

Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists



"Mother with Child," by Ma Hninn Moe Htwe, age 12, Myanmar (Burma)

SHEPHERD OF STONEHENGE

Stonehenge is awe-inspiring, but wait, who is that man lying in the snow?

WE'RE MOVING

Lucy feels better when she finds Anna's letter at her new house

Also: Illustrations by Anton Dymtchenko and Olga Todorova

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2007

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The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists

VOLUME 36, NUMBER 2
NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2007

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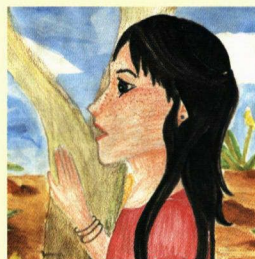
Max helps his dad and the vet deliver a calf

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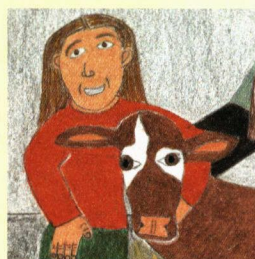
It helps to know someone else is going through the same thing



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

The Mailbox



I recently turned fourteen, so I can't submit any more stories, but I thought I'd say how great this magazine is! It's one of the only places where kids can have their writing seriously considered. Thanks for keeping this up!

LYLA LAWLESS, 14
Gaithersburg, Maryland

Three of Lyla's stories have appeared in Stone Soup, most recently "We're Moving," on page 43 of this issue.

I love many of the stories that are printed in *Stone Soup*, but one that truly amazed me was "First in Flight," by Rosalie Stoner, from the May/June 2006 issue. After I read the first page, I completely forgot that it was not written by an adult. I will always be sure to read Rosalie's stories, and I encourage her to keep writing! An illustrator who is very good is Ashley Burke. I have seen many of her drawings, and they are all very detailed. Ashley always finds a way to fit the drawing to the story, and her drawings are in so many moods. I will not be surprised if Ashley's drawings are made famous one day. *Stone Soup* is a great way to let kids show their work, and is a first step to becoming great writers and artists. Keep up the good work!

CLARA BONDI, 12
Knoxville, Tennessee

I think your magazine is wonderful. But, don't you think your magazine is a little bit horse-based? Every issue I've seen has had one or two stories about horses or horse-riding.

AOIFE TROXEL, 11
Gorham, Maine

I really enjoyed the story "JuJu" in the July/August 2007 issue. It was *amazingly* written, with two very good morals: 1) No matter what race you are, you can still love each other, and 2) When you love someone, they never fully go away. "JuJu" is a very touching story, it's also one of those stories that you don't want to end. "JuJu" is definitely the best, if not one of the best stories ever in *Stone Soup*. The writer and artist I think should definitely work on more stories and pictures.

TESS MORAN, 8
Lakewood, Ohio

I would like to say that the cover of the July/August 2007 *Stone Soup* is absolutely beautiful—the detail and colors are exquisite, and it almost looks surreal! Great job!

SUSANNAH BENJAMIN, 14
Greenwich, Connecticut

Susannah illustrated several stories for Stone Soup, most recently "Hope" in the September/October 2007 issue.

I admired the poem "For Grandma" by Sayre White [July/August 2007]. It made me almost cry! It was very touching, and it is amazing a thirteen-year-old can write such a poem. I also thought the "Crippled Detectives" by Lee Tandy Schwartzman [stonesoup.com] was extremely funny. I cannot simply believe a seven-year-old wrote it! Long live *Stone Soup*!

RURI KATO, 9
Aichi, Japan

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.



Shocked, Sam called above the blizzard's roar, "Are you all right, sir?"

Shepherd of Stonehenge

By **Casey Tolan**

Illustrated by Anton Dymtchenko

HARSH, COLD WIND rippled across the snow that blanketed the farm's fields. Sighing, Sam led the shivering sheep across the wide plain. Cauliflower, the farm's sheepdog, ran with Sam, keeping the milk-white sheep in line as best as she could.

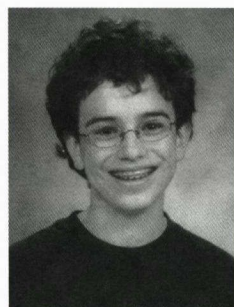
"Snow Sheep," muttered Sam, kicking at a withered plant poking its way through the snow. "How stupid can you get?" He had never asked to be herding sheep. He hadn't even asked to be on Edenary Farm.

Edenary Farm. Those words marked a turning point in Sam's life. Ever since he was born, Sam lived with his father and mother in Salisbury. His father, a rich merchant, had made sure the family led a luxurious life.

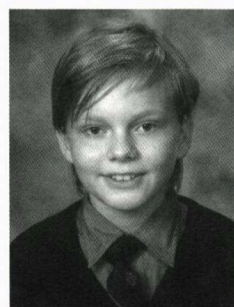
That had all changed two months ago.

In the middle of October, 1796, both of Sam's parents had died from influenza. They had been on a trip in Vienna, which was still getting over an epidemic, and caught the deadly disease. Sam, eleven years old, was put in the care of his uncle, Daniel Edenary, his mother's brother and the owner of a poor family farm. Sam's parents had offered Daniel part of their fortune many times in the past, but he had refused out of pride. So Sam's father's riches would stay in a local bank until Sam was eighteen and could inherit them.

It was now the end of December of the same year, almost Christmas, a time Sam used to look forward to. This year, though, there would be no Christmas tree, no fancy food, no



Casey Tolan, 13
Shorewood, Wisconsin



Anton Dymtchenko, 13
Montreal, Canada

presents. The Edenary family didn't have any money to spare on things like that.

Sam looked all around him. To his right, the way he had come, the wooden buildings of the farm stood out against the cloudy sky. They marked the road to Salisbury, the nearest town. It was the only road out of the white eternity that was Edenary Farm.

Everywhere else, there was only snow and the occasional tree. Sam hated it. But not too far away there stood a famous stone structure.

Stonehenge. It was one of Sam's favorite places and one he had visited frequently in the past with his father.

These days, Sam would sneak off to Stonehenge whenever he could, to escape the dreary farm life and see again the magnificent blocks of stone. He couldn't get away very often because he had his uncle to help. Sighing again, Sam called to Cauliflower to help him lead the sheep back home.

POTATOES AGAIN?" groaned Jasper, Sam's eight-year-old cousin. He crossed his arms and sulked, glaring fiercely at his plate. "You know I hate potatoes!"

"It's all we have, dear," replied Sam's aunt, Elizabeth. "Last year Daddy's sheep didn't make enough wool for us to buy better food."

"Don't worry, though," grinned Uncle Daniel cheerfully. "My new Snow Sheep technique will make us the best wool for miles around." Supposedly, if his uncle's

sheep spent enough time out in the cold, they would make higher quality wool, which would bring in more money.

Daniel Edenary was tall and stocky. He had a loud laugh, and even in hard times tried to keep a smile on his face. Elizabeth, on the other hand, was small and anxious. She had a nervous smile, and hated loud noises. Jasper was unlike either of them. In Sam's eyes, he was incredibly selfish, and liked to complain.

"That is," added Edenary, glancing at Sam, "they'll make enough wool to last until Sam's eighteen, and he can inherit his parents' fortune."

These days, Edenary often talked about the money. He had become desperate and decided it was worth more than his pride. Sam sometimes felt his aunt and uncle blamed him for not being old enough to inherit the money right away. In truth, they were probably worried he wouldn't share it with them.

Suddenly, Sam became angry with his uncle.

"You and your Snow Sheep," Sam shouted. "What nonsense! And if it weren't for the money, you'd probably throw me out. You love my parents' fortune more than you love me."

Sam's anger left him as fast as it had come. His aunt and uncle had been nice to him since he had come to stay at the farm. Looking at Jasper, who had become frightened at Sam's shouting, Sam felt ashamed. "I- I'm sorry," he mumbled, standing up. "I- I didn't mean it." As the family's eyes followed him, Sam pulled



"Potatoes again?" groaned Jasper, Sam's eight-year-old cousin

himself up the stairs to his room (the room his aunt and uncle had given him, he reminded himself).

Sam flopped onto his soft bed, thinking about what he had said. He knew his uncle loved him. Of course he planned to share his money with the family. What had made him say such a cruel thing?

But Sam also knew that some of his words had been true. Edenary Farm could barely support the family, and might go out of business if his uncle couldn't make more money from his sheep. Sam also feared that if his uncle kept using his Snow Sheep plan, some of the sheep could

even die.

There had to be some way to get money for the farm, Sam mused. He decided to go to sleep and think about it again in the morning.

FOR THE NEXT few days, Sam did his daily chores without really concentrating. He was distracted by the problem of saving Edenary Farm. Meanwhile, Uncle Daniel didn't have much to say to Sam. He was still angry with Sam because of his outburst.

Christmas and New Year's Day came and went, like all the holidays at the farm.

There was almost nothing to distinguish them from the other days of the year.

But two days after New Year's Day was different.

January third was very different.

It was early in the morning when Sam went out to move the sheep from the barn to the fields. There was hardly a breeze in the air, just the horrible cold. It clawed through Sam's heavy coat like a living, wild animal, trying to find an open space. Sam felt sorry for the sheep. It was cold enough in the barn, but Uncle Daniel insisted they spend time outside every day.

As he herded the sheep Sam started to feel drowsy. It was still early and he had gone to sleep late the night before. I'll only have a quick nap, he told himself, crawling into a small cave in the side of a snow-covered hill on the edge of the pasture. Cauliflower will make sure the sheep don't get away.

