

Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists



Illustration by Dominic Nedzelskyi, age 13, from "Breeze," page 23

BREEZE

Love can bring you together and tear you apart

THE GHOST CHILDREN

Why are Michael, Emma, and Summer drawn to the old house on the hill?

Also: A new poem by Nastassja Carusetta

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2012

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Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists

VOLUME 41, NUMBER 2
NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2012

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Editor's Note

When I was a little girl I wasn't allowed to have a pet. One of my two sisters wanted a Yorkshire Terrier so badly she cut pictures out of magazines and taped them to her wall. Now all three of us have pets that we love a lot. Several stories and poems in this issue are about people and their pets. In "My Kitty Mango," on an otherwise unremarkable day, Isabella shares a moment of connection with her cat that she will remember her whole life. "Breeze" is a heart-wrenching story of a boy whose dog means everything to him. Then one day, Breeze doesn't come home. Pets provide us with friendship, understanding, and love. If you're lucky enough to have a pet, think about what your pet means to you, what experiences you've shared. You might just find the kernel of a brilliant story or poem.

— Gerry Mandel

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Submissions

Please read our guidelines at stonessoup.com before sending us your work. Send submissions to Stone Soup, Submissions Dept., PO Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063. For questions, email us at editor@stonessoup.com.

ON THE COVER Dominic Nedzelski, a frequent illustrator for *Stone Soup*, will turn 14 soon, and we will certainly miss him. When Dominic received his assignment to illustrate "Breeze," he wrote back, "It's strange I got this story because my dog died little more than a week ago..." We were so sorry for Dominic's loss. We think he did a beautiful job of conveying emotion in his illustrations for "Breeze."



The Mailbox



Stone Soup is my favorite magazine! All the stories are so well written and the illustrations are detailed. I admired “A Different Kind of Friend,” by Lydia Solodiuk [March/April 2012] because this story shows that anyone can understand music. Emma Simmons, a deaf girl, helps the organist of her church turn pages for Bach’s *Fugue in D minor*. This seems hard for Emma but she faces her challenge. All the stories in your magazine inspire me to become a better, more interesting writer, so I can publish stories in *Stone Soup*. Furthermore, the illustrations encourage me to work on my drawings so I can become an illustrator for *Stone Soup*. I enjoyed looking at the pictures by Olivia Mulley in the July/August 2012 *Stone Soup*. The faces in her drawings almost look real.

Sophie Jacob, 10
Palo Alto, California

I love reading *Stone Soup* and I think it’s great that you have created a beautiful and page-turning magazine. Thank you!

Saffron Lily Gunwhy, 12
Ballina/Killaloe, County Tipperary, Ireland

I would simply like to thank you for creating *Stone Soup*. I love creative writing! It’s my favorite thing *ever*! When I saw you could send in things, I just stared at the glossy cover and said, “Me, *publish* my stories in *Stone Soup*?!” I was overjoyed. All you editors and readers out there: thank you, thank you all!

Rosie Helsinger, 12
Orlando, Florida

I’m so glad that you decided to publish my story. I’ve always wanted to be a writer. I’m really happy and I’m sure Mango is too. I really love your magazine, and it has inspired me to share my work. I loved the writing in “Go Back to Asia,” by Jason Fong [November/December 2011]. Poetry is a great way to communicate.

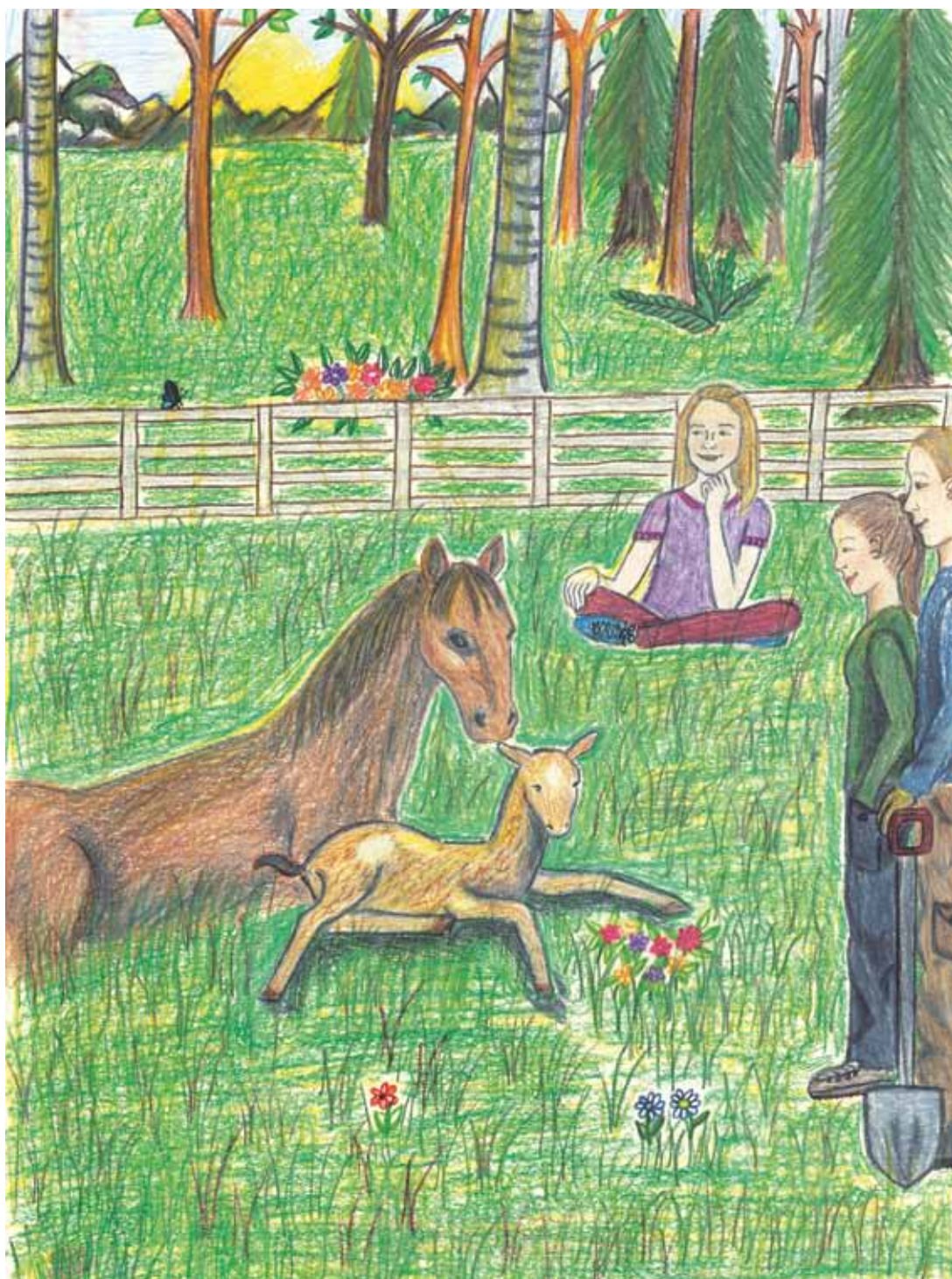
Isabella Widrow, 9, and Mango
Olympia, Washington

Isabella’s story appears on page 19 of this issue.

I loved the May/June 2012 issue of *Stone Soup*! My favorite story would have to be “My Brother’s Smile,” because it was very touching to me how Meena would do *anything* to see her brother smile. I think this really expresses sibling love as most children experience it today. I liked how Namrata Ramya Balasingam illustrated “My Brother’s Smile” with her own photos. It showed reality. There has to be a problem. Why not have Priya, Meena’s best friend, betray her, and Mani, the girl who was always mean, be Meena’s new best friend? I also liked “The Real Winner,” by Michele Younger. I especially liked the illustrations by Brooke Antoine. The plot was fabulous. I wanted to keep reading. Even though I can’t connect to this story very much, because I am the oldest and no one tells me I’ll never be as good as them at something like Miranda does to Sydney, I still like it a lot. I also like the use of Hawaiian words in the story.

Olivia Brash, 9
Maplewood, New Jersey

Stone Soup welcomes your comments. Write to us at The Mailbox, PO Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063, or send an email to letters@stonesoup.com.



We all got quiet, admiring her beauty

Missoula of the Mountains

By Lily Strauss

Illustrated by Olivia Zhou

IT WAS FINALLY SPRING in the woods of Montana. The bitter coldness had ended at last, and not only was the temperature warmer, but also the hearts of those who lived there. Bozeman, a chocolate-brown horse, was about to have a baby. Her life as a rodeo horse was over, for she had retired months ago.

One day, her beautiful foal arrived. Here's how the day went... "Mama, Mama, is Bozeman OK?" I, the owner's daughter, asked.

"Max, Bozeman's foal is being born!" Mrs. Andrews cried to her husband.

Mr. Andrews ran out to the pasture and saw a little foal, seconds old, lying in the itchy grass. Even though the foal was covered in slime and looked very ugly, Mr. Andrews could see the kindness in her eyes.

"What's her name going to be, Daddy?" I asked, when my mother came out.

"She deserves a very special name, Addi. So, I'm going to name her Missoula," explained Daddy with confidence.

Just as Mr. Andrews said Missoula, her head lifted up, making her look even more real. We all got quiet, admiring her beauty. We didn't talk for the rest of that day, and that is how that one magical day went.

MISSOULA WAS GROWING UP livelier by the day. She walked around the pasture where she was born every



Lily Strauss, 10
Leawood, Kansas



Olivia Zhou, 12
Roselle Park, New Jersey

day to visit her mother. She was very kind, especially with me and my friends.

One day, Mr. Levi, the Andrews' friend, came.

"Come on in, Mr. Levi," said Mr. Andrews through the moaning screen door.

"Max! May I meet Missoula, please?" asked Mr. Levi.

"Sure! I still can't believe you came all the way from Joplin, Missouri!" Dad said, leading him to Missoula's pasture.

Right as Missoula saw Mr. Levi, she steadily walked over, very curiously. I ran out and gave Missoula a big hug. Missoula lovingly and lightly nudged my neck, letting her kindness shine brighter than the sun.

"In two weeks, we are sending her off to rodeo training," Mr. Andrews explained.

Mr. Levi's face turned red. "Rodeo? Rodeo training? The sweetest horse I ever did meet, and rodeo?"

"What's wrong with a rodeo?" I asked.

"It's what her mama did," explained Mrs. Andrews.

"Please, please, please send her to be a therapy horse at my hippotherapy ranch!" begged Mr. Levi.

"Only for one month, but if my dear Missoula isn't happy there, she'll go straight to rodeo training," my daddy said, very sternly.

"Great!" called out Mr. Levi.

"What is hippotherapy?" I asked, worried poor Missoula wouldn't be happy.

"Well, it helps kids with different diag-

noses to improve posture, and many other important things," Mr. Levi explained. "Addi, we especially need therapy horses now because the tornado wiped out more than half of them," Mr. Levi said, trying to put an end to my jealousy, which was bubbling hotter and hotter.

I thought about how terrible it would be if Missoula got swept up by another tornado. My jealousy exploded. "I know I shouldn't be, but I'm really mad that another kid gets to ride my dear Missoula!"

"Addi," Mother said softly. "These children have Down syndrome, autism, brain injuries, and so much more. Don't be selfish."

Just then, my jealousy went away. There are so many bad characteristics in this world, but selfishness is one of the worst.

"Put Missoula to good use," I said, not angry now, but rather proud. "She deserves it."

FIVE DAYS AFTER Mr. Levi had left, the air was misty and gray, and a certain sadness loomed that fit the mood. Tomorrow Missoula was leaving, but now I was glad and I even knew who was riding her. The girl's name was Sammy, and she was very smart. She had mild autism. We sent letters back and forth. She said she has always dreamed of riding a horse. I said I was really happy to fulfill her dreams. I wasn't lying, not even the tiniest bit. I mean, I knew that Missoula was leaving, so why not help a girl my age with autism? And everyone knows that after every storm a beautiful rainbow ap-

pears. The only one who was sad now was Bozeman, who seemed to know that Missoula was leaving.

