



The
Ruby Float

——
A Tale of Hope

Read-Along
Storybook For Audio

as told in Episodes by Daph & Josh

Rick Nau

Illustrated By Sukwan Myers

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THE RUBY FLOAT

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by

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Dancing Pen Books

Dedication

For Bettina, The Love Of My Life.

Welcome



Daph: Hello Ladies and Gentlemen. Our names are Daph and Josh. Some of you may already know us from our great grandfather's stories, *The Ruby Float* and *Theodora's Children*. If you haven't read them yet, you'll find them at the [Dancing Pen Books website](#).

Josh: Today we're inviting you to hear our live presentation of *The Ruby Float*. It's split into lots of exciting episodes, so you can tune in whenever you'd like. Just close your eyes and imagine you're sitting with us by the lake under the big willow at Shady Point. Listen to the wind rustling through the leaves and to the short poem that introduces our story.

Daph: A boy and girl went to the sea—

Josh: In deep and dark despair—

Daph: When something dancing on the waves—

Josh: Sent sparkles through the air.

Daph: They plucked it from the water's edge—

Josh: A sphere of deepest red—

Daph: And found within amazing words—

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Josh: That chased away their dread.

Daph: So come with them as they do raft—

Josh: Across the bounding main—

Daph: In search of One who promises—

Josh: To heal them of their pain.

Daph: Now, on with the show!

Josh: Your friends —

Daph: Daph —

Josh: And Josh

Episode One
Dreams Of A Raft



Daph: Hello L & G.

Josh: L & G is short for Ladies and Gentlemen.

Daph: They know that, Josh.

Josh: I don't think they do.

Daph: Jesse told us that if we want to tell the story we can't argue.

Josh: I'm not arguing.

Daph: You are too.

Josh: No, I'm not.

Daph: What are you doing, then?

Josh: I'm responding to you.

Daph: What about the people who are listening?

Josh: Oh, I forgot.

Daph: So let's start. The story we are telling is called *The Tale Of The Ruby Float*.

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Josh: Daph and I will tell it together.

Daph: Yes, we have Jesse's permission. He's the one who first told us the story. He's our great grandfather.

Josh: Though it doesn't begin with Once Upon A Time, we will begin it that way.

Daph: Once Upon A Time, in a land far across the sea, there lived a boy and a girl.

Josh: The boy's name was Nathaniel, though he liked to be called Nate.

Daph: The girl's name was Samantha, but she always went by Sam.

Josh: The time was long ago, before cars and electric lights and cappuccino drinks.

Daph: It was not super long ago, however, for there were sailing ships and flashlights and bicycles.

Josh: Yes, Sam and Nate both had bicycles, as did everyone in the town where they lived.

Daph: Sam and Nate liked to ride around a lot, especially to the harbor and to the chocolate shop.

Josh: Sam especially liked white chocolate.

Daph: And Nate liked kippers, which are little salty fish that come in cans.

Josh: He didn't get those at the chocolate shop, obviously.

Daph: No, he got them at a little store in the harbor.

Josh: Some days they'd ride all over the town.

Daph: Everywhere they looked there was a house or a building that their grandpa had built.

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Josh: His name is Hank, which is short for Henry.

Daph: Like our great grandpa, that's Jesse, he loved his grandkids very much and told them lots of stories.

Josh: Every Sunday he'd take them to the beach and tell them a story.

Daph: Yes, they had a special place on the beach and a special umbrella and a special blanket.

Josh: "Tell us about the raft," they would ask every time.

Daph: "Oh, yes, the raft," he would answer.

Josh: "And when we're going to build it."

Daph: It was a terrific raft.

Josh: One that could sail across the entire ocean.

Daph: They were going to take lots of great food along.

Josh: Like chocolate and kippers and smelly cheeses.

Daph: Sam was going to bring her stuffed monkey.

Josh: And when they were out on the open sea, they'd catch lots of fish.

Daph: Then they'd cook them on a charcoal grill and drink hot chocolate.

Josh: Then they'd sail into all the ports of the world and learn new customs.

Daph: And taste all kinds of new foods.

Josh: And learn different languages.

Daph: It was very exciting, so exciting that I'd like to go along myself.

Josh: Me, too.

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Daph: And while Hank was telling the story, they'd have a gigantic picnic.

Josh: With fried chicken and lemonade and pink potato salad.

Daph: Then they'd go beachcombing and find wonderful things.

Josh: Like the jawbone of a whale.

Daph: Or beautiful seashells. Sam loved them and had a most beautiful collection.

Josh: Nate was always on the lookout for fishermen's floats, the glass balls that hold up the fishing nets.

Daph: Yes, they keep the fishing nets floating in the water. They are usually green or purple.

Josh: So if they're a different color, it's very unusual.

Daph: Hey, don't give the story away!

Josh: But it's called *The Ruby Float*!

Daph: Josh!

Josh: Okay. Let's talk about the logs then.

Daph: Thank you. To build a raft you need logs.

Josh: And not any old logs, but special logs that don't get waterlogged.

Daph: Because if they do, you'll sink, right in the middle of the ocean.

Josh: That would be bad.

Daph: Very bad.

Josh: Their grandpa told them about the trees he would use to make the logs.

Daph: They grew somewhere in the forest, high in the hills above the beach—

Josh: And in other hard-to-find places.

Daph: One day he'd show them the trees, but not until they were ready to begin construction.

Josh: They'd start by lashing all of the logs together with heavy ropes.

Daph: Then they'd put everything on top of them.

Josh: Like the cabin and the sail and the safety railing.

Daph: And the rudder, too, so that they can steer it.

Josh: It had to be extremely well built.

Daph: Very extremely.

Josh: Fortunately, their grandpa was an excellent builder.

Daph: He built the town library and the school and even Nate and Sam's home.

Josh: It was a most beautiful home, a wonderful home near the sea-shore.

Daph: I would very much like to see their home, if only I could.

Josh: It was built of beautiful finished pine—

Daph: With polished wooden floors and glorious windows and skylights that looked like the ones in boats.

Josh: I don't remember that part.

Daph: I'm elaborating. That means I'm filling in some of the missing details.

Josh: Is that okay with Jesse?

Daph: Of course it is. You can elaborate too, if you'd like.

Josh: Then I am now going to elaborate us to the breakfast table of Nate and Sam's home.

Daph: Great! That's where our story really begins.

Josh: The day is Sunday, the day their grandpa will have breakfast with them and take them to the beach.

Daph: It is a most beautiful day, one of the most beautiful of the year.

Josh: Eggs are frying and bacon is popping in the frying pan and orange juice is gurgling into bright, shiny glasses.

Daph: Nate and Sam pull on their sleepy clothes, comb their hair, brush their teeth—

Josh: And scramble into the kitchen faster than scrambled eggs.

Daph: Which are the fastest eggs of all.

Josh: But when they sit down at the table they know immediately that something is wrong.

Daph: Something is very wrong, which has nothing to do with the bacon and the eggs and the orange juice and the toast.

Josh: But it does have everything to do with the table being set for four.

Daph: Because on Sundays it is always set for five, number five being their grandpa.

Josh: Did we say that his name was Hank?

Daph: Yes, we did. To continue, Nate and Sam's parents were acting very strange that morning.

Josh: Yes, they were wearing inscrutable expressions on their faces.

Daph: What's inscrutable?

Josh: Inscrutable? It means they couldn't figure out what their parents were thinking.

Daph: Whatever the word, it had to be bad, because Hank had never

missed a Sunday with his grandchildren.

Josh: It's funny that no words were spoken.

Daph: That's right. Not a single, solitary word.

Josh: There was only silence.

Daph: Yes, dead silence.

Josh: And then the screen door slammed shut.

Daph: Meaning that Nate and Sam flew through it so fast that it didn't have time to close twice.

Josh: That's very fast.

Daph: Really fast. And they stayed going fast all the way to their grandparents' house.

Josh: They made it in record time.

Daph: Yes, even someone on a pogo stick couldn't have beaten them.

Josh: And when they got there—

Daph: What did they find?

Josh: We'll find out next time in—

Daph: Why Hank Didn't Come To Breakfast—

Josh: The next exciting episode of *The Tale Of The Ruby Float*.

Daph: Episode?

Josh: Yes, I think we should tell our story in episodes.

Daph: Grandpa didn't do that.

Josh: Yes, but the book company did. That's the way books work.

Daph: But this isn't a book.

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Josh: I still think we should have episodes. Then we can take breaks in-between.

Daph: To do what?

Josh: Practice for the next episode.

Daph: What should we call this one?

Josh: Dreams Of A Raft.

Daph: But we never introduced it.

Josh: Go ahead. Do the introduction.

Daph: Really?

Josh: Really.

Daph: Ladies and Gentlemen, this concludes Dreams Of A Raft, the first exciting episode of *The Tale Of The Ruby Float*.

Josh: That was great!

Daph: Thank you. I think I like episodes.

Josh: Well, that's it for now, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Daph: See you next time.

Episode Two

Why Hank Didn't Come To Breakfast



Daph: Hello Ladies and Gentlemen. Welcome to the second exciting episode of *The Tale Of The Ruby Float*.

Josh: It's called Why Hank Didn't Come To Breakfast.

Daph: Jesse started that part of the story by saying "something didn't happen."

Josh: Our story is a little different, however.

Daph: Yes, we put some of the breakfast material into the first episode—

Nate: Which we called Dreams Of A Raft.

Daph: We also took something out.

Josh: It was the part about something that was missing from the town.

Daph: It was something very important, something that a town can't survive without—

Josh: Something that hung over it like a dark cloud.

Daph: We'd tell you what it is, but Jesse told us that we've got to keep you in suspense.

Josh: In the meantime, let's find out the answer to Nate and Sam's question—

Daph: Why didn't their grandpa come to breakfast?

Josh: As we rejoin them, they've just finished running all the way to his house.

Daph: And there he is, sitting in his favorite swinging chair on the front porch.

Josh: They sit down next to him, but he hardly notices. It's like they're invisible.

Daph: "Grandpa?" asks Sam. "Are you all right?"

Josh: "It's us, Nate and Sam," says Nate.

Daph: But their grandfather doesn't say a word.

Josh: He just sits there, like a statue.

Daph: "Today's our day to go to the beach," says Sam. "Have you forgotten?"

Josh: "We waited for you, but you didn't come."

Daph: Sam tugs on her grandpa's arm, but he doesn't respond. Why in the world is he ignoring them?

Josh: "Let's go," says Nate, getting up out of the swing. "He's getting tired of us, that's all."

Daph: "That's not true," says Sam. "Something's wrong."

Nate: "Well, if something is, he's sure not telling us."

Daph: Yes, something was wrong.

Josh: Seriously wrong.

Daph: And it had to do with their grandmother.

Josh: Her name is Harriet, which is a name nobody has today.

Daph: I think it's a lovely name.

Josh: Though it's kind of old-fashioned.

Daph: Even so, Hank thought it was the most lovely name in the world—

Josh: And that Harriet was the most beautiful women in the world.

Daph: She was extremely beautiful.

Josh: And Hank loved her like no one has ever loved a woman before.

Daph: When he saw her the very first time, she was wearing a long, flowing white dress, not blue jeans or pajamas.

Josh: No one could keep him from instantly falling in love with her, not even the fire chief or the police chief or the mayor or anyone else.

Daph: And no one could keep her from falling in love with him.

Josh: Because for both of them, it was—

Daph: Love at first sight.

Josh: It was very mushy.

Daph: But very true.

Josh: Hank could scarcely believe what had happened.

Daph: How could someone so beautiful be in love with him?

Josh: What's more, how could anyone at all be in love with him?

Daph: When he was growing up, no one seemed to love him.

Josh: Not his brothers or his sisters—

Daph: Nor his schoolmates or his neighbors—

Josh: Not even his parents.

Daph: Instead of getting love, he got work.

Josh: Whenever he wasn't going to school, he was working.

Daph: He sold newspapers and made wires and pulled weeds out of big fields.

Josh: He fixed boats and painted fences and planted trees.

Daph: He washed dishes and mopped floors and made soup.

Josh: He was hoping that if he worked very hard, his mom and dad would love him.

Daph: But whatever he did, it didn't seem to make any difference.

Josh: Even so, Hank never gave up.

Daph: He hoped and hoped and hoped that someone he loved would love him back.

Josh: And when that suddenly happened, he became the happiest person on earth.

Daph: It didn't take him long to ask Harriet the big question.

Josh: Two weeks.

Daph: Yes, only two weeks.

Josh: Everyone told him he should wait.

Daph: But Hank wasn't about to. He knew true love when he saw it.

Josh: "Will you marry me?" he asked the girl of his dreams.

Daph: "Yes," answered Harriet.

Josh: That was fifty-two years ago.

Daph: But today—

Josh: Something's happened.

Daph: Something so bad that Hank can't talk about it.

Josh: Especially not to his grandchildren.

Daph: What is it? Have they had a fight?

Josh: Has Harriet left him?

Daph: Has she found someone else?

Josh: We'll find out next time in the next exciting episode of—

Daph: What do you mean? This is the episode where we find out.

Josh: We don't have to find out exactly. In the interest of suspense, I say we wait.

Daph: I guess we could—in the interest of suspense.

Josh: Then let's keep going.

Daph: That's it for now, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Josh: Be sure to join us again next time for—

Daph: A Time Of Sadness—

Josh: The next exciting episode in—

Daph: *The Tale Of The Ruby Float!*

Josh: See you then.

Episode Three
A Time Of Sadness



Josh: Hello everyone. Sorry about the little disagreement between Daph and me.

Daph: We've made up.

Josh: Yes, we have.

Daph: And we're ready to begin the next episode.

Josh: The title is—

Daph: A Time Of Sadness.

Josh: In the last exciting episode of *The Tale Of The Ruby Float* we discovered that Harriet was very, very sick.

Daph: It was her heart.

Josh: It was slowly giving out. The doctor told Hank that it was only a matter of time, though how much time he wasn't sure.

Daph: Hank took it worse than Harriet.

Josh: Jesse said that Hank was devastated.

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Daph: It's like you are hit by a tornado and everything is suddenly gone.

Josh: Of course, Harriet wasn't gone yet. It was just the idea that she would soon be gone.

Daph: Hank couldn't get it out of his head. He'd always imagined he'd be with Harriet forever.

Josh: It was impossible for him to imagine anything else.

Daph: Yes, if you took Harriet out of his life, nothing would be left.

Josh: Only Hank didn't say any of this.

Daph: You could only tell from his demeanor.

Josh: Demeanor?

Daph: He looked very sad. Even when he smiled he was sad.

Josh: This also made Nate and Sam very sad.

Daph: Yes, it turned their whole world upside down.

Josh: It was Nate who first thought about doing something.

Daph: His idea was to hope his grandmother into getting better.

Josh: He thought that if he could get everyone to hope for the best, the best would happen.

Daph: For a while it seemed to work. Hank got happier and so did Harriet.

Josh: But this was only an illusion.

Daph: It was like a mirage. It looks like something good, but it really isn't.

Josh: Then Sam told Nate that the happier Hank seemed to be, the sadder he was.

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Daph: She thought that the worst thing Nate could do was to give Hank and Harriet false hope.

Josh: Usually such criticism made Nate very mad.

Daph: This time it didn't. He just listened.

Josh: What Sam was saying wasn't that there was no hope—

Daph: Only that it was wrong to think that hope in hope would do any good.

Josh: The thought of this made Nate very depressed.

Daph: He couldn't sleep a wink. All night long he would lie in bed, wide awake.

Josh: Sometimes he would slip out of the house at night and go to the beach and sit alone on the sand.

Daph: As the waves crashed on the shore he would think about all that was happening.

Josh: It made him feel very alone.

Daph: That's right. That was just the way his grandfather felt as a boy.

Josh: That was before he met Harriet, before he had anyone who loved him.

Daph: Though he didn't know it, he was longing for the same thing as Hank.

Josh: Actually, he was longing for something much more than the same thing.

Daph: He was?

Josh: Remember? It was for a love so great that it would bring joy and happiness to everyone, no matter what.

Daph: That's right. No matter what.

Josh: One that could overcome even sickness and death.

Daph: I don't remember that.

Josh: I'm elaborating. You said that was okay. Anyway, you remember what Jesse said.

Daph: Yes, I do. He said that because Nate was just a young boy, he wasn't able to find the same words that we can.

Josh: That's right. It was like another language which he didn't learn till he got older.

Daph: I want to learn another language when I get older.

Josh: Let's stick to the subject.

Daph: It is the subject. I don't know another language, so I'm like Nate.

Josh: Then I am, too.

Daph: That's right. And so are lots of people who are listening to us.

Josh: I guess so.

Daph: And so was Sam, though she didn't know it yet. Not until—

Josh: Not until she saw Nate slipping out the window one night.

Daph: The first thing she thought was, "I'm going to tell Mom and Dad."

Josh: She went straight to their bedroom and put her hand on the doorknob.

Daph: Then she stopped. She was curious—like a cat.

Josh: So she slipped out the window herself and followed Nate.

Daph: It was pitch black outside.

Josh: Not a soul was to be seen, not even a cat.

Daph: Then Nate entered the woods.

Josh: Sam followed after him.

Daph: Now it was beyond pitch black.

Josh: She didn't have her shoes on and stubbed her big toe.

Daph: She had to keep from shouting, otherwise Nate would hear.

Josh: Her mind suddenly filled with visions of hideous monsters.

Daph: They were going to leap out at her and eat her up.

Josh: Now you're the one elaborating.

Daph: I know. It's fun to elaborate.

Josh: Nevertheless, she kept on going forward.

Daph: She had lots of courage, a lot bigger than being afraid or curious.

Josh: It was very big. If it hadn't been, this whole story might not have happened.

Daph: Which were Jesse's exact words.

Josh: No, they weren't. He said the story would have turned out differently.

Daph: That's right. And that would be a different story, which wouldn't be this story.

Josh: Okay, I give up.

Daph: Which is just what Sam didn't do. She kept on going until she saw Nate sitting on the beach.

Josh: He was staring off toward the sea like he was in another world.

Daph: "Nathaniel!" Sam hollered. "Whatever are you doing here?"

Josh: Nate jumped a foot off the sand, straight into the air.

Daph: Yes, he was very scared.

Josh: “What are you doing following me?” he asked.

Daph: “To find out where you are going. Why else would I follow you?”

Josh: “Well, go home,” he said. “I want to be alone.”

Daph: Samantha would do no such thing, not after what she’d been through.

Josh: So she sat down on the sand beside Nate.

Daph: “I’m not going anywhere until you tell.”

Josh: “I told you. I want to be alone.”

Daph: Nate stood up, walked twelve steps to the right, and sat back down.

Josh: Then Sam did the same thing.

Daph: So Nate stood up again and went another twelve steps.

Josh: Then Sam did the same thing again.

Daph: They did this over and over again, until Nate finally gave up.

Josh: “Don’t make me crazy,” he said.

Daph: Sam was so happy to have won that she kept her mouth shut.

Josh: As she looked around she noticed how beautiful everything appeared.

Daph: The sea and the little grains of sand were sparkling in the moonlight.

Josh: Way above the stars were twinkling in the heavens.

Daph: "It's so glorious," she said.

Josh: She didn't notice that Nate's cheeks were also glistening, something which cheeks don't do unless they're wet.

Daph: Instead, she saw something small and round dancing on the waves.

Josh: Now and then it reflected a flash of moonlight to her eyes.

Daph: "Look there," she said. "In the water."

Josh: Nate saw it, too, a small, sparkling object floating not far from shore.

Daph: Sam ran to the edge of the water and waited.

Josh: When a small wave carried it forward, she snatched it up with her hand.

Daph: "It's a fisherman's float!" she hollered.

Josh: Nate didn't answer. He was so down and out that he'd lost interest in everything, even his favorite things.

Daph: He used to like school, which I think is unusual.

Josh: You're elaborating again.

Daph: No, I'm not. I'm making a comment.

Josh: Well, keep it to yourself. We're not telling our own story.

Daph: If you listen to a story, you're part of it. If someone says they like potatoes and you don't, it's okay to say so.

Josh: Nate liked mashed potatoes.

Daph: So do I. But he doesn't like them anymore, now that he's so sad.

Josh: What about the gravy?

Daph: He really liked gravy. But not anymore.

Josh: He also liked swimming in the sea and diving down to see what was under the rocks.

Daph: Only he didn't care about any of these things anymore.

Josh: Not even adventure stories, which he liked very, very much.

Daph: Yes, he liked them very much. But now all of his dreams were gone.

Josh: He could only think of now, and now was very bad.

Daph: Meanwhile, while we were telling you about Nate being sad, Sam came back with the float.

Josh: This time she saw that his eyes were sparkling in the moonlight, just like the water.

Daph: Yes, because there was also water in his eyes.

Josh: Meaning that he was crying.

Daph: Sam had never seen her brother crying like this before.

Josh: She had seen him cry when their parents punished him, but this was different.

Daph: It was so different that it made Sam's heart melt inside.

Josh: Suddenly, she was also very sad.

Daph: She rushed to Nate and hugged him as hard as she could.

Josh: Then she also started to cry.

Daph: So there they were, crying like mad on the beach in the middle of the night.

Josh: And all because they loved their grandfather and grandmother with all their heart and soul—

Daph: And could do nothing to help them out of their hopeless predicament.

Josh: And that's the end of this episode.

Daph: We hope you can come back for the next one, which is called—

Josh: The Silhouette.

Daph: That's it for now.

Josh: Almost. One question. How did you know the word “predicament?”

Daph: Because everyone in our story is in one, that's why.

Josh: But how did you know what it means?

Daph: Do you know what it means?

Josh: It means a bad situation.

Daph: That's why I said it. They're in a bad situation, which is a predicament. Otherwise, it wouldn't be.

Josh: Then you're not going to tell me?

Daph: Tell you what?

Josh: How you know the word?

Daph: I'd tell you, but then I'd be breaking the storyteller's rule.

Josh: What rule is that?

Daph: Have you already forgotten? You've got to leave your listeners in suspense.

Episode Four

The Silhouette



Daph: Hello Everyone. Welcome to the 4th exciting episode of *The Tale Of The Ruby Float*.

Josh: It's called The Silhouette.

Daph: Which is a funny sounding word, just like predicament.

Josh: That's right. You told us last time that you'd tell us how you know the word.

Daph: Some words you just know, like silhouette.

Josh: That's not an answer.

Daph: It's an excellent answer. I'm sure you know lots of words and don't know how you know them.

Josh: I guess so.

Daph: Like silhouette.

Josh: Okay. You win.

Daph: Then I get to start the episode. It starts on the morning after the last episode.

Josh: If you remember, Nate and Sam were at the beach.

Daph: It was at night and very dark.

Josh: Sam found a fisherman's float.

Daph: But Nate was so sad that he didn't care.

Josh: Even though he collected fishermen's floats.

Daph: And even though this one was a very special color.

Josh: All of Nate's floats were green or purple or yellow.

Daph: This one, however, was a very deep red color.

Josh: It was so deep red that it looked black.

Daph: Unless you held it up to the light.

Josh: Which is what Sam was doing the next morning.

Daph: She was lying in bed, playing with the float.

Josh: It was very light, like an empty chicken's egg.

Daph: And smooth, too, not at all like the bigger floats that Nate had.

Josh: But most of all, Sam loved its ruby-red color.

Daph: Which looked more and more wonderful as the morning sun got brighter.

Josh: Then, out of nowhere, she got the shock of her life.

Daph: It wasn't out of nowhere, it was from somewhere

Josh: Okay, it was from somewhere. And that somewhere was inside the float.

Daph: "Oh my," she said out loud. "What is this?"

Josh: Like a streak of light, she shot into Nate's bedroom. She made so much racket, she scared him half to death.

Daph: “Nate! Nate!” she yelled. “Wake up! Wake up! Something’s inside the float!”



Josh: When Nate opened his eyes the float was hovering over his nose. It looked like a small, black egg.

Daph: “Come outside,” said Sam. “You can’t see anything in here.”

Josh: She pulled so hard on Nate’s arm that it almost came off.

Daph: When they got to the garden it was very bright.

Josh: “I don’t see a thing,” said Nate, looking down at the float.

Daph: “You’ve got to hold it up to the light.”

Josh: Nate held the float between his eyes and the sun.

Daph: Inside he saw something shaped like a square.

Josh: “You’re right,” said Nate, waving the float around in the light. “It looks like a piece of paper.”

Daph: “Let me see!” said Sam. She was very proud of her discovery.

Josh: “Wait,” snapped Nate, still looking into the float. “I see writing.”

Daph: He moved the float every which way, trying to get a better look at what was inside.

Josh: “I can’t make out the words. We’ll have to break the float.”

Daph: Sam grabbed back the float. “Don’t you dare. It’s too beautiful to break. And it’s mine.”

Josh: “But it might be something important, a message or something.”

Daph: “I don’t care. I found it and you didn’t want it, so that makes it mine.”

Josh: Nate’s normal self would have started arguing at this point.

Daph: He would have explained just why the float had to be broken right way.

Josh: He’d read plenty of adventure stories where messages were stuffed into bottles.

Daph: Most of the time the people were in great trouble and needed rescuing.

Josh: They had no other way of calling for help.

Daph: So they tossed their bottles into the water and prayed for the best.

Josh: Only Nate didn't say any of this because he wasn't his normal self.

Daph: Since he was so sad, he gave up without a fight.

Josh: "Have it your way," he said, walking back to his room. "I don't care about anything."

Daph: Sam was shocked. Everything around her, including the buzzing of the bees, went silent.

Josh: She was taking a look into her own heart.

Daph: It looked to her like one of Nate's fishing floats.

Josh: Yes, it was pretty big, but it was empty inside.

Daph: This scared her plenty, so she ran back to Nate's bedroom.

Josh: He was lying in bed again, staring at the ceiling.

Daph: "Let's break it open," she said, all out of breath.

Josh: Nate didn't move a muscle. Was he playing dead?

Daph: "Nate?" said Samantha. Her voice sounded so unhappy it was heartbreaking.

Josh: Nate didn't answer. He was barely moving.

Daph: "Please don't be mad with me," begged Sam. "I'm ever so sorry. The float's so beautiful, but you can break it open anyway. Please do."

Josh: Nate moved his lips a little bit, but Sam hardly noticed.

Daph: She decided on the spot that there was only one way to show Nate she was sincere.

Josh: She lifted the float over her head and threw it at the floor.

Daph: It was going really fast, fast enough to break into a million pieces.

Josh: Which is what would have happened if Nate hadn't been fast enough.

Daph: Quick as a flash, he jumped from the bed and caught the float in midair.

Josh: "I've got an idea," he said.

Daph: Nate was not the kind of person who gives up without a fight.

Josh: Jesse called him tenacious, which means he was like a bulldog.

Daph: "It's all right," said Sam. "You can break it. Someone might be in trouble. We've got to hurry."

Josh: "I don't think this is a hurrying kind of message," said Nate.

Daph: "But why?"

Josh: "Look at the float. How long do you think it took to make it?"

Daph: "I don't know."

Josh: "A long time. You need glassblowing equipment and pigments and lots of other things."

Daph: "But it could still be urgent."

Josh: "If that was true they'd just stuff a note in a bottle and throw it in the water."

Daph: "Then what kind of a message could it be?"

Josh: "Something very important. Something we can't even imagine."

Daph: "Oh, my!" shouted Sam. "Let's do break it open. I can't wait to find out what it says."

Josh: And that's it, Ladies and Gentlemen of all ages and sizes.

The Ruby Float · Episode 4 · The Silhouette

Daph: The end of Episode 4.

Josh: See you later for the next exciting episode of *The Tale Of The Ruby Float*.

Daph: Which we are calling—

Josh: A Message Of Hope

Episode Five
A Message Of Hope



Daph: Tah tah tah tah!

Josh: What's that?

Daph: I'm making music. Wouldn't it be fun if we had some?

Josh: But we don't.

Daph: But wouldn't it be great, anyway?

Josh: It would be great if we had a lot of other things—like costumes.

Daph: What would we wear?

Josh: I don't know. We have to figure out what Nate and Sam are wearing.

Daph: Didn't Jesse ever say?

Josh: I don't think so.

Daph: Maybe Sam is wearing a raincoat.

Josh: Why a raincoat?

Daph: Because it's going to rain?

Josh: It is?

Daph: Have you forgotten already. There is thunder and lightning and it's very dark.

Josh: Very dark!

Daph: Which brings us to Episode 5 of *The Tale Of The Ruby Float*.

Josh: It's called A Message Of Hope.

Daph: In our last episode, Nate and Sam found a ruby float with a message inside.

Josh: Now, in the dead of night, they've taken it to the beach to read it.

Daph: Sam is holding it in her hands while Nate shines a light on it.

Josh: "Steady," Nate whispered.

Daph: "What do you see?" Sam asked.

Josh: "Hold still. I can't see a thing with you wiggling around."

Daph: Sam held her breath. It's easier to hold still when you don't breathe.

Josh: "Good," said Nate.

Daph: "But it's too dark here. You won't be able to see."

Josh: "Yes, I will. Lit up things stand out better in the dark. Now hold still."

Daph: "I am holding still."

Josh: "There. I can see them."

Daph: "What? What do you see?"

Josh: "What else? Words."

Daph: Sam was very, very excited. “What do they say?” she asked.

Josh: “I said to hold still,” Nate answered, reaching for the pencil and paper in his back pocket.

Daph: “Nathaniel! Please tell me what they say. It’s making me crazy!”

Josh: “Let me write them down first. Then I’ll tell you.”

Daph: It took Nate less than a minute to finish writing, though to Sam it seemed like a million years.

