

# Stone Soup

*The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists*



*Illustration by Zoe Hall, age 12, from "Sisters," page 11*

## SISTERS

Cameron's older sister is always scheming

## HOPE

Will Abigail tell her father about the slaves' plan to escape?

*Also:* A story about time travel



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*The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists*

VOLUME 38, NUMBER 4

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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, heartfelt work by young people the world over, we can stir the imaginations of our readers and inspire young writers and artists to create.



*Jessie Moore, 12*

## Contributors' Guidelines

*Stone Soup* welcomes submissions from young people through age 13. For our complete guidelines, please visit our Web site: [stonesoup.com](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:** Artist Zoe Hall has illustrated four stories for *Stone Soup*. Zoe mostly draws people and says, "I believe that the expression, in a picture, should tell a story along with the story itself." Zoe has two cats, Pete and Button. She plays the trombone. See more of Zoe's artwork at her family's blog: [zekslite.typepad.com](http://zekslite.typepad.com).

# The Mailbox



LBP, 9

I want to compliment Tiger Tam, who illustrated my story, “Love—A Cursed Blessing” [July/August 2009], so beautifully. The only source of information she had about me and my family was my story, and somehow she managed to capture us perfectly (although we aren’t as cool-looking as she made us!). I love the contrast between my father’s study before the divorce, and a portrait of my family after the divorce. It was a very personal piece, and I was sure I would dislike any pictures done by someone who doesn’t even know us. How wrong I was! She is truly an amazing artist and I look forward to seeing her other works in other issues.

**AKASH VISWANATH MEHTA, 11**  
*Brooklyn, New York*

*See Tiger’s illustrations for “Hope” on page 27 of this issue.*

I have read *Stone Soup*, and I was inspired to write something myself. I was inspired ever since I received a braille copy of your magazine to read. I think your wonderful magazine has greatly encouraged me to become a writer myself.

**SOPHIE TRIST, 13**  
*Mandeville, Louisiana*

I have subscribed to this magazine for three years, and each issue is like an oyster; it arrives in the mailbox like everything else, but when I open up the smooth, creamy pages, the magic pearl emerges—this time in the form of captivating stories—magic that is only enhanced by my knowledge that these works of art were created by people my age. Thanks for all the great reading!

**SARAH NEWSHAM, 12**  
*Oakland, California*

I just read “When I Understood” by Malini Gandhi [September/October 2009]. It was the most moving thing I’ve ever read. I doubt Malini will ever know this, but it was so touching. I reread it over and over and cried every time I finished. Thanks, Malini!

**SARAH GAVIS-HUGHSON, 12**  
*Princeton, New Jersey*

Just recently, I received my November/December 2009 issue. I loved everything, but my absolute favorite was “Stranger,” by Emma Dudley. I can really relate to Gale. Even though I’m not allowed out by myself, sometimes I feel like a stranger too. Thank you for publishing Emma Dudley’s fabulous story with Charlie Jones’s fantastic illustrations!!!

**MAIA JANSSEN, 8**  
*Iowa City, Iowa*

Ever since the first time I read your magazine I really wanted my work to be in it. I think it is really cool how you send out your magazine all over the world. Every time I get your magazine it drags me away from video games for a long time.

**DYLAN JURUSZ, 11**  
*Somerset, New Jersey*

## 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.





*"My name is Charlotte, and yes, I do know a 'magical way to time travel'"*

# Time

By Kaija Warner

Illustration by Katya Lopatko

## CHAPTER ONE

**T**HOMAS WAS TEN years old and on a plane, a plane going to his grandparents' house on the shore of Lake Michigan. He hadn't seen his grandparents since his father's funeral three years ago. All he could remember was his grandpa smelled like apples and his grandma made delicious chocolate-chip cookies.

Thomas got off his plane at the airport. He took a taxi to his grandparents' address and had the driver drop him off at the beginning of the long winding driveway. He slowly dragged his suitcase up the driveway and found... nothing. It was as if there had never been a house there. Thomas did recognize the old dead oak, but for some reason, it was alive. Strange, but he was sure he was in the right place. Grabbing his suitcase, he ran back down the driveway, which was now nothing but dirt, rocks, and dead leaves. Thomas tripped and skinned his knee but got up and kept on running until he reached the road. It was now dirt with wagon ruts on either side. He saw the beginning of another driveway a little ways down the road to his left.

It took Thomas a short time to reach it and he walked up the flower-bordered drive. A stately white Victorian house appeared, enclosed within a wrought-iron fence. It looked very out of place. Thomas stepped through the gate, walked onto the porch and knocked. The door was answered by a redhead girl about six years old wearing a white dress and a sash that matched her sea-green eyes.



Kaija Warner, 13  
River Falls, Wisconsin



Katya Lopatko, 13  
Grapevine, Texas

"Um, e- excuse me, but could you tell me the date?" Thomas asked, somewhat afraid of the answer and unnerved by the way the girl was staring at him.

"It is June 15, 1908, of course!" she laughed.

This is *not* happening, Thomas thought. This only happens in movies or comic books! I'm dreaming. Yes, that must be it. Wake up! He pinched himself. It hurt. But wait a minute... this doesn't seem to be a dream because I can feel and smell and hear everything. It isn't fuzzy like my other dreams... so maybe this isn't a dream? He pinched himself again just to make sure.

"You're from the future, aren't you, Thomas. 2004 to be exact," the girl said quietly. "And all you want right now is to get back to your grandparents' house."

"Yeah, but I don't see how that's possible," Thomas said. "Unless you know some magical way to time travel," he added sarcastically.

"My name is Charlotte, and yes, I do know a 'magical way to time travel.'"

Charlotte shut the door and skipped around the back of the house to the lake-shore. Thomas stood there, stunned, not sure if she was joking or if she actually could time travel. He decided it was worth a shot because he somehow trusted her. Thomas dropped his suitcase on the porch and followed her.

Down by the lake, the mid-afternoon sun was glinting blindingly off the water. Charlotte handed Thomas three pebbles she had picked up from the shore. How were pebbles going to get him back

to 2004?

"Skip them while wishing as hard as you can to get back," she said cheerfully.

"But what happens if they don't work?" Thomas asked.

"Oh, don't you worry, Thomas. My pebbles will work, I guarantee it, just as long as you believe," she said confidently.

Slightly unsettled by Charlotte's certainty, Thomas skipped the first pebble. Nothing happened. He glanced at Charlotte, who smiled innocently at him, then skipped the second one. Again, nothing. Thomas was starting to wonder if he was going to be stuck in 1908 forever.

Gloomily, he picked up the last pebble. He threw with all his might, but the third stone came skipping back. It was shining with all the colors of the rainbow, flying back towards him. There was a flash of bright blue-green light and Thomas found himself standing on his grandparents' front porch with his suitcase.

## CHAPTER TWO

THOMAS's grandparents were, of course, happy to see him. They fussed over how much he had grown and asked what had taken him so long. Thomas mumbled something about delayed flights. His grandma, sensing that something was wrong, immediately fed him a plateful of warm chocolate-chip cookies and a glass of milk. Soon feeling better, Thomas put a Band-Aid on his skinned knee and helped his grandma with the dishes.

In his bed that night Thomas replayed his conversations with Charlotte in his



head and noticed something that he hadn't before. She had known his name, the year he came from, and exactly what he wanted. How? Who was Charlotte? I'll bike down the road tomorrow and see if I can find her house, he promised himself as he drifted off to sleep.

At seven o'clock the next morning, Thomas wrote a note for his grandparents and dug the old bike out from beneath all the other junk in the garage. Coasting down the driveway, he turned left and pedaled hard up the hill until he found the spot where Charlotte's driveway had been. Now, it could not even be called an animal trail. Hopping off the bike, he walked up the trail until he found the fence, and beyond it, the house, still standing, if a bit overgrown and falling apart.

Leaning the bike against the fence, Thomas walked cautiously onto the wobbly porch and knocked on the door, half expecting Charlotte to answer it.

"Hello? Is anybody here?" he called, slowly forcing open the rusted hinges of the door and peeking inside.

"Um... Charlotte?" he whispered.

"Hello, Thomas." Charlotte's voice sounded whispery and seemed to come from everywhere at once. "I told you my pebbles work."

### CHAPTER THREE

THOMAS'S MOUTH fell open. He was stunned. What was happening?

"Follow my ribbon, Thomas," Charlotte said.

Thomas noticed her sea-green sash

draped across a coat stand. Suddenly, the sash twitched and started floating.

OK, this is definitely not normal, Thomas thought, but I trust Charlotte. She must have a good reason for this... maybe...

The sash fluttered down the once-grand hallway and into the dining room; there were dusty place settings arranged on the table. The elegant French doors slowly opened and the sash darted out and soared into the woods. Thomas dashed after it, attempting to dodge branches and undergrowth. After a few wild minutes, the ribbon stopped by an old stone fence.

Thomas halted, panting, and wiped at the scratches on his face, then realized that the stone wall was the border to a private cemetery. The ribbon beckoned him over to a small granite gravestone. Thomas knelt and read:

Charlotte Catherine Adams  
April 5, 1902–June 16, 1908

Thomas stared at the blurry words as tears filled his eyes. He hadn't known Charlotte at all, but he felt like she was a little sister.

"Charlotte... w- where are you?" Thomas called. "Charlotte?"

"Thomas," said Charlotte's voice by his ear.

Thomas wiped his eyes and glanced up, and she was standing beside him, looking exactly the same as she had almost a century before.

"Charlotte, it says that you died the day after I came to your house. Did I do

something that made you die?" Thomas whispered, hoping with all his heart that the answer was no.

"No, Thomas. It was a decision I made. I have to go now, but I wanted to say thank you."

"Thank you? For what?" Thomas asked.

"For believing. You won't be alone, I promise," Charlotte said, handing him a pebble. "Goodbye, Thomas."

"What? Charlotte, don't go!" Thomas pleaded.

But she just smiled and faded into the early morning mist.


"Bye Charlotte..." Thomas whispered to the open air.

#### CHAPTER FOUR

**T**HOMAS SAT, frozen, for some time until the harsh caw of a crow star-

tled him out of his trance. Stiffly getting up, he picked up Charlotte's now lifeless ribbon and put it back in his pocket along with the pebble. Thoroughly depressed, he decided to head back to his grandparents' house. Climbing onto his bike, he bounced back down the trail and onto the road, where he almost crashed into a red-headed girl picking wild blackberries by the side of the road.

Hearing the brakes squeal, the girl whirled around and Thomas almost fainted. She looked exactly like Charlotte, right down to the blue-green eyes. Noticing his astonished expression, she smiled a gap-toothed smile, stuck out her juice-stained hand, and said, "Hi! My name's Lottie. Want a blackberry?"

And Thomas knew what Charlotte meant. 



