

Janet and the Magical Land of Varnivia



Written and illustrated By Eve Lanier

“Janet! It’s time for school!” eleven year old Janet Elderod’s mother called from the kitchen down stairs.

“Coming!” She croaked in her grumpy, half asleep morning voice. She fumbled around on her desk beside her bed for her glasses, threw some jeans and a T-shirt and tore through the hallway to the stairs.

In her haste, she stumbled, “Are you alright?” asked Janet’s mother.

“Yes, it was the devil step,” she said through gritted teeth. It helped her to bear the pain. (The devil step had existed ever since the house had been built. Her father’s father’s grandfather had built the house many years ago. Many innocent people had been a victim of the devil step and Uncle Vinnie had nearly broke an ankle on a trip to the kitchen for a glass of water.)

“Hurry, I have to get to work at the store,” Janet’s father said.

When Janet got down stairs, she ran right to the cabinet for her favorite cereal, Honeycomb. Honeycomb was Janet’s favorite ever since that rainy october morning while visiting uncle Vinnie. At the time Honeycomb had been the only breakfast at the house. Having had a strange shape and color they did not seem appetizing to Janet. But in the

end she gave in to all the enraging chants of, “EAT IT!” and, “JANET!” being thrown at her.

She was pleasantly surprised at the wonderful honey taste and how it went with the almond milk that she loved. Nowadays she eats Honeycomb a decent amount of days with almond milk. But today, when she had gotten her cereal and had gone to get the milk, she had been pleasantly surprised.

There was only regular cow’s milk. She loved regular cow’s milk and had yet another experience with that. She was at her aunt Alex’s house when she was offered some milk. Of course, Janet had excepted and she had thoroughly enjoyed it. But the surprise that awaited her was unexpected. In the end, she realized that she loved cow’s milk, but it did not love her back. Luckily, she had grown out of that phase.

As she stood there, she wondered what it would taste like to combine the two. Honeycomb and cow’s milk. To her dismay, it was quite disgusting. She decided, here and now, that she was not going to try that again. She shoveled down as much as she could bear, kissed her mother goodbye and stood up to leave.

As she turned around, she looked over at her sleepy little two year old sister, Sarah. The compassion she had for her sister was of a strong, deep kind of love and nothing

could separate them. Janet swept across the kitchen floor and kissed her little sister's soft head.

As Janet stepped outside she took note of the weather. As always, it was snowing and foggy. It was so foggy today that Janet could not even see the fifty foot clock not two blocks away. But she could just make out two people walking toward her. When she got closer she realized that they were her friends, Joseph and Rosie.

As she walked she remembered the first days that she had met her friends. Janet had been walking and working in her math book when, SLAM!!!!!!!!!!!! somebody had not been watching where they had been walking and ran into Janet!

“OH, I am so sorry!” the little boy had was so excited he almost fell over. “I am on my way to get my very first puppy!” Now that she could see it, the boy's face was filled with the most enthusiasm and energy that Janet had ever seen in a face. “My name is Joseph, would you like to come with me?” Joseph asked.

“My name is Janet and I would love to,” she replied. And that was the way she met Joseph.

Now Rosie was a different matter. Janet and Joseph had been walking to school when they heard a commotion. As they looked over, what they saw did not surprise them.

Patricia Stone, the idle school bully, was giving a scared little girl a hard time about spilling her water on what looked like a brand new sweater that Patricia was wearing.

“Give her a break!” Janet yelled. “I’m sure she didn’t mean to trip on purpose. For all I know you saw her walking toward you and couldn’t resist the urge to stick your foot out and trip her!”

Patricia’s mouth opened and when she realized what she was doing she quickly closed it, stood up, and slinked away with a small grumble, her new sweater dripping wet with poor Rosie’s water. Joseph and Janet ran over to the girl who’s face was as white as a sheet of paper.

“Are you all right!?” asked the two.

“You did not have to do that for me,” The girl said, who obviously was not used to being the center of attention.

“Yes we did,” said Janet. “We will be making sure that Patricia doesn't pay you a visit any time soon. Shall we walk to school together?” asked Janet.

