

# Stone Soup

*The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists*



*Illustration by Anna Welch, age 13, from "A Light Shining Out of the Darkness," page 18*

## **A LIGHT SHINING OUT OF THE DARKNESS**

Orion and his mother get a second chance to save a life

## **BADGER WILL BE BADGER**

Lucy's golden retriever is a troublemaker, but Lucy loves him anyway

MARCH/APRIL 2008

\$6.50 US \$6.50 CANADA





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*The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists*

VOLUME 36, NUMBER 4

MARCH / APRIL 2008

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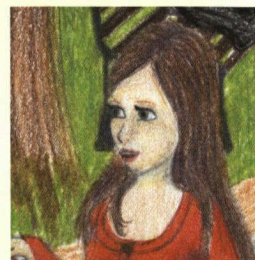
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Available from the Library of Congress in braille for visually handicapped readers. Call 800-424-8567 to request the braille edition

Stone Soup is printed on recycled paper

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*Stone Soup* (ISSN 0094 579X) is published six times a year by the Children's Art Foundation, 765 Cedar Street, Suite 201, Santa Cruz, CA 95060. Phone: 800-447-4569. It is published bimonthly in January/February, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, and November/December. Volume 36, Number 4. Copyright © 2008 by the Children's Art Foundation. All rights reserved. Reproduction of the whole or any part of the contents without written permission is prohibited. *Stone Soup* is mailed to members of the Children's Art Foundation. Eighty percent of the membership fee is designated for subscription to *Stone Soup*. In the United States, a one-year membership costs \$37, two years \$60, three years \$82. Canada add \$6 per year for postage; other countries add \$12 per year for postage. Please remit in U.S. funds only. Send SUBMISSIONS, SUBSCRIPTIONS, and ADDRESS CHANGES to: *Stone Soup*, P.O. Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Stone Soup*, P.O. Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063. Periodical postage paid at Santa Cruz, CA and additional offices. Printed in Canada.

# Stone Soup

*The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists*

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



Jessie Moore, 12

## Contributors' Guidelines

*Stone Soup* welcomes submissions from young people through age 13. For our complete guidelines, please visit our Web site: [stonesoup.com](http://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:** Anna Welch, of Hancock, New Hampshire, enjoys drawing and painting, especially mythical creatures, nature, and animals. Her work won second place in the New Hampshire Reading Rainbow Young Writers and Illustrators Contest. Watch for more of Anna's work in future issues of *Stone Soup*.



# The Mailbox



LBF, 9

I must confess that though many other authors and artists have caught my eyes and amazed me through the years that I've waited, hardly patient, for my next copy of *Stone Soup*, I have to dedicate an entire paragraph to the awe-inspiring Anton Dymtchenko. Each time I get my hands on a new copy of this beautiful, creative magazine, I flip through to see if any of his drawings are inside before I start reading. Anton's drawings are always detailed and incredibly colorful, and his skilled use of shadow brings his art to life. Thanks, Anton—I love seeing your beautiful artwork!

**LILLIAN FISHMAN, 13**

*Weston, Massachusetts*

Every other month when I open my mailbox and find a *Stone Soup* there, it is like getting a special gift. I have enjoyed so many of the stories and illustrations that it would be impossible to mention them all. Two of my favorite authors are Rosalie Stoner and Annakai Hayakawa Geshlider. I really like the way they both write. I also really like the way that Rosalie carefully researches her historical stories. Some of my favorite illustrators are Sofia deGraff-Ford, Alicia Zanoni, Ashley Burke, C.J. Green, and Karina Jivkova. And Anton Dymtchenko does such a terrific job of using light and shadow in his art that I am always striving to do the same with my own illustrations.

**WILLIAM GWALTNEY, 12**

*Englewood, Colorado*

*Eight of William's stories have appeared in Stone Soup. His latest is on page 33 of this issue.*

I suppose the best story I have ever read coming from your magazine was "Saturdays," by Sophie Stid [May/June 2007]. Elsa is such a character, observant, fairy-like and knowing. The poetry of this writing is always kept in rhythm. It makes Elsa such a full person. For me, the family is really alive. Even though Elsa is make-believe, I feel a strong connection with her, as though she were real. The illustrations are awesome too. Just looking at Elsa sitting there by the dining room window makes me feel as if it was real. Elsa's home looks as welcoming as she is, and I love that. I chomp down on the deliciously warm cookies as Elsa does, and hear Clara's grand notes on the piano. Tall, lanky Heidi is great also, a real character I, too, am able to love. Like Elsa, I myself think Saturdays better than all the other days of the week. As I read it, all reality was in a blur around me. It was only Elsa, only Saturdays.

**ELIE LEVINE, 9**

*New York, New York*

Let me start with the basics. *Stone Soup* is great and amazing. Everyone who contributes to the magazine is a talented person. Specifically William Gwaltney is my role model. His stories always have a good plot and good descriptions. Even though his illustrations aren't as good as some, they're amazing and do a good job of conveying the story. Keep up the good work and never stop writing and illustrating, William!

**PERRIN STEIN, 12**

*Newton, Massachusetts*

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

**Note to our readers:** Send us your letters! We are especially interested in detailed comments about specific stories, poems, book reviews, and illustrations. We'd also like to receive anecdotes (150 words or less) about interesting experiences you want to share with our readers. Send letters to The Mailbox, Stone Soup, P.O. Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063. Include your name, age, address, and phone number.





*The beach isn't all seashells, sand, and water. It's a whole world...*



# A Breath of Fresh Air

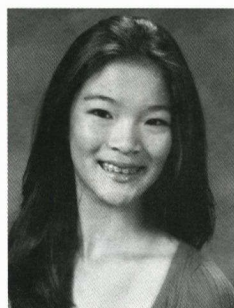
By Katharine Pong

Illustrated by Claire Zager

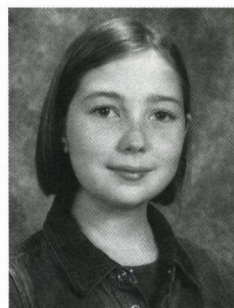
WHEN I GRABBED my sweatshirt and started running out of the house, there was no rational reason for it. I wasn't sure where I was going or why I was going there. I just needed somewhere to escape to. I felt so out of place in my house. What I was so sick and tired of, I wasn't sure. All I knew was that if I stayed at home any longer, my heart would burst and the jelly of me would spill all over the creamy porcelain kitchen tile.

Running can make you feel like you're not even in your own skin. You're not stuck in a body, your mind is free to go wherever it wants to visit. My legs kept moving, moving, moving, and my destination was like the leaky faucet in the guest room bathroom that you never think about: lost in the tangle of thoughts that infest minds. Actually, I didn't care where I was running to. The wind brushing at my face was soothing, and as my legs moved in a rhythmical motion I could feel my feet pushing off the ground with every step. As I ran, I closed my eyes and let my feet absorb everything that surrounded me. There was welcoming, cake-batter-like ground, lumpy and soft, that made my feet dance a *shhp shhp shhp* dance. Then there was the *thud thud thud* of my sneakers on cold asphalt, the yellow brick road of city people.

*Pebble Beach: Welcome!* The sign surprised me because my house was eleven miles away from the beach. Slowing to a walk, I kicked off my shoes and carelessly left them in a pile by a piece of driftwood.



Katharine Pong, 12  
Burlingame, California



Claire Zager, 12  
San Francisco, California

Along the seashore, I observed all of my surroundings. The beach was an incredible place. The ocean had always been stunning to me, because it's always there. No matter what's happening in the human world, you can count on the salty seawater tickling the shore to be there.

Little holes in the path I strolled gave a preview of the crab life beneath all of the caked sand. I had always wondered how the creatures breathed down under the ground. Did they get claustrophobic?

Were there oysters on the seashore? My little sister Leah had always wanted a pearl in its shell. Since I was in a pondering mood, I let my mind wonder and wander. Didn't the grains of sand that came before a pearl could be made hurt the oysters? Wouldn't it be like a permanent itch? The oysters couldn't do anything about it. If I were an oyster I would just want that grain of sand out of my shell. Out of my life. But if I couldn't get it out, what would I do? I would... try to make the best out of it. Maybe that's what a pearl really is. A

result of patience, endurance, and finally, a beautiful, smooth treasure.

I had never really become conscious of the fact that the beach's beauty wasn't all in the view. The beach isn't all seashells, sand, and water. It's a whole world, from seaweed cartwheeling onto the shore, to the symphony of seagulls' shrieks. And, like so many other things, it has meaning behind it. The ocean's steadfast trustworthiness and an oyster's patience, labor, and finally triumph were examples of what could happen in my life. Next time my sister clung to me like a wet swimsuit, I wouldn't shrug her off like usual. I would listen to her and help her feel less insecure, even if she was irritating. I'd make the little things in life become my grains of sand, and I'd turn them into pearls.

A day at the beach, exposed to nature's examples of patience and dependability, had eroded all my frustration at city life away, and with a fresh perspective about my world, I was ready to go home. ❁





# Phoebe

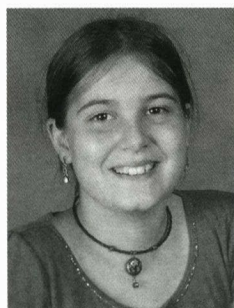
By **Erin Cadora**

*Illustrated by the author*

IT WAS A QUAIN little backyard, not much, but cozy, a haven for many strays. With pretty, plump azalea bushes to dash into, and a soft, ivy-covered ground to sleep on, a homeless kitty could spend a few comfortable nights there. Of course, it was never a permanent home of any stray, but there was one who was different.

She was not quite full-grown, but not a kitten either. Her stomach was as white and fluffy as a cloud, but her tail, back, and the top of her head were a thunderstorm gray. She had petite paws and innocent features. Her face consisted of glittering, clever, but frightened eyes and an adorable little pink nose that almost sparkled in the sunlight. She had obviously had a previous home, because there was a silver bell attached to her neck by a red velvet strap. Unfortunately, her previous owner had most likely abused her; she was petrified of humans and always had that anxious look in her eyes.

She had certainly taken quite a shine to that garden, and had seemed to settle there, but she took care not to venture near the crusted old brownstone that towered above her. Little did she know, the woman who lived in that house was interested in her, she was curious about the cat that lived in her yard. She also took pity on the poor thing; she was scared the kitty might starve. Every time the cat tried to sneak up on a bird or squirrel, her bell would jingle, scaring the critter away, and leaving her hungry. She was beginning to grow slim and slightly weak. The woman thought the cat was adorable, but didn't even con-



Erin Cadora, 10  
Brooklyn, New York



*She was not quite full grown, but not a kitten either*

sider taking her in. She still hadn't gotten over the recent loss of her pet cat that was very dear to her, Robert. He had been a unique cat, playful and mischievous, but all the more lovable. She still wanted to do something for the young kitty, so she decided that she would try to take her bell

off. She stepped gingerly into the yard, trying not to make too much noise. But the second the cat caught a glimpse of the woman, she darted behind a tree, not wanting anything to do with people.

