

When Coronavirus Came to Town

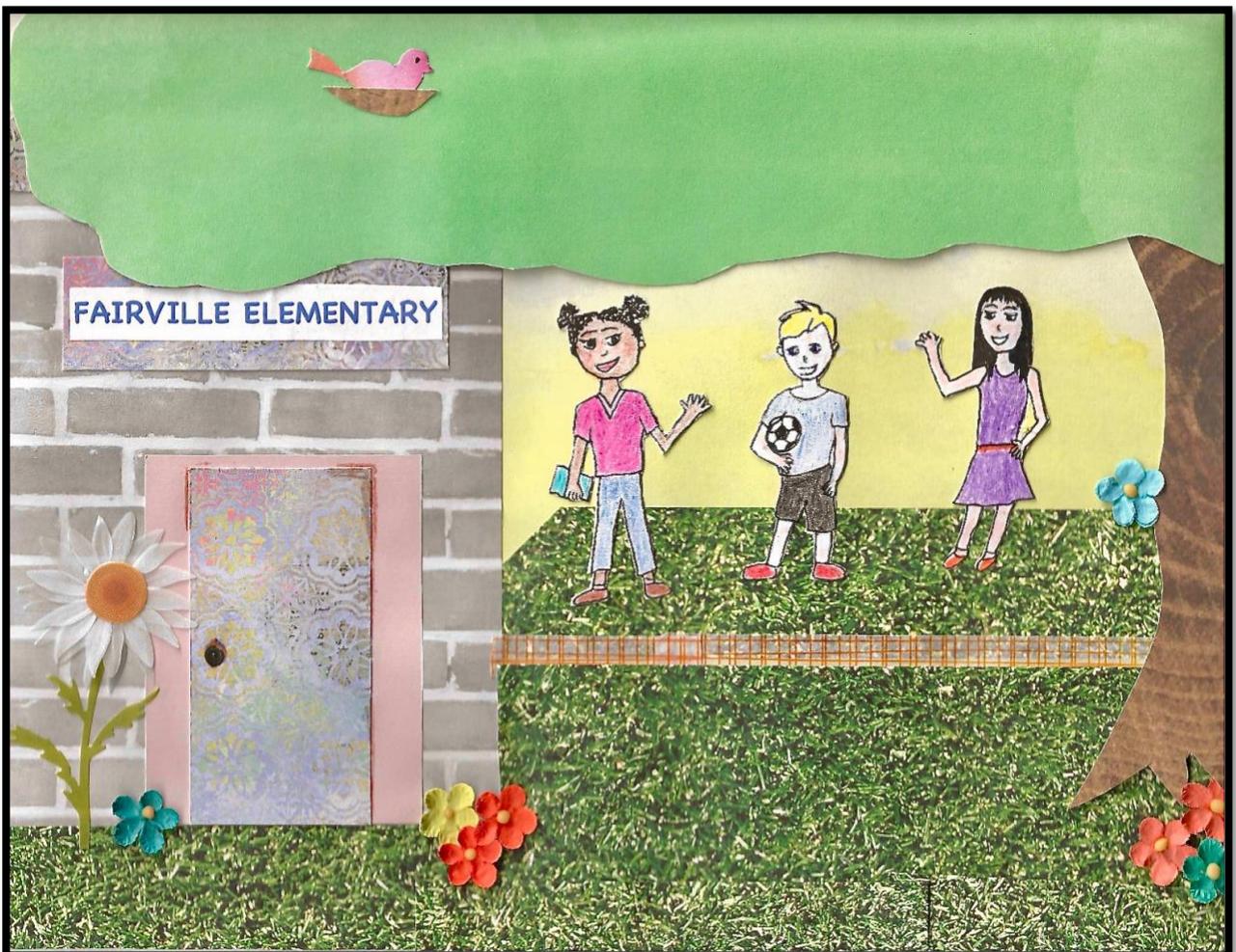
BY
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May, 2020

It was an ordinary, sunny Friday afternoon in Fairville.

When the last school bell of the day rang, Maya, Luke, and Sasha hurried outside. The three best friends waved goodbye to each other before they went home for the weekend.

"See you Monday!" said Sasha. "Don't forget to bring your soccer balls for recess next week," called Luke. "Okay, bye guys!" replied Maya. Luke hopped in his mom's car, while Sasha got on the bus and Maya walked down the street to her house.



