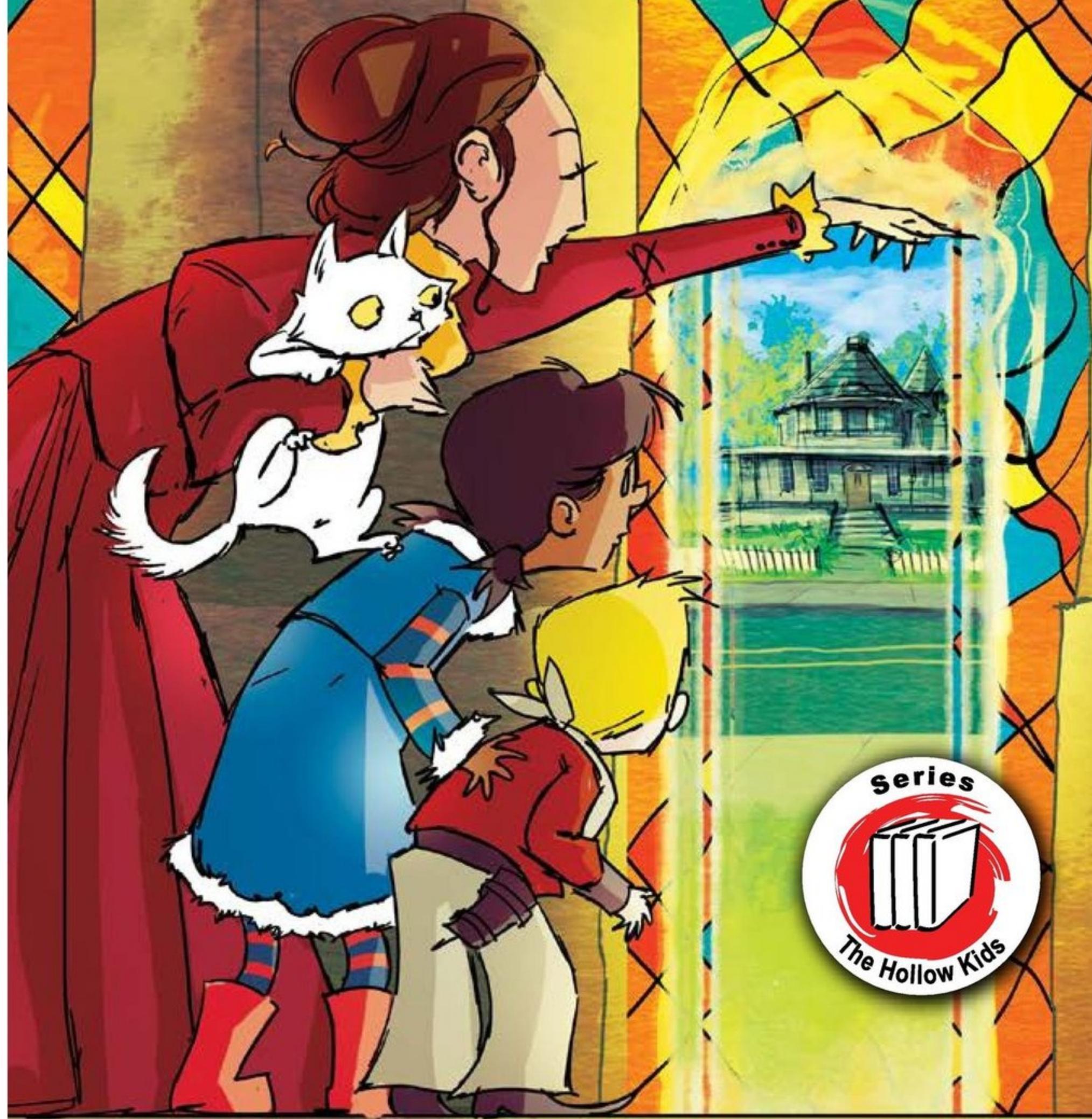


LEVELED BOOK • W

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE GLASS



Written by Rus Buyok • Illustrated by Thomas Boatwright

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www.readinga-z.com

Focus Question

Should Sarah trust Queen Tatiana? Why or why not?

