

Praise for
HANNAH GOLD

‘Deeply moving, beautifully told, quite unforgettable’
Michael Morpurgo, on *The Last Bear*

‘A roaring success’
The Times*, on *The Last Bear

‘A winning book from a master storyteller’
Irish Independent*, on *The Lost Whale

‘The author’s passion for the natural world currently under threat
makes their book outstanding’
New Statesman*, on *The Lost Whale

‘Stunningly illustrated and magically inspiring’
Daily Mail*, on *Finding Bear

‘[...] One that’ll inspire children for years to come’
A. F. Steadman, author of the Skandar series, on *Finding Bear*

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Piers Torday, author of *The Last Wild*, on *Turtle Moon*

‘I adore all of Hannah’s books but this one stole my heart’
**Jasbinder Bilan, author of *Asha and the Spirit Bird*,
on *Turtle Moon***

Books by Hannah Gold

THE LAST BEAR
THE LOST WHALE
FINDING BEAR
TURTLE MOON

TURTLE MOON

HANNAH GOLD



Illustrated by Levi Pinfold



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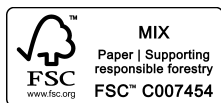
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*To all the mothers of the world – however your children
come, or even if they don't come at all.
May your light keep shining.*







CHAPTER ONE

The Oak Tree


SILVER TREVELON SWUNG one-handed from the branch of her favourite tree. It was a medium-sized oak, just past middle age, and over the course of its life it had seen many changes. The tree lived at the far end of the Trevelons' back garden and was a particularly good one for climbing.



And if there was anything that Silver loved to do best, it was climbing trees. She adored the rough, knobbly sensation of the bark under her fingertips, the cool breeze against her face and how the rich, earthy smell of the wood made her nose tickle. Most of all, she loved being so high up. Cocooned in the cradle of the uppermost branches was where she did her best and loftiest thinking.



Silver wasn't technically allowed to climb the oak tree any more. Not since the time she'd fallen out and had to wear her arm in a sling for three weeks. But, as she yanked herself up to the safety of the third highest branch (a lovely bough the perfect size for an eleven-year-old bottom), she reflected that today was nothing short of An Emergency.



Earlier at school, there had been an art exam. And she had failed. Not just failed. Silver had failed miserably. Even Roger White had beaten her, and all he'd drawn was a stick insect with a pair of mildly surprised eyes.

Silver scowled at the memory as she took out her painting.

‘And what is this supposed to be?’ Mrs Snootle had drawled while the rest of the class tittered – everyone except Aziza, who was Silver’s best friend and never laughed at her, even when she’d accidentally come to school wearing her leopard-print pyjamas.

‘That,’ replied Silver, her eyes flashing crossly, ‘is what you call abstract.’

‘Ah,’ said Mrs Snootle, making a show of twisting the picture this way and that. ‘I see, Silver, that while you may have learned some of your father’s terminology you have not, in fact, inherited much of his talent.’

Silver swung her legs angrily. Not so fiercely that it would hurt the tree’s feelings, but enough to make the leaves flutter in alarm.

‘How can I face Dad now?’ she muttered.

From up here, she could see straight into her father’s studio. Although calling it a ‘studio’ made it sound a little bit fancy when, in truth, it was nothing more than a modest conservatory tagged on to the end of their terraced house. But Dad loved it because it


was light. And, as he was fond of reminding everyone, artists breathe light as fish breathe water.

Through the glass doors, Silver watched his familiar tall shape pace up and down in front of his latest canvas. When she had left this morning, he'd given her an upside-down hug (the kind she loved best) and even lent her his most expensive paintbrush. The one with the bristles made from eagle feathers he'd bought on a field trip to Mongolia.

She squinted at her picture afresh. Obviously, it was an interpretation of an octopus. And, in her interpretation, so what if it had no arms?

Dad always said that paintings didn't need to make sense when you first looked at them. Sometimes the whole point of art was to force you to look below the surface to the treasure buried underneath. And if anyone ought to know, it was him.


Years ago, when Silver was just a baby, he had written and illustrated a children's book. It was called *Woodland Adventure* and followed the escapades of a




motley group of animals. Nobody had expected it to do well, but somehow the book had caught people's imaginations and Jack Trevelon had become a little bit famous. Not a lot famous. Nobody stopped him in the street for his autograph (except Mrs Holland next door, who wanted it, strangely, for her sausage dog, Harold), but enough famous that people expected Silver to be brilliantly talented at art too.

Except she wasn't.

She was rubbish at it.



Out of habit, she reached for the heart pendant around her neck. It had been a gift from her parents on her seventh birthday as a reminder of how special she was.



'Silver for our Silver!' they had cooed in unison.

