

**MARGARET PETERSON HADDIX**

*Author of **Among the Hidden***



**Running  
Out of Time**

**An ALA Best Book for Young Adults**



# ONE

The light woke Jessie, though it was just a glimmer downstairs. She eased out of bed, being careful not to disturb her sister Hannah.

"Ma?" Jessie whispered by the ladder down from the loft. In a few moments, her mother's tired face appeared below, illuminated by a flickering candle.

"It's the Bentons," she said. "Caleb says both Sally and Betsy are sick."

Everybody called Jessie's mother "the midwife," but she did a lot more than deliver babies. In Clifton, anyone who got sick at night called on her. Most people, Jessie thought, seemed to wait until dark to get sick, so they wouldn't have to go to Dr. Fister. Dr. Fister always gave prescriptions like "Make a poultice of chokeberries and rub it on your neck three times a day." He made a real show of it. He used to slip



a packet of pills under the table, too—pills that really worked. Anymore, though, he just gave the folk remedy. Jessie hadn't seen any of the pills in a long time.

"Can I come and help?" Jessie asked Ma.

"I don't want you catching anything. . . ."

Jessie gave her mother what Pa called "that pitiful please look," and she relented.

"All right. You can carry my bag. But I don't want you coming inside until I find out what Sally and Betsy have."

Jessie pulled her dress off the nail by her bed and yanked it over her head. Then she scrambled down the ladder and took her boots from beside the door. She was ready by the time Ma finished dressing. Grown women had to worry about clothing more than thirteen-year-old girls did. That was one reason Jessie was glad she wasn't entirely grown-up yet.

Ma unlatched the door and they slipped out into the warm April night.

"Hannah and the boys never even moved!" Jessie said.

Ma smiled.

"They could sleep through a blizzard. You're my light sleeper. You're always afraid you might miss something."

Jessie grinned. It did seem like an adventure being out in the middle of the night. The village looked spooky with only moonlight and the faint glow of Ma's lantern. Shadows flickered on the path and in the surrounding woods. The main buildings of Clifton loomed like hulking animals. Jessie shivered passing the three trees in the square that everyone said were haunted.

"Did Caleb go on home?" Jessie asked. Caleb Benton was



ten, but he was the biggest chicken in Clifton School. "I bet he was scared—"

"His ma didn't want him to wait," Ma said.

