

When Life Stood Still

Melek

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This book is dedicated to EvaLina Milliner, 1890-1955



Any resemblance to names and persons in this book,
living or dead, is coincidental.

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David O. Edwards



Angela M. Milliner

Chapter 1

He lived on the corner of John Street, in the small Welsh village called Porth. Most of the houses on the street had two rooms up, two rooms down with a tiny box room, not big enough to swing a cat and none had an inside bathroom. A couple of houses had three rooms up and two rooms down but no bathroom. Stone row terraced houses without garden or lawn, except for those on the railway track side, had a little garden. David's family lived in the two-story house with a basement, on the hill at the top of the street. There were ten siblings, eleven counting David. One can see their front door even now painted dark green with a bright shiny brass doorknob and a matching brass doorstep. They shone like the sun in the sky and David's mother liked the gleaming glow so much that she used to clean the brass every week and give it a shine every day.

John Street, Porth, was just below the mountain, Penrhiwgwynt in the Rhondda Valley. Porth was not just a dot on the map. It was considered the capital of the Rhondda, not that it had anything of grandeur like Cardiff city with its castle, university, and cathedrals but because it was positioned alongside the river Rhondda.

There were two Rhondda Valleys, Rhondda Fawr and Rhondda Fach, often called just, "The Rhondda." They were definitely the most well-known of the South Wales Valleys. In 1807, a poet looking across the mountaintop observed *'such scenes of untouched nature as the imagination would find it difficult to surpass'*. This is where Angel grew up; the majority of her best memories were made here where she lived with her grandmother, down the street from her best

friend, David. Just the two of them; her father was an occasional visitor.

Often when David and Angel were children they would climb up the mountain and romp, play in the buttercup fields, and swing on the branches of an old oak tree. They never cared about the time because they had so much fun. David had two brothers still living at home, and being the youngest child had more freedom. David loved to climb the trees and look far and wide as if he was looking from a ship's mast to the sea beyond. At these times he would shout, "Ahoy!" His voice echoed in the wind, carrying through the vales. Then he added more words, sentences, and they too would repeat in the echo. Every weekend they went to their special place on the mountain, rain or shine. Angel sat on the top of the old fence near one particular tree and watched David with excitement. It was funny really; most of the fence had fallen down over time. But there stood a small part of the fence and gate just underneath the tree, almost as if it intended to be there just for Angel to sit on.

One particular weekend they had homework from their choir teacher. Everyone needed to practice the Welsh Anthem and some hymns ready for Church. As they were up the mountain and far away from everyone David started singing the first words and Angel sang the last. Their voices seemed to hit the mountain on the other side of the valley and return with some delay, like a choir in the distance. It was fun for them to sing the words although they weren't particularly interested in practicing the Welsh Anthem. It was supposed to be sung with reverence and very slow. As many times as they could they would sing it with a beat since no one from their town could hear them up there. With every song their "make-believe choir" echoed back as though it sang the chorus.

David loved to sing and quite often he would make up songs.

“I had a girl, Angel was her name, and she had long brown hair just like a horse’s mane.”

Of course, Angel believed she couldn’t compete with his voice. She had a high-pitched tone that her singing teacher said was soprano. Angel tried to sing with David, who complained as soon as she opened her mouth.

“Oh, you make my ears hurt.” He clapped his hands over his ears. Then he would go on with his made up songs.

“Why don’t you fill your so picky ears up with dirt?” Angel would reply, hurt that he didn’t like her voice.

He got a little offended by her response, but like most kids they continued trying to outdo each other.

“You can’t sing any old thing.” David was bossy but a great singer, opinionated and right in his youthful sensibility.

“Huh, we’ll see about that David Edwards, teacher’s pet,” Angel told him. She was sure that’s how he gained favor. “I can sing but I don’t want to hear everyone say I crack the light bulbs.”

“Let’s hear you then, sing something,” David demanded. But it was a constant tease between them.

“I’ll sing when I want to.” Angel would pretend to pout and rub her eyes as though she was about to cry. Then he would nudge her with his shoulder and charm her with his smile. He was so handsome, even at nine years old. His black hair sucked in the light that brightened the sky. It was a rich coal color, with red tinges, that blew up and down in a swirl around his head when he swung upside down on the tree limbs. He was Angel’s best friend and she loved him as the big brother she never had.



