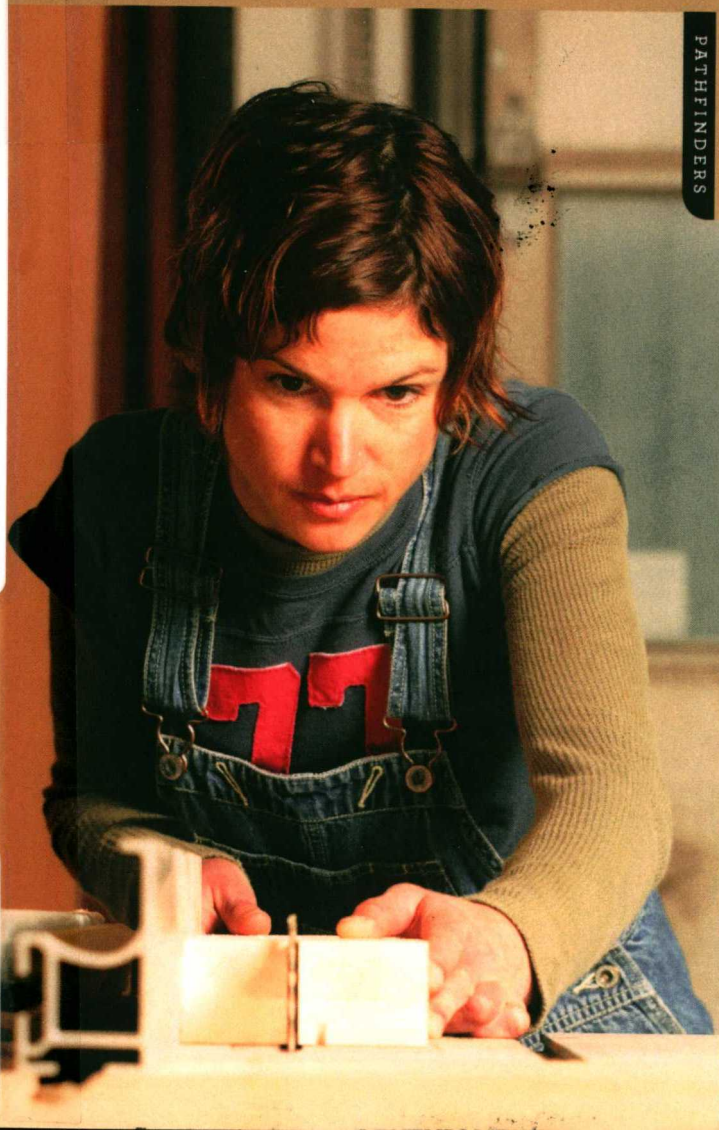


# The Saw That Talked

Tana Reiff

PATHFINDERS



## Chapter 1

When Lindy  
was a young girl,  
the tree  
in front of her house  
was hit  
during a storm.  
It was a big tree.  
Lindy would never forget  
how the earth shook  
when the tree  
hit the ground.  
After the storm  
she and her big brother  
went outside  
to take a look.

“Look at all this wood!”  
her brother said.  
“Just think  
of all the things  
we can make!”

The next week  
their father  
took a chainsaw  
to the fallen tree.  
Then Lindy and her brother  
had their turn.  
They knocked off the bark.  
They sawed logs  
into smaller pieces.  
They carried  
all of it  
into their dad's workroom.  
There, they began  
to make things  
out of wood.

They sawed.  
They shaped.  
They nailed.  
They sanded.  
They worked together  
for many weeks.

One piece of wood  
became a little table

for Lindy.  
Others became  
little chairs  
for Lindy and her friends.  
The last thing  
Lindy and her brother made  
was a house  
for their dog.

From that time on,  
Lindy loved wood.  
She loved  
the look of wood.  
She loved  
the feel of wood.  
She loved  
the smell of sawdust.  
She loved  
to turn a piece of wood  
into something  
that someone could use.

When Lindy  
got to high school,  
she took wood shop.

She was  
the only girl  
in the class.  
It didn't matter.  
When Lindy  
was in the wood shop,  
she was happy.  
She liked it so much  
that she went on  
to carpentry school.

And then,  
when Lindy  
got out of school,  
she looked  
for a job  
working with wood.  
She found one  
in a small furniture factory.

Around the same time,  
she married Nick.  
Lindy felt  
very lucky.

