

Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists



"Boat Riding," by Prabuddhi Dissanayake, age 10, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka

THE ISLAND

Eve can't bear the thought of leaving her beloved home

WORLD WAR II STORY

War can be exciting, but it takes a heavy toll

Also: Illustrations by Nina Prader and Claire Neviaser

JULY/AUGUST 2003

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VOLUME 31, NUMBER 6

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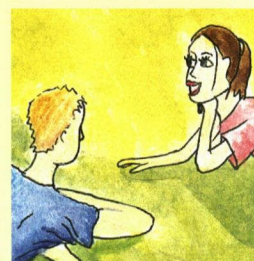
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Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists

WELCOME TO ALL OUR READERS, old and new! We've had the pleasure of publishing *Stone Soup* for 30 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 at www.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 in four to six 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 some samples of your art work, 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 and phone number.

Cover: "Boat Riding" is part of *Stone Soup's* permanent collection of children's art. It was donated to us by Shankar's International Children's Competition in New Delhi, India, which has been held every year since 1949! To learn more about Shankar's, visit www.childrensbooktrust.com. Special thanks to Mrs. Srinivasan.

The Mailbox



LBP, 9

I have only been receiving *Stone Soup* since Christmas, and I have honestly never been more excited to check the mail since then. I want to be an author when I grow up, and it is a big inspiration to know where to start writing—for *Stone Soup*. Your magazine is wonderfully put together and I hope that my work will be in an issue soon! All of the stories were great from the May/June 2003 issue, and I especially liked “Star of David” and “Emily’s Mustang.”

SOPHIE SILKES, 11
Kinnelon, New Jersey

I’d like to thank Karina Emilia Palmitesta for her story, “Silver Blue” [January/February 2003]. It described perfectly what I’ve been feeling. We had to put our dog, which we’d had for thirteen years, to sleep on September 10, 2001. I really miss her and the story made me cry in remembrance.

KATIE HOLLIDAY, 13
Waupaca, Wisconsin

Karina’s new story, “A Friend,” is on page 37.

I had been writing for several years before I discovered this fantastic magazine, but it wasn’t until you accepted my story “Silvercoat’s Call” [July/August 1999] that I got my “big break.” Later, my nature story “Autumn Thunder” was published [January/February 2002]. I will never forget my excitement at receiving an acceptance letter, or the sense that a new world had opened up with the printings of these works. *Stone Soup* offers every budding author a chance to reach her full imaginative potential and share her best writing abilities with an audience.

ISABEL HARDING, 15
Atlanta, Georgia

My aunt got me *Stone Soup* for Christmas a few years ago, and ever since, I wait impatiently for it to come every two months. I have tried sending in stories and poems of my own and, even though they have gotten rejected, I still seem to learn something each time. The first thing I read when the magazine comes are the poems. I love writing poems and so automatically I turn to the page with them on it. After I read a story or poem in *Stone Soup* I think about it and see what it has that mine didn’t and learn from all of the work that is published in it.

ALAINA MCCONNELL, 12
Wooster, Ohio

I enjoyed Ingrid Johnson’s story “Jenny” [January/February 2003] immensely. The story line itself shows up in everyday life, but few authors actually write about it. The sense of familiarity it offered through vivid detail made it come to life . . . from Jason’s spiked hair for the first day of eighth grade to the infamous playground “cooties.” I’d really like to see more like it.

JASLYN LAW, 13
San Rafael, California

I am writing to compliment Isabel Kimmelfield on her wonderfully detailed illustrations. I loved the drawing she did of a playground to illustrate Ingrid Johnson’s story “Jenny.” Her amazing attention to detail is what makes her drawings come alive. I really love *Stone Soup* and I am always excited when it comes in the mail. Thanks for publishing such a great magazine!

LYDIA TROTTMANN, 12
Fort Collins, Colorado

You can read all the stories mentioned in The Mailbox on our Web site: www.stonesoup.com

Note to our readers: Send us your letters! We are especially interested in detailed comments about specific stories, poems, book reviews, and illustrations. We’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.

Stripes

By Madeline Johnson

Illustrated by Lauren Walker



Madeline Johnson, 10
Bar Harbor, Maine



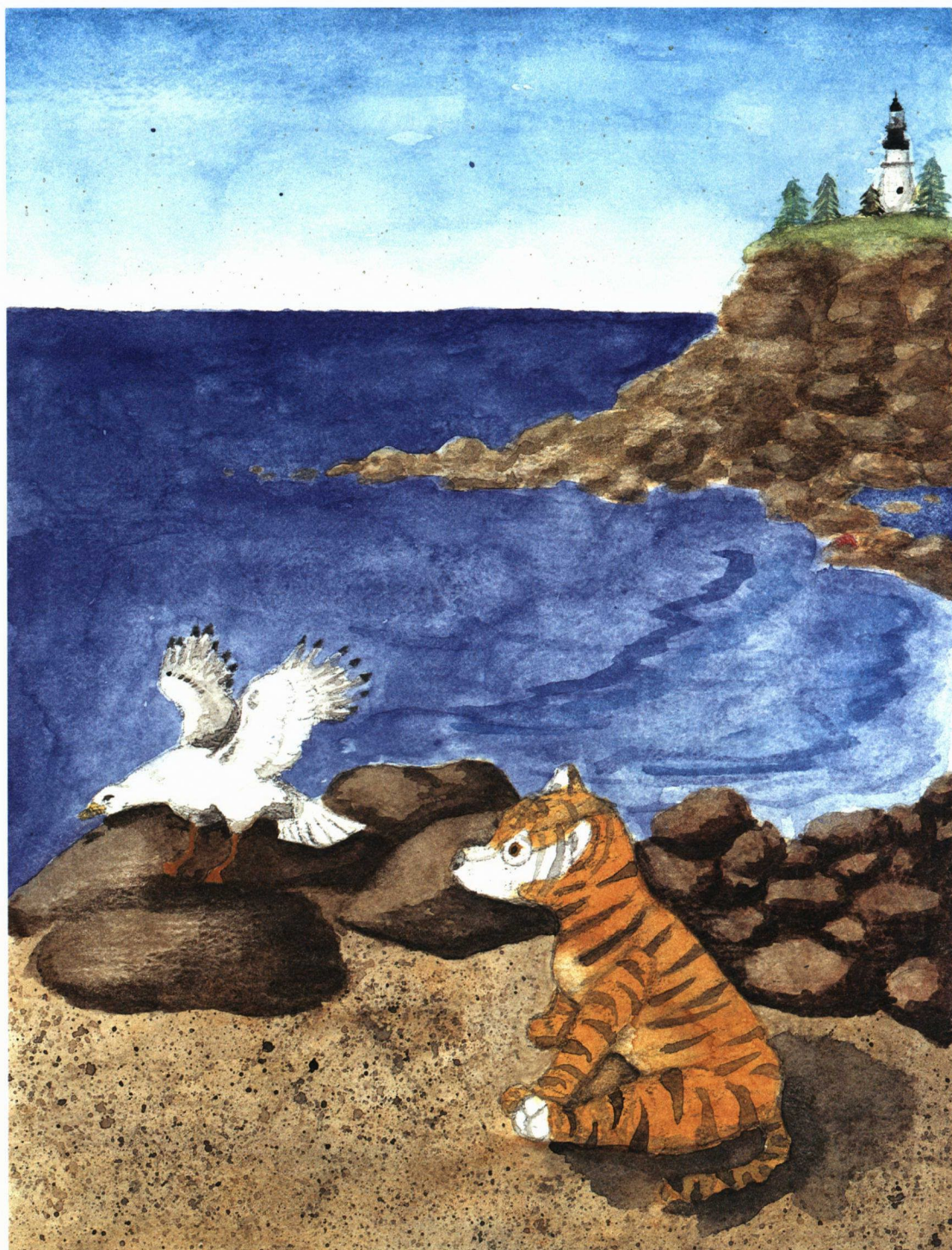
Lauren Walker, 13
Morgantown, West Virginia

MADDY LEAPS FROM STONE to stone, clutching a limp tiger in her left hand, and laughs. She is so happy with her first Beanie Baby. She doesn't think of Stripes as a stuffed animal, but as a wild tiger, her best friend. She swings Stripes around and around, and he is a blur of gold and black to everyone but her. She sees his beady gold eyes staring right into her hazel ones. She giggles again, and the sea roars its laughter back at her. The trees are swishing, and everything around her seems jovial.

She climbs a particularly large boulder and stands up to feel the salty air whip her hair back and wrap a blanket of cold around her. It feels good and refreshing. Stripes purrs his approval, too. They skip and play for a while longer until Mum calls for them to follow her up the path leading to home.

WIND WHISTLES IN MY EARS as I'm swung around and around. I'm enjoying it but am scared. The memory of a swinging accident left a black-and-blue mark on my right eye. Trees tower up above my fuzzy figure. My golden eyes fill with awe at the single leaf that truly dwarfs me to an even smaller size. I am often ashamed at being a tiger, at the size I am. My mouth is sewn together and for that I am often regretful. I can't speak or roar. I have to show my affections.

All of a sudden Maddy whirls around, sending wind whistling in my ears, and begins to wail to her parents about something she forgot at the ocean. We are not far up the trail so her par-



As far as I could tell Maddy was gone and I was lost

ents agree. Maddy runs back down the trail so fast that my eyes would have watered if they were not beads. We finally get back to the sea's sloshing waves, and Maddy retrieves a doll that is almost as dear to her as me. She puts me down and hugs her doll close to her chest. I smile and prepare to be picked up. I wait for long moments looking at the ground. I eventually look up to see nothing but the sea and its rolling waves and rocks that were mountains to me. No Maddy. No Maddy's parents. No doll. I sit there thinking this over and over again.

A seagull flaps its wings on a nearby rock, bringing me back to my senses. I try to look around but realize I'm a stuffed animal. I need a child and its love to move. As far as I could tell Maddy was gone and I was lost. So it's just you and me, I think bitterly, angry at the seagull for no particular reason. He pecks at me and flips me into a patch of sunlight. My eyes reflect in the sun and flash brightly. This frightens the seagull away, but he keeps a watchful lookout on me, eyes flashing as much as mine do, though he is not in the sun. I keep my eye on him until he cries his mournful screech and takes flight. I am lost and I have made a disgusting scavenger for an enemy. So I do the only thing I can do. I sit and think.