Angel’s mother left shortly after she was born. Her father had to work away from home so he took Angel to live

with his mother. She only saw him every couple of months. Angel's grandmother was a good woman who taught her, even at a young age, to show love, even when people were unlovable; to forgive those who hurt her as best as she could; and ignore those hateful children at school who bullied her.

Life was lonely for Angel. She didn't have any brothers or sisters so she would pretend her stuffed bear was an imaginary sister. It was alright, but Angel couldn't have a conversation with her.

The bear originally had fine golden red fur and music in her tummy if Angel squeezed. Eventually her music box broke down so she didn't play music anymore, and her fur had worn away where she had been squeezed so much. She had a tiny cut off pencil in her ear to hold it up. The bear was very old and Angel was told it had been her mother's, and the only thing that was passed on when she was a baby and went to live with her grandmother.

Angel didn't really cherish the bear because it had been her mother's, but because of the sweet music it played. It was the only bear Angel had all those years. Maybe the pencil in her ear had some significance, but Angel didn't know the story.



David was her rescuer and her knight in shining armor. That's why she had so much fun when they were together. He was everything to her and she appreciated his company even when he was showing off. She knew David made life extra exciting for her, as she was very shy.

During the times they climbed the mountain, they hunted for treasures, like slate pieces that fell from roofs of old buildings. If they were lucky they would come across

rams' horns that were shed by the males during their battle for dominance.

The roof slates could have various uses. They used them like chalk on the pavement stones, drawing pictures and lines for their hopscotch games. David's older brother, Ian, liked the bigger pieces of slate that they found. Ian used them like a canvas on which he would draw his beautiful artwork. Ian was good at drawing sheep and horses. His inspiration came after seeing Milkman Rhys coming early every morning, down their street as he made his daily deliveries with his horse and cart. The sheep trailed behind as if they were following their shepherd. Ian had plenty of experience watching them. The sheep always searched for food -- kitchen scraps that were in the rubbish bins along the street. It was funny to see some of them get stuck, head first, upside down in the bins with their back legs running in the air. The neighbors would find their rubbish bins all over the pavement and many times the lids would roll down the street.

Angel remembered Ian was so good at drawing on the slate, he sketched a picture of one of their neighbors, chasing the sheep down the street with her rolling pin in one hand, hands and arms covered in flour. That was Mrs. Probert and she lived at number 16 next to her grandmother's house. Of course, no one ever caught the sheep, as they were nimble of foot and quick. They would also poo little currents everywhere and people could easily slip and fall if they tried to run without looking where they were going.

Each weekend, the children wandered a little farther across the mountain. In the distance they saw what looked like the remains of an old barn or a house. They jumped for joy to find something new that they hadn't explored, even though they couldn't stay long.

On this particular day the children went up the mountain to bring back bits of treasures they had found at the ruins -- a broken cup, a pot, a knife with a pearl handle, and some old

copper pennies. The last treasure Angel found was a couple of farthings and a half-crown, the currency a little weathered with time. Farthings were difficult to find, as they were very small and were only worth a quarter of a penny, the lowest denomination of British coins that would soon go out of circulation. But, the half-crown was worth a lot more. Many people kept them as souvenirs, some gave them to local museums, but others sold them to collectors.

“Hurry, Angel. We need to get down before the rain comes. Those clouds are going to wet us down to the bone.”

“I’m hurrying, David. Your legs are longer than mine.”

“We’ll be in so much trouble, Angel.” He slowed down to wait for her.

It was getting darker and darker as they made their way down the rugged cliff and it was even more difficult to see where they could safely place their feet than it had been in the daylight. When they arrived at the bottom they still had to pass over the milkman Rhys’s field to Penrhiwgyt Road, then York Street and Porth Street that led them to John Street. The children hurried down the streets, rushing in the darkness.

David’s mother was on the doorstep with Angel’s grandmother who looked very, very worried.

“Where have you been?” her grandmother cried. “Angel, I was so worried about you.” She hugged Angel to her, holding her close.

“I’m sorry, Nene. We were having fun. And singing and we didn’t know the time.”

David’s mother, Mary, scolded David through the door of the house. “Your dinner is already on the table, go and wash your hands, David.”

David’s mother turned to Angel’s grandmother and said, politely, “Lina, we have plenty today, you and Angel are welcome to join us.”

Lina glanced down at Angel, the wind picking up ahead of the storm. Angel’s beautiful almond-shaped eyes filled

with hope, they never ate anywhere but their home. A change might be good for both of them. Lina thought she could make it up to Mary somehow.

