

# Stone Soup

*The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists*



*Illustration by Stanislav Nedzeskyi, age 13, from "The Ship in a Bottle," page 5*

## THE SHIP IN A BOTTLE

Five long years have passed since Sarah found the blue bottle in the sea

## SUMMER DAYS

Some days are so glorious, only a poem can do them justice

*Also:* A story from Ireland

MAY/JUNE 2009

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# Stone Soup

*The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists*

VOLUME 37, NUMBER 5

MAY / JUNE 2009

## STORIES

**The Ship in a Bottle** by Emmy J. X. Wong ..... 5

A little blue bottle travels around the world

**The Drawing** by Mae Hardman-Hill ..... 13

Leo is moving away, and Anabeth gives him a farewell gift

**The Tracks** by Aoife Troxel ..... 17

A train is coming—why won't Mark get off the tracks?

**Summer Days** by Eliza Putnam ..... 23

Eliza, Jamie and Hazen spend a carefree summer day outdoors

**Seahorse** by Rose Diltz ..... 29

Val discovers she is braver than she thought

**Wisconsin** by Madison Kwasny ..... 34

Madison loves returning to her family's summer house

**Half an Eggshell** by Claudia Ross ..... 39

A broken eggshell, screeching hawks—what happened here?

**Swimming with the Dolphins** by Emma Place ..... 41

Lily has an experience she'll never forget

**Lost and Found** by Maureen Sullivan ..... 45

Niki misses Claire terribly, but then she finds a note in the wall

## POEMS

**Beating the Storm** by Alec Zollman ..... 10

**Cubing** by Andrew Lee ..... 33

## BOOK REVIEWS

**In Mozart's Shadow** reviewed by Gertrude S. Suokko ..... 20

**Summer Ball** reviewed by Aidan Quigley ..... 36



page 5



page 13




page 39



page 45



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# Stone Soup

*The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists*

**W**ELCOME TO ALL OUR READERS, old and new! We've had the pleasure of publishing *Stone Soup* for over 35 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, phone number and e-mail.

**Cover:** Stanislav Nedzelskyi has won many awards for his artwork, including second place in the UNESCO International Poster Art Contest. In 2007 he represented the state of Texas at the Children's World Festival in Washington, D.C. Stanislav adores drawing his pet dog, Lucy, and wants to be an architect when he grows up.

# The Mailbox



LBP, 9

I really enjoyed reading the January/February 2009 issue. My favorite story was “Mirror, Mirror,” by Sabrina Wong. It was really realistic because at just about every school there are mean, popular people who act like Ellie. Tiger Tam’s illustrations were great! I liked how they were detailed and followed the story’s descriptions. Besides her artwork, I also loved Tiger Tam’s letter; I agree that “Mirror, Mirror” was one of *Stone Soup*’s best stories yet and it’s really great that she wrote an essay about how she felt.

**VIRGINIE CASPARD, 13**  
*Westfield, New Jersey*

For years I have enjoyed reading stories, poems, and book reviews, accompanied by beautiful illustrations, in your magazine. Children see the world in a different way, and I feel honored to read the story or poem of another child. In addition, it is interesting to see how a child would illustrate a story. I also enjoy reading book reviews, especially of books I have already read.

**ALICE-YANHONG LU, 12**  
*Camarillo, California*

I love your magazine. I’m an artist at heart! And some of those artworks are breathtaking. Eri Mizobe, your story, “Kane’s Treasure” [July/August 2006], was spectacular. It has such a great message! Talitha Farschman, your story, “The Tale of the Strange Nobleman” [May/June 2008], was great. You should most definitely think of becoming a published author. And Abbie Brubaker, “Memories of Moon” [May/June 2008], was so detailed. I’m a cat lover at heart, but I can’t have one. *Never* stop writing. And never stop making *Stone Soup*.

**SOPHIA MACLEAN, 12**  
*Broomfield, Colorado*

I just want to thank you for making a dream come true in allowing my work, “The Delivery Boy” [January/February 2009], to be published in your excellent magazine, *Stone Soup*. It’s a great honor to be published among so many other outstanding writers and artists that I have seen so often in *Stone Soup*. Thanks to your encouragement, I love writing more than ever. Sadly, I won’t be able to submit any more work because I’m fourteen now. However, I want to try and continue to get published in the future. Also, I’d like to tell you about my younger sisters. They were very excited to see that young writers could actually get published! You might be getting a flood of submissions from them in the future.

**RICHARD WANG, 14**  
*Chalfont, Pennsylvania*

I am so intrigued by the contents of your child-focused and child-driven publication. The young writers who have made a contribution to *Stone Soup* have poured their souls into their writings, and the details encased in their illustrations are just as astounding as their writings. *Stone Soup* has done an outstanding job of tapping into the pool of undiscovered young authors.

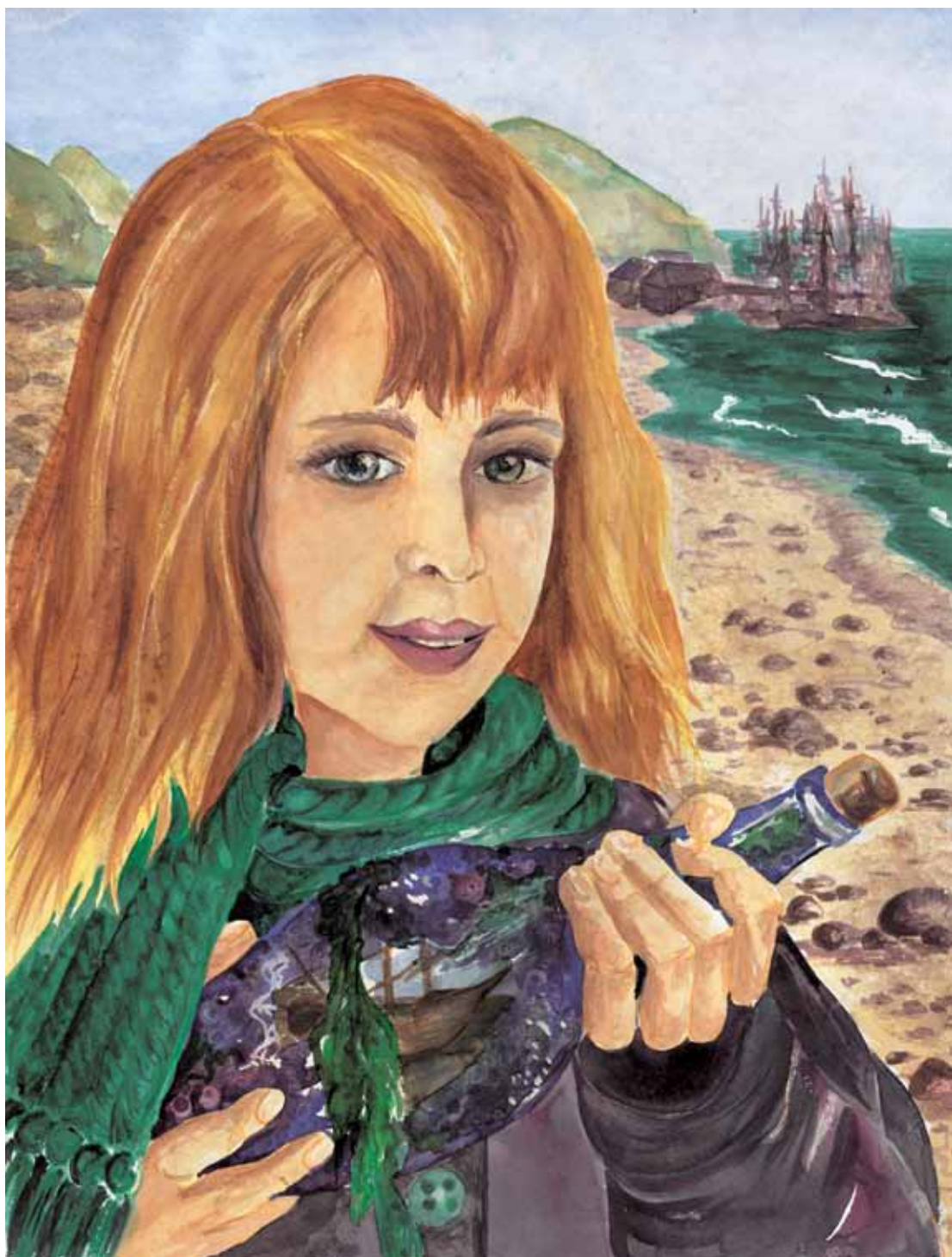
**SARAH GOMILLA, WRITING TEACHER**  
*Pinellas Park, Florida*

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

## **WWW.SECRETBUILDERS.COM**

*Stone Soup* is excited to announce that we are now partners with SecretBuilders, an online world for children offering a variety of creative activities, including an online interactive magazine where young writers can get published. We encourage you to visit [secretbuilders.com](http://secretbuilders.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, birthdate, home address, phone number and e-mail.



*It was the most curious thing she had ever seen*

# The Ship in a Bottle

By **Emmy J. X. Wong**

*Illustrated by* **Stanislav Nedzelskyi**

SARAH STARED AT the detail in the rigging of the tiny ship inside the glass bottle the window of the Chandlery had to offer. She hoped someday it could be her personal vessel. If it were hers, oh, the marvelous adventures she would send it on! But the time for daydreaming was over. The day was becoming eclipsed. She surveyed the horizon where the pale blue cloudless sky sank swiftly into inky surf. Down by the docks, she knew her father, an earnest fisherman in the short summer months, was probably whiling away the cold, hard afternoon whittling a small piece of ash. She could picture him in his work, humming sea-faring ditties to keep himself company. Newfoundland could be a desolate place in the stark winter months. She would finish her daily stroll along the deserted rocky shoreline hunting for rare treasure or a treasure map, as was her daily custom, and meet up with her father before heading home for supper. She knew her mother would have a thick meaty stew simmering on the woodstove, while Jordy, still only a toddler, would be amusing himself in his high chair with a tarnished silver spoon dangling from his mouth.

But today was not like any other. At once Sarah spied the translucent bottle holding pieces of sea and sky, bobbing up and down on the near cresting waves. It was the most curious thing she had ever seen. Standing on the shoreline and being careful not to get her only pair of shoes wet, she picked up the indigo bottle and emptied its foamy contents back into the sea. Upon doing so, the bottle's smooth glassy surface caught her fancy.



