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Fresh Fiction
from New Voices



Summer 2009

Fresh Fiction from New Voices



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The future of the book industry lies with new literary voices. For that reason, we are committed to growing alongside our authors by implementing unique publishing and marketing programs that enhance our lists and deliver continued success stories to you!

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Fresh Fiction from New Voices



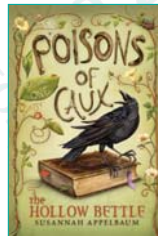
New for Summer 2009!



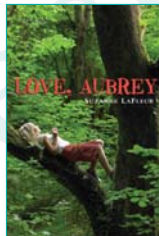
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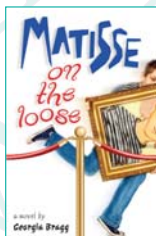
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It's a Second!

Second novels from former It's a First! novelists
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Born to Fly

by Michael Ferrari

Edited by Stephanie Elliott

ISBN: 978-0-385-73715-9

\$15.99/\$17.99 Can.

GLB: 978-0-385-90649-4

\$18.99/\$21.99 Can.

Middle-Grade Fiction

On Sale: 7/14/2009



from the editor



Our Dell Yearling Contest for a first middle-grade novel seems to be a contest of extremes: some years we find amazing novels like *Prizefighter en Mi Casa*, and some years we go without a winner. This year, I'm happy to report, was an inspiring year, and *Born to Fly* is a novel that I think will inspire middle-grade readers for years to come.

With its many curriculum tie-ins and sensitive handling of racism during World War 2, this historical adventure novel is great for school and classroom use. But Bird's spunky voice, the high-stakes adventure, and the fast-paced action make it a wonderful pleasure read, as well. This isn't stodgy "good for you" historical fiction: it's truly a page-turner, with an engaging plot and winning humor. I'm so pleased to have this remarkably accomplished debut on our list.

—Stephanie Elliott

from BORN TO FLY

Dad smiled. “So you’re really eleven today, huh? That’s pretty old.”

“I can finally reach all the pedals,” I told him.

“Why, I bet in another year you’ll be ready to land this thing.”

“Another year?”

“Here. You better let me line up our approach. You’ve got a birthday party to get to.”

I reluctantly handed over the controls so Dad could turn the plane around toward Mr. Watson’s grass airstrip.

“I’ll die if I have to wait another year,” I mumbled under my breath.

“What’s that?”

“It’s just . . . a year is practically forever.”

“I see.” Dad looked at me, the same way he looked at Mom when she was bugging him to take her to see her mom, Grandma Birch, in Buffalo. “Well, a year is too long to stare at that sad face. I guess you’re gonna have to land this thing.”

“Really?” I screamed.

He handed back the controls and cautioned me, “Remember, landing’s the toughest part of flying.”

“I know.”

At first I couldn’t tell if I was more excited or scared.

Then Dad winked at me and said, “Relax. I know you can do it.”

That was it. I got embarrassed by all his faith in me and so, like always, I rose to meet his expectations. I took the controls. Pulled back on the throttle. Leveled off for final approach. It was obvious. I was a natural. Making my descent like an old pro! We laughed and smiled. I checked my instruments. Everything looked okay.

Then suddenly, the engine hit an air pocket and hiccupped.

“Easy,” Dad said calmly. “Remember, don’t choke it.”

Right. Don’t choke it. That’s something you never want to do on approach. But I panicked and goosed the throttle. The engine sputtered and gasped like a sick duck. I wrestled with the mixture. Suddenly it was the scariest sound any pilot ever heard—complete silence. The engine stalled.

“Dad!”

My dad grabbed the controls—but the plane was already dropping like a rock, the wind whistling past the cockpit windows.

“Hold on!” yelled Dad.

The panic in his voice was what really scared me. He dipped the nose. I could hear the rivets of the fuselage rattle with the increased strain. The rushing wind feathered the propeller like a pinwheel. I couldn’t believe this was happening. And it was all my fault! But Dad didn’t seem to be thinking about that kind of stuff. He was focused on what he had to do to fix the problem. The whole plane was shaking like crazy and yet somehow he carefully set the throttle. Picked his moment. Primed the engine. Then jumped the starter. C-c-coughhh. I covered my eyes and prayed.

It started! The two of us looked at each other and screamed in triumph.

Moments later, I stared in awe as my dad gently landed the plane beside Mr. Watson’s cornfield like nothing had happened. We taxied to a stop and at last, Dad let out a big sigh.

I was still shaking and stuttering, trying to apologize, “I’m so sorry, Dad. I shouldn’t have goosed the throttle.”

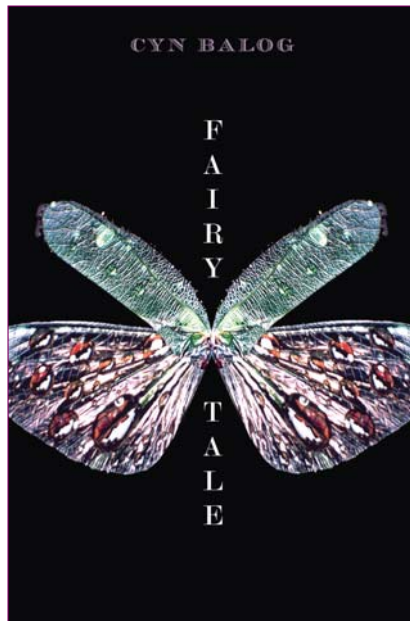
He smiled, wiping the sweat from his brow and steadied my hand, “It’s okay, Bird. I wouldn’t let you miss your own party, would I?”

“I’ll die if I have to wait another year,” I mumbled under my breath.

Michael Ferrari lives in Avon Lake, Ohio, where he is a teacher. He got the idea for *Born to Fly* at a World War II air show, where he overheard a boy telling his little sister that girls can never be fighter pilots. He wrote the story for her, and for his daughters. *Born to Fly* is his first novel.



Photo © Patia Ferrari



Fairy Tale

by Cyn Balog

Edited by Stephanie Elliott

ISBN: 978-0-385-73706-7

\$16.99/\$18.99 Can.

GLB: 978-0-385-90644-9

\$19.99/\$22.99 Can.

