

# Stone Soup

the magazine by young writers and artists



"Students Marching on Indonesian Independence Day," by Shinta Dewi Yndarto, age 10, Indonesia

## TWISTED FRIENDSHIPS

Beth is thrilled when a new girl moves in across the street, but then . . .

## COLORS OF A CHAMPION

Can Judy finish the horse race in the top three, despite her injury?

*Also:* Gabriel forms a close bond with his family's bull  
Stories from Singapore and England  
Illustrations by Jane Westrick

MAY/JUNE 2001

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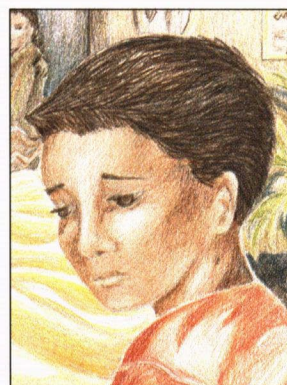
Volume 29, Number 5  
May/June 2001

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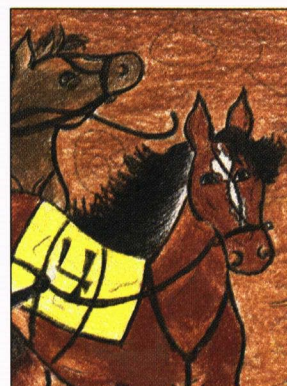
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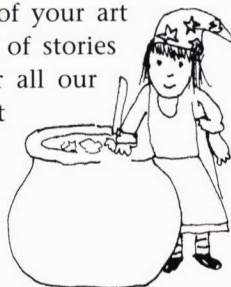
Welcome to all our readers, old and new! We've had the pleasure of publishing *Stone Soup* for over 28 years. It is our belief that, by presenting rich, heartfelt work by young people the world over, we can stir the imaginations of our readers and inspire young writers and artists to create.



## Contributors' Guidelines



*Stone Soup* welcomes submissions from young people through age 13. If you want us to respond to your submission, you must enclose a business-size self-addressed stamped envelope. If you want your work returned, your envelope must be large enough and have sufficient postage for the return of your work. (Foreign contributors need not include return postage.) Contributors whose work is accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope will hear from us within four weeks. Mail your submission to *Stone Soup*, P.O. Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063. Include your name, age, home address, and phone number. If you are interested in reviewing books for *Stone Soup*, write Gerry Mandel for more information. Tell her a little about yourself and the kinds of books you like to read. If you would like to illustrate for *Stone Soup*, send Ms. Mandel some samples of your art work, along with a letter saying what kinds of stories you would like to illustrate. Here's a tip for all our contributors: send us writing and art about the things you feel most strongly about! Whether your work is about imaginary situations or real ones, use your own experiences and observations to give your work depth and a sense of reality.



Jessie Moore, 12

**Cover:** Sinta Dewi Yndarto made her painting when she was a student in a special after-school art program at the Sanggar Melati Suci (Pure Jasmine Studio) in Yogyakarta, Indonesia; the teacher is A. Hari Santosa. Indonesian Independence Day is August 17. Special thanks to Joseph Fischer of Berkeley, California.

Gerry Mandel  
William Rubel  
Editors

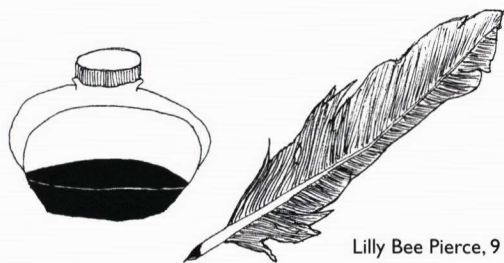
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Lilly Bee Pierce, 9

## The Mailbox

I've been getting magazines, all kinds, since I was eight (or younger), and so far this is the *best* I've read! My ambition is to become an author at some point, so, not only is this magazine a joy to read, it's sending me on the road to my career! I'd also like to compliment Valerie Gill on her astounding story, "Lightning Rod," in the January/February 2001 issue. Valerie gave storytelling/writing a whole new spin, in the best way possible! Her story was *much* better than most adults can ever hope to write, and I'm sure that if she sticks with it she might become the next great American novelist!

Alexa Gerlach, 13  
Greenough, Montana

I would like to compliment Jane Westrick on her beautiful illustrations for my story, "The Ultimate Challenge: To Come Home Alive," in the January/February 2001 issue. The pictures are almost exactly as I imagined it when I was writing the story, and I was impressed. I love them all, but my favorite one is the picture with Chocolate pulling Peter out of the water. I think Jane is a very talented artist.

Tara Stroll, 13  
Roslyn Heights, New York

*See page 8 for Jane's latest illustrations.*

Initially intrigued by your *New Yorker* ad, I then went to your Web site, which intrigued me further. Since then, I have sent several gift subscriptions to various children on my gift list with great results. I finally asked for and received a complimentary copy of your May/June 2000 issue and was further impressed. It's a marvelous publication—entertaining, educational and inspiring all at the same time. I was most impressed by Simon Reis's short story "Beethoven's Bargain." The premise of the story is wonderful and the prose is simple, beautiful and mature beyond the writer's age of eleven years. As I am an artist, I was also very impressed by William Drewes's illustrations.

Linda Hazen  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

*Simon's new story appears on page 31.*

I wanted to tell Francisca Thomas how much I loved her story "Catalina, My Friend" [January/February 2001]. I liked how she told the story from a parrot's point of view. I loved how the author used a lot of description about the characters. I could really picture each event in my head as they happened. I was very relieved that Catalina and Paco were together again in the end. The illustrations are also *very* beautiful.

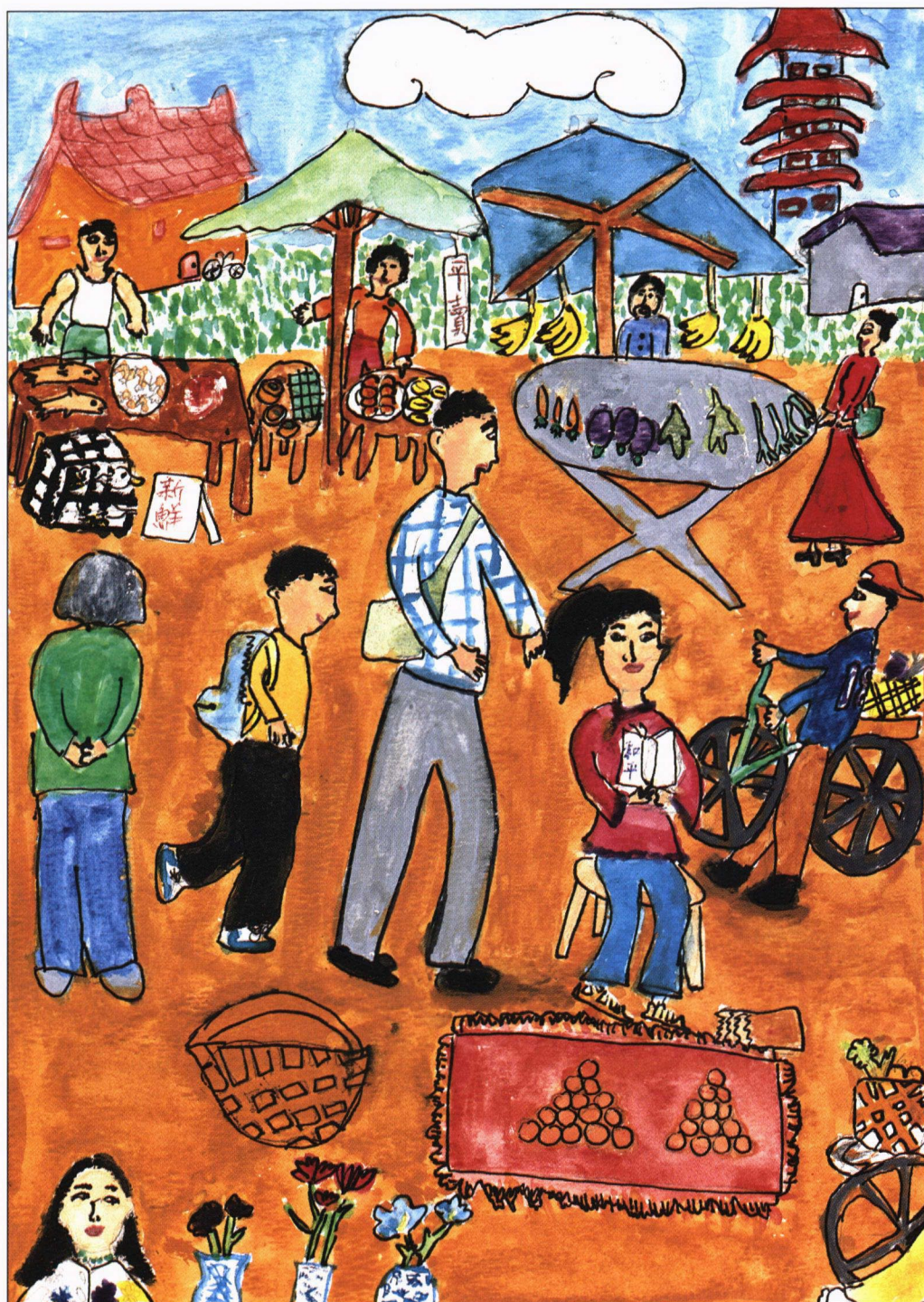
Emily Clarkson, 11  
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

I got a subscription for your magazine for Christmas, and I absolutely adore it! It's really great bedtime reading, and sitting in front of a fireplace with a mug of hot cocoa and your magazine is also great. You really select the greatest stories and illustrations.

David-Paul Teichert, 13  
Bad Nauheim, Germany

**Note to our readers:** Send us your letters! We are especially interested in detailed comments about specific stories, poems, book reviews, and illustrations. We'd also like to receive anecdotes (150 words or less) about interesting experiences you'd like to share with our readers. Send letters to The Mailbox, Stone Soup, P.O. Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063. Include your name, age, address, and phone number.





My father cleared his throat and asked, "How much are the oranges?"



# Honesty

by Zhang He

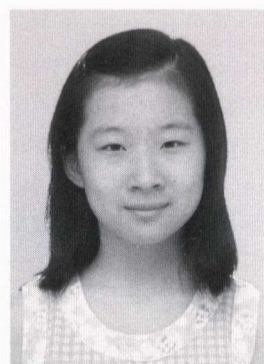
illustrated by Natalie Chin

**I**T WAS A FREEZING cold winter day in China. My family and I were visiting my beloved paternal grandmother who lives in ZhengZhou, a city in China. And this time we were celebrating the Chinese New Year with her.