Words to Know

abode

delirious

disorienting

faze

intricate

maternal

radiates

recedes

saunter

slender

triumphant

turmoil

The Other Side of the Glass
Level W Leveled Book
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Correlation

LEVEL W	
Fountas & Pinnell	S
Reading Recovery	40
DRA	40



A chill crawls down Sarah's spine as she steps into the darkness beyond the doorway of the house in the woods. She blinks, her eyes adjusting to the lack of light, and for a moment she glimpses something very strange and **disorienting**: a world turned in on itself, where fragments of earth and stone float aimlessly among plates, candlesticks, and various other objects.

As quickly as it appeared, the vision **recedes**, and she stands with Jake on a sturdy wood floor, ducks quacking behind them, in a dimly lit room she immediately recognizes. She has been there before.

"How did we get back to Porter's Mill?" she asks no one in particular. The room looks cleaner and more welcoming than the one in the Hollow, but it's the same room, she has no doubt.

She steps farther inside, and the door slowly groans closed as Jake proceeds to inspect their surroundings. The same curved staircase disappears up into the second floor. No toys litter the floor, but a few chests and shelves neatly line the walls, filled with plates, flowers, and other knick-knacks perfectly arranged. It seems more like a showroom than a house where someone lives.

"Jake, don't touch anything," Sarah snaps as Jake reaches for a small cowboy figurine on a shelf. Startled, he bumps the statue and it shatters on the floor.

"Oh, he can do no harm here," a woman's voice says from the top of the stairs.

The woman is stunning, with a gentle smile, sparkling eyes, and thick brown hair pulled into a careless bun. She wears a simple, old-fashioned dress of dark red. "Sarah, it's so lovely to see you," she continues as she descends the staircase. Thomas pads down behind her and leaps into her arms, purring loudly as his tail flicks back and forth.

"It's nice to meet you, too," Sarah replies, filled with conflicting emotions. Something about this woman unnerves her, but at the same time, the strange lady **radiates** a wonderfully **maternal** energy that makes Sarah want to hug her.

Jake seems to feel no such conflict as he embraces the woman heartily. "It's lovely to see you, too, Jake," the woman says, patting his head.

"I'm sorry I broke your cowboy," he says. The woman smiles and winks at him. With a flick of her manicured finger, the figurine reassembles itself on the shelf.



"What's your name?" Jake asks in wonder.

"Oh, how rude of me—I'm Queen Tatiana, but my friends call me Tati. Your mother has told me so much about you, Sarah."

"You knew my mom?" Sarah squeaks and leaps forward.

"Correction, child—I know your mother. She's here in the palace with me." Tati flashes one of the kindest smiles Sarah has ever seen.

"Can I see her? Where is she?"

"Of course, my dear. Follow me." Queen Tatiana motions up the stairs and starts her ascent. Sarah's emotions surge, and she can hardly contain her impatience. It takes everything she has not to bound ahead, like Jake. When he reaches the upper landing, he freezes. As Sarah approaches, she understands why.





While the lower level looks like Porter's Mill, the upper level resembles a castle out of a fairy tale. **Intricate** stained-glass windows stretch into the sky, flanked on either side by stone pillars covered with **slender** vines that erupt with clusters of enormous, fragrant blossoms, like wedding bouquets.

"Welcome to my humble **abode**," the Queen says, gesturing around her.

Sarah gapes up to the ceiling and wonders how they could have ever overlooked such a structure from the outside. As she watches, it seems as if the glass and stone near the top are shaking slightly, as though they're barely holding together. She blinks, and everything seems solid again.

The passage they step into appears to have no end and no doors, but that doesn't **faze** the Queen as she begins to **saunter** away, her shoes clacking on the reflective tiles. Jake and Sarah follow, marveling at their surroundings.

After a while, the Queen halts, and Thomas leaps to the ground.

"Here we are," she says and waves her delicate hand toward one of the windows. "Straight through there."

Something doesn't feel right to Sarah, and she pauses, clutching Jake's arm.

"Are you telling me to walk through a window?" she asks. "That doesn't seem safe."

"It's perfectly harmless," the Queen sighs as she strides over and thrusts her hand through the window with no resistance. The glass separates, and an opening spreads out beneath her hand, as if the glass itself were just a reflection on a sheet of cascading water. In the opening, Sarah sees only absolute darkness.

Jake leans forward to try to see more, and Sarah knows that if she didn't have his arm, he would be through the opening in a heartbeat.

"There's nothing in there but blackness," she says, and the Queen scowls for an instant before taking a deep breath and closing her eyes. Softly at first, light begins to radiate from within the darkness. Images begin to solidify: a white fence, a green yard, trees, blue sky, a house—her house, the old Victorian, the front door opening, a person stepping onto the porch.



