

Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists



"Bull Race," by Irina Tjahjana, age 12, Indonesia

WHAT HAPPENED IN ROSWELL

Was it a UFO or a weather balloon? (based on a true story)

THE DRAGON SPEAKS

Emily wishes she were back in San Francisco, until she hears Grandpa's story

Also: Illustrations by Zachary Meyer and Daria Lugina

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2008

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The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists

VOLUME 37, NUMBER 1

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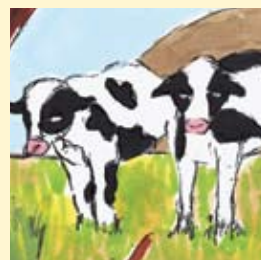
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Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists

WELCOME TO ALL OUR READERS, old and new! We've had the pleasure of publishing *Stone Soup* for over 35 years. It is our belief that, by presenting rich, heartfelt 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: "Bull Race" was loaned to *Stone Soup* by the International Child Art Foundation: www.ica.org. Every four years, in Washington, D.C., ICAF conducts an Arts Olympiad, which includes an international children's art competition. Special thanks to Ashfaq Ishaq.

The Mailbox



LBP, 9

I really like reading *Stone Soup*. There are soooo many talented kids whose writing is of excellent quality. I really like the stories by Bailey Bergmann, especially how she portrays a normal person's life in a thrilling, composed story. *Stone Soup* is a great magazine for kids.

FARAH M. KABIR, 11
Derwood, Maryland

Bailey Bergmann wrote "A Golden Dog After All" [September/October 2006], "From Terror to Triumph" [September/October 2007], and "Badger Will Be Badger" [March/April 2008].

I like all of the work in your magazines, but what I really like to read are the book reviews. Since I love to read, I also like to know what other people think about books. One issue I really liked was the May/June 2007. I liked all of the stories! I liked Analise Nurme's drawings in "What the Stars Are Made Of." She's really good! I see William Gwaltney's stories a lot, and I know why. They're really good too! Keep on going! I hope I see more of your stories!

ELENI MAHLIS-MILLER, 10
Chico, California

I think your magazine is great, a great idea, with great stories and great art, just great all around. I found it while looking for some writing competitions to enter, since I don't hear of many where I live. My nationality is Australian, but I live in China now, so it's very hard to find things to send my writing to. Anyway, I want to thank you for making *Stone Soup*. I know there are many young writers out there who appreciate it, and many more who will jump up and down with excitement when they discover it.

T. L. SOUTHEY, 13
Zhengzhou, Henan Province, China

Ever since I discovered *Stone Soup* at my school library this past fall, I thought it would be the coolest thing to write for *Stone Soup*. I had no idea that there were magazines out there written by young writers and artists! I love *Stone Soup* because it is a magazine that says to kids that it is cool to be smart, creative, and artistic.

JULIAN TUTUNCU-MACIAS, 9
New York, New York

I have enjoyed your magazine for the past five years. The stories are well written and the artwork is beautifully done. Specifically, I loved "Big Dreams for Number Seven," by Emma Dudley [March/April 2008]. I really related—I, too, was a basketball player until sidelined by a knee injury last year. It healed, but I re-injured it this year and will probably not be able to play again. Emma did an excellent job of describing how it feels for a big dream to be shattered. She also developed the character of Alicia very well, and I found myself rooting for her as she found the determination to eventually pick up the ball again. Great job, Emma—I'll look for more of your work.

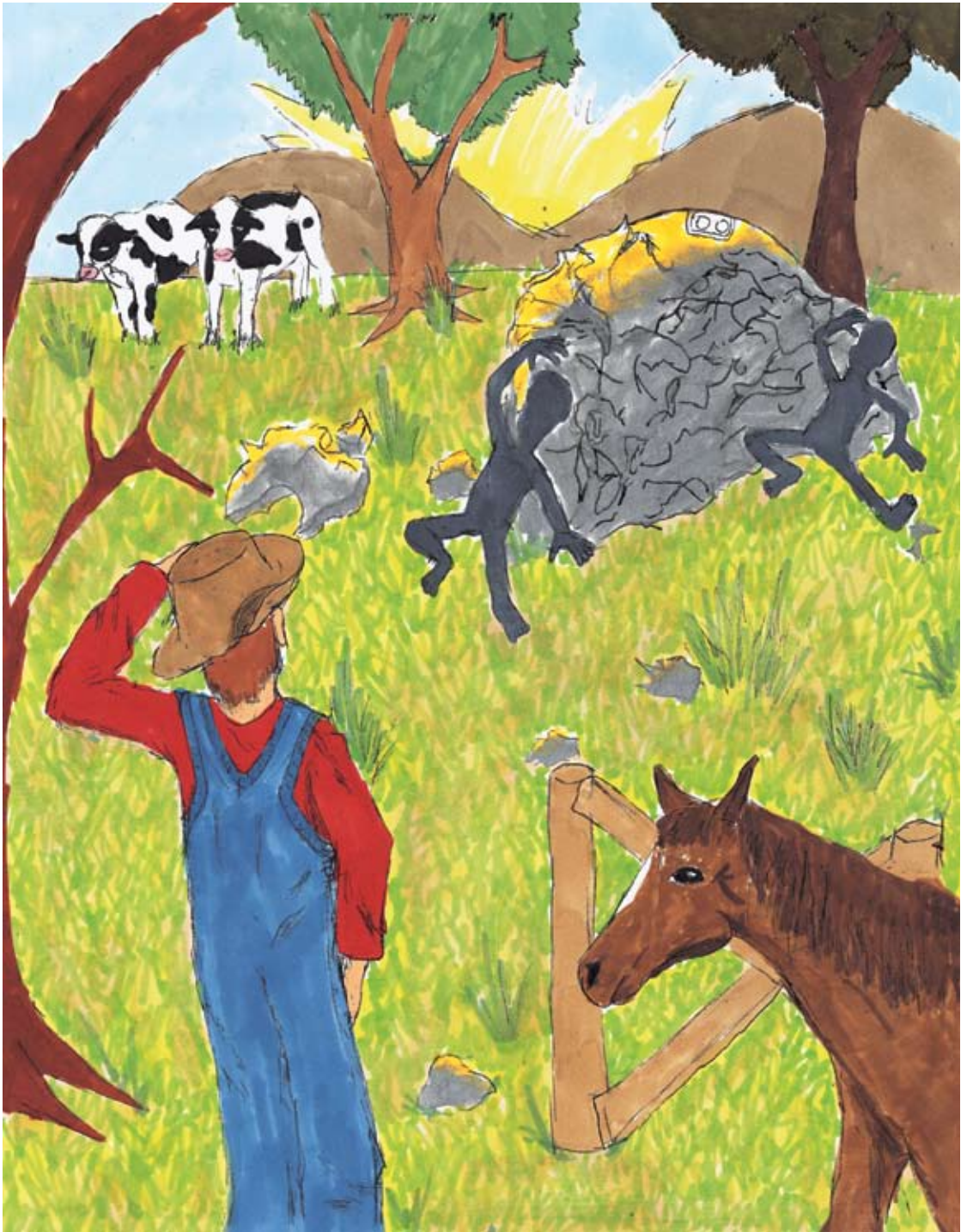
MELISSA LUTTMANN, 15
Memphis, Tennessee

I love the fact that kids can show their talent and get something out of it. I love that we kids can do something and be proud of it. Just because we're kids doesn't mean we can't spread our wings and fly! It inspires me to submit my work to your splendid magazine.

ESTHER DOLEZAL, 12
Douglasville, Georgia

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 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 sun reflecting off the object made it glow so brightly that it almost blinded him

What Happened in Roswell

By **William Gwaltney**

Illustrated by **Zachary Meyer**

JULY 7, 1947

IT WAS EARLY morning when Barry Whitestone rode out to check on his cattle. He noticed right away that something was wrong. The herd was spooked. They moved restlessly about, bunching together, shivering and bellowing, their eyes rolling in panic. Sweat colored their flanks. As Barry rode slowly through the herd, he saw something glint on the ground in front of him. He stopped, dismounted, and bent over to pick it up. It appeared to be some sort of metal. It looked a little like aluminum, finely polished, very strong yet extremely flexible... an odd thing to find in a dusty pasture. As he slipped it into his pocket, he suddenly realized that similar pieces were everywhere. Looking towards the south, he spotted a larger object, which appeared to be made of the same material. As he hurried in that direction, the sun reflecting off the object made it glow so brightly that it almost blinded him. Squinting in the sudden brightness, he saw what appeared to be two human-like forms, slumped against the object. Barry backed away and ran towards his horse. He scrambled aboard, and raced back towards the ranch... now every bit as terrified as his cattle.

IHAD A JOB at the feed store that summer, quite a feat for a boy of eleven. In the middle of the morning, when the men I worked with took their break, I'd scoot next door to Sally's Diner for a quick cup of coffee. My parents never let me drink the stuff, afraid that it would stunt my growth. But I was a work-



William Gwaltney, 13
Englewood, Colorado



Zachary Meyer, 13
Shelby Township, Michigan



"Fellas, you're never gonna believe what I got in my pasture"

ing man now, and Sally understood that. I'd sit at the counter and she'd wink at me as she poured me half a cup, never more, and made sure that I had a full pitcher of milk to mix it with. Anyways, there I was, drinking my cuppa joe, when old Barry from out at the Whitestones' place came running in. He was terribly pale, sweat poured from his brow, and he trembled all over as he took the reviving cup of coffee that Sally offered him.

He sat down at the counter, a few stools away from me. He wasn't drinking his coffee, just holding it, and his hands were

shaking so badly that it was sloshing all over. Several ranchers began calling out to him, but Barry didn't respond. In fact, he never even looked up. His eyes seemed to be focusing hard on the countertop, or on some place deep inside the counter, like he was looking through it into another world that none of us could see. When he did look up, the diner went silent. His eyes were wide and his pupils were huge, his face was tinged a sickly gray. Suddenly, Barry wasn't the only one trembling. My chest felt hot and I started to sweat, but my limbs were cold and shaky. I could

hear my pulse pounding hard in my ears.

Finally Barry said, "Fellas, you're never gonna believe what I got in my pasture."

"Whatcha got?" someone called out. "Cows?" Laughter rang out. A few of the men began to moo. Sally hushed them with a look. There weren't many men brave enough to stand up to Sally, especially when she had a hot pot of coffee in her hands.

"What I got," said Barry, "is a flyin' saucer." The entire diner went quiet. "... and I got a piece of it right here," he continued, slipping his hand inside his pocket. Just then, the door banged open, and everybody jumped.

A man in a black suit entered the diner—his dress was pretty unusual attire for these parts. He strolled over to stand behind Barry. Six other men, dressed the same way, followed him in the door. They were all big, and calm and quiet, and they all wore dark sunglasses, which made it impossible to see their eyes. Then, the first man spoke. "Mr. Whitestone? Mr. Barry Whitestone?"

"Who's askin'?" said Barry.