It was said that eating oranges during the special occasion is meant for good luck. Being superstitious, my father and I went to the market to buy a few before the big day. The market in China is different. It's usually a street with small booths. These booths sell fresh vegetables, fruits and even meat. People who have farms in the countryside always come to the market to sell their goods.

When my father and I arrived, the market was crowded with people, and of course, oranges. We looked around in the crowd of people and stopped at the sight of a small booth. This small booth was quite different; it was just a big piece of cloth on the ground with a few fresh-looking oranges. But I wondered why there were no customers. Unable to stop my curiosity, I persuaded my father to take a look at the oranges. We walked toward the booth and saw a young girl sitting on a stool, reading next to the booth. Her mind seemed to have whirled into the story, because she didn't even notice us when we walked toward her.

My father cleared his throat and asked, "How much are the oranges?"



Zhang He, 11  
Singapore



Natalie Chin, 9  
Bellevue, Washington

The girl heard him and jumped up as though her stool had just been electrified. "Oh . . . ah . . . what?" the girl stammered.

"How much are the oranges?" my father repeated patiently.

"Oh . . . three for one yuan," the girl answered politely. "They are not totally ripe . . . a bit sour," she added, when my father was examining the oranges carefully.

After a while he looked up and said, "I don't mind if they are sour . . . I'll buy twenty of them." Both the girl and I looked at him with surprise; I never thought my father could be so generous. Then the girl put the oranges in a bag and gave them to him. My father carelessly stuffed some money into her hand and we walked out of the busy street.

"Why did you buy so many oranges from her?" I asked my father as we

walked toward the bus stop.

"Well, she was so truthful and even told me that her own oranges are sour; besides, she really enjoys studying. And look at her book, it's so old; maybe she can use the money she earned to buy some books!"

I nodded my head vigorously after hearing my father's words. Just then, I felt somebody tugging my arm; I turned and recognized the person as the girl whom we bought the oranges from. "Ran . . . ran all the . . . way here, never . . . thought you walked so fast . . . here's . . . your change . . ." she panted, and stuffed the money in my hand. "Got to go and . . . look after my booth, bye!" Before I could mutter a thanks, she had already turned a corner and was out of sight. I stared at the coins in my hand; although it was only a few coins, the girl and her act of honesty will be etched in my memory forever . . . ❖



# Gray Fingers of Rain

by Natalie Lam



Natalie Lam, 12  
Bothell, Washington

At first misty  
then drizzling  
now coming down hard  
like long, thin fingers  
reaching down to earth  
gray against the green of the pine trees  
combining with the fog  
that has rolled in from the sea.

Many people prefer  
tropical islands  
or dusty deserts—  
but  
I like the wet  
and the fog  
and the mist  
and the gray skies of home  
because . . .  
to me, nothing is better  
than wet and mist and fog  
and  
gray fingers of rain against green trees.

# My Friend the Bull

by Rachel Johnson

illustrated by Jane Westrick



Rachel Johnson, 13  
Winter Springs, Florida



Jane Westrick, 13  
Mechanicsville, Virginia

**O**UR POWER WAS GONE AGAIN. The house was at least sixty years old, I say *sesenta*, but we moved in a few weeks ago. The rain was slamming into the earth like a fist. Trees outside bent their heads in awe of the storm. I thought, this was the kind of weather when my *abuela*, or grandmother, once sang songs and drank hot black coffee. But in the family room my parents and two older brothers sat around the newspaper like mosquitoes to a light with no words shared between them.

I stepped out into the rain. The water met my skin in a burst of coldness, past the jacket and pants to the tender skin. Rain always makes me feel alive and I hear my heart-beat through the pattern of drops. But then I go back inside to the air-conditioning and rock 'n' roll music, and I am not so sure.

My father calls himself a man of the times. He works in a city job and must watch the politics and the local events on the television or read of them in the papers. My *abuela* said that it is a changing world, but we must not forget those before us who were born and lived their lives in Cuba. Also she said that of the many things that will make me a man, one is conscience. One day I broke a mug while washing and, remembering this thing, I went to tell my father, but instead of thanking me for my words as I had hoped, he paddled me. Telling does not matter much anymore. Now my brothers al-





"Recuerdas, remember what I have taught you, my *nieto*. Adios"



ways uncover what I have done wrong and tell for me.

My brothers, they are the strong and handsome names of Juan and Padre, just as my father is Miguel. But me, the last child, I am only little Gabriel. But I remember my *abuela* always calling me her little *nieto*, which is grandson, but from the ways she spoke it with her heart in her lips and eyes I always imagined myself as loved one. Whenever I was with my *abuela* I was the loved one but now I am only Gabriel. I look back and see the yellow evening when she died. I sat on a chair beside her cheek but my parents and the doctor stood frowning far away at the foot. In the window above her head the sun settled like an old bird into its nest with a halo of red clouds, the sign of clear skies tomorrow. I heard her say in a voice as thin as a fallen leaf, "*El sol sets on me today, my little nieto. But en la mañana, you will rise and see him, my darling. Many more of him you will see. Recuerdas, remember what I have taught you, my nieto. Adios.*"

"*Adios, mi abuela,*" I whispered. Her lids fell lightly across her cheeks and I knew the end.

I sat for many hours memorizing each wrinkle of her face until my father called for me, "Gabriell!" Then I kissed her cheek and left her forever.

I WENT IN for *la comida*, but I thought it did not deserve the Spanish name because it was pizza. The

taste of grease rose in my throat with the taste of bile and I thought of my *abuela's* fish and yellow rice. We are in her house which was given to us when she died, a few miles from Miami. My parents much prefer city life, but this house was all paid off and with much furniture, and they came for the cheapness. But they tore down all her paintings and memories and put up wallpaper with seashells. Think of it, I tell myself, trading a lifetime for seashells!

"So," my father told us, "the bull will be delivered tomorrow." A sign was up for a bull for sale and my brother Juan saw it.

"I want to be a matador," he told my father. Juan has the temperament of a fighter. He is mean and cunning and has no mercy, and he played the games of fighting when a child.

"Very well," said my father, "but besides strength you must get education too."

Now the bull is coming. Probably Juan will try to ride its horns into me.

THE BULL was young and medium-size. His nostrils flared and he pranced near the walls of our pen. His name was Diablo, which is devil; however, as soon as I saw his hide I called him Rojo. His skin was red as blood or pepper. I liked to think of him as my own age and circumstance, only another prisoner in this great big world.

That morning Juan stepped into the pen with his bullfighting cap and a red



cloth and all his proud anger. Maybe it is angry pride; I do not know which.

"Bull!" he shouted in an ugly voice. "Come and fight!" The bull in response charged across the dirt to him and he stepped aside just in time from the pointed horns. Then he ran and vaulted the fence. Now he is inside telling tales of how he conquered the mighty bull, on his first attempt. Only I saw him.

Then I opened the gate and approached the bull. A sugar cube rested on my open hand, which showed my good intention. The bull, or Rojo as I thought in my private mind, pawed the ground anxiously. I thought, you are just scared and lonely like a lost kitten.

Soon his curiosity overcame fear. Rojo approached me and consumed the sugar into his great mouth. I reached out one hand to pat his great horn. He was not afraid and he leapt away and did a bull dance all around the pen. The dirt was packed by his prancing hooves. When he returned he begged for more and I fed it into his mouth, and then I seated myself upon his broad back and wrapped my legs around his muscled sides. This was the first time that Rojo and I did the bull dance together.

Days passed and the poisons of my life became more bearable. I did not mind the pizza nor my brothers' loud rock 'n' roll music. The bull had become my friend. I told him all my sorrows, of my *abuela's* death, and my family who did not respect me or the old ways of Cuba.

From my journal I read him stories. These I had created with my knowledge of the old tales and songs. The journal containing my stories was a gift of my *abuela*, whose heart was good and full of the oldness. At one time it lay beneath my bed, having no eyes to see it nor ears to hear it. Now the bull Rojo would stomp when he liked my stories and flick his tail when he did not. And some days when my family went to the city I would ride him on long journeys through the boggy country. I did all this in secret from my family. Thus the bull became my friend.

ONE DAY I was teaching the bull Rojo to jump over the fence into the grass beyond. He had just completed one leap and was standing proudly on the other side. Then a flash of movement caught my eye. Juan had seen me and surely he would tell my father. Now I did not know what was to come.

My body jumped from the bull. It ran to the house in its haste and in the bathroom it vomited up its fear through my sweat and tears. I screamed at my body inside my mind. Body, I cried, you are a traitor to me! It was then that I remembered. The bull Rojo was free from the pen with no hand upon his horn to guide him. My fears mounted like the fish eggs or the islands of golden seaweed floating in the sea. I thought, my *abuela* said that it is manly to weep but never to be afraid and above all else that would make me a man.

You are afraid, I told myself.

Of what? said my mind.

I am afraid for the bull Rojo, I answered.

You are not afraid for the bull Rojo, spoke my mind. You are afraid for yourself. You are afraid of your father.

Yes, I thought in a voice that would whisper if it spoke. I am afraid of my father.

You must not be afraid, answered my mind. Remember the lines of your *abuela's* face and the taste of her yellow rice. Remember all you have been taught. Only then can you become a man as was your *abuela's* greatest wish, of the old ways, as your father has forgotten and cannot remember.

I will do as I must, I thought. I will not be afraid.

I strode from the bathroom. Beyond the door, beyond my fears, was all I must face. The hands of the old ways pushed me out into it.

In the sides of my eyes were the empty pen, the garden all trampled, the lawn mower like a smashed fruit. But I did not have sight for these things. I saw only my father. His eyes glared with the fury of thunder and in them I could find no mercy. In his hand was the leather belt. Still I walked forward. I heard my *abuela's* voice whispering, "*Recuerdas*, remember what I have taught you, my *nieto*." The loved one.

My father bore down on me and the belt was raised like lightning behind his back. "That bull alone cost me one hun-

dred dollars," he spat.

Even as the first strike came down upon my back I stood to meet it like a man. The great fury rose in my throat. I cried, "You are not a man!" Still I stood to meet it until the blackness came before my eyes.

ONCE I dreamed that I rode my brother the bull Rojo. His muscles rose in waves like the sea. It met my legs and in that cycle I became one with him, and together we crested many hills. Then in the distance I saw the face of my *abuela*. Behind her were all the old ones from before. They stretched back to those who lived their lives in Cuba like the sea reaching to meet the sky. As one they nodded and I watched their silent mouths make the words, "You have become a man."

Then I woke. I lay on my stomach across my bed. The night was slippery with my sweat. When I rose I felt the pain like fire across my back, but I thought, it does not matter now because I am a man. I crept beyond my family who were full of paper and pizza and city noises. Outside were the moonlight and my brother the bull Rojo.

