

Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists



"My Family," by Adina Andeleanu, age 12, Constanta, Romania

A SCRAP OF ORANGE CLOTH

A stranger helps Mattieu's father see past his fears

THE LAST RED FLAG

It's 1917, and a Russian family is caught up in the revolution

Also: Illustrations by Andrew Smith and Ksenia Vlasov

A review of a book by Brian Jacques

MAY/JUNE 2004

\$5.50 US \$7.00 CANADA

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The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists

VOLUME 32, NUMBER 5

MAY / JUNE 2004

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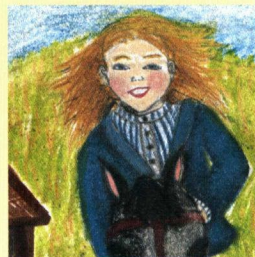
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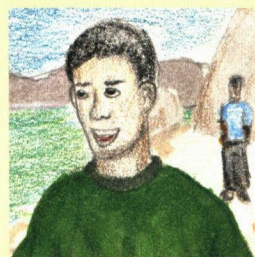
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 Stone Soup is printed on recycled paper

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Stone Soup (ISSN 0094 579X) is published six times a year by the Children's Art Foundation, 765 Cedar Street, Suite 201, Santa Cruz, CA 95060. Phone: 800-447-4569. It is published bimonthly in January/February, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, and November/December. Volume 32, Number 5. Copyright ©2004 by the Children's Art Foundation. All rights reserved. Reproduction of the whole or any part of the contents without written permission is prohibited. *Stone Soup* is mailed to members of the Children's Art Foundation. Eighty percent of the membership fee is designated for subscription to *Stone Soup*. In the United States, a one-year membership costs \$33, two years \$54, three years \$74. Rates to Canada and Mexico are an additional \$6 per year. Rates to all other countries are an additional \$12 per year. Please remit in U.S. funds or the equivalent amount in your own currency. Please send SUBMISSIONS, SUBSCRIPTIONS, and ADDRESS CHANGES to: *Stone Soup*, P.O. Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063. POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to *Stone Soup*, P.O. Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063. Periodical postage paid at Santa Cruz, CA and additional offices. Printed in Canada.

Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists

WELCOME TO ALL OUR READERS, old and new! We've had the pleasure of publishing *Stone Soup* for over 30 years. It is our belief that, by presenting rich, heart-felt work by young people the world over, we can stir the imaginations of our readers and inspire young writers and artists to create.



Jessie Moore, 12

Contributors' Guidelines

Stone Soup welcomes submissions from young people through age 13. For our complete guidelines, please visit our Web site at www.stonesoup.com.

Story and poem authors: Please do not enclose a self-addressed envelope

with your submission. Send copies of your work, not originals. If we decide to consider your work for a future issue, you will hear from us in four to six weeks. If you do not hear from us, it means we were not able to use your work. Don't be discouraged! Try again!

Book reviewers: If you are interested in reviewing books for *Stone Soup*, write editor Gerry Mandel. Tell her a little about yourself and the kinds of books you like to read. Enclose an SASE for her reply.

Artists: If you would like to illustrate for *Stone Soup*, send Ms. Mandel some samples of your art work, along with a letter saying what you like to draw most. Enclose an SASE for her reply. We need artists who can draw or paint complete scenes in color. Please send color copies of your work, not originals.

All contributors: Send us writing and art about the things you feel most strongly about! Whether your work is about imaginary situations or real ones, use your own experiences and observations to give your work depth and a sense of reality. Send your work to *Stone Soup*, Submissions Dept., P.O. Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063. Include your name, age, birthdate, home address and phone number.

Cover: "My Family" was loaned to *Stone Soup* by Paintbrush Diplomacy of San Mateo, California. For over 25 years, Paintbrush Diplomacy has worked to promote children's artistic expression around the world and to raise awareness of children's causes. Special thanks to Louise Valeur and Char Pribuss.

The Mailbox



I just wanted to say that “Musical Dreams” from the January/February 2004 issue was exquisite! Each delicately written and well-structured sentence was extremely pleasurable to read. The detailed artwork was a perfect addition to the story. Bravo, Betty Julia Rosen, Claire Neviasek, and *Stone Soup* for making this story available for me to enjoy. I would love to see more like it! I particularly fancied the format of the story—the “movements” were great! From the title to the last sentence, this piece of literature warmed my heart!

CHELSEA CYMROT, 12
Novato, California

Hello to all of you at *Stone Soup*. Simply delighted with your magazine and the wonderful opportunities you provide for youngsters. I’m printing out all the information for our granddaughter. She’s so excited and thrilled about the possibilities of submitting some stories and artwork. Also the idea of book reviews. What an experience. I’m a magazine writer (food, travel, draft horses, agriculture, rural life and more). Sharing the same enthusiasm with our granddaughter is a pure joy. We love talking about all the stories out there.

CAPPY (CAPELLA) TOSETTI
Surprise, Arizona

I have just moved and it has been really hard for me. Finding a copy of your magazine on my kitchen table makes me feel as light as air. Thanks for making such a great magazine!

MELISSA PROULX, 10
Exeter, New Hampshire

I am writing to say that I love *Stone Soup*, and in particular, I really enjoyed the story “A Lasso for Adagio” [September/October 2003] by Julian March. One thing I liked was that the author portrayed the snapping turtle as a “good guy,” not as the usual monster-with-the-huge-jaws-who-could-bite-your-hand-off-with-one-snap-if-you-disturb-it sort of thing. Also, something that I thought made the story seem more realistic were the tales woven into the story, such as the story of the one-eyed fisherman who had disappeared and never been found, and the story of the person who had been bitten by the sand shark a few miles away from where William was trapped in the boat, too afraid to swim. These things gave the story a certain depth, and a touch of reality. Lastly, I loved the descriptive phrases, such as, “He stared at me a moment, his flat black eyes full of ancient mysteries, then he slowly turned around and headed back out to the sunlit river.” That sentence, and others like it, helped me to picture the story line in my mind and to feel some of the character’s emotions. I would like to thank you for including such great pieces of writing by people my age, and I love the variety of subjects and writing styles. Although I have submitted several poems which have not been accepted (don’t worry, I don’t hold any grudges), I am still happy knowing that there is such a high quality selection of writing by such amazing young writers. Keep it up! I will continue to look forward to reading each issue.

ELIZABETH COOKE, 12
Newton, Massachusetts

You can read all the stories mentioned in The Mailbox on our Web site: www.stonesoup.com

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



He was running for me, and no one could ever stop us

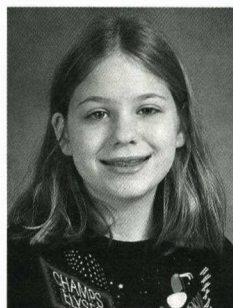
The Flying Angel

By Elizabeth B. Smith

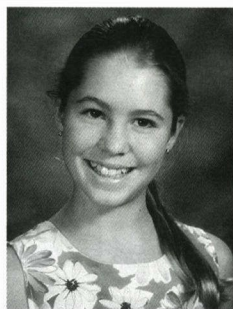
Illustrated by Rachel Stanley

“WHY AM I SO DUMB, Hobo?” I asked the short, jet-black gelding. I knew he couldn’t answer me, but I knew he could understand. Just two days ago, I had failed my first seventh-grade math test spectacularly, lost patience entirely at an annoying girl who I thought was my friend, and I continued to struggle with the facts of growing up. Now, staring into the eyes of someone I knew I could trust, I spilled it all out. And through everything, the glossy black eyes of my one true friend took everything in. When I ended my period of ranting, my wet eyes met his, and he looked back like always, and winked.

I threw my arms around his neck, and breathed in the smell of the horse. It was a smell that you learned to appreciate in my house, whether it was lingering in the car, collecting on my welcome mat, or biding its time on the bristles of one of the many brushes that scattered my floor. If you knew me personally, you’d know (and hopefully not be offended) that I’d switch a moment with you any time, for the presence of a horse. Right now, it was one of those times, a dewy Sunday morning, where the first signs of bitter fall were creeping in. You saw a lot of it inside the barn alone, the first burgundy stable blankets were being dusted off, the first-time riders all went out to buy expensive thermal jodhs, only to find out later that unless you were constantly visiting the barn during Snow Days and the likes (like me) you wouldn’t have any use for them. And the biggest preparation, the long-listed variety of shows, hunter paces, and



Elizabeth B. Smith, 13
Westfield, New Jersey



Rachel Stanley, 12
Seal Beach, California

fund-raisers that shared the season. But all of these things didn't faze me at all; they were just minor details that added to the daily barn atmosphere. All I really cared about were the horses, and how I would spend time with them. To almost all but me, fall was an entirely different season. Me, I didn't even know when the season began, and had no idea when it would disappear.

My train of thought slowly faded away, as I realized that my one thousand pounds of heaping affection was nosing around my coat pockets, looking for a tasty treat. "Oh, sorry, handsome, I forgot the carrots today!" I clapped a hand to my head in exasperation and reached over to stroke the gelding's long, dark forehead. He nickered softly and closed his eyes, begging for more. All of my past was forgotten, as the love of my horse took over me like a second skin.

Hobo snorted and shook his head, relieving himself of an itch. "Silly boy!" I laughed as he tried to nip my jacket. I glanced at my watch, it was still pretty early, and so I decided to take my horse out for a ride.

"I know you're not The Biscuit, old boy," I told him briskly, throwing a saddle on his back. I knew it sounded like one of those corny lines from a Saddle Club movie, but it gave me a tingly sense of satisfaction. I knew my horse could run, I just didn't know how to get him there.

After checking that everything was on correctly, I placed a hand on the gelding's sleek, black neck. "Let's go," I said, my

voice barely holding back my excitement. I had waited all week to get on him and just run. I knew that through a week of hard exercise, dealing with refusals of rails, and helping out with beginner lessons, all I needed was to feel the sensation of a flat-out gallop.

I slowly led Hobo out into the world; he followed obediently behind me, as if he had never done anything wrong in his entire life. I mounted up with ease, slipping my leather-clad feet into my stirrups, and gripping the reins tightly with both hands. I could see the faces of some of my friends, as they watched me with amusement. They too had their own horses to groom, and little girls to help. But not me; at this moment, it was me, Hobo, and a blank uncharted road in front of me.

I suddenly thought about the pain I had suffered through this past week, the hellish realities of a horseless, thirteen-year-old girl's life. A life that just didn't sit well for me.