Young Adult Fiction

On Sale: 6/23/2009



from the editor



Every once in awhile, though, a submission comes in that's so hilarious, so engaging, and such a pure pleasure to read that it actually makes you forget that it's your job to read it. For me, *Fairy Tale* was just such a book. It is the ultimate "dive into it with a bag of Cheetos and forget the world around you" read: commercial YA heaven. This story about 15-year-old Morgan and her lifelong love Cam—who, she's stunned to find out, is a fairy who belongs in a different world—not only has hot supernatural romance, but it has a

snarky sense of humor and a strong and capable heroine. First-time author Cyn Balog is able to keep the romance hot while still letting Morgan stand up for herself and be a formidable foe to the fairies.

At its heart, this is a story about realizing the life you had mapped out for yourself might not be the life you get—things change, first love ends, but you'll be okay. It's a story that I think a lot of teen girls will relate to, and I hope you love it even half as much as I do.

—Stephanie Elliott

from FAIRY TALE

"What is that?" I finally say. Dozens of questions are swirling around in my head.

"It's bad, isn't it?" he asks.

"Bad" is an understatement. Just above his shoulder blades, right at his spine, the skin is raised and bumpy, in the shape of an inverted V. His once-tanned, clear back is coated in something waxy, and it all seems to twitch and dance, like it has its own heartbeat. And at the very tip of that V, there's an opening, a small one, a bloody smile. And there's something, a sharp white sliver, just like a fingernail . . . poking out. . . .

I screw my eyes shut and do my best to keep my voice even. "It's not that it's bad, per se. . . . It's just . . ." What is the word for bad to the nineteenth power? Hideous times a million? Even "the most atrocious thing I've ever seen" seems to miss the mark. I expected, possibly, to see a golf-ball-sized bump under the skin. Maybe a tennis ball. Not *this*. "What the hell is it?"

He—thank God!—pulls his T-shirt down, carefully lowering it over the disgusting, alien growth, and turns to me. He balls his hands into fists and presses firmly down on his thighs, but not before I see his arms quiver. The rock of Stevens, the Cam Browne who can do anything, is trying to steady himself, and that's enough to turn my own knees to Jell-O. "How much did you see in your vision?"

"Just this. What happened right now. That's it."

"So you didn't see her?"

"Her who?" My voice rises to match his. "I've never seen you this freaked. Who are you talking about?"

The bell rings. In the hall, doors burst open and stampeding students fill every space. Despite the tongue-lashing I received from Tanner and the knowledge that I'll probably get the same reception from my bio teacher if I don't haul tail to science wing ASAP, I can't move. But Mr. Freaky Tumor just looks away, out the window, into the empty quad.

"Her who?" My voice rises to match his. "I've never seen you this freaked. Who are you talking about?"

from FAIRY TALE

continued

I walk so that I'm standing above Cam, so close I can rest my chin on the top of his head. I put my hands on his shoulders and force him to look up at me.

"Her who?" I repeat, louder and slower this time.

"Shh, she can hear."

"Cam, we're alone."

"You saw Pip, right? Did he have something with him?"

Though I have no idea what that greasy fellow would have to do with anything, I feel the need to just play along with my nutjob boyfriend, if only to keep him from running down Main Street naked with a colander on his head later in life. "Um, yeah. He had pencil box. And his lunch. Well, I think it was his lunch, but he seemed a little wacked about it."

He's silent.

"But what about that guy *isn't* wacked?" I add, tittering nervously, and immediately want to kick myself. I never titter! As I quietly curse this new, more intense version of Cam that is reducing me to behaving like a four-year-old girl, I notice something. There's a brand-new expression dawning on his face. It's . . . fear. "Um, it isn't his lunch, is it?"

"Not even close. Does he have it with him?"

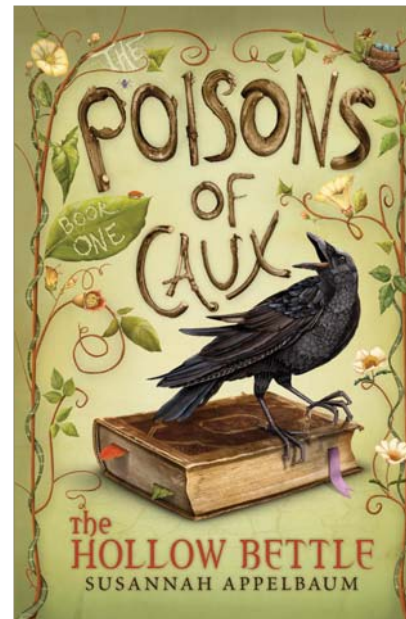
Oh, God, it is a severed head. "Um, no. We put it in his locker."

"You *what*?" He looks at the clock, grabs my hand, and pulls me up. "Go to your class. All hell is about to break loose, and I don't want you to be in the middle of it."

Cyn Balog has been a California Girl and a Maine Girl, but she's first and foremost a Jersey Girl. No matter where she's lived, she's been writing. Now, she's the race and event manager for *Runner's World*, *Running Times*, and *Bicycling* magazines. Which means that when she's not writing, she's probably either running or trying unsuccessfully solve a Sunday *New York Times* crossword puzzle from 2003. She lives in Pennsylvania with her husband and daughter.



Photo © Angela Pursell



The Poisons of Caux: The Hollow Bottle (Book 1)

by Susannah Appelbaum
Edited by Joan Slattery
and Allison Wortche

ISBN: 978-0-375-85173-5
\$16.99/\$18.99 Can.
GLB: 978-0-375-95173-2
\$19.99/\$22.99 Can.
Middle-Grade Fiction
On Sale: 8/11/2009



Alfred A. Knopf

from the editors



There are so many fantasy trilogies out there, and it's rare for a new submission to stand out among them. But when we read the first line of Susannah Appelbaum's *The Hollow Bottle*, we thought, "Okay. Wow. This is something altogether different." The voice was wry and witty (with a perfect touch of the macabre), and the world of Caux felt irresistibly fresh, filled with poisoners, tasters, apothecary healers, and herbs that "sparkled and pulsed with an odd shivery force." And that writing—it was so fluid, so confident. We found ourselves looking back to check the cover letter—yes, unbelievably, it was Susannah's first book. What a thrill it is to introduce this talented new writer, and her smart, action-filled, scary-funny trilogy. Lucky for us (and you), we're now working with the author on Book II of the Poisons of Caux trilogy: *The Tasters Guild*, coming in 2010.

—Joan Slattery and Allison Wortche

from **THE POISONS OF CAUX**
the **HOLLOW BETTLE** (BOOK 1)

It's an astonishing feat that young Ivy Manx was not poisoned during Mr. Flux's tenure as her taster.

