

# Stone Soup

*The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists*



*Illustration by Abby Martin, age 13, for "Grandma's Angels," page 17*

## GRANDMA'S ANGELS

Who are we without our memories?

## THE SOUND OF THE SEA

Jasper misses his dad

*Also:* A story and a poem about dolphins

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# Stone Soup

*The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists*

VOLUME 42, NUMBER 4  
MARCH / APRIL 2014

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# Editor's Note

**"And they lived happily ever after."** We enjoy a fairy-tale ending as much as the next person, but real-life stories don't often end all neat and tidy. Several young authors in this issue did a great job of capturing life's complexities in the endings to their stories. In "Grandma's Angels," Maggie's heart aches to see her grandmother suffering from Alzheimer's. Then one day she realizes that Grandma isn't really suffering. She's OK with her fate. It's a bittersweet moment for Maggie, both sad and happy. Jasper is devastated in "The Sound of the Sea" when he learns that the divorce was his dad's idea. There's nothing he can do to change it, but he can take his dad's advice and try to be happy, in spite of everything. "The Crownweaver" and "A Home for Barney" also have endings that make us think. The next time you write a story, remember these examples. Can you write an ending that feels like real life?

— Gerry Mandel

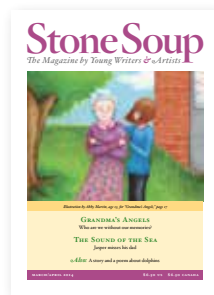
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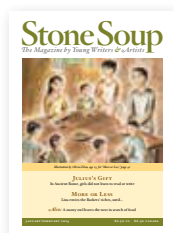
## Submissions

Read our guidelines at [stonesoup.com](http://stonesoup.com). If you have submission questions, write to [editor@stonesoup.com](mailto:editor@stonesoup.com). No email submissions, please.

**ON THE COVER** Abby Martin says, "I've been drawing pretty much since I could hold a pencil." Her mom is an artist, and her sister Charlotte illustrated for *Stone Soup* in 2011. Abby won first place in the Christian Homeschoolers Association of Pennsylvania art contest in 2010, 2012, and 2013. She also loves playing the violin.



# The Mailbox



**I first found** *Stone Soup* in Schuler's bookstore. I spent almost all my time at the bookstore reading *Stone Soup*, fascinated by my discovery. Later I got a subscription for a Christmas present! It was one of my favorite presents, because I was excited that I finally got to be a part of this group of writers and illustrators. When you are a young author or artist, it is hard to find a way to get involved in what you really love and be motivated to do it. *Stone Soup* is a golden opportunity for all writers, readers, imaginers, and artists to have their dreams come true. Thank you so much!

**Lauren Vanden Bosch, 12**  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

**I absolutely love** your magazine because it inspires me. Thank you!

**Tate Frederick, 10**  
Hopkinton, Massachusetts

**I really like** your magazine, *Stone Soup*. It is very interesting and fun to read. The writing pieces you publish are very well written and each piece draws me into a whole new world. Each story, poem, and drawing is vivid in detail and I can read or look at them again and again without getting bored. I loved the stories I have read on [stonesoup.com](http://stonesoup.com), and I especially remember the narrative "The Three Wishes" [May/June 2012]. It was very creative because the girl wanted other people to have a chance to make wishes too. I felt it was very heartwarming.

**Anne Chen, 13**  
San Diego, California

**My name is** Emily Rockwell, and I want to be a writer when I grow up. I have been receiving *Stone Soup* as a birthday present for a while. I have always dreamed of submitting one of my stories. Thank you and your magazine for giving me a chance to have my voice heard.

**Emily Rockwell, 12**  
Hampton, New Hampshire

*Emily's story is recognized in this issue's Honor Roll, page 48.*

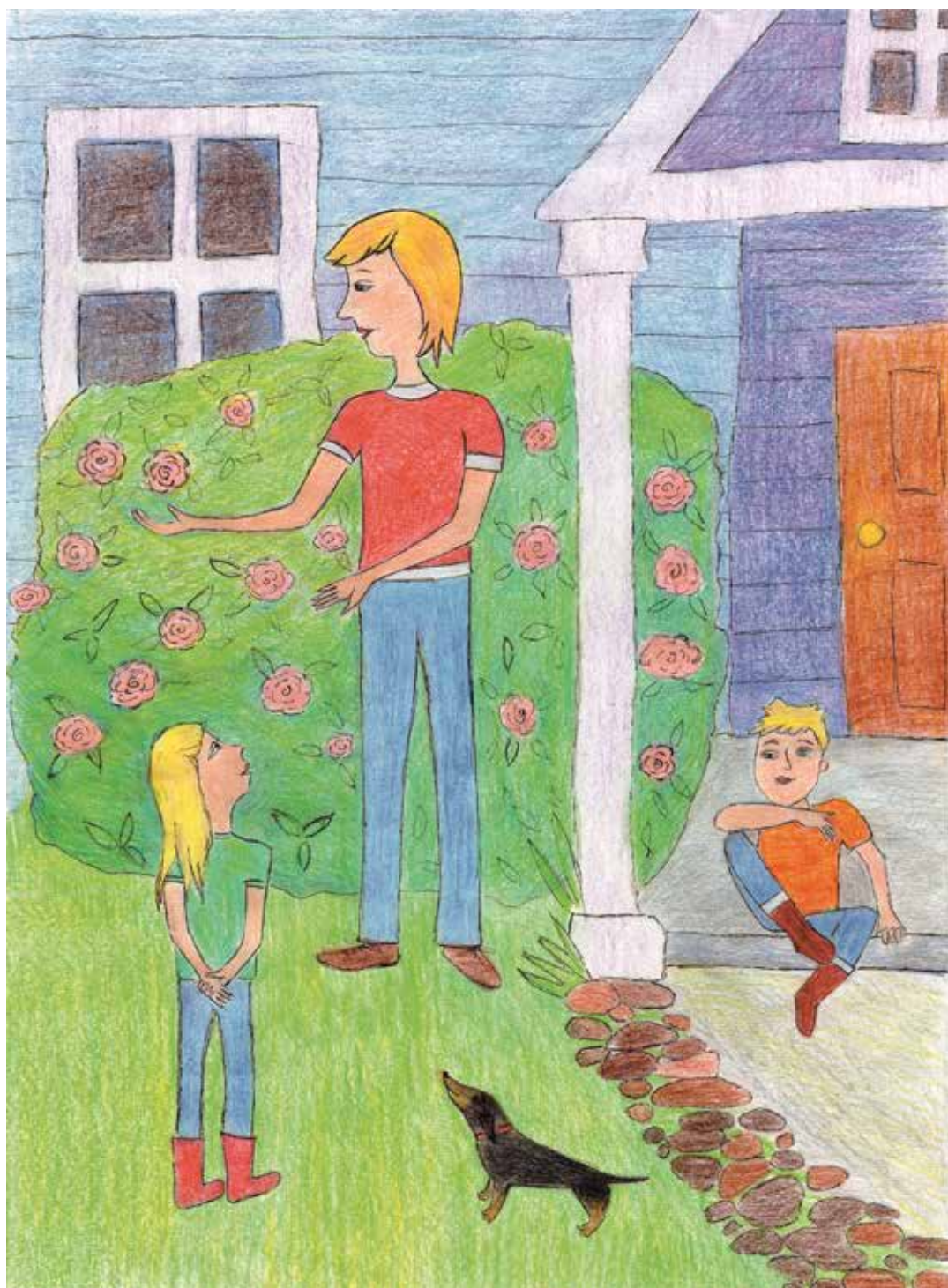
**My nine-year-old** son Jude enjoys your magazine very much, but I was disappointed to see this line on the cover of your January/February 2014 issue: "In Ancient Rome, girls did not learn to read or write." The good news is that Roman girls did very often learn to read and write. It's true that the prime emphasis for girls' education in ancient Rome was learning the skills they would need to become good wives and mothers, but this included learning the basics of reading and mathematics since they would be expected to manage the household, and many women had real jobs, like running a shop. Many girls even went to school until they were of a marriageable age. So while I totally understand the feeling of "elation" the girl in "Julius's Gift" felt when she discovered reading, I am happy to report that it is unlikely any Roman girl would have been kept from reading in the way the author depicts in her story.

**Dr. Susan Lupack**  
Editor of *Hesperia*  
American School of Classical Studies  
Princeton, New Jersey

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*Stone Soup* welcomes your comments. Send them to [editor@stonesoup.com](mailto:editor@stonesoup.com).





*Mama frowned and said, "You know, my camellias are disappearing"*

# The Crownweaver

By **Mathilde Fox-Smith**

*Illustrated by* **Tina Splann**

**P**EOPLE WHO BELIEVE in magic can see that magic in the trickling waters of a creek; or at least I can. I began to love going down to the creek in the woods behind our home when I was six-and-a-half. My parents usually took me, but when I turned seven, I was independent enough to go alone. By then, the creek was always washing things up onto the banks, especially beautiful sparkling rocks. It was almost like it was giving me gifts. Often my brother, Peter, and I would run down to the creek with my dog, Sizzles, running in front of us, barking at squirrels. When we arrived, we would kick off our shoes and splash around in the cool rushing water. After it rains, the creek is a huge treacherous river, and my parents don't let me go down there very often.

It was a sunny spring Saturday morning. After breakfast, I decided that I was going to spend a while at the creek. I called, "Mama! I'm going down to the creek."

"OK, but first let me show you something!" she called back.

I ran into the grassy green garden and she held up the head of a gorgeous pink camellia.

Mama loves flowers. I love them too, but I don't think anyone loves them as much as she does. She is a pretty famous person in the town for grafting camellias.

"It's beautiful." I smiled at it.

"It's called Pink Perfection," she returned happily.

I could see why. I examined the perfect layered petals on the flower, smiling. Unexpectedly, Mama frowned and said, "You



Mathilde Fox-Smith, 10  
St. Francisville, Louisiana



Tina Splann, 10  
Providence Village, Texas

know, my camellias are disappearing. It could be deer, but I have the feeling that somebody is picking them.”

I frowned too and wondered, What could be happening to them? Then I said, “Well, I’ll go now, and I’ll see you soon.”

As I left the yard and headed towards the forest, I heard a familiar voice chasing me.

“Where are you going, Lindsey?”

It was Peter.

“The creek.”

“I want to come.”

I shrugged and said, “Well, come!”

He nodded and jogged after me.

