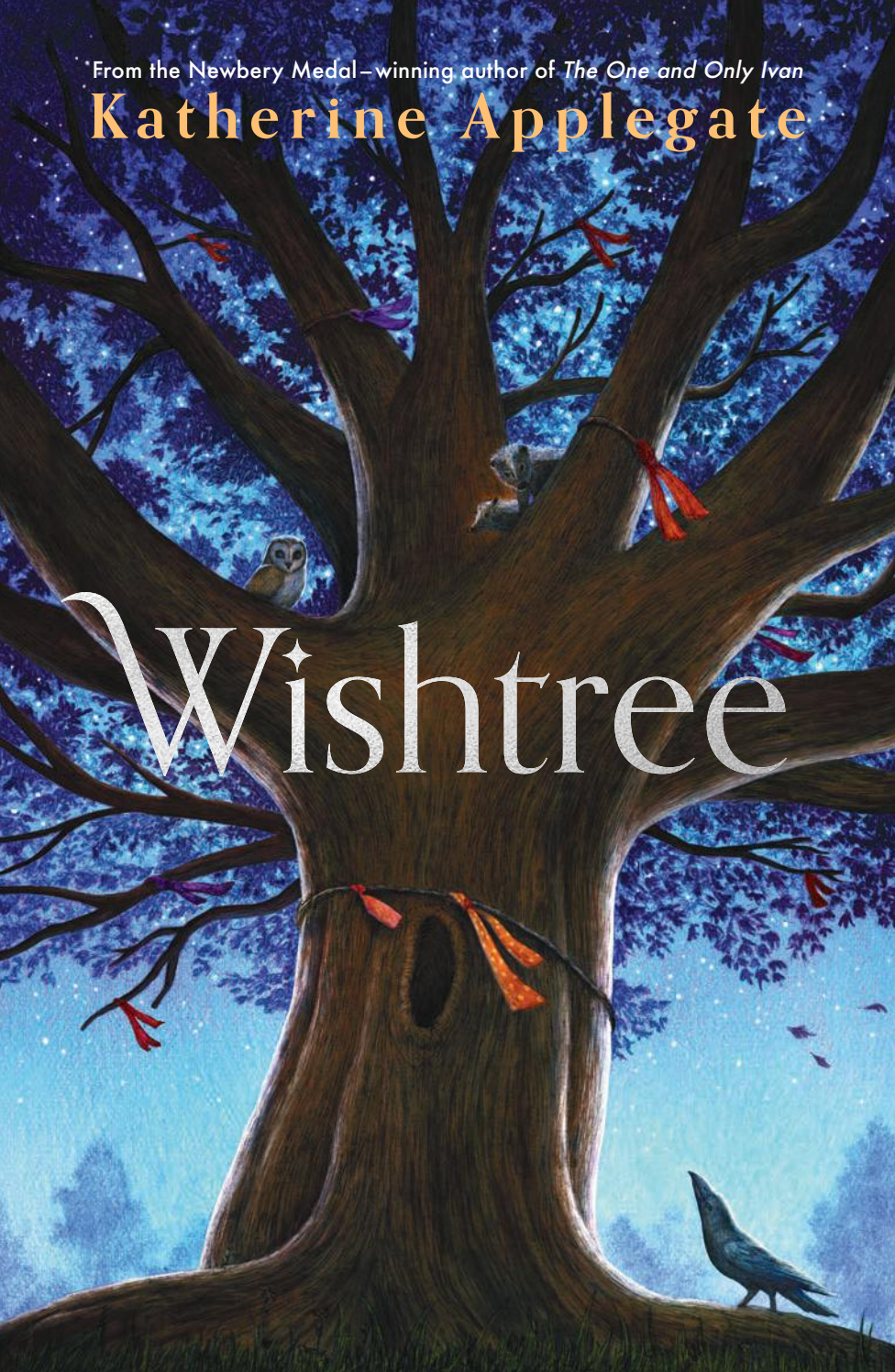


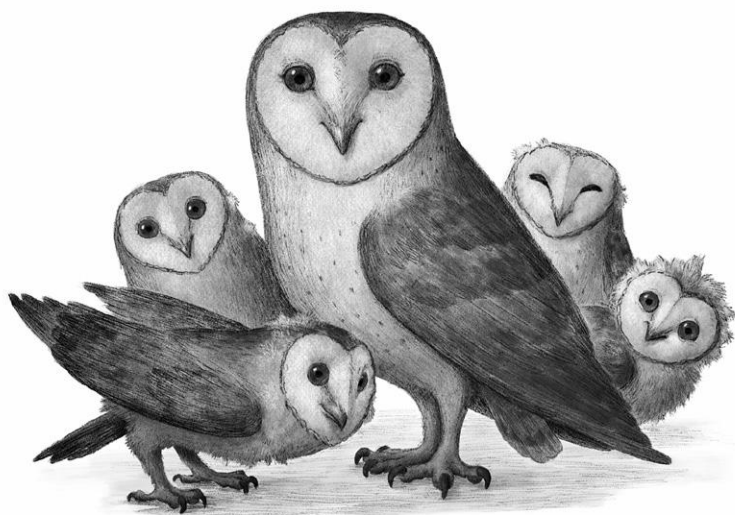
From the Newbery Medal-winning author of *The One and Only Ivan*

Katherine Applegate

Wishtree



Wishtree





Wishtree

Katherine Applegate

Illustrated by Charles Santos



WELBECK
FLAME

First published in 2017 by Feiwei and Friends,
An imprint of Macmillan Publishing Group

This edition was published in 2022 by Welbeck Flame
An imprint of Welbeck Children's Limited,
part of Welbeck Publishing Group.
Based in London and Sydney.
www.welbeckpublishing.com

Text copyright © Katherine Applegate, 2017
Illustrations copyright © Charles Santoso, 2017

Katherine Applegate and Charles Santoso have asserted their moral right
to be identified as the Author and Illustrator of this Work in accordance
with the Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988.

ISBN: 978 1 80130 070 4

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means,
electronically, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without
the prior permission of the copyright owners and the publishers.

Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK)

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



for newcomers
and
for welcomers





Be Different to Trees

*The talking oak
To the ancients spoke.
But any tree
Will talk to me.
What truths I know
I garnered so.
But those who want to talk and tell,
And those who will not listeners be,
Will never hear a syllable
From out the lips of any tree.*

—MARY CAROLYN DAVIES (1924)





It's hard to talk to trees. We're not big on chitchat.

That's not to say we can't do amazing things, things you'll probably never do.

Cradle downy owlets. Steady flimsy tree forts. Photosynthesize.

