

Stone Soup

the magazine by young writers and artists



"Spring in the Yard," by Kertu Kahm, age 8, Tallin, Estonia

ANOTHER DAY

In 1665 Spain a girl was expected to marry the man her father chose

ROSALINO'S DOG

Pinto makes a miraculous journey to be with his beloved master

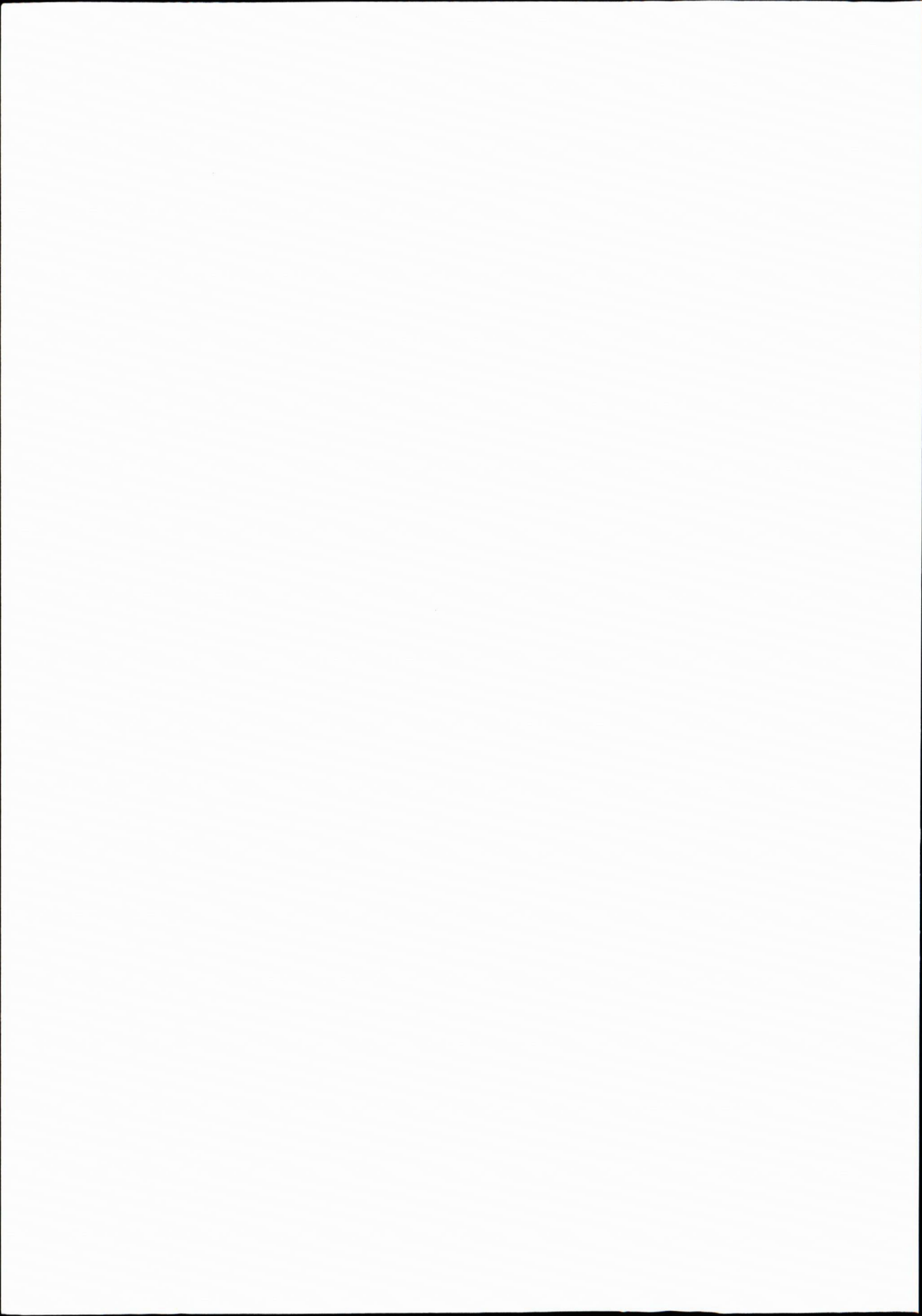
Also: How dare Coach Brown exclude all girls from the swim team!

Illustrations by Lainey Guddat and Holly Wist

A poem by Mark Roberts

MARCH/APRIL 2002

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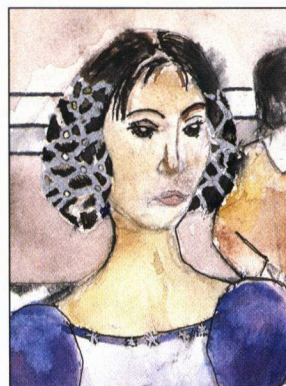
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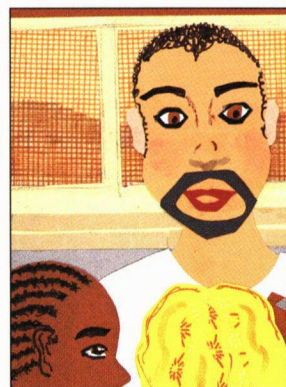
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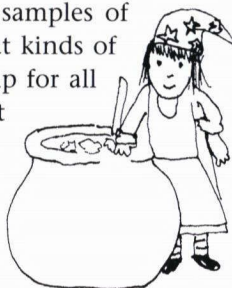
Welcome to all our readers, old and new! We've had the pleasure of publishing *Stone Soup* for over 28 years. It is our belief that, by presenting rich, heartfelt work by young people the world over, we can stir the imaginations of our readers and inspire young writers and artists to create.



Contributors' Guidelines

Stone Soup welcomes submissions from young people through age 13.

If you want us to respond to your submission, you must enclose a business-size self-addressed stamped envelope. If you want your work returned, your envelope must be large enough and have sufficient postage for the return of your work. (Foreign contributors need not include return postage.) Contributors whose work is accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope will hear from us within four weeks. Mail your submission to *Stone Soup*, P.O. Box 83, Santa Cruz, CA 95063. Include your name, age, home address, phone number, and e-mail. If you are interested in reviewing books for *Stone Soup*, write Gerry Mandel for more information. Tell her a little about yourself and the kinds of books you like to read. If you would like to illustrate for *Stone Soup*, send Ms. Mandel some samples of your art work, along with a letter saying what kinds of stories you would like to illustrate. Here's a tip for all our 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.



Jessie Moore, 12

Cover: "Spring in the Yard" was loaned to *Stone Soup* by the Albany-Tula Alliance in New York and the Children's Art Exchange in Vermont. Both organizations promote exchanges of children's art between the former Soviet Union and the United States. Special thanks to Laura Chodos and Renee Wells.

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Lilly Bee Pierce, 9

The Mailbox

I loved the story "Zordex" by Elizabeth Mainardi [November/December 2001]. It had so much detail and she portrayed the characters so thoroughly well. I think she should continue the story, maybe even make it into a novel. Also, Holly Wist's illustrations coincided perfectly with the story, and I love the technique she used. It made the art work come to life, I could almost see the people speak and move on the paper. Thank you to *Stone Soup* for encouraging the arts for young people, and providing an opportunity to learn from people of our age group about different writing and art styles.

Carmina Brelsford, 14
Madison, Georgia

See page 5 for Holly's latest illustrations.

The drawings by Jane Westrick for the story "Baby" by Leslie Pearsall [September/October 2001] really impressed me. I couldn't believe that such beautiful drawings of horses could be done by a thirteen-year-old! They should be in a museum! And this was just the first story in the issue. Then I wanted to read through the whole thing, and I did. I read the whole thing from cover to cover and continued to be impressed. I can hardly wait until the next issue arrives!

Emily Kaufman, 12
Brookline, Massachusetts

I would like to congratulate Anna Hagen on her "Message of the Conch Shell" [July/August 2001]. I enjoyed her story immensely! I am always drawn to stories that focus on relating to animals in some other way than most people do. I greatly admired the illustrations. I am very impressed that someone could be so talented at both writing and drawing! The story was so well written, it seemed like I was in Shayla's shoes for just the few minutes it took me to read it. Wonderful job, Anna!

Margie F. Chardiet, 12
New Haven, Connecticut

Well, nice work! You have acquired another passionate disciple for your fabulous Web site! What began as an assignment for one of my Masters of Education classes has blossomed into a whole new focus for my own middle school teaching practice. Oh, I could say more . . . I am so impressed with the material, the Web site and, more importantly, the voice that you give children!

Sandy McCormack, teacher
Bellevue, Washington

Visit our Web site at www.stonesoup.com.

My grandmother ordered me *The Stone Soup Book of Friendship Stories* a few months ago. I read it non-stop. All of the stories I read were awesome. The ones that touched me most were "Best Friends Forever" and "Friends to the End." I picked "Best Friends Forever" because my best friend is named Tina and I felt this story was about me and my best friend Tina. I picked "Friends to the End" because I'm very emotional and this grabbed my attention. After I read this story I had tears in my eyes. I really do think you all did an astounding job!!!!!!

Kristina Kruse, 10
Phoenix, Arizona

See page 47 if you would like to order The Stone Soup Book of Friendship Stories.

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.



I was sitting outside near the garden, reading a wonderful book

Another Day

by Lily Beaumont

illustrated by Holly Wist



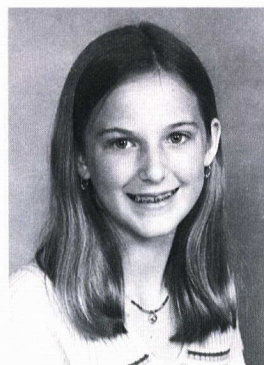
I CAN REMEMBER so clearly the day when my troubles began. I was thirteen years old, and it was the spring of 1665. It was unnaturally warm for Madrid, but I loved the sun. I was sitting outside near the garden, reading a wonderful book. In our flower beds, a bright array of color burst forth. Tulips, crocuses and irises all stretched their delicate petals toward the sun.

"Señorita, your mother wishes to see you." Our maid's voice shattered my pleasant daydreams. "She sounds excited about something, she did not tell me what." Relief spread through me. If it was my mother, there was nothing to fear.

