

# Stone Soup

*The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists*



*"Making Straw Hats," by Yu Zi Qwen, 12, Changhua, Taiwan*

## THE STRAWBERRY OLYMPICS

Ryan and Chad are like brothers after a super-fun day together

## DIAMOND SKY

When girls turn 13 in Sophie's family, they get a magnificent surprise

*Also:* Two book reviews about the experiences of Asian-Americans

MARCH/APRIL 2007

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*The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists*

VOLUME 35, NUMBER 4

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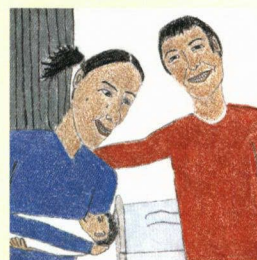
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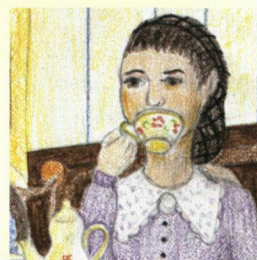
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# Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists

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



# The Mailbox



LBP, 9

By the time this letter reaches you, I will be fourteen years old and no longer eligible for any more submissions to *Stone Soup*. Thank you so much for giving me and hundreds of other children around the world this opportunity to get their drawings, stories, poems, and reviews published. I have greatly enjoyed these past years submitting to your magazine. The excitement of getting to see my work in a published magazine and getting paid for it at such a young age is indescribable. Please don't ever stop this magazine. It is the best one for young aspiring writers, like me. Thank you again.

**LAUREN MACGUIDWIN, 14**  
*McLean, Virginia*

*Lauren's poem, "Moonbeams," appeared in our March/April 2006 issue.*

Oh, how fast the seasons have passed! Still, *Stone Soup* has remained my favorite cup of hot cocoa for the soul. I love snuggling up with the latest issues on evenings, especially now that the temperature is dropping quite considerably. Reading and musing over the creative, yet original, pieces of artwork and writing has become the perfect way for me to unwind after a lengthy, hectic day. In fact, it has become a daily tradition, one that I most enjoy and look forward to.

**NING ADRIALLYN LIU, 12**  
*Tucker, Georgia*

In the November/December 2006 issue I was blown away by the fabulous drawings by Anton Dymtchenko. It's just amazing how a kid can do anything when they try.

**MICHELLE KRICHEVSKAYA, 11**  
*Chicago, Illinois*

I just wanted to say that I really enjoyed the story "Of Governesses and Greasers" by Adam Rowe [November/December 2006]. I liked how the ship's name—the *RMS Titanic*—wasn't mentioned until the last sentence. It made a nice ending. The illustration by Annalise Nurme was very good, and the detail made the drawing look real. I loved the innocent look on Lacey's face—it's so cute!

**ALEXIS COLLEEN HOSTICKA, 12**  
*West Chicago, Illinois*

*Alexis's story, "A Hidden Love," appears on page 23 of this issue.*

I wanted to thank you for making such a wonderful magazine. I always feel inspired by the fact that other kids can send in stories or poems and get them published. I especially like all of the animal stories that you print. From reading quite a few of the stories, you can easily see that furry friends are a big part of many children's lives.

**ELLE DAVIS, 13**  
*Fox Point, Wisconsin*

*Elle's story, "Isabelle," appears on page 31 of this issue.*

I love reading the writing at [stonesoup.com](http://stonesoup.com). It always inspires me and pushes me to do better. It made a big difference in my life because now I know that I'm not the only one that does this as a hobby. My parents said that kids write and draw better than most adults that even write and draw for a living. And I believe them. They say it's because children don't get embarrassed. Thank you for publishing this magazine!

**SARAH BRYAN, 11**  
*Merced, California*

**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 want 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.





*I am already breaking away, but not quite as rapidly as I would like*



# Flying

By Margaret Bryan

Illustrated by Olga Todorova

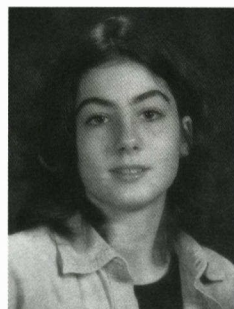
## STARTING LINE

**I** ROLL MY HEAD from side to side in an attempt to be nonchalant. My teammates look at me questioningly, and then ask, "Can we go now?" impatiently. I nod vaguely, lead them in a jog for about thirty meters, then turn around and run briskly back to the starting line. Once there I straighten my tie-dyed knee socks and perform an exaggerated walk in place. I glance at my teammates, making sure only five of our runners are in the front row and checking to see that everyone's shoe-laces are tied. I focus my gaze ahead as a man walks out before the competitors and gives a brief introduction, giving the usual instructions of there being two commands, one which is vocal, and then the sound of the gun. The man disappears in the herd of runners, and another walks out.

He utters the familiar phrase, "Runners set." There is a brief pause, and then the resounding sound of a pistol pierces the air. I am off.

## RUNNING

**T**HE SIGHT OF the other runners disappears in a flash, and the grass is rolling under my feet. My sneakers are white trimmed with red, accenting my maroon socks and uniform flawlessly. I glance back quickly as I round the bend; I am already breaking away, but not quite as rapidly as I would like. I pick up my pace, knowing that once I reach the woods I may slow down to my 3K pace and compensate for my overly swift start.



Margaret Bryan, 12  
Holden, Maine



Olga Todorova, 12  
Plovdiv, Bulgaria

I leap over the railroad tracks and head toward the pond, only slightly aware of the crowd standing on either side of me, applauding politely. Leaping over an obstacle reminds me of a book written by one of my favorite authors, and I run through the plot briefly in my head; anything to keep my mind off the rhythm of my breathing or the length of my strides, so that I may just enjoy the run and feel the wind rushing against my face. It's a chilly day, and it will be even colder in the woods, so I pump my arms vigorously to keep the warmth flooding through my body.

The pond is calm today, the water a calico sheet of tranquility. My breathing is shallow, so I concentrate on the tune of a beloved song and transform my jagged inhalation into a placid rhythm. I swivel my head, hopefully for the last time during this run, and am relieved to note that the other competitors are hardly in sight now. I relax my muscles and move briskly toward the edge of the forest.

As I enter the kingdom of greenery and timber a slight breeze rustles ever so slightly through the trees. My energy is repeatedly replenished by this mellow gust of wind, and I continue on down the woodland path before me. There are no other sounds save the languid tones of my sneakers slapping the ground with ease, and I seem to not even be aware when the terrain ascends and I begin to run on an uphill slope.

In time I see a clearing up ahead, and feel a twinge of regret that I am leaving the peaceful solitude of the forest's haven,

but it is only slight for I know that the finish line is near. As I approach the source of the sunlight and the crowd standing in the midst of it I alter my running style. I allow my breathing to become slightly more labored, and increase the length of my strides, no longer placing them in front of me in a carefree and thoughtful fashion, but in a deliberate and competitive manner, trying to look as though all I have been thinking about the entire race is a blue ribbon. For I am now exiting the woodland sanctuary in which I may camouflage with my surroundings and enjoy the scenery. Now I am a runner, and am human once more. I feel pain in my legs, and a familiar sensation of exhaustion as I round the bend, and see clearly ahead of me the true definition of a cross-country course, linear and concise in its layout.

#### FLYING

I HEAR A ROAR of applause as I enter the clearing, and dimly note the crowd of spectators on either side of me, some of them wearing uniforms like myself, whereas others are garbed in merely everyday apparel. There is the part of me that notices them, that is for certain. But there is another portion of my being that is oblivious to my surroundings completely. Suddenly the coldness of the day is nothing, and I no longer have to squint to shield the sun from penetrating my lashes. I no longer feel the fatigue in my legs, and exhaustion is no longer a factor. My awareness of leaping over the railroad tracks on the way back is minor, and the



sight of the finish line inconsequential. I am flying, but without the need of wings. Spreading a vast drapery of brightly colored plumage is utterly unnecessary; for I am already soaring through the air effortlessly, unconscious of my environment, hardly feeling my feet hit the soil repetitively. I am impregnable.

And then the sensation is gone, and I see the finish chute thirty yards ahead.

#### FINISH LINE

I CROSS THE powdery white strip on the grass at a clocking of nine minutes and eighteen seconds. I sway to the side slightly and then regain my balance, breathing deeply as I stroll down the walkway, my hand skimming the rope fencing on either side of me for a sense of support. My mother approaches on the other side of the finish chute and I greet her, bringing a hand over my brow dramatically to give her an understanding of my fatigue. A race official hands me a Popsicle stick depicting the number one, and I accept it with a brief murmur

of thanks. One of my parents hands me my water bottle, and I take a swig from it appreciatively. Immediately my strength is restored, and I jog across the field to watch my teammates finish the race. Then a sudden thought strikes me.