As she'd unwrapped the present, her mum had told Silver the story again. The story of how she'd come by her unusual name. It was because the night her mother went into labour, there had been a full moon in the sky. A super full one. Moons can be many different colours

– tangerine, golden, orange, blood even. But on this particular night, just over eleven years ago, it was silver.

The trouble was, she just didn't particularly feel like a Silver. Silver was something precious. Something shiny. Something to be marvelled over, like tiaras or fireworks – or your granny's best cutlery set. Something that belonged in a luxurious velvet jewellery case. Whereas she was someone who often had twigs in her hair, ran slug races up her arms, was in most of the bottom sets at school and could burp out nearly half the alphabet in one triumphant sitting.

Silver returned her gaze to the drawing.

Admittedly, it was a bit blobby. And the three octopus hearts might have been mistaken for gaping, hungry mouths. Or even bottoms. Urgh. Who was she trying to kid? Dad had more talent in his little finger than she had in the whole of her body.

Silver screwed the piece of paper up and shoved it back in her blazer pocket where she'd tucked Dad's paintbrush earlier.

Uh-oh.

Her mouth ran dry. The paintbrush. Where was it?

It must have fallen out when she'd climbed the tree. She scabbled around on the branch, checking any hidden crevices, even briefly poking her hand into the owl hole. There were no owls – just woodlice and spiders. Silver shuddered. She loved most animals, but there were exceptions.

However, the paintbrush wasn't anywhere to be seen.

'Ink splats!' Silver cursed, using the phrase her dad always came out with when he spilled paint down his clothes – which was often.

She kicked her legs in frustration. And, as she did, something shiny caught her eye.

The paintbrush!

It was snared between the teeth of a defiant-looking twig. Just one teeny-tiny arm-stretch away. She reached out to grab it . . .

And fell headfirst from the tree.



CHAPTER TWO

Ink Splats!

SILVER TUMBLED THROUGH the branches like an acrobat before landing safely in a soft cushion of twigs and leaves in the lower layer of the tree. She bounced out on to the mossy grass with a grin.

‘Thank you, my friend.’

She patted the trunk gratefully, plucked a few stray


leaves from her hair and skipped across the stepping stones in the back garden, imagining she was escaping crocodiles snapping at her heels, before arriving at the back door. She paused.

Picking the dirt out from under her fingernails, she scanned the back porch, looking for Mum's work scrubs. She always hung them on the same peg when she got home, but they weren't there. As Silver flipped off her baseball cap and slung it on a hook (it missed), her heart let out a guilty murmur of relief.

In the past week alone, Mum had told her off three times – once for leaving her muddy shoes in the middle of the hallway, then for dripping milk on to the kitchen table when she was eating her Coco Pops and finally for playing her music too loudly when she was having a shower. Lately, Silver had been trying her hardest to be good, but it still felt as if she couldn't do anything right.

'Silver? Is that you I hear?!' Dad called out.

'Coming!'



Apart from the oak tree, Dad's art studio was one of her favourite places, even if the smell of turps made the back of her throat prickle. The space was full of blank canvases propped against walls, a wooden worktable littered with jamjars, and paints of every imaginable colour scattered everywhere.

As always, Dad had his khaki combat trousers rolled up above his ankles and his white shirt was splattered with drops of paint. He welcomed Silver with a warm smile, plucked the eagle paintbrush from behind her ear and then returned his gaze to the huge canvas in front of him. There was a long pause.

'Silver,' he said finally, 'do you think the obsidian paint or the ash grey for this part of the sky?'

She turned to the painting in question and crinkled her brow.

A couple of years ago, Dad had had an exhibition of his art in a fancy London gallery. He'd worn a suit that made him sweat buckets and it was as if Silver had borrowed a new father for the evening – one that

had zipped his personality up inside a washbag.

It was the same with the painting he was working on now. There were no lavish pops of colour or splashes of sunshine and definitely no sparkle. The giant canvas was dominated by an ominous, storm-filled sky with a tiny boat being tossed around by fierce, angry waves.

Silver much preferred it when he drew silly pictures. Like the cartoon ones in *Woodland Adventure* or the doodles he used to do for her at bedtime, conjuring stories of magicians, dragons and unicorns out of blank pieces of paper. But he hadn't done those sorts of sketches in a long time.

'Well?' he asked again, the paintbrush now gritted between his teeth.

There was a tube of gold paint on his table. A beautiful, glittery, shimmering gold that would make the sky shine like a Californian sun.

'The g—'

'Obsidian, I think,' Dad answered, cutting her off.

‘A crystal formed from the lava of a cooling volcano. Otherwise known as the stone of truth. Now, talking of truth, what were you doing up that tree?’

‘H-h-how did you know?’

Dad didn’t answer. Not in words. Instead, he flicked his paintbrush up dramatically and painted an uncompromising X in the air. ‘You must promise me you won’t climb that tree again.’

Silver sighed. ‘I promise.’