A stick cracked in half as I trampled it with Sizzles at my heels. She wagged her tail and jumped over a log, forging ahead of Peter and me. We knew the woods well by now, the three of us. When we reached the creek, I yanked off my red boots and jumped off of a muddy hill. Sizzles leapt back to avoid me and I laughed, standing in the cool rushing water. Then I saw her, a girl with long dark curls, standing in the creek about twenty yards away. She had brown eyes too, and, most importantly, she had spun a crown of flowers that perched in her hair. It was spun with clovers, wildflowers, and tiny violets, but also an assortment of roses and perfect pink layered camellias. When I took a step in her direction, she sprinted out of the creek, grabbing a pair of brown boots on the ground. Sizzles barked and growled, making to run across the creek, but I grabbed her collar.

“No, Sizzie!” I exclaimed. “Bad dog.”

“What?” Peter asked.

“Someone... someone was over there.”

I waded across the creek as Peter watched me with looks of suspicion and question on his face. The girl was gone, but there on the sand lay a single Pink Perfection camellia.

ALL THROUGH the school week she was in the back of my mind. When I wasn’t busy with my work, like at recess, my mind floated to that topic.

On Wednesday, a few of my friends—Katie, Eloise, and Jenny—asked if I wanted to play with them. Thinking I had spent too long with my mind on this mysterious figure, I joined in their game.

“Did you see those Mexicans in the grocery store?” Eloise asked as we snapped sticks off of branches to make wands.

“Oh, yeah,” Jenny replied, sneering. “And they’ve got two girls, right? What do they think they’re doing here? Mexicans shouldn’t be taking Americans’ jobs, which is, like, definitely what they’re doing! They don’t belong here. I bet they’re illegal immigrants!”

“If I knew their names, I’d totally turn them in!” Katie joined in.

I frowned uncomfortably, remembering the image of the girl at the creek. Her tan skin and black hair fit the definition of Mexican. Was she?

At last, Friday came. I had finally figured out who the girl was: a neighbor of ours who lived in an old small house in the woods. I *had* seen her in the grocery store



before, but my family didn't know her parents, or her, *or* her sister.

When Saturday afternoon arrived, I yanked on my boots and jogged towards the woods to go to the creek. I was set to see the stranger again, foolishly bringing a pair of binoculars just to be sure. I let Peter come. He knew about the girl because I didn't see the point of keeping it a secret alone, but I did make him promise to keep it one, just in case the girls wanted it that way.

**W**E LEFT SIZZLES and went on our own, sweeping away the branches that clawed at our hair. At last, the rushing waters came into earshot, then sight, and there she was. She had brought her sister around too, and they sat by the water, cooling their feet and talking. Although I could hear their speaking quite clearly, not a word made sense. It was all in Spanish.

I watched them from behind a live oak, and Peter peeked around the other side. The smaller girl was the one I had seen last week, and she still wore the crown of flowers in her hair. In fact, it was quite amazing. She had woven it together with the same materials, but what made my heart skip a beat was that the flowers that made it up were still Pink Perfection camellias, picked straight from Mama's garden! The older girl resembled her a lot, and as I watched, the younger one prod-

ded a rose into her braid.

Then, I made up my mind. I quietly stepped around the tree and fumbled in my pocket until I found two sparkly rocks from the creek. Peter followed, keeping a suspicious eye on the younger girl's flowers.

Knowing they wouldn't understand English, I held out the rocks before they could leave. The older girl seemed more bold and realized that I was being friendly, so, judging by her gestures, she told the younger one to stay.

Now she gestured at me. She pointed at the rocks, then at herself with questioning looks on her face.

*Are those for us?*

I nodded and she took them, then she began again.

She pointed at herself. "Gabriela." Then at her sister. "Rosa."

*My name is Gabriela. She is Rosa.*

Eagerly, I nodded again and pointed at myself. "Lindsey."

"And who am I?" asked Peter as if I was a first grader. Rolling my eyes, I pointed and said, "Peter." Then I made the cuckoo sign.

Serious again, I tried my best to ask a question. With questioning looks, I shrugged, pointed at the girls, and ran a little ways, then came back.

*Why were you afraid?*

Gabriela took a while to digest the signs. As a look of understanding crossed

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The girl was gone,  
but there on the sand  
lay a single Pink  
Perfection camellia.

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*She was a passionate child who just... didn't know right*

her face, I settled down again. She then went nervous but answered, despite Rosa's head shaking pretty viciously.

"Mexican," she said with an accent. She drew a line in the sandy creek bank, then pretended to try and cross it. Gabriela changed her character into someone holding out a hand to say "Stop." Then she turned around and got across the line from a different point.

*We are from Mexico, and we needed a better living, so we came to the United States, but we weren't allowed in without taking the immigration test, but we didn't take it. Instead, we*

*snuck in.*

In short version: *We're illegal immigrants.*

Gabriela pointed at Rosa and her crown of flowers. She made a heart with her hands.

*Rosa loves flowers.*

I already knew that she was the one picking the camellias. As much as I knew her ways were wrong, I couldn't see the girl as a thief. No, she was a passionate child who just... didn't know right.

Peter was trying to communicate with Gabriela, but all he got were confused looks and raised eyebrows. When

Gabriela saw me watching, she made her last note. She pointed to herself and Rosa, then at the woods and the creek again.

*We have to go. We will come back, so meet us here.*

I nodded, then Peter and I hurried into the woods to get home.

THROUGHOUT the week, it stormed. Great drops of rain plummeted to the ground, bursting in puddles and clinging to grass stems. All week, we stayed and played inside.

On Friday, a half day at school, it was only drizzling. I was sure that Gabriela and Rosa would be at the creek, waiting for Peter and me. I was correct, and Rosa seemed bolder now.

“Wow!” I yelled suddenly.

Question filled Gabriela’s face as she looked from side to side, her black curls whipping her face.

I pointed at the creek, and Gabriela nodded, and Rosa joined her. She couldn’t express it through words, but I knew she was just as amazed as me.

The waters were no longer a quiet creek bed, but a roaring river. Huge logs were sucked downstream, and I took a step back, seeing its power.

Then it happened. Rain began to pound again and Rosa staggered backwards, getting her boot stuck in a wad of quicksand. She yanked and tugged, but

before Gabriela, Peter, and I could run up and help, her foot slid out of the boot. She tumbled down the bank and fell in the water!

All four of us panicked. Rosa flapped her arms and paddled as the powerful current swept her downstream. Gabriela led us in a sprint after her. I was afraid for Rosa, because if she panicked too much, she would run out of energy and sink like a rock.

Peter grabbed a fallen limb. Gabriela grabbed it too and began yelling at Rosa in Spanish, but she went under.

Gabriela let out a scream that seemed to shake the bank. The rain lessened into a sprinkle, and Gabriela flopped down on the sand, defeated and weeping. Peter and I were quite teary as well, and I sniffed a lot. Rosa and I were not exactly as good friends as Gabriela and I, but I just... just can’t express anything through words of how horrible I felt. *How could this happen?*

Sizzles trotted out of the woods, looking too cheerful. I reached out to pat her, but she barked at the creek.

One beautiful perfect pink camellia floated on the rough water. Slowly, and one by one, the petals broke off and glided downstream to a particular spot on the bank.

Something was there.

Someone was there.

I stood...



# The Sea Voyage

By Theo Taplitz



Theo Taplitz, 10  
Los Angeles, California

I saw a dolphin swim up to our ship,  
Not gray or blue but green,  
Just beyond the sea lions lying on the rocky beds  
That protect the docks from the wrath of the ocean.  
But today it is still,  
Our boat making ripples in the dark blue water,  
Fresh air washing my face,  
Waking me out of my morning slump.  
“Over there! Over there! The dolphins are jumping!”  
The ghost of my grandpa beside me,  
Like back on his old boat,  
His spirit still living  
With the mud and the fish smell,  
And the sunlight hitting the water and the swaying deck,  
And the dark brown leathery pelicans  
Flying low over the horizon.



# Call of the Dolphins

By Kyle Trefny

*Illustrated by the author*

## INSPIRED BY A TRUE STORY

IT WAS JUST one of those foggy afternoons when, suddenly, my dad's phone rang. Of course, his phone rings a lot considering he's a marine biologist, and people call him about sea lions, seals, and whatnot. But this call was different. It came from a local fisherman, fourteen miles off the coast of Northern California. He said he had found a bottlenose dolphin trapped under fishnets and that he didn't know how long it had been there or how it got there, but he was certain of one thing: without help it was going to die.

My dad frowned, drummed his fingers along the countertop, crossed the room, made a few quick calls, got some equipment, and headed for the door. Right then and there, I decided to go with him. "Dad," I began, "I was wondering if I could... go with you?"

He shrugged and pushed out his lower lip. "Should be OK."

I smiled, and together we left the house.

We met up with four of my dad's friends at our boat, *The Porpoise*. I realized that all of them were dressed for the adventure, while I was wearing jeans and a sweatshirt. Oh well, it was too late to go back, so I just stepped on board, and we started off.

We live in Berkeley, so we had to cut across the San Francisco Bay in order to get into the open Pacific. The ride took us under the majestic Golden Gate Bridge, although we could barely see it; it was veiled in mist. As we continued out to sea, I kept hop-



Kyle Trefny, 11  
San Francisco, California

ing to see some sign of the perishing animal. I never like that feeling, when you know somebody or something is dying, and there is nothing you can do to help. I could feel a coldness in my stomach and perspiration running down my neck. I glanced up at my dad's fellow biologists and saw them talking comfortably. I gotta say, I was envious. I mean, I'm sitting here all queasy and they are chatting away!

Everybody looked up when my dad turned off the boat's motor. I started staring out at the sea, which was as smooth as glass. I was about to ask where the dolphin was, when my dad seemed to read my thoughts. He said, "We are gonna go in silently. We don't want to make the dolphin anxious."

I liked the way my dad was saying "we." It made me think that I might be included. His next words confirmed my thoughts. "Your wetsuit is on the boat," he said, "and I've got an extra pair of goggles you could use. Do you wanna come?" I nodded happily and crossed the boat to get changed.

Our boat slowly drifted toward a tangled mass of fishnets and buoys. When we were about twenty yards away, my dad, two of his friends, and I slipped into the water. The only exposed part of my body was my face, but still, my whole body got chills when I dunked under.

Getting to the fishnets was slow progress. I could have gotten there much

faster if I didn't have a life jacket on; it gave my arms a very limited amount of space, to say the least. It took a while to get to the nets, but let me tell you, it took a whole lot longer to find the dolphin. It was somewhere in what looked like a massive knot. Finally, we found it, and it was in pretty bad shape. The dolphin was almost in a vertical position in the water.

Ropes ensnared its entire body. One of the traps was weighing down the animal's tail fluke. We were all armed with knives, and both my dad and his colleagues had oxygen tanks, meaning they could dive

under to free the dolphin's tail. I had to free its mouth and head.

