

# Stone Soup

*The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists*



*Illustration by Amelia Jiang, age 13, for "Searching for Atlantis," page 5*

## SEARCHING FOR ATLANTIS

A huge storm threatens to ruin everything

## GROWING SEASON

Ryan can't imagine a whole summer without his video games

JULY/AUGUST 2016

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# Stone Soup

*The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists*

VOLUME 44, NUMBER 6  
JULY / AUGUST 2016

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# Editor's Note

**Imagining the unknown.** What if a mythical lost continent could be found in the future? What if mermaids were real and their songs lured young men to their deaths? What if animals could come back to life as people? Many of the stories we publish in *Stone Soup* are realistic fiction, based on experience. But we also have a soft spot for fantasy and science fiction. We love it when our writers let their imaginations go and come up with an intriguing view of the world as it could be. In this issue, what makes "Searching for Atlantis," "The Songs of Green Waters," and "Rainbows in the Sun" great reading is that, in addition to sparking our imaginations, they are grounded in the believable, with realistic dialogue, careful descriptions of places, and characters we can relate to. Have you ever wished you could make something fantastical come to life? Try it in your next story!

— Gerry Mandel

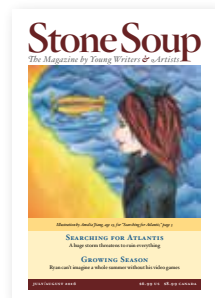
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## Submissions

Read our guidelines at [stonesoup.com](http://stonesoup.com). If you have submission questions, write to [editor@stonesoup.com](mailto:editor@stonesoup.com). No email submissions, please.

**ON THE COVER** Amelia Jiang's favorite thing to draw is scenery, using pencil crayons. She loves to play around with colors and layer different shades. At school, she designs yearbook covers and posters. Outside of school, she plays badminton and volleyball. Amelia dreams of becoming a designer or lawyer one day.



# The Mailbox



**I was very** excited to receive the May/June issue of *Stone Soup*! I especially enjoyed the story “Friends” because the author did such a good job and the illustrations were great. I

love your magazine!

**Caroline Krauth, 11**  
Chevy Chase, Maryland

**I am a huge fan** of your magazine and my favorite story I have ever read in your magazine is “Words,” by Elia Smith [September/October 2014]. It really improved my vocabulary and inspired me to get a dictionary and a thesaurus of my own.

**Annabel M. Smith, 11**  
Manchester, Massachusetts

*Annabel's story, “Don't Talk to Strangers,” appears on page 10 of this issue.*

**I teach** fifth-grade language arts at Heritage Christian School. Thank you for publishing *Stone Soup Magazine*. I have enjoyed reading the stories to my students. They have thoroughly loved listening to the variety of stories in the publication. It has fueled their fires to write well. They have been able to hear what great young authors do to connect with readers. The illustrations are inspiring as well. Thank you for your time and effort to foster lifelong readers and writers.

**Jennifer Miller, teacher**  
Indianapolis, Indiana

**I have been** a reader of your magazine for the past five or so years. I would like to comment on “The Girl Next Door,” [March/April 2016]. I also have been blind since birth, just like Via. I have had similar experiences with people who have not been around blind folks like me. I've also had friends who haven't really talked to me much due to the fear and misconception that people who are blind are “unapproachable,” “scary,” etc. This story really moved me. My advice to you readers is, when you meet a blind person, don't feel scared when you start talking to him or her. When you respect that blind person, and that person starts respecting you, true friendship is going to blossom for the rest of your lives! Thank you for this fabulous magazine!

**Enrique Lopez, 17**  
Jerome, Idaho

**When I was eight,** my grandmother got me a subscription to *Stone Soup*. Immediately, I loved it. The stories and poems took me into different worlds, but the book reviews, oh, the book reviews were incredible. I was always delighted when someone wrote about a book that I had read. When I hadn't read a book in a book review, though, I almost always loved the sound of it and went to the local library to check it out.

**Adina Siff, 11**  
Washington, DC

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*Stone Soup* welcomes your comments. Send them to [editor@stonesoup.com](mailto:editor@stonesoup.com).





*Perfect flying weather, especially for this trip*

# Searching for Atlantis

By **Sonja Skye Wooley**

*Illustrated by* **Amelia Jiang**

JULY 6, 2052, 9 A.M.

ELIZABETH PULLED ON her trench coat and adjusted the straps to her flying goggles. Her frizzy red hair was barely controlled under her striped bandana and her dark green eyes squinted in the glare of the sun. She was standing on the stone pavement of the San Francisco wharf, gazing out to sea, past the airships lined neatly in a row. Behind her lay the city with its multicolored skyscrapers, which were topped with gardens that looked completely out of place on the buildings. The sky was clear, with not a cloud to be seen. Perfect flying weather, especially for this trip.

"Wow, look at that thing! I can't believe the university let us borrow it!" said Elizabeth's friend and lab partner, Jack, who was standing next to her. He was pointing to the airship directly in front of them. It was a smoothly built contraption, its large propellers whirring as it floated a few feet above the sea.

"Well, I suppose it's for science. But you know, not everybody wanted to lend it to us," Elizabeth replied.

"Really?" said Jack with interest.

"Yeah," Elizabeth said. "Some of those guys thought our whole idea was baloney!"

"What?!" he exploded. "I've studied tons of old geography and history books. Lots of them suggest that Atlantis could be lying in the Pacific instead of the Atlantic all along. That's why nobody has ever found it. Besides, your sonar readings



Sonja Skye Wooley, 12  
Berkeley, California



Amelia Jiang, 13  
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

don't lie, there is definitely *something* down there."

"I know, we'll show them," Elizabeth replied, and she was about to say more when Jack's watch started going off. A tiny 3-D projected image of himself, short brown hair, jeans, glasses, and all, appeared on the screen.

"Come *on*, Jack," it said, hands on hips, "you have got to go!"

"Yes, I know," he grumbled. Jack turned off his watch and the projection disappeared. "Well, we had better get a move on," he said. Elizabeth nodded.

So they walked up the gangplank and onto the airship. As she passed through the entrance she saw *The Hurricane* written in large black letters on the side of the ship. "Well, I sure hope not," Elizabeth said to herself, then hurried after Jack.

Inside there was a small sitting room with a couch, a table, and a mini-fridge. The walls were made of glass so you could look out in all directions, the floor and ceiling were of polished wood. It's going to look cool in here when we get up in the air, Elizabeth thought to herself as she passed.

The control room had such a bewildering number of switches, knobs, and levers that only an expert airship pilot could actually use them without getting a headache. Expert pilot that she was, Elizabeth sat down and put on her headset.

"Everything in working order?" she asked Jack, who was sitting next to her.

"Yep," he replied.

"OK, I'm starting up the engines." Elizabeth adjusted a lever, and a loud hum began beneath their feet.

"We're gaining altitude," said Jack. "This is going to be a great day for flying."

The airship looked out of place in the vast emptiness of the sky. It had a blimp-like top, large propellers, and a relatively small human compartment. In the sky, all that could be heard was the drone of the propellers and the *shush shush shush* of the engine. That's why Elizabeth loved flying in an airship. When you're up there you feel as if you and your co-pilot are the only people in the world and the sea stretches on forever. Today, *The Hurricane* flew low under the clouds and closer to the ocean than some would deem safe. But, as was mentioned before, this was a *very* special mission.

Inside, Elizabeth pulled out a piece of paper on which she had printed the sonar readings and showed them to Jack.

"See that part in the middle, with all those weird lines? That's where we will be looking."

About an hour later, they arrived at their destination. Elizabeth checked the coordinates on the map, then fiddled with a compass on the control panel.

"Perfect, this is just where we need to be. Jack, can you get us down any... *Whoa*."

To the west a huge storm was brewing, reaching high into the sky and blocking out the sun. Lightning crackled, clouds were blown all over the place, and Elizabeth could hear the distant rumble of thunder. From Elizabeth and Jack's



perspective, it looked just like the unsightly contents of a witch's cauldron were being stirred quite violently.

"Oh great, just amazing!" said Jack, glaring at the storm. "Just as we come close to making a great historic and scientific discovery, this storm is conjured up. As if to drive us away!"

Elizabeth sighed. "Well, we will just have to come back another time." But the moment she said that, *The Hurricane* gave a sudden lurch, sending the two companions sprawling. Elizabeth heard a crash as the furniture in the sitting room was knocked about. By the time Elizabeth managed to get to her feet, she almost fell back down again in surprise.

"Jack!" she cried. "We're heading straight into the storm!" Elizabeth helped him to his seat and the two pilots desperately tried to get *The Hurricane* going back in the right direction. But it was too late, the storm had already swallowed them up.

Rain lashed at the windshield and lightning struck so close it nearly killed them. All they could see through the windshield was a whirling gray soup.

"We've got to get out of here!" Elizabeth shouted over the howling wind.

"I'm working on it!" Jack yelled back. He furiously tried to get *The Hurricane* facing into the right direction, but the airship just kept turning in ludicrous circles, buffeted by the wind.

"Jack, we need to get to the top of the storm!" Elizabeth cried.

"Are you crazy? It's even worse up

there!" Jack replied.

"If we can get above the clouds, it will be perfectly calm."

"Yeah, and the flight there is suicide!"

"It's our only chance, we have to," said Elizabeth.

"Fine," grumbled Jack, "but if something goes wrong, don't blame me."

With difficulty, the two pilots fought their way up through the sea of churning clouds. Just when Elizabeth thought she could see a glimmer of sunlight through the blackness, the world turned upside down and she saw no more.

ELIZABETH WOKE UP lying on the control room floor. At first she was confused. Where am I? she thought to herself. Then Elizabeth remembered. The mission. *The Hurricane*. The storm. She sat up, groaning.

"What *happened*?"

"Well," said Jack who was sitting next to her, putting on his glasses, "I've read that on the open sea some storms can have powerful updrafts near the top. Looks like we've been caught in an extra bad one and the sudden change in altitude must have knocked us out."

"OK, next question: where are we?"

"Well," said Jack, "only one way to find out." Jack stood up and looked out the window. "Wow, Elizabeth, you've got to see this."

"What? Oh, *cool*!"

