

Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists

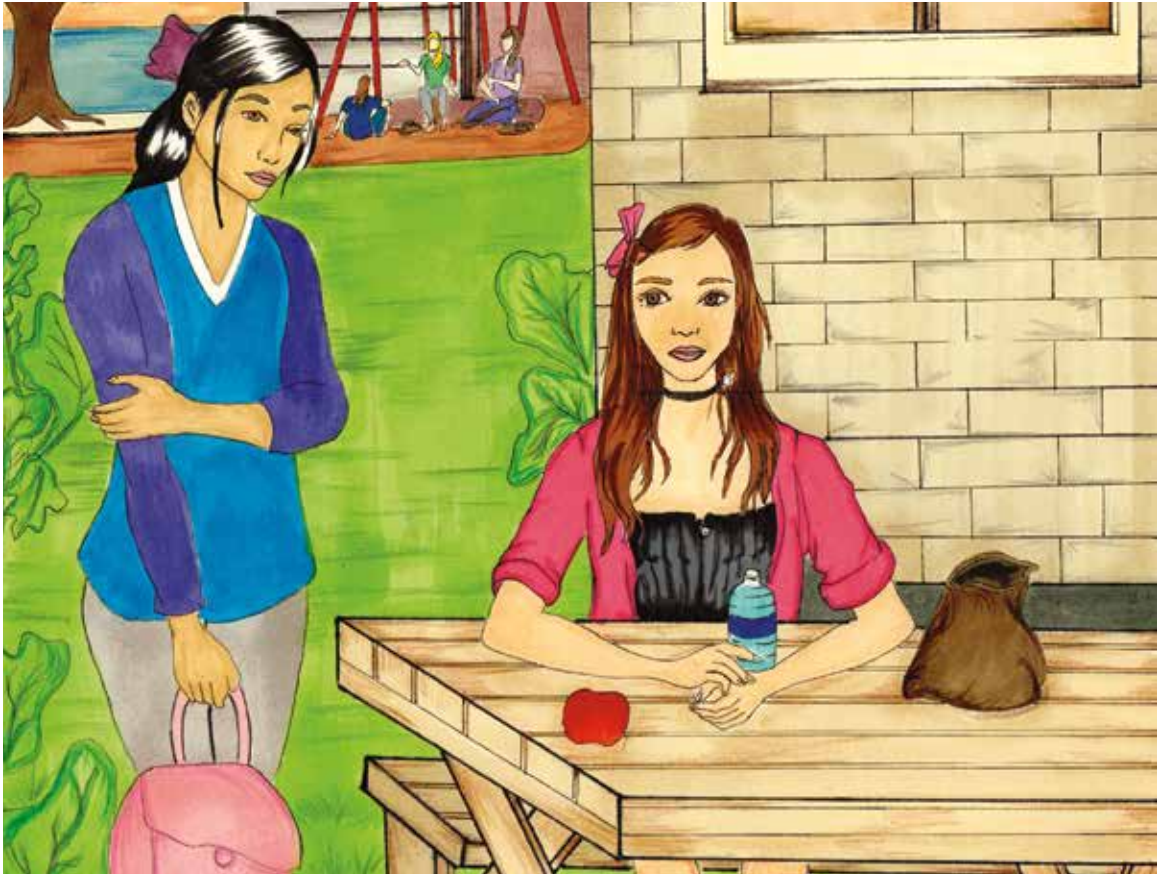


Illustration by Teah Laupapa, age 13, for "Take a Stand," page 32

TAKE A STAND

How dare they say those cruel things to Tina!

WORDS

Lilly finds a kindred spirit in an unlikely place

Also: A poem about basketball

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VOLUME 43, NUMBER 1
SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2014

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Editor's Note

Doing the right thing. Of course we all want to. But sometimes it's not obvious what the right thing is until we see the consequences of our actions. Two stories in the current issue show us opposite outcomes—one sad, one happy. In "If Only," David realizes too late that he did not do the right thing. He knows he shouldn't keep playing football after he hits his head the first time, but he keeps playing. Then he hits his head again, so badly that he may never play football again. He feels awful. In "Take a Stand," Megan struggles with a decision. It would be so much easier to say nothing when a group of her friends says mean, racist things to another friend. But she doesn't. The feeling of elation she gets after she takes a stand tells her she did the right thing. Did you ever struggle with a decision? Did you do the right thing? How did it feel? Your experience could be the starting point for your next story.

— Gerry Mandel

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Submissions

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ON THE COVER Teah Laupapa studies art with teacher Daryle Mishina at Kapolei Middle School on the Hawaiian island of Oahu. She likes drawing with Chartpak Markers. Teah has won many awards for her art. This year she will go to Japan as a finalist in the Toyota Dream Car Contest. Teah's dad is an artist too.



The Mailbox



I just wanted to tell you how much your magazine inspires me. Once I get the next issue, I rush to read the full magazine cover to cover and read my favorite stories over and over. I am inspired to write

my own stories once I see other kids' works. One of my favorite stories is "More or Less" [January/February 2014] because it had a great underlying message that happiness isn't always riches and money. I commend author Sammy Westfall for really being able to highlight that message through a story.

Sarina Deb, 12

Hillsborough, California

Thank you for this beautiful magazine full of artwork, stories, and inspiration, *Stone Soup*! I really love the archives on your website, which allowed me to read "Another Day" [March/April 2002], by Lily Beaumont, age 12, that I had heard about and now love! You have inspired me to start a magazine called *Mother Goose*. It should be out soon.

Gabriella Slade, 11

Westland, Michigan

Stone Soup is my favorite magazine! I've been subscribing since 2009, and I enjoyed every single page of every single issue. My favorite story was from the November/December 2013 issue, "Climbing Higher." I loved the plot and the strong message Natalia F. Lanzoni sent to all of us, and the great illustrations Ava Blum-Carr provided that made it so much more realistic.

Elsie Y. Jang, 12

Shanghai, China

I read the story called "Memories and Beginnings," by Melissa Birchfield, illustrated by Jessica Birchfield [March/April 2013]. I really liked it and I'm impressed that thirteen-year-old girls could write such a long story and make beautiful drawings. I'm writing to thank you for publishing this story because I love music and I also like the way the character talks about music. The main character could be a real girl and it could really happen that her grandmother dies. Sooner or later everyone dies and it could always be good to meet new people because they can help you to become better in your passion, like piano. I think it's important to tell feelings of a person in a story and show how you can meet other people, remembering the one you liked before.

Nina Casati, 9

Etna, New Hampshire

I have enjoyed your wonderful magazine for four years now. The stories published in every edition grab me and refuse to let me go until I have finished. The illustrations are equally unique and exciting. It was a thrill of a lifetime for me to illustrate for your incredible magazine. Just knowing I am a part of your brilliant project is a feeling I have dreamed of ever since I discovered art! I look forward to the next edition of *Stone Soup* for the kids, by the kids, and with the kids!

Christine Troll, 12

Somerset, Pennsylvania

Christine has illustrated three stories for Stone Soup, including "A Secret Freedom" on page 35 of this issue.

Stone Soup welcomes your comments. Send them to editor@stonesoup.com.



"Why are you twisting your earrings like that?"

My Grandmother's Earrings

By **Tatum Schutt**

Illustrated by **Phoebe Wagoner**

SO THERE I WAS, trying to keep my voice calm as I laid out my case to my archenemy on her front stoop.

"You just *have* to promise," I said, hating how my voice sounded so weak and pleading. Jess regarded me like a dead mouse her cat had dropped at her door.

"Fine!" she finally spit at my feet, and promptly slammed the door in my face. My shoulders relaxed and I grinned as I got on my bike and rushed away, the warm summer air whooshing by my face.

By some evil force of nature, Jess and I had both ended up at Interstock Sleep-Away Camp for the same two weeks, in the same cabin. I had stopped by her house the day before we left to insure *it* was safe. I hated it when people felt bad for me.

The next day I was ready with my duffle when the bus pulled up. I gave my mom and dad one last kiss when my mom pulled me back.

"Are you sure you want to do this, sweetie? After what happened, you..." I cut her off before she could finish her sentence.

"Of course I do! I love you, bye!" I shouted over my shoulder as I ran to the bus, my duffle hitting the backs of my knees. The doors opened with a swish and I was instantly barraged with the cheerful, bird-like chattering of happy campers. Coupled with it was the smell of lemons and lavender, which was odd, but I shook it off. Maybe someone was drinking lemonade. My face burst into a grin as bright as a supernova as I sat down next to a girl with kinky brown hair and introduced



Tatum Schutt, 12
Wilmington, Delaware



Phoebe Wagoner, 11
Carlisle, Kentucky

myself. There was no way I would let Jess ruin this for me.

THE DRONE of mosquitoes filled the air as Nicole, the girl I sat with on the bus, and I anxiously swatted them away. Today was our first archery contest, and everyone was on edge.

"Why are you twisting your earrings like that?" Nicole asked curiously. I immediately put my hand down and turned a bit red. I hadn't realized I had been doing it.

"I do it when I am nervous," I said. Suddenly Jess emerged from the back-ground of girls.

"No offense, but they look really old-fashioned," she said loudly, and I felt my face heat up like a pit of lava as more girls surrounded me.

Suddenly I blurted out, "I only wear them because my mom makes me. My grandmother gave them to me, and she has really bad taste." I laughed meanly.

"Is that the same grandmother you're always quoting?" Jess asked innocently. The obvious answer was yes, and my face felt as hot as a pan in the oven. I looked to Nicole for help, but she was staring intently at the ground.

A girl from the crowd said, "Why don't you take them off? Your mother would never know." Others from my cabin chimed in, voicing their opinions.

"I never thought of that!" I said, faking a surprised expression and shoving the earrings deep into my pocket.

I shot terribly, barely making the target. The earrings were a lump of regret

and embarrassment pressing against me, like the lump you get in your throat before you cry. When at last the day was over, I threw my shorts on the ground and dove head first into the forgiving folds of the cold sheets.

THE NEXT MORNING, I awoke before everyone to the eerie sound of an owl calling to its mate. I reached instinctively to my ears before the events of the day before came rushing back like muddy water when a dam breaks. I sat down with a plunk. I couldn't believe I had lied to my cabin mates just because of something Jess had said. I decided to start fresh and tell everyone the truth about my grandmother and the earrings. I swore that I would never take them off again. I reached into my crumpled shorts pocket to get the earrings. I groped and groped around, but my fist closed around only emptiness. My breathing became more rapid as my heart seemed to rise to my throat. I was shaking out my shorts when reveille was played, signaling everyone to get up.

Someone turned on the light and Nicole said, "Cicile, what's the matter? Your face is all white."

I slowly put my hand up to my ears. "My earrings!" I said. "They're gone!" Several people groaned.