"Come on now, Mr. Whitestone, no one wants any trouble. Who we are is not really important," said the man. "We're from Washington. That's all you need to know. Now please, stand up. You're coming with us." You could tell that Barry wasn't really too keen on the idea. He stood slowly, looking around the diner like he was waiting for one of us to save him. But we didn't. We couldn't. It was all kind of like a dream.

I watched as the men loaded Barry

into a long black car, which then pulled away up the dusty street. I wanted to follow them. I *needed* to follow them. I ran outside and hopped on my bike. The car already had a good head start, but I was determined to catch it. I pedaled faster and faster, until the wind began to sting my face, and my feet kept slipping off the pedals. But the car just kept pulling away. By the time I lost sight of it and stopped my bike, my legs ached and my lungs were on fire. I looked around and realized that I was near the turnoff for the Whitestone place. I decided that if I couldn't catch the car, I might as well ride on out to Barry's and see what really *was* in his pasture.

As I approached the turnoff, I could see quite a commotion going on up ahead. There was a roadblock and lots of army vehicles. I recognized our sheriff, who was arguing with yet another man in a black suit. "Listen here," I heard him say, "this is a county matter and I've got jurisdiction."

The man replied, "You don't argue with Washington, mister, we've got direct authority from the president to be here."

Soldiers paced nervously back and forth, their rifles at the ready. As I pulled up, one stepped forward and stopped me. "I'm sorry son," he said, "but I can't let you pass."

"But I live right up the road," I lied. "I've got to get home or my mom will be worried."

"She won't even be home," the soldier replied. "All the people who live up this road have been evacuated to the high school gymnasium in town. You can join

her there.”

“All right,” I said, “then I guess I’d better be going.”

I pedaled slowly back to town, the whole time scheming about how I could get out to Barry’s place and have a look at his pasture. I thought about it all afternoon before I finally decided on a plan.

It was pitch dark. As I drew closer to the Whitestone place, I was shocked to see that everyone was gone. There wasn’t even a cow to be seen, just weeds and dust, and moonlight reflecting off empty ground. The G-men must have taken everything... everything! I was so angry that I kicked the ground. Dust rose up to cover me in a cloud and that’s when I saw it. I had unearthed a small shiny shard of metal. It seemed to almost glow in the moonlight. I picked it up and slipped it into my pocket.

THE NEWSPAPERS were full of stories about flying saucers and aliens from outer space. Barry came back a few days later. He was the closest thing to a celebrity our town had ever seen. “What was in your pasture?” we asked him.

“Don’t ya know, boys?” he told us. “It was just a plain old ordinary weather balloon.” But we couldn’t help noticing that Barry was driving a nice new truck.

JULY 5, 2007

I WALKED INTO Sally’s Diner and was pleased to find that the place really hadn’t changed. I sat down at the counter. An old man walked over to join me. His

face was pruny, his back was bent, and his hands shook with fine tremors. “Billy!” he said. “Is that really you?”

“Do we know each other?” I asked.

“Don’t you remember me?” he said. “It’s me, Homer Fairway.” I would never have recognized him. He looked so *old*. “How is it you look so young?” he asked. “You haven’t changed a bit.”

“I don’t know,” I replied. “Clean living, I guess.”

“Do you remember Emma Baker?” he asked me. “Your old grade-school sweetheart?” I allowed as how I did. “Well, I hate to break the news to you,” he said, “but she passed away on Monday. You and I are the only ones of our generation left. But I’ll tell you something. Do you remember old Barry Whitestone?”

“Sure I remember him,” I said. “How long has he been gone?”

“Well, that’s the thing,” said Homer, “he’s not gone at all. He’s livin’ at that nursing home just outside of town.”

“Wow,” I said, “he must be a hundred years old.”

“Actually,” said Homer, “he’ll be a hundred and nine next month.” I whistled. “He’s still sharp as a tack,” said Homer, “and still has all his hair! By golly, I wish I knew why some of you age so well, while some of us just waste away until we’re gone.”

Saying my goodbyes to Homer, I decided it couldn’t hurt to drop in on old Barry. I walked down the road to the nursing home, a distance of about a mile. When I arrived, I wasn’t even winded, not bad for

an old guy like me. I went in and asked the nurse where I could find Barry. She was an annoying little girl with a syrupy-sweet voice, big poufy hair and long painted fingernails. As she pulled the gum from her mouth and began to wrap it around her index finger, she said, "That would be Room 109, sweetie, right down the hall." Not having any family to take care of me in my old age, was this what I had to look forward to? I sure hoped not.

Barry was sitting up in bed, reading a copy of *Newsweek*. He recognized me immediately. "Billy!" he shouted, his eyes lighting up. "What are you doin' back in town? Don't tell me that your kids stuck you in this place too!"

"Actually, I don't have any kids to put me anywhere," I replied.

"Well, lucky you," said Barry. "My own kids got too old to 'take care of me' and the next thing I knew they'd stuck me in here. Nasty little crumb snatchers. You'd think I'd raised them better than that. Course they're both dead now."

"Dead?" I asked, startled. "You outlived your children?"

"Got a couple of grandkids left," he said, "but they're in their seventies and not doing so well. One actually lives down the hall, but she has Alzheimer's and doesn't remember me. The other lives in Texas. I get a card from him at Christmas sometimes."

"Say," he said, "why don't you take me to lunch? We'll go down to Sally's Diner and talk about old times."

"Will they let you out of here?" I asked.

"Sure," he said, "as long as someone signs me out."

"Wait," I said, "I walked here."

"Listen," he told me, "I can still walk. I'm the only one in this place that doesn't need a wheelchair, a walker or a cane."

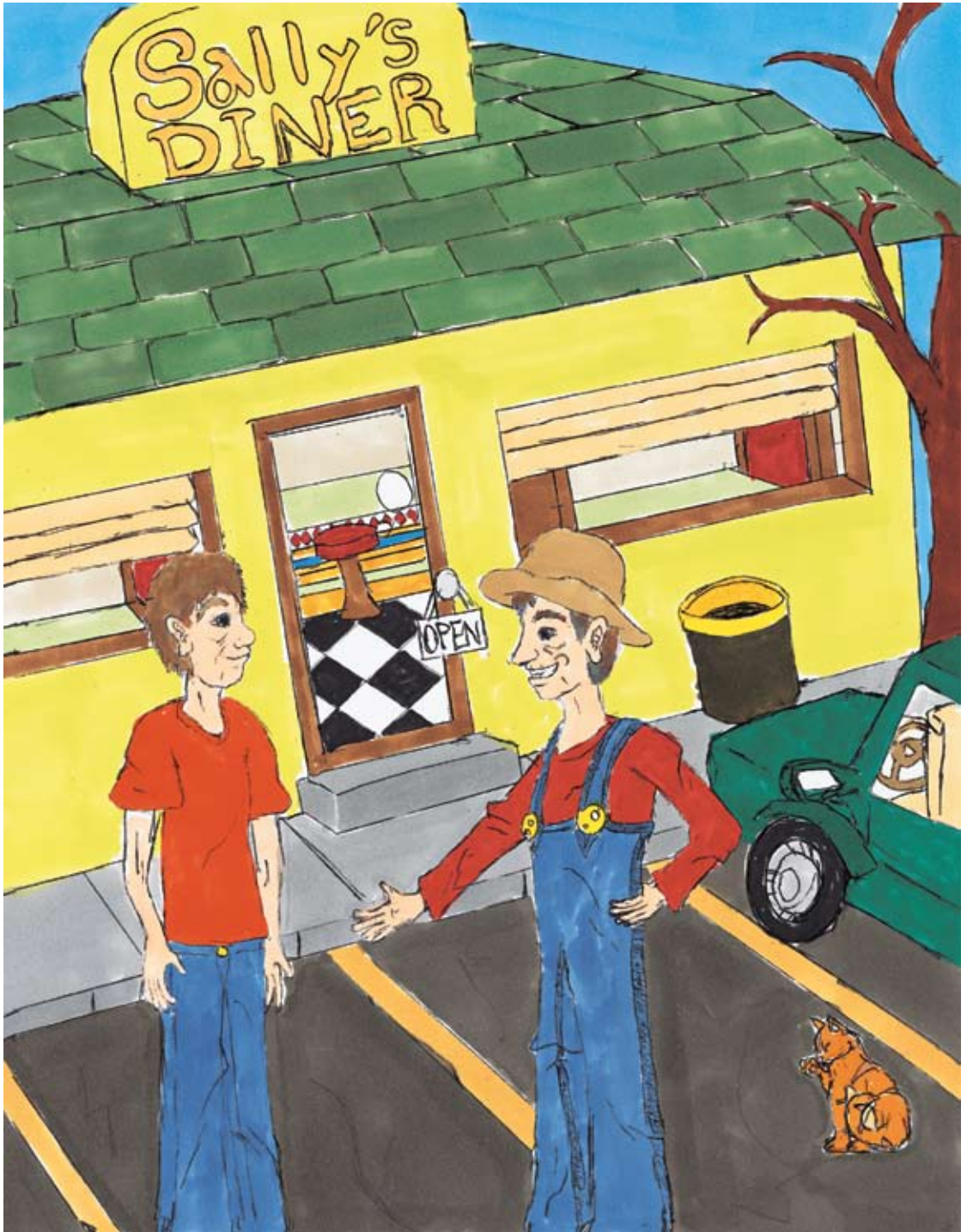
"But it's about a mile," I protested, "a lot longer than one of these hallways." Barry, already leaping from the bed, didn't seem to hear me.

Once Barry was dressed, we walked down to the desk. The nurse was still there. She was now reading *Soap Opera Digest*. "Excuse me, miss," said Barry.

She looked up in alarm. "Did you know," she squealed, "that Jake just divorced Sarah *again*?! What will she do now?"

"I shudder to think," replied Barry, "but listen, this is my grand-nephew, Jason Whitestone, and he's going to be taking me out to lunch and then for a Sunday drive. We might be gone all day, but should be back by bedtime." The nurse, however, had gone back to her magazine and didn't seem to care much. Barry filled out most of the information on the form, then pointed to an empty space. "Just sign right here, Jason," he said with a wink. So I signed my name as Jason Whitestone, and the next thing I knew we were out the door. It was almost too easy.

Once we were outside, I asked him about the ruse. He put his arm around my shoulders. "Son," he said, "I'm planning on a good *long* lunch." When we reached Sally's Diner he asked where my car was. "Let's go for a drive," he said. "We can talk while we're on the road." Once out on the



"Let's go for a drive," he said. "We can talk while we're on the road"

highway, heading south at Barry's request, he said, "You were in my pasture that day, and you picked up something that looked just like this, didn't you?" He held out a small metal shard. I pulled the similar shard from my own pocket.

"How did you know?" I asked.

"Did it ever occur to you," said Barry, "that we are not aging at the same rate as other folks?"

"What was it that day," I asked, "out in the pasture?"