MADDY SOBS AND SOBS. The couch is not comforting to her anymore. Where is her little tiger? "It's OK, Maddy," her mother says soothingly, "we will go back to the ocean tomorrow."

Maddy sniffs and tries to think about seeing Stripes the next bright summer day. She gets up and paces. What if the tide washes him away? Even if it brings him back, he surely will not be in the same place.

"Oh, Stripes," she whispers, "please come back!"

THE TIDE is now even closer. What am I to do? Maddy! Why did you have to leave me? Come back! Come back! I think furiously. Slish! Slosh! The water tickles around my belly and ankles. Why can't I move? Maddy, come back!

The water now is sloshing around my ears, the rest of my body completely consumed. I don't need to breathe but I am not used to being in water. I struggle, or try to, but I'm still a stuffed animal and cannot move of my own free will. Slish! Slosh! Now no part of my body is above the waves. Come back, Maddy!

The night swallows dusk and I am alone in the ocean. I see the glow of the full moon cast a light over the rocky beach when the waves bring me up. The tide has brought me out to the sea. I then slowly fade into unconsciousness, if a stuffed animal can.

When I awaken, the waves are still lapping the shore in an even rhythm. That is when I realize that one of those lapping waves had washed me ashore! I recognize the big boulder that Maddy had stood upon, holding me gently and firmly. Come back, Maddy, because now I am back!

“TODAY IS THE DAY, Mom! We are going to get my tiger and bring him home!” Maddy says confidently, though she knows they will not find him from just knowledge and from the weak smile on her mother’s face. Yet they hike down the road to the trail and walk (Maddy runs) down to the ocean. Halfway down she stops for a breath and looks up at her mom and dad. They are talking quickly to each other. She turns back around and runs so fast that the trees going by on either side of her are a blur of green and brown. The ground beneath her feet all of a sudden goes from padded soil to rocks and boulders. Trees break away to reveal the vast sea, shining in the sun, that stretches out forever in one part, and in another, laps on the faraway shore of another place. Maddy stares at it for about a second, scans the area around her hurriedly, jumps from rock to rock, and turns in circles, looking everywhere. Then she spots the large boulder that she and Stripes had climbed and sees something

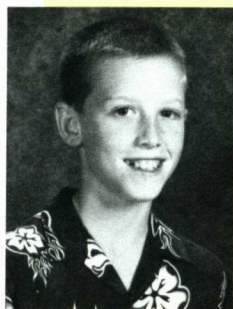
catch the sun. She runs over to it and topples over backwards. She cannot believe it!

“Stripes!” she chokes. “It’s you!” She picks him up and squeezes him so hard that she doubts he is glad to see her anymore. His wet body smells like low tide and salt, and his fur is standing on end, not soft and smooth. He is a wet ball of fur and he stinks! Maddy runs back up the path, and when she turns a corner, she collides with her dad and hugs him. “He’s back!” she says into his shirt.

I’M BACK, I think happily. We are now home and sitting on the couch, and Maddy and her parents seem to have forgotten the whole incident. But I have not. The waves have splashed me around as they had splashed the shore. I made such interesting enemies like the seagull and the sea itself. So it is about impossible for me to forget after what I’ve been through. But now I am home again with a loving family. I will always remember the time Maddy forgot me on a rocky beach . . . ☸

Diego

By Mark Roberts



Mark Roberts, 12
Windsor, California

Living in a world full
Of selfishness and wealth,
I feel the need to do something,
Reach out to others.

Two-year-old Diego
Calls out to me,
His picture spanning the miles
From faraway Guatemala.

Alone with just his mother
And very little else,
There must be some way to help,
Save my money for his life.

It isn't fair,
Growing up with so much,
Knowing others suffer in
Their lives day after day,
And not doing anything to share.

I can make a difference,
In Diego's poor community,
Become his "big brother,"
Help him lead a healthy
And successful life.

Carrying his picture in my pocket,
I can't wait for the moment
When love wraps his body in blankets
Or when I can finally hold his tiny hand
In mine, knowing that I can be a part
Of him forever.



Slowly, the boat crept away from the silent harbor and out to sea

The Island

By Xian Chiang-Waren

Illustrated by Nina Prader

SHE STOOD ON THE DOCK, squinting into the early morning sun. The wooden planks creaked softly as she ran over it. A dog trotted behind her, a small scruffy brown dog. They stopped near the end of the dock, leaped off the edge and into a small boat.

"The ferry's not here yet," she said to the dog, who didn't respond, merely scrambled onto one of the seats and put his paws on the edge of the boat for a better view.

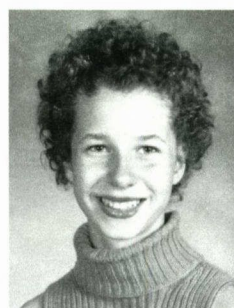
She started the motor. Slowly, the boat crept away from the silent harbor and out to sea. The dog uttered a soft growl, and then was quiet. The girl looked over her shoulder at the island.

It was small, the island, made up of small cottages for the year-round villagers (population 200) and the summer homes that tourists built. Since it was six miles out from the Massachusetts shore, the only way to go anywhere from the island was by ferry, and so the houses were built in a cluster around the harbor. But beyond that, there were several miles of beach, where the island children had explored and wandered for their whole lives. There were sandy dunes, driftwood with which to build forts. And of course, there was the sea. Island life revolved around the sea. The sea, and tourists, but mostly the sea.

The girl loved the sea. She loved to swim and splash in the waves, to glide through it in her boat. She loved sea glass and sea shells, and everything about the sea. When she was angry, the water was fierce, and when she was happy the waves were gentle. Sometimes, she thought that she and the ocean were one.



Xian Chiang-Waren, 12
New York, New York



Nina Prader, 13
Washington, DC

The island was called Evening Star Isle, and the girl was Eve.

Tourists had given her that name. Her real name was Margaret. Margaret Ann. She hated that name. She liked to be called Eve. Eve, which was the name of the Isle. She was the island. That's what people were always telling her and she knew it was true.

She had dark brown hair with streaks in it. Red, gold, and white-blond, all jumbled together, and her eyes were dark brown, almost black. When people looked at her, they saw the island. Tourists snapped her picture while she was sitting on the beach, and once an art student had drawn her.

They were far out now. She cut the motor. Eve let the boat drift aimlessly, let herself be carried with the gentle current, savoring these last moments.

In the distance, the ferry emerged from the fog.

Eve looked up. When she saw the ferry, she swayed slightly in the boat, clutching the side.

"Time to go back," she whispered. "Time for me to leave, Tro."

The dog whimpered softly.

"It's OK for you," Eve told him. "They're not kicking *you* out, you know, so be grateful for that." Reluctantly, she started the motor and headed back to shore.

Her father was waiting for her on the dock, having just arrived back in his fishing boat. He helped her out of the boat, and Tro hopped after her. Silently, they unloaded buckets of fish and carried

them to Charlie's shed, where they would be sorted and sent to the mainland. They trudged back to the cottage.

"You understand, don't you?" asked her father quietly.

She wanted to say no. She wanted to yell and scream and tell them that she wasn't going, would never go, because she was the island and the island was her, and she wasn't leaving, not ever. They couldn't make her. She refused.

But she couldn't say that, and so she simply nodded.

The cottage was a ways back from the little village, closer to the sprawling dunes and the wide, open sea. Father and daughter walked silently, entered the house without a word.

Inside, Eve's grandmother (who had been living with them since Gramps had died) was making breakfast, potatoes and eggs. Eve's sister, Angela, was perched on the edge of her chair, her golden hair rippling over her shoulders and down her back. At ten, she was three years younger than Eve, and the princess of the family. Their mother was sitting listlessly, staring out the window. Eve went to kiss her cheek, but she didn't respond.

"Margaret! Come help with the eggs." Eve went over and stirred the eggs around in the pan while Granny fussed over Angela.

"Sweetheart, you understand, it's only for a little while, till your ma gets back on her feet. Only a month, Angie-pie. You won't be away from your island more than a month."

Angela said, "It's Eve's island."

Eve smiled to herself.

"Who?" asked Granny. "Whose island? Daniel, what in heaven's name is the child saying?"

He cleared his throat. "She means Margaret."

Granny glared at Eve. "Don't be putting fool notions into this child's head. *Eve's island*, it ain't no one's island but for those who love it."

"Eve loves the island," said Angela.

"Not more'n you do, and you being more deservin', Angel," Granny cooed. "I do declare, Daniel, that child is the most spoiled thing I ever saw. Callin' the island hers, influencing her sister. And with the baby..."

At that, everyone froze, save for Mama, who tilted her head and continued to look out the window mutely. Eve dropped the spatula, and a cold ice wrapped around her heart.

Baby...

Her father turned to his mother with a hard face. "Mother, that's enough."

"Don't you turn this on me. It's her fault, 'twasn't mine."

"I said enough!" Dad shouted.

Granny smiled triumphantly, knowing she had hit a nerve.

The ferry docked. Eve could see it out the window. She ate quickly.

"Don't shove food into your mouth," Granny snapped. "Eat like a lady. Watch Angela." Angela smiled her foolish smile at her grandmother. "What an angel."

EVE BOARDED the ferry, clutching Angela's hand tightly in hers. They stood on deck, Angela waving, Eve holding onto the railing to keep from jumping overboard and swimming back to shore.

Eve waved to her dad and mama. Mama didn't notice, Mama was staring away. She probably didn't know what was happening. Granny wailed, telling Angela to be brave and she'd be back in no time, telling Eve that she had better take care of their Angela better than she had with the baby or else. Eve's eyes flashed, but she said nothing.

The ferry began to move. Angela waved happily, laughing as the breeze blew her hair away from her face. Mist swirled around them, and the tourists stared at the two little islanders, the little golden one, and the fierce one who looked like the island.

"Eve?"

"What is it?"

"We're leaving because of Mama, right?"

Eve turned away from her sister. "No," she said, "we're leaving 'cause of Baby."

Angela took her hand. "It wasn't your fault. It was the wind."

But it was my fault! Eve wanted to scream. I let it happen. I should have known!

Instead, she smiled halfway and let Angela believe that she was comforted.

Land drew near. Eve squinted, and saw, through the fog, the mainland. She saw the port, the shadowy figures that were people, waiting to greet the ferry.

"See them?" she asked Angela, pointing.

Angela looked. "Is one of them Aunt Sheila?"

