A native American boy captured a hawk in the hope that he can also capture some sense of its ability to fly....Parnall's sweeping black-and-white panoramas complement this spare, poetic text."

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HAWK, I'M YOUR BROTHER

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Rudy Soto
dreams
of flying...

He'd be
more like
a HAWK
gliding
smoother
than anything else
in the world.

wants
to float
on the wind,
wants
to soar
over canyons.

He doesn't see himself
some little
light-winged bird
that flaps
and flutters
when it flies.
No cactus wren.
No sparrow.
He sees himself
a hawk
wrapped up in wind
lifting
facing the sun.

That's how
he wants
to fly.

That's all
he wants—
the only wish
he's ever had.

No matter what happens
he won't give it up.
He won't trade it
for easier wishes.

There,
playing alone
on the mountainside,
a dark skinny boy
calling out
to a hawk . . .

That's Rudy Soto.
People here say
that the day he was born
he looked at the sky
and lifted his hands
toward birds
and seemed to smile
at Santos Mountain.

The first words
he ever learned
were the words for
FLYING
and for
BIRD
and for
UP THERE...UP THERE.

And later on
they say that
every day
he asked his father,
"When do I learn to fly?"

(He was too young then
to know
he'd never get his wish.)

His father said,
"You run.
You climb over rocks.
You jump around like a crazy whirlwind.
Why do you need to fly?"

"I just do.
I need to fly."

In those days
he thought that
somebody
would give him
the answer.
He asked
everybody...
everybody.

And they always said,
"People don't fly."

"Never?"

"Never."

But Rudy Soto
told them this:
"Some people do.
Maybe we just don't know
those people.
Maybe they live
far away from here."
And when he met new people he would look at them carefully. "Can you fly?"
They'd only laugh and shake their heads. Finally he learned to stop asking.

Still, he thought that maybe flying is the secret old people keep to themselves. Maybe they go sailing quietly through the sky when children are asleep.

Or maybe flying is for magic people. And he even thought that if no one else in the world could fly he'd be the one who would learn it. "Somebody ought to," he said. "Somebody. Me! Rudy Soro."

There, barefoot on the mountainside, he'd almost fly. He'd dream he knew the power of great wings and sing up to the sun. In his mind he always seemed to be a hawk, the way he flew.
Of course
a boy like that
would know
every nest
this side of the mountain.
He'd know the time
in summer
when the young hawks
learn to fly.
And he'd think
a thousand times,
"Hawk, I'm your
brother.
Why am I stuck
down here?"
You have to know all this
to forgive the boy
for what he did.
And even then
you may not think
that he was right
to steal the bird.
It may seem
cruel
and selfish
and mean —
not worthy of one
who says
he's brother
to all birds.
But anyway
that's what he did.
He stole
a hawk —
a redtail hawk —
out of its nest
before the bird
could fly.
It was a nest
that Rudy Soto
must have seen
all his life,
high on the ledge
of a steep rough
canyon wall.
He thought
that nest
might be
the best home
in the world,
up there
on Santos Mountain.
And he even thought that there might be some special magic in a bird that came from Santos Mountain.

Somehow he thought he'd share that magic and he'd fly.

They say it used to be that way when we knew how to talk to birds and how to call a bird's wild spirit down into our own.

He'd heard all those old stories and he'd seen hawks go flying over mountains and felt their power fill the sky.

It seemed to him he'd FLY — if a hawk became his brother.

That's why he climbed the cliff at dawn singing . . . to make the magic stronger.
And
that's why
he left
an offering
of food . . .
to show
he was
that
brother.

But
the young hawk
struggled
and screamed,
called
to the birds
circling
overhead,
called
to its nest
on Santos Mountain.

"Listen, bird.
Don't be afraid.
Don't be afraid
of me."

Climbing down,
he held
that bird
so close
he felt
its heartbeat
and
the bird
felt his.

"You'll be
all right.
You'll see."

