

SUMMER PEOPLE

SARA HOSEY

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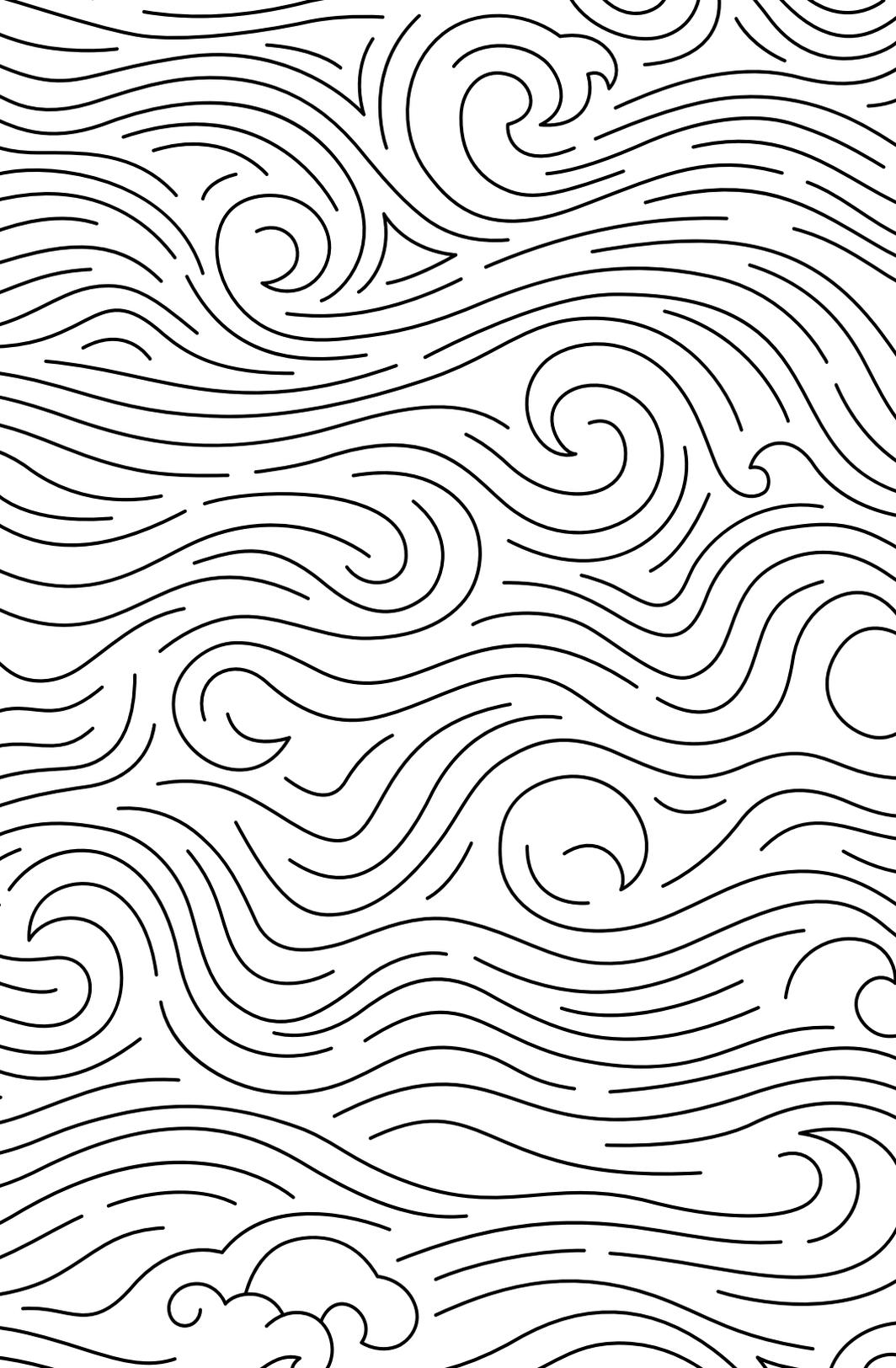
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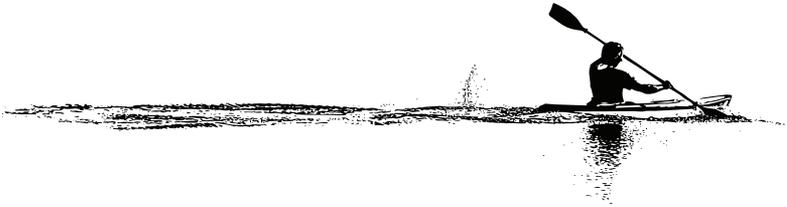
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FOR JESS, JOHN, AND JULES

ecm



1



THE DAY CHRISTMAS MILLER AND LEXI REYES found a body floating facedown in the lake hadn't started off weird and terrifying. In fact, it had been a happy enough day.

