



*Gear and Sea*  
*A Silent Guardians Novel*

© 2019 Good Machine INC.  
Written and developed by Clare C. Marshall

Based on characters and properties created by  
GMB Chomichuk & Justin Currie

All rights reserved.

**ISBN:** 978-0-9939446-6-6

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events, locales, and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

**Good Machine INC.**  
A subsidiary of Chasing Artwork  
716-70 Arthur Street  
Winnipeg, MB  
R3B 0E7

[goodmachinemedias.com](http://goodmachinemedias.com)

Interior Design by Samantha M. Beiko  
Cover and Interior artwork by Justin Currie  
Edited Samantha M. Beiko

First edition  
Printed in Canada

## Other books in the Silent Guardians Series

*Cassie and Tonk*

*Rust and Water*

*Dragon Nanny*

## Other books by Clare C. Marshall

The Violet Fox Series:

*The Violet Fox*

*The Silver Spear*

*The Emerald Cloth*

*The Midnight Tablet*

The Sparkstone Saga:

*Stars In Her Eyes*

*Dreams In Her Head*

*Hunger In Her Bones*

*Darkness In Her Reach*

*Voices In Her Song*

Stand-Alone Titles:

*Within*



**CLARE C. MARSHALL**

# **GEAR<sub>AND</sub>SEA**



**GOOD  
MACHINE**

[goodmachinemedi.com](http://goodmachinemedi.com)



# CHAPTER ONE

## *Marker*

Before the kids were allowed to disembark, they had to recite the rules. Ty's strawberry-blond hair whipped about her face as she inhaled the brisk sea breeze like a welcome friend. The metal railing that encircled the deck of the turtle ship felt cool on her palms. It had been three long days with no islands, but now, the children would run free on real soil. For a little while.

The aft propeller slowed and something in the engine room two decks down released a big sigh. The children gasped and cheered with excitement. The ship had completely stopped. It was safe to leave.

She clasped her hands in front of her, standing guard before the ramp that led down to the shallow waters lapping on the shore. Twenty-five young dirt-stained faces—and Raleigh, of course—eagerly waited for her to begin the call and response. As the oldest one on board the turtle, this was her most important responsibility. “If you find yourself alone...”

"Whistle for your friend!" the children shouted. The youngest, Sinkie, screamed the response at the top of her lungs, as she was wont to do, being barely three years old.

"Treasure, food, and flowers..."

"Go to Podge to give us power!" Though Sinkie once again said "whistle for your friend" and Beau, the second youngest, nudged her and she shouted into the sky, "POWER!"

Raleigh, standing behind the children with a watchful eye to the horizon, fought back a snicker. She'd come up with that one, and as Ty's closest friend and second leader on the turtle, she'd helped all the children memorize it. Food and medicine had to be stockpiled so it could be shared equally by all. Under Ty and Raleigh's careful watch, no child would go hungry. Small treasures could be kept and traded among the children, but they had to be inspected first to ensure they didn't have a functional use on the turtle.

"When the sun gets low..."

"It's time to go!"

The sun was already at its highest point in the sky. This would be a short stop. Once the sun began its descent, the boat would come to life and leave, whether or not they were on board. That was the way of things and not even Podge, the kid responsible for fixing the turtle, could stop it.



Ty's stomach did flip-flops as she stepped aside. "Good job, everyone. Have fun and be safe. Don't go far."

The words had barely escaped her and the kids clambered over each other, fighting for the honour of being first to touch shore. The younger ones ran down the wooden ramp and launched themselves gleefully onto the sandy beach. Ty leaned over the side, ensuring none had fallen into the shallow, rocky waters. The older kids made their way from the beach up to the long grass and disappeared into the thick trees, eager to find treasure or supplies.

Three of the older kids remained, looking up at Raleigh for permission to leave. Jan, Katerini, and Aika. These three siblings had come to the boat together about six months ago and had looked to Raleigh ever since for approval when they found something shiny, or climbed a tall tree, or did their chores quickly.

Something ugly within Ty stirred. Ty had said everyone could go. Ty was the leader. The one with the final say. That was understood by all, even the young ones. Yet only when Raleigh nodded did the three troublemakers walk down the ramp.

Raleigh crossed her arms and shook her head. Her dark, suspicious gaze drank the watery horizon, ever watchful for threats. Then she gestured to the island. "This is it?"

Ty set aside her misgivings. "C'mon," she said,

putting a hand on her closest friend's shoulder. Beneath her touch, Raleigh flinched. Even though it had been a year since Raleigh's fateful rescue, she wasn't comfortable with physical contact, even with Ty. "The kids will find something today."

