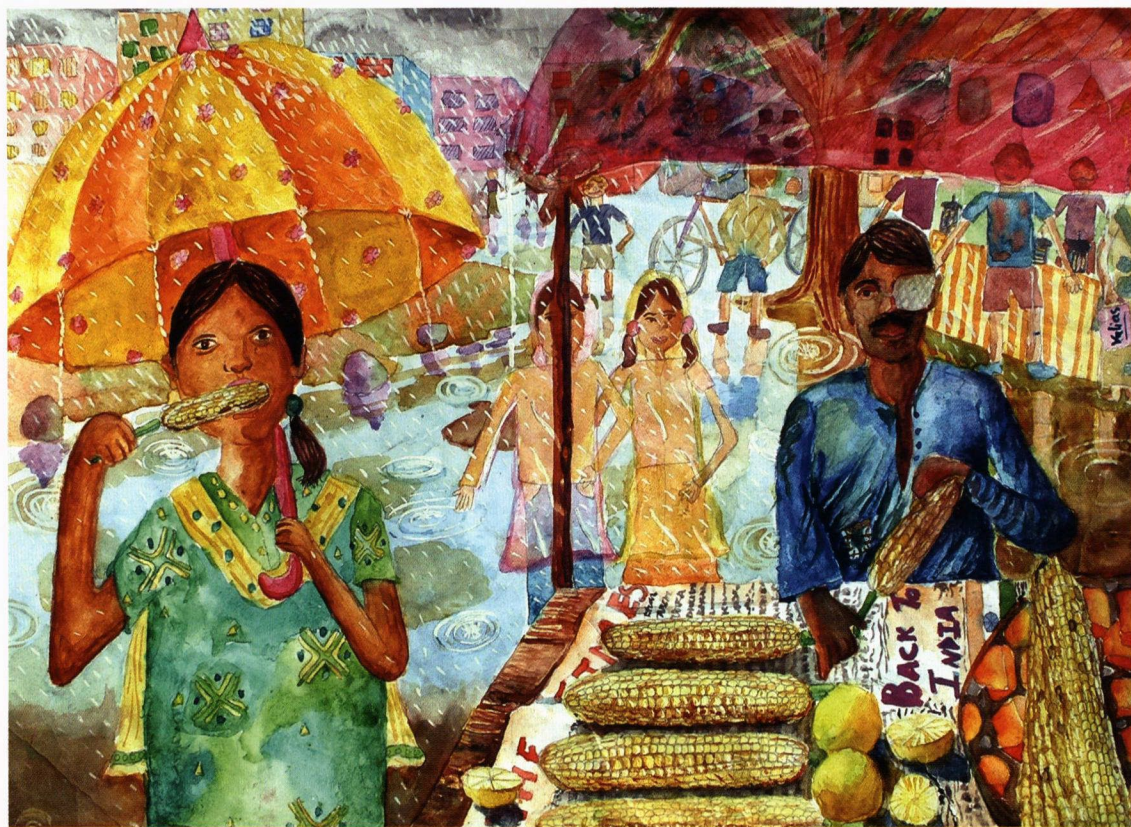


Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists



"The Monsoon," by Khubi M. Fofria, age 12, Vadodara, India

GREYHOUND PARK

Cassie, a racing dog, longs for a home

PENNSYLVANIA

Was Danielle wrong about her father all these years?

Also: Illustrations by Alicia Zanoni and C.J. Green

JULY/AUGUST 2007

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Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists

VOLUME 35, NUMBER 6

JULY / AUGUST 2007

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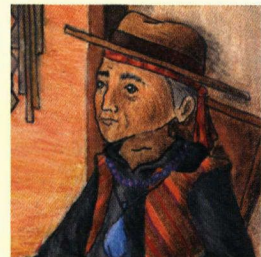
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Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists

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



Jessie Moore, 12

Contributors' Guidelines

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

Story and poem authors: Please do not enclose a self-addressed envelope with

your submission. Send copies of your work, not originals. If we decide to consider your work for a future issue, you will hear from us within four weeks. If you do not hear from us, it means we were not able to use your work. Don't be discouraged! Try again!

Book reviewers: If you are interested in reviewing books for *Stone Soup*, write editor Gerry Mandel. Tell her a little about yourself and the kinds of books you like to read. Enclose an SASE for her reply.

Artists: If you would like to illustrate for *Stone Soup*, send Ms. Mandel three samples of your artwork, along with a letter saying what you like to draw most. Enclose an SASE for her reply. We need artists who can draw or paint complete scenes in color. Please send color copies of your work, not originals.

All contributors: Send us writing and art about the things you feel most strongly about! Whether your work is about imaginary situations or real ones, use your own experiences and observations to give your work depth and a sense of reality. Send your work to *Stone Soup*, Submissions Dept., P.O. Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063. Include your name, age, birthdate, home address and phone number.

Cover: "The Monsoon" was loaned to *Stone Soup* by the Mudra School of Fine Arts in Vadodara, India. The school offers art classes taught by artists. Special thanks to Kiran and Jayesh Kansara.



The Mailbox



LBP, 9

In the March/April 2007 issue, I was amazed by how realistic and beautiful the story "Diamond Sky" by Sophie Stid was. Keep writing, Sophie! I also loved the artwork by Laurie Hamilton. From experience, I know that horses are not easy to draw, but Laurie captured their grace and elegance expertly.

RHIANNON GRODNIK, 11
San Francisco, California

Thank you for "Losing Grip" [January/February 2005]. It was truly amazing. The detail in the story and the artwork were amazing. I would also like to thank you for "The Thief of Bubastis" [January/February 2005]. Everything has been great so far.

ADIEL SCHMIDT, 10
New York, New York

Stone Soup is the best young writer and illustrator magazine I have ever read. It really inspires young people to write and draw and gives them the chance to get it in a magazine. Even if you choose not to include my story, I will always love this magazine. Every issue is like a present. Thank you so much for starting this awesome magazine!

SARAH DEBS, 12
Monte Sereno, California

I love *Stone Soup*! I read your stories almost every day. I have written a couple of poems, but never a good story until one of your writers inspired me. Thank you for making such a wonderful Web site! I have not read all your stories, but I hope I can.

OLIVIA SMIT, 10
London, Ontario, Canada

I became a subscriber to your magazine last summer. As a middle grades language arts teacher, I am always looking for ideas and inspirational readings that are also accessible to my mostly ESL students. In your summer and fall issues, I found beautiful examples of writings that I hoped would inspire my students and serve as mentor texts to our poems and memoirs. Using "Sailing," "Tickle Me Pink," and "Firefly Sky" as models, my students composed their own poems. My older students read "Revenge Is Bittersweet," "The Animal Kingdom," "Going Home" and "Friends Forever," as examples for good memoirs.

HADLEY SMILLIE, TEACHER
Chicago, Illinois

Once again, I spent a delightful afternoon today being mesmerized by all the charming and inventive stories, poetry, book reviews, and artwork *Stone Soup* has to offer. They continue to transport me to a different time and place, to an utterly special, distinct world beyond the words on the page.

