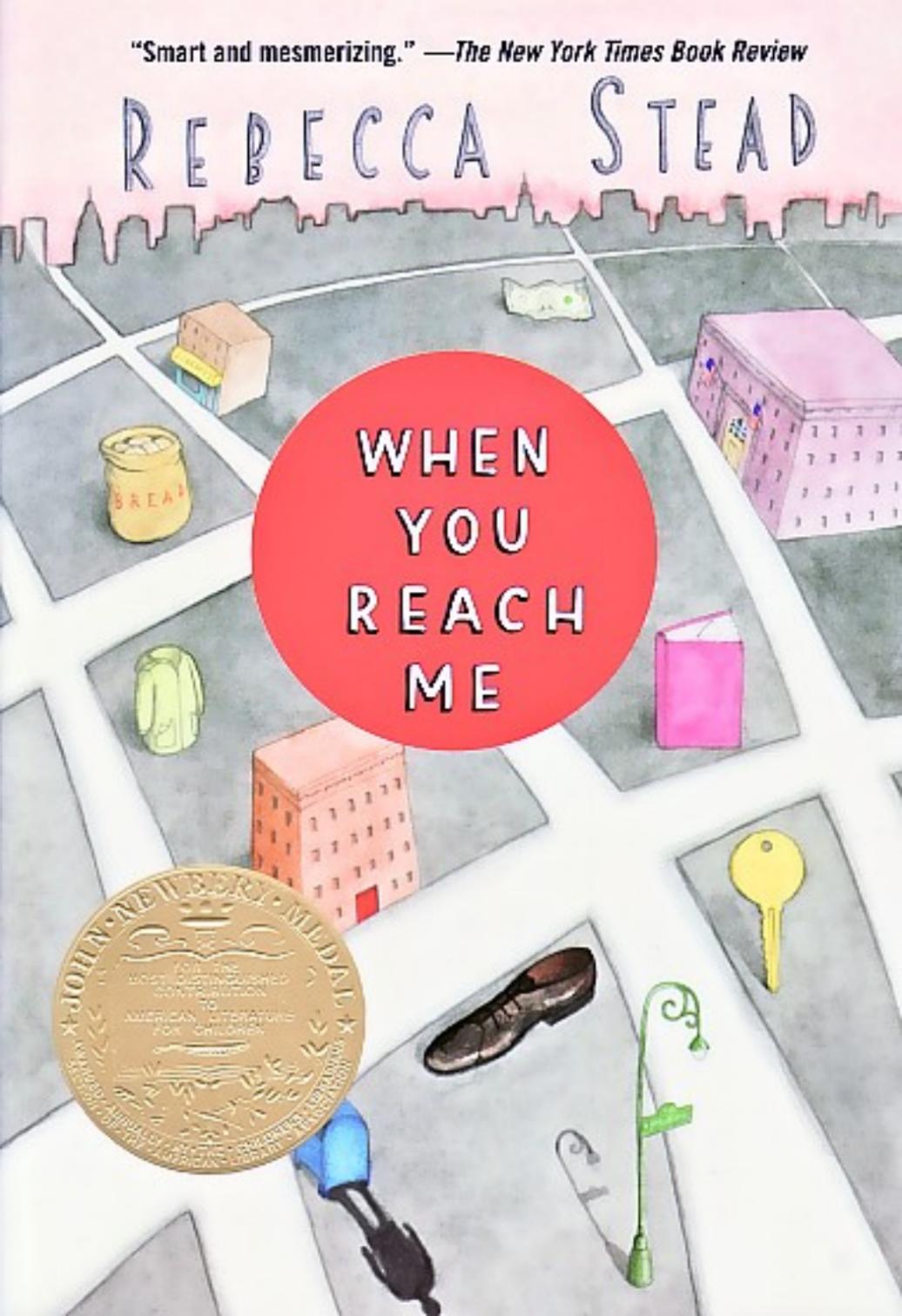


"Smart and mesmerizing." —*The New York Times Book Review*

REBECCA STEAD



WHEN
YOU
REACH
ME



Things You Keep in a Box

So Mom got the postcard today. It says *Congratulations* in big curly letters, and at the very top is the address of Studio TV-15 on West 58th Street. After three years of trying, she has actually made it. She's going to be a contestant on *The \$20,000 Pyramid*, which is hosted by Dick Clark.

On the postcard there's a list of things to bring. She needs some extra clothes in case she wins and makes it to another show, where they pretend it's the next day even though they really tape five in one afternoon. Barrettes are optional, but she should definitely bring some with her. Unlike me, Mom has glossy red hair that bounces around and might obstruct America's view of her small freckled face.

And then there's the date she's supposed to show up, scrawled in blue pen on a line at the bottom of the card: *April 27, 1979*. Just like you said.

I check the box under my bed, which is where I've kept your notes these past few months. There it is, in your tiny handwriting: *April 27th: Studio TV-15, the*

words all jerky-looking, like you wrote them on the subway. Your last "proof."

I still think about the letter you asked me to write. It nags at me, even though you're gone and there's no one to give it to anymore. Sometimes I work on it in my head, trying to map out the story you asked me to tell, about everything that happened this past fall and winter. It's all still there, like a movie I can watch when I want to. Which is never.

Things That Go Missing

Mom has swiped a big paper calendar from work and Scotch-taped the month of April to the kitchen wall. She used a fat green marker, also swiped from work, to draw a pyramid on April 27, with dollar signs and exclamation points all around it. She went out and bought a fancy egg timer that can accurately measure a half minute. They don't have fancy egg timers in the supply closet at her office.

April twenty-seventh is also Richard's birthday. Mom wonders if that's a good omen. Richard is Mom's boyfriend. He and I are going to help Mom practice every single night, which is why I'm sitting at my desk instead of watching after-school TV, which is a birthright of every latchkey child. "Latchkey child" is a name for a kid with keys who hangs out alone after school until a grown-up gets home to make dinner. Mom hates that expression. She says it reminds her of dungeons, and must have been invented by someone strict and awful with an unlimited child-care budget. "Probably someone German," she says,

YEARLING NEWBERRY

By sixth grade, Miranda and her best friend, Sal, know how to navigate their New York City neighborhood. They know where it's safe to go, and who to avoid. Like the crazy guy on the corner.

But things start to unravel. Sal gets punched by a kid on the street for what seems like no reason, and he shuts Miranda out of his life. The apartment key that Miranda's mom keeps hidden for emergencies is stolen. And then a mysterious note arrives, scrawled on a tiny slip of paper:

*I am coming to save your friend's life, and my own.
I ask two favors. First, you must write me a letter.*

The notes keep coming, and Miranda slowly realizes that whoever is leaving them knows things no one should know. Each message brings her closer to believing that only she can prevent a tragic death. Until the final note makes her think she's too late.

This remarkable novel takes place in the real world but holds a fantastic puzzle at its heart. *When You Reach Me* is an original, and a brilliant and profound delight.