I went to bed instantly, and it seemed like only a snap of the fingers before I woke up. I gave Missoula a big kiss and told her she'd be great. She nudged me, and my biggest enemy, crying, met me again.

Then, a big truck with a cage attached to it drove into our driveway, and Mr. Levi came out. I rubbed my tears and wiped them across Missoula's back. I wanted Sammy to know me, at least a little bit.

Missoula was loaded on the truck, and it slowly drifted away with Missoula now looking sadder than she ever had. I ran inside and let my wet face soak up on Mama's dress. The beautiful lavender turned an ugly shade of purple, almost like the day.

I was very upset, so I went to talk to Bozeman. "Bozeman, I know you're sad, but I have a plan," I said, waiting for an answer.

Bozeman said, "Neigh!" as if to say, Addi, are you out of your mind?

So I just sat down on the rock by the barn door and thought—until it came to me.

"Bozeman," I said, "what if we could raise enough money to go visit Missoula?"

Bozeman's eyes twinkled with delight. I dashed into the house and grabbed a piece of paper. "Help Us Raise Money to Visit Beloved Horse in Joplin," I printed. It was beautifully decorated, so I posted it up by a tree and sat down on the top of a thick

root. At first, nobody came. So I chanted, "Missoula of the mountains, Missoula of the mountains!" I left the sign up and ran inside and wrote to Sammy. Here's what I said:

Dear Sammy,

I am very happy that you are riding Missoula, but I miss her very badly. I tried to set up a stand to raise money to visit her, but it won't work. I don't want to create more problems in your life, but please help!

Your friend,

Addi

When I sent it, I didn't have the least bit of regret. All of a sudden, the doorbell rang. I went to open the door and saw Shirley, my best friend. More and more people joined behind her, each with a sympathetic look on their face. Soon almost everyone in my town stood before me. "Thank you," I said to everyone standing out there. I had a good idea what was happening.

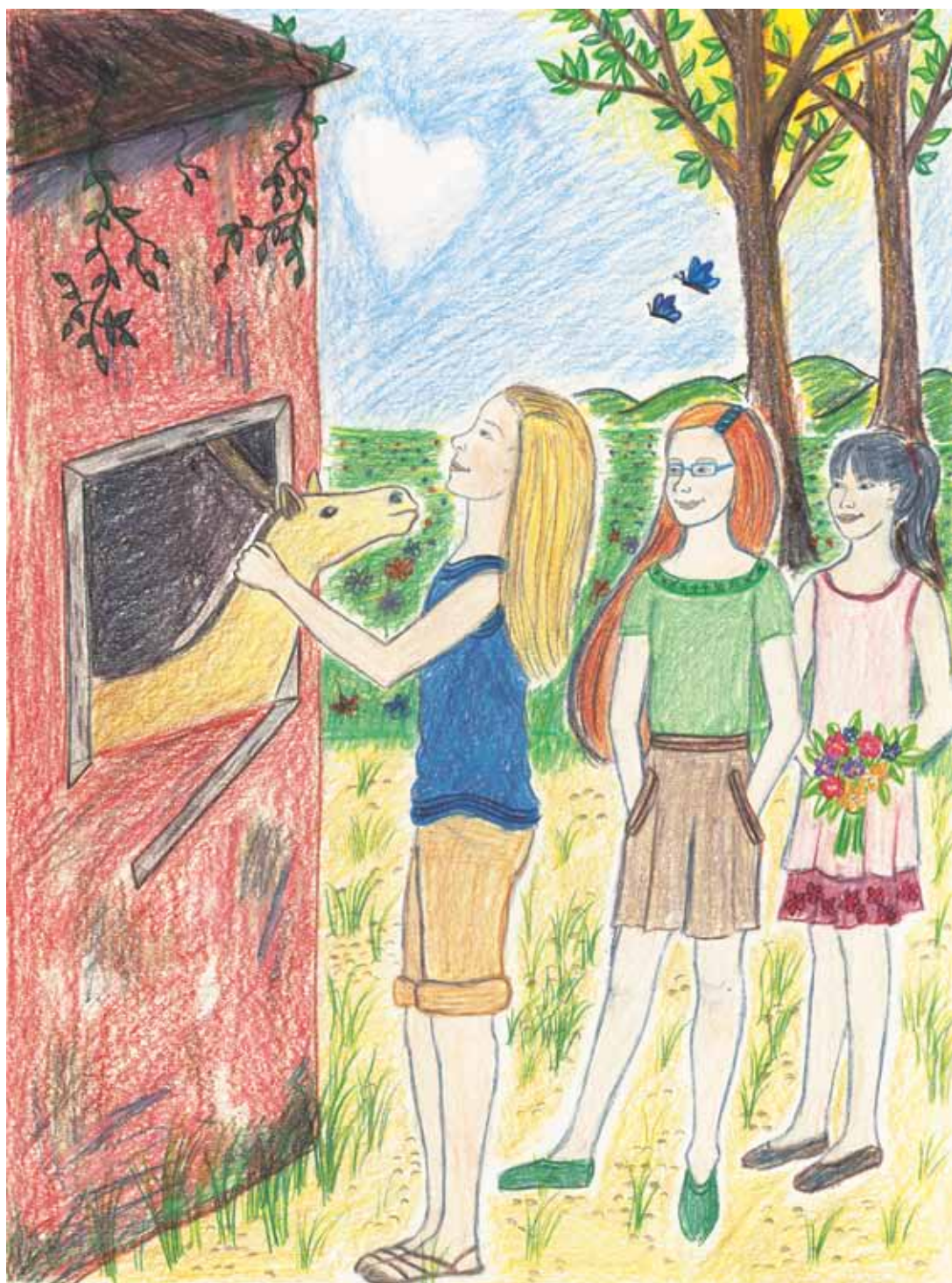
"Missoula left?" everyone asked in a beautiful chorus. Their eyes, so bright and sparkly, made me realize how much they cared.

"Yep," I whispered to myself. They all took shiny coins and crisp bills from their pockets. I gasped. "Oh, thank you so much!" I said as they handed them to me one by one.

"You deserve it. You really love Missoula," they said, and then they left.

As Shirley handed me her crisp dollar bill she said, "Good luck..."

Once everyone left I dug through the



I saw what Yellowstone saw—a big cloud, shaped like a heart!

trash can and found an empty can which had held sweet peas. I dropped the money in and shook it around, just to make sure it was still there.

THREE DAYS LATER, I went to the mailbox and found a letter from Sammy. It said:

Dear Addi,
Thank you! Don't worry; it won't be another problem, but another miracle! So far, I have collected over \$100. Hope to see you soon...
Love,
Sammy Reefs

I tried very hard to think about that one sentence, "Not another problem, but another miracle." Then it came to me. It made me realize I couldn't give up and, if I did, I knew I'd never forgive myself. I asked Mama how much money it would be to fly to Joplin.

Mama said, "It would cost about \$600!"

A tear slithered down my cheek, I knew I couldn't earn that much money. Then a thought came to me. "Mama," I said, "Shirley, you, and I must ride to Joplin in our car."

"Now, honey, I would need at least \$200 for that, and we'd need a trailer for the horse. You know I can't spend that kind of money," Mama said, looking heartbroken.

My eyes lit up. I ran upstairs and emptied out my can. I grabbed the money and raced downstairs. "Mama, look at this!" I cried out.

"Did you rob a bank?" Mother asked,

suspiciously. (I never had a single penny in my pocket). I had \$350 altogether.

"No, Mama, Sammy sent some of it to me! And everyone in town chipped in. And..." I squealed excitedly.

"Very well then, we shall make the trip to visit Missoula," she said, interrupting me, but I could see the sides of her mouth curl up into a smile.

MAMA PULLED OUT the car and we headed for Shirley's house. Mother explained it to Shirley's mother, and she agreed to let her go. So we set off, having great fun together, with Bozeman in the back trailer.

Then a thought appeared in the back part of my mind. What if Missoula didn't remember any of us? I couldn't think of anything worse than Missoula forgetting about us, now that she is Sammy's horse.

"Mama, is Missoula still *our* horse?" I asked.

"She may not live in our old barn anymore, but she sure still lives in our hearts," Mama said, sounding like she was reading it out of a book.

"Oh," is all I said.

She smiled and put her hand over her heart. I looked over at Shirley. Her face was lit up. Just then, I let go of all the stress and worry, and the only thoughts left were the positive ones. I was slamming my old, dark, negative door and was opening up a friendly, bright, joyful one.

"Shirley, Missoula is going to love those flowers!" I said, trying out this new room. And it felt great!

AS WE CONTINUED back down the road, I cried tears of joy when I spotted the sign that said “Welcome to Joplin, Missouri” in big, proud letters. We only drove a couple of minutes before I saw it. It was a worn-out red barn and had a cream X on the door. There was a green sign next to it, and in fancy cursive letters it said “Joplin’s Therapeutic Ranch.” We parked the car and walked slowly up to the barn as if this was just a dream, as if we had come all this way and were scared it wouldn’t be true. But a little girl came out of the barn, about as tall as me. Her red hair glimmered in the sun and swayed in the wind. Her blue glasses reflected Shirley, Mama, and me. I noticed that we were all smiling, but she wasn’t.

“Sammy?” I said, my stomach doing a flip-flop. Did she want us here?

“Addi, Shirley, Mrs. Andrews?” she asked, not frowning now, but looking rather pleased.

“It’s us, Sammy,” my mother said, satisfying tears skipping down her face. She ran over to Sammy and gave her a big hug.

“Before we see Missoula, I have some good news... thanks to all my friends back home, I raised an extra \$150 to help rebuild Joplin!”

“Really? Thank you, we have needed money to help rebuild this old barn!”

“How’s Missoula?” Shirley asked quickly and quietly.

“Good,” Sammy said slowly, almost as if she was remembering something while

she said it.

Just then, a baby horse peeked its head out of the window. Its fragile little body slipped and fell, then jumped to its feet again, looking at us curiously.

“Who’s that horse?” I asked.

Sammy took a deep breath and was quiet for a moment, smiling. “That is Yellowstone, Missoula’s baby,” she announced.

I stared at the yellow-and-cream horse in awe. I didn’t know whether to be mad that they didn’t tell me about him, or just soak up the glory of Missoula’s foal—the baby she once was. I looked over at Sammy, who wore a soft smile that made my heart melt like a popsicle in the heat. I was the popsicle surrounded by love. I decided to be happy about it.

I ran to the window and gave Yellowstone a big, truthful kiss on the nose and immediately knew this horse was going to grow up and be as meaningful to me as Missoula is. Yellowstone nudged me under my chin so I was now looking up at the sky. I saw what Yellowstone saw—a big cloud, shaped like a heart!

