

# Stone Soup

the magazine by children



"New Year Celebration," by Ira Bobkova, age 8, St. Petersburg, Russia

## THE BARON, THE UNICORN, AND THE BOY

A fantasy story by Ogechi Njoku of Nigeria

### ALABAMA

Catherine paints a loving portrait of her grandmother's home

*Also:* A review of a book about Nazi Germany

A poem about homelessness

Art from Turkey

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1992

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Heike Schröder, 12, Germany

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*Stone Soup*, founded in 1973, is a literary magazine containing stories, poems, book reviews, and art by children through age 13. It is published in September, November, January, March, and May by the Children's Art Foundation, a nonprofit educational organization devoted to encouraging children's creativity. In addition to publishing *Stone Soup*, the Children's Art Foundation operates a Museum of Children's Art and a Children's Art School. Work from the Museum's international collection and from the Art School appears frequently in the pages of *Stone Soup*.

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## Information for Contributors

*Stone Soup* is made up of stories, poems, book reviews, and art by children through age 13. We encourage our readers to send us their work! To get an idea of the kind of work we like, read a few issues of *Stone Soup*. Be sure to read the Activities section, too. You'll notice that we have a preference for writing and art based on personal experiences and observations. If you feel strongly about something that happened to you or something you observed, use that feeling as the basis for your story, poem, or picture. Writing need not be typed or copied over. Art work may be any size, in color or black and white. Mail your submission, along with a self-addressed stamped envelope, to *Stone Soup*, P.O. Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063. We will respond within four weeks.

**Stories:** A good story is interesting to read and has a point to make. Characters, places, sounds, and smells are described in detail, and dialogue sounds just like real people talking. Give your story a clear beginning, middle, and end.

**Poems:** In a poem a few words must go a long way to explain what you see or feel. Choose your words carefully! When your poem is read aloud, the words should sound beautiful and rhythmical, like music.

**Art:** We like pictures that use the whole page. Think about all the details that make up a complete scene.

**Book Reviews:** If you are interested in reviewing books for *Stone Soup*, write editor Gerry Mandel for more information. Aside from telling her your name, age, and address, tell her a little about yourself and what kinds of books you like to read.

**Illustrations:** If you would like to illustrate stories 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.





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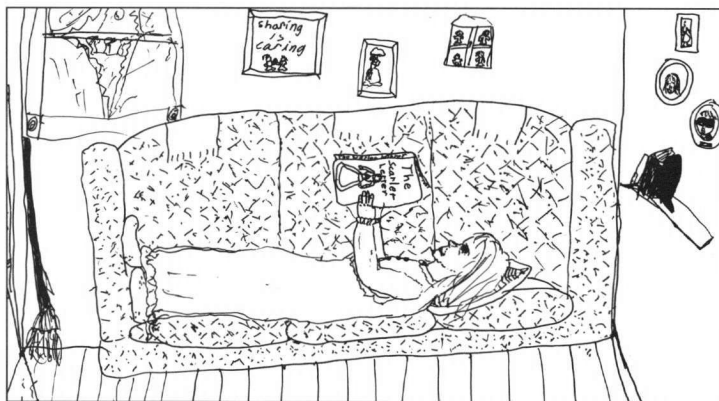
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## Alabama

THE WEEK HAD not been a good one for me. I had gotten sick upon my arrival at my grandmother's tiny house, and I had not been able to eat, and my sleep was filled with grotesque nightmares. I had learned the pattern of my grandmother's ceiling by heart, and I dreamed about *The Scarlet Letter*, the book I was reading. Waking up in the mornings, dizzy and hot, I would hear cheerful voices coming from the kitchen, and the smell of hot food would make me nauseous.

After a morning spent just like any other in the fever heat and spinning freakishness of illness, I was lying on the couch in my grandmother's tiny living room, staring at the photos of my family stuck on the wall. In the bookshelf underneath lay *Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Holy Bible* and other books of their sort. I was sick of the

small house, and its bready, sweet smell. I was sick of the small, dark rooms, and the book that I had to keep on reading because that was the only thing to do. I heard my mother and my grandmother talking outside on the swing. My mother's happy, gentle voice danced in and out of my hearing, and I could hear my grandmother's strong southern drawl. "Yes, Barbara, honey, I know I should get that plumbing fixed, but I just haven't got around to it!" I wanted to go outside and swing with them in the warm Alabama sun. I could imagine the red, moist dirt squishing beneath my toes, and the wildflowers and grasses growing up to my knees, and I decided to go out.

Standing up, I felt the room spinning around me. A hot, throbbing feeling came into my head, but I forced myself to go on. I hobbled through my grandmother's untidy kitchen to the back door, and I opened it. There my grandmother and mother were, talking happily in the sun. I could feel the sun's soft heat filtering down on me, and I smiled. I slowly closed the door and crept down the steps onto my grandmother's rock driveway. I could smell the sweet grass and wild roses. A little brown rabbit skittered by, and I sat down on the swing with my grandmother and mother. I put my head on my grandmother's strong shoulder and breathed in the wild country air. The sky was a piercing blue, and the breeze was fresh on my face. I felt alive and free.

A tiny girl in pigtails and overalls tricycled down the gravel road. She yelled, "Hello, Maw-maw Yarbrough!" to my grandmother, and my grandmother yelled back, "Why, hello, Miss Megan! How are ya today?" My grandmother is known and loved by everyone in

Cherokee. She babysits half of its population, and she is known in wide circles as "Maw-maw Yarbrough." Megan was one of her many charges. The little girl rode bumpily on, her tricycle wheels clattering on the pebbles.



My mother stood and began to head toward the house.

"Well, Mother," she said, her native southern twang creeping into her voice. "I think I'll go into the house and start supper. Are Angie and Stewart coming?"

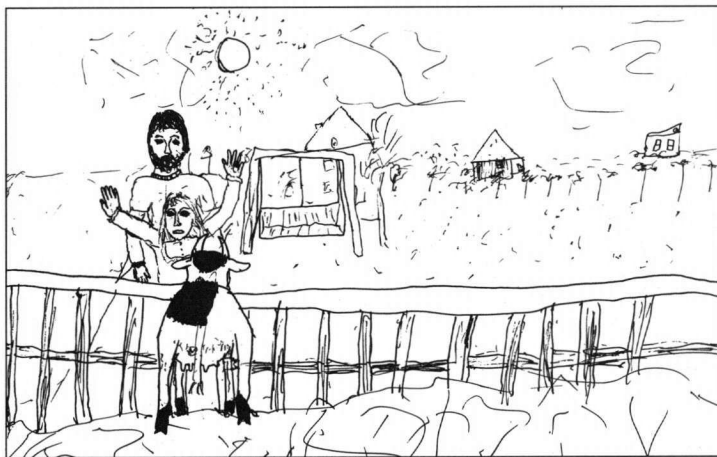
"I reckon so, Barbara," my grandmother said, standing up to help my mom. "I'll come along in and help you." And with that, both of them were gone inside the house.

