

Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists



"Birthday Party," by Karina Schmidt, age 12, Berlin, Germany

30th Anniversary Issue!

STAR OF DAVID

A German soldier takes a risk for a young Jewish girl

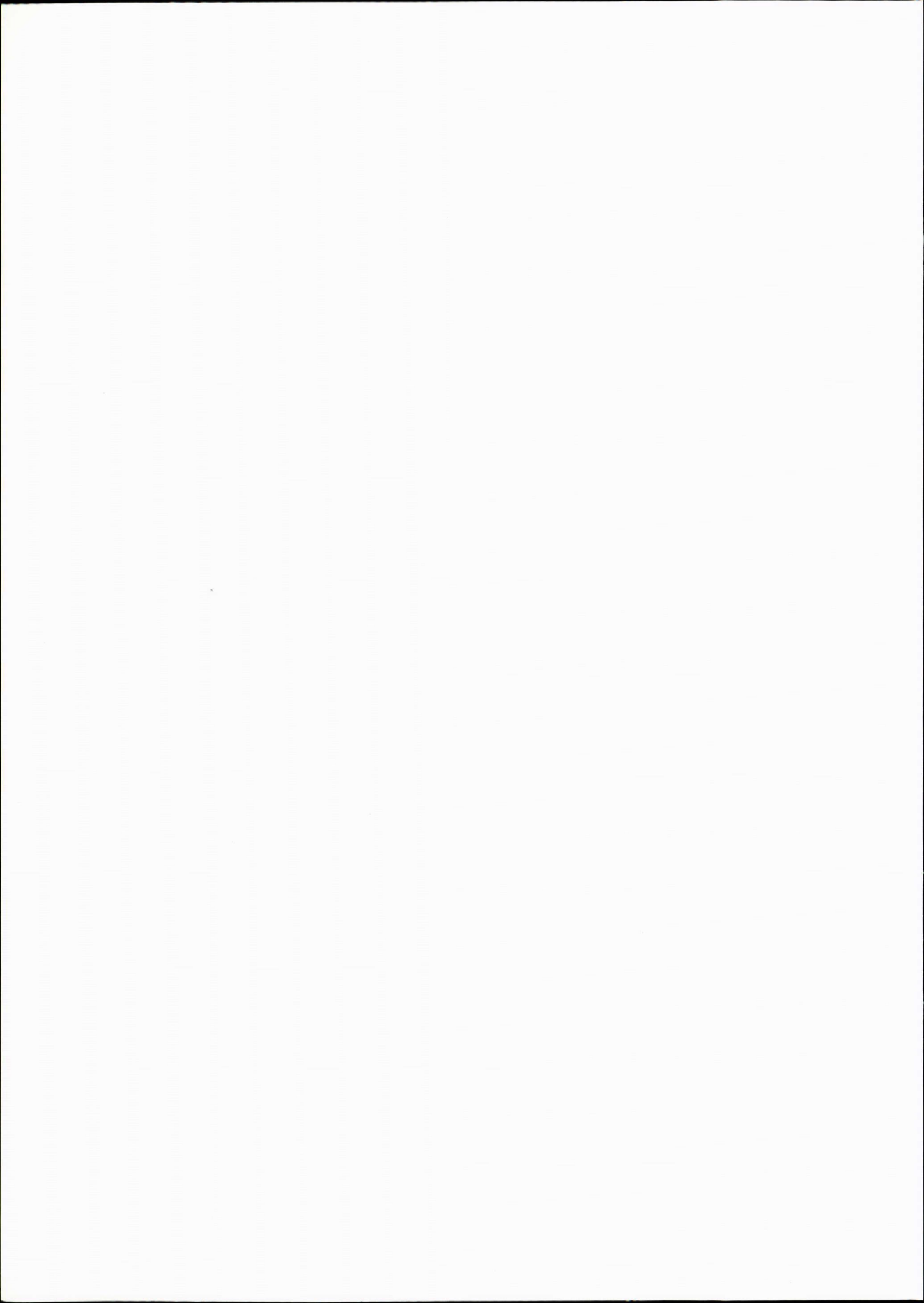
A STROKE OF THE BOW

Catriona's parents discover the healing power of music

Also: A new poem by Marley Powell

MAY/JUNE 2003

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The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists

VOLUME 31, NUMBER 5
MAY / JUNE 2003

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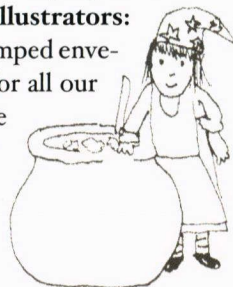
WELCOME TO ALL OUR READERS, old and new! We've had the pleasure of publishing *Stone Soup* for 30 years. It is our belief that, by presenting rich, heartfelt work by young people the world over, we can stir the imaginations of our readers and inspire young writers and artists to create.



Contributors' Guidelines

Stone Soup welcomes submissions from young people through age 13. Mail your work to *Stone Soup*, P.O. Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063. Include your name, age, home address and phone number.

Story and poem authors: Do not enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope with your submission. If we are considering your work, you will hear from us in four to six weeks. If you do not hear from us, it means we were not able to use your work. Don't be discouraged! Try again! If you are interested in reviewing books for *Stone Soup*, write editor Gerry Mandel for more information. Tell her a little about yourself and the kinds of books you like to read. If you would like to illustrate for *Stone Soup*, send Ms. Mandel some samples of your art work, along with a letter saying what you like to draw most. **Book reviewers and illustrators:** Please enclose a business-size self-addressed stamped envelope so we can write back to you. Here's a tip for all our 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. (For more detailed guidelines, visit www.stonesoup.com.)



Jessie Moore, 12

Cover: "Birthday Party" was loaned to *Stone Soup* by Paintbrush Diplomacy of San Jose, California. For over 25 years, Paintbrush Diplomacy has worked to promote children's artistic expression around the world and to raise awareness of children's causes. Special thanks to Kristina King and Char Pribuss.

The Mailbox



Dear Readers:

THE VERY FIRST ISSUE of *Stone Soup* was published in May 1973. To celebrate our thirtieth anniversary, we asked designer Jim MacKenzie to give *Stone Soup* a new look, with lots more color. We hope you like it. Thanks to all our subscribers and contributors for thirty great years!

GERRY MANDEL & WILLIAM RUBEL
Founders and Editors

I WAS DEEPLY TOUCHED by the story "Silver Blue" in the January/February 2003 issue. Since I have had that same experience of losing a pet close to my heart, I understood how Krista felt. I would like to compliment the author for writing such a good story and I thought the illustrations were great!

HARMONY SPENCER, 10
Chelsea, Vermont

I LOVED THE STORY "Characteristic Property" [September/October 2002]. Rachel Marris Reeves, you did a wonderful job. The story was detailed enough to give cool tidbits on your vision of the future, but not super-detailed, telling everything there was to know about the future down to the very last bit. The story line was wonderful. I can really relate to Cassie, even though she is supposed to live more than a thousand years after me! Also, Martin Taylor's pictures are incredible. I've always liked his work in my other issues of *Stone Soup*, but his wonderful coloring and intricate pictures are really fantastic. I don't know where you get the patience to draw all those windows and moving sidewalks, Martin!

JESSICA CELINE MALORDY, 13
East Rockaway, New York

FOR THE YEAR I have been getting *Stone Soup*, there has been nothing more exciting than to find the latest issue in the mail, plop myself down and read! It's my dream to become a good writer, and I really enjoy reading the work of others who share these interests. "Kisses from Cecile" [May/June 2002] is one of the best stories I've read in *Stone Soup*. I love objects and events from the past, and the way Marie Agnello described those "fragile, discolored" letters was wonderful. It was very well written, and the ending was moving, so I've read this story many times. In the latest issue I especially enjoyed "A Real Friend" [January/February 2003] by Julia Swearer. I have a few precious porcelain dolls that were once very real to me, so I can relate to this story, a story I think Julia told very well. With the fantastic art and writing, I think *Stone Soup* is a great magazine!

MEGAN GANNETT, 13
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Megan's new story, "A Stroke of the Bow," is on page 18.

I ESPECIALLY LIKED your May/June 2002 story "Feelings Towards a Bear" by Max Strebel. I feel just as Ann did about hunting. I think nature is a place that shouldn't be disturbed more than necessary. By this I mean that observing is fine, but killing is not.

TERRY SPINELLI, 11
Niskayuna, New York

You can read all the stories mentioned in The Mailbox on our Web site: www.stonesoup.com

Correction: Ashleigh Steever's name was misspelled in our March/April issue. Our apologies!

Note to our Readers: Send us your letters! We are especially interested in detailed comments about specific stories, poems, book reviews, and illustrations. We'd also like to receive anecdotes (150 words or less) about interesting experiences you'd like 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.



"Which one of you is the Jew? Or are you both Jews?"

Star of David

By Emily E. Hogstad
Illustrated by Dara Green

FEAR AND DISBELIEF drip down the back of my neck. I am leaning against the wall, feeling cold, hard, merciless brick beneath my palm, hearing things—simple, life-giving things, such as breath and whispers and rustles of skirts—so loudly that I’m afraid my very listening will give me away. On my side, my Jewish charge, and I want to tell her to kneel, to get shorter, to do something other than stand there and look at me with those pleading eyes. To take off that necklace she wears, the little silver chain with the tarnished Star of David hanging limply from it.

No time, I remember, and it amazes me that even my thoughts come in short spurts.

My older brother Henk has practiced with me many times ever since he has taken it upon himself to open our home to the persecuted Jews. Many alarms I was sure were real turned out to be hoaxes, gentle deceptions, in benefit of my training. But this—no, this was no fraud. I had seen the tobacco-stained teeth out the window, the frilly mustaches. I had heard the front door slam and their feet ascend the stairway.

Leah’s hand edges into mine and I feel like falling into tears, enraged toward the Germans, hateful of everything they hold dear to them. How can they curse Leah, such a simple, innocent soul? What demon is tearing my continent, my precious Europe, apart so? Have these people not known kindness, and do they not understand how to imitate mercy?

Whispers in Yiddish. I can’t comprehend it. Funny, I think,



Emily E. Hogstad, 12
Eau Claire, Wisconsin



Dara Green, 13
Marshall, Virginia

that the soldier, the Jew, and I all speak different languages and come from different cultures, yet still live in mortal terror of the other.

Boots are getting nearer. They're in the living room, perhaps, with the unstylish masses of Victorian furniture and its quaint view of the winding creek outside our townhouse window. From there it is a short leap into the hallway, then the closet door—from there, us, hiding behind the furs.

They don't stop in the living room; steady, trim clicks are advancing down the hall. Leah's hand grows a tighter grasp on mine, and my eyelids suddenly fall shut, staying tightly latched. I'm so still—my breath, my thoughts, my very heart has stopped—I'm afraid God might mistake me for dead.

The door cracks. The light bulb, hanging from a dusty string from the ceiling, suddenly tosses a pool of light upon the floor. The door wafts shut again, and here we are, together: three different people from three very different beliefs.

