

The Warrior Chronicles: Evolution
Written by Kathlyn Mickel
Copyright 2006 Kathlyn Mickel

You are Warriors now,
It is a battle of the mind.
You are Warriors now,
Search and you will find.
You are Warriors now,
New soldiers you must seek,
You are Warriors now,
The truth is buried deep.

Chapter 1

Carly pulled the door closed behind her. The cold November air stung her face and nose as she took a deep breath.

“Why does she have to be so difficult!” She stated with disgust while zipping up her coat. Her still damp brown hair hung loosely around her shoulders and she reached into her deep pockets to extract a blue scrunchy. She quickly pulled her hair into a ponytail and flung her heavy backpack over one shoulder. She was reluctant to move from the front steps of her house, but she knew she didn’t have much time. The bus would be there momentarily, another day of school was upon her, regardless of her desire to just stay home.

She took another deep breath of the cold air and stepped off the stoop. She could see Jon’s slight figure bouncing at the end of the street. He must have forgotten his coat again.

The fight with her mom began to replay in her mind as she walked to the bus stop. All that fuss over not turning on the dishwasher. So what if her little brothers had to eat toast instead of cheerios for breakfast. What was the big deal? She would do it when she got home.

Carly was getting more frustrated by the moment. Her mother didn’t understand her at all. She didn’t understand how it felt to be her, to be plain and not that smart. To be just so ‘normal’ that there was nothing special about you. Her mom didn’t understand. Neither did her sister, who was beautiful and in college now. Her father, who was never home. Her little brothers who were too young to even care. No one understood how boring life could be, and how she didn’t fit in with anyone. No one understood, well except maybe Jon. He understood her a little.

“Get up late?” He inquired when she finally reached him.

“Um, yeah, well, no, mom and I had a fight.”

“Oh,” He said turning away.

Carly and Jon were good friends. They had grown up together and attended the same church. They lived in the same neighborhood had gone to school together since the first grade.

They weren't best friends, but almost. If a girl could have a boy as a best friend, then he would be her best friend. Carly thought about that a lot.

Jon lived with his mom in the old original farmhouse that stood in their neighborhood. His father had long since departed leaving Jon, his sister, his mom, and the dog, which died two years ago. Jon had been so little when his parents divorced that it didn't bother him. Everyone was divorced, so it seemed.

About 10 years ago the field surrounding Jon's house was purchased by a developer who quickly divided the land into twenty parcels and erected 19 identical three bedroom ranch ramblers leaving Jon's house the only different home of the group. Jon didn't mind. His two-story farmhouse creaked in the wind and was surrounded by old oak trees perfect for climbing and spying on the little kids who rode their bikes up and down the quiet street. Carly's family moved in the first year and as second graders she and Jon became fast friends. As time went by they spent summers playing in the nearby cornfields and winters bearing the overcast skies of Washington State.

It seemed like endless months of rain depressed everyone, but Carly and Jon enjoyed their childhood of freedom and fun.

When junior high arrived, they were unprepared for the changes that hit them both. School was no longer interesting, but instead a bore. Their parents seemed distant and uncaring, not understanding their feelings or needs. And then there were all the physical changes, which Carly both loved and hated at the same time. She liked feeling older, but she battled the pimples on her face. Her curly brown hair now frizzed to the point of impossibility and none of her clothes fit right. She felt uncomfortable in her own body, and often became angry for no reason.

Jon took adolescence with more stride, although he hated the thought of shaving and it seemed like he never had the correct size of shoes. He didn't seem to mind his changing voice or slight clumsiness though.

Throughout the first year of junior high, Carly and Jon tossed around the idea of starting a relationship, but after a few days of hand holding and an attempt to kiss, they ended up deciding just to be friends. In a strange way it brought them closer together.

The long, orange bus arrived with lights flashing and they quickly climbed aboard. Carly settled into the first empty seat she could find and Jon slipped in beside her. Their school was located only about five miles away. It had combined three elementary schools and had seemed gigantic at first. But now it was easy to maneuver through the packed halls and they knew all the shortcuts to their lockers and classes. It would be a short ride, but the warmth from the blowing bus heaters welcomed them and steamed the rectangular windows.

“So, what was the fight about?” Jon asked casually.

“Stupid stuff,” Carly stated looking out at the passing fields and farmhouses. “Aren’t they always stupid?”