Christmas had been anxious, but she'd also been hopeful and excited. Her best friend, Lexi, a "summer person" from Pennsylvania, was finally arriving in Sweet Lake, New York, that afternoon. Graduation, just ten days earlier, already felt like the distant past.

To kill time as she waited, Christmas raked algae from the lake. Only June and it was worse than she'd ever seen it, the algae a scum on the top of the water in the shallow areas and growing in puffy, slimy clouds in the deeper water. The absolute center of the lake was the only place you could escape it.

She frowned, imagining Lexi's reaction, and worked harder, pulling out the blue-green substance in clumps, the algae clinging to the tines of the rake like mermaid's hair or long wisps of alien matter—or like a toxic mucous, the green snot indicating the Earth's fever. She dragged the algae toward the shore and then heaved it up and dumped it on land, where it would bake dry in the sun, turning into hard, matte-colored mounds that dotted the Millers' shoreline

for the rest of the summer. At this rate, the lake might be unswimmable by August. Or, if you did go in, you'd come out with burning eyes or a rash, as Christmas's father did one year.

When they were kids, Lexi and Christmas had spent all day in the lake, reading aloud to each other from waterlogged paperbacks as they floated in tubes, diving in to cool down ("here, hold the book for a minute"). Hours swimming and playing, treading water while they talked about everything, as though being in the water together dissolved the barrier between their minds, making them permeable to each other.

But last summer, Lexi had refused to swim in the lake at all. She was disgusted by the algae and would only go in from her grandfather's boat, in the middle of the lake, and then only to water ski. If she could have skied without getting wet at all, she would have. She told Christmas that she wanted to have children some day and that she didn't want them to have fins. "I hear they're expensive to remove," she'd deadpanned.

Christmas raked harder. It was almost as if she took its presence personally, or as if Lexi's disgust somehow extended to the entire community and even to Christmas herself. Lexi had teased her in the past about being too attached to the town, but back then it had been okay because Lexi had seemed to share Christmas's love of Sweet Lake. In the past few years, Lexi's stays had started getting shorter—and one year she spent only two weeks total at Sweet Lake. But this year she was staying for two whole months. Christmas had set up jobs for them at a community day camp, working Mondays through Thursdays in the basement of the new town hall complex—the same complex at which a meeting was to take place that evening, a meeting to discuss the algae blooms.

Christmas channeled her fear and frustration into the physical labor. The movement-with-a-purpose allowed her brain to disengage a bit, to quiet, to be in the moment and not skittering over

today, yesterday, tomorrow. And it helped to keep her from checking her phone every two minutes to see if Lexi had arrived yet.

She was so involved in her raking and thinking that the roaring vehicle was almost upon her by the time she saw it. Of course, it was Cash Ford on his fluorescent yellow Jet Ski whose zipping around she'd pretended to ignore earlier. But now she looked up to see him careening into the shallow water, coming to a dramatic, splashy stop about twenty feet away. He called out, "What the hell are you doing?"

Christmas stood in the churning water, the waves from Cash's Jet Ski lapping her ankles. "Hi, Cash," she said. Cash, naturally, was not wearing a life jacket; his tan chest and arms bulged with muscles. She suspected he was flexing, showing off, and she involuntarily rolled her eyes. "Trying to get rid of some of this algae," she said, her voice a bit squeaky, she thought.

Cash hooted. "That's the dumbest thing I ever heard. You think that's gonna make a difference?"

"Well," Christmas spluttered, finding herself, as she often did, at a loss when faced with her former classmate's combination of swagger, rudeness, and, sometimes, surprising insight. "Maybe if everyone did this at their lakefront . . . maybe it would help a little." Even as she said it, she knew it wasn't true.

Cash smirked. "Stop wasting your time and come for a ride with me."

Christmas shook her head. "No thanks."

"Aw, come on, Chrissy," he said. "You know you want to."

Christmas's phone, which she'd left on the dock, vibrated. She waded over quickly to retrieve it. Her eyes on her phone, she said to Cash, "I have plans."

Just got in, Lexi had texted Christmas.

Christmas texted back: Yay! I am waiting on the dock!

When Christmas looked up again, Cash had unceremoniously zoomed off. She bit her lip. She hadn't meant to be inconsiderate;

she'd simply been distracted by Lexi's text. Although even if Lexi wasn't heading over, there was no way Christmas would have gone Jet Skiing with Cash Ford.