He waited beyond the pen and pawed the dirt as if it were the first day. I fed him sugar, although he did not need it now to be my friend, and mounted his great redness. Then it was just as in my dream. We became each other and he was my warmth, my heart, my wholeness. It was after many hills and fields





...and the sun rose before us through the trees

that I realized.

I thought, I am a man and you are a bull, and when we are alone I am just Gabriel and you are just Diablo. But then we come together in the world and

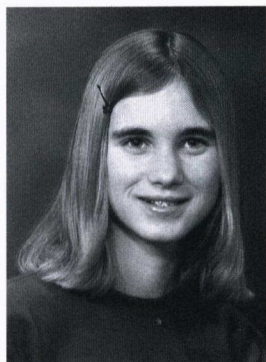
when I feel you inside me, you are Rojo and I am your brother. Then the mighty bull stomped his hoof and tossed his head, and the sun rose before us through the trees. ❖



# Twisted Friendships

by Hana Bieliauskas

illustrated by Christy Callahan



Hana Bieliauskas, 13  
Cincinnati, Ohio



HAD NEVER HAD ANYONE my age who lived on my street. All of my friends lived at least ten minutes away. I had always envied those who could call up their friends whenever they were bored and say, "Hey, want to get together?" My mom told many fond stories of her adventures with neighborhood kids when she was little.

When Jessica moved into the house across the street, I was thrilled. I had all of these great notions about what we could do together and how much fun it would be to have a friend living so close. For a while, it seemed as perfect as I'd pictured it, then, well, let's just say that Jessica had a hidden personality that wasn't nice at all.



Christy Callahan, 13  
Martinez, California

I NEVER REALLY saw Jessica move in. Mom said there was a moving truck, but I didn't see it. After a few days, I saw a girl come out of the house and walk down the driveway to the mailbox. I happened to be sitting on my porch, so I went to say hello. Secretly, I had been waiting to catch a glimpse of someone since I'd learned a new family had moved in. This girl, obviously close to my age, was what I'd hoped for.

"Hi," I greeted the girl. She had very light, almost white, blond hair and piercing blue eyes. She was wearing short jean cutoffs and a T-shirt. "I'm Beth—I live across the street."

The girl looked a little suspicious, then smiled. "I'm Jessica."

"Where did you move here from?" I asked, trying to strike up a conversation.

Jessica seemed to jump at the question, then replied, "California."

"Really?" I was impressed. "How do you like the house? The garden in front is so pretty . . ."

Jessica looked at the garden as if that was the first time she'd noticed it. "Oh—sure, it's OK."

We talked for a little bit longer, or I talked and Jessica sort of put in a couple words now and then. I invited her over, but she declined, saying she had unpacking to do. It was a couple weeks before she finally came over. I thought she would be just like having one of my other friends over, but she proved me wrong.

"This is my cat, Fluffy," I told her, as we sat with lemonade in my bedroom. "I named him when I was three—Fluffy, because of his long fur." I cuddled Fluffy and he purred affectionately.

"Why are you hugging a cat?" Jessica asked, as if there was something disgusting about Fluffy.

"I don't know," I replied. "Is it wrong to hug a cat?"

Jessica pushed back her blond hair and shrugged. "It's just strange." She changed the subject. "Let's go outside."

"OK." We picked up our lemonade glasses, Jessica's still had some left, and walked down the hall. Mom and Dad's door to their room stood open, letting in air.

"Oh darn it!" I turned to see Jessica's

glass on the floor, the pink lemonade on the rug. "I'm so sorry, I . . ."

"It's all right, Jessica," I assured her quickly. "I'll get a towel." So I ran downstairs, returning with a sponge and a towel. It seemed like an honest mistake at the time, but it wasn't.

That night Mom and Dad were going to a wedding. It was a fancy one and Mom wanted to wear her diamond ring. She only wore it on holidays and special occasions because it was her great-grandmother's.

"Beth, have you seen my diamond ring?" Mom came into my room. "It's not in my jewelry box, and I know I didn't take it out. In fact, I remember seeing it this morning."

I shook my head. "No, I haven't seen it since you wore it at Christmas."

"That's what I thought."

After my parents were gone, and my grandma was washing the dinner dishes, I went into my parents' room to see if I could find the ring. It was nowhere in Mom's jewelry box, or on the floor, or behind the dresser. I knew Mom would never take the ring out unless she was planning on wearing it right away. Where could it be? No one had been at our house since that morning—except Jessica.

JESSICA AND I spent a large amount of time together in the next few weeks. I put the ring incident out of my mind—Jessica would never have stolen it! We went swimming, played games, and roller-bladed.





... the game continued, but Jessica seemed to treat Cathy differently

I hardly ever saw Jessica's family. She said that her stepdad worked all day and her mom was "around." She mentioned an older sister, but I'd never seen her. I'd never been in Jessica's house, either. Jessica never wanted to go to her house, only mine. I didn't really care.

My best friend Cathy came home from vacation in early July—she'd been gone since the beginning of June. I was happy to see her again and sure that she and Jessica would like each other. I invited them both over.

Cathy was two years younger. That made no difference to me. She had been my friend forever. She was always smiling, plus very funny, but serious when the time was right to be. I thought Jessica was funny, too, and was eager for them to meet.

The afternoon went well. Jessica and Cathy seemed to like one another, although Jessica was a little quiet toward Cathy.

Once, when we were playing Monopoly, Cathy gave Jessica, who was



banker, an extra \$100 when she was buying a piece of property. Jessica gave it back to her, joking sarcastically, "Now what grade are you going into?"

"Sixth." Cathy smiled.

As if totally surprised, Jessica looked at her. "Sixth? I'm going into eighth." She sounded smug. Then the game continued, but Jessica seemed to treat Cathy differently, counting to make sure that Cathy was giving her the exact right amount of money.

IT WAS LATE one night and I couldn't get back to sleep. I wasn't sleepy and lay in the dark of my room, thinking of really nothing at all. My mind was full of memories and dreams.

Suddenly, a car came speeding down the street, halting in front of Jessica's house. I flipped off my blankets and stood at the window. Every light in Jessica's house was on, so I saw that a man was getting out of the car. He walked up to the house, through the once-beautiful garden. Almost immediately I heard people start yelling at each other. I guessed it was Jessica's mom and stepdad. Having no interest in listening to fighting, I crawled back into bed. The clock read 3:40 AM. What a time of night to be just arriving home!

SINCE JESSICA and Cathy had seemed to get along, I decided to invite them both to a movie a few weeks later. I asked Cathy first and she said that would be fine. Jessica agreed with the plan, too—until she learned

that Cathy was going.

"Cathy's going?" she asked in a whiny voice. "Does she have to? She's so immature!"

I was about to protest, say that Cathy was very mature, but Jessica continued. "Beth, I want to spend some time with you! We can go to a movie with Cathy another time."

Well, I was flattered by Jessica's wanting to spend time with me alone. So I called Cathy and told her we'd go another time, something had come up. Cathy was disappointed, but understood.

Mom dropped us at the movie theater. We went inside and waited in line to pay. Some teenage boys were in front of us, paying to see an R-rated movie.

"Beth, let's see that instead!" Jessica nudged me.

"But it's rated R!" I sputtered. "I told my mom we'd see that one." I pointed to the one rated PG.

Jessica rolled her eyes and shrugged. "You don't always have to be such a mommy's girl, you know . . ."

"I'm not a . . ."

"Oh, come on! It starts at the same time. Your precious mama will never have to know!" Then she added, "I'm not going to see a babyish PG movie. I want some action!"

I didn't know what to do. As if in some kind of trance, I followed Jessica's lead, paying for one ticket to the R-rated movie. When the cashier asked where our parents were, Jessica waved her hand at a woman buying popcorn, saying that was her mom. The cashier didn't protest.





Mom dropped us at the movie theater

We entered the movie close behind the teenage boys. Jessica walked fast to stay just behind them. We paused inside the theater door, Jessica tied her shoe, then, when they'd sat down, found a seat in the row behind them.

"I'm so glad you came, Beth," Jessica said happily, all of her sarcasm gone. "Oh, gross, there's popcorn all over these seats! But, if we move up two rows we'll be too close!"

One of the boys turned around. "You can sit with us."

"Could we?" Jessica walked to the next row and sat next to one of the boys. I followed like her shadow, even though I saw no popcorn.

The movie started and I lasted for about ten minutes. It was the most gory movie I'd ever seen. I realized that Jessica was pulling me around like a toy on a string—and I was letting her! I suddenly didn't care—I had to get out!

"Jessica," I whispered, "I feel sick."

"You are such a baby!" hissed Jessica, not looking away from the screen.

I sat a minute longer, then told her, "I'm going to call my mom."

"Tiny little baby!" taunted Jessica. "Go home to Mommy, see if I care." She glanced at the boys. "I'm staying."

By the time Jessica finished speaking, I was out of the theater. I called Mom, and she was there almost as soon as I put the phone down. She never asked about Jessica, just sent me to bed. I went easily to sleep.

Later, I called Cathy. I was feeling fully better. As soon as she got on the phone I knew something was wrong.

"I called you this afternoon, but your mom said you were at the movies with Jessica." She sounded shaky. "Beth, I thought you were busy!"

Her words made me feel dizzy. "I . . . I . . ." I began. Cathy didn't sound mad, exactly, just extremely hurt.

"Why didn't you want me to come? Why did you lie to me?" Cathy's voice broke.

"Cath, I'm so sorry, I didn't mean . . ."

"Look, don't apologize. If you want to be best friends with Jessica and not me, then fine. Just say it. Don't expect me to care."

"Let me explain, Cathy, OK?"

"Please, Beth, no. I'll talk to you some other time when you have your senses back—if you ever do." So Cathy hung up. I did, too.

Later I was going to bed and heard a

car come down the street, blaring rap music. I saw Jessica get out, and, in the light of the streetlights, saw one of the teenage boys. The movie had been over hours ago. I shut my curtain, disgusted.

THE NEXT DAY Mom and I were in a jewelry shop. Mom was getting a necklace fixed. I looked in the jewelry cases, admiring the jewelry. One case contained old antique jewelry, and I stood fascinated by it. Then a ring caught my eye. It was a diamond ring, and it looked exactly like Mom's. I gasped.

"May I help you?" an elderly clerk asked me.

I looked up quickly. "Do you know where you got that ring?" I pointed to the diamond ring.

"Why, I was the one on duty that day, so I do remember. A young lady about your age brought it in about a month ago—such an expensive piece! I had to get it, though, it's so lovely!" The clerk smiled.

