

# *Christmas Eve Blizzard*



By Andrea Vlahakis

Illustrated by Emanuel Schongut

# Christmas Eve Blizzard

Join Nicholas and his grandfather as they push aside the thoughts of decorating the Christmas tree to lovingly care for a cardinal trapped in a snow blizzard on Christmas Eve. Christmas morning finds Nicholas more concerned about the bird than opening his gifts. This tender story with a beautiful Christmas-morning miracle is guaranteed to touch your heart.

It's so much more than a picture book . . . this book is specifically designed to be both a fun-to-read story and a launch pad for discussions and learning. Whether read at home or in a classroom, we encourage adults to do the activities with the young children in their lives. Free online resources and support at [www.ArbordalePublishing.com](http://www.ArbordalePublishing.com) include:

- For Creative Minds as seen in the book (in English & Spanish):
  - ° Spanish/English Glossary
  - ° Cardinal (and Bird) Fun Facts
  - ° Making a Bird-Happy Backyard Habitat
  - ° Bird Feeder Crafts
  - ° What To Do If You Find An Injured or Orphaned Bird
  - ° Cardinal Numbers and Math Games
- Teaching Activities:
  - ° Reading Questions ° Mathematics
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  - ° Science ° Coloring Pages
- Interactive Quizzes: Reading Comprehension, For Creative Minds, and Math Word Problems
- English and Spanish Audiobooks
- Related Websites
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- Accelerated Reader and Reading Counts! Quizzes
- Lexile and Fountas & Pinnell Reading Levels

eBooks with Auto-Flip, Auto-Read, and selectable English and Spanish text and audio available for purchase online.

Thanks to Ann Shahid, Education Director, Audubon Center at Beidler Forest (SC) for reviewing the "For Creative Minds" section for accuracy.

**Andrea Vlahakis** is an author, poet, and writing instructor at the Institute of Children's Literature. Although she has a long list of magazine articles to her name, *Christmas Eve Blizzard* is her first picture book. A large portion of Andrea's work revolves around nature and birds. The inspiration for this book comes from her childhood home—when she was eight, her father hung a cardinal-red birdfeeder from their old apple tree and her love of bird watching was born. It also comes from her own bird rescue during a blizzard a few years ago, with the help of an equally snowbound wildlife rescue person on the other end of the phone. Andrea lives in Connecticut, surrounded by woods, streams, and lots of birds to watch.

**Emanuel (Manny) Schongut** is a prolific, multi-faceted freelance illustrator who works in children's books, book covers, textbook illustration, editorial art, posters, and advertising art—essentially he does it all! In addition to illustrating *Christmas Eve Blizzard* and *Turtles In My Sandbox*, he has illustrated for Masterpiece and Mystery Theater, Public Television, New York Magazine, and New York Times Sunday Magazine. In addition to his own artwork, Manny taught reportorial art and figure drawing at Pratt Institute in New York for several years. He now illustrates and teaches in the San Francisco Bay area.



