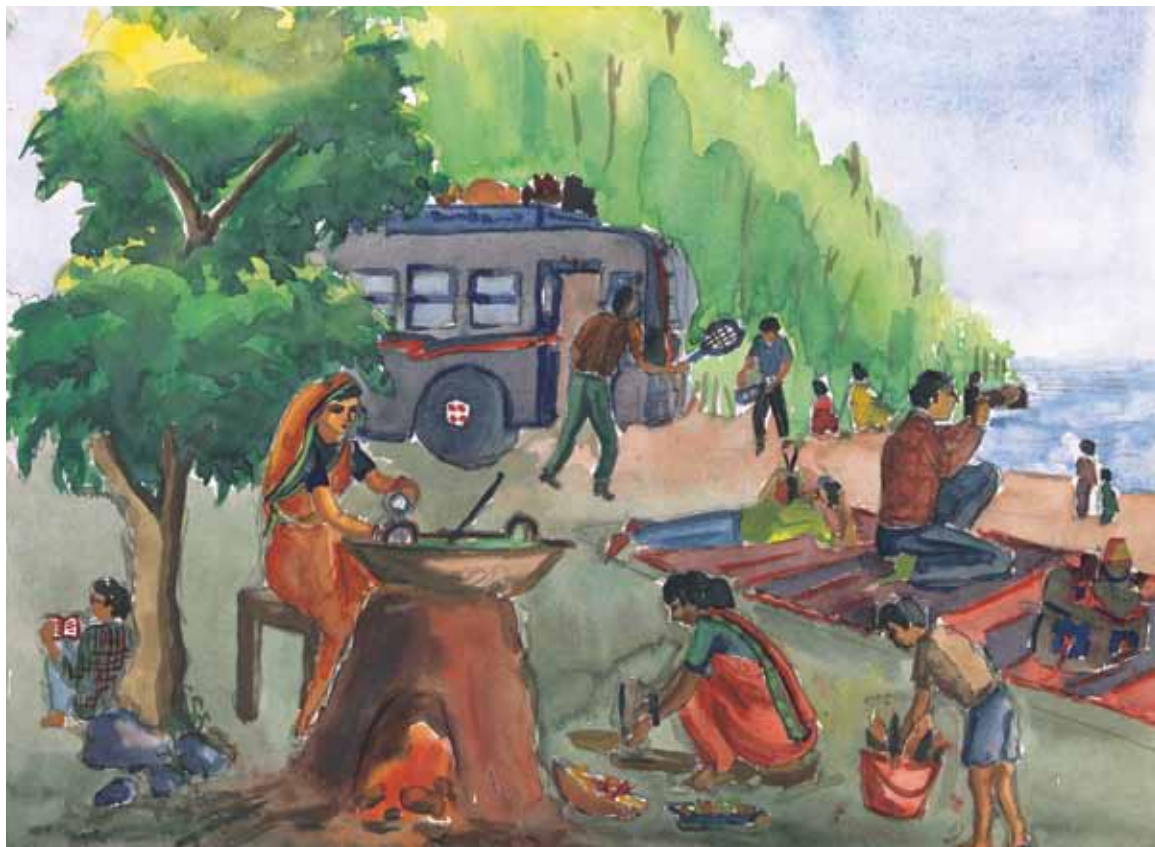


# Stone Soup

*The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists*



*"Holiday Spot," by Dibyendu Sett, age 13, India*

## BLUE EYES

Ben realizes he was too hard on his little brother

## A WEEKEND WITH ISABELLA HOHENSTAUFEN

Isabella risks her life to retrieve her backpack in a storm—why?

*Also:* A poem about summer camp

JULY/AUGUST 2011

\$6.50 US \$6.50 CANADA



# Stone Soup

*The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists*

VOLUME 39, NUMBER 6

JULY / AUGUST 2011

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Stone Soup is printed on recycled paper

GERRY MANDEL  
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*Subscriptions*

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*Design and Production*

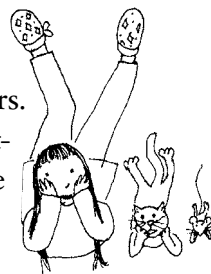
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*Stone Soup* (ISSN 0094 579X) is published six times a year by the Children's Art Foundation, 765 Cedar Street, Suite 201, Santa Cruz, CA 95060. Phone: 800-447-4569. It is published bimonthly in January/February, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, and November/December. Volume 39, Number 6. Copyright © 2011 by the Children's Art Foundation. All rights reserved. Reproduction of the whole or any part of the contents without written permission is prohibited. *Stone Soup* is mailed to members of the Children's Art Foundation. Eighty percent of the membership fee is designated for subscription to *Stone Soup*. In the United States, a one-year membership costs \$37, two years \$60, three years \$82. Canada add \$6 per year for postage; other countries add \$12 per year for postage. Please remit in U.S. funds only. Send SUBMISSIONS, SUBSCRIPTIONS, and ADDRESS CHANGES to: *Stone Soup*, P.O. Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Stone Soup*, P.O. Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063. Periodical postage paid at Santa Cruz, CA and additional offices. Printed in Canada.

# Stone Soup

*The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists*

**W**ELCOME TO ALL OUR READERS, old and new! We've had the pleasure of publishing *Stone Soup* for more than 38 years. It is our belief that, by presenting rich, heart-felt 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 website: [stonesoup.com](http://stonesoup.com).

**Story and poem authors:** Please do not enclose a self-addressed envelope with your submission. Send copies of your work, not originals. If we decide to consider your work for a future issue, you will hear from us within four weeks. If you do not hear from us, it means we were not able to use your work. Don't be discouraged! Try again!

**Book reviewers:** If you are interested in reviewing books for *Stone Soup*, write editor Gerry Mandel. Tell her a little about yourself and the kinds of books you like to read. Enclose an SASE for her reply.

**Artists:** If you would like to illustrate for *Stone Soup*, send Ms. Mandel three samples of your artwork, along with a letter saying what you like to draw most. Enclose an SASE for her reply. We need artists who can draw or paint complete scenes in color. Please send color copies of your work, not originals.

**All contributors:** Send us writing and art about the things you feel most strongly about! Whether your work is about imaginary situations or real ones, use your own experiences and observations to give your work depth and a sense of reality. Send your work to *Stone Soup*, Submissions Dept., P.O. Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063. Include your name, age, birthdate, home address, phone number and e-mail.

**Cover:** "Holiday Spot" was loaned to *Stone Soup* by Paintbrush Diplomacy of Menlo Park, California. For more than 30 years, Paintbrush Diplomacy has worked to promote children's artistic expression around the world and to raise awareness of children's causes. Special thanks to Char Pribuss, Louise Valeur and Lisa Fahey.

# The Mailbox



LBP, 9

In the May/June 2011 issue of *Stone Soup*, Allison Armstrong (author) and Emma T. Capps (illustrator) created “Working for Sparkle,” a story where the characters’ personalities are so realistic. This story is so good I nearly got hit in the head with a basketball while reading it. Even then I didn’t put the magazine down. I had gotten to the part where Suzy was in the Humane Society for the first time. The illustrations are extremely realistic and my brother really enjoyed them. Outstanding job, Emma and Allison!

**DANNI C. BELL, 10**  
*New Rochelle, New York*

One of my favorite images came from the November/December 2010 issue. It’s in the story “The Eight Snow Globes.” The face is just amazing! Daria Lugina might be in an art gallery someday. So girl, keep painting!

**ANN HOOKER, 13**  
*San Jose, California*

I read your January/February *Stone Soup*. I enjoyed one article in particular. It was called “Writing Is Like Knitting,” by Brittany Jullie. The article was about an adult named Ruby McClure who quit her job to write but could not get her writing published. I found it inspiring how Ruby kept on trying. In the end, she got a novel published. She always remembered the motto, “Writing is like knitting.” It takes a while to grasp and get the hang of. As much as I liked Brittany’s article, I still have some questions. Did Ruby’s grandmother say writing is like knitting? Was Ruby’s grandmother a writer? I thoroughly enjoyed reading this article and hope you publish many more just like it.

**MAIA REYNOLDS, 10**  
*Hanover, New Hampshire*

As I reflect on the time that Mary has spent preparing and submitting work to *Stone Soup*, I realize that not only has she grown as a writer and artist (in part by learning from those who are published in your magazine), but she’s learned other lessons as well. She has learned that writers and artists deserve to be paid for their work. (This is truly a unique and valuable feature of your magazine.) She has learned to be patient while waiting for replies to her submissions. She’s learned that it’s OK that not every work gets accepted. I want to give you and your colleagues my own thanks for all you do to inspire and encourage young writers and artists. When I first learned of *Stone Soup*, I was immediately impressed by the quality of the children’s works, and now I’ve become aware of and appreciative of another quality—the fact that you always publish beautiful stories. The stories might be about tragedy, loss, sadness, and difficult situations, but they are also always beautiful and hopeful. And that, I believe, is something that a culture’s literature must sustain. So thank you!

**JENNIFER WOODS, PARENT**  
*Frankfort, Illinois*

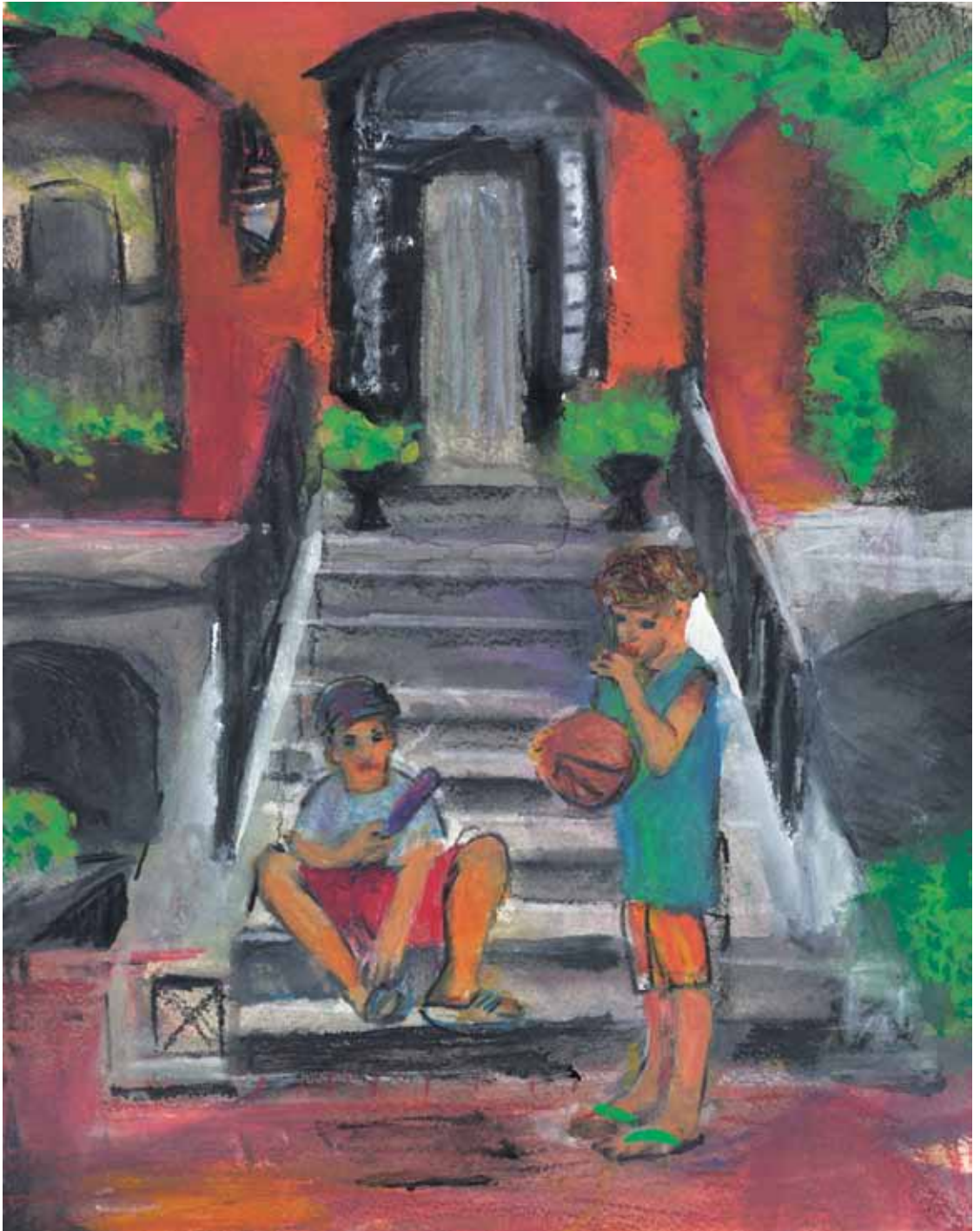
*Mary’s new story appears on page 45 of this issue.*

I’m a real fan of *Stone Soup* and constantly read your magazines. I just love them! The first time I saw your magazines, I really didn’t think much of it. After all, I preferred reading books. But after I read one story, yes just one story in your magazine, I was hooked. It was like some invisible force drew me to read your magazine. I read more and more *Stone Soup* stories and grew the sensation of wanting to be one of the young authors.

