

admired. I lit a match and held it close to Tinkerbell's face to show her how it felt. She looked even more beautiful in the flame's glow. When that match went out, I lit another one, and this time I held it really close to Tinkerbell's face. Suddenly, her eyes grew wide, as if with fear; I realized, to my horror, that her face was starting to melt. I put out the match, but it was too late. Tinkerbell's once perfect little nose had completely disappeared, and her saucy red lips had been replaced with an ugly, lopsided smear. I tried to smooth her features back to the way they had been, but I made them even worse. Almost immediately, her face cooled and hardened again. I put bandages on it. I wished I could perform a skin graft on Tinkerbell, but that would have meant cutting her into pieces. Even though her face was melted, she was still my favorite toy.

Pg 16: talking about toy Tinkerbell

"Even though her face was melted, she was still my favourite toy."

Tinkerbell is a symbol of herself and is referred back to in other pages. How Tinkerbell is burned, so is she. And even though she is "damaged" she is still her favourite, which relates back to herself.

## DAD CAME HOME

and roused all of us from

"Time to pull up stake

We had fifteen minutes  
the car.

"Is everything okay, I

"Don't you worry," I  
take care of you?"

"Course you do," I said

"That's my girl!" Dad  
speed things up. He took  
the Dutch oven, some a  
and Mom's archery set  
Goose. He said we should  
vive. Mom hurried out to  
of the moon, looking for  
buried it.An hour passed before  
the car, shoved whatever  
on the backseat and then  
the dark, driving slowly  
we were, as Dad liked to  
that he couldn't understand  
needed and haul our ass

"Dad!" I said. "I forg

"Tinkerbell can make  
little girl. You are brave"I guess," I said. I had  
despite her melted face.  
and white cat who was  
my face. "Quiet, Quixote



g about toy Tinkerbell  
h her face was  
she was still my  
toy."  
I is a symbol of

pg 21: The Mosquitoes  
"when the mosquitoes would  
fly in so thick that the air  
would grow dark with them."

connection to the  
story when he referred  
to the mosquitos in  
a very similar way.  
Both ways described  
that there were a lot  
of mosquitos.

Then we'd circle around, looking for the front yard. My with Grandma Smith, Mom's mom, Phoenix. Grandma Smith was a West and cussing and horses. She was known broncs and had helped Grandpa run yon, Arizona, which was west of Bull-and Canyon. I thought Grandma Smith e and Dad would always get into some art with Mom mentioning how short would make a snide comment about ay something about selfish old crones w what to do with, and soon enough ounted to a full-fledged cussing contest. dma would scream. ag!" Dad would shout back. cking bastard!" bitch!" vocabulary, but Grandma Smith could home-court advantage. A time would and he'd tell us kids to get in the car. to let that worthless horse's ass take her g and say there was nothing she could Off we'd go, heading out into the desert nt in another little mining town. ed in those towns had been there for us—just passing through. They were ans or what Mom called loose women. ir faces wrinkled and brown from the ds were lean and hard, with calluses on ke friends with them, but not close e moving on sooner or later. ut not always. Mom and Dad did most reading books without pictures by the ht us math. He also taught us the things eful, like how to tap out Morse code and r of a polar bear because all the vitamin

A in it c shoot M n and fire his pistol, how to throw a knife by the blade so that it landed in the middle of a target with a satisfying thwack. By the time I was four, I was pretty good with Dad's pistol, a big black six-shot revolver, and could hit five out of six beer bottles at thirty paces. I'd hold the gun with both hands, sight down the barrel, and squeeze the trigger slowly and smoothly until, with a loud clap, the gun kicked and the bottle exploded. It was fun. Dad said my sharpshooting would come in handy if the feds ever surrounded us.

Mom had grown up in the desert. She loved the dry, crackling heat, the way the sky at sunset looked like a sheet of fire, and the overwhelming emptiness and severity of all that open land that had once been a huge ocean bed. Most people had trouble surviving in the desert, but Mom thrived there. She knew how to get by on next to nothing. She showed us which plants were edible and which were toxic. She was able to find water when no one else could, and she knew how little of it you really needed. She taught us that you could wash yourself up pretty clean with just a cup of water. She said it was good for you to drink unpurified water, even ditch water, as long as animals were drinking from it. Chlorinated city water was for namby-pambies, she said. Water from the wild helped build up your antibodies. She also thought toothpaste was for namby-pambies. At bedtime we'd shake a little baking soda into the palm of one hand, mix in a dash of hydrogen peroxide, then use our fingers to clean our teeth with the fizzing paste.

I loved the desert, too. When the sun was in the sky, the sand would be so hot that it would burn your feet if you were the kind of kid who wore shoes, but since we always went barefoot, our soles were as tough and thick as cowhide. We'd catch scorpions and snakes and horny toads. We'd search for gold, and when we couldn't find it, we'd collect other valuable rocks, like turquoise and garnets. There'd be a cool spell come sundown, when the mosquitoes would fly in so thick that the air would grow dark with them, then at nightfall, it turned so cold that we usually needed blankets.

There were fierce sandstorms. Sometimes they hit without warning, and other times you knew one was coming when you saw batches of dust devils swirling and dancing their way across the desert. Once the wind started whipping up the sand, you could only see a foot in front of your



by the time I unwrapped my Mounds bar, it had melted into a brown, gooey mess, so I decided to save it until night, when the desert cold would harden it up again.