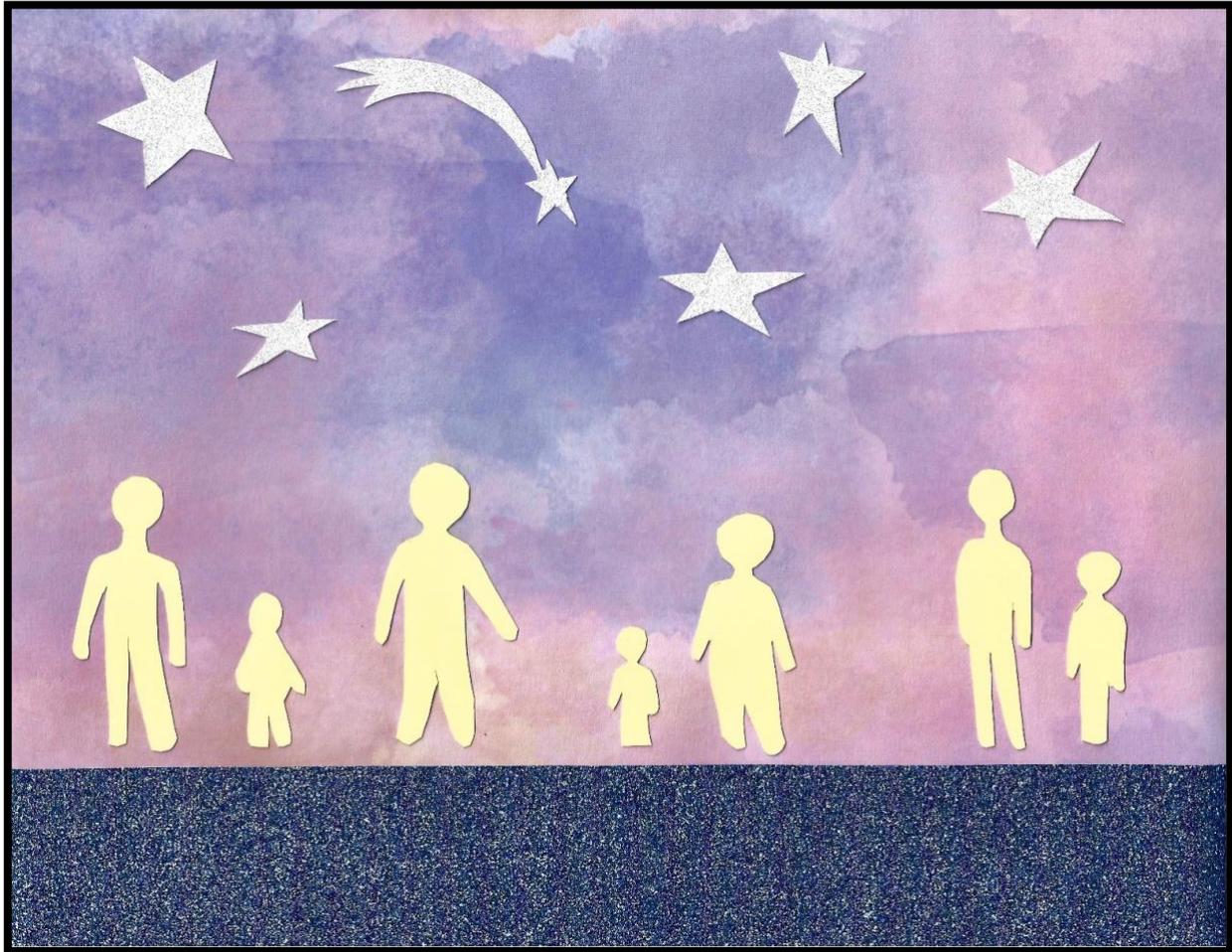
None of the friends knew that a big change was about to come to their town.

Fairville was a special and unusual place, because it had a **HUGE** secret.



It looked like an ordinary town, but all the grown-ups who lived there were actually superheroes. They had regular jobs but they also had secret jobs. When there were problems, they worked together and used their superpowers to help people all over the world.

The kids in Fairville grow up to be superheroes too. Kids don't get their superpowers until they turn 18 and they don't know exactly what their powers will be.



Sometimes they wonder what special powers they will have when they get older.

While they were at home that weekend, Maya, Luke, and Sasha all learned about the big change coming to Fairville.



Maya's parents talked to her and her little brother on Saturday. Her dad said, "Things are going to be different for a while. There's a new virus, called novel coronavirus or COVID-19, that can make people feel sick. While doctors are working on the best ways to keep people healthy, most people have to stay home a lot more. That means that you won't go back to school on Monday and for a while you'll do your schoolwork at home."