## Chapter 2

It was Lindy's first day  
working in the wood shop.  
She met the owner,  
Chet Michaels.  
He showed her  
to the saw table  
where she would work.

Lindy's job  
was to cut boards  
into set shapes.  
Each board would become  
the side or front or back  
of a chair or sofa.

Lindy did her job  
standing at the saw table.  
The round blade  
of the saw  
was spinning all the time.  
With one hand,



Lindy held the board  
against the back  
of the table.  
With the other hand,  
she pulled the saw handle  
toward her.  
The spinning blade  
cut each board  
along the marks.

Lindy had worked  
with table saws before.  
But something was missing  
from this one.  
There was no guard  
on the blade.  
At carpentry school,  
every saw blade  
had a guard.  
She didn't have to worry  
if her hand slipped.  
The guard made sure  
she would not  
hit the blade.

But her saw blade  
at the furniture factory  
had no guard.

She felt  
she should say something  
to Chet Michaels.  
She went over and over it  
in her head.  
But she was afraid  
to speak up.  
She had just started  
this new job.

And Lindy  
was the only woman  
on this floor.  
She didn't want  
to look weak.  
She didn't want  
to stand out.  
After all,  
no one had guards  
on their saw blades.

So she couldn't talk to Chet.  
And there was no way  
she was going to talk  
to these guys  
about a blade guard.  
They would only laugh,  
the way they always did.

They would start on her  
the minute  
she got to work.

"Hey there, sweet thing!"  
a guy named Burt Flowers  
called to her.

"Here comes  
the pretty woman!"  
said another.

Lindy liked her work.  
But she hated  
hearing those guys.  
She couldn't make friends  
with any of these people.

No, she could not  
talk to them  
about the blade guards.

She was glad  
to have Nick,  
because at work  
she felt all alone.

And what if  
she lost her job  
just for talking  
about blade guards?  
This was not  
a union shop.  
There was no one  
to stand up for Lindy  
but Lindy herself.  
She felt  
she was in no place  
to stand up for herself here.

She made up her mind.  
Speaking up  
just wasn't worth it.

So Lindy  
kept her mouth shut.  
She could work  
with a blade  
that had no guard.  
She would just have to be  
very careful.

## Chapter 3

Lindy's job  
in the wood shop  
was going all right.  
She was turning out  
chair and sofa frames  
one after another.

The one thing  
she still didn't like  
was the way  
the guys acted.  
Not only did they  
check her out  
every day,  
they gave her  
a bad time  
in other ways too.  
They always found  
a new way  
to bug her.

“Hey Lindy!  
Don’t break a nail  
on that saw table!”  
one guy kept saying.

Lindy always  
looked him in the eye.  
She always kept  
her mouth shut tight  
to keep in the words  
she really wanted to say.

They also played tricks.  
One day,  
the guys locked her  
out of the lunchroom.  
Another time,  
they took the key  
to the ladies’ room.  
All she could do  
was use the men’s room.

Then one day  
one of the guys  
went a step too far.

Lindy was working  
at the saw table.  
She was cutting boards  
just like always.  
She was keeping  
a close eye  
on her blade.  
It was loud  
on the shop floor.  
But she heard  
one of the guys call out,  
“Lindy! Hey, Lindy!  
Watch out!  
There’s a board  
flying at you!”

Lindy looked up  
as she reached  
for the handle  
on the saw.  
She saw nothing  
to watch out for.

All of a sudden,  
all she could hear



was her own scream.  
Instead of the handle,  
she had reached  
right into the blade.  
The end  
of her little finger  
hit the blade.  
She saw the blood  
flowing out of her finger.

“What do I do now?”  
she cried.  
She looked around,  
hoping someone would help her.

## Chapter 4

Lindy leaned back  
against the wall.  
The pain in one finger  
filled her whole body.  
But she didn't want the guys  
to know how bad she felt.

One of the older men  
ran over to Lindy.  
“What happened?”  
Brady asked  
in a kind voice.  
Then he saw for himself.  
“Let me see  
your finger.”

By this time  
Lindy was crying.  
She didn't want anyone  
to see her crying.  
But she couldn't help it.

The pain was so bad,  
she felt sick and dizzy.

Brady took a look  
at the finger.

“You lost  
the end of it,”  
he told Lindy.  
He pulled a rag  
from his pocket.  
He wrapped her finger  
to stop the blood.