"Yes, and when we get there we'll go to her house and live there till Mama's better."

"Granny said a month."

"Granny lied."

"She wouldn't. Not to me."

"She didn't mean to, maybe. She thought it'd be a month so she said so, but maybe it'll be longer."

"Oh."

The ferry docked. Eve grabbed her suitcase and Angela's, and the two of them disembarked. Eve looked around, recognizing no one, seeing no one who even resembled Mama. She pulled Angela through the crowd, looking, searching, wondering what she'd do if Aunt Sheila wasn't here. Well, she'd get right back on the ferry, that's what she'd do. Tell Charlie to stop and take them right back home.

Eve smiled. They would go home. Back to the island.

And then a lady who looked just like Mama was running up to her and asking, "Margaret? Are you Margaret? And Angela? Are you Daniel and Hannah's daughters?"

And Eve would have turned around and gone running back on the ferry, would have ignored Aunt Sheila and gone home. But Angela looked up at the lady and smiled. "Yes," she said, "I am Angela."

AUNT SHEILA's house was big, and it was white. Inside, there were colorful carpets and pale, pastel-colored walls,

but the outside was white. The house had three floors. Angela exclaimed over the little china figurines and the mahogany furniture, and Eve felt like hitting her for being so disloyal.

The day was spent shopping. They took Aunt Sheila's red Corvette to Cambridge and bought new clothes for school, which would start in a few days. To the two islanders, the mall was a kaleidoscope of color and excitement. Aunt Sheila was lots of fun, buying bright skirts and pretty blouses for Angela, jeans and cotton shirts for Eve. Aunt Sheila was a lawyer and made lots of money. She insisted that the girls get everything they wanted.

"How about this dress, Angela?" Aunt Sheila would say. "Margaret, look at this blouse. Do you want it?"

"Call me Eve," said Eve.

And Aunt Sheila didn't even ask. She just nodded and repeated the question. "Eve," she said. "Do you want the blouse?"

Later that night, Eve lay in her bed in Aunt Sheila's house. It was a pink room, with frills and lace. She would have hated it altogether, but outside the sea crashed and foamed, soothing her. Outside, the sea was still there.

She was restless. She wanted to be back on the island. She wondered how they were getting along without her, wondered how Granny had managed to make dinner, how Dad would bring all the buckets of fish to Charlie's shed the next morning. And Mama! Who would soothe Mama during the day, when Dad was out on his boat and Granny at bridge club? Who



"Eve! What are you doing up? Do you want something? I'll make tea"

would cook for her, sing to her, wipe the tears from her face?

It's your fault she's like this in the first place, Eve told herself. A nasty little voice in her head whispered, She wouldn't be this way if you hadn't let Baby die.

No! Eve wanted to scream. I didn't mean to, I didn't want her to die!

But Baby had died. Eve allowed herself to be transported back in time to that day, that day at the start of the summer. The whole family had gone sailing, Eve and Angela and Granny and Mama and Dad and Baby. Mama had packed a picnic

lunch, and they had fished and sang. Eve had shown Granny how to fish. Baby had laughed and giggled and so had Mama.

It was a brisk day, and soon the wind had turned harsh. Dad and Eve had tried to steer the boat back to shore, and they had almost made it. Only, the current had dragged them too close to the rocks, and though they tried to steer it away, they couldn't. Finally, a quarter-mile from shore, Dad had yelled at them to jump. Granny and Angela got the life vests, and Mama and Dad jumped off and swam easily. Eve was last. She picked up Baby gen-

tly and was about to hand her safely down to Mama and Dad, but at the last second an angry wave jarred the boat, and Eve felt Baby slipping from her hands.

She couldn't remember anything after that. She remembered seeing Baby a lot, but that might have been a dream. She remembered black, angry waves and Mama screaming, and . . . and finding Baby again, and holding onto her, holding her above her head so she wouldn't get hurt. She remembered waking up on shore and finding Baby still.

After that, Mama got quiet and listless. Granny blamed Eve—she stopped speaking to her, and when she did it was to ridicule her and taunt her about letting Baby die. And Eve didn't want to remember any of it. She wanted everything to be like it used to be.

EVE GAVE UP trying to sleep. Quietly, so as not to wake Angela or Aunt Sheila, she tiptoed downstairs. She wanted to go to the ocean.

There was a light on in the kitchen. Eve paused, then curiosity got the best of her and she went into the kitchen. Aunt Sheila was sitting there, reading a stack of important-looking papers.

"Eve! What are you doing up? Do you want something? I'll make tea."

Eve sat down and watched as her aunt set a pot of water to boil, then came back to the table. Aunt Sheila sat down.

"You didn't ask about my name," Eve said suddenly.

Aunt Sheila looked surprised. "I didn't

know you wanted me to."

"I didn't, I don't think. But everyone asks about my name. Tourists gave it to me. They said Margaret wasn't the right name."

Aunt Sheila laughed. "It isn't. Just as Sheila wasn't the right name."

"What do you mean?"

"I was once Eve of Evening Star Isle. Tourists gave that name to me, too. They said they saw the island in me. They see the same thing in you."

Eve was quiet. "Do you miss the island?"

"Oh, yes. I am the island. But there is more to the world. You need to see the rest of it. One day I'll go back, but for now I will see other places."

"I want to go back."

"You will."

"I didn't mean to kill Baby." Eve started to cry. Silently, she had that much self-control, but she was still crying. Aunt Sheila came over and put her arms around her. Eve set her jaw, tried to control the tears. Finally, they stopped.

"You didn't kill the baby," said Aunt Sheila. "It was a mistake. You have to move on now. We know it wasn't your fault."

"I killed Mama too."

"Your mother will heal. In time, her wounds will heal. As will yours."

Eve said, "And then we'll go back, won't we? You will, too, I know it. We'll all go back to the island."

And Aunt Sheila smiled, and said, "Yes."



Bliss

By **Nora Rothman**

Illustrated by **Claire Neviasher**

GRACE!!! WAKE UP!" I awoke that morning to the sound of my mother's prickly voice in my ear. I grunted and put the pillow over my head.

"Grace!"

"All right!" I cried, "I'm up!!!" My mother tutted and looked me in the eye.

"I wish you wouldn't sleep so late, there's chores to be done." She sat down on my creaky old bed and took hold of my shoulders. "Listen to me," she said. I sat up and wriggled free of her grasp.

"I'm listening," I said with a sigh. I knew what was coming. My list of chores. She did this to me every morning. It was the year 1850, and I was sixteen years old, with light skin and sandy blond hair, that was often falling into my hazel eyes.

"Your list of chores for the day is . . ."

I interrupted her. "Mother," I said wearily, "don't you think there is more to life than sewing or cooking or washing? Something adventurous and thrilling? Something . . . wild?" My sister Katrina laughed at this statement and started getting dressed. My mother looked at me very solemnly.

"Grace, darling, will you ever understand? Women are made for one purpose: to clean, get married and have babies." I decided that this was not the right time to point out to her that those were three purposes. "Now, here are your chores."



Nora Rothman, 11
Los Angeles, California



Claire Neviasher, 12
Madison, Wisconsin



"Mother, don't you think there is more to life than sewing or cooking or washing?"

I SPENT THE REST of the morning sweeping the floor of our little hut. It had only two bedrooms; one was for my father, mother and Jack to share. Jack was only ten weeks old, with black hair, like my father, and gray eyes, like Katrina. Katrina, my eighteen-year-old sister, was very fond of her glossy black hair that reached halfway between her waist and her knees. She was a very gorgeous woman, and had many marriage proposals, but hadn't accepted one yet. She and I were complete opposites, not only in appearance (I looked exactly like my mother, and she looked quite the same as my father),

but also in spirit. I was adventurous and I never wanted to marry, while she enjoyed the housework and believed the same theory as my mother; we're only here to get married and have babies. In fact, the only thing that kept me from running from that house was my father.

My father was bright, witty, and like me, he was adventurous. I just cherished him. He was always trying to reason with my mother, trying to get her to let me come pick flowers in the fields while he worked, or take walks alone, and all of the things that ladies weren't expected to do. But aside from my father, I had only one



Then I would sit under the shade of the tree and write

thing to keep me sane: my poetry. Whenever I had the chance, I would run off to the old tree with the hollow trunk and take my poetry book out of a hole in the tree, where I also kept a notebook, ink and pen given to me by my father. He was the only one who knew my passion for poetry, because I dared not tell the others. They would just laugh at me, the way they always do when I talk of unusual things. Then I would sit under the shade of the tree and write. Many times I would climb up in the outstretching arms of the tree, and sit and write of the sun, or clouds or night. Sometimes it rhymed,

and sometimes it was just the way I feel. And others, I wouldn't write it at all, just think about it, and eventually, I'd fall asleep.

"Gracie, Mother says you have to come help make lunch." Katrina's voice pierced my thoughts. I desperately searched for an excuse.

"I'm still sweeping," I lied, forcing a smile, "The floors have to be extra . . ." But Katrina wouldn't have any of it.

"Nice try, but it isn't fooling me." I hung my head and sighed.

"What must I do?" I asked.

Katrina thrust a straw basket into my

arms and said, "Just go pick enough apples to make a pie." I looked up, surprised. Katrina noticed my shock and, exasperated, exclaimed, "*For dinner!!!*"

A smirk grew across my face. "For dessert!" I said. And then I was out the door in a flash, running toward the apple tree, with the straw basket in hand. It was a beautiful sunny day outside, and I wanted to just stretch out on the grass and gaze at the clouds. But first I had to pick the apples. I climbed up in the tree and grabbed the reddest apples I could find. In the end I had about ten apples. I knew that that would be probably over enough, so I picked the smallest apple out of the bunch and ate it. It was delicious! I didn't want to go home to do more chores on that gorgeous day. I just wanted to sit out in the sun. I'm sure they won't miss me, I reasoned to myself, I think I will write my poetry. So, with that thought in mind, I sauntered over to the big old tree and took out my notebook, pen and ink. I gripped my pen and notebook with my mouth, and held the ink tightly in my left hand. Then I began to climb. Today, I thought, there must be a very clear sky, so the view must be best from the highest branch. And so I climbed to the highest branch of the tree, and sat facing the hills, leaning my back against the tree trunk. It was actually quite comfortable. And so, I began to write.

I was absorbed in my poetry when I heard a voice calling up to me.

