

**Creative Writing Manuscript:**

**The Tales of Eribacoa Island:  
Short Horror Fiction for Children**

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## ABSTRACT

*The Tales of Eribacoa Island* is a collection of children's short horror fiction about a group of kids and their spooky encounters within a mystical island. It includes elements of various genres, such as speculative fiction, mystery, the supernatural, and horror. This wide-ranging catalog of stories allows my work to develop without being restrained to a single genre.

My work is influenced by a series of authors who were instrumental to my world-building of Eribacoa island. Author R. L. Stine served as a guide for the horror genre aimed at children. My study of his action scenes, supernatural elements, and humor was instrumental in the creation of my characters.

Reading Anica Mrose Rissi assisted me with the structure of the collection and provided me with insight into the short story format. Examining the works of Breanne Mc Ivor, Carlos Hernandez, and Xavier Navarro Aquino was crucial for the integration of Caribbean elements and the development of the setting of my island setting. By observing their techniques and those by additional authors, I was able to create a modern twist on Caribbean folkloric characters.

The following themes are explored within my collection: how secrets affect a household; the lengths the characters will take to save their loved ones; people's connection with the spiritual world; nature as a powerful but healing source, and the hardships of growing up.

**The Tales of Eribacoa Island**  
**Short Children's Horror Fiction**  
Kayla M. Altagracia Jimenez

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## INTRODUCTION

One of my favorite childhood novels is *Alice in Wonderland* (1984) by Lewis Carroll. What entices me about this story is its world-building. While I was reading this fantastical tale, the world of Wonderland felt like a real place that one could visit. Learning that writing can portray humanity's complexities through mystical worlds outside of our own inspired me to become a writer.

I began writing when I was a child with diary and journal entries. Likewise, I participated in other forms of storytelling, such as drawing, painting, music, and performing.

As I grew older, my writing hobby was left behind to focus on science, which was another passion of mine.

When I began my university studies, I was drawn to writing once more. Still, science taught me about our connection with nature, the importance of listening, and how to capture details that might otherwise be dismissed.

Through my studies, I learned that writing is an outlet to tell our experiences in a meaningful way. Writing gives us the space to explore cultures and identities outside our own through poetry, short stories, or novels. Thus, we learn to empathize with others and open our eyes to different perspectives. Within my writing, I discovered my passion to tell unique stories that anyone can enjoy.

My initial idea came from notes I had written years ago. Also, it was inspired by the book series *Goosebumps* by R. L. Stine. I prefer reading stories that leave horror to the imagination of

the readers rather than include explicit scenes of gore and violence. For this reason, I was drawn to Stine's excellent combination of fear and humor.

After identifying Stine's work as one model for my own stories, I revamped my original premise into the creation of a mystical Island in the middle of the Caribbean called Eribacoa. I wanted to challenge myself to complete an idea that I had initiated. I took inspiration from authors I admired and from stories I grew up with. I chose the format of short stories because it gave me space to explore divergent themes, capturing fleeting moments in the characters' lives, which were linked by their friendships, circumstances, or by living in the same place.

Short stories tell a concise narrative while delivering an unexpected punchline. The point of view in each of my stories varies as I wanted to push myself to learn new techniques in my writing, and make improvements that I could use to later develop future writing, as well. This project was an exploration of my writing, and it was fulfilling to see where my stories went without restraint. I could explore all mediums, from prose, epistolary storytelling, and flash fiction with themes of how secrets can affect a family, the lengths the characters will take to save their loved ones, people's connection with the spiritual world, nature as a powerful but healing source, and the hardships of coming-of-age.

I learned the love of reading from my mom and aunt. Growing up, they would read to my siblings and me children's stories, such as *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, *The Rainbow Fish*, and classic fairytales. However, we couldn't afford to buy many books. We would read the same stories repeatedly.



By middle school, whenever the book fair would roll around, I could only buy one book per year. I understood the expenses my mom had to take on, which made me appreciate the books I could purchase even more.

I remember that the first book I bought for myself was the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules*. I felt joy being able to buy a book for myself, and I realized that reading for leisure was a privilege.

Gratefully, I had the opportunity to increase my book catalog when I reached high school and then when I started university studies, but I never forgot those lessons I learned in my childhood.

I aimed this collection at a younger audience, around the ages of 8 to 12 years old, because I wanted to create that sense of bliss in them that I once felt. During those formative years, a child learns about the world and their surroundings. I wanted my readers to explore folklore that felt familiar to them and were set on a magical Island that felt real. Moreover, I wanted to showcase the considerable amount of Caribbean folklore that exists, a discovery I made when I began studying at the University of Puerto Rico.