"Well," said Barry, "after two full days of debriefing, those government types convinced me that it was a weather balloon, and that's the story I've stuck to ever since. The new pickup truck they bought me to sweeten the deal didn't hurt either." He chuckled. "Of course, that pickup's been in the junkyard for some time now, so I guess that means all bets are off. The truth is, I don't know what I saw. It sure looked to me like a flying saucer but there was this bright light and it made it hard to see and the truth is... I didn't stay all that long to look. I was spooked, Billy, really spooked, so I took off. But here's what I do know. I picked up this little souvenir here," he pointed to his metal shard, "and you picked up one just like it. And look at us. I'm 108 and not only am I not dead, but I'm healthy as can be. And how old are you now Billy?"

"Seventy-one," I replied.

"Seventy-one," repeated Barry, "and not a streak of gray in your hair. No diabetes, no heart trouble, no arthritis. Haven't even been sick since you were a boy, I bet."

I thought hard. "No," I replied after a

while, "I haven't."


"Now think about it," he said. "Ya think there could be some kind of connection between that and these strange pieces of metal?" I thought about it, and then decided that I didn't know what I thought.

"Where to?" I asked.

"Well," said Barry, "if I have anything to say about it, we are *not* headed back to that nursing home. The problem is, they may start looking for me around dark. But since you used an alias, and since young Dora don't really look at us old folks all that well, and especially since they have no description of your car, it may take them a while to find us. With some good driving and no stopping, I figure we can be in Mexico before dark." It sounded like a plan to me.

JULY 1, 2031

ME AND BARRY crept over the border into Mexico in the dead of night. And by golly, we do enjoy our lives here. My savings lasted us a good long while, and when they ran out we got ourselves some jobs, Barry on a cattle ranch and me running a diner. We've had to move around a bit to keep people from noticing that they age a lot faster than we do. But everywhere we have gone, the Mexican people are friendly and welcoming.

Barry is still not willing to talk much about what he really saw in his pasture that day all those years ago, but now that I'm 95 and Barry's pushing 133, there's no doubt in my mind that it was definitely not a weather balloon. 



Glancing out the window again, Cammie felt lighthearted

October's Flight

By **Zoe Kayton**

Illustrated by **Sage Asakawa**

CAMMIE PUSHED ASIDE her sunshine-yellow curtains to stare out the window. Ghosts, princesses, and superheroes were just starting to file onto Lemon Lane. She turned from the window to look at her reflection in the full-length mirror. Cammie's curls bounced up and down gleefully in rhythm with her sparkling plastic antennae. A frilly ballerina leotard overlapped lavender tights. Matching wings glittered under the incandescent lightbulb hanging from the ceiling. Perfect, she thought. Glancing out the window again, Cammie felt light-hearted. It seemed almost as if she could fly. In fact, now she was flying. She was flying through her window, out of the neighborhood, and into the limitless sky. The moon smiled down on her. Cammie looked down, only to find the most beautiful flowers below her. They came in every color of the rainbow and were speckled with tiny intricate drops of dew. Cammie longed to go down to the flowers and so her wings obeyed and she drifted downward. Landing on a petal, she thought, How odd. These petals feel like bedsheets. Cammie, suddenly feeling indifferent to the petals, decided to taste some of that juicy nectar that allured her. As she bent down to sip, the nectar seemed to leap out of the flower and it splashed Cammie's face. The moon abruptly became a lightbulb. "Wake up, sleepyhead," said her obnoxious sister, who had evidently poured water on Cammie to rouse her. "You don't want to miss Halloween, now, do you?" Cammie rolled over in bed and put on her costume. She was a shimmering butterfly. Cammie looked in the mirror and thought, I could almost fly... ❁



Zoe Kayton, 12
Palm City, Florida



Sage Asakawa, 11
Lafayette, Colorado

Book Review

By Elena Chalfin Milin

Larklight, by Philip Reeve; Bloomsbury
Children's Books: New York, 2006; \$16.95



Elena Chalfin Milin, 11
New York, New York


ELEVEN-YEAR-OLD Arthur Mumby, his sister Myrtle, and his dad live on an old spaceship called *Larklight*—until it is attacked by giant spiders. *Larklight* is an excellent book because you are never bored. Arthur and Myrtle encounter a new adventure at every turn, like being hunted by a huge baby moth or visiting a talking thunderstorm, but it isn't hard to keep track of what's going on. In *Larklight*, there are many beautiful illustrations of scenes and characters, brightening our understanding of what's going on, but also taking away a little from our ability to imagine it. The cast of characters is memorable enough that you don't need the illustrations.

Larklight is told from the perspective of Arthur Mumby, an eleven-year-old not unlike me. As I read, I felt sympathy for Arthur, who was surrounded by people/creatures older than him, and enchanted by how he dealt with it. He manages to make friends in the foulest of situations. Some of Arthur's new companions are other than human—such as Ssilissa the lizard being or Nipper the land crab—but I sympathized with them too. They were all very real people—for example Ssilissa is a tomboy but wants to be treated more like a girl—even if they did not seem that way at first.

After escaping from their distressed ship, Arthur and Myrtle meet the notorious space pirate, Jack Havock, who is about as old as Myrtle. They take up residence in his ship and work for him as ship cleaners, as his boat, the *Sophronia*, is very dirty. Soon we learn that Jack and his inhuman crew escaped from the Royal Xenological Institute (which studies aliens) and, since they had no money, became pirates. Jack's parents "died" of a horrible disease originating on Venus called Venusian Tree Sickness, which turns whoever catches it into a tree. As Arthur and Myrtle's mom was believed to have been murdered a few years ago and their dad was seemingly killed by the giant spiders, they empathize with Jack, and befriend him.

I think it's interesting that *Larklight* is set in the 1850s, as most books today are set in the present or in the future. This was especially intriguing because *Larklight* is about futuristic things, like space travel. In addition, since *Larklight* is set in the 1850s, the language used in the book is slightly different from modern English. This slightly hinders your ability to understand it, but once you figure out what the words or phrases you don't understand mean, it is fascinating to compare modern English with that used in an earlier time.

My favorite part of the book was when the spiders were defeated. As Myrtle and Jack hug and kiss each other, Arthur writes, "It is one thing to write of giant spiders and man-eating moths, but there are some sights too stomach-turning for even the bravest British boy to contemplate, and the soppy way Jack and my sister ran to cuddle and kiss each other is one of 'em." That is my favorite part because I identify with Arthur (I don't like soppy scenes in movies) and also because I enjoy humor (the picture shows Myrtle and Jack hugging and Arthur covering his eyes but peeking out just a little).

If you read this book, I hope you like it as much as I did! 



Asters are my favorite flowers, and I often wear them in my hair

My Story, a Fictional Account

By **Gertrude Suokko**

Illustrated by the author

I LIVED A BEAUTIFUL LIFE free of worry or sorrow until the age of fourteen, when both my mother and father died. Then, I had nowhere to go except my Aunt Helga's. Her name explains her perfectly. Aunty was strict and old-fashioned. She was an old maid and her rigid lifestyle made me a prisoner to her. I am not a weak character, but there are some people whom you cannot contradict, no matter who you are.

That was the way it was with Aunt Helga. She was not unkind to me; she was just very stern.

I lived with my aunt for four years. In all of those years nothing marked one day from another: Saturday housework, Sunday church, and the few weekly engagements and visits. Otherwise I was at home with Aunt.

In those years, I could see no way to escape from where I was. I probably would have lived with my Aunt Helga forever, sheltered and ignorant of the world, my aunt constantly nagging me.

"Clara child, why put your hair like that? How I do hate these new fashions! And, for heaven's sake, do not sign your name Aster."

"Clara! Never let me catch you wearing red again!"

"Clara. When you dust the dining room, make quite sure you remove the runner before you dust the table. And do put on an apron."

And it went on and on. Indeed nothing would have changed had it not been for Martha Hayward and her brother, Thomas.

Martha and I were naturally drawn to each other even though



Gertrude Suokko, 13
Woodstock, Vermont

we were completely different. Martha was not particularly beautiful. Her blond hair clashed with her deep brown eyes, just as my bright blue shadowy eyes and dark hair made my face look pale and thin. Martha was large. I was small. She was buoyant and happy. I was rather mysterious. Perhaps that was what was so appealing to Martha, but also to Tom, her brother.

I liked Tom as much as Martha. Luckily I could see both of them often. Aunt Helga, upon their arrival, found gossipy, fretful Mrs. Hayward almost as interesting as I found Tom and Martha.

Their visits improved my spirits a good deal. It was evident to me that Aunt liked all of them, for at breakfast one morning she said to me, "Do you like the Haywards, Clara?"

"Why, yes, I do. I like them very much," I said. "Do you?"

"Yes, I have to say I do. Even though they are only Haywards. One must give allowances for name, Clara. Go change the flowers in the tea room. Then go to the post office for me, and on the way back pick up half a yard of blue silk and one foot of green ribbon. I cannot bear to think Mrs. Hayward has the new ribbon and I do not!"

Of course this was not very much praise for the Haywards. But that my Aunt would think of anybody but herself was

remarkable for her, or that anybody other than herself was worth talking about.

ONE BLUSTERY fall morning found me sitting in front of the parlor window, absently watching the asters swaying in their bed. Asters are my favorite flowers, and I often wear them in my hair. Also, when my father was alive and we lived in the country, he used to call me Aster when I wore purple. So I love them dearly.

The parlor door opened behind me. I took no notice of this. Probably it was Aunt Helga. A hand gently touched my shoulder. I looked up. It was Tom.

"Clara," he said, "I have brought you some flowers," revealing a purple cluster.

"Oh! Tom, how did you know I love asters so much? I never told you. Did you know I was thinking about them?"


"I have ways of finding out," said he, loftily looking at the ceiling.

"Don't joke, Tom. How did you know?"

"Are they your favorite?" he asked, looking well pleased. "I really didn't know that; I just thought you would like them."

"I do, very much," I said.

"Well, hope you think the same about their giver."

He was not teasing, I saw. And he added, "You will think so by and by, won't you, Clara?" And perhaps I will. 

Thirteen Ways to Look at Autumn

By **Kelly Dai**

The smell of gingersnaps,
apple cider,
and pumpkin pie
wafting through the air
in delicate swirls
arm-in-arm with the colorful wind.

The shy sun
poking through
the wooden arms
of a lamenting willow.

Golden drops
of warm sunshine
strewn across the yards
of piled leaves and blades of thin grass.

Quietly,
almost silently,
the bitter wind and its long fingers
pull and wrench at the crackling leaves.



Kelly Dai, 12
Merion Station,
Pennsylvania

The sighs
of schoolchildren
accompanying the morning fog
on the dawn of the first day.

The clouds overhead
as gray and lumpy
as my grandma's oatmeal.

A flock of geese, united in song,
fly south for the winter.

Shadows trace the geese's dark feathers
against the flames of dusk.
As I watch them fly
the roar of the ocean drowns out my bellow:
Why must you depart?

A dove and a nightingale
cooing along
with the caws of a raven
upon the calling of Hallow's Eve.

Pumpkins and jack-o'-lanterns
with wicked smiles
glaring at you from doorsteps.

