

# SUMMER SANCTUARY

LAURIE GRAY

LUMINIS BOOKS

# SUMMER SANCTUARY

LUMINIS BOOKS

Published by Luminis Books

13245 Blacktern Way, Carmel, Indiana, 46033, U.S.A.

Copyright © Socratic Parenting, LLC, 2010

## PUBLISHER'S NOTICE

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Cover image photographed and created by Kenneth Harkenrider.  
Cover design and composition for *Summer Sanctuary* by Joanne Riske.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., for permission to adapt the last two sentences from *Charlotte's Web* for the author's dedication. Copyright © 1952 by E. B. White. All rights reserved.

Genesis 34: 1–2 is quoted from *The Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright © 1978 by New York International Bible Society.

ISBN-10: 1-935462-34-2

ISBN-13: 978-1-935462-34-7

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

## Early Praise for *Summer Sanctuary*:

What a big-hearted story, told with affection and humor. I loved spending time with Matthew and his family and with Dinah, the girl who looks in from outside. Like Dinah, young readers will find a place of welcome and comfort, a true sanctuary, in the pages of this book. Like Matthew, they'll discover something important about friendship and independence.

—**Helen Frost**, *Printz Honor Award-winning author of *Keesha's House**

*Summer Sanctuary* exudes a strong voice for the two central characters . . . they learn what it means to measure a person's worth not based on circumstances, but on the will to survive. Gray has captured the essence of what it means to be a young teen—wanting to grow as an individual while needing the security of a home and loving family. *Summer Sanctuary* can help guide teens through the difficult transition between childhood and becoming adults.

—**Kayleen Reusser**, *author of *Taylor Swift—A Blue Banner Biography**

Go to [www.luminisbooks.com](http://www.luminisbooks.com) to find discussion questions for *Summer Sanctuary*.

## SUMMER SANCTUARY

The author is deeply grateful to the following people for their advice, encouragement and support:

Marcia Amidon Lüsted for her excellent instruction and editing.

For their thoughtful reading of the first draft, many thanks to Beth Schleisman, Nikki Busenbark, Peggy Virgil, Deb Sanchez, Bonnie Lloyd, Maria Camacho, Jon DeDee, and Teresa Landis.

Andrea Landis and DeAnna Barnes, my first teen readers.

Helen Frost, Kayleen Reusser, and my Fort Wayne SCBWI critique group.

Tracy Richardson and Chris Katsaropoulos of Luminis Books.

To Victoria, my unexpected miracle and muse.

To Frank, for keeping me warm and safe and dry while I write.

LAURIE GRAY

*For Robin,*

*It is not often that someone comes along who is a true friend and a good writer. Robin was both.*

# SUMMER SANCTUARY

œ One œ

THE FIRST TIME I saw Dinah, I thought she was a boy. Now that the summer's almost over, it's hard to believe that guy in jean shorts, dirty-white jogging shoes, and an oversized black t-shirt was even her. I was sitting on a bench in front of the library. I saw this guy sprawled out on the grass off to the side, soaking up the warm June sun. He had a newspaper spread out around him, but I had the funny feeling he was watching me as I choked down half of the turkey and Swiss sandwich my mom made me. Turkey and Swiss is my favorite, only I like it with mayonnaise. Mom made this one with mustard. Yuck.

I washed the mustard down with water from my sports bottle. Mom always chose mustard over mayonnaise in the summertime, like the mayonnaise would spoil the second I stepped out of the house. I examined the remaining sandwich half. The mustard had soaked into both slices of bread. It was smeared all over the turkey and all over the

## SUMMER SANCTUARY

cheese. No getting around it. I put it back in the sandwich bag and tossed it in the trash.

At that moment I was convinced the whole summer was going to suck—only I'm not allowed to say "suck." My best friend Kyle left the week before to spend two months with his grandparents on a farm a hundred miles away. Kyle's the kind of guy every kid likes. I'm the kind of guy every kid's mom likes. And speaking of moms, my mom was pregnant. AGAIN. So the chances of me getting my own room before I'm 20 were now absolutely zero. Zip.

I've wanted my own room forever. Kyle has his own room. I share my room with my next-youngest brother, Mark. I'm older, but Mark hit a growing spurt last winter. He was already as big as I was and destined to pass me this summer. Then he plastered posters of all his soccer and baseball heroes all over his side of the room this past spring. It was like a daily reminder of everything I'd never be.

I realized the guy was still watching me. His eyes followed me as I walked into the library. He was acting so creepy for a guy. It was giving me the willies. I mean, I'd never had a guy watch me like that. My heart pounded, and the mustard in my stomach churned. One time I

heard my grandfather preach about guys who like guys instead of girls. He called it the “abomination of reprobates.” I shuddered; Grandpa’s most booming preacher voice echoed the word *re-pro-bate-sub* in my head. When Grandpa thunders from the pulpit, you half-expect God to throw down a bolt of lightning for good measure. Everyone in the whole congregation prays he isn’t the biggest sinner there.

My dad’s a preacher, too. When I asked him about the abomination of reprobates, he gave me a little book called *Reprobation Asserted* by John Bunyan. Now, I liked John Bunyan’s book *Pilgrim’s Progress*, which was kind of like a Christian adventure novel. His reprobation book read more like a really, really long sermon. Somewhere in Chapter Two I read that “reprobate” means “void of judgment.” I gave the book back to Dad. Kyle’s the one who finally told me what Grandpa was talking about.

