Half a Chance by Cynthia Lord

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Review:
Lucy is used to being the new kid; her family has moved several times as her father, a famous photographer, has followed work and wanderlust. She hopes to make friends with her new neighbors and help them with her own love of photography, but some of the changes her photos show are painful. When she decides to enter her photos into the contest her father is judging under her friend Nate’s name to help his ailing grandmother, she’s uncertain about what outcome she wants.

Lord’s descriptions make the book a success—vivid images of animals, scenes, of the care involved in framing a shot, and creating a story through photography are all complete and believable. Lucy is a good middle-grade protagonist: she is conflicted about her relationship with her father and their mutual love of photography, wary of new friends, and saddened and confused by Nate’s grandmother’s growing dementia. The story is sometimes in danger of too much vagueness—Lucy’s mother is a background character at best, and she and her father do not quite resolve the distance between them throughout the book. This can also be considered an accurate portrayal of coming-of-age tweens dealing with change and instability as best they can. A melancholic but worthwhile addition.

Reviewer: Gillian Streeter