In fact, Sam's "quick nap" wasn't very quick. When he woke up and crawled out of the cave, the wind was whistling and snow was swirling around him. He knew enough about blizzards to know that these were the signs that signaled one was coming.

Sam called Cauliflower to herd the sheep back to the farm, only to be thrown back to the ground by a violent shaking, like a miniature earthquake. But all thoughts of any quake were forgotten when Sam saw one of the smaller sheep in the herd make its way over a small hill-top and disappear into the blizzard. He suddenly realized that Cauliflower, who

should have been guarding the sheep, had been sleeping, too!

Determinedly, Sam and Cauliflower led the sheep back home and into the barn. After closing the door behind the animals, Sam started out again into the blizzard to find the runaway sheep.

The blizzard was like frozen death. It whirled angrily around Sam, trying to smuggle the life out of him. Sam's scarf flew about in the wind, and was no help to Sam whatsoever. All around was wind and snow; the sheep was gone. Sam thought about turning back. His family would be worried, and there was almost no chance of finding the lost animal.

Suddenly Sam heard a worried bleat. It was the sheep! It was so mournful that Sam knew the animal was in trouble. With defiance as fierce as the blizzard itself, Sam pushed onward. The sheep's bleat led him deeper into the swirling snow. The search seemed to last for hours, even though it was only a few minutes.

Just when Sam thought he couldn't take it anymore, a giant dark behemoth appeared in front of him like a lighthouse. It was one of the megalithic structures of Stonehenge.

Stonehenge brought Sam memories of his father, who had gone there often. In broad daylight, the thirty-some huge stones, topped with smaller lintels and arranged in a circle, were awe-inspiring. But in the middle of a raging blizzard, they were even more majestic. The dark stone in his path towered above Sam, taller than any tree he had ever seen.

Trudging through the snow, Sam walked around the circle, amazed. The stones were so tall! He wondered, as always, how it had been built.

And then—there was the sheep! It was huddled up against the stone tower, defying the blizzard's attempt to sap it of life. Sam quickly scooped the terrified animal up, cooing to it softly. He prepared himself to brave the storm and head back to the farm when he heard a second, pitiful cry. Was there another sheep caught out in the storm?

Still holding the sheep, Sam made his way toward the center of the megaliths. There he found, not another sheep... but a man. His fair hair was covered in snow, and his eyes were glazed over.

Shocked, Sam called above the blizzard's roar, "Are you all right, sir?" Of course, the man was not all right, and answered with a low moan. Sam thought quickly. The man must have been caught in the blizzard.

Suddenly Sam realized that one of the humongous stones had fallen over. Tons of ancient rock had pinned the man's foot to the ground. It had to be crushed! That's when Sam noticed blood turning the snow crimson around the man's boot.

Twisting the man's foot, Sam unwedged it from his boot, getting it free but causing the man to shout out in pain and fall into unconsciousness. Sam took off his coat and slid it over the man's still body to keep it warm. That might keep the man alive for now. Because the blizzard was still raging, Sam decided not to venture

back to the farm right away. He'd wait until the blizzard subsided to go for help. Until then, Stonehenge would protect them.

As he and the man lay against the huge, fallen stone, Sam remembered all that his father had taught him about Stonehenge. Supposedly, the Druids, a priestly class among the Celtic people, had built it. The Druids were also associated with magic, and some people believed that Stonehenge had healing powers.

Sam liked Stonehenge because there was always an air of mystery about the place and yet, at the same time, it was so peaceful. It made him feel like he was in the presence of something timeless, something that made his life insignificant in comparison. And when he stepped into the ring of stones, it was almost like stepping into a different world.

Then Sam looked up at the sky and the swirling snow. Although the temperature wasn't rising, the blizzard seemed to have died down. It was time to get help.

"Stay with him," Sam told the sheep. "Keep him warm." Sam took one last look at Stonehenge and began to run.

This time the wind was on Sam's side, blowing him along as he rushed toward Edenary Farm. If the sheep stayed near the man, and his foot didn't bleed too much, he should stay alive long enough for Sam to get help.

BEFORE SAM knew it, he was at the farmhouse. Hammering on the door, Sam panted for breath. The door



"Did you see anyone round here, lad? He's tall and has light hair"

was thrown open by his uncle, who stared at him coldly. "Where have you been, boy, and where's your coat?" Elizabeth and Jasper stood behind him, looking at Sam worriedly.

Sam gasped out his story, making it especially clear that the man needed help fast. After hearing everything, Uncle Daniel said, "This better not be some joke, Sam."

"I wouldn't joke about something like this!" Sam said, indignant. "Really, a man's dying out there!"

That put Edenary into action. "Fine," he replied grudgingly. "I'll ride into town to get the doctor. You three hurry to the 'henge with blankets and bandages. Let's go!" He rushed off to the stables.

After a moment's hesitation, Aunt Elizabeth, Jasper, and Sam began to gather up all the warm blankets and bandages they could find. Sam then led them over the hills toward Stonehenge. Jasper didn't fully understand the situation, and complained most of the way there. Elizabeth looked nervous. Sam silently urged both of them on.

After about a quarter of an hour, they made it back to the man. He was still unconscious, but alive, with the sheep lying obediently beside him. Jasper gasped and turned away when he saw the blood soaking the cloud-white snow red. Aunt Elizabeth and Sam covered the man with blankets and bandaged his foot.

Before long, they spotted two men

walking toward them. It was Uncle Daniel and Salisbury's doctor, Nathan Elms. The injured man had a chance, thought Sam.

Dr. Elms and Uncle Daniel carried the man back to the farm, where the doctor re-bandaged the blood-soaked foot. Other than that, the man only had a few minor scratches. He was still unconscious.

"A few days' rest will have him good as new," the doctor told the Edenarys. "Then we'll find out who he is. Good thing you found him," he said to Sam, "or he would have surely died from the cold."

The injured man stayed at the farm, sleeping in the guest bed. He didn't wake up at all for the first day. Dr. Elms said that it was nothing to worry about and that the man should wake up the next day.

But on the next day something else happened.

In the middle of the morning, a tall man came riding to the farm from Salisbury. He said he was looking for a Sir James. "He's the Duke of Quettenham, and I'm his butler," the man explained to Sam, his aunt and uncle. "Sir James was out looking at Stonehenge when that bad blizzard hit. Did you see anyone round here, lad? He's tall and has light hair."

Sam looked at his uncle, who nodded.

Maybe Stonehenge really is magic, thought Sam.

Then he turned to the man.

"We found someone," answered Sam. "I think you'd better come in." ❁

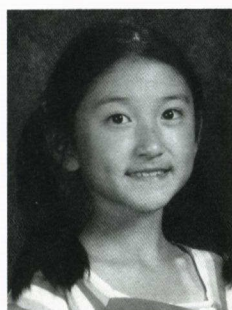
School Daze

By Anna Elizabeth Blech

Illustrated by Patricia Lin



Anna Elizabeth Blech, 11
New York, New York



Patricia Lin, 10
Los Altos Hills, California

SAMANTHA-ELLEN ROBINSON awoke to her alarm clock's shrill ring, followed by a loud thunk accompanied by a sharp pain, as she bonked the top of her head against the bottom of the headboard.

Groggy, Samantha slid her feet out from under the cozy fleece quilt and onto the embroidered rug. As she slipped her ten toes, sporting baby-blue nail polish, deep into the puffy warmth of her bunny slippers, Samantha accidentally caught a glimpse of her alarm clock. She leaped up into the brisk November morning, hardly noticing the chattering of her teeth, leaving the cocoon of her blanket behind.

"Nine o'clock!" Samantha gasped. "Nine o'clock! I'm late for school! *Oh, no no no no NO!*"

In one spectacular leap—usually reserved for acrobats, not pre-teen girls—Samantha managed to fly across the room, seize a pair of leggings and a T-shirt, and have one sneaker halfway on by the time she catapulted herself through the door. Samantha jammed her left foot into the other Adidas and ran. She sped across the landing, upsetting her two-year-old brother, Johnny, who had been standing there sucking his thumb and rubbing his eyes, so that he tumbled over onto his diapered bottom.

"Thamantha," he whined, attempting to stand back up, "Thamantha... wait."

"No time," she panted, hopping onto the banister. As she slid down towards the center foyer, the wind rushed past her ears



"My, my," Mom chided, "aren't we in a hurry this morning?"

and her stomach cringed. The image of Dad percolating coffee and Mom scrambling eggs grew larger and larger until, with a last sickening thump, she landed on the floor beside the kitchen archway.

"My, my," Mom chided, "aren't we in a hurry this morning?"

"Uh, huh," Samantha wheezed, half out the door. Sprinting across the driveway, she could still hear her father shouting, "Samanthaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa..."

Samantha paid him no mind, and soon she was pounding along the sidewalk, panting and gasping and racing like she never had before.

"I'm never late!" she cried inwardly, "I'm never late! I'll get detention! I'll get suspended! I'll get expelled! Ohh, how did I manage to press the snooze button so

many times?"

With every fall of her feet, her stomach did a backflip and her gut churned. "Oh, only let this be a dream," she begged, "and I'll never be late again."

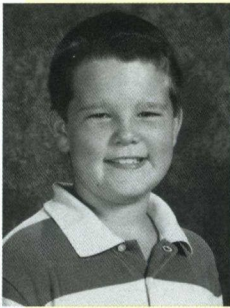
And then, the red brick building, looming in the distance, was coming closer. And then she was up on its steps. And then she was pounding on the doors and hollering, "Let me in! I'm late, I'm late!" She looked up at the windows in despair. "They even locked the doors on me!"