She'd known Cash since they were kids and had a clear memory of first encountering him at a summer library program, when he'd refused to read aloud, refused the ice-cream sandwich he was offered as a treat, and told the librarian that she had a fat ass and shouldn't have one either. The librarian had scowled and told Cash to put his head down, that she'd have his mother come pick him up if he was going to be so miserable, but Cash didn't even do that; he stalked out across the parking lot and sat defiantly on top of a big rock.

Christmas remembered her relief when he left. She'd felt bad for the librarian, who Christmas could see was fighting back tears. And, more generally, having Cash around made Christmas nervous, made any situation suddenly unpredictable. Later, when Christmas's family relocated to Sweet Lake full time (at ten, she became "summer people" no more), she and Cash were put in the Resource Room together, and Christmas learned that he, too, had a learning disability. As a result, and to Christmas's chagrin, she and Cash were placed in the same class every year, and often had "extra help" together. That they had this difference in common might have inclined Christmas to be a bit more generous toward Cash, but it didn't. Instead, it only made her want to further distance herself from him.

Cash probably felt the same way, Christmas reasoned. She assumed that Cash thought she was a kiss-ass, a nerd, a prude. She had to admit, though, that he was usually pretty nice to her, always inviting her to his bonfires (there were many alcohol-fueled parties in a nearby field his dad owned), and once giving her a lift home when he saw her out jogging in a dangerous thunderstorm. And there'd been kind of a thing between them, recently, after the prom.

But still. They were like oil and water, Christmas thought, at that moment noticing a rainbow-colored slick on the surface of the lake. Probably left behind by Cash's stupid Jet Ski.

Christmas looked out at the reflection of the cloudless sky in the water. With the exception of Cash at the far end, the lake was serene, with only one fishing boat floating in the center and an orange kayak over by a small inlet that she recognized as belonging to her friends Curly, so-called because he was totally bald, and his husband, Lemuel "Lemy" Kang-LaSalle.

Climbing up the onto the shore, Christmas grabbed the plump pink duffel—packed earlier with a change of clothes and her ADHD meds—that waited for her on the sloping, clover-filled lawn. She'd been wearing her swimsuit all day and she was ready to go.

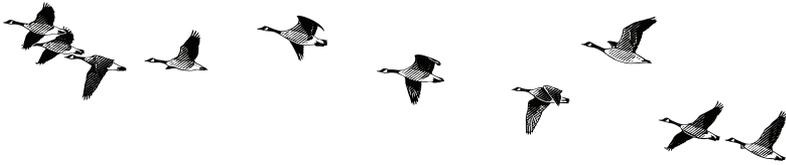
Christmas's earliness, her inability to concentrate on anything else when she knew she had something coming up, this, she had learned, was one of her "ADHD things," and discovering that it was—if not a symptom, a related condition—was somewhat comforting. Because she had ADHD, she had trouble gauging time and how long things would take. And because she was a people pleaser, because she had anxiety and hated disappointing anyone, she had developed a compulsion for earliness as an overcompensation for what would probably have otherwise been chronic lateness.

Medication helped. A bit.

Christmas stowed her phone in the bag and waited.

And then she'd heard the sputtering of a speedboat come to life, the sound distorted by the flat water as the vehicle backed up from the dock, a buzz as Lexi's grandfather put the boat in gear and pointed it west, toward Christmas's house. She skipped down to the end of the dock and waved, her arms wide and joyful, as though they didn't know exactly where she was, as though the boat was an airplane landing in the fog, as though Lexi was a long-lost traveler at last returned home.

2



CHRISTMAS BOARDED THE BOAT AND THE GIRLS embraced and squealed and embraced again. Christmas said, “Hi, Mr. Hansen,” and Lexi’s grandfather nodded solemnly in return.

The girls complimented each other—“You look amazing” and “You’re the one who looks amazing!”—and it was true: they’d both grown out of their earlier teenage awkwardness. For Lexi, this meant she’d come to appreciate her curly hair, which she used to try to straighten and tame. Now, a longish, wild, yet stylish bob framed her angular face. And Christmas, who was once too skinny, all knees and elbows, had put on a little weight and become more muscular, and she seemed to have finally won her battle with acne, though faint scars remained on her cheeks.

The friends beamed at each other, the purring of the motor an echo of their vibrating contentment. They’d been texting all morning in anticipation of their first ski of the summer, and they continued talking as Lexi put on her ski belt and the boat moved into the deeper water.

“Mom’s already on the road back to Philly,” Lexi said. “It’s like she’s allergic to this place.”

She cast an apologetic glance at her grandfather.

Christmas fed the towline into the water. The boat idling, Lexi gave her friend another hug and said, "This is going to be great summer." She crossed her eyes and stuck out her tongue and leaned over the side of the boat so that she fell sideways, plunging into the water. Her head appeared and she gasped.