"*Hello up there!!!*" called the voice. I swiveled around to see whom the voice

belonged to. It was a tall man, with brown hair and eyes to match. I smiled down at him.

"*Hello!*" I yelled back. He motioned something with his hands. "*What?*" I called. I could tell he was exasperated.

"*Come down!!!*" he practically screamed. I nodded and hopped onto a lower branch. From there I jumped. I landed with a thud on my feet, and quickly took the notebook and pen from my mouth and put them into the tree with the ink.

"Are you crazy?" asked the man. "You could have killed yourself jumping like that!"

I just smiled and said, "Nice to meet you, too." The man laughed.

"I'm sorry," he said, "I haven't introduced myself. I am Paul." I was surprised to see that he had not stated his last name, but I copied his style.

"I'm Grace. How do you do?" I held out my hand and we shook. His grip was not tight, but firm. He looked to be about in his forties.

"Now tell me, Grace, what were you doing all the way up in that tree?" he inquired.

I thought about this for a minute. Should I tell him? I decided I would.

"I was writing a poem," I replied. He looked shocked, so I continued. "You see, Paul, my mother has a theory that women were put on this world only to get married and have children, but I think that there is more to life than that, so I began to write poems, and I found that it just absorbs me! I just adore it!!!" I looked at

him, hoping he wasn't going to just walk away in disgust. But the look of shock on Paul's face turned into a smile. He had a lovely smile.

"Well, you certainly are an original!" he chuckled fondly. "Let's see it, then!" I just stood there gaping at him. Did he really want to see my poetry, or was he just pulling my leg?

"Go on, get it!" Paul ordered. I walked toward the hole in the tree and pulled out my notebook. The ink had dried inside the darkness of the hollow tree. He looked at me expectantly. He even wanted me to read it! So, I looked back through the pages to find my best poem, and then I read it.

"The forest branches loom high above me as I walk along the path. Ferns are growing alongside me, and the dappled light shines itself upon the path ahead. Beauty is everywhere. The world is silent, except for the rustling of the wind. It calls to me, leading me on. The light shining through the arms of the tree darkens, as the sun goes down. I cannot see a thing, but the wind leads me on. Suddenly, the forest ends and I look up at the black blanket high above me. Dots of light are sprinkled all over, some brighter than the others. The blanket of black engulfs me. And then I see a round bubble of light, a

sphere of hope and a dot of fear, the moon."

All was silent for a moment, and then Paul spoke.

"That was gorgeous!!!" he exclaimed. I shook my head.

"It was nothing," I answered, modestly, "really . . ." But Paul had grabbed me by the hand.

"Get your notebook and let's go!" He yanked my arm and pulled me all the way to where his carriage was parked. "Get in," he ordered. I got in, and he stepped up after me.

"Where are we going?" I cried.

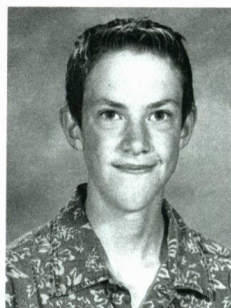
He looked at me grinning like a maniac. "To the Printing Press!!!" he yelled. And that is exactly where he took me. We talked to the editor, and I read him all of my poems. I was asked to step outside. I obeyed, and about a half hour later, Paul came out wearing a look that clearly said, "We did it!" I couldn't believe it. I was going to turn my notebook into a real book.

AND I DID. I did something more with my life than get married and have children. I proved my mother wrong, and inspired many women. And from that one day on, I lived the rest of my life in bliss. ❀

Thirteen and Still Feeling Lucky

By **Matthew Taylor**

Illustrated by **Max Strebel**



Matthew Taylor, 13
Mammoth Lakes, California



Max Strebel, 13
San Francisco, California

I LEANED BACK IN THE cushioned seat of the gondola. I looked over at my close friend and mountain bike riding partner Daniel Vest. Dirt smudges ran across his face, and his clothes had a tint of brown on them. Both of our shirts were drenched with sweat.

I drummed my fingers on the seat. Outside, the wind howled at us as the gondola took us to the top of Mammoth Mountain. Daniel and I had been riding cross-country trails all day to train for our next race, and to finish the day off, we were going to ride the world-famous downhill course Kamikaze. It drops from a summit of 11,053 feet to 8,900 feet in about seven minutes, riding at a medium pace.

Daniel rode a Specialized Hard Rock, a 24-speed hardtail and an all-out cross-country bike. I had a Schwinn Rocket 88, a 27-speed full-suspension bike. It was also a cross-country bike. At the time, we were both saving up for downhill bikes so that we could each have one bike for downhill and free riding and one bike for cross-country; however, we couldn't wait until we had the right equipment. The Kamikaze's draw was too powerful. I looked out the window. Trees stretched out for miles and miles, and they could be seen all the way to the White Mountains.

The gondola rumbled and shook as we entered the station at the peak of Mammoth's height. The doors opened with a sound like the release of a cap on a soda bottle.

Daniel and I grabbed our glasses, stepped out of the gondola, and wheeled our bikes out of the station and down the stairs. A



I can't chicken out now. I've just got to do this

cold wind blew through the air and moaned in my ears. A dust devil swirled through the air, causing all of the tourists who were taking the scenic gondola ride to gape and point. I looked over the barbed-wire fence which separated the level ground from a section of Kamikaze. The wide course was windswept, and rocks littered it.

Daniel and I clipped into our pedals and rode toward the start. A wooden sign read "Kamikaze," and right next to the name of the course there was a black dia-

mond. My stomach knotted up. Should we be doing this? It was a pro downhill course, and we were only thirteen. No, I said to myself, I can't chicken out now. I've just got to do this.

We turned and began our descent.

One minute later, we were speeding down the course side by side. Unlike the sheltered cross-country courses, trees were nowhere to be found except in the distance since the course was above the tree line. There were, however, plenty of rocks. My shocks rocketed up and down.

My fingers were sore because of their position on the brakes. I had to be ready for anything. My knees moved in harmony with my shocks. The wind blew into our faces and moaned in our ears, but neither of us was daunted.

I saw a bump throw the back of Daniel's bike into the air. His back tire came down crooked, but he shifted his weight and corrected it just in time. He then began a right turn which took us into another straight downhill section. I shifted my weight toward the back tire so that I didn't lean forward too much. We leaned into another right turn. Pink flags fluttered in the wind to our left.

I sighed in relief. This was the last part of the course. We were finally done. I pushed my pedals as I tried to catch up to Daniel, my bike wobbling from the sheer speed of it all.

"Whoa!" Daniel shouted. He leaned into a hard left turn and was then out of sight. Right ahead of me lay a series of sandy ditches. That was why Daniel had turned so suddenly. I, however, couldn't turn. If I turned right, I would just hit more sand. If I turned left, I would hit the metal pole that supported the pink flags. I stared ahead, frozen. A bump knocked my hand off its resting position on the back brake. I braced myself for the impact. I would have to do whatever I could to avoid injury. My front tire dug into the sand, and my bike immediately stopped. I, however, kept moving. My stomach lurched as my body threw itself over the handlebars. There was a snap as my clip-in

shoes tore out of the pedals. My arms flailed as I flew through the air. My legs jutted upward. I was in the same position a swimmer is in as he dives into the water, but my hands weren't in front of my head. My head slammed into the ground. Bright lights erupted in my eyes. I kept rolling and rolling until the sand finally stopped me. I heard Daniel shout something, I couldn't tell what, as he dropped his bike and sprinted toward me. My head burned, and it felt as if it were swelling inside my helmet. I unbuckled my helmet and threw it to the ground.

"Are you OK?" Daniel asked.

"Yeah, I'm fine," I replied. I put my hand in my hair. Rocks littered it, and dirt was smeared all over my shirt. I sat there for about a minute.

Finally, after he asked if I was OK again, Daniel suggested that we get to the bottom. I nodded.

WE SAT ON A bench outside of the main lodge. I looked around at all of the tourists who climbed the climbing wall and rented mountain bikes. I rubbed my head. That had been a pretty hard fall. My head still hurt, but it should since the fall was only about—how long ago was it? I thought about it. Why couldn't I remember? I had fallen on . . .

"Oh, no," I said.

"What?" Daniel turned to me.

"I . . . I don't remember where I fell, or when I fell, or anything." My voice trembled. "All I know is that I did fall."

"Do you remember riding the gondola?"

Daniel asked.

"We rode the gondola? We didn't ride the gondola, did we? We just got here, right?" Everything between waking up this morning and now was nothing but empty space. I began shaking.

"We've been up here all day!" Daniel said, his voice rising.

"Where did I fall?" I asked.

"Kamikaze," Daniel answered.

"But that's a downhill course, and it's way up there," I said, pointing to the top of the mountain.

"I know," he said. "But we wanted to do it all day, so we did."

I shook my head in disbelief. All right, I thought, I need to figure out what I remember. I need to spit out facts. Just facts.

"I'm Matthew Taylor," I said. "And you're Daniel Vest. My mom is Cathy Enright. My dad is Gary Taylor. My stepdad is Greg Enright, and my stepbrother is Matt Enright. We live in Mammoth Lakes, California. My birthday . . ." I paused. When was my birthday? "My birthday is September 11."

"No, it's not," Daniel turned to me. "You're a little more than a week younger than I am, and my birthday is September 14."

"Oh, no," I said, shaking my head. What if I forget all kinds of important things? What if I forget my friends' names or things that have happened to me?


Calm down, I said to myself. So far you only forgot your birthday and most of

today. It'll probably come back soon.

I saw Daniel's eyes darting around. A woman walked by. He ran up to her.

"Excuse me," he said, "do you think there's a doctor here?"

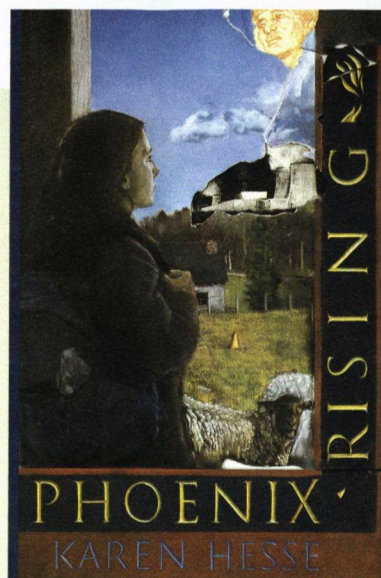
"Yeah," she said, pointing to the Adventure Center. "There's probably one in there."

