

Fossil Fish FOUND!

The year was 1938. A strange guest had found its way onboard the *Nerine*, a fishing boat sailing off the coast of South Africa. It was a huge fish with steel-blue eyes and a pale blue body with silver markings. The fishermen had never caught anything like it.

The fish acted strangely, too. It crawled slowly across the boat's deck on fins that looked like stubby legs. It oozed thick oil from its body, and bit the boat captain's hand. Then, about three hours after its capture, it died.

"Old Fourlegs," as the fishermen named it, had no value in the food market. But it was very unusual.

The captain called Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer, who sometimes displayed odd fish in her museum in East London, South Africa.

This was not just any old fish. It was a "living fossil" that caused a worldwide stir. Old Fourlegs turned out to be a *coelacanth* (SEE luh kanth), a fish that first lived about 400 million years ago. Until 1938, scientists had only seen fossils of this kind of fish. They believed it had been extinct for 70 million years!



Coelacanths are sometimes called dinofish because they were around even before dinosaurs.



The coelacanth's official name is *Latimeria chalumnae* in honor of Ms. Courtenay-Latimer.

Unable to identify it, Ms. Courtenay-Latimer wrote to a scientist named J.L.B. Smith. Dr. Smith, an expert on fish, was excited. It sounded to him like the lost coelacanth. By the time he managed to reach East London, the fish had been stuffed and its organs thrown away. Still, he could tell it was a coelacanth.

Dr. Smith spent the next fourteen years looking for another one. He put up posters in places all along Africa's east coast. He offered a cash reward to anyone who found one.

In 1952, Dr. Smith heard that fishermen in the Comoros Islands, near Madagascar, had caught a coelacanth. He rushed to see it and was surprised to learn that the men had caught this kind of fish before, but threw them back in the ocean because they were not good to eat.

Since the discovery of Old Fourlegs, a number of coelacanths have been found, but they are still rare. Many consider this fossil the "most important scientific discovery of the 1900s."



The red dots on this map show where coelacanths have been caught. Since 1938, about 200 of them have been found in these waters.

Fun Fact:

Scientists believe the coelacanth can live up to 100 years.



The Case of the Missing Deer

“Do you think we’ll see some deer soon?”
Blake asked.

From their chairs on the small patio, his mom and grandpa both nodded. The three had just arrived at their vacation cabin. Blake was kicking his soccer ball around the wide lawn that their cabin shared with three others. Beyond that were the woods, like a thick green wall. Grandpa had said the deer came right up to the cabins here, and Blake really hoped it was true.

“You’ll have to wait until it cools off,”
Grandpa told him. “But I bet we’ll see some this evening.”

“Hey, pass me the ball!”

Blake looked up to see a girl about his age coming toward him from the next cabin. He kicked his soccer ball her way.

The girl trapped the ball with her foot. “I’m Maria,” she said. “My family has been here three days, and this place is great. But I forgot my soccer ball.” She pointed to a third cabin. “There are two brothers staying at that cabin, Nicholas and Todd. We’ve just been kicking a pinecone around the last couple days.”





"I heard that the deer come right up to the cabins around here," Blake said.

"They do. It's really cool."

"All right! A real soccer ball!"

Two boys appeared from around the side of one of the cabins. It was Nicholas and his younger brother, Todd. Within minutes the four of them had a game going, with lawn chairs as goal posts.

The game was loud and rowdy. And even though it was late afternoon, the sun was still strong. Blake pulled his sweatshirt off and flung it on one of the chairs. After an hour of playing, and a few points scored by each team, they wrapped it up.

Maria called to Blake as the new friends all headed back to their own cabins and dinner.

"Hope you see the deer tonight!"

"Me, too!" Blake replied.

But no such luck. After dinner, Blake kept watch for a while at the glass door. When no deer appeared, he joined his family to watch a video. But he kept going to the windows to check. By bedtime, Blake had not caught sight of a single deer. Living in the city, he would never be able to see deer on his doorstep. This was his only chance!



The next day, Blake and his family had a lot of activities planned. But by late afternoon, he caught up again with Maria, Todd, and Nicholas. As they set up pinecones to dribble the soccer ball around, Todd said, “Did you see all the deer last night?”