# Spring Morning on a Farm

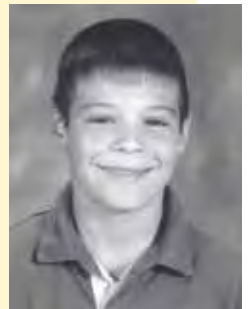
*By* **Levi Crossley**

My black-and-gray rooster crows.  
The sound of birds' chatter  
filters through the morning.  
I open the icy gate  
and walk the familiar trail.

A cool, damp haze  
swirls around me.  
I carry the rusty bucket  
filled with a ton of feed;  
It pours like sifting sand  
into the concrete trough.

Cowbells reverberate  
as they prance over the hill.  
Stopping beneath my willow tree,  
I watch them eat.

I turn around  
to head home,  
But first I pick the first  
Wild buttercup.



Levi Crossley, 12  
Russellville, Kentucky



*"MaCall, I don't feel like I'm on a magical island"*

# Sisters

By **Cameron Manor**

Illustration by **Zoe Hall**

## I. OUR MAGICAL ISLAND

“**H**EY, CAM,” MaCall whispered, nudging me in the side to wake up.  
“What?” I asked groggily, peeling one eye open.  
“What time is it?”

“Midnight,” MaCall grinned.

I groaned.

“I got some M&Ms from the vending machine at gymnastics. Do you want to share them with me on a magical island?” MaCall asked excitedly.

“Huh?” I moaned.

“A magical island—*the roof!*” MaCall whispered, her green eyes lighting up. “Now go get these jeans and tennis shoes on—I don’t want you to get hurt in case you fall off!” MaCall urged, thrusting clothes at me.

Yawning, I pulled them on.

“Put this belt on too,” MaCall commanded, handing me a pink sparkly belt. “I’m also wearing one. We’ll attach another one between us so we can be like mountain climbers,” MaCall explained, hurriedly tying my belt while she double-knotted hers.

“Uh... shouldn’t we tie mine tighter?” I asked, looking doubtfully at my mountain-climbing getup.

“Don’t worry about it. You’re lighter than I am,” MaCall sniffed, tossing her blond hair over her shoulder. “Wait. Let me just make sure Mom and Dad are asleep. You stay here.”



Cameron Manor, 11  
Laguna Hills, California



Zoe Hall, 12  
Rockville, Maryland



MaCall tiptoed over to our parents' room and placed her ear to the door as I sat there fuming. MaCall thinks she's stealthier than I am, but the truth is, she's downright noisy. Every time we sneak downstairs to "get a glass of water," (i.e., eat ice cream and watch our favorite late-night TV show), she either creaks every stair or topples down the whole flight with a giant BANG that would wake the dead. Well I guess the last thing is kind of my fault. I kind of advised her that the faster you move, the quieter you go, but now I see it depends on who's going.

"Definitely snoring," MaCall announced cheerfully, beckoning for me to follow her. "Well Cam, are you ready?" she asked, quietly opening her bedroom window. (It's the only one in the house with a removable screen.)

"Yes," I snorted with all the pride an eight-year-old could muster.

"Yo. Don't snort at me like that. I'm thirteen years old. You're lucky I'm bringing you on this adventure!" MaCall whispered, looking all offended.

MaCall pushed me out the window and onto the wood-shingled roof that slanted below it.

"Ouch, MaCall!" I screeched, trying to pry the splinter out of my hand.

"Now stay there, I'm coming out!" MaCall announced.

Two seconds later, she had plopped down beside me.

"Whoops!" she cried as she almost slipped on a loose shingle.

"If Dad knew about this, he would be

so mad!" MaCall said, calmly ripping open her bag of M&Ms and pouring them into her mouth.

"Oh yeah. Here," she said, handing me one brown M&M.

"Oh gee, thanks," I said, crunching down my one M&M.

"You're welcome!" MaCall said cheerfully, silently enjoying her bag of M&Ms.

To tell you the truth, I was getting a bit bored.

"Do you have any more candy?" I asked hopefully.

"I'm not a vending machine," MaCall said dryly.

"MaCall, can we go back now?" I asked hopefully.

"No."

A car's headlights suddenly shone against our house.

"*Duck!*" MaCall screeched, diving to hide her head between her arms.

Personally, I don't think it helped much. I looked at my sister and sighed.

"MaCall, I don't feel like I'm on a magical island. I feel like I'm watching you eat M&Ms," I moaned, watching her scarf down the last one.

"What? You mean you're not at this very moment burying your toes in hot sizzling sand as the sun sinks into the sea?" MaCall whispered, closing her eyes and sprawling back on the splintery shingles with a contented sigh.

"No."

"Well then... *use your imagination!*" MaCall screeched, then clapped her hand over her mouth. "Do you think Mom and

Dad heard that?"

"Yes," I whispered, closing my eyes and grinning. "Even a deaf person would."

"Huh. Then maybe we should go back now," MaCall said hurriedly, scrambling to her feet. "Wouldn't want to get grounded for the next 300 years."

MaCall reached out a hand to me and looked at me with mischief in her bright green eyes. I reached out my hand to clasp hers, and at that moment, I knew she was my sister.

## 2. MY SISTER THE SPY

"HEY, CAM, guess what?" MaCall giggled.

"What?" I groaned, knowing this meant trouble.

"I made us these files for our 'agency,'" MaCall chirped, slapping down a manila folder with a mysterious number 52 on it.

"Did you steal these from Dad's office?" I asked, looking at them suspiciously.

"Yeah, well that is not the topic," MaCall said breezily. "The topic is that *we are starting our own spy agency.*"

"Oh."

"Aren't you excited?" MaCall breathed, her eyes practically popping out of her head.

"Uh, the thing is, MaCall... whenever we do something together, I usually get in trouble."

MaCall looked offended. "Name five times that happened."

"Well, there was that one time that you convinced me to eat candy on the roof with you because it was a magical island

and then dad found the wrappers when he was hanging the Christmas lights."

"Umm—that's *one*," MaCall shrugged in disgust.

"And then there was the time you hid your stray cat in my closet and Dad thought it was *my* cat."

"Well..." MaCall hemmed.

"...after which Dad made us knock on *every door in the neighborhood* to ask if they had lost a cat—which was really embarrassing."

"That was last year," MaCall said, rolling her eyes.

"And then you're always making me play *Naiads*..." I began.

"I object to the word 'always,'" MaCall interrupted.

"Dad yelled at us for three hours for that!"

"It's not every day you can pretend you're a water nymph and steal your little brothers' souls," MaCall said smugly.

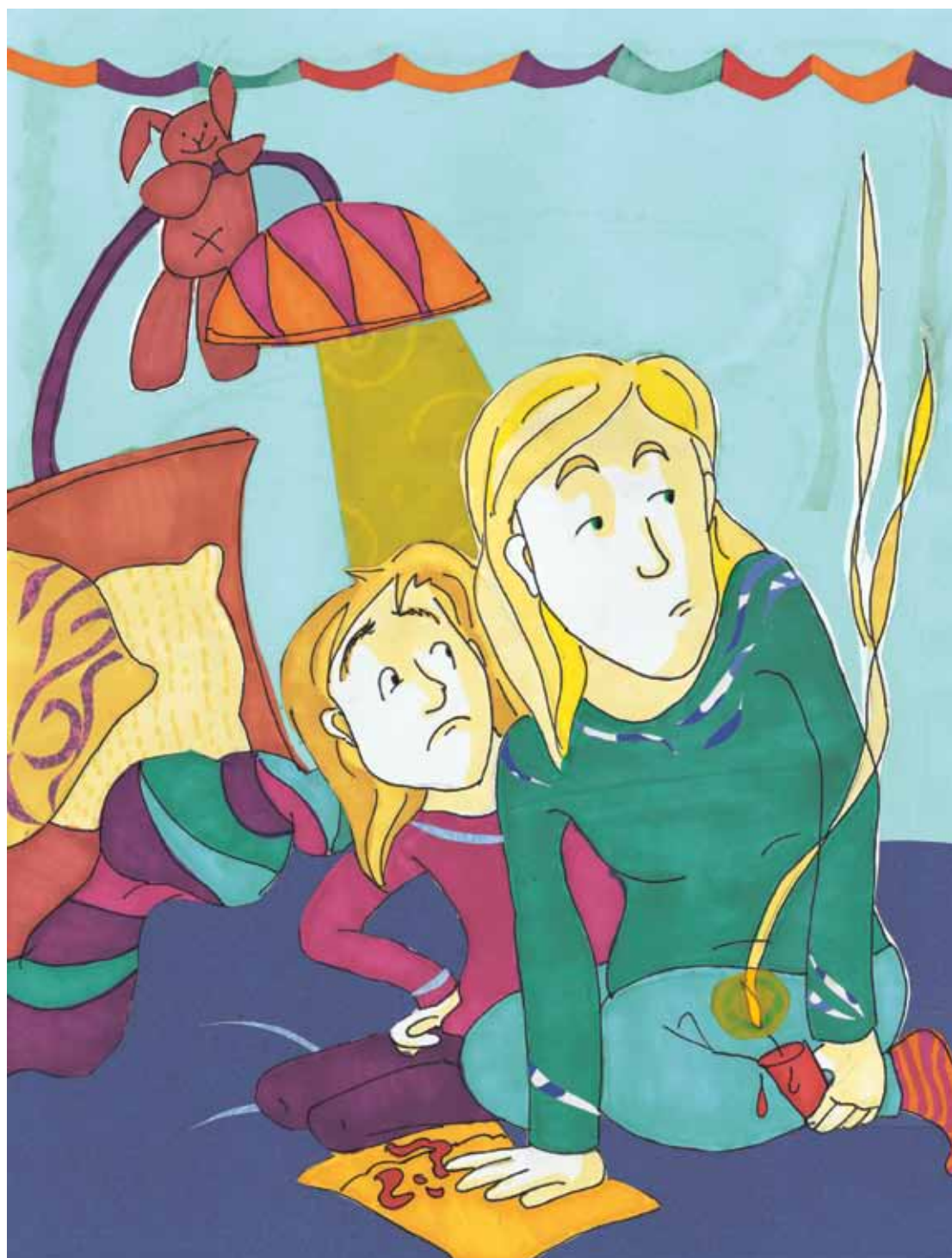
"Also, just recently you gave me five dollars to buy you a drink and a brownie and it ended up costing \$6.25..."

"How was I supposed to know it would be that expensive?" MaCall protested.

"It was really embarrassing because there was a long line of people staring at me," I harrumphed. "And then there was... *huh*," I hesitated, trying to remember the long list of injustices I had endured over the years.

"That's *four* things," MaCall said, her eyes bright with triumph.

"There've been so many things it's hard to remember," I protested.



*"Girls, what are you doing?" Dad asked, sticking his head in the room and sniffing suspiciously*

"Mom and Dad won't even hear about this," MaCall murmured, pulling out her cool wax seal kit.