Emmy J. X. Wong, 12  
Weston, Massachusetts



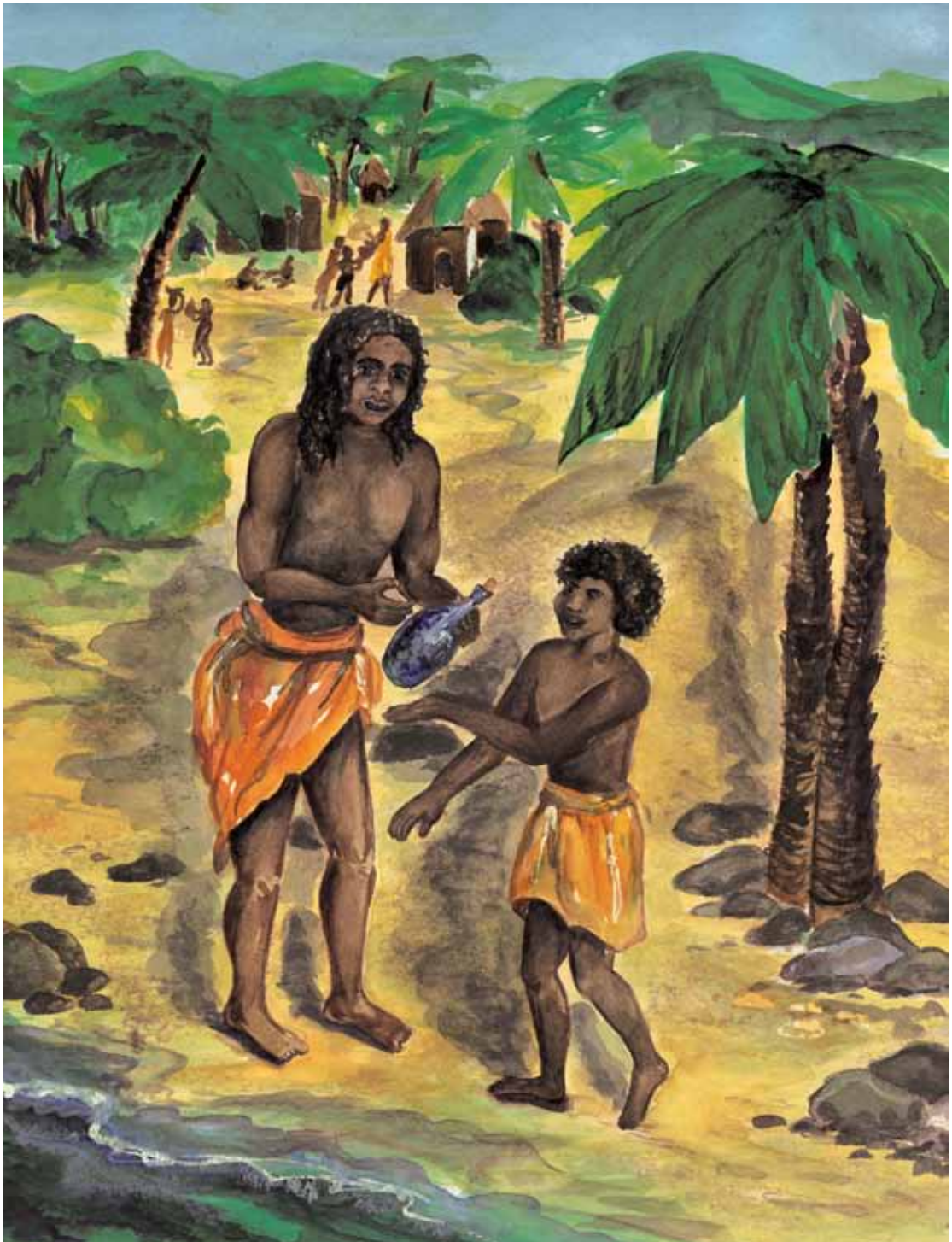
Stanislav Nedzelskyi, 13  
Keller, Texas

It appeared to be a very ancient bottle, not at all like the kind found in the local Pierce's Mercantile and General. Inside its neck sat a bloated, saturated piece of cloth-like paper that had markings on it resembling tightly curled letters. Sarah knew from her home-schooling that the first bottles were invented by the Egyptians millennia ago, and likely the scrawl it held could not be hieroglyphics. Still, it looked like cuneiform. Could the bottle be one that originally held spirits, perhaps tossed overboard by a sailor from a Spanish galleon? Or could it have been discarded by an English vessel, possibly by a ship's doctor, having already outlived its medicinal purpose? And what story lay buried in the mysterious code being held captive in its hull? She was enthralled with the bottle's curved, frosted appearance, and its wide, long neck. Along its shaft, it appeared pitted. Yes, this was a stalwart mariner of sorts which had sailed nobly and durably upon the high seas, possibly for centuries.

Upon eyeing the curious bottle, her father had an idea. Although Sarah was reluctant at first to relinquish the treasure back into its briny home, she also recognized an opportunity to own a twin to the tiny ship making its home in the Chandlery. So, after much deliberation over a supper of moose-and-carrot stew and buttermilk biscuits, the plan was decided upon. After the evening meal, Sarah chose one of her father's best hand-carved miniature orca whales, the more acclaimed inhabitants of Newfoundland,

to slip into the fluted neck of the bottle. She and her father carefully corked the bottle and sealed it with hot wax from the cabin's only light source. With the next changing of the tides, the vessel again was launched.

ON A SUN-DRENCHED afternoon, with the reflecting rays so strong as to be blinding, Michel was intrigued by what he saw just meters in front of him, swirling in an eddy. It could be a small grayish-blue sandpiper or it could be a fluid bottle, the color of sea. From a distance, he was not certain which. Michel's feet burned from the sand as hot as embers leading down to the shoreline of Côte d'Ivoire. He painstakingly made his way to the lapping waves to retrieve the ancient relic, which had appeared as if by magic. At once, he brought the glistening bottle back to his father to study. There was no doubt; this bottle had been put into the vast sea with purpose. It had a message to deliver. The twelve-year-old boy twisted the cork out of the bottle with keen interest. The contents were surprisingly dry. Looking inside the walls of the bottle, he spotted the hand-carved whale and smiled. Carefully constructed, it seemed it had been fashioned just for his amusement. His father, who knew some other languages in addition to his native French, was able to decipher that the carefully penned alphabet on the accompanying note was in fact Arabic. The name inscribed at the bottom in English was "Sarah" and the date recorded as eight



*Carefully constructed, it seemed it had been fashioned just for his amusement*



*Her grandfather was a master of porcelain, which had become fashionable in Japan*

months previously. The writing above it was primitive and resembled pictograms. Sarah's penmanship in comparison was well developed next to the small picture of the cetacean with its signature spout. Michel and his father thought long and hard of an appropriate response and after three whole days of devoted consternation chose two small items that would represent their proud country and tossed it back into the sea.

WHEN KEIKO discovered the bottle on the rocks overlooking Yokohama Bay, she was enchanted.


Without hesitation, she uncorked the aqua frosted vessel. Immediately a scent of cacao and coffee wafted from its portal. She closed her eyes and pictured coffee beans picked and roasted from a plantation set back under a canopy of lush leafy trees. The scent was pungent. This was very different from the smell of fish escaping from the local cannery and the scent of green tea which filled her nostrils, rising from her mother's teapot at each morning and evening meal. Keiko pondered over which item to put next into the experienced seafaring vessel. Her grandfather was a master of porcelain, which

had become fashionable in Japan. And he was overjoyed when she asked him to donate one of his tiny porcelain dolls which effortlessly slipped through the wide throat into the vessel's cavernous belly. Keiko added her name to the list in carefully inked characters and the very next day tossed the mysterious bottle from the highest point she could find into the eagerly awaiting waters below. She kept her treasure, the original contents held by the bottle, in a jar in her top drawer and counted it among her most valuable possessions. Each time she peeked at the jar, she fantasized about the bottle's long journey into the globe's east corridors and the barracuda, leatherback turtles and giant squid it must have swum past in order to reach her.

**W**HEN ALAS SARAH spied the bottle with all the enthusiasm brought about by the unbridled sails of a homebound ship awaiting its much needed sabbatical, she was not surprised. Every day, since its heroic departure, she had checked for its return. So today, she was more delighted than surprised. Like a daughter waiting for her sea captain father's return, she was overjoyed with the reunion. But she wasn't sure whether it held new cargo from distant ports, or whether she'd be disappointed and find only the original contents she had sequestered in the vessel with a world of anticipation. Had the bottle been out there in the sea biding its time in the North Atlantic, or had it in fact found currents and streams that took it to distant shores,

and somehow only now found its way back to her through the same channels? It had been five long years since that translucent bottle first appeared in the dead of winter. Sarah decided to uncork the bottle ceremoniously over supper that night.

When the bottle was unhinged, a light scent of ginger wafted from its sanctuary within. It was a healthy sign. Out slipped a small daintily carved jade figure of a Buddha. Investigating the rolled cloth more intently now, Sarah could make out at least eleven different signatures written in all types of languages in varying shades of ink. Her entire family was captivated by the little unassuming passport that lay open before them, seated tonight as the special guest of honor.

Jordy, now almost seven, was old enough this time to appreciate the adventurous tales the guest had brought to the Doyle home. This time, Jordy reached inside his pocket and took out his best variegated cat's-eye marble. It rolled through the bottle's gateway neck without hesitation. He reached for the dwindling flame from the shrinking ivory paraffin candle in the middle of the table. With his father's help, the task was soon complete. Before it was even tossed again back into the frigid black North American waters, he began daydreaming of tropical Tahitian sunsets and the land of kangaroos down under, scenery he was familiar with only through the well-worn atlas that sat atop the cabin's bookshelf. He couldn't wait for its next homecoming and the handsome tales it would surely be poised to tell. 

# Beating the Storm

*By* Alec Zollman



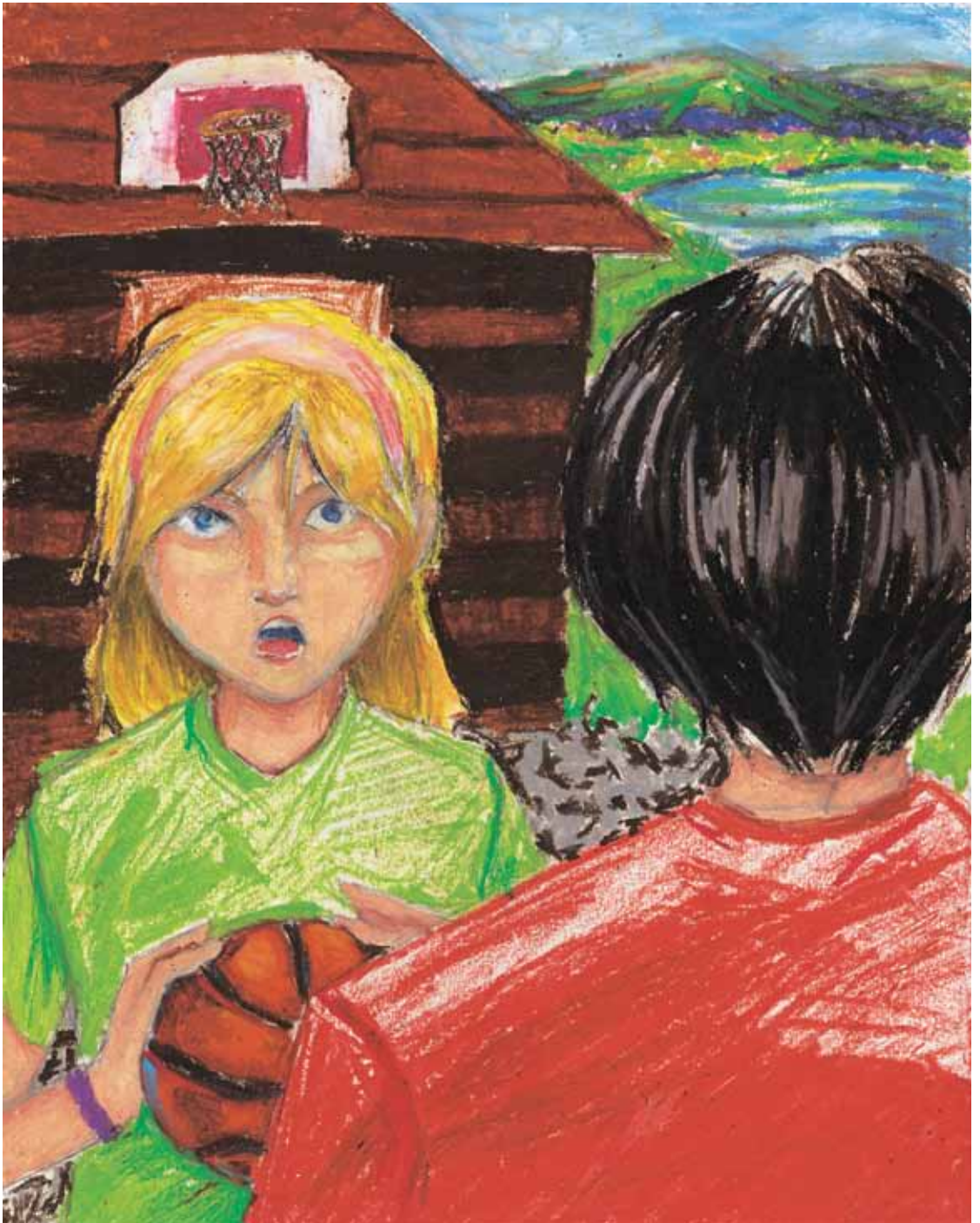
Alec Zollman, 13  
Strafford, New Hampshire