*The Hurricane* had, thankfully, landed upright on a white sand beach. Further from the shore there was a lush jungle full of plants that Elizabeth and Jack had

never seen before, and the screeches of howler monkeys filled the air.

“Let me check our coordinates,” said Elizabeth. “Hmm... Looks like we’ve been blown too far to the south.” She pressed a button on her watch, and a 3-D map of the ocean appeared. “Huh, this island isn’t on here. Hey! You know what that means? We’ve accidentally discovered a new island, probably one with tons of new species.”

“Wow! We’ll be famous!” said Jack. “What should we name it? How about ‘Jack and Elizabeth Island?’”

“What? No! We should call it ‘Elizabeth and Jack Island.’ Come on, let’s go explore.”

Once they maneuvered their way through the chaos of the sitting room, Elizabeth walked down the beach, while Jack went to check out the jungle. She was just about to dip her feet into the cool water that was lazily washing onto

shore when she noticed something. About five feet out from where she stood there was a steep drop-off. And below that was... Elizabeth gasped. Just below the waves was a huge castle, completely covered with coral, shells, and seaweed, but magnificent all the same. Below the castle were streets, houses, and villas. Elizabeth couldn’t believe it.

“Jack, Jack! I’ve found it, come here!”

“What?” he asked, running over. “Oh. My. Gosh. Are you seeing what I’m seeing?”

“Yep.”

“We did it! We actually found it!” Jack cried. “Now, we have two options here. We could either fly home, tell the university of our discovery, and then come back. Or, there is some scuba gear in a chest in *The Hurricane*. We could explore down there right now.”

Elizabeth grinned. “What are we waiting for?”



# The Shooting Star

By Maisie Zipfel

The moist grass  
comforts me  
as I lie there  
sleeping  
my brother beside  
me  
later, he shakes  
me awake  
and calls  
my name  
over and over  
and over again  
finally, I sit up  
startled  
I look up  
just in time  
to see a beautiful  
shiny  
shooting star



Maisie Zipfel, 10  
St. Louis, Missouri

# Don't Talk to Strangers

By Annabel M. Smith

Illustrated by Elena Delzer



Annabel M. Smith, 11  
Manchester, Massachusetts



Elena Delzer, 12  
Suamico, Wisconsin

## A TRUE STORY

“**Y**EAH, I THINK just a cheeseburger will be fine,” I told my dad as we stood outside McDonald’s. “I’ll take Beacon while you do that.”

I grabbed my dog’s leash from my father as he strolled into the restaurant. Seconds later, my brother emerged.

We watched as cars, spewing smelly exhaust, drove past. A navy-blue Mercedes suddenly stopped, leaving a car sitting irritably at the drive-through window.

The window opened and a man with a face the shape of a perfect oval and hair that was graying and balding appeared. He said something that was inaudible over the rumble of his car and then repeated it.

I swear, I had never seen the guy before. He was a total stranger and I probably will never see him again.

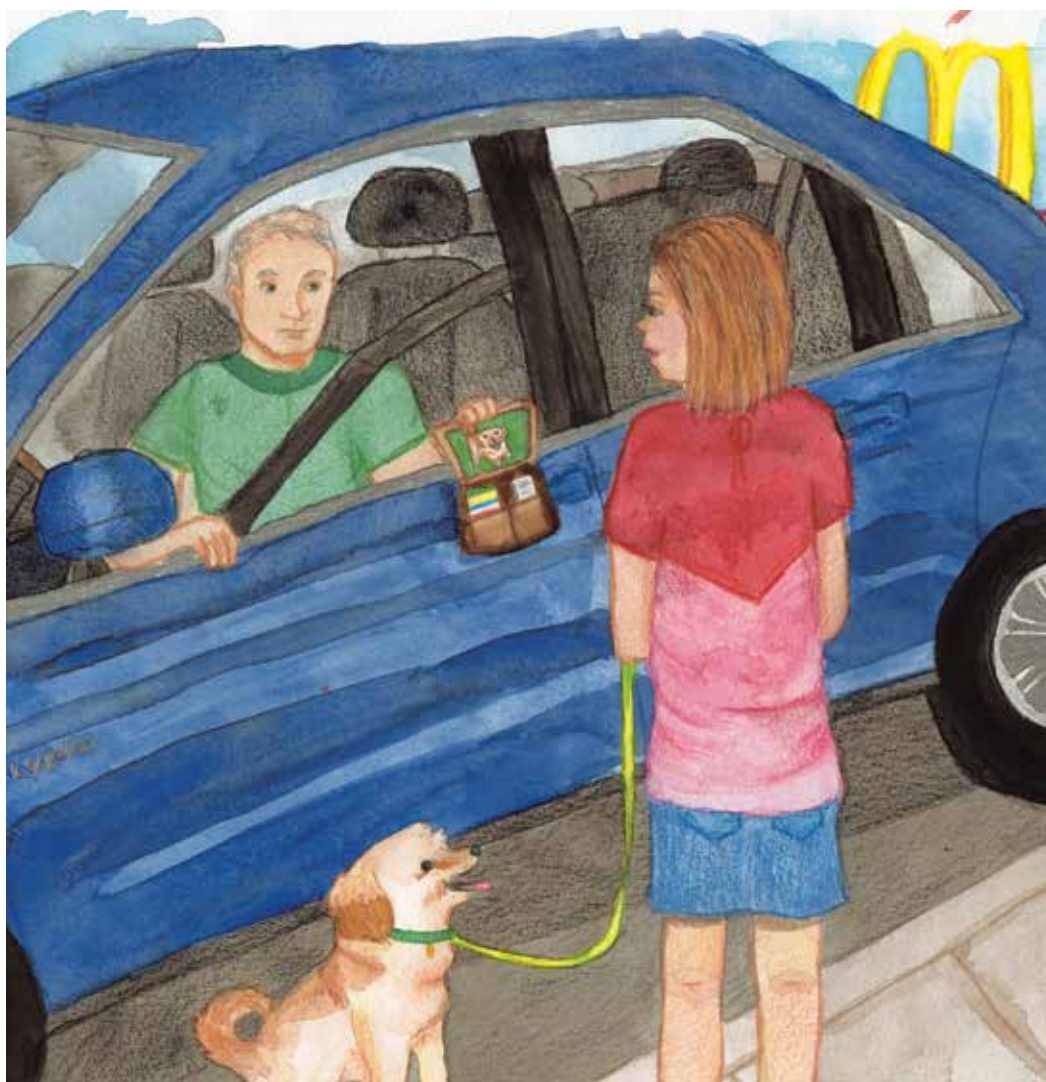
“What breed of dog is that?” the man asked. “’Cause I had a dog that looked just like him.”

“He’s a Maltipoo,” Atticus replied.

I was lost for words but I managed to utter, “A Maltese-Poodle.”

The stranger pulled out a brown wallet. He opened it up and I saw what I thought was a picture of the Beakmeister himself (the Beakmeister was my father’s favorite nickname for Beacon).

The dog in the picture had Beacon’s silky fur and black nose and pinkish tongue. The dog curled his tail up against his back like Beacon did when he was happy, and most dogs



*All there was in the world were the dog in the picture, Beacon, and me*


didn't. He had Beacon's floppy ears too. I wondered if the two dogs were related.

"This is him," said the man. I jumped a little. I had almost forgotten he was there. All there was in the world were the dog in the picture, Beacon, and me.

I saw a little bit of something in the man's eyes go out, as if in long-

ing for the dog. He tightened his lips a little and dropped the wallet abruptly. Reluctantly, he tore his eyes back to the wheel.

"Take good care of him," the man murmured, and drove off.

I scooped up Beacon and hugged him close. 



# Book Review

By Ramsey E. Stephenson

*Blackbird Fly*, by Erin Entrada Kelly;  
Greenwillow Press: New York, 2015; \$16.99



Ramsey E. Stephenson, 11  
Washington, DC


HAVE YOU EVER longed and hoped for something you never had? Like blue eyes, or soft yellow hair? Those are the things Apple Yengko longs for night and day. To not come from a different country. To not have a mother who does things differently than other mothers. To be the same as everyone else. Have you ever felt this way? Then you should read *Blackbird Fly*.

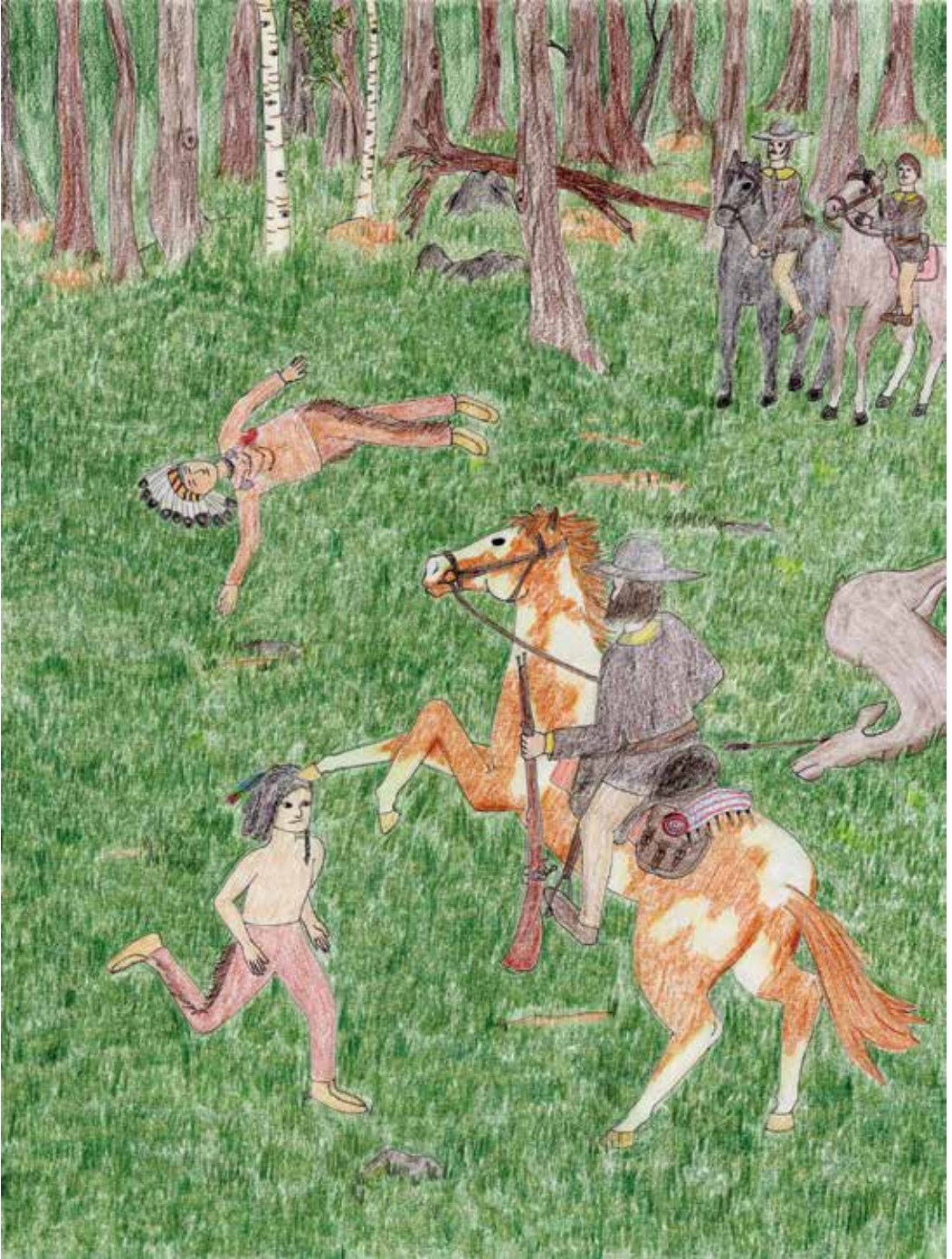
Apple Yengko is from the Philippines. She was born there, and that was where her father died. Her mother couldn't stand to still live in the same place. Too many memories. So they moved to America. Apple is conscious of her looks and how her mother talks. She goes to Chapel Hill Middle School in Louisiana. The kids make fun of her because she looks different. Looking different can either work for you or against you. In her case it works against her. They even put her on a list that marks her ugly. But then a bad mistake is made that somehow helps Apple make new friends and learn that being different from everyone else isn't so bad.