The woman was determined to get that cat something to eat, and she had an idea



for the next day. When she got home from work, she carelessly tossed her bag aside, eager to help the sweet young cat. She grabbed a paper plate and poured some cat food on it. Again, she stepped outside as gingerly as possible, but the cat sprung into the azaleas. From the fragments of world visible from in-between the dense bushes, the cat saw the woman put something down on the ground and walk back into the house. The cat was puzzled. Why would the woman put down a white disc with little brown circles? she thought. Intrigued, she slinked out of her hiding place and over to the unknown object. She sniffed, and a wonderful scent (in her opinion) erupted from the plate. She inhaled deeper and deeper until she was scarfing down the food. She knew the meal was from the woman, and she assumed she was kind, but felt she couldn't trust humans yet; ugly flashes of her old life still remained in her mind.

The woman's interest in the cat had turned to a love for her. She had fed her and watched her in a motherly fashion for a couple weeks, and was almost sure

she could welcome the beautiful creature into her home. But sorrowful memories of poor Robert's death still lurked in her mind, and she didn't know if she could handle taking in another cat. As she debated with herself, she practiced her routine of pouring some cat food onto a plate and toptoeing outside.

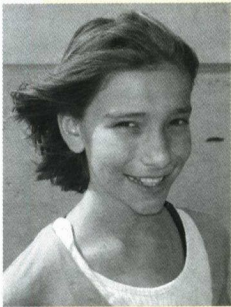
The cat cleansed her paws with her rough little tongue as she, too, thought about whether or not she would like to live with the woman. After the woman had given her several meals, feelings of affection for her food supplier had grown. She stopped, alert, with her ears perked up as the woman stepped outside to give her food, but she did not run away. The two maintained eye contact right until the minute the woman walked into her home, but didn't close the door. The cat looked at the food, then at the awaiting open door, and listlessly but surely walked into the house.

Thirteen years later, a plump, aged, affectionate cat named Phoebe purrs relentlessly as she nuzzles the sleeping daughter of the woman who took her in. ❀



# Cape Cod Bay Tide

*By* Sophie Anne Ruehr



Sophie Anne Ruehr, 11  
Brookline, Massachusetts

Our suspicion grows  
as the tide rises.  
The path is gone  
along with the beach,  
blocking our way.  
The marsh has disappeared,  
the sand a new brown,  
the sky a pale gray.  
Ice chunks linger  
in the ever flowing waters.  
The bird cries are far out on the bay  
where the ice banks end,  
where open water lies.  
Jump from island to island,  
making sure not to get splashed  
by the freezing salt water.  
Our dog runs out onto the icebergs,  
and then comes shivering back  
to our heels.



The cold wind blows  
and seems to push the tide in.  
The trunks of the pines  
touch the bank,  
inches away from the sea.  
The sun hides,  
and the hills seem to grow  
with the shadows.  
The eyes of little crabs  
come from holes along the beach,  
and scurry to higher ground.  
This is high tide.



*"You should really do this, Al. It would be good for you"*



# Big Dreams for Number Seven

By Emma Dudley

Illustrated by Daria Lugina

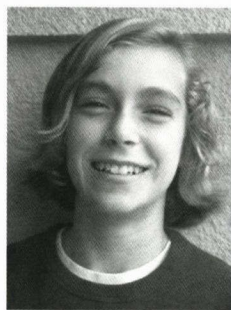
WHEN ALICIA WOKE she first thought she was in heaven. Indeed, everything around her was white: the sheets, the curtains, the furnishings. She sat up in bed and instantly felt a shot of pain course through her knee. She lay back down and stared at the ceiling. Then it came back to her: it had been the fourth quarter with thirty seconds to go and Alicia's basketball team, the Bulls, were in the lead by one point against the Devil Rays in the championship game. The recipe for disaster. Alicia had been shoving with the other team's center in the low post when the shot went up from the point guard. She vaguely remembered jumping up against the center for the rebound... and then the other girl had hooked her knee and Alicia had collapsed to the floor. The last thing she remembered was her coach's worried face above her. And thinking that she had just got her game high record: forty-two points.

A doctor came in. "You took a nasty spill there. A ripped tendon in your knee. We've done the surgery."

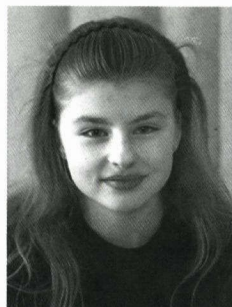
"How long will it take to get better?" said Alicia, feeling dread seep through her chest.

"About a year," said the doctor, "just for it to heal, of course. After that you'll have to finish physical therapy. You won't be able to play next season."

Alicia blinked. Next year she would be a senior. Next year was the year she could get a scholarship to Duke, her dream school. Next year was supposed to be her year to be the best of the best and show it to the world. She was already the best forward on



Emma Dudley, 12  
Berkeley, California



Daria Lugina, 11  
Northboro, Massachusetts

her team. And now she was going to miss her one dream she had had since she was eight years old.

"No basketball," she repeated.

"I'm afraid so. It's a bad tear."

Alicia sat back. That was all she could take in for now. She wondered if the Bulls had won the championship.

**A**LICIA'S MOTHER and father drove her home and helped her up the stairs of their house. She was still getting used to the crutches she had been given. Alicia then sat in a chair across from her parents. Alicia's family was not poor but they were not wealthy. She knew that her parents had wanted nothing more than for their basketball star to get a sports scholarship to one of the best schools in the nation.

"There it goes," Alicia said.

"There goes what?" Alicia's mother asked, looking sad.

"My opportunity to get a scholarship."

Alicia knew that her parents would try to make it sound like it didn't really matter. But she knew better than that. It was her father who had first told her about scholarships in sports and taught her how to play basketball.

"Alicia, you know that's not the only dream in the world. There are other things that matter. Like academics."

There it was. Her father was trying to put a good face on things. Her parents stood up and went into the kitchen.

Alicia hobbled upstairs and collapsed onto her bed. She couldn't deal with the fact that she would probably not play

any college basketball. Or make it to the WNBA. Just then the phone rang. Alicia picked it up and saw on her caller ID that it was her coach.

"Hi, Alicia. I thought you'd want to know who won the game," he said.

"Yeah, I do! Did we win?" Alicia crossed her fingers again, anxiously awaiting his answer.

"The Bulls won, Alicia. And I hope you know that we couldn't have done it without you. The Devil Rays couldn't get another shot off."

Alicia let out a relieved breath. But then again, she felt the same as she had before. What was the point if she couldn't play next year? "That's great," she managed to say. "Thank you."

"You know that there were scouts at that game. Forty-two points must have looked pretty promising to them, don't you think? How's your knee, Alicia?"

"I can't play next year."

"Your family told me. But today I saw this brochure for basketball summer camps for girls. They're looking for coaches. Sounds like just the thing you could do while still healing. I'll drop it off if you want."

Alicia said halfheartedly that it sounded great and then said goodbye. She then lay down on her bed again and fell into a dreamless sleep.

**W**HEN ALICIA woke up she found the basketball camp brochure on her bedside table. She went downstairs to call Emily King, one of her teammates.



Alicia needed to talk to someone. Emily said that she'd come over. When Emily came into Alicia's room she saw the camp pamphlet.

"This looks really fun," she said. "If Coach had recommended me I wouldn't hesitate! You should really do this, Al. It would be good for you."

"I can't even play next season," Alicia said. "How am I supposed to wrangle a bunch of grade-school girls?"

"Come on, Al." Emily raised her eyebrows. "When we were in fourth grade you were the one who taught me how to play basketball."

"I still don't know," said Alicia.

"Well I do. Sign up for it, and if you change your mind I'll do it for you."

After Emily left, Alicia thought about the summer camp. Both her coach and Emily were right. It would be good for her to share her talent with others, even if she couldn't use it for herself. It might be fun, anyway, teaching her favorite sport to little girls.


**I**T WAS NOW late in June and the first session of the All-Star Girls Basketball Camp was beginning that day. When she arrived at the gym and saw all the little girls she was surprised to realize that for

the first time since she had injured her leg she felt happy. She became good friends with all of the girls she coached.

At night she had long conversations with Emily on the phone. Emily said she thought Alicia shouldn't give up on her dream and to keep trying. Alicia found that she agreed. One day, after everyone had gone home, even the coaches, Alicia put on her old basketball shoes and shorts. Then she threw her old jersey on over her baggy white T-shirt. Then she picked up a basketball from the rack and threw her crutches down next to her shoes and sweatpants. Alicia then felt the pain, but she ignored it. She started slowly dribbling down court, with a huge limp.

Emily had dropped by to talk to Alicia. When she saw her dribbling down the court she stepped into the gym to see what would happen next.

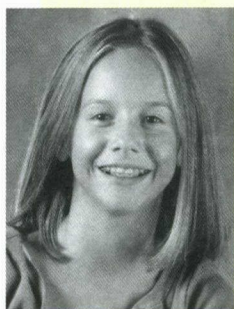
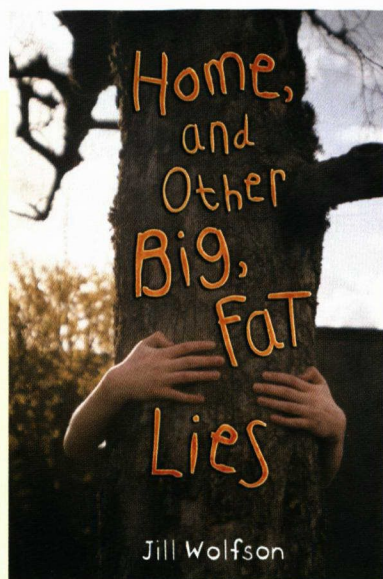
Alicia was now at the three-point line, slowly inching her way towards the basket. Her eyes were squinted up with pain. She finally stood in front of the hoop and shot the ball up in a beautiful arc. The ball swished through the net. Emily slowly started clapping and shouted, "Forty-four points for Alicia Peterson!"

Alicia just smiled with tears pouring down her face. 

