

Stone Soup

the magazine by young writers and artists



"Greece and the Sea," by Marianna Katsoulidi, age 12, Greece

THE MONTANA SUMMER

Secrets unfold as Bryan spends the summer with his grandparents

REAL FAMILY

A young girl, raised by lions in Africa, finally meets her "real" parents

Also: Illustrations by Alicia Betancourt and Martin Taylor

Gabby chooses between biology and ballet

A review of a book about César Chavez

JULY/AUGUST 2002

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Volume 30, Number 6
July/August 2002

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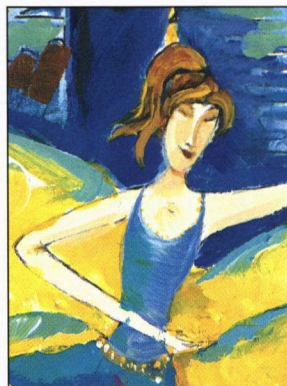
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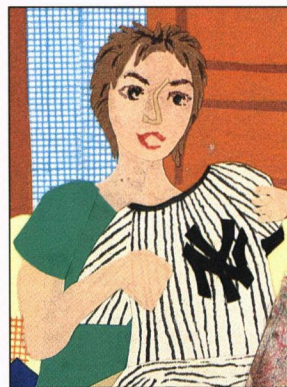
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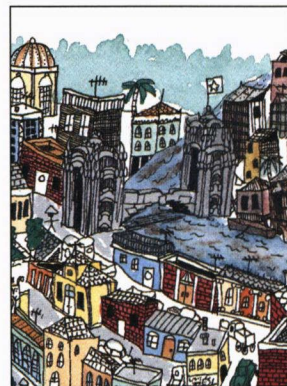
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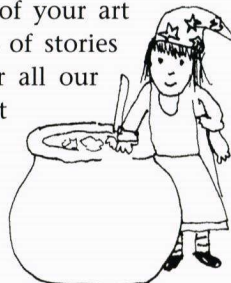
Welcome to all our readers, old and new! We've had the pleasure of publishing *Stone Soup* for over 29 years. It is our belief that, by presenting rich, heartfelt work by young people the world over, we can stir the imaginations of our readers and inspire young writers and artists to create.



Contributors' Guidelines



Stone Soup welcomes submissions from young people through age 13. If you want us to respond to your submission, you must enclose a business-size self-addressed stamped envelope. If you want your work returned, your envelope must be large enough and have sufficient postage for the return of your work. (Foreign contributors need not include return postage.) Contributors whose work is accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope will hear from us within four weeks. Mail your submission to *Stone Soup*, P.O. Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063. Include your name, age, home address, and phone number. If you are interested in reviewing books for *Stone Soup*, write Gerry Mandel for more information. Tell her a little about yourself and the kinds of books you like to read. If you would like to illustrate for *Stone Soup*, send Ms. Mandel some samples of your art work, along with a letter saying what kinds of stories you would like to illustrate. Here's a tip for all our contributors: send us writing and art about the things you feel most strongly about! Whether your work is about imaginary situations or real ones, use your own experiences and observations to give your work depth and a sense of reality.



Jessie Moore, 12

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

Gerry Mandel
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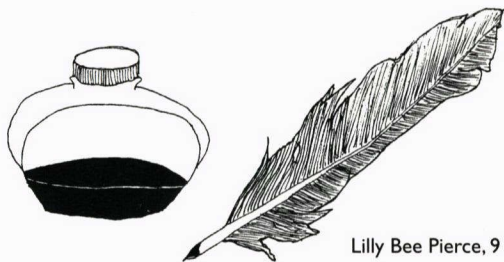


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Lilly Bee Pierce, 9

The Mailbox

I've heard about your Mailbox and ever since I've been getting *Stone Soup* I've been reading them eagerly. I like to see which stories people say are great and then read them over at your Web site. I'd like to compliment Neva Pederson on her excellent story "That Small Whisper" in the September/October 2001 issue. I love it because this situation happens so many times in hundreds of people's lives every day. I'd also like to congratulate Stephanie Gomori on her story, "The Magical Smile," in the same issue. It took me away; I felt as if Amy's guilt and Edna Berg's pain were actually real. It had a touching ending and I loved it.

Karina Palmitesta, 11
Mississauga, Ontario, Canada

I was very impressed with the story "Rescue" by Miranda Neubauer [March/April 2002]. Both the writing and the illustrations were wonderful to read and look at. It is so awesome that kids around my age can write such cool stories as this one. I could almost hear the characters talking and laughing. This story was also very easy to relate to. Sometimes I feel just like Sieglinde, because it is very hard for me to make friends, and everything just seemed so real and believable.

Hannah Tenison, 11
Jackson, Michigan

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

Dear Rachel,
I read your poem about September 11. It must be hard to have a birthday on September 11 so I wrote you a letter to cheer you up. Next year I will think about you on your birthday.

Jack Flynn, 9
Florence, Massachusetts

This letter is for Rachel Weary, whose poem appeared in the January/February 2002 issue of Stone Soup.

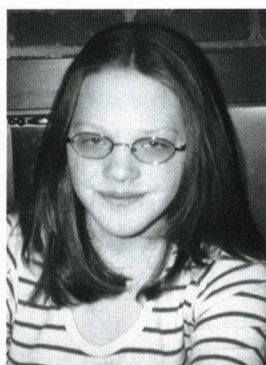
I enjoyed the story called "With Liberty and Justice for Some" [January/February 2002]. My grandmother and the main character of the story, Betty, have a lot of similarities, even though my grandmother was German, and Betty was Japanese-American. They both lost several years of their childhood to the war. Oma, as we call my grandmother, had to spend a lot of time in a bunker because of the bombing warnings for her hometown, Wurzburg, Germany, while Betty had to spend time in captivity in a barracks. Oma and Betty were both separated from important people in their lives. Oma was separated from her father, who had to go to fight, and Betty was separated from all of her friends. I also like Libby Nelson's story because of the extreme detail she used. For example, I like the sentence, "I slowly sat up, dragging my feet like a run-down windup toy as I walked to the door." The simile Libby used is full of meaning. Betty not only walks sluggishly, but she also walks mechanically. The last reason this story caught my eye is because of the illustrations. The texture Christy Callahan put into the drawings is absolutely wonderful! Like the author, Christy used detail. She used every inch of the paper to illustrate her feelings about the story. The short, dark strokes make the drawings very appealing.

Fiona Grugan, 10
Alexandria, Pennsylvania

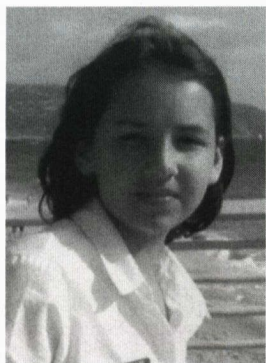
Turning Point

by Liz Reeves

illustrated by Alina Eydel



Liz Reeves, 12
Wayne, Pennsylvania



Alina Eydel, 12
Laguna Hills, California

GABRIELLA DeFRANCESCO dug a fingernail into her eyebrow, resting for a moment in a state of utter fatigue. It was nearly midnight, and the bed in her room taunted her.

She sighed, "Why me?"

Gabby was on the verge of committing to an entire summer cooped up in the cloistered science lab of one of the country's most prestigious universities. The application form lay on her rolltop desk. All she could think was, "How did I get myself into this?"

Closing her eyes, Gabby recalled a conversation earlier in the day with her Advanced Placement Biology teacher, Mr. Bennett.

"Miss DeFrancesco," Mr. Bennett said, presenting her with an application and a brochure, "you're the first student that, in all my years of teaching, I can send to this program with complete confidence that you'll benefit from it."

Gabby smiled an embarrassed smile and thanked Mr. Bennett in as few words as possible. She slung her brick-loaded backpack onto her shoulder and left, completely ignoring Mr. Bennett's frenzied shouts of, "Two shoulders, Gabby, put the pack over two shoulders. You'll destroy your back!"

When Gabby returned home and told her parents how she planned to spend the summer, her mother grabbed her face and



Her feet remembered their old grace, their old love

kissed both cheeks over and over until it became annoying. Her father, for his part, was completely befuddled. But he ended up

yelling "Magnifico!" and several other Italian phrases all meaning "wonderful" and ending in "-ico!" Gabby's summer dreams

of vegetating on the porch vanished into thin air, their particles becoming so condensed that they imploded.

DOWNSTAIRS, the grandfather clock in the living room tolled twelve times. Gabby pinched the bridge of her nose and tried to focus on the application. The next question was, "What are you passionate about?" The irony of the query bugged her. The fact was that she could never participate in normal teenage life because of her lack of passion for anything. This was disturbing. The nagging feeling that she was wasting her childhood kept her up at night.

Gabby wrote a neat, cursive "B" on the page, then vigorously erased it. She had dismissed the thought of writing "Biology" before she put her pencil to paper. Although it was the answer that the sponsor, Cell Division, Inc., wanted to hear, it somehow didn't satisfy her.

The ghost of the "B" shimmered on the page. She looked up from the application. Her eye caught the edge of an old photograph tacked to the bulletin board which hung above her desk. Hidden by her jam-packed schedule and reminder notes, the photo had become part of the board, just another thing in which to stick thumbtacks. Gabby disengaged the picture from the hole-riddled cork. It fell a little, before being firmly secured by Gabby's pointer finger. She brought it close to her face. In the photo, a small girl, smiling an unblemished eight-year-old smile, was ready for her big dancing debut. Gabby

grinned at the little girl, knowing that her every dimple was identical to those of the child. Gabby remembered that day so well. It seemed to have been the beginning of her life. This long-ago recital was the first thing she had done that really mattered.

Oh! How Gabby had loved dancing! She would twirl and leap and sparkle and smile, until her toes begged for mercy, but her mind begged for more. What a phenomenal ride! And she would dance until she was sure she was lame.

Gabby hadn't danced since she was thirteen, when the three-hour practices, dress rehearsals, and the commute to and from The Rock School began to affect her grades. Just remembering the day that she had quit made Gabby tingle.

"You failed a science test?" her mother asked, hardly expecting an answer. "You could've failed with a 64, but you had to get a 58! You never even mentioned a test!"

"Esther, Esther, please calm down," Gabby's father said. But when his wife glared at him, he turned his full attention to the pages of the test.

"It slipped my mind, what with dancing and all." Gabby tried to keep her voice reasonable, not wishing to provoke her mother any further.

"If you can't handle both school and dance, then you'll just have to cut back on one of them. And it won't be school!" Her mother bit her lower lip in an effort to control her anger. "That little place in Berwyn

has a nice ballet program . . ."

"Forget it! That's a lame program. It's for little kids. I'm serious about dancing!" Gabby shouted without thinking. "I can't cut back on dance at my age. It's now or never!" Gabby knew she should have stopped there, but she didn't. "I'd rather quit than go halfway!"

"Fine! You know what, that's fine!" her mother said, as she turned and swept out of the room in an angry daze.

Gabby fled out the front door, slamming it so hard that a porcelain Madonna fell from the mantel and shattered.

Gabby's father, who was an engineer and could have passed the failed test in his sleep, yelled after Gabby, "If you'd answered all of the questions $E = mc^2$, you would have gotten half of them right." He also yelled that he could say $E = mc^2$ in Italian, and, just to prove it to the wall, he did.

So Gabby quit dancing, and suddenly formerly disapproving teachers became models of praising, encouraging educators. A year later, when she announced to her parents that she had been accepted into a highly selective advanced biology course and had decided to start down the road to becoming a doctor, her mother began crying, completely overjoyed. Her father, thinking that his wife was upset, tried to comfort her. The whole ordeal was rather funny.

