

# Stone Soup

*The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists*



*"Balcón a la siesta," by Carolina Baez Osorio, age 13, Paraguay*

## TO KILL A UNICORN

Matthew and Francesca are sent on a mission, but how can they do it?

## ACCUSATIONS

When Lydia can't find her report, she blames the new girl

*Also:* Illustrations by Anton Dymtchenko and Annalise Nurme

MAY/JUNE 2007

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# Stone Soup

*The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists*

VOLUME 35, NUMBER 5

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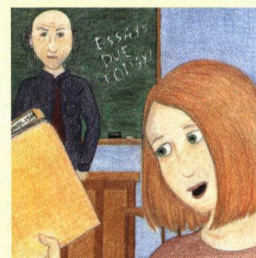
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# Stone Soup

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



# The Mailbox



LBP, 9

I am writing to express my general amazement that such a magazine like *Stone Soup* exists. The stories in it are well written and the drawings are colorful. The pages are thick and glossy, and when I pick up a new issue I am always very excited to see what creations lie ahead. Thank you for publishing such a great magazine and giving us young writers an opportunity to have our work printed in it.

**ANNAKAI HAYAKAWA GESHLIDER, 11**  
*San Francisco, California*

*Two of Annakai's stories have appeared in Stone Soup: "Morning of the Horses" in November/December 2005 and "Makoto, the Turtle Boy" in September/October 2006.*

I really enjoy reading *Stone Soup* magazine, and I think all the stories, poems, and illustrations in it are children's work at its best. I would like to praise several works in the November/December 2005 issue. I liked "A Wider World" by Christy Joy Frost because it shows magic in realistic events. I also enjoyed "The Shifting Sands" by Gus Ruchman, the poem "Happiness in the Johnson Family" by Colin Johnson, and the illustration by Thea Green for "Penny's Journey" by Ben Mast.

**SCOTT ROHER, 10**  
*Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*

I really loved the story "A Wider World" by Christy Joy Frost [November/December 2005]. I think it was my favorite in the whole issue. Vivien Rubin's illustrations were really impressive, too. I hope that if you ever publish one of my stories, it is just as good as "A Wider World."

**EMILY GAZALL, 11**  
*Gross Point Farms, Michigan*

Once again, I am fascinated by the contributors' beautiful and thoughtful writing that makes *Stone Soup* a very special magazine. Several books that have been reviewed I have read myself and all have turned out to be a good, entertaining read. I thoroughly enjoyed the piece "To Be But a Child" by Julia Soderholm [January/February 2006]. The descriptions are wisely written, Julia writes well beyond her years, and I myself became completely lost in the story, captivated by the characters I could clearly picture in my head. It took me a few minutes to come back into the real world, a sign of a true, gifted author. Keep on writing, Julia! I love *Stone Soup*!

**JULIA THOMAS, 12**  
*Bainbridge Island, Washington*

At East Side Middle School, this is the third year that the culmination of our memoir unit in all four Humanities classes has been sending the memoirs of our sixth-graders to *Stone Soup*. In the last two years, three students of ours have been published in your magazine: Michael Madans ["Sour Memories," May/June 2006], Amy Xu ["A Story to Tell," July/August 2005], and Emma King ["The Sky, the Water, and the Shell," July/August 2005]. For those three students, their teachers, and our principal, getting those publishing letters from you have been highlights and shining moments in their lives. We have improved the teaching of our curriculum and hope that these pieces of writing we are sending you are even better.

**MELISSA NATHAN, MICHAEL FEDER, AND  
EVAN KLEIN, TEACHERS**  
*New York, New York*

*You can read all the pieces mentioned in The Mailbox at [stonesoup.com](http://stonesoup.com)*

**Note to our readers:** Send us your letters! We are especially interested in detailed comments about specific stories, poems, book reviews, and illustrations. We'd also like to receive anecdotes (150 words or less) about interesting experiences you 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.





*Had I really set out with a will to murder the rarest animal in the forest?*



# To Kill a Unicorn

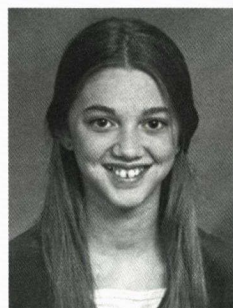
By **Abbie Brubaker**

*Illustrated by* **Anton Dymtchenko**

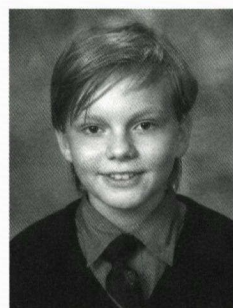
OUR SMALL HUNTING PARTY trotted silently along the woodland path, searching for the white ghost of the forest. We knew the unicorn's weakness now. An old enchanter, passing by my father's castle, had said that a maiden fair of face could trap a unicorn with a golden bridle. We were taking along Jaif's younger sister, Francesca, for that job.

The party was speeding up, making its way quicker now, for we were few. Francesca and her father, who was the Earl of Keshry, Jonathan the dog-keeper and his three finest hounds, me, and my own father. Francesca rode behind the Earl on his gray charger, while I had my own horse: a rather slow brown mare. Jonathan walked, holding the dogs' taut leashes, and Father brought up the rear on a fine black stallion. I looked around, taking in the forest scenery, and knowing that a unicorn would have trouble hiding its snowy fur among the trees. Suddenly, the dogs stiffened and began to bay, nearly startling me off of my horse.

"They've scented the creature," muttered Father to Jonathan. "Quiet them now. They'll frighten it deeper into the woods." He turned on his horse to face me. "Matthew, take Francesca into the meadow, then come back to us. We'll wait in the trees until the unicorn is trapped, then Jonathan will let loose the dogs to keep it in place until we get there. Understood?" I nodded. Father tossed me the heavy golden bridle. Then the Earl let Francesca down off his horse, and I helped her onto mine. She raised a hand in farewell at the remainder of our hunting



Abbie Brubaker, 12  
Lancaster, Pennsylvania



Anton Dymtchenko, 13  
Montreal, Canada

party, then we disappeared into the trees. I knew the way to the meadow, so it was very easy to let my mind wander from guiding my horse. It had been about two minutes riding, before a voice broke the silence.

"Do you really think I should do it?" I was surprised to hear Francesca's question.

"Do what?" I asked, looking sideways at her serious face.

"You know, catch this unicorn. They've always sounded so noble to me, and I don't think I want to help kill one."

I started to reply, but the trees ended and we were in the meadow. I let Francesca down without answering, and began to turn my horse, but she hissed, "The golden bridle, Matthew!"

Uh-oh. I retrieved the bridle from my saddle and handed it down. Then I nudged my brown mare and backed into the forest again. Once hidden behind a sufficient number of trees, I turned to watch.

Time passed. I had long since picked out Father's hiding place, and also that of the Earl. The unicorn had not come yet. How long would we wait? My horse stomped her feet and whinnied softly, and I rubbed my hand along her velvety muzzle.

"Shhh, girl. Quiet now," I murmured. She didn't understand why we were to stand here for hours on end. Come to think of it, I didn't really get it either. All this fuss and bluster, for the sake of killing a rare and beautiful animal. Then suddenly—*Oh, my*. I saw it.

The unicorn stepped from the forest, shedding bits of leaves and thorns. Its long horn glistened as though polished to a shine. I saw at once why many men chased after it—the creature was *so wondrous*. Francesca looked up sharply. I could see her hands trembling, clenched around the golden strands of the bridle. The unicorn warily turned its head in my direction, and I almost met its deep brown gaze. But, the thought of looking into the eyes of something you are about to help to kill—I quickly glanced down at the ground. *It can't see you, Matthew. Don't worry about it.*

The white apparition trotted to stand in front of Francesca, and lowered its head. My heart was pounding, and I watched as the girl reached up and placed a hand on the unicorn's mane. Would Francesca be able to do it? Her other hand still held the bridle. The Earl, I saw, was waving impatiently at his daughter, sending a silent message. *The bridle! Now!*

My horse had stopped moving, and stared at the unicorn with simple wonder. I was staring just as wondrously, struck by the sudden thought that Father and the Earl were going to *kill it*.

Francesca grabbed the golden bridle in both hands. She began to bring it up towards the creature's head; I heard the Earl give a quiet chuckle of delight, but I couldn't bring myself to be triumphant. Had I really set out with a will to murder the rarest animal in the forest? I wanted to tell myself no, I hadn't, but I wasn't sure. At least now I was of a clear conscience.



The unicorn wouldn't die by *my* hands, I swore silently. Father's face, half hidden in shadow where he was concealed, was smiling, the smile of the hunter who has his prey in an inescapable trap.

But no! The unicorn wheeled and ran suddenly, leaving Francesca to sink to the ground. She had whispered something in the creature's ear, I was sure of it, told it that it would die if it stayed. With a cry, the Earl signaled to Jonathan to release the dogs. My heart, which had risen so suddenly, plummeted again. The hounds would catch the unicorn, bring it down in a bloody scene of horror. The Earl signaled again, but Jonathan hadn't let go of the leashes. He held them in a white-knuckled grip, his face stony.

"Jonathan!" Father snapped. "We're losing time!" The dog-keeper shook his head, slowly walking back to stand beside me.

