

In the
YEAR *of the* **BOAR**
and **JACKIE**
ROBINSON

BETTE BAO LORD



M. Simont



JANUARY

Chinese New Year

In the Year of the Dog, 4645, there lived halfway across the world from New York a girl called Sixth Cousin. Otherwise known as Bandit.

One winter morning, a letter arrived at the House of Wong from her father, who had been traveling the four seas. On the stamp sat an ugly,

bald bird. The paper was blue. When Mother read it, she smiled. But the words made Grandmother cry and Grandfather angry. No one gave Sixth Cousin even the smallest hint of why.

It is so unfair, she thought. Must I drool like Chow Chow, eyeing each mouthful until someone is good and ready to toss a scrap my way? If Father was here, he'd tell. He would never treat me like a child, like a girl, like a nobody.

Still, Bandit dared not ask. How many times had she been told that no proper member of an upright Confucian family ever questioned the conduct of elders? Or that children must wait until invited to speak? Countless times. Only the aged were considered wise. Even the opinion of her father, the youngest son of the Patriarch, did not matter. No wonder he had gone away to seek his fortune.

She tried to pretend nothing had happened, but it was hard. All day, the elders behaved unnaturally in her presence. No unintended slights, quick nods, easy smiles, teasing remarks or harsh words. They were so kind, *too* kind. Bandit felt as if she had sprouted a second head, and they were all determined to ignore politely the unsightly growth.

That evening, as she and Fourth Cousin sat on the bed playing pick-up-beans, she confided in her best friend. "Something's happened. Something big has happened!"

"Oh?" said the older girl. "You are always imagining things! Remember the time you told everyone there was a goldfish swimming in the bamboo trees? It was only a fallen kite. Remember the time you overheard the cook plotting to murder the washer-woman? He was only sharpening his cleaver to kill a hen."

Bandit scowled as she scattered the dried lima beans. "That was then. Now is now!"

"All right, all right," sighed her dearest friend. "What has happened now?"

"That's it. I don't know," she answered.

"Well then, let's play. My turn. Sixies."

"No!" shouted Bandit, grabbing the other girl's hands. "Think! Think! What would make Mother smile, Grandmother cry and Grandfather angry?"

Fourth Cousin shrugged her shoulders and began to unbraid her hair. She was always fussing with her hair.

Bandit thought and thought, annoyed at her

AN UNFORGETTABLE YEAR



Shirley Temple Wong is thrilled to be moving from her home in China to America. But it isn't easy. She doesn't speak English, the kids at school ignore her, and she feels very far from home.

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victory. Jackie Robinson proves that in America, the grandson of a slave can make a difference. And for Shirley as well, on the ball field and off, America becomes the land of opportunity.

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—*ALA Booklist*


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