Best Picture Books of 2023

Katie Clausen
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I can’t wait for my hair to grow.
Mom never had long hair—she was told hers was too wild.
Nokomis couldn’t have long hair—
Our ancestors say:
Our hair is our memories.
Our source of strength.

An extension of us.
When Nimishoomis taught me how to fish for the first time, my hair was at my ears.
His stories and the memories of that day are woven into my hair.
Our ancestors say:
We grow our hair long
to be close to
Mother Earth.
When my baby brother was born, my hair touched my shoulders.
Our ancestors say:
Our hair carries energies and power.

It is a celebration of our lives.
All of the laughter and stories from that day are woven into my hair.
Our ancestors say:
When a loved one braids your hair, it reinforces the sacredness of your relationship.
When my hair reached the middle of my back,
Auntie Delia braided it so that I could
dance at Pow Wow.
All of her teachings and prayers are woven into my hair.
Our ancestors say:
Our hair is our medicine.
I'm growing my hair again. Mom says she wants to grow hers too.

We'll do it together.
Beneath

Cori Doerrfeld

New York Times bestselling creator
Finn was in a horrible mood.
Grandpa wanted to talk about it.

Finn did not.
“No. You won’t understand.”
“What if we just go for a walk?” Grandpa asked.

“Please?”

Finn let out a long sigh. “Fine. But I’m staying under here.”

“Don’t worry,” said Grandpa. “I’ll remember to think of what’s beneath.”
Grandpa headed for the forest.

“It’s just like when I look at the trees and remember there are parts I can’t see.”
"Because beneath what's growing up above . . . is what's growing deep below."
“Trying to guess what’s beneath can be easy.”

Grandpa whispered.

“I think she’s going to be a mom!”
“Other times, what’s beneath is a mystery. I’m not sure what it’s digging for.”
"Of course!" Grandpa answered. "Everyone is more than what you see.

"Beneath appearances are experiences.

"Beneath actions are explanations.

"Beneath what's different is what's the same."
“And sometimes . . .” Grandpa paused.
“Beneath someone who looks
like they won’t understand . . .”
"is someone who knows exactly how you feel."
Grandpa turned toward home.

Finn wanted to keep walking.

“Please?”
"I'll remember to think of what's beneath."
I love to paint.
It relaxes me.

They say I'm an artist.
I love to help my community. To seed goodness in the world.

They say I'm an activist.
But sometimes the world that I see
is not the world that I wish to see.
And the problems seem larger than life.

I want to scream.
I want to help.
I want to act.
This needs to be fixed.

This needs to be fixed too.
Above the surface, this seems right.

But that's when I realize that fixing things requires us all to look deeper.
I think it’s time to combine both parts of who I am: to take ACTION with my ART. It’s time to become an ARTIVIST.
The Artist can inspire others to give back by painting what every person deserves.
The Artist doesn't only paint.
She sings. He writes. They film.

We repurpose. We build.

We bring awareness to what can be changed for the better so that everyone can take action.
The Artivist is you.
What change will you create?
This is Ploof.

Ploof is feeling lonely.

Can you say hello?
whoosh whee!

Yay! Ploof is happy to see you.
POOF!

Yay! Way to go, Ploof! What a STAR!

Can you make a star shape too?
What's Ploof pretending to be now?

Ah, I see! Good one!
Wow!
So many shapes!
Can you guess
them all?
Oh no!
Ploof is stuck.

Can you help?
Maybe try shaking the tree a little?
Hide-and-seek?
Sounds fun!

Let's close our eyes and count to ten while Ploof hides.
Once upon a time, on a dark and stormy night, some kids JUST LIKE YOU found a TERRIFYING HAUNTED HOUSE.

At the end of a long hallway was a ragged old door—all splintery and creaky.
And SOMETHING WAS THUMPING BEHIND THAT DOOR.
Before the kids could run, the door opened with a loud CREEEEEAAAAK.

Lightning flashed, and a menacing shadow darkened the floor. It was the fiercest, most horrifying creature the kids had ever seen. Suddenly, it opened its gaping mouth, and...

