

*New York Times* Bestselling Author

AMY HARMON



*making*  
**FACES**

# Making Faces

by  
Amy Harmon

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Smashwords Edition

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*Making Faces*

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For the Roos Family

David, Angie, Aaron,  
Garrett, and Cameron

I am only one,  
But still I am one.  
I cannot do everything,  
But still I can do something;  
And because I cannot do everything,  
I will not refuse to do the something  
that I can do.

--Edward Everett Hale

# Prologue

“The Ancient Greeks believed that after death, all souls, whether good or bad, would descend to the Underworld, the kingdom of Hades, deep in the Earth, and dwell there for eternity,” Bailey read aloud, his eyes flying across the page.

“The underworld was guarded from the living world by Cerberus, an enormous, vicious, three-headed dog with a dragon for a tail and snake heads lining his back.” Bailey shivered at the image that popped into his mind, imagining how Hercules would feel when he saw the beast for the first time, knowing he had to subdue the animal with nothing but his bare hands.

“It was Hercules’s final task, his final labor to perform, and it would be the most difficult quest of all. Hercules knew that once he descended into the underworld, facing monsters and ghosts, wrestling demons and mythical creatures of every kind along his way, he might never be able to return to the land of the living.

“But death did not frighten him. Hercules had faced death many times, and longed for the day when he too would be delivered from his endless servitude. So Hercules went, secretly hoping to see in the Kingdom of Hades, the souls of loved ones he had lost and now paid penance for.”

# 1

## Super Star or a Super Hero

First Day of School–September, 2001

The school gymnasium was so loud that Fern had to lean down next to Bailey's ear and shout to be heard. Bailey was more than capable of maneuvering his wheelchair through the teeming student body, but Fern pushed him so they could more easily stay together.

“Do you see Rita?” she yelled, eyes roving. Rita knew they had to sit on the bottom bleacher in order for Bailey to sit near them. Bailey pointed, and Fern followed his finger to where Rita was waving frantically, making her breasts bounce and her fluffy blonde hair swing wildly around her shoulders. They made their way to her, and Fern let Bailey take over control of his chair as she scrambled up to the second row, sitting just behind Rita so Bailey could position his chair at the end of the bench.

Fern hated pep rallies. She was small and tended to get bumped and squished no matter where she sat, and she had little interest in cheering and stomping her feet. She sighed, settling in for the half hour of screaming, loud music, and football players working themselves up into a frenzy.

“Please rise for the National Anthem,” a voice boomed, and the mic shrieked in protest, causing people to wince and cover their ears, but effectively quieting the gymnasium.



“We have a special treat today, girls and boys.” Connor O’Toole, also known as Beans, was holding the mic with a wicked grin on his face. Beans was always up to something, and he instantly had everyone’s attention. He was part Irish, part Hispanic, and his up-turned nose, sparkling hazel eyes, and devilish grin were at odds with his smoky coloring. And he was a talker; it was obvious that he relished his time at the microphone.

“Your friend and mine, Ambrose Young, has lost a bet. He said if we won our first game, he would sing the National Anthem at this pep assembly. “Gasps were heard, and the volume in the bleachers rose immediately.

“But we didn’t just win our first game, we won our second game too!” The audience roared and stomped their feet. “So, being a man of his word, here is Ambrose Young, singing the National Anthem,” Beans said and waved the mic toward his friend.

Beans was small. Though he was a senior, he was one of the smaller players on the team and was more suited to wrestling than football. Ambrose was also a senior. But he wasn’t small. He towered above Beans--one of his biceps was almost as big around as Beans’s head--and he looked like one of those guys on the cover of a romance novel. Even his name sounded like a character from a steamy read. And Fern would know. She’d read thousands of them. Alpha males, tight abs, smoldering looks, happily-ever-afters. But no one had ever really compared to Ambrose Young. Not in fiction or in real life.

To Fern, Ambrose Young was absolutely beautiful, a Greek God among mortals, the stuff of fairy tales and movie screens. Unlike the other boys, he wore his dark hair in waves that brushed his shoulders, occasionally sweeping it back so it wouldn’t fall into his heavily-lashed brown eyes. The squared-off edge of his sculpted jaw kept him from being too pretty, that and the fact he was six foot three in his socks, weighed a strapping 215 pounds by the age of eighteen, and had a body corded with muscle from his shoulders to his well-shaped calves.