One girl, named Cathy, said, "What's so important about those earrings anyway? You said yourself, they are really old-fashioned." I sat down heavily on my bed.

"Let's just get this over with. My grandmother, the one I am always talk-



When I read this I nearly fell over with shock

ing about, died two months ago. She gave me those earrings three weeks before she died. They were the only thing I had to remember her by." I looked up and was met with eight pitying looks. Jess was the only one who was not looking at me; she was glaring at her lap.

"She made me promise not to tell," she said spitefully.

"Why didn't you want us to know?" Cathy asked softly.

"I don't like being pitied," I said truthfully.

"OK," Nicole said suddenly, breaking

the soft silence. "Who took them?" she asked, and everyone turned their heads and fixed their eyes pointedly on Jess.

"Hey," she said. "I don't think the question is *who* took them so much as *what* took them."

I let out a little gasp. "Do you mean... do you think it was my grandmother's *ghost*?"

Jess nodded gravely.

Suddenly the breakfast bell rang, breaking the silence like a class full of chatty third-graders. The cabin erupted in a flurry of kids getting dressed, but

the issue of the earrings weighed heavily on everyone's mind throughout the day. During the arts-and-crafts class, Nicole caught me alone.

"Don't listen to any of that ghost nonsense Jess is talking about. She probably took the earrings herself and made up that story to mislead you."

"Maybe," I said.


THE SECOND and final week of camp passed quickly, and I had lots of fun, although my grandmother's earrings never showed up. In what seemed like a very short time, it was time to pack up my duffle again. By now I was desperate to find my earrings. I had searched through every nook and cranny on the campus to no avail. I had begged and begged Jess to just give me the earrings if she took them, but each time she would look straight into my eyes and tell me she didn't take them. Either she was an incredible liar, or she actually didn't. I was starting to imagine how to face my parents with the news, when Nicole's parents drove onto the campus to pick her up. We exchanged addresses on little notes, and many hugs, and as she was driving away, through the cracked open window, she suddenly called out, "I'm sorry!" I was about to ask her what for when her car turned a corner and disappeared.

I opened the note to look at her address, and another smaller note fell out.

"Dear Cicile," it said, "I was the one who stole your earrings." When I read this I nearly fell over with shock.

I felt guilty for not stepping up and defending you when Jess was teasing you, so I took them so that you wouldn't be teased anymore. I didn't realize how much they meant to you. I should have fessed up when you told everyone about your grandmother's death, but I was too embarrassed. It was easier for me to go along accusing Jess than to justify the wrong that I did. I am very, very, very sorry. If you want them now, you have to run back to my bunk. Lie down like you are going to sleep, and look up. They will be in a small bag directly above your head. I will miss you so much, and I hope you will forgive me.

Love,
Nicole

As fast as my legs could carry me, I ran back to our cabin and lay down on Nicole's bed. And sure enough, directly above me were my grandmother's earrings. But they weren't the only things up there. Resting against the bag was a tiny bottle of perfume. I opened it and sniffed. The smell of lemons and lavender wafted over me, and I shivered though it was humid out. It was my grandmother's perfume. 

This Real World

By **Meghan Waldron**

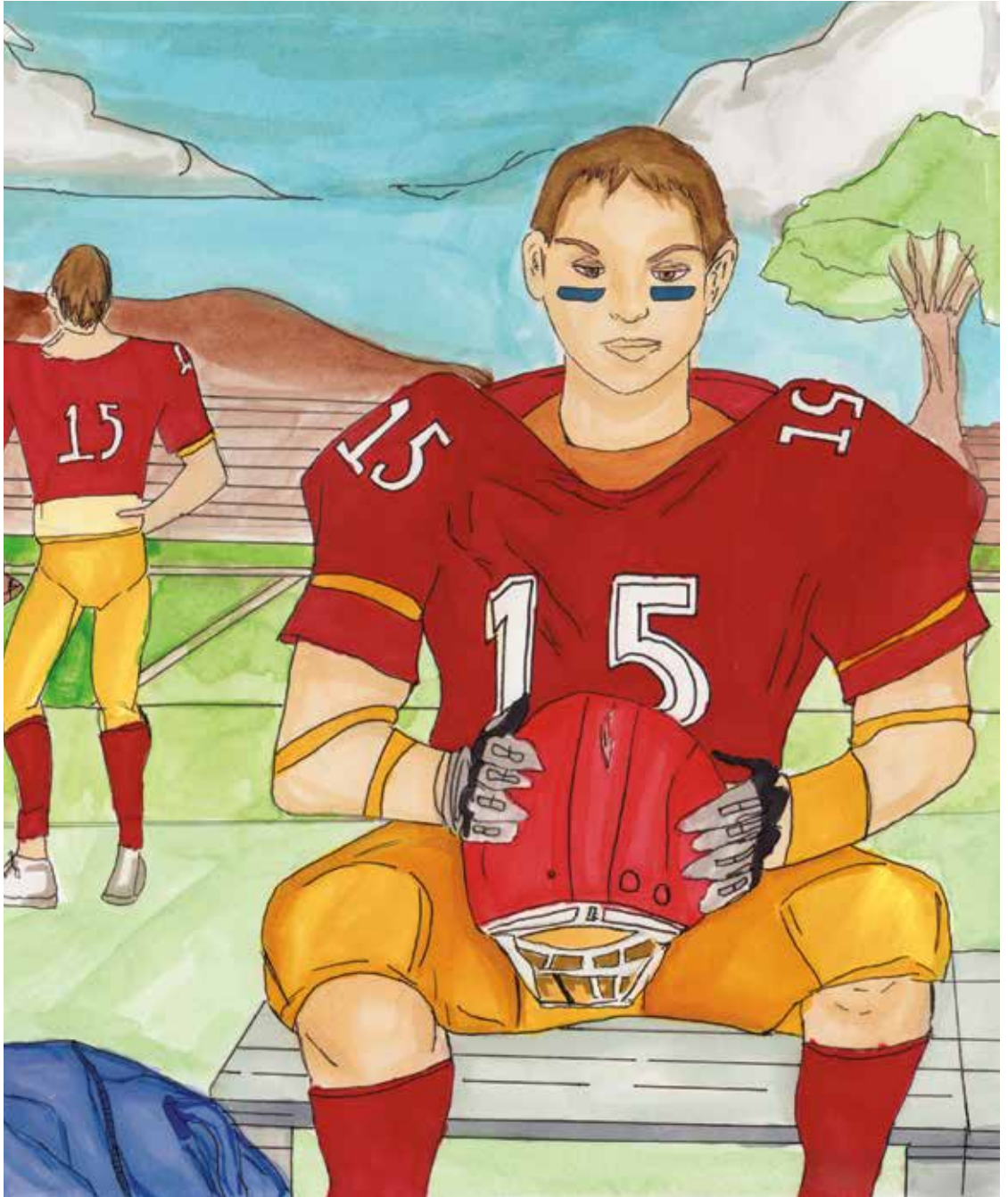
In this real world
I can feel the long grass
Brush my knees
And hear the soft whisper
Of the breeze calling
Go home, go home
As the daylight turns to night.

In this real world
I can see black specks
Circling the sky
Using high-pitched squeaks
As they locate each other
In the twilight.

In this real world
I can almost taste
The sweetness of summer
On my lips
As the bullfrogs call
Goodnight, goodnight.



Meghan Waldron, 13
South Deerfield,
Massachusetts



I noticed the slightest little crack on the crown

If Only

By **David Vapnek**

Illustrated by **Christian Miguel**

IF ONLY I HAD TOLD someone about the crack in my helmet, if only I had run around the defender, if only I didn't play in the championship game, if only I did what I knew I should have done all along... if only.

I woke up at six in the morning. The game wasn't until ten o'clock but I wanted to get there early. It's not like I would have slept much later anyway because this was what I was thinking about all last night. After all, I was waiting for this the whole season. Just beat East River Middle and we would be guaranteed a spot in this year's championship game. When I got to the frost-covered field it was deserted. Not many people would choose to sit outside in the early morning in November. I sat down in the corner of the bleachers and waited for the rest of my team to show up. It wasn't long before other players wearing red-and-gold uniforms arrived at our home field. We started to gear up. I pulled my team helmet out of my bag and noticed the slightest little crack on the crown. I turned it around to look at the inside and noticed that one of the pads was out of position and half peeled away. It felt totally normal when it was buckled up so I jogged onto the field and didn't give it a second thought.

I knew this was a big game for me because when you're the star running back and it's the semifinals, the whole team is counting on you to perform well. The first half our offense moved like clockwork and we had a good lead. It was the middle of the fourth quarter, just a normal draw play, just a normal run, just a normal hit. So I thought. He hit me right in the head.



David Vapnek, 12
San Diego, California



Christian Miguel, 12
Kapolei, Hawaii

Instead of hitting the padding, my forehead hit plastic. I went down. Hard. I sat there dazed for a moment but then hustled to the sideline still dizzy. Now I knew something was wrong. I didn't go back in for the rest of the game because we were already winning by so much. After the game I didn't feel much better, still dizzy and tired, and I kept wondering to myself, Was my helmet still in good condition? Was I going to be able to play on Sunday? I have had hits to the head before, but none were as bad as that one.

There were only four days until the championship game and during that time things took a turn for the worse. I kept getting severe headaches and the first two days after the game I was sent home both days because I was throwing up at school. The night before the championship game, I sat alone in my room, wondering if I should play tomorrow. I remembered getting told over and over again that, if you get a bad hit to the head twice in a row, the consequences were severe. My parents asked me time and time again if I was OK to play the next day. I couldn't tell anyone about the helmet because then they would connect the dots and think I had a head injury. I started to weigh my options but was so blinded by the fact that it was the final game of the season and our shot to win the title that I went against everything and decided to play. On the way to the game the next day

**If only I did what
I knew I should have
done all along.**

I had that feeling in the pit of my stomach, like the one that you get when you know something is going to go wrong, and I kept wondering, Am I going to regret this decision?

I forgot about everything when we arrived at the stadium. There were tens of thousands of people there—well, not exactly, maybe a hundred at most, but in my eyes I was playing in the Super Bowl. I got so immersed in my surroundings that my common sense went away, and I thought I was going to be fine during the game, but that little pit in my stomach was saying other-

wise. For the first half of the game I forgot about my headaches, I forgot about my broken helmet, and I forgot that I was still vulnerable to a severe hit. All was fine until the end of the third quarter when I was sandwiched by two giant linemen. I got up and went back to the huddle, but my symptoms returned. It was a tie game and my conscience was telling me to go to the sideline and tell coach that I couldn't play. That pit in the bottom of my stomach was still there but I thought that if I stayed on the field I could score the winning touchdown, so once again I went against what I knew I should really have done and I stayed on the field. I kept thinking about one thing though: Will this be a decision that I will regret?

