

**THE STORY
OF
Q**

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Marion J Chard

Illustrations by
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PROUD DAUGHTER PUBLISHING
ALGER, MI

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Marion J Chard/Proud Daughter Publishing
1460 Joy St
Alger, MI 48610

www.storyofQ.com

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ISBN 978-0692552315

Printed in the United States of America

For my granddaughter Jessica

My great nieces, Mylah,

Mykaelah & Madison

My great nephew Kaden

&

All my 'little' girls in Alger

Love you bunches!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A million thanks to Karla Rado Richey, for her beautiful illustrations and story suggestions, which provided the impetus to complete this book. She/they also inspired many of the ideas so integral to the storyline. Collaborating with you was such a joy. I couldn't have done it without ya!

Kudos to my test audience — Jessica & Kai-Ann Carney, Anne Chard, Lee Chard, Shelly Kozlowski, Kim Kuzawinski, Austin, Karla & Tom Richey and Elisa Schultz.

A special shout out to Dan Durda and all his TV colleagues for fueling my imagination on a daily basis, and Dan's mother Lillian for her inspiring and stimulating conversation.

Last but not least, my husband Lee, who patiently pushed me along with his subtle (and not so subtle hints), to get off my behind and finish the story.

*To mom and dad -
Thanks for letting me dream!*

PREFACE

While attending elementary school, I developed a real passion for science and space. While many of my friends were playing outside, I remained glued to my black and white TV set, eagerly watching the Mercury astronauts make their first brave attempts to go where no man had gone before. I even had a scrapbook (I still have it) with carefully cutout newspaper articles regarding the astronauts and their trips beyond the atmosphere. I was so enthralled that I sat in my room one day, carefully removed a piece of lined paper from my writing pad, and scribbled off a note to NASA. I don't believe I actually expected to receive a reply from the men who made it all happen; I simply wanted to share my unabated enthusiasm with anyone who cared to listen.

So imagine my surprise when my mother and father handed me an envelope from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. I was on cloud nine while I excitedly tore open that manila envelope with shaking hands. Lo and behold, they

not only responded to my letter, they also included seven 8 X 10, color photographs of the original Mercury 7. I was in heaven and immediately hung their images on the walls of my bedroom, alongside my collection of dolls and pictures of rock stars. Hey, I had eclectic taste.

To this day, I maintain my love of the heavens and everything associated with them. While I never got the chance to work at NASA, I can still dream big and hope that young girls like Rachael, keep reaching towards the stars.

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

Accuu: AH-coo

Arbi: AR-bee

Aundu-li: Ay-UHN-doo-lee

Cailla: KAY-luh

Daindi: Day-IV-dee

Duani: Do-AH-nee

Ennui: En-YOU-wee

Hainda: HAYN-duh

Hinna: HIN-nuh

Hanuu: HAH-noo

Huumu: WHO-muh

Kanii: Ka-NEE

Kasingi: KA-sing-ee

Lianna: LEE-uh-nuh

Lilah: LIL-uh

Miaanu: ME-ah-noo

Michio Kaku: Me-CHEE-oh Kah-KOO

Misha: MEE-shuh

Oma: OH-muh

Quibble: KWI-bull

Quinda: KWIV-duh

Raini: Ray-IV-nee

Taindu: Tay-IV-doo

Tinda: TIN-duh

Yume: YOU-Me



1

THE ONLY THING I REALLY WANT

“**G**irls, are you almost ready to go?”

It was Saturday morning, Rachael’s favorite day of the week - no school and she didn’t have to get up early. It’s not that she didn’t like school, she did. Rachael was an excellent student and enrolled in several enhanced classes. She also passed her qualification test in August and was accepted into the Advanced Elementary Studies program (AES), which met every Wednesday morning at 10:00 a.m. She enjoyed learning new things and meeting new people, and shared her father’s love of astronomy (he was a professor at a local university). However, she was still a normal ten year old, and couldn’t wait for the weekends.

Rachael loved snuggling beneath her comforter, but today she needed no prodding to be motivated, as she excitedly pulled back the flowing curtains surrounding her canopy bed and jumped to the carpeted floor.

She dressed in her favorite Marlo jeans, long-sleeved baby-blue cotton shirt, and fleecy white hoodie, embellished with the words, 'Girls Rock', and slipped on her headphones. Her shoulders began bopping up and down in time to one of her favorite songs, 'Girls Just Wanna Have Fun', as she mouthed the words, with special emphasis on 'fuh-unn'.

She found her mother singing along with the radio one day and before she knew it, Rachael herself was learning the words and joining in. She fell in love with the tune and even though it was an old song, she had to admit it was a good one.

Rachael's room was perfect; her parents granted her birthday wish and Rachael was able to redecorate her room just the way she wanted. She got to choose everything including the paint for the walls, and recalled how much joy she had leafing

through the pages of the big JC Penney catalog, picking out new furniture, window treatments and of course the fluffy white comforter with soft flecks of turquoise, green and purple. Her room reminded her of a lovely spring garden retreat, much like the one outside her bedroom window.

She didn't miss her old room adorned in pink and white, or the twin beds with their striped bedspreads. It was so nice having a full mattress and being able to stretch out. It was the best birthday present ever.

As she looked around her spacious bedroom this morning, she remembered how many times she had practiced her speech that day...

"Mom, dad, you know I'm gonna be ten soon and well, my room is, well you know, it's kinda childish, dontcha think?"