One main theme of *Blackbird Fly* is that being different isn't a bad thing. Sometimes it's a gift. It's OK not to blend in

with the crowd. You don't have to always be the same as everyone else. The author made the passion of the characters so strong. Feelings jumped off every page! It was also a little funny at times. You would immediately feel trust, sympathy, and compassion for Apple. Apple's mother is always raging about American ways and choices and friends. It makes Apple wonder, if her mom is always talking about how much nicer or more friendly or healthy the Philippines are, why did she move her to America? This book is a cliffhanger and will deeply impact your emotions.

The best thing about this book is that you can really relate to the main character. One terrible thing that happens in this book is that Apple's friends don't turn out to be so friendly and are really harsh. They backstab her when she least expects it. One time a really good friend of mine backstabbed me and I was hurt. But I got through it, and so did Apple. The things that happen in this book seem so real and you can totally relate to Apple's good moments, seriously embarrassing moments, and terrible and confusing moments. It makes the book seem so real because things like that happen all the time.

All in all, this was a five-star book for me. It made me gasp, sigh in relief, and shudder all the while I was reading it. This book was very satisfying, but also completely and truly shocking in some ways. *Blackbird Fly* is a fantastic read! 



*The last thing he saw was a hoof hitting him in the forehead*

# Scarlet Spring

By **Benjamin Mollborn**

*Illustrated by* **Bedford Stevens**

**K**ANUNA STOOD SILENTLY in the soft, grassy meadow, taking in deep gulps of the fresh spring air. The winter had been timeless and bitter, but now spring was here. It was only a few weeks ago when Kanuna had noticed the first little shoot of grass shyly peek its head through the silent blanket of snow. Now, there was not a single patch of ice or snow left. The rivers were teeming with snowmelt, and the meadows were as vibrant as ever. He felt as if the spring were the best thing that could happen to him right now.

Kanuna strode over to the river. He could just barely make out the form of his mother, standing at the edge of their village.

"Kanuna!" his mother called. "Kanuna, is that you?"

"Yes!" he shouted over the roaring river.

"Get over here," his mother scolded. Kanuna deftly got into the canoe, picked up the paddle, and crossed the river.

"Go to your father. Don't you remember—he's teaching you how to hunt today," Kanuna's mother scolded. How could he have forgotten? Kanuna slapped himself in the forehead. He'd been looking forward to this for a while.

"Hello, son," called his father. There are many benefits to having a father who is the chief of a tribe. Today, he was going to learn how to hunt.

"Follow me!" he called. They walked for half an hour until his father suddenly halted.

"Be careful and quiet," he whispered toward Kanuna, who



Benjamin Mollborn, 12  
Boulder, Colorado



Bedford Stevens, 12  
Springfield, Oregon



was still ten feet behind him. There was a deer in the meadow. Kanuna shivered with excitement. He drew his bow and, under his father's instruction, aimed for the eye and fired. The arrow went straight and clean, into the eye. It would have been a quick and painless death for the deer. They carefully made their way out. They were halfway across the clearing when the gunshots went off. Wild with fear, Kanuna looked to his father for help.

"Ru—" his father was cut off as a terrible gurgling noise issued from his mouth. Kanuna looked at the chief's chest and saw a bright red dot spreading itself slowly but persistently across his shirt.

Kanuna started sprinting across the meadow. He was at the treeline when he was cut off by a horse rearing up in front of him. The last thing he saw was a hoof hitting him in the forehead before he blacked out.

CHARLES WOKE UP with his head buried in the pillow. He sat up, coughing in the acrid fumes of burning firewood, his father's cologne, the stink from a dead bird on the roof that was far along in the rotting process, and his own sweat.

"Charles!" his father shouted up the stairs. "Are you up yet?" He gagged in response.

"Well get a move on!" his father said. "Don't you remember? You're coming with us today to secure more territory!" Charles had been waiting for this day his whole life. There were benefits of having a father who was the warden.

He and his father had come on a ship to the thirteen colonies, just like the rest of the town. But having no second-in-command, when the mayor was killed by the natives, the responsibility of leadership fell on him. Charles's father was the warden of the town prison, and he burned with a hatred for the Native Americans. His sole goal was to conquer land for farming. People still called him Warden, although he should not have been called that anymore.

"On my way!" Charles called. A half hour later he, his father, and ten or so other settlers were seated on their horses.

"Follow me!" called his father to the band of settlers. "Be cautious! The natives are extremely hostile." Charles wondered why the natives were opposing them. They were just taking what was rightfully theirs, after all.

Half an hour later, they came to a clearing. Everyone spread out in a half circle around it. There were no natives; the settlers' attention was on a deer. They were licking their lips and loading their muskets when an arrow soared out through the clearing, hitting the deer straight in the eye. The warden quickly held a finger to his lips, silencing the others. A grown man and his son, both natives, crept out into the clearing.

"Fire!" the warden shouted. A musket went off and the man dropped to the ground. The child ran across the meadow towards the trees. One of the settlers cut him off and, while it was rearing, his horse's hoof knocked against the child's forehead, a bruise already blossoming



yellow, purple, and black. He slumped to the ground, unconscious. Charles's father commanded the settlers to move forward and he tied the child up and slung him over the saddle.

Charles looked from the bruised child to his father, lying now in a pool of blood. Numbly, he thought, *This is why they're hostile. In fact, we're the hostile ones, and they're just defending themselves.*

The rest of the ride home was quiet, but there was an air of victory among all but Charles. The group dispersed, and he was left alone with his father and the unconscious form now slumped on the ground.

"What did you think?" the warden asked. Charles just nodded. Honestly, this had been the worst day of his life, but he wasn't about to tell his father that.

"Go put this child in the cellar and lock the door, there's a good boy," ordered his father. Charles tromped down the stairs, his and the boy's weight combined making the pine boards creak. The cellar was a damp and moldy room, with brick walls, a stone floor, and one small window with iron bars on it. Just as Charles was closing the heavy oak door, he saw motion behind it.


"I know you can't understand me," he whispered, "but I'm so very, truly sorry." Then he closed the door and slid the iron deadbolt into place.

**K**ANUNA WOKE UP in a boy's strong arms. The boy seemed to be about his age. He was unceremoniously thrown on a damp stone floor. His forehead

throbbed where the horse had hit it. He wished he could dunk it in some cool water from the river at home.

"*Oi noor eew kabnt oendrstraint mee,*" the boy whispered, "*boot eiam soew varree, troolee sairee.*"

The boy whispered words Kanuna did not understand, then shut the door and slid something heavy into place on the other side. Kanuna was left alone, the only company he had a solitary rat scuttling across the stone floor. His head throbbed once, and he remembered. His father! His father, lying there, shirt stained red. And Kanuna broke. He sobbed and sobbed and sobbed. Finally, when his eyes were red from crying, he slumped against a broken hay bale in the corner of the cell. He wondered, would he ever get out of here?

**T**HE GRASSY MEADOW was soft beneath his feet. Kanuna thought back to the night when that boy had helped him escape. The boy who had captured him. The boy who had talked to him. The boy who had pitied him. The boy who took a musket pellet in the leg for him. The boy who stood up to a vicious father for him. He was ever grateful. But the hole that his father had left in his heart would never disappear. He could fill it in, and he would go on with life. Eat. Drink. Sleep. Hunt. Love. Yes, holes could be filled in, but the dirt was always softer where they had been. But right now, he was going to enjoy life as it was. Everything was perfect on a summer's morning, and he was free. 

# My Hammock

*By* **Anamaria Grieco**



Anamaria Grieco, 13  
Brookline, Massachusetts

Suspended.  
Still.  
Suddenly, a  
sweet song,  
a lullaby.

Swinging now.

A hush  
a shush  
a soft touch  
caressing my  
sharp elbows,  
my shivering toes,  
my rounded cheeks.

Swinging now,

Swathed in  
silken material  
hush, hush, hush  
Goodnight sun  
alone  
but content

not lonely  
several long seconds...

Swinging now.

Stars smile at me  
sprinkling light  
Each star, its own  
star  
like snowflakes.  
Individuals.

Swinging now.

I sleep  
dreams tiptoeing  
across my mind  
slipper feet sliding  
silently.  
I sleep  
Safe in my hammock.