Andrea Vlahakis

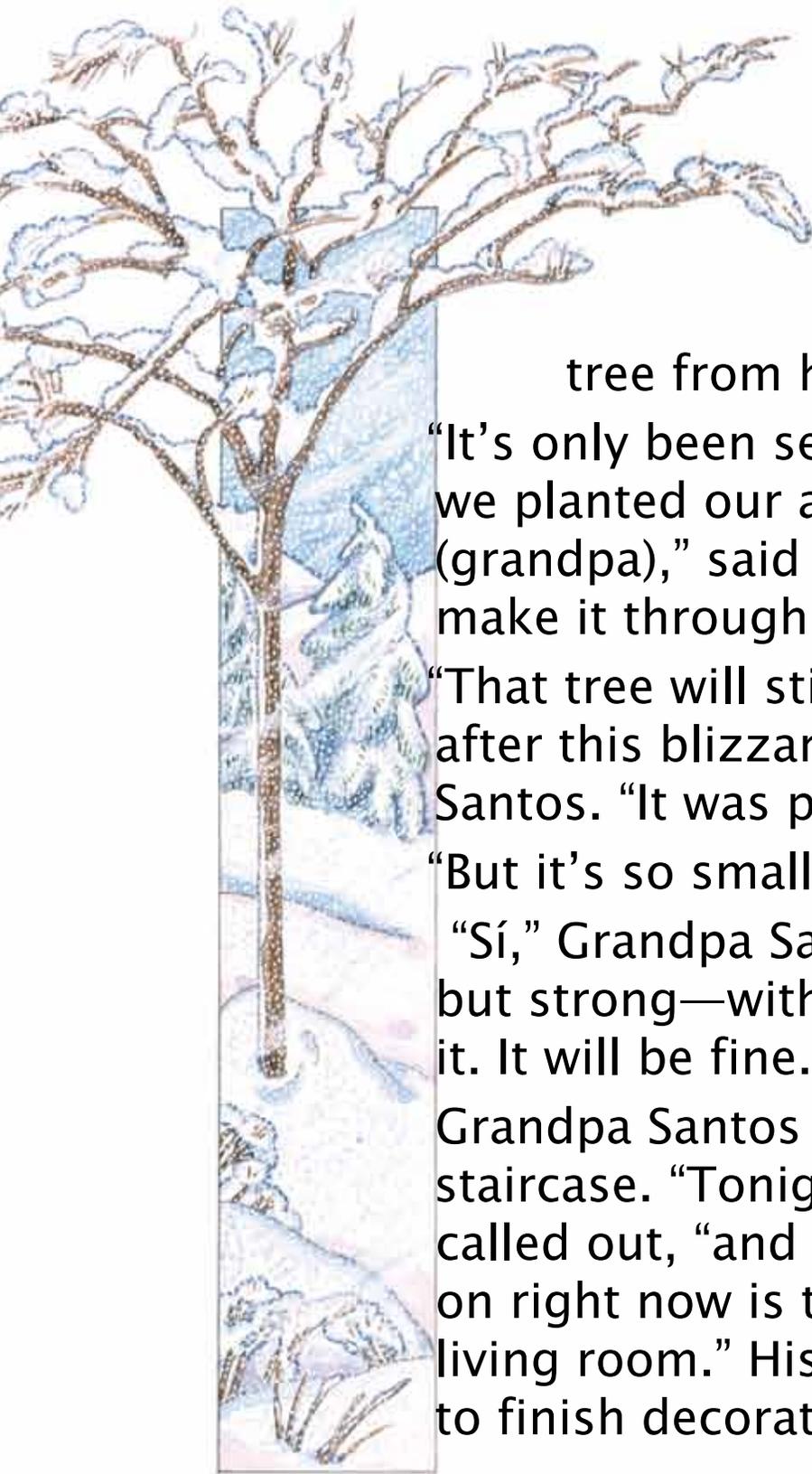


Emanuel Schongut

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Snow fell all through the night and into the morning. Yet, Nicholas could still see the young apple tree from his window.

