask me for the exact date that the eggs were laid so that they can come back right before the estimated hatch date and remove the wire. Then they mark the edges of the nest with poles and string orange tape between them. They post a sign that says that this is an endangered sea turtle nest and that there will be severe penalties for anyone who disturbs it. Then they make my day.

"We're sorry," they tell me, "but we don't have enough volunteers to keep someone on this beach. There are other beaches full of nests, and it takes all the

people we have to check on those. So we're going to need you to keep doing what you've been doing. You'll need to keep a sharp eye out and tell us if there's a problem with anyone bothering the nest. Will that be a problem?" they ask.

Will that be a problem? "Not at all," I tell them. I am thrilled. I spend the rest of the summer on the beach. I get books about sea turtles at the library and read them as I keep a hawk's eye on the nest. People see the sign and stop to ask me about the turtles. I tell them all that I have learned and make sure that they are told what they can do to help. Things like keeping their dogs on leashes and turning out their outside lights if they live along the beach. Baby sea turtles crawl towards the brightest horizon after hatching. Normally, the brightest horizon is over the ocean, but artificial lights from houses and condos can confuse the baby turtles, making them go the wrong way. Then they run the risk of getting lost and starving to death, or dying of dehydration, or crossing roads and getting hit by cars. After I explain this to her, one tourist goes back to her hotel and even manages to get the hotel owners to turn off *their* outside lights.

By the time the eggs are almost ready to hatch, dozens of beachgoers are part of a huge fan club dedicated entirely to the turtles. Every day they come to the beach and look at the nest. They circulate petitions throughout the neighborhood, asking the city council to pass a resolution stating that all outside lights, even streetlights, must be turned off during turtle

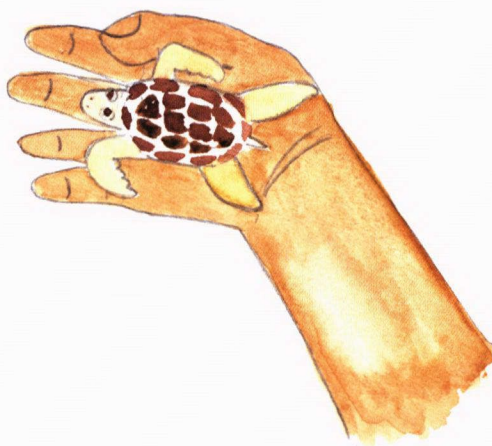
season. I feared that these people would only disturb the nest and its occupants, but instead they are just as interested in protecting it as I am.

Fifty-seven days after the eggs were laid, the Turtle Watch people come back and remove the wire. Fifty-nine days after the eggs were laid, the turtles hatch. We come back at dusk to find that they have broken out of the nest and are now scuttling frantically towards the ocean. A little girl walks over and picks up one of the turtles, intent on carrying it to the water's edge. "No!" I yell. "Put him down!"

She does as I ask, but says sadly, "He was having such a hard time getting to the ocean. I only wanted to help."

"If you don't let it crawl by itself," I tell her, "it won't imprint on its natal beach. If it's a girl," I continue, "she'll never find her way back here to lay her eggs." Just then, another turtle starts to crawl inland, away from the sea. I show the little girl how to bend down and gently shepherd it in the right direction.

When the last turtle is in the ocean, we all stand and watch the babies floating away on the gentle currents carrying them out to sea. I feel sad that they are leaving, yet happy that I have helped them to get this far. Perhaps in twenty years, when they are adults, some of these very same turtles will return to nest on this beach. If they come, I'll be waiting. 🌸





"Good luck," they all said, "and goodbye"

Guess What, Rebecca Bait?

By **Sydney Adedamola**

Illustrated by **Frannie Parrish**

REBECA KNEW a lot more about life than most children do. Rebecca, being the eldest of three children, had a lot of experience with young kids. She was kind and accepted the challenges that everyone must face now and then. What she did not know was that something huge was coming, something that would change four children's friendships forever.

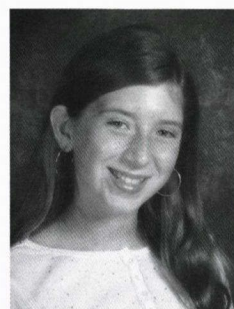
Fred Lipto adjusted his Harry Potter glasses before finishing the last (and hardest) problem on his ninth-grade algebra test. Fred was in fourth grade. He was a math wiz with freckles, and a good sense of humor. He was Rebecca's best friend and had known her since kindergarten. He was also the co-author of *Stonehedge*, a book he and Sarah (a girl who I will mention later) are currently writing. Fred's pen name is Flying Duck.

