

# Stone Soup

*The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists*



*"The Summer in India," by Sneha Lakhani, age 13, Mudra School, Vadodara, India*

## MEMORY'S SONG

Liru the sparrow wonders if he will ever see his father again

## BUILDING THE PYRAMIDS

It's not fair that girls can't take part in building the majestic pyramids

*Also:* Illustrations by Laney Haskell and Indra Boving



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*The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists*

VOLUME 38, NUMBER 1

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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:** "The Summer in India" was loaned to *Stone Soup* by the Mudra School of Fine Arts in Vadodara, India. The school offers art classes taught by artists. Special thanks to Kiran and Jayesh Kansara.





# The Mailbox



LBP, 9

I am your number one fan! I *love* your magazine! I check out three at a time from our library! The one *Stone Soup* story I seem to adore is “The Blueberry Family,” by Lena Greenberg [March/April 2009]. I could see Jessie and Allison’s point. It was an extremely creative story, completed with dazzling illustrations by Laney Haskell. In fact, I read it again and again. Thank you so much for publishing this entertaining, hypnotizing, *dazzling* magazine. I love it!

**RILEY MAYES, 9**  
*Harpswell, Maine*

*See Lena’s and Laney’s latest work in this issue.*

At the end of every year, I place my favorite magazines from that year on a bookshelf and recycle the rest. Your *Stone Soup* magazines take up most of the space. I recently re-read those magazines and realized that the story “We’re Moving” is the reason that the November/December 2007 issue is still on my shelf, even after two raids of my growing favorite magazines pile. I have never moved before, but Lyla Lawless explains the main character’s feelings so thoroughly that I can sympathize with the character just the same. Lyla also touches on a topic that I’ve always felt is true; if you know that even one person faces the same challenges as you, it gives you great comfort.

**KATE FIALKO, 11**  
*Charlotte, North Carolina*

*Stone Soup* is my favorite magazine, such imaginative pictures and writing, and the photos of the contributors—the hope of our future—are all beautiful and dear.

**RHODA STALEY, 80**  
*Harwich, Massachusetts*

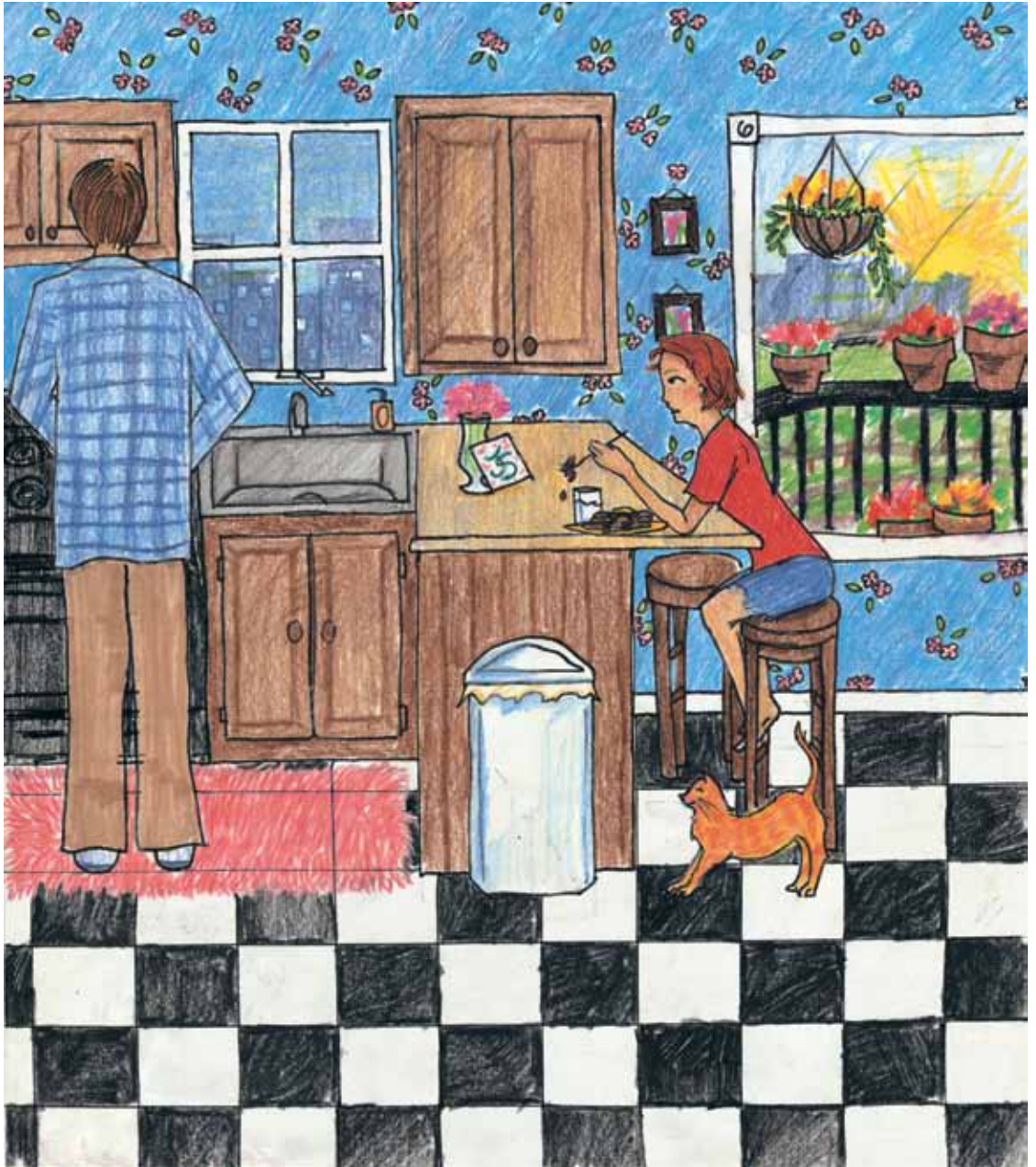
I just had my fourteenth birthday. I’m happy to be growing up but sad that I can no longer submit to your magazine. I first learned about *Stone Soup* when I was nine, and I tried to have my work published a few times before it was accepted. When my first story was published, I was ecstatic. I have been reading *Stone Soup* ever since, and I am always thinking about what I can write and submit. Whenever I learned that a story of mine was going to be published in *Stone Soup*, I would jump up and down for ten minutes and call all of my friends. For me, reading *Stone Soup* was just as good as having a story in it. I say *was*, but I know that I will always read and enjoy it, even though I’m too old to submit work. When a new issue of *Stone Soup* arrives in my mailbox, I sit down in my living room to look at the writing and artwork. I think about the authors as I read their stories, and who they are as kids in the world. I study the colorful drawings and imagistic poems. I think about the writing in *Stone Soup* long after I put down the magazine. The stories affect my daily life and way of thinking because I remember images from the stories and what I thought while I was reading them. Sometimes I imagine that I am a character from one of the stories. Thank you for producing such an amazing magazine! I will continue to read and love *Stone Soup*. It has made me a better writer and a better person.

**ANNAKAI HAYAKAWA GESHLIDER, 14**  
*San Francisco, California*

**WWW.SECRETBUILDERS.COM**

*Stone Soup* is pleased 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.



*Her dad had promised that Sundays were their own special days together*

# Not Your Ordinary Fairy Tale

By **Emmy J. X. Wong**

*Illustrated by* **Laney Haskell**

**E**VERY DAY WAS a holiday, or so it seemed. You didn't need decorated trees, fireworks, cakes and candles, or paper hats to celebrate special days, Marty thought. Marty loved her lazy Sunday mornings perched on a high stool in her galley kitchen, eating stacks of buckwheat pancakes dripping in amber syrup, lovingly cooked just the way she liked 'em, crispy brown on the outside and fluffy golden yellow on the inside. Her dad had promised that Sundays were their own special days together and no one would ever interfere. She loved her dad for that and for the myriad of special days he had devoted to her. She savored every one of them. She loved regular Friday-night barbecues on the geranium-lined terrace just as much as the sailing vacations on Martha's Vineyard that only came each windswept August along with the humidity.

Of all her favorite days, her most favorite ones weren't vacation holidays at all, but ordinary afternoons figure skating at the Frog Pond across from their Beacon Hill brownstone on late wintry afternoons, just as the sun was sinking. The magenta-and-plum sky, reflecting in the shimmering raspberry-blue ice, mixed together like oil pastels to create magical vistas. With the row of cupolas standing guard on the hill, just beyond the iron fence surrounding the Common, the Boston skyline was right out of a medieval fairy-tale picture book. She had become a princess, and her dad her knight in shining armor. With him protecting her heart she felt safe in a world that had slung more than a few arrows at her.



Emmy J. X. Wong, 12  
Weston, Massachusetts



Laney Haskell, 13  
Powell, Tennessee

Until Jessica arrived. After Mom died, it had been just the two of them. That was nine years ago. She had been almost four years old, then. Dad always said no one could take Mom's place and Marty knew deep down that she could believe him; he was trustworthy. No one could possibly ever take Mom's place. Marty still had fuzzy memories of her broad cheerful smile, and floral scent, her sparkly eyes and the polonaises she loved playing on the baby grand. There were signs of her everywhere in the apartment. Dad kept their wedding photo on display on the Steinway in the great room and a bottle of her favorite gardenia scent on his dresser. But Jessica now seemed like a constant interloper. She just showed up one day and never left, sort of like Marmalade, the orangey-red striped tabby who arrived on their doorstep in a blizzard and adopted the modest-sized family on the spot. She had unabashedly come knocking at the door in need of a cozy home and constant scratching behind her ear, and Marty had been overly eager to pamper her. Now she owned the place. Jessica in a similar way had wedged herself in. Jessica had been sent over by her dad's publisher. He was an experienced writer and she a young aspiring editor who wanted to throw herself into her work—and *Marty's world*, brimming with rainbows.

MARTY LOOKED DOWN at the carefully scripted aqua "J" intertwined with "S" for Sinclair on the back of the envelope that held the engraved wedding

invitation. It sat royally now on the mahogany sideboard biding its time. Sinclair Roberts. Ever since she could remember, she envisioned that one day she would grow up and leave the nest first, not the other way around.

Marty Roberts. Although everyone mistook her for a boy, with her short cropped fiery red hair, and a uniform of cutoffs and perennial rocker T-shirts, she thought *she* would be the one to break up the pair eventually as she sped off to an all-girls' college or maybe even—marriage to her own Prince Charming. Never in her wildest fantasies did she think her dad would be the one to break up the duo. But Jessica had other plans and dreams for herself, which selfishly included Dad. Marty gasped for air. Suddenly, she felt all her memories and her future slipping out from under her like quicksand. Her happiest days were behind her for certain.

"Honey, come in here." It was Dad, chirping from the living room with all the brightness of a spring robin. "We need you!"

I wonder, Marty pondered skeptically.

When Marty entered the large sunlit brick front room with the sheer muslin curtains, Dad and Jessie were hand-in-hand on their favorite spots on the couch. Marmalade was spread out across Dad's lap, licking one paw, enjoying a mid-morning bath. Why was it Marmalade had no trouble staking her rightful claim to him, when she had so much difficulty? Marty smiled at the placid feline, which resembled a carefree dust rag in an indulgent



pose. She wasn't going to be displaced from her castle—by anyone. Marmalade purred contentedly.

"Marty, which of these party favors do you like best?" Jessica pointed to a glossy brochure, one of several opened before the blissful couple. "Your dad likes these miniature porcelain swans filled with pastel butter mints. But they seem so old-fashioned to me. I need your help. I like these Belgian-chocolate swans in colorful tinfoil." Both looked hideous to Marty.

Marty searched for a diplomatic answer. She would prefer neither. She would prefer that Jessica go away and that there would be no wedding, but that wasn't a choice the pair of entangled arms and hearts had given her. Marty could see why her dad liked Jessica. She wasn't a stunning beauty. She was more the "girl next door." Pretty and nice enough. Jessica continued to carry on a dialogue to fill the void.

"Are you OK with the wedding, Marty? Do you want us to wait until you graduate from eighth grade next summer? We can wait, you know. I realize it's just been you and your dad for some time. If you need more time to get used to the idea, we can give you all the time you need." Her voice had become steady and low, one might even say reassuring and understanding.

