



## Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

**Donald Jordan**

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A bicycle newspaper route helps an anxious boy mature in the novel *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*.

A new bike would help Skeeter, but it won't solve all his problems. His father may lose his job, his mother spends all her time caring for his sick younger sister, and his sixteen-year-old brother has anger issues. Further, Skeeter believes that something terrifying lives in the decrepit garage down the street. Skeeter's everyday fears drive him to leave a note for the being in the garage on a dare; when he gets a response, he becomes determined to navigate the adult world, ready or not.

It's not only the run-down garage that makes Skeeter nervous. He is afraid of what his brother may do when his rich girlfriend inevitably dumps him, and he worries how his friends and the adults in his life perceive him. He draws a picture of a horse, requested by his crush, and inscribes it with a small "I love you," showing that in his experience of fear, he is learning to be brave.

Skeeter lives in a small Southern town. Neighbors whose private dramas infiltrate the lives of others in their community, and classmates who operate in a popularity hierarchy, round out its atmosphere. Skeeter's stern teacher writes proverbs on the chalkboard every day to drill wisdom into her students' minds; these innocuous aphorisms follow Skeeter whenever he goes, popping into his forebrain when pertinent events arise. But as Skeeter learns after he discovers what's really in the garage, morality cannot be wrapped up in a tidy package and delivered in the swift quip of a sentence.

*Fearfully and Wonderfully Made* is a wise coming-of-age story with Southern Gothic roots.

AIMEE JODOIN (September / October 2020)

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