I zoom uphill  
Take a cautious turn onto the road  
Coasting downhill feels great  
Like jumping in the ocean  
No pedaling, a cool breeze  
Still lurking in my mind  
The thought of pushing the limit  
To go back uphill  
I slowly come across a steep hill  
My thighs burn  
I am going in slow motion  
But it is worth going up this hill  
For the thrill of going down the other side  
The cool air whips across my shirtless skin  
I rocket down the hill

Hill by hill I pedal  
Until my body feels like one big wet noodle  
A storm cloud approaches  
Making it more of a challenge to get to the lake

The air feels like swimming in hot water  
I finally reach the last hill  
My energy bursts  
Like squeezing water from a sponge

I reach the lake  
Relief fills my body  
First move... JUMP IN  
The water is perfect



*"It's not a joke. I'm moving"*

# The Drawing

By Mae Hardman-Hill

Illustrated by Annie Liu

**I**'M MOVING."  
Anabeth stared at Leo. Her mouth was hanging open and her eyes were wide.

"What?"

"I'm moving to New York City."

Anabeth gulped. "Funny. Ha ha," she said tentatively.

"It's not a joke. I'm moving."

The words seemed to hang in the air. Anabeth stared at Leo across the basketball she held in her hands.

"Why?"

"M'dad got a new job."

"But you'll come and visit, right?"

"S'pose"

Anabeth didn't know what to do, so she threw the ball. It bounced off the rim of the hoop. Leo's gaze followed the ball as it rolled towards the shed, but he did not follow it. Neither did Anabeth.

Later, Leo could not say how long they stood there silently. It seemed hours. Finally, Anabeth's mom came out of the house and called, "Cookies!"

**T**HE NEXT DAY AT SCHOOL Anabeth could not pay attention. Her eyes kept straying to Leo, who was sitting at the desk next to her. She kept replaying last night's conversation in her mind. *New York City*. How could he live so far?

She bent over her textbook and tried to read. What did she



Mae Hardman-Hill, 10  
Ridgewood, New York



Annie Liu, 11  
Somerset, New Jersey

care if Peter Stuyvesant had a peg leg?

She stole another glance at her best friend. He sat absorbed in his textbook, twirling one stray bang. She would miss that about him. No matter where he was, Leo was almost always twirling a bit of his jet-black hair.

**A**NABETH RODE as fast as she could. Years of practice kept her from falling off her bike. The roads and houses and farms of Geneva, New York, flew past her.

Her mind raced, trying to find something positive about the situation.

*At least we're staying in the same state. He's only going to be a day's drive away.*

**L**EO SAW ANABETH coming five minutes before she arrived. When she got there she leapt off her bike and ran to him. Only when she was a few feet away did he realize she was crying. This was strange somehow.

They stood there quietly for a moment. Then all at once, Anabeth let out a sob and ran forward. She flung her arms around him and then just cried. Leo returned the hug without really thinking.

"Come on! We have to go!" Leo's dad's voice rang out through the silence.

Anabeth detached herself from Leo and reached into her basket. She pulled out a piece of paper.

"I thought you might want this."

She handed it to him. He unfolded the paper and looked at the drawing of a girl with blond hair and a boy with jet-black hair, riding bikes by a lake. He recognized

it as Seneca Lake.

He and Anabeth had often ridden their bikes there.

"Come on!"

Leo raised his eyes to Anabeth's.

"Good-bye... Anabeth."

She was crying again.

"Good-bye."

He climbed into the car and stared out of the window. As he stared at his best friend in front of his house, growing smaller and smaller, a single tear ran down his cheek.

**"L**EO! WAKE UP!"

Leo opened his eyes. The car was no longer speeding past country fields, but driving over a great bridge. Leo had lived in the more country-like part of Geneva, so the sight of the city ahead made his eyes grow wide.

"Beautiful, right?"

Leo shrugged. So far the Manhattan skyline was unimpressive. Just a jumble of buildings.

"See that one in the middle? The really tall one?"

Leo nodded.

"That's the Empire State Building."

They finally got to the other end of the bridge. The buildings here were much taller than the ones he normally saw.

"We're going to take a detour. We'll go to Times Square."

His father took a bunch of turns and twists, following the streets that all looked the same to him. How could anybody find their way? Back in Geneva he

and Anabeth had nicknamed all of the roads: Cherry Road (there was a Cherry tree), Farm Road (there was a bunch of farms). And then there was the best: Seneca Road. This road went all the way around Seneca Lake.

Lost in thought, Leo stared out of the window, not really seeing. The streets sped past, not really meaning anything.

“Leo, we’re here.”

Leo woke from his daydreams, and the busy streets and loud music of New York came back to him. They were entering a little area that was like a town. Every building was made of the same red bricks.

They stopped in front of a building. The building was on top of a hill, along with several other buildings. He climbed the stairs and peered around the corner of the building. Right next to the building that would soon be his home, was a little playground.

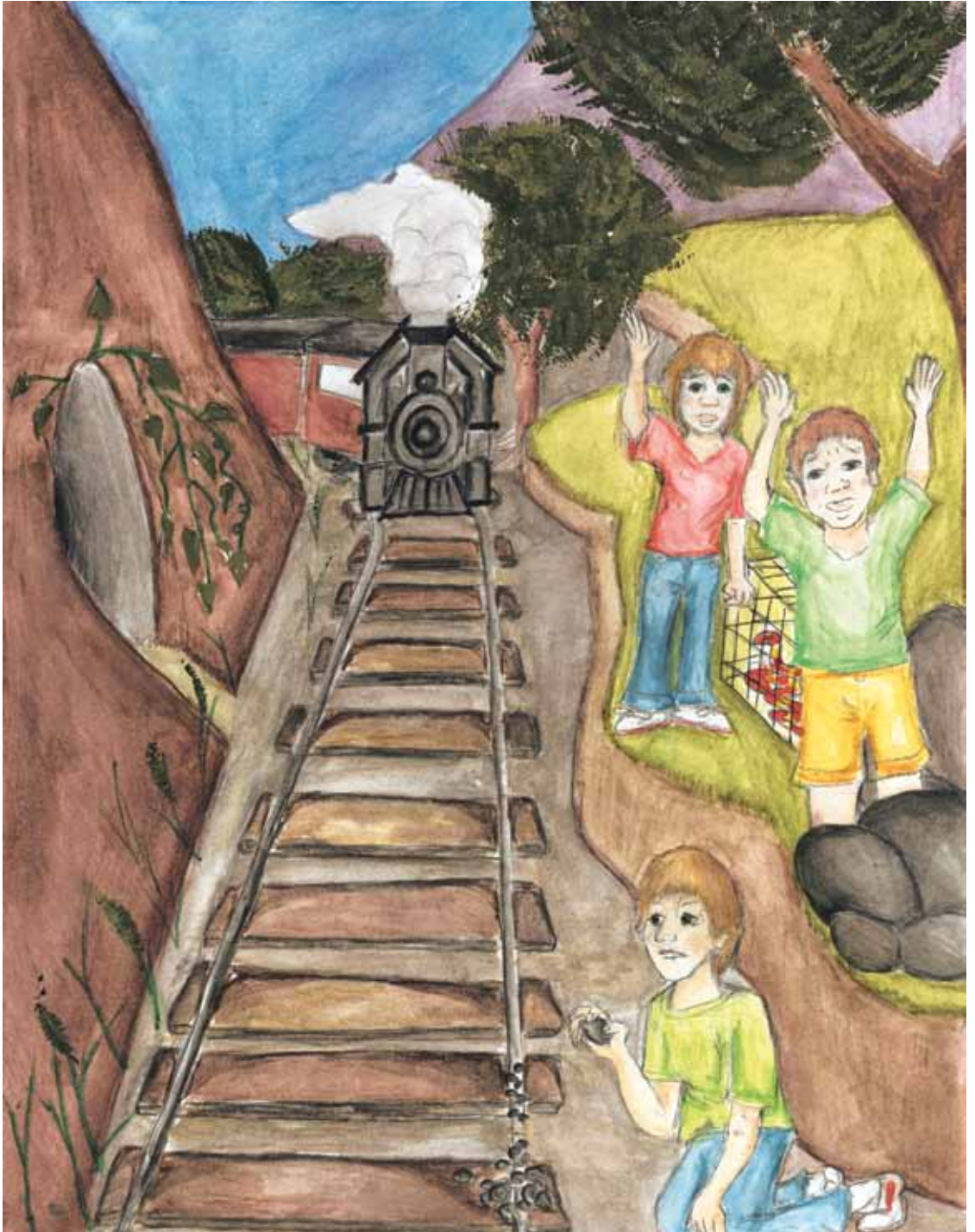
SEVERAL HOURS later, Leo stood in his room. It was fairly big. It had two windows, and pushed to one wall was his old loft bed and on another was a white shelf.

He walked over to the shelf and pulled out the drawing. Now that he looked at it, he could see that all Anabeth’s artistic skill was put into it. He could see each strand of hair, even a twinkle in the eyes. But the real beauty was not them, but the lake behind them. She had managed to make it shimmer, and make each current a different shade of blue-green. She had drawn the beautiful trees that held white flowers. One fell onto his shoulder, and his hand went up from the bike to brush it away. The hills behind the lake were a rich green, and somehow Anabeth had drawn the mist so that it looked real.

Leo took one last glance at it, and then tucked it away in a little box on the shelf. Then he lay on the bed and stared out of the window. He could see the city beyond. The city that would be the beginning... and the end.

IT HAS BEEN nine years. But still, even now, if you go to 530 East 20TH Street, Apartment 7E, you will see a room. And in that room there is a shelf. And on that shelf there is a box. And in that box there is a paper. And on that paper there is a drawing. ❀





*“Mark, come on!” I screamed frantically*

# The Tracks

By **Aoife Troxel**

*Illustrated by* **Zachary Meyer**

**T**HE DAY I SAVED Mark's life, there was no sign of disaster in the brilliant blue sky that sparkled in my eyes as I awoke, casting the shadow of my rocking chair over the wooden floor. It was August, at the peak of tourist season. Rob was off to camp, way up in the Berkshires of Massachusetts. So I decided to pop down to the tracks. This was one of me and Rob's favorite hangouts, besides the amusement park where Rob's uncle worked.

I quietly slipped on some clothes, careful not to wake my younger brother, Scott. Ma had warned him off the tracks on pain of death. Anyways, he was too young for me to bother with.

As I passed Ma's room, I took care to avoid the creaky board. If she had woken, she would've demanded where I was off to, and she'd never let me go, even if I managed a lie.

I had my appendix out last July, and I think Ma near fainted from grief, being that my older brother died from appendicitis. Ma was a wee bit paranoid now, it being five years to the date after his death.

As I passed the kitchen, I snatched an apple from the bowl on the table. There were a few flies buzzing around last night's dishes in the sink. I was careful not to let any more in, as I crept out the back.

