



**Finalist Speech for *Crossing the Tracks*
Barbara Stuber**

Years ago, before my mother occupied her own coffin, she told me that

It is interesting how the death theme runs through all our Morris finalists this year.

Through writing I was able to create the very people my mother and my character, Iris, needed - people we all need in our lives. These are the folks who hold the lamp, who offer the power of their whole presence to one another, who give their undivided attention and patience.

I love these humans.

And you, members of the 2011 Morris Award Committee, understood this perfectly because you too offered this to us - your care and undivided attention to what was precious to us - our books.

How incredibly helpful this has been for us first time writers who are so often convinced we would be better off writing our own obituaries than writing books!

On New Years Day 2008 I visited a dilapidated Shinto Shrine in a ancient bamboo forest, outside Kyoto, Japan with my husband and son. In the freezing drizzle I lit a skinny incense stick and on a rectangle of balsa wood
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publishing **CROSSING THE TRACKS**. I hung it with hundreds of others on the shrine.

be burned - the smoke
carrying our hopes heavenward. I believe my mom sniffed my mine and
irst line for your book, Barb,

I am so incredibly grateful that smoke eventually floated to New York City where my agent, Ginger Knowlton, and eventually my editor, Karen Wojtyla, and her assistant, Emily Fabre, at Margaret K. McElderry Books

It was just that easy -

The last line of CROS

I believe young adult books should be just that stars, guides for those crossing the treacherous tracks between childhood and adulthood.

Thank you all for recognizing our stars and for helping them shine.