

there were once two little girls who lived next door to each other. mae emma was the oldest, and she was known affectionately throughout the neighborhood as "screaming mimi". anne was somewhat younger, and a good deal smaller in stature, but believe me, her spirit was every bit as strong-willed! mimi and annie played together every afternoon; and often, they would disappear for hours at a time. . . .

mimi and annie were "allowed" this privilege of disappearing from their mothers' watchful eyes because of their neighbor (and best friend) michelle. michelle lived directly across the street from mimi, and although she was "an adult", her true age was never really known. the truth of the matter was that michelle was somewhere between the age of mimi and mimi's mother--and she had many of the fine qualities of both mimi and mimi's mother.

mimi and annie would tell their mothers they were "going over to michelle's house" and off they would go. these adventures were the basis for a friendship that has endured the truest tests of time. sometimes, but not often, mimi and annie would invite michelle along on the adventure du jour. this was a treat that michelle looked forward to with eager anticipation. mimi was always in charge. it was the first and foremost rule, if at any time annie or michelle forgot this, they were sent home immediately, and mimi would finish the adventure alone. (these were her favorites--mimi didn't need anyone or anything to have an adventure). these adventures lasted exactly until the time that mimi's mother called mimi to dinner. this was mimi's plan, as mimi was never late for dinner.

mimi loved to eat. she ate anything her mother gave her, especially "tube steaks". this was mimi's mother's name for hotdogs, and mimi could eat her weight in tube steaks. mimi also loved anything michelle gave

her. things from michelle's kitchen were always "fun foods". once mimi ate two whole pieces of fried chicken and a whole order of french fries all by herself, just because michelle gave it to her on a china plate with a fancy placemat and napkin.

one afternoon, mimi and annie asked michelle to go along on a trip to the "land of the azaelas". this was a place not too far away from where mimi lived. mimi was the leader (of course) and to travel through the jungle, mimi wore her special blue sneakers--they were just the right size to stomp down the tall weeds and high brush.

the land of the azaelas was a beautiful place. all of the azaela people were different colors: white, light pink, bright pink, red, peach and bright orange. the queen of the azaelas was a beautiful bright pink, and she had been ruler of the land since her dad, the king, had been accidentally cut down with a power mower. the azaela people had but one goal--to enhance the beauty of the earth with their wonderful colors. the azaela people were visible to the earth people for about two months out of each year. although this seems like a short period of time, the azaela people brought enough beauty and love to last the rest of the year. mimi loved the azaela people, and every year, after they had gone back to their land, mimi had to go and visit them. thus began the annual adventure to the land of the azaelas.

once there, mimi would go around and say hello to each of the azaela people. she knew each one by name. on this particular trip, mimi introduced annie and michelle to all the azaela people. annie liked the bright orange ones best, but michelle loved the pinks. michelle was really enjoying meeting all of the pink azaela people, but suddenly mimi heard her mother calling her for dinner. this quickly ended the adventure, because mimi had heard her mother say she was serving tube

page three

steaks for dinner.

so off they went, to hurry through the jungle back to the neighborhood, until the next day, when another adventure would be planned by mimi.

oh, by the way, mimi ate three tube steaks for dinner that night.