Josh: Then Nate repeated the words to her.

Daph: Though it was pitch dark, it was like a bright light had suddenly been turned on.

Josh: How could so few words be so strange and powerful?

Daph: “Read them again,” said Sam.

Josh: They were so overcome that they didn’t notice what was happening around them.

Daph: A giant storm was beginning. There was thunder and lightning and wind.

Josh: The booming of the thunder got louder and louder.

Daph: Then it started to rain so hard that it was like being under a waterfall.

Josh: Sam and Nate dove for shelter under a small boat that was turned upside down on the beach.

Daph: They huddled together under the hull and read the words in the float again and again.

Josh: “I am the Alpha and Omega—

Daph: “The First and the Last—

Josh: “The Beginning and the End—

The Ruby Float · Episode 5 · A Message Of Hope

Daph: “The Resurrection and the Life—

Josh: “Whosoever believes in me, though he were dead—

Daph: “Yet shall he live—

Josh: “And whosoever lives and believes in me—

Daph: “Shall never die.”



Josh: And with these final words, Ladies and Gentlemen of all ages—

Daph: We turn the lights out on Episode 5.

The Ruby Float · Episode 5 · A Message Of Hope

Josh: And though it is now very dark—

Daph: There is something glimmering in the darkness.

Episode Six
Nate's Plan



Daph: Hello Ladies and Gentlemen. Welcome to Episode 6 of *The Tale Of The Ruby Float*.

Josh: This Episode is called Nate's Plan.

Daph: At the start of our last episode, we talked about wearing costumes.

Josh: Just so you know, we decided against it.

Daph: They're not in our budget.

Josh: That's because we forgot to make a budget.

Daph: Yes, our grandfather says that a budget is very important. You don't want to run out of it.

Josh: You don't run out of a budget.

Daph: Yes, you do.

Josh: No, you don't. You run out of money. Money is the thing in a budget.

Daph: But we don't have any money.

The Ruby Float · Episode 6 · Nate's Plan

Josh: I know. That's why we're not getting costumes.

Daph: That's all right. We can just imagine them. That's much cheaper.

Josh: We better get on with the episode.

Daph: You want me to start?

Josh: Yes, you start.

Daph: Okay. I'll start with what Grandpa said. He said that a brother and sister can be very strong together.

Josh: When they're united.

Daph: That's right. And the message in the float had united them, just like the United States.

Josh: They talked a lot about the message and their grandmother's illness.

Daph: She was getting sicker and sicker.

Josh: And Hank was getting sadder and sadder.

Daph: No matter what Nate and Sam said to them, it didn't help.

Josh: They didn't mention the message in the ruby float, however.

Daph: That was because they didn't know enough about it.

Josh: They needed to talk to the person who had written it.

Daph: They needed to know if the promise was true.

Josh: Which meant they had to figure out where the float had come from.

Daph: "But how will we do that?" asked Sam.

Josh: Nate wasn't sure, but he was determined to find an answer.

The Ruby Float · Episode 6 · Nate's Plan

Daph: He spent lots of time at the beach, staring at the horizon.

Josh: He was certain that the float had come somewhere from the east.

Daph: Are you sure it wasn't west?

Josh: The land is to the west. It has to be east.

Daph: I don't think that Grandpa said that.

Josh: I thought we agreed that it's our story.

Daph: Yes, but we didn't agree on east.

Josh: It doesn't matter whether we agree or not, the float came from the east.

Daph: I don't think we should argue about this.

Josh: I'm not arguing.

Daph: We need to be united, like Sam and Nate. That's what Grandpa said.

Josh: Okay, then where did the float come from?

Daph: From over the horizon.

Josh: Which horizon?

Daph: That one.

Josh: You're pointing to the east.

Daph: I am?

Josh: That's east. The sun comes up in the east.

Daph: It is early, isn't it?

Josh: Yes, but it's getting late. So let's keep going.

Daph: Okay, let's talk about the raft.

The Ruby Float · Episode 6 · Nate's Plan

Josh: Good idea. We haven't talked about it since the first episode.

Daph: Now it's back, especially in Nate's mind.

Josh: He can see it, clear as a bell, sailing toward the eastern horizon.

Daph: He didn't tell Sam, though.

Josh: No. He decided to work everything out first.

Daph: He made a lot of visits to his grandparents' home.

Josh: While he was there, he picked Hank's mind.

Daph: He wanted to learn more about how to use that funny grey thing.

Josh: What's that?

Daph: You look at the sun with it.

Josh: The sextant.

Daph: And lots of maps.

Josh: Nautical charts.

Daph: And how to get through storms and keep things from falling overboard.

Josh: You mean how to stow things.

Daph: And how to make a thing that gets drinking water out of the air.

Josh: And how to dry fish and crabs and shrimp and flying fish.

Daph: And how to do a thousand other things.

Josh: Hank never suspected the real reason why Nate was asking holes in his head.

Daph: He thought Nate was trying to take his mind off being so sad

about his wife.

Josh: Nate secretly worked on his plan for many weeks.

Daph: Finally, when he thought everything was ready, he decided to tell Sam.

Josh: "But only on one condition," he said.

Daph: "What's that?"

Josh: "You've got to agree to honor conditions of absolute secrecy."

Daph: "Of course I will," she promised. "Now do tell me the plan. I hate being in suspense."

Josh: Nate became very nervous at this point.

Daph: He knew that without Sam's support, his plan would never work.

Josh: To convince her, he showed her lots of maps and charts and tables.

Daph: And also lots of equipment.

Josh: An adult might have found the presentation very impressive.

Daph: Not Sam. She didn't know what Nate was talking about.

Josh: Nevertheless, she had learned in the past months to be patient.

Daph: That's why she patiently waited for Nate to get to the point.

Josh: "I think the float came from here," he said.

Daph: He pointed to a tiny brown dot. All around it was a giant sea of blue.

Josh: "I want to build a raft and sail it there. I need your help."

Daph: That was a crazy idea.

Josh: No one of sound mind would ever consider doing such a thing.

Daph: Especially if they had no experience.

Josh: And especially if the dot was so small you could hardly see it on the map.

Daph: A million things could go wrong.

Josh: On the other hand, a lot of things could go right.

Daph: And what went wrong could be fixed.

Josh: That's what their grandpa said whenever he talked about building the raft.

Daph: He said to never give up.

Josh: Which meant, in this case, that there was a chance.

Daph: "What makes you think it came from there?" asked Sam.

Josh: She tapped her index finger on the tiny brown speck on the map.

Daph: Nate was ready for the question.

Josh: He was going to show her all his charts and all his arithmetic.

Daph: He had charts of currents and charts of wind and charts of weather.

Josh: He had tables full of math, tables so mysterious that even Hank couldn't understand them.

Daph: Tables full of things with T's and V's.

Josh: Like vectors and trigonometry.

Daph: But the tone of Sam's question told Nate that none of this would do to convince her.

Josh: He had to try something else.

Daph: Like things far beyond the T's and the V's.

Josh: "Instinct," he answered.

Daph: "Instinct?"

Josh: "Yes, instinct."

Daph: But Nate had only been partly correct in sizing up his sister.

Josh: Though Sam did not understand a thing about Nate's charts and tables and math—

Daph: She knew that they were very important.

Josh: Without seeing them, she would never have agreed to help.

Daph: Still, one other problem needed to be handled.

Josh: They would need to ask their parents for permission.

Daph: "Mom and Dad will never let us go," said Sam. "It's far too dangerous."

Josh: Nate disagreed. It was just as dangerous for adults.

Daph: Yes, danger wasn't the problem.

Josh: It was preparation.

Daph: If they super-prepared, then their mom and dad would certainly approve.

Josh: This would include first building a raft.

Daph: Secretly, of course. Otherwise, they might be stopped even before they could begin.

Josh: They would need Hank's help.

Daph: And he was certain to tell them all they needed to know, as long as he thought it was for make-believe purposes.

The Ruby Float · Episode 6 · Nate's Plan

Josh: When the raft was ready, they'd have to test it for seaworthiness.

Daph: Then, once they knew that everything worked perfectly, they would let their parents know.

Josh: They would ask for a formal meeting, of course—

Daph: Like the explorers do in adventure stories. They always meet with the people who give them money.

Josh: They would give their mom and dad overwhelming evidence of their abilities.

Daph: It would be impossible for them to say no.

Josh: Sam thought all of this over. Nate's plan sounded good.

Daph: And their grandparents' situation was getting worse every day.

Josh: It was a chance they'd have to take.

Daph: That very same night—

Josh: At the stroke of ten—

Daph: They pledged their dedication to the project.

Josh: They were on the beach at the place where Hank had always told them about the raft.

Daph: The moon was full and the stars were shining.

Josh: They agreed to work together as a team—

Daph: Keeping everything absolutely secret—

Josh: Until everything was ready.

Daph: And so, young Ladies and Gentlemen, this concludes Episode 6.

Josh: We look forward to seeing you soon for Episode 7.

The Ruby Float · Episode 6 · Nate's Plan

Daph: Which is called, quite naturally—

Josh: Nate and Samantha Build the Raft.

Episode Seven

Nate And Sam Build The Raft



Daph: Welcome, Everyone. We hope you brought lots of popcorn and soda to this episode.

Josh: Chocolate and hot dogs would also be very nice.

Daph: We, however, will not be munching.

Josh: No, we will be telling you the 7th exciting episode of *The Tale Of The Ruby Float*.

Daph: Which, if you remember, is called—

Josh: Nate And Samantha Build The Raft.

Daph: Shall I begin?

Josh: You may begin.

Daph: Thank you, Josh. Well, as we have said before, there are few forces more powerful than—

Josh: A brother and sister united in spirit.

Daph: Our grandpa says this a lot. That's why we remember.

The Ruby Float · Episode 7 · Nate And Sam Build The Raft

Josh: Nate and Sam were as united as anyone could ever be.

Daph: They went to work on the raft immediately.

Josh: They worked like beavers trying to stop a big river.

Daph: They worked day and night, bringing building things and supplies to the secret place.

Josh: Which was in a thick patch of trees near the beach.

Daph: It was close to a pond filled with saltwater.

Josh: Our grandpa called it a slough.

Daph: At high tide the water in the little pond would run into the ocean.

Josh: A little stream that flowed down from the hills above kept the slough full.

Daph: It was in these hills that their grandpa said the special trees grew.

Josh: By special, he meant special for making the very best rafts in the world.

Daph: Nate and Sam planned to cut down some of these trees, which were supposed to be very light.

Josh: First they'd float them down the stream to the slough.

Daph: Then they put them all together to make the raft.

Josh: Of course, the raft would have lots of other things besides logs.

Daph: We'll get into that later.

Josh: Then, when it was all done, they'd take a test voyage.

Daph: They'd have to do this at high tide so that they could sail straight into the ocean.

Josh: Otherwise they'd have to drag the raft over the sand.

Daph: Which would be impossible. It was much too heavy.

Josh: Then they'd sail back and do the hardest thing of all.

Daph: The big pow-wow with the parents.

Josh: And that, Ladies and Gentlemen, was the plan.

Daph: It was a very good plan.

Josh: In fact, everything went great for several months.

Daph: Sam collected tons of goodies, which our grandpa calls delectables.

Josh: She stashed them all in a big box hidden in the trees.

Daph: It was very hard for Sam not to eat any of these goodies.

Josh: They were of the very best kind that you can take on a long and dangerous journey.

Daph: Like white chocolate. It doesn't spoil and water won't hurt it.

Josh: These were Sam's exact words to Nate.

Daph: Nate's favorite was kippers. They are little salty fish that come in cans.

Josh: Yuck!

Daph: They were yucky all by themselves, but on crackers they were pretty good.

Josh: And nothing can hurt them. They can survive even better than white chocolate.

Daph: They took lots of other things, too.

Josh: They took butter cookies and hazelnuts and jars of orange blossom honey.

The Ruby Float · Episode 7 · Nate And Sam Build The Raft

Daph: They took tea and dried fruit and sweet pickles and ham with cloves.

Josh: They took baked beans and jars of red potato soup.

Daph: They took hickory smoked sausages and salted salmon and all kinds of cheeses.

Josh: There was cheddar cheese and blue cheese and butter cheese.

Daph: There was also a very smelly one that Nate liked to eat on dark bread.

Josh: As you can see, they had lots of things to survive on.

Daph: And Sam was very careful to store everything properly and at exactly the right time.

Josh: Timing was critical, for some of the food had to be stored last.

Daph: Otherwise, it might spoil.

Josh: This meant she had to know when the building of the raft would be complete.

Daph: This was Nate's department.

Josh: Like his grandpa, Nate was good at building things.

Daph: He'd built lots of models, especially ships and planes.

Josh: The kits always had parts and a scale drawing and assembly instructions.

Daph: But never any glue.

Josh: Of course, these were little models. This was full scale.

Daph: So glue wouldn't work. They'd have to use ropes and things.

Josh: That's right. Nate put that into the plan.

Daph: He made a drawing and everything.

The Ruby Float · Episode 7 · Nate And Sam Build The Raft

Josh: Just like the kits. It was very hard and took him quite a while.

Daph: Because he was very meticulous.

Josh: This means he was especially careful about all the details.

Daph: He even weighed nails and tested the floatiness of the wood.

Josh: He often worked at night under the covers of his bed—

Daph: With the flashlight on because it had to be kept secret.

Josh: The hull of the raft would be a platform of logs.

Daph: They'd tie them together with rope, because glue wouldn't work.

Josh: Then came the cabin and the other things that go on top.

Daph: I like the cabin especially.

Josh: Nate spent lots of time designing it.

Daph: It had to be built in just the right place; otherwise it might make the raft tip over.

Josh: And the design needed to be beautiful.

Daph: The rudder was also very important.

Josh: They needed it to steer the raft.

Daph: And the sail, too. That was very important.

Josh: Very important. The raft had to be fast because the island was so very far away.

Daph: "Oh, do let me make the sail," said Sam. "I'll be ever so careful."

Josh: "It must be very strong. And the sewing will be hard because canvas is so thick. I'll have to help."

The Ruby Float · Episode 7 · Nate And Sam Build The Raft

Daph: “Oh, yes,” said Sam. “And let’s do make it colorful, full of reds and yellows and oranges.”

Josh: “That would be wonderful,” said Nate.

Daph: You can see that Sam and Nate were making a great team.

Josh: They agreed on everything and never had any fights.

Daph: Like we sometimes do.

Josh: Those aren’t fights.

Daph: They are fights. That’s what they are.

Josh: Now you’re fighting.

Daph: I am not. I’m disagreeing.

Josh: Well I disagree, too.

Daph: Grandpa said that if Nate and Sam fought like us they’d have never gotten the raft built.

Josh: We don’t know that.

Daph: Grandpa does. He’s the one who knows the story best.

Josh: Well, this is our story now, isn’t it?

Daph: Yes, we said that before. I think it was in Episode 2.

Josh: And we want Nate and Sam to finish the raft, don’t we?

Daph: Oh yes, they’ve got to finish it. That’s very important. And very soon, too.

Josh: What about the logs?

Daph: What about them?

Josh: They haven’t gotten them yet.

Daph: Oh, yes, we have to say that Nate was worrying very much

about this.

Josh: That's right. And he didn't tell his sister because he didn't want to upset her.

Daph: He wasn't completely honest with her.

Josh: He had been looking high and low for those logs and he wasn't finding any.

Daph: No, he couldn't find a single one.

Josh: He was even more worried about this than having to talk to their parents.

Daph: That's really worried.

Josh: Their grandpa had told him many times about the logs and where they were located.

Daph: They came from a tree like the banjam tree.

Josh: Actually, it was a banyan.

Daph: The banjam is a very funny tree that looks like an octopus walking on his tiptoes.

Josh: Did Grandpa tell you that?

Daph: No, I just made it up.

Josh: It does kind of look like that.

Daph: It's got lots of skinny branches that hang down and touch the ground, like octopus legs.

Josh: But the legs are not curvy, like an octopus'.

Daph: They are straight as an arrow.

Josh: And very easy to cut.

Daph: But most important, they are as light as cork.

Josh: Making them very floaty, as Daph likes to put it.

Daph: Which means they would have no trouble carrying Nate and Sam and all of their stuff on their backs.

Josh: Their grandpa told them that the forest was overflowing with these wonderful trees.

Daph: They were everywhere.

Josh: All you had to do was find them.

Daph: It should have been easy.

Josh: But it wasn't.

Daph: Nate couldn't find them anywhere. He was in a panic.

Josh: All he could find were pines and cedars and oaks and maples.

Daph: But he never told Sam.

Josh: Nope. He never told her. Not until it seemed to be too late.

Daph: "Why have we stopped?" she asked.

Josh: She didn't know that Nate was scared out of his wits.

Daph: He was sure that he was going to ruin everyone's hopes, especially Sam's.

Josh: She had worked so hard and it was all for nothing.

Daph: Zippo. It was a total waste.

Josh: She was going to be furious.

Daph: She was going to say that he should have checked for the trees at the very first.

Josh: "No," he thought to himself. "I am not very smart, not even smart enough to be an older brother."

Daph: Sam noticed that Nate was looking terrible. “What is it, Nate?” she asked.

Josh: “There are no logs,” he confessed. He didn’t look at Sam. He was on the verge of crying.

Daph: “What do you mean?” she asked.

Josh: “The logs for the hull. I’ve looked everywhere. I can’t find them.”

Daph: Nate got ready for the explosion. He knew that he deserved it.

Josh: Whatever Sam said, he would say nothing in his own defense.

Daph: “Where did you look?” she asked.

Josh: “Where Grandpa said they were. I even triple-checked by asking him again and again.”

Daph: We should tell you that this was all happening at the secret building site.

Josh: Nate was sitting on the ground.

Daph: Sam was sitting on the goodie box.

Josh: It was two in the afternoon.

Daph: Though it was a sunny day, the trees blocked out the light, making it hard to see.

Josh: “Maybe the Alpha and Omega doesn’t want to be found,” said Nate.

Daph: He was feeling more terrible than ever.

Josh: And because Sam was so calm, he felt even worse.

Daph: “That would be very mean,” said Sam. “I don’t think someone would send us a message only to leave us stranded here.”

Josh: Sam’s answer greatly surprised Nate. For a split second he felt from somewhere a ray of hope.

Daph: “Look there,” said Sam.

Josh: A little ray of light was falling on the branch Nate was leaning against.

Daph: It was a silvery color.

Josh: Nate turned around and looked. The branch was perfectly pipe-shaped and two feet across.

Daph: When Nate touched it, it felt smooth and soft.

Josh: He stood up and pulled away the vines that were covering it.

Daph: The vines were making it look like a bush.

Josh: But it wasn't a bush at all.

Daph: No, it was a tree trunk over eight feet high.

Josh: And it was absolutely, completely straight.

Daph: Then Sam got really excited. She jumped down from the goodie box and pulled like mad on the vines.

Josh: Some of them came crashing down from above—like giant ropes.

Daph: It was raining bark and leaves and dirt.

Josh: They pulled and pulled and pulled—

Daph: Until they were surrounded by a small forest of silvery poles.

Josh: Nate dug beneath the pile of fallen vines and retrieved the saw from his tool kit.

Daph: He then placed the blade at the bottom of one of the trunks—

Josh: And drew it quickly backwards.

Daph: It sank into the wood like butter.

The Ruby Float · Episode 7 · Nate And Sam Build The Raft

Josh: “Hooray!” yelled Nate. “They were here all the time. We just couldn’t see them.”

Daph: “Hooray!” yelled Sam, jumping up and down. “Hooray! Hooray!”

Josh: “That happens to me all the time,” said Nate. “I look everywhere for things and there they are, right under my nose. It makes me crazy.”

Daph: “I lost my stuffed monkey once,” said Sam, all out of breath. “And all the time it was under my pillow.”

Josh: That’s the way it was with Sam and Nate’s project.

Daph: Everything they needed, including the logs, did not show up until the exact time they needed it.

Josh: And that’s it for this episode.

Daph: That’s right, Ladies and Gentlemen. This concludes Episode 7.

Josh: Please tune in next time for The Test Voyage Goes Awry.

Daph: They can’t tune in. They’re using computers and phones and things.

Josh: It’s an expression. That’s all.

Daph: Oh. I see. It’s not bad, actually.

Josh: Thanks.

Daph: Okay, Everyone, be sure to tune in next time. Goodbye.

Episode Eight

The Test Voyage Goes Awry



Daph: Lights.

Josh: Camera.

Daph: Action.

Josh: Hello, everyone. Welcome to Episode 8 of *The Tale Of The Ruby Float*.

Daph: It's called—

Josh: The Test Voyage Goes Awry.

Daph: Awry means that something went wrong.

Josh: More about that later. As for now, our heroes, Nate and Sam, are happy as larks.

Daph: Nate's confidence had come back completely, meaning he wasn't feeling horrible anymore.

Josh; And they were working like mad on the raft.

Daph: In a week it was completely finished.

Josh: And it was a real beauty.

Daph: The color of all the wood was pale yellow, making it glow like gold.

Josh: The deck was so flat and smooth and soft that Nate and Sam loved to walk across it in their bare feet.

Daph: It was kind of spongy, like cork.

Josh: But it was really strong and exceptionally floaty and waterproof.

Daph: Right in the middle of the deck was a beautiful cabin.

Josh: Nate made it of unstained birch.

Daph: Birch smells wonderful, especially if it's all around you.

Josh: Nate and Sam spent lots of time in the cabin smelling the perfume of the new wood.

Daph: They also liked to peek through the portholes.

Josh: Sam called them windows with funny names.

Daph: You could close each of them with a shutter to keep out the water during a storm.

Josh: There was also a hatch on the roof that you could open to let in the sunshine or the moonlight.

Daph: Sam made some gorgeous yellow curtains for the portholes. Portholes are not complete without curtains, you know.

Josh: The mast and the rudder were made of solid oak.

Daph: This made them as unbreakable as they could be.

Josh: Then came the sail.

Daph: And what a sail it was. It was gold and orange and red, as colorful as colorful can be.

Josh: The letters “A” and “O” were in the middle. They were ruby-colored, like the float, and made of silk.

Daph: They stood, of course, for Alpha and Omega. Sam stitched them on especially tight so no storm could ever tear them off.

Josh: The goodie box was in the cabin and overflowing with the very best things to eat—

Daph: Which we have already talked about, if you remember.

Josh: There was also a special chest in the cabin.

Daph: Lots of things were in it that I can’t remember.

Josh: Like a sextant and chronometer and compass.

Daph: Oh, yes, there were also stuffed animals and fishhooks and a special water collection device.

Josh: And lots of other things, like matches and adventure books.

Daph: So many things that if we said them all, we wouldn’t finish our story.

Josh: Only one thing was left to complete.

Daph: It was the speech that Nate was going to give to their parents.

Josh: It was a most excellent speech.

Daph: First of all, it talked about how something had to be done about their grandma’s health—and fast.

Josh: Second, it talked about their grandpa’s terrible sadness and how something had to be done.

Daph: And fast.

Josh: Third, it talked about the incredible message they had received from the Alpha and Omega.

Daph: Fourth, it told about the island that was a tiny speck and why

it was absolutely certain that the float had come from it.

Josh: Fifth, it did not say how they would get there.

Daph: No, not yet. Nate would write that in after the big test.

Josh: It was called the seaworthiness test.

Daph: They had to know that the raft was perfectly floaty—

Josh: And able to make it all the way to the island.

Daph: Tonight they would make the test.

Josh: The moon would be full, making it easy to see what they were doing.

Daph: It was here that we had the big fight.

Josh: What fight?

Daph: Grandpa was telling the story and you said Nate and Sam's parents would never let them go.

Josh: I was making a comment.

Daph: You were discouraging me.

Josh: I didn't mean to discourage you. I was just saying what I thought..

Daph: You were being mean, that's what.

Josh: Hey, aren't we in the middle of telling a story? Anyway, if Nate and Sam had been so sure of their parents, they wouldn't have kept the whole thing a secret.

Daph: I didn't think about that.

Josh: They wanted to make everything perfect first. Then they'd have the best chance of getting a yes answer.

Daph: They ARE trying to make everything perfect.

Josh: So let's get going. We already said that something had to be done about Harriet and Hank.

Daph: And fast.

Josh: And it got even faster at midnight on the 27th of June.

Daph: The seaworth test must now begin.

Josh: And it did begin, though it is called the seaworthiness test.

Daph: Oh.

Josh: Nate and Sam first dragged the raft into the slough.

Daph: I remember. The saltwater pond.

Josh: Yes. And much to their delight, the raft was very floaty.

Daph: It was perfectly floaty and perfectly balanced, like an octopus on tiptoes.

Josh: Sure enough, the moon was out, big as can be.

Daph: It was very bright and made everything look blue.

Josh: And it was also very, very quiet.

Daph: Almost too quiet. Even the frogs were not croaking.

Josh: And the crickets were not chirping.

Daph: And the fish were not jumping.

Josh: Everything was perfectly still.

Daph: The water was like a mirror. In the moonlight you could see your face in it.

Josh: Sam and Nate climbed onto the raft and waited for the tide to rise.

Daph: They were very, very excited.

Josh: Even with both of them on the raft, it didn't sink down a bit.

Daph: It was very floaty.

Josh: "Let's test the rudder," said Nate.

Daph: Sam knew what to do. They had practiced before, though not on water.

Josh: She got a long pole from the roof of the cabin.

Daph: Then she pushed it down into the water until it hit the bottom of the pond.

Josh: Then she gave it a hard push.

Daph: The raft took off like a rocket.

Josh: Nate moved the tiller this way and that.

Daph: The raft reacted perfectly, also moving this way and that.

Josh: "Push again," he said. "Harder."

Daph: The raft flew across the water.

Josh: It zigged and zagged.

Daph: And zagged and zigged.

Josh: They were so happy they could not keep from laughing.

Daph: Even though they needed to keep their location secret.

Josh: "Faster," said Nate. "Faster. Faster."

Daph: Pretty soon the water in the pond reached the same level as the ocean. Suddenly, it was no longer a pond, but a small river flowing into the sea.

Josh: Nate turned the raft and let the current carry it seaward.

Daph: The water sparkled in the moonlight like thousands of pieces

of shiny glass.

Josh: A small wave suddenly rushed toward them.

Daph: The floaty raft went right over it. It was like light dancing on a bubble.

Josh: In no time at all they had gone past the breakers.

Daph: Sam's pole could not reach the bottom anymore, so the sail took over.

Josh: Right away it filled up with lots of wind. It looked great.

Daph: Nate held the tiller thing really tight as the wind pushed the raft over the rolling waves.

Josh: "She's sailing," he yelled to Sam. "She's sailing."

Daph: Wow! This time they were beyond happy.

Josh: They felt like two birds soaring through the sky.

Daph: "She's sailing!" shouted Sam. "She's sailing!"

Josh: "Yippee!" yelled Nate.

Daph: The wind made them go faster and faster.

Josh: "Yippee! Yippee!"

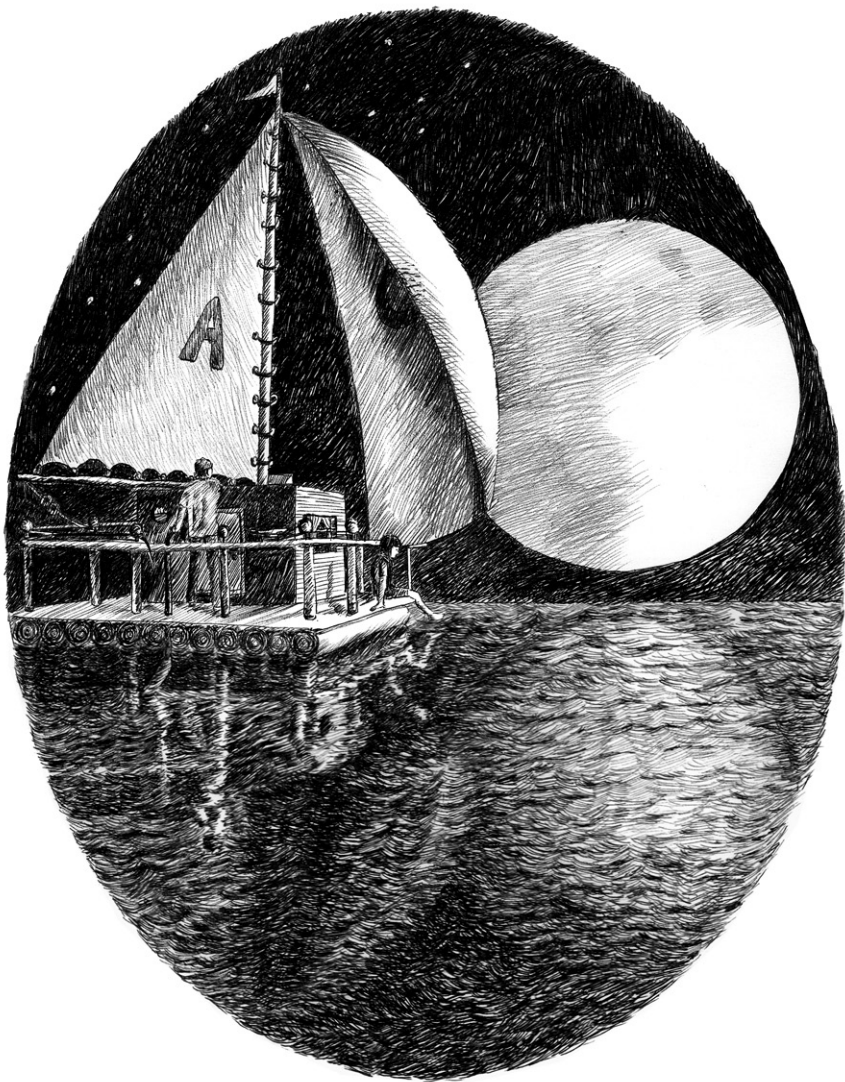
Daph: Sam sat down at the front of the raft and put her feet in the water.

