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Opening extract from

Black Dove, White Raven

Written by

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Sinidu told me I should aim for the sun.

I still have a plane. There must be *some* way I can get Teo out safely. I think Momma's hoard of Maria Theresa dollars is enough to pay for the travel. I am hoping my new passport is waiting for me in Addis Ababa. But Teo . . . Teo is trapped. I have thought about trying to get him a British passport – Colonel Sinclair has friends who have not left Ethiopia. I could throw myself at them in disguise as Helpless-Young-American-Girl-All-Alone.

I wonder if I could sweet-talk someone at the British Legation. But Momma couldn't even sweet-talk the Americans in our own legation, and of course the British probably can't do a doggone thing for Teo even if they wanted to. Legations have not got all the powers of embassies, and I don't know if they are even running any more, since the invasion and the shooting started. I don't

know anything that's happened in the past four months, except what I've seen from the air.

What about the French? Momma was still friendly with Pierre Ferrand and those Imperial Ethiopian Air Force pilots last time we were in Addis Ababa. But we're not French either, and I don't even know if they're still here.

It is a waste of time trying to pass Teo off as Italian. I think I pretty much burned that bridge behind me when I stole a plane from the Italian Air Force.

Sinidu is right. I am here at Lake Ashenge, north of Koram, and the emperor is in the hills above the town. There isn't anyone else who can help me.

I have nothing to lose. I am going to dare it. I will aim for the sun.

~~March 4, 1936~~
Yekatit 25, 1928

Humble Greetings to Your Most Imperial Majesty, Haile Selassie I, Emperor of Ethiopia!

I am writing to you (politely, I hope) to beg you to forgive my brother, Teodros Gedeyon, for the bond he owes your servant, *Ras* Amde Worku, and to grant him an Ethiopian passport.

We have not met you, but we saw you just before your coronation, and again when you landed for a few minutes at Tazma Meda. You know our mother, the photographer and flyer Rhoda Drummond Menotti, who works in your progressive clinic there. You used to let her land on your airfield at Akaki near the capital. Her aircraft has also been flown honourably in your service by my brother Teodros. He was given his pilot's licence by the same man who trained your own Imperial Ethiopian Air Force pilots.

Your Majesty, I am a white American myself and I don't believe you will expect any national loyalty from me. But my foster brother is an Ethiopian citizen because of his Ethiopian father. I count on your mercy and wisdom as I beg you to shower your blessing and generosity on Teodros. I have lived in Ethiopia since I was a little girl and am broken-hearted to have to run away as it is falling.

I am on my own. I am desperate. I don't know where else to turn for help. But I know that you can grant Teo a passport. You have children too, and some of them are not grown up yet. Princess Tsehai is our own age, and Prince Makonnen is very young. You must understand what it is to fear for your family.

I thought I would send you some things my mother kept, our baby stories and our older stories, some writing exercises and our flight records. I hope they help you understand what has happened to us.

I am embarrassed that everything is written in English. Teo and I both speak Amharic, but we don't write it very well, and I know that your translators are busy. My apologies! Also I'm embarrassed about the writing, which is silly here and there, especially in the beginning. But we both like to write, and sometimes I feel like the only thing I *can* do is write. It helps me think. Maybe you know what I mean.

I beg to tell you all that we have done for Ethiopia, and for you, this year.

I anxiously await your response and remain,

Your obedient servant,
Emilia Drummond Menotti

PS The captured Italian aircraft is also for you. I hope it is payment enough for the big favour I am asking.

THE ADVENTURS OF BLACK DOVE AND WHITE RAVEN

This story is by Em M. and it is writen down by Teodros Dupré

Once upon a time there was a very beaoutiful lady that was able to wear every costume and she coud make things and save peple and her name was White Raven. Everybody liked to watch her making her costumes. She travled in her flying machene with her partner named Black Dove. Sometimes he coud be invisable. They flew everywere together and that means they were always in the soup together. One day in there plane they saw a big grey cloud and when they got close they saw that it was made all out of birds flying very close together. They flew arond the cloud and they landed safelly. The End

(May 1928)

Theme for Miss Shore by Emilia Menotti
Subject: 'My Earliest Memory'
Beehive Hill Cooperative Coffee Farm
Tazma Meda, Wollo Province
Oct. 19, 1934 (Teqemt 9, 1927)

You don't have much choice about what your parents make you do until you're big enough they can't tie you down. I am not sure this is my earliest memory, but it is the oldest one with details in it. It is of being tied into the open cockpit of a Curtiss Jenny flying machine by Cordelia Dupré. When I was little, Delia took up more space in my head and heart than my own father. In fact, she still takes up more space there. Delia is the most important thing that ever happened to our momma.