I squirmed uncertainly.

"Fine! I'll just be a spy by myself then," MaCall shrugged, flouncing off.

"OK, *I'll be a spy with you!*" I shouted.

"Great!" MaCall cried, whipping around and looking delighted. "Your first mission is..."

"But I'll only be a spy with you under one condition," I interjected.

"And what is that?" MaCall moaned.

"If we get in trouble you have to tell Mom and Dad it was your idea!" I declared.

"What-ever, can you just sign this contract?" MaCall groaned, shoving a sheet of paper in my face.

"*I promise to be a spy with MaCall,*" I read aloud. "*Signed, Cameron Manor.*"

"Now write your name on the bottom line," MaCall ordered, pointing at the blank line.

"OK," I replied, scribbling in my best cursive.

"Great! Now we must seal the envelope," MaCall announced, lighting the red candle in her wax seal kit and dripping the wax all over the envelope.

"Aren't you supposed to drip the wax into a circle?" I asked, feeling confused.

"Yeah, but this way makes it look prettier," MaCall grinned, stamping it with her M for MaCall signet ring and burning the edges for a finishing touch.

"Girls, what are you doing?" Dad asked, sticking his head in the room and sniffing suspiciously. "What's that smell?"

"What smell?" MaCall asked innocently, shoving the evidence in my drawer.

"What are you two even doing?" Dad asked, marching into the room to find out for himself.

Dad yanked open the door to find a burned manila envelope with red wax dripped all over it.

"*Girls! Just what do you think you're doing?*" Dad yelled, slamming the drawer shut with a bang. "*You could've burned the whole house down!*"

"Sorry," MaCall shrugged.

"MaCall, don't you have something to tell Dad?" I asked.

"No, I don't think so," MaCall said, turning away.

"Girls, I don't want to see you doing this again unless Mom or I give you permission," Dad said sternly, stalking off sighing.

"OK, now let's get back to business," MaCall said, sighing with relief.

"What? Are you kidding me!" I screeched.

"Uh... no," MaCall answered.

"Did you hear what Dad just said?" I asked.

"Yeah, a good spy is not put off easily," MaCall said. "Besides, you signed the contract."

"Fine, but..."

"Great! Time for your first mission. You may open the envelope now," MaCall said in a hoity-toity voice, waving her hand in the air like a princess.

"Whatever, but if I get in any more trouble..."

MaCall just rolled her eyes.

I opened the envelope. Here is what it said:

To: Agent Grover

From: Agent Smuff

Mission: Go borrow \$20 from Mom's purse

Reward: When one agent helps another, that agent will be helped

"What is that supposed to mean?" I asked.

"Uh... what do you think? *Go steal \$20 from Mom's purse!*" MaCall screeched, getting red in the face.

"OK!" I roared back.

I tiptoed off to my Mom's room, only to find that she was *sleeping with her purse!*

"Pssst... Cameron, get over here," MaCall whispered.

"What do you want now?" I asked, tiptoeing back where MaCall was poking her head out from behind the door.

"I forgot to tell you... good luck, Grover," MaCall grinned, winking at me.

"Am I free to go *now?*" I asked impatiently, tapping my toes.

"Yes."

I sighed and tiptoed back to the room where my mother was sleeping, unaware of the drama that was unfolding two inches from her nose. Heart pounding, I carefully lifted her arm and slipped her purse out. Quickly, I snatched a \$20 bill from her worn brown leather wallet, put everything back the way it was, and dashed out of the room.

"Here you go, Agent Smuff. Mission *ac-*

*complished,*" I sighed, tossing the \$20 bill at my sister.

MaCall looked at the bill.

"Uh uh uh!" MaCall tsked disapprovingly. "I recall saying '\$40 dollars.'"

"You mean I have to go in there again?" I asked, horrified.

"Yes, you must... you have not completed your mission, Agent Grover," Agent Smuff snapped, green eyes flashing.

"OK fine, but this is the last mission," I said angrily, stalking off.

MaCall just grinned.

THE NEXT DAY, MaCall returned from her rhythmic gymnastic convention with a new ribbon stick, new ribbon, new clubs, new tape, and a new ball.

"Well, I guess you gotta help *me* now," I observed politely, eyeing all her new stuff.

"What is it you want?" MaCall asked in her nicest tone. She was in a really good mood because she had just gotten everything she wanted.

"A new MP3 player!" I answered without hesitation. It was only \$20 (which I knew because my sister had just gotten one), so I thought it was a fair trade.

Agent Smuff looked shocked.

"What are you *thinking?* I can't just go out and buy you that kind of stuff!" MaCall screeched.

"But you said, 'when one agent helps another, that agent will be helped,'" I said, remembering my contract.

"Yeah, hmmm..." my sister muttered distractedly, disappearing into her room.

And that was the end of the agency.



### 3. MY SISTER'S GARAGE SALE

“I KNOW HOW much you love boxes, Cam,” the sticky note read.

I stared at three battered boxes that didn't even close properly. Probably my sister hadn't wanted to lug them down to the garbage can, so she had “gifted” them to me. I sighed and lugged them to the corner of my room, where they sagged on top of the rest of her “presents.”

I am my sister's beneficiary, the one upon whom she lavishes gifts. Two-inch pencil stubs, old discolored nail polish, broken jewelry where the beads fall off and the clasps don't clasp, stained sticky notes with only two sheets left, books that don't “look good” in her room—all these treasures are mine for the enjoying.

I think what it really is, is that she can't be bothered to walk down the stairs, so she uses my room as a garbage dump.

One day I decided to speak up.

“MaCall, I just don't want your trash,” I said politely, delicately placing a year's worth of MaCall's gifts back in her room.

“That's not trash... those are my gifts!” MaCall cried, her eyes wounded.

I stood there, trying to be firm.

“*Caaaamm!*” —sniff sniff—How c- could you?” MaCall wailed.

It's actually kind of funny to watch teenagers cry, 'cause every once in a while you can see a smile poke out through their tears. I cleared my throat and threw my shoulders back, trying to remember the speech I had prepared.

“MaCall, for the past year I have been

collecting your ‘gifts,’ and I don't want them anymore!” I screeched, stalking out of the room to take a hot shower to cool off.

When I returned, MaCall was sprawled on my bed, muttering in her sleep. (For some reason I scored the best mattress in the house, and MaCall knows it. Also, MaCall doesn't like making her own bed, so she sleeps in mine.)

I poked her.

“MaCall, can I have my bed back?” I asked politely.

“Mom, don't wake me up! I can't do that right now...” MaCall groaned through a cobweb of dreams.

With a sigh, I plopped onto MaCall's bed and fell asleep.

*“What is going on? I never said you could sleep in here!”* MaCall screeched, catapulting me out of her bed with one swoop.

“Um, MaCall—you were in *my* bed. Where else was I supposed to sleep?” I pointed out, rubbing my butt.

MaCall glared at me, then flounced off.

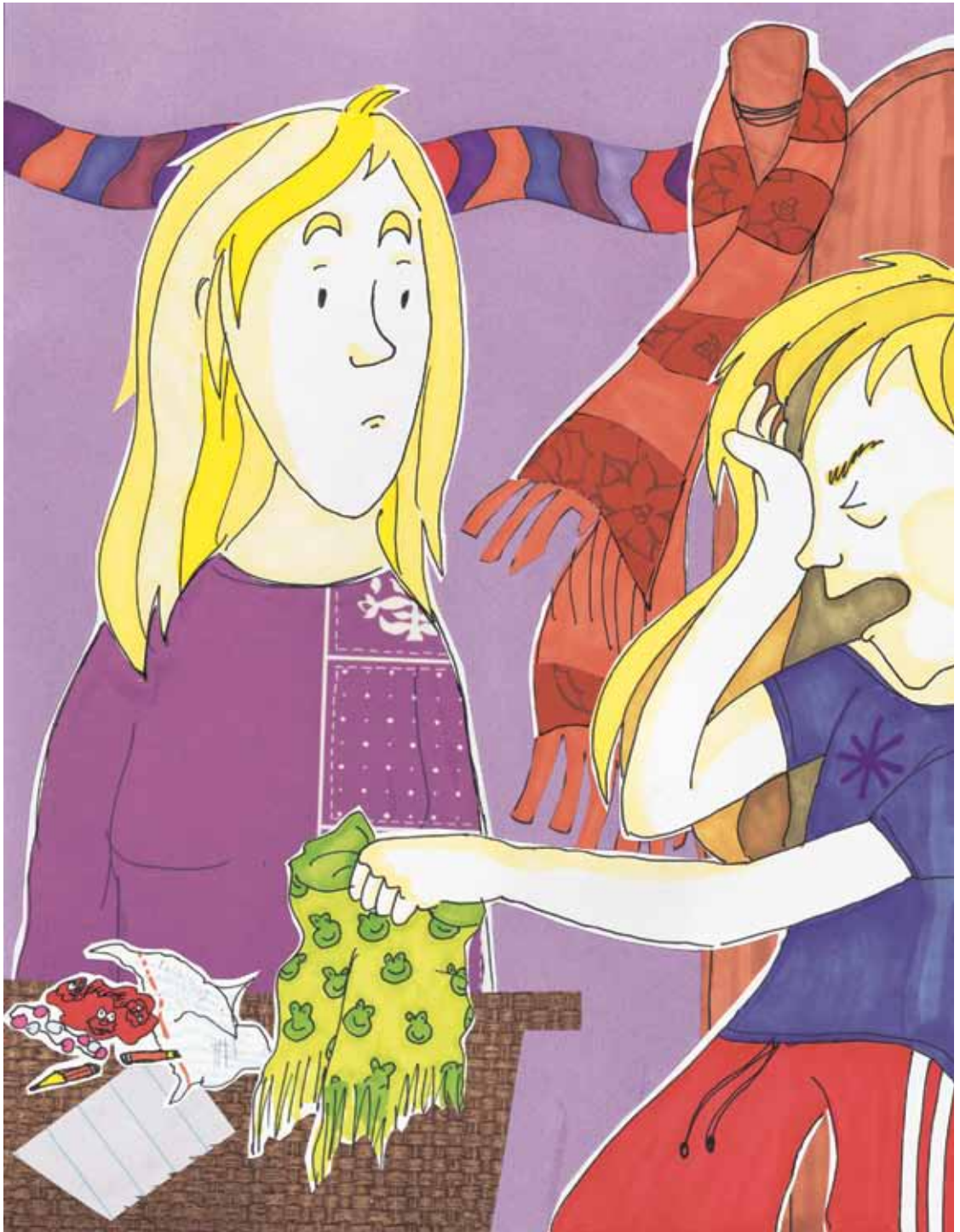
Two minutes later, she was back.

“I am really sorry about what happened. Will you forgive me?” MaCall asked, green eyes wide and as calm as a kitten.

