

Stone Soup

the magazine by young writers and artists



"The Harvest," by Viky Kaltsouni, age 9, Greece

BABY

Horses are Dylan's life—why must her mother be so fearful?

MEMOIRS OF A SOLDIER

It's 1939 in Germany, and Ben's father wants to send him to Switzerland

Also: Illustrations by Jane Westrick

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2001

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Volume 30, Number 1
September/October 2001

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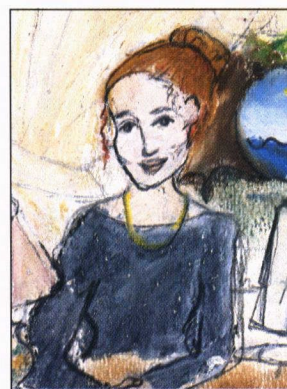
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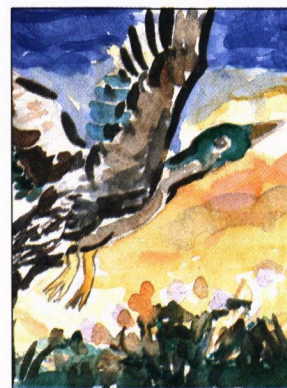
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Stone Soup

the magazine by young writers and artists

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: "The Harvest" was loaned to *Stone Soup* by the Museum of Greek Children's Art in Athens. The museum preserves and exhibits children's art, holds an annual art competition for Greek children, and conducts educational programs for children and teachers. Special thanks to director Mrs. Helen-Fay Stamati.

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The Mailbox

I love your magazine. Whenever I get it in the mail, I read it first thing. To me, every story is special. To me, each story teaches a life lesson, whether the writer means to or not. Every writer creates his or her own character, which is like creating a new life to me. There is always a story that touches me whenever I read *Stone Soup*. I would like to compliment Naomi Rowsell on her story, "Every Nordic Night" [March/April 2001]. It shows that every child and parent has a very unique, special relationship. This story also has great detail and I felt like I was right there when I was reading it. I would also like to compliment Joshua MacLean on his story, "Miraculous Mike." It shows how important people are and that you should always appreciate them.

Lindsay Yazzolino, 12
Issaquah, Washington

Lindsay reads Stone Soup in the braille edition.

I really like how you give kids a chance to put a story in a magazine. One of my favorites was "A Christmas Wish" [November/December 2000]. I would never stop reading the story because I had to know what happens next. I hope you make many more issues of *Stone Soup*.

Trey Zepernick, 10
Broussard, Louisiana

I was so happy when I first discovered *Stone Soup* last year. I've been looking for something like it for years. I would like to comment on a few stories from the May/June 2001 issue. First of all, Jane Westrick's art is so alive and detailed. I love all of her art work, such as the illustrations from "My Friend the Bull." I also love how Rachel Johnson wrote this story in a realistic setting. Great job, both of you! Another one is "Twisted Friendships" by Hana Bieliasukas and illustrated by Christy Callahan. This is a wonderful story about trust and peer pressure. I love it! And lastly there is "Spinning," written and illustrated by Julia Echternach. Her work has been published before, such as the story "Foxes and Frogs" in the September/October 2000 issue. This is a very, very well written story. Keep writing, Julia!

Sonia Luper, 11
Tacoma, Washington

For *Stone Soup*, these are my last illustrations, but for me, they will not be. Thank you for helping me to be the artist that I am, and thank you for giving all the kids in the world the foundation to be the artists and authors they will be. I have two brothers who might be coming along soon. Ted is nine and has zillions of stories in his head; if only he would write them down! Sam is seven, and he is an artist, too. Thank you again, I have had so much fun. Best wishes, I'll miss you!!

Jane Westrick, 13
Mechanicsville, Virginia

Since 1996, Jane's beautiful illustrations have appeared in Stone Soup eleven times! Jane turned fourteen right after she illustrated "Baby" (page 5) so, sadly, we must say good-bye to her. We'll miss you too, Jane! Good luck!

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.



Suddenly I hear the faint call of my mother's voice, signaling Willow and me to come back to the barn

Baby

by Leslie Pearsall

illustrated by Jane Westrick

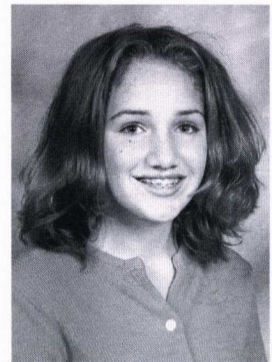
THE WIND BURNS MY FACE as Willow and I bound over tree roots and the soft earth of the forest. The sun-dappled woodlands stretch invitingly before us. The majestic spread of leaves lies like a masterpiece, untouched by human or horse. Eagerly Willow gallops into it, causing the leaves to blow up like a bomb. The horse snorts delightedly.

It is a crisp late-November morning in Lake Ariel, Pennsylvania. To our left glitters the frigid cobalt lake. The ducks, Jack and Sydney, patrol along the shoreline, making sure everything is under control. To the right is nothing, just the tangled mass of skeletal maples and dogwoods.

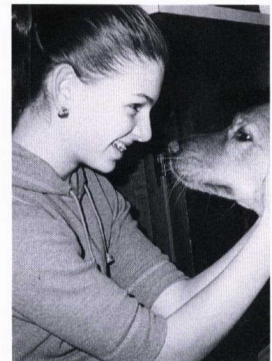
Suddenly I hear the faint call of my mother's worried voice, signaling Willow and me to come back to the barn. Reluctantly and somewhat irritated now, I turn the horse back in the direction of Strawberry Grove. Willow is as deflated as I am as he heads back to the barn at a reluctant trot.

The untamed wilderness turns into a well-worn path. Various footprints trample it. I think back to how many horses have galloped on these lands. Let's see, there was Rosebud, Juno, Penelope, Pumpkin, Typhoon, and so many more.

My parents have owned Strawberry Grove Farm since they were newlyweds of twenty. Now, nearly twenty-five years later, the strong stone walls of the barn and the old farmhouse on the hill are going strong.



Leslie Pearsall, 12
Greentown, Pennsylvania



Jane Westrick, 13
Mechanicsville, Virginia

My mother stands at the hayloft window with her binoculars in hand, worried lines creased on her weathered forehead. My black bangs fly up when I sigh in exasperation. Ever since the accident, my mother has become increasingly more of a worrier than she ever was. It is irritating sometimes, but I simply remember what Dad has drilled me to tell myself, "She's worried because she loves you."

"Dylan, please stay closer to the house where I can keep an eye on you. Or better yet, just ride in the paddock. Why don't you get back into showing?"

I sigh yet again and shut my eyes. I fight the urge to yell.

"Mom, Willow and I know the woods like the back of our hands. Or hooves in Willow's case," I told her, cracking a grin.

But Mom's face remains stern and a little bit sad. I can tell she's thinking about Georgina. The sight of Georgina's pale face lying in the leaves with her cloud of dark hair lying eerily around her still haunts my mother.

"Dylan, please. You're my only daughter left. I don't want to lose you too," Mom tells me in a choked voice, and hurries back toward the house.

Sighing in frustration, I untack Willow and let him loose with his pasture buddies, Comet, Tiny, Warrior, and Persia. The eldest horses, Pumpkin and Rosebud, recognizing me, nicker softly and lumber forward.

I feel a surge of affection for the sweet horses, who are in their high twenties

and the oldest horses at Strawberry Grove. But their chestnut coats still gleam a healthy shine and their brown eyes shine. My parents had bought them as a pair when they were a shade over four. We are old friends.

"Hey, guys," I greet them, pulling some fresh carrots out of my coat pockets.

Greedily but daintily they nibble each one, grateful for the attention. Suddenly the horses prick their ears and the sound of the rattling trailer comes up the road. Dad's back with the new horse.

ALL THREE of us, along with the yellow-and-chocolate labs, Banana and Ryley, gather around the roomy box stall that is now occupied with a gorgeous gray mare, dappled white and complemented by a black, gray, and white mane. Her name is Baby Blue, nicknamed Baby, and she is my newfound interest in the horse breed.

Baby munches calmly on the hay, casting her three awed onlookers curious glances once in a while, but otherwise the move hasn't affected her.

"Dad, she's gorgeous," I breathe for about the millionth time.

Since the moment my father backed the finely conformed Arabian mare out of the trailer, I knew she was something special. But how to find out . . .

The afternoon swiftly flows into a milky pink twilight, the winter sky dotted with cotton-like clouds. The last of the procrastinating geese fly overhead, frantically fleeing from the frigid cold to

the tropical south.

In the warmth and coziness of the huge stone farmhouse, I can hardly concentrate on the dullness of my math homework. Baby occupies my mind now. Dreamily I sketch a horse head on the margin of my paper. She has a finely dished face and intelligent wide-set eyes. My mother is overlooking.

"What interesting math homework. It's changed quite a lot since I was in sixth grade," Mom observes dryly.

"Oh, um . . . I was just getting a head start on my art project," I reply weakly.

Mom just raises her eyebrows and continues with the dishes.

"Dylan, if this horse is going to inhabit your mind, I'll have to find another home for her," Dad tells me from his nest of newspaper on the couch.

"Oh, no, Dad, she won't," I vow hastily, and quickly flee back to my math homework.

A WEEK LATER, now in the early stages of December, I am delighted to find at least a foot of snow draped dramatically over the earth like a blanket. The horses, even more enthused, frolic merrily about the paddocks. The dogs nip at each other playfully as they roam the property. The fat barn cat, Callie, lounges lazily in the snow, enjoying the weather at a calmer level.

School, to my delight, is cancelled today, so I take the opportunity to finally get on Baby's back. The gray mare leans against the sturdy box stall door, relishing the fact that she could hang

her head over the side. Dad told me that at her old home there were bars on the doors.

"Hey, girlie," I greet her warmly, brush box in hand.

I brush the mare until her coat shines pewter. Standing back to admire my handiwork, I conclude she is Olympic-worthy. I head over to the tack room to get the saddle that my father and I had selectively chosen at the tack shop the day before. I run my hands appreciatively over the caramel-colored leather that is decidedly soft as butter. I feel the soft suede knee flaps in admiration.

My mom pops her head in from the doorway, a little girl who cannot have been more than five at her side.

"Hey, sweetie. Going riding?" she asks me brightly, with a little dread in her voice.

"Yeah. Taking Baby out," I reply simply.

Mom's happy expression turns into horror as I gather the saddle and matching bridle from their racks and head out the door to Baby's stall.

"Um . . . Dylan, darling, isn't it a little too early still? I think she should settle in a little more."

The girl is looking on in rapt interest. Her mother, in high heels and a crisp blue suit, cell phone in hand, stands at the doorway of the barn. My mother gives part-time private riding lessons in addition to her veterinary service.

I sigh in exasperation and give my mom a look, and she looks at me sheepishly.



"You really like this horse, don't you Dylan?" Dad remarks, amused

"Mom, relax! We'll be fine. If you want, I'll just ride her around the paddock today," I assure her.

