Ann M. Martin

A Corner of the Universe

includes AFTER WORDS™ bonus features

SCHOLASTIC

Last summer, the summer I turned twelve, was the summer Adam came. And forever after I will think of events as Before Adam or After Adam. Tonight, which is several months After Adam, I finally have an evening alone.

I am sitting in our parlor, inspecting our home movies, which are lined up in a metal box. Each reel of film is carefully labeled. WEDDING DAY — 1945. VISIT WITH HAYDEN — 1947. HATTIE — 1951. FOURTH OF JULY — 1958. I look for the films from this summer. Dad has spliced them together onto a big reel labeled JUNE–JULY 1960. I hold it in my hands, turn it over and over.

The evening is quiet. I feel like I am the only one at home, even though two of the rooms upstairs are occupied. I hear the clocks in Mr. Penny's room, and footsteps padding

down the hall to the bathroom. The footsteps belong to Miss Hagerty, I'm sure of it. I know the routines of our boarders, and now is the hour when Miss Hagerty, who is past eighty, begins what she calls her nightly beauty regime. Outside, a car glides down Grant Avenue, sending its headlights circling around the darkened living room. It's warm for October, and so I have cracked one window open. I can smell leaves, hear a dog barking.

Mom and Dad have gone with Nana and Papa to some big dinner at the Present Day Club, their first true social event since Nana and Papa's party on that awful night in July. On this first night to myself, Dad has entrusted me with his movie projector and all the reels of film. I made popcorn and am eating it in the parlor where technically I am not supposed to eat anything, following the unfortunate deviled egg incident of 1958. Really, you can only see the edges of the stain, plus I'm twelve now, not some little ten-year-old. I would think the food ban could be lifted, since Dad feels that I am responsible enough to operate his movie equipment.

He said I could do everything myself this evening, and I have, without a single mistake or accident. I set up the screen at one end of the parlor. I lugged the projector out of the closet, hoisted it onto a table, and threaded it with a reel of film, making all the right loops. Turned on the projector, turned off the light, put the bowl of popcorn on a pot

holder in my lap, and settled in to watch the film labeled HATTIE — 1951. It's one of my favorites because my third birthday party is on it and I can watch our old cat Simon jump up on the dining room table and land in a dish of ice cream. Then I can play the film backward and watch Simon fly down to the floor and see all the splashes of ice cream slurp themselves back into the dish. I made Simon jump in and out several times before I watched the rest of the film.

But now I am holding the tin from this summer. I consider it for a long time before I take out the reel and fasten it to the side of the projector. I thread and loop and wind, doing everything by the light of a little reading lamp. When I finish, my hands are shaking. I draw in a deep breath, turn on the projector, turn off the light, sit back.

Well. There is Angel Valentine, the very first thing. She is standing on our front porch, waving at the camera. We have an awful lot of shots of people standing on our front porch, waving at the camera. That's because when Dad pulls out his camera and starts aiming it around, someone is bound to say, "Oh, Lord, not the movie camera. I don't know what to do!" And Dad always replies, "Well, how about if you just stand on the porch and wave?" So there is Angel waving. Pretty soon Miss Hagerty and Mr. Penny step out of the house and stand one on each side of Angel and they wave too.

And then later, on another day, in dimmer light, I see Nana and Papa standing on their own front porch, waving.

Find Your Place

Hattie Owen has never really thought about the world outside her small town. Her family's boarding house is where she feels most at home, with its eccentric tenants and predictable routines.

But there are secrets in Hattie's family, and the biggest one is her young uncle Adam. Hattie doesn't even know he exists until he shows up in her town, right when she's about to turn twelve. Suddenly the place she thought she knew so well begins to feel different. Her family and neighbors aren't ready to deal with Adam's mental problems . . . so Hattie gets caught in the middle.

In one summer, Hattie will find out how small a small town can be, how big the world outside is, and how far our hearts and minds can go.

★ "Martin delivers wonderfully real characters and an engrossing plot. . . . This is an important book." — *School Library Journal*, starred review

★ "Hearts will go out to both Hattie and Adam as they step outside the confines of their familiar world to meet some painful challenges." — *Publishers Weekly*, starred review

★ "This is a fully realized roller coaster of emotions, and readers take the ride right along with Hattie." — *Booklist*, starred review

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Cover photo by Michael Prince/Corbis
Cover design by Elizabeth B. Parisi

$6.99 US / $8.99 CAN

RL5 009-013

ISBN-13: 978-0-439-36881-8
ISBN-10: 0-439-36881-3

9 780439 368818

50699

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