The sweet taste of pumpkin pie
dancing upon your tongue.

I do not know which to prefer,
the beauty of contrast
or the beauty of harmony.
The last green leaf
or the vicinity.

The mountain is sighing.
Autumn must be near.



"I could learn something from you," Emily whispered to the wise-looking mythical creature

The Dragon Speaks

By **Emmy J. X. Wong**

Illustrated by **Frances Chan**

“**H** EY *new* girl,” a boy’s voice boomed large out of nowhere. “Are you Asian? Are you from China?”

Emily’s face felt scorched. She knew it was turning the deepest shade of sunburn right now because she was dying of embarrassment. She slid further down in her seat, halfway under her desk. In her first week at her new school, this was the last thing Emily Chang wanted—to call attention to herself in this way. But she couldn’t help it. It wasn’t her fault.

“I’m American, just like you,” she found her courage. Talking over the din of whispers in the room, she added in a small, barely audible voice, “Chinese-American,” stressing the *American* part.

Emily quickly jumped up from her seat as the bell rang, signaling the end of her math class which had been her favorite class, that is—up until now.

Oh why did we have to move from San Francisco to Boston? she asked herself, but she already knew the answer to that tired and futile question. Dad had lost his job as a sous-chef at one of San Francisco’s leading hotel restaurants and Yeh-Yeh (which means father’s father in Cantonese), had offered him a job back home in his restaurant, the Golden Dragon, in the heart of Boston’s Chinatown. Dad said they were “lucky that they had somewhere to go.”

Yeah, right, she thought. She could feel her anger and disappointment surging again inside her, as she pictured liquid mercury rising in a thermometer stuck in a bubbling bath of boiling



Emmy J. X. Wong, 11
Weston, Massachusetts



Frances Chan, 13
Hudson, Ohio

water. She couldn't squelch it this time. This time, the mercury was sure to win out and the thermometer would snap. She was at her breaking point. San Francisco was the only home she had ever known. She was born at San Francisco General. Although she had only been in her new home barely a month, she already missed the sprawling picnics her family celebrated in Golden Gate Park, their sauntering walks through the Palace of Fine Arts on sunlit spring days, dim sum each Sunday morning with Gung-Gung and Paw-Paw, her grandparents on her mother's side, but most of all she would miss her charter school and all it meant to her. At her old school, which was ninety-five percent Chinese-American, she didn't have to explain herself. Everyone there used chopsticks at lunch, knew how to write their name in both English and Chinese and didn't question why Chinese New Year was the biggest holiday of the year. Now in this new school she was assigned to, she was the only Asian-American student in most of her classes. She felt like a guest at her own birthday party. When Mom said it would take some getting used to, she wasn't kidding.

Emily hopped on the long mac-and-cheese-colored school bus and stole a seat in the back. She felt her head throbbing from the day's latest disaster and was happy when she started seeing telltale signs her stop was coming up. She eagerly awaited passing under the cherry-colored arch, the gateway to the city's Chinatown, to signal she was home. To her, it re-

sembled an oversized Chinese character scrolled in the finest calligraphy. She smiled at the curbside phone booths fashioned in the shape of tiny pagodas, now relics with the advent of cell phones but quaint nonetheless. From her bus window, she could see a carefully arranged string of golden roast ducks hanging in the window of her favorite bakery. Some lucky family tonight would have a scrumptious meal of crunchy roast duck with soft plump bread pillows, the kind that melted in your mouth. Her stomach grumbled. She jumped off at her stop in front of Yee's enticing silk shop and rounded the corner, heading for her grandfather's restaurant. Her family of four, which included her mom, dad and little sister, Sabrina, had moved into the cramped apartment in Chinatown above the restaurant while Yin-Yin and Yeh-Yeh, her dad's parents, had moved to a roomier home in the nearby suburbs. She didn't mind their cramped quarters, so Dad could be close to his work. She loved being in the middle of all the excitement downtown. From her bedroom window she marveled at all the fascinating sights and delighted in the familiar sounds. Neon dragons and great walls turned on at dusk, illuminating the community's pride in their culture. She loved the glittering storefronts with all their shiny silks and hand-painted porcelains, and all the signs in Chinese characters she had no difficulty reading made her feel right at home.

Emily stood for a minute outside the jewelry shop and peered in. She admired

the sparkling collection of jade pendants and rings. There were so many different shades and hues of the translucent gemstone. She knew that the deep emerald color was valued the most and she couldn't wait till her thirteenth birthday when Mom told her she could pick out her own jade pendant. She knew exactly which one she would pick. "Every girl needs lucky jade," she was overjoyed to hear her mother say.

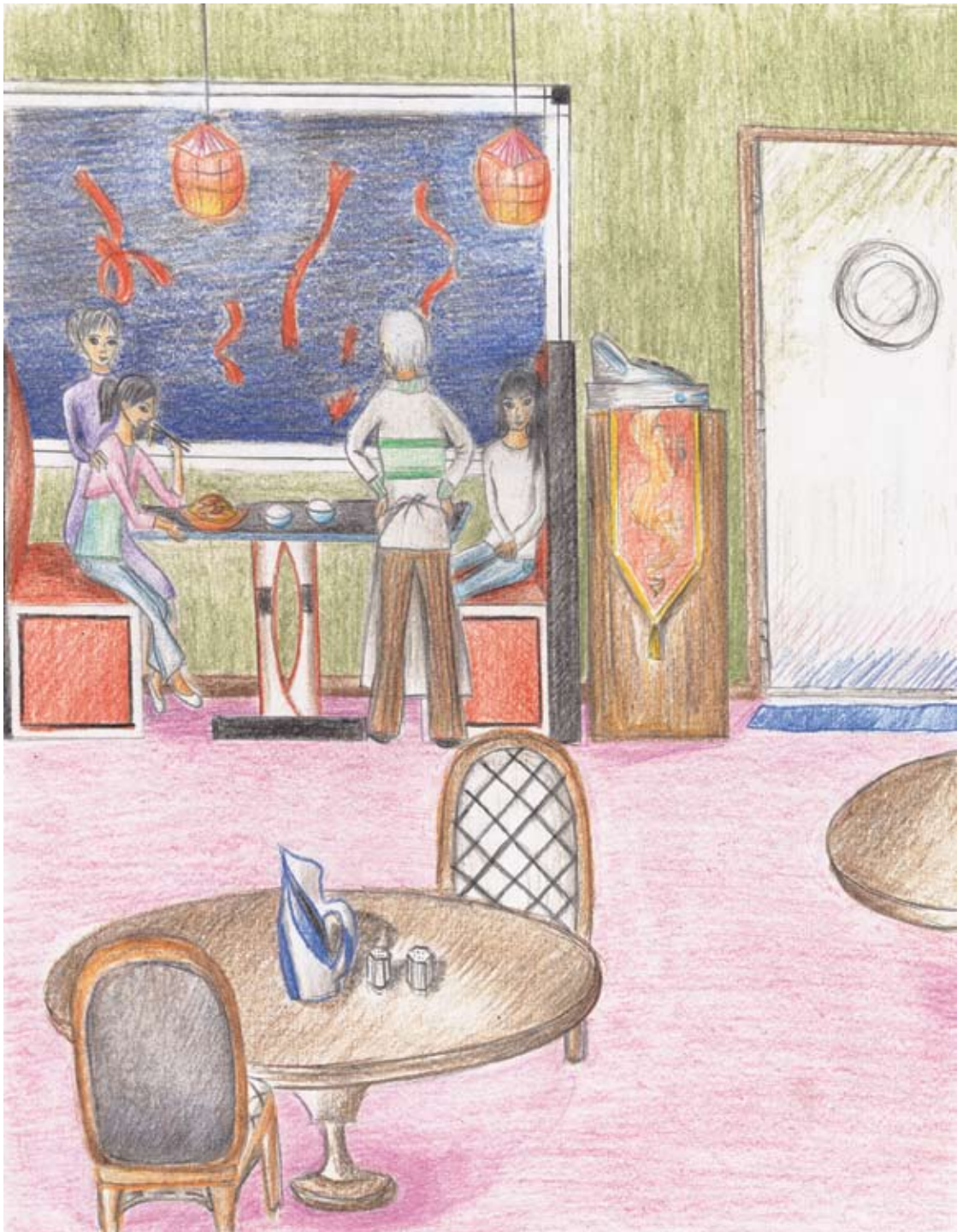
Her excitement bubbled over, looking at the gold picture frames which hung in the window. These were the kind shopkeepers bought to congratulate one another when they had gained enough capital and courage to open their own shops. Thick gold characters, carefully framed, hung on a ruby velvet background, spelling out congratulatory wishes, such as, "Wishing you good luck and prosperity in this new venture," and other things. Someday, she hoped she might even follow in her dad's and granddad's footsteps and open her own restaurant or gift shop. Then she might have her own lucky sayings.

Looking down at her watch, she knew she had a date to keep. She had promised to rendezvous with her family in the restaurant for an early supper before going upstairs to complete her homework, and before the customers would start coming into the restaurant, in droves!

One last stop, she thought. She was tempted by the incense-like scent wafting from the tea shop next door with some of the fanciest green and black teas from Hong Kong. They called out to her to explore, however that adventure would have

to wait for another afternoon. But she couldn't keep herself from what was happening inside the expansive window of Calvin Chen's Kung Fu Academy. Pressing her face against the spotless glass, she saw the students of all sizes with long bamboo sticks, facing off against each other, ready to spar. Swiftly and decidedly they moved back and forth to a rhythm repeated thousands of years since ancient times at Shaolin's Temple. She couldn't wait for the colorful lion dancers from the same academy to win over the hearts of every visitor lining the streets come New Year's next week, as they had won hers watching them practice. Emily sped up and soon found herself in front of the Golden Dragon. She looked up to admire the deftly dancing dragon over the entryway. He wore a fierce expression, announcing to all he was someone to reckon with.

"I could learn something from you," Emily whispered to the wise-looking mythical creature. Inside, the music made by the clanging plates from the wait staff mingling with the air fragrant with soy and ginger made her feel more relaxed and welcomed. She slid into the familiar worn leather booth next to her nine-year-old sister, Sabrina, who was chattering non-stop. Sabrina wore her thick black shiny hair in a ponytail, which bobbed up and down as she told Yin-Yin all the events of her day. Soon Yeh-Yeh came out from behind the swinging silver doors which led from the kitchen, balancing two rounded bowls of perfectly cooked white rice and a plate piled high with Shanghai crispy



"When I miss China, all I need to do is look at your grandmother"

noodles soaked in a savory beef sauce. The noodles were sure to keep Sabrina busy long enough so Emily could get some questions answered. Maybe she could ask Yeh-Yeh before Mom and Dad came out. She wouldn't want them to worry about her. She knew Mom would be hurriedly carving pink-and-white lotus flowers from radishes to adorn some of Dad's most delectable dishes, while he topped off sizzling signature dishes like Peking duck and firecracker shrimp.