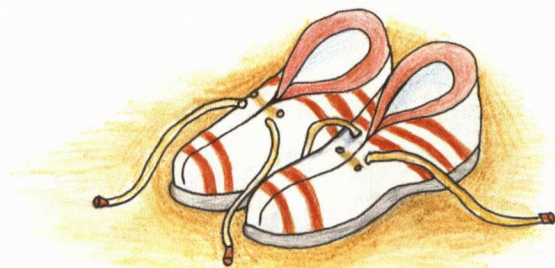
The memory of something that occurred only a few moments ago. I could hardly call it running—more like the vague recollection of soaring through the air, like a bird in its lazy state of being airborne.

I am curious; perhaps it will happen again? Probably not, but it's possible, isn't it? It won't hurt to try and find out.

With that, I sprint across the grassy lawn once more, pumping my arms powerfully, inhaling autumn's aroma rhythmically, concentrating on nothing in particular; just letting the wind rush against my face, making myself oblivious to sound. And running just because I want to.

And as this sentence flashes through my brain, it happens. A subtle change in the atmosphere, and the sensation of feeling light and airy, the ground so far below.

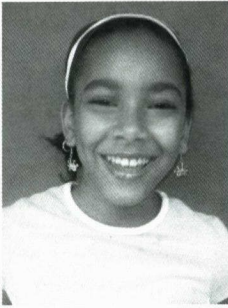
I. Am. Flying.



# Zachary

By Adanma Raymond

*Illustrated by* Jena Ritchey



Adanma Raymond, 12  
Cascade, Trinidad and Tobago,  
West Indies



Jena Ritchey, 13  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

AS MEL PICKED UP the phone, my freshly bitten fingernails dug into the wooden carvings that decorated our antique chaise lounge. But the look he gave me after a few seconds made my heart sink for the gazillionth time that evening. Why weren't they calling? As he hung up the phone, Mel let out a long, long sigh. "It was Ms. Connelly, she wants to know if we have her ladder still, go and check won't you?" Mel's voice sounded bored.

I was about to leave our living room when the phone rang once more. This time, there was no disappointment on Mel's face.

"Dad!" cried Mel. "What's going on, is Mom OK?" Before my father could answer, I was on the kitchen phone shooting out questions a mile a minute.

My father's hearty laughter boomed from the phone, "Your mother is fine, children, and so is your new brother, Zachary."

I swear that when I heard those words, the sky lit up. My new brother! A long eight months ago, our parents had told us that we should expect a new addition to the family. Since then life seemed to drag, waiting for my new sibling. And now, now he was alive, a new child in the world. My brother.

Mel revved up his red Honda and we were on our way to the hospital. I sat in the front seat, looking out of the window and imagining my new brother. Zachary would have lovely, chocolatey-brown skin, with jet-black curls sprouting up all over his head. He would have sparkling brown eyes, and rosy cheeks. He





*Tears of joy streamed down my cheeks as my father offered him to me*

would be a gorgeous baby. He was mine.

"Mom!" I ran into the hospital room excitedly.

"Sam! Sweetie, come look at our Zachary!" I turned around and there, in my father's arms, was the most adorable baby I had ever seen. He was just what I imagined and more. His long, black eyelashes quivered as he blinked and began to stare at me. Tears of joy streamed down my cheeks as my father offered him to me. I agreed, and held out my arms. His soft body was now cradled in my arms and he looked up at me and

chuckled with his small little mouth. Too scared of dropping him, I handed him back to my mother who smiled at me warmly.

"Don't worry, you have to get used to holding a newborn."

I played with Zachary for a bit and then the nurse said my mother had to do some tests, so did the baby.

We were about to leave when I felt something tugging on my finger. It was Zachary's little fist. I turned to him with tears in my eyes and whispered, "Don't worry, I'll *always* be there for you." ❁





*They were strawberries, decadent and juicy. At that moment I knew I was ready to compete*



# The Strawberry Olympics

By **Ryan Gallof**

*Illustrated by* **Rebecca Dutta**

**L**OOKING BACK AT THIS I realize how important Chad was and still is to me. I realized that he was no longer Chase's little brother, and was now my cousin that I loved, no, my brother that I loved.

I always loved going to Atlanta to visit my family. Well, mostly the Sittens. Let me rephrase that, I always couldn't wait to see Chase. The Sittens are my mom's identical twin's family. I loved hanging out with Chase, the oldest son. I saw him as an older brother more than anything.

My second mom, Aunt Kathy, suggested that we go strawberry picking at the largest strawberry farm in Atlanta.

"It's the biggest one in Georgia," Chase stated.

"Yay!" Chad shouts in joy and remembrance of his previous times there.

"Sure I'll go," I said.

That's when my mom starts giving out orders.

"OK, you get the sunscreen, you get the baskets."

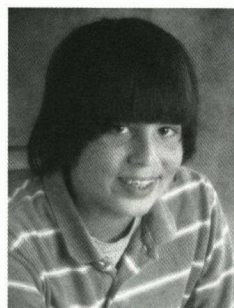
"Mom, they give you baskets there."

"Oh, OK, never mind," she said, sounding disappointed that she was incorrect, like a child on Christmas without gifts.

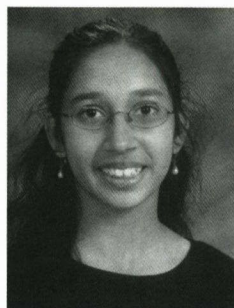
Then she forgot that disappointment and we were all happy to go.

I jumped in the back of the van right next to Chad. All he could talk about was how much fun we were going to have.

"We're gonna eat as many as we can. We're gonna see who can get the most in a minute, who can eat their whole basket



Ryan Gallof, 13  
West Chester, Ohio



Rebecca Dutta, 13  
Fremont, California

the fastest. We'll call it, the Strawberry Olympics," Chad said so proudly to think of the name.

"Wow, that sounds so boring. Why would somebody think of something that boring?" Chase mentioned like he knew everything.

He didn't.

Once we arrived there and decided what game was first, we got our buckets and began picking. I decided that I was going to ignore Chase and finally side with Chad. Chad and I were going to co-alesce for the first time. I was new to sid-ing with Chad, but what Chad said in the car sounded like there was nothing more fun in the world.

"Dude, I'm leaving you kiddies. I'm not gonna play your stupid games. See ya," he yelled across the farm.

Chase went to go on and do his own thing.

At first I leisurely picked strawberries. It was a warm-up for the games. I went to put the first strawberry in my mouth and I had this mouth-watering sensation. It was like all the colors of the world were blurry and all I could see was a strawberry and picture how good that tasted. They were strawberries, decadent and juicy. At that moment I knew I was ready to compete.

"OK. Let's see who can fill up their basket first?"

"Fine with me. I just don't want you to cry when you lose," I exclaimed, assured of my victory.

I ran down the rows of strawberries picking as many as I could. I looked over

just to see Chad doing the same three rows down. My confidence grew smaller every time I looked over, but I knew I could come through. Just at that moment I heard...

"Done!"

Chad had beaten me. I was upset for the loss but I kept my head up high for the next event.

"Now it's my turn to pick the event," I said, knowing that I had to pick an event that I knew I could win, otherwise I would be down two to zero. That was a margin I couldn't overcome.

"Let's see... How about whoever can eat the most strawberries in one minute. You up for the challenge?"

"Let's see who's crying after this one."

"Ready... Set... Go!"

The minute had started and I was eating away. I watched the clock carefully to make sure I was going to pace myself to not get too full and not be able to keep going. Then I glanced over at Chad. I saw he dropped one on his shirt and the juice from the bottom of the bucket was leaking all over his pants. I burst into laughter.

"Ha ha, Chad!!!!" I couldn't help but laugh at him not noticing that he looked like a giant, red, strawberry himself.

Once he realized how much I was laughing he couldn't help but laugh. By this time the look on my face just made laughter and joy explode into Chad. I think he blew a bubble with his nose. He just couldn't control himself. (At that age everything was funny.) We both simply lay there with not a care in the world about



who won. Now it was simply about having a great time.

We decided that the games were no longer needed to have fun. Even though Chase said that the games were dumb and we actually only finished one event he still wasn't right. So then we just sat there and enjoyed each other's company.

"I'm so glad you could come down."

"I know, usually we can only come during the holidays but I'm glad I got to come in the summer," I said, just happy to be near my family.

"C'mon guys," Aunt Kathy shouted as a signal to get us all in the car.

"Oh man!" we all yelled back.

We then all followed her to the car and thanked the owner of the farm as we left.

"I got the back seat," I yelled, hoping the louder I yelled the better chance I have of getting it.

"Fine, I got shotgun," Chase stated in protest.

As Chad and I settled in the back of the car I knew Chase was going to send a wisecrack my way.

And he did.

"So how was the Strawberry Olympics?" he says in a baby voice.

"It was so much fun."

"Yeah, we had a great time. Sorry you couldn't join us... not," Chad throws an insult at his older brother.

