



Nature Girl

By Jane Kelley

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Nature Girl is a laugh-out-loud funny, feel-good tale of self-discovery, growing up, and girl power that gives a fresh twist to the classic survival story! Eleven-year-old Megan is stuck in the wilds of Vermont for the summer with no TV, no Internet, no cell phone, and worst of all, no best friend. So when Megan gets lost on the Appalachian Trail with only her little dog, Arp, for company, she decides she might as well hike all the way to Massachusetts where her best friend, Lucy, is spending her summer. Life of the trail isn't easy though. And on the journey, Megan faces everything from wild animals and raging rivers to tofu jerky and life without bathrooms. Most of all though, Megan gets to know herself—both who she's been in the past and who she wants to be in the future—and the journey goes from a spur of the moment lark to a heroic quest to prove herself to Lucy, her family, and the world! Fans of Lisa Yee and Phyllis Reynolds Naylor will delight in Jane Kelley's irresistible debut.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 5–8—Megan, 12, finds herself plucked out of the hustle and bustle of New York City and dropped into the heart of Vermont. Her parents insist that she explore her artistic side and commune with nature rather than relying on electronic gadgets for entertainment. When they send her on a day hike with her sister and her sister's boyfriend, Megan has an argument with Ginia and decides to hike the Appalachian Trail, by herself, to Mount Greylock, where she plans to make amends with her best friend, Lucy. Her quest proves more difficult than she imagined as she encounters a bear, rain, makeshift shelters, bullies, hunger, thirst, and fear at night, but she overcomes all of them. As she and her dog cover the 30 miles, she analyzes her relationships, especially the tattered one with Lucy, whose mother has Hodgkin's disease. Megan has little knowledge of wilderness survival, but her tenacity carries readers through to the end. She has never been a doer, and she is rarely motivated by anything, but spending time alone, she realizes that she has been very selfish and begins to change her mind about how she lives her life. Her voice is believable and honest, and her journey is both a physical and emotional success. Kelley's debut novel is a modern-day adventure story that turns its back on the cell phone and portable GPS and gets to the heart of real survival.—*Delia Carruthers, Roxbury Public Library, Succasunna, NJ*

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About the Author

JANE KELLEY lives in Brooklyn with her husband and daughter. She has enjoyed many summers in Vermont. This is her first book. You can visit her web site at JaneKelleyBooks.com.

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1

The Hundred-Year-Old Maple Tree

“Can you hear me now?”

I creep a little further out along the tree branch.

“Lucy, are you there?”

I hear a little mumbling. I switch hands so that the cell phone is pressed against my right ear, six inches closer to my best friend.

“Lucy, you’ve just got to be there!”

My parents said the cell phone could only be used for emergencies. But this IS an emergency! My miserableness has swelled to monstrous proportions like the Barney balloon in the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade. Besides, since I’m hiding in a tree, my parents won’t even know I called Lucy until months from now when they get the phone bill. Then I won’t care how they punish me because I’ll be back home in New York City, far, far away from Nowheresville, Vermont.

“LUCY!”

I shouldn’t have yelled. I quickly look around to see if anyone heard me. But no one’s paying any attention

to me—as usual. Mom is on the other side of the farmhouse, painting the barn. I don’t mean really painting it (even though it sure could use a new coat of red). No, she’s making a painting of it. “Trying to capture the essence of its heroism as it stands against the march of time.” I’m not kidding you. Mom actually said that. Dad is at the far side of the field, sketching the tumble-down pile of rocks at the edge of the Woods. Anywhere else in the world, people would immediately get rid of that useless safety hazard. But up here, everybody worships that rock pile because it’s an authentic Vermont stone wall.

My sister, Ginia, is inside the farmhouse. Her name is really VIRginia, but ever since she turned sixteen, she has a fit if you call her that. She’s really good at drawing. She can draw just about anything—even galloping horses. But she’s probably doing another self-portrait so her squinty little eyes can be big and beautiful. She gets to spend hours mooning into a mirror and playing with her hair because my parents think that’s ART.

I’m supposed to be doing ART too. Every morning, the time between nine o’clock and noon is dedicated to “creative pursuits.” That’s my parents’ idea of a fun summer. Can you believe it? Three whole hours—every day? I told them that I couldn’t do anything for three whole hours—not even things I liked. Dad just smiled and repeated one of his annoying sayings, “Practice makes perfect.”

But he was lying. Practice won’t help my painting or drawing or anything else.

The trouble is, I don’t have any important talents. That became really obvious last fall when I started middle school. The first thing that happened was all the sixth graders had to demonstrate how great they were at singing and dancing and painting and showing off. Then the talent teachers chose kids for their workshops. I was hoping I could be in the chorus with Lucy. But I didn’t get picked for that. I didn’t even get picked for drawing. In fact, I guess you could say I didn’t get picked for anything. I got put in photography with all the other kids they didn’t know what to do with. I mean, anyone can point a camera at something and push a button. Unfortunately they didn’t have a workshop for doodling and hanging out with your best friend. Because those are the only things I’m any good at.

Maybe you think that doodling is drawing. They both use paper and pencil, right? I kind of thought that too. So on the first morning of ART time, I sketched myself standing next to the farmhouse. I can’t draw people, but you could recognize me by my frizzy hair. Then I made a swarm of mosquitoes attacking me. Only I didn’t actually draw them because they’re too tiny and complicated; I just covered the page in dots. Unfortunately Mom walked past while I was stabbing the paper with my pen. I tried to keep her from seeing what I was doing, but she looked anyway. She opened her mouth like she wanted to say something. Then she shut it again. Then she sighed. So I crumpled up the paper and threw it away.

And that’s the difference. Drawing ends up in museums. Doodling ends up in the trash.

From the Hardcover edition.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jennifer Howard:

Have you spare time to get a day? What do you do when you have more or little spare time? That's why, you can choose the suitable activity regarding spend your time. Any person spent their very own spare time to take a stroll, shopping, or went to the particular Mall. How about open or read a book allowed Nature Girl?

Maybe it is for being best activity for you. You realize beside you can spend your time along with your favorite's book, you can cleverer than before. Do you agree with it is opinion or you have different opinion?

Michael Walsh:

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Ruth Westlund:

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Nicholas Ko:

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