The hangers to our left start clacking and his shoe, with a forlorn stalk of a pants leg growing off of it, is right in front of me. I realize he smells of stale brandy, of restless wandering, of dust. I accidentally think of the shoe polish on the shelf right above our heads, that he might be able to use, but I scold myself for thinking that.

Suddenly he yanks a coat away and is staring into my face, then Leah's. We both stand there, silent for a moment, as I wash my eyes over his clean-shaven, dirt-

smudged face. He doesn't look like Hitler—he looks more like Henk, an honest man caught up in something bigger than his imagination would let him ponder.

"Who are you?" he asks, voice rough.

"I'm Leis, sir, and this is Leah," I whisper.

"And why ever are you here in this dusty closet?" As he speaks I see his teeth are darkened, a small scar meekly clinging to his lip.

"You scared us, sir," I managed. "We hid as soon as we could."

"Poor darlings. Come out—it's cold in here," he says, and he holds open the door for us as we uncertainly, defeatedly, trudge out to the hall.

Suddenly I remember—Leah's necklace—her Star of David! If the soldier found that, he would have proof, proof that she's a Jew, proof of her country, her heritage, her ancient culture. I glance at her neck but she's torn it off and thrown it on the floor—I look back at it in the closet, watching its glitter, praying the soldier doesn't notice it sparkling there, like a trout in a silver spring. He's gone on, though, to the other soldiers, to present us.

"Which one of you is the Jew?" is our greeting, spouted from an older, fattened man. "Or are you both Jews?"

"Jew?" I whisper faintly. "There are no Jews..."

"Which one? There's been reports of Jews hiding in this house! Which one of you is Jewish?"

Our soldier interjects, "They're children, Setzlich. Danish besides." Here he glances, silencingly, at us. "It has been said the Danish don't lie. Jews indeed."

"The Danish don't lie," mutters Setzlich, glaring at us both as his voice tumbles into a tumult of anger. "You idiot, Schmidt! The best lying in the business comes from the Danish—I swear, they've got the devil on their side!" His hand suddenly reached out and grasped my collar. "Girl," he growled, "girl, how many rooms is this house?"

"This is all," I say, truthfully, and, distrusting me, he slowly lets go of my dress. "The living room, bathroom, and closet."

His eyes stay on me. "Search the cursed closet again, Schmidt," Setzlich whispers, voice trembling with loathing. "Goderstadt already got the bathroom. See if there's any more. Then we'll see if the Danish don't lie."

"Yes, sir," says our soldier, and Leah and I exchange terrified looks. A search of the closet would mean the discovery of the Star of David twinkling on the floor, would mean our arrest, might even mean our deaths. My entire heart has suddenly twisted in torment—I can't think, and can't breathe. I hear him throwing a ruckus around in there—oh, why make it painful? Just expose us as liars, as protectors of the Jews, of God's chosen people.

He comes out then, expressionless. "Nothing," he says, and I look at him, confused. How could he have missed it there, meandering along the floor? He

looks at me, oddly. "You know, you both look remarkably like my own two little girls," he whispers, a little painfully, trying to force his chapped lips into a smile. "My two very good little girls. And so polite, too—the gentlemen will be competing for the attentions of you both. Trust me, I know these things." A pause. "Godspeed."

We all tilt there for a moment, on an unseen axis of disbelief.


"Let's go, then, Setzlich."

Setzlich casts suspicious glances between us but gathers his rifle and storms back out the door. Our soldier follows him, down the stairs and away, not once looking back.

For a moment Leah and I stand, side by side, watching the lace curtain billow out toward the street.

"It is a Passover," she finally says.

It takes many days and nights for the war to drag on, many more close calls until the war in our country dies. And a week after this triumph is proclaimed across the face of the scarred and haggard world, a few days before the Germans retreat from our city of Copenhagen, I receive a small crumpled envelope in the mail. I open it on the doorstep, wind-swept with the ashes from the firecrackers of celebrations, and out of it pours a small note, written hurriedly in German—"You might want to give this back to Leah"—and a silver waterfall.

It takes me a moment to realize the broken chain, crooked on my palm, is the Star of David. 

The Mystery of Cats

By Marley Powell



Marley Powell, 12
Los Angeles, California

Cleaning yourself
as if the world is just fine
Of course you don't know about September 11
or the war
You don't know about the terrorists
or do you

Is that mangy dog down the street the terrorist you fear

What does someone of your small stature
think of the world
Do you look at the humans around you
and think you're much smarter because you can hunt
smell a rat and see in the dark
Maybe you think all we can do is open a can

How would you manage all these wars between countries
Would you talk out your problems
or use a more violent approach

Grady enters the room
and I watch the hair on your back rise
You don't move
He doesn't move
This could be a showdown
But no

The moment passes and you resume your cleaning

I breathe a sigh of relief

What would the world be like if ruled by a cat
say, like you, Stripes
Would everyone be ordered to bathe for hours on end

You look up at me
with clear eyes
and I'm curious to know
Do you actually reason or do you just look smart

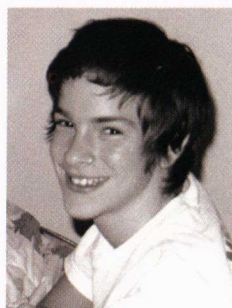
You know I've always suspected
you have the ability to think and also
the ability to pretend to think

I see a smile flitting across your face
You get up and go outside
Even though that dog could still be there
you show no fear

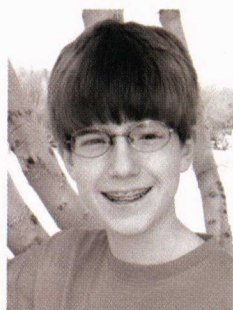
Running Away

By Danny Musher

Illustrated by Andrew Smith



Danny Musher, 13
Bethesda, Maryland



Andrew Smith, 13
Cave Creek, Arizona

THE CHILLING NIGHT AIR swirled around James Henry as he stumbled blindly over the treacherous forest floor. Just above the treetops, the full moon hung low in the sky, swathed in a shawl of thick clouds. James hurried breathlessly through the dense undergrowth, ignoring the brambles that cruelly cut and scratched his skin. Tree branches snagged at him, like claws of demons, and spooky noises all around him seemed to be sounds of his pursuers. A sudden hooting of an owl sent him sprawling across a fallen tree trunk in fright and he rose in a panic, his sweating face a mask of terror. He lurched forward into the bushes once more and continued his desperate flight.

His thoughts raced back to that fateful Wednesday afternoon. The day had been a blistering heat bath and the air was so thick you could barely breathe. While working in the fields, he had fainted from exhaustion. The overseer, who had a horrible temper, was already in a foul mood from the scorching weather. He threw himself upon James in a fury, and whipped him frenziedly until his back was thick with blood. James decided that night he would run away. He had had enough. Gathering his small bundle of pitiful belongings, he stole off just as dusk fell.

At first all went well. By night, he traced his way using the North Star as his guide. By day he hid and slept. But then the nights turned cloudy, blocking the stars, and he lost his way. Then, this night, a group of slave-catchers had stumbled upon him while he was resting, and he just barely got away. But they



His thoughts raced back to that fateful Wednesday afternoon

were hot on his trail and it was only a matter of hours before they caught up with him.

Suddenly, he stopped, chest heaving from exertion, heart pounding. He heard it. The sound of hoofbeats echoed in the distance, like drums heralding an execution. He paused an instant, stricken with fear, then broke into a run, his small bundle of possessions slapping against his back with every step.

James did not have any memories of his father or mother. When he was just a little boy, the Wicomico plantation he was born on went broke, and he was sold off to Talbot County. He recalled having a brother, but hadn't seen him since he was

sold off. He was now, as best as he could calculate, some eighteen years of age, and until a few days ago had lived at the plantation of Mr. Stuart Henry. Mr. Henry's plantation was enormous, and tobacco was the staple crop grown there. The field hands had to do backbreaking work from dawn to dusk each day, watering the precious tobacco leaves, tending to them, and worst of all, picking the horrid tobacco worms from off the undersides of the leaves. James had experienced this horror every day for as long as he could remember: the scorching sun pounding on his back, the lash of the overseer's whip, and the constant humiliation of being a slave. He had also hated it for as long as he had

known it, and he had always promised himself that one day he would get out; one day he would escape!!!

Now here he was, running through the woods driven by sheer panic, branches stinging him as they slapped at his face. Suddenly, he saw the faint glow of a light about fifty feet ahead. He slowed down and approached it cautiously. He emerged at the edge of a clearing, and saw a house, with a lantern swinging on the gate. Swinging!!! He had just registered this when strong arms grabbed him from behind and he found himself looking into the face of a bearded, heavysset man. Paralyzed with terror, he opened his mouth, but then the man chuckled and said, "Heh heh, ain't safe for someone like you to be out here this late!"

They walked up to the house and the man ushered him in quickly. "Sarah!" he whispered hoarsely into the gloom, "I've got someone here who needs help." Seconds later, a smiling, plump woman appeared and hurried James down the hall to a room on the right, while her husband left and went upstairs.

"You'll be safe in here," she whispered, picking up a rug and opening a trap door. James looked down and saw that below the paneled floor there was a pit, about fifteen feet deep.

He looked back at the woman and began, "I can't tell you how much . . ."

But she interrupted him, "Shhh, no time for this. Get in!" He lowered himself down, and just as the trap door closed, there was a knock on the door.


James huddled in the darkness listening intently. After a short pause, he heard a shuffle of feet, and the sound of a door opening. "Yes, may I help you?" said the woman.

"Yes ma'am," a deep raspy voice replied, "we're looking for a runaway. Would you mind us having a little look?"

"Oh no, there's no problem," said the woman. More shuffling of feet sounded, accompanied by the sharp clickclack of boots on the wood floor.

James heard them walk down the hall, pausing every so often as the man looked in a room. ". . . with the new Fugitive Slave Law, business is really good. I can even get away with returning slaves without a trial . . ." The man was nearing the room in which James was hidden.

Suddenly, the man's voice trailed off and the footsteps halted right outside the room. "Is anything the matter?" James heard the woman ask.

"Oh, nothing . . . nothing," mumbled the man. James's palms began to sweat as he heard them enter the room and he shivered, despite the stuffiness of the pit. He crouched there for several terrible seconds. Without warning, the rug was swept off the floor. He heard the woman protesting, but suddenly the trapdoor was wrenched open and he stifled a gasp of horror. A second later he was roughly hauled up onto the floor. "Well, well," said the man, looking at the shocked woman, "looks like you and your husband are in for some jail time, and this one's off to the chain gang." 