“Absolutely!”

As she walked along the boardwalk toward her friends, Janet greeted them.

“Hello!” she said.

“Hi,” her friends replied in gloomy voices.

“What is the matter?” Janet asked for she wondered what could possibly be wrong. It was cloudy and that always made her in a happy mood.

Rosie was the first to answer. “It’s Joseph’s dad. He’s in the hospital with cancer. The doctor is doing as much as he can but it’s only getting worse.”

“Apparently his best is not enough,” Janet heard Joseph grumble out the corner of his mouth.

“Joseph isn’t taking it very well and I don’t blame him. I’m so sorry I had no idea!” Janet said.

“It’s fine,” said Joseph. “Anyway, I’m sorry for the gloomy greeting. Oh no.” Joseph suddenly pointed out three murky figures emerging out of the fog.

“Hello Patricia, Miranda, Pierce,” said Janet, darkly. Rosie suddenly turned white.

Patricia Stone, who had long brown hair and sparkling blue eyes, was full of beauty, but completely empty of kindness. If you asked, you would find out she had bullied everyone in her school and at the park if you didn't count Janet. Janet was the only one who's knees didn't shake at the sight of Patricia. Miranda and Pierce are what you would call her sidekicks, the ones to bail her out, the ones who are always at her side no matter what the cost.

"What do you want?" asked Janet.

"Oh nothing," cooed Patricia.

"Even I know *that* isn't true", stated Janet.

But Patricia went on pretending Janet had never said anything. "I heard you are looking for a dog. I just came to let you know that Mrs. Berkhart is selling one on 23rd street. I know you have been wanting one, but I guess you are not going to have one any time soon considering your dad works at a grocery store", Patricia sneered. "Oh, and that goes for you too, Rosie, your mother's a book publisher," she scoffed.

"Lay off it!" yelled Joseph without thinking. Patricia gave him a cold hard stare and Joseph quieted.

"Well, see you later. Oh and good luck," smirked Patricia as she slinked away into the fog.

“My mom brings me copies of some of the books that she publishes,” Rosie whispered silently to nobody in particular.

“Don’t let that Patricia Stone push you around!” All though Janet said it, she did not feel it. She loved her father and felt like she could tell him anything. Deep down inside, Patricia had finally gotten to Janet. Nobody was going to insult her father.

As they walked home from school Janet was enraged about Patricia. “I can’t believe her! Making fun of our parents like that!”

“She is just trying to make you mad at her,” Rosie comforted Janet. Rosie had a soft heart. She didn’t like it when anybody, especially her friends were being hurt.

Janet loved that Rosie was trying to help but she knew that nothing would. “I just don’t understand why people like Patricia do what they do!” Janet said.

“Um, guys?” Joseph suddenly said. Janet looked at where Joseph was pointing, there was something struggling in the snow under the oak tree.

The oak tree was a traditional after school hang out place for Janet, Joseph, and Rosie. They even built a secret tree house deep inside. The reason this particular tree was so special, was that the three friends were the only ones who knew about the tree, in fact, they were the only ones who could even see it. No matter who they wanted to see the tree, nobody could see it. That is why the the fact that someone, or something ,was at the bottom of it, was a mystery.

“Hello?” Janet **yelled**.

The reply was quite unusual.

“yowwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwl”

“Let’s go back,” Joseph was whispering almost to himself.

“We can’t, what ever it is may be hurt,” Janet said. She decided to help the poor creature. As she walked forward, she realized that the creature was whimpering. It was then and there when she discovered that she knew exactly what it was. A dog. She was so happy she found herself running toward it. She stopped and stood right beside it. It was a dog, a full breed german shepherd dog!

She found herself saying over and over. than she remembered her friends. “It’s all right! It’s just a dog!!” her voice was trembling with excitement.

She heard a shuffle of feet, and than a gasp of breath.
“Wow!” Joseph exclaimed.

Rosie walked over to pet the dog. This brought Janet’s attention to a deep gash on the dog’s leg. “He’s wounded,” Janet said, “We should bring him to the shed behind my house and clean him up.”