It's her mother.

Sarah swallows back a sob at the sight of her mom on the front porch, waving, smiling, and beckoning Sarah to join her. Every thread of her being screams at her to run to her mom—but something is still not right. She blinks back tears and looks at the Queen, who has a smile plastered on her face, but for the first time, Sarah realizes the Queen's expression hides an immense amount of strain and tension, as if holding her hand in the glass requires incredible effort.

"What are you waiting for?" the Queen asks.
"Go to her. She's waited so long."

"It can't . . . It can't be real," Sarah replies, her voice cracking.

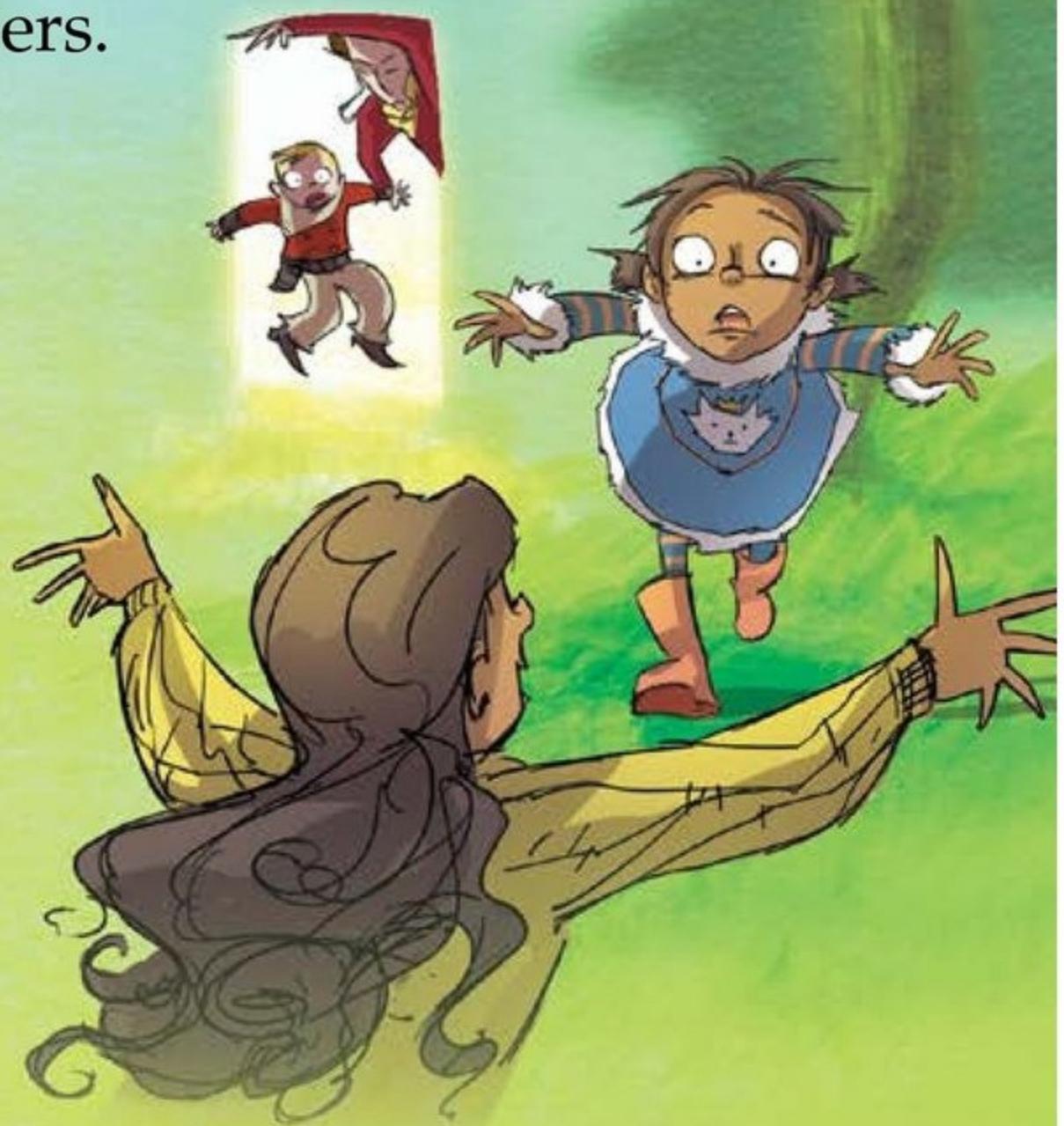
"Go and see for yourself, child," the Queen says. "You can hold her, talk to her, love her—all the things you've been dreaming about your whole life are waiting for you on the other side of the glass. You do want to see your mother, don't you?"