"Oh my God, it's cold!"

Christmas handed a ski over the side of the boat.

Lexi paddled herself into position and then gave the thumbs-up. Christmas turned to Mr. Hansen. "She's ready!"

The engine roared and the boat pitched forward. There was a moment of Lexi teetering before she was up, smiling, tossing her head with delight and then careening back and forth, weaving over the wake, showboating, waving and mugging, making Christmas laugh. In the hum of the motor, in the cool June afternoon, time stopped, and Christmas felt a sensation akin to, but more pleasant than, boredom. Lexi was happy.

The lake was gorgeous.

Life felt stunning and eternal, and Christmas was overwhelmed with gratitude as she watched her friend water ski, and she tried to tell herself to mark it and appreciate it, this, the first of many more summer days on Sweet Lake.

After two big laps, Lexi released the tow bar dramatically and put one hand on the back of her head and one hand on her hip, like an old-fashioned pinup. Her body continued forward on the ski until finally, as though on a delay, she began to sink, still holding the pose. Christmas rapped Mr. Hansen on the shoulder, "She's down!" The old man slowed the engine and turned the big steering wheel.

"That was amazing," Lexi declared as the boat bobbed near enough for Christmas to lower the ladder.

Lexi climbed up, shimmering and dripping, panting and smiling. Christmas dove in.

Like Lexi, Christmas burst up from the sharply cold water gasping for breath. Her light brown hair, black from the water, covered her face, and she slicked it back and looked up at Lexi. "I want two skis," she said.

Lexi rolled her eyes at Christmas's cautiousness. Two skis were the stuff of novices; they'd moved away from that years ago. "You're gonna drop one, I hope," Lexi said, retrieving the second ski from where it was stowed along the side of the boat.

"I'll see how I feel," Christmas answered.

"Live dangerously," Lexi said, laughing, pushing the ski so it would glide to where Christmas was treading water.

Christmas paddled herself to the rope, which slid like a snake just slightly submerged. When she got to the bar, she held on and was dragged a bit by the idling boat and, with her legs bent and her skis pointed up, she enjoyed the familiar tension forecasting the push that would soon send her upright to stand on the water.

"I'm ready," Christmas called, excited, but also trembling a bit, her stomach fluttering. She'd been skiing since she was eleven, but still, she was fearful in the moment before the boat took off, the moment before she was lifted.

And lifted she was: pulled to standing, blue-black water, so smooth, passing between her skis. Immediately, her body remembered what to do, and she slid across the wake, catching air, racing up alongside the boat only to lose speed, start to sink and be again yanked forward, pitching back across the wake. Lexi waved, gave her a thumbs-up. She held up her phone, taking photos and videos they'd never watch.

Who invented waterskiing? What kind of person thought it would be a good idea to pull a person at high speeds across the water? Christmas marveled at human inventiveness, lunacy.

She dropped a ski in front of the Hansens' house, wavered, found her balance again. And again across the wake. And again and

again. In these moments, flying across the water, Christmas was her most competent, her most confident. She was good at this. So good at this.

But then Lexi was frowning. She was talking to her grandfather, who craned his neck to look behind him as he scowled. He waved an arm as though to say, *get lost*, and Christmas turned to see that she was being trailed by Cash on his obnoxious Jet Ski. This was not the first time he had annoyed Mr. Hansen by driving too close to a skier. Like dolphins, some Jet Skiers liked to play in the speedboats' wakes; unlike dolphins, the Jet Skiers were reckless teenage boys operating hundreds of pounds of equipment. Mr. Hansen was endlessly outraged by what he called "those morons," who wouldn't stop until someone had gotten really hurt. Lexi and Christmas always assured Mr. Hansen that they never fell anyway—at least not accidentally. But with Cash behind her now, Christmas was self-conscious.

It wasn't her own ability she worried about. Instead, it was Cash's overconfidence that scared her. He was way too close; she could sense him right behind her, believed she could feel

the breeze as the Jet Ski cut across her wake.

And, unused to the specific exertion of waterskiing, she'd gotten incredibly, alarmingly tired. Her arms and back ached, and her legs shook. She wanted to simply drop the rope and stop skiing, but she was afraid that if she did, Cash, incautious or distracted, would run her over. She imagined the accident, imagined the dull thump of her head against the front of the machine, her ski flying straight up like a straw thrown into a fan, her body sinking to the bottom of the lake.

Meanwhile, Mr. Hansen twisted in his seat, obviously furious, his mouth open, his curses and recriminations unintelligible under the sound of the motor. She knew it was irrational, but Christmas felt guilty, as though she were somehow responsible, as though she had summoned Cash by turning him down earlier.