So I made a decision, it was a rash one; I would almost call it an impulse. My decision was that I would leave it all behind. In a second all the harsh realities would look a lot smaller than they were now. In an instant, I urged Hobo forward with my legs, and like an orchestra, the symphony began.

At first, the strides were steady, clean, show-ready. I leaned forward in the saddle, and let him break out into a full run. I am honest to say that my gelding was never War Admiral or Man o' War, but if you had been watching me, you wouldn't

know the difference.

As my thick, blond hair flew back in all directions, I suddenly remembered my math teacher, passing out my appalling grade, on that rainy Friday morning. Suddenly, like an accidental breeze, the moment had fallen behind, like a struggling horse on the last homestretch. Ha! I thought to myself, feeling like a new world had just begun.

I felt Hobo's powerful strides beneath me. They were not labored, nor were they showing any signs of reduction. He was running for me, and no one could ever stop us.

The red-faced, demanding looks of that annoying girl I was holding a grudge against, suddenly were whipped from my mind, and went spiraling fast into the earth beneath me. Suddenly, the entire week was going with it, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday . . . I couldn't stop myself from letting out a whoop of excitement,

which made my horse go faster. Suddenly, I was no longer riding a small black gelding, but a proud and regal thoroughbred that made up my nightly dreams. And the uneven, New Jersey ground below me suddenly gave way, and the white glow of Churchill Downs sang back at me. And the wind that was racing against my side now had transformed into a pack of significant others, struggling to keep up with me. And my eyes blurred with unshed tears as I passed by the barn at a full gallop, only to me, it was the brightly colored Kentucky Derby finish line. My mind screwed up in concentration, as I passed by a number of envious little girls, dressed in their powder-blue shirts, and spotless jodhpurs, watching me in awe. I did not bother to slow down; the power of the gallop was all too great to destroy.

And then, I heard one of the little girls behind me speak. "Look! She must be an angel. She's flying without wings." ❀



You . . . and Your Dad

By Katie Ferman



Katie Ferman, 11
Three Lakes, Wisconsin

Traveling the interstate routes
With no sense of direction
Following no road map
Traveling only by the lay of the land
Going on only because
Of the love of the land

You and your dad

You, a curly-haired toddler
Without even the knowledge
To put the right shoes on the right feet
Listening to Willie Nelson in a trance

You
Your dad

Feeling the love, but not really understanding it
Your bottle in one hand
The other, clutching the seat belt
Anticipating the next fork in the road

You, a rosy-cheeked kid
Not knowing anything but
Willie Nelson's voice and
The indescribable landscape
Not knowing
That later on in life you wish you would be able to relive
That single moment
A thousand times
Only the hazy memory
Sticking to you like the apple juice leaking from the bottle
Stuck to your lively little fingers at one time

You and your dad

On the interstate routes.



"I'm Kizza," he said. "Is your village nearby?"

A Scrap of Orange Cloth

By Maya Koretzky

Illustrated by Andrew Smith

YESTERDAY, A STRANGER LANDED on our beach. I was on the beach because Pa won't let me go out on the boats fishing. I saw the sail first, then the man balanced on the prow of a wooden boat, skinny knees protruding from under cut-off fatigues. He was real dark. Even in the distance I could make out that he was darker than me or Andre or Paul. He waded ashore and heaved his boat a little ways up onto the sand. The stranger looked at me out from under a floppy, canvas, army-patterned hat. There was burnt skin peeling on his nose and cheeks. He looked young, in his mid-twenties at most.

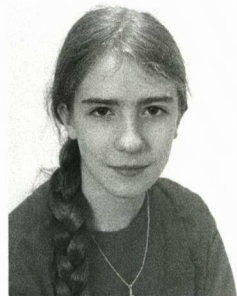
I spoke first. "My name is Mattieu. I am fourteen. Welcome to the Seychelles."

When he answered, his voice was deep and lilting, filled with music. "I'm Kizza," he said. "Is your village nearby?"

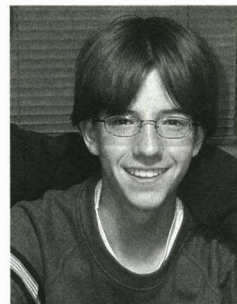
I smiled. "It's quite close, but all our men and boys are fishing and the women are at the market selling yesterday's catch." I hoped he wouldn't ask me why I wasn't fishing too.

Kizza's brown eyes danced. He stretched his arms wide, then slapped his hands on his knees and laughed deep, booming, and bell-like. "Then, I'll pull my boat up on the beach out of reach of the fingering tide and sit in the sail-shade to wait." Kizza leaned down to the bow rope neatly coiled on deck. He looked up. "Mattieu," he said, "maybe you could stay around for a while and we could swap stories if you have no work."

"Cool," I said, using one of the words I had picked up during the tourist season. Kizza swung the rope over his shoulder and



Maya Koretzky, 12
Thornton, Pennsylvania



Andrew Smith, 13
Cave Creek, Arizona

dug his feet into the sand. I watched his boat slide up the beach. I saw how as it ceased to bob with the tide, it became a lifeless thing, made of wood and canvas. I could see the name now, painted on the stern, Rosa Maria, in white on the red wood. "Did you know her?" I asked quietly.

Kizza followed my finger with his eyes. Then a change came across his face, almost as if a shutter had been pulled down behind his eyes. "Yeah, I knew her," he said softly. Then the shutter flicked up. "Is that far enough?" he said, his eyes shining.

WE SAT in the shade of the Maria's sail, while Kizza told me his story. Kizza's teeth and dirty T-shirt gleamed white on his black body as he spoke of his country, Angola; of the rivers and the seas and the people. I listened, hands clasped around my knees, as he described the brutal civil war and the scourge of HIV/AIDS, which had devastated Angola. I was entranced as he told me how he had fought two years for freedom, and how it was won. Then he told me how his thoughts turned to love, and how just weeks before his marriage to a beautiful woman with a Portuguese name, she had drowned in the monsoon rains. I listened, raptured. His words were no longer just words; they blended together into blurred images that danced before my eyes like mirages on the sand. I felt his pain as he told me how he knew he could no longer remain in Angola so he was pursuing his dream to circumnavigate Africa in a twenty-two foot sailboat he named after his fiancée.

"Now," he said, "this is my purpose. Everything I have, I am giving to this quest. I do not know what I will do once I reach Angola again, but I know I cannot stay there." He let out a ringing laugh and hit the sand beside him with his open palm.

That broke the spell. My head snapped up to look at the sea. I saw how the tide had risen and then the shadows of fishermen on white sailcloth guiding their boats in to the beaches. One lone boat followed them, a figure hunched over at the tiller. I knew it was my pa's boat, the Samuel.

I ran down to meet the men, sand swishing on my dry feet. The yellow, blue, and red skiffs blurred in my mind with the black faces of the villagers. I talked with and laughed with them. They jested back, my friend, Andre, hovering on the outside of the group, a strange mixture of pity and compassion in his eyes. I thought about Kizza's eyes, how they sparkled with life as he spoke, and I realized that he treated me as a man, while the villagers acted like I was a child.

The fishermen departed, talking loudly about the day's catch. Kizza looked back at me, about to say something, then old Dominique touched his arm and he turned to go. I gazed down the beach at the boats drawn haphazardly onto the sand, drinking in the sounds of the sea. The memory came unbidden, rising from the depths of a dark sea in my mind.

I saw Samuel, as real as the images in Kizza's tale. I was jealous and he was laughing, standing in a brightly painted

boat, a salt-stained orange life vest slung over his shoulder. He was fourteen then. "Sam, please," I said.

He smiled at me, the smile he reserved for his only brother. "I'll take you fishing tomorrow," he said. Samuel's words lingered for a moment on the air, then left me, the waves sighing around my ankles.

When I returned to the village alone, the women had come back from the market and were dancing in time to a drum and a deep tenor voice. Kizza stood in the middle of them, eyes laughing, singing:

By the moonlight,
By ebbing tide,
Look for me on the silver rocks,
By ebbing tide,

By the daylight,
By rising tide,
Look for me in the clear waters,
By rising tide.

By any day,
By any tide,
Look for me in the seas and ships,
For I am life!

I fell asleep that night with the last verse ringing in my ears.

I was heartsick the day after Kizza came as I lifted the prows of the fishing boats and shoved them into the shallows. Pa was the first one out, as he always was. He pushed his own boat out before I was even up, as he always did.

I stared at the shallow ruts the boats made, remembering. It was a foggy day like today. Things come back to me in

snapshots; building a sandcastle on the beach with Andre, Andre's brother's grim face as he told me the news, the brightly painted little boat in my remembering, then Pa on the beach next to me, turning a scrap of orange nylon over and over in his calloused hands, the remains of a salt-stained life vest. I think I tried to picture it, the smashed little bits of blue, yellow, and red wood floating in a circle, held together by torn canvas, but it shocked me when I saw it. Then there were the painful apologies of the cruise ship captain in broken French, how he failed to sound his foghorn, how he didn't see Samuel's boat and, most painful of all, the compensation sum of \$500 American and a gray aluminum boat.

I turned away from the sand ruts. I knew I couldn't stay here. I saw a familiar pair of torn cut-off fatigues looming in the mist. Kizza! I ran up to him. "You're leaving?" He regarded me with sparkling brown eyes. "Kizza," I said, "I need to ask you something!" He smiled. I blurted it out. "I want to go with you, to Angola." Kizza was listening, his head cocked at a funny angle. "Please, Kizza!" I said, "I can't stay here."

Kizza's face softened. He smiled. He shook his head. "OK, but just to Zanzibar."

"Thank you!" I gasped. I splashed into the water and placed a hand on the prow.

A figure moved in the mist. I saw how warped the silhouette was, hunched over in grief, and I knew it was Pa. The figure came at me, the splashes of his feet in the



I ran up to him. "You're leaving?"

shallows muffled by the mist. "Mattieu," he said, spinning me around and pinning my arms viciously to my body, "this is dangerous, too dangerous. You must . . ."

Kizza's voice cut sharply through the mist. "Your son must not hate the sea as you do."

Pa dropped my arms. "The sea is death. It is best, Mattieu . . ."

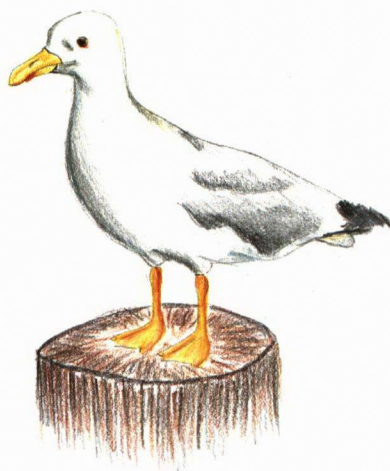
"Listen to yourself!" Kizza shouted, anger blazing in his voice. "Mattieu is not a child. Do not project your fears onto him. Let him decide."

