

# StoneSoup

*The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists*



*Illustration by Zellie Calavita, age 13, for "Black and White," page 11*

## BLACK AND WHITE

When you're the new kid, is it better to win or to lose?

## THE ANNUAL HOLIDAY SUMMER STREET SHOWDOWN

Aubrey loves her family, but she's tired of feeling different

*Also:* A science-fiction story from Venezuela



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*The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists*

VOLUME 45, NUMBER 2  
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2016

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# StoneSoup

*The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists*



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# Editor's Note

**Moving. Starting over.** When I was growing up, the mere thought of moving terrified me. Luckily, my family stayed in one place. But maybe it wouldn't have been so bad to move. Change can be a good thing. In "A Little Bit of Home," Emma doesn't want to leave her best friend, Jennifer, when her family moves to Maine. Three years later, Emma returns for a visit and realizes she has changed and so has Jennifer. Life in Maine, with her new best friend, Maria, suits her better. Robin, a boy who spends all his time reading in "A Friend Named Chester," is forced out of his comfort zone when his mom plans a vacation in the country. Robin puts down his books, goes for a long walk, and makes his first friend. In "Black and White," Tanner is faced with some unfriendly kids at his new school. He realizes he can use his chess skills to win them over. Have you or someone you know had to start over? Tell us about it!

— *Gerry Mandel*

## Subscriptions

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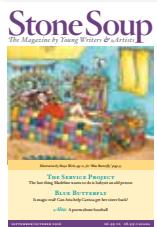
## Submissions

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



**ON THE COVER** This is Zellie Calavita's second cover for *Stone Soup* (her first was May/June 2016). Zellie enjoys drawing people and landscapes. Her favorite mediums are colored pencils and watercolors. She also enjoys writing, acting, and playing softball, and she is a supporter of girls' and women's rights worldwide.

# The Mailbox



**I started** looking through the *Stone Soup* Archives at [stonesoup.com](http://stonesoup.com), and I found the best stories, poems, and book reviews. I loved reading "Adrin's Chase" by Arden Bastia

[September/October 2012]. It was a fun fantasy story that kept me involved, and it had all the aspects of a novel, but in just a couple pages.

**Cailin Templeman, 12**  
Pacific Grove, California

**I love reading** your magazine, but one story in the September/October 2016 issue disappointed and disgusted me. This was the story called "The Hunt," about a boy who shoots a deer. This vivid portrayal about the death of an innocent deer for mere amusement disturbed me and likely brought younger, more sensitive readers to tears. I ask you to please refrain from publishing similar, violent stories in your otherwise wonderful magazine.

**Jasmine Criqui, 12**  
Del Mar, California

*"The Hunt" is a story that elegantly describes one of the most ancient human activities—hunting for our food. The violence of the hunt is always shocking—whether it is the violence of the lion hunting down the gazelle or a spider trapping and consuming a fly. Those of us who eat meat eat gentle cows and docile chickens that were killed behind closed doors. Christopher Thien's story makes us think. That is what great literature is supposed to do.*

—William Rubel, Editor

**My name is** Samuel Phillips and I love your magazine. The hunt for publication services for kids of my age was a tough one, and so when this magazine popped up, I couldn't help but jump with joy. The kids who write your stories are truly incredible!

**Samuel Phillips, 12**  
Syracuse, New York

**Stone Soup** is my favorite magazine. I used to write only rhyming poems, but then *Stone Soup* inspired me to write free-verse poems too. I like free-verse better because it gives you more freedom, you don't have to make everything rhyme, so you can say whatever you want. In my spare time, I also draw and write stories. *Stone Soup* is the best!

**Asha Kulkarni, 10**  
Palo Alto, California

**I read the story** "One Last Chance" in the November/December 2015 issue of *Stone Soup*. At the time, I was about to audition for *The Music Man*. In fact, reading "One Last Chance" helped me (and my mom) be more prepared for the audition, and may have even helped me get in! Thank you for offering subscriptions to *Stone Soup*!

**Joe Miyazaki, 13**  
Volcano, Hawaii

---

*Stone Soup* welcomes your comments. Send them to [editor@stonesoup.com](mailto:editor@stonesoup.com). You can read all the stories mentioned in The Mailbox in the Archives at [stonesoup.com](http://stonesoup.com).



*“To you this is dirt, but what is it to me?”*

# A Little Bit of Home

*By Brigid Armbrust  
Illustrated by Iva Borrello*

For Mom, and all the “Emmas” out there.

“Healing does not mean going back to the way things were before.”

*—Ram Dass*

“**E**m? WANNA GO bike riding with me today?”  
“Can’t,” I mumbled and grabbed my backpack.  
“Emma?” Jennifer asked, “Are you OK?” But I was already out the door and sprinting down the sidewalk as fast as I could. “Emma?” Jennifer called, “Emma?!”

I ignored her. I didn’t care. I just ran. I just ran toward nowhere in particular. And I didn’t care. I didn’t care about biking with Jennifer. I didn’t care about moving to Maine. I didn’t. I didn’t! And then, quite suddenly, I realized I was standing in front of Maddy’s house, and just as suddenly I realized that was where I’d intended to go all along. Maddy! I should have thought of Maddy sooner.

**M**ADDY WAS THE strangest kid in my class. Every day at recess she sat on the swings and rocked slowly. In the beginning lots of kids asked her if she wanted to play with them, thinking she had nothing to do. Maddy replied (very politely), “Maybe another time, right now I’m thinking,” though what she thought about beat me. She was a quiet kid, not the shy kind of quiet but the thinking kind of quiet. Maddy was the kind of person who spoke only when speaking was necessary. No more, no less. Whenever someone was sad, or stressed, or when a pet or relative died, people went to Maddy. When they went away again they were, if not happy,



Brigid Armbrust, 13  
White River Junction, Vermont



Iva Borrello, 12  
Portland, Oregon

calm. I had only been to Maddy once. It was after Coral died. Coral was my border collie, the first dog I ever had. We got her a few years after I was born. I'd played with her and fed her, and slept with her, and loved her, and suddenly she was gone... I'd stayed home from school, refusing to talk to anyone for two whole days.

Then I found myself at Maddy's.

Maddy had listened to my story without saying anything. After I finished she was silent for a moment. Then she said, "Pick up a stone." That had seemed far too simple. I stared at her.

"Just any stone?" I asked.

"The right stone."

"How will I know which one is the right one?"

"You'll know."

I looked down at the ground. It was littered with stones, but sure enough one stood out to me. I picked it up. It was not particularly smooth or shiny. It was just an ordinary gray stone. I closed my hand around it, the hard crust of the stone against the soft skin of my hand. It felt good. Really good. And suddenly I knew that Coral had a long, happy life and that it was time for her to return to the endless circle from which we all come, the circle of life.

I still have that stone under my pillow.

**M**ADDY WAS WEEDING a flower bed when I came to a stop in front of

her house. "Hi, Emma," she said. I took that as an invitation, so I opened the gate and stepped inside. Maddy continued weeding. Was it the rhythm of her work, or was it just the way her light brown hair fell over her shoulders that made me feel at home?

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**Maddy was the kind  
of person who spoke  
only when speaking  
was necessary.**

---

"My family has to move to Maine because of my parents' jobs, and I really don't want to go." I surprised myself. I hadn't really meant to tell her, because I was trying so hard not to believe it. But deep down I knew what I said was true. I didn't want to leave my friends. Especially Jennifer. "Mom says we can come back in a few years, but I don't want to go at all."

Maddy slowly looked at me. Her soft brown eyes gazed straight into mine. Her face was gentle, yet unreadable. After a minute she said, "Come here, Emma." I walked over to her. She had turned her attention to the flower bed and was digging with gentle and strong intention. After a minute she scooped up some loosened soil and held it in her cupped hands. "What is this, Emma?" she asked.

"It's dirt," I said, knowing all the time that I was wrong. That soil wasn't dirt. Not in Maddy's world.

To my surprise, she smiled. "To you," she said, "this is dirt, but what is it to me?"

"I don't know," I said.

She looked at me for a long time before she spoke, but when she spoke she did so

with such passion that it touched me to the heart. “It’s a little bit of home, Emma, it’s a little bit of home!”

LATER THAT NIGHT, while my parents were talking in the living room, I slipped outside. I took an old plastic bottle out of the recycling and got a hand shovel from the garden shed. In the backyard I found an out-of-the-way place behind a bush and began to dig. In a minute I scooped some soil out of the hole and put it in the bottle. Now I had my own little bit of home.

MY FAMILY’S MOVE to Maine was not as hard as I expected. Though I really missed Jennifer at first, after a while I started to make new friends. I grew particularly close with a girl named Maria. I told her everything. We spent lots of time together: hiking, drawing, talking, or even just sitting and staring at the sky. Life was rich and wonderful.

And then one day, three years later, my mother asked me if I wanted to go back. I felt a great surge of happiness rise up in me. Then I remembered Maria. The happiness melted away as fast as it had come. Mama saw this. “Emma,” she said, “maybe I could arrange for you to go back for, say, three days. You could see your old friends, visit your old school, and see if you want to go or stay.” I nodded in agreement. Within a week everything was arranged. I would stay with

my old friend Jennifer and attend school with her for three days.

MAMA DROVE ME down on Tuesday. I was so excited to see Jennifer! I had only seen her once since we moved to Maine.

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**Either I had  
changed, or Jennifer  
had changed. Maybe  
we both had.**

---

Jennifer could not wait to see me either. All through dinner she talked and talked, filling me in on everything that had happened in my absence: her new friends, her new bike, her new obsessions. It took way longer than usual to fall asleep that night

because Jennifer kept talking, but it was nice to be around her again. On the way to school the next morning she introduced me to her new best friend, Kelly. The two of them talked and talked, all the way to school. I was beginning to get a little bored, so I stared out the window and thought about my Boston terrier, Glitta.

That day at recess Kelly and Jennifer wanted to go down to the tennis court to play tennis. Reluctantly, I followed. I had never really liked tennis. Why couldn’t we just sit and talk? After about three minutes I was bored. I asked if we could do something else. Jennifer thought for a minute, but nothing she liked to do interested me, and she and Kelly were ceaselessly talking about things I couldn’t imagine being interested in. Either I had changed, or Jennifer had changed. Maybe we both had. Finally, I went and sat down on the swing next to Maddy.

