

Walden Lane

Where the mountains meet the sea ... Where the city blends into the wilderness ... This is Walden Lane. Hike in the sage-green hills, or surf in the cool Pacific—all in the same day. Is Walden Lane perfect? No. But it is home.

Meet the Characters

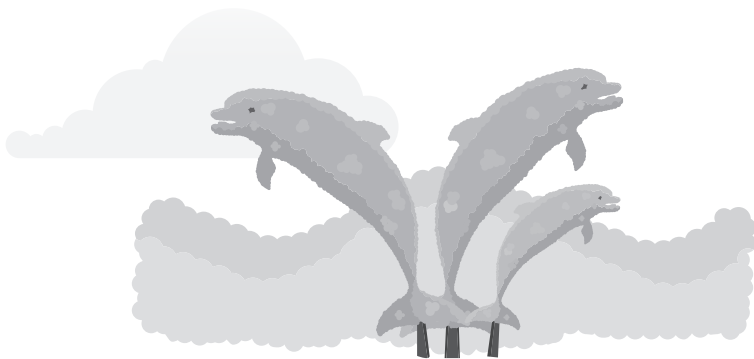


Marlon Moore loves gaming. When he's not in school or riding his bike, he's online. But 14-year-old Marlon is also a loyal friend and a great little brother. He would tell you his best friend is Steve McCain. But his dad is his true BFF.



Ashley Moore is an overachiever. She's good at almost everything she tries. Is she a perfectionist? Maybe. But Ashley is 16 and likes to have fun too. And her family doesn't let her accomplishments go to her head.

Crazy Neighbors



Clark's next-door neighbors trim their shrubs to look like dolphins!



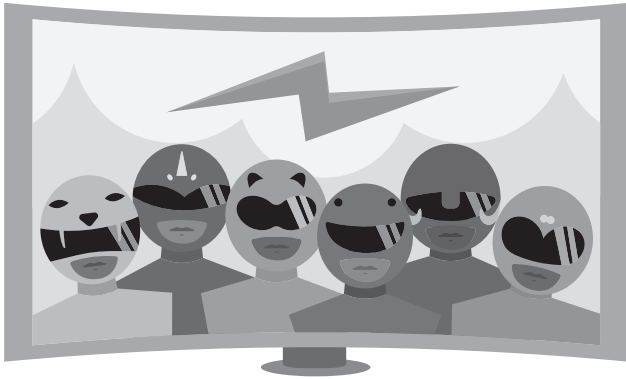
Everyone on Doug's street owns an RV.



Fun Facts



Mrs. Moore grew up in a funky purple house.



David Albert still watches *Power Rangers*.





Chapter 1

Welcome

Let's bring those cookies over." Marlon's dad smiled. He crossed the living room. As he did, he turned off the TV.

Marlon's mom walked out of the kitchen. She was holding a plate of freshly baked cookies. They were covered in plastic wrap.

Marlon eyed her from the couch. He was holding his tablet. Normally he would have grabbed some cookies. But not today. His mom had made them for someone else.

New neighbors had moved in across the street. The cookies were for them.

Marlon didn't know much about the new people. But they did drive a big white truck.

“Come on, Marlon,” his mom said.

His dad opened the front door.

Marlon's parents wore jeans and T-shirts. For “older” folks, he thought they dressed pretty cool. Marlon wore shorts and a T-shirt. His shirt said “I logged out for this?” on the front.

Marlon was into video games. Technology was an obsession. He also loved movies.

His mom was an elementary school teacher. Marlon's dad worked for the city. He helped to plan Walden Lane. That's where the Moore family lived.

Walden Lane was a mid-sized city. There were parks and neighborhoods. The city was surrounded by hills and trails. People liked to be outside.

Marlon had a sister. Her name was Ashley. She was a straight-A student. Ashley ran track for the high school. She was also in many school clubs.

“Why do I have to go?” he asked.

Marlon was focused on his tablet. He was reading a story. It was about a family. They robbed banks. The family had robbed over 50 banks. They didn’t get caught for a long time. The best part was where they lived. It was in a city just like Walden Lane.

“Because we’re a family,” his dad said. “And we’re going to welcome these new people as a family.”

“Ashley doesn’t have to go.” Marlon

put down his tablet. He got up from the couch.

“That’s because she’s at track practice,” his mom said.



The house was a fixer upper. It needed new paint. There was termite damage. The old window frames looked rusty. The yard was a tangle of weeds. It was not a pretty sight.

His dad knocked on the door. “They got a bargain here,” his dad said. “It just needs a little love. This side of the street is great. There’s nobody behind you.”

“They’re not home,” Marlon said.

“That’s odd,” his mom said. “Their truck is here.”

“Maybe they have another car,” his dad said.

“I haven’t seen one,” said Mrs. Moore.

Marlon eyed the white pickup. It was old. The paint was fading. There were some boxes in the back. He hadn't seen anyone, just this old truck. The people were never around.

"Maybe these guys are aliens," Marlon said.

"Shhh!" his mom said.

"Seriously! Maybe they just rented this house. Then they're going to use it to take over Walden Lane."

"Marlon," his mom warned.

His dad knocked on the door again.

Nobody answered.

"I guess they're not home," his dad said.

"We'll try again later." His mom sighed.

"Can I eat the cookies?" Marlon asked.