I know that this memory takes place when I was five years old because I was five years old when Momma and Delia bought the Jenny, their own airplane. It was a biplane that looked a lot like the one we have now, one wing above the other with open cockpits. Well, there were four of us to fit into the Jenny's two cockpits, counting me and Teo. But Teo and I weren't very big when we were five, and Momma and Delia figured out ways of taking us along.

This memory is not of my first flight. My first *flight* was in France in 1919 when I was five *weeks* old, not five years. My father, Papà Menotti, did the flying. Momma carried me against her belly in a scarf tied around her waist under her big leather flying coat because they didn't want anyone at the airfield to know they were taking me along. It was on the day of my baptism. Momma's parents are Quakers and they don't hold with any kind of religious ceremony, but Papà is Roman Catholic and Momma wanted to make him happy. So she agreed to have me baptised if they did my 'baptism in air' on the same day. Momma thinks I might have been the youngest person ever taken for a flight in an aircraft then.

But I don't remember that. What I remember is, when I was five years old, Delia lifting me out of Momma's arms and putting me into the Jenny. Delia was crouching between the wings and Momma was standing on the ground in front of the wings and holding me up to her. I remember reaching out to Delia and how pretty she looked in her leather flying helmet that was exactly the same dark brown colour as her skin, with her hair just peeping out around the helmet like a soft, crimped frame for her face. She had on pink lipstick because she and Momma had just finished an air-show performance and Delia always prettied herself up for the crowd. She lifted me into the

plane and plunked me on the seat in the cockpit squeezed in next to Teo.

'There they are, in the soup together!' She laughed. 'Rhoda, get up here and look at our kids – they're a double act, just like us.'

It was the first time they'd ever taken us flying in the U S of A because they'd never owned their own plane before. None of the owners of the borrowed planes they flew wanted to get a bad name if their plane crashed with a couple of little kids inside, being flown by a woman (Momma) – or, even worse, by a Negro woman (Delia). If anything like that had happened, it would have shut down an aircraft owner for good. But now that Delia and Momma owned their own plane, fair and square, they could do whatever they wanted with it.

Momma must have stood on her toes to peep up over the edge of the cockpit to look at us, and she and Delia both laughed.

'Tie 'em down,' Momma said, and Delia laughed again.

I craned my neck to see Momma hop up lightly on to the fragile body of the aircraft behind us, straddling the fuselage like it was a horse. (Once, when she first started wing walking, she put her foot through the fabric of the lower wing and broke her ankle and couldn't get it out. Delia had to land the plane with Momma all balled up in

the wing struts. Delia was the best pilot ever.) Momma watched while Delia tied us down. I remember Delia doing it and how I felt like I was going to be the safest person in the whole world after she was finished.

I remember Delia's hands – the shiny pink scar in the shape of a heart that she got when she was learning to fly, spilling hot engine oil on her hand, her slender dark fingers and her rose-red varnished nails. She strapped us up with white silk aviator scarves because the aircraft harnesses were too big for us. She tied us together.

'Now you hold on to each other,' Delia said. 'Like this.'

She crossed Teo's left hand over to mine, and crossed my right hand over to his, so our arms were woven together.

'You are going to be the new Black Dove and White Raven, so your two mommas can retire!' Delia told us. Momma laughed. I clung to Teo's hand because – I remember this *so well* – I thought she meant we were supposed to make the plane go, and I was worried that I didn't know how to. (Now I know she tied us down so that we couldn't grab hold of the control wheel in front of us. There was one in each cockpit.)

Delia told us, 'Now, if you feel scared, just hang on tight to each other and squeeze. Three squeezes means, "Are you scared?" and four squeezes means, "I am not scared." If you tell each other you're not scared, you'll

feel brave. Then lean back so you can watch your momma, 'cause she's going to do the showing off. You know you'll be safe because I'm going to do the flying!'

I remember feeling *so relieved* it wasn't going to be up to me.

'Oh, put a cork in it, Del,' Momma said crossly. Delia was always teasing Momma about being a better pilot than she was.

Teo repeated in my ear, 'Put a cork in it,' because it sounded goofy. We both snickered.