“We’d love to join you, Mary.” She ushered Angel into the warmth of the home, already filled with boisterous voices and full of love.

Angel unbuttoned her coat and slipped it down her arms. “Wow,” she whispered to herself, hanging her coat on the knob at the end of the staircase. “I’m having dinner with my knight in shining armor, in the big house on the corner of the street.” David lived in the biggest house because of their large family.

At the table, David was delighted to show his treasures off, excitement raised his voice. “We also found parts of an old barn and a house up there on the mountain but it was getting dark so we couldn’t stay and explore. Maybe tomorrow, after Sunday school, we could go back and see what’s there. I bet there’s some buried treasure.” His voice lowered to a whisper, his eyes glistening with excitement.

“Oh yes, I want to go, David.” Angel agreed with a big smile but a glance at her grandmother showed Lina’s concern again. She lowered her head and kept eating, glancing from the side of her eyes as her Nene Lina spoke to Mary.

This woman was all she had in the world. Lina loved Angel, cared for her, and sometimes she got upset with Angel if she didn’t listen and that was quite often, she had to admit.

It was easy to see her grandmother had already talked with David’s mother and father about her concerns -- two young children up on the mountain by themselves. It was not surprising to hear her say this evening, “Maybe Ian could go with them. I would feel much more comfortable if Ian was there. After all, he is bigger and more responsible.”

Ian was nearly sixteen and David and Angel were only eight and nine. Ian raised his dark bushy eyebrows and

fidgeted in his chair, then he shuffled his feet heavily when it was mentioned. He would rather stay at home and sketch away the afternoon than climb the mountain. That would be exercise and Ian didn't like too much exercise.

Angel dropped her fork on the floor so she slipped off her chair and was kneeling under the table when she noticed David's legs moving too; he was soon down on his knees also. They giggled, giving away their places under the table.

"What are you two doing down there?" Mary asked, lifting the edge of the tablecloth.

"Nothing, Mam. Angel dropped her fork and I was helping her find it." David was always quicker with an answer than Angel was.

They were giggling at the thought of Ian climbing the mountain. He was slim and tall but didn't really like doing much except kicking the ball around his back yard into his make believe goals. The only other activity they caught him doing was lying on his bed dreaming and sketching.

Ian had a cat that hung about close to the house for Ian's attention. When he was out with the ball, his cat wasn't too amused when he kicked the ball toward it. One could hear it meowing every time the ball went the slightest bit close to her.

Ian finally answered, "Hmpf, I suppose so. Maybe, if I take some paper and pencils I could draw while these two run around like raving idiots," he agreed reluctantly.

"Alright then," David's father, Ethan, replied. "If you just watch them and make sure they don't break their necks, it will be alright with me if you all go up there together tomorrow." The man of the house spoke, giving his approval. That always ended the current topic of conversation.

The following day after Sunday school, they went home and changed into their old ragged playing clothes, ready for abuse because they couldn't be mended any more. David and Ian put on their Wellington boots.

David muttered with a low voice so Ian couldn't hear, "Angel, where are your wellygogs? There may be insects lurking in the long grass. And, I know you don't like insects."

Angel couldn't find them so she pulled up her socks as high as they would go and put on her holey shoes. They were warm, stuffed with plenty of newspaper over the holes, and sturdy enough to climb the mountain. She leaned close to David, hoping he'd follow her quiet answer.

"I can't find them," Angel whispered to him, afraid if she raised her voice and the adults heard, she wouldn't be allowed to go with them.

"Oh, never mind." David sighed.

David's mother found an old flask she had stored in the pantry, washed it out and filled it with milk and carefully put it in Ian's satchel. Lina added Welsh cakes and some Bara Brith cake bread she had made. They were ready to go on their treasure hunt and have a picnic too -- except for Ian.

"Ian, where are you? Come on! We're ready to go." David shouted up the stairs for Ian, but Ian was in no hurry. He had to comb his hair into a style that was popular in those days and adjust his neck scarf. Ian was one to show off his appearance wherever he went. Although his family wasn't much better off than Nene Lina and Angel, Ian had flair with used clothing that he adapted to keep up with the fashion styles.

"Ian, where are you? Come on!" David shouted, again, louder this time.

"I'm coming, what's the big rush anyway." Ian came down the stairs and carefully placed his comb in his back pocket, and adjusted his neck scarf again.