Chase sits, disgusted that he doesn't have a comeback. Chad and I just sit in the back of the car so happy that we could do something this fun.

"Dude, we should ditch Chase more often," I said.

"Ha ha, yeah man."

Chad and I just ramble on and on about how much fun we had. It was one of the greatest eye-opening experiences of my life. Not to mention one of the most fun. We continued to laugh and play in the back of Aunt Kathy's car until we got back to his house.

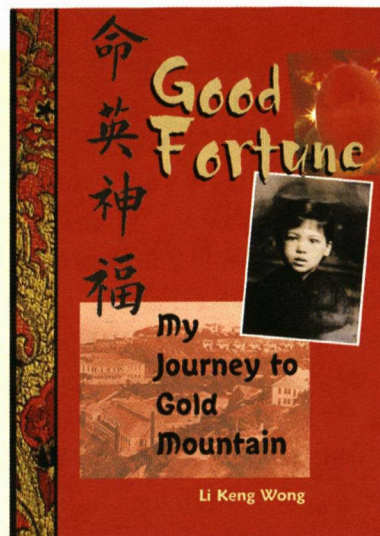
This one moment in time then, was only a fun outing. Now this moment speaks to my heart. I now realize how important Chad is. Now I don't just have one brother in Chase but two with Chad. ❀



# Book Review

By Mallory Xiaohe McFarland

*Good Fortune, My Journey to Gold Mountain,*  
by Li Keng Wong; Peachtree Publishers:  
Atlanta, Georgia, 2006; \$14.95



Mallory Xiaohe McFarland, 10  
New York, New York

HAVE YOU EVER READ a book that grasps you from the first page and won't let go until you have finished reading it? *Good Fortune, My Journey to Gold Mountain*, is one of them. You will feel like you are not in this world. You will feel as if you are experiencing Li Keng's world, and that you are part of the story you read at that moment.

I stayed up late to read and was enchanted by what I read. Li Keng Gee, who's seven years old in the beginning, and who tells the story, is also the author—she is now Li Keng Wong. Mama, Li Hong (Li Keng's older sister), Lai Wah (their youngest sister) and Li Keng herself, all go to Gold Mountain, what the Chinese called America, on board the *SS Hoover* to live with Baba. But before they, and the other women as well, are allowed to enter America, they are interrogated by the officials.

They are questioned because the American government doesn't want tons of poor people coming to America, taking up space, and not having enough money to support themselves. If you don't get all the answers right, you are deported back to China. Also, a Chinese laborer isn't allowed to bring his wife into the states, so what does Mama do to get to California? She pretends to be Baba's sister, and so her three daughters start calling Mama "Yee." Yee means Aunt in Chinese.



Once they are in America, they join Baba in his store—an illegal lottery business. Since gambling is against the law, the owners disguise their stores by making them look like clothing stores for example. But every so often, the police find out about a lottery store, and they arrest the owner. This happens to Baba a few times, but he is out of jail soon. Baba's store is large-ish, so he plans to have the family live there instead of renting another place.

Mama gives birth to Nellie, their first child born in America. Then Leslie and Florence come into the family as well. All times, the whole family prays to Quan Yin, the Chinese goddess of Mercy, that she will grant their family a boy. Giving birth to a boy means two things: one, the son will carry the family name, and two, he and his wife will take care of his parents when they grow old. So it is good to have a son, and the Chinese culture still believes in it. When Mama gives birth to William, they are all happy to finally have a boy.

The tradition of wanting a boy is still important in China because of the one-child policy. I was born in China, and I don't like the policy. Even though China's one-child policy is supposed to prevent overpopulation, I hate it that parents have to abandon their babies.

This is common: if Chinese families give birth to a girl, they keep the girl and try for a son. If the next child is a girl (probably me), they abandon the newest baby in some busy place, and try again for a son. Some of the baby girls who are abandoned are adopted and come to America. Li Keng and I both came to America for a better life.

*Good Fortune* is a great book! The words are beautifully woven together, and the way Wong shares her childhood in this book is amazing. I highly recommend it to all who are ages eight and up. I loved this book, and I hope you all do too. ❀

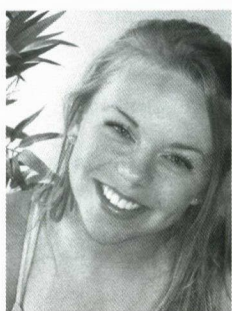
# Diamond Sky

By **Sophie Stid**

*Illustrated by* **Ashley Burke**



Sophie Stid, 13  
Menlo Park, California



Ashley Burke, 13  
Cedar Park, Texas

**A**SKI DAY means up at dawn. Dozy, half-awakening, drifting in and out of dreams. The flannel is warm, and the mattress is cloudy soft.

But it's up, sliding out of the billowy world of down blankets and fleecy comforters. Feet scrunch on the thick creamy carpet, hands reach for that glass of water you never finished last night. You sip it, slowly, in the dusky corner of the blue-and-teak room where the world is hovering between dusk and dawn. You gaze out at the pines, the softly falling snow, and the moose tracks like a finger drawn through icing. The room is dark and quiet, and the chair by the window is cold. Feet curl under, and cardinal birds flap in your stomach like it is Christmas. Your hair, morning-messy, falls over one shoulder. It's too early to think or do or say. This is the time to sit and sip and look out at the awakening world. This is the time for blue-and-teak quiet.

The snow ceases to fall, and now it's gray, but more like the English gray. Gray like a gull's wing, gray with snow waiting to fall. And you hate to leave the chair by the window, hate to acknowledge the fact that it's five AM and you aren't sleeping, but you have to. So you slip on a sweatshirt, open the door to let in a slice of the rest of the house, a slice big enough for you to slip out. You walk across honey-wood floors in the kitchen, turn on the lights. Your sister Grace pops out from the pantry, making you jump.

"Never. Do. That. Again. Before. Eight AM."

"What're you doing up?" your sister asks. She knows perfectly





*You don't know why or how or when you'll get home but for now all you need is this*

well, but she also knows that you are incapable of full sentences before 10:30 in the morning during vacation.

"Too. Early. Lemme alone. Pop-Tarts. To pop. Shoes. To buy. Places to ski. Move."

She moves. Strawberry Pop-Tarts are sweet and sugary in your hand, warm and

golden from the toaster. You eat them your special way, peeling the icing off, licking the jam. Gross, but otherwise it's bad luck. Doesn't everyone know that?

The kitchen begins to hum, and it's still too early to talk, and you know people will tease and make fun of your inani-



mate self if you stay. So you go, curling up on the stairs, which is very strange, but it's too early to care. And then, when the gray gray sky begins to let down the snow again, people—girls—get ready. Ski boots and ski pants and parkas. Masks, which you never wear because you managed to actually find a cute ski hat in Teton Village last week, which is amazing. Soon you are in the garage, dressed and warm and with both gloves on, and you have no idea how you got there. You open your mouth to object, but someone—your older sister Lindsay—crams a scarf around your neck. You sadly realize that the cute hat is not on your own head, but when you begin to speak, you get a mouthful of red wool. So you kick Lindsay, and she kicks you back, but gently, because she is seventeen, and it's time for ski boots, ski poles, cross country skis. Someone complains about you being so still, but you don't care as long as boots are on your feet and skis are on the boot and you actually have ski poles and you know today is ski day. Ski Day, talked about all your life, always secret, but today you find out, because it is the holidays, and the day before Christmas Eve, and yesterday was your thirteenth birthday.

"Hush! Hush!" The whispers circle around the drafty concrete garage, and boots stamp and your toes tingle. Grace and Lindsay and all the other cousins, aunts, moms, veterans of this. But for you—it is new, it is new, and you're beginning to wake up, and the cardinals in your stomach flutter once or twice. And you

feel sorry for your sister Mimi, only ten years old, stuck in bed, but that was you all your life. Until now.

And the garage door opens. Creaky, groaning, *will it break?* One by one the figures file out, and when it is your turn excitement is salty on your lips. Skis slip from garage to snow, and you tilt your face up to the pink-and-gray sky, and the gray snow, and you laugh out loud, and it is like a baptism, pure and sacred and holy, snow on your face and shoulders, snowflakes melting on the black leather gloves. And because you can't help yourself, you catch one on your tongue, and the cold shocks. And you are fully, fully awake, for the first time in your life at 6:30 AM, because how could you not be?

You follow everyone, side-slipping down the steep side of the driveway. She wasn't supposed to, but Grace, fifteen and competitive and a downhill skier, has been taking you outside ever since the snow started in November, teaching you how. You hear her voice in your head, "*Side, Sophie, side and back, skis straight, hold—do it right! Don't embarrass me!*" and you do it right, and Grace turns her blond head around to wink one brown eye. "*Good job, Soph!*" Lindsay catches on, the wink is obvious, but Queen Linds just laughs and holds her head higher.