Sunrise

By Emily Blackmer

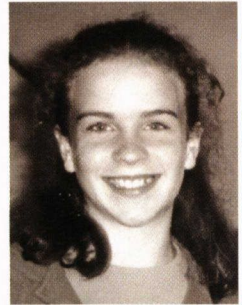
Illustrated by Anjali Thakkar

MY EYES OPENED. Sitting up, I glanced at my clock on my nightstand, and read the green, fluorescent letters: 4:42 AM, three minutes before my alarm was due to go off. I stretched out my arm and turned off my alarm. Scrambling out of bed, I changed from my pajamas into a tank top and shorts. I yanked a brush through my frizzy brown hair, and stuffed it up into a ponytail. I left my room and tiptoed down the hallway, trying hard not to make any noise. Creeping down the stairs, I forgot about the step that always creaked, and as it did, I winced. I hated how small sounds were always magnified in the quiet. I stayed where I was for a moment, and, holding my breath and crossing my fingers, I listened for stirrings from my family. When they didn't come, I let my breath go, and uncrossed my fingers, relieved. I wanted to be alone.

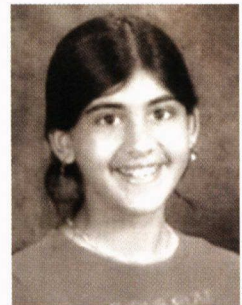
I didn't bother with breakfast, as I wasn't really hungry yet. I pulled my sandals on, and walked out the screen door into our backyard, and then began trudging up the back pasture to the top of the hill.

The date was June 21, the summer solstice, the day with the longest sunlight hours of the year. I had gotten up early to watch the sunrise. I know it sounds a little weird, but it's a tradition of mine. I've always done it, as long as I can remember. The sunrise has always been special to me, put in the same category as the unicorns the six-year-old me believed in.

My older brother Ian used to come watch them with me, but now, at sixteen, he thinks it's dumb, and immature. Last night



Emily Blackmer, 12
Hopkinton, New Hampshire



Anjali Thakkar, 12
San Jose, California



I felt as if there was nothing in the world but the sunrise and me

when I made the mistake of asking him if he wanted to accompany me, he just came up with an excuse in his wannabe manly way. "Can't, Beth, I gotta sleep well. I have a big all-star baseball game this weekend, and Coach will be really mad if I'm tired."

"Now Beth, dear," added my mother, who had been listening, "don't you think you are getting a tad old for that? I mean, you are thirteen years old."

Folding his Wall Street Journal, my father agreed. "Yes, Beth, you should call up one of your friends. Maybe they could pry

your nose from that notebook of yours."

In response, I nodded to show I had understood. My parents seemed satisfied, and went on to more interesting conversation.

So often I feel like an alien in my own family, traded with their real daughter at birth. I mean, with the exception of me, my family is the typical American family. My father is a lawyer in a successful firm, my mother is a homemaker, and my brother the star of every sports team he plays on. The only reason we live in Vermont instead of New York City is that

Mother needs to take care of her failing parents, who were prescribed "good, healthy air" along with many pills by the doctor.

I am the misfit of the family. I am quiet, studious, prefer the company of the characters in my books and stories to the flighty, ditzzy girls at my school, and am nearly always writing. My parents don't understand my writing. They think it is a little, silly hobby of mine, and hope I will outgrow it and become what they think of as "a normal girl." But I am far more serious about writing than they know. I want to be an author, and win the Pulitzer Prize. I know this is a big dream, but I also know it is what I desperately want to do. If only my writing came out on paper as it was in my mind.

I reached the top of the hill, and pulled myself out of my thoughts. In the west, the sky was still dark with night, a deep navy blue. Overhead that blue was blending with almost purple shades, which in turn were mixing with reds and pinks. In the east, I could see the glimmering pinks and yellows of the sun beginning to rise. My watch said 5:19. According to Internet data, the sunrise had begun.

Sitting down, not minding the dew on the grass, I just watched.

The blue and purple, once overhead, were slowly moving backward, opening up

the sky to a whole palette of new colors. Oranges, coral-like pinks, reds, and yellows were streaked and blended in the whole sky in front of me. They were colors so amazing that I was sure there had never been a sunrise as beautiful as this.

There was an upward shaft of sunlight, so intense at the bottom it dazzled my eyes. Surrounding it was a sea of pinks and reds and yellows, which seemed to ripple as a real ocean does. I had never known there to be so many different colors! I felt as if there was nothing in the world but the sunrise and me.

It was then, as the sun burst from the horizon, so magnificent and regal, a ball of yellow fire, that I heard the voice.

"Your dream," it said, "follow your dream. You can make it. Keep on trying. Don't give up hope!"

I was dazed. Who is this voice? Who, or what, was speaking to me?

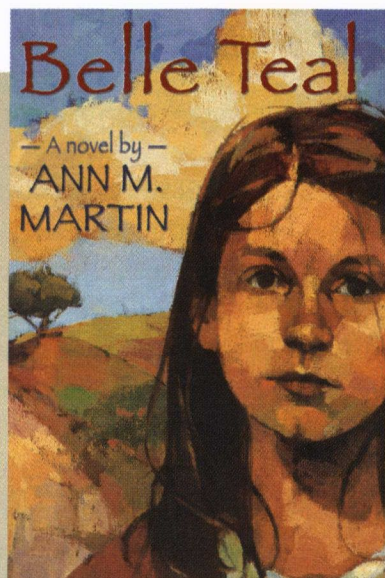
"Don't give up hope!" the voice said again.

And then I knew who was speaking. It was the birds, and the crickets, the trees, and the grass, the wind, the clouds, the sun, and the colors of the sunrise. But mostly me. It was I who wanted my dream to come true and I who would have to work for it.

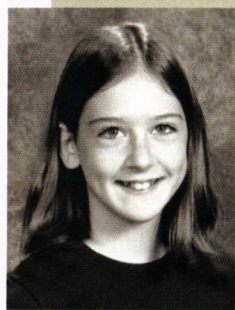
"I'll get there," I replied. "I'll do the work; I'll make my dream come true." ❁

Book Review

By Hannah Lentz



Belle Teal by Ann M. Martin; Scholastic Press: New York, 2001; \$15.95




Hannah Lentz, 11
Richmond, Virginia

DO YOU EVER ACT DIFFERENTLY around African Americans than you do around white people? Belle Teal did not think anyone would ever do such a thing, until segregation was reduced and, once more, schools began to integrate at Coker Creek. *Belle Teal* tells of the cruelty to people just because of their skin color.

Before I read this book I knew that people were often singled out, but I never realized that they would actually get hurt, or sent to jail, just because of their race. In *Belle Teal* many kids, and even parents, were extremely mean to the new kids at Coker Creek Elementary. When one of her friends started to taunt the new kids, Belle Teal got very upset. Her friend's father became the real problem, though. He is racist and prejudiced toward the children. His extreme racism finally came to a head

when he began spreading lies and rumors. When Belle Teal found out that the stories were untrue, she became especially angry and decided she needed to do something to help. This story was about the struggle between right and wrong.

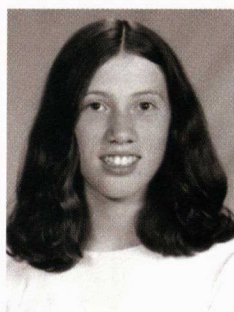
Belle Teal really made me think about how much it hurts people when you tease them or get them in trouble for something they didn't do. I have always thought and wondered, why do people treat their peers differently because of their race or religion? They are humans too.

In school you learn about the segregation laws and how life was in the 1950s, but *Belle Teal* truly makes you visualize how things were. I personally thought that this was a great book. In my opinion, it teaches you more about life in the 1950s than a teacher can explain to you. I would definitely read this book; it will make you see how African Americans really did feel in the past, and even, sometimes, in the present. 

A Stroke of the Bow

By Megan Gannett

Illustrated by Leigh Marie Marshall



Megan Gannett, 13
Edmonton, Alberta,
Canada



Leigh Marie Marshall, 12
San Francisco, California

IT HAD BEEN ALMOST A YEAR since that fateful day last June when Lucy Livingstone's baby boy had died at the age of ten days. Catriona Livingstone, her twelve-year-old daughter, was accompanying Mr. and Mrs. Livingstone to the cemetery to visit her brother on what would have been his first birthday. The day was cloudy, with a hint of rain in the air, quite unlike the lovely June day when Ty, her brother, had been born. Catriona was somber as they drove through the dreary streets to the graveyard, but inside she was concentrating on her hope that after this day her mother would be less grieved and her father less tense. She didn't know why she expected this; probably because it had been almost a year since their son's death and she thought it time to get on with life, and stop dwelling on the past.

Catriona, too, had suffered for days after the loss of him, as had her parents, for she'd welcomed her new sibling into the world graciously; she even decorated his future room and attended a baby-sitter's course to learn how to care for babies. But now she was ready to move on, eager to hear her mother laugh again and her father crack silly jokes once more. Today, in the car, she felt she'd burst if things didn't change soon.

"We turn here," said Mrs. Livingstone stiffly to her husband, who was driving. He nodded dismally, and flicked on the signal. Catriona began to idly drum her fingers in time to it, but one stern look from her mother silenced her. In a moment the car had turned into the parking lot, and the three of them got out,



She decided to go sit down awhile, somewhere she could think things out

Catriona hurriedly—she was tired of sitting in the gloomy atmosphere of the car. Mrs. Livingstone set off at a brisk pace, and Mr. Livingstone and Catriona followed, the silence unbroken except for the sound of their feet on the grass and the wind in the trees. Ty's grave was a small one, hidden behind a neatly tended wild rose bush. Mrs. Livingstone knelt down when they reached it, her fingers trembling as she touched the cold stone. Catriona peered over her shoulder to read the inscription.

Tynan Philip Livingstone, son of Lucy and Bradley Livingstone. Born June 8th, 2000, died June 18th, 2000. Rest in Peace.

Under the headstone bearing these words, her baby brother's body lay, imprisoned by the chilled earth. Catriona's heart ached for something she could do to bring him back again. She wanted to complete the family, add the missing piece. But he was gone, and no one could ever restore his life.

Mr. Livingstone, Mrs. Livingstone and Catriona remained silent for a few moments, their thoughts as bleak as the gray sky. Finally Mr. Livingstone murmured, "He would have been a good boy, I'm sure of it."

Catriona sighed and straightened up. She decided to go sit down awhile, somewhere she could think things out. In a soft voice, she excused herself, and hurried over to a neighboring spruce tree. Its branches formed a low canopy, so she crept under it to seek shelter for her thoughts.

Her feelings had been mixed and twisted together since her brother had died. First of all, she had been swallowed in sadness, her own and that of the people around her. Next, her feelings had been regret and longing, and reluctance to accept the fact that he was gone—never to return. Further, still, into the following year, she had felt neglected, and bitter over the fact that her parents were rather guiltlessly ignoring her. And, finally, she had become impatient and rebellious, angry that her parents couldn't—or wouldn't—get over their lost infant.

Lately, Catriona had been enduring a detestable combination of each, unable to pick apart her complex thoughts. One day one feeling would overcome her, the following day, a next. Now, as she sat in the protective security within the dark spruce's greenery, she pondered this as the gentle lull of the tree's slight swaying coincided with her parents' hushed conversing.

