

# Stone Soup

*The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists*



*Illustration by Joan He, age 13, from "Owl Eyes," page 12*

## GOLDEN EYES

Alyn can't help wondering about her reclusive new neighbor

## LOST

Oh no! Now the lifeboat is filling up with water!

*Also:* A fox is rescued and returned to the wild



# Stone Soup

*The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists*

VOLUME 39, NUMBER 1

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2010

## STORIES

**Golden Eyes** by Jordan Coble ..... 5

Tara seems angry, but maybe she just needs a friend

**Owl Eyes** by Noa Wang ..... 12

It's dark, and Noa can't find her way back to the campsite

**Splintery Embrace** by Serena Alagappan ..... 16

An unexpected change of plans leads to a perfect day

**Lost** by Simon Brake ..... 21

Stranded at sea, Trent and Simon struggle to survive

**Cry of the Wild Heart** by Mary Woods ..... 33

All of a sudden Red understands: the woman is his friend

**Saying Goodbye** by Elise Allen ..... 43

For Heather and Elise, summer 2011 will be epic!

**Finding a Friend** by Hannah Culver ..... 45

Hannah overcomes her fear of dogs



page 21



page 33

## POEMS

**The Whale** by Isaac Goodman ..... 11

**Camp** by Kayla Walsh ..... 15

**The Way Life Should Be** by Nicky Cannon ..... 30



page 43

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Counter Clockwise** reviewed by Hayden Raspberry ..... 18

**Slept Away** reviewed by Leah Wolfe ..... 40



page 45



Available from the Library of Congress in braille for visually handicapped readers. Call 800-424-8567 to request the braille edition



Stone Soup is printed on recycled paper

GERRY MANDEL  
WILLIAM RUBEL

Editors

MICHAEL KING

Subscriptions

STACI SAMBOL

Design and Production

BARBARA HARKER

Administrative Assistant

SONIA BAÑUELOS

Special Projects

*Stone Soup* (ISSN 0094 579X) is published six times a year by the Children's Art Foundation, 765 Cedar Street, Suite 201, Santa Cruz, CA 95060. Phone: 800-447-4569. It is published bimonthly in January/February, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, and November/December. Volume 39, Number 1. Copyright © 2010 by the Children's Art Foundation. All rights reserved. Reproduction of the whole or any part of the contents without written permission is prohibited. *Stone Soup* is mailed to members of the Children's Art Foundation. Eighty percent of the membership fee is designated for subscription to *Stone Soup*. In the United States, a one-year membership costs \$37, two years \$60, three years \$82. Canada add \$6 per year for postage; other countries add \$12 per year for postage. Please remit in U.S. funds only. Send SUBMISSIONS, SUBSCRIPTIONS, and ADDRESS CHANGES to: *Stone Soup*, P.O. Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Stone Soup*, P.O. Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063. Periodical postage paid at Santa Cruz, CA and additional offices. Printed in Canada.

# Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists

WELCOME TO ALL OUR READERS, old and new! We've had the pleasure of publishing *Stone Soup* for over 37 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 Joan He's beautiful illustrations have appeared four times in *Stone Soup*. Her favorite mediums are oil and acrylic; she especially likes to paint people, animals and nature. Joan takes art classes in Philadelphia and hopes to be a professional artist when she grows up.

# The Mailbox



LBP, 9

I love to write and I just loved the idea of having kids send their own writing pieces! I liked “King of the Forest” [January/February 2010]. It had lots of descriptive language, like the wind “holding its breath.” I might borrow that in my writing someday. I also like the poem “For No One” [May/June 2010]. It was interesting how the author wrote that the thunder had a “blinding smile.” I never thought about it that way.

**JAYMIE WEI, 10**  
*Shrewsbury, Massachusetts*

I recently read the May/June 2010 issue of *Stone Soup* and I loved the story “Inspiration,” by Emi Cohen. It drew me in right from the start; from the very first sentence, when “Ophelia crumpled up yet another piece of notebook paper,” I was instantly reminded of the many, many stories I’ve attempted to write, but then gotten bored of too quickly. Ophelia reminded me of myself, until the end of the story, when she began writing about her own life. I read this and began to think, and was soon working on a new story based on my life. (And I actually finished it!) Thanks, Emi, for the inspiration!

**ANALISA MILKEY, 11**  
*Los Altos, California*

I wish to thank and give a pat on the back, so to speak, to Halle Kershnik, whose short story “Cedar Wood and Rose” appeared in the March/April 2008 edition of *Stone Soup*. Your story was both beautiful and well written, and, most importantly, it seemed *real*. It swept me up in a way that only full-length novels have done before—and few novels, at that. You managed to capture years of feelings into so few words.

**JAMIE VINCENT, 14**  
*Herkimer, New York*

We love *Stone Soup*! My daughter is thirteen next week and still loves the magazine. She is a voracious reader and one of the top writers in her very competitive middle school! Thanks for a forum for young writers. I was an English major in college and wish *Stone Soup* had been available when I was young.

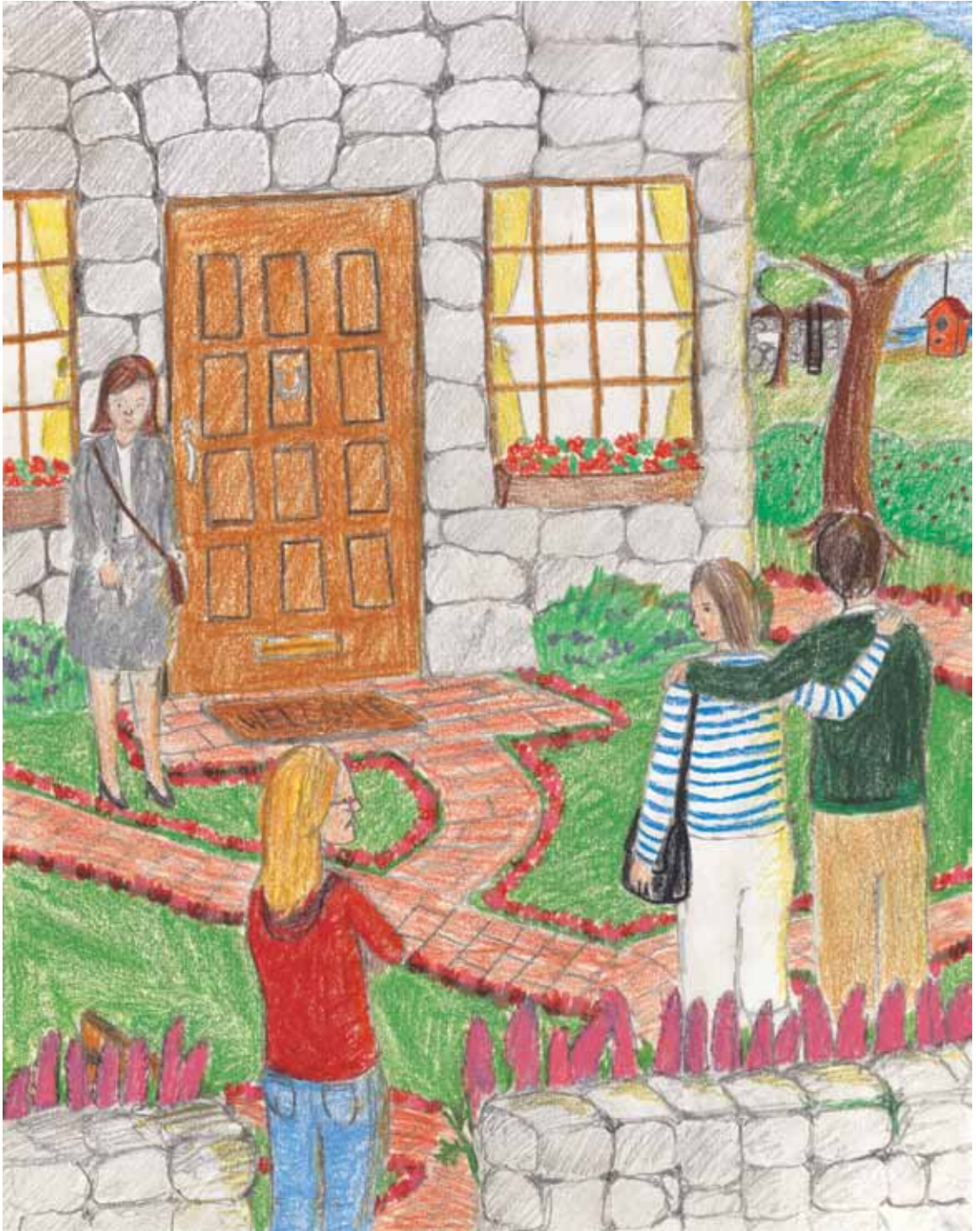
**ALIX GIOMETTI, PARENT**  
*Golden, Colorado*

My story, “Parting Is Such Sweet Sorrow,” was in your July/August 2004 issue. I’m going to be a freshman in college this year, and I wanted to share a funny story with you. I checked my Facebook yesterday and found this post from one of my classmates living on my hall this fall: “So I was cleaning out my room, right? And in the bottom of my magazine basket I see an edition of *Stone Soup*, this magazine for young authors/illustrators that my aunt bought a one-year subscription for me. I think, Huh. I thought I recycled all these last time I cleaned out my magazine basket. Oh well. I’ll just page through this and then chuck it. Of course the one edition that would somehow remain in there would contain a story written by you, Hannah Postel. My heart just about leapt into my mouth. Talk about a small world, huh? We’re living next to each other come fall and everything. I think I like life.” *Stone Soup* is a great idea, executed wonderfully. Not only do young authors and artists get a chance to express themselves, but they are part of a greater community of people who appreciate their efforts and enjoy their works. *Stone Soup* was a great magazine for me when I was younger and I’m so glad to see it’s still continuing.

**HANNAH POSTEL, 17**  
*Madison, Wisconsin*

**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.





*The house was at least a hundred times better than how her mother and father had described it*

# Golden Eyes

By **Jordan Coble**

*Illustrated by* **Abigail Schott-Rosenfeld**

**A**LYN WALKER TOOK in a shaky, excited breath. She had been waiting for this moment for a long time. Her mother and father had described the “perfect house” and living in it would be like “walking around in a storybook.” Finally, Mr. and Mrs. Walker had brought their daughter along with them to see their new home.

The realtor, dressed in a tight gray suit, unlatched the wooden gate embedded between two towering stone walls. Alyn clasped her hands together, calloused from hours upon hours of writing over the years. Her excitement was manifested as the prim realtor opened the passageway. Alyn’s mouth fell open. The house was at least a hundred times better than how her mother and father had described it.

The cottage, fashioned with hand-cut stone, was quaint, charming, and very charismatic. Surrounding it was a magnificent garden, abundant with foliage and greenery of every kind. Every bush had been planted with loving care, every flower placed with such tenderness, that the garden had amounted to a gorgeous, glorious whole. A brick path wove its way around the garden like a little snake slithering along the soil.

“It’s beautiful,” Alyn breathed. She couldn’t quite wrap her mind around the fact that she was going to live in this exquisite house.

“Did I mention that we will be sharing this property with a neighbor? She lives in that little shack there,” Mrs. Walker said brightly, always in a positive mood.



Jordan Coble, 13  
Camino, California



Abigail Schott-Rosenfeld, 13  
San Francisco, California

Alyn hadn't noticed the small stone abode before, for it was concealed behind the tall nectarine tree and abundant shrubs. Now she saw the rundown home, with the door falling off its hinges and a single, dirty window. Alyn felt a tiny poke of disappointment in her happy heart. She wasn't a greedy person, in fact, far from it, but she really didn't feel exhilarated about sharing her new estate with someone who didn't have the decency to keep up their own house. She gave a slightly injured sigh.

Mr. Walker took notice of his daughter's crestfallen reaction and quickly comforted, "Don't worry; the realtor said this neighbor is extremely introverted. She won't be any bother to us." Alyn nodded and shook it off. This moment was too special to be spoiled with a minor inconvenience.

"If you like it, honey, we can move in next week," Mr. Walker said. Alyn grinned. There was no house that ever was, nor ever could be, more perfect than this one. How her friends back in New York would envy the little Californian beachside cottage with a yard full of plants as green as her eyes, all tucked behind real stone walls like gold buried in a treasure chest!

