Helios

Title: In The Key of Code
Author: Aimee Lucido
Publisher: Walker Books (2019)
Review:

Readers would surely be convinced that music swims in Emmy's bloodstream and burrows in between her bones as the verbs and nouns and adjectives in the novel appear as musical metaphors, which is quite creative and interesting.
… **Quartets trios** a few **duets** here and there. Even the teacher runs around in a stunning rendition of "**Flight of the Bumblebee**"…
… The teacher **crescendoes** in with a smile painted candy-apple red. A color so joyful so **allegro** so **dolce** and **vivace** that it spills onto the rest of her face…

Emmy is from a musical family. Her dad has got a job with the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra so the family moves to California. As Emmy tries to fit herself in the new school, she discovers that coding is as natural and appealing as music to her. She makes friends with Abigail in the computer science club, but elsewhere she remains lonely – sitting by herself in the cafeteria or being "the girl under the stairs", feeling out of tune – because Abigail makes her part of her secret life. When this is non-accidentally revealed, there is a turbulence in the friendship between Emmy, Abigail and her friend group before things are gradually resolved. The novel ends with Emmy overcoming her stage fright in the showcase for her computer project and feeling like a musician of the world's most beautiful symphony. Entwined in Emmy's story are her observations about dad and mum's jobs, and about club teacher Ms Delaney's illness.

The characters' attitudes towards challenges are quite positive so the happy ending is kind of expected. But this is not an ordinary simple plot. It prompts you to think about secret life, ruthless disease and belongingness. For instance, while Abigail is mastering two lives very well, enjoying the best of everything, Emmy is tired of having a secret, being a secret and living a secret, so she finally breaks Abigail's cover. Has there been no jealousy or unfairness, could secret life be one of the most exciting things to do? On top of the thought-provoking bits, the author has been quite ambitious in combining the elements of music, code and poetry into the production of this hybrid novel. It is full of poetic and musical expressions. And obviously, when Emmy learns to think in Java code, the novel begins to incorporate the programming language's syntax and concepts, which is quite inventive.
… **if (Mom asks about how school was) { System.out.println(**"Fine"**); }**…
… Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner stomach.**settle()**;…
… **while (It is still the weekend) { if (mom) { mom.typeFromTheCouch();... } if (dad) { dad.playYourSong();... } }**…

Overall, it is an easy-to-read novel, a just-right companion when you want to spend some quiet hours in a café along with a chocolate chunk cookie and a cup of caramel waffle latte. But do not expect it to help polish your writing skill since the style of writing is an extraordinary one. I would give it a rating of 7/10.

(496 words)

Creative response:
A raspberry pi (raspberry jam on waffles, pi = π = 3.14)