“Alright, but what should we name him? asked Rosie.

Janet thought for a moment, “What about Bernard?”

“Perfect!”

Janet was so happy and full of love and compassion for this animal that all thought of hatred toward Patricia had been forgotten. It seemed like nothing in the world could go wrong. But nobody knew that someone was watching with greedy eyes at the happy group.

The next day, Janet, Joseph, and Rosie went to *The Perfect Pet* pet store to buy food and toys for Bernard.

“Do you think that it was a good idea to bring Bernard?” Joseph was asking, “I mean, in cace Patricia is here.”

“Nonsense,” Janet replied, “Patricia hates animals.”

“Oh look!” Rosie suddenly exclaimed as they walked into the store. One of the check out counters had a sign on it that said, John Stone.

“I cant believe it!” Janet exclaimed. She walked over to the man behind the counter, “Do you, by chance, know a Patricia Stone?” She asked.

“Well yes, I do.” he replied, “In fact, she is my daughter.”

The three looked at each other silently. Mr. stone was a rosy faced, cheerful, tall, gangly man with a full head of dark brown hair. Nothing like who you would expect to be the father of Patricia.

“Would you like me to go and find her for you?” he cheerfully asked.

“Oh, no we can find her,” Janet hastily added.

“All right,” Mr. Stone said, “She is feeding the kittens. Tell her that it is time to feed the puppies, it’s her favorite job, you know,” he said with a wink and a grin.

The three left with no intention of finding Patricia, but went straight to the dog section.

“How could she make fun of us having parents who work at a **checkout counter** when hers do to?” Janet was saying, “I just don’t...” but Janet suddenly stopped

because she had totally forgotten the rest. She felt like she was being lifted off the ground. She was finally in the place she always wanted to go, and now she had a reason to: the dog section.

“Wow!” she heard Joseph gasp.

They were all marveling at the selection of dog products. Dog food, dog toys, dog leashes, dog cleaning supplies, and finally the dogs. There were Labra-doodles, Black Labs, Golden Doodles, Chihuahuas, Golden Retrievers and many others.

“It’s like dogie heaven in here!” Janet exclaimed.

“Guys, come here!” Rosie beckoned them over to the wall at the end of the isle.

There appeared to be a small door where Rosie was pointing. There was a sign on the door that appeared to be in French. Janet had no idea what it meant but suddenly Rosie said, “Patricia’s room.” The other two stared at her. “What? Me and Patricia are in French class together.”

Janet slowly walked over to the door, but no sooner had she placed her hand on the door knob than somebody slapped it out of the way.

“What do you think you are doing?” Patricia snapped.

“We are just here to admire the new shipment of Terriers.” Janet said with just a hint of sarcasm in her voice.

“You should know that lying won’t help you,” Patricia said.

Janet could see a smirk trickling across Patricia’s face and the whole world seemed to stop in time. She could sense that even the other two were tense. Other people would brag about the dog they found off the street, but Janet knew better. She knew that if Patricia was teasing her about her parents now, then she couldn’t imagine the trouble she would be in if Patricia knew about the dog.

“What do you mean?” Janet asked, though she already knew the answer. She held her breath. There was a man outside glaring at Bernard but Janet didn’t have the time to investigate.

Patricia answered, “I saw you with that dog that you found and you’re here to buy supplies.”

Janet exhaled. She knew. She knew, and if Patricia knew, then the whole school knew. “So now your spying on us?” Janet asked.

“I was simply walking down a road that happened to be the same road you were on and I saw you.

“Well, I’d guess we’d just had a misunderstanding if I didn’t know you were lying like always,” Janet said. “You never care for anything but yourself.”

“What makes you think that?” Patricia asked.

“Because your face turns red when you lie,” Janet said. Patricia turned and walked away. “Oh, and your dad wanted me to let you know that it’s time to feed the puppies!” Janet yelled down the hall to Patricia. Her ears went bright red and she started to cry.

“Let’s go home guys,” Joseph suggested.