THE REST of the day consisted mainly of questions being asked over and over. I had to say my real birthday about fifty times, but it turned out that I had just had a mild concussion. That night as I lay in bed, still unable to believe that I had actually lost my memory for a while, I began to wonder why I mountain biked despite the obvious risks. I always heard about really hard crashes, and I had just had one. So what kept me going? I thought about it until I saw the answer. It's the thrill of going fast, the adrenaline rush of hitting a drop-off, the muscle burn of going up a hill, the technicality of the rocky, sandy, steep sections, and the passion that I feel as I push the pedals. Put simply, it's the love of the sport that keeps me going. It's the continuation after hundreds of crashes that separates the real mountain bikers who love the sport from the people who cry and put their bike away after a little scrape on the knee. Despite the hardest crashes that I will take, I have the privilege of being able to call myself a mountain biker, and because of that, I'm thirteen and still feeling lucky. 

Book Review

By Alexa Bryn

Phoenix Rising by Karen Hesse; Henry Holt
& Company: New York, 1994; \$16.95



Alexa Bryn, 12
Hollywood, Florida

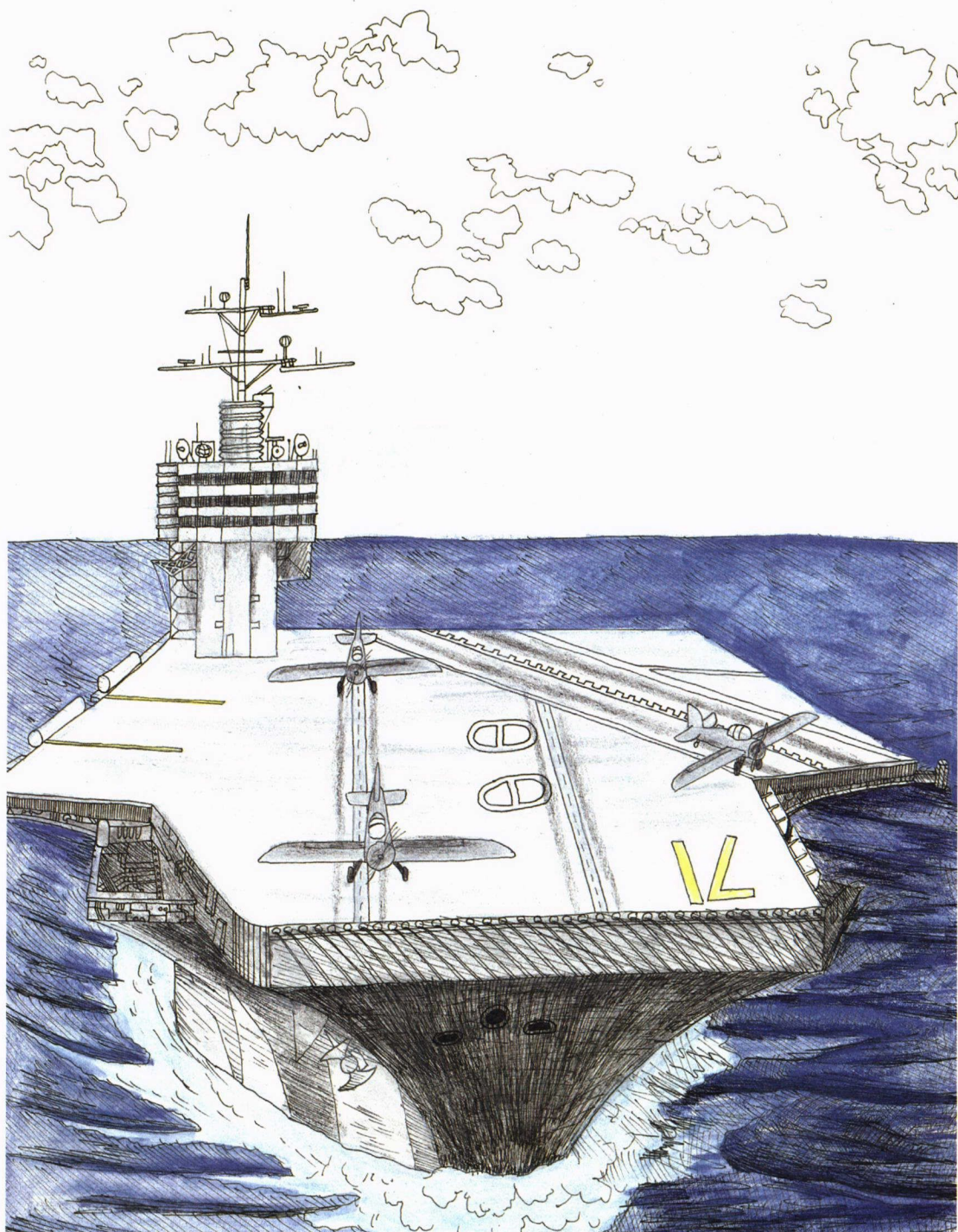
WHY DO BAD THINGS happen to good people? Why do some people live and others die? Isn't it ironic how a loss can bring two strangers together, but then ultimately, keep them apart? These are some of the questions which Karen Hesse explores in *Phoenix Rising*, a story of a friendship blossoming from one of the most devastating tragedies imaginable—an accident at a nuclear power plant.

Nyle, a young teenage girl, has already lost her mother and grandfather when the accident happens at Cookshire power plant. She lives with her grandmother on their farm near the plant, and watches with horror and fear as the power accident spreads radioactive nuclear energy, destroying their flock and their crops. Nyle knows that people are dying as well, and wonders if she and her grandmother will be next. If you have never lost a loved one, you may not understand Nyle's anger when she hears that Miriam and Ezra Trent, two sick refugees from the accident, are coming to stay in the back bedroom—the same bedroom where both Nyle's mother and grandfather died. But I understood Nyle's feelings, for last year my uncle, who was only forty years old, died after a terrible illness. Nyle's anger is rooted in fear—fear of getting close to people only to lose them. She

tries to build a wall, to protect herself from further hurt. As the story progresses, however, Nyle learns—and the reader learns with her—how to break down those walls.

Nyle's grandmother convinces her that taking the refugees in is the right thing to do. Difficult as it is for her emotionally, Nyle tries to make the best of the situation, and begins to spend time with Ezra. At first she reads to him and wets his face with compresses, but then they start to really talk—to connect—and they develop a deep relationship that goes both ways. It is not just that Nyle learns to care for Ezra, all the while knowing that she might lose him; Ezra also cares for Nyle, and his caring for her transforms her. As their friendship progresses, Nyle is no longer the closed, guarded person we met at the beginning of the story. Ezra has an uncanny way of making Nyle open up. Nyle feels that Ezra understands her, and she is able to confide her deepest thoughts in him. Through Ezra, Nyle begins to break down her walls, and rebuild herself as a person. What a lesson in friendship!

Phoenix Rising is also, however, a lesson in strength of mind and spirit. Ezra, like my dear Uncle David, was so sick that he could hardly move, but he willed himself to keep going on. He found the strength to keep living and to help others live their lives at the same time. While it is true that Nyle gave Ezra strength and prolonged his life, it is more remarkable how Ezra actually brought Nyle back to life. My uncle, like Ezra, gave me strength even as he lay dying, and I sat by his side. No matter how weak he was, he never stopped trying to animate me with his humor. The story of Ezra and Nyle confirmed for me that friendship and love are a two-way street. And we can learn so much in life—about how to live life—from helping to give life to those who are suffering. ❀



I paused, but only for a second, before pushing the accelerator as far as I could

World War II Story

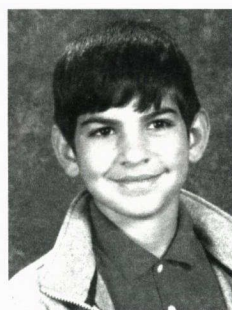
By **Asif Rahman**

Illustrated by **Martin Taylor**

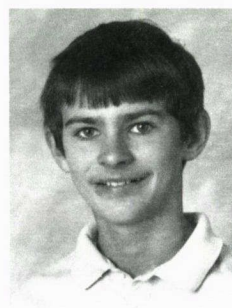
I WAS LYING IN MY BUNK, listening to the waves rocking the sides of the Yorktown when I heard the sound. It wasn't much, just a slight splash in the water, but when you have been living on an aircraft carrier for six months in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, you know the sound of a Catalina when you hear one. I heard the heavy seaplanes moving toward the Yorktown, and saw a light suddenly flicker on in the captain's cabin. Must be important, I said to myself. Captain Fletcher doesn't wake up at 5:45 in the morning for anything like this usually. I heard a slight murmur of voices on the above deck, but I couldn't make out the words.

Then, without a warning, a siren went off, then another, and then another. I leapt out of bed, and started for the narrow stairs that I knew would soon become a mass of bodies, pushing and shoving their way up, before long. Unfortunately, the stairs were already clogged when I reached them. Why did they have to put the pilots' cabins at the far end of the ship, I wondered. Oh well, now I had an excuse to wait for Mike.

Mike was my best friend aboard the Yorktown. I hadn't known him until I had been drafted into the army to fight in World War II, but when we met, we became inseparable. He had come from Russia to the U.S. in World War I, and had adjusted to the American culture very well. I was happy to have someone that flexible to watch out for me, just as I watched out for him. He was very smart, and could literally take apart his plane and put it back together. He knew exactly what every-



Asif Rahman, 11
Cincinnati, Ohio



Martin Taylor, 13
Portola Valley, California

thing did and was one of the best pilots on the ship. The only thing that made him different from the rest of us was his attitude toward the war we were fighting. Unlike me and the other pilots, Mike was the only one who didn't think that it was exciting and even fun to fight for his country. He just didn't like war.

I, on the other hand, thought it was very exciting to be taking part in this war. For the first time, I felt that I was doing something important. Even before I had been drafted, I had dreamed of flying a bomber, destroying enemy areas, and shooting down enemy planes. From the beginning, I looked forward to the day that I would fly up on a mission. Little did I know that that day would be a day I would remember and hate forever.

When I saw Mike, I motioned for him to come over, and we walked up the narrow, steel stairs together to the pilot ready room. When we finally managed to push ourselves up the stairway and across the slippery deck, the small room was already crowded with pilots. When we squeezed ourselves in, we knew something was going to happen that day.