As the four exited the property, Alyn felt a stony gaze upon her back. She glanced up at the window on the hidden shack, and was frightened to observe two glaring eyes, golden as a ferocious tiger's, staring at her.

A YOUNG WOMAN peered out of the solitary window in her rundown house, watching the realtor and the family of three stroll through the garden and inspect the cottage on the property. This woman had decidedly lived in an isolated state for five years and hoped that these newcomers would not be a nuisance. She glanced over at a picture frame on the dirty windowsill that held a photograph of her husband and son. She had loved them dearly, for her husband had a kind and understanding spirit, and her red-haired son was a huggable teddy bear with a charming smile. Pain pricked her heart like a sewing needle would prick one's finger, and she reached for a piece of paper and a pen.

IT HAD BEEN a week since she had first been at the cottage, and Alyn was unpacking and attempting to air out the musty smell that had settled upon the old house. The two shining, yellowish eyes had been brushed to the farthest corner of Alyn's brain, for there was so much to do! She stood up from her bent-over position on the wooden floor and wiped sweat from her brow. She didn't remember having quite so much stuff, but here it all was, waiting for her to unpack it and place it in the cheery sunroom that had been converted by the Walkers into Alyn's bedroom. Alyn pinned her swooping bangs behind her ear and surveyed the area. Boxes were piled in every corner, and she could barely find what little furniture she had set up amongst the monstrous tower



of moving supplies. Deciding it was time for a short interlude, she opened the door, its glass panes reflecting the sunlight, and entered her outdoor haven.

The scene painted before Alyn was a sight to behold. The salty ocean air breezed past her nose, and it was so delightfully overwhelming that she felt like she could taste it. The seagulls cawed overhead, dancing in wild, unrehearsed formations in the clear blue sky. The heavenly scent of flowers tickled Alyn's senses, for the blossoms were plentiful, scattered amongst the bushes. Blue jays and robins twittered in the shrubs, gossiping about who knows what. Walking along the pathway, she approached the nectarine tree, standing firmly like a soldier amidst the other plants. The sweet smell was so tempting that Alyn plucked a fruit and took a large bite. The juice dribbled down her chin, but she didn't wipe it away. She didn't care. There wasn't anyone here to criticize her, or anyone to give her a reproachful glance... in fact, there wasn't anyone here even to see her!

Then Alyn remembered the introverted neighbor who lived in the tiny house behind the nectarine tree and bushes. Her hand quivered slightly and her heart began beating faster. Had the strange person with the awful eyes seen her? She didn't want to find out. As Alyn hurried back to her house, she heard an eerie creaking noise coming from behind the shack. Curiosity sneakily wormed its way into Alyn's veins.

Growling at herself like an angry dog,

Alyn moaned, "Oh, why do I have to be so inquisitive?" and she silently followed the pathway toward the noise. As the creaking sound grew louder, Alyn became so quiet she could have transformed into a mouse. That's when she saw her.

Alyn drank in the details of the young woman rocking on the ancient swing. Her messy, rusty-red hair was pulled back into a ponytail. Her lips were sealed tightly together like an envelope. The woman's golden eyes gazed straight ahead, seemingly not realizing that Alyn was there. But Alyn knew that somehow her neighbor knew she was spying. The teenage girl uncomfortably shifted her position and her expressive eyes showed concern. She had been brought up to be kind, welcoming, and polite. Spying didn't involve any of those good characteristics, so Alyn suddenly felt obligated to do something nice for this eccentric young adult.

"Hello," Alyn said, approaching the woman and bestowing a sweet smile upon her. "I'm Alyn, your new neighbor. Who might you be?"

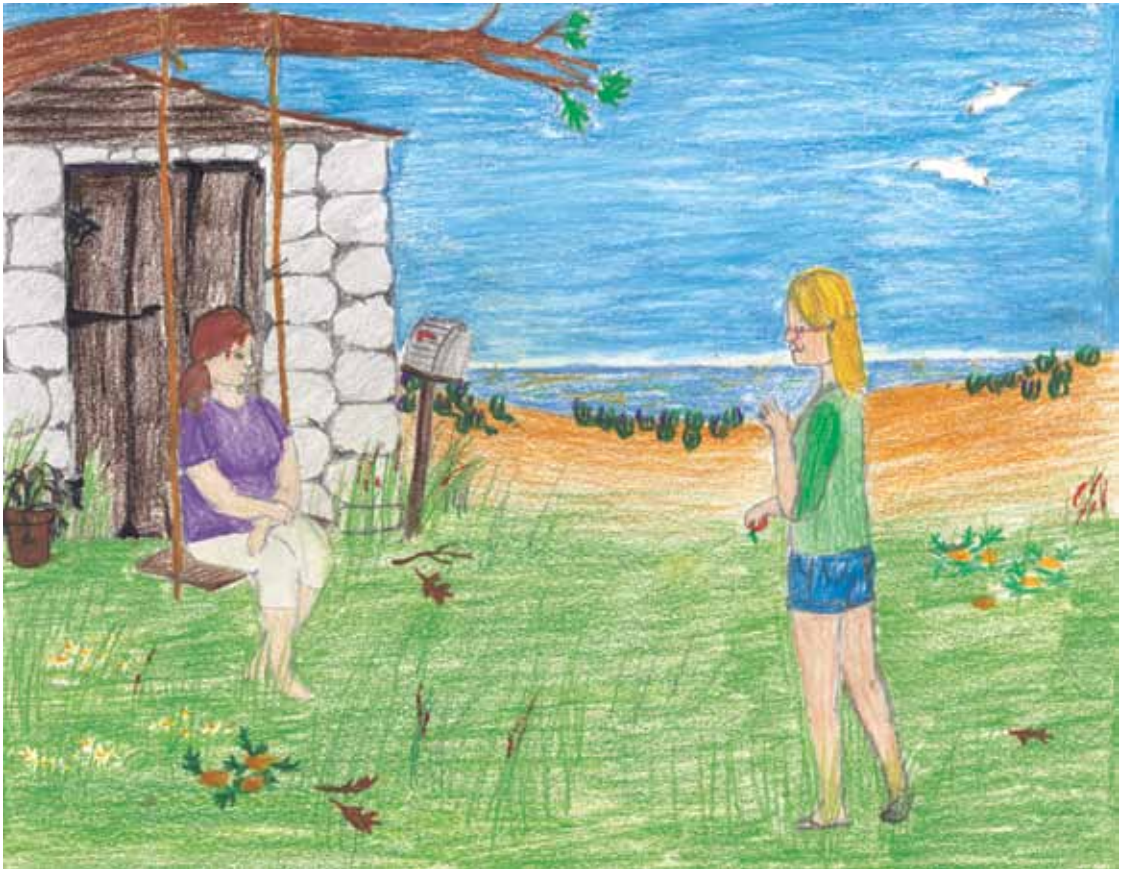
The woman muttered something inaudibly.

"Pardon?" Alyn asked politely.

The woman said slightly louder, "What a beautiful day it is today, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is," Alyn replied, trying hard not to grow too prideful for making a breakthrough.

Then the auburn-haired lady whirled around as quickly as a cheetah runs and snapped, "It was a rhetorical question." Then she stood up and hastily hurried



*"I'm Alyn, your new neighbor. Who might you be?"*

away.

"Wait a minute, please!" Alyn said. "What's your name?" The antisocial woman said nothing, although Alyn knew she heard. The gentle teenager very rarely became angry, so it was one of those infrequent moments when she began to fume.

How rude, Alyn thought. That uncivilized, odd, eccentric, impolite, introverted woman...!

It was at that very moment that Alyn's inquiring nature took control and decided she would find out her neighbor's name, and her background. Alyn was a very de-

termined and decisive girl, so once she set her mind to something, she wouldn't rest until the goal was reached.

**T**HAT NOSY, bratty, inquisitive teenager! the golden-eyed lady thought. How rude of her to be poking her nose into other people's business! Slamming the door of the shack behind her, the young woman collapsed on a beat-up couch.

I remember purchasing this sofa with Bryan, she reminisced, her mind tracing over every detail of that seemingly unim-

portant, yet immensely precious memory. I miss him so much; no one could ever understand me as well as he did. The young woman's face suddenly turned dark with anger. And I doubt anyone ever will try... not that I care, of course.

IT WAS TWO WEEKS since the Walker family had moved in, and the little cottage was starting to feel like home. On a particularly warm day, the humidity hung in the air like a canvas blanketing the earth, and laziness crept into the Walker house and everyone was soon in a relaxed and somewhat idle mood.

Alyn was lying on the fuzzy pink carpet in her bedroom, deeply involved in reading *Pride and Prejudice*. Her cotton-candy-pink glasses rested upon the bridge of her defined nose, magnifying each higher level word that she soaked in, hoping to use them in her own story that she was penning. The glass doors were open, allowing the stuffy room to air out a bit and for Alyn to glance outside whenever her eyes grew weary. As Alyn gazed out, giving her eyes a well-deserved rest, she saw the neighbor picking flowers and having a conversation with herself.

These eccentric acts made Alyn quiver, and she cautiously closed the doors and drew the curtain. Walking into the living room, where her parents were conversing, Alyn asked, "What's our neighbor's name?"

"I believe it's Tanya... no, Tammy. Oh dear, I don't remember," Mrs. Walker said, fanning herself with a magazine. "This

heat is too overpowering."

"It's Tara," Mr. Walker answered.

"She's quite an interesting character," Alyn admitted, using carefully chosen words so as not to insult Tara, for she had been brought up with the saying "If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all."

"Of course she is, dear," Mrs. Walker said. "I wouldn't doubt that you would be at least a bit reserved if your son and husband both died in a car accident."

"They both died? Where did you find this out?"

"We have spoken with her on occasion, and we've pieced together snippets of information," Mrs. Walker replied.

Alyn suddenly felt very poorly of what she had thought of Tara. Countless words, which now didn't seem to accurately describe the young woman, played through her head like a movie. Alyn felt miserable. How could she have thought that Tara was eccentric, uncivil, rude, and introverted without even knowing her full story? Much better words came to mind now: desolate, discouraged, companionless, and lonely. Tara probably needed a friend, or at least understanding.

"Mother, do you still have some of that banana bread you made?" Alyn asked.

"Yes, dear. Why?"

"I have an apology to make, and banana bread always causes the recipient to be in a more forgiving mood."

ALYN'S FRONT DOOR creaked as she opened it. Carefully balancing the

plate of banana bread in one hand, Alyn closed the door and stood up straighter.

"Be brave, be brave," she murmured to herself and walked steadily towards her neighbor's house before she could lose her courage. The fresh scent of the flowers wafted through the air, and the mossy fern brushed against her free hand, but Alyn was in no mood to enjoy a stroll through the garden. She was on an important mission, and she had made an indomitable decision to ask for forgiveness. There was no turning back now.

Alyn reached the broken door of the shack and politely knocked upon it. There was no answer, so she tried again, to no avail. Somebody stirred inside. Tara had most definitely heard Alyn; why didn't she answer the door?

Summoning up all of her courage like a shot-putter would gather up strength preparing to hurl the ball, she said, "Tara? It's me, Alyn. I know you probably don't want to talk to me, and you have a good reason not to. I've been really awful, and I assumed some things about you without getting to know you first. I see that I'm wrong now, and I'm really sorry." Alyn stared at the door, waiting for it to open, but it didn't. "Please, Tara. Can we be friends?"

There was a faint sniffing heard from inside the cottage. "Tara?" Alyn set down the banana bread and opened the door, too concerned about the young woman to consider manners. Tara was curled up in a

dark corner, crying, her golden eyes glimmering with tears.

"Did I say something?" Alyn asked, preparing to apologize for something else she apparently did wrong.

"Yes; you asked to be my friend," Tara whispered hoarsely.

"I'm sorry," Alyn atoned. "I didn't want to bother you. I'll just leave you..."


"No, wait!" Tara beckoned. "No one has ever cared that much about me since my husband and son died. No one has taken the time to want to get to know and understand me. I truly want to thank you, Alyn. Your kindness is refreshing, like a glass of cold lemonade on a hot summer day."

Alyn smiled, both at the compliment and at the simile used. "Do you always talk like that?"

"Yes, I am a poet. Poetry is my escape from the pain I've been shouldering for the past five years."