But even a hawk
too young to fly
knows
he's meant
to fly.
He knows
he isn't meant
to have
a string
tied
to his leg.

He knows
he isn't meant
to live
in a cage.
Every day he screams.
He pulls against the string
He beats his wings against the cage.

"You'll be happy with me, bird. You will."
But the bird looks out with fierce free eyes
and calls to its brothers in the canyon.

Every day it is the same.
They see those other birds learning to fly, learning the touch and roll and lift of air, learning to dip and dive. They turn when the wind turns.

But down below with his feet touching sand Rudy Soto's hawk can only flap his wings and rise as high as a string will let him go.

Not high enough.
Rudy Soto
tells his hawk:
"Someday
we'll fly
together."

He wants
to please
that hawk.
He's sure
he will.
He's sure
it's going to be
his
brother.

Each day
when the melons
are picked
and the wood
is chopped
and the corn
is hoed

Rudy Soto gives
a long soft call
and he comes
running.

He always says:
"I'm here now,
bird.
What do you want
to do?"

He takes the bird
out of the cage
and ties the string
around its foot
and the bird sits
on his shoulder
as they walk
the desert hills.
They go down sandy washes and follow deer tracks into canyons.
Sometimes they sit looking off to Santos Mountain.
And sometimes
they even go
on the other side
of Santos Mountain
to a place
where
water
trickles
over
flat
smooth
rocks.

The bird
plays
in that
cold water . . .
dips
his wings
into the stream
and jumps
and flaps
and the boy says,
"See.
You're happy
here with me."
But even when he says it he knows it isn’t true because the bird is tugging at the string and you see sky reflected in his eyes and his eyes flash and his wings move with the wind. You can tell he wants to fly. You can tell that’s all he wants, the only dream he has.

Rudy Soto knows what it is like to want to fly. He knows himself what it is like to have a dream.

But even so he waits until the end of summer, hoping that the bird will be content.

Every day it is the same.

The bird still tugs and pulls and yearns against the string. Rudy Soto knows that the hawk will not give up.
What else can a boy like Rudy Soto do?

He has to say: "I don't want to see you so unhappy, bird."

And he has to say: "One of us might as well fly!"

What else can he do if he really loves that bird?

He has to take him back to Santos Mountain to the place where he would like to fly.

That's where they go—up to those high red rocks.
There is a wind and clouds move across the sky and from far away you can smell rain.

Now he unties the string that has held his hawk so long.

The hawk is on his shoulder.

"Fly now, bird. Go on."

The hawk turns. He moves his wings.

"Bird, you can fly."

The hawk takes his time.

There, on the rocks he jumps and flaps, rises and sinks.
He has to learn the force of air and the pull of wind and the feel of freedom.

Maybe he jumps a hundred times before he seems to catch the wind, before he lifts himself into that summer sky.
At last he soars.

His wings shine in the sun and the way he flies is the way Rudy Soto always dreamed he’d fly.

The bird looks down.

Then he calls a long hawk cry, the kind of cry he used to call to his brothers.

Only this time he calls to Rudy Soto and the sound floats on the wind.
Rudy Soto answers with the same hawk sound.
Back and forth they call.
Brother to brother they call all through the afternoon.

High on the side of Santos Mountain Rudy Soto lifts his arms. His hair blows in the wind and in his mind he's FLYING too.
It doesn't even matter that his feet are on the ground. It seems to him he has the whole sky to fly in when he hears that call.

He knows he'll keep it in his mind forever.

Rudy Soto doesn't tell anybody.
He doesn't say:
"Lucky me.
I know about flying.
I know about wind."

He never says,
"There is a hawk that is my brother so I have a special power."

But people here can tell such things.

They notice that a hawk calls to him from Santos Mountain and they hear the way he answers.
They see
that Rudy Soto
has a
different look
about him.

His eyes
flash
like
a young
hawk's
eyes
and there is
sky
reflected
in those eyes

and it's
the sky
high
over
Santos Mountain.

People here
are not
surprised.

They're
wise enough
to understand
such things.