# Book Review

By Taylor Megan Potasky

*Home, and Other Big, Fat Lies* by Jill Wolfson;  
Henry Holt and Company: New York, 2006;  
\$16.95



Taylor Megan Potasky, 11  
Holyoke, Massachusetts

**T**HIS STORY BEGINS when the great and mighty “Termite” gets sent to her twelfth foster home. People call Whitney Termite because she is hyper and small for her age. Whitney has always lived in the city, but this time she is off to go live in the woods. Whitney can tell you a lot about foster parents, but not much about trees. She thinks she will never find a place where she belongs, or a family who loves her. As a reader, at this point I was trying to imagine what it would be like, as an eleven-year-old, to have no mom, dad or even a home. When I read this section of the book, it made me feel bad for Whitney, because she always had to move from foster home to foster home. She was constantly experiencing different things and a lot of changes. This would be very hard for any eleven-year-old, especially for someone who doesn’t have a family to love her.

When Whitney gets to her destination, a place in the middle of nowhere called Forest Glen, she soon discovers all the wonderful animals and trees. When she arrives at her new house there is a boy a little older than she is. Whitney wants to talk to the boy, but when she tries to get to know him he seems very shy. He won’t talk to her very much. Soon, Whitney finds out that the boy goes to her school and that his name is Striker.



Reading this part of the book, I thought that something special was going to happen between Striker and Whitney.

When Whitney goes to her new school for the first time, she meets her science teacher, Mr. Cantor. Mr. Cantor is really nice to Whitney. Whitney realizes she doesn't know much about the woods. She asks Mr. Cantor about them. Mr. Cantor thinks it would be fun and educational to have a club about nature for kids like Whitney. When the club meets, all the kids decide that they want to do a year-round project. Mr. Cantor thinks it would be a great idea to adopt a highway. When Whitney and all her friends picked up the highway it inspired me and made me feel happy to know other kids feel the way I feel about pollution and littering. My sister and I always pick up the side of our road when people litter too much. We come back with wagons full to the brim with litter. It makes me feel bad to think about littering because the people who are littering are risking the lives of all different kinds of plants and animals.

My favorite part of the book is the part where Whitney goes into the woods for the first time one day after school. She is amazed at what she sees. She is especially surprised by a really big tree that has all sorts of voodooist things around it, like candles and wind chimes. Whitney wonders who could have done this. She ends up finding out this is Striker's favorite tree, which he climbs often and spends lots of time in. I can relate to a person who would put voodoo things around a tree and love being in a tree. I live on a farm in the woods, and when I'm in the woods I feel relaxed.

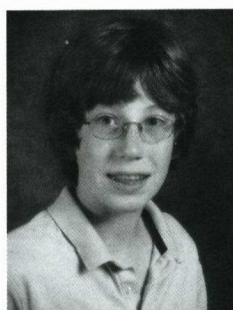
I would highly recommend this book to anyone who knows someone who is a foster child, someone who loves nature like me or anyone who likes a story about love (in this case love for family and nature). This book taught me that foster kids aren't different from other kids and that nature is really important to everyone.



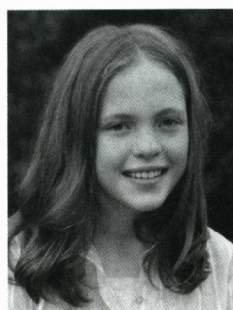
# A Light Shining Out of the Darkness

By Jonathan Morris

*Illustrated by* Anna Welch



Jonathan Morris, 12  
Grantham, New Hampshire



Anna Welch, 13  
Hancock, New Hampshire

ORION PADDED ALONG through the dense undergrowth, his leather-coated feet silent as death's cruel hand as they compressed the damp soil. His mother, Selena's, words, clear and simple as a raindrop, echoed through his head, "I need you to fill this basket with ashberries." Orion nodded, forgetting that his mother's words were only a reverie.

His elf eyes scanned the bushes, searching for the berries with the gray pallor. These berries were essential if he was to hold up his mother's reputation as the best healer in the Dawn Woods. Ashberries, his mother had only used them once in his presence. It was also the only time she had ever failed.

His father had gone out to hunt, a simple hunt out in the fairly safe Dawn Woods. No one knew that a young male dragon had made a home in a nearby cave where the deer had often lodged for the night. For all that was known, as his father had gone alone, he had entered the cave hoping to find the deer, there was something quite different waiting for him. The dragon had appeared in front of him out of nowhere like a specter and unleashed a ball of burning hatred of all creatures at him and his horse.

Hours later his horse limped up to the small cottage and began to neigh. This awoke Selena who came warily outside to a gruesome sight. The beautiful white horse was filthy with ash and soot, its right flank was a different sight. A curling pattern of blood arched down its right flank. Wasn't white the color of life, not death? Dragging behind it was Orion's father holding on only





*Letting out a sigh of relief, he began to fill his basket*

by his foot, caught in a stirrup. His body was completely disfigured by oozing burns.

Selena had heaved him inside and into the room where she treated her patients. Orion had been out behind the house at the well, getting a drink of water. He was pouring the water into a cup when he saw his mother dragging the body through

the house. "Who's that, Mommy?" he had drowsily questioned, staring at the unrecognizable body.

He had just barely been able to make out his mother's words, her voice was choked with tears, "Your father." It took a moment for his child's mind to register Selena's words but when it did the effect was dev-



astating for him. He broke down in silent tears at first; giving way to sobbing on the floor and wishing his father had heeded his words, begging him to stay home.


Selena had made a mush out of ashberries, the only known cure to dragonfire burns, and she began pasting her husband's figure with the bland-colored paste. Her tears were flowing freely now and were dripping on the raw-skinned body. Orion's father had then regained consciousness and the pain had driven him back into dreamful infinity. After hours of grief, the sun had risen, birds were tweeting, bugs were buzzing, but in the little operating room there was no life. The man's family came in full of hope, only to be sent back to the abject misery that had lasted the nearly endless night. Orion's father had been buried in the woods, as was custom, for elves' home is the forest and to be sent off in any other way or buried in any other location would be obscene. There had been no one but his own family to mourn his horrible demise and Orion's home became a place of silent suffering.

Since then Selena had striven harder than ever not to let death arrive at her doorstep again. That morning it seemed that the fateful night had occurred again. A lone stranger arrived at their door in the same bedraggled condition as Orion's father had. Orion was surprised that the man was even conscious after his exhausting ordeal. He had brought the man in and Selena set to work. Selena opened the drawer labeled *Ashberries*. It was empty. In her franticness to save her husband,

Selena had ravenously used up her entire store of the rare berries. In her grief over her beloved husband's death, she had not wanted to even look at the berries again, never mind refill her stash. Anyway, what were the chances that she would have to treat someone with dragonfire burns again? Orion was sent to retrieve the final but most important ingredient to the poultice that would save the man's life.

Now he was searching as best he could to keep the stranger from having the same fate as his late father. Finally, after what seemed like years of searching compacted into about an hour, Orion found the ashberry bush. Letting out a sigh of relief, he began to fill his basket.

When the basket was overflowing with the gray spheres, he began his trek home with celerity. He scampered through the door to the house, slamming it hastily behind him, and bore his precious cargo to his waiting mother. She dismissed him to his room at once, and Selena began crushing the berries with a pestle and mortar. Orion thumped onto his bed, exhausted after his long journey, and instantly fell into a dreamless slumber.

When he awoke, he immediately remembered the stranger and hurried into the kitchen. There, sitting at the table and tightly wrapped in bandages, was the man, smiling and happily conversing with Selena, who for the first time in years was truly happy. The happiness that had hidden from sight for years in the midst of her sadness was finally showing itself, a light shining out of the darkness. 



# The Redwing Blackbird Sings

By Nina Wilson

In the morning  
I wake up  
At six-fifteen  
Much too early  
Hair is combed  
Teeth are brushed  
Breakfast is had  
One day being like another  
But  
On my way to the bus stop  
A redwing blackbird sings  
Doo-Dee-OO!  
Time stops  
But my feet still move  
It is March  
The air has a fresh rainy smell  
The redwing blackbird  
Sings again  
Doo-Dee-OO!  
I am at the bus stop  
The bus pulls up  
And time starts again



Nina Wilson, 10  
Grayslake, Illinois



*Of course, everywhere Badger went, mischief was involved*



# Badger Will Be Badger

By Bailey Bergmann

Illustrated by Abigail Stephens

**N**OBODY KNEW WHY we kept him. To tell the truth, I didn't exactly know, either.

We named him Badger for the brown-gold stripe that ran down his muzzle, and later on, we would say that it fit his personality, too. He wasn't exactly an aggressive dog. He was, however, a jumpy, biting, rebellious dog. But he was beautiful and cute, and we loved him. Mom once commented, "It's a good thing he's so adorable..." She'd always trail off, whether to add emphasis or to search for words, I don't know.

Badger was a male version of Miss Congeniality and probably the most well-loved mutt among the people at the puppy training class, too, for Badger was Prince Charming in fur. He was always happy around new people, always wagging his tail, always squirming for attention.

That personality was his downfall. Sure, he was cute. My younger sister Sierra was always shrieking, "Isn't he *adorable?!!*"

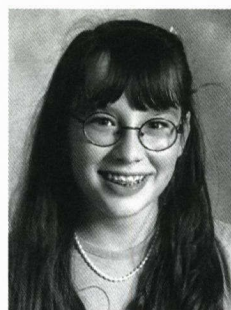
The youngest, Clarabelle, would always chime in, "I know; he's the cutest."

I, however, demanded discipline and respect. They demanded cuteness. He was good at that. Good, I mean, at looking cute with pillows in mouth, Kleenexes shredded all around him, and towels slobbered upon.

At first, we thought it was just puppy energy. But as he grew into a big, strong, naughty golden retriever, we quickly changed our thinking. Wherever Badger roamed, trouble was to follow. Anyone who had to live with Badger knew that...



Bailey Bergmann, 12  
Shawano, Wisconsin



Abigail Stephens, 12  
Amman, Jordan

I CLAMPED THE hand brake back, and wiped a hand across my brow. It was late March, but the snow was all melted away, the temperature in the high eighties, and the river unfrozen. As I rested on my bike, I gazed at the crystal-blue water through the thick sumacs. Thin layers of ice still covered some of the Wolf River, but most of it was thawed. Ducks, geese, and sea gulls rested on the remaining ice, making a loud racket that was a mixture of honks, croaks, and shrieks sounding like women screaming.

"Amazing," I breathed. I had lived in Wisconsin for several years, but I was always dazzled by the river in springtime. I got a good view, too. My house was situated about fifty feet from Stumpy Bay's bank, and the bank was surrounded by sumac trees and long, itchy grass. Stumpy Bay was where we got our water supply (filtered, of course), but it was off-limits for swimming. Stumpy Bay was named for the deadheads, algae, quicksand, muskies, and snapping turtles that lurked in the murky water. In the spring, it was clear and blue, like the rest of the river, but in the summer, it was covered in a film of green algae, which looked disgusting. It also smelled horrible, especially on muggy days.