On their way home, Janet was not feeling good about getting back at Patricia. She had never been that mean to anyone before. “Do you think I was too hard on her?” Janet was asking, “At first, I felt like I wanted to get back at her, to get my revenge for her making fun of my father. But now, I just feel bad.”

“But she made fun of our parents and lied to us.” Joseph said.

“I know, but nobody deserves to be treated like that.”

“You’re right,” said a strained voice that Janet had never heard before.

“Yeah but... wait, who said that?” Janet asked. the other two shrugged and shook their heads.

“I'm down here,” the voice said.

“Where? All I see is Bernard,” Rosie said.

“I am the dog.” The three stared in shock.

“You can talk? But you’re a dog!” Janet exclaimed.

“I am not a dog, I am a Bunadiva from the land of Varnivia. Me and Nina, who is a Nasasakar, and is my friend and companion, were taken from our beautiful home in Varnivia, and brought here, to the land of the Ten-Fingers.”

“Who are the Ten-Fingers?” Janet asked, “And why did they bring you here?”

Bernard’s answer was very astonishing, “Ten-Fingers is the Varnivian word for human,” he answered, “And the one that brought us here is a tall gangly man with dark brown hair and a sorry attitude.”

Janet turned back to her friends. “That matches the description of Mr. Stone completely!” she exclaimed, “Except the bad attitude.”

“It cant be him,” stated Joseph, “He does not at all seem like the kind of person who would do that!”

“Excuse us,” Janet said as she pulled her friends aside.

“I refuse to believe that Patricia's father had anything to do with this,” Joseph said again.

Rosie had not said anything for a while for she had been thinking, “We thought that a talking dog was not possible and apparently we were wrong,” Rosie said as she gestured toward Bernard, “So maybe it is possible that Mr. Stone *is* the one behind all this.”

Joseph was quiet for she had made a good point. Janet strode back to the dog for she had decided to help him.

“How did you escape?” she asked.

The dog was quiet as he tried to remember. “It was not four days ago when we were taken from Varnivia. If I remember correctly we were taken to a very large tree in which there was a door, that we entered. The room seemed to be a bedroom with pictures of dogs all over the walls. Our capturer then left us alone. Lucky for us, Nina’s kind, the Nasasakar have the ability to walk through things as if they are ghosts. She was terrified but felt that she needed to do it for my sake. We needed to go and get help.”

“I begged and pleaded for me to go in her place. for Nina also has the ability to give that power away, so when she finally gave in, I resumed my dog form and I walked through the door. There was a man standing outside with a long pole with a loop on the end of it. I panicked and bolted. The man saw me and caught my ankle with the hoop. It was sharp and it grazed my ankle,” He said as he gestured to his bandaged limb.

“How did you get away?!” Joseph gasped in amazement.

“I got a second wind,” Bernard said, “The race to get home had become the race to survive. I used every inch of strength I had in me to pull my foot out, and it worked. I was so happy that I almost jumped for joy. It was the pain that brought me back to earth again. I ran. I ran as fast as I could and as far as I could until I reached a tree. I rested there until you three found me. And now, we need your help,” he said, “To get back to our home and family.”

“That is what I thought since you are here, with us,” Janet stated, “And we will help you but what we need to know is where your friend is and what we need to do to help.”

After some thought the dog answered, “We need to go and save Nina. But we need to go tomorrow when the pet

store is closed so we are not seen. From there we just need to figure out how to get back to Varnivia.”

“So what do we do until then?” Janet asked.

His reply was simple, “We wait.” And he said no more.

On the way home, none of them said anything for they were lost in thought of what would become of tomorrow. As Janet walked home she was staring at the dog that she had found struggling under the tree. She hadn't had the slightest idea that he would start talking and lead her and her friends on the greatest adventure that they would ever have.

Janet suddenly stopped in her tracks. The tree, the tree that Bernard saw and stopped to rest at was the one that the tree house was in, the one that only her, Joseph and Rosie could see. “Barnard?” she whispered. He looked at her, “The tree that you stopped to rest at, could you see it?” she asked.

There was no reply, but an unmistakable wink. She smiled, she knew what that meant. After she locked Bernard up in the shed she walked inside the house. “Hi mom,” she said.

