

by holly bowne

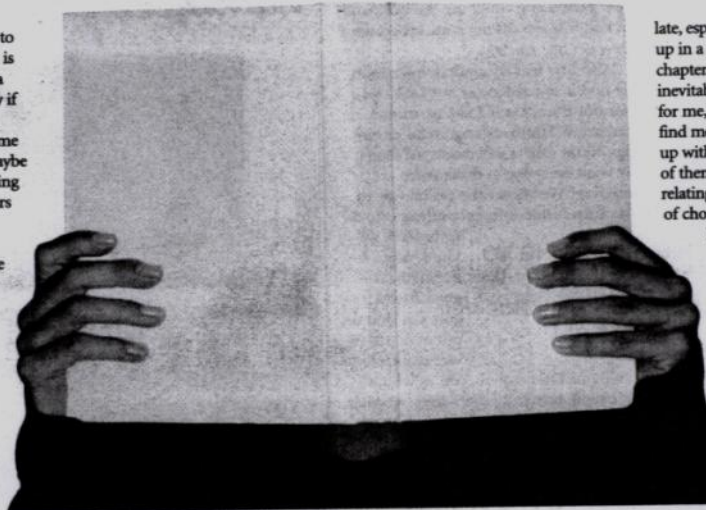
# Confessions of a Bedtime-Story Addict

JUST ONE MORE *NANCY DREW*. YOU KNOW I'M GOOD FOR IT.

They say the first step to healing an addiction is admitting you have a problem. Well, I don't know if I really have a *problem*. It's just that I like to read bedtime stories to my kids. A lot. Maybe it's a *little* unusual considering they are now 12 and 15 years old. And sure, it's a bit difficult for my daughter Ashleigh and me to squeeze together onto her twin-size bed – her being a full 2 inches taller than me – but, I tell myself I can quit anytime I want. The truth is ... I'm not so sure. And my children have become my enablers.

It all started when Ashleigh, my firstborn, was about 10 months old, and I decided that we needed to add a new and loving phase to our relationship by establishing a bedtime routine. I looked on it as a way to let her know it was time to slow down and prepare for sleep. I'd gather her up onto my husband's and my queen-size bed, piling the pillows around us to create a comfy little cocoon where we'd slowly savor a picture book together. (Well, I'd savor, she was more interested in chewing on the cover.)

As she got older, I pulled out all my old favorites – rereading classics such as the *Little House on the Prairie* series, *Nancy Drew*, and *Anne of Green Gables*. We became immersed in the imaginary. Then along came *Harry Potter*, and together we entered the world of fantasy. I satisfied my dramatic bent by creating distinctive voices for each character. The boisterous, cockney accent of Hagrid, the cool insolence of Draco Malfoy, and the calm of Dumbledore. I thought perhaps I'd finally



late, especially if I get caught up in a particularly good chapter. When my husband inevitably comes looking for me, he rolls his eyes to find me once again curled up with one or the other of them, dramatically relating the latest story of choice.

In my defense, I believe these story times are as much for my kids as they are for me. They love and look forward to this special bonding time we share. But in all honesty, I need my "fix." I need this time reading with them. In much the way

overcome my compulsion to read aloud every night when my son's developing taste in books varied so sharply from my own. My passion has always been fiction, but he's much more interested in reading about volcanoes, wolves, and medieval knights. Initially, I'd sigh when he'd pull out his choice of reading material for the night. "Don't you want me to read this?" I'd whine (Who is the child here?) holding up a *Hardy Boys* mystery.

"Not tonight, mom," he'd reply, happily climbing onto his bed and plumping the pillows in anticipation.

But I soon found myself just as fascinated as he was with the interesting new facts we'd discover together. I mean, did you know that pumice stones – used to smooth the rough spots on our feet and elbows – are volcanic rock?

Like any good junkie, I always finagle a way to satisfy my habit by reading to them both every night. Occasionally our storytime can run a bit

my husband relaxes by flipping through the channels on the television in the evening, reading to my children relaxes me. It brings a calming conclusion to my day. I crave that time to cuddle with them on their beds, the warmth of a new book covering us like a cozy blanket.

I acknowledge, though I don't want to admit it, that my days reading stories aloud are numbered. With my oldest a freshman in high school, and my youngest in the middle school years, too soon it will be over, and they'll be on to adventures of their own. But for now, I'll happily feed my addiction and treasure every single, sacred minute of our bedtime stories together.



Holly Bowne savors her bedtime stories while they last in Novi. To comment on this essay, or to submit your own, go to [strutmag.com](http://strutmag.com).