When she'd finished tying us up, Delia pulled on the leather gloves which she had in her pocket, and you couldn't see her pretty nails or her pretty scar any more, or even tell how little her hands were, and she leaned down and kissed us both one at a time. She left pink lipstick on Teo's forehead and probably on mine, and she said again, 'Now you're a double act like me and Rhoda.'

Their double act was not on stage but in the air. They were called the Black Dove (Delia) and the White Raven (Momma) and they did an aerial show together, barnstorming in flying circuses all over the U S of A. They did aerobatics (mostly Delia, because she was the better pilot) and wing walking (mostly Momma, who was not scared of getting out of a flying machine and riding it like a horse while it was in the air). Wing walking doesn't

mean 'walking' so much as it means daredevil fooling around outside the airplane while it's flying. Even just standing up between the cockpits counts. But also doing a handstand over the pilot or eating a picnic lunch on top of the wing. Momma did parachute jumps sometimes too. People are always impressed by *anybody* doing stunts like these, but especially a pair of pretty girls.

Black and white, night and day, that's what people used to say. On the ground, when people were watching, Momma and Delia milked that contrast for all they could get. But on their own and in the sky they never paid any mind to black and white – they were just two crazy people who loved flying.

'All set, Rhoda?' Delia asked, after she'd finished tying us up.

Momma answered smartly, 'Aye, aye, Cap'n!' because whichever of them was piloting was the captain; then Delia climbed into the pilot's seat. Momma was still straddling the plane behind us, and she twisted her wrists into the straps she'd got rigged in the wires over our heads as a kind of safety net. Someone on the ground in front of us must have swung the propeller to get the engine going. I remember feeling very excited, but not nervous. If I leaned back I could see Momma perched on the plane right behind me. Teo and I hung on to each other's crossed

arms and nudged each other in the ribs.

'We are in the soup together!' I echoed Delia.

'Put a cork in it!' he echoed Momma.

We laughed like cackling chickens. It doesn't take much when you're five.

And then the plane started to move and soon it was bumping over the grass and then, without me or Teo even realising what was going on, we were flying. We were so little we couldn't see out of the cockpit. All we could see was Momma's arms in the straps over our heads and the upper wing like a big sail and the blue sky all around us, and all we could hear was the engine and the wind singing in the wires. And Delia was flying.

That is my earliest memory.

Now I am done writing for Miss Shore, but it's making me think about Delia, and I want to write about her some more, so I am putting it in another of Miss Shore's blue theme books which I pilfered from the 'school cupboard' in the Sinclairs' dining room. It is longer than seven years since Delia died, which is nearly half my lifetime ago, and I worry that I'm starting to forget her. It would be a terrible thing to forget Delia, or how she and Momma made that promise to each other.

It was a little bit later. I don't know where we were. I *know* it must have been somewhere in the south because we were in some stranger's kitchen. We always stayed in people's houses south of the Mason-Dixon, instead of in hotels or boarding houses, because it was too hard for Momma and Delia to get rooms together.

It was a big kitchen in the airfield owner's house. There was an old-fashioned icebox *and* an electric refrigerator on

white metal legs, and a brand-new gas range that matched the refrigerator, all shiny white enamel with nickel trim. Delia had flown the plane from wherever we'd just left and Momma had brought me and Teo with her on the train. Momma was making us scrambled eggs when Delia came in.

Delia was still wearing her leather coat and trousers. But she'd taken off her flying helmet and replaced it with a modish grey cloche hat that fitted tight over her sleek marcelled hair – she was always so much more stylish than Momma. Delia carried her helmet and goggles in a pink-and-gold striped cardboard hatbox in one hand and she had her pigskin flight bag over her shoulder. She was also carrying the big paisley carpet bag she packed her things in when we were travelling. She dumped everything down on the kitchen floor and swooped over to me and Teo for a hug and a kiss. Then she looked up at Momma and said sadly, 'McKinley won't let us do the show for a mixed audience. Whites only.'

Momma banged her fork so hard against the iron fry pan that me and Teo both jumped. We must have been seven by then. Old enough to understand what was going on, for sure.

Momma's wispy gold bangs were sticking to her forehead. She stuck out her lower lip and blew them out. Then she frowned so that her grey eyes went narrow and

you could see that little dent between her eyebrows. But she wasn't mad at us or at Delia.