"M'lords, face it," he said softly, "none of us can kill a unicorn." He gestured at Francesca, on her knees in the meadow;

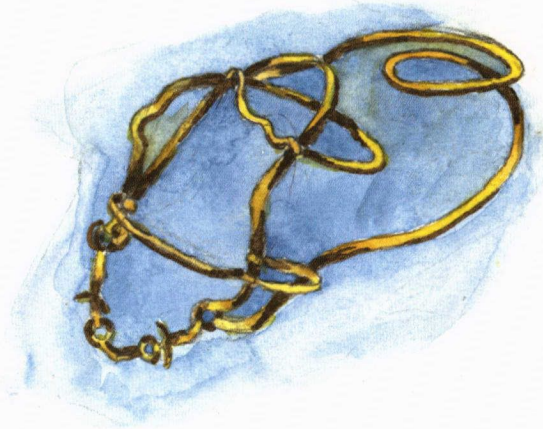
to me, leaning against an elm tree for support; and to his own paled face. Father cursed, mounting his horse and gesturing to the Earl to do the same. I took the reins of my mare and led her into the meadow.

"Francesca?" I asked hesitantly, not sure what she would say. She stood up unsteadily, and gave me a sad smile.

"It's not dead. That's all I could do for it." Without another word, I helped her into the saddle. After I had mounted, we joined Father and the Earl on the edge of the clearing. Jonathan came up beside us, his three dogs sniffing and whimpering with confusion. Francesca shot her father a look that was steely-edged, and my father did likewise to *me*. In frosty silence, our hunting party set off, heading towards home. Jonathan looked at me and smiled.

"I think we've all learned something," he said. "A life as rare as that one isn't easily taken."

I nodded, adding, "And *any* life is hard to take." ❀







*Emma sighed, thinking maybe Tansy didn't want to be her friend*



# Notes to Each Other

By **Bethany Grace Wade**

*Illustrated by* **Alicia Zanoni**

## CHAPTER ONE

EMMA AND HER FAMILY were walking home from the church meeting on Sunday, when her mother, Katherine Stuart, began to tell about the family that was coming to stay with them in a week. Mr. and Mrs. Keymon were some college friends of Emma's parents. The Keymons had a boy and a girl, Mrs. Stuart said, Jerry who was fifteen, and Tansy, thirteen. She said she had never seen Jerry or Tansy and didn't at all know what they were like. Emma just hoped maybe she and Tansy could be friends.

Emma sneezed as she slathered lemon oil on one of the dusty old end tables that were on either side of the gold and warm-rose couch. Everyone was getting ready for the Keymons' arrival. The Stuarts weren't exactly the neatest people. If it weren't for Katherine, Emma's mother, the whole house would be in chaos. Just as Emma finished wiping down the end table, a minivan pulled up their winding drive that led to their yellow farmhouse.

"They're here! They're here!" screamed Emma as she rushed upstairs to change her shirt.

"What?" exclaimed Katherine. "They're an hour early!" She rushed and put a pie in the oven, whipped off her apron and turned off the water in the kitchen sink. Sabrina came rushing downstairs with wet hair, patting it with a towel as she went.

"So much for drying my hair," she mumbled with a sour look on her face, very unusual for Sabrina. As the Keymons were



Bethany Grace Wade, 12  
Memphis, Tennessee



Alicia Zanoni, 13  
Grass Lake, Michigan

opening the car doors and unloading suitcases, Katherine, Sabrina and Emma were peacefully seated on the plaid couch looking as though there were no reason to be alarmed.

I wonder what will happen next, thought Emma with a chuckle. A man, a woman and two girls were heading to the door with large bags. Mrs. Stuart's eyebrows lifted in surprise.

"Oh boy," said Sabrina, somewhat confused. Emma and Sabrina watched the Keymons as they walked up the steps and rang the doorbell. Mrs. Stuart looked at Sabrina and Emma and took a breath.

## CHAPTER TWO

NOT WHAT THEY had expected indeed. What they had expected was a man and a woman, an older boy, and a younger girl.

"What in the world..." said Katherine, saying what everyone else was thinking.

"Good thing we have a barn," said Emma, laughing a little. Mrs. Stuart opened the door. In came a man, woman and two daughters, along with two cats, a dog and a rabbit. Sabrina looked as though she might burst out laughing any minute.

Mrs. Stuart smiled.

"Angela, Peter, it's so nice to see you again!"

Angela gave Katherine a bear hug. All the while Sabrina, Emma, Jerry and Tansy stared at each other. Tansy went back outside to get more bags. "Jerry" smiled at the two girls. She had a somewhat large mouth, with extremely white teeth.

Emma thought it was pleasantly large. Sabrina thought she looked like someone from a toothpaste commercial.

"Hello, I'm Jerry," she said. Emma smiled back.

"I'm Emma, and this is Sabrina."

"It's nice to meet you," said Jerry politely. The three girls began to make small talk, saying things like, "My mother told me you live in California. It must have been hard driving so far," and "I'm so glad you brought your pets." The latter comment was voiced by Emma, who loved animals, cats especially. Jerry was a bubbly girl, always laughing and smiling. Where was Tansy? Oh there she was. Emma saw her peeking around the edge of the car watching a bird in the birdbath. She looked nice to Emma. She had long, sleek, honey-blond hair which Emma thought looked like gold. Her eyes were brown, no, that sounded too boring, thought Emma, maybe caramel-candy brown. She had freckles, but not too many. Jerry and Sabrina walked away arm-in-arm, laughing and talking. Emma sighed, thinking maybe Tansy didn't want to be her friend. After all, she didn't seem in too much of a hurry to go inside. Emma watched her through the sheer curtains. Tansy's big eyes took in all their surroundings. The red barn behind the house, the wrap-around porch, and the bales of hay in the distance. She thought she had never seen such a beautiful farm. Actually, she had never been on a farm. Mrs. Keymon saw Emma watching Tansy out the window. Angela walked up to Emma. Emma





*The friends rode horses all day*

didn't know what to say; unlike Sabrina she wasn't very good at making small talk with grown-ups.

"Emma, I'm Angela Keymon," she said, sticking out her hand.

"Very nice to meet you, Mrs. Keymon," said Emma as she shook her hand.

"No please, call me Angela," she said as she winked at Emma. She seemed a lot like Jerry.

"About my girls, Jerry..." then she paused and laughed.

"Well, it dawned on me that you probably thought she was a he. Her name's

really Jeranna." Emma thought it was a beautiful name, very unusual though.

"As for Tansy, we didn't think about telling you, but she is deaf. That's why she isn't coming inside yet, she was kind of nervous. But if you get to know her, she's as enthusiastic and giggly as Jerry. You have the most beautiful auburn hair, I always wanted wavy hair."

Now I'll probably never have a chance of getting to know her, thought Emma. Well at least there's Jerry. But she's already friends with Sabrina.

Soon Tansy came in. She went to help



Mrs. Stuart and Angela in the kitchen. Emma didn't know how to introduce herself to Tansy. It looked like this visit would be a little awkward.

### CHAPTER THREE

WHEN EMMA woke up the sun shone happily through her window. She hoped Mom had made chocolate-chip pancakes, her favorite. She slipped her red robe over her pajamas and looked at the clock on the wall. It read 6:45 AM. Wow! She didn't know it was that early. Probably no one would be up. She walked down the stairs and into the kitchen/breakfast room. Sitting in a chair by the glass-topped table was Tansy, obviously surprised to see Emma. Emma waved. It seemed weird to wave when they had been in the same house for three days. Then Emma had an idea. She got a piece of paper and a pencil and wrote:

Hi, my name is Emma,  
I guess you already knew that. I've been wanting to get to know you, but I didn't know how. It takes much longer to write things out, but at least we can have a conversation.

Tansy tore out a piece of paper apparently from her diary and wrote:


I'm Tansy. Did you see all our pets?? Isn't it hilarious? Ha ha. I was kinda embarrassed to bring them, but we didn't have anyone to take care of them while we were gone. But Jerry says you like pets, so I guess that's

good. You have the most *beautiful* farm. I wish I lived on one too. But we live in the city, so there aren't any farms around.

The two girls wrote back and forth. Emma realized that Tansy really was a funny, happy girl, just as Angela had said. She guessed you could say refreshing. That night another idea came into Emma's head. In the morning she told her mom about it, who thought it was an excellent idea. Emma just hoped Tansy would, too.

The next day Emma found Tansy sitting against the barn under the shade of an old oak tree. Emma's braided hair swayed as she walked. This was the last day Tansy and her family would be staying with the Stuarts. Emma saw that Tansy was writing in her diary. Several other books lay scattered about her. Emma showed her a piece of paper. It said:

Would you like to ride a horse? We have a gentle gray mare named Violet you could ride. It's really fun. We could spend all day riding. My mom packed us a picnic.

Tansy wrote back saying that she would love to. The friends rode horses all day like Emma said. Then Emma told, or I should say wrote, Tansy about her idea. The idea was that they could be pen pals. Mrs. Stuart said that Tansy could come and stay with them next summer too if she liked. By then maybe Emma could learn some sign language. Tansy smiled. And Emma knew she had found a friend. 



# My Friend, Luis Manuel

By **Manuel Anderson**  
*Illustrated by* **Zachary Meyer**

**W**HEN I LIVED in Caracas, Venezuela, I went to a Catholic school called San Ignacio. I was there for kindergarten and preparatorio (a grade after kindergarten and before first grade). I was in a group of three friends that always did everything together. In this group, there was the oldest, a kid whose name I have regretfully forgotten, the youngest, Luis Manuel, and me, right in the middle.