"Yes," Sarah whispers.

"You do love your mother, don't you?"

"Y . . . Yes."

"Then go to her, quickly. You can have everything you've ever wanted if you just go to her."

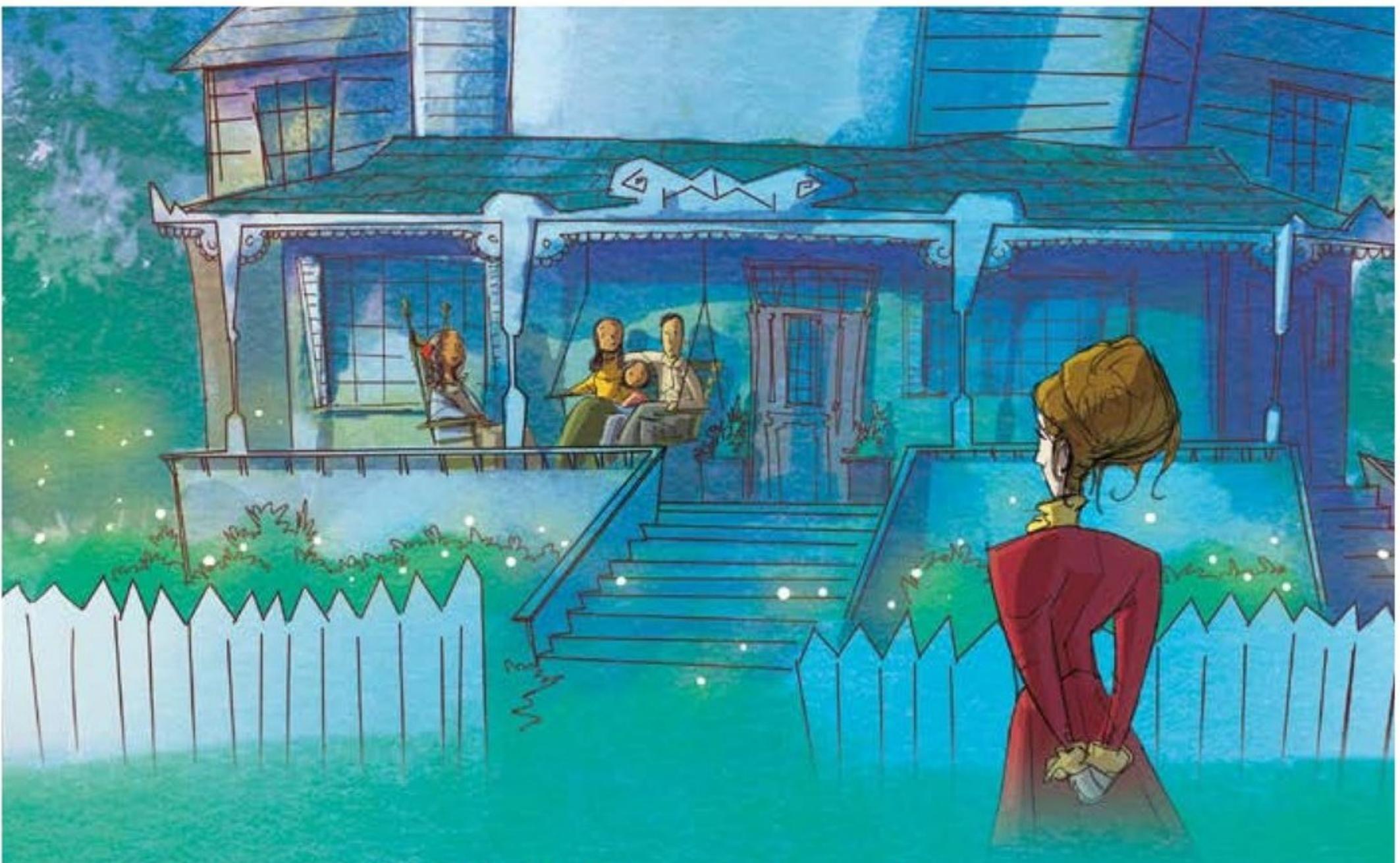


Sarah can restrain herself no longer. She gives in to her tears as she dashes through the opening in the glass, across the grassy yard, and into her mother's arms.