THE GRANDFATHER clock chimed the quarter-hour and snapped Gabby out of her daydream. She stood, stretching, and walked over to her dance trunk. It sat at the foot of her bed, where it had become no more than

a piece of furniture to her parents. As she lifted the lid, the books and papers on top slid to the floor. Inside the trunk were old copies of *Dance* magazine which she had been secretly accumulating from the drugstore racks over the past three years. What a longing filled her every time she read and reread those pages! Underneath the magazines lay years of costumes, each bedecked with glitter and sequins. Setting them aside, she came at last to her old toe shoes. The slippers' satin surface was a grace to the writer's callus on Gabby's middle finger. The wooden tips, covered with leather, clunked softly against the side of the trunk.

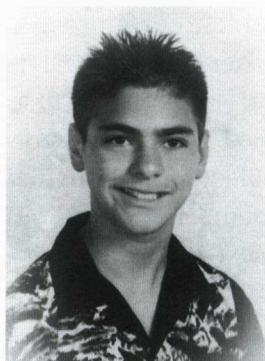
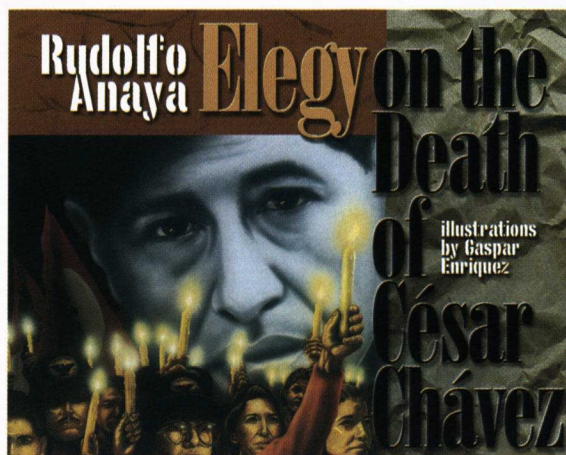
Gabby sat down on her bed and laced the long ribbons up her lower calf. The shoes still fit perfectly. Flat-footed at first, Gabby stood and took a few ginger steps. She pirouetted, stumbled, and pirouetted again. Her feet remembered their old grace, their old love. Next to this grace, this love, the goal of becoming a doctor seemed as small as a microbe compared to the ballerina it inhabits.

Gabby knew that her lost years could never be replaced. Even if she could replace them, the path they led down was a tricky, chancy one. She didn't care. She lifted herself up on *pointe* and tiptoed over to her desk. Bending over the application, she read once again the question, "What are you passionate about?" It seemed so clear now. In large capital letters, she wrote "DANCE!"

Then she tore up the application and threw it away. ❖

Book Review

by Thomas Arguilez Smith



Thomas Arguilez Smith, 12
San Diego, California

Elegy on the Death of César Chavez by Rudolfo Anaya;
Cinco Puntos Press: El Paso, Texas, 2000; \$16.95



REMEMBER THAT MY MOTHER cried on the day César Chavez died. I was four years old but I remember that my whole family was sad. When I read *Elegy on the Death of César Chavez* last month, I understood why my mother cried. The book is a poem expressing the grieving of people when César Chavez died. It is twenty-six pages with collage illustrations by Gaspar Enriquez. The collages mix black and white and color pictures that make the reader remember the faces of the *campesinos* (farmworkers) and César Chavez. It's short but it's like a sad song that gets stuck in your head.

I am a sixth-grader at DePortola Middle School. I had to write a biography so I read about the life of César Chavez and did a biographical report on him. I read books on him, but those books were only about facts and chronologies. My history book just had a paragraph about him in it. I learned about the important things he did for farmworkers, but this book, *Elegy on the Death of César Chavez*, helped me understand how people felt about him—that “he lives in the

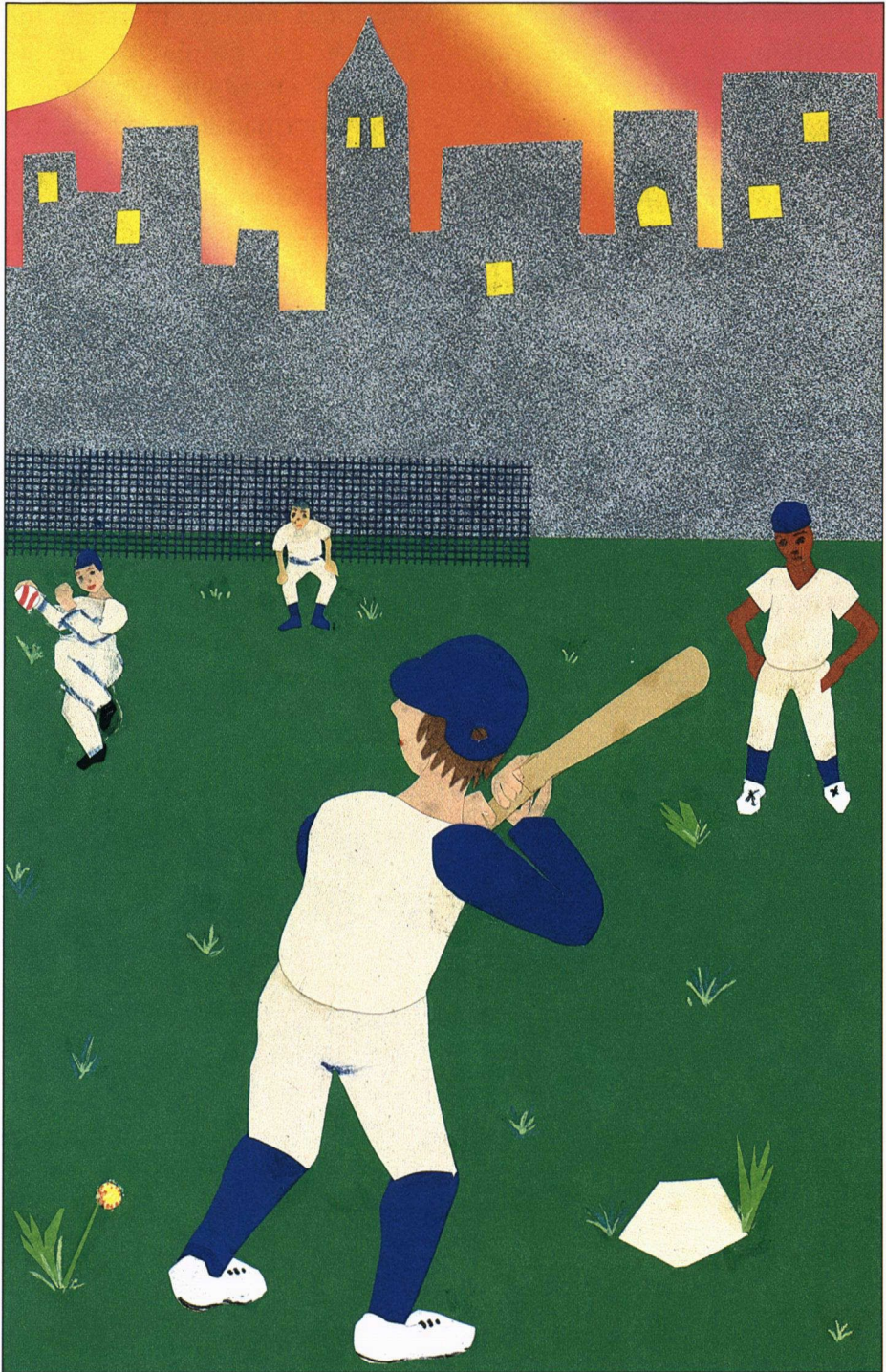
hearts of those who loved him."

I learned about the labor leader from my grandparents and my mother. My family worked in the fields and that is why he was important to my family. My grandfather showed me the short hoe he used to use when he worked in the fields. César Chavez made it against the law for workers to use the short hoes because it hurt their backs. The author described how César Chavez was the "guide across the fields of toil" and it made me remember how tired my grandfather looked when he came back from the fields because it was very hard work. In this book the author weaves some Spanish words into the poem like *el lucero* (bright star) and "across the land we heard *las campañas doblando*"

(the bells tolling). It makes the poem stronger for people like me who are bilingual. It would have been good if the author had included the definitions for the Spanish words for readers who only understand English in the back of the book, like explaining that *huelga* means strike and the word *campesino* means farmworker. Younger readers will have to look up some of the English vocabulary in this book, but you can understand the words by the way they are used. After reading this book about Chavez I felt how people felt about him and how they felt about the world around them. Even if someone never heard of him before, this elegy would make him sad and feel that César Chavez was a hero. ♦



Ariane Phipps-Morgan, 13, Heikendorf, Germany



Whenever Bryan was batting, he always had a feeling of excitement burst right through him

The Montana Summer

by Andrew Lorraine

illustrated by Alicia Betancourt

CHAPTER ONE

THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE the best summer of twelve-year-old Bryan Carmanne's life. His dad's best friend, Bryan called him Uncle Scott, was a manager for the New York Yankees. Bryan was invited to be a ball boy for the team for the whole summer! He would even get to travel with the team to some of the "away" games.

"I know it's your dream to be in the major leagues someday," Uncle Scott told him when he broke the great news to Bryan. "This will give you a taste of what it is really like to see the big guys in action. I already worked out all of the details with your mom and dad. What do you say? Do you think you can give up your whole summer for the team?"

"Oh, I know it will be hard, but I think that Bryan could make the sacrifice for the summer," his dad said, laughing.

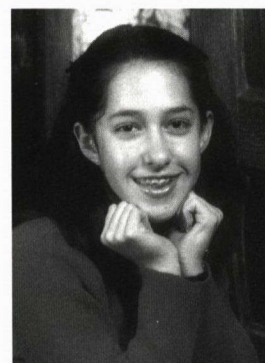
"Do you really mean it, Dad? Can I do it? Uncle Scott, will I get to meet my all-time favorite player, Derek Jeter? Do you think I can get his autograph?" Bryan said excitedly.

"Not only will you get to meet Derek, but you'll also work with him and the rest of the team all summer," answered Uncle Scott.

For as long as Bryan could remember, he dreamed of playing in the major leagues. It started when his dad gave him his first baseball glove. He was only three years old, but he and Dad practiced throwing and catching every chance they got. By the time he joined the local baseball team, the coach-



Andrew Lorraine, 11
Blue Bell, Pennsylvania



Alicia Betancourt, 13
Silver Spring, Maryland

es all told him he was a natural. Now, he was the star hitter for the Bronx Blasters. His batting average was the best on the team, at .396. His idol was Derek Jeter, the shortstop for the New York Yankees. Once at a Yankees game Bryan caught a home-run ball hit by Derek. Now he had the chance to actually meet and work with him. This was going to be the best summer ever!

"Thanks, Dad, thanks, Uncle Scott. You're the best!" cried Bryan, jumping up and down.

For the next few days, Bryan was ecstatic. Until this morning, that is. It all started when his mom called him into the living room for a "conference." Bryan could sense he wasn't going to like what she had to say. She wasn't smiling, and she wouldn't look Bryan in the eye. She had a serious expression on her face. His dad was there too, which was a bad sign.

"Bryan, there has been a little change of plan for your summer vacation," said his mom. "The museum has asked Dad and me to go to Egypt for the summer to research that new dinosaur graveyard. We can't pass up this wonderful chance to continue our research on dinosaurs."

"Son, we can't take you with us. The excavation site is too dangerous, and we won't have time to spend with you anyway," Dad added.