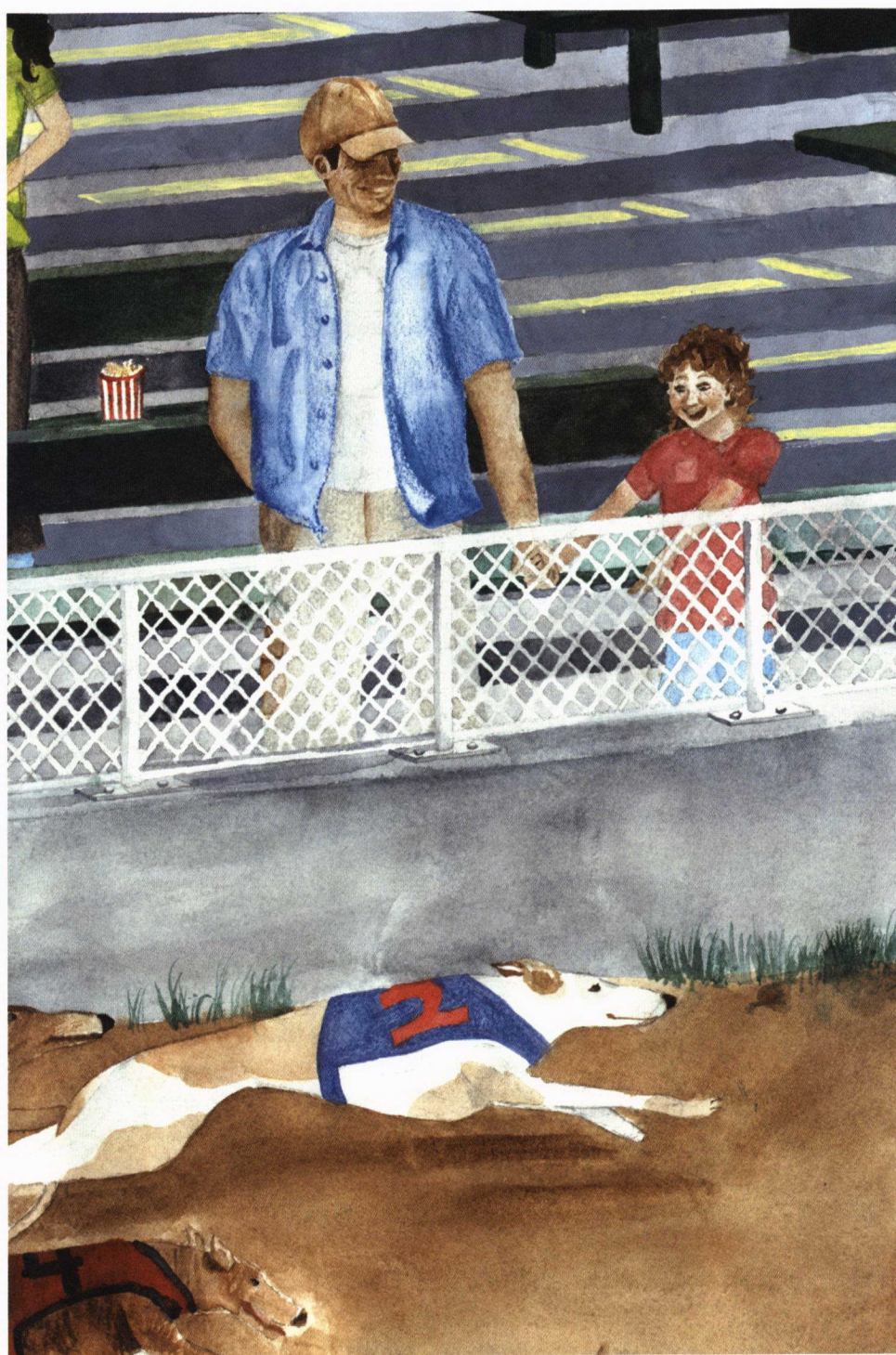
NING LIU, 12
Tucker, Georgia

In the May/June 2006 issue, I read the poem "Haven" by Misha Kydd and I immediately felt calmer and I relaxed. Every time I read "Haven" it soothes my heart. I love *Stone Soup*, and I recommend it to everyone!

MALLORY MCFARLAND, 9
New York, New York

You can read all the pieces mentioned in The Mailbox at 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.



"Go Cassie! C'mon girl!" It's the little girl from before

Greyhound Park

By **Emily Ward**

Illustrated by **Alicia Zanoni**

I CAN HEAR THE CROWD around me, talking amongst themselves, just waiting for the race to begin. I can hear people betting, "I'll take ten on Lightning! Twenty on Bullet!" I'm what you can consider an underdog. Lightning and Bullet, they are the true racers. I don't necessarily come in last, but I've never won.

I love the feel of racing, watching the rabbit bounding about in front of me. We know it's mechanical, but we run for the thrill of it. Suddenly, I get my confidence boost for the race. "I'll take five on Cassie!"

That's me! I think happily. *I won't let you down!* It's an honor enough to hear someone knowing my name. Usually, people refer to the lesser racers by their number. I'm number 2, I've actually grown rather fond of the number.

I can sometimes pick out individual voices in the crowd, little children talking to their friends. "I like that one the best, number 2!"

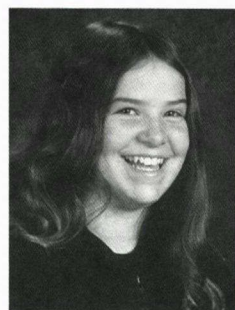
"Well, I like the black one the best."

Suddenly a family sits down up front. Next to my pen. "Hi there," a little girl whispers to me. "Daddy, what's this doggie's name?" she asks her father.

He looks at the brochure. "Number 2... Cassie..." he mutters.

"Hi Cassie," she says. "I bet she's the best one!" the girl squeals enthusiastically. "Daddy, can we put money on her?" she asks.

The man looks down at her, and stares into her eyes for a mo-



Emily Ward, 13
Missoula, Montana



Alicia Zanoni, 13
Grass Lake, Michigan

ment. Finally, he smiles. "All right," he says softly. The man stands up. "Fifty on Cassie!" he shouts.

Fifty! Not even Lightning and Bullet get that kind of money on them!

"All right girl, give it your all," he says to me with a smile.

I prefer it on the track, I love having everyone watch me, well, watching us... It's much better than the kennel that I get forced into when I'm not out. I can't lose, if I do, then I'm gone. Someday I know I'll win. I look at the racer next to me. It's number 12, Manfred. Another underdog.

Lightning holds his head up high and gives all of us a menacing glare. Bullet paws the ground and lets out a quiet bark. I think that Bullet will win this one. Lightning strained his paw a few weeks ago and hasn't fully recovered.

Just then, the gates open. I know exactly what to do, I've done it many times before. I take off sprinting, I can hear panting behind me, there are at least ten in front of me. Slowly I pass one, I try to pace myself for the rest of the race. Suddenly I hear a noise. Faint at first, then louder, and I tune myself into it. "Go Cassie! C'mon girl!" It's the little girl from before.

With a sudden surge of confidence, I pass another racer. "Atta girl! Keep it up!" This time it is the girl's father. I pass another greyhound. Soon, their two voices mix together, into one constant cheer. I run faster, and faster. I begin to pass more and more dogs, but I don't notice, I'm listening to the sound of cheering.

Then, the noise grows, more people are standing. "Keep it up!" "Number 2 is number 1!" "Cassie! Go Cassie!" Soon I realize that I am neck and neck with Lightning. Bullet is only a few feet ahead of me. I can see the finish in the distance. Now the entire crowd is cheering me. I push myself, using the last bit of power I can muster up, I speed ahead of Lightning.

I run harder, trying hard, so hard, to reach Bullet. I can feel Lightning's dark gaze boring into the back of my head, but I don't care. Even those who didn't bet on me begin to cheer. Everyone wants to see me win, everyone wants to see an *underdog* finally take charge. Bullet shoots a nervous gaze back at me. I move my legs, pumping them faster and harder than I ever have before. I am at a dead tie with Bullet. I can hear a startled whimper escape him. He tries to push forward, but it's no use. He used all his energy with his grueling pace. I pass him, and soon I pass the finish line. The crowd erupts into one huge cheer.

"Cassie! Cassie! Cassie!" they shout my name over and over again. I've never felt so tired in my life. I pace back and forth.

I can hear the announcer, "Truly an amazing feat, number 2 has won it all!"

That night I sleep comfortably in my kennel. I can still hear our trainer's voice, "Don't know how you did it, but you did!" I can still feel the sense of importance that rushed over me as I passed the finish line. I can still see the look in Lightning's eyes. And I can still imagine the little girl, "*Go Cassie! C'mon girl!*"

My dreams of winning come to an end

the next morning. I yawn, stretching my legs out as far as the kennel will allow them to move. I can hear the dogs above me shifting restlessly. I hear Lightning whimper, his paw must still hurt.

Soon, our caretaker comes in. "Hey guys. Good race yesterday, especially you, Cassie," she says and scratches me under my chin. "OK, everyone, give it your all today," she says, then she lets us out of our kennels and serves us breakfast.

News must spread pretty quickly, because today everyone is betting on me. I look around for the little girl from the other day, but I don't see her. "Twenty on Cassie!" I hear from a few feet away. I look up excitedly, but I don't see the girl, or her father. Several more people put bets on me, then the gates open. I race off again, passing others, but with no motivation for me to win. Then I see her, just behind the finish line, it's the little girl. I forget about the race, I forget about the pain in my legs, and the greyhounds around me. I run as fast and as hard as I can to get to her, and I make it.

A cheer erupts around me, but I don't care. I look around, she's gone. It was just in my imagination. "Yes sir! She's done it again! Cassie has won, with what seems like almost no effort," the announcer shouts out. I sigh, and pace back and forth. Winning isn't important anymore.

Once again, I am put back in my kennel, the rush of victory is no longer with me. I don't care about racing, I don't care about winning, I just want to see the little girl again, I just want a home...

I wake up in the middle of the night, my caretaker is opening my kennel. "All right girl, this is it. You're going to the national competition. One man in the last race runs the program, and he saw you racing. He wants you to compete," she says. I am led away from the racetrack that I have known all my life, and I am put into a strange car.

A man I don't know drives away, I soon fall asleep. I am awoken by our sudden stop. I lurch forward and almost hit the seats in front of me. The back door opens. I look out at the light. The man violently pulls me from the vehicle.

I am led into the kennels, they are slightly larger than the ones I lived in before. I am shoved into one and the door is locked. I try to fall asleep, but I am awoken only a few hours later by voices. I look up, and there she is. It's the little girl. I wag my tail and yip excitedly. She smiles and reaches down to pet me.

Her father is there also, he is talking to the man, I hear a little bit of what they are saying.

"I will pay you, how much do you want?"

"She is not for sale!"

"Please, for my daughter... it means the world to her."

"Absolutely not! The dog is running in a huge race tomorrow. And that's that!"

They want to adopt me! They want me to be their pet! I think. I paw at the door of my cage.

Her father walks over to her. "Come on Susan, we have to go now," he says sadly.

Susan. Her name is Susan. I make a mental note.

"I'll be at the race tomorrow, Cassie, I know you can win!" Susan whispers to me. Then they leave.

I sleep soundly, I can't wait to see them at the race tomorrow.

Morning comes earlier than I thought. I shiver with excitement, not about the race, though. *I wonder where they will sit...* I wonder. Moments later, the man comes in and feeds us. Then, we are led out to the track.