You ski all day, across rivers and down trails and forging the trails on vast expanses of plains where you pick wildflowers in the summer. The world is different, transformed, under this mantle of powdery white, and it has been for two months but



you have been too busy to notice. But now you do, and your breath is shallow. You are awed, aware of the sacred, quiet, still, pure beauty, and you want to shout. You want to shout, and run as fast as you can for as long as you can, spinning and arms spread wide, *freefreefree*, but you don't because that would shatter the sacred holiness of this place, and you would never do that.

After the lunch of salami and bagels you get tired, but you don't dare say a word. Grace is just ahead. You close your eyes, and ignore the frozen nose and toes, and the snow that lands on your nose and makes it colder. You tough it out, until you don't notice it any more. And then you notice the gray gray sky and the pine trees tall and soft and powdered over with snow. And you are so far from all civilization, no fences, no houses or telephone poles or cars and you love it. But Grace is getting bored, so you tell her a quick funny story about school and everyone laughs. Aunt Emily, who complained about you in the garage, laughs too. "A comic," she says.

"No," your mother says, "a peacemaker."

"No," you say, "someone who is wondering when we'll get there." You would rather be a supermodel than any of those things.

"Soon," Suzy says.

You tilt your head back to look at the sky, and soon it grows dark, and the stars begin to smile through the snow.

"Soon," everyone is saying, refreshed and revived and exhilarated.

And then Amy and Sybelle and Mia whip a blindfold around you, and you scream, the world muffled to your eyes.

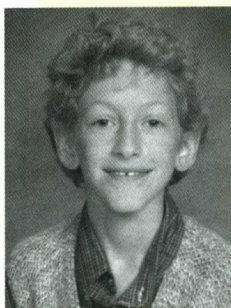
Hands touch your feet, and socks are jerked off and on, and your feet recoil in the cold air, your red toenails very red.

"Come," says your mother. "Come." And she and the aunts take your hands, everyone else following. You're turned around, and the blindfold is taken off, and you look back into the corridor of pine trees down which you came, candles stuck in the snow, and it is so beautiful, so achingly beautiful as some things are, that the cardinal moves into your heart and fans his wings. And you're turned around to face where you're going, and oh my lord!

An ice-skating rink is in the middle of nowhere, a pond really, iced over, with candles all along the edges and in the trees, and it is so crazy, so beautiful, you cannot believe what you're seeing, and the cardinal in your heart soars into song. Unconsciously you begin to skate, and you circle around and around, one leg following the other, effortlessly. Everyone else skates too, and you tilt your head back to laugh, but you stop mid-smile because the stars! The stars are glinting through the black night sky, the cold hard black diamond sky, so sharp, so clear that you have to wrap your arms around you so you don't fall apart with all the raw, pure, wild beauty. Arms around yourself, skating in a circle, you don't know why or how or when you'll get home but for now all you need is this. This is enough, this is what you need. This is vital. And you hold yourself, and you shudder, and you finish your laugh, head thrown back, and drinking in the cold hard black diamond sky. ❄️

# The Canal Towpath Near Sand Island on a September Afternoon

By Rory Lipkis



Rory Lipkis, 9  
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

A solitary autumn leaf rustles on a tree.  
Slowly, gracefully it floats down, twirling,  
silently meeting the dense dappled shimmer  
of still water.

Overhead, distant vees of geese appear.  
Their faint raucous cries float on a soft breeze.  
Sticks weave around rocks to form  
warm tables where turtles sunbathe languidly.  
Dragonflies swoop and hover like sylphs  
admiring their likenesses in the mirroring water.  
Lithe water striders skate across the skin of the canal.  
Schools of sinuous minnows flit like brown shadows  
below. Salamanders crawl over the slippery logs  
submerged under thick algae and creep away.

The green lacewings buzz perpetually among the reeds.  
Swamp roses clustered by the bank  
sway delicately in clumps of switchgrass.  
Mingled jewelweed and loosestrife nod to passersby.  
People fish, jog, ride bicycles,  
alone or in couples or in families.



I trudge on the dusty path past  
a child casting a line into the hazy water.  
He pulls a fish flipping and gasping from the murky depths.  
The child's father congratulates him,  
and the fish's life  
slips away.

Soda cans, rusty metal shards, plastic bottles, old tires  
are strewn among the brambles.  
The transfixing image doubles itself on the water,  
distorted here and there by a dead branch hovering low  
or a grimy plastic bag caught in weeds at the water's edge.

The placid mirror reflects it all.  
The river flows on, around snarls of fallen trees  
trailing skeletal gray fingers in the water.  
Two boys doubling on a single bike, one on the handlebars,  
ride by me. Their heads swivel to stare.  
They mutter something harsh.  
Cars judder over the looming bridge  
like distant thunder.





*I laughed and scooped up the naughty kitty*



# A Hidden Love

By Alexis Colleen Hosticka

Illustrated by Emma Glennon

**B**Y THE TIME I was thirteen, it seemed like I was too old to admit my love of animals. I'd hidden my true feelings about the subject for so long it just didn't seem right to change them so late. When I was five, a dog had scared me badly, and for a short time I had been afraid of animals. Ever since then, my parents had been way too over-protective about keeping me away from animals, and I had gone along with the flow instead of speaking up that I wasn't frightened anymore. Now I was too nervous to tell my parents—I figured they wouldn't believe me and just think that I was saying it to make *them* feel better. But, then I met Cinnamon...

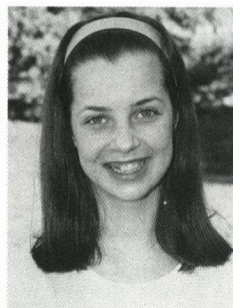
It all started one day in early August. School was going to start again in a few weeks and I was over at my friend Millaina's house.

"I'm sure that the violet dress will work fine, Millie. The color brings out your blue eyes and if you wear the little flower brooch, it'll be perfect," I said.

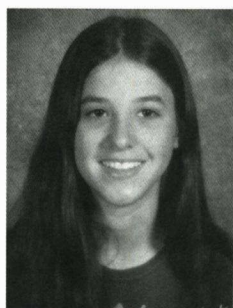
"Are you sure, Kirsten?" she asked me, looking at the dresses scattered across her bed.

"Yes. The green one is too bright and the pink washes you out. The rest all have their own problems. You'll look wonderful at the wedding—I promise. Can we go downstairs now?" I was getting hungry and Millie's mom always had muffins or cookies baking.

"Sure, but only for a minute, I signed up to help out at the animal shelter at 3:00 PM and it's already 2:40 PM. You can come



Alexis Colleen Hosticka, 12  
West Chicago, Illinois



Emma Glennon, 13  
Greenland, New Hampshire

with if you want, but you don't like animals—right?" Hopping up from her bed, Millaina headed towards the stairs.

"I'll come and see what it's like, a kitten or two won't hurt me," I smiled, thinking how awesome it was that I could finally be by an animal without Mom or Dad standing there to make sure I wasn't injured by "vicious" puppies and "terrifying" kittens. Maybe, just maybe, by helping Millie out at the shelter, I could slowly show my parents that I loved animals.

After grabbing an oatmeal-raisin cookie, I followed Millie out the door and we jumped onto our bikes. The animal shelter was only a mile and a half down the road, so we didn't have to rush. We didn't talk on the way there, but I was thinking about telling my parents. I decided to keep it a secret for now and maybe have Millie come over, then have her talk about the animal shelter and... My thoughts were interrupted as Millie came to a screeching halt in front of the animal shelter.

Wiping the sweat from my brow—it was 94 degrees—I took my purple helmet off and hung it on my handlebars. Millie and I both leaned our bikes against the shaded wall and walked into the shelter. On the floor in a corner was a little beagle puppy, it was frisking around like a madman.

"Where to first?" I asked.

"I normally feed the dogs first and then the cats. But, since you're here, I can feed the dogs while you feed the cats. Things will get done faster," she said, heading towards a door marked "Food and Supplies." I followed her and looked around in the

small closet. Grabbing a bag of Andersons' Cat Food, I followed Millie back out the door. "The cat room's that way—the door says 'Office,' but it's not one. Each house of three kittens gets a scoop of food and single kittens get half a scoop. Full-grown cats are all single-caged and get a full scoop." Millie headed left and I went right—to the cat room.

The door swung open easily as I pushed it with my shoulder—there was cat food in my hands. There were about thirty felines in the room, most of them kittens. As I set the bag down on the floor, I felt something rub against my sandal. Looking down I saw a dark brown kitten with bright blue eyes staring at me. I laughed and scooped up the naughty kitty. Glancing around the room, I saw that one of the cage doors had swung open. Above the door was the name Cinnamon, along with a piece of paper that said:

Cinnamon is a female tabby. She is often escaping from her cage. No special care necessary. —Marie

I figured Marie was a volunteer and gently placed Cinnamon back into her cage. She mewed at me and I laughed. Latching the cage shut, I grabbed the food and, starting at the beginning of the row, fed all of the gorgeous animals. Cinnamon had the last cage and I took an extra minute to stroke her. Poor Cinnamon, I thought, I wonder who could have deserted you. She looked up and purred at me and I smiled down at her.

