

# Stone Soup

*The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists*



*Illustration by Dominic Nedzelskyi, age 13, from "Window into the Wild," page 13*

## **A DIFFERENT KIND OF FRIEND**

Can a deaf girl be friends with a musician?

## **WINDOW INTO THE WILD**

Brandon strays from the path and glimpses a forgotten world

MARCH/APRIL 2012

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# Stone Soup

*The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists*

VOLUME 40, NUMBER 4

MARCH / APRIL 2012

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# 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:** Dominic Nedzelskyi, following in his brother Stanislav's footsteps, has illustrated five stories for *Stone Soup*. Dominic's favorite things to draw are animals and fantasy. Last summer he was invited to Washington, D.C., to represent *Stone Soup* at the World Children's Festival, where he also won an award for his artwork.

# The Mailbox



Thank you all for running *Stone Soup*. I have really enjoyed reading it for the last few years and it has further inspired my love of writing. The book review of *The Dragonfly Pool*, published in the September/October 2009 issue, led me to my favorite author, Eva Ibbotson, and many a wonderful world in which I have settled myself as a character and ridden along the hard roads in the books. Thank you again from an enthusiastic fan.

**ADDIE WILLSRUD, 13**  
*Ester, Alaska*

In the November/December 2011 issue of *Stone Soup*, I enjoyed all of the stories and illustrations, especially “Falling into Earth,” by Ethan Levin. Planet Imagine is like a second Earth because Earth blew up into a dust world. Even the picture was fascinating. Thank you for that creative story and illustration and all the stories and illustrations. My wish is to one day write and illustrate for *Stone Soup*.

**CHRISTINE ANNA TROLL, 10**  
*Somerset, Pennsylvania*

Your magazine ROCKS! I picked up an old 2008 one and read through the whole thing about eight times and begged my mom to subscribe for me. She will probably very soon. YAY! And on maybe the fourth time of reading that 2008 magazine, I saw the part that had the rules for submitting work. I thought, ME? I could try to be in *Stone Soup*?! Zoom to the computer. Zoom to Microsoft Word. And now, in 2011, I’m finalizing a story that I hope you’ll love. THANK YOU STONE SOUP AND ALL OF ITS CONTRIBUTORS!!!!!! You’re the best!

**SIMONE LOYSEN, 9**  
*Frederick, Maryland*

I am a big fan of *Stone Soup*. My grandmother got me a subscription for your magazine for Christmas and, ever since, I always read all of the stories. I found it very remarkable the way you let all those kids have their stories published into *Stone Soup*. Usually, magazines have contests and then the winner’s piece goes in the magazine. With *Stone Soup*, anyone can send in a piece and, if you like it, you publish it. I’ve never sent anything in to *Stone Soup*, but I’ve written and illustrated my own children’s story and also written many other stories, poems, and even a few haikus. I have entered many Scholastics writing competitions and even created a grief blog that lets kids like me, who have lost a parent, have a pen pal that the same thing happened to, because everyone needs a buddy sometimes. I love writing and I always will.

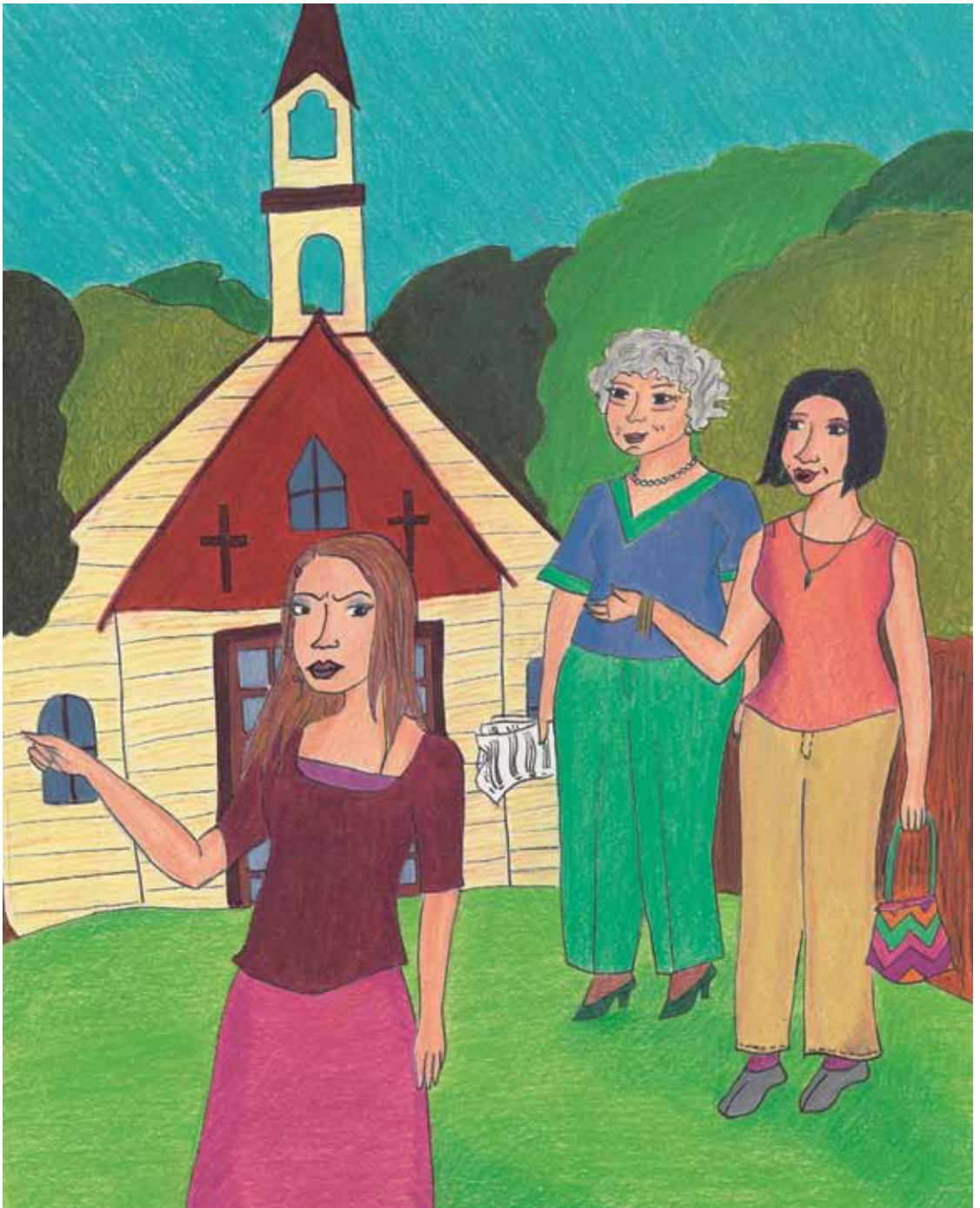
**ADRIANA POZNANSKI, 9**  
*Middletown, New Jersey*

*Stone Soup* is my favorite magazine. The stories are amazing! My favorite stories are “A Weekend with Isabella Hohenstaufen,” by Liana K. Gonsalves [January/February 2011] and “Last Summer at Camp,” by Eliza Edwards-Levin [May/June 2011]. I also enjoyed “The Race,” by Valerie Luyckx [May/June 2011] because I swim on a swim team. I wondered if Valerie swims too because she describes it very well. I love to read and write stories, so *Stone Soup* is perfect for me. I also really like to read stories that other people my age write. They give me lots of ideas and confidence that I could write a good story too, and whenever I read one of the magazines, it makes we want to get up and write a story right then.

**ALEXANDRA LANGLEY, 12**  
*Sebastopol, California*

**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.





*Emma signed back with petulance, "No, Mother, home"*

# A Different Kind of Friend

By **Lydia Solodiuk**

*Illustrated by* **Megan Tichy**

EMMA SIMMONS WAS as angry as a deranged bull. Her mother was going to make her go to church every week, a duty Emma considered pure torture. Emma had to sit through the whole service not hearing one single sound wave because she was stone deaf. She'd been born that way. She knew, after the service, the old ladies in their flowered dresses would watch and pity her, the deaf girl. But they were nothing compared to Ms. Lorenzo, Emma's nemesis. She was the church organist. Ms. Lorenzo's job depended on the one thing Emma couldn't do—hear. Ms. Lorenzo didn't just hear musical notes; she could hear car tires squealing, dogs barking, the microwave beeping, and phones ringing. Emma wouldn't have minded missing out on those sounds, but Ms. Lorenzo, along with almost everybody else, could hear people talking to them. Emma could only attempt to lip-read people's speech. As Emma fixed her hair for church, her phone buzzed inside her slipper. Emma took it out and flipped it open.

Her mother texted her, “R U ready??? Going 2 B late 4 church ☹.”

Emma texted back, “K comin.”

Emma walked downstairs and slipped on her shoes. She opened the door to the garage and got into the car. According to her phone, two minutes and thirty-six seconds after she got into the car, her mother hopped into the car and started the engine. Emma could feel the vibration through her seat.

Once Emma and her mother were seated in the pew, Emma



Lydia Solodiuk, 13  
Westford, Massachusetts



Megan Tichy, 13  
Tower City, North Dakota

flipped open to a random page in the pew Bible: Mark 7:31, the healing of a deaf-mute man. Gosh, this is so unfair, Emma thought, some guy 2000 years ago has his hearing restored to him by the Son of God and I'm stuck in the modern world and nobody is healing me. Emma felt a vibration in the floor. Ms. Lorenzo was playing a hymn. Emma put down the Bible and gave Ms. Lorenzo evil glares for the rest of the service.

Emma stood for the closing hymn and then followed her mother outside. She signed "home" to her mother.

Her mother signed back, "OK."

After a few weeks of regularly going to church, Emma thought, this church thing is thinly veiled public humiliation. After church, Ms. Lorenzo walked up to them.

"Hello, Ms. Simmons. I noticed your daughter looking over at the organ. If you wanted, I could let Emma put her hand on the side of the organ so she could feel the vibrations while I play."

"Let me ask Emma," answered Ms. Simmons. "Touch organ vibrations," she signed to Emma.

Emma signed back with petulance, "No, Mother, home."

Emma's mother sighed and turned to Ms. Lorenzo. "I'm sorry, Emma doesn't seem interested. It was extremely nice of you to think of her."

As soon as her mother's lips stopped moving, Emma started pointing toward the car and tugging on her mother's sleeve.

When they got in the car, Ms. Simmons

turned to her daughter and signed, "Rude daughter."

"Hate Ms. Lorenzo," Emma signed back. Emma glared out of the car window for the entire ride home.

Evelyn Lorenzo was attempting to practice Bach's *Fugue in D minor* for the upcoming memorial service when she had an idea. These page turns are difficult. It would be helpful to have a page-turner, she thought as the rain drummed on the roof. Sometimes Evelyn wished she was deaf to the outside noises of the world... that's who she should pick: Ms. Simmons's deaf girl. The girl seemed to enjoy the organ. Every time Evelyn caught her eye in church she was looking at the organ. Evelyn decided to ask Ms. Simmons after church tomorrow.

THE NEXT DAY, Emma woke up and felt miserable. She'd spent yesterday afternoon in the rain running errands with her mother and Emma had caught a bad cold. She stumbled downstairs and found her mother in the kitchen making coffee.

Emma signed, "Sick, no church."

Her mother felt Emma's forehead.

"Feel warm, stay home and nap," signed Ms. Simmons.

Emma signed, "OK."

Evelyn firmly played the postlude and rushed outside to find Emma's mother before she left. Evelyn walked up to Ms. Simmons and noticed that Emma wasn't there.

"Ms. Simmons, where is your daugh-



ter?" asked Ms. Lorenzo.

"Emma is at home with a bad cold," answered Ms. Simmons.