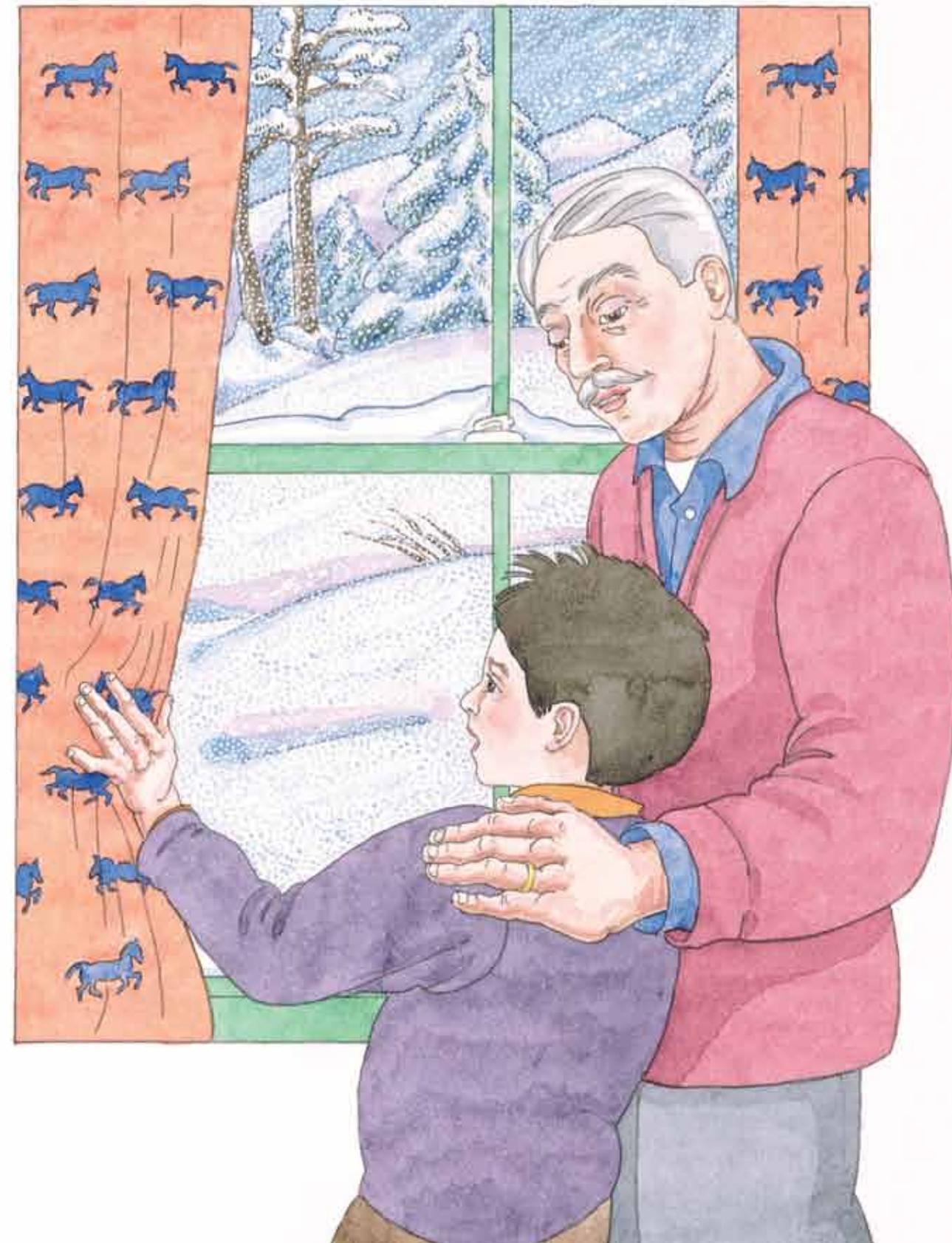
“It’s only been seven months since we planted our apple tree, Abuelo (grandpa),” said Nicholas. “How will it make it through the storm?”

“That tree will still be standing long after this blizzard,” said Grandpa Santos. “It was planted well.”

“But it’s so small,” said Nicholas.

“Sí,” Grandpa Santos agreed. “It’s small but strong—with good roots to steady it. It will be fine.”

Grandpa Santos headed for the hall staircase. “Tonight’s Christmas Eve,” he called out, “and the tree to concentrate on right now is the one down in the living room.” His voice trailed, “We need to finish decorating it, Nicky.”