Virginia in the summer is hot, even with the sea nearly in the backyard. The sweat was pouring off me by the time I reached the tracks.

I saw Joe Parkinson there already. Him and his brother Mark



Aoife Troxel, 12  
Inverin, County Galway, Ireland



Zachary Meyer, 13  
Shelby Township, Michigan

were trying to light a fire with a magnifying glass. I waved at them before I jogged down the tracks to my spot.

It was right at a curve in the tracks, and closed in on three sides. I thought of it as a sort of nook in the hillside.

I stayed crouched there while I finished my apple, right down to the seeds. I made a game of spitting them across the tracks, after flicking the stem into the grass.

Joe and Mark had given up their fire, and were walking up the tracks toward me. They could have been twins, they looked so alike—the same tousled dirty-blond hair and wide, green eyes—but there were nearly three years between them.

“That was some crack in Scouts, wasn’t it?” Joe asked, by way of greeting. I nodded amiably and jumped down from the nook. Mark was rubbing his head, remembering.

We had let out the least dangerous of Counselor Sawman’s snakes, and were playing with them. I was absently poking one of the sleepier ones with a stick.

Joe rather likes snakes, so he didn’t like my prodding. He snatched the stick from my hand.

“Hey!” I shouted. Joe was dancing away, routinely holding the stick out temptingly, then pulling it back. I ran at him with my arms out threateningly. We collapsed in a wrestling heap.

I could see Mark quietly sneaking up behind, so I tried to keep Joe occupied. It worked. Mark quickly pounced on Joe’s

sneaker. “Ha,” he whooped, and whisked away before Joe could move. Mark set off at a canter, holding the shoe above his head.

I was watching him with a laugh about to burst out of my lips, when he suddenly disappeared. His sneakers, meant for tramping, had no grips on their soles and had slid on the slick leaves.

He had fallen backwards into the steep slope we called the Gorge. It was maybe twenty feet wide, thirty feet deep and greatly resembled a miniature valley.

I rushed over, in time to see Mark’s flailing limbs roll down the hill at great speed. I grimaced. Joe was standing very still; he didn’t even appear to be breathing. I realized that I was holding my breath.

Crack! Mark’s head bounced off a log at the bottom of the Gorge. Joe and I hurriedly skidded down to him. We dragged him back up the hill, panting heavily.

He was “all right,” Joe diagnosed, while I meekly enclosed the snakes in their cages once again.

I smiled nervously now, and reached down for some loose stones to chuck across the tracks.

Mark was laboriously placing some pebbles along the rail. They seemed to be rather unsteady, and kept wobbling to and fro.

“Ed,” shouted Joe, “train’s comin’!” I dropped my rocks and ran back to the shelter of the trees with Joe. Mark’s pebbles had almost all been shaken off the rail, but Mark was still sitting by it.

“Mark,” Joe called, “move it!” Mark

didn't move, just kind of twitched.

"Mark, come on!" I screamed frantically.

I could hear the train's whistle now, the one it always blew right before it came hurtling around the bend.

In my mind, I could already see Mark's broken body being flung down the tracks like a rag doll.

I knew I couldn't let that happen, but my body seemed as slow as my mind was fast.

I rushed at Mark with a sudden pump of adrenaline. I felt my hands collide with his bony shoulders as, at the same time, I flung myself backwards to escape the train.

The driver had seen us seconds before. I could smell my hair burning from the friction sparks of braking wheels on track.

I waited breathlessly as the short train passed. It might have only lasted seconds, but it felt like years I waited for that train to go.

And when it did, I saw Mark. He was huddled on the other side of the tracks, with his head in his hands. But he appeared to be alive.

The train had come to a screeching halt a few hundred yards ahead. People were indignantly streaming out of it. I could hear a man loudly complaining to his wife, who appeared to have her eyes closed. It seemed like the entire host of passengers had come pouring out, and were angrily muttering.

But soon it all faded to a welcome buzzing, and I could no longer distinguish any particular voices from the crowd.

Joe had nimbly leapt over the tracks

and was sitting by Mark's side. I noticed the crowd had gone silent. So they had finally noticed us. I hoped they felt ashamed of themselves.

"Let me through," called a voice. "I'm a doctor." I numbly moved over as a man in a pinstripe suit pushed through the crowd of passengers. "Call for help," he commanded.

I could faintly hear the message being passed back to the driver, who radioed it to the hospital in Norfolk. Soon, the welcome siren of an ambulance made its way to my ears.

I watched the paramedics jump out of the vehicle, and cluster around Mark and Joe. One of the team ran back to the ambulance and returned, carrying a stretcher. I could see another wave Joe away, while the remaining three strapped Mark to the stretcher. They jogged up the incline, and slid the stretcher into the ambulance, like a baker might slide a loaf of bread into his oven. The driver, who had remained in the ambulance, took one glance into his rearview mirror to assure his passengers were steady, then took off with a squeal of wheels. The exhaust somewhat marred the red and white colors of its rear, but they were still visible as the ambulance retreated.

The two colors danced and blurred in my eyes. I realized I was crying.

As I reached a hand up to wipe my eyes, I saw Ma and Scott grinning at me from a crowd of faces. Then I could see the red and white strap of the medal for bravery being lowered over my head. 🍀

# Book Review

By Gertrude S. Suokko

*In Mozart's Shadow: His Sister's Story*, by Carolyn Meyer; Harcourt Children's Books: New York, 2008; \$17



Gertrude S. Suokko, 13  
Woodstock, Vermont


WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART was gifted in music beyond imagination. He was a genius, a prodigy. He is remembered and respected by thousands of people all over the world as one of the greatest composers. But no one remembers his sister, Nannerl Mozart. She was almost as talented as Wolfgang, but she was a girl. Possibly the best harpsichordist of her time, Nannerl was pushed away from her musical dreams to make room for her brother's brilliance. As children, Wolfgang and Nannerl sat for hours, side by side, at the harpsichord, making music together. At one point in Carolyn Meyer's book, *In Mozart's Shadow*, Nannerl says, "My brother might tease me about almost anything but he never said a critical word about my keyboard technique. I adored him for that."

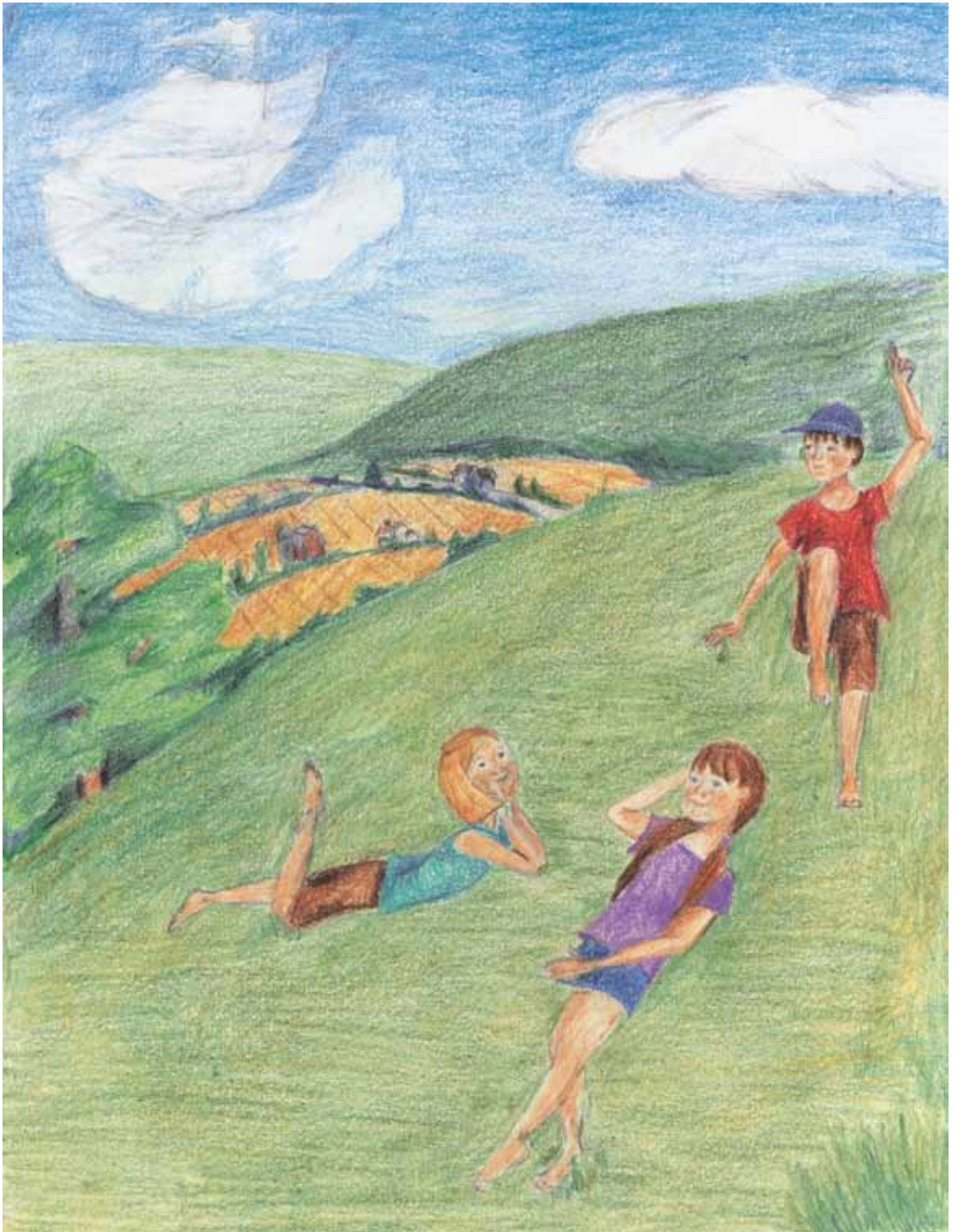
I found *In Mozart's Shadow* to be a rather sad, yet compelling story, not because of death or tragedy, but because Nannerl had more disappointments than joys. Her one solace was her music. I have had three very disappointing piano teachers, causing me to lose joy in my music. But reading Nannerl's story and how she loved making music has inspired me to love playing again. I live in a pretty, small town, not as ancient and refined as Salzburg, Austria, where the Mozarts lived, yet like it in some ways.

Sometimes when I am at home, I feel caged and isolated, and when I am away from home, I miss it and realize how wonderful it is. In the story, Nannerl Mozart can never achieve her full potential living in Salzburg, but she yearns for it when she leaves it.

The character I could not make up my mind about was Nannerl's father, Leopold Mozart. He was a devoted teacher to his children and he took them all over Europe. They traveled to the courts of the greatest powers of the time, to entertain the nobility with their extraordinary playing. But soon Leopold gave all his attention to Wolfgang and forgot his daughter until the end of his life when he needed her. I have conflicting feelings about Leopold; I can see why he would give up his talented daughter for his brilliant son. However, to leave Nannerl behind when he took Wolfgang to Italy, and not give her her chance, was awful. Leopold loved his daughter, but she was a girl, and her only respectable future in his eyes was marriage. The father and son traveled to Italy numerous times, where Wolfgang studied music. Yet Wolfgang resented the never-ending control of his father and he longed to break away. Probably all of us have known someone who grew up too closely tied by their parents and when they broke free they became distant or moved away, fearing to be fettered again. So it was with Wolfgang.

My brother and I often play with dolls. We can spend hours making up stories for the dolls to act out. Nannerl and Wolfgang did a similar thing with chess pieces. As they played the game of chess, they would make up stories for the pieces to live out. Nannerl often felt that she and Wolfgang were two halves of one person, and when they played together they became whole.