Pa backed off. My head reeled. So Pa had not gone out early as I thought he had. I took a step toward Kizza. "Pa," I whispered, "I'll be back."

Pa's face remained expressionless. He stood for what seemed like minutes, then slowly, he uncurled the fingers of his left

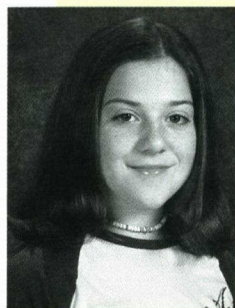
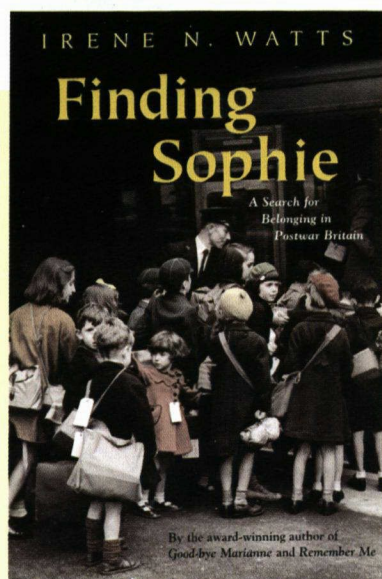
hand and moved toward Kizza and me. "I want you to take this with you," he whispered. I reached out and took it from him, a dirty scrap of orange nylon. "And this." He unrolled the cloth in my hands. Inside was a crumpled bill. It was \$500 American. "Buy yourself a boat with it," Pa said. "Sail back here one day." Our eyes met, then he turned swiftly and ran into the mist. I clenched my fist around the cloth. Kizza had pushed the Rosa Maria out and she bobbed with the swells, filled with life once more. The mist cleared as we tacked away from the Seychelles' coast, under a bright African sun.

By any day
By any tide
Look for me in the sea and ships
For I am life!



Book Review

By Allison Goldberg



Allison Goldberg, 11
Suffern, New York

Finding Sophie by Irene N. Watts; Tundra Books: New York, 2002; \$6.95

BEFORE I READ *Finding Sophie* I had read several books about Jewish children who went into hiding during World War II, or who were in concentration camps. I was very excited to read this book because it was about something new to me: children who were on the Kindertransport and what happened to them. I learned that the Kindertransport was a special train. It brought children, who were Jewish and living in Germany, to England. England was a much safer country during the war.

I liked the main character instantly! Her name is Sophie Mandel. She is 14 years old for most of the story—the same age as my sister. Sophie is brave and full of spirit. She is an amazing artist, also. Her life was so different from the way my life has been. Can you imagine being separated from your parents when you are only seven years old, and not knowing if you'll ever see them again? This is what happened to Sophie after she left her parents in Germany. She was sent on the Kindertransport to England to live with her mother's friend, Aunt Em. Sophie was

lucky because Aunt Em loved her so much and she loved her back. She had a good life with Aunt Em, even though life wasn't easy during that time.

You have to concentrate when you are reading *Finding Sophie* because the story moves back and forth in time. Sometimes Sophie would think back to special times she had had with her mother and father. They called her Zoffie in German. The saddest part in the story for me was, as Sophie got older some of the memories of her parents began to fade. Sophie has guilty feelings because she wants to stay in England forever with her Aunt Em and her new friends, Mandy and Nigel.

One of my favorite parts of the book was when Sophie had a reunion with a girl named Marianne, who had looked after her on the Kindertransport like a mother. They had to deal with being far away from their families, and with losing a close family member. This gave them a special bond.

I won't spoil the ending for you and tell you what happens, but I was happy for Sophie the way things turned out. Part of the reason I enjoyed the book so much is because the author, Irene Watts, told the story in such a real way. I thought it was fascinating that she was a passenger on the Kindertransport when she was a child, just like Sophie. If you are interested in learning about children's experiences during the Holocaust, you will enjoy reading this book. ❀



Jessie listened amiably as Mrs. Baker rambled on

Mrs. Will Baker

By Kyle Eichner

Illustrated by Vivien Rubin

JESSIE SAT DOWN HEAVILY on the bench and sighed. The heat was getting to her again, and her dress clung to her body. Hopefully, the tree would provide some cool shade. Although in South Carolina, it seemed that nothing was cold. The baby gave a little kick, and Jessie smiled. Lately, though, even smiling got to be tiring. While she found good reasons to, she also had to show too many fake and forced smiles, for when Will needed them.

Will. She had never imagined that their lives would be like this, or that Will could get so sick only a year after they got married. He was only twenty-three! Consumption had almost made him a different person. But he tried. When the doctor had told them to go to South Carolina, they had thought that everything would be better quickly, and it would be like a vacation. Now, every day showed him getting either better or worse, and every small step was a blessing. Going hunting. Getting out. Going to town. When they went out, it was *almost* like they were sixteen again . . .

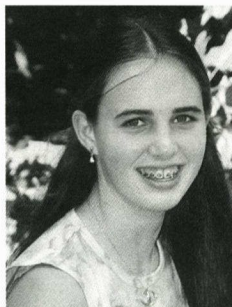
JESSIE PICKED UP the letter and unfolded it. There, in Will's careful, even handwriting was the message:

Saturday, June 15, 1896

Jessie:

Would you like to have my company to Walter's tonight.

Will



Kyle Eichner, 13
Alexandria, Virginia



Vivien Rubin, 12
Los Angeles, California

A huge grin spread across her face, and she twirled around in circles. He was so charming and courteous. Always obeying the traditions that she often laughed at. He knew that she would go with him! He didn't even write it as a question. What a different person he was when they were alone. But still the same, too. Jessie ran upstairs to tell her mother where she was going.

JESSIE GOT UP and shook out her skirts. She walked slowly back to the hotel, where Will was resting. The shade hadn't helped the heat too much, and tendrils of hair escaped her bun to stick out wildly. Even in the heat and humidity of the day, though, birds were singing. Jessie stopped to pick a flower and winced as she tried to bend over. As she kept walking, she allowed herself to close her eyes and walk in a dreamland. Someone calling her name snapped her out of her reverie.

"Jessie! Jessie!" Her mother-in-law, a slightly overweight and friendly figure, was walking quickly toward her. "We were wondering where you were. I thought that you might have gotten heat exhaustion. We have to take care of you now!" She laughed a good-natured laugh. "Come along, it's time for luncheon. I was thinking that we could go into town afterwards and..."

Jessie listened amiably as Mrs. Baker rambled on, saying something when it seemed necessary. Soon, they had arrived at the hotel, where Will and his father

were already sitting at the table. Jessie went over to Will and kissed him on the cheek before her customary "How do you feel?"

As usual, the answer was "Just fine, now that you're here," accompanied by a grin. Jessie smiled at him, and the ladies sat down for their meal. Throughout the luncheon, Jessie prodded Will to eat his food—the healthy part—and tried not to let him exhaust himself by talking. Afterwards, Mr. Baker suggested a "quick walk to refresh themselves."

Trying not to lean on his wife's arm, Will got up and started to follow his parents. Jessie walked with him, letting him rest his thin, undernourished body on her arm, and not mentioning it. Only twenty pounds separated their weights now, when it used to be sixty. After about ten minutes, Jessie saw Will beginning to tire, and without saying anything, turned around to head back. Without seeming to notice them, Mr. and Mrs. Baker turned back at the same time, and came up behind them.

"Lovely weather, isn't it?" Mr. Baker remarked.

"The same as it's been the whole time we've been here," was Will's reply, soft enough so that only Jessie could hear him. She smiled an amused smile at him, and her father-in-law kept talking.

"It's perfect weather for hunting. What do you say, Will? Want to go tomorrow? We could get some good meat for supper." He put a lot of effort into these few words, really wanting to convince his son into going.

"Of course, Father. I'd love to." Will put just as much effort into this short statement, but that was because he was almost wheezing. Casting a worried look at her mother-in-law, Jessie motioned them to go ahead. Slowly, she and Will walked back, trying to enjoy the time outdoors.

Breathing in the fresh air, Will remarked, "In some odd way, this reminds me of the sleighing party we had. You remember, by Miss Pearl's house?"

Of course she remembered.

THERE WERE fifteen of them there, on a Saturday evening. Everyone was bundled up for warmth, and each girl knew which boy she wanted to sit next to. Jessie and her closest friend, Sarah, huddled together with the other girls, laughing and getting ready to go. Will, of course, was there, and she could see the twinkle in his green eyes as he came over, even though he was as bundled up as the rest of them.

"Come on!" he said as he grabbed her hand. "We're first." Giggling, Jessie separated from the clump of girls, and gazed up at Will.

"Scared?" he asked as he helped her in.

Jessie laughed and sat up straight. "Never!" Behind her, John was helping Sarah in the sleigh, and soon they were all in.

"Ready?" John called to the girls. A chorus of assents came from the back. "Off we go!" and then they were riding through the cold night, laughing. Jessie sat close to Will, and they yelled and sang along with

everyone else. They raced against the snowflakes and watched the path disappear behind them. The whole affair was noisy and enthralling. By the time they got back to Miss Pearl's house, everyone was flushed, and too worked up to call it a night. So they all tramped in and had cocoa, like they were six years old again.

Will drove her home in the sleigh, and it was the most romantic moment she had experienced. Freshly fallen snow lay on the ground, everything was quiet, and the stars shone amazingly brightly above.

JESSIE SMILED at the memories. Will's hand was getting sweaty, and Jessie could tell that he had a fever by looking at him. By now she knew that she couldn't hurry his walk, although she wished that she could so that she could get him to bed sooner. Their slow walk back to the hotel took them twice as long as it had going out.

Jessie guided Will to their rooms, and sat him down on the bed. Hard, racking coughs came from his body and shook his frame. Carefully, she tucked him in, like a small child, and propped up his pillows. Jessie sat by his bed and watched him until he fell asleep.

Mrs. Baker came in quietly and sat down by her. "You'll be a good mother." Jessie turned, startled, and looked at her mother-in-law. "Come on, now, you need your rest too."

"I'll sew outside. I just need to sit down for a while." Jessie got her things and checked how Will was before leaving the

room.

On the porch, she sat next to another woman who looked friendly. Jessie tried to start a conversation, but it seemed like too much work, so she just sewed quietly. From somewhere in the hotel came the voice of a girl singing. She was singing a familiar tune . . .