“A mom and her babies were right outside our kitchen window!” Maria said.

“We didn’t see any at all,” Blake replied. “We thought maybe it was too cold.”

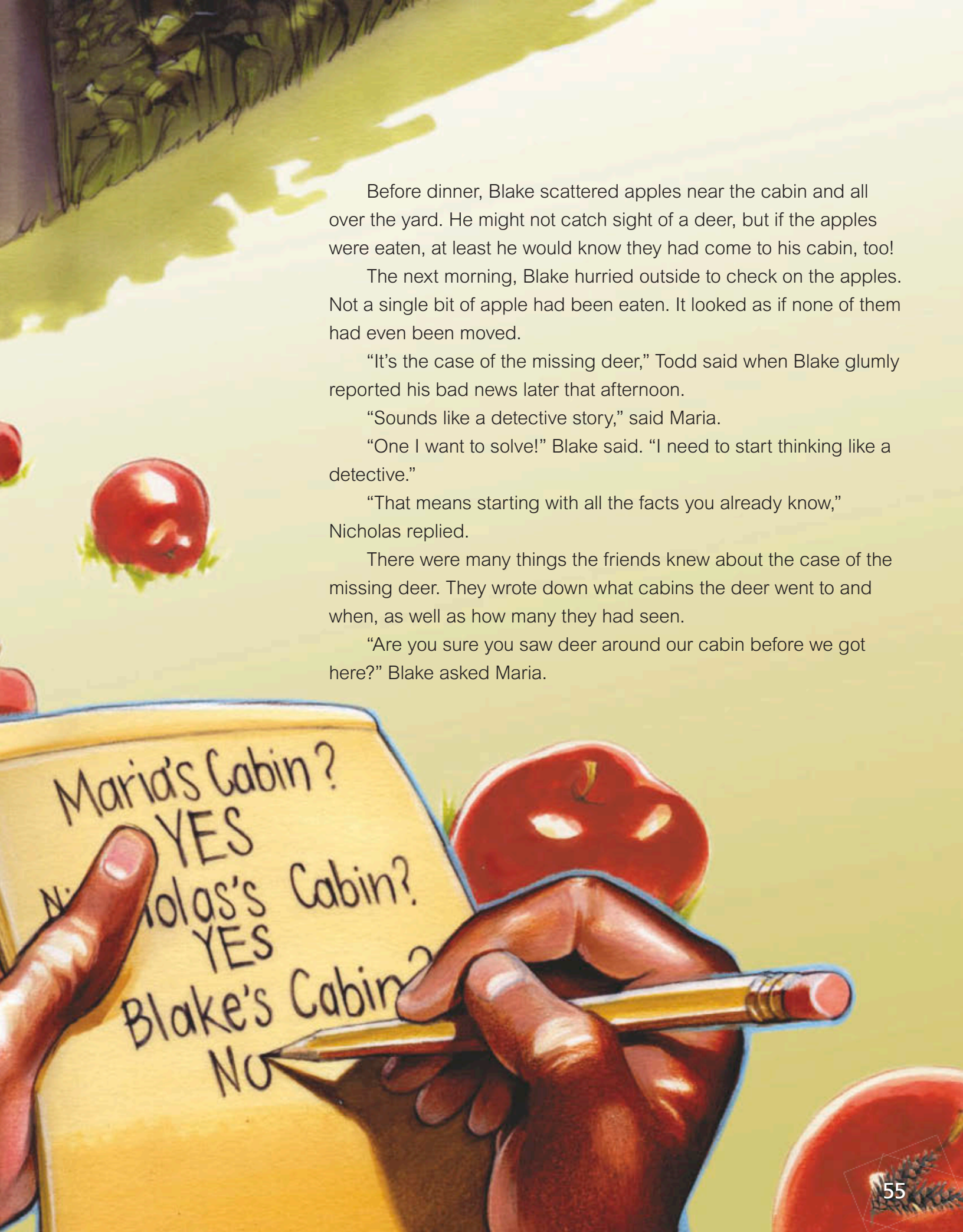
“No way!” Nicholas said. “They were all over the place.”

Blake frowned as he kicked the soccer ball across the lawn.

“I’m sure they’ll come to your cabin, too, Blake,” Maria assured him. “I saw them in your yard before you got here.”

