

A Character Sketch

Katrina Jeanette is a seven-year-old girl who likes to drink coffee. Her mother makes her water it down slightly and add lots of cream and sugar, but Katrina prefers it when her dad lets her share his black. Her mother puts her mossy brown hair in ringlets every morning, but her hair transforms to a crazy frizz by early afternoon, or even midmorning, if it's humid outside. She has a pointy chin that she is prone to resting on her hand whenever she gets bored. She will then let out a sigh that is a perfect imitation of her sister's whenever the older girl finishes arguing with her parents about her curfew.

After school, her friend Michelle comes over to her house and Katrina's mother fixes the girls an after-school snack. It's usually something healthy, but on Fridays she bakes cookies. There is a large mahogany chest in the basement that is filled with all sorts of clothes, and the girls often amuse themselves by playing dress-up. Katrina likes to put on a coconut bra and pretend to be Ariel from *The Little Mermaid*. She tells Michelle, who has to be Eric of Flounder, that it is because she has the prettier voice. Sometimes this discussion breaks out into a fight, and Katrina gets sent to her room. She used to throw awful screaming fits when punished—she would tear all the pictures from the walls (the ones she had drawn at school) and throw them down the stairs to show her disgust. Her mother would patiently tape them all back up once the fit had subsided, but one day, deciding she'd had enough, Katrina's mother took them away instead. After that, there were no more fits.

Katrina's favorite article of clothing is an oversized jean jacket that has bright pink sleeves. Her godmother bought it for her the previous Christmas, and Katrina wears it everywhere, even, sometimes, around the house. She pouts when her mother makes her take it off for dinner.

All of Katrina's friends at school have imaginary friends, and, one day, she came home and told her mother that she needed to set a place at the dinner table for *her* imaginary friend, Samantha. Her mother humored her the first night, but her father put a stop to it on the second. For weeks, though, Katrina would sneak food away from the table and make a game out of finding a way to sneak it to Samantha. The closet, she discovered, worked very well for this. She could hide herself behind the folds of her mother's long winter coat if she made sure to keep her feet out of view by putting on a pair of her father's boots, which came up to her mid-calf.

Her parents are avid country fans, and her favorite CD is Shania Twain. She'll sing to the mirror, using her fist as a microphone and striking different poses. If she catches anyone watching, though, she'll freeze up instantly and refuse to even admit she was singing. She tells her parents that she wants to be a member of the Dixie Chicks when she grows up. They tell her that she will have to get over her stage fright and she just smiles nervously at them and says that she will just sing in a recording studio, not in front of people.