When you're freeing a dolphin, you're going to want to be super careful. And when I say "super," I mean it. If I were to miss any of the ropes and cut the dolphin, it could freak out, thrash around, and maybe hurt us and itself. So it was slow work. Now, I'm up at the surface sawing away at the ropes, and my dad and his friends are down at the tail. Do you think the dolphin was enjoying all this activity? No. It's slashing its pectoral fin at me and flipping its tail. In fact, it was using all its remaining strength to get us away! And if it didn't have any more strength left... That thought made me work faster. After half-an-hour's work, many of the ropes were already loosened or cut away. But that wasn't enough; I wanted every one of these horrible nets at the bottom of the ocean.

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**He was certain of  
one thing: without help  
it was going to die.**

---



*The dolphin was free!*

In another fifteen minutes my wish was granted. The nets slipped down, down into the endless abyss. The dolphin was free! My dad, his two colleagues, and I, swam happily to the boat to celebrate. When we turned back, the dolphin was still there. We waited for ten minutes. Twenty minutes. The dolphin wouldn't leave. Then I noticed a small gray object, in another set of nets, eight yards from where the dolphin was swimming. I pointed it out to my dad and his eyes widened.

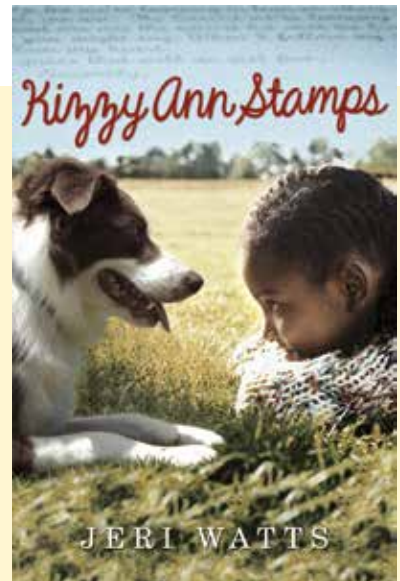
Then he smiled at me. "She has a calf!" he exclaimed. That got me and all four of my dad's friends diving into the water.

The mother dolphin reached her calf before us, but surprisingly she let us touch and untangle it. Once it was freed, she nuzzled it. We smiled and swam back to the boat. I climbed aboard and turned around. She'd followed us. She popped her head out of the water and gave a short whistle. It could have only meant one thing. "Thanks." ❁

# Book Review

By Autumn Owens

*Kizzy Ann Stamps*, by Jeri Watts;  
Candlewick Press: New York, 2012; \$15.99



Autumn Owens, 11  
Bryan, Ohio

**K**IZZY ANN STAMPS is a normal girl. She has a dog named Shag. She lives on a farm with her mother, father, and brother. But there's one catch to this whole "normal girl" business: Kizzy Ann is black.

Today, that wouldn't be a problem. However, in Kizzy's time of 1963, being black would have been a huge deal. Discrimination was everywhere back then. If you were a black kid, you wouldn't be allowed to use public restrooms. Trying on clothes at a store? The owners would've required you to put on gloves and cover up any body part that might be exposed to the fabric.

Nowadays, we don't have those types of problems. Black kids have the same rights as any other kids. But discrimination hasn't left.

Some types of discrimination people don't really realize. For example, how many times have you been told you're too young to hang out with the big kids? Or that you can't play in the football game the neighborhood boys are organizing because you're a girl? Both of these situations are forms of discrimination.

One time, I was backstage at my dance recital. I was in first grade, and one of my friends was in second grade. We were in



different classes, and each class had a backstage craft/snack table. I walked over to her table to say hi and a girl at my friend's table said, "You can't come over here. You're a first grader."

We have a choice: we can join discrimination or rebel against it.

Several characters in this book rebel against it. After Kizzy Ann is integrated into a "white" school, her new teacher, Miss Anderson, chooses to ditch discrimination and teach Kizzy like she was teaching a white kid.

However, some characters join forces with discrimination. Kizzy Ann's older brother, James, also attends a white school. But his teachers don't hand out books to the black kids so they can learn alongside the white kids. And sports? None of the black kids played varsity regardless of their ability because varsity was for white kids only.

Kizzy Ann and her family yearned to be treated normally. No negative attention, no special attention—just normal. When Kizzy and Shag sign themselves up for some dog training, their instructor, Mr. McKenna, treats them just like that: normal. He's there for them through thick and thin, not trying to force their relationship but not wanting to hurt it either, even if he has trouble expressing it. This trio, plus the addition of the white neighbor boy, Frank Charles, eventually makes it to a real dog show after a fair share of troubles. Then discrimination butts in again—the man at the sign-in desk tries to eliminate her from the competition because of the color of her skin.

This book reveals exactly what it might have felt like to be a black child back in 1963. It's a book filled with excitement, heartbreak, and truth. I would recommend it to anyone in a fraction of a heartbeat.

Discrimination is everywhere. We can ignore it, or we can destroy it.

Which will you do?





*“Who are you?” Grandma stares at us with furrowed eyebrows*

# Grandma's Angels

By **Marina Stevenson**

*Illustrated by* **Abby Martin**

**O**UR MEMORIES DEFINE who we are. They are the things that tie us to meaningful places as well as to the people we have loved. Memories are a part of us.

So who are we without them?

Who are we with nothing but lost, scattered memories?

Who is my grandma?

**T**HE CAR RIDE to the retirement home is short. Dad parks the car right up front in between a black jeep and a red pickup truck.

He turns to me with a thin smile. "Ready, honey?"

I nod and get out of the car and can feel the thick heat bouncing onto my face from the sun. The fresh scent of flowers dances in the air and tickles my nose playfully.

With hands clasped together, Dad and I walk up the steps to the large white retirement home. We push open the heavy glass doors, allowing the air conditioning to cool me down from the summer heat outside. I see Patty at the front desk and smile. She looks up happily and waves us over with bright eyes.

"How are you today?" she asks from her swivel chair.

"We're doing good," Dad replies.

I grab a mint from the glass jar sitting on top of the desk. "How's my grandma?" I ask as I unwrap the mint and plop it into my mouth.

She gives me a reassuring smile and places a lock of black hair behind her ear. "She is doing well. I'm sure she will be very



Marina Stevenson, 12  
Wayland, Massachusetts



Abby Martin, 13  
Bellefonte, Pennsylvania

happy to see you both.”

“Thanks, Patty,” Dad says as we begin to walk towards another set of glass doors.

We push the doors open and enter a large room. One side of the room is filled with nice leather couches occupied by elders squinting at the television in the corner, and the other has corkboards filling the wall of the different activities occurring this month. Dad and I pass by old people mingling with- in the retirement home, canes and walkers in hand.

We pass by an old woman wearing large glasses with white hair pulled back into a bun. “Hello!” She smiles and waves.

I don’t know who this woman is, but I smile and wave back. Dad has always told me that I should do this. He tells me that living in places like this can be sad. Living here can remind you of your limitations. And sometimes the families of those living here don’t even bother to visit—they don’t even say hello. If I ever had to live in a place like this, I would be sad, too.

We walk down a red-carpeted hallway with doors on both sides leading into bedrooms. Names are written in a slot next to each door in thick black letters of those who live here.

At the end of the hall we stop. The door to Grandma’s room is wide open, and I can feel a humid breeze. Dad walks in first, looking concerned, with me following from behind. Usually Grandma’s door is shut tight when we come to visit.

I can see Dad’s shoulders relax in front of me and feel mine do the same. Grandma is sitting in her wooden rocking chair by the corner in front of an open window. I puzzle at this for a moment. Grandma never has her window open, either. But I shake the thought off quickly to put on a smile for her.

“Who are you?” Grandma stares at us with furrowed eyebrows.

“Hi, Mom.” Dad takes a seat in the other wooden rocking chair next to Grandma. “It’s me, Daniel, your son.”

“Oh, Daniel!” Her face lightens up and produces a wrinkled smile.

“And this is your granddaughter, Maggie,” he says as he gestures to me.

“Hi, Grandma!” I say as I take a seat on her neatly made bed.

She puts a delicate hand to her pale cheek. “I didn’t know that I had a grandchild...”

My heart aches for a moment as I look at her. Grandma’s faded blue eyes show nothing. There is no sign of recollection at all.

“That’s OK, Mom.” Dad takes her hand into his. “Maybe you don’t recognize her. She probably looks different...”

Dad frowns suddenly and looks down at Grandma’s hand.

“Dad, what’s wrong?” I straighten up and try to read his face.

He looks back up at Grandma in panic. “Mom, where’s your ring?”

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Sometimes it hurts  
to remind her of  
who I am.

---



Grandma blinks. "What ring?"

"Your wedding ring, Mom," Dad speaks louder, "the one that your husband gave to you?"

She shakes her head. "I don't understand."

Dad rummages quickly through her dress pockets, fishing out nothing but tissues. He turns to me with a stern look. "Maggie, go push the employee assistance button," he says quickly.

I nod and run to the bedroom door. Next to it on the right side is a large red button with bold letters underneath it saying *Employee Assistance*. I push it urgently. And then, after waiting only a second more, I push it again.

Suddenly Alex, one of the employees, walks in.

"Do you need..." he begins.

Dad cuts him off. "Her wedding ring. It's not on her!"

Alex's eyes grow behind his glasses as he lets his mouth hang open.

"I need help finding it!"

Alex nods quickly and stumbles into the room. "Yes, of course."

Dad turns to me briefly. "Maggie, sit down next to her, OK?"

I rush over to Grandma and take a seat next to her in the wooden rocking chair.

We both watch in a blur as they rummage through the drawers and shelves. Dad and Alex go through her bin of dirty clothes and delicately turn over each dress and each pair of pants to make sure the ring couldn't be hidden inside them. They rip off the sheets of what was once her

neatly made bed and even crawl around on the floor, looking under everything.

I turn to Grandma and wonder if she knows what's happening. I wonder if she remembers Grandpa, even if it is just fragments of him.

I watch as she shakes her head in disbelief as she observes them closely. "This is nonsense," she mutters. "At this rate, we'll probably miss the flight back to California."

THEY COULDN'T find the ring anywhere. Alex and Dad tore through Grandma's room. They searched all through the retirement home and even across the lawn in the back. Nothing.

This evening Dad went to the downtown police station. He told me as we drove back home in a quavering tone, "Someone might have stolen it, Maggie." I didn't know how to respond to this. My mind froze at the thought of someone stealing from Grandma. She's an innocent person. She wouldn't know what was going on.

But what if someone did?

What if someone really did steal Grandma's wedding ring?