I stood up, my nightgown blowing in the breeze, and I walked through the thick, red clay into my grandmother's backyard. I knelt to the ground and felt the clay in my fingers. Little bugs crept through the green

stalks of wild grass. The pink wildflowers entwined with the grass, and the yard was a mural of pinks, browns, and greens.

There was a fence surrounding the tiny yard, separating it from the houses and meadows beyond. To the back was a pasture where cows ambled around and ate the tender grass. To the left was Megan's grandmother's house where she and her mother lived. A row of cherry trees separated their yard from my grandmom's. On every side was fence. To the right was a medium-sized tan house that I had never been in.

A huge white-and-black cow lumbered up to the fence and mooed at me loudly. It began to shake its head back and forth and bumped its body against the fence. Scared, I backed up — right into my Uncle Stewart!



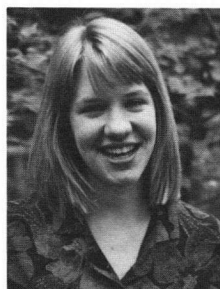
"Howdy, Blondie!" he said to me with a twinkle in his mischievous blue eyes. I gave him a big hug, and his



bushy red beard scratched my face. I smiled. "The sick'un's out of bed! You better git inside, little girl, it's gittin' cold out here!" It was then that I noticed the sun's growing pallor and the goosebumps on my skin. I put my arm around Stewart and began walking toward the door. Uncle Stewart's pickup was in the driveway, and my favorite aunt, Angie, opened the door to get out. Her thin, light brown hair blew in the wind, and she hurried up to me, a smile on her face.

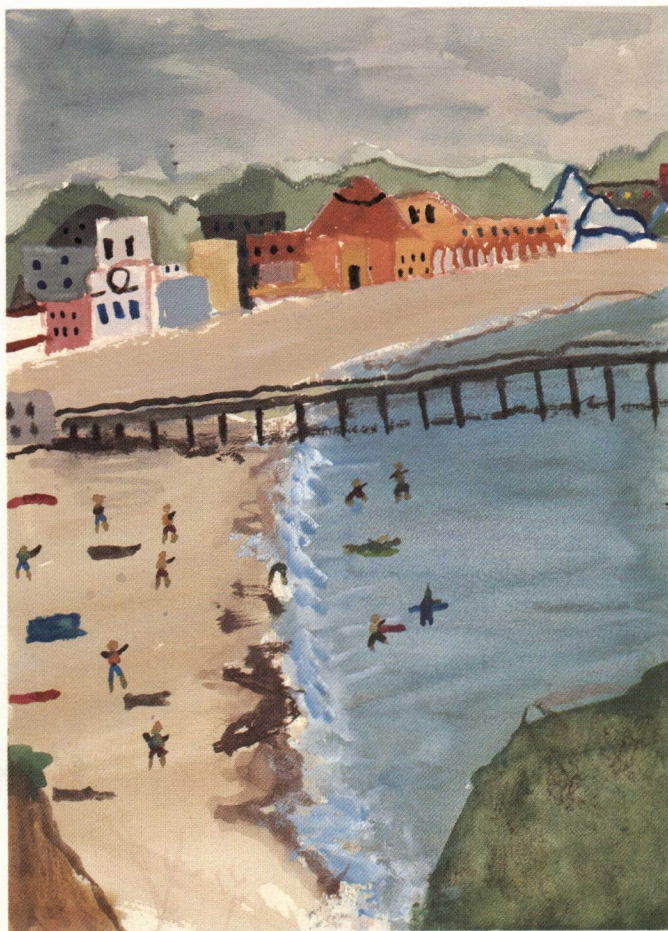
"Hi, Catherine," she said as she hugged me. "I've got a present for you in the pick-up. I'll go get it after I put my purse down." We all ran up the steps and went into the house. Amid all the hubbub of greeting, I went back outside to say a quick goodnight to the setting sun. Its crystal beams danced across the sky, and I thanked it for a wonderful day.

*Catherine Keyser, 12  
Sea Girt, New Jersey*



*Illustrated by Molly Richman, 8  
Kittanning, Pennsylvania*

## Cowell Beach



Gouache

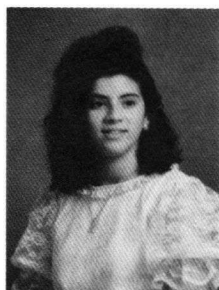
*Sarah Duncan, 10, Bolinas, California*

Sarah made this painting in Celeste Baross's summer landscape painting class at the Children's Art Foundation.

## Daddy, Come Home

THE ONLY PLACE that we could afford to live was in East L.A. But even by living there, my dad's salary couldn't manage to pay for our expenses. So my dad decided to be a border patrol agent. On June 6, 1980 he left to the Academy of Georgia where he would have to stay for four months. A week passed and I had already missed him a lot. I was really attached to him, so it really hurt when he left. He wrote to us and would tell us how homesick he was. Later on he began to get used to it. My mom had a really hard time without my dad. It was only Mom and I, and it was really lonely. When my mom would start cooking, I would go to the photo album. After I would find a picture of my dad, I would start crying because I missed him so much. On September 30, 1980 we left early in the morning to the San Diego airport. With lots of anxiety we waited for the plane to arrive. As my dad began to walk toward us, I ran up to him and gave him a big hug. I never remembered ever being so happy in seeing him. The past four months to me felt like a lifetime, but all I cared about was that my daddy was back home with us.

*Nadia Perez, 13  
San Diego, California*



## Working

"GEEZ, I DON'T want to work at the office all my life! I mean — what's life for if you have to work all of it?"

I work at my dad's office every Saturday and Sunday cleaning trash baskets and vacuuming. It's sorta hard but the good thing is I get paid for it. The reason why this happened was that my dad wasn't doing very well in his business and he decided not to pay a janitor anymore. So, now me and my dad do it.

It's awesome because not only do I get paid but Dad gives me things in his attic that he doesn't need anymore. Like a box of tape cassettes, old art work from his ads, and a computer. I took this computer home and took it apart. There were lots and lots of wild parts inside.

Sometimes my brother comes and helps me by keeping me company.

My dad never asked me if I wanted to do it. If he asked me I would say no. But I love my dad, and that's why I do it.

*Christopher Molinski, 9  
Gloucester, Massachusetts*



## Colorful's Life

ONE DAY I found a caterpillar on some milkweed. I ran home and got a jar. I ran back to where the caterpillar was sitting. I picked up a stick and carefully took the caterpillar and put it into the jar. What do they eat? I thought to myself. I ran home again and asked my dad. He said, "The leaf you found him on. Or her, of course." I paid no attention to the last sentence. I was already running back to get leaves for the caterpillar.