Are you sure you want to turn the page? Seeing this ferocious monster and hearing its bone-chilling growl could FREEZE YOUR LITTLE HEART TO ICE.
Hmmm... You don't look scared. But I bet deep inside, you are shaking in your sneakers. You're just pretending to be one of those kids who's not afraid of anything. DO NOT MAKE ME CALL MY TERRIFYING FRIENDS.

Fine.

Hey, can I get a little help over here?

Now you're in big trouble. Turn one more page, and you'll get the scare of your life.
Woof.

No! No! No!

Come back when you can be TERRIFYING.

Can somebody please show these two how it’s done?
Don’t worry—I’ve got this. If they turn the page again, they are going to be SO STINKING SCARED!

I said BOOOOO!!

Rats. I don’t think I scared them either.
Which way do I hold this?

No, that goes on your head!

This is making my ears itch.

Just put it on!

Okay, we're ready!
BEHOLD THE TERROR!

Very big scary red panda

Ghost of a bloodthirsty duckling

WooWooWooWoo!

WooWooWooWoo!

These are my cozy, scary jammies!

Spooky baby goat

Vampire puppy

DaNGERously prickly HEDEghog

I want to drink your bloooood!

Grrrr!

Must. Eat. Brains . . .

Scary zombie sloth

Hiiiiiiiii!!
Did it work?

Were they scared?

I don't think so.

THUMP!

THUMP!

scary zombie sloth
“Bath time!”
And then, in the glowing light of the full moon, the very scary creatures had a bath and went to bed.
365: How to Count a Year

Miranda Paul + Julien Chung
It takes the Earth 365 days to spin around the sun.
That's 365 “Good mornings,”
and, hopefully, 365 clean pairs of underwear.
One trip around the sun also means 365 flavors of the day.*

*Technically, since one year equals 365 and one-quarter days, every fourth year gets an extra 366th flavor. (And an extra change of undies, please!)
365 days might seem like an awful lot, so you can group the days into 52 weeks.

That could mean 52 Friday night movie popcorn spills,
Even smaller yet, 52 weeks equal calendar months.

That's 12 monthly clean-the-fish-tank messes.
But if we group them once more,

those 365 days
or 52 weeks
or 12 months
each add up to only...
That's 1 birthday cake, 1 birthday wish, 1 birthday party (unless you get 2!) for 1 special YOU.
The answer—8,760 hours—might seem like forever.
525,600 minutes could drag on and on and on as you wait and wait and wait.
You might lose your cool counting 31,536,000 tick-tick-tick-ticks on that clock.
1 marvelous collage of 1 year in the life of you.

How will you count your year?
Do you remember...
... when we had a picnic in the field?
It was just you and me and your dad.
You were looking for snakes and bugs
while we were talking on that blue blanket.
And you came running up to us
with something in your hands.

Oh yes, I remember. That's a good one.
Those berries were so sweet!
I’ve got one.
Do you remember...
... my birthday?
Dad called me outside and you gave me my bicycle.
You helped me get on and get steady
but then you let go and I lost control.

I didn’t know how to stop.

How could I forget?
... leaving our home behind?
We packed up everything we own in our truck
and drove down the highway,
farther than we’d ever been.
Cars were honking and whooshing past us.
We were lost.

Of course I remember...
Your bear guided us all through the city,
Yes, I will remember this.
Real to Me

Minh Lê

Raissa Figueroa
When you have a great friend, the rest of the world can seem to disappear.
Other's tried to tell me that she wasn't real, 
that she was just imaginary.

But what did they know?
We laughed together, were brave together, got in trouble together.

and sometimes we were even quiet together.
My friend was always there for me,
and I can't imagine anything more real than that.
She was real to me.

Then one morning...
she was gone.

but there was no one there.

I thought maybe she got up early, so I searched everywhere.
I couldn’t imagine where she would have gone without me.
I missed her laugh,
I missed her when I was scared,
I missed getting into trouble together,

and now that she was gone,
it was a little too quiet.
I missed my friend.
I can’t imagine anything more real than that.