I managed to survive the whole fourth quarter and now we were down by six

with only twenty seconds left. We were on the fifteen-yard line. First and ten was a pass play. Incomplete. Second down. Gain of two. A field goal wouldn't tie the game. We needed a touchdown. Part of me wanted to be the star and score, but that uneasy feeling just kept getting worse and worse. Regret. Regret. Regret. I couldn't get it to stop running through my head.

It was a simple run. A draw play down the middle. The same play where I got hit the first time, except this time the stakes were much higher. The gap opened perfectly, I got the ball and took off down field. At the two-yard line I lifted my head and saw a defender running straight at me. During that split second a million things ran through my mind: I should've told about my helmet, I should've sat out today, I should've just walked off the field, I should've listened to the pit in my stomach. And at that moment I was angry at myself and wished I could just stop time and run off the field, but it was too late. I collided with him helmet to helmet at the goal line and everything went black.

I WOKE UP in a strange room. Immediately I could tell that it was a hospital room. White walls, plain sheets, and I was in a hospital gown. I looked around and saw something on the bedside table. It was a green-and-silver trophy that said first place. That means that I made it into the end zone and scored the winning touchdown. I smiled for a second but then saw my parents sitting in the corner of the room looking sorrowful. Sitting next to them was a man in a white lab coat who I assumed was the doctor. He explained what had happened to me and told me that I had a very severe concussion. And then he gave it to me straight, he didn't sugarcoat it at all. "I'm sorry, but you may never be able to play football again." I couldn't believe what he was saying so I just stared. Never play football again... Those words were ringing like an alarm in the back of my head. So I scored the championship winning touchdown, but I may never be able to play the game again. Was it worth it?

I'd say not.



Book Review

By Kaylee Ayres

18 Things, by Jamie Ayres; Curiosity Quills Press: Reston, Virginia, 2012; \$14.99



Kaylee Ayres, 13
Cape Coral, Florida


JAMIE AYRES HAS WRITTEN an inspiring story about overcoming grief. In *18 Things*, teenager Olga Gay Worontzoff suffers through depression after her best friend since kindergarten is fatally struck by lightning on their sailing trip. Olga feels responsible for his death, and that lie leads her to swallow an entire bottle of pain pills. Her worried parents send her to counseling, where her therapist has her create a bucket list of eighteen quests to complete the year of her eighteenth birthday. Through Olga's bucket list, she manages not only to grow as a person, but to help heal the grief-stricken hearts of those around her. I loved reading this book because it truly shows that even when something bad happens, you can turn it into something amazing.

18 Things also inspired me to write my own bucket list. It showed me that life is a fragile thing, and it can end at any second. That's why bucket lists are important, so that even if we do die, we'll be happy with the life we lived. While Olga's list only consisted of eighteen things, mine ended up being eighty-five things. After reading this novel, I realized there were so many items on the to-do list of my life I wanted to experience. Because of my list, I rode my first roller coaster, went ice skat-

ing and roller skating, climbed a rock wall, carved my name into a tree, competed in a mud run, sent a message in a bottle, learned to ride a bike, and so much more. I even took some things off Olga's list, like watching a meteor shower, spent a day following what a Magic 8 Ball said, and started watching the one hundred greatest movies of all time.

I'm still working on completing my bucket list, but the experiences I've had so far have been out of this world. My bucket list helped me overcome my fears and accomplish things I never dreamed I was capable of. *18 Things* was a wake-up call to me. Before reading this book, I was just living every day going through the motions. Now, I am truly living to the fullest, and I've learned to appreciate every minute of life. Not only has *18 Things* affected my life, but the life of those around me. I've lent this book to nearly all my friends at my school, and they've loved the story, too. Every single one of them has rushed to make their bucket list after reading it.

The only thing I didn't like about *18 Things* was the ending, and not because the resolution wasn't good. It just made me cry so hard! I couldn't believe the author ended the story in such a way, not after everything that happened. Although I had my suspicions about the ending all along, when it struck like lightning, it was like a part of me died. I don't know if the ending was necessary, but I'm confident the author will find a way to weave the plot twist perfectly into her next installments of the trilogy in more unexpected ways. I can't wait to see what's in store for Olga, Nate, and all my other favorite characters.

18 Things is my all-time favorite book, and I recommend the novel to readers of all ages who enjoy coming-of-age love stories with paranormal twists. If you do read *18 Things*, be ready to laugh, cry, and have your whole world turned upside down. 



I was off in my own world, racing through the imprints of time

Find the Sunshine

By Jenna Fields

Illustrated by Frances Burnett-Stuart

I CAN REMEMBER as clearly as my own name, the sound of the rain pounding mercilessly away at the roof of my grandfather's house and the howl of the wind outside the raindrop-painted windowpane. I slouched in the rocking chair in the living room, watching the rain hammer away at the wood boards on the back porch and rocking absentmindedly. The droning hum of the heater vent vibrated through the musty air of the house. It was all white noise, buzzing away at the back of my head. In truth, my mind was not in that gloomy old house. I was off in my own world, racing through the imprints of time.

I was back to that summer, with my friends on the beach, taking in the sun and talking about nothing in particular. We laughed at jokes that made no sense and splashed through the surf, making an obvious effort to have as much fun as we could before school stole those days away from us. There was no telling how much I would give to be back at the beach, in the warm sun with my friends, rather than watching the rain come down, miles away from the seashore. My parents were at a Class of '85 reunion, probably laughing with some of their old friends and catching up on years lost. Naturally, I was outvoted, and here I was sent to suffer in solitude in the musty air of my grandfather's lonely old house.

I leaned back in the chair, closing my eyes. The silence began as the heater faded off, surrounding me, cutting through the pounding of the rain and the relentless howl of the wind. I listened for a moment before noticing the oddity of the silence.



Jenna Fields, 13
Coyote, California



Frances Burnett-Stuart, 13
Aberdeen, Scotland

Where was my grandfather? For at least an hour, I had not heard a thing from him, which was unusual, for he was normally bustling around the house, occasionally with his cane, giving orders or letting Sparky, his highly energetic border collie, out into the yard. Now I could hear not a sound from his room or the kitchen. Befuddled, I rose to my feet, out of the chair, and curiously made my way down the hall to his room. My ever-prominent grandfather's sudden silence held a feeling of gripping cold dread that wrapped around my heart like an iron fist. The pictures that hung from the walls in the long hall seemed to stare at me from either side, watching me, making the feeling that gripped me no easier to bear. Cautious, I touched the door to his room with my fingertips, pushing the light, wood door open. "Grandfather?" I called uncertainly. "Are you in here?" Relief washed over me when he answered in a clear, full voice.

"Jane? Come in," he replied.

I sighed and entered, pushing the door all the way back. He sat on the tall, high-backed armchair that stood erect by the window, gazing out into the rain-soaked street. I rested a worried hand on the red fabric of the chair, furrowing my eyebrows in discombobulated confusion.

"What is it?" I asked tentatively. Never was my grandfather this quiet, this withdrawn, so deep in thought. It startled me beyond all physical or mental belief and worried me to some extent. I had never really bonded with my grandfather, nor

were we close at all, but the prospect of any idea bothering him this much was foreign to me.

"Jane, could you fetch the photo album from my dresser?" he asked, gesturing at the old mahogany chest of drawers in one corner of the room. Bewildered, I scampered over to the dresser and picked up the leather-covered old photo album, cradling it in my hands so as not to ruin the antique delicateness. My grandfather turned to look at me and saw the way I looked at the old book. "Well, come on then. It won't crumble beneath your fingers, if that's what you're thinking," he said, the strength returning to his voice, seemingly breaking the brittle layer of ice that seemed to cover the room. Awoken from my daze, I walked more briskly to the chair and placed the album on his lap, stepping back after I did so. His eyebrows furrowed in thought as his hand ran over the leather cover, dull in some places but shining on others from the pale light gleaming through the window. He was silent once more, and I could feel the ice beginning to spread again, the delicate webbed frost spreading like a shadow. My grandfather sighed deeply, and a look of profound sadness came upon his face. "Your grandmother..." he began, fading off. "Your grandmother gave me this photo album, the first Christmas we ever spent together," he said, talking more to himself than he was to me. "She told me to store all the memories I could in it, so on days like this one I could look back and remember." He sighed, looking out

the window through the rain-spattered glass. "So many memories..." he mumbled, flipping open to the first page.

The picture was in black and white, depicting a man and a woman in a suit and dress, each wearing a brilliant smile. "Was that..." I began, but he cut me off.

"Our wedding, a day I will forever remember, every color, sound, smell, everything," he mumbled. I sat on the bed, not taking my eyes off his face. The former silence took over as he bowed his head over the photo, broken only by the patter of the rain and the rhythmic ticking of the clock on the wall. We

seemed to sit in deep quiet for eternity, neither speaking nor moving, as if the entire room had been encased in amber, and trapped. Finally, my grandfather looked up at me, a question in his eyes, "Jane, do you remember your grandmother?" he asked, his voice brittle, like kindling to be tossed into a fire.

I thought back into my younger years, as far back as I could. Grandma Rose died when I was about four or five, but try as I might, never could I remember more than a smile. My eyes met the tired eyes of my grandfather. "No, not much anyway," I replied, fiddling with the sheets on the bed.

"I suppose I shouldn't expect you to remember back that far," he said thoughtfully. "Rose was kind, gentle, the best mother in the world to your father and aunt. You have her eyes." I was startled.

My own hazel eyes had never seemed to be anything special, or meant anything to me, but now they seemed different somehow. "Yes, and her smile," he added, a sad smile of his own coming upon his face. He flipped the page, revealing a picture of a man, a woman, and two children, a boy and a girl.

"You, Grandma, Dad, and Aunt Lisa," I guessed, seeing the resemblance in the faces of each child and the parent.

"Yes," he replied, sighing heavily.

I was still in a bit of a cloud at this moment in time, having no inclination of why my grand-

father was so despondent or downcast. Concerned, I stepped forward and placed a tentative hand on the back of the red velvet chair. "Grandfather, is everything all right?" I murmured. The action surprised me, as if someone else was moving my hand and causing my voice to emit from my voice box. As I said before, I never bonded with my grandfather, and I never understood him. Of course, I never really made an extraordinary effort to get to know him, unfortunately, so you can imagine my surprise at my own actions.

He looked up at me, eyes that seemed to hold all the knowledge in the world staring straight into mine. "Today, exactly eight years ago, your grandmother..." he faded off again. "... your grandmother passed away," he said, obviously with much difficulty.

"So many memories..."
he mumbled, flipping
open to the first page.



