

JOURNEY TO ZENTOBIA

by Stacy D'Alessandro

EXCERPT

Maggie held her dad's hand, and they lifted off the ground. Her stomach dropped as the speed increased. The smell from the silver flames leaving the shoes reminded her of fumes from the gas station near her home in Hailsville. "This is amazing and scary, and I can't believe this is happening." Below, Zentobia got smaller and smaller as they flew higher. My body is so light up here. Am I in space? Doubt it, the sky's still blue. I have to try this on my own. She released her hand from her dad's, and her body wobbled from side to side. Cold, fresh air blew swiftly against her face, causing her to squint.

Brit flew next to her. "Just keep it steady. You'll get used to the wind. Focus on moving straight ahead."

"This is a lot harder than it looks." Maggie's legs twisted, and she circled around. Yikes! This is crazy! "Oh no! I can't balance. Someone help!"

Brit grabbed her arm. "You've got this."

I can do it. Maggie steadied her breathing and held her hands out to her sides. "It's working. I'm flying! Woohoo!"

They flew in silence the rest of the way. Maggie practiced tricks but kept losing her balance. As they approached the palace, Brit signaled to the group to land on the side of the building behind a set of dead trees.

Oh no. I forgot how to slow down. "Yikes! Dad! I can't slow these things down!"

"Tap your right foot twice," Brit yelled from the ground.

Maggie tapped her foot inches from the ground, and she landed on her hands and knees. "Ouch! That was the worst landing ever."

Her dad ran to her side. "You okay?"

"Yep." She stood. "I'll stick the landing next time."