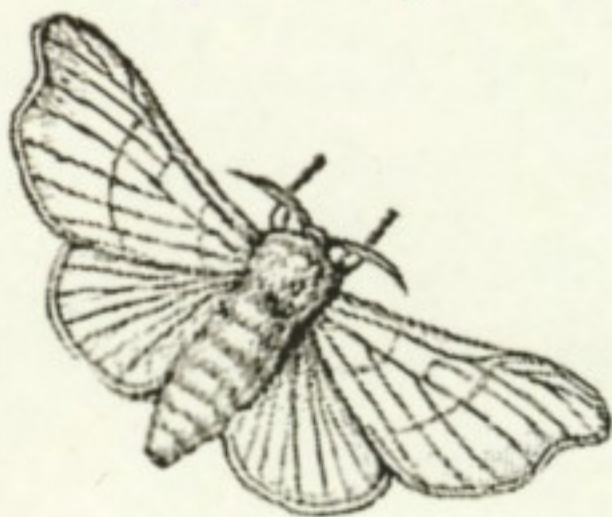


LINDA SUE PARK

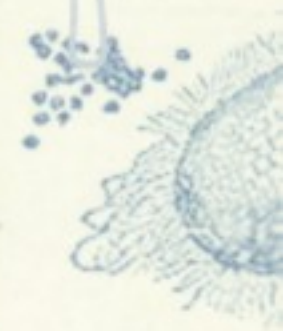
Newbery Award-winning
author of *A Single Shard*



PROJECT MULBERRY



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I

Patrick and I became friends because of a vegetable.

Not just any vegetable.

A cabbage.

And not just any old cabbage. A Korean pickled cabbage. Which isn't a round cabbage like Peter Rabbit would eat, but a longer, leafier kind. It gets cut up and salted and packed in big jars with lots of garlic, green onions, and hot red pepper, and then it's called *kimchee*. Kimchee is really spicy. Koreans eat it for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

I don't like kimchee. My mom says that when I was little, I used to eat it. She'd rinse off the spiciness and give me a bite or two. When I got to be six or seven years old, she stopped rinsing it. Most Korean mothers do that, and most Korean kids keep eating it.

Not me. I hated the spiciness, and I still do. My

mom keeps telling me I should eat it because it's refreshing. But what's so refreshing about having your mouth on fire?

My family used to tease me about not liking kimchee. My dad said maybe it meant I wasn't really Korean. "We should have your DNA tested," he'd tell me. The seven-year-old snotbrain named Kenny who lives with us—otherwise known as my little brother—would wave big pieces in front of me and threaten to force me to eat them.

Another thing about kimchee is, it has a really strong smell. Even though it's stored in jars, you can still smell it, right through the jar and the refrigerator door. It sends out these feelers through the whole house.

Three years ago, when I was in fourth grade, we were living in Chicago. I'd made friends with a girl named Sarah. The first time she came over to play, she stopped dead in the entryway and said, "Eww! What's that *smell*?"

I'd never really noticed it. Smells are funny that way—they can sort of disappear if you live with them all the time. But Sarah was so grossed out that I was really embarrassed.

The exact same thing happened again a few weeks later, this time with two friends, a boy named Michael and his sister, Lily. They *both* stopped dead

in their tracks and grabbed their noses. Then they insisted that we play outside because they couldn't stand the smell.

I asked my mom to stop making kimchee, but she told me I was being unreasonable.

When we moved to Plainfield two years ago, our new apartment didn't smell like kimchee—for about half a day. Then my mom unpacked some groceries, including a big jar of kimchee. *Sigh.*

I met Patrick on our second day in Plainfield, a Saturday morning. Actually, I saw him on the first day; he was hanging around on his front steps three doors down, watching the movers. Him and his three brothers as well. I noticed him right away, not because of the way he looked—brown hair in a normal boy-haircut, a few freckles, a gap between his front teeth that predicted braces in his future—but because he seemed to be the closest to my age. The other three boys were little, younger even than Kenny.

On the second day, I took a break from unpacking and went out to have a good look at the neighborhood. There they were again, the four boys, like they'd never moved off the steps. This time there was a girl with them, too, but she was a lot older.

Patrick came down the steps and said hello and told me his name. I said hi back and told him mine.

“Can I see inside your house?” he asked.

*Me: Do you know what's going to happen in the story?
Do you already know the ending?*

Ms. Park: I have a general idea of how I want the story to go, but nothing definite yet. Really just you and Patrick and the Wiggle project—that's all I've got so far.

Julia Song and her friend Patrick want to team up to win a blue ribbon at the state fair, but they can't agree on the perfect project. Then Julia's mother suggests they raise silkworms as she did years ago in Korea. Julia wants to do something more American, but Patrick is excited by the idea and finally convinces her. The optimistic twosome quickly realizes that raising silkworms is a lot tougher than they thought. And Julia never suspected that she'd be discussing the fate of her and Patrick's project with Ms. Park, the author of this book!

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