“OK fine,” I muttered, wondering what she was up to now.

“Well... would you like to buy some special scratch paper? It's five cents for twenty sheets,” MaCall asked brightly.

I looked at the sheaf of papers MaCall had thrust at me. Basically, it was the blank backsides of MaCall's old home-



*“MaCall!” I screeched, snatching up my favorite frog pajamas that were now curiously... shorts*

work that she had sprayed with Sweet Pea perfume.

“Uhhh...” I hesitated.

“You don’t like the scent? I also carry them in La Poison,” MaCall chirped, her eyes lighting up.

“I’ll stick with Sweet Pea,” I answered, handing over a nickel.

When it comes to MaCall, don’t even bother to resist. It’s better to do just whatever’s on her mind.

MaCall smiled.

“Thank you for your business. Now would you care to look at the other items I have for sale?” MaCall said brightly, shoving the nickel in her pocket.

Before I could answer, MaCall waved her hand over an elaborate display of old pencils, dirty eraser pieces, Elmo hair scrunchies we had last worn when we were five years old, plastic necklaces whose “diamonds” had long fallen off, and...

“*MaCall!*” I screeched, snatching up my favorite frog pajamas that were now curiously... shorts.

“Yes?” MaCall asked innocently.

“*What did you do to my favorite frog pajamas?!*” I screeched, clutching them to my chest.

“I had no idea those were yours,” MaCall huffed. “Anyway, they look much better now.”

I stalked out of MaCall’s room, furious. MaCall was always cutting up her clothes in an attempt to be a fashion designer, but cutting up my favorite frog pajamas was going a bit too far.

“It’s artistic!” MaCall called out desperately.

I pressed my hands over my ears, trying to shut her out.

What I really need, I thought, is a little sister. Someone I could dress up, tell advice to, give stuff...

“Hey, Jack!” I called out to my six-year-old brother as he bent over the carpet to draw an eye patch on his pirate.

“What do you want?” Jack muttered, looking up at me in annoyance. Jack hates to be interrupted, but this was an emergency.

“Would you like to buy some special scratch paper?” I asked brightly. “Just five cents for twenty sheets.”

“What do you mean by ‘special?’” Jack asked curiously, looking up at me with a gap where his tooth should have been.

“Uhhh... they smell really good,” I answered, thrusting the sheets under his nose.

“I’ll pass,” Jack said, returning to his pirate drawing.

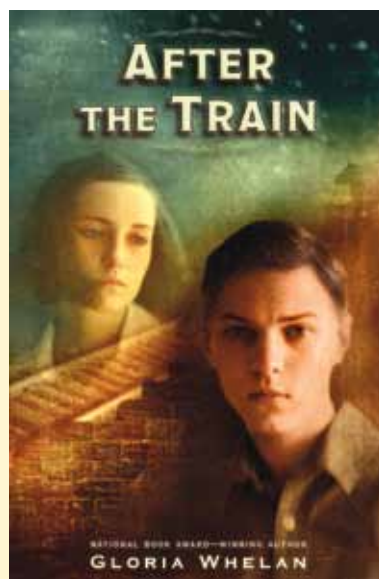
Oh dear. I think I’m just not cut out for sales.



# Book Review

By Siena Teare

*After the Train*, by Gloria Whelan;  
HarperCollins: New York, 2009; \$15.99



Siena Teare, 12  
Essex Junction, Vermont

**P**ICTURE THIS: you are thirteen years old and living in Rolfen, West Germany, ten years after WWII has ended. All your history teacher talks about is the war and how big an impact it had on history, along with how horrible it was for the Jewish people. You know all this already and you think everyone should move on and live in the moment. Of course you have sympathy for all the people who suffered and died, but right now your biggest concerns are playing summer soccer with your two best friends and helping your father rebuild the town's church in your spare time. This is Peter Liebig's life in a nutshell, until he discovers a treasure trove of letters that had been exchanged between his mother and father during the war.


While their country fought, Mr. Liebig, an architect by trade, built barracks in the prison camps. At home Mrs. Liebig, eager to play her part in the war, worked as a nurse at the Red Cross organization, treating mild wounds and making care packages for the soldiers. She saw the trains shipping off thousands of Jews to concentration camps but chose to ignore it all. The couple was happy helping the cause and blissfully unaware of the terrors going on around them. That all changed when a desperate woman held a baby out the window of a train and begged

Mrs. Liebig to take him. The small child, later named Peter, had changed the Liebig's lives forever.

Peter, now grown up, had always assumed that he was the son of his parents, just as anyone would. But when he discovers his Jewish heritage, his world is flipped upside down and he scrambles for anything to hold onto while he gets his head around this newly discovered information. When Peter talks to one of his father's Jewish friends and starts attending some of their religious services and dinners with him, he finds it easier and easier to come to terms with his past.

I thought I knew everything about my family and my past, but two years ago, when my father told me how my great-grandfather and great-uncles survived Auschwitz, I was astounded! They had lived in Poland and were helping Jews escape persecution. But the Nazis caught onto them, and they were sent to one of the worst prison camps created. Luckily, they all survived, but not without injuries. I was most certainly not in the same predicament as Peter, but I could relate to him and his sense of astonishment.

Peter is a good role model, and easy to relate to. He has the mind of an adolescent, making his thoughts about soccer and friends easy for the young reader to understand, but he is also a very kind boy with a logical mind and a generous heart. He is curious and works hard, as evidenced by the sections of bricks he carefully and dutifully laid while learning the trade with his father. He helps his friends with their crazy ideas and is respectful and polite to his parents and other adults, making him my favorite character in the book.

Because it is short in length, I found this book to be slightly predictable and some parts repetitive and slow moving. Overall, however, I enjoyed it. The book is a wonderful example of how learning about your past is not always a bad thing, and can be a grounding experience. 



# Flying Against the Wind

By Christopher Fifty

*Illustrated by* Sarah Emig



Christopher Fifty, 13  
Churchville, Maryland



Sarah Emig, 13  
Fort Belvoir, Virginia

**I**N A MARSH, long green grass reaching up to touch the sun swayed slightly in the cool morning breeze. The marsh was teeming with animal and insect life. A snake slithered through the grasses looking for mice while an osprey swooped low overhead, wind ruffling its feathers. The osprey was looking for an animal to catch; a fish was on the main course for today. He needed to find a big fish or several smaller fish to feed his mate and chicks. He headed towards the river, wind pushing him forward like an arrow shot from a bow.

The osprey was happy; he was always happy just flying, hunting, sleeping, and mating. A powerful hawk, he didn't need to worry about being the prey to some bigger animal. His chicks, on the other hand, did. Eagles were known to come flying by and snatch hatchlings to eat. The osprey promised himself that he would never let that happen to his chicks. He loved his chicks, and would easily sacrifice his life for theirs, and so would his mate. She would fly out of their nest and peck and claw an invader until he retreated, defeated. Ground animals couldn't get to their nest because the tree they picked was about twenty-three feet high and had sharp branches jutting out from the base. His mate always stayed with their chicks. Often when he came home he would see their chicks huddled under her warm fluffy wings.


He finally arrived at the river. It was fast moving and clear. He felt the thrill of excitement he always felt when he was going hunting. He was going to catch a big fish worthy of his wife and three chicks. He swooped into a dive. He loved the



*He was going to catch a big fish worthy of his wife and three chicks*

sensation of the wind rushing past his head. He pulled out of it about three feet from the surface of the water, looked quickly for a fish, and then swooped in. He dove quickly and made a splash as his talons entered the water. The fish, alarmed by the commotion from the ripples, tried to get away. Too late. The osprey speared the fish with his talons, piercing through the scales and deep into

the flesh. He quickly flew up, the fish's head dangling in the air.

With a tight grip, he headed to his nest where his chicks would be with his mate. He was flying against the wind, which made it harder, but he prevailed. He finally reached his nest. He saw his mate, with their chicks under her wings, and felt happy that he had such a good family. That night they ate well. 

# Someone Absolutely New

*By* Imani Apostol



Imani Apostol, 11  
Seattle, Washington

A dull, cloudy morning,  
On the couch with my parents,  
Cozy, like the three little bears.

My dad holds the camera,  
...Why?  
An unexpected turn in the lethargic morning conversation

My dad tells me to look at some papers,  
Confused and unsure,  
Why are they meant for me to read?

All the words on the paper were blocked out,  
Except for one—like a lighthouse, flashing news...  
PREGNANT

My legs jump in the air,  
My feet tap out the sound of joy.  
Then I know what the camera is for.

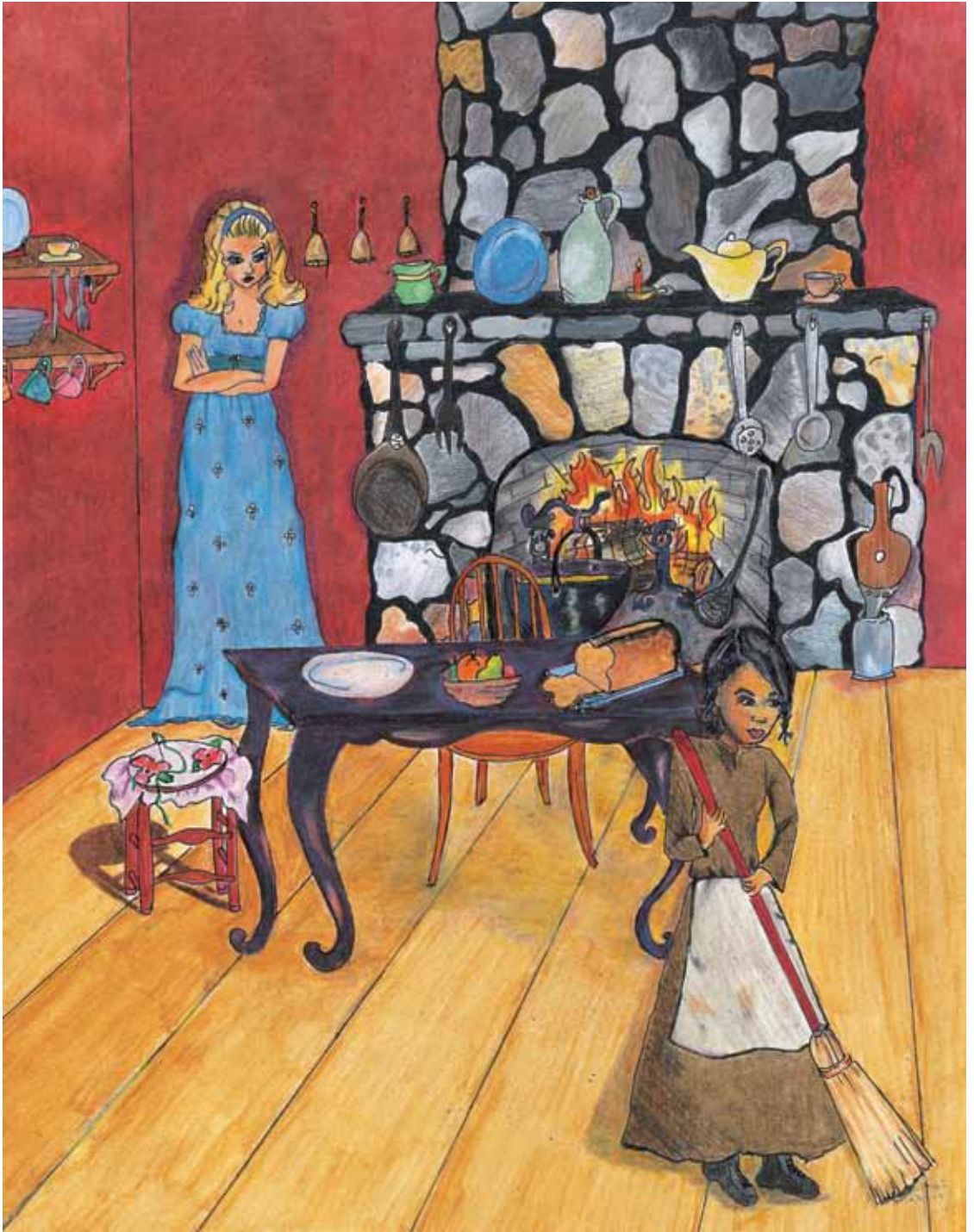
These new and different feelings and thoughts  
Crowd my head  
Like a crowded pack of people at the Macy's Thanksgiving  
Day Parade.