Rumor was that Ambrose’s mother, Lily Grafton, had tangled with an Italian underwear model in New York City during her quest to find fame. She became quickly untangled when he discovered she was carrying his child. Jilted and pregnant, she limped home and was swept up in the comforting arms of her old friend, Elliott Young, who gladly married her and welcomed her baby boy six months later. The town paid special attention to the handsome baby boy as he grew, especially when diminutive, blond, Elliott

Young ended up having a brawny son with dark hair and eyes and a build worthy of, well, an underwear model. Fourteen years later, when Lily left Elliott Young and moved to New York, no one was surprised that Lily was going back to find Ambrose's real father. The surprise came when fourteen-year-old Ambrose remained in Hannah Lake with Elliott.

By that time, Ambrose was already a fixture in the small town, and people speculated that was the reason he stayed. He could throw a javelin like a mythical warrior and barrel through opponents on the football field like they were made of paper. He pitched his little league team to a district championship and could slam dunk a basketball by the time he was fifteen. All of these things were notable, but in Hannah Lake, Pennsylvania, where the town closed their businesses for local duels and followed the state rankings like winning lottery numbers, where wrestling was an obsession that rivaled football in Texas, it was Ambrose Young's ability on the mat that made him a celebrity.

The crowd went instantly quiet as Ambrose took the microphone, waiting for what was sure to be a highly entertaining massacre of the anthem. Ambrose was known for his strength, his good looks, and his athletic prowess, but nobody had ever heard him sing. The silence was saturated with giddy expectation. Ambrose pushed his hair back and then shoved his hand in his pocket as if he was uncomfortable. Then he fixed his eyes on the flag and began to sing.

“Oh, say can you see by the dawn's early light . . .” Again, there was an audible gasp from the audience. Not because it was bad, but because it was wonderful. Ambrose Young had a voice fitting of the package it was encased in. It was smooth and deep and impossibly rich. If dark chocolate could sing it would sound like Ambrose Young. Fern shivered as his voice wrapped around her like an anchor, lodging deep in her belly, pulling her under. She found her eyes closing behind her thick glasses, and she let the sound wash over her. It was incredible.

“O'er the land of the free . . .” Ambrose's voice reached the summit, and Fern felt like she had climbed Everest, breathless and ebullient and triumphant. “And the home of the brave!” The crowd roared around her, but Fern was still hanging on that final note.

“Fern!” Rita's voice rang out. She shoved at Fern's leg. Fern ignored her. Fern was having a moment. A moment with, in her opinion, the most beautiful voice on the planet.

“Fern's having her first orgasm.” One of Rita's girlfriends snickered. Fern's eyes shot open to see Rita, Bailey, and Cindy Miller looking at her with big grins on their faces. Fortunately, the applause and the cheers prevented the people around them from hearing Cindy's humiliating assessment.

Small and pale, with bright red hair and forgettable features, Fern knew she was the kind of girl who was easily overlooked, easily ignored, and never dreamed about. She had floated through childhood without drama and with little fanfare, grounded in a perfect awareness of her own mediocrity.

Like Zacharias and Elizabeth, parents of the biblical John the Baptist, Fern's parents were far beyond their child-bearing years when they suddenly found themselves in a family way. Fifty-year-old Joshua Taylor, popular pastor in the small town of Hannah Lake, was struck dumb when his wife of fifteen years tearfully told him she was going to have a baby. His jaw hit the floor, his hands shook, and if it hadn't been for the serene joy stamped on his forty-five-year-old wife, Rachel's face, he might have thought she was pulling a prank for the first time in her life. Fern was born seven months later, an unexpected miracle, and the whole town celebrated with the well-loved couple. Fern found it ironic that she was once considered a miracle since her life had been anything but miraculous.

Fern pulled off her glasses and began shining them on the hem of her T-shirt, effectively blinding herself to the amused faces around her. Let them laugh. Because the truth of the matter was, she felt euphoric and dizzy all at once, the way she sometimes felt after a particularly satisfying love scene in a favorite novel. Fern Taylor loved Ambrose Young, had loved him since she was ten years old and had heard his young voice lifted in a very different kind of song, but in that moment he reached a whole new level of beauty, and Fern was left reeling and dazed that one boy could be gifted with so much.



*August, 1994*

*Fern walked over to Bailey's house, bored, having finished every single book she'd checked out from the library the week before. She found Bailey sitting like a statue on the cement steps that led to his front door, eyes trained on something on the sidewalk in front of him. He was pulled from his reverie*

only when Fern's foot narrowly missed the object of his fascination. He yelped and Fern squealed when she saw the enormous brown spider just inches from her feet.

