

WAYANS FAMILY PRESENTS

Amy
HODGEPODGE
ALL MIXED UP!



BY KIM WAYANS & KEVIN KNOTTS

Chapter 1

“Amy,” Mom called from downstairs. “Hurry up. You’re going to be late for school.”

I loved hearing that word—*school*. No, I’m not weird or anything. It’s just that I’ve never been to school before. Not a real one, anyway. My mom, grandma, and grandpa have homeschooled me since I was really little. And boy, was I excited to start fourth grade in an actual school. (Okay, and a bit nervous, too.)

Dad always says there’s a first time for everything. I guess he’s right. He says sometimes you have to take a chance and do something you’ve never done before. You can’t be afraid to change.

And that’s just what my family had done. Made a change. A big one! We moved all the

way across the country, from the tiny little town where I was born to our new house in Maple Heights, a neighborhood in Dyver City. We moved because Dad got a job at the brand-new Children's Hospital downtown. He's a pediatrician. A really good one, if you ask me.

"Amy!"

"I'm coming!" I yelled as I put away the scrapbook page that I was working on. Scrapbooking was one of my favorite hobbies. It all started when my grandmother gave me some beautiful handmade paper. Ever since then, I've kept a scrapbook filled with photos, letters, and all sort of keepsakes that remind me of happy memories. My scrapbook already had a picture of my new school. I couldn't wait to fill up the rest of the pages with new memories of all the friends I would make and fun I would have at school.

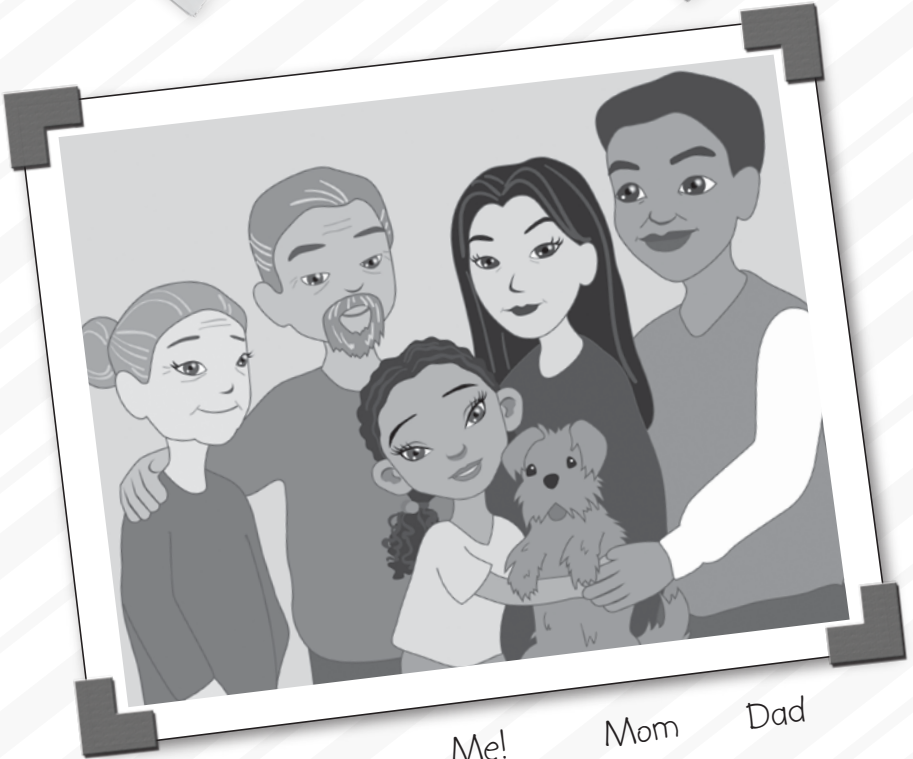
I took one last look at myself in my full-length mirror. I had tried on five other outfits that morning, but I decided to wear my favorite

dress. It was the pretty one Mom and Dad had bought for me on our family vacation to Hawaii. The dress has lots of beautiful colors and a big pink flower that snaps onto the shoulder.





My Family



Obaasan
(Grandma)

Harabujy
(Grandpa)

Me!

Mom
Giggles

Dad





My new school!
(Emerson Charter School)



I ♥
Giggles

As soon as I put it on I was sure every kid in the school would love my dress, especially when they found out where I'd gotten it. I'd be a big hit!

By the time I got downstairs, Mom, Dad, and my grandparents were already eating breakfast. My grandparents weren't just visiting. They lived with us all the time.

"Well, don't you look beautiful today?" Dad said with a smile.

"Are you *sure* you want to wear that dress, Amy?" Mom asked.

For some reason, she wasn't smiling. It had taken me a long time to convince my parents that I should stop being homeschooled. Had she changed her mind? Or maybe she really just didn't like my dress.

"It's my favorite dress!" I said.

"Okay," Mom said with a sigh. "Come and have some breakfast. You have to be at the bus stop in twenty minutes."

I sat down next to my grandmother. But before I could reach for my cereal, she put her

hand over mine and said, “Little Mitsukai, I’m going to miss you all day.”

My grandmother was born in Japan and she always called me Little Mitsukai. Little Angel.

My grandfather didn’t speak Japanese. He was from Korea. And he didn’t have a nickname for me at all. He always said there was no need for nicknames when I had a perfectly nice name already.

Dad’s parents are like that, too. Different. His mother is black and his father is white. Sometimes when we’re all together—my parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins—I wonder if people will even know we are a family since we all look so different from one another.

“I’ll be back at three, Obaasan,” I said to my grandmother. “And we can go for our daily walk then, okay?”

She nodded and poured a little more tea for herself and my grandfather even though his teacup was still half full. They both loved tea. *A lot.*

“So, are you sure you want to go to school?” Dad asked. There was a little worry-wrinkle in his forehead.

“I’m sure,” I answered. But there were lots of butterflies in my stomach. I just didn’t want anyone to know about them.

Hearing this, Mom sighed again. Sometimes it felt like nobody in my family wanted me to go to a regular school. They wanted me to stay home and learn from them because they still had a lot they wanted to teach me.

But I wanted to change. I was tired of spending every day at home with Mom, my grandparents, and my dog, Giggles. I wanted real, non-dog friends. I wanted to sit with my friends at lunch and share jokes, play tag, and jump rope with them at recess. I wanted to get invited to birthday parties and sleepovers on the weekends.

Sometimes I thought my parents would never understand that.

After breakfast, I spent a few minutes in the

yard playing with Giggles. He has honey-brown fur and lopsided ears.

But that's not why I love him so much. I love him because he's friendly and huggable. The perfect dog, really. That's why I felt so guilty for leaving him. He would probably miss me the whole time I was at school. And I knew I would miss him, too.

Finally it was time to leave and Dad came outside. "I'll take you to the bus stop and then go straight to work once you get on the bus," he said.

"Okay, Dad. But you can just drop me off. You don't have to wait around for the bus to come," I told him.

"Don't be silly," Dad said. "I wouldn't miss seeing you step onto the school bus for the first time."

I pet Giggles one last time. He jumped into my arms and licked my face.

"Phew, Giggles," I said. "Your breath stinks. You need to lay off the liver biscuits."

Then I led him back into the house. I couldn't help feeling a little worried. I didn't want to be the only one waiting at the bus stop with my father. How embarrassing would that be?