I would have to take care of someone  
Small, gentle, and fragile like a feather.  
What to do, what to do?

This new baby—new person in my life  
Will change the way I think of others,  
And will change the way I care for others.

A baby brother? A baby sister?  
Someone I am excited about,  
Someone I'm looking forward to—someone absolutely new.





*Abigail was watching Hope's every move disconcertingly*



# Hope

By **Cashen Conroy**

*Illustrated by* **Tiger Tam**

ON THE DARK WOOD TABLE, a plain plate lay inches away from Abigail. Her blond hair flounced around her shoulders. Her light blue dress with darker flowers brought out the bright blue in her eyes, which contrasted strangely with the rich brown of Hope's. Hope, on the other side of the room, was sweeping the grimy floor with a homemade broom of stiff bristles. Abigail was watching Hope's every move disconcertingly. Suddenly, she ordered, "Fetch me that plate."

Hope's eyes bore fire into Abigail's. Abigail ignored Hope and her smug nose tilted up into the air as Hope replied with no choice, "Yes ma'am," though Abigail was only a year older than her. But Hope did as she was told.

After Abigail had the plate in her hands, she leaned against the kitchen wall, holding it. Hope could feel her disapproving gaze upon her working back.

"Abigail," someone said in a harsh voice from another room, "are you doing your embroidery?"

"Yes, Father," Abigail replied stiffly, reaching for her sewing on the chair. Hope's gaze averted to the floor and she swept faster.

"Good," the tall man said as he came into the room. "I am going into town," he declared, straightening his overcoat. "Be good. I'll be back soon."

Abigail gave a small nod and looked into her busy father's eyes.

He left the room briskly and it gave way to silence. Then all Hope could hear was the scratch of the broom on the floor.



Cashen Conroy, 12  
Wayland, Massachusetts



Tiger Tam, 11  
Honolulu, Hawaii

LATER THAT EVENING, Hope was pouring water into tall, thin glasses for her master and his guest. Sitting down beside her, grasping a fork elegantly, was Master Thompson. He was talking to Mr. Stevens, a fat, jovial man who Hope couldn't imagine would own slaves. Spread across the white tablecloth was a large, colorful array of soup and turkey and vegetables prepared carefully all day by Auntie Edna, who would only get to try the leftovers. Steam rose from Mr. Stevens's heaping pile of food. A warm, meaty aroma wafted through Hope's nose. But she did not care to envy this small advantage she did not possess—there were many things far worse, and anyway, her concentration was now on only the plump, stout silver jug she held coldly and tightly against her creamy brown palm. That is, until she heard something distressing.

Master Thompson was talking about selling someone to Mr. Stevens! Grimly, she considered who might be leaving. Could it be Sarah, the twenty-something-year-old woman who worked here? Or Sam, the hardworking young man who tended the horses and brought in the firewood, who had taught her jokes and riddles? Might it be Auntie Edna, who had cared for Hope when she was sick and her mother was working, gathering cotton or fixing clothes, a grandmotherly old woman with a kind nature? Hope would miss anyone who left so! She fought her thoughts and tried to listen quietly to the conversation.

"She is a hard worker. She could help

you with many things. She knows how to patch things up and sew well," Master Thompson insisted in a businesslike way.

Oh no. Is it Sarah? Hope pleaded, not Sarah, oh please no! Hope dreaded the thought of the woman who had acted as an older sister to her leaving.

"But she would be willing to go alone?" Mr. Stephens inquired.

Hope grimaced. Master Thompson wouldn't mind. She had seen him separate families.

"We could arrange it," Master Thompson assured abruptly. When Hope had refilled both glasses, slowly so she could hear what the men were saying, she went into the kitchen. Edna was there, washing dishes.

"Oh, Auntie Edna," Hope cried. "Master Thompson's gonna sell someone!"

"I'm sorry, baby." Edna opened her arms. Hope flew into a hug.

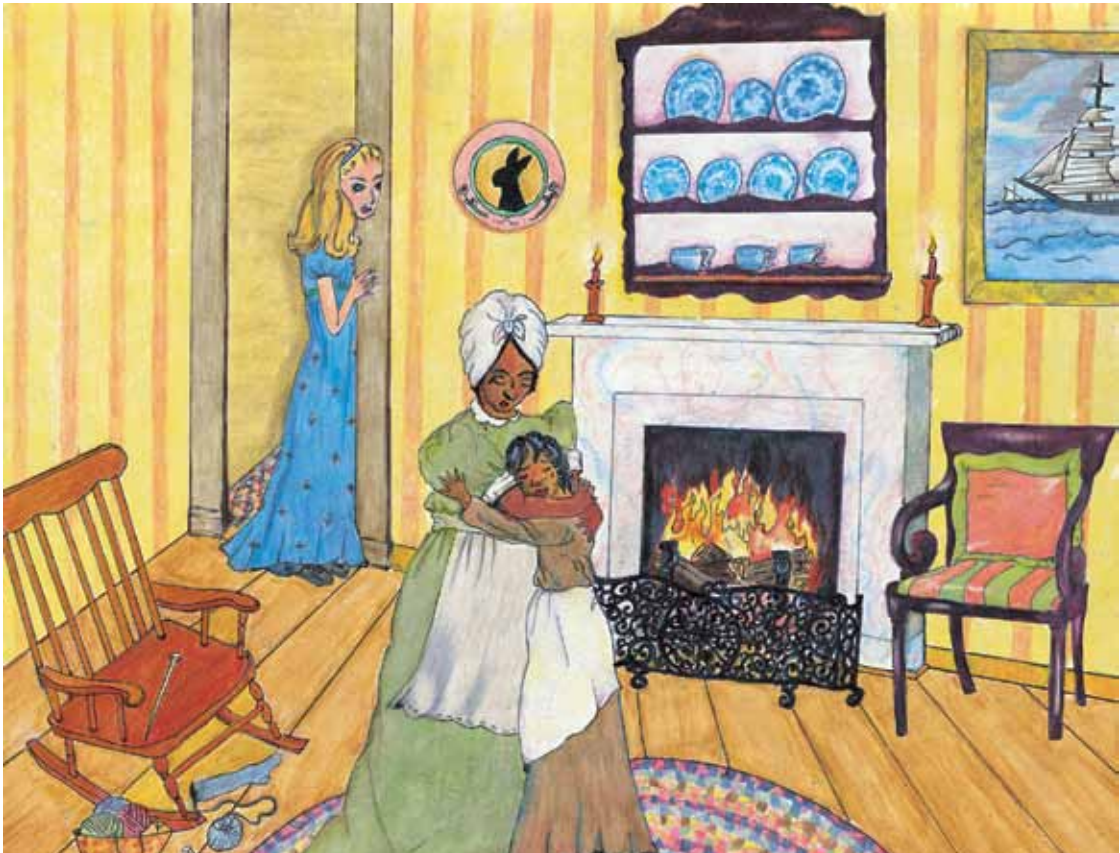
Sobbing, she told Edna what she heard. "I think it might be Sarah!" Hope wailed. "But I don't want none o' ya to go!"

"Shhh," Edna soothed, rocking Hope back and forth. "Shhhhhhhh."

"Girl," Master Thompson ordered sharply minutes later. "Take away the plates."

Hope went into the dining area and lifted up the plates, stacking them. When she was back in the kitchen, she saw that Edna had left. But Sam was there, with wood for the fireplace. "Sam!" Hope said.

"I heard 'bout the sale," Sam said, glancing at Hope grimly. "But I'm afraid it's not Sarah."



*"Hope, we're gonna have tuh run"*

"Afraid? Why, do you want Sarah to go?" demanded Hope.

"No, no, no. I'm worried who it might be."

"Who?" whispered Hope anxiously.

Sam hesitated before responding. "I think it might be your mama."

Hope gasped. Gaping at Sam, she asked why he thought so.

"Well, Master Thompson said whoever it is, is a good seamstress, can cook, and can't read, and you know yo' mama can't," Sam answered, concern and sorrow in his eyes.

"But he said she ain't got family!" Hope remembered in horror.

Sam stacked up the wood on the ground next to the fire. Avoiding Hope's eyes, he said, "I heard him say they could arrange fo' her tuh leave. Not that she ain't got no family."

"B- but!" Hope stammered. "He can't do that!"

Sam stood up and brushed himself off. He looked at her as if to say, do you think it matters to him?

Hope ran to the living room, where her mother was calmly stitching up a

sock. "Mama, oh Mama, they... Master Thompson... he gonna *sell* you!!!" she panted desperately.

Hope's mama, Caroline, froze. Her face was pale. Her eyes were wide. Her hand was still clutching the needle when she said, "When, Hope?" sharply.

"I don't know! wailed Hope, feeling helpless. "Soon!"

Caroline rose from her seat in a wooden chair. She held Hope close to her and whispered, in perfect, quiet diction, "Hope, we're gonna have tuh run. To the North. To Philadelphia, or Canada, maybe, I don't know where 'xactly, but I can't let you stay alone."


Hope hugged her mama back with all her might. Her eyes brimmed with grateful tears. She didn't know how to react. Fear pulsed through her blood, but freedom and determination did also.