"I'm sorry to hear that, Ms. Simmons. I wanted to ask your daughter a favor. I've noticed Emma seems to enjoy the organ when I play it in church. I need someone to turn pages for an organ piece; I'll be playing for Jane Samuel's memorial service. She was the former church organist and I'm expected to play a very difficult and memorable piece for the service. I thought Emma might be the right person for this."

Ms. Simmons was speechless. Not many people actually want to interact with her daughter, she thought. But Emma hates Ms. Lorenzo. But Emma's lip-reading teacher said Emma needs to spend time with non-deaf people so she can cope in the real world. Ms. Simmons coughed.

"Are you sure Emma could be your page-turner? She can't even hear the organ; she can only feel the sound waves vibrating through the floor. Also, she is a very bad lip-reader so you two couldn't communicate," spoke Ms. Simmons.

There was an awkward moment of silence.

Then Ms. Lorenzo spoke, "Are you implying that Emma is the wrong person for this?"

"Yes, I suppose I am," answered Ms. Simmons.

"I disagree. I could nod my head when I want the page turned by Emma. If worse comes to worst, you could be our translator."

"As you wish, Evelyn. When do you

want Emma to practice with you?"

"How about Thursday night at seven-thirty? That would work well for me."

"Thank you and see you then, Evelyn."

"Goodbye."

As Evelyn Lorenzo walked away she thought, My goodness, that woman is very overprotective of her daughter. Just because Emma is deaf doesn't mean that she can't have a life.

When Ms. Simmons got home, she went straight to Emma's room.

"Emma, phone," she signed.

Emma took out her phone and read the text message: "Emma, Ms. L wants U 2 help her turn pgs 4 organ piece. She wants you only, nobody else. Practice Thurs nite 7:30."

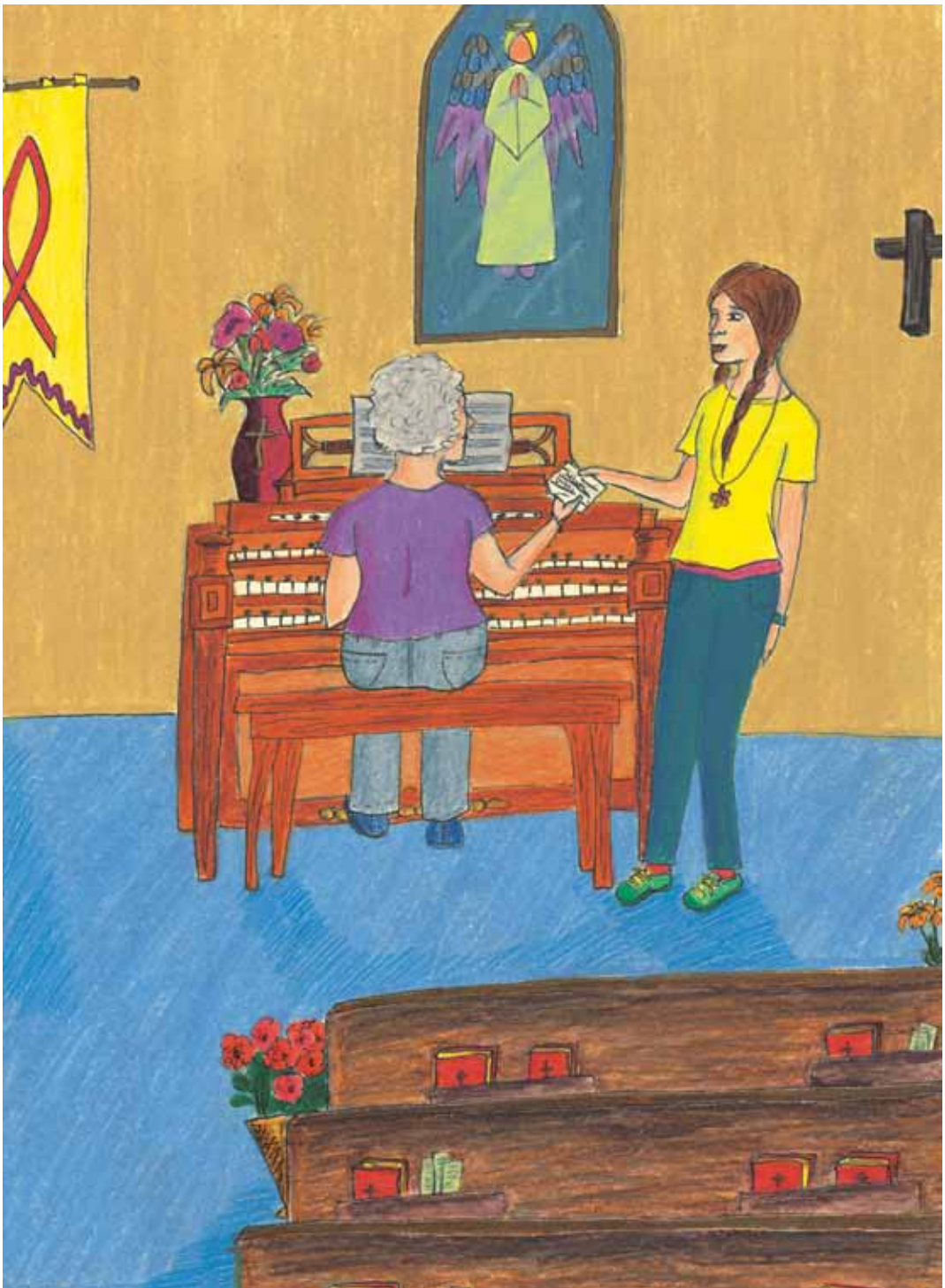
Emma whipped out her phone and started texting: "U kno how much I hte her. No fair."

Ms. Simmons texted back: "I want you to try for me."

Emma texted back: "hte U 2."

Emma signaled her mother out of the room.

**S**EVEN-FIFTEEN, Thursday night. After some angry signing between her and her mother, Emma admitted defeat and reluctantly walked downstairs. As Emma stepped out of the car, in the church parking lot, her mother signed, "Smile." Emma plastered a grimace on her face and walked in. Ms. Lorenzo was already seated at the organ. She indicated for Emma and Ms. Simmons to come over to her.



*Ms. Lorenzo turned to Emma and handed her an index card*

“Ms. Simmons, I might need you to sign something to Emma,” said Ms. Lorenzo.

“I’ll be sitting in the back pew if you need me,” answered Ms. Simmons.

Ms. Lorenzo turned to Emma and handed her an index card. It read:

Put your hand on the side of the organ to feel the vibrations.

When I nod, please turn the page.

Emma nodded at Ms. Lorenzo and put her sweaty hand on the side of the organ. As Ms. Lorenzo began to play, Emma gulped and thought, What if I totally mess up? Emma almost missed the first page turn. Her hands fumbled for the page. Emma then paid attention to all of Ms. Lorenzo’s nodding cues. When the song was over, Ms. Lorenzo smiled and handed Emma another index card. This one read:

Good. Let’s do it again.

Emma put her hand on the side of the organ and Ms. Lorenzo started again. Emma noticed that the third page turn was during strong vibrations and the fifth page turn happened during weak vibra-

tions. After a few more practices of the song, Emma was handed another index card. This one read:

Great job!! It was a pleasure to work with you. One more practice right before the service and we’ll be golden.

Emma smiled.

THE SERVICE was perfect. Emma turned the pages at all the right times. Afterwards, Emma handed Ms. Lorenzo a note. It said:


Ms. Lorenzo,

It was fun to help you. You are a nice person to remember me, the deaf girl. I used to hate you because you could hear so well and I can’t at all. If you wanted I could teach you sign language so we could “talk” until I get better at lip-reading.

Emma

Ms. Lorenzo smiled. She turned over Emma’s note. She wrote:

I’d love to learn. I could teach some music too. Beethoven was deaf too, you know.

Emma and Ms. Lorenzo hugged. Deal. 

# Moment of Truth

*By* **Marshall McKenna**



Marshall McKenna, 12  
Lexington, Massachusetts

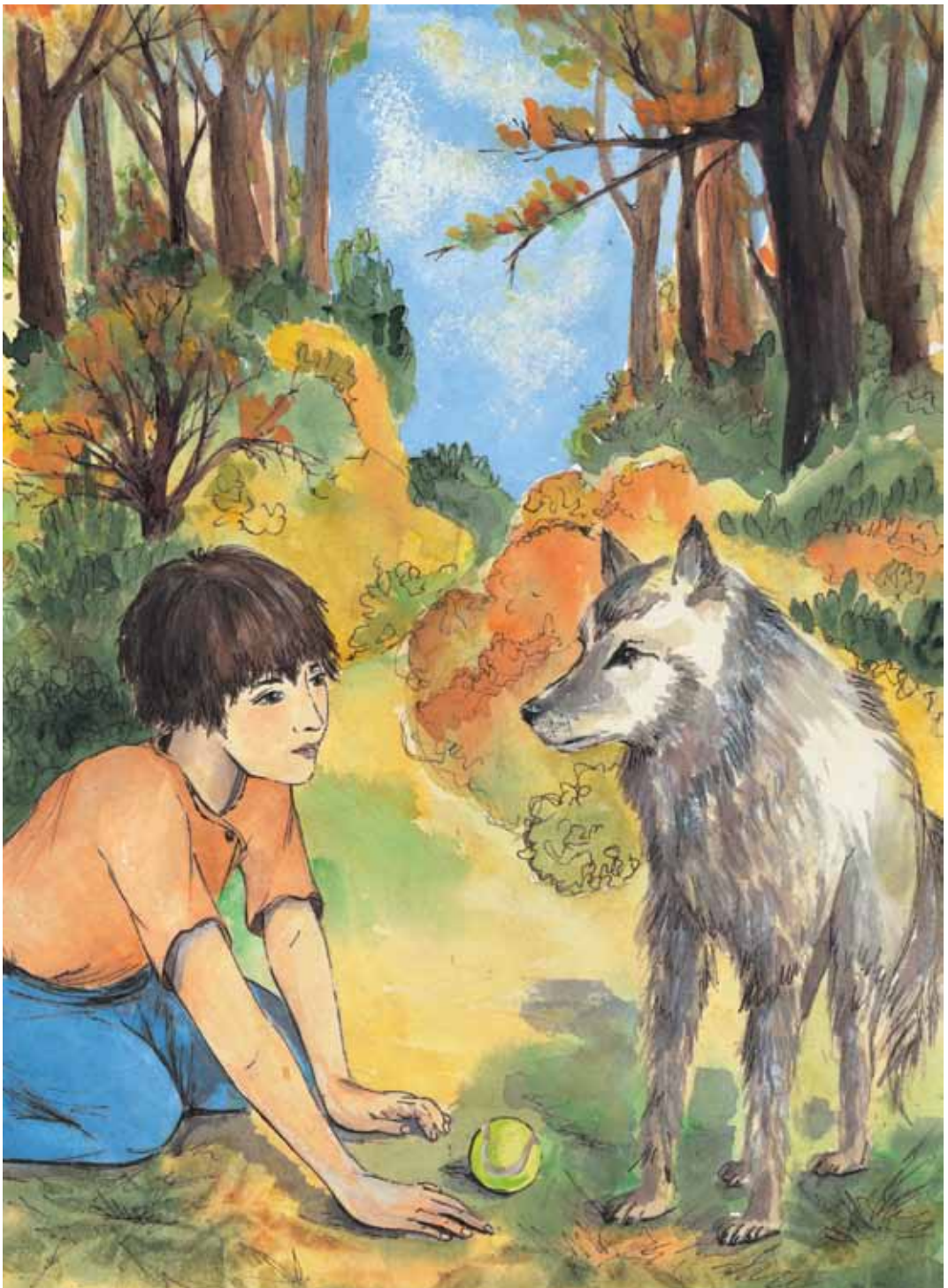
My last chance,  
One more miss  
And it's over,  
Cool sweat trickles down my neck.  
I risk striking out,  
My pride.  
My hands tremble  
My swing wobbles  
My body  
Not my own,  
I can't do this.

