

RANGER *in* TIME

Journey through Ash and Smoke



KATE MESSNER

illustrated by
KELLEY MCMORRIS

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Messner, Kate, author. | McMorris, Kelley, illustrator. | Messner, Kate. Ranger in time.

Title: Journey through ash and smoke / Kate Messner ; illustrated by Kelley McMorris.

Description: New York, NY : Scholastic Inc., [2017] | Series: Ranger in time | Summary: Ranger, the time-traveling golden retriever, has landed in Viking age Iceland, where he meets a girl named Helga, who seems perfectly able to take care of herself – until an erupting volcano and an early arriving baby force Ranger and Helga to journey through the ash and smoke to find her father and bring him home.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016011672

Subjects: LCSH: Golden retriever – Juvenile fiction. | Time travel – Juvenile fiction. | Volcanoes – Juvenile fiction. | Adventure stories. | Iceland – History – To 1262 – Juvenile fiction. | CYAC: Golden retriever – Fiction. | Dogs – Fiction. | Time travel – Fiction. | Volcanoes – Fiction. | Adventure and adventurers – Fiction. | Iceland – History – To 1262 – Fiction. | GSAFD: Adventure fiction.

Classification: LCC PZ10.3.M5635 Lan 2017 | DDC 813.6 – dc23

LC record available at <http://lccn.loc.gov/2016011672>

ISBN 978-0-545-90978-5

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 17 18 19 20 21

Printed in the United States of America 40
First printing 2017

Book design by Ellen Duda



Helga skipped from rock to rock over a rushing creek, slipping and sliding on the wet stones. “Father! Rosta!” she shouted. But the rain swallowed her words. She’d never hear Father, even if he called back to her.

Helga ducked under a stony bridge that spanned an area of soggy grass and ferns. Beyond that was a rocky tunnel. Helga crouched low and crawled into the sheltered dark to catch her breath.

The streams that flowed from the mountains were already rushing from the rain. Helga knew even from her short time in this land that too much water could sweep a person away. She would have to turn back. She hoped Father had found Rosta and was already on his way home.

Helga shook off her cloak, took a deep breath, and climbed back out into the blowing rain. She turned to where she thought the

longhouse must be, but the clouds were so thick and low she couldn't see past the rocks in front of her. Helga turned, but the view was the same in every direction – walls of cloud and water, coming down faster than ever. Was her family's longhouse before her or behind her?

The water puddled under Helga's feet. She splashed forward but had no idea if she was headed for home. She couldn't see the stream that cut through a wide crevice in the rocks nearby, but she could hear it roaring.

“Father! Rosta!” she called.

But only the wind answered.