"How would you like to spend the summer with Grandma Mildred and Grandpa Chuck in Montana?"

"What are you talking about? You know I already have plans with Uncle

Scott and the Yankees for the summer," said Bryan.

"Dad and I have to take this research job. We'll be in Egypt for ten weeks. You can't come with us because it's too dangerous," Mom repeated. "The ranch in Montana will be a lot of fun."

"You call this a little change in plans? How could you do this to me?" Bryan yelled angrily. "Why can't I just stay with Uncle Scott for the summer?"

"Bryan, that's out of the question. Uncle Scott will be traveling with the team. How could he keep an eye on you? Our arrangement for the summer was for you to work at the Yankees' home games," answered Mom, patiently.

"You are treating me like a baby! I don't have a say in anything around here. This is so unfair. I haven't seen my grandparents since I was two years old. Why do I have to stay with them?" Bryan shouted.

"Grandma Mildred and Grandpa Chuck are getting old. They might not be with us much longer. They *really* want to see you, and get to know you. With all the traveling Mom and I do, we haven't made time to spend with them. This is a perfect solution to our summer-plan problem," explained Dad.

"You can spend the summer together, and when Mom and I get back from Egypt, we'll meet you at the ranch and we'll all be together for a few days."

"Well, I *hate* this 'perfect solution.' I don't see anything perfect about it. I'll be stuck in the middle of nowhere with two old strangers. They probably have

never even heard of the New York Yankees. This *stinks!*"

Bryan stormed up to his room and slammed his door.

"I feel terrible about this," said Bryan's mom.

"It really is the best way, honey," replied Bryan's dad. "I just hope Mom and Dad know what they are in for."

Bryan plopped down on his bed. He stared at his prized possession, the home-run ball hit by Jeter. He looked at Derek's smiling face on the poster on the wall. Bryan felt like crying, but instead, he punched his pillow. He would never get Derek to autograph that ball now. Spend the summer with his rickety old grandparents whom he barely knew, and give up the Yankees? Were his parents nuts?

CHAPTER TWO

BRYAN WOKE up on Saturday morning feeling awful. He tossed and turned all night, thinking about how his summer was ruined. He had never felt this angry. His parents were traitors. Around mid-morning he decided to leave the safety of his room and go downstairs for breakfast.

"Good morning, Bryan, how did you sleep?" asked Bryan's dad.

"What do you think?" answered Bryan.

"That's enough of that attitude, young man," said his mom. "We know that you are disappointed, but have you even stopped to think that we feel badly for disappointing you?"

"We have some news for you, Bryan," his dad changed the subject. "It turns out that there is a flight tomorrow to Livingston, Montana, which is right near your grandparents' ranch. We have already spoken to Grandma and Grandpa," said his dad. "They will pick you up tomorrow at the airport. Why don't you go upstairs and start packing. Call us if you need anything."

Bryan couldn't believe this. It seemed as though his parents wanted to get rid of him. He ran up the stairs as fast as his legs could carry him, and sprinted into his room. Bryan started packing some of his prized possessions, realizing that there was no way out of this problem. Along with different sets of clothes went his baseball glove, bat, and ball. Bryan was hoping that someone in Montana knew how to play baseball. He wasn't even sure if the people in Montana even knew what baseball was.

The time passed very quickly when Bryan was packing. After a while, he finished and decided to head to the park and play some baseball.

"Bye, Mom," called Bryan. "I am going to meet the guys at the ballpark."

"Have fun," his mom called back.

Bryan headed out the front door to the park, which was only three blocks away. He brought his bat, glove, and baseball with him. It seemed as though it took an hour to get to the park, because the city streets were very crowded. But finally, he got there, and headed right over to the baseball diamond. Some of his friends were there, playing a game.



"There he is, Chuck. My, how he has grown!"

"Hey, Bryan," called his friend Jim. "Wanna play?"

"Sure," Bryan said.

"Bryan is on our team," called his other friend, Matt.

Bryan jogged out onto the field. Everyone knew how good he was, so they let him play shortstop. The pitcher for Bryan's team was awesome, so the inning went 1-2-3. Bryan and the rest of the team jogged into the dugout.

"Hey, guys," said Bryan, "I got some bad news to tell you."

"What is it?" asked Matt.

"My parents are going to Egypt, and I have to spend the summer with my old grandparents in Montana."

"Boy, do I feel bad for you," said

John, another teammate.

"This totally stinks," Bryan said angrily. "I don't know why I can't just stay with my uncle . . ."

"Hey Bryan," Matt interrupted, "you're up."

"OK," said Bryan.

Bryan got up and picked up his bat and helmet. He headed for home plate. On the mound was "Crazy Legs" Sam. He had such a weird style of pitching that all of the kids gave him that nickname. Bryan stared down the pitcher. Whenever Bryan was batting, he always had a feeling of excitement burst right through him, right before he was about to hit the ball. Again he felt this, and he smacked the ball over the fence for a

home run. He ran around the bases in triumph, and was congratulated by his teammates at home plate.

"Nice hit," said John.

"Way to go," said Matt.

The rest of the game continued like this, and by the time Bryan checked his watch, it was six o'clock. He knew that he should get back, because he had an early flight. When Bryan got home, dinner was on the table.

"How was the game?" asked his dad.

Bryan was still pretty angry with his parents. Playing baseball with his friends just reminded him more of what he was going to miss this summer.

"It was OK, I guess," answered Bryan, who really didn't feel like talking about it. "I think I'll turn in early tonight because I have to get up early."

"OK, honey. We'll see you in the morning," said his mom.

"Good night, son," added his dad.

Beep, beep, beep. "Wake up, honey, your alarm is going off," called Mrs. Carmanne.

"But Mom, it's only six o'clock," complained Bryan, as he shut off the alarm.

"You don't want to miss your flight."

"Yes I do," said Bryan.

"Don't make me get your father," said his mom.

"Fine," Bryan said.

Bryan got out of bed and headed for the shower. During his shower, he thought of what a bad time he was going to have with his grandparents. He got out of the shower, and put some

clothes on. He grabbed a pop tart, and headed out to the car. The car ride over to the airport was silent. Bryan refused, out of anger, to talk with his parents. Finally, they arrived at the airport. They checked his bags and headed to the terminal. As Bryan sat down, waiting to board his flight, many thoughts were going through his head. How could his parents do this to him? The beginning of the boarding of the flight interrupted his thoughts.

"We love you," called his parents. "We know this isn't the way you wanted to spend the summer, but you'll have a great time at the ranch. We'll call you tonight."

Bryan hugged his parents good-bye and boarded the plane. He wondered what misery awaited him, but he had no idea that he really would have the best summer ever.

CHAPTER THREE

BRYAN LEFT the airplane and walked slowly down the ramp. When he got to the gate, he looked over the crowd, and then he froze. Bryan stared at a wrinkled, old woman sitting in a wheelchair. She had a breathing tube coming out of her nose. The tube was connected to a big, green tank on the side of the wheelchair. Behind her, gripping the chair handles, stood a frail-looking, bald, old man.

Oh, no! Those two can't be my grandparents. Do I have to live with them, *and* take care of them too, all summer? Bryan wondered in alarm. Just

then, he heard his name called.

"Bryan! There he is, Chuck. My, how he has grown! I would know him anywhere."

She ran to Bryan with open arms. A tall man, wearing a cowboy hat, followed her more slowly. Bryan noticed that he was limping.

"Grandpa Chuck and I couldn't wait until you got here," Bryan's grandmother said as she hugged him. "Let me take a look at you." She held him at arm's length, looked him over, and ruffled his hair. Then she hugged him again. "You're just as handsome as your grandfather."

"Grandma Mildred had me drive to the airport hours ago," his grandfather exaggerated. He wrapped Bryan in a big bear hug.

"This isn't too bad," thought Bryan. "They're pretty old, but not that old."

His grandmother had bright blue eyes and a tanned, wrinkled face. Her curly, white hair looked soft. She was wearing jeans and a pink shirt. Grandpa Chuck was as tall as Bryan's dad. He had dark, gray hair, and a gray mustache. He was also wearing jeans and cowboy boots.

"Hello, Grandmother. Hello, Grandfather. The flight was OK. We watched a movie." Bryan didn't know what else to say to these strangers.

Grandma Mildred knew that Bryan was uncomfortable.

"We're going to have fun getting to know each other, right, Chuck?"

"That's right. Bryan, you'll love the horses," he added.

"I like baseball," Bryan answered. "I don't know anything about horses." Bryan knew that he didn't want to get anywhere near a horse. He fell off a pony when he was little, and had been afraid of horses ever since.

Grandma Mildred gave Grandpa Chuck a worried look, but they didn't say anything. On the way to the ranch, his grandparents asked Bryan about school and his friends and hobbies. Bryan didn't seem like he wanted to talk, so eventually they gave up. Bryan was already feeling homesick. He didn't notice the beauty around him—the cloudless blue sky, the majestic mountains, and the colorful wildflowers growing on the side of the road. He wondered what the ranch would look like. Bryan pictured it as a run-down old cabin with no running water and chickens scurrying around the yard. As they pulled into the driveway, Bryan was surprised. It looked like a normal house. It was a sprawling ranch house, painted white, with blue shutters on the many windows. Bryan could see huge stables off in the distance, and other small buildings. There were lots of corrals, some with horses grazing inside. He noticed a small pond with a dock for swimming and jumping. He refused to get excited about what he saw, because he still didn't want to be there. His grandparents took him inside and showed him his room.

"We'll let you get settled in. Lunch will be in half an hour," his grandmother said. Then they left him alone.

Bryan looked around the room and noticed right away that there was a bulletin board on the wall. He looked closer and saw pictures of himself playing baseball. There were even some newspaper articles about Bryan and his team.

This is pretty cool, he thought. Mom and Dad must have sent pictures from every season that I've played. Then he noticed some trophies on the shelf. They were baseball trophies, and they belonged to his grandfather! Nobody had ever said a word to Bryan about his grandpa playing baseball. What was this all about? Bryan was determined to find out.

CHAPTER FOUR

"LUNCH IS READY," Bryan heard his grandmother call. Grandpa Chuck was already at the table.

"I have a perfect horse for you, Bryan," Grandpa said, as Bryan sat down. "His name is Thunder. He's gentle, but he has spirit, too. How 'bout walking out to the stables with me after lunch, and you'll check him out?"

"Uhh, Grandpa, I thought I would finish unpacking after lunch," answered Bryan.

"That can wait till later. The fresh Montana air will be good for you," Grandpa said.

Not if it smells like horses, Bryan thought to himself. To his grandparents, he said, "Anyway, I think I'm allergic to horses."

His grandmother gave him a funny look. "Allergic? Your parents never told

us that!"

"Well, uhh, maybe I'm just a little allergic," Bryan answered. Then he forced out a sneeze to make his point.

His grandparents looked at each other, but they didn't say anything to Bryan. Then his grandmother said, "Bryan is right, Chuck. He just got here, and he should relax and finish unpacking this afternoon. There will be tons of time for the horses all summer long."

Grandpa Chuck looked disappointed. "OK. I guess I'll go down to the stables, then. If you change your mind, Bryan, give a yell."

As his grandfather left, Bryan called out, "I'd like to throw a few balls with you, Grandpa. Can we play some baseball later?" But Bryan's grandfather either didn't hear him, or didn't answer.

Grandmother sat down across from Bryan. "Grandpa Chuck sure loves his horses. He has turned this ranch into one of the best horse ranches in the state."