Jon didn’t seem that interested, and Carly certainly didn’t want to talk about the fight again, so a silence settled over the two friends.

Carly’s mind drifted far away.

Random thoughts flitted through her mind. Thanksgiving, only a few weeks away, Christmas, the choir concert, singing, her friends at lunch, youth group. One thought led to the next as Carly relaxed and began to forget about her mom. It was the lurching of the bus in front of the school that brought her back to reality. Jon grabbed his bag and squished into the line of bodies exiting the bus.

Carly quickly scooted in behind him. She dutifully stepped off the bus and secured her pack on her back. She stuffed her hands into her coat pocket and hesitated just a moment before departing.

“Bye,” said Jon walking towards the 300 hall. Carly would see him again in science class and lunch.

“See ya,” she replied heading for her first period class: choir. She was not looking forward to the day; she figured that usually her early morning foul mood stemmed from a distinct distaste for the morning. As she plodded along in the misty rain, she tried to cheer herself up. Choir was fun! She had always enjoyed it. It was classes like science and math that were drudgery.

She could hear lockers slamming from the halls as she passed the open doors.

Carly hated using her locker. It was inconveniently located and sometimes she had trouble with the combination. About once a quarter she would store a project in it so that she wouldn’t have to carry it, but most of the time she kept all of her books, notebooks, pens, and pencils in her backpack.

When she finally reached for the choir door, her hair was soaked and frizzy and a stubborn raindrop had gathered on her straight, thin nose. She hastily wiped it away and entered.

A couple of her friends were already in choir when she arrived. There were no chairs set up on the long bleacher raised floor, so she dumped her pack and went to grab one of the uncomfortable blue chairs stacked in the back.

“Hey Carly,” mumbled Jen from her seat in front. She was obviously only 15 minutes out of her bed and her curly blonde hair was ruffled and falling around her face. Jen was her choir friend. She had been in the same choir since 4th grade, but they never saw each other or socialized outside of that group. They sat next to each other in the alto section, that non-descript necessary but never the lead section that they had been placed years ago and had never escaped. It was the sopranos that got all of the solos and the sopranos who were called the most talented.

Carly knew that she wasn't the best singer, but she liked it, and she needed to have a hobby. Jen was a much better singer, but Carly was louder and more steady. She had a knack for remembering music, which Jen struggled with. Together they blended and lead the alto section with a bunch of seventh graders who had a hard time keeping on tune. Carly plopped down next to Jen who was absorbed in the second Harry Potter book for the fifth time.

Carly took out her headphones and began listening to her Third Day CD. She liked this CD, it was a new flavor for this band, which she saw in concert last summer at the Creation concert at the gorge. She only had about five minutes and mouthed the words to 'Wire' before the first bell.

Even though it was November, they were singing Christmas songs, or what the district now call Holiday songs, getting ready for the December concert. Carly longed for Christmas. It was her favorite holiday filled with memories and traditions. The two weeks of vacation from school also helped.

Their concert line-up consisted of Frosty the Snowman, Jingle Bells (the lengthy version), and Chestnuts Roasting on An Open Fire. The advanced Choir was doing the harder songs, but all were void of any religious tenor. Carly was used to this by now. Choir class was followed by math, then came science. Normally Carly loved science, but this year something seemed different, and Carly was uneasy from the very first day when Mr. Williams, with his glistening white smile, soft brown eyes, and boyish face challenged a student about his religion.

Carly didn't know the kid's name, but the accusing glare and patronizing tone Mr. Williams shot at the student made her uncomfortable. Many things about science class made her feel weird.

For example, the huge poster in the back displaying ozone effect with the last column loudly pronouncing: "Human extinction" was depressing.

All of the large jars filled with various animal fetuses lining the countertops made her squirm. Then there was the long timeline posted above the windows. "The Evolution of Mankind" it read and showed a monkey like creature, then that creature standing up, then progressing to a regular man over millions of years.

She dismissed the whole thing as a theory and hoped that she wouldn't have to think about it any further than the chapter test. She had been hearing about evolution since the fourth grade, but not in detail, and she wasn't in the mood to start hearing the details now. Her time in church had firmly planted the Creation story as truth in her mind, but she felt vulnerable.