And then Ruby Samson, passing by, stopped to stare at Samantha, puzzled and confused. And then Ruby was taking Samantha back from the steps, and saying, like one might say to a troubled toddler, "You're not late, Samantha. It's Saturday!"



The Opposite Direction

By Benjamin Firsick



Benjamin Firsick, 11
South Windsor, Connecticut

The icy November breeze
Chilled my neck, as muggy
Gray clouds hid the brilliant sun.

Laying my rake down, giving it a rest
From clawing the leaves into a pile,
When the desperate cries of wood thrushes
came to my ears.

The enormous amount of birds made me suck in the crisp air.
I exclaimed, "Wow. You don't see that every day!"

The birds made dips and circular movements,
that were fluent and organized. As the huge swarm flew towards
their destination, one small speck of a bird left the pack and
flew in the opposite direction.

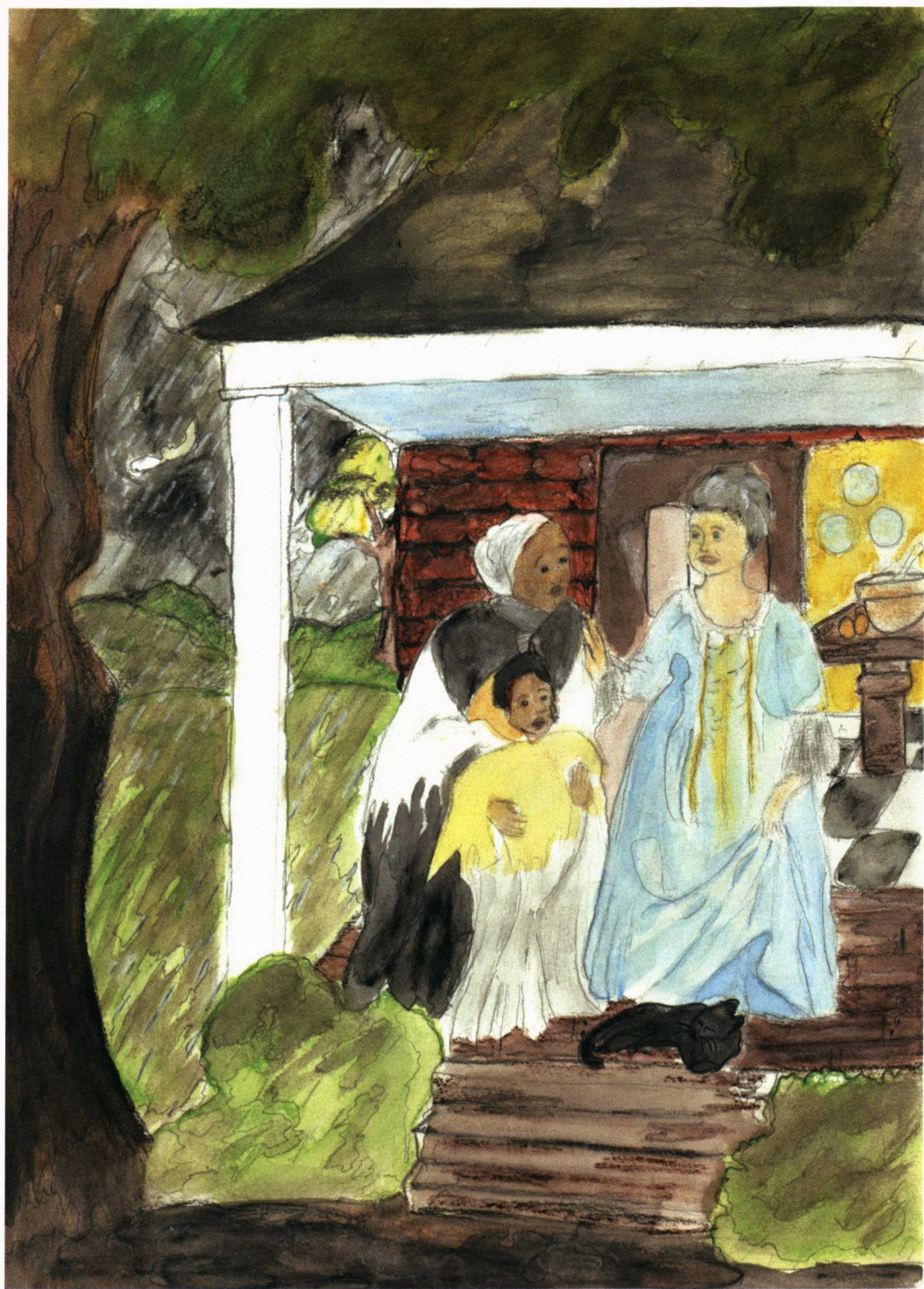
The caws and cries of the huge group echoed off
into the early morning sky.
The shrieks and hisses of the hawks greeted them as they flew into
Costa Rica and pierced through every heart of the wood thrushes.

A living nightmare for the inky black-eared wood thrushes,
A temporary amusement for the hungry hawks.

Hawks dived down on their prey like hail on ants.
Wood thrushes scattered frantically beating their wings up and
down searching for any means of escape.
Razor-sharp talons and hooked beaks glinted in dawn's early light.

The wood thrushes scrambled to and fro—"Where to go!"
One small speck of a bird led the others out of the jungle, making
swerves and dips as the hawks stopped their vicious assault.

They had a joyful reunion with the one daring bird that made a
solo flight—and eventually led the others out of the hawk's
sharp grasp.



It is not until I usher them in that I see the girl is hurt

The Black Cat

By Sage Behr

Illustrated by Emily Johnson

AT THE AGE OF SIXTY, I can't say I remember many things vividly.

Eight years has certainly felt like a long time. Eight years since I saw the slave being sold down by Mississippi. He was young and strong, a handsome man. I still see his face in my mind's eye.

"Sold!" cried the auctioneer. The young man turned around and was led off in shackles. I could see the scars where he had been whipped all over his back. As he was led away, he turned around and caught my eye. His eyes were full of pain and wisdom, sadness, and deep, deep anger. They weren't the eyes of a nineteen-year-old boy, but an eighty-year-old man who has had more than his share of trials in life. These eyes challenged me.

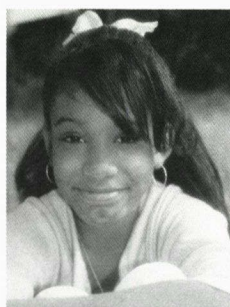
"Do something! Help me!" But I just stared at him, my breath catching in my throat. After a minute he closed his eyes, as if he was tired of the world. I walked away with my handkerchief over my mouth. I felt like I had witnessed something horrible.

That was the first time I had seen a colored person as more than a slave. Unlike most people, I identified that man as more than the first part of the name, colored, but by the second part, a person. When I looked into his eyes, I had seen myself. I could have been that man. If his soul was in my white body and mine in his black one, would he have felt the same way I do? Would he feel the same strange connection—we were both living together on this earth?

It was after that encounter that I started helping slaves to



Sage Behr, 12
Iowa City, Iowa



Emily Johnson, 11
Opelousas, Louisiana

safety. By now, I'd chance to guess I've helped about eighty-five men, women and children to freedom. There have been close calls, certainly. Once, my nephew, Sheriff Paterson, dropped in on a late-night visit. He leaned right against my closet door, which held the passage to the secret room. I swear I could feel the tension coming from two rooms over, where a mother and her three children sat quietly, holding their breath. But I am proud to say all of the slaves who have come to me have launched safely on their way to freedom.

Sometimes I wonder why I keep doing this. But every time a man or woman or family shows up on my doorstep, hope in their eyes and the word "freedom" melting off their lips, I feel a calling, an obligation to help these people live their lives. Who knows? Maybe someday the world will change and I will not have to hide these people in my closet. Maybe their grandchildren will go to college and have futures, like mine did. That is what I wish upon these people who cower behind a door in the closet this very second, clutching the sparse quilts and single candle I have provided them. I'd love to give them more, but if the room were to be searched, it would look suspicious to have more than that in there.

At four-thirty in the morning, I hear a rap on the back door. Jack is here. I hurry the man and his wife out the door; watch Jack help them into a compartment underneath the false bottom of the wagon.

Jack carefully rearranges the potato sacks. Hopping up into his seat, he urges the horses away and they ride away slowly.

FIVE DAYS LATER

A BLACK CAT is prowling around my house. Now, I am not a superstitious woman, but this cat is by no doubt unsettling me. It just circles the house again and again, flicking its tail. I'll try to get it out of my mind by baking some soda bread. That usually helps.

At nine o'clock it's storming badly. Rain is splattering on my windows hard, and lightning lights up the rooms of my house often. I hear a knock at my door. There stand a woman and a girl, a mother and a daughter. It is not until I usher them in that I see the girl is hurt. Her mother is holding her up on her feet, but the girl cannot support herself whatsoever. Her knees sag and she sinks to the floor. The gash running down the side of her head is still spurting blood.

"She tripped and fell," cried her mother. She is going to say more, but I stop her. I give her a damp cloth and ice.

"Try to numb it," I command. "I am going to fetch a doctor."

The woman gasps. "But, Missus, we'll get caught!"

I have already made up my mind. The little girl lying on my floor needs help. I wrap my shawl around my thin shoulders and go out in the pouring rain.

Thunder rumbles and lightning cracks, scaring the horses, but I urge them for-

ward. The lightning strikes again and I catch a glimpse of the black cat. Its eyes glint in the sudden light.

"Curse you!" I mutter. "You brought this misfortune!"

I am soaked when I reach Doctor Shepherd's house. Joseph Shepherd is an honest, good man who I value in the highest respect. If he turns me in I will not blame him. That is why, with my withered, arthritic hand shaking, I knock three times on his oak door.

