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The Summer My Sister Turned Fourteen, Nin Andrews

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Nin Andrews

THE SUMMER MY SISTER TURNED FOURTEEN,

July turned so sweltering, the pond shriveled into a mud puddle, and the polliwogs wriggled in the creek mud where cats swatted them out with their claws. Jimmy took up helping her in the vegetable garden, sinking in the tomato sticks and weeding the okra and beans and things. Nights he'd be waiting for her in the old tire swing. My sister would beg me to go out back with her and Jimmy while they'd sit side by side, the hairs on their arms almost touching, staring at ants crawling around a bucket rim or peeling labels off a pop bottle while listening to the bullfrogs and katydids. Sometimes the rain smell hung close as sweat, and heat lightning lit up the air where bats swooped overhead. I'd get so bored, I'd say something silly to try to break the silence, but it seemed like sadness was always hovering over them like a stranded angel or some kind of song I never could get the hang of, no matter how hard I listened or how long they waited.