**B**EHIND THE DOORWAY, Abigail was listening intently. Her pale, delicate hand curled around the white wall where the door closed. Her silhouette was innocent and pure, her long eyelashes stood out. But her thoughts were quite contradictory to her seemingly angelic demeanor. When she heard Caroline, her stomach plunged. Her throat was tight. How could they disobey her father? But how dare he want to separate them? How could she betray her father? He would hurt her, he would shout, he would blame her for everything! Abigail shook herself and took a deep breath. What am I talk-

ing about? Of course I'll tell him! I don't even like Hope!

She smiled, and was about to run off to tell her father, when all of a sudden, her mind started spinning and reeling. She closed her eyes tight and clutched the wall, leaning on it. An image of her ordering Hope to fold her clothes, tie her hair, was taunting her. Then one of her father coming in late at night and yelling at her flashed. He was blaming her for her mother's death. As if she didn't care. As if she didn't cry every night, remembering her stroking her hair. Then her mind gave way to a distant, forgotten memory that came back now clear, a time when she was six years old, watching her father whip a slave till his back was bleeding because he had run away. She could still see the plea of pain in the black man's eyes. She remembered herself asking, "What did the man do?" and her father spitting on the ground near Sam's foot and answering, "He is not a man. He will never be a man. He is a slave. Remember that."

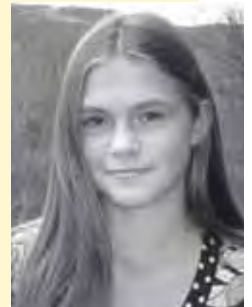
All these thoughts raced through her head as her father drank wine and ate meat, and Hope clutched her mother in fear, and Edna's wrinkled hands clasped each other as she prayed, and Sam fed the fire, having no idea that someone was remembering his pain seven years ago.

Abigail stepped out of the shadows in honor of that violent day and, defying her father's hatred for his slaves and doing what she felt was right, said, "I will help you." 

# Into the Night

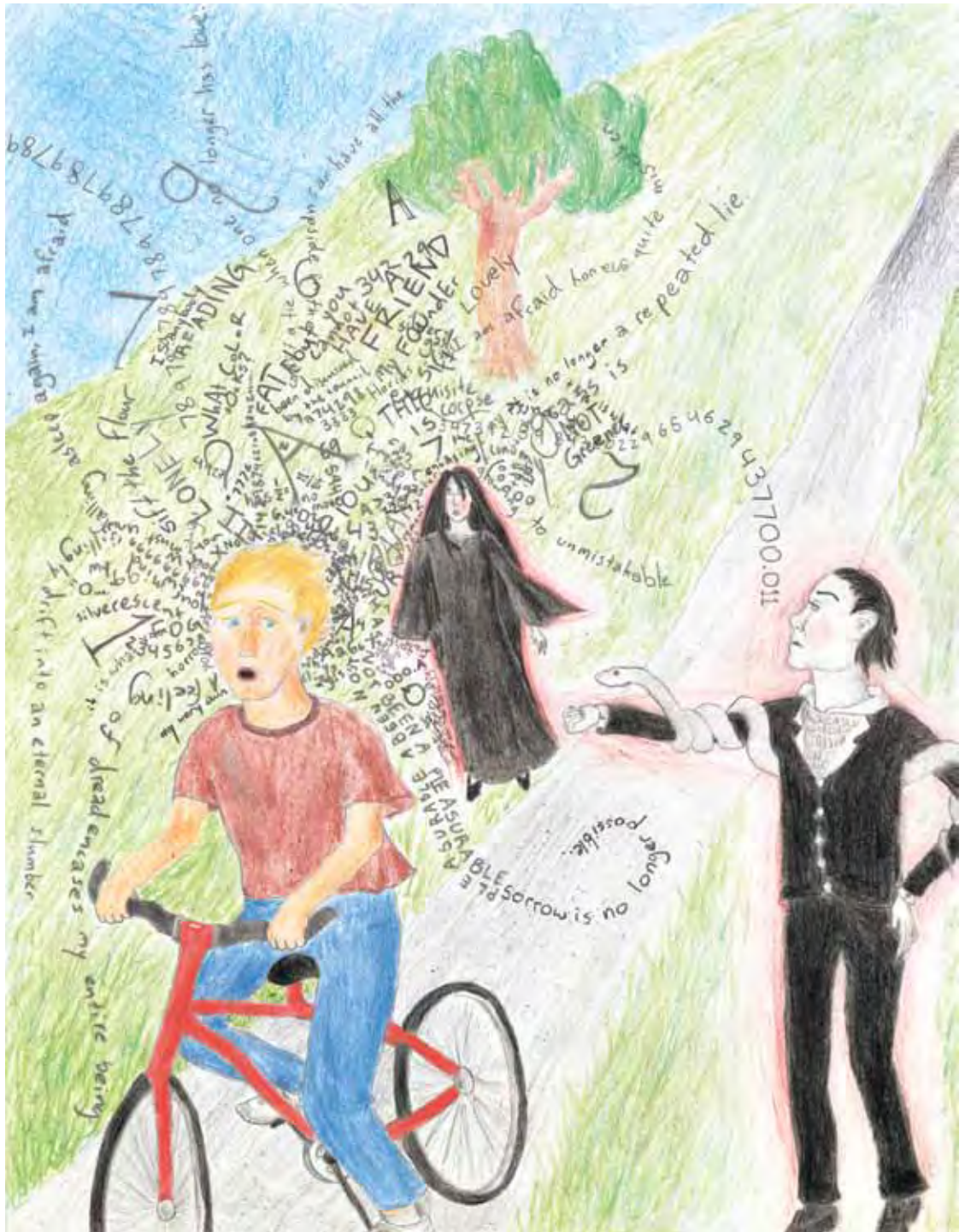
*By* Eliza Putnam

Loud chirping surrounds the house.  
It is hard to concentrate on anything else,  
While the wood frogs and peepers are calling.  
Silently, I put down my book, and slide away from my chair.  
I lean out of the window, seeing nothing,  
But feeling something in the air.  
The stars are shining brightly.  
I cannot see the tiny creatures,  
But their voices are calling, calling,  
Begging to be heard.  
Suddenly, I am through the window  
And into the night.  
Sitting on the porch roof,  
Letting the chirps and peeps envelop me.  
The tiny animals of the swamp are calling, calling,  
We are alive.



Eliza Putnam, 13  
Hartland, Vermont





*The faster I pedaled the more my dread rose, until visions started to appear before me*

# Living to Forget

By **Hayden Rasberry**

*Illustrated by* **Byron Otis**

**T**HE WIND TUGGED at my hair as I rode my bike faster and faster, trying to shake off the constant dread that was welling up inside me. Sweat glistened on my brow. My whole body ached. Burning fire ran up my throat. But the faster I pedaled the more my dread rose, until visions started to appear before me. Two smirking figures flashed before my eyes. Numbers and letters swirled. In a desperate frenzy I pulled my brakes down, hard, feeling every little stone that my tires were braking on. I screamed. Voices rang in my head and then there was complete silence. Almost too much silence. I sat breathlessly on my hard black bike seat and waited for my air to return. As I caught my breath I looked down the long gray road before me. I felt like following it on and on, but my common sense got the better of me. Don't be stupid I told my self. Don't be stupid.

As I sat, the weight of my terrible year crushed down on me like waves crashing on a drowning person. I felt so alone in the world. Alone, alone, alone. The words paced and then collapsed in my head. I had no friends at school and I felt like I was growing up too fast. The thought of getting older and not being a child anymore loomed before me. I felt scared and frightened. This was the first hot sunny day of summer break. All the other people in my class were probably at birthday parties or pools. But me, I was alone. My parents were away at their restaurant, Waterfall Delights. "Enjoy your day at home, honey," was all my mom had said. How was I supposed to enjoy my day at home? Anger ran through me, then sadness. And now, with the



Hayden Rasberry, 11  
Yarker, Ontario, Canada



Byron Otis, 13  
Keller, Texas

sun beating down hot on my face, I had a complete feeling of dread. I felt a mix of anger, sadness and hope. I clung to that hope tightly as I made my way slowly, almost not seeing back down the long road.

THE WATER RAN down my throat, cooling me down and calming me. I sat on one of our swivel chairs in our kitchen and took a deep breath. I just sat there for a while, looking into space, and watched the green digital numbers on our stove change. I got up, treading on one of my cat's squeaking toys as I went. I ran up the stairs. Right foot, left foot, right foot, left foot. At the top of the stairs to the right my brother's black door loomed with the words scrawled on tattered paper: Keep Out! I missed my old brother, the one who used to play games with me and laugh with me and comfort me. Now in his teenage years he was a black, rearing dragon always shut up in his room or hanging out with friends. I sighed and continued to my room. I flopped on my bed and took out *Swallows and Amazons* and began to read. As I read, my mind relaxed and I forgot my troubles.

As I lay there, book in hand, I glanced up at the clock. Would time ever stop? Tick, tick, tick, time is flying by, it seemed to always remind me. The clock was right, I should get moving and make my day alone better. My parents would be home soon. I walked to the other side of my room where young plants were soaking up the sunlight. Their slender bodies reached to the sky in a beautiful arc. I

had some new seeds I was going to plant. I looked at the seeds and was amazed as I had been many times before at how this little seed could turn into a plant. Children are like seeds, I thought. They reach up to their goals and become adults. They get sick and sometimes die, and eventually time sweeps them away. Would time take me away before I found a companion I longed for with all my heart?

Suddenly, I heard the sound of the door swing open. It was my parents! Just as I was starting to enjoy my day alone. Things happen like that, I thought. I slowly, slowly went down the stairs (so I would make my parents wait) and continued through the living room. As I walked I stubbed my toe on a chair, making me even more grumpy. I reached the dark coatroom and there were my parents. My mom was wearing an apron that said in huge fancy cursive letters, "Waterfall Delights." She was carrying a pink umbrella. My dad was wearing a chef hat and carried a briefcase in his hand. They were quite a sight.

"Hi Michael!" they said with a little bit of fake enthusiasm and a little bit of self-embarrassment. I guess they saw the look on my face. "Where is your brother?" they asked. Red hot fury ran through me. The first question they ask is about my brother, my mean, stupid, selfish brother.

I tamed my fury and said calmly, "I have no idea." My parents looked at each other and looked grim. Without another word they went into the kitchen. My mom started cooking and my dad went upstairs to his office. Enough cooking and

sorting out money, I wanted to yell, you did that all day today. But I didn't.

I OPENED THE door and went outside. I started down the street at a brisk pace, jingling some money in my pocket and hoping it was enough for an Aero bar. The general store was a fairly long walk from my house so I picked up my pace a little. I jogged past Nathan and Hannah's house, and then I was lost in a time where only trees and houses and people seemed to exist. As I ran something caught my attention. A black dog lay on the ground, licking his paw. As I looked closer I could tell he was a stray. He had no collar and he was very skinny. He looked right up into my eyes. His eyes were beautiful, brown eyes, just begging for me to bring him home. Something in me told me I had to. Something in those eyes told me. There was something in the way he looked at me. "Come on boy, we are going home," I said gently. Just then I knew his name, Chester. Yes, Chester. "Come on Chester, let's go." From that moment on, a great bond began to grow between us. Happily (if only for this little time), we walked home together through the last rays of sunlight.