She or he started eating right away. What should I name him or her? I know! Colorful. Yes, Colorful is just the thing. I wondered how to tell if Colorful was a boy or girl. I asked my mom. She said she didn't know. "Oh, well," I said. "I'll find out someday. Yes, I will. I know I will." Then I went outside with Colorful, who was still eating happily. I was thinking about when I would know if it was a boy or girl, and what kind of caterpillar it was. Or why it had antennas on the top and bottom and how it would be a friend to me. I wanted to find out that very moment, and I knew what I would be when I grew up. I would study caterpillars. I was going to find out soon about a caterpillar's life. I was so excited I nearly dropped Colorful. "Hip, hip hooray!" I was shouting. My mom came out, my dad came out. My sister and brother came out and even my neighbor. I said we were going to see Colorful's life and we all jumped for joy. Colorful was even jumping for joy!

Soon Colorful was attached to the top of the jar,



hanging upside down and making a chrysalis. We watched it being made. It was very interesting. Colorful seemed to have a pattern. First Colorful's antennae would move, then he or she would pause and curl up, then start all over again. Finally it was all shiny green. I was so excited!

Two weeks passed. Inside the chrysalis I could see the colors of the butterfly. I knew that it would be ready to fly soon. One night when I went to bed I watched the chrysalis closely, but nothing happened. The next morning Colorful was a butterfly! I could not believe my eyes. The butterfly was orange and black. I had never seen a monarch butterfly better. First Colorful dried his or her wings. Then I said goodbye and wished Colorful luck because he or she was going to Mexico for the winter. I lifted the top of the jar and Colorful fluttered off.

I miss Colorful but I'll always have a big place in my heart for him or her. Perhaps I'll find another caterpillar someday.

*Justine McDonald, 6  
Newton, Massachusetts*



## Firestorm '91

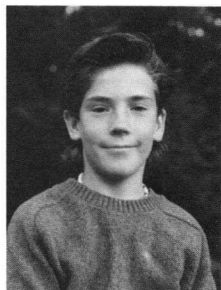
Out of the quiet sky,  
from the dark clouds,  
the wind speaks.

A hundred deer,  
snorting.

A giant fanning,  
huge flames.

The trees groan and crack,  
speaking like dolphins.

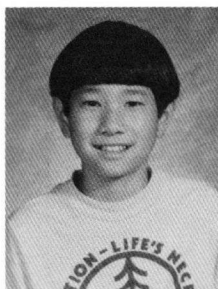
Walls of sunshine threaten,  
tiny humans, we run



*Edward Sedler, 12  
Troy, Montana*

# Poverty

I see a tall, long-bearded man walking by  
He wears a dirty outfit  
I see him ask for money  
He collects a one-dollar bill  
Then I see him get a ten  
A while later he asks me,  
"Do you have any spare change?"  
I hand him fifty cents  
He says, "Thank you, son"  
I watch him go off limping  
into Safeway  
In a while he comes out with bread and milk  
I feel good about sharing my allowance.



*Chun-Wei Huang, 12*  
*Palo Alto, California*

## Harvesting Vegetables



Oil Pastel

*Alper Erqin, 11, Turkey*

This painting was donated to the Children's Art Foundation by the Özel Neşem İlkokulu School in Trabzon, Turkey.

## The Bear

THE MORNING WAS cool. It wasn't cold, but not warm enough to go without a jacket. Sandy and I were walking toward the field where Chipper, my seven-year-old pony, was staked. I was swinging the reins, and Sandy was walking beside me. We didn't talk to each other, and it was quiet. A bird chirped, singing out a strange melody. When we arrived, I softly called to Chipper. He lifted his head and walked slowly over to me. He nuzzled my pocket to see if I had any treats for him. I laughed and slipped the bit into his mouth. He jerked his head a little at the coldness of the bit. I unhooked the rope from his halter and, grabbing the reins in my hand, jumped up onto his back. Since Sandy was taking the road, I decided to canter Chipper in the field.

As I neared the road that separates Chipper's field and Timer's field (Timer is Chipper's brother), I noticed a guest from the Goldhill Inn. He was taking a video of the inn. He nodded a friendly hello to me, and I decided to show off a little. Maybe he'd videotape me. I clicked Chipper again and gave him a little kick. He loped faster. When he came to the edge of the field where Timer was staked, I stopped him and let him walk.

Timer was going crazy. He was running around in circles, bucking and kicking his legs. I thought his unusual behavior was just in his excitement to see Chipper. I let Chipper walk up to him, and Timer kicked him. Timer



was acting really weird. It was then that I noticed the bear. He was sitting in the berry patch no more than sixty yards away. I gasped. Chipper jumped. Quickly, I leapt off Chipper and tried to pull him away from Timer. It was impossible.

Just then Sandy called, "What's wrong?"

"Bear." I spoke that one simple word.

"What?"

"Bear," I repeated.

"Where?"

"In the berry patch, right over there!" I pointed over toward the raspberries that were around one side of the garden. I was talking fast and calmly to Chipper, pulling at his head a little at a time. Finally, we were walking away from Timer, who was as wild as ever.

All the time I have had Chipper, I have never actually come within sight of a bear while riding (unless you count the time I heard snuffling in the woods and saw fresh droppings). Chipper was getting excited by now. He was hard to control from the ground. I ran him to the nearest tree and tied him quickly to it. It was only then that I relaxed and looked closely at the bear. It wasn't a big bear, but I'm not too good at telling what age animals are. Maybe he was the one-year-old that had been hanging around the town.

"He's so cute," I said to Sandy, who was looking at the small bear also.

"I know. That might be the one we saw in our yard the other day."

Just then Mrs. Hall shouted out her window at us, "There's a bear right there, ya know!"

"We know," I shouted back and then untied the reins



and started walking back toward my house.

Once we were out on the road, I leapt up onto Chipper once again.

"What are you doing?" Sandy asked.

"I'm going to put Chipper back in the pasture. Then we can come back to see the bear some more."

"Thank you for your permission, oh great one," she said.

I giggled. Then I loped Chipper down the short pathway to our house. He seemed to know where we were going. He automatically went to the gate of the big pasture. I opened the gate and he trotted inside. I slipped off his reins, and he loped across the pasture to scratch on a stake. Then I ran to tell my mom about the bear.

When I reached the porch, I didn't bother to use the steps — I never did — but vaulted up onto the porch.

When I opened the door, Carrie, my sister, greeted me with a questioning look.

"I thought you were going riding," my mom said.

"We were, but the horses are all hyped up because there's a bear in Mrs. Hall's berry patch," I answered.

And at the same time Sandy said, "There's a bear over at Mrs. Hall's."