Mom's worried lines cease a little and she manages a small smile.

"If you must. Be careful. Although Dad shoveled out most of the snow, it's still icy," she warns me.

I nod solemnly and begin to lead Baby out of the barn and into the winter wonderland. The mare flares her delicate nostrils and takes a deep breath of the crisp air. Her breath mists.

Grabbing my helmet from the rack, I can't help but grin. I'm positive Baby is

the horse for me. My mind races wildly toward summer.

"Think, Baby. By the end of the summer we'll be racking up the ribbons at shows," I fantasize aloud to the horse.

Baby, delighted about being outside in the wintertime, delicately prances toward the riding paddock. I had turned the weed-infested woodland into a nicely laid-out riding ring the previous summer. I had even splurged the remains of my savings on letter markers for dressage, which is a complicated division of riding that is considered ballet on horseback.

"Hmm, Baby. I wonder if you'll be a jumper or a flat horse," I muse.

I eagerly swing into the saddle without the help of the fence post, and Baby eagerly lumbers out, still relishing being out of the confinement of the stall.

I immediately fall in love with the horse's trot, and her canter is gorgeous. I make my mom watch ten times before I slip out of the saddle just to give Baby a big hug for being so well-mannered.

"We're going to rule the shows!" I tell her excitedly, punching the air with my fist.

LATE THAT afternoon, after swiftly navigating through homework, I curl up on the striped love seat next to my father and begin sketching a full-sized drawing of Baby. The sketch is very detailed, I even include her muscles and shade in her dapples.

My father looks over curiously at the work.

"You really like this horse, don't you Dylan?" Dad remarks, amused.

I nod eagerly.

"Dad, she's great! Her trot is like we're floating and her canter is as smooth as butter. We're going to knock Casey Frances off her horse this summer at the shows," I boast proudly, speaking of the rider who had beat me three times in a row in the dressage competition.

My father grins and turns back to his book. Mom, however, is not convinced.

"Dylan, are you sure this horse is safe? She looked like she was going pretty fast in the paddock today," Mom tells

me nervously.

I slam my sketchbook shut and glare at my mother, unable to control the irritation that I have bottled up for nearly one year now.

"Mom, that's it! I am so sick and tired of your irritating worrywart attitude! It's like you never take a chance on anything anymore! All you do is worry, and fret, and be miserable every time I ride. If you're going to be a vet or own horses, you have to take chances!"

"Dylan," Dad coaxes me quietly.

Mom's jaw is dropped and her dark eyes are flashing. All the dignity she lost comes flooding back to her.

"Well, I'm *sorry* if I want my daughter to be safe! It's hard enough just to watch you get on a horse anymore. Do you know how tough it is knowing that horses are why Georgina isn't here with us right now?" Mom shoots back.

Silence. Tears stream down my mother's face. Dad shifts his weight uncomfortably, trying to keep out of our fight.

I can't take it anymore. I have to get out of the house. I flee from the horrible living room and the cool air of the winter night floods onto my heated face.

Angrily, I stride off toward the direction of the barn and throw a saddle onto the dozing Baby, who is now startled into consciousness.

"C'mon girl, let's ride!"

Cantering her for a few minutes, I head out into the unknown black inkiness of the forest. Fortunately, there is a full moon to light my way. The yellow light streams through the skeleton trees.

I'm occasionally startled out of the saddle as Baby wildly trips over tree roots and fallen branches.

Nothing now looks familiar. The twisting willow tree that marks the end of my territory is nowhere to be seen. All that surrounds me is a tangled, thick stretch of trees and unknown turf. I tug on the reins to slow Baby, but she's much too frightened and wild now to pay attention. We gallop forward at a maddening suicide pace. Frantic, I pull as hard as I can back on the reins, throwing myself to the back of the saddle.

Suddenly I feel the sensation of the air and then the hard, painful thud of the ground. I sit up woozily. Then, it feels like something shoves me back into the ground. I can hardly think. All I can think of is . . .

Sunlight pours through the window of Dylan's fifth-grade classroom. As usual, her attention is not on English, but on the new paint horse, Calico, that her father had given her sister, Georgina, for her fourteenth birthday. Dylan's thoughts about it are jealousy and happiness rolled into one. Suddenly the door flies open and there is Dylan's aunt, looking wildly painstricken. "Dylan, you're wanted home," is all she reveals. All during the ride home, Aunt Ellen is silent. Tears slowly roll down her cheeks. Dylan is completely confused. The car isn't even at a complete stop when Dylan throws open the car door and follows the figure in the red coat heading out into the woods. Panting, Dylan realizes that she is deep into the woods. She stops short when she

sees her mother, father, and Dr. Matthews huddled around her sister, her dark hair wildly surrounding her satiny white face like a cloud. Blood trickles from her left ear. The doctor is feeling her pulse, he shakes his head sadly . . .

I wake up from my troubled sleep from the lemonade-like sunlight coming into my bedroom. Outside a thick blanket of snow is stretched out invitingly.

Woozily, I stand up and manage to stumble down the hall and stairs to the kitchen. My mother, startled by the fact her sick daughter is awake from her week-long sleep, smiles deliriously and runs forward to hug me.

"You're awake! You're awake!" she says again and again. Tears roll down her face.

"Mom, what happened?" I ask in a dizzy voice.

"Oh, darling, you went riding and you fell. Are you all right? You hit your head pretty badly." My mother touches the bloodstained bandage wrapping my head.

"I'm fine, where's Baby? Is she all right?"

Mom ignores me and breathes a sigh of relief.

"Oh, Dylan, you had us so worried! The doctor said you might have amnesia or brain damage . . . but you're fine! You're fine!"

She fiercely hugs me again.

"Where's Baby?" I ask again, more firmly.

Mom looks away.

"Darling, I don't want you to ride anymore. I just can't take another one of those experiences again. I mean, someday when I get some confidence back, maybe you can. Oh, Dylan, don't look at me like that. It's for the best."

I stare at my mother like she is insane. What does she mean, not ride anymore? No, she must be joking. But the sober expression on my mother's face reveals that she isn't.

I feel tears rising in my throat but I choke them back fiercely. Looking at my mother's red, puffy eyes, I see that she hasn't slept for many nights. Her face is paler and her dark hair is falling messily about her shoulders. I realize that Mom is simply protecting me and that I am her only daughter left. I feel a pang of regret for what a jerk I have been.

Suddenly my shoulders feel light and

springy, the way they used to before Georgina died. I hug my mother fiercely and realize that I am more than an inch taller than her. Maybe I really am growing up. Before my father bought Baby, I was young and selfish. It's amazing how much older you act within a few days. Looking at my mother's tear-stained and puffed eyelids, I realize I have to do this for her. Biting back tears, I hug her fiercely. She embraces me back in surprise.

Looking outside from my position by the glass French doors, I see the snow-capped backs of the horses. Somehow I am smiling. The pewter mare, Baby, stands like a statue out in the center of the paddock, trembling in curiosity at something she sees. I'll be back on that sleek mare, someday. I just know it. For now, I have to be neutral with my mother. Some things have to come first. ❖



Summer Winds

by Sam Brandis-Dann



Sam Brandis-Dann, 11
New York, New York

The breeze tastes sweet and warm
of sun
of ripe fruit
and of grass
It ruffles my hair and
plasters my sweat-wet shirt on my skin

It blows doors shut
and wafts in windows to cool hot pies and
fill empty spaces

In the gentle lull of the wind
trees creak and shiver,
fresh cut grass is
tossed onto the walk
and the clouds are pushed
like cotton-ball puffs
across a blue-glass sky

At night the wind carries
fireflies on its wings
and sweet chirping songs of crickets
and frogs

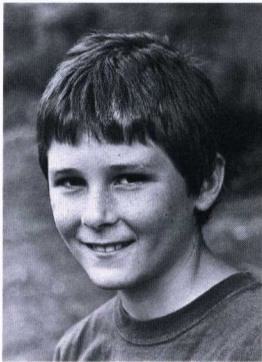
When the breeze stops playing
with my hair
or creaking the loose gate
and begins
chafing my skin and
redding my nose and cheeks
making breath visible

You know the summer wind has left
But you remember its playful soul

My Friend

by Max Strebel

illustrated by the author



Max Strebel, 11
San Francisco, California

TAP, TAP, TAP. The light drizzle sprinkled upon my window. I stood up and ran downstairs. "Yes! Only one more hour till eight. My favorite show 'Rocket Power' will be on." I skipped into the living room and grabbed my Gameboy off the top shelf. While doing this I thought about how nice it was on rainy days like this. My parents couldn't make me go outside.

I poured my cornflakes into the bowl. I looked with my dark blue eyes down into the bowl. Wow! Those pieces of cereal are like the stones that sink in the next level of Nintendo. I thought of all this while playing my game on Gameboy. The milk would be the lava I would sink in. I stopped the game and ate my cereal slowly, imagining each spoonful another monster jumping out of the lava and killing me. I did this for quite a while until my cereal got soggy. I took my plate to the sink and looked at the clock. Still half an hour to go.

Ten minutes later my parents got up. They ate breakfast. With only two minutes to go, I ran into the TV room and flipped on the TV. "Rocket Power" had just started. I lay down on the soft leather couch and lay there with my eyes half closed. "Frederick," called my father Leonard. "We don't have any more wood for the fire." I saw Leonard's face peek around the door. "That means you've gotta help."

"But Dad . . ."



I saw the squirrel in the mother hawk's beak. She was about to feed it to her young

"No buts about it. It'll only take half an hour."

"... in half an hour, my show will be over."

"Do you want to freeze to death?"

I snapped off the TV and walked out of the room with my head down. I flung a jacket around me and stomped outside. "Ahhh, but it's raining," I said with a grin, and turned around.

"No. The rain has stopped. Now it's just foggy."

I slowly walked down the stairs, trying to think of an excuse. The chill stung me like needles. The little autumn light that there was cast an image through the skeletons of trees. I finally made it to the corner of the field where all the wood was kept. I saw my father breaking through the fog with the rusty wheelbarrow from the barn.

When he got to where I was standing, I started throwing wood into the wheelbarrow. When it was so full that not one more log could fit in it, he took it back to the house to empty. He took his time, as if trying to make me suffer. Once he had disappeared into the fog, something else caught my eye. It was from above me. When I looked up, I saw a small animal with a big gray bushy tail. A squirrel. It darted from branch to branch. I followed it down to the creek. Every once in a while it would stop to groom itself. When it got to the creek, it noticed me. Such a fascinating creature, climbing head first down the trunk of an old oak, every few minutes glancing up at me. When it

reached the ground, it hesitantly came toward me. After it was about three feet away from me, I reached out to pat it. It scampered away frantically. I waited patiently for the squirrel to sneak back out of the blackberry bush. It did with a cautious look, its eyes staring at me the whole time. Slowly, it sat down next to me. I reached out a quivering hand, its eyes closed. Now I could feel the warmth of the animal's fur.