"How can you be so sure?" Raleigh started down the ramp. The wooden board wobbled under her weight, and Ty waited nervously until Raleigh was halfway down before testing it with her foot. It held.

"I just have a good feeling about it, is all." It was important to stay optimistic, even when tiptoeing gingerly on the outstretched, splintery ramp in calloused bare feet.

Raleigh was at the edge of the beach, searching the thick copse of trees before them. "Looks clear." She began shouting at some of the older kids, who had already put tons of distance between themselves and the ship. "Jan. Hey. Don't try digging up those stinkin' rocks again. Just because they glitter, doesn't mean they got tech in them, do you—?"

The wet pale sand squished between Ty's toes as she turned away from the noise and stared up at the turtle. The turtle ship—which had no formal name, known only as the turtle among the thirty-three who lived there—had been their home for nearly two years now. Five hundred seventy-six days, to be precise. The sleeping turtle head mounted on the tip of the bow had guided them through many a storm. How strong

it must be, Ty thought, that it didn't bat an eye or flare its dark and weathered nostrils during the storms and rend attacks. Nothing could stir it from its slumber.

The bow was strong and pointed, though the ship widened into a near oval, and its exterior was a scaled green, like a real turtle. Although it was a massively tall ship, it only had three decks: the top deck made of a gritty steel that also housed the garden and the trees; the middle deck, with the many unfurnished, small rooms, each with a porthole window; and the bottom deck, which housed the engine room and the hold. It had a large propeller in the stern, and aft of that was the rudder, which aided in steering.

The two front legs were retracted, as they were against the shore, but they aided propulsion and steering in rough weather. Inside both front legs were three retractable nails—or claws, as the young'un called them—that occasionally grabbed tech or junk for storage, and dissuaded pesky sea creatures from settling on the underbelly. Ty reckoned the front legs allowed the ship to venture so close to shore, as the rudder and the propeller would often become stuck in the shallow water. The front legs seemed to maneuver them out of any tight space.

On either side of the bow, thirty panels slid up, revealing secret compartments barely larger than Ty's fist. Ten robotic spiders scurried out, their tiny legs clicking against the hull. Ty frowned. Hadn't there

been five more on their last landing? They flopped onto the beach, their green pinprick eyes evaluating the sandy terrain. As one, they hurried for the copse of trees, the green lights on their skittering bodies illuminating their path.

Sinkie, who played in the sand a few feet away, squealed and tried to catch one, but the spiders were usually too quick for the children. Even if caught, they'd squeeze and scuttle over your skin and hop down to the ground again to carry out their purpose: resource and junk collection. Usually, it was junk, and no one could figure out how to program them to tell the difference. That was why Ty had to send her own little spiders into the forest, hoping they would fare better.

When the spiders returned to the turtle, that was a signal that the ship was ready to leave. Just as the turtle woke for nothing, it waited for no one.

"Raleigh, you—" But like the spiders, Raleigh and nearly everyone else had taken off into the woods. Ty rolled her eyes. Not again. Looking after the young'uns was supposed to be Raleigh's responsibility today, as Ty had to check and construct the marker and then search for medicinal berries and herbs. How many times had she tried to make Raleigh follow the routine, and how many times had Raleigh bent it?

For the most part, the young'uns didn't venture far from the shore unless they were with someone

older. Lately, though, the older kids had been taking off together, on the hunt for treasure, leaving the young'uns to fend for themselves. Ty sighed as Sinkie and Beau, a year older, splashed and fell on their bottoms just inches from a sharp, protruding rock in the sand. They were rarely apart, which always meant trouble.

One of the older kids named Lottie—barely out of childhood herself, but it was impossible to know everyone's exact ages—was sculpting a turtle ship out of sand. She sat, legs outstretched, quietly eying Sinkie and Beau as they engaged in their young'un games on the other side of the beach.

"Lottie, watch them for me for a bit, okay?" Ty said, pointing at their antics.

Lottie, her freckled face surprised and somewhat overwhelmed with the sudden role, stammered, "B-but what if—?"

"You went through the same drills as everyone else. If the spiders return, or if the propeller comes to life, whistle and yell. I know you'll do fine."

She grinned at Lottie with confidence she didn't feel, and dashed into the thick greenery before she had a chance to regret her choice. She exhaled her frustrations. Everyone had to step up and be a leader at some point. The only way to learn was to just do it, even if you felt you couldn't.

