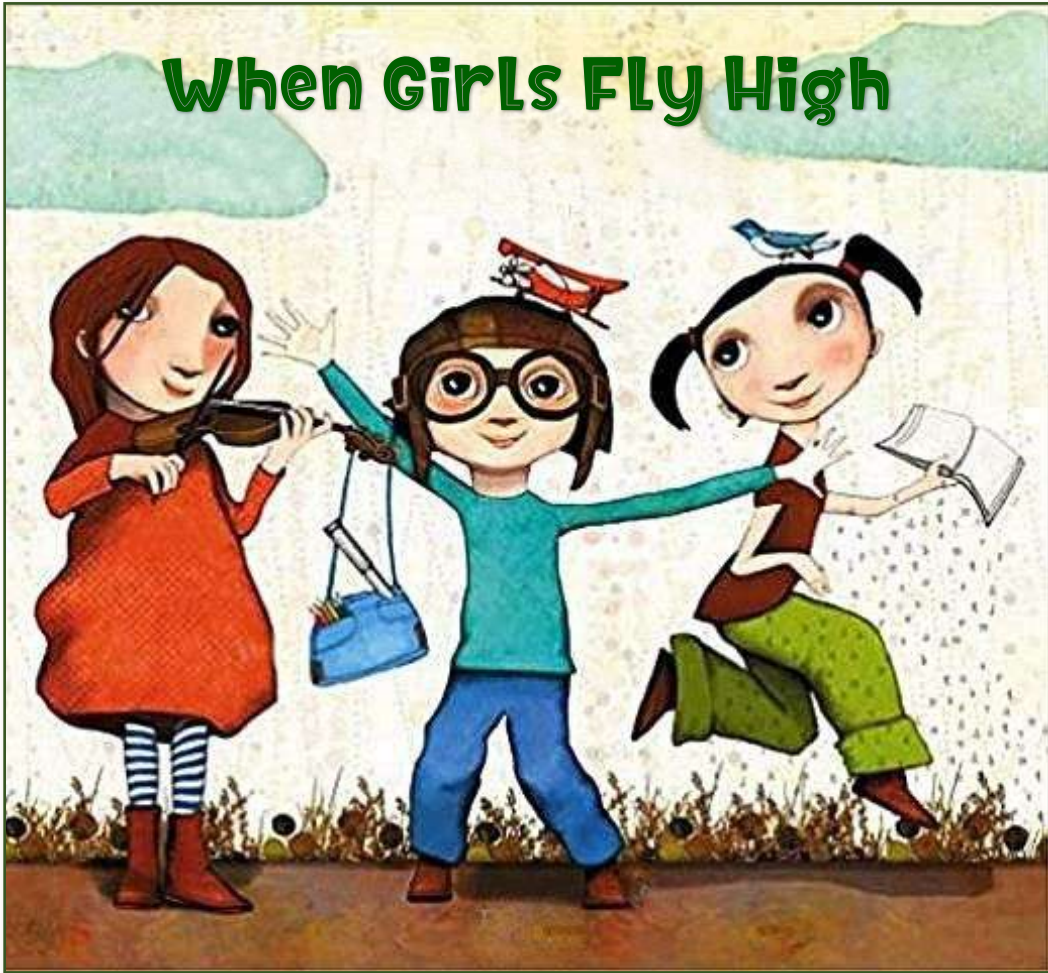


When Girls Fly High



Anne, Jane and Martha are three girls that could well stand for many other girls in the world.





Anne is as light as a feather and loves to fly around her room pretending she is inside an airplane.