My mind raced, trying to think of a place to hide Chester. Meanwhile, he licked my hand and brushed his warm black fur against my legs. His fur was toasty warm from the heat of the day. But now the day was drawing to a close and my time alone with him would only last till I got home. I would have to think of

a place soon. Time was running out. I let my mind wander through our yard. Pond, trees, concrete, back door, path. Then suddenly I knew it! My brother's old clubhouse would be the perfect place. I would sneak out back and put him in there. The only other problem I could think of now was food. It would be hard to get him food. But he really needed it. Even though he was trying to walk playfully I could see he was weak. I knew we had frozen meat, but I couldn't cook it for him. Not with my parents around. There was a chance we were having meat for supper. And then I remembered my mom cooking ground beef. It was a simple recipe; we had had it before. There was only a little bit of pepper and salt in it. I could sneak some into my napkin while I was eating dinner.

Steam wafted from the food on the table as my parents and I joined hands to say grace. "Blessings on the meal," my mother said, and then we ate. As I ate I hoped Chester was OK. I had left him in the clubhouse and he had seemed to be all right, but how could I tell? I thought he should see a vet for a checkup, but how could I bring him to the vet without my parents knowing? It was hopeless. I snuck some beef in my napkin, and at that very moment I heard my parents' voices saying my name.

"Michael." I jumped a little, almost spilling the contents of my napkin.

"Y- yes," I stammered. My parents didn't seem to notice any of my surprise and continued.

"We were wondering if you wanted to



get a dog for your birthday,” my mother asked.

“We have noticed you seem lonely lately, and a dog would be a good companion,” my father said.

“Yeah,” I mumbled, trying to stay calm.

“If you want some time to think about it, that’s OK too,” my mom said.

“That would be good,” I said, trying to smile. I knew my parents loved me by the way they talked to me and looked at me, but how could I tell them about Chester?

“You look tired,” said my father, breaking the uncomfortable silence. “What about an early night tonight, eh?”

“Yeah, Dad,” I said, “I am tired.”

“Go upstairs and get ready for bed, honey, I’ll be up in a sec,” my mom said in a motherly tone.

“OK,” I said quietly. As I brushed my teeth I looked into the mirror at myself. All I saw was a boy with dirty-blond hair and a worried look on his face. But I tried to believe I was something more, someone more in this world of billions of people. I tried to think of people who loved me. The first two people were my parents. Whatever I did they would always love me. Sometimes it was hard to tell they loved me, but I knew they did. The third person would be my brother. Amidst all his anger and blackness I knew he loved me with all his heart. The next two people (well not really people) would be my cat, Whisperer, and Chester. They both loved me as a master and would be devoted until they died. I finished brushing my teeth and crawled under my cool covers. I

just watched the stars and listened to the cicadas chirp and let myself relax. Soon my mom came in to say good night.

“Have a good sleep, Michael,” she whispered and then went to the door. Then she turned around. “Whatever you do, your father and I will always love you, right?”

“Yeah Mom, I know,” I said.

“Good,” she said, and she shut the door. My mind relaxed but then jolted to a start. I had to feed Chester! I listened to the low whispers of my parents and willed them to stop. They did. And with only a moment’s hesitation I slipped onto the cold floor. I took out the wet napkin from under my bed and headed downstairs. The house felt different now. Holding its breath. Every step I made the whole house creaked. I held my breath. Nothing. I opened the door and then I was out. Free to roam in the starry night. My eyes half closed. My mind started to drift. As if in a dream I walked to the clubhouse and put the napkin down, feeling warm fur against my leg, and then I left. Did I leave the door open? No, I couldn’t have. And as quickly as I came, I was in my bed again, drifting into a deep, black sleep.

I OPENED MY EYES. A large furry face hung over my face. For a long few seconds I was terrified but then I realized who it was and my panic turned to dread. It was Chester! I must have left the clubhouse door open last night. But how did he get into the house? He must have scratched on the door and my parents let





*"It looks like we have a very early birthday present here"*

him in. Then I realized my parents knew about Chester! I sat up quickly. There were my parents and my brother smiling.

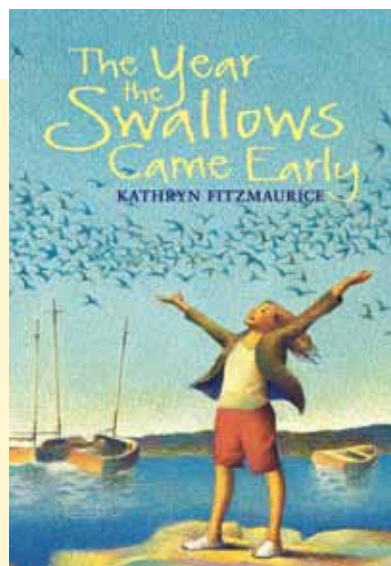
"Good morning, son," said my father. "It looks like we have a very early birthday

present here." I was too happy and bewildered to speak, so I just smiled. I guess my smile worked because our whole family smiled. My brother, my parents, me, and of course, Chester. 🍀

# Book Review

By Nicole Timofeevski

*The Year the Swallows Came Early*, by Kathryn Fitzmaurice; HarperCollins: New York, 2009; \$16.99



Nicole Timofeevski, 11  
Carlsbad, California

**W**HAT HAPPENS WHEN someone you love betrays you? Well, in this book, *The Year the Swallows Came Early*, you can learn that understanding and forgiving someone you love is the key for your own peace of mind. The main character of this book, Eleanor (Groovy) Robinson, deals with disappointment and anger, but later she finds out that you can't hate someone forever and that, sooner or later, you'll have to forgive them.


When this story starts off, taking place in the historic town of San Juan Capistrano, Groovy witnesses her dad being arrested and has no clue why. That night her mom reveals to Groovy that her great-grandmother had left her a lot of money. Upon hearing this, Groovy starts to eagerly make plans for using this large sum to go to cooking school. But she only gets a few seconds to be excited because her mother shatters Groovy's dreams by informing her that her father had lost all that money on a single bet, and that was why she had called the police. When I read this part, I was automatically hooked because I so desperately wanted to know how Groovy would react to this news. Groovy was disappointed about losing that money, but she also started to doubt that her father cared about her.

Meanwhile, Groovy's best friend, Frankie, doesn't even want

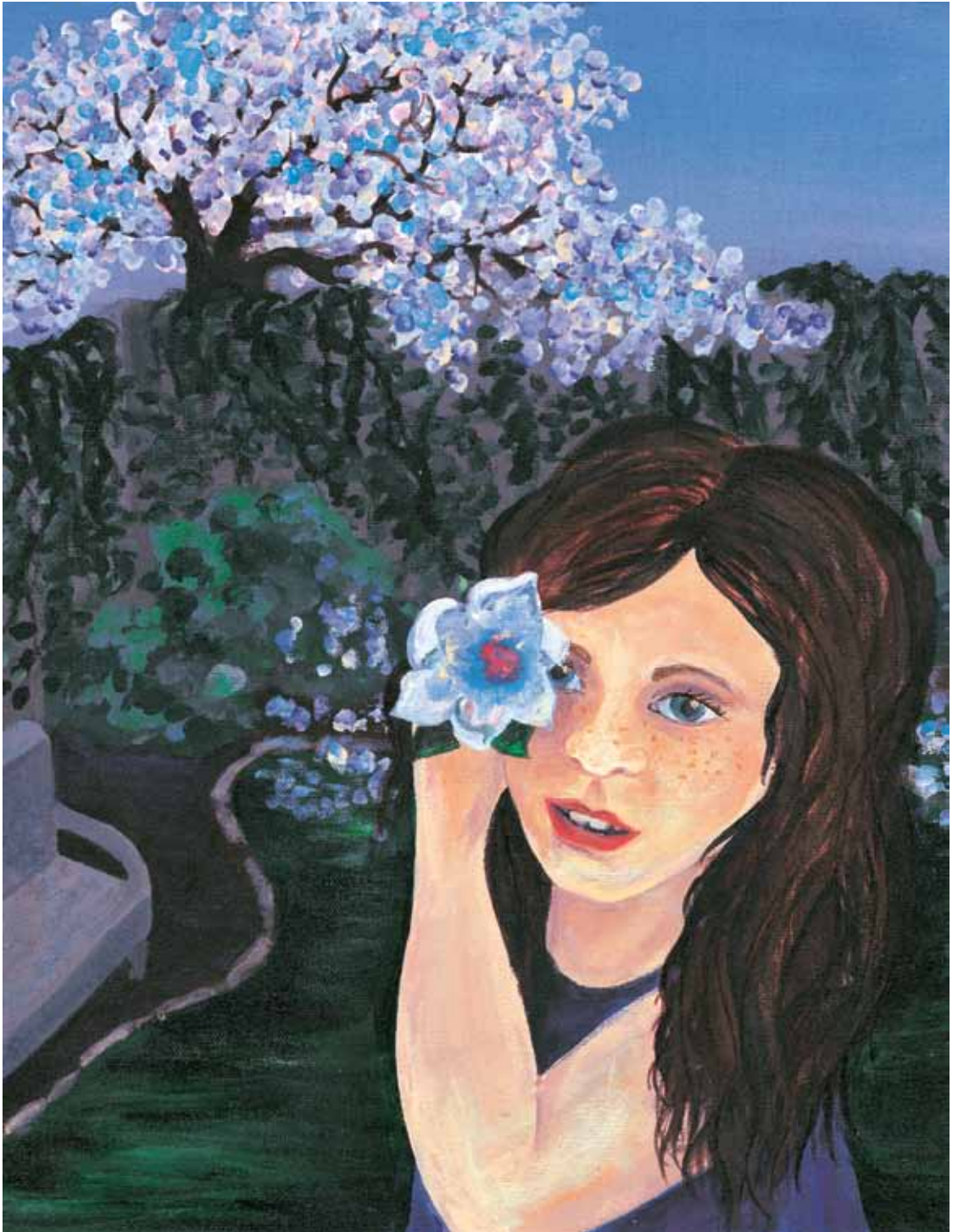
to think about his mother or read her letters. He is mad because his mother went on a voyage with his stepfather and left him with his stepbrother, Luis. She promised to be back in three days but didn't come back for three years. That whole time, Frankie believed that she had betrayed him, and so he never chose to read or hear the explanations from her, and he doesn't even want to know the real reason she didn't come back. Even when she appears at Luis's shop, Frankie still chooses not to listen to her, and so she leaves with a broken heart.

