

Archipelago

David Ward

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"I need a quest," twelve-year-old Jonah tells God. "Hear that? I want a quest. You took my dad. The least you could do is give me some direction." In fact, God has already prepared a quest for Jonah, teasing him with the tantalizing mystery of a girl no one else can see.

As it turns out, the girl is Akilah, and she is also twelve. She lived 14,000 years ago on the same Queen Charlotte Islands where Jonah and his mother have been camping. In Akilah's time, glaciers lined Canada's western shores and water levels were so low that some islands are not on Jonah's contemporary map because they have been submerged by glacial melt. A door has opened between the two times, and a magical mist guides Jonah to the threshold so that he can begin his adventure.

To Jonah's mother, Jonah appears to be sleeping deeply because of a possible concussion from a fall earlier in the day. This *Wizard of Oz* motif frames the story gracefully, even though Jonah's quest is much more perilous than anything Dorothy faced on her way to the Emerald City. Together, Jonah and Akilah confront sub-zero temperatures and the "Crossers," who try to kill Akilah's people for their meager belongings. Akilah and Jonah must defend themselves from these fierce fighters if they want to live. During their free time, however, they talk, and Akilah's matter-of-fact attitude about death strikes Jonah as appalling. However, she also tells him that his father "lives on inside of you," and that it is a "great honor" to live in ways he would have respected.

David Ward's clear, direct prose keeps the plot lively, and his dialogues, especially those between Jonah and his mother, are lifelike and compelling. This is his fifth book. His other titles include the Mask trilogy and *The Hockey Tree*.

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