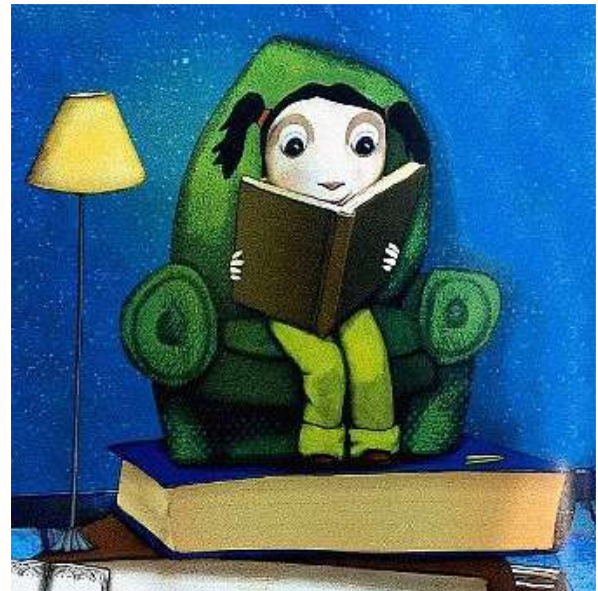
Although she is the smallest pupil in her class, Anne dreams of becoming one of the best pilots in the world.

Jane is a quiet sort of girl.

She spends her days reading, as if she were in a library all the time.

She also loves writing stories, and she carries a notebook with her wherever she goes.

Jane dreams of becoming a successful writer.



Martha is a little chubby, but that doesn't stop her from easily climbing the stairs of her home and dash into her room to play the violin.

Martha dreams of becoming a great violinist.





To help them fulfil their dreams, Mr. **WHERE-THERE'S-A-WILL-THERE'S-A-WAY** is already weaving three pairs of beautiful wings. Actually, he is in charge of weaving wings for us all...

In the meantime, a group of mean people led by Mr. **YOU-ARE-A-COMPLETE-FAILURE** are trying their utmost to stop the girls' dreams from becoming true.

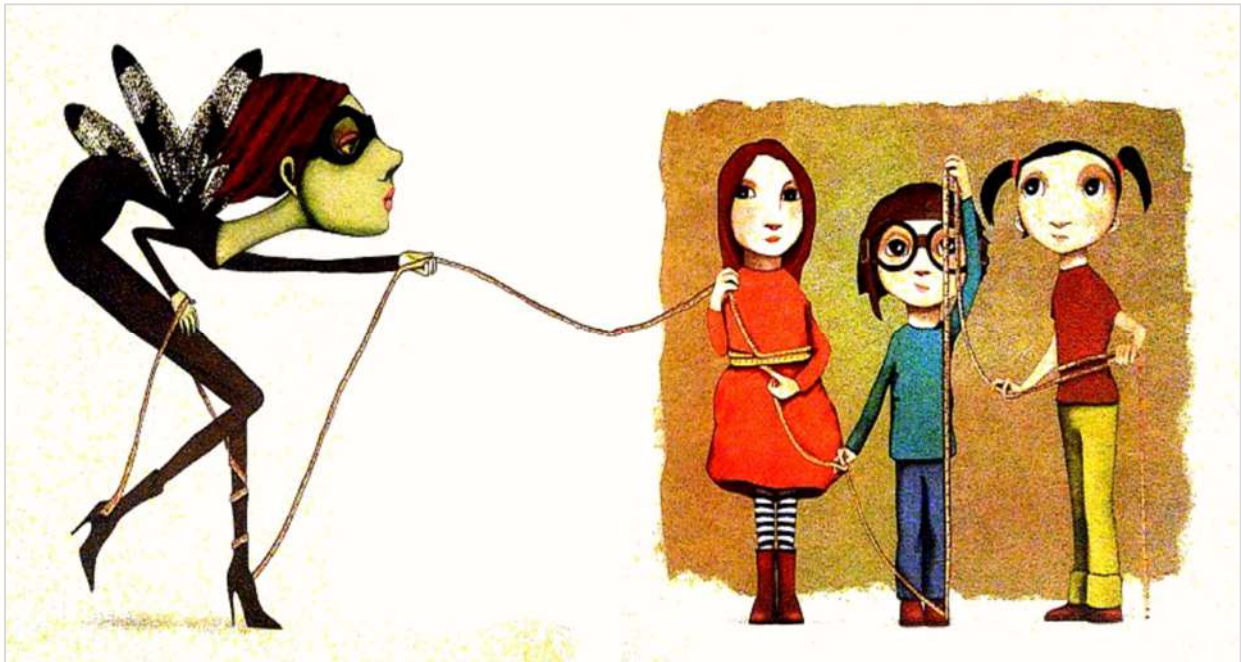
And they will stop at nothing to make sure the wings woven by Mr. **WHERE-THERE'S-A-WILL-THERE'S-A-WAY** won't ever work.