Mrs. Shepherd opens the door. She is in her bedclothes and looks quite surprised to see me. I croak out that it is an emergency, and I need Doctor Shepherd. Soon Doctor is rushing down the stairs, pulling on a coat and boots. I admire he is taking me seriously even when he doesn't know what's going on.

Doctor Shepherd takes his own wagon to my home. I lead him in the front door, past the black cat that is sitting on my front steps.


"Mrs. Pietas?" He is looking for an injured or sick person, but sees none. I put a finger to my lips and lead him to the door in back of my closet. The doctor looks confused. When I take a key from around my neck, unlock a small door, and open it, revealing a harassed-looking woman lean-

ing over a small black girl, his brow furrows. He glances back at me, question in his eyes. I look back at him. My eyes answer his question. *It's your choice now.*

Doctor Shepherd kneels down next to the girl. I watch him work, sewing small stitches in her head. He shakes back his dark brown hair. He is still in the prime of his life, barely past thirty-five, and his hair is not graying yet. I know if he turns me in, he will have done the right thing in many people's eyes. In his own eyes.

In a half hour, he is done. Standing up, Doctor Shepherd nods curtly to the girl's mother, who is cradling her child's head in her arms. I escort him to the door without a word. Before he leaves, he turns to me.

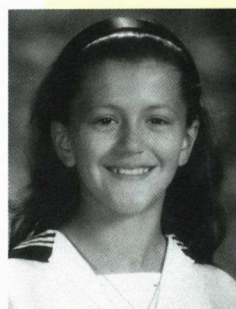
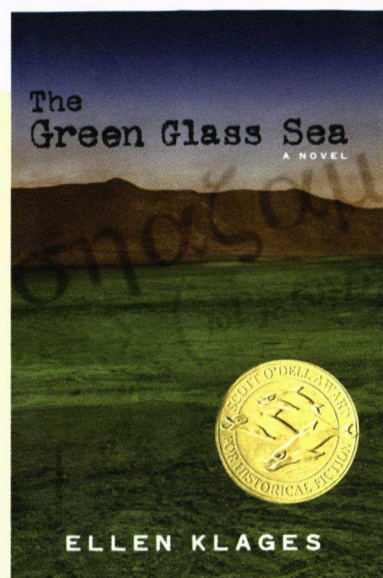
"I respect you, Mrs. Pietas. You are very brave." He tips his hat, and, without another word, he leaves. As I watch him go, lightning flashes. I see the black cat. In another flash, the cat is gone. I smile. Doctor Shepherd will not report his discovery to anyone.

I know there are more people like me. More people are helping slaves escape to the north, to freedom. The Underground Railroad, some call it. Yes, it is dangerous. But we are doing the right thing, that we know. But who knows? Maybe, someday, we all will be free. 

Book Review

By Katherine Tracy

The Green Glass Sea by Ellen Klages; Viking Children's Books: New York, 2006; \$16.99



Katherine Tracy, 11
San Francisco, California

SUZE REACHED IN and picked up a book, riffling the pages with a thumb. *The Boy Mechanic*, she said, snickering. "Why do you have *that*?"

"They didn't make one for girls," Dewey replied.

Have you ever done something that you really enjoyed, but you were the only one of your gender doing it? Well, know that you're not alone, because Dewey Kerrigan, a character from *The Green Glass Sea*, and I feel the same way.

Both Dewey and I enjoy doing what are considered boyish things. I like to run, bike, practice karate, and play basketball and soccer. Dewey likes doing things such as taking apart radios and going to the dump to get scrap hardware.

In the 1940s, it seems almost as if it were against the law for girls to be doing such things. In the book, Dewey is even referred to as Screw Dewey. I suppose these thoughts and stereotypes have lessened over the years, but even now when I go to get basketball shoes, I get remarks such as, "I'm sure your brother will love these shoes." In fact, I am an only child!

Dewey is an only child, too. She obtained her love of boyish things from her father, because her mother was no longer a part

of her life. Her mother abandoned Dewey and Mr. Kerrigan when Dewey was only two years old.

Dewey is living with her scientist father in a secluded community called The Hill, in Los Alamos, New Mexico. The Hill is secluded because the people living there are some of the people who helped create the Manhattan Project (a.k.a. the atom bomb), which helped America win World War II.

Having a father whose work was so closely related to the war meant that Dewey's dad couldn't share much about what was going on at work. This was a pity for Dewey because she was captivated by all the science and math involved in making the atom bomb. I can relate to this because my parents are government employees and they talk about work together and keep most of the stories concealed from me.

One intriguing thing that I learned was that the creators of the atom bomb tested it out in southern New Mexico, before using it against Japan. What is left of the explosion looks like there is a... yes, you guessed it, a "green glass sea."

The story goes on to show that Dewey continues to be successful as a girl in a male-dominated world. I believe these types of stories help young people, like me, learn that we can achieve what we set our minds to do. Along the way, the story also helps us learn about history. The author mixes fact with fiction in an interesting way.

Ellen Klages, the author, deserves a pat on the back for this magnificent novel. She lives in my city, San Francisco, so I hope to meet her someday. She is also working on the sequel to this novel entitled, *White Sands, Red Menace*. I truly enjoyed the story and I am certain that anyone nine or older who reads it will, too. Happy reading! ❁



A sight met her eyes that made Cura's hair stand up on the back of her neck

Whisper

By Dressler Parsons

Illustrated by Justine Mueller

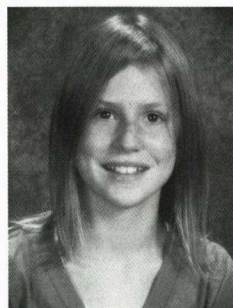
CURA SMITH, a gangly girl of twelve, was exploring the desert landscape of Arizona when she heard the sound that would alter her life forever. It was the soft, normally musical mew of a cat. However, that wasn't what made Cura turn in anxiety. It was that the sound had an almost undetectable cry for help. It was in trouble.

Cura spun on her heel and ran towards the mew, kicking up dirt as she did so. Gulping, her sweaty fingers pushed back an escaped strand of ebony hair. She could feel that she was getting closer—it mewed again. Cura skidded to a stop and stepped from behind a flimsy palo verde tree. A sight met her eyes that made Cura's hair stand up on the back of her neck.

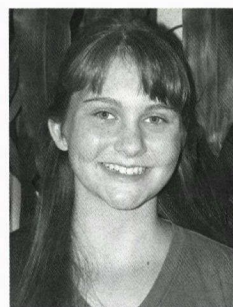
A rattlesnake lay coiled up, ready to strike. A small, cream-colored kitten was shaking with fear, his back arched. He cried once more helplessly, and the snake jolted forward warningly, then shrinking back into its coiled form almost immediately. Cura picked up a large rock and held it thoughtfully at her side.

If she hit it just right, the snake would die. But Cura wasn't stupid. She let the rock hit the ground and ran towards her house as fast as she could. The house was large, and hard to find somebody in. Surprisingly, however, her father was pacing the backyard, a tape measure outstretched. Normally he was never home, always at work at his construction business. A shovel rested in the unfinished pool against a dirt wall. Cura sprinted outside instinctively.

"Dad!" She waved her arms and ran towards him, breath-



Dressler Parsons, 11
Fort McDowell, Arizona



Justine Mueller, 13
Sand Springs, Oklahoma

less. "Dad!" Cura stopped and took a deep breath. "Rattlesnake... kitten..." she gasped. "Shovel..."

"What?" His eyes were full of concern and annoyance.

"The shovel, Dad, grab the shovel!" Cura spoke with such urgency that he grabbed the instructed object and followed her where she ran. When they got to the kitten, he furrowed his brow and turned to his daughter.

The kitten had taken it upon himself to climb the palo verde tree, and the snake was gone.

"Why did you call me over here for no reason, Cura?" he demanded, eyes fiery. Cura gulped.

"I..."

"He probably belongs to somebody, anyway!"

"But..." Cura processed his statement and let confusion cross her face. "What?"

Her father shook his head and looked at her. "Did you just call me over here to ask if you could have this kitten?" Cura's eyes grew wide, and a tear rolled down her cheek, making her freckles shiny.

"Would I do that?" she pleaded. "Dad, I'm telling you, there was this rattlesnake, and he was going to bite the kitten!"

"Don't you call me over here needlessly again, do you understand me?"

"B- But..."

"Do you understand me?"

Cura hung her head. "Yes, Daddy." He walked away, muttering under his breath.

When he had completely disappeared, she gently plucked the kitten off the top

of the tree and held him at arm's length from her. She looked sadly into his blue eyes and questioned him.

"I don't even like cats," she said softly. "Why do I feel inclined to help you?" The more Cura thought about putting the kitten down, however, the more her heart ached. She looked at the kitten's neck, and found it collarless. It seemed as though there was nobody to care for him.

Cura cradled the kitten in her arms and tickled his chin. He purred. "There's no reason why I can't take you home," she said thoughtfully. He wriggled, as though understanding her words. "How did you get that snake to leave, anyway? You're like the snake whisperer." Cura gasped suddenly, as a new idea occurred to her. "That could be your name—Whisper!" Whisper meowed happily. She giggled. "OK, then Whisper it is."

They trotted off for home, and Cura veered sharply to the right, ducking underneath a window. Silently she opened the window to the laundry room and jumped inside clumsily, stumbling when she landed, though managing not to make much noise. She then snuck to the stairs, tiptoeing faster than most people could run. She wasn't used to entering this way, because her parents were usually at work and there would be nobody in the house except for a fluttering note on the counter. But today was Sunday, and she had to be as inconspicuous as possible.

