

STEPPING STONES™

a chapter book

Fiction

The Chalk Box Kid

by Clyde Robert Bulla





The Room

Gregory heard the clock strike. It was an hour till midnight. His birthday would soon be over.

He went to the door and looked out into the street.

“Shut the door,” said Aunt Grace.

“I thought I heard the car,” he said.

“Gregory,” said his aunt, “the cold air is coming in.”

He shut the door. He went back and sat by her on the sofa. His tablet and paints and brushes were out on the table, but he didn't feel like painting. He sat there and tried to watch television with Aunt Grace.

It had been a long day. So far it was his very worst birthday.

He had wanted to go with Mother and Daddy. They were moving to another house, and he hadn't even seen it yet.

"If you go with us, you'll just get tired," Mother had said. "I want you to stay with Aunt Grace."

He had thought she didn't remember what day it was. He had told her, "I'm nine years old today."

"I know," she had said, "and I'm sorry we can't have a cake or a party. There's just no time. We have to finish moving."

But he kept thinking there would be *something* for his birthday.

He went to the door again. This time the car was there. Mother was getting out.

She came up to the door. She had on old



clothes, and she looked tired. "Hello, Grace," she said. "Thank you for keeping Gregory. Are you ready, Gregory?"

He picked up his tablet and paints and brushes, and he was ready.

They went out to the car. She sat up front with Daddy. Gregory got into the back.

They drove across the city. Gregory went to sleep.

When he woke up, they had stopped under a streetlight. The light shone on a house.

"Is this it?" he asked.

"This is it," said Daddy.

Daddy had lost his job at the factory. Now he had a different job. That was why they had had to move.

The house was small and it needed paint. It looked as if it had grown out of the sidewalk. There was no yard at all.

They went inside. Gregory saw boxes and papers. He saw bare walls.

"You'd better go to bed," said Mother.

"Where?" he asked.

She showed him a room. His bed was in it.

Fiction

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A new neighborhood. A new school. An unhappy birthday. Life isn't easy for nine-year-old Gregory. But then he discovers an abandoned chalk factory behind his house. And something magical happens: a beautiful garden and a quiet friendship spring up within its walls.



“Bulla has created a gem of a book . . . a story that goes straight to the heart.” —*Publishers Weekly*

“Outstanding characterization plus a poignant story make this a particularly strong selection.” —*School Library Journal*

“This simple, surprisingly moving book . . . has an almost poetic power.” —*Thinking Families*

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