And even if she didn't *want* to be responsible,

she should at least try, Ty thought bitterly as she spotted Raleigh's bright red hair in the trees. Rough, gnarled roots prevented Ty from running, yet Raleigh gracefully hopped over one protruding obstacle after another, as if she was intimately acquainted with the land. That was her talent.

"Show-off!" Ty yelled to her friend up ahead.

Through the thick trees, Ty saw Raleigh's hair spin. Some of it caught on tree boughs and pointy branches, but she could make out Raleigh's challenge of a grin. "What?

"You see anyone else?" Ty asked, pushing one thick bough from her face. Unlike Raleigh's, her hair was short and couldn't become tangled.

"No one but you," Raleigh replied, crossing her arms. "Katerini and Aika are way ahead by now. Jan, who knows?"

Ty finally caught up with her friend. Raleigh leaned against a thick tree. One hand covered her chest protectively, and the other braced the bark, her fingernails digging beneath to reach the soft flesh. Her green-eyed gaze flitted every which way, ever watchful for rends and clunkers.

The children had many names for the mechanical beasts that roamed the lands. They were all robots, and most of them were bad.

The trees provided some shelter from the sweltering heat of high noon, though beads of sweat

had already formed on Raleigh's face. As always, she wore the dark sweater, undershirt, and trousers she'd arrived in, no matter how many times Ty had insisted that shorts and sleeveless shirts would serve her better. The cord around her neck disappeared beneath her grey shirt. Ty frowned and fingered the blue, shiny stone, hanging innocently around her own neck on an identical cord. It was warm to the touch, warmer than usual. Probably it had heated when she'd stood on the beach.

Raleigh launched from the tree. "I see you didn't lose yours."

Her tone made Ty nervous. "Why, did you?"

"No." Raleigh tugged on the cord around her neck, but not enough to bring the gem from beneath her shirt. "I just prefer it close to my skin."

Raleigh's arrival on the turtle ship last year had been tumultuous. Burned and near death from a rend attack, she'd been the sole survivor of her village on a large island. They'd been lucky to stumble upon her. Everyone pitched in to create a gurney to carry Raleigh, who screamed and protested, back to the turtle ship. At first, she resisted all treatment, and hid the small treasures from the village tight in her clenched hand. But Ty had persisted. Had she not, Raleigh would have died. Despite Raleigh's prickly manner, the two had become inseparable, and Raleigh had thanked Ty with a precious gift: the blue gemstone.

She'd had two, one red and one blue. Podge suspected they were pieces of tech, but since he couldn't see a use for them, Ty didn't feel guilty about wearing it as treasure around her neck. The two girls hung them close to their hearts, a proud display of their friendship.

Raleigh had always worn her red gem openly, as Ty did with her blue. Until now.

She silently gestured for them to head west. If there were any markers present on the island, they'd find them. Since the turtle ship could approach an island from any direction, they'd agreed to place all markers close to the western shore. Not too far from the beach, but not on the sand, in case of flooding or erosion. One island looked like another, though they varied in size and with the climate. Ty and Podge had started naming them—Podge had wanted to number them, but Ty kept losing track, and it was more fun to listen to the younger ones come up with silly names instead. Regardless of name or number, Ty and Podge made markers for each new shore they visited, hoping to establish some kind of pattern to the turtle's uncontrollable, unchangeable route.

Ty broke the easy silence between them—something she hated doing. "I thought you agreed to watch Sinkie and the other young ones today."

Raleigh shrugged. "They have to learn to fend for themselves. Another couple of years and they'll be



leaders, like us." She leapt upon an exposed root and put one foot carefully in front of another, wobbled as she lost her balance, but easily recovered. "You can't be their mother forever."

Mother was a funny word. Everyone had a mother at some point, though now Ty was the only mother the lost children knew. On some islands, they'd find abandoned children in dilapidated huts or hiding in trees. The ones old enough to talk couldn't remember where the grown-ups had gone. Everywhere Ty and the children went, they found fragments, shadows of the world Before, but nothing explained why Ty and Raleigh seemed to be the oldest children left, why the tech, broken or not, had been left to rot, and why the rends seemed to want every living thing dead.

"Maybe," Ty said, after a while. "We can't stay on the turtle forever, either."

Raleigh frowned. "The ship's not perfect and it's full of junk, but Podge is getting better at managing all of the beeps and the whirs and the sighs...."

"Don't you want to, I don't know, make a home somewhere on an island?"

"Why would I want that? They're all the same. The ship is our freedom. Without it, we'd die."