JESSIE STOOD backstage, excited and not nervous at all. All of the other girls were back there too, in their outrageous costumes. As England, she wore an elegant ballroom dress, a crown and a sash with her country's name. Sarah, who was Italy, was dressed in a bright, flowing dress. The girl who was India had taken a long sheet and wrapped it around her body, and Germany was dressed up like a shepherdess. There was a moment of hysteria when Belgium couldn't find her sash, but that was soon fixed.

Everyone spoke in fast, excited tones. There was a simultaneous hush backstage and in the audience as the music teacher, Mr. Wilson, came onstage. He talked to the audience about how this was a great event to show the spirit of the school, and how much fun the girls had preparing it. Finally, they were ready to begin.

There were several acts before the Songs of the Nations girls went on. They lined up in a row on the front of the stage, and then Jessie stepped forward to sing her song. She heard the school orchestra start to play, and then she began to sing. Small butterflies that had crept into her stomach as she went onstage disappeared

as she started to sing. Her eyes swept the audience, and she found Will sitting in the sixth row, paying close attention and smiling.

When the song was over, the audience clapped politely, ready for the next country to sing. Jessie saw Will, clapping as hard as he could, and smiled broadly as she stepped back into line.

JESSIE STARED at the fabric, as if it held all of her memories. Mrs. Baker came toward her.

"Jessie! Remember, we were going to go into town! Come on, now."

Jessie looked up at her mother-in-law. "I think I just want to stay and rest. You can go with Mr. Baker—I'll be fine."

"Oh! Of course. I know you need your rest, dear. Have a nice afternoon!" With that, Mrs. Baker strode off, calling for her husband.

The afternoon passed slowly, although it was nice and quiet, just the right time to sit and sew. When Mrs. Baker got back to the hotel, Will was still asleep. Jessie was sitting in a chair by the side of the bed, sewing quietly and watching Will.

All of a sudden, he started coughing violently, and woke up. He started coughing up blood, and Jessie got up quickly to help him. She tried to prop him up and then stop the coughing in any way she knew how. It seemed to go on for an eternity. Mrs. Baker had gone to find the nurse, and Jessie was alone with Will. Finally, he stopped coughing, and somehow, went back to sleep. Something in Jessie's mind



Jessie and Will stood at the front of the church, smiling at each other and repeating the vows

told her that he had never actually woken up, though. Silently and carefully, Jessie tried to change Will's sheets without disturbing him.

Mrs. Baker came back with the nurse, who started propping him up again and listening to his chest. Jessie and Mrs. Baker stood quietly next to each other, watching the nurse work. When the nurse was done, she looked very upset and flustered.

"You should watch him, and come and get me if anything changes. He doesn't . . ." the nurse tried to find a way to say something, very flustered. "He doesn't have much time now." Without looking up, she hurried out of the room.

Without looking at each other now, Jessie and her mother-in-law sat down, trying to sew again. Only the automatic knowledge in their fingertips kept the needles moving. Finally, Jessie went over to check on Will, feeling his forehead and his chest. Her hands stopped suddenly, and went to his wrist, then to his neck, and back to his chest. She repeated these motions urgently. A feeling of despair washed over her as she turned toward her mother-in-law.

"He's . . . dead." A tone of disbelief crept into her voice. "Will. Is dead." Jessie sat down hard in her chair. "Dead." She stared into space, oblivious to the world around her. Then she absentmindedly put her hand to her belly. Soundlessly, she started to cry.

A week later they were home in Troy. The whole town knew that Will had died, and it seemed that they had all come to

offer condolences. Everyone had known Will, because he was such a kind and helpful person. The sort of person you just want to be around. Jessie took condolences quietly, saying a quick "Thank you," and then changing the subject by asking about their family.

During the days that she had been home, Jessie was arranging the funeral with the help of her mother and Mrs. Baker. She tried to stay as busy as possible, calling on people, writing letters, talking to the priest, and other items of business that needed to get done.

When the day of the funeral came, Jessie was silent, and didn't talk to anybody. She rode to the church with her parents, staring out into some great distance. During the service, Jessie nodded along, agreeing with what everyone was saying, sometimes mouthing the words to herself. She sat in the front pew of the church, and watched as two pallbearers carried his casket out into the churchyard. Slowly, she got up to follow, and then everyone else filed behind her. When the casket was lowered into the ground, Jessie said her own prayer quietly.

JESSIE AND WILL stood at the front of the church, smiling at each other and repeating the vows. Almost the whole town was there—at least, all of their friends were. Everyone had expected this to happen, they just didn't know why it had taken them so long.

Jessie looked straight into Will's green eyes. "For better or for worse . . . for rich-

er or for poorer . . . all the days of our life, until death do us part."

UNTIL DEATH do us part. Jessie threw a flower down on the casket, and watched as the remains of her husband were buried. Many of the people around her were crying. Jessie hadn't cried since the day Will had died. People came up to her, to reminisce and to express sorrow for her. Jessie listened to what they had to say and managed to say something polite in response. If someone had asked her what they had said, she would not have been able to say.

After the funeral, Jessie moved in with the elder Bakers. She tried to go out and talk to old friends, but it was hard, and they seemed awkward around her. So she stayed at home most of the time, sewing clothes for the baby that was coming soon. Jessie also took long walks outside, around the town and then outside of it in the country. Flowers were just starting to come up, and the weather was just getting warmer.

Soon, she got too tired to be able to walk far, and found it hard to move around. Her back started aching constantly, and she never got enough sleep at night. Jessie's mother and mother-in-law were extremely excited about the baby, about to be grandparents for the first time.

About three months after the funeral, Jessie started having sharp, cramping pains in her back. She lay down in her

bed, trying to ignore the pain, and called out to Mrs. Baker.

"I'm having the pains," she tried to explain, her hand on her back. "They come and they go."

"Oh!" Mrs. Baker's hand flew to her mouth. "I'll send Mr. Baker for your mother and the midwife right away, dear. No, you just stay there. It will be fine, don't worry. I'll be right back, dear. Will! Will!" She walked off hurriedly, almost running. Jessie lay on her back and stared at the ceiling, counting cracks in the wood.

When her mother came in an hour later, the pains lasted longer and longer, and were coming closer to one another. The midwife came in soon after, talking in a quick, soothing voice.

"It's all right, everyone calm down. Take a deep breath now dear—deep—and now let it out slowly. Be patient. That's right. Breathe." Mrs. Warren had been a teacher at the school as well, teaching sewing to the girls. "Breathe." Throughout that long day, Mrs. Warren helped Jessie with her labor, just as she had helped her with her sewing years before.

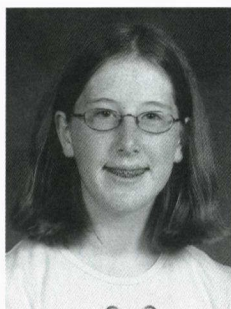
After eight hours, a baby was finally born. Mrs. Warren wiped it off with a cloth, and then wrapped it in a blanket. Jessie took the baby from Mrs. Warren and laughed tiredly. "Shhh. You're a beautiful little girl." Then Jessie looked into her green eyes and started crying. ❀

Author's note: This story is based on the life of my great-great-grandmother, Jessie West Baker, who lived in Troy, Ohio. She lived from 1877 to 1931.

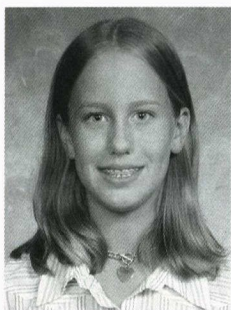
Tripod

By Caitlin Peterson

Illustrated by Melissa Moucka



Caitlin Peterson, 13
Appleton, Wisconsin



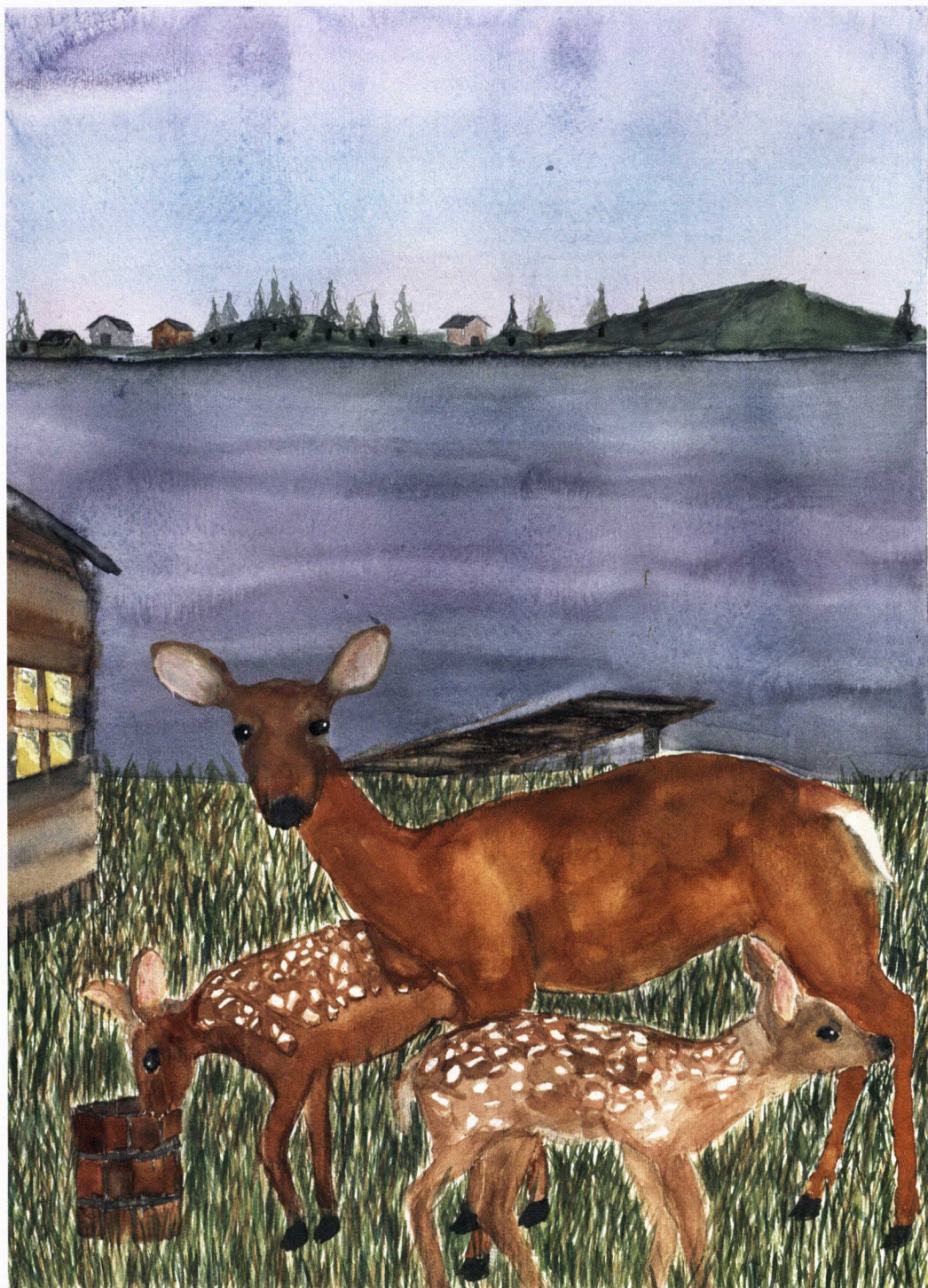
Melissa Moucka, 13
Hinsdale, Illinois

EVERY YEAR AT OUR COTTAGE, we feed corn to the deer. All of the deer look pretty much the same. They all have brown fur that turns gray in the fall, a bright white tail—and four legs. Then Tripod came along.