Suddenly, a flash of feathers was flung into my face, and a small squeaking sound filled the forest. When the feathers left, the squirrel was gone. I looked up to see a red-tailed hawk with the squirrel clenched between its talons. I followed the vicious bird to its huge nest of leaves and sticks. The scraggly bundle was literally five feet long and two feet thick.

The bird landed as I started to climb the big pine. I kept an eye on the nest until I reached it. I had a grip on the tree as I peeked over the edge. Three little cotton balls were bouncing up and down, looking as if their heads were attached to loose springs. I saw the squirrel in the mother hawk's beak. She was about to feed it to her young. She saw me!

Her yellow eyes glared at me with an awkward stare. I ducked and clung to the tree like it was my mother. The hawk dropped the half-dead squirrel into the nest and peered over the edge. She couldn't see me, so she started digging into her nest; I peered over the other side of the scruffled nest to see the

birds from behind and all three youngsters staring at her. No one was looking at the squirrel but me. I snatched the squirrel and felt a pecking at my back. I lost my balance and fell, fell and fell till I hit the ground, felt the squirrel leave my hands and everything went black.

Slowly my eyes opened, but sharply squinted as the sun reached into my pupils. I rolled into the shade of the dark pine. The damp ground comforted me. "What time is it? Where am I? Why am I here? Wasn't I just chopping wood with my father?" I slowly got up from the leaf-carpeted soil, trying to think why I was in the middle of the forest. I looked up and saw a grungy nest. In the back of my mind I could remember a bird, a hawk, with something in its sharp talons. It was a smaller animal, shaking and squeaking. I just couldn't remember what.

I dazedly walked home, trying to recall the story, when my back started to hurt. I reached back to feel a drop of blood. A memory slowly oozed into my mind. I remembered being scratched harshly on the back in a tree.

No, these were all just thoughts I was having. Man, all this TV stuff really has

got my imagination flowing. But really, for some reason, I have been turned off by TV. I have really been turned on by nature. What's wrong with me? Why aren't Nintendo things catching my interest?

Now I was walking up the front stairs. Slowly I creaked the door open. "There you are, where were you?" I heard someone say from upstairs.

"Somehow, I ended up in the forest," I said, as my dad walked downstairs.

"In the forest? How?"

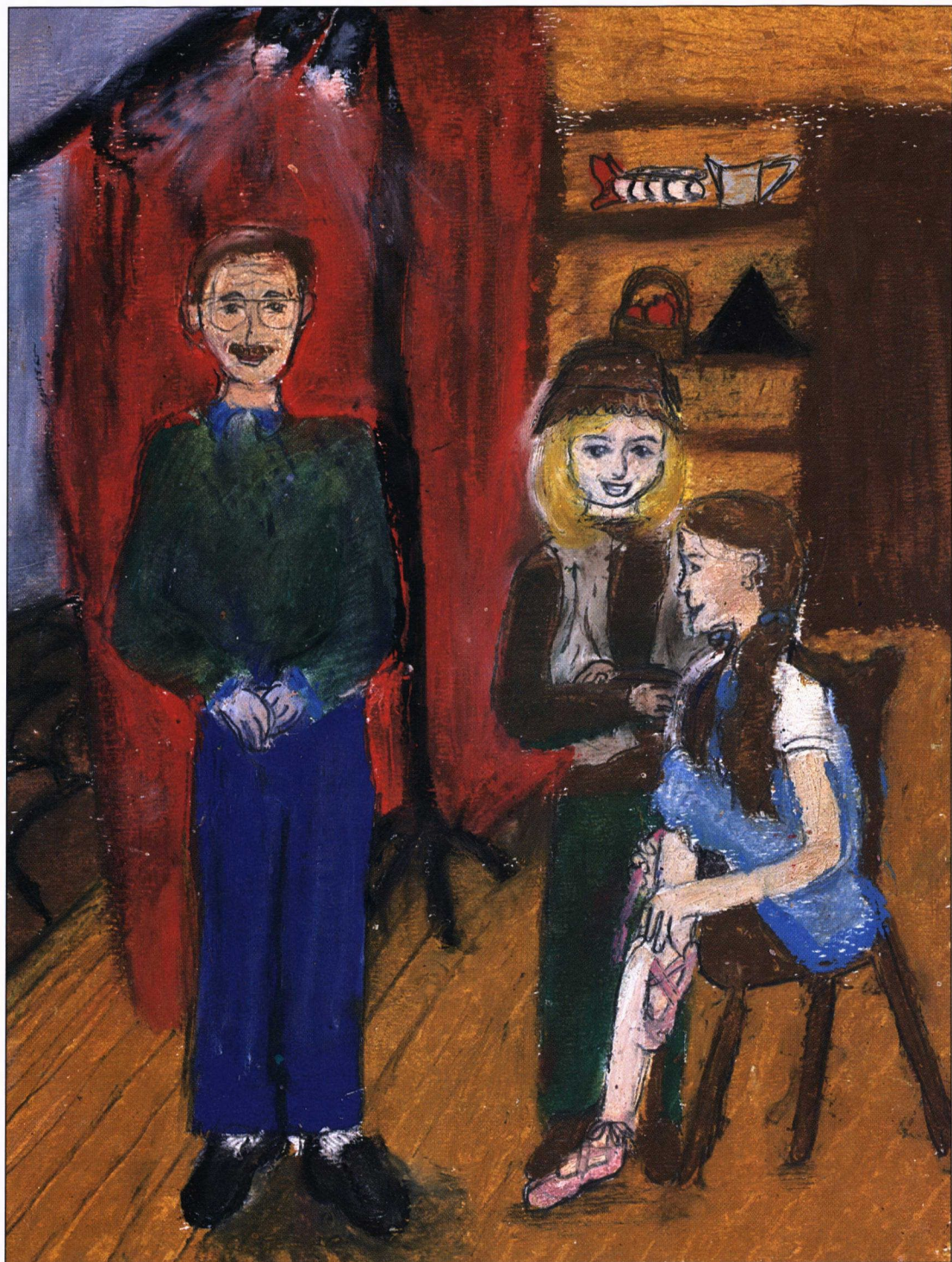
"I have no clue," I said.

"Well, all the wood has already been put away."

I went over to the couch and sat down, looking out the huge glass walls. I looked far, far across the field to where I had wanted to load the rusty wheelbarrow with wood. I looked at the fence I had been standing next to. I saw a small gray animal. A squirrel, the squirrel, was staring right at me. Slowly, the story came back to me.

Every day following that day the squirrel would watch me, and leave, but would always come the next morning. And I would always be there to greet my friend.





My dad smiled down at me. "You look beautiful, Morgan"

Heart and Soul

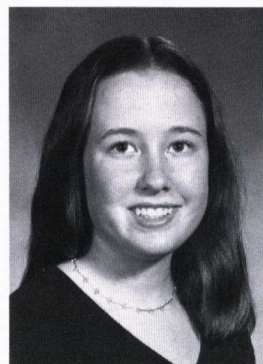
by Jill Cooley

illustrated by Jessie Hennen

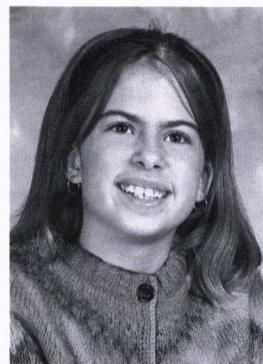
MY FINGERS TREMBLED as I laced up my toe shoes. I drew in a long, shaky breath. Why, when I had longed for these new satin shoes just a few months ago, did I want so badly to take them off and crawl under my bed?

"Got the recital jitters?" a voice asked gently. I nodded, oblivious to the speaker of the comforting words. Vaguely, I looked up. Of course. It was my best friend, Sarah. How could I not recognize that pretty voice? Sarah was the scarecrow in our ballet school's production of the classic movie, *The Wizard of Oz*. It was Sarah's and my favorite movie. Sarah was a wonderful dancer. Everyone was sure that she would get the lead role. Sarah was the only one who wasn't surprised at who got the part of Dorothy. Everyone was surprised. Even the girl cast as Dorothy was shocked. How could I know that? I knew because that unbelievably lucky person, the girl that Miss Stephanie saw as good enough to dance the lead role, was I, Morgan Quincy.

"Ready to get 'em out there, hon?" a deep voice suddenly shook me out of my puzzled thoughts. My dad smiled down at me. "You look beautiful, Morgan." I grinned at Dad. I was actually very average-looking, with a tall, thin figure, bright blue eyes. My long brown hair was tied in two ponytails for my part in the ballet. It didn't matter how I looked to my dad. My sister and brother aren't knockouts either. Sarah was



Jill Cooley, 13
Burlington, Massachusetts



Jessie Hennen, 12
Shoreview, Minnesota

the one who would be called beautiful. Her short blond hair was cut so it framed her round face perfectly. Her lively green eyes dazzled everyone. Right now, you couldn't tell that, because her elaborate scarecrow costume covered most of her.

My dad was the one who could always make me feel proud of myself. I don't know what I would do without him. "Oh sweetie, you look so grown-up. That dress is so pretty. Are you sure it's not too small? You did grow quite a bit. Should I ask Miss Stephanie if she has another one? Oh, and one more thing, Gram and Granddad are here to see you. Your sister is here. She missed a day of college to see you. Arnold is in the audience; oh, Morgan, you are going to be wonderful. Hi there, Sarah, I'm sure you'll be wonderful too, dear."

As my mother stopped to take a breath she looked at my face more closely. "Is that *makeup* on your face?!" she practically screamed.

"Mo-om." I groaned, trying to keep the smile off my face. "Puh-lease. It's your youngest daughter's big debut. Give me some encouragement, will ya?"

My mom always tries to fill silence with words, but sometimes I enjoy silence. My dad and Arnold, my brother, like silence also. That's why we like fishing together. "If your mom came fishing with us," my dad would announce playfully, "the fish would wear earplugs!" Of course, my older sister Beth used to come fishing with us, but then she "outgrew it." I hope that I never out-

grow fishing, because I like the quality time spent with my dad.

"Morgan, honey, are you OK? You have that daydreaming gaze again." I was able to get a nod in before Mom took off again. "Now I'll be watching from the audience, and after we will go out for dinner. I was thinking that French place down the street, the cute little cafe? I'll check it out later. Well, I have to go; good luck, darling!"

My dad rolled his eyes at my mom's excessive chattering and strolled away. My mom, all intentions of finding me a new dress and wiping off my makeup lost, linked arms with Dad and went with him.

"Wow," murmured Sarah, "your parents are really nice." I felt a pang of guilt. Sarah's parents had died when she was eight. I couldn't even imagine what it would be like without my parents. Sarah lived with her aunt and uncle and their son Eric. They were nice people, but to tell the truth, they were kind of dull. Sarah was the best friend in the world.