During the next few weeks, I helped



out at the shelter many times. Each time, I cuddled Cinnamon a bit longer and stroked her a little more tenderly. I was growing to love that darling kitten.

ONCE I HAD Millaina tell my parents that I was working at the shelter with her, I planned on adopting Cinnamon. I was sure my parents wouldn't care and was looking forward to the date I planned to have Millie come over for dinner—in two weeks. But then it happened, the plan was ruined and my secret was out.

It was two days before the planned dinner and Millie and I were both working at the shelter. We were the only ones there and about to close up when a man wearing a big camera around his neck and holding a large pad of paper in his hand came rushing in the door.

"Excuse me ladies, can I speak to Mr. McLonvul?" he asked politely. Mr. McLonvul was the owner of the shelter.

"Sorry," Millie answered, "Kirsten and I are just closing up. Mr. McLonvul left about a half an hour ago. Is there anything I can do to help you?"

"Well, I'm trying to do an article to put in tomorrow's *Hilton Gazette*. By the way, the name's Mr. Clantrive. Anyway, I was wondering if I could interview you two. You know, just a few questions about the place," Mr. Clantrive asked in a rush.

Millie and I looked at each other for a moment. "Sure," I said hesitantly. "I mean, we're not experts on this place, but we know the basics and we can tell you

the current animal count and stuff."

"Wonderful!" Mr. Clantrive said, taking a pencil from behind his ear. "Question one: about how many people volunteer here weekly?"

Millaina went behind the desk for a moment, fishing out the volunteer sign up book. "Uh—this week we had fourteen volunteers, and then there are three permanent volunteers who aren't listed, so seventeen people working. There's about that many every week," she answered.

About how many cats are there currently and how many dogs?" asked Mr. Clantrive, glancing up from his notepad.

"Twenty-seven cats—mostly kittens, but there are some full-grown," I answered quickly.

"Forty-one dogs—an even mix of puppies and full-grown pooches," responded Millaina.

"I'll call Mr. McLonvul to get any more info that I need. Thank you, girls. By the way, what are your names?" he asked, glancing up from his notes again.

"I'm Kirsten Mulgat and this is my friend Millaina Yiert. Mulgat is spelled M-U-L-G-A-T and Yiert is Y-I-E-R-T," I said, nonchalantly. As I spoke, Mr. Clantrive snapped a picture of us.

"Millaina is M-I-L-L-A-I-N-A," added Millie. If she was going to be in the paper, it was going to be spelled correctly—people were constantly misspelling her uncommon name.

"Thank you, goodbye girls," said Mr. Clantrive and left.

Millaina and I finished cleaning up the

building and then locked up. We headed opposite directions towards our houses; we had ridden our bikes there as always. About halfway home, I suddenly realized that unless I could keep my parents from reading the paper the next morning, my secret would be out.

It's no use, I thought to myself. There's no way to try to have them not read the paper. They might pass the article, but I was planning on telling them soon anyway. Oh well, I guess I'll see how it goes tomorrow...

Early the next morning, my secret was no longer a secret. The article ended up being on the front page of the Neighbor section, so it wasn't something that my dad skimmed or missed. It was especially obvious that I had been there because of the large color picture below the large headline: "Hilton Animal Shelter, Still Going After 25 Years!" Apparently he had called Mr. McLonvul for more information.

"Well look at this, Madeline," Dad called to Mom.

"Why, Kirsten Mulgat! Is that you?" Mom asked, looking at a picture with Millaina and me in it.

"Yeah," I mumbled.

"I thought you didn't like animals, honey," Dad said, looking at me. "Were you just walking there with Millaina so you got in the picture or something?"

"No," I said, blushing bright red, then the entire story came spilling out.

"Well, Kirsten," said my dad, after I had completed my explanation. "I just don't understand why you were scared to

tell us."

"But you're not grounding me or anything?" I asked bashfully.

Mom laughed good-naturedly. "What do you think, Shawn?" she asked, then answered the question herself. "No Kirsten. But, next time can you at least tell us that you're volunteering? Dad and I might want to come with."

I smiled, "Sure, Mom. I promise I won't keep any more secrets like this!"

The next day, Mom came to the animal shelter with Millaina and me—Dad was working. I gave her a little tour of the cat section and Millaina the dog section. Of course there were other parts of the building, but neither of us had ever worked in them. She helped out a little, but mostly just observed.

As we rode our bikes home, Mom and I talked, "You really like that little kitten, Cinnamon, don't you?" she asked me seriously.

"Yeah, she's soooooo cute and she loves me, too," I answered, trying to sound casual.

"She is a charming kitten, I like her too," Mom replied.

I looked at Mom, was she thinking the same thing as me? "Uh, Mom," I said after a few moments of hesitation. "Do you think that, well, maybe that there's any chance we could adopt Cinnamon? I mean, you just said that you liked her too so..." I trailed off.

"I was thinking the same thing Kirsten," said Mom, looking at me with a twinkle in her eye. "I'll talk to your father and if he





*"You really like that little kitten, Cinnamon, don't you?" she asked me seriously"*

agrees, I believe you can have a pet."

I couldn't wait for Dad to get home, though I was pretty sure his answer would be yes. Luckily, I was right.

The next day was probably the best day of my life. It didn't take long to adopt Cinnamon since the shelter already had most of the necessary adoption information from me volunteering. We stopped by a pet store on the way home to pick up food, toys, a cage, and even a little blue collar for Cinnamon. I held her the whole time, rubbing her soft fur against

my cheek and scratching her gently. I had decided against changing her name, it fit her perfectly. The colors matched, and Cinnamon was full of spice and energy with a spirit of her own.

I was glad that my secret had finally come out, because if it hadn't, I would have never met Cinnamon, and without Cinnamon, life wouldn't be as good as it is now. Because now, three years later, I have Cinnamon's darling kittens: brown, little Paprika, gray, timid Ginger and courageous, snow-white Sugar. ❁

# Mismatched

By **Pierie Korostoff**



Pierie Korostoff, 12  
Spring Mills, Pennsylvania

Paperwhites were sagging about the sink.  
You could smell fresh air on them  
if you got close enough.  
Their curtain, white and green,  
the only one on the kitchen window  
And through it, snow refused to budge.  
Odd to have flowers and snow  
even if they matched in color.  
Except the stems, of course,  
they stood out like the green bottle next to the clear glasses,  
like the chicken magnet  
among those little magnetic words  
that never spell what you want.  
Words like "bubble"  
but not "the" or "and."  
Why would I need to write about bubbles?  
My toe rubbed against the polished maple rung  
of the tall kitchen stool  
silent rhythm to the dog's tapping nails,  
parents mumbling,  
ever-present radio, NPR  
or a Cuban CD.



A jumbled soundtrack  
to my moment of thinking nothing,  
forgetting to check the notes  
that came and went,  
muddling over the fridge;  
my tiny collage.



*Truly a form of art," Isabelle Wilcox imagined a sophisticated British voice saying*



# Isabelle

By **Elle Davis**

*Illustrated by* **Laurie Hamilton**

“**T**RULY A FORM of art,” Isabelle Wilcox imagined a sophisticated British voice saying. “And now down the long wall at the extended trot!” (Here Isabelle pressed her spur into Kaptein’s side.) “Oh and such beauty! Never before has the world seen such an extended trot. Never before has the world seen such a ...”

But Isabelle never quite decided what the world had never seen because at that moment, Kaptein snorted and shied at something up on the hill.

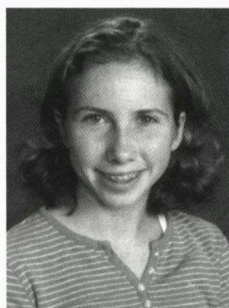
“What *is* it Kaptein?” Isabelle asked her horse. Kaptein shook his long chestnut mane and pranced with his head high in the air.

“Kaptein!” Isabelle gathered up her reins with annoyance. She knew daydreaming on a horse, especially one that could get spooky and silly like Kaptein, was a guaranteed, tested-over-thousands-of-years formula for disaster.

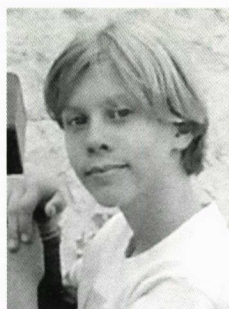
“Don’t you try those dumb saddlebred stunts on me, mister.” Kaptein finally responded to her squeezes on the reins and put his head down a bit.

“That’s better.” Isabelle relaxed her fingers. Then she saw what her Arabian was spooking at. A small rider was trotting up on a fat pinto pony.

