



The Boys Who Could Fly

Howard M. Tillison

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The Boys Who Could Fly is a coming of age story set in Georgia in 1967. Eleven year-old Andy Talbot's mother moves the family back to her home town following the death of Andy's father in Vietnam.

Andy is one of only two kids in the still-segregated Woodstock Elementary School who don't have a father living at home. As a new boy entering the last year of elementary school, and having been raised in California where his father was stationed in the Navy, Andy is branded "a Yankee" by the class bully and persecuted as a symbol of the Civil Rights Movement which was changing life in the old South in the late 1960s.

Andy's mother begins a romance with another man, and after a while announces her intention to marry him. Along with the new man in their lives, Andy is also confronted by his step-sister to be, Melody, who is a couple of years older and far more worldly and street wise when she arrives in Georgia from California to live with her father.

Following a year of conflict in elementary school, Andy and his new best friend, Milton, the other fatherless boy, face the prospect of spending the summer in the Georgia heat without much to do. Clinging to the memory of his father, a Navy jet pilot, Andy enlists Milton to help build a full-size glider/soapbox car contraption which they ride down a hill on an abandoned road, and discover that "The Spirit of Woodstock" really can fly -- about one foot off the ground for a few yards.

The story winds multiple themes around these characters, culminating in the class bully ending up stuck high in a tree after hijacking "The Spirit of Woodstock."

The Boys Who Could Fly contains coarse language, sexual themes and bathroom humor appropriate to kids of their age, (whether parents like to admit it or not). There is no overt sexual content or gratuitous violence. Every event in the book has either happened to someone in real life, or is physically plausible. There are racial themes reflective of the time, but no explicit use of vulgar terms. Sophisticated readers will understand what's going on, while younger readers (older teens) will breeze over without really understanding the message. That's okay. That's what coming of age is all about.

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