The spider continued on its way, slowly traversing the long stretch of concrete. Bailey said he had been tracking it for half an hour, never getting too close, because after all, it was a spider, and it was gross. It was the biggest spider Fern had ever seen. Its body was the size of a nickel, but with its gangly legs it was easily as big as a fifty-cent piece, and Bailey seemed awestruck by it. After all, he was a boy, and it was gross.

Fern sat beside him, watching the spider take his time crossing Bailey's front walk. The spider meandered like an old man on a stroll, unhurried, unafraid, with no apparent goal in mind, a seasoned citizen with long, spindly limbs, carefully unfolding each leg every time he took a step. They watched him, entranced by his terrifying beauty. The thought took Fern by surprise. He was beautiful even though he frightened her.

"He's cool," she marveled.

"Duh! He's awesome," Bailey said, his eyes never wavering. "I wish I had eight legs. I wonder why Spiderman didn't get eight legs when he got bit by that radioactive spider. It gave him great eyesight and strength and the ability to make webs. Why not extra legs? Hey! Maybe spider venom heals muscular dystrophy, and if I let that guy bite me I'll get big and strong," Bailey wondered, scratching his chin like he was actually considering it.

"Hmm. I wouldn't risk it." Fern shuddered. They became entranced once more, and neither of them noticed the boy riding down the sidewalk on his bike.

The boy saw Bailey and Fern sitting so still, so silent, and his interest was immediately piqued. He stepped off his bike and laid it on the grass, following their gazes to where a huge brown spider crept along the walkway in front of the house. The boy's mother was petrified of spiders. She always made him kill them immediately. He'd killed so many he wasn't even afraid of them anymore. Maybe Bailey and Fern were afraid. Maybe they were scared to death, so scared they couldn't even move. He could help them. He ran up the sidewalk and smashed the spider beneath his big white sneaker. There.

Two pairs of horrified eyes shot to his.

"Ambrose!" Bailey shouted, horrified.

"You killed him!" Fern whispered, shocked.

"You killed him!" Bailey roared, pushing up to his feet and stumbling

down the sidewalk. He looked at the brown mess that had occupied the last hour of his life.

“I needed his venom!” Bailey was still caught up in his own imaginings of spider cures and superheroes. Then Bailey surprised them all by bursting into tears.

Ambrose gaped at Bailey, and then watched as Bailey walked on unsteady legs up the steps and into his house, slamming the door behind him. Ambrose closed his mouth and shoved his hands into the pockets of his shorts.

“I'm sorry,” he said to Fern. “I thought . . . I thought you were scared. You were both just sitting there staring at it. I'm not scared of spiders. I was just trying to help.”

“Should we bury him?” Fern asked, her eyes mournful behind her big glasses.

“Bury him?” Ambrose asked, stunned. “Was he a pet?”

“No. We just met,” Fern said seriously. “But maybe it will make Bailey feel better.”

“Why is he so sad?”

“Because the spider is dead.”

“So?” Ambrose wasn't trying to be a jerk. He just didn't understand. And the little red head with the crazy, curly hair was kind of freaking him out. He'd seen her before at school and knew her name. But he didn't know her. He wondered if she was special. His dad said he had to be nice to kids who were special, because they couldn't help the way they were.

“Bailey has a disease. It makes his muscles weak. It might kill him. He doesn't like it when things die. It's hard for him,” Fern said simply, honestly. She actually sounded kinda smart. Suddenly, the events at the wrestling camp earlier that summer made sense to Ambrose. Bailey wasn't supposed to wrestle because he had a disease. Ambrose felt bad all over again.

Ambrose sat down beside Fern. “I'll help you bury him.”

Fern was up and running across the grass to her own house before the words had left his mouth. “I have a perfect little box! See if you can scrape him off the sidewalk,” she shouted over her shoulder.

Ambrose used a piece of bark from the Sheen's flowerbed to scoop up the spider's remains. Fern was back in thirty seconds. She held the white ring box open as Ambrose deposited the spider guts onto the pristine cotton. Fern put the lid on and gestured to him solemnly. He followed her to her back yard and together they scooped out handfuls of dirt from a corner of the garden.