She was real to me.
With time, I did make new friends, and eventually ...
we laughed together, we were brave together, we got into trouble together.

and sometimes we were even quiet together.
And while a lot of time has passed since I last saw her,
I still think about my first friend,
and wonder what she's doing now.
I can only imagine.
I WANT 100 DOGS

Written by Stacy McAnulty  Illustrated by Claire Keane
I want 100 dogs.

That sounds fun, but where would 100 dogs sleep?
My 100 dogs will sleep on my bed.

More likely, 100 dogs would sleep on you.
Okay, then. I want 90 dogs.

Interesting request, but how would you walk 90 dogs?

My 90 dogs will wag me.

They certainly would.
Then I want 70 dogs.

How would you feed 70 dogs?

I will share all my food. Even my ice cream.
But dogs should only eat dog food. And 70 dogs would need lots and lots of dog food.
Maybe 50 dogs.  

HOW WOULD YOU TRAIN 50 DOGS?

STAY!

SIT!

COME!
What about 40 dogs?

How would you keep 40 dogs healthy?

We will take them to the doggy doctor.

But would the vet take them?
I can make do with 30 dogs!

How would you groom 30 dogs?

Doggy spa makeover day!
Okay, then. I just want 10 dogs.

How would you clean up after 10 dogs when they go number 2?

You mean I'd have to...

YEP.
I think we like 1 dog. Please.

And how will you care for 1 dog?
I can't believe we talked her out of 100 dogs.

I can't believe I talked them into getting 1 dog.
Stay my baby, just this way till forever and a day.
Tiny fingers.
Tightest grip.
Teeny toes.
But what a kick!
Cutest little lips around make the most impressive sound.
Bundled tight but wiggle free.
Look how strong you’re bound to be!
Brightest eyes that seem to say,
“Watch me grow! I’ll start today!”
So with each step I'll watch you grow,
never really letting go.
I’ll just save this precious space in my heart—a special place.
where, my baby,
you will stay
till forever and a day.
Once Upon a Book

by Caldecott Honoree Grace Lin
and Kate Messner
Alice was tired of heavy sweaters and thick socks and staying inside with nothing to do. “I wish I were someplace that wasn’t so frozen and gray!” she grumbled to her mother.

She began to stomp away, but something flapped nearby. It was the pages of a book. Curious, Alice began to read.
Once upon a time, there was a girl, Alice, read.
She went to a place Alice with colors, where even
the morning dew was warm.

“Thus sounds like our home,” said the birds.
“Turn the page and come in...”
So she did.
So she did.

The sun blazed down and dried her hair as she rode on a camel through the desert.
So she did.

The gentle water soothed her as she swam with the fish through the coral reefs.
So the girl went to a place of coziness and warmth, where the kitchen smelled of dumplings and her family was waiting with dinner.

“That sounds like my home,” Alice said.

“Turn the page,” her mother said, “and come in....”
If I Was a Horse

Sophie Blackall

Two-Time Caldecott Medalist
If I was a horse, I would gallop all day.
If it was raining,
I wouldn’t care.
I would roll in the mud
and laugh and laugh.
and everyone would want me on their team.
Nobody could make me take a bath.
and I'd come home when I was hungry.
If I was a horse, I’d stay up late.
I’d sleep standing up, and
I’d dream great galloping dreams.
AN AMERICAN STORY

Kwame Alexander * Art by Dare Coulter
How do you tell a story that starts in Africa and ends in horror?

An unbelievable story about evil plans and big guns hiding in the night.

waiting
while the girls and the boys finish chores play games listen to old tales of trickster spiders and talking drums
About planting corn
And threshing rice
And curing tobacco
And harvesting coffee

And cooking
And cleaning
And building
FOR FREE.
for the women
to sing everyone
to sleep,
for the men
to dream
of tomorrow

waiting
About sly men from cold places scheming and laughing on tall ships...

while people shackled below, cramped in small, hot spaces, cry and sometimes die.
A story of struggle and sacrifice about bold men and women jumping into the sea, into the jaws of sharks because—
and refusing to stop smiling and loving.
About planting corn
And threshing rice
And curing tobacco
And harvesting coffee

And cooking
And cleaning
And building
FOR FREE.
while blond-haired boys and girls ate their candy
You do it
by being brave enough
to lift your voice,
by holding
history
in one hand

and clenching
hope
in the other.
It's Fall!