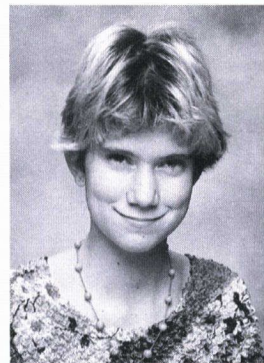
My mother, Catalina, was always gentle, calm and kind. Recently however, she had become ill, and now spent most of her time in bed. Her strength had left her, and although doctors examined her, none could find the cause of her weakness. Luckily, my older sister Isabel took after my mother in all respects. Throughout my mother's illness, she gave me the hope and comfort I desperately needed. Isabel had injured her foot when she was small, and now walked with a limp. Although this meant that her chances of marriage were small, I was glad because it kept her close to me.

Suddenly, I remembered I was supposed to see my mother. I raced inside the house, as our maid called after me, "Brush off your skirt, there is grass on it!"

As I skidded around a corner, I almost collided with my



Lily Beaumont, 12
Rochester, New York



Holly Wist, 13
Murphysboro, Illinois

father, who gave me a cold look and said haughtily, "My parents would have beat me if I were so careless." Trembling, I tiptoed until I reached my mother's bedroom.

As soon as I opened the door, I saw my mother's joyful face smiling at me. "Maria," she said fondly, "come closer to me." Happily, I walked over to her bedside. "I have good news, your father has told me he will be taking you to court soon." She said this anxiously, waiting for my reaction.

I felt uncomfortable, I had never been to court all my life, although my father went there often. "Will Isabel and you accompany me?" I asked.

She shook her head sadly saying, "My child, I can hardly move from this bed; how could I get to court?" Her gentle, brown eyes pleaded with me to understand. I did not.

I could understand if my mother did not come. She was ill, and court life would not suit her, but there was no reason that Isabel should not come. Oh well, I thought, I shall get it over with, and then return home to the part of my family that loves me.

Instead of expressing these worries to my mother, I asked one simple question, "When do my father and I leave?"

"Soon, Maria," she replied, "very soon."

The next few days passed in a blur. I had no free time; every day was spent "perfecting" me for court. Everything had to be a certain way, and nothing less would do.

Seamstresses rushed in and out of our house day and night. I gasped at the fabrics they held in their arms. Silks, satins and velvets were only one-third of what I would wear. Throughout my life, I had worn simple gowns, generally made of wool. Their colors were muted, and were usually dark browns or grays. Suddenly, I was being presented with vivid, expensive gowns.

When I wasn't being fitted for new dresses, I was being tutored. I had been studying for many years; my parents believed that everyone should have a good education. However, my studying was much more rigorous than it had previously been. Geography, math, history, literature, all had to be perfected by the time I was at court. Although I thoroughly enjoyed my time with the tutors, I did not see what the point of this was. I was a girl, and as most people would have said, a woman's job is in her house. In most people's eyes, I was a worthless girl, whose only purpose was to marry and have as many children as possible.

The days went by so quickly, I was surprised when I found myself arriving at court. I was shocked for the first few days. Everything was so different from my peaceful house. There was never any silence or tranquillity here, something was always happening. Elaborate dances took place in the evenings, and during the day, servants hurried down the hallways, trying desperately to get all their jobs done.

Gradually, however, I began to sink into court life. I even enjoyed it. This

process was helped by Edward.

I met Edward a week after I arrived in court. For the first time since I had arrived, I was attending a dance. Although the seamstresses had made many gowns for me, I was wearing my best this evening. It was unlike any other dress I had ever seen. Its pale blue cloth was embroidered with silver thread, which was sewn gracefully into tiny stars bordering the hem. It was made of silk so light it seemed to float around me; I could barely feel it. My dark brown hair was caught up in a silver net, and on my feet I wore delicate blue slippers, which were trimmed with lace. I was laughing and having a wonderful time, when, by chance, I saw a young man standing at the edge of the room. Although I couldn't understand how, he seemed different to me. Slowly, I crept across the room to where he was standing, and we began to talk.

He was the son of an English ambassador, and had journeyed with his father to Spain. Although his father was busy most days, he was free to do what he liked. As I listened to his voice, I fell into a trance. He was so different from the Spanish men I had met. This was not merely a difference in appearance, although his golden hair and blue eyes were much different from the Spanish. He seemed so much more truthful, peaceful and gentle to me, and I loved these new qualities.

My life was suddenly brighter and happier than it had ever been, and than it could ever be. Edward was the one

person I could really confide in about my dreams, and know that he would be supportive. Even my mother and Isabel always thought I was being impractical when I talked about such important matters to them. Edward never criticized me, and so I began to tell him everything.

I told him how my father did not care about me as a person, but about me as a tool, used to gain power. I told him about how I loved learning, and how I hoped that one day I could have enough knowledge to write a novel. I told him about my gentle mother who was so ill, and about my sweet sister who no man would marry because of her limp. I told him everything.

One day, as I was sitting in my room, my father entered. He was smiling, but I sensed that the reason he was smiling did not have anything to do with my well-being. His cruel eyes sent a warning to me as he spoke, warning me not to disagree. "Maria, I have decided that we should return home for a while. There are matters I would like to think over for a time, matters that could prove profitable," he told me.

Instantly I knew what those matters were, and, in an instant, I felt my secure world shatter into millions of pieces. I knew one word that could describe it all, marriage.

I couldn't believe how foolish I had been. While I had sat in my mother's bedroom, I thought about how strange it was that only I should have been going to court. Now the pieces fell into



I crept across the room to where he was standing, and we began to talk

place. My father had been putting me on display, showing me to all the rich and powerful men who might someday prove a "suitable" husband for me.

I don't know how I managed to survive the trip back to my house. I was living my life in a deep stupor, and I had no hope left in me.

When I arrived home, I managed to scribble out a letter to Edward. I told him how sorry I was that I would never see him again, and that I hoped he would understand.

A few evenings later, my father called my whole family into his bedroom. My poor mother had to recline on his bed, she was so weak. I did not feel anything at all. I knew that tonight my father would probably announce who I was to marry, but I had already resigned myself to the fact that I would be unhappy, and that there was nothing I could possibly do about it.

Then my father began to speak. "After much consideration, I have decided that it would be most profitable for our family if Maria married the Duke . . ."

That was as far as he ever got. At that moment, I screamed. In an instant, my father had grabbed me around my wrists. Tears were streaming down my face as I pleaded with him, "Father, please, if you love me, let me marry Edward. Please let me marry Edward. I need to, someday I will write novels. If you love me let me do these things. I promise I will not let you down."

He slapped me hard across my face.

As my face stung painfully, I heard my father yell, "What makes you dare to think that you can take control of your fate? Answer me, Maria!"

Then I saw something amazing; my mother, slowly and painfully, rose from her bed. "Juan," she said gently as she touched my father's shoulder, "Juan."

Then my father turned toward her. "I will talk to you later, Catalina!" he screamed. I watched her as, horrified, she climbed back into bed.

That is the last thing I can remember before I fainted to the floor.

When I woke up the next morning, the stars were only beginning to fade into the morning sky. I was in my room, with my bedspread pulled up around my chin. Vaguely, I wondered how I could possibly be in my bed, when I had been unconscious in my father's room. I decided that our maid must have brought me in here.

I began to lift myself off my bed. Instantly, a stabbing pain shot through my head, and I fell back into a mound of pillows. Hesitantly, I reached a hand up toward the source of the pain. As my fingers brushed up against my hair, I felt a bump. It must have happened when my head hit the floor. I winced, and attempted to get out of my bed again. This time, I was successful.

After I slipped on a robe over my nightgown, I crept out into the parlor. The house was silent and peaceful, there was no sign of the struggle that had taken place the night before. On the

table was a note. On the front it said, "To Maria." My heart raced as I opened it up.

Just as I had suspected, it was from Edward. He told me to meet him Thursday evening just outside of my house. Today was Thursday. He promised he would be there and asked me to pack a few of my possessions. After we were a safe distance from Madrid, we would stop at a church.

I realized then that he wanted me to marry him. After that, we would most likely leave for England, for what was there for us in Spain? It saddened me to leave my mother and sister, but I could not marry anyone but Edward, it would crush all my dreams.

I spent the rest of the day packing a few of my treasured possessions in a small cloth bag and writing notes to Isabel and my mother. In the notes I told them that I would always love them, and that one day, if fate would have it, I would visit them again.

That evening, I walked outside my house. It was cold and, even as I pulled my shawl tighter around me, I shivered. Then I spotted the carriage just up the path. Quickly, I ran up, and saw Edward standing there. He put my bag in the carriage and opened the door for me, saying that as soon as we were married, we would leave on a ship going to England. As I climbed through the door, I glanced back once more at my house, then nodded, sure I was doing the best thing. The carriage rolled slowly out onto the path and away from my house.

MARIA, ENGLAND is only a mile away; we will soon be there," Edward shouts down from the deck above our cabin. I am grateful to him, for he has broken the trance that I fell into while I thought about my past. His voice is comforting; it makes me feel secure and warm, although outside our ship, waves rock violently.

"Can you see the coast?" I ask. My voice is calm, not betraying the doubts I still sometimes have.

"Yes," Edward tells me, "it is a great sight to see, we are almost home."

Home.

Ever since our carriage rolled away from my house, I have not felt that I was at home. As Edward comforted me in our carriage, I was not at home. As we became husband and wife in a small church, I was not at home. Now, suddenly, I realize, I am more at home with Edward than I could ever be with my father. With this comforting thought in mind, I stare down at the paper in front of me. Perhaps, someday, this paper will be bound into a great novel, that many children will read. I put my pen to my paper, and begin to write.

Usually when I am writing, I find that the words form easily under my pen. I devote myself to shaping the characters and plot. Today however, I cannot help thinking about my past, present, and future. I think about my family, and how they are different in so many ways. I think about Edward, and the home we have in England. And my future? All I can do is wait for another day. ❖

Guts and a Few Strokes

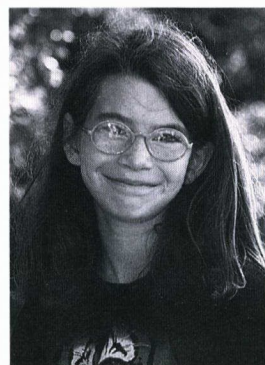
by Eve Asher

illustrated by Alicia Betancourt

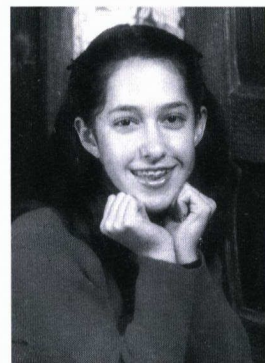
STROKE. STROKE. BREATHE LEFT. Straight legs, follow through with the arms. These are usually my thoughts while swimming the hundred-meter freestyle. For those of you who don't know, that's two laps. I can do it in about a minute and twenty seconds, sometimes more, sometimes less. Oh, and my name is Sophia, been swimming for five years in that very pool, been on the team for three years. Had I been going more slowly and looking ahead, I would have noticed that the seemingly endless deep blue of the chlorinated water was lightening into white. I would have noticed that I could no longer see the stems of sunlight poking through the water like sprouts poking through the air. This time, all I noticed was the green line on the bottom of the pool which would mean I would do a flip turn and start on another length if I wasn't on my last one. I knew what to expect. I felt the warm sunlit wall under my hand. Done!

