

MICHAEL DORRIS

MORNING
GIRL



WINNER OF THE SCOTT O'DELL AWARD
FOR HISTORICAL FICTION

H Y P E R I O N

C H A P T E R O N E

MORNING GIRL



The name my family calls me is Morning Girl because I wake up early, always with something on my mind. Mother says it's because I dream too hard, and that I don't relax even in sleep. Maybe she's right—in my dreams I'm always doing things: swimming or searching on the beach for unbroken shells or figuring out a good place to fish. I open my eyes as soon as the light calls through the smoke

pond when the water is very smooth. He thinks we're like birds floating above that sky island, very, very high.

I don't know how my brother came to see everything so upside down from me. For him, night is day, sleep is awake. It's as though time is split between us, and we only pass by each other as the sun rises or sets. Usually, for me, that's enough.

Mother promises that someday my brother and I will be friends, like she and her brother Sharp Tooth finally got to be. She whispers when she tells stories of how my uncle acted when he was a boy—how twice he laughed at her when she got into trouble or how he told a lie and never untied it, ever, with the truth. She became very still, closed her eyes, and took a deep breath at that memory, but then she shook her head, looked into me the way only she can do, and said that she used to believe she'd never forget what he had done; but look, she has. And now Sharp Tooth is exactly the brother she wants, the person in the whole world who remembers important things from when she was a young girl, who remembers Grandfather when he was alive and before he grew old.

I don't answer what I think: that *my* brother is

I could have explained that it was my brother's fault, but it would have done no good. Father would only have made more jokes and Mother would have said, "We'll listen later, Morning Girl."

I stood up, squeezed the stiffness from the back of my neck, and gave my brother a parting frown that I hoped would leave him very worried. That did no good, either, for he was already back on his own mat, curled into a comfortable position, pretending to be dreaming. His eyes were closed tightly, and his mouth was smiling.

Outside, at least, belonged to me, since no one else was around. I could do anything, go anywhere. I could walk or run, I could climb or swim, I could watch the ocean or slip into the mango grove, keep very quiet until the birds forgot I was there and began to talk to one another again.

The day welcomed me, brushed my hair with its breeze, greeted me with its songs. I raised my arms high and stretched. I let the rich scent of the large red flowers color my thoughts, and the perfume gave me an idea of how to use my special time. I would search for the most beautiful blossoms and weave them together into necklaces for Father and

I DREAM TOO HARD



In alternating chapters, *Morning Girl*, a twelve-year-old Taino, and her younger brother, *Star Boy*, vividly recreate life on a Bahamian island in 1492—a life that is rich, complex, and soon to be threatened.

An American Bookseller Pick of the Lists

A Horn Book Fan Fare Book

A Booklist Editor's Choice

A *New York Times* Book Review Notable Book of 1992

- ★ "A reverberating story of coming of age, both for the two characters and for the world."
—*School Library Journal* (starred review)
- ★ "With spare, lovely words [Dorris's] first children's book tells a surprising story about people who love and hurt."—*Booklist* (starred review)
- ★ "... should be read by both children and adults for many generations to come."
—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)
- "... graceful and engaging ... a warm story full of real characters and situations, told in marvelous language ..."—*New York Times Book Review*