

"Here he comes," said Lori. "Don't be a chicken."

Colleen bit her bottom lip.

It was after school. The three girls stood across the street and watched Jeff.

"Maybe we should wait until tomorrow," said Colleen.

"Hey, Jeff!" Lori shouted.

"No," Colleen whispered.

Jeff turned.

Lori and Melinda walked toward him. Colleen lagged behind.

"Hello, Jeff," said Lori.

"Hi, Jeff," said Melinda.

"Hello, hi," answered Jeff.

Lori laughed.

"C'mon, Colleen," said Melinda. "Ask him."

Colleen blushed and looked away.

"Colleen has something she wants to ask you," said Lori.

"Well, see, um, okay, well—" stammered Colleen.

"Quit bothering me," Jeff said very quietly.

"We're not *bothering* you," said Lori. "Colleen just wants to ask you—"

Melinda stopped her. "Let Colleen ask him," she said.

"Well, see," said Colleen. "Okay." She took a breath. "I'm having a . . . it's my birth—"

"I don't want her asking me anything!" Jeff snapped.

Colleen turned bright red.

"And quit saying hello to me too!"

"We can say hello if we want," said Melinda. "It's a free country."

"I don't want you saying it to me," said Jeff.

"Don't worry!" Colleen exploded. "I won't!"

"I will," said Lori. "Hello, hello, hello, hello, hello."

"Shut up!" said Jeff. He slammed his book down on the sidewalk.

"Hello, Jeff, hello, Jeff," said Lori. "Jello, Jeff." She laughed at her mistake. "Jello, Jeff. Hello, Jello." She laughed hysterically.

"And quit laughing!" Jeff shouted.

"She can laugh," said Colleen. "You can't tell her she can't laugh."

"Hellohellohellohellohellohello," said Lori as fast as she could.

"Shut up!" screamed Jeff.

"You shut up," said Melinda.

"I'm not afraid of you, Melinda," said Jeff.

"I'm not afraid of you either," said Melinda.

Jeff raised his fists in the air. Melinda did the same.

Lori shrieked with anticipation.

"Okay, hit me," said Jeff.

"You hit me first," said Melinda.

"No, you hit me first," said Jeff.

"Somebody hit somebody!" shouted Lori.

Jeff tapped Melinda's shoulder with his fist.

She slugged him in the stomach. As he bent over she hit him in the nose. Jeff flailed his arms as he tried to defend himself, but Melinda kept punching him, in the neck, in the stomach, then in the eye.

Jeff fell to the ground.

Melinda jumped on top of him, knees first. She sat on his chest and held his arms flat against the ground.

Lori knelt beside them and slapped the ground as she counted: "One . . . two . . . three . . . four . . . five . . . six . . . seven . . . eight . . . nine *ten!*"

Melinda stood up.

Lori held Melinda's arm high in the air. Holding her nose with her other hand, she bellowed: "The winner, and still champion of the world . . . Marvelous Melinda!"

Colleen clapped her hands.

25.

I'm going to be good, thought Bradley, and then, when everybody sees how good I am, they'll know I'm not a monster.

"And Mrs. Ebbel will give you a gold star," said Ronnie.

Bradley was so excited, he didn't realize he was putting on two different-colored socks: a blue one and a green one. He tied his shoelaces, then went into the bathroom and looked at himself in the mirror.

His black eye was almost all gone. It had faded into a light brownish-yellowish color. He hurried out to breakfast.

His mother made oatmeal for him.

"I hate hot cereal," he complained.

"You'll eat what you're served," said his father. "This isn't a restaurant."

He frowned, not because he had to eat oatmeal, but because he realized he never should have said he hated it. That was something the Bad Bradley would say. The Good Bradley liked hot, lumpy cereal.

He took a big spoonful, brought it to his mouth, and swallowed the glop. "Mmm, good!" he said, but as he withdrew the spoon from his mouth, his elbow bumped his glass of orange juice.

Claudia screamed and jumped up.

"Oh, Bradley!" said his mother.

His father glared at him.

"It was an acci—" He started to say it was an accident but then remembered Carla didn't believe in accidents. That puzzled him. He wondered why he would want to spill his orange juice on purpose. He liked orange juice. It was the oatmeal he should have spilled.

"Are you just going to sit there, or are you going to help your mother clean it up?" asked his father.