The first thing that I notice out there is a hole in the fence, it leads down a path, and into the forest. The second thing that I notice is Susan and her father, right next to my pen, again. "Hi Cassie! Hi girl!" Susan says excitedly. I wag my tail and paw the ground.

I hear a conversation of the two men sitting next to them. "Yeah, I'm placing my money on Cassie. If she wins this one

then she's going international!" one says. Then the gates open. I run out, all of the others are bent on catching the rabbit.

Then I realize something, I'm in the lead. If I win, then I go international, and I never see Susan or her father again. If I lose, then I'm done for. I stop, and look at the others, no mind of their own. Their lives are about that rabbit, and nothing more. I was once like that, until I met Susan. Then I look at the hole in the fence. And I run through it.

I trot down the path awhile, everyone behind me is shouting, "Catch her! Catch her! She's worth tons!" "She's a born racer, we still need to breed her to get pups that are the same way!" "Quick, while she's stopped!"

I stop, and turn around. I look right at Susan and her father. I bark loudly, then wag my tail. And they smile.

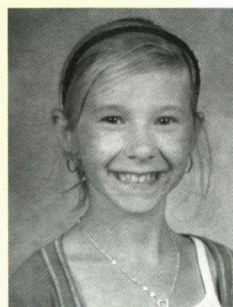
Then I turn, and I do what I've been trained to do for all of my life. I run. ❁



The Sea's Hug

By Annie Rudisill

The sea opens its arms to me
Hugging me by pulling me into its deep cool waters
My head goes under
The waves crash overhead
I hug it back
I swim deep
To the bottom
No rush to get air
My feet feel the sandy bottom
I swim back up
To smell the crisp fresh salty breeze pass by me
I see mossy rocks slipping under the waves
Seagulls cry loudly for their friends
I see bright neon-colored sea glass glittering in the sun
I walk onto warm sand
But the sea calls me back to play
I can't resist
I run into its cool hug once again



Annie Rudisill, 11
Ann Arbor, Michigan



I sat at the kitchen table while Juan made me drool with all of the great smells of her cooking

JuJu

By **Natalie Schuman**

Illustrated by **Emily Johnson**

JUAN (PRONOUNCED JU-AN) walked into our living room where my parents were sitting at the table. My mom and dad knew right away that she would be the one. She was wearing jeans and a Barbados T-shirt. She had brown hair, brown eyes, and brown skin. My sister, Emily, was two at the time and I was not yet born. Emily walked up to Juan and shook her box of Tic Tacs.

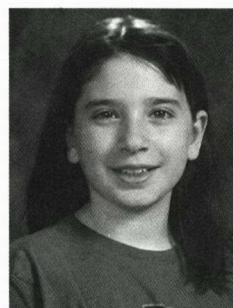
"You want one?"

Juan smiled and shook her head. "No thank you, Emily." Juan had a look on her face that said, *I think I'm going to like this kid*. Emily gave her the same look right back.

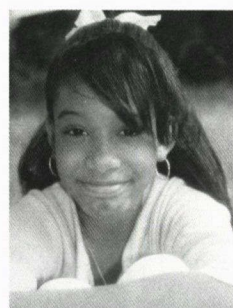
Then Juan sat across the table from my parents. When the interview was finished Emily walked up to my mom and said, "Mommy, I like that lady." She was only two years old but even then she knew that Juan was going to be our babysitter.

Juan took care of Emily until Emily was five. Then I was born and she would take care of both of us. Juan sat in the waiting room with Emily and then an hour after I was born she came in and held me. I have a picture that the nurse must have taken for my mom of Juan holding me.

From then on Juan and I were as close as we could get. She sang songs to me like "Oh My Darling Clementine," and songs that she knew from when she was growing up in Barbados. Even now I remember her voice clearly singing them to me. I remember one day very clearly. We were in a park (I can't remember which) and I had stubbed my toe and was crying. Juan picked



Natalie Schuman, 11
New York, New York



Emily Johnson, 11
Opelousas, Louisiana

me up and sat us both down and rocked me like a baby. She sang those songs to me and it calmed me so much. Juan or JuJu as I liked to call her was like a second mother to me.

"How long do I gotta stay with you, girl?" Juan would often ask in a joking manner.

"'til college, JuJu!"

She would laugh and then kiss me on the head.

Our family always said that Juan knew our apartment building better than we did. Because later on in the years that she worked for us she was mainly alone in the house with our dog, she was able to do laundry and hang out with all of the staff that worked in our building. When she and I were going somewhere and we saw someone new that worked at our building Juan already knew their name.

"Hey Pablo!" she would shout from across the lobby. "How's the wife and kids?"

"Sharon is good, so are Benny and Samantha," the doorman or maintenance guy would say. Then they would pause a minute and be happy that Juan remembered. "How are Harry and Kenny?" (Juan's husband and daughter).

"They get by," she would say with that great smile. "See ya later! Stay sweet!" Pablo (in this case) would walk away with a happy feeling, while I would walk away feeling bad that I didn't know Pablo's name until then.

I used to, and still do, go over to JuJu's house for sleepovers. Juan and I play dom-

inos there. She makes me barbecue ribs for dinner. She lives in Brooklyn so every so often Juan and I take the train to her stop and walk the couple of blocks to her house. Along the way we can't get a block without running into someone that we know. Juan will say hello and introduce me.

"This Natalie, I babysat her since the day she was born."

Her neighbor or friend would widen her or his eyes and say, "This is Natalie?" They would look shocked. "The one you don't stop talking about?" Juan and I would smile shyly. "Well," they would smile back, "it certainly is a pleasure to meet you." They would stick out their hand and I would shake it.

When we finally got to Juan's house we would relax and talk to Kenya, Juan's twenty-three-year-old daughter. She always had stories about college and questions about my school.

Soon Harry, Juan's husband, would come home. He was a doctor. He would ask me how I was and join the conversation. Then Kenny would go do homework, Harry would watch a baseball game or the news, and Juan and I would go into the kitchen.

I sat at the kitchen table while Juan made me drool with all of the great smells of her cooking. She would make the best barbecue ribs ever. She usually made peas and corn along with it too.

When I asked her once where she learned to cook so well she would smile and say, "I'm from Barbados," as if that would explain everything.

"I remember one day when I was about

eight Juan and I were walking hand-in-hand on our way down the street. Two men stared at us with hatred.

"Why don't you take care of kids your own kind?!" they yelled at us. I could see a tear spark in Juan's eye.

"You don't talk like that to me and my girl!" Juan yelled back and just like that we continued walking, but in silence. Me being Caucasian and Juan being African-American never seemed like a problem to me but apparently some people really needed to grow up.

Emily and I just finished doing the dishes when our mom called us into the dining room. We sat down, thinking our parents were going to tell us the plans for the weekend. We were trying to be shocked when my mom told us that it was time to have Juan stop working for us, but we knew that this conversation had been coming up.

Juan had been our family's babysitter for thirteen years. She came to our house every weekday morning at seven-thirty and left at six o'clock to go to Brooklyn where she lived. She babysat my sister since my

sister was two and now my sister is sixteen. We loved Juan and it seemed impossible to live without her. But the truth was that we didn't need her anymore. I walked to and from school by myself and went places after school with my friends. And my older sister did almost everything on her own.

The last day she worked with us was the saddest day of my life. I sat on JuJu's lap as she stroked my hair and told me that we would still see each other all of the time.

"Natie, don't you worry," a tear fell down both my cheek and hers, "I will always love you and I will see you very often." She held me tighter. Right then I thought about how she always asked me how long she would stay with me and about how my reply had always been 'til college. I always knew that it would never happen but I had secretly hoped she could.

But after all of that Juan was right. We see each other all of the time. She got a job babysitting in my building and I see her every morning and sometimes after school.

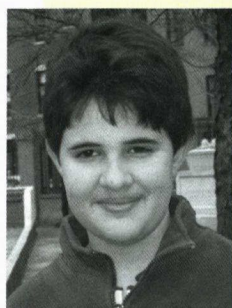
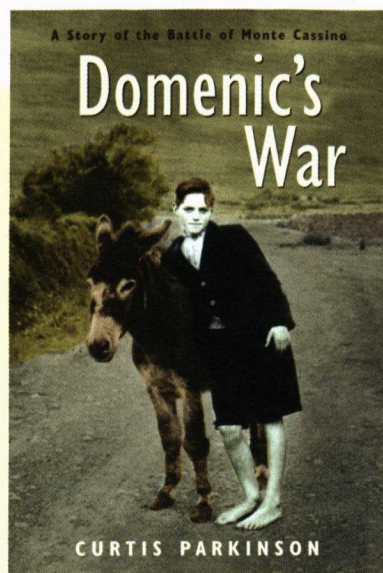
Juan will always be there.



Book Review

By Nicholas Rao

Domenic's War: A Story of the Battle of Monte Cassino, by Curtis Parkinson; Tundra Books: Toronto, 2006; \$9.95



Nicholas Rao, 12
New York, New York

AT THE MENTION of war, some of the first images that come to mind are of troops firing from trenches or a plane dropping bombs. These are the experiences of soldiers; but imagine an ordinary person, a family with children perhaps, just doing ordinary, everyday things, like cleaning up the house or sitting down to breakfast. Imagine doing these things, but with shells exploding all around you, parts of your house being blown to bits. To step outside your front door is to risk death.