Where should I put Whisper? she thought. Cura hugged Whisper closer to her body and sighed in frustration. I

could put him underneath my bed—no, no... I could put him in the attic—that's no good...

The door opened. Cura's mother walked inside, putting away fresh towels, and stopped curiously at the sight of Cura, wide-eyed and frightened. Her gaze traveled to Cura's arm, which was cradling a cream-colored tiny thing... which meowed. She sighed indignantly.

"Cura Harmony Smith, what do you think you're doing, bringing that cat into the house? It probably has an owner or a disease or something..."

"We could take him to the vet," Cura suggested hopefully. "He's not clean enough to have an owner, and he has no collar." She paused and held Whisper to face her mother. He meowed again and her mother was bewitched by his big, blue eyes. "Please? Whisper was being cornered by a rattlesnake..."

"Whisper, you say?" Her mother leaned over and placed the towels on Cura's bed.

"Please, Mom. We need to help him."

"Well, maybe *you* do, but *I'm* very busy..."

"But I'll buy the food and everything..."

"Cura, I can't. I have work tomorrow..."

"Please?" Cura choked. "There's nobody to take care of him! If we don't help him, he'll die. He was given a second chance at life, and I would feel awful if we forced him to throw it away." She wiped away a tear. "Wouldn't you?"

Cura's mother bit her lip, closing her eyes as if she was pained deeply, and then slowly and softly replied, "All right."

"But..." Cura paused, and turned her hopeful eyes to her mother's. She poured a glittering smile across her tear-streaked face. "Really?"

Her mother looked away guiltily, then met Cura's smile with a half-smile of her own. "Yes," she sighed. "I... guess I *need*," she shrugged, "to help him, too." She walked over to Whisper and scratched his ears. "And how could I say no to a face like this?"

She exited the room, leaving Cura to hug Whisper once, then fall into a doze.

Just before the moon lazily drifted into the sky, fighting for admiration with the sun, Cura roused and was alarmed to find that Whisper was gone. Teary-eyed, she ran into every room in the house. Finally, she walked, defeated, into the kitchen, wiping her eyes. She saw the blurry shape of her mother pouring something into a bowl.

"M- Mom," she sobbed, "Whisper is gone, and..."

"Whisper's not gone, Cura," her mother said comfortingly. Cura curled one hand into a fist and wiped away the last of her tears, and her vision cleared.

Her mother was setting a shallow bowl of milk on the floor, and a cream-colored kitten came forward and gratefully lapped it up with his sandpaper tongue.

"Whisper!" Cura cried happily. A haunting sound met Cura's ears. The slam of the back door, the scraping of boots on the concrete. "Oh..."

"What is the meaning of this..."

"We already discussed it, honey," said

her mother quietly. "We... we're going to keep the kitten." She sighed. "Whisper needs our help."

It seemed as though her father was attempting to object, but did not. He shook his head, giving in to the unseen spirit prodding him. "Fine."

At dinner, they all sat at the table and talked, which felt like a miracle to Cura. Usually, everybody would be in and out, and would grab a TV dinner when they felt like it.

"Delicious... um... mac and cheese, Mom," Cura smiled.

"It took me hours to make," she joked back, jerking her thumb happily to the empty box on the counter. Cura's dad grunted noncommittally.

"What does this cat eat, anyway?" he asked. Cura laughed.

"Cat food doesn't cost much," said Cura. "W- We could all go to the pet store on Monday."

"I have work," her mom and dad said simultaneously.

"After work?"

"How about we go next Sunday?" suggested her mother quietly. Cura gaped.

"B- But that's a whole week from now! What is he going to live on until then?" she cried. "And besides, Dad always spends all Sunday working at home."

"Work ends at a reasonable time,

sweetie," her mother suggested to Cura's father timidly.

"Yeah, at five," grumbled her father. "We can go then," he continued in a warmer tone. Cura's smile was so big that she feared it would break loose.

After dinner, Cura slipped into her nightgown and pulled down an extra pillow. "Here's your bed, Whisper." Whisper trotted over and curled up, a tiny ball on the mass of red. Cura crawled into bed and pulled the covers up to her chin, then heard a noise.


The door was pushed open, and both of her parents walked in.

"Goodnight, sweetie," said her mother. She leaned down and kissed Cura on the cheek. "I love you." She exited the room, leaving an impression of warmth hanging in the room.

"Goodnight," her father grinned, kissing her forehead. Cura reached up and gave him a hug.

"I love you," she said.

"I love you too," he replied, and Cura knew he meant it. He left, turning off the light and closing the door. Whisper leapt from his bed to Cura's stomach. She pulled him close.

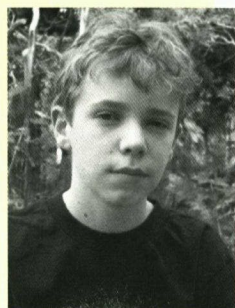
"Oh, Whisper," she said softly. "You darling. You're not just a snake whisperer at all," she sighed, letting him fall asleep. "You're a family whisperer." 

Choir of Autumn's End

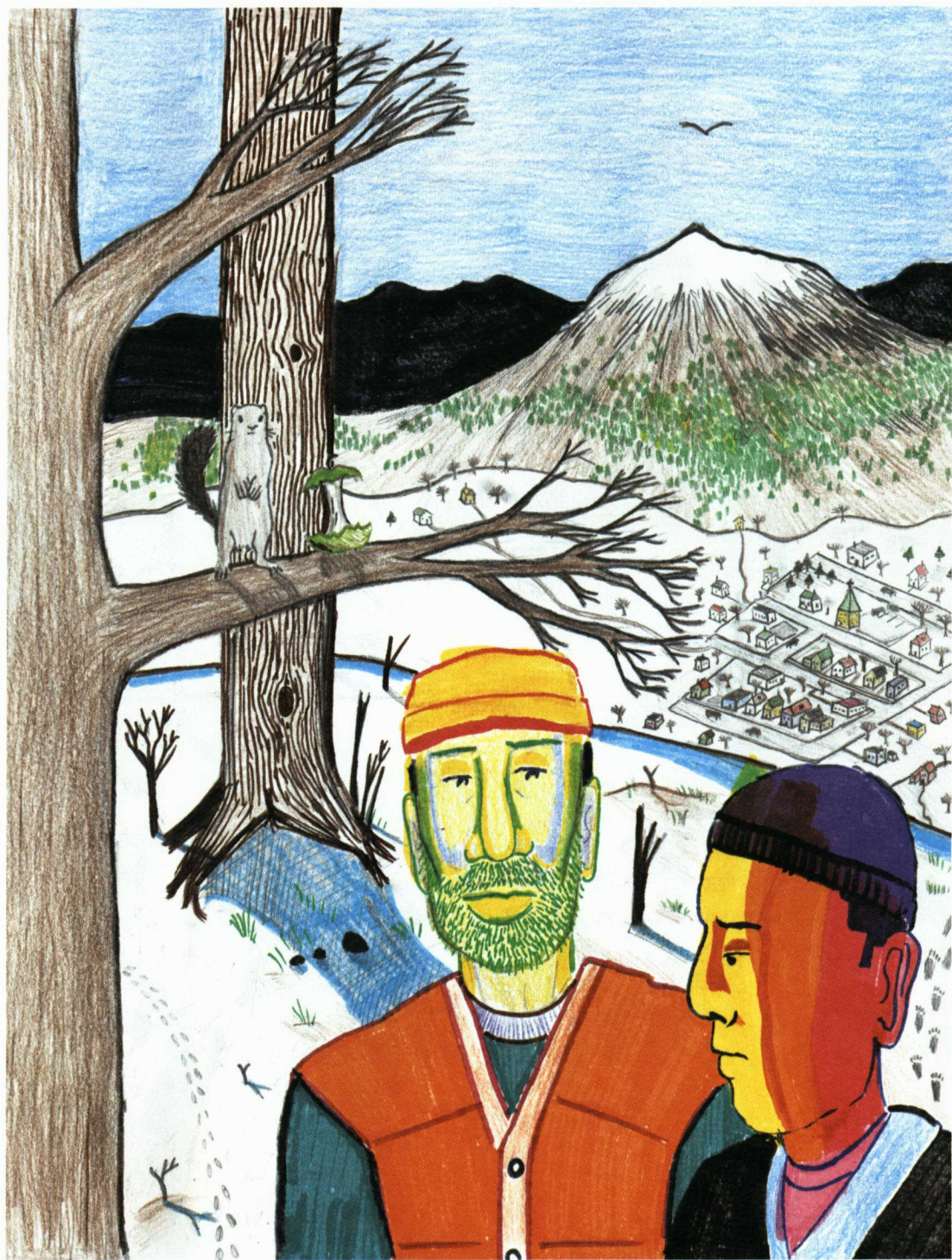
By Gabriel Wainio-Théberge

Listen! Is that the calling of the hounds,
The hounds returning?
What wavering desolate horn is this that sounds,
So much like the wild hunt's baying?
A trembling weary choir of voices
From the chilly gray air.
And they come, then,
From behind the old, mound-like gray hill,
A long-necked mourning choir on wings,
Late geese.

We are the last
Honks their song
And should have listened to the wind's warnings.
Now autumn is ended
And winter's wingbeats ruffle our tails.



Gabriel Wainio-Théberge, 12
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada



"I sort of wish that we could live up here. You know, it's so peaceful, it's nice"

Trek to the Peak

By Alexis Colleen Hosticka

Illustrated by José Chardiet

CHAPTER ONE

TWO SMALL FIGURES seemed to creep up the snowy mountainside. The hawk staring at them through two black eyes from up above dove a few yards to their right. A mouse flinched in his sharp talons and was soon torn to pieces. Scampering among the treetops, squirrels chattered, munching their fall harvest of nuts.

