TERIKIAK
(ter-ick-ee-yak)

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[www.benlueders.com](http://www.benlueders.com) **Full Synopsis**

The tale begins with the curious scene of a talking mother frog helping her son, Santiago, escape a dreadful pirate ship in the middle of the night. She gives him a shiny golden box as he rows away in a rowboat.

Next, we're abruptly introduced to the Ficus family. Abram and Margaret Ficus and their three sons: Arthur, Alexander and Augustine (Gus). The eldest Ficus brother, Arthur, is the smartest and likes others to know it. The middle brother, Alexander, is scrappy and resourceful. The youngest brother, Gus, just wants to be noticed and loved. The family has driven from their midwestern home all the way to "Slaughter Beach" Delaware for their summer vacation. But after only a few days at the beach, the three brothers are bored out of their mind, and begin resenting their parents and each other.

That is, until they stumble upon a mysterious rowboat bearing a shiny, locked box.

A violent riptide steals them from shore and transports them and their rowboat to a tropical island called Terikiak, guarded by terrifying spike-covered sharks. After narrowly surviving the sharks, they are discovered by a friendly old frog named Frederick and his trusty velociraptor steed, Rebekah. In the scuffle, however, they have lost Gus, and along with him the mysterious box (which might be their only ticket off of the island).

While Arthur and Frederick sleep that first night, Alexander sneaks off to try to find his lost little brother. However, he is unwittingly captured by a band of pirates, led by a coffee-addled old Walrus named Winnifred who is searching the island for the golden box. Alexander pretends to be a pirate himself, both to survive, and to find out if the Walrus knows his little brother's whereabouts.

When Frederick and Arthur awake and discover Alexander gone, the frog immediately entrusts Arthur to the care of some sentient creatures called Toolas, while he goes off to search for Alexander. While staying with the Toolas, their king dies and Arthur uses his cleverness to become their new king. This turns out not to be as glamorous as it sounds.

Meanwhile, little Gus has been found by a giant, furry creature called Rombom who turns out to be a friendly beast, and soon becomes Gus' inseparable companion.

Once Arthur is crowned king, Frederick returns to the Toola Kingdom with grave news that Alexander has become a pirate himself. Arthur refuses to believe it, and orders the Toola army to attack the pirates to save Alexander — not realizing that the Toola king must lead his army into battle. Frederick loans Arthur his velociraptor, Rebekah, as his royal steed.

While pretending to be a pirate, Alexander discovers that Winnifred is holding the old frog's wife, Evangeline, in a jail cell. Alexander befriends a servant of the Walrus captain named Klaus, who helps both him and Evangeline escape, just before the Toolas attempt their attack.

Gus and Rombom have a violent encounter with some pirate spies in a fruit orchard, that results in the friendly beast becoming wounded. Gus cares for his wounded friend.

The story of the three separated brothers converge on the morning of the great battle. Through their spying, the pirates get wind of the attack beforehand and surprise the Toolas as they emerge from the forest. Arthur must devise a plan to defeat the pirates who have staked out a strategic spot above the Toola army. Gus and Rombom hear the commotion of battle and run to defend the Toolas, as Alexander and Evangeline escape the pirate ship on a rowboat. The situation worsens as Winnifred summons a terrifying crustacean-like creature from the depths of the ocean named "Basore". It wreaks havoc on the island and the three boys are reunited amidst the carnage.

Ultimately, the beloved Rombom sacrifices his life to save his companion, Gus, from the mighty Basore – and the boys unlock the mystery within the golden box: a magical instrument that summons a giant winged creature called a "Koolatius". The great bird defeats the Basore with one fell swoop and offers to fly the brothers back home. The Ficuses say good bye to their friends, hop aboard the winged beast, and fly away from Terikiak.

The book ends with an unexpected scene set back at Slaughter Beach. It's the night of their children's disappearance, and the Ficus parents, Abram and Margaret, are exhausted after an evening of looking for their lost sons. Suddenly there's a knock at the door, but instead of being greeted by their children, they are greeted instead by a talking frog: Frederick and Evangeline's lost son, Santiago.