"That's what we all have to do, Jane, find our sunshine"

I recoiled subtly, all of the puzzle pieces falling instantaneously into place, missing chunks falling into sequence with one simultaneous click. He must have sensed my muscles tensing up, because he smiled slightly and looked up at me. I smiled back, trying to make it as sincere as possible, but as shaken as I was, such a thing was difficult to accomplish. My grandfather turned back to the window and the pale light seemed to make his weathered face look years older. I gazed out at the rain as well, as lost in thought as he was. After what seemed like another eon, my grandfather said something I shall never forget, something that will remain forever in my memory. "The thing about Rose was, she never saw the deep darkness of a storm cloud, or the cold freezing rain. She always used to tell your father and Lisa when they would cry or think they could no longer carry on, 'No matter how hard the rain may fall or how the storm may roar, there will always be sunshine, even on a cloudy day. You are my sunshine, my only sunshine.'"

He gazed down at the picture on his lap, the man, woman, and children. "You know, she sang that song to them, I don't know how many times, but they never seemed to tire of it. I've always tried to find the sunshine, among all those clouds. Over the years it's become harder, but I've always seemed to find it." He turned and looked at me solemnly, sorrow and emotion filling his eyes. "That's what we all have to do, Jane, find our sunshine, and we can get through life, no matter the

speed of the winds, or the strength of the waves." I closed my eyes to contain my own emotions. It seemed as if I had suddenly been transformed into thin glass, and the slightest nudge would cause me to shatter into a million pieces. My thoughts seemed to move like storm winds in a cyclone around my brain, that is to say, exceedingly fast. When I opened my eyes again, his gaze had returned to the photo album, and his hand held the page in a death grip. It was then I decided to leave him in peace with his thoughts, feelings, and memories. Solicitous not to disturb him, I crept silently out of the room on tiptoe and closed the door behind me.

Little did I know that this would be the last time I saw my grandfather and heard his voice. I spent the rest of that day on the back porch, Sparky curled asleep at my feet, and the cool air swirling around my face. My parents returned from the reunion and collected me, interrogating me on how my time had been while they were gone. I simply replied that it had been boring and I did nothing, keeping my grandfather's conversation to myself, knowing that those moments would forever be mine alone. Two days later, I found out that my grandfather had passed away peacefully in his sleep, and for some obscure reason, it came not as a surprise to me, but more as if I knew it was coming. Part of me said that I never truly knew him in depth, but another segment of my heart told me that my grandfather had showed me more about himself in fifteen minutes of meaningful conversation

than he had in almost all of my lifetime.

That day we went back to my grandfather's house, and almost consequentially, gray clouds swirled overhead, threatening to cry out their tears of sorrow. I said almost nothing as we entered the house, my navy-blue jacket wrapped tight around my shoulders to evade the cold. My parents were in the kitchen, speaking to one of the neighbors, who had baked cookies. What for, I do not know. As far as I was concerned, celebration was the last thing on my mind. With my parents occupied, I managed to slip away, back down through the hall and to the back bedroom. As I pushed open the door, the first thing that I lay eyes upon was the photo album, brown leather wrapped around the memories my grandfather had held close at heart.

My throat seemed to close up, all of the emotion I had held in on the car ride here and every moment since I found out, rose to the surface in a hot, uncontrollable rush. Standing in the doorway, I hugged myself, rocking back and forth from my heels to my toes, breathing deeply in and out. When it felt as if the feelings had returned to their former blasé demeanor, I stepped forward and made my way stiffly over the faded carpet to the mahogany set of drawers and gathered the album into my hands, which seemed to shake at any given moment. Carefully, I wrapped the old book snugly in my jacket and tucked it safely under my arm.

I left the album by the front door and snuck past the adults in the kitchen, out the back door and into the yard. Sparky

lay in his house, possibly sleeping, or mourning the passing of his lifetime companion. I stepped off of the patio and onto the grass, feeling the pure lushness of the green sprigs under my feet. The wind picked up in a flourish and I could feel a few solitary, daring drops of rain on my shoulders. "Find the sunshine," my grandfather had said. There was sunshine to be found, even on a cloudy day. But how could there be sunshine? Now? With all that had happened, the good seemed impossible to find. So I closed my eyes and began to cry, giving up trying to find the sunshine, because it seemed there was none to be found, not in this storm. The rain fell harder, and my tears, hot salty bitter tears, fell with it. Sobs shook my body, and raindrops, cold, freezing raindrops, fell onto my bare arms, and I began to shiver.

I looked up into the rain and suddenly, as if by some supernatural force, the clouds broke on the horizon and brilliant rays of sunshine cut through the mist like a knife. My eyes grew wide and my tears slowed, as if sunshine had stopped them too. When my gaze landed upon the brilliant rays, I thought of what my grandfather had told me of my grandmother, and I realized that I hadn't found my sunshine, it had found me. So, comforted, I began to hum.

"You are my sunshine, my only sunshine, you make me happy, when skies are gray. You'll never know, dear, how much I love you. Please don't take my sunshine away."



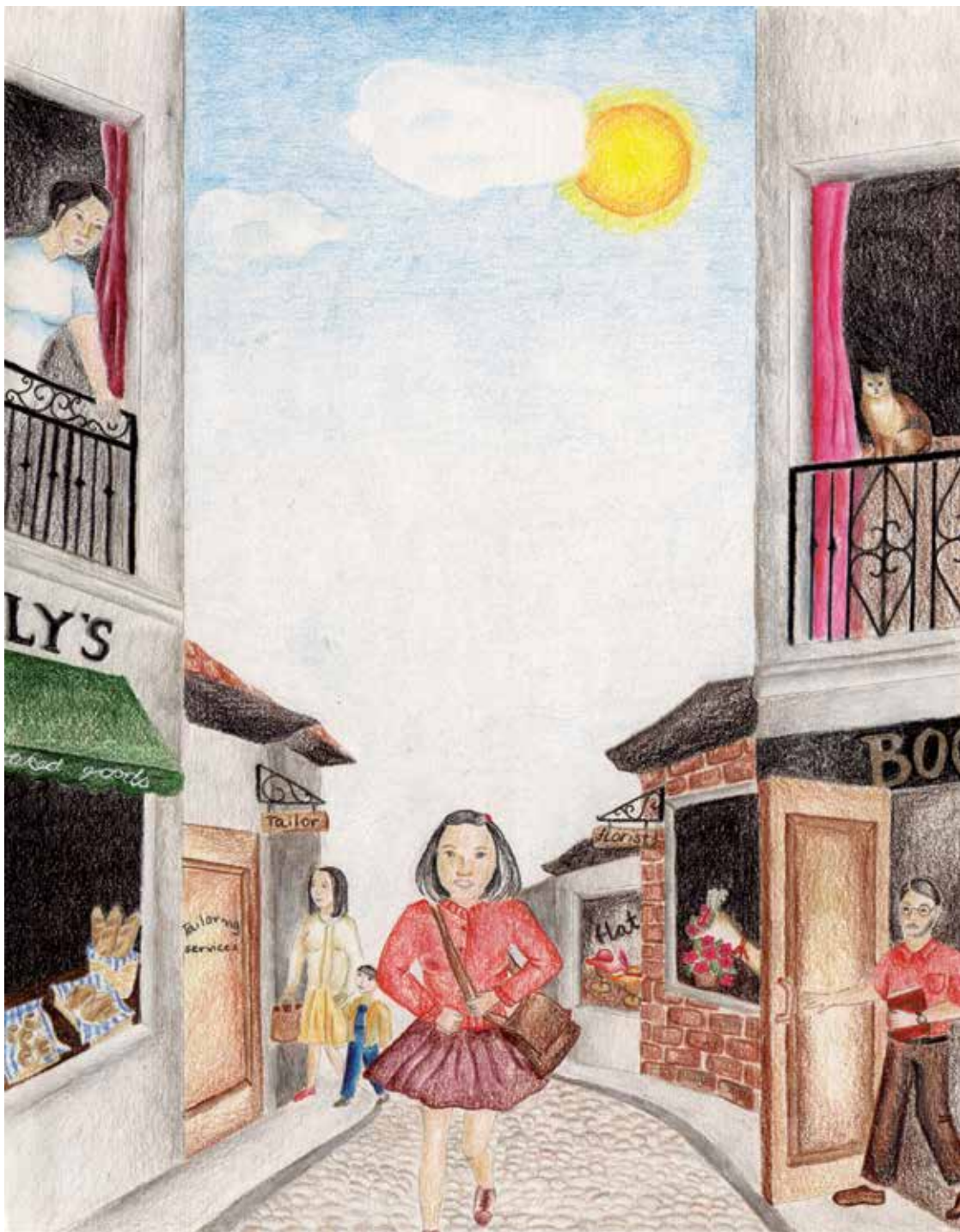
Goes the Ball

By **Richard Ma**

You know the sound—
the clang as the ball bounces off the rust-colored hoop.
The backboard, faded with use, trembles.
You feel it vibrate.
On the rebound, you throw again.
In your mind, the ball soars through the hoop;
 a satisfying swish.
Instead, the ball ricochets, landing in the mud; it splatters.
When you pick it up, the ball is caked with mud.
You sigh, and turn to head back.
In the distance, there is a rumble of thunder
And yet...
the muddy ball flies,
flecked of dirt trailing in its wake.
You watch as the ball's path forms a perfect arc;
 your heart leaps.
Once again, you think of the ball soaring through the air,
 and passing through the hoop.
This time, you hear it swish.



Richard Ma, 12
Kirkville, Missouri



"Japan bombed Pearl Harbor! Japan bombed Pearl Harbor!"

Movement

By **Kika Kovalski**

Illustrated by **Samira Glaeser-Khan**

YUKI LOOKED LIKE a wild horse, galloping through the streets of the small, friendly town, her silky black hair flying through the wind. The glaring sun beamed down at her.

“Japan bombed Pearl Harbor!” she screamed. “Japan bombed Pearl Harbor!”

When two months had crawled by, and the event was forgotten in that small Japanese-American town, Yuki snatched a rusty red radio from her windowsill. The sun was streaming in. It was early afternoon, and a long shadow was cast behind the silent radio. She leapt outside, meeting a group of friends on her dusty stoop. The crackling voice began, reciting a shock. “Recently signed Executive Order 9066 allows people of any race or culture to be evacuated throughout the war,” then it added, “and most believe that Japanese-Americans will be targeted because of the threat posed by the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December.” Yuki could taste the blood in her mouth as she felt the inside of her cheek with her tongue. Yep, she’d bit off some skin.