But talk to people? Not so much.

And just try to get a tree to tell a good joke.

Trees do talk to some folks, the ones we know we



can trust. We talk to daredevil squirrels. We talk to hardworking worms. We talk to flashy butterflies and bashful moths.

Birds? They're delightful. Frogs? Grumpy, but good-hearted. Snakes? Terrible gossips.

Trees? Never met a tree I didn't like.

Well, okay. There's that sycamore down at the corner. Yakkity-yakkity-yak, that one.

So do we ever talk to people? Actually *talk*, that most people-y of people skills?

Good question.

Trees have a rather complicated relationship with people, after all. One minute you're hugging us. The next minute you're turning us into tables and tongue depressors.

Perhaps you're wondering why the fact that trees talk wasn't covered in science class, during those *Mother Nature Is Our Friend* lessons.

Don't blame your teachers. They probably don't know that trees can talk. Most people don't.

Nonetheless, if you find yourself standing near

a particularly friendly-looking tree on a particularly lucky-feeling day, it can't hurt to listen up.

Trees can't tell jokes.

But we can certainly tell stories.

And if all you hear is the whisper of leaves, don't worry. Most trees are introverts at heart.





2



Name's Red, by the way.

Maybe we've met? Oak tree near the elementary school? Big, but not too? Sweet shade in the summer, fine color in the fall?

I am proud to say that I'm a northern red oak, also known as *Quercus rubra*. Red oaks are one of the most common trees in North America. In my neighborhood alone, hundreds upon hundreds of us

are weaving our roots into the soil like knitters on a mission.