In order to achieve their mischievous goal, each of them put a few stones inside the girls' pockets, shoes and rucksacks.

And that is how, little by little, the girls feel unable to fly, although they have a pair of wings each.

The first stones are put by Ms. **EXTERNAL-BEAUTY**.



Equipped with a measuring tape, Ms. **EXTERNAL-BEAUTY** repeats her favorite mantra:

“Girls must be tall and thin, girls must be tall and thin, girls must be tall and thin...”

And so, one morning, Anne arrived at school feeling very sad.

“I’m too small,” she declared, disconsolate.

In order to look taller, Anne decided that she would start to walk on tiptoes. However, she soon got tired. Deeply discouraged, she began to feel that she would never be tall enough for anything.

As for Martha, our aspiring violinist, the fact that she was chubbier than all the girls in the ads quickly became a problem. When the problem turned into a real concern, Martha’s violin began to sound more and more out of tune.

Meanwhile, Jane began writing stories with female characters that resembled those in the cartoons she watched on television: slender and fashionable, with endless waving hair. Whether they were intelligent, brave and creative was something that Jane seemed bent on ignoring.



And this is how Ms. **EXTERNAL-BEAUTY** goes about stuffing stones into the girls' shoes, instilling in them the idea that they are unable to fly high.

Then comes Mr. **DECEPTIVE-MIRRORS**, who puts mirrors in front of the girls that do not reflect their true value, but only what he wants them to see.



And while they look at themselves in the mirror, he repeatedly whispers words that are meant to hurt them: "Fat, dwarf, goofy, skinny, awkward, ugly, four eyes. Fat, dwarf, goofy, skinny, awkward, ugly, four eyes..."

And this is how Mr. **DECEPTIVE-MIRRORS** goes about stuffing stones into the girls' pockets, instilling in them the idea that they are unable to fly high.



Then comes Mr. **GENDER-INEQUALITY**, with a bag full of **LESS THAN** stones:

Girls run less fast than boys.