To everyone else,  
A spring day,  
Warm and beautiful.  
Dandelions cover the field,  
The opposite of my emotions.  
I worry,  
I fear.  
The day is too sunny,  
I doubt.

I hear the sound,  
Loud and clear.  
A glimmer of hope sparks inside of me,  
A candle in a dark room.  
The ball is gone.  
It flies with the birds.

The ball touches down  
A mile away,  
Out of sight.  
The candle turns into a torch,  
A thousand torches,  
The game is mine.  
I'm at the top of the world.  
"Keep this moment forever."  
A feeling comes to me,  
Sweeter than any peach or pie,  
Victory.





*The wolf leaned towards him and their eyes met again*

# Window into the Wild

By **Claire Hekkala**

*Illustrated by* **Dominic Nedzelskyi**

**B**RANDON BOUNCED the tennis ball up and down on the dirt ground. The short, dark-haired boy was nine Earth years old, just old enough to resent this boring trip his parents had brought him on. Who wanted to go to a wildlife reserve anyway, even if it was one of the last remaining on Earth? Everyone cool in his class got to go to Mercury, or at least the Moon. Brandon's brown eyes glared at nothing in particular from underneath heavy brows as he threw the tennis ball hard on the ground one last time. It flew off in another direction. Muttering to himself, Brandon headed off to get it.

The ball rolled into the shadows and off of the carefully groomed dirt path, made to make you feel as though you were traipsing through the wilderness when actually anything you wanted was just a button press away. Brandon slipped off of the path after the ball, making almost no sound. The last thing he needed now was his parents yelling at him for leaving the designated safe area. The wild animals here were dangerous, they said, and they were restrained by an invisible wall of energy that shocked any animals but humans that walked near it. Brandon imagined that he was passing through that wall right now, and shivered.

The boy squinted as he walked along, trying to make out the bright yellow-green of the tennis ball in this dark area of the park, shaded by the many trees around. Brandon looked back the way he'd come and saw the path, his parents making their way slowly along it. It was reassuring, yet Brandon wondered at



Claire Hekkala, 12  
Corvallis, Oregon



Dominic Nedzelskyi, 13  
Keller, Texas

how far he'd already come. He must have really bounced the tennis ball hard for it to go this far!

Ahead of him, Brandon spotted the round splotch of out-of-place color that was his tennis ball. He hurried now, ignoring the plant tendrils that grasped at his designer clothing. Just as Brandon bent down to pick up the ball, he saw movement in front of him. The dark-haired boy froze.

Everything his parents had told him before this trip ran through his head, despite his trying to look bored and not remember it at the time. *You have to stay on the paths. Don't go wandering off. I know you think it's boring, but there are wild animals in this park that could kill you as surely as a crash-landing on some other planet. Listen to me, Brandon. I'm telling you to be careful.* Brandon wished he had listened, and just let the tennis ball go. It wasn't as important as his life!

Seconds passed as he crouched, petrified, and nothing lunged out of the bushes. Nothing tore his head off, or even snarled at him. Carefully, slowly, Brandon dropped to his knees, one hand still on the tennis ball, and peered through the undergrowth where he had seen the movement. What he saw next took his breath away.

Brandon didn't immediately see whatever had made the movement in the clearing before him. It was all shadowed and dappled with light that forced its way through the thick, interlocking branches above. But he watched and waited,

and after a while a piece of the shadows seemed to detach itself and move towards him.

It was a wolf. A gray-furred, lithe beast that was no less muscled for its slender form; the kind of animal they spoke of in all the stories, but that was hopelessly endangered now and lived in only a few parks. It came at Brandon in a sort of slow lope, shining yellow eyes fixed on him. A few feet away, it stopped and sat down, swishing its thick furry tail across the ground once. There was no question of its having seen Brandon; its eyes never left his face. Brandon suddenly felt vulnerable and open, despite being behind a bush.

Something urged Brandon to get a better look at this almost mythical creature. Few people these days could claim to have seen one; they lived only on Earth and couldn't survive on other planets, despite attempts to set them up there. Besides, part of Brandon's mind told him, he was just as unprotected here behind the bush as he would be with a full view of the wolf. He wished he had brought a camera.

Remembering all he'd ever heard about wolves: their ruthlessness, their strength, but also their beauty and loyalty to their packs, Brandon inched his way out from behind the bush. Once he could see the wolf in full, he stopped, feeling afraid outside the safety of his bush. The wolf was still staring at him.

Yellow eyes met brown and Brandon found himself amazed. Here he was, on his knees in a forest, trading glances with a wild wolf! All this because his tennis ball

had rolled away! Brandon continued to stare into the wolf's eyes like he was mesmerized.

The wolf got to its paws gracefully and Brandon felt another surge of fear. After everything, was it going to kill him now? Those yellow eyes didn't seem murderous, but then again, wolves didn't murder. They killed to survive. The wolf padded silently over the leaves, coming closer and closer.

Brandon was on the verge of panicking when the wolf stopped. It was close enough now for Brandon to reach out an arm and feel its gray fur, but he didn't. He was paralyzed, unable to move. The wolf leaned towards him and their eyes met again.

"Brandon! Brandon?" The wolf jerked away as the call echoed through the forest. The moment was broken. Brandon fell backwards in surprise at hearing his name, pushing himself back up on his elbows just in time to see the wolf fading into the shadows again without a backward glance.


"Brandon! Brandon, where did you go?" The boy being called realized that his parents had noticed his absence, and possibly just saved his life. Brandon didn't think the wolf had been about to kill him, but you could never be sure. Hurriedly, Brandon scrambled to his feet and picked up the tennis ball. He turned and ran towards the voices, and soon the path was in sight. He picked up the pace, suddenly

afraid that the wolf was going to come flying out of the bushes and kill him.

Brandon finally emerged from the forest and stood before his parents on the path, breathing heavily from the unexpected exertion. His mother, the one who had been calling, frowned. "Where have you been? Did you just come from off the path?"

Brandon felt there was no point in denying it, so he nodded. His father, standing silently by his wife's side, looked shocked. "After everything we've told you?" he asked, and started off on his lecture about listening and obeying directions. Surprisingly, Brandon realized that he didn't mind that much.

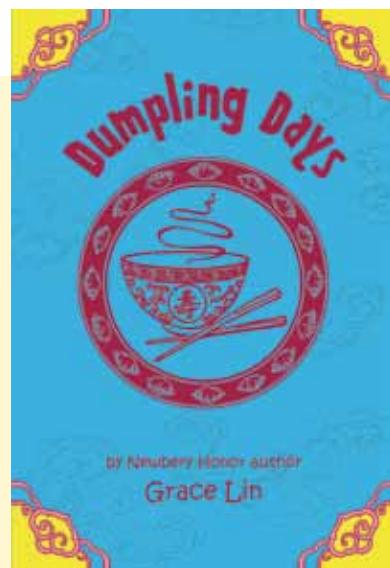
He pocketed the tennis ball, realizing that it was too late to explain how it had rolled away. While his father went on and on, Brandon's thoughts were on the wolf. Imagine that, meeting a wild animal and not being attacked! I bet none of my friends have ever been only a foot away from a wolf, Brandon thought smugly. Not even the ones who went to Mercury.

The dark-haired boy didn't know it then, but he would never forget the wolf. Its luminous, golden eyes would remain forever in his memories, to be remembered occasionally and wondered at. Those eyes had given Brandon his first taste of something uncontrolled, ancient, un-tailored. They had provided a window into the wild. 

# Book Review

By Emily Chen

*Dumpling Days*, by Grace Lin; Little, Brown  
Books for Young Readers: New York, 2012;  
\$15.99



Emily Chen, 10  
Brookline, Massachusetts

“You should know Taiwan. It’s...” Dad said, his face dimming as he tried to think of the right word in English. His hand fell as he gave up and said it in Chinese instead. “It’s... Taiwan is... *bao dao*.” (treasure island)

—Pacy’s dad, describing Taiwan in *Dumpling Days*

**H**AVE YOU EVER gone on a trip that changed your life? Well, in Grace Lin’s novel, *Dumpling Days*, Pacy Lin, an Americanized Taiwanese from New York, does just that. With her parents and two sisters, Pacy goes on an exciting trip to Taiwan to celebrate her grandmother’s birthday. There, not only does Pacy get to see her Chinese relatives, she gets her fortune told, eats varieties of dumplings, and witnesses a special photo shoot. Through her adventures, she learns her true identity and grows closer to those who matter most. Grace Lin’s new novel is full of humorous twists and turns.

In many parts, I can relate to Pacy’s feelings. Like Pacy, I am an American-born Chinese, and I am not yet fluent in the language. I have never been to China or Taiwan, though after reading this novel, I am looking forward to going there so that I can learn more about my heritage and Chinese culture. When I read about Pacy’s troubles and worries because she did not know




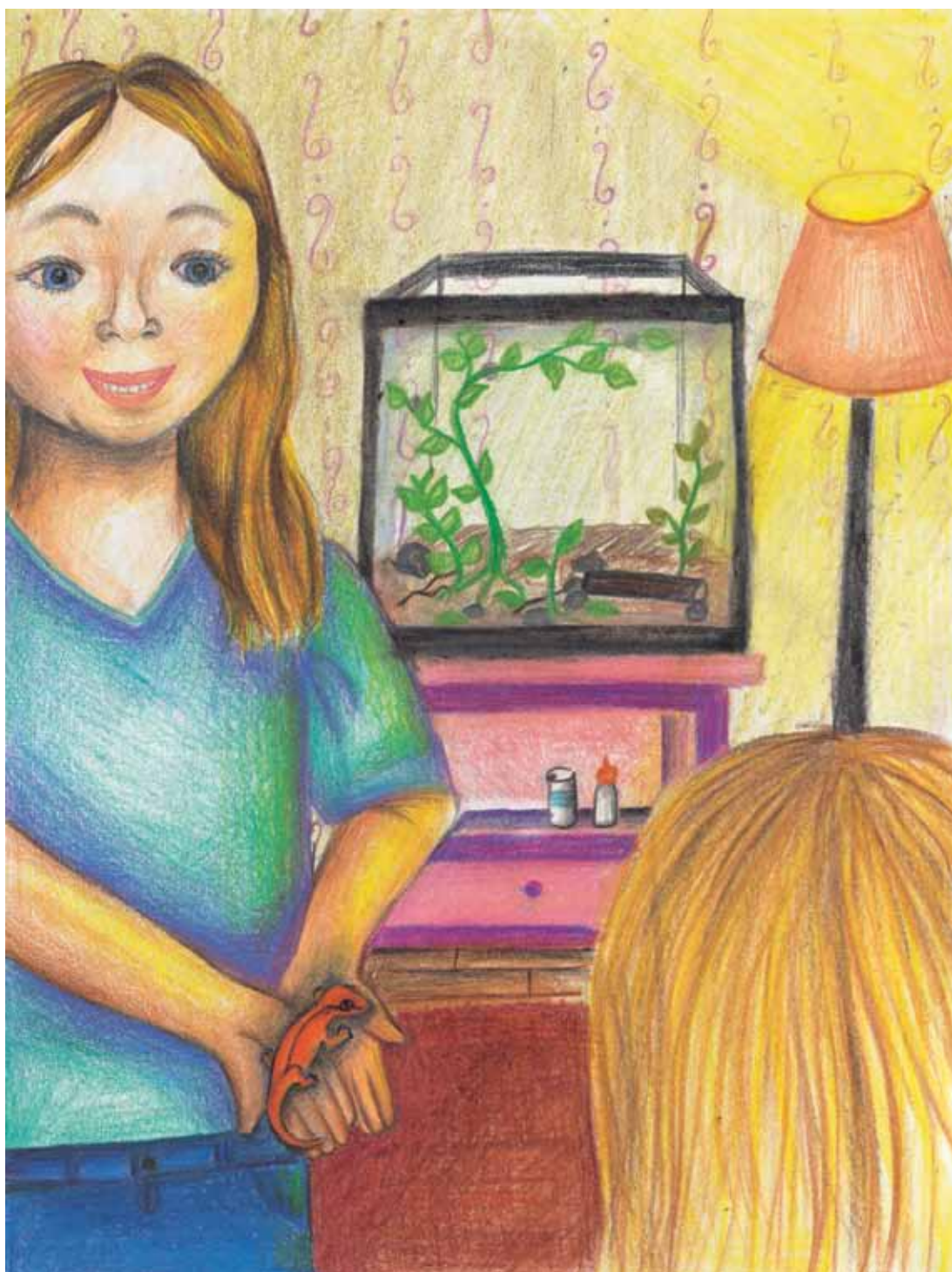
Chinese, I became motivated to learn more Chinese before I go, to ensure that I don't feel as lost as she did during my stay.