“Ugh.” It was Abbey and her pony, Rainbow Daughter. Named after some dumb horse in some lame TV show. In Isabelle’s opinion, horses should not have names that sounded like a kindergarten named it. But in this case, it was true; Abbey had



Elle Davis, 13  
Fox Point, Wisconsin



Laurie Hamilton, 12  
Orono, Maine

named her pony when she was in senior kindergarten.

"Hey Isabelle!!!" Abbey waved enthusiastically from atop her small mount.

"Hi Abbey," Isabelle said wearily. Abbey didn't seem to notice.

"Guess what!" Abbey didn't wait for an answer. "Ava said that since I have been doing so well on the trail, I can go with an older rider." Isabelle knew what was coming next but she crossed her fingers in the pocket of her new vest anyway. "Do you want to go on a trail ride, Isabelle?"

"Um, OK." Isabelle bit her lip. She liked trail rides fine, but Abbey was so *annoying*. She was what her friend Will would have called uber-annoying. Uber. It was such an elastic word.

"Isabelle, did you know I'm going to Sacramento for Thanksgiving? It's true. Will you miss me? Cause I know you go on trail rides with Sammy but she isn't a very good rider. I think anyway."

"Sammy shows three in the pony jumper division, remember?" Isabelle said through clenched teeth.

"Oh I know but she takes from Claire, you know. I don't think she is a very good instructor at all, well you should know, Isabelle, she hated you when you used to ride Thomas..."

"Abbey—shush up! She could be out here." Isabelle was regretting her decision to ride with Abbey. "Let's long trot a serpentine when we get to the field, 'K?'"

"All right," Abbey said cheerfully. "I just love long trotting —especially outside. It's so fun! I can't canter without Ava so we

shouldn't go too fast; I know Kaptein can get excitable..."

And so the trail ride dragged on with Abbey chattering and Isabelle getting more fed up with her. Finally, it began to get dark and Isabelle suggested they go back to the barn.

As they rode back, Isabelle did what she had been doing for the past couple of weeks. She thought about the long process and eventually final decision that had led her parents to move to Wisconsin. Her father had been offered a high-powered job in Wisconsin, one with more pay and respect. Her father didn't always get along with his employers, but as a sought-after medical research doctor, it was usually the hospital that was scrambling to meet his needs, not the other way around. However, if there was a way to stay fairly local, Edward Wilcox would move to a different hospital. Now, the whole Wilcox family would be moving to Wisconsin so Edward could be a research surgeon heading up cloning in the Midwest. Pretty amazing once she thought about it.

"Isabelle!" Abbey's annoying voice cut through her thoughts. Isabelle glanced at her. The little girl was pointing at something.

"What?" Isabelle asked with as much patience as she could muster.

"There's an enormous log blocking the path." Abbey sounded genuinely scared. "And I can't really jump, especially not out of the ring!"

"Well..." Isabelle frowned. "Looks like you are going to have to try. Because the





*"I'll try, OK? But don't expect it to look like something out of *Young Rider*!"*

way we came is about a half-hour ride from here. And we can't go back, it's already pretty dark. Unless you plan on camping out here."

Abbey really did look for a second like she was ready to go galloping recklessly back to the barn. But then she shook her head. "I'll try, OK?" Abbey even managed a small smile. "But don't expect it to look like something out of *Young Rider*!"

Isabelle grinned. "That's the spirit!" Normally, Abbey wasn't her favorite person, but she did want her jump to be a success, not only for safety reasons, but

Isabelle didn't want the younger girl's confidence to be damaged.

"OK, go for it, Kim Severson!" Isabelle shouted to Abbey, naming an Olympic cross-country rider. Abbey cued her pony into a canter and gamely looked ahead of the log. "Nice, Abbey, keep looking ahead, give her little squeezes if she feels hesitant..."

Rainbow popped easily over the three-foot log and Abbey landed laughing on the other side.

"Yes!"

From where Isabelle sat on Kaptein,



she saw a tiny fist pumped in the air. She could also hear Abbey praising and patting her pony as though she had just won an Olympic medal. In a way, she had. Isabelle circled Kaptein as large as she could allow and pushed him into a canter.

"Heads up, Abbey!" Isabelle shouted to clear the way for her and her gelding. Kaptein galloped strongly up to the obstacle and then stopped and rolled his eyes. "Kaptein!" Isabelle whispered fiercely into his mane. Isabelle couldn't believe Abbey had gotten over and not her! Kaptein did cross-country fairly often. Rainbow wasn't too experienced, although she was rock steady. Ugh.

"Isabelle! What happened??" Abbey's voice floated over the log. Isabelle ground her teeth.

"We're fine. Stay out of the way please." Isabelle bent over Kaptein's neck and urged him into a slightly slower canter. She hadn't wanted to rush him. This time, the Arabian sailed over it, snapping his front legs to clear the obstacle. "Good boy!" She stroked Kaptein's neck generously.

"That was great!" Abbey enthused. "But... what happened the first time?"

"Oh never mind, Abbey. You did awesome too. Now let's ride home, it's really dark." Isabelle pointedly turned Kaptein around to face the barn. The chestnut gelding began tossing his head and jiggling in place. "Stop that." Isabelle tugged at the reins and Kaptein resorted to just chewing the bit.

Luckily, the ride home was completely

uneventful. Abbey chattered on about how she might become a professional eventer but Isabel tuned her out for the most part. Finally, the stone barns came into view and Isabelle waved goodbye to Abbey, who would be untacking in the Horseshoe barn while Isabelle was untacking in the Diamond barn. Isabelle, frankly, was really not sorry to see her riding off towards Horseshoe, although Abbey waved until she disappeared into the other barn.

"Whew!" she whispered to Kaptein when their ride was over. "One advantage of moving to Wisconsin—no more Abbey or Claire!" Isabelle undid the girth and lifted the saddle from her horse's warm back. She sighed as she thought about the move again. On one hand, it was kind of nice to be forced out of the complicated web of barn politics. On another, she did have some great friends at San Joaquin Valley Ranch and at St. James Middle School. Still, she would be going to Clearwater Equestrian Center, a barn known for its excellence. And attending another Lutheran school, where she would meet other religious kids. "It can't be that bad," she said aloud.

Absentmindedly, she unwrapped a peppermint and fed it to Kaptein. He crunched it loudly and tossed his head up and down. "Will you like it there?" she asked her horse.

He nodded up and down. Isabelle knew it was simply her horse enjoying the treat but it reassured her nonetheless. Bring on Wisconsin, she thought. We're ready. ❀



# A Long Way from Home

By **Emily Livaudais**

*Illustrated by* **Karina Jivkova**

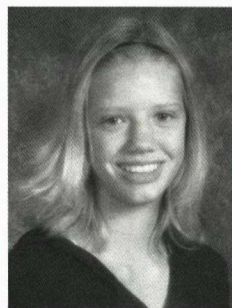
AS KATIE DALE LOOKED out the window at the icy tundra, she wondered about many things. She wondered what the surprise was her grandma talked about so often. She wondered if she would make new friends. She wondered what her house was going to look like. She wondered if it was possible to learn a new language in approximately three days. She wondered if all these thoughts were usual when going to a new country. Katie sat in the taxi frozen with fear. She was all alone ready to start a new life in Iceland.

Katie had been under so much pressure since both her parents died. She had been around almost all of America looking for a new family. Katie didn't understand it. Why couldn't she stay with her grandmother, why? Katie knew perfectly why, it was because everyone thought her grandmother was a crazy old lady who ought to be locked up forever. Katie strongly disagreed with this, but how could she change what was in the past? She was just thankful she was going to have some parents around to support her.

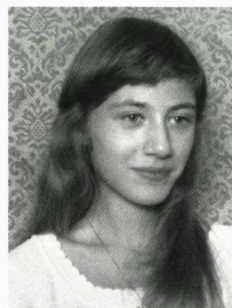
"Here you are, miss, at the Akureyri Airport," said the taxi driver.

Startled by this remark, Katie paid the taxi driver a little of her money that was left to her by her parents.

When Katie stepped out of the car a sudden wind blew her leather bag off her arm and onto the ground. Her belongings spilled everywhere. She quickly gathered them before the wind blew them away. She was putting away what she thought was her



Emily Livaudais, 11  
Fenton, Missouri



Karina Jivkova, 13  
Sofia, Bulgaria



*This must be the store Grandma mentioned in her letter, Katie thought*

last item, until she saw a white envelope marked Katie. She had never seen this before, but she recognized the handwriting as her grandmother's. She read the letter aloud in a sort of mumble.

My dear Katie,  
I don't know if you will miss me on your

long excursion, but I'll miss you terribly. I am so very proud of you leaving your home, and going far away with no support. But that is not true my dear. I always feel as if you are right next to me, and no matter what, you will always have me for support. I once lived in Iceland for nine years. During those years I made many friends.



There is one friend I know that you must meet. Her name is Marrisa. She lives in an old antique shop fairly close to the Akureyri Airport. Enclosed is a ticket. In order to meet her you must take this ticket to the person behind the counter at the shop, and ask for Marrisa. If he is kind enough he'll let you take her home with you forever.

