The Extraordinary New York Times Bestseller

THE GIRL WHO COULD

victoria forester

"It's the oddest/sweetest mix of Little House on the Prairie and X-Men. I was smiling the whole time (except for the part where I cried). . . . Prepare to have your heart warmed."

-Stephenie Meyer, author of the Twilight saga

CHAPTER ONE

PIPER DECIDED to jump off of the roof. It wasn't a rash decision on her part.

This was her plan—climb to the top of the roof, pick up speed by running from one end all the way to the other. Jump off.

Finally, and most importantly, don't fall.

She didn't make plans in the event that she did fall, because if you jump off of the roof of your house and land on your head, you really don't need any plans from that point on. Even Piper knew that.

So that's what she did. She jumped clean off of her roof.

But before we get to what happens next, you'll probably need to know a thing or two about a thing or two.

Piper lived with her ma and pa on a farm. It wasn't much of a farm to be sure, just an old clapboard house and a bank barn that leaned dangerously to the left. For longer than anyone could remember, the McClouds had lived in Lowland County on those same twenty rocky acres of land. Piper's grandpa and great-grandpa and great-grandpa, and so on and so on, all breathed their first, last, and everything in between right in the same house where Piper was born, and because of that, the McClouds never planned to live anywhere else. Betty McCloud felt that folks ought to stay in one place and not move around too much so that the Almighty knew where to find them if He needed to.

"If the good Lord wanted things to keep changing all the time, then the sun wouldn't rise up the same way every blessed morning." Betty was a plain, no-nonsense, solidly round woman who believed in only two things: the Good Book and something that she called "providence," as in—

"I told Millie Mae not to fool with that newfangled gardening hoe. Can't say I'm surprised them black beetles is eating clear through her tomatoes now. It's providence, I tell you. Providence."

Unlike Millie Mae, Betty McCloud never tempted providence.

Joe McCloud, a lanky man with sun-weathered skin the color of browned autumn leaves, never said a word about providence, but then he never said much about anything. If pressed with a question, he'd likely ponder it for a long stretch before finding the words to answer in his measured way, "Well, that's just the way things is." And the way things was, was plenty good enough for Joe McCloud.

So it was in this manner that Betty and Joe quietly went about the business of tending to their land, as the seasons and years passed them by, one no different from the next. And never was it heard to be said in Lowland County that a McCloud didn't do things as they were supposed to be done. That is, until someone said precisely that.

"No, I ain't. It's not the way of things." Betty McCloud argued with Doc Bell when he announced that she was pregnant. After all, Betty had celebrated no less than twenty-five barren years of marriage and was no longer considered a young woman.

Four months later Betty McCloud birthed a baby girl. That baby girl was named Piper. Piper McCloud.

News of Piper's birth traveled with great speed through the remote fields of Lowland County, where cows outnumbered people by a ratio of ninety-three to one.

"It's not the way of things," Millie Mae hotly declared to the ladies' Tuesday afternoon sewing circle, each one of whom immediately pressed her ears more closely inward. "Fancy a woman Betty McCloud's age prancing around with a newborn baby! A first-time mother at that. It ain't right!"

SHE CAN FLY!

Piper McCloud lives with her normal ma and pa on a normal farm in normal Lowland County. But Piper isn't your normal girl. Ever since Piper was a baby, she's been able to hover a few feet off the ground, and if the people of Lowland County knew she could fly, they would have something to say about it. So, it only seems best that Piper be sent away to I.N.S.A.N.E., the top secret school for children with extraordinary abilities like hers. Her new friends have powers like telekinesis, X-ray vision, and the ability to create their own weather. Piper likes her new life at school, but soon, she realizes things aren't as they seem. Now, the school she was sent to far her own protection might be the most dangerous place she's ever been.

★ "The story sours, just like Piper, with enough loop-de-loops to keep felds uncertain about what will come next."—Booklist, Storred Review

"Any child who has felt different will take strength from Piper's Fight to be herself

The Horn Book

Go Fish

Look inside for an interview with Victoria Forester.