

THE
RESTORATIONISTS

BETWEEN
FLOWERS AND
BONES



**SNEAK
PEEK**

SAMPLE ONLY

WRITTEN BY CAROLYN LEILOGLOU

ILLUSTRATED BY VIVIENNE TO

Praise for
Beneath the Swirling Sky

“Colorful descriptions will send curious readers searching for images of the paintings mentioned, while discussions of art as a vehicle for the expression of truth and beauty add depth to the plot. . . . [Vivienne] To’s expressive, delicately rendered illustrations enhance the text.”

—KIRKUS REVIEWS

“A delightful adventure, excellent for reading aloud. This book will make you want to study van Gogh and get out the paintbrushes!”

—SARAH MACKENZIE, founder of Read-Aloud Revival and author of *The Read-Aloud Family*

“This carefully composed story is certain to captivate and delight your creative kids.”

—S. D. SMITH, author of the Green Ember series

“*Beneath the Swirling Sky* adds to the literary canon that blends art and mystery, such as *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* and *Chasing Vermeer*. An art adventure woven with truth and beauty.”

—MEGAN SABEN, associate editor for Redeemed Reader and author of *Something Better Coming*

“What a timely tale of uplifting the good and slow work of art-making. Carolyn Leiloglou sets out to restore humanity’s fractured connection with history’s great painters, and she pulls young readers in so close to historic works of art that they can almost smell the paint.”

—JOE SUTPHIN, illustrator of the *Wingfeather Saga*,
Little Pilgrim’s Progress, and the official graphic
novelization of *Watership Down*

“Leiloglou has somehow managed to craft a thrilling tale of paint-soaked derring-do that is also a profound exploration of the purpose and power of Art—all wrapped in language even a video-game-loving middle schooler can relate to. What a fantastic way of introducing young readers to the great masterpieces, not as dusty relics in a museum, but as literal doorways into adventure!”

—JENNIFER TRAFTON, author of *Henry and the
Chalk Dragon*

“Every word is like a brushstroke that outlines a beautiful story and keeps you yearning for more.”

—KELLEN, age 12

“Mrs. Leiloglou writes a wonderful story with relatable characters who are imperfect but who each have a unique purpose. It’s such an interesting idea to actually travel through art and gives me a new understanding of how you can use it to express yourself and your feelings. Definitely for fans of Pages and Co. Loved this book and can’t wait for the next one!”

—HANNAH, age 10

“I loved the characters and the way they traveled into paintings and between the artists’ works! Their personalities were so great! I learned so much about different types of art as well.”