Raleigh wasn't wrong. It had a garden, with fertile soil that never seemed to sour, no matter how much or how little the children tended it. The ship processed dead plants to collect their seeds for future sowing. It

collected and recycled rainwater for drinking, bathing, and cooking. It had a built-in defense system—the Shell—that automatically deployed over the top deck when robots or rain threatened them.

Finding the ship had been a blessing. No longer did they have to live in fear.

And yet...the ship's island visits were becoming noticeably shorter. The ship no longer left at sundown. It had left *before* sundown. Twice.

"If anything," Raleigh continued, before Ty could point that out, "we need *more* stuff for the boat. The Shell is great, but what if the rends punch through? What if we land on an island, and rends attack the turtle, and we can't fight them off? Or worse, what if one of the young'uns are snatched running off the ramp?" She threw some mock punches at Ty, and Ty laughed as she defended herself. "I don't want to deal with anything like that again."

Raleigh was referring to the incident two days ago, when some bird rends had attacked some of the young'uns playing on the shoreline. One blink, clear blue skies. Second blink, talons digging into shoulders, children screaming. Ty had been on board with Podge. Raleigh had returned to the beach from scouting just in time. She'd jumped over jagged rocks and launched herself at the bird. It released the child and swiped at Raleigh instead, grazing her cheek. Despite her disadvantage, she'd continued to assault

the rends. It had been enough to make the two birds think twice about carrying off a young'un— that day.

"The rends don't eat what they catch, you know," Raleigh said, almost to herself, rubbing the scratch on her cheek absently. "They don't have guts like us. No clunker does. They're metal through and through. I think they attack us because they like the hunt."

Ty shivered, feeling that Raleigh was right. Clunkers were clunkers. They didn't *have* brains. Some were birds and some were spiders and some were mammals. But the scariest ones were the rends, and they were a special kind of clunker, many taller than the trees with arms and legs and eyes, but all of them had red lights and one purpose: destroy. The rends wrecked everything in their sights, including their former families and homes.

The two girls clambered over thick roots and hanging boughs as the sunlight between the trees grew broader, revealing portions of rocky beach, the never-ending ocean, and the cloudy, stretching sky. The tall grass crept up on them, itching Ty's legs, but scratching them would just give Raleigh more ammunition, as her trousers protected her legs just fine.

It didn't take much searching. The berry-stained white fabric, weather-worn but still secure around the tree trunk, did its job. Ty took off towards it. Yes, the rocks were still there, too—a pile of three massive

stones against a thick tree trunk. It had taken her and Podge and some of the other kids the entire afternoon to find and pile them here, stain the flag, and secure it around the trunk. But it had held.

Ty stood, open-mouthed and shocked before the marker. She didn't think she'd find anything. She never had, until now. But this was amazing.

This meant they'd *been to this island before*.

"You made this?" Raleigh frowned. "I don't remember that."

Letting out a squeal that shocked even Raleigh, Ty grabbed the waving fabric and stretched it, and yes—there, a date. Ty had always kept careful track of the time since they'd boarded the turtle ship, as one day on the ocean often blended into another. Today was Day 576. She recognized her scrawl on the dirty fabric: Day 211.

One year ago, on this day, she'd stood on this very spot.

"Did you hear me?" Raleigh asked.

"You weren't with us yet. That was a few weeks after this," Ty replied finally, her face hurting from the grin. "This is incredible. We've *been* here."

Finally. Some real, hard evidence that the turtle ship was following a route.

"So what are you going to do about it? Make the marker taller?" Raleigh asked.

Her sceptical attitude broke Ty's reverie. She had

a point. While this proved the turtle ship returned to previous islands, the marker didn't really provide any other benefit. What if they'd visited this island twice since placing this marker, and they'd only just found it now? Although her record keeping was studious, what if, somehow, she'd messed up, and it wasn't really Day 576? Worse: what if someone else had the same idea as she did, and was also constructing markers exactly like hers? She wished that could even be a possibility. It would mean they weren't truly alone.

Deflated, Ty searched the ground for a big enough stone to place on top. "You could be a little happier about this, you know. This is progress."

Raleigh blew out a sigh and reluctantly helped Ty search for rocks. "Because you're not making any sense. It's just...you know. Pointless. Like I said. We've got the ship. Yeah, knowing which islands are which is a little helpful, but have we really seen any depletion in food? Tech? The islands seem to have everything in abundance."

"Each island has everything in abundance *now*. What about two years down the line?"

"Two years ago it was the same as now. The ship is self-sustaining."

"Is it?" Ty pointed north, towards the turtle ship. "I can remember the turtle being a lot less full of junk and a little more in tip-top shape."

"Tech breaks. Podge fixes it."

