

# Prologue

## PROLOGUE



BELINDA SAT ON THE OLD TREE STUMP WHERE SHE ALWAYS SAT, gazing at the white stone wall. There was no gate, no opening of any kind.

A very long time ago a boy tried propping a ladder against the wall so he could climb to the top but every time he did, something pushed it away. So the boy climbed a tree too far from the wall to jump over it but close enough to see inside. He said there was nothing but weeds and a few trees.

No one knew where the wall came from or how long it had been there. It just was. Every year the tax money arrived at the bank so no one could tear down the wall or build anything on the land.

Belinda rested her chin on a small fist, blue eyes scanning the wall. It just didn't make sense her nine-year-old mind decided. Why would anyone want a wall without an entrance or a gate or something? It wasn't protecting anything. It wasn't hiding anything. What else was a wall for?



She reflected on the fact that though the wall was white, it never got dirty. The wall always looked freshly painted, but no one ever washed it or painted it.

Belinda often spoke to the wall, telling it her problems and her dreams, things she never told anyone else. It listened as no one else did and never got angry or laughed at her. The wall had become her friend. She sat there quietly, staring at the wall. She'd never touched it. Why? There was no reason to be afraid of it. She clasped the small gold monkey charm that hung around her neck. The charm she always clutched to bolster her confidence. The charm her mother gave her the day she dropped Belinda and her younger brother Billy at Grandma's. "Remember I love you, Honey," her mother said before leaving. That was almost two years ago.

Rolling the small charm in her fingers, Belinda stood up and walked over to the wall. She extended her right hand toward it, touched it but did not feel any texture. Instead her hand seemed to be pressing against a wall of air. Placing her head upon that same wall of air, she whispered, "Remember I love you, Wall."

Suddenly the wall disappeared. What happened? She spun around. The wall was behind her. She spun around again. She was inside!