A voice was heard, "Come on over here son, look at this."

"What'd you find?" said another voice.

"Looks like deer tracks," replied the fatherly, first voice.

"Aw, cool Dad. Think we could see one?"

"Maybe Jasper. But, I don't know if they're fresh, I'm not a forest ranger," said Dad.

"OK; I just thought that hawk was cool!" responded Jasper, gazing at the cloudless, bright blue sky.

As the two hikers continued up the mountain, animals stopped to glance at the quiet party, both of them soaking in the beauty of nature, not wanting to disturb the peacefulness of the gorgeous mountainside.

Soon they had reached the peak, gazing out to the surrounding valley. They both smiled to themselves as they rested. It was the most beautiful sight they had ever seen. The little houses, looking like toys with dolls marching around and riding in matchbox cars on the twisting roads.

They sat down for a picnic of ham sandwiches and fresh, tart apples. The chill, February air nipped their noses as the



Alexis Colleen Hosticka, 12
West Chicago, Illinois



José Chardiet, 13
New Haven, Connecticut

sandwiches disappeared and the apples crunched and vanished. A squirrel ventured near and Dad threw him his apple core. He scurried away and up into a treetop, to feast on his own fresh supply of nuts.

The plastic sandwich bags went into the hiking packs and Jasper threw his apple core into the trees and the two took last sips from their water bottles.

"I sort of wish that we could live up here. You know, it's so peaceful, it's nice," said Jasper, still gazing down at the beautiful valley.

"I don't know. It might be nice for a little while, but then you'd miss swim team and all your friends. If they came up here it wouldn't be very peaceful anymore."

"I guess you're right, but I still think it's nice up here," replied Jasper.

CHAPTER TWO

THE WELL RESTED pair continued on their hike, this time downhill. At first, it seemed to go faster, probably because of their rest and meal. Soon they were halfway done with the trip down. They stopped for a drink and sat down to watch nature for a little while.

As they were standing up and adjusting their packs, cries of, "Help! Help!" were heard.

"Who's that?" asked Jasper.

"I don't know Jappy, but we better go and see," answered Dad.

Quickly jamming their water bottles back in their packs, they hurried toward the sound. It was coming from slightly

uphill, and to their right. Every few moments, they would pause to hear more cries for help. As they paused again, Jasper saw a figure lying on the sparkling, white snow up ahead. A moan came from the still body, and they ran ahead. As they hurried forward, a loud scream of pain from the body scared a small squirrel. Jasper jumped in surprise. They heard a rumble and snow began to tumble down the mountainside. Everywhere and everything was white.

The last thing Jasper heard was "Run!! Run, Jasper, run!!" Then everything went black.

CHAPTER THREE

WHEN HE CAME to, about an hour after being conked on the head with a tree branch, Jasper was freezing. His left-hand glove had fallen off and it felt like he was lying in a freezer.

"Dad?" he mumbled, still faint.

Struggling to get a breath of fresh air, he tried to push the whitish darkness away. But, it was no use, he collapsed after the first attempt. He backed into the deep snow, and it became dark again.

Meanwhile, at the base of the mountain, in the little valley, rescue dogs were getting ready to search and rescue. Men were strapping on their packs and bundling up warm. The whole town was in a flurry, everyone was worried, especially the ones with loved ones in danger.

Soon the search was on and dogs were sniffing the fresh white snow, searching for signs of life.

As Jasper lay there, unconscious, a

warm body lay down next to him. Not a dog's furry, shaggy, small body, but a large smooth body, the body of a deer.

CHAPTER FOUR

AFTER THAT AVALANCHE, everyone said that the only reason Jasper Lawrence survived was that a deer came to see him. Not to just see him, to warm life back into him and give strength to his small, cold body. When the rescue dogs did find him, the deer leaped away into the trees and wasn't seen again.

Jasper liked to believe that it was the same deer whose tracks he had seen earlier with his father. Father was found not

far from Jasper, still alive, but with a generous dose of frostbite on his toes and fingers. They never knew who the man who caused the avalanche was. He was found dead about twenty yards below father with a twisted ankle, probably what he had been moaning about.

EPILOGUE

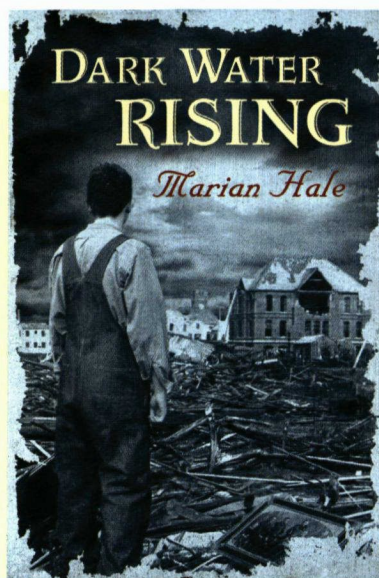
JASPER GREW UP to work on a search-and-rescue team. He saved many people in his career, but never saw a deer cuddling a victim. Jasper had two rescue dogs in his career: Buck and Doe. He also owned a pet dog named Deer after the animal that had saved his life. ❀



Book Review

By Adiel Schmidt

Dark Water Rising by Marian Hale; Henry Holt Books for Young Readers: New York, 2006; \$16.95



Adiel Schmidt, 12
New York, New York

DO YOU KNOW somebody who survived a natural disaster or a big storm? Well, I don't, but when I read *Dark Water Rising* by Marian Hale, I felt like I *had* survived a natural disaster, the Galveston storm of 1900. Marian Hale takes you right into the life of 16- (almost 17-) year-old Seth.

This book was very intriguing, especially for someone like me who doesn't like straight-out history, but enjoys historical fiction. Before reading this book, I knew about major cities in Texas, but I had never even heard of Galveston or of the storm that took place there in 1900.

Seth wants to fulfill his dream and become a builder like his father, but Seth's father has different plans for Seth. He wants Seth to become a doctor. This is one of the reasons why Seth and his family, in the beginning of the book, move to Galveston. I'm not as old as Seth so I don't really work yet, but I've had experiences like his. For example, I used to play piano and liked it, but when my brother started playing drums, I also wanted to play drums. My parents just ignored me and kept on signing me up for piano. Eventually, I ended up quitting piano, and now I don't play any instruments. Seth is similar to me in a way be-

cause his parents think they are doing what's best for him, but he really wants to do something else.

While reading this book, I was surprised at how badly black people were treated during this time period. Seth has barely seen black people and treats an old black man named Ezra like a slave. He later becomes good friends with Ezra's grandson, Josiah, when they have to survive together in a storm. In an early scene, Seth's dad comments that black people aren't as good as white people. I really disagree with this and I'm appalled at this behavior, but I live in a more modern time period than Seth.

Once Seth and his family are moved into their house, Seth's uncle finds a summer building job for Seth. Seth is overjoyed because he thinks that if he does a good job for his boss, his dad might let him become a builder instead of a doctor. Josiah also works for the same person as Seth. One day a big storm is forecast for Galveston, but Seth still goes to work that day. He and Josiah (who lives with Seth's aunt and uncle) end up almost swimming home because there is so much water in the streets. When Seth and Josiah end up relying on each other for survival, Seth really changes his views about black people. This affected me personally because I have friends who are black and this was Seth's first realization that blacks weren't much different from whites.

Throughout the book, the relationship between Seth and his dad is constantly changing. After Seth survives the storm, Seth's dad (in my opinion) views Seth as an adult who can make his own decisions. Seth's dad also sees that Seth is a good builder, and tells Seth that he doesn't have to become a doctor.

I highly recommend this book to all people who would enjoy a short read about a relationship between a father and a son that will teach them history and a lesson about friendship. ☸



"A white Christmas," she said happily. "It's been a long time since we've had one of those"

A Calf for Christmas

By **William Gwaltney**

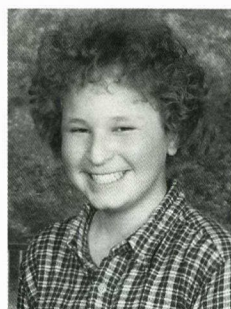
Illustrated by the author

IT WAS CHRISTMAS EVE, and everything was ready. Presents had been purchased with great care months before. Yesterday they had been wrapped in dozens of pretty papers and decorated with beautiful bows. Now they sat like sparkling jewels in a pirate's treasure chest, under the fragrant boughs of a giant spruce. The farmhouse was filled with tinsel and holly and light.

The dining room table was covered with a white tablecloth, and red and green candles stood in silver candle holders waiting to be lit. Golden streams of light poured down from the dining room chandelier onto plates heaped high with frosted cookies in the shapes of snowmen and reindeer and elves. Soon these plates would need to be moved to make way for the huge Christmas Eve feast that was almost ready.

From the kitchen came the smells of cinnamon, nutmeg and vanilla, and of a golden brown turkey almost too big for the oven. On the stove, every burner was in use. Steam was pouring out from underneath the lids on various pots, fogging up the windows in the farmhouse kitchen. The sink was filled with pots and pans and utensils, and the counters were happily cluttered. As the mother worked, chopping, stirring, and checking the pots, she sang along with the Christmas carols coming from the nearby radio.