Another month passed, and Yuki had again forgotten about the day when the rusty red radio spoke those words. Just emerging from an orange grove, she and her friends were making their way home from school. Straight in front of her, her eyes were glued to a familiar wood post, for they had nowhere else to rest. She bent her fingers back until they screamed with a fire of pain inside of her. Her thoughts embraced the post, the



Kika Kovalski, 10
Brooklyn, New York



Samira Glaeser-Khan, 13
Chicago, Illinois

imperfect edges, all the splinters from it that had pierced her skin, all the times she danced with joy around it, everything. She ran to the post, her friends close behind her. Cupping her hand so that it rested on it perfectly, she prepared herself to skip around it. But there was a paper in her way. A paper with bold lettering, tied to the post with a confident nail. She usually would have not stopped to acknowledge it, but she surprised herself and stopped in her tracks. She read it with worry—nearly tears—in her eyes. The radio was right. They (and all other Japanese-Americans) had to evacuate to internment camps in six days! Her mind raced. *How would they make it? Who would she tell first?*

Before she knew it, it was all over. With nothing but clothes and her favorite bandana, Yuki was stepping on cold metal steps onto the cold metal train, her mother and her sister Keiko by her side. Her father had died long ago. The train engine rumbled and started, moving on the rickety tracks. All around her were mothers, their arms wrapped around their children, children with needy, tearful looks in their eyes, and men with their work caps, standing tall, clutching handles. Everyone was swaying with the train. And before long, Yuki felt like one of them too, swaying with the crowd, going to a place unknown.

For one sweaty month, Yuki lived in horse stables. The space was so small that it felt like all the emotions, health, everything was spreading throughout

the crowd. You could see and feel everything that the person next to you saw and felt. There wasn't even enough room to breathe your own breath, say your own words, feel your own things, or think your own thoughts before someone else's life butted into yours. Yuki desperately needed to start doing karate kicks, her fury and frustration flying with her power.

Finally it was over. But nobody was preparing themselves to float home with relief, back to their beautiful lives. No. They were preparing themselves for something very different. Yuki sat again on a cold metal train, but the air was so fresh and cool, she didn't mind quite so much.

Wind was blowing through her silky black hair again. Her hair was flying through the fresh wind. Everyone else's hair was tied up in a tight knot. Everyone else had stiff, short head covers of hair. Everyone else's hair was bottling up their emotions and freedom. Only Yuki's hair was free. Only Yuki was still Yuki.

The barracks in Amache were brand new, you could tell. But that didn't mean they seemed like a good place to live, a place worthy of human beings. People were already settling into their new homes though, and the dust behind the train was settling too, for it had flown in the air, surprised by the train's passing. When the train left again, Yuki watched steam rise from the top, twirling then disappearing into the sky.

All of Yuki's friends were far, far away, and karate kicks weren't helping. Yuki

buried her face in her pillow all day, every day, for there was no school. Her hair was tangled in itchy, painful knots. All Yuki could think was, *I've lost myself, the world is ending, and I'm only eight years old.* Then she cried. She hadn't cried since her father had died. Her tears were silent, but they were tears, dampening her stiff pillow in two dark circles. Yuki thought of the days when everything was going to be all right.

Days passed, and the same thoughts and feelings passed through Yuki's mind again and again, and she made no progress, whatever that could possibly be. She was a powerless, silent, motionless fire.

She wobbled around on the creaky wooden floor, realizing that her legs were no longer functional. She tried to stretch her arms, but they were too stiff. She tried to squeeze her eyes closed in pain, but they were filled to the top with fresh tears and dried with dry ones.

The last of Yuki's personality was dying down, as was her life. She was struggling to live. The fierce temperatures seeped into her. Everything had to be over, there was no other way she could be living in such pain. This thought calmed her. Just take a deep breath, and in moments it will be over, and you won't have to do it anymore.

Everything from true life was a memory now, the only spark of her world she was able to carry with her was her clothes and her bandana, and they only made her lonelier, for as she wore them through the days, they caused her only to think of the past. The food and meal process at

the camps had the same effects, only taking her farther into the past, to a sensitive place that she rarely touched. Her father was a great cook. He whipped together the best of meals, and they were right there on the table waiting for her the moment they were done. Now, crowds coming from out of nowhere lined up, waiting for what seemed like forever, for freezing cold rice and potatoes.

She thought of the days when she and her best friends had hid out in Miss Breed's small-town library just for the fun of it, staying there for as long as they felt like it. And Miss Breed had always just given them a smile, letting them giggle and sit there, never telling them what to do, when and how, as Yuki's mother would have. Then, as if the world had read her mind, Yuki discovered that she got a letter. There was a slightly dented corner, but her name was right there on the front, and that was all that mattered. Then, smaller, as if the writer was less important, was the name Miss Breed.

Dear Yuki,

I was just thinking of you. Every afternoon I absentmindedly wait for you and your friends to arrive here, giggling and talking. How are the camps? What was it like to live in a horse stable for a month? I miss you, and I hope everything's OK.

Miss Breed

Ten days had slipped by, and Yuki had written back the best letter she could. With Miss Breed's support by her side, Yuki managed to get out of bed and out

of the building. Far away on the horizon was a snow-covered mountain. Nearly just as far away she saw adults working, leaning down to the ground with metal bars by their feet. A ball flying through the air caught her eye, and to her surprise, there were some older girls, about Keiko's age, eleven, playing volleyball and smiling. Throughout their game someone would give an occasional shout to a teammate. Old people sat and chatted, sometimes in English, other times in Japanese. Yuki felt like a baby bear, just coming out of its den for the first time, a whole new world to discover, one very different from its old one.

All of the sudden, Yuki felt someone breathing on her neck. She automatically blocked out all other noise, and she could hear the heavy breathing beside her. She turned, and it was a guard. She stepped back. Yuki once again felt the pain of the skin inside her cheek squeezed between her teeth.

"I won't hurt you," said the guard, in a gentle father-like voice, one she hadn't heard in a long time. He seemed almost hurt, but more sorry that she was scared of him. Yuki let out a sigh of relief, as if she knew she could trust him. He had long skinny legs, and he was tall, towering over her. Her relieved grip on the skin in her mouth tightened. But then he made a surprising move, and Yuki knew that he wasn't truly a guard inside. *Seriously, Yuki, now you're becoming Keiko?*

The guard bent down and squatted by her side. He looked her right in the eye

and said merely, "Hello." Then he stood up, and their fixed gazes wandered again.

The sun fell, and at nearly the tip of night, midnight, when all the lights are dark, and the camps dead silent, a whisper rose from Yuki's mouth. It seemed like she had almost broken a spell.

"Keiko?"

"Yuki."

"I met a guard."

"Yes."

"He sounded like a father. He was nice."

"Yes."

"He squatted and looked me in the eye."

"Yes."

"Did you see?"

"No."

"Good. Do you see without really seeing?"

"Maybe."

"Would you like to meet him?"

"No."

"C'mon..."

"Yes."

"Let's go."

"No."

"What? We have to wait until morning?"

"No."

"Well can we go then?"

"Not yet."

"Why?"

"I just know."

"So then you do see without seeing."

"Maybe."

One restless month had passed, and



The sky was filled with stars, each shining with its own special beauty

never had the right day come for Keiko to meet the guard. Just moments after Keiko and Yuki had settled into bed on the Fourth of July, Keiko whispered to Yuki, "Today. Now."

"Let's go."

Slipping outside, Yuki in her bare feet, Keiko in slippers, the two moved through the dust. Yuki leaping, Keiko gracefully tiptoe-sliding as if on ice. As they approached the guard, he had his hands behind his back, his eyes glued to the sky. Keiko nodded. Yuki looked up at the sky, joining the guard. The sky was filled with stars, each shining with its own special beauty, though disguised by how it blends with the many.

The world continues, I've found myself

again, and I'm only eight years old. I'm more than I was before.

Be Like the Cactus*

by Kimii Nagata

Let not harsh tongues, that wag
in vain,
Discourage you. In spite of
pain,
Be like the cactus, which through
rain,
And storm, and thunder, can
remain.

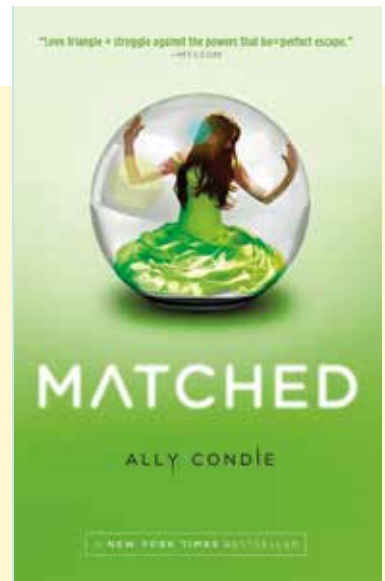


* "Be Like the Cactus" is part of a collection of poems called *Cactus Blossoms*, edited by Ferne Downing. The poems were written by Japanese-American high-school students who were forced to live in an internment camp during World War II.

Book Review

By Kira Householder

Matched, by Ally Condie; Speak (an imprint of Penguin Books): New York, 2011; \$9.99



Kira Householder, 12
Scottsdale, Arizona

PART OF LEADING your own, individual life is choosing whom you love and where you work. Imagine how drab and strict life would be if someone controlled that and decided when you died.

If there is even one rebellious bone in your body, you probably would have despised a life like that. You cannot call a life your own until you control it, which everyone has the right to do. At least, nowadays. But in this futuristic novel, things are a little bit different, and Cassia Reyes isn't exactly appreciative of that fact.

Along with trying to deal with the order and rigidity of the Society's harsh rules, Cassia is falling in love with someone she is not supposed to. This is like committing a crime. She knows what she's doing is wrong, but she has to see the poetic, spiritual boy she fell in love with. This is when her rebellious side kicks in. Cassia finally realizes that the Society can't make her into someone she's not.

This is where she and I share a trait. I am not just a lump of clay that someone can barge in on and mold me into someone

I'm not, and neither is Cassia. I'm my own person, and so is everyone. Even if all your rights are taken away, you still have that. And with being your own person comes the capability to be with anyone your fate chooses.


I love how the author uses poetry, passion, and desperation to bring the two characters together. Usually, I'm not into romance, but there's something deeper and more indescribable than love in this book. Even when they're apart, they're still together; they're inside each other's hearts and minds. I think everyone and anyone can learn something vital from this.

What I learned from this is that you don't have to be near someone to be close to them. If you truly know them, then they're on your mind all day and all night, even when you're sleeping. Surviving without them simply isn't an option.

I learned that a relationship doesn't just happen. It takes time, and that time should be spent together. It's not about the appearance of the person nor anything else, except what they have to offer you, and if they'll accept your offering.

The foundation of a relationship is like a building. You construct the base with sturdy bricks, because you need to know if you can trust this person. If you can, the second floor is more lenient, and less broad than the first. Then you keep building up and the connection blossoms.