Josh: The sparkling water rushed by like magic.

Daph: "Whoopee!" she yelled. "Whoopee! We're going to see the Alpha and Omega."

Josh: Nate kept his eyes on the sail. He moved the tiller in such a way that the sail stayed completely full of wind.

Daph: This made the raft go really fast.



Josh: As the wind was from the rear, Nate didn't notice how fast they were traveling.

Daph: He also didn't notice that they were getting very far from shore.

Josh: So far, in fact, that when Sam looked back, she got a big shock.

Daph: “Where’s our beach?”

Josh: Nate looked over his shoulder. His heart turned a somersault.

Daph: The shoreline was missing!

Josh: Way to the south, the lights of the town twinkled like tiny stars.

Daph: Nate shoved the tiller to one side really fast.

Josh: This made the raft immediately spin around.

Daph: When it did, the wind switched to the other side of the sail.

Josh: This made the sail and the boom swing around like a baseball player swinging a bat.

Daph: Nate was very lucky that the boom didn’t hit him in the head.

Josh: He ducked just in time; otherwise he would have been knocked cold.

Daph: Instead, the boom crashed into the ropes holding up the mast.

Josh: When it did, the raft shook like a wet dog.

Daph: Sam almost flew overboard.

Josh: And the raft almost flipped over. Good thing that Nate had built it so well.

Daph: Sam held onto the raft’s railing for dear life.

Josh: She was scared out of her wits.

Daph: Good thing that Nate had made sure that she was wearing a safety line.

Josh: And a life vest.

Daph: “Nate!” she screamed. “What’s happening?”

Josh: Nate was at a total loss. He was finding out real fast that he

didn't know how to sail.

Daph: He thought he knew because he'd studied his sailing book.

Josh: And that book was now inside the cabin.

Daph: Even if he had had it in his hand, it wouldn't have helped.

Josh: Things were much too crazy.

Daph: He was trying to turn the raft back toward the tiny lights, but he just couldn't do it.

Josh: Every time he tried, the boom whizzed over his head and crashed into the ropes holding up the mast.

Daph: And every time the raft leaned way over and shook like a wet dog.

Josh: It was a very bad situation.

Daph: It was horrible. Whatever could they do?

Josh: "Lower the sail," Nate yelled. "Undo the rope and let it fall."

Daph: But no one answered.

Josh: Nate leaned way to the right and left and looked toward the front of the raft.

Daph: But he couldn't see anything. The cabin was in the way.

Josh: "Samantha!" he yelled. "Are you there?"

Daph: Then came the panic. Had Sam fallen overboard? It was a horrible thought.

Josh: Nate let go of the tiller and raced to the bow.

Daph: What a relief. There was Sam, hanging onto the railing with all her might.

Josh: But the relief didn't last long.

Daph: Since Nate wasn't holding the tiller thing, the raft started going in terrible circles.

Josh: The boom was flying back and forth like a giant pendulum.

Daph: Only this wasn't a clock, it was a raft.

Josh: And the raft wouldn't hold up much longer unless the clock was stopped.

Daph: Thank goodness Nate kept a cool head.

Josh: He carefully crawled toward the mast and untied the rope that held up the sail.

Daph: Down it went in a heap.

Josh: In the same instant the crazy spinning of the raft stopped.

Daph: Nate rushed back to Sam and threw his arms around her.

Josh: "Sam! Sam!" he yelled. "Are you all right?"

Daph: Sam was so scared she was shaking all over. "I think so," she said.

Josh: Nate helped her back into the cabin and wrapped her up in warm, dry blankets.

Daph: She was soaking wet.

Josh: He gave her some hot tea that he had in a thermos and waited until her shivering stopped.

Daph: Then he went outside and searched the horizon.

Josh: The lights of their town were completely gone.

Daph: And that is it, Ladies and Gentlemen. Episode 8 is over.

Josh: Next, it's on to Episode 9—

Daph: Which we are calling—

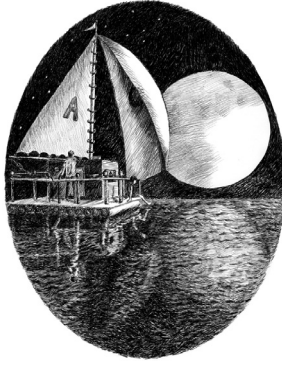
Josh: Adrift At Sea.

Daph: So, until next time, be sure you know what you're doing before you do it.

Josh: And be sure to tune in when we come back to continue the exciting *Tale Of*—

Daph: *The Ruby Float*.

Episode Nine
Adrift At Sea



Daph: Hello Ladies and Gentlemen, Boys and Girls, even Kangaroos and Kittens.

Josh: If they can understand English.

Daph: Of course they can.

Josh: What if they're from Argentina?

Daph: They don't have kangaroos in Argentina.

Josh: And animals can't talk.

Daph: Maybe they can't, but they can hear.

Josh: You think they can understand us?

Daph: I don't know, but if our listeners have pets, it's okay with me if they listen, too.

Josh: Okay. Enough silliness. I think we better get started.

Daph: I was getting started until you started asking questions.

Josh: How about answering this question?

Daph: What question?

Josh: What's happened to our heroes, Nate and Sam?

Daph: Nate and Sam? They are way, way out in the ocean.

Josh: What about land?

Daph: Nowhere in sight?

Josh: And the weather?

Daph: The weather is very weird. It's clear as a bell, but the wind is howling like a crazy cat.

Josh: The waves are gigantic with huge whitecaps that crash down on the raft like an avalanche rushing down a mountain.

Daph: That's bad.

Josh: Very bad. And all the while the raft is being blown farther and farther away from home.

Daph: It keeps blowing for many, many days and nights.

Josh: So many that Nate and Sam can't keep track of them.

Daph: All the while they stay inside the cabin.

Josh: The hatches are latched down tight so that the water can't get in.

Daph: Thank goodness that Nate did such a good job.

Josh: All the while they hung onto each other. When they weren't sleeping, they read and re-read the words inside the ruby float.

Daph: "I am the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last—

Josh: "The Resurrection and the Life. Whosoever believes in me, though he were dead—

Daph: "Yet shall he live—

Josh: “And whosoever lives and believes in me—

Daph: “Shall never die.”

Josh: So it was that they hoped against hope that the Alpha and Omega would save them.

Daph: And so it was that they forgot about everything else.

Josh: About the locker filled with wonderful goodies.

Daph: About their parents who were now so far away.

Josh: About their sadness over their grandparents’ terrible situation.

Daph: About all the fun they had sailing across the salty pond.

Josh: About playing on the beach and listening to their grandpa’s wonderful stories.

Daph: They could only think about how very afraid they were.

Josh: And of their great hope that the Alpha and Omega would save them.

Daph: Good thing that they could not see what was happening outside the cabin.

Josh: It was absolute craziness. One look and even a young person would have keeled over from a heart attack.

Daph: That’s bad.

Josh: Very bad. And inside the cabin, Nate and Sam could hear the sound of the very bad.

Daph: They heard the wind making sounds like a roaring lion.

Josh: They felt the waves hitting the cabin roof and walls like a huge wrecking ball.

Daph: They felt the raft being tossed up and down like they were on a trampoline.

Josh: They imagined the very, very worst, not knowing that outside it was a nightmare.

Daph: Most of the time they could not sleep because the raft was always shaking them like leaves on a tree.

Josh: Whenever they did drift off, a big bang would wake them up—

Daph: And scare the wits out of them.

Josh: Even so, they had to sleep.

Daph: Even so they had to close their eyes.

Josh: And when they did they entered a dark world without dreams.

Daph: And when they did, it seemed to last forever.

Josh: But even forever comes to an end.

Daph: What?

Josh: I said, even forever comes to an end.

Daph: How can that happen?

Josh: Only when it seems like forever, but it isn't.

Daph: Like it was with Nate and Sam?

Josh: Exactly.

Daph: So that after many days, when Nate suddenly opened his eyes in the dark, everything had stopped.

Josh: That's right. The lion had stopped roaring. And the wrecking ball had stopped.

Daph: It was pitch black. Nate couldn't see his finger in front of his eyes.

Josh: At first he thought he was at home, in his bed, and that he'd woken up.

Daph: Only it was never this dark in his bedroom.

Josh: And his bed didn't slowly rock up and down, like a tree limb in the wind.

Daph: He reached out with his hand and felt the walls of the cabin.

Josh: They were still dry as a bone.

Daph: Good thing Nate had done such a good job on the raft.

Josh: It was a very good thing.

Daph: He moved his finger along the cabin wall until he felt one of the things that keep the windows closed.

Josh: It was a shutter latch. He grabbed it with his finger and pried it open.

Daph: Then he opened the shutter.

Josh: Everything was suddenly deep purple.

Daph: Nate looked through the window and far away saw the edge of the world.

Josh: Actually, it was the horizon, which he could just make out in the deep purple light.

Daph: The ocean was like a mirror. Everywhere Nate looked he saw the reflection of the stars.

Josh: He crept outside, not wanting to waken Samantha, who was all snuggled up in blankets.

Daph: What he saw amazed him.

Josh: He looked high and low and everywhere he looked the raft was okay.

Daph: It was not hurt at all.

Josh: The mast still rose high up in the air.

Daph: The boom thing and sail were all tangled up in each other, but still okay.

Josh: The tiller was fine, too, and rocked back and forth in the waves like a baby's cradle.

Daph: The wind was completely gone.

Josh: It was a dead calm.

Daph: And very quiet, so quiet that Nate heard bunches of little fish splashing in the water.

Josh: Suddenly the sky turned pink. The sun was on the way up.

Daph: And suddenly Nate felt happy, so happy he was ready to explode.

Josh: "Sam! Sam!" he yelled.

Daph: He ran to the cabin and shook her awake.

Josh: "Get up! Hurry! Come look! Hurry! Hurry!"

Daph: When she got outside she couldn't believe her eyes.

Josh: The storm was over. They had made it.

Daph: "Hooray!" she yelled. "Hooray! Hooray!"

Josh: They sat down side by side at the bow of the raft.

Daph: Their feet were in the water. It was nice and warm and shiny.

Josh: Then the sun came completely up and made everything very bright.

Daph: "Oh, Nate, we must say thank you to the Alpha and Omega."

Josh: Nate thought about this for a moment. "I know," he said, "but now we're lost."

Daph: "No we're not," she said cheerfully. "You can use your sextant

thing.”

Josh: In the middle of all this he had forgotten about the sextant.

Daph: “I do so want to see the Alpha and Omega after all of this,” she said. “And I do want to get home also.”

Josh: “Of course,” said Nate. But his voice sounded weak.

Daph: Now he had to do another thing he’d never done before.

Josh: His mind was filled with more terrible thoughts.

Daph: They said to him, “Nate, you have already failed as a sailor—

Josh: “You cannot fail again. If you do, you are the most stupid person in the world. And you and your sister will die.”

Daph: There was a brighter side, however.

Josh: So far, Sam had not blamed him for anything.

Daph: Of course, she knew nothing about sailing. So she didn’t know that Nate’s bad sailing was to blame for everything.

Josh: “I’m very sorry,” confessed Nate.

Daph: “About what?”

Josh: “That I got us into all this.”

Daph: “Oh, Nate, I do want you to stop worrying. The raft stayed together just fine, didn’t it?”

Josh: “Yes.”

Daph: “And we’re safe and sound, aren’t we?”

Josh: “Yes.”

Daph: “Then let’s eat. I am so very hungry and I cannot start to tell you how hungry I am.”

Josh: Nate was also starving. Besides, the sextant reading could not be taken until noon.

Daph: Our heroes spread out a huge feast on the deck of the raft.

Josh: There were fresh oranges and smoked kippers and jams and honeys—

Daph: And piles of muffins and sweet butter cookies—

Josh: And salted ham and boiled eggs—

Daph: And a big wheel of cheese full of holes—

Josh: And fresh hot chocolate that Nate made by heating milk on the barbecue.

Daph: They ate and ate and ate until they were absolutely stuffed.

Josh: Then Nate decided it was time that he learned how to sail.

Daph: He got out his sailing book and turned it to page 71.

Josh: Page 71?

Daph: That's where it talks about sailing the raft.

Josh: You're sure it's page 71?

Daph: Yes. And then it goes on and on, which is what Nate did until he was ready to give sailing a try.

Josh: The conditions were perfect. The winds were light and the seas were calm.

Daph: Now was his chance to turn a dream into reality.

Josh: "Grab the halyard," he said. "Coil up that dock line. Haul in that sheet."

Daph: Since Sam didn't know any sailing terms, she had no idea what Nate was talking about.

Josh: He was talking about ropes.

Daph: As she soon found out. Just like people, ropes have lots of different names.

Josh: The halyard raised the sail.

Daph: The sheet adjusted it.

Josh: The line did everything else.

Daph: It was fun to learn all these names. Even right and left were different.

Josh: Right was starboard.

Daph: And port was left.

Josh: And if you measured how deep it was, it wasn't in feet.

Daph: No, it was in fathoms.

Josh: Fathoms.

Daph: What are they called?

Josh: Fathoms. A fathom is 6 feet.

Daph: I knew that. I was just testing you.

Josh: Just like Nate was getting ready to test himself on sailing.

Daph: First, he was going to practice the different ways of pointing the sail.

Josh: Samantha hoisted the canvas.

Daph: With all its bright colors, it was absolutely gorgeous in the morning sun.

Josh: "Standby to come about," yelled Nate.

Daph: Nate pulled on the big rope that was hooked to the boom.

Josh: That's the mainsheet. As he pulled it toward himself, the bow of the raft turned through the wind.

Daph: As it did, the sail went over to the other side of the raft and filled with wind.

Josh: Then Nate slowly let out the mainsheet.

Daph: The raft scooted along the water just great. It was going in a completely new direction.

Josh: It had turned about 90 degrees through the face of the wind.

Daph: Nate kept going in this direction for about a minute.

Josh: Then he executed the reverse maneuver.

Daph: He did what?

Josh: He turned back the way they were going before.

Daph: Oh. Why didn't you say that?

Josh: That's the reverse maneuver.

Daph: Is that tacking?

Josh: Yes. That's going back and forth when you're sailing into the wind.

Daph: Oh. I see.

Josh: "We're tacking," he yelled out to Sam.

Daph: Sam sat on the bow with her feet in the water.

Josh: It sped past like water in a fast, mountain stream.

Daph: And the wind whistled in her ears.

Josh: And the sweet, warm, ocean air filled her nose.

Daph: Meanwhile, Nate did the tacking thing over and over again—

Josh: Until he was an expert.

Daph: Then he had to learn how to jive.

Josh: Jibe.

Daph: That's a funny word.

Josh: And also a very dangerous one.

Daph: Why's it so very dangerous?

Josh: Because if you jibe in the wrong way, you've had it. That's what Nate did.

Daph: He did the wrong jibe?

Josh: No, he jibed when he shouldn't have.

Daph: But I still don't know what a jibe is.

Josh: It's when you turn a sailing vessel with the wind coming from the rear.

Daph: Nate did that?

Josh: Yes. When the big wind came during the test voyage, he did it lots of times.

Daph: Is that why the raft went crazy?

Josh: Exactly. The sail flew back and forth like mad. Luckily, the raft held together.

Daph: But why's he trying it now?

Josh: His sailing book says it's okay if the wind's not too strong.

Daph: Like today.

Josh: That's right. "Stand by to jibe," Nate yelled out to Sam.

Daph: Nate slowly pulled on the big rope hooked to the sail.

Josh: The boom moved slowly from starboard to port. As it did, the raft leaned only a very little.

Daph: It was a most perfect jibe.

Josh: Nate breathed a sigh of relief. The jibe was not nearly as horrible as he thought it would be.

Daph: “We’re running with the wind,” he yelled out to Sam.

Josh: Running was another word he found in his sailing book.

Daph: Nate practiced the jibe over and over again until he was nearly dizzy.

Josh: He also told himself to never, never again jibe in a strong wind.

Daph: Sam wasn’t much interested in sailing herself.

Josh: Even so, she understood everything that Nate was telling her about tacking and jibing and running.

Daph: She liked beating the most because it made a nice breeze come that cooled her off.

Josh: It also made the raft do impossible things, like sail against the wind.

Daph: How is that possible?

Josh: It’s called the Bernoulli effect. I read about it in a sailing book.

Daph: I like the Bernoodli effect.

Josh: Bernoulli. It’s the Bernoulli effect.

Daph: I know. It sounds like a kind of noodle.

Josh: We better get back to the story.

Daph: Oh, yes, I remember that Sam didn’t like running, which doesn’t mean moving your legs fast.

The Ruby Float · Episode 9 · Adrift At Sea

Josh: That's right. When the raft is running, the wind is pushing it from behind.

Daph: When that happens the raft bounces around and makes Sam feel seasick.

Josh: It also gets very hot. Since you're moving with the wind, there's no breeze blowing across the raft.

Daph: Josh tried doing all of the sailing things until the sun was way high.

Josh: Then he dropped the sail and let the raft come to a stop.

Daph: He was very worried about what he had to do next.

Josh: Maybe he would make some very bad mistakes, just like he did during the test voyage.

Daph: Or maybe he wouldn't. If you want to find out, then stay tuned for our next exciting episode.

Josh: It's called—

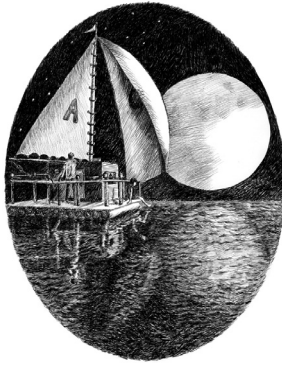
Daph: They Set Sail For The Island.

Josh: That's it for now. See you later.

Daph: Bye.

Episode Ten

They Set Sail For The Island



Daph: Hello Everyone. We're back.

Josh: And we're ready to present the next episode of *The Tale Of The Ruby Float*. It's called—

Daph: They Set Sail For The Island.

Josh: If you remember, Nate had just lowered the sail and brought the raft to a stop.

Daph: A black cloud of fear is darkening his mind.

Josh: Wow, did we rehearse that?

Daph: No, I just got it from the book. It's very nice, isn't it?

Josh: I don't think a dark cloud of fear is very nice.

Daph: But it tells us that Nate is very afraid. He is shaking inside like a milkshake.

Josh: Even so, he's able to hold the sextant very steady.

Daph: It is a thing you point at the sun so that you can find out where you are.

Josh: Then you look inside the device and see a little reflection of the sun in a mirror.

Daph: Hank taught Nate how to use it. It was very complicated.

Josh: With Hank's help, Nate was able to find the exact geographical location of their town.

Daph: Whenever he made a mistake, Hank helped him fix it.

Josh: Now he had to find the exact geographical location of the raft.

Daph: This time, if he made a mistake, it would be curtains.

Josh: Which helps explain the dark cloud in Nate's mind.

Daph: And the milkshaking inside.

Josh: "Fetch my chronometer," said Nate.

Daph: Samantha handed him his watch. "Here's your scronometer."

Josh: Nate looked at the time and turned white as a sheet.

Daph: Inside he was a vanilla shake.

Josh: Though it wasn't noon yet, his watch read two-thirty.

Daph: The first thing he thought was that his watch had stopped.

Josh: Nope. It wasn't that. The second hand was moving normally.

Daph: But maybe it had stopped during the storm.

Josh: And then started ticking when it was over. That would throw it off.

Daph: "What's the matter now?" asked Sam.

Josh: She noticed that Nate looked a little sick.

Daph: She didn't know that the sextant only works when you have a good watch.

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Josh: Without a watch you can figure out how far north or south you are—

Daph: But you can't figure out the east and the west distance.

Josh: Since the world is 25,000 miles around, the north-south part doesn't help much.

Daph: Especially if you're looking for an island as big as a speck of dust.

Josh: "I think my watch has malfunctioned," said Nate.

Daph: "Oh, Nate," said Sam. "You mustn't worry. You can use mine."

Josh: Sam ducked into the cabin and grabbed her watch.

Daph: It was very pretty, with a dachshund face and ears that moved to show the time.

Josh: A real navigator would never touch such a silly watch.

Daph: But when Nate saw it, he became very interested.

Josh: Sam's watch also said two-thirty, or two-thirty-two, to be exact.

Daph: That meant that it really was two-thirty, or two-thirty-two, to be exact.

Josh: But not here. It was two-thirty-two back at home.

Daph: Any experienced traveler would have realized that.

Josh: But Nate wasn't an experienced traveler.

Daph: Before the raft was blown away, he'd never been more than 55 miles from home.

Josh: When he'd practiced with the sextant, he was always in the same place—

Daph: On the beach with Hank.

The Ruby Float · Episode 10 · They Set Sail For The Island

Josh: Since they weren't moving, the watch always told the right time.

Daph: Noon happened at noon, sunrise at sunrise, and sunset at sunset.

Josh: As soon as he realized this, Nate knew exactly what to do.

Daph: He looked through the sextant thing and asked Sam to check her watch.

Josh: The sextant said that the sun's highest point was 76.1 degrees.

Daph: This happened at exactly 2:40 in the afternoon.

Josh: Now it was on to some heavy-duty calculations—

Daph: Which to Sam looked like Egyptian hairyglifics—

Josh: Hieroglyphics.

Daph: Oh?

Josh: Until, finally, they turned into numbers which Nate circled.

Daph: And what he circled meant that they were very, very far from home.

Josh: 7,745 nautical miles to the east.

Daph: And 922 miles to the north.

Josh: Which means north of the equator.

Daph: That's really out there.

Josh: Yes, it is.

Daph: The wind really blew them this far?

Josh: That's what Jesse said. That would mean they had been at sea about 12 days.

Daph: And how much farther was the Alpha and Omega island?

Josh: Still pretty far. Another 597 miles.

Daph: They'll need plenty of wind.

Josh: Wind they had, though the current was flowing the other way.

Daph: How did Nate know that?

Josh: From sea charts and other things.

Daph: So how much longer will it be?

Josh: Five days.

Daph: Five days? That doesn't sound too bad.

Josh: Not too bad. But if they had to turn around and go the other way, back toward home—

Daph: Now I remember. That would be bad.

Josh: That's right. With the wind against them, they'd have to sail a zigzag course.

Daph: It would take them forever to get back home.

Josh: Well, actually, it would take fifty days.

Daph: But they only have enough food and water for 10 days.

Josh: Meaning that turning back was impossible.

Daph: They had to keep pointed toward the Alpha and Omega and hope for the best.

Josh: And it's a good thing they figured out their location right away—

Daph: Because the next day the sun was gone.

Josh: Everything was grey and dismal. It looked like a storm was coming.

Daph: It was so cool and breezy that Sam stayed inside the cabin.

Josh: She cuddled up in lots of blankets and sipped hot tea.

Daph: She also read her favorite book. It was about Salto, a squirrel who could do back flips.

Josh: Meanwhile, Nate stayed outside and manned the helm.

Daph: He kept watching the sail and the compass that was on the cabin wall.

Josh: He had to maintain a very exact course.

Daph: Very exact.

Josh: It had to be dead on.

Daph: Dead on.

Josh: Otherwise—

Daph: I don't want to think about it.

Josh: Neither did Nate.

Daph: If they missed the island, they'd be lost at sea.

Josh: This made Nate's heart very heavy.

Daph: But he never told Sam. He didn't want to frighten her.

Josh: As the day went on, the waves got bigger and bigger.

Daph: The sky looked scarier and scarier.

Josh: Pretty soon the waves were as big as mountains.

Daph: Each one was like a giant's hand that lifted them high up in the air.

Josh: Then the hand would tilt and they'd slide downward very, very fast.

Daph: It was like the giant was dropping them into his big, ugly mouth.

Josh: After which they'd slide down his throat until they were in his deep, dark stomach.

Daph: Then the wind would suddenly stop. The sail would go crazy and swing every which way.

Josh: Then the giant would feel sick to his stomach.

Daph: His stomach would suddenly turn inside out and send them flying upward again.

Josh: And when they were finally out of his mouth, the wind would hit the sails really hard.

Daph: So hard it made a bang so loud it hurt your ears.

Josh: This made it really hard for Nate to keep an exact course.

Daph: And also, there was the danger of the jive accident.

Josh: You mean the accidental jibe. Very bad. He didn't want that to happen.

Daph: No way.

Josh: At sundown the rain started to come down in buckets.

Daph: Good thing that Nate had taken along his yellow rain slicker and hat.

Josh: Because the rain was coming down so hard it was like nails hitting his face.

Daph: If things kept on like this, how'd he ever manage to keep the raft on course for four more days?

Josh: He'd have to stay awake the whole time.

Daph: But who can stay awake for four whole days? It's impossible.

Josh: He thought about letting Sam spell him, but was she strong enough?

Daph: The tiller thing was hard to control. You needed to have strong arms.

Josh: And the mainsheet needed to be adjusted again and again.

Daph: It was a very dangerous job. Nate's only choice was to go it alone.

Josh: Or so he thought.

Daph: Sam worked very hard, keeping Nate powered up with crackers and kippers and hot chocolate.

Josh: Even so, food doesn't help keep you awake.

Daph: And even so, Sam got sleepy and cold and had to turn in.

Josh: So Nate was all alone—

Daph: In the dark and the cold and the wet for hours and hours and hours.

Josh: Then, at exactly 3 in the morning, a huge wave drenched the raft.

Daph: In a flash Nate opened his eyes.

Josh: For a moment he wasn't sure what was going on.

Daph: Then he knew. It was terrible. He'd fallen asleep.

Josh: For how long, he didn't know.

Daph: He was mad as a hornet at himself.

Josh: Thankfully, he'd tied a rope to the tiller to keep it from moving much.

Daph: Otherwise, there might have been—

Josh: The dreaded accidental jibe.

Daph: Nate tried to see what was ahead.

Josh: But he saw only the water all churned up, white as soapsuds.

Daph: He shined his flashlight ahead, then turned it off.

Josh: There was so much night and so much dark that it scared him half to death.

Daph: But somehow he got through the night.

Josh: And when daybreak came, Sam came out of the cabin with a steaming mug of hot chocolate.

Daph: “Ahoy Matey,” she yelled, most cheerfully.

Josh: Though the raft was moving over the waves like a giant roller coaster—

Daph: Sam didn’t mind at all. In fact, she thought it was fun.

Josh: Her night in the cabin had been cozy and warm.

Daph: She slept great.

Josh: And she had great confidence in Nate.

Daph: And even greater confidence in the Alpha and Omega.

Josh: Which, under the circumstances, seemed pretty crazy.

Daph: Even so, it was a very good thing—

Josh: Creating the most perfect blend of brother and sister.

Daph: Sam’s cheer brought Nate’s cheer.

Josh: Even though he was dog-tired.

Daph: “Oh, do let me spell you,” she pleaded. “I’m sure I can handle it. Honest I am.”

Josh: “I’m not so sure about that,” thought Nate. “She might be too weak for the job.”

Daph: Then he thought some more about it. “But what if I fall asleep again?—

Josh: “What if I cause the dreaded accidental jibe?—

Daph: “I might sink the raft and send us straight to Davy Jones’ locker.”

Josh: How do you know about Davy Jones’ locker?

Daph: Pirate movies.

Josh: Oh, that’s right. I forgot.

Daph: That means they’d both be dead, which would be a very bad thing.

Josh: And so, Nate said, “You’re sure you want to? It’s very hard work.”

Daph: “Oh Nate,” she said. “It’s four more days and you can’t do it alone. Oh do let me help.”

Josh: Sam was a very quick learner.

Daph: In less than an hour she could get the raft to go straight as an arrow.

Josh: She was so good with the tiller and sail that Nate relaxed a little.

Daph: It was most obvious that Sam could do it without him.

Josh: And what’s more, the rain had let up a little.

Daph: Yes, things were looking up.

Josh: Nate tied himself to Samantha with his safety line.

Daph: He wanted to be doubly sure that she couldn’t be washed overboard while he was asleep.

Josh: He then told her to call out if anything bad happened.

Daph: Then he crawled into the cabin, wrapped himself in blankets, and was out like a light.

Josh: Meanwhile, Sam did terrifically well at the helm.

Daph: Whenever the tiller thing pushed against her, she pushed back with her whole body.

Josh: She wasn't going to be bullied by a big piece of wood.

Daph: She really liked keeping the sail full of air—

Josh: And watching the little compass ball dance back and forth on the cabin wall.

Daph: And whenever the raft flew down a big wave—Wow!

Josh: She felt like a bird soaring through the air.

Daph: Then, hours later, at precisely 6:30 in the morning, to be exact—

Josh: A loud scream filled the air.

Daph: Nate shot out of his blankets like a jack-in-the-box.

Josh: Then the rope around his waist gave him such a yank that he almost fell over backwards.

Daph: Panic set in. The worst had happened. Sam had been washed overboard—or so he thought.

Josh: He darted out of the cabin with such speed that the rope went slack.

Daph: As it did, Sam, who was using it to lean out over the water, fell in.

Josh: Nate sprang into action.

Daph: Immediately he used the rope to pull Sam back to the raft.

Josh: Fortunately, her huge life jacket kept her head above the water—

Daph: Until Nate pulled her back onto the raft.

Josh: Nate was very angry.

Daph: Why in the world had Sam been so stupid? A big shark could have come and then—

Josh: You're elaborating again.

Daph: It could have happened! There are always sharks around.