In *Domenic's War*, Curtis Parkinson has Antonio experience such a life living in a town at the foot of Monte Cassino, the mountain where stands one of the oldest monasteries in Italy, now the location of one of the fiercest and bloodiest battles of World War II. Antonio is drawing water from his well, when a misdirected shell changes his life forever, reducing his house to rubble and killing his family.

While the families near Monte Cassino face such perils, those in other parts of Italy suffer from hunger and poverty. All the food the farmers produced and stored is commandeered by passing German soldiers to whom they dare not give resistance. Thirteen-year-old Domenic Luppino's father is one of these

poor farmers. His family never has enough to eat, and whatever food they do have must be carefully rationed. There is no telling what will happen from one day to the next. When it comes to war, such families are totally helpless.

However, it is as easy to pity the soldiers as it is to pity the civilians. Parkinson makes his readers see the soldiers as individuals, men who have been sent by their countries to kill or be killed, but who are, nevertheless, ordinary people, many of whom have families and children of their own. When Domenic's father and older brother go into hiding up in the hills, Domenic's house is taken over by a company of German soldiers. Domenic and the German captain develop a rough relationship. The captain is kind to Domenic and shows him a letter from his son, Gunther. It is very sad to see how much the son misses his father and wants him home, sad to see how much the captain wishes to be home with the family he loves.

The real enemies, it seems, are those who started the war. At one point in the story, a Canadian soldier tells of how he was sent to drive the Germans out of a town they had occupied and was drawn by a voice into a house that he, himself, had blown up out of sheer anger. He encounters a seventeen-year-old German soldier with his stomach ripped open. "After that," the Canadian says, "I wasn't mad at anyone anymore—except whoever it was that got him and me into this mess in the first place."

Parkinson leaves his reader reassured that life will go on for Domenic and Antonio and eventually the war will end. However, something like the war of Monte Cassino, that had such a strong impact on the lives of those who experienced it, will always remain in their minds. Nothing will ever be exactly the same as it was before. ❁



"It's my daughter, Esperanza," he sobbed. "Last night she was taken by the flu"

Curandero*

By Kiyomi Wilks

Illustrated by C.J. Green

IT WAS A WARM, sunny, day. The wind chased the clouds playfully across the sky. Alejandro rocked contentedly in his chair, but he knew something was not right. However, he was content to sit on his porch and wait for the trouble to find him. It always did in the end.

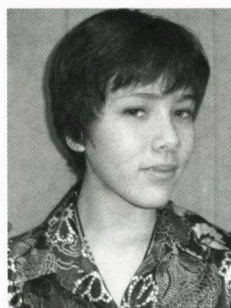
The sun was just sinking below the horizon when a panicked-looking Henry raced up the worn rabbit trail to Alejandro's house. It was a nice enough house, made of adobe, but Henry was in no state of mind to notice. "*Curandero* Alejandro! Please, I need your help," Henry cried in a hollow voice as he stumbled onto the porch.

"What is it?" Alejandro asked in his most soothing voice.

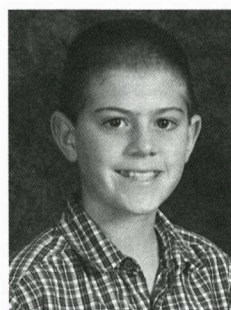
"It's my daughter, Esperanza," he sobbed. "Last night she was taken by the flu. Now the doctor says she is in the last hour of her life! You must help us, I beg of you." Henry ended in another sob. The wind too seemed to be struck with grief for it picked up and began to howl with the man.

"I will help," proclaimed Alejandro, "but you must understand that I may not succeed."

Henry's house was stifling with heat. "We have been trying to sweat out the fever." Esperanza, who could usually be found on the riverbank, bursting with life, now lay prostrate on the bed. She looked so pallid that Alejandro wondered if death had already visited her. Esperanza was covered in a mountain



Kiyomi Wilks, 12
Corrales, New Mexico



C.J. Green, 13
Manassas, Virginia

*A curandero is a folk healer.


of blankets, her black hair matted with sweat. "I must ask you to leave the room," Alejandro said with an air of authority that made it clear that he wasn't really asking. He then pulled back his wrinkled black sleeves and set to work.

He began by brewing willow-bark tea to try and blunt the fever. Herbs flowed from his blue sack in a small river as attempt after attempt failed. The girl's breath was coming in shallower gasps now. He was going to lose Esperanza, he thought. But *La Muerta* would not receive her without a fight. Alejandro knew what he must do.

He walked quickly to the window and flung it open. In a voice that never should have been able to erupt from such a small old man Alejandro summoned, "Zephyr, to me!" A large owl with feathers that looked like a network of stars on a quilt of night glided in through the window to land on Alejandro's outstretched arm.

Alejandro walked solemnly to the sick

girl's bed. Carefully he placed the owl next to her head. The owl stared hard into the old man's eyes as if looking for something. He seemed to have found it for he emitted a soft hoot. Zephyr returned his attention to Esperanza. Puffing out his feathers, the owl blew a silvery mist that engulfed the girl's entire body. For a moment the blanket of mist shone with a piercing light, then it disappeared. With it, went Zephyr. Esperanza's eyes opened, life seemed to flood into her cheeks. "Mama?" she called. Her voice sounded as if it was coming from somewhere a thousand miles away.

Alejandro took two long strides to the door and admitted her parents. The couple took one look at their daughter and burst into tears of gratitude. They clamored to thank the man who had saved their daughter's life and rushed to her bedside. His work done Alejandro quietly exited the door without so much as a word. Just a smile. 



Haunted Mansion

By Lyla Lawless

Illustrated by Kamiye Hoàng Mai Davis

HAUNTED HOUSES don't exist, right? Well, one night when I was about nine, I wasn't so sure. I was coming home from my friend's house as the sun was setting, hurrying since I was late for dinner. I was on the east side of the hill, and darkness blanketed me. The last rays of the sun highlighted the tops of the tallest trees. It was a little spooky, so I tried to walk faster.

Up on the top of the hill was the old Finster house. To get home, I had to walk right past it. I was already shivering from the gloominess of the darkened hill, and the presence of that old mansion frightened me. Even from the bottom of the hill, I could see the cobwebs cluttering that rickety front porch and the broken windows on one side.

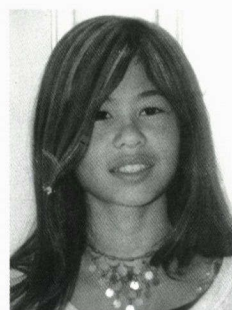
Creepy as it was, I couldn't rip my eyes away. The only time I'd ever walked past that house was with my friends in the middle of the day. We would dare each other to walk up to the front porch and sit on the old rocking chair. No one ever did it. Usually, we all looked at our feet and hurried on by.

Consequently, I never got a good look at the place. Now, if I tried hard enough, I could spot some dusty furniture inside the house. By craning my neck, I saw that the side door hung crookedly in its frame, and blew slightly in the wind. The *creak, creak* of it sent shivers down my spine.

Then, out of the corner of my eye, I saw movement. I froze, and whirled around. There, in a second story window was a pale yellow gleam. The sun had set by now, and the faint glow cast a



Lyla Lawless, 13
Gaithersburg, Maryland



Kamiye Hoàng Mai Davis, 13
Palo Alto, California



I wanted to run and hide, but my feet were cemented to the ground

square of light on the hill. I wanted to run and hide, but my feet were cemented to the ground. I knew what I had seen.

There had been someone in that room. It was a man, hunched over with age. The light had gone right through him, and his features had been ghostly white. He'd a lantern on the table where it flickered now. If I listened closely enough, I could hear his footsteps on the creaky floorboards.

Then, there was the wheezy sigh of someone settling into a rocking chair. My whole body was shaking violently. Now I found energy to run. Before you could say "boo," I was up the nearest tree.

No one belonged in that house. Old Man Finster had moved two years ago. I barely remembered it. The house hadn't been in a better state, that was for sure. All Old Man Finster had done was keep the cobwebs on the porch at bay. I wondered if someone had broken in and was planning to rob the place. Then, I laughed shakily. Silly me, who would want to rob that dump? There was nothing worth taking, unless you had an interest in rotting timber.


Still, something nagged at me. No one had moved in—the "for sale" sign still swayed in the breeze by the road. Besides, no lights had been on in there ever since Old Man Finster moved out.

I was almost certain it was a robbery.

That was even worse than a ghost was, I thought. Ghosts really couldn't hurt you, but real, live people could. What if they had guns? I climbed a few branches higher in my tree. The sky was a deep, indigo blue now, and the entire world was a shadow. The light from the Finster house's window seemed much brighter.

I had just resigned myself to a night in the tree when I remembered something I'd read in the newspaper. People were *supposed* to be in that house. It had been one of the stops on the Underground Railroad in the 1800s. Someone had bought it, and was sending a renovation crew to fix it up so people could visit it. That spooky old Finster house was going to be a museum!

I caught another glimpse of the mysterious man. He wasn't hunched over, at all, nor was he transparent. He was middle-aged, and wearing a baseball cap. A clipboard was clutched in his hand. He made a note on it, picked up the lantern, and left the room.