You don't just know straight away either. Cassia doesn't realize she loves this boy at first. All he did was teach her to write, a forbidden concept in the Society, guide her through all her troubles, spend time with her, and admire her. But if that's not love, I don't know what is.

If you want to see a powerful relationship built off of destiny and thrive off of forbidden actions, this is the book for you. 

Take a Stand

By **Megan Little**

Illustrated by **Teah Laupapa**



Megan Little, 13
Phoenix, Arizona



Teah Laupapa, 13
Kapolei, Hawaii

“**G**O BACK TO CHINA, slant eyes,” they would say. “Why won’t you just leave us alone, Tina?”

In the beginning, I thought she could have just ignored them. But I didn’t understand what they were putting her through.

I remember that cloudy Tuesday afternoon clearly. I had just finished my peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich. I sat on a tan, unfinished picnic table outside my classroom and tilted my head up toward the cloudy, deep blue sky, admiring the unseasonably cool weather for an early-August day.

“Megan!” I heard her cry out. Immediately I knew it was Tina.

Hearing the panic in her voice, I jolted my head up and automatically assumed the worst.

“What happened?” I asked, feeling my defensive instincts kick in.

“They told me they hated me and that all they wanted was for me to die. They told me to go back to China! Telling my teacher only upset them even more.” Tina said she felt trapped, and abandoned.

I wanted to help my friend but I didn’t know exactly how to. I felt so weak, not wanting to confront the bullies, who were my close friends as well. Did that make me a bad friend and a bad person? Or did it make me only human?

“I... I can’t believe...” I stuttered out, feeling my breath catch in my throat before I could even finish my sentence. “They’re



"They told me to go back to China!"

foul. You aren't even from China!" I knew this because Tina was always talking about her rare yet incredible trips to visit her family in the Philippines.

All of my confusing, mixed emotions welled up and scared me as I struggled to keep my head from bursting. Time stopped.

I blinked and looked around me until I realized that I couldn't even see. I couldn't hear, I couldn't think, I couldn't breathe. All that mattered was Tina. Emotions raced through me, sending chills down my spine. I searched my mind for an easy way out. I searched and searched, testing all possible outcomes. Still, I was confused

and afraid for me and for Tina.

She was distraught, softly sobbing into her knees. I then realized what I knew all along about what had to be done. I gave Tina a long, comforting hug.

"I will take care of this," I promised her, still with my hand on her shoulder.

Before my brain could catch up, my legs had taken me all the way to the only swing set in the playground, where the bullies were seated in a circle on the ground. This was the place that the particular group of twelve-year-old girls always sat. They had claimed the red swing set

as their "meeting place" to be respected and avoided by all other students in the school. I watched them for a while. I noticed the smirks on their faces growing as they laughed together about forcing Tina to leave. My twenty seconds of buildup consisted of a quick self-pep talk to convince myself that I could finally stand up for something.

"You can do this," I assured myself, "for Tina."

I jerked to a stop just in front of the girls. I still remember how I felt, staring down at them. Before I opened my mouth to speak, I took a very needed deep breath. "You need to leave Tina alone. She didn't do anything wrong and she most

definitely does not deserve you treating her like this."

As I spoke, their surprise flared and washed over them like a violent wave trying to drown out the sand beneath it. Each girl exchanged an angry and nervous glance. They obviously never expected me, or anyone, for that matter, to confront them.


**"You can do this,"
I assured myself,
"for Tina."**

"What's your problem?" I heard finally from one of the girls.

"If you don't want to be her friends, then don't be her friends. But you owe her kindness at the least," I demanded. They

still looked upset, but after that I knew I was done. They knew they were done. That was all it took and I was astonished! Slowly, I turned to walk away. Bullies weren't worth my time, or Tina's tears.

As I headed back, I smiled. I couldn't believe the strength, joy, and amazement I felt standing up for my best friend. I hadn't had the strength in the beginning and it wasn't until after I had stood up for her that I realized the importance of true courage. I then, now, and will forever know that that was the right thing to do.

I feel much more mature after defending Tina, and I will cherish the memory of standing up for her when searching for confidence as I go through life. 

A Secret Freedom

By **Aiwen L. Desai**

Illustrated by **Christine Troll**

CALI MARLIN SMILED in anticipation as she held her mare, Artemis, or Arty, as Cali liked to call her. Today was the day. Every year Cali, her brother, Finn, and their parents rode all over the ranch in search of Secret, an elusive mare, and her band. Secret's band had been loose on the ranch for years, but a human being had yet to catch a glimpse of their lead mare. The only reason they knew she existed was by finding white tail hairs caught in bushes. There was no other albino in the band. By collecting her urine and running it through multiple tests they knew she was female. And the places where she chose to relieve herself showed that she was lead mare, or at least a very high-ranking mare in the herd. This year, Cali wanted more than anything to see Secret.

"Ready to go, Carolina?" A deep voice drawled behind her. Cali turned and frowned.

"Stop it, Finn. I've told you a million times to call me Cali!"

"And I've told you a million times to call me Grand Master and Great King of the World!" Cali huffed and turned away. Finn ruffled her hair and then jumped into his horse, Pepper's, saddle. Although the belittling gesture annoyed Cali, nothing could spoil her day now. She sprang into the saddle just as her parents came riding up.

"Everyone ready?" their dad asked.

"Ready!" Finn and Cali chorused.

They set off over rolling pastures and moved gradually into rockier country with steep outcroppings and buffeting winds.



Aiwen L. Desai, 12
Madison, Wisconsin



Christine Troll, 12
Somerset, Pennsylvania

The trail they were on followed a fast flowing river upstream, higher and higher, until they were in the rocky foothills of the mountains. Cali and Finn exclaimed every time they saw something that looked like a footprint, but none of them turned out to be legitimate.

Around noon Cali's mom pointed upwards at a massive gray storm cloud gathering on the horizon.

"Looks like rain." Cali's heart sank. They would have to head back—the mountains could be treacherous in bad weather. Her dream of finding Secret would have to wait until next year.

In a few minutes it started to drizzle. Cali was just beginning to hope that they would be able to keep looking after all when a bolt of lightning struck a giant twisted pine tree directly in front of them. The tree crashed to the ground with a resounding echo that shook the bones of the mountain.

"We'll have to pick a path around it!" Finn shouted over the roaring rain. Cali's father pushed his horse into the woods around the tree, and her mother and Finn followed. Cali squeezed Artemis, but the mare didn't move. Cali kicked her gently. Artemis stood like a statue. Cali was starting to panic. The river was already swelling over Artemis's hooves. She gently pulled the mare's head away from the river, but it was no use. Artemis jiggled backwards, eyes rolling in panic.

"Calm down, Arty. It's going to be OK." Cali glanced into the woods. Her family was gone. And Artemis was beyond reason. She danced further and further into the river.

Suddenly, a wild current swept them both into the middle of the river. Cali felt as if an icy hand was grabbing her, forcing

her under the freezing water. She spluttered as finally they were pushed momentarily to the surface. The driving rain was blurring Cali's vision, but she could have sworn she saw a flash of white in the trees on the other side of

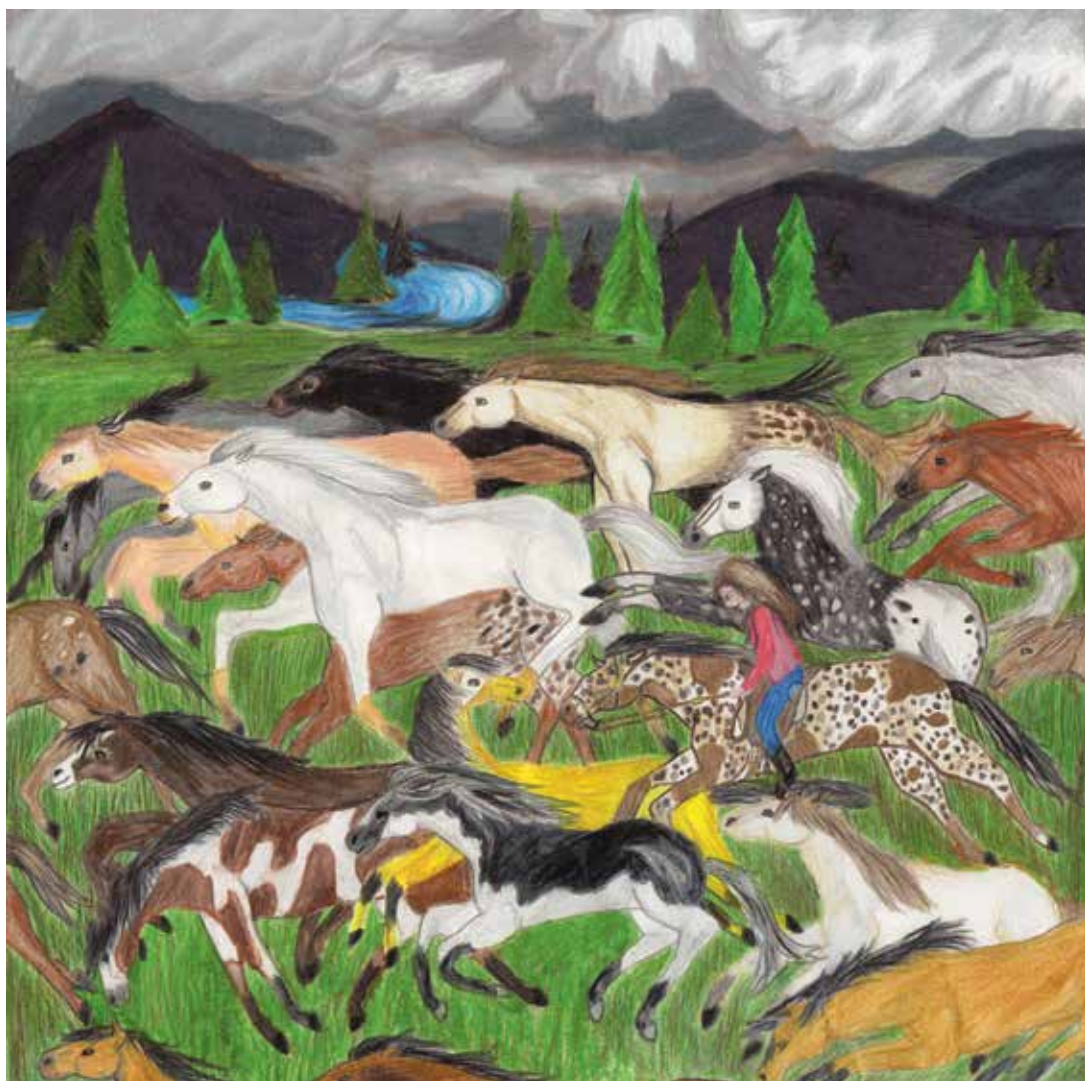
the river. But before she could confirm it a foaming wave crashed over her head, pulling her and Artemis down into the turbulent waters.