“Hi, Emma,” she said absently. Her eyes were fixed dreamily on the horizon, her hair blowing in the wind. I wondered why she wasn’t helping me. I was feeling so... lost. Then I realized that Maddy never made people feel better, she showed them what they needed. I already knew.

**T**HAT NIGHT, while Jennifer was doing homework, I slipped outside. I walked through the deepening dusk until I reached my old home. There was an unfamiliar car in the driveway. I sneaked into the yard and darted to a specific bush behind the house. From underneath my jacket I withdrew a plastic bottle, the very same bottle I had taken from the recycling three years ago. I took a deep breath and returned the

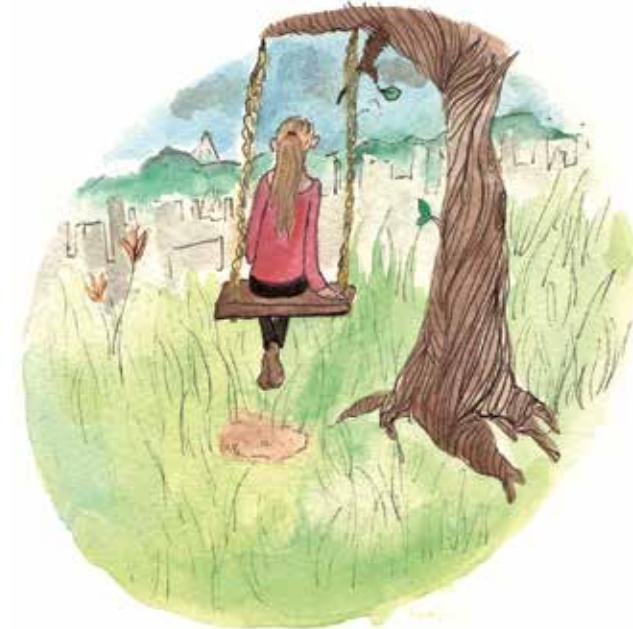
contents of the bottle to its original resting spot.

**F**OUR DAYS LATER, Maria met me at my front door. “You’re staying?” she asked anxiously. I nodded. “Oh good!!” her face flooded with relief. “I don’t know what I’d do if you left.”

I smiled at her. “I don’t know either!”

Maria smiled too. “Come on, Emma,” she said, taking my hand.

As I walked toward the woods, hand in hand with my best friend, I thought one last time of the bottle I had emptied behind my old bush, my “little bit of home.” If I ever needed one again it would come from my backyard here, in Maine. I silently thanked Maddy for showing me this. Maddy, with her wisdom far beyond her years.



# Hidden in Things

By Lotus Shen

They are hidden in a place  
like a key lost in the dark  
A plane's vapor line  
disappears from the sky  
An insect flies away from view  
like a worm crawls beneath the earth  
A flower you cannot see  
has withered back in its own pod  
The lines drawn by our skates  
vanish from view as the Zamboni drives across the ice  
Small, cold, tiny snowflakes fall gently from the sky  
disappearing into a thin layer of snow  
The water in the stream that was just in front of you  
has flowed away from where you just saw it  
A wave begins to form  
then crashes down to join the others  
Raindrops fall from the clouds from high above  
Suddenly they have disappeared into a puddle  
making a small last splash



Lotus Shen, 11  
Newark, Delaware



*This was the deciding moment. The endgame.*

# Black and White

*By Stiles Fraser White*

*Illustrated by Zellie Calavita*

THE RECESS BELL pierced through the hallways like a needle puncturing a piece of soft velvet. Students threw back their chairs and stampeded towards the classroom door. I grabbed my leather jacket and stepped into the unfamiliar corridors. Alone, I walked down the deserted hall.

It all started when my dad got fired from his job at the post office. My mom had to work two jobs at a time just to feed us. Our family had to rent out our house to strangers for extra cash. We couldn't afford private school after that, so we decided to start fresh and moved to Fleetwood, Pennsylvania. Being a transfer in the middle of January made it ten times harder. Especially on your first day.

I burst through the doors and onto the recess yard. There were kids dribbling basketballs, playing on the monkey bars, reading, drawing, and playing tag. I spotted one of the kids from my math group, the only class I had taken so far at this new school.

“Hey,” I said as I walked over to the boy. “I’m Tanner. I came here from Connecticut.”

The boy looked up at me and walked away.

I scanned the horizon for any other place to sit. That is when I saw the chessboard.

I strode over to the chessboard. Before saying anything, I took in the atmosphere. There were four kids clustered around the board. They all had a somewhat intense vibe. Two of the kids were engaged in the game while the other two



Stiles Fraser White, 12  
Los Angeles, California



Zellie Calavita, 13  
El Cerrito, California

kids watched intently. One of the players had darkish brown hair and piercing blue eyes. The other kid had thick, black glasses.

I watched as glasses kid slid his rook onto A-5; not a very good move. It opened a hole in his castle. Blue-eyes immediately slammed his queen down onto H-2.

“Checkmate,” said Blue-eyes.

“Good game,” said the glasses kid as he reached his hand across the board. The victor shook it.

“Hey guys, can I play?” I questioned.

“Do you even know how to play?” asked the winner.

“Yeah...” I said. “It’s my favorite game.”

“Sure,” said the blue-eyed kid. “You probably won’t win though, so don’t get your hopes up too high,” he warned. “My name is Dexter. You can take a seat right over there.”

I sat down on the smooth, wooden bench.

“So,” began Dexter. “Hand me all of those black pieces.”

“Actually, can I be black?” I pleaded. “It’s my lucky color.”

“No,” said Dexter. “I am black and always will be. Now hand me those pieces.”

I ignored him. “Can’t we at least flip a coin?” I tried.

Dexter thought for a moment. “Sure.”

I HANDED ALL of the black pieces to Dexter and set up the white pieces on

my first two ranks. A few kids gathered around the table, waiting anxiously to see who the victor would be.

“Go,” Dexter snarled.

The buzz of the playground slowly blurred around me, leaving Dexter and me as the only ones in focus. I took a deep breath in and slowly let it out.

I instinctively moved my king pawn up two spaces. The casual opening move. Dexter glared at me hard before copying the king pawn move. I slid my G-1 knight to F-3. This time, Dexter advanced his

bishop, pinning my queen pawn. I squinted at the board, trying to catch an early threat. I decided to try the Fried Liver Fork, to test how good he was at reading attacks. I moved my bishop into attacking position. Dexter didn’t see the threat. He pushed his queen pawn one space. I continued my tactic, moving my knight into position.

One of the kids sitting next to Dexter leaned to the side and whispered something into his ear. Dexter’s face lit up as he thwarted my attack. He gave me a smug look.

Pretty stupid, I thought as I saw he could’ve taken my knight. I quickly moved it into a safer position.

I zoned out as Dexter prepared his next move.

What if I lose this game? I thought. Will I still be an outsider? Will kids like me more if I win? Or maybe they’ll think

I'm a show-off, trying to be smug and cool. Maybe the...

"Your turn," said Dexter, interrupting my thoughts.

Dexter had castled, leaving himself in a great defensive position. My palms began to sweat as I scanned the board for a good offensive move, looking for a weak spot in his lines to attack. There. His king pawn was completely unguarded beside the king.

If I could set up a Roman Blitz right on that spot, I could end this game, I thought.

I decided to try it.

As the minutes passed, more kids accumulated around the table. They were watching with a little dash of pity for me, knowing that Dexter would come out victorious. Dexter still had that smug look on his face, like it was plastered there. I looked behind me, just to see how many supporters there were on my side. Not one soul stood behind me. I turned back to the game.

After several intense moments, one of Dexter's supporters pulled out a chess clock.

"You guys are taking too long. Recess ends in twenty minutes. We'll give you each ten minutes to start out with," the kid with the clock said as he wound the numbers to ten.

The clock thumped down on the metal table with a clang.

"Go," said the clock boy.

**T**HE SOUNDS were getting to me. Each time the clock ticked, it

felt like a small chisel was digging into my skin. My heartbeat matched the clock's ticks perfectly and beads of sweat dribbled down to my eyebrows. One kid was gently drumming his fingers right next to my hand. My quick, angry glance in his direction made him stop.

My king was stuck. Trapped by my own pieces. That was exactly how I felt. Stuck in this new world, away from my old life. This chess game was what ranked me in this new territory. Win, and I might be a leader in this unknown world. I might be the Dexter to other kids, someone to look up to, under pressure to do perfect things, never mess up. Lose, and I might be a simple follower, submerged below the radar, just like Dexter's cronies, forced to go along with what he says.

Both lives are not for me.

This was the deciding moment. The endgame. Where one mistake could decide your entire future. This was it.

Dexter was in a terrible position. After making a mass attack with my queen, I had left his forces crippled. It was down to the wire.

Dexter's smug grin was wiped off his face. He looked scared. Dexter had two minutes left on his clock and I had one minute left. I had a mate-in-one. Glaring in front of me like a piece of silver. Dexter moved. I still had the mate.

Ten seconds left. My hand wavered over my rook, the checkmate piece. Five seconds. I closed my eyes, made up my mind, and...



# Book Review

By Samantha Abrishami

*Counting Thyme*, by Melanie Conklin; G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers: New York, 2016;  
\$16.99



Samantha Abrishami, 11  
McLean, Virginia

WHEN I'M PICKING OUT books to read, I usually try to avoid the sad ones. *Counting Thyme* is definitely ranked amongst the saddest books I've ever read, and yet it lies with my favorites. How? Maybe it's because the underlying theme of hope even through sadness with hints of humor scattered throughout gives it a unique touch like no other book I've read. Maybe it's because this book does not avoid stunning reality, like others do. All I am sure of is that I would and will choose to read *Counting Thyme* again and again, and each time I will enjoy it as much as I did the first time.

*I am willing to do anything for my brother.* That's what Thyme thinks. Her little brother, Val, has cancer, and she's ready to do whatever it takes to help him. And wait—there's a chance to cure Val, and it's a special test in New York. Thyme's family temporarily moves to an apartment in New York, because this new treatment opens too many opportunities to ignore. People who have siblings, like I do, can relate to the struggle she went through between doing what was best for her brother and doing what she truly wanted.