"I think I know what else he likes, baseball. I saw his trophies in the bedroom. I never knew he played ball. It's like some sort of secret," Bryan said.

Grandma Mildred gave Bryan a sad look. "That was all a long time ago, Bryan. I thought that he would snap out of it when he sent you your first baseball glove. You were only three years old," she said with a smile. "His favorite picture was the one of you, proudly wearing that glove."

"Grandpa sent me the glove? I always

thought that it was a present from my dad."

"Your dad still holds a big grudge against your grandfather where baseball is concerned. When your dad was a boy, he was a natural, just like you. But Grandpa refused to play ball with him."

"Why?" asked Bryan curiously.

"Your grandpa was a mighty fine baseball player. Right after your grandpa finished college, he was drafted by the New York Yankees."

"The New York Yankees! Wow, that's my favorite team," said Bryan in awe.

"Your grandpa was looking forward so much to play in the big leagues. Unfortunately, on the day he was to start as a shortstop for the Yankees, there was a terrible car accident. Your grandpa's leg was crushed."

"That's awful," said Bryan.

"He had to spend weeks in the hospital and months in rehab. He's lucky he didn't lose his leg, but he was left with a limp. His baseball career ended before it even got started. He won't even talk about it."

"So that's why I never knew that Grandpa played ball. My dad never talks about it, either," said Bryan. "Does Grandpa have more trophies? Can I see them?"

"There's an old trunk in the basement. I'll tell you what. Grandpa is going into Livingston tomorrow to check out some horses. When he leaves, we'll drag that old trunk up to your room and you can look inside," Grandma said.

Bryan was really excited. "I can't wait until tomorrow."

"Let's make a deal, first," said Grandma. "I'll keep you away from the horses for a few days, and you won't mention baseball to your grandfather."

"How did you know that I'm afraid of horses?" asked Bryan.

"Just a lucky guess," Grandma laughed.

"OK, it's a deal. Then what?"

"Then, the two of you will both begin to face your fears," Grandma answered.

CHAPTER FIVE

BRYAN COULD hardly wait until his grandpa left for Livingston. As he was walking out of the door, he called to Bryan, "Bryan, do you want to come into town with me? I think you would enjoy looking at the horses. So, do you?"

Just then Bryan's grandmother interrupted him. "Bryan is spending the day with me. We are going to get to know each other better."

"Oh," said Grandpa. "That's fine. I'll see you later, then." He kissed his wife good-bye and ruffled Bryan's hair. "I'll be back in time for dinner."

Bryan waited until his grandpa was out of sight to talk. "Boy, that was a close one," exclaimed Bryan.

"You're lucky to have a grandma like me. I always think on my feet."

"I owe you one," said Bryan. "Now can we go get the trunk?"

She led him down to the musty old basement. There were a lot of things



"I can still see your grandfather in that uniform. He looked so handsome and proud"

stored away there. They found the trunk and dragged it upstairs to Bryan's room. Bryan could hardly wait to see what he would find. He lifted up the latch and peered inside.

"Wow, this is totally awesome," Bryan exclaimed. Folded neatly on top was his grandpa's Yankees uniform. "I saw one like this when my dad took me to the Baseball Hall of Fame last summer. Can I take it out?"

His grandmother nodded. "I can still see your grandfather in that uniform. He looked so handsome and proud."

"It's really terrible what happened to Grandpa," said Bryan.

"Yes," answered his grandma. "It's terrible that he keeps it all inside of

him, too. But I think that you'll be good for him, Bryan."

"What do you mean?" questioned Bryan.

"Don't worry about it for now. Let's see what else is in this old trunk," she changed the subject.

Bryan spent the next few hours rummaging through the trunk, while his grandmother baked pies in the kitchen. She smiled to herself when she heard Bryan's cries of "Cool!" and "Awesome!"

Bryan felt like he found a buried treasure chest. Besides the uniform, Bryan found his grandpa's old shoes, Yankees hat, socks, and baseball glove. At the bottom of the trunk were pictures of Grandpa with the team, and trophies

from his college days. One trophy was for the MVP of the University of Montana baseball team called the Mustangs.

Grandpa made it home in time for dinner. He and Grandma spent a lot of time talking about the horses he bought in Livingston. Bryan never mentioned the trunk to his grandpa.

CHAPTER SIX

IT TURNED OUT that Grandpa Chuck was pretty busy for the whole week. The new horses that he bought in Livingston were going to be delivered soon, and he had to get the stables ready. Each day he would ask Bryan to come along and check on the horses, but as promised, Grandma Mildred always had an excuse ready. Finally the stables were ready and Grandpa Chuck had some free time.

"I'm not taking any more excuses, Bryan. I'd really like to get you up on Thunder today and you'll go for a ride," he said with a smile.

Grandma Mildred knew that the time had come for Bryan to tell Grandpa Chuck the truth. So did Bryan.

"Grandpa, I have a confession to make. I'm not allergic to horses. I just don't like them. They scare me. I fell off of one when I was a little boy."

"Hmmm. I see," said Grandpa.

"I'd like to make a deal with you, though," said Bryan.

"Go on, I'm listening." Grandpa was intrigued.

"Grandma Mildred says that we have

to face our fears. That's how we make them go away," said Bryan.

"What do you mean, *we*?" questioned Grandpa. He looked at his wife.

"I know all about your accident, Grandpa, and about how you never got to start as shortstop for the Yankees. I looked through your old trunk, too," said Bryan. "Grandpa, it was fantastic to see all of your stuff and look at your trophies. You shouldn't hide everything away like that."

"All of that was a long time ago, Bryan. So much time has passed. It still hurts to think about what I could have become. Besides, this old leg of mine won't let me play any baseball."

"Come on, Grandpa. If I'm willing to ride Thunder and face my fear of horses, can't you at least try to play baseball with me? I trust you, Grandpa. Will you trust me and Grandma too?"

"I know your grandmother is a smart woman, and you're right, Bryan. I think it's time to mend some fences."

"Grandpa, I thought you said you finished working on the stables!" complained Bryan.

"What your grandfather means, Bryan, is that he's ready to start to play baseball again. Right, Chuck?" laughed Grandma Mildred.

"When I look at Bryan, he reminds me of his father when he was a boy," said Grandpa Chuck. "I regret that I let him down. He was a natural, just like you are, Bryan. But I was so bitter and feeling sorry for myself that I didn't realize how much I was hurting him by

refusing to play ball. All of that is going to change now. I have a second chance with you. How 'bout finding that old baseball glove of mine. Let's play some baseball!"

"Awesome! Let's go!" yelled Bryan as he ran to his room for the glove.

"Then, I'll introduce you to Thunder," called Grandpa.

"OK, it's a deal," Bryan replied.

Grandma smiled as they left the house. One old, one young, learning from each other.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SUMMER sped by faster than wild horses. Grandpa and Bryan built a batting cage and Bryan practiced a lot. He thought that he knew everything about baseball, but Grandpa Chuck taught him a few tricks. Grandpa Chuck also taught him how to ride Thunder. Grandpa was right. Thunder was gentle but spirited, and Bryan grew to like the horse.

One night, the phone rang. Bryan's parents were calling. They were back in New York and ready to come out to Montana to get Bryan.

"How was your summer, son?" asked Bryan's dad over the telephone.

What a question, thought Bryan. He remembered how angry he felt when his parents changed his summer plans. He was sure that it was going to be the worst summer any kid could have. Living with two old people and a bunch of horses in the middle of nowhere would be boring and horrible. Boy, was he wrong. His grandparents were the coolest grandparents in the world. They were fun and smart. He didn't even think about their ages, because what counted was what was in their hearts and minds. The ranch was very different from his world, but just as wonderful. There was always something new to see and learn. He had accomplished something, too. He could ride a horse without any fear at all, and he had helped his grandpa remember how much he loved baseball.

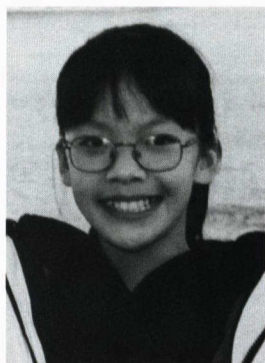
"How was my summer?" Bryan asked, as his mouth widened into a big smile. "It was fantastic!"

Yes, Bryan learned a lot of things that Montana summer, the best summer of his life. ❖

Hungry

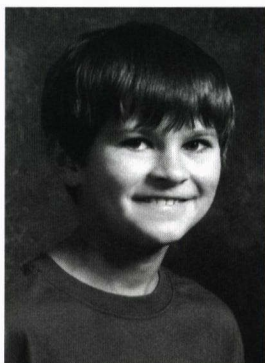
by Tran Nguyen

illustrated by Martin Taylor



Tran Nguyen, 13
Victoria, British Columbia,
Canada

Tran wrote this story
when she was 10



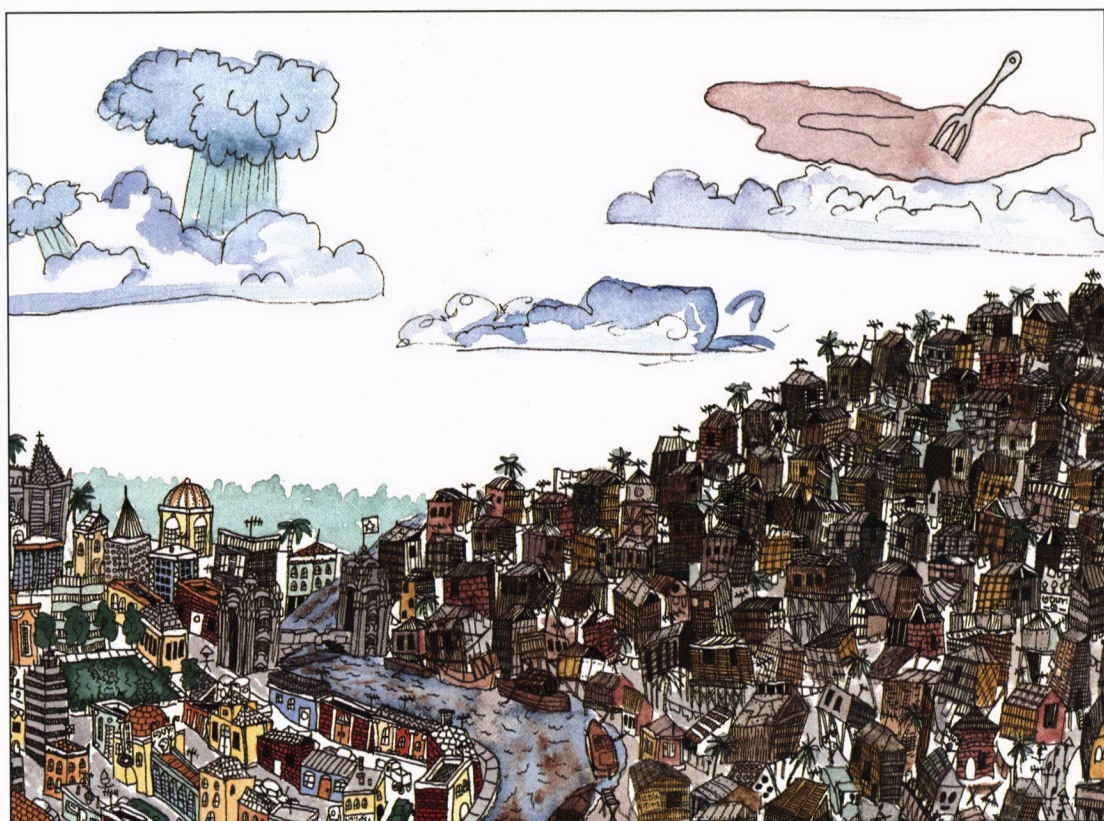
Martin Taylor, 12
Portola Valley, California

IT WAS SUMMER and our family was eating dinner. We were eating food I didn't like. For dinner we had liver, broccoli and beans. I was hungry but I didn't feel like eating liver or broccoli.