There she goes again, thought Marty. It's true. As much as she resented her, Jessica was all right. She always said the right thing at just the right time. She knew why Dad had, OK, admit it, fallen in love with her and she knew why she

was having so much trouble disliking her. Jessica was a kind person. She was smart and maybe even beautiful and she made it a point to spend as much time with *her* as she did with Dad. Marty remembered how she took her and two friends shopping and to lunch on Newbury Street to celebrate her twelfth birthday. When her dad was reluctant to buy her the expensive cell phone she wanted, Jessica went to bat and enumerated all the ways she was responsible.

"Marty does all her homework, is always where she says she is and has never given you any cause to worry about her. Of course she can handle a new cell phone. She needs it. She won't lose it or allow it to get stolen. I have no doubt," she had argued intelligently. Her dad appreciated logic and, as a best-selling author, recognized a plot when he heard one. Of course, the two had ganged up on him and had rehearsed it ahead of time. It was two against one. Now it was the other way around.

Marty pulled up a chair and decided to try to get used to the idea of her dad's marriage to Jessica. Her world though seemed to be churning again, like the bottom of the ocean futilely trying to brace itself for a hurricane motoring up the coastline in full fury. She had enjoyed a few good years of stability, but now it seemed stormy days were eager to flood in again; the clouds were beginning to take shape overhead. Soon, Jessica and Dad would be on their honeymoon in Bermuda and she would be all alone, in

search of a silver lining to all those clouds or, better yet, one last rainbow; at least Marmalade needed her. What would happen when Jessica became her stepmom? Would she suddenly sprout a wart at the tip of her nose, or turn out to be a twin to Cinderella's wicked stepmother? That's how the familiar story went.

ONE DAY tumbled into the next and soon the day that put her into a panic each time she thought about it had finally arrived. Marty was glad that this day had finally come. This was the climax to the story. This was the one part she was now ready for after so much contemplation. What she wasn't certain about was its ending. In many well-loved fairy tales, Prince Charming rides in for the last few pages, but after all, I'm only twelve-and-a-half, thought Marty. "No, I'm afraid there isn't going to be a fairy-tale ending for me," sighed Marty with a heavy heart.

The picturesque whitewashed chapel with the pointy steeple came into view sooner than she had anticipated. Marty could hear the familiar organ march sailing out softly on a breeze as soft as butterfly wings. Outside the church, a wave of bridesmaids in frosted aqua blue, pink and lilac dresses, the color of beach glass, waited in attendance under a brilliant sky. But once inside, Marty felt the air still and turn stifling. The sea of navy and black suits, paisley ties and flowery dresses wearing oversized hats seemed to swallow up all the oxygen and she felt she was drowning.

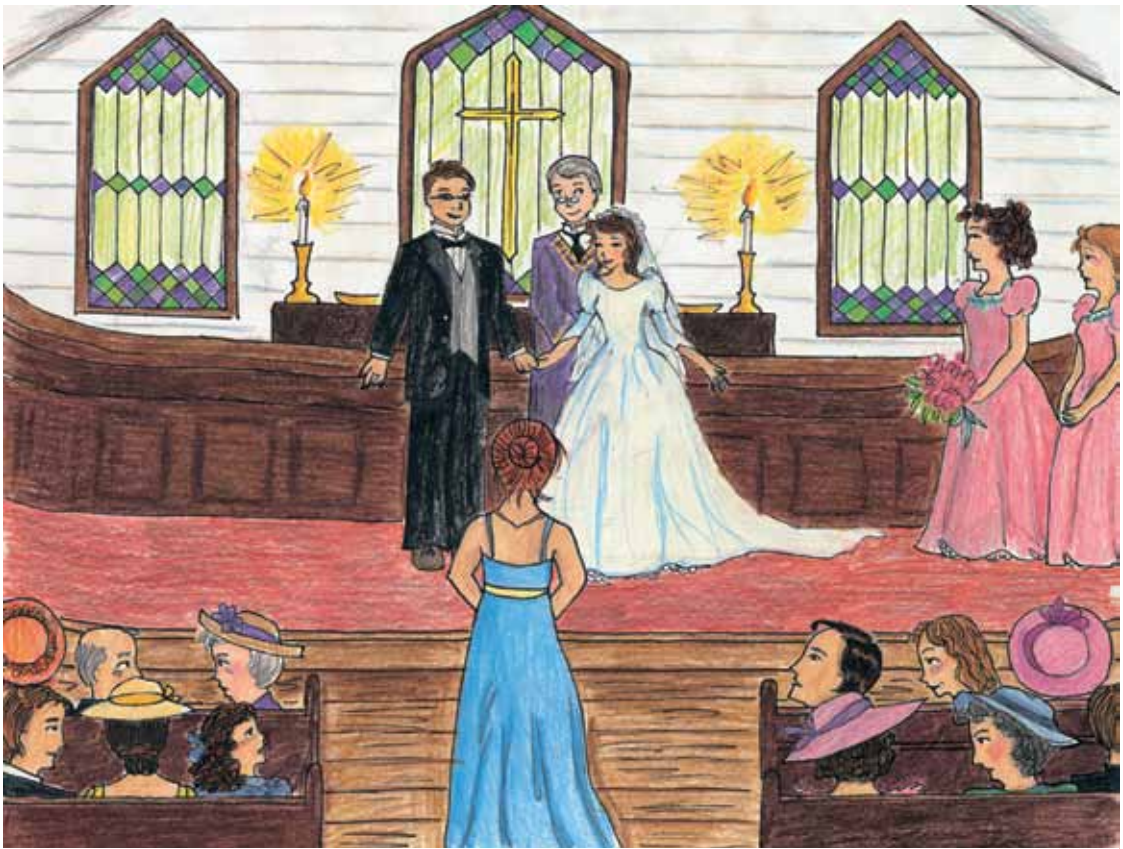
She felt so uncomfortable and awkward in her cornflower-blue empire-waist gown, making her way down the aisle now, hoping someone would throw her a life jacket. Her thoughts floated away to earlier in the day when her grandmother had painstakingly tried to make a chignon out of her tuft of orange hair she had tried to grow out specifically for the wedding. But all her efforts seemed to be in vain as the wisps escaped the tightly pinned bun at the nape of her neck. Everything seemed to be falling apart. In front of her, now Jessica and Dad held hands. Marty hadn't seen her Dad look this happy since—since she couldn't remember when.

Marty tried to catch her breath. "I'll just try to fade into the woodwork," she whispered to herself, "or maybe melt into the pine floorboards and pretend to be invisible." Her heart was shattering into a million pieces, by the reflective twinkle in Jessica's eyes, lovingly gazing back at her father.

But just then, her dad and Jess dropped their hands and opened their circle, extending their arms out to her. "Martina," her dad called to her in that rich, baritone, soothing voice she knew so well. Jessica then called out without hesitation, motioning to her, "Marty." Marty didn't know what to think. They both wanted her to join them at the foot of the altar.

"Marty, will you take us to be your new family?" her dad asked in earnest.

"Marty, will you accept me into your life as someone who loves you and cares about you?" questioned Jessica implor-



*"Marty, will you take us to be your new family?" her dad asked in earnest*

ingly, with honest eyes, putting her arms tightly around her waist.

"Oh yes, yes!" Marty heard herself venture, but in only broken words in a cacophony of sound—because she was sobbing so loudly.

**“Y**OU SEE, it wasn’t *just* your ordinary fairy-tale ending,” Marty suggested to the passenger sitting next to her, hanging on every word, racing toward pristine pink beaches and high-flying skies together. *“It was so much better than that!”* ❁

# The Loss of a Leaf

By Peter Satterthwaite



Peter Satterthwaite, 13  
Cranston, Rhode Island

It was a picturesque day at a pond,  
The glassy water gently undulated,  
Transforming turtles to twigs.  
The swans slowly carved their way forward,  
The paddleboats hypnotically  
Slap slap slapped.

But no day is perfect for everyone,  
Like the coming of fall,  
For betwixt the lily pads,  
A swan lay  
Dead,  
Its head limp at its side.

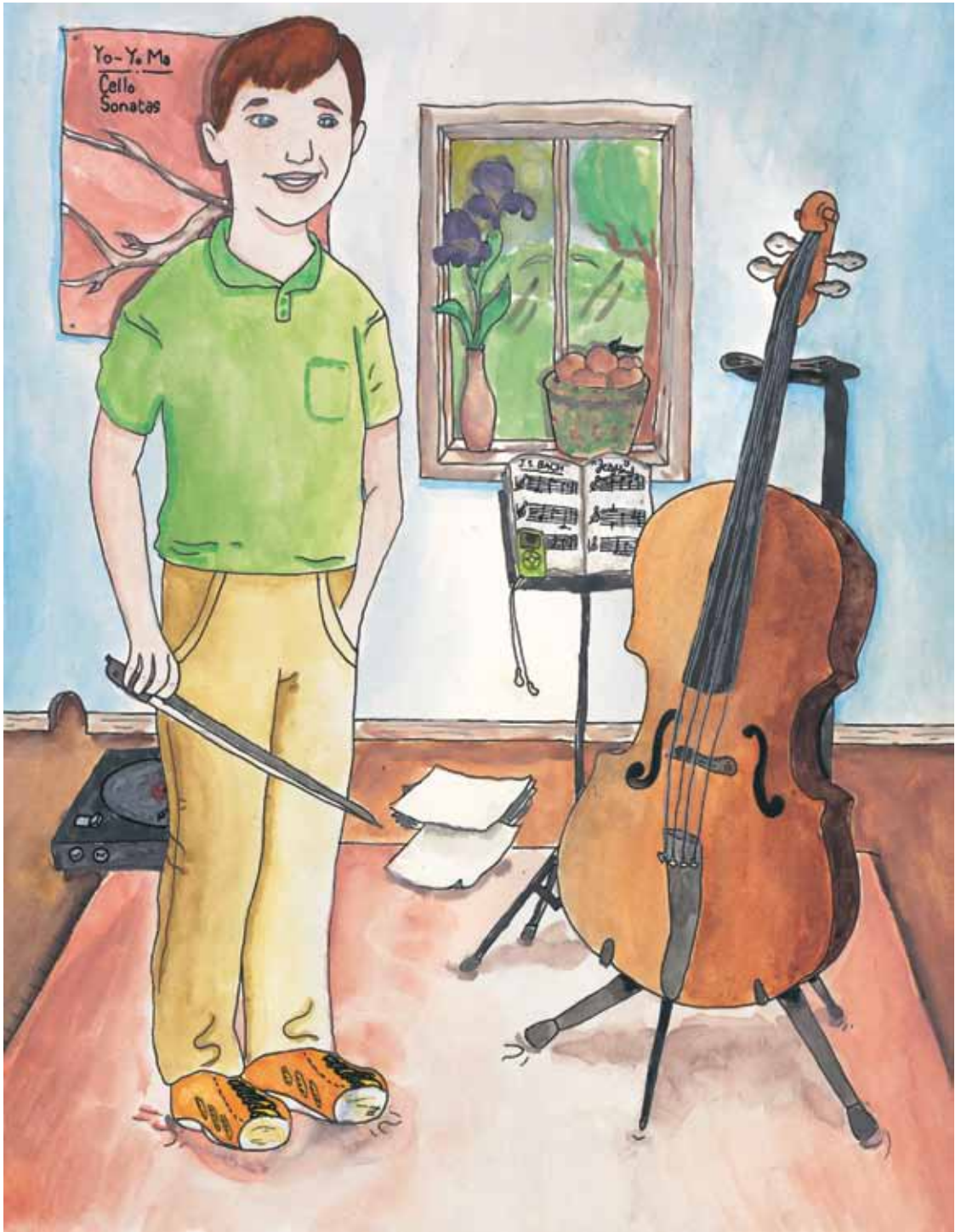
Two deceptively collected swans swam up,  
Their wings arched over their backs.  
One of the mourners swam up and went from calm  
and collected,  
To aggressive and emotional.  
It began biting the neck of the dead swan, wings pumping,  
causing a great ruckus.  
Was it cannibalizing or freeing the other swan from its  
eternal sleep?



That swan will be denied so much,  
Days like today,  
Cygnets,  
And the late summer water relaxing away troubles.