Josh: I wonder why Jesse didn't mention that.

Daph: You can't think of everything when you're telling a story.

Josh: Good thing Nate didn't think of sharks or he'd have been even madder.

Daph: Until he saw something very, very interesting.

Josh: There, beside the tiller, was a straw basket piled high with—

Daph: Nate couldn't believe his eyes. They were little red floats.

Josh: Just like the one that had brought them this far.

Daph: And in the water, bobbing about like jellyfish, were dozens more.

Josh: Sam had been leaning out over the water, snatching them off the waves—

Daph: When Nate jumped out of the cabin and made the rope go slack.

Josh: Causing Sam to do a swan dive into the ocean.

Daph: "Oh Nate," she screamed, now that she was high and dry. "I do believe we're near the island—"

Josh: “Yes. Go on.”

Daph: “I didn’t mean to wake you. Honest I didn’t. But I was so excited I just had to scream.”

Josh: But Nate didn’t hear a word. His attention was riveted on the bobbing floats.

Daph: Riveted?

Josh: Yes. He couldn’t take his eyes off them.

Daph: In a flash he dropped the sail and started to fish out the floats with a net.

Josh: “We must be getting closer,” he said.

Daph: Samantha grabbed a paddle and used it to move the raft closer to more and more floats.

Josh: Each time Nate handed one to her, she couldn’t resist holding it up to the sun.

Daph: And each time, there it was—a silhouette.

Josh: The hour was growing late.

Daph: The sky was clear and the heavens were slowly filling with stars.

Josh: That was very nice.

Daph: Thank you.

Josh: Meanwhile, Nate scanned the horizon for signs of an island.

Daph: But nothing was there.

Josh: That night Sam and Nate stayed together in the cabin.

Daph: The wind had stopped. The sea was calm.

Josh: Outside, little bells hung from the rigging.

Daph: They were silent now, but if the wind came up, they'd start to ring.

Josh: Telling Nate that it was time to take the helm and raise the sail and keep them moving on their eastward course.

Daph: So, too, were our heroes quiet.

Josh: Silently they shined a light into each tiny float—

Daph: Only speaking in whispers as they discovered each secret that was hidden inside.

Josh: They were precious words, words filled with mystery and hope.

Daph: "What does it all mean?" asked Samantha.

Josh: "I don't know," said Nate.

Daph: But one thing they did know.

Josh: Their desire to meet the Alpha and Omega was growing by leaps and bounds.

Daph: And now, let us leap forward to sunrise.

Josh: The little bells are ringing and our sleepy-eyed heroes are just coming out of the cabin.

Daph: They both have a very good stretch and then start jumping up and down and screaming to each other.

Josh: "There! There!" they yelled. "Look! Look!"

Daph: They had both seen it at the same time, an itsy-bitsy dot on the horizon.

Josh: It was an island, clear as day. "Hoist the mainsail," Nate yelled to Sam.

Daph: He was so excited he grabbed the mallard and raised it himself.

Josh: It was the halyard.

Daph: Yes, the halyard.

Josh: “All hands on deck,” he yelled. “Full speed ahead. Avast! Land ho!”

Daph: Sam reacted in the only way she understood.

Josh: She threw her arms around Nate’s neck—

Daph: And flooded him with tears.

Josh: And so ends Episode 10.

Daph: With Nate all wet with Samantha’s tears.

Josh: And the bells ringing and singing in the rigging of the raft.

Daph: What? Did you just think of that?

Josh: I’m not sure. Didn’t Jesse use those words?

Daph: I don’t think so.

Josh: What’s it matter? Our heroes are happy and the episode’s over. Let’s eat.

Daph: But we’ve still got to mention the next one.

Josh: Okay. Ladies and Gentlemen, please tune in next time for the 11th exciting episode of—

Daph: *The Tale Of The Ruby Float*. It’s called—

Josh: Shipwrecked.

Daph: And so, until then, God bless you all.

Josh: That’s new.

Daph: Yes it is.

Josh: I like it.

Daph: Thank you.

Episode Eleven
Shipwrecked



Daph: Here we are again, Ladies and Gentlemen, about to begin the next thrill-packed episode of *The Tale Of The Ruby Float*.

Josh: Don't we always say exciting?

Daph: It's the same thing; only it sounds different, which is good.

Josh: Just because it sounds different?

Daph: Yes, and if you don't introduce this episode soon, I will.

Josh: All right. Ladies and Gentlemen, in our last episode our heroes had just spotted an island.

Daph: They were so happy that they were leaping up and down and crying.

Josh: Actually, Sam was crying.

Daph: I'm sure that Nate was crying, too. Jesse doesn't tell us everything, you know.

Josh: But he did tell us what happened next.

Daph: And what happened next is just what you expected.

Josh: Sam and Nate headed straight for the island as fast as they could go.

Daph: And it was pretty fast, especially because the wind had picked up again.

Josh: By noon they were half a mile from the island.

Daph: That's good news.

Josh: Yes, it would have been good. Except for one little thing.

Daph: What's that?

Josh: The reef.

Daph: A reef?

Josh: A very large reef separated them from the island. And crashing down upon it were gigantic waves.

Daph: Should I stop pretending now?

Josh: Yes.

Daph: Okay. They were very big waves, so big that when they hit the reef it was like a cannon going off.

Josh: On the other side of the reef Nate and Sam could see a beautiful, blue lagoon.

Daph: The water was peaceful and calm, with tiny waves that washed up onto a pink, sandy beach.

Josh: The island itself did not look so nice, however.

Daph: Right in the middle of it was a craggy old mountain with its top stuck in some ugly looking clouds.

Josh: And on either side of the beach were tall cliffs with a whole lot of trees on top.

Daph: All day Nate and Sam looked for a way to get past the reef.

Josh: They sailed on and on, parallel to the reef, looking for an opening.

Daph: But everywhere they looked there were only crashing waves.

Josh: And everywhere they looked, there were no little red floats.

Daph: And every time they thought about it, they wondered why their map showed the island to be somewhere else.

Josh: It was supposed to be 400 miles farther on.

Daph: Had Nate made another mistake?

Josh: Or was this the wrong island?

Daph: “What do we do now?” asked Samantha.

Josh: Nate didn’t have a clue. Whenever the reef disappeared, the cliffs replaced it, creating a solid wall.

Daph: There was no beach and nowhere to land.

Josh: And when the reef returned, it was always the same.

Daph: No opening. Gigantic waves. The sound of cannons.

Josh: They had no other choice but to take the risk.

Daph: They’d have to wait for the tide to rise. Then they might be able to sail up and over the reef.

Josh: But there was one little problem.

Daph: They had no idea when high tide would be.

Josh: They could try holding their position until the water rose, but this would be very risky.

Daph: If the wind shifted or a skull came up, they might be swept away.

Josh: You mean squall.

Daph: Yes. If it swept them away it would be all over. They'd be lost at sea forever.

Josh: No, there was no way they could wait.

Daph: They had to take their chances. They had to aim for the place where the waves were smallest—

Josh: Catch the biggest wave—

Daph: And sail straight over the reef.

Josh: They could only hope that the raft wouldn't be smashed into a thousand pieces.

Daph: And that the sharp coral wouldn't make them into hamburgers.

Josh: Nate unhooked their lifelines and double-checked that their life vests were securely buckled up.

Daph: If the raft got stuck on the reef, they didn't want to be stuck to it.

Josh: Otherwise they might be turned into hamburger.

Daph: Better to jump into the water and hope that the wave would carry them into the lagoon.

Josh: Then, if they survived, they could swim to shore.

Daph: Just as they decided to sail in, everything got much worse.

Josh: Enormous swells passed under the raft and hit the reef so hard that the noise was like thunder.

Daph: Even worse, it looked like the tide was going out, not in.

Josh: They could see the vertical wall of the reef with razor-sharp coral everywhere.

Daph: Not only this, the sky was getting dark with clouds.

Josh: Lightning was coming down everywhere.

Daph: The thunder of the storm and the thunder of the waves were so loud that it hurt your ears.

Josh: “It looks bad,” said Nate.

Daph: “Oh Nate,” said Sam. “Can’t we do something? I’m so afraid.”

Josh: Sam’s frightened voice suddenly triggered something inside of Nate. Instead of panic, it was confidence.

Daph: “How can it be,” he thought, “that we’ve come this far only to be lost?”

Josh: “Hold on!” he commanded. “We’re going in.”

Daph: Nate hitched the raft to the next wave. Jesse called it a super-colossal wave.

Josh: Actually, he didn’t use the word “super.”

Daph: But it was super-colossal.

Josh: He did call it a hideous monster, however.

Daph: That’s right. It was a monster wave, like one of those giants we talked about earlier.

Josh: And like one of those giants, it grabbed the raft, lifted it up—

Daph: And threw it like a rock straight at the wall of the reef.

Josh: It was like the time Sam hurled the ruby float to the floor.

Daph: That’s right. And just before it could hit, Nate jumped out of bed and caught it.

Josh: But this time it wasn’t Nate, it was the water at the base of the reef.

Daph: Like Nate’s hand, it shot up from below and caught the raft before it could hit the wall of the reef.

Josh: Then the wave lifted the raft straight up, threw it forward, and dropped it in the middle of the reef.

Daph: Whereupon, a tiny second later, the super-colossal wave smashed down on them from above like the big fat hand of a giant.

Josh: If the hand hadn't been made of water, Nate and Sam would have been squashed flat as a pancake.

Daph: Instead, it was like they'd been thrown into a super-colossal washing machine.

Josh: With the wash cycle set for heavy duty.

Daph: You know about wash cycles?

Josh: I do. Who do you think washes my jeans?

Daph: Doesn't Mom do that?

Josh: Stop asking so many questions. Our heroes are still under the water. They're going to drown.

Daph: Oh, yes, they are very much under the water and everything is churning and turning.

Josh: And their arms and their legs are going every which way as they are sucked down and down—

Daph: And down and down, until, suddenly, everything gets still.

Josh: The giant's hand seems to have let go.

Daph: Then, like two corks, our heroes rocket to the surface.

Josh: Whereupon they gasp for air and open their eyes.

Daph: They flail about wildly, afraid that the next big wave is going to get them.

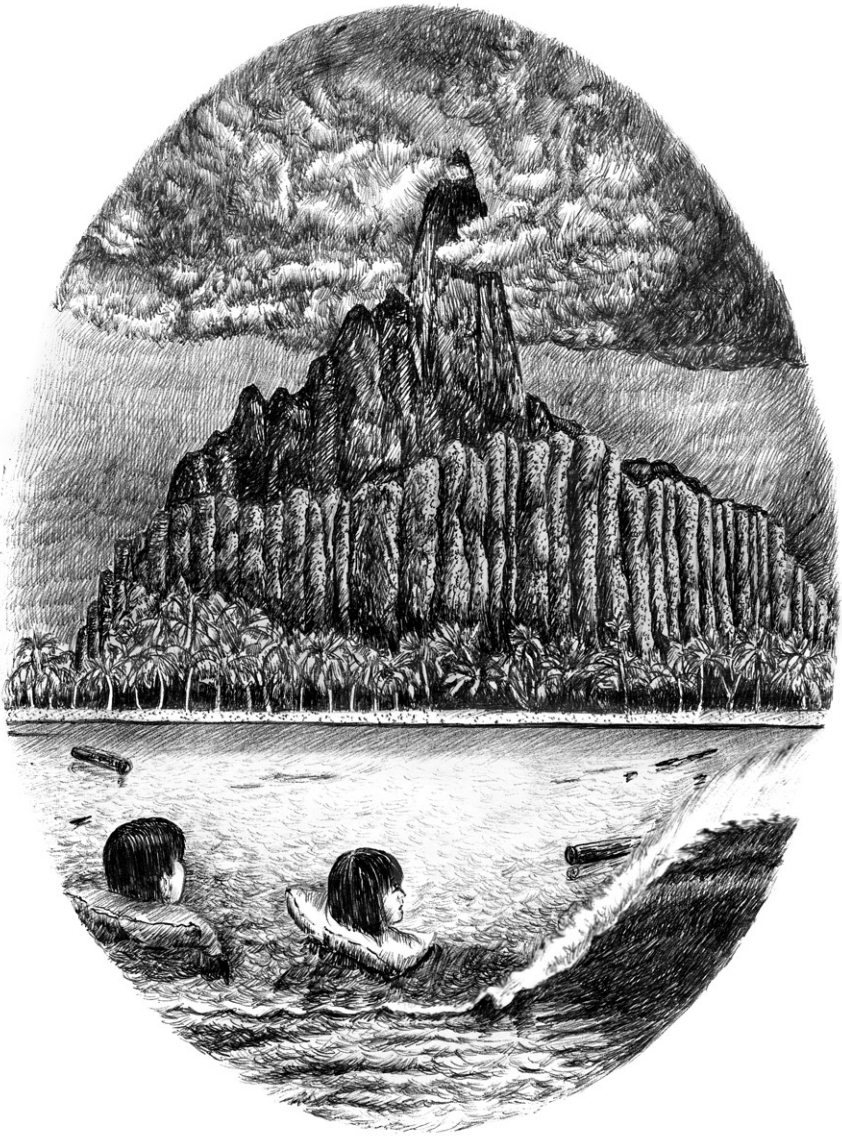
Josh: But no wave comes.

Daph: The wash cycle has stopped. There is not going to be a spin

The Ruby Float · Episode 11 · Shipwrecked

cycle. Someone has unplugged the machine.

Josh: But this is no washing machine full of dirty clothes and soapy water.



Daph: No, it is a beautiful, blue, tropical lagoon.

Josh: And they are now in it, floating in their life vests, safe and sound.

Daph: They wait until they catch their breath, then hold hands and slowly swim toward the shore.

Josh: In half an hour they pull themselves onto a pink sandy beach and collapse.

Daph: They are dead-tired—

Josh: And barely able to move a muscle.

Daph: Which means we are now at the end of Episode 11—

Josh: And 3,159 miles from home.

Daph: That's a very long way.

Josh: About an eighth of the way around the world.

Daph: On a little raft?

Josh: That's right. On a little raft.

Daph: Oh no! Where is the raft? Still on the reef?

Josh: That's not in this episode.

Daph: That's right. We have to keep everyone in suspense.

Josh: So tune in next time for the next exciting installment of *The Tale Of The Ruby Float*.

Daph: It's called—Not Alone.

Josh: That's it for now.

Daph: Bye.

Episode Twelve
Not Alone



Daph: Hello, Ladies and Gentlemen. We're so excited to have reached Episode 12 of—

Josh: *The Tale Of The Ruby Float*—

Daph: As first told to us by our great grandfather, Jesse.

Josh: And now we are telling it to you.

Daph: You know this, of course, if you've been following along.

Josh: And you're probably drying off right now, since everyone got wet in the last episode.

Daph: But now we're high and dry on a nice beach of pink sand.

Josh: And ready to begin.

Daph: So keep listening and you'll discover—

Josh: That the title of this episode is—

Daph: Not Alone.

Josh: Now, if you'll remember, Sam and Nate were washed over the

reef by a super-colossal wave.

Daph: Then they swam to shore, crawled under a palm tree and zonk—

Josh: They were so exhausted that they fell asleep right there on the spot.

Daph: It must have been very dark and very creepy.

Josh: Jesse never said anything about this part.

Daph: He also said nothing about what happened to the raft.

Josh: He made us wait until our heroes regained their strength.

Daph: Which wasn't until the following morning.

Josh: Thankfully, the storm clouds were gone and the lightning was no more.

Daph: It was a very beautiful, tropical day, actually.

Josh: Jesse never mentioned that either.

Daph: I know. I'm just creating atmosphere. It's very important.

Josh: I suppose it was beautiful, except for one thing.

Daph: What's that?

Josh: What they saw scattered all over the beach.

Daph: What did they see?

Josh: Hundreds of little bitty pieces of the raft's cabin.

Daph: And broken chunks of the special logs that made the hull.

Josh: And pieces of paper from the charts and the maps.

Daph: And the beautiful sail all bunched up in a big, wet heap.

Josh: Luckily, Nate found the thermos floating in the lagoon.

Daph: There was still a little bit of hot chocolate left.

Josh: Which made up their entire breakfast.

Daph: They looked all up and down the beach for something they could eat.

Josh: Nothing.

Daph: What about coconuts?

Josh: No way to get them open.

Daph: What about fish?

Josh: No way to catch them. No fishhooks. No spears.

Daph: What about water?

Josh: There wasn't any. Only saltwater.

Daph: This doesn't sound good.

Josh: It wasn't good, because after a whole day of walking up and down the beach—

Daph: They found nothing.

Josh: That night they went to bed hungry as lions.

Daph: But first they made a tent out of the sail.

Josh: Then they tried to sleep.

Daph: But it was almost impossible. And not because of the mosquitoes.

Josh: Everything under them was moving up and down, not because of an earthquake.

Daph: But because they'd been at sea for so long.

Josh: "Won't it ever stop?" asked Sam.

Daph: The ground didn't, but after a while, when it got really, really dark, something did.

Josh: What was that?

Daph: Their hearts. They were hearing noises, creepy noises, coming out of the jungle.

Josh: Some thing, or things, were moving around out there.

Daph: Once something brushed against the tent.

Josh: Sam let out a scream so loud it could break glass.

Daph: It was very, very loud.

Josh: Then it got very, very quiet.

Daph: Too quiet.

Josh: Nate kept looking at his watch, which had a dial and hands that glowed in the dark.

Daph: He could hardly wait for morning.

Josh: His watch said midnight when he noticed that Sam had fallen asleep.

Daph: Suddenly, he could see his entire watch and hand.

Josh: Then the letters "A" and "O" on the sail.

Daph: Someone carrying a light was standing on the other side.

Josh: Nate shook Sam awake. He put his hand over her mouth to keep her from screaming.

Daph: But it didn't work. This time she was so loud a picture window would have broken.

Josh: Nate's ears were ringing like church bells.

Daph: He could barely hear the words coming from outside the

tent.

Josh: “Don’t be afraid,” said the voice. “I won’t hurt you.”

Daph: The voice was big and booming, just like the super-colossal reef waves.

Josh: “Who are you?” asked Nate.



Daph: The light got closer. Then, a gigantic shadow fell across the tent.

Josh: “I live here,” boomed the voice. “And who might you be?”

Daph: Sam elbowed Nate before he could talk. “Don’t you dare tell him.”

Josh: Then she took a deep breath, faced the shadow and screamed—

Daph: “Go Away!”

Josh: It worked! The shape and the light disappeared. Then, just as before, it became very, very dark.

Daph: “Who was that?” whispered Sam.

Josh: “I don’t know,” said Nate.

Daph: They made a solemn pact to stay awake all night and keep watch together.

Josh: Then they immediately fell asleep. They were beyond exhausted.

Daph: Hey, have you noticed something strange?

Josh: What’s that?

Daph: The people in Grandpa’s stories fall asleep and wake up a lot.

Josh: So what? Isn’t that normal?

Daph: I never noticed that in other stories.

Josh: It also gets very dark a lot. What about that?

Daph: You’re right. It gets dark, very, very dark.

Josh: And then the light comes.

Daph: Yes, then the light comes.

Josh: Just like now, in the story. It's sunrise and a popping and crackling noise is going on.

Daph: It's coming from outside Nate and Sam's tent. It's so loud it wakes them up.

Josh: Nate pokes his head outside the tent to investigate.

Daph: Uh oh! He sees footprints, very very large footprints.

Josh: They are going up the beach.

Daph: Nate follows them with his eyes until he gets to a small fire.

Josh: What's this? Smoke and a strange smell fill his nose.

Daph: It's fried bananas.

Josh: Then something starts to whistle. It's a tea kettle that's sitting on the fire.

Daph: The teapot is making a very cheerful sound.

Josh: Nate and Sam follow the footprints to the fire.

Daph: Though it's not cold at all, they are shivering all over—

Josh: Because being very hungry and thirsty can make you cold.

Daph: So when they saw what was on the straw mat in front of the fire, they were astonished.

Josh: It was a most incredible breakfast.

Daph: Should we list everything, like Grandpa does?

Josh; It wouldn't be right not to.

Daph: First, there was a teapot filled with scrumptious smelling flower blossoms.

Josh: Just add the boiling water that's on the fire and you've got tea.

Daph: Then came the edibles. There was golden honey for the tea.

Josh: And mango nectar in a huge jug—

Daph: Which our heroes immediately gulped down without breathing once.

Josh: Then came a huge platter stacked high with all kinds of bread and exotic fruit.

Daph: Not to mention, a big assortment of jams and jellies.

Josh: And what's this—an unopened can of kippers!

Daph: Those were Nate's. They must have washed ashore.

Josh: Beside the fire was a big pile of logs. When the bananas were done frying, Nate put them all on the fire.

Daph: Then they sat down, warmed themselves by the roaring fire, and had a feast.

Josh: They ate so fast that they couldn't use their mouths to talk.

Daph: They could see just fine, though, and with their eyes they followed the footprints.

Josh: Until they disappeared way down the beach.

Daph: When they were finished, they packed the extra food into a sack they made from the sail.

Josh: Then they followed the tracks.

Daph: Sam hopped from footprint to footprint, trying to keep her feet inside of them.

Josh: It was hard because they were so far apart.

Daph: Meaning the footprint maker was very big.

Josh: The footprints also sank way down into the sand.

Daph: Way down!

Josh: Meaning that the footprint maker was very heavy.

Daph: Very heavy!

Josh: Nate compared the depth of the footprints to the depth of his own.

Daph: He was going to do a very complicated scalculation.

Josh: Which he did. His conclusion—

Daph: The person weighed at least twice as much as Nate.

Josh: One thing they didn't notice, however.

Daph: What was that?

Josh: The color of the sand.

Daph: That's right. It was pink, very pink, and it wasn't from the sun shining on the sand.

Josh: The footprints went on for a very long time.

Daph: It was at least an hour.

Josh: Then they turned left and headed into the jungle—

Daph: Where they suddenly disappeared.

Josh: Oh no!

Daph: But then, there was a path. Only one path.

Josh: Sam and Nate took it. For a while it was straight and level, but then it went up and up.

Daph: So they kept following it, going up and up until it came out at the ugly face of the cliff.

Josh: Yikes!

Daph: But the path was still there. All you had to do was follow it up.

Josh: On one side was the air and a very big drop.

Daph: And on the other side, a brown coral wall.

Josh: Fortunately, there were lots of holes in the cliff that you could hold onto.

Daph: As Nate and Sam climbed up and up, they hugged the cliff like it was their mom and dad.

Josh: It must have been an hour before they reached the top.

Daph: That's right. Now two hours have gone by. And our heroes' legs are so tired and wobbly, they've just got to sit down.

Josh: But now they can see everything far below.

Daph: The lagoon is so beautiful that it takes their breath away.

Josh: They'd never seen anything so blue.

Daph: It looked like the entire sky was dissolved in the water.

Josh: And the dissolved sky was held between two rings.

Daph: The inside ring was pink as the sunset. It was the beach they walked on on their way here.

Josh: The outside ring was the dreaded reef that sank the raft and almost sent them to the bottom of the ocean.

Daph: From here it looked so small and peaceful, with little waves making it sparkle white and blue.

Josh: And just beyond, so deep in color that it looked almost black, was the big, wide ocean.

Daph: But enough sightseeing. It's time to get moving.

Josh: And so our heroes got up and followed the path again.

Daph: Which took them straight into the deep, dark jungle.

Josh: It had been nice and cool at the edge of the cliff, but here it was steamy and hot.

Daph: The path was all windy and hard to see. It seemed like they were going straight, but Nate knew better—

Josh: Because he'd found his pocket compass on the beach.

Daph: Every step they took made the needle go this way and that.

Josh: But Nate kept track of their every move, making sure that if the path suddenly disappeared, they wouldn't get lost.

Daph: They went on and on for another hour, always moving a little more this way than that.

Josh: Until, just when they were ready to die from heat exhaustion, they slammed on the brakes.

Daph: Thank goodness they did. One more step and our story would have been over.

Josh: They stood at the edge of a cliff with a thousand foot drop.

Daph: It went straight down, like the wall of a huge castle.

Josh: And there wasn't a moat at the bottom filled with alligators. It was a whirlpool of gigantic waves and rocks.

Daph: "Oh no!" said Sam.

Josh: I don't remember her saying anything at this point.

Daph: She didn't. But that's what she was thinking. They'd come all this way and the path had disappeared.

Josh: It seems that way.

Daph: What do you mean "seems?" It leads over a cliff.

Josh: But how can that be?

Daph: Exactly. What kind of a trail goes through the jungle and stops at a cliff?

Josh: Maybe they should go back into the jungle and look around some more.

Daph: But it's getting late. And it's very dark in there.

Josh: Here we go with the dark again.

Daph: But it is dark. There are thousands of big trees everywhere.

Josh: Which was absolutely true. It would be crazy to start exploring the jungle at this late hour.

Daph: And so, sad and discouraged, they turned back.

Josh: It was a completely wasted day.

Daph: And lots of wasted energy.

Josh: But what else could they do?

Daph: Only a few steps and they were back in the jungle, just like before.

Josh: And just like before, the jungle had that heavy, syrupy smell which jungles have.

Daph: Yes, we forgot to mention that earlier.

Josh: Only this time there was something different about the syrup.

Daph: It was kind of a smoky syrup.

Josh: Very smoky, like someone was cooking pancakes and smoked sausages.

Daph: So smoky that Nate and Sam stopped dead in their tracks.

Josh: Didn't we just use those words?

Daph: No, we said they slammed on the brakes.

Josh: You're right. So they froze in their tracks.

Daph: There was most definitely, absolutely, smoke coming from somewhere.

Josh: "There must be another path," Nate whispered, thinking that some unknown person might be listening.

Daph: They both crouched low and poked around in all the yuckies growing on the smelly jungle ground.

Josh: This time they weren't going to give up.

Daph: Sam pulled out her super telescope.

Josh: Telescope? She doesn't have a telescope.

Daph: Yes he does. It's in her mind.

Josh: Her mind?

Daph: She can see hard-to-see-things with it. Like when she saw her grandpa wasn't sad because of them.

Josh: True. She did notice that.

Daph: And she saw Nate sneaking out of the house at night.

Josh: Also true.

Daph: And she found the ruby float and saw the message inside of it.

Josh: I never thought about it that way.

Daph: She even saw that Nate could sail, even before he knew he could.

Josh: And now, Ladies and Gentlemen, just when it seems that all hope is lost—

Daph: She sees a second trail, hidden underneath the cobwebby bushes.

Josh: Grandpa said they scrambled along this new trail, but I think they went very slow.

Daph: Because of all the cobwebby things.

Josh: And nasty jungle bugs.

Daph: Pretty soon the bushes and the bugs and the cobwebs were gone.

Josh: The trail got real wide.

Daph: And the trees got farther apart, letting the sun come blazing down on their heads.

Josh: Then, just like this episode is going to do, the trail suddenly ended.

Daph: That's right. No more trail and no more episode.

Josh: And so, Ladies and Gentlemen, we cordially invite you to stay tuned—

Daph: For the next exciting episode of *The Tale Of The Ruby Float*.

Josh: It's called—

Daph: A Wonderful Discovery.

Josh: So please come back soon so that you, too, can make—

Daph: A Wonderful Discovery!

Episode Thirteen

A Wonderful Discovery



Daph: Hello Everyone. We're back and ready for another—

Josh: Action-packed episode of *The Tale Of The Ruby Float*.

Daph: That sounds kind of sational.

Josh: You mean sensational?

Daph: I'm not sure. But whatever the word is, this is very serious business.

Josh: That doesn't mean it can't be jam-packed with excitement.

Daph: I know. But I want everyone to know we're very serious about the story.

Josh: Of course we are. You just told them so.

Daph: We better start then.

Josh: Okay, when we last saw Sam and Nate they were at the end of another trail.

Daph: But this time it didn't end at the edge of a big cliff.

Josh: No, this time it ended somewhere else.

Daph: So instead of looking straight down a thousand feet, they looked straight ahead.

Josh: And what they saw astonished them.

Daph: There, across a little green field of grass, was a small cabin.

Josh: Jesse called it a bungalow. That's a tropical word for cabin.

Daph: The bungalow had a pretty roof made of big leaves.

Josh: Pandanus leaves.

Daph: It had a very nice porch and a big front lawn full of trees.

Josh: Mango and coconut and banana.

Daph: And very far away, beyond the lawn, you could see the deep, blue ocean.

Josh: You could also see a colorful garden growing just past the lawn.

Daph: And just past the garden was the edge of a cliff.

Josh: Yes, edges of cliffs seemed to be everywhere on this island.

Daph: The garden grew lots of wonderful things, like gigantic melons and weird looking vegetables.

Josh: And there was a little stream that watered it on its way to the edge of the cliff.

Daph: When it was finished, it fell way down the cliff into a beautiful blue lagoon.

Josh: It made a little waterfall that also made hundreds of little rainbows as it fell through the air.

Daph: The water was clear as glass.

Josh: And if you followed the stream backward you ended up at the

south side of the bungalow.

Daph: Nate and Sam took this in for a while before making their first move.

Josh: Which was to walk across the lawn to the front of the bungalow.

Daph: They checked out the porch, but didn't see anyone there.

Josh: Then they climbed up the steps and went to the door.

Daph: It was wide open.

Josh: They knocked several times, but no one showed up.

Daph: Then they took a peek inside.

Josh: The wooden floors and walls looked a lot like the cabin of the raft.

Daph: Near the back was a big desk.

Josh: On top was a very large book, a stack of papers, and a bright red feather pen.

Daph: To the left was a small room with a sofa and some chairs.