"There is no need to carry that burden alone, Tara," Alyn evangelized. "There are plenty who will assist you, including me."

Tara's golden eyes, once so fierce and now so gentle, gazed at Alyn. "I appreciate your understanding more than you will ever know. You are truly an angel in teenage clothes."

Alyn smiled humbly. Compassion and determination filled her soul. She would help her neighbor... no, she would help her friend. 



# The Whale

*By* Isaac Goodman

The whale gently glides across the surface  
his sad, long, moaning music enchants all he meets  
to rejoice the sound would be a wronging  
for he is sad, lonely, cold  
his sister has just lost her life  
and the two-legged ones did it  
an empty feeling embraces his head  
and the wind drowns out his thoughts  
as he peacefully swims away



photo: Eric Zelman

Isaac Goodman, 9  
Providence, Rhode Island

# Owl Eyes

By Noa Wang

*Illustrated by* Joan He



Noa Wang, 11  
Delta, British Columbia, Canada



Joan He, 13  
Wynnewood, Pennsylvania

I STOOD OUTSIDE the little store, waiting for my mother to come out. The golden sun had sunk behind the whispering branches of the pine trees. The moody sky had been dyed dark orange and gray, dotted with thin, wispy clouds. All the birds of the forest were silent and had hidden themselves, except for a single great-horned owl dozing in a tree. I shuffled my feet and the pebbles underneath my sneakers tumbled over each other, raising little clouds of gray dirt.

I wish Mom would hurry up, I thought. How long does it take to pay for firewood? I had been waiting there for fifteen whole minutes, according to my pale pink watch. I watched as the second hand ticked its way slowly around the face of the clock and finally decided that I had waited long enough.

"Mom," I hollered, poking my head through the door of the shop, "I'm going back to the tent by myself. I'm tired of waiting for you!" Without a second glance, I turned on my heel and sprinted down the dusty trail, the gravel crunching beneath my feet. As I ran, the cool autumn wind blew through my long hair, and I breathed in the rich, sharp scent of pine needles. Suddenly, I reached a fork in the trail, unsure of where I should go. I was pretty sure the campsite wasn't to my left, so I decided to take the right trail.

That part of the campground was darker, and the trees grew closer together. Vines and roots jutted out from the ground like mossy tentacles, making me trip and stumble. Minutes later, I heard a small splashing noise. Thinking that maybe it was my



*It cocked its head expectantly. Did it want me to follow it?*

father making soup over the campfire, I ran towards it. But it wasn't soup at all. It was a silvery blue stream, surrounded by muddy yellow weeds. I turned around and started walking in the direction I thought was the way back to the campsite. But wherever I went, the trees, grass,

roots and dirt looked exactly the same. Warm sweat started to trickle down my sides and make my shirt stick to my back.

When the sky was starting to turn dark gray, I heard a noise but I was too far away to make out what it was. When I approached the source of the sound, I

realized it was another stream. Then I saw the muddy, soggy weeds and realized with a jolt that this was the same stream I saw an hour ago. I was going in circles. If I was to continue like this, how would I find my way back to the tent? The sky had already darkened to a threatening shade of dark blue, and the full moon had taken the place of the setting sun. My heart thudded in my chest like a trapped bird. I heard a low rustling noise and spun around. Nothing was behind me. Just shadows and black trees, where anything could be hiding. Terrified, I sprinted away from where the noise came from. I ran past the dark pine trees, each one filled with leering, fanged faces and scaly corpses' hands reaching out towards me. Something wet and cold brushed against my hand, and I whimpered and ran faster.

Luminous, menacing red shapes filled the thick undergrowth, watching me dash past. When I dared look away from the glowing figures to glance up at the darkening sky, the stars became white-hot eyes glaring at me from above. Suddenly, a pair of huge, sharp yellow eyes snapped open above me. My heart stopped, and so did my feet. I watched as the two circles stared down at my face, and then one eye closed sleepily, and opened again. I then realized that those two eyes were not the eyes of a monster or devil, but the ones of an owl.

My eyes were slowly adjusting to the

darkness, and I could see that it was a Great Horned Owl. It spread out its wings, displaying its massive wingspan and black speckled feathers. All of a sudden, it soared towards my head. I ducked and watched it land on a branch to my left. It cocked its head expectantly. Did it want me to follow it? I didn't think owls were smart enough to lead someone home, but something about this bird just seemed... trustable. I hesitated and then took a few steps towards the bird. It took flight, soaring through the chilly night sky.

I stumbled blindly after the owl for what seemed like hours, my ankles becoming scratched and bruised from the rocks and thorns on the forest floor. I started thinking that I shouldn't have followed the owl and that I was simply too imaginative.

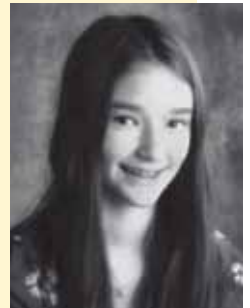
Suddenly, I heard people calling my name. Recognizing the voices of my parents, I raced towards the shouts, completely forgetting about the owl. I glimpsed my mother and father rushing through the trees at me with their arms outstretched, sobbing. As I was caught in their rib-crushing hug, I babbled to them about all that had just happened. Then my voice trailed off as I glimpsed a familiar pair of great yellow eyes peering out at me from a pine tree. But as soon as I laid eyes on those two shining stars, they blinked and disappeared into the night. ❁



# Camp

By **Kayla Walsh**

A bluish cabin near a quiet peaceful lake.  
Nothing, nothing at all could beat a place like this.  
Colorful sailboats glide along the silent water.  
A loon and its babies dive down to get a fish,  
Leaving a ripple in their place.  
Birds calling, a tree swaying,  
Laughter of my family fills the air.  
My feet run across the soft mossy and green grass,  
While playing with my dog.  
In this place, it makes me happy,  
Takes me away from all the dangers of the world.  
It protects me.  
I jump into the crystal-clear water.  
It refreshes me on a hot summer day.  
This place is better than an arcade or a water park.  
The hammock swings near the water,  
While hot dogs and hamburgers are grilling.  
It's old I know, but it's the best.  
It's Camp!



Kayla Walsh, 13  
Falmouth, Maine

# Splintery Embrace: A Memoir

By **Serena Alagappan**

*Illustrated by* **Emma Collington**



Serena Alagappan, 12  
New York, New York



Emma Collington, 13  
Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

**C**RUNCH. CRACK. The pavement gurgles under our car. My excitement turns the corners of my mouth up. We are going miniature golfing for the first time. I push the button to open the window. The crisp fall air lifts the pieces of hair that rest on my forehead. The light is like liquid, shimmering down from the sky. Everything is palpable. The royal, jade trees, the soft, quiet pale blue of the sky and the warmth of my rose-pink fleece sweatshirt on my skin.

We follow the wrong road and we don't see the right signs. Finally, after searching, we find our path. When we get to the park, there is a sign that reads, "Closed. Under Construction." I sigh as my breath circles around me. We get back into the car.

My mom announces that we are going to find Jones Beach. I wonder how we will swim in weather that bites at your face. We can't find Jones Beach but we find our way to Oyster Bay Beach. We go to an ice cream parlor near the sand. As we walk towards the boardwalk, I slip the blue plastic spoon into my mouth as the Oreo ice cream slides down my throat. I begin to skip but bend down to tie my blue-and-white sneakers perched on the ground like a blue jay's vibrant wing.


We walk as our feet tap on the wooden boards. The ocean wrinkles to my left and my sister walks next to me on my right. The wind blows through our ink-black hair and we all smile. We do not talk. The wind whispers secrets that we do not have to speak. The setting sun melts like sweet butter into the ocean.



*This day that we had not planned was perfect*

My thoughts wander and the boardwalk stretches far as if being pulled by a giant. I think about my birthday that just passed, and how I spent months planning it out to be perfect. In the end, it did not live up to the times and activities I had carefully laid out on paper. Now that I look back, how could a game end at a perfect hour and not interfere with the next activity? I had tried my hardest to anticipate the exactness of

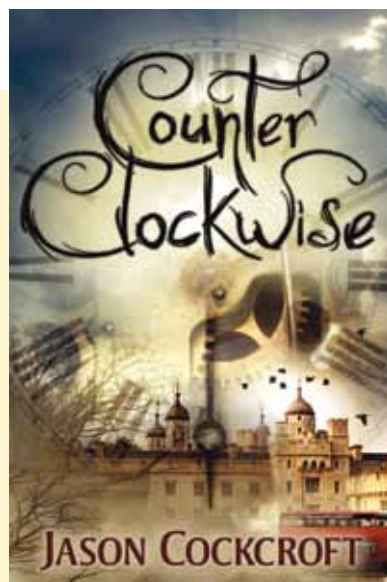
the special day but I had not succeeded.

We finally reach a bench next to a broad and aged tree a few feet off the boardwalk. The knotted roots tightly embrace the splintery edges of the bench. I sit down as the lowest branch gently grazes the top of my head. I squeeze my mom's hand tightly, look far out across the golden water and smile. This day that we had not planned was perfect. 

# Book Review

By Hayden Rasberry

*Counter Clockwise*, by Jason Cockcroft;  
Katherine Tegen Books: New York, 2009;  
\$15.99



Hayden Rasberry, 11  
Yarker, Ontario, Canada

**H**AVE YOU EVER read a book that has changed the way you look at your life? A book that opens your eyes? *Counter Clockwise* did that for me. Suddenly, you don't take everything for granted. Most days I wake up, look at the clock, get dressed and head downstairs. I am in the same house, same place; I am with the same people. It's a secure feeling, like a rooster crowing at the break of day. I always took that for granted, waking up in the morning and having a house and parents that care for you. I never quite realized how lucky I am, that my life is intact and doesn't just break apart suddenly. Like shattering a thin layer of ice.

But some people aren't so lucky. They set out one day and take the wrong step and suddenly things shatter. This happens in *Counter Clockwise*, by Jason Cockcroft. A bus that is just going too fast hits Cornelle, Nathan's mom. The bus tries to stop but it's too slippery, and right there in that split second life will never be the same for Nathan or his family. The author captured those seconds when the bus slides but can't stop. My heart beats as if I am there living the life of Nathan.