“Thanks, Brady,”  
said Lindy.

“I guess I’d better  
go and see  
the company nurse.”

“I wouldn’t do that,”  
said Brady.

“Around here,  
we don’t get hurt  
on the job.”

“What do you mean?”  
Lindy wanted to know.

“I just lost  
part of my finger.  
I’d say  
I just got hurt  
on the job.”

“You want to keep  
your job?”  
Brady asked.  
“Then don’t go  
to the company nurse.  
Go to your family doctor.  
If you go  
to the company nurse,  
you won’t have a job  
to come back to.”

“You’re kidding!”  
said Lindy.

“I wish,”  
said Brady.

“That’s how it is here.

Now my word to you is,  
put on a smile  
and get back  
to your saw table.”

To Lindy,  
one cut finger  
felt as if her hand  
had been cut off.  
She tried not to cry.  
She didn't want  
her pain to show.  
But her finger  
hurt like crazy.  
She didn't see  
how she could go  
back to that saw table.

But back she went.  
She tried not to think  
about her finger.  
She put her mind  
on the next board.  
And the next.  
And the next.

And with every board  
she sawed,  
she kept her eye  
on that blade.  
She had let her mind  
leave her work once.  
For that, she had paid.  
She couldn't let it  
happen again.

At long last,  
her shift was over.  
Lindy felt very weak.  
The pain in her finger  
was all she could think about.  
She dragged herself  
to her car.  
She grabbed  
the door handle.  
She fell  
into the front seat.  
Her head  
dropped to the wheel  
and she let herself  
cry like a baby.

## Chapter 5

“What happened to you?”  
Nick cried  
when he saw Lindy.

She told her husband  
what had happened.  
“And you drove home?”  
he wondered.  
“You’re in bad shape.  
How in the world  
did you drive a car?”

“It’s only my finger,”  
said Lindy.

“Get in the car,”  
said Nick.  
“I’m taking you  
to Emergency.”

On the way,  
Lindy and Nick talked.  
“Why didn’t you go  
to the company nurse?”  
Nick wanted to know.  
“Why didn’t you  
tell your boss?”

“I didn’t want  
to get fired,”  
said Lindy.  
“Brady said  
to shut up  
or I’d be fired.”

“Well, then, call  
the Health and Safety inspectors,”  
said Nick.  
“They won’t let  
your company  
get away with  
not having blade guards.  
Hey, I’ll call *for* you!”



"No way!"

said Lindy.

"You and I both know  
there should be guards  
on those blades.

But anyone  
who rocks the boat  
is in for rough sailing.

Besides, Nick,  
I'm the only woman  
on my floor.

I have to be tough.  
I'm not going to be  
the one who talks.

I just have to be  
more careful."

"I want to know  
why there aren't guards  
on those blades,"  
said Nick.

"They tell me  
blade guards  
slow things down,"

said Lindy.

"You must set the blade  
for the size  
of the board.

It's hard to see  
how to set it

with the guard on.

You can pull a blade out more  
when there's no guard.

That saves time.

Time is money, man.

And money  
is what the company  
cares about."

"How do they  
get away with it?"

Nick wanted to know.

"They get away with it  
until someone calls  
the inspectors,"

said Lindy.

"And no one calls.



So the inspectors  
don't see it."

"Why don't the inspectors  
come and take a look  
now and then?"  
Nick wondered.

"There aren't  
enough inspectors  
to check up  
all the time,"  
she said.  
She reached  
deep into her bag.

"What are you doing?"  
Nick asked.

"I have the number  
for Health and Safety,"  
Lindy told him.  
"I keep it  
in my bag.

In a pocket.  
Deep down here  
somewhere."

She dug into her bag.  
"Here it is,"  
she said  
as she pulled out  
the little paper.

"Well, I hope  
you'll use it,"  
said Nick.  
"Because if you don't,  
I will."

Nick drove  
to Emergency.  
A doctor looked  
at Lindy's little finger.  
"You had a close call,"  
he told her.  
He began to stitch.  
"You were lucky

you didn't cut off  
the whole finger,"  
he went on.  
Or your whole hand,  
for that matter!  
You really should not work  
for a little while."

"Maybe not,"  
said Lindy.

"But I can't miss work  
for one bad finger.  
I'll be there tomorrow  
pain or no pain."

## Chapter 6

Lindy stood  
at her saw table  
the very next morning.  
The little finger  
on her right hand  
was wrapped in white.