We'd heard rumors about a three-legged deer near the cottage, but it was still a surprise to see her. We were looking out the window when a deer wandered into the yard. "She's walking funny," Mom thought out loud. Then we saw the reason for the limp: the deer was missing her front right leg! "I feel kind of bad for her." We all nodded and kept watching the new deer. Mom got a pair of binoculars for a closer look. "Look at the leg," she said, handing the binoculars to me. I looked. Tripod wasn't truly missing a leg. She had a small, deformed leg that was only a few inches long—not even a quarter of the length of her other legs. It showed she had been like this since birth, but her tiny leg would never do her any good in the wild.

"She's like a tripod—only three legs," said Dad. We laughed, but it was a good name, and it stuck. From then on, the deer's name was Tripod. When we first saw Tripod, it was almost the end of summer. That is always a sad time. We have to close up the cottage, take the dock out of the lake, and trade sun and fun for cold and snow.

Winter isn't easy for the animals, either. Chipmunks and squirrels hibernate in their cozy nests under trees and most birds fly south to warmer temperatures, but deer are left to struggle through the winter. It's survival of the fittest for the



She was older this year and had two babies with her

deer, and we were worried about Tripod. With only three legs, she had an obvious disadvantage when it came to survival.

That night, though, our worry about Tripod living through the winter disappeared. We were just about to go to bed when we saw a commotion out the front window. There were at least six deer crowded around the bucket, and none of them were very interested in sharing the corn. Tripod was right in the middle of the fight. She had been there first, it seemed, and she didn't intend to give up her spot in line just because of a missing leg. A bigger deer pushed in front of Tripod and she stumbled to the side. "Poor Tripod," we said, still thinking about winter. There was no way she could last very long with her leg. But Tripod proved us wrong. She reared up on her hind legs and kicked her one good leg at the bigger deer to scare him. He jumped out of the way, and the rest of the deer followed. They didn't like the idea of a hoof in their face any more than the first deer. We looked at each other in amazement. Tripod might have had a disadvantage, but she was tough. Suddenly we didn't have any doubts that Tripod could survive the winter. In fact, she could probably last longer than any of the other deer. She was used to working extra hard just to live.

Next summer, we found that we were right. As soon as we put out new corn, Tripod came by. She was older this year and had two babies with her. They were

cute little deer with white speckles, and we were sure that they had one of the best mothers a deer could have. After seeing the way she had defended her spot in line at the corn bucket, we knew that she would guard her babies with even more determination.

Every year after that, Tripod showed up for corn. We came to expect her. Of course we liked all the deer, but Tripod was special. We considered her *our* deer. When a deer came up to the corn bucket, we'd ask, "Is it Tripod?" We were always watching out for her.

This year was the sixth year since we saw Tripod. It was the first year that Tripod didn't come. At first we made excuses, but it soon became clear that something was wrong. The average life span of a white-tail deer in the wild is nine years, so Tripod had been getting old. And the first time we saw her, she was already one or two years old, so by this time she would be seven or eight years old. That's pretty good for a deer, especially one with three legs. Tripod hasn't come by since.

But every once in a while, someone will see a deer dart across the road. Even though they only had a quick glance, some people were certain that the deer they saw had only three legs. I've never seen another three-legged deer, but that doesn't mean that she's not out there. Maybe she is the last daughter of Tripod, continuing the legacy. I don't know. But whether or not there is a Tripod, Jr., in our woods, we'll always remember Tripod. ❀

On the Bridge of Dawn

By Megan M. Gannett

Illustrated by Rosemary Engelfried

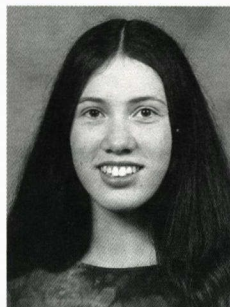
EVERY YEAR SPRING RUSHES IN with a parade of colors, a symphony of sounds and a thrill of smells. Much as I enjoy the pearly sheen and biting chill of winter, it is the morning when I first wake to hear the steady dripping of melting snow, and breathe that moist, fresh smell of thawing earth that pumps wonder through me every year.

To me, spring brings optimism, cheer and love of life swirling and hovering around every corner of nature I turn. It propels me out of bed each morning, and sends me seeking my hopes and dreams much more avidly than before. And best of all, spring promises that long, lazy summer days are ahead of me, full of doing whatever I want to do. In summer there are no deadlines or schedules prying into my consciousness.

But spring is the time of year when living grasps me by the elbows and swings me up into paradise, sparkling with such newness that it contains something summer will never have.

Today I awake to the lively chirping of birds—robins, chickadees, blue jays; I don't even mind the squawk of a magpie if it, too, is celebrating spring. It has been spring for some time now—it is mid-April—but I haven't yet gotten used to all the surprises and delights, for they come every day.

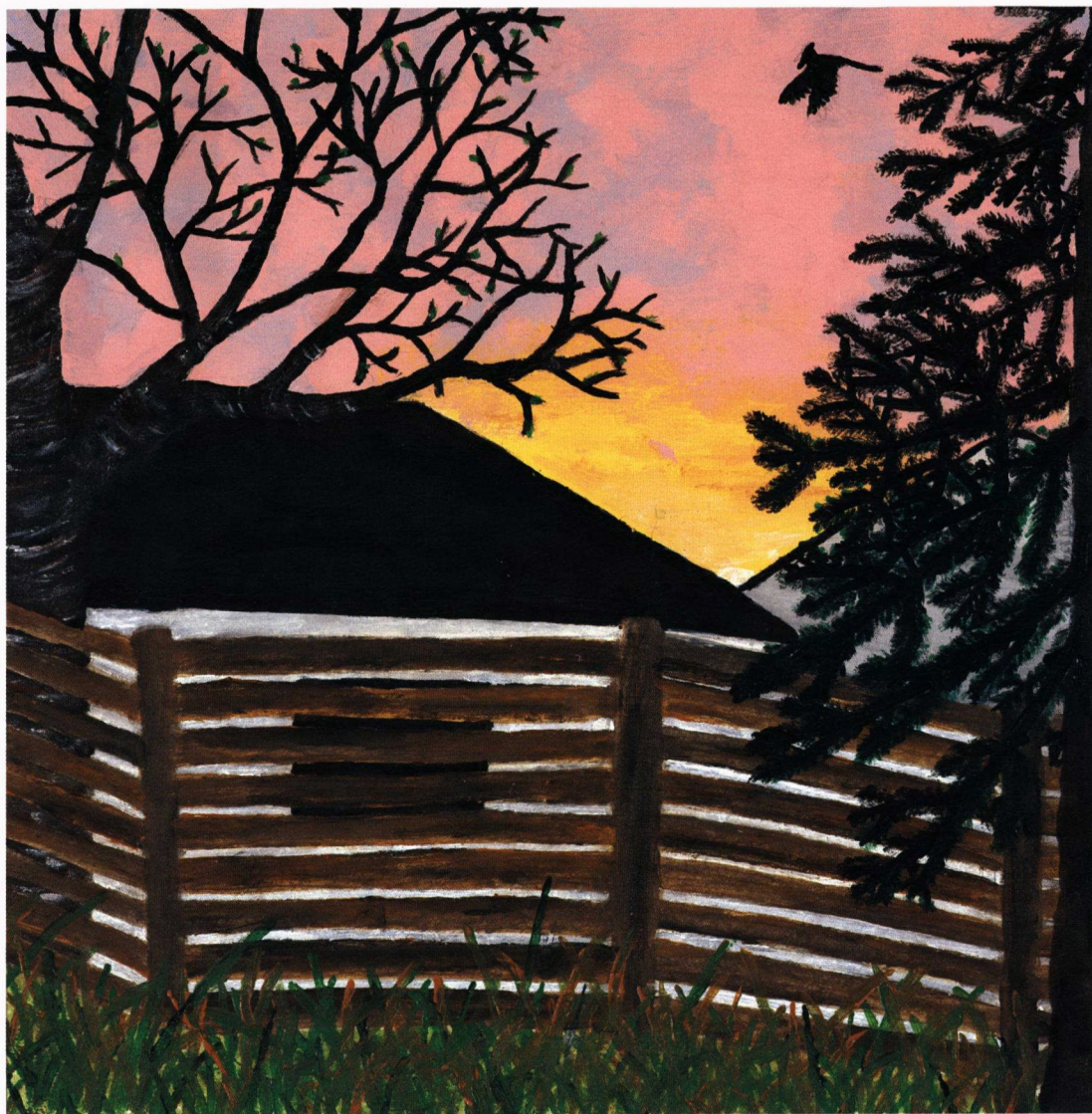
I sit up out of bed, push off the covers, and leap to my feet, flinging open the curtains. It must be very early, the light is just creeping sleepily up from behind the trees and rooftops. It won't be long now before this mix of pastel pinks, oranges and purples shifts into fiery reds and yellows and the full, bright sun



Megan M. Gannett, 13
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada



Rosemary Engelfried, 13
Hillsboro, Oregon



It must be very early, the light is just creeping sleepily up from behind the trees and rooftops

emerges, showering the world with the brilliance it has been yearning for.

Brimming with excitement, I pull myself away from the window, a painted picture of delight, and hurriedly dress in my casual summer wear. No jackets and sweatpants will I have; I want to feel the

crisp morning air create goosebumps on my legs and arms. To immerse myself in spring.