I wanted to center the stories in an imagined Caribbean using the knowledge that I've gained in my field. I utilized the genres of children's horror with elements of speculative fiction and mystery to develop these stories. The benefit of using children's horror is that it subverts the trends found in traditional horrors, such as embracing the unknown.

The use of humor with unnerving imagery was vital for the design of my collection. The distinction between fantasy and reality worked well when combined with speculative elements.

Incorporating the techniques used in the retellings of folktales, I created a modern twist on Caribbean folkloric characters that inhabit my fictional world Eribacoa.

The remainder of this introduction is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on my influences, and how certain authors made a mark on my writing style and storytelling. The second part provides an overview of my short stories with mentions of works that inspired them directly.

## Part I

My favorite stories growing up were in the fantasy fiction genre. Authors such as Lewis Carroll, the Grimm Brothers, Hans Christian Anderson, and Neil Gaiman created worlds that fascinated me. Their writing and setting lured me and built my enjoyment of the English language. Other projects that intrigued me were movies from Disney and Studio Ghibli. Two of my favorite movies from each studio are *The Little Mermaid* (1989) and *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004). They combine real-world elements with fantastical motifs, forming distinctive visual experiences that are captivating to watch.

As I grew older, I began reading stories of mystery and the uncanny.

One author who includes terrifying and unusual events that impact the character's life is R. L. Stine. His stories inspired my collection and lead me to write spooky tales for younger audiences. His writing is accessible to kids. He aims at entertaining children, centering on their panics and fears of the unknown in a comical way. It creates an escape for readers to fully immerse themselves inside the worldbuilding without the anxieties of real-life danger lurking

around. One example of a book that combines these haunting images with a twist ending is *Stay Out of The Basement* (1992).

The novel is about siblings Margaret and Casey Brewer, who are worried about their father, Dr. Brewer. After he started conducting experiments in the basement of their home, his behavior turned erratic and unpredictable. Worried about their father, the kids venture into the basement and discover a truth that takes them by surprise. As his father slowly becomes part of his plant-testing experiment, they must stop him before they lose him forever.

In this quirky tale, one can find children's fears of mistrusting their families for hiding secrets that can affect their lives. It explores the trope of man versus nature, as a powerful force that could dominate humans. Stine's use of humor, fantasy, and horror through simple dialogue shaped my writing and character development. His career trajectory motivates me to keep writing.

While researching to further develop my writing style for this project, I found author Anica Mrose Rissi and her collection *Hide and Don't See: And Other Very Scary Stories* (2021). This contemporary collection of short stories combines laughter and elicits chills in young readers.

One stand-out story is "Truly Delicious." The epistolary narration focuses on a young girl named Robin, who writes letters to her dad and stepmother while she is away in camp. Through its first-person point of view, we get insight into Robin's experiences. She describes how her camp buddies are getting sick from the food or the mosquito bites. She soon finds out that something sinister lurks within that isolated area. Slowly, Robin's friends go to the infirmary and

never return. Her last entry explains that she wakes up alone and decides to walk through the forest to see what she can find.

This story includes isolation, loneliness, unexpected illnesses, and the fear of something terrible happening outside the comfort of your home. Through her straightforward writing, the reader senses the tension of the action and feels drawn-in by the unfolding plot. I was interested in her inclusion of epistolary narration, making the story conversational also, but enhancing the seclusion the character feels. The action is focused on past accounts of Robin's life, building anxiety in the reader who wants to learn what happens next. The rest of her collection has multiple points of view and illustrations in each new chapter. Guided by this collection, my writing includes various points of view for the various characters who inhabit the same world.

To add more contemporary elements to my story collection, I looked for models in authors who focus on the Caribbean. Knowing the vast quantity of folkloric characters that enrich the Caribbean, I wanted to unite them on a peculiar imaginary island to see how they would interact within that space. Thus, I was drawn to authors I discovered during my studies, such as Breanne Mc Ivor, Carlos Hernandez, and Xavier Navarro Aquino. For Mc Ivor, I explored her collection *Where There Are Monsters* (2019), a gothic and humoristic work of short stories that integrate symbolism and folkloric monsters to tell her message. Her stories are aimed at an adult audience, but it was important to explore the themes of economic and cultural divisions in order to observe what I could incorporate into my work. These topics are relevant and pervasive in our society, producing fears that trickle down to young people who do not have the luxury to ignore these problems. This collection was excellent to display the masks within our world and the presence of hidden monsters that pass among us.

