

By Julia Ventura
(Based on a true story)

"I have a family here on earth. They are so good to me" (Children's Songbook, 788).

Let's grab the gear. It's fishing time!" Dad said. Hayden grinned as he looked around. Everything was bright and buzzing. They had the whole lake to themselves!

Following Dad, Hayden walked behind the car and lifted the big fishing tackle box out of the trunk. It was heavy, but he didn't mind. He'd carry one twice this heavy if it meant fishing with Dad.

Fishing poles rattled together as Dad pulled them out. "Looks like Dan fell asleep," he said. "Will you wake him up?"

Hayden held back a sigh. "Uh, sure."

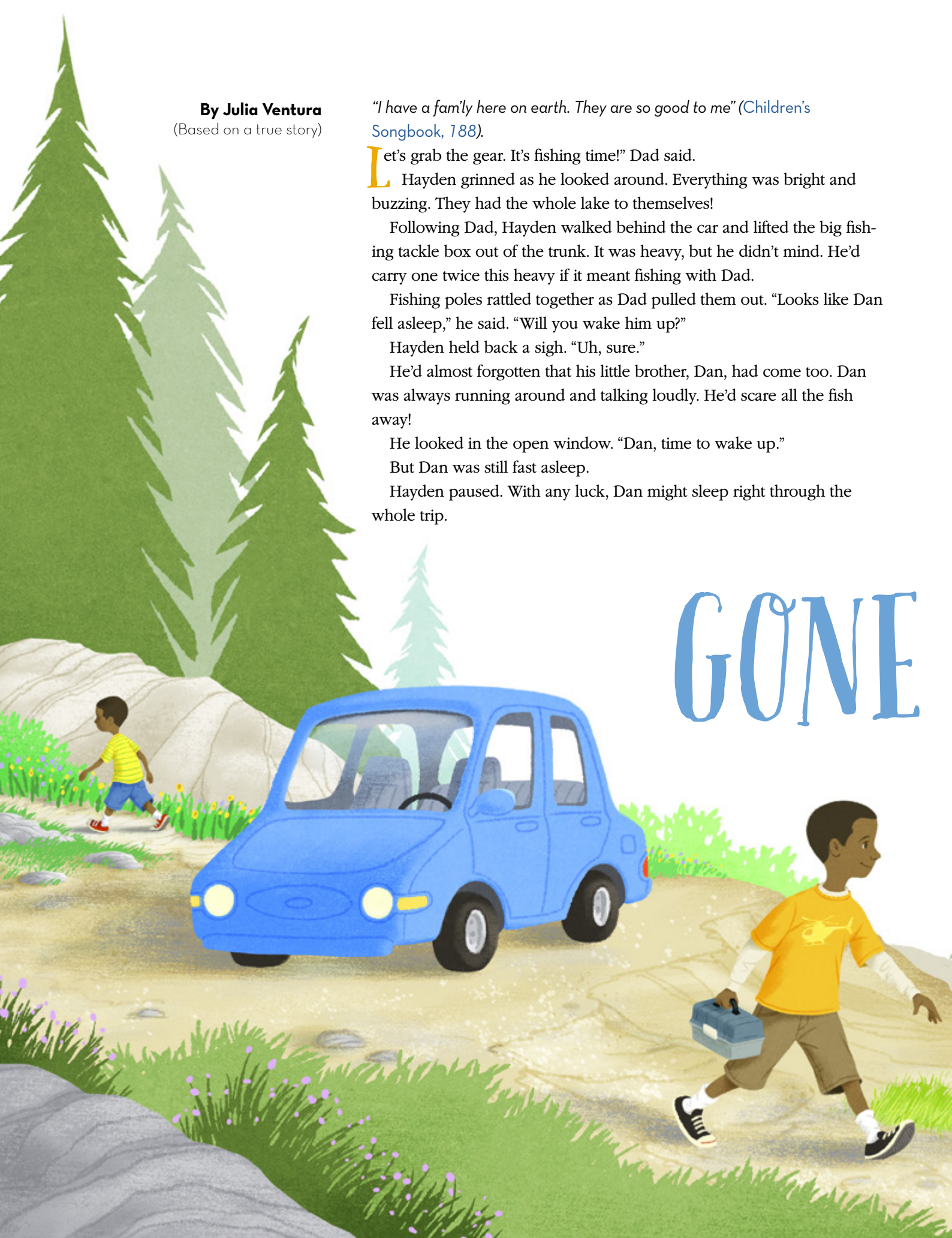
He'd almost forgotten that his little brother, Dan, had come too. Dan was always running around and talking loudly. He'd scare all the fish away!

He looked in the open window. "Dan, time to wake up."

But Dan was still fast asleep.

Hayden paused. With any luck, Dan might sleep right through the whole trip.

GONE



Hayden quietly hauled the tackle box to Dad's fishing spot on the shore.

"Here's the bait, worms and all!"

Dad took the tackle box from him. "Great, thanks." Then Dad looked up. "Where's your brother?"

Hayden glanced at the car. All of a sudden he wondered how *he* would feel if he woke up alone in a new place. Not good, Hayden decided. In fact, he'd probably feel pretty scared. And Dan was only five.

"Just a second, Dad. I'll be right back." But when he looked in the car, Dan was gone!

Hayden couldn't hear the buzzing insects anymore. Everything seemed to go quiet.

"Dan's not here!" Hayden yelled.

Dad hurried over and quickly checked the car.

"He's probably just looking for us," Dad said. "It's only been a minute. He won't be far."

Hayden tried to stay calm, but his stomach was turning somersaults. "Can I say a prayer?"

"I think that's a very good idea."

Hayden thanked Heavenly Father for his little brother and asked that they would find Dan right away so that he wouldn't feel afraid.

When Hayden finished, his heart stopped feeling so tight.

Dad put a hand on Hayden's shoulder. "What if you were Dan? Where would you go?"

Hayden noticed the door on the other side of the car was open. Dan probably hadn't seen them on the shore. Hayden pointed to a trail nearby. "I'd probably start walking that way," he said.

They hurried along the trail.

Every second felt slow and heavy. As he walked, Hayden kept saying prayers in his heart. After a few steps, they came around a bend in the trail and saw Dan up ahead.

"Dan!" Hayden shouted.

Dan spun around and smiled. "Hey, where did you guys go?"

Time sped up again. Hayden raced to Dan and hugged him tight.

"I'm so glad we found you," Hayden said. He said a quick prayer of thanks in his heart.

Dan just grinned. "Where are the fish?"

"Come on, I'll show you," Hayden said. His feet were itching to run to the lake. "Let's see who can catch the first fish. I'll help you bait your hook." ◆

The author lives in Georgia, USA.

FISHING

*Hayden couldn't wait to go fishing!
If only Dan hadn't come too. . . .*