Cali clung to the mare, holding on for dear life. Artemis battled hard, thrusting her forelegs into the infinitely stronger current, but it was to no avail. Just as Cali felt certain that this was the end, a mass of solid bodies pushed them to the surface.

Cali looked around and gasped. Bays, pintos, palominos, blacks, duns, and one lone albino horse were striking out for shore, pulling Artemis along with them. Upon reaching land they shook themselves like dogs. Artemis did the same, nearly throwing Cali.

Then, carefully, they began to pick their way down the mountainside. The precision with which they moved was

**Cali wanted
more than anything
to see Secret.**



With a joyous bound, they moved as one across the prairie

flawless, and even in the pouring rain they looked ethereal. Beside them Cali felt like an ugly troll in the company of swan maidens.

Finally, they reached the rolling plains beneath the foothills. With a joyous bound, they moved as one across the prairie. Their hooves tapped out a speedy

staccato, and all around her Cali could see a myriad of different horses all running to the same rhythm. She raised her face to the sky and laughed from pure exhilaration. With her wet hair streaming out behind her, Cali gripped Artemis's mane and let herself be pulled into a secret freedom. ❁

Salty Air

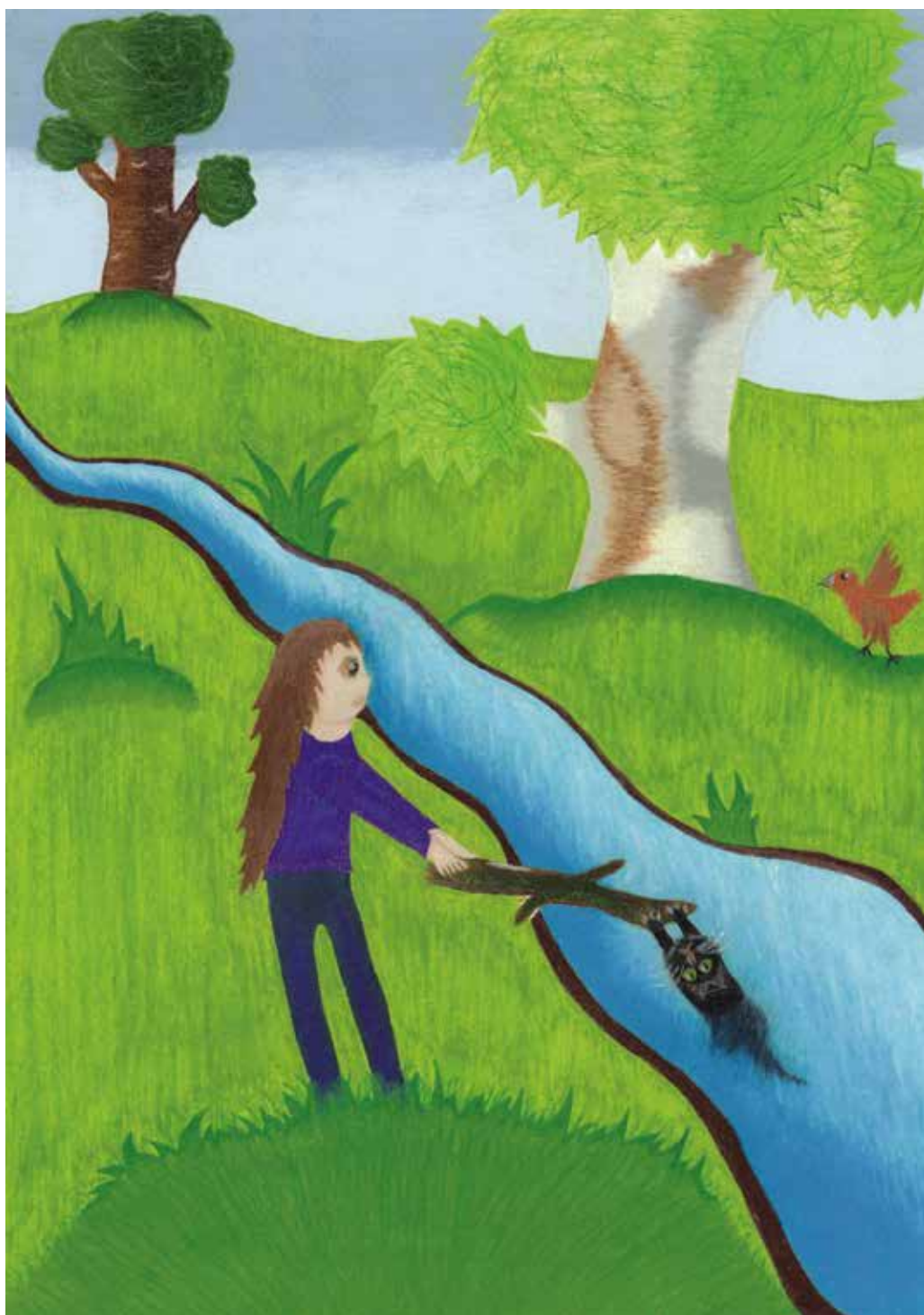
By **Pearl Tulay**



Pearl Tulay, 12
Amherst, Massachusetts

My sister and I
Scramble up the jagged rocks
Our pockets full of shells, rocks
And the occasional sea glass.
My mother sits by the fire,
Reading peacefully
We grab sheets of paper towels
On the windowsill, a menagerie
Of tiny ocean creatures
Unmoving now, glistening in the sun
They sit there all weekend
Until it's time to
Go.
The sea glass is the last act in the show

All others packed up
Shoved into bags and jackets
We always leave the best for last
But when we get home,
Exhausted in that exhilarating way,
The memories are drawn out of our things
We lock them in our minds
And all that's left is dull rocks
The magic somehow all gone.
They were always more beautiful
When you had the ocean behind them
The waves pounding the shores
The earthy damp scent
And the fireplace, crackling all night.



"Grab on!" I told it, though I knew it couldn't understand me

Listen

By **Montanna Harling**

Illustrated by the author

THE SUN SLANTED through the trees, lighting the forest with a warm glow. The day was surprisingly warm, being the middle of autumn.

I climbed a sun-warmed boulder and stopped to catch my breath, letting my gaze drift through the part of the small forest I knew so well. Every day I would come here and listen to the river chatter, listen to the wind rustling the leaves of the mighty oaks and huge sycamores above my head. Since I had no friends, I spent all of my time after school here, in the forest not far from my house. I didn't feel so very lonely here in the forest.

I sat down on top of the boulder and closed my eyes. The sounds of the forest blended together in a beautiful song; wind whispering, river splashing, birds twittering, squirrels chattering.

I frowned as suddenly a new, unfamiliar sound drifted on the breeze; a shrill mewling sound. I stood up and gazed wildly about. *What is that?* I wondered. It sounded like a small animal in pain.

At first, I saw nothing unusual in the clearing around the boulder. Then something caught my eye—something in the river. A black shape was being carried downstream by the river currents. As I watched, a strong current pulled the thrashing black shape underwater.

I scrambled down the boulder and raced to the bank of the river, a bit downstream of where the black shape was floundering against the river. I gasped. The shape was a kitten! It broke



Montanna Harling, 13
Valley Center, California

the surface of the water, its jaws gaping as it let out a shriek of terror.

I spun around and spotted a hollow log nearby. Attached to its mossy trunk was an old, rotted stick that once was a strong branch. I raced over to the old log and snapped the branch off. *Hurry, hurry!* I told myself.

Back at the river, I crouched down and stuck the stick out as far as I could reach, right in the path of the kitten. “Grab on!” I told it, though I knew it couldn’t understand me. The kitten looked at me, and I wondered if it knew what to make of me—a thirteen-year-old girl holding a rotting stick out to it.

The current tossed the black kitten against the stick. The kitten scrabbled feverishly at the rotting wood, its tiny claws

gripping the bark. It could hold on for a while, but probably not very long. I had to act quickly, before the current could pull the kitten away again.

I pulled the stick back, not too fast in case it jerked the kitten off. Once the stick was close enough to me, I stretched out my left hand and plucked the kitten off the branch. He clutched my hand and meowed with an almost re-

lieved tone to his voice.

My heart pounding, I drew the kitten close to me and dried his soaking pelt off with my jacket. He shook his head fiercely, scattering drops of water. He began to purr as I dried the fur behind his ears.

“I think I’ll call you Splash,” I said, smiling. The kitten looked up into my eyes—and I knew. I’d found a friend. 🌿

I didn't feel
so very lonely
here in the forest.



Words

By Elia Smith

Illustrated by Tina Splann

THIS YEAR, for a school project, Lilly was volunteering at a nursing home, or rather, she had been volunteered. It was not a pleasant prospect. From what she had heard from her older sister, Rose, it was basically just sitting around and listening to old people talk, talk, talk. Rose was the exaggeration queen, so you could never know if you could trust her, though.

So that's why, on a balmy Sunday morning, Lilly was standing on tiptoe at the reception desk and trying to read the very high up copy of the list of people, whens, wheres, hows...

Lilly pulled out her notebook and her purple pen and started a new page. *Mrs. Riley*, she scrawled in her sloppy cursive, *formidable, splendiferous*. Lilly kept logs of everyone she met in that notebook, their eccentricities, faults, strengths, and wonderful adjectives galore.

Mrs. Riley had the eyes of a warrior, with stories etched into every line and bravery stitched around the edges. Lilly liked her at once, from the moment she stepped into her room. She seemed impossible to defeat, Lilly thought, with the air of a general. She talked with an odd accent sweeping the edges of her words. Mrs. Riley had memories. Lilly could see them in the stories she told, of cool beaches, waves pawing the shore, wind whispering, and fresh, sweet mangoes.

"Do you really remember these things?"

