



Watercolor with Stan
—for Stanley Person

Stan recreates the scene, fills the space with color, plants blooming trees behind the wagon. Cleans his brush. Begins again.

The trees are green today, black in the original photograph.

It used to take Stan two hours to paint one, his teacher says. But now he makes two, three paintings in that time. The wagon is leaving the farm, and we are following. The painter fills in the sky, dots it with speckles like confetti or the shell of a dyed egg lifted from a cup of blue.

He grew up on a farm, has always enjoyed working hard. He and his three brothers and one sister kept busy, his father and mother, too. They harvested grains and baled hay. Nurtured thirty cows, and grew potatoes and sprawling vegetable gardens. He likes the hard work, brushing the palette with bristles until the water revives the dust he will drive along paper to color the road.

The spoked wheels turn away from us. Three milk jugs sit in the rear of the wagon, and up front: the couple, embracing. Their bodies flash white in the photograph. Their faces meet in the shadow of their newsboy hats touching. Their gazes unite, absorbing only each other. Stan lifts his brush; his mother now in red. His father, a midnight shade of blue. They're delivering milk to the market, but forgetting all about it, all about the world and the work on the farm and the road ahead and the one behind. Stan swirls his brush, changing the water, and is happy to show his painting.

The art teacher waves a humming hairdryer over his work, prepares to leave their final class. See, Stan never missed a single one. *Can I give you a hug?* she says. *Yes. Wonderful.* He takes the brushes she gives him to keep. His wife, Joanne, sets the painting in a frame and once, long ago, she and Stan nursed a kitten to good health together, and they smile about this memory. *Tini*, Joanne says, was the kitten's name. She hangs Stan's painting with the others, where it collects award ribbons, holds a mere moment, a bountiful love, watercolors by his hand. And already Stan is deciding what to paint next.