These were corrupt times in Caux, the land being what it was—a hotbed of wickedness and general mischief. The odds were stacked against anyone surviving their next meal, unless they had in their employ a half-decent, Guild-accredited taster. A taster, such as Sorrel Flux maintained himself to be.

The day of Mr. Flux's arrival was a day like any other, devoid of goodwill and cheer (and befitting the taster's disposition). A fire burned glumly in the grate within the small tavern Ivy called home, and beside it a few regulars took their drinks in tedious silence. Hidden in her secret workshop, Ivy Manx found herself hoping for something thrilling to happen—perhaps a particularly rousing poisoning. She had been ignoring her studies in favor of one of her experiments when Shoo cawed softly.

"Never you mind," Ivy admonished the crow. "Cecil will never know I was using his equipment unless you tell him."

She proceeded to strain an evil-smelling mixture through her uncle's sieve. Ivy worked with a look of great concentration upon her face, and when the task was finished, she set it on a burner to boil. Almost immediately the syrup discharged a clingy cloud and a sickly sweet smell filled the small room, forcing the crow to alight dizzily on a coatrack to avoid it.

"There. Let's see what that does when it's done."

The workshop door was veiled from sight by dust and shadow, a sly entrance cut in the midst of an enormous blackboard in residence upon the tavern's far wall. It was further obscured by the simple fact that the shadowy wall was never regarded—the menu on the blackboard was long obsolete. When Cecil was seeing his patients or when the workshop was hosting Ivy's nefarious experiments, a sharp eye might discern a flickery crack of amber light slicing

"Ivy Manx found herself hoping for something thrilling to happen—perhaps a particularly rousing poisoning."

through the darkness. It was here that Ivy put her eye, wondering what might be keeping her uncle.

It was fortuitous timing. Ivy watched as a scrawny and particularly unimpressive stranger crossed the threshold, pausing right in front of her to scrape the caked mud from his tatty boots. He exuded from him a sour sense of disinterest, and clinging to him, although unseen, was an odd sort of melancholia—the kind that affects the bearer not at all, but those who behold him feel instantly cheerless.

Having just passed through the Bettle's creaky front door, Mr. Flux—for indeed this was he—made a beeline to the bar. He ordered and consumed an unusually expensive brandy and then quickly ordered another, requesting Cecil leave the bottle before him.

Ivy examined Mr. Flux move closely. Something about the man's threadbare cloak seemed familiar, although even in the dying light of the tavern it was plain to see that the robes were ill kept and patched with an unsteady hand. Ivy tried to place it. Her thoughts turned to her neglected studies, and with a start, she realized what it was she was seeing.

"A graduate of the Taster's Guild—Shoo, can you believe it? A real taster, here at the Hollow Bettle!"

Ivy pushed Shoo aside for a better look, receiving an indignant squawk.

The taster's eyes alighted upon a high shelf behind the bar. There, a stocky bottle made vague with dust and grime sat alone. Inside, amid the amber brandy, a twinkle of red from a small stone.

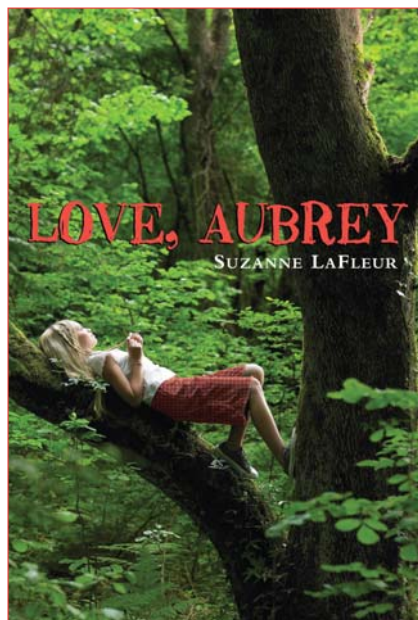
"Perchance that be your bottle, sir? Of which you've named your fine establishment?"

Cecil followed the taster's gaze. "That it is."

Susannah Appelbaum worked in magazine publishing for many years and now lives with her family in New York's Hudson Valley. *The Hollow Bettle* is her first novel. To learn more about the author, please visit www.susannahappelbaum.com.



Photo courtesy of the author.



Love, Aubrey

by Suzanne LaFleur

Edited by Wendy Lamb

ISBN: 978-0-385-73774-6

\$15.99/\$17.99 Can.

GLB: 978-0-385-90686-9

\$18.99/\$21.99 Can.

Middle-Grade Fiction

On Sale: 6/9/2009

WENDY
LAMB
BOOKS

from the editor



When I read this first novel, and shared it with colleagues, I knew we had to publish it, and jumped into an auction with several other houses. What a thrill to know we had won!

The author, Suzanne LaFleur, is off to an amazing start. She's also fearless, in that she has tackled a complex subject—family tragedy. Yet this story is never mournful, because the voice is so natural, simple and honest.

The novel's first readers found the story truly touching; we all loved Aubrey, her grandmother, and her best friend Bridget. Aubrey's process of grieving and healing is totally authentic and deeply moving. Among other things, this is a story about the stages of grief, and the uses of memory—not textbook stages, but Aubrey's unique, unfinished ones.

Suzanne decided she would be a writer when she was nine, and told her family. Nobody really believed her. Now they do.

—Wendy Lamb

from LOVE, AUBREY

It was fun at first, playing house.

I made all my own meals. Crackers and cheese, three times a day.

I watched whatever I wanted on TV, all day.

It'd been a good three days: crackers and cheese for breakfast, TV, crackers and cheese for lunch, TV, crackers and cheese for dinner, TV, bed. Nothing to think about but TV and cheese. A perfect world.

Then I ran out of cheese.

There wasn't anything left in the freezer. The veggie drawer in the fridge had drippy brown lettuce and stinky carrots. A container of milk sat on the shelf. I

I didn't want anyone at the store to notice me, so I put on a hat and sunglasses, like a movie star walking around a city.

opened it. It smelled awful, too, so I put the cap back on and shoved it to the back of the fridge.

I checked my room for snacks. I peeked at the lower shelf of my nightstand, where I had set a plate with two chocolate-covered cookies for Jilly, the way Savannah always did. Jilly's cookies used to disappear, but I couldn't seem to get her to come around anymore. Savannah

probably ate the cookies herself. I picked one up and bit it, but it was hard stale.