When Miss Stephanie told me about my part, I stood there speechless while Sarah wrapped me in a hug and squealed. If she was even the tiniest bit jealous she didn't show it. I wish that I could show some of her cool, calm behavior before every recital. She was well suited for the scarecrow. Not only was she a gifted dancer, she was a great actress and could act clumsy as the scarecrow should. Why did Sarah choose me for a best friend? I couldn't even think of anything to say about her parents.

Instead I mumbled, "I'm so sorry, Sarah," and left a lot of things unsaid.

Sarah nodded, obviously too wrapped up in thoughts of her parents to speak. She often talked about them to me. She confided that she was glad that she had been old enough when they died to have memories. Personally, I thought it would ease the pain if you didn't remember them.

We sat down to stretch, only a half-hour before the show. I thought about the show. I had several solos in the show, including one to "Somewhere Over the Rainbow." It was my favorite dance of the show. It had plenty of feeling, with pirouettes and jetés, my favorite moves.

"Morgan, don't get all starry-eyed on me now," Sarah teased. I flashed her a smile, glad she wasn't thinking about her parents. "Concentrate on the music, the steps will come."

I frowned slightly. Where did that thought come from? Miss Stephanie, I realized. Of course. How many times had she circled around our dancing groups, eyes flashing, whispering, "Concentrate on the music! The steps will come!"

"Shoot!" I muttered suddenly.

Sarah turned to me, full of concern. "What's wrong, Morgan?"

I almost laughed. Leave it to Sarah to be worried about nothing. Well, practically nothing. "It's just that Miss Stephanie wanted to see me in her office. Five minutes ago," I explained.

Sarah's eyes widened. "Well, I hate to

be the one to break it to you, but Miss Stephanie doesn't exactly like it when people are late coming to see her."

"You're right." Awkwardly, I scrambled to my feet. I tried to walk with dignity down the hall. I could hear Sarah stifling a giggle. I wasn't mad. I knew that I looked pretty funny trying to walk with toe shoes. And with the raw blisters under the soft pink toe pads. Unfortunately, the toe pads didn't prevent all of the sores from developing on my toes.

I reached Miss Stephanie's office and boldly knocked on the door. For some reason being filled with apprehension of the recital gave me newfound courage.

Miss Stephanie opened the door. "Ah, Morgan! Come on in, dear." I hesitantly stepped into the cream-colored office. The desk was old-fashioned, but the computer on it looked new.

Miss Stephanie cleared her throat. "Morgan, I'm pretty sure you want to know why you were chosen as Dorothy for the production." She paused. "Right?"

How could she know that I wanted to know more than anything why she chose me? I nodded.

"Well, that is what I am going to tell you. You see," she continued, "it was a very hard decision between you and Sarah. Before I continue, am I correct in saying that you girls have noticed that Sarah performs each dance step perfectly?"

I nodded. Yes, of course I had noticed.



"You see," she continued, "it was a very hard decision between you and Sarah"

"And am I right in assuming that you had automatically thought that Sarah would dance as Dorothy?"

"Yes," I agreed softly.

"That being said, the reason that I chose you over Sarah is very simple. Sarah is a marvelous dancer, but she lacks something that you have. You have *feeling* when you dance, Morgan. You can see in your face, in your body, in your eyes, that you love to dance. Your whole soul pours out when you perform. You are a natural dancer, darling, and I sincerely hope that you stick

with it."

I stared at her, dumbstruck. Finally I managed to stutter, "Th- thank you, Miss S- Stephanie."

"You're quite welcome, my dear, I was just telling you. Now go out there and dance your heart out, which you do anyway. Good luck!"

I left the office, my heart soaring.

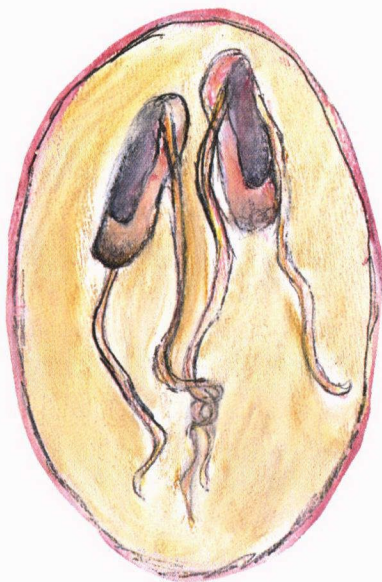
I didn't have time to see Sarah before the show. I was a little bit late. I hurried onto the stage. The curtains were closed. I ran softly as possible to the center of the stage and got into my

starting position. I tilted by chin up, put my feet in a perfect fifth position and waited for the music to start.

The curtains slid open and the music started. I stood paralyzed with fear, staring at the audience. Then, all at once, my feet worked again. My body, which was so tense a few seconds ago, gave in to my heart and danced. The steps were so right, so perfectly right for the music, that I wondered why I had ever forgotten them, even for a second. My heart felt free. My soul flew from my fingertips and touched the audience. I could feel myself smiling. I could feel the audience watching me. I didn't care. In fact, I wanted them to watch me. Why else would I be up here?

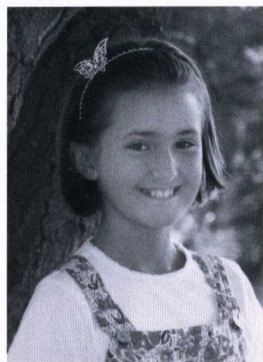
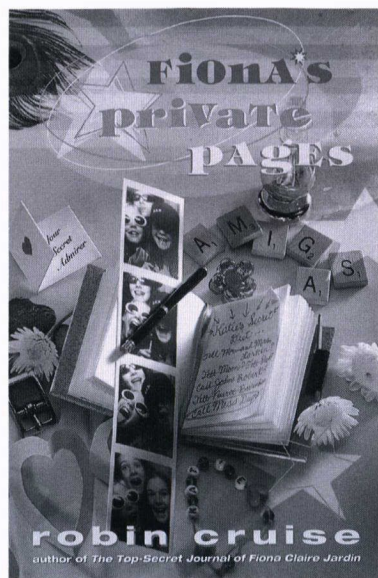
Suddenly I realized that never while I

was doing anything else but dancing would I feel my heart and soul, together. Not later, when my sister tried to impress me with her new "college" words, like "Oh, Morgan, your performance was simply *superb*." Not when my little brother Arnold put his sticky fingers in mine and whispered, "You looked pretty, Morgan." Not when my mom chatters to everyone about how beautiful her daughter looked. Not the proud looks on Grammy and Granddad, or even anything Dad or Sarah says. Suddenly I realized that I didn't need the approval or compliments from them, although they were nice. I knew, at that moment, that the only person's approval I needed was my own. My heart and soul decided for me. ❖



Book Review

by Emily Rice



Emily Rice, 12
San Anselmo, California

Fiona's Private Pages by Robin Cruise; Harcourt, Inc.: New York, 2000; \$15

WHAT DO YOU THINK makes a True Friend? Is it someone who, as Fiona Claire Jardin thinks: 1) always says nice things about you, agrees with you 100 percent, and thinks you look perfect; 2) never gets mad or disappointed in you and never keeps you waiting; 3) keeps your secrets no matter what; 4) never gossips or passes notes about you; 5) is exactly like you?

Or is a True Friend more like what her mother, Laurel Ryan, believes? A True Friend: 1) sees you with her heart; 2) listens to you with her heart; 3) knows and loves you in her heart; 4) carries you in her heart; 5) opens her heart to you.

This is the question that Fiona explores in this book. *Fiona's Private Pages* is a wonderful book based on the pleasures and trials of friendship. It seems like every one of her ideas about friendship had to be tested and maybe changed. I could definitely understand many of Fiona's feelings.

Fiona has a best friend named Blanca, and two "second-best friends" named Katie and Natalie. One of her struggles involves Natalie. Natalie has been having trouble in school, and

her mother says that if she cannot bring her grades up, she will have to change schools. Fiona decides to help by asking Katie to tutor Natalie in math, but, unfortunately, her grades remain low and her parents transfer her to a Catholic girls' school. Although the girls still live in the same town, Fiona is worried that this change will hurt their friendship. When I was five years old, my family and I moved from Connecticut to California. I tried to keep in touch with my best friend Sally, but we didn't have the patience to write letters. Then, just last year, my best friend Madeleine moved to New York. Now that I am twelve, it is easier to keep up a friendship by writing and calling, but it is still a lot harder than when you see each other every day. A good friend is worth the effort.

Fiona has another challenge with friends at school. A new girl, Mackenzie Swanson, has just started at Fiona's school and is already very popular. Fiona did not like Mackenzie from the beginning because she embarrassed Fiona in front of the whole class. As if this weren't enough, she also wrote and passed mean notes about her. Since Fiona assumes Mackenzie does not like her, she is surprised when Mackenzie invites her to spend the night. Fiona is confused because she is attracted to Mackenzie's wealth and popularity, but she doubts Mackenzie cares about being a true friend. I used to have "friends" like Mackenzie. They were cool and

popular, but I was not content. Half the time they were nice to me and half the time they were not. I stopped hanging out with that group, and, although I am not popular anymore, I am much happier with my real friends who I know I can trust.

Then, as if all these troubles were not enough, Katie tells Fiona a secret and makes her promise not to tell *anyone!* This is a big problem for Fiona because she knows if she does not tell anyone, Katie will be in terrible danger. But of course, this is number three on her True Friend list. Although I have never been in a situation quite as bad as this, many kids have. Should a person risk losing a friend in order to help her, or should secrets be kept no matter what? I think it is worth it to risk the friendship, especially if the secret is potentially dangerous to someone. Chances are your friend will forgive you and most likely be grateful in the long run.

One year later, after all these ups and downs with friendship, Fiona reviews her list and realizes that her ideas of a True Friend have greatly changed. She understands that people can get mad at each other and still be friends. She also realizes how boring life would be if all her friends were just like her. I think many people will love to read *Fiona's Private Pages* and see that Fiona's experiences are much like their own. This book reminds me of what a True Friend really is, *and* how to be one. ❖



They had to be extremely careful of unwanted listeners at Father's secret meetings

Memoirs of a Soldier

by Arielle Gorin

illustrated by Zoe Paschkis

ON THAT DAY IN 1939, Ben was only ten years old. Yet, as he sat sipping cream soda in his father's store, his legs dangling off the high wooden stool, Ben felt almost as old and wise as Heinrich Goldberg, the ancient bookstore owner who had fought in the great World War.

Yes, Heinrich knew everything, all right. He told terrific stories about how he had crouched in deep trenches, bullets whistling overhead, how he hadn't even noticed the wound in his arm that had caused him to be sent away until his sleeve began to turn red . . . Ben wanted to be exactly like Heinrich when he grew up.

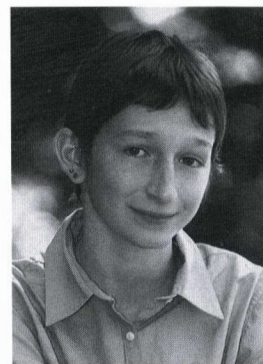
"Is everyone here?" came Father's anxious whisper. Ben's thoughts crashed to bits like the windows of their store had a month ago, when the Gestapo, or German Secret Police, had smashed them to pieces.