You know, when I'm underwater, I can't hear or see the rest of the world. I've escaped to what I call Blueiland. In Blueiland, I don't have a meet in two days, I'm not stressing over fraction homework, I'm not watching whatever I eat because I'm allergic to peanuts, I'm just floating in blue and relaxing. Everything fades away into the blue.

But, unfortunately, I'm not in Blueiland now and I wasn't then. Coach Morris called us together. "Did you notice how



Eve Asher, 10
Auburndale, Massachusetts



Alicia Betancourt, 13
Silver Spring, Maryland



“That’s practice for today, so dry off and go home”

Sophia’s arms came out of the water straight? That’s following through. Keep that in mind. Remember, not only do swimmers with correct strokes go faster, they also don’t get disqualified. That’s practice for today, so dry off and go home.” Every practice ended with “dry off and go home.” It signaled us to disperse, which we did. Always.

Later, while gossiping in the locker room, Maggie, whom we trusted to know the most about the pool (no one knew why), gave us startling news. “The pool’s getting a new manager and they might fire Coach Morris,” she said, amazingly calm. Out came a scream from all of us of, “What!” We were all in

pure shock. The more I thought about it, the more I wished I didn’t know.

Lo and behold, the next day at practice there was a young man with smooth blond hair and eerily blank green eyes. He, as we later found out, I don’t remember how, was the new coach, Coach Brown. I could barely hold back tears. Coach Morris had been the coach as long as I could remember, and now he was leaving, and some blondie was taking his place. This blondie better be good, I thought. If he’s not, he’s going down!

“Now,” he smiled, revealing teeth that were so white and perfect they scared me. “It’s tryouts all over again.



"Hey, you guys, we oughta show Brown what we're made of!"

Now, Coach Morris would choose you if you had the potential to get good. I will choose you if you are good and have the potential to get better. A length of each, freestyle, backstroke, butterfly, breaststroke, no rest, go!" he shouted.

It was a snap, except for backstroke, of course. Toward the middle, I pulled a muscle, and it hurt. Butterfly hurt more, but I could rest it after. I just endured, like I do far too often.

Just before Coach Brown announced who made the team, something struck me as odd. He had decided right then. You'd think he'd need some time to think, but not Brown. Brown knew in an instant who the "better swimmers"

were. My best friend Amy and I crossed our fingers. Here goes nothing!

"Peter!" he read. What was going on? Peter couldn't even manage to practice five days a week.

"Harold!" he read. Coach Brown must be crazy. Harold bent his legs when he did the backstroke, *every single time*. Sheesh!

"David!" he read. That I could understand. David had the best butterfly on the team.

"Ian!" he read. By now I'd noticed the lack of girls. It went on like that, too.

"Alfred!"

"Craig!"

"Joseph!"

All boys! Even Shawna hadn't made the team, and her backstroke was nearly perfect. Finally, Maggie called out, "What about the girls? It's a boys and girls team in the Boys and Girls 8 through 12 Division, *Coach Brown!*" The last words sounded almost mocking.

Coach Brown motioned for her to follow him, and, in turn, Maggie motioned us girls to follow her. We huddled in a corner like a football team. I glanced at the boys, who had moved to our spots on the bleachers, where we had been a minute ago. It was hot that day, really hot, and so humid I could barely breathe. The sun went behind one of those rare perfect cotton-candy-marshmallow-fluff white clouds, leaving us a lot cooler. Coach Brown began. "The boys and girls division includes girls. No one much likes to watch girls do things meant for boys, like swim in races. That's because no matter how hard you girls try, you'll just never have the same natural athletic ability boys have. If you must swim, try synchronized water-ballet. That is for girls. Boys are just better at real sports; as much as we try to cover it up, deep in our hearts, we know it's true. Now scat! The pool's for team practice only right now. Toodle-oo!" And he waved us off like mice.

Everything boiled inside me. I could have punched him; no, I could have killed him right then. Normally, I'm a rather quiet kid, but something just popped. It was almost like I'd filled a

balloon with screams, adding some whenever I got mad, and then this was the final one. I felt like my balloon had popped, and now all those screams fell out of my mouth. "YOU JERK! YOU DON'T THINK I'M AS GOOD AS THE BOYS!? You don't think Shawna can whip the swimsuit off anyone who dares challenge her at the backstroke!? You don't think Maggie could do the fastest freestyle she can for thirty whole lengths without rest!? Don't ya!? Do you think Amy's butterfly isn't fit for the Olympic Games!? *No*, you don't, because we're girls, right? *Right?* You sexist freak . . ." Maggie and Amy restrained me before it got out of hand. Right then, all I could call him was "Mmmmm!"

That night, Coach Brown called Mom and Dad and told them what I had done. I got off surprisingly easy. Mom took my side and said I'd been provoked, which was a hundred percent true, and Dad sympathized and told me I couldn't watch TV for a week. That was OK, because about the only show I watch is "As Told by Ginger," and according to Amy it was all reruns that week.

Amy, Shawna, Maggie and I were riding our bikes to the pool the next day when I said, "Hey, you guys, we oughta show Brown what we're made of! I don't know about you, but I'm doing the hundred-meter freestyle, permission or none!" This would be the most gutsy thing I had ever done. Normally, this sort of thing would come out of anyone

else's mouth, and I would hesitate, then go along with it. This was different. This was when some blondie told me I wasn't good enough, told girls all over the world we weren't good enough. And now my fiery anger was sizzling, maybe burning. And I had to put out the fire within me, douse it with the pool.

Shawna called out, "Hear, hear!"

Maggie called out, "Johnny Stone is going down!" Johnny Stone is a competitor in the Individual Medley, and he and Maggie always seemed to end up in a dead tie. With this determination, Johnny Stone *was* going down!

Amy called out, "Brown can't break up Team Dolphin!" Each team had an animal mascot, and ours was the dolphin.

The next few minutes flew by, and, before I knew it, Maggie and Shawna had already gone, and Johnny Stone had gone down. I couldn't believe myself, but I'd already pushed Craig aside and gotten on the springboard. Coach Brown was babbling like an idiot at the referee, who didn't seem to care. We

hadn't transferred to the boys' division yet, and—oooh, I couldn't believe my luck—the pool manager was watching.

The horn! (Oh, how annoying.)

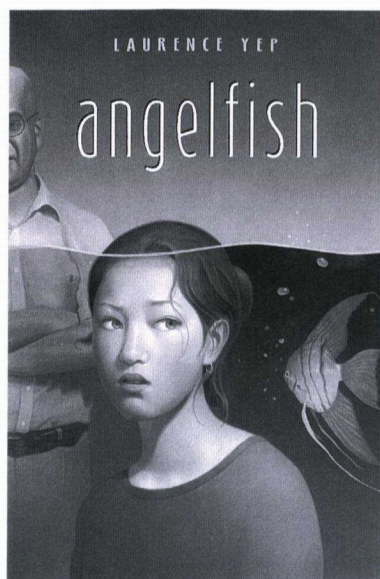
I dove. I later found out I had been racing, completely coincidentally, against only boys. I tore through the water, but speed wasn't what I concentrated on. I thought about each stroke, making it as good as I could. It was different from a normal race, oh so different. Now I wasn't winning pride for my team, I was winning dignity for girls around the world. At least I thought so.

After exactly 62.84 seconds, I took my last stroke, pushed off the pool's smooth bottom, and pulled myself out of the pool. The manager, a redheaded woman with round features, was talking to Coach Brown. "Your team is phenomenal! Did you see those four girls? Most endurance I've ever seen. You've really motivated them. I must say I'm very impressed," she raved.

Maggie, Shawna and Amy came over. I smiled. No doubt about it, with guts and a few strokes, we showed him. ❖

Book Review

by Zhan Tao Yang



Zhan Tao Yang, 13
Las Vegas, Nevada

Angelfish by Laurence Yep; G. P. Putnam's Sons: New York, 2001; \$16.99

WHEN I FIRST READ *Angelfish*, I had many reactions to it, but as I progressed through the book, many of the reactions shifted to reveal different ones. At first, when I first met Robin, the main character in this book, I pitied her because she had to work for a racist old grouch and she could not tell anyone, or else her dream role in her ballet class that she had worked so hard to win would be at stake. As I read through the book, I realized that my feelings changed from pity to a strange sort of jealousy and envy. By going to the fish store every day to work off her debt on the broken glass window, she was not only gaining knowledge of fish and being taught tai chi, but she was also learning many very important lessons of life.

Like Robin, I am also Chinese American. Although both my parents are Chinese, I look more Korean than Chinese. Mr. Cao had called Robin a "half person" because she was only half Chinese. People have also often criticized me about my looks. One thing that was different, though, was that they claimed that I was a nobody, for I didn't look a bit Chinese.

That hurt me even more than what Robin experienced because I had been born and lived in China for half my life, and I had the heritage and knew about China even more than she did. I think the part where Robin compares the characteristics of the beast in the ballet *Beauty and the Beast* with Mr. Cao, a grouchy old man who possessed Beast's temper, was especially wonderful, for in the process of comparing the two, she learned both how to help Mr. Cao overcome his fear and how to act as Beauty on the stage. When Robin found out that Mr. Cao was actually a ballet dancer who was also a victim of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, I finally began to understand why Mr. Cao was so gruff in his manner with Robin, and how he tried to cover up everything nice he did with an insult. Although Mr. Cao's intentions were to try to teach and warn Robin of the dangers of an

audience so that she would never have to go through what he had to go through, in the end both sides learned a lesson. Mr. Cao learned that no matter what happens, the dance never leaves the dancer, no matter if it is in the mind or the body, and Robin learned not to misjudge people by their appearances, for even a beast would appreciate beauty and magnificence if presented the right way. This part of the story affected me deeply, for my mother's generation and my grandmother's generation were affected immensely by the Cultural Revolution.

