

WHEN GEETHA and her mom move to the United States after her parents' divorce, they leave everyone Geetha loves behind. As if that's not hard enough, some kids at her new school make fun of her clothes, her food, and the way she speaks English.

The only things that lift Geetha's spirits are playing her flute and visiting the local beach, where she makes friends with a boy named Miguel after they help rescue a stranded harp seal pup—a scared creature who seems comforted by Geetha's music. All the while, though, her anger is building: at her mom for making them move, at the mean kids at school, and at people who carelessly pollute the sea and hurt animals. Geetha's never felt so dejected before, but during her visits to the marine mammal rehabilitation center, she bonds with the injured seal, who seems to mirror her loneliness and fears and gives her new perspective.

Then she and Miguel start a beach-cleanup venture, and she's surprised to see how many caring kids show up. As the day approaches for the seal's release, Geetha feels torn. She wants the best for the pup, although she knows she'll miss him. But she's learning to live with mixed feelings and to accept that while there will always be rough waters, there are safe harbors too.

PADMA VENKATRAMAN was born in India and became an American after living in five countries and working as an oceanographer. She also wrote *The Bridge Home* (Walter Award, Golden Kite Award, Global Read-Aloud), *A Time to Dance* (IBBY selection, ALA Notable), *Island's End* (CCBC Choice, South Asia Book Award), and *Climbing the Stairs* (ALA/Amelia Bloomer List, Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People). She lives in Rhode Island.

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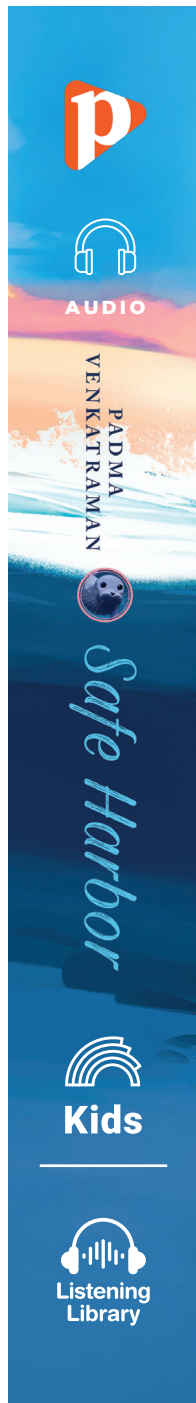
Runtime: 2h. 9m. • Unabridged

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