Captain Frank Fletcher was standing in front of us, pacing back and forth and looking very anxious. Then suddenly, he stopped. "Boys," he said in his serious barking voice, "today is a day that will make history. Japanese carriers have been sighted and we're sending every man out to bomb them. If we can wipe them out, maybe this war will turn around." The men in the room grew quiet for a few mo-

ments, and then cheers and some talking broke out. Many of us had never even seen a Zero (Japan's preferred fighter) let alone an enemy aircraft carrier. This was big even by the older pilot's standards. Sure, they had shot down a few planes in their careers, but bombing a carrier? That was something only people like Jake had ever done.

Jake was my rear gunner. He had been on the Yorktown before almost everyone, and he had seen it all. He had shot down Zeros, participated in bombings, and had paid the consequences. His right cheek was black and heavily scarred. In one mission, his plane had caught a hail of machine-gun fire and many had grazed his cheek. His pilot was killed, but he inflated the life raft, and was picked up by a search-and-rescue team. After that, he had become one of the most respected members of the ship. Younger men eagerly listened to his tales of battle, but surprisingly, he was never eager to begin another battle. All that had ended after his pilot had been killed. It had really changed Jake, and after that, he was never quite the same about war. Sure, he told stories like everyone else, and stayed in the Navy though he could have left long ago, but he seemed to not care about the war anymore. Still, I was glad that he was my rear gunner. I felt invincible with such a good man sitting behind me, pumping his machine gun at enemy planes (though, as I said, I had yet to see a Zero).

Captain Fletcher resumed speaking. He gave us details, such as wind speed, lo-

cations, temperatures, squadrons, and the rest of it. I followed very closely, but I noticed that Mike hadn't. His face had turned slightly whitish, and when I asked him what was wrong, he just said, "I don't think I'm going to like this at all."

"Oh, come on, Mike," I said to him. "You'll be fine. Anyway, you're the best pilot on the ship, and everyone knows it."

"Really?" he said, as if surprised.

"Of course; now let's get to our planes, they need some work," I said, ending the conversation.

We walked down to the hangars with the other pilots in silence. The anticipation hung in the air, and even the workers were giving us admiring looks. After all, weren't we the people who were going out to bomb the ships? Weren't we the people who would win this war for America? Finally, we reached the hangars. Hundreds of planes lay there, wingtip to wingtip, waiting for their journey to the elevator and onto the deck.

The SBD Dauntless is an old plane. It had been flying for almost ten years, but was still the best dive-bomber in the sky. It seats two people, the pilot and the rear gunner. The pilot guided the plane to the target, dove at it, and released the bomb. The rear gunner got the hard job and all the glory. The rear gunner's job was to shoot down as many enemy planes as possible, without being shot down himself. This was not easy if you were in a tight dive going at 400 miles per hour with some Zeros hot in pursuit. It was very dangerous, and there was no cockpit to

protect the rear gunner from the low temperatures and enemy bullets. A rear gunner needed all the skill (and luck) he could get. That's why new trainees are always taught as pilots. They figure that we don't have enough skill to deal with enemy planes ourselves. Frankly, I agree. I wouldn't last two minutes in the back of a Dauntless, and the stories I've heard Jake tell don't bode well with my natural disposition. For one, I hate cold. I get cold enough in a regular cockpit, even wearing a flying suit. I don't know what I'd do if there was no glass between the elements and me. Also, I don't know beans about a machine gun. Of course, I know that you just pull the trigger, but it doesn't look that way. When I first saw a machine gun, I thought it was some sort of remote-control device, with all the little things coming out of it (which I later learned were called cartridges). Anyway, I'm just glad that I'm a pilot and not a rear gunner.

Mike and I got into our separate planes and waved at each other. We knew it would be a few hours until the workmen refueled our plane and made all the necessary inspections (Does the engine work? What about the flaps? Did we load enough ammunition?). I briefly wondered why we had to stay in the cramped cockpit of the plane if the workmen were going to take two hours to do everything before we even were on the runway. It was probably some safety precaution that was taken so that the pilots were always ready for takeoff, but I thought it was stupid nonetheless.

I won't bore you with the story of that long, hot wait, but to make a long story short, it seemed as if everyone was anxious. (Except for Mike. He seemed downright scared. I didn't worry, though. He was a great pilot.) Finally, we saw what we were looking for. A man held a thumbs-up sign in the air, which meant that we could start our engines and move our planes into the huge elevators that moved between the hangars and the top deck. Mike and I went together. I thought he'd feel better if I was with him for this journey. I radioed a message to him and said that he would be absolutely fine, and he managed a weak smile at me.

Then all of a sudden, we were on the runway. I felt my blood rush through my body. I had taken off many times before, but only for patrols and routine practice flights. This time, though, I was going on a mission. I watched the planes before me roll down the runway and into the air. I listened intently for the call that would give me the OK to rev my engine up to max. Then, I heard it. "CR 163, permission to take off granted." I paused, but only for a second, before pushing the accelerator as far as I could. I heard the tires screech forward, and the big Rolls-Royce engine rumbling faster and faster . . . and then I was in the air.

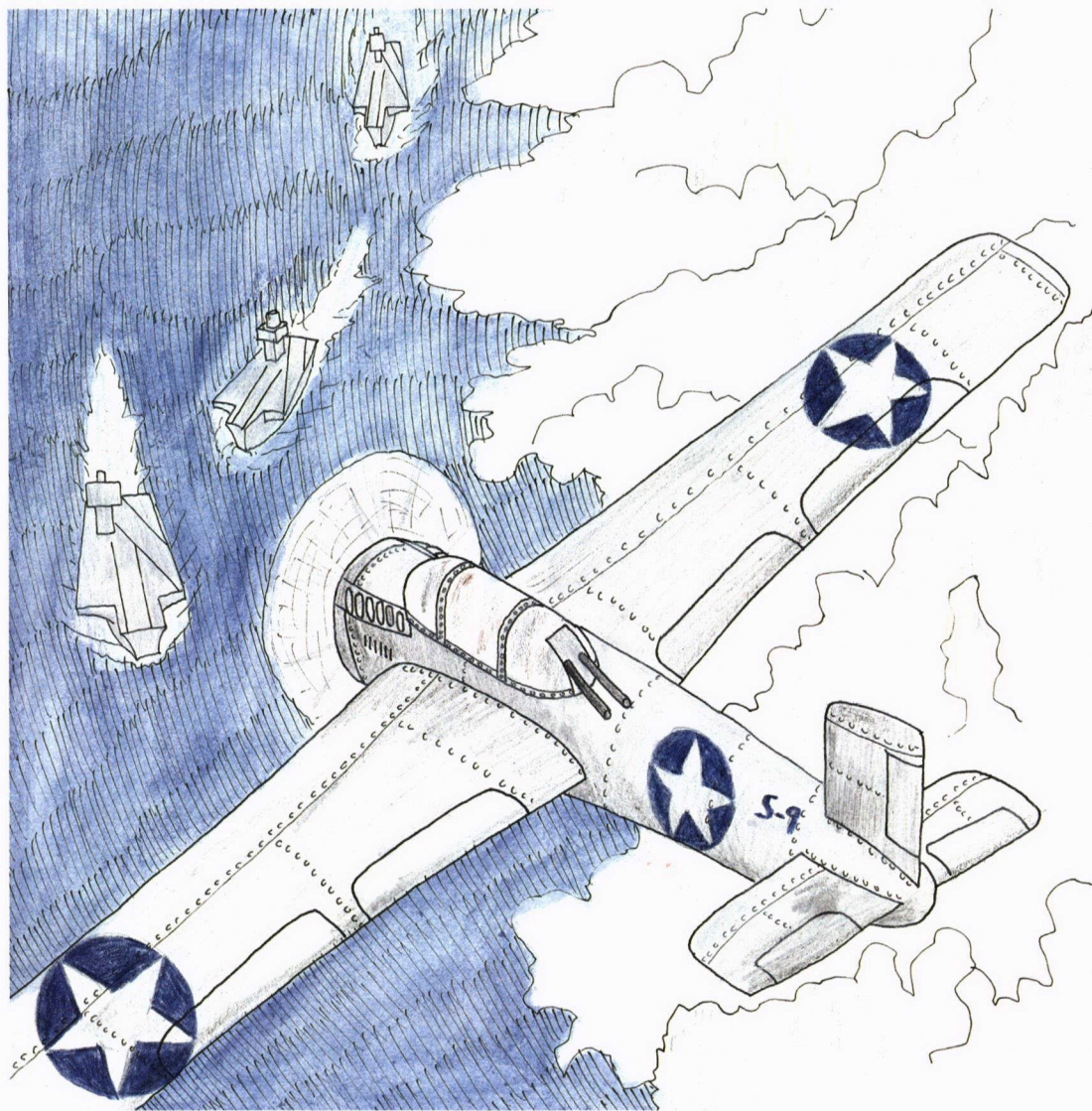
I held the steering bar gently, circling twice before heading off toward the east—where Japanese carriers had been sighted. I looked out the cockpit window, and saw Mike grinning at me. "See, I told you you'd feel better," I radioed to him.

He nodded enthusiastically in response. We quickly flew to the front of the formation, just behind the lead plane. We watched the waves sparkling below us, and the clouds rushing by. There was nothing I liked better in the world at these times than flying. It felt so calm and quiet, that I couldn't imagine what it would be like with enemy planes, and guns, and the rattle of bullets. It seemed impossible. But I knew it wasn't, because of the pilots that had died, and the scars on Jake's cheek, and the worried look that crossed Captain Fletcher's face when someone mentioned Zeros.

After almost three hours of flying, I heard Mike radio that we were five minutes from the targets. A radio message from the leader confirmed it. I checked the bomb-releasing mechanism, and shouted back at Jake to check the guns. Below us, I saw the torpedo planes readying their weapons. Then a cloud slid below us and we lost our view.

I heard the Zeros before I saw them. The rumble of an engine and the sound of air shrieking under us could only come from one of the fast-moving planes. Surprisingly, I didn't see any of them. Then I heard machine-gun fire, and then a crash as a plane hit the water. I knew then, with a sudden dread, that the torpedo planes below that had met the Zeros wouldn't stand a chance. It was best not to think about it, I thought.