But there are wise and helpful people in Frankie and Groovy's neighborhood. Mr. Tom really wanted to help Frankie. He once said to him, "All that anger will turn you to stone." Unfortunately, that's exactly what ends up happening to Frankie, and then to Groovy as well. From just being sad and discouraged, Groovy becomes very angry and starts to hate her father.

When mid-spring came, so did the scout swallow, and this time early. The rest of the swallows followed, bringing many changes. Groovy finally talked to her father on the phone, and she decided to forgive him and give him another chance. After a while, Luis explained to Frankie what really happened with his mother. Frankie understood and sincerely forgave her. It was a year of much disappointment and loss, but it would be a year to remember, the year the swallows came early.

I learned from this book that "people are just who they are." That means you need to be able to accept and trust the people you love before jumping to conclusions or thinking negatively about them. I also learned that you can't carry so much anger and hatred inside yourself because it will slowly destroy you and make many people around you miserable and unhappy. You should try to do as many good things as you can, and stay positive, because it will not only make you feel good, but it'll also brighten up the world around you. 





*Mara thought she looked rather like a goddess, or perhaps some sort of sprite or tree nymph*

# Simple Treasures

By **Emma Watson**

Illustrated by **Mary Campbell**

**M**ARA WAS ENTRANCED. The shop blurred before her in a tribute of glory to the necklace. Draped carelessly over a slender black velour cone, its gold, glassy pendant gem glittered as if with dew. It hung on a short golden chain. Mara could tell, without even trying it on, that it would nestle snugly in the hollow of her throat with a cool, fluid ease. The shop vendor, an old man, smiled at Mara kindly.

"Try it on if you like it, dear. Don't be shy." But Mara was hesitant even to touch the exquisite thing. Just as she reached out trembling fingers to grasp its chain, she felt a tug on her shirt. She turned to see Tommy, her little brother, clutching her tightly.

"What?" she said sharply. The old man tutted and turned away.

"*What?*" she repeated angrily, pulling her fingers regretfully away from the necklace in order to pry him off of her.

"Mommy says to come, Mawa."

"*Now?*"

"Yeah. Mommy says to come *now*."

Mara fairly flew across the store to her mother, who was waiting impatiently in the cosmetics section. Tommy jogged after her.

"Mom... look... I found this *gorgeous* necklace—come see," she gushed.

"I've been waiting for fifteen minutes, Mara," her mom warned sternly. "We can't stay any longer."

"But *Mom*."



Emma Watson, 13  
Los Angeles, California



Mary Campbell, 13  
Fort Worth, Texas



“Nope. Come on.”

Taking Tommy’s hand, her mother exited the store. Fuming, Mara followed.

The moment they got home Mara jumped out of the car and ran into the backyard. Sinking down onto a stone bench covered with lichen, she scowled at the ground. She wasn’t spoiled. She knew that she hardly ever asked for anything, but she really, really, really, *really* wanted that necklace. Her mother didn’t listen to her. Her brother was annoying. She probably had the worst life in the whole world. Mara sighed. What really irritated her was that she knew that wasn’t true. Mara raised her head and looked around the peaceful backyard where she sat. Dusk was falling, and the plants were shrouded in blue-gray shadow. Mara spotted a big white flower lying on the ground near the ivy-smothered wall. As she knelt to pick it up Mara corrected herself. “White” hardly seemed to do it justice. The flower was silver, and in the center where the petals met and twined into a cup for the chalky pink pollen, the hues deepened into a warm sapphire blue. There were others like it, spread-eagled on the wet grass, but they were limp and the colors neither so beautiful nor so vibrant. Presumably, they came from the tree above, reaching over

the wall from the neighbor’s garden. The sky darkened as Mara turned the flower over and over in her hands.

“Mara—dinner!” called her mother from the kitchen window. Mara stood and, as though following whispered directions, tucked the flower behind her ear. As she ascended the creaking steps of her porch, she glimpsed her reflection in the dark window—and caught her breath. The silvery flower glowed brightly in subtle contrast to her wavy brown hair. With the fireflies coming out, flickering on and off around her, and her pale leaf-green eyes, Mara thought she looked rather like a goddess, or perhaps some sort of sprite or tree nymph. She thought again of her golden necklace, only now it didn’t seem very important. Struggling to find the cause of this new apathy, Mara’s eyes left those of the nymph staring back at her and alighted on the silver flower fixed stunningly in her hair. The nymph’s coral lips curved into a knowing smile. The necklace, for all its gaudy gold, could never have given her pleasure or beauty like this.

“Mara!” called her mother again. “Your dinner is getting stone cold.” Mara gave her reflection one more angelic smile, before dashing into the house. ❁

# A Special Kind of Family

By **Emily Boring**

*Illustrated by* **Hannah Phillips**

OUR CAR TRUNDLED along a dusty gravel road one day in the middle of July. I stared out the window at the clouds of dry dirt that billowed from beneath our tires, picturing what our car must look like from the outside. Aside from the layer of dust covering it, our big red Subaru looked completely normal. With two kids in the back seat and a trunk filled with towels, bags, and blow-up water toys, our car was the image of an ideal family headed off for a fun summer day. I sighed.

I wonder what it would be like to have a normal family. How different would life be if Aaron were an average ten-year-old boy? I pondered. I knew that if anyone looked past our car and surveyed the people within, they would not find an ideal family. They would see that my younger brother has autism. They would see that, at age ten, he can't do certain simple things like dress himself, read, or talk in full sentences. And they would see how much Aaron's special needs keep our family from being perfectly normal.

After a few more miles, our car crunched to a stop in a dusty parking lot, and my train of thought was interrupted as I climbed out of the hot back seat. I was relieved to be back at the lake that my family travels to every summer for a day of swimming. It looked just as I remembered it, a small green lake nestled into a wooded hillside. I inhaled the spicy scents of sagebrush and pine, wafting from the central Oregon vegetation. As I exhaled, glad to be back in this beautiful setting,



Emily Boring, 13  
Salem, Oregon



Hannah Phillips, 12  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

thoughts of my family's imperfections were momentarily wiped from my mind.

Emerging from the car behind me, Aaron let out a joyful yell, exclaiming "Oh! Oh yes!!!" He then picked up a nearby stick and attempted to hit a pinecone with it, pretending to play baseball. He associates baseball with happiness and does not hesitate to grab a makeshift ball and bat whenever he is pleased. Embarrassed with his behavior, I grabbed my towel and ran down to the rocky lakeshore.

I immediately plunged into the chilly water, frolicking around and shouting that everyone should hurry up. It was a sweltering day, and the lake was dotted with other swimmers, many in the vicinity staring at Aaron, who was still playing "baseball." Upon reaching the point where ripples of water lapped up against the pebbly ground, my dad plodded slowly in, punctuating each step with a loud "Ow!" as the icy water made contact with his skin. Aaron tried to run right in but forgot to take off his shoes, shirt, and glasses. After my mom removed them, he proceeded with painstaking care until, with an enormous splash, he lost his footing and fell chest-deep in water. Finally my mom, who has a notoriously low tolerance for cold water, screwed up her courage and dove under.

We took off swimming—Aaron swims with a peculiar dog paddle—until we reached the very heart of the lake, where huge white driftwood logs floated and provided nature's best toy. I pulled myself up onto one, noticing how pale and eerie

my feet looked as they kicked a few feet below the surface. Aaron struggled for a moment to pull himself up on the log, the difficulty of this simple action reminding me how much his disability affects his coordination. I took pity on him and helped hoist him up.

Exhausted from his efforts, Aaron collapsed on the log and pushed his soporific brown hair out of his eyes. Suddenly remembering last year, he exclaimed, "Jump!" Upon his command, I sprang off the slippery wood and dove into the water, causing the log to rock and create a sea of ripples. Following my example, my mom jumped off, and my dad helped Aaron to fall off the log in an uncoordinated dive.

After dozens of crazy, log-rocking, water-spraying jumps, many involving disastrous attempts at cannonball contests and synchronized diving, we finally took a rest. My mom stretched out on the sunlit log, and my dad sat next to her. We were all lost in the moment, a whirl of happiness and fun that warmed us as much as the late afternoon sun did. Aaron, perched a few feet down the log, patted the wet patch of wood beside him, smiling proudly as though he offered the coziest chair in the world. "Sit! Come sit!" he invited me.

I climbed closer to him, and together we sat. My feet dangled in the cool green water and I listened contentedly to the buzzing of millions of pine needles tingling in the forest. My nose took in the wilderness-like, sunny smell of the set-



*I had just spent the last hour completely enjoying my family just the way we are*

ting. We were just a family sitting on a log in the middle of a lake. My family.

And in a dawn of realization, it occurred to me that I had just spent the last hour completely enjoying my family just the way we are. Anyone looking on wouldn't think about how strange and different Aaron is. They would have seen how happy we were, they would have been caught up in the joy and fun we had been

radiating. It seemed to me in that moment that nothing, not even perfection, could match the happiness, spontaneity, and love that makes my family unique.

Overcome by my new thoughts, I scooted even closer to my brother, and together we gazed at our reflections in the green lake. The image of our smiling faces was bent a little by the water, but the imperfection made us look all the better. 🍀

# Frisbee

*By* **Laura Dzubay**



Laura Dzubay, 11  
Bloomington, Indiana

I curl my cold fingers  
Around the yellow Frisbee  
Coil my arm back  
Dip it low, flex my wrist,  
Release.  
It sails smoothly through the air  
Floats gently above my father's head  
And then  
The wind carries it slowly  
Into his waiting hands  
He smiles and tosses it  
Back into the wind  
I am prepared  
My arms are open, ready  
As his were  
To grasp it, to hold it in my clutches  
But instead  
The wind takes it,  
Swoops it, low and high  
Suddenly  
I am snatching air,  
And the Frisbee lands  
Softly in the grass,  
Wet with mud  
I pick it up



Bend low,  
Step forward,  
Let go.  
Dad leaps  
With a ballerina's grace  
His hands clasp  
Around its plastic yellow body  
Our eyes lock  
He nods, I nod,  
A mental understanding  
Then it's whizzing through the air  
A bright, lemon-colored streak against the violet sunset.  
I push off the ground  
My feet lift from the grass  
I reach for the sky,  
Palm open  
Instinctively  
My hands snap shut  
Like the pincers of a crab on the beach  
And suddenly it is there  
I am holding it  
Thud.  
My sneakers meet the ground  
And I am thrusting it into the air  
A triumph  
He smiles  
I smile  
The yellow disk  
Is in my hand  
We smile  
We nod  
Go home  
Now we are done here.

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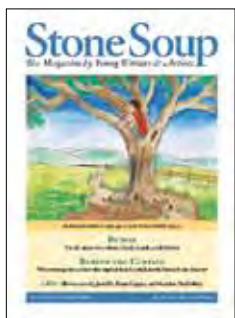
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