Renée Kurilla
Colors bursting, shadows tall.
There's lots to celebrate—it's fall!
In class, our teacher asks to hear what things we love this time of year.
A scarf around my chilly nose.
Autumn sounds like buzzing blowers,

honking geese, and humming mowers.
Scarecrows, mums, and wagon rides.

A corn maze we get lost inside!
Carving pumpkins

filled with light.

They flicker on our porch at night.
Like ghostly cookies,
mummy rolls,
and yummy cider doughnut holes.

Ringing doorbells...

Trick or treat!

Marching down a spooky street.
Fall has treasures to be found in colors, textures, smells, and sounds.

It's so much fun—we love it all.

What things do you love about fall?
BIG

New York Times bestselling creator

VASHTI HARRISON
ONCE there was a girl
with a big laugh and a big heart
and very big dreams.
She grew and learned and laughed and dreamed

and grew and grew and grew.

And it was good...
One day something big happened.
It made her feel small.
The words stung
and were hard to shake off.
Everyone had advice,

Hmm... that's no good.

Try this instead!

but that kind of hurt, too.
AREN'T YOU TOO BIG TO BE CRYING?

HAVE YOU TRIED BEING SMALLER?

WHY CAN'T YOU JUST FIT IN?
These are yours. They hurt me.
but they still couldn't see

I can help you change if you want...?

No thank you. I like the way I am.

that she was just a girl.
In Every Life

Marla Frazee
In every birth, blessed is the wonder.
In every hope, blessed is the doing.
In every moment, blessed is the mystery.
In every love, 
blessed are the tears.
In every sadness, blessed is the comfort.
And in every life, blessed is the love.
SAME LOVE, DIFFERENT HUG

by Sarah Havorka
illustrated by Abbey Bryant
Bear hugs, morning hugs,

jump hugs, too.

Quiet, loud;

they all feel right.

But...
What do others like?
Shh...
it's time for me to look quietly through my favorite book.

On these days Grandy likes a...
gentle, slow
don't-let-go
hug.
I'm so fast!
Watch me dash!

I twirl and whirl
with a flash.

On these days
Cousin likes a...
big-grin
around-we-spin

HUG!
no hugs.

Instead, I give her a...

soft song to hum along, and save the hug for later.
We choose hugs that fit the day.
Big, small,
or none at all...
Whispering breeze, shadowy tree, calmness washes over me.

On these days I like a... stay-in-place need-my-space wave.
Yippee-yay! It’s the day of days!
Our hearts erupt with sunshine rays!

On these days
Grandma likes a . . .
skip, prance
happy-dance

HUG!
to show our love every day.
Simon and the Better Bone

Corey R. Tabor
Caldecott Honor-winning author of Mel Fell
How rude! Clearly this was one of those bad dogs you hear about.
Simon wiggled his nose. He opened his eyes really big. He crossed them.

But the other dog knew the same tricks.
“Here!” said Simon. “This is for you!”
Simon tried his other tricks. He chased his tail. He played dead. He recited his favorite poem. He chased his tail while playing dead while reciting his favorite poem.

But the other dog knew those tricks too.
Simon smiled. He'd lost a bone, but he'd found a friend.
I hope I see him again soon, thought Simon.
It was the day before International Day at school, and Nalliah couldn’t help but be a little nervous.

She loved to sing and dance. Last year, Nalliah had taught her classmates a Vietnamese song. This year, she was performing her favorite traditional Vietnamese dance, and she wanted to do her best.
Maybe Mom has one that I could use, she thought.

Naiiah tiptoed into her mom’s room, where colorful áo daisy cascaded from the closet like a hanging garden of flowers. She spotted a yellow one embroidered with swans and water lilies.