Angelfish is a wonderful story for anyone or any age. It will captivate readers and guide them through China's horrific past, from a period of time where even simple dreams seemed impossible, to the present, where a young, innocent girl teaches an old man that no matter when or where, beauty is always appreciated. ❖

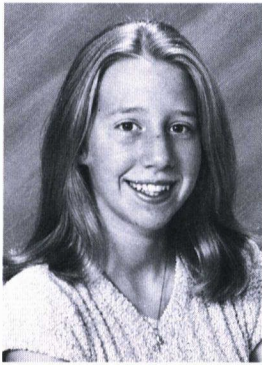


Ariane Phipps-Morgan, 13, Heikendorf, Germany

Amy

by Katie Fister

illustrated by Lainey Guddat



Katie Fister, 13
West Chester, Ohio



Lainey Guddat, 12
Kent, Washington

I CAN STILL REMEMBER the day I met my best friend. I rode my bike past her house a few days after she had moved in. The afternoon air was clear and crisp, and a few fluffy white clouds danced over my head in the breeze. There had been a storm that morning, so the essence of rain swept softly over my skin, and stray drops of water hung from the trees.

I noticed her horse right away. That was the first time I laid eyes on her horse, the most beautiful animal I had ever seen in my life. He was very tall, that was the feature that stood out to me. Though I was only in first grade, and too small to understand how big he was in hands, I could easily tell that my head wouldn't come even to his shoulder. His coat and mane were a black that was blacker than the night. A black that wasn't miserable or sad, but happy and cheerful. Just looking at him put a smile on my face. His stride was perfect. The way he trotted was as smooth as butter, and when he cantered, I could see the delight in the eyes of the rider. That's when I noticed the girl. She looked about my age, with her neat blond hair pulled into a ponytail under her velvet riding helmet. Her form was absolutely perfect. Her back was straight, and she sat deep in the saddle, with her heels down and her hands gripping the reins just right. Any fool could tell that she was a great rider. I couldn't help watching the girl, and eventually she realized I was there.



Any fool could tell that she was a great rider

I kept coming back to watch her ride, day after day, until finally she agreed to give me lessons. She told me that her horse's name was Sultan and her name was Amy.

I SET OFF on my bike toward Amy's ranch in the summer of our sixth grade. She had invited me over for the day, and we were going on a trail ride. My personal favorite horse was a gray mare, seven years old, named Lily. She was kind, sweet and seemed to understand that I was uncomfortable at anything other than a walk, therefore she never acted up. I hated even trotting on horses. I had never had the courage to canter a horse. I was a beginner, though I had been riding for many years under the instruction of my best friend. "You are ready to advance, Kara," she would tell me every day. "What's stopping you?" Physically, I was ready to advance. But I was a timid girl by heart.

I arrived shortly to find Amy in her front yard holding two horses, saddled and ready to go. One of them, I was happy to see, was Lily. The other horse standing next to Amy was Sultan.

"Ready to ride?" inquired Amy, as she tossed me a helmet, and strapped one on herself. Her eyes flashed with a daring sense of adventure. How she and I ever got to be anything more than instructor and student was still a mystery to me. Amy and I were two very different people.

"Yeah," I said confidently, but Amy knew better. She laughed, which made

her entire face glow with amusement, and handed me Lily's reins. We mounted and headed for the trails.

It was an incredible day. The air was mildly warm and the sun was shining brightly. The sky was a blue you can't imagine, with no clouds to disturb it. We rode into the forest near the ranch. Amy held her head high as Sultan strode along through a woodland carpet of leaves. Lily and I were beside them and Amy and I chatted as we always did on trail rides.

Soon we came to a fallen log. It must have been four feet in height, perhaps five feet in width. A smile crept over Amy's face. Just the sight of that log gave me goosebumps, but Amy had other ideas. She stopped Sultan about twenty feet in front of the log. I knew exactly what she was thinking. "Amy," I warned her, "that log is huge, are you sure Sultan can clear it?"

Amy gave me a look. "Of course Sultan can clear it, he's the best horse around!" she exclaimed, patting him on the shoulder.

Amy wasn't exaggerating, Sultan really was the best horse around. Amy could prove it when she rode him in shows. She and Sultan always took home a blue ribbon. When Amy rode, it was as amazing as watching the sun set. But she never gave herself any credit for her ribbons. "It's all Sultan," she would insist. Then when she got home, she nailed the ribbons to the walls of his stall.

I put Lily into a walk, and we went around the log. Nothing could make me

jump it. I stopped Lily about fifty feet from the other side, giving Amy plenty of space. "OK," Amy shouted. "Here I go!" She urged Sultan into a perfect canter, and approached the jump gracefully. Sultan's ears were perked forward, all of his attention fixed on the jump. Amy urged him on, and Sultan leaped. He sailed over the jump. Suspended in the air above the log, I relaxed, but my heart acted too soon. Just as they were coming down for their landing, Sultan's foot caught on a hole in the log, and he came crashing down on top of Amy.

I gasped for my breath. "Amy!" I screamed, jumping off of Lily. I ran to the spot where she lay. Sultan was flailing his hooves madly. I grabbed his reins and forced him up. Amy was crying, the only time I had ever seen her cry. At least she was alive.

"Kara," Amy sobbed, "I can't feel my legs."

My heart skipped a beat. "Try to stand up," I encouraged her. I helped her to her feet. But the second I let go, she collapsed. "Oh no," I whispered. I knew what was wrong with Amy. Amy knew it too. It only took one terrifying second to leave my best friend paralyzed.

Amy got home from the hospital five days later in a wheelchair. Many thought her condition was bad, but Sultan's, in my opinion, was worse. No one had the heart to tell Amy about Sultan. I went over to Amy's house every day to see her. Her mother sent me up to her room, where I would al-

ways find her trying to stand. Her arms were still quite strong, as they always had been. Amy would lift herself out of the chair using her arms, only to collapse again once her weight was shifted onto her legs. I hated to see my best friend falling apart like this.

"Kara," Amy begged me one day, "Please tell me, what's wrong with Sultan?" I could tell she was truly worried, because simply bringing up the subject of her beautiful horse brought tears to her eyes. I looked straight at Amy, studying her face. Her skin seemed so much more pale, her hair tangled. Her lips were cracked and dry, but the saddest thing about Amy was her eyes. Once so full of beauty and happiness, they now expressed an undying sorrow.

"OK, Amy, I guess you should know," I admitted reluctantly. My voice dropped to a whisper. "Sultan was badly traumatized by the accident. Now he's gone crazy, he bucks and rears whenever anyone comes near him."

"Where is he?" Amy asked.

"In the paddock," I replied, and before I knew it Amy was out the door. "Amy, wait!" I screamed after her.

She stopped just outside the paddock gate and gave me a cold look. "I can see your concern, Kara. But Sultan trusts me," she said, waving me away, "he won't hurt me." Amy opened the gate. I watched closely, holding my breath as she approached Sultan. "Hey, boy," she murmured, "don't be scared, it's me." Sultan immediately reared up in anger,



"You don't think I can do it, do you Kara?" she muttered

hooves flailing inches away from my best friend.

"Oh God," I prayed, "get out of there, Amy." Sultan reared up again, but this time he was closer to Amy, and she wouldn't back away. Before I knew what I was doing, I ran into the paddock and pulled Amy away from the angry horse. I pushed her out of the paddock and slammed the gate behind me. Sultan galloped in furious circles around the ring.

"Kara!" she yelled, "I was doing fine!"

I was losing my patience, "No, Amy, you were not doing fine! He could have killed you!" I exclaimed.

Amy stared down into her lap. "You don't think I can do it, do you Kara?"

she muttered.

I had no idea what she was talking about. "It depends on what you are going to do," I replied. I desperately wanted to take my words back, ashamed of myself for yelling at Amy after all she had been through.

She glared at me. "I'm going to ride Sultan again," she said with a determined look on her face.

My mouth dropped open again. I wanted to yell at her, tell her she was out of her mind, but instead I whispered, "Amy, you are my best friend in the whole world," my mouth went dry, "but I can't let you hurt yourself."

Amy exploded. "You still don't think I can do it! Well, I'll show you, Kara, I'll

show everyone! And if you aren't going to back me up, just go home, Kara. Go home and forget me." Her cruel words pierced my heart like a thousand knives. I was only worried about her, but I hadn't the courage to yell at Amy anymore, so I turned on my heel and walked down the driveway of her house.

I worried about Amy all night, tossing and turning as I was unable to sleep peacefully. Visions of my best friend on a stretcher blew through my head and the sound of sirens and panicked voices filled my ears. I had to oversee her riding somehow, to protect her. "But how?" I argued with myself. "She would be furious if she found out you were watching her. She's mad at you." Around midnight I got an idea. I figured I could hide in the woods just outside her backyard, that way I could watch her, and she would never know I was there. I made up my mind to stash myself in the woods so I would be able to keep an eye on Amy.

When I arrived at Amy's house the next morning, I had just enough time to steal away before she came outside at six-thirty. Sultan was still in the paddock, running around in mad circles. Amy trudged along in her wheelchair, holding a halter, lead rope and lunge line. She slipped into the paddock quietly. Sultan reared up in fright, bucking and kicking wildly. "Oh please, Sultan, don't hurt Amy," I said under my breath. Thankfully, Amy was quick, even in her wheelchair. She easily avoided Sultan's flailing hooves, and

swiftly slipped a halter over Sultan's nose, which impressed me. He fought, but Amy was clever, and held her ground bravely. My heart pounded at every second that Sultan was close to her. Amy made her way to the center of the paddock and shooed Sultan to the rail. Tapping him gently with her lunge, she began a familiar process known as join-up. I had seen her do join-up many times before with new horses. Join-up developed a trust between a horse and a rider, in which the rider could prove to the horse that she wanted to be friends, and was no threat. Sultan cantered in smooth circles around Amy. When she signaled it with her lunge, Sultan changed direction or speed. After a few hours, Sultan let her get near enough to pat him tenderly on the shoulder. I was amazed at Amy's progress in a single day. For a single split second, I thought Amy glanced in my direction. My heart skipped a beat. Was I just nervous, or did Amy really know I was there?