Cash accelerated until he was right next to Christmas. Their eyes met and she waved him away—the hand that held the bar was quivering—and he smirked and dropped back before appearing again on her other side. She pulled up, tried to ski closer to the boat and away from Cash so she could drop the rope, but there he was, right beside her again, no longer simply an annoyance but a true threat.

“Go away!” Christmas shouted. Her breath was shallow, and she was afraid she might cry.

Her arms and legs shook ever more violently from the strain. Her fingers, clutching the bar, felt frozen and locked. What was he trying to do? What was wrong with him?

The rope began to slacken and Christmas realized that Mr. Hansen was gradually slowing the boat. Although she didn’t sink immediately, it became more and more difficult to stay upright on the ski. Mr. Hansen was counting on Cash losing interest once there was no more wake to jump over. But Cash didn’t go away. He continued to slice closely—too closely—at high speeds, his Jet Ski making a thunderous noise as it leaped over its own waves.

“What is your problem?” Christmas tried to scream over the din as she sank. Her ski slid off and she clutched it to her chest, feeling ridiculous and vulnerable: just a head, bobbing in the water.

“Goddammit!” Mr. Hansen hollered from the boat.

Cash whooped, gunned his engine, and—finally—took off, zooming across the waves.

Christmas flushed with relief. The heat in her body made the water feel warm and though her muscles continued to spasm and shiver, she was suddenly sublimely comfortable. She dunked her head under the water and wiped the tears from her face. Emerging, she took deep breaths before she paddled to the boat, where Lexi and Mr. Hansen continued to rage.

“Could have killed you—”

SUMMER PEOPLE

“Are you okay? You looked really scared—”

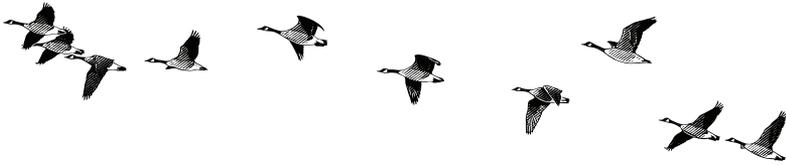
“—call his father if I thought it would do any good.”

Christmas climbed up the ladder and Lexi put a towel around her shoulders.

“But you sure looked good out there, girl,” Lexi said, grinning.

“Son of a bitch,” Mr. Hansen said.

3



“HE’S OBVIOUSLY A SOCIOPATH,” Lexi said as they reclined on deck chairs on the small slate patio, drying off.

The sun, which had just a moment before felt so heavenly on Christmas’s face, disappeared, and the air noticeably cooled. She shivered and squinted up at the obstructing cloud.

“Do you think he’s gonna pull that nonsense every time we ski this summer?” Lexi asked, blinking behind her sunglasses, pushing a black curl out of her face. “I’m afraid my grandfather might murder him. Like, for real. He’s probably gonna arm me with a crossbow and tell me to shoot at Cash while I’m skiing.” Lexi mimed lifting the weapon and gazing through the sight.

Christmas made a face and sat up too. “Cash Ford would probably think it was sexy or something.”

“Eww,” Lexi said. “More like Trash Ford.”

Christmas swallowed an impulse to defend Cash. Though Lexi’s estimation was not completely inaccurate, Christmas also knew that Cash wasn’t always terrible. And he hadn’t had the easiest life either. His family was well-known in Sweet Lake (his grandfather had operated an auto shop that was positioned somewhat ostentatiously on

an acre of lakefront) and his dad, who had inherited the shop, was roundly adored. Mr. Ford was handsome—even for an old guy—in a sort of Matt Damon way, with a wide, easy smile and the same tousled blond hair as Cash, though his was graying at the temples. He was rich and showy about it, but he was also friendly and generous. All the local sports teams, PTAs, and fun runs knew he was good for a donation or sponsorship; he'd recently funded a new steeple on the local church. He wasn't the mayor, but maybe that was because he didn't need to be.

Cash's mom had been a beauty queen, also locally famous. She'd died of cancer when Cash was nine, and he had always seemed a bit feral after that. He had his dad to look after him, of course, but Mr. Ford never really seemed all that concerned about what Cash got up to, what trouble he was in, which classes he was failing. When Cash was acting extra obnoxious, Christmas tried to remember that he'd lost his mom, but it was hard because Cash lacked his parents' charisma.

Christmas opened her mouth, about to confess something she'd been meaning to tell Lexi, when Lexi's phone vibrated. They both looked at it, Christmas snapping her mouth shut. Lexi, her hair back in her face, unselfconsciously smiled at the phone before texting back. "Sorry," she said, catching Christmas's eye. "That's Martha. You're gonna love her. I'm trying to convince her to take a few days off work—she works all the time—and come up. She's just . . ." Lexi trailed off and her eyes rolled up to the sky and she shook her head as she searched for the words. "She's the best."