"Yeh-Yeh, why did you come to America?" Emily began in a shaky voice, trying to steady it but wondering whether life back in China would be better than needing to explain yourself everywhere you went outside the limits of the city's Chinatown.

"Life in China can be very hard," replied Yeh-Yeh truthfully. He began his familiar story which Emily never grew tired of hearing. "China has been through many famines. I became a street vendor, selling little trinkets just to survive, and that's where I met your Yin-Yin. She had a street cart and made the most superb, freshest noodles you ever tasted. Every day, I would eat at her cart, sitting atop a barrel, and together we talked about our hopes and dreams for a better future. I fell in love with your Yin-Yin and together she and I knew we needed to immigrate to America for a better opportunity for our family. Now, I have two gift shops and a good restaurant that your father will take over for me."

"But, do you ever *miss* China, Yeh-Yeh?"

Emily asked impatiently, not getting the answer she was seeking.

"Sometimes, but I have all that I need right here with me. When I miss China, all I need to do is look at your grandmother. She is far more beautiful than the rarest jade. The sound of her voice is more brilliant than the timbre of the most brilliant gong, announcing evening meal. Her spirit is stronger than the most upright bamboo and she is more flexible than... than... even these noodles in her ability to take on new challenges," he added, laughing at his latest simile. "I look at you and I see her," he added affectionately. "You have all the same traits as your grandmother." His thoughts were interrupted by the winter sky, lit up with scarlet streamers filtering in through the windows.

"Look there, outside the window. The dragon has begun to chase the sinking ball of fire and will continue to chase the ball of fire across the sky all the way to China," he murmured intently.

"Oh Yeh-Yeh, you can't possibly believe that. You know the earth spins on its axis and we are facing away from the sun now," Emily softly chided.

"Oh yes, I know that is the *scientific* explanation, but my heart tells me to believe what my ancestors believed. See, when I think of them and where I have come from, I am not so alone. I stand tall with pride and remember those who sacrificed before me, so that I could lead a better life," he resumed patiently. Emily blinked away a tear. Suddenly, listening to Grandfather's consistent and reassuring

voice, she was not so afraid. She wondered if this is how Magdalena felt when she came to her old school wearing her striped fiesta skirt that her *abuela* had brought her from Mexico City to celebrate Cinco de Mayo, reflecting the same pride and colors as the Mexican flag.

Her grandfather's pride and his sentiments resonated that evening in her bedtime thoughts before she drifted off to sleep.

"As beautiful as the rarest jade, as brilliant as the gong, as strong as the bamboo, as flexible as the noodle," she repeated, smiling to herself. Yes, she could be as flexible as Grandma had to be moving to a new country and get used to her new school, even if it meant overcoming all the obstacles in her way.

"HEY American girl," she heard bel-
lowing across the room at her the next day at the end of math class. "Can I be your friend?" It was that menace Eric again, the boy who had taunted her only yesterday. Suddenly he didn't seem to bother her any more. She was proud of who she was and her family, all of them she had dreamed about going back many generations. She was from a proud people, rich in culture and beliefs. She wouldn't hesitate

again to own up to her Chinese roots.


"I'm not good at making friends. I have a lot to learn. I'm sorry that I said something to offend you, especially it being your first week and all." It was Eric now walking next to her out of class, trying to apologize.

"Why do you want to be my friend?" Emily asked.

"Because you're the smartest kid in math class and you seem really nice. I'd like to get to know you better."

"Well, it takes a big person to admit his mistakes," she replied. "I guess we can be friends."

"I'd really like that, Emily," he added with a smile.

"Emily? You know my name? What, no 'Asian girl' today?" she kidded amidst an easy laugh. Now it was his turn to blush to a deep crimson shade, the color of *hong bao*, lucky money envelopes given out every Chinese New Year to children or anyone lucky enough to receive them. Emily giggled. "I guess we *all* still have a lot to learn, and Boston is as good a place as any. I think I'm gonna like it here." Her heart sang. Somewhere she knew the dragon was also smiling. His heart sang too as he chased his golden ball of fire across the sky all the way back from China. 

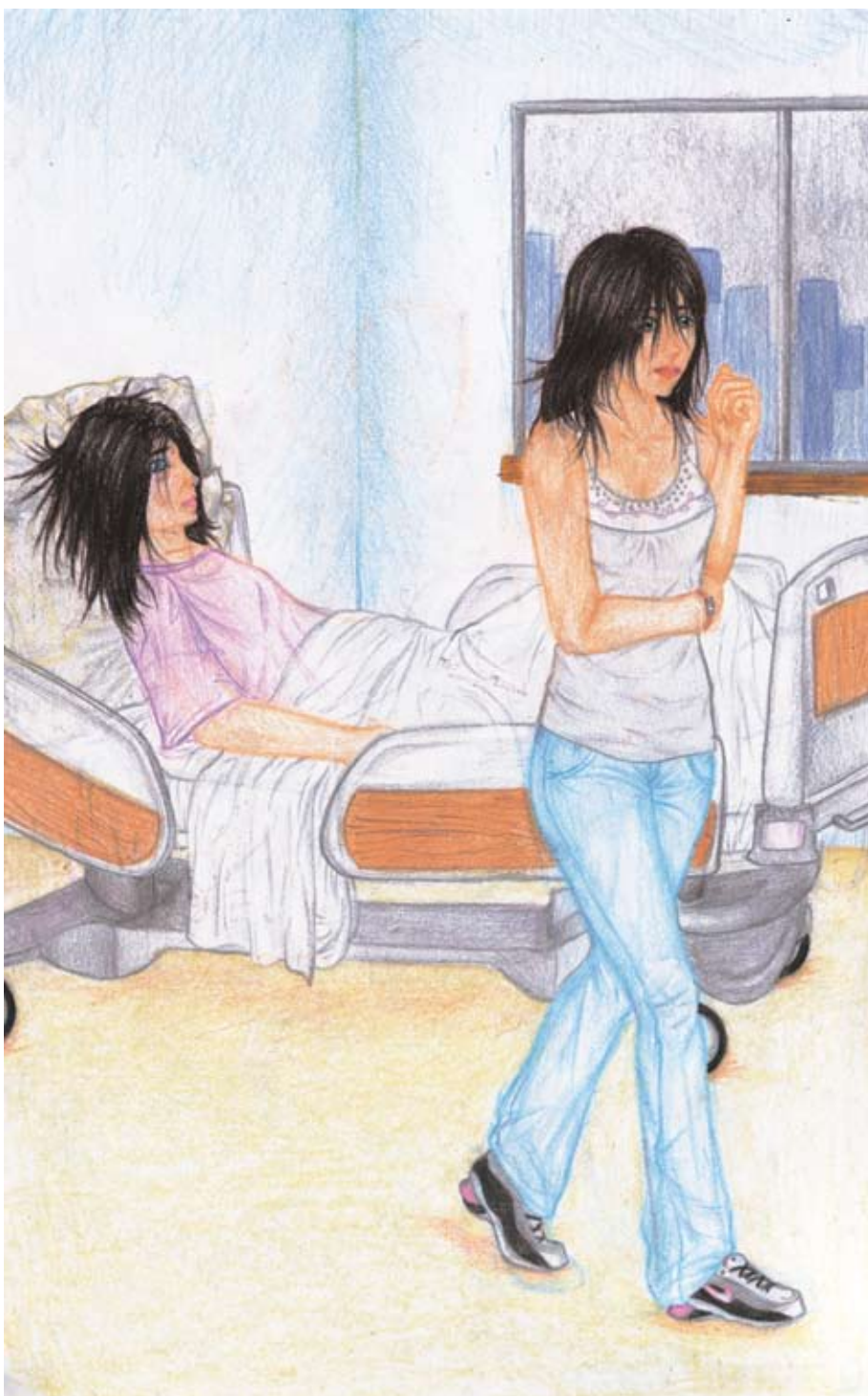
When I Was Five

By Ashok Kaul

When I was five, I got out of school.
It was the first day and
I had already made friends.
But none of us knew
what was happening.
I heard a lot of talk about
crash mess fall tall.
Why was everyone talking
about mess fall hit hurt
and tears. Fear.
My mom took me home.
The streets were empty.
I heard fire trucks and police cars.
Then my mom told me.
The two towers were missing.
I was five. It was September 11.
Suddenly, I felt unsure.



Ashok Kaul, 11
New York, New York



She had heard the words—I love you—but she had not responded to them

A Different Kind of Light

By **Catherine Babikian**

Illustrated by **Grace Lackey**

AMY RAN. She ran and ran and ran and ran because she never wanted to stop. She flew past churches and office buildings, the sound of her Nikes crushing the gravel guiding her. Her muscles didn't hurt; her skin was simply a garment she could peel off when she got hot. Amy wanted to get as far away from that building as she could get. The smell still permeated her nostrils and she ran harder, ran faster, as if the closer she was to home the faster she could get rid of the smell. Sweat dripped down her back, nestled itself in the crevices of her face, but she didn't care.

Amy ran faster. Never had she run like this before, but she found that the more she thought, the more she wanted to go home, the farther her legs would take her.

Running was a mental sport, Amy decided.

