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## Being Azra

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## Being Azra

—Lynn Tramonte '98

I must tell you, first, that my bike does not make good noises. It's not a ten-speed or even a three-speed. It goes one speed up a hill and faster down. My bike doesn't whir or click like a ten or a three speed. It's a plain, old, rusty brown color which I don't think is the original color, but I don't remember 'cause I've had this bike forever, since I was seven. And now I'm thirteen and I still ride this plain, old, rusty brown bike which I think had a racing stripe once. Oh—I don't have a name for it either. It's just "bike."

And my hair is not it's natural color. It used to be a wonderful, crazy shade of nothing and stuck out in little frizzies and I was forever trying to straighten it. It tried ironing it and blow-drying it and I even used that stuff the black ladies use—Dark N' Lovely—but it fried my hair even more until it looked like one of Auntie's scouring pads. Auntie Evelyn scolded me harshly for stooping so low to use the black lady hair stuff. I said why would I stoop so low, a minute ago you said I was acting high and mighty. She slapped a birch stick across my knuckles, but I recovered.

Whenever April came, which wasn't often, we would sit around sipping iced tea with lemon and brainstorm as to what to do about my hair. We decided it would look most becoming if we added some color to it. So we went to this hair coloring place that was a lot dirtier than the one Auntie Evelyn usually takes me to if we're going some place like a wedding.

So we got my hair dyed, but the lady left the dye in too long and now my hair is this really neat shade of purple! I think it's keen but Auntie Evelyn, predictably, doesn't like it. The roots have decided to grow out and now I have two-tone hair.

School was boring, so I quit. One day I just said I'm not going and I didn't go. Besides, I read all the books they were reading three years ago. Auntie Evelyn thought the idea of quitting school an utter disgrace until she told everyone I was so smart I was a genius and regular school was too easy for me so she had to tutor me at home. This isn't entirely untrue, but mostly Auntie just gives me a few books to read but I don't 'cause they're all about dumb girls who want Roger and Ned to take them to dances.

I like my name: Azra Blue. Auntie Evelyn doesn't even acknowledge my real name, she just calls me Christina. I don't feel "Christian-like." Azra Blue is the only name for me, April says, and she is right. Azra was my father's name, even though I am a girl. I don't know what his name is now. I don't know where his home is now, either.

Sometimes Auntie Evelyn takes me aside and asks me how my journey with Christ is coming. I tell her I don't know 'cause I don't know what she means. Is it a sin to go to church if you don't believe? I can't make myself walk with Jesus, but Auntie Evelyn sure can make me go to church most times. Maybe I might try riding my bike with Jesus some time, but only if he can keep up 'cause I am pretty fast. But I prefer riding alone. In fact, I prefer being alone.

I don't have any friends at all. I don't like anyone well enough to call them my friend. Well there's April, but she is supposed to be my mother. But she's not around too much.

Auntie Evelyn says Jesus is my friend. I never wanted that! How can I be friends with someone I don't even know is there for sure?

Sometimes I say, "O.K. God, if you're there, make this happen." Like make April come over right this second. Or make Auntie take her hair net off before dinner is ready. Just give me a sign. Sometimes this happens, sometimes this doesn't. And always I don't know what to think.

The house that I live in is very elegant and is cool in the summers and toasty in the winters, nice in between, and is full of expensive junk. But it is not my house and I should feel so fortunate to live in it and I should pray to the Lord Jesus Above that when I get my house and my husband that I live half as comfortably as I do now. But the only time I am really comfortable is when I'm on my bike, and I don't pray to anyone and I don't want a husband, anyway.

I am an only, lonely child and I live with my Auntie Evelyn and her husband Uncle Thomas whom I think must be a homosexual or something 'cause he's never touched her. I know this for an absolute fact 'cause I overheard Auntie and April talking once when April was visiting from the trailer park. Auntie said that the best thing 'bout Uncle Thomas is that his strict Christian upbringing offered little tolerance of sex other than for "propagation." But Auntie didn't sound ecstatic or anything. They have no kids of their own.

Once Auntie took me to this big, fancy store called "Macy's." I was so bored so I started playing hide-n-seek in the clothes racks with this cute little kid. Auntie got very red-hot and marched me out the door, almost losing her ugly purse and exclaiming things about me not acting like a young lady. I must seem very young to her 'cause she's real old, no—ancient, and I am thirteen and I feel about sixty.

I'm tired of life with Auntie and her silent but deadly husband Thomas. I do not belong in their sphere.

So now I'm packing a few things in an old red bandanna like the do in the movies. I've got my notebook and pen and my heart necklace and my copy of On the Road by Jack Kerouac. I'm off to try to find April whom I think is in Tennessee or Tuscarawas county or someplace like that and maybe she'll tell me where my father is. Maybe he's really some big rock star like Jim Morrison or John Lennon and his name is not Azra Blue. I'll be rich and famous and called "the long lost daughter" in all the newspapers and Auntie Evelyn will read about me in the Lifestyle section and she won't worry. Maybe I'll come back for a celebrity visit and sign autographs and maybe, just maybe, I'll let Auntie Evelyn say that she knew me when.