They were finally ready to go on their adventure. Off they walked, waving goodbye to their parents and to Nene Lina. It was a beautiful day after the storms of the night before. The air brittle and clear, it was easy to breathe. They walked up Penrhiwgynt Road and on through the

milkman's field carefully, as not to spook his sheep or his sheep dog that was always on the alert for trespassers.

Over the stile they climbed and ran to the next field as quickly as they could. Then climbed over the small rocks that lay about them as they approached the bottom of the mountain but they didn't pay any attention, as the smaller rocks rolled underfoot. They were going to have lots of fun.

They climbed; rocks fell around them and tumbled to the ground below as they hiked ever higher. Each step they took upwards more rocks loosened. It was getting harder to find solid rock or dirt to grab hold of and place their feet, one by one as they followed each other up. There was another way up the mountain, but this way was quicker. They didn't care. They were on a mission – a treasure hunt! Up the mountain they went ignoring all the signs that said, “*PERYGL – PEIDIWSCH A DRINGO – CREIGIAU GOSTWNG* (DANGER – DO NOT CLIMB – FALLING ROCKS).”

David sang a song, “We're on a hunt, a treasure hunt. Up the mountain we go to find treasure from long ago.”

It didn't take so long this time. Excitement gave their feet wings. First they stopped at their usual place and David swung on the tree and sang his songs.

“Whau hoo, whau hoo! We're having fun on the mountaintop. Ian came with his drawing pot.” Ian had an old glass jar filled with small pencils and bits of crayons.

David was funny and made Angel laugh. It was a good place to have their picnic. The Welsh cakes and Bara Brith bread were sweet and good and they washed them down with the milk from the flask. When they had finished all the goodies and milk they were refreshed and ready to continue exploring.

Ian found the landscape to his liking as he sketched pictures in his little notebook. He was so occupied he didn't notice they went on playing; David swung on the tree and sang joyfully. With each sway of the branches, leaves fell like soft snowflakes, not white, but green as the grass. A

softly colored rainbow in the distance over the nearby hill to the valley below gave a warm comforting feeling. Ian, mystified by the separation of colors, hastily sketched his next page then went back to add detail.

An hour or so passed by and Ian finally realized they were there for a different reason, to find treasure. Coming back to reality, Ian announced they needed to get up and go. On they walked further up the mountain to the top. It wasn't so bad a trek from their tree, as there was plenty of long grass to walk through without rocks. Being at the mountaintop fascinated Ian. There was too much for his artistic passion to absorb and Angel and David noticed he enjoyed being with them.

In the distance they glimpsed some old ruins. They thought it could have once been a house, or better still it could have been a castle. That would be so exciting if it were a castle.

Chapter 2

The air was fresh and the sun lifted its head from behind the clouds, making the fields of buttercups glisten in its rays. It was so beautiful, just like Angel's favorite fairy tale. White fluffy clouds, blue sky, sun scorched buttercups and to top it all - a vibrant rainbow much more colorful than the one they noticed before.

The ruins didn't seem that far yesterday, but today they seemed miles away as they walked through thick fields. But the sky was glorious and the sun shone brightly, as if it was shining just for them and they were headed to the end of a galaxy. Every blade of grass glistened and the buttercups were thick and plentiful. Heather grew in rich purple color, alongside the hedgerows, and what a beautiful sight it was. The smell in the air was fresh.

Alongside the hedgerows, blackberry bushes grew thick with thorns, but between the dangerous limbs, fruit ripened in the sun. The bushes were heavily laden with blackberries. Oh, they tasted so good, a rich deep blue color, plump, juicy, and so sweet. They perfumed the air with an aromatic berry fragrance. It would have been a great harvest if they could have picked them and taken them back in a sack. Maybe next weekend they could pick them and take them home for Nene Lina and David's mother Mary.

"Can we come back and pick these next week? Think of the jams, all lined up on the shelf." Angel popped a couple into her mouth.

"Or the pies Mama could make." David rubbed his stomach, licking his lips with a grin. He pulled a couple and

munched them as they continued walking, keeping up with Ian who was busy looking around.

Angel listened to the chirping of birds circling around them, flying up above. It was a perfect day for Ian to join them; this day picture perfect for his artist's soul. The sun warmed their backs as they walked on. Ian would not be able to complain to his parents about having to watch over the youngsters on this day. There were so many things he could draw, the colors so bright and beautiful.