Maya frowned. "But I'm not scared, I can still go to school. I want to see my friends!"



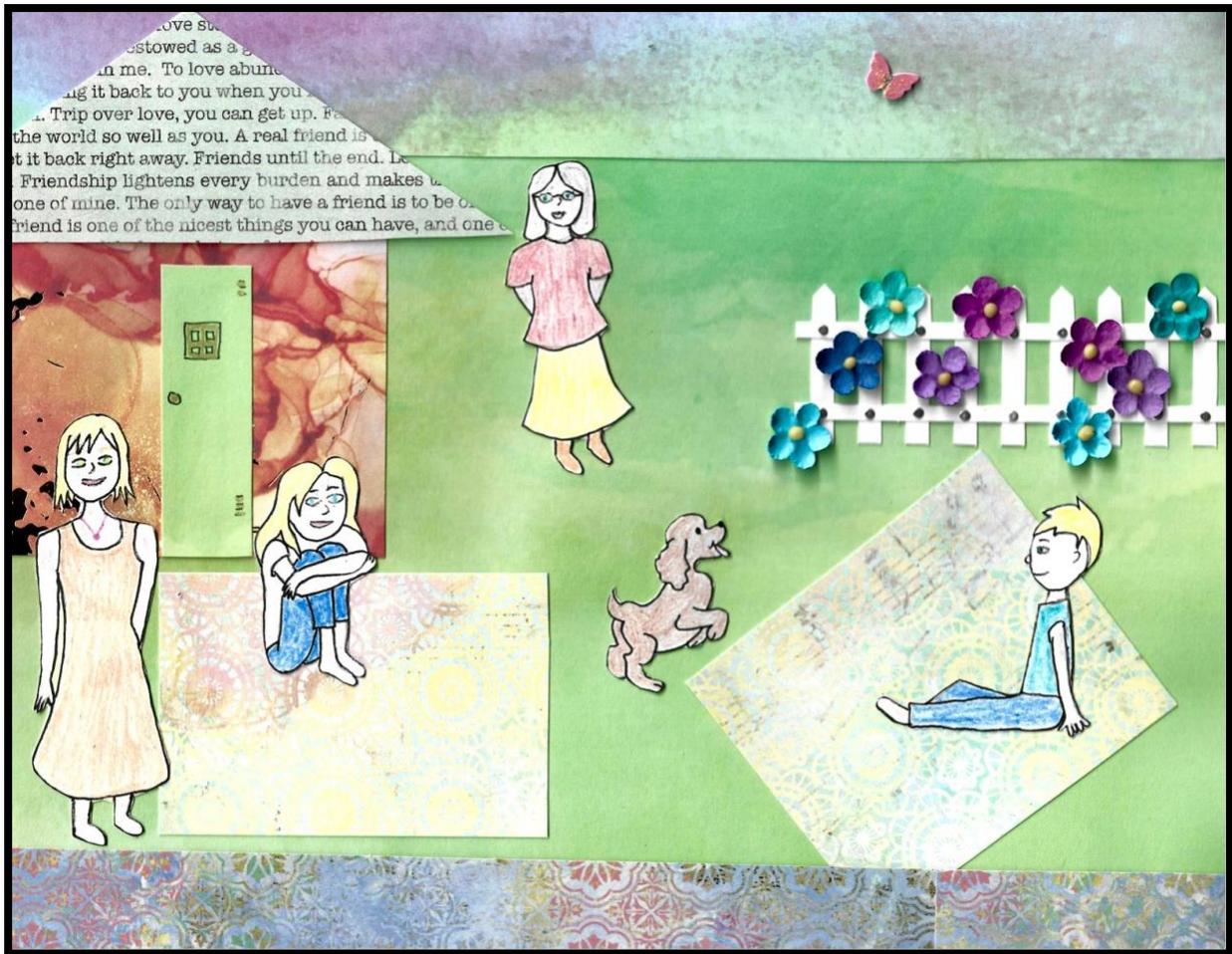
"It's safer for everyone when people stay home, Maya," explained her dad. "The coronavirus is really tiny like a germ you can't see, and people can catch it when they are close to each other and talk, sneeze, or cough. We have to help keep our town as safe as we can, so we'll **stay home** unless we really have to go somewhere, like to buy more groceries."

"Is staying home the only thing we can do to stay healthy?" asked Maya. Her mom said, "There are other ways we can try to keep ourselves and each other healthy. We can **wash our hands with soap and warm water**, especially after we go out somewhere or after we blow our noses or cough or sneeze. We should try not to touch lots of things if we're outside of the house, but we can also use **hand sanitizer** if we're not at home."