Sarah Hinkle flexed her fingers and sharpened a fresh, number 2 pencil before looking down in her notebook to do a final edit of the story she had been working on for months. Sarah was an author, a lover of books, a critic, and a lover of comfortable shoes. She treasured green eyes, black hair, black cats, and Harry Potter movies (as well as the books). She was Rebecca's good friend and never missed a chance to cheer people up with her lively ways and sharp mind. She played the violin, as well as the piano, and her two favorite quotes were, "Great minds think alike" (she said that to Fred a lot) and "Winners are losers and losers are winners" (she said that to George a lot). For your information, George is the fourth friend. Sarah's pen name is Keylock Sniders.

"George Wiles, put that video game down and do something



Sydney Adedamola, 10
Norwell, Massachusetts



Frannie Parrish, 12
Needham, Massachusetts

useful!" hollered George's mother.

George Wiles reluctantly put down his control and turned off the X-Box he had gotten for Christmas. He had been at the height of the game where Mario was about to get out of the Yube, get back his star charts, and enter the *secret chamber*! He walked outside and helped his sister, Madison, haul the disgusting garbage cans out of the garage and onto the sidewalk. His neighbor, Robert Mettla, was doing the same thing. When he went back inside, he recaptured the moments in school that day. The class had *loved* the new (and improved) "Ember Tyke and Breezy Baby" story that he wrote. Ah, life was perfect for George, or so he thought.

Wham! The door slammed as a tired Mr. Decker walked in. He settled himself in a chair and his wife brought him a steaming plate of macaroni and cheese, and, of course, a mug of boiling, hot coffee. As he stirred his dinner around in his bowl, he thought about his fourth-grade class, especially Rebecca Baits. She was a good student, a little on the shy side perhaps, but precise and clever.

Three blocks away, Fred had put down his algebra book and was now nestled snugly in his favorite chair, eating rice and chicken. Two blocks away, Sarah was settling down to some steak and cucumbers after just submitting her latest story to *Stone Soup* magazine. At 36 Joseph Drive, George was scraping the last piece of pizza onto his dish. It was obviously pepperoni pizza, George's favorite. On Baits Lane, Rebecca and her family were eating

pasta, Rebecca's favorite food. Her mother cleared her throat.

"I've already told your siblings about this," she began. "You are not going to like what I have to say. Guess what, Rebecca Baits? We're moving."

Rebecca didn't tell her friends immediately that in four short months she would have to move from Norwell, the only home she had ever known. A battle raged in her mind between enjoying her life and spending a carefree four months with her friends or giving her friends the time to get used to the idea that she was moving. She finally decided to tell them. Even though Fred was her closest friend, she told Sarah first. She had always been able to share a lot of things with Sarah, for she was a girl too. Sarah took it calmly but you could see the worry in her hazelnut eyes, and when she got home she destroyed her newest story (an act that her mother said was a disgrace). Sarah promised to let Rebecca break the news to Fred and George and swore she wouldn't tell anyone else at school. Next, Rebecca told Fred. He jumped up and down and said he'd cut off his left arm if Rebecca moved. When he got home, he tried to snap his flute in half. George's turn! George went home and chucked his Play Station 2 out the window he was so mad. All of them were terribly angry but didn't tell their parents anything. Rebecca pleaded with her parents, but they said they had to move because of their jobs.

"Where are we moving to?" Rebecca questioned, but the answer was always the same.

"We don't know yet."

Rebecca was discouraged. Her friends tried to cheer her up but it was no use. She had known George since third grade, Sarah since second, and Fred since kindergarten. Rebecca had faced many challenges before but this was the worst. She didn't know what she was going to do. Sure she was going to make new friends, but not like these. She would miss everyone in her class, especially her teachers, Mrs. Williamson and Mr. Decker.

When she found out the day they were moving to Alabama, Rebecca immediately told her friends. On the day of the move, right before she got into the car, each of her three friends gave her a parcel.

"Good luck," they all said, "and good-bye."

Rebecca hopped into the car, and was driven away. In the parcels she found from Fred a little book that said "My Secrets" and a note that said, "In case you forget all the secrets we shared -Fred."

From Sarah she got a large notebook. Inside the book was a note that said, "In case you forget to write stories."

There was also a necklace with half a flower-shaped charm. Engraved on the

charm was the word "Best." Sarah was wearing the other half of the charm, which was engraved with the word "Friends." Rebecca put the necklace on.

From George she got a beautiful plant and a box of stationery. His note said, "In case you forget to write us all."

Rebecca wanted to cry. She was probably never going to see them again.


THREE YEARS LATER

IN ALABAMA, Rebecca met a very nice girl named Ashley. They had lots of fun together, but Rebecca still never forgot about her friends.

One day, Rebecca, the now Junior High student, got home to find her mom in the backyard. Her mother patted a space next to her on the hammock where she was sitting. An exhausted Rebecca gratefully sat down and flung her book bag onto the grass.

"Guess what, Rebecca Baits?"