“I don’t get it,” Blake said the next day when he learned his friends had spotted deer in their yards again. Again, the animals had avoided Blake’s cabin. What was everyone else doing right?

“Maybe I’ll put some food out there. Like some apples,” Blake decided. Nicholas, Todd, and Maria thought this might work.



Before dinner, Blake scattered apples near the cabin and all over the yard. He might not catch sight of a deer, but if the apples were eaten, at least he would know they had come to his cabin, too!

The next morning, Blake hurried outside to check on the apples. Not a single bit of apple had been eaten. It looked as if none of them had even been moved.

"It's the case of the missing deer," Todd said when Blake glumly reported his bad news later that afternoon.

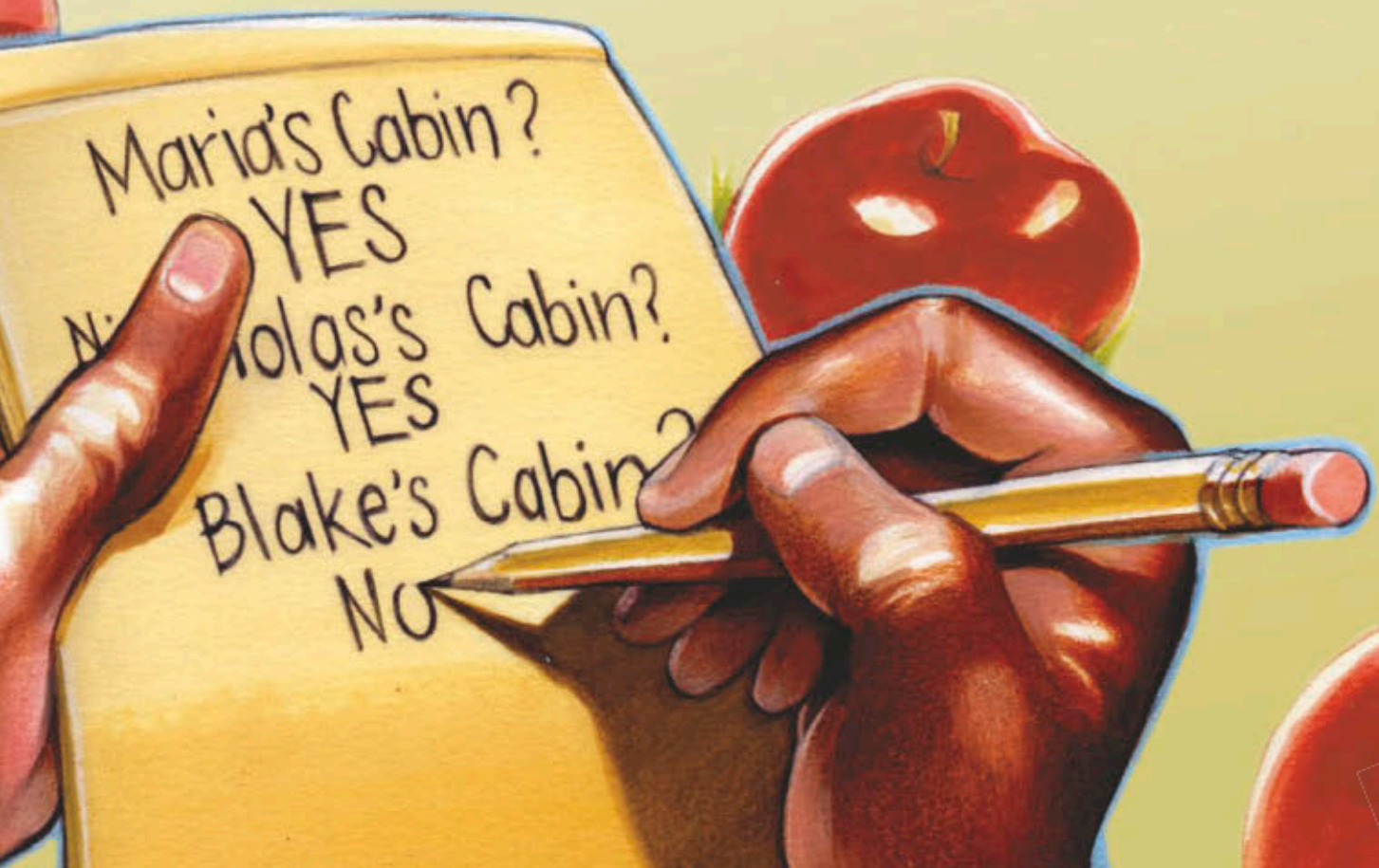
"Sounds like a detective story," said Maria.