I secretly watched Amy every morning for an entire year. I thought about her every day. When school started again, I hoped and prayed that we could somehow be friends again. But every day, I got the same angry glare from Amy in class, the same cold shoulder at recess, and the empty loneliness in my heart as the long hours ticked by.

One harsh winter morning in December, I sat in my corner of the woods, my eyes glued to Amy like a hawk. Normally, I had no idea what Amy would do that day, but today I

knew. Sultan had a saddle on his back and a bridle in his mouth. She was going to ride. My heart pounded like never before, and my breath was short. Amy grasped the saddle and pulled herself into the seat. Oh my, I thought, Amy's got nothing to support her, she'll fall! But Amy was smart, and had thought of that ahead of time. She pulled the stirrups up and over her lap, intertwining them tightly. "OK, Sultan," I heard her say, "this is it."

With a click of her tongue, Sultan was walking slowly. He seemed to understand that Amy needed to be handled carefully, and he couldn't act up. Amy held on to the horn of her English saddle, her knuckles white with effort. She put Sultan into a slow trot, doing careful circles around the paddock. "Oh, Amy, you're doing it!" I whispered. "You're riding!"

A determined look crossed her face, as she gently urged Sultan to canter. Sultan's smooth gait allowed Amy to relax. Her once-frightened face now expressed a joy that can't possibly be described in plain words. "Come on, Sultan!" she yelled. "Let's fly!" Sultan's canter quickened, as Amy aimed him for the paddock fence.

My heart seemed to stop completely and tears of fear welled up in my eyes. "Please don't, Amy," I begged her to myself, hoping somehow she could hear me. But she didn't stop. Closer and closer to the fence they approached. In one mighty leap, Sultan cleared the fence, and landed safely on the other side,

where he and Amy galloped across the field into the rising sun. It was a beautiful sight. The profile of two happy spirits that had overcome their own disabilities illuminated the sky, as even the clouds seemed to rejoice at Amy's success.

"You did it!" I screamed without thinking, jumping out of the woods and running toward Amy. Once I did it I couldn't stop myself, I was so proud of my best friend.

"Kara!" Amy exclaimed, a smile spreading across her face. She and Sultan cantered across the field to where I was standing. Amy lowered herself carefully into her wheelchair, and once she was settled, she and I embraced for the first time in over a year. "Oh, Kara, I'm so sorry," she cried. "I know you were only trying to protect me."

"I'm sorry too Amy," I replied, as I spilled the whole story about how I had been watching her work with Sultan. We released and she looked at me carefully. For one horrible moment, I was afraid she was mad at me.

"You mean to tell me," she inquired, "that you cared enough about my safety to get up at six every morning just to make sure I was OK, even though the chance of getting caught was at risk?"

Relief spread through me. "Of course," I whispered. "You are my best friend." Suddenly, Amy burst into tears. I couldn't help it, I cried too. We both knew that we weren't sad at all, but deliriously happy, and never again would our friendship be tested. ❖

Rosalino's Dog

by Andrew Shannon

illustrated by the author

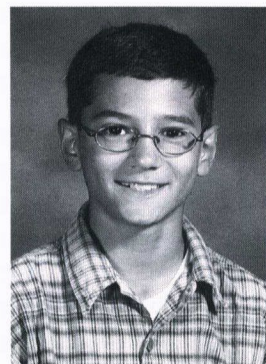
THIS IS A STORY ABOUT my great-grandfather's dog. This story takes place in Mexico in the town of Tampico, where my great-grandfather, Rosalino Dominguez, had been trying to get land for poor people, but that was against the government's laws.

My grandmother told me, "The only time he had ever cried was when he had to leave his dog." The dog's name was Pinto, and in Spanish that means spotted. Pinto was a very energetic dalmatian, and very big. Every day when Rosalino came home from work, he would say hello to his wife, then spend almost an hour with his dog. He (and sometimes his wife) would throw sticks for Pinto, play with him and pet him.

But one day the government found out that Rosalino had been trying to get land for poor people. Men came over and threatened his life, so he had to leave. My great-grandfather decided to go north. He'd heard that in California there were jobs. He decided to go north even though he would have to leave his beloved wife and dog.

"My beloved wife," he exclaimed, "I must leave you but I will send what money I can." He ran to Pinto and gave him a very tight hug. And once he was done, he finally walked away from his home.

Rosalino's wife and dog watched him get smaller and smaller as he walked further and further away. Going, going, gone.



Andrew Shannon, II
Sacramento, California



They would have a big campfire at night and talk about their lives

And so he began his journey north in search of a job. On he walked without stopping unless it was to drink from a stream or eat some cactus. He had no other supplies. He walked for days and even waded across the enormous Rio Grande, the river that separates Texas from Mexico. After walking for days he looked up and saw something that made his heart skip a beat. A *railroad station!!* He did not have any money, but that was no problem. He could sneak into a boxcar. So he ran up to the station and went up to a conductor.

"What direction is this boxcar train heading?" he asked.

"North," the conductor replied. "Why?"

"Just wondering," my great-grandfather replied.

My great-grandfather could not believe his luck. So he jumped in a boxcar and the train pulled from the station.

As he rode in the boxcar, Rosalino started really feeling lonely. He missed his wife, his dog and his cozy home. His life was perfect up until the cruel government got in his way. It wasn't fair that all the good land went to the rich people, and the poor people who worked on it got nothing.

He walked, hitchhiked and rode trains all the way to the Imperial Valley in California. There in the Imperial Valley, he found plenty of work picking tomatoes, peaches, cotton and whatever



"Pinto, is that you?!" Rosalino cried

else he could find. He sent what money he could to his family.

Rosalino and the other farm workers lived in whatever shelter they could find near the fields where they worked. So usually they would have a big campfire at night and talk about their lives. Almost everyone there had left people they loved and had to work their hardest just for a little money. Sometimes to get people's minds off their troubles, Rosalino would talk about the funny things Pinto used to do.

"He would chase his tail all day long and once he caught it he would shake it around like a baby's rattle!" Everyone would laugh at this.

One night, while they were sitting

around a campfire, they heard a rustling in the bushes. They saw a glow of eyeballs, and out crawled a beaten, exhausted, but happy, Pinto.

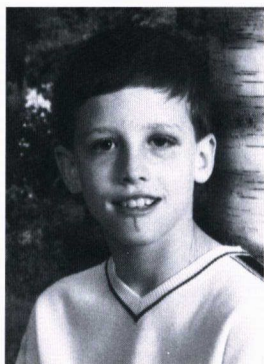
"Pinto, is that you?!" Rosalino cried. He threw his arms around his beloved dog.

Everyone agreed that Pinto's arrival was a miracle, so the next day they took him to a church to be blessed. Unfortunately, Pinto died about a week later from exhaustion. But still, that dog walked and tracked my great-grandfather for about 2000 miles across deserts, over mountains and through rivers.

Through love and determination, Pinto was finally reunited with the man he loved so much. ❖

The Crash

by Mark Roberts



Mark Roberts, 10
Windsor, California

I can't remember the crash,
Only closing my eyes,
A falling feeling rushing through me,
As if I were sinking under water.
But there was none, just rocks.

My eyes wouldn't open.
I remember thinking this must be
What it's like being dead.
I floated out of the ditch,
"Crawling like a cat,"
they told me,
And couldn't feel myself.

The youngest one said,
"I thought you were dead,"
And the other,
"Will the eye ever grow back?"

Teeth chattering, feeling of ice
All over my body,
And the voice repeating,
"Don't fall asleep, don't fall asleep,"
I wanted to sleep the pain away.

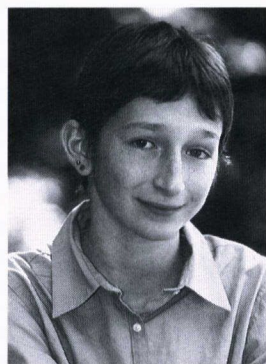
I thought breaking bones
Would hurt more,
But my eye demanded attention.
Behind a swollen, deformed eye,
I still see swirling leaves,
Crossed branches of trees,
The flash of a strobe light,
And the crash, again and again.

My face has become
An ugly changing rainbow,
But inside I am the same as before.
Can you see me in all my colors?

Reb's Secrets

by Zoe Paschkis

illustrated by the author



Zoe Paschkis, 14
Newton, Massachusetts

Zoe wrote her story when she was 13 and illustrated it shortly after she turned 14

“**M**OTHER, DON'T,” I SHRIEKED.

Mother looked at me and opened her mouth threateningly. “Rebecca, you’ll wake everybody up!”

“I like this side,” I said quickly, stroking the dark yellow cotton.

“Yes, but you know that your grandmother made that quilt and when she arrives, she’ll want to see the patchwork side up. Say you had quilted a beautiful patchwork and then backed it with a solid color. Would you be more proud of the patchwork you had labored over or the backing? Common sense, Reb-el!”

I was comforted slightly that she hadn’t discarded her loving nickname for me in her scold.

“Mother,” I ventured.

“Yes, Rebecca.”

“I . . . uh . . . I was writing late last night and uh . . .” And then the whole story spilled out. “I’ve been trying to write something and the pen exploded . . . all over that side of the quilt . . . I’m so sorry . . . I tried to wash it . . . I did . . . I feel so bad . . . I knew I was using a leaky pen . . . I should have stopped using it before . . . I’m so sorry . . . I just . . .”

But mother was already searching the underside of Grandma’s quilt for the stain.

“It’s here.” I snatched the lower corner and flipped it up furiously, and covering several patches was a big black



... and covering several patches was a big black splotch

splotch. I burst into tears and flung myself onto the bed.

"Oh my Lord," gasped Mother.

I writhed on the bed and kicked off my shoe and wrestled off my coat and buried my face inside of it. I dared remove it for a split second and saw my mother standing with her hand over her mouth, unsure of what to do. There was a long silence.

"Honey . . . Reb . . . what have you written so far?"

I stared at her in astonishment, hesitated, and then I scrambled to my feet and hurried to the closet. I swept aside two pairs of shoes and a fallen blouse and pulled up the floorboard. Reaching inside, I pulled out a fabric-covered book. I heard the wooden floor creak and felt my mother standing behind me. Using my nightgown, which was hanging on a hook, I pulled myself to my feet, and without looking at my mother, I moved silently to my bed, sat down and began to read aloud.

