

★ "SPELLBINDING . . . COMES ALIVE WITH THE DETAILS
OF TIME AND PLACE."—KIRKUS REVIEWS, STARRED REVIEW

BROOKLYN BRIDGE

A NOVEL BY NEWBERY MEDALIST
KAREN HESSE

MAX AND KARL

Max and Karl came to the bridge a long time ago. Even they forget how long. But they didn't always live under the bridge. Their families had been neighbors in the Old Country. Their two mothers had brought them to America on the same boat. Their fathers had remained behind, in Russia, to finish up business.

No one expected Karl's mother to die so soon after arriving in America. What choice did Max's mother have when Karl was suddenly orphaned? Of course she took him in. There wasn't food enough. The landlord threatened eviction. But she took him in.

The boys thought, Max and Karl, that it was their job to help out, to bring in money. So they asked around the neighborhood and Louie said he knew where they could get cash and he'd tell them if Max and Karl would split the take with him.

So Max and Karl broke into a room on Lorimer Street and stole sixty-eight dollars and split it with Louis Fishbein. But when they brought their share of the money home to Max's mother, she raged at them in a language they were already trying to forget. And mostly she raged at Karl, who was older, and should have known better, and wasn't her flesh and blood. She blamed him for leading Max astray. She turned on Karl with a terrible fury,

never thinking that in driving Karl away, Max would go, too.

That night the boys slept in the vestibule of Dr. Pflug. When he found them curled together, like two beaten dogs, he questioned them.

We're brothers, Max said, though they looked nothing alike.

But the way Karl looked after Max, Dr. Pflug believed them.

We're orphans, said Karl.

And Dr. Pflug fed them a good meal and said they could stay the night.

Which they did. In that vestibule. Without any hardship to the doctor. But the next day he called the police and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. And the boys fled.

They wandered until they found their way under the bridge where no one fed them but no one chased them away, either. It was the first time they belonged somewhere, in a way they never had in Russia, in a way they never had in America.

They had found a home under the bridge. And so they stayed.