"Come on, Lu!" Sierra was calling, speeding down the gravel driveway with Badger at her wheels. "Beat you to the road!"

"Just try!" I shouted back, digging my feet into the pedals. I easily caught up with Sierra, and we both nearly collided

with Clarabelle and Badger, who were coming back. Sierra and I turned around carefully and then raced back, laughing lightheartedly. Badger had dropped back to my spokes, for he was becoming winded from the exercise. Of course, everywhere Badger went, mischief was involved. That's why my skirt was muddied by Badger's dirty lips and my leg had a scratch from some stray teeth.

"Git, dog!" I yelled, thoroughly sick of having to discipline this unintelligent mutt. Badger looked at me daringly with his hazel-brown eyes. He moved closer again, and I was tempted to run straight into him and teach him a lesson, but refrained. A bite on my leg was the reward for my mercy.

"Badger!" I braked so suddenly that I nearly flipped off. I threw my bike down and lunged toward the puppy, whose tail was wagging in merriment. "No, don't give me that 'I don't care' look!" I hissed. Badger danced on his legs, eyes twinkling. My anger boiled even more at his nonchalant attitude. "Do you want to go up? Do you want a spanking? Do I have to drag you to your kennel?"

Badger wasn't the least bit subdued, and immediately turned around and ran off to Sierra and Clarabelle, who were slurping down Gatorade. Tears stung my eyes as I picked up my bike and slung my helmet onto the handle.

Why care? I thought. He doesn't. I pour my life into him, trying to make him happy, and all he does is attack me. Why? Why does he prefer Sierra over me,



when I am the one who regulates what he does and does not do? I was jealous, hot, and upset. I loved Badger; where was the love I deserved? I had read story after story about how dogs were the most loyal friends a girl could have, but where did Badger fit into this category? I had had so many high hopes of him becoming a therapy dog, or an agility competitor, but he couldn't even sit for two seconds.

I walked my bike back up the driveway, Sierra and Clarabelle both asking what was wrong. I ignored them—and Badger—and parked my bike in the garage sullenly.

If he hates me, I decided, then I will hate him too. I glanced at Badger one more time, then turned and left him, slipping into the house and slamming the door shut.

I stomped up to my room and threw myself onto my bed, glaring at the design on my pillowcase. I looked up above my bed where a framed photograph of Badger and me hung. Daddy had snapped it when Badger first came home; when he was arm-sized, cuddly soft, and oh-so-sweet. I was smiling—my cheek buried into the top of his fuzzy, honey-colored head, my left arm wrapped around his chubby chest, the other supporting his bottom. His eyes were squinted, nothing like the expressive eyes Badger now had. His tongue wasn't hanging out sideways or cracked in a Badger-grin. He was perfect. Too perfect. I angrily reached up and yanked it down, intending to toss it in my drawer to forget forever. As it was clenched in my hands,

however, I couldn't keep my gaze off that dog. He was the picture of innocence, of calmness, of a well-behaved dog, but that's not what captivated me. I couldn't quite grasp it at first, but then it hit me. This wasn't my baby—it wasn't Badger. Badger was Badger—no human intervention could change that. What would this house be like without Badger? What would it be like with a perfect doll dog?

I struggled with the answer, trying to push away the truth. It would be terrible, I finally admitted. There would be no Badger to knock you down with his oversized sticks; no Badger to see that your arm was never not scratched; no Badger to bark nonstop whenever he wanted out of his kennel. Without Badger, who would eat the rest of the cat's breakfast? Who would alter your wardrobe to rags? Who would you baby talk to whenever you entered the house?

My anger and unforgiveness melted like ice on the river. Badger was just like me—he needed to be molded, directed and disciplined, and most importantly, he needed to be loved. A wave of guilt passed over me, and I leaned my head against the picture frame, thinking hard. Even if Badger never did lie still for three seconds, he was still Badger. Badger would remain Badger. But he was a puppy, a baby. He was not yet brilliant, nor was he fully trained. His main goal in life was to please himself, but perhaps later on he would realize that the hands that fed him and petted him, and the hearts that loved him were the ones to be gratified. Badger





*My anger and unforgiveness melted like ice on the river*



had a big heart. It was easy for me to see that. The hyper-dog would transition into one of unconditional loyalty. Badger *did* love me. He was just expressing it in his own way.

With a new resolve and joyfulness, I skipped downstairs and opened the door. Badger, his teeth clamped on a red jump rope, looked my way. I laughed, my heart overflowing with love.

"Want to go on a walk, Beegie?" I called, using his pet name. We started down the driveway, Badger trotting in his horse-like way in front, Sierra and Clarabelle following. I had a mind to go right, towards the main field and away from Stumpy Bay, since Badger did sometimes splash in water. But I found myself going left. I trusted Badger's sensibility, and even though he loved wading, swimming was not his style.

There was a break in the sumacs, and to the right, only a few trees grew here and there, so you could see the river clearly. A shallow area with only ankle-deep water washed over it, and rolled downward into the bay. I could see the bottom of it, but it ended in dark water; I couldn't see how deep it was over there, though I guessed over my head. Badger, being the water dog that he was, investigated the area promptly. We girls stayed on dry land, I scrutinizing his every move. I tensed as he came to the edge of the swamped-over mud patch and his forelegs sank deep into the water. Clarabelle, Sierra and I began jumping up and down, hollering in enticing voices for Badger to come back. We knew he wasn't

in any immediate danger; he could swim (even if he didn't like to), and he was a smart dog, even with all his other faults. Sure enough, Badger wheeled around, looking pleased and refreshed, though he smelled terrible.

"Let's go back," I suggested. I didn't want to take any more chances with Mr. Badger.

"OK," Sierra agreed, picking up on my motherly instinct. "Come here, Beegie, Beegie, Beegie!"

We headed towards the driveway again, Badger galloping after us. Then, before I knew what was happening, Badger was streaking back towards the water.

My eyes widened in horror. "No, Badger!" I yelled, chasing after him, ignoring the sting of the grass on my bare legs and the mud that was splashing onto my flip-flops. Just like that, without a splash, my dog, my baby, disappeared into the water—simply vanished, rings of water rippling out from the place he had descended.

He was probably underwater for just a second, but time seemed to have frozen. I didn't know if anyone else said anything or moved, but I only heard my own voice screaming, "Badger!!" It was a high-pitched scream of horrific desperation. It couldn't have been my own.

Something drove me on in this time-frozen moment. I unconsciously propelled towards the water, my bare feet were now wet, my flip-flops caught in the muck. I stumbled over a tree root and unintentionally dove into Stumpy Bay, bobbing

up with a gasp, thrashing around for dear life. It all happened in a few seconds, and Badger was soon up, too, his head held high above the water, struggling against the current. I could feel his legs pumping out the rhythm of my heart.

He was trying to come towards me, but the current was pulling him away.

"Good boy, over here." My voice was chopped from the chattering of my teeth. Badger's eyes rolled towards land.

"No, baby, look at me!" Tears were welling up, but they were blocking my view; I could not cry. "Badger!" I had to go under again. I emerged, my hair blocking my face. I tried to tread water with one hand as I cleared my face with the other, but it was difficult. I could not touch bottom; I didn't even know where bottom was. My sisters were screaming something, but I wasn't listening. My attention was focused on Badger, terrified, helpless. It cut to my heart, giving me a boost of power.

"I'm coming, Badger!" I gurgled as loudly as I could. He was an arm's length away from me. I stretched. My hand was instantly cut by one of his sharp claws. I barely felt the pain; it was numb anyway. My stiff fingers wrapped around his collar, and I pulled him close, being careful to avoid his claws. Now that I had him, I needed to get to land. The current was sweeping us towards the ice, and that meant we were heading for the river's middle, which meant fewer things to grab hold of, for only Stumpy Bay had things sticking up in the water. My eyes opened at this. Stumps! Of course! They didn't

call Stumpy Bay *Stumpy Bay* for nothing. But where could I grab hold of one?

"Grab it, Lucy!" It was Sierra's faint voice shouting out this fateful command. Grab what? I looked around, not loosening my grip on Badger, and saw what Sierra was screaming about. It was a small stump, protruding out of the water. It looked thick enough, but the diameter was definitely not wide enough for both Badger and me. Still, it would keep us afloat. I grabbed, and my fingers touched the slimy, slippery wood. Gasping, I gripped it as my lifeline. I went into a sitting position, and helped Badger put his front legs on mine, so he could rest. We were both breathing heavily, thankful for the rest. I turned and called to Sierra, "Go get help!"

Sierra had already sent Clarabelle, but now she, too, turned and fled.

I tried to concentrate on holding the stump and lifting up Badger, but my legs were growing weak, as were my arms, and I was shivering beyond belief. Badger huddled up against me. I clung to his collar. If we were to float away again, we were going together. Minutes passed. No one appeared. Then my ears picked up the wail of sirens. Help was coming!

An ambulance, followed by a dive crew, pulled up onto our street. Mom was standing with Clarabelle and Sierra next to her. It was hard to see exactly what was going on, because Badger and I were a good way from shore.

"Help's coming, Badger," I whispered.

The inflatable boat cut into the cold,





*I turned and called to Sierra, "Go get help!"*

murky water, heading towards us. Badger began to whimper pitifully, but the only sound I made was the chattering of my teeth. Someone lifted me up, but I couldn't tell who. I didn't really look. I was soon out, wrapped in a thick blanket with Badger at my feet, bundled in one equally warm.

I fell into unconsciousness before I reached shore, and when I woke, I was

in a prim, white hospital room. Mom and Daddy were looking at me anxiously, and I sat up, just as anxious.

"Lie down, sweetie," Mom crooned.

"Badger. Where's Badger?"

"Do you think a bit of water would hurt that dog?" Daddy teased.

