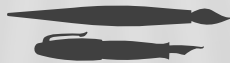


JACKSON PEARCE & MAGGIE STIEFVATER

Pip Bartlett's
— GUIDE TO —
SEA
MONSTERS



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CHAPTER 1

“Pip, if you throw those slugs in my hair, you’re in big trouble,” Callie said.

We—me, my older cousin Callie, my best friend Tomas Ramirez, and his family—were in Mr. and Mrs. Ramirez’s minivan, smushed together like toes in a shoe. The Ramirez triplets were stirring up noise in the seat behind us. Callie sat on my left. Tomas sat on my right. A plastic tank full of water and magical creatures sat right in the middle, balanced in my lap.

We were all headed to a beach vacation.

Well, all the humans, anyway. I hadn’t been to the beach in a really long time. So far, I’d spent this summer with my aunt Emma at her veterinary clinic for magical creatures, and last summer my parents had been too busy traveling for their geology work to have a vacation.

So I was pretty excited, especially since Tomas and I were sort of the reason we were able to go in the first

place. We'd helped save some Unicorns at a show earlier that summer, and one of the owners had thanked us by letting us spend a week in her fancy beach house.

Callie hissed as the minivan went over a bump and the water in the tank sloshed.

"I'm serious, Pip!" she said, wrinkling her nose. "If those slugs—"

"They're not slugs," I corrected. "They're *babies*."

Baby Tubafish, in fact. According to my favorite book, *Jeffrey Higgleston's Guide to Magical Creatures* (which I was sitting on, to save room), the ones in this tank were probably about three weeks old. They were shiny as brass and wiggly as tadpoles. Sure, they were pretty squishy, but they didn't look anything like slugs to me. Not with those big eyes.

It was my job to release them once we got to the ocean. I was pretty excited about that too. I really like being useful, especially when it has to do with taking care of animals.

"I don't understand why they're here," Callie moaned.

"Because they're delicious," Tomas said gravely, pushing up his glasses. He wasn't wrong. Tubafish eggs were a yummy snack for a lot of different magical sea creatures, which was why they needed a little help. Animal experts all over Georgia rescued the eggs and hatched them in safe

aquariums in tiny Georgia towns until the Tubafish could protect themselves from becoming lunch.

And boy, oh, boy, could the Tubafish babies take care of themselves now.

“That isn’t what I meant,” Callie said. “I don’t understand why *I’m stuck here with them.*”

“What’s the first thing you want to do when you get to Port Candor?” Mrs. Ramirez asked us brightly, changing the subject (very intentionally, if you ask me).

“Everything!” one of Tomas’s brothers shouted. I couldn’t tell which one. Even though they didn’t look precisely the same, it was still hard to remember which was which.

“Something with animals,” I said.

“Shocker,” Callie muttered.

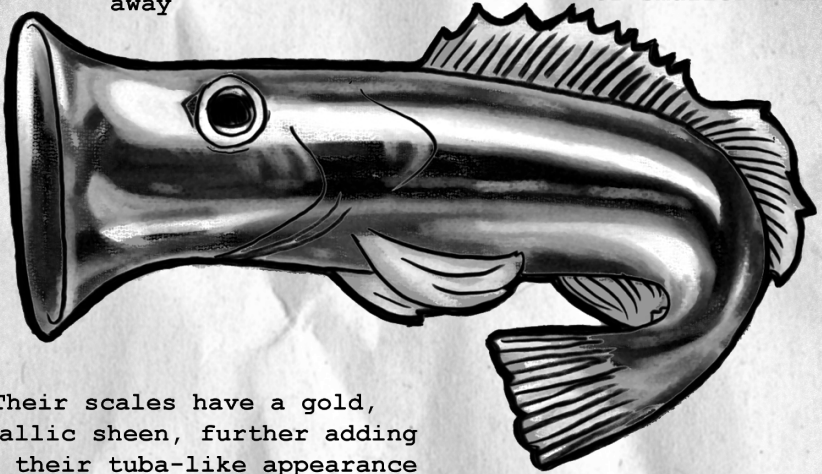
“What about you, Tomas?” his mom asked. Tomas would definitely have a specific answer—he was pretty much always the most prepared person in any room. For this trip, he’d packed allergy medicines and first-aid supplies, snacks and paperwork, and three different sets of tweezers for different-sized boardwalk splinters.