Josh: They weren't your usual sofa and chairs made of cotton and wood.

Daph: No, they were made of pretty reeds.

Josh: Like the bamboo they use to make fishing poles.

Daph: There was even a fireplace with a kettle hanging inside of it.

Josh: It was built into the back wall and made all of coral.

Daph: But nothing was cooking. There was no smell of smoke or anything.

Josh: That meant that the smoke they followed here must be coming from somewhere else.

Daph: Maybe from behind the bungalow.

Josh: So they headed off along the south side of the bungalow.

Daph: It was very beautiful with lots of flowers growing everywhere.

Josh: Like hibiscus and bougainvilleas and gardenias and mandevillas.

Daph: Those are some very fancy-named flowers.

Josh: Fancy or not, that's what they're called.

Daph: And they all were growing on the banks of the same little stream that watered the garden.

Josh: Nate and Sam took a big drink from it.

Daph: It was the sweetest, coldest water they had ever tasted.

Josh: How can it be so cold on a tropical island?

Daph: That's what Jesse said. Maybe it was coming from an ice cave.

Josh: An ice cave? In the tropics?

Daph: Why not? There's snow in Hawaii, isn't there?

Josh: There is?

Daph: I saw it in one of our books. There's a great big mountain with lots of snow on top.

Josh: Oh, that mountain. It's a very tall mountain.

Daph: It's very fat. But it doesn't look that tall.

Josh: Okay. So maybe there is an ice cave. But right now we're looking for smoke.

Daph: And the smoke is right there, behind the bungalow.

Josh: It's coming out of a little house built of bleached coral rocks.

Daph: There's a chimney on top and it's smoking away like mad.

Josh: The smoke smells good, like a hickory barbecue restaurant.

Daph: Lots of wood is piled up along the wall in very neat stacks.

Josh: There's also a big heap of pink sand shaped like a cone.

Daph: But it's not what they see or smell that grabs their attention the most.

Daph: Yes, it's what is pounding away at their eardrums.

Josh: It's kind of like singing, more or less.

Josh: And the voice is very deep and cheerful, but not too musical.

Daph: Jesse called it ascappela.

Josh: A capella. It means singing without any musical instruments playing.

Daph: And here's what the a capella person was singing—

Josh: "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation."

Daph: It was most definitely a man's voice. "See who it is!" said Sam.

Josh: She pushed Nate toward the door, but he jumped back. "No. You see."

Daph: "No. You see."

Josh: It was like that time on the beach when they were getting up and sitting down and getting up and sitting down.

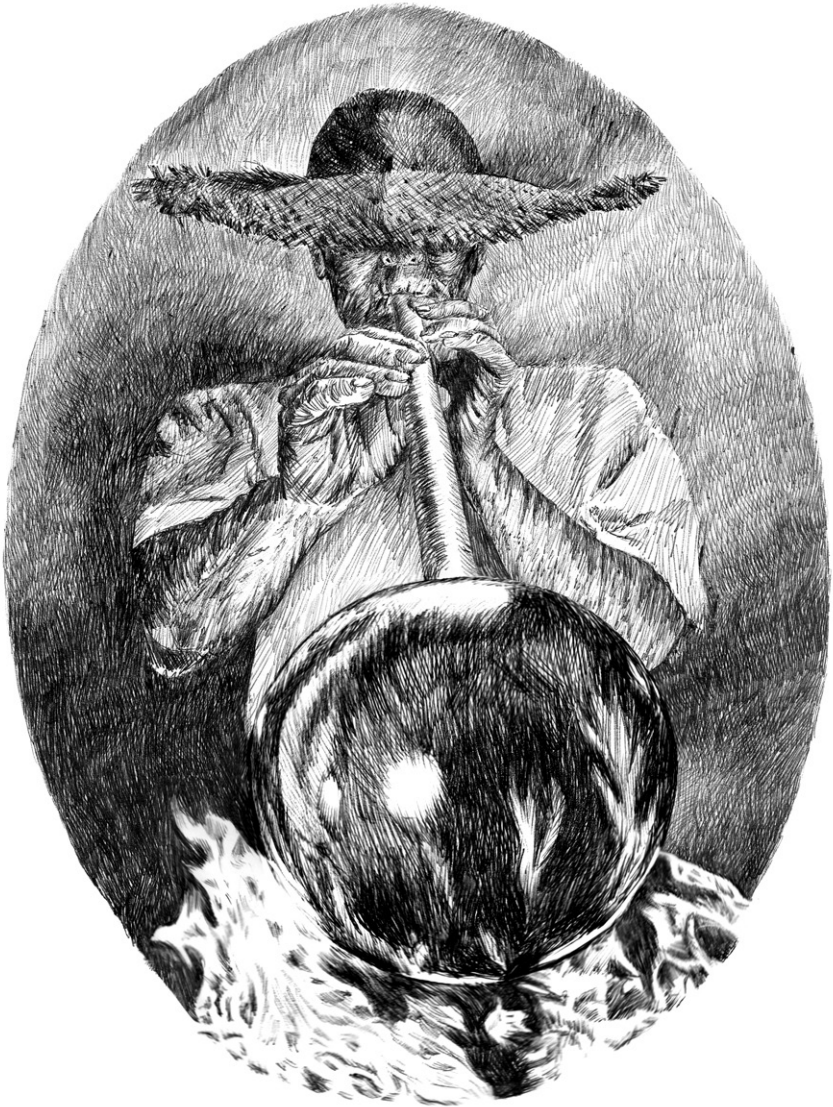
Daph: Finally, they got tired, and decided to look together.

Josh: "Wow!" they thought. "That guy is very, very big!"

Daph: He was spinning some kind of pipe thing over a big fire.

Josh: At the end of it was a little bubble of deep red glass.

Daph: The man sang and sang, only stopping when he blew through the pipe.



Josh: It was a basso profundo.

Daph: The pipe?

Josh: No. The man's voice. It means that it's very deep.

Daph: We already said that.

Josh: Yes, but basso profundo sounds like something you'd say in a very deep voice.

Daph: And the basso stupendo went away as soon as he blew in the pipe.

Josh: The little deep red bubble got bigger and bigger and the room got quieter and quieter.

Daph: Now, as our heroes are watching this amazing sight, we'll tell you what we know about the man.

Josh: First off, he knew that Nate and Sam were watching him. He just didn't let on.

Daph: In fact, he'd been watching ever since they washed up on the island.

Josh: He was the one who shined his lantern on their tent in the middle of the night.

Daph: And scared the wits out of them.

Josh: And made Sam scream her bloodcurdling scream.

Daph: Even now the man's ears were still ringing.

Josh: He disappeared completely after that night.

Daph: He stayed way out of sight—

Josh: Because he didn't want to scare Nate and Sam anymore.

Daph: So he secretly made them the fabulous breakfast.

Josh: And the trail in the sand that would lead them to him.

Daph: When Nate and Sam followed it along the beach, he was way up on the cliff, looking down.

Josh: When they went into the sticky, icky jungle, he was right behind them.

Daph: He didn't want them to get lost.

Josh: It wasn't easy for him to sneak around.

Daph: That's because he was pretty old, though not as old as our great grandpa.

Josh: Even so, he was very, very strong.

Daph: And also completely bald.

Josh: Only you couldn't usually tell because of his big straw hat.

Daph: He needed it to keep from getting a bad sunburn on his head.

Josh: Nate and Sam had been right in estimating his height and weight from the look of his footprints.

Daph: He was six feet, seven inches tall, which is very high up.

Josh: And he weighed 230 pounds and didn't have an ounce of fat on him.

Daph: His face needed ironing.

Josh: What?

Daph: It had lots and lots of wrinkles. Some were as deep as the Grand Canyon.

Josh: Jesse said that this showed that he'd had many joys and troubles in his life.

Daph: His hands were so big they made a watermelon look like a ping-pong ball.

Josh: I don't think they were quite that large.

Daph: Even so, they worked so well that he could thread a needle in the dark.

Josh: And slip a little piece of paper into a little red orb in the light.

Daph: Which he was doing a lot as Nate and Sam watched.

Josh: First, he made the paper damp, rolled it into a little scroll, and dropped it through the pipe into the orb.

Daph: Second, he spun the pipe and the little red ball really fast over the fire.

Josh: Third, while he was still spinning the little red ball, he quickly moved it over a basket.

Daph: Fourth, he slammed on the brakes, which means he stopped the pipe from twirling.

Josh: Fifth, he tapped the pipe with one of his giant fingers.

Daph: Sixth, he watched the little ball, which looked exactly like the ruby float, fall into the basket.

Josh: Seventh, he did the first 6 steps over and over again until—

Daph: Eighth, the basket was piled high with lots and lots of ruby floats.

Josh: Then came step 9, which was the man picking up the basket.

Daph: And step 10, he walked out the door.

Josh: Now we will switch to the man's steps, which Nate and Sam secretly follow.

Daph: I'm getting tired of all these steps.

Josh: That's okay. The man makes too many, so we can't number them.

Daph: First, he walks toward the bungalow.

Josh: I thought you were tired of steps.

Daph: Oh, I forgot. He walks toward the bungalow.

Josh: But he doesn't go into it.

Daph: No, instead, he cuts across the lawn and goes straight into the icky sticky jungle.

Josh: Fortunately, he doesn't go far.

Daph: And fortunately Nate and Sam are not trying to run in front of him.

Josh: Because he ends up at the edge of a cliff.

Daph: Not again.

Josh: But this cliff's a little different than the one at the end of the garden. There's no lagoon at the bottom.

Daph: No? What's there?

Josh: The big wide ocean. And there are no rocks below.

Daph: Then what happens?

Josh: He starts pitching the little floats toward the sea.

Daph: Just like baseballs.

Josh: Only they don't fall like baseballs.

Daph: They fall like ping-pong balls. That's because they're so light and floaty, like the raft.

Josh: They sort of drift downward, like little red bubbles.

Daph: They go down and down and down until you can't see them anymore.

Josh: At which time they land in the ocean—

Daph: And float away into the sunset.

Josh: Now comes the next thing.

Daph: Which makes me hungry, just thinking about it.

Josh: The old man leaves the jungle and ends up in the garden.

Daph: Where Nate and Sam watch him pick lots of vegetables and melons and put them in the basket.

Josh: Then he grabs a bunch of green coconuts from under the coconut trees—

Daph: And a bunch of pretty red and yellow and green mangoes from the mango tree.

Josh: Then comes the neat part.

Daph: He gets a little net from beside the stream and snags three super-colorful fish.

Josh: He also throws them into the basket.

Daph: Then, in a flash, he disappears into the bungalow—

Josh: Leaving Nate and Sam standing alone behind a big tree.

Daph: I think it was a breadfruit tree.

Josh: Actually, we don't know what kind of tree it was.

Daph: It was most definitely a breadfruit tree. It is just the right size to hide behind.

Josh: Where have you ever seen a breadfruit tree?

Daph: The same place I saw the snow on the tropical island.

Josh: I need to take a look at that book.

Daph: I think we sold it.

Josh: That's too bad. It sounds like a very good book.

Daph: Can we go back to Nate and Sam now?

Josh: Sure. Let's go.

Daph: They are hiding behind a big breadfruit tree.

Josh: Every now and then they take a peek at the bungalow.

Daph: Pretty soon every now and then turns into a long time.

Josh: So that, before they know it, it's dark.

Daph: Now they can come out from behind the breadfruit tree and take a closer look.

Josh: It looks like candles are burning in the bungalow. There is lots of flickering light.

Daph: And there are also flickers coming from the big fire in the fireplace.

Josh: That's a lot of fires.

Daph: You need some of them for cooking.

Josh: And what's cooking smells exactly like fresh mango pie, roasted fish, and something like potatoes.

Daph: "Do you think he could be the one we're looking for?" whispered Sam.

Josh: "I'm not sure," said Nate.

Daph: "Well," said Sam. "We will just have to knock on the door if we are ever going to find out."

Josh: And you, our listeners, will have to listen to our next episode if you want to find out.

Daph: Because this is the end of Episode 13.

Josh: So stay tuned for the next exciting episode of—

Daph: *The Tale of The Ruby Float.*

The Ruby Float · Episode 13 · A Wonderful Discovery

Josh: Which is called—

Daph: The Most Important Question In The World.

Episode Fourteen

The Most Important Question In The World



Daph: Wow! We're now all the way to Episode 14.

Josh: Which is called, if you remember—

Daph: The Most Important Question In The World.

Josh: Shall we ask our listeners to guess what the question is?

Daph: Sure. Shall we give them a clue?

Josh: That might take away the suspense.

Daph: We don't want to do that.

Josh: Maybe we should just rewind back to the end of the last episode.

Daph: Rewind?

Josh: It's movie talk

Daph: Don't we just tap to go back?

Josh: No. We're going to rewind like they did when Grandpa was a boy.

Daph: But when did tapping start?

Josh: A long time after Grandpa was a boy.

Daph: Okay, let's rewind to the end of the last episode.

Josh: Where Nate and Sam have arrived at the front door of a bungalow.

Daph: Which is hidden deep in the jungle.

Josh: On a tropical island.

Daph: Thousands and thousands of miles from their home.

Josh: Someone is inside, cooking up a storm.

Daph: It smells very, very good.

Josh: And Nate and Sam are very, very hungry.

Daph: But most of all, even more than wanting to eat mashed potatoes and mangoes—

Josh: They want to know if the man cooking up a storm is the one they're looking for.

Daph: Is this the most important question?

Josh: Could be. Let's flash forward to our current episode. Hopefully, we'll find out.

Daph: Nate and Sam are still standing at the door.

Josh: You might think that after all they've been through, they'd bang on the door right away.

Daph: But no. Their heads are filled with worries.

Josh: And their stomachs are filled with butterflies.

Daph: They are about to talk to the person who brought them here.

Josh: He doesn't look at all like they expected him to look.

Daph: Not that they had any idea of how he would look.

Josh: Actually, they'd never thought about it.

Daph: But if they had they would have never imagined this.

Josh: The man was old, very old.

Daph: Of course, they'd seen that he was old when he was making the floats.

Josh: But now it was sinking in.

Daph: Could this really be the one they were looking for?

Josh: What if they had made some terrible mistake?

Daph: Like Nate and the accidental jive.

Josh: Jibe!

Daph: Now, after so long, there was only one way to find out.

Josh: Nate gave the door a light tap.

Daph: It was so light that someone who wasn't listening wouldn't have heard it.

Josh: But the old man was listening.

Daph: He'd been listening for an entire hour, which is how long Nate and Sam had been standing outside.

Josh: It was just as well that they'd hesitated.

Daph: Because he wanted to make everything inside just right.

Josh: Such as getting dinner ready.

Daph: Even so, waiting so long to hear the knock was very hard for him.

Josh: Because he was crying inside for Nate and Sam.

Daph: They did not realize how awful they looked. Their clothes were dirty and torn and their shoes were gone.

Josh: And their hair was all flyaway and matted down and filled with salt.

Daph: The old man wanted to rush out to help them, but thought it best not to.

Josh: Why do you think that was?

Daph: I don't know. Jesse never really said.

Josh: He did say that the old man didn't want to frighten Nate and Sam. We said that before.

Daph: Yes, at the tent. Sam screamed at him.

Josh: But he could have stayed and talked to them.

Daph: But that would be a different story.

Josh: And a different old man.

Daph: As for this old man, he waited until just now and then opened the door.

Josh: "Hello," he said, just like you would if you answered your own door—

Daph: And found two young strangers standing outside.

Josh: Nate and Sam looked way up at the man's wrinkly face.

Daph: From this close, he looked like a giant.

Josh: Even so, his voice was soft and gentle.

Daph: It wasn't at all basso stupendo, like it was when he was singing.

Josh: "What can I do for you?" he asked.

Daph: Nate and Sam weren't sure how to answer.

Josh: "We were in the area," said Nate. "We noticed your house—

Daph: "And wondered whether you might be able to help us find someone we're looking for."

Josh: The old man could tell that Nate was very nervous. "And who might that be?" he asked.

Daph: "The Alpha and Omega," said Sam in a pretty loud voice. "The person who sent us the message inside this float."

Josh: Sam handed him the ruby float. For days she had been holding onto it with a death grip.

Daph: Nate was very surprised. He thought it had been lost when they crashed on the reef.

Josh: The man rolled the float about in the palm of his hand.

Daph: His hand was so big the float looked like a red, clear marble.

Josh: What's a clear?

Daph: Jesse said they were his favorite marbles. You can see right through them, like glass.

Josh: Oh. I guess the float could have looked like that.

Daph: Yes, like a red clear.

Josh: The old man looked the little float over and came out with another question.

Daph: "The Alpha and Omega sent you this?" he asked.

Josh: His voice stayed gentle and soft, putting Nate and Sam a little more at ease.

Daph: "Yes," said Sam. "And we saw you making them in the rock house."

Josh: “You were spying on me?” he asked.

Daph: Nate and Sam imagined that the wrinkles on the old man’s face were starting to frown.

Josh: “No! No!” said Nate. “We were just making sure, that’s all.

Daph: “Yes,” added Sam. “We’re inexperienced in this sort of thing.”

Josh: “You are, are you?” asked the man.

Daph: “Those are the words our mother always uses,” said Sam. “It means we’re still learning.”

Josh: “Why don’t you both come in,” said the man.

Daph: “Oh my,” said Nate. “We wouldn’t want to disturb you in the middle of your dinner.”

Josh: “Not at all,” insisted the old man. “I love having guests. Won’t you join me? I’ve got plenty for everyone.”

Daph: “Are you sure?” asked Sam. The food smelled great and it looked very warm and cozy inside the bungalow.

Josh: “No trouble at all,” said the man, seeing that Sam and Nate were both shivering with cold.

Daph: Immediately the man escorted them through the door to the dining room table.

Josh: As Sam and Nate took their seats, they didn’t notice that the table was already set for three—

Daph: Or that the portions of food were in just the right amounts.

Josh: I think they were too tired and nervous to notice what most people would.

Daph: They were very stressed out.

Josh: To say the least.

Daph: Shall we get to the food?

Josh: I guess so. But did you ever wonder why Jesse talks so much about it?

Daph: What do you mean?

Josh: The details and all, down to the last potato.

Daph: I don't know. But I always like those parts of his stories.

Josh: Do most stories have lots of food in them?

Daph: Oh, Josh, what does it matter? Let's just get going. Nate and Sam's food is getting cold.

Josh: Okay, let's start with the steaming pile of something that looked like baked potatoes.

Daph: On which you put strange tasting butter made from coconut milk.

Josh: Then there were some great spicy greens that made you so warm inside that the shivers immediately went away.

Daph: And the most excellent fish that Nate and Sam had ever tasted.

Josh: They were both so hungry that they hardly said a word as they ate.

Daph: They washed everything down with some deliciously sweet coconut milk.

Josh: And for dessert they had a gigantic slice of fresh mango pie.

Daph: Next it was time to sit in the parlor in front of the blazing fire.

Josh: The old man took a seat in one of those reedlike chairs we told you about.

Daph: Sam and Nate stretched out on a luxurious carpet of woven fandango leaves.

Josh: They were pandanus leaves.

Daph: Right. And as is often true in Jesse's stories, Nate and Sam went off to dreamland in the twinkling of an eye.

Josh: The old man watched as our heroes drifted away. Then he lowered his head and folded his hands.

Daph: Now and then he moved his lips, like he was whispering something to someone, but no words came out.

Josh: Now it's time to fast forward from early evening to early morning.

Daph: Sam and Nate have just opened their eyes.

Josh: For a moment everything seemed very strange. Are they in a dream? Or are they really so far far away from home?

Daph: Then they remembered the spectacular dinner and the big roaring fire.

Josh: And the old man, who was nowhere to be seen.

Daph: "He was right there," said Sam, pointing to the reed chair, which she now saw was a rocker.

Josh: "Come," said Nate. "Let's find him."

Daph: As soon as they got outside they smelled the oh so familiar smoke.

Josh: Which caused them to make a beeline for the glassworks.

Daph: They didn't get far before they heard the basso stupendo of the old man's voice.

Josh: "A mighty fortress is our God," he sang, "a bulwark never failing."

Daph: What's a bulwark?

Josh: I think it's something that's hard to move or break, like a giant rock.

Daph: You sing the rest. The words are too hard for me.

Josh: Okay. "Our helper He amid the flood, of mortal ills prevailing."

Daph: And right here, the old man saw our two heroes. Immediately he stopped his work.

Josh: "A hearty good morning to you both," he said. "Did you sleep well, I should hope?"

Daph: "Oh yes," answered Sam. "And we're so sorry to have fallen asleep. It was very impolite of us."

Josh: "Yes," added Nate. "We're normally night owls."

Daph: The old man let out a belly laugh.

Josh: "As am I," he said. "But I drifted off myself also, I must say. Come, I have something for you."

Daph: Our heroes could hardly keep up with the old man as he walked to the bungalow.

Josh: Each step he took was equal to two or three of theirs.

Daph: Once inside he reached under the rocker and pulled out two pairs of exquisitely woven straw slippers.

Josh: Exquisitely woven.

Daph: They were absolutely gorgeous. I would love to have a pair for myself.

Josh: Well, these slippers are for Nate and Sam.

Daph: Yes they are. "Put them on," said the man. He saw that their feet were full of cuts and black and blue spots from walking on the sharp coral.

Josh: The sandals fit perfectly. Sam, especially, thought they were very fashionable.

Daph: “Where did you get them?” she asked. She was very curious.

Josh: “I made them last night,” he replied. “While you were sleeping.”

Daph: “You made them?” Nate asked. He was astonished.

Josh: “Yes,” said the man. “It was no trouble at all. Would you like to try them out?”

Daph: “I’m due for a walk,” he continued. “You’re welcome to come along, if you’d like.”

Josh: They agreed immediately to come. The man was becoming more mysterious and more interesting by the minute.

Daph: Off he went, with our two adventurers right behind.

Josh: He followed the little stream backward until it disappeared into a tall mountain of brown coral.

Daph: Maybe the ice cave’s inside the mountain.

Josh: Could be. But right now our heroes are climbing the mountain with the old man.

Daph: It’s so steep they have to stop every five seconds to catch their breath.

Josh: It was every five minutes.

Daph: Whatever it is, it’s very exhausting.

Josh: Along the way they avoided talking about the most important issues.

Daph: For the old man, it was the question of how our heroes had gotten here.

Josh: For our heroes, it was the location of the Alpha and Omega.

Daph: Instead, they beat around the bush.

Josh: More precisely, they exchanged pleasantries.

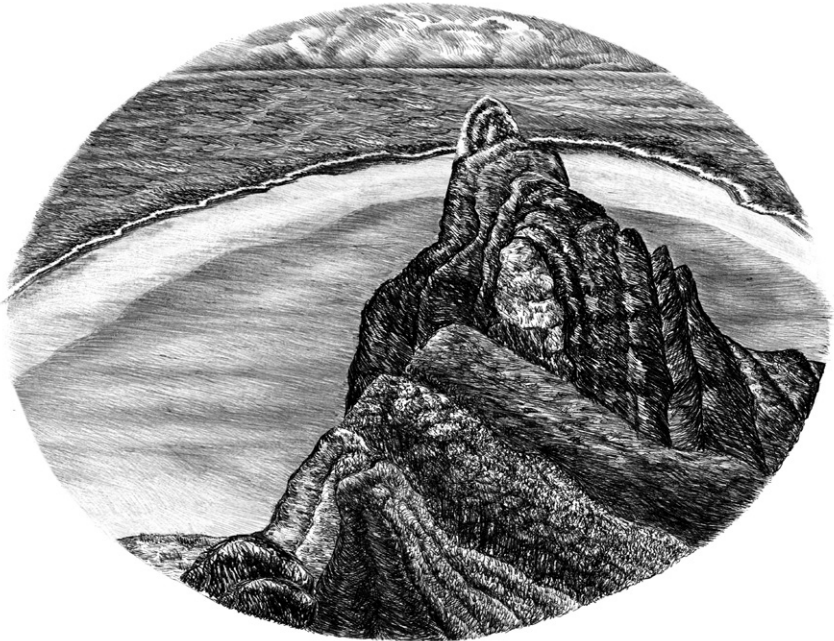
Daph: Jesse never said what they were, however. I guess it wouldn't have mattered anyway.

Josh: The hike to the top of the mountain lasted an hour.

Daph: Though the old man had climbed the mountain a lot, he was still wiped out.

Josh: As he waited to get his strength back, he enjoyed watching the look of wonder in our heroes' eyes.

Daph: "From here you can see the entire island," he said.



Josh: The top of the mountain was a gigantic piece of coral, flat as a pancake.

Daph: It was like a crow's nest without the basket or the crows.

Josh: No matter which way they turned, they could see the horizon, blue as can be, with towering white clouds boiling out of it.

Daph: Spreading out below them was the entire island, green as an emerald.

Josh: And at the edge of the emerald, bright red beaches and turquoise blue lagoons.

Daph: But nowhere did they see any sign of human life, except for the old man's bungalow.

Josh: Which from here looked like a tiny dark speck near the foot of the mountain.

Daph: "There," said the old man, pointing north. "If you look closely you can see the remains of your raft."

Josh: Our heroes followed the tip of the man's giant finger to a spot on the beach.

Daph: But it was too far away to see anything.

Josh: "You'll need this," said the man.

Daph: He gave them a little bamboo telescope that he had tucked away in his jacket.

Josh: Sam looked first. Everything in the spyglass was much bigger and very pink.

Daph: It seemed that the glass of the telescope was made from the same pink sand as the ruby float.

Josh: The lens was lighter in color, however, making it easy to see through.

Daph: "It looks so beautiful," said Sam.

Josh: Nate, who hadn't looked yet, was growing impatient. "Let me see," he said.

Daph: Sam gave the glass to Nate, who was also taken by the wonderful pink color.

Josh: “I’m not able to make floats of the pink glass,” said the man. “It’s too fragile.”

Daph: “But the red floats are so very beautiful,” said Sam. “If it hadn’t been red, I might not have kept it.”

Josh: The old man let out another belly laugh.

Daph: “You must tell me how you found the float,” he said, “and how it came to pass that you are shipwrecked on this island—

Josh: “It would also be friendly if you would tell me your names.”

Daph: Nate and Sam were very embarrassed. How could they have been so impolite to someone so nice.

Josh: They apologized left and right, even telling the man how their parents had stressed the importance of always being polite.

Daph: And wouldn’t you know, they still forgot something.

Josh: What is that?

Daph: To ask the man his name. Instead, they told him their entire story, Sam going first, then Nate—

Josh: Then Sam, then Nate, and back and forth and back and forth until they got to the very end.

Daph: As they talked they disagreed only on the order in which everything had happened.

Josh: Nate sometimes skipped things so that he could get to the heart of the issue.

Daph: Which was to find a way to save their grandparents, whose names are Hank and Harriet.

Josh: On this one thing they agreed completely and wholeheartedly.

Daph: Just when they thought that all hope was lost they discovered the ruby float.

Josh: It was Sam who snatched it out of the sea and saw the strange silhouette inside.

Daph: It was Nate who figured out how to look inside. And when he did, Whammo—a message!

Josh: I don't think that Whammo! quite fits here.

Daph: But it was a Whammo! There was thunder and lightning and wonderful words that changed everything with a wham.

Josh: Okay. And after the Whammo, they had to think about what the words might really mean.

Daph: Which didn't take long. After all, the words are absolutely clear.

Josh: Except for the question of who this Alpha and Omega might be.

Daph: Whoever he was, the words promised that he could save Harriet from death—

Josh: And rescue Hank from his terrible sadness.

Daph: For in the whole wide world, no one loved his wife more than Hank.

Josh: And so they built a raft like the one Hank had talked so much about in his stories.

Daph: Which they would sail across the sea in search of the Alpha and Omega.

Josh: But first they'd get their parents' permission. It was very important.

Daph: But before that they'd do a test voyage.

Josh: That way they could convince their parents that they really knew what they were doing.

Daph: But then, during the test voyage, something went terribly wrong.

Josh: A big wind came out of nowhere and blew them way out to sea.

Daph: By the time it stopped, they were so far from home, it was impossible to go back.

Josh: They had to fight against giant waves and bone-chilling cold and terrible fears.

Daph: Even so, they kept the raft pointed toward an itty bitsy island.

Josh: Nate was sure the float had come from it. He'd studied lots of charts and done lots of math.

Daph: And, best of all, he had an instinct—

Josh: Which agreed with all the charts and math.

Daph: Then, after 31 days at sea, they came across a zillion ruby floats, dancing on the water.

Josh: Actually, it was several dozen.

Daph: That night they checked each one for a message. There were plenty. And they wrote them all in the logbook.

Josh: The same logbook that disappeared when the raft was smashed to pieces on the reef.

Daph: Only the message in Sam's float had survived, thanks to her death grip.

Josh: This was the float they'd placed in the old man's great hand.

Daph: Now they were hoping that the old man could lead them to the Alpha and Omega—

Josh: Who is the Beginning of all things and also the End, to the best of their understanding.

Daph: One little detail worried them a lot, however.

Josh: According to their map, no island was at this location.

Daph: It was supposed to be several days farther ahead.

Josh: And that, Ladies and Gentleman, brings us back to the top of the coral mountain—

Daph: Where the old man has been listening patiently to everything Nate and Sam have been telling him.

Josh: He heard the passion in their voices and felt the sadness in their hearts.

Daph: How much they missed their parents and grandparents!

Josh: How much they wanted to bring wonderful news back to Hank and Harriet—

Daph: News that would make them supremely happy.

Josh: “So you are looking for the Alpha and Omega?” asked the old man.