Every single person has the right to choose his or her step. As

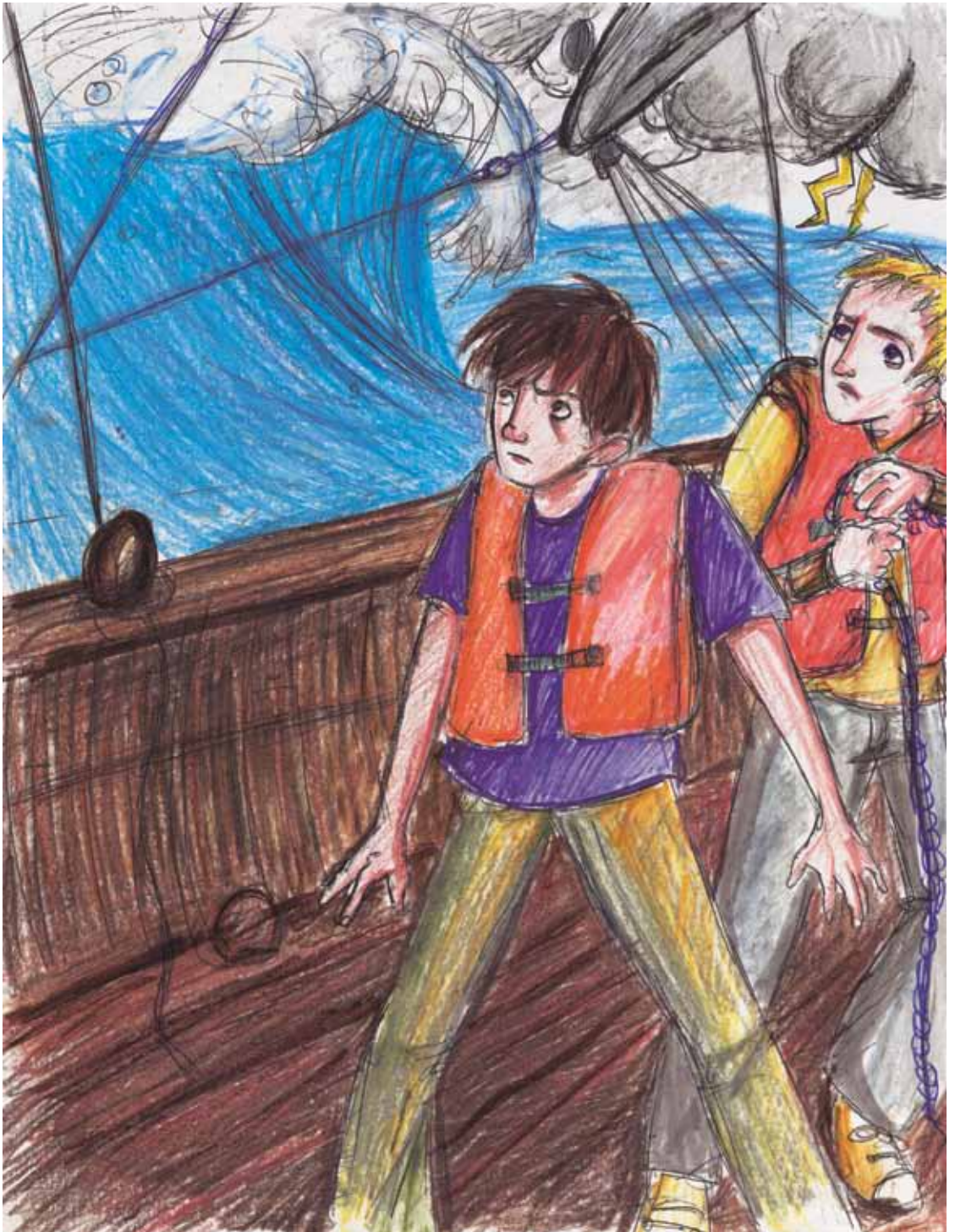


I write this I choose to tap this review out. I don't have to but I do. Changing the course of my life in a small way but still changing it. Anybody can accomplish anything because they choose the steps they walk. Nathan's mom made the wrong steps. Why does it have to happen to her? Only fate can tell. Nathan is overcome by grief; he can't understand why this had to happen to him.

One night after school he goes to a bonus class. By the time it's finished it's dark. As he waits for his dad, something odd happens. He meets a Beefeater who helps keep the crows away at the Tower of London. He remembers his father telling him his grandfather was a Beefeater. His dad was always embarrassed having his father dress up for a job; in Nathan's dad's view not even a job. The creature says his name is Bartelby. Nathan follows him and Bartelby starts changing the dates and papers at the school's office. Nathan tells him to stop. He says that Bartelby is ruining somebody else's work. Bartelby turns with a glint in his eye and says, "What would we do if everything were perfect?"

That line was interesting to read. It's true. What *would* we do if everything were perfect? In India they sew beautiful rugs. They purposely make a mistake so their work is not quite perfect. So the work has character.

Then something unimaginable happens, Bartelby takes Nathan back in time, counterclockwise, to the day his mother died. He is confused and scared. He walks along and sees his mother about to walk across the road. He runs toward her and then everything is a blur of sirens and shocked people. Nathan begins to move back and forth through time's mazes. Will Nathan lose himself in the past? Or will he be able to move forward, into the future? 



*It was one of those moments where everything seemed to happen in slow motion*

# Lost

By **Simon Brake**

*Illustrated by* **Hallie Schrieve**

**W**AVES POUNDED ON the sides of the boat like relentless punches, throwing the large craft off course. My uncle regained his footing on the drenched deck and forcefully guided the boat through the tormented sea. His black hair whipped around his face and his lips were set in a hard, thin line. All around me crates of life vests slid around the ship. I sidestepped one and lost my footing, tripping over the box. Above, lightning arched across the gray, stormy sky. I scrambled to my feet and glanced around, my senses alert. I spotted my cousin Trent twenty yards away. I ran up and helped him pull a long rope, trying to steady the sails from losing control in the wind. It was like playing tug-of-war with the Empire State Building. I firmly planted my feet on the deck and pulled with all of my strength. No use. Without my uncle it was hopeless. We both let go, defeated. I studied my cousin's face among the blinding mist. He looked worse than me, almost. His entire body was flushed from strain and his eyes told me that he was on the verge of fainting.

Just then, the boat lurched and dipped, threatening to turn over. A mountainous wave swelled next to the ship and crested, higher than the deck. It was one of those moments where everything seemed to happen in slow motion. The tension of foresight tightened my chest as the wave stumbled, losing its balance and crashing down onto the deck. I was flung, powerless, from my cousin, tumbling through the churning wave. I fought to gain control, but my minimal strength was nothing



Simon Brake, 13  
Gaithersburg, Maryland



Hallie Schrieve, 13  
Olympia, Washington

compared to the smashing force of the water. When the wave receded, I found myself lying face down near my uncle, who was clinging to the wheel.

"Go!" he shouted through the howling wind.

"*Wha-?*" I started to say, but then I saw what my uncle meant. Trent was clinging to the back of the mermaid statue protruding from the front of the ship out over the water. It didn't look like he was going to be able to hold on much longer. I raced to the prow, slipping more than once. With no energy left, I hoisted myself up onto the mermaid and, promising myself I wouldn't look down, crawled slowly towards my cousin. He was straddling the statue, his arms wrapped around her neck. I prayed I'd reach him in time; the wooden ship had become so slippery it was a wonder he was still with us. I moved slowly out over the water. I couldn't help looking down, despite my promise. Fear gripped me in a choke hold. My stomach seemed to be trying to throw itself up, stuffing itself in my throat. I couldn't do it.

Then, a second tidal wave hit the craft. The ship bobbed threateningly and I lost my grip, slipping off the statue. I closed my eyes, and I couldn't breathe. Instinctively, I swung my arm backward for support and managed to grab the ship. Digging my fingers in the wet wood, I used the siding of the boat to support myself while I swung my free foot over the railing of the boat. When I was safely on deck, my next thought was about Trent.

There was no way he could have made it. I stared into the crashing sea and knew what I had to do. I rushed over to the emergency life craft and struggled inside. Then I took a life vest and secured it on my shoulders and took out my pocket-knife. Furiously, I worked on the ropes suspending the small craft until finally they snapped and sent me plummeting down into the violent waters of the sea.

I spotted Trent a few yards away in his neon-yellow shirt. I paddled furiously with paddles from the lifeboat, but the waves, which now seemed to have tripled in size, consistently sent me spinning off course. Blinded by fatigue, I gave one final push before I reached him, gliding next to him among the choppy waters. I extended one hand out to pull him toward the lifeboat, but I realized I had no strength left. I barely had enough to breathe. No, I told myself, neither one of us is going to die. My fingers felt the fabric of his shirt. Come on, come on, come on...

**T**HE NEXT THING I knew, I was lying in the bottom of the lifeboat, Trent next to me. I immediately bolted upright, but a sharp pain in my head made me stumble backward for support. I looked around. Everything was blurry but coming back into focus. The storm seemed to have subsided, but I had completely lost my bearings. All around me was open sea. There was no sign of my uncle's ship anywhere. Strike that. There was no sign of life anywhere save the unconscious form of my cousin lying unceremoniously in



the bottom of the lifeboat with me. The lifeboat was a tiny, sleek design painted white. It had a small, weak motor in the back and a small tin box with first-aid equipment.

I turned back to Trent. He was starting to come to, shaking his head slowly. His eyelids fluttered open and he too was greeted by a splitting headache.

"Ahh, ow!" he said.

"Trent," I breathed, relieved to see him awake.

"I... not..."

"Calm down," I said gently. "We're OK."

"Is Uncle Frank...?"

"I don't know. I don't know where we are or he is. I was out cold too for a while."

"We're lost, aren't we?"

It was quite the inconvenient truth. I slumped over, defeated. This was not how it was supposed to be. When Uncle Frank suggested that Trent and I come along in his authentic 1700s-design tourist ship for a spin a few miles into the sea, getting lost in the middle of the ocean with no signs of anything for miles and miles round was not part of the equation.

"We need to get back to land," Trent said clearly.

"Yeah, maybe we can signal the coast guard or something," I said.

"Here," Trent said, "it's getting darker, right?"

"Right."

"Isn't the sun supposed to set in the west?"

"Trent! You're a genius!"

"Well, if we set sail off of the east coast..."

"We follow the setting sun to get back to land." Ahhh. I could breathe easily again. We would make it.

We gunned up the motor in the back of the boat and we made a slow and steady pace toward the setting sun. The sunset was truly beautiful out on the ocean, but there was still a certain tension that limited conversation between Trent and me. We both knew that we wouldn't be sure that we would come out on top of this situation until we found help. Or at least I did. I envied how quickly Trent had come up with the solution for navigation. If only I had that kind of simple attentiveness in a crisis. But emotions soon weren't my only problem. Glancing over at Trent, I could tell that he too was resisting the urge to voice the hunger clawing at his stomach.

"Uhh. You hungry?" I asked tentatively.

"Yeah," he said, seemingly relieved that I had brought it up first. "They didn't happen to pack pizza and sodas in that survival kit, did they? If not, I guess I could settle for some KFC, but I don't think they have any floating locations yet. I'll keep my eye out." There it was again. Attempts at humor where all I could see and feel was an empty horizon. Come to think of it, the sun had almost disappeared from the horizon and it was starting to get seriously dark.

"Not sure we could fish this time of day," I said. It felt good to voice my con-



cern without revealing how scared I actually was.

"No, I suppose not," Trent said. "I guess we just hit the hay early tonight. Or soggy hay as it were." I couldn't help the twitch in the corner of my mouth at this crack. I always knew Trent was the kind of person who you'd want on your team in a worst-case scenario. Now I have first-hand proof to back it up.

THE MORNING was hot. Like, I could cook... no... I could *burn* pancakes on my forehead kind of hot. Trent helped me set up a makeshift tent with our ponchos, but this only provided a minimal amount of protection from the heat. The fact was, we needed food and water immediately. Yesterday, the movement of the boat from the motor provided a little breeze, but we hadn't turned the motor on for today yet to conserve as much gas as possible. Now, I wasn't even sure I could move out of the little shade I could get to turn the motor on. Both Trent and I had splitting headaches from heat prostration and I felt like I was going to throw up if I didn't get any food. So this is what starving means, I thought. My parents had always reprimanded me when I said the word starving because they said that I didn't know what it really meant to starve. Now, having planned a late lunch on Uncle Frank's boat, now, having eaten my last small meal at breakfast yesterday, it being late in the afternoon of the day after, I knew a little bit of what it means to starve. I looked around. The waves

seemed to be getting larger; the sun was definitely starting to shine brighter. Trent was asleep next to me, or was he dead? Was I dead? I must be. Or I must be *dying* anyway. I tried to sort through all of these broken thoughts, but I couldn't control my one strongest urge: thirst. If I was to stay alive, I needed to do something about it.

I emptied the first-aid box and filled the lid with ocean water. Looking into the grayish saltwater I knew that I would have to clean the water before I drank, but cleaning meant boiling, and boiling meant fire, and fire was dangerous to start on a small ship. But no fire meant no water, no water meant no drinking, and no drinking meant serious dehydration, which could also be dangerous. So I went with the obvious choice and started to build a fire.

I used the tin box as a tiny fire pit because I knew the tin wouldn't burn up as easily. For kindling, I took my pocket-knife and shaved off some curls of wood from the wooden oars in the lifeboat. Once I had a decent pile of shavings, I got ready to light the fire. With what, I didn't know.

I had heard of people concentrating the sun's heat with a magnifying glass and starting a fire so I thought I'd try it. I had plenty of heat, but the magnifying glass was a problem. I looked around for one in the pile of first-aid equipment I had piled on the deck, but nothing looked remotely like a magnifying glass. I sat back down under the shade to think. There had to

be something I could use to start a fire on the boat. Then I had it.

I took a plastic baggie of Band-Aids from the pile of first-aid junk and emptied it. Then I stretched it across the mouth of the makeshift tin fire pit, securing it with medical tape. Taking the lid full of ocean water, I carefully poured a little onto the baggie, creating a small puddle suspended over the wood shavings. I had seen water used for magnifying purposes, so I was sure my plan would work. I soon found out that, regardless of it working or not, I didn't have the patience for it. I shook Trent awake so he could keep watch while I slept. Sleep, it turned out, didn't happen to be the right word. I was awakened not five minutes later, it seemed, by a voice yelling in my ear.

"Look! Come on! Look at this!"