**RAY HUANG, 10**  
*Vancouver, Washington*

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





*“Hey, Ben, do you wanna play basketball?” Nick asked*

# Blue Eyes

By **Eve Driver**

*Illustrated by* **Spencer Hanson**

**T**HERE ARE SOME things in life that you never forget—no matter how much time passes, they just cling to your heart and mind like the stubby fingers of a kindergartner clutching his mother’s hand on the first day of school. Special moments, like the day when my parents showed Nick and me the place where they met, and we sat there under the big tree, as one happy family, or emotional events, like the time when my parents told us that they were getting a divorce—those are things that will stay with me forever. That day when I thought I had lost my brother was one of those things. It is still as clear in my mind as the moment it happened.

I remember it started on a humid afternoon in August, during one of those days when the air is so heavy that you can barely move and the heat overwhelms your senses. The sun smothered us like a thick-soled boot extinguishing a coal that escaped from the fireplace. We could feel its merciless heat on our backs as Nick, my ten-year-old brother, and I sat on the front stoop, eating Popsicles. Our mother had ordered us out of the house after Nick spilled his drink all over the kitchen table.

“Hey, Ben, do you wanna play basketball?” Nick asked. He was always playing basketball those days.

“No. It’s too hot,” I replied.

Nick grabbed a ball anyway and started dribbling around.

“When will you be ready to play?” he pestered.

“I don’t want to play at all, Nick. Stop bothering me.”

“Bother! Bother! Bother!”



Eve Driver, 13  
Wellesley, Massachusetts



Spencer Hanson, 11  
San Anselmo, California

"You're such a baby! Why don't you go ask your mommy to play with you? Oh, wait, I forgot, she doesn't like you anymore because you ruined her tablecloth." I was being a bully, but I was irritated and I knew what would get to him.

"She still likes me! She's my mom!"

"OK, OK, you can think whatever you want." I had him. He threw his basketball at me and ran inside. I waited for Mom to send him back out again, but she didn't. She was probably finished cleaning up.

Nick was sitting at the kitchen table when I walked in. I shot him a look that let him know I had won and then headed upstairs. I was taking it too far, and I knew it, but I had to get the better of him.

"Shut up, Ben," he called after me, but I ignored him. When I was almost to the top of the stairs, I heard a sob escape his chest before he could stifle it. He hated when I teased him about being a baby. Ever since the divorce, he had been really close to Mom, and he still felt insecure. I shouldn't have been so harsh with him.

The thing about Nick is that he usually forgives you pretty quickly. I thought that by the next morning at the latest, he would have forgotten the whole incident. At first, I thought he had, but he wouldn't speak to me and his eyes were red, as if he had been crying. Something was wrong, and I worried about him for most of the day. Maybe something was going on at school. Or, more likely, he was still sore about our argument from the previous afternoon. He was only ten, after all. I decided to apologize when I got a chance.

The walk home from baseball practice was pretty long, and about halfway through, all that humidity built up into a thunderstorm, and before I knew it, rain began to pelt my face like bullets. I put my hands over my head and started to run. Thunder boomed, and I ran faster and faster. When I reached the front door, I knocked as hard as I could. I waited for the familiar sound of my mother's pumps on the hardwood floor, hurrying to let me in, but heard nothing. I knocked again.

"Mom?" A huge peel of thunder crashed from the angry skies, and it really began to come down. Where was she?

I fished around my pockets for my key. I found it and unlocked the door, collapsing into the shelter of my warm home. I trudged upstairs, peeled off my sopping baseball pants, dried my hair, and felt a lot better. I would have been happy to settle in for the night, except for one thing. Where was Mom? And, come to think of it, where was Nick?

I headed downstairs to phone the neighbors in case someone had seen them. When I reached the kitchen, however, something caught my eye. Lying on the table was a note written in my mother's careful hand.

Can't find Nick. Went out to look for him.  
Stay here.

I love you.  
—Mom

When I finished reading it, two thoughts immediately invaded my mind like so many enthusiastic schoolchildren



shooting their hands up to answer a question. My first thought was that I knew exactly what had happened to my brother. I don't know how I knew, but I'd never been so sure of anything in my life: he had run away. My second thought was that there was no way that I was staying home. I had to find him.

I ran outside and the ferocious rain that almost knocked me down nearly changed my mind. Squinting my eyes, I ran around back and grabbed my bike. The first place I thought to look was Nick's friend Daniel's house. Even if he hadn't planned to go there, he might have taken shelter from the rain. I pedaled faster than I had ever before, and the rain stung my raw skin.

I couldn't see very clearly, but when I reached Daniel's house, I recognized the dejected walk of my mother slogging down the front walkway. She must have had the same idea I had, but not had any luck.

"Mom! Mom! It's Ben!" I called to her. I'm surprised she could hear me through the deafening roar of the storm.

"Oh, Ben! What are you doing? I told you to stay home."

She hurried to me in her clumsy spotted boots. At thirteen, I was just taller than her and I looked down into her worried eyes, wet with tears and rain. Those vividly blue eyes had seen so much, too much. I just couldn't let her lose her son on top of her husband.

"Mom, listen to me. I'll find him. Don't worry. I want you to go home and stay

there in case he returns. Please."

She grabbed my hand and squeezed it as if she were a child getting a shot. Why did my mother seem so small and weak?

"OK," she whispered. "I love you." She turned and started sloshing home, probably dying inside, but glad to be getting relieved of her responsibilities for a moment by letting me do what I was determined to do.

When she was out of sight, I pondered my next move. Where would Nick go if he wanted to escape from the emotional tumult and tribulation of his ten-year-old life, if he wanted to feel safe, and loved? Another crack of thunder rang in my ears just as the answer came to me: the tree.

I mounted my bike like a steed and flew down the street once more. It was a long trip to the place where our parents had met, but I knew with all my heart that was where he'd be.

As I pedaled through the downpour, I couldn't stop thinking about him, all alone in the violent storm. His mop of curls would be matted against his head, and he'd be shivering. I clenched my jaw and it was as if my body was not a part of me; I could not feel the pain as I exhausted every ounce of my energy. In less than five minutes, I was pulling into the park. I strained to see if I could catch a glimpse of Nick below the tree. And just like that, there he was. He was hunched into a ball, shaking with shivers, sobs, or both. I tossed my bike aside and ran to him. Wrapping my arms around his quivering form, I cried, and our sobs became one.



*And just like that, there he was*

We sat there like that for a long time, not thinking at all about getting up and going home. Eventually, the storm started to let up and our sobs quieted. As one final bolt of lightning lit up the sky, he looked up. I stared into his wide, brilliantly blue eyes and realized that they were just like

my mom's. He was so young, so innocent, and I couldn't let those eyes know such pain and grief. As I looked at him, I realized that he needed me more than I had ever known. After a long journey, I had finally found my brother, and I knew that I would never again let him go. ❁

# Simpleness

By **Madeline Snigaroff**

I love it when it's raining  
and you're driving  
and you pass under a bridge  
and the rain stops  
for just a moment.

I love it when you walk outside  
on a wet morning  
and you can smell damp clay  
and freshly mown grass  
under the gray morning light.

I love it when it's nighttime  
and you're under a cool blanket of stars  
and you feel like  
you should be able to see your breath  
or taste the air.

I love it when you're at the beach  
and you let the water  
stream to your toes  
and your ankles sink into the sand  
and the water streams back out again.



Madeline Snigaroff, 11  
Del Mar, California

I love it when you look at someone—  
just glance at them barely—  
and you both know  
that you're about to burst out  
in laughter.

I love it when it's snowing outside—  
just gently, though—and you  
sit outside in the snow  
and let the snowflakes fall on you  
in their quiet, peaceful way.

I love it when a spacious room  
becomes absolutely quiet  
except for the sound of a  
clock ticking away the time  
of silence in the room.

I love it when you bite into  
a perfect apple  
and you can hear that  
satisfying crunch that just  
makes it taste so much better.

I love it when a gust of gentle wind  
streams through the trees  
so that they rattle  
and it sounds like water  
is passing through.

I love it when you read the last words of a book  
and you read them over  
and then the first words  
and then the title  
because you just can't believe it's over.

I love it when you do that:  
when you smile like that at me.  
Do it again;  
smile like that  
again  
at me.





*"Shhh... everything's going to be OK," Natalie promised the foal*

# As the Breeze Blows

By **Schuyler Mitchell**  
*Illustrated by* **Emily Jackson**

A LIGHT BREEZE tousled Natalie's long auburn hair as she ran through the woods. The canopy of leaves above shielded Natalie from the sun beating down. Natalie loved the outdoors and was thankful that she had finally finished her chores so she could have fun.

"Neigh!" Natalie heard a strange noise. What was a horse doing in the middle of a forest? Cautiously, Natalie walked toward the sound. She peered over a large log that had fallen in a recent storm, and gasped.

A chocolate-brown foal with white markings lay on the forest floor. Its back left leg was bent at an angle that couldn't be good. The foal was struggling to stand up but collapsed in the dirt every time. Natalie tentatively stretched out her hand. The foal squirmed away and started neighing frantically.

"Shhh... everything's going to be OK," Natalie promised the foal.

"Natalie! Where are you? It's lunchtime!" Natalie's mother called.

"I'll be right back," said Natalie. Then she rushed home, hoping that the foal would be there when she returned.

THE HUBBUB of normal life at Natalie's farm made it easy for her to slip outside unnoticed. Quickly stripping a piece of linen from the washing line, Natalie left her home and dashed back to the injured foal. It took her a while to relocate the animal but its distressed wails helped. Once she



Schuyler Mitchell, 12  
Raleigh, North Carolina



Emily Jackson, 12  
Maple Valley, Washington

spotted the horse, Natalie leaned down and wrapped the linen around the foal's broken leg. The poor creature lashed out with its hooves, trying to dislodge Natalie's hand from its leg, but Natalie held on tight. She slowly eased the leg back into its right position, then stood back to admire her handiwork.

"There, there, little one. It'll all be OK," Natalie murmured, stroking the foal's head softly. Natalie had experience with animals from working on her farm. Her family made their money by raising foals, then selling them once they were old enough. The cow milk and chickens' eggs also helped rake in money, but the horses were what Natalie's family was known for.

