

OUR ONLY
May Amelia



JENNIFER L. HOLM



My Brother Wilbert Tells Me

My brother Wilbert tells me that I was the first ever girl born in Nasel, that I was A Miracle. He tells me this as we stand at the edge of the water, on the Nasel River, watching it rush by crazily. He is trying to cheer me up.

Wilbert has found me here on the Baby Island where I have run away on account of Pappa being awful to me. Even Wilbert says it is terrible that Pappa was awful to me today, on my own birthday. Wilbert is thirteen and my favorite brother which is something indeed since I have so many brothers, more than any girl should have. My secret birthday wish is to get a sister but I don't know how likely that is.

These are my brothers:

Matti is eighteen.

Kaarlo is seventeen and one half and is really our cousin but I guess he's sort of a brother.

Isaiah is sixteen.

Wendell is fifteen.

Alvin is fourteen.

Ivan is fourteen too. He is Alvin's twin and they look as alike as two blackberries. Only Wilbert and I can tell them apart, even Mamma has trouble.

Wilbert is thirteen.

May Amelia Jackson is twelve. That is Me.

We live on the Nasel in the state of Washington. It is 1899.

Pappa is always yelling at me Don't Get Into Mischief May Amelia when all I'm ever doing is what some other boy has done first. He says that I am a Girl and because I am a girl I cannot be doing what the boys are doing, that there is danger everywhere. Wilbert tells me that Pappa has had a Hard Life. That you can see the hardness in the lines of his face, what with coming all the way to Washington after being pressed into the Finnish Navy and leaving Finland. That's why he's hard on me. But Wilbert's wrong. Pappa doesn't like little girls very much in general, and me in particular.

Mamma has a baby in her belly and Pappa said

Children I sure do hope your mamma gives us another boy 'cause I don't think I can stand another May Amelia. He said this in front of all the boys, after hollering at me for going up to Ben Armstrong's logging camp by myself. I said But Ivan and Alvin go up by themselves and he said May Amelia, I will not abide any arguments.

But Pappa— I said.

Then he hollered so loud I'm sure they heard him over at the Petersen farm.

That logging camp's a dangerous place for a young girl! he hollered. I don't want you running around there, Do You Hear Me? Then his eyebrows got all fierce-looking and met in the middle and he shook his finger at me and That Was That.

I hate it when he scolds me so I ran away. I took the little rowboat onto the Nasel and went to the Baby Island and hid in the old sorcerer tree until Wilbert came to fetch me home. He's the only one who knows about the sorcerer tree. It's all hollow-like and fits a small child like me just fine.

I say Wilbert I reckon I would like to be buried in the sorcerer tree when I die, and he says Fine May but you're not likely to die anyways. You're only twelve and you hafta to be old to die didn't you know that?

I say I did but was just a-planning.

SHE MAY BE A MIRACLE, BUT SHE'S NO PROPER YOUNG LADY!

It isn't easy being a pioneer in the state of Washington in 1899, but it's particularly hard when you are the only girl *ever* born in the new settlement. With seven older brothers and a love of adventure, May Amelia Jackson just can't seem to abide her family's insistence that she behave like a Proper Young Lady. Not when there's fishing to be done, sheep to be herded, and real live murderers to be captured! May is sure she could manage better if only there were at least one other girl living along the banks of the Nasel River. And now that Mama's going to have a baby, maybe there's hope. . . .

"AN UNFORGETTABLE HEROINE NARRATES HOLM'S EXTRAORDINARY DEBUT NOVEL. MAY AMELIA'S SPUNKY NARRATIVE VOICE GIVES THE NOVEL ITS IMMEDIACY AND POTENCY. NOT TO BE MISSED."

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