The cloud that was hiding us suddenly went away. Below us, I saw a fantastic site. Three carriers lay there, like islands glint-



A dive bomber rarely gets a view of his targets like this

ing among the waves. It was a moment I'll remember forever. A dive bomber rarely gets a view of his targets like this. I saw the Zeros coming off the runway, and the remains of the torpedo squadron trying hard to shake off the fighters. But I didn't care. I was caught up in the moment, and

I was going to do a good job. The leader started the dive. I saw the Zero pilots looking up at us, saw them turn and scream toward us, but it was too late. We were all in the dive now. I saw the deck looming, closer and closer. My hand was on the bomb release button . . . and then

it was over. I was climbing again, and the radio was filled with cheers and shouts. I noticed that Mike's voice was absent. I asked him what happened over my radio and he said that he felt terrible.

"What about the men in the ship, won't they die? That isn't right, even in a war."

I had no answer for him. I hadn't thought about how the Japanese felt about the war, and how they cared about their soldiers dying. It was an unsettling thought. I never did answer that radio message.

Then the Zeros came. One moment they were gone, the next they were there. They swarmed over us, and I heard my plane vibrate from Jake returning their fire. I dodged planes and looked for a way out of the flying mass of planes, streaking by in a bright display of colors. I saw a hole and dove for it. Miraculously, I didn't hit any planes in my desperate leap for freedom. I hit the accelerator and soon was far from the battle. I saw other members of my group around me and saw Mike among them. He looked positively shaken by the mess he had gotten out of, and I had to admit, I was too. But I had loved every minute of it. The adrenalin rushing through my body, the Zeros zooming by, and the bullets whizzing all around me. There was risk, but it didn't matter, it felt great to fight for the U.S.

Mike and I headed back for the York-

town. The sun was starting to set, and I was surprised at how much time it had taken us to fly to the Japanese carriers. I had thought we would be home before sundown, but it didn't look like we'd make it. We flew in silence. Then, out of the corner of my eye, I caught a glimpse of silver. Then it was gone, hidden by a cloud. I saw the thing again, up above us, and I knew it was a Zero. I realized Mike couldn't see it! And it's sitting on his tail? I thought frantically. I hit the radio button. A short wave of static and it died. A Zero must have blown one of the connector cables, I thought. I tried to wave my plane, do anything to warn Mike, but it was too late. I saw the Zero firing, and the bullets seemed to go in slow motion, as if I were in a dream. I saw Mike's plane being ripped apart, and at that moment, I felt a terrible grief rising up in me. I didn't hear Jake blowing the Zero to bits, didn't hear the sound of metal being ripped apart. I was in another world. My mind was whirling around and around with the question, "Why did they do it to Mike, why?" And I knew why. It was because of war. And I knew that I didn't like war anymore, didn't like the bombing, and the firing, and the killing, even if it was for my country. I thought all this as I watched the tail of Mike's plane slip beneath the gentle waves, glowing slightly from the dying rays of the setting sun. ❀

Fiesta

By Natalia M. Thompson

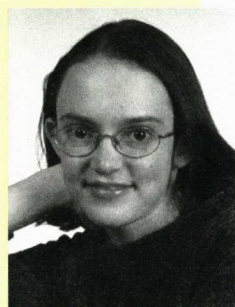
mariachis
playing
joyful songs
and
niños laughing

street vendors,
pregoneros,
shouting
out hopes
of selling their goods

las mujeres, the women,
chatting as they slap *tortillas*
on the patio

these are
the sounds
of my *México*,

the sounds
que
yo quiero mucho,
the sounds
I love



Natalia M. Thompson, 11
Madison, Wisconsin



"Remember when ..."

A Friend

By **Karina Emilia Palmitesta**

Illustrated by **Morgan Ashworth**

REMEMBER WHEN WE WERE eating yellow popsicles in the park and there was a wind and the yellow melted popsicle blew on us?"

"Yes," I responded, "your mum asked where we'd gotten mustard stains." We both broke down laughing, until I managed to gasp, "Remember when I took the shortcut behind the school and rode through the mud and my pants got all dotted with mud flecks?"

"I remember," Chris chuckled, "and when we went home, I stalled your mum while you snuck upstairs to change."

We both laughed again for a long while. Chris started again.

"Remember when . . ."

Ah, those were the days. It was always like this, on Saturday evenings in the purply-dim dusk, recalling things from the past. We were lying in our favorite spot, a tall hill in the park with a huge oak tree on top; it was great to just sprawl out in the shade on your stomach with the breeze tickling you; that was exactly what we were doing. I giggled as Chris recounted that memorable incident in the school cafeteria. Then I remember-whened him about the time I was laughing so hard at the dinner table that pop came out of my nose. And that had to be the night when we had company.

After the usual bout of giggling, I turned expectantly to Chris, waiting for a nice funny remember-when. He always told them instantly and they were always perfectly detailed and good. This time, however, he was silent, staring away into space



Karina Emilia Palmitesta, 11
Mississauga, Ontario, Canada



Morgan Ashworth, 13
Wellington, New Zealand

with a wistful look. I was about to nudge him gently when he said, in a whisper, "Heather . . . do you remember when you and I became friends?"

THIRD GRADE. I was friendless, shy, not pretty or popular. I had no best pals, as other people did. I had already been branded as Heather the Loner. I was miserable.

But lo and behold! As I was counting up an addition problem in my head before lunch, here came the most popular girl in my class, Kirsten . . . straight toward me. She had a load of friends, and they always seemed to avoid me. I didn't know why; but there she was, surrounded by her usual crowd of pals, clearly making for me!

Her light gray eyes friendly, Kirsten reached my desk and grinned a hello at me. I smiled back, not believing my eyes.

"Hi, Heather," Kirsten said, "Wanna play this recess?"

I was flabbergasted. "Uh . . . I guess . . . I mean . . . sure!"

Kirsten smiled and started to go back to her seat. "See you then," she called over her shoulder.

From then on, I played with her; but Kirsten and her friends made fun of me, played tricks on me, forced me to hold the rope all the time when they were skipping and made up new rules so I could get captured in Cops and Robbers. My life in school was more miserable than ever, until the new kid came.

His name was Christopher, and he was-

n't too tall, with white-blond hair and light, playful blue eyes. However, his eyes weren't too playful in our class; they were downcast and shy. He didn't have any friends either, and nobody seemed to want to play with him, even though he was a fast runner and pretty nice. I was among them. He was a stranger, after all; a new kid.

Still, I felt sorry for him. I knew how he felt. But I didn't dare come forward and talk to him; I was very shy, and after all, there was Kirsten. For some reason, I was desperately loyal to her; I tried to please her and make her laugh and win her approval. And she'd been treating me like dirt through a mask of friendship. But I was terrified of being cast out; I would be the loner again, wandering aimlessly at recesses, friendless and alone. No, I wouldn't do that. At least with Kirsten I had *somebody*.

One fateful day, everything changed.

It was a pizza day; everybody had ordered pizza and we were in the middle of lunch, munching away, laughing and talking. Kirsten and her friends had pulled up their chairs to my desk; we were all having lunch at my group, and I was having an OK time. Christopher was in my group; he sat alone with his pizza, eating in silence. Nobody was bothering him, until Nick, coming in from the water fountain, zipped into the classroom past his desk. At the time I was reluctantly joining in on the discussion of clothes which I didn't really care about, but Kirsten had opposite feelings—when there was a yelp and a bang.

"Hey! You, c'mere, I'll teach you!"

I spun around in my seat. There was Christopher, glaring at Nick. His pizza was on the floor. Nick was howling across the room.

"Hah, I'd like to see you try!"

Kirsten chose this moment to laugh a cruel little laugh, pointing at Christopher; the class joined in instantly. I didn't. I still had one pizza left. Instantly, like a subconscious reflex to this, I took my remaining pizza, summoned up all my courage, and slid it toward Christopher, ignoring the incredulous "What are you *doing*, Heather?" from Kirsten. The pizza slid into place on Christopher's napkin, and he looked at me with wide eyes.

"Thanks," he whispered. I met his eyes, and smiled.

CHRIS AND I became instant friends; best friends, in fact. I shrugged off Kirsten, who had earlier branded Chris as "uncool," and the rest of her friends; and I played with Chris. I did everything with Chris. I ignored the jeers of kids when I played with him because I was a girl and

he was a boy. I ignored the "sitting in a tree" verse they howled at Chris and me at recesses. I ignored it all. You could do that for a best friend. And Chris was the best friend there ever was.

"Don't you remember that, Heather?" Chris asked, shattering my daydream and jerking me back to the future, three years later in grade six. I glanced sideways at him and grinned, "Yeah . . . yeah, I remember that, Chris."


"Heather! Come home now, it's dark!" my mum's voice floated faintly from across the park. I got up.

"Better go," I said. "See ya, Chris."

"See ya, Heather. Guess I should be going home now too." Chris got up and started down the hill. "Bye," he added over his shoulder. I walked off in the opposite direction, toward the distant outline of my mother.

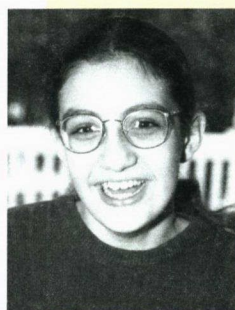
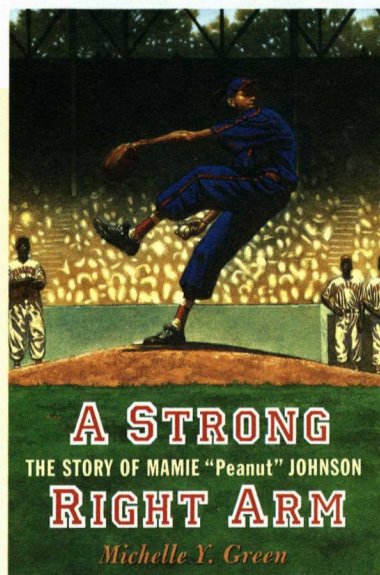
"Bye."

As Christopher disappeared into the fast-falling darkness, I paused, smiling slightly. My eyes seemed unusually wet.

"I'll never forget," I whispered; then I raced homewards. 

Book Review

By Anastasia Apostoleris



Anastasia Apostoleris, 11
Princeton, Massachusetts

A Strong Right Arm: The Story of Mamie "Peanut" Johnson by Michelle Y. Green; Dial Books for Young Readers: New York, 2002; \$15.99

I LOVE BASEBALL, and I have always had a special interest in African-American history. But that is only a part of the reason that I liked *A Strong Right Arm*. The book is about Mamie Johnson, an African-American girl who plays baseball in the days when the major leagues were segregated.