He picked up his napkin to help, but his mother told him to stay out of her way. "You'll only make a bigger mess," she said.

Silently, he finished eating.

As he headed back to his room, Claudia burst out laughing.

"What's so funny?" he demanded.

"Look at your socks!" she laughed.

He looked down at his feet, then back at his sister, the laughing hyena. "Thank you, Claudia," he said. "I appreciate your sharing that with me."

She stopped laughing and stared at him.

He walked into his room, sat on the edge of his bed, and took off his sneakers.

"Wow!" said Bartholomew. "You were so good. I would have punched her face in if I was you."

"He's going to get a gold star today," said Ronnie.

Bradley changed his socks, but once again he was so excited thinking about the gold star that he didn't pay attention to what he was doing. He took the green sock off his right foot. He took the blue sock off his left

foot. He put the green sock on his left foot and the blue sock on his right foot. Then he put his shoes on and left for school, determined to be good.

He walked into class and took his seat—last seat, last row. He sat up straight with his hands folded on top of his desk. He tried to hold back his excitement as he glanced at the chart on the wall next to him.

Jeff came in and sat down—last seat, second to last row.

Bradley saw him out of the corner of his eye, then turned to get a better look. Jeff had a black eye!

"What are you staring at, Chalkers!" Jeff snarled.

"Hey, you two look like twins!" exclaimed Shawne, the girl who sat in front of Jeff.

"Turn your ugly face around," Jeff snapped.

"Oh, shut up, Bradley," said Shawne, turning around.

Bradley looked at the back of Shawne's head. *She still thinks I'm a monster*, he realized. *But once I get my gold star, then she'll know I'm good.* For the rest of the morning, he sat at attention with his eyes fixed on Mrs. Ebbel. He kept wondering if she had noticed how good he was yet.

As he walked outside for recess, he was almost certain there'd be a gold star next to his name when he returned.

Curtis and Doug, two of Jeff's friends, came out of Mrs. Sharp's class. "What's the big idea?" asked Doug.

"Hitting Jeff when he's not looking," said Curtis.

"Huh?" said Bradley.

Doug pushed him.

He stumbled backward into Jeff, who pushed him back the other way.

Bradley looked around. He was surrounded.

"Jeff's our friend," said Robbie.

"Yeah!" said Brian.

"You hit me when I wasn't looking!" said Jeff. "And my hands were full of groceries. I didn't want to break the eggs."

"Chicken Chalkers," said Dan.

There was a space between Andy and Doug. Bradley dashed through it and ran across the playground.

Jeff and his friends chased after him.

Bradley looked back at them and smashed into a girl standing on one foot. The girl fell onto the hard hopscotch ground and wailed.

"I'm telling, Bradley!" said one of her friends.

"I'm sorry," Bradley said helplessly, then continued running. He ran up the concrete steps and entered the school building through the auditorium. From there, he walked quickly to the library.

"What do you want, Bradley?" asked Mrs. Wilcott, the librarian.

"Nothing," he muttered as he sat down at one of the tables. He leaned his head against his hands, propped up by his elbows.

What if Carla's wrong? he worried. *What if I really am a monster?*

"I don't want any trouble from you, Bradley," said Mrs. Wilcott.

26.

"We'll get you at lunch, Chalkers," Robbie whispered as Bradley returned to class.

"You're late," said Mrs. Ebbel.

He sat at his desk—last seat, last row—and looked at the chart on the wall next to him. Of course there was no gold star next to his name. He had already done three things wrong: First, he had knocked over a girl and made her cry. Second, he was late getting back to class. And third and worst of all, his name was Bradley Chalkers. As long as his name was Bradley Chalkers, he'd never get a gold star. They don't give gold stars to monsters.

They beat up monsters. He looked around at Jeff, Robbie, Russell, and Brian. He had to concentrate very hard to keep from crying.

The worst part wasn't getting beaten up. The worst part was that he knew everyone would love it so much. He imagined the whole school—the boys, the girls, and even the teachers—standing by and cheering as Jeff's gang took turns hitting and kicking him.

When the bell rang for lunch, he slowly took his paper sack out of his desk.

"We'll be waiting for you outside," Jeff said to him.

Bradley watched him walk out the door. He walked

slowly toward the front of the room, then suddenly dashed out the other door and into the hall.

