



## Sunborn Rising: Beneath the Fall

**Aaron Safronoff**

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*This is an entertaining and adventurous beginning to a series about three friends in an arboreal world.*

Three young inhabitants of an arboreal-based community grow concerned when they discover evidence that may threaten their idyllic world in Aaron Safronoff's sizable fantasy novel, *Sunborn Rising: Beneath the Fall*. Accompanied by beautifully detailed color illustrations, this intriguing story follows the friends as they struggle to return to their families after their journey takes dangerous and deadly turns.

*Sunborn Rising* presents an ecologically positive world, populated by a multitude of coexisting species. Barra is a Listlespur, a tall, feline creature who uses her long tail to swing through branches; her cohorts include Tory, a Rugosic, whose outer layer is composed of minerals, and the ever-anxious Plicks, a Kolalabat who loyally follows his more adventurous and daring friends despite his smaller size and misgivings. Their home is in the giant treetops of Cerulean—a seemingly safe, flora- and fauna-filled playground, well described in affectionate, effusive, and intelligent prose. But layers below them, something nefarious is stirring.

Infused with recognizable human qualities—Barra, the typical young teen, butts heads with her mother Brace—*Sunborn's* characters are appealing. It's fun to encounter unique aspects of the Arboreals' world through them. An upset Brace tells Barra to go to her "nest room"; time is told by looking at dayflowers; and a reverberating event known as the Buckle marks the daily transition into night.

More than thirty full-page, highly detailed color illustrations help depict this otherworld realm. Smaller black-and-white drawings decorate each of thirty-five chapter headings, and a similar number of these sketches are interspersed throughout the text.

The early descriptions of the Loft and its environs are brightly reminiscent of the '90s film *FernGully: The Last Rainforest*. Like that film, this book contains an evil entity that the three bups, or young ones, must contend with. They are hounded by its deadly minions, and also encounter previously unknown but helpful and beguiling creatures.

The writing is entertaining, as when it's evident there's very little light in a certain area: "No bluebells or lemonlights or indiglows. No sparklenettles or lumenlichens or shimmerpollens." There are scientific terms, of course, but also just very good prose, such as: "The rhythm of Barra's heart became a brief rapid staccato like an urgent knock at the door. Barra didn't hesitate. She answered."

The book is aimed at fantasy aficionados or anyone who simply enjoys a good, entertaining story. Though the main characters are early adolescent, the book's target audience appears to be older due to its advanced storyline and concepts. There are also a couple of scenes containing violence and death. *Sunborn Rising* is the first in a series and sets up its storylines well for coming sequels.

During their very challenging and life-changing adventure, Barra and her friends come to realize they must find the strength within themselves to help their world—as they know it—survive. Along the way, they are given this advice:

“The pathwood home is the hardest to find sometimes. And sometimes it’s the hardest to travel.”

ROBIN FARRELL EDMUNDS (February 17, 2016)

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