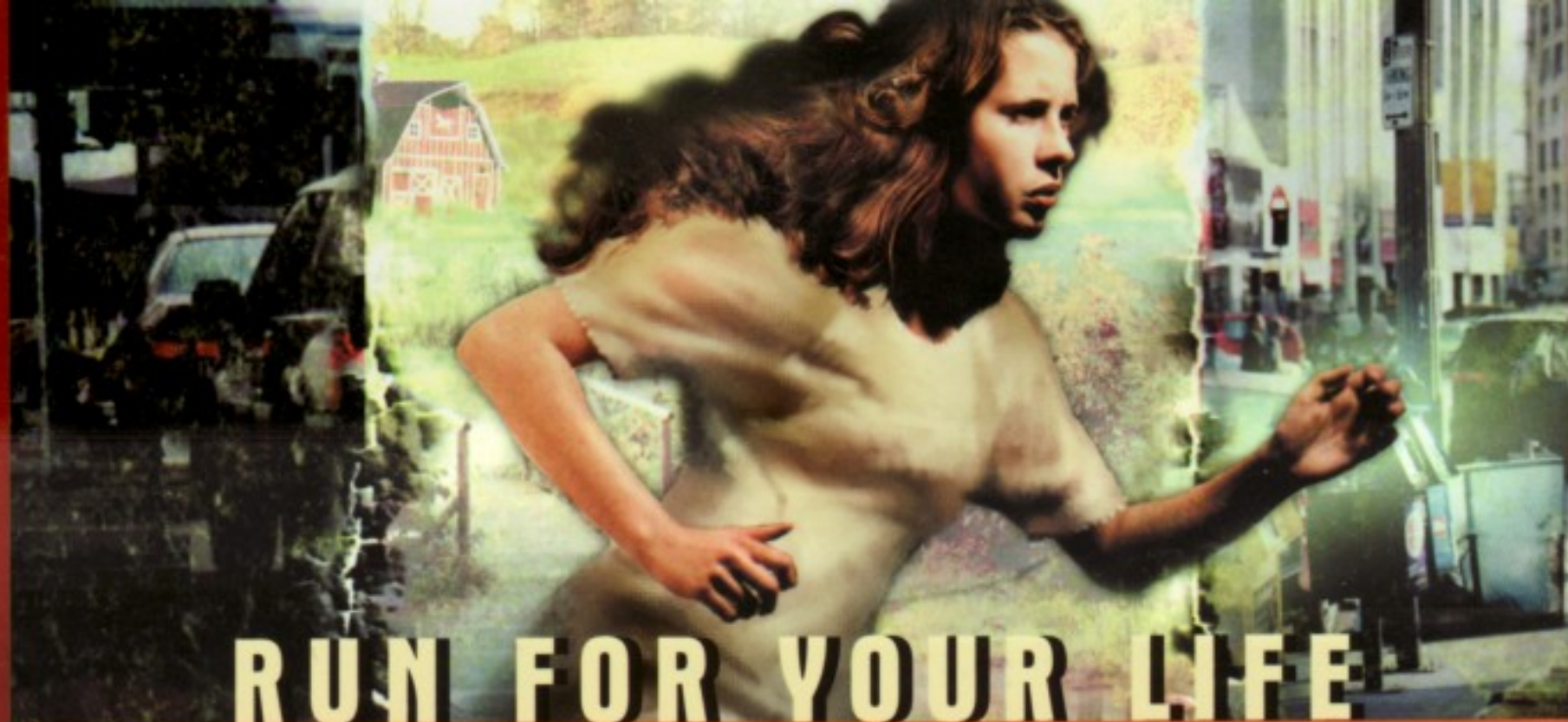
Jessie waited for Ma to say more, but she didn't. Usually when Jessie convinced Ma to let her go along on these night trips, Ma and Jessie talked all the way: about the symptoms Ma knew and how she planned to treat them, or about Jessie's schoolwork, or about just anything. But tonight Ma seemed barely aware that Jessie was with her. Ma stepped silently, her face shadowed. Jessie thought Ma might just be tired. This was the fourth night in a row she had been called out. Ma hadn't let Jessie go the other times.

They passed the school, the general store, and Dr. Fister's clapboard house. Jessie couldn't understand how the doctor could afford a clapboard house, when no one went to him. Jessie's pa was the blacksmith, and he was always busy. Yet Jessie's family still lived in the log cabin they'd built back in 1828, when they first came to Clifton. Jessie had hinted more than once that they needed a new house, now that there were six children. After all, she said, little Katie was soon going to outgrow the trundle bed that slipped under Ma and Pa's bed downstairs. Where was Katie going to sleep then?

Pa always answered that a new house was too expensive, with the whole country in a depression. He didn't seem to mind. Hannah whispered that Pa liked the log cabin too much to build a house.

Hannah was just a year older than Jessie, but she said she could remember when they built the cabin. All the men in the village helped lay the maple logs, one on top of another, and then the women filled the cracks with mud. Jessie had





# RUN FOR YOUR LIFE

Jessie lives with her family in the frontier village of Clifton, Indiana. When diphtheria strikes the village and the children of Clifton start dying, Jessie's mother sends her on a dangerous mission to bring back help.

But beyond the walls of Clifton, Jessie discovers a world even more alien and threatening than she could have imagined, and soon she finds her own life in jeopardy. Can she get help before the children of Clifton, and Jessie herself, run out of time?

"If Ray Bradbury had written *The Giver*, the result might rival Margaret Peterson Haddix's *Running Out of Time*"  
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"*Running Out of Time* is a highly imaginative, absolutely terrific first novel."  
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★ "Absorbing . . . gripping . . . convincing and compelling. Fans of time-travel or historical novels . . . will look forward to more stories from this intriguing new author."  
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