

Once I didn't know about my grandfather Felix's scary childhood.
Then I found out what the Nazis did to his best friend Zelda.
Now I understand why Felix does the things he does.
At least he's got me.
My name is Zelda too.
This is our story.

A BANK STREET BEST CHILDREN'S BOOK OF THE YEAR
A USBBY OUTSTANDING INTERNATIONAL BOOK

★ "A poignant close to an affecting and heartrending history."
—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

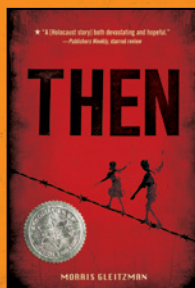
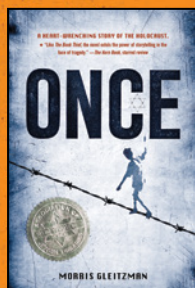
★ "Brilliant in its realism." —*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

"A clever and satisfying way of coming full circle." —*School Library Journal*

"A powerful conclusion to Felix's story." —*VOYA*

"Zelda, impulsive but loving, is a credible narrator whose feelings and actions propel the story, which is equally hers and Felix's." —*The Horn Book*

Find out how Felix's story began in . . .



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Now, at last.

It's arrived.

I can see it on the post office shelf.

Good on you, Australia Post, and your very kind pick-up counter that stores parcels instead of delivering them to grandfathers and spoiling their birthday surprises.

"That one there," I say to the man at the counter.
"The one with my name on it."

I show him my homework exercise book to prove I'm me.

"Hmmm," says the man. "Zelda. Nice name, that. Daringly exotic and a bit unusual."

"Actually, it belongs to someone else," I say. "I got it secondhand."

"I know the feeling," says the man.

He points to his name tag, which says ELVIS.

We give each other sympathetic looks. Elvis hands me the parcel.

“There you go, secondhand Zelda,” he says. “Hope it’s something good.”

“It’s a present for my grandfather,” I say. “He will be eighty tomorrow.”

Elvis says something about how he wishes he was eighty so he could retire. I sympathize with him, but I’m not completely listening. At last I’m holding Felix’s present, and I can’t wait to give it to him. I can’t wait for his big grin when he sees what it is.

Oops, I didn’t mean to make an excited noise in the post office.

Calm down, Zelda, you’re not a squeaky toy.

I thank Elvis and head for the door.

My phone beeps in my school bag. I know who it is without even looking.

Poor Felix. He gets worried if I’m late home from school. He’s not used to being my substitute parent.

I text him back.

on my way see ya soon

I hug his present to my chest and hurry out of the post office. If I run fast and don’t faint in this heat or trip over and fall into any ditches, I can be home in fifteen minutes.

But I don't get far.

"Hey, shorty," says an unfriendly voice. "Where's the fire?"

Three girls are blocking the street. They're older than me, thirteen or fourteen. Their uniforms are creased like they get into lots of fights and never do any ironing. The toughest-looking one's got a badge on her school bag that says CARMODY'S PEST REMOVAL.

She's looking at me like I'm the pest.

I don't know why. I've never met these girls before.

Escape plans flash through my head.

I could climb up the mobile phone tower on top of the post office, or I could dash round the back of the video store and through the fence and hide in the forest, or I could run into the bank and get a personal loan and buy a ticket to Africa on a flight that leaves in the next two or three seconds.

No, I couldn't.

"So," says the pest-removal girl. "Dr. Zelda, I presume?"

I try to work out what she means. And how she knows my name.

Adults are walking past, not even looking at us. Don't they realize that when three older kids are standing this close to a younger kid, it's not a social event?

"Hope we're not keeping you from a big medical emergency, Dr. Zelda," says the pest-removal girl.

Oh, okay. I get what she's on about. And it's my fault. A few days ago in class, when I was the new kid, Ms. Canny asked me to tell everyone about my family. I told them about my parents being devoted doctors in Africa and my grandfather being a retired brilliant surgeon.

I shouldn't have said brilliant. It's true, Felix is very brilliant, but it sounds like boasting. I should have said quite good or average.

"I'm on my way home," I say to the girl. "It's not a medical emergency."

"Yes it is," says one of the other girls. She points to the pest-removal girl. "Tonya needs medical attention. She's swallowed her gum."

I smile to show them I know that's a joke.

They don't smile back.

"Come on," says Tonya. "Cure me."

Lots of other kids walking home from school are stopping and staring now.

"Or is that stuff all lies?" says Tonya. "About your family being Australia's top medical geniuses."

"I never said that," I reply.

"My little brother's in your class, and he reckons you did," says Tonya. "Is that why you had to leave your last school, Dr. Zelda? Cause you make up stories?"

I don't know who her brother is, but he's wrong. He's

also lucky. I wish I had an older sister. Then she could help me explain to these three bullies the real reason I had to change schools.

More kids are gathering. Tonya grins.

“Dr. Zelda’s new in town,” she says to them. “We’re all very excited. She’s a medical genius. She can cure zits and bed wetting and do heart transplants.”

I try to leave.

Tonya’s bully friends drag me back.

“Not so fast, shorty,” says Tonya. “What have you got there?”

I hold on to the parcel as tightly as I can. I might not be the biggest or toughest person in the world, but when I’m defending a precious birthday present, I can be very determined.

“None of your business,” I say.

Tonya prods the parcel.

“You look nerdy, so it’s probably a textbook,” she says. “Let me guess. *Boasting for Dummies*.”

A couple of kids snigger.

“It’s for my grandfather,” I say. “If you harm it, I’ll tell the police you damaged the property of a senior citizen.”

Tonya’s face goes a bit uncertain. I should get away while I can, but I don’t.

“I’ll tell the local paper as well,” I say. “It’ll be front-page

news, an eighty-year-old man having his birthday gift vandalized. And when I tell them who did it, your photos'll be on the front page too."

I stop, out of breath. I'm taking a risk, because I'm not sure if there is a local paper around here.

Tonya glances at the other kids. Some are looking uncomfortable. A few are moving away.

"What a storyteller," says Tonya. "Spellbinding. And mesmerizing. I'm totally entranced. No I'm not."

She grabs the parcel and yanks it out of my hands.

"Give it back," I say, lunging at her.

"Make me," says Tonya.

She ducks away and pushes past the kids and dances down the street. Her two friends go with her.

I run after them.

I know what I should be doing. I should be ringing the police.

But I haven't got time for phone calls.

Inside that parcel is something very rare and precious, and I think it's going to make Felix very happy, and I want it back now.