I had to go shopping. I needed a break from TV anyway. I got some money from my sock drawer, taking just two of the twenty-dollar bills leftover from my birthday. It was so long ago, my birthday. On the day I turned eleven, I didn't think I would be using the money in Gram's card to buy my own groceries.

Everything was different now.

I didn't want anyone at the store to notice me, so I put on a hat and sunglasses, like a movie star walking around a city.

I put my backpack on and set out for the grocery store. It was nice to be outside

from **LOVE, AUBREY**

continued

for a change. The summer air felt really hot though, and soon there was sweat under my hat and running down my face behind the glasses. The disguise wasn't as glamorous as it had seemed.

I was excited to pick out anything I wanted at the store. I went to the aisle with the SpaghettiOs and lifted my sunglasses to examine the cans. I wanted the ones with meatballs. *Savannah likes the plain ones*. No, she liked—Savannah had liked the plain ones—

I suddenly felt very sick, there in the canned-goods aisle.

But I needed food. I put five cans of SpaghettiO's with meatballs into my buggy.

Because I wanted to run a healthy household, I figured I needed some vegetables. I got two cans of corn and one of green beans. I picked out a box of Cheerios and a half-gallon of milk, a loaf of bread and sliced-turkey-and-ham packages, and a bag of apples. I realized my backpack would feel heavy and figured that that was enough to eat, for a few days, anyway.

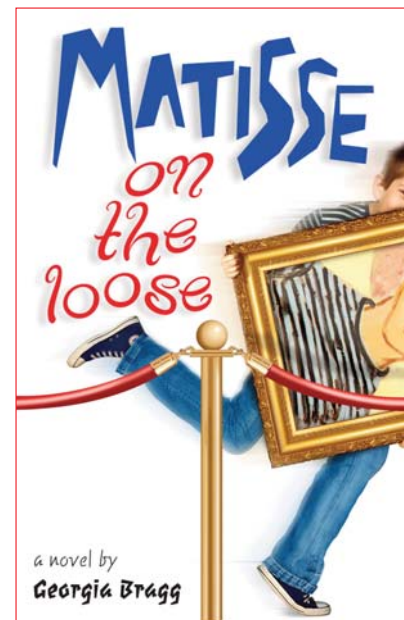
I paid and made it out of the store without anyone recognizing me. I stopped at a bench and zipped the paper grocery bag up in my backpack. I adjusted my hat and sunglasses and started to walk home, but that's when I noticed the pet store next to the grocery.

I wasn't on a schedule or anything. I had time to go inside.

Suzanne LaFleur is a recent graduate of the MFA program in writing for children at the New School. She works with children in New York City and Boston. www.suzannelafleur.com



Photo © Barbara Jane LaFleur



Matisse on the Loose

by Georgia Bragg

Edited by Wendy Loggia

ISBN: 978-0-385-73570-4

\$16.99/\$18.99 Can.

GLB: 978-0-385-90559-6

\$19.99/\$22.99 Can.

Middle-Grade Fiction

On Sale: 7/14/2009



from **the editor**



What drew me to this colorful middle-grade novel was its sense of humor and respect for the creative process. Georgia's agent, Edward Necarsulmer IV, pitched this as a book about an eccentric family, similar to *The Royal Tenenbaums* in tone. And I liked that description a lot, and found it to be really fitting. It was refreshing to read a manuscript with boy appeal—with nary a baseball, dragon, or gross-out scene in sight. Most kids can relate to being in an offbeat family—or having a friend who is. And who doesn't have the urge to make his or her mark on the world? During the editing process, I found myself noticing just how many real-life art heists actually were taking place. They happen a lot! Thankfully, this art caper has a happy ending.

—Wendy Loggia

from **MATISSE** on the loose

I was alone. I'd never been there without a guard nearby or visitors roaming around.

The little red lights under the surveillance cameras in both corners of the room were off. I was really alone. No one could see me.

I knew I shouldn't do it. It was wrong. But I stepped over the tape line on the floor in front of *Portrait of Pierre*. That's normally when a security guard would say, "Too close, step back." To be a whole foot inside the tape line made it more interesting to look at the painting. When else would I have a chance like this? I was so close to it, I could feel the colors rushing through me, or maybe it was something else because a strange noise came out of my throat.

The motion detection beams that usually shone down from the ceiling were off too.

Then I did a really bad thing. I reached up . . . and touched the frame. If the motion alarm had been working, it would have gone off, and probably someone would have tackled me to the ground.

I thought of doing something else bad. It was so bad and wrong it was stupid. I felt sick just thinking it. But that didn't stop me. I grabbed the frame around *Portrait of Pierre* and took the whole thing off the wall. As I stood with the painting in my hands, a whole bunch of new noises came out of me, and it felt like a heat lamp was melting the skin on the back of my neck.

What I did next was really stupid—but mostly illegal. I turned the frame around. The canvas was held in place by some sort of little nails stuck into the frame on all four sides. I was surprised they were so easy to get out. I was operating as if someone else were controlling me. How could I be doing that? It was unbelievable when I lifted the masterpiece right out of the frame. I leaned it

against the wall. I took my fake *Portrait of Pierre* and stuck it in the frame. I jammed a couple of the nails back in to hold it for a minute while I took a quick look, dropping the other nails into my pocket to keep them together.

I hung the frame back on the wall with my painting in it.

There I was, looking at something I painted hanging in an art museum. I wasn't getting enough air, and I had a tingling feeling all over my face, but it was worth it.

It looked really, really good.

What other kid in class could do that?

Nobody. That's who.

**The motion detection
beams that usually shone
down from the ceiling
were off too.**

Georgia Bragg was a printmaker, a painter, and a storyboard artist before becoming a writer. She lives in Los Angeles, California, with her husband, two children, and two cats.