Maya's dad added, "We should **try not to touch our faces**, especially if our hands aren't washed." Suddenly, he put his arm up to his nose and sneezed. Maya's mom laughed and said, "See kids, he did a good job remembering to **sneeze into his elbow!** Even if he's only sneezing because he's allergic to the cat."

At the same time, Luke's mom and grandma were in their backyard telling him and his older sister, Phoebe, about the coronavirus. Luke's grandma lived in her own little cottage in the yard behind the family's house. "Okay, I think I can do my schoolwork at home," said Luke after they told him about school being closed. "But for how long? When can we go back to school?"



"We don't know yet, but it won't last forever," said his grandma. "Some things will be different until the doctors and town leaders say it's okay for schools to open again."

"What other things will be different?" asked Luke.

"Well," his mom said, "When I go to work, I'll **wear a mask** on my face to help keep myself and other people healthy." She worked delivering mail for the post office. "And Grandma can't work for a while because people have to stay at least **6 feet apart for safety** and not be in big groups. You know that Grandma cuts people's hair for her job, but people can't be that close together right now."



Grandma added, "And I won't be able to hug or kiss you for a bit. I need to stay 6 feet away from all of you for a couple weeks because someone at my job found out she has the coronavirus. I don't think I caught it, but just in case, I can't get too close anyone for a little while."

Luke felt his cheeks get hot and he felt like he might cry. He rubbed his dog's head to try to feel better.



"It's okay to be sad," said his mom. "But grandma is doing the right things and we're doing everything we can to stay healthy as a family. We can talk to Grandma on the phone or on video calls. We can visit her from outside her cottage for the next few weeks. We don't know if she'll get sick, but if she does, I'll help her and her doctor will too."

"Goodness gracious, what's that I hear? Gotta' run for a bit - I'll be back soon!" called Grandma, as she suddenly flew off.



Luke's mom shook her head with a smile. "I still forget that she can do more than fly. Now that she's older, she has her new power of being able to hear trouble from very, very far away and check on what's happening. Makes me wonder what else I'll be able to do when I'm as old as she is!"

Across town, Sasha's parents were talking to her too. Her mom was a doctor at the hospital. Sasha was worried that her mom could get sick from the coronavirus.

"We are learning more about this virus every day," her mom told her. "And most people who get sick get better. There are lots of things we can do to protect ourselves and I do those things and am very careful at work."