All she had was the Bible to back her up; Mr. Williams had charts, graphs, scientific evidence, and jars full of baby animals. Every day she reluctantly took her seat in the front row.

The bell rang, time for Frosty, Bells, and Chestnuts.

“Check out my chess board,” said Jon slipping into the desk next to Carly in science class and handing her a newly crafted two foot board. “What do you think?”

“Wow,” said Carly genuinely impressed by the perfectly crafted squares and the glistening texture of the piece. Jon had quite a talent for woodwork and loved woodshop.

“That’s amazing! How long did it take you?”

“Oh, about three weeks I guess, I got an A- on it because I made a mistake with the router over here,” he explained pointing out a lengthy indent that seemed to bobble slightly around the edge.

“That’s really nice, what are you going to do with it?”

“Guess I’ll have to learn chess!” He said triumphantly while gently placing the board under his seat.

Mr. Williams raced in the door thirty seconds before the bell with armloads of paper which he dropped on his desk sending an echoing bang across the stale room. It silenced the class.

“Now that I have your attention,” he said with a toothy grin, “let’s get going. Your opening question is on the board. Take out your science notebooks and answer in complete sentences. Don’t forget, you’ll see questions like this on the WASL, so you need to address the question in the answer. You have five minutes.”

With that he turned his back on the class and snapped on his computer.

Students obediently searched and recovered their science notebooks and flipped them open to a clean page. A slight mumbling could be heard as Carly read the question under her breath.

“This is a silent activity,” came the voice of Mr. Williams who was now reading his current email.

The mumbling stopped and only the sound of scratching pencils could be heard along with the buzzing of the florescent lights.

Carly read the question again.

“Explain the theory of Evolution. What is your opinion of it?”

Carly tensed just a bit. She knew that her science journal would not really be read, just the pages counted, but what was she supposed to do? Should she play the game- write down what she really knew, and state her “schooled opinion” that it is an excellent theory that explains the origin of mankind? Or should she be truthful. She didn’t believe in evolution, she believed in Creation, but she didn’t have much evidence to back that up. The minutes passed.

She opted for the quick and acceptable lie: “I’m not sure if I understand evolution. I think it will be interesting to learn about it.” Teachers loved that kind of fake honesty.

“Good, now let’s hear some of your answers,” said Mr. Williams turning again to the class.

“Julie? What did you write?”

“Um...” Julie hesitated as a few eyes turned to her seat in the back row. “Um, I put that evolution is a theory that talks about how mankind came from monkeys.”

Excellent start, interjected Mr. Williams making Julie blush.

“Joseph, your answer please.”

“Well, evolution is a theory that was founded by Darwin and uses the process of natural selection to randomly evolve animals and plant life into what we see today. It is scientifically accepted as fact and is now provable.”

“Fabulous Joseph!” Exclaimed Mr. Williams almost giddy.

Carly averted her eyes hoping to avoid Mr. Williams’s selection. On this day that tactic worked and Mr. Williams turned to his desk to retrieve a massive pile of papers which he handed out to the rows.

“This will get us started,” he said. “Please read the first few paragraphs and summarize them in your notebooks.”

Carly obediently accepted the task and scanned the first three paragraphs about the life of Charles Darwin.

He was born in Shrewsbury England in 1820 and was a curious child intensely interested in animals and nature. Originally he was supposed to go into the ministry, but that didn’t suit his nature, and so he decided to become a doctor. Unfortunately he was a very poor student and left that pursuit as well. He eventually decided to travel...

Carly looked up and scanned the room.

Everyone was scribbling notes and reading, everyone except the kid by the window who seemed to be lost in thought.

Carly stretched to peek at his paper. It was blank.

“Let’s see what you have,” boomed Mr. Williams confident voice when the ten minutes had expired.

“Sean, what did you write?”

I wrote that Charles Darwin was born in a place called Shrewsbury England.

“Yes, yes,” chirped Mr. Williams swooping to a full size map on the front board. “Here we are,” he ceremoniously pointed to the West coast of the United States, “and here is Shrewsbury!”

I traveled there last year- wonderful little city with a fabulous little museum devoted to the great scientist Charles Darwin. They even have a life size statue of him. Here I’ll pass around the photos.”

Mr. Williams distributed the large photos of the quaint town to the rows. Jon handed a picture of Mr. Williams next to the statue of Darwin. His white teeth gleaming, he had his long arm resting on the statue as if the two of them were long lost friends. Carly quickly passed it to her neighbor.