*“That should be big enough,” Ambrose said, taking the box out of Fern's hand and placing it the hole. They stared at the white box.*

*“Should we sing?” Fern asked.*

*“I only know one spider song.”*

*“Itsy Bitsy?”*

*“Yeah.”*

*“I know that one, too.” Together Fern and Ambrose sang the song about the spider getting washed down the waterspout and getting a second chance to climb when the sun came out again.*

*When the song was over, Fern put her hand in Ambrose's. “We should say a little prayer. My dad is a pastor. I know how, so I'll say it.”*

*Ambrose felt strange holding Fern's hand. It was moist and dirty from digging the grave and it was very small. But before he could protest, she was speaking, her eyes scrunched closed, her face screwed up in concentration.*

*“Father in Heaven, we're grateful for everything you have created. We loved watching this spider. He was cool and made us happy for a minute before Ambrose squished him. Thank you for making even ugly things beautiful. Amen.”*

*Ambrose hadn't closed his eyes. He was staring at Fern. She opened her eyes and smiled at him sweetly, dropping his hand. She began pushing the dirt over the white box, covering it completely and tamping it down. Ambrose found some rocks and arranged them in an S shape for spider. Fern added some rocks in the shape of a B in front of Ambrose's S.*

*“What's the B for?” Ambrose wondered out loud. He thought maybe the spider had a name he didn't know about.*

*“Beautiful Spider,” she said simply. “That's how I'm going to remember him.”*

# 2

## Have Courage

September, 2001

Fern loved summertime, the lazy days and the long hours with Bailey and her books, but fall in Pennsylvania was absolutely breathtaking. It was still early in the season, not quite mid-September, but the leaves had already started to change, and Hannah Lake was awash in splashes of color mixed in with the deep green of the fading summer. School was back in session. They were seniors now, the top of the heap, one year left before real life began.

But for Bailey, real life was now, this instant, because every day was a downhill slide. He didn't get stronger, he got weaker, he didn't get closer to adulthood, he got closer to the end, so he didn't look at life the way everyone else did. He had become very good at living in the moment, not looking too far ahead at what might come.

Bailey's disease had taken away his ability to raise his arms even to chest level, which made it impossible to do all the little things people did every day without thinking twice. His mom had worried about him staying in school. Most kids with Duchenne MD don't make it past twenty-one, and Bailey's days were numbered. Being exposed to illness on a daily basis was a concern, but Bailey's inability to touch his face actually protected him from germs that the rest of the kids managed to wipe all over themselves, and he rarely missed a day of school. If he held a clipboard in his lap he could manage, but holding the clipboard was awkward and if it slipped and fell he couldn't lean down to retrieve it. It was a lot easier for him to work at a computer or slide his wheelchair in close to a table and rest his hands on the top. Hannah Lake High School was small and not very well-funded, but with a little help and some adjustments to the normal routine, Bailey would finish high school, and

he would probably finish at the top of his class.

Second hour pre-calculus was filled with seniors. Bailey and Fern sat in the back at a table high enough for Bailey to utilize, and Fern was his assigned aid, though he helped her more in the class than she helped him. Ambrose Young and Grant Nielson sat in the back of the room as well, and Fern was tickled to be so close to Ambrose, even though he didn't know she existed, three feet away from where he sat wedged in a desk that was too small for someone his size.

Mr. Hildy was late for class. He was habitually late to his second-hour class, and nobody minded really. He didn't have a class first hour and you could usually find him in the mornings with a cup of coffee in front of the TV in the teacher's lounge. But that Tuesday he came into class and flipped on the TV that hung in the corner of his classroom, just to the left of the chalkboard. The TVs were new, the chalkboards old, the teacher ancient, so nobody paid him much attention as he stood staring up at the screen, watching a newscaster talk about a plane crash. It was 9:00 am.

“Quiet, please!” Mr. Hildy barked, and the room reluctantly obeyed. The shot on the screen was trained on two tall buildings. One had black smoke and fire billowing out of the side.

“Is that New York, Mr. Hildy?” someone asked from the front row.

“Hey, isn't Knudsen in New York City?”

“That's the World Trade Center,” Mr. Hildy said. “That wasn't a commuter plane, I don't care what they are saying.”

“Look! There's another one!”

“Another plane?”

There was a collective gasp.

“Holy sh—!” Bailey's voice trailed off and Fern clamped a hand over her mouth as they all watched another plane burrow into the side of the other tower, the tower that wasn't already on fire.

The newscasters were reacting much like the students in the class--shocked, confused, scrambling for something intelligent to say as they stared with dawning horror at what was clearly not an accident.