Yellow: the color of happiness and forsythia blossoms.
Nalialh slipped it on.

The dress pooled around her like water. She rolled up the sleeves, tugged it up around her waist, and cinched it with a belt. Then she unfolded Mom's wooden fans and began to practice.
Rrrripppp!
“Oh no!” Naliah squeaked. Will Mom be mad?

She heard her mother’s footsteps coming down the hall. Naliah hid the áo dài in the back of the closet, burying it as deep as she could.

“Naliah!” Mom asked. “What are you doing, little one?”

Naliah glanced away, her heart racing. “I’m looking for an áo dài to wear for International Day tomorrow. Mine is too small.”
Mom knelt and gathered Nalliah in her arms. "I know you didn’t mean to rip it. When I was a little girl, I also loved trying on my mother’s ao dai. I tore the very same dress."

"You did!!" Nalliah gasped.

"Do you see this lily pad?" Mom asked. "Your grandmother embroidered it over the hole that I made. We can sew another one over the new hole."

Hope bloomed in Nalliah’s heart. "Can you sew a frog instead? You always say frogs are lucky."
Naliah hugged and sniffed kissed her mom. "You fixed it!"

"Your grandmother's áo dài is even more special now that it has your lucky frog on it," Mom said, planting sweet sniff kisses on Naliah's head. "And when you grow up, this áo dài will be yours."
Instead, they flitted and flapped where they belonged:
on her yellow áo dài.
She truly felt like a Mid-Autumn Princess.
I'M MIA.
This is Mama.
And this is our
new favorite fact.
We have a house.
A house!
Five rooms.
Eleven windows.
And a whole lot
of promise.
Our apartment was all kinds of special.

One good-bye was extra hard.
But a house has been Mama’s dream for so long, it couldn’t help but grow into my dream too. And this house? It comes with a yard and a mango tree. This place is our own personal queendom.
Each morning, I prop my elbows onto my windowsill and watch for mangos. Nothing looks close to ready. I’m about to think I’ll never find one that’s ripe.

Then I do!
I hurry outside.
And I give that mango a tug.
Mama joins me in the yard, and I tell her my new favorite fact.
“Our tree made a mango!”
Red and Gee were looking through books when Gee spied the perfect one.

"LOOK, A BOOK ABOUT PANDAS!" he said.
Red’s eyes went wide. “I’m a panda!”
“Are you.”

“A book about us?”
Red hopped from paw to paw.

“And you’re a panda.”
“I am.”

“They will be better than bamboo bubble tea!”
They took the book to the tree house. "Ready for un-bear-ly-able awesomeness?" Gee asked. The pandas dove in.

They read page...

after page...

after page...

until they reached The End.
HOW COULD A BOOK ABOUT PANDAS TOTALLY LEAVE OUT RED PANDAS?!?
“I’m writing my own book about pandas.” Red got out a pen and paper. Gee made space at the table. “You should!”

And wrote... And erased.

Wrote... And erased.

Wrote...
There were all kinds of books about all kinds of giant pandas... But not one about red pandas. The facts were black and white. "Eep!" Gee squeaked. "I see what you mean."

“I don't know what I was thinking,” Red mumbled. She tossed her book in the trash.
On their way back...

Panda: What's going on?

Panda: Look! A book about red pandas!
At last...

“We’re done!” Red read the finished book. “Oh Gee, it’s me. And it’s PERFECT!” she shouted from the treetops.
There would be something perfect...
for everyone.
How many animals can you see in this picture?
How many animals can you not see in this one, because they're hiding from the tiger?
Which of these creatures is the zookeeper’s favorite?
Which of these ladies just robbed a bank?
What is this boy hiding behind his back?
How did that cow get all the way up there?
What kind of beast lives in this bathtub?

And what does it eat?
Who is she waiting for?
Which of these children is dreaming of peaches?
Where is this ship sailing away to?

Will you go with it?

Are you ever coming back?
I come from early morning wake-ups, handcrafted blankets knitted with memories.
I come from
Have to
beat the traffic.