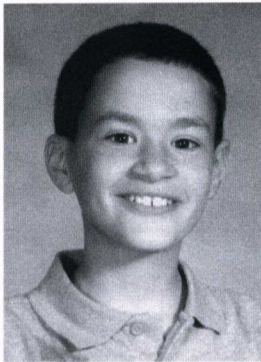
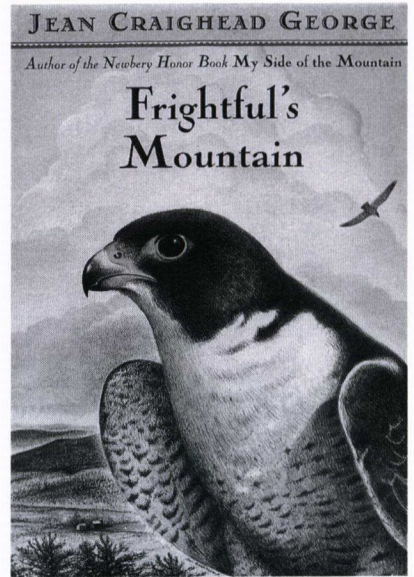
I ran to get Mom. When she saw the ring, she was speechless. "My God," was all she said. Then she looked at me. "Do you know how it got here?"

I looked at my feet, then up into Mom's face. I took a deep breath and began to tell her. Everything. I knew I had a lot of apologizing and explaining ahead of me, but it was a beginning. ❖



# Book Review

by Corben Wolford



Corben Wolford, 10  
Seattle, Washington

*Frightful's Mountain* by Jean Craighead George; Dutton Children's Books: New York, 1999; \$15.99

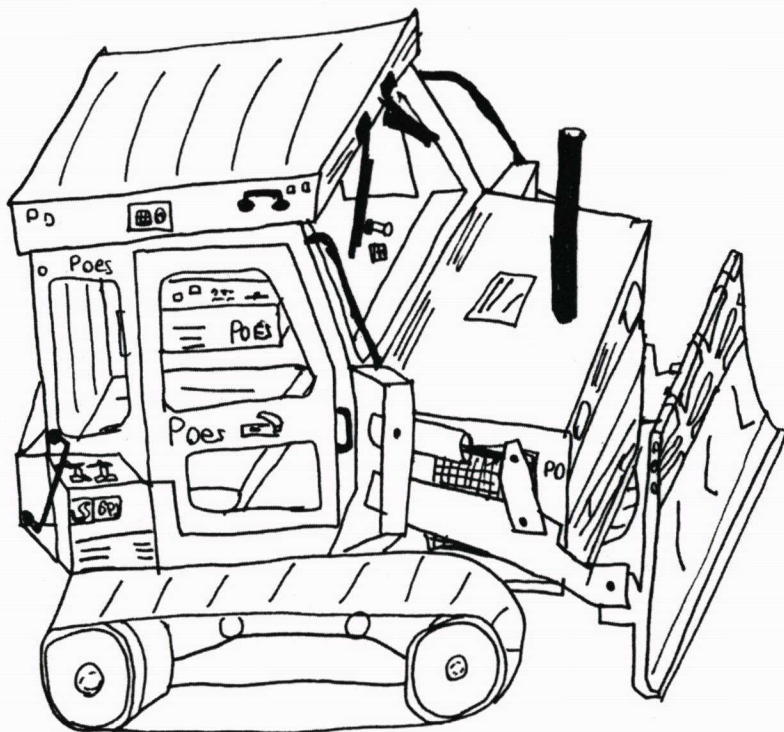
**J**EAN CRAIGHEAD GEORGE wrote the book *Frightful's Mountain*. It is about a peregrine falcon named Frightful and a boy named Sam who loves peregrine falcons. Sam lives in a tree house on a mountain where he likes to watch Frightful and many other creatures.

When I was in fourth grade our class raised salmon so we could learn about them because they were endangered here in the state of Washington. When I read *Frightful's Mountain* it reminded me of raising the salmon because both the book and the raising of the salmon taught me that we need to protect our endangered species and all of the other animals from becoming extinct. Both from raising the salmon and from reading this book I learned about how people harm the animals. For instance, in the book people used insecticide called DDT in South America that insects were eating and dying from, and then some birds were eating those DDT-sprayed bugs, and then peregrine falcons would eat the birds that had eaten the insects. Then the peregrine falcons would die from the DDT. In the salmon's case that I studied people

were dumping pollutants in the water and the fish would die in the polluted water.

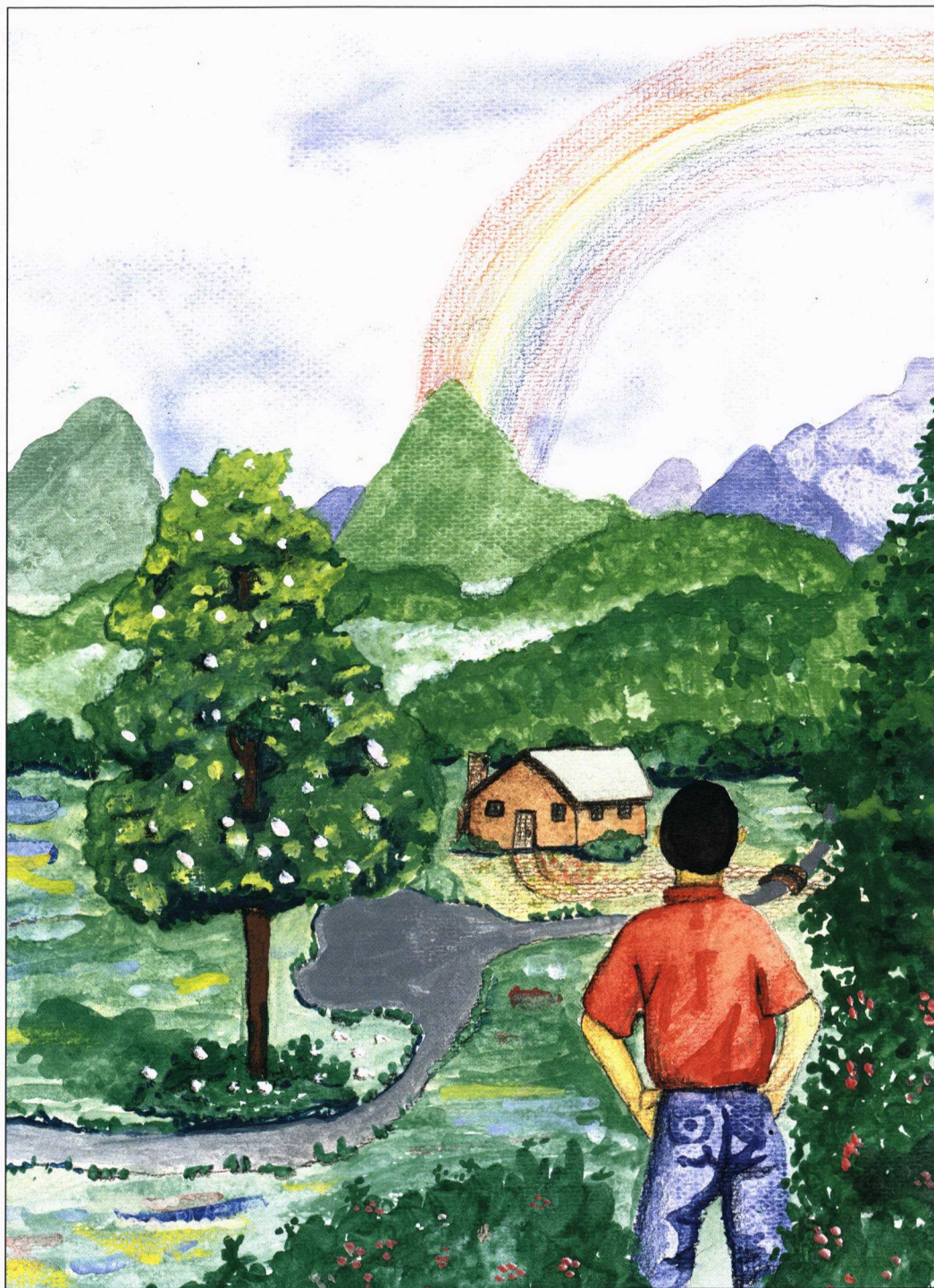
*Frightful's Mountain* is an all-around great book because of the way that the book can make you think you are there

with the characters. You can almost hear people talking and hear the animals. It's as if you can reach out and touch everything. Therefore, I suggest this book to anyone who likes to read books that are hard to put down. ❖



Anther Kiley, 9, Newton Highlands, Massachusetts





I turned the bend in the path and a beautiful sight met my eyes

# Ray of Light

by Cameron Mckeich

illustrated by Aaron Michael Phillips

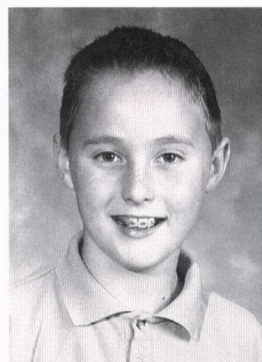


HIKED UP THE rocky trail that led to the place I knew so well. Tiny drops of rain fell from the dark sky. A cool mist lingered over the ground. The boughs of the elms that had grown over the path brushed my face. Normally, we would have cut the branches back, but now that my grandpa was gone it seemed as though nothing should be disturbed; as if by changing the things around him we would be doing something wrong.

Nothing had really been the same again since my grandpa had died. A lot of my friends wondered why my grandpa was so important to me. But they had dads, so for them it was different. My dad had died of cancer when I was two. I don't remember him. After that, my grandpa had been like a father to me. We did everything together. We went swimming, fishing and to Saturday night movies. But the place I liked best was where I was going now.

Our farm was the most awesome place ever. We called it "our" farm because, as he said, it was my farm too. It wasn't a real farm at all. We had farmers for neighbors, but our farm was a piece of wilderness. It was acres of bush and forests, with our cabin, gardens and yard at one edge. We had built trails all over the place, but since the only way we could possibly maintain them was to walk them regularly, and since my grandpa wasn't here anymore, that didn't happen.

This was my first time up here for a while. My mom had



Cameron Mckeich, 11  
Newmarket, Ontario, Canada



Aaron Michael Phillips, 12  
Phayao, Thailand



been bugging me for months to come up. I was afraid it would evoke painful memories. Memories of hot summer days when we would cool off in the swimming hole, laughing and talking. Memories of planting my grandpa's massive flower gardens. He had bed after bed of hollyhocks, peonies, delphiniums, lilies, phlox, hostas, lilacs, rhododendrons, asters, daisies and probably every type of flower that would grow in our climate. Memories of hiking our trails, cooking in our kitchen and most of all, just being with him. But finally I decided to go.