Remembering that I should be quiet, I tiptoe down the stairs and through the house, wondering how my family can resist the wonder April holds. Then, breath-

ing deeply, I steal outside.

A glorious sensation greets me as I enter the magical world of my yard at dawn. I run softly over the grass, a soggy sponge saturating itself with life, and, glancing down, admire the tender spikes beginning to appear on the lawn, pushing up through the dead brown grass of last year. I am heading for my tree, the towering spruce in the corner of my yard. It is my gateway to the sky, from which I can stare down at the houses and people and feel free, as the wind plays with my hair and rocks the tree from side to side.

Eagerly, I clamber up onto the fence—the lowest branch is far out of reach when I stand on the ground. Then, using all my strength, I grab onto the two branches and scramble clumsily up—and here I am, in the tree. After a moment of inhaling the fresh air mingled with the sappy smell of wood, I continue, moving quickly through the maze of firm, sturdy limbs I know so well that I could do it with my eyes closed.

But now is the time for looking about me, using all my senses to soak in the beauty. Perched high on a branch I gaze dreamily through a window gracefully fringed with fingers of dark green needles. The tree seems to be holding me in a secure, steady grasp, staunchly supporting me at this height. Many times during the year I come here in need of assurance, and

this tall, stately tree provides me with everything I need. Even in the midst of this urban neighborhood, my tree stands out over the house relentlessly.

Sometimes I think I'd like to be a tree, but in the heart of the forest, providing homes to an abundance of animals and nurturing saplings in my rich, rotting, mossy wood when the time comes to fall. I yearn to be stationary, full of peace and wisdom, not bustling about in a rush like many people today, who don't seem to have time to stop and simply stare as they contemplate life.

I know that soon the rest of the world will wake up, and everyone will hurry off to school or work to grind through another busy day. Heedless of that part of life just for living, they'll think of nothing but earning money or good grades, that they assume will dramatically improve their diligent lives.

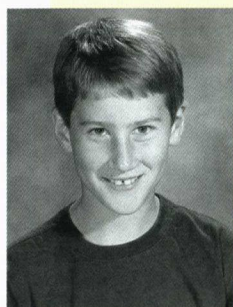
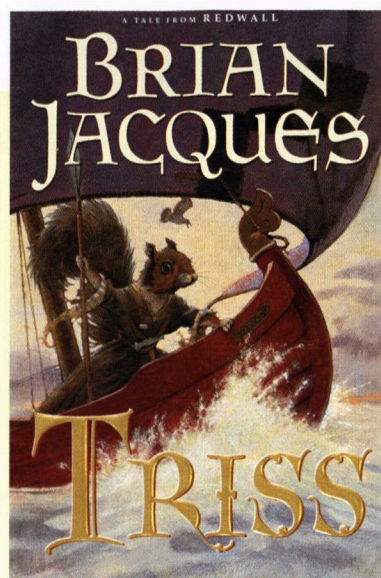
But until then, I will sit here in my tree, thinking of nothing but the buds on the trees and this golden moment of dawn. I will hold that moment like a priceless treasure, savoring it to its fullest. Deep down, I know that when the sun peeps just above the horizon, and nothing is awake yet but me and the birds, when everything lies tranquil and untouched, that is all that matters.

And this wise old tree knows too. ❁

Book Review

By Andrew Glick

Triss by Brian Jacques; Philomel Books:
New York, 2002; \$23.99



Andrew Glick, 11
Pekin, Illinois

A BOOK OF ADVENTURES. Comic and distinct personalities. Several story lines that wittily intertwine together, make the book *Triss* by Brian Jacques an intriguing read.

Triss is a squirrel slave at Riftgard, a kingdom of evil rats. *Triss* and two of her friends escape from Riftgard and Kurda, an evil princess who rules it. Kurda's efforts to capture them are what drive the story plot onward.

While they are playing cat and mouse, Scarum, a hare from a mountain who is looking for adventure, and Kurda show that they have the most recognizable individual personalities. Kurda is good at insulting others and does it often. She will make a mistake and blame it on someone else. She missed a tossed turnip moving during her sword practice and is it her fault? Oh no. Kurda's accent makes her seem all the more evil. Kurda's eyes blazed with anger at her mistake. "Stupid oaf! Ven I say trow [throw], you trow dem proper. Trow high, vot do you tink I am? You t'ick [thick] mud brain bungle paws!"

Scarum is my favorite for he gives you the most sense of "I know what he would do here." Like most hares, where food is, Scarum is. He tells others that he is everything good there is to be, like a fearsome shark slayer sometimes and at other times

he's the son of a very wealthy family. "Wot wot's" and "I think I'll jolly well do that" and his growing appetite make him irresistible to laugh at. Even though Triss is one of the main characters, she does not show as much personality as the others.

This novel is like our lives, just much smaller. It has similar concepts such as gravity, animals, and sun/moon, unlike *Lord of the Rings* where there is magic, huge evil creatures created, and different landforms. It's simply the squirrels' and otters' perspective on their lives with normal problems such as big animals and predators and how they overcome them. They live in a great, huge, safe Redwall abbey with mostly peaceful creatures in it. This is essentially our world but in much earlier times, like King Arthur's and Camelot's day. Now we have large societies and countries, but it used to be tribes, roving bands, castles, and some empires fighting each other with bows, arrows, and swords and that is just this.

Brian Jacques explored many ideas involving determination with each key character at various points in the story. At the beginning, Triss and her friends were captured and, in jail, did they get out after slaving at those bars? They could have figured they were going to a better place and just died. However, through persistence, they succeeded in escaping. Kurda showed fierce determination to recapture her slaves by bringing her best rats to capture. She did not care what happened to her rats. She was brave by doing what her father was petrified of.

This novel is excellent, just like all his others in the Redwall series, but the personalities the author creates in this one just pull you in and make you a part of Redwall's legend. ❀



"Lupus, is that your name then? Good name for a gray wolf"

The Lone Wolf

By Preston Craig

Illustrated by Jesyka Palmer

ALEXIS JAMISON LOOKED thoughtfully at the young gray wolf anxiously pacing the enclosure. "You've got green eyes. That's odd. Did you know that most gray wolves have gold eyes, or yellow even?"

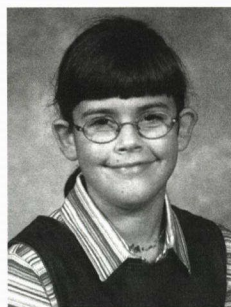
The wolf whined fearfully, a pup's apprehensive sound, and Alex looked helplessly at it. "I can't do anything yet," she continued bitterly. "You're going to be released, don't you know that? What's your name, anyway?" She looked at the piece of paper tacked lopsidedly to the fence, her father's practically illegible handwriting spelling out the words: *Lupus*. Gray wolf. Approximately two years old.

"Lupus, is that your name then?" Alex said interestedly. "Good name for a gray wolf."

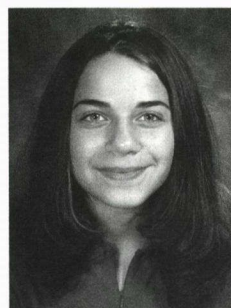
Lupus whined again. "Oh, Lupus," she murmured, her voice breaking.

She jumped to her feet, put a hand against the fence briefly, then tore herself away and strode toward her house, trying hard to keep from turning back to Lupus.

The cool Alaskan air bit at Alex as she walked across the field of dying grass. She was used to wolves; there were plenty here at the gray wolf release center her father had begun four years ago. She had come here every summer since her parents split up when she was six. Alex had learned everything there was to know about endangered gray wolves from her father, and was already able to help him with his work. She didn't usually let herself get attached to any of the wolves, knowing they were



Preston Craig, 10
Mount Pleasant, South Carolina



Jesyka Palmer, 13
Blissfield, Michigan

eventually going to be released and she'd never see them again, but she was curiously interested in Lupus.

BACK AT the enclosure, Lupus lay down wearily at nightfall after a day's worth of restless pacing. He was a lone wolf, and would probably never start a pack of his own again. Before a yearling had challenged him, he'd been the alpha male of his pack, but the yearling had won the fight and now Lupus was a social outcast, hunting and living alone. He howled mournfully.

Today, however, Lupus had finally become interested in a human when the young girl had spoken to him. He didn't know her language, but he had understood her tone. She sounded as though she hadn't wanted to go from him. No human had ever spoken like that to him; they had used falsely calm, sweet voices instead, as if he were a shy little cub that needed protection. This human had talked to him like the tough, former alpha he was. He somehow sensed that this girl was like him, alone and perhaps afraid.

His head rested on his forepaws, and his green eyes closed gently.

ALEX WOKE EARLY the next morning. It was pleasantly silent in the house, and she lay in bed for a few minutes, thinking about how lucky she was that it was summer vacation, when she didn't have to go to school and endure the insults and jeers from Kara and her group.

Her former friends.

Some friends they were, to ditch her the moment she'd shown signs of not being "cool" anymore.

One particular memory stuck out with uncomfortable clarity in her mind...

It had all started on a warm day in November, when a new girl, Lori, had joined Alex's class at school. Alex and her best friend, Kara, befriended Lori, and at first, everyone seemed happy. Lori hung out with Kara and Alex and their whole group of friends. But little by little, Alex began to notice changes. Kara and Lori became closer and began doing things without including Alex. Kara never called or e-mailed Alex anymore. One day, Alex overheard Kara and Lori talking.

"Why should we hang out with her? All she ever talks about are her parents being divorced and how she's going to go to Alaska to see her dad and her precious wolves," Kara was saying to Lori.

Alex knew they were talking about her. She was stunned. She had thought they were friends.

Alex swung herself out of bed, fiercely driving back the memories that made a burning pain erupt somewhere around her throat. "Forget," she commanded herself sternly. But she knew that would be impossible, to forget everything.

She had a sudden, deep desire to see Lupus. Alex had felt so drawn to him yesterday. Seeing him alone in his enclosure, while all the other wolves were with their mates or in packs, had reminded Alex of her own loneliness.

After a quick shower, Alex got dressed

in a dark flannel shirt, faded jeans, and brown ankle boots—it was cold at the wolf release center where she was staying, even in summer. Her father would most likely already be outside, studying the big gray wolf, Gregoryi, and his mate, Baileyi.

Alex shoved an energy bar into her jeans pocket and sprinted to Lupus's enclosure. She sat down firmly on the dirt sprinkled with dying grass a short distance from his pen and rapped gently on the chain-link fence with the heel of her hand.