Daph: “Oh yes,” said Sam. “We do so much want to meet him.”

Josh: Then, without missing a beat, Sam popped the big question.

Daph: “Could you possibly be him?” she asked.

Josh: She was very polite, hoping against hope that the answer wasn’t yes.

Daph: The old man laughed again. It seemed that he laughed a lot, but this time it wasn’t from his belly.

Josh: “Not I,” he answered. “Most certainly not I—

Daph: “But I can tell you what I know of him.”

Josh: “That would be wonderful,” cried Nate.

Daph: “Oh yes,” said Sam. “It would be so wonderful if you could help us.”

Josh: “You’ve never heard of him before?” asked the man.

Daph: “No,” said Sam. “In all my years, I am sure I have never heard of anyone called the Alpha and Omega. It is a curious name, indeed.”

Josh: “I haven’t either,” said Nate. “I’ve been going to school six years and I have never once heard of such a person.”

Daph: But Nate wasn’t finished. “Not in geography or in math or in anything else.”

Josh: “What about Hank and Harriet?” asked the man. “Did they ever mention such a name?”

Daph: “Never,” answered Nate and Sam together.

Josh: “Surely your parents must have mentioned the name—

Daph: “He has many names—

Josh: “Perhaps you heard them and didn’t realize that they were speaking of the Alpha and Omega.”

Daph: “What are they?” asked Sam. “I have an excellent memory. If they ever mentioned any of the names, I will most surely remember it.”

Josh: “He is called Wonderful, Counselor, the Everlasting Father—

Daph: “The Prince of Peace. And these are but a few of his names.”

Josh: “Wow!” exclaimed Nate. “Those are incredible names.”

Daph: “That they are,” said the man—

Josh: “And he is far greater than any one of them.”

Daph: “Well, I’ve never heard a single one of them!” said Sam.

Josh: A big wind suddenly came up, almost tearing off the old man's hat.

Daph: And the wind didn't go away, but stayed and stayed.

Josh: And the air got cooler, much cooler than the air down below.

Daph: The old man saw that Nate and Sam were shivering again.

Josh: "Come," he said. "Let's go back home."

Daph: And so it is, Ladies and Gentlemen, that you can also go back home—

Josh: For our episode is over.

Daph: Except for one last thing.

Josh: What?

Daph: Did we answer the question about the question?

Josh: I think we did.

Daph: What is it?

Josh: Who's the Alpha and Omega?

Daph: But we've been asking that from almost the very beginning.

Josh: That's why it's so important. The whole story is about that.

Daph: I think it's confusing.

Josh: It's not confusing at all.

Daph: Then why is our next episode called what it is?

Josh: You mean—A Very Puzzling Answer?

Daph: Yes.

Josh: We'll find that out next time. As for now, we've got to finish up. People have things to do.

Daph: Oh, I forgot. Anyway, I was just pretending again.

Josh: Well quit pretending and invite everyone to our next episode.

Daph: Ladies and Gentlemen, please come and see us next time as we discover a very puzzling answer to—

Josh: The Most Important Question In The World.

Episode Fifteen
A Very Puzzling Answer



Nate: Hello, Ladies and Gentlemen. Welcome to Episode 15 of *The Tale Of The Ruby Float*—

Daph: Which is called, just as I hinted at the end of the last episode—
A Very Puzzling Answer.

Josh: Now, when we last saw our trio, they were climbing down the coral mountain.

Daph: A big wind had come up and it was getting cold.

Josh: Cold by tropical standards, though in most parts it would still be considered real warm.

Daph: Can we fast forward now? I want to get to the answer.

Josh: Why not. It's turned out to be a very rainy day and everyone has to stay inside.

Daph: Yes, they are all three inside the bungalow. You can hear the rain coming down on the roof, which is very cozy.

Josh: And they've just finished another of the old man's great meals, which, fortunately, we are not going to inventory.

Daph: Inventory?

Josh: You know. Make a list. Like make a list of everything they ate.

Daph: But I like that part, especially the mango pie.

Josh: Maybe they did have mango pie, but right now they're waiting for the old man to answer their question.

Daph: You mean about the Alpha and Omega?

Josh: Yes. They're sitting at his feet and looking at his very wrinkly face.

Daph: That's right. He says to them, "It has been many years since I have talked to anyone about the Alpha and Omega—"

Josh: Why are you stopping.

Daph: I think you should be the old man. I can't talk in the basso stupendo.

Josh: But you spoke for him in the last episode. Remember, we shared what he had to say.

Daph: But what about when he says too much for one of us to say?

Josh: That already happened. You spoke for him, then I did, and so on.

Daph: Maybe we can get someone else to play the old man.

Josh: We don't have anyone else. There's only you and me.

Daph: What about the basso stupendo?

Josh: I'm sure our listeners are able to imagine you've got the greatest basso stupendo in the world.

Daph: You think so?

Josh: Yes. I think you're doing great.

Daph: Okay, let's start again.

Josh: Good. Just remember, sometimes I'll also have to play Sam, and you'll have to play Nate, just like before.

Daph: Okay. I'll start by playing the old man. He says, "It has been many years since I talked to anyone about the Alpha and Omega—

Josh: "Though, as you know," he continued, "I have been telling of him through little floats such as yours."

Daph: Okay. I think that worked.

Josh: Good. Now on to Nate. "Do you work for him?" he asked.

Daph: "In a way, " said the man. "You might say that he works through me."

Josh: Now Sam has something to say.

Daph: "I see," she said, though she didn't really see anything. "Do you have meetings with him?"

Josh: But Sam's not finished.

Daph: "Our dad has meetings," she said. "That's how he finds out what he has to do."

Josh: "You might say that I have meetings," said the old man

Daph: "When do you meet with him?" asked Nate.

Josh: "All the time," said the man.

Daph: "Have you met with him since we got here?" asked Sam.

Josh: "Oh yes. The moment I saw him I said to him—

Daph: "Oh my, thank goodness you'll show me what to do."

Josh: Nate and Sam looked all around. Something seemed very odd.

Daph: Everywhere they'd been on the island they'd seen no one ex-

cept the old man.

Josh: Maybe the Alpha and Omega lived somewhere in the jungle, under the trees.

Daph: “How did you get to know him,” asked Sam. “Did you meet him here, on the island?”

Josh: “Oh no,” he said. “It was my mother who first introduced us. I was very young. Younger than you.”

Daph: “Wow!” said Sam. “Then you’ve known him a long time.”

Josh: “I guess I have,” answered the man.

Daph: Then Nate came with another question.

Josh: “What’s he look like?” he asked.

Daph: “Yes,” said Sam. “I should very much like to recognize him the moment I see him.

Josh: “Well,” said the man, “I know this is going to sound strange, but I’ve never seen him.”

Daph: “Never seen him?” our heroes asked, talking together at the same exact time.

Josh: “Not with my eyes, if that’s what you mean,” said the man.

Daph: This was extremely odd, thought our heroes.

Josh: How was it possible to meet someone without seeing him?

Daph: “But you said your mother introduced you to him,” argued Sam.

Josh: “She did,” said the man. “But not in the way you think. Instead, she showed me some of his work.”

Daph: “You mean like a book or a painting?”

Josh: “Exactly,” said the man.

Daph: Our heroes' ears perked up.

Josh: "What did she show you?" asked Nate.

Daph: "Nothing that I hadn't seen or known of before—

Josh: "Nor anything that you have never seen or known of before."

Daph: "Like what?" asked Sam.

Josh: "Everything I could see and everything I could not see. The sun, the moon, the stars, the heart beating inside me."

Daph: "You're not saying that he made all these things, are you?" asked Sam.

Josh: "That's precisely what I'm saying. He created everything, from the tiniest speck of dust to the most gigantic star in the universe—

Daph: "He created you, he created me and he created everyone else—

Josh: "There's nothing you can think of that he didn't create."

Daph: Nate and Sam were very quiet. They believed that the Alpha and Omega must have great powers—

Josh: But this was much greater than anything they'd ever thought of.

Daph: "You're startled?" asked the man.

Josh: "Yes," said Nate. "We're not sure what to think."

Daph: "Perhaps you would like to think alone for a bit. I shall go outside and enjoy the rain."

Josh: Before our adventurers could answer, the old man rose up out of his reed rocking chair.

Daph: Then he grabbed a big straw umbrella and went straight outside.

Josh: "What do you think?" asked Nate.

Daph: "I don't know," said Sam. "What do you think?"

Josh: "He seems very level-headed to me," said Nate.

Daph: He remembered that their mom sometimes used these words.

Josh: Especially when she was talking about people whose judgment she respected.

Daph: "He does to me, too," said Sam.

Josh: "A level-headed person wouldn't work so hard for something he didn't think to be true," said Nate.

Daph: "I suppose not," said Sam. "But that doesn't mean he's right."

Josh: "But he seems to be honest. He told us right away that he is not the Alpha and Omega."

Daph: "Yes. And if he'd said he was, we wouldn't have believed him."

Josh: "Then who do you think the Alpha and Omega could be? If he's not more powerful than death, the message in our float is made up."

Daph: Sam listened to Nate's argument. It made sense.

Josh: "And if he made the whole universe, then helping Hank and Harriet would be a piece of cake for him."

Daph: Sam held still for a second, then bolted out the door.

Josh: Nate was right behind her. It was like the time they'd left the breakfast table on the day Hank didn't show up.

Daph: They found the old man standing under a breadfruit tree. His head was bowed down.

Josh: Sam immediately grabbed him by the hand.

Daph: "We're so sorry," she said. "Please come back in and tell us more."

Josh: "No apologies, please," he said. "I love the rain."

Daph: The old man returned to the bungalow and took a seat in his reed rocker.

Josh: Nate and Sam sat down again at his feet.

Daph: “I don’t mean to be nosy,” said Sam, “but what did you think when your mom told you about the Alpha and Omega?”

Josh: “Let me think. If I remember correctly, we were walking at night in the garden and she was pointing at the stars—

Daph: “I suppose I thought he was up there among them, looking down on us from very very far away—

Josh: “I was a bit sad.”

Daph: “Why were you sad?” asked Sam.

Josh: “To think he was so very far away.”

Daph: This didn’t sound too good to Nate.

Josh: “He was far away, then,” he asked.

Daph: “Oh no. Not at all. It was I who was far away.”

Josh: “I don’t understand,” said Nate.

Daph: “My heart was far from his,” said the old man.

Josh: “My mother told me that he loved me. But I didn’t love him. It was that simple.”

Daph: “He loved you?” asked Sam.

Josh: “Like a son, my mother said. More than his own life.”

Daph: The old man pointed at the big book on his desk beside the red feather pen.

Josh: “The whole story is over there,” he said. “In that book.”

Daph: Our heroes had been wondering about this book since the

first time they saw it.

Josh: It was very large and also very old, just like the old man.

Daph: “Whose story is in it?” asked Sam.

Josh: “The story of the one you’re searching for. Go ahead. Take a look.”

Daph: Our adventurers made it to the desk in a flash.

Josh: Like the old man, the book looked even bigger when you were up close to it.

Daph: And like the old man’s face, the book had lots of deep cracks in its leather cover.

Josh: And the letters of the title words were so worn you couldn’t tell what they said.

Daph: “May we open it?” asked Sam.

Josh: “Please do,” answered the man.

Daph: The first page had only two words written on it.

Josh: They said: The Bible.

Daph: “Did the Alpha and Omega write this?” asked Sam.

Josh: “In a way,” answered the man. “Come. Bring the book here. I’ll show you something.”

Daph: Our heroes carried the book to the old man.

Josh: They held it as carefully as you would a little baby.

Daph: The old man put it on his lap, opened it to a page near the end, and pointed at a line.

Josh: “See here,” he said. “What does it say? I can’t see well without my glasses.”

Daph: Nate read the words out loud. The page they were on was very thin and yellow.

Josh: “Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, yet shall he live.’”

Daph: Sam couldn’t believe her ears. It was all she could do to keep quiet till Nate was done.

Josh: “And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

Daph: “The words in our float!” burst out Sam, who still held the ruby float in her hand.

Josh: “Almost,” said the old man. “Your float doesn’t begin with Jesus, but with Alpha and Omega. As you know, he has many names, including Jesus.”

Daph: Nate was concentrating so much on reading that he might as well have been deaf.

Josh: “Perhaps you’d like to read a bit more,” said the man.

Daph: “Oh may we?” asked Sam. “That would be wonderful.”

Josh: He pointed to a line on the page. To the left of it was the number 11.

Daph: “The story starts here,” he said.

Josh: “Who is John?” asked Nate. He saw the name at the top of the page.

Daph: “A disciple of Jesus,” answered the man.

Josh: Sam had never heard of such a word.

Daph: “What is a disciple?” she asked.

Josh: “A follower of Jesus,” he said—

Daph: “If you follow him, you are one of his disciples.”

Josh: “Are you one of his disciples?” asked Nate.

Daph: “I suppose I am,” he answered.

Josh: The old man fell silent as he watched our adventurers devour the page with their eyes.

Daph: He noticed whispering and then realized that Nate was reading the words to Sam.

Josh: The rain outside continued to come down hard upon the pandanus roof of the bungalow.

Daph: The fire popped and whizzed in the fireplace and the flames flickered as the wind shot down the chimney.

Josh: Rays of pink light danced across the faces of our adventurers—

Daph: And smoothed out the wrinkles on the face of the old man.

Josh: “Is this a true story?” asked Nate.

Daph: The story was about Lazarus. The Alpha and Omega had raised him from the dead.

Josh: “It is,” said the old man.

Daph: “Where is Bethany?” asked Sam.

Josh: “Far away from here,” he said—

Daph: “In the land where the Alpha and Omega was born.”

Josh: “But he’s here now, right?” asked Nate.

Daph: Nate was still very worried that he had made a mistake.

Josh: “No, not physically,” said the man.

Daph: Sam’s heart sunk inside her like a rock. “But you told us you met with him!”

Josh: “That I did,” replied the man—

Daph: “I spoke to him when I was outside under the breadfruit tree.”

Josh: “But no one was there,” said Nate. “You were standing alone.”

Daph: As you can tell, Nate was getting very frustrated.

Josh: “I know it looked that way,” said the man, “but I was anything but alone—

Daph: “You cannot see the air in the room, but it is most certainly here—

Josh: “You cannot see your own hearts, but they are most certainly beating within you—

Daph: “You cannot see your minds, nor your thoughts, but they are most certainly there—

Josh: “So it is with the Alpha and Omega. He is here, yet he cannot be seen.”

Daph: “But Mary and Martha saw him,” said Sam, thinking of what Nate had just read to her.

Josh: “And his disciples saw him, too,” said Nate. “Didn’t you say you were one of his disciples?”

Daph: “Yes, I did say I was a disciple,” he said. “As for the story of Mary and Martha, that was before his death.”

Josh: “Death?” our heroes said simultaneously.

Daph: “Did not the story say that Jesus was going to die?” asked the man.

Josh: The children were terribly confused.

Daph: How could somebody be alive and then dead and then alive again? Or was the old man talking to the dead?

Josh: “I don’t mean to be impolite,” said Nate, “but I’d like a moment to speak privately with my sister.”

Daph: Though Nate sounded calm and collected, giant waves were crashing around inside him.

Josh: “This time we’ll go outside,” he continued. “It’ll help us think more clearly.”

Daph: “That’s an excellent idea,” replied the man.

Josh: He suddenly produced two beautiful pandanus umbrellas that they had never seen before.

Daph: “You made these?” asked Sam.

Josh: “For just such occasions,” said the man. “It’s very good to be alone sometimes and to honestly address your own thoughts—

Daph: “Please, I won’t be offended in the slightest.”

Josh: The children walked through the garden under their big umbrellas.

Daph: The rain wasn’t coming down so hard anymore and the air was sweet with flower smells.

Josh: “We need to read the old man’s book,” suggested Nate. “Until we do, we’re going to stay confused.”

Daph: “But it’s a very big book,” said Sam. “It will take forever.”

Josh: “Not if we set our minds to it. We built the raft, didn’t we? Did that take forever?”

Daph: “No, but it took a long time.”

Josh: “We sailed here, didn’t we? That didn’t take forever.”

Daph: “No, but it also took a long time.”

Josh: “Then we can surely read a book.”

Daph: Sam began to cry. “I can’t read that well. Grandma will die before I will ever be able to finish.”

Josh: Nate put his arms around his sister. “Remember what you told me when I was discouraged?”

Daph: “No.”

Josh: “When I couldn’t find the trees for the raft, you said the Alpha and Omega would show us how to find them.”

Daph: “I did?”

Josh: “Those weren’t your exact words, but that’s what you meant. And when we got through the storm you said it was because of him.”

Daph: “That too?”

Josh: “Yes. Don’t you see? He’ll make sure we get back home in time.”

Daph: “But what if Grandma’s already died?”

Josh: “We’ll just have to trust the Alpha and Omega, like we did during the storm.”

Daph: Samantha cheered up a little. “That was a bad storm, wasn’t it?”

Josh: “Yes, it was?”

Daph: Sam looked into Nate’s eyes. “Will you read it to me? Like Mom does? I always understand when she reads to me.”

Josh: “Every word. I’m sure the man will explain to us everything we don’t understand.”

Daph: “You think so?”

Josh: “Sure. We’ve just been asking questions in the wrong order. Anyway, didn’t you say the man seems pretty level-headed?”

Daph: “I think that was you. But it is true. He does seem very level-

headed, as Mom would say.”

Josh: And so, Ladies and Gentlemen, we bring Episode 15 to an end.

Daph: Nate and Sam’s biggest challenge is still to come—

Josh: Which is to read and understand the old man’s book.

Daph: But fortunately they have some help—

Josh: Help which you will discover when you return for the next episode of—

Daph: *The Tale Of The Ruby Float.*

Josh: Should we tell them what it is?

Daph: You mean who’s going to help, or the episode?

Josh: The episode. Otherwise, we would be losing the suspense.

Daph: Okay. The name of the episode is The Breath of God.

Episode Sixteen

The Breath Of God



Daph: Hello, Ladies and Gentlemen. It's so nice to have you back for Episode 16 of *The Tale of The Ruby Float*.

Josh: In our last episode Nate and Sam did their best to understand the identity of the Alpha and Omega.

Daph: But it wasn't easy for them, even though the old man did his best to explain.

Josh: What the old man said made sense.

Daph: But, on the other hand, it didn't make sense.

Josh: How could the Alpha and Omega be alive and then dead and then alive again?

Daph: Then again, the message in their float talked about the same thing.

Josh: The old man had showed them exactly where it was in the book that was on his desk.

Daph: Maybe if they read it, they would understand.

Josh: It was a gamble, though.

Daph: A big one. It was going to take time and time was something their grandma might not have.

Josh: On the other hand, they thought, if the Alpha and Omega was as powerful as he sounded, then they had nothing to worry about.

Daph: All these things were rumbling like thunder through our heroes' heads as they stood outside—

Josh: Under the breadfruit tree, with a light rain coming down and pandanus umbrellas over their heads.

Daph: I think we can fast forward now.

Josh: Okay, because our adventurers moved very fast in returning to the bungalow.

Daph: The old man was still sitting in his chair.

Josh: And his head was bowed, like it had been when they saw him under the breadfruit tree.

Daph: "He's talking to the Alpha and Omega again," said Sam. "Don't disturb him."

Josh: They waited a bit—

Daph: Until the old man opened his eyes and saw them standing in front of him.

Josh: "Ah, you're back," he said.

Daph: "We hope you're not angry with us," said Sam.

Josh: "Not at all," he said.

Daph: "Whenever you want to be alone," he continued, "just say the word."

Josh: "We'd like to ask a favor of you," said Nate.

Daph: “What’s that?” asked the old man.

Josh: “We’d like to read your book.”

Daph: The old man’s face lit up.

Josh: “Please do,” he said.

Daph: “If we have any questions, may we ask for your help?” asked Sam.

Josh: “I am at your disposal,” answered the old man—

Daph: “Perhaps I can point you in a direction that will make your job a bit easier.”

Josh: The old man opened the Bible to about the same place the children had been before.

Daph: The top of the page said “John.”

Josh: “If you read this first,” said the man, “many of your immediate questions will be answered—

Daph: “You’ll have to be careful, though—

Josh: “The book is very fragile.”

Daph: “We will be very careful,” promised Sam.

Josh: “Now, with your permission,” said the man, “I am going to turn in.”

Daph: The old man lit several candles and left for the glassworks.

Josh: Since Nate and Sam had arrived he’d moved his hammock there, leaving the bungalow to them at night.

Daph: “I’m so excited,” said Sam. “Do you want to see how it begins?”

Josh: “But the man told us to start here,” objected Nate.

Daph: “Please,” begged Sam. “Aren’t you just a little bit curious?”

Josh: Nate turned the pages very carefully. “Here. It says ‘Genesis.’”

Daph: “What do you suppose that means?”

Josh: “I don’t know. Shall we go back and ask the man?”

Daph: “Oh no! Not now. It’s too late. Just read the first sentence.”

Josh: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

Daph: “Wow!” said Sam. “That’s what the man’s mother told him.”

Josh: “Shall I read more?” Nate very much wanted to find out what happened next.

Daph: “We’d better do as the man said,” warned Sam. “We can go back when we’re finished.”

Josh: “How about going to the end?” he said, flipping forward. “Let’s take a look.”

Daph: “No!” shouted Sam. “That will ruin it.”

Josh: Nate turned back to the first page with “John” at the top and began to read aloud.

Daph: “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God—

Josh: “He was in the beginning with God—

Daph: “All things came into being through Him and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being—

Josh: “In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men,” finished Nate.

Daph: “They’re like the Genesis words,” said Sam.

Josh: “They are,” agreed Nate.

Daph: Sam huddled close to Nate as they continued through the book.

Josh: They were tremendously excited, even more than they'd been that night when they first read the words in the ruby float.

Daph: I remember they were under the boat and it was pouring rain outside. Lightning bolts were everywhere.

Josh: Yes, but those bolts were like little sparkles compared to the brightness of hope that was flashing through them now.

Daph: And the wind that blew that night on the beach was like a little breeze compared to the hurricane they were feeling now.

Josh: It was the breath of God, fanning the hope of our heroes into a raging fire.

Daph: But words can't fully describe what Sam and Nate were experiencing that night.

Josh: They were coming before God, the Alpha and Omega, the one whom they'd been seeking for so long—

Daph: In a state of desperation and confusion. But their hearts, which were hurting, they opened to God.

Josh: And God answered them. It wasn't in a voice you could hear with your ears, like the voice of their parents or grandparents or the old man.

Daph: It was in a voice that only their hearts could hear, but it was as loud and clear as the old man's basso stupendo.

Josh: And it spoke to them in many ways, though always saying the same thing—

Daph: "Don't be afraid, my children—

Josh: "Have faith in me—

Daph: "I will provide for everything you need—

Josh: "I will strengthen you—

Daph: “I will bring you healing.”

Josh: With a wonderful loving hand, God guided Nate and Sam through “John.”

Daph: He especially helped them understand the meaning of the words inside the ruby float.

Josh: It wasn’t complicated at all, actually.

Daph: Because the words, like the children had always hoped, meant exactly what they said.

Josh: And what was that?

Daph: Whoever believes in Christ, who is also Jesus and the Alpha and Omega, and many other wonderful names—

Josh: Shall never die.

Daph: And the big “whoever” word included not only their grandma, but everyone else, including them.

Josh: This didn’t mean that they would never die on this earth.

Daph: It meant that if they died here, they would still live, not here, but in an eternal world.

Josh: That’s what the old man meant when he said that the Alpha and Omega had lived—

Daph: And then died and then came back to life again.

Josh: This was to show everyone that only He has power over death.

Daph: This is why He calls Himself the Resurrection and the Life.

Josh: And this is why His followers believe that only He can give eternal life.

Daph: And so, Ladies and Gentlemen, this ends our shortest and most important episode.

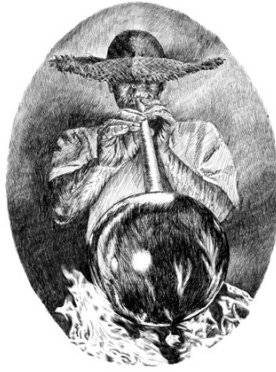
The Ruby Float · Episode 16 · The Breath Of God

Josh: Please tune in next time when we present episode 17 of *The Tale Of The Ruby Float*, which is called—

Daph: The New Journey Begins.

Episode Seventeen

The New Journey Begins



Josh: Thanks for returning, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Daph: As you know, lots and lots happened in our last episode.

Josh: Though you couldn't see what happened with your eyes.

Daph: You could only imagine it, since it was in the hearts of our heroes.

Josh: And what was there that wasn't there before?

Daph: Or shall we say who?

Josh: Yes, I think that's it. We should say who.

Daph: The Alpha and Omega, that's who. He was now living in the hearts of Nate and Sam.

Josh: And He was telling them of thousands of things they had never known before.

Daph: Some of which we are going to tell you in this episode, which Josh will introduce.

Josh: Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to The New Journey Begins.

Daph: We'll begin by zooming out so that we can see 60 days all at once.

Josh: You know about zooming out?

Daph: Don't you remember, we just made a video together.

Josh: Oh, that.

Daph: We did zooming and spinning and blurring and swapping and all of that.

Josh: I don't think those were the exact terms, but we did do that.

Daph: And we had funny noises and music and everything. It was lots of fun.

Josh: But right now we've got to keep going with the story.

Daph: I know. But when we're finished I want to make a little movie about it.

Josh: It would have to be a very long movie.

Daph: It wouldn't be any longer than any other movies.

Josh: It would be a lot longer than 40 seconds.

Daph: Was our movie only 40 seconds?

Josh: Yes.

Daph: That's funny. It seemed a lot longer.

Josh: It would also cost a lot of money.

Daph: Not if we're creative.

Josh: You mean, if we figure out how to create money?

Daph: Oh, Josh, why are you so discouraging?

Josh: I'm just being realistic, that's all.

Daph: Well I don't want to be that way. I want to be in a way that can tell the story in lots of ways.

Josh: So let's finish the story. Then we can talk about the movie.

Daph: Can we?

Josh: I promise. Now, let's get started.

Daph: Okay. Ladies and Gentlemen, if you remember we were just starting to zoom out on 60 days.

Josh: So zoom out we will as we find out what Nate and Sam learned as they studied the Bible with the old man.

Daph: As we said, they studied for 60 days and found out thousands of things, of which we will mention but a few.

Josh: Such as how the entire world was created—

Daph: And how people decided not to follow God—

Josh: And how a great flood wiped out the entire world—

Daph: After which came a most beautiful rainbow, the first ever—

Josh: And of what the rainbow meant—

Daph: And of the Alpha and Omega being born on this earth—

Josh: And of the incredible miracles that he performed.

Daph: But now it is time for slow motion.

Josh: Because this is the part that Nate and Sam wanted so much to understand.

Daph: The Alpha and Omega had died.

Josh: But he didn't die in an ordinary way. He was killed on a cross. You would think that would be the very end of him, because that's what we always see.

Daph: But not this time. This time someone who was dead, the Alpha and Omega, brought himself back to life.

Josh: And this time Nate and Sam were not confused.

Daph: The book made everything crystal clear.

Josh: It told the meaning of salvation and of the grace of God.

Daph: It told them that if they followed the Alpha and Omega it would not be all peaches and cream. It would be lots of trials and lots of problems and many other things.

Josh: But it told them not to be afraid, because the Alpha and Omega had already beaten his enemies.

Daph: It was only a matter of seeing things through, of being loyal to the King.

Josh: You're elaborating again.

Daph: But it's true. The Alpha and Omega, the King of everything, wants us to be loyal.

Josh: I guess so.

Daph: He does want us to be loyal. It is all over the book.

Josh: I don't know if He uses the word loyal. I think it's faithful.

Daph: Oh, Josh, if you're loyal, you're faithful and if you're faithful, you're loyal.

Josh: Okay.

Daph: And one more thing.

Josh: What's that?

Daph: I think we should stop for a second and talk to our listeners.

Josh: That's what we're doing.

Daph: No. I mean really talk to them.

Josh: Okay. What do you want to say?

Daph: I want to say that if they haven't read the Bible yet, they should stop everything and read it right now.

Josh: Before we're finished with the episode?

Daph: Yes, they should read it right now and come back when they're done.

Josh: Okay. So what do we do in the meantime?

Daph: I don't know.

Josh: Do we stop the episode?

Daph: Yes.

Josh: Grandpa didn't stop the story when he was telling it to us.

Daph: We already knew about the Bible.

Josh: Yes, but we hadn't read it.

Daph: We knew about it. We knew the stories.

Josh: But we hadn't read it.

Daph: What are you saying?

Josh: I'm just saying that Grandpa didn't stop.

Daph: Why didn't he?

Josh: I think because he wanted us to decide on our own. It's like the Alpha and Omega. He let's us decide on our own.

Daph: But he's the King of everything.

Josh: That's true. But he doesn't force anyone to follow him.

Daph: He doesn't?

Josh: No.

Daph: Then what about the next part?

Josh: What part?

Daph: The part that frightened Nate and Sam. It was about hell and the whole world being burned up.

Josh: But that part's not about the Alpha and Omega followers. It's about the others.

Daph: What others?

Josh: The ones who don't want to follow him. Don't you remember? We didn't want to follow either.

Daph: Oh.

Josh: And then, after a long time, and after a lot of Grandpa's stories, we changed our minds.

Daph: Is that how it happened?

Josh: I think so.

Daph: Then maybe we can go on.

Josh: And if anyone wants to stop and read the Bible, great. They can always come back to our story later.

Daph: Okay. I think you're right.