What to do? Catriona's thoughts were being interloped by the realization of the truth; her parents weren't likely to come home any differently than they had arrived, she had seen it in her mother's eyes as she fingered the headstone. Should she speak to them about her feelings and demand change? Or should she continue to bear the burden of emotional loneliness? She couldn't decide. She would have to simply practice the virtue of patience. And, she thought ruefully, I might as well begin now . . . who knows how long I have to wait.

WHEN CATRIONA arrived home that day she went off to attend a dress rehearsal for a concert she was in. She played the violin, or rather the fiddle, as it was called in the Celtic fiddling group in which she was involved. The concert was on one of the main stages in town, and Catriona was both apprehensive and excited about it.

At the rehearsal, however, as her fingers flew over the strings and she drew quick, light bows, as her foot kept the beat by tapping the floor, she forgot about the stress which barred her way. She forgot her muddled feelings, she forgot how her hopes for a new beginning had just been dashed, and how her mother had rushed to her room and wept uncontrollably when they'd returned home. All she focused on was the optimistic laughter soaring from the fiddles, and the joy that music brought her.

During the last tune, a slow and mournful melody, Duana, Catriona's talented instructor, stopped the group.

"Excellent. As long as you play from your heart and blend together as one, this will be superb." She beamed reassuringly at Catriona, one of the youngest (many were adults). "I believe we are behind time, so I'll let you scatter. See you there on the big day. Practice hard!" And to Catriona, reading her mind, "Don't worry, lassie. You'll be fine."

Catriona hoped she would, but she *knew* she'd have no trouble "practicing." Fiddling was one of her main escapes from life these days, and she truly enjoyed

sharpening her skills.

On the way home from the rehearsal that night, she thought about how grateful she was to Duana as a teacher. Always calm, encouraging and understanding, she was an important figure in Catriona's life. Catriona had been taking lessons with her since she was eight; four years ago. But she'd only joined the fiddling group this year—this was her first performance—and Duana had always been there, patiently helping her along. Catriona felt she owed a lot to her for this.

Now Catriona had reached her house, so she turned in the gate and swung it shut, before proceeding up the walk. Suddenly she halted and took a deep breath. Already she could feel her stomach contracting due to the unpleasant tinge of tension lingering in the area. It was with great hesitance that she resumed her step, as the chilling feeling grew colder in her stomach.

"MOM, DO YOU mean to tell me that you're not coming to see me play at the most popular stage in town?" demanded Catriona, astonished, as she stood beside Mrs. Livingstone in the kitchen, peeling potatoes for dinner.

"Catriona, don't be so raucous," snapped her mother sharply, pausing briefly to scold her daughter. "I just can't bear to see you play happy music to happy people for their merriment when our family is in mourning. I've told you . . ."

"In mourning!" spluttered Catriona angrily. "Your baby's been dead for a year, a

baby you only knew for ten days, and yet you won't come and see me in a concert I've been preparing for all year! I might as well not go!"

At this point Mrs. Livingstone broke down, weeping, and Catriona, being so worked up, followed suit.

"You just won't understand!" wailed her mother. "You just won't understand."

Catriona tried to calm herself down, her and her mother both, taking one deep, shaky breath after another.

"Mom," she whispered, tears sliding steadily down her face. "Mom, I'm sorry." She put her arms awkwardly around Mrs. Livingstone, and Mrs. Livingstone hugged her back. As they clung to each other, Catriona mumbled, "I understand. Maybe . . . maybe next year you'll be ready to see me in concert."

And, with one last embrace, Catriona released her mother, and picked up the potato peeler once more.

SATURDAY MORNING, Catriona's big day, dawned bright and fair. It was a breath of fresh, sweet air after weeks of stormy weather and cloudy skies. At eight in the morning, the only one awake yet, Catriona was getting ready for her appearance onstage.

She stood in front of the bathroom mirror, combing through her thick, short, light brown hair. Reflected, she saw her face flushed with excitement and anticipation, but Catriona knew something the mirror didn't, and couldn't, reflect. Something deep from inside her, that only she

could feel. It was a feeling of regret, reproach, and—could it be?—anger.

It was her parents' failure to agree to come to her performance, of course. She had told her mother she understood, but she didn't really; she still believed all the harsh words she'd pelted her mother with two nights ago. However, this was where her main confusion pooled: why wasn't her father coming to watch her? He had a ticket; both of her parents did. And he wasn't still suffering from grief like his wife was . . .

At least not to the same degree, thought Catriona, yanking her comb through her hair so fiercely that a few hairs were pulled out.

Mr. Livingstone wasn't about to collapse in hysterics at the sound of fiddle music, so why wasn't he coming? His excuse was that "something had come up at work." Which was true, of course, but he'd surely be able to make an exception, just once. Catriona just couldn't comprehend it.

EXACTLY THREE hours later, Catriona stood backstage with Duana and her fellow fiddlers, clutching her fiddle nervously. They would soon be playing on that famous stage, from which a pin dropping to the floor could be heard. What if Catriona let down the whole group, and made a mistake? She couldn't face the disagreeable thought. Then, just as she was hoping the Highland dancers before them would be on for a long time, she heard the audience clapping loudly and knew it was their turn. She was right, because sudden-



She played with all her might, letting the sound penetrate through her

ly Duana became all business-like, directing them into their performance formation. Catriona took her place in between the only other kids in the group: Brenda, who was eleven, and Cormac, who was fourteen. With butterflies in her stomach, and her hands growing sweatier by the second, she followed the circular hallway backstage, around to the entrance on the left side.

And then they walked onstage.

Catriona gasped in dismay as she laid

eyes on the hundreds of people packed in the theater. She, play for all of them? Her knees began to shake and her hands to tremble. If only her family had been out there—for sheer comfort!

But that couldn't be helped now. Breathing quickly, Catriona moved like a wooden doll, lifting her fiddle to her shoulder on Duana's cue, but in a superficial state all the while. Before she knew it, they had started to play.

At once, warm, glorious music filled

Catriona's heart. She played with all her might, letting the sound penetrate through her, saturate her with wonder. She wasn't nervous anymore; this was spectacular. She wished this was an everyday occurrence.

It seemed to all go by in a minute. Soon they were on their final tune, the sad, sorrowful, lonesome one. Catriona played it for her brother, Ty, for her parents, who, because of their lasting grief, couldn't be present. She played for everyone else in the world who needed to hear this music resonate through this building, music speaking so simply without words. And as she drew her last bow, she felt a strange feeling wash over her. She no longer felt that grudge against her parents for not coming that day, but an understanding and a willingness to forgive.

"CATRIONA! CATRIONA Erin Livingstone!"

Catriona spun around, to see her mother and father standing near the door separating the lobby from backstage. She ran over to them.

"Mom, Dad. What are you doing here?" Their daughter was utterly amazed.

"Oh, Catriona!" Mrs. Livingstone squeezed her in a tight hug, and Catriona was surprised to see tears in her eyes. "We just had to come, we couldn't disappoint you so! I'm extremely sorry for the way I've been acting! I haven't been playing my role as a mother, and . . ."

"I haven't been playing my role as a father," finished Mr. Livingstone apologetically, his own eyes moist.

"I feel so ignorant," confessed poor Mrs. Livingstone. "Fiddle music isn't all happy and joyful, and . . . and that I- last number really g- got to- to me." She fought to control herself. "No, Catriona, dear, I'm- I'm ready to begin fresh. To put the past behind me, and look to the future. I- I just hope you'll forgive me."

Several emotions took hold of Catriona. She wanted both to laugh and cry, but she just embraced her mother, unable to speak, and her mother understood. Then she did the same to her father, a weight lifting clear off her heart. Things would change. Ty was gone, but his memory lived on, and it was time for carrying on down the path of life.

And Catriona had started them on their journey, with a stroke of her bow. ❀

Precious Time

By **Ryan Kinnavy**
Illustrated by **Devon Cole**

JOHNN MCCARTY WAS WARMING up his arm. "Whip it in there!" yelled his friend, Stuart Johnson. He and Stuart played for the Rockets. The Rockets were the best baseball team in the league, all because of John, their pitcher. Or at least that's what Stuart thought!

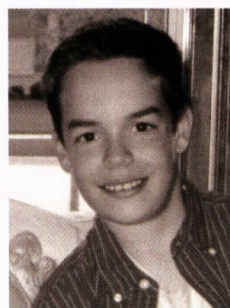
John was great at baseball, but he also loved school and got A's in almost every subject. He loved history the most. Stuart, on the other hand, hated school and especially hated history.

The one thing the boys had in common was that they both loved baseball! They both rocked at it too! John was the pitcher for the Rockets and could pitch 60 mph. Stuart played short-stop and was the fastest runner on the team. They were both drafted to the Rockets last year when they were only ten years old. Before they joined the team, the Rockets were in last place. The Rockets easily picked up the two friends in the first draft. As soon as John and Stuart joined the team, the whole team seemed to burst with skill. The Rockets started winning again. Last season they were undefeated all the way to the championship, which they ended up losing to the Devils.

Today, John was going to pitch the whole game for the Rockets' second championship attempt. John was warming up his arm with Stuart. They played catch until Mrs. McCarty came.

"Are you sure your parents know we're taking you to the game?" questioned Mrs. McCarty.

"I'm sure," replied Stuart. "They said they would be late to



Ryan Kinnavy, 11
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Monroe, Maine



The one thing the boys had in common was that they both loved baseball!

the game.”

“OK then, pile in boys,” said Mrs. McCarty.

Stuart felt energetic and excitedly ran to the car. John felt like running, but he didn’t want to tire himself out before the game.

As John walked to the car, he noticed a sparkle on the ground. He bent down to study it when he heard his mom calling him from the car. “C’mon, John, or else you’re going to be late to the big game!”

“One minute,” John yelled back.

John looked back down at the ground. He could barely make out the shape of a ball as big as his palm. He dug at it with his fingers until he pulled it out of the dirt. The bottom side of the sphere was

clean and shiny like a crystal. He would have examined it more if his mom didn’t grow impatient. “John! Now!” He couldn’t wait any longer without getting in trouble, so he stuffed the ball into his pocket and walked to the car.

Soon they were en route to Callahan Park, named after the city’s founder. As they turned at an intersection, all that was on John’s mind was the game. John didn’t give a second thought to the mysterious, shiny sphere. John was so caught up in thinking of the game that he never saw the car speeding toward them from the opposite direction. Mrs. McCarty had reached for the Chapstick she had dropped on the floor and didn’t see the car. When John looked up and saw the speeding car, he

knew something bad was going to happen. Before he could tell his mom to watch out, the car impacted Stuart's side of the car with enormous force. Stuart was thrown forward and then backward. John heard a crack and then everything went black.

When John woke up, he was still in the car, trapped in his seat. When he looked over at his friend, he was shocked. He saw his friend hunched over, but the thing that scared him the most was that Stuart's neck was in a weird position. John saw that Stuart wasn't breathing. He is just holding his breath, John thought hopefully. But five minutes passed and Stuart still hadn't taken a breath.