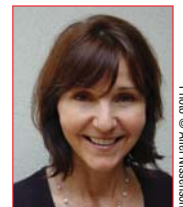
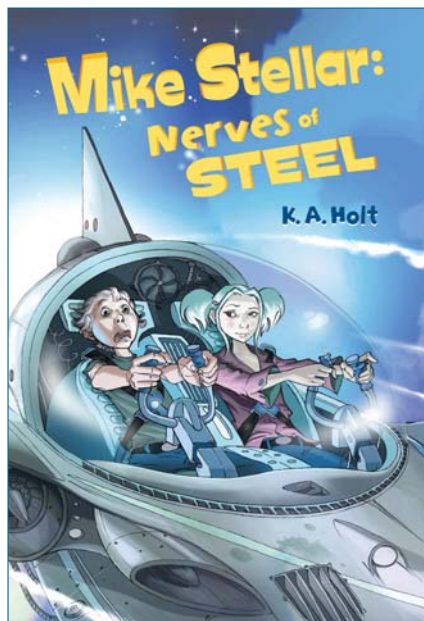


Photo © Arlei Nissenon



Mike Stellar: Nerves of Steel

by K. A. Holt

Edited by Schuyler Hooke

ISBN: 978-0-375-84556-7

\$15.99/\$17.99 Can.

GLB: 978-0-375-94556-4

\$18.99/\$21.99 Can.

Middle-Grade Fiction

On Sale: 6/23/2009



from the editor



Two years ago I was reading the first chapters of that week's submissions.

Good Grief? Who is this for? (toss aside)

Can I handle this submission from my cousin's neighbor today? (toss aside)

Yikes...this is too scary for me! What will a ten-year-old think? (toss aside)

Hmmm. Mike Stellar, catchy title. Hee-hee-hee. Chortle chortle. Ha! Ha! Ha!

Two hours later, I finished the manuscript. I dialed the agent: "What a riot! It's fun. It's accessible. It's silly. It's full of adventure. And the sci-fi stuff works terrifically. I want this book! Mike is every kid I know: a complete hero, even if it is accidental, and a complete goofball . . . also accidental!"

I hope you will enjoy it. Wait, let me rephrase that . . . I hope you AND your young readers will enjoy it.

—Schuyler Hooke

from Mike Stellar: Nerves of STEEL

I jogged in place and decided to check out the school. Best to familiarize yourself with the enemy as soon as possible. I was leaving the lobby when, out of the corner of my eye, I saw a narrow hallway jutting back behind one of the benches. I got this funny feeling in my stomach: the hallway was probably blocked off for a reason, but my curiosity got the better of me.

At home my curiosity was always getting the better of me. I'd sneak into Nita's room so that I could find all her EFE propaganda and hide it. And Stinky and I used to bust into Hubble's room and look for dirty reader cards under his mattress. Just the idea that someone was trying to hide something from me made me want to tear down walls to find it.

I followed my pounding gut. Why did I feel so nervous? I did stuff like this all the time.

I followed my pounding gut. Why did I feel so nervous? I did stuff like this all the time.

I grabbed the bench with one hand and stuffed the other in my pocket, trying a one-handed bench-hopping maneuver popular with the *MonsterMetalMachine* skateboarding mandroid, PunkBot. Woo! I successfully hopped the bench and tried to go down the

hallway, but *ooooof*. It was like I suddenly weighed forty-five-thousand pounds. I couldn't lift my feet, and my arms felt like they were being stretched to the floor. It was like I was stuck in an invisible tar pit or something.

After ten minutes I hadn't even made it an inch. It must be a gravity enhancement net. Fantastic. These stupid gravity enhancers were the newest in security, at least according to a thing I saw on the vis.

I sighed hopelessly. I couldn't even yell for help; it felt like I'd need at least twenty strong dudes hefting a crowbar to get my mouth open. I struggled to move my eyes around so that I could get a better sense of my surroundings. I was only about half a foot away from the bench, so that meant anyone walking through the lobby would see me. I was so busted.

Then, on the wall, about three feet above me and two feet ahead of me, I saw a spider skitter up onto the ceiling. I had never been so happy to see a spider before

from **Mike Stellar:**
Nerves of STEEL
continued

in my life! Thank goodness for spaceships with “natural” atmospheres. That spider proved that the net I was caught in wasn’t very big. So if I could just wiggle forward or up or . . . I noticed that there was a small grate under my left foot. It was smaller than my foot, actually, so there was no way I could escape that way, unless . . .

I used all my strength to wiggle a finger in my pocket. It barely grazed a grasshrinker. If I could pop it and get some juice on my fingertip, it might be enough to get me through the grate. Or it might be too much and disappear me completely.

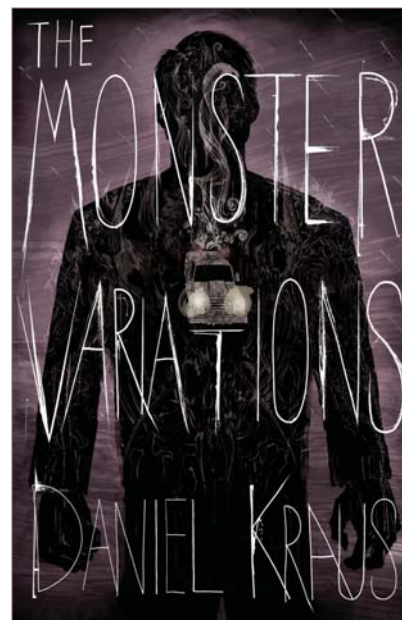
I took as deep a breath as I could muster underneath all the pressure of the net and I scraped my fingernail against the skin of the grasshrinker. It didn’t work. Those things have thick skins for a reason. I had nothing else to do, though, and nowhere else to go, so I stood there for what felt like forever, scritch-scratching at the grasshrinker in my pocket until I felt a little moisture on my finger. Then a gush. And then . . .

I was falling.

K. A. Holt lives a life of mayhem in Austin, Texas, with her husband, three children, and annoying dog. When she is not writing space adventures or daydreaming about time travel, she enjoys eating lots and lots of chocolate. Kari also enjoys gardening, but because she does not enjoy sweating or being away from her computer, this is a hobby she mostly pretends to enjoy.



Photo © Steven Roy



The Monster Variations

by **Daniel Kraus**

Edited by **Beverly Horowitz**

ISBN: 978-0-385-73733-3

\$16.99/\$18.99 Can.

GLB: 978-0-385-90659-3

\$19.99/\$22.99 Can.

Young Adult Fiction

On Sale: 8/11/2009



from **the editor**



I admit, I was startled. Early on in this debut novel, a hit-and-run accident occurs—and the outcome of that moment is so piercing that as I read, I had to stop and catch my breath. The easy summer the three friends have planned to spend together is changed forever. I knew the title of the submission was *The Monster Variations*, but it made me wonder: Is the author a monster too? I had nothing to fear. The intensity of the plot and the psychologically astute development of the characters in this vivid and deftly written novel were enthralling. I couldn’t stop reading. Forces collided, but there was no sentimentality about what was happening. It would take compassion and guts for the boys to overcome their demons. Daniel has captured not only the personalities of the boys but also the nature of life in a small town—as well as the secrets families hide. This author is a wonderfully sympathetic storyteller, and his compelling edge-of-your-seat thriller is sure to appeal to teenagers and adults alike.