It was clear to Natalie that without help the foal would only survive a few more days. Natalie guessed that it had only recently been weaned from its mother's milk. A gut feeling told Natalie that she was the one who had to take care of this animal. If her parents knew, they would surely make her get rid of it, for the market was only willing to take in pure-breds, which the foal most certainly was not. Natalie would have to sneak food out of the house to give to the animal. If she got caught, there was no telling what would happen.

"First things first," Natalie said aloud. "I have to give you a name." The trees rustled as the light breeze picked up again. Natalie, of course, had never ridden the foal but could tell by the way it was built that it had a smooth gait.

"How about... Runs Like the Breeze?" Natalie suggested. "Breeze for short." The foal whinnied and Natalie took that as a good sign.

In her family, they never named the horses. Her father said that if they did they would just become attached and the day when they had to sell would be harder. Natalie didn't care. She thought that everything should have a name.

Eventually, Natalie walked home. The next morning she would go back to the foal with a blanket and food. That night Natalie dreamt of riding Breeze along the beach, wind whipping through her hair and waves crashing on the shore.

"**W**OW! YOU SURE are hungry. Slow down!" Natalie laughed as Breeze inhaled the apples and hay. Breeze paused for a second and looked up with a piece of hay dangling from his mouth. Natalie wiped it away, giggling.

It had been a week since she had found Runs Like the Breeze, and his appetite had really taken off. Natalie loved the horse but a nagging feeling deep inside of her kept on asking, "Won't they notice the food is disappearing?" Natalie pushed the feeling away and continued talking and laughing with the foal. Finally, Breeze stopped eating and snuggled into the blankets that Natalie had laid out in a hollow log.

Breeze's leg was healing quickly and Natalie was happy about that. Still, she worried about what she would do once Breeze was all better. Breeze had re-

ally grown attached to Natalie and would never run off without her. Natalie was glad but she kept on wondering if it was really fair. Once Breeze became a full-grown horse he shouldn't have to be cooped up. Just looking at Breeze told Natalie that he was a wild horse. Would he really enjoy having an owner?

Breeze's breathing became slower and steadier so Natalie knew he was asleep. She sat for a while, stroking Breeze's flank and listening to the birds. As the dusk shadows fell she stood up and started for home.

"Where have you been?" Natalie's mother, Mrs. Merriman, exclaimed.

"Mama's been worried sick," said Natalie's sister, Maybel.

"I was just taking a walk," Natalie replied.

"Well, tell me before you go," Mrs. Merriman said and walked away.

When she was gone Maybel said, "I know you're hiding something, Natalie." Natalie was shocked. Maybel couldn't find out about Breeze!

"No, I'm not!" Natalie protested.


"Fine, but I'm watching you," Maybel said and stalked off. Natalie couldn't believe it. Only a week had passed and she had almost lost Breeze.

"COME ON, BREEZE. It's time to go," Natalie said, leading Breeze deeper into the forest. His leg was healed completely as if there had never been an injury in the first place. Maybel had followed Natalie one day while she was visiting Breeze. It was only a matter of time before Natalie's secret leaked out to her whole family. Once they got a hold of Breeze he would be sold for labor or other horrible things. As much as it broke Natalie's heart, she realized that the only way Runs Like the Breeze could be happy was if she let him go.

"Go on, fellow," Natalie persuaded with tears streaming down her cheeks. "You don't need me anymore. Be free."

Breeze wouldn't budge. He nuzzled Natalie, looking for food.

"Maybel will be here soon! Leave!" Natalie exclaimed. Breeze seemed to finally get the message. He turned around and started cantering through the forest.

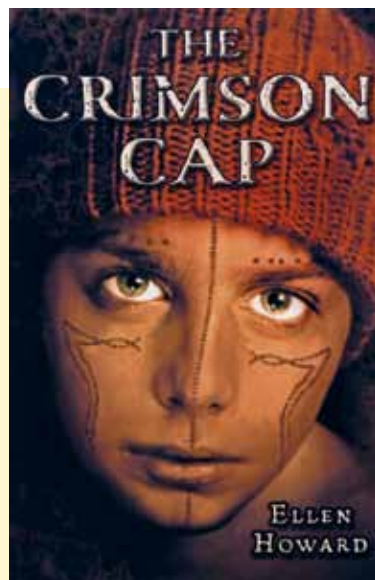
"I'll miss you, Runs Like the Breeze," Natalie murmured as Breeze's brown flank disappeared in a grove of trees. The same wind that had blown Natalie's hair on the day she found Breeze started up again. It whispered his name as it brought Breeze to a new life—a life where he could run wild and free, just like the wind. 



# Book Review

By **Beth Demske**

*The Crimson Cap*, by Ellen Howard; Holiday House Books for Young People: New York, 2009; \$16.95



Beth Demske, 12  
Lawrence, Michigan

**G**ROWING UP is something we all do at one time or another. I just stumbled upon Pierre Talon when he was in the middle of the process. He looked at me with sad, intense eyes surrounded by tattooed charcoal dots and crowned with a fraying crimson cap. He introduced himself as I read the covers of Ellen Howard's *The Crimson Cap*. His "voice" was dry and humorless. Through it I heard traces of French, Hasinai Indian, and Spanish languages that he had picked up one-by-one throughout the book.

Why did I take this book home in the first place? The little French woven into the excerpt on the back of the book caught my full attention. Because I speak a good bit of French, the wonderful job the author does at using a tiny salting of it had a magnetic pull on me. Then I discovered, with the delight of a historian who has just found an ancient prize, that the book was based on a true story! At once I snuggled down with glee (I love historical fiction) to read my newest book.

Pierre Talon, a French boy in the expedition of Monsieur de La Salle, must leave his family in the French settlement when he's only eight years old. Then, in six years, his life takes many strange (and alarming!) turns. His crimson cap stands for the time that passes and the changes he faces. Every time he takes it



off it's a fainter shade of red. He is continually shocked by how different it has become—how different *he* has become. He then looks at what has happened in his life and has a choice to make: to despair, or rejoice. Should he stay with the Hasinai Indians? Is there any reason to go back and search for his siblings?

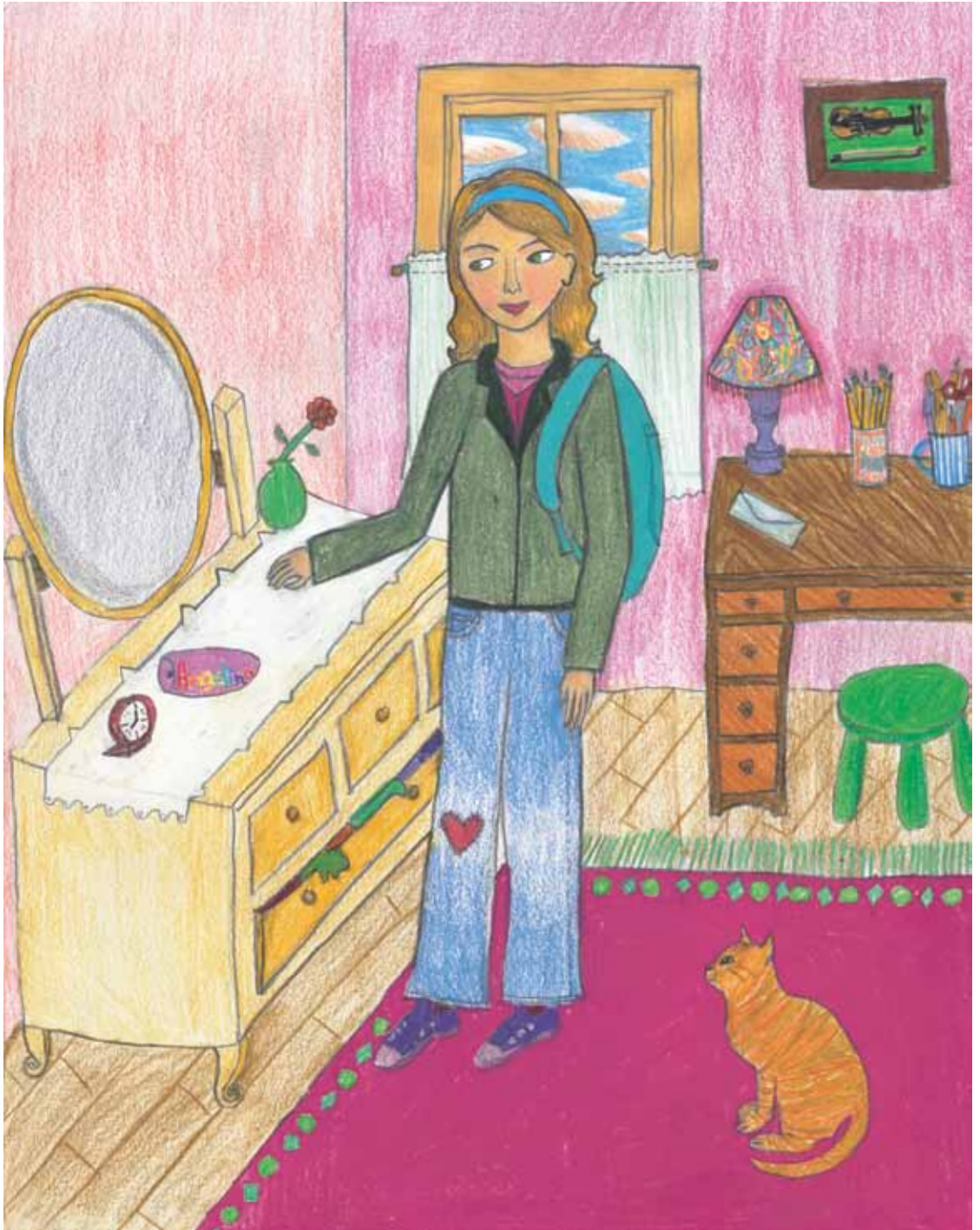
I am a born-and-raised American. I also have grown up in a wonderful, loving home in the twenty-first century. So I was surprised to find, no matter how vastly different our lives are, that Pierre and I are very much alike.

In a way, I have a “crimson cap” too. On a hill off our front yard, there's a beautiful box elder tree that's been there since I knew what a tree was. If I think as far back in my memory as I can reach, the tree was a sapling with a thin trunk, spindly branches and very light green leaves. But over the years, it has grown thick and tall and a richer shade of green has replaced the old lime hue. I'm continually shocked by how different it has become—how different *I* have become. And I face that same choice: to despair, or rejoice.

In *The Crimson Cap*, Pierre is forced to dwell among teens and grown-ups from the time he's only eight years old. Having two older sisters, I'm a lot like Pierre. Growing up is a doubly challenging process when, like me and Pierre, you're raised in a more mature, experienced setting. Sometimes I find myself feeling small and young, and other times I feel very grown up.

Pierre says to his sister in the book that he and she are branded by their sufferings, not by any marks they wear on their face. I believe that everyone is branded in some way: their own history, or their family's. I am branded by the family and friends I love, who have left their mark on my biggest crimson cap—my memory—by the ways they have loved me. Love and suffering are the two noblest brands anyone can ever have.

As you can see by now, this book has made me think very hard about my life. It's a potent read that no thinker and French speaker, like me (and like the main character), should pass up! ☸



*I hate everyone for making me wear those things*

# The Spectacle Dilemma

By Joyce Chen

Illustrated by Lydia Giangregorio

ANGIE PULLED on a jumper and a pair of pants, not peeking. She stuck her arms in a jacket without allowing herself even to *think*. After gulping a cup of OJ and some cereal, she brushed her teeth without grimacing. But when she was ready, backpack slung over shoulder, it was time. To decide.

