

Stone Soup

The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists



Illustration by Zoe Hall, age 12, from "Sisters," page 11

SISTERS

Cameron's older sister is always scheming

HOPE

Will Abigail tell her father about the slaves' plan to escape?

Also: A story about time travel

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“Hey Cam, guess what?”

“What?”

“I made us these files for our ‘agency.’” MaCall, my older sister, slapped down a manila folder.

“Did you steal these from Dad’s office?”

“Yeah, well that is not the topic,” MaCall said breezily. “The topic is that *we are starting our own spy agency.*”

“Oh.”

“Aren’t you excited?”

“Uh, the thing is, MaCall...whenever we do something together, I usually get in trouble.”

MaCall looked offended. “Name five times that happened.”

“Well, there was that one time that you convinced me to eat candy on the roof with you because it was a magical island and then dad found the wrappers when he was hanging the Christmas lights.”

“Umm—that’s *one*,” MaCall shrugged in disgust.

“And then there was...*huh*,” I hesitated, trying to remember the long list of injustices I had endured over the years.

“That’s *one* thing,” MaCall said, her eyes bright with triumph.

“There’ve been so many things it’s hard to remember.”

“Mom and Dad won’t even hear about this.”

I squirmed uncertainly.

“Fine! I’ll just be a spy by myself then,” MaCall shrugged, flouncing off.

“OK, I’LL BE A SPY WITH YOU!” I shouted.

“Great!” MaCall cried. “Sign here.”

She shoved a sheet of paper in my face.

“*I promise to be a spy with MaCall,*” I read aloud. “*Signed, Cameron Manor.*”

“Now write your name on the bottom line.”

“Ok,” I replied, scribbling in my best cursive.

“Great! Now we must seal the envelope.” MaCall lit the red candle in her wax seal kit and started dripping the wax all over the envelope.

“Aren’t you supposed to drip the wax into a circle?” I asked, feeling confused.

“Yeah, but this way makes it look prettier,” MaCall grinned, stamping it with her “M” for MaCall signet ring and burning the edges for a finishing touch.



“Girls, what are you doing?” Dad stuck his head in the room and sniffed suspiciously. “What’s that smell?”

“What smell?” MaCall asked innocently, shoving the evidence in my drawer.

“What are you two even doing?” Dad asked, marching into the room to find out for himself.

Dad yanked open the door to find a burned manila envelope with red wax dripped all over it.

“GIRLS! JUST WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU’RE DOING?” Dad yelled, slamming the drawer shut with a bang. “YOU COULD’VE BURNED THE WHOLE HOUSE DOWN!”

“Sorry,” MaCall shrugged.

Dad stalked off, sighing.

MaCall perked up.

“Back to business.”

“What? Are you kidding me!”

“Ugh...no.”

“Did you hear what Dad just said?”

“A good spy is not put off easily,” MaCall said. “Besides, you signed the contract.”

“But—”

“Great! Time for your first mission. You may open the envelope now.”

MaCall waved her hand in the air like a princess.

“Whatever, but if I get in anymore trouble...”

MaCall just rolled her eyes.

I opened the envelope. Here is what it said:

To: *Agent Grover*

From: *Agent Smuff*

Mission: *Go borrow \$20 from Mom’s purse.*

Reward: *When one agent helps another, that agent will be helped*

“What is that supposed to mean?”

“Ugh...what do you think? GO STEAL \$20 FROM MOM’S PURSE!”

MaCall screeched, getting red in the face.

“OK!” I tip-toed off to my Mom’s room only to find that she was SLEEPING WITH HER PURSE!

“Pssst...Cameron, get over here,” MaCall whispered.

“What do you want now?” I asked tip-toeing back where MaCall was poking her head out from behind the door.

“I forgot to tell you...good luck, Grover,” MaCall grinned, winking at me.

“Am I free to go *now*?” I asked impatiently, tapping my toes.

“Yes.”

I sighed and tip-toed back to the room where my mother was sleeping, unaware of the drama that was unfolding two inches from her nose. Heart pounding, I carefully lifted her arm and slipped her purse out. I snatched a \$20 bill from her worn brown leather wallet, put everything back the way it was, and dashed out of the room.

“Here you go, Agent Smuff. Mission *accomplished*,” I sighed, tossing the \$20 bill at my sister.

MaCall looked at the bill.

“Uh uh uh!” MaCall tskked disapprovingly. “I recall saying ‘\$40 dollars.’”

“You mean I have to go in there again?” I asked, horrified.

MaCall just grinned.

* * *

The next day, MaCall returned from her rhythmic gymnastics convention with a new ribbon stick, ribbon, clubs, tape, and ball.

“Well, I guess you gotta help me now,” I observed politely, eyeing all her new stuff.

“What is it you want?” She was in a really good mood because she had just gotten everything she had wanted.

“A new MP3 player!” It was only \$20, so it was a fair trade.

Agent Smuff looked shocked.

“WHAT ARE YOU *THINKING*? I CAN’T JUST GO OUT AND BUY YOU THAT KIND OF STUFF!” MaCall screeched.

“But you said, ‘when one agent helps another, that agent will be helped,’”
I said, remembering my contract.

“Yeah, hmmm...” my sister muttered distractedly, disappearing into her room.

And that was the end of the Agency.