ForeWord Reviews

JUVENILE FICTION

Venus and the Comets
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> *Venus's white T-shirt had 'Starlet' stitched on it with gold thread. Her white shorts were trimmed with gold ribbon. Her anklets had matching lacy gold edges. Jill S. saw her first. 'Oh, look. It's Soccer Barbie.'*

Nine-year-old Venus is determined to be a soccer star, but her single mother is determined that her only child be "the Supermodel of 2013." Venus is tired of curling irons, ruffled party dresses, and keeping her smile wide so her dimples would show. She wants to be a part of the Comets soccer team and have friends, rather than spend weekends modeling to please adults. When her first soccer match is scheduled on the same day as she is slated to play Cinderella at a toy store grand opening, Venus takes drastic measures to prove to her mother how important it is for her to be with her team.

The author, who was born in Austria but raised in New York City, is well known in the world of books for children and young adults. Originally a screenwriter for television, she has written twenty books for children and teens, revealing a deep understanding of youths' concerns. Her novel *Junkyard Dog* received a starred review from Publishers Weekly; other titles have been chosen as American Library Association Best Books for Young Adults and the International Reading Association Young Adults' Choices.

Plenty of realistic preteen dialogue makes her latest volume appealing to girls who are beginning to read chapter books, or to reluctant young female readers. The characters, while somewhat undeveloped individually, portray typical types of upper elementary aged girls—the athletic, the timid, the klutzy, the snobbish. Young readers will identify with Venus's need to be one of the group and a confident team player. "I want to be a regular kid for now. I mean, a real one," she says. Written for ages seven to nine, this realistic novel will receive high-fives from its readers.