



Vernet, Claude Joseph. *Imaginary Landscape, Italian Harbor Scene*. 1746,
Minneapolis Institute of Art.

THE HARBOR
By Leighton Matney
A period

Caesar woke up on his 15th birthday to his parents arguing downstairs. Typical. Since his father's art stopped selling, they had been arguing nonstop about money. Caesar never felt safe anymore. He stretched and trudged down the steps to the living room where the squabble was happening.

“What will we do!” he overheard his mom saying from the other room.

Caesar wanted a normal birthday, not one filled with tension. He wanted a day where he could just relax and enjoy the life he lived. Today though, he wanted something special, something that would make him a man. With sweat beading on his forehead and butterflies in his stomach, he approached the living room. On each side of him were unsold paintings, most were of his relatives and friends, but there was one that stood out. It was of a harbor, the harbor. The place of triumphant victories and groundbreaking losses. A place where he could make a fortune. Caesar had never been there, but he always longed for adventure. Caesar had always been a thrill seeker. He yearned for the challenge of catching the biggest fish in the sea. Caesar burst into the room, and all eyes turned and gazed toward his tall, lean body.

“W-w-sorry,” his mother stammered; his father just looked at him intently.

“I think it is time to live my dream and go to the harbor,” said Caesar.

His parents nodded in unison with sad eyes and pointed towards the rod and gear hanging on the wall. Caesar thanked them. Before he could exit and start his journey, his mother blurted out, “Be smart, we don't want to lose another one.”

“What other one?” replied Caesar.

“Well... You had a brother...deceased,” said his mom. “He was like you...an adventurous thrill seeker, but that was his demise.”

“He attempted the same challenge you are about to go on, but he never came back,” his dad added.

“Just come back, please,” said his mom.

“I will. Don't worry!” exclaimed Caesar.

Caesar was off on the journey of a lifetime. As he walked out of the door, he thought about his adventure, wrapping his mind around leaving home by himself to raise his family out of poverty by fishing the deadliest catch. He could hear the blowing wind and see the winding path inviting him on this journey. Caesar knew this would require lots of hard work, but he was ready.

When the sun was just starting to set, Caesar started hearing noises he had never heard before coming from the woods. It felt like a person that wanted to hurt him was there. Caesar thought nothing of it until he saw a light inching closer and closer. Caesar didn't know what to think, so he continued walking. He saw an eerie figure approaching amongst the trees, and all he could do was stare. He snapped himself out of his paralysis and immediately started to run for his life, an ethereal figure following him. He had never seen anything as fast as it! He knew there was little time left until it caught up. Suddenly, Caesar was thrust back and a ghostly voice started narrating.

“Twenty years ago, I was on this earthly plane,” said he.

“Who are you?” Caesar asked.

“Who am I?... Well, I am your brother, Zaddus. Deceased. I have been watching you your whole life, and well, you are a lot like me,” his brother said in an understanding tone.

“They just told me about you,” Caesar said in awe.

“I was just like you, adventurous, outgoing, always up for anything, but that eventually killed me. The same adventure you may embark on today killed me. I will show you.” Zaddus waved his arm and the image of the harbor appeared before them. “The harbor, right before I perished.”

Caesar saw him slip from the rocks high above the water, hit his head, and fall to his death in a watery grave.

“Brother, do not go, or your fate will be the same as mine.”

“But I have to because we’ll lose the house if I don’t.”

“Don’t expect me to save you if you fall,” said Zaddus in a serious tone.

“You won’t need to,” replied Caesar in a cocky voice.

Caesar sat up and wiped away the dirt and sweat from his face. He saw the initial ZC carved into the tree next to him. He smiled at his brother's initials. With trees swaying like kites and the path winding like yarn, Caesar continued his journey.

In the harbor town, Caesar bought some bait, food and prayed. Caesar walked down the gravel path to the rocky cliff overlooking the water, and he cast his reel into the glistening sea, as shiny as a new pot in his ma's kitchen. Recalling those memories made him sick to leave them alone, but he knew he had to do what was right. With his reel, he was controlling his destiny. Suddenly, he felt a tug on his rod. As he lost his balance because of his daydreaming, he called for the nearest local, but no one came. Caesar thought that this was the end until he felt an unexpected tug, giving him the strength to right himself and pull the fish out. Caesar looked behind him and saw a smiling face.

“I had to save you, don't get cocky!” Zaddius whispered, and then he vanished, leaving only a piece of paper.

“You did what I couldn't and did it with style! I will always miss you guys and haven't felt whole since I left on the fateful day. Love you till the end, Zaddius.”

Caesar fell to his knees and started bawling, knowing his family was saved, and he had an angel watching over him.