I thought Carolyn Meyer wrote a beautiful story about people who really lived. Through the eyes of Nannerl Mozart, the characters struggle and achieve, living out their lives with both sorrow and joy. 



*Are we like that? Do we not even know it when something incredible just passes us by?*

# Summer Days

By **Eliza Putnam**

*Illustrated by* **Sarah Jessica Osburn**

“**T**HAT ONE LOOKS LIKE a ship,” I say, pointing my finger to a large cloud. I can almost see Captain Hook swaggering on the deck, but then my fantasy just evaporates into another fat cloud. I turn my head and see a herd of elephants parading through the sky. They stampede through the clouds, and I say nothing, waiting for them to disappear into a daydream. I imagine the sun shining on the elephants in Africa.

“Eliza?” Jamie asks, breaking my trance.

“What? Sorry... wasn’t listening,” I say.

“We noticed,” Hazen snorts.

“Hey now!” I say, sitting up.

“You are so out of it, Liza.”

“Speak for yourself,” I shoot back to Hazen.

“Look!” Jamie says, breaking our friendly bickering. Two huge clouds are going toward each other. I’m confused. The wind should be pushing them in the same direction.

“They’re on different planes,” explains Jamie.

“Thank you for enlightening us, boy super-genius,” Hazen says, but I marvel at the clouds as they hover above us, going toward each other faster than the average clouds. But when the two clouds meet, nothing happens. They just go by. Are we like that? Do we not even know it when something incredible just passes us by?

“Huh,” is all I have to say.

We all lie back down, staining the backs of our shirts with wet grass, to watch the clouds.



Eliza Putnam, 12  
Hartland, Vermont



Sarah Jessica Osburn, 13  
Lindley, New York

"This is what summer is meant to be," says Hazen lazily. I nod wholeheartedly.

"Yeah," agrees Jamie. "Hey, look! That one looks like an E," he says.

"Yeah, it does," I say. "I wonder if the cloud gods are trying to tell me something?" I wiggle my eyebrows, and Hazen cracks up.

"Let's go!" Hazen says, jumping up. I follow her, knowing exactly what she means.

"Where are we supposed to go?" asks Jamie, not yet caught on.

"Anywhere! Everywhere!" I say, and start running. Hazen flies by me. Jamie soon catches up. We sprint through the infinity of green fields. My feet get covered in dewy mowed grass, but who cares?

I run with the wind. With the ground beneath my feet, and the sun shining for us high above. Something about this care-free feeling is better than anything else.

When school starts, these times are gone, so I savor the thundering noise of my feet hitting the ground, and the wind pushing my hair into my face, and sun hurting my eyes. The three of us run until we collapse.

My heart is beating way too fast, but I'm still in energy mode.

"Chicken," I say.

"Low," Jamie responds immediately.

"Tree!" I shout. It is my favorite game.

"Leaf."

"Alphabet."

"Bog."

"Flame!"

"Stare." I wonder how long this game

could go. It is nothing. You shout words until someone pauses. But it is the best game in the entire world.

"Um, guys, what's going on?" asks Hazen. Jamie and I keep shouting. Finally I point to Hazen, and say one word.

"You." And just like that, she has joined the endless game.

After a while Jamie stops, and Hazen drains out, too. Now I am the only one screaming. I must sound like a lunatic.

One last word. "Champion!" I yell, laughing.

"Hey, look over there!" says Hazen.

A huge rock bulges out in the meadow. It is covered in ivy, moss, and prickles, and surrounded by high grass filled with thorns and milkweed. "Let's climb it!" I say. Jamie and Hazen look reluctant. "Oh c'mon!" Hazen follows me, but Jamie stays. "Please, Jamie?" He shakes his head.

"No prickles for me," he says.

"Fine," says Hazen, and we jog over to the unmowed weeds around the rock.

"OK, here we go," I say, and start fighting my way through the jungle that reaches my belly button. "Ow!" My first thorn—with many to follow, I'm sure—scratches my leg.

I hear an almost responding "Ow!" behind me from Hazen. We forge on.

When we're halfway there, I hear a voice not belonging to Hazen. "Ouch!"

"Jamie!" I turn. "Thanks for coming." We wait for him to catch up, and then continue.

After many prickles, scratches, and pauses for tick checks, we reach the top.

I look around the rock. I see the same things but from a higher perspective. "Well, this is a disappointment," Hazen says. I kind of agree with her, but don't want to admit it.

"It's cool," says Jamie.

"Look at the mountains!" Hazen says. They seem to have risen out from the horizon. The clouds around them are pinkish from the reflected sun.

"Wow."

"Wow wow," I say.

"Let's go," says Jamie.

"OK," I say. "Wasted effort..."

"Your idea," points out Hazen.

"Fine. Last one down is a wasted effort!" I say, already sprinting through the thorns. They ignore me, slowly picking their way through the prickles. When they reach the bottom, we compare scratches.

"Thank God for long shorts," says Hazen.

"Yeah," says Jamie.

I look at my shorter shorts and notice I have twice as many scratches as each of them. "Oh well," I sigh.

We stand in silence.

"Whadda you want to do now?" asks Jamie.

"Blah," says Hazen, a twinkle in her eye, and the game starts up again.

We shout and scream, and act like little kids. How nice it is to pretend, just for one day, that we've gone back in time, and there is nothing more important in the world than us having fun. Carefree. If you know that there is reason to care, then

there is no such thing as being free of that reason. Maybe that's why it's impossible to really pretend to be young again, back when you didn't know that reason existed.

After a while we are back on the grass above Hazen's house again. I have one last favor to ask of this perfect carefree day. I stand up and start spinning in circles, just like I used to for hours when I was six.

"What are you doing?" asks Jamie.

"Spinning. Join me!" Both of my friends stand and join me enthusiastically. I stop spinning and look down the hill. I'm pretty sure there's a devilish glint in my eye. I look at Hazen. My silly idea has been reinforced. Hazen looks at Jamie, and he nods. "Three, two, one... GO!" We start spinning wildly, faster, faster, and faster still, until we're going wildly out of control, sprinting and twirling down the hill. I start running when I can't spin anymore. Trying to run straight is out of the question. This way, that way, careening crazily, I'm too dizzy to even see properly. Finally I fall down. Splat! I've fallen in a mud pile! I burst out laughing, and stand to run to my friends.

"How bad is it?"

They wince. "Your entire back is covered in mud."

I involuntarily frown, and then smile again. "Anyone want a hug?" They run away screaming.

When I catch up to them I give them two big mucky hugs, and say, "Let's do it again!" So again and again we spin down the hill, until it is unavoidable that we have to go indoors soon. The mud on my

back is caked dry.

“One more time,” says Hazen. We run up the hill. “Three... two... one...” she says as slowly as possible.

The silence is annoying instead of peaceful. “Go!” I scream and we start off. Hazen and Jamie are already zooming down the hill, spinning uncontrollably.

I want to  
Remember  
My friends,  
Frozen in time,  
Mid-circle,  
Smiles upon their faces  
On a bright green hill,  
Waiting for me to reach them.  
Then I start  
Spinning.  
I see the sky  
Swirling in circles.  
I see my feet  
Swirling in circles.  
One step, two steps.  
I quicken the pace  
Of my circle dance,  
Until it is too fast to count.  
I can't see  
Anything.  
My feet are drums,  
Slamming the earth.  
A rhythm like an  
Overactive,  
Erratic  
Heartbeat.  
Then I'm  
Out of control,  
Spinning,


It's impossible to  
Stop.  
I hear the wind and my heart,  
Nothing else.  
I am an  
Out of Order sign,  
Too scrambled to fix.  
I can't remember  
When I was in order.  
I am so lost,  
So out of  
The limits that  
Make sense.  
But I feel so  
Contained in  
My brain.  
So at one with  
The World.  
Like that Zen  
Thing that  
I have always made fun of.  
When you have lost  
Everything that ever made  
Sense,  
You realize just how much  
You have always had.  
I remember every second of  
Exhilaration  
That I enjoyed as a child.  
Why did I forget it all  
Until now?  
I don't know,  
I just enjoy the  
Moment.  
Being a child,  
Being an adult,  
Or anything  
In between,

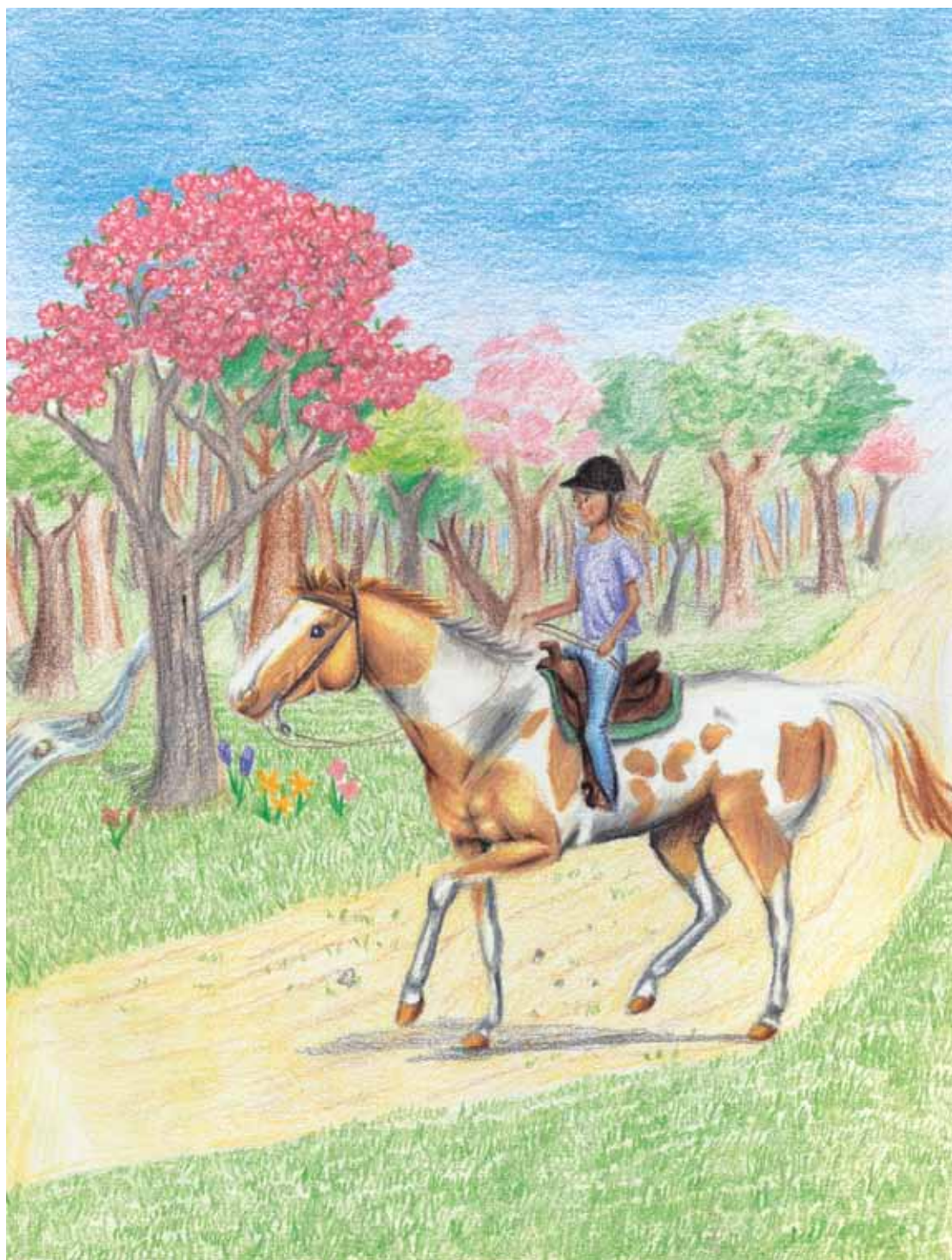


*"Anyone want a bug?"*

Are all limits set before you are born.  
But you know what?  
I can be a little kid  
Whenever I want!  
I start sprinting.  
The wind screeches in my ears.  
Such a perfect moment.  
Then  
I hit the  
Ground.

