



Catalyst

Beatrice Villaflor, Year 6

Omoshirokunai was ‘boring’ in Japanese, and was the most accurate word to describe the sleepy town of Aspen Grove. It was a town of limited space, with a meagre population of less than seven hundred. In the span of a mere 67 days, Mara knew almost everyone.

As Mara walked around her narrow garden pointlessly, she noticed stones clustered around one side. They loomed, almost like a barricade, limiting anyone from walking any further. The stones emanated a feeling of mystery, and Mara was going to find out what lay behind.

Scrambling clumsily over the boulder-like stones, Mara’s arms shook as she hoisted herself on top of the rocks. Lowering herself from the stones, she dropped down on the sand. Upon observing further, she realised that behind the stones lay a hidden stretch of beach, and beyond that, the ocean. The ocean stretched as far as the eye could see; it was hard to believe it stopped at one point and was not infinite. Ocean waves howled in the background as Mara inspected her surroundings.

Beyond the small stretch of sand was a white fence, limiting the space. An unstable looking shed was in a corner, and inside it was diving gear. In a heartbeat, Mara slipped the gear on, walking over to the shoreline. The waves emanated a salty yet pleasant fragrance, beckoning Mara to jump in.

Contemplating the consequences, Mara hesitantly stepped away from the ocean. But it wasn’t wrong, was it? It was her only chance to do something unforgettable.

Mara readied herself as a countdown ticked in her head.

“Three, two, one.” She mumbled, almost inaudibly.

Then, she jumped.

An abundance of coral in different colours crowded the ocean floor, from red to yellow, greeting her. Fish of different shapes and sizes swam past Mara as she reached out to touch them. Sea anemone moved like the nimble arms of ballerinas, the sea their stage.

She could hear the call of the whales and the shouts of the dolphins as they dove out of the water. Jellyfish moved aimlessly, following the ocean current, like they were in a hypnotic trance. Small sea snails crawled on the sandy floor, their shells vibrant and lively.

Seaweed floated at the top of the water like an evergreen curtain as they sank in a looping spiral. Caws of birds echoed in the sea as a discordant cacophony. Schools of fish swam in a mesmerizing patterns, as pods of dolphins retreated underwater, only to dive back down again.

Shadows formed, tall and gaunt. Night fell as the sky darkened, undergoing its constant metamorphosis. As Mara swams back to shore, she thought about the picturesque scene as she took a seat on the slightly damp sand.

Shrugging the gear off, she padded over to the rocks. Clambering over the rocks gracelessly, Mara lowered herself onto the grass. She took a seat, remembering the scene vividly.

She knew it was not bound to happen again anytime soon, but for the time being, it was enough to alleviate her unenthusiastic mood.

“Maybe Aspen Grove isn’t too bad.” Mara muttered, because it might just be true.