"Yeah, I think so," Ben whispered back, glancing around the room excitedly. He was the only one there under eighteen, maybe even twenty.

Father listened intently for a few seconds, his eyes piercing the darkness to every corner of the room. The shades were pulled completely down, and the only light was that which filtered in under the door. Even so, now that the windows were gone, they had to be extremely careful of unwanted listeners at Father's secret meetings.



Arielle Gorin, 13
Eagle, Idaho



Zoe Paschkis, 13
Newton, Massachusetts

Suddenly, Father began to speak. "As you all know," he began, "and as we all suspected, Hitler's aggression against us Jews has become more than unfair laws and yellow stars on our jackets." Ben could hear murmurs of agreement and could faintly see people nodding as he squinted through the gloom.

"I could relate to you numerous incidents of terror and injustice, of damage done to property—and people." Here, Father had to raise his voice slightly to be heard over the indignant muttering which undulated through the room. "We must take action!" declared Father, in a voice that was so full of passion that it would have been a yell had there not been a need for quiet. "We are gathered here to decide whether to flee to safety in Switzerland, or to stay and form a resistance group."

"No decision there!" screeched the crackling voice of Heinrich Goldberg, oblivious to the alarmed chorus of "sshhh" all around him. "Would we run away like a bunch of stinking, lily-livered cowards?"

"Heinrich," Father answered, trying not to smile, "even if we *do* decide to form a resistance, you will be sent to safety."

"What about this, eh, eh?" said Heinrich angrily, pointing to his sleeve, which was carefully torn in the exact spot where his scar was.

Some people said Heinrich was a pompous old fool, but Ben admired him more than anyone else, except for Father. If he had as good a scar as that,

he would make sure everyone could see it, too.

Meanwhile, restless murmurs rippled through the room. It seemed to Ben that Heinrich could have waited for a better time to voice his opinion. Perhaps it was true that Heinrich didn't always think before he . . . No! How could Ben have thought such a thing? He was sure that Heinrich had a very good reason for speaking up when he did, and yet . . . Confusion spun in a dizzying wave through Ben's head. His cream soda suddenly seemed bland and unappetizing.

Then, like an ice cube on your forehead on a summer afternoon, Father's voice broke in, sending a calm coolness through the hot, restless mutterings. "Let's not waste our valuable time on discussing the details of actions not yet decided upon, and on arguing a case upon which all present have already formed an opinion. And yet . . ." Father paused. "And yet, if we do decide to stay, I have a very special job in mind for you, Heinrich."

Alight in the glow of Heinrich's enormous beam, Father began the vote. "All in favor of a complete run for safety, say nay."

There was a heavy silence.

"And all in favor of forming a resistance group, say aye—quietly." This last was added as "ayes" began swelling through every corner of the room. They were quiet, as Father had suggested, yet determined.

They sound so brave, thought Ben ex-

citedly. I bet any one of them could take on ten Nazis! Yet fear gripped his heart as the reality of what they were doing sank in. He remembered a film clip of Adolf Hitler he had once seen—the huge black moustache, the evil, glinting eyes, the harsh, cruel voice . . .

Ben shivered violently. Father must have felt it for, next to Ben, he whispered, "All right, son?" The terrible image blew away like a speck of dust. "All right there?" Father repeated.

"Yes," answered Ben. I'm fine."

SWITZERLAND. It was only just across the border, yet it seemed continents away. How could Father send him there? Why couldn't he help with the fighting? It wasn't fair!

Yet, in his heart, Ben knew that it was going to be very dangerous, staying and fighting the powerful Nazis. He knew that Father just wanted to keep him safe. Ben started to sigh, then caught himself just in time. Father and Heinrich might hear him.

He knew it was wrong, but couldn't resist. He was listening at the door of a room. Inside, Father and Heinrich were arguing heatedly.

"I should have seen through your sneaky plan at once, Joseph!" Heinrich was screeching. "'I have a *very* special job in *mind* for you,'" he mocked bitterly. "You want to send me away, that's all. You want to get rid of me."

That same wave of dizzying confusion came over Ben again, this time stronger. How could Heinrich say those

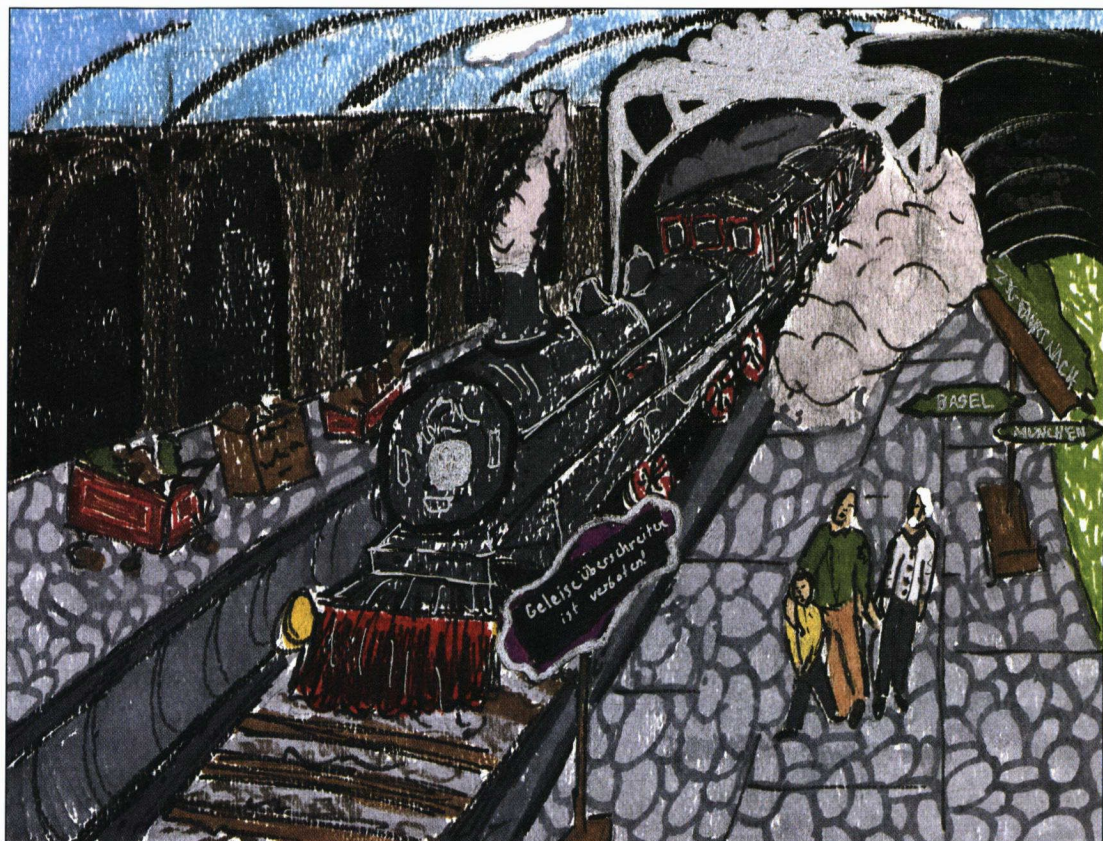
things about Father? There was something, something about Heinrich he hadn't seen before and didn't like. Yet he couldn't think what it was. Ben put his ear to the door again and tried to shrug off his confusing thoughts.

"Heinrich," Father was explaining in a slow, quiet voice. "Ever since Ben's mother died when he was very young, he has been the most important thing in the world to me. He can't go to Switzerland alone. I need someone I can trust, someone I know will take good care of Ben. You are that person, Heinrich. We've been friends ever since I can remember. I . . . I trust you more than anyone else."

It seemed as if what Father was saying had just sunk in, as if Father's calm voice had cooled Heinrich's fiery outburst.

"All right," Heinrich said after a pause. "I'll do it for you, Joseph. I'll do it for you."

THE CLAMOR of people hurrying back and forth rang in Ben's ears, and the smell of engine smoke singed his nostrils. It was all an unreal dream. He looked at Father standing beside him, tall and strong, brown-bearded and blue-eyed. Ben was leaving him. He was going to be in Switzerland with Heinrich Goldberg for . . . for years, perhaps. How could this be happening? He tried desperately to hold his tears back, and mostly succeeded, but one tear managed to sneak past his careful guard. It squeezed out of his left eye and



"It's all right, Ben. Don't be ashamed to cry," said Father

rolled down his cheek, leaving a wet, salty trail behind it.

"It's all right, Ben. Don't be ashamed to cry," said Father. "I know Heinrich will take good care of you. He would put his life on the line for you, I'm sure. But, in some ways, I want you to take care of Heinrich, too."

"Wh- what do you mean?" stammered Ben in surprise. "Take care of Heinrich?"

"Yes. You see, in some ways, despite his age and experience, Heinrich is like a child. He is desperate for people to approve of him, for them to be impressed,

and is angry when they aren't. He'll go to almost any means to make sure that people are impressed, even if it means stretching the truth. I want you to be gentle and understanding with him. I chose him to go with you not only because I know he'll take good care of you, but because I know you can help him."

A thought flashed through Ben's mind. Father had voiced exactly what it was that Ben had been unable to figure out—what it was about Heinrich that Ben had just begun to see, that part of him that was so foreign to the image of

a wise old veteran.

"Here comes Heinrich now," broke in Father. Almost simultaneously, there was a screech of brakes and a rattle of wheels as their train pulled in.

"You ready to go, Sonny?" asked Heinrich, placing a bony hand on Ben's shoulder with enthusiasm.

Ben nodded. Father clasped him in a strong hug and shook hands with Heinrich before Ben and Heinrich boarded. As the train pulled away, Father winked at Ben. Ben winked back. Father's sturdy figure grew smaller and smaller as the train pulled away from the station. Ben resolved to remember it forever.

Yet as the station grew smaller and smaller, so did Ben's courage. Soon the tears started to fill his eyes again, and this time they conquered. They covered his cheeks and blurred his vision as the country flashed past.

Heinrich's cheerful voice broke in as Ben stared miserably out the window.

"Son, I've been thinking . . ." (I wish he wouldn't call me "son," thought Ben.) "I've been thinking that I would like to publish a book about my experiences during the World War and call it *Memoirs of a Soldier*. But . . . well . . . what with my arthritic hand and all, I'd like to ask a big favor of you: I would like you to write down my memoirs for me. I dictate and you write. How 'bout it, son? Will you do it for me?"

Suddenly, before he had time to think, all Ben's tears and anguish burst forth.

"No!" he screamed. "*Just be quiet, will you?*"

Heinrich sat in stunned silence for a full five seconds, then turned away. Ben leaned back in his seat, realizing miserably that he had just done the exact opposite of what Father would have wanted him to do. Before he knew it, he fell into a troubled sleep as the train flew along, mile after mile.

