

A note from author-illustrator Matt Tavares



PHOTO BY SARAH TAVARES

Soon after I started working on this book, I visited Niagara Falls with my family. It was awe-inspiring to see it up close, to stand next to the falls and soak in (literally) the sheer massiveness of it. We got drenched on the Maid of the Mist and ventured out to the end of the observation platform at Prospect Point. I tried to imagine what it must have felt like for Blondin to be right near that very spot, unthinkably high above the raging river, walking on a rope just three inches wide. (It was scary enough standing on a twenty-foot-wide platform!)

The most common question people asked me while I was working on this book was “Did he ever fall?” The answer, incredibly, is no. After leaving Niagara Falls in September of 1860, Blondin spent the next two decades traveling the world, performing on his tightrope. He gave his final public performance at the age of seventy-two. Amazingly, in over sixty-five years as a rope walker, he was never injured. After stepping down from the rope for the final time, he retired to a villa in England.

He called it Niagara Villa.



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