I laughed. "I think it's the same one that was in our yard the other day," I said. "Sandy and I are going over to see what it does."

"Well, Carrie and I are going down to the school in about fifteen minutes. I have some work I need to do before tomorrow. Tell me about the bear when I get back."

"Sure."

Then Sandy and I walked back across the road to Mrs. Hall's place. She was yelling and screaming and banging pans at the bear.

"She's mad," I said matter-of-factly.

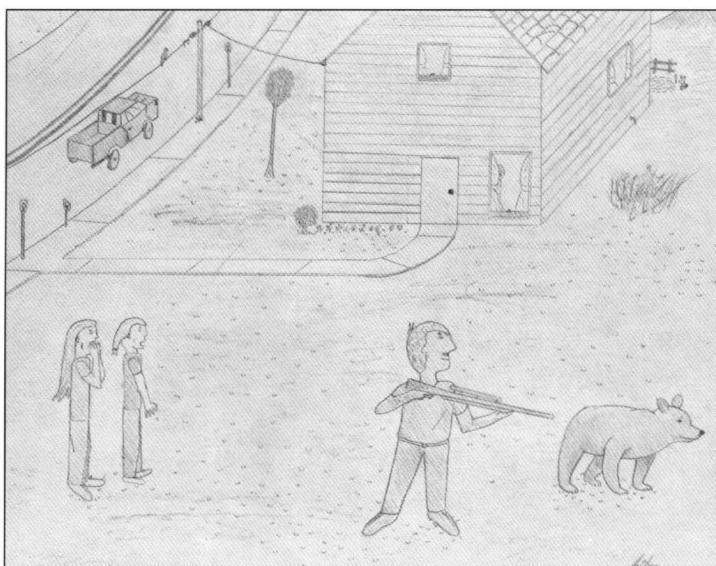
"Very good," Sandy said sarcastically.

"I can't see the bear," I said, standing on my toes and trying to see it.

"Let's go over where we were before." But we didn't get a chance to because just then we saw Bill slowly walking, gun in hand, toward the bear.

"No!" I gasped. Why would anyone shoot a baby bear? A bear without its mother. A bear with nowhere to go. Bill aimed. Then a shot rang out.

"God," Sandy said, obviously mad. I couldn't speak. I was boiling over with anger — a steam pot that can't stop boiling, even when the burner beneath it is off. Maybe it wasn't dead. Maybe he had just shot to scare



it. Then why had he aimed the gun? I argued with myself. "I am never speaking to him again," I said under my breath.

"What?"

"Nothing. I just feel sorry for the bear."

"I know. I mean, it couldn't defend itself. They didn't have to shoot it," Sandy said in a sarcastic voice.

"No kidding!"

Then, we walked wordlessly back toward my house. Mom and Carrie were just leaving. They had these looks on their faces. They had heard the gunshot, obviously. "It's dead." My voice cracked as I said it.

"Who shot it?" my mom asked.

"Bill Hall." Sandy spoke his name in disgust. Just then we saw Mrs. Hall walking toward the Jones' place, her kids hanging on her.

"Is it dead?" my mom called to Mrs. Hall, even though she knew the answer.

"Yes," Mrs. Hall called back matter-of-factly.

"Why did you shoot it?"

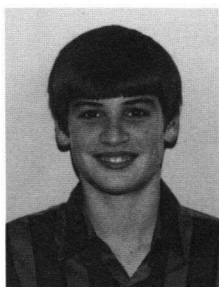
"I didn't shoot it, Bill did!"

Great, Mrs. Hall, blame it on Bill. Mrs. Hall went on, "You know what happened yesterday? He was growling at me from behind the woodpile." Then Silvie started crying, and Mrs. Hall continued walking.

All my mom said was, "Come on, Carrie, let's go." And they rode off.

I slowly walked over to Chipper. He looked at me with his big brown eyes and yawned. I forced a smile. "He's dead, Chipper, dead." And I buried my face in his strong neck.

*Lena Boesser-Koschmann, 11  
Gustavus, Alaska*



*Illustrated by Jathan Brubaker, 13  
Telford, Pennsylvania*



# My Accomplishment

**M**Y MOM TELLS me I've sucked my thumb since I was two months old. I sucked my thumb until I was seven-and-a-half.

Whenever I sucked my thumb I would have my doll. My doll's name was Tugger. He was a cat doll which I got for my first birthday. When I sucked my thumb I would rub Tugger's face. By the time I was seven all the fur had rubbed off, but I still rubbed his face.

One night in January when I was almost seven-and-a-half my mom, my dad, my brother, and I were all having dessert. I was nagging them about letting me get a cat because what I wanted most was a pet of my own.

My dad said, "If we get you a pet what will you do for it?"

I suggested giving up Tugger.

That was all my mom needed to trigger the switch in her brain. She said to me, "Janica, will you stop sucking your thumb?"

I thought about it for a second and then I said to my mom and dad, "Sure, but how long do I have to not suck my thumb to get a cat?"

My mom said a week would show I had broken the habit.

My mom told me that she had thought she was going to have to sit and hold my hand at night and stuff like that, but from then on I didn't suck my thumb once.

The first night it was sort of hard not to suck my

thumb. Instead of sucking my thumb I clung to my covers. That night I didn't sleep too well. I tossed and turned all night.

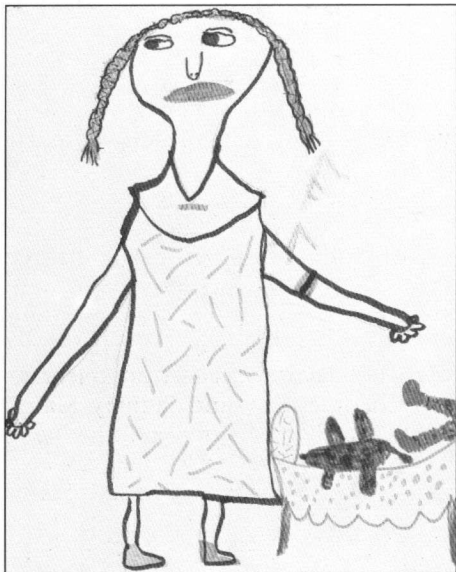
The next day I went to the beach. I didn't suck my thumb all day. When we got home I scraped my knee. I sucked my thumb for about three seconds, and then I remembered. I told my mom, and she said it was O.K. After dinner I went to sleep, but this night I didn't have as much trouble as I had had the night before.

The next day I didn't do much. I read a book to my three-and-three-fourths-year-old brother. All I really did all day was sit around the house, but that night I realized that every night it got easier to get to sleep.

On the last day I felt so proud of myself. My mom took me out to a woman who she knew had kittens. There were two brothers. My mom said that I could pick which cat I wanted first. They were both identical, but there was one that had one checkered paw. He kept rolling out of the basket, and I picked that one.