I wasn't sure whether I was more happy or annoyed, but regardless, I sprang up and scrambled out of the shade as quick as I could. Trent showed me what he was yelling about. There, amongst the curls of wood, was a small, fluttering flame.

"Come on, come on!" I coaxed it.

"We'll need to blow on it to make it spread," Trent said. He removed the plastic baggie, careful not to spill any water on the fire, and lowered his head to blow. Just then the wind changed directions and our little flame shivered and died out. So did all of my hope for clean water.

"It's OK," said Trent, "we'll just try to..."

"No! It's not OK!" I said, looking Trent in the eye. "Are you even thirsty?"

"Well, yeah, but..."

"But what? I'm going to die if I don't get water! Then what!?"

"Listen," Trent said calmly, "we are going to get water. We just need something to spread the fire quickly, like gasoline."

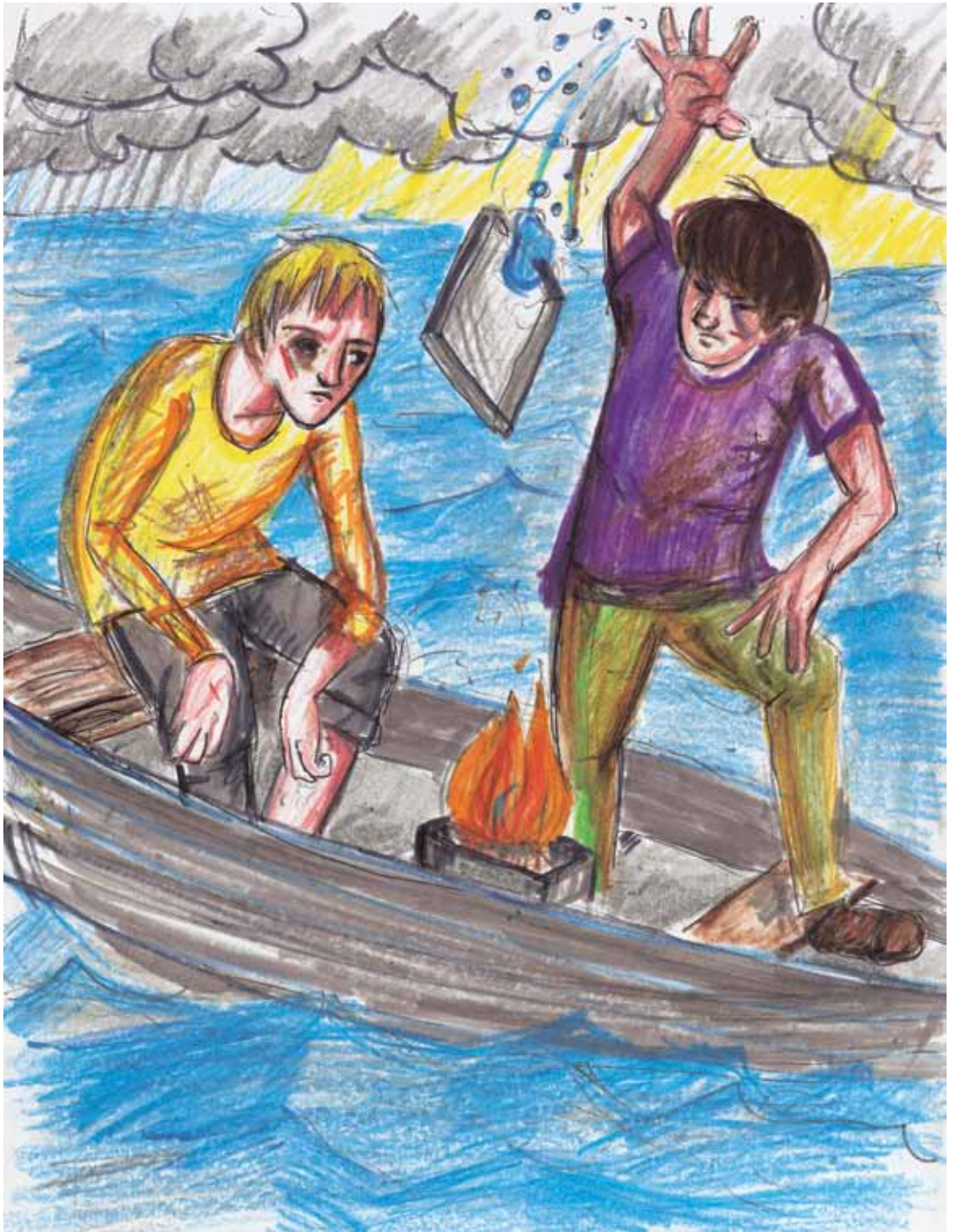
"Well that's great that we have so much of that because I was wondering what we were going to do with it all!" I said sarcastically.

"But we *do* have gasoline," Trent said, "in the motor."

I didn't say anything. I hate being made to look like a fool, but whenever I'm around Trent that seems to be the norm.

"All we have to do is get something to suction the gas out of the valve," Trent was continuing. I walked over to the pile of first-aid stuff and found a syringe. I tossed it over to Trent, who looked at me curiously, then settled on nodding in response. I could tell he wasn't sure what was going on in my head, and to be honest I didn't know very well either. I was just stressed. It's not every day that you have to survive on your own in the middle of nowhere. It took some time to clear through my thoughts, but when Trent came back a second time with the syringe full of gasoline, I was ready to talk.

"Look. Trent. About what I said. I guess I didn't really mean to blow up at you like that. I'm sorry." At first he just ignored me, replacing the baggie and making a new puddle. But then he turned toward me and stared. I could see his eyes searching me again. He looked thoughtful



*All that work was a waste. And now I was practically dying of thirst and of the heat*

for a moment, and then sat down.

"I think I know how you feel," he said. I couldn't meet his gaze, but I could feel his eyes like lasers on me. "You're worked up," he continued, "so you wanted to yell at somebody, and for obvious reasons I was chosen as the lucky target." I laughed. Trent grinned. As much as I sometimes didn't want to admit it, he was a pretty cool guy.

"Thanks for helping me out with the gasoline. It's just that, sometimes I wish I could come up with a good idea," I said. Trent chuckled.

"What about this little fire pit?" he asked. "That was a good idea! What about leaving Uncle Frank to come save me? That was a good idea! I won't let you sit there and say that me being alive was the result of a bad idea!"

That's when a new fear gripped me.

"Trent," I said tentatively, "Do you think Uncle Frank is OK?"

Trent looked off into the distance for a while before speaking. "I think so. He knew his way around the ocean. I'm sure he came out on top."

"I guess," I said halfheartedly. I would have just sat there, forming my thoughts into something concrete, but just then I saw a flash of yellow coming from the tin box. Trent rushed to undo the tape and removed the plastic baggie, letting the flame sprout up to its full size. Then I grabbed the two oars and laid them across the boat so they were suspended by the walls on either side. Trent took the lid off the tin box, filled it with a fresh scoop of

seawater and placed it onto the two parallel oars.

We stood staring into the water for what seemed like eternity, eagerly awaiting bubbles to appear. I was getting sweatier and thirstier by the minute and was ready to take a swig of the water whether it was clean or not. Then tiny bubbles started forming at the bottom of the tin lid. A few more minutes and they started floating to the top, bringing the water to a rolling boil. We let the water boil for a bit, then took it off. It was far too hot to drink, so we had to continue to wait. Now I was starting to go seriously out of control. My throat had thoroughly dried out, my forehead was thoroughly drenched with sweat, and a piercing headache pinched at my skull. Finally, I had had enough and shook up an instant cold compress from the first-aid kit and dropped it into the water. This would have to work. After five more minutes of sheer torture, we decided to try out our water. I took the first tentative sip and then spat it out immediately. I'm not sure if I expected the salinity of the ocean water to disappear when I boiled it, but it sure hadn't. All that work was a waste. And now I was practically dying of thirst and of the heat. I swung back and sent the tin lid spinning off into the water. I wanted to scream, but my throat was too dry.

"Hey!" Trent yelled. I turned toward where he was standing by the fire. The flames had spread out of the box and onto the wooden deck. I leaned over the side

of the boat and scooped some water into my hands and then dumped it over the crackling flames. The only reaction was a slight sizzling. I glanced around for something to scoop water with, but my hands were still all I found.

Scoopful after scoopful of water still didn't do much work on the fire, and it was starting to spread all over the front half of the boat. We would have to try something else.

"Trent! Over here!" I called. I told him my plan. We took one of the ponchos from our makeshift shade and held it like a sack. We both lowered it into the sea and came up with a good five times the amount of water I could get from my hand-scoop. Carefully maneuvering the poncho, we brought it over to the fire and realized with a sickening sensation that the boat was already tilting. We splashed the fire with the water from the poncho and most of the fire died out. By the time we came back with the second poncho-full, the fire had spread up the side of the boat, making holes in it. We dumped the water, and the fire was gone for good.

Trent and I sighed at the same time because we both realized what was about to happen. The boat was beginning to sink.

"Come on!" I yelled to Trent. "Get my life jacket on!"

"OK! Get ready to use the old fire pit to bail out some water!" The whole boat was tilting forward menacingly, and, soon enough, water began to wash onto the deck. I started to scoop water out of the boat, but I soon realized that I wasn't get-

ting anywhere. The water was just coming in too fast.

"Trent," I yelled, "come and help me!"

"With what?" he asked as he stumbled over to me.

"I don't know! Just help me!" We both worked furiously, but while our strength came to an end, the water didn't. I stood panting, water up to my knees.

"This is hopeless," I said to Trent. He nodded.

"We'll have to just sit at the back of the boat where the shade is." That's what we did. I was genuinely afraid and genuinely in pain as we watched our tiny boat fill with water. My head was splitting open, and I was soaked with sweat and dirty water. That's when we felt the whole boat sink. The deck fell away from our feet and we were left in water, in the middle of nowhere. I struggled to stay on top of the water, but I was quickly losing strength. I floated on my back for a while, but I was becoming restless. I could never be truly comfortable floating around in the middle of the ocean without a life jacket. Trent paddled over to me.

"Do you want the life jacket for a little bit?" he asked. I nodded, and he slipped the orange vest off and handed it over to me. I buckled it across my chest and tightened the straps. Though I could float now without effort, I was still feeling uncomfortable.

"Trent," I said, "we can't stay this way forever, floating across the Atlantic."

"Hey," he said, "someone's bound to find us sooner or later." I sure hoped so.



It was already starting to get dark, and I could see that Trent didn't have a whole lot of strength left either.

The waiting was torture for me, and I could tell it was even worse for Trent without a life jacket. He looked at me pleadingly. "I can't do this anymore," he said, "I'm too tired!" He fought to keep his head above the water, but he was soon overpowered, sinking down beneath the surface.

"Trent!" I yelled, but I knew he couldn't hear me from below the water. I dived under and felt around in the water for a piece of his shirt, but I couldn't find one. I came up for air and saw Trent bob up to the surface, his face still submerged. Two powerful strokes brought me over to Trent, and I struggled to support his head above the water.

"Breathe, Trent! Breathe!" I murmured, crushed under his weight. I could feel some shallow breathing in his lungs, but he still wouldn't come to. I tried smacking him repeatedly in the face, but he gave no response. By now, I wasn't strong enough to support myself, much less Trent on top of me, but I circled my arms around his chest and kept him safely above the water.

"Help!" I cried out. I didn't know who I was calling to, but I yelled anyway.

"Help!" I cried again. I felt tears gathering in my eyes and my vision went blurry. I couldn't do this anymore. I released Trent and floated on my back, crying large, hot tears. That's when I felt as if darkness was closing in on me, saw the shadow of a large ship looming over, and heard a long, low sound of a horn shake the air.

"Coast guard," I breathed.



# The Way Life Should Be

*By* Nicky Cannon



Nicky Cannon, 12  
Dallas, Texas

Secluding ourselves by a fire,  
Cherishing a novel.

Burning rubber under us,  
As wind whips our face.

Embracing in a hug,  
When one has not seen  
The other for years.

Smiling, laughing, splashing,  
As icy water slithers up our bodies.

