

The Gift Untold

By Mary Ann Koontz

“Sorry guys, I have to go.” Nick tossed the football to his friend, David, and grabbed his backpack.

“You can’t leave now,” David protested. “I like it when we slaughter these guys, and we’re barely winning.”

Nick laughed and shook his head. David was his best friend, but he didn’t understand.

“See you later,” Nick said. He walked across the vacant lot where they often played football, kickball or baseball. He never let on, but his heart was seldom in the game. Just because he was big and strong for his age, everyone seemed to expect him to love sports.

Nick hopped on his bike and headed down the street. He glanced back to make sure no one was watching him, but the boys were already in the middle of another scrimmage. Rising off his bike seat, Nick pedaled hard and turned toward the park.

The park was quiet. Nick dropped his bike and ran to his favorite spot under the big willow near the pond. Duck scattered from the noise as Nick hurried to pull his supplies out of his backpack: paper, pencils and eraser – all purchased with his own money from an art supply store. They were his most prized possessions.

He cringed remembering his dad’s words when he bought them. “What does an athlete need with art supplies? You should be buying a new bat or glove instead.” After that, Nick began to sneak away from the ball games to do what he loved most – drawing.

Relaxing with his back against the tree, Nick started to sketch a footbridge that divided the pond nearly in two. Lily pads and trees began to take shape, while ducks and geese seemed to come to life on the paper. Nick was so intent on his work, that, without realizing it, he had drawn a boy skipping stones at the edge of the water.

“Wow! You’re really good.”

Nick jumped. He had been so busy putting the finishing touches on his drawing that he hadn’t seen the boy walk up next to him. It was Wei-Lun, the new boy in his class.

“Thanks. I hope you don’t mind me drawing you,” said Nick.

“Are you kidding?” replied Wei-Lun. “I think it’s great. Where did you learn to draw so well?”

Nick shrugged his shoulders. “Do you really like it? No one ever said that about one of my drawings before.”

“Sure,” Wei-Lun answered. “You could enter it in the art contest at school. There are two weeks before the deadline. That gives you plenty of time to draw and choose the one you like best.”

“I guess I never thought I was good enough to enter,” said Nick. “But maybe I will. Could you help me pick out the best drawing when I’ve finished them?”

“That might be a hard choice, but it sounds like fun,” said Wei-Lun.

“Let’s get started,” said Nick excitedly. “How about if I make this next drawing of you?”

“Then it would have to be a winner!” Wei-Lun smiled proudly.

Nick laughed and began to sketch the contour of his new friend’s face. Secretly, he had a feeling Wei-Lun could be right.