My favorite part is when they visit the highest mailbox in the world. It is on the eighty-ninth floor of the Taipei 101 building, and it has three sections: Family, Friend, and Lover. Pacy mails a postcard to her best friend, Melody, who had moved away to California, and places it in the Friends box. When Ki-ki, Pacy's seven-year-old sister, places her card into the Lover box, everyone taunts, "Who's your boyfriend?" Ki-ki, however, remains indignant. She replies that she does not have a boyfriend and that she mailed it to herself because she has nobody else to send it to. Thinking about Ki-ki putting that postcard into the Lover section made me crack up.

On many pages, there are intricate drawings portraying what is happening in the story. These pictures are very creative, and they give you an idea of how everything looks. My favorite picture is of the four statues portraying the four pleasures of life: yawning, picking your ears, scratching your back, and picking your nose! This shows the Chinese sense of humor.

What I learned from *Dumpling Days* is that winning and competition isn't everything. In Pacy's painting classes, there is this mean girl, Audrey. Audrey tries to criticize Pacy in order to bring attention toward herself. This angers Pacy and makes her concentrate on being better than Audrey. Pacy feels frustrated and unhappy. At the art contest on the last day of classes, a girl named Eva wins for their class. This makes Pacy feel slightly crestfallen that she didn't win, but she is even more regretful about wasting time competing with Audrey when she could have been befriending Eva and enjoying her classes.

I found *Dumpling Days* to be a funny and interesting novel, and I hope it will be for you too. I am looking forward to reading Grace Lin's other novels, also starring Pacy: *Year of the Dog* and *Year of the Rat*. 



*She was as light as a feather and as smooth as a river rock*

# Homecoming

By **Haley Cheek**

*Illustrated by* **Isabella Xie**

I HAD MARVELED at her beauty a dozen times before, but this was different. This time was special. She was sitting in front of me in her temporary plastic container as we drove home. Every little bump made me tense all my muscles. I didn't want her to get scared. I figured that for someone as fragile and small as her, driving over a tiny pothole would be like an earthquake. She stared up at me with her curious brown eyes and I met her gaze in awe.

I had waited months to get her, hours of research and planning. Taking trip after trip to the pet store. It wouldn't have taken so long, but my dad was always busy at work so it was hard for him to find time to go with me. We had to wait to get her so we could set up her terrarium, what was about to become her new home. As we drove, my heart started picking up speed. I couldn't wait to show her my house, our house. It was the most unbelievable feeling in the world; finally having her with me.

I held my hand over the container at an angle to shield her from the sun. There was no music coming from the radio. No entertaining stories coming from Dad's mouth. Just silence. But it wasn't that awkward kind of silence that makes you want to wriggle in your chair. It was that magnificent, magical silence that makes you wish you could freeze time and savor every minute of blissful peace.

After what seemed like ages of trying to hold her as still as physically possible, we reached our little suburban house. My dad fumbled with his keys and we went inside. I carried her



Haley Cheek, 12  
Wellesley, Massachusetts



Isabella Xie, 11  
Newton, Massachusetts


carefully up the stairs and into the den. As Dad made some final touches to the terrarium, I showed my mom the new addition to our family.

She was a beautiful crested gecko, with three toes on each little padded foot and a graceful tail almost the length of her body. She had two rows of spiky ridges that created dramatic eyelashes and then cascaded elegantly down her back. Her scales made an intricate orange pattern and her head looked like an ancient arrowhead, with her spectacular little eyes sitting on each side before coming to a gentle curved point where her nose would be. I could feel the vibrations of her every footstep, and I could almost see her tiny heart race inside her body. She was probably the only one who had even worse butterflies than I did.

I pulled off the lid and gently lifted her out. She was as light as a feather and as smooth as a river rock that had been shaped perfectly by Mother Nature's waters. I set her down cautiously on top of the small log inside the glass terrarium. She just sat there frozen. I noticed that she had turned a very dark, dark brown color. I knew that darker colors usually meant crested geckos were excited or scared. I closed the door to her domain after spraying the inside with warm water from a spray bottle. That way it would be nice and humid like the lush rainforest where she came from.

We left her alone for a while so she could adjust to her new environment. When I got downstairs, Dad asked me what I was going to name her. Wow. I hadn't thought of that. I decided that I wanted to give her a name that was fitting to her heritage. I wanted it to mean something. I knew from all my research that crested geckos live in New Caledonia, a tropical island to the east of Australia. I did some searching on the computer but couldn't find out how to say lizard in Polynesian. However, I did discover that the Polynesian lizard god is called Moko. "Moko. Moko." I tested the word out loud. I loved the way it fit so comfortably in my mouth. It was perfect.

We had to let Moko rest before we could really start enjoying her company, but I sneaked into the den and checked on her before I went to bed. She had climbed high up on the vine that was suction-cupped onto her back wall. She was exploring and had turned back to her brilliant shade of bright orange. That night, I dreamed that I was with Moko in the rainforest. We were laughing and playing in the canopy of the trees, and just peeking through was the moon and the stars, shining brighter than ever before.

I woke with the fluffy feeling of joy and love in my heart, and I knew that Moko and I were going to be happy together for a very, very long time. 

# Daffodil

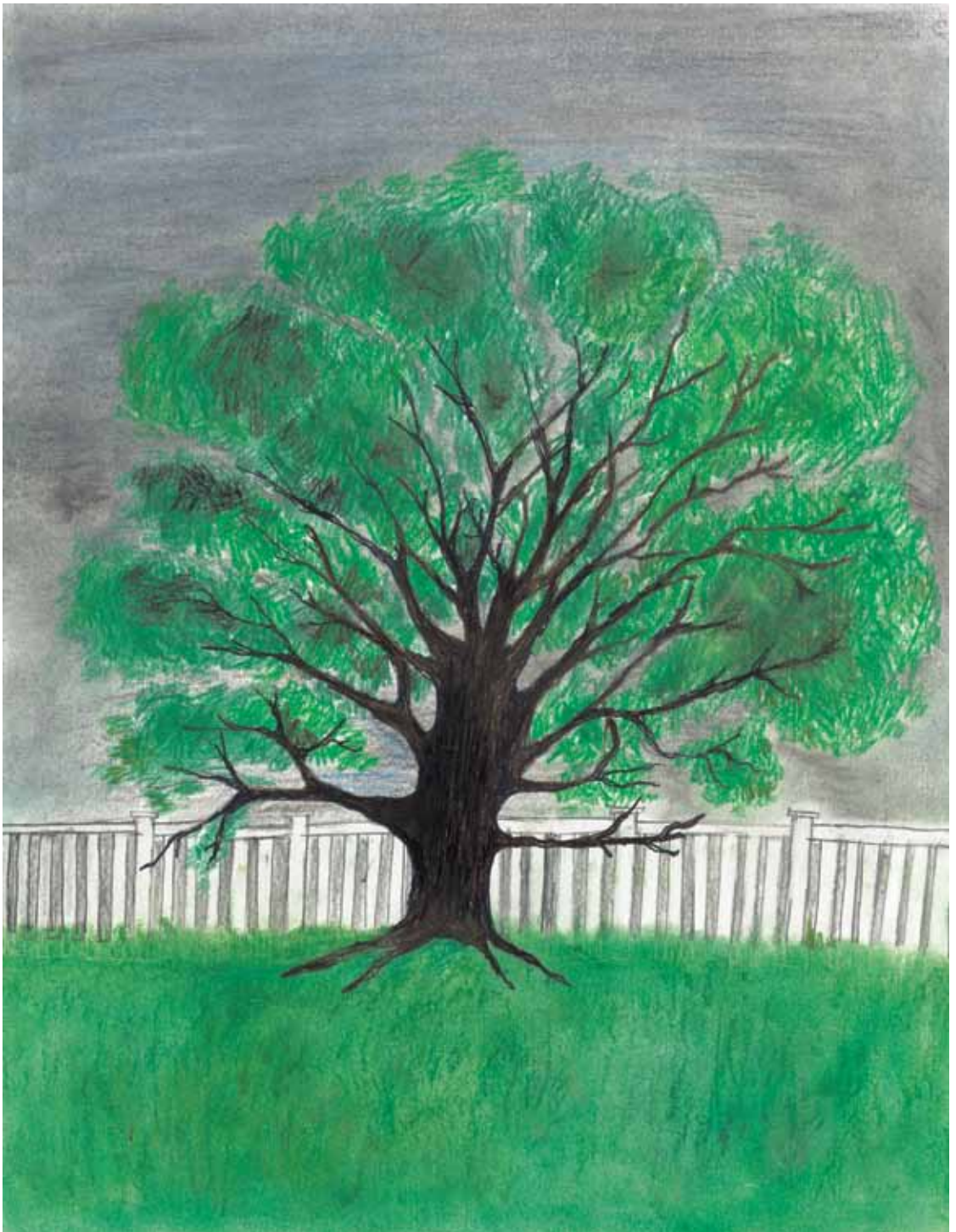
By **Madeleine Yi**

A pea-green shoot pokes out of the ground.  
Through the last sprinkle of snow,  
It stretches.  
Straightens.  
Reaching towards the sky, it whispers,  
“Spring. Spring. Spring.”  
It battles the icy wind  
And the winter-beaten mud.  
Slowly  
A bud grows,  
Rounder, bigger, smoother.  
One day...  
Yellow.  
Finally.  
Five fairy petals caress the warming air,  
Surrounding a golden crown.  
A lone beam of sunshine,  
Among browns and grays.  
Head high,  
It is the herald of spring,  
Announcing the arrival of sunshine,  
The birds, and  
Other daffodils.



Madeleine Yi, 12  
Derwood, Maryland





*The morning the oak tree was cut down was dismal and wet*

# Logs

By Naima Okami

Illustrated by Sarah Ko

THE MORNING the oak tree was cut down was dismal and wet, clouds drooping under the defeated sky. My breath fogged up the school bus window as I strained my eyes for one last look at the tree's branches; one last look at the way they stretched towards the weak sunlight. I did not feel particularly sad, as I had expected, but then, what was going to happen had not yet fully registered. It was as though I was going to snap my head up in the middle of next day's math class and say "*What!*" about twenty-six hours too late.