'We're staying in his house,' Momma said. 'He'll let us all sleep under the same roof, in the same bed, and help ourselves to the food in his icebox to feed our kids, but he won't let coloured folks and white folks watch our air show together?' She rammed the fork back into the eggs and stirred them messily, and a big piece of egg flew out and sizzled into black charcoal beneath the range's brand-new gas burners. 'Well, I'll talk to him.'

'Just 'cause you're the White Raven is not going to make him change his mind.'

Delia wasn't being sarcastic or mean. She just sounded sad. She'd talked to the airfield owner already and she knew he wasn't going to budge.

Momma stabbed at our eggs like she was going to kill them.

'Now, Rhoda!' Delia gently took the fork and fry pan out of Momma's hands. She was still wearing her pretty hat and her flying coat and she squeezed Momma around the waist. Then she started to stir the eggs herself.

Momma stomped over to the kitchen window and stared out with her arms folded over her chest. If ever a human being could look like a covered pot about to boil over, she did.

'It's *not fair,* Delia,' Momma said. 'It's not fair and it's not right. Bessie Coleman wouldn't ever fly if she couldn't have a mixed crowd watching. She'd have refused and we should too.'

'We don't have Bessie's draw,' Delia said, 'or her backing. Maybe some day we'll get a newspaperman sponsoring us like she did, but that has not happened yet, and her falling out of a plane and killing herself didn't do us any favours. We just don't pull the crowds like she could and that means we don't make the money. And we have more mouths to feed.'

Momma stood simmering.

'We have got to do it, Rhoda. We have got to go ahead and play to whatever crowd we get.'

'I won't.'

'Well, then, I'll do the show myself,' Delia said.

Momma turned around to glare at her. 'You dirty double-crosser.'

Delia took the iron skillet off the stove and started to pile forkfuls of egg into two saucers that Momma had put out for us.

'I never double-crossed anybody,' Delia said calmly. 'I'm just feeding the kids.'

Momma let out one enormous, choking sob, just one, and swiped the back of her hand angrily across her eyes.

'It's not right, Delia. They don't do this in Pennsylvania or New York and when they tried it in New Jersey we didn't cave in like this. We never caved in like this before.'

''Cause we haven't had to yet.' Delia took hold of Momma's shoulders and made her sit down with us at the table. 'Listen, honey, I want to tell you my wild idea.'

Then she knelt between me and Teo for a few seconds, with one hand on each of our shoulders now. 'I want to tell you *all* my wild idea.'

Delia got up and sat down across from Momma and held out her hands over the table. Momma took them. Teo and I sat watching with our scrambled eggs getting cold in front of us. We knew that wall they were up against. Doing air shows south of the Mason-Dixon was like being in another country; crossing that invisible border between Pennsylvania and Maryland took you into another world. You had to follow a different set of rules. Delia probably hated them worse than Momma did. But she was better at playing along.

'You thinking of going back to France?' Momma asked. Her voice was low and husky. 'I'd go back there in a heartbeat. Remember how no one cared when we sat together at the café in La Chênaie, drinking Chartreuse and rocking our babies in the same baby carriage? A coloured girl and a white girl wing walking and flying aerobatics as

a team would pull *sensational* crowds in France.' Momma paused. 'How do you say *Black Dove and White Raven* in French? *La Colombe Noire – Le Corbeau Blanc*.'

'*Blanche*,' Delia corrected. 'You're a girl.'

'No. *Raven* is masculine,' Momma said.

'But you're not,' Delia laughed.

She suddenly realised she was still wearing her hat, and let go of Momma's hands for a moment to take it off and lay it on the table. Teo shot me a warning look and I carefully moved my plate closer to me so I wouldn't risk getting grease on the soft charcoal-grey material. But Delia wouldn't have noticed. She had something more important on her mind. She pulled Momma's hands back across the table and said quietly, 'I don't want us to go back to France. I want to go to Ethiopia.'

This is the moment I remember – not my earliest memory, but the *best*. Delia and Momma gripping each other's hands across some stranger's enamel kitchen table, staring hard into each other's eyes. Their hands were clasped in front of us, Momma's strong and pale, Delia's slender and brown. Momma's gold wedding ring and Delia's rose-petal-red painted nails. *I want to go to Ethiopia*.

The Europeans all still use its old name, Abyssinia. But the Americans who are enchanted by it call it by its own name, in its own language: Ethiopia.