"Ahead, a light illuminated a circle of moist and thick air. The green leaves glowed on one side, apple skins, and quivered in the cool and slow moving wind. I walked in the heavy darkness toward the light. The fog was noiseless, enchanting. With the beat of concentration: shck, shck, shck on the wet pavement. I am going to the halo of pale golden light, where I should enter the realm of enchantment, breathe the thick, magical air and hear the muted undertones of the night weightlessly resound in my head. Shck shck shck. I am closer, and in the

shadow of a great tree, approaching the thick haze of enchantment and wonder. Shck. Sh. I no longer hear the sounds of my feet walking. I only hear the thundering silence echo in this vast supernatural world. I hold my breath, lest I blow it all away. It will soon die away as these morning hours creep closer so I must savor this moist air and this enchanted place, this feeling of walking into a cloud, unsure of where to go, but with no desire to go, a desire to sit and wait and not think about anything. This realm is an escape from life, a stopper, a place to think about nothing at all with everything to think about. The only emotion is contentment and the only thought is to stay forever. If only every night I could enter this world, if only every night were foggy and silent, blessed. If only I could lie down on the wet pavement and think about nothing forever."

Mother sat down slowly. "Reb, that's beautiful," she breathed.

"That's all I've got for now . . . it took me two weeks just to write this."

"How long have you been working secretly on that, you little snipe?" she said, grinning.

I flushed deeply. "Several weeks now. I guess I won't be needing that floorboard anymore, now that you know about it and all."

I picked my coat up off the bed and hung it on a hook by the door. I retrieved the shoe that I had kicked off, pulled off my other one, and set them both in the closet.

"May I comb your hair?" asked Mother.

"Sure," I obliged, as I unpinned it and let it fall down across my back. I love people playing with my hair. She patted a spot in front of her on the bed and I brought over my brush and sat down. I felt her tenderly lift a lock of hair and start to brush it, over and over, each time feeling a pleasant pull on my scalp.

"You see," she began, "I didn't know you were such a wonderful writer, Reb! Look at me!" I turned and she took my chin into her strong hand and looked into my eyes. "You can write. You can write!" Her eyes filled with tears. "Why did you hide it?"

I shrugged, embarrassed that I had hidden something from my mother for all this time. "Well, I guess I was just shy, you know."

Mother nodded. "I was just like you at this age. I drew all the time in private. Unlike you, I never got found out. But still, to this day, I regret having kept it all a secret. I remember in seventh grade, we had an assignment where we were supposed to write and illustrate our own fables. I worked hours on my illustrations, making them detailed and beautiful. After class on the day we

turned them in, Mr. Keegan pulled me aside and asked me if I would like to be the school's "Artist of the Month." It all sounded wonderful until he added that I would be in the paper. I turned him down immediately. And after that," she sighed, "I stopped drawing."

"But why, if you were so good at it?"

She shrugged and wiped her eyes. "I don't know. Just don't let that happen to you, OK, Reb? You get your stuff out into the world! Don't be afraid!"

I nodded and mother stroked my cheek. She set down the brush and wrapped her arms around me. For several minutes, she hugged me and patted my head. When she let go, she looked at her watch.

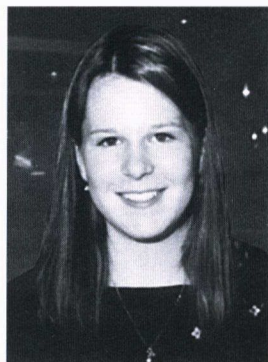
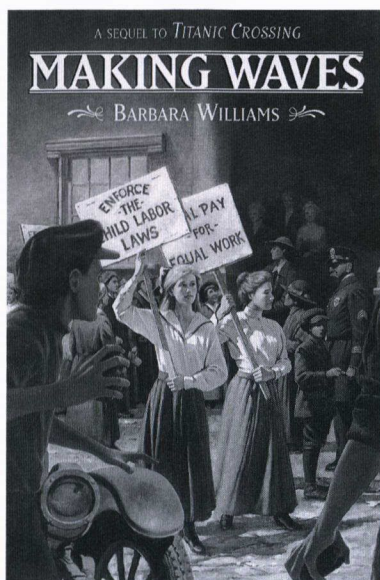
"Speaking of shy, it's just a few minutes shy of eleven!" she cried. "Come on, shoo, shoo! Get under the covers."

She picked up my little book and set it gingerly on my bedside table as I climbed under the covers. She bent over me, kissed my forehead, and tucked the covers closer around my chin. Before she left the room, she turned down the corner of the quilt with the stain on it and smoothed it out.

"Good night, Reb." ❖

Book Review

by Sarah Marcus



Sarah Marcus, 12
Watchung, New Jersey

Making Waves by Barbara Williams; Dial Books for Young Readers: New York, 2000; \$17.99

IN MAKING WAVES, author Barbara Williams returns to her two main characters who survived the sinking of the *Titanic* in her last book, *Titanic Crossing*. These two young people, Albert Trask and Emily Brewer, continue the friendship they forged on that fateful voyage in 1912.

Like many young people, Emily and Albert share a bond, which was formed by a shared experience. All of us form friendships by positive and negative experiences we share with others: a particularly successful science fair project or maybe a crushing defeat on the soccer field. Certainly Emily and Albert witnessed the horror of the loss of 11,517 souls and must now manage to go on with their lives.

The book begins less than a week after the disaster at sea, when Emily writes to Albert, looking for someone to talk to who “understands about the *Titanic*.” Emily’s new life is clouded with fears and nightmares about the disaster, and she can’t put it in the past the way Mama suggests. This determined twelve-year-old is seeking an empathetic ear, the

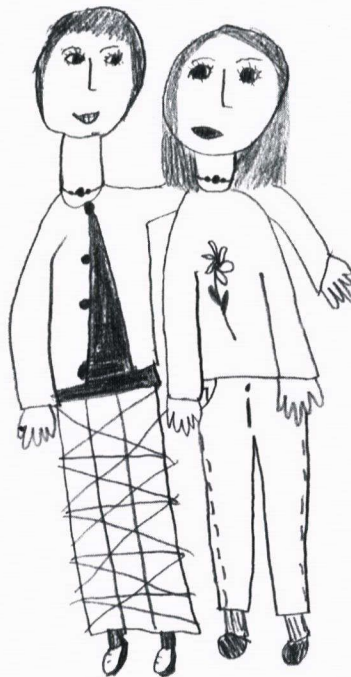
way many adolescent girls commiserate with their friends about being a wallflower at a school dance.

Through their correspondence, Emily and Albert find that they share the feeling of wonder about why they survived and so many others didn't. Both of them attempt to get on with their lives, making friends, learning lessons, and fitting into family life. However, just like many real-life people who survive a disaster, they both find themselves fighting to right wrongs.

Barbara Williams has created believable characters. Emily's strong will, which often gets her into trouble, is

her strongest asset. In a time when women were still in the background, she breaks the mold by joining her friend Maggie in a fight for change. Albert provides a sensitive and understanding ear to Emily, as he tries to insure that his survival makes a difference.

Most readers and moviegoers already know the story of the *Titanic*. Ms. Williams carries the story to the next level by reminding us that the *Titanic* disaster did not end the lives of all on board. Many who survived achieved great things that were shaped by their experiences on April 15, 1912. ❖



Hannah Fine, 10, Providence, Rhode Island

Limitations

by Tran Nguyen

illustrated by Natalie Chin

PROLOGUE



I AM A GUARDIAN ANGEL. I am retelling one of my missions to earth long ago. It was my first mission; I was proud of my abilities. And to go to a foreign country made me excited.



Tran Nguyen, 13
Victoria, British Columbia,
Canada

THE RADIANT noon sun shone brightly as the cool breeze ruffled the palm branches near the Mekong in Cambodia. It flowed from China and went past several countries and ended in the South China Sea near Vietnam. The Mekong River flowed smoothly, running its course to the ocean; the water glittered like a jewel in the light. A small fishing boat village was huddled together on one side of the four-mile-wide river, the small brown boat homes bobbing up and down. Children swam playfully in the water without a care. I noticed especially one small boat house where a family of four lived. Their living quarters were small and cramped. Like all of the other boat houses, they all looked alike. The boats were a much larger version of a wooden row-boat with a platform overtop and a tent-shaped roof. But this one I noticed was older and needed more repair; there was a thin rope holding the boat from drifting away. The mother and the father and their two sons that lived there were eating their meager dinner. The children were six and four years of age; their rag-like clothes hung loosely on them. Their parents' faces were tired but happy.



Natalie Chin, 9
Bellevue, Washington



The catching always reached an all-time low in the flooding seasons

GLOOMY CLOUDS filled the sky and a cold breeze ripped through the air. The family was in a small paddle-boat heading for the schoolhouse. The parents were dropping off their children at the school and then would go to work after. The paddle dipped slowly in the water getting closer to the school.

THE MOTHER and father paddled to the middle part of the river where fish were abundant. The rainy season had started last month and steadily the water had begun to get stronger, and

the fish had started to get fewer and fewer. The water rushed quickly past the anchored boat; the gray clouds rumbled threateningly. Both of them cast out their fishnets, hoping with luck this time to catch many fish. A few hours later, they pulled the fishnets out of the water and checked for fish. They had once again caught very little fish. The catching always reached an all-time low in the flooding seasons and the family always went poor and hungry. Sad and depressed, the parents paddled silently home.

TORRENTS of rain poured down the sky with the strength of bullets. The two boys shivered with a high fever and coughed as a chilly wind swept through the house. They were too sick to go to school. The parents were reluctant to go to work, but they knew they must go in order to make money for medicine and warm jackets for their sons. They crept outside and onto their small paddleboat, leaving their two sick children.

THE CURRENT rushed stronger and stronger than before and swept away debris. The cloud-filled sky was dark and menacing and rain poured down. The youngest son woke up with a bad feeling welling up in his chest. Where was Mom? Where was Dad? His brother woke up shortly, sweating with fever, coughing and cold. He shivered and took an old shaggy blanket and covered both of them with it to keep them warm.

THEY SAT in their paddleboat waiting and waiting. They had pulled up the nets hour after hour and had caught no fish. The rain battered their bodies. They knew that there would be no fish because of the water that was mounting higher and more powerful. As they sat there, a log floated by. Then the father thought, Why not collect the firewood that had been swept away in last night's storm to sell and get money instead? They started paddling to collect logs of wood.