I can see Dad's shadow stretch across my bedroom floor.

"Maggie, why is your lamp still on?" His voice is soft and gentle as he enters my room.

I sit up in my bed and take a deep breath. Dinner isn't sitting right in my stomach. Everything just feels wrong. "I can't sleep," is all I can say as I look up at

him.

He slowly nods his head and takes a seat on my bed next to me. "That's OK, honey."

"Will the police find the ring?" I ask.

He takes my hands into his and holds them tight. "I can't know for sure if it was actually stolen." His voice is quiet and unsure.

There's a pause in our conversation where all I can hear is the buzz of my bedside lamp.

I open my mouth, trying to think of the right words to say. "Dad, what kind of a person would steal from Grandma?"

He closes his eyes and sighs. "I don't know, Maggie, I don't know."

**B**EFORE GRANDMA was diagnosed with Alzheimer's by her doctor, she lived with Dad and me. She moved in with us a little after Grandpa passed away.

I remember a lot about Grandma before she got sick. Like the way she would dance and sing to me when I was feeling bad. Everything seemed to change when she got sick, though. I had to remind her of the lyrics to the songs she would sing to me that she knew by heart. A couple times I would catch her using the wrong side of her hairbrush or even cutting up some of her favorite family photos. It made no sense to me, but it seemed to make sense to her doctor.

I was only six then, and now that I'm thirteen, things have gotten much worse for Grandma. The day that she forgot who I was was the most unforgettable.

I watch Grandma now as she looks out her closed window with a satisfied look on her face, as I think about everything and wish it was all different. I'm angry that Grandma has to experience a disease like Alzheimer's and angry at the thought of a person ever stealing from her.

Dad went to a few different jewelry stores in town to see if they had Grandma's wedding ring. He tried hard to talk to Grandma, to see if he could even get a little bit of recollection about what had happened to her ring. But there was no sign of her remembrance.

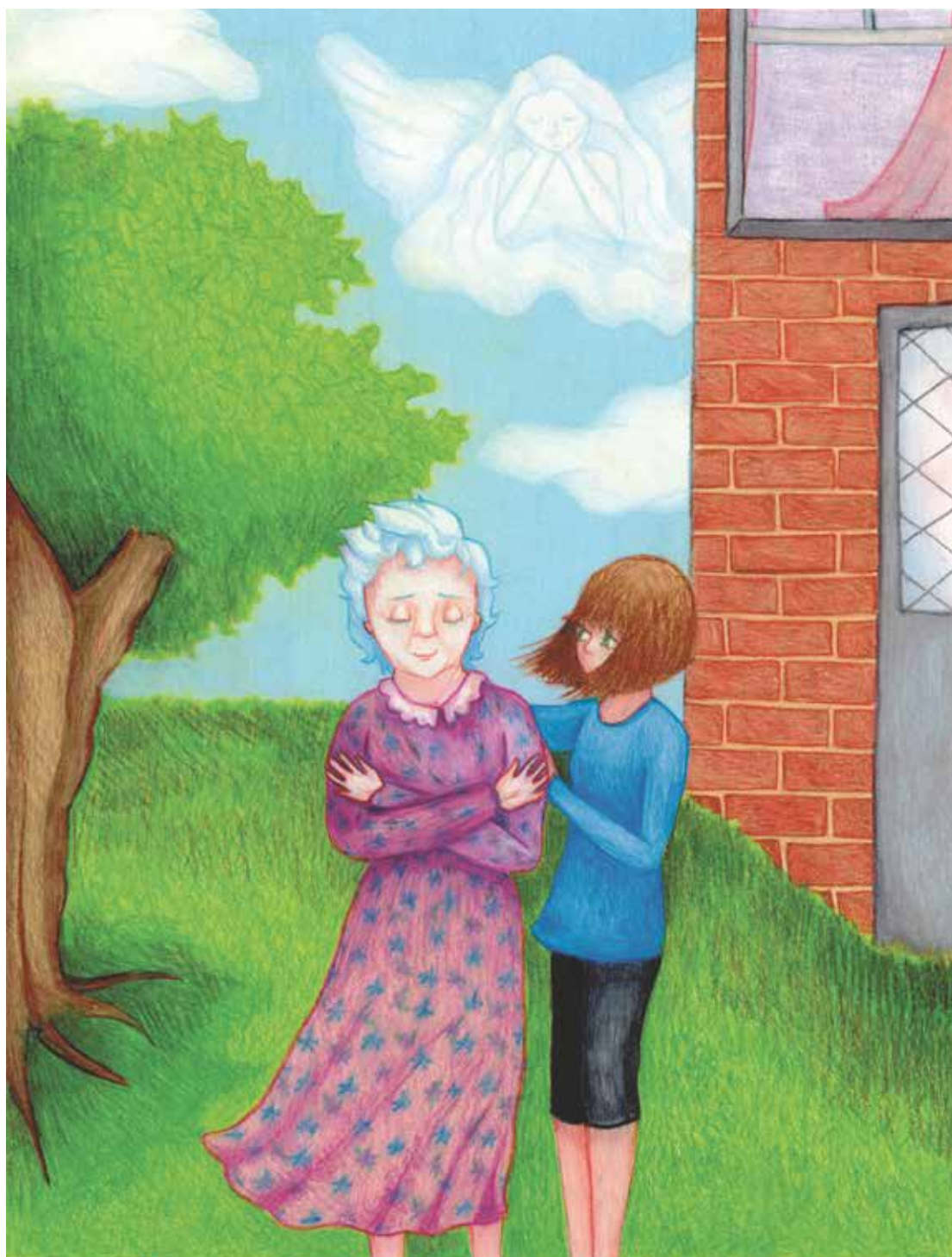
"Isn't it just lovely outside, Rebecca?" Grandma says.

It takes a moment for me to realize that it's actually me she's talking to. I open my mouth, wanting to say that it's actually me, Maggie, her granddaughter that she loves and not Rebecca. But I stop myself. Sometimes it hurts to remind her of who I am.

"Yeah, it's a really nice day outside," I reply and look out the window with her.

As I look outside with her at the birds swimming and gliding through the air, I wonder if Rebecca is someone from Grandma's memories. Maybe I look like Rebecca with my short brown hair and green eyes.

I find myself standing up and walking over to the opposite side of the room where all of Grandma's pictures hang from the wall. The arrangement of them always seems to change, with new ones being hung up now and then, and some even disappearing.



*"Can't you hear them?" she whispers. "Can't you hear the angels?"*

"You have a lot of pictures over here," I say as I look at them all.

My eyes rest on a faded photograph of a group of middle-aged friends on a beach wearing bathing suits and smiling. One of the persons' heads looks like it has been cut out choppily.

"Papa just got me a nice camera for my birthday," Grandma says proudly. "I took a few photographs yesterday."

I look over my shoulder at her curiously but then look back at the wall and suddenly find a wooden framed photo of Grandpa amidst the many photographs. It looks like him a little before he passed away. His gray hair is combed back neatly and his wide smile is hidden behind his short white beard. I can feel myself smile, too, and am reminded of the small memories I've made with him. For a moment I wonder if Grandpa knows all that has happened to Grandma, if he is sad or angry.

I hear the sudden stir of Grandma behind me and turn around to see her up on her feet with a look of shock on her face.

"Grandma?" I stare at her nervously,

unsure of what to do.

Grandma ignores me and walks straight out of her bedroom and into the hall.

I follow her out of her room and down the hallway. "Grandma!"

She quickly opens the back screen door to the retirement home's yard and rushes outside. I try and grasp onto her floral dress to stop her, but she already has stopped.

I can feel the sun's heat on my face and back and hear the birds chirping happily. I stare at Grandma as a soothing breeze sways her curly hair. Her eyes are shut and her lips have formed a peaceful smile.

"Can't you hear them?" she whispers. "Can't you hear the angels?"

There is a moment of stillness as I look up into the sky. It is so blue, so flawless. I can feel my eyes close just like Grandma's, and I think I can hear them.

They are singing. They are looking over Grandma.

It is in this moment that I realize everything will be OK. Grandma will be OK.

I can hear the angels.