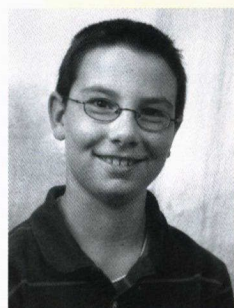
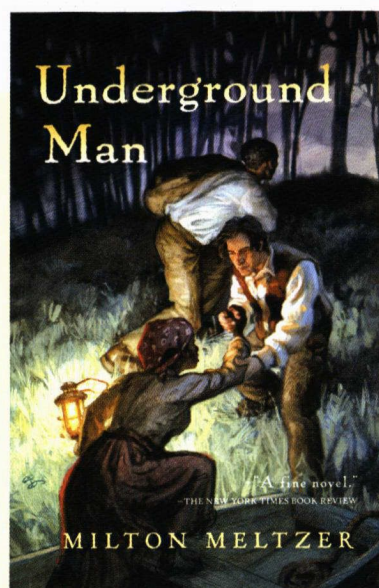
Rebecca groaned.

"I have some good news for you. We are moving back to Norwell." Rebecca was overjoyed. There was only one small problem, she didn't know how she was going to part with Ashley... 

Book Review

By Mason Grande

Underground Man, by Milton Meltzer; Harcourt Children's Books; New York, 2006; \$17



Mason Grande, 10
Glastonbury, Connecticut

MILTON MELTZER'S *Underground Man* is a fictional but historically accurate account of life during the Civil War. Josh, a teenager, leaves his farm home to start a life of his own away from his parents. During his travels, he meets a runaway slave. Josh hears of the horrible conditions and the brutal treatment of slaves by their owners. After learning about this, Josh is inspired to become an abolitionist working to rescue blacks from slavery. It is surprising that the hero in this book, Josh, is Caucasian. I learned many things about the brutal treatment of slaves and how horrible life was for them. I also learned many things about how abolitionists were detested and unpopular by the people of the southern states.

Some specific things that Josh does to free slaves is buying them at auctions and then letting them free. He even puts himself in danger by helping slaves run away from their plantations and owners in the night. I had many reactions during the story. One reaction was that I appreciated Josh's will and determination to try and help prove that all humans should be treated equally.

Josh experiences many things that I could relate to and you will probably too. Josh is confused about what he wants to do with his life. He begins to have disputes with his father over decisions that he makes for Josh. For example, Josh's father secretly signs Josh up for a hat-making apprenticeship when he does not want to do this. One similar experience that I encountered just like Josh is when I have had my parents make me do things against my will. For example, when I wanted to quit an instrument but they made me keep on playing it.

One interesting thing that I never knew was that abolitionists used signs. Josh uses many secret signs and simple objects to signal the people he will help. For example, he uses a blue handkerchief and a bent spoon to signify that help is on the way. I can relate to this because even today in the army ordinary-looking things can signify operations and actions.

Josh encounters important choices and decisions in this story. I thought it was exciting to experience the many life-endangering adventures and quests that Josh encounters until he is captured by guards when he is helping a runaway slave to safety. Thrown into jail with a long sentence hovering over his head a difficult choice must be made by him to continue his beliefs or quit them. As he thinks over his rights and wrongs surprisingly he has his jail sentence shortened. With the choice of a lifetime Josh must decide to accept his fate as an abolitionist or to stop believing in what is right. I was astonished to find out that this story is based on the true life of Calvin Fairbanks. He spent twelve years in jail for what he believed was right. I appreciate and am in awe of the determination and righteousness of this amazing man. ❀



Has anyone else ever noticed that the colors of the sunset are much like those of yogurt?

Fireworks

By Anna Currey

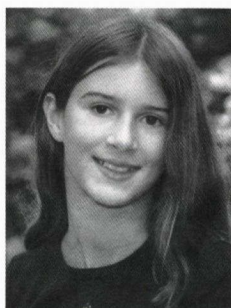
Illustrated by Anne Magnus

IT HAD BEEN five days since Mae had seen another person. It had been five days since she had brushed her hair, taken a shower or changed clothes, and those were just a few of the previously considered necessary things which she had not done since June 30.

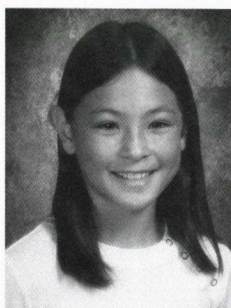
But it would end soon. It had to. She could see the mainland from here, for God's sake! But it was too far to swim, and her only boat was currently smashed against the rocks about a half a mile away. In retrospect, it was really stupid to try to see how close she could go past the rocks without hitting them. She mentally promised to whatever insane, totally unfair god was up there that if—no, when—she got back she would never go out on a boat again. No, that was stupid, because if Mae didn't get back she wouldn't go out in a boat anyway. It seemed it was in God's best interest that she just festered here for the rest of her life.