The town council, as they so bravely called themselves, had come to us months before, demanding that we cut down the "safety hazard" in our front yard. My father, never one to respect authority—especially if they were asking him to destroy something he loved, had laughed in their faces and slammed the door. Thinking that they would give up, we had promptly forgotten about the encounter until presented with their lawyer, who listed the laws we were violating until our eyebrows touched our hair. Knowing they had won, the group of committee members had smugly walked down our walkway, smart skirts and pressed pants rippling in the breeze. I had felt a strong urge to yell something at them, but my father's footsteps drew my attention. He was walking *away*, toward the kitchen! To my utter disbelief he had picked up the phone and dialed the local tree service company, arranging an appointment for the "soonest time possible." My father, who loved that old oak as much as I did, had given up. His *great-grandmother*, when her father had



Naima Okami, 12  
Rose Valley, Pennsylvania



Sarah Ko, 12  
Naperville, Illinois

built the house, had planted it. His *father* had taught him to climb in its dependable arms, and he had taught his daughter, me. But he had given up. And then, so had I.

And here I was, being pulled away by a cheerful, yellow bus amid drizzling rain and gray skies, wondering if I would hear the *crack!* of splitting wood all the way in my science room. Then the realization I had been expecting came, and I knew that I wasn't going to sit around while my favorite part of the neighborhood was destroyed by paranoid monkeys in dress clothes. I was going to try my best, come what may.

"Excuse me?" I asked the bus driver, trying not to look at the rolls of fat that cascaded from her stomach, resting on her legs.

"Yeah?"

"I was—um—wondering if you would let me out. I forgot something at home. I can have my mother drive me to school after I get it, she's off work today." This was a lie, but how was she to know?

"Sure, hon, get on out. Don't be late for school!" With a faint hiss like angry snakes hidden inside the dashboard, the doors opened, and I ran down the rain-darkened steps and onto the road. Even though my house was only a few blocks away, I knew I had to sprint to make it there in time. They were coming to cut the oak down at eight-thirty, in less than five minutes. Panting, I reached the back gate of my yard and yanked it open. Hidden by leaves, I put my foot in the familiar knot-hole and hoisted myself up into the tree's

branches. They stood, immobile and confident under my feet, while their delicate leaves filtered sunlight like stained glass. I climbed from branch to branch, farther than I had ever dared to climb before, so far up that when I peeked down, the whole town seemed unfolded below me like a giant Monopoly board. Suddenly I felt a little scared, as if I might be doing the wrong thing. But I couldn't turn back now, could I?

The rain had started to come down harder by the time the green truck pulled up into our driveway. Scrawled across the side in mud-brown print was Fitch & Thompson's Tree Service: Providing Help for Trees for Minimum Fees since 2007. I didn't really see what there was to brag about, but then I wasn't in the tree service industry. Three men wearing atrocious orange shirts bearing Fitch & Thompson across the back walked the length of the yard and up onto our front step. Before they could knock on the door it opened, and my father and three committee members walked out. When had *they* gotten here? One of the men walked over to the base of the oak and started to take notes, while the other two pulled the truck out of the driveway and parked it parallel to the edge of the yard, where their soon-to-be victim gallantly stood. They began to prepare their chainsaws, and I knew it was time to announce my presence. However, I didn't get the chance.

"What are *you* doing up there?" The man who had been taking notes had

evidently looked up, and everyone else followed suit.

"I'm passively resisting," I stated bluntly. "You can't cut her down now. That would be *murder*." I said the last bit triumphantly, directing my words at the people who had condemned my friend to die. They sputtered a bit, and the tree man's jaw fell open, but my attention was now focused on my father. He had a sad, slightly disappointed look on his face, as if he had expected better of me.

"Caroline. Come down, now. This is going to do nothing but disrupt things. You can't stay here forever, and then they'll just come back tomorrow." I hadn't thought about that in my race to figure out what to do, and suddenly the plan seemed much less ingenious. But I would stand my ground.

"No. I'm staying up here." The rain was pouring by now, sticking my hair to my neck and soaking through my clothes. My teeth chattered of their own will. One of the council members stalked closer to the tree and began to speak.

"Do as your father says. Come down here no—" The woman was cut off by her colleagues, who pulled her into their circle and began whispering. Finally she broke away from the group and glued a wide smile on her face before approaching the tree once more.

"Now listen, honey, you don't want to cause a problem for us, do you?" She waited for my answer, and when it did not come she continued anyway, smile hardly faltering. "Be a good girl and come down

now, OK? You're probably really cold and wet by now, and we all want to go home." As if for emphasis she opened an umbrella over her head with a loud *snap!*

"No. And you can't do anything about it. If you try to cut her down, I'll fall, and then my dad will sue you and you'll be arrested for murder." She sighed dramatically, as if I was just the stupidest, most stubborn person she had ever met, and retreated back to the rest of her army. A half an hour or so passed, and the men who had been called to cut down the oak began to check their watches and restlessly shift their weight from one foot to the other.

I really was cold by now, and that, combined with the feeling of disobeying my father, made me start to shiver. What if this didn't work? I hugged the slippery side of the tree trunk protectively and glared down to the ground where my father was approaching the base of the tree. What was he going to do? He hoisted himself expertly onto the first branch, then the second, and before I realized what was happening was almost halfway up the tree. I had no place to go, for I had climbed as far as the tree's now fragile branches would let me. I held the trunk even closer. Then my father reached my branch and yanked me down from my perch, slinging my slight body over his shoulder. I struggled, but he was very strong, and I did not want either of us to fall. Although holding my legs with one hand while simultaneously climbing with the other, he easily found footholds and

branches to clasp in his huge hands. I was losing, and I knew it.

"Let me down!" I cried, but he ignored me, concentrating instead on navigating down the tree with his squirming load.

Tears began to roll down my cheeks as I thought about what would happen, and by the time my father set me on the ground, I was sobbing. The men with their chainsaws advanced, and I ran inside the house before I could hear the rip of breaking wood. I raced up the stairs to my room and threw myself on my bed, heedless of my muddy shoes and wet clothing. Pulling a pillow over my head, I loudly hummed the national anthem, but I could still hear the thumping as bits of the oak were lowered to the ground, still hear the buzzing whirl of the chainsaws.

When it was all over, my father came into my room and sat down on my bed, stroking my hair and telling me that he was sorry. I stayed in bed for the rest of the day.

**F**OR THE NEXT WEEK, I walked the long way home from school, a path that led me to my house's back door instead of its front. I couldn't stand to see the gaping, bare space that had once been so filled with green life, or the pile of stout logs that would be used for firewood.

At first everyone at school had acted a bit wary of me, as if I might do something as radically unexpected as I had that day. The story of my failed boycott had spread rapidly, and even my sixth-grade teacher shot me sympathetic glances. I had for-

given my father with little effort, for how could I hold the oak's death against him when he was as sad as I about it? Most things went back to their old routines, but I couldn't seem to pull myself out of my morose mood.

My mother, who I suppose saw herself as an aspiring psychologist, said that I should try visiting the tree stump—that seeing it might help me “come to terms” with what had happened and “move on with my life.” She bothered me non-stop about it, until I had to clench my fists to keep from yelling SHUT UP!! with all the force in my lungs. Then I would remember that she was just trying to help, and the anger would fly out of me like a cut balloon. But no matter how much I loved my mother there was just so much of this I could stand. One day at dinner, I had had enough.

“Fine!”

“What?” she asked, almost surprised. I had refused her so many times she had probably accepted the fact that I always would.

“I’ll go.”

“Thank you, Carrie. You know your father and I cannot stand seeing you so upset. Anyway, even if it doesn’t work, there’s no harm in trying, right?”

As far as *you* know, I wanted to say, but instead refused to respond and walked into the hallway to slip on my coat. It was dark out, so I took with me the emergency flashlight that perpetually hung in the mudroom. It bobbed cheerfully with my every step, shining strange dollops of light





*The rustling sound was coming from there*

onto the grass and trees.

The place where the oak had once stood was no different than I expected. A wide, slightly raised circle cut off the grass, already splattered with mud. Seeing it, I did not feel any better. I heard an eerie rustle of leaves, felt an imaginary coolness from standing in what would have been the tree's shadow. It was like my neighbor, who had lost his arm in the Vietnam War and said he could still feel the pain of the wound that had infected it. Phantom pains, he liked to call them. But there it was again. That rustling sound.

I whirled around, accusingly spotlighting the pile of logs with my flashlight. The rustling sound was coming from there. The light of the beam searched the shadows and dense leaves, finally flickering once off the startled eyes of a calico cat with a bundle of dark fur in her mouth. *She* had been the one making the noise!

Carefully pressing the flashlight to the grass so that its light dimmed but was still

enough for me to see, and then sitting down on the damp earth, I waited. She stood perfectly still, staring into my eyes, the kitten in her mouth limp. I knew she was gauging my danger. I tried to be as quiet as possible, barely even breathing for fear of startling her. Cautiously, she began to move again, climbing onto the largest bit of trunk and dropping her baby into its rotted interior. Enthralled, I watched as she ran quietly away, to return with another kitten, this one splotched white and black like a miniature cow. During the next half an hour she made five more trips, coming back each time with a kitten more adorable than the last, fur colors ranging from white to black to calico or mixes between them. Every time she gently laid a baby cat inside the log, I thought about how she was making use of the hollowness that had caused the oak to be a danger, thought about how happy it would have been to be something's home.

It took me a while to realize that I was smiling.



# Noire

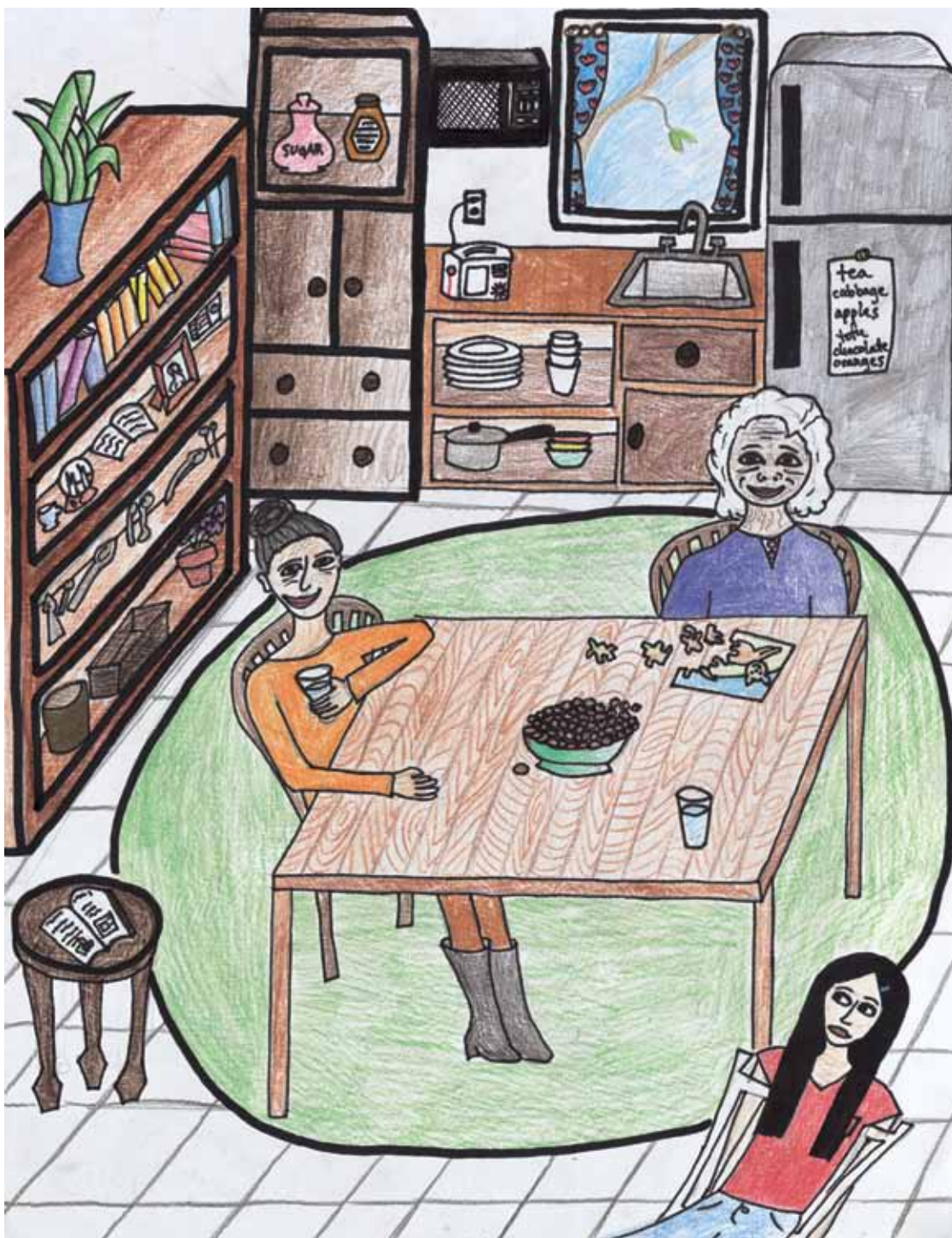
By Jonah O'Hara David

A crow or raven  
against the black night.  
A cry from a lone child.  
A smooth dark rock  
thrown at you.  
A dot, sweet, warm,  
and black on your tongue.  
A musty smell,  
revolting at first,  
sweet afterwards,  
though too quick to catch.  
Scented like a black horse.  
At first sight,  
A child tattered,  
crying, and though silent  
makes the loudest sound.  
It is a whinny heard in the distance.  
It's something or someone you love  
Who  
Dies.  
That's Negro.