Of course, Thyme is very happy for Val, but... *moving*. Away from her friends, and her house, and everything that she can call home. In my whole life, I have never moved. However, I have

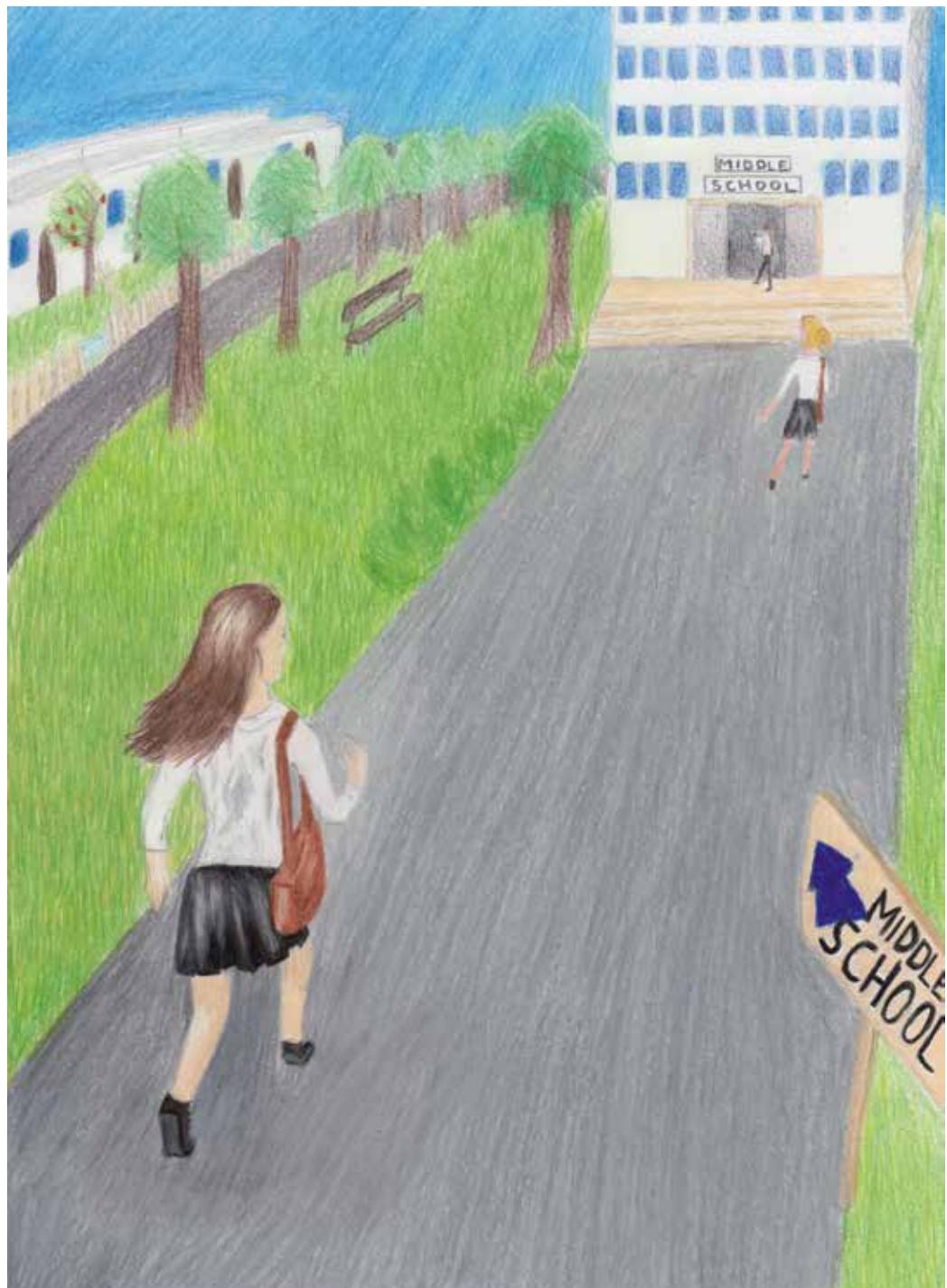
had friends that have moved far away, and so I understand having a best friend move away and can only imagine how much worse it would be to lose all your friends. The first week, you start out thinking that you can always keep in touch and call each other or email each other. But you just start drifting farther and farther away—not physically, but emotionally. And within the third week, it is all but a dream. Sure—you might email sometimes, but, as Thyme finds out, there's a big difference between actually talking to someone, and hanging out with them, and just communicating electronically.

Speaking of friends, Thyme isn't especially eager to have her cool, popular new classmates see Val bald and in a stroller at five years old. They might think he's odd, and weird, and if they start thinking that about Val, they'll start thinking it about Thyme, too. I know that people in school can be mean and judgmental. People are always looking at what you're wearing and don't necessarily think before they speak. Luckily, busy with her best friend in her old school, Thyme hadn't noticed school drama. But in her new school, she is tossed into the middle of a lot of drama.

Did I mention that the move was temporary? So why is Thyme's old best friend reporting a "for sale" sign at Thyme's old house? Thyme's parents never said anything about selling their house. Thyme never even thought about it. This move was supposed to be temporary—only temporary. So are Thyme's parents hiding something fishy, or is her best friend wrong? I would be outraged and hurt if my parents told me that a move was temporary—and then sold our old home. Hopefully, Thyme can get to the bottom of this and figure out what's really going on!

Thyme finds out what "home" really means to her in this touching and unique, tear-encouraging book. Along the way, she might make some unexpected friends!





*The Dome was perfect, and Drew was known for messing up the perfection*

# Outside The Dome

By Brigit Pierce, Sam Hinton, and Hannah Feren  
Illustrated by Boróka Ferencz

**S**PRINTING ACROSS THE asphalt road, on her way to school, all Drew had on her mind was how the prank was going to unfold. Over the years, she had perfected her talent for imitating other people's voices. *Hmmm, how can I make sure she's out of her office?* Drew thought as she rounded the corner. She paused briefly to tie back her unkempt brown hair. *I hope she's still getting her coffee.*

Still racing, Drew caught glimpses of nice cottages in rows, each one with a window box and a grassy patch for a small garden. *Everything* was neat and tidy in The Dome, everything organized, and *everything* was always exactly the same. Drew had lived in The Dome all her life. Her parents told her that she should be grateful for what she has, and where she is, for the remains of the human race were living inside this huge glass dome, safe from the wasteland the world had become. The Dome was perfect, and Drew was known for messing up the perfection. For example, a year before, she flooded the boys' bathroom, and earlier this year, she had pulled the fire alarm and set all the sprinklers off. Those were some of her best, and most prized, pranks.

Finally, Drew snapped back into the present at the sight of the school building. She dashed right in, holding her hands in front of her to push open the wooden double doors. Drew knew the quickest route to the principal's office by heart and automatically rushed there, hoping again that Ms. Pavo and her ridiculous beehive hairdo wouldn't be there to ruin Drew's devious plan. Luckily, her office was completely deserted, ex-



Brigit Pierce, 10  
Sam Hinton, 11  
Hannah Feren, 10  
Caracas, Venezuela



Boróka Ferencz, 13  
Washington, DC

cept for her tank of bobble-headed fish. Drew jogged over to Ms. Pavo's window and kept watch for the usual swarm of approaching students. And sure enough, they came, all racing to be the first into school. *This was convenient*, Drew thought, *Ms. Pavo is always the last one in from the playground. Perfect.*

Drew strode across the room and scanned the office quickly for something resembling a microphone. Halfway through her scan, she noticed a small headset with a tiny microphone lying askew on the principal's desk. She chuckled as she imagined this tiny headset perched on her principal's huge hairdo. Drew snatched up the headset and felt around for an *On* button. She fiddled with the microphone for a fraction of a second and heard a faint crackling noise. She took a quick look at her watch and began to impersonate Ms. Pavo's shrill voice.

"Attention, students. We have been notified that there is a gas leak in the science lab, and the building must be evacuated immediately. Go home, and don't come back until tomorrow." Drew finished with a grin, and in the wink of an eye, she was back on the pavement, headed to her grandmother's cottage, closely followed by the rest of the students.

**D**REW LOOKED deep into her beloved grandmother's eyes. They were bright blue, just like her own. She and her grandmother were very close, and even though she didn't always fully approve of Drew's pranks, she never tried to stop her. Drew loved her grandmother

for this, and for many other reasons. Her grandmother yawned, and Drew realized that she should probably go and let her grandmother rest. She was getting older and slowing down. The wrinkles in her face were becoming more pronounced, her hair increasingly white. Drew went home and spent the day relaxing. After sunset, though she wasn't tired, she followed the rules and got ready for bed. Her schedule was prescribed like all citizens of The Dome. Mealtimes and bedtimes were set. You couldn't skip meals or stay up late. It was hard for her to fall asleep, but eventually she did.

**I**N HER TROUBLED slumber, Drew watched in despair as her grandmother got wheeled out into the cold night air. The door to her grandmother's cottage slammed, and Drew suddenly found herself near the glass wall of The Dome, the wind whipping her pale face. Time stopped as she desperately searched for her grandmother. *Where have they taken her?* She heard a dull thud, and there, on the smooth surface of The Dome, was a slightly smudged, dusty handprint. Out of impulse, Drew tried to wipe it off, before realizing with an overwhelming feeling of despair: the handprint was on the outside of The Dome.

**D**REW WOKE to the sound of her own screaming. She sat up in bed and wiped the sweat off her forehead. The handprint was still vivid in her mind. She knew she would never be able to unsee it. *How could there be a handprint on the outside*

*of The Dome? No one ever left The Dome. No one came in. There was nobody but them. She shook the thought away. No, it couldn't be true. It was only a dream. Her grandmother was still in her cottage a block away. Nothing could have happened. She had just spoken to her the day before.* Still worried, she ran out the door and down the path to her grandmother's cottage, not eating the breakfast that had just been delivered. Drew knew something was wrong when she didn't see her grandmother tending her garden as usual.