"Cool," Christmas agreed weakly, though her mind snagged on those words: *the best*.

It wasn't that Christmas didn't want Lexi to have other friends. Or maybe it was. Though Christmas herself didn't really have other close friends, she was self-aware enough to know that this was not a normal way of being, that most people liked to have several dear

friends. So she would never actually give voice to her concern that Lexi was going to replace her, that Lexi, like Christmas, only had enough room in her heart for one best friend.

Maybe if Christmas had lived somewhere else—somewhere bigger—it would have been easier. It wasn't as though she was bullied or persecuted. She said hi to everyone, had a group that she'd sat with at lunch for the four long years of high school. She had one classmate, Madison, whom she saw outside of school, but that was mostly because Madison insisted on it.

But if she were being honest, Christmas might admit that she hadn't truly pursued friendships with her classmates. Though she pretended to be offended that after seven years most still considered her "summer people," she was also to blame for her isolation. She was shy, of course, but more than that, her parents had not discouraged an attitude of apartness, perhaps even superiority. And Christmas knew that, even though her family had their own small-town scandal, folks in Sweet Lake still regarded her parents, both former teachers, with a little bit of awe, considering them a certain brand of eccentric intellectual.

Ultimately, it didn't matter. Christmas had graduated and was starting college in the fall. She would meet new people there.

But mostly it didn't matter because she had always had Lexi and always would.

Christmas knew what true friendship was. She knew what it was to meet someone and love them right away. Friends at first sight.

The Hansens' house was about a half mile down the road from the Millers' and Christmas's parents had known Lexi's grandparents to say hello. When Christmas was seven, Mrs. Hansen (who was, sort of embarrassingly, around the same age as Christmas's mother, Allie), told Allie that her granddaughter, who was also seven, was staying for the summer. Would Christmas like to come over and play?

Christmas, who didn't go to a lot of people's houses even back in Queens, was agitated, fretful about the playdate. But when she walked into the Hansens' house, Lexi had taken her hand and led Christmas upstairs where there was a dollhouse, a box of Hot Wheels, and several ancient Barbies. Lexi was not put off by Christmas's shyness or her nervous thumb-sucking, and also shared Christmas's interest in intense imaginative play. The two spent that first afternoon spinning out an elaborate drama involving the Barbies, and Christmas recalled how wonderful it felt for a committed daydreamer to find her collaborator. And, perhaps even more exciting, was that when it was time to leave, they made plans to do it again the next day.

Lexi's phone buzzed. Christmas watched—flexing her fingers, which were stiff, the skin raw and ready to callous after only one ski—and wondered if Lexi was texting that person Martha yet again.

"Sorry, sorry," Lexi said again, the smile from the text exchange still playing on her lips. "Hey, do you want to go to that mini-golf place after dinner? I was just telling Martha about it—how it's, like, authentically vintage but not because it's trying to be cool but just because they have literally not updated it in a million years. I told her I'd send pictures."

Christmas grimaced apologetically. "We—I—have that meeting tonight. The meeting about the algae?"

"Oh, that's right," Lexi said, nodding. "My grandparents want to go to that meeting too. Do I have to go?"

"It's at the new town hall complex—you'll get a preview of where we'll be working tomorrow if you come," Christmas said. "The camp is in the lower-level classrooms."

"Imagine passing up such an enticing opportunity," Lexi said. "But yeah, if it's important to my Chrissy, I'll come. We'll can do mini-golf tomorrow night. Are your parents going to this meeting?"

“Civic engagement isn’t really their vibe.” Christmas wrinkled her nose.

“I mean, can you blame them?”

“That’s a loaded question,” Christmas returned.

“Will we be the only non-gray-hairs there?”

“Probably.”

“Girls,” Mrs. Hansen called from an upstairs window. “Come in and eat.”

“Coming,” Lexi called back. She looked at Christmas. “She made lasagna.”

“Yum. I love your grandma’s lasagna.”

“How dare you,” Lexi joked. “Talking about my grammie like that.”

“I mean, everyone around here loves Kathy’s lasagna. It’s famous.”

“I had no idea my grandmother was so promiscuous. Culinarily speaking, that is.”

“Let’s just say she knows her way around a meat layer.”

“Too far,” Lexi laughed, rising.

Dinner was happy with the Hansens. Not generally effusive people, Lexi’s grandparents beamed at their granddaughter as she sat down to eat, and their warmth extended to and included Christmas. The lasagna was, as predicted, delicious.