Swinging now



*"I'm Lisa," she says, cheerfully. "It really sucks that you got pushed."*

# High Dive

By Devon Davila

Illustrated by Amy Mengler

**M**Y TOES CURL and uncurl on the sandpaper-rough diving board. I shiver as I stare into the glittering pool. The chlorine smell turns my stomach.

I know I'm eventually going to have to jump, but I just can't. I stand, letting the wind chill my tan skin. It's the last day of summer, and I'm *determined* to conquer the high dive.

I hear another groan escape from behind me. I glance back. Marcy, my best friend, impatiently taps her pink nails along the metal ladder.

"Hurry," she mouths at me.

Another mosquito nips my arm, and I slap it away. I try to ignore the incoherent whispers down below. *This time I'm going to do it.*

I bend my legs, flex my muscles, and do a little hop. The whole board quakes, and I let out a little scream before grabbing the railing. I hear Marcy's snort over the racing of my heart. I grip the railing with my shaking hands. *Just don't look down. Just don't look down.* I stare at the deep blue sky patched with pink.

"She's never going to do it," I hear Amy Andrews grumble from below. Dark strands of hair flutter in front of my face, escaping my thick ponytail. That's when I know I can't do it. I begin to make my way towards the ladder with wobbly steps before disappointment and embarrassment can overwhelm me. *Don't let them see you cry.*

"Jeez," Marcy says, stepping onto the diving board. She



Devon Davila, 11  
Whittier, California



Amy Mengler, 12  
Kendenup, Western Australia



strides towards me, forcing me to take about seven steps back.

"What are you doing?" I squeak.

She takes a few steps toward me and pushes, *hard*.

I scream, falling and falling towards the water. My arms and legs flail uncontrollably. I hit the water with an icy slap.

My skin stings as bubbles tickle their way up my body. I hang there a moment, suspended under water. My heart screams in my head. I can't think anything. Finally, I kick hard and break the surface.

I stare up at Marcy. She looks like a queen on top of the diving board.

"Why did you do that?!" I shout, sputtering. She rolls her eyes.

"Oh, relax. You finally jumped off the diving board. Aren't you happy?" she says, glancing nervously back at the people in line. Most of them didn't even pay attention, but I know she *hates* it when someone makes a scene.

"You pushed me," I accuse lamely.

"I was only helping," Marcy says, rolling her eyes again. "Now you might want to move, or else I might crush you."

I force smooth strokes to the edge of the pool. Acid tears fall into the water. I hear Marcy's happy squeal and splash. I climb out stiffly, wrapping a fresh towel around my waist and slinging my new swim bag over my shoulder.

"Excuse me," says a voice behind me. I quickly wipe away tears.

I turn and stare at a girl with sun-kissed skin in a red bathing suit. She smiles at me, and her smile feels like a refreshing spray.

"I'm Lisa," she says, cheerfully. "It really sucks that you got pushed." I adjust my bag strap and look at my feet. I feel the tears about to well up in my eyes again. *How could Marcy do that?*

"Do you want to sit with me?" she asks.

*What I really want is to go home and lie down in the clean sheets and forget about today.* "Sure," I say, smiling as kindly as I can. "I'm Mia." She sucks in a breath of air and then gives me a small smile.

"Follow me," she says, before leading me off. Together, we brush past the dry hedges and go behind the locker rooms. You get a perfect view of the high dive. Queen Marcy is right back up there. We reach a fountain, and I can't help but notice the sunset reflecting on its calming surface. It's filled with pleasant round pebbles that remind me of sea glass. It's a special place.

I take a seat at its base and face the hedges. How I wish I could ignore the kids jumping off the diving board with ease. I stare longingly at them. *Why is it so easy for them?* I wonder. I imagine how weird I must've looked falling, flailing, and screaming from the diving board. I want to cry all over again, but I just sigh.

Lisa lies next to me, her curly hair stretching across the cold cement. Unlike me, she's staring up at the sky, her

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**I'm done with Marcy  
but I'm not done with  
that diving board.**

---

eyes butter-soft. My muscles begin to unclench, and I listen to the trickling water.

I turn to her and say, "I want to be able to jump off the high dive just like everybody else." Lisa turns and stares at me. I push a soggy strand of hair behind my ear.

"I know. You'll do it someday" she says, giving me that ocean-spray smile.

"Have you ever felt that way?" I ask. "I mean... about anything?"

Even though I'm being very awkward, she just closes her eyes and sighs. "I moved here at the beginning of summer. My mom wanted me to go to this pool, so I came. I watched everyone buy frozen lemonades together and take selfies. I was always alone, sitting in my chair, with a melting lemonade and a camera with no memories. I never had the courage to ask somebody to hang

out with me, but then, I finally did." Her eyes sparkle as she turns to me. "I found this place a few weeks ago. I call it The Golden Fountain. It looks like it's come straight out of a fairy tale, right?"


"Yeah, it does," I smile.

I'm done with Marcy but I'm not done with that diving board. I *will* conquer it.

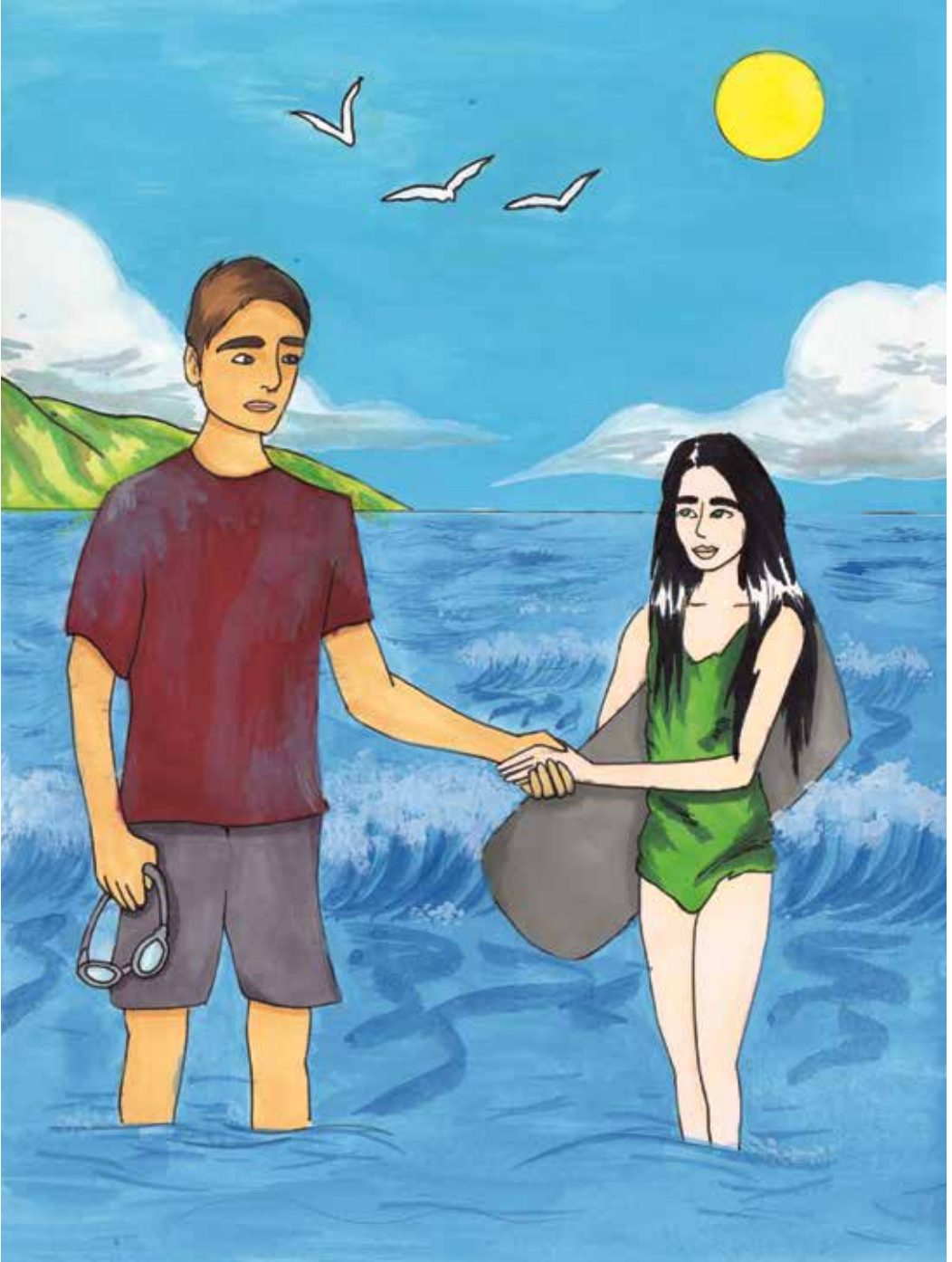
We watch the sun sink and stars slowly sprinkle across the sky. Lisa tells me about her brothers and her dog. I tell her about my favorite restaurant and school. Lisa is the only girl I've ever seen at the pool who doesn't go to my school, and I've never seen her until now.

As I walk home, a new swing in my step, I remember what Lisa said to me.

"Lisa, I'm going to jump off the high dive, OK?" I said.

"I have no doubt," she said, and squeezed my hand. 





*I noticed that her eyes were almost exactly the shade of the ocean*

# The Songs of Green Waters

By **Hannah Awbrey**

*Illustrated by* **Angelica Devers**

We call you, songs of life serene,  
You dive, our beauty never seen  
Until you're trapped in worlds of green.  
To land you won't return.  
For beauty won't your life you trade  
And join us in a brief parade?  
The countless lives we've took and played  
All men for beauty yearn.  
So join us, hear our siren song  
Your lifetime left you'll come along  
Until no more for breath you long  
So turn, green waters, turn.  
O gentle waters turn.

—Ariella Pearl

**T**HERE WAS A CONVERSATION going on at the moment, but I wasn't paying any attention to it. I added in a "cool" once in a while, but my mind was far away from my cousins' small talk. I stood, clad in a damp T-shirt and swim trunks, on the wet sand of the beach, the ends of waves lapping at my bare feet.