"Bradley! Come back here!" Mrs. Ebbel yelled.

He kept running. So what if he got in trouble? What difference did it make?

He pulled on the door to the library. It wouldn't budge. The library was closed during lunch.

He tried to think of somewhere else he'd be safe.

"There he is!" said Doug, stepping out of the auditorium.

Bradley turned and ran back the way he had come. He rounded a corner, then stopped and made a quick and desperate decision.

He opened the door to the girls' bathroom, closed his eyes, and stepped inside.

He opened his eyes. Luckily, the room was empty.

He held his breath and listened. Nothing could be worse than being beaten up inside a girls' bathroom. *They'd probably stick my head in a girls' toilet*, he thought.

He waited. He didn't hear anything.

He looked around. The floor and the bottom half of the walls were covered with green tile. There were two white sinks and a paper towel dispenser. There were three toilets in three separate stalls. Each stall had a door. It looked very much like the boys' bathroom. Girl toilets appeared to be the same as boy toilets. He was disappointed.

He couldn't risk going back out into the hall. He leaned against one of the stalls, reached into his

brown paper sack, and took out his roast beef sandwich.

Someone was opening the door! He quickly put the sandwich back in the bag and hopped into a stall, closing the door behind him. He stood on the toilet so his feet couldn't be seen.

He listened.

He heard a person walk across the tiled floor and then enter the stall next to him. He covered his mouth with his hand as he heard some familiar but very private sounds.

At last the toilet flushed and he heard the person zip her pants and walk across to the sink. He heard the sound of running water, and then a paper towel pulled down from the dispenser. Finally, the bathroom door opened and shut.

He exhaled, hopped off the toilet, stepped out of the stall, and froze.

Two girls were staring at him. One was the girl who had used the toilet next to him. The other had just entered. He wondered which was which. Then he heard the loudest scream he'd ever heard in his whole life. That answered his question.

He darted past them, opened the door, and flew into the hall.

He rounded a corner, came to a door, and pounded wildly on it until it opened.

"Bradley?" said Carla.

"Hello, Carla." He held out his hand. "It's a pleasure to see you today."

She shook his hand.

He walked inside, shut the door behind him, and sat down around the table. "You won't believe it," he said as he looked at his picture of the green monster hanging on the wall. "You just won't believe it."

"I'm sure I won't," Carla agreed. She sat across from him. She was wearing a sleeveless, black-and-white checkered shirt.

"Okay, I'll tell you," said Bradley.

"I was hoping you would."

"Do you know where I was before I was here?"

"No?"

He slammed his fist on the table. "The girls' bathroom!"

He told her all about it, how the girl had used the toilet next to him and how he thought she had left but really another girl had entered! "At first I didn't know which girl was which, but then one of them screamed, so she must have been the one."

"Who was she?" asked Carla. "Did you know her?"

"Yes, but I don't think I should tell you her name. She probably doesn't want anybody else to know."

"That's very considerate of you, Bradley."

He shrugged.

"Shall we have lunch?" asked Carla.

"Okay." He took out his roast beef sandwich.

Carla set her lunch on the table. She had a carton of yogurt and a plate of sliced tomatoes and cucumbers.

"That looks good," said Bradley.

"You want to trade?"

"Okay."

They traded lunches. Bradley ate a slice of cucumber. He thought it was delicious.

"So what were you doing inside the girls' bathroom?" asked Carla. She took a big bite out of Bradley's roast beef sandwich.

"Jeff and his friends were chasing me," he explained. "Jeff's got a black eye, just like me! They all think I gave it to him."

"Did you?"

He could have lied. He could have said, sure, he beat up Jeff with one hand tied behind his back. He knew Carla always believed whatever he said.

"No. I can't even beat up a girl," he said. "Melinda Birch beat me up. Do you know her?"

"No."

"You'd like her. She's nice."

Carla smiled.

Bradley ate a slice of tomato followed by a spoonful of yogurt. "I hid in the library at recess," he said. "They couldn't beat me up in the library, even if they found me. You can't even *talk* in the library."

"Yes, I know."

"Isn't it amazing?"

"What's that?"

"The library. All those books. And they're all different, aren't they?"

Carla nodded as she drank Bradley's juice through a straw.

"I kept thinking about that the whole time I was there," he said. "They're all different, but they all use practically the same words. They just put them in a different order."