“Well, there’s an Ocean Safety Exhibit at the Visitor’s Center that I’d like to see,” Tomas answered. He opened up a map of Port Candor that he’d been working on memorizing for the entire car ride.

Tubafish

The rare call of the adult Tubafish can be heard by humans over two miles away

Because they cannot close their mouths, Tubafish feed by swimming swiftly through schools of smaller fish



Their scales have a gold, metallic sheen, further adding to their tuba-like appearance

SIZE: 26-28"

WEIGHT: 35-40 lbs.

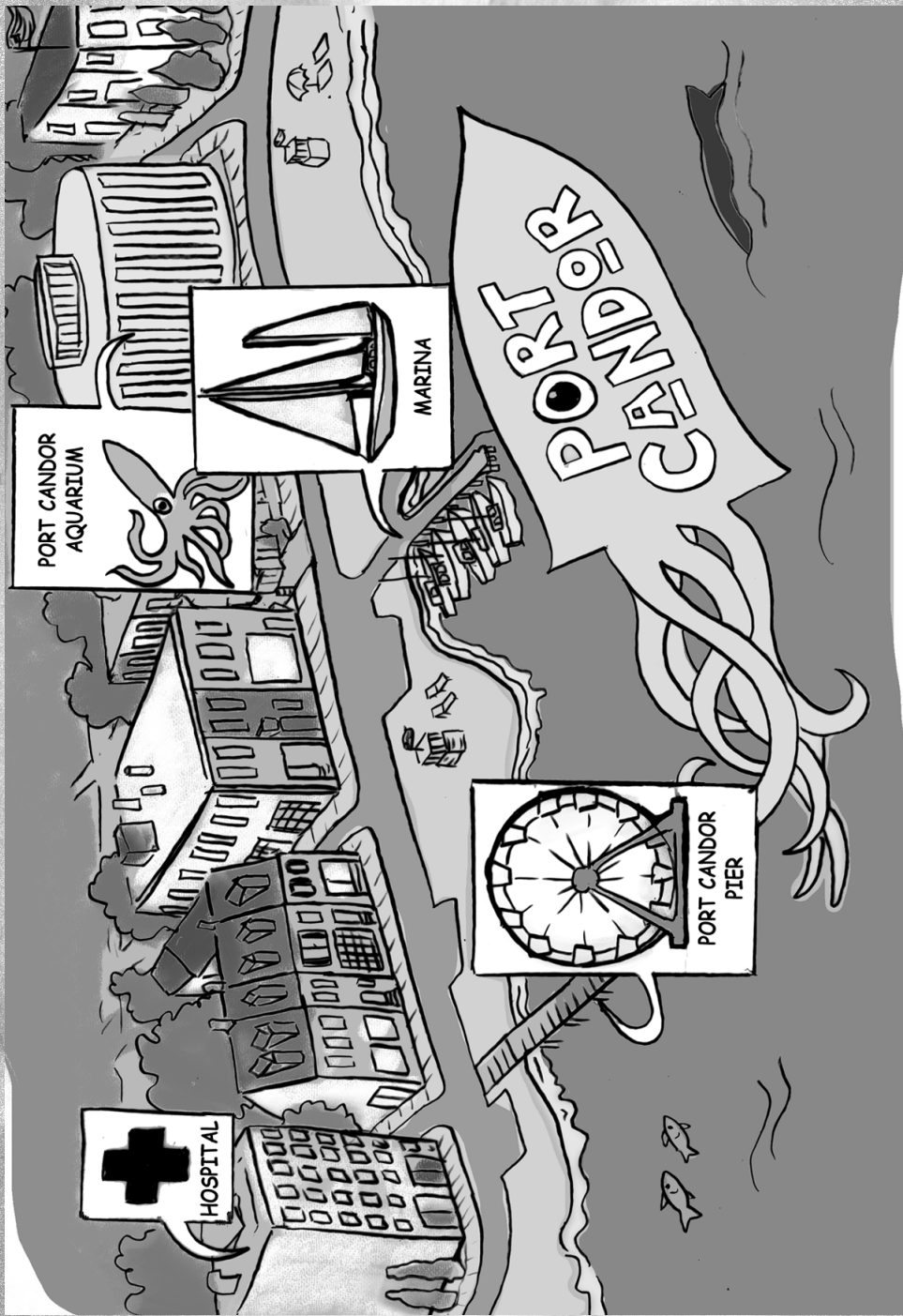
DESCRIPTION: Rare, reclusive, and rude-sounding at times, Tubafish are rarely seen near the shore after maturity. After spawning in shallow water, young Tubafish practice their loud defense call—which, to many, sounds exactly like a particularly unskilled tuba player blasting a single note. Fishermen have numerous superstitions about Tubafish; to hear a Tubafish's call three times in a single day means whatever song is stuck in your head will remain there forever.