Her short story “The Course” focuses on the figure of the loup-garou. This story delves into the complications of a relationship, especially one that is being burdened by a monstrous figure. Coraline, the girlfriend of our titular and nameless character, is trying to find a cure for what they describe as a sickness. The man disappears at night, turning into the figure of the loup-garou, and does not remember what happens the next day. This monster is Trinidad’s folklore version of a werewolf, a man that shapeshifts into a wolf and causes mayhem and destruction in its path. The couple visits an obeah person to try to uncover the mystery of the man’s powers. As he takes medicine to destroy his monster within, we see the couple trying their best to cope with their situation. We observe the man’s doubts about the process and his fears of starting a family with his girlfriend if they succeed in the course. As the story progresses, one feels hope for the couple’s future and dreads their ultimate downfall. By the end, the man transforms once more, and his girlfriend goes missing, leaving an open-ended final scene with many questions unanswered.

What attracted me to this story was the use of the Caribbean take on the character. Though the mythology of a werewolf is well-known, the author's focus on the Caribbean version of the story inspired me to make this kind of addition to my writing. Integrating colloquial folktales and modernizing them for new audiences became a focus of my collection. This illustrates our cultural connections and our societal fears as expressed through mythical beings. Mc Ivor’s smooth writing is rich in metaphors and beautiful to read.

The line “to name something is to give it more power...and if you call a name, you never know what might answer” (Mc Ivor 44) intrigued me. I utilized this line as a starting point in how to develop the monsters in my stories, making them a mystery that would unfold as the stories goes on. The characters in my stories would gradually acquire information, connecting

the dots to unlock the secrets of the magical beings that inhabit the Island. However, some of my stories are left with eccentric endings, like Mc Ivor's tales that leave you wanting more. Her collection also delves into other folktales or traditional carnival characters, such as the midnight robber, as well as morbid topics like cannibalism. These aspects were valuable to keep in mind while creating my world.

Within this exploration of Caribbean folklore, I observed the unique elements given in Hernandez' collection *The Assimilated Cuban's Guide to Quantum Santeria* (2016). These stories are filled with symbolism and divergent viewpoints that are conscious of the message being portrayed. This speculative fiction mashes together subjects of science, magic, and Latin American cultural beliefs into an exceptional collection. It explores the boundaries and complicated relationship between religion and science, using magical details to examine societal problems. The stories' focus is on humanity's relationship within their own species and in their link to their environment.

Themes of political turmoil, the diaspora, immigration, family dynamics, and culture can be appreciated throughout this work. Through the collection's use of humor and imagination, the reader can take a moment to reflect on their societal pressures through the medium of science fiction. This collection was a helpful reminder of cultural heritage and the limitless forms of integrating my roots within my work. It was important to not only use my experiences as inspiration but to incorporate cultural myths and histories from my Latin American neighbors. Honing in on these themes and this approach, I felt confident in adding Caribbean folktales to the blend of my children's horror fiction through own my unique lens.

A story I want to highlight from Hernandez collection is "The Aphotic Ghost." This tale focuses on the dynamics of Dolores, Enrique, and their son Lazaro. It is divided by subheadings

that change points of view between characters, jumping from past to present accounts. We leap through different mysteries in the narration. We seek to learn the whereabouts of the missing son; Dolores' revelation that we as readers never uncover; and Enrique's role in the story. It creates a puzzling account of their dynamic as an unconventional family. At the heart of the story is the aphotic ghost, a name given to the mystifying jellyfish captured by the underwater filmmaking son and kept in Enrique's home. Like the jellyfish, Dolores and Lazaro are enigmatic characters in Enrique's life. By the end, the story is about healing and moving on with one's life, while growing and learning from past experiences. A line that caught my attention was "Histories never stay severed. Like the tail of a lizard, they grow back" (Hernandez 5).

This link between history, culture, and experiences that are integral to our growth was important to incorporate into my stories. The process of coming-of-age can be daunting to a child. Growing and uncovering oneself, like one's interests, likes, dislikes, and morals is universal to people's life journey. Though this collection focuses on adult situations, these experiences impact all our lives no matter the age. Thus, it's important to be familiarized with these topics as a child, resulting in less fear of embracing these changes that will occur without our control. In the beginning, Enrique's reluctance to learn the truth about Dolores showcases that childish fear of uncovering an uncomfortable reality. Nevertheless, he knows that actions have consequences, and it's liberating to let go of that fear. I featured hints of this self-discovery in my stories, as launching points for child readers that they could explore as they grow older.