Cleaning up, Christmas reminded everyone that they’d have to leave soon if they wanted to make it to the meeting on time. Lexi jumped in the shower and Christmas, eager to get moving, waited in the kitchen with Mr. Hansen.

The Hansens’ place was basically identical to the Millers’: a squat wood-frame house that appeared, from the front, to be only one story, but which was perched on an incline and had a low-ceilinged third story with two bedrooms and a bath, and a lower-level family room with sliding glass doors leading to the lake. The houses

had been built as vacation homes in the 1950s, back when “upstate” was still a destination, and though in recent years more and more Brooklynites were gravitating to the area, Sweet Lake had obviously seen better days. One snarky blogger, observing the close-set, peeling-paint homes, with sinking porches and unattractive satellite dishes positioned prominently on front roofs, dismissed the whole area as *Catskill Crappy*.

But Christmas liked their houses. They were comfortable and always infused with the smells from outdoors: cut grass in the summer, snow in the winter, wet leaves and mud in the spring and fall, and the dank, deep, lovely smell of the lake all year-round.

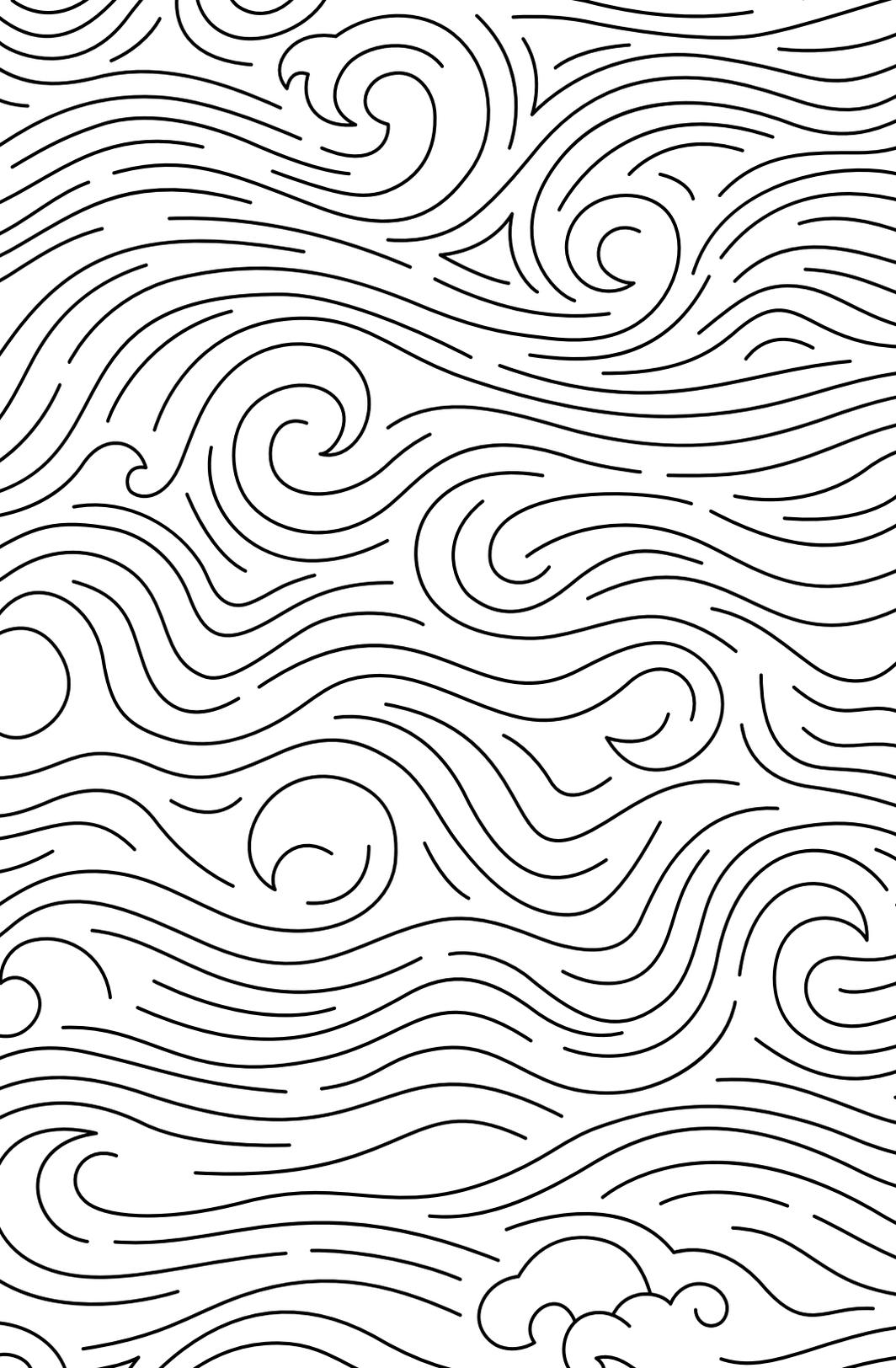
Christmas and Mr. Hansen stood in near silence, Mr. Hansen intermittently jiggling his keys and Christmas checking her phone. Her friend Lemy had texted to see if she needed a ride to the meeting that night; her friend Madison had texted, too, to ask if she wanted to hang out afterward. Christmas politely declined both offers.