I ran inside the barn and saw Missoula. She was so much bigger than before. When I hugged her, my scrawny arms only went halfway around her neck. She looked at me, remembering our times together, and gave me a slobbery horse kiss. Yellowstone walked over and I realized that he was right, love was in the air. ❀

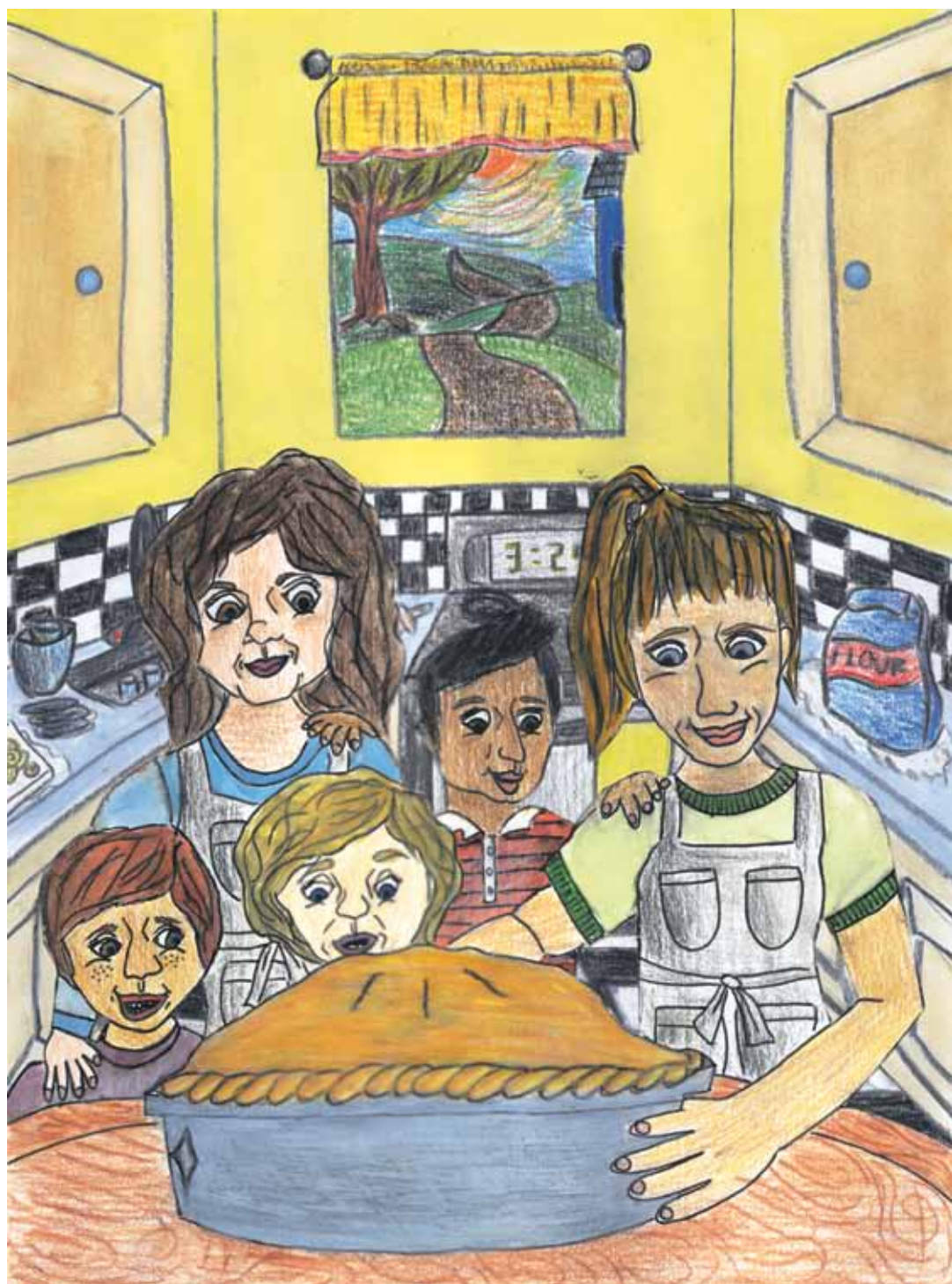
Shriveled Roses

By **Ethan Vranic**

Under the gray sky
In a dreary meadow,
One with the trees and fallen leaves.
A raven flies overhead
And the cold north winds
Start to creep in.
But in between two oaks is where they lie.
Once flourishing and lush, just like this meadow.
Shriveled up, facing down
With a pile of petals
Upon the ground.
No color left, in stem or flower,
The thorns are still sharp,
But no life inside them,
Ready to fall,
Shriveled Roses.



Ethan Vranic, 12
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada



"Great job, guys!" Gabby smiled. "You made a pie!"

Not Quite as Easy as Pie

By **Miriam Henerson**

Illustrated by **Isabel Samperio**

I HEARD A LOUD *bang!* Followed by a “No, darn it!” I rolled my eyes, knowing Max was in the kitchen again. Clumsy, fumbling, *so* not-a-chef-and-never-will-be, Max. I peeked around the corner of the door frame, only to see him and his cat, Rufus, covered in flour. Rufus was not happy and bounded away, shaking flour on the floor. Gabby, Mati, and Arian stood nearby. By some miracle they had all missed the flour explosion (unlike poor Rufus), but none of them looked happy.

“Really,” we all said in unison. “Really, Max?” He looked around at all of us, wearing a look that said that he knew he was an idiot, but also that we were being too judgmental. Well, duh.

Gabby grabbed an apron off the oven handle and threw it to me.

“C’mon let’s show them how it’s done!” she said fiercely and grabbed the now half-empty flour sack.

Max explained, “Make it good, guys; this is for Mom and Dad’s anniversary.” I threw an apron in his face.

“Surely you didn’t think we were doing this?” I said, emphasizing the “we.”

“No,” Gabby agreed. “We’re teaching you!” she said, pointing at the three boys. Mati and Arian stepped forward, interestedly.

A N HOUR LATER, the pie crust was rolled, four times because all three boys screwed up and their crusts fell apart. The apples had been drenched in cinnamon and sprinkled with sugar, and Arian had successfully bandaged his fingers after an



Miriam Henerson, 12
Van Nuys, California



Isabel Samperio, 13
Missouri City, Texas

apple-coring incident. Now we were ready to pinch the crusts.

"OK," I said, "now take a fork and press the tines into the edges to crimp it." Max looked at me like I had three eyes on each ear. I rolled my eyes again.

"Crimp means to make the pretty ruffle pattern that you see on pies' edges," I said. Bored (and slightly amused), I looked at Gabby, who was teaching Mati to poke ventilation holes in the crust. He looked happy, and I thought that was good because Gabby could be very aggressive. We both could. We were tomboys. That's why we were here, teaching descendants of monkeys to make apple pies, instead of at the nail salon getting Sugar-and-Spice purple polish. And personally, I was glad. I turned back to Max and Arian and they were crimping away.

"Very nice," I said, clearly impressed. "Great!" They went on crimping until the whole pie was done. Then Mati, who was immensely enjoying poking ventilation holes in things, came over and did just that. The five of us looked at the pie.

"Great job, guys!" Gabby smiled. "You made a pie!" The three boys smiled big cheese-eating grins. Gabby and I stood there, basking in their pride, but after a while we got so bored that I stepped in and took the pie. They didn't notice. I popped the pie in the oven. They didn't notice. Gabby shot a foam dart at Max's nose. That he noticed. He smiled mischievously and shot her back. Then it turned awesome. An all-out foam dart war took over the entire house, and

we only stopped when the oven timer pealed.

WE ALL RAN back to the kitchen, red-faced and full of adrenaline. Max dropped his gun in his haste and it landed with a loud clatter on the tile floor. Mati followed suit.

Arian kept his gun in hand until he reached the counter, where he slammed it down as Gabby took the pie from the oven.

Our pie came out golden-brown and flaky. It looked beautiful; better than any pie I ever made by myself. Gabby smiled at the pie, and as she was looking at it an orange dart whistled past her ear and hit the pie in the dead center.

"My ventilation," Mati screamed, a little too loudly.

Gabby gripped him by the shoulders and said through her teeth, "We slaved over this pie for three hours, and all you care about is your ventilation?"

Mati cringed under her gaze, but I saw a smile play on his face at her touch. I, too, smiled a little bit.

"So let's slap on the whipped cream!" Arian demanded.

"We can't yet; it'll melt because the pie is still too hot," Gabby said.

"All right then, well, let's decorate!" I exclaimed. "Your parents will be home soon, Max, let's make this place nice!"

So we did. We raided the wrapping paper and ribbons, created an arch of silver and red bows over the door, and draped gold streamers around everything.

By the time we were done, everything was colored in bright metallic shades. Just in time, too. As I added the last bow to the arch, the door clicked open, and everyone but Max ran to hide.

"Hi, honey!" I heard Max's mom say from my place behind the bar. "What's this?" She noticed the decorations.

"It's... something for you and Dad!" Max replied. From the tone in his voice I could tell it was taking all of his willpower not to tell. As he led his parents upstairs to more decorations, I remembered. The dart! The dart is still lodged in the pie! I thought. We have to get the dart out of the pie! I crept slowly from my hiding spot, every floorboard groaning under me. I was thankful to reach carpet, but the relief didn't last long. Max was leading his parents back downstairs! I ran to the pie

without any notion of the sounds I made. Quickly as I could, I dislodged the dart, but it left a gaping hole in the middle!

The whipped cream! I thought, the whipped cream. But then Max and his mom and dad came into the kitchen. I had just enough time to snatch the pie and cream can off the counter and crouch, pie in hand, on the cold tile. Max saw me and stifled a gasp. Quickly diverting his parents, he gave me enough time to cover the pie in cream and slide it back on the counter. Max's mom turned.

"Oh, honey! Did you bake this yourself?" she asked. Max was supposed to say that some special people had helped him, and then everyone was supposed to jump out. But before he could, I popped up and said, "Yes! He's quite the baker!"

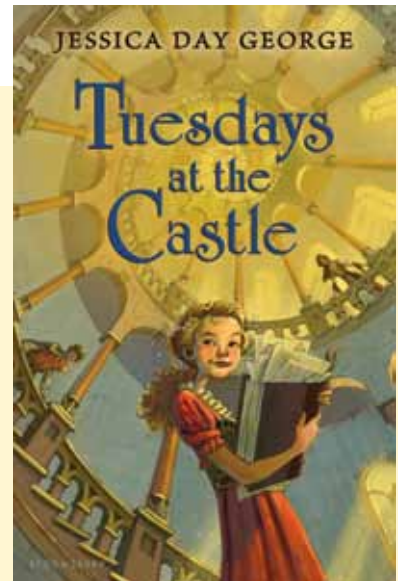
Everyone smiled.



Book Review

By Rachel Halpern

Tuesdays at the Castle, by Jessica Day George;
Bloomsbury Books for Young Readers:
New York, 2011; \$16.99



Rachel Halpern, 11
Glen Rock, New Jersey

JESSICA DAY GEORGE'S *Tuesdays at the Castle* is a wonderful, heart-pounding story about a young girl who needs to protect her home, the Castle Glower. When an evil man named Khelsh tries to take over the castle, it is up to Celie to stop him.


In this story, I felt that I could relate a lot to Celie because we are both eleven years old. In the beginning of the story, Celie wishes people would treat her like an adult, not a young girl. She is brought down by the way her siblings don't treat her as an equal. I could definitely understand how she felt. Even though I am the oldest child in my family, there are times when I feel that I am not being told certain information, because people think I may not understand it, just what Celie feels in the story. For example, when Rolf was sitting on his throne, looking depressed and frightened, Celie asked what was going on. In reply, her sister Lilah told her that she would never understand. Celie was very hurt by what Lilah said, and thought, how could she not understand something if she didn't even know what it was?

