

c y n t h i a   k a d o h a t a

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WINNER OF  
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k i r a - k i r a



## chapter 1

きらきら

MY SISTER, LYNN, taught me my first word: *kira-kira*. I pronounced it *ka-a-ahhh*, but she knew what I meant. *Kira-kira* means “glittering” in Japanese. Lynn told me that when I was a baby, she used to take me onto our empty road at night, where we would lie on our backs and look at the stars while she said over and over, “Katie, say ‘*kira-kira, kira-kira.*’” I loved that word! When I grew older, I used *kira-kira* to describe everything I liked: the beautiful blue sky, puppies, kittens, butterflies, colored Kleenex.



My mother said we were misusing the word; you could not call a Kleenex *kira-kira*. She was dismayed over how un-Japanese we were and vowed to send us to Japan one day. I didn't care where she sent me, so long as Lynn came along.

I was born in Iowa in 1951. I know a lot about when I was a little girl, because my sister used to keep a diary. Today I keep her diary in a drawer next to my bed.

I like to see how her memories were the same as mine, but also different. For instance, one of my earliest memories is of the day Lynn saved my life. I was almost five, and she was almost nine. We were playing on the empty road near our house. Fields of tall corn stretched into the distance wherever you looked. A dirty gray dog ran out of the field near us, and then he ran back in. Lynn loved animals. Her long black hair disappeared into the corn as she chased the dog. The summer sky was clear and blue. I felt a brief fear as Lynn disappeared into the cornstalks. When she wasn't in school, she stayed with me constantly. Both our parents worked. Officially, I

stayed all day with a lady from down the road, but unofficially, Lynn was the one who took care of me.

After Lynn ran into the field, I couldn't see anything but corn.

"Lynnie!" I shouted. We weren't that far from our house, but I felt scared. I burst into tears.

Somehow or other, Lynn got behind me and said, "Boo!" and I cried some more. She just laughed and hugged me and said, "You're the best little sister in the world!" I liked it when she said that, so I stopped crying.

The dog ran off. We lay on our backs in the middle of the road and stared at the blue sky. Some days nobody at all drove down our little road. We could have lain on our backs all day and never got hit.

Lynn said, "The blue of the sky is one of the most special colors in the world, because the color is deep but see-through both at the same time. What did I just say?"

"The sky is special."

"The ocean is like that too, and people's eyes."

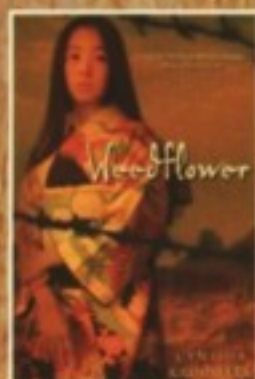


## kira-kira (kee ra kee ra): glittering; shining

**G**littering. That's how Katie Takeshima's sister, Lynn, makes everything seem. The sky is *kira-kira* because its color is deep but see-through at the same time. The sea is *kira-kira* for the same reason. And so are people's eyes. When Katie and her family move from a Japanese community in Iowa to the Deep South of Georgia, it's Lynn who explains to her why people stop on the street to stare. And it's Lynn who, with her special way of viewing the world, teaches Katie to look beyond tomorrow. But when Lynn becomes desperately ill, and the whole family begins to fall apart, it is up to Katie to find a way to remind them all that there is always something glittering—*kira-kira*—in the future.


### A Junior Library Guild Selection

- ★ "This novel shine[s]." —*Publishers Weekly*, starred review
- ★ "Will speak to readers who have lost someone they love or fear that they could." —*Booklist*, starred review



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