Of course, she wasn't going to make it easy for him. On the wide part of the beach facing the mainland she had dug, in giant lettering, the words HELP! STRANDED! and a frowny face above it just in case any plane pilots were illiterate. She also had a red towel, rescued from her yacht, that she planned to wave wildly at anything that was or resembled a vessel that could carry humans.

Now she was sitting on the cape, because her green shirt and blue jeans were the most conspicuous with a background of sand. The cape went out high and far enough that she could see all around her little island, making it impossible for a boat



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to go unnoticed. She was eating her dinner now, made up of fiddler crabs, snails, a lettuce-like plant that she hoped was edible, and eggs. The eggs she got from a nest she found in the woods. She had promised herself she would eat only two of them today, but they were too good to resist. She was now eating the last one.

At first she had ignored the idea of finding food, instead depending on getting rescued, but after missing a few meals she changed her mind. There weren't many choices. The Spanish moss, live oaks, palmettos and sea grass all were pretty unpalatable. She tried catching fish, but somehow they always got away. Then she remembered eating crab, and though she had never liked it, the abundance of fiddler crabs along the beach made them all the more appetizing. At first they were like the fish, always dodging away at the last second, but she learned to scoop them up and hold them like she used to hold fireflies she caught in her backyard. She soon found that they were good, though they pinched hard for such little things. She had tried finding clams, but when she actually found one she couldn't figure out how to open it. Then she noticed the snails that were all over the sea grass. Mae had never eaten escargot before, but she remembered the French ate it, so she figured it couldn't be too bad. All over the spiny sea grass in the marshes tear-drop-shaped snails crawled, inching their way through their own tiny world. She could just swoop down and pluck them off one by one. Once she ate some she couldn't

figure out what the French liked about them, but the snails were so easy to catch she felt it would somehow be a waste if she didn't eat them.

Mae knew she couldn't go on like this. It wasn't lack of food, it was lack of people. There was no one to talk to, no one to gossip about, no one. Mae had always known she was an extrovert, and now she was being deprived of her biggest pleasure—people. Without them the world seemed empty and purposeless. Whenever she had eaten enough that she didn't feel hunger gnawing at her stomach, a miracle that rarely occurred, she found that she didn't have the motivation to go on. All she wanted to do was sit on the cape and try to identify the individual buildings that cut the smooth line of water and sky that was the horizon. It took her till she got hungry again to be able to get up and get something done.

The sun was setting now, so Mae decided to stay on the cape even though she was done eating. She had realized that most animals had an obvious advantage over her in the nighttime. They could see her clearly, but she might have no idea they were there. She tried not to go into the woods or the marsh at night, figuring that's where any potential dangerous animals would most likely hang out. She spent all her nights on the beach just above the high tide line with a small fire lit a few feet away (she lit it by using her glasses the way she used to use a magnifying glass to light fires) in case of any nocturnal planes.

Has anyone else ever noticed that the colors of the sunset are much like those of yogurt? It's true. They both have the same subdued, rosy tones. The sky near the horizon, Mae decided, was strawberry flavor, and the big red sun that hovered reluctantly above the skyline was a chunk of strawberry thrown in to make it look less artificial. If you went a little higher the sky became peach yogurt, and even higher the beginnings of night were coming in and a few of the bolder stars were already shining. Mae didn't feel sleepy, so she stayed to watch the whole sunset.


Mae had never been much of a sunset person before. Now, though, sunsets were often the highlight of her day. It was the only time when she didn't have to feel guilty about not doing something else. She could just relax and watch the colors slowly parade across the sky. Now it was officially night because the sun had dipped below the horizon. The sky had remembered it was night too and turned from a bloody red to black, and the rest of the island was in shades of gray instead of color. Still Mae did not go back to her camp on the beach. She had seen something out where the city was, an explosion of color against the lazy night. And another one. The second explosion was followed by a distant wailing sound, like a mix between sirens and popcorn popping. Then she remembered what they were. They were fireworks.