“Hi, honey, how was your day?” Janet’s mom asked. Janet looked over at her sister who was drooling and cooing with glee that she was home.

Janet replied with a smile, “It was amazing,” she said, “Is Dad home?” she asked.

“Well, he was still at work but I think that’s him pulling in right now.” she answered.

As her father walked in, Janet ran over to him and gave him a big hug. “Oh how is my little grasshopper?!” he exclaimed.

“I’m fine, Dad,” she chuckled at the nickname.

When Janet was first learning to ride a bike she always forgot to use the breaks. Instead, she would put her foot down on the ground. In result to that she would start hopping around and so the nickname “grasshopper” had been used ever since. “I’m fine but I’m really tired.” she said, “I think I’m going to go to bed.”

“Alright,” her mother said, “Sleep tight.”

“Ok,” she replied, and with that, she walked off to bed.

The next day Janet woke up bright and early, for in her excitement she could not sleep. She woke Bernard and the two ran over to Rosie's house. It seemed that *she* had also woken up early for they found her running toward them excitedly.

"I couldn't sleep! I was too too excited," Rosie gasped, out of breath.

"Shall we go and wake Joseph?" Janet asked.

"No, I already tried," Rosie said, "He's out cold. Let's go and wait for him."

"Oh no!" Janet exclaimed.

"What's the matter? Rosie asked.

"I just realized that if the store is closed, then the door is going to be locked, Bernard! Is there any other way into Varnivia?" Janet asked.

"Yes," he replied, "And you know where it is."

Janet did indeed know where it was for she now realized what that wink meant last night.

"Know where what is?" they heard Joseph ask as he ran toward them.

“Good, you’re awake,” Janet said, “The pet store’s doors are going to be locked, so Bernard is going to lead us to another entrance that we know of.”

Then what are we waiting for? Bernard, lead the way,” Joseph stated.

As the dog ran and the others followed, they found themselves being lead to the tree house. “It’s in here?” Rosie asked.

“Yes,” Janet said. As she started to climb she remembered that dogs couldn't climb trees, “Do you need help?” Janet asked.

“No, if nobody is looking then I can change into my original form and fly up.”

“Nobody is looking because everybody is in school,” Janet said.

“Ok,” said Bernard, “One, two, three!” he shouted and they watched the form of a dog transform into something much different. The true form of Bernard was like nothing that Janet had ever seen. He had huge and round blue eyes and was the size of a newborn baby with green hair, antennas and a snout for a nose.

“Whoa!” Joseph gasped, “Look at his eyes! He looks like a pig!”

Janet could tell that Bernard was getting impatient.

“Enough goggling you Ten-Fingers you, it’s time to save Nina!” he exclaimed, “And I do *not* look like a Ten-Fingers farming animal!”

“Alright, I’m sorry!” Joseph said, although Janet could still hear him chuckling quietly as they climbed up the ladder. When they had gotten to the top, Bernard walked them to the big trunk and told Joseph to lay down inside. Bernard closed the trunk and when he opened it again, Joseph was gone!

“How long have you known about this tree house?” Janet asked. She then listened very intently to his reply for he had a wonderful way of speaking that makes one happy and comfortable.

“When I was but a small Bunadiva, I was carless and stubborn and always found myself wandering away from the shelter of my master. One day in my wanderings I stumbled upon a hole. Naturally I fell in. Once I was on the bottom, I found a door and if I went through it, I would find myself in this trunk. This tree house soon became my hideout.”

“Wait!” Janet suddenly interrupted, “If Joseph teleports into the hole, how is he going to get out and how does he know to wait for us?”

“Oh, don’t worry about that,” Bernard said a matter-of-factly, “I built a ladder out of the sticks in the hole. There are many strange and treacherous creatures. If he does not wait, we shall pray for his life.”

Janet was suddenly not as excited as much as she was scared, “Let’s hurry,” she said as Rosie disappeared into the trunk. Before Janet stepped into the trunk she took one last look at the world that she was used to. Who knows what lays beyond in the land of Varnivia?

