



THE BATTLE OF JUNK MOUNTAIN

by Lauren Abbey Greenberg



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Lauren Abbey Greenberg

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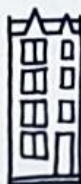
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Running Press Kids
Hachette Book Group
1290 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10104
www.runningpress.com/rpkids
@RP_Kids

Printed in the United States of America

First Edition: April 2018

Published by Running Press Kids, an imprint of Perseus Books, LLC,
a subsidiary of Hachette Book Group, Inc.

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Print book cover and interior design by T. L. Bonaddio.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017947054

ISBNs: 978-0-7624-6295-7 (hardcover), 978-0-7624-6296-4 (ebook)

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THIS IS MY HAPPY PLACE

FOR MY TREASURES:
Brian, Jacob, and Ellie

THIS IS MY HAPPY PLACE

I didn't expect my summer sister to ditch me the first minute of vacation. She could've at least waited until I emptied my suitcase.

"But . . . but . . ." I sputter like the last seconds of microwave popcorn. "What about going to Lolli's?"

Poppy sighs. "I'm sorry. I wish I could, but the last time I didn't show up for a shift, my dad totally freaked out."

I sink onto what will be my bed for the next month. "But we always go to Lolli's for milkshakes first thing. It's tradition."

"It sucks, I know, but . . ." She shrugs. "Our tradition will have to change."

Change? What's she talking about? The best thing about Thomas Cove is that nothing ever changes.

I stare at the stack of neatly folded T-shirts on my lap. "Couldn't your dad wait for you to start working at the store until you're older? Nobody I know back home works full-time when they're twelve."

She sits next to me cross-legged and examines the bottoms of her bare feet. "It's different here. Kids start hauling lobster traps by the time they're eight years old. Consider me lucky."

Poppy's parents own Quayle's Market, the only grocery store on Cedar Island. Her two older sisters have worked there for years. I guess it was only a matter of time before she got roped in. But why did it have to be *this* summer, the first one without my parents?

Sunlight streams through the window, making Poppy's auburn hair glow like a maple tree in fall. "You could come with me. I have to stock the shelves and stuff, and it's kind of boring, but at least it's not the fish counter."

"Thanks, but I guess I should stay here. I'm ready to get this project going, if you know what I mean." I tug on the top drawer of the pine dresser in an attempt to put my clothes away, but it's stuck shut. The one under it opens easily, but it's full of miniature glass ducks, piles of old comic books, and several cat calendars. Looks like my grandmother's been trolling the yard sales . . . again.

My cheeks puff out. This is going to be a bigger job than I thought.

I catch my reflection in the cracked floor-length mirror. The damp Maine air has wreaked havoc on my curly hair

already. I pat down the puffed-out ponytail at the base of my neck. Ugh, I look like a beaver.

Poppy rolls onto her stomach, smooshing the ruffled blue throw pillows beneath her. Together we peer out the window. The view outside is postcard pretty, the kind parents pay top dollar for at a hotel. A lobster boat cuts through the water; its motor drones steadily as it passes anchored skiffs that rock gently back and forth in its wake. Next door to us, a hulk of a man wearing a camouflage baseball cap chops firewood. Sweat darkens the back of his dingy gray tank.

"Is that the new neighbor?" I ask.

"Yup, that's Cranky."

"Cranky?"

"His real name is Mr. Holbrook, but I call him Cranky, because that's what he is. Every time I see him, he has this look on his face like he just bit into a vomit burger. He's so mean, Shayne. He'll yell at you if you cut through his yard. You can't use his dock—"

I gasp. "No dock jumping?"

"Nope. All his property is off-limits."

Drat. The old neighbors, the Krafts, used to let us have full run of their place like it was our own private playground.

"When he moved in, my mom made me bring over a plate of cookies. As soon as I stepped into his yard, he appeared from

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to Deborah Vetter for your tutelage during first drafts; Lisa Tillman for your great input over many revisions and cups of coffee; Amy Jameson for being an awesome agent and support system; Adrienne Szpyrka for being a wonderful, caring editor; Teresa Bonaddio for creating a beautiful cover; and finally, my family for letting me drag you along fact-finding missions up and down Mid-Coast Maine for many years.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lauren Abbey Greenberg is an award-winning writer/producer and a graduate of the Institute of Children's Literature. She lives in Maryland with her husband, two children, and fluffy dog, and has spent summers in Maine for the past twenty years. This is her debut novel. Visit her online at www.laurenabbeygreenberg.com.

PRAISE FOR *THE BATTLE OF JUNK MOUNTAIN*:

"This absorbing middle-grade read gently but unflinchingly considers the common ground of growing up and growing old."—*Kirkus Reviews*

"Loved it! Shayne's sharp wit combined with her can-do compassion grabs us from the get-go. Her summer of trials and unexpected friendships shines a brilliant light on the power of holding on . . . and letting go.

I didn't want this sweet, heartrending story to end!"

—JENNIFER RICHARD JACOBSON, author of *Small as an Elephant*

"*The Battle of Junk Mountain* is a warm, fresh tale that will have readers smelling the salty air of the New England coast as they explore the heavy burden—and joy—of toting around the past."

—BETH VRABEL, author of *Caleb and Kit* and the *Pack of Dorks* series

"Equal parts humor and heart, I fell in love with *Thomas Cove* and its quirky cast of characters. Readers will be moved by this honest and touching story of change and learning how to let go."

—ERIN TEAGAN, author of *The Friendship Experiment*

ISBN 978-0-7624-6295-7



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Printed in the United States 04/18

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