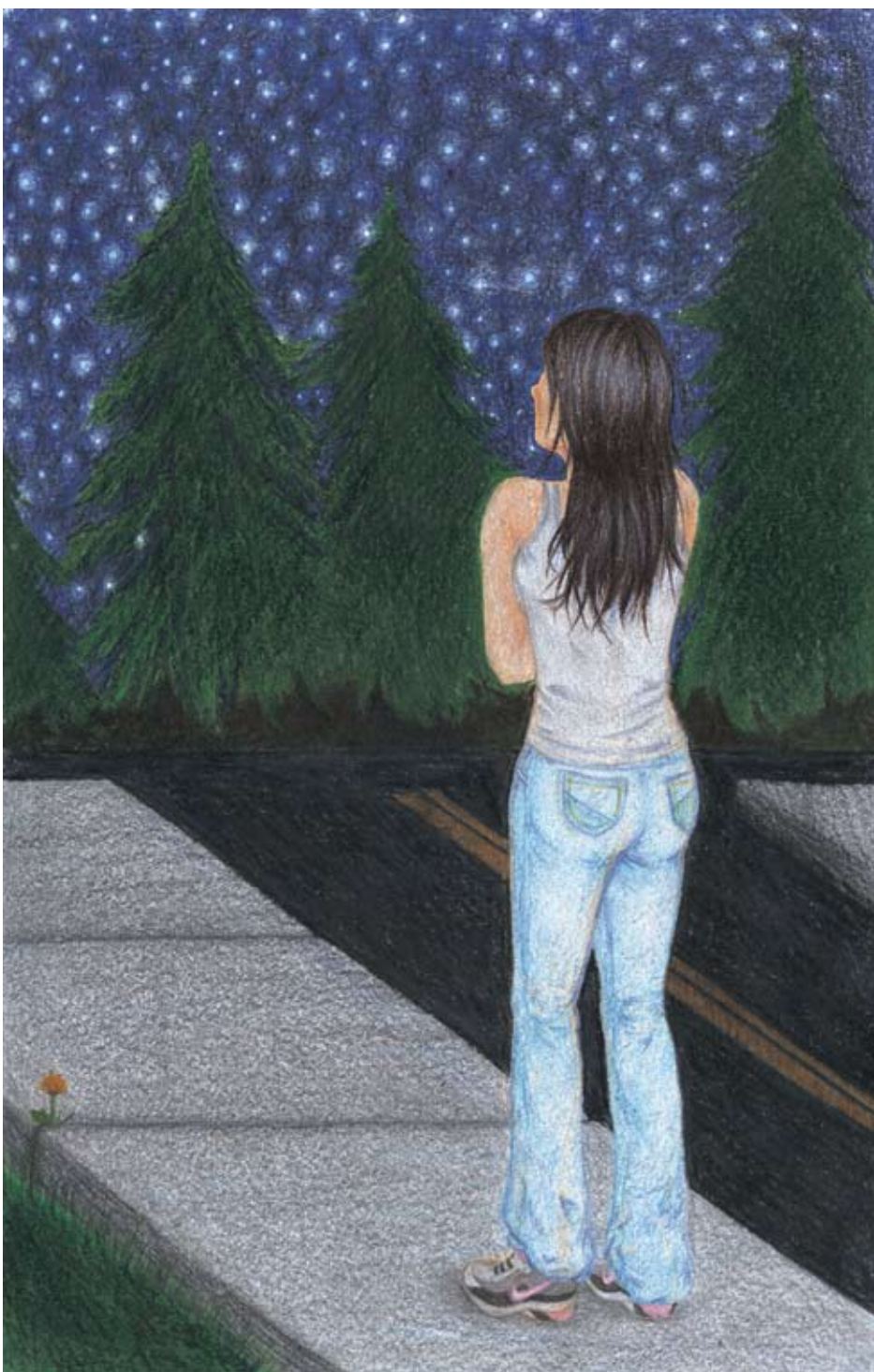
Amy did not slow down for several miles. How far away was she from that hospital, that place she never wanted to see again? Seven miles, she reasoned. She approximated the route at thirteen miles, which seemed reasonable, so she would have about six to go. On any other day, Amy would be intimidated, but not today, not when all she wanted to do was go home. Away from that hospital, which reeked of antiseptic and sick people, away from her father, who couldn't say two words to her, away from the nurses and doctors all in white, who fake-smiled at Amy while secretly feeling sorry for her. Forty-five minutes, give or take, she'd be home. Home.



Catherine Babikian, 12
West Des Moines, Iowa



Grace Lackey, 13
Lynnwood, Washington



Amy knew they glowed because her mother was there with them, no longer with her

The image of her mother flashed in her mind as she ran, becoming more vivid and then suddenly blurry in a flash; she found that she had to probe her mind to find the good images of her, not the ones where her mother was small and frail, but the energetic woman Amy knew her to be. A twinge of guilt stabbed her heart, letting misery flow through her veins; it took extra energy to keep running now. She had been selfish, uncaring. She had left the room in a hurry, wishing she would never have to go back, despite the calls from her father. Her mother had even called her name, whispered three words down the hall, where they floated in her ears, but she had not turned around.

Amy wished she had. She had heard the words—I love you—but she had not responded to them. Amy had not cried, although anguish was pouring out of her in buckets. And Amy knew that the way to rid herself of the permanent melancholy that had overtaken her was to cry, but she never cried. She had stopped crying a long time ago.

Four miles to go. Amy pulled her watch up to her face; she had forgotten to wear her glasses that day. Nine twenty-four. The little display glowed in the darkness,

the only light she could see that was not a streetlight. The moon wasn't even out to guide her... her mother loved full moons, she thought. But Amy pushed the thought out of her head and ran faster. Harder.

Amy felt a blister form on the back of her heel; she did not slow down to accommodate it. She pulled her watch to her face again. Astonished at the speed of her running, she silently thanked her mother for that gift. The sudden remembrance of her mother brought a whole rush of memories into Amy's consciousness, and Amy came to a direct halt.

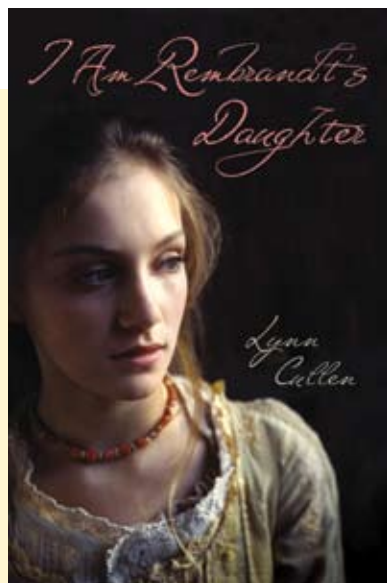
She stayed at a standstill for several minutes, her blood pounding and her heart racing. The sky was stained with pitch, as if someone had thrown blue-black paint, the same color as her heart, over the sky and blanketed it in darkness. Amy looked up, expecting to see only a sea of misery blue, and she instead saw that the stars glowed with a different kind of light. They cast a sheer glow on Amy's face; Amy knew they glowed because her mother was there with them, no longer with her, but in the stars somewhere, glowing that different kind of light.

And Amy cried, for what she had left unspoken. ❀

Book Review

By Stephanie Murphy

I Am Rembrandt's Daughter, by Lynn Cullen;
Bloomsbury Children's Books: New York,
2007; \$16.95



Stephanie Murphy, 12
Baltimore, Maryland


HOW MANY OF YOU know who Shakespeare or Beethoven were? Many of you, probably, but how many of you know who Rembrandt was? I know who Shakespeare and Beethoven were, but I had no idea who Rembrandt was until I read the book, *I Am Rembrandt's Daughter*. This book is not told through the eyes of Rembrandt, but through the eyes of his daughter, Cornelia.

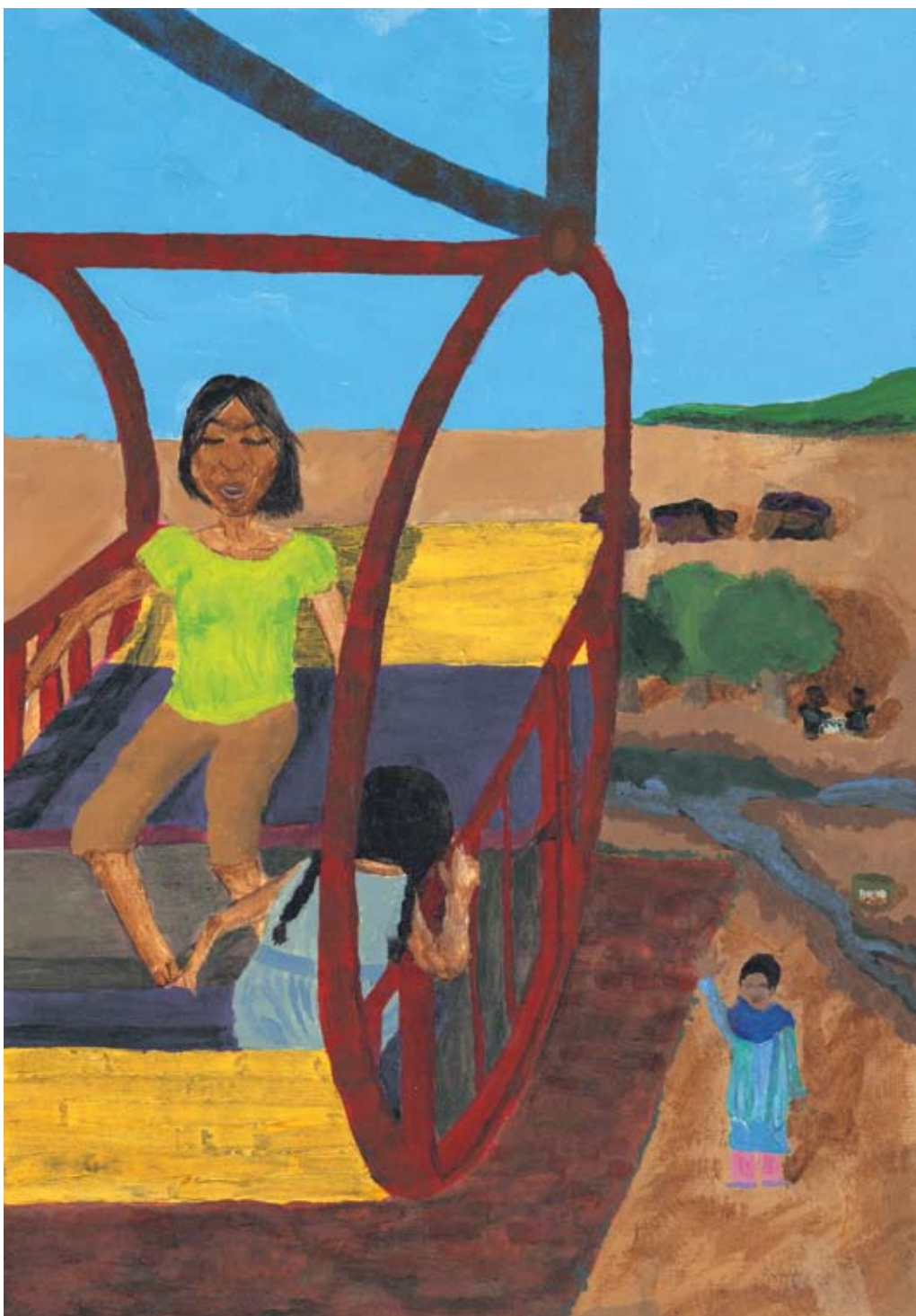
It is a wonderful book filled with romance and mystery that is based on real characters. Cornelia has always felt ashamed of her father, Rembrandt, or vader as they say in Dutch. She is ashamed because Rembrandt paints with rough brushstrokes that can be seen, unlike the other painters who paint with smooth, hardly visible brushstrokes. It is because of this style of painting that Rembrandt, her brother, Titus, and Cornelia have to move from their big house to a small house. The only reason they survive is because of Neel, the very quiet student who pays to take classes with Rembrandt. Cornelia doesn't give much attention to boring Neel, and she doesn't realize how many times she might have broken his heart.

Cornelia has always wanted to learn how to paint, but Rembrandt has never offered to teach her. I can relate to this

because, like Cornelia, I have always loved to paint, and I am always eager to learn new techniques with the brush. For Cornelia, there has always been a great emotional distance from her vader, Rembrandt, so she tries to find a companion for herself, such as the gold-mustache-man. When he is no longer a suitable companion because he doesn't come to their house anymore, she finds a sweet boy named Carel. Cornelia falls head-over-heels in love with him. Her life crashes down when unanswered questions about her past become known. Also, what happens when Titus comes down with the plague that kills her mother along with many others?

