

December 20, 2019

Salutations Mrs. Cynthia Kadohata,

In your book *Kira Kira* you describe the trials and tribulations of what being a middle child is like so profoundly. I am a middle child. I absolutely loved your book. It touched my heart because it helped me to learn somethings about myself I didn't realize before. I saw myself in Katie. Through her character I learned to love my sister more than I thought possible.

The first thing I noticed Katie and I are similar is in that of race. Like Katie my mother was not born in this country. I am half Puerto Rican. Mom is always telling me how I need to learn to speak Spanish, to be more Hispanic. Katie's mom wanted to send them to Japan so they learn to be more feminine. Mom tells us that one day she will send us to Puerto Rico for the whole summer so we learn the language and internalize the culture.

The second thing I noticed about Katie and myself was the personality. I consider myself an artist. I paint. My room is usually a mess. I think outside the box. Mom says I have a quirky personality. I think Katie is also quirky mostly because she reminds me of myself.

The most important parallel that I made was Katie's relationship with her sister Lynn. My older sister Isabel has always been very sickly. When she was in fourth grade she suffered pneumonia four times! Once she had a fever of 106! Mom was pregnant at the time with my little brother and was going crazy. I was in first grade. I didn't understand what the fuss was all about. She was so skinny and looked as pale as a ghost. This pattern of illness continued until today. Now she is a freshman in high school. So far she has had pneumonia twice.

Whenever Isabel gets sick, like Katie, I have to help by taking over her chores, taking care of my little brother and even help to wash the sheets she pukes on. For a while we used to share a room together. Isabel would ask me to check if mom and dad were still awake constantly through the night. If Isabel was sleeping, which she did a lot of, during the day I was not allowed to go in the room. Only at bed time and I had to be very quiet. So that left me in the living room with my younger brother who pesters and thinks he owns the TV. When she is not sick we are like two peas in a pod. We do everything together. Poor mom, back then she had to deal with a sick child, a baby, and a whiny little girl. Me!

It was in 4th grade when school started enforcing twenty-five minutes of reading every night. I found out that I was a very fast reader. I was particularly interested in realistic fiction. Isabel was in 7th grade and once again had pneumonia really bad. Once again, I was complaining about all the extra chores. I was my usual grumpy self when mom walked in my room with a book in her hand. It was *Kira Kira*. Thinking back I am sure mom did this on purpose, she had already read the book. She told me that she was sure it would help me cope with the situation. I didn't believe her.

While reading this book I realized that the family was literally the same compared to mine. The parents from a different country, the older sick sister, the baby brother who took up whatever attention was left, to the close bond between the sisters. It seemed to me that the circumstances that Lynn was going through were happening to Isabel and the feelings that Katie experienced I was experiencing myself. When I finished reading the book my first thought was shame. I felt ashamed of myself for begrudgingly taking care of my sister and for complaining over and over again that it wasn't fair. I had to put the book down and bury my face in a pillow and cried for all those times my sister had to hear me complain when she couldn't help her situation. I cried for all the negativity I had inflicted in my house. I realized that I had the power to make things better. I could make my family smile. Soon after Isabel got better and was back to her usual self. I apologized. Your novel has taught me to look for and appreciate the "glittering" moments in my life. I love my sister. She is my Kira Kira. The one parallel I hope never to have with Katie is losing Isabel.

Most humbled and appreciative,

Ilana Gunther