



HONORABLE MENTION

The World's Best Librarian

By Hailey Frantz

Heather Yardy, Teacher | Gratton School
STANISLAUS COUNTY

Illustrated by:
Elk Grove High School

The story starts like every normal story does, an ordinary day. The sun peeked through the Sierra Nevada mountains, waving its sunbeams at us. I was grateful for a peaceful day, since I had been studying so hard! I really want to be a librarian and get to tell stories all day long. I'm only 6 years old but I want to be the world's best storyteller! I had just finished a good novel when the sky started to darken. Of course I thought that those troublemaker clouds were covering the poor sun again. Little did I know that that was the last time I'd see the sun again for at least a month.

As the day carried on, I decided that the dark sky couldn't bring down my sky-high spirits. I didn't notice the clouds of smoke drifting by. I didn't notice how thick the air was. I went to grab a new book, so I stretched my roots and drifted over to the library where the librarian knows me well. I remember days of just sitting and listening to her read to me.

"Hello, Ruby!" She greeted me happily.

"Strange weather today," I said while shuffling through books with my branches. "Sure as bees and honey," Ms. Vinny said warily. Today she had a strange tint in her eyes that I suspected was the result of the suspicious clouds of smoke. The thick and dark air was clearly bothering her. Again I quieted the voice of worry and grabbed a book about London, where the clocks are as tall as us! Normally I would read in my favorite spot near the creek but for some reason I didn't. That little voice saved me.

I was halfway through the book when I realized I had been reading during Bright Hour, the hour we trees devoted to soaking up sunlight. As I was looking back down to my book, I saw the long wispy red shadows reaching for the hills. It took my roots a

second to register that they weren't shadows but instead flames! It was too late to go and wake all the trees. I prayed that their fire-resistant bark would save them. I wished I could help them with all my bark, but we had had many training lessons on fire, and the first thing you learn is "No matter how hard you desire, stay away from fire." I knew it was too late for them to move, and if I moved—my train of thought was suddenly cut off when the flames danced up the hill, swallowing the grass whole. Like any tree I was scared, so I closed my eyes and waited and waited but wait a minute!

I realized that the river in front of me had burned out the fire, saving me! As much as I wanted to celebrate, I felt the weight of sequoia trees everywhere on my branches. I knew there was nothing I could do to replace their beautiful bark. I called trees' names and heard some replies, but sometimes I only heard silence. We will get better, I reminded myself, because sequoias have a special way to plant seeds. When our little cones dry up, out come the seeds! As I looked around at the burned trees, I expected to be sad, but I was wrong. This time I saw thousands of tiny seeds smiling up at me just waiting to grow.

"Were we really smiling or is that just a metafloor?" squeaked my small grandchild.

"Meta-p-h-o-r, Claret," I enunciated. A smile quickly spread across my face, despite myself.

"That's really how it went?" asked Moss with wide eyes.

“Sure as bees and honey!” I replied. A pang of happy-sad hit me when I realized that that was the same thing the librarian said to me all those years ago. Her “good morning” sometimes still rang in my head. I still had sad moments where I missed my friends, but I knew every single one of them would want me to live my life. I knew that I couldn’t get the other trees back, but what I could do was to be the world’s best librarian.



Author

Hailey Frantz

Heather Yardy
Teacher

Hailey learned a lot about sequoia trees in writing this story. She had no idea sequoia bark was fire resistant and that trees can grow to be 300 feet tall. She hopes readers learn about the impact of fires on forests, and enjoy the dialogue she infused in the story, as that was her favorite part of the writing “The World’s Best Librarian.”

Getting the lighting, texture and three-dimensional quality of the tree just right was important to this high school senior. Wang started with research, finding images of forest fires to determine what the air looks like during a fire. He then brainstormed, sketched and ultimately created the image through Procreate, a computer painting program.



Illustrator

Wangshuang Xie

Deborah George & Crystalline Owen
Art Teachers