

## First Take: Chapter 1 (SWITCH)

by Ingrid Law

*Welcome, savvy reader! What follows is the text of the original 950 words I wrote, back in Spring of 2011, when I first began to free-write, brainstorm, and pitch ideas for Gypsy Beaumont’s “savvy” story, for the book that would eventually come to be titled Switch (Book 3 in the Savvy series of companion books, published in 2015 by Dial Books for Young Readers; Puffin paperback edition, 2016).*

*I explored many different options for Gypsy’s savvy, settling in the end for her to first be able to see forward and backward in time—then, after the big “switch”, giving her the ability to stop time entirely. But in this earliest of all versions, I toyed with the idea of giving Gypsy a talent for making things from her imagination come to life. For anyone who has read the final, published version of Switch, you will see that Gypsy’s story started out quite differently, including a supporting character who didn’t make the cut through even the earliest rewrites and revisions. In fact, I think the only thing that remained intact from this scene is the setting: The inside of a grocery store, in Hebron, Nebraska...*

“WHAT THE HECK ARE YOU TRYING TO DO, Gypsy Beaumont? Get yourself killed *and* turned into a popsicle at the same time?”

The first time Henry Meyer tried to talk to me for real, I ignored him like he was nothing but a figment of my imagination—a thirteen year old bad-dream of a boy with a buzz cut, a dirty winter coat, and an armful of ripe oranges. I was simply too busy conferring with a pair of gnomes in the frozen foods aisle of the grocery store in Hebron, debating the best way to rescue an injured sparrow from the top of the ice cream case, to pay the boy any mind.

And I had to concentrate on my climbing.

Wedged inside the half-open door of the glass freezer cabinet, I gripped the top of the door with one hand, while clinging to the highest shelf inside the cooler with the other. My left foot, and most of my weight, rested on a gallon bucket of Rocky Road at the bottom of the case, while the toes of my right foot cautiously tested the strength of the lowest frosty shelf. I wondered if the sill of Neapolitan and Butter Pecan would hold me. But I knew if I could climb the shelves inside the case, like they were a ladder, I would gain the height necessary to rescue the droop-winged bird.

“You have to move faster, dearie!” the fatter of the two gnomes called out. In my vision of the world, the little elf sat on the edge of the shelf of Fudge Ripple, kicking its feet over the side. He was just opening his mouth to say something more, when the second seated gnome, one with a long nose and a crooked hat, elbowed him in the stomach—hard enough to knock him backward, saying:

“No, no, you potbellied nincompoodle! Slow and steady’s better.” Then to me, he added, “Don’t listen to that daft drum of butter. Take your time, Gypsy!”

“Stop arguing, please,” I chided the quarrelsome duo with a laugh. “Keep distracting me, and I’ll fall.” Proving myself right a second later, I let out a squeak as my weight toppled the bucket of Rocky Road and I crashed forward, slamming into the cold metal shelves and nearly losing my grip on the door. For a moment, the two gnomes disappeared into oblivion, leaving me alone—except for annoying Henry Meyer—as the bottom freezer shelf gave out as well, spilling tubs of Butter Pecan into the aisle and setting both my feet to dangling.

Blasted by the arctic, artificial cold, my teeth chattered as I adjusted my grip on the top shelf of the freezer and found new purchase for my right foot, one shelf higher. But Henry Meyer was already behind and under me, wedging his shoulder awkwardly beneath my rear end. The sudden unexpected support startled me—as did the big boost up—and I let out a second squeak.

“Eep!”

But Henry merely hoisted me higher and asked, “Why in the world are you climbing up inside this cooler, Gypsy? And who were you talking to? I could hear you laughing from across the store.”

I continued to try my best to ignore Henry, but it was becoming increasingly difficult, now that I was sitting on his shoulder. I wasn't surprised he hadn't noticed the injured bird that sat perched above us, puffed into a slumping ball of wrecked-up feathers. Nor was I surprised that he couldn't see the two round-faced gnomes as they reappeared, wrestling each other inside the freezer case, issuing loud oofs, ouches, and grunts as they poked their stout fingers into each other's eyes, and threw each other against tubs of Double Vanilla and Mint Chocolate Chip. People often had trouble seeing even a microscopic fraction of the things I witnessed every day. Still, occasionally I thought it might be nice if *someone* could see a bit more of what I saw. I knew life would be as plum as peach pie if people would just stop looking at me like I was crazy all the time—if they would stop staring at me the same way Henry Meyer was now as he studied our reflections in the glass freezer door.

Then again, people always looked at me, my brothers, and my sister like we were the biggest, strangest, most show-stopping spectacles in the world. And in some cases it was true. Most of the people in my family *were* spectacular. Savvy spectacular. Perhaps it was some potent power in the sap that ran through our family tree that made each of us that way, on or around our thirteenth birthdays. Or maybe it was something else . . . something straight outta the tall tales my grandpa used to tell. Something born in moonlight, or out of the depths of a mighty river, or on the crest of a powerful ocean wave.

Climbing that freezer case inside the grocery store, I had already been thirteen for five whole months. And the only change that had happened to me so far was a sudden need for two thick, corrective lenses in a pair of sparkly glasses frames. But I was still waiting. Waiting for my very own dazzling gift. My very own *savvy*. Wondering if I would recognize my new talent the moment it arrived, or if it would take a bit of time to figure out.

Sometimes a savvy kicked in with the breath-whumping *thump* of a prize-pony kick to the tummy, or with the same blaze and chaos as a wildfire whipping through a popcorn farm—a popcorn farm next to an explosives factory...

*I hope you enjoyed this brief “First Take” — a small glimpse into the process of writing, revising, and re-writing a book. For the complete and final version of Gypsy Beaumont’s savvy story, check Switch out from your local library, buy it online, or ask for it at your nearest bookstore. Thanks!*

*Ingrid Law, 2016  
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