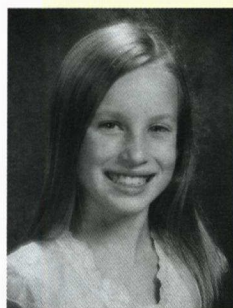
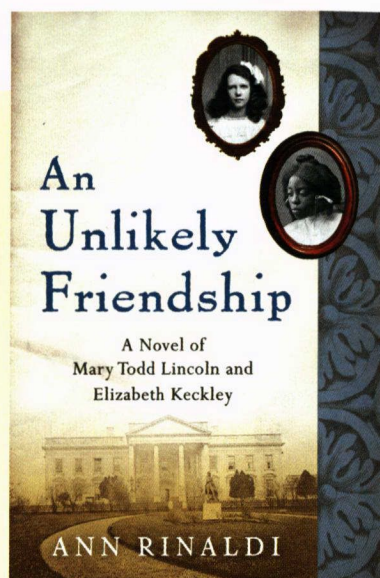
A grin spread across my pale face. Of course not. After all, Badger *was* Badger. ❀



# Book Review

By Ashley Johnson

*An Unlikely Friendship* by Ann Rinaldi; Harcourt Children's Books: New York, 2007; \$17



Ashley Johnson, 10  
West Linn, Oregon

IMAGINE A LONELY white girl, raised in a wealthy and prestigious family, who lived her dream of becoming First Lady in the White House. Now, imagine a black girl, born into slavery, mistreated and overworked, who in the end was able to purchase her own freedom. Two women, different in skin color and social status, yet similar in their persistence to achieve their goals. In the novel *An Unlikely Friendship*, author Ann Rinaldi describes the unlikely yet unique friendship between two historical women, Mary Todd Lincoln and Elizabeth Keckley.

In the beginning, I was excited how Ann Rinaldi immediately drew me into the historical happenings that occurred on Friday, April 14, 1865. The Civil War was finally over, which brought an end to slavery. Suddenly, President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated. Mary, emotional and shocked about her husband's sudden death, only desired to see Elizabeth (Lizzy) because she was the only one who understood her. From here, the author takes us back into the past to the childhoods of Mary and Lizzy, beginning with Mary's upbringing.

Mary experienced a troubled childhood. Her mother passed away when she was young and she was raised by a selfish and cruel stepmother. Mary always put up a fight with her stepmother's orders and was persistent in her beliefs. Even though



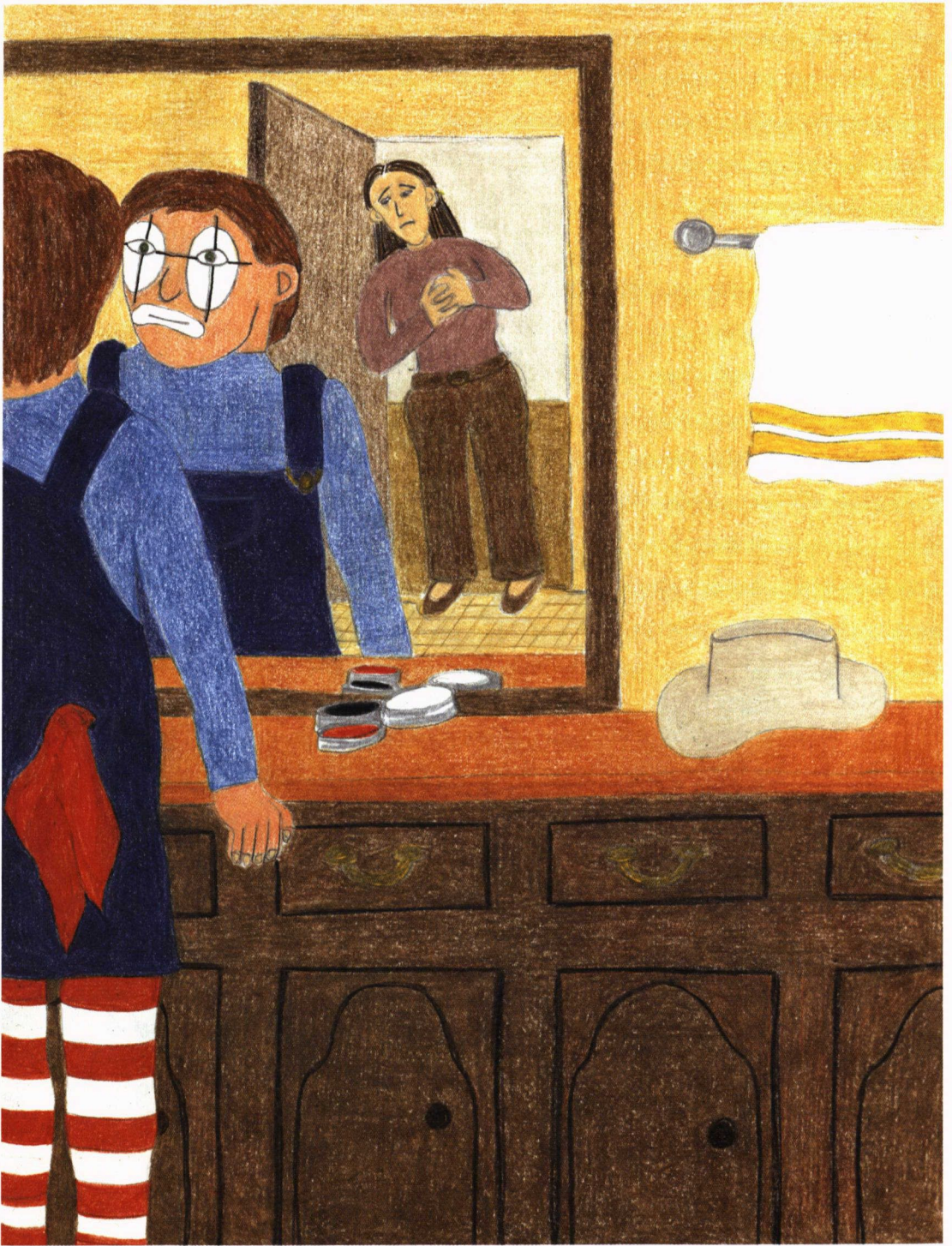
her life was unhappy, Mary continued to believe in herself and never gave up on her dream of living in the White House. There was one person in Mary's life that meant the world to her. Her name was Mammy Sally, a black slave and the family's cook. When Mary experienced hardships, Mammy Sally was always there for her, like a mother. They developed a trusting relationship that Mary always cherished. In my life, I am fortunate to have two grandmas that I consider my Mammy Sallys, who care for me like Mammy Sally cared for Mary.

Lizzy, born into slavery, was raised by her black mother on a southern plantation which was owned by her white father. She learned how to sew at age four. Lizzy wished for the day that she could sew for a grand lady. Later, she experienced the hardships that go along with being a female slave. This section of the story reminded me of when my class studied slavery. I became furious while reading about the intense mistreatment of Lizzy, like whippings and other abuse. Through Lizzy's hardships, she never gave up and she became a great seamstress.

Later, after setting up her own business, Lizzy became Mary's seamstress in the White House. Mary continued to live a difficult life because she dealt with depression, the death of her two sons, and the struggles of being First Lady. She looked to Lizzy for support and Lizzy was always there for her. Mary considered Lizzy her Mammy Sally. This unlikely friendship makes me think of the pen-pal friendship I have with a girl from Zambia, Africa. The friendship is special to me even though we live different lives and communicate with each other from one side of the world to the other.

I would highly recommend this book to those who enjoy reading historical fiction. Ann Rinaldi presented the information so well that I have a strong understanding of the characters' lives. She really allowed me to feel the amazing relationship between Mary Todd Lincoln and Elizabeth Keckley. ❁





*"But Mom," I tell her, "I don't really have a choice. This job chose me, remember?"*



# Bullfighter

By William Gwaltney

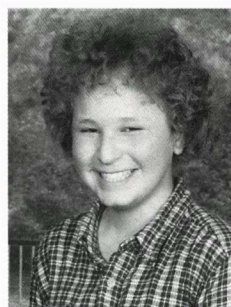
*Illustrated by the author*

IT'S A HOT, dry August evening on the Oklahoma panhandle. The sun is going down and the crickets have begun to sing. There's no breeze at all tonight, nothing to ease the blistering heat.

I am twenty-three years old. I finished four years of college before I realized that a banker's life was not for me. Right after graduation, I joined the PRCA, the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association, and haven't looked back since. I've traveled across the country riding bulls... big, mean, strong bulls. But through it all, what I've really wanted is a different kind of rodeo job. Tonight I'm going to make my dreams a reality. I'll be one of two clowns at a local rodeo. Unlike circus clowns, rodeo clowns have a dangerous job. We're not just there to make the crowd laugh. During the bull riding, we become bullfighters, distracting the bulls to help keep the riders safe.

I slip into my costume. I pull on overalls that have had the legs cut out so they resemble a skirt. I need to be able to move freely and turn fast. I pull on tights underneath to cover my legs. They are bright and colorful to attract the bulls' attention. I'll wear a cowboy hat but that goes on later. I begin to paint my face. It takes longer than anything else. As I am finishing up my makeup, I look into the mirror. I see my mother enter the room behind me.

Her lips tremble and her tense white fists are pressed together. Her face is pale and ghost-like. Her eyes plead with me. "Matthew," she says, "please listen to me. Don't do this, honey. I



William Gwaltney, 12  
Englewood, Colorado

love you too much to see you put yourself in so much danger."

"But Mom," I tell her, "I don't really have a choice. This job chose me, remember?" The look in her eyes tells me that she remembers all too well. I walk across the room and wrap my arms around her. I tell her that I am listening to her. That I really do understand her concerns. Then I tell her again that I really *must* do this. Not only for myself, but for Charlie too.

Just then, my father limps through the door to join us. Dad used to fight bulls. He'll understand. He smiles at me. Then he puts one hand on my shoulder and says, "All right, Matthew... ready to go?"

"Yeah, Pop," I tell him. I turn once more to my frightened mother and say, "All right, Mom, we're going now. Wish me luck." She pulls me close. She hugs me hard. She starts to cry. I tell her once again not to worry.

"Please be careful," she says. I'm not sure if she's crying for Charlie or for me. But then, I don't guess it really matters. I tell Dad that he can drive. We climb up into our rickety old Ford pickup. It is so badly rusted that its original color cannot be determined. My father bought it brand new in 1950. He says that it was black then, but you couldn't tell that by looking at it today.

It only takes ten minutes to drive to the local rodeo grounds. When we arrive, almost every seat is filled. The rodeo began over an hour ago, but bull riding is always the last event of the night. The bulls wait impatiently in small pens behind an iron

gate. There are Brahmas and Brahma crosses, Charolais, and scrappy Mexican fighting bulls. Their breed doesn't matter. All that matters is that they buck. There is only one given in bull riding. Those bulls will try to kick, trample and crush anything that's in their way, including me. I slide out of the truck and turn to my dad. "Now remember," he says "I'll be back to pick you up at ten o'clock. I'm going home so that I can be with your mother. If you need anything, call the house. Knock 'em dead, cowboy," he says to me, and then he is gone.

I spot my partner for tonight, another clown named Slim, and go to say hello. Along the way I pass cowboys who all greet me happily. Most don't know my name but they're glad to see me anyway. One look at my clothes tells them that I am a bullfighter. I will risk my life to grant them a few seconds of safety. They know that I will at least give them the chance to get up off the ground and run to the fence, avoiding danger.