But what she saw was not the grassy field and the paved streets, but two eyes looking up at her. They were very familiar eyes and ones that Janet was not at all happy to see.

“Patricia, what are you doing here?” Janet said sternly but slowly so as to not show her temper.

“I know what my father did and I want to help,” Patricia stated.

“What?” Janet said.

“I want to help.” Patricia repeated, “My father was cleaning my room for me when he saw a door behind my mirror that led to a strange land, and with my father and his thirst for adventure, he ventured further and deeper into it. On the way he found two strange creatures and brought them home for me. At first I agreed and loved my father for it, but after what you said to me that day, I changed. I saw what you were doing for them and I decided to help.”

Janet was dumbstruck and almost convinced, “How do we know that we can trust you,” she asked.

“Because, I brought this,” was Patricia's answer. She stuck her hand down the ladder and another hand took it in return. It was green and fuzzy and so was the rest of the creature. It was a strange creature that looked almost human but was green and had slits for a nose, like a snake. But the most noticeable thing about her, was the unmistakable red line right down the middle of her forehead.

Janet knew almost immediately who it was. not because she felt she had seen her before, and not because of the cool calm feeling that overcame her when she first laid eyes on her, but the fact that Bernard yelled, “Nina!” and the creature that, apparently, was Nina yelled, “Gernlend!” and they both embraced. Janet was startled to hear Bernard be called “Gernlend” but she remembered that Bernard was probably not his real name.

“Ok, fine, you can help,” Janet said to the patiently waiting Patricia.

In returned to this wonderful news, she gave Janet a big smile and walked over to the trunk, “You can go ahead of me,” she said to Janet.

Janet was not used to this sort of behavior coming from Patricia and she did not know what to do. All she could do was give her a stifled, “Th-thank you,” and lay down in the trunk. “Ok,” she said nervously to Bernard, “Send me to Varnivia.” She did not feel as brave as she sounded.

She watched as he closed the trunk. Then the lid clicked closed. All the sudden she lost the feeling in her limbs. She felt like she was spinning one hundred times around in a second. She felt like she was getting sick. She was going to puke if it didn't stop spinning soon. It was getting lighter, and finally, she stopped. She was now in a dark room. She couldn't see anything except the dark outline of a door with sunlight leaking through. She got up. She was so dizzy that she almost wasn't able to stand. She walked over to the door and opened it. She was now in a wide hole and she was not alone. Joseph and Rosie were also there.

“You made it!” they whispered and they looked relieved but also terrified.

“What’s wrong?” she asked.

“Shhhhhh!” they said hastily, “It can hear you!”

Janet was confused. What could they possibly be talking about? she thought. But then she saw it: a monster. It had swirls going in a line from its back onto its tails. And its tail did not come down at the end of its spine, it split in two and came out on the sides of it. Its face was that of a t-rex but with teeth that stuck out and were jagged and sharp like a saw. Janet was frozen with fear. When it seemed like all hope was lost, Gernlend, Nina and Patricia came bursting out of the door, one by one. They must have sensed that something was wrong because they ran right to Janet and the others. Nina and Gernlend took their hands and they all stood in a circle. The monster ran toward them and seemed ready to pounce, but all of the sudden, it stopped, and looked like it was confused and didn’t know what it was doing in a hole, with six people standing in a circle.

“What’s going on?” Janet whispered.

“It has been told that when two different Varnivians join hands with four Ten-Fingers, they may have the power to turn invisible and control any creatures minds and make them obey your every command,” Nina said like she had never seen anything so amazing in her life, “Everybody!”

she yelled, "Tell it to go as far away from here as possible!"

"What, why?" Joseph asked.

"Just do it!" Janet yelled. She was excited too but she also wanted to get out of this hole. "Ok everybody, she said, "One, two, three!" she used all of her mind and strength to will the monster out of the hole. It was the strangest sight. It was as if fate was on their side. The monster was turning around and climbing out of the hole!

"Well done, all of you!" Nina exclaimed. They all gave each other high fives, and climbed up the ladder to begin their journey to get Nina and Gernlend back home.

