*A Completely Different Place*, and by inconsistencies such as Johnny on page 99 saying that they don't read the signs out loud, because doing so sets the magic to work, but on page 103 reading one aloud, with no effect. Other readers, however, may delight in the giddy pace of the action, the sardonic humour of Johnny's narrative, and in the deployment of traditional fairly tale material in a new context.

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### An Entertaining Flight into Fantasy and Freedom

***The Invisible Day.*** Marthe Jocelyn. Illus. Abby Carter. Tundra Books, 1997. 134 pp. $14.99 cloth. ISBN 0-88776-412-6.

"Even though I am almost eleven years old, my mother is stuck to me like glue." Thus begins this entertaining first novel about a young girl yearning for freedom — and then having to cope with it. When Billie (real name Isobel) stumbles across a mysterious powder which makes her invisible, she gleefully gets herself into situations which any young reader would relish: doing what she pleases, eavesdropping, being in the boy's washroom, making faces at adults, playing tricks on her worst enemy. But Billie soon encounters as many problems as joys, which propel the story along to its final satisfying conclusion.

Jocelyn is a fine writer. Her use of first person, humour and believable dialogue ring true, giving a solid, funny, kid's-eye view of home and school. The secondary characters are just as believable: Billie's overprotective mother, her loyal friend Hubert, and her nemesis, the snooty Alyssa. The setting, New York City — that place where safety and freedom are always an issue — is wonderfully detailed, whether fruit market or film set, candy store or subway. The book is episodic, moving swiftly in 24 easy-to-read chapters, with an appealing layout. Abby Carter's line drawings deftly convey the sense and tone of the story. (An invisible protagonist must be a daunting challenge for any illustrator!)

Fantasy is a difficult genre, and for the most part Jocelyn handles it well. In a few places the logic wears a little thin, but this is a minor quibble. When Billie is invisible, everything she holds disappears (66) — but not telephone receivers, door handles, subway poles or other convenient exceptions. It is also a handy coincidence that Billie's teacher, that day, is replaced by a substitute. Jody, the teenage genius who created the vanishing powder, is in the story only to help undo the spell. Would readers want to find out more about what happens to her?

In an epilogue tacked on after the final chapter, Billie carefully makes amends for every single piece of mischief done. Presumably this is to mollify the politically correct. (Will Curious George now have new volumes added, to atone for all the mayhem he's caused?)

Don't wish too much for what you want, the old saying goes; you might get it. This is a delightfully magical read for any child who wants to taste the joys and challenges of freedom — and then, like Billie, come safely home again, to a mother who is just beginning to let go.

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### The Necessary Balance between the Worlds of Emotion and Reason

***Summer of Madness.*** Marion Crook. Orca, 1995. 188 pp. $7.95 paper. ISBN 1-55143-041-X. ***Dreamers.*** Mary-Ellen Lang Collura. Douglas & McIntyre/Greystone, 1995. 133 pp. $7.95 paper. ISBN 1-55054-162-5.

Marion Crook's young adult novel *Summer of Madness* is set on a cattle ranch in the Cariboo region of British Columbia. Crook's compelling first-person point of view narrative is provided by sixteen-year-old Karen Stewartson who ably assumes the household duties, her own and her absent mother's daily ranch chores.

Crook's style of writing is engaging. Her setting, described in a realistic manner, makes ranch style life and its problems interesting and credible. Crook's strongly-motivated, believable characters have fascinating depths. Karen's main problem appears to be the emotional turbulence created by her best friend, seventeen-year-old Kevin who is at times grumpy, critical and domineering. "Having troubles with his hormones," Karen's mother remarks. Kevin and Karen both possess the uncomfortable ability to invade one another's thoughts. Trevor Foster, another boy who interests Karen, is, on the surface, a real charmer, and apparently uncomplicated.

The central controlling idea is Karen's attempt to maintain balance between her emotions and reason. Capable, rational Karen's self-control slips when her father's and their neighbour's cattle are poisoned, and dirt bikers cut their fences, open gates and harass their cows. When confronted by Karen about his criminal involvement Trevor reacts by threatening Karen and her seven-year-old sister, Sarah.

Karen believes "emotions are irrational and that people shouldn't act on them," preferring the control of karate to random acts of violence. So she voices her objection when their neighbours vandalize Trevor's motorcycle, one of those used to create havoc on their property. But, as the violence accelerates, Karen rejects reasoned karate moves and chooses a pitchfork as a weapon against Trevor.

It is the final act of the poisoning of her calf, Edie, that shatters Karen's control. Karen tells her veterinarian friend, Reena, "I'm not going to be a vet." She asks her, "When do you get so you can take it? So you don't care so much?" "But not caring would make you a bad vet and a lousy human being," Reena tells Karen.