My mom noticed I wasn't eating and asked, "Dear, why aren't you eating?"

"Mom, I don't like liver or broccoli," I answered quietly. My mom had a disappointed look on her face. I was staring at a piece of broccoli when all of a sudden I was back in the past in Berlin. It was a sad, cloudy and cold day in Berlin. The houses there were old and falling down; there were hardly any trees, but when you saw one it would have no branches on it or it would be decaying. Most restaurants and stores were out of business. There was trash littered everywhere and there were people lying on the ground. Their faces were pale and one man I saw was shivering. I felt sorry for these people because I had a home when some didn't. In one corner I saw a crowd of children by a garbage can. They were arguing over a piece of apple core that had been eaten already.

I heard a boy say, "I get to have it because I'm older!" I started walking around the city. Everything looked so sad and so poor. I went into a dark alley when I saw a girl who was about eight years old. She was a small skinny girl; she had blond curls, her clothes were torn and she wasn't wearing any shoes. She was eating an old fishbone that had a lit-



Then I started going down slowly to the ground and I stopped at Vietnam

tle chunk of meat left on it. When she saw me she quickly put the fishbone behind her.

"Please don't take it from me. I'm really hungry," she answered quietly.

"Don't worry," I quickly replied, "I'm not hungry. How long have you been hungry?"

"I'm not sure," she said timidly, "but I know I've been hungry for a long time."

I asked, "Where are your parents?"

Her face all of a sudden saddened, then she started to cry. "They died two months ago because of starvation," she said between sobs.

"Please don't cry. I'm sorry," I replied. "Where do you sleep at night?"

"Oh, I sleep at my house. Do you want to come and see?" she said in a shy voice.

But before I could say anything she grabbed my hand and started leading me to her house. I followed her through two alleys and then we were there. It was old and the paint was peeling off, a window was broken, the front steps creaked under my weight when I stepped on it. When we were in the house I saw there was one bedroom, and a small kitchen and living room. The kitchen had a few pots and pans

and the stove was wrecked. In the living room there was a small dinner table and three chairs. She took me to her room. She had slept there before with her parents on the same bed. There was a drawer where they kept their clothes, a night table, a chair, a picture of her parents.

Then she said, "Sometimes I'm afraid to go to sleep at night but I hug the picture of my parents to comfort me. Once I dreamed of my mom as an angel and she came to take me to heaven, then I woke up. I wasn't in heaven, I was in my room, and my mom would be gone."

My heart reached out to her. "I think I better be going," I answered sadly.

"Bye," she replied. "Hope I meet you again soon." I went to the door and when I got out I was lifted up and started flying at a great speed. I flew past cities and towns. I saw millions of people that looked like tiny little dolls. I just kept on flying and flying. When I was flying past China, I saw so many interesting scenes. Then I started going down slowly to the ground and I stopped at Vietnam. It was a hot day. Vietnam didn't look as bad as Berlin in the past. There were a lot of straw houses and some brick houses that only the rich could afford. Palm trees were everywhere and there were boats that were loaded with food to sell, and there were stands that sold things like clothes and more food! I started to walk along the

dirt roads. I passed an old bridge and saw three boys and two girls. One girl was sleeping on the bare floor. Then a boy quickly ran and grabbed a piece of bread off the ground and ran back under the bridge.

"Hey, I got some food!" he excitedly told the others. He started to split the bread and he got the biggest piece.

"Why do you get a bigger piece than us?" one of the other boys said.

"'Cause I got the bread!" he shouted. They started arguing, then fighting. Here sometimes, they would fight for their food, but I could eat as much as I wanted. I had learned my lesson. I started running. I ran up a hill and then I closed my eyes. I didn't know if it was my imagination, but did I smell broccoli? When I opened my eyes I was back at home!

"You fell asleep in the middle of dinner!" my dad said disapprovingly.

Whew, I thought, it was only a dream! I started gulping down my food. My parents looked happy now.

A little bird flaps its wings,
Looking for its nest.
The streets look so sad,
Flying through the rain.
This little bird has no nest,
Young orphans have no home.
Both are suffering,
Both keep wandering.

Bleed Blue

by Katrina Sondermann

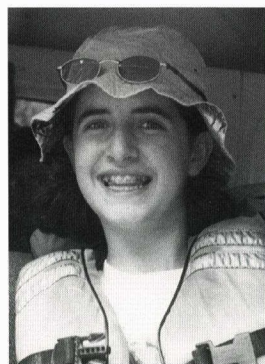
illustrated by John Lugg

TALL BUILDINGS SCRAPE THE SKY, a murky river gently runs, carrying with it logs and leaves. A graceful arch frames this quiet city. Cars drive down the streets; few people walk on such a hot and humid night, so muggy your knuckles begin to swell. Inside this city a substantial building stands, a building that is so cold you must wear a jacket inside. That's not why people go there, however. It's for something much better than that . . . hockey.

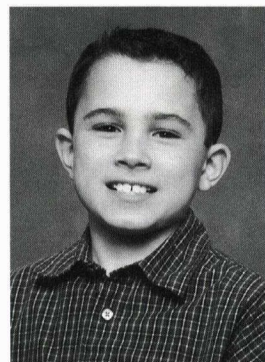
"Dad! Look at that guy! He has blue oozing out of his head!"

"Wow, that's a great look!" my dad says in his best sarcastic tone as we walk around outside of the Saavis Center, home of the St. Louis Blues. We are the only ones to be seen wearing Avalanche merchandise; everyone else is wearing things that say something like, "St. Louis Blues! Do you bleed blue?" I was wearing my Avalanche jersey that said in big letters, "DRURY 28." My dad was wearing a sweater with the Avalanche logo.

"People are nuts in this town! They all have blue oozing out from somewhere!" I said as I watched people move around and into the stadium. People sit and stare at me in my jersey, hat and pom-poms sticking out from my head. I don't mind, I like the attention. My dad and I slowly make our way into the cold and crowded building. All over people stare at us, most likely thinking we are some idiots that



Katrina Sondermann, 12
Denver, Colorado



John Lugg, 10
Lock Haven, Pennsylvania

moved from Denver to St. Louis and are still loyal to our old team! They are not even close!

My dad and I have never had a very good relationship; he is always at work and never home. When he does get home it is at one or two in the morning and I am fast asleep. Even if I was awake, he never says much, and when he does it's, "Hi, how was your day? That's good. You should be in bed." That's it. I barely knew him and he barely knew me, or so I thought.

It was Mother's Day when my dad brought up the idea; he made it sound like it could never happen, but I knew it could! He said that we should drive all the way from Denver to St. Louis and get tickets to see the Avalanche play the Blues during the Stanley Cup playoffs. This took me by surprise; how did he know I loved hockey? Why was he suddenly after twelve years wanting to spend time with me? He said that getting the tickets was the only thing stopping us . . . oh, and my mom. I would have to convince Mom that it was OK if I missed four days of school, and that it was OK that Dad and I be gone for that long. I knew I could convince Mom, the only problem was the tickets.

We started with the woman who works for my dad (her family is in St. Louis). She called her parents and they said they would get back to us. We waited all day and had still gotten no answer. Both of us knew that if we got tickets we would have to leave day after

tomorrow in order to make it to the first game. By night we had heard nothing and Dad had given up, but I had not, and would not. I went to school the next morning as if nothing had happened, and halfway through the day I got a message saying to call my dad. I did, and the first thing he said was "Wanna go to St. Louis?" Tears filled my eyes, I would finally get to know my dad.

The air was filled with all kinds of noises as we fought our way to our seats with bags of popcorn and Pepsis, and after we sat down we paid more attention to our surroundings. Next to me was a couple who looked shocked, and I smiled at them just to get a glare back. I get it, I thought, they just don't understand that we are not crazy fans that are there to torment them!

One and a half minutes into the game and we have three goals! Bourque, Messier and Tanguay. Boom, boom, boom! Everyone is sitting there with this look on their faces that says to the goalie, "How could you do this?!" We are standing tall, the only ones in the stadium cheering and yelling! The people next to us stand up and leave! While we celebrate! Together.

The rest of the first period goes by and most of the second, when the lady who is sitting in front of us leaves and returns with a small bag that she hands to us. I open it to find a puck that says St. Louis Blues. "I wanted you to have something to remember this trip by," she says. Later at the middle of the third



We are standing tall, the only ones in the stadium cheering and yelling!

period the score is 3-3, and we have come to know everyone around us.

The man behind us comes up the stairs with his sixth or seventh beer; he sits down and soon cracks up at his friend's joke. I feel a cool liquid dripping down my back, everyone gasps, and he says over and over again that it was not on purpose. The liquid is beer. My dad immediately perks up, "You bum! What are you doing pouring beer on my daughter? You don't ever do that again! I'm very tempted to call security on you!"

He actually stood up for me.

At the end of the game it's still 3-3. The tense overtime begins. Everyone's

hearts are racing, pounding, beating, and throbbing inside their chests. This is it. One goal and the game's over. Seconds go by, then minutes; each team has equally good chances but no pucks go in. A tense and long five minutes go past when the red light finally flashes. We won! Everyone's energy sinks, except ours! We won! Yelle scored the winning goal! We won! We walk out into the silence, silence that tells us that we have won! Outside the rain beats down on our backs and washes away everything, except our victory, our love for our team and our new relationship. I slip my hand into my dad's. "I love you," we both murmur. ❖

The Ocean

by William Ilgen



William Ilgen, 9
Berkeley, California

I stand on the ocean shore,
watching the waves go by.
The sun is going down but I don't leave.
I will stay out on the ocean shore.

Seagulls fly overhead,
they land down on the beach.
Their far-off cries bid the day good-night.

Out in the sunset I see dolphins
leaping through the waves.
Their turning, jumping transforms
the setting sun into the start of a new day.
They call out to me and I long to join them
in the freedom that is the sea.

Sunset is a dark, purple haze,
recalling everything that is beautiful.
I grab a boogie-board
and float along with the water.
A giant wave comes over me
and I tumble head over heels underwater.
In the sea I am a new creature.
When I return to the surface
I laugh out loud.

I look up and see the first stars.
The sky is becoming black.
It is time for me to be going.
Tomorrow I'll come back
and watch from the ocean shore.



"I have news about my dad! He's coming back!" said Rebecca, excitedly

Love

by Tania Karas

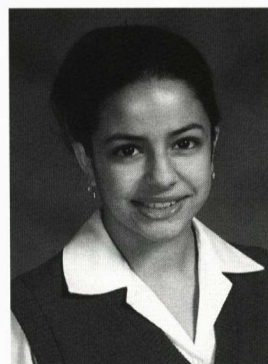
illustrated by the author

REBECA LOVED THAT DOG. If anything happened to it, I think she'd probably convince her mother to sue the vet. She'd say they didn't give her dog enough care or that they messed up the last time she took her dog for a checkup.

I'm sorry to say that I hated my cousin Rebecca's dog. I never told her this, but it's true. From the moment I walked in the door the first time Aunt Jess, Rebecca's mom, asked me to babysit Rebecca, that dog and I have hated each other. I hated the way it stared at you with a kind of smirk on its face. I hated the way Rebecca let its hair grow in front of its eyes, so that you could never tell if it was looking at you or not.