"Grandmother," she called softly, walking to the back of the house. No answer. She called again, a little louder this time. "Grandmother, where are you?" Every second that she couldn't find her grandmother made the dream more and more likely to be true. "But it couldn't be," she reassured herself in a soft whisper.

As she circled to the front of her grandmother's house, a cleanup crew was clearing away her grandmother's things. "Do you know where my grandmother is?" Drew asked, while trying unsuccessfully to keep the panic out of her voice.

"What grandmother? You don't have one," the leader of the cleanup crew answered. Drew knew it wasn't true. "Now, go away girl. We're cleaning this residence out. Orders," he said.

"But, these are my grandmother's."

"We've told you once, now we've told you twice. You don't have a grandmother,"

**The handprint was  
still vivid in her  
mind. She knew  
she would never be  
able to unsee it.**

one of the Lower Ranks addressed her, while being slapped in the back of the head. Lower Ranks weren't allowed to talk to the citizens, except on orders or to family members. Rule Number 48.

*I know I have a grandmother.* At that she fled her grandmother's cottage and didn't stop running until she saw the dusty handprint, just like the one she had seen in her dream. She stopped dead in her tracks and stared. Even the wind that brushed past the walls of The Dome couldn't erase the handprint. In a daze, she walked over to touch it. She couldn't feel the dirt. It was on the outside.

It stung like a slap to the face, and Drew wondered what this could mean. A red wasteland covered the ground as far as the eye could see. No one could live out there. What she had thought was only a dream had become reality. The handprint was strangely red compared to the shiny glass of The Dome. Drew wasn't one to shed tears, but at that moment she couldn't help it. But soon her sadness turned to anger. *Someone is making people disappear, but why?* She ran back to her family's cottage to think.

Ever since she was little, there had been blank spots in her memory. It never had occurred to her that memories could have been taken away. But, how could it be possible for humans to disappear without anybody noticing? And why am I the only one who remembers?



*She didn't know if she could do this*

As she thought this, her stomach growled and she realized the one thing that was different. The one thing she didn't have today that the rest of The Dome had.

Breakfast. She ran down the stairs to ask her mother a simple question. "Where's Grandmother?" Drew braced herself for the answer as her mother replied with a chuckle, "Who? Honey, you don't have a grandmother."

Drew's heart was racing. People were disappearing, never to be seen again. Namely, her grandmother, and assumedly countless others. Who was next? Her mother? Her father? And breakfast was

the only thing stopping people from realizing it. Drew's eyes grew wide as she contemplated the possibility that the Governors might be putting something in the food to make people forget. Drew had to do something about this. But what? It occurred to her she had no authority to stop people from eating the delivered meals, and she fell into despair. Then she realized that the High Governor did have that authority. And Drew had the ability to *sound* like the High Governor. As the day wore on, Drew started to formulate a plan. She knew she had to avoid eating the delivered meals and resolved to pick fruit from the trees

in her yard to keep herself going. The next morning she would skip breakfast again and put her plan in motion. But tonight she would sleep. It had been a long and troubling day.

DREW RACED down the sidewalk. Zero-emission cars puttered along the road that ran next to her. It was eight A.M. That morning at breakfast she had declared that she was not feeling well and shouldn't go to school but back to bed instead. She promised her parents that she would check in at noon. She went up to her room and climbed out the window. Now, Drew was racing towards the center of The Dome, towards the Governors' Building. Her plan was risky. She would break into the PA room and announce... something. She would figure it out when she got there. Finally, she skidded to a halt in front of the sleek modern building. She pushed open the double doors and tried to appear like she knew where she was going. After much searching and a few close calls with security, she noticed a sign indicating that the PA room was just around the corner. *This is it*, Drew thought. She stepped around the corner... and instantly jumped back—the hall was crawling with Enforcers. Drew peeked around the corner again. They were still there. She would just have

to wait it out.

Two minutes later she stepped into the empty hallway. Drew pushed open the door marked PA and looked around for the microphone. She recognized it right away; it was the same style she had used for the prank at school. Drew put the headset on and cleared her throat. She had never imitated the High Governor's

low, hypnotic voice before. She didn't know if she could do this. She did a test run. "Greetings, citizens." That sounded about right. She flicked the *On* switch. *Here goes*, she thought. "Attention, citizens of The Dome.

There has been an accident in the kitchens, and the breakfast is no longer suitable for consumption. I repeat, the breakfast that has been delivered is not safe. All are advised to avoid eating delivered meals for the rest of the day." Drew eased off the headset and slipped out of the room. She strolled back through the building, once again trying to look like she belonged. Out of the doors and back to her cottage Drew walked. If they hadn't eaten breakfast, the citizens of The Dome would be starting to remember. She hoped that would be enough. Drew's feelings were complicated. While she felt accomplished, in the pit of her stomach she had a sense of foreboding. She realized that this was only the beginning.



# Wolf Moon

*By Brooke Hemingway*



Brooke Hemingway, 13  
Chicago, Illinois

The oak trees all around us  
Hide the light of the moon,  
Only emitting a faint  
Spectral glow.  
Rustlings and stirring,  
Usual at nighttime like this  
Are gone.  
The air is silent tonight,  
The tingle of magic in the air,  
And it seems all of the forest  
Is holding its breath,  
Marveling at the beauty of  
The moon.

The clearing in front of me  
Is full of blinding light,  
With the moon directly overhead,  
The fullest it can be.  
The rocks are painted white and silver,  
With the ground frosty,  
As though the early morning mist  
Is painted upon them.

The whole universe sparkles,  
Like stardust has fallen to the earth,  
In the middle of our small world.

All around I hear the  
Huffing and panting of wolf breath.  
I step, into the clearing,  
My front paw illuminated  
From the otherworldly moonlight.  
Raising my now silvery tail,  
I lead my pack  
Out into the clearing,  
To howl at the moon.



*The whole street was bedazzled with colors and sparkles and bright lights*

# The Annual Holiday Summer Street Showdown

By Aleydis Barnes

Illustrated by Regina Arriola

HOLIDAY DECORATIONS on Summer Street always got a little out of hand. If a two-hundred-foot inflatable Santa was put up one day, you better believe that there would be a three-hundred-foot menorah the next day. Smoke machines were brought out, mechanical masterpieces were set up (Mr. Johanson had moving reindeer that made actual noises and flashed red lights from Rudolph's nose), and amazing designs were painstakingly created using lights. Even the Galdans, a family not that into the holidays, draped tinsel over their whole house, yard, and car *and* set up a radio that blasted Christmas songs twenty-four seven.

The only house that was left out of this tradition was the Abbotts'. As Mr. Abbott believed that the holidays should be about being with your family and not setting up decorations (really he was just afraid of heights and worried that he would be forced to climb something) and Mrs. Abbott said that the whole idea was crazy, their comfy old house was left bare each year.

The children decided they had to do *something* to amuse themselves, and so the Annual Holiday Summer Street Showdown was created. It was a fake competition where each house was judged on three criteria, and the house with the highest number of points won. The first criterion was *Uniqueness* (how special and different it was from the rest), the second was *Impressiveness* (its astoundingness; how shocking it was), and the third was *Work* (how much work was put into making it).



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The Showdown started on the same day each year, December first, and submissions could be entered up until the twentieth. But one year, it almost was at risk for being shut down. The story begins on December eleventh, when most of the houses were finalizing their decorations.

“Ooh, look, Ms. Lethern has made spinning dreidels!” said thirteen-year-old Dove, pointing her bejeweled finger out the window (note: Dove is a firm believer in fairies and has dreamcatchers lined around her windows).

“I would rate it a seven out of ten on the *Impressiveness* scale. Pretty good, but I think we know she can do better,” said nine-year-old Oliver. He quickly scribbled down on his clipboard the score on the already almost filled to the brim chart. His light brown waves (that all the Abbotts had) were spiked up in the air in an almost Mohawk sort of way, as when he was concentrating he had a habit of running his fingers through his hair.

“Look at Liam’s house, look at Liam’s house!” said four-year-old Daisy. She clutched onto her teddy bear named Mr. Fluffy and jumped up and down in front of the window to get a better view. Liam was one of the many crushes that Daisy had been obsessed with over the years, and Mr. Abbott said that at this rate, she would get married at ten years old (the children didn’t know if he was joking or not).

“Oh, don’t worry, Daisy Crown,” said beaming Dove, kissing Daisy on the cheek, “I shall tell you what Liam’s house looks like. Ooh! The whole place is bedecked with lights—even the car!”

“Let me see, let me see!” squealed Daisy.

“I got it,” said twelve-year-old Aubrey, who perhaps was the normal one of the family.

She hoisted Daisy overhead, and they peeked out of the window. The whole street was bedazzled with colors and sparkles and bright lights. Daisy went

quite still after she spotted Liam’s house, and she stared at it with her blue eyes wide, as if trying to capture it in a photograph.

“Who’s in the lead so far?” asked Aubrey, nudging Oliver’s shoulder to see his calculations.

“Mr. Zhang is,” Oliver announced. “He has a forty-foot-tall Christmas tree with flashing silver lights, a fake Santa and Rudolph climbing into his chimney, and a stand where people can donate presents to kids without them.”

“Oh, the kind man,” said Dove, holding her hand to her heart.

“Yeah,” said Oliver, “but guess who’s creeping up after him? Mrs. Aldrich! She has the lights that spell out Happy Hanukkah, a thirty-foot flickering menorah, and a basket with chocolate coins and dreidels that neighbors can take to play with!”

"I want chocolate," said Daisy in a dreamy sort of way, and she stared wistfully at the house outside.

"Looks like she's found another love," said Aubrey, rolling her eyes.

"Well, to be honest, chocolate is everyone's love," said Dove.

They spent a few more minutes gazing outside at the holiday decorations ("I bet that Ms. Whitaker will have the most points! Shake on it now; whoever wins gets a dollar," said Oliver to Aubrey) before Mrs. Abbott sent them to bed, as there was school the next day. Aubrey settled into her warm sheets, her long hair braided tightly so that it was not messy at all in the morning, and she sighed peacefully. Her hazel eyes slipped shut, with images of snowmen and dreidels and lights flashing in her mind.