THE NEXT months were like a hazy nightmare for Ben: exiting the train, staying in a plain, rented room that was shabbily furnished . . . Ben spent hours on end staring out the window at the bare, majestic Alps. He wished that he lived on one of those mountains—just him and Father. They would be all alone, and they wouldn't have to worry about Hitler, or the Nazis, or anyone.

Heinrich kept a safe distance from Ben now. Sometimes he would forget and start telling one of his old stories, then stop abruptly. Ben avoided him, partly out of guilt, partly because he sometimes felt he simply couldn't stand him. And to think he had admired him once!

The only thing that kept Ben from going crazy was the letters from Father. Every few weeks the smiling, blue-eyed landlady would tap on the door and hand Ben a crisp envelope. He would breathlessly tear it open and read Father's letter over and over again, savoring each word. Most of the time, Ben felt like a cooped-up chicken or goat.

But when he read Father's letters, that feeling changed to brave heroism, and he remembered he was doing his part in the war just as all the soldiers and members of the Resistance, like Father, were doing theirs.

One day, a particularly brilliant and sunny one, Ben was staring out at the nearly blinding white snow on the tops of the mountains. The sun danced and sparkled like magnificent diamonds. The trees created rich, dark green spots against the vivid whiteness.

Tap tap. What was that? Tap tap, came the sound again. Ben raced to the door and yanked it open. There stood the pretty landlady, her bright hair coiled in a bun, an envelope in her hand. It was dirty and smudged, but to Ben it shone more than all the snow in the world.

"A letter from Father!" Ben exclaimed. The landlady gave him a kind, almost pitying smile, then turned and left, her polished boots making a thumping sound on the wooden staircase.

Ben ripped the envelope open. Heinrich looked up from the newspaper he had been reading and tried to hide his interest. The letter read as follows:

Dear Ben,

This may be the last letter you receive from me for a very long time, perhaps until the end of the war. You see, the Nazis have been after me and I must go into hiding. Some very kind non-Jews have taken me in; I mustn't say where. It

is a safe place, and there's a good chance we'll see each other again. In the meantime, keep your chin up. Be brave.

Love, Father

No letters from Father from now on? Not knowing if he was alive or dead? Ben was devastated. Yet no tears came this time; only a hollow, empty feeling.

Without asking permission, Ben noted bitterly, Heinrich leaned over and read the letter. "Be glad your father escaped death," he said cheerfully. "I had a narrow escape, too. Did I ever tell you . . ."

Ben wanted to shriek at Heinrich to just be quiet. But before the words escaped his throat, Father's reminder came to mind. "*I chose Heinrich to go with you not only because I know he'll take good care of you, but because I know you can help him.*"

"Heinrich," Ben said suddenly, trying to talk quietly and gently, like Father did, "I'm sorry about what I said on the train. You know what? I'll help you with *Memoirs of a Soldier* after all." Ben picked up a piece of paper and a pen. "Now, what would you like me to put?"

Heinrich thought a moment, then dictated, "Once there was a brave man, loyal and true, who was dedicated to the cause of freedom."

Ben wrote it down:

Once there was a brave man, loyal and true, who was dedicated to the cause of freedom . . . ❖

Bingo!

by Simon Hatfield

illustrated by Jackson A. Harris

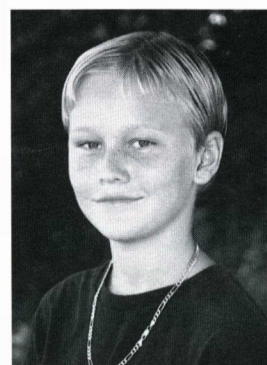
SWISSH! ED WAS PLAYING basketball on the slab, a super-smooth playground on the campus of Country Day, his school. In the coolness of the evening the asphalt felt oddly warm beneath Ed's bare feet. He was playing with his best friend Dave, and he had just scored a two-pointer while Dave was blocking him.

"In your eye!" Ed screamed.

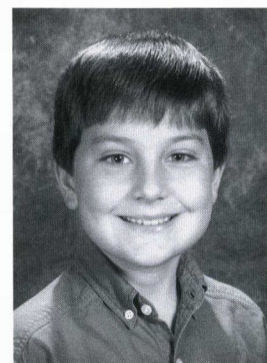
Just as Ed noticed it was getting dark, his mom yelled, "Come on up, boys, dinner is starting, and we have to eat before bingo."

Ed felt free of school rules as he walked over to his shoes that he had kicked aside earlier, and thought about Mr. Gonzalez as he put them back on. Mr. Gonzalez was the headmaster and had an uncanny way of getting Ed into trouble when he had the chance. Like that time when he had yelled at the boys for swinging on the swings loudly during a school play. Geez, some people . . .

The boys raced up to the Pavilion and, as always, Dave, who was six months older, won. They bought bingo cards, ate their spaghetti dinner like wolves, threw a couple of croutons and got ready to play by clearing their cards. The Pavilion, a hilltop pentagonal building, looked like an anthill. People were walking every which way, babies were screaming, not to mention girls. The corrugated galvanized roof reflected the sounds so that it sounded as if all the four-year-olds in the



Simon Hatfield, 12
St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands



Jackson A. Harris, 9
Tampa, Florida



People were walking every which way, babies were screaming, not to mention girls

universe were reciting the alphabet in their own different languages. The microphone was now being adjusted by the announcer and it made a noise that made Ed's ears beg for mercy.

Ed played the first few rounds but did not win. These rounds were regular bingo (five in a row) and had boring

prizes, such as sea-life books and an art kit.

After those, both the rounds and the prizes got more interesting. Twenty-five-dollar gift certificates, a blow-up soccer goal and thirty dollars worth of food at a good Chinese restaurant.

Dave won a prize from one of these

rounds, a twenty-five-dollar gift certificate to a place in town that he had never heard of before, Royal Poinciana. He was worried that he would not like his prize, but he was reassured by Ed's mom. "It's a cool place Dave, kind of like Lamuria." Ed's head was a kaleidoscope of emotions. One part of his mind was happy for his best friend, but the other half was almost jealous that the winner had not been him. This also made him determined to win another game.

After a few more empty-handed rounds and the same kind of prizes, Ed was ready to play for the big prize, the air-hockey table. Ed's hands started to sweat and he felt like he had eaten some live guinea pigs that were currently hopping about in his stomach.

By the time the final round started, Ed was mumbling things like "guinea pig" and "flying monkeys" to comfort himself.

A sudden hair-raising *creeaagch* indicated the starting of the final round. "This round will be blackout bingo for the air-hockey table." Straining, the announcer lifted up the hockey table to show the prize. The first number called was B-12. That was good because Ed had that one on both cards. The numbers kept streaming out of the announcer's mouth. On occasion, the announcer would say something like "Iiiii . . ." and a few of the girls would hopefully scream numbers like 25 or 27 but the announcer would prove them wrong with an I-21.

You could feel the tension in the air. As the game progressed the crowd would exclaim "YES!" or "NO!" depending on if they had the number called on their cards. Ed had only two left, O-64 and B-14. The next number called was Oooo . . . "64" a girl cried, "65" another called out. Ed's hopes skyrocketed. "Oooo . . . 70," called the announcer. The crowd was a sea of "YES!" and "NO!" The next number, Beeeeee . . . "4! 14! 5!" cried the crowd in hopes to convince the caller. "Beeeeee . . . 14," called the announcer. The sounds from the crowd, "Yes!"

"Joy," Ed added.

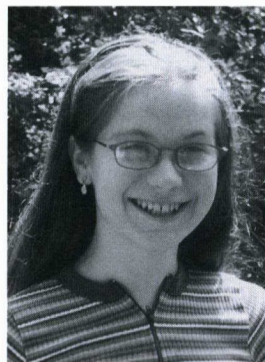
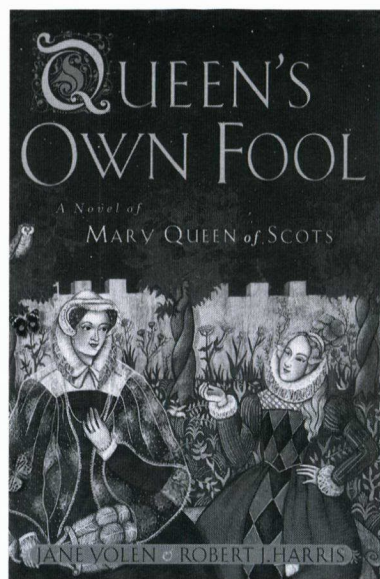
"NO!" from the back and then from the left front corner the dreaded sound came—"BINGO!" Then there were several "No's" and imitation crying. Ed's head dropped. He had lost to an old lady. What was she going to do with the hockey table that he had wanted?

Ed left the building and went to the car. He felt terrible; he had lost by one square, just one! The world was closing in on him as they drove Dave home. Ed just couldn't get it off his mind. One square left! Thinking about it made him feel as sick as that time he drank Listerine.

Even though Ed knew it would make him feel worse, he snuggled up into the seat, and when Dave said good-bye he pretended he was asleep. Finally the family arrived home. Ed forgot to brush his teeth and went directly to bed. His stomach ached. He hoped he'd feel better in the morning. ♦

Book Review

by Julia Zelman



Julia Zelman, 12
Montville, New Jersey

Queen's Own Fool by Jane Yolen and Robert J. Harris;
Philomel Books: New York, 2000; \$19.99

MY DICTIONARY TELLS ME that "history" is a record of significant events in the past. It is a perfectly valid explanation of the word, but it leaves some things out. While poring over our history books in school, we often do not fully grasp that these people were *real*. They loved and feared and grieved, as we in the twenty-first century do. It takes a truly gifted author to take a piece of history and make it a fascinating tale. Jane Yolen and Robert Harris have won a place among these talented few with their novel, *Queen's Own Fool*. They have taken the true story of a remarkable young girl who led a daring life when women were considered to be inferior to men in every way. And they have brought this tale, overlooked by the history books, to the present.

This girl, Nicola, is an intelligent, talkative, friendly person, one that we can sympathize with through all her dangers and hardships. Through her own point of view, she tells the story of the famous Mary Queen of Scots.

The supporting characters—not all of them likable—

expand the reality of the tale. Madame Jacqueline, Nicola's tutor, is one such character. She is a complete tyrant. Jacqueline demands that Nicola's intelligence be harnessed to the restrictive standards of her society. She also stifles Nicola's originality and innocent wit, trying to force her pupil into a conventional female role.

However, the reason Madame Jacqueline is so interesting is that she can be viewed as the opposite of Queen Mary. For example, in the beginning of the book, Nicola and her uncle's family are lodged in a bleak, gray room, symbolizing their lowly position in society. When the queen arrives, she brings comfort and warmth to the room. Later in the book, Nicola is in a similar position, but this time she is alone in the coldness, without Pierre, Annette, or any of her old friends to comfort her. And worse, it is not the kind, merry queen who enters the bleak room, but the stern, stiff, unsympathetic tutor. Instead of bringing joy and hope to her surroundings, Madame Jacqueline makes a bad situation terrible.