Was it dead from natural causes, or man-made ones?  
Could it have been saved?

So many questions,  
Like the water in the clouds,  
So much stress and more worry than bugs in a humid  
summer's night.  
All from  
The loss of a leaf.



*I stared at my beautiful instrument for almost fifteen minutes, thinking intently*

# Today

By **Cole Miller**

*Illustrated by* **Emma T. Capps**

**T**ODAY WAS THE big day. I was afraid it would go horribly wrong. I woke up today with that feeling you always get before something big. I ate breakfast in a hurried fashion. I always ate a slow and controlled breakfast. Today was different. Today was the day of the concert. I had eggs and bacon today. That was our family's traditional Friday breakfast. I shoveled each bite in with such force that I could have scared my dentist. I thought I was doing everything fast, but I almost missed the bus! I stared at my beautiful instrument for almost fifteen minutes, thinking intently. I play the cello, the large instrument that everybody misspells. I couldn't take my mind off the performance—the hum of the instrument, the squeaking of the wood, and the beautiful sound that flows out when a bow slides across the strings.

On the bus today, I talked to no one. There was a kind of tension between me and the school only a mile away. The gymnasium was just waiting for me to arrive, to take my seat in front of the whole school and do what I love to do. I had been playing the cello for almost two years when I was asked by the principal to play. I remembered that day well. School had just finished for the day, and already the warm summer breeze was gone. Gone were the days of swimming and playing, gone were the days of sunshine and beaches, gone were those juicy, orange peaches that I adored so much. It seemed that just as soon as summer started, it was over. I was sitting on the street corner, waiting for the bus to arrive. The autumn leaves swept by my face, and



Cole Miller, 11  
San Rafael, California




Emma T. Capps, 12  
San Carlos, California

I was reminded of the baseballs, streaking past my face like comets. I felt a hand on my shoulder and looked up. It was the principal. She had short and curly white hair, dark brown eyes, and a smile that could spread joy across a crowd of people. She looked down on me and asked me the question that led me to many hours of stress and practicing. "Will you play?"

I arrived at the gym at eight-fifteen, thirty minutes before the concert. We set up our stands and tuned our instruments. Nobody spoke. The tension between us all was greater than iron chains, coiled around an object firmly. This was not a time for joking, laughing, or talking. This was a time of music. Five minutes later, the doors opened and our music instructor walked in. He was wearing a tuxedo, but you could see it was done by trembling hands because the tie was lopsided and uneven. He walked over to the piano and took his seat. I was reminded of the times when I took my seat in the sand, resting at a summery beach. This was nothing like that. We were inside a large, dark, and enclosed room that had a sense of urgency. We all took our seats and looked around each other. We were all ready.

Then, fifteen minutes later, the whole school filed in. It suddenly dawned on

me the amount of people we were performing in front of. I tried to push it back into the depths of my mind, but it kept resurfacing like a disease that wouldn't go away. I took some deep breaths, but it didn't help. The students took their places in the seats, and all eyes turned to the performers. The lights flashed onto our stage, but they weren't needed. We placed our bows in the position and started to play. The five minutes that the group of musicians spent playing were ones I will never forget. The sound was so sweet it was almost as nourishing as a peach. The lights felt like the rays of sunshine. And the noise was the soft splashing of the waves. But this was different. This was better. The stress released felt as good as succeeding in a goal. And only one feeling was felt through the performers, pure joy. It finished just as soon as it started, like summer. The applause that was heard thundered through campus like a stampede of animals, running after the hunt they all wished to claim. The crowd stood up and roared like a thousand warriors after the death of the enemy.

Today was the big day. Today was better than summer. Today was not horribly wrong. Today I succeeded and that is better than I could have hoped for. 



# Shadow

By **Katya B. Schwenk**

*Illustrated by* **Zoe C. Yeoh**

**F**OR A FEW DAYS in mid-September, the temperature seems perfect. It's not boiling hot, but it hasn't reached what you would call freezing cold yet. It's a little chilly, but that makes you feel fresh and wide awake, and the wind isn't horribly wild and hasn't started biting at your face.

It was one of those days, and so my dad and I drove down to the local woods to go for a walk.

The ride was short, and I entertained myself by looking at the trees' beautiful gowns of gold, red, and orange. Here and there, a pine tree popped up, looking serious and glum compared to the others around it.

We stopped and parked in the small lot. I got out, and a cool, crisp breeze brushed my cheek and ruffled my blond hair.

We started walking, and our feet crunched on the forest floor. Sometimes—in a sudden gust of wind—a brightly colored leaf would float gently down, adding to the great carpet of foliage already resting there.

We talked some, but I usually skipped ahead of my dad, my hair whipping back, and breathed in the fresh, earthy smell of the forest.

After a ways, about thirty minutes after we started, a bubbling stream wound itself towards us and continued to race merrily along the path.

As we rounded a bend, I noticed a skinny, black animal drinking from the stream. I froze, for my first thought was, bear.

My dad didn't notice it at first but then stopped as well.



Katya B. Schwenk, 11  
South Burlington, Vermont



Zoe C. Yeoh, 12  
Salem, Connecticut

He was a black lab that was obviously lost—or a stray. His fur was matted, and his ribs were showing. But there was also something around his neck. It wasn't a collar—I could tell that much—but more like a piece of string.

The animal heard our footsteps and turned to look at us.

Well, he seemed to be looking at *me*.

He wasn't just *looking*, however. He was almost talking to me in a way I couldn't explain—the way animals seem to give messages to humans without words, through just their eyes. This dog's eyes were like melted chocolate, and if I had to say what he was conveying to me in words, it would be, "Help me."

Still frozen, I peered closely at him, trying to see what the thing around his neck was. But instead, I found myself gazing back into those eyes, as if I could not look away.

And then the dog came slowly, tentatively, towards us, his tail wagging slowly.

My dad unfroze and walked toward the dog, just as slowly as the dog walked toward him. Then my dad said, "Hannah, let's get the dog back to the car, OK? Then we'll take him to the Humane Society—he obviously needs help."

Unfreezing, I nodded. "Come on," I coaxed.

The dog was too willing. He bounded towards us, then stopped, and limped the rest of the way; his leg was hurt, it seemed.

Half an hour later, we were in the small parking lot, and my dad was looking at

the map to find the route to the Humane Society. I was looking at the thing around the dog's neck. Tied on a red string was a piece of paper.

In small, messy handwriting it said, "Please take care of Shadow."

Immediately, my heart went out to the dog. How could someone do that? How could someone let a dog survive on his or her own? And then a small question formed in my mind. What would have happened to Shadow if we hadn't found him?

Trying not to think about the answer to that question, I paid more attention to Shadow. His fur was as black as a raven, and one of his ears had a chunk missing from it. On the way back, I had petted him, but my dad said something about ticks, and so I stopped.

But he had to agree with me that this dog was very cute. Well, if he was a little bit plumper, and his fur was brushed, he'd be adorable.

When my dad folded the map and put it away, I dared to ask him, "Dad, can we keep Shadow?"

"Shadow?" he asked. Then he sighed. "Hannah honey, you've named the dog already? You know we can't keep him."

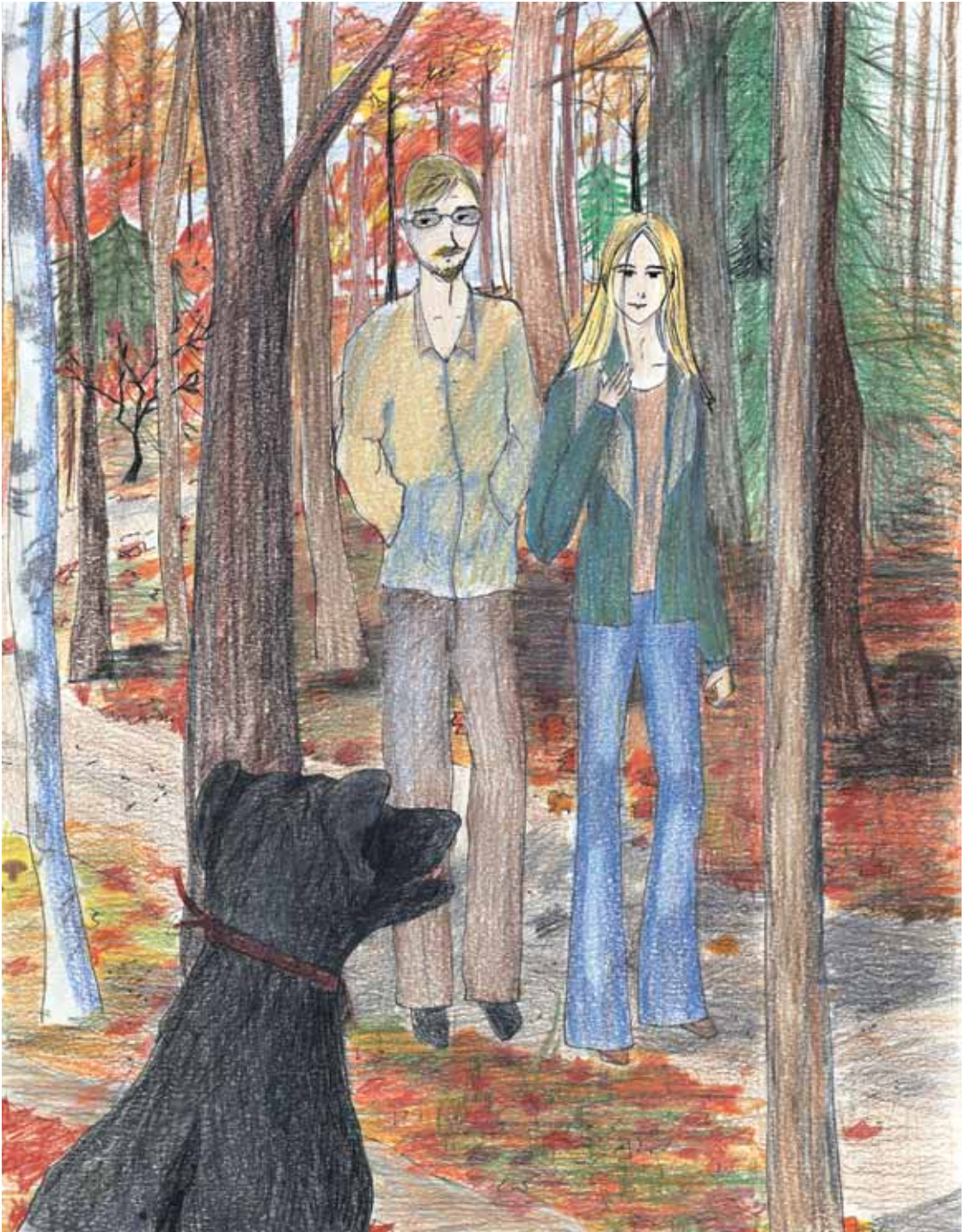
"No, look, Dad, it says on his tag."

"He has a collar?"

"No, look."

My dad crouched down and looked at the tag that had been around his neck. I could see his lips forming the words as he read them.

Again, he sighed. "Well, let's get going,



*He was almost talking to me in a way I couldn't explain*

Hannah.”

I nodded, looking at Shadow. He was pacing around us, glancing sadly at me with his big brown eyes.

We got in the car, and Shadow sat in the back, panting happily.

“Can we keep him, Dad?” I pleaded.

“No, Hannah,” my dad said firmly. “We can’t. I’m sorry.”

“Please, please, please?” I begged.

“Sorry, Hannah,” said my dad.

“I just don’t want him to go to someone who’ll abandon him again,” I said.

My dad sighed. “There are other people who care about dogs, sweetie,” said my dad.

“I know,” I said. “But what if he gets placed in a home that doesn’t care?”

“He won’t,” said my dad. “That’s what the Humane Society is careful about.”

I turned my attention to the trees again, but somehow they didn’t seem so interesting anymore.

Half an hour later, we arrived at the building. We walked inside and I found myself in a room that had cages with cats in them, guinea pigs chattering anxiously, and sounds of barking dogs echoing through it. I wanted to take each cat home, and each gerbil and hamster as well. The lady took Shadow, and my dad dragged me out of the Humane Society.