Jonah O'Hara David, 10  
Norman, Oklahoma





*Grandmother Rose seemed to bubble with joy*

# History Is Worth Preserving

By **Maya Martin**

*Illustrated by* **Maggy Esserman-Rice**

**A**NNA NAKAGAWA loved going to her grandparents' house. The house was large, with lots of room inside and out. There was a room full of books, a grand piano, a room with a huge TV, and even a room of her very own, where she stayed every time she came over. And of course her grandparents were wonderful. With her being the only girl grandchild, they treated her like a princess. So once a month she stayed at their house for a day or two. Today was the Monday of spring break. She was going to spend a leisurely week here, doing nothing.

There was a small downside to staying with her grandparents. Whenever Anna came over, she had to visit her great-grandmother, Rose. She did love her grandmother, but Anna always felt awkward and uncomfortable around her. It also was kind of depressing to see her now, since she often had medical problems and sometimes forgot things.

**“W**E'RE HERE!” Grandma said as they drove into the garage. Anna popped out of the car, grabbed her suitcase, and ran in.

“We should visit Grandmother Rose before lunch,” Grandma suggested, after Anna was settled.

“Do we have to go right now?” asked Anna, wanting to relax and read.

“Anna, there will be plenty of time to relax later. Besides, Grandmother Rose just moved to a new nursing home. It would



Maya Martin, 12  
Battle Ground, Washington



Maggy Esserman-Rice, 11  
Washington, D.C.



really cheer her up if you visited her.”

“Oh, all right,” Anna sighed. She grabbed the first book in her suitcase and headed back out the door.

Anna glanced at the book she brought as they drove to the nursing home. The book was called *A Brief History of World War II*. Anna had already started it, and it was very interesting. There were tales of bravery in Europe, in Africa, in the Pacific, and even in America. Stories of prisoners of war, submarine captains, army nurses, air force captains, Jewish refugees, and patriotic children on the home front all were in this book.

“Here we are!” Grandma said, interrupting her thoughts.

The nursing home was big and open. Anna and Grandma signed their names in the guest book and then hurried down halls filled with nurses, elderly people, and guests. They stopped in front of room 302, which had a sign that said EMILY ROSE SEO in gold letters. Grandma knocked on the door.

“Come in,” said a frail, yet loud and confident voice. Inside, Grandmother Rose was sitting at the kitchen table, eating grapes and doing a puzzle of a cat by a pond.

“Hello, Anna dear! Hello, Mary! How are you two today? Sit down! Would you like some grapes? Or perhaps some water?” Grandmother Rose seemed to bubble with joy.

“I’ll have a few grapes,” Anna meekly responded, sitting down on a rocking chair by a closet and a bed. She set her

book on a small side table. Grandma sat down at the kitchen table.

“That’s a nice puzzle, Rose. Where did you get it?” Grandma asked.

“My sister Louisa sent it. We used to do puzzles together when I was little.”

There were a few moments of silence while Grandmother Rose worked on the puzzle and Grandma checked the small refrigerator. Finally, Grandma spoke.

“Why don’t you two stay here while I talk to the nurse about your medication.” An odd silence followed as both women looked at the girl, waiting for an answer.

“All right,” Anna finally responded.

Grandma knew Anna was very uncomfortable, but she thought leaving the two alone would do them good.

AFTER GRANDMA LEFT, Anna walked over to the tall bookcase, lined with photos, postcards, trinkets, maps, ancient books, and a quaint collection of spoons. Anna looked at them all, but she was especially drawn to one black-and-white photo.

The photo was of a girl, maybe twelve or thirteen, with a cheerful expression, but you could see that she was tired and worn out. Her eyes were dark with a sort of mysterious air, but the happy expression overpowered them. She had very curly black hair and wore a long coat with a skirt that barely stuck out underneath. The girl had large boots on, which was fitting since the ground looked very muddy, and she stood next to a long, shed-like building. The background resembled



*"Yes, that's me, when I was twelve years old"*

some sort of farm. The photo was turning brown with age, and the frame looked as old as the photo.

Anna studied the photo a long time and then asked, "Is that you?"

Rose smiled. "Yes, that's me, when I was twelve years old."

"Are you at a farm or something?"

"No, that's at Camp Minidoka."

"Where's that?"

"Minidoka was one of the camps where

they interned Japanese Americans. It's in Idaho."

"Oh." Anna really had no idea what she was talking about, but she kept quiet. After a few quiet minutes she asked, "Why were you there?"

"Do you mean you've never heard of the internment of the Japanese Americans during World War II? Isn't it even mentioned in that book you have?"

"Oh yeah, once my mom told me you

went to some prison camp.”

“Well, would you like to hear about it?”

“Uh, sure, I guess.”

“Well, Anna, it’s a long story. My father was a Nisei, but my mother was an Issei. They met in Portland, married in Portland, and settled in Portland.”

“What’s a Nee-say, and what’s an Ee-say?” Anna asked, curiously.

“An Issei is someone who was born in Japan but has immigrated to America. A Nisei is the child of an Issei, an American citizen. We were pretty well-to-do. Nisei were generally treated better than Issei, since they were thought to be more ‘American.’ Issei weren’t able to become citizens or own land, so even though my mom had come to America at age four, she did not have very many rights. Still, we got along pretty well. We even went to a public school. There was some prejudice, though.

“In 1939 World War II started, and some people started disliking Japanese people. But it wasn’t really bad until 1941, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. Everyone started hating Japan, even many Nikkei, like me. But Caucasians hated the Nikkei themselves.”

“What’s a Nikkei?” Anna asked.

“A Nikkei is a Japanese American.”

“Didn’t people hate Germans and Italians? We were fighting against them, too.”

“Yes, but Nikkei were treated worse, for three reasons. First, Japanese are easier to tell apart than Germans and Italians. Germans and Italians looked just like the

average white American. Second, before the war, Nikkei were often treated similar to African Americans at the time. So this gave people an excuse to bully us. Third, the Japanese actually attacked America. But I’m not giving the people who hated us an excuse. We were Americans, not Japanese.

“I had some Caucasian friends. After Pearl Harbor, only one would talk to me. She was a real friend, and she offered me a lot of support. But mostly I hung out with other Nikkei. It was partially because, well, who else would we play with? It was also for defense.”

“Defense!?” Anna interrupted.

“Yes, defense. Nikkei boys often would get beat up and then get blamed for starting the fight. Girls suffered constant teasing and prejudice. Even some teachers excluded us.

“In January, the FBI searched houses, including ours. They didn’t find anything suspicious, but my friend’s father was arrested because they had some books that were in Japanese. Then we were told by the government to move eastward. Some people I knew did, and they suffered a lot more prejudice than on the West Coast. Some returned to the west. My father didn’t want to. In February, though, they told us to stay on the West Coast and not go more than five miles from our home. We couldn’t be out at night. The FBI was watching us.

“On February 19, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, and every Nikkei in Western California, Oregon,

most of Washington, and part of Arizona had to go to relocation centers, away from any towns and surrounded by barbed wire. They were really prisoner-of-war camps.

"We first went to an assembly center, and the one in Portland was a Livestock Exposition before it became the assembly center. We stayed in a horse stall. We then were sent to Minidoka Relocation Center. We had to stay in a room in a long barrack, with only a thin wall separating us from our neighbors. There was a big public bathroom with no privacy, and we all ate in a big room. We couldn't go near the barbed-wire fences, in fact, in some camps they shot people who got near the fence. Sometimes, people from nearby towns would watch us from the fence. They had never seen a real Japanese person. It was so humiliating, people I know thinking that I was an enemy.

"I was angry at America. I hated America. I wanted to go somewhere better, but where was that? I didn't eat much, I had trouble sleeping, and I got depressed. I would sit and sulk all day. I knew someone who had a nervous breakdown. My mom didn't want that to happen to me, so I went to school.

"That picture is of me in 1942. As you can see, Minidoka was very muddy. I'm in front of the building we stayed in."

Just then Grandma walked in. "Hi, ladies. It's almost time for your lunch, Rose."

"Wow, that was fast!" Anna commented.

"If you call twenty minutes fast, then yes, that was fast," Grandma responded. "Anyway, we better go so Grandmother can have lunch."


Anna walked over and hugged Grandmother Rose. "Bye. That was a very interesting story," she whispered.

"Goodbye, Anna dear. I'm glad you liked my story or, should I say, my life."

Grandma smiled as she watched them. She knew she did a good thing, leaving them alone. She hugged Grandmother and then they left.

ON THE CAR RIDE home, Anna was silent. She thought about Grandmother's story. It was so unfair! She couldn't believe that anything like that happened in America.

Once they got home, Anna looked through *A Brief History of World War II*. There was no mention of the internment camps. At first Anna got very upset, but then she knew what to do.

The next day Anna asked Grandma to take her to see Grandmother Rose. Grandma agreed. On the way out, Anna grabbed a pencil and notepad. Because history is worth preserving. 

# The Great Challenge

By Ryan Traynor

*Illustrated by Isabel Won*



Ryan Traynor, 12  
Emerald Hills, California



Isabel Won, 12  
Belle Mead, New Jersey

DAN SCOUTED UP AHEAD and saw the steep uphill climb before him. He took in a deep breath, looked left and right, and vowed to reach his destination in one piece. Keeping low in the tall grass, his eyes barely cleared the blades. He needed to keep his focus. He needed to remain silent to avoid detection.