She let her eyes wander to the dresser, staring with unconcealed revulsion at the small, flat case that crouched beside her alarm clock. I hate them, she thought. I hate the nurse for that test. I hate Dad for ordering them. I hate everyone for making me wear those things... and saying I look *so cute* in them!

Angie shivered. The very abominable idea that she would look cute in that awful contraption was disgusting. Yes, that's right, she decided, smiling smugly, she would not wear them. Of course she wouldn't. She would leave them at home and say she forgot them.

With that landmark decision, she walked triumphantly to the door, ready to catch the school bus.

"Honey," called her mother, "did you remember to bring...?" Her inquiring eyes appeared as she reached the landing. Angie scowled. "Well?" prompted her mother.

"I forgot them," she mumbled, scuffing the carpet all the way to her dresser. Her hand hovered for just a moment above the case before her fingers closed around the rainbow-embroidered Angelina. Then it was stuffed unceremoniously into her backpack.



Joyce Chen, 13  
Missouri City, Texas



Lydia Giangregorio, 12  
Gloucester, Massachusetts

By the time Angie reached Mrs. Fox's fourth-grade classroom, she had finished vowing to keep the glasses in her backpack until she could find another excuse to not wear them. But fate prompted her to break the solemn promise as the zipper was undone and the case fell out along with her homework.

Gregor stooped down to pick it up.

"I didn't know you wore these, Angie," he said, handing it back to her.

Angie, chatting animatedly with a friend, suddenly flushed scarlet as she caught sight of the case.

"I don't," she snapped, snatching them from Gregor. "No one in our class does."

"But it has... Angelina on it," the boy protested. She flushed even deeper and stuttered a little.

"Ooh, they're yours?" asked Nancy. "Try them on! I wanna see!"

"I... I..." she stammered with the case half in her backpack already. But already a few others of her classmates had started watching interestedly. Slowly, the hand withdrew with the colorful case in it, and the same hand pulled the case apart. A pair of purple glasses fell out, their clear

lenses sparkling in the light.

Her classmates waited, still watching.

Angie pulled them on delicately, her eyes closed, like they might explode any second. I don't need these, she thought. I don't need these. Then she opened her eyes. And blinked. And blinked.

These can't be my eyes, she thought. These... are too clear. They're too real. All of a sudden, in a dizzying rush, Angie realized, this is the real world. This is the real world! I can see again!

But there was another thing...

She turned around, facing her classmates, waiting.

All of a sudden, Nancy beamed and clapped her hands together.

"Oh, Angie! You look smart in them!" she exclaimed.

"I do?" she asked, wonderingly.

Gregor nodded his head, agreeing. "You look... nice in those."

"I do? I do!" and Angie couldn't help breathing a sigh of relief. Then she turned back again and slowly turned in a circle, drinking in all the details that had been so fuzzy before.

I can see again...



# The Chase

By Jack Mesich

Elk stands framed against the light blue sky sniffing  
the hot air for a sign of wolf.  
He smells wolf.  
But the scent is faint and there is no danger right now  
so he lowers his horned head  
and starts eating the ripe green grass at his hooves,  
not looking for a sign of predators,  
but focused on eating.

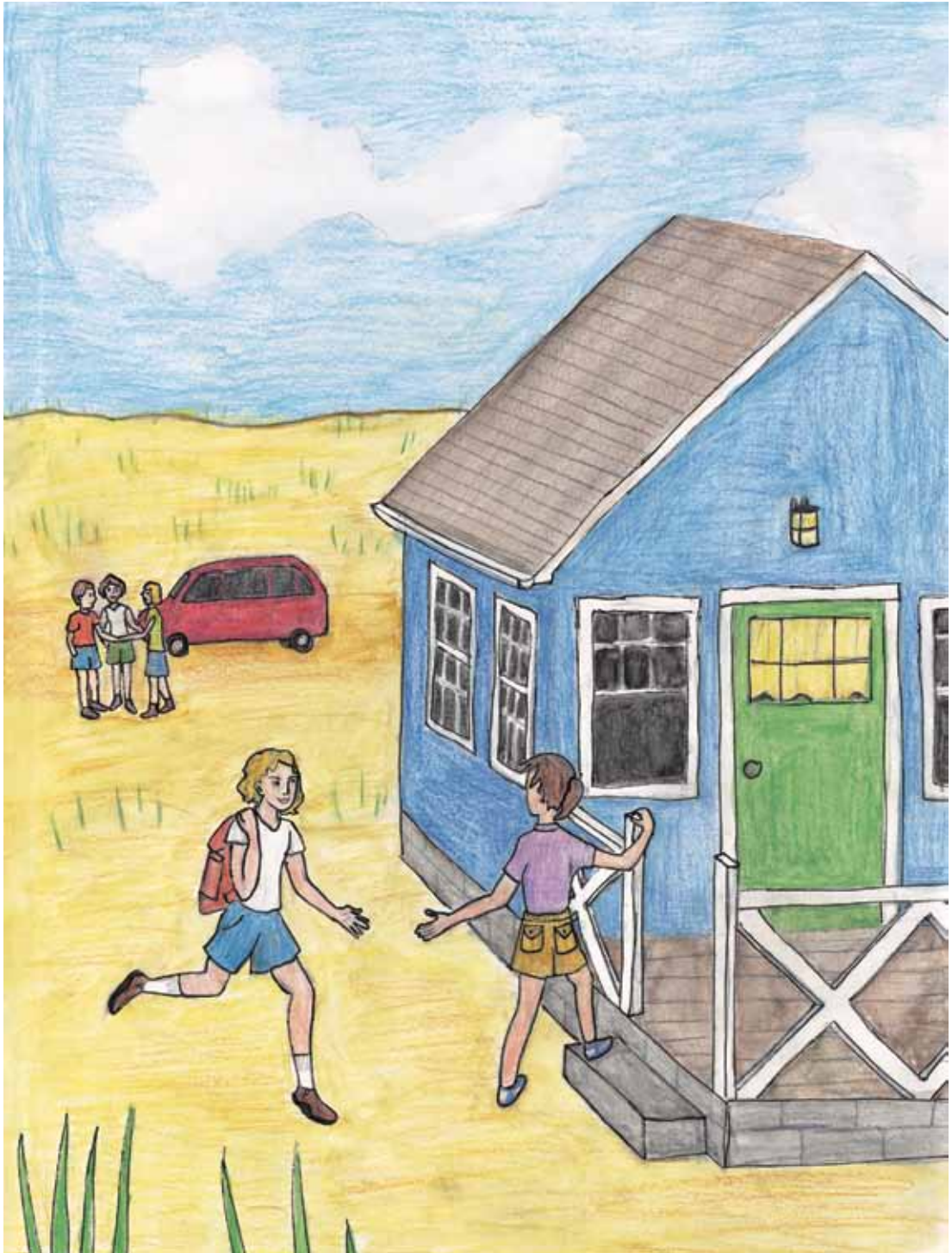
Elk lifts his head up fast.  
He smells something.  
Wolf.  
But much closer than before.

He starts running  
jumping over logs  
trying to get away.  
But the wolf is upon him.  
Elk runs as fast as he can, but not fast enough.  
The wolf leaps at his rump.  
Elk jumps aside leaving the wolf panting  
and abandoning the chase.  
Elk is too big for the wolf to tackle by himself.



Jack Mesich, 11  
Sioux Lookout, Ontario  
Canada





*We left the adults talking and took off running down the beach to the cottage*

# A Weekend with Isabella Hohenstaufen

By **Liana K. Gonsalves**

*Illustrated by* **Mimi Simon**

**I** SHADED MY EYES against the Saturday morning sun, then snuck another peek at my watch. It was already ten o'clock, and Isabella Hohenstaufen had yet to appear.

Every summer, for two weeks, my parents and I vacation at Carrie Ann Bay, where we own a beach house. This is the part of summer that is devoted to family time, when me, Mom, and Dad get to spend some quality time together. However, for one weekend, I get to invite a friend over. We stay in a congenial white cottage next door to the beach house, and for two days, we get to do whatever we want. Popcorn, movies, late nights, surfboarding, you name it. Usually, I take my best friend, Jessica, but she had moved to Kansas this spring, making it “highly impractical for her to come,” as Mom said. So this year, I invited Isabella.

See, Isabella is my pen pal. My whole seventh-grade class had been assigned to someone from another school district. Most kids had stopped after two letters, but not me and Isabella. We'd been corresponding for about a year, and even though I'd never seen her face-to-face, I could tell she was the kind of person I would want to be around. Her letters were long and detailed, but not painfully so, and her stories were always entertaining, like the time she and her younger siblings tried making their own glue and ended up pasting their fingers together. But the best part was that she answered my letters almost immediately. Her favorite food was strawberry ice cream, and she liked to read books, like me. I felt I could tell her anything, things I



Liana K. Gonsalves, 13  
Webster, New York



Mimi Simon, 13  
Richmond, Virginia

didn't even tell Jessica, because I knew Isabella wouldn't laugh, at least not to my face, and she always had a kind word. So, this summer I thought Isabella would be the perfect choice for a cottage-mate.

I squinted at the road, and my heart leaped in my chest. I saw a red minivan approaching the beach house. It stopped in the path, and a girl got out of the passenger's side. She slung a red backpack on her shoulder and started walking quickly towards me. I waved energetically at her, and she waved back, even faster. Finally, when we came to the middle of the path, I got my first good look at my pen pal. She had curly blond hair and warm hazel eyes that laughed and sparkled. She was wearing denim shorts, a white T-shirt, and a vivacious, effervescent grin. "Hi," I smiled, "I'm Crystal."

"Isabella," said Isabella shyly.

I heard the screen door bang shut, and my parents came out. "You must be Isabella!" bubbled Mom. "We've heard so much about you!"

"Isabella, welcome," said Dad, gripping my pen pal's hand in a hearty handshake. "I'm Mr. Glassman, and this is Mrs. Glassman. Now, did your mom bring you?"

"Y-yes," stammered Isabella, obviously overwhelmed by all this attention. "She's coming j-just now."

Sure enough, a woman who looked just like Isabella walked up behind her daughter. "Sorry we're so late," she said. "We got lost on the highway. The road really twists and turns, doesn't it."

"Yes, especially if you're not used to it," said Mom. "I'm Paige."

"Amy."

Dad held out his hand. "And I'm Mark." They then proceeded to talk about boring adult stuff, like where Isabella and I would be staying, when she would be picked up, etc., etc. I turned back to Isabella. "Wanna see the cottage?"

"You bet," said Isabella. "Hey, Mom, I'm going up to the cottage. See you Monday."

"OK, sweetheart," said Mrs. Hohenstaufen. "I love you. Be good, now. I don't want you getting into any mischief."

"Mom!" Isabella shot me a quick "can you believe her?" look. I shot her an "I know, my parents are the same way" look, and grinned. She grinned back. We left the adults talking and took off running down the beach to the cottage.

THE COTTAGE wasn't much by Carrie Ann Bay standards, but it was just right to me. It had two rooms, a living room and a bathroom, a small television, a microwave, a pantry, a refrigerator, a couch, and a vase of seashells. I could tell that Isabella thought it was the best thing since sliced bread. She stared at everything open-mouthed, even peeking in the bathroom three times. "So, your parents let you stay here? With a friend? For a whole weekend?"

"Yeah," I said, "it's pretty sweet."

"Sweet? It's wonderful! I don't even have my own bed. I have to share one with my sister, Casey. And she drools!"

Isabella had never told me this in her letters. “I think you’re lucky to even have siblings. It gets kind of lonely being an only child.”

Isabella shrugged. Then she grinned brightly. “So, can we go exploring? I’ve never been to Carrie Ann Bay.”

“Sure. We can go boogie-boarding. You brought your swimsuit, right?”