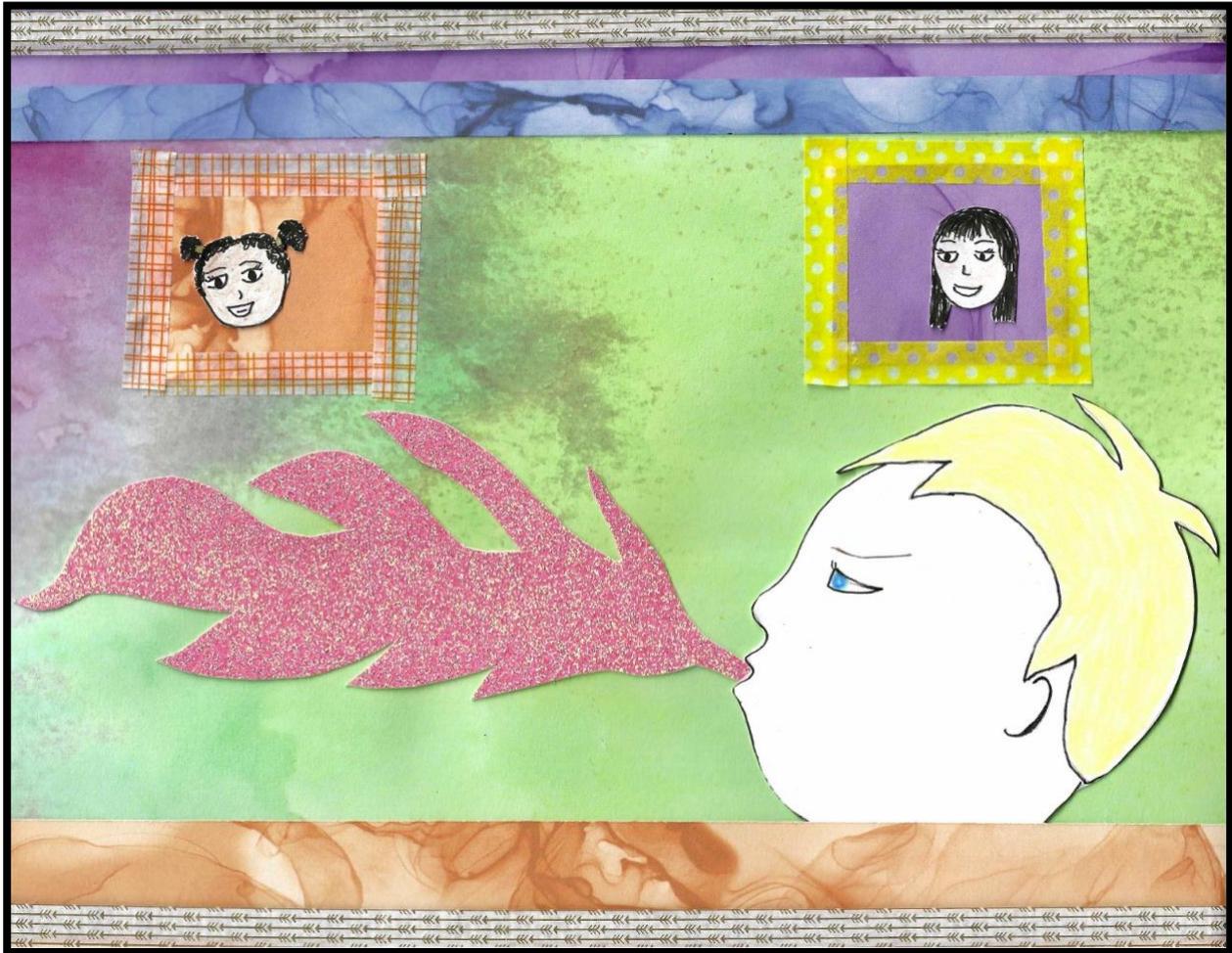
Sasha remembered the things her mom had told her about ways to stay healthy, like singing **"Row, Row, Row Your Boat"** or **"Happy Birthday"** twice while washing **her hands**, and not touching her face. Mom told her, "It's not just doctors and nurses, many people are helping us learn about COVID-19, and helping us stay safe and have what we need, like scientists, custodians who clean buildings, grocery store workers, truck drivers, and farmers."

Sasha's dad told her, "I'll be at working at home now." He was a seventh grade teacher. "While you work on your schoolwork, I'll use the computer to teach my students. We'll take breaks during the day to do fun things too. I think it will really help us to go outside to walk and play soccer. We just can't get close to other people."



Sasha thought it could be fun to do more things with her dad. And because he had super-strength, he could always pick up a car when their soccer ball accidentally got stuck underneath one!

A few days later, Sasha's mom set up a video playdate for Maya, Luke, and Sasha. She said seeing each other would be good for them. The friends were so happy to see each other! Maya told her friends that she felt mad sometimes about having to stay home so much.



She asked what was helping them when they felt that way. Luke shared that his mom taught him how to take slow, deep belly breaths to relax. "When I breathe in, I pretend the air is my favorite color, blue, and when I breathe out, I blow out my angry feelings like breathing fire!" he said. Maya giggled and said, "I love that! I think I'll try it."

Sasha shared that she felt lonely sometimes without a brother or sister at home to play with. Sasha said, "But when I feel lonely, I try to do something that makes me feel happy, like ask my dad to play a game, read a book, or draw a picture - 'cause you know I love to draw!"



Luke nodded. "Yesterday I was sad about not being able to play with my grandma. I talked to my mom about it and she told me it was okay to feel upset and that I wouldn't always feel that way. I drew Grandma a picture. Then I did feel a little better."

Maya was excited to tell her friends something that she tried. "My dad's a chef at a restaurant and I helped him make some cookies that we shared with our neighbors. And I made some thank-you cards for workers at the hospital and we mailed them! It made me feel good to help people."



Sasha smiled and said, "That's so nice! My mom said everyone at the hospital loves getting cards! My mom reminded me that when I'm worried, I might feel better if I play outside and run around. Mom also told me that it helps me stay healthy and feel better if I go to sleep when I'm supposed to and eat good food."

Luke said, "Even though things are really different, some things are fun. I get to play more with my mom, and my sister is teaching me how to play her trumpet."
"You're right," Maya said, "I get to help decide what movie my family watches for movie night and my dad and I built a fort in my room yesterday!"



The friends talked about the not-so-good things and the good things that were happening while they were at home.

Maya, Luke, and Sasha were doing a great job with all the big changes. They had good times with their families and they saw their teachers and friends on the computer. But sometimes they felt sad or upset about the things that were different.



