

NEWBERY
AWARD-
WINNING
AUTHOR

"A powerfully moving story."
— *Chicago Daily News*

IRENE HUNT

No Promises in the Wind



Joey stirred on his side of our bed when the alarm clock jangled at a quarter to four. "You want me to go with you, Josh?" he asked sleepily.

I reached out to the bedside table, stopped the alarm, snapped on the shaded study lamp, and lay back on my pillow. The chill of early October had sharpened during the night, and the discomfort of being cold together with too few hours of sleep made me irritable and moody. I didn't even feel particularly grateful to Joey for offering to go with me. In the first place he wasn't a lot of help, and anyway, three hours of delivering papers in the dark city streets was too hard for him though he'd never have admitted it. Joey had been frail since he was a baby, but he was tough. He'd have been up in a minute if I had said, yes, I needed his help.

As it was, I didn't answer his question and he sighed deeply as he turned his face away from the light. I couldn't

tell whether that sigh was one of relief at being able to go back to sleep or one of hurt at my rudeness. Ashamed, I got up and found an extra blanket, which I threw over him and tucked around his shoulders. I could sense his feeling of comfort as he curled up into a tight little spiral and snuggled down under the extra warmth.

When I was dressed, I sat down in the big mohair chair beside the window, twisting my body to avoid the broken spring in the chair's back. "Just five minutes," I told myself, "just five minutes to rest and get used to being awake."

I stared at the faded paper on the wall in front of me without really seeing it until I became conscious of the yellowed figures of cowboys riding their broncs in precise paths from baseboard to ceiling. My mother had allowed me to select that paper five years before when I was no older than Joey, and I had held out for cowboys and broncs, scorning Mom's preference for pots of flowers or bright colored birds. I studied the horses and their daredevil riders for a long time as if they mattered. They didn't, of course, but concentrating on them kept me awake.

Finally I roused myself. My paper route didn't mean much money, but it was important. Dad had been out of work for eight months, and only the day before, my sister had received notice of a cut-back in personnel which cost her the clerking job she'd had for nearly a year. Every few pennies counted in our family; a job was a job, and to risk losing it by being late was out of the question.

It was dark in the kitchen when I went downstairs, but I could see the outline of my mother's figure as she stood at the stove. "Why did you get up, Mom?" I asked gruffly. "I tell you over and over—"

She put her hand on my arm. "Hush, Josh, let's not wake

Dad. He couldn't sleep until about two hours ago." She poured out a cup of hot milk and handed it to me. "Here, drink this; I'll have a little breakfast for you at seven."

She was not as tall as I was; she had to lift her face when she kissed my cheek. "I'm so proud that Miss Crowne wants you to play for the school assembly next week. I'm very proud of you, Josh."

"I wish you could come and hear us. Howie and I are going pretty good lately."

"I know. I want to hear you so much—but, then, I can't and there's no use talking about it." She turned back to the stove and moved some pans aimlessly. "You can stay after school and practice if you want to. There isn't much for you to do around here."

My mother ironed all day in the laundry a few blocks down the street. She shouldn't have been doing work like that. She played piano beautifully, and for a long time she had given lessons to children in our neighborhood until recently when no one had money to pay for a luxury like music. She taught me for seven years, up until I was thirteen and we had to sell the piano at the time Dad's work at the factory was cut to three days a week. She understood my love for music and she encouraged it—always there was encouragement from my mother.

Dad had mixed feelings about my playing. He loved music too, really; it was a common love of music that had drawn him and Mom together when she was a black-haired little Irish girl of eighteen and he was a Polish widower almost twice her age. Dad's parents had been musicians in Poland, good ones too, but poor as far as money was concerned. There had been poverty in Dad's childhood, and he placed the blame for it upon a father who had never been able to

From the Newbery Award–winning author of *Across Five Aprils* and *Up a Road Slowly* comes a tale of a brave young man's struggle to find his own strength during the Great Depression....

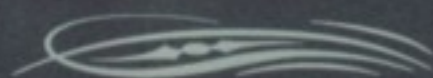
No Promises in the Wind

In 1932, Americans' dreams were simple: a job, food to eat, a place to sleep, and shoes without holes. But for millions of people these simple needs were nothing more than dreams. When he was just fifteen years old, Josh had to make his own way through a country of angry and frightened people. This is the story of his struggle to find a life for himself during those turbulent times.

PRAISE FOR IRENE HUNT'S NOVELS:

"A powerfully moving story."

—*Chicago Daily News*



"Intriguing."—*The New York Times*

www.penguinputnam.com

ISBN 0-425-18280-0



\$4.99 U.S.
\$6.99 CAN