With love, Grandma

P.S. I'm sure your folks won't mind Marrisa living with you.

Katie was so happy to know her grandma had friends right here in Iceland. She immediately started looking for the antique shop.

Katie wandered not far into an odd little shopping town. She looked and looked in every store window. Finally she saw an old building full of many odd things of different shapes and sizes. This must be the store Grandma mentioned in her letter, Katie thought.

As she entered the shop a sudden burst of warm air hit her in the face. There were racks with candlesticks, paintings, mirrors and dolls. Straight ahead was a counter with an old man behind it. Katie walked up to him and handed him a small golden ticket. The man looked puzzled, until Katie said, "Marrisa." The confused look on the man's face faded.

He also spoke English, and he said, "She's downstairs between the lamps and jewelry."

Now Katie was puzzled. The man, then, took her by the hand and led her to a small dark room below the store. He led to a part

that had shelves full of old broken things that Katie couldn't tell what they were, except one thing. It was the most beautiful doll she had ever seen. She had a very detailed face, and she wore a blue dress with 1684 embroidered at the bottom. Katie stared at her for a long time. The man must've noticed, because he took the doll off the shelf and handed her to Katie while saying, "This is Marrisa. There isn't much I can do with her, but you can have her for free if you'd like. I got her from an old friend of mine. I knew her for nine years."

Katie didn't know what to say. She just nodded her head and turned to walk back up the stairs. She was near the top of the staircase when she looked back at the old wrinkled face and said, "Thank you," in a soft gentle voice.

Katie walked back to the airport feeling just a little different than before. She easily found her parents, because they held up a sign that said Katie.

That night Katie found some paper, and wrote:

Dear Grandma,

I met Marrisa today. You were right, the man let me keep her. Since I got her I've told her everything. She's like my new best friend that I can always trust. My parents are great, they even speak English. They live in a cozy cabin near a huge forest.

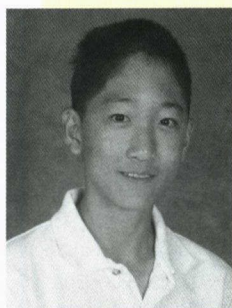
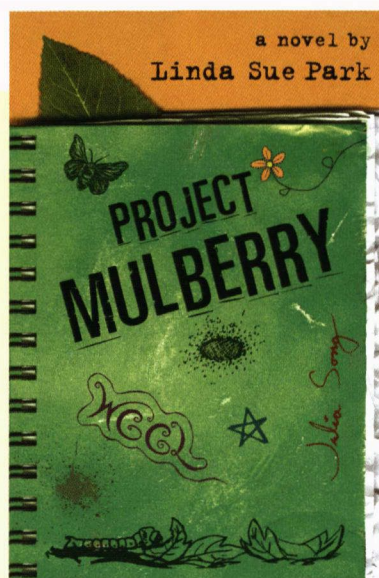
I love you a lot, Katie

As Katie curled up in her bed she thought to herself, I have two great parents, one best friend, and a grandma who loves me. How could life get any better? ❀

# Book Review

By Richard Chung

*Project Mulberry*, by Linda Sue Park;  
Clarion Books: New York, 2005; \$16



Richard Chung, 13  
Los Angeles, California

“**T**HAT’S GREAT BUT what about here?” That’s the question I used to ask myself whenever my mom bragged about how well developed and strong and powerful Korea was. My parents were born and raised in Korea; I have lived in L.A. all my life. Often I wished that my parents would brag about America instead because that would be more useful to me.

This past October, my mom borrowed books from the library, just as she does every two weeks or so. I left *Project Mulberry* at the bottom of the pile because it didn’t sound interesting and the cover looked dull. I didn’t even know what Mulberry meant. Finally, after I had read through the other books, I picked up *Project Mulberry* and started to read it. I read five pages the first day and the rest of the book the second day. I was so fascinated by the story that even my mom and dad’s favorite Korean soap opera, blaring on the TV with its characters always crying and shouting and fighting, didn’t distract me. The main character of *Project Mulberry*, Julia Song, was in almost the exact same cultural situation as I was. I really wanted to figure out how she solved the problem of juggling two cultures.



Julia Song, a seventh-grader who has just recently moved to Plainfield, Illinois, needs to find a project for the state fair. Julia's Korean-born mom, whose own mom worked with silkworms, suggests a silkworm project. Patrick, Julia's best friend, loves the idea but Julia thinks it is too Korean. She instead wants a more American project. Julia eventually gives in and throughout the book she gradually changes her attitude about the project, caring for it more and more. At the climax of the novel, Julia realizes she loves the silkworms and finds herself protecting them from being killed; the final step of the process requires the silkworms to be killed. Later, Patrick and Julia compromise and she allows Patrick and Julia's mom to kill some of the silkworms for the project. Julia learns much more from this adventure than how to raise silkworms and make silk. When Julia decides to do the silkworm project, she accepts her heritage and stops fighting it. By the end of the story, Julia starts to ask questions about her family's past and appreciates her background.

I realized it was useless to deny my background because I can't change it. When Julia finds herself unexpectedly enjoying the project, I thought, I can do that too. Now I understand that being Korean adds to instead of detracts from my American identity. Finally, I am proud of my parents' bragging about Korea. Finally I have stopped asking myself rhetorical questions and have really started listening to learn about the land of my ancestors. For anyone who is struggling as I was to bridge more than one culture, *Project Mulberry* provides unique insights and an enjoyable read. ❁





*Rachel smelled the delicious taste that was longing to be brought to her lips*



# In My Eyes

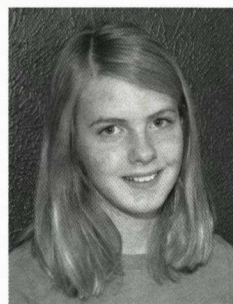
By **Grace Watson-Martin**

*Illustrated by* **Emma Kim Burbage**

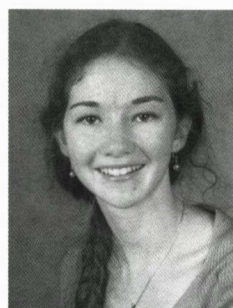
RACHEL GENTLY SET down the next pile of firewood by her mistress's fireplace. She stood up straight and yawned. It was already 5:30. She went into the kitchen and fetched the teapot. She crushed up some tea leaves and threw them into the pot of boiling water. The water slowly turned brown, like waiting for the sun to rise. She looked at her dark brown skin. If only she were white. She would have her own personal slave, a big white house, get to eat real food, and get to taste tea! As the water finally turned dark brown she poured it into the teapot. She set out the teacups, the teapot, the butter and bread, the sugar, and the cream all on one tray and brought it out as her mistress, Mistress Sarah, her daughter, Madeline, and her master, Sir John, sat down. They each took a teacup and put sugar and cream at the bottom. As each of them nibbled on their bread, Rachel poured them tea.

Rachel looked into the deep brown of the tea in Madeline's cup. The sugar dissolved quickly while the cream turned it a pale tan. Rachel smelled the delicious taste that was longing to be brought to her lips. Her hands went out to take the cup but snapped back in when Mistress Sarah yelled, "Stop at once! You fool! Tea is only for civilized human beings! Not a negro like you!" Rachel set the pot of tea by Sir John and ran out into the fields where her mother was picking cotton with a few other Africans. She spotted her mother and hugged her.

"What's happened, child?" asked her mother, stroking her braids.



Grace Watson-Martin, 11  
Arlington, Texas



Emma Kim Burbage, 13  
Redwood City, California

"Have you ever had tea?" Rachel asked.

"Once," said her mother, "when I was a child and working for Sarah, I snuck some tea from the kitchen. It was British tea. I didn't have any sugar or cream with me, so I snuck some sugar out of the blue cupboard your grandmother kept her spices in."

"Mother, how could you!" exclaimed Rachel. "We're only supposed to use those spices, especially the sugar, for special occasions only!"

"Yes," her mother continued, "but I convinced myself this *was* a special occasion. It was the best drink I ever had! Very hot, but so sweet and refreshing. I drank every last drop of it. That's when Sir John caught me."

"Did he beat you awfully?" Rachel asked anxiously.

"Let's not get into details," said her mother.

"Oh, Mother!" said Rachel, wrapping her arms even tighter around her mom.

"*Rachel!*" cried Sir John.

"Go, child," said her mother. "I'll be right here."

Rachel ran toward the front door.

"A slave owner is here to have a look at you," said Sir John, pushing her into the house. Rachel's heart skipped a beat. She held back her tears. The slave owner was sure to take her away from her mother and papa and little Noel, who was only eight months old. She would be thrown on a ship and would be taken somewhere else in the world.

The slave owner examined her carefully.

