Ginger Olsen was born in Brooklyn, NY where she spent a great deal of her childhood with her first- and second-generation Norwegian-American family until the age of 15 when her grandmother died. She grew up listening to their stories which now, at 79 years old, she is attempting to write.

For the past 36 years she has called the North Coast of California home. A retired goat cheese maker whose recipes are drawn from the salt air and her Norse heritage, she believes she is blessed to live where she walks with the gods.
They arrived at the family party wearing brand new, matching yellow sundresses made by Nana. Even though the dresses were identical, Lanie’s had twisted, food spots were smeared on the front and the waist was caught in her underpants. As usual, Isabelle Anne’s perfect presentation was ready to show off her grandmother’s skill.

Isabelle Anne was six years old and the first grandchild of the family. She moved from uncle to aunt to great aunt being petted and fussed over while chattering incessantly. “School was fun. I go back in September.” “I already knew how to read” “We learned to write the alphabet.”

“You’re so smart. Did Mommy teach you to read?”

“You must have looked pretty in all those dresses Nana made for you.” “Did the other children like them?”

“Yes. Nana makes cookies too.” “How come you don’t have children?” Isabelle Anne responded to all the adults not the slightest bit upset that she was the only child. Lanie was brushed aside and always referred to as “Isabelle Anne’s little sister.”

Anne, also known as Nana, loved her grandchildren equally but Isabelle Anne was so attentive. Lanie was annoying. Of course she made duplicate dresses though Isabelle Anne’s always looked, well... good. Widowed when her oldest son, the grandchildren’s father, was 15, Anne worked ten hours a day including Saturdays in a dark basement room with 30 other women all at sewing machines. She was paid by how many pieces she completed. One of the benefits of the job was that she could sew the pieces of the children’s dresses that she cut out at home. It only took a little time from her usual daily count. And it gave her such pleasure.

She sat happily now listening to her family enjoying themselves. She admired the children’s dresses feeling just a touch of pride in the family compliments. She spoke up: “Isabelle Anne, What do you want for your birthday?”

“Oh, Nana, Could I have a real store bought dress?”