

Celebrating Writers and Writing in our Communities

Volume 2 | Issue 1

Article 26

2019

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Recommended Citation

Wilke, Naeva (2019) "One in 2.25 Billion," *Celebrating Writers and Writing in our Communities*: Vol. 2 : Iss. 1 , Article 26.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/rwc/vol2/iss1/26>

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One in 2.25 Billion

By: Naeva Wilke

The sunshine pours through my dirty window and blinds me through my closed eyes. I lumber out of bed and hit the cold floor. I get dressed and go downstairs. Mom is making bacon and eggs. Nothing special. I open the door and a frothy breeze comes in. I step outside on to the cold grass. I step through the grass and my feet feel a tingling sensation with every new step. I feed the pigs and greet the horses. Yes, I live on the farm, and we don't have much money. Our animals are slowly being sold for money. The chickens peck at my feet and the cows snore. I hear the door open behind me and my sister, Riley, walks out. Her blond curls blow in the wind and her blue eyes sparkle. She's only six years old, but she's already prettier than me.

"Hailey," she says, hand on her hip. "Breakfast is ready."

I walk back inside and Riley is greeted with a cup of hot cocoa. I eat my food and just as I am finishing up I hear a faint rumbling noise in the distance.

"Bus is here!" I yell, and run outside.

"Have a good day!" my mom calls after me.

"I'll try." I say. I hop on the bus to be greeted with a bunch of "compliments." Your soooo smart! Freak! Loser! Farm Girl! Pig breath! Chicken manure! It was amazing how many insulting names one could come up with.

"Cut it out!" yells the bus driver, Linda. Linda was my only friend at

school. Sure, she was in her 50's, but she was all I got, right beside Mom, Riley, and sadly, my animals. My dad was already dead. He died of a stroke when I was 6, and Riley wasn't born yet.

"Thanks." I whispered to Linda as I took my seat right behind her. She nodded in return. I could still hear people behind me, whispering insults. Ever since 2nd grade, I'd been the loser, I'm in high school now and nothing has changed.

I get off the bus and go to all my classes. Everyone calls me names, nothing new. In the last class of the day, I sit and ignore the papers being thrown at the back of my head. I listen to Mr. Kloster go on and on about The Revolutionary War. I start to drift off and then I hear the best thing in the world, the bell. Everyone rushes out of the classroom and run onto the bus. I hop on and take my seat behind Linda.

After a while, we arrive at my farm. Before I get off the bus I hear someone whisper, "Farm girl." I run to my house and I am greeted by Riley halfway to house. She tightly grips me. She looks scared.

"What is it, Riley?" I asked, worried.

"M-m-m-m-m-m-m-m," she stammers. "My teddy bear is missing! I think he's dead!"

"Well, let's get inside and look for it because it's windy out here," I say.

Mom runs in from outside and says, "Girls, get to the cellar. NOW!" She looks frantic and she is grabbing food and water from the fridge and stuffing it into a bag.

“Hailey, get a flashlight and extra batteries,” she says. “Riley, get blankets and the cat!”

We ran off in different directions. When I get back, Mom is stuffing things into the cellar. Riley returns with the cat, Ollie, and blankets. Mom throws the blankets and Ollie down into the cellar. I throw down the flashlight and batteries. I still don’t know what is going on. Mom helps Riley down the ladder mom gestures for me to follow. I climb down and land on a heap of blankets. Mom is right behind me. She locks the cellar door and climbs down. I turn on a flashlight and look out the window that is halfway underground. Ollie purrs and comforts Riley.

“What’s going on?” I ask.

“Look,” Mom says, and points toward the window.

I look again and this time, I see a very faint twister in the distance. It is slowly inching towards us and I realize the animals are still out there.

“MOM!” I say, “The animals! They’re still out there.” I lunge for the ladder, but Mom grabs me by my arm and sits me back down.

“I know they’re still out there, but where are we going to put them?” she says.

I guess she is right. We listen to the wind and hope that it does not reach our beloved farm. I look back out the window again and scream in horror. I see the horses getting swept up by the tornado and the chickens floating up. The pigs dive into the mud, but they too, get sucked up. Riley clutches me as the tornado sweeps over our house, sucking up all of our memories. The cat screeches and the wind shakes the ground.

“It’s going to be okay,” I say to myself, “everything is going to be fine.”

I wait for a moment, and then there was silence, complete silence. We wait in the cellar for a few minutes to make sure it is really gone. Then, mom climbs up the ladder and open the cellar door. Whooooohhhhh! A huge gust of wind comes in and I close my eyes. When I open them, mom is gone, and the cellar door is open and swinging. I look outside the window and see that there was another tornado that was sneaking up on us, and when mom opened the door, it pounced.

“Mom!” I screech in horror. I climb up the ladder, grip the steps tight, see the second twister, and realize, that mom is in that somewhere. I lock the cellar door and climb down the ladder.

“Where’s Mom?” Riley asks.

I didn’t know how to answer, so I ignored her. It was cold in the cellar, so I grabbed a blanket and wrapped it around me. I also put one on Riley.

“Hailey?” asked Riley. “Is Mom in... that?” she pointed at the twister.

I gulped. “We can’t know for sure.” I answered, still not knowing what to say.

“Is she dead?”

“I don’t know.”

I look out the window again and see and hear nothing. Literally nothing. It came, it left, then came again, then left. Who knew what could happen next. I decide to stay down here a little longer. Besides, where would we go anyway?

After a while the flashlight starts to flicker. I replace the old batteries with

new ones. The change almost blinds me. It's dark now, and Riley is already asleep. Since she is using three blankets, I just use the one that I already have. I go to sleep after praying for mom.

I wake up to Ollie licking my toes. Sunlight is halfway streaming through the window. I hear a faint wind. Just a small breeze. I sit up and my back pops. Riley is still sleeping, so I decide to climb the ladder and look outside. What I see is like a nightmare. The trees are either ripped from the ground and just holes remain or the trees are just lying there. There are bits of remaining wood from our house. Some of the ground has been dug up. My home was now nothing but chunks of wood and dirt. My mom was gone. My life was going to be changed forever.

“Oh my god.” says Riley from behind me.

I turn around and hug her. A tear rolls down my cheek and lands on Riley's shoulder. Ollie rubs up against my leg and comforts me. Millions of thoughts were racing through my head. Where were we going to live? What are we going to eat? We would probably live in the cellar and savor our food, but what about after that? I don't know. We walk around and find remnants of memories. I pick up a photo with shreds of glass on it. It was a picture of me when I was 11 and Riley when she was a baby. Another salty tear rolls down my cheek and splashes on the photo. We find some of the old books Dad used to read to me. Something catches my eye. It was underneath a piece of wood. I pick up the piece of wood and find Riley's teddy bear. Riley comes over and grabs her teddy bear. I

sit down and Riley joins me. We sit there in the sun. Riley hugs her teddy bear and me.

“Hailey?” says a voice from behind me. I turn around and see, no, it can't be, Mom. She was dirty, her shirt had rips and there were twigs and leaves in her knotted hair. Riley runs up to Mom and hugs her. They are both crying, and I don't realize it, but I am too. I get up and hug Mom. We don't talk, we just hug. Ollie comes over and joins the embrace. I missed Mom so much, and I thought I had lost her forever. I thought I had lost everything today. That's when I realized it, family is the most important thing in the world. Even though we had lost all of our possessions, we had each other. When I asked for a family, I got one. I got this one. Out of 2.25 billion families, I got this one. And that makes me the luckiest kid in the world. Standing there in the wreckage of our house I knew that we would be okay because we had each other and the strength of love and family is everything.