

Can three brothers survive its fury alone?

THE GREAT WIDE SEA



M. H. HERLONG





GERRY SAYS HE remembers the sun and the fish. All the fish. The silver ones swimming around the rudder at anchor. The brilliant blue ones flashing across the fiery red coral. The big black ones curving like shadows at our bow as we sailed with the Gulf Stream.

But the one he remembers best, he says, is the first one he stabbed with his spear. He tells how he shoved the spear down right into the flounder's head, how he pulled the still-struggling fish from the water, and how he laughed—because he was six years old and could kill a fish.

He remembers all that, he says, but nothing more. He says he was too little when it happened. He says I have to tell him stories.

So I do.

Once upon a time there was family. Then a boat. And then islands.

Once upon a time three boys were lost at sea. One almost drowned. One almost went crazy. One fell off a cliff.

Gerry says I'm making it up, but I'm not. Everything I tell him is the truth. I just don't tell him everything.

I don't tell about the morning we woke up and Dad was gone. I don't talk about the storm. Or when we wrecked on the coral reef. I don't talk about—I never will talk about—when I left Gerry alone, standing there on the empty beach of that desert island with Dylan dying at his feet.

I don't tell stories about those things and I don't need to. Because Gerry is lying. He remembers it all. Sometimes when we go sailing now we watch the shore slip by and we remember together. Not with words or even looks but with blood rhythm—with the rush of electricity from one body to another. I pull in the mainsheet. I lean on the tiller. I tighten the jib. The boat flies.

And I don't need to tell stories. I sit close to my brothers on the rail and I get dizzy. Like when you stomp your toe and it hurts so bad you think you'll faint. The world spins backwards. I lose my place in my life. I'm running and I don't know if I'll make it in time. Then it's all starting over again. And it's not a story at all. It's real and I am fifteen.



THE BOAT

CHAPTER ONE

WE DROVE ALL night to get to the boat. I kept asking Dad to stop and let us sleep, but he always said, "No, I want to get a little farther," until Gerry fell asleep leaning against the door, his mouth open and drooling, and Dylan tilted over sideways on the backseat. Somewhere south of Miami, we pulled over at an all-night gas station.

"Dad, please," I said when we got back in the car.

"It's too late," he said, and drove us back onto the dark highway.

So I just sat there for hours, watching us rush into the hot, muggy June night and thinking about the spiky palm trees and mosquitoes and strange, quick lizards scuttling off into the crumbling asphalt along the edge of the road. When we finally made the Keys, my head was aching and the sun was just rising behind us.

Three brothers
face the ultimate
challenge at sea.

Ben and his brothers have always loved sailing on the lake near their house. But when their mother dies in an accident and their father decides to sell their house and sail around the Bahamas, they aren't so sure about life on a worn old sailboat so far from home. Then one morning the boys wake up to discover that their dad is gone and they're lost half-way between the Bahamas and Bermuda. What happened to their father? And what will they do when a treacherous storm looms on the horizon?

★ "Herlong's first book is a great survival story and a fine portrayal of family relationships in a time of crisis."

—Booklist, starred review

"Ben, Dylan and Gerry, so brave and struggling, will stay in readers' hearts forever.

M.H. Herlong is definitely a writer from whom we can expect great things."

—The New Orleans Times-Picayune



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