"Did you—?"

"Just twenty-six letters," he told her. "All they do is move those letters around and then they say so many different things!"

"Did you—?"

"You'd think, after a while, they'd run out of ways to move them around," said Bradley.

"Did you check out a book?"

"No, Mrs. Wilcott won't let me. I used to, a long time ago, before I met you, I used to check out books and not return them. I used to scribble in them and rip them up. So she won't let me check any books out anymore. The whole time I was there she kept watching me, saying, 'I don't want any trouble from you, Bradley.'"

He ate another slice of cucumber. "I just wanted to look at a book. I wasn't going to ruin it."

"I know," said Carla. "And after a while, Mrs. Wilcott will know that too."

"I'm trying to be good," said Bradley. "But nobody will give me a chance."

"They will. It just takes time."

"Do you ever play checkers on your shirt?" he asked.

Carla nearly spit out her juice. She laughed and shook her head.

"I like your shirts," he said.

"I like your socks," said Carla.

Bradley looked at his mismatched socks. "I thought I changed them," he said, befuddled.

"I hate socks that match," said Carla. "See." She stuck out her legs. She was wearing white pants. She had on one white sock and one black sock.

Bradley smiled. It wasn't his usual twisted smile, but one that was genuine. It was one that, up till now, had been seen only by Ronnie and Bartholomew.

"I know something good you can do," said Carla. "And Mrs. Ebbel will notice it too."

"What?"

"Homework."

The smile dropped off his face. "No. No I can't," he said.

"Sure you can," said Carla.

"I can't!" His eyes filled with tears.

"You can do anything you want to do, Bradley Chalkers. I have a lot of confidence in you."

He shook his head. "But I can't." His voice cracked.

"Don't say 'I can't.' As long as you say you can't do something, then of course you won't do it. Say, 'I can!' Say 'I can!' and you can do anything."

"I can't! I can't!" He was crying.

"Bradley, it's not that difficult. You're making a big

deal out of nothing. If you want, I will help you."

"I can't," he sobbed.

"Why can't you?" she demanded.

He wiped his eyes with his sleeve and sniffled. He looked Carla straight in the eye and said, "I don't know what page we're on!"

"Oh, Bradley," Carla whispered. Her eyes glistened. She stood up, walked around the table, and kissed him on the cheek.

28.

Bradley lay on his bed, on his stomach. He chewed the end of his pencil as he looked hopelessly at the arithmetic book, opened in front of him.

Next to the book was a piece of paper. In the upper right-hand corner he had written:

Bradley Chalkers
Homework
Arithmetic
Page 43
Red Hill School
Room 12
Mrs. Ebbel's class
Last seat, last row
Black eye

His handwriting, which was messy anyhow, was made worse by the fact that he wrote with a dull pencil on top of a soft bed.

He had stayed in Mrs. Ebbel's class as long as he could after the bell rang.

"Bradley, it's time to go home," Mrs. Ebbel finally said to him.

He looked outside, unsure if Jeff and his gang of bullies were waiting for him. "Um, I have a question," he said.

Mrs. Ebbel eyed him suspiciously. "What kind of question?"

He tried to figure out what kind of question he had. "An *asking* question."

"I see," said Mrs. Ebbel.

"May I ask it?" he asked.

"O-kay," she said reluctantly.

He asked his question. "What page is the homework on?"

"The homework? Page forty-three."

He wrote "43" on the top of his sneaker so he wouldn't forget, then took his arithmetic book and stepped outside. Jeff and his friends were playing basketball. He ran home.

Now he looked hopelessly at page 43, shook his head, and sighed.

Question 1. What is three-fourths of two-thirds?

It was the most impossible question he'd ever seen. His mind wandered.

"Hey, Bradley, what are you doing?" asked Ronnie.

"Homework."

"What's homework?" she asked.

"It's work you do at home."

"Is that supposed to be funny?" she asked.

"No, really. That's what they do at school. They give you work to do at home and they call it homework."

"You've never done it before," said Ronnie.

"I'm doing it for Carla. Now leave me alone so I can concentrate."

Question 1. What is three-fourths of two-thirds?

"Why are you doing it for Carla?" Ronnie asked. He sighed. "Okay, I'll tell you, but you can't tell anyone."