Though I begged my parents for Shadow, they refused. I pouted. They wouldn’t give in.

Finally, *I* had to give in, which was something I knew was going to happen all along. But it wasn’t because of my parents’

stubbornness; it was because Shadow was adopted.

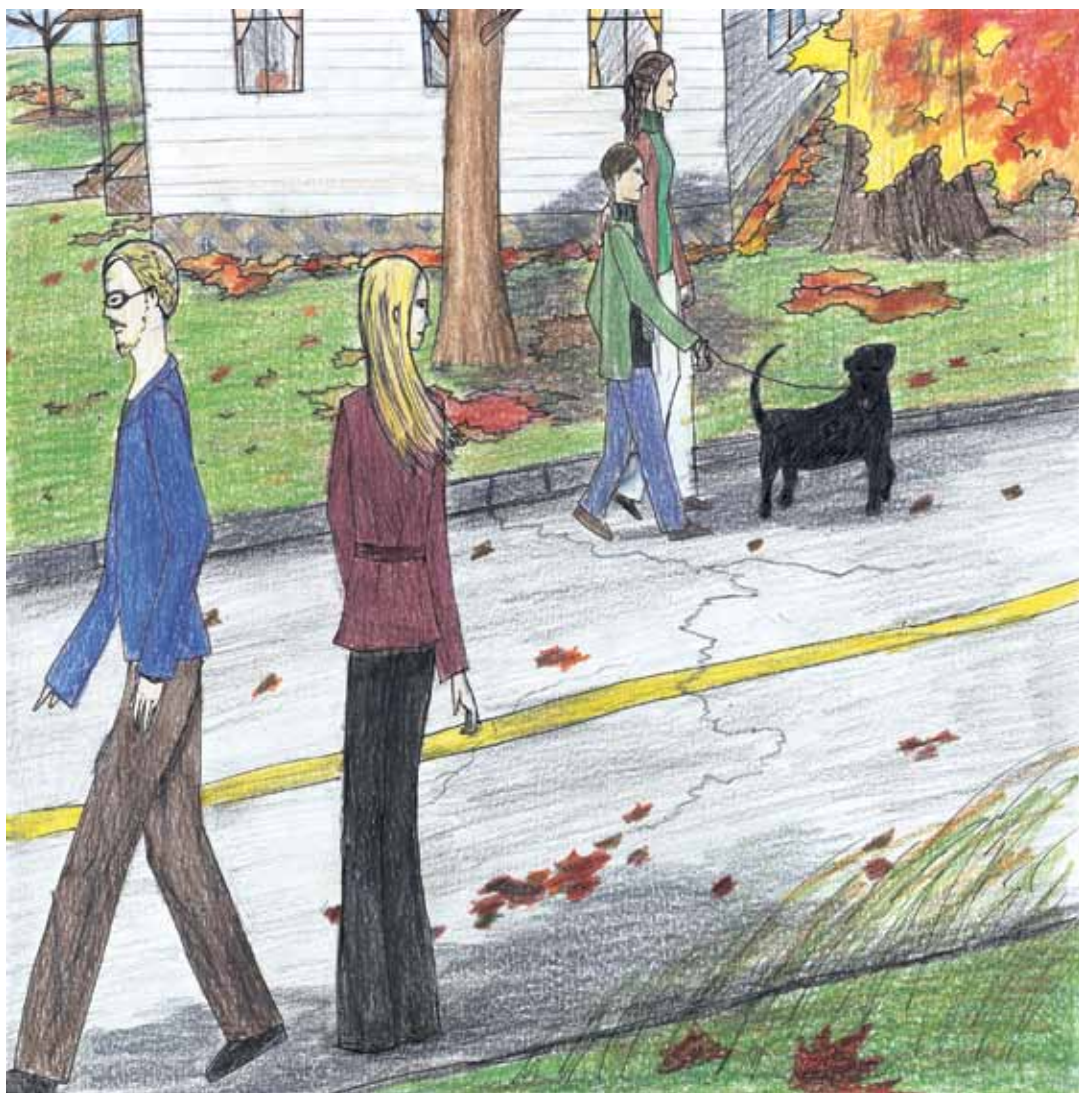
For about three weeks, my heart leaped whenever I saw a black lab. I strained to see if it might have been Shadow. But none of them were quite right—maybe too small or too big. Or when I asked to pet them, they didn’t recognize me or look at me in the way Shadow did.

But Shadow might not recognize you, Hannah, I thought. He barely even knew you. I knew it was true, but I couldn’t make myself believe it.

Once a month of that passed, I gave up. I just hoped that Shadow had been adopted into a good home and put it out of my mind. I had just entered middle school and was thinking about other things.

A year passed. My dad and I were walking down the street on a fall afternoon one day. The trees reminded me of the ones that were so beautiful on the day I first met Shadow. Suddenly, I saw out of the corner of my eye an eight-year-old boy and his mother walking down the street with their dog, a plump black lab. I turned my head. There was something about this dog that I couldn’t quite place. The lab had a red collar on, and one of his ears had a piece missing. He trotted happily beside the two and was looked at in adoration by the boy. As I passed them, the dog turned his head towards me and almost said something to me with eyes like melted chocolate, which were care-free and untroubled. He said (if I had to translate), “I’ll be OK.” Then he turned





*He said (if I had to translate), "I'll be OK"*

his head back to the boy and his mother and continued his walk.

I stood there, glued to the pavement, watching them head down the street until they disappeared. "Hannah, c'mon," said my dad. Silently, I turned away from the empty sidewalk and followed him, feeling complete; the worry that Shadow would

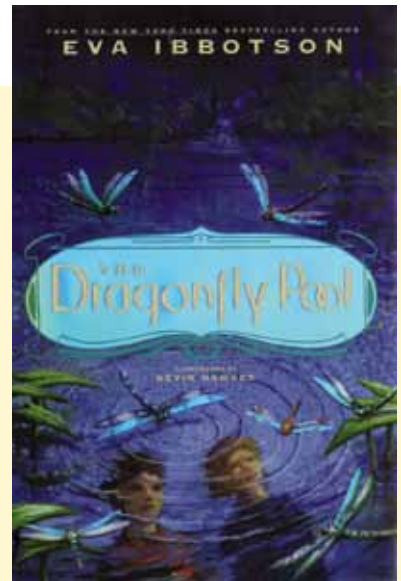
be mistreated or neglected seemed to have vanished into thin air.

Now I have a gray kitten with a white blotch around one eye. Her name is Lark, and she looks at me with bright blue eyes that are like rivers and almost talks to me in the way Shadow did—the way all animals can do. 🍁

# Book Review

By **Lena Greenberg**

*The Dragonfly Pool*, by Eva Ibbotson; Dutton  
Children's Books: New York, 2008; \$17.99



Lena Greenberg, 11  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

I'M NOT A BIG FAN of fantasy books. So when I flipped through *The Dragonfly Pool* and found mentions of dukes, kings, and princes I groaned, thinking this book would be about royalty, kingdoms, and other things irrelevant to my life.

I couldn't have been more wrong. *The Dragonfly Pool* is about real-life situations and feelings.

Tally is a girl living in London as World War II is approaching. Her father, believing she won't be safe in London when the war comes, reluctantly sends her away to a boarding school called Delderton. Tally doesn't want to go, worrying that it'll be like her cousins' strict boarding school. But when she arrives at Delderton, she is instantly comfortable and makes friends with a girl whose mother is a movie star, a boy who tries to flush his tie down the toilet, a girl who lisps and is allergic to many things, and other eccentric characters. Classes range from drama, where children "give birth" to themselves and act like forks, to biology, which starts at four A.M.

The school is invited to perform at a folk-dancing festival in a country called Bergania. There they meet Karil, the crown prince of Bergania, who wants more than anything to be an "ordinary" kid. After his father's assassination Karil is in danger, so

the students go to great lengths to rescue him and bring him to Delderton.

There were many themes in this book, such as friendship, trust, and reaching out to children from all over the world, but the most intriguing to me was the one Karil thinks about: the definition of *ordinary*. I have also wondered about this because sometimes I feel that I don't have an ordinary family and I'm not an ordinary kid. I'm homeschooled; I can't tolerate certain foods a lot of kids enjoy, like chocolate and ice cream; I have some challenges; and I've always felt kind of different, with the things that interest me, from other kids. So I could relate to Karil, who longs to be an ordinary person and join the Delderton kids at their school. The ironic element is that, compared to most other schools, Delderton is not ordinary.

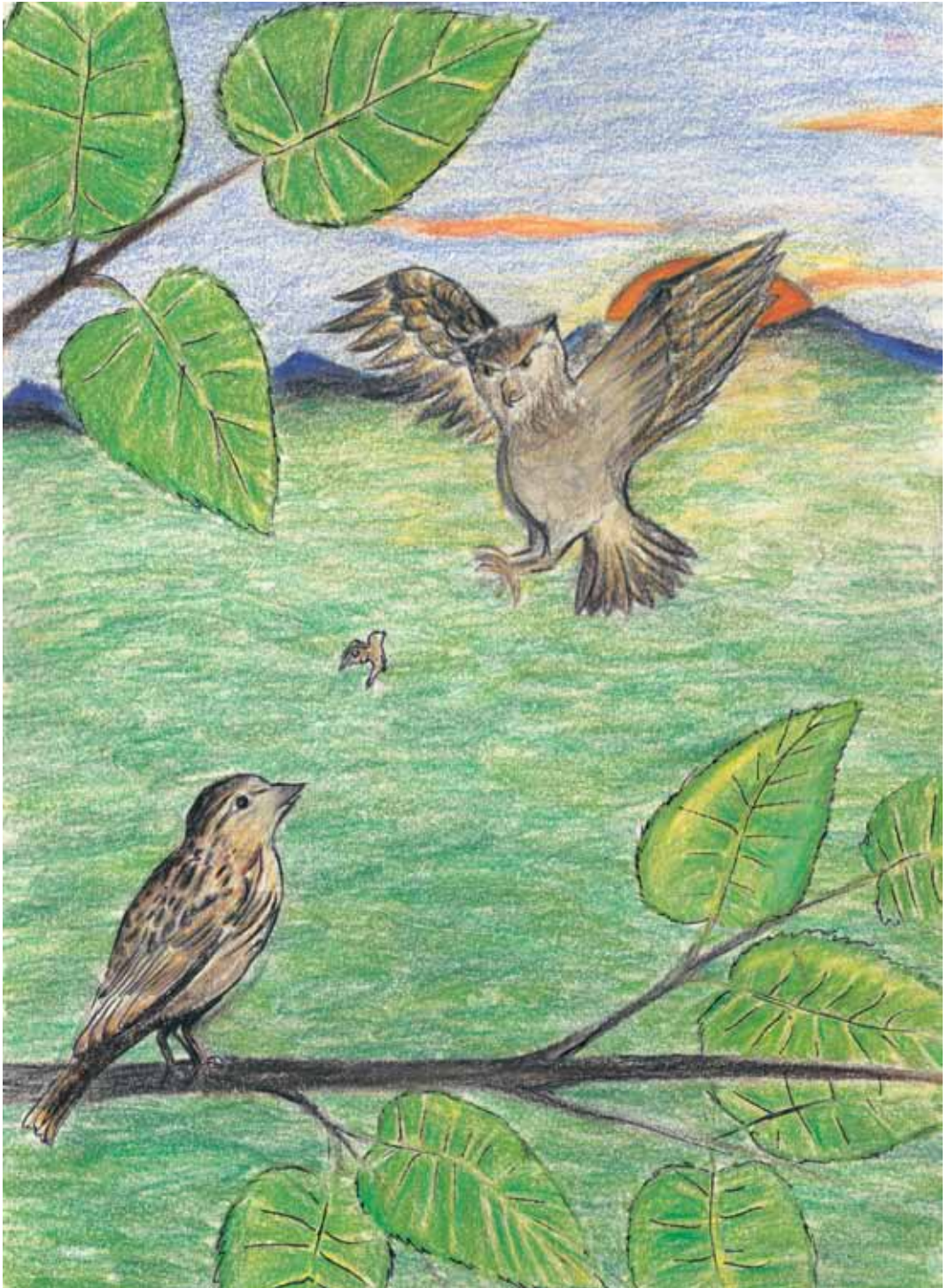
I liked the school with its quirks and would probably enjoy the classes. Another thing I liked was that the kids really learned stuff at Delderton, even though some of the classes might have seemed silly. Sometimes I worry that people might think I'm not getting a proper education because I don't go to school, but I believe kids learn in places that work for them. Also, the descriptions were vivid and I felt like I was there. So reading about the school was fun.