Comforted, I shinnied down from the tree and alighted on the ground. Picking up my jacket from where it had fallen, I strode on down the road, my head held high. Ghosts? Ha! Ghosts don't exist. That old house wasn't haunted, and nothing inside was going to get me. I began to jog, since it was now dark. After all, I was late for dinner. 



"Do you still love dolphins?" he asked, shoving a ten across the counter

Pennsylvania

By **Grace McNamee**

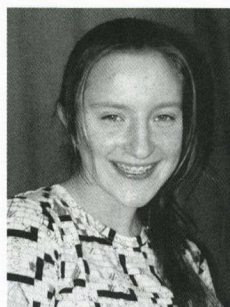
Illustrated by **Celeste Kelly**

I TURNED TO WATCH the Ohio sign fade, merging with the endless road carrying me away from home. *What am I doing?* The thought swirled around my head, ricocheting off the few other ideas that popped up, shoving them away. Restless, I picked up a book and then threw it aside. I loved to read but was too miserable to do any such thing at the moment. I shifted my favorite toy, Kelly, a dolphin, and spread out. My eyes scanned the car for anything of interest to do, skimming over the notebooks, books, Kelly, and the car upholstery till my eyes settled on the back of my dad's head.

"Remind me why I'm moving?" I asked my father, longing to ask a different question: *You left when I was two, why are you taking me away from Mom NOW?* But the question remained in my head, jumping around. My father half-turned, lowering the volume on the radio but remaining silent. I flipped through memories in my head, trying to recall something of Dad from when I was two. But I've got no memories from before the divorce, before my mom swore she would never see my father again, before my father left in the first place. I knew some things, like the way my parents got into a huge argument and weren't talking for weeks before the divorce. As far as I was concerned, I never heard of my father except when my aunt told stories, which my mother discouraged. Mom had refused to speak of Dad, hear of him, everything he did was wrong, and I agreed. No nice man would forget his two-year-old; no nice father leaves his daughter behind.



Grace McNamee, 13
Bethesda, Maryland



Celeste Kelly, 13
New Haven, Connecticut

I tried to block Mom and Aunt Suzy out of my mind. I didn't want to think about them or the house or Suzy's garden. I didn't want to think about walking home from school with my friends, or alone with a book in hand. I didn't want to think about our cat, Tiggy. But I was thinking about all this quite a lot. The vision of Suzy in the flower garden behind the house, Mom with Tiggy on the porch reading yet another book, pushed away even the question *What am I doing here?* That was home. *So why was I on the way to Pennsylvania with the father who once left me behind?*

"Danielle, you're moving to Pennsylvania." It was my mom who had said it, her tone short and blunt like I'd never heard it before. "You're going to live with your father. I'll see you at Christmas." Suzy had come in then, holding an empty packing box. She'd set it down, frowning, and left, silent. My mother pushed graying hairs from her face, shifting her weight, and then sat on my bed, not looking at me. She didn't say anything as she looked around my room. Then she stood and left.

"Did you tell her?" my aunt had asked, and I had heard Mom brush past.

I lay my cheek against the cool car window, watching the autumn leaves swirl downward. Cars sped past, trying to avoid the cloudburst that was just beginning, causing the drops to fall like tears on the window. Rain had always been comfortable back home. My Aunt Suzy, my mom, and I used to curl up and watch one of my mom's favorite movies, call a friend, and

play games. *Stop it!* I ordered. Suddenly words rang in my head: *Did you tell her?* Why would Suzy ask that? Of course Mom had told me I was leaving.

"I guess I just thought it was time you and I got to know each other. It's been eleven years since I last saw you." I snapped back to reality, turning to look at my dad's back, wide and sturdy.

"You could have done something before," I told him, doing nothing to keep my voice low. I willed him not to reply, to let me go back to my misery. No, actually, I wanted him to turn around and take me home.

"Danielle, you've got to understand!"

I tried to shut him out. I tried to think, I tried hard, but he kept talking, saying a bunch of nonsense. *I was so happy in Ohio—why did Dad take me away?* In my head I skimmed back to the beginning of the school year, Mom's smiling face as I came home. "Danny," she had said, never Danielle, always Danny, unless things got hard. She had hugged me then, and I'd groaned, pulling back so I could toss away my backpack and book. "How was school?" she asked simply, but then began to chatter like an excited schoolgirl; sometimes I'd thought she was one. I saw Aunt Suzy coming down the stairs then, looking at me strewn across her favorite red chair.

"Your dad called."

Those words rang in my head. I'd never remembered this part before, the few times I'd shuffled through my memories. My head had always skipped this part, but now that I thought about it, Aunt Suzy

always said it, every year. I frowned the same way she had, sweeping up my own brown hair and pulling it back into a meager ponytail.

Dad was pulling into a gas station, having fallen silent. My mind decided on something. Aunt Suzy must have been trying to make me think better of my dad—that was probably all. I skipped the fact that Aunt Suzy didn't try to make anything of anyone.

"I'm in the mood for a Three Musketeers and Vanilla Coke. You up for it?" I looked at him. He'd named my favorite drink and candy. *Ironic*, I thought as I nodded, trying to cut off the conversation. It didn't work.

"Do you still love dolphins?" he asked, shoving a ten across the counter where a cashier took it, talking into a cell phone while she made the wrong change. He ignored my silence and went on. "I remember when you were very little, you were so dolphin-obsessed that for your birthday one year you made me take you to see a dolphin act. You were so... bouncy. You fell in love with this little dolphin toy, called it Kelly or something like that." He smiled and started the gas pump as I got into the car. Kelly sat in the seat, her gray-blue fur stuff going in every direction. I looked blankly out the car window and then shrugged. So what if he bought me Kelly? He still left me. All the same... Aunt Suzy had once said I got Kelly when I was three, a year after the divorce.

The dark came in fast, the rain evaporating as we drove. I could no longer say

what state I was in. Once more I settled my cheek against the window, Kelly slipping from my grip as I began to revisit my last birthday.

I sat on the couch downstairs completely alone. Suzy was out getting the cake from the nearest Giant, and Mom was upstairs, probably trying to wrap a present before she came down. I could hear her rummaging through the closet, where she always hid things. I stared at the gifts on the chair across from me, trying to figure out what they could be. The doorbell rang. I found myself opening the package the tall UPS man had handed me; it had my name on it, after all.

I can still remember exactly how that package looked as I ripped off the traditional brown paper and pulled out a small blue Tiffany's box. The paper fell in a heap, the return address crumpled but facing upward. I hadn't looked at the address, or at least at the time I hadn't seen it. The card was plain white, no balloons or puppies or cute phrases, just a plain white card that read: "Happy Birthday! I love you!" I opened the box quickly, and the heart necklace slid into my palm, cold.

I had assumed Aunt Suzy had bought it on the Internet and had it shipped from New York.

I pulled myself out of the daze, scooping Kelly back up and turning to look towards the front window. My dad blocked my view of the road that way. He was smiling, his fingers tapping the steering wheel in time to the song on the radio. I wanted to be angry at him for taking me away

from Mom, for having Suzy lie to me.

It was only a few calls, that's not enough for a father! I told myself time and time again without much success. He half-turned to look behind us before he switched lanes. I looked over at him. *You never asked Mom about Dad... maybe he tried hard to know you.* I couldn't silence that voice. Finally I sighed and spoke.

"Did you send me a heart necklace for my birthday?"

He nodded, looking confused. "Of course, I sent you something every year. It was your birthday!"

"And did you call every year?" I asked, feeling the question bubble out of me and finding myself unable to resent that. "At the beginning of the school year?"

Once more he nodded, but the confusion had ebbed away and understanding seemed to be dawning. "Did you?" I wanted to hear it, maybe... maybe then I could believe him.


"Yes, I did."

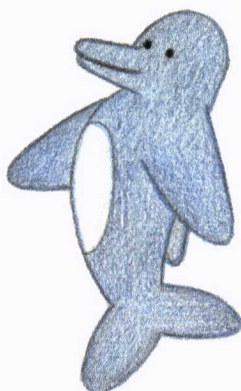
Outside, a Pennsylvania road sign went by. Four hours had passed. I was so confused—or was I?

"Did you try to get to know me?" I watched the sign fade as we kept driving.

"I went to court over you. We were planning to divorce anyway, but we stopped talking because of you."

I sat back hard, a feeling of overwhelming dizziness pulsing through my veins. Half of me wanted to scream—I wasn't happy about leaving Ohio, wasn't happy at losing Suzy and Mom, wasn't happy about being taken away from my friends, but the other half wanted to jump for joy—Dad had tried to get to know me! We were half a block from Dad's house and I was no longer sure whether I was happy or sad.

Just take it one step at a time, I told myself. Slightly nervous, I looked out to see my new home. 



For Grandma

By Sayre White

You drank
hot water
from a chipped mug.
It was so boiling,
that it would have scalded
my tongue.
But you loved it.
I loved the Eggo waffles
that I've never
had without you;
for me they are only
there
in your warm house,
with the rain
pouring
behind the large window,
as it often does
in Olympia.