Hard.  
Boom.  
But you look up.  
And see the sky,  
In circles.

I stand up, and my friends join me.  
"Let's go home," I say, and the three of  
us walk home, savoring a day of complete  
carefree. 



*It was a lovely day for a trail ride*

# Seahorse

By Rose Diltz

Illustrated by Abigail Stephens

THE WIND BLEW against the trees, making them sway gently, their new leaves brushing each other lightly. The sweet sound of birdsong met my ears, along with the babbling of the stream and the gentle thu-thump of my horse's hooves against the soft dirt track. It was a lovely day for a trail ride. The sun was shining, the cherry tree was in bloom, and everything was beautiful. My horse, too, was enjoying it. Her ears were pricked up, her trot was brisk, and the wind that ruffled her mane was keeping the flies away, too.

She was an odd horse, to be sure. I had been there to witness her birth, and I was the first one to point out the oddest thing about her. "Look at her side!" I had whispered in astonishment. And there, as plain as day, was the word "sea." She was paint (brown and white), so the spots were no surprise, but that one odd collection of spots on her left side...

So we called her Seahorse. The first question people asked after we had told them about Seahorse's word (as we referred to it) was "So, does she like water?" and the answer is "No, she loathes it with a passion." And that's right! I can't even get her to cross the bridge over the stream! And whenever it rains, she'll do *anything* to get inside.

I live on a ranch, so there are a ton of horses and other animals around, but Seahorse is my favorite. I think it's because I identify with her. You see, my name is Val. My mom says it stands for valor, but I always say it stands for Valerie. I'm not very brave. I'm scared of spiders, rats, crows, dogs, thunder-



Rose Diltz, 13  
Coggon, Iowa



Abigail Stephens, 13  
Williamsburg, Virginia

storms, and the dark. So, like Seahorse, I don't really live up to my name.

The day was made even more bright and pretty by the promise of Becky's arrival. She was my best friend and nothing at all like me. She was strong, confident, and didn't have a name she had to live up to. She didn't even *look* like me. She was tall, fair-skinned and had straight jet-black hair and green eyes. I was medium, tanned and had curly honey-blond hair and brown eyes. But we both loved horses, and that was enough!

THE DAY HAD turned dark and oppressive by the afternoon. Thunder rumbled slightly in the distance and the sky was completely clouded over. I was watching out the window for the red pickup I knew would be coming into the driveway any second.

When it did, I jumped up and ran down the stairs yelling, "Becky's here! Becky's here!"

When I got outside I slowed down, and we gave each other high fives. We ran inside, laughing and talking. "So, what about our trail ride, Val?" asked Becky.

I looked outside. "I dunno, Beck, Seahorse hates rain and Arthur hates loud noises." Arthur was the horse Becky always rode when she came over to my house.

"Oh we'll be fine."

We checked with my mom and she said it would be OK as long as we came back if it started to rain.

It only took us a few minutes to tack up

and get our horses out on the trail. I could tell Arthur was getting nervous. His tail was swishing back and forth irritably and he kept starting at little noises. "Becky, let's go back," I said.

"We're fine! Quit worrying!" snapped Becky in her usual confident manner.

It started to rain.

"We need to turn back! We told Mom we'd go straight back if it started to rain!" I said, kind of desperately.

"It isn't raining, it's sprinkling!" she shot back.

In a few minutes the storm had broken loose. "Becky! We need to turn back!" I yelled over the roar of the storm.

"Val!" I heard her over the thunderous noise. "I can't control Arthur! He's..." CRRACK! A huge thunderclap cut her off, and I heard the frightened scream of a horse and saw Arthur bolting off into the woods.

Without thinking, I urged Seahorse onwards. In my mind, I knew that if Arthur reached the stream, he would jump it, and Becky would not be able to hold on.

Seahorse came to a sliding halt when we reached the stream, which had now become a torrent. Sure enough, Arthur jumped the stream, and Becky fell into the raging water.

Without thinking, I kicked Seahorse until she dove into the water. Make no mistake, I was terrified, but I reached out my hand and grabbed a handful of Becky's shirt. I pulled her gasping and panting up onto Seahorse and urged



*"You're being unusually quiet," I told her softly*

her onto the shore. I dismounted from Seahorse and grabbed Arthur's reins. The fact that he had lost his rider seemed to have puzzled him enough to stay put. And, besides, the rain was lessened by all of the trees.

It took me a while to lead the horses back to the barn. Arthur kept startling at the thunder, and, after her heroic show of bravery, Seahorse did *not* want to cross the bridge. But I finally got back to the house, and, by the time I did, it was sprinkling again. "Whoever controls the weather around here should be put in a rubber room," I murmured to myself as I helped Becky off and put the horses away.

**B**ECKY'S MOM made a huge fuss over us and mine called the hospital (who said she would be fine with some rest and a warm blanket) and my dad made everyone hot chocolate.

I sat down next to Becky, careful not to spill any of the hot drink I had in my hands. "You're being unusually quiet," I told her softly.

She smiled slightly. "Well, part of it is aftershock, I mean, it was a pretty dramatic thing that happened. And part of it is just that I'm thinking..." She trailed off and sipped at her cocoa.


"What?" I asked after a minute.

"Well, first of all, it was a very stupid thing I did. I should have gone back the first time you told me to. Second, you saved my life. No really!" she said when I blushed and looked down. "You did. And I'm *really* grateful. Third, what you did back there was brave. Really brave. I've always thought that being brave meant you aren't afraid. It doesn't. Being brave means that you're afraid to do something, but you do it anyway. You were brave. I was just..." She trailed off again.

"A moron?" I supplied helpfully.

She grinned. "Thanks. Remind me to write you out of my will." We laughed.

**A**FTER BECKY and her mom left, I went to check on the horses. Poor Arthur was asleep in his stall. I put an apple in his feed bucket, knowing he would find it when he woke up.

Seahorse was awake but very tired-looking, and she crunched happily on the apple I gave her. I patted her on the head. "You lived up to your name today, girl." And so did I, I thought, smiling. A bird chirped somewhere outside, and in her stall window, I could see a rainbow. I smiled. The weather around here really was crazy. 



# Cubing

By Andrew Lee

He holds the cube in his hands  
The unbreakable puzzle,  
Or so they say  
Flexing his fingers

He holds it gingerly  
Like a trusted friend

The stopwatch beeps  
His fingers fly over the cube  
Attacking the colors  
Orange, green, blue, and whites  
Spark through the air  
In graceful motions, his fingers

Working like bees  
Shift through the layers  
Suddenly,  
Out of the blue  
The cube emerges from his palms

Like a miracle, the cube is whole once again  
The stopwatch beeps

And the magic stops



Andrew Lee, 13  
DeWitt, New York

# Wisconsin

By **Madison Kwasny**

*Illustrated by* **Amanda Valdovinos**



Madison Kwasny, 12  
Truckee, California



Amanda Valdovinos, 13  
Damascus, Oregon

**I** ENTER THE OLD room, and a wave of familiarity washes over me. Nothing ever changes about this room, and I love it. I toss my backpack down and flop onto the silky smooth comforter of my bed, allowing myself to be immersed in the feeling of joy that permeates the room.

I lift myself off the bed and walk over to the big sage-green brass-bound trunk. I lift the lid and smile. The unmoving soap boxes sit nestled among each other. I pick up each box individually, handling it with utmost care. One, a small oval that smells like lavender. Another, shaped like a lemon, smells of a delightful citrus. My favorite, the soap bar shaped like the Mad Hatter, with a generic soapy scent. Below the first layer of soaps is a second layer of hotel soaps and many others. Some are shaped like carrots, animals, and rectangles.

I close the trunk and sit down on the cream-colored chair, covered with a green floral pattern. The chair is next to a table with an assortment of antique tarnished-silver brushes and combs atop it; each with the owner's initials engraved in loopy, old-fashioned handwriting. Sitting cozily in the chair I slip my feet out of my shoes and rub them along the bumpy carpet as I pull a book out of my bag to begin reading. I inhale, smelling the beach just down the road, and hear the ducks calling on the lake.

I finish reading, stand up, and look at the white-painted wood bookshelf. I run my hands along its rough surface, looking at the never-changing wedding and new-baby announcements, in addi-



*Nothing ever changes about this room, and I love it*

tion to the pictures. I pick up each item on the shelves and examine them closely. One of my favorite pictures is a bunch of teenage girls posing in white dresses. It is their faces that draw my gaze. I also glance over the writing and designs on the wedding and baby announcements. I kneel down to look at the dusty old books

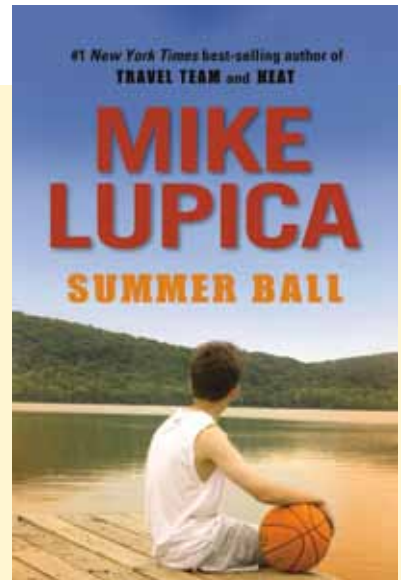
on the bottom shelf, their faded gold gilt writing beckons to me, asking me to turn the pages that have been still for so long. I do not resist the call.

I look out at the sloping lawn and the tall trees that border it. I look at the very top of the lighthouse out on the point, and I feel like I am truly home. ❁

# Book Review

By Aidan Quigley

*Summer Ball*, by Mike Lupica; Philomel  
Books: New York, 2007; \$17.99



Aidan Quigley, 12  
Trumbull, Connecticut

HAVE YOU EVER read the sequel to a book that you loved and felt utterly disappointed or, even worse, robbed? If you read *Travel Team*, by Mike Lupica, which was reviewed by Zach Hoffman in the May/June 2007 edition of *Stone Soup*, and decide to read *Summer Ball*, you will feel anything but robbed. *Summer Ball* is an amazing book written by the best sportswriter in the business.

In the book, Danny Walker is coming off leading his team, the Middletown Warriors, to a travel team championship. His dad, a former NBA player, Richie Walker, decides that Danny will go to a famous basketball camp in Maine, the Right Way Basketball Camp. Even though Danny's two best friends, Ty Ross and Will Stoddard, are going, Danny is worried about attending camp because he fears not being good enough or tall enough to compete well against some of the other campers, the best players his age in the country. When he arrives, his fears are realized. A player that played against Danny in the travel team championship game, Rasheed Hill, hates him and is attending camp. He is put on the same team as Danny, and their coach wants Rasheed to be the star of the team. When Danny visits the coach, the coach suggests that Danny try soccer. Danny is able to fight through all


of these hardships and make it to the championship game, while standing up for his new friend, Zach Fox, in a fight with one of the best players in camp, Lamar Parrish.