—**Beverly Horowitz**

from THE MONSTER VARIATIONS

Now, hurtling through the trees, the time for worrying was past. They would be there shortly, and then the truth would separate itself from rumor.

James kept his legs turning and did not know how he continued to find footholds on the black, uneven terrain. It felt as though he was fleeing something fearsome and gaining—maybe it was a silver truck, maybe it was Willie's parents, or maybe he was simply trying to outrun the summer, which had finally come home, fattened and vengeful. School began soon, he knew that, and all things, even summers, eventually died. But perhaps if you ran fast enough, you'd never have to witness the actual moment of passage.

It hit all three boys at once, the terrible possibility that they were lost. They had never played in these woods before. They certainly hadn't expected to cross that creek. Were they wildly off course, heading now into the deeper, darker jaws of something waiting to swallow them? There was no telling what creatures prowled in such woods: bobcats, bears, wolves, spiders, snakes, maybe even other boys who had lost themselves in the forest years before.

James knew it was hopeless—they should've come out the other end of these trees long ago. Willie glanced back at him and James recognized the same fear, but Willie's expression warned James to keep quiet. James weighed the moment. If he spoke his dissension aloud, his voice might become his own missing arm.

Then Reggie slowed. The other two pressed up behind. There, before them, was a fence. It was wrought iron and tall. They had arrived. They looked beyond the fence and their shoulders shuddered and their guts hardened.

Gravestones spread across the cemetery at regular intervals like the protruding vertebrae of a buried monster a thousand times larger than Tom's. It was a calculated risk: if the boys dared trespass, might not the Monster rise and reveal the rest of its hideous skeleton?

The boys had cleared bigger fences in their day.

**The boys had cleared
bigger fences in
their day.**

They helped Willie vault over the top—the maneuver was the same used to hoist him up to Mel Herman's garage. Once alone on the other side, Willie looked back through the bars. James shivered. It was like seeing Willie on the other side of the Van Allens' screen door, only this time his home was a cemetery—*this was where he lived*. Perhaps he was supposed to have died when the truck hit him, and the cemetery just wanted him back.

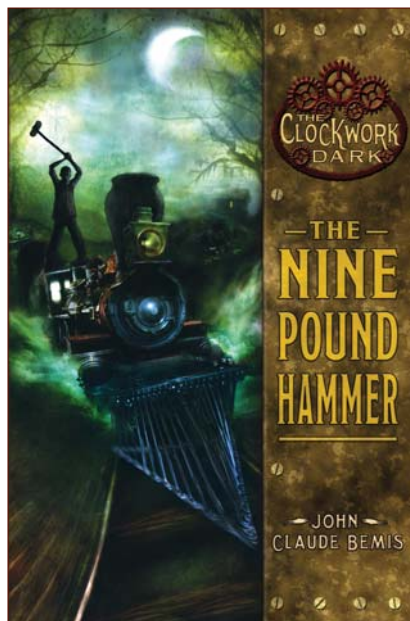
Seconds later Reggie was over the fence. Burying his dread, James followed suit and then they stood together at the far perimeter of the graveyard, three boys versus a legion of the dead, and they advanced without weapons because of the one desire that conquered even terror: the desire to see.

They moved silently through the stones. They kept expecting to see it, to see something—a gathering of grownups, other curious children, maybe even newspaper reporters. When they finally saw it in the distance, they realized they had been looking at it for some time. There were no crowds. There were no lights. There was only the glister of police tape tied from tree to tree.

The boys slowed but kept walking. Soon they could read the yellow tape: POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS. Then they were at the tape, then they ducked beneath it, and then they held their breath as they looked upon it. The rumor was true.



Daniel Kraus is the director of six feature films and is working on his second novel for Delacorte. He lives with his wife in Chicago. Visit him at www.danielkraus.com.



The Nine Pound Hammer:

Book 1 in The Clockwork Dark

by John Claude Bemis
Edited by Jim Thomas

ISBN: 978-0-375-85564-1
\$16.99/\$18.99 Can.
GLB: 978-0-375-95564-8
\$19.99/\$22.99 Can.
Middle-Grade Fiction
On Sale: 8/25/2009



from the editor



John Bemis *tried* to write about wizards and dragons, elves, and dwarves. He grew up reading Tolkien and Lewis, and when it came time to write his own books, he wanted to emulate what he loved. But John discovered he needed a new source of inspiration, a different tradition from which to draw. John is also a musician, a player and fan of vintage country and blues. While he was picking out a song on his guitar, it struck him: why not look to the themes and archetypes in folk songs?

Inspired by Southern folklore and American legend, in particular the story of John Henry, John Bemis has set his fantasy in the American South at the end of the nineteenth century—the age of trains and the Reconstruction. John's heroes are connected to the common people and the great American wilderness. His villain is a cold and calculating champion of the machine. It's flannel shirts versus velvet frock coats in a fresh and exciting approach to epic fantasy!

—Jim Thomas

from THE NINE POUND HAMMER

The Pirate Queen waded through the room, tossing lavish items about as if they were nothing more than salvage-yard scraps. The others looked about with slack-jawed amazement. This was better than any mercantile, better than any museum.

"Come here," she ordered. "I have one last demand if I'm to set you free."

On the table was the painted trunk. The Pirate Queen opened the lid and removed a crank box with a tiny curved horn. Then she pulled out a wax cylinder. After fastening it together, she turned the handle. Conker froze as the

Conker swayed and his eyes fluttered.

"It . . . it . . . it's the prettiest thing I ever heard," he said.

music began. It was just as Ray remembered Jolie's singing, but in a sweeter, sharper voice. As he listened closely, he noted that there were many voices singing together in unison. He felt again the uncontrollable desire to hear the music better, to do whatever the singer asked, if only the song would continue.

"Sounds wretched," Si said, hands over her ears.

Conker swayed and his eyes fluttered. "It . . . it . . . it's the prettiest thing I ever heard," he said.

The Pirate Queen stopped it abruptly. "Can't stand it either," she said to Si. She disassembled the music box and returned it to the brightly painted trunk. As she handed it to Ray, she said, "The Gog will keep hunting for me until he gets this. I'll not risk my ship another day with this menace on board. Take it, before I toss it in the river."