I remember your soft
freckled hands,
the skin loose and wrinkled,
but still strong,



Sayre White, 13
Missoula, Montana

patiently untangling
my wet hair
with that purple
comb I loved,
as we looked
at *Ranger Rick* magazines,
and pictures
of Mom's diving days.
You answered
my millions of questions,
and read me
thousands of books
in your rich voice,
on that green plaid couch,
that has since been moved
from your house to mine.

I curled in your lap
and your loud laugh
shook your large frame
along with my small one,
making me giggle
and fold myself deeper
into your well-cushioned arms
until I could feel
your heart against my
wiry back.
I didn't know then,
that someday soon
that heart would fail.

I wish you could see
me now,
Grandma,
see my life
and how I've grown.
I want to show you
the work that I've done,
and together
we could read the poetry
that I've come to love.
But you were gone
too soon.
Gone before
I could say
goodbye,
gone before
you could truly see
the granddaughter
you barely knew.



I had never taken the time to watch the whole sunset before, but now I was entranced

Ellie's Market

By Alice Mar-Abe

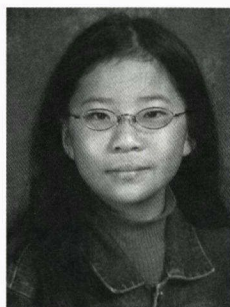
Illustrated by Emina S. Sonnad

ALEXANDRA! ALEXANDRA!" came the excited voice of my younger cousin Clara from the hallway. "You get to take Max and me shopping for Halloween costumes!"

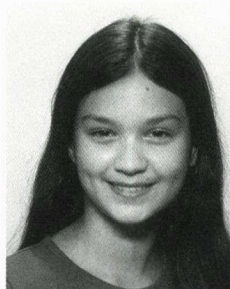
I smiled at her seven-year-old excitement as I stepped out into the crisp autumn air, filled with leaves in a hurry to get to the ground. Halloween was coming, and that meant lots of shopping to be done, and *that* meant I would get to go to my second favorite place in the world: Ellie's Market.

A delicious aroma of pumpkin spice wafted out as I pulled open the door and the cheery jingling of bells met my ears. I had arrived at my second home, and at the counter was my best friend, Cecil, who owned Ellie's Market with his brother Harry. You couldn't exactly romp and play with Cecil the way two kids would, and that is what many people remember doing with their best friends, but in a way Cecil was even better. He was almost like a grandfather. Oh yes, I had other kid friends, but hanging out with Cecil was fun.

Today I greeted him and hurried off to help Clara and Max with their costumes. As I went through eccentric old hats and frilly dresses, looking for just the things to perfect princess and scarecrow costumes, I thought of all that Ellie's Market meant to me. True, it was only a little larger than my school classroom, and the building was slightly rickety and old, but for such a small place, the number of wonderful memories it held for me and so many others was amazing. Even not so wonderful memories seemed special, like six years ago, when I was six and had come



Alice Mar-Abe, 11
Seattle, Washington



Emina S. Sonnad, 12
Snohomish, Washington

in bawling because of a cut on my knee. Cecil had found a bandage, and the rest of the afternoon had consisted of cocoa, books, and hugs.

Ellie's Market is a hodgepodge of everything...

For one thing, Ellie's Market is like a community club. Nearly everyone in the neighborhood above the age of six months has been there, and most people visited at least three times a week. The clothes section wasn't big, but it wouldn't have been there at all if Cecil and Harry weren't so friendly. People had wanted to help Ellie's Market, so they would donate their old-but-gently-used clothes for Cecil to sell, and pretty soon these donations got so large they turned into a whole clothes section! It's especially helpful for Halloween; you never know when you'll find the perfect thing, and knowing Cecil, if he finds it first, he'll save it for you. Our neighborhood was great already, but Ellie's Market really brought us together.

In Christmas season, my family bought our Christmas trees there, when the trees were kept in the empty gravel lot behind the store. In January we could usually do with a new umbrella, and at least five kids drop in every day to buy a little candy. In Ellie's Market, there's not only candy, but food, clothes, games, and sometimes a little silverware. Once in a while, Cecil brings in joke-shop items, like a can of "nuts" that a fake snake popped out of when you opened it.

The walls are covered with kids' artworks and in a place of honor by the door

is a picture of Ellie, Cecil and Harry's grandmother. I stare at her a lot in her silver frame on the wood-paneled wall. She died a long time ago so I never knew her, but she looks kind and wise and full of stories to tell—like Cecil. I think Ellie would be proud of him if she could see him now. The floors make a pleasant creaking sound, like trees shaking in the wind. The wooden shelves, tables, and metal racks aren't in perfect order, but there's a sense of neatness to them. I can't quite put a finger on it, but something about all this makes the atmosphere friendly and welcoming.

WHEN I GOT home from school the next day, I scurried over to Ellie's Market to quickly buy some hard candy to suck on while I did my homework. As I reached the corner, I looked up and saw a big neon-yellow sign posted across the door. I only got a glimpse of the word SALE! before a big truck screeched to a stop in front of me and blocked my view.

Good! I thought. A sale! But when I reached the door and read the sign, my heart stopped. Ellie's Market was having a closing sale? Was it a Halloween joke? Ellie's Market couldn't be closing! No way. It had to be a prank.

Cecil was inside sweeping the floor—the bare floor. It seemed that Cecil and Harry's friends had come in and cleaned them out of items. Only a few of the familiar racks remained that I was so used to seeing heaped with clothes, and most of the artwork was gone.

I gulped and barely managed to choke out, "Cecil?"

He looked up. "I'm sorry I didn't tell you," he said sadly. "I didn't want you to be sad for too long."

"You're—closing?"

"Yes. Harry and I will still be here—you know where we live. But the store won't.

"Hey! Cecil! A little hand back here?" called Harry from the back of the store.

"Watch the sunset," Cecil said quietly. "It's beautiful." Then he turned and left.

It couldn't be happening. Ellie's Market had made up a big part of my life—it couldn't just close! I sat on my bed and sobbed. Gone? My favorite hangout and my second favorite place in the whole wide world was gone? I didn't answer when my mom called for dinner, and my homework lay neglected. Even Max and Clara couldn't

cheer me up. I wanted to be alone.

It was a week before I remembered what Cecil had said. Watch the sunset? Well yeah, it was beautiful, but why had he mentioned it? I went and sat outside. Finally it came, those brilliant shades of red and pink and yellow and orange, filling the sky with astonishing rays. I had never taken the time to watch the whole sunset before, but now I was entranced.

Then, suddenly, it was gone. The sun had disappeared. I sat on the dark porch steps and thought. In several hours, the sun would rise, and then it would set again. It was always changing, like life, like people. We live and die. And stores can't always stay open. Cecil had been right, and I still had my memories. Sometimes those are best. I went inside to wait for the sun to rise. ❁





"Josh, there's a big fire going off a little ways from here!" said Eric in a panicking voice

When the World Becomes a Flame

By Connor Pickens

Illustrated by José Chardiet

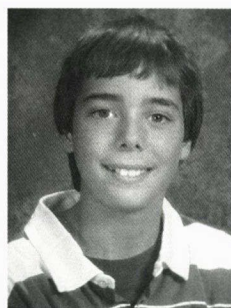
JOSH WATCHED ALL the heads bouncing up and down as he hiked down the trail. He was on a Boy Scout hike with his small troop through the large forests in California. This would most likely be their last hike for a while because they were going to go skiing in the mountains for a few weeks.

He had been a Boy Scout for two years now and loved the long outdoor hikes they had during the summer. Now it was mid-October and the troop was growing tired of hiking all the time, and looking forward to the skiing and snowboarding they were going to do.

Josh looked down at his uniform filled with pins and badges of all sorts that he had earned these last two years. He looked up at the gray sky with birds flying in a flying V formation. He watched the trees filled with reds, yellows, and oranges. Josh loved the outdoors, the animals, the smell, and especially the feeling of adventure it gave him.

Josh's troop decided to take a short water break near a few small stumps on the side of the dirt path. Josh was happy about the rest. He enjoyed hiking but grew tired easily. He sat at one of the stumps next to his best friend, Eric, who was an expert on birds. Josh took a large gulp from his large water bottle he had brought. The cold water instantly quenched his thirst. Eric took out his binoculars and started scanning the sky for any sort of bird.

When the troop leader, Bill, stood up and announced that



Connor Pickens, 13
Shakopee, Minnesota



José Chardiet, 13
New Haven, Connecticut

it was time to start the hike again, Josh picked up his backpack and placed his cap back on his head. Eric, still searching for some kind of hawk, slowly stood up. "Come on," said Josh to Eric, "you're going to trip, not being able to see where you're going."

"One more second," replied Eric excitedly. "I think I just saw the golden hawk in that tall tree!"

"Really?" asked Marc, the brainy kid of the troop. "They're supposed to be really rare this time of the year." Marc searched the cloudy sky for the bird. "I don't see it anywhere!"

"Time to go!" shouted Bill, who had assembled all the other scouts on the road. He started walking and the boys ran to catch up. Josh was second to last in line. Eric, still having his binoculars up watching for the golden hawk, kept bumping into him.

"Sorry," said Eric for about the twelfth time in the last ten minutes, "I can see the hawk, but it keeps circling around in the sky so I have to keep my eyes on it at all times."

"That's OK," said Josh, looking back at the watchful Eric. "Just be a little more careful, OK?" Eric didn't answer. "Eric, did you hear me?" questioned Josh, turning back to see his friend had stopped far back, looking above the tall trees.