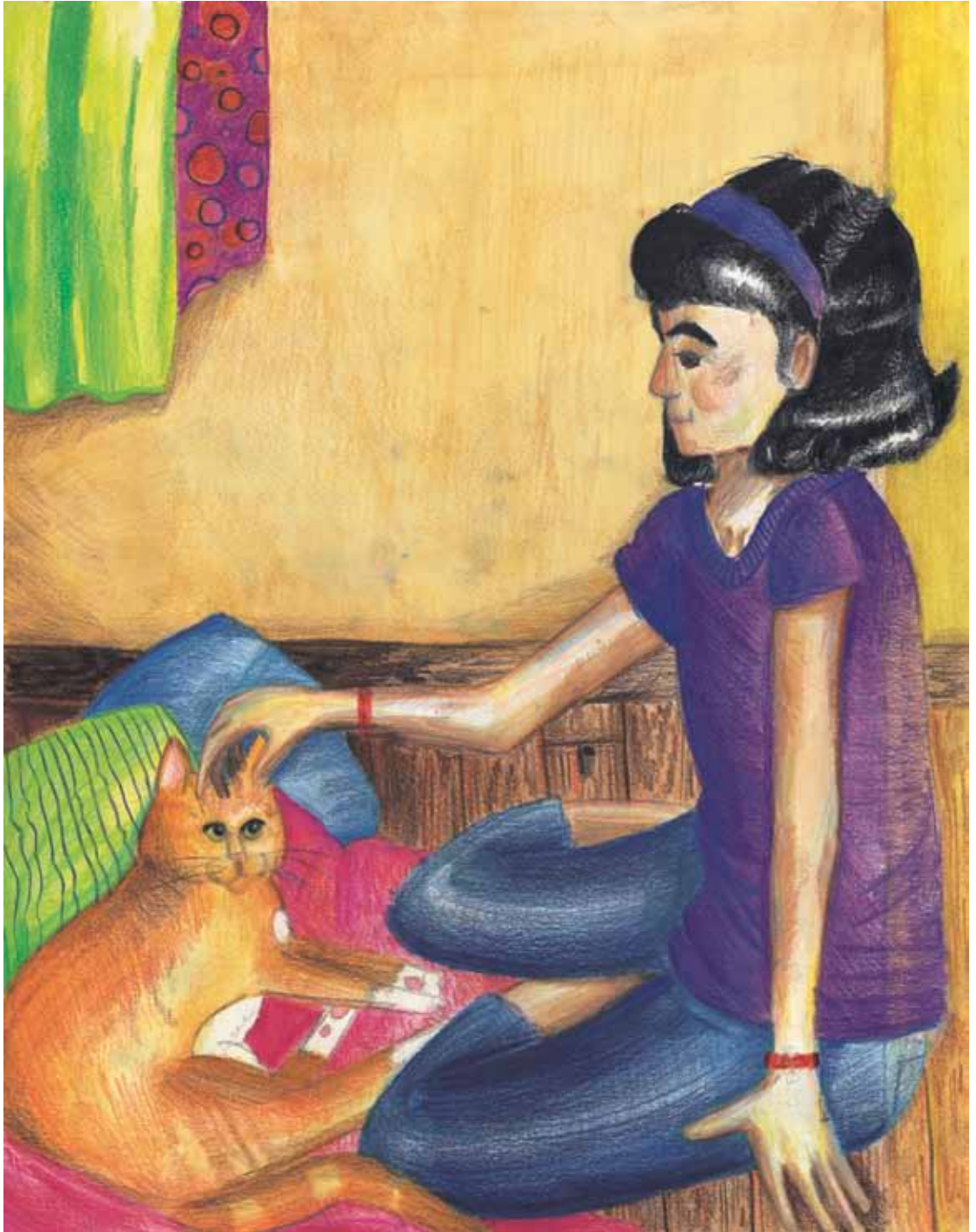
Despite everybody thinking Celie is not mature, she possesses a certain power, a power to almost control Castle Glower. For

example, if Celie trips and falls off the balcony, the Castle will make sure she has a soft landing. The Castle does not do this to anyone else, unless it is someone very close to Celie. The Castle likes Celie the best, which makes her feel special. It must feel extraordinary for Celie to know that the Castle has a special relationship with her, and only her. I'm glad the author chose to write that the Castle liked Celie the best, because it seems like someone really understands her and cares for her. Of course her parents and siblings care for her, but her connection with the Castle is different, more touching and valuable.

One part of the story I found to be particularly good was the part in which Celie and her siblings started pranking the Council members, who had betrayed the royal family and supported the evil Khelsh. I tend to like a little bit of humor, so this part was perfect for me! I especially liked the prank where Celie and her siblings stole the Council members' clothes and loosened the stitching. I laughed out loud at the part when Lord Feen raised his hand to speak, and the clothing ripped right under his armpit. The way the author described his embarrassment was hilarious!

At first, it was a little confusing to follow the story when the author was explaining about the different rooms Castle Glower had, and how it would add new rooms and take away old rooms. I had to re-read some parts of the description of Castle Glower and was a little disoriented when the description would change every so often due to the addition or loss of a room. That was one of the only faults I felt the story had.

Tuesdays at the Castle was a lot of fun to read, and I enjoyed it very much. I would definitely recommend it to anyone who loves a well-written, fanciful, fast-paced story with a dash of humor! 



Mango gave me a look that I think I could remember for my whole life

My Kitty Mango

By **Isabella Widrow**

Illustrated by **Claire Nilsson**

IT WAS A DRIZZLY, rainy day. There were hardly any people walking on the street. My sister was in her room, singing a pre-school song. My mom huddled in her bed, reading a book. My cat Baboo was, of course, sleeping. My dad was on the couch, doing something with his iPad. And I was on the dining room chair, feeling bored.

I wondered where my other fat cat Mango was. I looked everywhere. On the table, the couch, and finally, in the closet. And there she was. Slowly blinking at me innocently.

I crawled into the closet. I squished and pulled away all the old pillows. I settled in the blankets. As I scratched her under the chin she began to purr. It made me feel warm and sweet, even though the day was cold and wet. Mango seemed very happy, as if it was her who led me into the closet. For a second our eyes locked. For a second Mango seemed more than an overweight cat. For a second Mango gave me a look that I think I could remember for my whole life. But then Mango looked away. And the spell was broken. It was like a baseball shattering glass.

After that I left. It was still a drizzly, rainy day. There were hardly any people walking on the street. My sister was tucked away in her room, singing pre-school songs. My mom was huddled in her bed, reading a book. My cat Baboo was, of course, sleeping. My dad was on the couch, doing something with his iPad. And I was on the dining room chair, not feeling bored, but feeling happy. 🌸



Isabella Widrow, 9
Olympia, Washington



Claire Nilsson, 12
Greenville, South Carolina

The Chances We Take

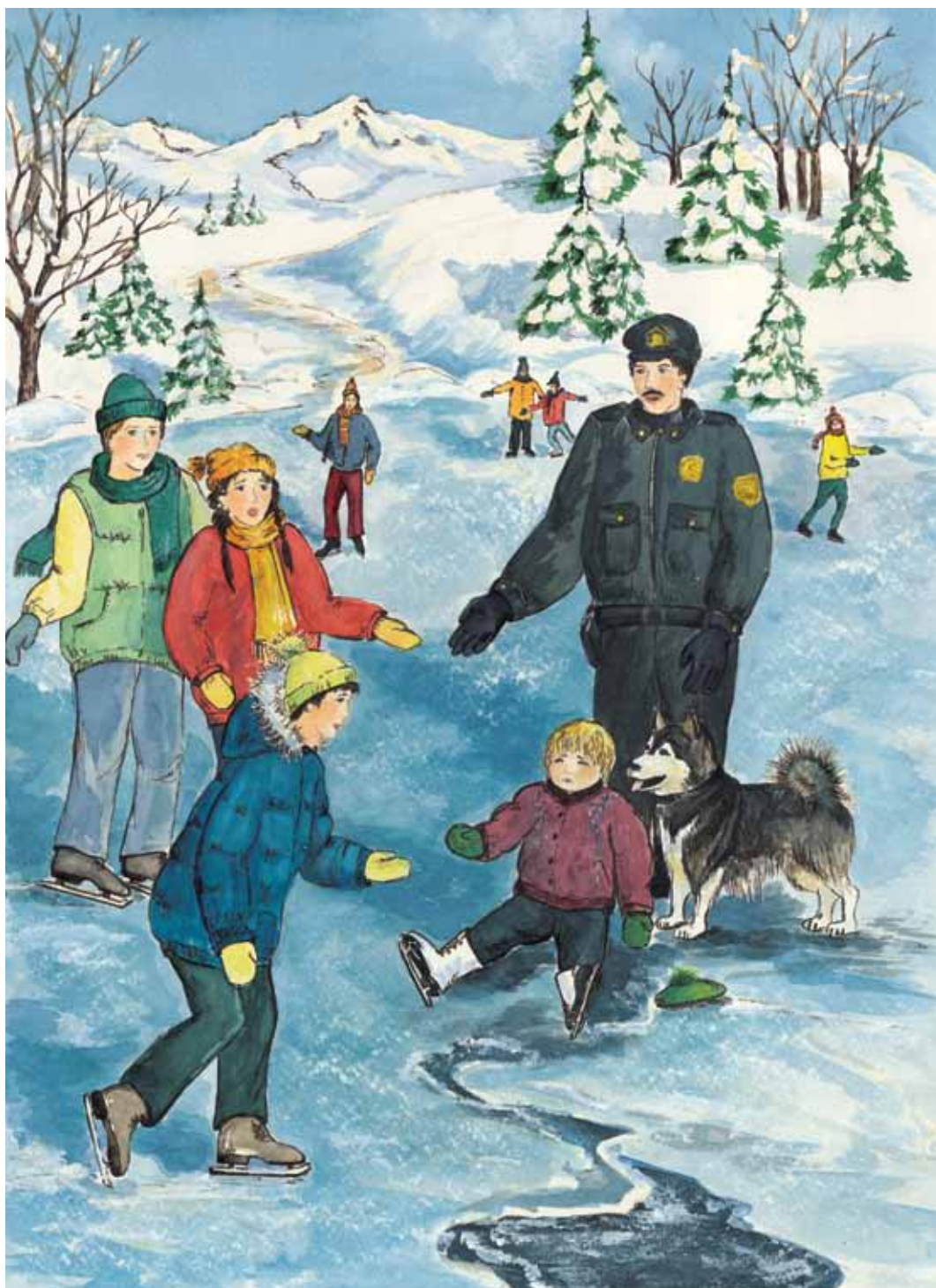
By **Nastassja Carusetta**



Nastassja Carusetta, 13
South Pasadena, California

She left before the sun came up.
I didn't have a chance to say goodbye.
Goodnight;
I love you.
The last words spoken between us
The suitcase had been packed that night.
Button-up shirts,
Silky and soft.
A warm embrace;
The smell of roses.
I'll be back before Sunday, she had said.
It was a Friday morning.
A small road trip,
A six-hour drive,
A harmless once-in-a-life opportunity.
In the cold, the rain, the fog, the darkness.
She left. She left.
Goodbye. Goodbye.

Dark thoughts invade my mind,
Black clouds drifting into my head
Eating up the happiness.
What could happen? What might happen?
Tears fall down my cheeks,
Salty drops of sea.
They drip down my nose,
Fall onto my lips.
Please, please.
Just come back. Please.
Come back safe.



"Is this your dog, kid?" a tall policeman asked

Breeze

By **Sarina Rani Deb**

Illustrated by **Dominic Nedzelskyi**

THERE'S A FUNNY THING about love. Love can twist you and tie you in a knot. Love can make your heart burst and your eyes fill with tears, and love can make you so jubilant even when there's a tornado outside. Love can bring you together and tear you apart. Love did all of these to me when my dog Breeze came along. I loved Breeze. He was my dog and we were inseparable. Now he is an image in my brain and an echo in my heart.

Back then we lived in the Crestfall Mountains. In winter, the tall mountains would be filled with white snow tops. The lakes would be covered in ice and the snow would fall lightly and gracefully, creating a winter wonderland. In summer, the waterfalls would release all their water, rushing down the stream and into the Garmelen River which flowed through my backyard. Crestfall Mountains was a beautiful place to live.

It was a cheerful November day when I first asked my parents about having a dog. I was eleven years old and in my life, all around me my friends had dogs to play with and take care of. They had dogs that could do tricks, dogs that could play catch, and dogs that could protect them. My friend Samuel even had a police dog because his father was a canine officer.

"Father?" I had asked. "Can I have a dog?" My father was a big man. He had short stubbles growing along the bottom of his mouth and his eyes were always cheerful and sparkling or dark and serious. Whenever he was happy, the whole world would be happy and the flowers outside would smile. Whenever he was



Sarina Rani Deb, 10
Hillsborough, California



Dominic Nedzelskyi, 13
Keller, Texas

angry, the birds would fly away, and the window panes seemed to shake thunderously.

My father pursed his lips. He obviously didn't expect me to ask this question. To my surprise, he smiled and softly said, "Jay, if you think you're ready for a dog, you may have one." That day I was happier than ever before. My mother and father took me to a local shelter where I could pick a dog. There were several dogs and at first I had a hard time choosing. There was a dog with a spot over his left eye, a dog with fluffy ears, and many other dogs each better looking than the next. Finally, I spotted an Alaskan Husky in the back. He had sparkling gray eyes, fluffy brown fur, and when I saw him I knew he was perfect. I easily picked him. The next thing we had to do was name him. My mother, father, and I thought of names in the car ride back home.

"Ruffee!"

"Cody!"

"Nelson!"

"Brownie!"

"Skye!"