*Janica Snyder, 10  
Coral Gables, Florida*





## The Lost Clown

**W**HEN I WAS three, I lost a green-and-white clown at French school. I liked it so much. My grandma gave it to me. We looked at my French school and asked if someone took it home, but we were very, very sad because we didn't find the clown. Somehow it seems like I'm very far from home when I lose something.

*Amanda McMillan, 5  
Herminie, Pennsylvania  
Illustrated by the author*



## Book Reviews

*Along the Tracks* by Tamar Bergman; Houghton Mifflin Company: Boston, 1991; \$14.95.



ALTHOUGH I've read many books based on the persecution of Jews during World War II, none of them gave me as much insight and feeling as *Along the Tracks* did. This book (which is based on a true story) is about a Jewish boy living in Poland who grew up extremely close to his mother but was cruelly separated from her by the actions of Nazi Germany.

From the beginning, the author shows the closeness between Yankele and his mother and the cruelty that befell them and many others of their kind — separation. The phrases actually put me in Yankele's shoes and made me realize how much he was suffering just because of one person's (Hitler's) closed-mindedness and coldness. "Poland was an anthill that had been trampled by a cruel boot."

As I read on to the point where Yankele had been living on the streets of nowhere looking for his mother and sister (not knowing if they were even alive) for a couple of years, I began to realize just how desperate the situation for all those Jews had become. The most

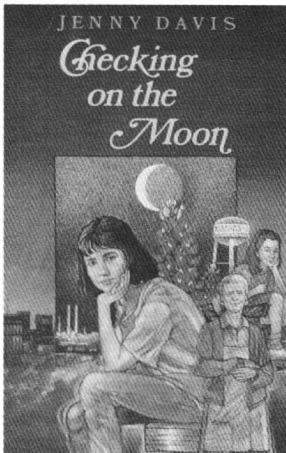
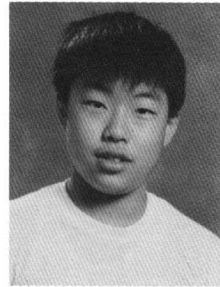
specific location he knew of was the name of a large area and a huge town within it at which his mother was to have disembarked from the freight train that he had managed to get separated from. He would look for her for almost six years — six years of living on the street and stealing food to survive. He couldn't go to an institution because they would not let him continue his search. He traveled from place to place jumping onto moving trains which could kill him in a second if he missed. (He was reminded of this by the remains of children to whom that had happened.)

Even after he got reunited, he would never be the same again. Six years of experiencing the harshness of the city streets could sure change a person! He had grown up "hanging onto his mother's apron strings." The intimate closeness between him and his mother had sheltered him from the coldness of the early twentieth-century society. Somehow, he was able to survive, but when he returned, the change in him would dismay his mother forever. He, at age fourteen, smoked, jumped onto moving trains, and stole (for his mother). He also began to pity children who still depended on their mothers for everything. What had happened during those long, sorrowful six years would stay with him as long as he lived.

The other books I've read about the German persecutions of Jews didn't make me really *feel* what it was like. Before this book, I had read many books about the Spanish Inquisition and thought of how cruel and inhumane it was, but I never thought that something equally cruel had also happened to them just fifty years ago. No one knows how many Yankeles there were or

about all the horrible things that they had to go through. This, no one must forget. Although I've never been separated from my mother, I can imagine what it would be like from the information I got from this book and some of my own experiences. Hopefully, Yankele will reach the hearts of everyone, even anti-Semites (people who dislike the Jewish people), and make them realize what it was really like so that it may never happen again.

*Tommy K. Chang, 13  
Ontario, California*



*Checking on the Moon* by Jenny Davis; Orchard Books: New York, 1991; \$14.95.

I FOUND *Checking on the Moon* a very moving book. Cab's mother marries someone, just a little while after they meet. Cab has to go live in Washco, Pennsylvania, with her grandmother while her mother goes off to Europe. She has to leave

her home for a summer and live in a place where she doesn't know anybody. Luckily, her older brother, Bill, comes with her. Cab's brother changes from being really nice to being withdrawn and sad after something terrible happens to his girlfriend. Cab makes a good friend, and in the end she hates to leave.

This book touches me because many terrible crimes happen in Washco. I think it's horrible that people in big cities can't walk the streets at night. The people in Washco rebel against the crimes. They walk the streets in groups. Then they march to the mayor's office. These people love their homes and are determined to keep the streets safe. I would do that to protect my home if I had to. They were brave.

*Julia Davis, 12*  
*Wayne, Maine*





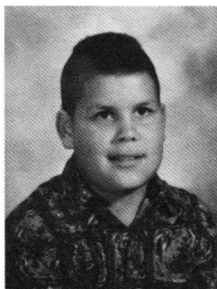
# The Great Owl

The night was dark,  
and the sun was going down.  
I heard an owl  
in the distance.

hoo hoo

It flew across the tundra.  
It dove and grasped  
a rabbit.  
The rabbit squealed  
in the moonlight.  
The owl flew with the rabbit  
to the nest.  
The chicks squeaked with hunger  
and ate constantly.

The owl is off again.



*Buckley Hollembaek, 10  
Delta Junction, Alaska*



## The Baron, the Unicorn, and the Boy

ALBERT GAZED LISTLESSLY at everything before him. Statues and tombs stood around him, both of great and delicate antiquity. People shuffled noiselessly past him, admiring the artifacts set before them. As you can imagine, Albert was at the museum. This was one of the numerous outings he'd been obliged to take part in during the school year. Thus, he was spending hours in the detested place.

"Can we leave now?" he asked. His voice hung in the heavy silence, and, receiving no answer, he looked up to find himself alone. Panicking, he ran to the exit,

thinking that his class had perhaps gone or moved on to another interesting display, but, instead of facing the usual glass panels, he found himself facing an old door. It was so gray with dust and veiled with cobwebs that Albert could hardly see it. Curiosity, with a thread of fear accompanying it, forced him to open it.

He stepped over the threshold. The room was covered with layers of dust with an open grime-covered window showing glimpses of a barren and desolate land. The room was empty except for a large figure at one corner. Albert shivered and took a few steps backward. Just then something stirred and some dust brushed off the figure's face. Its eyes blinked open and stared at Albert. He turned with his heart in his throat, his sole intention to run out of the place, when the voice arrested him. "At last you are here. I have waited for a long time."

Albert turned slowly and stared at the man, for man he was! While he was busy brushing himself off, Albert diligently studied him. He was young with stalwart features. His face was kind but with a hint of sadness and suffering hovering around it. His clothes suggested long ago prosperity but were now in rags. His limpid eyes lifted to meet Albert's and he smiled.