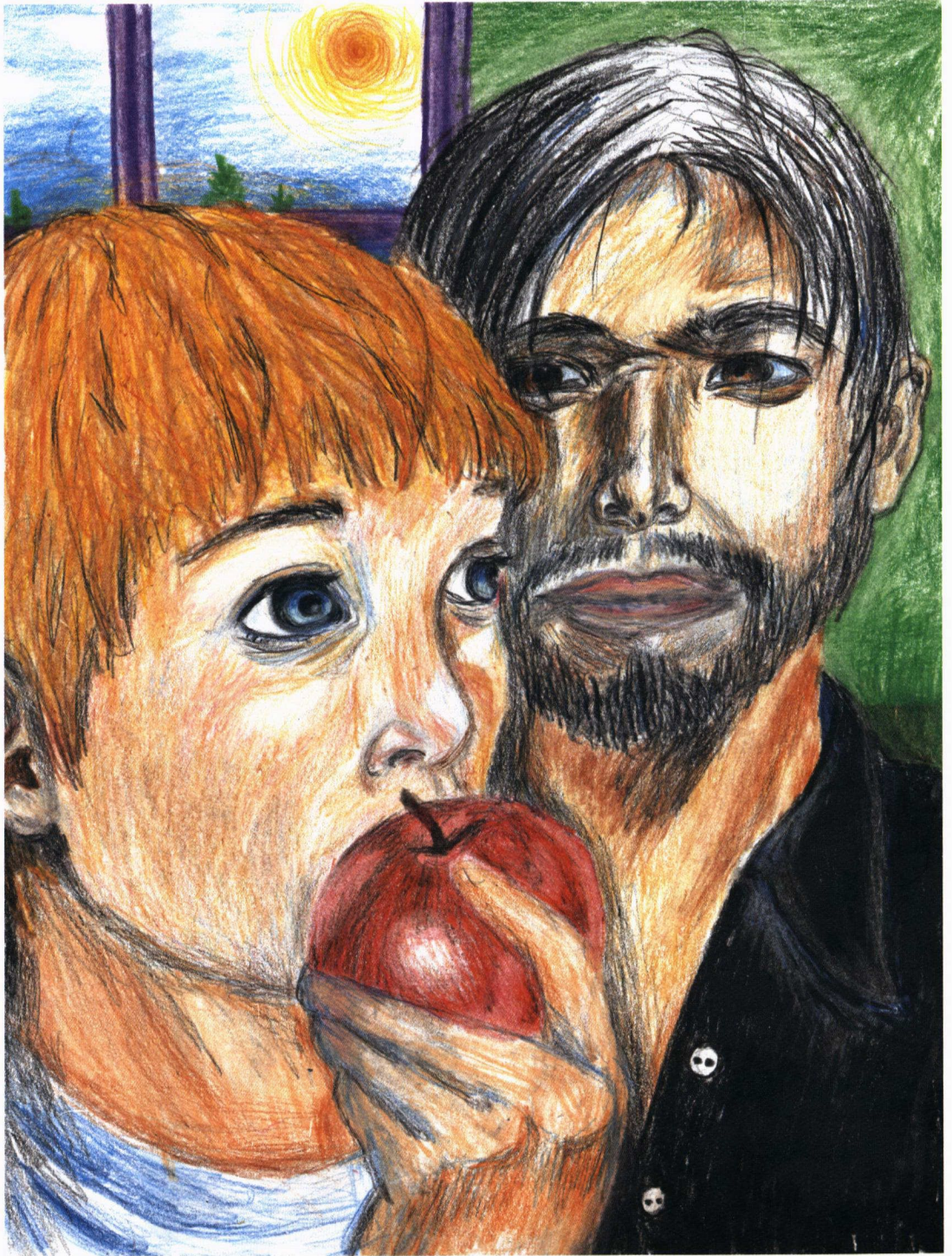
It was hard to connect the things she

was seeing now with the fireworks of her childhood. They were so far away. She could just put up her forefinger and block them out completely and the majority of their sounds never even reached her. But she almost found this even more beautiful than them up close.

She wondered if this was the way life was. Up close, everything is loud and confusing, but once you are distant and impersonal, maybe you can see that life is just beautiful. Maybe that's it. In any way, shape or form, life is beautiful.

Maybe this was the experience God had, getting to watch life from far off, getting to see the big picture. Mae had never given much thought to God before, but her dad was a minister, so she always felt expected to believe in him. So she did, praying every now and then to the mysterious man in the sky. As she grew older she began to doubt him in the way she began to doubt the tooth fairy and the Easter Bunny, but she never worried about it. She didn't really care. Mae had always been more concerned with what was going on here, now. But maybe there was no God. Maybe life was just one, beautiful, amazing circus with no audience. Mae wondered if she was going crazy, because somehow this seemed like the most beautiful thing she had ever heard.

Mae kept on watching the fireworks. Maybe she was crazy, because somehow, in that moment, she didn't think she would mind if she never got saved. 



Then, everything stopped. Except for Turif and Gareth, the world was frozen

The Time Magicians

By Casey Tolan

Illustrated by Sofia deGraff-Ford

SUNLIGHT BEAMED onto Gareth Then's face, forcing him awake.

It was the morning after Gareth had arrived at his Uncle Turif's cabin on the island of Belmopan. The cabin was in a clearing of the isolated Zel Forest, and Turif lived there alone.

Gareth was there against his wishes. Dinner the night before had been a silent, simple meal of meat and greens, and his uncle had turned out to be cold and grouchy.

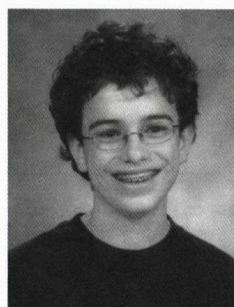
But that wasn't the worst of it: Gareth had seen Turif do Time Magic.

