

*Marvel the Marvelous*

Laura Chester

Reviewed by: Vivien Lee, 15

Star Teen Book Reviewer of *Be the star You Are!* Charity

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*Marvel the Marvelous* written by Laura Chester and illustrated by Gary A. Lippincott, transports the reader to the land of the icy Northern Joya, where horses can ice skate and pink clouds can communicate. Marvel the horse lives with her two older sisters, Brilliance and Luster. When the king and queen of Joya discover a child in a frozen pond the whole village sets out to create their very first bonfire. As a result, winter leaves Northern Joya and spring comes, melting the ice into a great river. The child, named Lee, has no idea how she ended up in this strange land and is desperate to go home. She is told by the king and queen that by following the river current, she will be able to see the Treasure House, the portal to Earth.

Marvel, who had befriended Lee, volunteers to accompany her along for her journey, and is later joined by Bonzo the mastiff and Beanie the pug. The four friends swim along the dark and dirty sewage; they encounter the Spigot-von-Glume, a monster created by pollution; they meet the honey-bunnies and talking flowers. Along the way, Lee tries to recollect on how she ended up in the frozen pond. All she can recall is that she got in a car accident after her father drove in a drunken state. As she continues to ponder on her current situation, they face their final challenge: the Darkling Orblock. After they cleverly get past the monster, Lee enters the Treasure House, briefly seeing her sister Claire before she is transported to Earth. When she wakes up, she finds herself in a hospital, and her parents explain that she had just been in a coma. Claire had died in the accident. Lee and Marvel, in their own worlds, cry, knowing that they will never have a chance to make a proper farewell with each other.

It would not be surprising if the reader was skeptical on whether or not this book was worthwhile to read. However, it is strangely charming even for teenagers, and many of the childish elements are too adorable to scoff at. The tone is something very similar to fairy tales, and at times it might seem clichéd, but the reader will end up forgiving the author because it is so cleverly done. Young readers around the age of seven or eight would probably enjoy this tale the most. It is the perfect transition book for those who are leaving behind the picture stories and starting longer, chapter books. Chester often makes references to alcoholism and environmentalism, which is very commendable, as it is important to let young readers know the basics of the current issues we have today. Through this story, the readers may learn a lesson about how our nature reacts to our actions, like pollution and oil dumping. For the older readers, it is a relieving break from the complicated novels of today. No matter how much one enjoys the exciting stories of that end up in best seller lists, this novel takes the reader to a place where she or he can dream of a fairy land that everyone dreamt about when they were young.