Ray picked it up hesitantly. "Thank you. I appreciate—"

The Pirate Queen waved off his gratitude, saying, "I suppose I don't need to remind you that you should take special care with this. I'm not sure why the Gog wants a mermaid, but the fact that he's returned after so long worries me."

"Somebody has to stop the Gog," Ray said. "Won't you help?"

A strange smile, full of sadness and admiration, crossed the Pirate Queen's face. "I have no desire to see whatever evil the Gog is building come to completion, Ray.

from **THE NINE POUND HAMMER**

continued

But if it comes to fighting, I'll not put my neck out for him to lop off." She paused. "But help? I might have something that will help. Just maybe . . ."

The Pirate Queen fixed Conker with a penetrating gaze. "I've got my suspicions about something."

She went to a chifforobe at the far wall. Opening the cabinet, she removed something long and wrapped in a black shroud of waxed cerecloth. She carried it back and set it down before Conker.

The Pirate Queen spoke low and solemnly to Conker. "If my instinct is right—and I'll know in a moment if it is—then this is meant for you."

Pulling back the coarse cloth, she exposed the corner of an octagonal block of iron and then tugged off the entire cloth to reveal a long-handled hammer. It could have been any hammer used by thousands of workmen to break rocks or drive railroad spikes. But by the fragile tremor of emotion on Conker's face, Ray knew it was no ordinary hammer.

"It can't be possible. . . ." He touched his fingers to the handle's raw weathered wood.

"I thought as much," the Pirate Queen said. "When you pulled my steamer off that shoal tonight, I thought there was only one person who could do such a feat, only one other with that kind of strength. This hammer gave you the strength to do it, Conker. There is no denying the resemblance. You're John Henry's son."

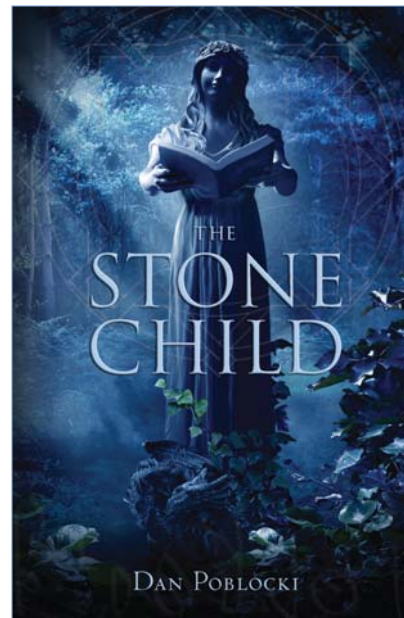
Si asked, "But what . . . Conker, what is it?"

Not taking his eyes from the hammer, he whispered, "My father's hammer. The Nine Pound Hammer."

John Claude Bemis grew up in rural eastern North Carolina, where he loved reading the Jack tales and African American trickster stories, as well as fantasy and science fiction classics. He lives in Hillsborough, North Carolina.



Photo © Jan Bauldree



The Stone Child

by Dan Poblocki

Edited by Jim Thomas

ISBN: 978-0-375-84254-2

\$15.99/\$17.99 Can.

GLB: 978-0-375-94254-9

\$18.99/\$21.99 Can.

Middle-Grade Fiction

On Sale: 8/25/2009



from **the editor**



What if the monsters from your favorite horror books turned out to be real? That's the question Dan Poblocki asks in his frightening and fun debut. Dan is a longtime fan of John Bellairs, and the latter's influence is apparent in *The Stone Child's* unexpected twists and turns. But Dan takes it a step further with an original spin on traditional mythological elements. In this case it's an artifact from the gate of the Garden of Eden, something that barred monsters from entering that paradise. Eons later, in the hands of an unwitting horror writer, it's a key that frees them from their netherworld. It's up to Dan's young protagonists to unravel a coded book the writer left behind, expel the creatures, and seal the gate. Knowing the plots of their favorite novels might just save their lives!

Dan tells me he got in trouble as a kid, scaring his friends with his stories. There was a lot of parental pressure for him to cut it out. I, for one, am glad he's still at it.

—Jim Thomas

from THE STONE CHILD

There was something strange about the book in Harris's hands. Its binding was damp, but somehow inside, the pages were dry. Harris's flashlight gave the book a ghostly glow. He opened the cover.

"*The Wish of the Woman in Black*," Harris read. "I haven't read this one before."

Eddie gasped. "An unpublished Nathaniel Olmstead book!"

Harris stammered slightly as he read the first sentence aloud. "In the town of Coxglenn, children feared the fall of night. It wasn't the darkness that frightened them—it was sleep. For when they lay in bed and closed their eyes, she watched them."

For the next hour, the boys sat in the basement and read the book by flashlight. Every twenty pages or so, whoever was reading handed the notebook off to the other. The characters in the book shrieked across the movie screen in Eddie's head, running in fear from the horrible Woman in Black whose quiet rage made her the most dangerous creature in the worlds of Nathaniel's books. Whatever—or whoever—stood in her presence would rot slowly from the inside out.

Eddie thought the ending of the fifth chapter was especially scary. He didn't want to stop reading, even though his legs were starting to get numb.

One night, when Dylan lay in bed staring at the ceiling, he heard a noise downstairs. It sounded like something scratching at the walls. He thought it might be a mouse or a squirrel that had found its way inside. He threw the covers off his bed, put on his bathrobe and slippers, and made his way down the stairs. When he flicked the light switch in the living room, nothing happened. The scratching was coming from the other side of the room.

"Mom?" Dylan called up the stairs. "Dad?"

They didn't answer.

A horrible odor filled the darkness. Dylan heard low, inhuman laughter. Something

stood in the living room with him, and Dylan could hear its quick, shallow breath. The scratching grew louder.

"Eddie," Harris whispered. "Did you hear that?"

Eddie looked up from the page. He'd become so enthralled with the story, he'd forgotten where he was. "Hear what?"

"It sounded like . . ." Harris stared at the shadows in one of the stone archways in the nearby wall. He shook his head. "Forget it. Just keep reading."

Cautiously, Dylan crept toward the mantel. When he reached the rug in front of the fireplace, he saw two strange lumps. Bending down, he realized the lumps were piles of clothing—his mother's bathrobe and his father's pajamas. They were wet, and the smell—

"What that nasty smell?" said Harris, interrupting once more.