Some elements of the book were overplayed. Even though it was necessary to the plot, the scenes where the kids had to escape from Nazis became a little rote. Also, the "relatives pushing a kid to be something he doesn't want to be" seemed kind of cliché. These scenes were boring because I felt I'd read them all somewhere else.

Overall, however, I liked *The Dragonfly Pool*. The plot was intriguing, the themes were interesting and inspiring, and the location was fun. While reading it, I almost forgot about what was going on around me!







*He yearned to help, but he was overpowered by fear*

# Memory's Song

By **Mary Woods**

*Illustrated by* **Indra Boving**

“**W**E SHOULD HAVE known better,” Garu grated angrily. The sparrow perched high in the apple tree, watching helplessly as the gray cat below devoured her kill. “Let’s leave. This is no place for the clan.” His fierce gaze flicked over his now small group: his trusted friend Baklan, Baklan’s mate Teekeh, their grown daughter Kila, and his own son, Liru.

Liru looked up to him with imploring eyes. “Where? Where is there?”

The sharpness in Garu’s voice changed to weariness. “I don’t know. But someplace.”

He took off and the group followed suit. The summer evening air was cool and refreshing, but Garu could not enjoy it. He tried to keep his eyes ahead, but they kept glancing backwards at his son. Why did Liru have to have those pale brown feathers like his mother? Why did he have to serve as a reminder of that terrible event? A pain slashed through his heart. He remembered it all too well.

**H**E AND LIRANA were flying together on a summer evening. The breeze was sweet and the sunset was radiant. It turned the green leaves of the forest below to gold. Little pink clouds skipped across the colorful horizon. He could see the smile on Lirana’s face and the gentle sparkle in her eye; a smile of pride at bringing up her first child. Their son Liru was a few weeks old and needed plenty of care, but Teekeh had



Mary Woods, 11  
Frankfort, Illinois



Indra Boving, 13  
Hope Valley, Rhode Island



offered to watch him for a while. Garu and his mate had eagerly taken the opportunity to enjoy the sunset and soar in the pleasant sky. And as Lirana let out a laugh of happiness and did a loop-the-loop in the air, Garu felt as if there was nothing more he could possibly want.

A screech rang in the quiet air, and suddenly all was chaos.

Lirana screamed as the owl swooped towards her. The great talons were wide open, waiting to snatch prey out of the air. They closed with a snap—but Lirana was quicker. Her little pale brown wings tilted ever so slightly and escaped the flying predator. This happened once, twice, three times, and still the sparrow evaded the owl with inches to spare. But it could not last much longer.

Meanwhile, Garu sat stupidly watching the scene from a branch he had crashed into when he had dived to avoid the owl. He yearned to help, but he was overpowered by fear. He was frozen in place.

It had been growing steadily darker. The owl's eyes were accustomed to the night, but Lirana's were not. She was constantly twisting and turning. Then suddenly, in her inability to see, she doubled back—straight into the owl's claws.

Her scream rent the air, and then all was silent as the predator flew away with his kill.

Garu felt numb all over. His claws came loose, and he fell from the branch. He landed in a soft pile of leaves, where he wept uncontrollably.

AFTER THAT, he had left the forest, unable to stay at the place of his mate's death. He had moved from one place to another—swamps, farms, cities, prairies, but never forests. He could not bear to be reminded. But everywhere he went, at least part of the clan was killed by one thing or another. And whenever they were, he left again, searching for a safer territory. But nothing had improved. Predators had picked off the clan one by one, until their number was reduced to a mere five.

Suddenly, a screech rang in the quiet air, and instantly all was chaos.

"Dad! Heeelp!!"

Garu's head whipped around at the sound of his son's cry. A huge mottled owl was diving towards him, and Liru was flapping desperately. Garu's heart skipped a beat, and then it plummeted down to his stomach. The nightmare was happening all over again.

Baklan, Teekeh, and Kila had fled towards the fields below, leaving Liru to his fate. But Garu refused to do the same. This time he would not sit dumbly watching his loved-one die. He forced his wings to beat, and darted through the air towards his son. "I'm coming, Liru!"

It seemed as if Garu had gone back into time. There was the little pale brown streaked sparrow, dodging and ducking, twisting and spinning. And there was the huge bird of prey, swooping and grasping thin air with gleaming talons. But this time Garu was not a spectator. He was a pursuer.

Suddenly, he slammed into the owl's back, and as soon as he realized what he had run into, he began tearing the owl's feathers out, ripping and scratching. The owl was surprised at this ambush and rapidly dived down. Garu fell off the predator's back and fell. But just in time he opened his wings and swooped upwards. He spotted his son flying away to safety and followed him into the darkness.

The clack of claws sounded next to his ear, and there was a rush of air, ruffling his gray-brown feathers.

The owl was after him.

As he spun away to one side and then to the next, he saw Liru heading towards him. Regardless of his own safety, Liru was returning to help his father.

"Liru, go!" screamed Garu. "Go, now!" He felt the whiff of air and tilted his wings to avoid the keen claws.

"No!" his son shouted back. "I'm not going anywhere!" And he flew ever closer.

"Liru, don't you dare..." He never finished. Something sharp tore at his shoulder, and then he was free-falling, his wing flapping painfully and uselessly. The last thing he saw before he blacked out was the illuminated golden eyes of the owl, and beyond that, his son hovering in the dark sky.

**L**ONG INTO THE starry night Baklan watched for Garu's return. He and Teekeh and Kila had flown down to a dense thicket when the owl had attacked. But Garu had stayed and tried to save his son. But Baklan knew that Liru would

never return. He figured it would be just the same as every time. Garu would come back with hard eyes and a hardened heart. And now that his son had been killed here, he would probably avoid the open country as well as forests. And they would move on and on.

Garu did not return that night. The three sparrows waited all through the next morning and afternoon, and finally when the sun began to set, he appeared on the horizon. Even from this distance, Baklan could tell that his wing-beats were heavy.

Baklan took off from the thornbush and flew out to meet his leader. But as he approached, he saw that there was something wrong. Garu's feathers were of a darker hue than this sparrow's. And this bird was smaller and slimmer... no... it couldn't be...

It was Liru.

Baklan's steady flight faltered as he recognized Garu's son. "Liru! You were... how did... where... Liru, you're alive!"

"I'd rather not be." The young sparrow brushed past Baklan and alighted wearily in the thicket. Puzzled, Baklan turned around and followed.

He found Liru staring towards the north, towards their forest home. Baklan fluttered over next to him. Liru did not turn to look at the older sparrow, but his next words were addressed to him. "My father would have wanted me to lead the clan. In honor of his death, I will accept the position. We will leave for the forest at dawn." There was something of Garu in



*The hospitable water rat came back with a few dried leaves and a mortar and pestle*

the determined way he said these words.

"Yes, sir," Baklan nodded smartly. "Should I take a night watch?"

"No. That is my duty. I wouldn't be able to sleep anyways."

"Yes, sir." He crept down to a lower branch and settled down comfortably. And he peered at Liru's silhouette until the last rays of the sun disappeared on the horizon, and he fell asleep.

**G**ARU AWOKE coughing and spluttering, water pouring out of his mouth. He was drenched to the bone. His shoulder ached unbearably. Only when

he was finished coughing up water did he hear the gentle voice. "That's right. Feel better now? You surprised me; I never saw a sparrow in a stream before. And a good thing I got you out too; you were nearly drowned."

Garu stumbled on unsteady legs and painfully turned around. There, smiling in a friendly way at him, was a dark brown water rat. "Who... who are you?" But his speech came out in a whisper, and it set off another bout of coughing.

"That's all right, you don't have to talk. I'm Hrimi. This is my den. I saw you floating in the stream nearby and dragged

you out. I didn't know if you were dead or unconscious, but I took you in anyway. And here you are, well and alive."

"Alive," Garu agreed in a low voice, "but not well." He shifted his position slightly and winced as pain shot through his wing.

"Yes, we'll have to do something about that shoulder. Wait here, I think I've got just the right herb in my storerooms." Hrimi scurried off.

Garu took the time to observe his surroundings. He was sitting in a warm, dry burrow in the ground. The burrow must have been deep because the ceiling was high and arched. Roots lined the roof; there must have been a tree growing above him. The room was large and airy. Three windows at the top illuminated the space and the sunlight shining in made it cheerful. Dried grasses lined the hole, and there were a couple of tunnels leading to the rat's storage rooms. Hrimi looked old. He couldn't have dug this all by himself.

The hospitable water rat came back with a few dried leaves and a mortar and pestle. "You need to drink this, so I'm crushing it up," he explained.

As the water rat ground the herb, Garu looked around at the room in marvel. "Did you dig this?" he inquired.

"Oh, no!" Hrimi laughed. "My father and my brothers did. I was the youngest. They're all dead and gone now. But we had good times. Yes, we did. I remember my father teaching me how to swim. He was proud of me, the way I caught on quicker than my older brothers had." The rat sighed happily at the memory. "Those

were good days. I miss them, and sometimes I feel real lonely, but then I remember one of those happy times and I'm all right again. I'm contented. I'm glad I live in the burrow my father dug."

And Garu pondered over what he said.

LIRU WATCHED the snow fall gently past him. Last summer he had led the clan back to the forest where he had been born. There Baklan had recognized a few friends of his, and these had willingly joined the group. Their number had gradually grown to around twenty sparrows, and Liru led them. He was happy with his life, except for one thing. The thought of his father had always bothered him. He had never found out whether or not Garu had really died. On that far-off summer day he had searched all along the place where his father fell, but not a trace of him could he find. He assumed Garu was dead, and he forced himself to accept it. But still there was a tiny glimmer of hope, like a flickering candle on a stormy, starless night, that refused to be put out.

Liru gazed upon the clan of sparrows chatting and laughing below. Liru wished he could join in their happiness. But this winter day had reminded him of another long ago, when the ever-shrinking clan, under Garu, had moved to a swamp. The wind was bitter, and it rattled and shrieked in the cattails like a great predator. Liru had been frightened on that frigid winter dawn. Then suddenly he had spotted his father above him, perching in the reeds, watching over his family. And

Liru was reassured.

Now, he glanced up as he had long ago. His eyes narrowed. That bump on that limb above him hadn't been there before. He tried to focus in on it, but the white flakes falling past made it difficult. And then—it *moved*.

At the same time that warning flags went up in Liru's head, the tiny glimmer of hope that his father would return began to grow out of control. It flared up and licked at the doubtful part of him, burning it up into nothing but a smoldering memory. Then it blazed brighter and brighter, until hope gleamed in his eyes and he cried out, "Father!"

The figure took off from the limb and dived towards him. Liru spread his wings as well, and time seemed to slow down to a crawl.

A sparrow was floating towards him through the snowy air. His eyes were bright and eager, and his feathers were shining with health. There was pride in those eyes. Pride for his son.

Liru's heart leaped up into his throat with joy. He linked his claws with those of Garu, and they spun round and round together until their wings could beat no more; then they tumbled down, breathless and dizzy, into the soft white snow. They stared at each other for a moment, breathing hard. But when Liru opened his mouth to speak, Garu shook his head.

"No need to say sorry, Liru. It wasn't

your fault, so don't blame yourself. I'm here and I want to know all your adventures."

As they flew up to a branch overlooking the clan, Liru explained all that had happened, and how he had been confused about Garu. "But now," he concluded, "I'm so happy I could sing."

"Do so," Garu grinned, and his son obeyed.


A song came pouring forth from the depth of Liru's heart, bubbling and spilling over like a waterfall of notes. It flowed and chuckled like a stream, then changed to long, sweet tones, savored and heartfelt. Then finally it ended triumphant and strong, like trumpets after a battle is won.

Garu spoke quietly in a dreamy, far-away voice. "You sound just like your mother did."

"Really?" Liru asked, pleased.