—LEVI, age 10



THE RESTORATIONISTS

Beneath the Swirling Sky
Between Flowers and Bones

THE
RESTORATIONISTS

BETWEEN
FLOWERS
AND BONES

by

CAROLYN LEILOGLOV

ILLUSTRATIONS BY VIVIENNE TO



WATERBROOK

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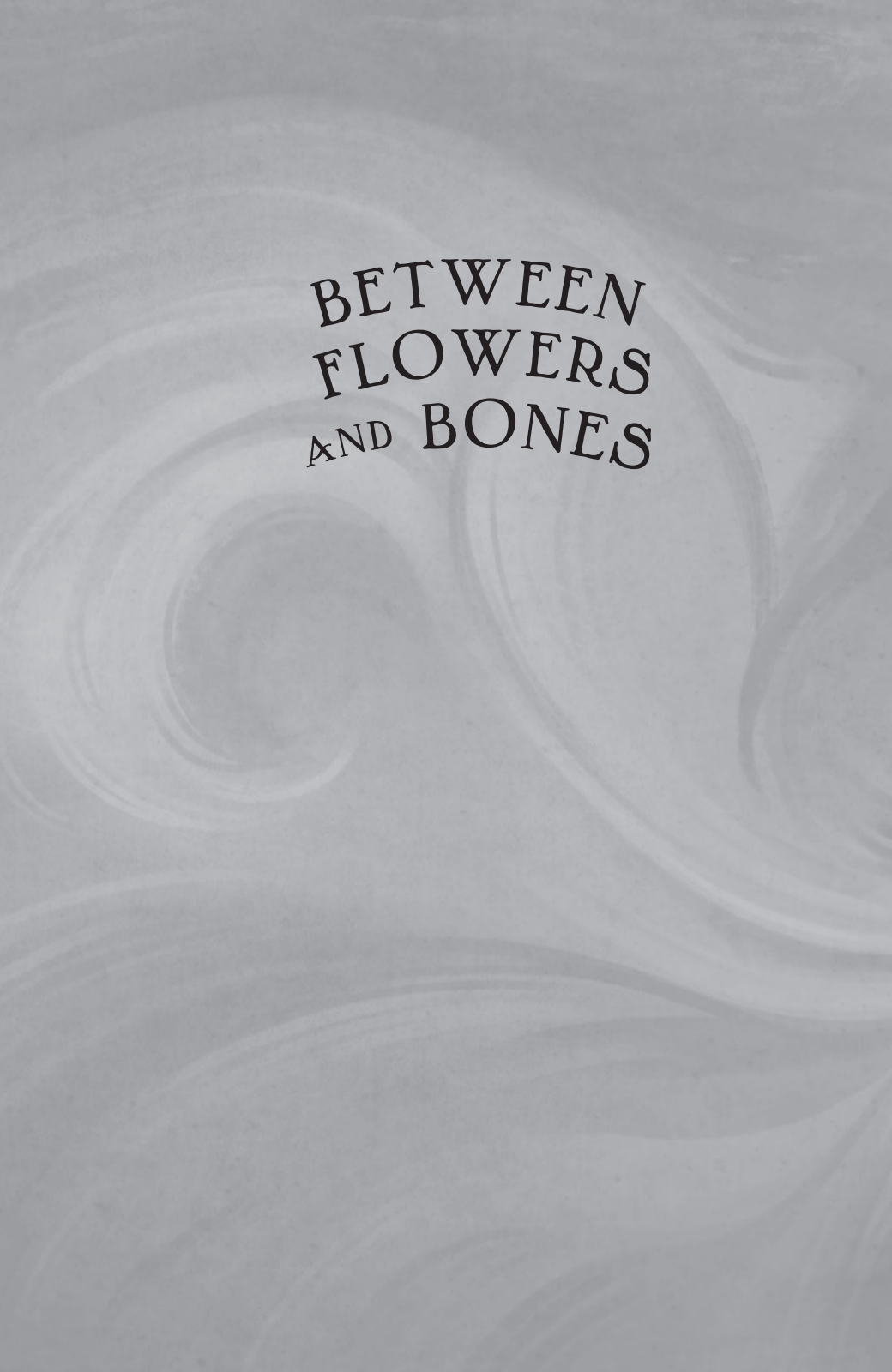
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**TO EVERLY—YOUR GIFTS ARE
EXTRAORDINARY. NEVER DOUBT THAT.**

Nobody sees a flower—really—it is so small—we
haven't time—and to see takes time like to have a
friend takes time. . . .

So I said to myself—I'll paint what I see—what the
flower is to me but I'll paint it big and they will
be surprised into taking time to look at it.

—**GEORGIA O'KEEFFE**



BETWEEN
FLOWERS
AND BONES



1

Georgia landed on her feet next to Vincent, who stood gawking at the swirling clouds flowing over the landscape. He acted like this was his first time inside a painting. Like they hadn't been training this whole past week. Sure, her second cousin was a newbie compared with her—he'd only discovered their family's ability to Travel into paintings over spring break—but . . . gawking? Still, it was better than him sulking with one of the frequent headaches he'd been getting since he and his mom arrived at Gramps's ranch in late June.

“Coming?” she asked, trying to keep the impatience from her voice. “It's not like we're on a mission or anything.”