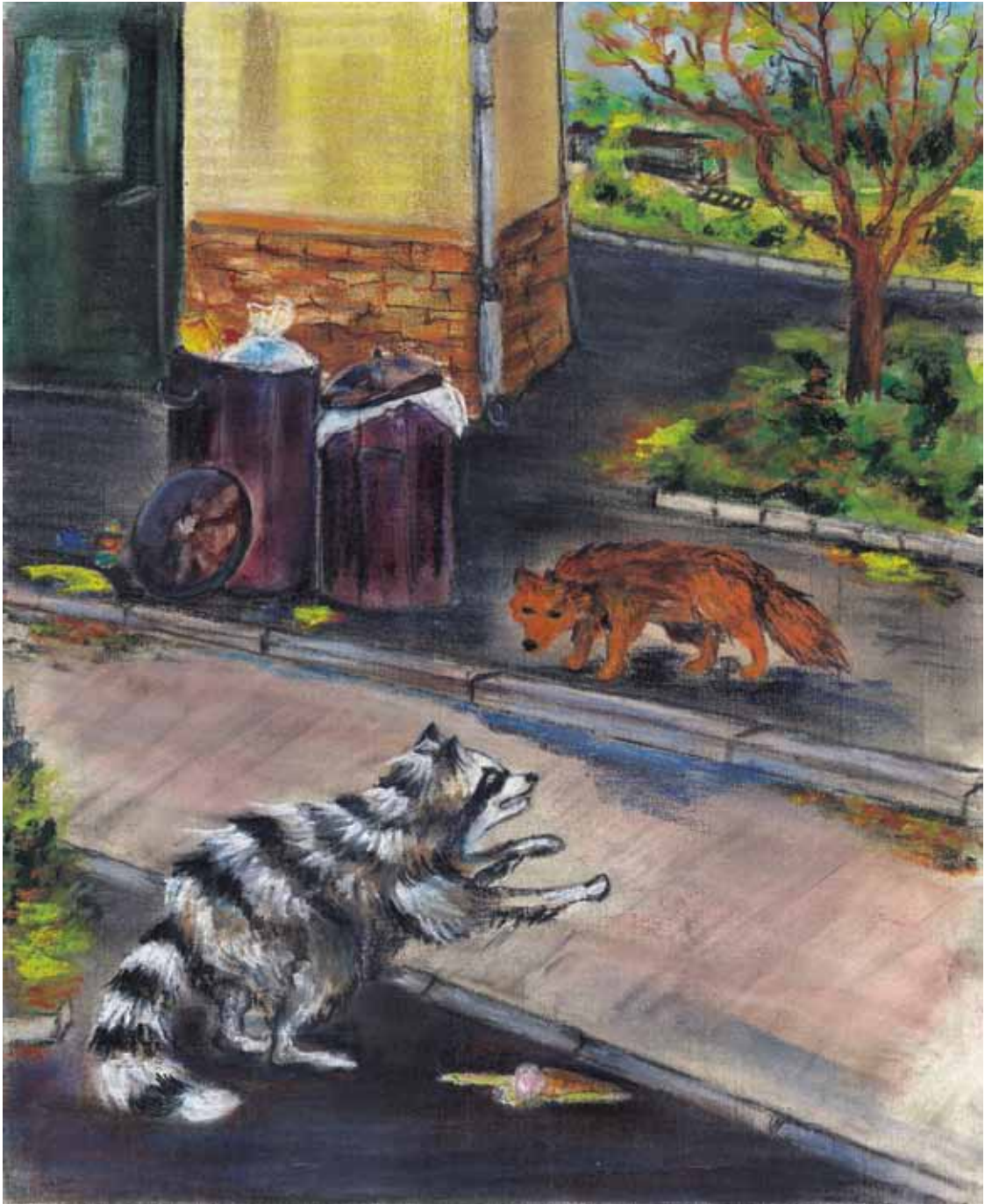
Savoring arctic-cold lemonade,  
On a blistering summer day.

A refined voice departing your throat,  
As a thunderous boom of applause  
Emits from the audience.

Doing whatever appeals to you,  
Without any consequences.

This is the way life should be,  
This is the fictional world  
That we pray becomes reality.

But an alarm rings madly,  
And my wondrous dream comes to an end.



*For a minute there was no sound except for the cold breath of the wind*

# Cry of the Wild Heart

By **Mary Woods**

*Illustrated by* **Dominic Nedzelskyi**

**T**HE SMALL, RAGGED fox trotted along in the dry brush near the train track, head low and ears flattened. His scruffy, dirty, brown coat ruffled slightly in the cold mid-October wind. His alert, dark eyes were half-closed, giving the fox a sharp, hooded gaze. Though barely a foot-and-a-half high, everything about him was tough and quick.

He was hungry. The fox lifted his slim muzzle to the wind and sniffed deeply, hoping to catch the whiff of a mouse or a fat starling waddling along the tracks. No other animal was nearby, but there was something tantalizing in the air...

He leaped out of the dry bracken and onto the great ridge of white gravel, upon which the railroad tracks lay. Here the fox could have a better view of his surroundings and could better smell more distant odors. Again he snuffed the breeze, short, stiff whiskers trembling. Yes, he could smell it, quite clearly now. It was coming from a small grocery store, from its open garbage cans.

The fox left the tracks and with a steady, quick dog-trot headed towards the store. He didn't mind scavenging—it was certainly easier than hunting, but he preferred fresh meat any day. Still, there were some foods in those garbage cans that he couldn't get enough of—like the salty potato chip crumbs at the bottoms of those funny crinkly bags.

As he neared the grocery store, his ears pricked at the sound of a terrific crash. The fox pushed aside the dry brush, rather startled, but curious.



Mary Woods, 12  
Frankfort, Illinois



Dominic Nedzelskyi, 11  
Keller, Texas



A big male raccoon sat in a jumble of aluminum canisters, banana peels, old eggshells and moldy bread. In his paws was a half-eaten ice cream cone, which he gnawed on with relish. Glancing up for a moment, the raccoon spotted the fox standing in the bracken. He dropped his treat and growled, ready to defend his supply of food.

The fox barked back his challenge, teeth bared, and moved forward. Brute strength would not be enough in this battle, he knew. The raccoon was much larger than he. But wit and agility were also valuable traits, and these the fox had.

The two wild creatures circled each other, occasionally making experimental snaps and lunges. The raccoon was stronger, younger, and larger than his adversary. But the fox was wiry, swift, and experienced in fighting. For a minute there was no sound except for the cold breath of the wind. Then the raccoon sprang.

The fox easily evaded the attack with a leap of his own. He sailed clear over his enemy's head, landed on the other side, then whirled back and nipped his hind-quarters. The raccoon squealed. Claws out and ready, he made a swipe for the fox's head. But it only connected with hard ground. Again the smaller, quicker creature spun about, then returned, nipping and tormenting.

A second time the raccoon dashed to get away. Then, he made a maneuver that was surprisingly quick. He turned swiftly and made a dart at his rival's side.

Teeth sank into the fox's leg and warm

blood spilled onto his paw. Wrenching himself away, the fox leaped on the coon's back, clawing and snapping.

Suddenly he was rolling over and over, gray fur in his mouth, claws in his face, teeth in his shoulder. He lashed out with one front paw, but it found nothing. Then he kicked sharply with both hind legs, slashing the raccoon's belly.

There was a sound somewhere between a growl and a shriek. The coon untangled himself from the fray and bolted for the underbrush.

The fox stood still for a moment, panting, as he watched this retreat. When he was sure that the enemy was not returning, he licked his new battle scars and settled himself down for an excellent meal.

IT WAS A QUIET, misty autumn twilight when the fox began to make his way towards his den. All day he had scouted his territory, checking boundaries and making sure that no intruder fox had invaded. It was not a large territory, but he knew every inch of it well—the best places to hunt, the deepest shadows where he could lie undetected, the busy streets where cars roared constantly. The latter he avoided. The fox only saw humans at a distance and concluded that they did not concern him much.

He pressed on, paws flashing back and forth in that mile-eating dog-trot. He sniffed the fine drizzly rain, listened to a few bedraggled sparrows chirping in the brush nearby. He did not stop to hunt them, though. His belly was full.

As he approached the small tangle of young trees, the fox halted and peered nervously over his shoulder, making sure no creature saw him. But he was alone.

The fox gracefully leaped through a gap in the thicket and tumbled into his close, grassy den. After a moment, he lay down and curled into a ball. He nosed at the rags and dry leaves on the ground, tucking them around his ragged fur to keep warm. Finally, he fell into a deep sleep.

**T**HE NEXT MORNING, he slowly awoke to sunlight filtering into his den. Rising, and shaking his fur free of dried leaf bits, he stepped freshly out into the cold early morn.

A silver fog blanketed the world. No birds twittered; not a breath of wind stirred the fallen leaves scattered about the ground. The dry, bare plants seemed to shiver, though they did not move. At that moment the sun's edge peeked over the horizon, tinting the eastern sky with gold. The light spread wide into every corner. The air itself glittered, as if thick with golden dust. The fox lifted his head, breathing in the magic of the silent dawn.

A late robin suddenly let his flowing melody loose. It was as if a cord had been snapped. The mist cleared, the magic faded, and small morning sounds pervaded the air. The fox swept a dingy tail across his legs and licked his chops, ready for breakfast.

He first headed towards the railroad tracks, ears forward and listening. He could hear many birds singing in the

brush, but what he craved today was a sweet, tender mouse. The fox crept silently through a gap in the bracken. Then he leaped gracefully onto the white gravel ridge and crouched down upon the rusty train tracks. The fox lay stock-still—and waited.

There! A tiny brown mouse flitted nervously from shadow to shadow only a few yards away, approaching a discarded, muddy hot dog bun. The fox shifted his gaze to the rodent, and his muscles tensed imperceptibly.

The mouse skittered closer. A train whistled in the distance.

The fox never let his eyes off his prey. The mouse seemed faintly aware that she was being watched, and for several moments froze and sniffed the air. But the fox was downwind and undetectable. The tiny creature crawled near the hot dog bun and began to eat.

Another train whistle pierced the air, closer this time. Though the ground trembled faintly, the fox did not move. The mouse continued to nibble, shiny, dark eyes peering nervously round. A third time the train shrieked, and the tracks shook under the fox's feet. But he barely noticed. The rodent, however, was unnerved. She sidled away.

*Now!* the fox thought. He leaped into the air...

Suddenly a great force slammed into his hind legs. He was whirled off the tracks, skidded across the gravel and into the underbrush. For a minute the fox lay there, his hind legs numb from impact.

Then pain, unbearable pain, shot up his paw like searing fire, blotting every other thought from his mind. His sight wavered—and went dark.

WHEN THE FOX awoke, everything was strange. It was dark and stuffy. The ground underneath him was of unknown material, and everything vibrated violently. His hind legs throbbed in agony. Where was he? Feebly, he sniffed the air.

The overwhelming scent of humans filled his nostrils, bewildering him. Why was he trapped? Never before had he been this helpless.

The fox tried to stand, but his legs utterly and painfully failed him. At last he curled up in a corner of his strange prison, whimpering as the world around him shuddered and jolted.

AFTER SOME TIME, the vibrating stopped. He sensed the movement of an unseen creature outside, and suddenly the box was lifted up. Where was he going now? He felt a faint breeze through a crack in the box and heard a familiar sound—cars rushing back and forth over a road.

Suddenly a door creaked open, and a light shone through the crack. There was an urgent babble of human voices as his box was whisked through a new, strange-smelling world. After a few moments, he was set down. The box opened, and two white-gloved hands reached inside.

He was too weak to fight. The hands

snatched him up and placed him under an unbearably bright light. Then he felt a sharp sting in his shoulder.

Suddenly he felt quite drowsy. The light and the two humans faded from sight. Darkness blurred his mind.

THE NEXT MORNING, the fox awoke to warm sunshine. For a moment he fancied he was in his cozy thicket—then his paw scraped against cold metal.

