

By Carey

Popsicles, Raspberries, and Tropical Islands

The sun spreads over the horizon of pine trees and creates lace patterns on my bed sheets. Bandito, Nini's dog, comes in. He yawns with all his pointy white teeth and his pink curling tongue showing. His jaw creaks like an old door hinge. I slither out of bed and Bandito and I tumble down the long, skinny cottage staircase for breakfast. Oliver and Eliza are already on the couch in their pajamas eating Corn Pops and Raisin Bran and Frosted Flakes on top of yogurt and blueberries. Eliza calls it top on top. When we're done with breakfast, we get into our bathing suits and step outside into the sunny Saturday air that smells like pollen fused with chlorine and sunblock.

We hear a car door slam and footsteps coming up the walk. We stampede down the steps to hug our cousins, Ali and James. They change into their bathing suits as fast as they can and we scamper to the pool. We jump in, creating splash after splash after splash. Sometimes we sail to tropical islands on our floaties. We're pirates on our pool mat. We're mermaid queens living in hidden castles in the sea. We're wild horses and fairy princesses until we're called out of the pool to eat lunch with pruny fingers and chattering teeth. After our lunch, we run down the hill to the raspberry bushes under the trees that stand proud tall like the skyscrapers in

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New York. The grass sticks to our dripping wet feet. We pluck the raspberries off the bush and drop them into our green raspberry baskets. My basket fills up, but Eliza's fill her mouth instead. I take a big fat red one, so red, it's almost purple. When I put it in my mouth, the juice squirts on my tie-dye bathing suit and sprawls into the fabric like a blot of red ink.

The sun beats hard on our backs and mosquitoes buzz in our ears like pop music from a city car's window. When the sky turns pink, we eat dinner at Nini and Baba's house (my grandparents). We eat strawberry popsicles on the rocks. Juice drips down our chins and makes pink streams on the ground. We brush our teeth and comb our stiff, salty low-tide hair. We crawl into our soft beds, listening to the lullaby of the grownups' voices in the kitchen and the hum of the cicadas outside.

The next day we go back home to the city. The proud and tall buildings tower over us, blocking the cloudless blue sky. They are so unlike the big, breezy trees by the raspberry bushes. Music buzzes from cars as annoying as the Connecticut mosquitoes. We crawl into our city beds, listening to the lullaby of the night people laughing in the street, nothing like the cicadas outside in Connecticut.