Ever since Vincent had accepted his role as a Restorationist Artist, he'd been all wide-eyed wonder. She couldn't explain why it bothered her so much. But she

almost wished she'd never left the door unlocked for Vincent and then his six-year-old sister, Lili, to wander into *The Starry Night*. The Vincent she'd first met had wanted nothing to do with art. She'd been so desperate for a friend that when he'd stumbled into the painting that first night, she'd thought it was the best accident ever. Yet somehow she felt even more alone now than before.

"Give me a minute," Vincent answered, throwing out his arms for balance as the olive-green landscape shifted beneath them. "I've just never been in a painting this abstract before. I thought Georgia O'Keeffe was all flowers and bones."

"Flowers and bones" wasn't the worst summary of many of O'Keeffe's paintings, but Georgia wasn't about to admit that Vincent was right. Not with the way this past week had gone.

"Obviously there's more to her than you thought." Of all the paintings by her namesake, why did Gramps own this one?

Blue and white swirls that reminded Georgia of marshmallow cream slowly spiraled through the sky, spilling over onto the uneven landscape, which alternated between black, olive, and white. The ground undulated beneath her feet as she carefully hopped over a river of deep burgundy. She'd fallen into it once and wasn't about to do so in front of her cousin.

“Look, I’m surfing!” Vincent called as he bounded ahead of her and slid along a white wave of ground toward the left of the painting. She was too annoyed with him to admit it looked like fun.

Musical laughter sounded behind her, and she turned to see that her mom had joined them. Mama’s eyes smiled as she watched Vincent, and Georgia felt a spark of . . . Was that jealousy? She pushed it down, focusing instead on her strategy.

“Come on, Georgia! This is fun!” Vincent called, as if he had no idea that he wasn’t on her list of favorite people right now.

Somehow, despite acting like an excitable new puppy all week, Vincent had managed to impress everyone—her parents, Gramps, and even his mom—with his amazing Gift. It must be nice to be an Artist with such powerful control of the painted world surrounding them. But he’d be a lot easier to get along with if he had a normal Gift like the rest of the Restorationists in their family. A Restorer like Gramps. Or an Appraiser like her parents. Or even another Navigator like herself and his mom. With Vincent the Artist around, no one seemed to appreciate Georgia the human map. Georgia, who’d been training and studying her whole life to be the best Navigator ever.

A gentle squeeze on her shoulder brought her back to reality. She found herself facing the gray boundary to

the Corridor. How long had she just been staring at it? Her mind had been so full, she didn't even remember walking to the painting's edge. She turned and looked into Mama's dark brown eyes.

"Lead the way, mija." Mama nodded at Georgia, and a swell of confidence filled her.

Georgia tucked a stray strand of her short red hair back under her headband. She didn't want anything distracting her from their mission. She *would* prove herself an important member of this team. She'd studied every possible route and knew exactly where to start their search. Her parents had worked for years without an on-mission Navigator, relying on Georgia only in the planning stages. But she would show them how much better things could be if she were on every mission.

Vincent gave her a cheesy thumbs-up, which soured her mood again. She wasn't ready to feel friendly toward him right now. She took a deep breath and stepped through the wall into the Corridor.

Inky blackness surrounded her as she stood waiting for her eyes to adjust. Endless bright windows of possibility stretched in either direction: the nine hundred or so paintings Georgia O'Keeffe had created in her lifetime. Georgia had been in the Corridors of hundreds of artists, but visiting her namesake's Corridor felt like coming home.

Corridors may not have sounds or smells of their own—the only thing Georgia could smell was the faint whiff of dried clay on her overalls. But somehow the missing sensory input made her mind feel like it was opening up, like an intricate pop-up book. Every bright window led to a painting, which led to a home or museum, which led to more paintings and more Corridors. Her mind's eye peered down the hallway, endless routes and choices presenting themselves. Of course, she couldn't see every route, only the ones through paintings she'd studied or visited with her parents, which they'd done ever since she was little. But that covered most of the major museums. She'd never bothered to count, but the number of paintings she could locate was in the tens of thousands. Navigation didn't seem like a superpower compared with being an Artist or Tracker, but it was her Gift, and she was good at it. She just had to steal her parents' attention away from Vincent long enough for them to recognize it.