I was half right. The whole place screamed "Grandpa!" at me. Every step along that trail I took I remembered something else about him. I was fondly thinking of him, and then I remembered that he would never be able to

enjoy the pastimes that he loved so much again. These bittersweet thoughts filled my head as I crunched my way past the cranberry bushes, the pond and finally the big hill we used to ski down.

It was a very steep climb up to the top. As I was reaching the top I realized the rain had stopped. I turned the bend in the path and a beautiful sight met my eyes. A single magnolia tree grew in the clearing, ahead. It was now in full flower, its lovely pink blossoms beautifully unfurled and shining in the ray of light that had pierced the darkness. The storm clouds of sorrow were rolled away and a beautiful rainbow was let down from the heavens. It shined brightly and I could feel my grandpa telling me everything would be all right. And now, I was quite sure he was right. ❖

# A Summer Job in the Fields

by Siobhan Ringrose

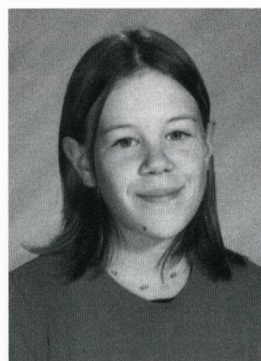
illustrated by Rivers Woodward

**S**UNLIGHT STREAMED THROUGH the stormy clouds and a rainbow seemed to end over the field beside me. For a moment I remembered the childhood saying that treasure could be found at the end of the rainbow. I laughed, but glanced over the field anyway. There I saw tender green leaves in tidy rows, yet untouched by the weeds. Suddenly I saw millions of red gems sparkling with dewdrops, at the verge of bursting, and sitting proudly on a bed of straw. The first fruits of the season, the sign of summer and the beginning of the fresh fruit feasts were before my eyes. It was strawberry season.

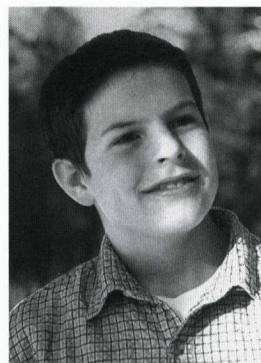
I pedaled my bicycle further and came to a hand-drawn sign "Pickers Wanted." I looked at the sign in awe—could I be paid to travel the sweet-smelling rows and to eat all the sun-warmed berries I wanted? That weekend, at the tender age of thirteen, I started my first summer job.

I pulled myself from bed before the sun rose and was pedaling along long deserted country roads by six AM. I arrived just before seven and was given crates and tags. I followed the field boss to a flooded row and I set to work. I was happy and the days began to fly by.

Each morning the cold, wet leaves would soak me and I would take off my shoes, to work barefoot in thick mud. I shivered for the first couple of hours, before the harsh sun began to shine relentlessly overhead. Soon I would long for



Siobhan Ringrose, 13  
Waterford, Ontario, Canada



Rivers Woodward, 12  
Stehekin, Washington





I pedaled my bicycle further and came to a hand-drawn sign "Pickers Wanted"

the cool morning to return. I learned to fear the field bosses, who were employed to pick on the pickers. The berries I picked were either too green or I was leaving too many green berries on the plants. My crates were either too skimpy or too full. I couldn't argue, though, or I would lose my job and, unless my crates pleased them, my card would not be punched.

Every worker longed for lunch break. We would all stand, stretch and head hungrily to our coolers in a shady or-

chard. There was always a long line for a repugnant outhouse from which gasping people would flee. You had to bring your own toilet paper and your own wash water. Lunch finished much too soon and, like prisoners, we returned to the endless rows. The afternoons were scorching hot and a cloud over the sun was something to savor.

I had never realized the diversity of field workers. As I worked I heard the chatter of the Portuguese, Chinese, Jamaicans and Mexicans. There was a



man there who had impoverished Vietnamese workers working for him. All their picking money went to him and he gave each one a fraction back. The most amazing group of all, however, were the German Mennonites. Entire families came out each day, dressed in dresses and clothes that hid all of their bodies. They didn't seem to mind that these clothes would be filthy within minutes. The children, as young as three, would pick for about an hour before tiring, and they would go and play on sandy roads. They were oblivious to cars and, forgotten by their parents, they were soon covered head to toe in dust. The Mennonites were a group to marvel at. They could pick double the speed of everyone else, taking frequent breaks. I tried never to share my row with them, because they always passed me and took the best berries. On Sundays the fields became strangely quiet, because no Mennonite would work on the Sabbath.

The days became weeks. Each day I bent my aching back over those abundant berries and picked with red-stained, dirt-caked hands. I earned a quarter for every quart I filled and I could fill close to two hundred quarts in a ten-hour day. Having no other experience, I thought it was great money. I felt so proud to stand in the long line of tired workers who all slaved together and receive crisp bills for my work.

Every night I would ride the long, lonely farm roads home, often having to scrape the mud from my bike tires with a stick so they could turn.

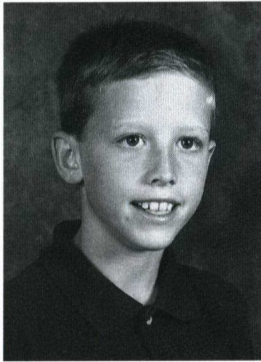
My summer job ended with the harvest. I was upset and relieved at the same time. I would earn no more money and eat no more berries. On the other hand, I could sleep in and live in the comforts of home. The experience taught me to appreciate farmers, to value many novelties I took for granted and to see strawberries in an entirely new light.

I had been working on a strawberry farm for several weeks. The farm was heavily irrigated, resulting in ankle-deep mud along the rows. During the day, I would always walk past a young Mennonite girl, who played in the orchard while her parents picked. She was always in a dress, with two braids and enough clothes for the coldest winter day. She eyed me each time I passed, marveling that I could be immodest enough to wear a T-shirt, shorts and no shoes. Over time her staring grew more intense and it seemed like she wanted to speak with me. One day I ambled by in exhaustion, my back painfully hunched over, my hands stained red with black nails, my body covered in stains, sweat and dust, and my bare feet heavy with caked mud. The child looked up timidly and stated sincerely in broken English: "You look pretty." ❖



# No Simple Thank You

by Mark Roberts



Mark Roberts, 10  
Windsor, California

I didn't know  
That going to my new school  
Would mean four long nights  
Away from you.

I didn't know  
I would miss your scratchy face  
When you kiss me,  
Wrestling on the bed,  
Climbing on your back  
Or into the "rabbit hole"  
To watch TV together.

I didn't know  
Just how much I'd miss your funny faces  
And my favorite Hungarian love song  
About meeting the girl at seven-thirty  
Under the stars.

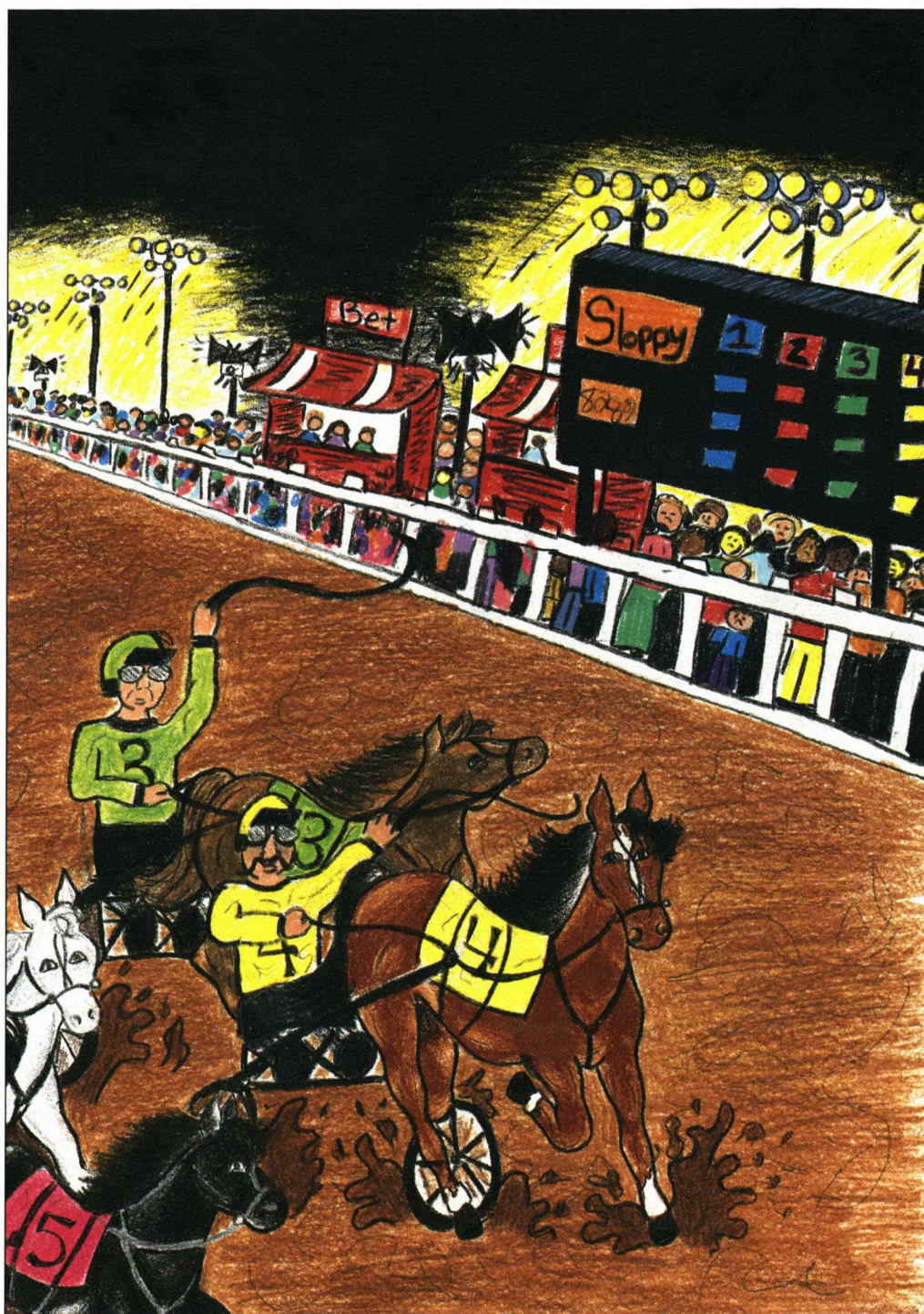
I didn't know  
How much I loved  
Your gentle "slamming" me into bed,  
Your never giving me a straight answer  
And the footballs we throw to each other.

