



I was already down at the dock the next morning when Grandma appeared with a life jacket and a long pole. She didn't seem surprised by the raft at all, or by the animal pictures all over it.

"How did you know . . . ?" I started.

"Let's go," Grandma interrupted, tossing me the life jacket and stepping onto the raft. She pushed the pole hard into the river bottom and we moved smoothly into the current.

"Your turn," she said after a few minutes. She showed me how to hold the pole and push, and I poled us to the middle of the river. Even there, the water wasn't over my head.

We poled the raft up the river, then let it slowly drift back down. The birds kept us company the whole time, soaring, swooping, singing. Some even landed on the raft and rode with us for a while. Hitchhikers, Grandma called them.