"Oh, yes. Did you know that was how I met her? Her voice echoed sweet and strong throughout the whole forest. All the males flocked around her, hoping she would pick one of them for a mate. She used to sing you to sleep when you were frightened of the night and its noises. Do you remember that?"

"Yes, I do," Liru nodded. He paused for a moment, then said hesitantly, "You... you seem happy to talk about her."

"I am," Garu confirmed. "Yes, she was a wonderful sparrow. I'm *glad* to have known her. I'm glad to be back." 



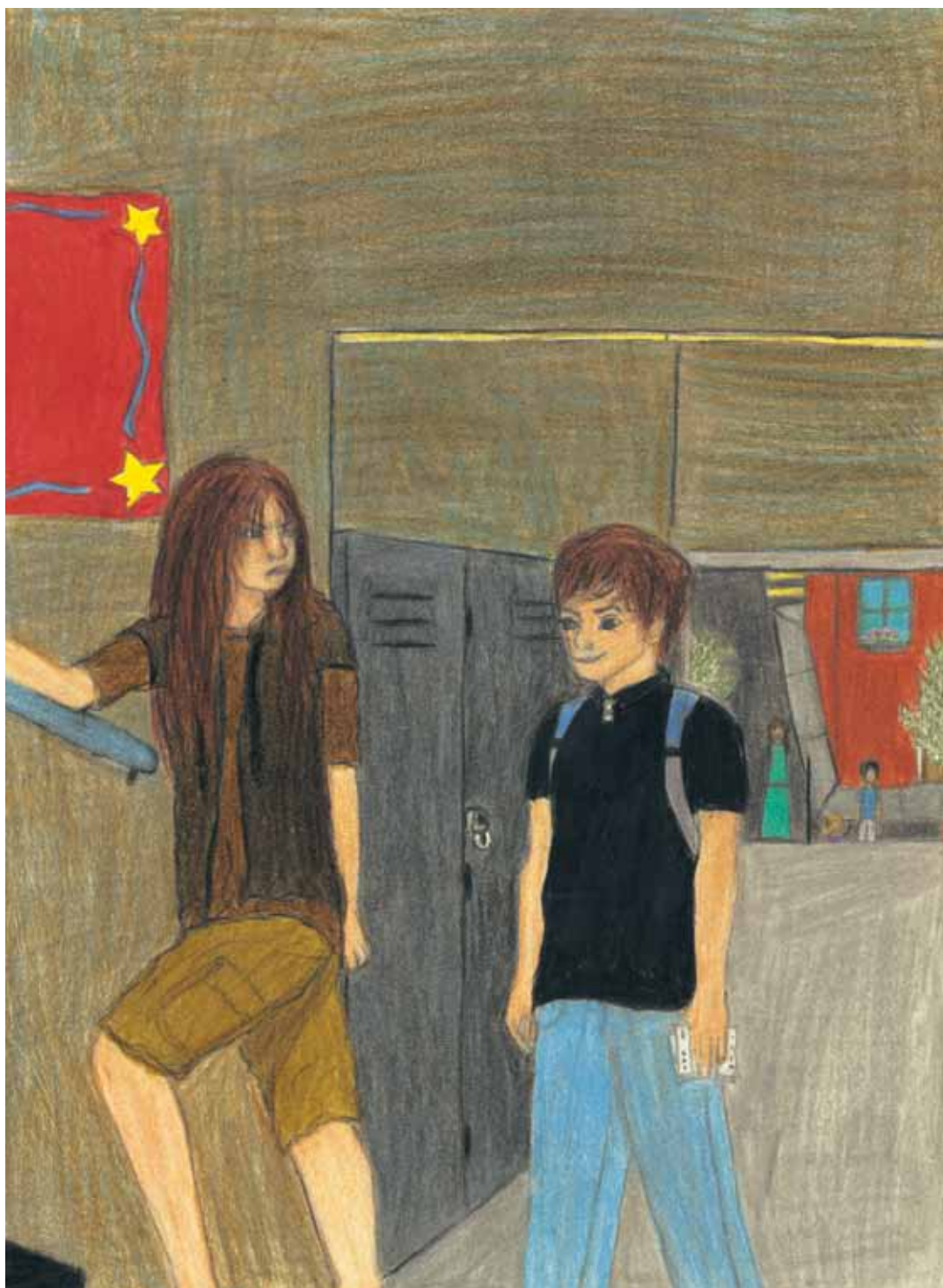
# Leaf of Sunshine

By **Laurel Gibson**

The forest is calm,  
only an occasional chirp of a bird,  
breaks the silence,  
the sun is buried in a blanket of clouds,  
only a few golden rays escape,  
just enough to penetrate the darkness,  
cool wind rustles through the trees,  
gently swaying their nimble branches,  
so peaceful,  
one single leaf spirals to the ground,  
twirling, spinning,  
now upon the brown fallen leaves,  
lies one of a brilliant sun-yellow color,  
with its bright green smudges,  
splattered haphazardly across its surface,  
a beautiful sight,  
compared to the crumpled leaves surrounding it,  
it seems like a precious gem,  
it is a bit of sunshine,  
on a crisp autumn day.



Laurel Gibson, 12  
Durham, New Hampshire



*“What are you smiling at? It isn’t a moment of happiness”*

# Pain

By Daniel KulahliOglu

*Illustrated by* Tessa Palacios

PAIN CAN BE FELT in all kinds of ways. If you fall off a bike and scrape your knee you could feel pain, put on a bandage and, with time, forget about it. But there is another pain that can only be cured by accepting it because it never goes away. This is the pain I want to talk about.

One beautiful spring morning, the birds were chirping, and the cool morning breeze blew through the window that woke me up gently. I suddenly remembered that that day my whole grade was going to perform a play called *Matilda*. My part was the father, which had the most lines to remember. I practiced like crazy until I learned it by heart. I gulped my milk down in a flash and wolfed down my waffles in a second. I slipped into my jeans and black short-sleeved polo T-shirt, put on my shoes and bolted out the door. As I boarded the half-crowded train I started to review my flash cards. I felt that going to school that day in particular would be an extraordinary day. But I didn't know what sort of surprise awaited me.

As I entered the school all smiling, a fifth-grader glared at me and said, "What are you smiling at? It isn't a moment of happiness." With that she spun around and charged up the stairs. I barely had a chance to reply to what she had said to me, when I passed by a group of kids sitting on the floor crying. I was confused as to why the whole school was so gloomy on what was supposed to be a fun morning. Near the main office, Ms. Rosenblum, a third-grade teacher, gestured me toward the cafeteria. I considered what I might have done for her to pull me



Daniel KulahliOglu, 12  
Rego Park, New York



Tessa Palacios, 13  
Spring Hill, Tennessee

aside. She wasn't even my teacher. I sat down at a table, my hands all sweaty and cold, still wondering about why was I there.

"I am sorry, Daniel, but I have some bad news for you," she said with a soft voice.

"Mr. Dutt, our science teacher, died last night while he was driving his car," she said.

Like a movie stuck in rewind, all the fun memories were going from the last to the first science class. The first image that came to my mind was the day we made the experiment of Coke and Mentos in after-school science. Mr. Dutt organized the whole "crew" into groups. My group was working with Diet Coke and blizzard-blue Mentos candies. I loved seeing the Coke rattle after I inserted the wire full of Mentos into the bottle nozzle. The sound of exploding bits of hard candy and overflowing soda excited the whole class. We all ended up soaking wet, and brown and sticky. It was one of the funniest days of my life. Then, in a flash, I pictured the bearded dragons, the turtles and the snakes in the science room. I saw Mr. Dutt feeding and petting them. I heard his voice and his funny jokes. All of it will be gone forever. My head felt like a helium balloon and my body like a rock. Now I understood why the fifth-grader glared at me, the kids were crying in the hallway and even the red eyes of Ms. Rosenblum. As soon as all these images were out of my heart, I blew up in tears.

"I know how you feel, sweetheart,

I miss him too," she said as she gently stroked my hair.

When I arrived at my fourth-grade classroom, my teacher, Ms. Painter, who was sitting on a rocking chair and reading a book, glanced up at me and said, "Daniel, do you know what happened? Did anyone tell you that Mr. Dutt d- "

"I know what happened," I interrupted her, which she hates a lot but on this occasion she didn't care. As I sat down at my table I saw the rest of the class drawing pictures quietly. Some were reading books and some were crying. When I saw the kids crying for a moment I felt that we were all sharing the same pain, that we were all friends. But that wasn't so. Fourth grade was my worst year in elementary school. Kids always were making fun of me, calling me names and leaving me out. Nobody wanted me to play with them. Nobody wanted to sit and eat with me at lunchtime. Every day I dreaded to go to school. The whole school was my hostile enemy, except Mr. Dutt. He was my only true friend, or that's how I felt. Now that he died I was completely alone. Then, I came across a doodle of a cartoon bearded dragon: it was my lizard, Carlo. I smiled and felt a bit better.

I received Carlo for my birthday, inspired by Mr. Dutt's bearded dragons, Angelo and Derek. I was amazed at how fun and enthusiastic creatures they were so I begged my parents for one. When I finally got one I learned a lot of facts on how to take care of them. I read about them on the Internet as well as in books

and magazine articles, and then I went to Mr. Dutt and told him all that I had learned. Mr. Dutt was pretty amused at my interest, so he gave me more books about lizards and also let me help him take care of the bearded dragons at school. Science became my favorite class and Mr. Dutt, my best friend.

Suddenly I left my chair all dreamy and went to the principal's office to ask her if I could feed the lizards one more time. It took a long time for her to finally say yes. Then and there I realized that would be the last time I ever saw them. The principal had decided to send the lizards to an animal shelter.

In the dark quiet science class I slowly walked over to the back of the room where Mr. Dutt kept the can of crickets. Then, I looked at Angelo. Just look at those innocent eyes, I thought, while I dumped the crickets and poured water in his water bowl, just as I saw him do before. I said softly to Angelo, "Goodbye, buddy, I will never see you ever again, but I will remember you forever. Will you re-

member me?"

Like magic he bowed his head and blinked his eyes slowly, or that is what I thought. After I fed Angelo I left the room. As I solemnly walked back to my classroom, I was thinking about how would I be without Mr. Dutt. I didn't say goodbye to him, but as I entered the classroom I had a smile on my face. At least I said goodbye to the lizards, I thought.

After that day my heart grew stronger and stronger. I slowly started to accept that we lose the thing we care about the most. However, it is in our hearts to find ways to heal the pain. I found my way by caring about my bearded dragon. My life passed on, fourth grade to fifth, then to sixth. But whenever I stumble back into May 31, my heart would break open and fall into sadness. I will remember how I felt when Ms. Rosenblum told me that Mr. Dutt had died, and the small smile I had because at least I said goodbye to the lizards, which was a part of him that will live with me forever. ❀