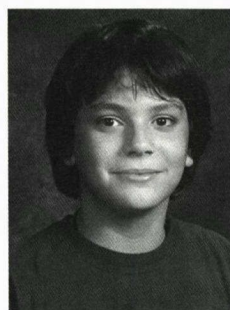
Luis Manuel had light brown hair, a long face, and was very thin. One thing that really stood out was a scar running from the corner of his forehead diagonally to his right eye. He always said he had gotten it from a cat, though I wasn't so sure because this seemed like such an ordinary story for him.

Though being the youngest, Luis Manuel was our leader. He was outspoken, getting himself where he wanted to be. He was very energetic, always running and jumping.

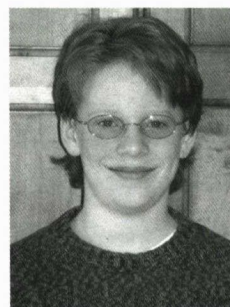
"*Vamos!*" he would call back to us, already at the tire swings, grinning a devilish grin, while the other kid and I were still pondering whether to go down the slide or climb down the rope ladder.

Always talking, he had a tendency of getting himself into trouble with our teacher. Even though he did get into a lot of trouble, the teachers still liked him. He just had to look at you with his innocent look and all was forgiven.

What was one of the coolest things about Luis Manuel was this aura you could sense around him, that made you want to be friends and be exactly like him. That was how cool, nice, and



Manuel Anderson, 12  
Ann Arbor, Michigan



Zachary Meyer, 11  
Shelby Township, Michigan



*"Vamos!" he would call back to us, already at the tire swings*



friendly he was.

One day, as we were walking down the hallway, talking, we spotted a Cheeto on the ground a few meters away. He turned to me with his devilish grin, ran to the Cheeto, grabbed it up, and popped it into his mouth.

"Come on! That was no competition!" he laughed.

"I would have won if I was a pig like you!" I joked back. "My mom says that you can get germs from eating things off the floor."

"Running out of excuses, eh? Cheetos are good, and plus, if I do get sick, at least I get to stay home."

We both laughed, and walked down the rest of the way to the class, shooting comebacks at each other.

Every morning, before class, all the kinderkids and the kids from preparatorio would flock to the orchards and sit in the grass. Then the nuns and the principal would come and we would have our morning prayers, sing songs, and then go back to class.

The principal told us to not tear the grass, but everyone did anyways, stuffing it all into their pockets and see who would have the most at recess. Teachers would walk around trying to make sure the rule was obeyed. Every so often someone would get caught and that would be the last we saw of them that day. Luis Manuel

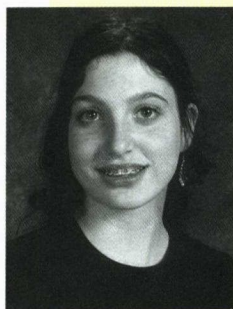
never got caught. He was so sneaky, he could tear handfuls right under a teacher's nose. He was amazingly daring, always ready to take risks and get into trouble. And he never cried. If the nicest teacher in the school would have screamed at him and said he was useless, his face would have showed no emotions. If he fell and ripped a knee open, he would just get up and start running again. It was kind of creepy.

Since we lived in Caracas, we had earthquake drills. The alarm would sound and everyone would just stop and crouch under their desk, unless your teacher told you to walk outside, since there aren't any buildings to flatten you. We would always discuss about what would happen if a really big earthquake hit. We came up with the most impossible situations, stuff like friendly aliens coming to rescue us and take us to their planet.

Those were the good times, when you had no worries except learning cursive and making sure you knew that seven times two was fourteen. When you needed to make sure you had the newest version of some Pokemon card, or that you knew what Sour-Cream-and-Onion Pringles were. Well, I ended up having to move to the U.S., and I left my best friend. He had helped shape so much of my personality, and I know I wouldn't be the same person if I never had known Luis Manuel. ❁

# Envelope

By Olivia AscioneD'Elia



Olivia AscioneD'Elia, 13  
Brooklyn, New York

surrounded  
every day  
by glow-in-the-dark stars  
gummed to the ceiling  
and photos  
like a virus engulfing the walls

images of wooden birds and chlorine-rich summers  
cherry blossoms and children in plastic hats  
taped mosaic  
across plaster

the house  
over a century old  
with closed-off dumbwaiters  
grimy stained glass  
tin ceilings sagging  
canned antiquity

house under tree bower  
turns pink at dusk  
mourning doves nest  
on the air conditioner crying

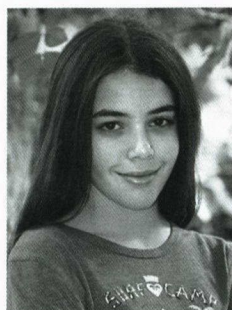


night house drowns in dark ink  
façade retreating into obscurity  
windows glow over the street  
where light from passing cars  
swims into dark rooms  
disappearing into the walls again

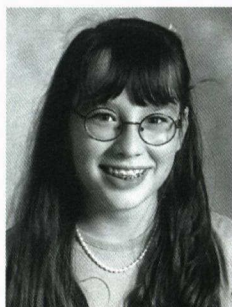
# First Horse Show, Ever

By **Emily Saso**

*Illustrated by* **Abigail Stephens**



Emily Saso, 12  
Brooklyn, New York



Abigail Stephens, 11  
Amman, Jordan

I WAS NINE YEARS OLD and it was my first horse show ever. Pacino, my steady ride, was the picture of blue-ribbon pride with his black coat shimmering and his mane in neat braids. There I stood, next to him with my peach show shirt, newly pressed navy-blue blazer, and my hair in long silky braids with matching peach ribbons. Everything was perfect... on the outside! Inside I was trembling with fear. I was more nervous than I had ever been in my life. My body was quivering and my mom noticed. I blamed it on the chill of late fall and refused a warm jacket because that would cover my show dress glory.

I searched for distraction to steady my nerves and began to focus on the task ahead. The familiar smell of leather and the rhythmic sounds of the clip-clop of horses' hooves soothed my anxiety as I entered the tack room to grab my pony's saddle. Calmer now but still shaking, I began to tack up Pacino. Pad, saddle, girth, rein, bridle, stirrups...

I slowly mounted Pacino and softly pressed my heels into his soft belly, letting him know it was time. We entered the ring, both of us counting on each other for the teamwork that lay ahead. I held his reins tightly and he walked forward with a nice pace. I took deep breaths of the crisp November air, and the chill intensified my focus. We began a brisk, even trot as we passed the judge in the center of the ring. She had ten riders to keep watch on. Would she notice me?

We trotted for what seemed an eternity, and then the judge





*I felt like I had been competing all my life*

said the words I dreaded and longed for all at once, "Canter, please." I felt apprehensive, but I knew this was no time to be timid. With a kick of my heels and cluck of my tongue, I asked Pacino to go faster into a canter. He hesitated and I felt the panic set in. One more kick, one more cluck... and we were off, whizzing past the other horses and kicking up moist dirt. It felt like we were flying. We were a blurred flash of shadow-colored fur, racing through the ring. I felt in command, in control of my horse. I felt like I had been competing all my life. I felt totally shocked that I was still on my horse!

The judge spoke again, "Walk and line up, please." I slowed Pacino's pace and we lined up in the middle. Here it was, the moment of truth. The judge studied

us, and scribbled away on her sheets of paper. My stomach turned somersaults but I tried to keep my composure. They announced the placing order from above over the speakers:

"First place, number 223."

Oh well, not me. That's OK.

"Second place, number 220."

Oh well, still not... wait, that *is* me!

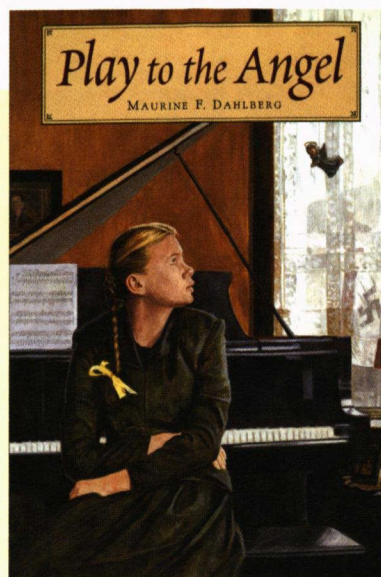
I placed second! My first competition and I took second place! My heart beat so fast as I nudged Pacino forward to receive our prize. It was a red ribbon and the color red had never looked so beautiful to me! A grin from ear to ear was plastered across my face and stayed with me, thrilling me until I lay in bed that night, remembering the day and sweetly drifting off to sleep. ❀



# Book Review

By Anya Josephs

*Play to the Angel*, by Maurine F. Dahlberg;  
Farrar, Straus and Giroux: New York, 2000; \$16



Anya Josephs, 12  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

THE MOST MEMORABLE book I have read in a long time is *Play to the Angel*. Beautifully written characters breathe life into this interesting plot. The city of Vienna is well described, and the individual locations are so convincing I almost expect to see the dark interior of Café Adler or the snowy streets when I open my eyes.

This book, by Maurine F. Dahlberg, is the story of a girl named Greta and her dream to become a concert pianist. Greta's big brother, Kurt, is a talented pianist, despite his life-threatening illness. He tutors Greta, and together they play on a wonderful piano. Then, Kurt dies. Greta's mother is heartbroken and withdraws from her life. To make matters even worse, Greta's best friend moves away. Greta is all alone, except for her dream. Even that is threatened when her grieving mother decides to sell their precious piano.

