

29 November 2023

Dear Mrs. Palacio,

My name is Evelyn, and your book *White Bird* made a really big impact on me. I read it over winter break in fourth grade. It was recommended to me by my favorite teacher, Mrs. Turner. We called her The Book Fairy because we believed she had the ability to suggest the perfect book to a student. Every time she suggested a book to someone, they felt a strong connection to it from the moment that they began to read. So it was with *White Bird*.

She wanted both me and one of my friends to read it, but my friend borrowed it before me. She promised to bring it back to school before winter break so that I could take it home over the break. She kept her promise, and returned it the day before the break started. As I was leaving school with the book that day, Mrs. Turner gave me a hug and said, "Enjoy your book." I responded with, "I will. See you in two weeks."

I read the entire book in one hour. I loved every part of it. I laughed along with the characters, shed a tear for Julien, and wished with all of my heart that Sara could have back her fairytale life. I loved her having kept the carved bird after all those years, and I loved the moment at the end when the white bird flew past her window. It was a sign.

My tenth birthday was the day before we went back to school. My mom and I had a Harry Potter movie marathon. Before it started, I read *White Bird* again. It just called to me. I still cry every time I read it, but there was something about the story that made me really happy. Maybe it was when Sara saw her father again. Maybe it was at the very end, when Julian was protesting. It just filled me with a sense of joy. A sense of hope.

That evening, as I was about to go to bed, my mom stopped me. She told me that Mrs. Turner was in the hospital. She was sick. She had meningitis. She wouldn't be at school for a

little while, so we would have a substitute teacher in our reading class for a while. It was Mrs. O'Halloran. I remembered Mrs. O'Halloran. We called her Mrs. O. She was nice. When we went back to school that Monday, she didn't teach reading class quite the same way that Mrs. Turner did, but that was ok. Mrs. Turner would be back soon.

Mrs. Turner died that Tuesday afternoon, January fourth. My mom told me after dinner, and I layed on her bed and cried for an hour. I thought of White Bird. I thought of how, now I could relate to Sara, how she left the house one day and then just never saw her mom again. I understand the pain of constantly being reminded of it every day. Of never being able to give her just one more hug. To say something more meaningful than just, "I'll see you in two weeks."

It's been almost two years now, and now I can look back on the time that I was so lucky to get with her, and yes, it still makes me sad, but now I can also see all of the fun times that we had. Reading books in class, working on projects, just chatting. I can appreciate the time that I got, without yelling at someone because of sadness. If I think hard enough, then that still happens, but I can see the happy moments without being overwhelmed. But January 4th is still cursed, you can't tell me otherwise.

Now, I have something kind of like a White Bird. I have a Book Fairy. I see signs from her in a lot of different ways, one of which is as a white bird. I don't mean to steal your idea, but what with her death and reading the book for the first time being so close together, it just feels right. Another way is willow trees. When I was in fourth grade, all of the homeroom classes were named after trees. Mrs. Turner's class was willow. It was strange when we remembered that willow trees are often signs of sadness. So now, when I pass a willow tree, I wave, and yell "Hi Mrs. Turner!" as loud as I can, like maybe if I yell loud enough, she'll be able to hear me.

It's nice to have a white bird. It's also nice to have White Bird to read when I get sad. It instantly makes me feel better. So, thank you.

Sincerely,

Evelyn Johnson.