The slave owner whispered something in Sir John's ear. "Girl," said the slave owner, "get me some water." Rachel hurried outside and filled a bucket with water. She went into the kitchen and filled a pitcher with the water from the bucket. She carried the pitcher and a glass into the dining room and poured the man some water. "You've got this girl well trained, sir," the slave owner said to Sir John.

"Well then, that settles it," Sir John said, shaking hands with the man. The slave owner took hold of Rachel's dress and started to drag her.

"*No! No!*" Rachel screamed. They can't do this, Rachel thought, they can't take me away from Mama!

She was dragged onto a stagecoach. The slave owner put heavy shackles on her feet.

"*No! Don't take my baby!*" Rachel's mama called. She was racing through the cotton fields as fast as she could. She dropped on her knees in front of Sir John. "Please," Mama begged, "don't let them take her! She's my baby!"

"Mama," Rachel cried as the slave owner flicked the horses with a whip. Her mother got off her knees and raced after the moving stagecoach. Rachel held her hand out for her mother to take it. Her mother grabbed hold of it and pulled Rachel off the stagecoach. Rachel landed on the dirt road.

Her mother whispered in her ear, "Follow me." Her mother started running into the woods. Rachel's heavy shackles slowed her down. Mama picked her up



and ran as fast as she could. They heard dog barks behind them. Her mother raced inside a cave. She cupped a hand over Rachel's mouth while several dogs went flying past the cave. One dog stopped. He sniffed around and looked into the cave. Mama carried Rachel deeper into the cave. They found a little hole for Rachel to climb in. But they put Rachel in the hole too soon, for the dog heard her shackles clang against the hard rock floor of the cave. Mama found a big rock to throw at the dog. The dog saw her and started barking madly. Mama threw the big rock on top of the dog. She picked up Rachel and started to run.

As night fell Mama set Rachel on the ground. "Oh, Mama!" cried Rachel, throwing her arms over her. "Thank you for saving me! I was so scared, I don't know why I didn't free myself from him."

"It's OK," said Mama, letting go of Rachel, "you were in shock."

Rachel smiled. She stood up. Forgetting about the shackles around her ankles, she tried reaching an apple high up on a tree above her. She tripped on her shackles and fell face first. Her shackles made a loud noise. Then the dog barks started again. This time they were farther away. Mama picked Rachel up and started running.

As the day broke, Mama and Rachel scrambled into a cave tired and exhausted. "Let's try to get some rest," Rachel said.

"But we need food," said Mama, opening the sack that had been carrying cotton from the fields back at Mistress Sarah's house. "I've got a bit of bread and an

apple," said Mama. Mama split the piece of bread with Rachel. After that they both fell asleep.

"Rachel! Wake up," said Mama, shaking Rachel furiously. Rachel sat up just in time to see the sun go down. Mama picked up Rachel and they ran from tree to tree like a deer. After a while Rachel spotted an old house in the woods. "That's where we shall rest tonight. There's an old lady who lives there. She will help us escape to freedom," said Mama. Mama set Rachel down on the porch and barely knocked on the door.

A slight whisper said, "Who's there?"

"Juba this and juba that," sang Mama.

The voice answered, "Juba killed a yellow cat."

Mama sang back, "Get over double trouble juba."

"Ah, ah juba," the voice answered.

The door opened and there stood an old lady the height of Rachel herself. The old lady looked at the shackles around Rachel's feet. "Do carry her in," the old lady said to Mama. "I don't want you two to get in trouble."

The old lady carefully picked at the lock on the shackles clinging to Rachel's ankles while Mama told their story. "There we go!" said the old lady as she pulled the shackles off of Rachel's feet. Rachel rubbed at her feet. Dark red marks circled around her ankles. A loud knock was at the door. "It's them!" the old lady whispered. She rushed to the back of the house where an old wardrobe stood. She pushed it aside and pulled at a rope con-

nected to the wall. The wall opened like a door. "Quick, hide in this hole!" said the old lady, pushing Rachel and Mama in. She gave the shackles to Mama. "Don't want to get in trouble, do we now?" she said, shutting the door.

"May I help you," she asked.

"We're looking for a young girl around ten and a woman around thirty. We're going to look around," a loud voice barked. Rachel heard a pair of feet shuffle into the room they were hiding in. She heard him opening drawers and even opened the wardrobe in front of the hole. Finally they left.

The next day the old lady gave them some new clothes to wear. They were off once again, but this time with Rachel run-

ning for her life as well.

As the sun started rising a sign appeared out of nowhere. Rachel, who didn't know how to read, tried to make out what it said. Mama gave a sigh of relief. "What does it say, Mama?" Rachel asked.

"It says, 'Welcome to Pennsylvania!'" Mama answered.

Suddenly, something didn't seem right. "Will we ever see Noel and Papa again?" Rachel asked, as they walked through a large pasture.

"I bet we will someday," Mama assured her, "but don't let no worries come over you, child. We're free!"

The sound and sweetness of the word free came over Rachel. "Free," Rachel whispered. "We are free." ❁





# The Faerie Circle

By Alana Yang

Illustrated by Susannah Benjamin

**A**RIEL WOKE UP AT 11:55 PM. She tossed off her blanket, stood up and tied her favorite silver sweater around her waist. Silently, like a ghost, she slipped out the door and walked down the hallway. She could hear her sister Sophie breathing as she walked past her room. Down the stairs, skip the creaky third step, past the dining table, jump over Fluffy the greyhound (Sophie picked the name when she was six), and out the den door. Ariel didn't know where she was going, or why she was going there, but it felt... right. It felt like there was something she needed to do.

Moonlight poured down on the figure moving silently across the dew-covered lawn. Ariel knew this path by heart. She and Sophie went there years ago to play faeries, but they stopped when Ariel entered middle school. Now, as a seventh grader, she didn't feel the least bit embarrassed to be visiting one of her childhood haunts.

As Ariel's bare foot stepped into the moonlit clearing, she felt a thrum of... joy? Power? Memories? It felt like someone was watching her. She glanced up at the moon and, as she always felt when she looked up at the sky, was awed by the great white disk sending down rays of milk-white light like so many chords of music.

Ariel slowly sat down across the clearing from the Faerie Circle that she and Sophie had played in. The ring of daisies never grew over, and the delicate white blooms always grew back whenever Sophie and Ariel had picked the flowers. Now the daisies were splashed lilac with moonbeams. Ariel sat and



Alana Yang, 12  
Santa Rosa, California



Susannah Benjamin, 13  
Greenwich, Connecticut





*Slowly, the Faeries appeared and sat on the daisies in the circle like chairs*



waited for Them. She had never seen Them before, but she knew that tonight was the night. They didn't let just anyone see Them.

Ariel glanced at her watch, pushing long black hair from her eyes. 11:58. Ariel shifted and promptly sat in a small puddle of water. It had rained during the day and the ground had little wet patches all over. Ariel peered into the shining liquid and saw her reflection—a thin pale girl with large violet eyes staring back at her. Ariel sat back and sighed. She wished her dark hair, now tipped with water, was capable of doing something other than just hanging straight around her face. And then she heard it. Or, rather, she *didn't* hear it. Everything went silent. Ariel looked at her wrist again. Beep. 12:00. Midnight.

Sparkling points of light poured by the dozens from the grand old oak tree at the edge of the clearing. Slowly, the Faeries appeared and sat on the daisies in the circle like chairs. Ariel could hardly breathe. The Faeries either didn't notice her or ignored her. They were indescribable in human words.

Each three-inch-tall Faerie had a shimmering dress in a color we do not have a name for. As the Queen sat down, her sheet of red corkscrew curls fanned out in an invisible breeze.

Then the Faeries slowly unfolded their wings, leapt into the air, and started to dance. Suddenly, they started to sing. The mixture of the Faeries' dance and their singing, so like angels' voices, was... in-

credible. It was moonbeams, light, the sun, stars, the four elements—water, fire, wind, and earth. It was rainbows and poetry. It was more than all of that. It was Magic. Pure and indescribable Magic.

It felt like they danced for years, but finally, they drifted back down to the Faerie Circle. Ariel was shaken out of her trance as each Faerie picked her daisy, and they arranged them in a pattern on the dirt. The Queen took her own beautiful daisy and placed it in the pattern, then made a call, like a bird, to the other Faeries. Ariel held her breath. It was over.

The shimmering Faeries flew back as softly as they had come—little orbs of shining light—and that is when Ariel dared to move. She looked at her watch. Beep. 1:00.

Suddenly curious, she moved to a standing position to look at the pattern the Faeries had created.

Her eyes widened when she saw her name, Ariel, spelled out in daisies, with the Queen's own pulsing daisy for the dot on the i. A breeze swept over Ariel's arms as she bent to pick up the Queen's daisy. As she watched, the daisy disappeared, and in its place lay a gold chain with a pulsing, glowing, shimmering, iridescent pendant. The pendant was a capital F with Faerie wings.

Ariel sighed with joy.

She had watched the Faeries dance at midnight on the full moon.

She had been accepted.

She was one of Them now.



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