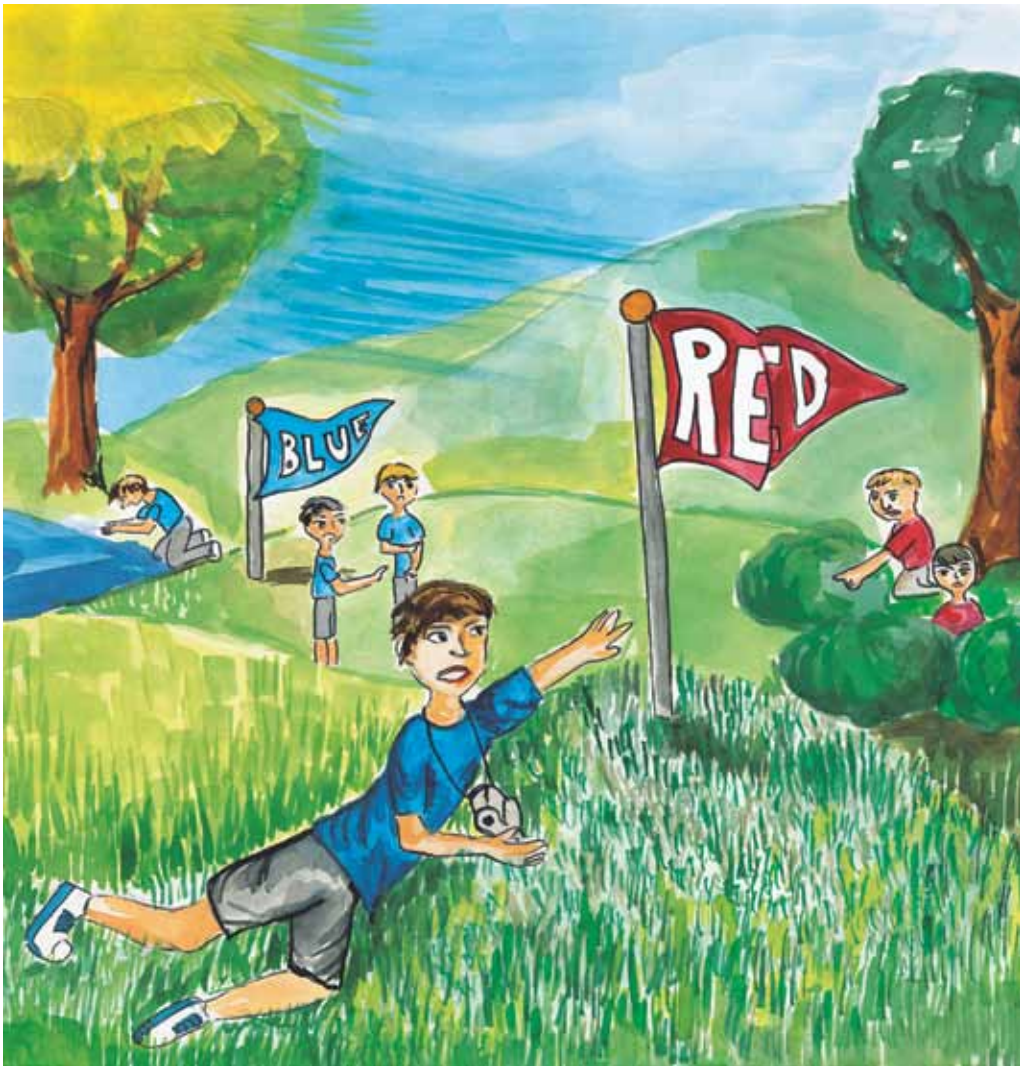
Slowly and skillfully, he maneuvered through the obstacles, making a point to not make a sound. The wind was picking up, but the whistling through the treetops would not cover many mistakes. He scanned the area and located two of his buddies, crawling slowly through the brush. They all had the top of the hill in their sights. The time was ticking away, but they could make it, if they all hung together.

Out of the corner of his eye Dan caught a blur of color. Was it an animal? Was it the enemy? He paused for one moment and took out his binoculars. He located a person near the river, dipping his hands in the dancing water for a drink. As he watched, he swallowed hard. Droplets of sweat ran down his forehead, blurring his vision for a moment. In the hot afternoon sun, the water would taste so nice. But he didn't dare chance the risk. Was it safe? Should he proceed?

He inched forward, then bounded behind the large boulder to his right. Like a snake slithering along a hot desert he laid his hands on the boulder and slid around to the other side. Now he had a clear view of his target.


He crouched down in a tiger attack stance and pounced up





*One more step and the victory was theirs*

the hill. Taking the run as quickly as possible, he could feel his lungs hurting from the sharp intake of air. His heart was pounding. He felt as if it would jump out of his chest... but he ran on. The goal was too important, to him, to his buddies, to his alliance. He had to succeed.

One more step and the victory was theirs. Reaching out as far as his fingertips could go, Dan grabbed the flag and held it high. His buddies rang out a chime of “Yays” to go with his yelp of joy. His team had won in the camp’s game of Capture the Flag. 

# Book Review

By Risa Askerooth

*Finding Danny*, by Linzi Glass; Walden Pond Press: New York, 2010; \$16.99



Risa Askerooth, 12  
Mililani, Hawaii

**T**WELVE-YEAR-OLD Bree Davies didn't know what to do in her lonely life before she got Danny, her beloved Border Collie. They were inseparable. She loved Danny more than life itself. Bree had long ago learned to deal with the fact that her mom and dad were lost to their new jobs, or, as Bree refers to it, "The News Monster." It didn't perturb her all that much at the time, since she was content with Danny. That is, until he ran away.

Bree's resentfulness to her parents increases when she finds out that her mom left open the side gate, by which means Danny got out. Although the sadness she endures is unbearable, in her struggle to find him, she makes a difference in the lives of countless dogs, and people. While chasing a dog she believes to be Danny (who is really a stray), she stumbles across the path of kindhearted Rayleen, who has a knack for rescuing strays and finding them homes. Before long, they develop a strong bond, full of love for dogs and the will to help them.

Being a dog owner of a rambunctious Black Lab/Rhodesian Ridgeback mix, I see lots of semblance between Bree and me. My dog, Ginger, has run away just shy of ten times. From those times, I remember my apprehension for her, thinking *Where is she? Will she be all right?* When we spot her, the look on her

face—half-guilty and half-excited—says it all. She trots up to us and licks me as I bury my face in her fur. I want to be mad, but I can't. I am just relieved and overjoyed to have her back. We found her every time, but the hours spent looking for her—feeling bitter and disconsolate—were sheer torture.


When Bree visits the pound with Rayleen and witnesses a dog owner abandoning his dog, her heart shatters. That doesn't lessen her faith. Instead, Bree—being Bree—is inspired to get as many dogs adopted as she can. And just like that, the idea of Adoption Day blossoms.

Along the way, she gets a lot of help from the most unlikely people. Like Ashton, who is Bree's fellow lead in the play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. They foster an unlikely friendship (and maybe something more) that starts with their passion for dogs. Bree also meets Martha, an old woman who needs something to care for. And you can't forget Officer Reyes, who has no spark left in him and barely looks at the dogs that come in, until Bree shows him the joy of loving.

"Save a shelter dog. Mutts are miracles." This is what the big banner in front of Adoption Day says in big blue letters. Bree is ecstatic. And when Adoption Day is over, she has reason to be, too. Almost all the dogs get adopted. She even found a home for Neptune! The only thing that was missing was Danny.

Over the course of events in the book, Bree learns a valuable lesson that opens her eyes: the only thing in life that's constant is change. As ridiculous as it sounds, it is astoundingly true. Nothing stays the same. And that's permanent.

Right now you might be wondering, does Bree find Danny? I'm not saying anything, but I can guarantee that this book has a wonderful ending.

I recommend this book to anyone who knows what it feels like to lose something, or someone. It is truly an inspirational story about overcoming the odds and having faith. Who knows, it might just make you want to adopt a shelter dog. 

# Wings of Hope

By Jenna Lasby

Illustrated by Victoria D'Ascenzo



Jenna Lasby, 13  
Austin, Texas



Victoria D'Ascenzo, 11  
Lincoln University, Pennsylvania

A SILENT BREEZE whipped thirteen-year-old Amy's light hair as she limped onto her porch. She grabbed the walking stick that rested against the side of the house and stood with its help. It made her feel old, but there was no way to get around without it.

Ignoring her feelings of protest, she started off on the walk across a path in the woods that she took every morning. Her mother sent her on these missions to look for insects, which she studied. An entire room in their house was filled with dead bugs in glass cases, with the rare exception of a live one being examined.

Amy slipped in through a space between two trees. The grass parted on each side to make way for a rough path. She walked down it, pushing debris aside with her stick. This was one of her easier days; sometimes the stick would catch on a root and make her trip.

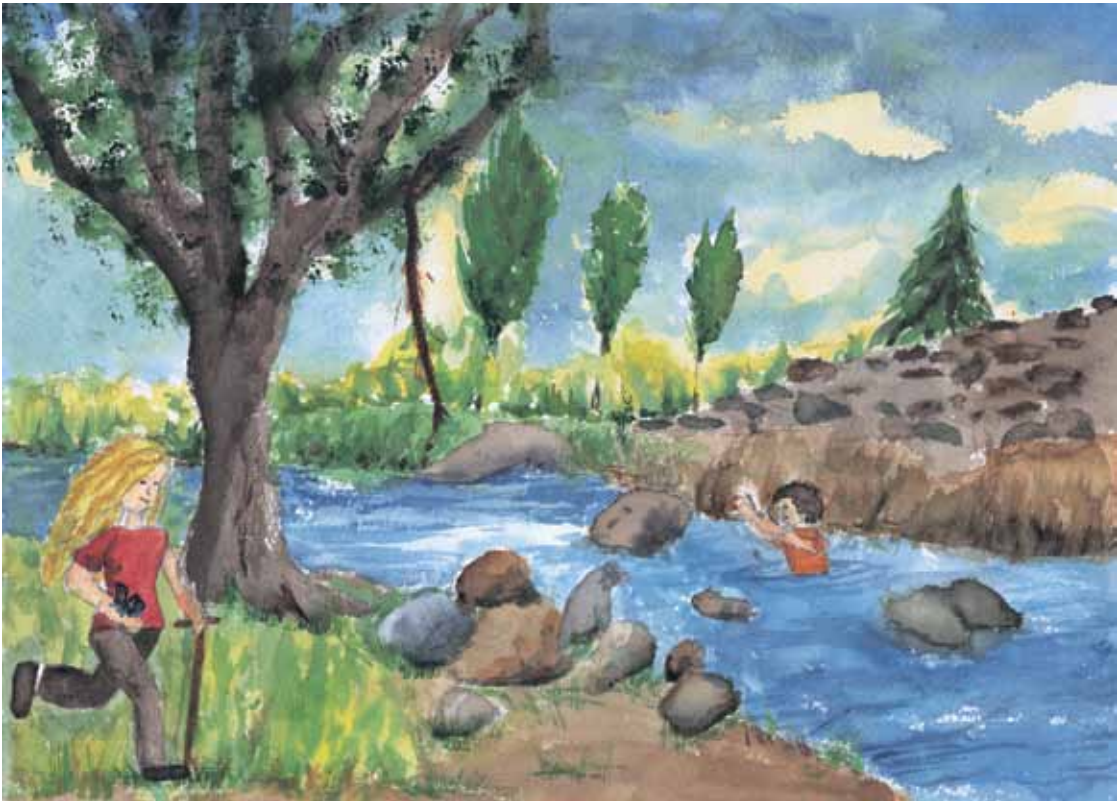
"Hey, Amy!" She turned around to see her little ten-year-old brother, Rick, making his way toward her. Swallowing her annoyance, she nudged aside a bush so he could get to her. Not waiting for her to ask, he continued, "Mom wants you to go a different route this time. She said she saw some rare bug somewhere else."

"Where?" she asked.

He only shrugged. "She didn't tell me."

"Um... OK." Amy veered away from the path, and Rick trudged off in a different direction. She was about to warn him





*In her moment of panic, something landed on her arm*

to be careful, but he had disappeared. He's always so abrupt, she thought with a sigh.

Suddenly the sound of rushing water came to her ears. She halted, tensing. Hadn't she promised herself never to go this way again? But she had no idea how to return to the path, or anywhere else for that matter. The only way to get back was from the area ahead. Taking a deep breath, she emerged into the less-wooded clearing before her.

It all hit her like a tidal wave. The gurgling river. The sharp rocks. The broken string dangling from a tree close by. Her

memory of that horrible day came back unbidden.

She and Rick had been playing on the rope swing that the tree had once held up. Amy had taken a running start and launched herself in the air, grabbing the rope. It swung precariously for a second before snapping. Wailing in terror, she was flung into the river.