Inside the library, I went straight to the front window and watched the reprobate through the dark glass. Why did he pick me to watch anyway? Definitely weird. Something was up. He looked all around before he carefully folded up the newspaper and very deliberately stuffed it deep inside the trash can. There was something peculiar about the way he did it, but I couldn’t quite put

my finger on it. Then he walked over to the same bench where I'd been sitting, and I saw what he had in his hand. My sandwich!

He sat down on the bench and crossed his legs like a girl. I watched him put the sandwich right up to his nose and smell it. Then he opened it up, pulling the mustard-glued turkey from one piece of bread, the mustard-glued cheese from the other. After a thorough examination, he reassembled the sandwich and took a small bite. He chewed so slowly, like he was savoring every drop of mustard. I about gagged just watching him.

But the more I watched him, the more something told me it wasn't a guy. By the time he was done with the sandwich, I was pretty sure he was a she and not some weirdo. Well, it was still weird. And I had a million questions: Who was she? How hungry would you have to be to eat trash? How could you be that hungry and eat so slowly?

She ate every crumb. She even licked the mustard and crumbs from the plastic bag. Then she stuffed the bag in the front pocket of a tattered black backpack. I couldn't take my eyes off of her. I willed her to come into the library so I could get a closer look.

When she did, I nearly tripped over myself dashing to the nearest bookshelf. I grabbed the first book I reached and stuck my nose in it. After she passed by I realized I had buried myself in a quilting book. *What a loser!* I groaned as I put the book back on the shelf.

She walked behind me over to the tables by the magazines. She pulled two chairs out from under a table and turned them to face each other. Then she pulled a spiral notebook and pen out of the overstuffed backpack. She sat in one chair with her backpack and feet on the other. She chewed on the pen as she flipped through the notebook.

I wanted to talk to her so badly. Just the thought made my palms sweaty. I didn't exactly have much experience talking to girls, only Kyle's sister, Amanda. And she mostly just ignored us. I guessed this girl was about the same age as Amanda—fourteen, maybe fifteen. It was hard to tell. I concentrated on breathing deeply as I meandered toward her.

I picked up a *National Geographic* magazine off the rack and sat down at the table behind her. I studied her profile. She was kind of pretty; funny ears, though. Then again, maybe everybody's ears are funny, and I just never noticed. Her light brown hair was neatly trimmed around

her ear, but all chopped up in the back. Like she'd turned her back on a mad barber, and just barely escaped with her life.

When she caught me staring at her, I hid my face behind the magazine. She tossed her notebook and pen on the table. When I looked at her again, her blue eyes burned right through me, catching my ears on fire.

"What?" She shot the word right at me, her head recoiling from the force.

I turned my head around and looked from side to side. I raised my eyebrows and gave her my most innocent and surprised look. "I'm sorry," I said. "Are you talking to me?"

She narrowed her eyes. "What are you looking at?" she demanded.

Our eyes remained locked. I held up the magazine. "*National Geographic*," I croaked. There was a long, awkward silence, but neither of us blinked. I cleared my throat. Then I mustered up every ounce of courage I possessed and blurted out, "What's your name?"

She squinted her eyes at me again. "Who wants to know?"

"I do," I said, doing my best impersonation of my dad's voice.

“And who are you?” She took her feet off the chair and turned slightly toward me in her chair.

“My name is Matthew.” I stood up and offered her my hand like a man. “What’s your name?” I asked again.

This time she ignored my question and my hand. “How old are you, Matthew?” she asked.

I felt my shoulders and back straighten as I replied, “Almost thirteen.”

“So you’re twelve.” She waited for me to agree. I sat back down instead. “What grade are you in, Matthew?”

I hated that question. Everybody thinks that’s like the easiest question in the world—only I can explain Pythagoras’ theorem in less time than I can answer that question. And Pythagoras is more interesting. I wanted her to think I was cool, so I tried to be mysterious. “I’m not in a grade,” I said, crossing my arms.

“Yeah, right,” she replied. “It’s summer vacation. Nobody’s in a grade. What grade will you be in when school starts up again?”

“It depends,” I said. I shrugged my shoulders for effect.

“Depends on what?” she asked, draping her arms over the chair across from me. “On whether or not you flunked?”

## SUMMER SANCTUARY

The word flunked was like a slap in the face. “I’ve never flunked,” I countered, forgetting to be cool. “My family home schools. I’m at a different grade level for every subject.” I waited for her to laugh or make fun of me, but she didn’t.

“Really?” she said with a serious frown. “So what’s your highest grade level?”

“I’m at a twelfth grade reading level,” I replied evenly.

“What’s your lowest grade level?”

“I don’t know. I’m doing sophomore level math and science. Probably social studies is my lowest. I’m just starting high school work in that.”

She seemed genuinely interested all of a sudden. “So do you get a summer vacation when you’re home schooled?”

“Not really . . . well, kind of, I guess. My mom only brings us to the library once a week during the school year. My deal with my parents this summer is I can study independently. I get to choose the project, and I can ride my bike to the library every day if I want. Once I get my chores and stuff done, I mean. Every day except Sunday on account of church, and the library is closed.” I was talking way too much. I still didn’t even know her name or anything about her, except that she wasn’t anything like any of the girls from my church.

“So how many brothers and sisters do you have?” She had moved to my table now, dragging her backpack with her.

“I have three younger brothers.” I paused. “And another one on the way.”

“Wow!” she exclaimed, raising both her eyebrows.

I tried to change the subject from me to her. “I’ve never seen you here before. Are you new in town?”

“Not exactly,” she said. “I just discovered this branch of the library. I think I like it. So maybe I’ll see you around. I gotta go now, though.”

I thought I saw her smile as she slung her backpack over her shoulder and disappeared out the door.