As he lay in the chair that had been his bed, Gareth thought back to the day before, when Turif had used his Magic to speed up a tree in Time, causing it to age and then die in a minute. Gareth shuddered. Time Magic was believed to be evil.

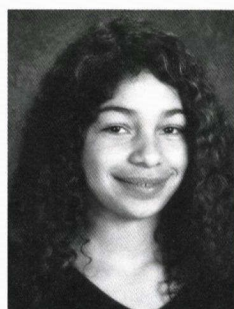
Gareth's father, Seramon, always said that Turif was the black sheep of the family. With cold eyes, Seramon would tell of the day he had found Turif practicing Time Magic, playing with Time itself.

"Bad stuff, Time Magic is," said Seramon. "Normal magic's fine and all; it's OK. Time Magic, though, well you want to keep clear of that. Messing with Time, you never can tell what's going to happen." Luckily for Seramon, Turif was one of the few Time Magicians left in the known world, if not the only one.

Gareth stretched, and listened for any telltale sound that Turif was awake. He heard nothing, and tiptoed across the hall into the kitchen to find something to eat; he decided upon a



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juicy red apple. He bit into it as he tiptoed back across the kitchen—colliding with the scowling Turif.

“Stealing now, are we?” said Turif dryly, stepping past Gareth and into the kitchen. He grabbed a loaf of bread for himself.

“I- I... Gareth stood there, looking at the apple. “I wasn’t trying to steal, U-Uncle. I was just... hungry.”

Turif snorted, munching on the bread. “Well, that apple’s your breakfast, boy,” said Turif. He walked outside into the clearing, calling, “Follow me.”

Turif sat on the trunk of a fallen tree, and motioned for Gareth to do the same. “Boy,” he said, taking a deep breath, “you have potential.”

“What?”

Turif sighed. “Has your father told you nothing?” he muttered.

The boy blinked.

“You’re a Time Magician. Well, not a Time Magician in full,” frowned Turif, considering.

“Wait,” said Gareth. “I’m...” he coughed, “I’m a Time Magician?”

“Are you listening, boy?” hissed Turif. “You have the potential to become one! And I’m going to make sure that that potential is fulfilled.”

“I- I don’t understand.”

Turif stood up and began to pace in irritation. “With my help, you can become a Time Magician,” he said slowly and with a calm that threatened to break at any second. “Then you and I will be the only two Time Magicians in the world.”

“Well, do I have to be one?” asked

Gareth, not fully comprehending the situation.

Turif roared with irritation. He swung his hand in the air, causing the fleeting sound of a stream. Then, everything stopped.

Except for Turif and Gareth, the world was frozen. Butterflies were suspended in the air. The wind ceased to blow, and the birds were silent and held unnaturally still.

“That,” said Turif quietly, “is what you will do when I finish with you.”

Gareth understood.

Still, he was divided. Part of him wanted to accept Turif’s offer, wanted the power of Time Magic. The other heard the echo of his father’s voice: “Bad stuff, Time Magic is...”

As the clearing around him came back into motion, Gareth worried that Seramon was right. Turif was interfering with Time itself, and although it was amazing, it was also terrible.

“Sorry,” replied Gareth, “but I can’t be a Time Magician.”

Turif stared at him.

“I’m not asking you if you want to,” he said, anger edging his voice again. “You *will* be a Time Magician: When I die, the art of Time Magic will die with me if you aren’t. And I’m not about to let that happen.”

Without waiting for a response from Gareth, he stood.

“Your lessons will begin now.”

Gareth began to argue, but Turif’s glare made him decide to cooperate, for now.

“First, you must learn about The River

of Time," Turif said. "It is everywhere, always there, always flowing. Normally, The River flows at a certain speed, and everything is drawn along with it. All Time Magic really does is manipulate it.

"What a Time Magician needs to do is change The River's speed. If you can make it go faster, Time goes faster. And vice versa. You can also make it stop flowing. The only thing you cannot do to The River is reverse it. You cannot go back to the past.

"People around the Magician, even those who are not Magicians themselves, hear The River flow when Time Magic is used."

"That's what I heard yesterday when you sped up the tree!" exclaimed Gareth, excited despite himself. Turif nodded, and continued.

"You never change all of the river. That would take enough power to kill a Magician. What you have to do is manipulate parts of it. For instance, when I stopped Time just now, Time outside of the clearing didn't stop moving. And we weren't frozen in place.

"Time Magic can also have disastrous results. For instance, if I had let Time escape my control it could have frozen the entire forest. Time Magic can be very dangerous.

"And now it's time for you to try feeling The River."

Gareth admitted that Time Magic sounded amazing, but he remembered what Seramon had said. He would pretend to go along, and maybe Turif would forget

the whole thing.