“Of course!” She unzipped her backpack, took out a blue one-piece, and threw her backpack near the door. It was clear that Isabella knew how to travel light, as her backpack seemed to float to the ground.

“Great! You can get changed in the bathroom, and I’ll change out here.” As Isabella shut herself in the bathroom, I found myself smiling. Her exuberance was infectious. Even though it just started, I could tell this would be a great weekend.

“SO WHAT’D YOU think of the waves? Pretty awesome, huh?” I asked as Isabella and I made our way back to the cottage. We had been in the water all day and were tired and dripping wet. We had wrapped towels around ourselves, but that didn’t stop the chilly Carrie Ann Bay winds from creeping in and making us shiver.

“Awesome doesn’t cover it!” said Isabella, laughing. “Only, I still have water in my nose from falling off so many times.”

“You did great for a first-timer. You should have seen me the first time I went boogie-boarding. I fell off so many times

the lifeguard came over and asked my parents if I had a history of collapsing.” We laughed as we entered the cottage, leaving wet, sandy footprints on the hardwood floor.

After a quick dinner of macaroni and cheese, we were just settling down to some popcorn and a movie, when my cell phone played a piano riff. Jessica’s ring! “Sorry, I have to take this,” I said to Isabella. I flipped open my phone. “Hey, Jess!”

“What’s up, Crystal?” said the voice of my best friend.

“Oh nothin’. I’m just here at the cottage.”

“Really? I wish I was out there too. It’s too bad you’re stuck there with just your parents this year.”

“Well, I’m not exactly alone.” I suddenly felt a tightening in my gut. I wasn’t sure how Jessica would take the news that I was at the cottage with someone else. On the other hand, I couldn’t just ignore Isabella’s presence, especially since she was in the room. “I’m kind of here with my pen pal, Isabella.”

“Oh?” said Jessica. I couldn’t tell if that was a good “oh” or a bad “oh.”

“Yeah. Look, Jess, I would have invited you, but since you just moved to Kansas...”

“That’s OK,” said Jessica, but her voice sounded different, almost deflated. “I’ll call you back next week, when you have more time. Have fun.” Jessica hung up. I sighed and closed my phone, wishing Jessica could be here too.





*"You never told me about her in your letters," said Isabella*

"Who was that?" asked Isabella.

"That was my best friend, Jessica."

"Oh?" said Isabella.

Again with the "oh," I thought.

"Yeah. I usually invite her to the cottage, but I couldn't this year because she moved to Kansas."

"You never told me about her in your letters," said Isabella.

Part of my brain registered that Isabella sounded kind of out of sorts, but I kept blabbing. "Yeah," I continued. "We met in kindergarten and have been best friends ever since. She owns a horse,

Scotch, and three cats. We... Isabella? Is something wrong?"

Isabella seemed to be biting her lip. She looked uneasy. "No," she said. "It's kind of late. I think I'm going to bed."

"Don't you wanna watch the movie?"

Isabella shook her head. "No, that's OK." With that, she got out her sleeping bag, curled up, and fell asleep. I sat on the couch, confused by her behavior. I looked at the cell phone I was still clutching in my hand. Then it hit me. The call! Jessica! I suddenly felt like such an idiot for bragging about Jessica. Listlessly, I got out



a sleeping bag, turned off the light, and lay down, feeling as if someone had just punched me in the stomach.

WE HAD BEEN sleeping for about an hour when a loud crash woke me up. I sat bolt upright in my sleeping bag and looked around. Everything looked in order. I lay back down and was about to drop off to sleep again when I heard another crash. I opened my eyes just in time to see the cottage door blow open and slam shut. Isabella woke up too. "What's happening?" she asked, sounding worried.

"A storm, I think." I peered out the window to see a crack of lightning illuminate the sky. Rain fell down like miniature missiles. "Yeah. The storms here can be pretty bad. The wind must have blown the door open." I moved to lock the door when another gust whipped through the cottage, this time taking Isabella's backpack that had settled by the door earlier.

"No!" Isabella cried. She raced out the door without bothering to put on shoes.

"Isabella!" I screamed. She either didn't hear me or was ignoring me. I followed after her, running for all I was worth.

I chased her all the way down to the beach, to the edge of the sea. What had once been gentle, playful ripples were now big, choppy black waves. "We've got to go after my backpack!" Isabella yelled over the thunder. She pointed. I followed her finger, and sure enough, the red backpack was being tossed around haphazardly in the merciless waves.

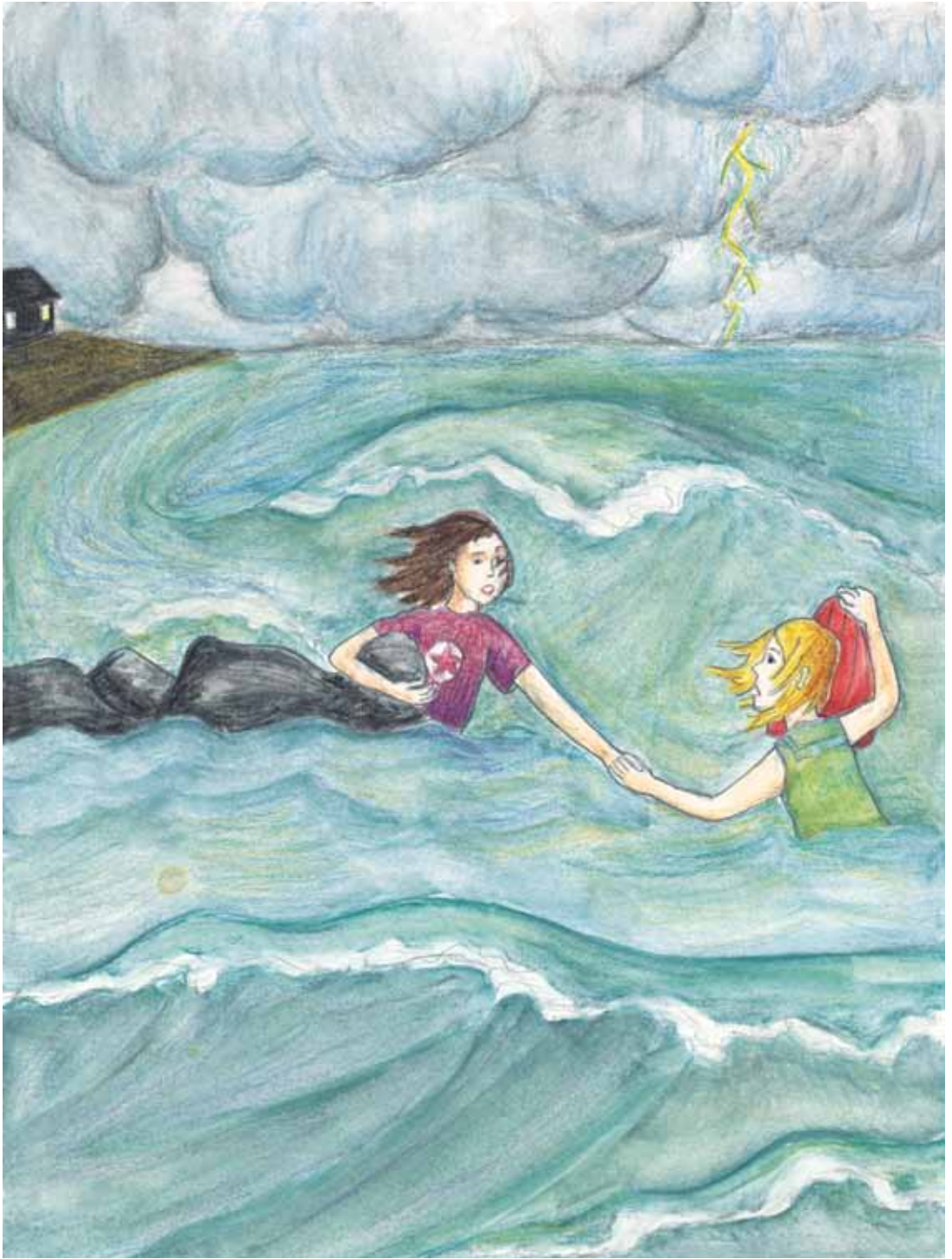
Isabella started out after the backpack,

but I grabbed her arm. "Listen," I said. "You know what they say about swimming in a thunderstorm. You could get electrocuted! You can always get another backpack!"

"It's not just that," said Isabella. It was on the tip of my tongue to ask what she meant when, out of the corner of my eye, I saw the beach house light flick on and the silhouette of my dad peek out of the window. He must've heard the commotion. Isabella, taking advantage of my distraction, broke from my grasp and, before I could stop her, waded in, first to her ankles, then her knees, then her thighs. Then she cried out and fell headlong into the water.

Time seemed to stand still as I made up my mind. On the one hand, I could get hurt if I went in the water. On the other, Isabella was already in the water, and she was in trouble. I had to go after her.

The water was frigid cold. I tried to ignore it as I swam clumsily but quickly after Isabella. I called her name, but every time I opened my mouth a rush of salt-water poured in. The waves pushed me back, but I fought, the only thought in my head was to get to Isabella before she was gone, forever. Finally, after a brutal struggle, I spotted her. She was up to her neck in water. With one arm, she hugged a large rock. With the other, she clutched her backpack, as closely as she held the rock. Lightning cracked the sky. Thunder boomed, as I swam over to her and put one arm around her shoulder. She whimpered appreciatively. We were exhaust-



*We were exhausted and had no idea how we'd get back to shore*

ed and had no idea how we'd get back to shore. Just when I thought we were doomed, I heard my dad yell, and a life preserver landed next to us with a splash. We grabbed it, giving us just enough hope to struggle towards the shore. The sea was like a hand that kept trying to grab us and hold us back. The waves loomed up and enveloped us in water, and we would come up, coughing, only to be caught again in the same vicious cycle. When I didn't think that I would be able to hold on anymore, my feet brushed the sandy bottom. We had made it!

My dad ran toward us. "Girls! What were you doing out there? You know not to go swimming in a storm!"

I started to speak, but Isabella cut me off. "It's my fault, Mr. Glassman. My backpack blew into the water, and Crystal was just trying to help me. I'm sorry."

"Well," said my dad hesitantly. "If you're OK..."

"Dad," I interrupted, "we're fine."

"Are you sure? I could get you some hot chocolate..."

"Dad."

"Or some pillows..."

"Dad."

"At least let me get you some towels..."

"Dad, we're OK."

Dad shrugged. "If you say so. Just come up when you're ready. I'll start the hot chocolate." He turned and walked away.

Isabella and I stood awkwardly. I felt

like I had when we had just met, shy and uncomfortable. "I'm sorry," Isabella said, breaking the silence, "for everything. For chasing the backpack, and how I acted. It's just, I thought I was your best friend. But it wasn't right for me to get all jealous and close you out."

"Don't sweat it," I said, not wanting to sound mushy. Then I added, "Isabella?"

"Hmm?"

"What's so special about the backpack? You went after it like it was your prized possession."