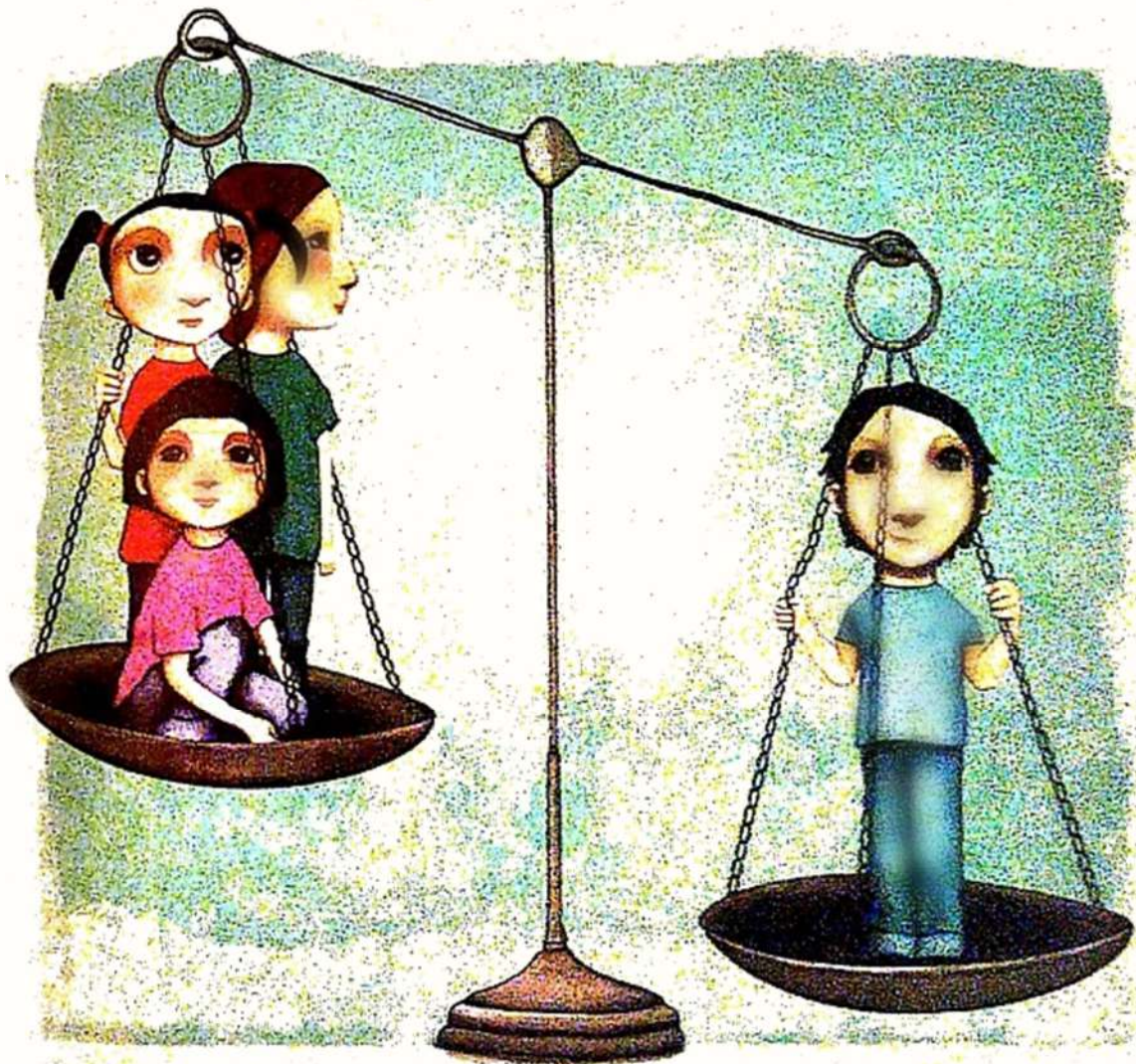
Girls are less strong than boys.

Girls jump less high than boys.

Girls are less brave than boys.

Girls are less, less, less...

And this is how Mr. **GENDER-INEQUALITY** goes about stuffing stones into the girls' rucksacks, instilling in them the idea that they are unable to fly high.





Last, but not least, arrives Ms. **BUT-YOU-SHOULD**, with a bag full of **MUST** stones:

Girls must be pretty.

Girls must look like princesses.

Girls must be extra polite, hyper nice, and totally futile.

And this is how Ms. **BUT-YOU-SHOULD** goes about stuffing stones into the girls' shoes, pockets and rucksacks, instilling in them the idea that they are unable to fly high.

And so Anne wants to become a flight attendant because being a pilot may prove too difficult for her. Besides, she only knows men pilots.

As for Martha, she only cares about being thin, and, despite her mother's insistence, she has stopped playing the violin.

Jane continues to write stories, but her explorers, scientists and painters are no longer **WOMEN** but **MEN**.

And Mr. **WHERE-THERE'S-A-WILL-THERE'S-A-WAY** is totally powerless to make them realize what is really going on.

One morning, when they are together at the playground, they see Violet hanging from the tree in the yard.

Violeta is seven years old, just one year younger than they are, and she is a very brave, cheerful and intelligent girl. In other words, she is everything the three of them used to be...



Hanging upside down, Violet shouts, “When I grow up, I want to be a Martian!”

“But how can you be a Martian if you’re not from Mars?” asks Martha.

“Not being from Mars doesn’t stop me from dreaming of becoming a Martian. How about going for a run?”



“I’d love to”, says Martha, “but these shoes are so heavy they won’t let me run”.

“Why don’t you take them off?” suggests Violet.

When Martha takes off her shoes, she sees that there is a stone in her left shoe and two stones in her right one. Why had she never noticed this before?

As soon as Martha starts to run, she feels much, much lighter.

After they have finished their run, Violet asks Anne, “Do you want to do a handstand?”



“I’d love to, but my skirt will certainly fall,” Anne answers. “Girls are not supposed to lift their skirts in public.”