"I am Raymond Fitzgerald," he said. I am a king but have not seen much of that aristocratic world. At an early age, I lost my father and mother in tragic circumstances, indeed, there was a lot of mystery surrounding their death. I was made king, and, as young as I was, I was made to do a number of duties. In one of them, I was visiting a nearby kingdom. I took with me enough sustenance to last a month, my unicorn, and the baron

I once trusted. My unicorn was envied in many kingdoms for its strength and spirit. My baron, as I found out later, also liked it, and, halfway through the journey, he attacked me. Taken by surprise and totally unarmed as I was, he easily defeated me. He took my unicorn and kept me captive here. Even then. . .," he shrugged. "Without that unicorn I am nowhere. Luckily, the baron informed me of the unicorn's whereabouts, thinking that I'd never be able to reach it. The unicorn is in a cage situated about three miles from here. Give him this flower." He withdrew a crushed



flower from the tattered folds of his cloak. "It will enable him to free himself from the cage. Beware of the baron for he is very sly. You may use no arms as only the ruby can kill the baron. Do you agree?"

Silence followed in which Albert trembled. His instinct told him that to agree was to sign his death sentence. But maybe he was thinking of the long-ago sense of chivalry or perhaps he believed in the code of honesty and bravery. Whatever it was, it was enough to make his heart stop skittering like a ping-pong ball. He looked straight at the king. The king somehow sensed his approval and led him to the door. He lay his hands briefly on Albert's shoulder and Albert could feel his gratitude.

As the door was shut behind him, his eyes widened in surprise. Instead of mummies and pharaohs staring disapprovingly on the waxed museum floor, he stood in the middle of a clearing. A dense forest surrounded him and it was rapidly approaching dusk. About three miles from here, he thought. He started walking quite happily, whistling as he went, but soon the whistles died in his throat. In the heavy darkness, the trees seemed bunched together as if hiding something, and eyes seemed to be watching him from every side. No longer trying to fool himself, he ran like he had never run before, stopping only when the first pale rays of the morning appeared. The last few faltering steps led him to a cage, but his eyes closed and he lay down exhausted.

When he woke up it was to feel something nudging his hand softly. It was the hand that had held the flower, and Albert sat up in panic when he felt that it was gone. But he gasped when he saw the unicorn. The unicorn was a thing of perfection and beauty with its almost translucent skin and the pearly horn that rose gracefully from its forehead. Its gray eyes looked at

Albert and he felt a sense of faith and trust pass between them. He lay his hand on the unicorn. Its feathers were also of the same pearly white as its horns.

"What are you doing?" The voice was quiet and soft, but there was no mistaking the menace that lay beneath it. Albert turned around, startled, and grew pale. I must be dreaming, he thought frantically. He was looking at the baron. His long black hair was visible beneath a bowl-shaped metal helmet, and a furious scowl was visible despite his thick black beard. He was dressed in black with a leather tunic and cloak. His eyes were small and glinting, burning with fire and hatred, and his mouth was set into a cruel, harsh line. His sharp, iron-headed spear pointed directly at Albert was perhaps the most frightening thing that Albert had ever experienced. Albert stood rooted to the spot, but the unicorn galloped a few yards away, sensing danger.

"Regard your strange manner of garment," he continued in an antiquated British tone. "You fare from a strange land, but that does not give you leave to take people's possessions, or does it?" His expression as he looked at Albert was that of one who sees something he wishes to destroy in a moment. "The unicorn is mine, and neither you nor Raymond can take it away from me." He started walking determinedly toward the unicorn, and it started rearing frantically as he approached. But the baron laughed a cruel laugh that sent the shivers up Albert's spine. As he laughed, Albert caught a flash of gold and saw with surprise the large gold chains that encircled the baron's neck. They met at his broad chest and on it gleamed the ruby! It glowed with wicked lustre and now Albert recalled the king's words,

"Only the ruby can kill the baron." It was the source of his power, and he had to get it — somehow.

The baron in the meantime had stopped a few feet in front of the unicorn. He grabbed his ruby and, muttering something unintelligible to Albert, pointed it in the direction of the unicorn. The surprise and anger showed on his face when the unicorn did not react to the ruby. Albert, seeing this, took hope and ran toward the unicorn, but the baron turned quickly. "If I can't get one, I'll get the other!" and he pointed the ruby at Albert. Albert felt himself growing numb and cold, and he couldn't move. The baron laughed again, an almost happy expression in his eyes. "King Fitzgerald may have warned you about me, but you both do not know the extent of my power. With you turned to stone, I can easily recapture the unicorn!" Albert felt himself grow cold all over, and suddenly, terror like he had never known before snaked through him and a scream broke loose from his throat.

The unicorn sensed his danger and galloped to his side. As soon as he felt the soft head nudging him, Albert felt his strength slowly returning. But there was still danger. Albert could see the baron climbing onto his horse and his spear gleamed in his hand. He could guess that the baron was planning to dash madly at them and. . . well, he could guess what the spear was for.

The unicorn nudged Albert, and Albert, sensing what it wanted, mounted its bare back and they soared into the sky. They reached the baron, and the unicorn soared low, encircling him. The baron made futile attempts to spear the unicorn for he had realized that the



unicorn was no longer in his control. It took only one precisely timed kick to send the spear flying and it fell in Albert's ready hand. They turned and flew a few



yards away and landed. They turned once again and started to race straight at the baron. The mere strength and anger of the animal rooted the baron to the spot. Albert was ready and, as they drew nearer, he thrust his spear out and it caught onto one of the large gold links, and all that was needed was a little pressure for it to break and the ruby was falling uselessly to the ground. A scream was all Albert heard before he was struck into a swirling darkness. . . .

Albert opened his eyes and found himself in the museum. He gave a sigh of relief. Then he saw that in front of him hung a portrait. The caption read, "King



Fitzgerald," and the young king seemed to be smiling at him. Albert turned to go, then smiled and gasped — for around his neck hung a medallion shaped like a unicorn.

*Ogechi Cynthia Njoku, 12  
Nigeria, West Africa*



*Illustrated by Andrew Ujifusa, 10  
Chappaqua, New York*

## Important Calls

**I** SAT SULKILY at the kitchen table, swirling my soggy Captain Wheaties around in the bowl. This was *not* my morning, even though it was a Saturday. Why did Mom have *another* meeting with a "prospective client"? Geez! She couldn't even spend time with her own kid.

When she walked in I pretended I didn't notice her. "Honey, I'm going out to pick up a few necessities. I'll be back in a few minutes, but I'm waiting for an important call. So watch the phone for me, will you? Thanks,

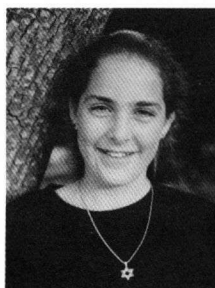
sweetie!" And with that she hurried away. I made sure she saw I was too busy eating to respond.