I know now how much you love me  
Because you drive the long miles  
To San Francisco  
Working extra,  
Returning only after everyone is asleep  
Just for me.

You leave before dawn, but  
You call every morning and night  
Just to say you love me millions.

The only thing ever scary about you  
Is losing you.  
It breaks my heart  
And unfolds it  
That you work so long and hard  
Just for me.





"And they're off!" the announcer shouted



# Colors of a Champion

by Simon Reis

illustrated by Lainey Guddat

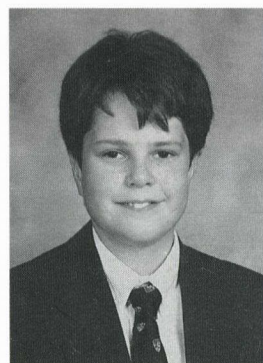
**I**T WASN'T THE BEST NIGHT for the race. Earlier that afternoon, a torrential downpour had drenched the ground. The air was thick and humid and the sky a murky gray soup. Dense fog was beginning to envelop the landscape. The tote board flashed the condition of the track—SLOPPY.

Judy Garland was depressed. She had trained hard for weeks, enduring the whiplashes of her rider, Jose Montegna. Clearly, she was a champion, at least in her last few races. But that had been on other tracks, dry, fast tracks where her hooves could dig in like claws and propel her forward as swiftly as the rushing wind. She had never raced at this track and she had never raced on muddy ground.

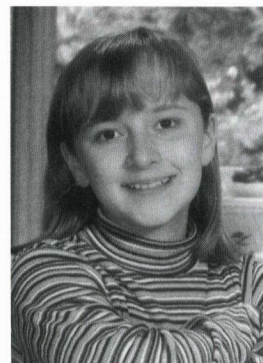
The competition was fierce here and she knew it. There was Southwind Diamond, Arapamack, Frisky Fame and especially Stormont Zodiac, all of them stronger, faster and more sure of themselves. Judy didn't have much of a chance. The odds on her were 45 to 1.

"Two minutes to post time," the announcer warned.

The trotters were just finishing their show rounds, parading in front of the crowd in the stands hoping to attract more bets. You could bet any amount above the one dollar minimum. At 5-to-1 odds, the winner would collect ten dollars on a two-dollar bet, and half that amount if the horse placed or showed. Most people bet on either their favorite



Simon Reis, 12  
Port Hope, Ontario, Canada



Lainey Guddat, 11  
Kent, Washington



number, a name they liked, or the color of the horse's outfit. It was mostly guesswork.

Judy was number 4 and she was all decked out in bright lemon. Southwind Diamond was number 1 in black gear, Arapamack sported number 5 in blazing pink, Stormont Zodiac was number 2 in red, and Frisky Fame number 3 in neon green. There were four others, numbered 6 to 9, all in hot, flashy colors. At 1 to 1, Stormont Zodiac was clearly the crowd's favorite.

The riders guided their trotters to the back stretch and lined up behind and across the white truck that awaited them. Suddenly, the truck spread its gates like two straight wings on an iron bird. Slowly at first, it began to roll down the track, the horses and riders following close, all in a straight line.

"The field is in the hands of the starter" echoed from the loudspeakers in the stands.

The crowd had placed their final bets, and together as one group they surged to get as close to the rail as possible. People watched in tense silence as the horses came around the bend toward the starting line.

The riders leaned back in their two-wheel harnesses, one hand on the reins and the other whipping their horses' backsides. Swish! Snap! The tail of the whip stung their hides. The animals, trying to get away from the next lash, sprung forward, their legs stretching, straining and pounding through the grimy mud.

Judy was scared. For a moment the giant, white lights in the stadium blinded her, and in that moment an image flashed across her mind's eye.

She was in a stable, just born, stumbling to get up for the first time because her legs wouldn't support her. After a few minutes, she felt some warm air on her face. She opened her eyes and looked up to see her mother breathing heavily, gazing into her eyes and almost whispering without even moving her lips, "Welcome to the world."

Then suddenly, she felt a nudge on her rear. She turned around to see her father poking his nose under her belly as if to say, "Get up." Judy struggled. She pushed her back legs out behind her, trying to get a foothold. When her feet were stable, she moved her front legs into position and pushed up. She pushed with all her might, her leg muscles straining so that every part of her was rigid. Her knees were still bent but she forced them upwards, shifting her body weight when she moved. Finally, with one last effort, she straightened her knees and stood up. She stood there panting and snorting, then looked up into her mother's eyes once more. Again, without opening her mouth, the mother's gaze penetrated her baby's thoughts, "Your name is Judy and you are a champion."

As the truck picked up speed, so did the field, but still close together and straight across.

Judy was fourth on the inside, next to Frisky Fame, then Stormont Zodiac and



She was suddenly back racing her father in the golden fields of home

Southwind Diamond on the rail, and fanning out to the right of Judy, Arapamack, Charlie Whiskey, Great Expectations, Dreams Are Free and Anitra. There were nine in all, each one a champion, each one determined to wear the blue blanket of victory.

Around the turn, they came toward the starting line. The truck lurched forward, folded its gates and veered off to the side.

"And they're off!" the announcer shouted.

Once around the mile-long track and one of them would cross the line first.

Instantly, the crowd began to cheer, each man for his horse, "Come on, Whiskey . . . Run, Stormont . . . Let's go, Dreams . . . Move it, Frisky . . ." The babble of voices filled the grandstand, excited, angry, hopeful voices. Some people jumped up and down, others pumped their fists into the air, still others closed their eyes and prayed. A foreign language rose high above the crowd, "And in the lead Arapamack followed by Frisky Fame Stormont Zodiac-Anitra Charlie Whiskey Judy Garland-Southwind Diamond Dreams Are Free and bringing up the rear Great Expectations."



Thirty-six hooves splashed mud as each horse in the field of nine fought to gain an early lead. The riders in their chariots, their goggles all splattered with dirt and water, sliced their whips through the air. Frisky Fame lunged ahead in a burst of speed, followed close behind by Stormont Zodiac and Anitra.

Judy was doing her best to keep up with the rest of the field but her back legs, not used to the sloppy mud, slipped and she fell back to seventh place. Ahead of her through the pack she could see the favorite, her arch-rival Stormont Zodiac, in second place challenging Frisky Fame in the lead.

Around the bend they went and into the back stretch.

Judy heard the voice, "You are a champion . . . you are a champion . . . you are a champion." Not this time, she thought, not today, not on this track, not in this mud.

Back at home, in the hills of yore, she ran wild through the fields and pastures. Whenever she got thirsty, she stopped and drank from the cool, flowing waters of the creek, and in the lazy afternoons of sunlit days, she rested serenely under the cool shade of linden trees.

But her father had other plans for her. One day, as she stepped out of the stable for her morning run, she saw her father standing sternly before her. "Follow me," he snorted. She obeyed, not knowing what he wanted or where he was going. "I want you to chase me and keep up with me," he said gently

but firmly.

And that's how Judy's training began. At first, of course, she could barely keep up with her father. Weeks and months passed when she wanted to stop, to quit. She just wasn't made to race. It was tough going but her father persisted, and Judy was devoted to him and didn't want to disappoint him. And so, she ran and ran and ran, faster each day and finally, faster than her father.

Faster, she thought, faster, I must go faster. I can win this. I can. I just have to go faster. Judy looked around her. She was still in seventh place. Southwind Diamond was now ahead of her by a few meters and Dreams Are Free had moved up to fifth. She could see Frisky Fame in the lead. Behind him was Arapamack, followed by Stormont Zodiac and then Anitra. She expected Charlie Whiskey and Great Expectations to be behind her but she didn't want to look back, she wouldn't look back.

Then the strange words boomed out again from the loudspeaker, "Inthelead-FriskyFamebehindhimArapamackStormontZodiacAnitraDreamsAreFreeSouthwindDiamondJudyGarlandGreatExpectationsandCharlieWhiskey."

Judy wasn't listening. She was now running as hard and as fast as she could. Behind her, she could hear the cart carrying her rider bouncing along the track. She had felt his whip several times in this race and now it was coming at her full force. Each stroke was a sharp pain on her backside. Clearly, Jose

Montegna wanted to win this one.

Suddenly it was like she had shifted into a new gear. Her legs felt longer, she felt like she had new energy, and her will was restored. The distance between her and Southwind Diamond shortened. They were now neck and neck. Judy was determined. She would win. With a sudden rush, she pulled ahead of Southwind Diamond and put distance between them, two meters, three meters. But she wasn't thinking about that, all she was thinking was, one down, five to go.

A voice from the loudspeaker spoke in what she recognized as English, "The field remains the same except for Judy Garland who has moved into sixth place ahead of Southwind Diamond."

Her muscles strained and ached. She was suddenly back racing her father in the golden fields of home. "I'll show him, I'll do it, I'll beat him this time." With a sudden burst of speed, she hurled herself forward, and as she inched ahead of him, she could see the glint in his eyes. She heard his snort of pride, and from then on nothing could stop her. Her father slowed, came to a standstill and watched with a triumphant toss of his mane as his champion disappeared into the distance.

The weather at the track was worse now.

By the bend at the paddock a gray, obscure fog was hovering, so dense that there was no telling what was within it. It was something out of the twilight zone, a place of nothingness.

And as the crowd watched, the field disappeared into the darkened haze and nothing more was seen.

The grandstand suddenly went silent, dead silent. The only thing heard was the distant honking of cars some miles away and the cries of babies in parents' arms. Binoculars were trained toward the bend but nobody knew for sure where the field was now.

After what seemed an eternity of time, they began to appear. Like ghostly shapes emerging from the mist, the herd of gladiators sprang into the clear. The leaders were all in a pack now, running like a tribe of one, their mud-splashed bodies next to one another so that they were nearly indistinguishable from each other. Four horses led the field: Stormont Zodiac, Frisky Fame, Anitra, and Judy Garland half a length behind.

But something was wrong, something that the crowd couldn't really see clearly. Judy was limping! Her left hind leg was out of rhythm with the others. A white foam oozed out of her mouth and she had a wild look in her eyes. Something had happened in that dark fog.

People were on their feet now, all urging their horses on toward the finish line, a hundred meters ahead.

Judy could hear the announcer's voice, "And in the stretch, it's Stormont Zodiac by a nose, Frisky Fame in second, Anitra third, and Judy Garland half a length behind. . . . Folks, Judy Garland is hurt! She's stumbling! . . .



Something must have . . .”

Judy was hurt but nobody knew when or how. She was in pain and was fighting to keep up the pace.

It was now down to the wire. Bright lights suddenly flooded the finish line. The crowd lined the grandstand rail. The roar drowned out the announcer’s voice.

