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“Figures on a Crinkled Map” by Clara Pavri

It was all perfect. Pristine water, blue skies, white clouds floating over a bright blue lake. A ripple in the lake, a stone throne. That was you, a friend, laughing and shouting, your smile shining bright. My friend, gone, away like a bang, like a stone hitting calm water. So much confusion, I didn't realize you had left until you were already gone. Sunbeams shining down on us, on the world, a day I'd never forget. And everyone else would never remember.

Wisps of smoke floating from a fireplace, there for a moment gone, flashing before your eyes. Gone before you can see it. Crinkle of paper, green map rolled out on the faded tablecloth. Miles seem like inches, oceans seem like rivers, car drives seem like talks on the phone. Discarded dreams shoved in a drawer, to live with paperclips and beginnings of plans we never fulfilled. Stare up at the sky, at the same moon I can see as I stand alone by my window. So far away yet so close, just out of reach. Not so different from two people living on a crinkled map. Hot airplane, soaring over the places you used to know, now stitches in the great rolling quilt of land. Land with a hard thump, step of the plan, into a different city, a different world from where you came from. That's when the storm begins. Dark clouds of sadness rolling into my brain crowding out the thought, rain pouring over my soul, lightning striking, cutting into me burning with fierce heat. But in the midst of it all there is the sun, struggling, reaching for a chance to come out again. It may not come out, and it may never heal completely. But a ray might shine through, water rippling to a stop, smoke lingering in the air, a map folded, car keys jingling in a pocket, an engine starting, a knock on your front door. Reminding me how easy it is to forget and move on. Then there is

something different. Hope sparkling. Like bright firecrackers reigning down on the world, on me. Light shining bright. Rain from thunderstorms mixing with sunshine to create something new, a rainbow of wonder and color, piercing through the storms. And the sunshine torn and tossed by the wind returns. Hope returns, not forgetting, not dwelling, just hoping, and dreaming, acting. Telling me that what has been lost can still be found.