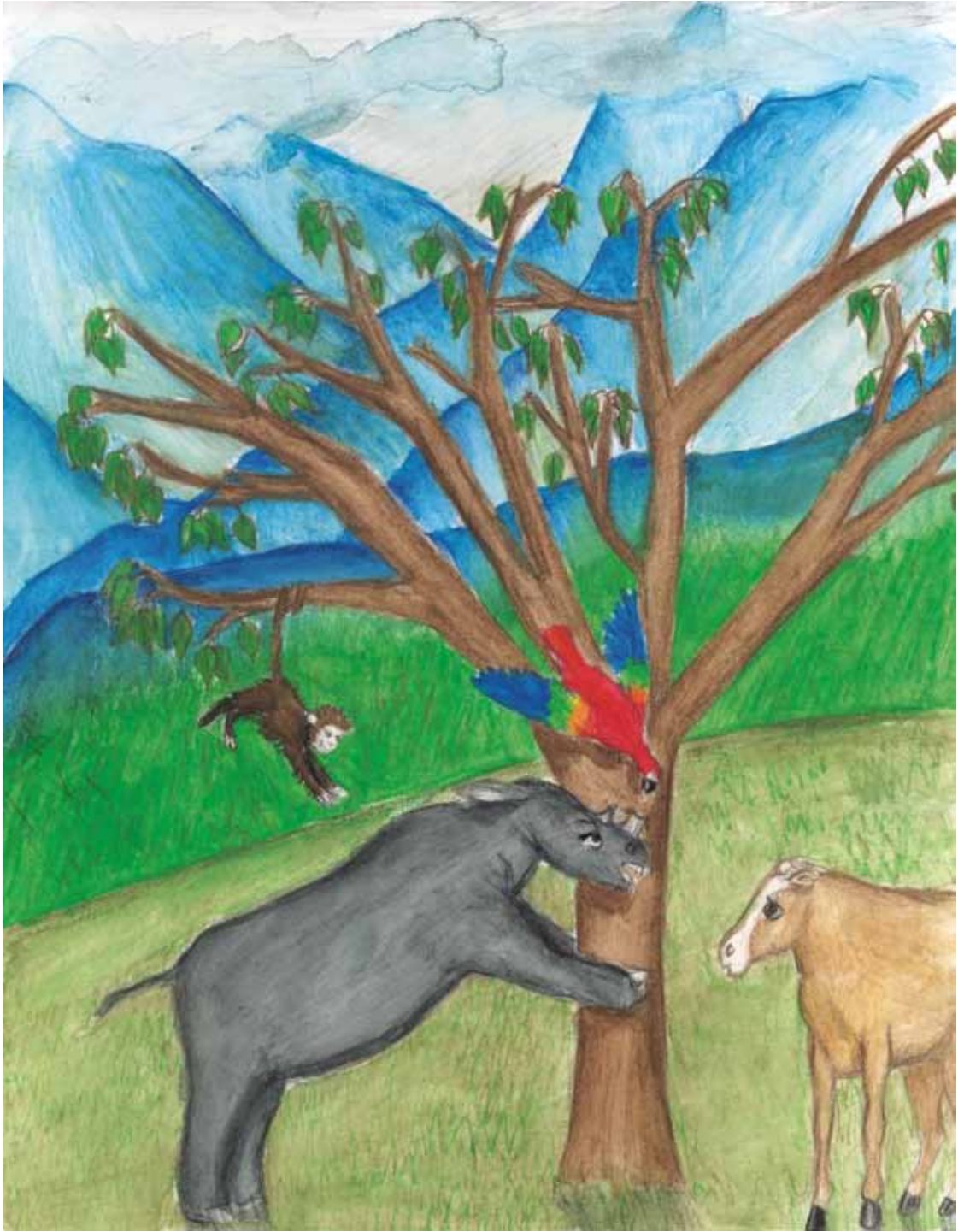
Isabella looked at me. "It's not the backpack, it's what's in it. I happen to carry all your letters in there. I don't know what came over me, but when I saw the backpack in the water, I just had to get it. I couldn't bear to lose your letters. But they're all destroyed, anyway. Look." She pulled out a fistful of soggy paper.

"That's OK. I'll write more. Come on, let's go back up to the cottage. Want some hot chocolate?"

"Are you kidding? Of course!" said Isabella, smiling that bright grin again. We took off running up the rocky path, both smiling. I didn't know why Isabella was smiling, but I was smiling because we had not only salvaged a backpack, we had also rescued a friendship.

As we made our way to the hot chocolate, I started planning next year's weekend at the cottage. Next year, hopefully, we'd have three sleeping bags to unroll. ❁





*What a lot of disturbance and noise he was making*

# The Kind Cow and the Tiger King of the Forest

By Arjun Pillai Hausner

*Illustrated by* Libby Marrs

THERE IS A SPECIAL PLACE in the old Kingdom of Nepal where the plains meet forests that goes on up to the Himalayan Mountains until the tree line stops and it is very cold, where the daphne bird, the rhino, and the tiger are close to grazing cows.

Gopa was a beautiful cow with kind bright eyes who lived in this amazing place. She spent her time grazing in the grass and occasionally wandering into the forest to explore new types of grass to eat or new views of the forest to gaze at. Gopa loved spending time wandering through the forest, gazing up at the trees and searching for new flavors to nibble on. Sometimes Gopa would just stare out into the distance at the peaks of the Himalayas, just admiring their height.

One day Gopa was wandering around in the forest when she heard the sound of stamping feet. To see where the sound was coming from, Gopa went out to look. Quickly, she walked into a clearing and saw a rhino with its horn stuck in a tree, stamping his legs behind him, trying to free himself. What a lot of disturbance and noise he was making. Nearby birds screeched and monkeys made howling noises, making fun of him. The rhino yanked and pulled in a great panic as hard as he could, trying to get his horn out of the trunk of the big tree.

“Dear Rhino, please calm down,” Gopa said. “If we both pull at the same time the horn will come out.” The rhino thought it was worth a try so Gopa and Rhino both pulled as hard as they could. Gopa pulled Rhino by his tail in her mouth as hard as she



Arjun Pillai Hausner, 12  
New Delhi, India



Libby Marrs, 12  
Albuquerque, New Mexico



could. With little effort the horn slipped out of the tree trunk.

*"Dhanyavad,"* said the relieved rhino. "Without you I would be stuck there all day, and would feel hungry too."

"You're welcome," Gopa replied. "I was happy to help."

Exhausted, Gopa returned home to her barn. Feeling good that she helped the rhino, she fell quickly to sleep.

The next day Gopa went out and grazed in the field. When she was full she wandered into the forest. After a while of just walking around she heard a daphne cry. Gopa went and looked and saw a daphne on the ground with a branch on top of his wing. The daphne told Gopa that he was looking for food when the big branch fell from a tree and landed on his wing, pinning him to the ground. Gopa comforted and assured the daphne that he could roll the branch off and the daphne's beautiful wings would be fine. But he was still worried. Gopa was determined to help Daphne. Gently, Gopa nudged the branch off of the daphne's wing.

*"Dhanyavad,"* Daphne cried, while thinking to himself that Gopa is not bad for a cow. "Thank you again," he said as he tried to spread his wings to fly home.

But when the daphne tried to get up and fly he got into the air and then spiraled back down like an airplane with a broken engine. He was caught by Gopa.

"Gopa," Daphne chirped, "what will I do? I need to rest before I can fly. Would you please take me to my nest?"

"OK," replied Gopa.

So Gopa walked till they found the nest of the daphne, where she gently placed him back into his home.

"Gopa, would you kindly wait nearby for a little bit?" chirped Daphne.

Gopa waited near the nest as Daphne asked. Daphne went inside and when he came out, he had a leaf wrapped around his wing like a bandage. Daphne flew around to show off his new wing.

After that, Gopa went home to the barn and went to sleep. That night Gopa dreamed a very strange dream.

She dreamed that an invisible force with a tiger's tail was pulling her out of her barn into the forest clearing. Then the Holy Cow came into the clearing and said that Gopa was going to be eaten. Gopa woke up with a stir and then the dream went blank.

When Gopa woke again it was early morning and she was being dragged into the forest.

"Ahhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!!" Gopa screamed. "Who are you and how did I get here?"

"I am the Tiger King of the Forest," roared the tiger. "While you were asleep I dragged you out of your barn and into the forest. Now I will eat you!!!!!!!"

"Help!!!!!" Gopa screamed.

Just then, Rhino happened to walk by and heard Gopa scream. He remembered how Gopa had saved him. He was determined to help Gopa in return, even though he was very scared of the tiger. Just at that moment Daphne was passing overhead and saw what was happening to Gopa. He remembered how Gopa had saved him. He thought to himself,



*“Gopa, would you kindly wait nearby for a little bit?” chirped Daphne*

What can I do to help Gopa? I am just a bird! He was also afraid of the tiger. But he joined the rhino. Together they were determined to help Gopa.

Rhino charged at the tiger while Daphne swooped around and pecked at the tiger. Tiger dodged Rhino’s horn and swatted Daphne. Rhino skidded to a stop, turned around, and charged again, grazing the tiger’s shoulder and creating a cut. At

the sight of his own blood, Tiger darted away into the depths of the forest, followed by his long tail.

Rhino and Daphne led Gopa out of the forest and back to her barn.

“*Dhanyavad*,” Gopa said, “for saving me from the Tiger King.”

“No problem,” Daphne and Rhino replied. “You helped us, and we helped you.”



# Mixed Bag

*By* **Genna Carroll**



Genna Carroll, 13  
San Jose, California

I sigh  
As the warm water pours down my back  
Washing off the dust and dirt  
Of the last week  
It's been so long since I showered.

A movie  
Playing on television  
Surrounding me with its music and images  
It's nice to be part of society again.

Pillows  
Soft and fluffy  
Two of them on my bed  
I'd forgotten what they felt like.

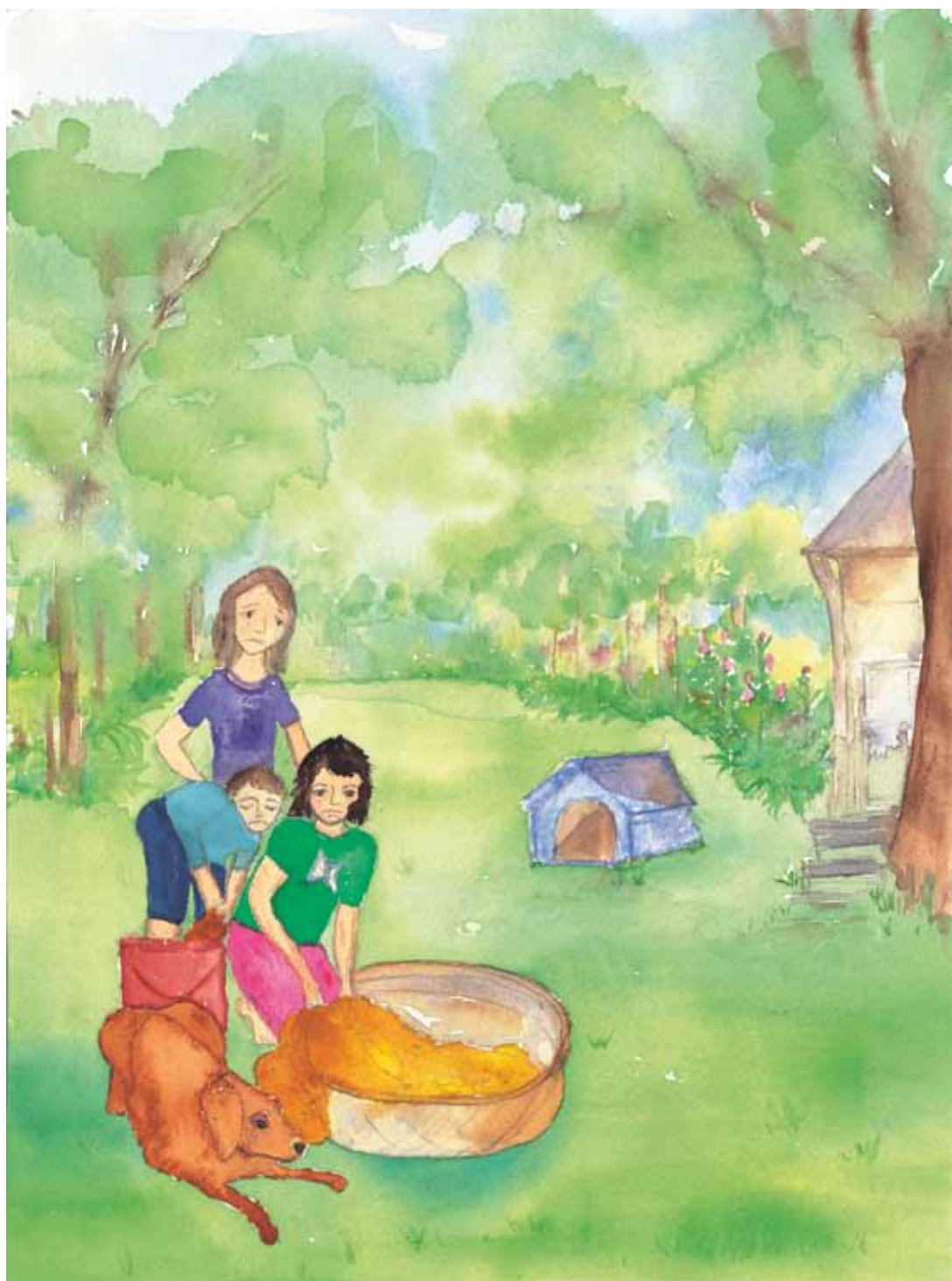
A warm quilt  
Pulled over me  
What a nice warm place to sleep.