"Josh, there's a big fire going off a little ways from here!" said Eric in a panicking voice. "I think it could be a forest fire."

"We've got to tell Bill now!" Josh said quickly in a hoarse tone, filled with ner-

vousness. Josh started off in a sprint with Eric close behind him. Almost all the way to Bill, Josh and Eric started yelling, "Bill, Bill, there's a big fire going on in the woods! It looks like it's pretty big by the looks of the smoke!"

BILL IMMEDIATELY stopped and halted the hikers. "Where is the fire?" questioned Bill, while grabbing the binoculars from Eric. The boys pointed in the approximate direction, and Bill turned the binoculars towards the area that their fingers pointed. "Well," started Bill, quietly concentrating, "I don't see anything." Bill adjusted the binoculars silently with his large hands. He put the binoculars back to his kind, concerned face again. "Oh my gosh you're right!" screamed Bill, jumping backwards on the ground. Bill told everybody what he had seen and told them how they were going to handle the situation.

"So," Bill was saying to the troop, "we have to be calm and not panic about this. There is a ranger station about ten miles from here. They'll help us get out of here, but we'll have to be fast, so let's get going."

The troop started out quickly for the ranger station. Everybody was dead quiet as they walked briskly along the trail. They took a minute break every ten minutes or so to conserve their energy. The whole troop could now see the towering smoke shooting up into the sky like an endless tower of black and gray.

Must be from all the dry weather we've

been having lately, thought Josh to himself as he trudged behind Marc. They were about halfway to the station, but the smoke was coming closer and closer every minute, and the kids were beginning to feel nervous and scared.

Bill kept urging them to go faster. The troop was now jogging slowly down the path, all the time looking over their shoulders expecting a fiery blaze to be right behind them. Then someone behind Josh started screaming, "I see the fire. I see the fire!"

Everybody glanced behind them, looking at the torch of fire coming at them far behind them. Eric started to cry, which people didn't see him do very often. Bill ran back to the end of the group and screamed, "Run!"

The boys took off across the trail as if the world was coming to an end. Bill was running behind them making sure no one got left behind. "Only two more miles," he shouted as they passed a sign. The fire was only about a mile and a half behind, but they could see it easily through the smoke-filled sky. The boys ran faster and soon only had a mile to go, but the fire was only a mile behind. The boys were now sprinting as fast as they could.

They rounded the turn and found the ranger station right in front of them. The two park rangers were already packing the two jeeps they had. Bill ran over to them,

using the rest of his strength, and began explaining their situation. The rangers told them to hop in while they got the maps. The troop scrambled in and waited impatiently for the rangers' return. The rangers each drove a jeep, with Bill in the passenger seat of the first. Eric and Josh were both in the second jeep, along with two other kids.

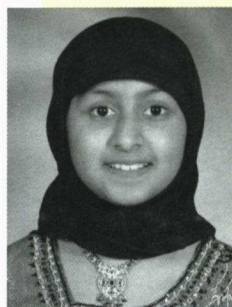
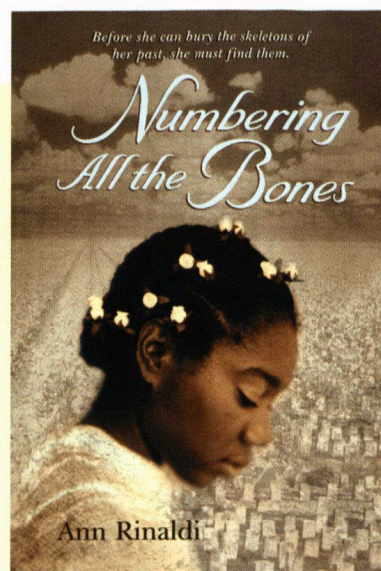
The rangers stepped on the gas and drove away from the fire as fast as a rocket. They followed the trail for a while and soon found the interstate. The kids all cheered enthusiastically and the rangers drove them into town. Above their heads flew buzzing helicopters heading for the fire. The whole ride the troop had ridden in silence, but now the rangers turned on the radios.

"Helicopters have just been sent to this fire and are expected to arrive shortly," the reporter informed the still nervous people driving down the highway. The rangers listened for a little, then turned the radios to a popular station playing some music for the kids until they reached the town. They all stopped at the Gas 'n' Go and called their parents to tell them they were all right and would take the next bus home. As they got on the bus Josh thought, Wow! What a day. Maybe this was a little too much adventure for me for a day! Josh plopped down in the seat next to Eric, and smiled as they drove home. ☸

Book Review

By Sajeda Ahmed

Numbering All the Bones, by Ann Rinaldi;
Hyperion Books for Children: New York,
2002; \$15.99



Sajeda Ahmed, 13
Detroit, Michigan

ONLY ONCE IN a very long time is a book published that is truly a work of art. It takes a great deal of work and time to have created such an extra special piece of writing. Only once in a while is a truly artistic and skillful book published, that readers of all ages can enjoy, now and for years to come. I'm proud to say that one such book exists. It is called *Numbering All the Bones*, by Ann Rinaldi.

This book has a few imaginary characters but is actually based on a true story. It tells history through the eyes of a thirteen-year-old slave girl, named Eulinda, who struggles to reunite her family—or what is left of them. In the 1800s, slavery was a common thing. It was 1864—the year of the Civil War. The north against the south; blacks against whites. It was the year of Abraham Lincoln, and his Emancipation Proclamation.


I really liked this book because it was so convincingly written. It is based on things that happened in the past, but the way it was written and pieced together makes it seem unbelievably realistic. This book wasn't just entertaining, though. I learned things that I've never really thought about before. Did you know that a woman named Clara Barton founded the American Red Cross in 1912? Well, neither did I until reading this book.

My favorite character in the story was Clara Barton. Clara, a character in the story but also a real person, was a civil rights activist. I was amazed at how much she had accomplished, considering the fact that a woman back then had so few rights. She was even thought to be the most powerful woman in the world.

In 1864, Confederate soldiers created a prison in Georgia in which they held prisoners of war—their own fellow Americans. It was a horrible prison; Ann Rinaldi really emphasizes that. Thousands of prisoners were dying every day, and more kept coming to the prison to take their places. The dead were neglected—carelessly dumped into trenches, many corpses sharing one trench.

After the fall of the Confederacy, the prison was just shut down, for the war was over. Clara Barton, Eulinda, and a former and much luckier prisoner, got together and planned to properly re-bury the dead, one of whom was Eulinda's last living family member.

The most interesting part of the story was when Eulinda's past was uncovered. It told of how her mom had died, how her brother was sold away after being framed for stealing a ring, and the devastating truth that her one last surviving family member, Neddy, was being held captive in that dreadful prison.

I consider myself lucky to have had the opportunity of reading this book. It gave me a hauntingly realistic glimpse of what the past was really like, in a way that years of history books and classes could never have accomplished. 



"On your mark, get set, go!" instructed Natalie

If at First You Don't Succeed, Try, Try Again

By **Hannah Blau**

Illustrated by **Claire O'Neill Sanger**

IZZY AND HER SISTER, Natalie, stepped onto the asphalt at Bergman's Running Track on Norm Street. This was Izzy's favorite time of day. Quiet. The sun was rising. Izzy began to run, slowly at first, then speeding up. By the time she reached Natalie again she was at full speed.

"Time?" asked Izzy.

"Two-thirty," replied Nat.

"Yes!" Izzy exclaimed. "One more time."

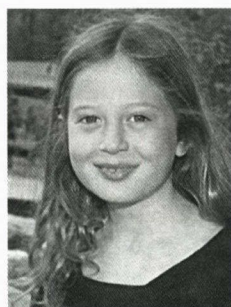
The big race, three miles, was three weeks away—so far yet so near. Izzy spent afternoons practicing with her teammates. She practiced at the track near her house on Saturdays. Natalie, who raced for her high school, went along. Nat made Izzy feel confident. She was pretty and kind. Izzy admired her. She was a streak when she ran yet she was so happy and carefree. She would never be like Nat but oh how she wished. Izzy was also a little competitive with Nat. Izzy sort of thought it was good to be a little competitive. Maybe.

For the next hour, Izzy pushed herself to beat her best time. She loved running and the sensation of wind against her face at top speed. But she also wanted to win.

"Let's stop for a drink," Natalie suggested.

Izzy was glad. She was hot and sweaty. It was not an uncomfortable feeling, just a little feeling saying "mission accomplished." They headed to Brooks convenience store, where she bought a bottle of water. Then they walked up Norm Street towards home.

Every Saturday, Izzy kept to the same routine: she got up with



Hannah Blau, 9
Baltimore, Maryland



Claire O'Neill Sanger, 12
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

her sister at five AM, worked out at the track until seven and returned home a half hour later. At ten, her best friend Jessie would come by. During those hours, Izzy amused herself by trying to watch a movie (Harry Potter), or reading a book (Harry Potter) or fitting together the pieces of a puzzle (Harry Potter), though she could hardly pay attention. Finally, ten o'clock came and so did Jessie. She tapped out the secret knock, although it wasn't very secret anymore.

The door swung open and the two friends gave each other a quick hug. They grabbed some Power Bars and left for the pool. That was how it went every Saturday. Izzy liked it.