While the development of the collection continued, I searched for a story that could serve as a backdrop for the creation of Eribacoa. I wanted to add touches from the Puerto Rican landscape I grew up with but add my spin to the scenery. My goal was to create a new Island, but one that felt somewhat familiar. For this reason, I turned my attention to *Velorio: A Novel* (2022)

by Xavier Navarro Aquino. This narration focuses on the aftermath of 2017's Hurricane Maria. It is centered on the characters of Camila, Banto, Morivivi, Marisol, Bayfish, Cheo, and Urayoan, and the despair the hurricane produced in their lives. The novel draws the viewer into the imaginative cult-like alternative society named Memoria and the grueling reality of isolation that many experienced after the real-life devastation.

We see multiple points of view divided by chapters that are characterized by unique writing styles that help distinguish them. Themes of governmental control, environmental destruction, survival, colonialism, and the dangers of idols are explored throughout this story. The text demonstrates a contemporary youth that expresses anger about their current political landscape and a desire for something different. Horror imagery, such as like gore and explicit death scenes, are present in this work, which influenced my stories. The description of nature, the devastating but potent presence of the environment was influential for my formation of Eribacoa.

I focused on the unity between humans and nature, our impact, and its connection with the spiritual world. Aquino's use of real-world and historical references described as, "old songs playing on La Mega...riding la Caja de Muertos in La Feria, las fiestas patronales, el festival de las mascararas in Hatillo" (Aquino 85), combined with the fictional town of Florencia gave me the idea of adding elements we see in Puerto Rico in my stories. However, I decided to reverse my approach to creating my island. My settings of the town square, the houses, the shops, the mall, the circus, and the amusement park hint at Puerto Rican culture. Thus, I could take many liberties in the landscape with a sense of realism.

Aquino's novel uses fragmented ideas and thoughts, stream of consciousness, and code-switching, which helped me think about style choices with some of my stories. Though my



writing is accessible and easy to read, his creative technique of storytelling and his characters' connections within his fictionalized world helped me map out how I wanted my characters to live in the world that I created. I also wanted the narration to center on a group of characters that know each other or that interact in the same space, like in Aquino's work.

To create the name of the Island I took inspiration from Navarro's work. I wanted to include the Taino language in my island's creation through my own creative lens. My search landed on Jibacoa or Playa Jibacoa, which is a fishing village in the Mayabeque Province of Cuba.

Likewise, I enjoy constellations and I wanted to include something science related in the title of my work. Knowing that our ancestors looked for the stars as guides, I thought it would be fitting to find a constellation name to incorporate in the title. I landed on the constellation Eridanus, which is represented as a river. The word individually means Eri means hometown, blessing, and my city. Thus, I formed the name Eribacoa.

Ultimately, I created a world that combined all the lessons I gained from reading and studying these authors into that peculiar Eribacoa. In this encompassing overview, I have shown how authors from various fictional genres have influenced the development of my writing. The following section demonstrates how these various elements from the authors mentioned, as well as other writers, have been incorporated into the stories of my collection.

## Part II

### "Letters to Cleo"

This story focuses on Begonia, a young girl who is visiting her grandparents' home during the summer. Inside the grandparent's mysterious Victorian-style home, she is forbidden

from entering her grandfather's workplace situated in the tower. Her curiosity drives her to discover more than she asked for. She uncovers a family secret that changes her life forever.

It is written in first-person through emails she sends to her best friend Cleo, who, in another story, has her own adventure in summer camp. Most of the narration is fragmented and one-sided until the end. As Rissi and Aquino demonstrated in their fiction, centering on one perspective creates tension for the reader. It creates a sense of isolation and provides a skewed recounting of the events that occurred. This was the first story I wrote for the collection, receiving initial feedback from my peers during my workshop course last semester. I knew I wanted to write a story in letter form and through their reactions and revisions, I observed how it evolved into a new work. It focuses on themes of family dynamics, coming-of-age, secrets, and friendship. What will Begonia discover?