Nothing was perfect enough for my beautiful new dog. I sighed and looked out the window. The wind was blowing lightly. A soft breeze drifted lightly all around the mountains. The breeze made the mountain air feel wonderful. Finally, I knew what I was going to name my dog. I jolted upright in my seat. "His name is Breeze," I said.

My mother and father sighed happily. "It's perfect, Jay!" my mother exclaimed.

Breeze and I became best friends fast. Every day while I was sleeping, Breeze would curl up in his dog bed and fall asleep. While I ate breakfast, Breeze ate breakfast. There were other things I learned about Breeze, besides being just like me. One day during my winter break Breeze and I went figure skating on Caramel Lake. The light shiny ice sparkled and every child that lived in our town was skating. I tied Breeze up against a bike rack and leaned down by his face. "I'll be right back, boy. Please stay here and be a good dog." Breeze's ears twitched. I smiled and went off with some of my friends. It was twenty minutes later when I heard a loud, vociferous bark. My heart leaped. Was it Breeze that I heard? The bark became louder and louder. People stopped skating. Suddenly I was aware of a big splotch of water in the ice. The lake was melting! In the splotch of water was Breeze! I couldn't believe my eyes. Breeze seemed to be gnawing on something. With a lift of his head Breeze pulled out a little boy.

Everyone rushed over to Breeze and little Jonny Tompson, who was soaking wet. He was the boy that Breeze had saved.

"I-I fell in-t-to the wa-te-r. The dog-gie sa-aved me." Breeze stood confidently on the ice. Policemen in puffy uniforms rushed over to us.

"Is this your dog, kid?" a tall policeman asked.

"Yes," I said quickly.

"Well, son. Your dog just saved that little boy's life." I was shocked. "But I tied

my dog Breeze to that pole. How did he get out?"

The policeman shrugged. "He must have gnawed his way through the tether and pulled on the scarf of the little boy. Funny none of you people saw the boy. Your dog is so observant."

I beamed. The cold day suddenly seemed warm and bright. People and family members of Jonny Thompson thanked me and came over to pat Breeze's body or rustle his fur.

Breeze was always amazing at helping people. His watchful eyes saw things that even watchmen on the mountains couldn't spot. Often, I would take a walk around our small town in the mountains with Breeze next to me. Every time Breeze would spot something going on. He spotted a crook stealing apples from Old Fisher Trechtin's store. He spotted children falling off trees. Every place that Breeze had helped in some way, we were both given lots of thanks. Soon enough, we got calls from lots of people who had heard about Breeze. They said they would pay lots of money to have Breeze come and solve their problems.

One day in the deep path of winter, the snow was blowing harder than ever before. As my father came home from work, my mother quickly finished making dinner.

"Have you seen Breeze?" my father asked.

"No," my mother said. "Let's get dinner started anyway." I agreed, assuming Breeze would come home in no time. But

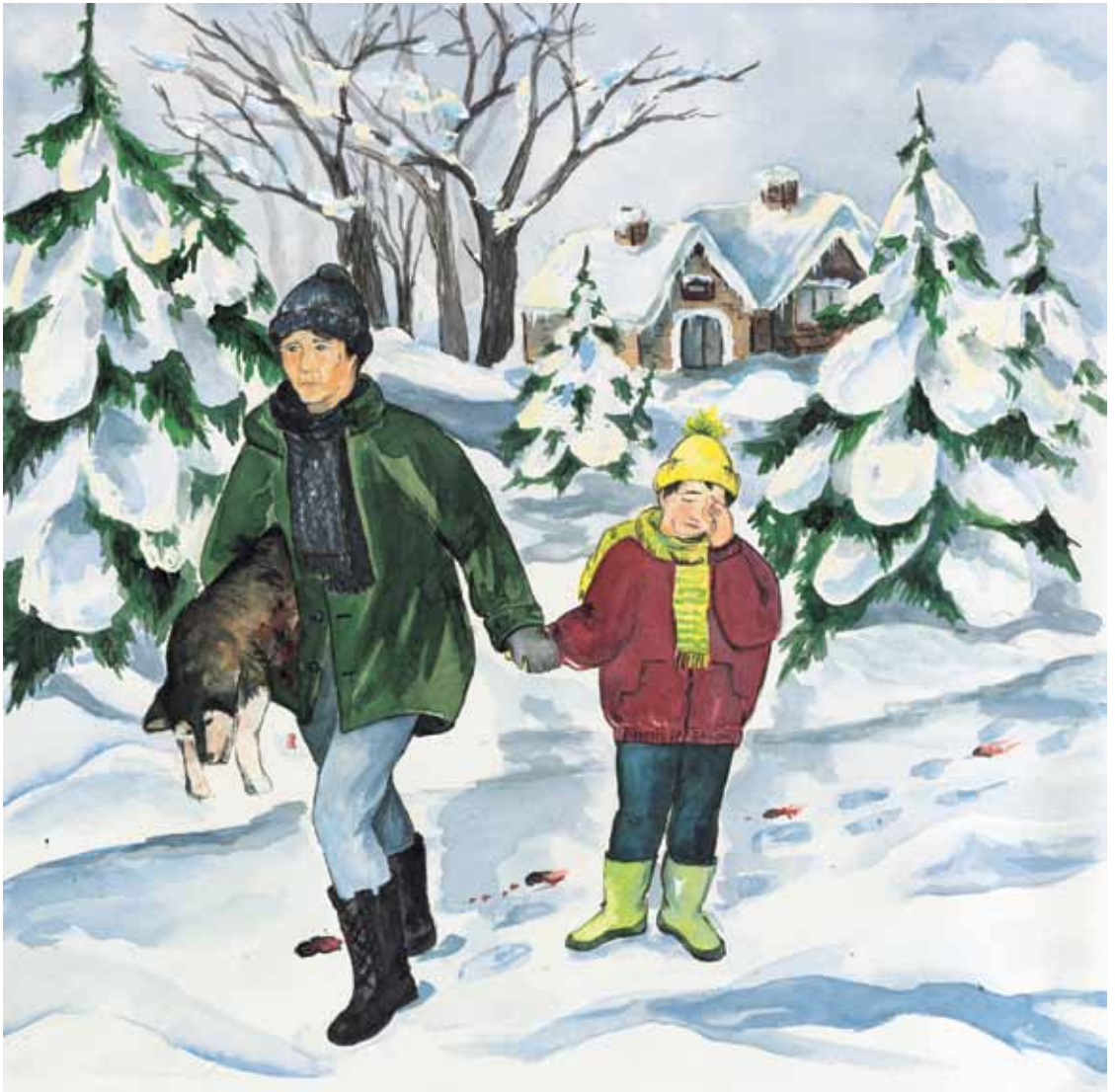
an hour later when the night sky appeared and the stars twinkled, Breeze wasn't home. An alert came on the radio.

"Blizzard alert. Blizzard alert." My father ran out the door as soon as he heard these words, tying his shoes as he left. We all knew that he was determined to find Breeze. In what seemed like four hours, my father walked through the door. His usual bright face was dark and gloomy. Bits and pieces of snow clung to his ears, nose, and mouth, making his face turn red. His snowsuit, that was usually bright green, was completely white. My father, whom I had known for eleven years, looked like a complete stranger who had gone out in the cold in a bathing suit.

"I couldn't find Breeze. The dog is smart though and probably found shelter during the storm. The towns are completely covered in snow and ice. The main stores on Cocatuff Avenue have fallen. We need to make sure that we are in tight shelter." My father spoke in a gruff sad tone. I cried and cried and begged my parents to let me go out to find Breeze. But no matter how much I begged them, my parents refused. Finally, giving up hope, I lay down on the couch while my mother rubbed my back and my father listened to the radio for more reports.

I felt my eyes flutter open. How long had it been? I jolted upright. "Mother?" My mother and father were sitting on the couch, their arms wrapped around each other and their eyes teary.

"Good morning, Jay," my father said. "The blizzard storm stopped. Would



I cried and cried as my father took us home

you like to go into town with me to find Breeze?" I was relieved that the blizzard had ended but upset to find that Breeze still hadn't come home.

"Yes," I said quickly, and with that I put on my coat and boots and ran outside.

"C'mon, son," my father said. "It's about time we find Breeze." I nodded and fol-

lowed him. We went around and around the town. Signs had fallen and roofs were covered completely in snow. Everyone in town looked distraught and upset since the air was still freezing.

"I have an idea," I said suddenly. "Breeze probably went to the old Rackshackle's Cave because I showed it to him

last week. It's a good place for shelter."

My father nodded. "Great idea, Jay."

The two of us walked in silence around town to Rackshackle's Cave. Finally, we reached the sheltered area. My heart jumped. I saw a fluffy brown dog with big eyes. I rushed over to it, my father close behind. Breeze was lying down in the cave, bits of rocks stuck inside of him. When he saw me his eyes were half-closed but he perked up. His body was deflated and blood was smeared all over him. I cried and cried as my father took us home, carrying Breeze in one arm and holding my hand in the other.

When we first got home my mother called the veterinarian, who came quickly. Looking at my paralyzed dog, she sighed and went over to examine Breeze. For a long time she sat by Breeze, nursing him. Time passed. The night went by as I slept on the couch next to Breeze. The veterinarian offered to stay the night so we housed her in the guest room. The morning also went by and all I did was sit by Breeze. He was alive, but there was a fear that he wouldn't make it.

Months flew by. Before I knew it, it was spring. The warm air hugged my shoulders and the light breeze pinched my fingertips. I was sitting on the edge of the riverbank, my feet dangling into the Garmelen River. The cold icy water refreshed my feet. It was springtime, my favorite time of the year, but that year I wasn't excited at all. Breeze was still suffering. Every day after school, I would


come home to my precious dog, lying on the couch suffering. The only thing that relieved me was the little bud of hope that was planted in my heart. I heard my mother calling for snack. I sighed and stood up, running across the grassy meadows to my house.

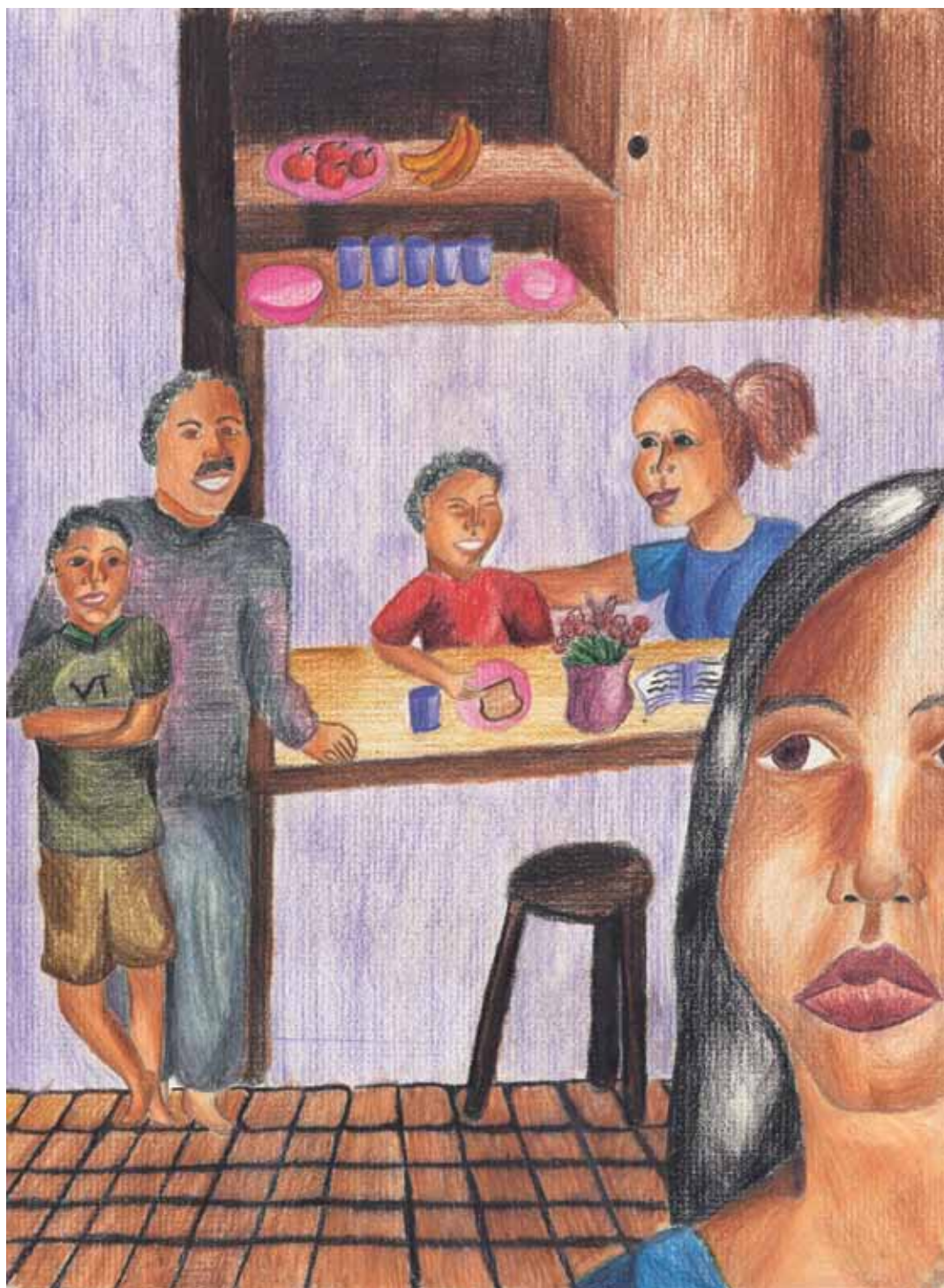
When I reached my house I wiped my feet off and walked into the kitchen. "Jay," my mother said, "Breeze's eyes are closed. Do you think he's OK?" I gasped, sprinting to the family room and plopping myself on the couch next to Breeze. My dog looked more paralyzed than ever.