"Sit still," said Turif. "Close your eyes. Don't move. Don't talk. Don't even think. Try to feel The River flowing around you."

Gareth did as he was told, although he was starting to feel a little silly. He tried not to think, but his mind kept wandering. He had to use all of his concentration to think of nothing.

Suddenly, he felt something around him. It felt like water, currents and eddies. He yelped, his concentration shattered.

"I- I felt it," he stammered, his eyes wide. "It felt like water!"

"It was The River," said Turif. "Try again."

After concentrating for a while, Gareth felt it once more. This time, he didn't let The River surprise him. But the longer he concentrated, the harder it got. Finally, he let go of his concentration and opened his eyes, panting. It felt like he had been concentrating for ages.

"That was less than a half minute!" frowned Turif. "You have to be able to do better than that. Try again."

For the next hour or so, Gareth practiced holding onto his concentration. At the end, he was tired, even though he hadn't been fully trying and his concentration never lasted longer than a minute.

Turif was disappointed.

"Well," he said, "it'll have to be good enough. Now, you'll try to control The River." He walked around the clearing, and eventually came back with a fallen tree branch, which he placed next to Gareth. "First, feel The River in your mind."

Gareth concentrated, and soon felt it.

"Now, sense the branch, sense how The River is pulling it along. Sense how the branch is aging in Time."

Gareth thought hard, and surprisingly, he could subconsciously feel The River flowing around the branch.

"Feel each eddy and each current," continued Turif. "Then take hold of one of those currents."

Gareth felt the eddies and the currents, but when he tried to take hold of one, his concentration broke.

"Try harder!" yelled Turif, irritated. "Catch the currents with your mind, boy! That's the magic of it, the reaching out with your mind. You have potential; you can do it. Pretend that your mind is another hand. Reach out with it, but only when your concentration is complete."

Gareth tried again, but failed. In the end, he was totally exhausted.

"Hmmmm..." muttered Turif, thinking. Then an idea came to him. "Maybe the branch is too big. Go take a rest and have a snack, then come back here and we'll try again."

Obliging, Gareth went to the cabin. In a few moments, he was asleep in a chair.

AFTER GARETH woke up and had another apple, he decided to try again. Even though he didn't intend to become a Time Magician, he was curious.

"Let's try something small," said Turif, picking a blade of grass and setting it on the tree trunk next to Gareth, who eyed it incredulously. *A blade of grass?*

"When we finish training today, you will be able to make this blade of grass wither far faster than it would normally. Now, do what you have been doing, but concentrate harder."

Gareth concentrated, but immediately felt nauseous.

"Ohhhhhhhhh..." He moaned in pain and discomfort.

"Stop groaning, boy," shouted Turif. "You're just feeling the aftereffects of using Time Magic! Once you're used to it, you won't feel anything. Now concentrate!"

Mad at Turif for yelling at him, Gareth wanted to prove that he could do it. He tried again and again, but failed each time; the nausea got worse as he kept trying. Turif egged him on, and didn't let him stop until well past noon. Gareth was exhausted, angry, and sick.

"Pitiful," spat Turif disgustedly, shaking his head. "When I was your age, I could stop Time for minutes on end without getting sick at all. You're weak, just like your father."

Then Gareth cracked.

"How dare you!" he shouted at Turif, jumping up in rage. "My father isn't weak, and neither am I! Who cares about Time Magic, who cares if you're the last Time Magician in the world?"

For a second, a shocked look came over Turif's face. Then anger replaced it.

"What are you going to do, then, boy?" he hissed. "Without me, you'd be in the middle of a brewing war! You'll do as I say. Sit down and be quiet, now, or you'll



As the cat bore down on him, all he could do was watch in terror

regret it!”

Gareth was too angry to do anything. He seethed and stood eye-to-eye with Turif. It was as if Turif had stopped Time again.

Gareth turned away. Anger boiling within, he stomped from the clearing, not knowing where he was going; somewhere, anywhere was better than being with Turif.

He crashed through the foliage. He decided he wouldn't stop until he got to the edge of Belmopan, and then he would run and run and run all the way across the Vanere Sea and back to his parents in Daria, his home.

But a war was brewing on the mainland, between his home country of Aargaria and their age-old enemies, the Nadere Empire.

Because of the danger, Seramon and Gareth's mother, Tara, had sent Gareth away to the neutral island of Belmopan, where Turif lived. Although Seramon hated Turif, he was the family's only relative, and he would (hopefully) keep Gareth safe.

But now, he ran and ran and...

Smack! Gareth ran straight into what seemed to be a strange-shaped tree. He backed away, rubbing his bruised forehead, and prepared to run on. But then the tree started to move.

It arranged itself, and turned to face Gareth. It was a huge, cat-like thing with dark brown fur, which gave it the impression of a tree trunk. Its eyes were golden and full of anger at being awoken. It yelped, and jumped at Gareth.