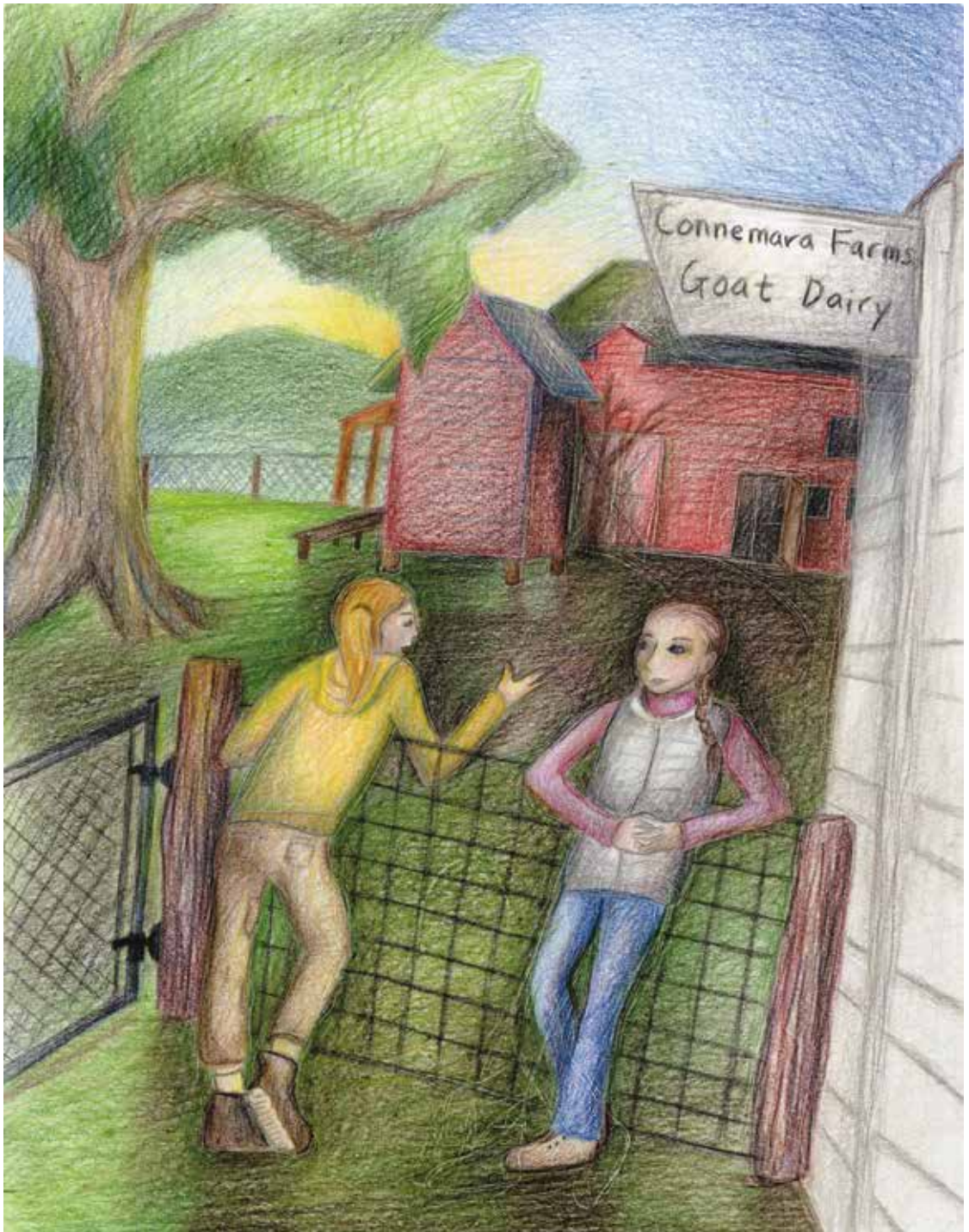
# Spring

*By* Isabelle Zeaske

The grove of royal white birches  
I've always loved  
Casts intricate shadows  
On the pavement below.  
Black on black  
Like deer running at night.  
A young fern sprout  
Catches my eye.  
Something shines  
But nothing moves.  
An old plastic bag  
Flutters limply in the breeze  
From the high limb of a pine  
Like winter's flag of surrender.  
The rhythmic snap  
Of the bag  
Is drowned out  
By the soft song  
Of a faraway  
Chickadee.



Isabelle Zeaske, 10  
Minneapolis, Minnesota



*We chatted together about everything, from baby goats to gardens*

# A Home for Barney

By Kaley Birchfield

*Illustrated by Sarah Pi*

IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL spring morning. My irises and daisies were beginning to bloom. The crepe myrtles had put on their finest display, and pink flowers littered my driveway. It was a perfect day in North Carolina. I stepped out of the house and got into my old truck. Slowly, I drove the few miles to the Carl Sandburg home. On the way up the hill, I met one of my fellow workers, Amy. We chatted together about everything, from baby goats to gardens. We reached the goat barn and went through the gate.

"I'm so excited, Christy," Amy told me. "You know Jenny?"

I nodded. Jenny was the head worker. "Mmm hmm?"

"Well anyway, she sent me an email this morning saying that a few of the goats gave birth last night!"

"Great!" I exclaimed. We hurried inside the barn.

"Christy, Amy, come over here," Jenny called. We ran over to her. Jenny was holding Nellie, one of our goats, still. "She's having trouble with her babies," she told us solemnly. Amy and I looked at each other. We bent down and struggled with Nellie. An hour later we had a thin baby goat in our laps.

"Only one?" Amy asked. "That's unusual."

Jenny gently took the kid from me and examined it. "It's very weak and sickly," she noted. "He needs food." She tried to urge Nellie to nurse her child. The goat turned around and refused to.

"She's shunning her baby because he's so sick!" I cried in despair.



Kaley Birchfield, 11  
Sammamish, Washington



Sarah Pi, 13  
San Jose, California

"We'll have to bottle-feed him," Amy realized.

"Christy, I'm putting you in charge of this little guy," Jenny said. She handed me the goat.

"But... but," I stammered.

"I've got to go check on the other goats. Come on, Amy." Amy gave the kid one last glance before following Jenny out of the barn.

I gently adjusted the little fellow and coaxed the nipple of a bottle into his mouth. He finished the milk in a few minutes and then snuggled against me. I smiled and stroked his soft brown back. He had found a new mother.

Two weeks passed since the goat's birth, and he still had never left the barn. He also still remained without a name. Jenny had left him in my responsibility, so I figured that I was supposed to name him. But none of the names I picked for him suited him. I tried Ginger, but he wasn't fiery. He was calm and dependent. Fuzzy didn't quite fit him. I asked visitors for ideas and came up with Little, Quiet, Sam, Cinnamon, and Chocolate.

One day, as I was trying to think of a name, one of the workers, Marla, came in. I had never been very fond of her, as she wasn't the brightest creature on earth. She stood leaning against the doorway of the barn. Finally she said, "Barney."

"What?" I looked up.

"Barney. Name him Barney. He's never left the barn, has he? So name him Barney." She left the doorway and walked

outside.

I pondered the name. It suited him. He *had* never left the barn. It wasn't too big or grand. It was tiny and quiet. Like him. "Barney," I whispered. "Your name is now officially Barney." Barney gave something in between a squeal and a whinny. "You like it? Huh? You like it?" I laughed, and rolled over in the hay with Barney on top of me.

"What's goin' on?" Marla asked.

I smiled. "Thanks for the name, Marla," I said.

She shrugged. "Sure." Although she wouldn't admit it at the time, I knew that we had both found a new friend.

THE WEEKS PASSED. Marla and I shared the responsibility of taking care of Barney. He became more curious, and once even ventured out of the barn. However, he still remained sickly. Jenny was afraid that when he grew up, he might pass along these sick genes.

One day, she told me and Marla, "We're going to have to neuter him. We can't risk having a herd of sick goats."

I looked at my feet. "All right." I couldn't bear to watch.

"You can take a break," Jenny said, "both of you. You've worked so hard. Let's give you each a week-long break, all right?" We nodded.

As we walked to the parking lot, Marla said, "I'm really sorry."

I shook my head. "At least he'll live," I said.

The week seemed years to me. Every



second of the day, I worried about Barney. At night I tossed and turned. On the morning of the seventh day, I rushed over to the barn. Jenny met me.

"Where's Barney?" I gasped, seeing that his usual spot was empty.

"I put Kate in charge of him for now."

My heart sank. "Oh."

"Don't worry," Jenny reassured me. "You'll get him back soon. I know that you're doing great with him. For now I need you to take care of Mocha."

My shoulders sagged.

Mocha was a stingy goat, about Barney's age. She had sprained her ankle a few weeks back, and though it had healed, it still bothered her. She would often stand in the corner and nip anyone who came too close to her. "OK." I slowly approached Mocha with a handful of grain. I held it out to her. Instead of enjoying this rare treat, she backed away from me and eyed me suspiciously. I sighed. Suddenly I heard a familiar nicker. "Barney!" Kate was holding a squirming Barney in her arms. She brought him to Jenny.

"Barney's impossible," she said. "He hasn't been like this all week!"

Jenny smiled. "He sees Christy. Kate, how 'bout you take care of Mocha and Christy takes care of Barney?" Relieved, Kate handed Barney over to me. I hugged him to my chest. "You've been such a good mother to Barney," Jenny said.

I glowed. "Thank you."

Jenny continued. "You'll soon be saying goodbye to him."

Startled, I looked up. "Why?"

"We sell some of the goats every year. You ought to know that by now."

"No!" I cried. "Sell Barney?"

Jenny gave me a sad smile. "I see that you've gotten as attached to him as I have." She shook her head. "Yes, I'm afraid so."

I sighed and looked at Barney. I could see a look of innocence in his dark brown eyes. I hugged him again and went to find Marla.

Barney blinked a few times as we stepped out of the barn. He had only been out of the barn once in his life. I found Marla sitting on the ground, getting her daily bath from Natalie. The goat was licking her face playfully.

"Marla?" I asked softly.

She looked up. "Yeah?"

"We're going to have to sell Barney."

Marla opened her mouth to say something, and then closed it. Suddenly she burst out, "Christy, this is my last day workin' here. I've got a new job that'll pay more than this one. I'm sorry 'bout Barney." She gazed fondly at the young goat in my arms. I set Barney on the ground. He took a few tentative steps towards Marla, warily watching Natalie. Marla enfolded Barney in her arms. "I'll miss him. Both of you."

"Me too."

Marla stood up and placed Barney on

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**I knew that we  
had both found  
a new friend.**

---





*"We're going to have to sell Barney"*

the ground. Then she threw her arms around me. The sun was setting, and my watch said 4:56.

"I'd better leave," Marla choked. "Remember to write." I watched sadly as my friend walked down the steep hill for the last time. Slowly I picked up Barney and tucked him in for bed.

That night, as I lay in bed, I thought about Marla and Barney. Marla had left,

and soon Barney would too. It was too much for me to bear, and I cried myself to sleep.

**T**HE BIG DAY arrived. I studied the sky. It looked cloudy, and I hoped that the sale would be canceled. But the clouds parted and it proved to be a sunny day. With a heavy heart, I drove over to the Carl Sandburg home. I opened the

barn door and saw Barney standing there as usual. A lump settled in my throat as I realized that this would be the last time I would see him there, waiting for me. I bent down and ran my hand along his back. I could see little stumps of horns already beginning to grow. Quickly, I fed all the other goats, so that I would have more time to spend with Barney. Soon, the other workers arrived. As I was hugging Barney, a soft hand touched my shoulder. I looked up and saw Jenny.

"I know how hard this is for you," she said. "Can I hold him?" I placed Barney in her arms. She rocked him back and forth. "I'm going to miss him."

I was surprised. "You'll miss him, too?"

Jenny smiled. "It's impossible not to miss someone so likeable. Thank you for all you've done for him. Without you, he might not have survived." She gave me back my "child." "They'll be arriving soon." And they did.

People poured in, admiring the goats. For a while, no one seemed interested in Barney because he was so tiny and fragile. I sat on a crate with Barney sitting on the ground next to me and watched a family examine the goats. There were four girls with their parents in this family. They were obviously searching for a young goat, since they kept looking at the kids. I could overhear some of their conversation.

"No, this one's too wild."

"This one just sleeps."

"What about this one?"

"No."

They were about to leave empty-handed when the youngest girl cried, "Look!" With a sinking feeling, I realized that she was pointing at Barney.

The family rushed over. They all fawned over him, even the oldest girl, who looked about sixteen years old.

"He's so little!" exclaimed one girl.

"He'll be perfect for Daisy."

"He's adorable!"

"Hello," I said, managing a smile. "This is Barney."

"Barney," mused the mother. "Well, girls, you want him?" They all nodded.

"Please, Father?" the youngest girl begged.

"Autumn," the mother said in a warning tone, "don't beg."

"Of course," the man said. "Does two hundred sound all right?"

I hesitated. The price was fine, but I couldn't bear to give Barney up. "Yes."

The youngest girl's face lit up, and she gently hugged my little friend. Although I hated to see Barney leave, I knew he would be in good hands. I could tell by the way the girl gently caressed him.