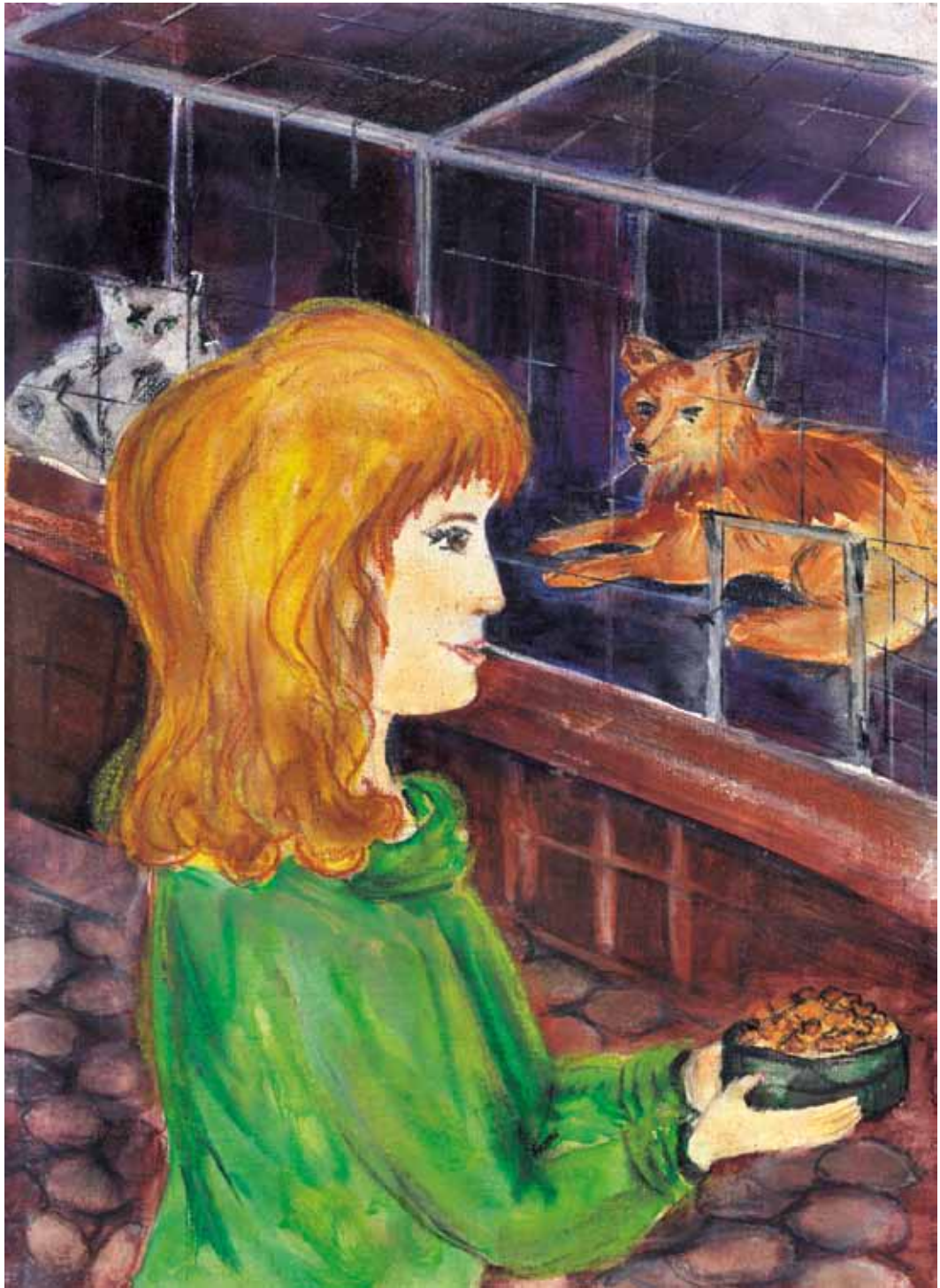
His eyes opened wide with fear. He was sitting in another box of some sort, but its walls were made of thin, metal bars. Two bowls stood in a corner. Where was he? Sniffing at the side of the strange box, he scratched at it with his claws. The wire rattled, awakening a small, fierce kitten in the adjacent cage. The tiny feline hissed, green eyes shooting sparks. The fox retreated. A terrier somewhere below him began barking incessantly. The fox's mind spun as he looked out on the scene in front of him.

Rows upon rows of cages lined the walls of the large, white room. Behind the wires were whining puppies and wide-eyed cats. The noise was unbelievable. Where had all these animals come from? Why were they trapped?

At last, bewildered and frightened, the fox shrunk into a corner and curled into a ball, trying to shut out this alien world.

At that moment a door swung open and he heard human footsteps. All the dogs began barking at once.

"Breakfast's comin', pups, just wait a sec," a cheerful voice called. The fox



*"Hey, little Red, I won't even touch you. Here—hungry?"*



heard cage doors opening, then closing again. What was going on? Carefully he peeked out.

A human face loomed over him. Her golden-brown hair lay in soft curls about her shoulders, and her brown eyes sparked with laughter. She spoke kindly, but the fox considered her only his captor. Fur bristling in terror, ears flattened, he pressed against the side of the cage.

“Hey, little Red, I won’t even touch you. Here—hungry?” The woman took one of the bowls, filled it with something, and put it back. “It’s all right,” she murmured. Then she closed the door and moved on.

Suspiciously, Red began to move forward. His back legs felt strangely stiff, though they no longer pained him. He turned and sniffed curiously at them. Both his hind legs were covered in a peculiar, hard material. The fox scratched at it, but the encasement would not come off. Whimpering, he stumbled across the cage floor until he reached the bowls.

One was full of water, which he lapped at nervously. The other was filled with strange brown pebbles that smelled faintly of meat. Having an empty stomach, Red tried a mouthful.

Dryness coated his tongue as he attempted to swallow the strange food. It nearly choked him. He quickly drank again, then retreated to the back of the cage and slept out his fear.

OVER THE NEXT week or so, Red learned the routine of his new life.

In the morning, the woman would come, fill his bowls with water and the dry, crunchy pebbles. She would come in the evening, too, and do the same. The rest of the day he spent lying listlessly in his cage, biting at the hard covering on his hind legs. He longed to run once more with the breeze, and stalk again in the shadows. But here, there was no waving bracken, no small, timid prey—and he could not run.

He was so downhearted that he stopped eating and only drank when his throat pained him from thirst. Red slept away the unchanging days.

So he was greatly surprised when the woman, one morning, picked him up out of his cage and carried him away. He did not struggle in her arms—he had long since learned that she would bring him no harm.

After traversing a maze of flawlessly clean hallways, the woman entered a small room and set him on the table. As the bright light from above focused upon him, the fox remembered his first experience here. Then, just as before, there was a prick in his shoulder—and all went black.

WHEN RED AWOKE, he was in the dark, stuffy box that jolted and bounced. But he was no longer frightened. Nor was he glad to be away from his wire cage. He simply no longer cared to live, if it was a life in imprisonment.

Then suddenly the jolting stopped. After a moment, the woman opened the box and lifted him out.





*He let out a bark of joy and leaped into the crisp, clear air*

“Here we are, Red—your new home. It’s not what you’re used to, but maybe—you’ll like it.” She stepped out of the van and set Red on the ground.

The fox stared around him in amazement. He stood at the edge of a snowy forest. The sky was cloudy, and a small breeze played about his muzzle. The wind! He had almost forgotten the feel of it. He let out a bark of joy and leaped into the crisp, clear air.

As he landed, it suddenly struck him—his legs! He turned and softly licked them. No longer did they pain him, and the hard encasement had been removed. *He could run!*

Red was about to dash off into the still,

silver woods, when the woman stepped up quietly beside him. The fox turned to her. He now knew—and was grateful. He looked into her soft-featured face, while his dark eyes silently said—*thank you*.

The woman did not respond, but she understood. There was a moment more of quiet... then at last she turned and climbed back into her van. “Goodbye, little Red,” she whispered. Then the motor rumbled to life, and she drove away, leaving the fox alone at the edge of the forest.

Red looked into its shadowy depths and thought about the dangers here—other foxes, wildcats, perhaps even bears. But he was free. And for now, that was he all he needed. ❁

# Book Review

By Leah Wolfe

*Slept Away*, by Julie Kraut; Delacorte Books for Young Readers: New York, 2009; \$8.99.



Leah Wolfe, 12  
Florham Park, New Jersey

WHEN I FIRST picked up *Slept Away* at the bookstore, I expected it to be a fun, entertaining story, and it's that plus more. In addition to being amusing and lighthearted, this book holds a meaningful message about society, and particularly popularity.

All Laney Parker knows is New York City. It's her home, where she's lived all of her fifteen years. Summer's approaching, and she's looking forward to lounging around in luxury by a beautiful pool with her best friend, Kennedy. She'll sleep in late every morning, hit all of the huge parties thrown by her peers, and maintain her reputation, while relaxing under the sun for a couple of months. It'll be a great relief from the stress of the school year.

But her mother has different ideas. *Wham*—Laney's awesome and lazy summer plans go down the drain as she's faced with six weeks of misery and torture at a summer camp called Timber Trails in Pennsylvania.

No matter how much she kicks and screams and protests, Laney is thrown way out of her familiar, busy city environment into a rural campsite with no air-conditioning, a cabin she has to share with a few cruel strangers, and chocolate only twice a week! How will she survive? Although this pampered princess


may be overreacting, I can understand her anger. With so much free time over the long summer break, I'd definitely prefer to make my own plans as well.

I can relate to how Laney doesn't want to go out of her comfort zone. This winter, my parents have been urging me to try something new and go skiing with them. I, having zero tolerance for the bitter cold, have always said no. Perhaps if I just tried it, I'd find that it's a lot of fun.

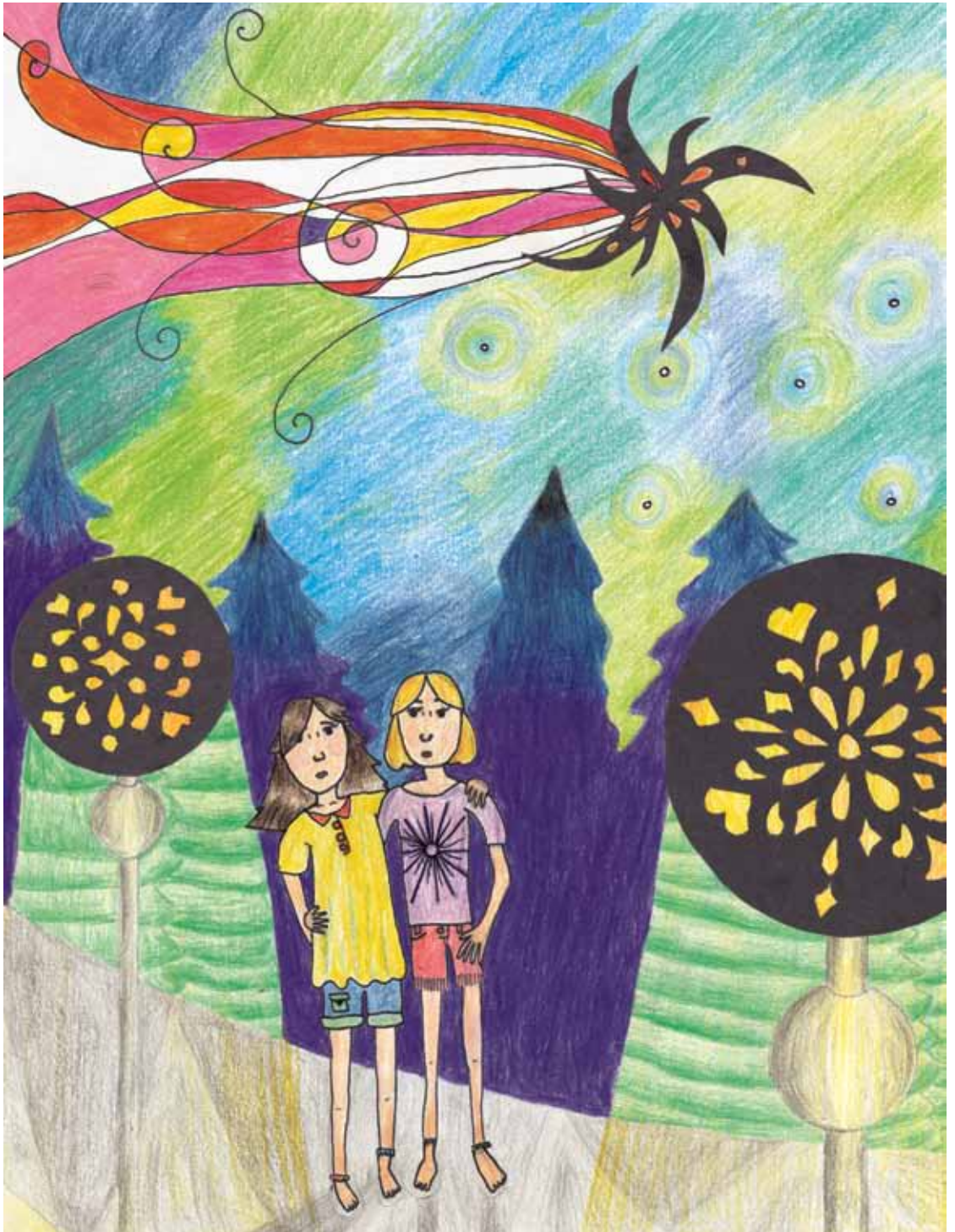
Used to being in the royal party when it comes to the social ladder, Laney quickly realizes that things are not quite the same here at Timber Trails. That may be a bit of an understatement, actually. How is she suddenly considered the outsider, the weirdo, the geek? And these girls who she'd probably make fun of if she were back at home were suddenly... the popularity *queens*? Laney's world is being shaken up like a salad after all the ingredients are put in the bowl.