Two hours later their boat was laden

with wood to sell and the husband and wife were ecstatic to have found so much wood. It was extra hard now to paddle with such weight. The rain was still beating down relentlessly and the current was pushing in the opposite direction when they were paddling. They were in the middle of the four-mile-wide river and it would take lots of effort and strength to get to shore. Tired and hungry they kept on paddling but the current was too strong. Tides of water flooded into the boat. They both started bailing out the water but when they finished another bigger tide flooded the boat again. The mother bailed while the father paddled with lots of effort to reach the distant shore. A big monstrous wave all of a sudden hit the boat. The boat spun, then flipped over, taking the parents with it.

MEANWHILE on the boat house the weather was the same. Their home rocked violently back and forth. Both of the boys were ill, worried and, most of all, scared. Without warning, the boat lurched sideways. The rope that had held it had snapped! The youngest son ran out of the safety of the roof and tried to retie it with a stronger rope; the boat would stray away if he didn't do it quickly. Another violent lurch flung the child's body into the mighty waters.

"Help!" he screamed, coughing and gasping, as his lungs filled with water.

His body was too frail to swim in the raging current. His brother took a rope

and threw it to him. I flew down swiftly and tried to save him. It was not his time to go, not his time to die. I held up his weak body as his brother pulled himself slowly toward the boat, when another wave came and broke his grip on the rope. I needed to retie the boat, but I also needed to help the mother and father, but I couldn't leave.

THE PARENTS floated up onto the surface of the water. They watched their hours of effort and work rapidly pushed away from them as they swam with all their might to reach the faraway shore. The mother was shivering with cold and strived to keep on swimming.

"Do you need me to help you?" her husband asked.

"No," she said, in an exhausted tone.

It seemed like they would never reach home.

FIFTEEN MINUTES later he knew she couldn't swim anymore; her strength was drained and she was cold. Her husband had insisted that she go on his back to let him do the swimming. She wrapped her arms around his neck. His strokes were now getting slower and he was getting weary. Both of them would never make it home like this.

She knew what she had to do.

"Remember to take care of our sons," she said, trying to sound happy, "and to buy them medicine and jackets."

Tears streamed down her face, mingling with the rain.

"Don't give up! I'll help you get to

shore," uttered her husband encouragingly.

She had no more strength; her husband did.

"You must live. I'll always be with you," she gently whispered, and, weeping, she slowly let go and slowly sank into the water.

"Nooo!" I cried. I knew what had happened. I had managed to get their son safely back on the boat. I had saved one life, yet lost another.

THAT NIGHT when the father had arrived home, he sat down with his children in silence. His face was impassive, as if still shocked. The two boys ran eagerly up to him.

"Where's Mommy, Dad?" the youngest said.

"She's with us from now on, anytime, anywhere." He tried to explain what had happened and then collapsed and cried. The boys knew now that there would be no one to kiss them good-night. They knew that she was gone. The husband remembered what she had said, "You must live."

He carried his two sons, sat near the edge of the boat house and listened to the rushing water. The sky was dark and so was the river water, like their future.

EPILOGUE

WHEN I RECALL this story, it makes me think about my abilities and it reminds me that even I, an angel, have limitations like everybody else. ❖

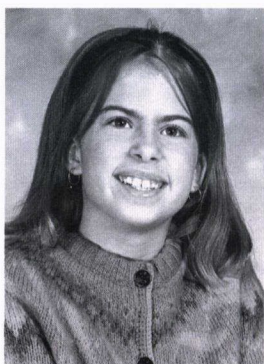
Rescue

by Miranda Neubauer

illustrated by Jessie Hennen



Miranda Neubauer, 13
Bielefeld, Germany



Jessie Hennen, 12
Shoreview, Minnesota

JT WAS THE FIRST DAY at my new school. I was excited and nervous. I am the first in my family ever to go to a Gymnasium (a German secondary school for grades 5 through 13, preparing for university entrance). Frau Heintz, the homeroom teacher for class 5b, was calling the roll. "Andreas Ludowsky?"

"Here!" a thin boy with thick curly hair whom I didn't know answered.

His name began with an L. That meant my name would be coming soon. I began to think wildly, Please don't call me, forget me, skip my name. But it didn't help.

Frau Heintz called, "Sieglinde Steinbrecher?"

"Here," I whispered barely audibly. But she hadn't heard me.

"I said Sieglinde Steinbrecher! Where is she?"

This time I spoke a bit louder. "I'm *here*." I couldn't help sounding a bit whiny. Some other kids laughed. How I wished that I had a more modern name, like Daniela or Ann-Katrin. Why was I stuck with such an old-fashioned name?

But at least the worst was over. The roll call had gone better this time than in elementary school, where everybody had repeated my name over and over again and had kept saying how stupid it was. I had just leaned back when I heard a voice behind me I knew only too well. Sabine von der Heide, my worst enemy. She'd been at my old school as



"We'll have some fun with her. In fact, we can start right now!"

well. "Hey, it's Oma. Grandmother is in our class again!" she was saying to her best friend Birgit. "We'll have some fun with her. In fact, we can start right now!" The next thing I knew, somebody had pulled the long braid hanging down my back. I turned around, even though I knew who had done it. Sabine sat there, with her fake, sweet, innocent smile. "Why, Grannie dear, how are you? What big teeth you have!" she said. Birgit could hardly contain herself with laughing. She looked like she was going to burst. I also thought I was going to burst with anger. I had to keep it in, but I couldn't. I could feel my face getting hot, in a moment I would scream at that stupid girl, when . . .

"Sabine von der Heide? I repeat, Sabine von der Heide?" Frau Heintz was still calling the roll, and now it was Sabine's turn. She hadn't noticed it while she'd been annoying me. She raised her hand, looking very embarrassed at having missed her name. I couldn't help grinning a little; it felt like I had paid her back.

But I knew it was going to be a hard year. Just like all the other years since first grade. That was the first time I had ever been in a class with Sabine. Already then she had noticed I was a good teasing victim. That's also when she had started calling me Oma. As we'd gotten older, Sabine had teased me about other things as well. I wore old-fashioned clothes, not Calvin Klein jeans or Gap clothes like her. She talked a lot about boys and pop stars. That didn't interest

me at all. I preferred reading books. I was sure that all the kids at this school were snobs who had parents that were doctors or professors and earned loads of money. My mother was a supermarket cashier who barely earned enough to raise her three daughters.

And I was right about the hard year. Every day at recess Sabine, Birgit and their other friends would pull my hair and tease me. They stuck their feet out when I walked by their desks so I would trip. One time, Sabine grabbed my worn leather satchel and started throwing it across the room to Birgit. Moments later it was flying around the classroom. Even kids who usually left me alone were joining in the fun. I felt miserable. There was nothing I could do but wait till the teacher came. Or until they got tired of it. If I tried to snatch my bag back, they threw it around even more. Or they laughed at me during P.E., when I couldn't run fast enough or wasn't able to make a basket.

At home, nobody really cared that I was unhappy. My mom was too busy taking care of my little sisters. And as for my father, well he'd left us when I was only six, just before my youngest sister was born. The one time I had asked my mother for help in first grade she'd answered, while she changed the baby's diapers, "You can't run to me every time a little thing goes wrong at school. You're a smart girl! Stand up for yourself! Deal with it. The others will grow up sooner or later. Then they'll leave you alone." I'd hoped that would

happen. For four long years I'd hoped. Sometimes I'd even wished something bad would happen to me, that I would break my leg, or get really sick, so that everyone who teased me would feel sorry. Or that I'd come to school and find that everyone was friendly and would apologize for the mean things they'd done. I'd really believed things would be better at my new school. But they weren't. Nothing ever changed. And it looked like they never would.

This was how I was feeling when Alison arrived. The weather had become cold and wet. Every morning I bundled up in my old thick brown coat and braved the wind. I think it was a Friday, because I remember thinking, as I battled the stormy weather, that very soon it would be the weekend, when I could stay home, relax and finish my library book, *Robinson Crusoe*. I could be alone on my island before Monday and the terrors of school began again. I reached school, and pushed open the heavy door. Thankfully, I stepped inside. At least in here it was warm and dry.

I walked up the stairs and down the third-floor corridor. I entered my classroom, the third door from the left. I sat down in a hurry, hoping that nobody would notice me and start getting on my nerves.

Moments later Frau Heintz walked hurriedly into the classroom. To everyone's surprise, she was followed by a new girl. She began, "Class, this is Alison Sheperd. She's just arrived from America and is going to be in our class

from now on. Her father just became a professor at the university. She doesn't speak much German yet." I looked at Alison. She had dark brown hair and skin the color of light milk chocolate. She was slim and tall. Her face showed no expression.

Behind me I heard Sabine say to Birgit, "Wow! A real American girl. Maybe she's met some movie stars."

Frau Heintz was scanning the classroom. Her eyes settled on the empty seat next to mine. "Alison, go sit over there next to Sieglinde. She's the best in English." Then she looked at me. "Sieglinde, please let Alison share your English book." She cleared her throat. "Andreas, please read out exercise number three on page seventy-two."

Moments later Andreas read out loud with a very strong German accent, "How do I get to the train station? Go down Park Street, turn left on James Road. . . ."

When the bell rang for recess, I crammed the English book into my bag and then looked up again so I could put in my pencil case as well. Then I noticed that Alison was looking at me. I gave a weak smile. She smiled back. I pulled together all my courage and said, hoping my English wasn't too bad, "How do you like it in Germany so far?"

"It's not bad, but I wish it would stop raining!" We both laughed. "Your name is Sieglinde, right? That's a pretty long name. What do your friends call you?"

I didn't know what to say. How could I tell her I didn't have any friends?



To my surprise, nobody was standing there except the mailbox

"Oma," I muttered.

"Oma?" she repeated, "Doesn't that mean Grandmother?" she asked.

I nodded.

"That's weird. What do they call you that for? Do you mind if I call you 'Siggy' instead?"

"Of course not."

"Great!"

We both got up to leave the classroom when I unmistakably heard Sabine's voice. "Wait, Alison!" She pronounced it "Ellison." "Wait! We would like you something to ask."

"Lived you in New York in a skee-scraper?" Birgit asked.

Alison was puzzled. "A what? Oh, you mean a skyscraper." She shook her head. "No, only very rich people do."

"Was you once in Hollywood?" Jan wanted to know. "Has you seen a movie star there?"

"I've never been to Hollywood," she replied. "And I'm not interested in meeting movie stars anyway. I prefer reading a good book!" Then Alison turned to me with a grin. "C'mon, Siggy, let's go!" Together we walked out of the classroom.