These themes are also found in the novel *La Ciudad de las Bestias* (2002) by Isabel Allende. In her novel, Alexander Cold and his family are facing a family crisis, as his mother is receiving treatment for cancer. While their parents manage the situation, Alex and his sisters are sent to live with their grandmothers. Despite complaints, 15-year-old Alex is sent to the Amazon rainforest to be with his eccentric grandmother Kate Cold in her travels. Her job as a reporter for International Geographic Magazine leads her to explore a legend within the South American region, with the reluctant assistance of her grandchild. Throughout their expedition, the duo is accompanied by a unique group as they uncover the native tribe 'People of the Mist' and a mythical creature called the Beast that lurks within the forest. The themes found in this novel are survival, man versus nature, deception, appearances versus reality, and identity.

I read this novel when I was a child. What intrigued me about this story was the relationships between grandparents and grandchildren. That link between past and present

generations is special, particularly when they learn from each other. Like in the Goosebumps children's horror fiction series, we see the dynamics between characters whose families become closer by tense situations and ordeals that they must face together. The novel's description of nature and the natives that inhabit its space, as well as its dose of magical elements, assisted me in thinking about and designing Eribacoa. I wanted to create a world that felt real and that one could visit it.

Particularly, I wanted Begonia to feel the restrictions inside the house and the sense of seclusion that Alex feels in the middle of a foreign space. Likewise, I wanted my creature to have weird peculiarities like the Beast in Allende's novel. The creature for my story is a zombie, taking inspiration from the book *Zombie Halloween* (2014) by R. L. Stine, and the movie *Juan of the Dead* (2012) directed by Alejandro Bragues. Unlike the zombies that appear in the works mentioned before, I wanted to allude to my zombie's grotesque appearance without making it explicit while also adding aspects that make it unique to my writing.

As my short story unfolds, Begonia confronts the truth and decides to keep the secret to protect her family. The hints of foreigners, the government's role in the family's mystery, and the grandfather's job as a scientist display how powerful entities and colonialism can impact a family, causing drifts within the household. Like Alex, Begonia must confront the reality of deception and face a difficult challenge.

#### "Mallory's Misadventure"

This was another story I developed during my graduate fiction writing workshop class. A pampered child named Mallory returns from summer camp to find her mother acting strangely. After several encounters that she cannot explain, Mallory decides to help her mother return to

normal. She is aided by her friend Cal, his older brother Daniel, and Daniel's peculiar friend Eugene. She soon realizes that the situation is more dangerous than she had first thought, and she must save her mother from the monster that controls her before it is too late.

Written in first-person narration, this story follows a more conventional structure. Mallory must learn what disturbs her mother before she loses her forever. On the other hand, she does not realize that dangers lurk nearby and that she is vulnerable to falling victim to this monster. The Caribbean folktale I used in this story was La Diabliesse. This legend has been explored in many stories, as seen in the flash fiction "Albert and the La Diabliesse" (2015) by Robin Montano. This short tale follows Albert, a man who is returning home through the woods. As he moves along, he sees something near his path. He begins recounting the legends of the monsters he could face in those woods, such as La Diabliesse. With each step, his fears increase and become stressful for the character. By the end, he realizes that what he was seeing was a banana leaf and that he was not in any danger. This story serves as a guide to my narration. Its direct writing helped with the elaboration of my character's thoughts and fears about the unknown. It also helped me visualize the characteristics of the mythical woman and how I could add my twist to her story.

To foster a child's voice, I took inspiration from the character of Camila from Aquino's story. She is the novel's youngest character, and her thought process was beneficial for the creation of Mallory's voice. Camila and Mallory's personalities are vastly different but they both go through nerve-wracking situations that mature them. Another character I took inspiration from for Mallory was Chihiro from the movie *Spirited Away* (2001), directed by Hayao Miyazaki. Both Chihiro and Mallory are similar in age. They are both immature at first but must embark on a heroine journey to rescue their loved ones. In contrast to Chihiro, Mallory does not

visit a mystical world. Her island Eribacoa is riddled with magic, which increases the stakes as the safety of her home has been compromised. Nevertheless, they both rely on their friends for assistance. Though Mallory may or may not save her mother, her own fate remains uncertain as she succumbs to the monster's control.

### “Sebastian's Twisted Tale”

This story focuses on a young boy named Sebastian who awaits the return of his parents on a Halloween night. However, when he begins experiencing terrifying encounters with a *douen*, he accepts the help of his cousin, Cleo, and begins an adventure by trying to understand why he is being bothered by such a spirit. He travels to the town square and must explore the mysterious woods, ending up at a mystical calabash tree that holds the truth to his worries.