"I'll bring him over to your truck," I told them.

"OK," one of the girls said. "Race you there!" she called to her sisters. I sat quietly, holding Barney for one last time.

"Oh, Barney," I sighed. I was amazed at how attached I had become to him in the few weeks I had known him. Tenderly, I carried him to the waiting truck. As I walked through the barnyard, Amy flashed me a pitying look.

I placed Barney in the back of the family's truck and placed in some hay. The youngest girl stuck her head out of the open window.

"Come visit Barney soon!" she called. "Our address is 545 Bernan Road, Harring, North Carolina 58649!"

Her voice was drowned out by the car engine, and the last thing I heard was her sister saying, "Don't tell strangers our address!" and the girl replying, "She's not a stranger, she's Barney's mommy!"

**A** WEEK PASSED. The next Saturday, I had made up my mind: I would visit Barney. I drove for about ten minutes before I saw the house. It was a white house, and a spacious pasture surrounded it. Two goats stood in the field. I recognized Barney as one of them.

The four girls ran out of the house to meet me. Their parents followed them.

"I'm Christy Bournham," I said.

"Let me introduce *ourselves*," the woman said. "I'm Mandy Coddell, and this is my husband, Jim. These are my daughters, Spring, Summer, Winter, and Autumn. We named them after the seasons." The girls smiled at me.

"Hi," said Spring, who looked about sixteen. Summer, probably thirteen, grinned at me, and Winter, age ten, smiled shyly. But Autumn, the youngest, who was eight, looked at me with her eyes shining.

"I play with Barney every morning,"

she told me.

"Don't you have school?" I asked.

"Yes, but we homeschool."


Winter added, "We need Barney to keep our goat, Daisy, company. She's been so lonely after our other goat, Anna, died."

I told the family Barney's story as the girls led me to the pasture.

A different Barney met me. Instead of the skinny, shy Barney I knew, I saw a healthy, adventurous goat. He immediately stopped what he was doing and ran over to me. "He didn't forget me!" I laughed.

"He'll never forget you," Summer said. "You saved his life." I knew that Barney was fine, so I returned home with a light heart.

The next day at work, I half-expected Barney to be waiting at the door for me, although I knew he wouldn't be. To my surprise, a small goat stood there. "Barney?" I gasped, not believing my eyes. I knelt down. It was Mocha. "Mocha?" The goat sadly bleated. "You want to be loved, don't you?" I crouched down and hugged her. "I'll give you all the love that you could possibly want, Mocha-girl." Mocha bleated again, but this time it was a joyful one.

Although I had lost two friends, I had found a new one. I knew that Marla and Barney would always love me in their hearts, even though we were separated. I also knew that one day Mocha would leave me, too. And then I would find her a perfect home, just like I had for Barney. 

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**"It's impossible  
not to miss someone  
so likeable."**

---

# Blue Petals of Hope

By **Marika Massey-Bierman**

*Illustrated by* **Diana Baszucki**

I WALKED HOME with the poster for the spring musical heavy in my arms. I looked at it again, hoping that I had seen it wrong. Nope. The block letters were still dominating the page, telling me once again that I didn't want to perform this spring. "Finding Broadway," it said, "A Musical Without Words!" There wouldn't be any lines, just solos. Just singing, which was my least favorite part of the play.

I had done the spring musicals for a couple of years now, running in the fall and hanging out with my friends in the spring. This year it seemed that I was going to be out of the loop, skipping the play. It was a new thing to me.

I entered my front door, kicked off my sneakers, and headed to the kitchen for a snack. I was halfway through my bowl of cereal when my mom walked in, having finished her email upstairs.

"What's that?" she asked, pulling the playbill from my arms before I could snatch it away.

"Oh," I said, looking down, "that's the spring musical the school's doing this year. I thought it looked kinda boring."

"Hmmm," she replied, looking thoughtful. "Only singing. Interesting. I didn't know you liked singing."

"I don't," I said. "I'm not sure about the play this year."

"But honey," she interrupted, "you always do the plays!"

"I know," I sighed, "I'll think about it." I finished my cereal in silence and put my bowl in the sink. As I walked into the hallway, my hand reached for the phone.



Marika Massey-Bierman, 13  
Burlington, Vermont



Diana Baszucki, 12  
Portola Valley, California





*Maybe if I didn't do the play, I would be like the flower*



"I think I'll call Ellie," I said to no one in particular. My fingers dialed the number before I even put the phone to my ear. It rang and rang, but Ellie never answered. I left a message, telling her to call me. If I truly didn't want to do the play, I wouldn't be seeing much of my friends for the next few months.

My dad stopped me on my way outside. He looked me in the eye for a few seconds before talking.

"You look stressed," he said.

"Yeah," I replied, "I know."

"What's going on?" he asked. I waited before answering.

"I'm not sure if I want to do the play this year. But all my friends will."

"There's always running, you know," he added. My dad has been trying to get me to join the track team for years. I always decline, because of the spring play, but I guess he thought this year was a possibility.

"None of my friends do track," I said.

"That doesn't matter," he said. "You'll make new friends."

"Right," I replied. I hadn't made a new friend since second grade.

"Remember," he called over his shoulder as he walked up the stairs, "follow your heart, not someone else's."

The door slammed shut as I walked out onto the porch. My mind was full of swirling thoughts. I wanted to do the play because all my friends were doing it. I had never done track before. I wouldn't know anyone there. I wouldn't have any friends. I would be a loner. But I didn't want to do

the play because there would only be singing. I would hate my afternoons. I would be miserable for the next two months.

I still hadn't calmed down after a half hour of sitting on the grass. My mind would not clear, and all I could do was stare at the flowers. After fifteen more minutes had passed, I moved to get off the lawn. One of the flowers caught my eye.

It was a bluebell, its petals blooming out towards the bright sunlight. It was about five feet away from the rest of the bluebells, which were only partway open. In my mind, I saw the poor flower as me, a loner by myself on the track team. But I also saw how happy the flower was, blooming larger than all its cousins in the shade. Maybe if I didn't do the play, I would be like the flower. By myself, yet surrounded by happiness in what I was doing.

I got up abruptly, all the blood rushing to my head. I had made my decision. I would join the track team.

THE FIRST DAY of track practice was Monday. After the bell had rung, I grabbed my stuff and ran down to the gym. The locker room was full of kids, excitedly changing and talking. I pushed my way to the back of my locker row and quickly put on my gym clothes.

I ran upstairs to the gym and sat down on the stage. There was no one else to talk to. All of the other girls were with the friends they had signed up with and were giggling all around me in their little

groups. I sat on the stage with my head down, feeling sorry for myself. Why had I ever chosen to do this?

*"Track!"* came a voice. *"Get off the stage and come over here!"* It was our coach, who was also our PE teacher.

"Hello," he said, once we had all gathered around him. "My name is Coach Anderson." Whispers were heard, like a small hissing noise had suddenly started in the gym. I was completely silent.

"I hope you all enjoy track today. I think we should start with some warmups," he continued.

Everyone spread out with their friends, as Coach Anderson led us through some stretches. My legs felt tight. Running seemed impossible.

"OK," he called, "let's do some running! Eighth graders, lead the way!" The older kids pushed to the front of the group and started to run around the school. Our school was pretty big, and by the time we got back to the gym my heart was pounding and my legs ached. I wanted to go home, but Coach Anderson had different ideas.

"I want you to get in groups of six," he called over the talking. "Get a stopwatch, and go run for twenty minutes. I want you back before four-thirty!"

Everyone started to split into groups with their friends. I wandered around aimlessly, hopefully glancing at groups. No one wanted to pick me. No one even

noticed me. I gave up and stood still, waiting for Coach Anderson to put me with a group of annoying boys or whispering girls. Someone called my name. I looked up, but it wasn't Coach Anderson.

I recognized her from my math class, but she hadn't really talked to me before. I was pretty sure her name was Anna. She called my name again, and I started to slowly walk over.

"Chloe!"

"Yeah?" I said softly, not looking her straight in the eye.

"So... do you want to be in our group?"

"Uh, sure," I hastily replied, suddenly feeling self-conscious. Did my shirt look too big? Were my shorts too bright?

"Well c'mon then," she called, already walking toward the door. "We only have twenty minutes, you know!"

I followed her, staring at the ground. I wished I could crawl into a hole and curl up there for the rest of my life. Anything but run for twenty whole minutes with a group of girls that probably thought I was the dorkiest loser they had ever met.

Anna led me towards my fate, five or so other girls of varying heights and ages. All of them looked liked they didn't belong and were as uncomfortable as I felt.

"So," said Anna loudly, "who wants to carry the stopwatch?" A small, blond girl took a miniscule step forward.

"I'll take it!" she said softly.

"OK," replied Anna, dropping it into

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**"Remember,  
follow your heart,  
not someone else's."**

---

her outstretched palm. "Remember to start it when we start running." The girl didn't say anything in response, but Anna just kept talking.

"I want to get to know all of you," she said, "but we don't have enough time. How 'bout we talk while we run?" Everyone nodded silently. "Good. C'mon, follow me!"

Anna struck a slow pace while the rest of us fell behind her. She led us around the block and into the busy, crowded streets of downtown. We ran along the waterfront and past the playground filled with younger kids climbing all over it. Just as I felt my legs begin to loosen up, I felt a tap on my shoulder. Anna was running right next to me, her short strides matching up


with my long ones.

"Hi," I said nervously.

"Hi yourself," she replied. Then, in a moment of sincerity, she lowered her head slightly and asked, "Did your friends do the play too?"

"Yeah," I answered softly. "So I thought I wouldn't have any friends on the track team." Anna was silent for a moment.

"I was thinking the same thing," she said, "but now you're here. Maybe everything will be OK."

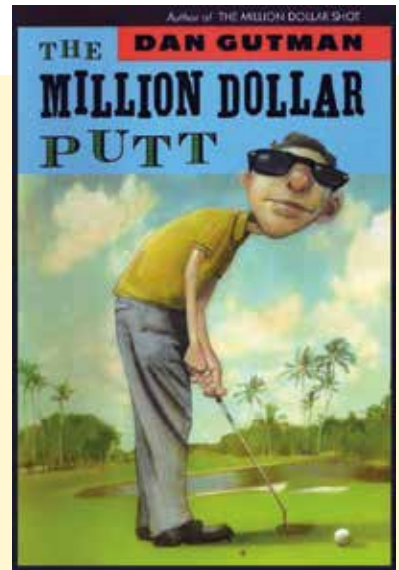
"Maybe," I replied, and seeing the smile on Anna's face made me realize that I had made the right decision. Although taking a chance was hard, I had opened the door to a new possibility, a new hope. Just like the bluebell in the garden. 