"One I want to solve!" Blake said. "I need to start thinking like a detective."

"That means starting with all the facts you already know," Nicholas replied.

There were many things the friends knew about the case of the missing deer. They wrote down what cabins the deer went to and when, as well as how many they had seen.

"Are you sure you saw deer around our cabin before we got here?" Blake asked Maria.



She nodded. "Definitely."

"Could it be the soccer ball?" Nicholas asked. "Before you got here, we didn't have one. Maybe the sound bothers the deer."

"But they don't come out at the time of day when we play. At night, it's quiet. So it can't be that."

A search around the cabins provided no clues either. Then Todd had an idea. "Let's check for tracks coming out of the woods!"

Everyone agreed. At the edge of the woods, they found deer tracks heading towards Blake's cabin. But it looked as if the deer had turned back around for some reason.

It was a mystery! The four friends sat down in the screened-in porch at Maria's cabin. As they chatted, Blake picked up a

magazine that sat in a basket near his chair. It had articles about outdoor sports.

As Blake flipped through the pages, one article caught his eye. He read it quickly.

"I've got it!" he said. "I bet I know why the deer have been staying away! Follow me!"

In seconds the friends were standing in Blake's yard, between their lawn-chair goal posts.

"What's the one thing you notice in this yard that isn't in any of the others?" Blake asked.

The three kids looked around. "Just your sweatshirt on the chair," Maria said finally. It had been lying there since their very first soccer game.

"Right!" Blake said. "I just read this article that said deer have a really good sense of smell. It said hunters spray their clothes with something that covers up human scent, because deer run away when they smell people."

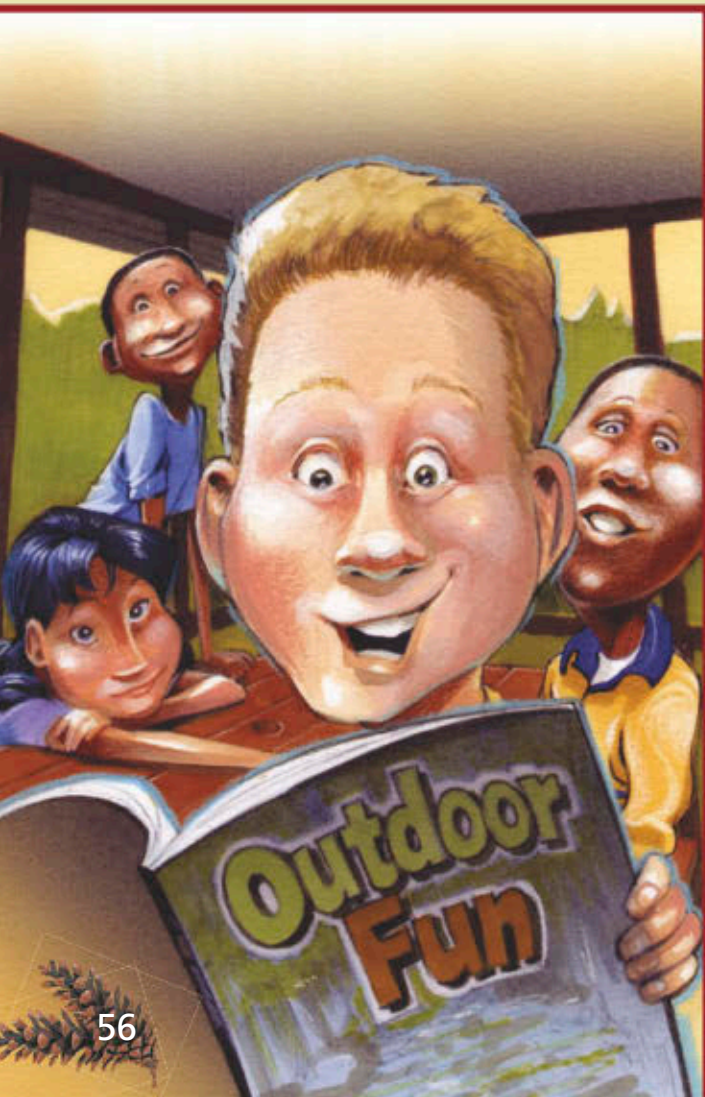
"So you think your sweatshirt was keeping the deer away from your yard?" Nicholas asked.