A radiator  
Blowing warmth into the room  
It's nice to be away from the drafts of the tent.

Showers, television,  
Pillows, mattresses,  
Quilts, radiators  
Sleeping will be easy here.

Before I drift off  
Into the welcoming world of sleep  
I look up.

I see only the white paint  
Of the ceiling above me,  
Separating me from the stars  
High up in the heavens  
Pinpricks of light slowly rotating  
Which were my companions for the last week.



*She put the blanket into the basket and set them next to Fern*



# Fern, the Queen of All Hunting Dogs

By **Shyla DeLand**

*Illustrated by* **Jo DeWaal**

**M**OM GENTLY SHOOK ME. “Honey, your father is home.”

“What? Oh! Yay!” I cried, already out of bed. “Dad, how did your hunting trip go? Was Fern good?”

“Fabulous!” my tall father said. “She treed this one!” He held up a large silver coon. “You trained her well.”

“Thanks, Dad.” I looked up at him. “But where is Fern now?”

“She ran off. Probably chasing after a deer. You know that nose of hers. She’ll come back, she always does,” Mom said, laying a cool hand on my shoulder.

“Are you sure?” I asked her.

“Ninety-nine-point-nine,” Mom said. “Now go back to bed. It’s six o’clock in the morning.”

“Aw, Mom.” I hurried away. “Wake me up if she comes back.”

I woke up at eight and clattered downstairs. In the living room, Mom and Dad were already sipping coffee. I glanced at their quiet faces.

“Mom?” I asked. “Dad? Did Fern come back yet?” Dad nodded. “Well, is she OK?”

“Shyla, Fern was attacked by something, we don’t know what,” Mom said softly.

“Well, is she going to be all right? When did she come home? Why didn’t you wake me up?” I didn’t know what to think.

“She came home about an hour ago. We didn’t think we should wake you.”

I noticed they didn’t answer my first question. “Well, is she...”



Shyla DeLand, 10  
Remsen, New York



Jo DeWaal, 12  
Greenwich, Connecticut

"She's alive, but, well, it could go either way," Mom said. I looked at her, horrified. My dear sweet Fern, named after the girl in *Charlotte's Web*, just two years old. She couldn't die. I wouldn't let her.

Slowly, as if I were dreaming, I walked outdoors and over to Fern's doghouse. Sure enough, a small figure lay prostrate on the floor of her tiny house.

"Hey Ferny, girl," I said. My little red-bone's tail thumped so softly I could hardly hear it. I kept my voice as calm as I could. "You're going to get better, you hear? You're a tough li'l girl and, if I know you, you'll pull through. Get some rest now, OK?" Feeling better, I walked away.

Inside, I poured myself a bowl of cereal and sat down at our homemade table to eat it.

"Shyla," came a sleepy voice from behind me. My brother, Michael, was awake.

"Yeah," I muttered.

"I heard you guys talking," Michael said sheepishly.

"Then you're a nasty little snoop," I said. I felt bad about Fern and didn't want to talk to a barely seven-year-old about it. "I'm not kidding. You weren't supposed to listen."

"That's too bad," Michael said stubbornly. "How's Ferny?"

"Better than ever." I dumped my bowl in the sink.

"That's not true. You know that's not true." Michael stood sleepy-eyed in the middle of the room, but I wasn't about to fight with him.

"Goodbye, Michael." I walked away.

Mom was fixing a bowl of venison that we had canned last winter. She handed it to me with a spoon. "Feed this to Fern."

"Will this make her better?" I asked doubtfully, stirring the tender chunks of meat.

"Hopefully, yes," Mom said. She ladled some warm broth over the meat.

"She needs the energy, and the protein."

"OK," I said, almost smiling. "Are we going to take her to the vet?"

"No, honey, vets cost too much. Your dad's been out of work, there's no extra."

"I'd pay," I whined as I walked away, knowing full well I didn't have enough. Outside, I walked to Fern's house and knelt beside her. Thump-thump. A knot rose in my throat. I swallowed and gently fed the warm meat to Ferny.

"See, little girl, that's not so bad. Looks so good I could eat it myself." I stroked her head. After two spoonfuls, Fern refused to eat. I ran back to the house.

"Mom, she ate a couple of spoonfuls. Is that good?"

"Well, I'd have liked her to eat a little more," Mom sighed, "but I suppose whatever she eats is good."

"Well, I think she'll get better." I crossed my arms stubbornly.

"I certainly hope so." Mom smiled affectionately at me.

Looking down, I realized I was still wearing my pajamas. I ran to my room and changed into a green T-shirt with a white butterfly on it, and a pink skort. Then I ran outside barefooted. Fern hadn't moved an inch and, except for her

thumping tail, she looked dead.

Suddenly, tears filled my eyes. This was too hard. I loved her so much and she was dying and I couldn't do anything! I ran away into the woods. I could hear the thumping of her tail as I ran off.

"Sssshhhhyyyllllaaaaa!" Michael called. "Hhhellppp! Commme quicckk."

Fearing the worst, I ran back to Fern's house again. There I found my sweet dog collapsed on the grass with Michael standing helpless beside her. "Sh-sh-sh-shyla," he sobbed. "She got up, and she's bleeding everywhere."

"Calm, Michael." Mom appeared next to us. "Shyla, honey, go get my laundry basket and that old yellow baby blanket of yours."

I ran back to the house and grabbed the materials. I handed them to Mom and she put the blanket into the basket and set them next to Fern. "We probably shouldn't lift her. I think she'll get in it." Mom laid a hand on Michael and my shoulders.

And she did. Dad came over and carried her into the house as gently as he could and then he set her down in my room and left. I read *Charlotte's Web* to her and she looked up every time I said Fern. And I sang to her, songs that had words that weren't words, tunes that weren't tunes that rose and fell but stayed soft. Then I lay down on my bed and closed my eyes and fell into a dark world where no light or dreams ever enter.

When I woke up, Fern had peed on my floor. I cleaned it up silently and coaxed her outside. "'s OK," I told her.

Back in my room, I tried to write in my diary but my mind was numb.

When I went to let Fern back in, she was gone. I felt so helpless that I burst into tears.

"Shyla, it's only natural for an animal to want to be alone when it dies." My mother had tear streaks on her face.


"I know, but I'll look anyway." I ran off. "Fern!" I called. "Fer-" my voice cracked "-ny!"

That night Lily, my best friend, called. I told her everything. When I finished, there was silence at the other end of the phone. Finally, I heard a sob.

"She was sssooo yyyooooounnnnggg," Lily bawled.

"I knooww," I managed to say. We cried into the phone for five more minutes and then hung up. I felt better and went to bed.

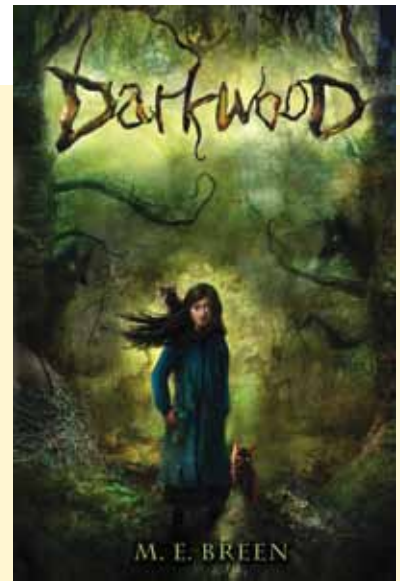
We found her two days later. She was lying among the sweet ferns, under a little tree. Her tiny body was covered in maggots. My father cried when he told me, "The last thing she heard was you calling 'Ferny.'"

A few weeks later, a tall pink flower that we had never seen before sprouted up right where Fern had died. It was oddly beautiful, making the little hollow a perfect resting place for the queen of all hunting dogs. 

# Book Review

By Caroline D. Lu

*Darkwood*, by M.E. Breen; Bloomsbury Children's Books; New York, 2009; \$16.99



Caroline D. Lu, 13  
Andover, Massachusetts

“**W**HAT HAPPENED NEXT was so strange that Annie could not be sure afterward what was real and what she had imagined.”

This line, from M. E. Breen’s *Darkwood*, is an accurate summary of Breen’s first novel. The story is a wonderful sort of strange, and captivates the mind like any work of a master fantasy writer.

Annie Trewitt’s story begins in Howland, a dark little town in the depths of Dour County where “kinderstalk” prowl the nighttime woods searching for humans and animals to prey on. Annie lives with her prim aunt and odious, ill-tempered uncle. Her parents and sister have been “killed,” or so it seems. The beginning of the story has a bleak and mysterious tone to it. The plot initially is a bit confusing but quickly unwinds itself to a comprehensible state. Throughout the first few chapters, the mood increasingly chills as Annie’s adventure takes her to the dreaded woods—at night.

Some of the feelings that Annie experiences in the beginning are loneliness and desperation. Her only true companions at the start are her wise and unfailingly loyal cats, Isadore and Prudence, whose characters are portrayed so well that the reader forgets, at times, that they are not human.


I found this bleak loneliness at the start of the story to be overwhelming, but as the story progresses, Annie's character grows easier to identify with. Breen captures the experiences of a young girl who is almost completely alone in a frightening world, but who somehow manages to function instinctively, and to be passionate and admirably brave.

A great snapshot is the line "But now—now she could hardly bear ever having resented Page for anything." Annie lost her beloved sister, Page, years before the story takes place, but still constantly aches for her. I knew exactly how Annie felt: she could not even consider resenting her sister because of anything, now that she had lost her.

