

# Sunny Acres

Fiction • Sarah Miller

We're going to Sunny Acres today. We always go, every year when it's Halloween time. I like pumpkins, and so does Mom, so we go to Sunny Acres. It's the pumpkin patch. There are so many pumpkins at Sunny Acres. I like the short fat ones, but Mom says they're not good for making jack-o-lanterns because they're too round. Mom doesn't let me make jack-o-lanterns by myself. She says I'll cut my finger, but I do get to pull the guts out of the pumpkin's belly. Or maybe it's the pumpkin's head. I think it's the head because when you make it into a jack-o-lantern, it has a face. It has triangle eyes and a smile. Bellies don't have eyes and smiles. I like how squishy the guts are and how I can squeeze them really hard in my fist and they come out between my fingers.

Mom smiles a lot. Every time I look at her she is smiling. A big smile to tell me she loves me. Today, she smiles so big because we are going to Sunny Acres to get pumpkins. We take the red truck, and it rumbles a lot, really loud like if it were a giant cat and you pet it and it purred. Mom says when cats purr, it's like they're smiling at you because they don't know how to smile with their teeth. The red truck shakes and black smoke sometimes comes out of the pipe thing in the back. I can see it in the mirror out my window. Usually, when the black smoke comes out, the people in the car behind us make a face. I made a face when I was littler, but I don't care about the black smoke anymore. There's black smoke now. I don't make a face, I just smile like Mom, and she smiles at me still because she's so happy that I'm smiling.

We drive by a lot of fields. I think they're supposed to have corn, but there isn't any corn. I don't like corn, so I don't care if there's no more. We drive by little houses that look pretty old. We keep driving for a long time. There's a

stop sign up there, so I point at it and say STOP just to make sure Mom knows there's a stop sign. She smiles, glad that I reminded her to stop. I look at the wooden house outside my window and it is white, but the paint is coming off so it's really more brown. I guess the wooden house is brown, but it has some white paint stuck on it. The front door is brown too, but it has some black paint stuck on it. And the shutters. The roof has parts of it gone. The rocking chairs on the porch are empty. They look like they're begging someone to sit down and rock and rock and rock and rock. But no one is rocking. I look at the house for a long time, and then Mom goes. I always remind her to go, but I forgot this time. She still smiles though because she is not mad at me for forgetting. We only drive for a little bit more, and then I see the big green sign with SUNNY ACRES on it. The driveway is gravel. Gravel makes popping sounds when you drive on it, like when you put popcorn in the microwave. After we park, I get out and put my feet on the gravel. I roll it around with the bottom of my shoe. I draw a smiley face in the dirt on the window. The red truck is covered in brown.

Last time we came to Sunny Acres it was really windy and Mom pretended she was getting blown away. I always can tell when she's pretending. This time it's really still and quiet. The tree branches aren't even moving, which makes me a little bit sad. When they move, Mom says they're waving at me, and I like to wave back. But I guess the trees are sleeping today. I lean way backwards and look at the sky. I can't see any clouds. It just looks all the same color. It's sort of white but also sort of grey. Maybe that's why no one else came to Sunny Acres today because they don't like when the sky looks sort of white and sort of grey. I have to squint, even though there's no sun. I look at Mom, and she is smiling at me huge because she is so happy that we are here at the pumpkin patch. Mom loves pumpkins.

I run to the big field where all the pumpkins are, and I stop running when I get there. There are so many pumpkins at Sunny Acres. I see a short fat one, so I bend over and look, but it has fuzzy black and white stuff stuck all over it, and it seems squishy and there's holes in it. One of the holes is really big, and the whole half of the pumpkin is down inside the whole. I stand back up and keep going and looking at pumpkins, but I see another ugly one and another ugly one and another ugly one and more and more ugly ones. They all have holes and black stuff and white stuff and they look like basketballs without all the air inside. I walk faster because I want to get to the good pumpkins, the orange and round ones. I see more ugly pumpkins, so I walk faster. All of them are still mushy and wrinkly. It looks like someone took bites out of all the mushy pumpkins. I smell something really bad, so I run because I want to get to the good pumpkins and I don't want to smell that smell anymore. I run

faster. It smells bad. The pumpkins are ugly. I run until I get to the little fence.

I turn around, and Mom is standing at the other end of the field. She is smiling because she loves pumpkins. She will be so sad when she sees how ugly the pumpkins are. She walks toward me with a big smile to tell me she loves me. She is walking really slow. And she is smiling. She smiles while she bends over and looks at a tall, skinny pumpkin. She will be so sad when she sees that it is ugly and covered in black and white stuff and has holes in it. It is really soft, so it squashes down and wrinkles up when she puts her hands on it. She smiles while she picks it up and holds it on her chest like she loves it. She walks toward the fence where I am, and she smiles while she does it. She smiles while she walks really slow. She smiles really big while she looks at me.

The fence is almost as tall as me. My feet fit between the wires. I scratch my arm on a pointy end of a wire while I climb down on the other side. Mom is still looking at me through the fence. She is still looking at me and smiling so big and walking towards me. Her face looks like a mask of her own face. It looks different. I'm scared. I turn around and run. Really fast. My right shoe comes off. I don't look at it. I run faster. I turn my head around, and she's on this side of the fence, but she's still walking so slow. And smiling. I keep running. I run and run and run and run. I turn my head around again, and she is right behind me. She could touch me. She walks slow and smiles. How did she catch up to me? I turn around and run faster than I've ever run in my whole life.

I run through some woods. Sometimes my right foot steps on a stick and it hurts. I run. Faster until the woods aren't woods. I turn around, and no one is behind me. I see the back of a white house that is mostly brown. And I see a stop sign. I walk around the house. There are two empty rocking chairs on the porch. They are begging. I don't see any cars. Maybe no one's home. I knock on the brown front door with black paint stuck on it. The door opens and makes a creaking noise. It sounds like it's screaming or something. I hate it. I hate it. And she is there. She is smiling at me. She is inside the house, and she is looking at me, and she is smiling at me. She is smiling so big at me. To tell me she loves me. Her eyes look like triangles. She is smiling because she loves me. Her eyes are like triangles.