As they trudged through one field to the next, they passed apple trees laden with fruit, and the apples that fell to the ground made a thick sludgy carpet. Ian reached up to pull a fresh apple from one of the trees.

“Get me one, Ian,” David shouted.

“Me too, please,” Angel added, pushing close to David.

It was no trouble for Ian to pull the apples from the branches above, as he was much taller.

In the distance they saw brown and white dots. As they got closer they could see the dots took the shape of cows grazing in the fields. In the next couple of fields were fat, dirty-white curly sheep with black faces and ears, some lying down and some eating grass. Others were upside down, twisting into the grass, as though they were scratching their backs.

Onward they plodded over stonewalls that looked as if they were about to fall down. Ian told them as they climbed over yet another one, that each farmer built the walls from old stones with their own hands adding one stone on top of the other to border their land. That way each land holder knew his boundaries. If the cows got mingled, all they had to do is look for the place where the rocks tumbled down. Older than Angel and David, Ian learned all this in school.

Into yet another field Ian led the way, constantly shouting, “Come on, come on.” It seemed they walked forever. As soon as Ian saw the ruins, he took off running.

“Wait for us!” Angel screamed, racing to keep up.

“Come quickly, don’t waste time dawdling.” Ian was a boy of few words. He kept shouting to David and Angel, “Quick, come on, come on.”

It took a couple of hours for them to reach the ruins.

Slate was scattered everywhere for quite a distance before they even came close to the remains of the old home. There were many small jagged pieces but also good-sized ones. Ian was so excited he was trying to dump as much of it as he could into his satchel. If he took all he wanted to gather, it would mean they would have no room for anything else. Slate was heavy to carry so they couldn’t take too much.

“Leave us some room in the satchel, Ian. We want to take back some treasure, too,” Angel reminded him, already looking on the ground.

“I’ll save you room, but not too much.” He quit gathering and chose one to work with, he settled and pulled out his colors, ready to draw more. Angel watched him a moment, but the pull of treasure soon had her scrambling behind David to search.

David found some rusty pots and pans and an old black clothes iron. As she walked inside what may have been the kitchen of a house at one time, Angel saw an old rocking chair that had lost one of its legs near the fireplace. It was amazing, the fireplace was intact, and it looked identical to her grandmother’s back home.

There was a black cast iron oven on one side and rods across the other side that once held coal or logs, but they had rusted. The stove stood freely without the support of a wall and chimney behind it. Looking around more of the room, she even found an old gas lamp. Smudged with soot and covered with dirt, aged and beautiful, she knew the fragile glass wouldn’t make it down the mountain in the satchel.

“Angel, look,” David called from his place, turning over things to see what was underneath. Angel went out to see

what he'd found, excitement making her features flush and her eyes brighter.

"Mama would love these." He held up some of the old rusty pots to give to his mother.

"I think she would. Maybe we can clean them first and give them to her." They kept searching in the immediate area. In the corner under many broken timbers they found spoons and some old copper and brass mugs with letters engraved on them.

"Look at these, David. What did they drink out of them?" Angel pretended to take a sip.

"Not dirt like you, Angel." David laughed, teasing her. "Let's see. Maybe this one was *E* for Edwards, like my last name. And this one," Angel nodded and brushed off more dirt.

Two had *C* and there were two more with letters *D* and *O*, but the letters were almost worn away and could barely be read. David was anxious to get them into the satchel quickly, their time was growing short, but Ian had already stuffed in a huge amount of the slate.

Angel reached for a couple of the spoons she thought her grandmother would like. Nene Lina collected spoons. Every time her father came to visit with them he would bring a spoon from some place he had visited on his travels. She had quite a collection. Mostly they were silver ones with flags, designs, and some different shapes.

Lost in the discovery, it took them a while to decide what they would take home.

"You need to leave some of the slate, Ian. There won't be any room for our things and you need to share," David told his brother, watching while Ian handled the slate pieces, trying to decide what to keep and what to leave.

"I want to take some of these home to Nene, too." Angel had the smallest pile of treasures.

While they scavenged the area, Ian heard thunder rumbling. He stopped choosing and got up to look. He saw fork lightening in the distance.

“We need to leave. The storm is close. We must get home before the rain starts.” Gathering their things, they started walking away from the ruins, but the rumbling got louder and closer and they could feel the vibration under their feet. The satchel loaded and heavy, they would be slower heading back home. They simply couldn’t leave their treasures behind. They were the reason for their journey.