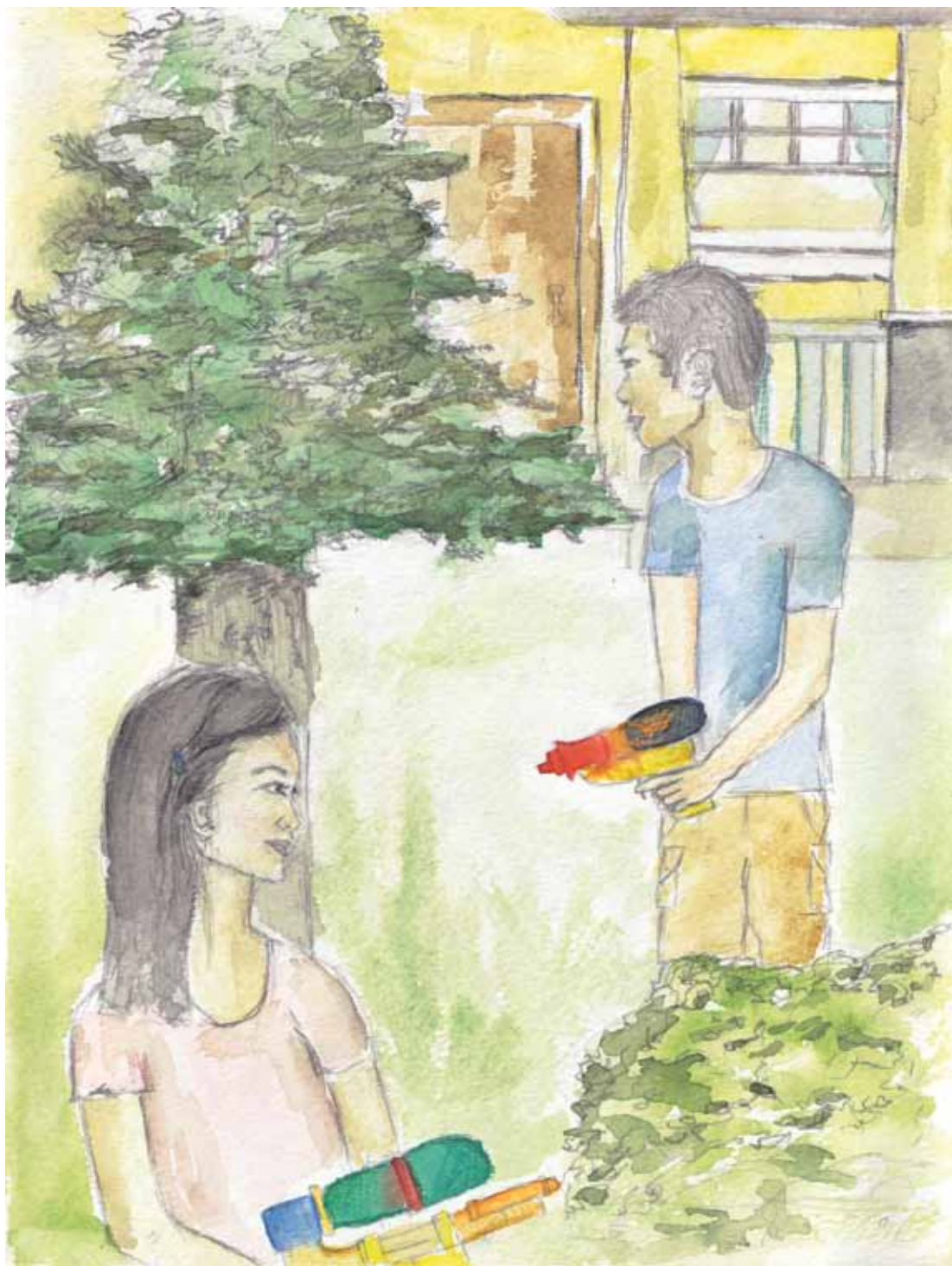
My favorite part of the story was how Annie's family was slowly pieced back together, and her fascinating relationship with the "kinderstalk," which reworked the typical animal-human relationships found in today's youth fiction.

However, a major theme in this novel is also corruption and evil. Most of the adults in the story are strong antagonists. The lack of positive adult characters adds to the chill of the plot. Annie almost always found a way to fight back against these seemingly stronger villains and eventually triumph.

I can relate to Annie's audacity and rebelliousness. Often in school I am the one to speak up when an assignment is unclear or unfair to my classmates and me. Audacity and courage are always involved. At one point, Annie goes to work at the Drop, the mine where children are forced to mine ringstone (a valuable stone) alongside adults. However, Annie does not cower in fear when ruthless adults yell at her. She realizes that something very wrong is going on at the mine, and she eventually makes her escape.

I was impressed with *Darkwood*. The plot is entertainingly complex yet comprehensible, and features the perfect mix of chill, suspense, and triumph. My only complaint about *Darkwood* is that it will leave you begging for a sequel. 





*There he was, looking the other way!*

# The Water Gun Fight

By Isabel Won

Illustrated by Katherine Wang

“**S**PLAT!” A BLAST of cold water slapped my bare arm. Gasping, I quickly whirled around to catch the source of the attack. I faced a familiar face with dark brown eyes, dark uncombed hair that stuck out in every direction, and a big, playful smile. It couldn’t be anyone but my older brother, Paul. “Fight, or prepare to die!” he yelled, trying to make his voice sound raspy and evil. I giggled at the fake pirate voice he made, knowing that this threat was coming all along. The clues were simple, it was a hot, humid day and my brother and I were very bored. It was too hot to be outside, too hot to be inside, too hot to be anywhere. Our parents had gone to attend a school PTA meeting and had left me in the supervision of my older brother. Was this a good decision? I wasn’t so sure.

“Hmm,” I said, deciding which risk I should take, “dying” or fighting. “Fight!” I decided, grinning.

“Good choice,” my brother said in the raspy pirate voice. He threw me a water gun filled with water. “I’ll stay in the back and you go to the front,” he declared. I nodded and ran as fast as I could to the front of the house. “Ready?” I heard my brother call.

“Yeah!” I answered. The fight began!

After a few seconds of waiting behind a tall pine tree, I crept up to the side of the house, my water gun up, ready to fire. Cautiously, I took a quick glance of the front of the house, searching for my brother. There he was, looking the other way! A perfect chance, I thought to myself. I silently tiptoed towards



Isabel Won, 11  
Belle Mead, New Jersey



Katherine Wang, 13  
Tampa, Florida

my brother to get a more accurate shot and then started spurting water at his back. He yelled in shock and, as quick as lightning, he spun around like a top and then started pumping water at me like a maniac. There was water everywhere!

Then, I was out of water. "Hey! Wait!" I yelled, trying to avoid water gushing into my mouth. My brother stopped. He was grinning so wide that all I could see was a row of big, white teeth, like a shark that's just about to eat you whole. His eyes glittered with delight like stars in the night sky. His wet, dark brown hair was plastered down to his head, which made it look like he had a hat on. "I'm out of water!" I exclaimed.

"So am I," my brother replied.

We walked towards the water hose to refill our guns. That was when I realized I was drenched from head to toe. Although it was a bright sunny day, I was freezing. My wet clothes were stuck to my skin, making me even colder. As my brother refilled his gun, he asked in a concerned tone, "Are you cold? Do you

want to go in now?"

"Well, it is kind of cold..." I started.

Suddenly, he stopped the hose and poured all the water out of the gun. "Let's go in, your lips are turning blue."

"What?" I exclaimed. "What about our game?" I couldn't help but sound disappointed. My brother pulled me into the house. He got a big, fuzzy blanket and threw it over me. It draped over my face. "Hey!" I yelled playfully, pulling the blanket back over my head.

"Whoops," he said in a funny clown voice. He got out one of my mom's finest cups and a tea bag. He filled the cup with hot water and dropped the tea bag in the cup. He said, "Care for some biscuits and truffles?"

I giggled and was about to answer when I heard a rattle of keys and the click of the key turning in the keyhole. The door opened and in came our parents.

"Hi Paul, hi Isabel," my mom said. Then she asked, "Why are you all wet?"

My brother and I shared a quick glance. "No reason," we said at the same time. 🌿



# Through a Champion's Eyes

By **Mary Jessica Woods**

*Illustrated by the author*

**T**HE CROWDS ROAR for me as I step on the track. I listen, and I arch my neck and dance as my groom leads me down the stretch. Mike, my jockey, sits still on my back and listens too. But I know he is excited. I can tell by the way he grips the reins, clutching them firm. I prance a little more to assure him of my confidence.

Now my groom unsnaps the lead rope, and Mike stands in the saddle and lets me break into a canter. We are approaching the starting stalls, and other horses and riders canter past us. Some are nervous and skittish, so that an assistant must lope out on his own mount and steady them by the bridle. I continue my canter down the track. I know what is expected of me.

We jog past the starting gate. Mike lets me go a little more before turning me around. We slow to a walk. An assistant trots up beside us, and he leans over and takes hold of my bridle. Again I stretch my legs and dance. Slowly, all the racers turn and are ponied up to the stalls. We have the number four post position. The assistant lets go, and Mike steers me towards my stall. A starting handler takes my reins and leads me in. The gates are closed behind me. I feel Mike's hands leave the reins for a moment as he reaches up to pull his goggles over his eyes. Then they are back again with a ready hold.

I flick my ears down the row at the sound of more gates being closed, one by one. Nearly all are in position now. Jockeys shift, horses stamp. I relax and feel Mike let out a breath as well. We know what to do.



Mary Jessica Woods, 13  
Frankfort, Illinois





*Mike keeps me steady, but I can sense his tingling excitement*

Everyone is still now. The air is electric. Even the crowd feels it, and a shout surges from them...

*Riiiiiiing!*

The gates slam open, and for a few moments I see the track, clear and unoccupied before me. Then horses begin to crowd forward and bunch at the rail. Mike

eases me to the back, some lengths behind the pack. I prick my ears and settle into that long, slow gallop I know so well.

“...Zenyatta’s *dead* last, Zenyatta’s dead last early...” The voice of the announcer fades in for a moment, but then it is lost again in the thunder of hooves. Mike crouches in the stirrups, his hands, legs,



and whip motionless. I keep a steady stride, watching the rumps of the horses ahead rise and fall, rise and fall.

A little farther on, I feel the bit moving in my mouth and Mike's hands rubbing against my neck. It is my signal. I extend my stride. We sweep by the first horse with no trouble and settle in second-to-last. Mike keeps me steady, but I can sense his tingling excitement.

**T**HE PACK AHEAD begins its sweep around the first turn. I follow unhurriedly. We come out of the turn easily and I continue to breeze. I watch the jostling of the horses ahead and I am glad we are in the back, where I can concentrate and prepare for my real run at the end.

We are closer to the pack now, only a length or two behind the racer in front of us. The second and final turn is approaching. Still I wait for the signal.

We swoop around the turn. Now it is a straightaway for the wire. The drone of the announcer becomes momentarily audible.

"...if she can win this, she'll be a super-horse..."

Mike gives me my cue a second time. I glance at the outside of the pack, for that is where I usually go, but this time Mike steers me towards the inside rail. The horses are breaking, and there is a hole there wide enough for me to slip through. I take it. Now I am in the middle of the pack, and I can feel Mike glancing around for another opening. There! Something is opening up on the outside. I prick my ears

up and head for it. A horse rushes into our way, and we have to go around. But now the track is free and clear before us. Mike urges me with his hands and his whip. I fly over the ground. My strides lengthen and push me forward with ever-increasing speed. We are gaining... gaining... gaining... The crowd screams, but the voice of the astounded announcer sails above it all.

*"This — is — un — be — lieve — a — ble!*  
*ZENYATTA!"*

We flash under the wire, half a length in front.

Mike punches the air with his fist in victory. The feeling is surging through him, and it makes me want to gallop further, but he eases back on the reins. I slow, even though I love the soaring sensation of running. The race is over. And when a rider lopes over to lead us to the winner's circle, Mike takes off his helmet and lifts his eyes to heaven, thanking God for once again giving us wings.

**O**N NOVEMBER 7, 2009, the Breeder's Cup Classic was run at Santa Anita Park, California. The winner was the first female horse to ever capture that race—a five-year-old mare named Zenyatta. She was undefeated. In 2010 she went on to win five more races, all piloted by jockey Mike Smith. She retired in November of 2010 with a total of twenty starts and nineteen wins. Later, she also won 2010 Horse of the Year. Though her brilliant career is over, she will remain in our hearts for many, many years to come.

Long live the Queen.



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