I liked this book not only because it had an outstanding ending, but it also has many important themes and conflicts, such as the difference between rich and poor. Cornelia has been ashamed of her status in her community. Some see her as the poor mad painter's daughter, and she soon realizes that being rich is not always as good as people think. I also really enjoyed this book because of the different times that the book was set in. One time period occurs in the present when Cornelia is sixteen and the two other time periods occur in her past. The last reason that I liked this book is because it is a bit of a mystery. You want to try and figure out who she was literally—who were her real parents?—and who she was emotionally—is she really just the crazy painter's daughter or is she more?

The author proves that not every relationship is meant to be when you are confronted with a life-and-death situation, and that those who help are the ones you should really appreciate. I was horrified when Carel backed away from Cornelia when she needed him most. But I love who Cornelia chose in the end. This is an emotionally touching book that truly takes you into her past, present, and future. 



We zoomed upwards, back towards the pure, peaceful blue sky, free and safe

The Ride of a Lifetime

By Kaylyn Kavi

Illustrated by Sora Nithikasem

THE PLACE WAS DESERTED, an abandoned ruin of what used to be. A victim of the slow ravages of time. Ever so slowly fading away, into nothingness... At least that's what it seemed, until our aunt had to abruptly ruin it by adding, "It may look deserted, but that's just because people don't come on the weekdays. On the weekends, it gets really crowded and busy."

That's a joke right? I thought, seriously doubting that this dumpy old amusement park sitting in the middle of nowhere on one of the many lonely dirty streets in India could ever possibly be "crowded and busy." I mean, there are literally no signs of life here, except some stray dogs of just skin and bone and the usual hoard of midnight-black crows that perch high in the coconut trees, and peer down at whoever may be passing by, like kings surveying their kingdom. This is *pathetic*!

As I was talking to myself, they—my sister, Ava, my dad, and my aunt—had already moved on, so I had to run to catch up. As we walked, I looked around, trying to appreciate the cool breeze that hadn't seemed to stop blowing since we got to India from the US, a glimpse of light and freedom in a dark endless tunnel, rather than dwell on the burning heat that beat down on us unmercifully like a slave driver, bringing down the whip on an out-of-line slave.

As we wandered around we saw empty food stalls and forgotten ride parts lying discarded on the ground. The ride operators weren't even at their operating booths, but rather grouped



Kaylyn Kavi, 12
Bridgewater, New Jersey



Sora Nithikasem, 10
Livingston, New Jersey

together under trees, talking, looking surprised when they saw us approach, and giving off the immediate impression that even *they* didn't expect people to be coming.

As we approached, one of the guys stood up with a pained expression, seeming to ask us not to make him get up and go do his job. Honestly, I'd say they got it pretty easy. Getting paid for sitting around, talking, and occasionally pressing buttons or pulling levers. He led us over to the Ferris wheel without even asking whether we wanted to go on, thus solving the problem of "Which ride should we go on first?" Ava and I got in the first cart that came by, and as we closed the gate, the wheel rotated upwards, so that our dad could get in another cart.


"These are *sooo* not safe!" Ava exclaimed, as we noticed that there was no seat belt, restraining bar or anything whatsoever to keep you from falling out, aside from the floor and the about three-foot gate that you could open from the inside.

As the huge wheel slowly and cautiously pulled us up, like a scared puppy first entering its new home, Ava and I just sat there feeling more bored than ever. So, to make some fun, we began leaping from one side to the other to get the cart rocking. "CREAK... CREAK..." the joints groaned as we pushed them back and forth, back and forth. We continued

to torture the poor flimsy wooden boards, with no apparent alarm or even the attention of any of the few surrounding people. No one even seemed to give us a second glance, which was rare considering that ever since we got to India, people had been staring at us because of how we looked and dressed. As we were cruelly punishing the sides of the cart, the cart started to sway to each side. And not just swaying like a young tree's new branches gently quivering in the breeze. More like rocking hard like a tree caught in a thunderstorm with no way to shield itself from the harsh blows it was receiving. As the cart continued to swing from side to side, quickly gaining speed, we looked down over the low wall, at the rapidly approaching ground.

"SWISH... SWISH... WOOSH... WOOSH... CLANG... CLANG..." shouted the gears covered in a thick layer of mud-brown rust; I could practically hear the CRASH! that was certain to follow.

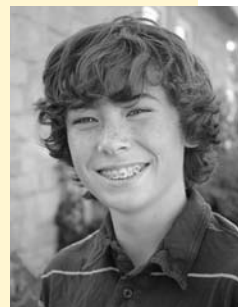
I shut my eyes and gripped the side of the cart, holding on for dear life. "*Abbbbbb*!" Ava and I screamed, only to have the air rush up our throats and drown out all the sound we were pouring forth.

We got closer and closer, until I could see the very patterns of the bricks on the ground... and then we zoomed upwards, back towards the pure, peaceful blue sky, free and safe, like new-born birds learning to fly. Life was bliss. 

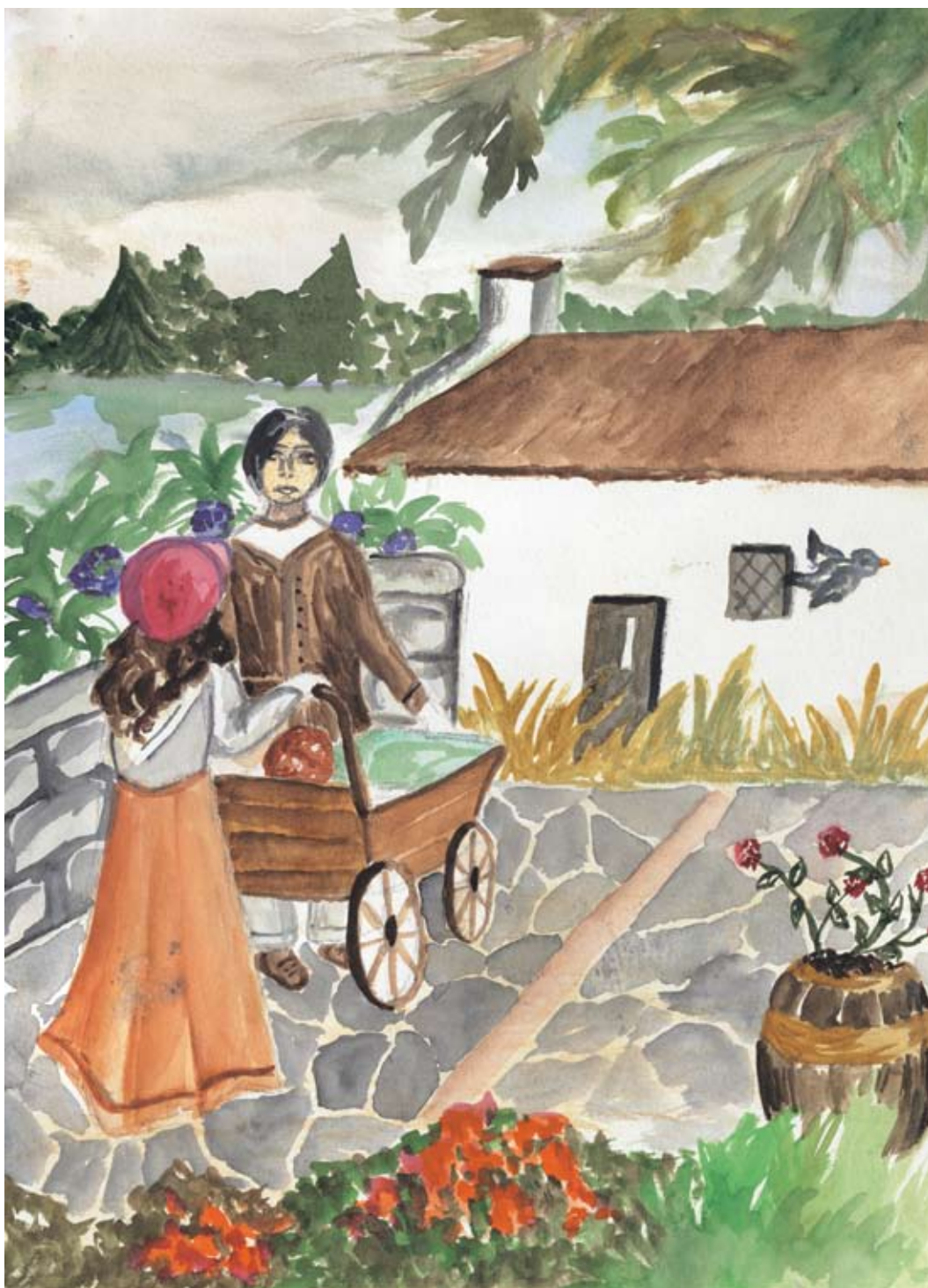
Back Down to Earth

By **Jacob Dysart**

The wind is in my hair as I kick with my foot
The rhythm of my wheels on the cracks of the sidewalk
Thu-thump, thu-thump, thu-thump
The curb is coming to meet me at the end of the block
It draws closer and closer
Its short drop seeming like a cliff
I lean back slightly, about to go off
And then it happens
That sweet split-second in which I am flying, untouched
 by worldly problems
Just flying
Then, as my wheels touch down, the entire world
 comes back in a single gust of wind
Thu-thump, thu-thump, thu-thump
Back down to earth on my skateboard



Jacob Dysart, 13
Long Beach, California



If only we had wings. We could fly to America

Wings

By Eleanor Holton

Illustrated by Daria Lugina

I WAS STARTLED. I really didn't know what to think. I was so sure that I would get the job. The idea of not getting it had never even crossed my mind. I could hear the baby crying outside and Molly was singing to it.

Hush my dear,
The galloping men ride through the bracken, and ride o'er the ben,
Mummy will watch her sleeping hen,
So close your e'en my dearie

She had a beautiful voice. It was clear and pure. The fact that she was so skinny and pale that you could almost see her skeleton didn't affect her voice at all, it made it all the more beautiful.

Ever since it began nothing has been the same. I remember it well. The awful smell, the black veil covering everything, oh yes, the potato famine is absolutely terrible. I walked outside. I had let my whole family down. I couldn't even get a job to save my own family. If only we could get enough money to go on a boat. Then we could escape to America. America. That word fills me with a sort of hope. The land which has streets paved with gold. "The land of opportunity," people say. I would have traded my right ear just to put one foot into the country. All the people in Ireland would. Not just me.

Molly looked at me and I shook my head. She let out a moan and we started walking home. She stopped and laughed as some birds flew by inches away from her bonnet. They called to each other, flying from place to place. If only we had wings. We could



Eleanor Holton, 10
Cambridge, Massachusetts



Daria Lugina, 12
Northboro, Massachusetts



"You naughty child! Whose river did you steal it from this time?" Mama chuckled

fly to America. I looked down, the baby was screaming. Problem is, I thought, we don't have wings.

It was a dismal journey, and we were very glad when we saw home at last. Mama was at her knitting. She is a magician with those needles of hers, I tell you. She was

making a beautiful shawl for Molly, with reds and whites and blues. It was fit for a king. Or a president. "Any luck, Tom?" she looked up at me, but she could tell from our faces. None of us slept. We were all too hungry.

