



March 4, 2003
Period Two

-Welcome to Class-

The small bell rings mightily as I tap it quickly with my finger. My sister walks into the room with her bright pink and green backpack from last year. I promptly tell her to settle down in her assigned seat as I begin the class. I introduce myself and write my name for that day in elaborate cursive. I would choose unique, mature names: Miss Manderly.

Within ten minutes, the white board is filled with colorful works used for spelling and grammar. I ask the class a question, giving everyone enough time to consider the answer; yet, in the end, my sister answers all the questions.

I ring the bell for recess and silently watch my sister leave the room. I grab a blue marker and open it as the fumes consume the room. I write the next subject on the board, math. I stare down at my hands and they have turned a mixture of black, green, and blue; colors that stay for days.

Friends, schools, responsibilities, and a new room later, Mom yells for me to do my cleaning jobs again. I make my bed and vacuum the house when I enter a room with a chipped whiteboard with charcoal colored stains. I turn to the old rusty bell and tap it once. I take an old pink rag and wipe the board clean because class is about to start.

50/50

PATRICIA CRONIN

AMBUSH

The broomsticks are horses, the straw their blond manes. My sister and I ride like rodeo stars, snapping lengths of clothesline, rounding up the tomato plants. We spy horse thieves hiding behind the dogwood and gun them down before breakfast. Roy Rogers and Gene Autry, that's who we are. No way, not even on a dare, would either of us be Dale "Poofy Hair" Evans. Real cowboys don't dress in those fringy skirts and I wouldn't embarrass even a broom by calling it Buttercup.

It's Saturday afternoon and my mom has finished the laundry, so I steal two warm Osh Kosh bandannas from my father's top drawer.

We wear matching denim jackets and the red cowboy boots my parents bought us for Christmas. Once, I made spurs out of bottle caps then walked to school. The teacher called my mother.

Husbands and miles and lovers and one white picket fence later, I sweep my kitchen floor, clearing away dropped Cheerios and toast corners. My own backyard has a dogwood and today I think I best strap on my six guns because horse thieves are clever, they'll strike soon as your back is turned.