Ronnie promised not to tell.

"We're in love."

"Really?" exclaimed Ronnie. "How do you know?"

"She kissed me."

"Oooh, that means she loves you!" said Ronnie.

"Are you going to marry her?"

"Maybe, when I'm older. First, I have to do my homework."

"I'm going to marry Bartholomew," said Ronnie.

"I know," said Bradley. "Now let me do my homework."

Question 1. What is three-fourths of two-thirds?

"Hey, Bradley, what's going on?" asked Bartholomew.

"Leave him alone," said Ronnie. "He's trying to do his homework. He can't concentrate when you're talking to him."

"Maybe I can help," said Bartholomew. "What's the problem?"

"What is three-fourths of two-thirds?" Bradley asked.

"Three-fourths of two-thirds," Bartholomew repeated. "That's a tough problem all right. Three-fourths of two-thirds. Let's see. You divide four into—no, you multiply two times, no . . ."

"Of means *divide*," said the donkey. "Like if you

take half of something it means you divide by two. You divide three by two and four by three."

Bradley started to write that down.

"No, *of* means *times*," said the lion. "You have to multiply everything."

"First you have to reverse the nominators," said the fox.

"You don't reverse, you inverse," corrected the mother cocker spaniel.

"I think you have to find a common denominator," said the elephant.

"Not for multiplication," said the hippopotamus. "That's only for addition."

"Multiplication is the same as addition," said the fox, "only faster."

"You cancel out the threes," said the kangaroo. "You always cancel out threes."

"You multiply the threes," said the lion.

Bradley kept erasing and rewriting and erasing and rewriting until there was nothing but a big black smudge covering his paper. On top of the smudge, he tried to write $3 \times 3 = 9$, but as he did so, his pencil tore a hole through the paper.

"The answer can't be nine," said Ronnie. "If you start out with fractions, you have to end up with fractions."

Bradley slammed the book shut. "None of you know what you're talking about!" he cried out in disgust. He took the book, paper, and pencil, and walked down the hall to the dining room.

His mother was sitting at the table working a crossword puzzle from the newspaper. He plopped down next to her and sighed.

She looked at him inquisitively.

"I can't figure out how to do my homework," he complained. "Will you help me?"

His mother smiled. "I'd be delighted. Let me see."

He pushed his arithmetic book in front of her. "Page forty-three."

She opened the book to that page and looked at Bradley's torn, smudged paper. "Okay. First let me clear away this newspaper so we can have a nice, neat place to work. While I do that, I want you to get a clean sheet of paper."

"I don't have any more paper. This is all I brought home."

"There's some paper in your father's desk. Get a sharp pencil, too."

He looked at her in disbelief. He wasn't allowed to touch anything on his father's desk.

She nodded.

Bradley felt a little scared as he walked into the extra bedroom which his father used as an office. He opened the top drawer of the old oak desk and carefully took out a pencil and a piece of paper. He shut the drawer, looked around, then hurried back to his mother.

She smiled at him.

He sat down and wrote, much neater this time:

Bradley Chalkers
Homework
Arithmetic
Page 43
Red Hill School
Room 12
Mrs. Ebbel's class
Last seat, last row
Black eye

"You have to put all that," he explained, "in case it gets lost."

She read the first question aloud. "What is three-fourths of two-thirds?"

He shrugged.

"Okay," she said, "the first thing you want to do is write the equation."

He still didn't know what to do.

She wrote it for him.

$$\frac{3}{4} \times \frac{2}{3} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

"Whenever you see the word *of*, it means you multiply," she explained.

"*Of* means *times*," he said.

"Right," said his mother.

That was what the lion had said.

"Now you can cancel out the threes," said his mother.

That was what the kangaroo had said. You always cancel out threes.

Neither of them noticed that Claudia was standing behind them, watching. "That's not how you're supposed to learn it," she said abruptly.

Bradley turned around and glared at her.

"You have to explain *why* you cancel them," said Claudia. "And they don't call it canceling. It's called dividing by one."

"I just know the way I learned it," said Mrs. Chalkers.

"If you want, I can show you, Bradley," said Claudia.

He looked at his mother, then back at Claudia, then at his mother.

"She knows the way they're teaching it now," said his mother.

"You'll help me?" Bradley asked his sister.

"Sure, why not? I got nothing better to do."