Everything was hazy after that, except for the pain. Apparently her leg had hit a sharp rock and severely damaged the bone. In the hospital, she could hardly get up. Even now, almost a year later, she could only walk with this dumb stick.



How could she have done something so brainless? Now her life was wrong forever.

Amy was jolted out of her thoughts by a piercing scream. "Help!"

At first she thought it must be her imagination. Then she saw the small, brown-haired form of her brother thrashing in the river as it carried him downstream. Her blue eyes widened in disbelief. Thoughts raced through her head as fast as the beating of her heart. What happened? How *can* this be happening? Would he be OK?

"Help!" he called again.

"Hold onto a rock!" she advised.

Rick reached out, taking hold of a large stone. He managed to grab it, but it looked too slippery to support him for long. Amy's thoughts kept bombarding her. There wasn't time to get her parents. And none of the branches on the ground were long enough to reach him.

In her moment of panic, something landed on her arm. She couldn't help glancing at it. It was a butterfly with white stripes on its black wings and flashes of blue below them. Shock spread through her. Touching a butterfly could shorten its life. Either it didn't know that... or it was bravely taking the risk.

She should do the same.

Amy gently shook the butterfly off and hurried down the shore. Her steps slowed

when she reached the water. She flinched from cold and fear as it lapped against her feet, but she continued to go deeper. Before long she was almost up to her knees in water. Inching forward, she approached the stone that her brother was clinging to.

"Grab my hand," she told him.

Wordlessly, Rick took it. His grip was surprisingly strong for a ten-year-old. Amy lugged him to the shore, fighting the current that threatened to drag them away. They both collapsed to their knees on land, panting and soaking wet.

Amy got her breath back first. "What were you doing?"

"I tried to cross the river," he answered. "I thought I could get to the other side."

"Don't ever do anything so stupid again," she said.

"I won't," promised Rick.

She blinked. "I thought you would argue."

"I'm just glad I'm alive, I guess," he responded. He drew in a chilled breath. "Let's go home."

Amy stood up beside him. In the distance, she saw the butterfly that had landed on her, flying around a tree. A smile spread across her face as she realized the truth of her brother's words.

I shouldn't be angry that my life won't be the same again, she thought. I should be happy that I'm alive. 🍄

# Curiosity

*By* Sarah Wood

I would spend those bored hours,  
Peering through the wire mesh screen,  
Waiting for something worthy of a smile.

He zoomed, an invisible blur,  
Until he hovered at my window,  
His ruby throat aflame,

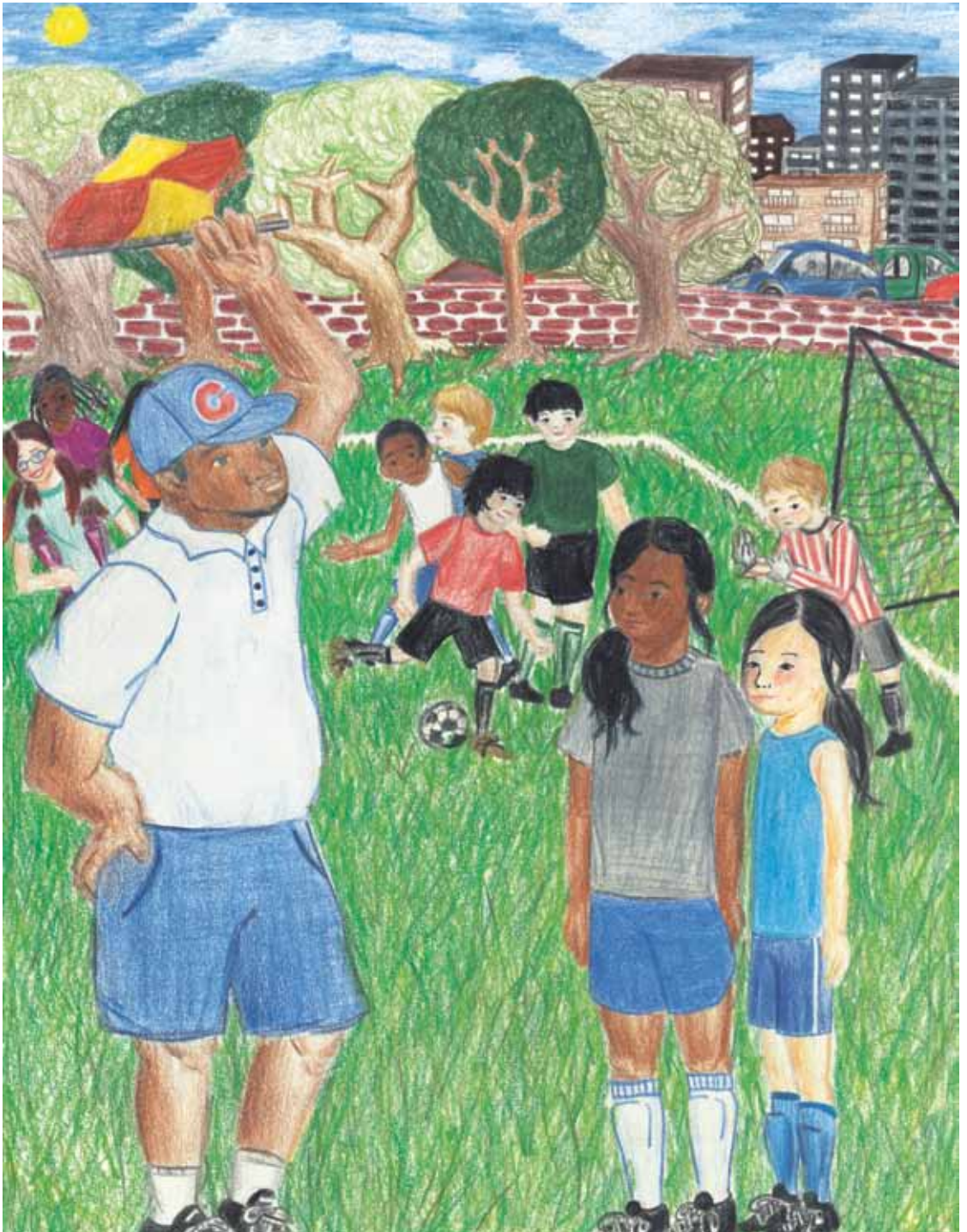
And his wings a cloudy shimmer.  
His eyes waiting,  
Holding mine.

It seemed for hours,  
As the hand ticked slowly, softly in the corner,  
We watched, wary,

Until a small green streak,  
He disappeared.



Sarah Wood, 12  
Seattle, Washington



*"Jonathan, Erica, the lot of you, get on the field," called Coach Mike*

# Soccer

By **Erica Hsieh**

*Illustrated by* **Madeleine Gates**

**E**VEN NOW, three years later, I remember that vague understanding of what it meant when my parents told me we were moving to Chicago. I had five friends in California, and they were all a little bit older than me, though I was taller. I remember thinking that I needed to remember this place, since I wouldn't be coming back for a while. Even at seven years old, I understood the curse of the concept "moving."

When I visited Chicago, the trees were bare, gloomy, and gray. The grass was flat and dead, there were no flowers, no trees, none of the hills I was used to. Everything was flat and gray with concrete. The houses were large and foreboding, made of an ugly brick. The house I was staying in was drafty, gray, and cold. I didn't realize it was just the edges of winter.

The first phone call in our house in Chicago, however, was for me, and it was from Vivian, a girl I didn't know that well since she had changed schools when I still lived in California. But she was nice, and I liked her. I immediately wrote letters to some of my other friends: Rachael, Katherine, and Zoe. I gave them to my dad to mail.

Then, oh then, the Chicago summer came. It was 100 degrees, hot, sticky, and humid. The heat seemed to shimmer, and if you touched metal, you would burn. I went to an *outdoors* sports camp, where I was informed by a curly-haired girl with black hair that two of our counselors had a crush on each other because they were teasing one another. I watched two girls, one chubby-cheeked with pale skin, the other black-haired with al-



Erica Hsieh, 10  
Chicago, Illinois



Madeleine Gates, 13  
La Jolla, California

mond eyes. They treated each other as sisters but they couldn't be; they looked too different. The chubby-cheeked girl, whose name was Olivia, turned out to be my best friend two, three years later.

Zoe and Katherine wrote back, but Rachael didn't. I figured that Dad had lost the letter, though he denied it. So I waited for letters. I unpacked, played tennis, cried that I left my stuffed animal in California—and to my parents I must have looked like a happy little seven-year-old who just moved and is content with her new home. Sure, I knew that they knew I wasn't as happy as I could have been, but they didn't know that I cried myself to sleep or that I choked up when I saw the last name of one of the teachers at my old school on the wall at the university swimming center.

I wrote back to Zoe and Katherine about what Chicago was like and how much I missed them. It had been two months and still nothing from Rachael. At that point I began to question just how bad could the mailmen mess things up. Actually, Rachael hasn't written to me to this day, though I wrote her two letters, and I'm sure the second one made it to her because I slipped it in her dad's suitcase when he came to Chicago on a work trip and was working with my dad.

Then, one day at the sports camp, we started our unit on soccer. Now, I loved—and still love—soccer. Not meaning to brag, but I was really good. (Don't you love my seven-year-old modesty?)

Whether or not because of me, my team won most of the games.

At a particularly hot and sticky soccer game, a boy on my team came up to me and said, "If you gain possession, pass to me and I'll score." (Even then I would admit I did not have the best aim.) I shrugged.

"Sure."

The boy had long black hair, coal black eyes, and was one or two years older than me. His name was—if I remember correctly—Jonathan.

"*Jonathan, Erica, the lot of you, get on the field,*" called Coach Mike, waving the off-sides flag impatiently. I jogged over to the coach, a big man with dark skin, the sun attempting to strangle me as I ran.

"Coach Mike, do I switch to midfield since Rachel's not here?" I panted. Coach scanned the group of hot, sweaty grade schoolers.

"Wait a minute, why's Rachel not here?"

"She sprained her ankle in track and field," called Kylee, an explosive defender with hands the size of footballs and who could run like a deer.

"Sure, but do you really want to?"

"Yeah."

"Fine," he said, "*Everybody ready? In position*—Leo, what are you doing? You're defense!"

I heard Coach's ear-splintering whistle, and the other team kicked off. Now, if I were a writer, I would describe the game, make it exciting and all that, but there is really nothing to describe.



We won. Jonathan (or was it John?) scored *six* times. After the game, I ran with the other kids to the water fountain. I flopped down on the grass and splashed water on my face. Sitting up, I poured the rest on my head. Jonathan walked up to me and held up his hand for a high five.

"To teamwork." I gave him a good, hard high five. He smiled.

"Most girls I know barely even touch your hand when they high-five. I like your spirit."

"Most boys I know—well, used to know—would rather eat scat than be caught talking to a girl," I replied, flattered. Jonathan threw his head back and laughed. It was a warm and friendly laugh, and it made me all tingly inside.

"Wait, what do you mean, used to know?" he asked.

"I just moved here from California."

"Well, welcome to Chicago."

"Thanks."

"Hey, do you want to join my soccer team?" he asked. "It could be fun. Each week two kids are picked to be team captains. If you come, I'll know who to pick first."

"Yeah, I want to."

"I think I've seen you around before—do you live on Kimbark?"

"Yeah, I do, where do you live?"

"Woodlawn. I think my garden's the one behind yours."

"Erica," asked Jonathan hesitantly, "do you want to- to meet at Bixler park tomorrow morning? I- no, I don't mean..." he said hurriedly, misreading the look on my face.

"Of course!" I smiled. He grinned.

"See you, then!" he said.

I smiled. So what if Rachael decided not to write to me? It didn't matter now. I had a friend.



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