
A BOSTON GLOBE-HORN BOOK HONOR BOOK

My Louisiana Sky

KIMBERLY WILLIS HOLT



YEARLING

Archambault



Folks around Saitter don't understand why parents would name their daughter Tiger. But Daddy says it's because of love. Momma had a kitten named Tiger when she was a little girl. She loved that kitten so much, she hugged it too hard and it died. Momma wasn't going to let that happen again, so when I was born she was real gentle with me.

Some people in Saitter say Momma and Daddy should have never been allowed to get married because they're different. Folks around here call it retarded, but I like "slow" better.

Even though Daddy got through twelve years of school, most folks say teachers felt sorry for skinny Lonnie Parker. Just passed him from grade to grade like they do some of the basketball players. Momma never went to school, but Granny taught her to read.

With those kind of odds, I should be dumber than

an old cow. But I'm not. In fact, my classmates' parents are still scratching their heads trying to figure out how I got straight A's and won the spelling bee five years in a row. It's even harder for them to believe Momma taught me to read. But she did. Momma likes reading comic books. I read about Superman and Donald Duck when I was four. Now Momma likes me to read to her because I can read the words she can't.



It rained every day the week after I finished sixth grade. The clouds hung low in the gray sky and the raindrops poured down, hammering our roof with a constant patter. But by Saturday, the day Aunt Dorie Kay came to visit from Baton Rouge, the sun came out in all its glory and the sky returned to a brilliant blue. When we heard her car drive up near the gate, Momma ran out of the house like a little kid. She grabbed hold of Aunt Dorie Kay so hard, my aunt wobbled on her high-heeled shoes.

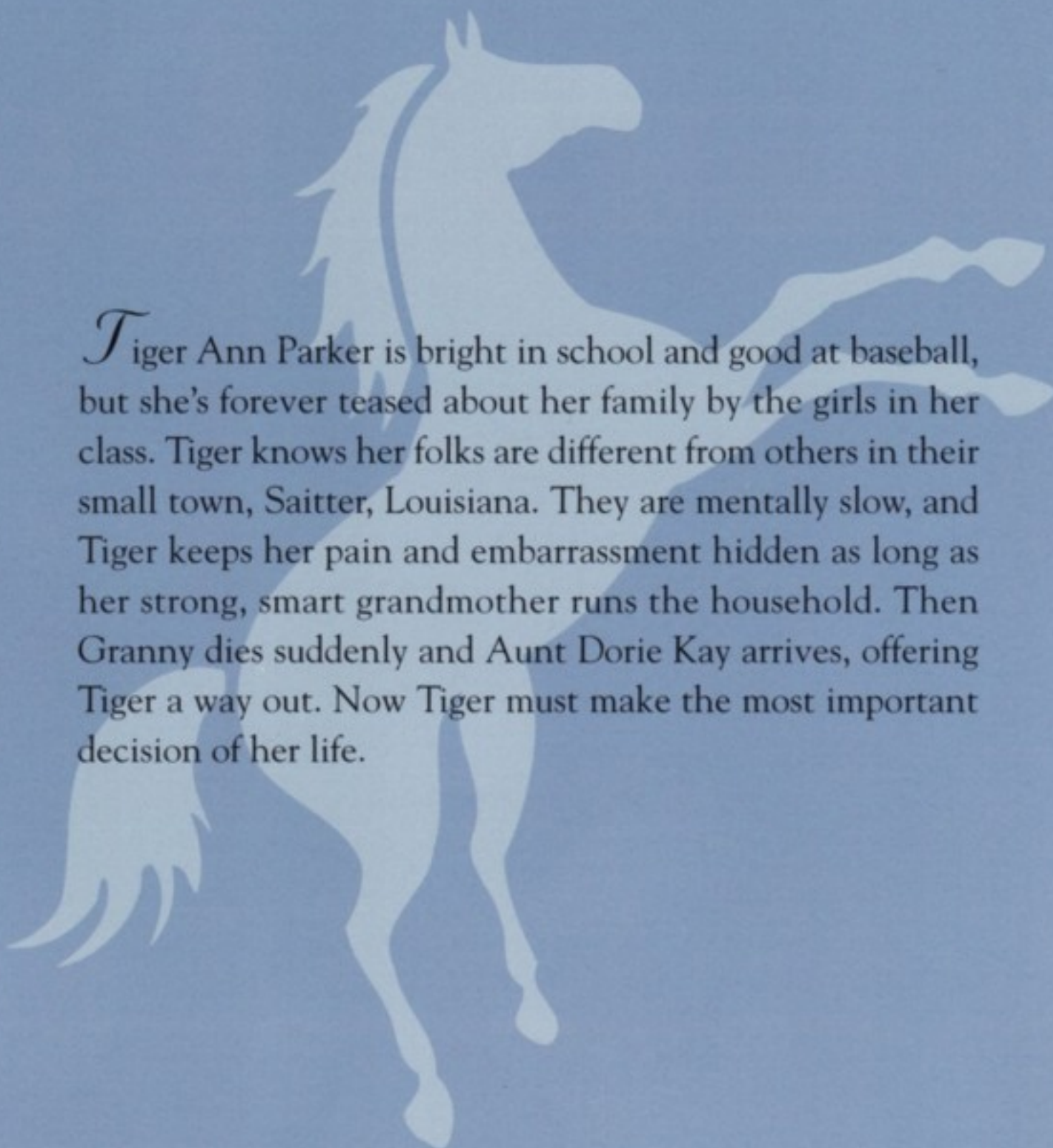
"Whoa, Corrina." Aunt Dorie Kay caught her balance and smoothed her dark hair back in place.

"Oh, Dorie Kay, I missed you so much," Momma squeaked. She stepped back with her dirty bare feet, admiring Aunt Dorie Kay from head to toe. "You're as pretty as a picture in a fancy ladies' magazine."

Aunt Dorie Kay was Momma's younger sister. To me, she was the most sophisticated person I had ever known. Today she wore a tailored navy blue suit that matched her shoes and she smelled better than the perfume counter at Penney's. She wasn't beautiful like Momma. Momma's long dark hair fell to her shoulders, and her body curved in all the right places. But somehow Aunt Dorie Kay's flat chest and narrow hips appeared stylish in her pretty clothes. She wore more makeup than any Saitter woman dared to, except for the women who went to the Wigwam honky-tonk on Saturday nights. But while their faces looked caked on, hers looked glamorous.

Aunt Dorie Kay gently cupped my chin with her hands. "Twelve years old. Tiger, you are growing up into such a young lady."

Her voice was smooth like a deep, calm lake. I wanted to dive right in and let it work magic on me. Turn me into someone I wasn't. But as I looked at my reflection in her eyes I was reminded of what I saw in the mirror. I saw Daddy. He was tall and skinny with thin red hair and a long neck. His narrow eyes squinted when he smiled and his nose took up a lot of room on his face. But folks say kids change a bunch before they finish growing. Especially in the summertime.



*T*iger Ann Parker is bright in school and good at baseball, but she's forever teased about her family by the girls in her class. Tiger knows her folks are different from others in their small town, Saitter, Louisiana. They are mentally slow, and Tiger keeps her pain and embarrassment hidden as long as her strong, smart grandmother runs the household. Then Granny dies suddenly and Aunt Dorie Kay arrives, offering Tiger a way out. Now Tiger must make the most important decision of her life.

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