Perhaps noticing Christmas’s neck rolling and nervous habit of shifting from foot to foot, Mr. Hansen assured her, “We’ll get out the door eventually.” He paused and cleared his throat. “Though I don’t generally put much stock in having meetings about things.”

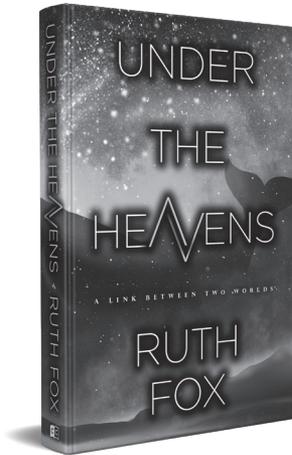
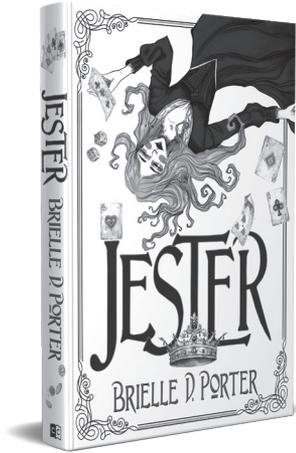
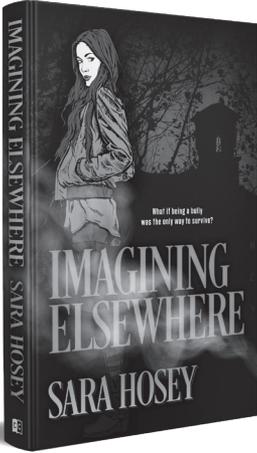
“My parents think it’s a waste of time too,” Christmas told him. “But I’m happy that people are talking about doing something.”

“Talking about doing something,” Mr. Hansen repeated skeptically. He shrugged. “With Bill Ford running the show, who knows. I have heard that most everyone will be there. Worried about their property value. That’s one thing people care about: money.”

“Okay, let’s go,” Lexi called, rushing into the kitchen, her grandmother right behind her. “Who’s ready to go solve some problems?”

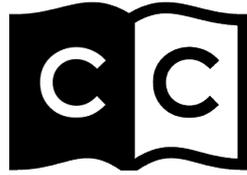


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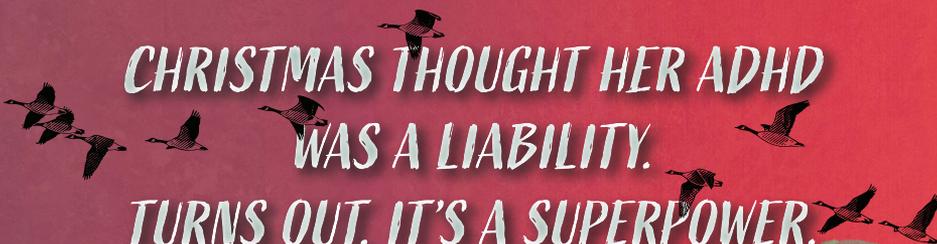
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CHRISTMAS THOUGHT HER ADHD WAS A LIABILITY. TURNS OUT, IT'S A SUPERPOWER.

Seventeen-year-old Christmas Miller is looking forward to a summer of sunbathing and waterskiing at her home in Sweet Lake with Lexi, the one friend who gets her completely, ADHD and all. But the day of Lexi's arrival, the girls have an almost-argument and worse, that night, they discover another friend, Lemy, floating face down in the lake. Though reeling from her rift with Lexi, Christmas is determined to find out who attacked Lemy, even if it means she must confront her own mother's possible involvement in the crime.

Christmas would do anything to protect her beloved Sweet Lake community, but when the lake becomes polluted and people around her start getting hurt, Christmas must face the profound problems in Sweet Lake—and in her own family.

*"The day they found a body floating face down in the lake
had started off inauspiciously enough."*



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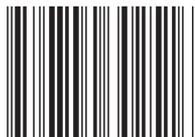
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