# When I Understood

By Malini Gandhi



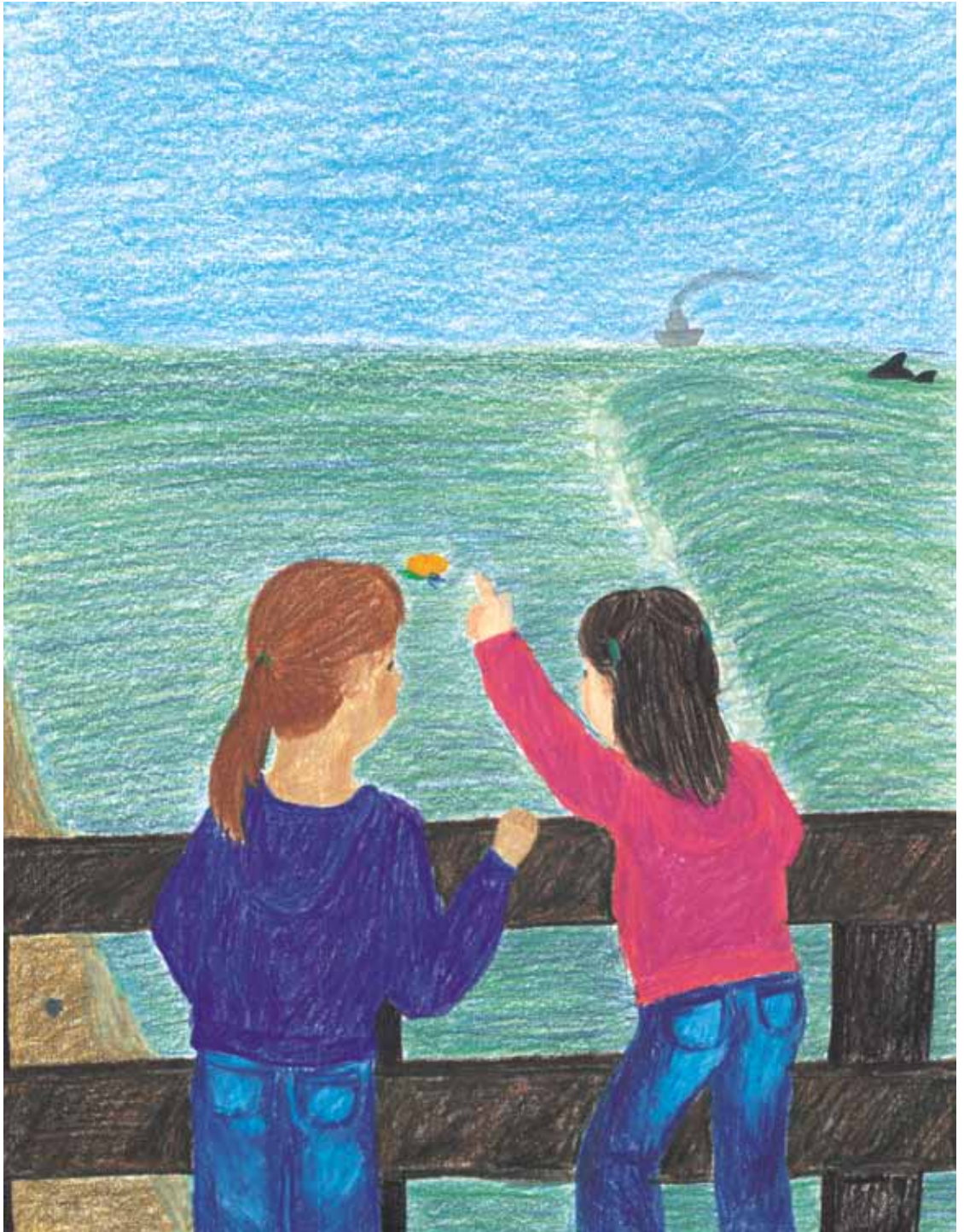
Malini Gandhi, 13  
Auburndale, Massachusetts

NEW DELHI, INDIA, 2002

Staring wide-eyed out of the car window  
I look down at the dusty bodies of children clustered below me.  
Their hair is streaked with dust and grime  
Their skin darkened to a crisp by the intensity of the broiling  
summer sun.  
Their writhing hands clutch at the shiny silver metal of our car  
Grabbing hungrily at the colorful juice boxes my parents offer  
from the windows.

I know I should be enjoying the bustling world around me,  
but somehow I can't.  
The road is a blur of color and life;  
Vendors shout from their stalls  
Advertising a rainbow of colorful fruits and vegetables  
Or fine cloth dyed sunset orange, rose pink, indigo.  
Sweat clings to their dark skin as they haggle and argue  
with customers passing by  
Or just catch up on the latest gossip.  
Chickens strut through the crowd like confident butlers;  
A cow slowly ambles its way through the people.  
Despite the crowd the blasting honks of cars' horns sound  
as they force their way through,  
Shiny metal islands in a sea of bodies.

But I am taking in none of this;  
My eyes are riveted to the children.  
I catch sight of a girl about my age,  
Seven,  
Her dark hair pulled back in a messy braid,  
Clutching the grubby hand of a wriggling two-year-old.  
Seeing the look of amazement and longing that fills her eyes  
As her gaze sweeps over our car  
I offer her one of the juice boxes  
With trembling fingers.  
She grabs it  
Immediately handing it to her little sister.  
Just watching the little girl inhale the sweet drink  
Its contents spilling from her mouth and running down her chin  
like a thousand rivers  
I think of all the times I've stormed out of the room crying  
after losing a game of checkers,  
Argued with my brother about who had to go first  
for piano lessons,  
Made faces when my parents made me eat vegetables.  
I can remember those times when my mom got angry,  
Yelling, "Don't you understand, there are children dying  
in the world?"  
Looking down at the thin, hungry bodies of the children  
surrounding me  
At the toddler devouring the juice  
At the grateful look the girl gave me  
I realized that,  
For the first time,  
I did understand.



*"Maybe a little twist in life can be a good thing after all"*

# Flowers on the Water

By **Hannah Scarborough**

*Illustrated by* **Hannah Phillips**

**J**ACKIE LINNELY TOOK a big jump into the crunchy pile of leaves in the school yard. Ms. Lunder suddenly blew her whistle as the bell rang, BRRRINNNGG! “Alice,” Jackie called out to her friend, “see you after school!” As Jackie lined up to go inside, she saw Ms. Lunder pull on a sweater. That made her feel chilly, too. Jackie was so happy autumn was here! It was her favorite season: apples, apple pie, and the best thing of all... the new aquarium on Main Street in downtown Aberdeen was opening.

“Jackie?” asked Ms. Lunder.

“Here!”

“Jason?”

“Here!”

“Now,” Ms. Lunder said, “who can tell me the next chapter of science we will be learning about?” Jackie’s hand shot straight into the air. “Yes?” questioned Ms. Lunder.

“Marine biology! I know because I was looking at the next chapter in the textbook.”

“Correct!” Ms. Lunder pronounced. “I am glad you were thinking ahead.”

Gosh, thought Jackie, I can’t think about anything else!

When she grew up, Jackie wanted to be a marine biologist and study hermit crabs, sea stars, coral and tropical fish, like Schubert and Vivaldi, her pet fish at home. Also, she thought she might pursue a career in music. Jackie loved to play the cello, and her favorite piece was *The Four Seasons*, by Vivaldi.



Hannah Scarborough, 10  
Pleasanton, California



Hannah Phillips, 11  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Before Jackie knew it, the school day was over, and she was meeting Violet, Lily and Alice at the school's back gate. As she neared their meeting spot, she heard Alice say, "Did you hear the aquarium is almost open, and they are giving a grand tour in a couple of weeks?" Jackie practically jumped on Alice, looking more like a happy elephant than a ten-year-old schoolgirl!

"They what?" Jackie exclaimed.

"I said they are opening the aquarium," repeated Alice.

"Really? Do you think they are taking visitors now?"

"Hmmm. I'm not sure. 'Bye Violet and Lily," said Alice.

"Maybe we could go," suggested Jackie.

"Um, Jackie?" Alice began.

"Yes?" asked Jackie.

"I'm moving."

Now Jackie's mind was a complete blur. OK, let's replay this, she thought: first I asked her about the aquarium, then she said she was moving?! "Oh, no, Alice! Why?" Jackie blurted out suddenly.

"For a lot of reasons," explained Alice.

"Where are you moving to?" asked Jackie.

"Eureka, California," replied Alice.

As Jackie walked home, her thoughts were interrupted by the smell of apple pie. Then she realized that the smell was coming from the ever-baking household of Alice Palmer, struck by the fact that this was probably the last time she would smell that delicious aroma. She leapt over the small shrub that caressed the ground

beneath the Palmers' kitchen window, pressed her nose to the now steamy glass, and took a deep breath.

SCRATCH, SCRATCH went Jackie's pen against the stationery envelope that was almost labeled: Alice Palmer, 2820 Florentine Avenue, Eureka, California. Jackie heaved a glum sigh as she was once again reminded of her friend's move two months ago. Aberdeen's aquarium was now open, but Jackie took no pleasure in going there without her friend Alice. Tidepooling was an exciting outing that Alice and Jackie had always enjoyed together, but now it was only associated with Alice's departure to Eureka. "Jackie! Time for cello lessons!" her mother's voice interrupted from downstairs.

"OK!" Jackie replied, trying to strike a happy tone to her voice. As she lugged her cello down the wooden steps, her mind forgot about Alice and took on Vivaldi's "Autumn" movement from *The Four Seasons*. This piece, which emphasized the sudden seasonal changes in the music, always made Jackie feel more cheerful about transitions in her own life.

"JACKIE! Letter for you!" called Jackie's mother from downstairs. As she eagerly ripped open the envelope, Jackie couldn't control the letter from falling to the floor! Grabbing it excitedly, she read the letter:

Dear Jackie,

What's going on back in Aberdeen? How



are you? I've made lots of friends, and now I am pretty much used to Eureka. Did my mother call you yet and tell you the news? I am coming to visit...

Well, *that* was enough for Jackie! With an Indian warlike whoop, she tore downstairs with the exciting news. With Alice coming to visit, everything would be the same again, Jackie thought. We will go to the aquarium, take long walks along the boardwalk at the beach, and gather leaf bouquets for Ms. Lunder again! Jackie imagined.

“I’M SO HAPPY you could come back to Aberdeen, Alice!” said Jackie.

“Let’s go to the new aquarium!” Alice suggested.

“No,” replied Jackie. “Now I only associate the aquarium with your moving away. Let’s go for a walk on the beach instead.”

As the two strolled along the wooden boardwalk, they observed innumerable quantities of amazing sea creatures, such as sea stars, water spouts of whales, silvery minnows in the waves, and... “Alice! What’s that?” Jackie pointed toward an

unidentifiable yellow object in the water.

“I’m not sure, Jackie. Oh, it looks like flowers,” Alice replied.

A glistening bundle of bright yellow daffodils—the kind you see in early spring—against the deep blue background of the churning waves was coming closer to the pier. Then Jackie realized that there was something different about this walk than the others they had taken before Alice had moved away: the feeling of picking yellow daffodils in the springtime. They weren’t going to last forever. Even as you were enjoying them, you knew they were going to wilt soon.

“Alice?” asked Jackie.

“What is it?” answered Alice.

“Those flowers—they’re starting to make me think that maybe a little twist in life can be a good thing after all,” said Jackie. “A bundle of beautiful yellow daffodils isn’t usually in the ocean on a Sunday morning. That’s just like your move to Eureka, Alice. You’re out of place, also, but maybe we can find the beauty in that, too.”

“Wow,” whispered Alice. “In Eureka, we say W.O.W. for Words of Wisdom.”

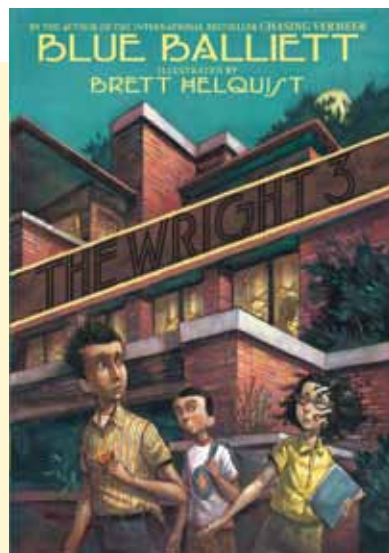
Jackie grinned.