IT WAS the last Saturday before the race. Jessie had decided to join Izzy and Natalie for their Saturday routine.

"On your mark, get set, go!" instructed Natalie.

Izzy and Jessie ran and ran. On this morning, Izzy didn't notice the wonderful silence or the beautiful sunrise.

"Time?" Izzy breathed after finishing twelve hard laps, hopping from one foot to the other.

"Thirty-five minutes flat," Natalie replied.

"Not bad for three miles," Jessie said, trying to laugh. She was trying to be funny but Izzy could tell she was worrying about the race.

They practiced for another hour, trying. Izzy and Jessie were pleased. Better.

"You've got a whole week to practice,"

Natalie said. Her words were reassuring, but seven days didn't seem enough.

When they got home Izzy and Jessie were exhausted. No swimming.

IZZY'S TIME was improving, but butterflies were beginning to form in her stomach. They came flying in as the day drew nearer. And finally just when there was no room for another butterfly, not even a moth, it was time.

Izzy and Jessie arrived twenty minutes early, as did the rest. The girls greeted each other with chatter. They warmed up alongside the track.

Parents, teachers and friends arrived. Then noise.

"I'm scared," Izzy whispered to Natalie, who stood with her.

"Don't worry, you'll do fine," she replied.

Izzy took her place on the track.

The whistle blew.

Before Izzy could think, her legs were carrying her. Going, going, Izzy felt so tired and she began to slow. It seemed like forever before the finish line came into view. And it seemed even longer before she crossed it. Everyone else was there already, it seemed.

She had failed.

Izzy had thought she was a good runner and now what? Should she quit? She sat down with the rest of her team. She couldn't hear the loudspeaker as it called out the winners. Tears pressed hot behind her eyes. She looked down. This was more than embarrassing.

WEEKS WENT BY, races were missed. Practice didn't go well either. Nothing could comfort Izzy. She hadn't run for days. You'd have to be very smart to think of anything that would upset Izzy more than this, but your guess would probably be wrong anyway.

Almost every day Natalie would ask, "Are you sure you don't want to run today?"

And Izzy would always say, "Just leave me alone!"

One day, Jessie sat down beside Izzy in her room to talk.

"We've been losing all this time and if you don't start coming to practices *today* we won't get to go to the championship race. You need to be back. And I miss you with me."

"Huh?" Izzy was stunned.

"You're a great runner, Izzy."

"But I let you down," Izzy sighed, "didn't I?"

"You didn't. You were nervous. Everyone has those days. Don't let a silly little race tear you away from something you love," Jessie explained reassuringly.

"Really?" Izzy asked excitedly.

"Yeah," was Jessie's calm answer.

Izzy felt like crying.

"Thanks," was all she could say.

"So will you win?" asked Jessie. Her tone had changed. Now it was determined.

Izzy nodded. They hugged, then walked out the door of Izzy's house and headed to go—what else?—running. As she sprinted, wind whipping at her hair, a smile crossed her face. She was back.

IZZY AND JESSIE were the first runners at the championship race. Then the crowd and then noise. But Izzy didn't hear the noise; she was happy.


"On your mark. Get set. Go!"

Izzy knew exactly what to do.

She felt like wind. Sunlight shown on her cheeks, her heart bursting with joy. She felt as if she had already won. And it didn't matter anymore. *Is it possible? Am I more like Nat? Yes. At last,* she thought. *This isn't all about winning. It's about having fun. That was what Jessie had tried to tell me.* She felt the steady beat of her feet against the pavement.

Just then someone passed her.

"No," thought Izzy, "*not this time.*"

And that's when Izzy ran. 



The moonlight is shining on Athena's snow-white coat

Night Flight

By William Gwaltney

Illustrated by Gwyn Welch

I WALK OUT INTO the hot summer night and head across the lawn to the barn. Fresh dew covers the lush grass, and I lift the small red backpack that hangs by my side so that it will not get wet. Fireflies flash silently through the air, gleaming like tiny flying diamonds. The full moon shines almost as brightly as the sun. I reach the barn, where my horse, Athena, stands in her stall. When she hears me coming, she lifts her head and pricks up her ears. She snorts softly. I reach into my backpack for an apple, and place it on the top of her door. She devours it happily. I open her stall and she prances out. I take off the thick wool blanket which covers her. She trembles with excitement. She knows what comes next.

I slide her bridle over her head, and fasten the tiny buckles. I take a moment to slide my backpack over my shoulders. Then I slip up onto her broad bare back. It wouldn't be the same to ride her with a saddle. I turn her out of the barn and we walk down the driveway until we are out of earshot of the house. Then we walk a little farther just in case. I don't want to wake my parents.

When we have gone a safe distance, I ask her for a gallop. She responds immediately, taking off, her neck stretching out, her hooves striking the ground in a quickening rhythm. The gentle thundering of her hooves ripples through the still night air. She pulls hard, asking for some extra rein. I let her have it, allowing it to slip easily through my fingers. Faster and faster we go. I feel as though we're flying and suddenly, *we are*. She gives one last



William Gwaltney, 11
Englewood, Colorado



Gwyn Welch, 12
Hancock, New Hampshire

push with her mighty back hooves, then spreads her giant wings and we begin to soar through a black velvet sky.

We fly low over the tops of trees, startling birds who are already asleep. They awake unhappily, squawking and shrieking, flapping and fluttering. We are the largest thing they have ever seen in the night sky. Then we clear the trees and we are flying over open ground, sparkling with the same dew that I walked through earlier on my way to the barn. I keep Athena down low so that people cannot see us easily. We fly over backyards where dogs look up at us and bark an alarm. But when people come out to investigate they do not see us, for we are flying so fast we are already gone.

I look down to see a series of tiny ponds below me. The moonlight is shining on Athena's snow-white coat, and I can see her image reflected in the ponds as we glide past. I ease her down out of the sky and we land softly by the water's edge. I slide off of her back. Athena slips her delicate muzzle into the water and drinks noisily. When she is done she lifts her head and water dribbles from her lips. I cup the water in my hands and bring it to my mouth. It is cool and refreshing. I remove my canteen from my backpack and fill it. I scoop up some water and pour it over my head. Athena watches me closely, enviously. I pour the contents of my canteen over her back and she closes her eyes in bliss. I refill my canteen and relax on the bank of the pond as I sip from it. I am suddenly aware of just how beautiful

the night is. The moon's reflection dances across the water. Crickets sing from the nearby meadow. Tiny bats flutter over the pond, snatching mosquitoes out of the air and swooping down low for an occasional drink. The scent of summer flowers lingers in the air. After a short rest, I mount Athena again and we are off.

As we soar beneath the stars, the gentle notes of "Pachabel's Canon" drift lazily below me. I look down and see that there is a concert on the lawn of the museum. This is one of my favorite pieces of music, and hearing it played live is a special treat. I guide Athena down behind the museum and together we sit and listen to the beautiful notes hanging in the still night air. Even though I have no saddle, the feathers of Athena's furled wings feel so soft and comfortable that I feel as if I am sitting on a down comforter.

When the last note has been played and the concert is over, I turn Athena around and we run again. I am reminded once more of how much I love the way it feels when she finally lifts off. Her speed creates a wind that ruffles my hair and lifts the mane off her neck. It makes the feathers dance on her wings. As she flies, the beating of her wings makes a comforting sound similar to the sound made by my mother's sheets, snapping on the clothesline on a windy afternoon. I feel as if I could fly forever. I wish that everyone could see her, she is so beautiful as she flies, but I know that this secret must be mine alone. I shudder when I think of what might happen if people knew that

she existed. She might be taken or stolen from me. My parents might decide that it is too dangerous for me to fly. Someone might kill her, just because she's different. Even if none of that happened, publicity could be the end of all that we love. There would never be quiet times again for us to just fly silently through the darkness; under a canopy of glowing stars... enjoying ourselves and all the night has to offer.

As we fly, I look down at my watch and realize that it is getting late. I turn her slowly in the air and she soars back towards home. I ease her downward and she lands gently on the grass, running at first but slowing down gradually until she is walking once again. I walk her slowly around the pasture, giving her only sips of water until she is cool. Then I lead her back to her stall.

I approach her with the blanket and she dances away. She shakes her head. I know that it must be terrible to wear this thing on such a hot summer evening, but I also know that this is one of the only

ways to keep my secret. I speak to her soothingly as I put the blanket on and fasten the straps. I pat her and tell her what a good girl she is. She nuzzles me before moving over to check her feed bin. When she finds the carrots I have placed there, the look on her face is one of pure joy. In small ways, she is just like any other ordinary horse.

I leave her and walk quietly back to the house. My dog, Luger, meets me at the door.

He does not bark, but he chuffs softly, his big tail wagging loudly in the dark, banging against the walls and sweeping objects off low tables. I make him sit down so that his tail is quieter. He is the only one who knows my secret, and it wouldn't be good if he woke my parents.

I eat a quick snack in the dark kitchen before heading up the stairs to bed. I can hardly wait to fall asleep and dream... about tonight and about all the nights to come, gliding through the starry skies on Athena. ❁



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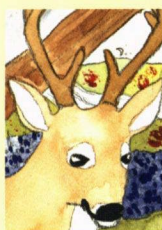
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