**S**o, I suspect your house will be blank this year?" said Aubrey's friend Melissa Galdan as they walked to school.

"Yeah, my parents don't really want to decorate it," said Aubrey. She tucked a lock of hair behind her ear as she walked, watching her hand-me-down rain boots from Dove splash into the puddles. The odd mixture of dirty water and bright floral print was a mesmerizing mix, and she found it quite fun to see.

"Well, why don't you guys do it yourselves? Dove's thirteen now, she can make sure that you guys are safe doing it. And you know, I feel really bad, because everyone else's houses have decorations except your guys', and it isn't right that your parents are keeping you from doing

it. I always feel a little guilty whenever people talk about it to me 'cause I know that you're not doing it. And some people at school say you're above it all, and you believe you're better than everyone else, and that's why you don't put them up. I try to..." began Melissa, but Aubrey interrupted her.

"Wait, people are talking about me?"

"Yeah. I've tried to explain that it's not you, it's just that your family's a little bit odd. I mean, I love them, and Daisy's like my own little sister, but people don't like people who are different. And the fact that you're forced into having all of the whispers and gossip and insults is just unfair! You're not the one doing it!" said Melissa angrily.

Aubrey pursed her lips and looked down again, except this time she wasn't looking at the hand-me-down boots. She hated those hand-me-down boots, and she hated Dove, and she hated her family. She knew she shouldn't blame them, but weren't they the reason she was disliked at school? Weren't they the reason she was *different*?

Melissa's eyes softened.

"You OK, Aub? I'm sorry I said that, I'm sure everything will be fine. If you put up some decorations, I know they will forget about it," Melissa said. She gave a reassuring smile.

"Yeah, I'm fine, Lissy," said Aubrey, keeping her eyes on the ground. "You think it'll snow this year?"

"Well, it hasn't yet, but I'm positive it'll come soon. I'm a half-full type of girl, you know?" said Melissa, glad that the conver-

sation was moving on to happier things. Aubrey's eyes were set on the ground still, and the images that flashed in her mind were of taunting voices and cruel laughter. Who knew what people were saying behind her back at that moment.

**“Y**OU WANT to do what?” sputtered Mr. Abbott when they came up to him the next day.

“Set up decorations. On our house. Today,” said Aubrey, slowly and clearly. Melissa smiled supportively and linked her arm in Aubrey’s. Dove and Oliver stood behind them, pretending not to but listening attentively. Dove was “watching a movie,” but the sound wasn’t on, and Oliver was “eating a PB&J sandwich,” even though he hadn’t taken a bite. Both of their eyes flicked back and forth between Mr. Abbott and Aubrey and Melissa, like minnows flicking side to side in an aquarium.

“That whole decorating thing takes away the importance of family,” began Mr. Abbott, ready to launch into a speech about commercialism.

“Don’t worry, you don’t have to do it,” Aubrey said, “we will. Dove will make sure we don’t get hurt.”

“Oh, oh, well, I guess that’s OK, then,” said Mr. Abbott. He smiled, tousled her hair, and kissed her forehead. “Good luck, and stay safe.”

“We will!” said Melissa as he headed towards his office, muttering under his

breath words of relief.

“OK, let’s get started, troops,” said Aubrey, turning to face her siblings. “Melissa has been kind enough to lend us some decorations and...”

“What if we don’t want to decorate? If we do our own house, then the contest will be biased, and we’ll have to end the Annual Holiday Summer Street Showdown!” said Oliver crossly.

“I don’t really know either,” said Dove. “I really want to help you, Aub, but the new *Peace for the World* magazine has come out, and I was planning on reading it this afternoon,”

“But- but...,” pleaded Aubrey, “what about all those people who will become happy because of us putting up our Christmas lights? Do you not want to spread happiness, Dove?”

“Of course I want to spread happiness!” said Dove.

“Then why not decorate?” asked Aubrey.

“Oh, fine. If it means keeping those children happy, then I must do it!” said Dove determinedly.

“Oliver, it’s two to one, come on, let’s go!” said Aubrey as cheerfully as she could. She needed to show those kids at school that she was normal.

“I will only surrender after Daisy agrees,” Oliver said. All eyes turned towards Daisy, who was counting the buttons on Fluffy Bear’s suit. She couldn’t count past five, so she would say “One...

**People at school say  
you’re above it all,  
and that’s why you  
don’t put them up.**



*“You want to do what?” sputtered Mr. Abbott*

two... three... four... five... one-two... three-four... five-one-two... three-four-five-one-two...” going on and on for hours. Aubrey had to explain the situation to her as simply as she could, which was hard, as Daisy kept on turning her attention back towards her teddy bear.

When finally it was all out, and all she had to do was choose, they all waited for her nervously.

She said, “Fluffy Bear has three-four-five-one-two-three-four-five-one-two-three-four-five-one-two-three-four-five-one-two (which equaled thirteen) buttons on his suit.”

At that point all of them smacked their

hands on their heads and sighed.

“But about the lights—I say yes! When Liam and I get married, we can’t fight over what family tradition we want our kids to have!” she said.

The air was pierced with groans of exasperation from Oliver and a chorus of Yes!-es from Melissa.

“OK, come on, let’s go,” said Aubrey, her teeth gritted determinedly. The group headed outside, Daisy singing the wedding march out loud, Dove saying famous quotes about kindness (“Treat others the way you want to be treated”), Oliver muttering under his breath about the unfairness of it all, and Melissa shouting holiday

songs at the top of her lungs.

"Here are the lights. We've only used them once, so they aren't that tangled. Where do you want to put them?" asked Melissa, hauling up a bag that looked almost as big as one that Santa might have.

"On the roof," said Aubrey. "That way everybody can see them."

She needed this, she needed to become normal. To have people stop talking about her behind her back, saying that she was stuck up and weird. But... did she really?

They brought out the unused ladder from the backyard and set it up by the house. One by one they headed up towards the roof, Dove carrying Daisy as carefully as possible. But just as they started unravelling the bright lights, Melissa got a call.

"Just a second," she said, "let me get this. Hi, Mom... yeah, I'm at Aubrey's house. We're setting up decorations... yes, decorations... I know! Yeah... uh-uh... OK. Yes, Mom. I'll see you there. Love you too." She gave a sad look towards Aubrey and slipped her phone back in her pocket.

"You have to go?" asked Aubrey, even though she already knew the answer.

"Yeah," sighed Melissa, "but don't worry, it's really easy to set them up. I'll see it tomorrow, OK? Bye, guys!" She gave one last wave and then proceeded down the ladder. Aubrey watched her make her way across the street to the Galdan's house, where the twenty-four-seven radio

was at the moment playing "All I Want For Christmas Is You." She furrowed her brow, and her hazel eyes darkened, but she managed a few claps.

"Come on, soldiers! Let's get to work!" she barked good-naturedly.

*It's really easy to set them up* must have been Melissa's code words for impossibly hard. They spent the first thirty minutes

just untangling the yards and yards of lights. By the end of it, even Dove was hating the bright monster in some way ("I don't think you and I are going to be friends," is what she said). Next was putting it on the roof. The other houses on Summer Street had

lights draped artfully over their trees and holiday decorations, but all the Abbotts ended up having was a loud argument over which way the cord was supposed to go and who was going to be on the ends. At some point in the middle, it started to rain—not the warm, wet rain that makes everyone happy but the cold, freezing type of downpour that results in pellets of water the size of golf balls. Aubrey's fingers were numb, and everyone's hair had turned a dark, damp, mud color. Daisy would not stop sneezing, and Oliver was absolutely not having a good time.

After another hour, they finally ended up finishing the decorations. All they needed to do was plug in the cord to see the golden lights blazing out holiday cheer.

Aubrey knew she should be content.

She had finally become the normal. No Showdown, no bare house, no whispers. But she also knew that behind Dove's words of "Oh, the children will be so happy," her thirteen-year-old sister was not enjoying this. And she knew that Oliver practically hated her for forcing him to help her in something he detested. She knew that Daisy was tired, and sick, and hungry, and bored out of her mind.

And at that moment, she realized something. She didn't care about the whispers. If they thought she was above it all, so be it! She was above it all in the best possible way, in a way she felt proud and happy of. And with that, Aubrey started to take down the lights.

"What the heck are you doing?" yelled Oliver. "I just spent an hour and thirty minutes setting it up in the *rain* for Pete's sake, and you're gonna take it down now!"

They both started tugging over the lights, and with a struggle she managed to get out, "Let's not do the decorations! Let's do the Annual Holiday Summer Street Showdown!"

Once he heard that, he was all on board for helping her take off the lights. It took approximately five minutes to bundle the yards back into the bag, in which Aubrey truly realized what a waste of time it was setting them up. The kids headed down the ladder, Dove first, Aubrey second—

with Daisy, and Oliver last.

They stood in the yard, getting pelted with rain, and looked up at their bare, drab roof. Aubrey thought that it had never looked so perfect.

With that, they carefully settled the ladder back into the dusty, dark garage and headed inside.

The bright rooms with gold colors welcomed them, and Dove quickly set out to make some hot mint tea, with extra spoonfuls of sugar for Daisy.

The Abbott children crowded around the window once again, Oliver back with a clipboard and Daisy back with the jumping up and down. They noted the Johnsons' yard with an inflatable Nativity scene, and *Ooh-ed* and *Aah-ed* at the twenty-foot spinning dreidel set up in Ms. Aldrin's place.