My two cousins, Kyle and Mark, stood by me in similar beach garb, involved in a conversation that included various and frequent interjections of "dude," "man," and "bro." For Mark and Kyle, this was the height of the Californian beach experience: looking cool, wearing overpriced sunglasses, and exclaiming over bikini-clad, blond-haired, sun-tanning teen



Hannah Awbrey, 12  
Reedley, California



Angelica Devers, 13  
Kapolei, Hawaii

girls. I was uncomfortably bored with their so far fifteen-minute-long conversation about a certain exceptionally “hot” bikini-wearer. I wanted to be deep out under the ocean, my new goggles strapped over my face, with a clear view of the green, underwater world. But Mark and Kyle would have none of that, especially the goggles, which they said made me look like a dorky robot.

“Jarren!” I broke my gaze from the ocean horizon at the sound of my name.

“What?” I turned to Kyle, trying to pretend that I had been interested in what he was saying.

Kyle groaned. “I said, ‘Jarren, check out that...’” But, even though it was no doubt some girl, I never got a chance to hear exactly what I should check out. A skinny, pale-skinned girl on a boogie board, with dark, stringy hair and a sea-green one-piece bathing suit, was ejected from the ocean with the waves, whooping and cheering as she shot right into Kyle, knocking his legs out from under him.

“Oh!” The girl jumped to her bare feet and flung her dark, stringy hair over her shoulder, revealing a face clouded with freckles. “I’m so sorry!” She took Kyle’s hand and yanked him to his feet with a surprising amount of strength in her skinny arm. “Are you OK?” She peered into my cousin’s face. “There’s no way to steer on these things, you know. Someone should invent boogie boards

that steer, don’t you think?” Her voice came out in a lively, enthusiastic burst that made me wonder whether she took the time to inhale at all.

“No problem,” Kyle said quickly and shakily, stealing a glance at Mark. All three of us turned away from the girl, expecting her to rush sheepishly back into the ocean. Kyle and Mark returned to their conversation and I, imagining the quiet peace I could have beneath the ocean, looked towards the sea—and found myself face-to-face with a freckled,

dark-haired girl: the kid with the boogie board had never left.

“Oh!” I took a leap back. “Er... um... are you OK...?” Oddly, to my surprise, I noticed that her eyes were almost exactly the shade of the ocean.

“Yeah,” she said perkily, looking unfazed. “My name’s Rosie.” She stuck her hand towards me.

“Um...” I looked over to Kyle and Mark for help, but they’d abandoned me and moved on to another conversation on their own. The girl, Rosie, reached down and grabbed my hand, giving it a firm shake.

“I- I’m Jarren...” I stuttered, not wanting to hurt the kid’s feelings but longing to leave the awkward situation.

“Nice to meet you, Jarren.” Rosie kept her grip tight on my hand. “Come on, you aren’t really interested in what those guys are saying anyway. Why don’t you come and swim with me?” She gave my

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**It was so easy  
to recognize you  
as a kindred spirit.**

---



hand a hard tug.

"Listen, kid, I can't..."

"Who're you calling kid?" With her freckled face screwed up in anger, she could have been a laughable sight, but I, a head taller than her and much heavier, was strangely frightened. "I'm thirteen years old," she said proudly. "How old are you, anyway?"

My face flushed, an annoying attribute that popped up at the most embarrassing times. "Th-thirteen," I stammered. Rosie humphed triumphantly.

It was hard to believe this scrawny little imp was my age; she was a full head shorter than me and looked unhealthily skinny, like someone who had been starved or underfed. Her swimsuit hung as loosely on her tiny frame as someone's baggy jeans might.

"Just come on, OK?" she said to me, never loosening her grip on my hand. "We don't have to go swimming. Don't you like books? I'll show you a really great book."

I completely froze in my tracks with enough force to make Rosie's fingers untangle themselves from mine. Suddenly, I was shaken deeply. I *did* like books, but how did she know? How did she know that I would have rather been enclosed in a solitary garden or forest, living incredible adventures through written words, than here, looking cool on the beach? She could have been a good judge of character who randomly popped out of the ocean. Or, she could have been something more than that, something abnormal, something fantastical like

you'd find in a story...

"Jarren?" Rosie turned toward me.

I hesitated a moment. "Yeah... yeah, coming." Then, somehow finding my hand back in Rosie's, I followed the tiny sprite of a girl beyond the sands of the beach.

"**W**HY DO I NEED to see this book so badly, anyway?" I was squatting in a sparsely furnished room, wondering why I ever followed this little stranger to her tiny, cheap-looking apartment. I wasn't worried that I was in any danger—Rosie was such a weak-looking, skinny thing—but I shivered with dread when I thought of Mark and Kyle finding me missing, probably alerting my parents. Before I had decided to try to be cool like my cousins, I had many a time wandered off into forests and fairylands and gotten separated from the group. A sickening feeling came over me when I thought of my father's face, once he found out I had followed a stranger to her house.

"This book is my single most prized possession," Rosie announced, pulling an ancient-looking, leather-bound volume from a wrinkled trash bag. With its thick, uneven-edged pages, old, dusty appearance, and strange, fish-like symbol on the cover, this was exactly the kind of book you might find magic in. "Of course," Rosie continued, hardly seeming to stop to take a breath, "that's not much to say, considering the small amount of possessions I actually own."

She opened up the trash bag to reveal

a tiny jumble of items. They consisted of no more than a few T-shirts, a single pair of shorts, and a worn-out pair of tennis shoes that looked two sizes too small for even Rosie's tiny feet. The magical-looking, leather-bound tome that Rosie held seemed to be the only book she possessed.

"All my belongings have to fit into this bag for when I move to a new foster home. I've been in three different homes this year alone. Can you believe it?" Rosie grinned at me.

"Um... uh..." I couldn't believe it, and I thought it was awful, but I didn't know how to respond. My skin crawled with discomfort. I'd always felt uncomfortable around people who had suffered great hardships, thinking myself awful for not having gone through the things they had. Fortunately, Rosie didn't read much into my silence. It took her a split second to get back to talking.

"In fact," she continued in a lively, animated voice, "I'm supposed to move to a new home tomorrow. That's why it's so urgent we look at the book right now, so that I don't have to move away from the beach."

"Um... uh-huh," I feebly grunted, growing more uneasy by the second.

Rosie blew a film of dust off the book's cover. "It's not actually this dusty," she explained. "I read it so often that there's no way it could be. But the dust makes it look so ancient and magical, so I roll it around in the sand quite often. It makes it look so lovely, doesn't it?" I had to admit, the particles of dust poofing off of

the cover gave a dramatic effect.

"This book," Rosie said, cracking open the spine to a yellowing page that displayed an ink drawing of the ocean, "belonged to my mother. In fact, she wrote it herself." She pointed to a signature scrawled in the corner, a name handwritten in black ink that read *Ariella Pearl*. "That's my mother's name." For once, Rosie was silent. I stewed in heavy, awkward air until she took a breath and, fortunately, started up again.

"Do you like mermaids, Jarren?" she inquired, her eyes sparkling like the ocean. "Not the purple-and-pink, red-haired kind, but, you know, real mermaids? Sirens who lure sailors off their ships to drown them?"

"Um, yeah. I guess they're OK," I said uncomfortably. "Besides the, you know, killing people part."

"Those sirens—that's what my mom's book is about." As she leafed through the pages, ink-drawn images of beautiful and eerie girls with fishtails instead of legs flipped before me.

"Interesting," I said, preoccupied. I nervously glanced towards the door, wondering when I'd be able to escape this girl and her crazy book.

"Do you want to know why I'm in foster care, Jarren?" Rosie looked at me, making uncomfortable eye contact.

"That's OK." I got to my feet, inching towards the door. "I wouldn't want to intrude."

She grabbed my hand and gave me a stony stare. Holding the mermaid book in the crook of one arm, she read from

one of its pages.

*“If a human woman or girl wishes to become a siren, there are three steps she must complete. First, she must go out to sea in a sailor’s vessel and dive head first into the water at midnight exactly. Then, she must sing her greeting to the sirens below. And finally, to prove her heart and worth, she must bestow upon the leaders a gift of...”* um...” Rosie slammed the book shut... “of something special, basically.”

I stared at her for a second, my jaw swinging on its hinge.

“Don’t you get it, Jarren?” She tucked the book under her arm. “My mother! That’s why I’m living as an orphan. And my father, he...” she trailed off, on her face the look of one who had just betrayed an important secret. “Well, he’s dead. But my mom, she left me this book. She wants me to become a siren and live with her. And I’m going to do it tonight, because I’ve finally got the special gift! Will you help me, Jarren?”

I stood, dumbstruck, for a moment. Rosie was insane—understandably so, having lost her parents, but still insane. And I was insane for the part in the back of my mind that wanted, unexplainably, to believe her and help her turn into this nonexistent creature she thought her mother had become.

“Rosie,” I said finally, “I know losing your parents must have been hard. And I know believing that your mother is a... a mermaid helps with that pain. But Rosie... it’s insane!” I burst out. “Mermaids, magic spells—none of it is real! This book is a work of fiction!”

I grabbed the book from Rosie, who yanked it back with unbelievable force.

As I made my way out the door, Rosie’s blue eyes haunted me. She called desperately as I left, “Please, Jarren. I need you! Meet me on the beach at half-till-midnight tonight. Please!”

Her eyes flashed in my mind as I slammed the door.

“**I** AM INSANE. I am *completely* insane.” “No, Jarren. This means you *are* sane, that you still believe.” Rosie smiled a crooked-toothed, charming grin my way.

We were sitting side-by-side in a rowboat we had “borrowed,” the ocean turning my face green from seasickness. What in the world was wrong with me? I was on a stolen boat with a stranger at close to midnight, risking getting in even bigger trouble than earlier that day, when my parents had found out that I’d followed Rosie into her house. I didn’t know why I’d decided to come out here to meet Rosie; I didn’t want to be here. I could hardly remember escaping the hotel room once Mark, Kyle, and my parents were asleep, but somehow I knew there was no other choice but to meet Rosie, just as she’d wanted me to.

“It’s nearly midnight now.” Rosie glanced at her wristwatch. “Soon we’ll be seeing the sirens.”

“Right.” Even though I had mostly come to terms with the fact that I was helping Rosie on her wild quest, I still wasn’t sure whether or not I should believe in her mermaids. Part of me found

it so natural to believe, but another part saw it as completely absurd. "Um... so what exactly will the mermaids look like?" I asked.