Things become even more peculiar when she runs into a guy from home, here at camp. Ever since a horrible accident that led him to pencil in his eyebrows in the third grade, this boy has been the biggest joke in the city... at least among their group of peers. He obviously leads a double life, as he's a major heart-throb at Timber Trails, bewildering Laney.

Soon, she finds herself falling for this guy. Uh-oh... This relationship would be totally off-limits back in New York! Will she ignore him because of his status, or will she listen to her heart and risk her social standing at home? Laney's been faced with one of the toughest decisions in her life, and one of the most important revelations about popularity—what's the point of it all, anyway? If you look deeper at someone, maybe there's more to that person than a silly label implies.

At the end of this dreaded summer, Laney Parker is left with a few amazing new friends, an appreciation for both the stylish clothes *and* the chocolate she has at home, and a freshly opened mind to the realities of popularity. 





*It wasn't the first shooting star I saw but it was the most special one*

# Saying Goodbye

By **Elise Allen**

*Illustrated by* **Maya Keshav**

**T**HOUSANDS OF TWINKLING and glittering stars lit up the black night sky. It's so beautiful, I thought as I gazed up at the sky. I wish I could stay here forever, but I couldn't. Heather and I were slowly walking up the street towards my cottage. It was like we did every summer night after we said goodbye to our other friends, but tonight was different.

The night was warm and still and I could hear crickets chirping and an owl hooting deep in the woods. The big fluorescent streetlights were faintly buzzing above us, helping to light our way. Our bare feet were padding softly on the pavement, and we were crying. Tears ran down my face, and I kept wiping them off. I must look like a wreck, I thought, because I had been crying all night.

"Next summer will be here before we know it," Heather sniffled.

"Yeah," I agreed, "but we have to go to school between now and then, which will make it seem way longer."

"We need to plan for summer 2011, because it will be epic!" Heather exclaimed.

"Totally!" I grinned. We laughed a bit about our joke. It was because I told her the story about how when I was younger one winter my mom, my sister, and I were at a hotel with an outdoor heated swimming pool and a bunch of teenagers were out there. The teenagers kept yelling, "That was so epic!" Naturally, my sister and I would run out on the balcony, yell, "That was so



Elise Allen, 12  
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan



Maya Keshav, 13  
Waterloo, Ontario, Canada



epic!" and run back inside.

Then in the sky a glowing light streaked by. It was a shooting star. We stopped talking and stood still. It seemed like the whole world held its breath. I smiled, it wasn't the first shooting star I saw but it was the most special one.

We wandered up to my cottage, then we stood there for a second looking at it. It looked so bright in the darkness, with all the light streaming out of the windows. I could still hear crickets chirping. My nose was stuffed and I was still crying a little bit.

"That was pretty cool," Heather finally said.

"I guess that means next summer is going to be awesome," I smiled.

"Oh you know it," Heather agreed.

"Do you want to sit on the porch?" I asked.

"No," Heather replied, "the sidewalk is fine." Heather and I sat down on the rough sidewalk, instead of the porch. This feels weird, I thought. Every night we sit on the porch and talk, not the sidewalk. We talked for a while and even laughed a little bit.

It was time for Heather to go back to her cottage, and I wouldn't see her again for a long time. I started to cry again. We both stood up from the sidewalk and brushed the dirt off our shorts. Heather and I hugged each other, and I could feel the tears sliding down my face again.

"At least it wasn't as sad after we saw the shooting star," Heather sighed.

"Yeah," I nodded, "bye."

"Bye."

"I wish you could stay another week."

"Yeah, me too."

"But we'll see each other soon."

"Yes, we will."

"Bye," I said again.

"Bye," Heather said for the last time.

Heather turned around, strode down the sidewalk. She looked back one last time and waved. I waved back. Then I stood there for a while watching her get smaller until I couldn't see her because the big pine trees were covering her. I stood there for a little while longer. Then I sighed and started up the stairs. Tonight was sad, but it wasn't terrible, I thought as I trudged into my cottage, and I was already excited about summer 2011. ❁



# Finding a Friend

By **Hannah Culver**

*Illustrated by* **Jordan Lei**

I HAD ALWAYS CONSIDERED myself a pretty good runner, but when you're running for your life you can never move fast enough. I glanced back, almost tripping over myself. I could see out of the corner of my eye his black mask, beady eyes, and his muddy fur coat. Though what scared me the most were his sharp canine teeth. Go ahead and laugh but I was running from... a dog. My flip-flops had fallen off my feet when I started running and the pavement was burning hot. I rounded the corner into my driveway, sprinting for my front door. I wasn't always scared of dogs, but something happened that makes me run every time I see one.

Two years ago a dog ran into my yard where I was playing. When the dog started to wag his tail and bark I thought he was nice. So I tried to pet him, but apparently he didn't want to be touched. When my hand got too close to his forehead he lashed out and bit me. I can only remember screaming and crying, waiting for the pain to go away. The next day when I woke up I was lying in the hospital bed with stitches on my right arm from my wrist to my elbow. Even though the dog had to go to the pound the fear and the scares he gave me never left.

I don't know why but I never told anybody about what happened. You can imagine with my fear of something like this I was an easy target for bullies. No one wanted to hang out with me anymore. Even though before they were really only my friends because I was the school's best track and cross-country runner (we had a really small school). It didn't really bother me



Hannah Culver, 12  
Merrimack, New Hampshire



Jordan Lei, 11  
Portland, Oregon

because I could always find something to do by myself, but my parents disagreed. "You need at least one friend, honey. Someone you can talk to other than us." My parents always said that when they saw me reading, alone, up in the branches of a maple in our backyard. Though they were right, I was lonely. However, I didn't want to become friends with anyone at my school, until I met someone who changed everything.

I knew the day would come when the teasing would become too much and I wouldn't be able to take it any longer. On a Friday in October it happened and I ended up running to my house three miles away instead of taking the bus home. I went straight into the woods when I got home. I sat down in a pile of leaves, letting all the sadness and frustration that I was holding inside go. I listened to the hush of the trees and admired the beauty of the falling leaves.

Suddenly I heard whimpering, and it wasn't mine. I glanced around quickly. At first I saw no one but then I saw the last thing I wanted to see, a dog. From instinct I stood up, legs tense, as if I was waiting for the starting gun in track, but the dog didn't move. Even with my fear of canines a part of me wanted to go and comfort the wounded stray. Eventually, my heart overpowered my conscience and I couldn't bear his pain. I knelt down ever so gently, so as not to frighten him, still he didn't budge. Then carefully I reached out my right hand. My scar started to tingle, remembering the last time I was this

close to a dog. Then, before I was ready the dog stretched out his neck, nudging his head into my hand. At that point I knew he needed me and I needed him.

The dog happily followed me home; sadly, he was limping the whole way. Some animal probably more frightening than any dog had wounded his back right foot. However, the expressions on my parents' faces said it all. Their mouths had dropped to the floor speechless, and when I asked if we could keep him, they assured me that if he didn't have rabies we could. Even after a few days with Scruffy (which is what we chose to name him) the statement "Dogs are man's best friend" was proven true.

One day, a couple months after I found Scruffy, I was taking him for a walk and I noticed a sign on a telephone pole. The sign read:

### **Lost Dog**

Medium height, brown eyes, mutt, male,  
scruffy light brown hair,  
Answers to the name Copper.  
If seen, please contact me at 544-0222,  
or bring him to my house at  
18 Sugar Hill Road, Easton, NH  
Thank you,  
Annie Samson

Next to the writing there was a picture of Scruffy or Copper. No doubt about it, that was a picture of the dog who was sitting right beside me. My heart shattered into a million pieces. The dog who had rescued me from drowning in sadness belonged to someone else.

That evening I sat in bed, staring at the



*At that point I knew he needed me and I needed him*

sign that I had torn down in anger. Just then it occurred to me that Annie was probably feeling just as miserable as I had before I found “Copper.” At that moment I knew I had to return my friend to his rightful owner.

The next day I brought Copper to Easton to find his owner. He seemed to recognize the smell near the house, but I didn’t want to let him go. When I knocked on the door I knew I had done the right thing. The girl answered

the door and almost cried with happiness that her dog had come home. She thanked me about twenty times before she took Copper. Then, right as she was closing the door, I whispered, “He’s a great dog.” She must have recognized the sadness in my eyes because she offered for me to come over after school and walk Copper with her. Annie and I quickly became best friends and to this day we still are. Surprisingly enough, I owe it all to a dog. 🌸

# Subscribe to Stone Soup!

ONLINE: **stonesoup.com**

By phone: **800-447-4569**

By mail: **P.O. Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063, USA**

By fax: **831-426-1161**

## RECIPIENT 1

☐ 1 year      ☐ 2 years      ☐ 3 years

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip (Province, Postal code) \_\_\_\_\_

Country \_\_\_\_\_

Send a card for: ☐ Christmas    ☐ Hanukkah    ☐ Birthday

Sign card from \_\_\_\_\_

Begin with:    ☐ Jan/Feb    ☐ Mar/Apr    ☐ May/Jun  
                  ☐ Jul/Aug    ☐ Sep/Oct    ☐ Nov/Dec

## RECIPIENT 2

☐ 1 year      ☐ 2 years      ☐ 3 years

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip (Province, Postal code) \_\_\_\_\_

Country \_\_\_\_\_

Send a card for: ☐ Christmas    ☐ Hanukkah    ☐ Birthday

Sign card from \_\_\_\_\_

Begin with:    ☐ Jan/Feb    ☐ Mar/Apr    ☐ May/Jun  
                  ☐ Jul/Aug    ☐ Sep/Oct    ☐ Nov/Dec

## PAYMENT INFORMATION

### Rates

	1 year	2 years	3 years
United States	\$37	\$60	\$82
Canada	US \$43	\$72	\$100
Other countries	\$49	\$84	\$118

Total purchase amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

International postage rates account for the entire difference in price between U.S. subscriptions and foreign subscriptions.

### Payment by Check

☐ Check enclosed (payable to Stone Soup;  
U.S. funds only)

### Payment by Credit Card

☐ Visa    ☐ MasterCard    ☐ AmEx    ☐ Discover

Card number \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. date \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime phone number \_\_\_\_\_

### Cardholder/Gift Giver

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip (Province, Postal code) \_\_\_\_\_

Country \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for your order! Visit our Web site at [stonesoup.com](http://stonesoup.com)**





# Visit [stonesoup.com](http://stonesoup.com)!

## Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists

[Subscribe/Renew](#) | [Contact](#)

[Search](#)



[Home](#)

[About »](#)

[Magazine »](#)

[Submit Work](#)

[Shop](#)

[Subscribe](#)

[Archive of Children's Writing](#)



### Here are some of the special features you will find at [stonesoup.com](http://stonesoup.com):

- ▶ Detailed guidelines for contributing your work
- ▶ Over 300 stories, poems and book reviews from past issues
- ▶ Recordings of our authors reading their own work
- ▶ Curriculum guides, blogs, and forums for teachers
- ▶ The Stone Soup Store for products featuring children's artwork
- ▶ The Stone Soup folktale

"Stone Soup is a lovely magazine of art and writing by children."

—Washington Post



Become a fan of  
Stone Soup Magazine  
on Facebook