The dog's name was Lawyer, named after the job Rebecca's father used to have before he and her mother got divorced. Aunt Jess complained that he was never home enough, but Rebecca and I didn't blame her. As he became more successful, though, we began to see less and less of him. He was always rushing from one case to another, one court to the next.

After Rebecca's parents got divorced, her father went away to college to get a degree in Library Science, and became a librarian at a library in New York. He didn't want to stay in California because he didn't want to have to face Rebecca or her mom, or worse, the dog. It would remind him of his past



Tania Karas, 12
Palos Park, Illinois

job and past family, and Rebecca's father just wasn't strong enough to face his own problems.

Rebecca asked me to come with her to walk Lawyer one day, and I accepted, not wanting to hurt her feelings. I could tell that Lawyer was uncomfortable with me around from the second he saw me. He growled and kept casting glances at me over his shoulder. Somehow Rebecca didn't notice.

"I have news about my dad! He's coming back!" said Rebecca, excitedly, the moment we started out down her driveway. Her blue eyes glittered in the sun as the wind ruffled through her chestnut-brown hair, which she inherited from her father. Her blue windbreaker really brought out the blue in her eyes.

"Really? When did he and your mother decide on this?" I asked, surprised.

"Well, I kind of figured it out myself. He sent me a letter for my birthday and at the bottom he said he missed me! Isn't that great? And so now he's coming back for me and Lawyer, and my mom is gonna love him again! Isn't that great, Alice?"

I cringed. "Did he specifically say that he was coming back?" I asked her.

"Oh, Alice, you don't understand anything!" she said, laughing. "He's not *supposed* to say that he's coming back. It's supposed to be a surprise!"

"I see," I said painfully. "And where is he going to stay? I didn't know your mother forgave him."

"She didn't have to. He got another job, Alice. He stopped being a lawyer a long time ago. He's a library guy now," said Rebecca, eyes twinkling.

"Rebecca, what if he doesn't come back? What if he just misses you but doesn't want to face you or your mom?" Or your dog, I thought to myself. Rebecca's expression changed to a serious one.

"Alice, you're not being funny anymore. Stop teasing, because Lawyer and I don't want to hear it," she said to me, with a warning tone in her voice.

"I'm not teasing! But honestly, just because he misses you doesn't mean he will come back. It's only natural for him to miss a daughter like you, but he may not come back. Do you understand what I'm saying, Becca?" I said to her.

"No, I don't. He's my dad, and he's coming back because he loves me. You're the one who doesn't understand!" she shouted. With that, she tugged on Lawyer's leash, turned around, and sprinted home with the dog at her heels. She tripped over her untied shoelaces, but luckily she didn't fall. Slowly I began walking to my house, which was only two blocks away.

When I got home, I called my mom at work and asked her what we needed from the grocery store. She got pretty annoyed at me for bothering her, because as soon as I called I realized that the list was right next to the phone. I grabbed the list and left. As I was walking to the store, I stopped by Rebecca's house. If there's one good thing about

living in a small town, it's that everything is real close to everything else.

Aunt Jess told me that Rebecca was not in the mood for visitors, so I just followed her into the kitchen. "Do you know what's up with Becca, hon?" she asked me. She turned on the tap for the sink and started scrubbing away at a pan. I sat down at the table and traced my finger over the hand-stitched tablecloth. It's about two hundred years old, passed down to the oldest daughter in each generation since my great-great-great-grandparents came to America from Ireland.

"Well, she thinks Uncle George is coming back," I said.

Aunt Jess's hand slammed down on the counter at the mention of his name. "*What?*" she whispered. She spun around and faced me.

"See, Uncle George sent Rebecca a birthday card and said that he missed her, and now she thinks that he's coming back for her," I said, not daring to look at Aunt Jess in the eyes.

She turned off the water and sunk into a chair, holding her forehead in her hands. I think I saw a tear roll down her face, but I wasn't sure. "She doesn't deserve this," Aunt Jess said softly. "Rebecca deserves two parents in the same house, not one. I wish he'd come back and face his own problems. He could have just changed his hours on the job. It would have been that simple. But he decided to get up and leave."

I remembered that after Uncle George left, Aunt Jess wouldn't speak to anyone

for nearly three weeks. She doesn't like to talk about her troubles or be comforted. It seems to run in the family, because I don't like it when people get all sympathetic either.

"Do you want me to leave you alone?" I asked her carefully.

She nodded slightly but didn't look up. "Thanks for telling me, hon," she said quietly. I let myself out and left for Lucinda's, the local grocery store.

When I got back from Lucinda's, my mom was home, waiting for me. While sorting out the five bags of food I had brought home, I told Mom about what had happened today with Rebecca. She frowned when I told her Rebecca had gotten mad and left me.

"Alice, sometimes you push things too far. If she told you to stop, you should have stopped. Or you should have at least changed the subject. You need to think before acting, Alice," my mother said. That's how she typically is after having a rough day at work. Always finding fault with everyone.

We ate dinner as soon as my dad came home, but didn't mention Uncle George for the rest of the night. I tried avoiding Rebecca for a few days, in case she was still mad at me. About a week later, Aunt Jess invited my parents and me over for dinner. She didn't seem too happy about it, though.

When we got to Rebecca's house, we had a huge shock. The man who answered the door was the one and only Uncle George, whom I hadn't seen in nearly five years. This was the same

Uncle George who wouldn't face his own problems, who never called and only wrote on Rebecca's birthdays.

Boy, was I stunned. Lawyer seemed pretty uncomfortable too because he kept sniffing at Uncle George suspiciously all throughout dinner. No one spoke except for Rebecca, who was as happy as a flower on a rainy day. She chattered to no one in particular about her velvet green dress, her brand new patent-leather shoes, and a variety of other topics. After dinner Aunt Jess asked Rebecca and me to go upstairs to Rebecca's room.

"What did I tell you, Alice? He came back! I knew he would! I always did know it!" she said happily. She began talking to Lawyer, who was giving me funny looks every few seconds as usual. The night flew by, and before I knew it my mother came into Rebecca's bedroom and told me that it was time to go. As we walked out to our car, I saw Uncle George get into his car to leave too.

Rebecca ran outside to her father. "Daddy, where are you going?" she asked. He rolled down the window and stroked her cheek, softly speaking to her. Rebecca began crying and yelling, but he rolled the window back up. Lawyer ran out of the house, growling and barking. Then Uncle George pulled out of the driveway and drove away. Rebecca collapsed onto the cement and let out a hideous scream into the night. Aunt Jess watched her from the window, and I was certain I saw tears this time.

Once we got home, I began crying

quietly. This was a little too much for me. I have never seen anything as scary as what I just saw. I could hardly fall asleep because the vision of Rebecca falling into a heap on the pavement kept nagging and haunting me. I refused to close my eyes because when they were closed I could see Rebecca even more vividly in my mind.

I got out of bed and went into my parents' room. Apparently they couldn't sleep either, so we all let it out and discussed what had happened. They told me that Uncle George couldn't stand being away from his daughter anymore. He wanted to take Rebecca away, but Aunt Jess wouldn't let him.

The next time Aunt Jess called, about three or four days later, my mother was in the shower and my father was watching football on television. That left me to answer the phone. Aunt Jess was in tears and I could hardly understand what she was saying. She was sobbing uncontrollably and wouldn't pause long enough for me to ask what was going on. From what I could understand, I heard that Uncle George had just robbed a bank vault and had gotten away with a huge amount of money, and police were looking for him.

I was speechless. This was his way of getting back at Aunt Jess for not letting him have Rebecca. Uncle George had been on the loose for about five hours, and there were police looking for him everywhere. I put down the phone and yelled for my dad to come into the kitchen. I put him on the phone with



After a few minutes he hung up the phone and called my mother into the kitchen

Aunt Jess, and he got all quiet while she explained it to him.

My father's face got pale and his knuckles turned ghost-white as he listened to Aunt Jess talk through sobs. After a few minutes he hung up the phone and called my mother into the kitchen. She came in with her bathrobe and a towel around her head. She sensed that something was wrong from the second she walked in. My dad looked up and said, "Get ready. We're going to Jess's house."

Once we got to Aunt Jess and

Rebecca's house, we saw what a wreck Aunt Jess was. She was crying and mumbling to herself, hugging Rebecca and crying into her hair, walking around in circles with the telephone in her hand. Lawyer was growling and barking because of how weird she was acting. My parents led her into the living room, a room Rebecca and I were not allowed into. So Rebecca led Lawyer and me up to her room and slammed the door.

"I hate my mom!" she mumbled to herself. She didn't even look affected by

what her father had done.

"Why?" I asked her, sitting down on her bed. "She didn't do anything. Your father is the one who . . ."

"Oh, be quiet, Alice. He did it because he was mad at my mom. He was mad because she wouldn't let me see him or go with him. He's my father, and he came back because he loved me," she said. I decided not to argue. After all, what did I know about being a kid with divorced parents? Mine were happily married. She picked up a Barbie doll and stared at it for a minute. She picked up Ken and Skipper and the rest of the dolls and walked over to her dollhouse, which was sitting in the corner of her room waiting to be played in.

"You're so lucky," Rebecca said to the Barbie. "You have a nice happy family and sisters and brothers to keep you company. Your parents aren't divorced. And you don't have a mean old mother who won't even let you see your father." All at once Rebecca started crying, holding the doll to her chest. Lawyer came and sat next to her, and she squeezed him as if he was the only one left who loved her.

For once I didn't say anything. I then heard the phone ring downstairs. After a few minutes I heard Aunt Jess scream. I ran downstairs to see what was going on. Aunt Jess threw the phone to the ground and stopped crying. Her expression changed to an angry one. "He was tracked down and arrested," she said, not facing any of us.

Rebecca walked into the kitchen with

Lawyer and saw her mother. She looked at all of our faces, one by one. She had heard what had happened. "He wanted me to go with him," she said to no one in particular. Lawyer finally noticed that something was wrong and began whimpering.

Aunt Jess turned and stared out the window for a long time after that. My parents, Rebecca and I didn't move for fifteen whole minutes. Those were some of the longest fifteen minutes I'd ever experienced. Lawyer nudged Rebecca and poked her with his nose, but she didn't even move. He bared his teeth at me, but I didn't care. Finally Aunt Jess turned back around and looked at Rebecca right in the eyes.

"I know you hate me. I kind of hate myself too. I should have let you go with him for ice cream or something. It would have been the least I could do. A fine man like him would take good care of his daughter, and I'm sorry I didn't let you go with him."

Rebecca grinned and ran to her mother with open arms. "Mom, when he comes back, I'm still going to stay with you. If he wants me he'll just have to move here."

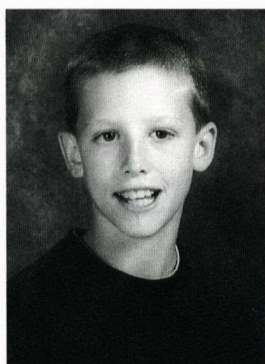
My big mouth opened again before I could stop it and I asked, "How do you know he's coming back?"

Rebecca spun around and looked at the ceiling. She rocked back and forth on her feet. She absently twisted a piece of hair around her finger and finally said, "He's my father, and he's going to come back . . . because he loves me." ❖

Coming into the Light

(for Cameron)

by Mark Roberts



Mark Roberts, II
Windsor, California

Looking down at the
Little wrinkled face and
The mop of black hair in my arms,
I felt excited, holding a baby
For the first time.

Peeking through tired eyes, he tried
To behold the newness of life,
But was too sleepy from the
Hard work of being born.