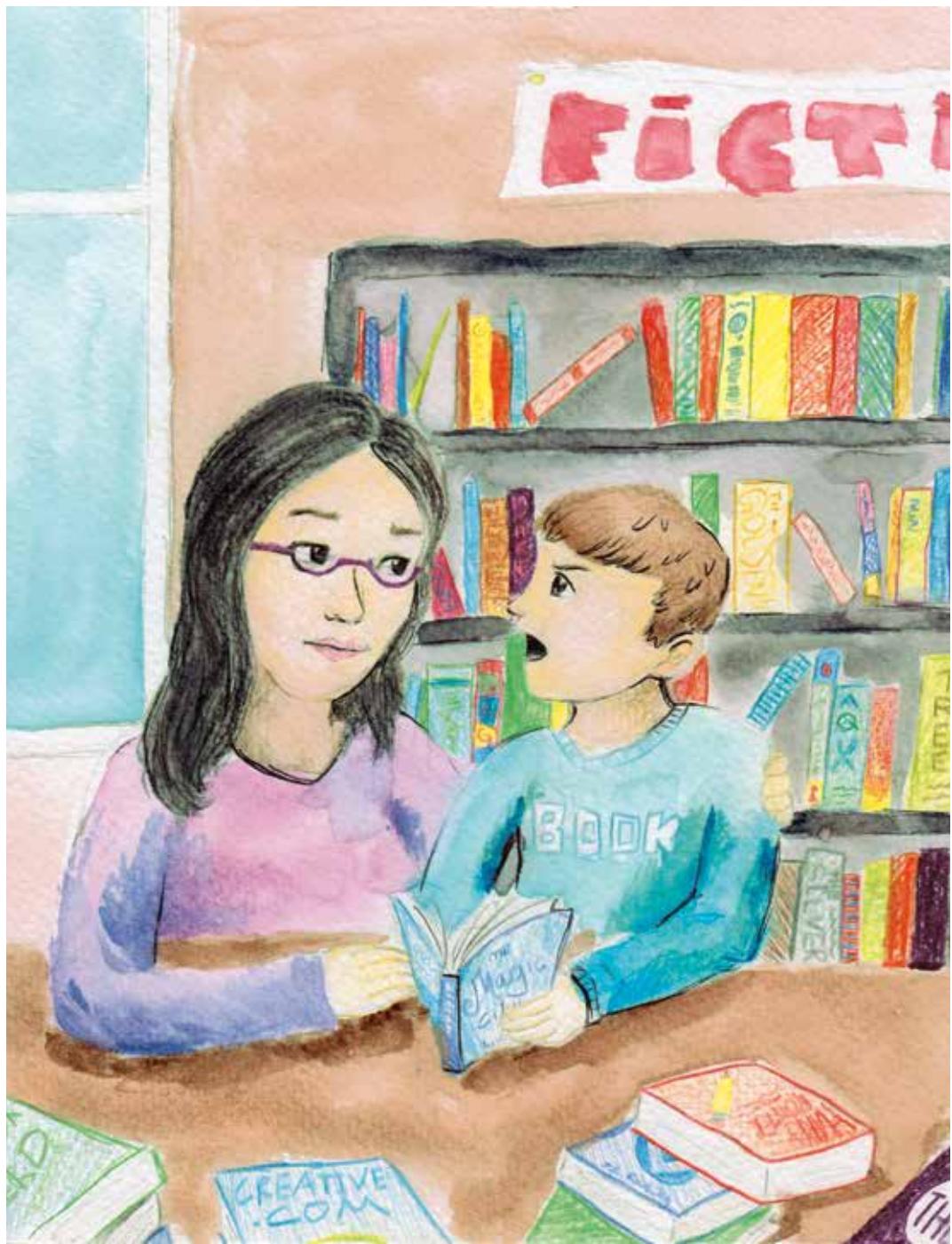
It was getting dark, and Mrs. Abbott would soon come to tell them to go to bed. Aubrey watched her sisters and brothers laugh, joke, and tease, and she smiled, thinking she wouldn't have it any other way.

Oliver yelled, "Again, I bet Ms. Whitaker will have the most points! Shake on it now; whoever wins gets a dollar! Coming once—coming twice?"

Aubrey grinned, and brought out her hand.

"I'll take you up on that one."





*"No books!" he spluttered. "Mom, this is outrageous!"*

# A Friend Named Chester

*By Benny Mitchell*

*Illustrated by Matthew Lei*

ROBIN CARTER WAS a lonely child. He had no friends, and he couldn't remember a time when things were different. He was twelve, in the seventh grade. He was only open when he was reading and had such great passion for it that it was the most dominating factor in his life. He had loved reading for as long as he could remember, and his parents told him that he still loved reading even before that. His parents had tried to drive him out of his shell, but when he was put out into the world he would pull out a book and read. As much as it broke their hearts to see their son alone and cut off from the world, they eventually gave up.

At school he was no different. He was average in nearly every subject, barring English, in which he excelled. The kids acted as if he was invisible, and even the teachers sometimes forgot about him. And when they did remember him it was only to give an acknowledgment when they passed back a test. His English teacher, Ms. Murkly, was perhaps one of the few people in the whole school who realized that he existed. He was her best student. He always turned in his homework and always had something to say about the author of the book they had been reading most recently.

On the other end of the spectrum was his sister, Judy Carter. Eighth-grade diva, Judy was one of the most popular kids in the school. She was a motormouth and always had something to say or a story that she had just remembered. The parents of these drastically different children were Mabel and Albert Carter. Mabel was a thin and kind



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Matthew Lei, 11  
Portland, Oregon

woman with long flowing dark hair and a large intellect. She would read to Robin when he was a baby and never ran out of books, since she was the head librarian at the Guava County Library. Albert was a slightly rotund man with hair like a bonfire and a deep love of botany. The first thing he did when he bought the house was build an extension in which he housed his vast collection of plants. Just recently his collection had grown too vast and he had been forced to make an extension to the extension which he classified as "For Bonsai Trees Only."

On this particular day, Robin was in the fiction section of the Guava County Library, currently reading E. Nesbit's *The Magic City*, when his mother walked in. Robin was a curious figure in the library. While the librarians loved his passion for reading and encouraged it often, Robin could be quite aggravating due to his tendency to check out the maximum amount of books at a time. Sometimes he would use his parents' library card too. When his mother spoke, she startled Robin out of his fantastical reverie.

"We're going on a vacation," she said.

"Where?" said a surprised Robin.

"The beautiful Hibiscus County," she replied.

"OK," said Robin dismissively, and continued reading.

"Also, we were thinking you shouldn't

bring very many books, if any," she continued. Now Robin was really surprised.

"No books!" he spluttered. "Mom, this is outrageous! Books are great!"

"I agree, but I think you read too many books for it to be healthy," responded his mother. "You have no friends, Robin, you don't stop and enjoy this world because your head is in another."

He had no  
friends, and he  
couldn't remember  
a time when things  
were different.

"Books *are* my friends," muttered Robin. But it was hopeless and he knew it. Unlike his father, his mother was a strong woman, and he would be even more shocked if she did back down than he was about this atrocity. He quickly relented and stormed down the street towards his house. A cloud of fury was about him.

JUDY HAD a similar reaction, but for very different reasons. "The country! We're going to the country!" she screeched. "There's no cell reception in the country! How will I talk to my friends?"

"This is a family trip," responded a tired Albert Carter.

Judy continued to complain, but Robin didn't stick around and listen. He was walking upstairs to his room, hoping that it would provide him some calm and sanctuary. His room was a veritable treasure trove for people like him who loved books. Robin's dream room, in other words. It had stacks of books everywhere.

Robin had tried to put them all into shelves, but he was unsuccessful, as they repeatedly spilled out. He had so many books that you would wonder why he goes to the library at all, as his room was a library in its own right. This remains a mystery.

Once upstairs he walked straight to shelf A-6 and pulled a book from the shelf. It was his favorite book, Edward Eager's *Magic or Not*. He found it was calming, a charming story about a young girl, her brother, their friends, and their adventures in a rustic town. He sighed. This was going to be a horrible vacation.

THE CARTER FAMILY's red truck rumbled down a bumpy dirt path. Up ahead was the house they had rented, a small ivy-encrusted cottage, which was barely large enough to avoid being classified as a hut. *Goodie*, thought Robin as they pulled up to the "parking space." In truth it was brittle twigs forming an open rectangle. Robin's father was the first to leave the car, followed closely by Robin's mother.

"All right, gang, let's go see the place," said Albert Carter in a voice that suggested that he had won the lottery. He was answered by the chirping of the birds. Judy was giving them the silent treatment, and Robin... well Robin just didn't feel like talking.

Unperturbed by the apparent lack of enthusiasm, Albert pushed on. He had a brief tussle with a door that appeared to have never been opened within the century, but eventually bested it and opened

the door. The inside of the house was admittedly nicer than Robin had expected, but it wasn't the Tardis; it was still small.

"Cozy isn't it," said a jolly Albert. Mabel agreed as she unloaded the luggage. "So, gang, where should we go next?" said Robin's father, but Judy was already in her room and Robin was outside.

The weather was cold and wet, but Robin was too miserable to notice. To really understand how he felt you would have to lose something that was a part of you, and then know that part of you was miles away. That's pretty much how Robin felt right now. The road stretched far ahead and Robin was actually getting kind of tired. He had been walking for a while. Eventually he came to a nondescript bungalow. There was nobody home. He threw himself into the bench that sat on the porch. He knew it was wrong, but he was exhausted.

It wasn't long before he heard a voice. "Who are you and what the heck are ya doing in my yard?" Robin opened his eyes. A boy with red hair and tan skin stood over him. A straw hat sat on his head, and his crystal-blue eyes bore into him as if to say, *Answer me or else. I don't know what I'll do, but ya won't like it.*

"Um, hi?" said Robin.

"Playing dumb, are you?" said the boy. "Well I'm not, get out of my yard."

"Um, wait," said Robin, not much wanting to abandon the bench. "I was admiring the architecture."

"You were admiring the architecture," repeated the boy.

"Um, yeah?" said Robin.

“From the porch?” asked the boy.  
“Er, maybe.”

The boy suddenly smiled broadly, “OK, funny boy, why are you really here?”

“My house is miles away on Citrus Avenue and I was taking a walk,” answered Robin. “I was exhausted so I sat down here.”

The boy frowned.  
“Citrus Avenue? That’s over ten miles away! You must be exhausted! Here, come inside. I’ll have Mom make us some grub.”

Robin hadn’t noticed until now, but he was starving. His stomach rumbled like a beast straight out of one of his books. “Thank you...?” he said.

“Chester,” said the boy, and walked through the front door. Robin quickly argued with himself over the sanity of walking into a random child’s house, but his hunger quickly got the best of him.