When Danny first arrives at camp, he realizes that he isn't one of the best players there. One time, when I was eight, I went to a basketball camp. The camp was divided into two divisions. According to my age, I belonged in the top division. But after a few minutes of practice, I was demoted to the lower division, even though I felt like I was doing fine. But, just like Danny, I continued trying and I was promoted.

My favorite part of the book is when Rasheed stood up for Danny during the championship game. Throughout the book, Rasheed and Danny slowly gain respect for each other and become friends. Because Coach Powers wouldn't play Danny, Rasheed told Coach Powers that if Danny didn't play, he wouldn't play. When Coach put Danny back in, he led a huge comeback. Another one of my favorite parts was when the ref called a technical foul on Lamar. In my basketball league, there was one team that was very dirty. They were never called for a technical foul.

In the book, the campers could cheer for whatever team they wanted. We got revenge on the dirty team by attending the league play-off game they were in and cheering loudly for the other team.

One thing the author does extremely well is dialogue. Even though the camp is in Maine, it attracts players from all over the country. One of the friends Danny meets, Tarik, is from New York City, so he has a different vocabulary than the kids from Long Island. This is kind of funny because he uses terms that Danny (and I) don't know.

I definitely recommend this book about basketball, friendship, and teamwork. Once you pick it up, it is hard to put down. 



*It's small; I almost crush it in my hand*

# Half an Eggshell

By Claudia Ross

Illustrated by Joan He

I JUMP DOWN the small drop to the grassy road. Tall, brown grass overruns it, thorny weeds branching up from the dry ground. Long stalks of fennel huddle together.

Lizards skitter away from my shoes, and they dart down deep cracks in the earth. The road snakes down the valley. Behind it is a golden brown bluff. Tall grass stands, waving gently—the whole bluff looks like a giant river, swaying back and forth, back and forth.

I run down the hill, summer liberties rising through my stomach. Four days ago I'd graduated from elementary to middle school. The jump was a big one. I was leaving the place that was familiar, that hadn't changed for seven years. The old was comfortable, the new was...

Spiny weeds latch themselves onto my jeans. A noise in the bushes, a hawk calls. They fly by. I slow, reaching a fork in the road. The left fork winds around the back side of the bluff, the right climbs up it.

I choose left.

Avocado trees hang loose over the trail, casting blotchy late-afternoon shadows. A hawk calls again, flying directly overhead before it lands on a branch. It eyes me, wondering who this stranger is in the middle of his territory. The hawk ruffles its feathers, turning away.

I step back.

Walking slower, I hear only the *swish, swish* of wind through the grass. Another hawk joins the first, but I don't look back.



Claudia Ross, 13  
Studio City, California



Joan He, 12  
Wynnewood, Pennsylvania

They call to each other, and fly to a closer branch.

*Screeeeeeee!*

*Scree-scree-scree-ssscreeee!*

*Scree-scree screeeeeeech!*

Their tones are angry—fast and sharp.

Crisp leaves crunch beneath me. Spiny leaves stick to my socks. The trail is winding away from the couple of hawks, up a slight hill. The lizards are still.

A flash of white catches my eye. I bend down, picking up half of an eggshell. It's small; I almost crush it in my hand. The jagged edge is cracked cleanly, where the small bird must have picked his way out. Maybe flew out of the nest. Maybe left his family. Maybe the little bird wasn't ready to go at all...

The trail fades, golden grass taking over. I sit on a low branch, looking through the leaves over the valley. I hear

a rustle behind me, looking to see the hawks hopping across the place I've just left. The egg cracks in my grip, pieces of shell fall to the ground.

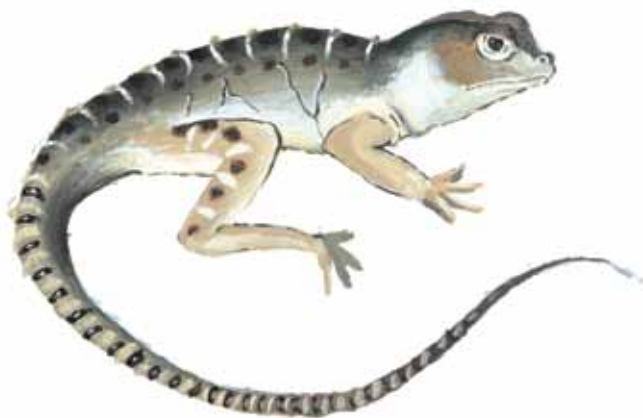
One of the hawks picks up a leaf in his beak, and it hits me. *They're looking for the egg.* The hawks' calls are more frantic, and they hop back and forth across the mound of leaves where the egg was. I swing my legs around the tree, jumping down. I step softly, quickly, towards the hawks. They back off to the side, flapping onto a branch. I set the eggshell down, then sprint away from the birds, down the hill, through the shadows. I don't hear the hawks until I'm nearly halfway down the road:

*Sssssscreeee...*

Their tones are gentle—slow and soft.

*Sssssscreeee...*

*Sssssscreeee...*



# Swimming with the Dolphins

By Emma Place

Illustrated by Emily Che

LILY SAT IN A deck chair on the deck of her parents' sailing ship, the *Maid of the Sea*. The sunlight sparkled on the water. It was a beautiful, sunny summer's day and they were going on a little sail in the clear, blue waters of the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Maine. The sails of the red boat were tightened with a loud slapping noise by a slight breeze that played across Lily's hot face. Although it was hot, the day was lovely. Not a cloud in the bright, startlingly blue sky.

Lily relaxed and leaned back against the back of the deck chair and heaved a sigh of contentment as she watched the sunlight dance across the water. She sipped her lemonade. It was not too sweet and not too sour, just as she liked it. Ice cubes floated in it and the cool liquid soothed her parched throat. Lily had long, light brown hair that she usually wore down. It created a beautiful rippling effect when she ran. Her eyes were brown as well and she was tall for eleven.

Lily's mom came onto the deck.

"Lil, would you like some chocolate-chip cookies before they're gone? Your brother's hogging them down below."

William, Lily's younger brother, loved food, especially sweets such as cookies.

"No thanks. They always make me thirsty," replied Lily, taking another sip of lemonade. Talking of thirst had made her thirsty.

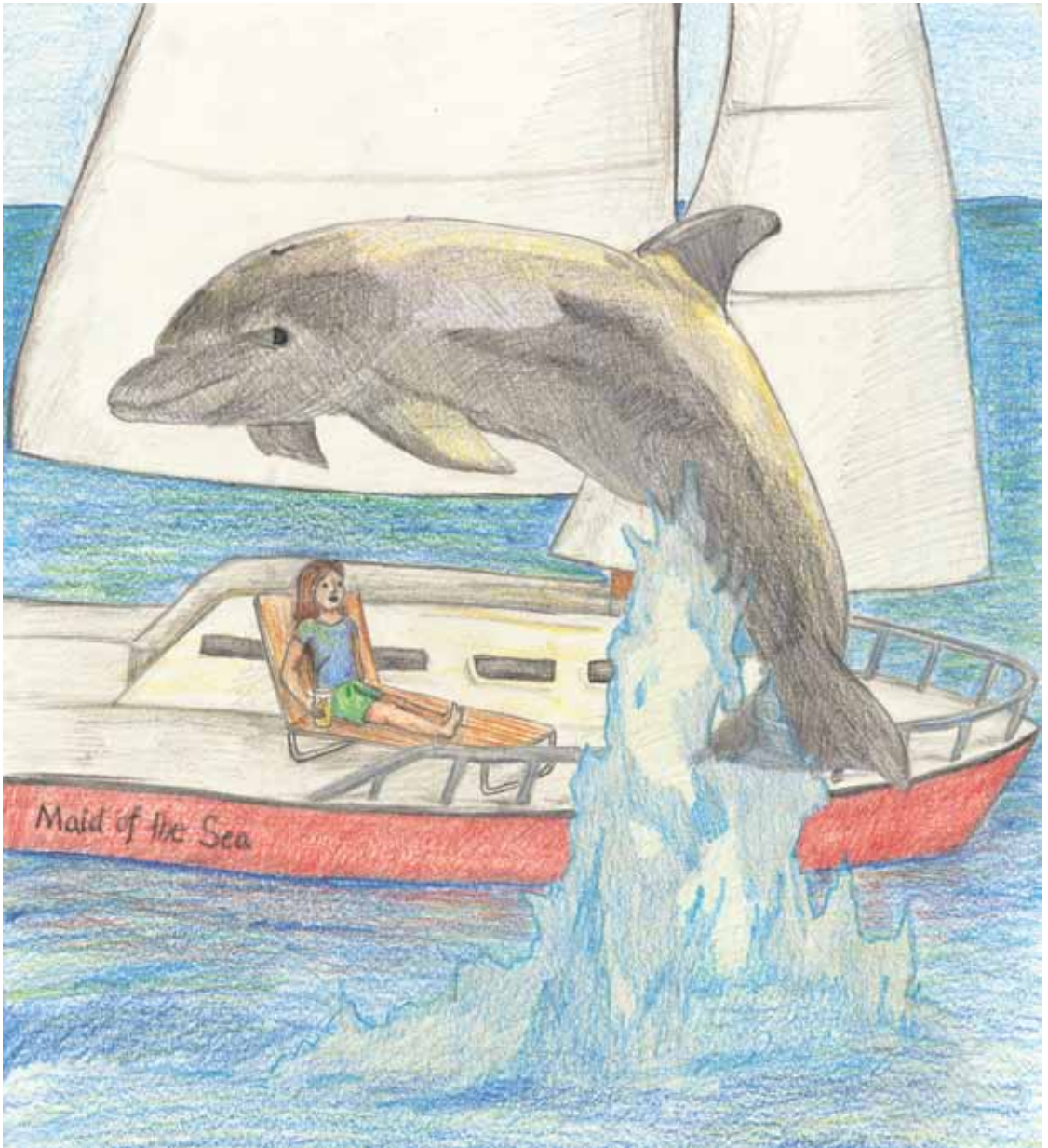
Her mother left as Lily leaned over the side and watched the lobster pots go by. She counted all the different combinations of



Emma Place, 11  
Waynesburg, Pennsylvania



Emily Che, 13  
Saratoga, California



*Suddenly a dolphin leapt out of the water in a graceful arch*

colors. Pink and orange, red and yellow, the list was as endless as the sky above.

She watched as several waterbirds swam by, chattering excitedly like kids

who have spotted a plate of cookies.

Suddenly a dolphin leapt out of the water in a graceful arch, his shiny gray sides glistening with the sunlight reflect-

ing the droplets of water that poured down his curved body. He plunged back in with a splash, beak first, and was gone.

Another dolphin leapt out, followed by two more. Suddenly a pod of dolphins could be seen swimming just below the surface.

Lily stripped down to her swimsuit underneath her clothes, not taking her eyes off the group of dolphins. She wondered whether they'd swim away if she got in. They seemed friendly enough, swimming alongside the boat.

Deciding, she carefully climbed down the ladder and slid into the sun-warmed water.

At first the dolphins seemed wary, but then the first dolphin to leap came forward and nuzzled against her like a dog greeting its owner. Gradually the others came up and started nudging her as if asking her to play. She stroked their smooth skin and they seemed to like it—at least

they clicked excitedly.

