



North of Beautiful (A Justina Chen Novel)

By Justina Chen

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North of Beautiful (A Justina Chen Novel) By Justina Chen

As he continued to stare, I wanted to point to my cheek and remind him, But you were the one who wanted this, remember? You're the one who asked-and I repeat-Why not fix your face?

It's hard not to notice Terra Cooper.

She's tall, blond, and has an enviable body. But with one turn of her cheek, all people notice is her unmistakably "flawed" face. Terra secretly plans to leave her stifling small town in the Northwest and escape to an East Coast college, but gets pushed off-course by her controlling father. When an unexpected collision puts Terra directly in Jacob's path, the handsome but quirky Goth boy immediately challenges her assumptions about herself and her life, and she is forced in yet another direction. With her carefully laid plans disrupted, will Terra be able to find her true path?

Written in lively, artful prose, award-winning author Justina Chen Headley has woven together a powerful novel about a fractured family, falling in love, travel, and the meaning of true beauty.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 7 Up—Terra's body is very nearly perfect, except for the port-wine birthmark on her left cheek, which several surgeries have failed to remove. It is the teen's final semester of high school and she looks forward to college where she can study art and escape from her bullying, verbally abusive father. Over the Christmas holidays, Terra and her mother get into a car accident and meet Jacob, a Goth Chinese boy with a cleft lip, and his adoptive mother. The women immediately strike up a supportive friendship, while Terra and Jacob grow close. When Terra's brother, who lives in Shanghai, sends her and her mother tickets to visit, and Jacob's mother wants to try to track down Jacob's birth mother, they decide to travel together. But what about Erik, Terra's enamored but slightly clueless boyfriend? Headley's ambitious novel is written in a beautifully crafted style that flows seamlessly. The pace is somewhat bogged down in the first half but it quickens when the characters travel to China, where Jacob, Terra, and their mothers begin to confront their insecurities. Terra and Jacob are flawed, complex, and memorable characters. The message that true beauty and strength come from within is dominant, but this is also a moving and satisfying story in its own right.—Amy J. Chow, *The Brearley School, New York City*

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review Sixteen-year-old Terra seems to be a typical high-achieving high-school student. Under her heavy makeup, though, she hides a port-wine colored birthmark on her cheek that makes her feel like an outsider. During yet another attempt to remove the birthmark, Terra runs into Jacob, a gorgeous Goth with a cleft-palettes scar. That encounter initiates a transformation in both Terra and her subservient mother. Headley has written an exquisite book that explores the difference between physical and true beauty as Terra and her mother travel from Washington state to China, and from the home of a shame-faced, cruel cartographer into the presence of an adventurous, strong woman and her insightful teenage son. Headley uses map metaphors throughout, even in the activity, geocaching, which helps bond Terra and Jacob in both Washington and China. She also uses Terra's artistic medium, collage, as a literary device to create layer upon layer of experiences and insights into a artfully written journey of self-discovery, self-actualization, and love. With every carefully chosen word, well-crafted sentence, and fully developed character, Headley maps out a wholly satisfying reading experience that takes readers from terra nullis to terra firma. Grades 9-12. -- Frances Bradburn

About the Author

Justina Chen Headley's life were a map, it would be dotted with destinations from around the world. Despite her ability to get lost anywhere, she revels in traveling and has lived in Australia and China. Her first young adult novel, *Nothing But the Truth (and a few white lies)*, won the 2007 Asian Pacific American Award for Youth Literature. Her second book, featuring a gutsy snowboarder, *Girl Overboard*, won praise from Olympic Gold Medalist and fellow snowboarder Hannah Teter. Justina is a co-founder of *readergirlz*, an online book community for teens, and lives in Washington with her two children. You can visit her online at justinachenheadley.com.

Users Review

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