Maya talked to her mom about her feelings one night. "Mom, I thought I was brave but I get scared sometimes and I don't think other kids feel that way." Her mother hugged her and said, "Honey, being brave means that you try even when you're scared, it doesn't mean you don't get scared. Everyone gets scared sometimes, even me."

Maya stared at her mom, "But you're a grown-up and you have superpowers! You can turn invisible whenever you want to and you help people who are in trouble!" "Yes, I have superpowers," her mom said. "But even superheroes get scared of things. When we do, we get help from our friends and we try to be brave and do what we have to do."

Maya thought about this. She guessed that her mom was being brave when she put on her face mask and went to work at the drugstore, to make sure people could still buy their medicines.



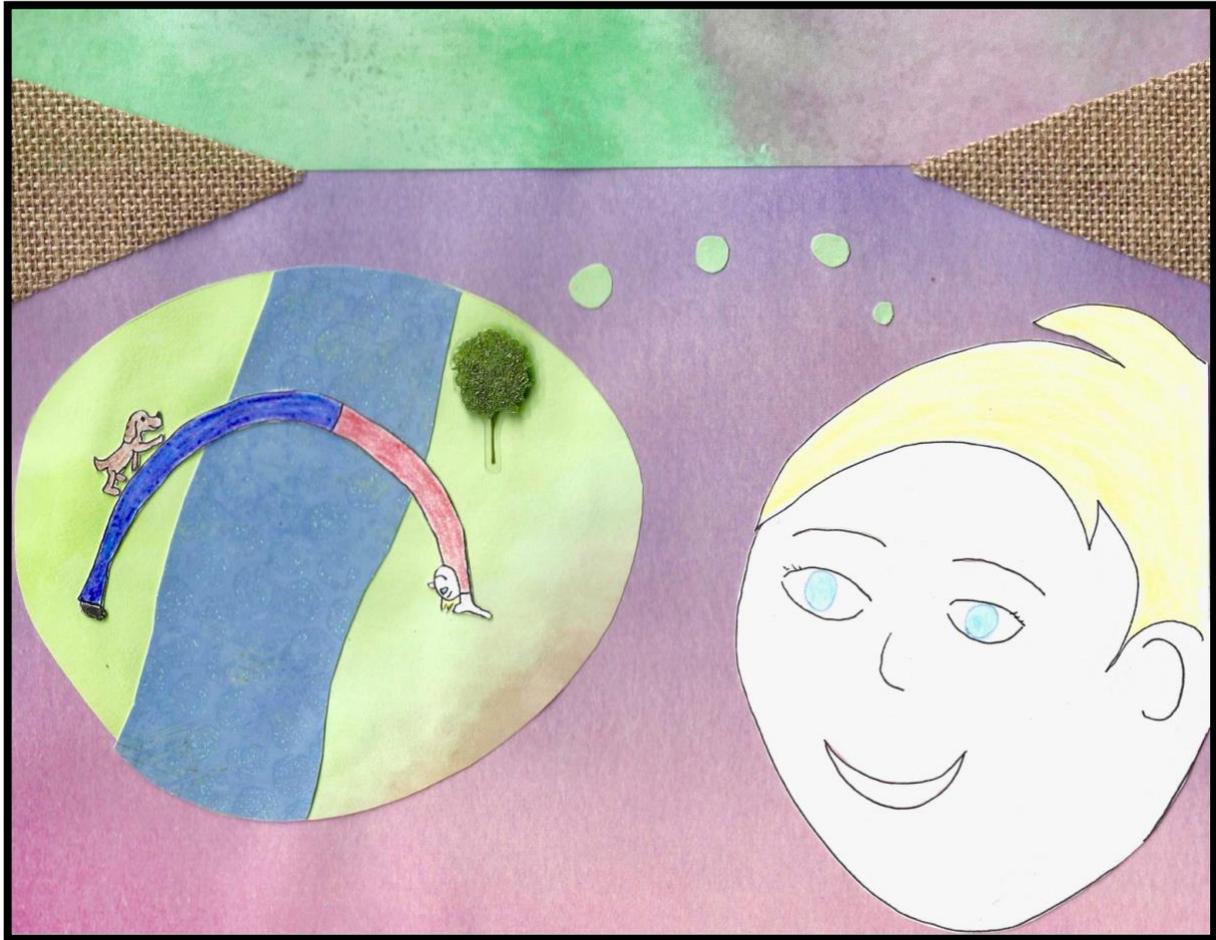
"Maybe you are learning new ways to be brave right now," her mom told her, "and when you're grown up maybe knowing how to be brave will be one of your powers."