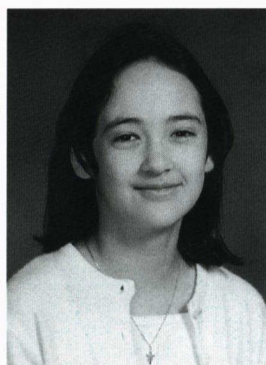
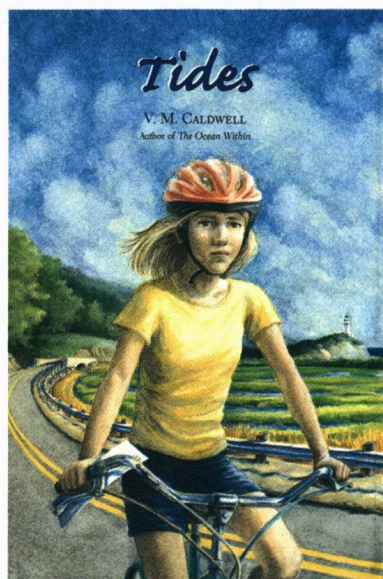
Seeing his small hands and
The little scratch on his face
I smiled down at him,
And he smiled back in his sleep.

I wanted to tell him about
What he was in for,
All of the adventures and
Surprises of the world.

He was two days old,
Squirming in my arms,
And I thought about new life
And how it moves from one boy
to another.

Book Review

by Nell Elliott



Nell Elliott, 12
Evanston, Illinois

Tides by V. M. Caldwell; Milkweed Editions: Minneapolis, 2001; \$16.95

PEOPLE OF ALL AGES will love V. M. Caldwell's *Tides*, a touching, well-written story. The author includes characters of different ages and personalities, making it enjoyable for a vast expanse of readers. Children who have lost a parent or are experiencing a difficult childhood will especially like the book because it gives hope that things *can* work out.

Tides is about an orphan, Elizabeth, who has recently been adopted by the Sheridan family. Every year the Sheridans go to the ocean to visit their grandmother and cousins. Elizabeth has always wanted to see the ocean, and she looks forward to the trip all year. But when she arrives, she discovers that she is terrified of the water.

At the same time, the oldest Sheridan cousin, Adam, is angry and disturbed. Earlier in the year his two best friends were killed while driving home, drunk, from a party. He has never really recovered from the shock of the tragic accident. He treats his grandmother and parents disrespectfully and is cruel to his siblings. The Sheridans' struggles with these two

central problems result in their growth as a family.

I have had an experience very similar to Elizabeth's: ever since I was little, I wanted to learn to swim. Most of my friends could swim, and I envied them very much. I always imagined myself diving into crystal-clear, cool water, swimming with dolphins, and finding mermaid cities. But when I finally went to Lake Michigan, I hated it. The water was freezing and I got cramps. The pebbles hurt my feet, and I couldn't stand the smell of fish. When I felt seaweed swirl around my leg, I thought it was a fish, coming to eat me. I was so scared that I ran all the way back to the beach and wouldn't go back into the water for a long time. Most terrifying of all were the waves. I was afraid they would knock me over and that I wouldn't be able to get back up again. Elizabeth, too, was frightened of the waves, and the seaweed-fish smells made her nauseous.

Throughout the entire story, the author helps you relate to all the characters by revealing their feelings and emotions. She writes wonderful dialogue that gives no doubt as to what they are feeling. For example, when Adam comes home because he has learned that his cousin was injured, his sister Molly is openly hostile to him. The description of Molly's face and tone as

well as the dialogue make it obvious that Molly thinks Adam deserted the family and doesn't deserve to be called a Sheridan any longer.

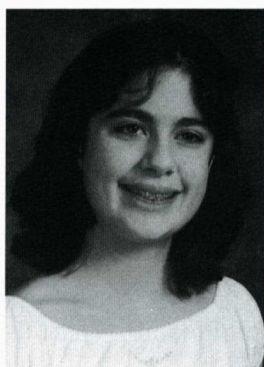
One thing I especially liked about *Tides* was that the situations in the story were very believable. Often the events in a story are *possible*, but not probable. In *Tides*, the characters handle their problems in ways that people might handle their problems in reality. For example, Adam decides to "solve" his problems with the family by leaving home. This is something that happens to many disturbed teens. Adam gets a job close by home for a while but in the fall decides to sign up for conservation work in a national park, instead of going to college as he had originally planned. Despite all the conflicts the author weaves into her plot, everyone's problems are resolved in a heart-warming, believable way.

My favorite message from *Tides* is that a truly loving family can never be separated. The Sheridans live through many heart-wrenching situations that few families would live through without being permanently damaged. My own family has lived through an extremely difficult situation, but we are still here. Now that everything is over, I can see how we were there for each other the entire time, giving hope and support—just like the Sheridans. ❖

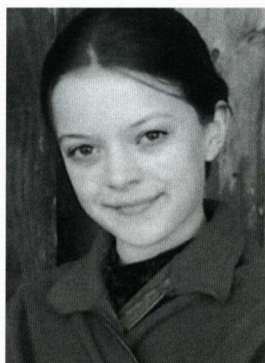
Real Family

by Erica Boyce

illustrated by Raini Reynolds



Erica Boyce, 13
Sherborn, Massachusetts

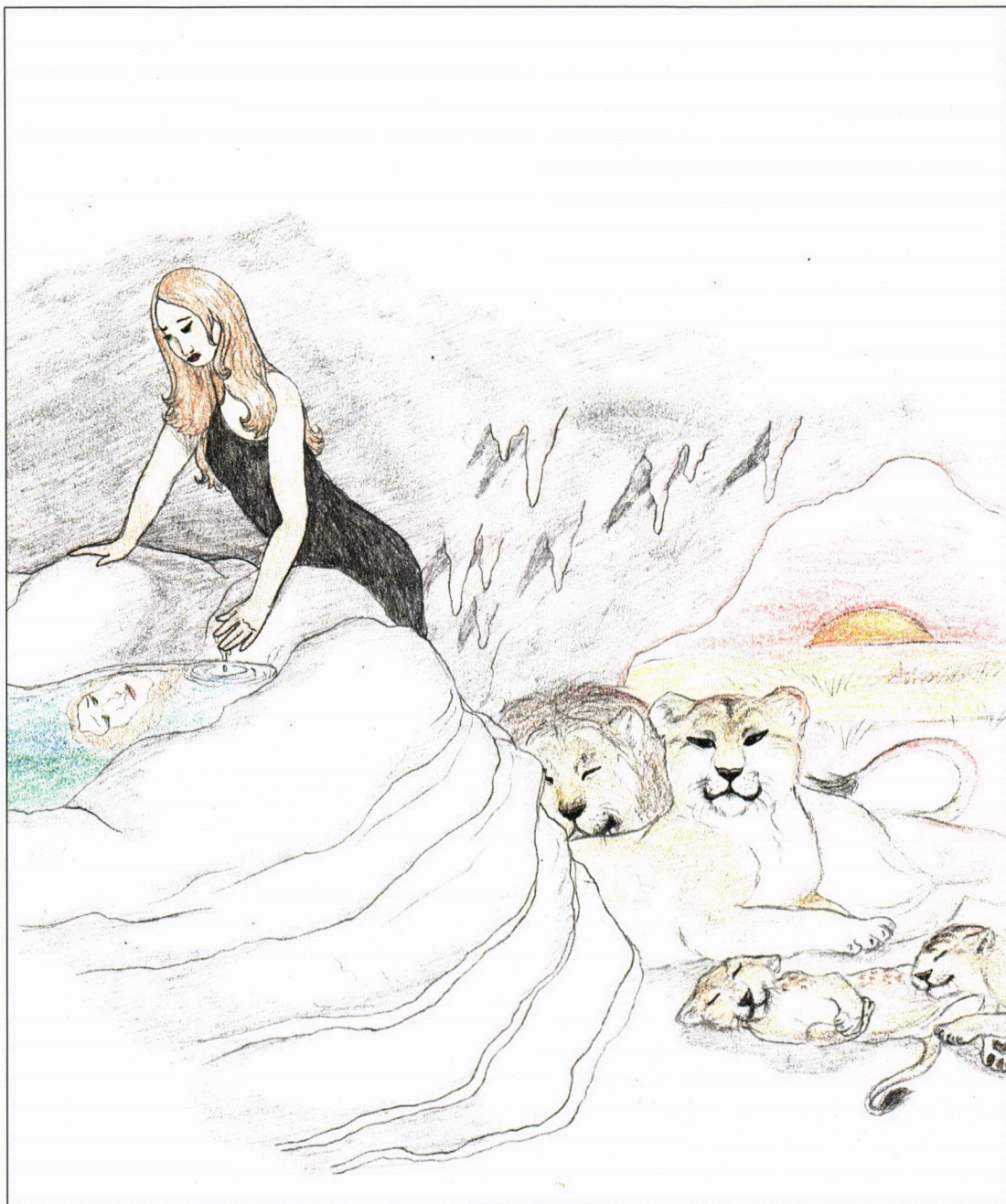


Raini Reynolds, 11
Homer, Alaska

THE LIGHT GLINTED PLAYFULLY across my face, awakening me from my slumber. I reluctantly got up from my warm, furry haven curled up beside my mother with all of my siblings around me. I stretched luxuriously, and winced as I remembered yet again how hard the floor of that cave was. Cautiously, I tried to crawl over Hashim, who had odd brown stripes across his forehead, and Malishkim, with the white paws, without waking either of them up. I warily crept up the natural stone stairs that circled their way around the inside of the cavern and peered into the shallow freshwater lake in the room at its zenith. The reflection that looked back up at me didn't look anything like the faces of my family. My face was tanned from the sun, but it was still starkly naked and *pink*. Everyone else in my pride had rich, deep golden fur over their entire bodies, and the *papuas*, or fathers, in our pride even had a long brown fringe of fur around their faces. My hind legs were much, much longer than theirs, and I had peculiar miniature extensions with tough plates at the ends of them coming out of my paws.

I splashed awkwardly into the water, transforming my reflection into a plethora of tiny ripples. I liked it that way. I couldn't see that I was different. I began to wash.

It wasn't always like this. My moshi (mother) found me under a bush in a mirage when I was very young, crying louder than she



The reflection that looked back up at me didn't look anything like the faces of my family

had ever heard her own young yell. I was a hideous, crimson, wrinkled tiny thing covered with a strange-colored fur that wasn't plush at all. But Moshi felt an unusual sense of compassion for me, and she had finished her hunting for that day already anyway, so she gently placed me on her back and took me to her pride.

When all of the papuas in our pride came home, not everyone thought that I should be welcome. However, my moshi and papua insisted, so they brought me along with them from shelter to shelter. The others had to listen to them because they were the leaders of our pride.

"Lalashim? Are you up there?" My moshi's melodious voice awakened me from my daydream. I quickly licked my paws and ran them through the long, red fur that only grew on top of my head. I stretched and finally ran silently down the steps. All of the moshis in our pride were looking up at me expectantly from the foot of the stairwell. The sun was showing its full, round, orange face, a small *hoofka* above the horizon, so it was time to go hunting. The papuas and cubs were still sleeping, as they would until they saw it fit to rouse themselves.

We all slunk out of the cave into the bright, warm morning. I loved waking up early to go hunting with the females. Everyone walked along in a comfortable silence until we caught the scent of an antelope, zebra, or other hefty animal. The giraffes we left alone, though. There was an old legend saying that if anyone tried to sink their teeth into their supple flesh, they would move their powerful

legs and kick us to join our ancestors in the heavens.