# Book Review

By Julian Tütüncü-Macías

*The Wright 3*, by Blue Balliett; Scholastic Press: New York, 2006; \$16.99




Julian Tütüncü-Macías, 10  
New York, New York

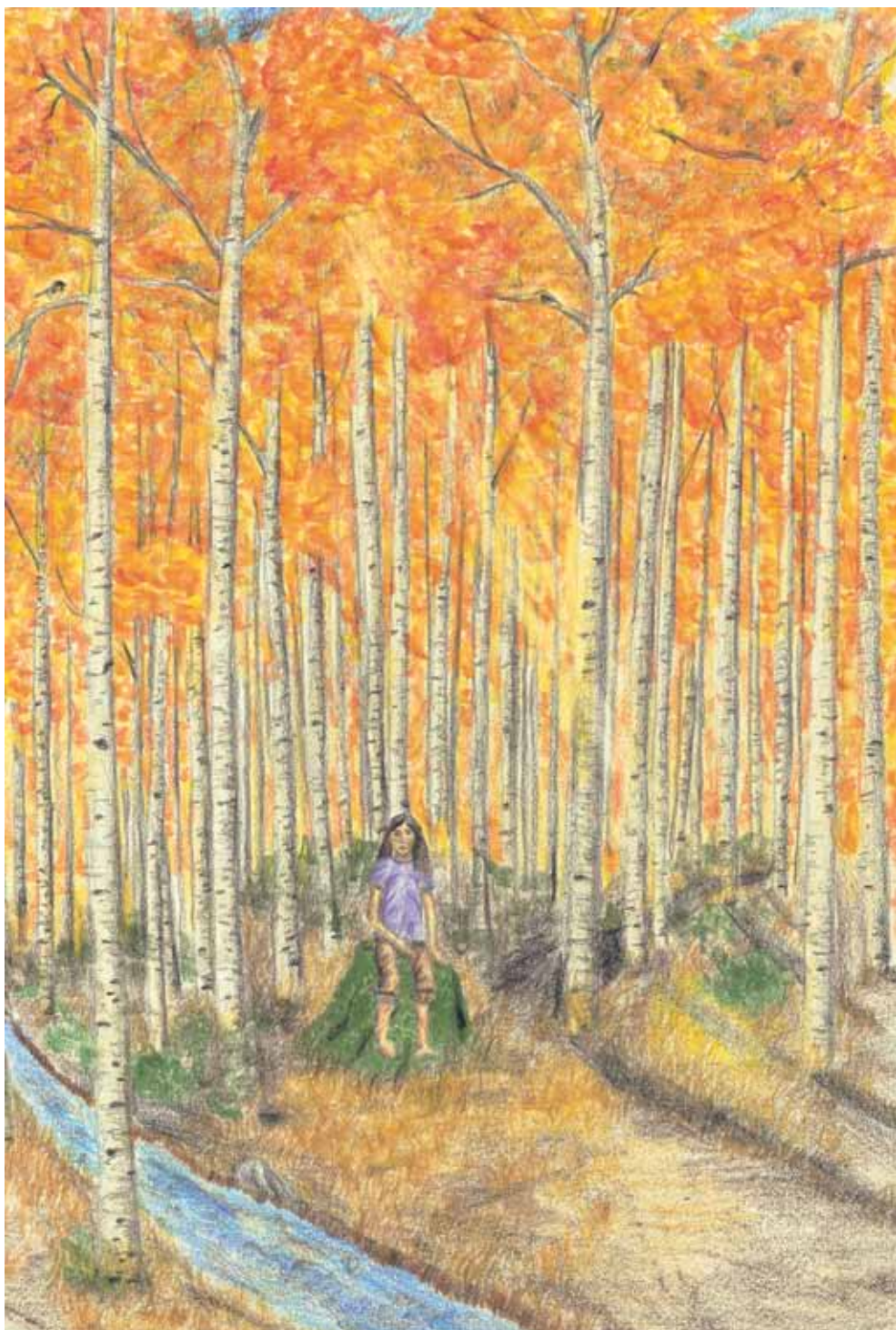
THE SECOND MYSTERY in a trilogy comprising *Chasing Vermeer* and *The Calder Game*, *The Wright 3* stars two familiar detectives, twelve-year-olds Calder and Petra, along with a new character, Calder's old friend, Tommy. It is the end of the school year and the trio, calling themselves the Wright 3, attempt to finish the mission started by their teacher, Ms. Hussey, and their sixth-grade class: saving the Robie House—an actual house in Hyde Park, Chicago, designed by famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright—from being divided up and donated to four different museums. The novel is thrilling, even a bit scary at times. A mason hired to take down the house is “shaken off” the roof. There are unexplained shadows and voices. The Wright 3 almost get killed! Blue Balliett keeps you on the edge of your seat in this captivating mystery packed with action and wit.

I liked *The Wright 3* for three main reasons: first, its clever and playful mathematical design based on geometry, pentominoes, and Fibonacci numbers; second, its sharp portrayal of characters and their complex relationships; third, its inspirational plot, as it shows that individuals can make a difference—even if they are kids!

I liked the way *The Wright 3* includes math, which the team uses to solve the mystery and even escape death. Calder, as in *Chasing Vermeer*, has a set of pentominoes, mathematical tools that come in twelve different shapes. He uses them to create the Wright Sandwich Code, which is challenging but fun to figure out. The Wright 3 use the code to communicate when in danger, making an escape plan. Another math-related clue is the Fibonacci numbers, a number sequence in which the next number is the sum of the last two numbers. *The Wright 3* uses Fibonacci numbers in a fun, challenging way, ranging from a puzzle in the artwork to the clue that could save the Robie House.

The interactions and problems of the characters in *The Wright 3* are similar to the ones my friends and I sometimes experience. For example, Petra and Tommy often seem to compete for the “honor” of being Calder’s best friend, making it hard for them to be close and trusting friends. Mostly, my friends and I get along well. But sometimes we get caught up in uneasy triangles and have to work out some tensions before we can all have fun. As friends are becoming more important in my life, reading about the trio’s friendship issues made me feel relieved that my friends and I are not the only ones experiencing these difficulties.

I can relate to Ms. Hussey’s class’s effort to save the Robie House through my school’s effort to stop overcrowding. Because of the growth of my school’s population, we were in danger of losing the science lab, the art room, the computer lab, and the library. We put posters all over the neighborhood. Parents and students participated in many demonstrations saying “No!” to overcrowding. In the end, the City provided us with additional room in an annex. The power to make a change is in Ms. Hussey’s class and my community, and I find that inspiring. 



*I notice the utter calm and stillness the creek, animals, and the trees create*



# The Sanctuary That Cured Me

By Iona Swift

*Illustrated by* Hero Klimek-Brooks

“**Y**OU HAVE TWO unheard messages. First unheard message.” The fake, calm voice of the answering machine seems to ring through my ears. I can feel my excited heart pumping blood to every single part of my body. “Hi, this is Kerry from the Golden Mountain Theater Company with a message for Molly.” Anticipation radiates through me like the sun on the Sahara Desert. “I just wanted to let her know that, unfortunately, we do not have a part for her in our production.”

I am vaguely aware of my mother’s quick gasp as the rest of the message slips away from my consciousness. The air in the room begins to feel hot and stuffy. I have to get out. Numbly, I pull open the door and escape into the cool October day. Frantically, I start to run down the narrow path, fleeing to the safety of nature. It leads to a small creek that flows beyond our field. The land I know so well feels cold beneath my bare feet and the steady rhythm of their steps clashes with my uneven breathing. The tall, golden grass that comes in the fall lashes at my bare legs and creates small, red scratches on them. If I wasn’t so confused, so mentally lost and numb, I might have felt it and cared.

I notice the rhythm of my steps gets slower as I approach the trickling stream. The smell is different down here, like fresh rain and autumn leaves that have begun to fall. I sit down on an old stump, green with moss and lichen, and look down at the calm water of the brook I visit so often. It looks different today, everything does. I stare numbly at the cold, clear water and try to summon the energy to think. The phone message, the



Iona Swift, 12  
Cedar Ridge, California




Hero Klimek-Brooks, 13  
Tacoma, Washington

Golden Mountain Theater Company; I didn't get the part I wanted in their production. It was mine! How could this be? Right now, it seems as if that part is my whole life, and it got taken away by one quick phone call.

It is drizzling slightly and the cold, delicate tears from the sky mix with my salty ones and make small, perfect ripples in the glass-like water. I am suddenly aware of every sound: a songbird's soft call in the aspen tree above me, the cold, October wind slyly wrapping itself around the young, slender trees. The chilly breeze reaches me and sends a shiver down my spine despite the hot, boiling feeling inside of me.

I notice the utter calm and stillness the creek, animals, and the trees create. It soaks into my skin, seeping deeper and deeper inside of me and finally brings my agitated soul to a stop, letting the calm trickle in, and the pain leak out. A patch of sunlight filters through the leafy, multi-colored canopy above me and brings glowing sunshine to me, warming my heart, body, and soul.

I stand up and take a last look at the sanctuary that cured me. Turning around, I make my way up to the warm, friendly house that I call home. Pulling open the slider door, the sweet, cozy scent of hot cocoa fills my nose, and I know I'll be all right. 



# Building the Pyramids

By Timmi Ruth Kline

*Illustrated by* Megan Snide

**T**HE SMELL OF hot bread rose to Lomea's nostrils as she removed a freshly baked loaf from the small fire. She handed it to her younger sister, Hemufe, who in turn gave it to the last worker waiting for his lunch.

She fell back onto her mat with a sigh. The desert heat that the twelve-year-old had ignored while serving lunch slowly crept up. Her hand searched for the water skin, but to her dismay she found it empty. She grabbed the skin and ran to the well in the middle of the makeshift village.

She looked to her left and saw the thousands of men finishing their lunches ready to continue work on what the great pharaoh Cheops claimed would be the largest pyramid in Egypt. She filled the skin and took a long drink. She made her way back to her house to help with the cleaning. When she reached the house, she found the cleaning almost done and her other, older (by four years, but certainly not wiser) sister, Noch, looking very annoyed.

"Where have you been, Lomea?" she half-yelled in Lomea's face. "Our parents left me in charge while they travel so I make the rules! Moreover, do you know what those rules include? You not wandering off like some nomad, that's what those rules include!" She stopped for a long breath. "And what's more..."

Lomea interrupted, having heard this speech before. "I know, I know, and you would sell me to the next camel merchant that came within twenty miles if Mother and Father would allow."

Lomea had no tolerance for her sister at that moment, for she



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Jones, Oklahoma



Megan Snide, 13  
Dublin, Ohio



*What she saw brought her to an immediate standstill and robbed her of every ounce of her breath*

had just gained the courage to get a closer look at the pyramid as soon as lunch was over. Unfortunately, her sister was even less tolerant than she was. Noch had her finish the cleaning, do the laundry, make lunch, and go to town to buy something for dinner.

Lomea ran out the door as soon as she was done with her chores. She raced across the hot, gritty sand just as the sun began to set. As she ran she looked up, and what she saw brought her to an immediate standstill and robbed her of every ounce of her breath. It was the

pyramid, majestically rising, half-finished, out of the sand against the setting sun.

She rubbed dust out of her eyes. She paused to take in the new and exciting sights and smells. She saw the rock ramps set against the pyramids for the transportation of the stone blocks. Lomea was startled, but awed and inspired, by the caw of the lone vulture circling above her head. Suddenly, she heard the sound of small feet fast approaching. She turned around and saw her younger sister, Hemufe, coming towards her with open arms.

“Lomea! Lomea!” the four-year-old squealed excitedly. “I just fell down a dune but I got up, and I didn’t cry!” the little girl yelled triumphantly.

“Good, good,” Lomea said distractedly, thinking of how it wasn’t fair that girls couldn’t take part in building such a marvelous wonder. She felt sweat trickling down her forehead and her lips cracking in the heat. She heard the grinding of the stone blocks against the ramps.

Lomea knew that building the pyramid, listening to the overseer yelling every day, and experiencing the aching hands from pulling the stones up the pyramids with ropes would be extremely tiring and difficult. She also believed it would be worth it. It would be amazing if you could look at the beautiful wonder, what would surely be the pride of all of Egypt, and know that you had taken part in making it a reality!

Lomea picked up her little sister and

showed her the beauty of it all. “See,” Lomea sighed dreamily “this is where the pharaoh will be buried when he passes on to the afterlife. See how it rises up, out of the desolate desert to rule the sands, just as Pharaoh rules the people? Even though the tomb of the pharaoh is not yet completed, is the structure not the most wonderful thing you have ever seen? Is it not amazing how something in the middle of the desert, made out of common stone, can be more majestic than the graceful lioness? Even more remarkable is that I had never seen the beauty in it before. Father had always...”

The mention of her father, a farmer who had been called to Thebes, the capital of Egypt, to help harvest crops, made her stop in mid-sentence and gave her a lump in her throat. Her mother had gone as well, leaving her and her sisters home alone. Lomea’s father had not wanted this. He believed they were not old enough to take care of themselves, but Noch had insisted that she was almost an adult and could take care of the household. They had been gone for three months now and Lomea wished they had never left. She set her sister down and felt tears gently falling down her face. She suddenly felt strong, sturdy arms around her waist.

“Why do you cry, little one?” She heard a deep, gentle voice coming from behind her. She quickly turned around and her eyes met a sight grander than the pyramid itself. Her mother and father, home at last!





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