After walking a little way they came upon a river. "How are we going to get across?" asked Janet. The answer was not as fun as she had made it out to be.

She found herself riding on a horse-like creature across the river. Their ears came up like antlers but five feet taller and like any Varnivian creature, it was green. Joseph did not seem to be getting the hang of the one that he was riding. He kept falling off and at one point, Janet had to get off and swim over to save him. They finally got dropped off at a meadow filled with flowers.

"This can't be so hard to pass," Janet guessed.

“This is no ordinary field,” Nina said, “This one can do all different things to your skin if you walk among its flowers.”

“Well then, we should run,” Joseph suggested.

Janet and Rosie looked at each other with uncertainty. At the count of three, they all ran. As they ran, Janet could see Rosie’s ears and arms turning blue and Joseph’s mouth and nose get bigger. When she looked over at Patricia, her mouth dropped open. Patricia's hair was being knotted up and then pulled out in tufts! She was not screaming and wailing like she normally would be, but her face was beat red and slightest tears were running down her cheeks. In that moment, Janet realized that Patricia *had* really changed. She was willing to give up her life and her hair to get someone home.

Then it happened. Janet’s skin was getting painful boils the size of golf balls all over it, and they hurt. They hurt so bad that tears sprang from her eyes. They were almost there. Although Janet ran as fast as she possibly could, she felt like she was running in slow motion. When they arrived at the end of the field she and the others collapsed on the ground next to a tree. It was the biggest tree that Janet had ever seen. Gernlend and Nina were gone. Her friends were safe, and she blacked out.

When she awoke, her boils were gone and she was in a hammock. A woman that looked exactly like Nina was standing next to her. The real Nina was standing beside the woman and said, "This is my mother and she has healed you and the others. There has been a bridge placed for you to cross the field for your journey home," she said.

"Thank you for bringing my daughter home," the woman said in very poor English.

"You are welcome, but *she* is the one to thank for your daughter's safety," Janet said as she pointed to Patricia. Patricia looked up.

The woman walked over to her and kissed her hand, "I wish you a safe journey," she said.

The four walked home without saying a word. Over the bridge, through the river, into the hole and then into the tree house. "How would you like to have lunch at my house with us?" Janet asked Patricia.

She seemed surprised but pleased, "Ok," she said.

"What a day!" Joseph sighed, "I'm so glad that we got Gernlend and Nina back home."

Rosie said, “Janet?”

“Oh, yeah,” Janet said.

“What’s wrong?” Rosie asked, for Janet was not in her usual happy mood.

“It’s just that I have been really wanting a dog and I just thought that Bernard was the one,” she said as she felt three hands on her shoulder.

“There are plenty of other dogs out there,” Joseph said, “And Bernard is home where he belongs.”

“I know,” she said. “Do you hear that?” she asked, for she thought that she had heard barking inside her house. As she stepped into her house she hollered, “Mom!”

To her delight and astonishment, the cutest little black lab that she had ever seen came running toward her! “Mom, what is this!” she cried.

Her mom came in, all smiles. Her answer made Janet so happy that she actually started to cry, “It’s a puppy and it’s yours!” This was the answer that she had been waiting for.

“Aww! It’s so cute!” her friends were saying.

“Janet?” her mom said.

“Yeah?” she asked, although she wasn’t really listening.

“Your teacher called from school and said that you weren’t there today. Where were you?” she asked.

Janet was surprised that she forgotten that people would have noticed that she’d been missing, and decided to give her mom the truth. “I was in the magical land of Varnivia where dogs could talk and flowers light up the sky.”

“Hmm, ok then, don’t tell me,” her mom said, “just don’t do it again.”

“Ok,” Janet said.

“What are you going to name him?” Patricia asked.