The four contenders in the lead now surged toward the line that would divide the winners from the losers. There was only room for three: Win, Place, Show. There was no glory for number four and Judy was now four, inching her way up to Anitra until they were almost head to head.

She knew that she didn’t have a chance to win or even place. Stormont Zodiac and Frisky Fame, numbers one and two, were now well ahead. The best she could do was to show.

But the pain was getting worse and her spirits were sinking. She felt herself drifting back.

The crack of the whip stung her side and snapped her out of her daze.

Fifty meters to go.

Judy was now alert and fully aware of what was going on. She was still neck and neck with Anitra. Every few seconds or so, she would slip back and Anitra would take an inch lead. Then, Judy would come up and Anitra would slip back. Back and forth like that. They were evenly matched. The announcer had trouble keeping up. “Now it’s Anitra, Judy’s coming up, Anitra’s behind. It’s Judy! Anitra! Judy! Anitra!”

Judy was having a hard time now as her leg was hurting more than ever, her muscles all strained, her energy all used up.

Twenty-five meters to go.

She could see the bright lights that marked the finish line.

The crowd was on its feet, the noise deafening.

Twenty, fifteen, ten, five.

From a silent place deep inside her, Judy found the last breath of strength she had. It was enough.

“Across the finish line, it’s Stormont Zodiac by half a length, Frisky Fame by a head, Judy Garland by a nose, Anitra, Southwind Diamond, Arapamack, Dreams Are Free, Charlie Whiskey and Great Expectations.”

It was over.

The crowd slowly began to thin out. Winners were rushing toward the betting counters to collect their profits. Losing tickets littered the ground like leaves on an autumn day.

But suddenly, the tote board began to flash “Photo Finish” and beneath that, “Inquiry.” It wasn’t yet official. The people stopped and stared at the board to check the results. Several minutes passed, the tension building.

Finally, the board scrolled down: Number One Stormont Zodiac, Number Two Judy Garland, Number Three was Frisky Fame, and Number Four was Anitra. The crowd was confused and you could hear all kinds of boos and cheers. The announcer called out, “Judy Garland has moved up to place second

because, according to photos, Frisky Fame interfered with her in the fog."

Nobody was sure what had happened. Somewhere in that dense fog, Frisky Fame got too close to Judy Garland and accidentally collided against her. Judy stumbled, her leg buckled under her and her weight fell on it. The pain was unlike anything she had ever felt. It stopped her in her tracks. From then on, she was a wounded runner.

Now it was over and Judy didn't know what she was feeling. She was relieved but she was in a lot of pain. She didn't win but did she deserve to place? Had she done her best? What would her father say? There was no prize for being second.

She saw Stormont Zodiac being led to the Winner's Circle where he got his blue victory blanket and she looked at him with admiration and envy. Next time, she thought, there's always next time.

But there was not going to be a "next time" for Judy. The doctors at the track did their best, they fixed her leg, but she was going to limp for the rest of her life. She would never race again. She would never again feel the heart-pounding excitement of competition, the danger of the battle, or the thrill of victory. It was over.

They sent her home where her father and mother greeted her like a conquering heroine. Her father told her how proud he was of her. Her mother gave her lots of hay and apples. Judy was glad to be home, but she was also overcome with disappointment, and she stayed in the barn for days and days. Nothing could console her. It was hard.

One morning, after a rain shower, her father was at the gate of the barn. He called her to come outside. She didn't move until he approached her and nudged her several times. "Come on, come with me," he said, "I want to show you something."

Judy obeyed. She followed her father and he led her toward the open field. "Go," he said, "there's something out there I want you to see."

She limped slowly into the pasture. The rain had stopped and everything was brightly colored. The grass was greener, the field more golden yellow, and a clear blue sky was peeking through the thin clouds. Judy stood there and stared at the God-made beauty of nature.

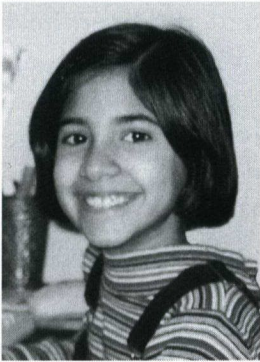
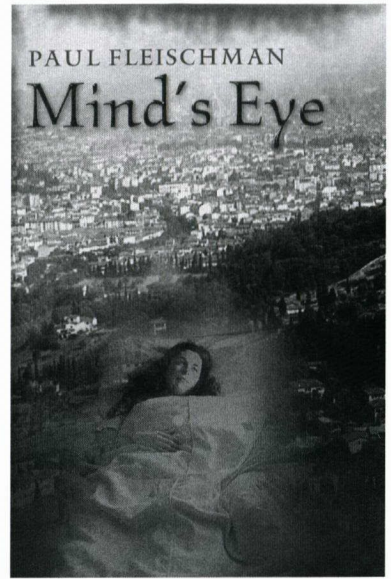
"Up there," her father said, tossing his head upwards, "look!"

Judy slowly lifted her head toward the sky, and somewhere off in the distance, arcing across that sky, she saw a rainbow. ❖



# Book Review

by Meenakshi Dalal



Meenakshi Dalal, 9  
Naperville, Illinois

*Mind's Eye* by Paul Fleischman; Henry Holt and Company:  
New York, 1999; \$15.95

**D**O YOU KNOW WHAT your mind's eye is? It's your imagination. In this book a sixteen-year-old girl, Courtney, meets an eighty-eight-year-old lady, Elva, in a nursing home in which both of them are living. Courtney is paralyzed from the waist down and Elva has a disease called Alzheimer's. Alzheimer's is a disease that makes you forget everything. If your closest friends and family come to visit you, you may have no recollection of who they are. In the book Elva sometimes thinks Courtney is her sister because of her Alzheimer's.

This book is about the two main characters, Courtney and Elva, taking an imaginary journey to Italy, with an old guidebook for a guide. Elva wants to take a trip to Italy because before her husband died he asked her to go for him. Now she can't go because she is too old and sick, so she wants to go on the journey through her mind's eye. She got an old guidebook on Italy, only to find that she can't read the tiny print. I felt sorry for Elva at this point, because she loves to read, and to find that your eyes are getting bad when you

really need them is sad. Elva has to rely on someone else's eyes to read for her. She chooses Courtney's eyes. She invites her on the journey through the mind's eye.

Courtney is reluctant, but she is so bored that she goes along. The book shows how unpleasant and boring a nursing home can be. First of all, the nurses are untrustworthy. They steal from the patients. The patients have no way to entertain themselves since the TV doesn't work and they can't even go out to breathe some fresh air. I would hate to live in a nursing home because in the book it gives you the impression that nursing homes are awful places.

Elva talks to Courtney a lot in the beginning of the book and Courtney doesn't listen to a word Elva says. I know what this feels like because it has happened to me many times before!

Courtney seemed to be like any other teenager. She likes sleeping in till eleven o'clock! Courtney and Elva were complete strangers in the beginning of the book. They became friends only because Courtney was bored and Elva had nobody to talk to. At first I thought of Courtney as an unattractive teenager, but as the book went on Courtney became much nicer because she learned a lot from Elva. The most important thing she learned was that to survive in

a nursing home she had to use her mind's eye.

This book sends a good message because it shows you can use your imagination for anything. One thing that I didn't like about the book was the style in which it was written. It was written completely in dialogue like a play, which I felt made it more difficult to read. You have to concentrate harder since there are no paragraphs explaining what's going on. Also, it seemed to jump around a lot. However, I thought the author's descriptions gave you a very good idea of what the characters were experiencing and I could picture myself there. The topic was sometimes depressing but sometimes I felt really good for the characters. I felt good when they seemed to be enjoying themselves on their imaginary journey, but not when Courtney was being mean to Elva by ruining it. I felt sad when Elva died, but in a way I also felt good for her, because she lived a good life and with Alzheimer's and bad eyes I feel she wanted to die.

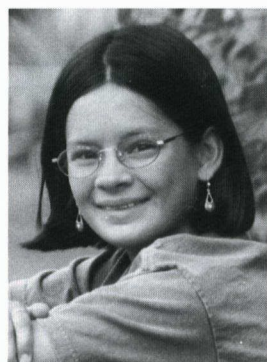
This book deals with subjects like illness and old age, and being alone in the world, that are rather depressing. Even so, after finishing the book, I didn't feel sad. Instead I realized how your imagination can turn even awful things into something pleasant. That is what makes this book worth reading. ❖



# Spinning

by Julia Echternach

illustrated by the author



Julia Echternach, 12  
Highlands Ranch, Colorado

**I**'M SPINNING, SPINNING, SPINNING, my eyes closed. My hair brushes against the soft mossy grass and the sounds of traffic are distant, but I'm aware of them. Two arms—are they mine?—are holding onto the tire swing comfortably, not gripping but giving me a feeling that if I fall I'm not falling too far. It doesn't feel like my eyes are closed. It feels like they're not there at all. The feeling is bliss.

"Maggie!" someone calls. I am outraged at them temporarily. How dare they yell out my name and interrupt that nice dizzy feeling?

My toes, connected to my ankles, connected to my calves, connected to my knees hooked through the tire, touch the grass to stop me. I sit up, no longer leaning backwards like I love to do. The tire spins faster. I'm way too dizzy to listen to the voice calling my name again.

When I open my eyes the dizziness fades, and I'm sad that the feeling is gone. My mother stands in front of me with her hands on her hips, angry. "Maggie!" At the end of my name her voice slides straight up into another octave. I can't help but giggle, even though that is the very last thing I should do.

"I talked to you about this tire swing. The rope's wearing through—can't you see it, Maggie?" She holds a piece of rope up to my eyes. "It's fading. Just in time, too. You're thir-



I'm way too dizzy to listen to the voice calling my name again

teen, Maggie, a little old for a tire swing."

Since I turned thirteen, my mother has considered me too old for everything. She wants me to cut my hair, dark brown and long enough for me to sit on it. But *Heather* isn't too old for *anything*. Heather wanted the tire swing in the first place, and she can go on it "because she's lighter than you." Heather is "about to outgrow" a tire swing, so

she has to "enjoy it while she can." My mother's words have gained the ability to drive me insane.

I have nothing against Heather. It's perfectly fair; I can go with my friends wherever I want as long as I tell my mother where I'm going and when I'll get home, and I can do that spur-of-the-moment without planning anything three days ahead of time. And Heather can go on the tire swing, read the comic



strips, and eat raw cookie dough. And she is my sister. I'm the only person allowed to call her Copper for her red hair.

Heather is hiding up in the tree, but my mother doesn't know. It seems like the best secret in the world. I sigh, lean back, and pretend to just be annoyed when in fact I am winking at Heather.