# Book Review

By Shenna He

*The Million Dollar Putt*, by Dan Gutman;  
Hyperion Press: New York, 2006; \$15.99




Shenna He, 12  
Burnaby, British Columbia,  
Canada

**I**F YOU HAPPEN to be walking along the shelves in the library and it's a rainy afternoon and you're looking for a short but enchanting story, then *The Million Dollar Putt*, by Dan Gutman, is for you. Dan Gutman has made the life of a blind kid realistic, not to the point that you're bewildered but to the point where you're fascinated and curious, not ever wanting to put the book down. *The Million Dollar Putt* pulls you into an adventure with your heart drumming with golf, a blind kid, a girl, and a million dollar tournament.

Ed Bogard, known as Bogie, is just any other kid. From his perspective, he thinks he could do anything a sighted kid could—apart from driving. Being blind doesn't bother him because he could bike, parasail, and play guitar. So when he discovers that he could play golf like a pro, he's stunned and excited. However, he realizes that golf is a team sport, and being blind means that he couldn't put the ball on the tee, or set himself up. So what does he do? He finds Birdie, a mysterious girl who has been watching him for over a year since she first moved in.

Birdie doesn't know anything about golf, doesn't know how to ride a bike or play guitar. But with her charm and her childish yet stunning personality, she becomes Bogie's coach. In a blink of an eye, someone signs Bogie up for a golf tournament. It could've been any tournament, but it's not because the prize is a million dollars! Can a blind kid and a girl who can't ride a bike win these million dollars?

Not many people have I come across who know this book, but I think this is a book totally worth reading. Dan Gutman writes fabulous books, and I've read almost all of them. Despite the sad touch to this story, not once have I pitied Ed in this book. He is a unique and original boy with his own opinions on life, even though he can't see and he constantly gets made fun of and pranked on. I've never played golf in my life, but Ed makes it sound so easy, it makes me wonder if I should try. This book really encourages you to try new things and think in a way you've never thought before. After I read this book, I turned out the lights and imagined being blind, and I realized how hard it must've been for Ed, and how much of a strong-willed boy he is.

I'd recommend this book to anyone who likes a bittersweet novel with a touch of humor and sadness. It doesn't matter how old you are, this novel will still bring out the best in you, and all your other emotions. 



# Illuminated

By **Siena DeBenedittis**

*Illustrated by* **Montanna Harling**



Siena DeBenedittis, 13  
Bayside, New York



Montanna Harling, 13  
Valley Center, California

**E**LEVEN-THIRTY, says my watch. I slide out of bed and begin to get dressed. Pajamas off, bathing suit on. I creep out of my room and peek into my parents', my sister's, and my brother's rooms. They are all fast asleep. Putting on a thin sweater, I slip out the door. Eleven-thirty-five, says the clock on the stove.

After walking for a short time, I come to my destination. Shedding my sweater, I slip into the silky water, the underwater pool light making the water look like it is glowing.

I dunk my head under the water, feeling the initial shock as the cool water surrounds my entire body. Opening my eyes, I see the light that is casting the eerie glow. I see where the floor of the pool begins to slope downward toward the deep end. I see my own feet and hands illuminated by the strange light. I float back to the surface and take a deep breath of fresh air. Then I plunge back down into the water.

As I land on the bottom of the pool, I slither down the inclined plane. Soon I am more than ten feet underwater. I sit on the floor, staring up at the surface, which is blurring everything above me. I clear my mind.

Then, crouched on the bottom, I straighten my legs and propel myself upward. As my head breaks the surface, I see the stars.

Oh, the stars...



*I gaze at the stars and try to forget*

Floating on my back, I stare at the magnificence. It is almost too much to wrap my head around, that all this really does exist. It's magical. I name all the constellations that I know: Orion the Hunter, Perseus, Leo the Lion, Canis Major and Canis Minor, the Big Dog and the Little Dog.

I gaze at the stars and try to forget. Forget that I'm moving tomorrow, from the only place I've ever called home. Forget that it's not likely we'll ever come

back. Forget all the *please-Rose-try-to-understands* and the *it-will-be-better-for-us-theres* and the *please-act-like-the-young-adult-you-ares*. Just forget.

Staring at the stars, I feel reassured. I am not worried anymore. Everything will be all right. I know it will.

Midnight, says Horologium,\* the great clock in the sky. 

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\* Horologium: Small constellation whose Latin name means "clock."

# Snapshot

By **Ella Biehn**



Ella Biehn, 12  
Decatur, Georgia

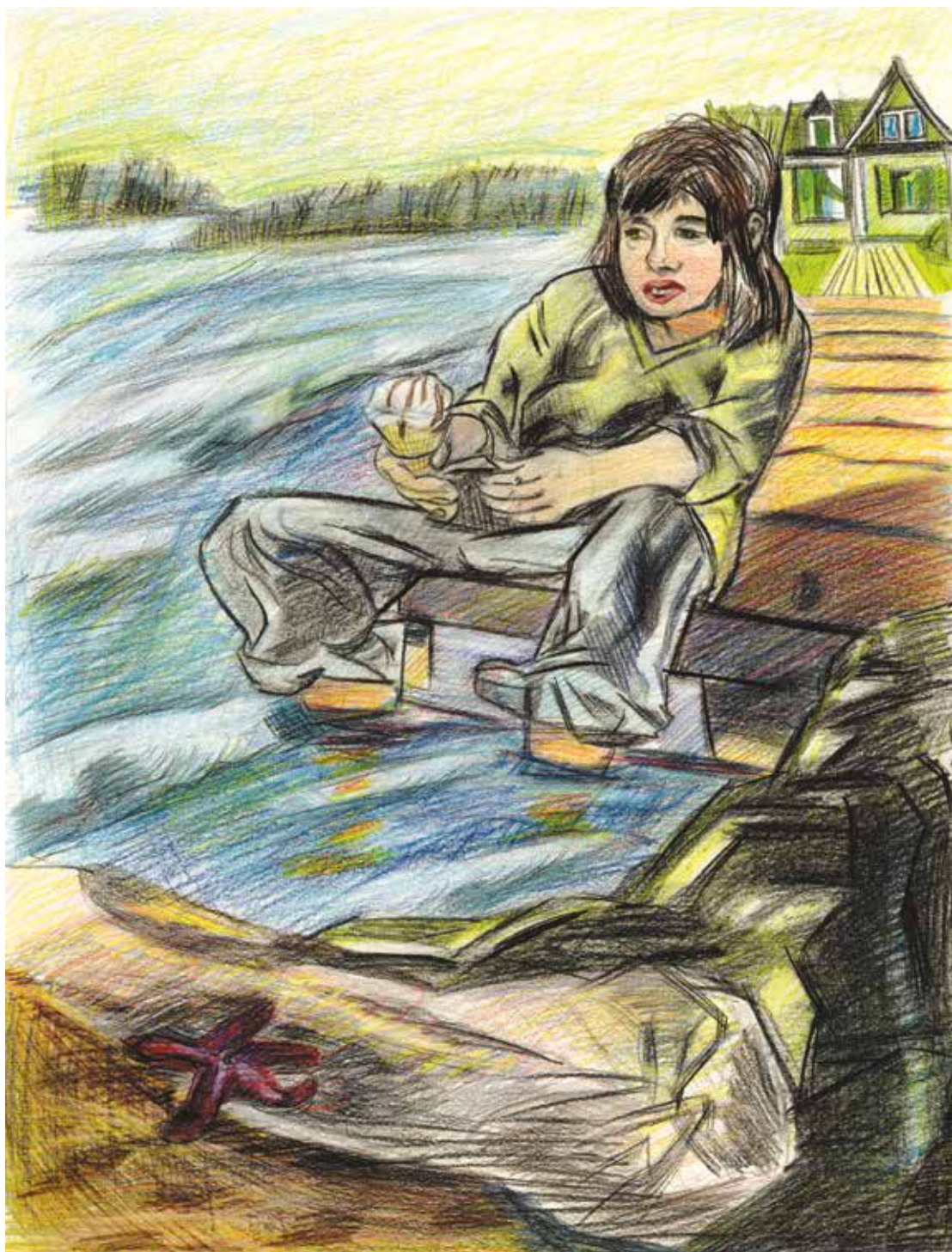
On a perfect day  
    long ago, in the dream-time  
so long  
that we do not remember  
    late in the gold-brown autumn  
    clad in hats and mittens  
we dashed outside to dance  
    among auburn leaves  
tugging at each other's hair  
and scraping fingers on rough pavement  
cheeks rosy  
    we danced until the fall had filled us  
and we were whole again

That was before the move, of course  
and now that memory is dust  
    the old house alien with unknown furniture  
the garden overgrown  
    that was before the move

before I traded blustery autumns and snowfalls  
for sultry summers and palmetto bugs  
and I lie awake in bed at night  
    reminiscing in silent loneliness  
hoping for the oblivion of sleep...

But someone was there  
    that day in the bullion autumn  
    someone bid us stand  
by the bluff, overlooking the city  
    smiling, bearing chapped cheeks and nose-tips  
    someone snapped a picture  
so we will not forget

snapshot



*He needed his own special place*



# The Sound of the Sea

By **Sonia Suben**

*Illustrated by* **Savva Gretzky**

JASPER STARED OUT the window of the van and thought. He thought that he would not like his new home. His friends and his father were at his real home, the home he wanted to be his. The home that used to be his.

His mother and father got divorced six months ago and his mother wouldn't let her husband take Jasper.

Jasper would rather have gone with his father.

His mother could not teach him to fold paper airplanes or throw a football. She could not throw a basketball or sing him his favorite lullaby. She could show him drawing techniques and read to him. Jasper did not like those things.

He had shoulder-length brown hair and green eyes. Like his father.

Jasper stared out the window and looked at the sea.

He had everything in common with his father.

His father was behind him, like his past. As a matter of fact, his best days were behind him. How would he ever get along with his mother, and how could he do it alone?

Jasper looked down at his notebook. A droplet of water splashed onto one of the pages. Jasper knew where it had come from. He wiped his grimy arm across his eyes and listened to the radio.

"... and it is one hundred three degrees out, humid," the reporter said energetically. One hundred three degrees, thought Jasper. No wonder I'm sweating.

"Jasper, darling," his mother whispered, "we're here."



Sonia Suben, 10  
Forest Hills, New York



Savva Gretzky, 13  
Thornhill, Ontario, Canada

They stepped out of the car and Jasper looked at his new home. It was a nice place, two stories, and painted sky blue with white shutters. There was a basketball hoop attached to the garage door and a large backyard. The beach was just down the road and there was a dock and an ice cream parlor.