Written in third-person narration, this story was based on the first idea I had for my collection. Years ago, I had written a scene of someone seeing a ghost outside a window during a storm. It then transformed into a hero's journey. My inspiration for this tale was the graphic novel *Amulet* (2008) by Kazu Kibuishi. This story centers on siblings Emily and Navin, who move to a new house after their father dies. Inside, they find the strange amulet from their great-grandfather and embark on a rescue mission to save their mother, who is kidnapped by an arachnoid and taken to the magical world of Aleddia. This nine-book series follows their exploration of the world and their family's secret that unites them in this mystical land. What inspired me about this work was the dynamics between the siblings. Emily is a skillful and curious leader, while her brother Navin is more childish but who uses his talents in technology to assist in their quest. Their interactions helped shape the relationship between Sebastian and Cleo. Despite their differences, the cousins in my story protect and care for each other like Emily and Navin.

To form the folktale of the douen, I consulted stories such as “Douen Calling” (2016) by Brandon Mc Ivor and “Douen” (2022) by Lyndon Nicholas. Taking the premise of a child-like ghost with feet facing backward, both stories utilized their monster in unique ways. Influenced by their creativity and knowledge of these ghosts, I added my own variables to this Trinidad and Tobago folkloric figure. I wanted to explore the capabilities of a douen, inserting the possibility of a return to human form. Using synesthesia, I added elements like laughter, the tree, and the ghost’s abilities in order to enhance the mystery and magic of Eribacoa. Like Hernandez in his collection, I wanted to explore the connections between the spiritual world, nature, and people’s impact inside that space. The result was a paranormal adventure with an amusing twist ending.

### “Don’t Stop, Keep Going”

This tale narrates the story of a young child running through the forest. This nameless body attempts to escape from a group that is hunting them. Stumbling on an enchanted calabash tree that sits by a magical river, the child encounters a cluster of douen and a mysterious creature that piques their curiosity. Distracted, the character does not realize that their chasers are nearby. After a dangerous encounter, the narrator transforms into a douen, freeing themselves from their tormentors.

It was written from the second point of view as flash fiction. I knew I wanted to add a story where the reader could experience the character’s threat firsthand. For this work, I emulated the short story “A Salting,” by Lasana M Sekou from his collection *Brotherhood of the Spurs* (1997). It follows a young girl who gets kidnapped from her home and is taken as a slave to St. Martin. It describes the inhuman experience of slavery through the eyes of a child, forced to grow to survive. As described, “the captors will smuggle some of us through a lagoon by night to a S’maatin Lan’. They will sell us out of the belly of this evil craft as slaves to their own kind”

(Sekou 32). We see the terrifying voyage to the Americas and the loss of innocence many experienced through a fictionalized character. I wanted to portray those fears and cruelties in my story, including a hopeful ending. In comparison to my other stories, this bittersweet ending can bring some level of comfort to the readers. I wanted the narrator's pain to end and what remained is longing for their parents and their past. By briefly referencing Pedro Pietri's poem "Puerto Rican Obituary," I aimed for the message to be generational. The themes include healing from a traumatic experience, escaping into nature as a haven, and the environment as a provider of justice.

### "The Great Sycamore Circus"

This last story in the collection centers on a circus and the secrets that it conceals. Maeve is a young mermaid who is trying to find her golden comb in order to return home. She meets Micah and his family, who are a part of the circus troupe of Galileo Sycamore. When she discovers that not everything is what it seems, she must take the golden comb and her starfish necklace and leave. But she also hides a secret that might cause irreversible damage if she does not return to the ocean before time runs out.

It is written in third-person narration. By using simple and direct writing, I wanted to portray the innocence of children. Also, I wanted to allude to other monsters that lived on the Island. My goal was to expand the worldbuilding in my work and make Eribacoa feel like a real place. The movies *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (1983) and *The Last Unicorn* (1982) supported the formation of the circus and its colorful characters. Consulting Mc Ivor's book and other sources that could inform me about the history and description of the monsters helped shape my world. I drew comparisons to the Jamaican folktale River Mumma for the creation of my mermaid, adding my own spin to the tale.

I took inspiration from one of my favorite fantasy novels, *The Night Circus* (2011) by Erin Morgenstern. Magicians Celia and Marco are destined to be rivals for their opposing magic, but they begin a love affair despite themselves. Centered on family, community, and belonging, this magical tale drew me to write about circuses, as well. Like the magicians in Morgenstern's novel, the characters hold secrets of their own. Nevertheless, Micah and Maeve in my story feel a connection. They develop a blooming and innocent romance that serves as an obstacle to their obligations and quests. All my stories exist within the mystical island of Eribacoa, allowing for future stories to unfold.



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