Then, we would creep up as close as possible to the animal, and when we were sure that we were at the most advantageous spot, we would run simultaneously up to prey and trap it until one of us could clamp our jaws on their neck, the fatal spot. There would be a small struggle, but eventually the animal would succumb to death and hang limply in our mouths. Finally, we would eat until we were full to bursting and bring what was left home.

This was where my job would come up. Two summers ago, I discovered that the sticklike objects protruding from my paws could curl around a kill and make carrying the meat much simpler. Since my legs couldn't move swiftly enough to trap our meal, my teeth weren't sharp enough to cut its throat, and my nose was too feeble to smell the animal, I insisted to the other hunters that my task would be to carry the kill back home.

That day, we were all chattering cheerfully on the way back. It had been a good hunt; we had brought home three zebras and two antelope. Suddenly, my moshi stopped in her tracks, her muzzle raised high and twitching.

"Humans! Upwind from here!" she exclaimed. We all swiftly turned our heads upwind. As one, we skulked from bush to bush, out of sight of the humans, until we could see them. It was rare that people ever came here to the savannah because the climate was so

harsh. Being that we were all very curious creatures, when they did come, we always went, unnoticed, to check them out. We never attacked them unless we were particularly desperate for food or they were disrespecting our space.

As we all crouched under a patch of dry grass, we inspected them painstakingly. These particular ones looked very strange. Most of the humans who came here were very dark. Moshi says that they are the native humans of this land. But these, these humans had oddly pink skin, so light they were almost white! There were two of them; one of them had long, red-gold hair and sparkling blue eyes, and the other had short, deep brown hair and greenish eyes that looked rather like the deepest part of the hidden pool in our cave. And yet . . . they looked vaguely familiar, like a memory from a dream. One of our youngest moshis, Ganua, blurted out precisely why I remembered them.

"Why, they look like you, Lalashim! Especially the one with the orange hair!"

I was a little baby, screaming and flailing my fists around, when these two people and a substantial group of others with enormous, black, box-like things came here on the huge metal bird. Oh, how my ears were hurting! I felt particularly attached to the more feminine of the two, but I would hush myself if the other were holding me, too. When the strange creature of flight finally landed, bump-bump-bumping on the makeshift runway, I was sleepy and ready to go home. So of course I started crying fee-

bly again until we had reached our campsite in a caravan of frightening green machines.

Everyone but one crew member had to leave immediately to "shoot the show," so they left me on a blanket in the shade with strict orders for that last crew member to watch me vigilantly. Eventually, both of us dozed off, but I woke up first, restless. So I decided to go for a pleasant crawl, just around these bushes. But one bush led to another, and another, and I got lost. It was starting to get dark, and I was hungry and afraid. I curled up under a bush, but when my aching body refused to accept these harsh conditions, I started howling. Suddenly, a benevolent, warm-looking, fuzzy creature appeared and sniffed at me with its huge muzzle. I giggled, its whiskers tickled! It gave one last, decided sniff and carefully picked me up with its needle-sharp teeth, laying me on its soft back. I fell asleep instantly.

"Lalashim? Lalashim! Hello? They're leaving!"

I came back to earth and realized that, indeed, they were piling into a huge green box on wheels, leaving their insubstantial canvas tents behind.

"Let's go," I said firmly. I didn't like the eerie familiarity around this place, or the strange memories that came with it. I was ready to go home. The others were perplexed, but they recognized the determination in my eyes and followed me back to our cave.

That night, after everyone had eaten our catch and praised it profusely, as was proper in a pride, the moshis

l lounged with their cubs and licked them clean with rough tongues. When it was my turn to be inspected, I mustered up the courage to ask my moshi about the remarkable people we had seen earlier.

the thorough cleansing of my only fur.

"Perhaps. They did have a strong resemblance to you. The same extraordinary eyes that look like our lake. Would you like to find out?"

I sat up alertly at the unexpected



I touched my paws to her face to let her know that she would always have a place in my heart

"Do you think that those humans were my real family?" I got right to the point.

My moshi gently licked behind my ears. "This is your real family, Lalashim."

"No, no, I mean the one that I was born into," I clarified impatiently. Moshi sighed, but she tried to disguise it with

question. "Could we? Really?"

"Well, they would have to remember you, like I remember all of my *brocha*." (*Brocha* means family.) "So all that you'd have to do is reveal yourself to them, and if they recognize you . . ."

I felt a wet blob hit the top of my head, I hadn't realized that Moshi's

voice had been quavering until then. Hastily, I touched my paws to her face in *wakka*, or love and respect, to let her know that she would always have a place in my heart. She returned the gesture shakily.

"So do you want to do it?" she inquired.

"I don't know. I'll think about it."

And I did. For the whole time that the moon was in the sky that night, I sat at the mouth of the cave and stared up at the stars, worrying. What if those people were my family? Would I enjoy living with them? What would it be like? What if I decided not to find out? Would I be able to stand it? When the moon was at its highest point in the sky, I saw an enormous, growling green box moving across the horizon, very near to where I was sitting. The box heaved to a halt right in front of me. I wondered what they had seen? The two humans that I had recognized that day tumbled out of the box and came running toward me. I became anxious. What if they had seen me? Impossible. I was sitting in the darkest shadows of the cave! But they had! They jolted to a stop just one jump away from me! I tried to back into the cave, but the one with long hair was coming toward me, with front paws just like mine upraised. My brain was flashing warnings. Run away! Leave while you still can! But a part of me wanted to know if this was my family. Before I finally reached a decision, it was too late. The humans were upon me, making coaxing noises in

their own foreign dialect. I think they were worried about a child being alone in Africa. Hah!

Suddenly, the woman stopped, her hand out to freeze the other. Her eyes grew wide, so enormous that I thought they were going to fall out of her head. The male looked confused, his eyes searching the woman's face for a clue as to why they had stopped. She uttered one word, and one word only. It might have been a name, because it was such a strange word. "Clara?" There was a long pause as the male squinted at me. The moon glinted on a single drop of water that was slowly tracing its way down her cheek. A look of recognition appeared on the man's face.

The two started conversing rapidly. Finally, they inched over the small space that remained between us, their hands still upheld. Just as I decided to go with them, after all, the man leapt over the distance that separated us and gathered me in his front legs. The female promptly followed suit. By now, both of their faces were sopping wet with the water that seemed to pour out of their eyes, and they were repeating that bizarre word over and over again. I wasn't quite sure what to do, so I licked the salty water off of their faces. We sat like this for several minutes until they were finally clean.

The male picked me up and carried me to the box they had come out of. I became frightened. I did not want to go into that box! But the man held me firmly, no matter how much I squirmed.

Once we were inside the outlandish contraption and he had slammed a sheet of metal over the only way out, a dark man in the front pushed something that started the box rumbling across the savannah. I wiggled myself out of the woman's hold to get a last look at my cave through the peculiar clear wall that was across the back of the box. The female dragged me back down again, and the two humans started conversing quickly. I whimpered faintly in the back of my throat. The man started stroking my fur while the woman looked me in the eye and started saying things slowly in her own tongue. A growl escaped from my throat. I was not enjoying this. I tried flexing my paws ominously to let them know how I felt, but neither human seemed to understand. Finally, the box lurched to a pause in front of their campsite of cloth tents. The woman carried me into one and covered me with a strange, flattened-out fur. She bent over and touched her muzzle to my forehead. These humans had some odd customs. Then, she ducked back out into the starry night.

I curled up. I stretched out. I did this several times, but it was no use. I couldn't get to sleep. Too many questions bombarded my mind for the second time that night. Was this the right choice? Did I really want to do this? Learn their language? Their customs? And most of all, when would this sharp pain in my chest go away? I knew it had

something to do with my family—friends, that is. I missed my old brocha.

By sunrise, I knew what my choice for my future was. I crept out of my tent, flexing my muscles in the morning light. I stalked around the campsite. Finally, I found my . . . new moshi and papua? That sounded strange. They were lying under furs similar to the one I was under last night, out in the open. I took a sharp rock that I found nearby, used it to rip off a lock of my long fur, and draped it across the woman's paw. I stood there for a moment, just watching them. They looked so serene and vulnerable, just sleeping there. Finally, I shook myself and ran out toward my home.

Halfway there, I heard the thundering of many paws on hard-packed earth. Quickly, I wiped away the water that had suddenly started coursing down my face and turned toward the clamor. As I had expected, my moshi was at the head of the pack of females running toward me. As soon as I had reached Moshi, she started running her tongue all across me.

"What happened? Didn't you like your family? Did they treat you badly?" My moshi started firing questions frantically at me. I wasn't surprised that she had known where I was. My moshi knew everything. I looked her in the eyes firmly to stop her hysteric cleaning.

"You were right, Moshi. This is my real family." ❖

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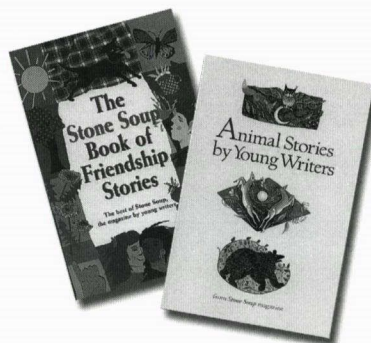
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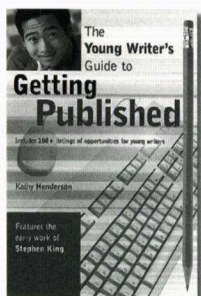
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Jessie Mug

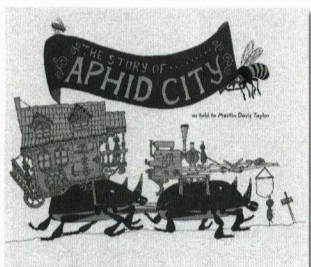
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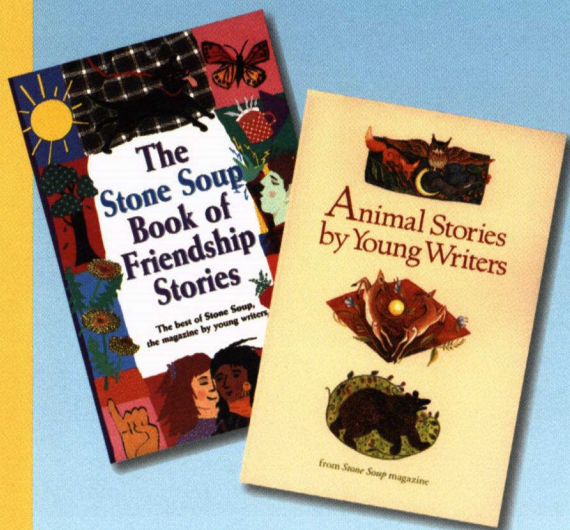
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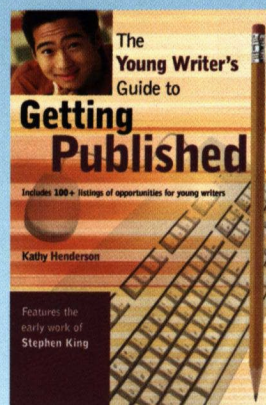
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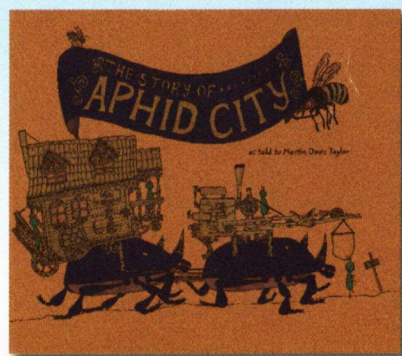
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