Josh: Now, you were talking about the whole world being burned up.

Daph: Yes, it is very bad.

Josh: And after the very bad something very very good comes along, which is a new earth and also a new heaven. Nate and Sam found all of this in the old man's Bible, which starts from the beginning of the world and goes clear to the very end. And the more they read the more their faith in the Alpha and Omega grew.

Daph: It is like a little baby drinking lots and lots of milk to get strong.

Josh: And the old man was always there, answering their questions, not by using his own words, but by pointing out a part in the book that explained the other.

Daph: Just like the Alpha and Omega did when he was asked to explain about himself.

Josh: Then, after many days had gone by, our adventurers asked the old man to baptize them. They'd read in the Bible how the Alpha and Omega and his followers had been baptized. They went under the water and came up again, just like Sam and Nate when they were swept over the reef. And when they went under it was like dying. And when they came up again, it was like being born—

Daph: Like a little baby, only this baby will belong to the Alpha and Omega and always remain his loyal follower—

Josh: The same Alpha and Omega who had brought Nate and Sam to this faraway island.

Daph: Now we are going to focus our cameras on the old man. He is so happy that he could laugh for a million years, because for a million years he'd been making the ruby floats and throwing them into the ocean.

Josh: Not quite a million years.

Daph: It was a very long time.

Josh: And all that time he never knew whether anyone had gotten his messages.

Daph: Sometimes it made him very sad.

Josh: Except for the Alpha and Omega, he was all alone. What good could that be? It seemed that his life was all a waste.

Daph: And then, suddenly, two children appear on the island. Suddenly everything makes sense, even the reason for his being ma-

rooned on the island—

Josh: A story which we will reveal to you later, so stay tuned.

Daph: Now we must move our camera equipment once more, this time to the place on the beach where Nate and Sam first came ashore.

Josh: Ninety-one days have gone by since they were swept away from home.

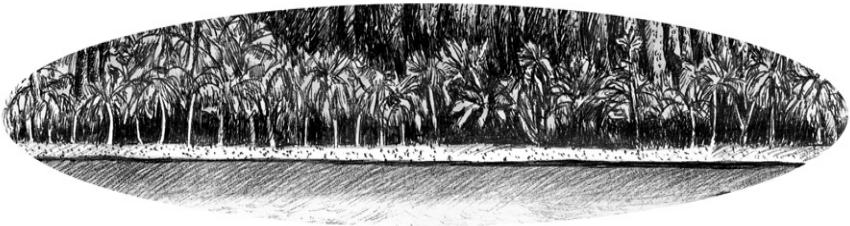
Daph: The day is spectacular.

Josh: The air is so clear it seems that you can reach out and touch the horizon with your hand.

Daph: The sun is bright and golden and the lagoon a beautiful turquoise blue.

Josh: Our trio marvels at the beauty of the island and thanks the Alpha and Omega for having brought them here.

Daph: The old man leads our heroes into the warm and fragrant waters. He baptizes Sam first. “Lord Jesus,” she says, before going under, “I do so much love you in so many ways. I will thank you always for everything you have done and will love and serve you with all my heart and soul.”



Josh: When Sam came up out of the water she wore a smile as warm as the tropical sun. This made Nate so happy that he could almost burst. “Jesus,” he said, as the old man got ready to baptize him, “everywhere I look I see your wonderful ways, ways far too wonderful for my simple mind to understand. I repent of all my sins and proclaim to you that I will now and forever remain your most humble

servant.” With this the old man baptized Nate. And he thanked the Alpha and Omega for his goodness and mercy in saving these two precious children.

Daph: That night was glorious, a beautiful summer evening on which the stars and the moon shined down brightly upon the island. Nate and Sam helped the old man to prepare a feast.

Josh: Here’s a short inventory.

Daph: We’re taking an inventory this time?

Josh: Why not? It’s getting late and everyone’s getting hungry.

Daph: Josh, you’re so sweet. Why don’t you start?

Josh: Okay. There was baked fish and fresh bread and garden herbs and many kinds of delicious fruit and berries—and jellies and jams. And out of the cellar the old man brought a bottle made of the same ruby red glass as his floats. He popped out the cork and poured a fragrant, deep red wine into all three glasses. He then broke pieces from a loaf of bread and handed them to Nate and Sam. This, he said, would be their first communion celebration.

Daph: “Take, eat,” he said, raising the bread. “This is the body of our Lord, which was given for you. This do in remembrance of Him.”

Josh: When they had all eaten the bread, he lifted up his glass and asked Nate and Sam to join him.

Daph: “Drink of it; this cup is the new testament of our Savior’s blood, which was shed for you for the remission of sins.”

Josh: Once the children had taken communion, the old man blessed them. Then they enjoyed the most delicious meal they had ever eaten.

Daph: When they were done, they sang songs together and danced about the house and the garden, their hearts overflowing with joy on this most beautiful of all the island nights.

The Ruby Float · Episode 17 · The New Journey Begins

Josh: And so, Ladies and Gentlemen, we bring this episode to a close.

Daph: And if you are reading the Bible right now and not knowing that we are ending it, then you will know when you come back.

Josh: So, wherever you are, please visit us for the next episode of The Tale Of The Ruby Float—

Daph: Which is called—The Tragic Farewell.

Episode Eighteen

The Tragic Farewell



Daph: A bright and cheerful good morning to you, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Josh: It might not be morning for everyone. You should leave out the time.

Daph: But everyone can imagine. And the morning is always so pretty and wonderful.

Josh: Not always. Sometimes there are storms going on or people are in distress.

Daph: I can still wish everyone a bright and cheerful morning.

Josh: Okay, but just remember that this episode isn't so bright and cheerful.

Daph: Josh! Don't give it away.

Josh: I'm just foreshadowing.

Daph: What's that?

Josh: It means that when you see a big shadow something is causing it.

Daph: Like the old man's shadow on Nate and Sam's tent?

Josh: Did we say he cast a shadow?

Daph: I'm sure he did. He had a light and it was night and that makes shadows everywhere.

Josh: Well, that's foreshadowing.

Daph: Except this episode doesn't start with any shadows. It's bright and sunny.

Josh: That's right. Which is why our heroes are startled the next morning when they hear the loud sound of thunder.

Daph: Yes, Nate rushes outside looking for the big dark clouds and the lightning.

Josh: But it is clear as a bell. The only shadow he sees is his own.

Daph: Should we tell everyone the name of our episode before we go any farther?

Josh: Good idea. Ladies and Gentlemen, now that the sun is up and the thunder is booming we welcome you to—

Daph: Episode 18 of *The Tale Of The Ruby Float*. It's called The Tragic Farewell.

Josh: In our last episode our heroes became like the old man, not meaning that they got very large and wrinkly, but that they also became good friends and followers of the Alpha and Omega. Though they couldn't see or hear Him, they knew He was living in their hearts.

Daph: Yes, He was in them like the little message inside the ruby float.

Josh: Everything was peaches and cream with lots of dancing and singing and eating of mango pie.

Daph: But now, on this bright and sunny tropical morning, something was going to happen.

Josh: The little floats were about to be thrown at the floor, but not so the messages could be taken out and read and understood, but so they could be destroyed.

Daph: Now, let us point our cameras toward Nate.

Josh: He has just run through the garden to the edge of the cliff. He is still looking for the big clouds, which we have already said are not there. Perhaps a storm is coming from the other side of the island, he reasoned. He went back to the bungalow where Sam was just coming out the door. "Storm's a-comin from the west," he said smartly. "Can't see it from here."

Daph: "That doesn't sound like thunder," said Sam.

Josh: Our heroes immediately began searching for the old man. They checked the garden and the glassworks, but he seemed to have vanished. "Maybe he's gone up the mountain to see what's making that sound," suggested Nate.

Daph: Without saying another word our adventurers ran all the way to the top. Sure enough, there was the old man, crouching behind a large, coral rock. Beside him was his red feather pen and inkwell, which were lying on top of a neatly folded piece of paper. The booming noise, which had gotten louder as Nate and Sam climbed the mountain, was now hurting their ears.

Josh: "Keep down," said the man.

Daph: He aimed his bamboo spyglass through a hole in the coral and looked toward the lagoon. Nate and Sam asked if they could look through the spyglass, too.

Josh: When they looked through the spyglass they were astonished

The Ruby Float · Episode 18 · The Tragic Farewell

to see a very tall sailing ship anchored just off the reef. Giant clouds of smoke were all about it. And right there, exactly where the raft had gotten stuck on the reef, great big spouts of water were shooting



high up into the air. “What are they doing?” asked Nate. The old man studied the ship through his spyglass. “It’s a warship,” he said. “She’s using her great cannons to blast an opening in the reef. When she’s

through, she'll send a landing party ashore."

Daph: Sam immediately jumped for joy, yelling and screaming and waving to the ship below. Only with lots of effort could the old man get her to stop. "Listen carefully, my children," he said. "These men have not come to take you home."

Josh: "Are they pirates?" asked Nate.

Daph: "Worse," said the old man. "This warship is from the land I last departed."

Josh: Sam and Nate were confused.

Daph: "Why should that be bad?" asked Sam.

Josh: "We've no time to talk about this now," said the old man.

Daph: He took the piece of paper from under the inkwell and handed it to our adventurers. "I've written this for you," he said. "It explains everything. When you're safe, you can read it. Come. We must hurry."

Josh: As they hurried down the mountain the old man spoke rapidly. "Listen carefully," he said. "I am going to hide you in a place these men cannot find. "Then, I will go alone to meet them."

Daph: "But what will happen to you?" asked Sam.

Josh: "Don't worry about that, my little ones," he said. "We are in God's hands and God will do what is right." "But you can hide also," said Nate. "If they won't find us, they won't find you either." "They will not leave until they find me," said the old man. "If they must search for me, you will be in even greater danger." When they reached the bungalow the booming suddenly stopped. "Hurry," said the old man. "Soon they will be here."

Daph: The old man helped our adventurers quickly fill their knapsacks with lots of emergency supplies. They stuffed in bread and fruit and preserves and kindling wood and warm clothes and mangoes

and pineapples and lots of other things. The old man took nothing for himself, save for the old Bible that was on his desk. Quickly, he led the children through the jungle along a secret path.

Josh: It was very dark and no sign of a trail was visible anywhere. If the man hadn't been leading Nate and Sam by the hand, they would have been lost in no time. Suddenly, deep inside the jungle, the man stopped.

Daph: In front of him was a huge rock of coral. The old man put his whole weight against it and edged it sideways. Underneath was a small opening in the ground.

Josh: "My hurricane shelter," he said. He took the knapsacks and lowered them, one by one, into the opening. Then he disappeared down the hole. A few seconds later his head popped back up. "Everything's in fine shape," he said. "Come on in."

Daph: Our heroes carefully lowered themselves down through the hole, hanging onto the sides for dear life.

Josh: Maybe it was the ice cave you were talking about.

Daph: I don't think so. That would be much too cold for a hurricane shelter.

Josh: Whatever it was, it was extremely large, like being inside of a giant cathedral that was built in olden times and went high up and made lots of echoes inside. Except this cathedral wasn't made of stone, it was made of coral.

Daph: Some very large holes in the coral faced west toward the sea. Light and wind poured through the jagged holes, like through huge open windows. And there was plenty of water. A big clear pool full of ripples was against the south coral wall.

Josh: The waters in the pool gurgled and splashed as the underground stream raced through it. They made a very cheerful sound that echoed off the walls of the chamber. And the water that overflowed the pool disappeared into thousands of little holes in the cor-

al. Nate poked his head through one of the jagged holes that faced the sea. Looking downward he saw the vertical face of the cliff. A few feet away water from the underground stream shot straight out of it and fell a thousand feet into the ocean below. It was a magnificent waterfall with lots of white mist and rainbow colors.

Daph: “Everything you’ll need is right here,” said the old man.

Josh: He then gave them a quick tour of the shelter.

Daph: Are we going to do another inventory?

Josh: A little one.

Daph: Great. I’ll start. In the little crevasses of coral were stored all kinds of things.

Josh: There were countless jars of fruits and vegetables.

Daph: And juices and smoked fish and other great emergency virtuals.

Josh: Victuals.

Daph: There were candles for the dark nights and stacks of warm blankets—

Josh: And piles of firewood and other essential items, much too numerous to mention.

Daph: The old man led our heroes to one of the big openings that faced the ocean.

Josh: “You must watch from here,” he said, giving them his spyglass. “Spell one another, if necessary. Eventually the tall warship will appear. It will be sailing toward the northwest horizon. Once it has disappeared, wait one full day. Then and only then may you leave the shelter. Go immediately to the mountaintop and wait for your rescuers. Pray ceaselessly to the Alpha and Omega to safely guide them here. “I will pray also, for I am certain that if we pray such a prayer, God will answer it.”

Daph: Our two heroes hugged the old man and cried.

Josh: “Do not weep, my children,” he said, “for in your coming a most wonderful thing has happened. God willing, you will bring the hope of Christ to your land.” He extended his huge hand to our adventurers and handed them his ancient Bible. “You must keep this for me,” he said. “If you become discouraged or afraid, read from it. I must go now.” He then climbed up through the shelter entrance and sealed it from above with the great coral rock.

Daph: Our two adventurers sat alone in silence. It seemed that even the little stream had stopped gurgling and whistling. And the wind no longer whispered through the openings to the sea. “Oh my,” said Sam. “Oh my.” But if the truth be told, she said absolutely nothing. It was only her thoughts echoing silently about the chamber.

Josh: And so, Ladies and Gentlemen, we conclude this episode of *The Tale Of The Ruby Float*—

Daph: Even though it isn't in quite the same way as the book, we want to have plenty of time to talk about the letter that the old man gave to Nate and Sam.

Josh: So we're giving it its own special episode, which we're calling . . . The Letter. And you are all most cordially invited to come and read it with us next time.

Daph: That's it for now.

Josh: See you later.

Episode Nineteen

The Letter



Daph: Hello Ladies and Gentlemen. Welcome to Episode 19 of *The Tale Of The Ruby Float*—

Josh: Which is called—

Daph: The Letter.

Josh: At the conclusion of our last episode Nate and Sam were all alone in the hurricane shelter. They were greatly afraid that above them, somewhere on the island, something terrible was happening.

Daph: It was like being in the cabin of the raft during the storm, only this time they couldn't hear anything—they could only imagine.

Josh: And what they imagined wasn't good. They knew only that the old man had warned them to stay in hiding until they saw the tall ship sailing away.

Daph: Why this was, they didn't know.

Josh: Perhaps the letter which the old man had given them would reveal the truth. And so, let us join Nate and Sam as they move toward

a brighter spot in the shelter. Light is pouring through one of the openings in the coral wall, illuminating the words of the old man's letter. "Dear Samantha and Nate," it began. Then it went on for several pages, telling of many things that our heroes had never known before.

Daph: All the while Nate read the letter out loud to Sam, the same way that we are going to read it for you.

Josh: We'll have to trade off because the letter is a little long.

Daph: But you need to know that the whole time the old man is speaking.

Josh: Except when we have a short interruption in the middle.

Daph: Oh, we should also mention that the letter is so new that the ink on it is hardly dry.

Josh: The old man wrote it on the mountaintop with his red feather pen.

Daph: And so we begin, remembering that we have already said "Dear Samantha and Nate. "Not long after you arrived," the letter continued, "I began sending out hundreds of floats, which told about your shipwreck on the island. I addressed them to your parents, explaining that you are both well and that you missed them dearly and needed to be rescued."

Josh: Hey, you changed the letter.

Daph: Only a little bit.

Josh: But it's a letter. You can't go changing it like that.

Daph: But we are telling the story, not reading it. If you tell the same thing in your own words, it is still the same thing.

Josh: But it's a letter.

Daph: But Grandpa never showed us the letter. He just told us what

the letter said.

Josh: But it's all written down in a book.

Daph: But Grandpa said that this is our story. We talked about this before. We can elaborate.

Josh: Okay. I guess that's what we've been doing all along.

Daph: See, there's no reason to change now. That would be jarring.

Josh: Jarring? Where did you learn that word?

Daph: When I dropped a jar of jelly in the kitchen. It made a very loud jarring sound when it hit the floor.

Josh: And a big mess.

Daph: We wouldn't want to make a mess, now would we, not while we're almost at the end?

Josh: Okay, where did we leave off?

Daph: The old man told Nate and Sam that he'd been sending out lots of floats with their address inside.

Josh: That's right. But he couldn't give the exact address because he didn't know it.

Daph: Which might explain why Nate and Sam's sea charts were off.

Josh: Even so, the Alpha and Omega led the children here.

Daph: And even so, he was bound to lead their parents here also.

Josh: Then we come to something in the letter that's very interesting, something our listeners might have noticed earlier.

Daph: What's that?

Josh: Nate and Sam never asked how the old man ended up marooned on the island.

Daph: That's right. They didn't.

Josh: And the old man never told them, at least, not until now, in this letter.

Daph: For which the old man says he's sorry.

Josh: Then he does a flashback into his childhood. He remembers how his mom first told him about God.

Daph: Yes, he told that part to Nate and Sam before.

Josh: And though he knew from his mom that God loved him, he wouldn't love God back.

Daph: That's right.

Josh: So then he grows up and leaves home.

Daph: He takes everything with him, even the cat.

Josh: He moves to a completely different country.

Daph: And in this country everyone is just like him.

Josh: How's that?

Daph: They also don't love God. It is a very comfortable arrangement.

Josh: Then, after working hard, he gets very very rich.

Daph: He takes a few shortcuts along the way, however.

Josh: Which result in him hurting lots and lots of people.

Daph: But who cares. He's rich!

Josh: Little does he know that his mom, who is far far away, is asking God to change his heart.

Daph: She is doing this every day without giving up.

Josh: Even though she never gets one single letter from her son.

Daph: Not even a phone call.

Josh: That was before phones.

Daph: But even if he'd had a phone right in his pocket he wouldn't have called.

Josh: Most definitely not.

Daph: He was a real bad guy.

Josh: It sounds like it.

Daph: Then, one day, he gets a message from home.

Josh: It wasn't a letter. He'd never open a letter from his mother. He always threw them away unopened.

Daph: Then how'd he get the message?

Josh: A messenger came, a friend of his mother. He made the long trip and knocked on the man's door. The man opened it and faced the messenger in the doorway. The messenger spoke immediately so that he would be sure his message would be heard. "Your mother has died," he said.

Daph: The man said nothing in return. He showed no emotion whatsoever. You would think the man's heart was made of steel.

Josh: But it only seemed like steel.

Daph: When the messenger left the man felt very cold inside.

Josh: Outside it was also very very cold.

Daph: Even so he went outside and sat under a frozen tree and stared at a huge frozen lake.

Josh: Hey, this isn't in the book, is it?

Daph: No. The book people took it out. But Grandpa told it to us.

Don't you remember?

Josh: Kind of.

Daph: I think it's good to know about it because it fills in some missing information about the old man.

Josh: Like what?

Daph: For instance, after talking to the messenger he feels very very bad.

Josh: Yes?

Daph: So he makes the trip back to his old home.

Josh: I remember. It's very beautiful with canals and lots of orange trees and rocky hills.

Daph: Yes. He walks all the way from the harbor to his home, which takes him many hours.

Josh: Why did the book people take this out? I think it's very important.

Daph: Yes it is. So we are putting it back in, right here.

Josh: And when he gets home the messenger is there. He's been taking care of his mother's house ever since she died. She asked him to wait until her son returned.

Daph: Yes. She was sure he would come back. She'd asked the Alpha and Omega for this.

Josh: The house was very beautiful with flowers everywhere.

Daph: Like the old man's garden on the island. He liked flowers very much.

Josh: The messenger greeted him warmly.

Daph: And made him a very nice supper.

Josh: You're inventing this part.

Daph: Yes I am, but not the part about the letters.

Josh: What letters?

Daph: His mother had made copies of all the letters she had written to her son.

Josh: She did?

Daph: Yes. And the messenger gave them to the man to read.

Josh: What happened then?

Daph: He read the letters, every one. It was like his mother was still alive.

Josh: That's right. She told him many things, especially about the Alpha and Omega.

Daph: She was very loving and told him not to feel bad about not writing. She was sure that one day she would see him again. She'd asked the Alpha and Omega for this.

Josh: It was very late when the man finished reading the letters.

Daph: Like in lots of Grandpa's stories.

Josh: He asked the messenger to take him to where his mother was buried. They walked along the empty, lonely streets. Not even a cat was around. Eventually they came to the graveyard. There were lots of trees and it was a little hilly. The man thanked the messenger and told him he could go. Then he lay down beside his mom's grave and started to cry. He cried very very hard and then he lay very very still. He was feeling bad for everything he had ever done. He felt all alone with no place to go. He had no friends and no more mother. He was really all alone.

Daph: And then, sometime in the night, he called out to the Alpha and Omega.

Josh: Do you remember what he said?

Daph: It was something like, “If you’re really there, please forgive me.”

Josh: Is that what Grandpa said?

Daph: He didn’t say. But it must have been something like it. Lots of hours went by. Eventually the sky started to turn pink. He’d spent the whole night in the graveyard. And as the sun came up he saw that he was under a tree. It was a pepper tree, with bright red berries. Thousands of berries were scattered all around him, like a sea of tiny red floats. And when he looked up he saw his mother’s gravestone. Guess what words he saw written on it?

Josh: What?

Daph: “I am the resurrection and the life, the beginning and the end. Whosoever believes in Me, though he were dead, he shall live. And whosoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.” So see, his mother wasn’t dead at all.

Josh: Not if you believed the Alpha and Omega.

Daph: And so the steel door of the man’s heart opened up.

Josh: And the Alpha and Omega came in, just like he did into Nate and Sam’s.

Daph: And the man became a completely new person.

Josh: Oh, yes, he looked exactly the same on the outside. But inside he was completely new. And so he returned to the country that had made him so very very rich.

Daph: He gave back what he had taken from oh so many people.

Josh: Even though he’d gotten it fair and square, according to the laws of that land.

Daph: Then he went everywhere and told everyone about the Alpha

and Omega, which turned out not to be very popular with the people in that country. So they arrested him and gave him a good beating and threw him in jail.

Josh: Then, when it was time to let him out, they gave him a stern warning. He was not to tell anyone about the Alpha and Omega, otherwise—curtains!

Daph: Though the man was afraid, he kept telling people about the Alpha and Omega. He tried to be careful so that no one would be hurt. He tried to do it in secret.

Josh: But it didn't work. It wasn't long until someone betrayed him. He was thrown into prison. Then the ruling council had a trial and sentenced him to death.

Daph: It looked very bleak.

Josh: Meanwhile, behind the scenes, a few brave friends of the man offered to give money for his life.

Daph: It was a lot of money.

Josh: The people on the council couldn't resist. They took it.

Daph: In return, they promised to send the man back to his homeland.

Josh: But they didn't do any such thing. Instead, unknown to his friends, they took him to this island and threw him overboard. Like Nate and Sam, he had to get over the reef. Fortunately, he was a very strong swimmer. Otherwise—Davy Jones' locker. When he got to shore he had only his clothes. Nothing else.

Daph: Even so, he thanked the Alpha and Omega for sparing his life.

Josh: Yes, and our listeners are probably now wondering how he got the Bible.

Daph: Very good question. You see, after two days on the island he spotted something floating in the water.

Josh: It was a metal box all sealed up with wax. It was very floaty, like the raft.

Daph: He was very hungry and opened it up, hoping it would be food. And it was food. But a very different kind of food.

Josh: It was a Bible, the same Bible that he gave to Nate and Sam. And when he opened it up he found a note inside written by that most famous person of all times—Anonymous.

Daph: Yes, and Anonymous thanked the man for telling him and his family about the Alpha and Omega. He said he was very sorry that he couldn't help the man. He asked for his forgiveness and the man willingly forgave him.

Josh: Meanwhile, the man was happy as a lark. This way, with the Bible, he wouldn't be alone. He'd have the voice of God to keep him company. And let me tell you—he needed it! Because he spent thirty years on the island, all alone, before Nate and Sam finally arrived.

Daph: It was amazing that his vocal cords still worked. Oh, I forgot, he sang a lot.

Josh: And for thirty years the man called the island his home.

Daph: And for thirty years the Alpha and Omega provided him with everything he needed.

Josh: He had iron for his pots—

Daph: And clay for his dishes—

Josh: And wood and stone for his houses—

Daph: And fruit and fish and vegetables for his table.

Josh: Even paper and ink, so that he could write the letter we are talking about.

Daph: But most important, God gave him the pink sand with which to make the ruby floats—

Josh: One of which brought Nate and Sam to the island.

Daph: Of course, other floats must have gotten into less friendly hands.

Josh: Because the floats had to be floating every which way on the ocean.

Daph: Only no one knew where the floats were coming from, because the old man never mentioned that he was marooned on the island, or where the island might be—

Josh: Or that the floats were even coming from an island.

Daph: It was only Nate who figured that out.

Josh: Why he was able to do it and no one else, I don't know.

Daph: Yes you do.

Josh: I do?

Daph: It was the Alpha and Omega. He wanted Nate and Sam to find the island and so Nate was able to.

Josh: I guess so.

Daph: There's no guessing. It's for certain.

Josh: But now the messages were different.

Daph: Yes, they were now rescue messages, the kind you'd expect to find in a bottle.

Josh: And anyone could find them.

Daph: Even the bad guys.

Josh: Which is what happened. They didn't want any more of those ruby float messages getting to their shores. They'd been getting them for almost thirty years and were sick of them. So the rescue message was just what they needed.

Daph: Because they had the island's address in there.

Josh: No, they didn't. There was no address.

Daph: Yes there was. The old man told them how to get to the island.

Josh: It was a ballpark estimate. The old man wasn't sure.

Daph: But the bad guys were. They knew the exact location of the island.

Josh: And the old man knew that they knew.

Daph: And so he kept watch from the mountaintop, making several trips each day and night.

Josh: Something which our heroes didn't know.

Daph: He also prepared the safe haven, which he called the hurricane shelter.

Josh: Which brings us up to date. Sam and Nate are in there now, just finishing the letter we have been telling you about.

Daph: I think I should read the conclusion of the letter.

Josh: Yes, I think you should.

Daph: "I beg you not to deviate in the slightest from any of my instructions. The men who will soon be here are cold and ruthless, just as I was until, by the grace of God, my heart was transformed. They will show mercy toward no one, not even children, whom they regard with contempt. Should they capture you, they will put you to death or sell you as slaves. I hear your footsteps now as you are running up the mountain. I shall soon miss the sound of them. God be with you."

Josh: And that was it. No more old man. And Nate and Sam being more afraid than they had ever been in their entire lives. Only one thing they knew to do.

Daph: They got on their knees and began to pray—

Josh: Asking the Alpha and Omega to save the old man from his enemies.

Daph: And with this, Ladies and Gentlemen, we conclude The Letter.

Josh: We look forward to seeing you next time when we present the next exciting episode of—

Daph: *The Tale Of The Ruby Float.*

Josh: Which we are calling—

Daph: Devastation.

Episode Twenty
Devastation



Daph: Here we are Ladies and Gentlemen, all the way to episode 20 of—

Josh: *The Tale Of The Ruby Float.*

Daph: In our last episode we learned lots and lots about the old man. He wrote it all down in a letter to Nate and Sam. Some of which we read to you—

Josh: And some of which we told.

Daph: All of the letter reading Nate and Sam did took place under very stressful circumstances.

Josh: Yes, the old man had hidden Nate and Sam from some very bad guys, guys like the old man once was before he became a loyal follower of the Alpha and Omega. He has told Nate and Sam to wait until they see the warship sailing away from the island. Then they are to wait some more, a whole day and night, before they can come out of hiding. Meanwhile, the old man is up above and Nate and Sam have no idea what has happened to him.

Daph: All they can do is pray to the Alpha and Omega that he will be okay.

Josh: And pray they did, all the while keeping their eyes trained on the sea, waiting and watching for the tall warship to appear. As the days went on, the skies remained clear, though an odd grey haze began to fill the air, lying over the sun like a dirty blanket and making the days feel very gloomy. As they watched, Nate sometimes read aloud from the Bible the old man had given them.

Daph: They were comforted by the story of the shepherd boy who God had protected from a powerful king.

Josh: They found hope in the adventures of Paul, who God saved from a terrible shipwreck, even helping him get safely to the shores of an island, just like he had helped Nate and Sam. They were amazed at the power of a God who could make the sun stand still and bring the dead back to life, a God who loves children and who promises to stand beside those who trust in Him. They read on and on, stopping only when one of them had to catch a bit of shuteye.

Daph: One day blended into the next, just as the sun blended into the haze until everything was one, big, gigantic blur.

Josh: Then, most suddenly, on the seventh day of waiting, at precisely 11 in the morning, the tall warship came into view. It was already very far away and even through the spyglass looked quite small.

Daph: Nate and Sam focused the pink lens on the ship's deck, trying to see whether the old man might be there. It was a big ship with many guns and a large crew, but among all those on deck they could not see the old man. Eventually, the warship turned toward the northeast and made a beeline for the horizon.

Josh: Our adventurers prayed for the old man, wondering and worrying about what might have happened to him, never taking their eyes off the warship, never ceasing to look for some sign of him upon the deck of the mighty ship.

Daph: Slowly, after several hours, the ship faded from view. All that was left was the grey haze that had replaced the beautiful blue of the tropical skies. That night a gigantic full moon lit up the sea in a beautiful white light. Nate and Sam remained vigilant, never taking their eyes off the horizon. Sunrise came and the sea remained empty.