John had been feeling an uncomfortable sensation by his right pocket. When he reached down, he felt the sphere bulging into his leg. He carefully took it out and rubbed off some of the dirt. He had noticed an inscription on the sphere before he got in the car, but he hadn't had time to examine it. He could barely make out the inscription, "Precious Time."

As John kept rubbing the sphere, he noticed it started to glow. The ball jumped out of his hands and started spinning, making a kind of a force field around him that lifted him up out of his seat and out of the car.

After the force field stopped, a screen popped up in front of him. It had "year, month, day, and time," with blanks after each word. Right next to all of that there was a button that said GO.


A thought came to John. Could this be a time machine? Could he bring Stuart

back to life? John quickly typed the information on the keyboard. "There!" exclaimed John, "I'm all finished!" He wasn't too sure about hitting the GO button. He thought of Stuart and knew that helping his friend was all that was important.

John pushed the button. Nothing happened! He tried it again. Then he realized that he had typed in the present time and not the time of the accident. He looked at his watch and noticed that the second hand wasn't moving. He estimated the time of the crash and typed in the information. Then he hit GO.

At first, nothing happened. Then suddenly, he saw everything go into rewind. He saw his car go backwards and go back around the corner. Then it stopped and he was teleported to his car. The car went forward around the corner and approached the intersection. His mom dropped her Chapstick. "Stop!" yelled John, and his mom slammed on the brakes just in time to stop from being hit by the car.

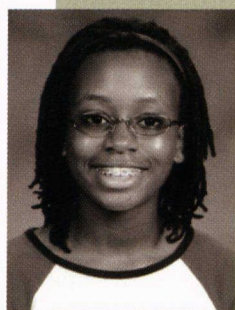
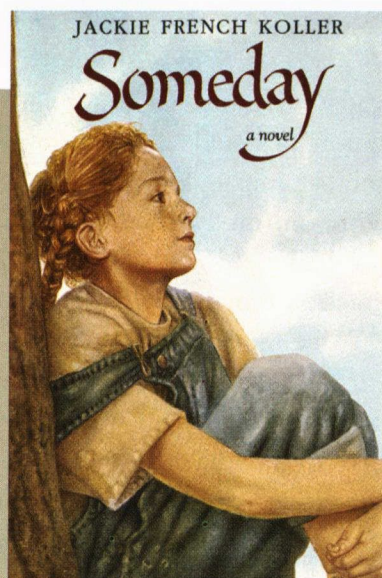
"That was close," said Mrs. McCarty as she breathed a sigh of relief.

John reached into his pocket and noticed the sphere was gone. Had all this been a dream? John wondered. All he knew was an incredible sense of relief that everyone was safe. He couldn't question what had happened. It was just too much to handle. He would have to spend some time trying to figure it out later. Instead, for now, John decided to set his sights on the championship game ahead. 

Book Review

By Allena G. Berry

Someday by Jackie French Koller; Orchard Books: New York, 2002; \$16.95



Allena G. Berry, 12
Racine, Wisconsin

EVER THOUGHT ABOUT YOUR “someday”? You know, someday you’ll go off to college, someday you’ll get a job, someday the house, the family—someday, someday, someday. Someday the town you’ve loved and grown up in will be washed away to nothing more than a reservoir for a big city, is not your normal “someday.” It will no longer be on a map; only a sad distant memory for the people who once lived there. I’m almost positive that that thought hasn’t entered your mind. For Cecelia Wheeler, though, it was a fact, but one that was always off in the distant future. Yes, it would come true, but it was too far away to think about now. Unfortunately for Cecelia, someday, sadly, came too soon.

In this creative and detailed story, fourteen-year-old Cecelia Wheeler (affectionately known as Celie) is falling apart as she watches her town collapse. Everything she knows (including her family) is changing. Worst of all, she might have to move to Chicago, a city too far away for words to describe from her precious town of Enfield, Massachusetts. More importantly, Chicago was too far away from her best friend, Chubby Miller. During the last few days of Enfield, a strange, handsome and wealthy young man waltzes into Celie and her mother’s lives. It seems as if nothing could go right. When there was a sliver of

hope that things might go right, it just crumbles again. *Someday* is the story of the surprises, the misery, and the triumphs of the people during the last few days of Enfield—and all the towns in the Swift River Valley.

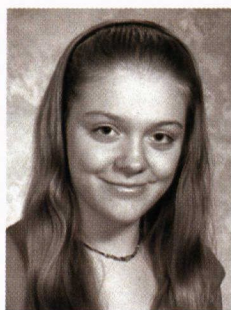
While I was reading this book, I thought about my own somedays. I remembered that years ago, I loved to go to my grandpa's house very much. He had so many stories, so many memories of the way things were. I was immersed in my family's history. I had always known my grandpa was old, and I knew that someday he would die, but when it happened, it all seemed so sudden. It was as if we were just in the living room of his house, sitting at his feet and listening to his stories and all of a sudden the stories ended; I just wasn't ready. Then, I remembered that last year, I had to make the decision about which middle school I would attend. As most of you know, middle school is a big step from elementary. For me, it was an even bigger step. I decided not to attend the school where all my friends were going, but a school where anyone who attended was immediately labeled a snob. I knew no one where I was going, and I had to basically start all over again. There were new teachers, new kids, new rules and a whole new environment. I knew that someday this would happen, but once again I just wasn't ready. My someday came and now I enjoy my new school. I also enjoy my friends—old and new.

One of the things I really loved about this book was how the story about the town wasn't the only story going on. Celie and her family had to deal with everything from love to hate, joy to sorrow, laughter to tears. Read the book and think about your somedays. Maybe you'll get the same message I did, or maybe it will be something totally different for you. I know this much is true: when your somedays become today, you can remember yesterday with the hope for a brighter tomorrow. ❁

Emily's Mustang

By Alexandra Pistey

Illustrated by Jesyka Palmer



Alexandra Pistey, 13
Katonah, New York



Jesyka Palmer, 12
Blissfield, Michigan

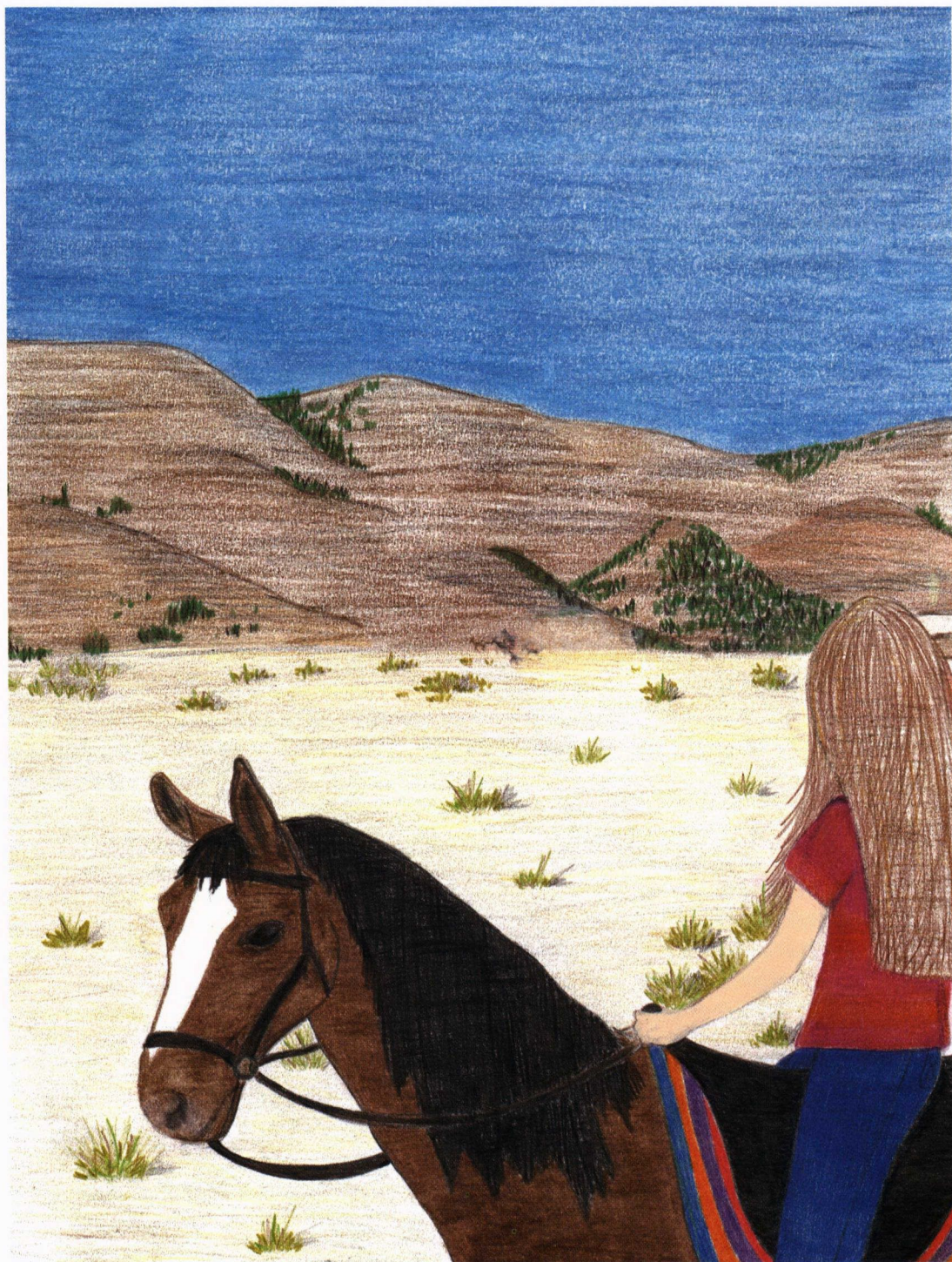
EMILY SHADED HER GREEN EYES from the hot Nevada sun. A tiny breeze blew a loose strand of her dusty brown hair and relieved the humidity that made the air hang thick and heavy. Her mother's horse, Sweetie, shifted impatiently beneath her.

Emily reassured her with a pat, but her mind was in the craggy mountains that loomed high and forbidding above horse and girl. She strained her eyes, searching for a cloud of dust kicked up by a figure on a lone horse. Finally she saw movement. A mustang, running wild and unkempt in the hills. Behind it was a small herd, all shabby and scarred. All of a sudden, they broke into a gallop. The stallion screamed his shrill emergency call. Was it a bobcat that so upset the herd?

But then she saw a man who was waving a long lariat atop a bay quarter horse. Only then did she relax. She watched, enthralled, at the scene going on far above. Man and horse closed in on a handsome mare, coat gleaming in the sunlight. The horse received small signals from his rider that were only seen by the experienced eye. After lassoing a few mustangs, the pair rode down the steep cliff toward Emily. The man grinned with pride at the fine mare he had caught.

"She ought to fetch a fair price," her father determined. He worked for the Bureau of Land Management, capturing mustangs to sell at silent auctions to qualifying owners-to-be.

"Yeah. Ain't she gorgeous," Emily replied. "Mom's looking for you."



Finally she saw movement. A mustang, running wild and unkempt in the hills

"All right. Let's go down to the house together."