'That's crazy,' Momma said, giving Delia's hands a shake and a squeeze like she was trying to wake her up.

'*It is not crazy.*' Delia was forceful, but she still didn't sound like she was being stubborn or mad – her voice was just warm and determined. She really meant it. 'I told you it was a wild idea, but it's not a crazy one.

'I have been thinking and thinking,' Delia went on. 'Maybe I wouldn't have ever heard of Ethiopia if I didn't go to France and meet Gedeyon and have Teo, but I bet I'd still have the notion to go to Africa. You and me both used to listen to that Marcus Garvey talking about Liberia being the new Black African homeland. I don't have reason to go to Liberia, but my son is half Ethiopian. I want him to feel at home there.'

'But that's like running away,' Momma objected. 'And Ethiopia isn't *my* homeland.'

'No, your homeland is that Alice-in-Wonderland horse farm in Pennsylvania where nobody fights wars and nobody gets lynched, and you go every Sunday to those starchy Friends' meetings where nobody ever sings or says anything, and you left when you were eighteen because it was so boring! You know that isn't the real world – that's not living in the U S of A!'

'What about the NAACP trying to change things lawfully for Negroes in the USA?'

Delia hesitated. And finally she said, 'They're changing too darn slow. They help people in court; they don't do a thing on the street. Being a mother is making me selfish. I don't want my boy to have to wait. Ethiopia is a country of African people, run by Africans and it always has been. It's not like Liberia, set up by the USA as a colony for freed slaves. Ethiopia is the only country in Africa never to be colonised!'

Delia knew what she was talking about. She went on, 'They've got their own culture and their own language. Rhoda, you still look at those wonderful books of photographs Gedeyon gave me in France. You were looking at them before we left Pennsylvania. You know you want to see it for yourself. Imagine if you could take pictures like that yourself!'

'You temptress,' Momma teased.

Teo and I loved those pictures too. Even before we could read the books, we made up stories around the pictures. Churches a thousand years old, carved in rock. Crazy-looking hornbills so top-heavy that their beaks should make their heads fall over. Black-and-white monkeys with beautiful long tails, men playing strange stringed instruments and women in embroidered robes weaving patterned baskets. Crowned priests carrying fringed umbrellas and horsehair fly swatters.

'And now Ethiopia is respected enough to be a member of the League of Nations,' Delia said. 'They just sent a diplomat to the President of the USA! It's turning into a modern nation so let's be the first to go!'

Momma sighed again, shaking her head. 'It's a dream, Delia! Ethiopia is *poor*. People there don't have money to pay to watch a pair of girls wing walking.'

Delia was ready for this.

'We could make a business for ourselves, finding game for white hunters. Or taking exotic aerial pictures for magazines. You nursed people before – I bet they need nurses. We could fly to out-of-the-way places and help out. I don't know, but *something*! So our kids will grow up in a place where no one will ever say to them, ''You can't ride with each other because one of you is coloured. You have to eat in different rooms because of the colour of your skin.'''

That was something Teo and I hated. We all hated it.

'I don't want my boy to have to *fight* for his right to get a drink of water or eat in a restaurant,' Delia said. 'I want to live in a place where people like him can do what they like, and that is ordinary.'

Staring her straight in the eye, Momma gave Delia the single, curt nod that she used to tell her she was ready for aerobatics. It meant she was ready. Ready to go. She just hadn't said it out loud yet.

'Teo's dad is dead,' Delia said. 'But even before Teo was born I had to work things out for my own self and I'm not counting on any man to help me now. You and me are in the same boat there. We need to do this ourselves. And we can. Cut back on little things – nail varnish, new clothes –'

'That's *you*,' Momma said. 'I don't spend on myself.'

'All those dang magazines,' Delia reminded her. 'Film for your camera.'

Momma laughed. She tightened her hold on Delia's hands.

'So this is what we do,' Delia said decisively. 'We do these dumb, white-only shows. You practise keeping up that poker face you're so terrible at, and we play to whatever crowd they give us and we don't complain, and we don't kick up a fuss about who they let in. It's selfish, I know it. But it won't take too long. Two years, maybe? We'll make the money, then we'll go!'

'You *are* a little crazy, Delia,' Momma said fondly.

'You were with me from the start and you are with me now!' Delia gave Momma's hands a shake. 'Think of the sky, Rhoda! Think of the sky in Ethiopia! What'll it be like to fly in the African sky?'

They clung to each other across the table between me and Teo.

