Everybody
Needs a Rock

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Everybody needs a rock.

I’m sorry for kids who don’t have a rock for a friend.

I’m sorry for kids who only have tricycles, bicycles, horses, elephants, goldfish, three-room playhouses, fire engines, wind-up dragons, and things like that—if they don’t have a rock for a friend.
That’s why
I’m giving them
my own
TEN RULES
for
finding
a
rock. . . .

Not
just
any rock.
I mean
a
special
rock
that you find
yourself
and keep
as long as
you can—
maybe
forever.

If somebody says,
“What’s so special
about that rock?”
don’t even tell them.
I don’t.

Nobody
is supposed
to know
what’s special
about
another person’s
rock.

All right.
Here
are
the
rules:
RULE NUMBER 1

If you can,
go to a mountain
made out of
nothing but
a hundred million
small
shiny
beautiful
roundish
rocks.

But if you can't,
anyplace will do.
Even an alley.
Even a sandy road.

RULE NUMBER 2

When you are looking
at rocks
don't let
mothers or fathers
or sisters or brothers
or even best friends
talk
to you.
You should choose
a rock
when everything
is quiet.
Don't let dogs bark
at you
or bees buzz
at you.

But if they do,
DON'T WORRY.
(The worst thing you can do is go
rock hunting when you are worried.)
RULE NUMBER 3

Bend over.
More.
Even more.
You may have to sit on the ground with your head almost touching the earth.
You have to look a rock right in the eye.

Otherwise, don't blame me if you can't find a good one.

RULE NUMBER 4

Don't get a rock that is too big.
You'll always be sorry.
It won't fit your hand right and it won't fit your pocket.

A rock as big as an apple is too big.
A rock as big as a horse is MUCH too big.

RULE NUMBER 5

Don't choose a rock that is too small.
It will only be easy to lose or a mouse might eat it, thinking that it is a seed.

(Believe me, that happened to a boy in the state of Arizona.)
RULE NUMBER 6

The size must be perfect. It has to feel easy in your hand when you close your fingers over it. It has to feel jumpy in your pocket when you run.

Some people touch a rock a thousand times a day. There aren’t many things that feel as good as a rock—if the rock is perfect.

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RULE NUMBER 7

Look for the perfect color. That could be a sort of pinkish gray with bits of silvery shine in it. Some rocks that look brown are really other colors, but you only see them when you squint and when the sun is right.

Another way to see colors is to dip your rock in a clear mountain stream— if one is passing by.

RULE NUMBER 8

The shape of the rock is up to you. (There is a girl in Alaska who only likes flat rocks. Don't ask me why. I like them lumpy.)
The thing to remember about shapes is this:
Any rock looks good with a hundred other rocks around it on a hill.
But if your rock is going to be special it should look good by itself in the bathtub.

RULE NUMBER 9
Always sniff a rock.
Rocks have their own smells. Some kids can tell by sniffing whether a rock came from the middle of the earth or from an ocean or from a mountain where wind and sun touched it every day for a million years.

You'll find out that grown-ups can't tell these things. Too bad for them. They just can't smell as well as kids can.
RULE NUMBER 10

Don’t ask anybody to help you choose.

I’ve seen a lizard pick one rock out of a desert full of rocks and go sit there alone. I’ve seen a snail pass up twenty rocks and spend all day getting to the one it wanted.

You have to make up your own mind. You’ll know.

All right, that’s ten rules. If you think of any more write them down yourself. I’m going out to play a game that takes just me and one rock to play.

I happen to have a rock here in my hand...