Eddie paused. After a moment, he smelled it too. "It's almost sweet . . . like the garbage bins next to the parking lot at school. Where's it coming from?"

"All around," said Harris. Then he looked at the book in Eddie's hands. "Sort of like . . . exactly like what's happening to Dylan in the story!"

Eddie gasped. "An
unpublished Nathaniel
Olmstead book!"

As early as fifth grade, **Dan Poblocki** frightened his friends with tales of ghosts and monsters. When his mother started receiving phone calls from neighborhood parents, Dan decided to write his stories down instead. He now lives in Brooklyn, New York.



Photo © Nic Desiderio

IT'S A SECOND!

Find out what former “It’s a First” novelists have been up to.

DALE E. BASYE



“It’s a First”



NEW!

HECK: RAPACIA

Welcome to Rapacia, where the greedy kids go.

In his second novel, Dale E. Basye takes Milton and Marlo on a journey that is as clever, as laugh-out-loud funny, and as satisfying as the first.

STACEY GOLDBLATT

GIRL TO THE CORE

What kind of person is at your core? After she catches her boyfriend cheating on her, sixteen-year-old Molly O’Keefe finds herself unexpectedly in Girl Corp, a self-esteem-building club for nine-year-old girls. With their help, will Molly be able to stand her ground and embrace the strong girl at her core?



“It’s a First”



NEW!

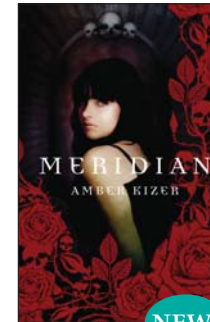
IT'S A SECOND!

Find out what former “It’s a First” novelists have been up to.

AMBER KIZER



“It’s a First”



NEW!

MERIDIAN

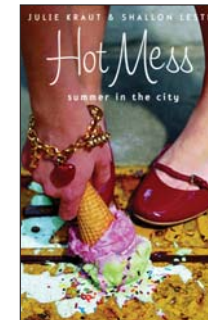
My name is Meridian Sozu. I am a Fenestra. I have always shared my world with the dead, and the soon to be dead. But I really didn’t understand what that meant until the first day of Christmas break, my Sophomore year, when I returned to an empty home.

Half-human, half-angel, Meridian Sozu has a dark responsibility.

JULIE KRAUT

SLEPT AWAY

What’s a city girl to do when she’s forced to spend her summer in the middle of the woods? Laney Parker is about to find her world turned upside down!



“It’s a First”



NEW!

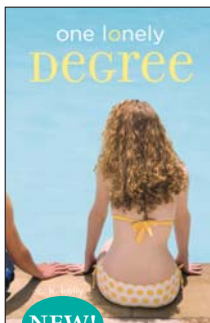
IT'S A SECOND!

Find out what former “It’s a First” novelists have been up to.

C. K. KELLY MARTIN



“It’s a First”



NEW!

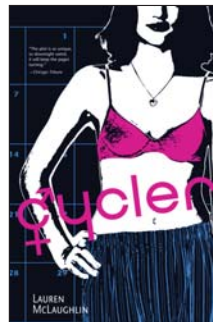
ONE LONELY DEGREE

Finn has always felt out of place, but suddenly her world is unraveling. It started with The Party. And Adam Porter. And the night in September that changed everything.

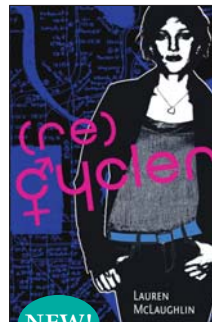
LAUREN MCLAUGHLIN

(RE) CYCLER

What’s your reality? In the gender-bending follow up to *Cycler*, Jack and Jill are back—and in New York City!



“It’s a First”

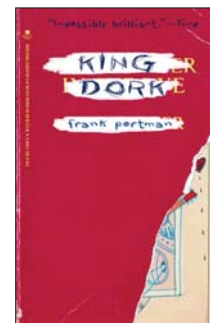


NEW!

IT'S A SECOND!

Find out what former “It’s a First” novelists have been up to.

FRANK PORTMAN



“It’s a First”



NEW!

ANDROMEDA KLEIN

Remember *King Dork*?

Now meet *Andromeda Klein*—a totally different oddball, high school, mystery masterpiece from Frank Portman. *Andromeda* is a quiet, booky girl with an unexciting life. Until her world takes a turn for the weird . . .

LAUREL SNYDER

ANY WHICH WALL

If you had a magic wall that could take you to any place and any time, where would you go? In *Any Which Wall*, author Laurel Snyder proves that you don’t have to be an orphan, know a dragon, or even be a child to get a taste of magic.



“It’s a First”

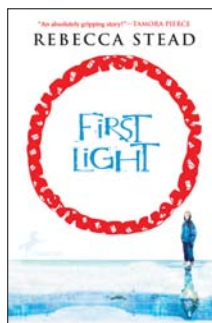


NEW!

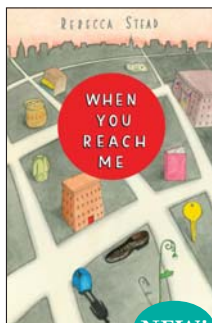
IT'S A SECOND!

Find out what former “It’s a First” novelists have been up to.

REBECCA STEAD



“It’s a First”



NEW!

WHEN YOU REACH ME

In *When You Reach Me*, a stunning follow-up to Rebecca Stead’s first novel, three mysterious letters change how Miranda sees her friends, her family, her world. The fourth one changes how she sees the universe.

JAKE WIZNER

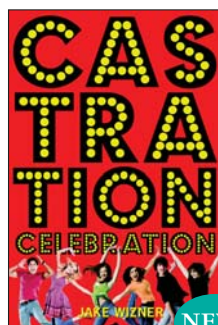
CASTRATION CELEBRATION

It’s High School Musical—rated R!

When the girl who’s foresworn men meets the boy who’s devoted himself to picking up women, there’s bound to be drama—perfect for a six-week summer program devoted to the arts.



“It’s a First”



NEW!

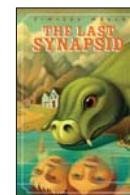
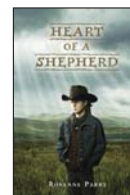
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BECOME BESTSELLERS!

Fresh Fiction
from New Voices

New—Available Now!



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