Josh: Our heroes were tempted to leave their hiding place a bit early because they so much wanted to check on the old man. Strangely, since the day they were separated, they had smelled smoke, which gave them hope. Perhaps the old man was back at the glassworks, hard at work, cranking out more ruby floats. Or maybe he was in the bungalow cooking up some of his mouth-watering meals.

Daph: Nevertheless, our heroes stayed put until exactly 24 hours had gone by.

Josh: Then, without waiting so much as a second, they climbed up the entrance shaft to where the big rock closed up the chamber. Using a long pole that the old man had given him, Nate pushed the rock aside.

Daph: To his amazement, brilliant sunlight poured into the shaft. The jungle canopy of thick green leaves seemed to be missing. Nate slowly raised his head to the level of the jungle floor. Fear shot through him like a thunderbolt. Everywhere he looked there was total and complete devastation.

Josh: Which is why this episode is called Devastation. Where thousands of gigantic trees had once grown were thousands of smoldering stumps.

Daph: The icky sticky jungle floor, once a thick rug of smelly leaves was now a mat of white ash.

Josh: As far as the eye could see everything was completely burned away—every tree, every bush, every vine, every blade of grass, every living thing that had ever existed on the island. Sam, who was still under Nate, tapped on his ankle.

Daph: “What is it?” she asked. “Let me out. I want to see.”

Josh: Nate boosted himself onto the jungle floor. It was hot and smoldering. Sam followed. What she saw horrified her. Even in her wildest imaginings she had not expected something this terrible.

Daph: In complete shock, our heroes wandered about the charred remains of the island, searching for the old man.

Josh: His bungalow was gone, leveled to the ground and completely burned away. Not a trace remained.

Daph: The beautiful palms, the mango and breadfruit trees, the garden, the old man’s rocker and desk, all were gone.

Josh: The glassworks was completely destroyed.

Daph: Its coral building blocks, just like those of the bungalow, had been knocked down and thrown off the cliff into the sea.

Josh: Not even the tiniest red fragment of a ruby float could be found.

Daph: Only the stream remained, though it was no longer crystal clear, but filled with icky black soot.

Josh: Nate and Sam followed it upstream through the unrecognizable grounds of what had once been the old man’s home until they reached the foot of the big coral mountain. It, too, smoked like a gigantic volcano.

Daph: Slowly they ascended the blackened mountain until they reached the flat coral peak. As they looked down on the island, they saw nothing but white, smoldering ash. There were no specks of green or brown or any other color that might mean life.

Josh: Incredibly, the entire island had been burned to the ground. Our two heroes then hiked to the other side of the island over four miles of hot smoking embers. They descended the cliff to the beach, whose pink sands were all dirty with black soot.

Daph: Everything on the shores was burned away—

Josh: The trees, the bushes, even the long vines that had clung to the face of the cliff. Eventually our heroes located the spot where they'd first come ashore after their shipwreck. Not a single piece of the raft's broken logs remained, not even the tiniest splinter of the cabin. And that place in the lagoon where the old man had baptized them, that place where the water had been so fragrant and clear and turquoise blue was now black and murky and smelly.

Daph: Farther out, where the giant wave had thrown them over the reef, they now saw an opening. It was here that the ship's cannons had blasted a passage through the coral.

Josh: We will now change the subject and fast-forward to sundown—

Daph: Because it is way too depressing to keep talking about this.

Josh: A cool rain is falling and our heroes have returned to the hurricane shelter.

Daph: They are absolutely dead tired, for over the last seven days they have hardly slept a wink.

Josh: They light candles and eat some of the preserves the old man has given them.

Daph: Then they wash all the black icky stuff from their bodies and fall asleep.

Josh: Which, as you know, often happens in our Grandpa's stories.

Daph: And to find out what happens next, please hurry back for our next episode of—

Josh: *The Tale Of The Ruby Float*—

Daph: Which is called—

Josh: The Strange Cloud.

Episode Twenty-One
The Strange Cloud



Daph: Hello Ladies and Gentlemen.

Josh: Welcome back to The Tale Of The Ruby Float.

Daph: As you know, lots and lots changed during our last episode.

Josh: Especially the mood, which went from very happy to very sad.

Daph: That's right. Everything that was peaches and cream—

Josh: Has now turned into rotten fruit and sour milk.

Daph: And even this doesn't sound bad enough.

Josh: For the old man is now gone and the children are all alone on a roasted island.

Daph: It's so bad that even Josh and I are going to leave the island for this episode.

Josh: That's right. We're taking our camera equipment and moving to a lonely spot on the ocean.

Daph: It's not super far from the island, but just far away enough that

you can't see it.

Josh: The time is midnight, which seems to be one of our grandpa's favorite times.

Daph: The moon and the stars are shining down from above, painting the ocean in a beautiful light.

Josh: And when we look east, toward the spot on the horizon beyond which the island would be, we see a very very strange sight. A huge vertical cloud, shaped like a column, is sitting right there, glowing in the moonlight like the world's biggest light stick. It goes straight up into the starlit sky, which seems to be perfectly balanced on it.

Daph: Like a black, upside down bowl balanced on a light stick.

Josh: We are not the only people in the world who are seeing this incredible sight.

Daph: There is someone else, someone who is not aware of our presence.

Josh: And who is this person, out in the middle of the ocean in the middle of the night?

Daph: It's a man driving a ship.

Josh: Or more precisely, the helmsman of a sailing ship.

Daph: Though not of the ship that burned our island to the ground.

Josh: He is sailing the ship on a funny zigzag course.

Daph: It almost looks like he is trying to play tic-tac-toe on the water.

Josh: As he sails along, he keeps his eyes plastered on the giant vertical cloud.

Daph: In all his sailor's life, he's never seen anything like it.

Josh: He keeps thinking his eyes are playing tricks on him.

Daph: But no matter how many times he blinks, the white pillar remains.

Josh: If this is real, he's got to report it to the captain.

Daph: If it's not, he's got to go to sick bay.

Josh: Sick bay?

Daph: Yes, sick bay. It's sailor talk for seeing the doctor.

Josh: Did you learn that from your pirate movies?

Daph: I don't know, I just know it.

Josh: Okay. So the helmsman pulls on the cable that clangs the bell in the captain's cabin.

Daph: A minute later the captain shows up.

Josh: He sees exactly the same thing as the helmsman.

Daph: A giant white column is joining the horizon to the moonlit sky.

Josh: "Make for it," said the captain. "We'll have a look."

Daph: The sailing ship crawled along. It was almost a dead calm.

Josh: The sea looked like a mirror.

Daph: The driver was very happy with the change.

Josh: You mean the helmsman. It's sailor talk.

Daph: Okay. The helmsman was happy. He was very tired of playing tic-tac-toe on the water—

Josh: And always losing—

Daph: And always having to keep track of everything on a map, which was beginning to look like a spider web of pencil marks. One thing was sure—no one, not even the captain, was familiar with this

part of the sea.

Daph: It was very far from where most of the sailing ships went.

Josh: And the currents were very strange, going every which way and back.

Daph: For days the captain and the helmsman and the navigator had been tearing their hair out.

Josh: Their sea charts showed nothing in this part of the sea.

Daph: There was only water—

Josh: Nothing else.

Daph: Even so, they kept looking, zigging and zagging and tacking and jiving—

Josh: Jibing!

Daph: The ship was like a spider weaving an invisible web on the sea—

Josh: A web than in 14 days had caught nothing at all—

Daph: Except a big heap of frustration.

Josh: But now, at least, there was something to see, something the helmsman could aim for, even though that something was just an oddly shaped cloud—

Daph: One of those weird things that sailors coming home from far-off seas tell strange tales about.

Josh: Then, at exactly 6 a.m., a cry came from the crow's nest high above the deck.

Daph: "Land ho! Land ho!"

Josh: The helmsman strained to see, but his spot on the deck was far too low.

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Daph: He could make out nothing, except the whitish column still rising from the sea.

Josh: “Land ho!” went the cry again. “There it is. Below the white cloud.”

Daph: The helmsman rang the captain.

Josh: Suddenly the whole ship was buzzing with people, who poured from their cabins onto the deck.

Daph: Everyone was amazed—

Josh: Amazed at the cloud which the ship had followed through the night.

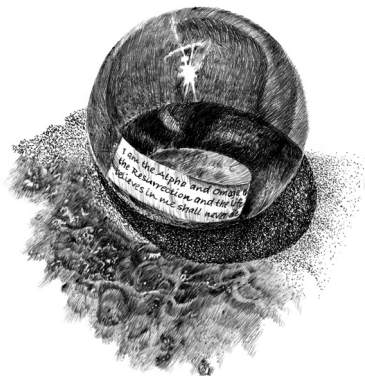
Daph: And so, Ladies and Gentlemen, we would like to thank you for following us through this amazing episode—

Josh: And also invite you to join us again next time for episode 22—

Daph: Which is called—

Josh: A Time Of Great Happiness.

Episode Twenty-Two
A Time Of Great Happiness



Daph: Welcome back, Ladies and Gentlemen—

Josh: To Episode 22 of The Tale Of The Ruby Float.

Daph: If you recall, most of the last episode happened out at sea on a ship that was following a strange cloud.

Josh: You might notice that this is the first time that we left the island in many many episodes.

Daph: And while it might not be the last—

Josh: We must now bring all of our storytelling equipment back to it.

Daph: We have to move very fast, because just as the bell is clanging on the strange ship—

Josh: The alarm clock is going off in the hurricane shelter.

Daph: What alarm clock?

Josh: The one that's set for 6 a.m. Our heroes don't want to oversleep, do they?

Daph: Grandpa never said anything about an alarm clock.

Josh: He never said anything about a breadfruit tree, either.

Daph: Oh, you're back to that now?

Josh: No, but we agreed that it's okay to elaborate.

Daph: But a breadfruit tree on a tropical island can happen. An alarm clock in olden days can't.

Josh: Then what's that ticking sound?

Daph: Oh, Josh, let's get on with it. Nate and Sam are in serious trouble and this is no time for joking.

Josh: I was just trying to think of a funny way of introducing this episode, which is called *A Time Of Great Happiness*, which begins like many of Grandpa's episodes—with Nate and Sam waking up. They haven't slept well, however.

Daph: Way too much stress. They're also a bit cold. So they light a fire to warm things up and make a pot of flower petal tea.

Josh: Then come some marmalade and jam and bread.

Daph: They need to have lots of energy, because stress takes it out of you, and because they've got to go back up the mountain so they can keep watch, just like the man told them to. Of course, they fill up their knapsacks with lots of edibles—

Josh: Like honey and crackers and a nice coconut pie which they found in the shelter.

Daph: Then they climb through the entrance hole back to the surface of the island.

Josh: But this time there is no brilliant shaft of sunlight—

Daph: No smoky sky or smelly air.

Josh: Instead, something very weird has happened.

Daph: The entire island is socked in.

Josh: Socked in?

Daph: That's airplane talk for fog.

Josh: Yes, it's not only foggy, it's very very foggy.

Daph: A pea soup fog, to be exact.

Josh: A fog so thick that it's impossible to tell right from left or up from down.

Daph: Now, you'd think that a tropical island could never be covered by fog.

Josh: Never. It's much too warm for fog.

Daph: So what had happened?

Josh: I believe that a simple scientific explanation will suffice, which goes something like this. If you throw water on a burning log you get steam. And if you throw water on a burning island, you get a lot of steam. So, there you have it—the rain from the previous afternoon had soaked into the huge bed of glowing coals that covered the island. This caused a colossal cloud of steam to rise straight up over the island, which didn't stop until it hit the very top of the sky.

Daph: Enough science, however. We must now get back to our adventurers, who are not all too happy about the super-thick fog. "What do we do now?" asked Sam.

Josh: "Wait here," said Nate, disappearing into the shelter. A moment later he was back with his trusty compass, which pointed to nothing except an endless sea of fog. "We shall strike a course in that direction," he said, pointing his finger into the nothingness.

Daph: "What's there?" asked Samantha.

Josh: "The path up the mountain. We shall follow the compass to its starting point and then ascend until we're out of the fog."

Daph: “Are you sure?” asked Sam.

Josh: “Very sure,” said Nate. “Stay close or you’ll get lost.”

Daph: It was much easier for them not to lose each other than not to get lost.

Josh: And get lost they did, almost fatally so. For by now we know that this island has many edges over which you can fall into the sea. And not five minutes had gone by before our heroes arrived at one of these edges, over which they would have plunged had it not been for something that Sam is well known for—her blood-curdling scream.

Daph: After this close call with death they wisely decided to return to the shelter.

Josh: Yes, it would be very smart to wait for the fog to lift.

Daph: Finding the shelter was more easily said than done, however.

Josh: For an hour they carefully groped their way through the fog.

Daph: And in all that time they couldn’t find the big coral rock that marked the entrance to the hurricane shelter.

Josh: “We’d best sit and wait it out,” said Nate. “It’s bound to clear some time.”

Daph: “Oh I do hope so,” said Samantha.

Josh: As they waited they tried singing some of the songs the old man had taught them.

Daph: It would help take away their fear, or so they thought.

Josh: But they had not gotten past the first few notes when Sam suddenly squeezed Nate’s arm.

Daph: “Hush,” she said, most forcefully.

Josh: It became very quiet, for fog can swallow up sound as easily as cliff edges.

Daph: But ears are not eyes. And Sam's ears had heard something come out of the fog.

Josh: "What?" whispered Nate. "I don't hear anything."

Daph: "Hush!" said Sam.

Josh: There it was again, ever so slight.

Daph: It was the sound of voices.

Josh: Though you couldn't tell from where they were coming or what they were saying.

Daph: "Oh Nate!" exclaimed Sam, throwing her arms around him. "I'm so afraid."

Josh: Nate was also terrified. If these were the bad guys and the fog suddenly lifted, it was curtains.

Daph: "We have to find the shelter," whispered Nate.

Josh: "But we can't see anything," whispered Sam.

Daph: "Stay close to me," he said. "And pray."

Josh: Nate searched the ground. If only he could find their footprints, he could follow them backwards to the shelter. Nate moved slowly forward.

Daph: Sam held onto his belt loops and followed from behind.

Josh: She was so afraid that she kept her eyes shut.

Daph: It's not surprising, therefore, that Sam's foot might hit a piece of loose coral.

Josh: Which it did.

Daph: This caused her to fall forward, whereupon she lost hold of Nate's belt loops, opened her eyes, and grabbed the first shape that appeared in front of her.

Josh: Once she'd regained her balance, however, she realized that something was wrong.

Daph: The shape was much too big and much too solid to be Nate.

Josh: Like Sam, Nate had also seen a shape suddenly appear before him. Wanting to avoid it, he quickly veered to the right, which caused Sam, who had let go of his belt loops, to run smack dab into it.

Daph: As soon as she realized that the shape she was holding onto wasn't Nate, she immediately used her first line of defense, which was to frighten and repel the enemy by letting out a bloodcurdling scream.

Josh: At exactly the same time Nate came to Sam's defense.

Daph: With all of his strength he beat his fists against the enemy, who was now holding onto Sam and yelling something that no one could hear because of Sam's bloodcurdling screams.

Josh: "Let her go!" yelled Nate. "Let her go!"

Daph: Nate continued his attack, pounding even harder against the unknown shape.

Josh: He yelled and yelled, unable to hear the words that the shape was saying, words that sounded much like their own names. It was Sam who first recognized the familiar shape against which her own tiny fists were falling.

Daph: "Daddy!" she cried. "Daddy! It's you! It's you!"

Josh: Then Nate came to his senses. "Dad!" he yelled. "Thank goodness it's you."

Daph: In an instant our heroes' attack changed into hugs and leaps and joyful cries.

Josh: Even the fog, thick as it was, couldn't keep the sound from being carried across the island.

Daph: Then came the sound of running feet.

Josh: Our heroes' mother suddenly came out of the fog followed by Hank and a hundred others, all of who'd been searching for our lost adventurers for so many months. Then, out of joy, came a bit of guilt.

Daph: "We're so sorry to have worried you so," cried Sam.

Josh: Heavy tears poured down her cheeks.

Daph: "We meant to ask you for permission to go, honest we did, but a big wind came up and then—"

Josh: But words of apology were the last thing their parents wanted to hear. They were overcome with joy and smothered their darlings with hugs and rained tears down upon their faces.

Daph: It seemed that even the weather was celebrating, because a breeze immediately came off the sea.

Josh: Gradually the fog disappeared. And gradually the island reappeared—

Daph: In all its terrible ugliness.

Josh: All but Nate and Sam gasped in horror.

Daph: How could it be that the children had survived?

Josh: Well, what our listeners already know, our rescuers soon found out.

Daph: Nate and Sam led everyone to the old man's hurricane shelter.

Josh: There they had hidden as the terrible inferno had blazed above them.

Daph: And from there they retrieved the old man's Bible and the ruby float, two very special items which none of the rescuers had ever seen before, not in their entire lives.

Josh: Sam held the float up to the sun and pointed to the secret hid-

den inside.

Daph: Nate opened the Bible and showed them what the message said.

Josh: They could not talk fast enough as they told of the Alpha and Omega—

Daph: The one who had protected them from harm—

Josh: The one who had guided their rescuers to the island—

Daph: The one who could bring endless joy to all those who chose to follow him.

Josh: And on and on they talked, even until they were on the rescue ship—

Daph: And even until it pulled up anchor and raised its sails—

Josh: And even until it was so far from the island that you would never know that you were ever there.

Daph: It was then that our heroes' joy turned to sadness. How much they would miss the old man.

Josh: How great was the love he showed them when he talked about the Alpha and Omega.

Daph: How wonderful and sad that he had given his own life to save theirs.

Josh: Just as Jesus had done when he went to the cross.

Daph: And so, Ladies and Gentlemen, we bring this episode to a close.

Josh: We have but one more to go, one so new we have yet to give it a name.

Daph: So while Nate and I think of a name for it, get ready for the most exciting conclusion to—

Josh: The Tale Of The Ruby Float.

Episode Twenty-Three
The Return Home



Josh: Hello, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Daph: Well, this is it, the last and final episode of The Tale Of The Ruby Float.

Josh: Since our last episode Daph and me have been hard at work, thinking of a name.

Daph: We tried all sorts of things and finally settled on something very simple.

Josh: And so, welcome to—

Daph: The Return Home.

Josh: Now, if you remember, our heroes have just left the island.

Daph: Their parents and Grandpa and lots of others have rescued them.

Josh: The old man has disappeared, possibly captured by his enemies.

Daph: Nate and Sam are very sad about this, especially since the old

man was so wonderful.

Josh: Funny that Jesse never said what happened to him.

Daph: Maybe that's coming in another tale.

Josh: And something else.

Daph: What's that?

Josh: You would think that Nate and Sam would ask about their grandmother.

Daph: They did.

Josh: But Jesse didn't mention it.

Daph: He wanted to keep us in suspense.

Josh: But he should have at least had our heroes ask the question.

Daph: Then why didn't they ask in our story?

Josh: Good question. Maybe next time we'll have them ask.

Daph: We can do that in the movie.

Josh: Oh, yes, the movie.

Daph: What do you mean, oh, yes, the movie? You said we could do it.

Josh: I said we could talk about it.

Daph: But you sound like you don't want to do it.

Josh: Daph, we haven't finished the story yet.

Daph: I know. But I'm going to be very sad if at the end of the story it is really the end.

Josh: We'll tell other stories.

Daph: I know. But I don't want this one to end.

Josh: And it's not going to end if we don't get started.

Daph: Okay, let's start with our heroes' grandma.

Josh: Yes, and what we know so far is that she was still alive when Hank left her to join the rescue mission.

Daph: That's strange. Why wouldn't Hank stay with Harriet?

Josh: Because she absolutely insisted that he go.

Daph: This didn't make Nate and Sam too happy. In fact, it upset them very much.

Josh: What if she had died while their grandpa was away looking for them?

Daph: That would be horrible.

Josh: How long has the rescue ship been away from home? I've forgotten.

Daph: Jesse didn't say exactly. But I'm sure that it's been a long time. We said earlier that it was several months.

Josh: This must have made our heroes worry even more.

Daph: Yes, they were very upset, but they took heart in trusting the Alpha and Omega.

Josh: From the very start, even before they knew everything about him, they trusted him.

Daph: Yes, the message he sent was far too wonderful to be made up.

Josh: So wonderful that our heroes firmly believed they'd arrive home in time to give it to Harriet.

Daph: And this hope they did their best to give to their grandpa, who wasn't entirely pleased with himself for having given his grandchildren this crazy idea about the raft, which is something that our grandpa never said when he told us the story.

Josh: But now the children were back, safe and sound, on the rescue ship, doing their very best to take away their grandpa's fears.

Daph: It was Sam who helped the most. All of her reading with Nate had turned her into an excellent read alouder.

Josh: You mean she was good at reading out loud.

Daph: She was very good. And as the sailing ship slowly made its way toward home, she read to her grandpa from the book of John.

Josh: Though she might not have noticed, the words made her Grandpa feel a lot better.

Daph: As for Nate, he ran all over the ship with the ruby float in one hand and a flashlight in the other.

Josh: He showed the float to everyone, from the cook sweating in the galley to the man in the crow's nest, telling them what the message said and what it meant, which was exactly what it said.

Daph: On day ten of the return they came to some tiny islands where no one lived.

Josh: They were coral atolls.

Daph: One of the tolls had water and the ship stopped there to get it.

Josh: Its lagoon, which was blue as a blue cleary, reminded Nate and Sam of the day they were baptized.

Daph: Perhaps, they thought, some others on the ship might want to be baptized, for many, upon hearing Nate and Sam's story, had decided to become loyal followers of the Alpha and Omega, including their parents.

Josh: And so the children told them about how the Alpha and Omega and all of his loyal followers were baptized.

Daph: Soon they found themselves standing in the crystal waters of the lagoon surrounded by a great crowd of people.

Josh: And they baptized them all, telling them of the great love the Alpha and Omega had for them. a love so great that he had given his own life in payment for their sins.

Daph: Then it was back to the roly-poly high seas again—

Josh: Where Nate and Sam began their next project.

Daph: What project?

Josh: The singing project.

Daph: Oh, that!

Josh: Yes. Now we all know that sailors like to sing.

Daph: Yes they do, especially pirates.

Josh: And what they usually sing isn't very good.

Daph: It isn't?

Josh: Okay, let me try again. Their singing is very good, but what they sing about isn't.

Daph: Oh, that!

Josh: Of course, Nate and Sam didn't know about that part.

Daph: But they did know that they both liked singing and that they also liked the old man's singing.

Josh: That's right. Especially the basso stupendo—

Daph: Which many of the sailors were also very good at.

Josh: And so Nate and Sam taught everyone on the ship the beautiful hymns they had learned from the old man.

Daph: Soon the entire ship was vibrating to the sound of a hundred booming voices.

Josh: "A mighty fortress is our God," they belted out—

Daph: “A bulwark never failing.”

Josh: Very good.

Daph: And they sang this, too: “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation.”

Josh: As they sang, other ships coming their way would hear.

Daph: “What are you so happy about?” they would signal with flags and lights and loud voices.

Josh: “We bring good news!” the rescue ship would signal with flags and lights and loud voices—

Daph: And with shouts and jumps and waving arms from Samantha.

Josh: “What is your news?” they would signal back.

Daph: “Glad tidings of great joy,” the rescue ship would signal. “See what the boy is holding in his hand.”

Josh: Nate waved the ruby float back and forth and pointed to what was inside.

Daph: Sam yelled to the signalman, “Flash the lights again! Say that the Alpha and Omega is coming!”

Josh: And so the lights flashed and continued to flash even until the day the rescue ship sailed into home port—

Daph: One hundred days after it had first set out on its mission to save Nate and Sam.

Josh: A tremendous joy swept through the land, for everyone had been greatly worried about our two adventurers.

Daph: The moment the ship’s gangplank touched the dock, Nate and Sam flew across it.

Josh: Their feet moved so fast they barely touched the ground.

Daph: They couldn't have gone faster, even if they'd been on pogo sticks—

Josh: Or racing bikes or even very fast horses.

Daph: We are exaggerating, of course, just to make the point that Nate and Sam were dying to get to their grandma's.

Josh: But was she still alive?

Daph: Strangely, Jesse didn't tell us until our heroes got to their grandma's house.

Josh: Even so, it makes sense to think that she's still alive. If she weren't, someone would have said something.

Daph: Yes, someone from the shore would have flashed a signal—

Josh: And the signal would have told Hank and our heroes whether Harriet was still alive.

Daph: Even earlier, the passing ships would have signaled something. Surely Sam and Nate had to know.

Josh: Which means the kind of running they did was different from their running on the day Hank didn't come to breakfast.

Daph: What do you mean? Running is running.

Josh: No. There's more than one kind of running.

Daph: I don't understand.

Josh: There's happy running and there's scared running. This time they were doing happy running.

Daph: Oh, that.

Josh: Happy running is much better.

Daph: Much better! Like flying through the air.

Josh; That's right. Nate and Sam were like two birds flying through

the air.

Daph: Going up and down and soaring.

Josh: They were a little worried, yes, because their hopes were so high. And people with high hopes sometimes worry that good news has to be balanced with bad.

Daph: But that's superstition.

Josh: Yes.

Daph: And the good news that Nate and Sam are bringing can never be changed into bad, even if you worry about it.

Josh: So let's not worry about worrying as we follow Nate and Sam into their grandma's house. Yes. There she is, lying in bed, thin and pale, but very much alive.

Daph: And when she sees Nate and Sam she is even more alive.

Josh: A great big smile goes clear across her face.

Daph: "My dear children," she says. "Where have you been? We have been so worried."

Josh: Nate and Sam hug their grandma—

Daph: And smother her with kisses.

Josh: "Oh Grandma!" they exclaim. "We're so sorry that we made you be all alone—

Daph: "We have missed you so!"

Josh: Then Hank comes in. Just think, it's been one hundred days. "Me too," he says.

Daph: "Oh Grandpa!" shouts Sam. "Grandma is still here. Isn't it wonderful?"

Josh: Hank cannot begin to say how wonderful it is. He is beyond

happy.

Daph: “Please tell Grandma the news, won’t you?” says Sam. “Please do.”

Josh: “I most certainly will,” he says.

Daph: And so it was that he told her all that he knew about the Alpha and Omega.

Josh: Which is everything he learned from his grandchildren—

Daph: And from Sam reading him the Bible on the rescue ship.

Josh: But before he did, he kissed their grandma most tenderly and told her he would love her forever and forever—

Daph: For we know from Jesse that no one ever loved his wife more than Hank loved Harriet.

Josh: And so it is, as our great grandpa likes to say, that our story is drawing to a close.

Daph: Which makes us sad, since we don’t want it to end.

Josh: Which means our listeners will be wanting to know what happens to Harriet in the future.

Daph: We would like so much to say that Harriet got well—

Josh: And that she and Hank spent many more wonderful years together.

Daph: But that didn’t happen.

Josh: At least not here—

Daph: On this earth.

Josh: You see, Harriet died a few weeks later, which was most terrible for Hank.

Daph: And also for Nate and Sam. Even so, there was good news that

this bad news couldn't beat.

Josh: Yes, there was now someone who Harriet loved more than Hank.

Daph: Someone who Hank loved more than Harriet.

Josh: And who was that?

Daph: It was the Alpha and Omega.

Josh: And just like the old man knew where his mom was, Hank knew where Harriet was.

Daph: She was there, in heaven, with the Alpha and Omega.

Josh: One day Hank would join her, as would Nate and Sam and all others in their land who chose to become His most loyal followers.

Daph: And so we will close our tale with the same words that our great grandfather used to close his—

Daph & Josh: "So it is in any land and with any people that those who believe in Christ will never die."

Josh: Well, that's it, Ladies and Gentlemen, the end of the last and final episode of—

Daph & Josh: The Tale Of The Ruby Float.

Josh: We hope so much that you will retell our tale to others just as we have told it to you.

Daph: Of course, you can elaborate, if you'd like, just as we did.

Josh: Just remember not to change anything about the Alpha and Omega.

Daph: That's because He's always the same—

Josh: Someone who loves you way more than Hank ever loved Harriet—Daph: And someone who wants to be with you forever and ever.



Thank You

Thank you for listening to the The Ruby Float as told by Daph and Josh. If you enjoyed it, please consider leaving a review on the site where you purchased the read-along book. Your comments are greatly appreciated.

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About The Author



Rick lives in Southern California with his wonderful wife, Bettina. He enjoys helping her tend the hummingbird garden and defending her from the exotic creatures that lurk in the shade of the honeysuckle bushes. When he's not out and about in wilds of the backyard, you're likely to find him reading and writing, especially in winter, when the fire's blazing in the hearth and the rain's coming down in sheets outside the window.

His first publication, *Daph*, a story set during the polio epidemics of the 1950s, was awarded Best Short Story Of The Year by *Writer's Digest*. He has written two novels—*The Ruby Float* and *Theodora's Children*—part of a series called *Tales Of Hope*. The third in the series, *Desert Gold*, is now in work.

You can connect with Rick at Dancing Pen Books, Twitter, Facebook, and Google+.

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Join Daph and Josh under the tree at Shady Point as their grandfather tells them the story of:

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The
Ruby Float

—  —
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More About Theodora's Children

The background of the cover is a photograph of a winter landscape. A snow-covered path leads from the bottom left towards the center, with footprints visible. To the right, there are several evergreen trees heavily laden with snow. In the distance, snow-capped mountains are visible under a dramatic sky with a bright sun setting or rising, creating a lens flare and casting a warm glow over the scene. The sky transitions from a deep blue at the top to a vibrant orange and yellow near the horizon.

*Theodora's
Children*

A Tale of Hope

Rick Nau

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