Greta's last tie to her beloved brother seems about to snap until a strange piano teacher moves in nearby. This mysterious man, named Herr Hummel, won't reveal the secrets of his past, except that he comes from Germany and left because of the growing Nazi threat. Herr Hummel wins Greta's trust in a different way. Instead of confiding in her, he convinces her mother to keep the piano and finds a concert for Greta to play



in. At the edge of success, Greta's dream is once more postponed as Hitler invades Vienna and she discovers the truth of Herr Hummel's dangerous past.

The black and white of the history is richly supplemented by the colorful characters and places. The picture of how Kurt's death broke apart Greta's family is both believable and touching. Admirable characters add a warm element of love. Greta's perseverance, Herr Hummel's generosity, and the friendliness of Greta's schoolmates build the sense of community. As the story progresses, the flaws of the characters are revealed, but that makes them more interesting and attractive, not less.

One part of the story I can connect to is the pain of losing your best friend. Even though I was only five when I moved away from my friend Jane, I still miss her all the time. The relationship between Greta and her dead brother is also very realistic. Fortunately, my wonderful younger brother Aaron is still alive, but the mixture of love, jealousy and admiration Greta experiences is very reminiscent of real siblings. To read the story of siblings so much like Aaron and me separated forever by death was a very moving part of this book.

Greta and I are the same age, and we are both growing up. Even with the trauma of her life, Greta is like me in so many ways. We both want to make friends, fit in, make our mothers proud, do well in school. If Greta were to live next door to me, I think we would be friends.

The one thing I disliked about this book was the climax. I thought the plot was good, but the whole climax took place in the last twenty pages of the book. The beautiful detail evaporated, and little pieces of the action got lost in the fast pace.

Despite this shortcoming, I would recommend *Play to the Angel*. A spotlight on an important historical event, it also brings to life a cast of realistic characters struggling toward bettering themselves. ❀





*"Think about something else," she told herself, yet her mind always came back to her love, Cody*



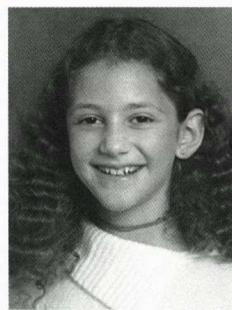
# What the Stars Are Made Of

By **Rachel Tuteur**

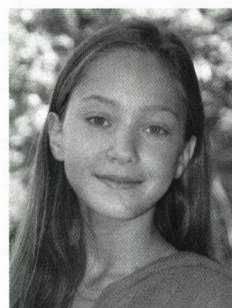
*Illustrated by* **Annalise Nurme**

SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD BELLA sat nervously in her chair. "Think about something else," she told herself, yet the wandering of her mind always came back to her love, the baker's son, Cody. They have always been friends, more than friends. When they were little they would spend their summer nights together, skipping smooth rocks on the sandy riverbanks. She would shout to her father an excuse to get out and away so she could be left with her beloved Cody. She went to the bakery and picked up her lovely Cody. These were only when they were little though they were always the best memories, before they knew they liked each other, pondering over the thought of your crush liking you back. But this was before the arranged marriages and the boring Paul and the insufferable Lia. She remembered the nights all too clearly...

CODY STOOD STRAIGHT and tall in his black suit and his red tie, trying to look good for his father. Cody had to admit it, he was not an orderly man, strict and fierce, he would much rather be in the kitchen smelling the delightful fragrance of dough and flour always ready for work. "Seventeen-year-olds are ready," announced his father every morning, yet Cody had never thought he would take action. He was not ready for this; he needed Bella, the one he truly loved. He remembered chasing the fast fireflies in the spring with only one thought in mind: Does she like me too? This was before all the decisions were made for them with the arranged marriages. Lia was unbear-



Rachel Tuteur, 12  
Sharon, Massachusetts



Annalise Nurme, 13  
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

able and how he hated Paul. The memories were the only things he had of when things were normal. Those memories were his favorite yet he remembered them way too certainly...

“PAPA,” I YELLED, “I’m going to the bakery to get bread then talk to Cody.”

“Are you sure?” asked Emily suspiciously. She hated secrets and yet she always knew them before you knew them yourself. Bella, who was thirteen years old, had to give her little six-year-old sister credit. She had so many things hidden under her pink bonnet that you could mistake her for a genius, yet she was always underestimated for being so small. She was born early and going to be small anyway. At least Bella didn’t underestimate her most of the time.

“I’m just going to the bakery,” I replied smoothly, not to raise her suspicions any higher than they usually were. I pulled on my leather coat. My sister and I always had leather coats because our father was the tailor. We always got the best clothes and we had such a variety. You should see my closet.

“When will you be back?” asked my father. Leonard Johnson had a way of sneaking up on you, yet it wasn’t surprising. He would pop up and you’d always be happy to see him. At least most of the time.

“Around nine,” I answered, still in a cool tone of voice. I had not looked back but I could sense Emily was still watching me with a close eye. If someone was

watching, even Emily’s three dolls, Sandy, Mandy, and Randy, I would make sure to keep my secrets. They were all differently made with different materials and were different sizes and shapes, yet Emily insisted they were triplets and for that I could not change her mind. Before anyone could ask any more I slipped out the door.

I was always bewildered by the night, so calm and peaceful, yet it always represented dark and hatred. This confuses me but I don’t mind. I know that one day I’ll understand them just like my father. Fathers knew everything and if they didn’t they would find out. Just last week I asked my father what the stars were made of. I haven’t gotten the answer yet. It seems it is taking him longer and longer to get the answers, but I’m confident he’ll figure it out, just like always.

“Hello Mr. Chipmen,” I called.

“Bella,” the little ones shouted. All five of the children ran up to me like a swarm of bees. After all, I was known as the town babysitter. I was so good with kids (thanks to Emily) and they did all love me too. The sad thing was that was the only thing I *was* known for. Other than the simple girl. Everyone thought of me like that. Everyone that is except Cody.

“You must go in,” I insisted. “Your mother no doubt has supper on the table.”

Four of them scurried in, following their grumbling stomachs, envisioning their mother’s famous steaming rolls and soft and smooth mashed potatoes. Yet one stayed behind too eager with curiosity.



"Where are you going?" asked the small and little Rachel. Rachel was Emily's best friend and she had the exact plentiful amount of cleverness. They knew exactly what the other one did, exchanging others' secrets and confidential information. They ran around the town acting innocent and sweet but I knew better.

"Where are *you* going?" I shot back lightheartedly. Rachel was sweet and I loved every kid in the town like a sibling.

Rachel bought the act and said, "Home of course," and she put her hands on her hips but the beam on her face told me she was playing. She trooped in right after her siblings and I could see through the window I was forgotten. I let out a sigh of relief and looked onward to find my king and his castle. But Rachel was not fooled so easily and a pair of eyes was following my figure until I turned the corner and was out of sight.

**M**Y EYES KEPT drifting toward the door with one thought racing through my head: Is Bella here yet? "Of course not," I murmured. I was always hoping still that for some reason she might have come early.

Working at the counter was busy and boring. At fourteen there is almost nothing that can keep my attention for long. I work like a robot doing my orders yet not feeling or truly understanding them. I looked out the glass front window noticing the backward letters BAKERY. I didn't even have to read the letters, knowing this place well. I looked beyond that

and I wished I could see the fountain, which was being blocked by the cottages ahead. I hoped I would soon be sitting there with Bella. Who could ask for anything more?

"Cody," I faintly heard a shrill voice from the back.

"Coming," I sighed. Though being the cashier is the most boring job in the store, it did have the best view. I walked through the doorway to the back, noticing the cobwebs draping the crown of the entrance. "I'll probably have to clean that," I moaned, for whenever Renée was running the store I was the one doing the work.

Since my sister was sixteen she has been married to Patrick, who is actually quite likeable, at least from my point of view. Renée hates him. They were in an arranged marriage. A baker's daughter and the butcher's son, a perfect couple. *WRONG!* They are completely different from each other. Anything you can think of they think oppositely about, like where to live and how a twenty-four-year-old mother and a twenty-six-year-old father should raise their kids. After all Renée's misery she takes it out on me when they work the shop. "Why me?" I always ask, yet there is persistently no response.

A broom was immediately pounded upon me. I looked aimlessly down at my feet. "Clean the front waiting room," a shrill voice cried and this told me it was Renée. Though I was still looking uselessly at my feet a little smile crept up my face like the little engine that could, slowly but surely. I squeezed the handle of the broom

to control my excitement, being able to watch for Bella.

I scurried out of the room, making sure I was concealing my face for I could not contain my smile any longer. I walked through the doorway grinning from ear to ear but hiding it from Patrick who was working the register. He would have told Renée because he did love her, yet his love was not returned.

As I swept through the waiting room I noticed who was here. Mr. Duncan, Mrs. Barren, Mrs. Landau, Emily... why was Emily here? Did something happen to Bella? My smile collapsed, my feet took me as fast as they could to Emily.

"What are you doing here?" I practically screamed.

"Wow," she stepped back. I had obviously scared her. "Can't I just get bread?!" she yelled. If she had gone any further I probably would've gotten a spanking.

"Sorry," I grumbled. I was now on Emily's suspicious list. She would be watching all the time.

"*SWEEP!*" shrieked Renée. I was relieved I had an excuse to leave Emily. Soon I would probably find one of the triplets lying around carefully hidden yet in a perfect place to watch. Last time I acted suspicious Mandy was found atop the oven where no one looks. How she got up there I cannot tell you, but she was placed as if looking down upon us like a ruler to his subjects.