Suddenly the door to the outside burst open and happy voices filled the air. Having finished their evening chores, the children rushed into the house, each trying to be the first to reach the



William Gwaltney, 12
Englewood, Colorado

Christmas cookies in the dining room. Max, thinking himself too old for such childish behavior at twelve, slowly removed his shoes and walked seriously into the kitchen. He called out to his younger sisters, "You leave those cookies alone! You'll all spoil your appetites for supper!" His mother grinned.

"Now you sound like me," she said. "Before I know it, you'll be taking over my kitchen and doing the cooking as well."

"Not a chance," replied Max. "You are the only person in the world who can make dinner smell this good." He inhaled deeply. "Did you know that it's starting to snow out there?" he asked. "There's already almost two inches on the ground." A broad smile lit his mother's face and her brown eyes twinkled.

"A white Christmas," she said happily. "It's been a long time since we've had one of those. Have you and your sisters finished your chores?" Max nodded. "Great," his mom replied, "Now where's your father?"

"He's still out in the back pasture," Max answered. "I think he's..." But before he could finish, the door to the outside once again blew open.

Into the kitchen came Max's dad, his hair wet, his clothes rumpled, and a grim look on his face. "Molly!" he called to Max's mother. "Call the vet! That cow with the white face is having trouble calving. She's been trying since early this morning, and I went out just now thinking she'd have a nice calf on the ground. But she's made no progress since I last saw her. I'm not even sure that the calf's

still alive but we've got to do something."

"OK, Frank," said his wife, "I'll call the vet and be right out to help."

"Dress warmly," said her husband, "it's only twenty degrees out there and the temperature's dropping fast."

As he left the kitchen, his wife called to the children. "Max," she said, "I'm going out to help your father. I'll need you to finish dinner and feed the girls. Turning to her younger children she said, "Now, no Christmas cookies until you're done with dinner. Max is in charge and you'd better listen to him. I want you all in bed early so Santa can come. Understand?"

Three little heads nodded agreement. "Yes, Mom," they said. But as she turned around, Max was already pulling on his boots.

"Let me go out instead," he said. "You're still getting over your cold, and I'm not really great in the kitchen. Besides, the little kids are way too excited to want to listen to me tonight."

His mother smiled. "You're right, of course, but dress warmly. You don't want to get sick either."

As Max struggled into layers of warm clothing, his mother called the vet. Max headed out the door, still shrugging into his coat. Outside, it was bitterly cold. The falling snow swirled around his head. Steam rose from his nose and mouth as he breathed out warmed air into the frigid night. This was not good calving weather. The baby, if it was still alive, was liable to freeze to death before morning. The cow giving birth to him was the worst mother



The site that greeted them was not a pretty one

on the farm. She usually abandoned her calves, refusing to take care of them or even let them nurse. Now here she was having her calf in the middle of a blizzard. It was crazy.

As Max crossed the front yard, he heard the roar of an engine and looked up to see headlights coming up the driveway, illuminating the falling snow. The vet had made it in record time. Max walked over to meet him, and together they drove out into the back pasture to find his father. The site that greeted them was not a pretty one.

Max's father held one end of a rope, and the cow was on the other. The center of the rope was wrapped around a tree trunk, and his dad was trying to pull the cow up close so that she couldn't move around as much. Although she looked exhausted, the cow had the fiery glint of rage in her eyes. Her sides heaved and sweat steamed off of her. She thrashed and kicked and struggled, trying to break free of the rope.

"Hey Frank," said the veterinarian, climbing out of his truck, "she sure looks angry. How long did you say she's been trying to calve?"

"She's been at it for most of the day," Max's dad replied, "but all we've seen is one little foot."

"Not good," said the vet. "It's unlikely that the calf is even still alive. But we need to get it out one way or another. What are the chances of getting the cow into the barn?"

"Not good," said Max's father. "She's a wild one. If we loosen the ropes, she's bound to either get away or hurt us. I don't think we should chance it."

"OK," said the vet, "let's see what we can do." Speaking calmly, he approached the cow and tried to grab the small foot of her unborn baby. As the men had talked, the cow had settled down, seemingly too weak and tired to fight anymore. But now she bellowed furiously and threw all her weight to one side, ramming the vet soundly and sending him flying through the air. He landed in the cold fresh snow and rolled several feet. Struggling to his feet, he approached the cow again, limping slightly on a newly bruised leg. Her eyes rolled wildly toward him as she tucked a hind leg up near her belly, preparing to kick.

The vet grabbed some more rope and tied the cow's right rear foot up underneath her. Now she was more concerned with maintaining her balance than in fighting. "She won't try to kick me now," said the vet. "She knows she'll fall if she tries."

He approached the cow again and reached underneath her tail. Grabbing the calf's leg, he pushed it back inside the birth canal. He fumbled around for a min-

ute, then suddenly Max saw two little legs. "I think we're OK," said the vet. "One leg was twisted backwards. I've found it now, so the baby's in a normal position to be born. The only problem is, Mom is too exhausted to push, so we're going to have to help her. I'm sorry to bother you," he said, "but I'll need a piece of rope."

Max ran for the shed, returning with the rope in hand. The vet took it and wrapped it around the calf's two front legs, which were still protruding from the cow. "OK," he said, "we're ready. We'll all need to pull on this rope if we hope to get this calf out. They grabbed hold and pulled as hard as they could, but nothing happened. Within a few minutes they were covered in sweat and gasping for breath. Disappointed, they all let go of the rope.

"Hang on," said the vet, "something's wrong." Reaching inside the cow again he said, "I'm afraid I have some more bad news. This calf is huge. His shoulders are too big to fit through the birth canal. We can either save the cow or save the calf, but you're going to have to make a decision."

"Can't we save both?" asked Max.

"There's a slight chance we might be able to," the vet answered, "but the only way to get to that calf is to do surgery on the cow. And this is not the time or the place to do that with any chance of success. It's below freezing out, it's snowing, and a pasture is far from a sterile environment. I think we need to be prepared to lose one or the other."

"I think that we should save the calf,"

said Max. "This cow has been a lot of trouble over the years, and the calf might turn out to be a good one."

"The problem," said his father, "is that it's unlikely that this calf is even still alive."

"Well, actually, I might have to disagree," said the vet, his hand still inside the cow. *Something* in there just started sucking on my fingers, and I believe I know what it is." He laughed. "Not only is this calf still alive, but it's hungry too!"

The vet retrieved his surgical kit from the back of his truck. Anesthetizing the cow, he made an incision along her belly. Reaching inside, he pulled out a gigantic calf. Max couldn't believe his eyes. It was the same size as a normal six-month-old calf! It was a beautiful heifer, a baby girl, with big bones and long legs. Except for some white markings on her face, she was a pretty reddish-brown, the color of henna. Her eyes were big and soft with long lashes. But she wasn't breathing.

"Hurry," said the vet. "If you want to save her, we've got to act quickly." Grabbing the calf's hind legs, the vet lifted her up as high as he could reach. The calf was now hanging upside down, but she was so long that her head and forelegs were lying on the ground. "Max," said the vet, "grab that towel. You've got to clean the mucus out of her mouth and nose!"

"Why are you holding her upside down?" asked Max as he worked.

"Because gravity is our friend," said the vet. "This will help the mucus drain out of her lungs more efficiently, making your

job easier." But the calf still did not take a breath. The vet laid her down on the ground and felt for a pulse. He couldn't find one.

"I think she's gone," said Max's father, sadly. But the vet's enthusiasm knew no bounds.

"She was sucking on my fingers just minutes ago," he said. "We're not giving up! This calf has been fighting to live all day, and we're going to help her. If I could only lift her a little higher..."

Suddenly, Max had an idea. "Your pickup!" he shouted. "If you stand in the back of your pickup you can get her all the way off the ground!" The vet looked at his truck. "It just might work," he said. "Frank, can you get into the back of my truck and hold her up?" Max's dad climbed into the truck. Max and the vet passed the calf up to him. Grabbing its back legs, he reached above his head, holding the calf as high as he could. Now she dangled above the ground. Max went back to work on her nose and mouth, trying to get her to breathe. The vet began to massage her chest briskly. Every once in a while, he stopped to slap her hard.

"What are you doing?" shouted Max. "Don't hurt her!"

"I'm trying to get her heart beating," said the vet. Suddenly, the little cow coughed. She heaved a huge sigh and then blinked her big brown eyes and looked up.

"We did it!" yelled Max. "She's OK! She's going to be all right!"

"We can hope so," said the vet, "But she's not out of the woods yet. We really



"Look!" they shrieked. "Look! Santa brought us a new calf"

need to get her inside where it's warmer. Is there an empty stall in the barn?"

"Yes," said Max's dad, "but it's really not that much warmer in the barn than it is out here." The little cow struggled to stand, but the slippery snow made it impossible.

"What about the basement?" asked Max. "We've got the woodstove down there so it's nice and toasty."

"That's a great idea," said his father. "We'll put down a thick bed of hay and sawdust." Working together, the three of them carried the huge calf into the basement and bedded her down for the night. Max was exhausted, but he took the time to dry her thoroughly and give her a bottle of warm milk before he struggled back up the long basement steps.

In the kitchen, his mother bustled about, making hot chocolate and sandwiches for his father and the vet, who had just come in from tending to the mother cow. They had sewn her up and had somehow managed to get her into the barn. "It looks like she'll make it," said the vet, "but I don't think she'll be able to have any more calves." Max thought that might not be such a bad thing. She didn't seem to like being a mom much anyway.

Max's mother offered Max a mug of hot chocolate, but all he wanted was his nice soft bed. "Merry Christmas," she told him. "It's after midnight, so it's now officially Christmas Day." Max smiled and then staggered off to bed. He fell asleep immediately. In his dreams cows, beautiful cows, pulled Santa's sleigh through a snow-filled sky.