The house was small but welcoming, and a small fire crackled in the hearth, despite the fact that it was ninety degrees and sunny outside. He saw Chester already sitting at a table, gnawing at a loaf of bread with what appeared to be colored sugar decorating the top. “Turns out Mom wasn’t home,” he said between bites, “but I found this instead!” Chester shoved another loaf of the peculiar bread into Robin’s hands. Robin stared at it, dumbfounded. Chester noticed his confused stare. “Seriously? You’ve never heard of *pan dulce*?”

Robin looked at him blankly.

“No? Well you’ve gotta try it. It tastes like heaven.”

Robin, musing over what heaven actually would taste like, took a bite. He had to admit, it was pretty delicious. They ate in silence for a while, appreciating the *pan dulce*. When they finished, Chester asked,

“Are you new here?”

“Yeah,” replied Robin.  
“My family and I are staying here for the summer.”

“Cool,” said Chester. “In that case, do you want a tour of the town?”

While still not entirely sure that the sweet bread hadn’t been poisoned, Robin hadn’t a clue where he was, so he said yes.

“Sweet,” said Chester as he got up from the table, “let’s go.”

Chester turned out to be a very good tour guide, not only showing him the town, but giving him inside tips on the various locations and people. “This is the market, my father sells his food here, he is a baker after all... This is Mr. Barnaby’s house. He has the juiciest apples, but he’ll only share them with you if you make a good impression on him...” and so on. Robin learned about everybody in this deceptively diverse town, from a veterinarian who adored naked mole-rats, to a librarian who suffered from forgetfulness, and even a strange man the locals called “The Gouda Man,” who was hopelessly obsessed with cheese and making a nacho that was truly perfect. Robin was especially interested in a young boy who made mari-



*Chester turned out to be a very good tour guide*

onettes and thought of them as friends. Even though, for all Robin knew, Chester was an insane boy obsessed with providing false stories about non-existent people in a rustic town, Robin couldn't help but enjoy his quirky presence. And this is especially surprising because Robin's voracious appetite for unrealistic books had made him exceedingly paranoid.

When they reached Robin's house he said, "This is Old Man Akee's house, but he won the lottery a while back. I think he rents it out now, but nobody's living here right now, unless..."

"Hi, sweetie." It was Mabel's voice.

"...you moved in here," finished

Chester.

"Well, I guess this is goodbye for now," said Robin. "Do you want to meet again tomorrow?" Despite his previous misgivings about the boy, Robin had a thoroughly good time.

"Sure," said Chester. "Right here at nine o'clock sound good?"

"Sounds great," replied Robin. "Bye."

"Bye," said Chester.

Robin was whistling as he came walking down the dirt path he had been miserably bumping down only hours earlier. As he came up to the door, his mother asked, "Who was that?"

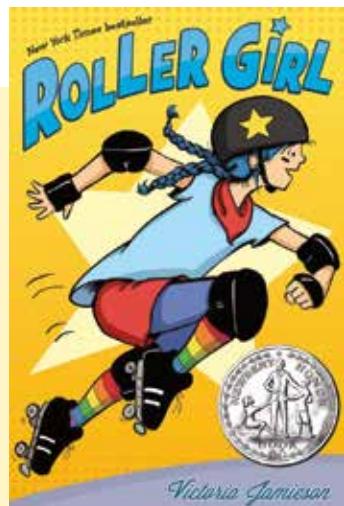
"A friend," replied Robin.



# Book Review

By Claire Cleary

*Roller Girl*, by Victoria Jamieson; Dial Books for Young Readers: New York, 2015; \$20.99



Claire Cleary, 12  
Mariposa, California

**T**OUGHER. STRONGER. FEARLESS. These are the words the protagonist of *Roller Girl* is driven by as she fights to achieve her goals in this amusing and inspiring graphic novel of friendship and growing up. A relatable character for almost anyone who's ever tried something new, Astrid is a twelve-year-old girl who is obsessed with roller derby... but not necessarily good at it.

Ever since first grade, Astrid has done everything with her best friend, Nicole. So Astrid signs up for roller derby camp and assumes that Nicole will do the same. But when Nicole decides to go to dance camp with a new friend instead, Astrid finds herself standing in front of a huge warehouse, alone and about to enter the most terrifying day of her life. Astrid soon discovers that the other girls in the camp can skate fifty laps in ten minutes, while all she can do is fall. And no matter how hard she tries, she doesn't seem to get much better.

If you've ever tried to master a new skill, you will be able to relate to *Roller Girl*'s spunky and determined protagonist. I recently attempted to ice skate and found myself thinking about Astrid's similar situation as I clung to the wall on the side of the rink. Everyone else seemed so good, and here I was, afraid to even skate without support. Astrid expressed similar thoughts when she first went to the roller rink. Eventually though, like her, I found my

confidence and slowly improved. Astrid's journey to confidence was sprinkled with difficulties that she sometimes had trouble overcoming, but she always managed to stay surprisingly positive and never gave up. I think I could learn a lot from this, because often when I try a new sport I struggle with self-doubt and frustration.

The other part of Astrid's story that is easy to identify with is her friendships. The author cleverly entwines this aspect of the story with Astrid's roller derby experience. While at camp, she encounters new people, makes friends, and starts to learn who she is without Nicole. Her new peers open her eyes to a whole different world, one that she never would have noticed if she hadn't broken apart from Nicole. When I was recently faced with the challenge of starting at a new school, I had many of the same feelings Astrid did. But by taking a risk and reaching out to new people, I found that there are great personalities everywhere, not just in the people you already know.

The fact that this book is a graphic novel gives a whole different feel to the story. Usually, I don't read comics or books with illustrations, but this one really spoke to me with its accessible characters, well-thought-out plot, and detailed drawings. The author is a talented artist, and her vibrant illustrations bring the story to life. Humor and sarcasm help lighten the story and keep the reader entertained. In the author's drawings, you are able to see the characters' quirky facial expressions and other details that couldn't be easily expressed in writing.

Perhaps one of the things that I liked most about this book is that I felt like I knew Astrid. I felt her pain when Nicole told her she wasn't going to derby camp, I felt her joy when she finally could skate without falling, and I cheered her on in her first bout (roller derby match). I disliked the people she disliked and loved the people she loved. Somehow, using few words, the author made the characters complex and believable.



# Katy Runs the Store

By Anika Walkes

Illustrated by Alexandra Carr



Anika Walkes, 11  
Grand Forks, North Dakota



Alexandra Carr, 13  
Brooklyn, New York

KATY'S FATHER'S HAND kept waving goodbye, until his car turned the corner and she could not see it anymore. Katy Bay lived in a small village in England with her father, Mr. Richard Bay. Katy's mother died when she was very young, and so her father had to raise Katy all by himself. Katy would miss her father very much, but he would be back the next morning. Katy, at the age of eight, dearly loved her father and had refused to be kept away from him at first. But Katy had stopped crying and agreed that he should go to his business meeting out of town, when he told her that her elderly Aunt Martha would watch her while he was gone. Aunt Martha was a loving woman at the age of sixty-eight who loved to sit and knit in front of the fire.

Now, Katy's father had a shoe store, and he had promised to be back before the store opened the next morning. But his train got delayed on his way home, so he could not possibly get there before his store was supposed to open. Katy knew that the store should open at exactly eleven A.M. And when it was ten-thirty Katy said to herself, "Daddy should be home by now, shouldn't he? I wonder what I should do." And all of a sudden, like a balloon popping in midair, it came to her. And as quickly as she could go she ran to Aunt Martha, who was knitting in front of the fire, and said, "Aunt Martha, may I *please* open the store?"

Of course, Aunt Martha thought that Katy wanted to play store and open her own pretend store. So she said, "Of course



*Unexpectedly, Katy got up on the stool and started ringing up Mrs. Frouchy*

you may, dear, but don't make a mess of things!" as Katy ran to the store, which was next door to her house.

When Katy got to the entrance, she took the extra key that was hidden under the doormat, unlocked the door, and turned on the lights. After about five minutes, Mrs. Splenda Frouchy, a usual customer who bought new shoes quite often, walked into the store looking grouchy (as usual). She noticed that Katy was the only person in the store. But after thinking about it and noticing that she had to be home to cook dinner soon, she continued to shop and soon found

a pair of shoes that were perfect for the not-too-hot and sunny June day. When she was ready, she expected to see Mr. Bay, ready and waiting to help her at the counter. But instead, she found the same child who had been standing there when she had come into the store. So, noticing that she had to hurry and hoping that the girl would summon her father to help ring her up, she put her things onto the counter. Unexpectedly, Katy got up on top of the high stool that stood near the cash register and started ringing up Mrs. Frouchy. After checking twice to make sure she didn't make any mistakes, Katy

took the money from Mrs. Frouchy and pulled out the cash drawer and put the money in.

While all this was happening, Katy's father was hurrying home, because he thought he would have to open the store right when he got there. But as he was nearing the store he saw Mrs. Frouchy walk out with a puzzled face, and as he was passing her she said to him, "Mr. Bay, you've got a smart little girl there! Imagine, a girl not even nine years old running a store! Who would've thought?"

After hearing this, Mr. Bay hurried into the store and stopped at the sight of

Katy sitting on the high stool behind the counter, smiling a smile as wide as the ocean. And of course, at the sight of her beloved father Katy cried, "Daddy, you've come at last!" Katy ran to her father and embraced him in the biggest bear hug that a little girl can give. After asking and finding out how Katy had "run the store" all by herself, the two closed the store early and walked to the house together. And after that,

Katy helped her father almost every day in his store. And it became of that little accident that Katy became her father's new and best employee at Mr. Richard Bay's Shoe Store.



