

# Passages

## Reading Level 8



**Title:** The Devil's Arithmetic

**Author:** Jane Yolen

### Sample From The Book

Aunt Eva leaned over and laid her hand quietly on his. It was enough to calm him. He smiled at Hannah. "Open the door to Elijah, child, and invite him in with an open heart."

Slowly Hannah moved toward the front door, feeling incredibly dumb. She certainly didn't believe that prophet Elijah would come through the apartment door any more than she believed Darth Vader, or Robin Hood, or ... or the Easter Bunny, would. No one except babies. Like Aaron.

"Glancing over her shoulder, Hannah saw they were all watching her intently. Aaron bounced up and down on his chair.

"Open it, Hannah!" he called out loudly. "Open it for Elijah!"

Baby stories! she thought angrily, unlatching the double bolt. Flinging the door open wide, she whispered, "Ready or not, here I c..."

Outside, where there should have been a long, windowless hall with dark green numbered doors leading into other apartments, there was a greening field and a lowering sky. The moon hung ripely between two heavy gray clouds. A bird pelted the air with a strange, lilting song. And across the field, stepping in the furrows, marched a shadowy figure. He had a shapeless cap on his head, a hoe over his shoulder, and he was singing:

Who asked you to be buried alive?

You know that no one forced you.

You took this madness on yourself.



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Postal Mail  
Diarmuid, Inc.  
P.O. Box 357580  
Gainesville, FL 32635