

THE PINBALLS

NEWBERY MEDAL-WINNING AUTHOR

B E T S Y B Y A R S



IT ISN'T EASY
BEING BOUNCED
AROUND

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One summer two boys and a girl went to a foster home to live together.

One of the boys was Harvey. He had two broken legs. He got them when he was run over by his father's new Grand Am.

The day of his accident was supposed to be one of the happiest of Harvey's life. He had written an essay on "Why I Am Proud to Be an American," and he had won third prize. Two dollars. His father had promised to drive him to the meeting and watch him get the award. The winners and their parents were going to have their pictures taken for the newspaper.

When the time came to go, Harvey's father said, "What are you doing in the car?" Harvey had

been sitting there, waiting, for fifteen minutes. He was wearing a tie for the first time in his life. "Get out, Harvey, I'm late as it is."

"Get out?"

"Yes, get out."

Harvey did not move. He sat staring straight ahead. He said, "But this is the night I get my award. You promised you'd take me."

"I didn't *promise*. I said I would if I could."

"No, you promised. You said if I'd quit bugging you about it, you'd take me. You promised." He still did not look at his father.

"Get out, Harvey."

"No."

"I'm telling you for the last time, Harvey. Get out."

"Drive me to the meeting and I'll get out."

"You'll get out when I say!" Harvey's father wanted to get to a poker game at the Elks Club, and he was already late. "And I say you get out *now*." With that, his father leaned over, opened the door and pushed Harvey out of the car.

Harvey landed on his knees in the grass. He jumped to his feet. He grabbed for the car door. His father locked it.

Now Harvey looked at his father. His father's face was as red as if it had been turned inside out.

Quickly Harvey ran around the front of the car to try and open the other door. When he was directly in front of the car, his father accidentally threw the car into drive instead of reverse. In that wrong gear, he stepped on the gas, ran over Harvey and broke both his legs.

The court had taken Harvey away from his father and put him in the foster home "until such time as the father can control his drinking and make a safe home for the boy."

The second boy was Thomas J. He didn't know whom he belonged to. When he was two years old someone had left him in front of a farmhouse like he was an unwanted puppy. The farmhouse belonged to two old ladies, the Benson twins, who were then eighty-two years old. They were the oldest living twins in the state. Every year on their birthday they got letters of congratulation from the governor. They were exactly alike except that one's eyes, nose and mouth were a little bigger than the other's. They looked like matching salt-and-pepper shakers.

***"Take a good look at a pinball machine
sometime. You might learn
something about life."***

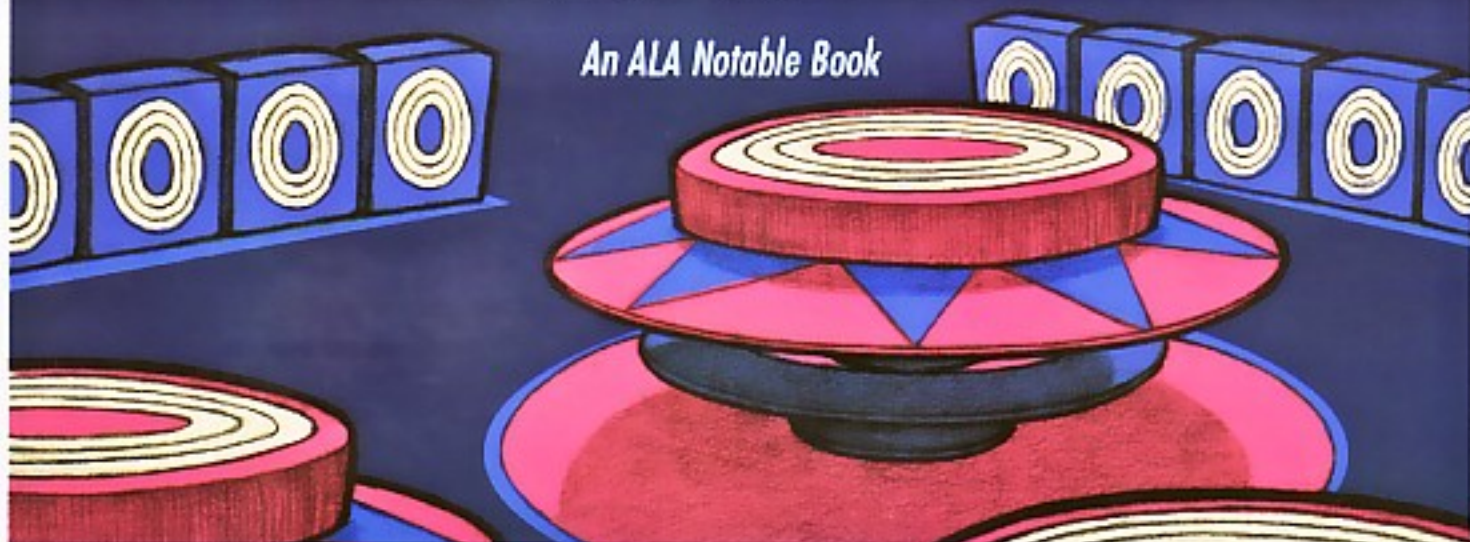
Carlie gets bounced around like a pinball—no say in what happens to her, nobody to depend on. If she was in charge, she wouldn't be stuck in this foster home with two other kids, Harvey and Thomas J.

But to her surprise, Carlie and the boys become friends. And as the three learn to depend on each other, they also start to realize that they don't have to be like pinballs. Together, they can stop bouncing around and take control of their own lives.

"A former winner of the Newbery Medal scores again with a story that has poignancy, perception, and humor." —*The Chicago Tribune*

"Deftly told with humor, this realistic novel introduces unique individuals who learn to deal with grief by sticking together." —*ALA Booklist*

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