"How's your finger?"  
Brady asked her.

"No big deal,"  
she told him.  
"I didn't need  
the end of that finger!"  
They both laughed.

And so, work went on,  
the same as always.

On Friday afternoon  
Lindy was finishing up

for the week.  
There were only  
ten more boards  
to saw.  
She counted down:  
9, 8, 7.  
And then six.

That Friday,  
six was not  
Lindy's lucky number.

She held that board  
against the back  
of the saw table.  
The saw  
cut into the board.  
All of a sudden,  
the blade  
hit a tiny knot  
in the wood.  
The board jumped.  
Lindy wasn't ready.  
It all happened  
so fast.

Her thumb  
hit the saw blade.  
Lindy cried out in pain.  
She backed off fast.  
She could see  
that her thumb  
was cut real bad.  
Blood was everywhere.

This time,  
Brady heard her cry out.  
He ran over to Lindy  
and wrapped a rag  
around her thumb.

Lindy held her mouth tight  
as if to hold in the pain.

"I'll be okay,"  
Lindy told Brady.  
"It's not that bad."

She finished sawing  
the last five boards.

Then she drove herself  
to Emergency.

But Lindy had to stay home  
the next day.  
The pain was still too bad.  
She lost a day of work,  
a day's pay.

And then, a week later,  
Lindy was in the middle  
of sawing a board.  
Little bits of wood  
began to fly all over.  
Lindy ducked.  
This happened  
all the time.  
But this time,  
some of the bits  
hit Lindy in the face.  
She felt a line  
of hot blood  
drip down her cheek.

She knew why  
the wood  
flew around like that.  
It was because  
there was no guard  
on the saw blade.

Just then,  
Chet Michaels  
came walking by.  
“What’s up, kid?”  
he asked her.

Lindy hated  
when Chet called her “kid.”  
He never called  
the guys “kid.”  
Only her.  
Only the woman.

“Nothing’s up,”  
she answered.  
“I can handle  
a little blood.”

“Yes, I guess you can,”  
said Chet.

“You should be  
used to it by now.  
Maybe you should be  
a little more careful  
around that saw.  
You, of all people,  
should keep your eyes  
on your blade.”

Lindy was afraid  
she might blow up.  
She had just been hit  
in the face  
with flying wood.  
It was because  
there were no guards  
on the blade.  
And Chet picked now  
to tell her  
to be more careful.

“Yeah. I’ll be more  
careful,”  
Lindy told Chet.  
But Chet Michaels  
had not heard the last  
of what Lindy had to say.



## Chapter 7

Enough was enough.  
Lindy was ready  
to call the inspectors.  
Health and Safety  
needed to know  
what was going on  
at this furniture factory.

The company  
had a rule:  
No phones  
on the shop floor.  
No calls, no texts,  
no games, nothing.

So Lindy waited  
till break time.  
Then she marched  
out the door.  
She kept on walking,

to be as far away  
as she could be.

She dug deep  
into her bag.  
She pulled out  
the phone number.

She hoped  
to talk to someone  
right away.  
But she was put  
on hold.  
She waited.  
And waited.  
She looked  
at the time.  
Her break  
was almost over.  
She gave up  
and went back inside.

Over lunch  
she called again.  
She ate her lunch outside

while she waited  
on hold.  
She heard  
the same music  
playing over and over.

And then, at last,  
she heard a voice.  
“How can we help you?”  
the man said.

“I need to report  
the company I work for,”  
she began.  
She told the man  
all about her saw  
with no blade guard.  
She told him  
about how she got hurt,  
three times.

“Are you following  
all the safety rules?”  
the man asked.

“Of course, I am!”  
said Lindy.

“But the company  
is not!

That is who  
won't keep guards  
on the blades,  
not me!”

“Are you sure  
you're not just angry  
about something else?”  
the man asked.

“I'm angry  
about a lot of things,”  
said Lindy.

“But there are still  
no guards on the blades!”

“We're pretty busy,”  
said the man.

“But we *will* send  
someone to take a look.

It won't be  
today or tomorrow."

"Thank you,"  
was all Lindy said.  
With that,  
she ended the call  
and went back inside.

She had done it.  
She had called  
the inspectors.  
Now she had to wait  
for two things.  
She had to wait  
for an inspector  
to show up.  
And she had to wait  
to see if this phone call  
would cost her  
a job she loved.