Luke talked to his grandma on the phone one day when he was feeling sad about not being able to go to school or play on the soccer team. He thought that other kids didn't get sad and cry like he did sometimes.



His grandma told him, "Luke, other kids cry too. You are normal! This won't last forever and you're doing a wonderful job being flexible with all the changes."
"What does flexible mean?" Luke asked her. "It means that you are really trying new things when things are different, even when it's hard."

Grandma chuckled, "Your mom is very flexible - remember that her superpower is that she's Rubber Woman. She can stretch and bend into different shapes and reach things that other superheroes can't. Maybe you're going to be super-flexible like her!"



Luke smiled and thought about it. Maybe when he grew up he would be able to change shapes when he needed to, just like his mom.

Sasha went for a walk with her dad one afternoon and told him she was feeling worried. "What if something bad happens and I can't help you or mom?" she asked. "I don't want people I love to get hurt or upset."



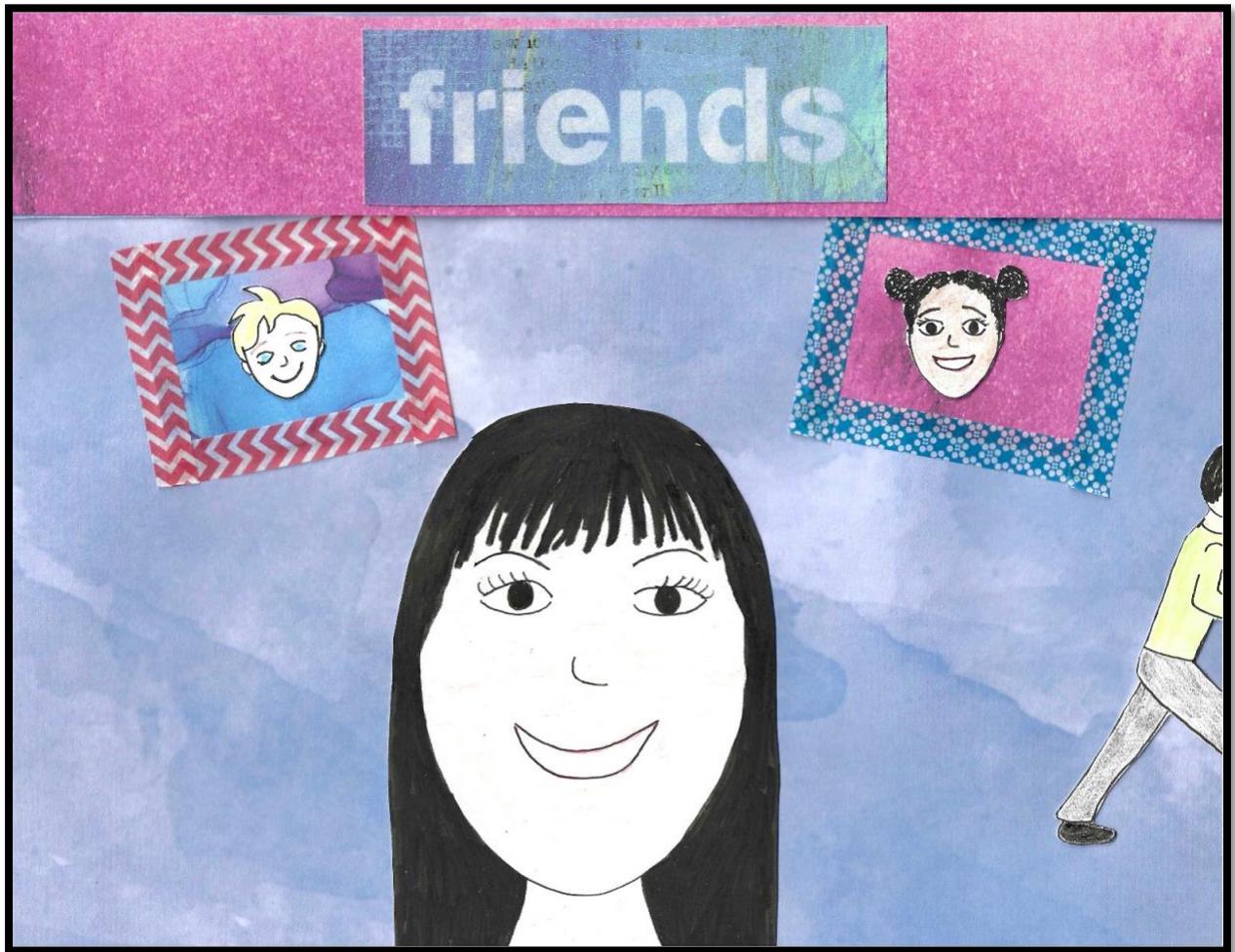
Sasha's dad took her hand and said, "It's not your job to take care of us, Sasha. We're the grown-ups. We're taking care of ourselves and of you. Remember, we are doing all the things the doctors told us to do to stay healthy and safe. You're doing your part by listening and doing what I ask you to do, like washing your hands, feeding your goldfish, and helping to set the table."