The next few days were the best I could remember. For the first time ever I had a friend. Someone was talking to me, laughing with me, not at me, and the best thing was, nobody seemed to bother me when I was with Alison. They respected her and admired her for being so self-confident.

One day, about a week later, Alison asked me if I wanted to go to the

movies with her. I was overjoyed. "Of course I'll go," I said. "I've heard that *Cast Away* is a really cool film, it's based on *Robinson Crusoe* and it's showing at the cinema in English, why don't we go see that?" We decided to meet at three o'clock on the corner by the Turkish grocery store across from the cinema.

That afternoon I sang while I warmed up some leftovers for my sisters. Never before had I finished my homework in such a short time. As soon as my mother got back from work, I cleaned up and got ready to leave. My mother had been delayed so I was very late. I ran along the street and took a shortcut through the park. I rushed around the corner, panting and ready to apologize for keeping Alison waiting, when, to my surprise, nobody was standing there except the mailbox. I was very confused. Where was she? What if she didn't like me anymore, either? I waited a few minutes. She didn't come. I looked at my watch. The movie would begin in ten minutes. What should I do? I walked a short way down the block to see if she was coming. She wasn't. I walked further and heard voices coming from behind a high brick wall. I stopped to listen. I heard a harsh, deep male voice. But there was another voice as well. A voice I knew. A steady, high voice with an unusual edge of fear in it. I crept along the wall and slowly peered around the edge. I was shocked to see some teenage boys standing in a half-circle around a small, huddled figure with dark brown hair. They all had clean-shaven heads and were wearing tall black

leather boots. I knew what that meant. I'd seen pictures like that in the newspaper. They were Neo-Nazis.

"Give us your money!" the tallest boy was saying.

"I don't have any!" Alison whispered in broken German.

"If you don't give it to us right now, you'll be very sorry, you stupid foreigner!"

How could they be doing this to her? It wasn't fair. I wanted to start screaming at them, I wanted to kick them in the shins, but I knew that wouldn't stop them. I needed to find help. Now I was worried. What if I couldn't find anybody? What if they really did hurt Alison? I saw the boys advance toward her. I needed to do something fast. Suddenly, I remembered the Turkish grocery store. Herr Erkan, the storekeeper, would help me. I'd gone to his store many times on errands for my mother. He just had to help me. Without thinking twice, I ran across the street. I almost forgot to look both ways. I burst through the door. Mr. Erkan and his customer looked up. "Herr Erkan . . ." I gasped. "Herr Erkan . . . my friend . . . Neo-Nazis . . . they're bothering her . . . want her money!"

Mr. Erkan dropped the apples he was weighing and called to his son, who was sorting cans on the shelves. "Mehmet, come, we must help the little girl!" Both

of them dashed out with me ahead.

As soon as we could see the boys and Alison, Herr Erkan started to shout, "Leave her alone! Don't you dare touch her! I'm going to call the police!" For a moment it looked like the boys were going to attack Herr Erkan, but then they changed their minds. They hurried out of the yard so fast that neither of us was able to stop them. "If only we had gotten ahold of those fellows . . .!" Herr Erkan said.

"That shouldn't be too much of a problem," Mehmet said. "I think they go to my school."

Alison slowly scrambled up, visibly shaking. "Thanks a lot," she said, nodding to me and the two men. "I thought I was lost for sure. They were really mean!"

"Luckily not all Germans are like that," Mr. Erkan said, grinning at me. I translated that for Alison.

"That's for sure." Alison grinned at me as well.

For a moment we were all quiet. Then Mr. Erkan said, "Well, I guess we'll go now. But don't forget, if you ever need help again, don't hesitate to ask us." The two of them left.

When they had gone, Alison looked at her watch and said, "If we want to make that movie we'd better go!"

And that's just what my best friend and I did. We had rescued each other. ❖

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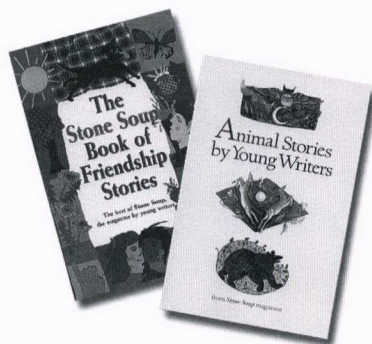
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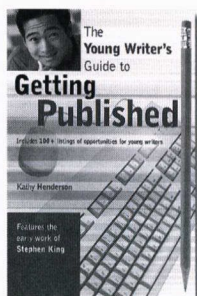
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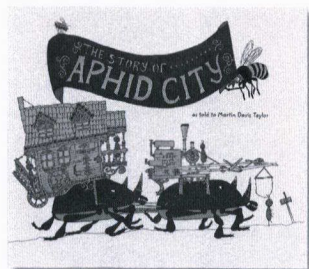
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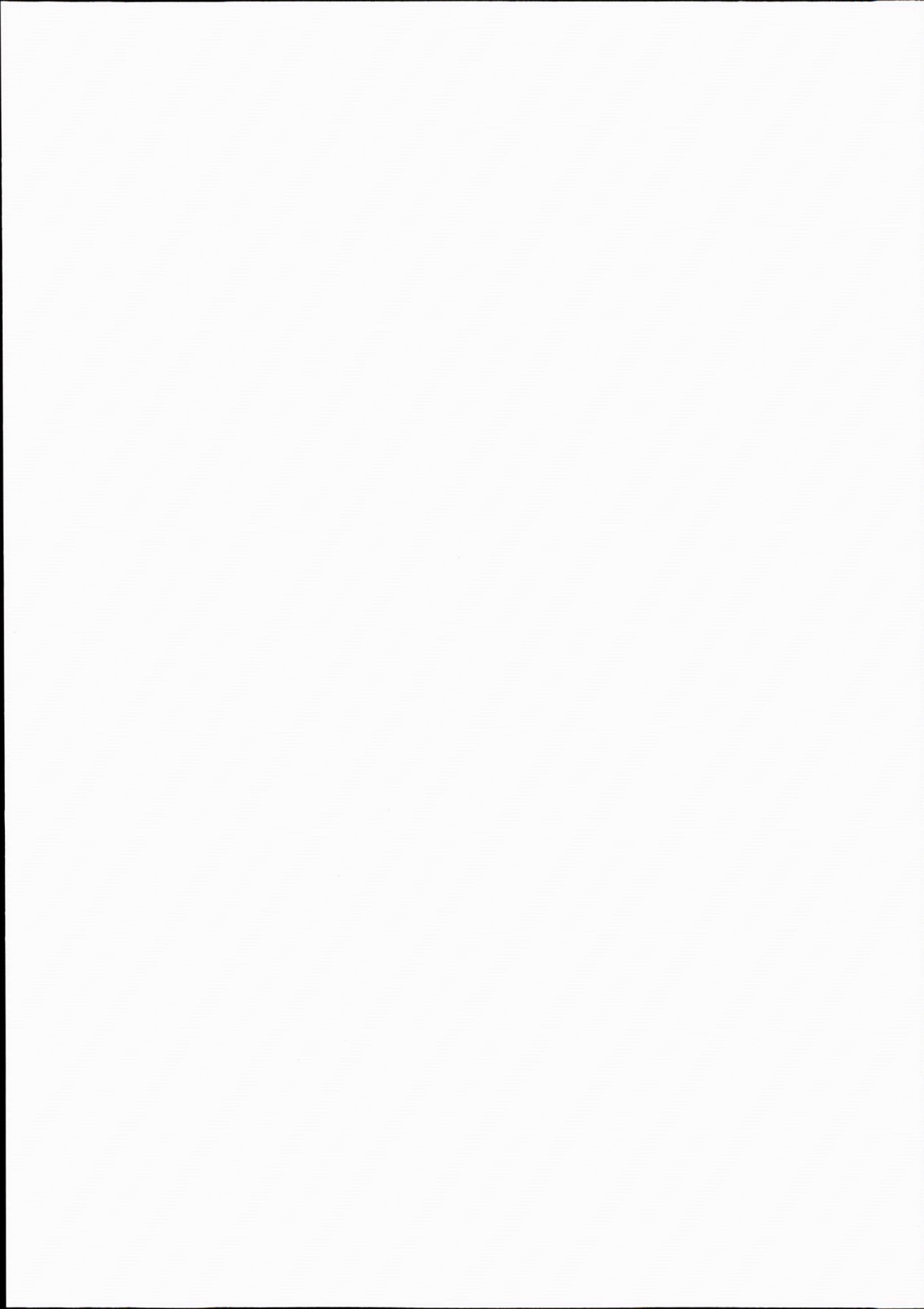
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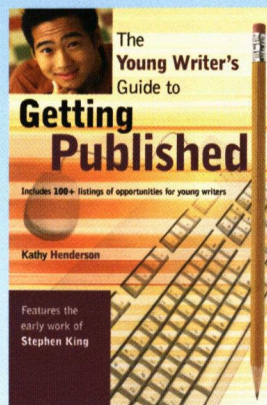
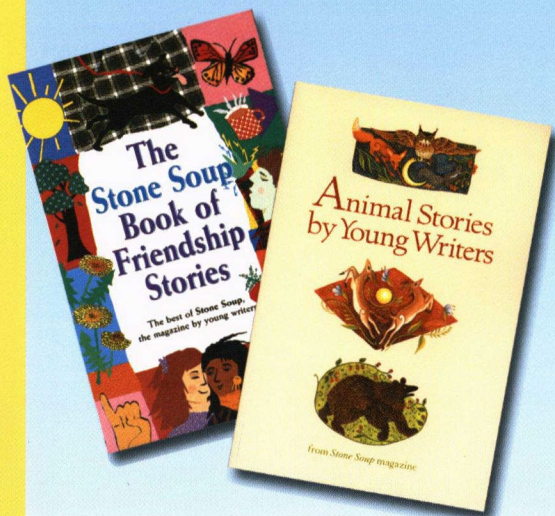
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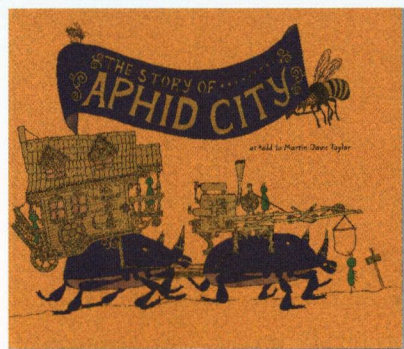


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