Next morning, Molly came skipping in,

humming a tune and holding a large fish.

"You naughty child! Whose river did you steal it from this time?" Mama chuckled.

Molly laughed, her hair blowing behind her. She looked lovely with a flower tucked behind her ear. "Never you mind, Mama," she said, and she set herself by the stove. Minutes later wonderful smells filled the house. We couldn't survive without Molly.

It was January fifteenth and I finally got a job. We broke up stone and made roads that go from nowhere to nowhere. Absolutely pointless. It was just a way for the government to make more jobs. You'd think they would think of something better than that. Something that would help make the famine go away. At least it would pay the rent of the house for a while.

In the night Molly fell on the floor, coughing. Mama lit a candle and the orange glow filled the small room. I could just make out Molly on the floor, bright red in the face. We helped her back into bed, but she was still coughing. For the next few weeks it went on.

"It's TB," said the doctor as he examined her. He was a very good doctor, we knew that, and we believed him. Molly was so weak, if she put even a foot out of bed she would topple over coughing. But we did all we could to help her get better. We gave her three-quarters of the food, and Mama never left her side. We all thought that she was going to get better.


My job was awful. It wasn't so much the work as the children there. They were starving. Their once young, happy faces as they paddled in the river or laughed with

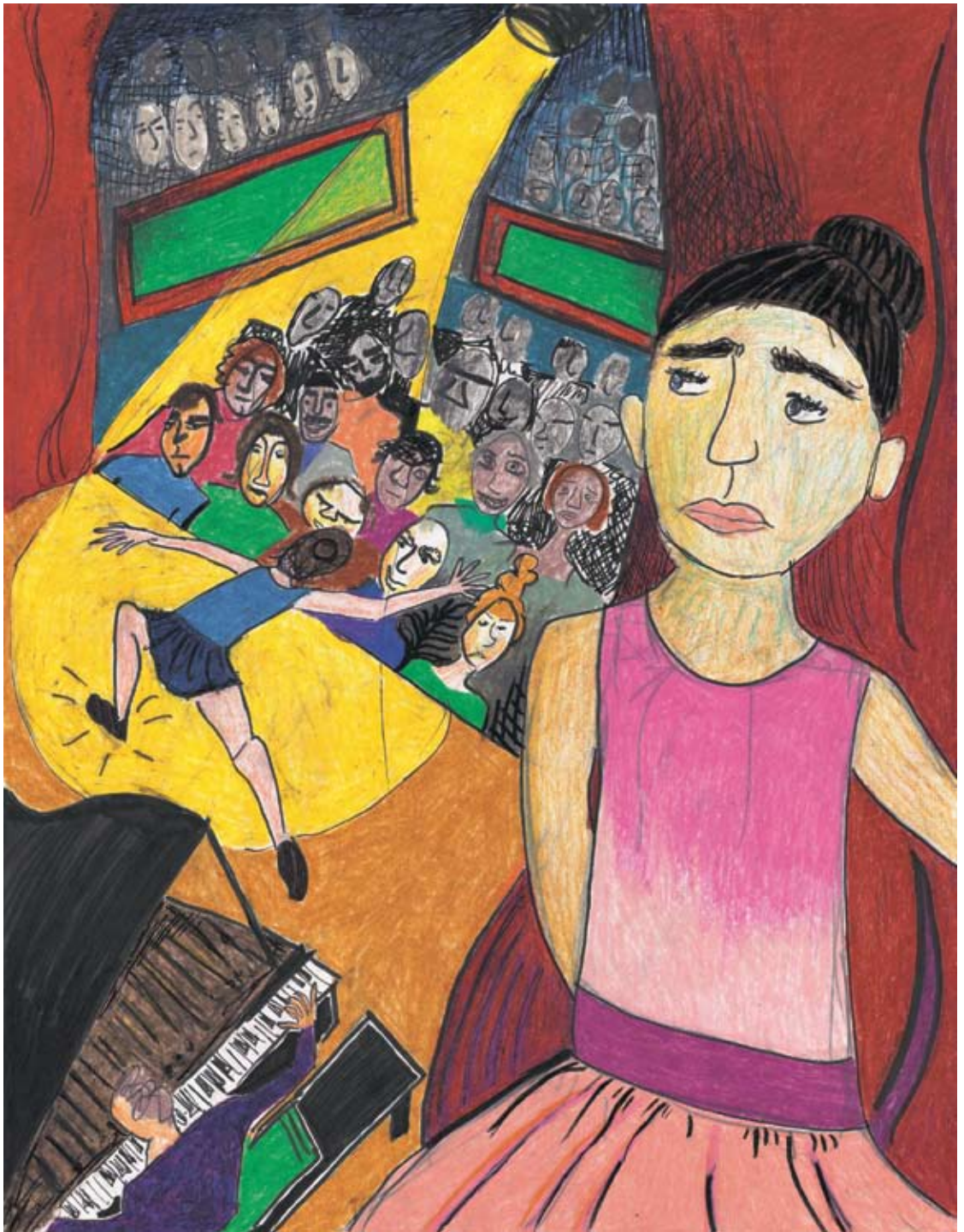
their friends were gone, replaced with a sad, worried expression more fit for an old man bowed down with worries than the young children they were. All they had were memories, which they would swap for a single crumb of bread if they could. Even when we had the small amount of money that we earned, there wasn't any food to buy.

St. Patrick's day came again. We went to church and then joined in with the parades. Mama bought some beer and dyed it green and more fish was stolen from the rivers than ever before. We chopped wood for the fire, and I helped Josie, next door, to look for leprechauns. We had Josie and her family around for a dinner of fish, beer and even one or two potatoes that we managed to find. It was a wonderful day.

The landlord has to feed us. It makes him very angry, but it's a fact. He is going to shove us all out of our own Ireland. Hopefully soon, though I feel sad to leave this country, famine or not.

Molly was up all night coughing. When morning finally came and the birds called to each other, Molly was coughing so hard you couldn't hear yourself talk. Then, all of a sudden, she stopped. The birds outside flew away. Mama rushed over. Then quietly, Mama began to sob.

I LOOKED BACK over Ireland. The boat was rocking softly. I would really miss Ireland, even with the famine. Mama and the baby were playing with a piece of string. Everything would be all right. We were going to America. 



Butterflies were having a party in my stomach

A Sliver of Moonlight

By **Aja Corliss**

Illustrated by **Gwyneth Welch**

CLICK, CLACK, sounded the dancer's feet, echoing out in the auditorium. The smooth piano accompanied her and the audience and judges looked very pleased with the performance. I took a deep breath behind the thick velvet curtain. I was up next. My heart thudded louder than marching drums. I had spent months and months practicing to get this far. I was in the National Level Dancing Team. I breezed through the community and state competitions, but the Nationals were a whole different story. I patted my tight bun and smoothed my tutu out. I was a ballerina.

Other dancers around me were quickly reviewing their routine. I was too jittery to do anything. I hoped I would relax once onstage. I was competing with a lot of serious dancers and I had to admit they were looking pretty sharp. The dancer on stage right now was Opal Vasnull. She was a very talented tap dancer. I breathed slowly and tried to soothe my mind by listening to the rhythmic beat of Opal's performance. I needed to relax.

All of a sudden my mom rushed in. "Mom! What are you doing here? I thought you would be in the audience," I said.

"Yes, hon, I just needed to check on you. Are you all right? After this piece there will be a short intermission and you will be next."

I looked at her grimly. "Mom, Opal is really good. How am I supposed to beat her? I can't possibly polish up my dancing until I've calmed my nerves!" My mom gave me a quizzical look. "You've never been worried about any of the other dance com-



Aja Corliss, 12
Mercer Island, Washington



Gwyneth Welch, 13
Hancock, New Hampshire

petitions before. Maybe you should take a breather. You know, to freshen up a bit and relax and maybe practice.”

I nodded shakily.

My mom patted my shoulder and went back to the audience. I peeked out of the curtains one more time. Opal was clicking away as the piano pounded her finale. I closed the curtain. Butterflies were having a party in my stomach. One of the other contestants named Suzy Roo came up to me and asked, “Are you nervous?”

I shrugged, even though inside I was saying, “Yes, yes!”

Suzy smiled and said, “If I were you I would go outside for a bit to cool out during intermission.”

I nodded, too anxious to reply.

My mom and Suzy had both told me to go outside. I quickly walked out of the crowded backstage area and out the door. A blast of fresh air greeted me. Somehow this made me feel a little more relaxed, but I would need more than that if I were to beat Opal. I walked around the building and stood in a patch of grass. I looked up. Stars glittered everywhere, but the moon wasn’t to be seen. I sighed and sat down. I had so many ribbons from dance competitions and all my friends and family expected me to bring back another blue ribbon this time. This wasn’t helping to ease my nerves. Maybe stretching would help. I got up and at once my legs turned to jelly and started shaking. Great, I couldn’t even stand up. I sat down again and put my head between my legs.

The worst thing that could happen would be if I totally goofed and got last place. At least my mom would still give me the roses that she tried to hide in the car. I put my head up and listened. I heard nothing except for my racing heart beating. Everyone was inside and the animals outside were asleep. It was very still. The world outside the competition seemed frozen, as if waiting for me to perform. I gulped down a flock of butterflies, but they kept fluttering back up.

I looked down at the dark lush grass below me. Then I noticed a glimmer of light on the grass. I peered at it. This was odd. Then I looked up. The moon had peeked out behind the dark clouds ever so slightly, directing its powerful moonlight right onto where I was sitting. No, not where I was sitting, it was on me. It was my spotlight just on me. Somehow this relaxed my bubbling thoughts and eased my anxiety. I realized the moon would always be there. No matter what competition I was at, the moon may not be visible, but it is always there. Win or lose tonight the moon will still shine upon me. Win or lose and the beautiful outside world was going to stay the same.

Suddenly my mind was brought back to when I was a little girl. My very favorite uncle had brought his music player over to our house for Thanksgiving dinner. I remember so clearly my excited little shrills and squeaks when he turned it on and classical music poured out. My small six-year-old feet instantly began to move as I twirled in my flowing pink dress. My



Win or lose tonight the moon will still shine upon me

parents clapped and cheered when I was finished. I remember the feeling of pride so big inside of me that my cheeks had glowed. My parents said that was when I first showed my love for ballet. It made their hearts warm at the sight of their dancing baby girl. They also said that was the best Thanksgiving we ever had.

Now, seven years down the road, here I was on Thanksgiving Day again, completely nervous and jostled by a National Dancing Competition in Kentucky. I danced for the ribbons and glory. I realized with a jolt trickling down my spine

that I was not the little six-year-old dancing for the love it. Now it seemed I just loved competing. This had to change. I didn't need to try to make it happen. It happened by itself. As if on queue birds started to chirp and squirrels began to chatter. I got up and breathed. Then I danced. I danced like I had never danced before. My feet pattered delicately on the frost-covered grass as I twirled. Whatever happened in the competition, I was ready. Win or lose I was ready. I had never felt happier in my entire life than when I danced in the sliver of moonlight. ❁

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