Fear paralyzed him. As the cat bore

down on him, all he could do was watch in terror. And then...

The cat-thing stopped in mid-leap, less than a foot away from Gareth's face. It was frozen in Time, along with a small area of forest. Gareth was also frozen, and this time not with fear.

Turif stepped into the frozen space slowly, keeping a bubble of moving Time around him.

"What have you gotten yourself into now, boy?" he asked with a hint of laughter. He came level with Gareth, and looked at him, considering.

"Why did you run off like that?" Gareth could not answer, of course. "Cat's got your tongue?" laughed Turif.

He pushed the cat-thing down, until it was lying on the ground. Then he released his hold on The River around Gareth, letting him move once again. The cat-thing, however, was still frozen.

"Y- You saved me," he breathed, checking himself, making sure he was all right.

"Now do you believe in the power of Time Magic?" asked Turif, smiling slightly.

"Uncle Turif," said Gareth, "I felt the magic when you froze Time. I should have trusted you when you said I have potential."

"I suppose I've been too hard on you," replied Turif. "It's just that... well, after spending many years by myself, I sort of forgot how to be kind. And I couldn't let you not become a Time Magician.

"Now," he continued, "let's go back to the cabin and call it a day. Tomorrow we'll start practicing again."

"I promise I'll do my best!" said Gareth.

They left the spot, Turif letting the Time Magic go. The cat-thing lay on the ground, confused and disoriented. It curled up, and went to sleep once more.

FOR THE NEXT few days, Turif and Gareth practiced. The former was trying to be kinder, and the latter was giving it his all. No longer was dinner silent, and the two were starting to become friends. Gareth even read a few of the books on Time Magic in Turif's library, and was getting better and better at the art.

Three days after the cat-thing incident, the message bird arrived. It alighted on Turif's arm. "Turif Arnolged Pastest. One message for Turif Arnolged Pastest. Would that be you?" Its voice was loud and surprisingly nasal.

Message birds did not literally carry messages like homing pigeons, with the note tied around their legs. Instead, the sender of the message related it to the bird, and the bird remembered the message. Then using some unknown magic, it found the message's recipient and recited it.

"Yes..." replied Turif to the bird, sounding concerned.

"This message is from Queen Elisa Barona Simonia." Gareth's eyes grew wide. The Queen of Belmopan? Turif obviously had some secrets.

"Message begins: Turif! Nadere has officially declared war. I must send our troops to Aargaria to aid them. Come to the castle at once. I will deploy the troops

in one hour whether you are here or not. Aargaria must be helped! Message ends.”

For a second, there was silence. Turif was numb with shock, and Gareth was confused, trying to figure out the strange message.

The message bird broke their silence. “Will there be a reply message?”

Turif jumped into action, tossing the bird into the air. “Tell her I will be there and that she must not enter the war! Now go! Fly fast!” He ran into the cabin. The message bird fluttered around, then took off, muttering something about humans that did not sound like a compliment.

“What was that about?” Gareth asked Turif, following him into the kitchen. Turif was packing a bag of food for himself.

He said hurriedly, “Gareth, you must stay here. Do not leave the clearing until I return. I’ll probably be gone overnight, but you’ll be fine. I’ll see you soon.” Before Gareth could ask more, Turif ran through the house and out of the clearing, already formulating a spell to make Time around

him flow faster.

Gareth stood there, not knowing what to do. He thought of what the message bird had said. “Nadere has officially declared war. I must send troops to Aargaria.” Something clicked in his mind.

Nadere had declared war on Aargaria.

And Daria, his home, would soon be in the middle of a war zone.

Miles and miles away from the conflict, Gareth felt helpless, totally helpless. How could he help stop Nadere from attacking his homeland? He was only a child; he had no power.

Or did he?

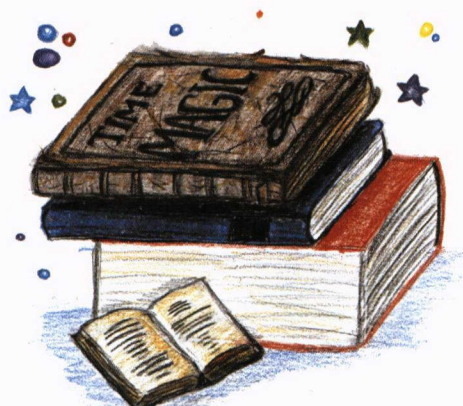
Gareth knew what he needed to do.

He ran through the house and grabbed his bag, some food, a canteen of water, and—after a slight hesitation—one of Turif’s Time Magic books.

Gareth looked around the cabin once more. He took a deep breath, then stepped into the clearing.

Aargaria was waiting.

Gareth was coming.



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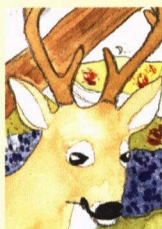
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