"We can't rely on tech forever!" Ty was shouting now. She hoped the children couldn't hear. Fighting led to fear and mistrust. Mistrust led to trouble. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath, re-centering herself. "The markers can help us determine which island is best to establish a settlement. A real home."

"And if the rends come?" Raleigh threw up her hands. "Then what?"

"We'll strip the ship for tech. Between me and Podge, maybe we can patch together a shield barrier. Give the children some real stability."

"The big rends can't get us on the ocean. They can get us here."

"Any rend could get us at any time. We just have to—"

"I'm not going to let anything happen to you," Raleigh said forcefully.

Ty was caught off-balance. "Nothing bad is going to happen to anyone," she promised gently. "Not so long as *we* stick together and protect the young'uns. And we can best protect them by thinking of their future."

The finality in Ty's tone must have hammered home the point for Raleigh. She simmered as Ty found a hefty stone, lifting and carrying it to the marker. She pushed it on top of the other three stones. They wavered under the new bulk, but held.

Ty sighed. If she didn't say something, Raleigh would just brood all night, and *that* was not good for

crew morale. "Putting a new rock on top of the old marker is a good—"

A searing pain ripped through her breastbone as a high-pitched whine tore through the trees. Both her and Raleigh yelped, clutching their chests. Ty held her necklace away from her body, startled to see the bright blue pulse in time with her heartbeat.

Raleigh pulled her gem daintily from beneath her shirt and slammed it against her palm. It pulsed in time with Ty's. "They've never done that before."

The sound, whatever it was, had been brief. It rang still in her mind. A faint memory tugged at Ty. More of an instinct. Something from Before. "There might be related tech nearby."

Raleigh frowned. "That doesn't—"

Ty waved away her friend's objections and scoured the forest floor. The tech from Before was valuable. It was why they searched each island as thoroughly as they could. It powered the ship and the rends and anything of value. Memories of the Before came as feelings, strange associations that she had no vocabulary for, yet this flashing bit of colour—that meant something *big* was nearby.

Possibly as big as a rend.

Don't let it be a rend, Ty prayed.

"Over here!"

Ty lifted her head. Raleigh had gone some distance away. "Wait!"

Ty grumbled and cursed as she pushed herself through the rough trees. The path became increasingly tighter and she relied on Raleigh's flaming hair to keep her moving in the right direction. The gem continued to pulse, no longer as unbearable as burning coal. It bounced off Ty's chest as she ran.

"The sound, it—"

Ty swatted away a thick bough and followed Raleigh's voice into a clearing a couple of minutes from the marker and skidded to a stop at Raleigh's heels.

Junk. Everywhere. Wires hung from tree branches. A clunker arm with three fingers the size of Ty's entire body rested by Raleigh's feet. Several flat pieces, many dented and burned, had been strewn throughout the clearing. No rust on them, fortunately. They hadn't been lying here long. Other smaller pieces reflected and caught her eye: coils, screws, and tiny whats-its that had some unknown, possibly important use. Ty's astute sense of smell picked up on the burning metal and plastic, even though the sun didn't shine as brightly here as it did in other parts of the island. The tall trees enveloping the clearing had suffered some fresh-looking burns, and peering at the sky, she noticed some broken, uneven patches in the canopy.

The clunker had fallen from the sky, onto this island in this clearing, and smashed into pieces.

That couldn't be right...could it? Surely they'd



have heard a crash, especially one this large.

Raleigh seemed at a loss for words. “Have...?” she started, but couldn’t even bring herself to finish the question. Ty just shook her head. She’d never seen anything like this. Sure, they’d found pieces of tech, probably belonging to rends and clunkers of all shapes, but never something this...complete.

And then there was the head. Lying on its cheek between two fallen skinny trees, the detached robot head stared vacantly with two round eyes at the girls. It did not plead to be repaired. It did not even look angry. It looked dead.

Clunkers can’t *die*, Ty scolded herself. Not even rends could die. “We’ll need everyone’s help if—”

As Ty moved towards the head, the round eyes lit up like beacons. Her gem heated and pulsed in response. Ty cried out, batting it away from her shirt.

The eyes blinked—and the lights went out.



Hey! I'm Clare. I'm the author of the book you're reading.

I hope you liked the first chapter!

Did you know you could read more...for free?

Yeah!

[Start reading the next two chapters right now.](#)

Or, if you're already dying to collect the entire book, the best way to support me is to [buy the book directly from my website](#). You can also get it from your favourite book seller, but if you buy the print book, I will sign it for you! :)

Happy reading!

*-Clare*