There was no calculus assignment that day. Instead, Mr. Hildy's math class watched history unfold. Maybe Mr. Hildy considered the seniors old enough to see the images that played out in front of them, to hear the speculation.

Mr. Hildy was an old, Vietnam vet, he didn't mince words, and he



couldn't tolerate politics. He watched with his students as America was attacked and he didn't bat an eye. But he quaked inside. He knew, maybe better than anyone, what the cost would be. It would be young lives. War was coming. No way it couldn't after something like this. No way it couldn't.

“Wasn't Knudson in New York?” someone asked. “He said his family was going to see the Statue of Liberty and a bunch of other stuff.” Landon Knudson was the student body vice-president, a member of the football team, and someone who was well-liked and well-known throughout the school.

“Brosey, doesn't your mom live in New York?” Grant asked suddenly, his eyes wide with the sudden realization.

Ambrose's eyes were fixed on the TV, his face tight. He nodded once. His stomach was hot with dread. His mom not only lived in New York City, she worked as a secretary in an ad agency that was located in the North Tower of the World Trade Center. He kept telling himself she was fine; her office was on a lower floor.

“Maybe you should call her.” Grant looked worried.

“I've been trying.” Ambrose held up his cell phone, the one he wasn't supposed to have in class, but Mr. Hildy didn't protest. They all watched as Ambrose tried again.

“Busy. Everybody is probably trying to call.” He snapped the phone closed. Nobody spoke. The bell rang, but everyone stayed in their seats. A few kids trickled in for their third hour class, but word was spreading throughout the school and the regular schedule was no match for the unfolding drama. The incoming students sat atop desks and stood against the walls and watched the screen along with everyone else.

And then the South Tower collapsed. It was there and then it wasn't. It dissolved into a massive cloud that swept down and out, dirty white, thick and fat, bristling with debris, dense with devastation. Someone screamed and everyone was talking and pointing. Fern reached over and took Bailey's hand. A couple of girls started to cry.

Mr. Hildy's face was as chalky as the board he made his living writing on. He looked out over his students crammed into his classroom and wished he'd never turned on the TV. They didn't need to see this. Young, untried, innocent. His mouth opened to reassure them, but his intolerance for bullshit robbed him of speech. There was nothing he could say that wouldn't be a bald-faced lie or that wouldn't frighten them more. It wasn't real. It couldn't be. It was an illusion, a magic trick, just smoke and mirrors. But the tower

was gone. The second tower to be hit, the first to go down. It took only 56 minutes from impact to collapse.

Fern clung to Bailey's hand. The billowing cloud of smoke and dust looked like the batting from Fern's old stuffed bear. It was a carnival prize, filled with cheap, fuzzy, synthetic cotton. She'd conked Bailey in the head with it and the right arm had torn free, spewing fuzzy white fluff in all directions. But this wasn't a carnival. It was a spook alley, complete with maze-like city streets filled with people covered in ash. Like zombies. But these zombies wept and called out for help.

When they heard the news that a plane had gone down outside Shanksville--only 65 miles from Hannah Lake--students began leaving the classroom, unable to bear more. They ran out of the school in droves, needing reassurance that the world hadn't ended in Hannah Lake, needing their families. Ambrose Young stayed in Mr. Hildy's room and saw the North Tower go down an hour after the South Tower collapsed. His mother still wasn't answering. How could she when he couldn't get anything but an odd buzzing in his ear whenever he tried to call? He went to the wrestling room. There in the corner, in the place where he felt safest, sitting on the loosely rolled mat, he offered an awkward prayer. He was uncomfortable with asking God for anything when He so obviously had His hands full. With a choked "amen" he tried to reach his mother once more.



*July, 1994*

*High up in the rickety brown bleachers, Fern and Bailey sat slurping the purple popsicles they'd pilfered from the freezer in the teacher's lounge, looking down at the bodies writhing and grappling on the mat with the fascination of the excluded. Bailey's dad, the high-school wrestling coach, was holding his annual youth wrestling camp, and neither of them were participating; girls weren't encouraged to wrestle, and Bailey's disease had started to weaken his limbs significantly.*

*Basically, Bailey was born with all the muscle he was ever going to have, so his parents had to carefully consider how much activity he should participate in. Too much, and his muscles would tear down. In a normal person, muscles that are torn down repair themselves and rebuild stronger*

than before, which is what creates bigger muscles. Bailey's muscles couldn't rebuild. But if he didn't get enough activity, the muscle he did have would weaken more quickly. Since the age of four, when he was diagnosed with Dushenne muscular dystrophy, Bailey's mother had monitored Bailey's activity like a drill sergeant, making him swim with a life jacket even though Bailey could navigate the water like a fish, mandating nap time, quiet time, and sedate walks in her busy little boy's life so he maintained his ability to avoid a wheel chair for as long as possible. And they were beating the odds so far. At ten years old, most kids with Dushenne MD were already wheelchair-bound, but Bailey was still walking.