"Well, it'll be different for each of us," she said. "I'll see them in their true form, with turquoise-y skin and dark green hair."

"Oh," I said, mildly shocked. The image of a Disney's Little-Mermaid-like maiden disappeared from my mind.

"But for you," Rosie continued, "and for almost all boys, actually, you can't see the true form. The sirens appear as the human girl you're most attracted to."

My face blushed red.

"But don't worry." She grinned. "I won't be able to see what it looks like, remember?"

"Right." I chuckled nervously.

Rosie peered over the edge of the rowboat. "I shouldn't dive in and call for the sirens till midnight, but maybe I should dip down there now to check for obstacles. You know, sharks and stuff."

I shuddered. "Seriously? You had to bring that up?"

"I'll be right back." She grinned and shed her shorts and T-shirt to reveal the same damp, baggy swimsuit she'd worn the day before. Her dark hair tied into a ponytail, she plugged her nose and plunged, feet-first, into the ocean.

Without Rosie, the rowboat was lonely and frightening. The ocean rocked the boat slowly and sickeningly, the stars glinting evilly on the ocean's surface. I glanced at Rosie's watch, which she'd left on the rowboat's seat. It read 11:55;

Rosie would need to be back soon if not to miss midnight. I shivered in the cool night breeze, wanting only to see Rosie's dark-haired head popping up from the water. A splashing noise a ways off drew my attention.

"Rosie?" I leapt to my feet, the boat splashing underneath me. An eerie, beautiful song suddenly seemed to seep from the water, but I paid no attention, because Rosie's head had appeared where I had heard the splash. "Rosie?" I called again.

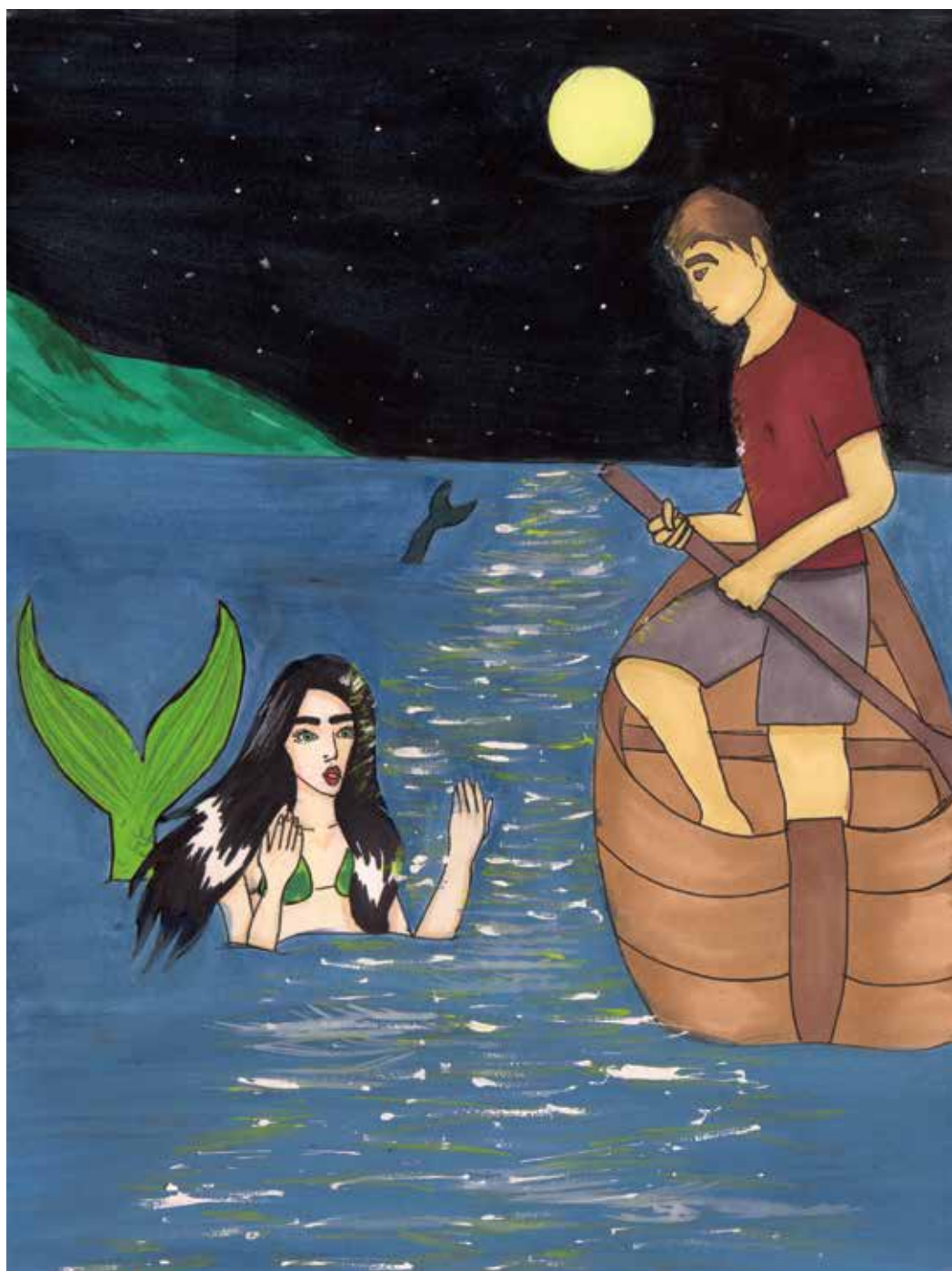
The person was Rosie, no doubt, but her black hair was sleek and completely dry. Her eyes sparkled blue-green as always, but her lips had not before had that bright red hue.

"Rosie...?" I called again, this time more warily. Her bright red mouth opened, and a hypnotizing song came toward me. The song's beauty was beyond anything else, and so was she. "Rosie..." I mumbled, my lips feeling thick and clumsy. Nothing else mattered anymore, except Rosie and her song. A glistening fish tail emerged from the water; it was attached to her torso but I didn't care; it only enhanced her beauty.

"Jarren?"

I blinked and shuddered, looking down to find myself balanced on the boat's helm, poised to jump. "What...?" I mumbled.

"What are you doing?" The voice, the same one that had called my name, came from Rosie, tail-less, heaving herself onto the rowboat. Her drenched hair hung stringily in her face, and her



*The song's beauty was beyond anything else, and so was she*



lips were a chilled purple, not the siren-Rosie's shade of bright red. I looked out over the horizon to see a tail disappearing beneath the waves.

"You were about to jump! Thank goodness I was here, don't you think?" She wrapped a beach towel around her shivering shoulders. "You must have seen a siren, then. Don't worry.

You don't have to tell me who she looked like." She placed a wet hand on my shoulder, and my chest gave an odd flutter. How could Rosie be the human girl I was most attracted

to, the one the siren chose to take the form of?

Rosie grabbed her watch from the seat. "11:59! Come here, Jarren, it's almost time to go!"

Now, suddenly self-conscious, I pulled off my T-shirt and kicked away my flip-flops. Rosie seized my hand, as was her custom, and pulled me onto the edge of the boat. She focused, unblinkingly, on the watch, its little shiny numbers reflecting in her eyes, and stood unnaturally still. I stared too, fidgeting a little more than her, until, with a barely audible *click* the numbers changed to 12:00. Before their transformation was even complete, Rosie had flung the watch aside and disappeared head-first with a swan dive into the ocean. Clumsily, I splashed in after her.

Being beneath the ocean made me wish I had brought along my "dorky robot" goggles. I opened my eyes to get

a blurry view of the space around me, but salt stung my eyes. The underwater world, which was usually silent and peaceful, was alive tonight with a creepy, alluring song. A few inches away from me, bubbles flew from Rosie's mouth as she sang a greeting to the sirens. In my blurry, water-clouded sight, with

her hair spinning gracefully around her, she could have been a siren as far as beauty goes. She also didn't seem to need to breathe, which was my problem. My heart pounded in my chest and

my lungs seemed to beat against my rib cage as I struggled to survive the lack of air.

Then, suddenly, I found myself gasping in saltwater from surprise. A pale white hand reached up from the ocean depths, and a siren, identical to Rosie, seized my ankle. I tried to scream but only breathed in more water. Every time I coughed, more ocean invaded my lungs. The siren was pulling me into a deeper, darker, noticeably colder depth of the sea. Where was the real Rosie, and why wasn't she trying to help? Had she already made her transformation into one of these awful, murderous creatures?

Then, suddenly, a hand slipped into mine: never before had I been so glad that Rosie had such a strong grip. My blurring, clouded vision could perceive her freckled face above mine, ripping me away from the siren. We rocketed towards the surface of the ocean, Rosie

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**I finally found her,  
and she was ready  
for me to come home.**

---

pulling me along, with sirens' songs and smooth fingers brushing against my feet. A large part of me wanted to stay down there with the sirens, sacrificing my life for a little of their beauty and music, but I didn't fight against Rosie's power. After what seemed like a lifetime, we broke through the water's surface, and Rosie heaved me into our rowboat. I sputtered and coughed a good amount of seawater onto its floor.

When I was finally able to speak, I turned to Rosie. I was alarmed to see that her face was red and tear-stained. "Why did they do that?" I said in a raspy voice. "They tried to kill me!" Then, looking her over, I saw her feet and toes. "You're not one of them. You didn't give them whatever that 'special gift' was! Oh, thank goodness!" I grinned, but caught myself. "But... your mother..."

Rosie took in a raspy breath and sniffed. "Jarren?" she said, sounding more timid and shy than I'd ever heard her. "I need to tell you something. Those sirens, they kill people, you know. More precisely, they eat them. Their food consists of male humans. That's why they like to lure the men off of ships, so that they can eat them."

"Ohhh..." I muttered, not knowing what to say as tears cascaded down her face. She sniffed hard and spoke again.

"But there's something else you don't know!" she choked out miserably. "The gift that a girl has to give to become one of them—it's a male human! You have to give them a boy they can eat, and then they'll use their magic to make you one

of them! That's the gift to prove 'heart and worth!'" She broke into sobs. "When I saw you, it was so easy to recognize you as a kindred spirit. You loved to read; you desperately wanted to believe in magic. You were the perfect one to trick into coming. You were the perfect gift."

