

FLIGHT
A Story



Rick Nau
Dancing Pen Books

Flight



by Rick Nau

At first Amy liked it for the keys. There were white keys and black keys, though she didn't know their names. When you pressed them they made noise, thundering noises on the one side, noises like birds on the other.

It was the thunder she was afraid of most, not the thunder of the keys, but the kind that came from the clouds. Her father had disappeared into the clouds, had soared into them and never come back.

“He’s protecting us,” she told her mother. “One day I’ll fly into the clouds and visit him.”

Her mother hid her grief behind a smile.

“You will,” she said, hugging her daughter.
“I’m certain of it.”

The piano was deep below the house, in a basement with the furnace. Amy had found it one day during her explorations.

“Whose is this?” she asked her mother.

“Your father’s,” she answered.

“Why’s it down here?”

“He moved it here when you were born. He didn’t want to disturb you when he was playing it.”

“I want to play it,” she said.

“Of course,” said her mother.

It was a dark and dreary basement, with rough concrete walls and rusty pipes overhead and mice jittering about in the darkness. But for Amy it was paradise. Before school she would go there and practice to her heart’s content,

banging away on the keys until a glorious melody arose. Of course, no one could hear it, which was good, for the glorious sound of a piano is not so glorious for those trying to sleep at five o'clock in the morning.

Sunday was a special day. The pianist at her church gave her lessons, showing her how to turn the banging into beautiful music. They played Bach and Beethoven and Brahms and as the day wore on, when the pastor was away, a bit of Swing.

A year went by. Then two.

“You’re very good,” the church pianist said. “I’ve never known someone who learned so fast before. You make the notes fly, like birds.”

Every day Amy hit the keys—on holidays and school days, on birthdays and summer days, on winter nights and when all her friends were playing in the park. She’d play and play and play until her mother would appear.

“It’s so beautiful,” she would say. “Wouldn’t you like to bring the piano upstairs?”

“I like it here just fine,” Amy said.

One afternoon the sirens wailed. They were mounted atop tall poles and on rooftops and on every high place in the city. They wailed and wailed until the people poured from the buildings and quickly disappeared beneath the ground.

“This way,” said Amy’s mother, “directing some of them to the basement. Don’t run. Watch your step. The stairs are steep. Hold on to your child. Don’t worry. Don’t worry. You’ll be safe here.”

Amy sat among the throng, enclosed in her mother’s arms. Everywhere were children, some quiet, some crying, all of them, like Amy, huddled close to their mothers.

“We thought they’d never come this far,” said one of the mothers.

“Yes,” said another. “We’re beyond range.”

“That so?” said a third.

Quickly the thunder was upon them. It shook the ground violently, filling everyone with fear. It shook and shook and would not stop. The babies cried, the children screamed and the hearts of the mothers melted within them.

“Father will be here soon,” Amy shouted into her mother’s ear. “He’ll chase them all away.”

She waited, but the thunder remained. Beneath the piano people cringed and prayed.

“Don’t worry,” she shouted through the din. “My father’s coming. Don’t be afraid.”

She ran to the piano, set her small fingers upon the keys and began to play. She played and played, striking the keys with such power and fury that the music rose above the din of the falling bombs. Like the roar of her father’s Spitfire, the music shook the air, filling it with a glorious resonance. She played and played, lifting everyone into the clouds, beyond the din, beyond the fury, into the heavens, where all became quiet as the night.

“Have they gone?” someone asked.

“Wait. Listen.”

Minutes passed . . . like an eternity. No one spoke. Then it came, building slowly, the sirens belting out a different tune.

“The all clear,” someone said.

Amy lifted her hands from the keys. She closed her eyes and began to cry.

“I miss him so much,” she said.

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Inspired by the story of Sir David Willcocks, who played the piano for his troops when they were under heavy shell fire at the Battle of Normandy.

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Air Raid Sirens

About The Author



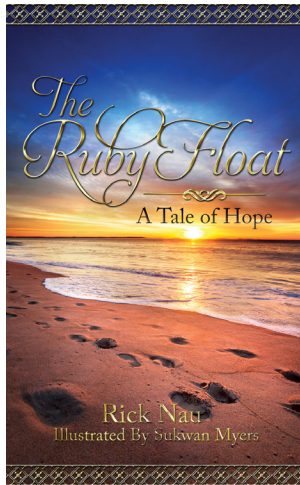
Rick lives in Southern California with his wonderful wife, Bettina. He often helps her tend the hummingbird garden—which is becoming quite jungly—and sometimes needs to defend her from certain exotic creatures that lurk in the shade of the honeysuckle bushes. When he's not out and about in wilds of the backyard, you're likely to find him reading and writing, especially in winter, when the fire's blazing in the hearth and the rain's coming down in sheets outside the window.

His first publication, *Daph*, a story set during the polio epidemics of the 1950s, was awarded Best Short Story Of The Year by *Writer's*

Digest. He has written two novels—*The Ruby Float* and *Theodora's Children*—part of a series called *Tales Of Hope*. The third in the series, *Desert Gold*, is now in work.

You can connect with Rick at Dancing Pen Books, Twitter, Facebook, and Google+.

The Ruby Float



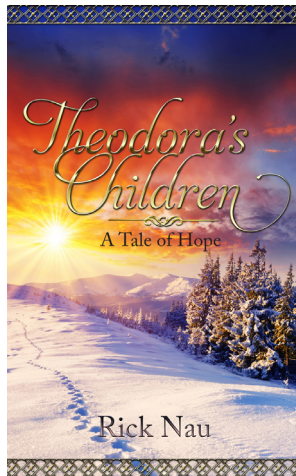
We've all been there—our hearts broken, our lives shattered, our hopes and dreams dashed. Many things can do it—a serious illness, the death of a loved one, a disappointment in life, a divorce, the loss of a job, a rejection. When we're young the loss is amplified. In a small world everything looks bigger, more immediate, more frightening.

In *The Ruby Float* two children are heartbroken when they discover their grandmother is dying. Desperately wanting to help, they search for a mysterious person who they believe can save her. With only a few clues to

guide them, they embark on a perilous journey, sailing a small, homebuilt raft across a broad expanse of ocean. What they discover changes not only their hearts, but the heart of an entire nation.

If you're eight or eighty, you'll thoroughly enjoy *The Ruby Float*. Parents will take special delight in reading it aloud to their children, who'll love the many beautiful illustrations by artist Sukwan Myers.

Theodora's Children



Gretchen is a young girl who suffers from a dreadful loneliness. Though she is extremely rich, having virtually everything under the sun that any boy or girl could ever want, she has no friends—not one, not a single one.

Then, one day, during a terrible disaster, someone mysterious enters her life, someone who will cause it to change forever.

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