I heard her car zoom away, and soon after, the phone rang. Brrriing! I watched it ring. Brrriing! I stared at it like a cat ready to pounce. Brrriing! I glared at it like the bad guys in the movies. Brrriing! I watched it and scratched my head like I didn't know what was going on. I watched it so many different ways, but it just kept ringing.

Boy, it's amazing what things you notice that you never saw before when you look closely at something. I spotted a chip in the corner of the phone and a food stain or drip or something on top. I'd never even noticed that our phone was beige with a blue cord. Geez!

Suddenly I perked up. The ringing had stopped. Well, I had watched it just like Mom said. I felt better, now. In fact, I felt almost good.

*Allegra Raboff Gordon, 12  
Berkeley, California*



## Fan Creek

WITH FLY RODS ready, Dr. Notz, Greg Notz, my dad, and I marched to Fan Creek on Fan Creek

Trail, Yellowstone National Park. The sky was crystal clear with a gleaming sun. The path on which we walked was dusty with signs of faint hoofprints from horses who passed through before us. The walk was short, but it seemed like hours because of the amazing sight of the vast landscape.

As we reached the ridge covered with bristly sagebrush, we came to a jerking halt. At the top of the ridge there was a magnificent view. The beauty choked us. There was Fan Creek lying sleepily in the peaceful valley. Two massive mountains on either side of the valley make homes for many trees. Grasshoppers were fluttering and chirping on the rocky banks of the ridge. The crispy, thin mountain air was hard to breathe at seventy-five-hundred feet. When we finally regained our strength, we started down the ridge. The smell of wildflowers in between the tall grass was as sweet as cherry pie.

Dr. Notz was first to cast. Fish were splashing and jumping excitingly in the smooth flowing creek. The soft mountain breeze made the charred trees sway. We started down the creek.

Halfway down the creek Greg yelled, "Look!"

"What is it?" I asked.

It was a female moose and her calf. The mother was tall and powerful, walking peacefully in the distance. The calf was small and slender as its clumsy legs tripped over each other. It seemed to do everything its mother did. We were all in line, sharing binoculars. We watched them until they worked their way into the tall timbers.

We started fishing again, hitting every sun-reflecting hole. Dr. Notz had already caught about five in one

hour. I, on the other hand, didn't catch any. Greg was almost out of Dad's and my sight. Dr. Notz was close behind.

My dad and I decided to take a break. We scaled the hard, rocky hillside until we came to a level area. We sat down by a large pine and a fallen old log. There we sat full of conversation, eating our fruit roll-ups.

Then I heard something. It sounded like the scratching of wood. I came to a stop in my talking and held my breath. My dad was silent. I heard it again. I remembered the warnings the ranger had given us about grizzly bears, and how they sometimes ripped up logs.

"Listen," I whispered to my father.

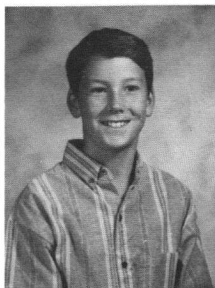
"What?" my dad replied.

"Don't you hear that scratching?" I asked.

"Oh, that's just the trees rubbing," he stated, pointing to the tops of the sturdy, sweet-smelling trees. I let out a sigh of relief.

By the time we had gotten back to fishing, the Notzes were coming. As we started back to the ridge, the sound of the playful grasshoppers faded. We turned around and looked at the majestic sight once more and said goodbye to that sleepy creek in the valley.

*Mark Davis, 12  
Danville, Pennsylvania*



## The Old Beach House

THE WAVES POUNDED fiercely against the shore of Nauset Beach for the second day. All of James's neighbors had evacuated their homes a few days ago, after they had heard the severe hurricane warnings. But James was determined to stay and guard his old beach house.

James had lived on Nauset Beach since his college days when he and his father had built the small wooden beach house by themselves. He remembered long days at the beach in late summer floating on a raft with the hot sun warming his tanned skin. He recalled walking the beach in early spring looking for shells and rare stones. He loved this old house and the memories it contained. He was not going to let all of this drift out to sea.

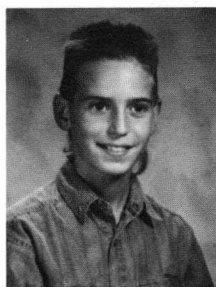
Soon the waves crashed and destroyed his neighbor's house, sending sand into the streets and water onto James's back deck. The day seemed endless, as he nervously listened to the weather forecast on his portable beach radio. He glanced at his old photo albums on the shelf, then slowly began to pull them out one at a time. Skimming through the pages he saw pictures of his family and friends enjoying days at the beach. Suddenly, he was startled by a loud knocking at his door. It was a beach patrol, warning him to evacuate. But James had made the decision to stay and protect his house.

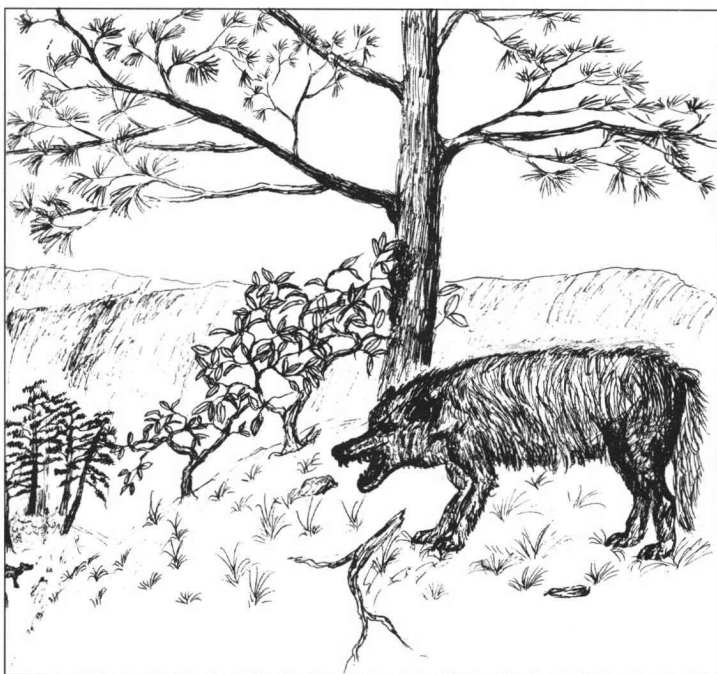
The tides came and went bringing more houses with

them, and James once again was faced with the decision to either stay in his house or move to higher ground. As high tide approached, water came up to his doorstep, and James realized that he had to go before it was too late. Quickly he fled out of his house with a small bag of possessions. He went off down the road to a nearby shelter. In the shelter James could not help but think about his house. Would it be wrecked, flooded, or washed out to sea? James tried to keep his mind off of the house by staying busy reading books, talking to old sea captains, and playing chess. Like a boat at sea, his mind kept drifting back to his house. James fell asleep that night with a lot on his mind. He wondered what was ahead for him.