"That's what we're going to find out," Blake said, grabbing his sweatshirt. "Let's see what happens tonight. Everyone come over after dinner."

That evening a soft rustling sounded just beyond Blake's cabin. The four friends were ready and waiting at the sliding glass door. As they watched, two deer and a fawn made their way delicately across the shadowy backyard. They paused to nibble on fresh apples Blake had put out for them.

"You were right!" Maria whispered.

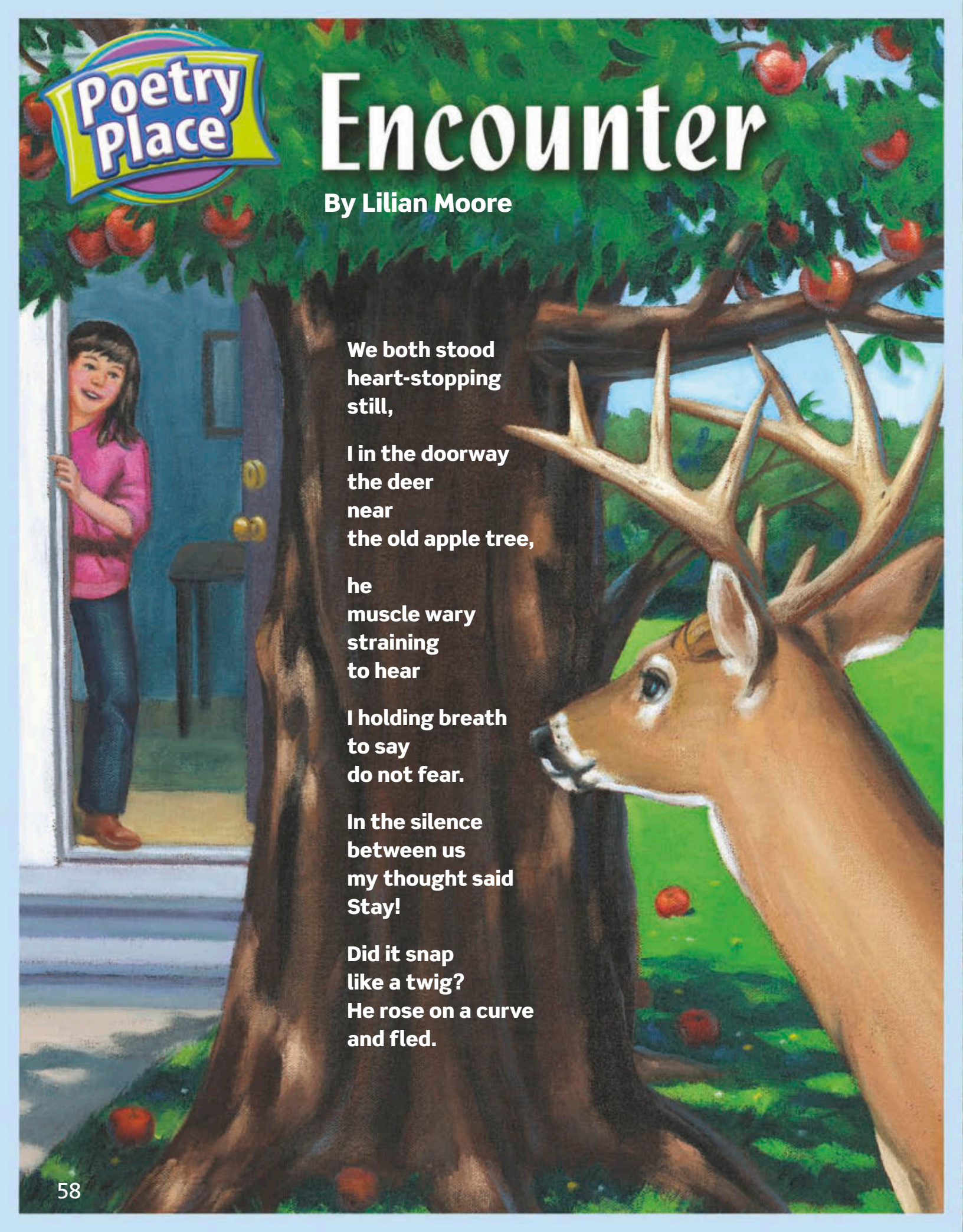
Blake smiled, satisfied at last. "I'd say the case of the missing deer is finally solved!"