"I may not be as strong as Ambrose, but I still think I could beat him," Bailey said, his eyes narrowed on the match below them. Ambrose Young stood out like a sore thumb. He was in the same class as Bailey and Fern, but he was already eleven, old for his grade, and he stood several inches taller than all the other kids his age. He was tussling with some of the boys from the high school wrestling team who were assisting with the camp, and he was holding his own. Coach Sheen was watching him from the sidelines, shouting out instructions and stopping the action every so often to demonstrate a hold or a move.

Fern snorted and licked her purple popsicle, wishing she had a book to read. If not for the popsicle, she would have left a long time ago. Sweaty boys did not interest her very much.

"You couldn't beat Ambrose, Bailey. But don't feel bad. I couldn't beat him either."

Bailey looked at Fern in outrage, spinning so fast that his dripping popsicle slid from his hand and bounced off his skinny knee. "I may not have big muscles, but I'm super smart and I know all the techniques. My dad has shown me all the moves, and he says I have a great wrestling mind!" Bailey parroted, his mouth turned down in an angry frown, his popsicle forgotten.

Fern patted his knee and kept licking. "Your dad says that 'cause he loves you. Just like my mom tells me I'm pretty 'cause she loves me. I'm not pretty . . . and you can't beat Ambrose, buddy."

Bailey stood up suddenly and he wobbled a little, making Fern's stomach flop in fear as she imagined him falling from the bleachers.

"You aren't pretty!" Bailey shouted, making Fern instantly seethe. "But my dad would never lie to me like your mom does. You just wait! When I'm a grown-up, I will be the strongest, best wrestler in the Universe!"

*“My mom says you are going to die before you are a grown-up!” Fern shouted back, repeating the words she had heard her parents say when they didn't think she was listening.*

*Bailey's face crumpled, and he began to climb down the bleachers, hanging onto the railing as he teetered and tottered to the bottom. Fern felt the tears rise up in her eyes and her face crumple just as Bailey's had. She followed after him even though he refused to look at her again. They both cried all the way home, Bailey pedaling his bike as fast as he could, never looking over at Fern, never acknowledging her presence. Fern rode alongside him and kept wiping her nose with her sticky hands.*

*Her face was a mess with snot and purple popsicle when she brokenly confessed to her mother what she had said. Fern's mother silently took her by the hand and they walked next door to Bailey's house.*

*Fern's Aunt Angie, Bailey's mom, was holding Bailey on her lap and talking quietly to him on the front porch as Fern and her mother climbed the stairs. Rachel Taylor slid into the adjacent rocker and pulled Fern onto her lap as well. Angie looked at Fern and smiled a little, seeing the tear-stained cheeks streaked with purple. Bailey's face was hidden in her shoulder. Fern and Bailey were both a little too old to sit in their mothers' laps, but the occasion seemed to demand it.*

*“Fern,” Aunt Angie said softly. “I was just telling Bailey that it's true. He is going to die.”*

*Fern immediately started to cry again, and her mother pulled her against her chest. Fern could feel her mother's heart pounding beneath her cheek, but her aunt's face stayed serene, and she didn't cry. She seemed to have arrived at a conclusion that would take Fern years to accept. Bailey wrapped his arms around his mother and wailed.*

*Aunt Angie rubbed her son's back and kissed his head. “Bailey? Will you listen to me for a minute, son?”*

*Bailey was still crying as he lifted his face and looked at his mother and then looked at Fern, glowering like she had caused all of this to happen.*

*“You are going to die, and I am going to die, and Fern is going to die. Did you know that, Bailey? Aunt Rachel is going to die, too.” Angie looked at my mother and smiled apologetically, including her in the gloomy prediction.*

*Bailey and Fern looked at each other in horror, suddenly shocked beyond tears.*

*“Every living thing dies, Bailey. Some people live longer than others. We*