“The best place to start would be the O’Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe,” Georgia said. This would be a piece of cake. She knew each of the 277 paintings in that museum. She didn’t typically bother with memorizing the collections of smaller museums, but she made an exception for O’Keeffe. Not only did they share a first name, but the fact that O’Keeffe had been a potter, too—at least

later in her life—also made Georgia feel a special kinship with her. “The closest gateway is *Back of Marie’s No. 4* painted in 1931.” Maybe adding the date was a little over the top. “It’s just over here.” Georgia began walking down the Corridor, assuming the others were following, their footsteps swallowed up by the Corridor’s silence.

“I think I see something.” Vincent’s voice stopped her.

She turned to see him still standing in front of the painting they’d just exited. He hadn’t even bothered to follow her. Mama, who had been following, hurried back toward him.

“What is it, *mijo*?”

Georgia bristled at her mom’s use of the term of endearment. She knew *mijo*—short for *mi hijo*—didn’t have to literally mean “my son,” but she couldn’t help feeling replaced after the way Vincent had stolen her family’s attention this past week.

Vincent pointed in the opposite direction from where Georgia had been leading.

“It looks like Luminescence,” he said.

Georgia squinted, but she couldn’t detect the shimmering that would surround a painting recently Traveled through, except around the one they’d just come out of.

In addition to his extraordinary Gift as an Artist,

Vincent always seemed to be able to spot Luminescence from a much farther distance than anyone else. Which was pretty annoying. Especially to the person attempting to navigate a mission.

“We should check it out, then,” Mama said, giving Vincent’s shoulder a squeeze. “Good work.”

Georgia followed, dragging her feet. “Doesn’t mean I’m wrong about the O’Keeffe Museum,” she muttered.

A few minutes later, they stood in front of a painting glimmering with Luminescence. Georgia recognized it as also belonging to the O’Keeffe Museum—which proved she’d been right, by the way. *Mule’s Skull with Pink Poinsettias* was the “flowers and bones” type of painting Vincent had been talking about. Desert landscape, giant skull, flowers floating in the sky, and all a bit surreal.

“Let’s be ready, yes?” Mama said.

Vincent pulled a paintbrush from the leather satchel over his shoulder and squirted a dab of brown paint onto it. Technically, Georgia should grab a palette knife or something, but why bother? When the only living Restorationist Artist was right here, what did she really have to contribute inside a painting? She was useful only as a guide—and apparently not even that today.

“Let me go first,” Vincent said, as if this were now his mission to direct. “The Luminescence is bright, so he’s

probably still in there. I bet he's behind that giant skull. Wait a bit before you follow. That might throw him off."

"Ten cuidado," Mama said and then kissed Vincent's head of curly brown hair. "If there's a problem, jump to the museum. But hide the paintbrush. I know you'd never harm a painting, but a museum guard might get the wrong idea."

Vincent nodded, then reached his free hand toward the glowing image and disappeared.

Forget waiting.

Georgia reached toward the painting before her mom could stop her and stepped onto the hilly desert landscape right behind Vincent. Heat radiated from the sand shifting beneath her feet. Vincent spun to face her.

"Why didn't you wait?" he whispered.

"Because you aren't running this mission, in case you forgot."

"Okay, then lead."

Hopefully the wind was enough to hide their hushed voices, but they needed to get moving before they were spotted. She glanced behind them, but Mama didn't materialize. Maybe she really did trust them to do this on their own. Like a real Restorationist team. Georgia's stomach twisted at the thought. She and Vincent were anything but a team.