The smiling Sarah Jenners came to the door to greet them in her apron, flour coating her arms up to her elbows. Nevertheless, she hugged her husband and daughter, speckling their clothes with whiteness. Joshua and Emily flicked the flour off onto the dry ground.

Sarah looked at the mustangs Joshua had caught with a dreamy look in her eyes. "They're so beautiful," she told them.

"That one isn't so pretty—look, he's got scars all over him. He's a sorry sight, all right," Joshua commented.

"Oh, no—he's the most beautiful of all."

Emily couldn't say she agreed with this, but she decided not to press further.

During supper, Joshua described his capture. "I was chasing the herd, and a pretty little mare caught my eye. I brought Wild Thing close to her to try to corner her, and just for a second I was distracted by a rearing horse. When I looked back toward the mare, she was gone."

"Maybe she went off in a hidden crevice," Emily suggested.

"You're probably right," her father agreed. "There are plenty of hiding places in the mountains." He pushed his plate aside and rose from the table. "Well, I'd best get a good night's sleep—I have a hard trek tomorrow." Emily remembered that her father was going to the next county to sell some cattle, and wouldn't be back until after dark. Joshua said

good-night to his wife and daughter before getting ready for an early bedtime.

"I wonder what happened to that mare Dad talked about," Emily said to her mother when they were clearing the table.

"Oh, I don't know. The mustangs have secrets humans will never know," answered Sarah.

But Emily wanted to know. The question nagged at her even as she fell asleep.

Emily was riding a horse through the mountains. She didn't know whether it was Sweetie or Wild Thing or some other horse. She was searching for something exciting, but this was unknown to her also. Suddenly, a gleaming palomino mare stepped out of the shadows. She seemed to be glowing with some inner light and stood out like a beacon in contrast with the black night. Emily knew this was what she was searching for. She sat looking in awe at the magnificent creature looking back at her with large, wild eyes. They both remained motionless, as though frozen. Then, wisps of fog abruptly started to curl around the mare, shrouding her from Emily's view. "No, no!" she cried out, reaching her arms desperately toward the mustang. A wail of disappointment tore from her throat. She woke up with her pillow damp from tears.

Emily dressed like a zombie, eyes staring into space, thinking about the palomino mare. She pulled on her jeans and headed outside to saddle Sweetie. After scrawling a short note that said "Gone riding, back for breakfast," she headed for the mountains.

For the first two hours, Emily saw no sign of life except for the occasional jack-rabbit springing across the path and the hawks soaring high in the sky. It was eight o'clock, and she knew her mother was up by now and preparing breakfast, but Emily had no thought of turning back—not until she saw the mustang mare.

Another half-hour passed. Now her mother was probably getting a little worried. Emily continued to ride deeper into the mountains.

Here was a low canyon, surrounded by mountains on all sides, except for the narrow space between. A brook bubbled across it. Emily's heart leapt. This spot was the perfect home for a herd of mustangs!

She directed Sweetie to the brook and gave her a long drink of the cool, refreshing water. Looking down into the water, she gasped. Behind her, she could see the reflection of a palomino horse! Slowly, ever so slowly, she turned her head so she could glimpse the mare. Nervously, the mustang sidestepped, wary of this human drinking at her brook. The sunlight made her smooth golden coat shine, and her mane and tail were long from years of growing. The mare stared at her with her big, deep brown eyes. Looking at her under the clear blue sky, for one shining moment, Emily thought she was the most beautiful thing in the world.

Suddenly, Emily heard the shrill neigh of a mustang break the silence. The mare heard her stallion too, and galloped away to him in the pass between two mountains.

"No!" Emily breathed. She sank to her knees and wept. "I'll never see the mare again," she cried. But she ached with a burning desire to have that mare. She *needed* her. She felt that if she couldn't have her, she would die of a broken heart. Wait—my dad is the best mustang catcher in the state! He could capture her for me, she thought happily.

She took Sweetie's reins and mounted. Kicking the mare's sides, she told her, "We're goin' home."

It was nine o'clock when they reached Emily's home. Sarah was waiting at the open door, frowning, and as soon as Emily walked toward her, her mother reached out and held her daughter to her, resting her cheek on Emily's brown hair. She kneeled down to look Emily over for injuries or stains and, finding only dusty soil on her jeans, stood up to smooth her hair back. She kissed her daughter's head.

"I was so worried about you," she said at last.

Emily looked at the ground and bit her lip, wishing she had checked the time. But it was worth it to see that mare! she reminded herself. She pushed the dirt into a little clump with the toe of her boot. "Yeah, well, I'm sorry. Next time I'll come home earlier."

"Good," Sarah responded firmly. "So go inside and wash your hands; the waffles are getting cold."

After breakfast, Emily told her mother about her ride while helping her wash dishes.

"And I saw the most gorgeous palomino



For one shining moment, Emily thought she was the most beautiful thing in the world

mare—she must have been the one Dad was chasing yesterday. I'd love to have her." Emily turned her green eyes on her mother appealingly, trying to let her mother know how much she wanted the mustang. Sarah studied her daughter searchingly for a long moment before

turning her back and silently drying a plate, staring at it unseeingly as she ran the cloth over its smooth white surface again and again.

Emily gazed at her mother's back, forming a plan in her mind. If only her parents understood the desperate *need* she

felt! Emily knew the palomino mare was the one from her dream, and that the beautiful mustang was meant to be hers. She loved riding Sweetie, but her mother's mare was placid and calm, not wild and spirited like the palomino. Besides, Sweetie was her mother's, and Emily was ready for a horse of her own to train, to ride and care for. If only the mare was hers . . .

Emily couldn't sleep that night, and lay on her bed staring at the ceiling, images of the mare—*her* mare—flitting across her mind. She turned toward the wall, looking out through the window screen into the moonlit night and listening to the insects chirping. A coyote howled somewhere in the mountains, dark shapes on the horizon blotting out the stars. His long, lonely call echoed through the still night, and Emily's heart ached with longing for the mustang mare. Where was she, at this very moment? Emily wondered. Was she safe? Was she, too, staring at the bright stars twinkling in the velvet sky and listening to the coyote's mournful howl?

Emily heard the front door creak slowly open, and footsteps coming from the kitchen. For a second Emily was alarmed, but then she smiled as she recognized her father's cough. He was back from the auction. Emily waited for a few minutes until her father climbed the stairs and peeked into her room, his silhouette blocking the light from the hallway.

"I'm awake, Dad," Emily whispered.

Joshua nodded and walked into her

room, bending over Emily's bed as he hugged her.

"Dad, I saw a beautiful mustang mare this morning, she . . ." Emily's rush of words was stopped when her father touched her lips lightly with his finger.

"Tell me tomorrow," he whispered.

Nodding reluctantly, Emily kissed him good-night. Joshua gently tucked a lock of her brown hair that had fallen onto her damp cheek behind her ear. Giving her one last kiss on the forehead, her father rose and walked out of the room, leaving Emily alone again, impatient for the morning to come so she could carry out her plan.

The next day, Emily jumped out of bed, eager to tell her father about the mare and try to convince her parents to get her the palomino. She hurried down the stairs to the kitchen, where she found them eating breakfast at the table.

"Morning, dear," her mother greeted Emily.

"Did you sleep well?" her father asked.

Emily nodded, smiling with excitement. "Yep," she answered. She accepted an English muffin from the plate Sarah held out, and plopped down in a chair opposite her father.

"Dad, yesterday I went riding and I saw a gorgeous mustang mare . . ." Emily told her parents about the palomino mare she had seen, telling them about her rich color, her powerful conformation, her nice size. "I really want her," Emily finished. Glancing at her mother and father anxiously, wondering what they were

thinking, Emily rushed on. "I was thinking, my birthday is pretty soon, so maybe you could get me the mare . . ."

Sarah averted her eyes down to the table, tracing the outlines of the flowers on the tablecloth with her finger. Sensing her husband's questioning gaze, she raised her head and stared back at Joshua, her face expressionless and her eyes unfathomable to Emily. Joshua looked at his wife for a long moment, seeming to read in her face what Emily could not see.

At last he turned back to his daughter. "We'll see," he answered, returning to his breakfast.

Disappointed and frustrated, Emily finished her English muffin and pushed her chair back from the table. "Well, I'm going for a ride on Sweetie," she announced, starting to walk away before her father's voice made her pause.

"Oh no you aren't, young lady. Don't you remember what you have to do today?"

Emily scrunched up her face in thought. "Oh, yeah," she answered, shoulders sagging. Her battle for the palomino had made her completely forget that she was supposed to check the fences in the back pasture. Riding out there, mending any broken boards and returning to the house would take most of the day.

By the time she returned, sweaty and tired and with a splinter in her right palm, it was late afternoon. Sweetie traveled along the path to the barn at an easy, ambling walk, her head low and her tail swishing away the flies, enjoying the sunshine. Emily, however, was anxious to rest,

cool off and then resume planning how she would acquire the mustang mare.

She was about to dismount when she heard voices near the circular paddock behind the barn. Wondering why her parents would be there, Emily quickly switched Sweetie's bridle for a halter, clipped her to the cross ties in the wash stall, and hurried toward the paddock.

Emily skidded to a stop before her father, who had been talking with her mother in the space between the barn and the house. Beyond that was the paddock, and Emily glanced at her parents' faces, glowing with anticipation and excitement, before straining to see over them. Joshua looked at his wife, and the corners of Sarah's mouth turned upward into a small smile.

"Happy birthday, Emily," Sarah whispered before she and Joshua moved aside so their daughter could see what was in the paddock.

Emily gasped as she glimpsed the form of the palomino mare standing in the middle of the paddock. From the trampled ground and the sweaty sides of the mare, she could tell there had been a struggle. Emily's heart soared at the thought of the palomino's—her palomino's, at last!—wild spirit. Fumbling to open the gate, Emily slowly made her way to the mustang's side, extending a trembling hand to stroke her horse's side, her head filled with plans and dreams for herself and the mare.

The mustang flinched at her touch, watching her with distrust. Only then did

Emily really see the palomino mare.

The horse's once gleaming coat was muddy and damp with sweat. Her long mane and tail were tangled and stained and filled with burrs. Worst of all, her beautiful, intelligent, wild eyes were listless and defeated, and her golden head almost touched the ground.

Emily took a step back from the mustang, her green eyes startled and horrified. She shook her head slowly, trying to pretend that she was wrong, that the mare would learn to love her and her new home, that her spirit wasn't broken. After waiting for what seemed so long, Emily had her own horse, she had the palomino, she was happy—wasn't she?

A sob tore from her throat, and then another. Closing her eyes against the hot tears, against the harsh reality, Emily finally realized what she hadn't before—that her dream horse wasn't hers. The palomino mare might be hers in name, but her heart would always belong to the craggy mountains and the endless blue skies of the Nevada wilderness.

Was she too late to fix her mistake? Was the mustang's spirit broken forever?

Tears trickling down her cheeks, Emily's shoulders shook as she groped for the latch of the paddock gate. Throwing the gate open, she ran blindly toward the palomino, shouting and waving her arms.