"Call Father," I told her.

My father arrived soon. He felt Breeze's pulse. His eyes filled with tears. "He's dead, son," my father said. Instantly I burst into tears.

That time was hard for me to believe. Every day I would mope around and expect Breeze to curl up beside me. I couldn't live without Breeze. I went through some awful stages. I was mad at Breeze, then guilty, then sad, then upset, then just miserable.

Time passed and everything changed. We moved away from Crestfall and into a big city. I made friends but was still upset every day when I had time to think. One day, I was sitting on my back porch and the light breeze was drifting by me. I heard Breeze's cry. And I understood. I may not have Breeze with me, but I would always hear his soft sweet cry drift through the breeze, and his voice echo in my heart. 



Everybody seems so happy except for me

Lillian

By Alyssa Ingle

Illustrated by Samira Glaeser-Khan

I WAKE UP TO the sound of my little brother, Carson, screaming. I plug my ears with my pillow, trying to block out the noise, but it doesn't help.

"No, Daddy, no!" Carson laughs. *Laughs*. That's something I'd sure like to do.

You see, ever since Carson was born, my parents really haven't paid attention to me. All they care about is whether Carson is crying or not, or whether my older brother, Parker, is happy. As for me... well... it just doesn't seem like anybody cares.

The next thing I hear is Parker yelling, "Hey, Mom! Do you know where my cell phone charger went? I can't seem to find it! And I know I didn't take it out of my room!"

Well if it's in your room, then of course you can't find it, I think to myself. Parker's room looks just like a normal thirteen-year-old boy's room would look: dirty clothes scattered all over the floor, bed unmade, light always on whether the room is being used or not.

"Oh, you can't find it?" my mom replies, with an edge of concern to her voice. "Here, let me help you find it."

Wow, if I ever lost *my* cell phone charger, I don't think my mom would help me look for it. She'd just tell me that I better find it or I don't get my phone.

I rest my head on my pillow, getting angrier and more depressed every second that goes by.

Why don't my parents care about *me*? Ever since Carson was born, I've never heard them say, "Hey, Lillian, how was your



Alyssa Ingle, 12
Delano, Minnesota



Samira Glaeser-Khan, 11
Chicago, Illinois

day?” or “Lillian, are you feeling all right?” or “Here, let me help you.”

I wish Carson didn’t exist. He’s only four, so I know he might get a little bit out of control, but this is *way* out of control. Carson breaks just about everything he touches, he yells and screams, and he takes up just about all of my parents’ time. They use the rest of their leftover energy on Parker.

Now Parker. Parker’s usually pretty nice to me, but if you were looking at him through my perspective, it would probably just seem like he’s trying to take all the attention that I’m supposed to get.

“Lillian?” my mom pokes her head into my room, pulling her dark, auburn hair behind her ear. “Can you come downstairs? It’s time for breakfast.”

“Yeah, one minute,” I mumble. My mom leaves, without even smiling or saying good morning or anything.

I want to run up to her and beg and plead for her to wrap her arms around me, to tell me that she loves me. But that seems so far away from where I am right now. The thought makes me mad.

Suddenly, I feel like I can’t stand it anymore. I can’t bear it any longer. I am going to change things today. I am going to make a difference in this family. And I won’t rest until I reach my goal.

BREAKFAST SEEMS worse than it usually is, even though nothing is abnormal, on a typical Saturday at my house. Everybody seems so happy except for me. I feel so out of place.

I take a few bites of toast and then dump the rest in the garbage.

“Hey, Lillian?” my mom says, and I turn around to see a surprising look of concern and possibly anxiety in her deep brown eyes. “You not hungry today?”

“Well,” I sigh, my stomach churning for some odd reason. This was my chance to talk to my mom—and my dad—and tell her how I really felt inside. But I don’t want to say it in front of everybody. I take a deep breath anyway and say, “Well, I just... I just wanted to talk to you and Dad for a few minutes.”

“OK,” she replies, sounding suddenly cheerful. A spark of hope lights up in my head. “Just let me finish my breakfast here, and then meet us in the living room.”

“OK,” I say excitedly, and try to walk into the living room and sit on the couch, but it’s hard. I can’t believe it! My parents are actually going to listen to me! It’s hard to believe that just a few minutes ago I was so angry and depressed. Now, I feel energetic and happy, and I feel like I am actually going to make a difference in my life.

I smile to myself.

My mom and dad walk in a few minutes later. They each take a seat in a chair.

“So,” my mom says, “what would you like to say to us, honey?”

“Well,” I begin, thinking how I should word my feeling of rejection to them. “Ever since Carson was born, I have kind of felt you don’t care about me.”

I pause, and my mom nods, taking in the information. She nods at me to go on.

"It seems like you only care about Carson and Parker, and when Parker lost his charger and you offered to help him find it, it just made me mad because if I lost my charger, I knew you wouldn't help me look for it."

My parents both nod thoughtfully. I even think I see tears welling up in my mother's eyes.

It feels good to say all this to them, it really does. They're listening to me, I know they are. And best of all, I know they care.


"Oh, honey, I'm so sorry you felt that way," my mom says, and sniffles a little. A tear falls down her pale cheek. I want to cry, too, but I can't seem to do it. "I wish you would have told us a long time ago, though."

"Yeah," my dad chimes in for the first time, and part of me wonders why he hadn't said anything the whole time, while another part of me is just happy that he cares. "We don't want you to feel neglected or hurt when you shouldn't."

I can't help but smile. I'm surprised I haven't burst into tears of happiness and run over to them and squeezed them both like I would never let go. I feel so... happy... so alive. It's like a dream come true!

By now, my mom is crying.

"Lillian, come here," she says. I feel a tear fall down my cheek, too. I half jog, half walk over to my mother. She wraps her arms around me and hugs me tight. I want to yell in happiness.

"Lillian, I love you," she whispers. 



Dreamer of Dreams

By Danielle Eagle



Danielle Eagle, 12
Winnipeg, Manitoba,
Canada

I can capture
a bird's flight,
a mountain's splendor,
a tiger's roar.
My pen
marks the crisp
white paper
like footprints
on a snowy trail.

My dreams
are alive,
and leaping
like sparks
in my hands.
To dream is to speak
a thousand words
and never speak at all.

In my dreams,
I fly
like a
new bird,
like the quiet
of the storm.
The music
that flows
from my eyes
is like currents
of electricity,
and it powers me,
the dreamer of dreams
to live.



Everyone said it was haunted, but we never listened

The Ghost Children

By **Krystle DiCristofalo**

Illustrated by **Elise Arancio**

WE ALWAYS LOVED going to that old house on the hill. Everyone said it was haunted, but we never listened. Michael, Emma, and me, Summer.

Why did we always go there? I guess we were interested. We didn't believe in ghosts. Not then. Now we know better. But even more than that, we were attracted to the house. That old wreck of a building, with shutters hanging loose and boards half ripped off. But it was majestic, too. Big, with a tower on each side. It must have been beautiful, once upon a time.

Emma loved leafing through the old, blurred, black-and-white photographs. She especially loved one of a girl about our age, whose face, despite being blurred, Emma insisted was very like her own.

Michael liked fiddling around with the old toys. There must have been children living in that house when it was abandoned. Why was it abandoned? No one knew. And we certainly never stopped to wonder. We didn't want anyone coming to claim our special hideout. But anyway, there were lots of toys scattered around, old teddy bears and crayons, even an Erector Set, a metal, motor-powered set that almost anything could be built out of. Kind of like Tinker Toys, you know? For older kids, though. Michael really liked fiddling around with that thing. Why? I don't know. Maybe he felt drawn to it the way Emma felt drawn to that old photograph.

The way I felt drawn to the old clothes.



Krystle DiCristofalo, 12
Allenhurst, New Jersey



Elise Arancio, 11
Tucker, Georgia

I JUST LOVED leafing through the old dresses, trousers, and shirts. Somehow, some of them fit me, and there was nothing I liked better than modeling my favorite frilly creations. I fantasized that I lived in the twentieth century, around the time people would've lived in this house. Sometimes I felt as though I was born into the wrong century. I had this absurd fascination with the early twentieth century. Maybe it came from the old house. It would've been built around that time. I don't know.

We loved that old house. Whenever we could, we'd go up the hill and hang out there, exploring the three floors and the attic, or just sit on the porch steps and talk.

Today was one such day.

"I'll race you up the hill!" I called to Emma and Michael. I was already running and reached the porch steps first, followed by a breathless Emma and a panting Michael.

"No fair!" Emma pouted. "You had a head start."

"Don't be so whiny, Emma, let's just go inside," said easygoing Michael.

We barged through the door. As usual, I went immediately to the old dresses, Emma to the photographs, and Michael to the toys.

But after a while of trying on the old dresses, I realized I felt bored. "Hey, guys," I said, "let's do something else for once. Let's go down to the basement. We never explored down there before."

Emma jerked her head up, eyes wide.

"But that's the part they say is haunted!" Although we had thoroughly explored every inch of the three floors and the attic, we had never set foot in the basement.

"Don't be such a scaredy-cat," I said encouragingly. "You don't believe in ghosts, do you? The parents probably started those rumors to keep kids from coming up here."

Michael's eyes were troubled. I knew that if he said no, Emma would agree, so I started working on him, getting him to crack. "Come on, Michael," I encouraged. "Are you scared? There's nothing to be afraid of. We should really go down there. I mean, why not? Please, Michael. Pretty please?"

Michael looked away for a moment. I silently prayed that he would say yes. I really wanted to see what was down there, but if thirteen-year-old Michael said no, eleven-year-old Emma would go along with him, and, although I hardly dared admit it, even to myself, I was too chicken to go down by myself.

"OK," Michael finally agreed. I let out a mental whoop. Out loud, I thanked him seriously and, grabbing my flashlight, led the way downstairs.

Cobwebs draped the mantelpiece of a fireplace and hung from the corners. I swung my flashlight around, peering everywhere. I accidentally kicked up some dust, and we all sneezed and choked on it. I could see why we hadn't gone down there before. Behind me, Emma shivered and said, "Oooh, Summer, this is spooky.

Let's go back upstairs."

I'll admit it, I did consider that. But twelve years old was too old to believe in ghosts, so I just said, "Let's stay a little longer. I want to see what's down here."