"So..." I shuddered. "So I was the gift. They were going to... eat me." Rosie managed to nod her head. "But you saved me! You saved me before they could eat me, and they didn't get their gift! That's why you're not one of them." Somehow, I couldn't be angry at the girl who had just nearly led me to my death. All I wanted to do was console her and stop her heart-wrenching sobs.

"My mother," she said softly, wiping tears from her face with wrinkly, wet fingers. "I saw her down there. My father, he was her gift to the sirens. It was shortly after I was born. She wrote a message to me in the back of the book, telling me about giving my father as the gift and turning herself into a mermaid. She was the one who grabbed your ankle. When she saw me—recognized me—she looked so... so happy! My mama, I finally found her, and she was ready for me to come home. But I left her there. I left her there!"

"Rosie," I said, grabbing her firmly by the shoulders. "Your mother loves you. But you should not—cannot—join her. You're different than she is. She murdered your father, Rosie, and left you an orphan. But you're so much better—you couldn't even manage to kill me, a stranger. She loves you, Rosie, and you love her,

but you can't be together. She's not deserving of you. And you're too good to become a monster like she is."

Rosie's head dropped onto my shoulder, sobbing and shaking. Silently, with as much strength as Rosie had when she pulled me from her mother's claws, I paddled the small boat back to shore. My shoulder was clammy and soaked with Rosie's tears, and I would treasure that feeling forever. When we reached the sand, I dragged the rowboat back to its ignorant owner's dock, and Rosie collapsed into a heap on the sand. When I came back, her tears were dried, and she stood unsteadily on her feet. She took me softly by the hand.

"Rosie?" I said nervously, relieved that she was looking more like her strong self. "When I saw the sirens... they looked like you."

Rosie threw her skinny arms around my chest, and I could feel the bony joints of her shoulders as I wrapped mine gently around her neck. Her lips were soft

and cold as she kissed my shoulder.

"Have a good trip to your new foster home tomorrow," I said, choking on the words.

"You have a good trip too. To wherever you go next." She released me and took ahold of my hand, leading me off the beach and silently letting me go as we got to the road where our ways parted.

As I walked alone and barefoot on the side of the road, I thought of faces clouded with freckles, ocean-colored eyes, raven black hair, evilly glistening mermaid tails, and the feeling of freezing lips and salty tears on my shoulder. From where I stood, a strip of the sea was barely visible. As I looked out over it, I thought I could see a glint of a siren's tail, but I didn't care. I thought of Rosie rocketing into my cousin and tears slid down my cheeks. Oddly, a verse of poetry that I thought I had long forgotten drifted in to mind.

*So turn, green waters, turn.*

*O gentle waters, turn.*



# Tracks

By **Ellanora Lerner**

I go to the tracks to think,  
The ties go on for miles.  
They let me see the world,  
They remind me how small I am.

The bushes creep into the dirt in the cracks,  
Even in synthetic structures there is nature.  
They have sat here long enough to be ruins,  
And trellises for invasive vines.  
But they were once signs of progress,  
Human civilization creeping over unclaimed lands.

I go to the tracks to think,  
There's a rock a few yards off.  
It's big enough to sit on,  
So I sit and watch.  
Most remnants of the tracks' glory days are gone,  
But I can feel the rush of the wind as the trains hurtle past.

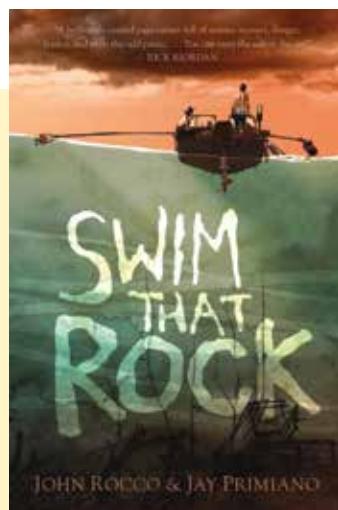


Ellanora Lerner, 13  
New London, Connecticut

# Book Review

By Christian Rice

*Swim That Rock*, by John Rocco and Jay Primiano;  
Candlewick Press: Somerville, Massachusetts,  
2014; \$16.99



Christian Rice, 13  
Quakertown, Pennsylvania

**I**F YOU WANT a book with daring adventures and even pirates (*gasp*), then *Swim That Rock*, by John Rocco and Jay Primiano, would be the perfect book for you to cozy up on the couch with. The book zooms in on Jake Cole, whose life is about to change drastically. After his father's disappearance/assumed death, Jake walks out of his house with a motive—a knife with his father's initials was left in his gate, and he must find the person who left it. He runs into this man, who gives him only the name Captain. Captain is wearing “rubber boots, worn jeans, and a red flannel shirt... (with) black hair... matted across his forehead.” He leads Jake on a semi-legal journey, which earns Jake 300 dollars. But this is just the beginning. Jake and his mother, along with their friends Gene, Tommy, and Darcy, must earn 10,000 dollars in one month or lose their restaurant and move to Arizona—which is most certainly not on Jake's to-do list. Either by quahogging or by the Captain's methods, Jake knows he must save his restaurant.


One of the best parts of the book, in my opinion, is when Jake almost injures himself to save someone's equipment—a person whom, chances are, he will never see again. When this



guy, Paul, drops his brand-new equipment into the water, he immediately and dejectedly gives up. Seeing this, Jake jumps into the water to help Paul retrieve his equipment, almost killing himself after getting tangled in an anchor line. When Jake retrieves the equipment and gives it to Paul, Paul offers him money, which Jake refuses. Although it may seem kind of weird, as I am a thirteen-year-old, I have done the same thing. While shoveling my driveway, I watched my neighbor struggling to shovel her driveway across the road. I felt a pang of pity and went over to assist her. She pulled out her wallet, and I told her that I wouldn't take it from her because people had shoveled my driveway for me, so I was just paying it forward.

I cried while reading about Mary, the homeless woman. She had lived on the beach for seven years. Once she saw Jake on the beach she called home. She gave him a quarter and told him to call his mother. He originally said he couldn't take her money, but she forced him to. He turned around to thank her, but she was gone. I couldn't take it—it reminded me of the story in the Bible where the poor woman who gave a little but gave it all truly gave more than the people who gave a lot but had so much more.

After reading this book, I couldn't help but wonder if there are people throughout the world who are in hard situations like Jake. I know there are, and I hope everything works out for them—short term and long term.

This book would be perfect for anyone from the ages of eleven to fifteen. I feel that anyone who hunts/fishes regularly would have an easier time understanding this book—still, though, it is good for anyone who likes strong protagonists who do not shrink in times of danger. 



*I never knew how small the fountain could look*

# Rainbows in the Sun

By **Hannah Mayerfield**

*Illustrated by* **Matthew Lei**

**W**ATER TRICKLED from in between the cracks of the fountain, the sun glinting off its surface as it set, going drip... drip... drip... I watched the water splatter into my palm. I never knew how small the fountain could look. I used to be smaller than a soda can, with wings and bright blue feathers. I used to drink from this. I used to fly about the lakes, flip about the treetops and see rainbows in the sun. I wouldn't think of eating anything other than birdseed. I never saw the world as the big, fast, killing predator. Just the innocent prey. But then... the bullet... a flash of light... then darkness... and I was back. Just... not as a little blue jay. I had become akin to the one who killed me, ate poultry and fish and hamburgers and cheese sandwiches... But normal people don't remember being killed... or their lives before. They only remember their current life. I stared at the water in the fountain... I could not see the rainbows in the sun. Only the darkening sky. I can't see anymore. And... a warm glow spread across the water as the moon hit it. I can see again. The woods loom large around me, their shadow and mystery curling around me, holding me close, hugging me tight. I hear my former predators, the night owls, hooting and flapping their wings like I wish I could. I hear the rustling of leaves, feel the light of the moon on my face, and the ground beneath my feet. Maybe tomorrow, I will also feel the wind beneath my wings. 🌀



Hannah Mayerfield, 10  
Scarsdale, New York



Matthew Lei, 11  
Portland, Oregon

# Topanga Canyon

*By* **Eddie Patterson**



Eddie Patterson, 10  
Lawrence, Kansas

Two white cars pass each other on the highway,  
One maneuvers easily around a red barn,  
    through a twist in the highway,  
    and towards the seashore's fogbanks,  
Pulling up the canyon side, the other passes  
    under the shady brambles of a glen,  
And its destination, far from sight,  
    twinkles reflected only in its seeker's eye.  
Now the first car is only a speck on the horizon;  
    the ocean is far from me but not from it,  
Going fast, the second car enters the woods' splintered  
    sunlight, unseen to my eye,  
    gone like the nighttime stars,  
And as the morning star fades, I recall how soon  
    I will have to get in my car and leave this paradise.

Coyotes, far on the other side of the canyon, howl;  
can they feel the loneliness in the air, too?  
A finch hops onto an ancient locust tree's limb,  
its feathers creating a halo of sunlight and joy,  
Not a care in the world, the finch lifts off,  
its sequined shard of light following it wherever it goes,  
Yammering, higher on the cliff; our neighbors' chickens awake  
to the already bright sky.  
On the cliff, I sit; I can see the Pacific before me, like a mirage,  
moving away through my car window...  
Now my dream vanishes: I am still here,  
still sitting in this wondrous place,  
but for how long, I cannot say.



# Growing Season

By Hannah Mark

Illustrated by Savannah Ugo



Hannah Mark, 13  
Hardin, Montana



Savannah Ugo, 12  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

“RYAN, HONEY, GUESS WHAT?” Mom bounced into the room, a cheerful smile on her face. “Grandpa just called. He is delighted to have some extra help on the farm this summer!”

*Oh no!* Ryan thought, dragging his eyes away from his tablet. He pulled off his headphones.

“But, Mom! We’re going to Disneyland this year!”

Mom’s brow wrinkled. “Oh, honey, we can’t quite afford Disneyland this year. I’m sorry. I know you want to go. But Grandpa needs your help, and besides, a real-life experience is far more precious than Disneyland could ever be.”

Her smile was back.

Ryan groaned and went back to his game. Maybe this was all just a crazy dream.

