

*A Note from Nina LaCour,
author of *Mama and Mommy and Me in the Middle**

When my daughter was three, I was offered a job teaching in a graduate program that allowed me to work from home year-round—with an exception. Each January, I would travel to take part in a residency devoted to the study of children’s literature. The trip would last ten days, during which my colleagues and I would lead workshops and give lectures and get to know our students, and then we’d all say goodbye and fly back to where we came from. I knew that being away would be difficult, but I wanted the job and trusted that it would get easier with time, so I said yes.



I’m from the San Francisco area and have lived here all my life, so packing for Saint Paul, Minnesota, in January was no easy task. But more pressing than the question of heavy coats was the question of how to say goodbye to my sweet kiddo for so long. *How do you help a three-year-old understand what a span of ten days will feel like? Or is it better not to? Should I make it sound fun—like a novelty—or let her know how terribly I’d miss her?* It was uncharted territory. My wife told me about the fun plans she was making for the two of them. Usually *she* was the one who traveled for work. It was a reversal of our roles, and we both knew it would be good for everyone. We were navigating family life as two working mothers. We were figuring it out.

Still, after they dropped me off, I sobbed at the airport.

As the days passed in Minnesota, I remembered what it was like to be a writer out in the world with other writers. My favorite job perk was sitting in on my colleagues’ lectures. I’d published a few YA novels at that point, and though I loved the idea of writing picture books, I had no clue where to begin. Still, I scrawled pages of notes on the emotional life of the child and the interplay between text and art, hopeful that I’d find a story to tell. All the while, I missed my wife and daughter terribly.

And one day, I realized that the story I wanted to write was already unfolding.

One thing I love about picture books is how honest they can be, and how beautifully simple. Here is mine: I went away for my job. My wife took time off of hers. Our daughter missed me sometimes, and had fun without me, and got her mama all to herself. They played and snuggled and made big plans. And then I came home, and we were all together again.

Kaylani Juanita’s gentle and vivid and joyful illustrations bring such tenderness and whimsy and delight to the text. I couldn’t have dreamed up a more beautiful visual language for it. I hope this book will help children who are missing someone they love feel seen and understood. Thank you for reading it.

I’m wishing you the best,

Nina