James awoke the next morning to streaks of sunlight shining through the shelter window. Without hesitation, he walked swiftly toward the beach house. The road was covered with sand as he walked through the narrow path to the beach. From the path, he could see a glimpse of the old beach house. From where he stood it looked the same — untouched. He walked around the house. There was no damage. He couldn't believe it. He felt relieved. He also felt a sense of regret that he had been so stubborn. He realized how lucky he was to be alive.

*Jason Piantedosi, 10  
Saugus, Massachusetts*





## A Lone Wolf in the Wild

**E**BONY SAT AND scratched his ears and rolled in the dirty dirt. He blinked his eyes a few times because of the strong rays of the burning sun. Then he abruptly turned his head and stood still. He shifted uneasily and lifted his nose and smelt the breeze that gently blew to the north. Then his hair stood on end and he growled and snarled. Far, far down to the north stood a figure of another wolf, who soon vanished as soon as he heard the feared growl of Ebony. Ebony was feared wherever

he went. Everyone knew him as a grouch and very very vicious, and they nicknamed him Killer. Ebony was only vicious and aggressive because when he was a pup his mother died. He had been playing in some bushes, jumping at the leaves and branches, when the wind forgot him and left him there, never to see him again. Since then Ebony thought he was betrayed and attacked any wolf or thing who was anywhere near him. He attacked with sharp teeth like knives and claws like swords. He grew up feeling left out and angry. He soon turned into a mean, aggressive wolf. He turned out to be the strongest wolf in the world because he exercised when he wanted to and slept when he had to. He also was a pro at fighting because he had begun ever since his pack left him. He also was the biggest and the heaviest because he ate and ate because he was bored.

Ebony sat back down and watched a jack rabbit pass right in front of him four feet away. He stood up very quietly and gave a tremendous leap and with a thud landed on the rabbit and dug his sharp teeth into its skin. Then he gobbled it whole. Suddenly there was a laugh. Ebony whirled around and almost pounced until he saw that it was only a girl wolf. So he growled and snarled softly, but she would not go away.

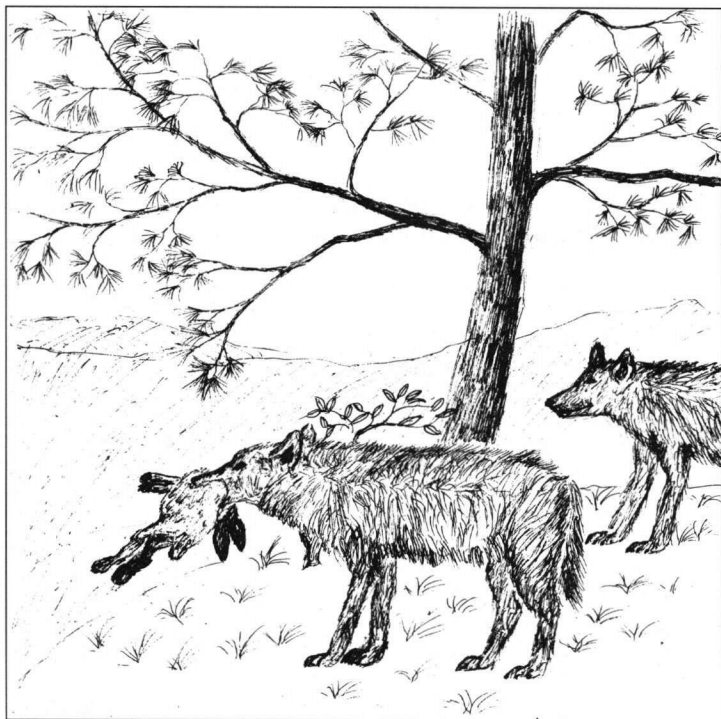
"Excuse me," she said sweetly, "have you seen my pack? I'm new here and I don't know this place." Ebony looked into her deep brown eyes. They smiled at him. Ebony swallowed hard and turned his head because he could not look at her straight in the eyes.

"No, I don't know any packs!" Ebony hesitated and then continued. "Now get out of here!" he mumbled gravely. The beautiful girl wolf suddenly looked sad.



She turned her head and shifted uneasily.

"I'm sorry if I, if I bothered you," she said, her voice choking and tears pouring out of her eyes. She turned away and ran.



"Wait!" cried Ebony, who in all his life had never felt sorry for anyone. Somewhere in his stone heart he felt sad and grieved for her. Maybe it was because of her beauty and sweetness. He suddenly felt loved and his hard stone heart softened. He raced after her, desperate to retrieve her love and help her in any way possible. He gained all his strength and toppled in front of her,

even though he was five yards away from her. She stopped dead in her tracks.

"What – what do you want?" she managed to say.

"I'm sorry!" Ebony blurted out. The girl wolf's face lit up.

"I'm Wood Rose, what's your name?"

"Ebony."

A year later everyone was greeting Wood Rose and Ebony and their five puppies, Cocoa, Windy, Pepper, Rascals, and Trouble, with kisses and nice comments.

Now Ebony, Wood Rose, and their family decided to join a pack, and they joined the most famous pack in the world. Ebony was the leader and Wood Rose was the she-wolf. As the years fly by the ancestors of Wood Rose and Ebony still live today. Somewhere far, far away.

*Jessica Housand, 10  
Cocoa, Florida*



*Illustrated by Ryan Williamson, 12  
Crozet, Virginia*

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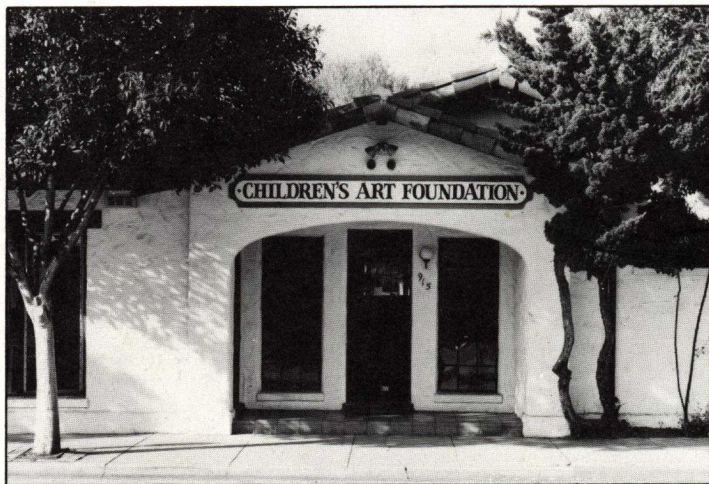


Photo: Tony Grant

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