LUPUS WOKE with a start at the rattling noise. Clumsy prey? He hadn't hunted anything since that young man with the overlong hair had found him, lying sick amongst the dark trees, and brought him to this place. Little did he know the young man was Alex's father.

His eyes opened hopefully and he instinctively half-rose at a second jangle, but when he saw it was only Alex, he lay down sadly once again. Alex warily put a finger through the chain-link fence, and he lunged fiercely for it. She leapt backward, scolding him. "Don't bite me, I'm your friend," she said indignantly. "I won't hurt you."

Lupus shuffled backward to the farthest corner of his pen, barking warningly. Alex grinned shyly. "I know you're scared. That leap at me was all show, wasn't it? You're trying to be a great, frightening wolf, to scare me off." She threw her head back and laughed, hard.

He barked louder. Was this girl laugh-

ing at him? Him, the gray, black, and white wolf of the green eyes, the hardened loner, the strong alpha? Even the man who had captured him had seemed slightly wary, carefully avoiding his teeth.

Alex smiled again, looking at Lupus with bright gray-brown eyes. Lupus gazed away.

"Come on, Lupus," she muttered imperiously, rattling the fence again to catch his attention. Her voice was slightly annoyed, but she quickly hid her frustration and said, in a softer voice, "I won't hurt you, you know that. I like you, Lupus. Come on out, come on and say hi to me. I won't hurt you."

The wolf snarled aggressively at her, showing off sharp white teeth. He knew for a fact his snarl sent chills down anyone's spine—he'd gotten into enough fights, trying to become the alpha of his pack, to know that. But Alex just grinned casually and leaned nonchalantly against the fence. "I'm not going."

"Alex!"

Her head swung around so fast all Lupus saw was a flash of short, shaggy dark hair. She clenched her fists involuntarily. "Dad, I'm over here with Lupus!" she yelled back. "I've already taken a shower and I've got my breakfast!"

Peter Jamison, her father, came around from Gregoryi's enclosure, his notebook underneath his arm and pencil tucked into his pocket. "Good," he said, punching Alex playfully in the shoulder. "I'm going back to the house for a meal. Seven o'clock already, did you know?"

Alex shook her head obediently, hiding her digital watch.

Lupus watched the chestnut-haired man stride toward the house. He whined and scampered toward Alex.

"What's the matter? My dad scares you?"

Lupus whimpered fearfully.

"He must've captured you. I'd be scared of him too, if he'd captured me and put me in a pen. In a sense, I am in a pen; enclosed, alone, without anyone else. Except, unlike you, nobody's leaning on my fence to help set me free."

The wolf's nose bumped her thigh. She looked down and saw Lupus nudging her slightly.

"What are . . . I mean, is that . . . are you actually touching me?" Cautiously, she reached out a thin hand, shoved it laboriously through the wire, and Lupus leaned his head against it as if he had been a dog.

ALEX WAS in a sort of happy daze for the rest of the day. She alone had made Lupus come to her, she alone had befriended him, she alone knew what his nose felt like on a human's skin. It made her proud of herself as she had not been in years.

At dinner, Alex asked casually, "Dad, why don't you let Lupus out, to try to mate with Dakota or Cheyenne, or join Gregoryi's pack?"

"I've already tried," said Peter bitterly. "He won't interact. When I tried to mate him with Cheyenne, so they could start a pack of their own, he just, sort of, you

know, loped away. Gregoryi tried his best to kill him, and Dakota and Canis each circled him in that way that all wolves do when they're going to fight."

"He came right up to me today," Alex remarked innocently. "He nudged my hand."

"Sure, Alex."

"No, really, he did! Can't I try it again? Put him in Gregoryi's pen, I mean. It's not hopeless."

"It is."

"It's not! Please, will you do it tomorrow morning?"

"I'll think about it, Alex. Just think about it, mind you."

LUPUS WOKE to see two tall figures walking toward his enclosure. One, he could see even from this distance, was Alex, walking rather more jauntily than usual and her back straighter, shoulders back. The second was presumably her father, Peter, whose long strides were reluctant, his head angled downward.

Sure enough, Alex and Peter arrived at Lupus's enclosure a few seconds later. Peter moved Lupus to Gregoryi's pen, with Alex alongside him all the way, murmuring soothingly under her breath to calm Lupus.

She brushed a lock of dark hair out of her eyes automatically, a familiar nervous gesture of hers, as Gregoryi sniffed at Lupus, surveying the younger wolf with an experienced, slightly bored eye.

Gregoryi bounded forward, snarling, and Lupus snarled back, teeth bared. Alex



A few warningly sharp nips later, Gregoryi was letting Lupus paw at him and Baileyi

had one foot on the fence when Peter pulled her backward and grasped her tightly, not an embrace, but an action meant to hold her back from the wolf she loved.

It was dangerous to enter that enclosure, she knew, but she beat at Peter's arms like a small child. "Cut it out," Peter commanded roughly. "You know perfectly well that I wouldn't let you into the middle of a wolf fight if my life depended on it. Quit hitting me, Alexis, you've no good

reason to."

She stopped reluctantly, but Peter still kept a firm grip on her right forearm. "Watch them," he said quietly.

Gregoryi lunged for Lupus, who stepped aside nimbly. He dodged a swipe at his head, but bit at Gregoryi's paw at the next one. A few warningly sharp nips later, Gregoryi was letting Lupus paw at him and Baileyi. It was amazing.

Peter gaped at the three social wolves.

"I never knew Lupus had that much determination," he murmured. "Not to mention that much courage. He fought a much bigger animal and has now, it appears, been accepted into its pack. If he will mate with Dakota or Cheyenne, we could release him with Gregoryi, Baileyi, and Canis."

Alex gasped. It was too good to be true. "Really? Lupus could . . . be free? In the wild? Mating and hunting and running and . . . and . . . he'd never have to be a lone wolf again?"

"Yes," her father replied simply. He had never seen such a grin light up his daughter's thin face, or such happiness fill her solemn eyes.

LUPUS STOOD uncertainly on the edge of the forest beside his mate, Dakota, with Gregoryi's pack in front of him. Was he meant to run forward?

Alex made a pushing motion with her hand and called, "Go on, Lupus! I . . ." Her voice was joyful, but there were tears smudging her last few words.

He was obviously meant to go, he could feel it in the commanding gesture she had made, but the girl—he couldn't leave her, not for anything. She loved him, and he loved her. They were a lot alike and could almost communicate, in their own silent way. He couldn't leave the girl who had made his life worth living again. He couldn't abandon her, couldn't abandon some-

one who he had loved and known for such a short period of time, the best time in his life.

"Go on, Lupus!" she shouted to him, more strongly.

Lupus stepped forward, then looked back over his shoulder, hesitating.

"Go on, Lupus!" she cried to him, tears of sadness and joy alike running down her cheeks to wet her black T-shirt. "I'll never forget you! Never! I love you," she added in a sad whisper only she could hear.

With one last bark, he broke into a run and disappeared into the dark trees with the other wolves.

ALEX WAITED till his gray-and-white tail had completely vanished to turn, pulling the stack of photos and sketches of Lupus out of her jeans pocket. She flipped clumsily through them, sight blurred by the tears filling her eyes.

Pictures of Lupus taken with an instant camera, Lupus running, gnawing on Gregoryi's ear, sitting with his head tilted. And that beautiful sketch she had drawn last night, of Lupus sleeping, made realistic with colored pencils. She missed him, but he was most likely happy with his newfound friends.

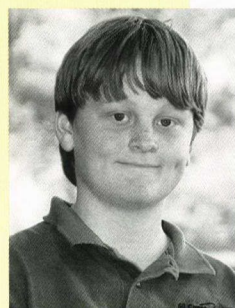
Alex began walking back toward her house, pocketing her only reminders of Lupus once again.

Maybe she, too, would find a pack of her own someday. ❀

Ode to Marbles

By Max Mendelsohn

I love the sound of marbles
scattered on the worn wooden floor,
like children running away in a game of hide-and-seek.
I love the sight of white marbles,
blue marbles,
green marbles, black,
new marbles, old marbles,
iridescent marbles,
with glass-ribboned swirls,
dancing round and round.
I love the feel of marbles,
cool, smooth,
rolling freely in my palm,
like smooth-sided stars
that light up the worn world.