In the chutes, they're getting the first bulls ready. A bull rope is slung around each bull's belly, and is snugged up right behind their front legs. One end of the rope is called the tail. It gets passed through a loop on the other end of the rope and then the rope is tightened. The cowboys then wrap the remainder of the tail around their hands to secure their grip. A sticky substance called rosin is applied to the tail to keep it from slipping. If you listen hard, you can hear the occasional clanging of cowbells as the bulls mill around in the



chute. The bells are hung on the bull rope for weight. When a cowboy lets go of the rope, this weight will cause the rope to fall harmlessly to the ground, so that no one has to remove it from an angry bull. Later, when the bulls are turned loose and are bucking wildly, you can hear the cowbells easily. Of course, by then everyone is too distracted to even notice it.

The sun has gone down completely now as I walk out into the dusty arena. The first bull rider is preparing to climb aboard his bull. I secure my position, not too far away from the chute but not so close that I'll be in the way when it opens. I balance lightly on both feet, hands on my knees, ready to move fast in any direction. The lights glare above me. I am sweating but I can't tell if it's from the hot lights, the warm night, or the fear of knowing that in just a few seconds, a raging bull will be coming my way.

Suddenly, the gate swings open and out comes the first bull, bucking and angry. He would like nothing better than to kill the man on his back. The bull comes straight toward me, jumping and spinning. For a moment I am frozen in place. Everything seems to be moving in slow motion and all sounds are muffled. And then, all at once, I snap back to reality. I jump to the side just as the bull plunges by. I dodge and weave, staying close enough to the bull so that I can help the rider if he gets in trouble, but far enough away that the bull can't easily gore me. Just how long can eight seconds last? It seems as though I've been evading this bull forever.

Finally, the buzzer sounds. The good news is that this cowboy's time is up. Freeing his hand from the bull rope, the rider jumps off and that's my cue. As the bull turns to chase the cowboy, I jump between him and his intended prey. My brightly colored costume catches his eye and encourages him to come after me instead. I let the bull chase me, taunting him all the way, until I'm sure that the cowboy has gotten to the fence and out of harm's way. Then I change my position and run right past the bull's nose. He bellows in fury but can't change his own trajectory quickly enough. By the time he manages to change direction to come after me, I've put a good ten yards between us. Of course, for such a big animal with such a long stride, ten yards is nothing. I make it to the fence right before he does. As I jump up on the top rail, the bull slams into the fence. The fence shudders and so do I.

Suddenly I realize something. Slim is still in the arena. Caught up in what was going on, I never even noticed. Now that I am safe, however, I turn to see the bull charging my partner. He is far enough out toward the center of the arena that he doesn't have a chance of making it to the fence. I have to help him. I leap off the fence and sprint toward the bull for the second time. He wasn't very happy with me the first time, so I'm guessing he'll be even angrier now. The bull is closing in on Slim as I come up behind him. Grabbing the hat off of my head, I use it to smack him on the hindquarters. He slides to a stop and turns toward me, hatred in his

eyes. Breathing heavily, he stands perfectly still and doesn't move. I dance forward, slap him again, and once more jump out of the way. He swings his heavy head, bellowing loudly, and begins to chase me. But now the fence is too far away for me to get to it as well. There's only one thing left to do.

The clown barrel is sitting in the middle of the arena. It's been called an island of safety by those in the rodeo business. I'm about to find out just how safe it really is. I run toward it and vault inside. I barely have time to curl into a ball and grab the handholds before the bull is upon me. Bam! Two new dents from the bull's mighty horns appear in the barrel right in front of my face. Then my barrel is spinning madly through the air. When it hits the ground again, it bounces several times before rolling across the arena. When it finally stops moving I'm dizzy and a little sick to my stomach.

As soon as my ears stop ringing, I shoot out of the barrel and make a mad dash to the fence. I grab the rails and climb for all I'm worth, not even daring to look behind me. I don't even notice when I reach the top of the fence. I attempt to keep climbing and fall over the top and onto the other side. I land on my back and look up at the stars. I hear the crowd. Half of the people are cheering, the other half are laughing. The laughing ones must think that this was all just a part of my act.

Two faces appear above me... Slim and the rodeo manager. "Thanks, Matthew," Slim tells me, "I reckon you saved my life."

"Any time," I say, panting. They get me

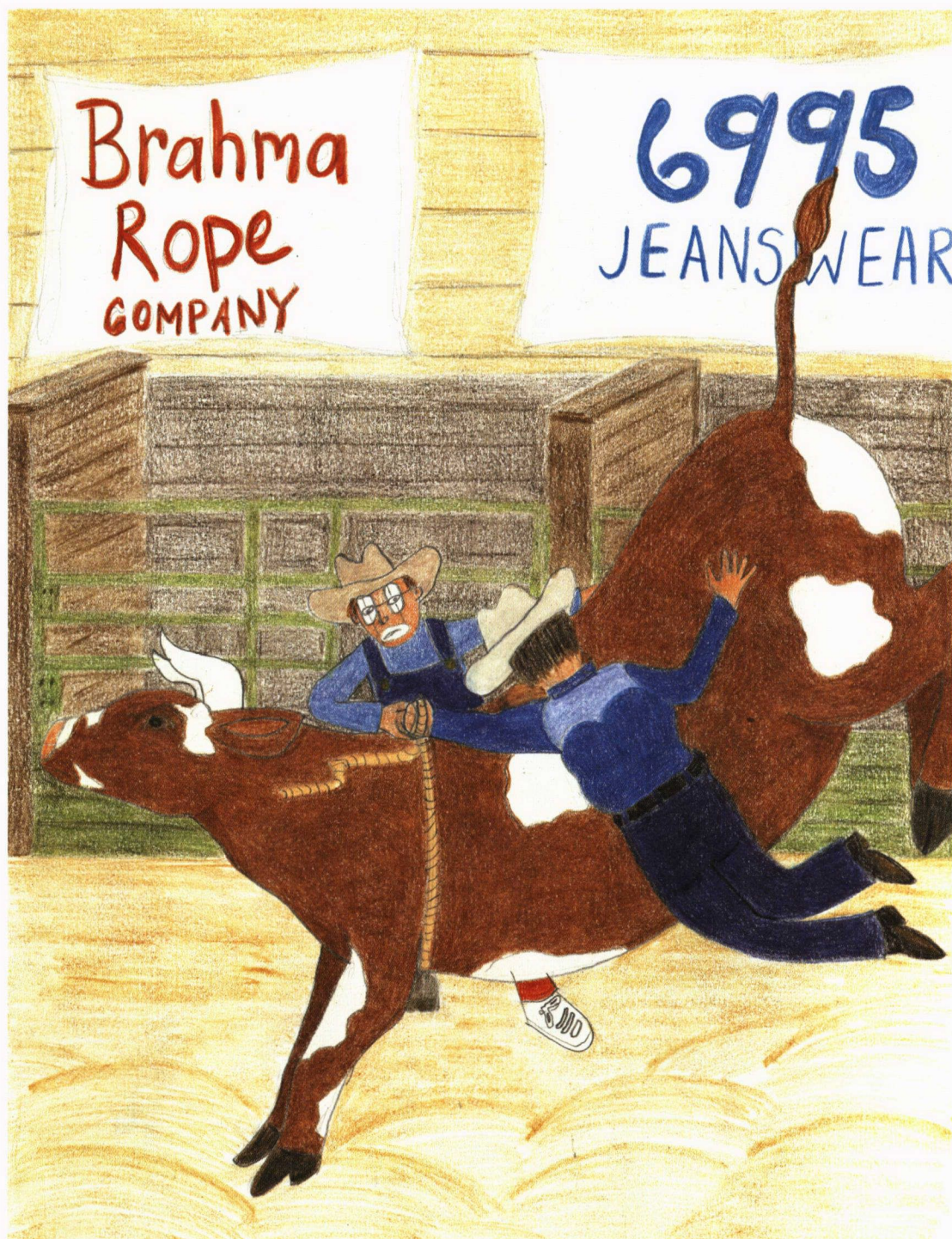
up off the ground and help me back up onto the fence. Two men on horseback help to herd the bull out through the gate. The arena is clear once again. Slim and I climb down off the fence. The next bull to go is fighting so hard in the chute that his rider can't safely get on him. Tension in the air is thick. It's time for a little comic relief.

I walk out to where the crowd can see me and to where I can interact with the announcer. At the top of my lungs I yell to the announcer, "What do you call a cow that don't give no milk?"

The announcer sits and ponders this for a moment. Then he says over the microphone, "I don't know. What do you call a cow that doesn't give any milk?"

I cup my hands around my mouth and yell, "A milk dud!" The crowd chuckles, but that's not enough for me. I want more of a response. I look over toward the chutes. The cowboy is still not on that bull. Now the bull is lying down and three cowboys are trying to get him back on his feet. I have a little extra time. I call to the announcer again. "Where is every cow's dream home?" I ask. He once again repeats the question back to me over the microphone so that the audience can hear. The answer, of course, is "Moo York." The crowd laughs out loud. I look toward the chutes again. It looks like there's time for one last joke. "What do you call a cow that's just had a calf?" I ask. Once again the announcer appears stumped. As I yell out, "Decaffeinated!" the audience roars with laughter. The ten-





*Running up on the bull's right, I leap up and reach across to the man on the other side*



sion is broken, and just in time too.

Now the bull is up and the rider is on him. I head back toward the chutes. I need to be ready when this bull comes out. After all, this bull, Bullet, is the reason I am here tonight. The gate swings open. Bullet doesn't move. He stands there, his eyes glaring, his sides heaving. I dance in front of him, hoping he'll charge out. He still doesn't move. Dancing in closer, I take off my hat and slap him across the muzzle, then dance back out of the way. When I was a kid watching Saturday morning cartoons, an enraged bull would narrow his eyes while steam poured from his nose. As I look at Bullet, I think I know where the animators got their ideas. Bullet suddenly explodes out of the chute, plunging straight toward me before he remembers the man on his back. In midair he begins to buck and twist and kick, trying to unseat his rider. I have never seen a more powerful bull in my life.

It happens so quickly that I don't even see it coming. One second the rider is on the bull, and the next he's been bucked off. I spot the danger immediately, the cowboy is hung up. His hand is caught, the bull rope still wrapped tightly around his clenched fist. The bull continues to buck, the man bouncing against his left side like a rag doll. I have to do something. Running up on the bull's right, I leap up and reach across to the man on the other side. Grabbing his arm with one of my hands, I use my other hand to untangle the rope. Suddenly the rope is

loose, and the cowboy's hand is free. I let go of his arm and he lands on his feet. He runs toward the fence and climbs to safety. Slim and I are right behind him. For today at least, Bullet has lost.