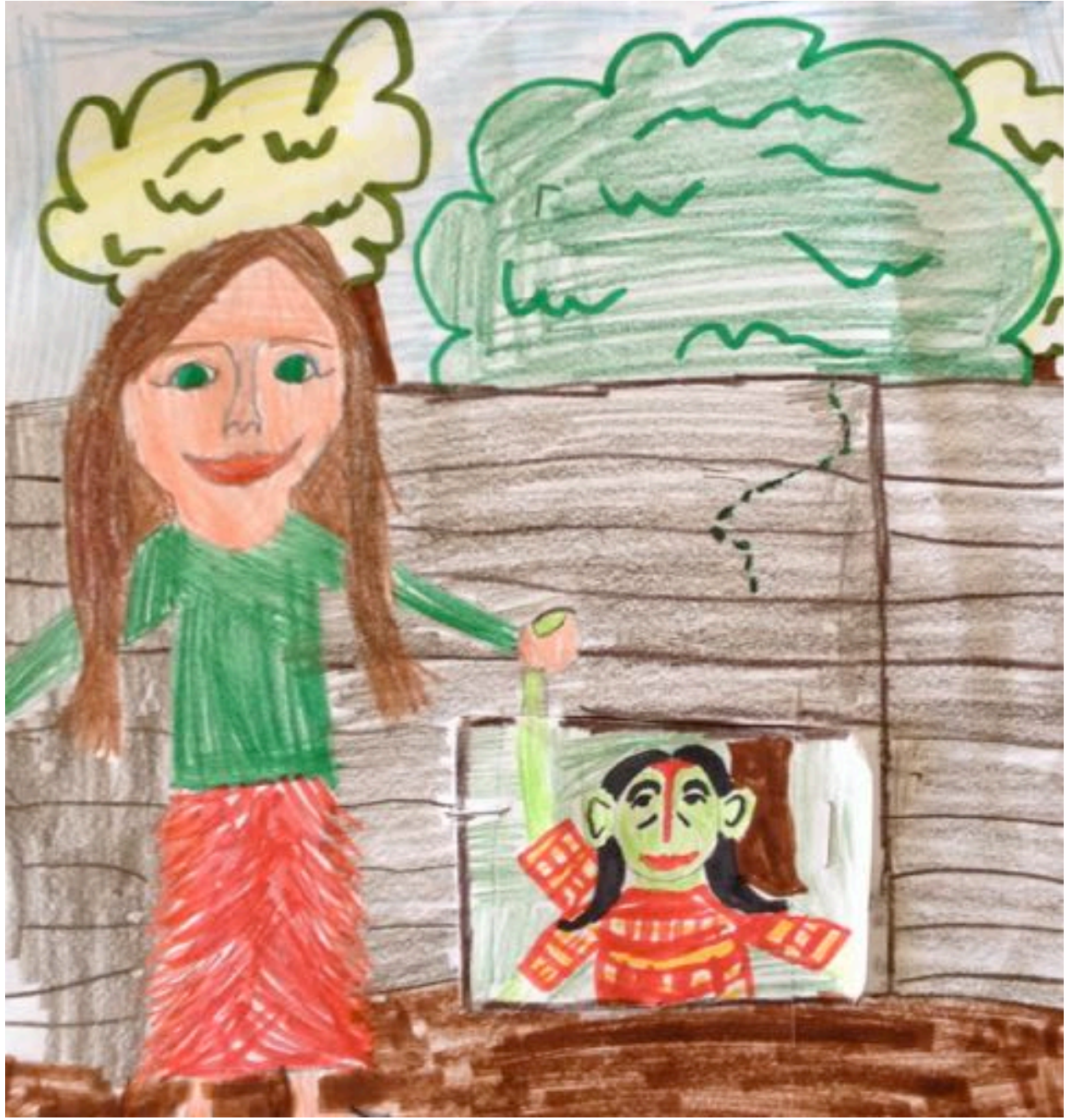
“What about Bernard? I think that is a great name,” Janet’s dad said.

Janet looked at her friends, “Ok, Bernard it is then.”

the end.













About the Author



Eve Lanier is 11 years old and has been writing stories since she was 6. She has an amazing imagination and everywhere she looks she sees things as inspiration. Eve spends her days reading, drawing, singing, playing music, making up inventions, and playing with her little sister, Sophia and her puppy, Rascal. Eve recently moved to Bangor, PA from Southern California and loves all the trees and can't wait to spend a snowy winter here.