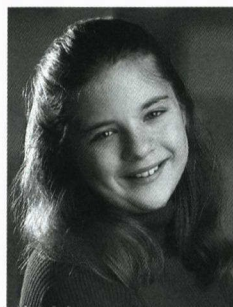


Max Mendelsohn, 12
Weston, Massachusetts

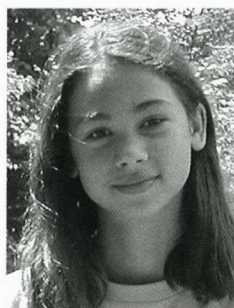
The Last Red Flag

By Devin McKissic

Illustrated by Ksenia Vlasov



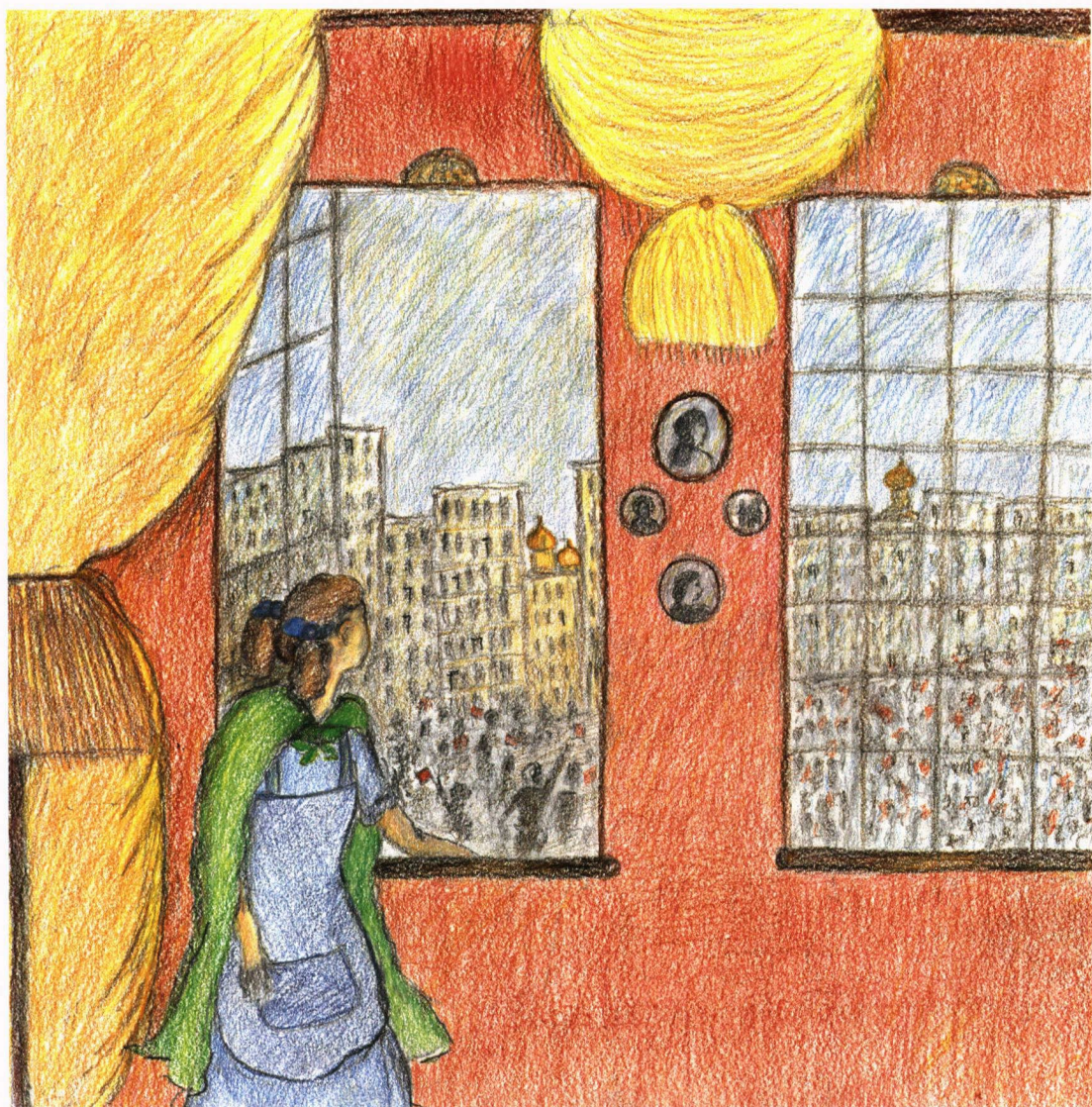
Devin McKissic, 11
Seattle, Washington



Ksenia Vlasov, 12
Katonah, New York

I STARED OUT THE WINDOW, looking onto the surging crowds with sadness and fear. I had always known the revolution might happen—as if my brother, Anton, would ever let us forget. He was always out on the streets, socializing with the revolutionaries, showing me the small red flags he brought home. It seemed he enjoyed upsetting Mama—telling her that since we had a family of aristocrats, we may be targets for the revolutionaries. After we came to stay with Aunt Evelina for a while, he told us to always be ready to leave. Well, he had before they sent him off to the war. But revolutions were for France, not my beloved Russia. Oh, how far we had come from the carefree days when we skated down the frozen creek back at home. As I stuck my head out the window, I closed my eyes and listened to all the sounds around me. Suddenly, I heard a strange, muffled noise. I realized it was Mama standing out on her balcony, silent tears running down her face, continuing even when Papa came out and put his arm around her. I could hear their voices, even over the roar of the throng.

“Oh, Igor,” Mama cried, “why can’t the war just stop? Sometimes, I wonder what the tsar is really up to. Much as I love him, I cannot see how the war is doing any good for us. How could he send so many innocent men to their deaths? We all know that sending peasants with barely any training won’t help us win the war. And it breaks the hearts of so many families. All I want is for the madness to end and for Anton to return.”



I stared out the window, looking on to the surging crowds with sadness and fear

At this, I gasped. Mama had never spoken out against the tsar! Things like that were for Anton and his university friends, back from before the war . . .

"Anitchka, hush, it will be all right," my father soothed. "You know that we were forced into this. Do not worry. The tsar

will soon sort this all out. And you and Anya are working in the hospital, nursing the soldiers, are you not? I'm sure that soon, one of them will have news of Anton." But I could see his brow was creased, and I could hear the worry in his voice, a voice I knew well.

"I certainly hope so," Mama said tearfully. Papa began to say something, but I did not wish to hear more. When Papa was worried, things were not good. My strong Papa always knew how to solve our problems.

I LONGED TO GO back to our estate in the country. It wasn't as grand or nearly as big as Aunt Evelina's mansion here in Moscow, but it was wonderful. The workers were always good to us, because Papa gave them freedom and never let the supervisors beat them. Papa's methods were often looked upon with scorn by our neighbors, but he didn't care. And best of all, we were slightly isolated from the world, and we didn't have to hear so much terrible news. It took days for letters to get from the city to our house. I used to hate this part of our life—I barely ever got to hear from my friends in the city, but now I realized how lucky we were. We had a simple lifestyle there. When we were little, Anton and I would explore the forest. I remember when we found the shell of a robin's egg. It was the lightest of blues, with a few faint cracks running through it . . .

All of a sudden, Mama came into the room and interrupted my thoughts. "Come, Anya, it is time for us to work in the hospital. Are you sure you want to go today?"

Mama asked me the same question every day. As if I didn't feel my best when I was working, helping the soldiers. I disliked sitting around doing embroidery

like Aunt Evelina always encouraged me to do. "Ladies don't need to do work," she would always say, "that's what men are for." It angered me so. Women certainly weren't useless, like Aunt Evelina thought. Her talk was what sparked me into working at the hospital.

MAMA AND I walked out the door and wove our way through the crowd. We had been careful to put on the cloaks belonging to the maids and servants of the house. We knew that the swarming protesters must not see our nice things. Soon, we had reached the hospital. When I first started working, I had gotten frequent nightmares—seeing the once-healthy men the way they were was almost a living nightmare. They were extremely thin, their heads were shaved, their beards ragged. But now I had gotten over it. I passed my time re-bandaging the wounds and telling stories of my childhood in the countryside, and it pained me and comforted me to see the happiness in their eyes as I talked about the smell of fresh buckwheat and the many flowers popping up in the springtime. I realized that these men were born to appreciate the wild, raw beauty of the Russian wilderness, and if I were given a choice, I would certainly fight to protect it. I would leave each bed with its occupant promising to tell me of any news about Anton. I knew we were lucky to have Papa still here—he had lost an arm in a war in Manchuria when I was four and wasn't eligible—but I knew that the tsar was getting desperate, and if we



I looked across the room at the dollhouse that had been Aunt Evelina's when she was young

weren't lucky, he would soon be drafted.

By the time we got home, the sky was already darkening. When we arrived at the door, Mama quickly put her cloaked arm around me and pushed me inside. Aunt Evelina rushed to greet us. "Anitchka! Anya! Where have you been? The piroshki are getting cold."

"All right, all right, sister," Mama said, "give me a bit of time, dear." Aunt Evelina bustled out of the room, and I saw Mama slip a few rubles into the pocket of the cloak she had worn.

When she saw me watching her, she

said, "For a new coat," and together, we walked into the dining room.

THE SHOUTS of more revolutionaries raised me from my deep, dreamless sleep. As I sat up in my bed, I looked over at the window. It was still pitch black. The nights lasted so much longer in the winter-time. I tiptoed downstairs and saw a light on in the kitchen already, meaning the chef was already up. "Anya!" he said. "What are you doing up so early?" I gestured toward the street, and he nodded sympathetically. "Come. I shall make you blini."

Soon after, Mama came down in her nightgown, still yawning. "Anya, how long have you been up? We're working double shifts at the hospital today and I don't want you to be tired!"

"Oh, Mama," I sighed, "I'll be fine."

But there was a sudden interruption to our quarrel. "Anya, dear," Aunt Evelina said, stepping into the room in her silk dressing gown, "dark circles under the eyes aren't proper for any young lady."


"Goodness, does everyone have something against me? I shall take a nap before our shift at the hospital." I stomped upstairs, undressed, and positioned myself comfortably underneath the covers. As I lay in my bed, I looked across the room at the dollhouse that had been Aunt Evelina's when she was young. It was an amazing thing, with tiny, meticulous furniture. There was every detail imaginable, right down to the needlework on the sheets of the tiny beds, and I realized that in some ways, the revolutionaries were right. Once my tutor, Olga, had taken me to a factory when we were on a vacation in St. Petersburg, even though she could have been unemployed by my mother for doing so if anyone found out. Olga always wanted me to see the real world and know it for what it was. I had nearly cried when I saw the terrible conditions. Why should some girls get frivolous things, like intricate dollhouses, while others only get one meal a day? This, I thought, I would never understand.

WHEN I WOKE UP, I was itching to get out of the house and to the hospital. I quickly dressed in an old skirt and blouse, quickly walked out of my room, and ran down the stairs, only to see Mama sitting in the dining room, crying. "Mama!" I exclaimed. "Whatever is the matter?" Wordlessly, she handed me a letter. It read:

Dear Mother and Father,

I will soon be coming home. The German prisoner camp I was in fell apart after the captives rebelled, surprisingly. They put much work into their plan, and thankfully, it worked—I can't imagine what could have happened if it hadn't and the German soldiers had retained control. I would have escaped immediately, but when I was in the camp, a tree fell on my leg and I am currently unable to walk unassisted, so I have been staying at a nearby farmer's house. They will hide me until I am healthy again. I hope all is well with you. Now, burn this letter.

Much love,
Anton

I could hardly contain my excitement. Soon, Anton would come back. He would find some way to get to the city. Then we would go home. At that moment, all the misery of the past months nearly melted away. Somehow, everything would be all right. Later on, as I looked over at the desk in the corner of the room, I could see the tiny red flag Anton had given me so long ago. I thought it would be the last one I would see for a long time. 

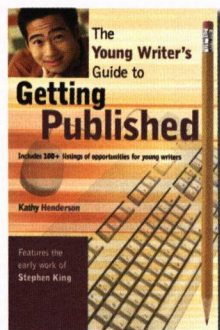
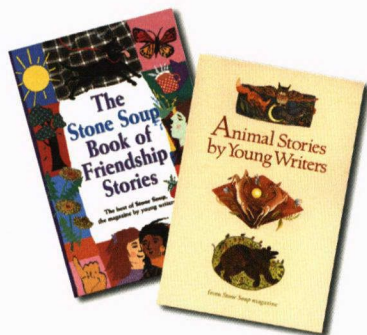
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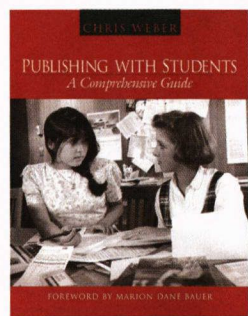
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