



A CREEK STORY

# *The* Missed Leaf

WREN MARLOWE  
PUDDLEBEND



## The Missed Leaf







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*For everyone still learning that waiting  
is a way of listening.*





Sora stood on the lookout rock. A yellow gum leaf drifted toward the pale pebble on the gold water. That leaf would start the afternoon game. Her spyglass waited on its cord.



Skip propped himself tall on both fins in the reed shallows. His eyes sat at full height. He had news, and he was done waiting. His snorkel stood straight up. He pushed for the surface.



Skip burst up through the reed water with his mouth wide open. Bright drops flew all around his head. "Plop! I'm here!" he shouted in one big breath. His snorkel tipped sideways on his back. Nobody had asked him yet. The drops came down on Sora's rock.





Sora had been about to say her soft hmm. Then the plop hit the quiet. She froze with one leg high and clutched her spyglass. "Danger at the bend!" she trumpeted at the reeds. The reeds held nothing. Her call went to empty air. The yellow leaf slid on free of any glass.





Sora lowered the spyglass from the blank water. Her neck stayed tall and stiff. One long toe pointed at nothing below. The leaf was gone from the glass. She knew the call had been empty. She needed quiet now to find that yellow leaf again. She stretched her neck in a slow full circle.





The quiet had just come back to the reeds. Skip erupted from the shallows in a wider spray than before. His fins flew high. Gold drops flung from his snorkel tip. "Plop! I'm here!" he shouted in one big breath. The shout ate the last good gap. Sora's leg came down hard.



Sora's soft hmm broke mid-breath. She trumpeted toward the reeds again with her neck stretched long. The spyglass swung wild on its cord. "Who goes there?" she called once more. Only spray answered her. The yellow leaf sat at the lip of the pebble. Nobody was watching it pass.





Past the pebble the leaf rested.  
Sora coiled on her rock. Skip's  
mouth closed.



Skip held still in the reed water. His mouth stayed shut. His eyes sank level with his head. He wanted to shout his thing. He did not. "I can wait," he whispered to the mud. The snorkel lay quiet. The water went smooth around his chin.







Skip stayed low in the water with his mouth shut tight. He raised one wet fin. "Plop! I'm here!" he said, soft as a bubble. He pointed at a reed snag off the main drift. The yellow leaf hung there, caught and waiting. This time the words fit the gap.





Sora climbed down from the lookout rock toward the reeds. Her long legs found the mud step by step. The spyglass swung on its cord. She was leaving the high watch behind. She wanted to see close what waiting had found.



Sora and Skip faced the snagged leaf. The spyglass rested on her feathers. One fin stayed half-raised beside her. The yellow leaf hung between them. Sora bent her long neck down beside his fin.

## EVERYONE AT THE CREEK



### **Bramble**

COMMON WOMBAT

The steady big-kid guardian



### **Cinder**

COATIMUNDI

The nosy neighborhood explorer



### **Hush**

TAWNY FROGMOUTH

The tall nervous big cousin who thinks nobody can see him



### **Nix**

SUGAR GLIDER

The littlest rocket sibling





## **Skip**

MUDSKIPPER

The tiny little brother who cannot wait his turn



## **Sora**

SANDHILL CRANE

The tall watchful big-sister neighbor



## **Tock**

FIDDLER CRAB

The bossy little drummer who wants everyone in the game



## **Tuck**

SHORT-BEAKED ECHIDNA

The littlest cousin who is always a bit too close

## ABOUT THE CREEK

Puddlebend is a slow bend in a warm creek where the water is shallow enough to stand in and the mud is soft enough to sit down in. Everyone who lives there is small. Everyone who lives there is working something out.

These stories are about the ordinary, difficult business of being a friend: waiting your turn, going back for what you dropped, letting someone hold you when you are all spikes.

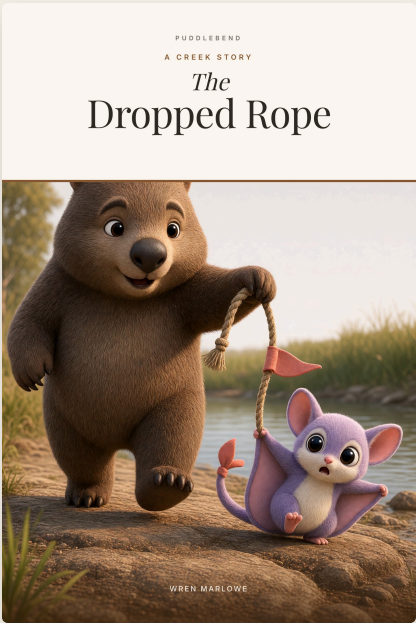
## WREN MARLOWE

Wren Marlowe is the Puddlebend house name for stories made at the water's edge — quiet, funny books about small creatures working out how to be together.





ALSO IN THIS SERIES



**The Dropped Rope**



**The Belly-Up Hug**



**The Clacking Lid**



**The Landing Branch**



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