I resumed my gazing through the window, staring past the cottages, wishing I were the fountain always looking up

at the sky. I would spew water and grant wishes, but could I grant my own? Being with Bella. It seems so simple yet it would be so complicated. I did not like thinking about it so I did not let my mind wander far about my future. I only had fantasies about being with Bella, yet it would never be the real thing. I am not going to think about it, I told myself sternly, yet I missed the part of what I would be when I grew up and what my children would be like. *NO.* Don't think, get back to work.

Then the door slowly opened and the bell swung, alerting us a new visitor had arrived. *RING, RING, ring.* It gradually got softer and softer. Could it be? Yes, it was Bella. Her long black ringlets draped her shoulders, bouncing as she moved about the room gracefully. Her eyes green as emerald begged me to say something romantic about them but I could not do that. As much as I love Bella I was just as shy. That is why I was known as the quiet one. Everyone thought of me that way. Everyone that is except Bella.

Her eyes brightened as she glanced at me. I think they glimmered more than the prettiest diamond in the world. She started walking toward me. I wondered if she was feeling just as shy as I was. I started walking toward her too, adding butterflies to my stomach with each step. There was a moment of silence but I didn't mind. Just being with her was good enough.

"Do you want to go to the fountain?" asked Bella timidly, adding pink to her cheeks. It seemed as though she had been building up her courage brick by brick to





*"Did you hear something?" asked Bella. I had, but my reply was, "No."*

say that. This time my eyes brightened.

"Of course!" I yelled enthusiastically. As quick as I could I hung up my flour-covered apron and ran out the door. I was holding her hand at the time and I don't know if I'm imagining it but she seemed happier than ever before. We were off. READY. SET. GO.

By this time Patrick had run to Renée, telling her I was gone. He had hoped that

even the slightest touch of love would reward him with love in return yet Renée had not noticed. All she did was shriek at the top of her lungs, "CODY!"

"Did you hear something?" asked Bella.

I had, but my reply was, "No." Nothing could spoil this moment. I was with Bella and there was nothing more I could ask for... except that she felt the same way too. ❁





*The summer cottage father loved so much looked gray and forgotten*



# The Summer Father Was Away

By Sariel Hana Friedman

*Illustrated by Joanna Stanley*

**J**O-BEAR, JO!" a voice called. "Wake up, wake up—it's just a bad dream."

"Where am I?" I awoke, puzzled, my eyes only half open.

A familiar face hovered over me in the morning light, sun-bleached hair strewn across his forehead, and clear glacier-blue eyes. A boy about fifteen—my brother, Nathaniel.

"Where are we going?" I questioned with a start.

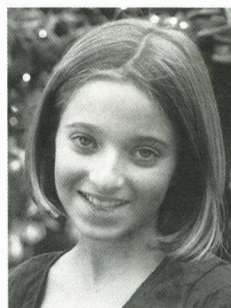
"Crazy with Maisy and Daisy!" Mama said. That was Dad's favorite phrase—it meant that, as hard as we pushed, we would never pry it out of him.

Our father, Matthew, was at war. It felt empty the three of us in the car without him. For a long time I could only hear the forlorn sound of the wind and the rhythm of the tires on the dirt road.

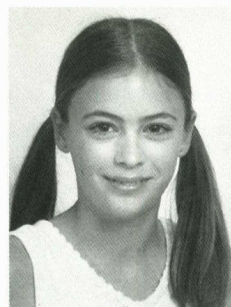
"I wonder where Daddy is right now," I asked.

Sadness fell like a heavy blanket; I knew everyone was thinking about Daddy. I closed my eyes and imagined what he was doing, but the pictures were blurry: maybe he was listening to the scratchy sounds of the radio as he tried to stay awake on patrol. Maybe he was cleaning his rifle, rubbing oil on the barrel the way he'd shown me. Maybe he was writing us a letter, his flashlight getting dimmer and dimmer as the batteries faded.

"We're here!" my mother said, her voice filled with an enthusiasm I sensed was a little too fake. I was jostled out of my reverie. Rolling down the window I could hear the faint sound



Sariel Hana Friedman, 10  
Pacific Palisades, California



Joanna Stanley, 13  
Seal Beach, California

of sighing waves. Bunny rabbits, startled by the rough engine cutting through the silence, stopped to stare, then run. The summer cottage father loved so much looked gray and forgotten. The flowers he had planted drooped, no longer able to find the light of day.

As we carried our bags through the door the sour scent of mothballs overwhelmed the comforting sea-salt smell of our summer home.

"Let's go straight to the beach," my mother called. "Come on, it'll be fun."

Nathaniel and I looked at each other—we both knew she was definitely trying too hard.

"The sun's not even out. It'll be freezing in that water. I'd rather stay here."

"Fine—then I'll just go by myself," my mother said, "and I'll bring those frozen Baby Ruths you love so much with me."

It wasn't because of the candy that we gave in; it was for Mom, it was for how hard she was trying.

I was pulled in our familiar red beach wagon down Tanglevine Lane next to vines of wild grapes. I was stuck between a mix of happy and sad, torn between two people, loving both equally. Mom was chattering away about who knows what until, finally, we arrived.

"Well, we're here," Nathaniel muttered, uncomfortably. "Er—might as well go in the water."

At first my brother and I jumped the waves dutifully, skin white with goosebumps. But, as the waves got bigger, so did Nathaniel's spirits.

"Here comes a humongous one. I challenge you to dive under."

Breathing hard, I closed my eyes and prepared to dive.

Suddenly I felt comforting arms lifting me—up, up, up—then throwing me across the waves. Exhilaration!

I fell under the churning foam, the voices on the shore muffled. But I could hear my father's voice above the rumble of the waves, "No matter where I am, no matter what I do, I'll always hold you tight."

The thrill of it made me laugh out loud, the first time in six months. Even when I realized that it was my brother who'd lifted me up, and not Dad, it still made me happy.

Out of the corner of my eye I saw—or maybe I was just imagining it?—Nathaniel's lips (blue and chattering) curling up into a hint of a smile.

"Who wants a frozen Baby Ruth?" my mother called.

"Isn't it wrong to feel so happy?" I blurted out when we plopped ourselves into the hammock we had made summers before.

I looked at Nathaniel, his lips embedded in a thick layer of chocolate. I pointed and stifled a giggle. He flashed a quick, embarrassed smile, white teeth with chocolate frosting.

"I've been waiting to feel like this since Father left—but I didn't realize I could," I said.

"Jo-bear, get real," Nathaniel said.

"OK, maybe not since he left, but for a long time."





*The thrill of it made me laugh out loud, the first time in six months*

I felt my mother's fingers tuck my wet hair back behind one ear.


"You're my smart girl, aren't you?" she said.

The steady drumbeat of my heart, still pounding, rang in my ears. The hammock sighed contentedly as we swayed back and forth.

"You can't buy a day like this," Nathaniel announced. It was a phrase Father used that always made us laugh.

Before I knew it, he was pulling me across the beach on a boogie board.

"Faster, faster," I cried. This time, he, too, was cackling gleefully.

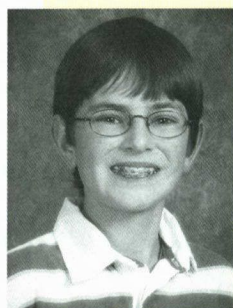
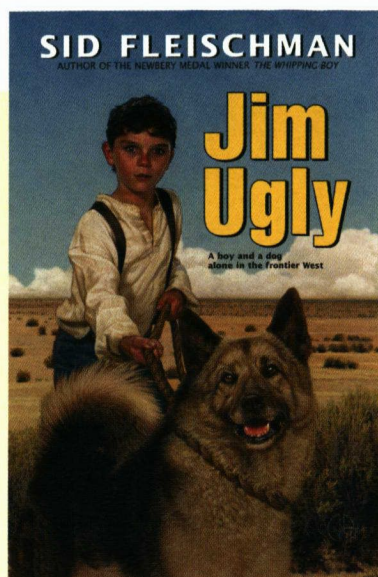
I remember that summer—way more than the rest: father returned with war stories to tell us (with occasional sound effects from Nathaniel). That summer was the turning point of my life. That was the summer I learned that I could live with sadness and still find a spark of joy. 



# Book Review

By Alec Ahrens

*Jim Ugly*, by Sid Fleischman; HarperTrophy  
(reprint edition): New York, 2003; \$6.99



Alec Ahrens, 11  
Terrace Park, Ohio

**I**F YOU LIKE mysteries and suspense/adventure books, then *Jim Ugly* is the book for you! Twelve-year-old Jake Bannock's father, Sam, is dead. He was buried in a pine wood coffin with ice inside to keep him cool and comfortable. But Jake has heard about a fortune in diamonds and begins to wonder if his father is really dead or just hiding out somewhere. So Jake sets out with his only inheritance, a wolf-like tracking dog named Jim Ugly, to find his father and finally learn the secrets his father had kept hidden for so long. As Jake makes his way through the barren California desert on a locomotive train, he meets many helpful and some hindering characters. Some of these characters are: the prim, prissy and emotional Wilhelmina, Sam's secret fiancée, D.D. Skeats, the self-proclaimed assassin who almost always misses his target, the traveling, boisterous "Arizona girl" performer, and the nasty Cornelius, the man who hired D.D. Skeats to kill Sam Bannock.