Some likable characters hold interest for the reader as well. One is Davie Riccio, a dwarf who has risen above the place his society demands that he take. Rather than being a jester that everyone

laughs at, he has become one of the most important politicians in the royal court. But the price for his defiance of his culture's standards is great when his pride and audacity overcome his caution.

My father owns a garden that I visit often. It is a place of renewal and rebirth, where plants spring up from the seemingly lifeless dirt. Nicola has similar experiences among gardens, but it is she who is renewed. It is at gardens that her life is changed—first, when she meets the queen, who takes Nicola out of her former impoverished life. Later, when she encounters La Renaudie, the Protestant outlaw, her idealized, happily-ever-after view of the royal court is destroyed.

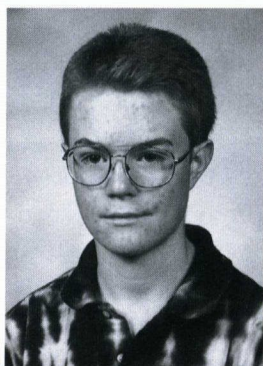
The only major flaw I found in *Queen's Own Fool* was that it presented a misleading image of Queen Mary. In the story, she is portrayed as a kind, courageous, freedom-loving woman. In all probability, this is not the truth. Some historians claim that she plotted against Queen Elizabeth and played an important part in the plan to murder her husband. In addition, I thought the queen was too perfect to be very believable.

But this book is well worth reading. Through authors like Jane Yolen and Robert Harris, history rises from the grave to reenact itself before us! ❖

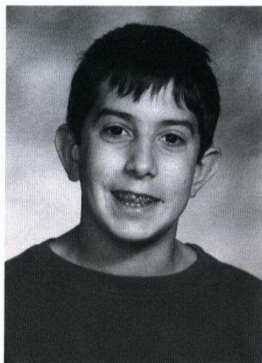
The Duck Decision

by Chris Heinrich

illustrated by Joe Lobosco



Chris Heinrich, 13
Baudette, Minnesota



Joe Lobosco, 12
Kinnelon, New Jersey

“**H**URRY UP, CHRIS,” my dad whispered in my ear. “He’s gonna get away. You need to shoot him now.” I was looking down my brand new Remington 20-gauge shotgun at a mallard. It was a miserable Youth Waterfowl Hunting Day for me. I knew shooting those ducks would make my father proud, but I just couldn’t. My father was an avid duck hunter and fisherman when his job allowed it. Fishing bored me, so Dad hardly ever asked if I’d like to go with him. I had gone hunting with Dad before but never brought a gun, because I didn’t own one, and his were too big for me. The shotgun had been a present for my twelfth birthday in August. I’d been practicing almost every evening at the local shooting range, where I learned to ignore my gun’s kick and to ventilate soda cans.

I knew I could hit that duck, but I didn’t want to. I had never enjoyed killing things, and I loathed jerks who killed animals for no reason at all. I liked nature. I didn’t want to hurt it.

I looked down the barrel at one of the ducks. This duck had struggled to find enough food to survive, and had to evade predators each day of its life, and now my dad asked me to kill it so we could have one nice meal. I hated myself for even pointing the gun near the mallard, but I hated to hurt my father’s feelings too.

“I . . . I can’t tell which is the duck and which is the



I knew shooting those ducks would make my father proud, but I just couldn't

decoy," I pathetically explained to my dad.

"Just try, Chris. I know you can do it," Dad whispered confidently back to me.

Thanks, Dad, I cried to myself. Just make it harder for me. Tears leaked from

my eyes as my brain raced to make a decision.

"You really don't want to shoot them, do you?" Dad quietly intruded on my thoughts. I was too choked up to make any noise. Luckily, a nod was enough. ❖

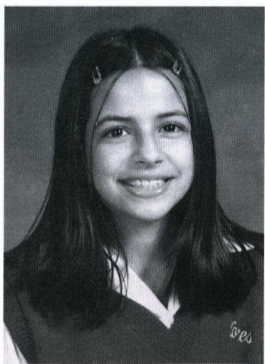
The Magical Smile

by Stephanie Gomory

illustrated by Tania Karas



Stephanie Gomory, 12
Hewlett, New York



Tania Karas, 11
Palos Park, Illinois

AMY BURTON HAD A TASTE for dramatics. Her daily schedule was crammed full of acting lessons, ballet, and auditions. Her room overflowed with masks, stage makeup, and old playbills. Every day after school she would walk over to the acting studio where she took musical theater classes. Often, she would come home with amazing news about her budding career. Her parents knew how much she loved the spotlight. They knew of her ability to mold herself into any role, to put her heart into what she was doing. But Amy felt that, if she could be seen in a different way, her talent could shine more brightly. She soon found a way to be a shining star while mending a broken heart. However, it wasn't how she had planned.

"Amy! It's time to go!" called Mom. It was April 28, Amy's twelfth birthday, and they were going to New York's Hollywood—Broadway. They would see *Phantom of the Opera*, eat at the best diner in town, and ride the ferry to the Statue of Liberty. Amy was so excited she practically fell down the stairs. She had on her favorite stargazing (as she called it) outfit—bright pink flares, a white chenille sweater, and open-toe jellies. Like a filmstrip, she was ready to roll.

The pair climbed into the family's blazing blue Chevy and blasted up the music. The spring air nipped at their cheeks and Amy's hair sparkled yellow in the sunlight. "Sweetie," said Mom, "before we go, I'd like to stop over at Rolesrose



"How's it look, honey?" Mom yelled over the buzz of the cash register

and pick up that crystal necklace your dad bought me."

"Sure, Mom," Amy replied, and off they went.

Rolesrose was an antique shop owned by a cute old lady named Edna Berg. She seemed to have many secrets, as did her shop. It accommodated everything from glass elephants to Barbies in prom gowns to ship models and exotic souvenirs. The car stopped with a jolt, and the twosome jumped out and opened the rusty door of "antique paradise." Amy wandered over to where the old

movie cameras were. But it wasn't the cameras she thought whimsically delightful. It was the jewelry box made of pink stained glass that fascinated Amy. A rainbow of delicately beaded figures, representing dancing women, dangled off the sides. On the top was a set of brass comedy and tragedy masks trimmed with turquoise rhinestones. Inside were various gem compartments.

Amy's fingers crawled gently over the smooth glass and the colorful beads. The brass mask models on the dazzling box seemed to glitter and glow. Next to

this box, on the same dusty shelf, was a showcased jade elephant, its varnish glinting in the dim light. Although the bright jade color was beautiful, the elephant didn't have the same magical beauty that the jewel box had. It didn't have the shine, the shimmer, the feeling. However, Edna Berg often referred to this elephant as her husband's favorite. Mr. Berg claimed it took him down nostalgia lane, back to when he fought in the Korean War.

Amy looked over to where her mother was, trying on an iridescent string of crystals. "How's it look, honey?" Mom yelled over the buzz of the cash register. Then her voice broke into a whisper. "Daddy has good taste, don't you think?" She raised her eyebrows and Amy chuckled.

"Well, he found you, didn't he, Mom?" Her mother smiled, then turned back to the mirror.

Amy turned back to her thoughts, too. Hmmmm, she thought. After all the times she had visited Rolesrose, she had never gathered up enough courage to look at the price of the box she admired. Today's the day, she thought. Besides, nothing will ruin my day. It's my birthday!

Her hand skated across the shelf the box was on with excitement, feeling for the back of the box because the shelf was so cluttered. Catching mental hold of where it ended width-wise, she edged her way carefully around to the back of the shelf. Peering through the clutter, her eye caught hold of the familiar

twinkle of the jewel box. She reached in carefully and began pulling out the prized object. With an abrupt motion, her hand froze. Her nail had gotten stuck on something. She jiggled her hand back and forth and realized that in order to get the box she would have to yank it out of its place. She began to pull and felt her nail split, but her burning desire to take a peek at the jewel box's price erased the pain. She jerked the box from the shelf and sighed a breath of relief. But before her smile had a chance to appear, she heard a glassy crash. Startled, Amy winced. She twirled around and fixed her gaze on what had fallen. It was the jade elephant!

Amy's mouth burned; her eyes stung with pity and anger. How could she break something as valuable as this? Amy quickly began sweeping up the pieces with her sandals. She could take them home secretly and glue them together. But the right thing to do, she knew, was to tell the truth. Yet how could this one girl, who broke the most precious thing in an old man's life, tell the truth?

Amy drew near the tear-streaked face of Edna Berg, who had seen the crash and looked as broken apart as the elephant itself. "I'm so sorry," Amy said in tears. "I promise I'll replace it."

There was a long pause, interrupted by a raspy voice. "It's not the money," Edna sobbed. "It's that my husband held it so close to his heart."

Amy bit her tongue. "I didn't know how much it meant to him," she lied.

She stroked Edna's arm to comfort her.

"The truth is, sweetheart," the woman began, "my husband is very sick. The doctor said he has had another stroke and is becoming weaker every day." The poor woman collapsed to a stool in grief.

Amy waited until Edna gained back her strength. Finding her voice again, Edna exclaimed: "I wish that life was as smooth as the glass on the jewelry box you admire. If my eyes shone as brightly as those rhinestones, I'd be the happiest person on Earth. And if I could see another smile on my husband's face, I'd be even happier. What he needs is the company of an enchanting young soul like you."

An enchanting young soul like you. The words played again and again in Amy's head. "Perhaps I could keep your husband company while you're at work," she began. Her eyes lit up with excitement as she remembered her passion for performing. "I could dance and sing for him, even write a play and perform it!" she exclaimed.

There was a moment of silence, then Edna's face lightened and she attempted a smile. "I suppose that could work out," she said. My husband would be delighted to have you with him! If you are willing to do this, it could make up for your mistake."

Amy smiled and turned to her mother, who was obviously pleased. To Edna,

Amy said, "I'll be there."

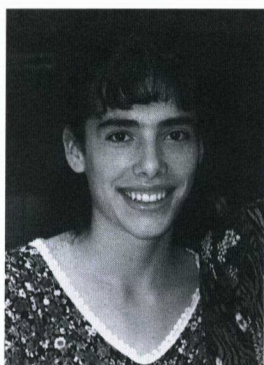
Amy and her mother left Rolesrose soon after, the crystal necklace sparkling on her mother's neck. They decided to postpone Amy's birthday treat for a future date. Amy glanced down at her favorite outfit. The stargazing clothes hadn't come in handy, but she *had* found a star—a shining star deep within herself. She realized that the best birthday present she could have gotten was a smile from Edna.

