MOO

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BOOKS

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BUT FIRST, BEFORE ZORA . . .

I am Reena, twelve years and two months old,
formerly of a big city, a city of monuments, and
people of many colours, a harlequin city of sights
and noises,
of museums and parks and music
and cockroaches and rats
and mosquitoes and crickets
and fireworks and traffic
and helicopters whopping overhead
and sirens ***screaming*** through the air
and that's how we lived for a time

me and my parents and brother
zzzooooooooooommmming
on the

subway

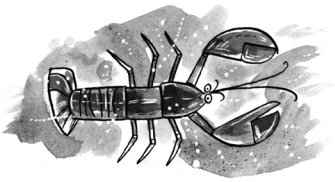
or creeeeeping along in buses or cars
in
to
and
around
the city

trawling through the museums
ogling
the dinosaurs and artefacts

ambling through the zoo
listening to the ROARS and SCREEEEEECHES
and scrabbles and warbles
staring at the l a z y crawls

of bored animals.

Yes, for a time that's how we lived.



FLIGHT PATH

Then one day, when we were stuck in traffic
behind a tall grey bus spewing exhaust
with horns HONKing
and people YELLing
and sirens WAILing—

on a day that was hotter than hotter than HOT
my mother asked my father a question.

A question can swirl your world.

My parents had recently lost their jobs when the newspaper they worked for went out of business. We were on our way to drop my father off at another job interview.

So, my mother said, *do you still like reporting?*

Not so much, my father admitted.

Is that what you see yourself doing ten years from now?

Um—

Because that's the flight path we're on.

I was sitting in the backseat with my brother, Luke, a seven-year-old complexity. Sometimes he acted as if he were two, and sometimes twelve. He was full of questions and energy and opinions except when you wanted him to have any of those things.

Luke was drawing with a black marker in the yellow notebook that was nearly always with him. He drew for hours and hours: contorted heroes leaping and jumping and vaporizing; bizarre enemies with gaping mouths and sharp talons and horns; and complicated towns with alleys and bridges and dungeons.

In the car, when Mom said, *Because that's the flight path we're on,* Luke said, *Flight path? We're not in an airplane, you know. We're in a* car *and we're on a road,* but I noticed that he was adding a runway and an airplane to his drawing.

Drivers all around us were HONKing their horns like crazy, and the smells and the heat and the NOISE were pouring in the windows and

squeezing us

from all sides.

Let's get out of here, my mother said.

My father took his hands off the wheel and raised his palms to the sky.

No, I mean out of this city, my mother said.
Let's move.

To—?

Maine! I said.

My parents turned to look at me.
Then they looked at each other.
Then they looked at me again.

Maine! they said. *Of course!*

My parents had met in Maine many years ago and when they spoke of Maine
their voices had the glint of sea and sky.

In the car that day,
Maine just popped out of my head.

I hadn't expected they would take me
seriously.

I'm glad I didn't say *Siberia*.



WHICH IS HOW . . .

Which is how I came to meet Zora, though not quite so easily as it might sound because first we had to give our landlord a month's notice and then we had to clear out all our closets and cupboards and the dreaded storage garage. Then we had to lug some of that outside for a yard sale and the rest to the Salvation Army and then we had to clean and watch as future renters tromped through our rooms noting

how small they were and how old
and how dark and
it
was
embarrassing.

And then there was the packing and moving of the beds and clothes and books and pots and pans – oh, it hurts my head to remember it so let's skip it.