Georgia swallowed her resentment and surveyed the

painted landscape surrounding them. The most likely hiding place for their target was the giant skull to their left. The thing was massive, as tall as a house. If they couldn't find him at the skull, they'd have to hike toward the desert hills, which were spotted with short trees. But that would leave them exposed. She glanced up at the two huge poinsettia flowers hovering above them like clouds that refused to provide any shade. They were nearly as big as the skull and would have also made for interesting hiding spots if they were reachable. At least to anybody besides Vincent, who could probably paint a working ladder or a lasso. But their target couldn't reach the flowers either. The skull was the best place to start searching. Georgia signaled to indicate Vincent should go around the back of the skull while she approached from the front.

She crept past the wide cavity where the mule's nose would have been, moving toward its right eye socket, which seemed like the ideal hiding place. It was closer to the edge of the painting, so if their target wanted to escape into the Corridor, he wouldn't have far to run. Georgia jumped to try to peek into the eye socket, but she wasn't tall enough. She jumped again, this time managing to catch hold of the socket's edge, and began hauling herself up. Thank you, pottery, for the arm strength.

She'd just pulled herself to her elbows and was about

to swing her leg up when she felt a tug at her waist and heard the ripping sound of Velcro.

“No!” she yelled in frustration.

Georgia dropped to the sand and turned toward her dad. He threw his arms up in victory, clutching the flag that had been attached to her waistband. His face was nearly as red as his hair and streaked with trickles of sweat.

“Finally!” he said. “Remind me to pick somewhere cooler for the next capture the flag.”

She crossed her arms. “O’Keeffe *is* cool.”

“The coolest.” Dad nudged her. “Hey, don’t be a sore loser.”

She looked at her feet. It wasn’t that. It just felt like she’d blown every chance of proving herself this past week. It hardly seemed fair to have lost so quickly, especially when she hadn’t even been allowed to take charge in the Corridor. Every training exercise had ended with her parents oohing over Vincent’s amazing abilities. Her first time to lead a training mission, and she already felt like a failure. Why had she expected anything different?

“I was watching you from the back of the other eye-hole. It was smart for you and Vincent to circle both sides at once.”

“Not smart enough,” she mumbled.

“By the way, where’s the rest of your team?” Dad asked

just as a brown net flew through the air and landed on him.

Georgia looked up to see Vincent grinning down from the massive eyehole, his hair falling into his face. He must have climbed up from the back. Grudgingly she realized that would have been smarter than her plan of muscling up into it, leaving her backside and Velcro flags vulnerable.

“Grab his flag!” Vincent called down.

She pointed to her waistband. “I’m already dead.”

Dad had stopped struggling in the net and was now studying it with interest. “This is amazing, Vincent. You painted this just now? There’s detail you couldn’t possibly have had time to add.”

Vincent’s ears reddened. “I just tried to picture what I wanted. But it’s still not working like before . . .”

“Before” as in when they were fighting for their lives. He’d saved himself and Georgia from falling down an endless hole with just a paintbrush and had even tied up his mom’s evil twin, Adelaide, without touching her. This net may not have been as impressive as all that, but Vincent’s false modesty irked her, as it drew only more praise from her dad.

“Nonsense,” Dad said. “Frida, look at this.”

Mama had finally entered the painting and was jogging toward them.

“So they got you this time.” She smiled at Vincent, then Georgia.

“More of a draw,” Georgia muttered, but Mama was fingering Vincent’s net and didn’t seem to hear.

“Mira! This detail, in just a couple minutes. And strong! It’s remarkable!”

“He’s really progressing,” Dad agreed.

Georgia had heard enough. If this family was going to be all about Vincent, fine. Let him be his own team. Who needed her anyway? She’d just stick to pottery and grow up to be an old cat lady.

“Looks like the mission is done, so I’m going home.” She turned away from the happy group.

“Mija, wait! Come look at what your cousin has made.”

Georgia waved without looking back. “Just want some alone time.”

She slipped around the giant skull to where the flowers floated far out of reach. Just like everything she wanted. She ran toward the Corridor before the tears could overtake her.