“I agree with you,” says Violet, “but we are only doing some gymnastics. Maybe you don’t know how to do a handstand.”

“Of course I do!” says Anne, vexed.

When she does the handstand, Anne sees some stones falling from her skirt’s pocket. Why had she never noticed this before?

“Jane, I know the multiplication tables as well as a ten-year-old,” boasts Violeta. “I know that two times two is six.”

“Two times two is six?” exclaims Jane. “Two times two is four.”

“No, it’s six,” insists Violet.

When Jane goes to get her math book from her rucksack, she sees that it is full of stones just like the ones Martha and Anne found.

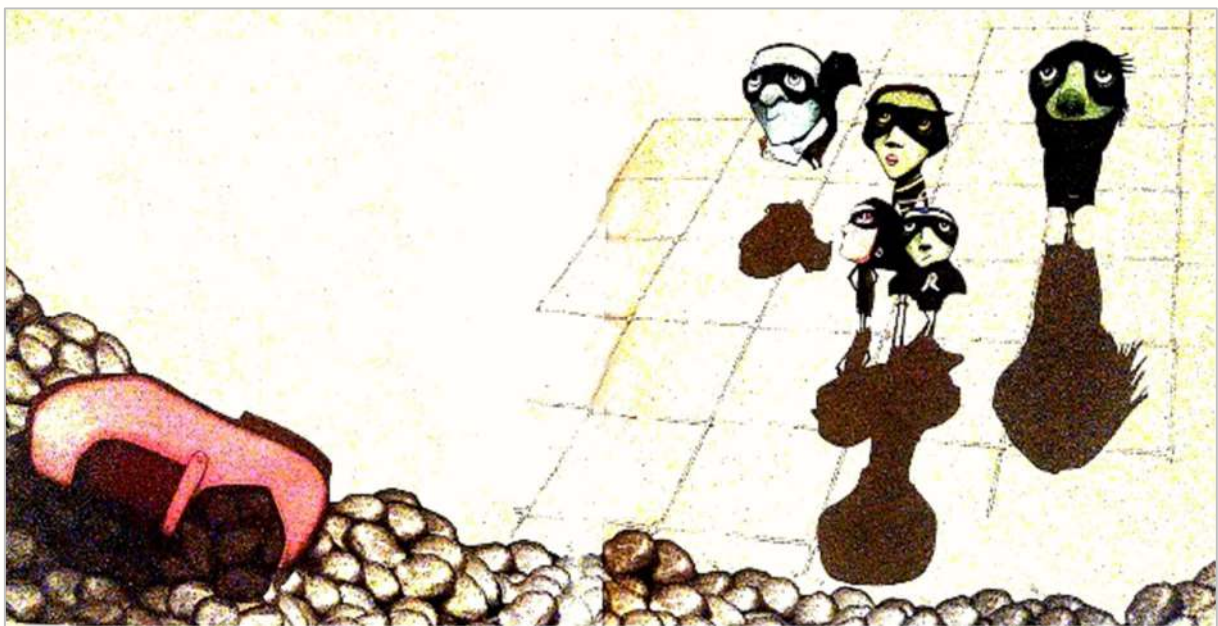
The sound of the falling stones catches the attention of the other girls playing in the playground. They wonder if they also have some stones hidden in their pockets, in their lunch bags, and in their socks.



AND THEY ALL REALIZE THEY ARE LOADED WITH STONES!

How great the girls feel dropping them!

Put together, all the stones form a mountain as high as the Himalayas. Once they are at the summit, the three friends realize that the members of Mr. **YOU-ARE-A-COMPLETE FAILURE** group look much smaller and insignificant than they seemed.



“I told you we can all become Martians!” says Violet, thrilled. “Up here, we can almost touch Mars!”



The three girls are glad they never stopped being able to fly high. And, in their hearts, they know that, in order to climb the mountains of their lives, they only need to spread the wings that Mr. **WHERE-THERE'S-A WILL-THERE'S-A-WAY** has so gently and kindly woven for them.

As well as for all of us...



Raquel Díaz Reguera
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