Encounter

By Lilian Moore

An illustration of a young girl with dark hair, wearing a pink shirt and blue pants, standing in a doorway. She is looking out towards a large, ancient-looking tree with thick, gnarled bark. The tree is covered in green leaves and red apples. A large deer with impressive, light-colored antlers is standing in the foreground, looking towards the tree. The scene is set in a lush green forest with a blue sky visible through the branches.

We both stood
heart-stopping
still,

I in the doorway
the deer
near
the old apple tree,

he
muscle wary
straining
to hear

I holding breath
to say
do not fear.

In the silence
between us
my thought said
Stay!

Did it snap
like a twig?
He rose on a curve
and fled.

Deep in the Forest

By Barbara Juster Esbensen

Deep in the forest
curled in its grassy
bed
the fawn
lies
dappled with circles
lies
hidden under
medallions of sunlight
and woodland gloom
almost invisible



In “The Case of the Missing Deer,” a tossed sweatshirt foreshadows the deer staying away from Blake’s cabin. In the story below, events also foreshadow future events. Read to decide which ending makes the most sense—or create your own ending.

THE MISSING REPORT MYSTERY

It was Laura’s birthday, but she wasn’t happy. All weekend she had worked hard on a science report about woodland habitats. Now it was missing.

“It’s the best report I’ve ever written,” Laura moaned, looking down at her family’s new puppy.

“Come with me, Rusty,” she said. “Let’s look for my report.” Rusty wagged his tail and dropped the newspaper he’d been chewing on.

Laura led Rusty from room to room.

“Have you seen my report?” Laura asked her sister Paige, who was sitting at the kitchen table. Paige quickly slid something under a placemat.

“Report?” she asked. “What report?”

Ending 1: Laura finds her report in the living room, chewed to pieces by Rusty. Paige had been making a surprise birthday card for Laura.

Ending 2: Rusty leads Laura to the report, which he had carried in his mouth to her school.

Ending 3: Paige hid Laura’s report, so she could surprise her by making a drawing for its cover.



WHO DID IT?

After reading “Fossil Fish Found!,” you know that a few people were involved in the 1938 discovery of the coelacanth. The main ones were:

- A. Dr. Smith
- B. Ms. Courtenay-Latimer
- C. The captain of the *Nerine* fishing boat

Read each of the six statements below. Which person above does each statement best correspond to? On a separate sheet of paper, match each statement to a person by writing the number and letter that go together.

1. First to see the strange fish
2. Thought the fish might be a coelacanth
3. First to contact Dr. Smith about the fish
4. Offered a reward for more coelacanths
5. Was bitten by the strange fish
6. Had the strange fish stuffed



Writing to Remember

For centuries people have been writing down their experiences in diaries and journals. Journals have opened a window on what life was like in many different times and places.

A journal entry can be a good way to help you write a personal narrative about an experience. For example, in "The Case of the Missing Deer," Blake might have written about his excitement at seeing the doe and fawn.

Write your own personal narrative. Think about a discovery you have made, and write a journal entry about it. It can be a place you have visited, something you've done for the first time, or something you've observed in nature. It can also be a fictional discovery—a place you imagine seeing or an activity you imagine doing.

Write the date for your journal entry. Record your thoughts, feelings, and what you saw, heard, and did on this particular day. Include details. Write so that someone reading your journal will understand something about you and the world you are writing about. If you like, include small drawings that relate to your writing.

May 25

Today was a momentous day. I saw a bald eagle for the first time. It was perched in a tree at the edge of the lake.