I have ridged, reddish-gray bark; leathery leaves with pointed lobes; stubborn, searching roots; and, if I do say so myself, the best fall color on the street.

“Red” doesn’t begin to do me justice. Come October, I look like I’m ablaze. It’s a miracle the fire department doesn’t try to hose me down every autumn.

You might be surprised to learn that all red oaks are named Red.

Likewise, all sugar maples are called Sugar. All junipers are called Juniper. And all boojum trees are called Boojum.

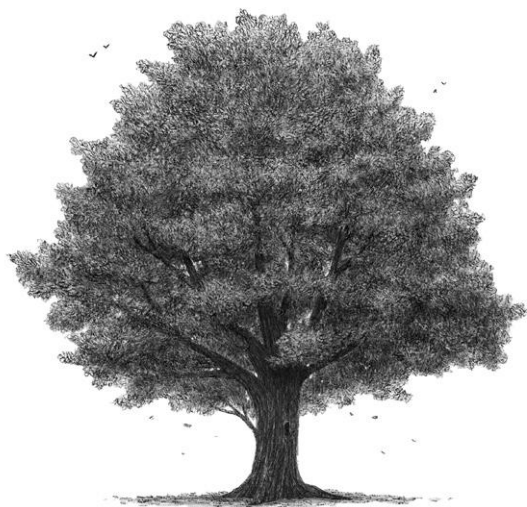
That’s how it is in tree world. We don’t need names to tell one another apart.

Imagine a classroom where every child is named

Melvin. Imagine the poor teacher trying to take attendance each morning.

It's a good thing trees don't go to school.

Of course, there are exceptions to the name rule. Somewhere in Los Angeles there's a palm tree who insists on being called Karma, but you know how Californians can be.





3



My friends call me Red, and you can, too. But for a long time people in the neighborhood have called me the “wishtree.”

There’s a reason for this, and it goes way back to when I wasn’t much more than a tiny seed with higher aspirations.

Long story.

Every year on the first day of May, people come



from all over town to adorn me with scraps of paper, tags, bits of fabric, snippets of yarn, and the occasional gym sock. Each offering represents a dream, a desire, a longing.

Whether draped, tossed, or tied with a bow: They're all hopes for something better.

Wishtrees have a long and honorable history, going back centuries. There are many in Ireland, where they are usually hawthorns or the occasional ash tree. But you can find wishtrees all over the world.

For the most part, people are kind when they visit me. They seem to understand that a tight knot might keep me from growing the way I need to grow. They are gentle with my new leaves, careful with my exposed roots.

After people write their hope on a rag or piece of paper, they tie it onto one of my branches. Usually they whisper the wish aloud.

It's traditional to wish on the first of May, but people stop by throughout the year.

My, oh my, the things I have heard:

I wish for a flying skateboard.
I wish for a world without war.
I wish for a week without clouds.
I wish for the world's biggest candy bar.
I wish for an A on my geography test.
I wish Ms. Gentorini weren't so grumpy in the
morning.
I wish my gerbil could talk.
I wish my dad could get better.
I wish I weren't hungry sometimes.
I wish I weren't so lonely.
I wish I knew what to wish for.

So many wishes. Grand and goofy, selfish and sweet.

It's an honor, all the hopes bestowed upon my tired old limbs.

Although by the end of May Day, I look like someone dumped a huge basket of trash on top of me.

Trees can't tell jokes,
but they can certainly tell stories...

Red is an oak tree who is many rings old. Red is the neighbourhood wishtree – people write their wishes on pieces of cloth and tie them to Red's branches. Along with a crow named Bongo and other animals who seek refuge in Red's hollows, this wishtree watches over the neighbourhood.

You might say Red has seen it all.

Until a new family moves in. Not everyone is welcoming, and Red's experience as a wishtree is more important than ever.

*'A distinctive call for kindness, delivered
by an unforgettable narrator.'*

– Publishers Weekly

www.welbeckpublishing.com

ISBN: 978-1-80130-070-4



9 781801 300704

eBook
Audiobook
available



FSC

£7.99