By then we had passed through the small town beyond the Bar None Bar. Dad was driving and smoking with one hand and holding a brown bottle of beer with the other. Lori was in the front seat between him and Mom, and Brian, who was in back with me, was trying to trade me half of his 3 Musketeers for half of my Mounds. Just then we took a sharp turn over some railroad tracks, the door flew open, and I tumbled out of the car.

I rolled several yards along the embankment, and when I came to a stop, I was too shocked to cry, with my breath knocked out and grit and pebbles in my eyes and mouth. I lifted my head in time to watch the Green Caboose get smaller and smaller and then disappear around a bend.

Blood was running down my forehead and flowing out of my nose. My knees and elbows were scraped raw and covered with sand. I was still holding the Mounds bar, but I had smashed it during the fall, tearing the wrapper and squeezing out the white coconut filling, which was also covered with grit.

Once I got my breath back, I crawled along the railroad embankment to the road and sat down to wait for Mom and Dad to come back. My whole body felt sore. The sun was small and white and broiling-hot. A wind had come up, and it was roiling the dust along the roadside. I waited for what seemed like a long time before I decided it was possible Mom and Dad might not come back for me. They might not notice I was missing. They might decide that it wasn't worth the drive back to retrieve me; that, like Quixote the cat, I was a bother and a burden they could do without.

The little town behind me was quiet, and there were no other cars on the road. I started crying, but that only made me feel more sore. I got up and began to walk back toward the houses, and then I decided that if Mom and Dad did come for me, they wouldn't be able to find me, so I returned to the railroad tracks and sat down again.

I was scraping the dried blood off my legs when I looked up and saw the Green Caboose come back around the bend. It hurtled up the road toward me, getting bigger and bigger, until it screeched to a halt right in front of me. Dad got out of the car, knelt down, and tried to give me a hug.

Pg 1 Pg 30: Falling out of car  
"Even I rolled several yards along the embankment, and when I came to a stop, I was too shocked to cry." This created a strong emotional response in me because the imagery it created of this little girl sitting on the side of the road and her parents not coming back for her made me feel as if I was in the situation.

Pg 35: Th...  
"I + look  
freakish  
stuck in  
tor-ture

I pulled away from him. behind," I said.

"Aww, I'd never do that," I said. "I know that you'd fallen out, but he wouldn't understand a word he was saying."

Dad started pulling the piece of skin deep in my skin, so he reached for a pair of needle-nosed pliers. When he got to my forehead, he took out his thumb and forefinger from bleeding. It was dripping with blood, Dad said. "You busted your snout looking for me."

I started laughing really hard. I had never heard for a nose. After Dad said that, I told Brian and Lori and Mom that I was laughing as hard as me. Snort, snort, snort.



g 16: Talking about toy Tinkerbell  
Even though her name was  
me  
Ravi  
Tini

Pa  
Pg 25: Talking about the  
"Like build the glass castle  
... A great big the glass castle  
going to build a house he was  
desert."

- Is this castle made up by her child imagination?
- How does it relate to the title?
- Is it a symbol of her childhood?
- Does this story he tells make him a good or bad dad?

Lori, Brian, and I were about to go to sleep, Dad said. They were always about him. We'd be tucked in under blankets in the desert, the world dark except for his cigarette. When he took a long draw, it lit up and we'd see his face.

"But yourself, Dad!" we'd beg him.

"I want to hear another story about me," he'd say.

"We'd insist.

Dad would say. He'd pause and chuckle at some memory. "I did a foolhardy thing that your old man has done, and I've gained even for a crazy sonofabitch like Rex Walls." Dad would talk about how, when he was in the air force and his plane went out, he made an emergency landing in a cattle pasture and his crew. Or about the time he wrestled a pack of wolves and surrounded a lame mustang. Then there was the time he saved the lives of a family who would have drowned if the dam had burst. Or how he went AWOL in the air force to get some beer, and how he caught a lunatic who was planning to blow up the dam to show that occasionally, it paid to break the

storyteller. He always started out slow, with lots of "What happened next?" we'd ask, even if we'd already heard the story. Mom giggled or rolled her eyes when Dad told the story at her. If someone interrupted his storytelling, he'd beg him to continue and promise that no one

could do it harder, flew faster, and gambled smarter than Dad. Along the way, he rescued women and children who weren't as strong and clever. Dad taught us that he showed us how to straddle a wild dog and how to hit a man in the throat so you could kill him, but he assured us that as long as he was around, we could end ourselves, because, by God, anyone who so much as hurt any of Rex Walls's children was going to get their ass kicked at you could read Dad's shoe size on their ass

all the amazing things he had already done, he was telling us about the wondrous things he was going to do. Like build the Glass Castle. All of Dad's engineering skills and mathematical genius were coming together in one special project: a great big house he was going to build for us in the desert. It would have a glass ceiling and thick glass walls and even a glass staircase. The Glass Castle would have solar cells on the top that would catch the sun's rays and convert them into electricity for heating and cooling and running all the appliances. It would even have its own water-purification system. Dad had worked out the architecture and the floor plans and most of the mathematical calculations. He carried around the blueprints for the Glass Castle wherever we went, and sometimes he'd pull them out and let us work on the design for our rooms.

All we had to do was find gold, Dad said, and we were on the verge of that. Once he finished the Prospector and we struck it rich, he'd start work on our Glass Castle.