Before they could turn and head for home, horses appeared from all directions. Spooked by the storm, they started a stampede toward the only little shelter in the area. The trio froze, unable to push past the big bodies as the horses rushed towards them through the foundation of the house.

“Oh my God, Ian, what do we do?” David stood fast behind Ian, who was trying to stand tall to appear bigger to the wild horses.

They huddled together in the hope that the horses wouldn’t trample them to death. Angel was scared, leaning against David and Ian as they watched them get closer. It didn’t seem they were going to stop, but the horses finally slowed down and milled all around them, stamping and breathing in snorts.

“David, I’m scared. They’re so big and tough.” Angel started crying. David puffed out his chest, now the rush slowed down. He straightened and shouted at the closest ones.

“Shu, go away, go away.” He waved his arms looking even bigger.

Of course those horses wouldn’t go anywhere. They just milled around the children as the storm brewed. Then they settled and began feeding on the long grass around the old building foundation. There was another old building too that

appeared to be much bigger, what was left of it anyway. It looked like the remains of a barn in the field.

David was getting nervous. He liked horses, but not when they kicked up speed and were surrounding him. He started singing, making up lyrics again.

“Horses coming, horses wandering all around. Brown ones, black ones, and white ones too, slowing down and jumping on you!” Then he tickled Angel to make her laugh.

“What are you singing David? it sounds stupid,” Ian said, not amused at all by their antics.

“Do something. How are we going to get back?” Angel gestured to the herd of horses blocking their way through the field and home.

“Angel, it’s alright. They’re quiet now. Actually, I think they liked David singing even if it was a stupid song.” Big brother had come to the rescue, calming both of them in his own way.

“David, sing to me like you did on the tree, maybe they might go away.” Angel held David’s hand in both of hers, looking up at him, sure that he could sing the horses into leaving.

“Yeah little brother, sing to her. Let’s hear what you got.” Ian crossed his arms, waiting.

“Stop being mean, Ian,” David told him, trying to come up with a set of lyrics.

“I’m not mean; I’m just as frightened as you. They’re wild horses and I don’t know what they’ll do next, but obviously they like you singing. So sing to them.” Ian unfolded his arms, gesturing to the horses around them. They were so close the children could hear their teeth grinding the grass down before they swallowed it.

“What do you mean they are wild? Where do they live?” Angel asked. “They have a home to go to, don’t they?”

“On the mountain silly, where do you think?” Ian told her.

“Well, do they just roam around from place to place?” David asked. The more they talked, the horses calmed, and so did the children.

“Mostly,” Ian said. “But some of these horses are captured and they are sent down the mines to work with the men, like some of the horses that worked with Dad.” There was a cold wind and raindrops were falling. The storm caught up with them.

“Come on, it’s time to go home before the big storm. Get your treasures and let’s go quickly.”

“What about the horses, Ian?” Angel shouted, still afraid of the large animals surrounding them.

“They have weather proof hides. They will be alright and they are calm now so come on quickly.” Ian beckoned them to follow. He led the way through the horses, sometimes pushing against their sides or their rumps to make them move. They stepped aside as the children made their way clear, scared as those big bodies moved on hard hooves.

They had their stuff together but before they made their way down the mountainside, Angel called to David, “David look, that horse over there. He’s on his own and he looks hurt.”

“What are you talking about?” David looked around, trying to see the horse Angel pointed out.

“Look, David there’s blood, he’s hurt.” She moved closer to the animal, her hand out to touch its side, as Ian had done to push the other horses aside.

“I don’t see any blood, it looks like dirt to me.” David moved closer, looking at the horse’s leg.

“No David, look. His leg is hurt he’s holding it up and it’s bleeding.” Insistent, Angel moved closer to the horse.

Ian was getting irritated. He knew they needed to go back down the mountain before the storm got really bad. He wasn’t prepared to spend the night up here.

“Kids, it’s time to go home.” He reminded them, voice full of patience he wasn’t feeling.

“No Ian, he’s hurt. David help me please he’s trying to walk but he’s limping. David, please sing to him. Please. It will calm him.” Angel ran to the horse, her hand so small against the side of the animal.

“Angel found a horse, with a limp. She wants to fix it but we didn’t bring liniment.” David sang softer than usual as he stepped up to Angel’s side.

The horse didn’t look like he was going anywhere, but just stood there. His nostrils opened up and he let out condensation in the chilly air. He opened his mouth and Angel could see his teeth, then he let out a squeal and dragged his hoof on the ground.