But it wasn’t. Two weeks later he found himself hugging Mom goodbye and boarding a plane for middle-of-nowhere Montana.

Grandpa picked him up at the tiny airport in a beat-up white pickup, hardly visible under layers of dust.

“Hi, Ryan,” Grandpa greeted him.

“Hi, Grandpa.”

Suddenly, a furry mass catapulted out of the car and tackled Ryan, covering him with kisses. Grandpa chuckled. “That’s Bolt. I think she likes you already.” *Understatement of the century*, Ryan thought as he heaved the dog off of him.

Grandpa lifted first Ryan, then his suitcase into the truck. “So, you excited to work on a farm?”



*"It ain't much, but it's home!"*

Ryan didn't bother to remove his headphones. "No," he mumbled under his breath.

After a good hour of driving along mostly unpaved roads, the pair reached Grandpa's small farm. There was a little house surrounded by pine and cottonwood trees. To the left of that was the animal barn where the goat, Sukie, and the ten chickens lived. Behind the house was a blooming garden where Grandpa grew his vegetables.

It sure didn't look like much. Ryan scanned the roof, searching for a satellite dish—nothing. This house didn't even

have TV. Ryan slowly climbed out of the truck. Grandpa whistled as they walked to the front door. He flung the door open wide. "It ain't much, but it's home! Ryan, your room is upstairs. Can you find it OK?"

"I guess." Ryan could hardly remember his last visit here, but the stairs were right next to the front door. He trudged up them, opening the first door he found. It was a tiny, plain bedroom. Ryan deposited his suitcase on the floor and surveyed his surroundings. In the corner of the room was a large window. He glanced out. A lush, emerald field

stretched to the edges of the boundless sky. On the very edge of the horizon, a faint blue smudge of mountains was visible.

Bored, Ryan shifted away from the window and flopped on the bed. He switched on his tablet, tapped his favorite game, and waited for it to load. The moment was ruined, however, by Grandpa's call up the stairs.

"Ryan, you settled in? C'mon down, we got some work to do."

Grumbling, he thumped downstairs, trailing headphones.

"There you are." Spotting Ryan's tablet, Grandpa held out a hand, face creased with an odd expression.

"Why don't I keep that safe for you? I don't hold much with these newfangled electronics. Besides, we'll be so busy this summer you won't have any time for it."

Ryan's mouth fell open a little and he stared at the outstretched hand.

"But, Grandpa!"

"No 'buts' about it." Grandpa's eyes twinkled.

A shocked Ryan slowly handed over his prized possession. *First I had to come to this stupid farm to work all summer. Now this!* It was inhumane.

"All right. First thing, we got to change the irrigation."

So Ryan, clad in tall rubber boots and armed with a shovel, walked out into the field with Grandpa. Bolt trotted happily along, and while the two shoveled mud and changed the canvas dam's position to redirect the water flow, she hunted mice in the grass.

Then Ryan fed the flock of chickens. They gathered around his feet in a fog of feathers. After that Grandpa cooked supper and Ryan had to wash the dishes. He finally fell into bed, exhausted to the bone, or so he told himself.

When Ryan opened his eyes, Grandpa was shaking him.

"Wake up, son! Time to milk!"

It took Ryan a moment to register his surroundings. And then he groaned what he imagined to be a groan of long suffering. Really, he just sounded pathetic.

"Get dressed and meet me at the barn." Grandpa clomped down the stairs but Bolt jumped on Ryan, refusing to let him fall back to sleep. She wagged her tail fiercely and gave an exuberant bark as he pulled himself out of bed. He yawned and glanced at the clock. *What is this unimaginable hour? Good grief! No one should be forced to rise before the birds!!!* But he yanked on his clothes and wandered out to the barn.

Grandpa was in the barn, sitting on the milking stanchion (a sort of table) with Sukie on top. There were two slats which held the goat's head in place and a box for her to eat out of. Milk was streaming from her teats into a bucket with clear regularity. Grandpa glanced up from his work and saw Ryan, who was standing uncertainly in the corner.

"You come try," he commanded. "Hold the teat like this, pinch it off, and squeeze the milk down." He guided Ryan's hands through the motions. Ryan was clumsy. By accident, he squirted his shirt with milk and the sticky warm felt

queer against his skin.

After the milk was strained and put away, the irrigation had to be changed again. So Grandpa moved the canvas dam and Ryan shoveled the wet dirt into mounds, while Bolt hunted.

When they finally got to eat some bacon, eggs, and toast, Ryan's thoughts kept straying to his tablet and all the great games and things he was missing out on. Maybe, just maybe, he could convince Grandpa to let him have it back again.

*Hey, Grandpa! Can I have my tablet back? I just want to beat this one level...* Even in his head, the words sounded stupid.

After breakfast, Grandpa showed his grandson how to weed the garden. "See here, Ryan, just pull gently on the base of this weed. See? It comes right out. Now here's an onion. Let it be. But this one's a weed! I want to see you pull it out... Good!"

Despite Grandpa's instructions, Ryan still pulled up a few onions. Guiltily, he patted them back into the soil and hoped his grandpa wouldn't notice.

By lunch he was longing for a break. He despaired of the long hours of toil that stretched before him. He deserved a rest! Hadn't he been working hard all morning?!

He sat sullenly down to his soup. Finally he could not hold the question in any longer. It burst out of him like an angry bull. "How can you stand it?

Working all day long with no rest and then waking up and doing the same thing the next day?"

Grandpa paused in the middle of buttering his bread. He looked Ryan squarely in the eye. "Who says work isn't fun? I work hard because I enjoy working. Working makes me feel young," he said simply. "When we weed the garden we earn healthy strong plants and good food to eat. We irrigate the fields to get nutritious hay for the animals. You only reap what you sow, Ryan."

"Well, I don't care! I only came here 'cause Mom made me! I hate work! I hate this farm!" As soon as the words were out of his mouth Ryan knew they weren't true. He wished he could hide. Grandpa's face was drawn, his brow wrinkled. He looked like an old, old man. Abruptly, he pushed back his chair and stood up. When he spoke his tone was level with no hint of anger.

"Ryan, there's something I've been meaning to show you. But I think you can see it for yourself. Just walk down the field and out that gate." He gestured. "There's cookies on the counter and water in the fridge. Help yourself. I'll be in the hay field." He disappeared out the door.

Blind with shame, Ryan grabbed the snacks and hurried out the door. He found the gate easily. *Why had he said that?* he wondered as he plodded along. Bolt trotted faithfully at his heels. She

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**"Oh, honey,  
we can't quite afford  
Disneyland this year.  
I'm sorry."**

---

seemed to sense that something was the matter with her friend.

The gate opened up to a path, and the path led to a river. He stopped, gazing with awe at its flowing grace. It swirled on, unburdened by any worries. Plunking down by its edge, Ryan chucked a rock into the blue. Its splash was satisfying. He threw another.

*Splosh.* Another. *Thunk.*

He began hurling rocks as fast as he could, not thinking about anything or anyone, not caring. Then, exhausted, he flopped down on the cool grass until he remembered the cookies. He ate two. Bolt sat

before him, her brown eyes pleading for all she was worth. Ryan laughed for the first time all day. "OK, girl. Here you go."

They walked back to Grandpa together. And Ryan knew what he needed to do.

"Grandpa?... I... I'm sorry. For the way I acted. I... I guess I just said that... because I was mad. I didn't mean it."

For a long, long time they stood there. Then, slowly, the two walked back into the house.

One rainy morning, two weeks later, Grandpa sent Ryan to find his tackle box. Ryan heaved a creaky cupboard door open. He scanned the dusty shelves for the box. Was it there on the top shelf? He caught a glint of something up there. He reached upwards and his fingers closed over something smooth, something cold, something familiar... It was his tablet! Enthusiastically, he

pressed on the button. The device sputtered to life. There was still battery left! All of a sudden, the front door squeaked on its hinges, and Grandpa's boots thumped in the hall. Ryan tried to stow the tablet but he was not fast enough. The closet door opened wide.

"What are you doing in there, Ryan?"

"I... I was just looking for the tackle box and..." he fumbled.

But Grandpa had seen the tablet resting on Ryan's lap. A tiny frown creased his features.

"Well," he said, "you can play on that if you

want. Bolt and I are going fishing."

Yes! Ryan thought. His hands shaking with eager impatience, he opened his favorite game, the one he longed to play. His fingers practically flew, battling monsters, aliens, and other players. But as he waited for a new level to load, he happened to glance out the window. There he saw Grandpa striding along the path to the river with Bolt bounding at his heels. The rain coated the fields in a thin mist. Ryan switched off his tablet and ran out the door after them.

Over the next few weeks, Ryan's life fell into a rhythm. Between milking, cutting baling, and stacking hay, weeding and picking in the garden, and fixing meals, Ryan had hardly any down time. Whenever he did, Grandpa taught him how to whittle or shoot, or he read books which he found in his room. On rainy days, he and Grandpa went fishing.

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**As soon as the words  
were out of his mouth  
Ryan knew they  
weren't true.**

---





*He stopped, gazing with awe at its flowing grace*

When Ryan needed a rest from the work, he walked down to the river. While he still wasn't perfect, he didn't find quite as much to complain about anymore.

One morning in early August, Ryan paused in his work to stare at a cloud of dust crawling up the driveway. He squinted at the smudge. It was a car. It was his mom.

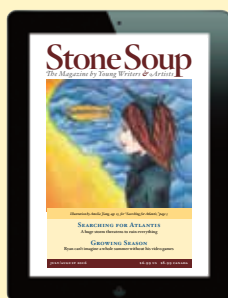
Mom covered Ryan with hugs and kisses.

"I was so worried, honey!" she cried, bending over to look him in the eye. "You weren't answering any of my emails or texts! And I was so anxious to see you guys that I just decided to come. I'm so glad you're all right." She straightened up. "Now tell me: did you enjoy your summer, Ryan?"

Ryan glanced up at Grandpa. "Yeah," he grinned. "Can I come back again next year?"







# Honor Roll

**Welcome to the *Stone Soup* Honor Roll!** We receive hundreds of submissions every month by kids from around the world. Unfortunately, we don't have space to publish all the great work we receive. We want to commend some of these talented writers and artists and encourage them to keep creating.

— *The Editors*

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