Mrs. Chalkers stood up, and Claudia took her place. "Don't do it for him," said Bradley's mother. "Make sure he knows how to do it himself."

Claudia worked patiently with Bradley for the rest of the afternoon. When he said he understood something, she made him explain it to her. That was harder. He understood it when she did it, but then he had trouble when he tried to do it himself.

By dinnertime, they were only a little more than halfway through. Bradley wanted Claudia to help him after dinner, too, but she had her own homework to do.

"You know how to do it," she told him. "You can do it yourself."

"I need help," he complained.

"I'll help you," said his father.

"You will?"

"Let's go to my office. We can work at my desk."
Bradley couldn't believe it.

They worked together. Bradley was surprised by how much his father knew. He made all the hard parts seem easy. Bradley was a little disappointed by how quickly they finished. He had liked working with his father.

He brought his finished homework back to his room.

"Oh, I get it, Bradley," said Bartholomew. "You multiply the numerators and denominators separately. But I still don't understand reducing."

"It's easy," said Bradley. "Here, let me show you again."

Bradley was too excited to sleep. *Mrs. Ebbel will be so surprised*, he thought. *She'll tell the whole class, "Only one person got a hundred percent—Bradley!"*

But there were so many things that could still go wrong. *What if I lose it on the way to school?* he worried. *What if Jeff and his friends steal it?* Twice during the night he got out of bed to make sure it was safely folded inside his arithmetic book.

What if I did the wrong page? He was no longer sure whether Mrs. Ebbel had said page 43 or page 62! He tried to remember exactly what she said to him.

He sat up in horror. She never said it was *arithmetic* homework. Mrs. Ebbel had just said a page number. She never said what book! She could have meant history, or language, or any of his other books!

He lay back down and trembled. His tears wet his pillow.

He got out of bed early in the morning, checked to see if his homework was still there, then quickly got ready and left for school without eating breakfast.

On the way he stopped to make sure he still had his homework. As he opened his book, the paper fell onto the sidewalk, right next to a puddle of water.

He stared at it, horrified by what he had almost done, then quickly picked it up and placed it back in

his book. He held the book tightly shut the rest of the way to school.

He was one of the first ones there. He had to wait for the doors to open. He kept on the lookout for Jeff and his gang. He stood with his back to the school wall so they couldn't sneak up behind him.

He saw Andy. He thought Andy had seen him, too, but if he had, he didn't do anything about it.

When the doors opened, he was the first one in Mrs. Ebbel's class. He sat at his desk—last seat, last row—and waited.

As the other kids came in, he saw them put sheets of paper on Mrs. Ebbel's desk. He wondered if that was their homework. He now had a new worry. He didn't know how he was supposed to turn in his homework.

Jeff entered, placed a piece of paper on the pile on top of Mrs. Ebbel's desk, then came toward the back of the room.

It must be his homework, thought Bradley. What else could it be?

"Shawne," he said aloud.

The girl who sat in front of Jeff turned around.

"Are you supposed to put your homework on Mrs. Ebbel's desk?"

"Don't tell me what to do, Bradley!" Shawne snapped. "You worry about your homework, and I'll worry about mine, okay?" She turned back around.

It was almost time for school to start. *What if I have to put it on her desk before the bell rings or it*

doesn't count? He fumbled through his book for his homework, stood up, then headed for Mrs. Ebbel's desk.

He became more nervous with each step he took. His mouth was dry and he had trouble breathing. He could hardly see where he was going. He felt like he was going to faint. Mrs. Ebbel's desk seemed so far away. It was like he was looking at it through the wrong end of a telescope. His heart pounded and his homework rattled in his hand.

Somehow he made it to her desk and tried to focus on the sheets of paper the other kids had put there. It looked like arithmetic homework! Page 43!

But instead of feeling better, he felt worse—like he was going to explode.

"Do you want something, Bradley?" asked Mrs. Ebbel.

He looked at his homework shaking in his hand. Then he tore it in half and dropped it in the wastepaper basket next to Mrs. Ebbel's desk.

He instantly felt better. His head cleared and his breathing returned to normal. His heart stopped pounding.

He walked back to his desk, took a deep breath, exhaled, and sat down. He folded his arms on his desktop and lay his head down sideways across them. He felt sad, but relieved, as he gazed at the gold stars.