“David, he really likes your singing, he’s trying to talk to us.”

Ian now was more than irritated, as he wanted to go whether the horse was hurt or not.

“Ian, please let’s help him, it’s really cruel to go home and not help.” Angel was so soft hearted and she was beginning to cry.

“Oh, girls are so soppy!” Ian rattled back.

He took off the scarf from around his neck and threw it towards David. David loved animals and couldn’t bear to see them hurt either, but Ian was standing there watching their every move.

David folded the scarf and knelt down beneath the horse’s head. The horse could have trampled on David but was motionless and looked helpless. He was definitely hurt; David showed Angel a great gash on his leg.

Ian stared at them.

“Oh, Ian look at him, he really is hurt and needs our help.” David showed Ian the cut on the horse’s leg.

“The horse is not a ‘he’ it’s a ‘she’,” Ian snorted slowly at them.

“What are you talking about, Ian?” Angel asked, looking from him to the horse’s face, as if that would give her a clue.

“Well this horse doesn’t have the parts that a male horse would have.” David looked puzzled at Ian, and Angel hadn’t a clue what he was talking about.

“You’ll learn about the birds and the bees when you get older,” Ian shouted and looked up at the sky. “Come on, we have to go it’s getting darker and we won’t see our way back.”

“So the horse is a girl?” David answered.

“Oh, that’s so nice, a girl horse. We must give her a name. She is so beautiful. Can we call her, Buttercup? What do you think David?” Angel cooed to the horse, still petting her side, and moved up to her neck as the horse bent forward, and closer to David.

“Well, while you are deciding on a stupid name for this horse we are going to get drenched. It’s going to pour down with rain shortly. Look at the clouds over there,” Ian complained as he pointed.

“Yes, I think so, Angel. Buttercup would be a great name. After all, we found her in a buttercup field. Buttercup, Buttercup.”

Angel was excited the name fit, she was the one to give it to Buttercup.

When David said Buttercup, she swished her tail as though she recognized that the name belonged to her.

“Oh David, she likes us. Look she’s trying to rub her head over us.”

“I wish we had a saddle and a rein, I could ride her,” David replied, bravado back in place.

Ian hadn’t finished with his comments. “You kids are going to drive me nuts. We came to get treasure but now you two are nursing a horse. What next?” He smiled when he said it. Of course, Ian liked horses. He was always sketching them.

David worked to clear the dirt off the cut on Buttercup’s leg. It looked like the blood was dry and the cut clean.

This was a different kind of horse; she had white fur all over her body - not like the others. They were mostly brown-black or white with big brown and tan splotches. Buttercup was beautiful and her name fit her well. It saddened Angel to think they had to leave her up on the mountain with the others, even though she galloped with them.

Ian finally convinced them they had to leave and go home. David ran to Buttercup and knelt down by the side of her, not sure if he was praying or just talking to her. As for Angel, she had to give her a big kiss on her face even though she was taller than Angel was and wild, she didn't care. Angel stood up on her tip-e-toes as much as she could and put her arms on Buttercup to steady herself while Buttercup tilted her head forward. Angel kissed her on her face.

Buttercup snorted, shook her head, and swished her tail with approval.

"Now I have two sappy kids," Ian commented. "We are going now," he shouted, finally out of patience.

"Alright, Ian," David shouted back.

"Ian, but will we see Buttercup again?" Angel asked.

"Most likely. Now you kids have just about done everything you shouldn't do to a wild horse," Ian answered hurriedly.

Tears came to Angel's eyes as she left. Looking back at Buttercup, Angel said, "I think she feels sad, too." Buttercup stood motionless, looking their way. Angel turned and hurried back to her and hugged her, her arms up around Buttercup's chest as she looked up at the curious horse. Buttercup's head dropped to Angel's level and Angel could see her big shiny eyes looking at her as Angel's tears ran down her cheeks and wet the horse's fur. "I love you," Angel sobbed. Buttercup breathed heavily.

"Oh my God, what are you doing? She is wild! She doesn't understand your wailing. Come on now!" Ian called to her.

From there on Ian complained non-stop. “Do you realize what you did with that wild beast? It was so dangerous. She only had to move quickly or pick up her hoof and kick at you and you could have been crushed to death.”

They had to listen to him as they followed him across the mountaintop. He never seemed to run out of breath, constantly reminding them about the dangers of wild animals, throwing in warnings of bears and mountain lions and other creatures.