BOY,
you better
HURRY UP!
I’m going to
be LATE for
work.

Is that my favorite?
Pan-fried bologna,
homemade pancakes,
strawberry jam.
cotton candy hair
candied corn hair
and razor-sharp
lineups

High fades and low fades,
tight ponytails and laid edges.

What’s up, y’all?
Good morning beats,
hip-hop and vibrating seats, and sunrise dancing.

This bus ain't going NOWHERE until y'all...
I come from
1960s school days.

Sky-high bookshelves,
dusty classics.
Books that don't

with me;
one or two that do
Rattling VROOM!
And the other kids.

can I touch your **HAIR**?

...you don't sound **BLACK**!

do you play **BASKETBALL**?
WHERE ARE YOU FROM?
I come from Somewhere.
...our dreams, hopes, ambitions, lionlike traditions.
JUST LIKE GRANDMA

by Kim Rogers illustrated by Julie Flett
On the steps of a house at the end of the street
Becca knows that
she is just like Grandma.

Reading,
dancing,
painting,
winning.
Together they high-five until the sun dips behind the gym and Grandpa takes them out for pepperoni pizza.

They all laugh and eat and celebrate Becca’s win.
Together they shoot hoops until the sun dips below the tree line and Grandpa calls them in for tea and white bread.

More than anything, Grandma wants to be just like me.
She flitters out the back door and
stands near the garden barefoot, too.
“Let me try,” she says.

Grandma shows Reena some dance moves
in the cool grass.

Together they flutter like the most beautiful butterflies
Grandpa has ever seen,
until the sun dips below the tree line
and he calls them in for fried chicken.
More than anything, Becca wants to be just like Grandma.

At the weekend powwow, Becca watches Grandma dance Fancy Shawl with many other dancers who are half her age. She wins the grand prize!
playing, eating, celebrating. Spending time with her and Grandpa, too. Together.
Inside Grandma’s studio
Becca watches
Grandma paint and paint
a colorful sunrise.

More than anything,
Becca wants to be
just like Grandma.
And Grandma knows that
she is just like Beeza.
That Flag
But only at school. I’m not allowed to go to her house, even though we live on the same street.

“Keira,” Mom says whenever I go outside. “Please stay where I can see you.”

Then she shoots a look that means, Don’t go anywhere near their yard.

I already know why. It’s because of that flag.

Mom and Dad say it’s a hate flag. “A symbol of violence and oppression.”

Bianca’s parents told her it’s a heritage flag. “A celebration of courage and pride.”

What I know is I can’t go to any parties or sleepovers at her house. And I can’t invite her to mine.
“Kaire!” Bianca runs up to me. “I’ve been looking for you everywhere!” She throws her arms around my neck, but I don’t hug her back. “What’s wrong?” she asks.

My throat feels tight. I’m not sure what to say. I just point to the pictures in the case, then I walk away.

Back on the bus, Dad and I sit up front, behind the driver. I stare out the window, remembering those pictures and that flag. My best friend’s flag.

Later that night, my family and I talk for a long time. They tell me things they’ve never told me about before.
About the scary things my grandpa saw when he was just a kid.

About Grandma being spat on for trying to go to school.

About Selma.

About the Charleston 9.

We talk about the things Black people have to do every day to stay safe.
After our talk, I feel scared, confused, and mad.
But mostly I’m sad.

About Mom and Dad getting called bad names and chased by people in a truck.

About the Freedom Riders.
I'm trying to beat my grandpa at chess when I hear Grandma cry. "Lord have mercy!"

Mom turns up the news. It's news none of us wants to hear.

Two Black people were shot in their own front yard by three white men. They show pictures of the men on TV. They're standing in front of that flag.