At the beginning of the book, we hear how Mamie has grown up with baseball, how her "life has been wrapped up in that three-inch universe of twine and leather." I think that is a good beginning because it shows right from the start what the book is about and displays the attitude of the main character.

This book takes us through the baseball life of Mamie, and there are many instances where she shows the heart and determination of a true winner. For example, when Mamie was ten, she moved from South Carolina to New Jersey. There was no baseball for girls in her new town, and when she saw a white boys' team playing she wanted to play with them. The boys laughed and said she couldn't play because she was a "colored

girl," but she signed up for the team anyway. I liked how, even when the boys teased her, Mamie knew she was as good as they were.

Reading this book made me feel grateful for the kind of environment I live in. I am on a swim team. Unlike Mamie, I am not a natural athlete, but at least I am accepted and encouraged by my teammates. Mamie was a very good pitcher, but she was not fully accepted by her team because of her color.

Mamie mentions that her family was always behind her, whatever she did. That shows the importance of a good family, because, as hard as it was for Mamie to achieve her goals, I think it would have been much harder without the strong support of her family. I like how Mamie says that her family was a leading force in her life and dreams, instead of saying that she accomplished everything she did by herself. My family is a huge part of my life, and I don't think I would be where I am in anything without their support.

Although there are parts in this book that would not be particularly interesting to people who don't like baseball, I don't think this book is mainly about sports. I think it's about achieving goals, not giving up, and believing in yourself. ❁

Wives of the Desert

By Hilary Miller

Illustrated by the author



Hilary Miller, 13
Moraga, California

IN THE BLUE GOAT-HAIR TENT, Shaimaa heard the music and laughter of the wedding, the shrill ululation of women's voices and heavy swirl of woolen skirts. She pulled the scratchy blanket that smelled of camels up over her nose to avoid inhaling the mouth-watering flavors of prickly pear cactus, sweet and juicy, of plump golden raisins and date wine, of lentil bread soaked in sticky wild honey. Night had fallen over the desert, but there was no peace.

Mother stirred faintly in the corner. Through the musty dimness Shaimaa could see her, pale and thin as a wraith, the circle of scarlet paint on her forehead like a bleeding sun. Nestled against her in a mound of wool, baby Selwa whimpered, and Mother moaned in her sleep and pulled the browned bundle of skin and bones closer. Shaimaa knew how much the child had taken out of her: a sickeningly hard labor, then draining her of milk, which was in short supply as there had been sparse food for some weeks. They fed Selwa on camel's milk while Mother slept, slept so deeply that her breath was only a whisper.

Marriage, thought Shaimaa disdainfully. Her father, seeing that Selwa was Mother's last child, had taken a second wife now. It was their wedding bells that chimed; the food was brought by his new wife's family. Tears sprang into Shaimaa's eyes, stinging them with salt. Softly, she murmured a passionate prayer to Allah: "Please, Allah, don't let Father stop loving Mother. Ever."



"I love your hair," Zainab murmured

"SHAIMAA, THIS IS ZAINAB." Father smiled as he placed his hand affectionately on the plump arm of the young woman, shrouded in gauzy violet and deep-blue woven cloth and dripping with gold jewelry, who smiled shyly at them. She was short and her face was a satin oval, moderately pretty, Shaimaa thought, but nothing special.

Shaimaa clamped her lips together and glared darkly from the shadows of her veil, which revealed only her snapping eyes, gleaming wildly like black opals.

Zainab's lips curved into a lilting smile. "I was very sorry to hear your mother is ill. I hope she's feeling better?"

Biting her tongue, Shaimaa scowled beneath the folds of black cloth and smoothed her knotted blackbird hair haughtily. She left the question unanswered and strode away across the swirling hot sands, the dust stinging and blistering her bare heels, feeling the alarmed eyes of Zainab and father burning her back like glowing coals. She sank to her knees beside a creaking wooden loom. Mother's latest blanket, unfinished, was still a web of dyed woolen threads, twisted and interlaced with the strings of the loom. Shaimaa delicately slipped the shuttle through the strings, imagining her mother's soft gentle hands caressing the smooth yarn with the love she put into everything.

Footsteps pounded the dry gritty sand and Zainab knelt gracefully beside her in a whirlwind of lushly-colored cotton. "Beautiful loom."

"It's my mother's," muttered Shaimaa dryly. A choking sob rose in her throat, threatening to burst forth, but she swallowed it hard and touched the weaving.

Zainab picked up a coarse donkey-hair brush that lay nearby. Before Shaimaa could stop her, she felt her hair tugged and twisted, the coarse bristles drawn through the thicket of tangled silk tresses. "I love your hair," Zainab murmured, lifting a lock that dangled in Shaimaa's eye and slipping it into her hand. "Stubborn hair, the prettiest kind. Has its own flame. I would never hurt that sort of hair, or any hair, for that matter. Aren't I brushing gently?" Her hands, on which were painted intricate swirled designs in the reddish henna dye, were light but firm, cool as date palms.

Shaimaa jerked away, clasping her hair protectively. "Too gently. A mother should brush her daughter's hair. And my mother is asleep."

Zainab was still a moment, stunned. Then she flipped her veil over her own face so that her mouth was hidden, but Shaimaa saw her eyes, deep and watery, misted with a loneliness that filled her like a gaping black maw.

SELWA WAS CRYING. Her shrieks echoed though the camp, drowning out the fitful bleating of goats and squawking of chickens. Amira, who was nursing her own chubby infant, darted a venomous glance at the tent where Selwa lay with Mother. "Allah above, will that child never cease to wail?" Her throat contracted as her baby, too, stopped suck-



Through the slits of tent fabric she saw Father kneel beside Mother's mat

ling and began to cry.

Silence struck more forcefully than a sandstorm. No one moved. Sheik Mansour, mending a camel's swollen leg, dropped a green ointment-jar in surprise and it rolled into the cooking fire and splintered into broken glass.

Shaimaa tiptoed to the tent and lifted the soft flap of matted fur curiously. Mother was coughing. Beside her squatted Zainab, tenderly drizzling fresh goat milk into Selwa's tiny, feeble mouth. Selwa's lips puckered as she swallowed. Her flailing hand caught Zainab's necklace of lacy golden hand-motifs, curling around the strand of precious stones with a soft, cooing giggle.

Shivering angrily, Shaimaa whirled and stormed up the slope to where Father was watering the sheep. Their woolly noses sent ripples over the opaque glassy surface as they drank. "Father, how can you? How dare you replace Mother with another woman?" The sob she had been dreading broke from her lips like a dry thunderclap, and it burned her like raw chilies rubbed against the skin.

Father's mustache drooped. His snowy turban was unraveled and the melting sun struck his shining coffee-dark scalp, while light dancing blindingly on the blade of his naked scimitar made it almost impossible to look at him. "Shaimaa, listen . . ."

"No, I will not!" She stared hard at the sheep's woolly back, allowed the angry words to flow forth in a flood she had, until now, held back. "Just because Mother is ill, you find another woman to try and make yourself happy. But it gives happiness to no one, not me, not Mother and Selwa, not Zainab. Not the children Zainab will bear for you, and that is why you married her." She breathed hard, her voice wilting on her lips like rose petals, withering, dying. In a tear-drowned whisper, she demanded, "Isn't it?"

"No." He looked away from her, fingers drumming the cotton-fluff back of a sopping sheep whose wool glistened with water droplets like translucent pearls.

"Shaimaa, when Zainab was very young, she nearly died. Surgery was the only way to save her, but it made it impossible for her to ever bear children." Father looked directly at her now, and his eyes reflected the sun-bleached sand, licked sorely by tongues of flame. "I married her to save her from a husbandless life of manual labor. Perhaps it isn't right. But I never meant to replace your mother." He sighed, twisting his ink-black goatee, and glided stiffly away without another word, his stormy-gray robes billowing.

When Shaimaa rose slowly from the foggy waters of shock, she stumbled sluggishly down to the camp. The fury which fed her aching mind had been quenched, and now her head was painfully clear and cold. Through the slits of tent fabric she

saw Father kneel beside Mother's mat, caress the line where her broad glazed forehead ended in a raven waterfall, flowing in a dark cloud over her pillow. "Do you feel better, Hala?" His hard eyes flickered with something like repentance, finally admitted.

"Mahdi," she murmured, and buried her face in his cloaked shoulder.

Shaimaa, dazed, turned away. Zainab was sitting on the stony edge of a well, gazing into the empty distance, alone. *She only wanted to be a mother, a wife.* Now she is neither. She moved hesitantly to the motionless woman. "Zainab?" The woman turned, her melting face soft as silk with sorrow. "Let us be friends." Shaimaa held out her open hands, tasting that word, friends, as juicy-sweet in her mouth as ripe mangoes.

Zainab took her hands, enfolding them, and her teardrops fell and washed away the henna dye in bruised purple streaks.

THE DESERT was embraced by a moist wind. Mother, swaddled infant-like in rough blankets, sat in the river-breeze with Selwa. Her skin was less shiny with sweat now, though her nose gleamed bone-white in the ice sunbeams. Zainab went up to her with a shy smile. "Hala? I am your daughter Shaimaa's friend."

"Welcome," replied Mother, rising, and with sisterly affection she touched her polished cheek to Zainab's mellow one. ❀

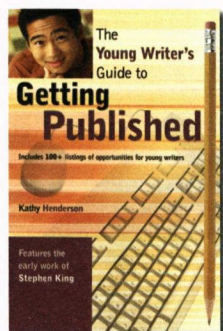
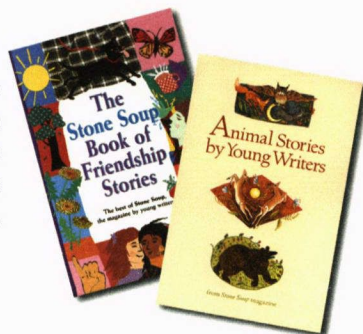
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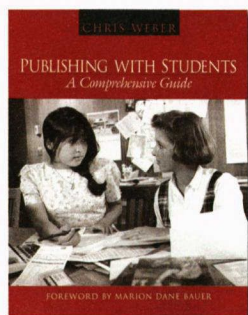
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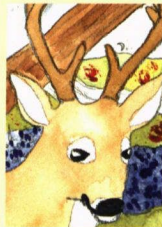
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