"Go! Go away! Stupid horse, *you're* getting what you wanted! GO!" Emily screamed.

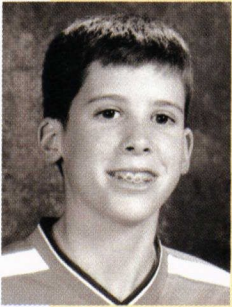
Joshua, surprised and confused, took a step forward to stop his daughter, but was restrained by Sarah's hand on his shoulder. There was no astonishment or surprise on Sarah's face; she watched the scene unfolding before them as if she had seen it long before.

The mare raised her head, startled by the sobbing, shouting human behind her. Suddenly, she seemed to wake up, and with a delighted whicker she galloped out of the paddock, through the open gate toward the mountains.

A cool breeze blew strands of Emily's brown hair across her tear-stained face as she stood in the middle of the empty paddock, watching the mustang gallop away. Her mother walked slowly up to her and enfolded her in a hug that was surprisingly strong. Sarah gazed at her daughter with not only tears but pride in her eyes, and her tiny, sad smile broadened as the two watched the mare pause in her flight for freedom, one forehoof raised. Flaring her nostrils, coat gleaming gold, the palomino tossed her head and emitted a shrill whinny of joy, announcing her return to the herd. Snowy white mane and tail billowing out behind her, the mare galloped into the distance, forever free. ❀

Doing the Tango

By John Roberts



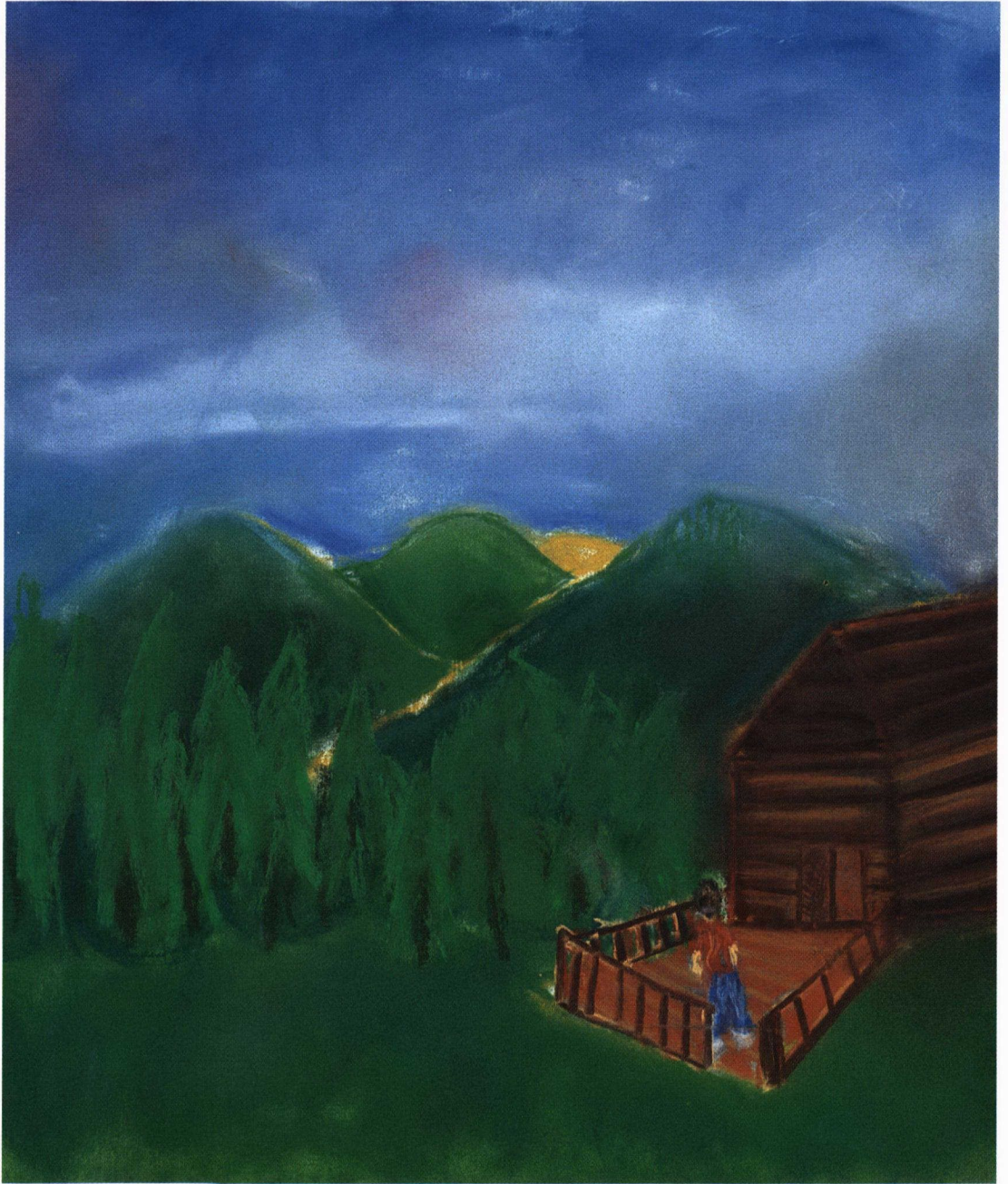
John Roberts, 13
Windsor, California

In my house, we celebrate everything.
Even the smallest things.
Good grades on a test.
Learning that we are going
On vacation.
Even a surprise present.
The reward is
“doing the tango.”

The dogs want to join in
And scramble to find a toy
A bone, a partner to celebrate
The joyful dance.

Learning to do the tango
Was a hard job in itself.
When I was young,
The turn and the switch
Of hands
Was the most challenging.
Now it comes naturally.

The greatest part of all
Is seeing the joy
On my mother's face
When she knows
There is good news,
Meaning
We get to dance the tango.



He loved the way everything was quiet and still before the rest of the world woke up

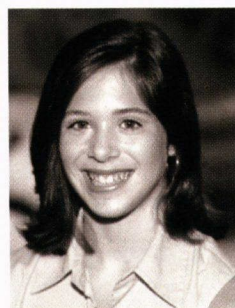
A Lesson for Life

By **Rebecca Schneider**
Illustrated by **Elliott P. Frank**

BILLY STOOD ON THE PORCH of the cabin enjoying the cool, fresh air. He loved the way everything was quiet and still before the rest of the world woke up. Then he remembered — he was at camp in North Carolina, 800 miles away from his parents in Florida. Billy shivered. Suddenly, the air seemed too cold and the quietness too quiet. At home it wasn't like that. Home. That magical word. No, stop thinking about that! Billy rubbed his eye where a tear tried to come out. Finally, he gave up and started bawling like a baby. The rest of his cabin woke up and started saying, "Crybaby, crybaby, crybaby, Billy's a crybaby, crybaby, crybaby..."

Aah! Billy sat straight up in bed. Where was he? Oh, now he remembered, safe at home in his bed. He groped around the nightstand for the thick glasses that he needed to wear. He got out of bed and opened the window. Ahh, the wonderful balmy breezes that Florida was known for. It had just been a nightmare. He wasn't in North Carolina and he wasn't going to camp. He was going to spend this summer like the previous summers: at home with his family doing nothing. Billy smiled, went over to his closet, and pulled out a pair of khaki pants and a polo shirt, tucking the shirt in just so. He then went and stood in front of the mirror, examining his face carefully.

If only my glasses weren't so thick and my hair so shaggy, Billy thought. If I didn't have glasses then I wouldn't look like a nerd, and my brown eyes are actually quite nice. Then if I get my hair cut like the other boys I could be a model. Well, not



Rebecca Schneider, 12
Atlanta, Georgia



Elliott P. Frank, 11
Evergreen, Colorado

quite a model, but . . .

Billy's fancies were cut short by an ear-piercing yell. "Billy! Oh, Billy my boy! Breakfast is ready!"

Billy followed his nose down the stairs and into the kitchen where his mother had cooked her famous "start of the summer" breakfast. Billy smiled happily and started wolfing down her delicious pancakes and sausages. Yes, this would be a great summer. Maybe he would even make a few friends. But the next instant this feeling of happiness was shattered by the words that came out of his mother's mouth.

In that same false, happy voice she announced, "Oh, and your father and I decided you're going to sleep-away camp this summer."

Billy choked on his sausage. "What?! What do you mean? You can't send me to camp! I . . . we . . . I thought . . . ohhh!" Billy stomped up the stairs and slammed the door to his room. Well, he thought, maybe Brian will understand the way I feel. So he called his best and only friend, Brian.

"Hello?" answered a husky voice, unmistakably Brian's.

"Hey!" replied Billy.

"If you want me to play with you today I can't because I'm going to camp in two days and I have to pack."

"Well, actually, that was what I was calling to talk to you about. You see . . ."

"Wait!" Brian interrupted. "If you're calling to convince me not to go, well, you can't. Just because you don't want to go

doesn't mean that I don't want to go." With that, he slammed down the phone.

While Billy was still trying to let the phone call sink in, his mother came in. "Billy, let me explain about our decision."

"You don't have to explain, I can tell that I'm a pain to you guys and you want to get rid of me!" snapped Billy, and, with that accusation, Billy stormed out of the room.

He grabbed his baseball, bat, and glove and ran outside to the baseball field down the street from his house. Once there, he started sobbing like a maniac, throwing the ball up and swinging the bat wildly, not caring that everyone was stopping to stare at him. The only thing that Billy accomplished from this was a bump on the left side of his head where the ball hit him. When it grew late, Billy walked back to his house and into his room, slamming the door for the second time that day. There was a tray of food on his bedside table which he gobbled down hungrily, while opening the note that was also on the table. It said:

Dear Billy,

Your mother told me about your reaction to camp, and I just want to get a few things straight. The reason we are sending you to camp is because we're running low on money and need to work extra hours. We can't be at home at all this summer to see you or take care of you. Because camp starts in three days, your mother will help you pack tomorrow. Your camp is in Raleigh, North Carolina, and it is called Golden Eagle. You should have a lot of fun there.

You need to grow up sooner or later, and this is the best time to do it. You will not only be helping us out, but also yourself. Thanks so much. Now eat your dinner and get to bed, because you're going to need all of your energy to pack.

Love,
Dad

Well, it was pretty nice of Dad to do all that for me, thought Billy as he got ready for bed. But still . . . Billy couldn't finish his train of thought because he burst into tears. He cried himself to sleep.

The next few days went by in a blur of tears and packing. Finally, the fateful day arrived and after a long drive it was time for Billy to say goodbye to his parents. "Take care now. Have fun. Don't forget to write us," his parents said.