‘You could quite easily have broken your neck, and your mother has enough on her plate at the moment without worrying about you too.’

Silver was about to point out that she hadn’t broken her neck though, but then she noticed his face. It was not a face to be argued with.

Dad replaced the paintbrush in a jar of turps before guiding her to an old, worn sofa in the corner. Silver curled up under his arm. He smelled of paint and acrylics, but also of something familiar and safe. She rested her head on his shoulder.

‘So, my treasure, did the eagle paintbrush work its magic?’

Ink splats! She’d hoped Dad had forgotten about the art exam. She reluctantly fished in her top pocket and handed the picture over.

Dad smoothed out the creases. ‘An octopus!’ He grinned. ‘And look! There are the three hearts just like the three of us. Me, you and Mum. I’m guessing you came top of the class?’

Silver wanted to remind Dad that she never came top of the class at anything, but he was looking at her so hopefully that she shrugged instead.

‘Mrs Snootle wasn’t impressed.’

‘What does Mrs Snotface know?!’ Dad cried. This was his name for her and it never failed to make Silver giggle. ‘This octopus is magnificent!’

Before he could interrogate Silver any further on her art skills, she was saved by the phone. A contraption so ancient you even had to dial the numbers. Dad didn’t believe in ‘newfangled technology’.

‘Best get that.’

While he disappeared into the kitchen to answer it, she sidled over to the table to take a closer look at that gold paint. It may not have been formed from volcanoes, but it was far more dazzling to the eye.

Like it had been carved out of the sun itself.

Silver picked up the tube and gave it a little shake. As she did, she noticed the envelope that had been hiding underneath. It was covered in airmail stickers, faraway stamps and a few clumsy splashes of stormy blue paint.

Sometimes Dad got fan mail from overseas readers. Perhaps this was from one of them? There was an unusual scent to the envelope that she couldn't place. It smelled sweet and pungent. Silver flipped it over. On the back was a green-ink stamp of a turtle.

‘Cute,’ she murmured.

Silver wasn't one for reading other people's letters (not normally anyway), but the enclosed letter peeked out tantalisingly. The top part of the white paper

was decorated with inky trees in all shapes and sizes. Underneath was some lettering in bold:

Turtle Beach Rescue Centre

Below this came the salutation 'Dear Mr Trevelon'. But, since ninety per cent of the letter was still inside the envelope, it was impossible to read the rest.

Probably just fan mail, Silver concluded. From an animal lover – since this was the type of reader he attracted. And, although Dad didn't object to her reading his post, he did prefer to vet the letters first. Still, maybe he wouldn't mind just this once . . .

'Jack! Silver!' Mum's voice rang out. 'I'm home!'

Silver watched unseen from the conservatory as her mother entered the hallway. Her brown curls were tightly swept back in her customary bun and her shoulders were hunched. No doubt she was exhausted after another long day at the practice. Silver was about to call out hello, but then Mum paused by the family

portrait of the three of them, the one taken last year at the beach, and touched it with her fingertips. An unexpectedly melancholy expression crossed her face, so briefly that Silver might have imagined it.

‘Sorry I’m late!’ Mum called, straightening her spine. ‘Last-minute emergency with a runaway guinea pig . . .’

‘No apologies needed,’ said Dad, emerging from the kitchen. ‘I know guinea pigs come before husbands.’

The pair of them smiled at each other.

Then he paused. His face reddened. And . . .

‘ACHOO!’

The sneeze was so loud, the walls rattled. With a beetroot face, he pointed a paintbrush accusingly at Mum’s pale blue scrubs. She always took her work clothes off at the back door and, as she looked down at herself, she seemed surprised she was still wearing them.

He pinched his nose to stop a second, even more violent, incoming sneeze. But it exploded out of him like a volcano.


‘You’re . . . still . . . wearing . . . your . . . scrubs!’

This used to be a joke between them – how the art student allergic to fur somehow fell in love with the ambitious vet.

As Dad sneezed for the third time, his hands, and by consequence his paintbrush, took on a life of their own. The paintbrush flicked this way and that, spraying obsidian paint everywhere – up the walls, across the wooden flooring and even on the very tip of Mum’s nose.

Her tawny eyes narrowed to the shape of a beak. ‘Jack Trevelon,’ she snapped as she wiped the blob off her nose, ‘this is the last thing I need today. The absolute last thing.’

Silver’s heart sank. Once upon a time, Mum would have laughed and then she would have rolled her eyes – in the same way you’d roll your eyes at a misbehaving puppy. They might even have kissed (yuk) and, though it was sometimes embarrassing, Silver would have much preferred it to the horrible tenseness that now filled



their house. The tenseness that made her feel like she was stepping on eggshells the entire time.

She looked down at the letter in her hands. The turtle gazed back up at her. Then she guiltily replaced the envelope under the tube of gold paint and scurried upstairs.