## Chapter 8

A week went by.  
No inspector  
came to the shop.  
Two weeks passed.  
Still no one.

No one was talking much  
these days.  
Lindy did not tell anyone  
about her phone call.  
The guys had stopped  
giving Lindy a hard time.  
They knew  
they had gone too far.  
Seeing Lindy get hurt  
was not funny.

Then one day,  
Lindy heard a man cry out  
over the sound  
of the saws.

“It got me!  
Oh, God, it got me!”

It was Brady.  
Lindy ran over  
to see what was wrong.  
She saw Brady’s hand,  
covered with blood.

“What happened?”  
she called to Brady.

Brady didn’t answer.  
His face went blank.  
He fell to the floor.  
A circle of blood  
formed a pool  
around him.  
Brady was out cold.

One of the other guys  
came over  
to Brady’s saw table.  
“Look at that!”

he screamed,  
pointing to Brady  
on the floor.

Lindy got down on the floor  
beside Brady.  
She looked at his hand.  
It was cut wide open  
to the bone.  
She knew at once  
what had happened.  
Brady’s hand had slipped.  
And his saw blade  
had cut right into it.

“Is anyone here  
going to say  
this man  
shouldn’t see  
the company nurse?”  
shouted Lindy.  
She looked around.  
All the guys  
had stopped working.



The whole place  
was still and quiet now.  
Everyone was looking  
at Lindy.  
No one answered her.

“Does anyone hear me?”  
she asked.  
“I don’t think  
Brady should be moved.  
And we can’t leave him here  
like this.  
He’ll die.  
He has lost  
a lot of blood.  
I’m going  
for the nurse.”

One of the guys  
got down on the floor  
to check Brady.  
“He needs more  
than the company nurse,”  
he said.

Lindy ran to the door.  
She heard  
one of the guys say,  
“There should be guards  
on these blades.”  
Another guy said,  
“Someone around here  
should have called  
the inspectors  
a long time ago.”

“Guess what?”  
Lindy called out.  
“I already did!  
Now what do you think  
of that?”



## Chapter 9

Lindy and the nurse came running back to the shop floor. The nurse said that Brady must go to a hospital right away.

In minutes, help came. The paramedics carried Brady out. Lindy waved goodbye and off they went, lights flashing.

Lindy headed back to the shop floor. She turned down the hall. What she saw there

made her stop in her tracks.

All the men were standing around with phones in their hands.

“What’s going on, guys?” she asked.

“We’re calling the inspectors,” said one.

“We’re all reporting the blades without guards.”

“You’re kidding!” she laughed.

“All you guys are calling at the same time?”

“No phones on the shop floor,” said Burt Flowers.

“That’s the rule.  
So here we are.”

“No service!”  
one guy shouted out.  
“Too many calling  
at the same time!”

But some of the calls  
were getting through.

“You started it, girl!”  
said Burt Flowers.

“All right!”  
said Lindy.  
Her smile  
was as wide  
as a big, round saw blade.

“If we all call,  
maybe we’ll get guards  
on our blades,”  
Burt said.

“Some of the guys  
don’t like the guards.  
But wait till you get hurt!  
And what’s the worst  
that can happen?  
If one of us gets fired,  
we all get fired!”

“We’re in this together!”  
said Lindy.

She heard a guy talking  
on his phone.  
“Someone here  
got hurt real bad.  
You need to come and look.  
These saw blades  
with no guards  
could kill someone!”

The next day  
an inspector  
showed up at the shop.  
It took him

less than a minute  
to spot the problem.

“You have 30 days  
to get a guard  
on every blade,”  
the inspector told Chet Michaels.  
“I’ll be back  
to have a look.  
If there are no guards,  
no one can use the saws.  
Got that?”

## Chapter 10

Two weeks later  
every saw  
on that shop floor  
had a blade guard.  
It took a little time  
to get used to the guards.  
They did slow down the work  
a little bit.  
But everyone felt  
much safer.

Brady’s hand  
was in bad shape.  
He was still in hospital  
when guards  
were put on the saw blades.  
Lindy went to visit him.

“We did it, Brady!”  
said Lindy.

"Now there's one more thing  
we have to do.  
File you a claim  
for Workers' Compensation."

"You really are crazy, girl,"  
said Brady.