One exciting part of *Jim Ugly* is when Jake goes to the doctor who supposedly took the bullet out of his father's shoulder, but



only found a bullet D.D. Skeats had fired at his foot while aiming for his father. This made Jake's suspicions about his father not being dead even more likely. After Jim Ugly sniffs a shirt of Sam Bannock's, he tears across town to the railroad, Jake sprinting behind the whole way, thinking to himself, "Dad's not dead! Dad's not dead!" Thus begins a quest across miles and miles of dry, dusty terrain, over tall mountains and through many perilous areas of California, dodging an old Confederate assassin the whole way.

The big idea of this book is that people may change their opinion about others in time, like Jake did after his travels and getting to know Wilhelmina. After his father says, "She's not much like your mother, is she, Jake?" Jake answers by saying, "Nope, but I like her." Another big idea in the book is, never give up hope. Jake demonstrates this by never giving up in the search for his father. This quality is great in a human.

This book triggered many emotions in me. I was angry toward Jake's father for not telling Jake that he was getting remarried. I felt sympathetic toward Jake because he was the victim of the story. So many secrets were kept from him, even the one about his father! Also, he was constantly being tailed by D.D. Skeats, and to top it all off he was getting a new mother, and he didn't know!

This book would be great for people ages nine and up who like looking for clues and solving mysteries. I hope you, like me, find this book interesting and lots of fun. 





*Lena smiles at her little ballerina of a sister, bringing her cinnamon cookies*



# Saturdays

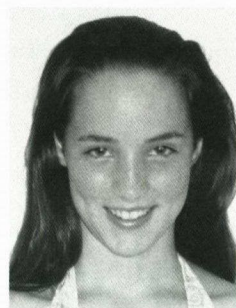
By **Sophie Stid**

Illustrated by **C.J. Green**

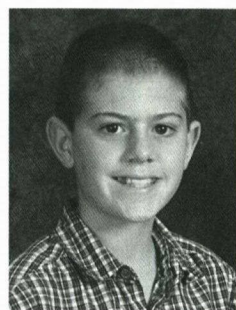
**T**O ELSA, Saturdays mean bliss. Saturdays are the morning of her entire week. They are the crowning glory, the cherry on the top of the sundae. A week without Saturdays to Elsa would be a week without happiness. She takes what she can get. And she gets Saturdays.

All week long, she taps her patent-leather-clad toes. She fidgets and she flutters. She doesn't have the patience to button her dresses or shirts, or zip up jackets. She's a blur, she's a nuisance. She's waiting for her Saturdays. Her parents smile fondly, and her sisters scoff. But what can they do? The brownstone at 23 East Hampshire Street is the kingdom, and Elsa is the miniature queen. Mother, Father, Clara, Heidi, and Tanya, they all jump to her commands. The eldest, Lena, does too. And can they help it? Just a frown from the little dancer casts a shadow over the whole day. Even Palinka, the brown-and-white dog, is devoted to Elsa. No treat tastes as good as bacon from Elsa's pudgy, dimpled hand.

Elsa's treats are Saturdays. Friday night she comes home from dance class, and plops her little four-year-old self by the dining room window. She sits, all by herself, in the velvet crimson window seat, and carefully lets down her bun of red-gold hair. She slips off her dance shoes and her scratchy tutu, and lets them fall to the floor like unheard whispers. The dining room is glossy, decadent, and dark. Books from the mahogany shelves brood over Elsa, thinking important thoughts. Elsa is a little scared by the picture of Great-Grandmother Marguerite that overlooks



Sophie Stid, 13  
Menlo Park, California



C.J. Green, 13  
Manassas, Virginia

the window seat, who has the hooked nose of people who died very old a very long time ago. But Elsa has learned to look defiantly back into Great-Grandmother's flat brown eyes.

Elsa herself has bright blue eyes, like well-tended violets or pieces of spring sky the fairies forgot to collect. She has a little upturned nose sprinkled with cinnamon freckles, and soft pink lips. Her upper lip is dented with a little scar, from when high-spirited Heidi dropped her on the hearth. Elsa has never quite forgiven Heidi for that. But she loves Heidi anyway. Elsa is a person who loves naturally. Even Heidi, who is all long legs and jutting elbows and who can be hard to love. Some people can sing and some people can run, but Elsa can love.

Elsa leans her red-gold head against the mahogany paneling, and taps her fingers in a rhythm. She hears Clara practicing at the piano. Music fills the house like piney smells, grand and booming. Clara, who is fifteen, loves the piano. Clara wraps her whole soul in music, like a down blanket. She hums all the time, even in her sleep. When she walks home from school, her long gangly legs in their navy-blue-uniform tights skip to the tune of an unheard violin.

Elsa hears Tanya with Mother in the kitchen, banging oven doors, stirring, whirring the beaters. Heidi is groaning in the living room, angry with math. Heidi takes up so much space, with long legs and arms and wild auburn hair and flashing green eyes. She vibrates with contained

energy. Elsa doesn't. Elsa radiates peace.

Elsa watches the people go by, bundled up and warm. They wave at her fairy image in the windowpane. She waves back, and then turns to Lena. Lena smiles at her little ballerina of a sister, bringing her cinnamon cookies. Lena stretches her lean arm along the mantelpiece, and lays her glossy brown head on it, and watches her sister.

"Elsie, how was ballet?"

"It was good." Elsa takes a deep bite of cinnamon-raisin cookie. "We did pliés. I'm to be a Snowflake in the 'Nutcracker.'"

"That's grand," Lena says. She smiles, her green eyes calm and comfortable, laughing at the little miniature witch of a girl. "And are you waiting for Saturday?"

"Oh, yes," says Elsa.

And then Mother comes in, moving quietly, a candle in her hand. "Elsie, *lieben*, hand me the matches."

Elsa does so, scrambling, a little monkey in her tights. She hands Mother the box of heavy matches, and everyone watches as Mother lights the Friday night candles. Puff! The candles bloom like chrysanthemums in the darkness, Mother's hand shielding them from the wind.

**S**ATURDAY MORNING Elsa wakes up early, and she lets twelve-year-old Tanya help her dress. Elsa buttons her red coat, and she takes her blue hat into Lena's room. Lena and Heidi are just waking up, fresh-faced in the early morning dawn. Lena brushes Elsa's hair, the brush sure and strong in her hands. She strokes Elsa's



tangles into a red-gold halo of curls.

Elsa scrunches her blue tam-o'-shanter on her head, and Heidi frowns at her. Elsa smiles back, angelic and content. And then all the sisters walk out the door. They walk hand-in-hand, tall and dignified Lena, fiery tomboy Heidi, dreamy musician Clara. Plump and motherly Tanya holds hands with Elsa. One by one, they file into the corner deli. They get their bagels, they get their lox. The owner smiles at the Saturday morning regulars, and hands them free moon cookies.

Elsa hates moon cookies, but she wouldn't have any other cookie for the world. She licks off the brown-and-white icing, careful not to mix the two. She waits to lick the brown icing until all the creamy moon part is licked off, and the hard, tasteless half-cookie is slick and shiny in her mittened hand.

The sisters walk to the park, and eat the bagels there. Elsa's heart is singing and dancing. She thinks her chest might burst open with how happy she is. Lena smiles at her, thinking her own private thoughts. That Elsa. Always staring at something in the distance, something that pleased her and made her rose-pink lips twist in one corner.

"Keep your fairy lands, Elsie," Lena whispers.

Elsa eats her moon cookie.

They walk all over Boston on Saturdays, a fresh-faced sight straight from Sweden. Old women smile, old men ask wise Lena for help in their sidewalk chess game. Elsa and Tanya scatter crumbs for the pigeons,

and Heidi balances on the fences. Clara taps her long skinny fingers, sounding out tunes and melodies on walls and trees and fence posts.

By three o'clock, they are always at the launderers. Billowy sheets piled in tubs, drying in the scent of lavender. The atmosphere is fresh and clean, warm and dry. The laundress fetches the laundry for the Olsons, asks after their parents. She hands each of them, even seventeen-year-old Lena, toffee from the caramel-warm basket on the counter. The waxed paper slides off, and the slick shiny candy melts on your tongue like afternoon sunlight. Elsa holds a bag of laundry, and wishes she were old enough to carry her mother's clothes. The silk and taffeta dresses, the net and sequined shirtwaists, the velvet feathered opera capes. Lena carries those. Heidi is not to be trusted with her father's suits, so solemn Clara holds the crisp black-and-white ruffled cummerbunds and vests. Heidi, like Tanya and Elsa, carries socks, pinafores, and the girls' checked gingham dresses in a laundry sack.

From there, they go to Nightingale Park. They lay the laundry out on the grass, and they amuse themselves. Clara lies on the sunny grass with some sheet music, and Lena sews and Tanya mends. Heidi runs around the fountains, with Elsa on her back, skipping on the marble, her skirts flying up. She runs and Elsa screams in laughter until both are too tired.

But there are other things to do. There are swings, and there is the newspaper man, and there is the cigarette man, and

there is the chimney sweep. Elsa runs and plays and explores every nook, every cranny. She plays with rocks as fairies, and she makes wildflower wreaths. She drinks in the grass and the lake and the sun, and this feeling. She sits, still clean, in the midst of a golden light. Nothing bad can happen today. Not today.

At five o'clock, it is time to go home. But on the way there, they stop by the carousel. Elsa's favorite part! The music and the painted horses, going up and down, lights like around a movie star's mirror. They arrive, and the ticket man looks up from the paper.

"Sorry girls, not today. It's broken."