"Maggie! Can't you just get off the tire swing?"

"Sure, Ma. It just takes a while." I pretend to be struggling to lift my feet up, struggling to emerge from the tire that's making my mother crazy.

Ma gets bored watching me and walks inside. I smile smugly, bend over backwards, and flip myself out. If Ma saw she'd have a cow.

Heather starts laughing, and so do I. We giggle over Ma, standing in front of the plants, oblivious to our mischief.

Ma turns around. I stand in front of the tire and strike a Miss America pose. Ta-da!

My mother scowls and walks inside. I scramble up the tree silently and sit next to Heather on the top branch. "Yo, Copper."

"Yo, Mags. We're running out of berries."

"Let's go to the farm, then."

"That's the thing. Tyler's been mad at me since I picked that deformed blackberry, the one he thought *National Enquirer* would pay him twenty dollars for. If I go back there he'll throw a fit."

I smile. "Tyler's on vacation in *Co-sta Ri-ca*, remember?" I stretch out the

name of the place where he is, the way Tyler says it.

"Oh, yeah." Heather shimmies across the branches to the tire swing branch and climbs expertly down the rope. I'm right behind her. We stand on either side of the tire swing and jump off simultaneously.

I tap Ma on the shoulder, say, "We're riding our bikes to the farm for the afternoon," and rush to the garage, where Heather is wheeling out her ancient and very cool aqua-colored bike. That thing is a work of art.

After strapping on our identical helmets we start pedaling to the farm. Heather is way faster than me on her bike, but I was riding around while she was at Girl Scouts last week and for maybe the fifth time *ever* I got to the farm before her.

Old Tyler's a little crazy but he's got the greatest berry patch you ever saw. He doesn't put pesticides out there or anything, but at the beginning of each summer he plants a new kind of berry, waters it, and lets it grow wild. He lets everyone come over and pick the berries.

We use a key Tyler gave us and walk right on into his kitchen. It looks like it hasn't been changed since 1932. There's no microwave, and a very rusty sink, with a stove plopped right in the middle where you might put a cute little table.

There are some straw-woven baskets in the cupboard that we put our berries in. They've got red checkered pieces of

fabric in them so the juice won't seep through. I love the farm; it's like going back in time.

I run out the door and listen to the comforting slam behind me. Heather is already picking strawberries, huge juicy ripe ones. I can just imagine what they taste like.

"Yo, Copper," I whisper to Heather. She jumps.

"I didn't know you were right there."

"I don't want you to get all the strawberries before I do. Have you eaten any yet?"

"Nope."

I'm not surprised. Heather thinks that if you wait to eat them they taste better. I love to sink my teeth into them right away, get red and green and purple stains all over my shirts, drop everything on the ground and stomp on it because it's not technically litter. It's like yelling at someone when you're mad at them, you just let everything out.

I pick the biggest strawberry I can find and stick it in my mouth. Half of it's hanging out, which makes Heather laugh, and I start laughing too, letting the strawberry fall into my hand and feeling like Heather and I are the best friends in the world.

We pick berries for hours. Lunchtime comes and goes, and I start thinking about everyone at the swim club jump-

ing out of the pool and trying to get a piece of pizza before it's all gone. Whenever that happens Heather and I just smile and keep tossing a tennis ball back and forth because we got pizza an hour ago at eleven o'clock.

That's how the days pass in the summer; we toss the tennis balls around and go to Tyler's farm and spin on the tire swing until we can feel the world spinning beneath our feet. I lie on my back on the grass and watch the clouds sometimes, and Heather comes over and plops her head on my stomach, and I stroke her hair for hours and hours. We climb trees and look down on the world.

When I look at my watch it's four o'clock.

"Yo, Copper," I call out.

Heather turns around to look at me. It's time to go home.

We throw our tied-up bandannas of berries in my old tan leather backpack and walk across the field to our bikes. It's just starting to look like afternoon; purplish clouds spread out over the sky, and a yellow kind of light falls over everything.

Halfway riding home I make a spontaneous turn to the right and I ride over to the creek instead, and dip my ankles in the water, wondering if Copper is wondering where I went. ♦



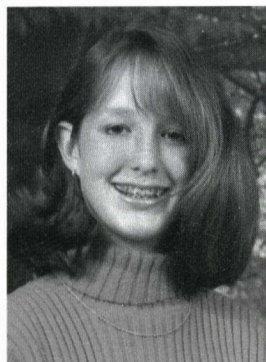
# Tiger, Tiger

by Vera Litvin

illustrated by Haylee Collins



Vera Litvin, 13  
London, England



Haylee Collins, 13  
Kingsport, Tennessee

**T**OLY HID AMONG THE tall grasses of the tropical forest. He could feel the cold sweat trickling down his face. The tiger was standing close now, so close Toly could feel its pulsing breath. The vibrant black and orange of the tiger's coat hurt his eyes. It couldn't see him; only the tiger's keen sense of smell told it Toly was there. Toly waited for just the right moment and then in an instant, with one smooth liquid movement, Toly found himself mounted on the beast's back. The tiger was growing more obedient now; Toly felt its warm fur beneath him. "Run!" Toly told the tiger and it ran. Ran fast over crannies and ditches, carrying Toly further and further away from the city. Toly felt the wind ruffling his hair, violently blowing in his eyes, forcing tears to form. He had done it! He was riding the tiger. He was the conqueror. He was . . .

"Toly!" his mother's voice reached him as though it was coming from somewhere far away. "Wake up! It's nearly seven o'clock!" The beautiful forest, the mighty tiger, the smell of the moist soil; all disintegrated as if they never were and Toly drowsily opened his eyes.

"Aw, go on, Mum, five more minutes," he pleaded desperately. Anything to win him more time.

"No!" his mother retorted firmly, and left the room. Toly's sheets were cold with sweat, but he knew that he had done it; he had ridden the tiger!





"Run!" Toly told the tiger and it ran

Toly detested school; no, he feared it. Most of all he feared Derek, the school's bully. He feared him with a fear hard to describe, a fear that engulfed him like a giant wave, a fear that made his knees give way and his stomach tense up at the mere mention of Derek's name. By rights Derek should have been a stupid

lug whose fist did most of his bidding. But it wasn't right, nothing was ever right. Derek was cunning, calculating and strong—he was a tiger. Yet the fear Toly felt for the bully and the tiger were different as could be. The fear of the tiger was invigorating, it caused every vein to thrill and stand to attention.



The fear of the tiger was rewarding, it made Toly feel a strange sense of achievement. Made him proud. Yet the fear of Derek made Toly feel none of those things. It made him want to crouch down really small and hide somewhere in a dark hole where no one could find him. Ever.

Derek's bullying was usually nothing the school considered "serious." It was just a shove here or a nasty comment there. But it was those small cruelties that hurt Toly more than anything. His days were spent trying to keep out of Derek's way, being careful never to leave the watchful eye of the teacher for the wide expanse of the playground. A dangerous place—Derek's domain. Derek knew the playground like the tiger knew his jungle. He ruled it, and all those who ventured out into it were at his mercy. All day Toly stayed on guard, tense and scared. Jumping at the slam of a door, at heavy footsteps. The only escape from his fear was the daydreams of the tiger. Toly knew they weren't real, of course he did, but in them he was always so brave. The hero. The winner. In real life he was nothing—just a small scared boy. Toly knew it couldn't go on like this. Something deep inside, which was as much part of him as the day-

dreams of the tiger, told him that one day he would have to make a stand for himself. It wouldn't be easy . . .

Toly was waiting. Waiting and watching. He wasn't hiding behind the grasses anymore. He was standing in the open expanse of the jungle. Heart pounding, faster, faster, faster. One movement and he stood upright in front of the tiger. Not shuffling, not lowering his gaze, just upright. Toly stood upright. His heart pounding, blood rushing through his veins. He looked his enemy in the eye. It took nearly all of Toly's strength to do that. Suddenly he wasn't afraid. Derek's commanding expression was gone. Instead, a rather confused one appeared. A smile crept up on Toly's face. A very small one at first. Then bigger and bigger, until his whole face was creased in a massive grin. Derek looked uneasy. He lowered his head and shuffled into the school building, defeated. His mates followed, teetering, their respect for Derek considerably shaken during the last ten minutes. Toly just stood in the middle of the playground in amazement, unaware of all the students around him beaming in appreciation. Toly was unsure what exactly he had done, but he knew one thing; this time he had ridden the tiger—for real!



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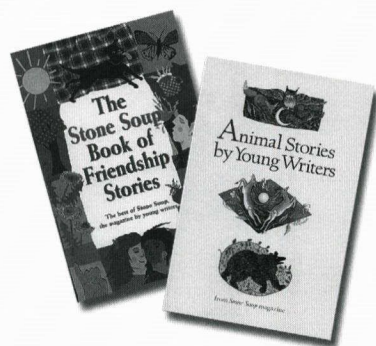
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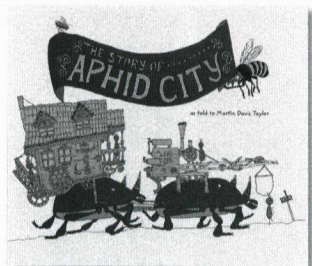
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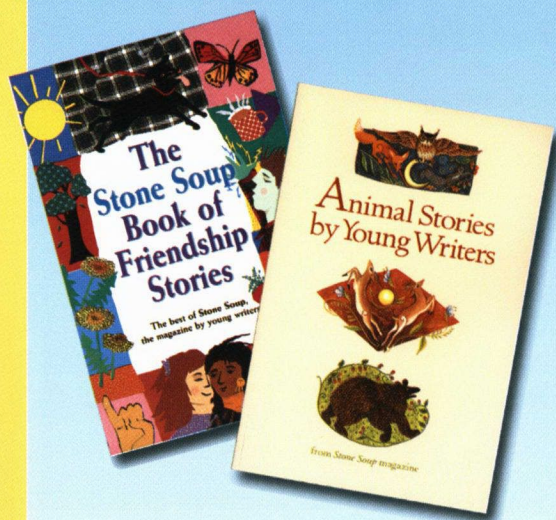
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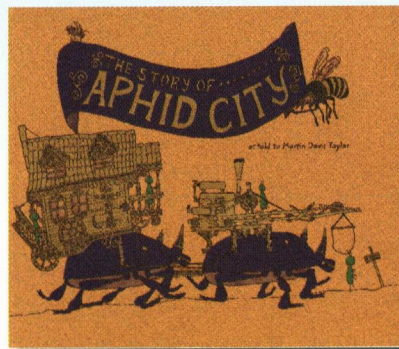
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