

# Gloria Who Might Be My Best Friend

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illustrated by Mike Reed

If you have a girl for a friend, people find out and tease you. That's why I didn't want a girl for a friend – not until this summer, when I met Gloria.

It happened one afternoon when I was walking down the street by myself. My mother was visiting a friend of hers, and Huey was visiting a friend of his. Huey's friend is five and so I think he is too young to play with. And there aren't any kids just my age. I was walking down the street feeling **lonely**.

A block from our house I saw a moving van in front of a brown house, and men were carrying in chairs and tables and bookcases and boxes full of I don't know what. I watched for a while, and suddenly I heard a voice right behind me.

"Who are you?"

I turned around and there was a girl in a yellow dress. She looked the same age as me. She had curly hair that was braided into two pigtails with red ribbons at the ends.

"I'm Julian," I said. "Who are you?"

"I'm Gloria," she said. "I come from Newport. Do you know where Newport is?"

I wasn't sure, but I didn't tell Gloria. "It's a town on the ocean," I said.

"Right," Gloria said. "Can you turn a cartwheel?"

She turned sideways herself and did two cartwheels on the grass.

I had never tried a cartwheel before, but I tried to **copy** Gloria. My hands went down in the grass, my feet went up in the air, and – I fell over.

I looked at Gloria to see if she was laughing at me. If she was laughing at me, I was going to go home and forget about her.

But she just looked at me very **seriously** and said, "It takes practice," and then I liked her.

"I know where there's a bird's nest in your yard," I said.

"Really?" Gloria said. "There weren't any trees in the yard, or any birds, where I lived before."

I showed her where a robin lives and has eggs. Gloria stood up on a branch and looked in. The eggs were small and pale blue. The mother robin squawked at us, and she and the father robin flew around our heads.

"They want us to go away," Gloria said. She got down from the branch, and went around to the front of the house and watched the moving men carry two rugs and a mirror inside.

"Would you like to come over to my house?" I said.

"All right," Gloria said, "if it is all right with my mother." She ran in the house and asked.

It was all right, so Gloria and I went to my house, and I showed her my room and my games and my rock collection, and then I made strawberry punch and we sat at the kitchen table and drank it.

“You have a red mustache on your mouth,” Gloria said.

“You have a red mustache on your mouth, too,” I said.

Gloria giggled, and we licked off the mustaches with our tongues.

“I wish you’d live here a long time,” I told Gloria.

Gloria said, “I wish I would too.”

“I know the best way to make wishes,” Gloria said.

“What’s that?” I asked.

“First you take a kite. Do you know how to make one?”

“Yes,” I said, “I know how.” I know how to make good kites because my father taught me. We make them out of two crossed sticks and folded newspaper.

“All right,” Gloria said, “that’s the first part of making wishes that come true. So let’s make a kite.”

We went out into the garage and spread out sticks and newspaper and made a kite. I fastened on the kite string and went to the closet and got rags for the tail.

“Do you have some paper and two pencils?” Gloria asked. “Because now we make the wishes.”

I didn’t know what she was **planning**, but I went in the house and got pencils and paper.

“All right,” Gloria said. “Every wish you want to have come true you write on a long thin piece of paper. You don’t tell me your wishes, and I don’t tell you mine. If you tell, your wishes don’t come true. Also, if you look at the other person’s wishes, your wishes don’t come true.”

Gloria sat down on the garage floor and started writing her wishes. I wanted to see what they were –but I went to the other side of the garage and wrote my own wishes instead. I wrote:

1. I wish I could see the catalog cats.
2. I wish the fig tree would be the tallest in town.
3. I wish I’d be a great soccer player.
4. I wish I could ride in an airplane.
5. I wish Gloria would stay here and be my best friend.

I folded my five wishes in my fist and went over to Gloria.

“How many wishes did you make?” Gloria asked.

“Five,” I said. “How many did you make?”

“Two,” Gloria said.

I wondered what they were.

“Now we put the wishes on the tail of the kite,” Gloria said. “Every time we tie one piece of rag on the tail, we fasten a wish in the **knot**. You can put yours in first.”

I fastened mine in, and then Gloria fastened in hers, and we carried the kite into the yard.

“You hold the tail,” I told Gloria, “and I’ll pull.”

We ran through the back yard with the kite, passed the garden and the fig tree, and went into the open field beyond our yard.

The kite started to rise. The tail jerked heavily like a long white snake. In a minute the kite passed the roof of my house and was climbing toward the sun.

We stood in the open field, looking up at it. I was wishing I would get my wishes.

“I know it’s going to work!” Gloria said.

“How do you know?”

“When we take the kite down,” Gloria told me, “there shouldn’t be one wish in the tail. When the wind takes all your wishes, that’s when you know it’s going to work.”

The kite stayed up for a long time. We both held the string. The kite looked like a tiny black spot in the sun, and my neck got stiff from looking at it.

“Shall we pull it in?” I asked.

“All right,” Gloria said.

We drew the string in more and more until, like a tired bird, the kite fell at our feet.

We looked at the tail. All our wishes were gone. Probably they were still flying higher and higher in the wind.

Maybe I would see the catalog cats and get to be a good soccer player and have a ride in an airplane and the tallest fig tree in town. And Gloria would be my best friend.

“Gloria,” I said, “did you wish we would be friends?”

“You’re not supposed to ask me that!” Gloria said.

“I’m sorry,” I answered. But inside I was smiling. I guessed one thing Gloria wished for. I was pretty sure we would be friends.