

The Golden Flower by Ellie S.

Today was a rainy day on the Oregon Trail. Ma is taking care of my baby brother Francis. He has a cold. We all sleep in our covered wagons. It is very crowded in there. No one gets much sleep. The trails were muddy and wet, so many of the other wagons got stuck.

"Alice!" my father calls to me. "Coming, Pa!" I shout back.

It's about 6:00 in the morning and it is still dark out. We're crossing a river today. I head over to Pa to see what the matter is.

"I'm here. Can I help?" I say. "Yes ma'am," Pa says, patting me on the head. "Help me take everything out of our wagon, please."

I start unloading our wagon when I saw a glimpse of a girl. I say to Pa, "Look! There's a girl over there! Pa, look!" Pa turns to look. His eyes widen. But the girl sees us watching and runs back behind the bushes. She is now nowhere to be seen. "I saw her, Alice. I think she is a Native American. There must be some tribes around here. Anyway. Let's get back to work," Pa says.

Then my five-year-old brother, Wilbur runs over. "Hi, Alice! Good morning, Pa! Ma and Francis are coming too. And guess what! Francis feels better! He laughed at me this morning when I spilled water on my shirt!" Wilbur points at his shirt. "See?" He asks. "Yes, Wilbur, I see. And I'm glad Francis is better," I say. Ma walks over with Francis.

"Good morning, Alice!" She says. She sets Francis down and tells Wilbur to watch over him.

About fifteen minutes later, it's our turn to cross the river. "Okay. Alice, you and Wilbur can cross first. Ma, Francis and I will go last." Pa decided. "No! I want to go last! All by myself! I don't want to go with Alice! I'm a big boy!" Wilbur pouted. Ma looked at Pa. He shrugged. "All right. Wilbur, you'll go last." Ma looked Wilbur right in the eye. "Do NOT lean out of the wagon. If you fall, the current will push you down the river. Do you understand?" Ma said, very seriously. Wilbur stood up tall and proud with the words, "Yes ma'am!"

Everyone got across safely and then it was Wilbur's turn. He was going across with all our things. When he was almost to the other side, a big gust of wind came and our wagon, with Wilbur and all the other things that were in our wagon, started to fall. As the wagon tipped, Wilbur splashed into the river. His light brown hair turned dark as the water flowed through it.

Ma calls, "Wilbur! Someone help him! Wilbur, come up to the surface!" I've never seen Ma so worried. Tears drip down her face. I see the Native American girl rush behind the bushes again. Francis started crying because of all the commotion. I stand there, not knowing what to

do. I'm about to lose my brother. I feel a tear fall down my own cheek. Pa calls for help. All our belongings flow down the rapids. I can barely hear myself think. Everyone is panicked. The other pioneers have joined us in crying and hollering. Children run and scream. Babies cry. I'm so scared.

Then, out of nowhere, a whole tribe of Native Americans come running. One of the men jumps for my brother. The man comes up with Wilbur in his arms. Wilbur takes a giant breath of air. He swims over to Ma and gives her a great big hug. Ma wraps her arms around him, even though he's soaking wet. The rest of our tribe reaches for our things. The Native American girl – who is about my age – sees my stuffed bear, Gummie. She grabs him. He's dripping wet. I'm relieved. I would hate to see Gummie get lost. She walks over to me. "Yours?" She asks, holding up the bear. "Yes. Thank you. For getting help and saving my bear. I'm Alice, by the way," I tell her. "You are welcome," she says. She starts to turn and walk away.

Before she can leave, I say, "Wait! Don't leave. You saved us. I don't even know your name!" She looks at me. "I'm Millaray. It means golden flower in our native language. We are the Shoshone tribe. And my father was the one who saved your brother." "Well, tell your father thank you," I reply.

Then we hear a call, "Millaray! Come here! Where have you gone?" "That's my mom. They must be done cleaning up. It was nice meeting you," Millaray said to me. "Hold on just a second. I have something you might want. So that you will remember when you saved my family," I say, running to the wagon to get Gummie. I hold him out to Millaray. "Really? I thought you loved that bear. You should keep it, Alice," Millaray said. I say, "No. I want you to have Gummie. I'll be fine without him. With you, I know he'll be in good hands."

Millaray takes Gummie with a smile. "I'll take great care of Gummie. Oh! I have something for you. It's as special to me as Gummie is to you." She looks down at her bracelet and unties the string. It really is a pretty bracelet. It has beads the color of the ocean. The string is dyed purple, red, and the most wonderful shade of green I've ever seen. "My grandmother made this for me before she died. But it would look amazing on you. Grandma would understand. Please take it," Millaray offered.

I stare right at her. "It- it- it's beautiful." I stutter. "I will never take it off. Thank you," I say. "You're very welcome. I must get going. But I know that I'll never forget you. I hope your brother turns out fine. Bye," Millaray said. "Goodbye," I say and Millaray walks back to her Native American village. I wish we didn't have to go all the way to Oregon. If we could just build a house here. Then, I could play with Millaray whenever I want.

"Alice! We're ready to go!" Ma calls. I sigh. "Coming," I say sadly. I'm really going to miss Millaray. Then Wilbur comes over and hugs me. "Alice! I'm okay! Did you see those people save me?" He asks. I hug Wilbur tight. "I'm glad you are alive, Wilbur," I tell him. "So are we," Pa says, walking over to us with Ma and Francis. Ma says, "Let's get in the wagon and head on our way. We will be in Oregon sooner than you'll know it."

We did get to Oregon soon after that. I am now much older, and we have a wonderful two-bedroom house with a kitchen and small garden in our back yard. Pa has a great job and Ma is expecting another baby. I still wear the bracelet that Millaray gave to me. Although it's getting too small, I will never take it off. I think of Millaray every day and I'm so happy to have met her. I'm grateful for everything she did for me and my family. Traveling on the Oregon Trail was a trip I will never forget.

Author's note

Pioneers that traveled the Oregon Trail had many obstacles to face. In this story, a family of five struggles crossing a river. That was one of the obstacles. Other problems were illnesses, oxen dying, going over mountains, and more. The pioneers traveled in covered wagons – or prairie schooners - during the 1800s. They arrived in Oregon 4 to 6 months later. Pioneers traveled to Oregon in search for new farm land or to escape legal problems and politics. It was a hard trip and many pioneers died along the way. But once they got to Oregon, many thought the long trip was worth all the trouble.