All Billy could do was nod and force back the tears that were threatening to overflow down his cheeks. Then his parents left in a cloud of dust, leaving Billy all alone in a strange place. Billy walked into his cabin, which he was sharing with nine other boys. Their names were written on their bunks, and some of the beds had bags on them already. Billy walked down the aisle between the beds, reading the names: Joe, Louie, Cornelius, Daniel, Aaron, Joel, Chris, John, Bob, and Billy. His bed was at the very end. On top of him was Bob, who had already made himself at home. His bed was made, but it was a little messy. He had taken the top two drawers to put his stuff in and he was sitting on the bed, moving his head to the music coming out from his Walkman. Bob

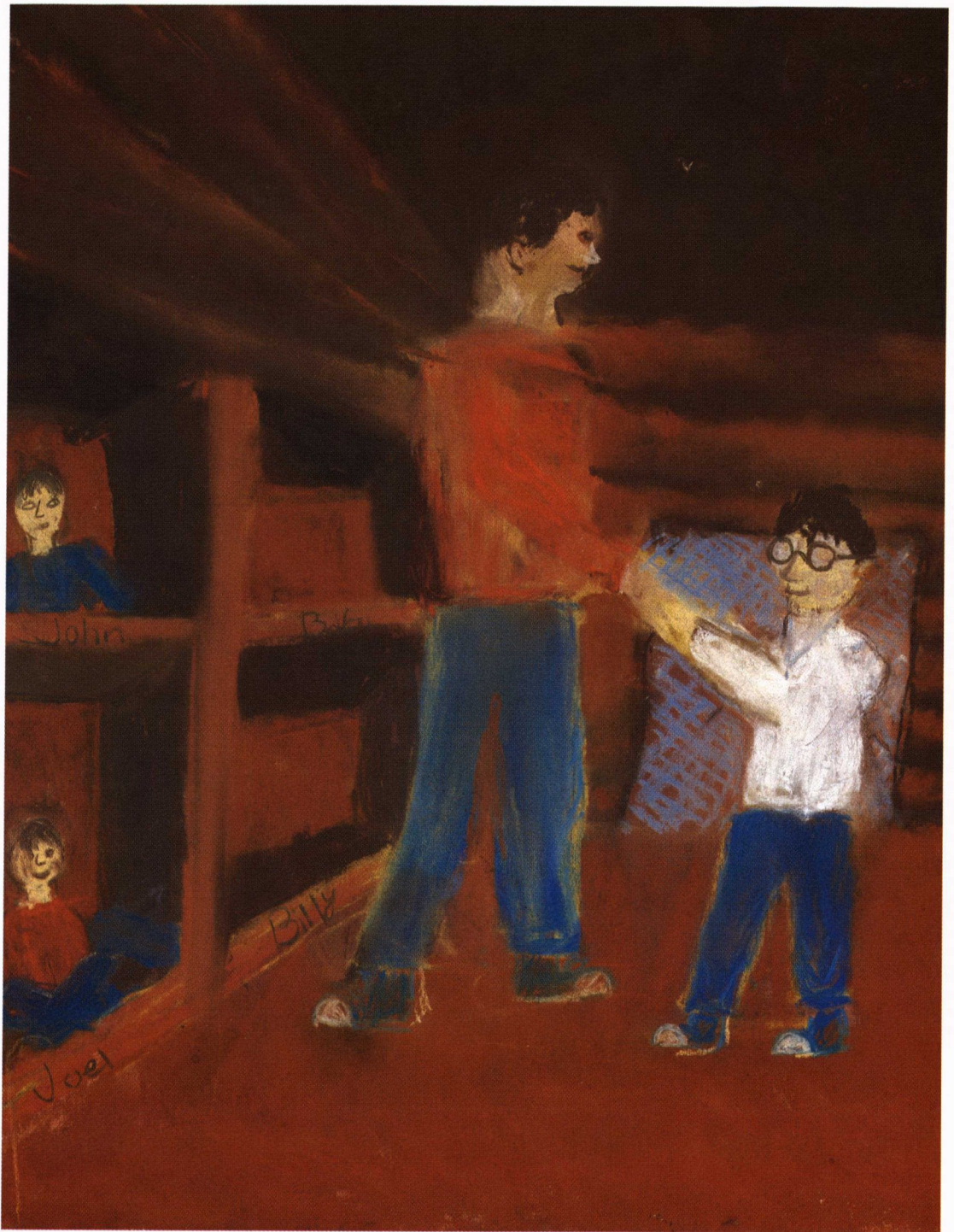
was dressed in jeans shorts that came down over his knees and a tie-dyed T-shirt. He was tan and had golden hair and baby-blue eyes. Billy thought of his pale skin and shaggy, boring brown hair and brown eyes, which you couldn't even see because of the glasses. He looked down at his khaki shorts and tucked-in white polo shirt and tugged at the corner of it, to make it not so neat. Then he opened up his duffel bag and started making his bed. There. No, too neat. Billy ruffled the top of the bed until it looked just a tad messy. Then he pushed his hand through his hair until that, too, wasn't so neat. He stepped back, looked at the kid obviously from California, and said, "Hi!" Only it came out in a squeak. Billy cleared his throat, took a deep breath, and screamed, "Hi!!" This time it was a little too loud.

Everyone in the room was quiet. Then Bob pulled off his headphones and said, "Hey! My name's Bob. What's yours?"

"Billy," Billy replied.

"Cool."

And with that, Bob put his headphones back on and continued listening to his music. During that exchange the whole cabin seemed to be listening. As soon as Bob put his headphones on the cabin exploded into action. Everyone went back to what they were doing, but they seemed friendlier than before. In fact, several people came up to Billy and introduced themselves. Billy set to work unpacking, and soon all the clothes that he had brought were in the bottom two drawers of the dresser that he and Bob were shar-



"Hello, Billy, I'm Burtelof Loouky William Minisup"

ing. His shoes were under the bed and his books and stationery were on the nightstand on the other side of the bed, in the drawer. Finally, Billy was able to sit down and take a long look at his cabin. But Billy didn't get farther than the sitting-down part. Because as soon as he did, his counselor walked into the room.

"OK, everyone. As I'm sure you all have noticed, we have a new member in our cabin: Billy," announced the counselor. He walked forward and extended his hand. "Hello, Billy, I'm Burtelof Loouky William Minisup."

Billy just stood there, openmouthed, wondering how he could ever remember his counselor's name. And if he couldn't, then maybe nobody would like him and . . . Billy's thoughts were interrupted by Burtelof Loouky William Minisup, who was speaking again.

"But you can just call me Burt." As this was said, everybody exploded into peals of laughter. Billy looked around, wondering if they were laughing at him. Then he smiled. It was a joke! Of course! And it was actually pretty funny.

Then Burt announced that they were going to go play baseball until it was time to get ready for dinner. As everybody cheered, Billy looked at his watch. Two hours of humiliation. The happy feeling inside of Billy quickly disappeared as he followed the rest of his cabin out to the baseball field.

"OK, now since we only have eleven people, we'll divide the teams up into six and five. I'll be on the team with five with

Joe, Bob, Daniel, and Billy. We'll bat first. Everyone else is in the field," said Burt. As the other team ran out to the field, Burt gathered his team around him. "I'll go first, Joe second, Billy third, Bob fourth, and Daniel last. OK, now let's play ball!" And with that he stepped into the batter's box.

Louie threw the ball, Burt swung and hit a grounder through the second baseman's legs for a base hit. Next came Joe. He swung and missed at the first two. The third one was a little high. He swung at the next one and got the first out. Billy waited breathlessly, wondering what his teammates were going to do. At school, whenever he struck out, everybody always yelled at him.

"Nice try. You'll get it next time. OK, Billy, let's see what you got," Burt yelled. Billy breathed out a sigh of relief, picked up a bat, and with legs like Jell-O, walked to the plate. He put the bat up to his shoulder and swung. He missed by miles. Instead of hearing laughter, he heard lots of encouragement, even from the other team. He got a lot closer to the next pitch and was again encouraged instead of laughed at. On the third pitch he swung, and connected. Even though it was just a little dribbler, Billy didn't care. It was his first hit ever. Everybody was cheering like it was a home run, even though Billy knew that it was really nothing. But it felt really good. Soon, half an inning was over, with the score 1-0. Burt had scored. Billy raced out into the field and was feeling pretty good until he realized that he

would have to field. He was the only one in the outfield.


Well, maybe nobody can hit as far as the outfield. That way, nobody will know how bad I am at catching, Billy thought. But Billy was proven wrong by the first person that came up to bat, Cornelius. He swung at the first pitch and hit the ball deep into center field, where Billy was. Billy looked around, and, realizing that there was no one around to save him, started backing up to try and catch the ball. He looked up at the sky, and to his dismay, the ball was coming down way in front of him. Billy raced forward, but try as he might, he couldn't catch it. So he just picked it up and threw it hard to second, where the runner was headed. The man on second base caught the ball and tagged Cornelius for the out. Everyone stared at Billy. He knew what was coming next. They were all going to yell at him for not catching the ball. Burt was the first one to speak.

"Wow! What are you doing way out in the outfield? You should be pitching!" Everyone nodded their heads in agreement. Billy was ecstatic. Not only were they not mad, but he was going to be a pitcher, one of the most important positions. Maybe camp wouldn't be so bad

after all! The two hours went by fast after that, and soon it was time to get ready for dinner. Billy didn't even remember the score of the game.

After dinner there was a big campfire and everyone roasted marshmallows. Billy looked around at everyone. Their faces were bathed in the orange glow of the fire, and Billy felt welcome for the first time in his life. He was really happy.

The feeling of happiness stayed even when he thought about his parents while he was getting ready for bed. He closed his eyes and was out in less than five seconds.

In the morning Billy woke up before anybody else. He went outside and stood on the porch of the cabin. It was quiet and cool, just like he liked it. He thought of home. Then Billy remembered his dream. This was exactly like what happened in it. But instead of starting to get homesick, Billy's feeling of peacefulness lasted. The perfect weather stayed perfect. Burt came out onto the porch and, instead of calling Billy a crybaby, he just said, "Isn't it nice out here? I just love it like this." That was when Billy realized that he wasn't going to get homesick and nobody was going to make fun of him. Camp was going to be great. 

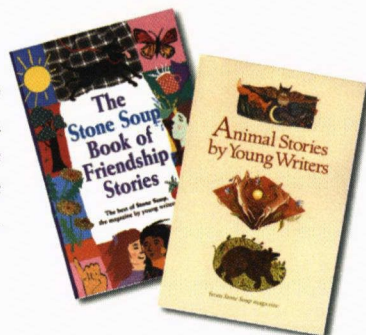
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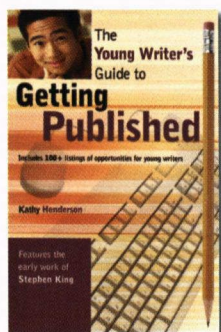
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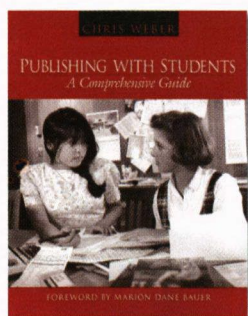
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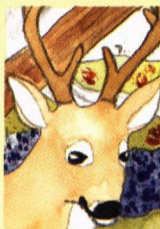
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