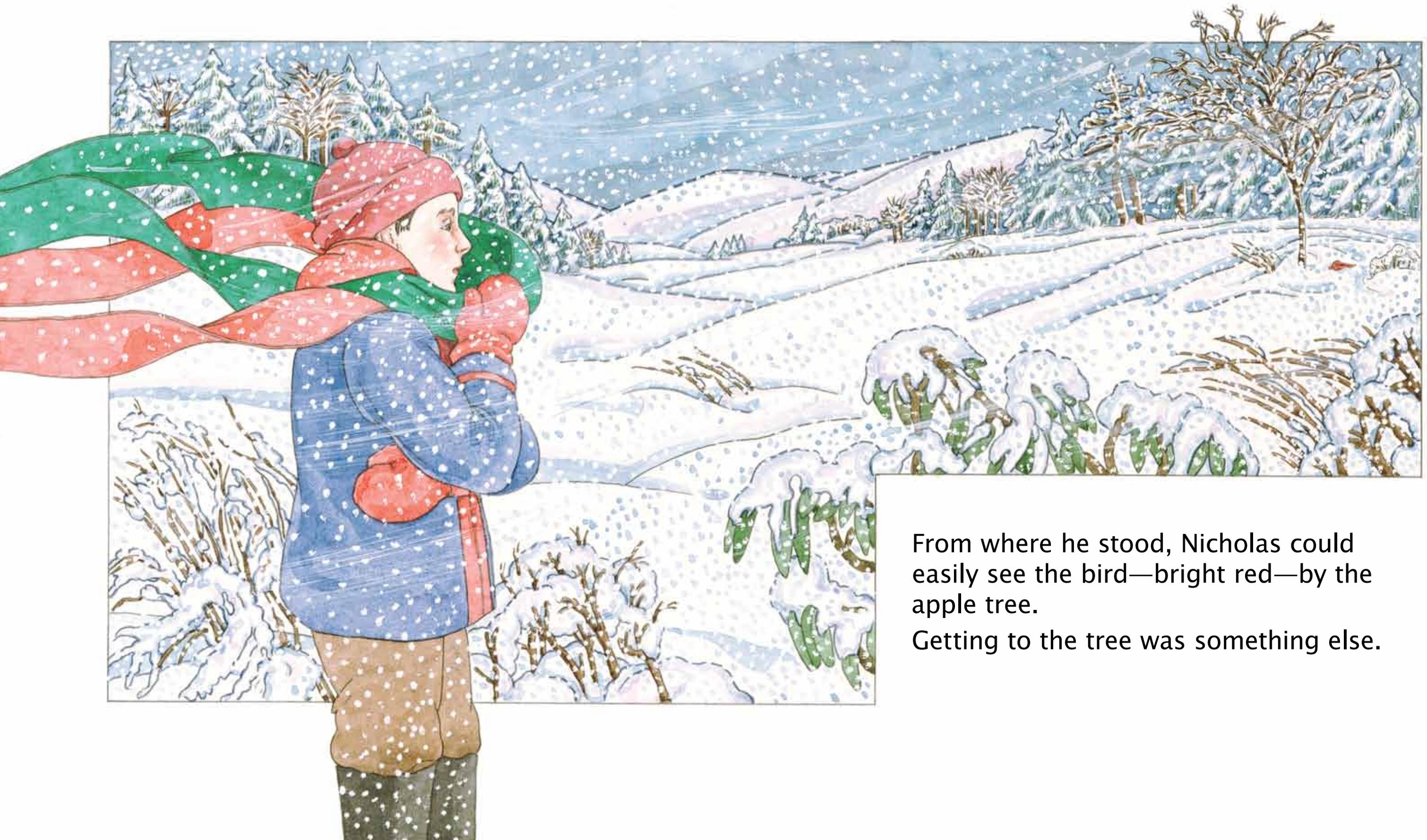
Nicholas turned back to the window. Watching the snow fly furiously, he saw a flutter of feathers. A bird tumbled off an apple branch onto a high drift of snow.

“No . . .” Nicholas whispered.



He rushed into his boots and coat. He threw on two scarves, his hat and mittens and ran out into the storm.





From where he stood, Nicholas could easily see the bird—bright red—by the apple tree.

Getting to the tree was something else.

## For Creative Minds

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### Spanish/English Glossary



si - yes  
muy enojado - very angry  
pobrecito - poor little bird  
no sé - I don't know

es un cardinal



it is a cardinal

### Cardinal (and Bird) Fun Facts

Birds are the only animals that have feathers. They have one bill, two legs, and a four-chambered heart. Like us (mammals), they are warm-blooded and breathe air. Birds lay eggs.

A male Northern Cardinal is usually recognized by bright red coloring. The female Northern Cardinal is grayish tan with red in the wings, tail and its crest. Both male and female adults have a red bill.



When the babies are 9 or 10 days old, they leave the nest. The male watches them and cares for them for about three weeks while the female sits on the nest with more eggs.

Many birds have different colorings depending on whether the bird is a male or female. Generally, males have brighter colors or markings to attract the females. The females tend to have duller coloring to help them hide (camouflage) as they sit on the nest.

The female sits on the nest, and the male brings food for her and the babies.

Cardinals migrate short distances.

Both cardinals raise their babies together. They usually have three or four babies at once and may have up to two or three sets (broods) of babies in the spring and summer.

## Making a Bird-Happy Backyard Habitat

Just like us, birds need food, water, and a place to live. If they can find those things in your backyard, you might just have some birds move in as neighbors!