They embrace each other for a long time, Sarah unwilling to release her mom after so many years. When they finally pull away, her mom takes her inside and gives her lemonade and cookies as they sit on the couch.



Sarah recounts her life story from as far back as she can remember. She tells about her childhood, her school, her friends, Dad, Aunt Terra, her goldfish that died and the cat that ate it; the school play when she forgot her lines; her favorite food (roast beef) and how she can't get enough; the choir concert when she got sick behind the risers and kept singing; the night she, Qynn, and Jake were first lost in the Hollow; the frightening laughter following them; the journal; Qynn's Uncle Jasper; the scissors, lamp, and key. Whenever Sarah asks what her mom has been doing, she says, "Waiting here for you," and asks Sarah another question.



When Sarah is finished telling her mom everything she can think of, it's nearly dark. They go into the dining room, where a feast of roast beef with all the fixings sits on the table. She's almost surprised when her dad and Aunt Terra come in from the kitchen, smiling and laughing.

Why should she be surprised? She's home, with her mom. Of course they should be here; they're a family, and families eat dinner together.

The dinner tastes better than anything she's ever eaten, and they all talk and talk and talk until, by the time dessert is finished, Sarah is nearly **delirious** with happiness.

After dinner, they sit on the porch and watch fireflies twinkle in the air. A while later, a woman in a red old-fashioned dress comes up the walk.

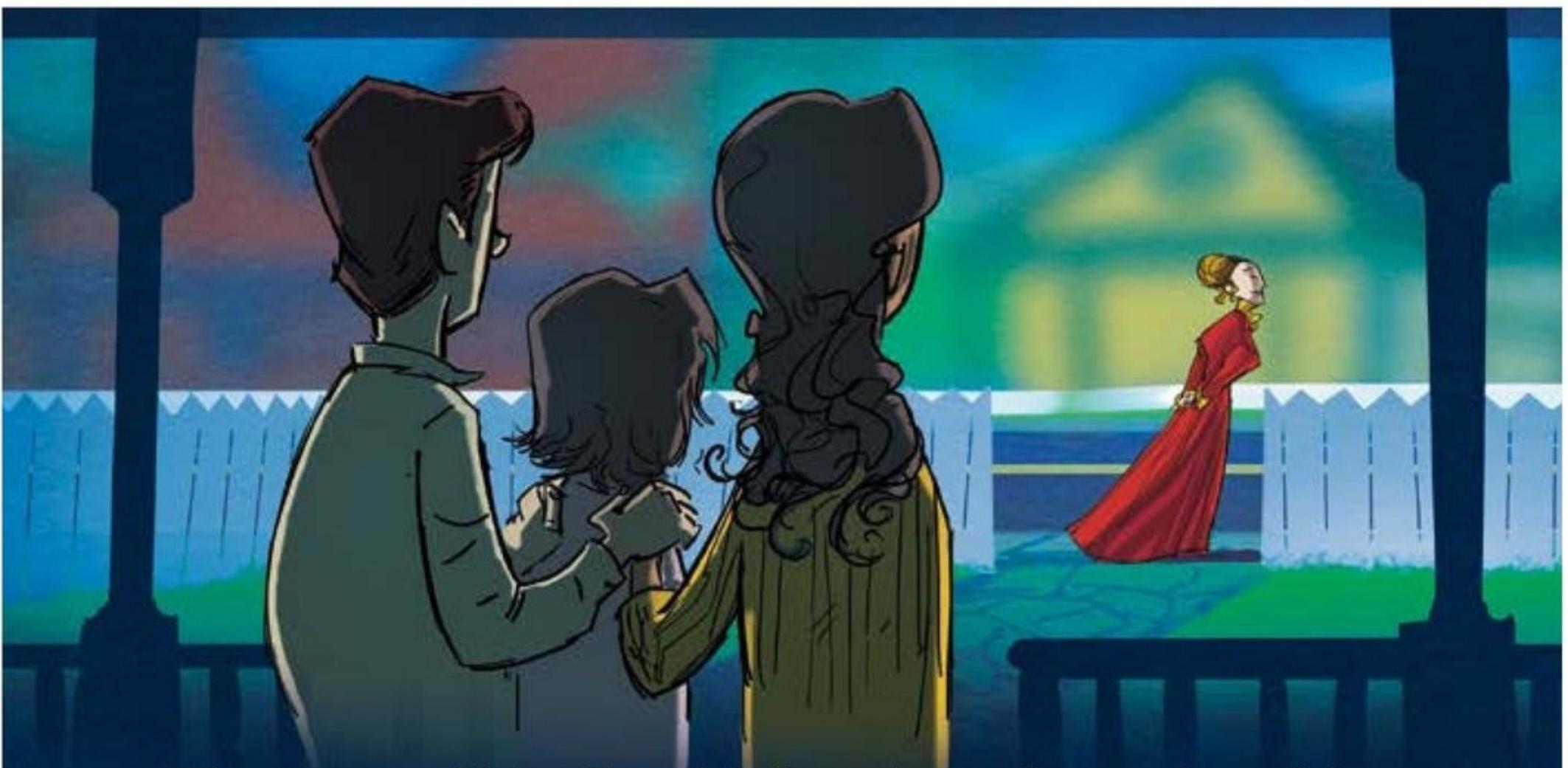
“Are you enjoying your time with your family, Sarah?” she asks, smiling. Sarah recognizes her, but the memory is distant and foggy. Sarah nods and squeezes her mother’s hand.