When they reached home, hardly a minute passed before the doorbell rang. To Amy's surprise, outside were Edna Berg and her husband. Amy caught a glimpse of a package tucked under Mr. Berg's thin hand. He handed the package to her. She poked her fingers under the foil wrapping and was amazed at what she saw. It was the shimmering, mystical jewelry box! Amy's smile could have reached the farthest galaxies. "Oh, I can't accept this gift," she exclaimed. But, on opening the box, she discovered that inside the largest gem compartment was a folded piece of paper. Typed in clear, bold lettering were the words: *The only key to opening the heart is love.* A single tear slid down Amy's cheek. Lifting her gaze to thank the Bergs, she noticed something remarkable. The sight eased her mind of guilt and pain. There, under the soft glow of sunset, the couple was smiling. ❖

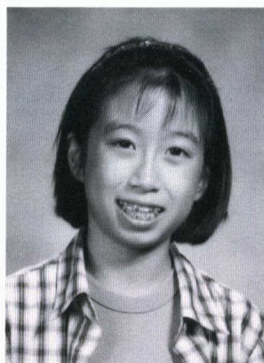
That Small Whisper

by Neva Pederson

illustrated by Alice Feng



Neva Pederson, 13
Agua Dulce, California



Alice Feng, 12
North Potomac, Maryland

“**H**OW DID YOU SLEEP last night?” my sister Rose asks. She tosses back her honey-brown hair and hands me the breakfast bowl she just washed.

“OK,” I reply, rinsing it, “but I woke up with a headache.”

Rose is eleven, three years older than me, and usually we get along well. But today I am feeling grumpy.

“I didn’t sleep too well,” says Rose, “because you were wiggling around and had most of the blankets.”

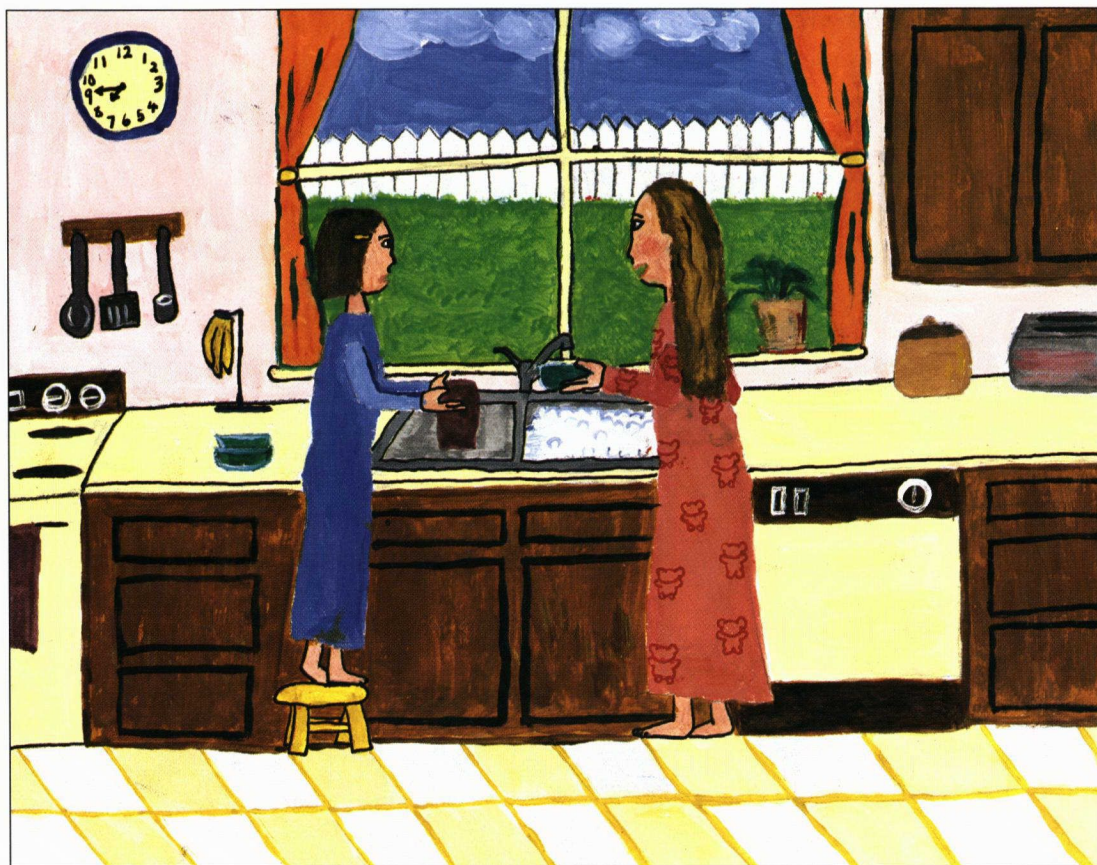
Immediately, I rush to my defense. “I did *not* have all the blankets! They were just as much on your side!”

“I didn’t say you had *all* the blankets,” she says.

“You meant it though!”

Rose makes an impatient splash in the dishwater and I am silent. Standing tiptoe on my yellow footstool, I glance over the soapy bowl at her. Looking innocent in her teddy-bear nightgown, she scrubs dishes fiercely until her patience returns. But, yes, gazing intently at her, I can tell that she, with her rosy-cheeked face looking so sweet, is plotting the great evil she is going to do. Today she will try to steal more blankets to her side when we make the bed. I know she is scheming, getting ready to make her move and probably even sorting out words to put me in the wrong. I look back down at the bowl I am rinsing. I had better be ready and have my argument prepared.

“Let’s make the bed now,” says Rose, emptying the blue



"How did you sleep last night?" my sister Rose asks

dish tub and wiping the counter.

"All right."

You certainly aren't always that anxious to make the bed, I think. I'll expose you before you have a chance to rejoice in your success.

But as we trudge up the carpeted stairs, my conscience bothers me. Do the blankets really matter that much? And as we round the corner to our bedroom an annoying thought tickles my brain. Just apologize for wiggling so much and let her have more bedspread. But I instantly shove the thought away.

No! She shouldn't get away with this.

We remove the pink pillows and blankets from the bed. I have to put her in her place, I think, as we spread the sheets and blankets back on. After smoothing them down, the time has come for me to expose her.

Something whispers to me, "Don't!" but I ignore it again and, peering at her side, I exclaim, "Rose! You have more blankets on your side!"

She glances up, astonished.

What fake surprise, I think.

"No I don't," she replies calmly.

"You do too. Come look."

Coming to my side of the bed she says, "You have just as much as I do, maybe more!"

"Oh yeah?" With my hands, I measure the bedspread that hangs over my side and hold up my hands for her to see.

"Now go measure *your* side," I command.

Obediently she returns to her side and measures in the same way, but when her hands are held up, I can tell (oh the evilness of it!), she has made her hands closer together on purpose.

"See?" she says.

"No! You made your hands closer together!"

"All right," she retorts hotly, "if you don't believe me, get the ruler!" Rose's patience has run out and her brown eyes begin to spark.

As I march angrily to our desk to get the ruler, I glance at her side of the bed again. Uh-oh. Maybe she doesn't have more. Maybe today she hadn't been planning to steal more bedspread! Maybe . . . but of course, we have to be sure. Oh, I should not have started this mess.

The tension bears down as we measure her side of the bedspread. The ruler reads 11¾ inches.

"Are you *still* sure I have more?" Rose says, glaring at me.

"Ye- . . . Yes." Actually, I'm not sure. But I have to stick to my story.

Now to measure my side. The pressure is so thick I can barely see. My heart begins to pound and perspiration dots my upper lip as Rose presses the ruler to the blankets. I hang back, afraid to look, my legs trembling. What if I have more?

"Twelve inches!" Rose announces triumphantly.

No! It can't be! I refuse to accept it.

"Let me see!" I insist, trying to sound overpowering, and I snatch the ruler from her hands to measure for myself. But the ruler still reads twelve inches. I sigh.

Not daring to look at her, I slam the ruler back on the desk and, pursing my lips, I stalk out of the room.

After tramping angrily about for a while, I lean heavily against the wall. Why did I ever start that argument? How I want to go back and start over. I should have listened to my conscience. It was just a small whisper, but it sure would have saved a lot of trouble. And as I cool off and think back, I am thankful that my conscience still pricks and annoys me.

Peering into the room, I see Rose slamming drawers as she gets ready for the day. It looks as if I've spoiled her morning. I swallow hard and go in to apologize.



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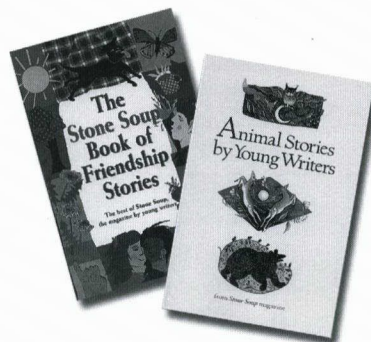
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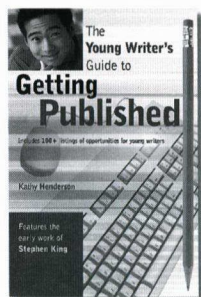
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Jessie Mug

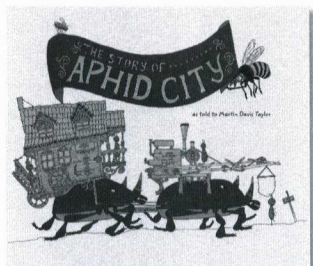
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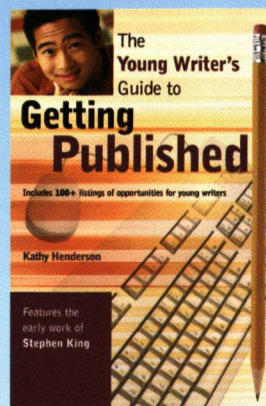
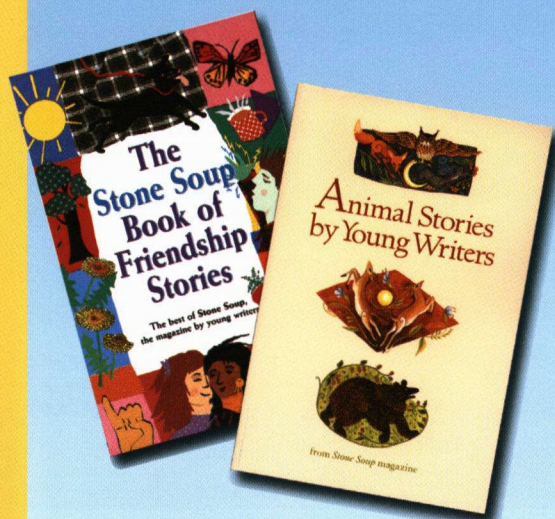
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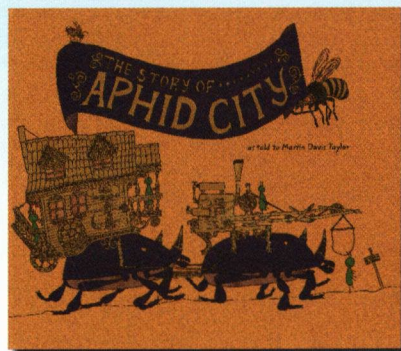


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