Although I was afraid, I looked into each corner, only to meet disappointment. The cobwebs I had seen before seemed to be the only ornament that graced the basement with their presence.

But then I strode to the fireplace, the others close behind.

There was no fire in the fireplace, and, by the looks of things, there hadn't been one since the house was abandoned. I breathed a quiet sigh of relief. There. That proved it. The place wasn't haunted. Ghosts would've built a fire, right? Or wouldn't they? Did ghosts get cold, anyway?

I swung my flashlight to the mantelpiece. The basement wasn't devoid of any possessions after all. Three framed photographs adorned the mantelpiece. I took them down and blew the thick layer of dust and cobwebs off before handing one each to Emma and Michael. "Let's take these upstairs into the light," I said.

The other two were only too happy to obey and raced up the stairs as if they were being chased. I followed more slowly, looking back and swinging my flashlight to make sure no unearthly presence was following us up the stairs. For after I found the photographs, the peaceful old house seemed almost... well, menacing.

We all crowded around the old couch in the living room to look at the photo-

graphs. Emma was especially interested, for none of the pictures in the old album she liked to leaf through were framed. And these were much better quality, too. We blew more dust off of them and stared at the unveiled photos. For a moment we were speechless.

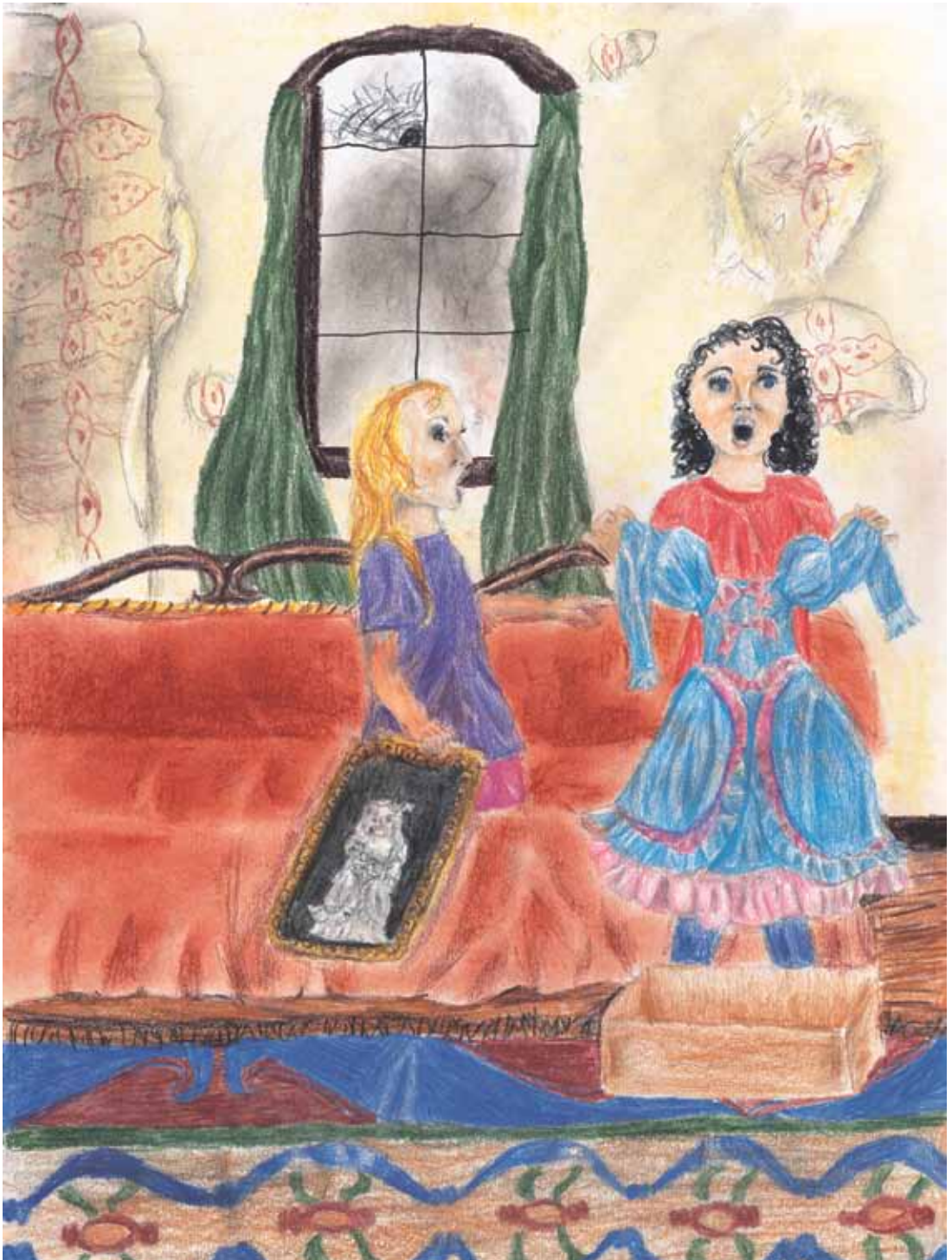
"M-M-MICHAEL," Emma stuttered, "th-th-that looks like—like *me!*" Emma pointed to the picture Michael held. He handed it to her, and we both crowded around Emma for a closer look.

She was right. The girl in the picture bore a remarkable resemblance to Emma. She had Emma's solemn, heart-shaped face, her small, perfect nose, her long, wavy hair, and her long eyelashes framing almond-shaped eyes. The only difference was that, while Emma wore a T-shirt and leggings, the girl in the photo wore an old-fashioned dress—one of the very ones I had seen time and time again!

I gasped and ran to grab the dress. After a quick search, I found it and ran back to the living room with it over my arm. "Emma—look!" I said breathlessly, holding the dress out to her. "It's the dress the girl in the picture's wearing."

With a little gasp of her own, Emma took the dress. "Put it on," I urged her. She pulled it over her clothes, and Michael and I gasped the loudest gasps of all.

For there could be no doubt that the girl in the photo was Emma. Standing there with her honey-blond waves of hair falling slightly over her face, her expression serious, almost troubled, and in that



"It's the dress the girl in the picture's wearing"

dress, a simple pink-and-blue knee-length one with a frill along the hem and puffed sleeves, Emma looked exactly like the girl in the photograph.

"Emma—that's—that's *you*," I half-whispered.

Emma stared at the photograph, then strode to the antique mirror that hung on the wall. She uttered another little gasp. "It *is* me," she whispered. "It is."

Then she fell down in a faint.

Michael and I hardly noticed. We were fighting over the remaining two pictures. We finally ended up with one each. We looked at them, looked at each other, and promptly traded pictures.

I stared at mine, tracing the outline of the girl in the picture. She stared back at me. No, there was no doubt that this girl was *me*! Too shocked and confused to say anything, I kept staring, tracing the outline with my finger. This girl had a curly bob of hair that fell only to her chin and wide eyes like mine. I touched my own hair. It had used to be that short, but lately I had been letting it grow, and it was almost down to my shoulders by now. The girl in the picture had my snub nose, arched eyebrows, and round face. Her face was so like mine it was just impossible.

Then I looked at the dress the girl was wearing, and *that* was when I let out a gasp. "The dress she's wearing—that's my favorite!" I cried, standing up and dropping the picture on the couch. I raced to the closet where the dresses hung and

grabbed the one I was looking for. It was very pale yellow, embroidered with pink, blue, and green butterflies. The skirt was flared and went down to a little above my knees. I pulled it on over my T-shirt and jeans and then went to look at myself in the mirror.

I shook my head in confusion. How was it possible that both Emma and I looked exactly like the girls in the photographs? Then I remembered. Emma! She had yet to wake up. I knelt by her and shook her gently. "Emma!" I called softly. "Wake up!"

She opened her eyes blearily and shook her head. "What the... Oh!" She jumped up and stared at me. "Summer," she said in an almost reverent whisper, "Summer, you look like that other girl in the picture."

I nodded, scared and miserable. Just then, Michael joined us at the mirror. He was wearing old-fashioned trousers and a shirt tucked into them over his clothes. I stared at him. I had never seen Michael's shirt tucked into his pants for the life of me. For a full minute there was silence. Then my gaze strayed to the photograph in Michael's hand. I looked at him. He didn't need to say anything. He just nodded.

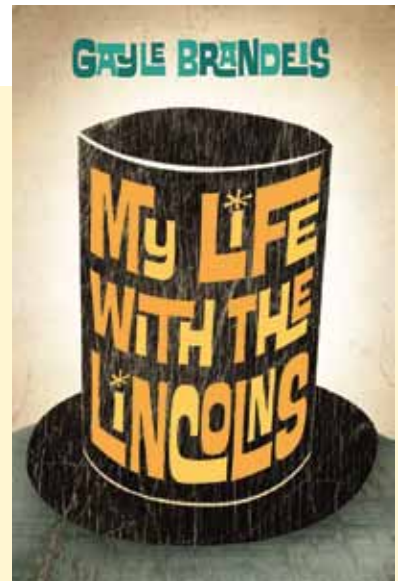
"People say this place is haunted," I said in a voice that seemed not to be my own. "And now I think they're right." I turned to the others, eyes wide and scared. "I think—I think *we're* the ghosts!"



Book Review

By Ana Sofia Uzsoy

My Life with the Lincolns, by Gayle Brandeis;
Henry Holt and Company: New York,
2010; \$16.99



Ana Sofia Uzsoy, 12
Cary, North Carolina

WILHELMINA EDELMAN has three goals for the summer: to get through age twelve without dying, to keep her mom from becoming insane and going to a “nuthouse,” and to stop her dad from getting shot. As you might know, normal twelve-year-olds don’t usually have these types of summer goals. But Mina isn’t a normal twelve-year-old. She is Willie Lincoln reincarnated.

Actually, her whole family used to be the Lincolns. Her dad’s initials are ABE, and Mina and her sisters have girl versions of the names of the Lincoln boys. But being in a reincarnated family has its drawbacks. Mina has to keep her family from coming to the same sticky end as the Lincolns.


The book is set in 1966, and the Civil Rights Movement is well under way. Mina, being a girl from a white family, offers an interesting perspective on all the conflict going on. Mina’s father is a strong supporter of black rights and takes her on protest marches in secret. Once, they even went to an overnight vigil. At the vigil, the protesters knelt on the ground until very late, even though people were crowded around them, taunting them and yelling offensive things. But the protesters persevered. This shows just how determined they were to get the rights they deserved, rights that should have been theirs at birth.