The woman smiles and snaps her fingers, and everything around Sarah changes to sand—including her mother’s hand.



“NO!” Sarah screams, clutching handfuls of sand and weeping. The memory of everything that has happened comes crashing down on Sarah. “You bring her back—now!”

“I’m sorry—I know this hurts, but you have to make a choice,” the Queen kneels down, an expression of honest concern and pity on her face. “I can bring her back, along with your family and your friends—everything you ever wanted and dreamed of. I can make all your pain go away, all your loneliness. It will be like it never happened. All you have to do is say you’ll stay, and that you’ll help me. Will you stay and help me?”



The **turmoil** in Sarah's head reaches a breaking point. Something is very wrong here. The Queen is dangerous, but her mother has been living here for years unharmed. She says she can make the terrible things go away, but what kind of help does the Queen want from her? Does it matter? Is there anything she wouldn't do for her mom? All she has to do is say—

“Yes.”

The Queen smiles, but this time it's **triumphant**. She takes a deep breath, waves her hand, and the world returns to the way it was. Sarah's hand firmly grasps her mother's, and they all watch as the woman in the red dress walks away.

“Who was that?” Sarah asks.

“Just a nice new neighbor,” her mom says.
“It’s time for bed, honey.”

As Sarah gets ready for bed, she can't shake the feeling that she is forgetting something. "There's someone else who's supposed to be here, right?" she asks as her mom tucks her in. "He was with me, wasn't he? A boy, with yellow hair, dressed like a cowboy—where did he go?"

"I don't know who you're talking about, my love," her mom says. "Perhaps you're thinking of your favorite bedtime story."

"Am I?"

"Yes, the one about the girl and the cowboy who go through a magical doorway and are chased by frightening creatures before finding a palace and living happily ever after."

"Oh, yeah," Sarah says, "that is my favorite story, Mom. Would you tell it to me again tonight?"

"Of course I will."



Glossary

abode (<i>n.</i>)	a home or place where someone lives (p. 7)
delirious (<i>adj.</i>)	having confused thoughts and speech, often as a result of a high fever (p. 12)
disorienting (<i>adj.</i>)	causing someone to feel or become lost or confused (p. 3)
faze (<i>v.</i>)	to disturb or frighten someone (p. 8)
intricate (<i>adj.</i>)	very detailed or complicated; complex (p. 7)
maternal (<i>adj.</i>)	having to do with a mother or the qualities of a mother (p. 5)
radiates (<i>v.</i>)	emits something, often light or heat in the form of rays or waves (p. 5)
recedes (<i>v.</i>)	moves or pulls back from a previous position (p. 3)
saunter (<i>v.</i>)	to walk at a relaxed speed; to stroll (p. 8)
slender (<i>adj.</i>)	not very wide; slim (p. 7)
triumphant (<i>adj.</i>)	joyous because of recent success (p. 14)
turmoil (<i>n.</i>)	a state or condition of disarray, confusion, or agitation (p. 14)

The Other Side of the Glass

A Reading A-Z Level W Leveled Book

Word Count: 1,803

Connections

Writing and Art

How would the story be different if Sarah hadn't listened to the Queen and gone through the window? Write a new ending on the basis of this scenario.

Art

Make a diagram or model of the Queen's palace from this story. Include both the lower level and upper level of the palace.

Share your work with the class.



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