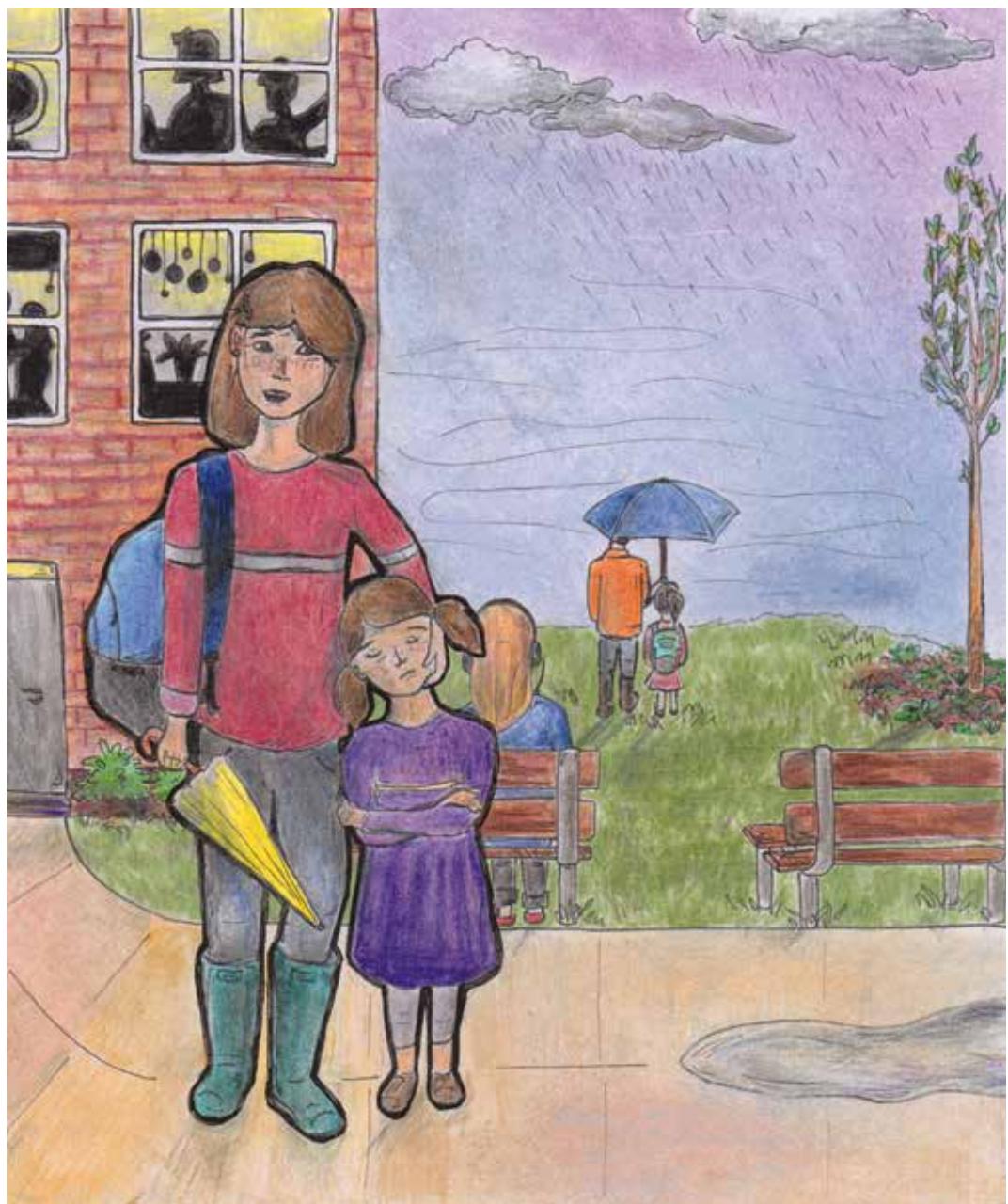
# Islands in the Clouds

*By Sandra Detweiler*

Have you ever climbed a butte  
in the fog  
with the sun's rays slanting  
visibly  
through the trees?  
Have you reached the top,  
leaving fog and tree behind  
and seen a sea of white clouds  
stretching away  
in all directions?  
The treetops of other  
high places  
poke up through the mist  
and you dream of a ship  
that could sail in this sea  
and bring you to another of the  
islands  
in the clouds



Sandra Detweiler, 13  
Eugene, Oregon



*“Let’s go home,” her sister whispered*

# The Butterfly Box

By Hannah Krenn

Illustrated by Katie Lew

**E**XHAUSTED FROM ANOTHER long day of school, Kaeli flopped down onto her bed. Her eyes wandered around her room and landed on the little box on her dresser. Walking over, she picked it up. It was a beautiful box, painted with delicate butterflies and edged with gold. The butterfly box. Her grandfather had given it to her when she was very little. As the years had gone by, she'd filled it with little trinkets, lost teeth, pressed flowers... whatever she thought was special. Kaeli hadn't opened it in a long time. She'd never shared it with anyone, either. A few months ago, she'd attended her grandpa's funeral. She missed him. The box brought back a flood of memories. The pressed penny from her first trip to the zoo with him. The necklace he'd given her on her tenth birthday. The good luck charm he'd given her for her first performance... Kaeli blinked away tears. She pushed her dark brown hair out of her eyes. It's OK, she told herself. It's OK.

**“K**AELI,” THE TEACHER SAID. He pronounced it *Ki-lee*, instead of *Kay-lee*. Kaeli was too tired to correct him. The teacher continued, “What’s the value of x in the equation x equals three times the quantity...”

Luckily for Kaeli, the bell rang to signal the end of school. She packed up her backpack and escaped. It was drizzling outside, and Kaeli hurried to the elementary school, a block down, to pick up her little sister. Kaeli immediately spotted her in the window of the classroom. She was easy to recog-



Hannah Krenn, 13  
Piedmont, California



Katie Lew, 13  
Winchester, Massachusetts

nize. With her short, dark hair and brown eyes, she looked like a miniature Kaeli. As she walked closer, Kaeli realized Aya's eyes were red. Was her sister crying? As soon as she spotted her big sister, Aya ran out to her.

"What's wrong?" Kaeli exclaimed. "Aya, what happened?" Aya just shook her head.

"Let's go home," her sister whispered. Kaeli sighed and opened her umbrella, positioning it so both of them would stay dry. The two walked in silence, just listening to the pitter-patter of the rain on the umbrella.

As soon as they got home, Kaeli faced her little sister. Aya was in third grade, but she looked like she couldn't be more than seven.

"What happened?" Kaeli asked again, more softly this time. She sat down with Aya on the comfortable, well-worn couch in the living room. She could see Aya fighting against tears.

"I hate school!" her sister finally exclaimed. "I hate all of it! I hate spelling, I hate math, I hate everything!" She frowned at Kaeli's concerned face.

"Come on, Aya, you love school," Kaeli said. "What happened today?"

"They're so mean," she sobbed. At Kaeli's coaxing, she continued. "I spelled 'genius' wrong, and I knew how to spell it, but I just mixed up the letters, and then, and then..."

"And then what?"

"And then they said, 'How would she know how to spell it? She's stupid.'"

"Oh, Aya," Kaeli hugged her little sister.

"And then everyone laughed!" Aya started crying again. Kaeli sighed and stroked her hair.

"Did you tell the teacher?"

"N-no," Aya managed. "W-why would I?"

"She can help," Kaeli reassured her sister. "Meanwhile, I want to show you something."

**H**ER SISTER quieted, Kaeli headed down the hall to her room. Kaeli paused for a moment. Was she ready to show Aya this? She'd never, ever shared it with anyone. It had been *her* special box, especially in the months following her grandfather's death. "Passed away," her mother might say. But he wasn't passing. He was gone. Part of Kaeli wanted to keep this for herself. She shared so much with her sister. But the better part of Kaeli knew that her grandfather would have wanted her to show Aya. A meditation came back to her, from Grandpa's funeral. *"When I die, give what's left of me away..."*\* It was still Kaeli's memories, but maybe she could give Aya some of those memories, too. She picked the box up off her dresser, very carefully, and carried it back to the living room.

**A**YA WAS CURLED UP on the couch. Kaeli walked over and sat down next to her.

"Aya, there's something I wanted to show you," Kaeli said quietly. She opened her hands to reveal the butterfly box. Aya's eyes widened.

"What's that?" she asked.

“Grandpa gave it to me,” Kaeli explained. She watched Aya’s eyes fill with tears again. Maybe, just maybe, Aya missed Grandpa almost as much as Kaeli.

“I put all kinds of things in here,” Kaeli continued. “I look at them sometimes to make me feel better when I’m sad. It’s like... a box full of memories. Happy memories.” She handed it to Aya.

“Can I open it?” Aya questioned. Kaeli nodded. Aya’s eyes widened as she opened the lid and looked through the contents.

“I remember that!” Aya exclaimed, fingering the necklace. “Grandpa gave that to you when you turned ten! Remember the party you had? And Grandpa and Grandma made you the cake with the fairies, and...”

“I remember. I’m surprised you do; that was three years ago!” Kaeli said. Aya just shrugged. It was nice talking about the good times with her grandfather.

Before thinking it through, Kaeli fastened the necklace around Aya’s neck.

“You can wear it tomorrow,” Kaeli said. “If you want, of course,” she added.

“Really?” Aya asked. Her eyes were shining again, but this time from happiness, rather than sadness.

“Really,” Kaeli confirmed. Aya startled her by giving her a big hug.

“Thank you!” she said, grinning. Aya’s enthusiasm was contagious. Kaeli found herself smiling as well. They heard a car pull into the driveway. Aya pulled away.

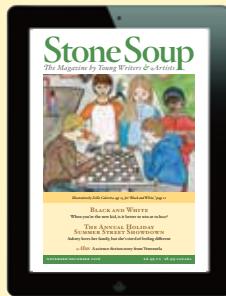
“Mom’s home!” Aya said, running to greet their mom. Kaeli closed the box, careful as ever, and returned it to its spot on her dresser. She knew that it would be there, whenever she needed it. Even if she just needed a smile. Kaeli recalled another line from the meditation.

*“So, when all that’s left... is love, give me away.”\**



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\* From the Jewish prayer book *Mishkan T’filah*, edited by Elyse C. Frishman.



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**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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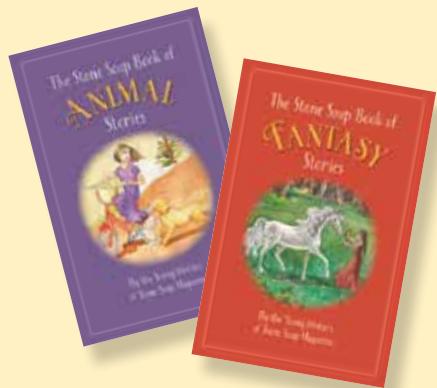


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