"I thought we made a deal," Max said to his sisters as they struggled to wake him up the next morning. "I'd give you one of my presents and you'd let me sleep until at least seven o'clock."

"But it's ten o'clock already," said his oldest sister. "Mom wouldn't let us wake you up any earlier. But you've got to get up. You've got to come and see what Santa brought us. It's the best present ever!" Rubbing the sleep from his eyes, Max dragged himself out of bed.

The girls tumbled down the stairs ahead of him. Then they opened the basement door. Suddenly, Max remembered the calf. He charged down the basement stairs right behind his sisters. "Look!" they shrieked. "Look! Santa brought us a new calf. And Mama said we can feed it with a bottle. And Daddy says she can stay in the basement until spring. Isn't she beautiful?" And she was.

"We decided to let you name her," they all shouted. "Dad said that it should be your job. What are you going to call her?" they asked.

"How about Eve?" said Max, as the calf sucked hungrily on his fingers. "She was born on Christmas Eve."

"Eve! Eve! Eve!" chanted his sisters. The calf bawled loudly.

Giggling, Max's littlest sister said, "I think that means she likes her new name!"

"Actually," said Max, "I think it means she's hungry. Who wants to feed her?"

"Me! Me! Me!" clamored his sisters, and they all raced upstairs to fix Eve her bottle.



Winter

By Riley Grace Carlson



Riley Grace Carlson, 9
Franklin, Tennessee

I walk through the silent pasture to the tree swing.
I sit down and start to swing.
I close my eyes and fall into a silent sleep.
When I open my eyes I see the ground is littered
with leaves, acorns and plants of all kinds.
I sit listening to the wind roar.
I am not troubled.
I just sit there
watching
waiting.

We're Moving

By Lyla Lawless

Illustrated by Olga Todorova

“**W**E’RE MOVING.”

The words fall with a dead thud on my ears. I can’t believe it’s happening. The possibility has been there for weeks, months even. But I never thought it would happen to me.

“Why?” I choke.

“You know how long your father has been searching for the right job,” Mom says apologetically. “We prayed that it would be near here, but it didn’t turn out that way.”

All I can do is nod numbly.

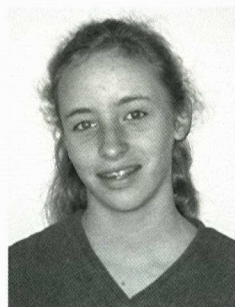
This house has been my home for all of my twelve years. All my friends are here, all the places I love are here, everything I’ve ever known is here. I stare out the window at night and can’t imagine being in a different place.

“You’re down in the mouth today, Lucy,” my best friend Grace says cheerfully to me at school the next day. “What’s up?”

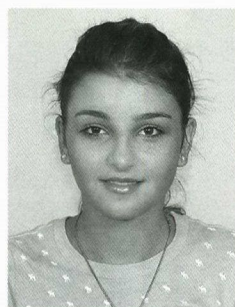
“We’re moving,” I reply in the somewhat deadened voice that has become mine since the announcement.

“You’re not serious!” Grace exclaims, but I can tell that when she looks into my eyes, she knows it’s true.

THE YELLOW SIGN goes up in our yard the next week. Every time I walk past it on my way home from school, the bold words, FOR SALE, glare at me mockingly. Mom and Dad fill the kitchen table with printouts of house descriptions near this new job of Dad’s.



Lyla Lawless, 13
Gaithersburg, Maryland



Olga Todorova, 13
Plovdiv, Bulgaria



"I'll write every day," Grace promises as she helps me pack one afternoon

Springfield. We're moving to Springfield, Illinois, a place I know only vaguely as the capital of its state. It's just a word on paper to me; how could I soon be living there? Rockville—now that's home.

The new house is soon picked out. Dad has to fly to Springfield for some sort of interview; Mom jumps at the chance to look at the house she wants. I spend the entire plane ride praying that something will be wrong with the house.

It's too fast, I plead silently. This is all happening too fast. Can't I have a little more time?

No such luck, though. The house is perfect. Somewhere inside me, I knew it

would be. Mom spent hours gushing over it back at home.

My home. Not this strange place that I have to go to.

She brings me to see the new place on the last day of our "vacation." I am surprised to see that the people who own it have a daughter, just my age. An only child, just like me. We look shyly at each other, and I realize that the same daze of moving that I've seen in my eyes is in hers as well.

Silently, imperceptibly, we make a connection. But we're both too shy to say a single word.



I clutch the letter in my hands, realizing the ray of hope it has given me

IT'S BACK TO Rockville then. For a few blessed weeks, I am able to forget about the whole business of moving. No one is interested in our house, and it takes a while to buy the new one.

Grace and I chat and laugh as if things aren't different. Still, inside, we both know that it's not the same.

I begin boxing up my things that week. The sale on the new house—I still don't think of it as mine—went through, and the old family has already left. Mom wants to get everything ready for Moving Day, June 15.

Now I know it's real—the awful day has

a date. Finally, it has sunk in.

We're moving.

"I'll write every day," Grace promises as she helps me pack one afternoon. I look at her and nearly laugh at the absurd pledge. Everyone knows you can't write every single day. Probably not even every single week.

"E-mail me instead," I suggest. She laughs, and for a brief instant, I am happy.

IT'S THE NIGHT before. All day it was hot and muggy, and the night is no better. I am on a sleeping bag on the floor of my room—no, my old room. *I have*

a new room now, I remind myself. One of those strange rooms in the Springfield house is mine.

Somehow, I thought that taking possession of something in the unfamiliar house would give me something to look forward to. It doesn't really help. I know that the new room will be just as empty, just as forbidding as my room is now. Only worse, because it's not mine.

We're back at the airport bright and early the next morning. I have only my backpack, like a brick, slung over one shoulder. Everything else is in the moving vans. They left before I even got up.

I always used to love flying in airplanes. Once a year, we would fly to Florida and visit my grandparents. To me, airplanes were fun, exciting, and exotic. But all of a sudden, I hate airplanes. This time, they're taking me away from home and they're not going to bring me back.

After an agonizing stretch of time in the air, we're in the Springfield airport. Dad drove the car with the moving vans, so we don't have a way to get to the house. Mom hails a cab; she doesn't want a rental car because then she has to worry about driving it back. The cab works out because the drive to our new house isn't far so the cab driver can't charge very much.

Then I'm standing in the cavernous in-nards of the new house. I thought it was forbidding when there was furniture inside; now that it's empty, with only electrical outlets glaring at me from the bare walls, it almost scares me.

"Why don't you pick a room, Lucy?" Mom suggests, seeing the look on my face. "We can move your things into it as soon as the moving van gets here."

I nod and head for the second floor. Inside, I scream all the while, *It's too big! All of it is too big! We only had one floor at home. How will I ever get used to this?*

Mom always says to be positive about things. I figure that's the only way I'll ever get through this awful day. *I can make a new room exciting*, I decide determinedly. *It's not every day that you get to choose a new room.*

It's fake optimism, though, and I still have a huge knot in my stomach as I stare at the yawning doorways. Every one looks the same. How can I ever pick one? Leaving it to chance, I close my eyes and spin around until I know I'll be sick. I stop, and keep my eyes closed until the nausea goes away. When I open them, I am facing the only bedroom whose windows look out onto the street.

It seems right, somehow. My old room looked onto the street, too, and I always enjoyed watching the cars go by.

Springfield cars can't be that much different from Rockville cars, I decide. *This room will be mine.*

I stride into the empty room with its bare walls and look around. The first thing I notice is that the walls aren't bare—in-between the two windows, a folded sheet of notebook paper is taped to the wall. Curious, I go to it and peel it carefully off. Mom won't be happy if I mess up the paint.

The paper is a letter, written in a girl's neat cursive. On the front is a scribbled note, reading "To the New Girl." I sling my backpack off my shoulder, and ease down onto the floor to read.

Hello.

I put this here because this was my room and I hoped you'd pick it. Chances are you did. Did you notice how this room seems friendlier somehow? Maybe it didn't to you; maybe it's just because it's my room.

When my parents told me we were moving, I yelled. I told them I wouldn't go. I said that I'd lived in Springfield my whole life and I couldn't imagine being anywhere else. Did you feel that way? I don't know; you might have moved before. But it hurts every time, I bet.

I wish we weren't going, but I can hear the moving van backing up our driveway now. I'm going to tape this to the wall right before I leave the room. Mom hates me taping things to the wall, but I don't think she'll mind just this once.

I don't even know why I'm writing you a note. I guess when we met—or really, saw each other—I could kind of tell that you were nice. Sometimes you can just tell that about people. I guess I thought that we might be kind of the same.

I was mostly writing to ask if you would send me a letter (took me long enough,

huh?). I'm going to be lonely in our new city. We're going to Seattle; can you imagine a place any farther away? I thought you might be lonely, too. My friends are great, but there's the whole summer ahead of you with no school and you all might not run into each other for a long time.

Mom's calling me; I guess I'd better go. I wrote my address below. I'll be waiting for the letter.

Sincerely,
Anna Schultz

When I finish, I stare out the window, a flood of emotions washing over me. All this time I have been thinking that I was the only one who had ever felt this way. I have been so worried about friendships, both the ones I have to try to keep and the ones I will have to make.

And here is this girl, writing a letter to someone she's never even spoken to, just because she wants a friend. I clutch the letter in my hands, realizing the ray of hope it has given me.

With a curious feeling of happiness, I rummage in my backpack for a pencil. After tearing a page out of my notebook, I lean against the wall again and write Anna a letter.

I know I will be waiting every day for the mailman until she writes back. ❁

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