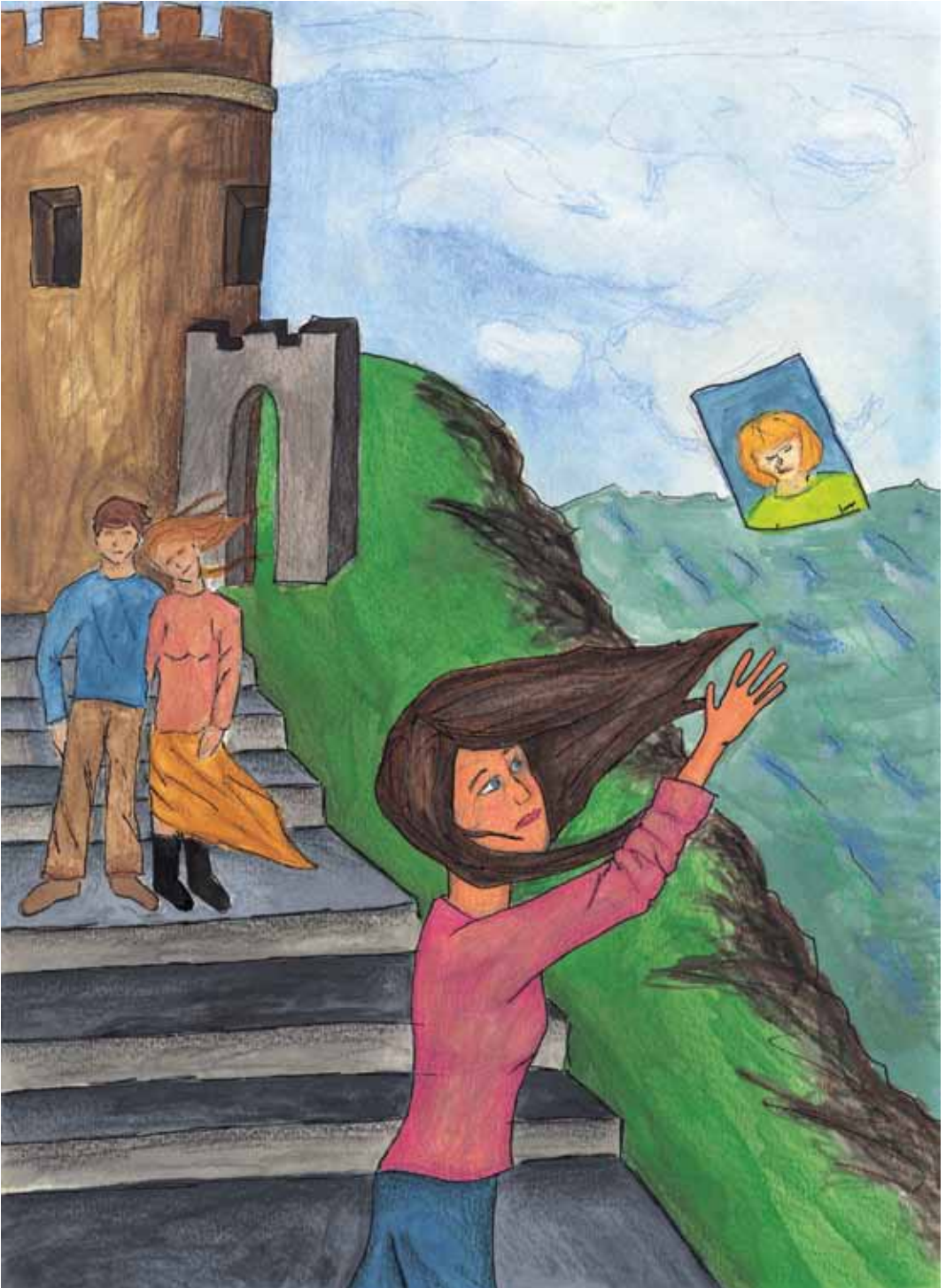
The first dolphin came up to her and pushed her gently with his beak as if he was asking her to do something. She stroked him, but that didn't seem to be what he wanted. He nudged her again and again. He gestured toward his back with his flipper.

"Do you want me to ride you?" asked Lily incredulously.

He continued gesturing. She gently grasped hold of his dorsal fin. She put a little of her weight on his back. He didn't object. She put her full weight on his back and clambered on. He started swimming, his streamlined body pushing through the water. They started going faster, with Lily's hair streaming behind them. She laughed and laughed. A moment she'd never forget: riding a dolphin!

The sun looked down and shone his rays on them, dolphin and girl, racing through the waves. ❁





*Then the wind soared, carrying the picture high into the sky*

# Lost and Found

By **Maureen Sullivan**

*Illustrated by* **Carly Thaw**

**N**IKI SCOWLED. She clutched the rumpled picture of her best friend, Claire, as she trudged up the many stairs. I don't care if this is a famous place, she thought angrily. It doesn't change the fact that they made me move to Ireland and leave Claire behind in Wisconsin. Niki grumpily followed her parents up the never-ending flight of stairs leading to the Cliffs of Moher.

Niki's mother glanced back at Niki and sighed. Her daughter wore the same pouting look she had been wearing ever since they moved to Ireland. There were so many beautiful sights in Ireland, and her daughter wouldn't see any of it. She was stuck on the fact that she wouldn't see Claire until Christmas, six months away.

As Niki continued to climb the seemingly never-ending stairs, the wind began to get stronger. When she reached the top, panting, she gasped in spite of herself. This was the most amazing thing she had ever seen. The land curved in, off to her left, and then curved out again; so she was looking across the water to the cliffs themselves. They rose majestically from the crashing waves and misty air. They were lined up in a row, so where one cliff ended, another one began.

Niki could hear the waves crashing far below. The wind came rushing in from the ocean, curving around the land to slam into her. The wind was so fierce she was yanked and shoved back and forth. She had to fight not to get blown over as she mounted the final steps. Ahead, there was a sturdy stone castle where her par-



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Arlington Heights, Illinois



Carly Thaw, 13  
Charleston, West Virginia

ents stood. She made her way slowly to them, fighting the wind every step of the way. "It's... I didn't know it would be like this!" she shouted; but the wind tore the words from her mouth. She just grinned at her parents instead.

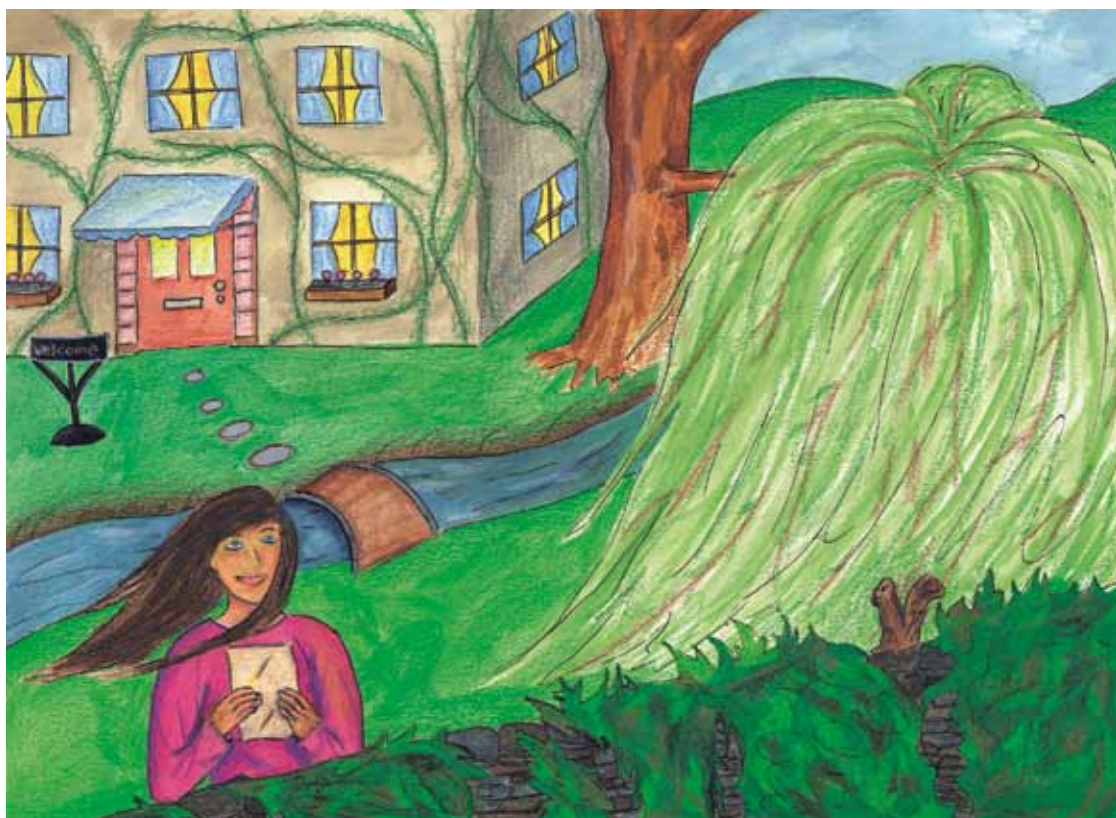
Niki caught her breath in a sheltered area where the castle protected her from the strong winds. After a moment, she headed out, going around the corner of the castle. Then she was hit by the most powerful wind yet. She held her arms out to the side and leaned into the wind. It tore at her like a wild animal. The wind whipped her hair across her face and made her eyes water. This wind gave her a feeling of excitement and exhilaration that she had never felt before. She closed her eyes and leaned even more into the wind. She imagined herself flying free, soaring up, up, up... she felt calm in a way she couldn't explain. She had been filled with millions of different emotions since moving here: excitement, anger, sorrow; but now she was feeling strangely free.

Suddenly, the picture of Claire, still in her hand, was torn from her grasp by the gusts of wind. She opened her eyes and the feeling of calm disappeared. "No!" she cried. She tried to run and catch the picture but the wind held her back. She watched helplessly as the wind tossed the picture back and forth, up and down, left and right. Then the wind soared, carrying the picture high into the sky. Then it plunged down, down, closer and closer to the crashing waves. Niki stared as the picture disappeared into the swirling water.

SO WHERE DO you want to go tomorrow?" Niki's father asked. Niki shrugged. She had been silent ever since Claire's picture had blown over the cliff. Niki's parents exchanged glances and walked quicker. Their daughter clearly wanted to be left alone. Niki sighed. Losing that picture was like losing her friend all over again. Niki trudged toward their room, which had been a horse stable before it was remodeled into a hotel. Her parents thought that staying in this hotel and visiting famous Irish places would make her like living in Ireland. It wasn't working. Niki sighed again. She halfheartedly scanned the landscape, running her eyes over huge trees, the flowing stream, the stone wall covered with ivy. She reached out and ran her hand through the ivy as she walked. Some of the ivy curtain parted and Niki saw a blue piece of trash crammed into a hole in the stone wall. She stopped walking and separated the ivy so she could tug on it. There was a rock holding it in place, which seemed strange. Why would you need a rock to hold a piece of trash in a hole in a wall? Niki wondered. She yanked it out and let the curtain of ivy close. Niki blinked and looked closer at what she held in her hand. It was a blue plastic bag with a piece of paper inside it. Carefully, Niki opened the bag and pulled the paper out.

Dear Someone,

Hi. My father runs this hotel. This is where I live, but none of my friends live around



*Niki couldn't breathe. A girl? Who lived here?*

here. I'm lonely. I've always wanted a penpal from another country, so would you write me a letter when you get home? It would be even better if you lived here; but letters are a good way to be friends, too.

Your hopeful friend,  
Bridget

Niki couldn't breathe. A girl? Who lived here? This was better than she had imagined. Their new house was only a few minutes' drive away. She started to run,

calling, "Mom! Dad! Look what I found!" Niki raced to their room. She waved the letter at her mother, too breathless with excitement to explain. Her mother took the letter and handed Niki one in exchange. Niki glanced at the return address and hurriedly ripped open the envelope. It was from Claire! Niki grinned. She might have lost Claire's picture, but she would never lose Claire as a friend. And she had found a new friend right here in Ireland. ❁

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