By the time my dad comes to pick me up, the rodeo is over. A few people are still around, tending to the stock, but the arena lights are off and the crowds have all gone home. I'm tired but satisfied. "How did it go?" Dad asks.

"Pretty well," I tell him, "especially for my first time."

"Let's go home," he says. "You must be tired." As we walk to the truck, I ask him if we can stop and visit Charlie on the way home. "Sure," he says, "I've been wanting to see him too."

The cemetery is dark when we arrive but I've been here so often I have no trouble finding my way. I stop at a grave marked Charles Prue, 1984-2005. Bullet killed Charlie a year ago today, and there's been an empty space in our hearts ever since. "Hi Charlie," I mutter. "Whadda ya think? I kept Bullet from claiming another life today. I figure that if I work enough rodeos and do my job well, you won't have many other bull riders to keep you company up there."

Dad comes up behind me. "I miss him too," he says, "we all do. He would have been real proud of you tonight." We stand together in silence for a few minutes before heading back to the truck. And as we drive away, I'm already thinking about my next bull.

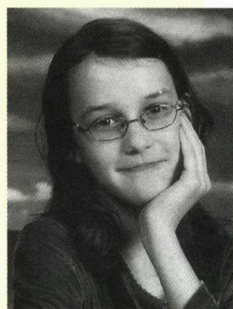




# There Was a Blizzard

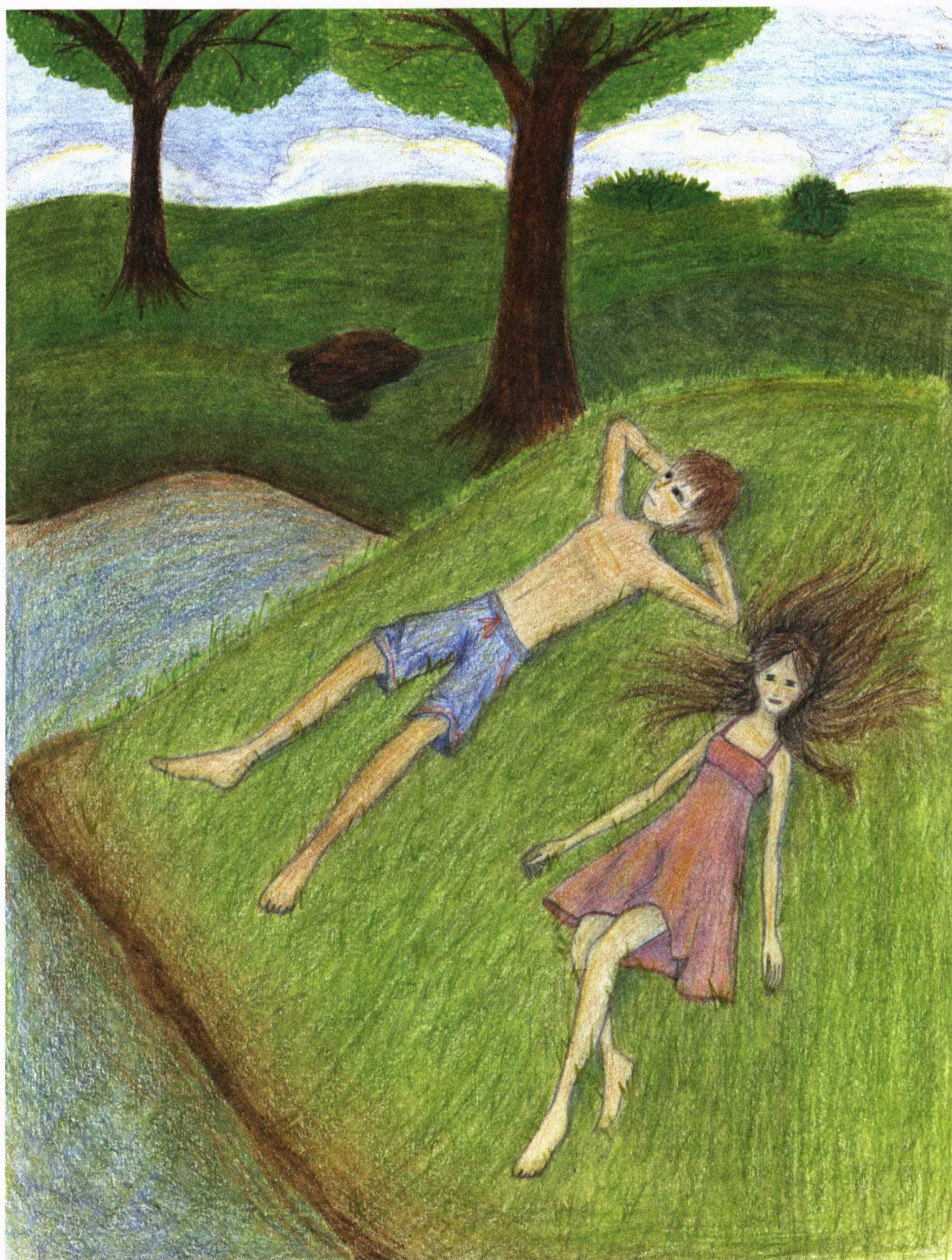
By Alice Provost Simmons

Blizzard  
white snow  
twirling  
dancing like  
another  
kind of ballerina.  
I see a girl  
she is white—  
seeing something  
I can't see—  
a white hawk  
circling



Alice Provost Simmons, 10  
Barrington, Rhode Island





*As we watched the clouds roll past, Will and I talked over the last couple of years*



# Cedar Wood and Rose

By Halle Kershisnik

Illustrated by Ashley Whitesides

“IT’S TOO COLD.”

“Aw, come on, Trinity, just jump!”

I glowered at Will from the riverbank. “It’s *too cold*.”

He considered me for a minute, then, holding his hands up in a sign of surrender, he walked out of the water, dripping, and sighed in resignation. I crossed my arms, feeling very proud of myself. I had finally out-willed him. *Ha ha!* I thought, *You have no control over me now, Will Brydan!* I was just about to voice this thought when he suddenly ran at me, scooped me up, and carried me kicking and screaming back into the lake, sundress and all. When he was up to his waist, and I was almost touching the water, he stopped.

“Ready?” he asked, grinning down at me roguishly.

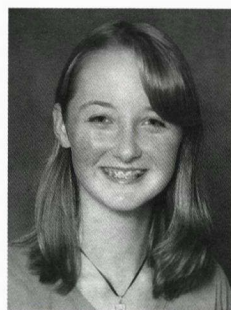
I crossed my arms and glared at him, quite aware that I was helpless while he was holding me up like this.

“You’re horrible,” I said with finality. This said, he promptly dropped me into the sun-warmed water.

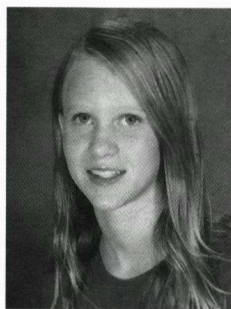
I came up sputtering, and immediately started swimming out to catch him. He was already out in the middle of our tiny lake. Laughing, he called out, “Hurry up, slowpoke! I haven’t got all day!”

I quickened my pace, and before long, I caught up to him.

“Now, aren’t you glad you came into the water?” he asked impishly. I opened my mouth to say something biting, but he had dunked me into the water again, and was off laughing. I came up with revenge written all over my face. This friend of mine need-



Halle Kershisnik, 12  
Olympia, Washington



Ashley Whitesides, 13  
Grand Junction, Colorado

ed to be taken down a notch.

I lunged after him with a yell, and caught him around the neck. After sufficiently punishing him for his ungentlemanly deeds by way of shoving him underwater, I relaxed and just floated there with my arms still around his neck.

"You're an idiot, did you know that?" I said to him after a little time had passed. He just smiled.

"Yeah, I know."

After about an hour in the water, we retired to the shore and lay down in the grass, the sun shining over us. I spread my dark brown hair out so that it would dry faster, and turned my green eyes to the sky.

As we watched the clouds roll past, Will and I talked over the last couple of years. He was only half a year older than me, but was about a foot taller and a lot stronger. I had been living here for as long as I could remember, and Will had always been in the picture someplace or another. He and his family lived across the lake from us, but he had always seemed like a brother to me. His mother home-schooled us both, so we never had much homework or the like to worry about for most of our lives. We had grown up in utopia.

"Look at those clouds, they look like a dragon with a big fat knight running after it," Will said.

"Yeah... Do you remember when we went to that medieval masquerade in Riverside?" I asked.

"Yep, that hoop skirt you had on was atrocious."

"It was not," I answered, slapping him

on the shoulder good-humoredly. "You were just mad that day because your mother made you wear that ridiculous suit."

"Any self-respecting seven-year-old would have been throwing fits," he countered.

"OK, fine," I said. After a few minutes of companionable silence, a question popped into my mind.

"Do you ever feel really *old* when we talk like this?"

"Like what?"

"Well, so... *nostalgic*."

Will turned onto his side to look at me, his coffee-colored hair glinting in the sun, and fixed his brown, almost black eyes on me. Assuming a very serious expression, and pursing his lips a little, he said, "Well now, I can't say I have." He stopped and winked at me.

"That was the best imitation of Uncle Marty yet," I told to him, smiling.

Laughing, he rolled onto his back again, paused, and turned his head back in my direction.

"You really think so? I thought I made him seem too old."

"Nope, that was as close to perfect as you've gotten yet."

WHILE WALKING home, we talked, joked, and laughed as only eleven-year-olds can. When we got there, our parents were in the living room discussing something in hushed voices.

"Yep, there's no way around it. The company transferred us both, and we



can't seem to get them to rethink their decision."

"But the children will be devastated."

"I know, Ellen," Will's dad said, "but it's unavoidable."

"Do you *have* to move as far as Minnesota, though?" my mother asked.

"Yes, I..."

Will's father trailed off as he saw us standing in the door. We were paralyzed, horrified at what we heard.

"Where will *we* be moving?" I whispered, almost breathless from the tension. I was almost afraid to ask the question, and I dreaded the answer the minute the question came out of my mouth.

"South Carolina."

I FOUND WILL skipping stones on the lake. When he had run out of the house after our parents told us we were moving to different states, I hadn't been able to keep up with him.

We didn't say anything to each other; we just stood side by side, with Will mechanically swinging his arm to throw the stones across the water. I watched as each of the stones skipped across the smooth, glassy surface of the lake. He never missed a beat. It had taken him a long time to learn how to do that.

As I stood there, I reflected on all the golden years I had spent here. Everywhere I looked, I could name off something that had happened in that very spot.