Mr. Williams was now explaining the contents of the museum and the details of his lengthy trip through England. The class was starting to fade away. Carly’s thoughts drifted far, far from the class, back to the concert and comfort she felt there among believers.

Then suddenly a booming voice interrupted her.
“Conrad, would you like to join us?”

Carly looked over to see Mr. Williams confronting the distant boy. He was strange, one of those kids that you never really noticed. He was only three chairs over, next to the window. He slowly moved his eyes from the direction of the distant trees to Mr. Williams.

Sullen and dark, his hair fell over his eyes. “No, I do not,” he said with quiet confidence. There was an uncomfortable silence, then, for some reason Mr. Williams left him. He returned to the overhead. For just a second Carly watched the kid, he was odd, almost a little disgusting. Perhaps he’s a serial killer, thought Carly, or a madman waiting to plan some kind of catastrophe. She scolded herself and went back to the board.

“So, as I was saying, evolution is an accumulation of knowledge. It began with Darwin and has through numerous discoveries become the leading scientific theory of the day.”
“Theory,” thought Carly, “yes, it is just a theory.”

“In fact,” Mr. Williams continued, “it is a fact,” he chuckled to himself, “that it is a fact.” His admirers in the back cooed and giggled to each other.

Carly felt irritated by them and by the subject. This isn’t what she knew to be true. She had been hearing this same story since fourth grade. Yeah, yeah, they all think it is a fact, but it’s not.

“Now, I know some of you have been taught differently, but in the next few weeks I will prove to you, or should I say science will prove to you, that evolution is the reason we are here today. Evolution created you, and evolution can be proven. We will see how

transitional forms, and spontaneous generation, and natural selection combine to create, manipulate, and sustain life.”

Carly suddenly felt brave. This wasn't right. This wasn't what she knew to be true, and if no one else was going to stand up to this nonsense, then she would have to.

She raised her hand defiantly. Jon looked over, slightly curious.

Mr. Williams continued his dialogue.

She waived her hand slightly and then her bravery began to subside.

No, she encouraged herself. I've got to say it. Brave once again she blurted,

“Excuse me Mr. Williams.”

“Oh, yes, Carly, you had a question?” he said brightly.

“Um,” she bit her lip as she became aware that all eyes were staring in her direction. She wasn't usually noticed in the class and had never asked a question before, “well, it is just that I don't believe in evolution,” she hesitated just slightly before continuing, “I believe in a divine Creator.”

There was a sudden silence, and even a gasp from the back of the room. Carly's face turned a shade of red as she stared hopefully into the contorted gaze of Mr. Williams. She could tell that he was stunned, but quickly recovered as he glanced from her to the window and back again. He took a deep breath then let his eyes fall upon her. Taking a long slow step to her desk he sighed impatiently. Carly could smell the spearmint gum that was now lodged between his teeth and cheek.

She suddenly felt very alone and was regretting her question.

Mr. Williams placed his hands on her desk and a wry smile crossed his face. His stony gaze was locked on her forehead. He leaned closer, as if to tell her a secret, but as he invaded her space, she naturally began to cower in her chair. She could feel the cold back of her desk digging into her shoulder blades. Her heart began to beat quickly.

“Now Carly,” a sweet voice began.

She could feel the hair on her arms begin to stand up. A hot rush of blood flooded her body and she became short of breath. Her heart was pounding so hard that she was sure Mr. Williams could hear it. Concentrate, be strong, she urged herself.

“I understand you are confused.” He began. Her blood pulsed through her ears with a great thump, thump, thump.

“You were raised in a close-minded family. They taught you all sorts of mystical things so that you would behave and have morals.” His words were seething with venom and Carly was having a hard time exhaling.

“But you are growing up- you should be questioning those ancient beliefs. You should be stretching your mind, not caught in some lie fostered by myths and stories.” His condescending tone made her feel as if she was insignificant and worthless. She swallowed hard to keep herself from crying.

“I know it will be difficult at times, but the sooner you learn the truth, the better off you'll be.”

The truth, the truth, the truth! A random dialogue began to play in her mind: what is the truth, where is the truth, this can't be true, this can't be happening, help- help me find the truth, where are you God?