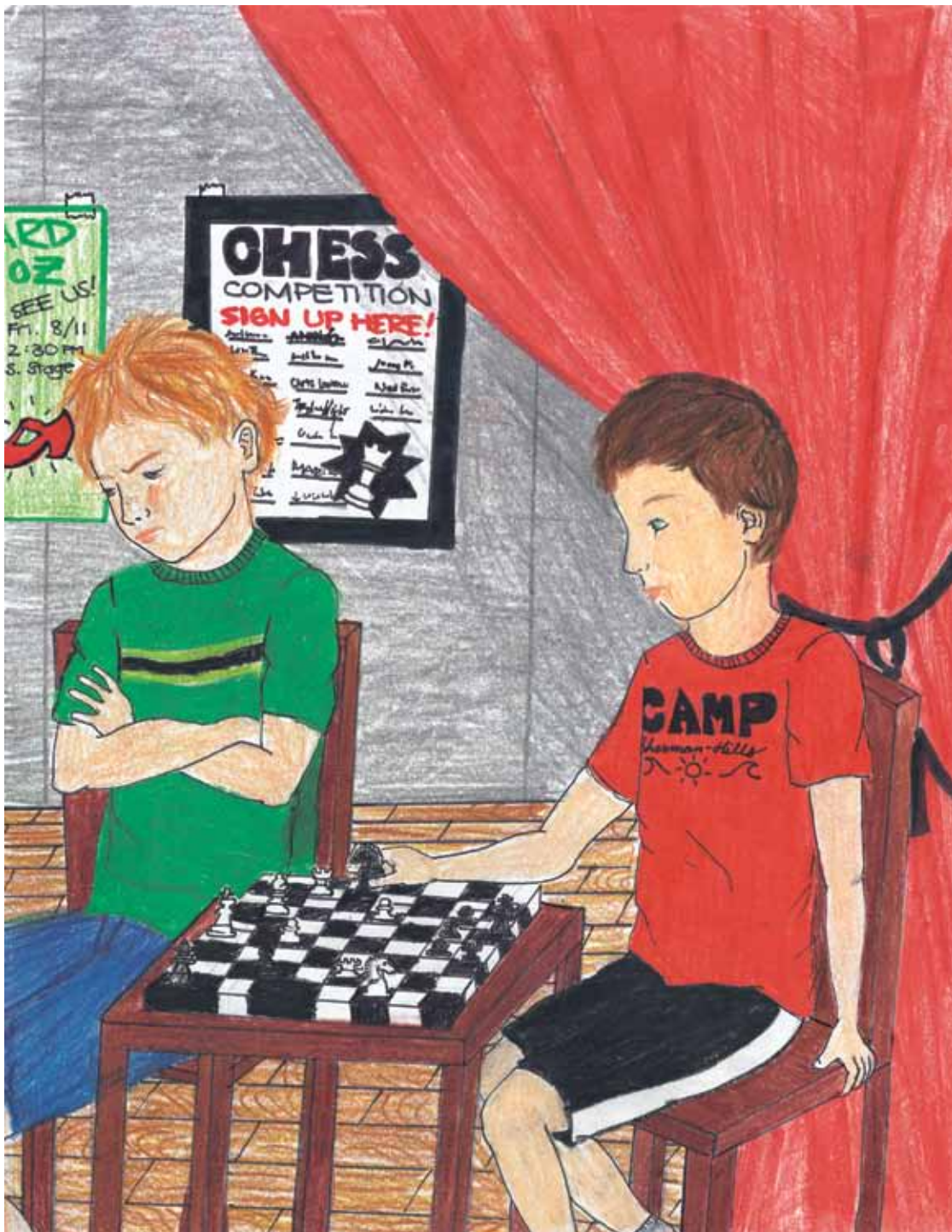
Another event that was occurring during that time was the Vietnam War. Mina and her sister sometimes played Vietnam with the boys next door, screaming gibberish and throwing fake grenades in imitation of their idea of the Vietnamese people. Also, her neighbor's father is sent to Vietnam but comes back after losing one of his arms. I felt so bad for him, and I could only imagine the pain and hardship the man was going through.

A section of the book that really caught my attention was when Mina's older sister, Roberta, falls in love with a young black man named Thomas. When they run away together and are found again, Mina's mother is absolutely livid. She calls Thomas a predator and a menace and accuses him of having terrible intentions. I think she was being very prejudiced and racist because Thomas was a fine young man, and she surely would have not have been as enraged if he had been white.

When Mina's father fires their black cleaning woman (he says he is "emancipating" her), Mina's mom becomes vastly angry with him, like a spewing cauldron. When she finds out her husband has been lying to her and taking Mina to dangerous protest marches, the cauldron begins foaming and seething. Then, when Roberta runs away with Thomas, the cauldron churns and froths, and all the contents gush out. This shows Mina's parents' deteriorating relationship, and eventually it gets so bad that Mina's dad moves out.

This book was truly excellent. It provided a different approach to the Civil Rights Movement and still described in detail all the events that were occurring. It also showed a child's point of view to everything going on. People, some even from Mina's own neighborhood, come to the protest marches just to throw rocks, bricks, and even Molotov cocktails at the protesters and to shout in their faces about White Power and other awful things.

But back to the ongoing Lincoln problem. Will Mina die an early death like Willie Lincoln? Or will she be able to keep history from repeating itself? 



To my amazement, Chris just set up the pieces and started playing!

Camp Conflict

By David Agosto-Ginsburg

Illustrated by Madeleine Gates

MY NAME IS JAKE. I have brown hair and green eyes, and I'm eleven years old, but most importantly, I've always wanted to go to summer camp. Every year I beg my parents to let me go, but they always insist that it's too expensive. It was the end of the year and I was about to confront my parents about summer camp, when they walked into my room with huge smiles glued to their faces. "This year we're sending you and your brother off to summer camp!" my mom exclaimed.

"Hoorah..." I started. "Wait, did you say me *and* my brother?" I inquired. I looked over at my brother, Chris. He had pale skin, sad brown eyes, and was nine years old. He had given up on the puzzle he was doing because he wasn't able to assemble the pieces in neat rows. We both looked at my dad anxiously.

"Yes, his therapist said it could help him deal with his autism," my dad replied.

Around other people my brother does all kinds of weird things. Going to the same summer camp as him would be a nightmare. "I won't go!" I insisted.

"We'll see," said my dad.

Six days later I found myself on the bus to Sherman Hill Camp, headed straight for my doom.

As soon as we got there, we were given our cabin assignments. "Due to the fact that your brother, Chris, has autism, you will both be sleeping in Cabin D, even though he's younger than you," one of the counselors told me. I sighed and trudged



David Agosto-Ginsburg, 11
Cherry Hill, New Jersey



Madeleine Gates, 13
La Jolla, California

off to my cabin.

Despite my doubts, I had a great time at camp, but for my brother it was a different story. The first day he spilled some of the water he was drinking and shrieked so loudly that, even though I was sitting on the other side of the dining hall, my ears rang for two minutes afterward. The second day I glimpsed him sobbing because the nature hike began ten minutes late. My brother didn't utter a single word for the first two days, much less talk to anyone, and even if he did, I could tell no one would have listened. These things were all worrisome, but they were nothing compared to what happened when a boy in my bunk started bullying him.

The bullying started when a burly kid named Ned realized how important it was to my brother that his bedspread was flat. Ned was twice Chris's size and had messy red hair. Every morning Chris would spend half an hour straightening his covers, and if anyone even touched his bed, he would get upset. One night when I got back from the evening activity I heard Chris scream. When I looked over to see what was wrong, I saw that not only were Chris's sheets completely disheveled, but it looked like someone had poured mud all over his bed. When I scanned the room to figure out who was the culprit, I noticed that Ned's smile was a mile wide.

All week Ned messed up Chris's bed. The next week he asked him trivia questions and teased him when he got the

answers wrong. I called Ned names and insisted I'd tell one of the counselors if he kept bullying my brother, but Ned refused to reconcile with Chris. I could hardly wait for camp to be over.

Chris had always been good at board games, so naturally he decided to participate in the chess tournament. I watched in awe as Chris beat player after player, until he finally made it to the final round. "Chris Marlow will play Ned Baker tomorrow," said one of the counselors, and we all went back to our cabins.

The next morning at the tournament, Ned and Chris sat next to each other on the stage. Chris opened the chess board box, and water spilled all over him. Ned grinned with a sinister look on his face. I braced myself for the screams, but to my amazement, Chris just set up the pieces and started playing!

Two hours later, Chris checkmated Ned's king and won the game. "I hate you all!" shouted Ned, then kicked my brother as hard as he could and stomped off the stage.

"Get back here!" the camp director yelled, and by the tone of his voice, I could tell that Ned wouldn't be coming back to Sherman Hill Summer Camp. I looked over at Chris, expecting him to be paralyzed with shock. My brother was chatting with one of the kids from the semifinals. A smile lit up my face, and there was only one thought in my head: "This is going to be the best summer ever!"



My Dog

By Abby Shaffer

I look at him
My dog
Head on tiny white paws,
Breathing heavily.
He looks back at me
His eyes sad
As if to say, "Come to me,"
So I do.
Then I
Stroke his head quietly
And he closes his eyes,
His breathing deep
Raspy
And tired.
He is small, sick, and old
But right now he is with me.
So I give him a kiss
And let him snore.



Abby Shaffer, 12
Riverside, California

Friendship

By **Brooke Ashton Maret**

Illustrated by **Christine Troll**



Brooke Ashton Maret, 10
Rowlett, Texas



Christine Troll, 11
Somerset, Pennsylvania

SPRINT TROTTED THROUGH the peaceful town. The sun was just covering the horizon, causing joyful rays of light to bounce off her shimmering coat. We trotted by houses and fields, occasionally passing a barn or two. Sprint bounded off, wanting to trot. I gracefully pulled on her reins, urging her forward. This was it. I'd been waiting for this day forever. This was the day I could keep my beloved horse, Sprint, permanently.

Maybe I should back up a bit. My name is Ashley and I live with my mother on a small, green hill. Our two-room house, or should I say cabin, is made of thick, dark wood. There was a bit of furniture and books scattered about it, and that was about it. We had just enough things to be comfortable. Although, a bit more wouldn't hurt. My father died two years ago, breaking off a huge piece of our family. I've never had a brother or sister, so I have no idea what it's like.

The sun now shone so high and proud, showing off its fluttering light. I pulled Sprint to a stop, for we had reached the training center. Since Sprint was now mine, I was thinking about training her for a race or two, a perfect place to show off. Plus, she deserved it. Having to sit in a barn or wander in a small field all day, a place where no one except Mom and I could see her... I mean, there is no reason to hide her golden-brown coat, especially when there are so many people to see it!

"Hey, Ash, you got it?" Jake, the head trainer, but also a really good friend of my mother's and mine, asked with a hopeful tone. I slipped off Sprint, but before I could answer a worn-out



Here I was with my best friend, my first best friend, my only best friend

car with chipped blue paint pulled up to the empty house next door to mine. It's been told nobody has lived at that house in quite a while, although not long enough for it to be haunted. Without answering Jake's question, I ran off, headed to the house, wanting to know what was going on.

What I saw once I got there was so exciting I had to lean against Sprint to keep from falling over. Standing in front of me, looking straight back into my eyes, was a young girl about my age. She wore a yellow top and a pair of short skinny jeans. The morning light reflected off her golden-brown hair, causing it to shine like a

dog standing in the moonlight. Speaking of dogs, in her arms was a small puppy with fur the color of her hair. He wore a fancy red collar around his neck with a jewel here and there.

"Hello, I'm Shannon, we just moved in here, me and my parents, and I was wondering if you could tell me a little about this place," the girl spoke while glancing around. I just stood there a few seconds when I realized she was trying to start a friendship.

"Sure, why not, I'm Ashley, by the way, and I live right there," I nodded next door. "Well, there's not much to know except that there is a training center at the bottom of the hill and plenty of fields surrounding it. Why don't we go check it out?" The words left my mouth as fast as they entered.


"Sure," she agreed, while heading downhill.

We spent the next hour laughing and playing. We told each other jokes and stories until we were so worn out that we wanted to just sit and do absolutely nothing. We also learned quite a bit about each other and it turns out Sprint and the puppy, Pip, like each other just as much as we do. My mom invited Shannon and her family, the Rosens, over to our house for dinner, and our families have a lot in common. Both Shannon and I are an only child, we both love horses more than anything, and we love to spend our days outside, enjoying fresh air and sunlight. Plus, we get along really well and so do our pets. I knew right then that Shannon and

I were going to be best friends.

THE NEXT FEW DAYS were some of the best ever. We found an abandoned ball in a field and continued to play kickball every day. I also let Shannon ride Sprint a lot, just as she let me hold and play with Pip.

One morning, when the air was cool and smelled of dew, I had a little surprise for Shannon. I brought her outside while at the same time making sure she wasn't peeking. I had already explained to her that I had gathered the money by putting Sprint in the races. People sure do pay for good entertainment. Once I pulled off the cloth that was tied around her head, she screamed so loud the whole town could have heard us, for Shannon had her eyes locked on a lovely brown pony.

Dozens of colors blended together like someone mixing the rainbow. Pecks of light fluttered together, it was so magnificent that you'd think someone was spray-painting the sky. I watched the unbelievable view while racing down the rough, gravel road. Sprint never wanted to stop. But this time I wasn't alone. Next to me, enjoying the view even more than I, were Shannon and Lizzy. Lizzy was her new pony that now glided so gracefully that if you hadn't known her before you would have thought she was a professional racer. The thought flashed through my mind. Here I was with my best friend, my first best friend, my only best friend. I smiled at the thought. 

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