Broken! Elsa's bottom eyelids fill with tears. Her lashes are glued in triangles, her lips tremble and bow.

"Elsie," Lena says, bending down, but Heidi moves her out of the way.

"Elsa," she says, taking the small girl's hands. "Elsa, we will have our own carousel."

Elsa looks up. The golden light did not protect her. "Heidi..." she sobs.

"We will," Heidi says firmly. "Climb on my back."

Elsa does. Then Clara gets into the spirit of the thing. She takes out her penny harmonica and begins to play "Waltz of the Flowers." Lena begins to dance, bending and twisting and extending her ballet-cultivated body, up and down, up and down. Tanya sings along.

And they proceed, the Olson sisters, in their own carousel. And so it goes, the Waltz of the Flowers, all the way home. ❁

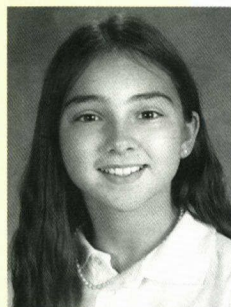




# The Dancer

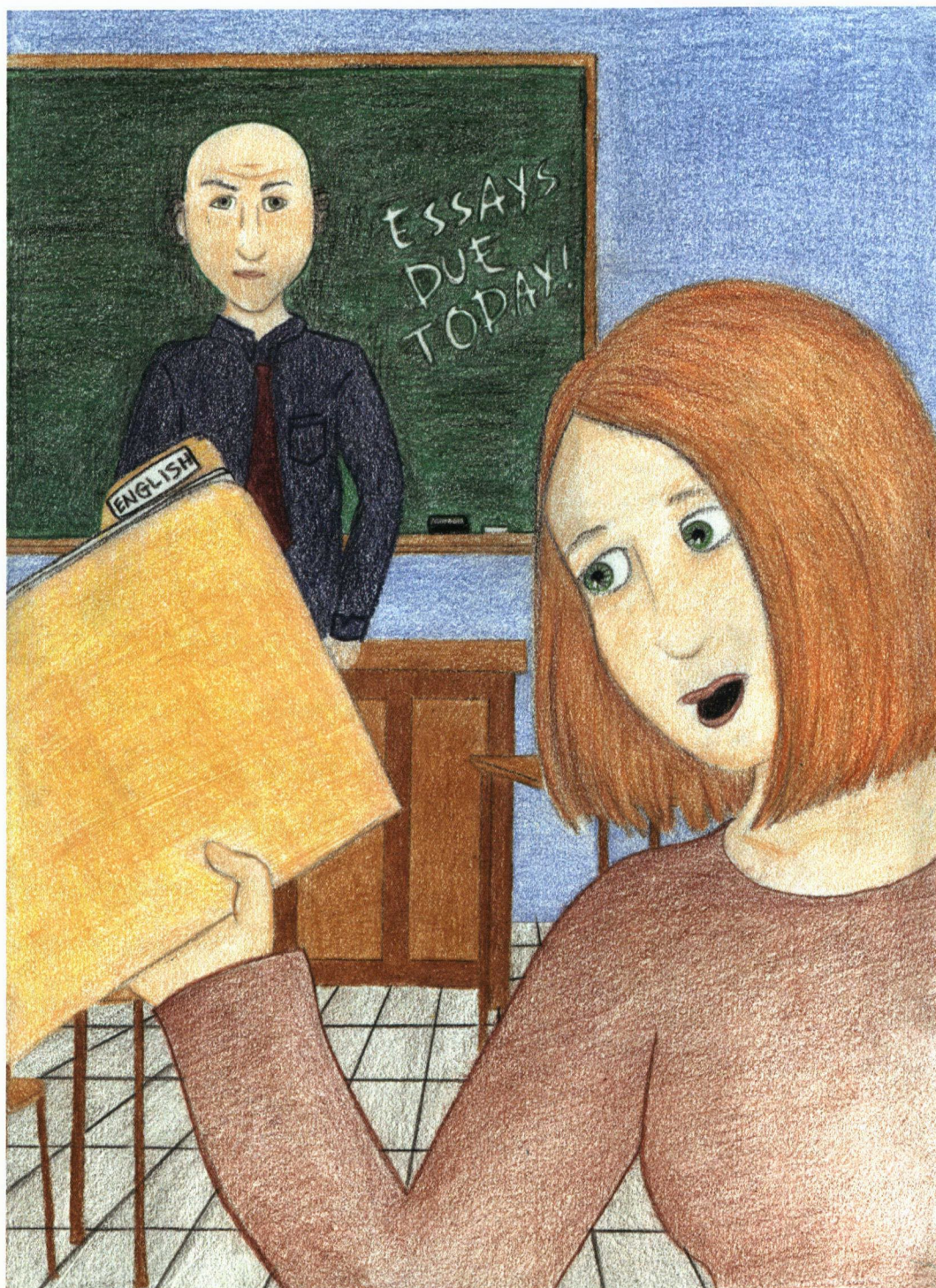
By Anna Preston

Behind the curtain of rain  
The Dancer awaits  
Her slick, muscular legs tensing, preparing,  
Wide eyes darting, searching.  
Suddenly, with all grace, she leaps through the air.  
Flying, Soaring,  
She lands with flawless balance  
Just in time to shoot her slender tongue into the air  
For dinner.  
The frog on her lily pad.



Anna Preston, 12  
Oakton, Virginia





*"Your report, Miss Jackson?" he asked impatiently*



# Accusations

By **Lyla Lawless**

*Illustrated by* **Celeste Kelly**

**I**T ALL STARTED on the stairs outside my English classroom. I was late and I wasn't watching where I was going, so I ran smack into my best friend, Kelly. There were pencils bouncing down the steps, folders spewing their contents on the floor, and pens escaping only to be crushed underfoot by passing students.

Mr. McPherson, my teacher, was less than pleased when Kelly and I walked into class two minutes after the bell. He was even angrier when, five minutes later, I couldn't find my homework.

It was the best report I'd ever written. When I'd left school that morning, I'd triple-checked to make sure it was in my English folder. Now I checked all of my other folders, too, and my binder, just in case I had misplaced it when I dropped my things. But as I dug through my backpack with increasing dread, the report refused to turn up.

Mr. McPherson stood at the head of the classroom, his arms crossed. "Your report, Miss Jackson?" he asked impatiently.

I looked up with a sick feeling in my stomach. It couldn't be in the hallway; we'd picked up everything in sight. So if it wasn't at home and not in my bag... then I had done the unthinkable.

I, Lydia Jackson, straight-A student, had lost my homework.

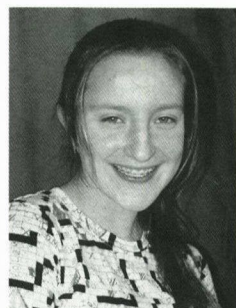
"I don't have it, sir," I squeaked.

Mr. McPherson heaved a short sigh and strode back to his desk.

"I will give you until Friday to turn in your report, although it will detract from your grade. I'm sure the report will turn up."



Lyla Lawless, 13  
Gaithersburg, Maryland



Celeste Kelly, 13  
Dickerson, Maryland

I glanced back into my backpack in despair. I had never missed an assignment before. Friday was two days away. There was no way I could find my report by then, and writing it over would be impossible.

Then I realized something. *If it isn't at home... and I didn't leave it in the hall... and if it isn't in my bag... then someone stole it.*

As soon as I thought it, I knew exactly who had done it: the new girl who sat in the back of the classroom, who had long, dark hair that was always in her stony gray eyes. Lately, she'd been tossing shy glances in my direction, but they had made me a little nervous because I didn't understand why she picked me.

She was strange. She never talked to anyone, and people said she'd been caught shoplifting. She got terrible grades in English, and hardly ever turned in her homework. I knew she hadn't brought in her report today. And she'd bent down to pick up my stuff in the hallway. If she could get my report and copy it down at home, she could turn it in late and still get a decent grade.

As I sat in my seat, oblivious to the class, I felt a cold, hard lump of hate settle in my stomach. That awful girl had stolen my prize report. And I was going to get it back, no matter what it took.

**“Y**OU'RE KIDDING!” Kelly cried, leaning towards me, her gaze incredulous.

“Well... I don't *know* that she took it,” I amended. “But what else could have happened? I know it isn't at home, and she's

the only one who would dare.”

Kelly glanced over her shoulder at the girl, who sat by herself in a corner of the cafeteria, her dark hair falling like a curtain in front of her face. I saw her unzipped backpack sitting by her feet.

“It's got to be right there,” I breathed as we stared at the backpack. “It would be so easy to just walk by and snatch the report. You could spill your milk over there, or something.”

“I don't know,” Kelly hesitated. “Maybe we should just ask a teacher to check. She probably put it in her locker.”

Kelly was probably right, but I was still seething over my humiliation in English. Maybe if I could turn my report in today, Mr. McPherson would still give me full credit.