### Birds need native food

Plant native trees, shrubs, grass, or flowers that will provide a variety of food like nuts, acorns, fruits, and nectar. Different birds like to eat and live in different types of plants.

Cardinals eat a variety of seeds. If you want to attract cardinals, plant things like:

Mulberries  
Serviceberries  
Dogwoods  
Crabapples

Wild grape vines  
Virginia Creeper  
Black oil sunflowers (black seeds)  
Safflowers



- If it will not damage the house, leave dead limbs on trees so birds can eat the bugs.
- Make a pile of dead branches that fall or yard clippings in an out-of-the-way area to attract birds.
- Use leaves and other autumn "fallings" as mulch in your winter gardens – it will attract birds and help your garden!

### Birds need water to drink and to bathe

- Buy or make a shallow bird bath, (with no more than one inch of water) that rests on the ground. Place it near quick shelter, too, like a shrub or small tree in case cats are around.
- You could make a bath out of a heavy plastic lid or old garbage can lid. You can even use a terra cotta or plastic saucer from a plant pot!
- Birds really like dripping water which you can supply by hanging an old bucket with a small hole in the bottom over the birdbath. Make sure to change the water every few days to keep it fresh.

### Birds need a place to sleep and build nests

- Some birds like to live high in the trees; others like to live low to the ground.
- Cardinals like to nest in dense hedges or thickets. They especially like nesting in honeysuckle thickets. They like living in various types of pine trees (evergreens) during the winter when it gets cold. If you plant trees, flowers or bushes to attract birds to your backyard, use plants that are native to your area.





Thanks to Ann Shahid, Education Director, Audubon Center at Beidler Forest (SC) for reviewing the For Creative Minds section for accuracy.

To my father, with whom I've planted many trees -- A.V.  
For R.A.H. -- E.S.



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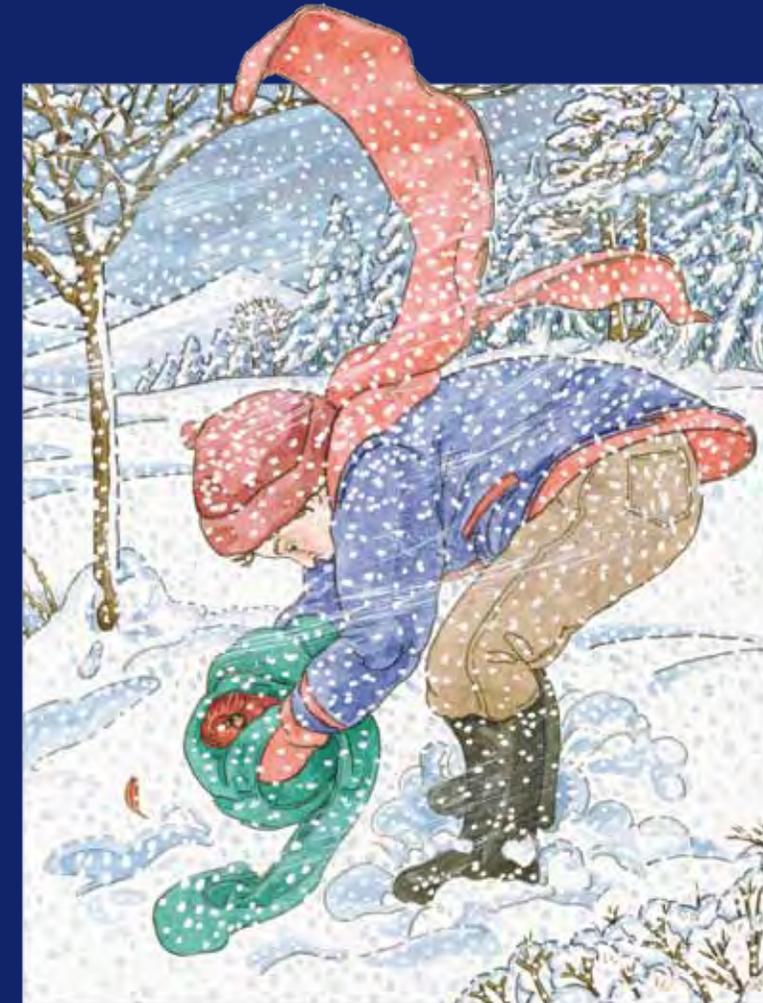
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