He looked at her and smiled. "You know how your mom's superpower is X-Ray vision? That helps her as a doctor because she can look inside people to understand what's wrong. I think you care about other people's feelings and you understand feelings. Maybe you'll be able to help people understand their feelings when you're grown up."



Sasha liked that idea. "And maybe I'll be super strong like you are, Dad." He said, "You probably will! People who know what to do with feelings are strong. I had a hard time for a while when I was a kid; my grandpa had to move far away and I really missed him. I think that going through hard times can help us grow stronger."

On a rainy day after a couple weeks of being at home, Maya, Luke, and Sasha had another video playdate. While they were talking, Maya's dad's superhero badge started screeching loudly and he hurried out of the room to answer the call. "What's your dad's superpower again?" asked Sasha. Maya said, "He can shoot fire or water out of his fingertips. It comes in handy when he's cooking at his restaurant too!" The friends laughed.



Maya said, "My mom thinks that right now we might be practicing doing things that will become some of our superpowers when we're older."

Luke and Sasha nodded. "Yeah, while we're going through COVID-19, we're learning to be strong in new ways," Sasha said.



The friends all smiled at each other. They felt like they were together even though they were in different houses.

Maya, Luke, and Sasha knew that one day they would be back together again at school. And when they got older and turned 18, they would discover the superpowers they had been making and growing during COVID-19.



But for now, they were going to keep doing their best every single day.

P.S. To all the strong, brave, flexible, caring, and awesome kids reading this book...we won't say "The End," because the story isn't over quite yet. Until the novel coronavirus story is over, remember what you learned!

Take Care of Your Body

- Wash your hands slowly with soap and warm water to kill germs / Use hand sanitizer when there's no soap and water
- Clean your hands after touching things out in public (like toys at the store, elevator buttons, doorknobs)
- Don't touch your face if your hands aren't clean
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow or arm (instead of your hands)
- Stay at least 6 feet away from people ("social distancing," unless your parents say it's okay to be closer)
- Stay at home when you're told to
- Wear a mask when you are in public places, like stores (if your parents tell you to)
- Eat good food
- Get enough sleep

Take Care of Your Feelings

- Talk and do fun things with your family, friends, and people you care about (even on phone or video)
- Take deep, belly breaths to relax your body and feelings
- Do things that make you happy, like playing a game, doing art, reading, playing music, building a fort...
- See what you can do to help someone else
- Get some exercise
- Go outside in nature, if you can
- Think about the good things in your life
- Remember that all your feelings are okay and talk about your feelings with someone you trust

Thanks for reading! And keep learning, because the grown-ups are learning more all the time. Be super!

Love, Luke, Maya, and Sasha

More Resources for Parents

Talking to kids about COVID-19

<https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>

Supporting kids during COVID-19

<https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/supportingchildren-covid-factsheet.pdf>

Building Resilience: Parenting During a Pandemic (tips for parents)

<https://www.lcm.org/building-resilience/>

Hand Washing Infographic

https://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/content/dam/classroom-magazines/magazines/home-page-logged-out/editorial/coronavirus/assets/Infographic_hand_washing.pdf

Handwashing Video Demo

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6__gfKaNg1Y

Parents and caregivers: Give yourselves a pat on the back for all you're doing. Keep being super!

Author Bio: Angela Breidenstine lives in New Orleans, Louisiana. She works as a clinical psychologist with children and families. She has many interests, and some current favorites include listening to her neighbors' chickens cluck in the morning, taking photography walks around her city, nurturing the two tomatoes and three satsumas growing in her garden, delivering virtual stress-management/relaxation workshops, and finding pennies. Angie is not very good at eating crawfish, waking up early, refraining from petting stray cats, or cutting her own hair. When she was 7 years old, she consistently told adults that she would be an "author and an illustrator" when she grew up. This book realizes that childhood dream and is dedicated to her late mother, who infused creativity into everything she did.



Self-portrait of the author at home
April 28, 2020



The chicken next door