'Rhoda? Say you'll do it with me.' She squeezed

Momma's hands three times: I saw her do it. *Are you scared?*

'Didn't I just say so? Didn't I give you the go-ahead?' Momma nodded one more time. Her voice was still husky and passionate. She squeezed Delia's hands back. I counted to four. *I am not scared.*

Momma vowed to Delia, 'We'll do it. In two years' time. We'll do it.'

In that house we had one big iron bed with creaking springs for all of us to sleep in and that was our favourite kind of place to stay. When we all had to share one big bed, me and Teo got squeezed in between Momma and Delia, and there is no place I ever felt safer or warmer or happier. And that night I remember how Momma and Delia kept whispering and planning back and forth over the top of us:

'– If we do a show in Washington, we can see if there's an Ethiopian embassy or at least a legation –'

'– That crazy Horatio Augustus knows all kinds of people. *And* he owes us money.'

'– My folks can take the kids for a spell. For the whole summer, so we can do shows back to back –'

'Aw, the kids can come along with us while we do that. They're big enough to behave. They're nearly big enough to learn to fly!'

'Now *that* would be an act,' said Momma, and they both laughed.

They made a plan. They kept track of their funds in a special notebook and they did everything they could to save for our new life in Ethiopia. Delia stopped painting her nails and Momma stopped buying magazines. Teo and I would page through the old ones while we waited on people's porches or in the shady corner of some aircraft hangar. The pictures we looked at in magazines were always the same after that night to remember – except every now and then when Momma sold a picture she'd taken herself, and *Harper's* or *Popular Science* would send her a copy of the issue that had her photograph printed in it. She didn't stop buying film.

They still hadn't saved what they needed when the empty, Delia-shaped hole got blasted in our world.

Here's what we know about the crash:

It was a bird strike. That's when a bird hits the plane in mid-air. Delia was flying, in the front cockpit, and Momma wasn't tied in – she'd just climbed down into the back seat after a wing-walking show. They were only twenty feet above the ground and the propeller shattered and a piece hit Delia in the head. The Jenny stalled itself hard into the ground and flipped over. Momma, in the rear cockpit

which isn't under a wing, was thrown clear; they think Delia was killed instantly, when the propeller first hit her. But in any case, she didn't survive the crash.

It happened in Illinois in the summer of 1927. I was eight and Teo was seven. The bird was a prairie falcon.

Momma was in the hospital for a week, stone-cold unconscious for the first two days. The cook from the diner next to the airfield took care of me and Teo until Grandma and Grandfather came out to get us. Then we waited for Momma to wake up.

I know this is hard to believe, but me and Teo didn't know anything was wrong until the night they let Momma out of the hospital. We were just so used to having other people keep an eye on us from time to time; so used to getting left with a pile of Lincoln Logs on some stranger's kitchen linoleum or playing with a cardboard box full of kittens on an unfamiliar front porch for an afternoon. We hadn't been at the airfield when the Bird Strike happened, so we didn't see it, and nobody told us about it. When Grandma and Grandfather got there they thought we already knew, so they didn't tell us anything either.

Even Momma herself still didn't know what had happened when she came to stay in the hotel where we were with Grandma and Grandfather. She was nearly as much in the dark as us because she'd been out cold for so

long. Also Grandma and Grandfather were scared to talk about it to any of us.

But Momma figured it out. And so did we, the first night we had her back. I think we figured it out because for the first time ever, *ever*, it was just Momma and me and Teo all together in a strange bed. We weren't sandwiched safely between anybody. We were all by ourselves on each side of Momma, a strange pale ghost of herself, painted ear to ear across her face with a bruise like a purple raccoon mask, lying on her stomach and shrieking into the pillow as if we weren't even there.

'What am I going to do?' she choked wildly. '*What am I going to do?*'

That's how we knew Delia wasn't coming back.

When I woke up in the middle of the night, Teo and I both had our arms tight around Momma. She was sound asleep, but every now and then she'd make a little gasping sob like she was still crying in her dreams. We knew we had to take care of her because Delia couldn't do it any more.

After the Bird Strike, we all went back to Grandma and Grandfather's farm in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. And Momma stayed in her old bedroom for six whole months.

Teo and I are a double act, like Delia said. We have each other. So the Delia-sized hole in our lives is bigger for

Momma than it is for us. The only thing that has ever come close to filling that hole is the African sky, and that is why we live here now.