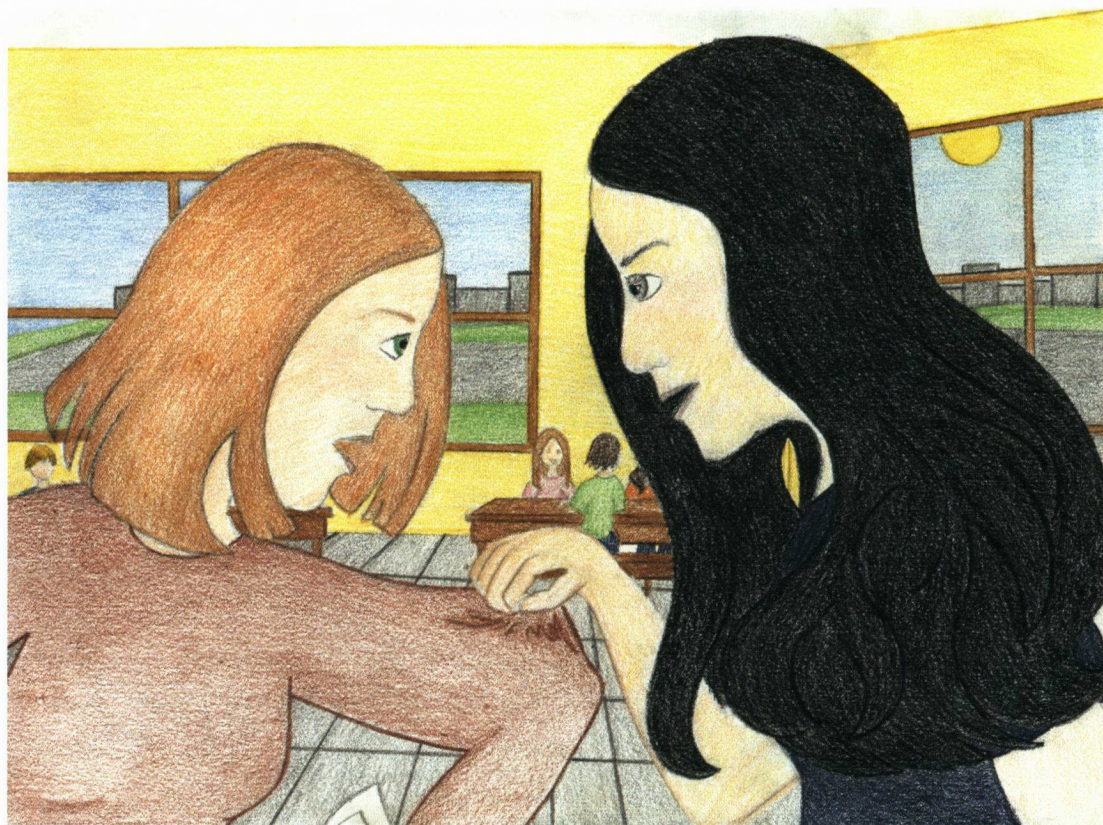
“No,” I decided. “I want it back now. We'll walk by her table on our way to the trash can and drop our tray. You make a fuss, and I'll go through her backpack. It'll be over in a second.”

Kelly was still uncertain, but we went on with our plan anyway. As we strode past, Kelly hooked her shoe around the girl's leg, collapsing to her knees and dropping the tray.

“Oh, man! I can't believe this!” she cried as the girl turned to glare at her. “Oh, I'm so sorry!”

I bent over the backpack and started to rifle through it, but the girl turned back to her lunch, and saw me out of the corner of her eye. She whirled around and grabbed me by the shirt. I found myself dangling from her grasp.





*"What were you doing in my stuff?" she hollered*

"What were you doing in my stuff?" she hollered.

"Give my report back!" I yelled. "You stole my report!"

Her eyes widened in disbelief. "You thought I stole your dumb report? Why on earth would I want it?" I noticed several lunch monitors closing in on us.

"I bet you're going to turn it in yourself," I said, "since you get bad grades in English!"

I could hardly believe myself. Nothing that bratty had ever come out of my mouth before. It didn't surprise me when she gave me a hard shove.

Then I was on the floor, my shoulder smarting where I'd hit the table. Half a dozen teachers were crowded around me, lifting me back up. Kelly stood nearby, her tray of trash still strewn across the floor, eyes wide in horror. But what jumped out at me the most was the girl, standing aside, her fist still clenched, her stony eyes boring holes into mine.

It was then that I saw something new in her expression: hurt.

"I thought you didn't believe them," she hissed at me. "No one ever talks to me, but I thought that you, at least, didn't believe all the stories. I guess I was wrong. I

guess you're just as bad as everyone else."

Then I was hustled away, leaving her to stand alone in the middle of the crowd.

After the nurse cleaned me up, I went to the principal's office.

"Well, Lydia," he addressed me. "What do you think about the scene in the cafeteria today?"

"I really thought she had my homework," I whispered. "It made so much sense. She *doesn't* get good grades in English. But I was too rash and... I should have waited. It could have been anyone else. I should have asked everyone before accusing her."

The principal nodded. "That's right. I can see that you've been thinking this over. Now let me tell you about Kaitlyn. She was transferred from her old school in the middle of the year. Kaitlyn is very shy and has trouble making friends, so the other children started telling stories about her."

"I'm really sorry," I mumbled. "I don't know what got into me."

"You realize that I can't let this go unpunished," the principal said.

"No sir," I agreed.

"You will have a week of after-school detention. Kaitlyn will be joining you."

"Yes sir," I replied.

I left the principal's office with mixed feelings. I felt worse than before about what I had done to Kaitlyn, and I wasn't

looking forward to telling my parents about the detention. But I was getting a chance to try to make up to Kaitlyn, which was something I had been sure would never happen.


I stared out the bus window at the trees whizzing by. Kelly tapped me on the shoulder, and held out two tattered sheets of notebook paper.

"Um..." she hesitated. "I found this in the hall, after math class."

It was my report. There were shoe marks all over it, a water stain on the first paragraph, and a tear right down the middle of the second page. I was going to have to rewrite most of it.

It sort of reminded me of my situation with Kaitlyn. Looking back, I realized that we might have had the beginning of a friendship started. Then, in the blink of an eye, it had been stepped on, stained, and torn. Now I had a second chance to build it back up. It would take time and care, and it wouldn't be easy. But it could still happen. All I had to do was try.

"Thanks, Kelly," I said, folding the pages and carefully sticking them into my backpack. Maybe I could take the report into detention, and offer to help Kaitlyn with her own homework while we were there.

It wouldn't be much, but it was a start. And that was all I needed. 



# Thoughts of a Sunny Day

By **Brigid Cami**

*Illustrated by* **Hannah W. Smith**

**T**HE CAR CAME to a stop, and I stepped out, closing the door behind me. I ran home, determined to finish my homework and retreat to the lake as soon as possible.

I dashed into my room and dumped everything out of my bookbag, on the floor. I took out my task sheet and looked at what I had written.

My first assignment was under the math subject. I took out my math book and a sheet of paper, and began to work out the problems one by one. I worked at a quick pace, which made my handwriting extremely sloppy. That's something my teacher won't be very happy about, I thought. As I solved each problem, I counted down the amount remaining, until I finally finished. I quickly put my math belongings into my bookbag and checked it off on my task sheet. For my next assignment, I needed a poster finished by next week. That can wait, I thought. I looked at the next line and was pleased to learn that nothing else but the word "none" was written.

"Yes!" I mouthed. I leaped off the floor and hurried into the living room.

"I'll be outside," I told my parents.

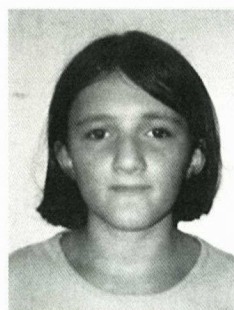
"No," my dad said. "You have to eat dinner first."

"What?" I asked, in a frustrated tone. "But I never have to eat first!"

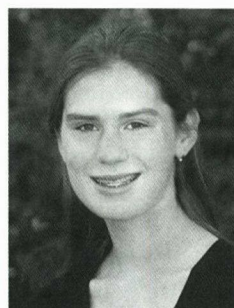
"But you should," my dad said, calmly.

"Dad...!" I said, dragging it out. "I'm not even hungry."

"You've barely eaten anything lately. If you don't change that,



Brigid Cami, 13  
Blacksburg, Virginia



Hannah W. Smith, 13  
Wellesley, Massachusetts



*"Be back in thirty minutes!"*

you'll be sick," he said.

"But I'm fine!" I said, in a very high-pitched voice. "Oh, come on!"

"All right, all right," he said. "We'll compromise. You can go out for only half an hour, and then you have to come back and eat."

"OK!" I said with a smile on my face.

I ran into the kitchen and took out the bag of old breadcrumbs, which had remained from the day before. Then, I quickly put flip-flops on and ran outside, calling, "Be back in thirty minutes!" as I shut the door behind me.

As I began to walk toward the lake, I


took a deep breath and smelled the fresh spring air. It was such a beautiful day. The lake sparkled from afar, giving me that relaxed nothing-could-go-wrong kind of feeling. Before I knew it, I stood before it. I took a seat on a rock nearby and opened the plastic bag. I took out a handful of crumbs and sprinkled it around me. Already I saw the ducks approaching, always a little frightened at first. I saw them bend down their slender necks and gulp the crumbs away, looking at me as if asking for more. I sprinkled more crumbs around me, and once more watched the ducks gulp them down. My eyes rolled over the lake,





*My eyes rolled over the lake, and again I absorbed its perfect beauty*

and again I absorbed its perfect beauty. I watched the wind softly stroke and crease the water before my vision found another site: the sky. It was unbelievably clear and its brightness made me squint, as I looked up at it. The lovely beaming sky. It made

me feel so small, looking at its never-ending corners. I saw it, as if wondering how far under its covers I would reach. I looked at it with dreams, and goals passing before my eyes. I looked at it, and thought... What was stored in my future? 

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