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# The Little Secrets

Tessa McMillan

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Saunders, Kate. *The Little Secret*. Illustrated by William Carman. Feiwel and Friends, 2009. ISBN 9780312369613. \$16.99. 231 p.

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Friendship --Fiction; Kings, queens, rulers, etc. --Fiction; Elves --Fiction; Books--Reviews;

Jane does not know what to think of the new girl, Staffa, who has just joined her class. Yet Staffa instantly sees Jane as the best friend she has always wanted. As their relationship develops into a strong friendship, Jane becomes leery of Staffa's large, wealthy, and demanding mother, Lady Matilda. When school ends, Lady Matilda convinces Jane's parents to have Jane join her and Staffa's summer vacation. Once the vacation is underway, Jane sees that Lady Matilda and Staffa act strangely around a beautifully painted box they have with them. As they reach their destination, a lonely Scottish island, Jane, Staffa, and Lady Matilda are sucked into a miniature world inside the painted box. Inside this world, Lady Matilda is an oppressive elf-queen over the Eckers. Jane finds out that she was brought into the box world to marry the queen's son, Quarles, and stay there forever. However, Queen Matilda's children and subjects are tired of Matilda's rule and begin a revolution to dethrone her. The revolution succeeds, Quarles marries an Ecker, and he gives his people power to create a parliament. Jane is taken back to her world with the help of King Quarles. Once outside in her world, he asks Jane to destroy the painted box so no humans could enter that world again.

Saunders creates a unique fairy-tale kingdom where bugs are the means of transportation and food, and sugar is a valuable commodity. Jane is a strong central character that many readers can identify with.

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