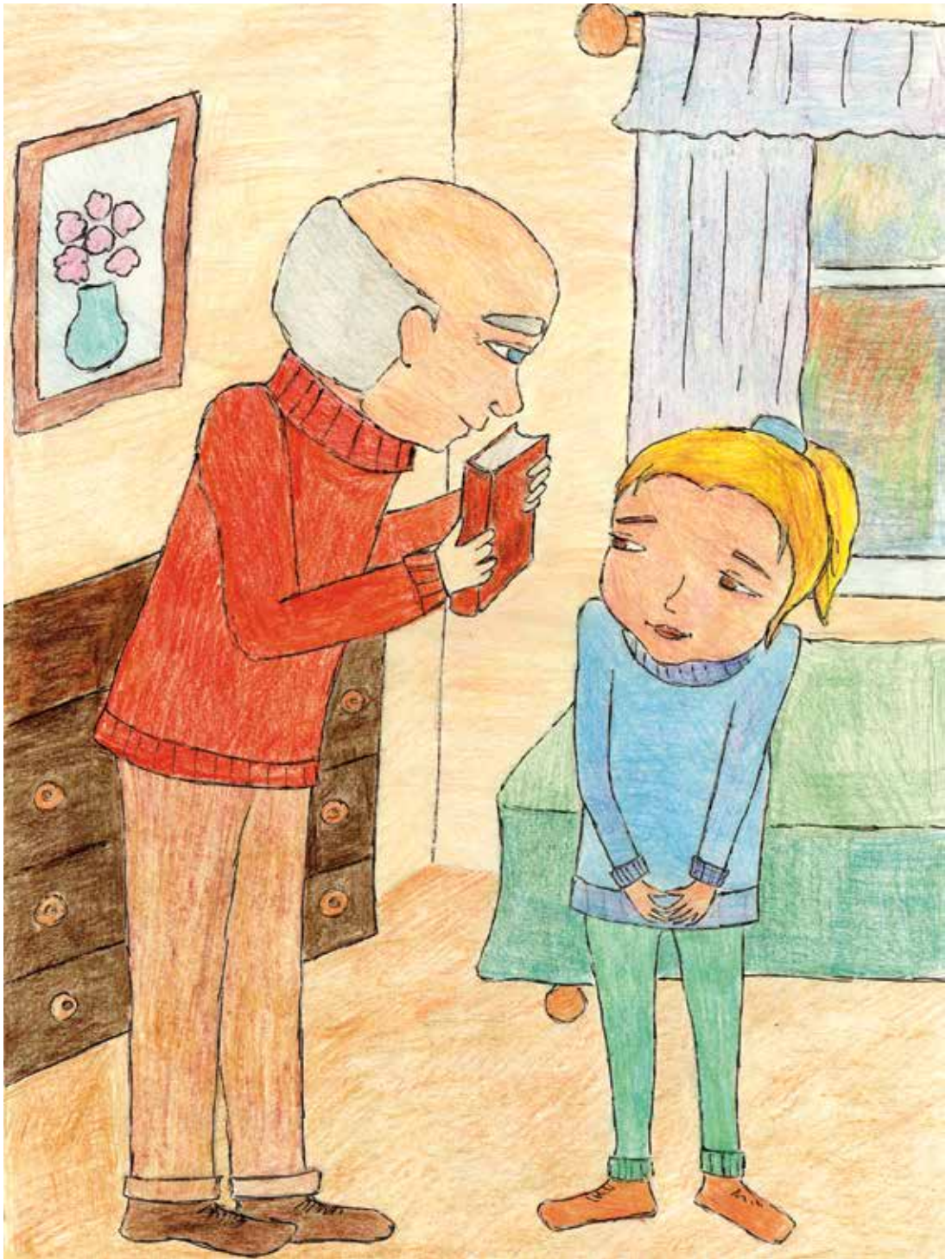
Mrs. Riley laughed, not a creaky old person's laugh, but one like bells that didn't match her wrinkly outside.



Elia Smith, 10
Santa Monica, California



Tina Splann, 11
Providence Village, Texas



"Unfortunately, I have no children to pass it on to"

"No, *non, non*, Lilly, I make it all up, pure imagination, but sometimes I feel like I was there."

I know what you mean, thought Lilly, as she exited the grove of mangoes and stories.

Miss Ashley: loquacious, gregarious. Miss Ashley was more blunt about things than Mrs. Riley and chattered like a group of squirrels. Lilly tried her best to keep up with the constant stream but soon gave up and pretended to be listening. When she was leaving, Miss Ashley gave her a big hug and said, "Thank you, sweetie, nobody ever listens to me!" and Lilly felt a little ashamed that she hadn't really, but smiled and hugged the old lady back.

Mr. Joseph: _____? Mr. Joseph was so indescribable that it gave Lilly a shock. When she walked in, he asked with no hesitation, "What's your favorite word?"

Lilly's words, her giant vocabulary, blanked. Then she said loudly, "Pulchritudinous!"

He nodded, then calmly replied, "That means beautiful."

Lilly's heart stopped, almost, and then she stuttered, "H-how d-do y-you know th-that?"

Mr. Joseph smiled warmly and whispered, "The same way I think you do." Lilly thought back to cold nights in front of the fire, flipping through the dictionary and pointing out interesting words to her family, Mama, Papa, Rose...

She grinned back at Mr. Joseph, and he took out a worn book, the cover a rich red leather, and he held it up. *Merriam-*

Webster's English Dictionary, First Edition. Lilly gave a breath of awe. "Is that, like, one hundred years old?"

He seemed pleased at her reaction. "Indeed." Mr. Joseph stroked the cover gently and said, "It was my father's, and his father's, and so forth. Unfortunately, I have no children to pass it on to." Lilly stared deep into his ocean-blue eyes. "You know," he contemplated, "you are one of the only people I have met who I feel really understands me."

Lilly felt the praise swirl in her stomach and waved goodbye to Mr. Joseph. "*Adieu.*"

"That wasn't so bad, was it?" Lilly's mom asked, helping Lilly pull off her jacket. Lilly shrugged. She didn't want her mom to know how much she enjoyed it because... because it was her moment, and she wanted to hold onto it a little longer.

NEXT SUNDAY was cool and brisk. Wind whipped Lilly's cheeks as she skipped along to the nursing home. She skidded to a stop in the warm reception room, shimmied out of her coat, popped off her hat, dashed up the stairs, and slid, breathless, into Mrs. Riley's room.

Mrs. Riley laughed. "You look like you have run a mile or two, Lilly!" She patted the side of the bed. "I'm glad you came. Come, have a seat." Lilly sat, and breathed Mrs. Riley's warm, clean smell, like soap and lavender. "Today, Lilly, I want you to tell me a story." Lilly almost fell off the bed.

"What?!"

"I said, you tell me a story," Mrs. Riley calmly replied, taking Lilly's hands in hers.

"B-but I don't know any stories."

"Make one up. It doesn't matter if it's good." Mrs. Riley tapped her temple with a long, pale finger. "Use your imagination!"

So Lilly took a deep breath and began. "Once upon a time, there was a creek full of splashing, glittering water, babbling, stories flowing out from every drop." She was surprised she was sounding like Mrs. Riley. "The creek was in a wood, light and green, the sun catching big, fanlike leaves, glimmering like emeralds. Through the wood, there was a house like a cottage, gardenias placed meticulously in the window boxes, and daisies, roses, and violets scattered around the yard in clumps." Lilly paused. "I don't know what comes next."

Mrs. Riley clapped her hands. "Superb, Lilly, don't worry, I'll tell you the rest next week."

Lilly was baffled. "*You'll* tell *me* the rest?"

Mrs. Riley smiled at her. "Yes. You started a story, I'll finish it for you." She then pulled Lilly into a strong embrace for someone of her age.

Miss Ashley was having a talk with a friend from next door so Lilly's company was unneeded, thus she skipped over to Mr. Joseph's room.

"Remuneration," Mr. Joseph said as she walked in.

"Reward, or payment. Her remuneration was a trophy and a medal." Lilly replied automatically, sounding like she had swallowed the dictionary.

He grinned. "Good! The only other person in this place who knew that was Miss Ashley."

Lilly was disconcerted. "Miss Ashley?"

"Yes, indeed. Miss Ashley thinks the greatest pleasure in life is reading, yet the workers, so ready to help in other circumstances, were oblivious to this need. So I let her borrow the *Merriam-Webster*." Mr. Joseph held up the shabby book.

"Rather dilapidated, but full of reminiscence," Lilly commented.

"I think so, too," concurred Mr. Joseph. "But the threadbareness of it adds to the magic."

It does, thought Lilly. She didn't need to say a thing, because Mr. Joseph knew. He was a bit peculiar, how he made you want to pour all your thoughts out and confide everything in him. He would listen and understand, and yet you could tell all you needed was a smile, or a look into those deep blue eyes.

"Can I hold that, please?" Lilly asked, eyeing the book.

"Here you go, but be careful. This baby's ancient," Mr. Joseph said, placing it in her arms.

Lilly gently picked up the dictionary, cradling it in her arms like a precious jewel. She turned the pages with a loving finger and breathed in the warm, musty scent of time. Words flew by on the pages, beautiful words, calling her.

"You like that, don't you?" Mr. Joseph murmured. "I can tell by your eyes. I see affection, true caring. You really do love words."

IT TOOK a million years, or so it seemed to Lilly, for the next Sunday to come. She sprinted down the sidewalk, piercing the warm, thick air like an arrow, and didn't stop until she reached Mrs. Riley's room, and only barely. She nearly crashed into the wall.

"Goodness!" Mrs. Riley laughed. "You certainly are a ball of energy today!"

"I... want... to hear... the rest... of the... story," Lilly panted almost indecipherably.

"I should suspect you do." Mrs. Riley tried to hide a smile. She handed a small, boxy, journal-like book to Lilly. "It's in there. Treasure it, and add your own words."

Lilly opened to the first page. It was covered in neat cursive, and Lilly knew it promised to be an amazing read. Anything that came from Mrs. Riley was bound to be.

Miss Ashley turned out to be a good listener. How strange that Lilly, usually so subdued, was bubbling like a fountain. Naturally, Miss Ashley couldn't be too

quiet for too long, so soon the room was spurting with activity and chatter.


Mr. Joseph leaned over and pulled a chair right up close to his bed and motioned for Lilly to sit. When she did, he reached into his dresser drawer and took out the book. He placed it in Lilly's hands and hesitated for a moment.

"I'm giving this to you." He looked straight into her eyes, blue by brown.

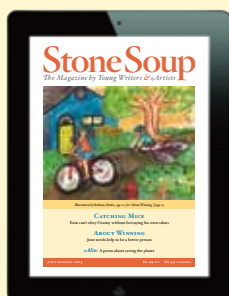
"I know I can... trust you. I know you will appreciate the gift of words."

Lilly didn't know what to say. She wanted to give a long, eloquent speech, but that still wouldn't show all the gratitude she was feeling, brewing up inside her.

So, she took a deep breath and said, "Thank you. I love it." It was five words, and none of them had over five letters, but a three-hundred-word essay with all complicated words couldn't have done better.

Lilly gave Mr. Joseph the best hug she could muster, and he hugged her back and whispered in her ear, "I knew you would." 





Bonus Materials

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- Editor Gerry Mandel blogs about the featured story from each issue.
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- Children's Art from Hungary. (July/August 2014 edition)
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Honor Roll

Welcome to the *Stone Soup* Honor Roll! We receive hundreds of submissions every month by kids from around the world. Unfortunately, we don't have space to publish all the great work we receive. We want to commend some of these talented writers and artists and encourage them to keep creating.

— *The Editors*

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