Her dad raised his eyebrows and let just a hint of his famous smile peer over the top of their local newspaper, the Lake Chalfont Gazette. He'd let his wife handle this one.

"And the point you are trying to make, is?" her mother inquired, while expertly adding a stack of

towering pancakes to the platter of link sausages and scrambled eggs.

“Well, um, I think I’m ready for a more grown-up décor. After all, I’m gonna be a teenager in a few years”, she exclaimed, as she added a third pancake to her plate.

Her younger sister sighed across the table. It was more than a sigh — it was a super sigh!

“Jeez Rache, why do you always have to egg-aserate?”

“I don’t and it’s ‘ex-ag-ger-ate’ ”, she retorted, her voice raising a couple of notches.

“Whatever”, snapped Melanie, stabbing the sausage on her plate, accidentally causing it to fly across the table, landing next to her father’s steaming cup of coffee.

“Girls”, he pleaded. “Must we always begin each morning like this?” and turned with an exasperated, but loving glance at his wife.

“Sorry dad”, they chimed together. Rachael and Melanie exchanged smiles and tried their best to stifle their giggles, as the meal continued on in silence except for the clanging of forks and knives.

After a few minutes, Rachael resumed her well-rehearsed speech.

“Uh, anyway, I was talking about my birthday and I’ve been doing a lot of thinking and I know what I want”, she paused, pensively looking at each of her parents, before beginning again.

“The only thing I really want is to redecorate my room, okay?”

Please, please, please she repeated to herself, and then held her breath anxiously waiting for her parents’ reply.

“Your dad and I will talk about it this weekend, okay?” then winking at her husband, she began clearing the dishes from the oblong wooden antique table, which once belonged to her grandparents. The table sat in front of a huge bay window, with tons of soft, thick, comfortable pillows. It was a great spot to view the rainbows cast by the leaded glass. It was also Misha the cat’s favorite place in the house. The girls loved watching him stretched out and asleep on his back, with his whiskers twitching back and forth. What do cats dream about anyway, they wondered.

Rachael's attention snapped back to the present as she heard her mother call out once more.

"Girls, are you ready to go?"





2

THE GARAGE SALE FIND

Rachael headed out the door with her mom, dad and younger sister and a pocketful of birthday money, anticipating what she would buy. She was looking for great mystery books, jewelry and whatever else caught her eye, but an enormous alphabet letter was certainly not on that list.

Each year her neighborhood held a several-block garage sale and she and her family always looked forward to the daylong venture. Each member would always come back with a trove of treasures (well it was to them), and this weekend was no exception.

After an exhausting, but oh so fun day, their last stop led them to Mr. and Mrs. Hollingsworth's home, their neighbors across the street. Rachael and

her sister loved spending time at their home and in fact, the Hollingsworths were just like grandparents to them.

“Hey girls, where are my hugs?” Mr. Hollingsworth called out as he knelt down, and both girls threw their arms around him, each taking a side.

“How’s my two favorite young ladies this afternoon?” he beamed, while adjusting his World War II veteran’s cap, which never left his head.

Meanwhile Mrs. Hollingsworth waved to both the girls, as she handed change to a customer.

“Hello Rachael, hello Melanie. Still have lots of goodies left for you two to go through.”

Not needing any prompting, they spent the next thirty minutes strolling past each table and rummaging through various boxes of puzzles, books, and assorted objects. Rachael was getting ready to pay Mrs. Hollingsworth, when she spotted a very large letter ‘Q’ made of porcelain, near the garage door. Hmm, I didn’t notice that the first time around, she thought to herself, and walked over to it, eyeing it curiously.

It stood about seven inches high, and five inches wide and sat on a base, and just happened to match the décor in her room. She felt a bit silly for even considering it, and looked around to see if anyone was watching. When she was certain that no one was staring at her, she placed it at the bottom of her ever-growing pile of sale items. For some reason she felt compelled to buy it; there was no simple explanation.

Mrs. Hollingsworth began ringing up her purchases, including the giant 'Q', and much to Rachael's relief, didn't question her about the 'letter'.

"That will be six dollars even, Rache", she said in her ever-pleasant voice.

"But Mrs. H, it's more than that. I came up with six dollars and eighty-five cents. I still owe you money."

"Oh my dear, I'm giving you a bargain this afternoon", she chirped. "It's my 'favorite ten-year-old' discount. I guess you weren't aware of that, were you", and a brilliant smile crept over her face, pushing up her violet-colored spectacles, just a little.

“Mrs. H, you are too good to me, but thanks. You’re the greatest!” she remarked, while blowing her a kiss from across the table.

“See ya later Mrs. H. See ya later Mr. H”, Rachael beamed, as she headed home on this sunny but slightly brisk day, crunching the brightly colored fallen leaves beneath her shoes. She looked both ways for oncoming cars, carefully crossing the street, and then slowly hopped up each stone step of the large covered front porch, savoring the sweet autumnal aromas that filled the air. She loved this time of the year.

Rachael returned to her room with two large bags of goodies, including a mint-condition trilogy entitled, ‘Where in the World is Penelope?’ She couldn’t believe her luck, for she’d been dying to read these and now owned the complete hardcover set. The ‘Q’ however, would remain in the bag, stuffed inside her closet for several days until she finally had the nerve to plop it on her desk. She was still mystified why she bought it in the first place, but felt justified because the colors blended so perfectly with her new décor.