Jasper's mother sent him to the beach while she sorted things out with the moving truck guy. She gave Jasper ten dollars for ice cream.

Jasper walked down the road. The beach was deserted. It was too hot. First he went into the ice cream parlor and bought a cone of fudge ripple.

He slung his feet over the dock and squinted into the sun. His feet made ripples in the water. Just like my ice cream, thought Jasper. His mind directed back to the move.

I'll have to make new friends, he thought.

I'll have to get along with Mom, he thought.

I'll have to be missing dad, he thought.

But he knew he had to get along with Mom, because otherwise his father would be mad at him. Now he was totally confused about how to do that.

When he got home, his hands sticky from the ice cream, his mother showed him his room. She bought some wooden letters and spelled JASPER over his bed. His room had a desk and a bed and a closet and a dresser and a bookcase. Like any old room.

"It's nice," he told his mother politely.

Then Jasper excused himself and went to sit in the backyard.

What would he do? What he really needed was something to keep him calm, to calm him when he was upset. He needed his own special place, that had a sound that calmed him down.

So the next day, he rode around the neighborhood and looked at all the places. The playground, the beach, the ice cream shop...

He settled on the dock. He loved to put his feet in the water, the dock was almost always empty, and it had the sound of the sea.

One day Jasper and his mother went to the beach and Jasper found a conch shell. He sent it to his father, along with a tag that said, "A gift from your boy, Jasper."

**B**UT THEN ONE evening, Jasper had a big fight with his mother. Naturally, it was about his father. And Jasper was so angry and upset he ran out into the backyard and hugged his knees until the lights went out in his house and the stars came out.

Jasper tiptoed back into his room and got ready for bed. He got in bed and closed his eyes.

But the pesky burden that was sleep would not come, and Jasper could not stop his brain from squeezing into thoughts about the fight. Then he remembered his special place.

He looked at his clock. It read 10:02 P.M.

Pretty late, thought Jasper, but not too late.

So he walked into the bathroom and put on some shorts and a T-shirt that read, "The Beach Is Cool," then tiptoed out onto the street.

His feet ruffled the water and he lay back on the dock and felt the breeze rustle his hair. For once since he moved, he felt, not exactly happy, but at peace. Not upset. He leaned his head back and thought.

Then he took out a piece of paper and a pen and wrote a letter to his dad.

A WEEK LATER, Jasper lay on his bed, tinkering with his broken radio until he became bored by trying to fix it. He rolled over on his back and stared at the clock. It read 11:57 A.M.

Jasper would have to wait. It wasn't happening until one o'clock. The letter had worked.

Jasper was waiting on the front steps. He leaned his head back and let the breeze rustle his hair. Then secretly, he smiled, something he hadn't done much since his parents got divorced.

Jasper knew his father wouldn't come exactly on time. He was famous in the family for being late. The times where his mother and father had laughed about that seemed ages ago. So this time, Jasper went into the house around 12:25 P.M. to have lunch. At 12:38 P.M., he came out, licking a purple Popsicle. Then he sat down on the front steps again.

Around 1:15 P.M., Jasper was getting anxious. He hoped his father was planning on coming. Until that moment,

Jasper had been certain his father would show up. Now, his confidence wavered.

But at 1:37 P.M., Jasper saw his father, standing up tall in a football jersey. As soon as Jasper saw him, he jumped up and ran to his dad. Then Jasper threw a bone-breaking hug around his dad.

"How's my boy?" Jasper's dad chuckled heartily.

"Er, I'm not sure," replied Jasper. "Since we moved out, it's been kind of tough.

"How?" Jasper's dad wondered.

"I love Mom, but I don't get along with her. Not being with you gives me an empty feeling, only as though my heart was full of hot, strong love, and when you divorced Mom and we moved out, that love was hollowed out."

His father had a strange look on his face, as though he wasn't sure what to say.

"Now I have a question," Jasper whispered.

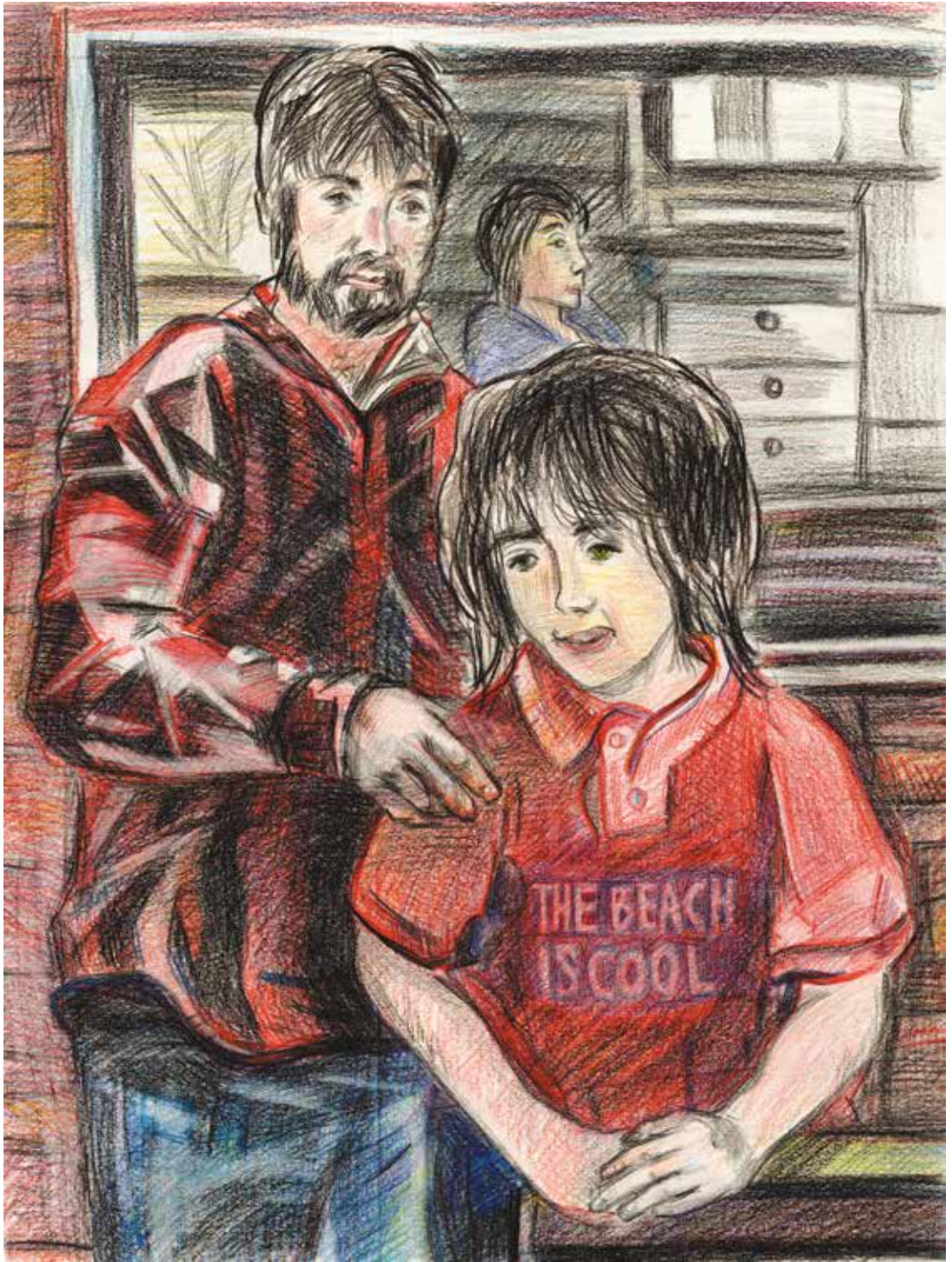
"What?"

"Whose idea was it to get divorced, yours or Mom's?"

That question caught Jasper's dad by surprise, as though he had walked into a beehive. He was not sure how to answer. And then slowly, he answered, "It was my idea."

This fact hit Jasper like a speeding bullet. His love for his father was twisted in a knot. How could this wonderful man, his father, cause so much misery and pain in the life of his son? His son whom he loved? His son who trusted him. His son who was not quite sure he could trust his father anymore. His son who was not quite sure





*"I just thought that maybe I could get you back together"*

he could turn to his father again.

"That's impossible. You wouldn't do that to me. You wouldn't. You're not that kind of person." Jasper felt kind of unsure about that now.

Jasper's father looked sadly at his son. "I'm not the person you think I am."

"I just thought that maybe I could get you back together." Tears started in Jasper's eyes.

"Hmm." His father's eyebrows creased. He was thinking hard, Jasper could tell. "Hmm."

"Also, can I ask you something?"

"Anything."

"Is what caused you to get divorced me?"

Jasper's eyes were staring at the house. In the kitchen window sat his mother, her eyes full of worry, staring hard at Jasper and his father.

There was an awkward moment of silence. Then Jasper's dad said, "What gave you that idea? Your mother and I both love you equally. You should know that," replied his father.

"So can I do anything to make you get back together?" Jasper pleaded. He was almost whispering.

"No, son. No. But one thing you can do to make your mother and me happier is to be happy. Don't force yourself. Find something, anything, that makes *you* happy. That's the best thing you can do for us and yourself." Jasper's father had a strained voice. "I'd better go." He stood up. "I love

you. Tell your mother I miss her."

Jasper's father walked down the road into the sunset.


Mixed up in his own swirl of thought, the only thing Jasper could say was, "Bye."

IT WAS THE morning. Jasper's mother was silent all through breakfast, so Jasper assumed he should get out of the house. And at the moment, he was trying to be happy, and going to his special place would make him happy.

He left the house and ran to the dock.

THE SUN WAS setting. The sky turned pink and orange, the colors whirling and mixing around each other. Jasper had been at the dock all day, and his feet were beginning to prune. But he leaned his hands back on the dock and felt something playing on his lips. Something that made a kind of warmth spread inside him.

A smile. And without realizing it, Jasper had a smile turned on to full blast. Because he was doing exactly what his father said he could do to help. And it felt good, to be happy, so he just sat still, doing nothing, and he did not want to move for fear it would stop the happiness coursing through him. He saw what his father meant. He was helping himself, and his parents too.

So he just leaned back his head, closed his eyes, and listened, listened to the sound of the sea. 



# Honor Roll

**Welcome to the Stone Soup Honor Roll!** We receive hundreds of submissions every month by kids from all over the world. Many submissions are excellent, but, sadly, we don't have space to publish all the great work we receive in *Stone Soup*. This is our way of recognizing some of the talented young writers and artists whose work we admire. We commend them and encourage them to keep creating.

— *The Editors*



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