

Rick Nau

Dancing Pen Books



by Rick Nau

Andrew was not having a good day. For starters—and enders—everyone had forgotten his birthday. Not that this had never happened before. He had no brothers or sisters, so having them remember was out of the picture. He had a mother and a father, though they weren't his real mother and father. They could have been in the picture, but they didn't care about Andrew. For them Andrew was a check in the mail (we won't go into details about where that check came from), just as he'd been for all the other parents he'd had in the past.

That morning Andrew got up to a quiet house.

His father was at work and his mother was in bed (which was usually the case). The kitchen table was empty, save for a shaker of salt and a sugar bowl. Andrew wanted to make himself some cinnamon toast for breakfast, but there was no cinnamon, so he just made toast with butter and sugar. Then he hustled off to school, where he was not looking forward to a good day.

It was a new school—this was his seventh—and he knew no one, except for a girl who always wore striped dresses. Most of the kids had gone there since the dawn of time and knew everything about each other backwards and forwards.

"What was your name again?" they would ask.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Andrew."

<sup>&</sup>quot;The way you talk, it's funny. Where you from?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Around," he said.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Around where?"

"Around here. Not far."

He wasn't a bad student. The teachers didn't notice, however, as he was too new. He was always new, of course, because he was always changing schools.

"You," said his science teacher. "Yes, you. Please stand up and introduce yourself to the class."

Andrew hated this part of school. He'd introduced himself so many times. "How nice it would be if they would introduce themselves to me," he thought.

"Andrew," he said.

"Do you have a last name, Andrew?" she said.

Just then something came flying through the open window and struck him in the ear.

"Ouch," he yelled, grabbing the side of his head.

Everyone laughed—except for the teacher, who went to the window and looked out. No

one was there.

"That's odd," she thought.

Andrew did not think it odd. He'd been struck with flying objects many times before. This one, a tiny rock, was now in his left pocket, into which it had fallen after whacking his ear.

During recess Andrew went out and looked around. It was your usual playground, with swing sets, tetherball poles, lots of asphalt with grass growing out of the cracks, and a solitary sandbox.

It was the sandbox that caught Andrew's attention. There was a small depression in the center of it. He bent down and examined it. At the edge of the depression were small pieces of what seemed to be melted glass.

"Hey, Andrew, playing in the sandbox," he heard. "How old did you say you were?"

It was his classmates. They were being cruel, of course.

"Old enough," he said.

"That night he went to bed with a stomach not stuffed with cake and ice cream, with eyes not blinded from the light of burning candles, with ears not deafened by birthday horns and the singing of the "Happy Birthday" song.

"It would have been nice if someone remembered," he said, as he kneeled at the side of his bed. "Oh, well. Maybe next year."

Just then a bit of light filled his room. He looked back, thinking his parents had opened the door. But no, the light was coming from his shirt, which he'd neatly draped over a chair.

"What's this?" he said, scrunching up his face in amazement.

The light grew brighter, rose out of the pocket of his shirt, and hovered over the top of his head. It was the rock which had whacked him in the ear.

Andrew reached for it, but it moved sideways, flew through the open window and streamed

upward to the stars, leaving behind a trail of sparks. Andrew stared heavenward in amazement.

Meanwhile, five thousand miles away, at an observatory in the Canary Islands, an astronomer was banging on the eyepiece of a giant telescope.

"Confounded beast," he yelled. "Hey, Bernardo, telescope's on the fritz. I'm seeing an extra star in the middle of the Hyades. Come, take a look."

Bernardo pressed his eye against the lens. "I'll be," he said. "I'm seeing the same thing. The V looks like an A. Better file a repair report."

Perhaps it was because Andrew let out such a gasp that his parents suddenly came to his room.

"What's going on here?" they asked, seeing him staring out the window.

"Nothing," he said. "I'm just looking at something."

"Well get yourself in bed," they said. "You've got school tomorrow."

His parents left, closing the door behind them.

"Whatever's got into that kid?" they asked.

Andrew pulled up the covers and closed his eyes.

"Thank you," he whispered.

### **About The Author**



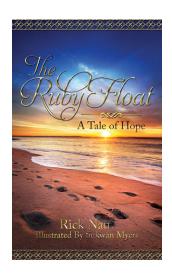
Rick lives in Southern California with his wonderful wife, Bettina. He often helps her tend the hummingbird garden—which is becoming quite jungly—and sometimes needs to defend her from certain exotic creatures that lurk in the shade of the honeysuckle bushes. When he's not out and about in wilds of the 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.

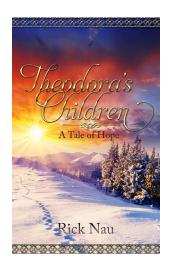
If you're eight or eighty, you'll thoroughly enjoy The Ruby Float. Parents will take special delight in reading it aloud to their children, who'll love the many beautiful illustrations by artist Sukwan Myers.

# Now Playing The Ruby Float AudioBook



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#### 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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#### The Rock Star

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