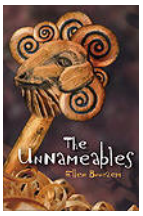

Brooklin Writer Quits Day Job, Sells Novel

"The Unnameables" by Ellen Booraem
Harcourt Children's Books

Publication Date: October 1, 2008
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BROOKLIN, Maine—More than two decades after its author gave up, stuck the first draft in a drawer and went to work for the local paper, the middle-grade children's novel "The Unnameables" will be released this fall by Harcourt Children's Books. The Junior Library Guild has selected it for its Fall 2008 catalogue, and it has received a starred review in *Kirkus*.

Although the official release date is October 1, books will be in most stores in mid- to late September.

Booraem wrote what she describes as "a dreadful first draft" of "The Unnameables" in the early 1980s, then abandoned it to spend the next 20 years reporting and editing for community newspapers in coastal Maine.

In 2003, she took a six-week fiction-writing course with Gouldsboro novelist Cynthia Thayer, and the bug bit again. Later that year she quit her job as arts and special sections editor for *The Ellsworth American* and started rewriting her book from scratch. She finished it the following spring and eight months later landed an agent. A year after that, Harcourt bought the manuscript.

"The Unnameables" is a whimsical fantasy set on an island where everyone is named for what he or she does. The hero is a 13-year-old foundling boy named Medford Runyuin, whose meaningless name underscores his status as an outsider in a rigid, orderly society. Medford has a dangerous secret that just keeps getting worse as he gets older. A smelly, chaotic goatman shows up to expose the secret, kicking off a chain of events that changes Medford's life—and his island—forever.

Working with Kathy Dawson, now editorial director for fiction at Harcourt Children's Books, Booraem spent nearly 18 months revising the book after signing the contract.

"It was hard work but I'm keenly aware of how lucky I am," she says. "There are thousands of good books out there that deserve to be published but won't be. If I didn't live in Brooklin, mine probably wouldn't be either. This area is rich with writers, artists and publishing professionals, and I would have gotten nowhere without their advice and support."

Booraem's web site is www.TheUnnameables.com. To augment her publisher's marketing efforts, she is a proud member of the Class of 2k8, a joint marketing group formed by 27 debut children's novelists from all over the U.S. More information about the class is available at www.Classof2k8.com.

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