That hate flag.
When Ms. Greyson asks what we learned from our field trip, I say,
“The Confederate flag is racist.”
“That’s not true!” Bianca cries. “It stands for Southern pride.”
The Confederacy,” Ms. Greyson says, “fought a war to keep Black people enslaved.
Their battle flag is still used by hate groups who want white people to rule.”
“No.” Bianca shakes her head. “Why would my family fly a flag like that?”
“I don’t know,” Ms. Greyson answers, “but it’s a good question to ask.”
But I'm willing to see.
VERY GOOD HATS

EMMA STROUB

ILLUSTRATED BY BLANCA GÓMEZ
Some people think hats are fancy things you can buy at a haberdashery, but that’s just the tip of the iceberg.
Acorns make snug hats for your fingers.

Raspberries, chewed-up gum, tortellini, and doll shoes work too.
An empty pudding cup makes a good hat for a stuffed bear.

Cats and other small furry creatures are good hats in wintertime.
Hardcover books are nicely dramatic hats, if you have excellent posture.

Paperback books are floppier than a soggy beret.
Bubbles make very fine hats, if temporary.

A crown is a hat for a queen, but flowers can be too.
The roof is the house's hat, and a lid is a pot's hat.
Everyone knows that.
Empty bowls work, but you have to make sure they’re empty first.

otherwise you might have a soup hat instead.
Some of the best hats come from grandparents.
If you’re in an airplane, you get to wear a cloud.

If you’re on a scooter, you have two hats:

your helmet and the wind.
Some hats are just falling leaves.
You see? Hats are everywhere you look!
Anything can be a hat if you believe it is.
the wishing machine
Every Sunday after cereal, we walk to the laundry-mat, Mom and me.
Every Sunday,
the same squeaky floors.

Every Sunday,
the same sweet smells.

Every Sunday,
we see our friends.

But this Sunday
is different.
This Sunday is our
last Sunday at the
laundry-mat.
Tomorrow we are leaving to live with Grandpa. Grandpa’s trailer is tiny.
But it’s stuffed with caramel candies and wooden birdhouses and a dog named Sparky!
Having a dog, I think, is not so bad.

And time with Grandpa is not so bad either.
But Grandpa’s trailer is far away.
Too far to walk to the laundromat.
And it won’t be just Mom and me anymore.

I feel sad to say goodbye.
But Mom says, “If we have any coins left,
we’ll buy a bag of cookies!”

Mom drops the coins in the slot.

“Clink, clink, clink!”

“Like a wishing well,” I say.
Mom smiles, her first smile today.
“What do you wish for, Sam-my-Sam?”
I shrug and say, “I dunno.”
But on the inside, I know exactly what I wish for.
To stay in our apartment.
Mom pushes the button—thunk!
The door locks—clunk!
The machine wakes up like Grandpa from a nap.

The water whispers,

“Wish—wish—wish!”

So I ask Mom,
“When do I get my wish?”

“Sam—my—Sam, sometimes the good things take time.”
QUEEN CITY COIN LAUNDRY
OPEN 6AM - 11PM
7 DAYS A WEEK

My head spins with dreams of our apartment.

A room for Mom.

A room for me.

Flowerpots in the window and lots of places to play.

And best of all, we'll get to stay. We'll walk to the laundry-mat every Sunday.
We walk into the snow.

After a few slushy steps, I stop—Mom never made her wish! So I ask her, “What do you wish for?”

Mom pauses, then says, “I want us to be together and happy, wherever we are.”

“I want that too,” I say, smiling because I know, no matter where we go, we’ll be together every Sunday.”
Mom and me.
EVERYBODY HAS A BODY

By Molli Jackson Ehlert

illustrated by Lorian Tu
Everybody has a body.
Bodies look different ways.
Some are short, some are tall.
Some are small, some are large.

Some are different colors,
some are different shapes.
Bodies have different needs.

Some move in different ways, some see in different ways.

Some talk in different ways, some think in different ways.

Some just got here, some have been here a long time.
Bodies feel different ways. Some feel good playing, some feel good resting.

Some feel hairy, some feel bumpy.

Some feel strong, some feel flexible.
Your body is your body.
It doesn't look like anyone else's.
It doesn't feel like anyone else's.

It does things that only your body can do.
And those differences make you you.
We love Spring!
We love Fall!
We love Winter!
Thank You!

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