

Shine by Jill Paton Walsh

Planet Earth is dying. Some children have been evacuated on a spaceship and have arrived on the planet Shine, which is to be their new home. The children ran forward over the open expanse of land before them, shouting.

And at once we were limping, crying, and hopping back. We were still wearing the soft ship slippers we had been given to keep down the noise in the corridors of the spacecraft, and the pretty grey grass and flowers had cut through the thin leather at once, and cut our feet. The Guide ordered the crate of boots to be brought from the store and unpacked. Someone fetched ointment and sticking plaster. Meanwhile, we stopped and picked the sharp plants, which broke easily in our fingers when gathered; they seemed to be made of glass, sharp and shining like jewels.

But as soon as we all had boots on, we could walk over them safely, for the growth was crushed beneath the soles as fragile and crunchy to walk on as the frost-stiffened grass of winter on Earth.

We all walked over the crisp and sparkling frost plain, down towards the shores of the lake. It took an hour to reach it. The lake shore was a wide silver beach, made of soft, bright sand, like grains of worn-down glass. And all the time we walked toward the lake, it did not move, or ruffle, even enough to shake the curtains of reflected mountain and reflected sky that hung in it. And though the air smelled good and sweet to breathe, it was windless, and as still as the air in a deep cave underground. Only the little rivulet that followed us across to the lake to the crag valley where the ship had lodged moved; it chuckled gently from stone to stone, and sparkled as brightly as the glass leaves and grass.

When we got to the beach, Pattie went to look where it joined the lake, to see if it would make some splash or ripples for just a little way, but it seemed to slide beneath the surface at once and made only the faintest ripple ring, quickly dying in the brilliant mirror of the lake.

'I think we may be lucky,' said the Guide. 'I think this place is good.'