"You got things  
all stirred up.  
That's great.  
No one even lost their job.  
But now you want me  
to stir things up more  
by filing a claim?  
Are you mad?"

"Dear Brady,  
you can't use your hand,"  
said Lindy.

"Do you want  
to lose pay  
for all your lost time?  
Look at you.  
You'll be out of work

for a long time.  
You might never be able  
to work a saw again!"

"That's life,"  
said Brady.

"Listen, I'll help you file,"  
said Lindy.  
"I don't know  
much about it.  
But I'll find out.  
We don't have a union.  
We have to help each other."

"You're young, Lindy,"  
said Brady.

"I've worked  
for Chet Michaels  
all my life.  
I can't turn on him  
after all these years."



"You're not turning on him,"  
said Lindy.

"You'll need the money.  
That's why the company  
pays into Workers' Comp.  
You could sue  
for not having guards  
on the blades!"

The next day  
Lindy went  
to the company office.  
She asked  
for a claim form  
for Brady.  
She asked for one  
for herself too.  
Maybe she could get paid  
for her lost day of work.

"We'll fill out  
the claim forms for you,"  
she was told.

"No, thanks,"  
Lindy said.  
"I'll take them with me."

She and Brady  
filled out the forms together.  
They had to get doctors  
to fill out some parts  
and then sign the forms.  
Lindy took the forms back  
to the company office.  
The company  
needed to fill out  
one part of the form.  
Then the company needed  
to send the claims  
to the insurance company.

Lindy and Brady  
waited to hear  
about their claims.  
But word did not come.  
So Lindy called  
the insurance company.



"We never got your claims,"  
she was told.

"I knew it!"

Brady said.

"The company  
never filed the claims!"

"Right,"  
said Lindy.

"They would have  
sent us copies  
if they had filed them."

"We shouldn't have  
tried to file,"  
said Brady.

"No, no, no,"  
said Lindy.

"We had to file.  
We just need  
to get the guys  
behind us on this."

## Chapter 11

When Brady was back home,  
Lindy went to his house.  
"You're coming with me  
to the shop today,"  
she told him.

"What's going on?"  
Brady asked her.

"You'll see,"  
Lindy said  
as she helped Brady  
to her car.

When they got  
to the wood shop,  
Lindy told everyone  
about the lost claims.  
They all stopped  
what they were doing.

They marched down  
to the company office.  
Lindy walked  
at the head of the parade.  
Brady was second.

The woman at the desk  
was Barbara Michaels.  
She was Chet's wife.  
She ran the office.

"What happened  
to our Workers' Comp claims?"  
Lindy asked Barbara Michaels.

"Nothing,"  
said Barbara.  
Sure enough,  
two claim forms—  
hers and Brady's—  
were sitting on the desk.  
"I was told  
not to file these claims.  
I'm sorry."

Lindy grabbed the claims.  
"You haven't even filled out  
the company's part  
of the form!"  
she said.  
"We're not leaving  
until these forms  
are ready to send."

Barbara pressed  
a button  
on the desk phone.  
"Chet, you'd better  
get over here,"  
she said.

All the workers  
packed into the little office.  
They watched  
as Chet worked  
on the form.  
He asked Brady and Lindy  
some questions  
along the way.

They checked  
to make sure  
everything on the form  
was correct and true.  
Everyone watched  
as Chet signed  
both claim forms.  
They watched  
as Barbara put the forms  
in a big envelope.  
They watched  
as she wrote the address  
on the envelope.  
They watched  
as she put postage  
on the envelope.  
And they stayed  
until the mail truck came.  
They watched  
as it drove away  
with the envelope inside it.

The workers  
walked back

to the wood shop.  
This time,  
Lindy and Brady  
were at the tail end  
of the parade.

“Do you think  
we’ll get Workers’ Comp?”  
Brady asked Lindy.

“We’ll see,”  
Lindy said.  
She gave Brady  
a big hug.

“Thanks, girl,”  
said Brady  
with wet eyes.  
“Everything is better  
because of you.”

Lindy thought back  
to when she was a child.  
She thought about

when the big tree  
came down  
in the storm.  
She thought about  
how she and her brother  
made things  
out of the wood.  
She told the story  
to Brady.

“Just when you think  
everything is coming down  
around you,  
you make something  
good out of it,”  
Brady smiled.

As they reached  
the wood shop,  
Lindy smelled the sawdust.  
She couldn't wait  
to get in there  
and cut some more wood.