Each of the stones made their journey: skip... skip... skip... sink. Skip... skip... sink. Skip... skip... skip... sink. After

some time had lapsed, he picked up a big, jagged-edged stone and hurled it into the water with a huge splash, disrupting the almost perfectly pristine water with its resulting wave. He sank to the ground and buried his head in his hands. I looked down and watched him, then I sat down next to him.

"It's gonna be hard leaving this place," I said quietly, watching for Will's reaction.

"Why do we have to leave?" he exploded. "Everybody's happy. You and I are getting a perfectly fine education. Gosh dang it, there's no reason to leave!"

Silence. We both stared out into the distance, an air of shared anger and sadness between us. There was nothing more to say, it had all been expressed in those five words: *there's no reason to leave...*

ABOUT MIDWAY between our two houses, hidden from most, there was a ring of old-growth cedars. You entered this ring through a gate in the trellis that bordered the inside of the circle. On that trellis were red climbing roses. Somebody who came long before us had planted the trees and made the little courtyard inside them. The circular cement bench had been overgrown with weeds, and the roses were almost choked out when Will and I had found this haven, but we had cleaned it up and restored its beauty.

Today we entered in hopes of finding a place safe from all eyes, a place where we wouldn't have to look at all the boxes piled up in our front yards. A place where

we wouldn't have to watch the movers unceremoniously pile all of our fond memories, all of our treasures, into a big moving truck.

We sat on the bench in the middle of the courtyard, facing away from the entrance. I watched as a bee drifted from flower to flower, watched as the breeze stirred the leaves of the roses. Feeling a sudden rush of affection, I leaned my head on Will's shoulder, and closed my eyes, feeling my hair swirling around my face, and wishing that we didn't have to leave.

Becoming aware of a faint pressure, I opened my eyes to find Will with his head on top of mine. I looked up and my eyes met his. He smiled an unsure, sad smile, and I felt the tears well up in my eyes. We were really leaving.

"We better go," I said, breaking the silence that had permeated the area since we had come, and also using it as an opportunity to wipe my eyes.

"Yeah."

We both got up, and Will opened the gate for me. After muttering a quiet "Thank you," I closed the gate for the last time. We paused outside, and hugged each other as tight as we could. Even though there would only be a couple states between us after we had both moved, it seemed like we were moving to different continents, different ends of the earth.

We parted, and headed in opposite directions, with the wind following me all the way home, carrying the sweet, sweet scent of cedar wood and roses.

I LOOKED AT our new house. It was two stories, but still managed to be small. Surrounded by small, compact houses just like it, it was for a small, compact family. Walking up the stairs with some of my bags, I found my room. It was a light blue, like the color the oceans are on world maps. I opened the window and looked outside. It was a lot warmer here in South Carolina than it had been in the mountains.

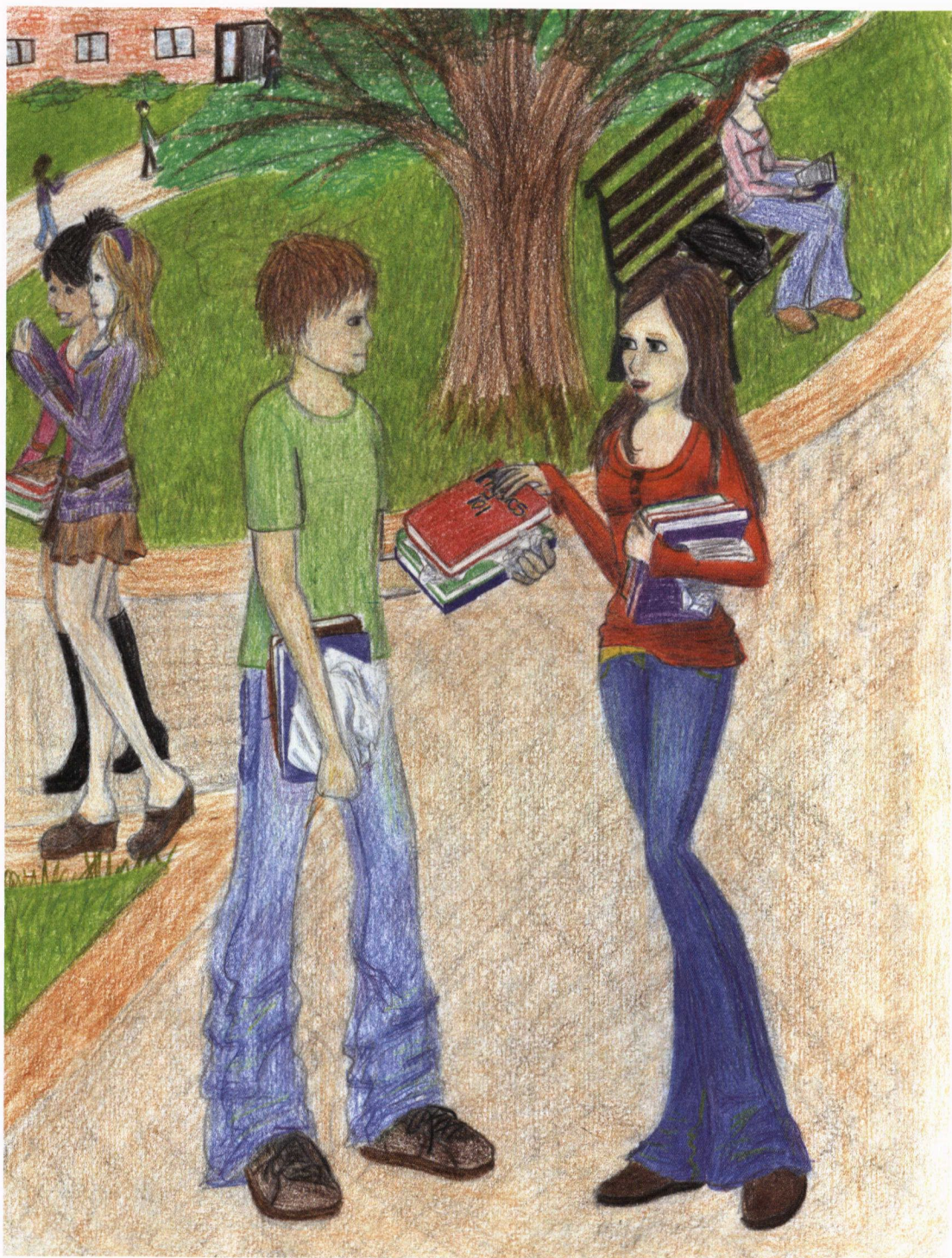
Leaving the window open, I turned back and surveyed the unordered chaos the moving inflicted.

"Well, welcome to your new home, Trinity," I muttered. I was determined to make the best I could of this place, but unfortunately, middle and high school were to prove torture despite my resolve.

I TOOK THE elevator to the third floor, walked down the hall, and stopped in front of studio apartment 316, Chicago, Illinois. Six undeniably horrible years had passed since we had moved to South Carolina, and now I was moving again. This time, though, it was just me. I was going out on my own.

I love you, college of mine, I said as I opened the door and stepped inside. It wasn't a particularly nice apartment, and it wasn't big, but I didn't need much space. My lovely college had dorms, but only some, so the school paid part of the rent for the other half of its students, who found a low-priced apartment. Of course, there was a limit to how much it would pay, but it was still help. By the end of the





*"I'm so sorry!" I said as I retrieved Physics 101, and handed it to him*



day, all of my stuff was scattered around in the various areas that I would be organizing them into.

"Better get started," I said to my furniture.

That night I slept in my own home. It felt odd to sleep somewhere other than my parents' house, but it was still comfortable. The smallness made it impossible to feel too isolated, and it also contributed to masking my lack of furniture.

"CLASS DISMISSED."

I gathered up my books and shoved them into my bag. Heading across the central plaza, I watched as all my fellow students streamed out of their classrooms and dispersed to the next class or, as in my case, to a place to sit and enjoy their free time until the next class.

Unfortunately, I wasn't watching where I was going while I was observing this, and I crashed into a tall freshman who was otherwise occupied as well. Books and papers flew everywhere, and we both stooped down to help clean up.

"I'm so sorry!" I said as I retrieved *Physics 101*, and handed it to him.

"No, no, it was really my fault, I should have been watching where I was going." Straightening up, all books restored to their owners, he stuck out his hand. "I'm Will Brydan."

I stared.

Will.

"Will! It's Trinity!" I felt like jumping up and hugging him I was so excited. What were the odds? We had moved apart, only

to find each other again on a crowded college campus in Chicago!

"Trina! I never expected to find you here! What class are you going to?"

"I don't have one right now," I answered.

"Great, same here. Have any plans?" he asked.

"Nope, I'm all free."

"Good, meet me at my dorm in twenty minutes. I'm in Trowbridge Hall, D pod," he said.

"OK, see you there!" I called over my shoulder, running towards the street my studio was on. I was perhaps as happy as I'd ever been, and all those terrible years in high school melted into oblivion.

"GREAT DORM, Will. So neat!" I said sarcastically. The windows were flung open to the Indian-summer air, and every once in a while, you'd feel the breeze blowing softly through.

"I know, I know, I didn't have time to clean up before you got here," he said, shifting all the junk he had on the table to the floor. I sat down on his bed with the books I had brought for studying, and gazed around the room.

"I'll be right back, I have to get my books," Will said. While my eyes were wandering the room, they fell on a little cedar wood chest sitting on the small dresser. It wasn't very remarkable, but I was itching to open it up and find out what was inside. I looked away, determined not to snoop in other people's stuff.



Glancing towards the door to make sure Will wasn't coming back yet, I walked cautiously over to the dresser, and opened the chest. Inside there were a couple smooth stones, a birthday hat, cedar sprigs, and some dried roses. I laughed, as I recognized them as some of the very same flowers we had had in our haven among the cedars when we were younger. The roses had lost some of their petals, and they rustled around in the bottom of the box.

Attached to the inside surface of the lid, there were some photos. One was of Will's family and his big St. Bernard dog, Champ, that he had had when we lived on the lake. Another was of Will and me

when we were about five. I was behind him with my arms around his neck, and both of us had big smiles plastered on our faces. The next two must have been friends that he had met in high school after we had moved, because I didn't recognize the people in the pictures.

"So, you found that..."

I turned around, and there was Will, standing in the doorway, smiling. He walked over, and sat down at the foot of the bed next to me, as a breeze from the open window rustled the petals in the bottom of the chest, bringing with it the slight, forgotten fragrance of cedar wood and rose.



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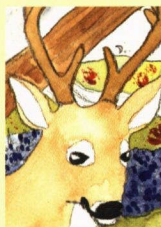
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