Mr. Ramirez caught my eye in the rearview mirror. “You always want to see animals, Pip. Did you know there are actually wild Grogponies that live in the sand dunes near Port Candor?” I looked down at the Tubafish, not wanting Mr. Ramirez to see my smile. Even though I liked the Ramirezes a lot, sometimes I got a little shy when they spoke to me—I was like that with most humans, to be honest. I was much better at talking to magical creatures, which was good, because I seemed to be the only person in the world magical creatures could actually understand.

“I didn’t know that,” I said. I almost told him about how Grogponies were technically a subspecies of the Hornless Unicorn, then lost my nerve.

“Yep! They’re so tame that sometimes they’ll come right up to your car for you to feed or pet them! Not that you always want them to.”

I knew why—because Grogponies were clumsy. Unlike their Unicorn relatives or regular old horses, they stumbled around like they were constantly dizzy. They were never aggressive, but they could still cause a lot of problems when they fell on top of you. Places with large Grogpony populations even sold sticks that looked like giant Q-tips that you could use to poke a tumbling Grogpony back in the other direction.



PORT CANDOR

PORT CANDOR
AQUARIUM

MARINA

PORT CANDOR
PIER

HOSPITAL

“Speaking of Grogponies—Jose, there’s one now!” Mrs. Ramirez said, pointing at the side of the road. Half a second later, she changed the direction of her pointing to right in front of the car and yelled, “WATCH OUT!”

A Grogpony was staggering cheerfully in the middle of the road.

Mr. Ramirez stomped on the brakes. The minivan’s tires squealed as it slowed down, weaving from side to side. I held the tank of Tubafish in my lap tightly to keep it from sliding forward, but I couldn’t hold on to the water inside it. Water blasted through the mesh top. Callie wailed. Mrs. Ramirez swore. Tomas began to hiccup.

The minivan lurched to a stop inches from the swaying Grogpony.

The Tubafish began to bellow.

They were so loud that the Grogpony snorted at the minivan before backflipping into a ditch, then stumbling off. I wanted to shout an apology to it, but there was no way the Grogpony would be able to hear me over the Tubafish—there was no way *anyone* could hear *anything* over the Tubafish. I could feel the sides of the tank vibrating from of the sound of them. Even the *water* seemed to be trying to escape from the noise, jiggling right out the top of the tank and onto my clothes.

Callie waved her arms on either side of my head. Her

mouth was moving, and even though I couldn't hear her words, I knew exactly what she was saying: *MAKE THEM STOP.*

The Tubafish swam in frantic circles, bouncing off the walls. I said, "Hush! You're safe now!"

But the Tubafish couldn't hear me either. They kept making that incredible bonging sound. Other cars slowed down, staring at the source of the noise. The triplets kicked the back of our seat. Callie opened her door to the side of the road. I think she wanted me to throw the tank out of the minivan.

I shouted, as loud as I possibly could, "YOU'RE SAFE NOW!"

The Tubafish stopped.

"Really? Oh. Never mind, then," one of the babies squealed.

Other than that, everything went very quiet. My ears were ringing.

Mr. Ramirez wiped a tear from his eye. He said, "That was so loud I cried a little."

Mrs. Ramirez pointed outside the car to a sign just on the other side of the ditch the Grogpony had crossed. It read:

WELCOME TO PORT CANDOR: YOU'RE IN FOR A FUN TIME.