

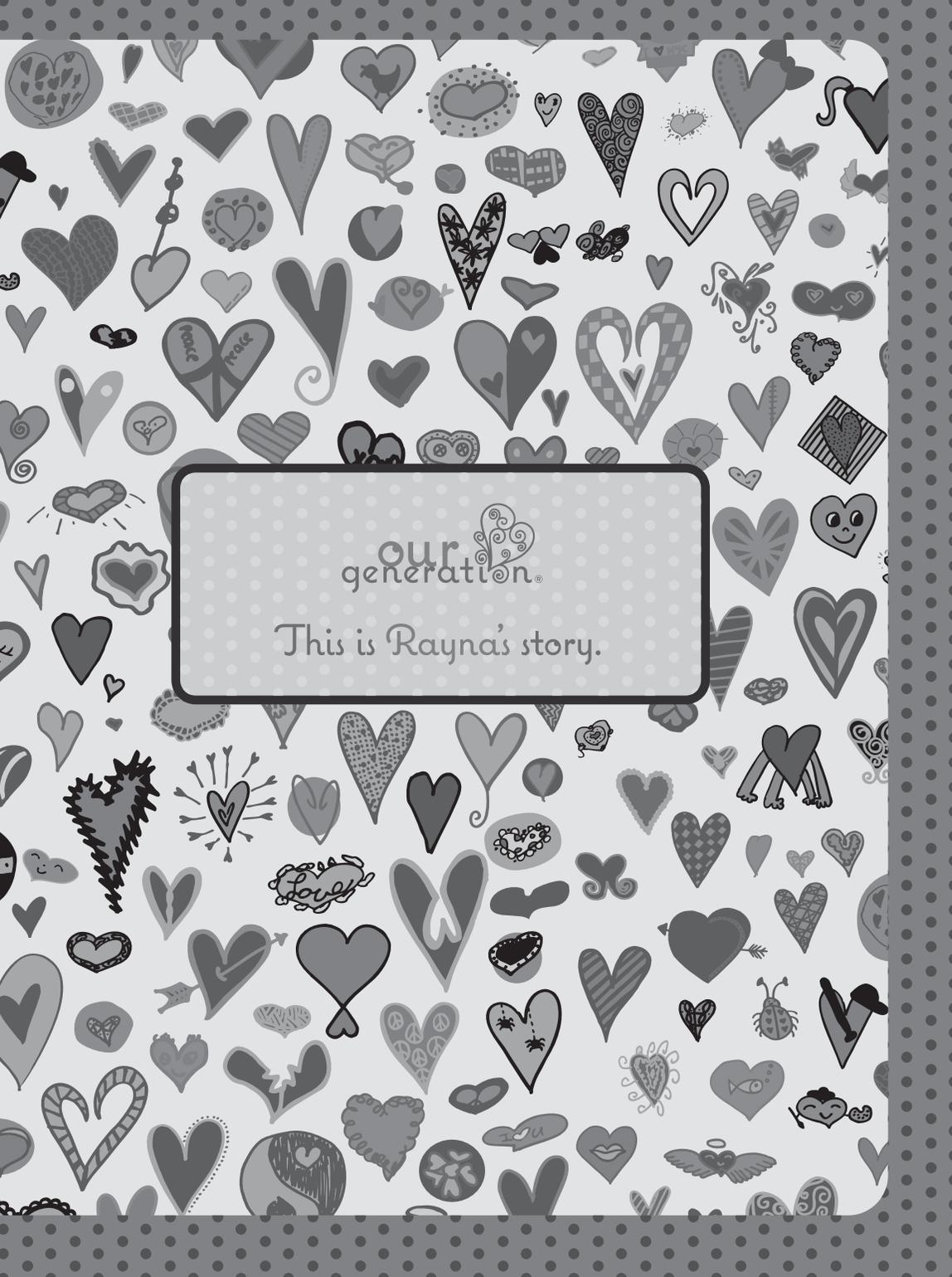


# The Foodie Friends Project

FEATURING RAYNA™

BY SUSAN HUGHES  
ILLUSTRATED BY GÉRALDINE CHARETTE





our  
generation®

This is Rayna's story.



RAYNA™

# THE FOODIE FRIENDS PROJECT

BY

SUSAN HUGHES

ILLUSTRATED BY GÉRALDINE CHARETTE

*An Our Generation® book*

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**EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT!**

*Big words, wacky words, powerful words, funny words...  
what do they all mean? They are marked with this symbol \*.  
Look them up in the Glossary at the end of this book.*



# *Chapter One*

“THIS IS YOU, CLASS!”

“FABULOUS FOURTH-GRADE FOODIES!”

Ms. Landon exclaimed. She wrote the words in bold letters across the whiteboard at the front of the classroom. Pointing to each one of us, she announced, “This is you, class! You’re now the Fabulous Fourth-Grade Foodies and your focus over the next few weeks will be...”

She waited, looking at us expectantly.

“Food!” many of us called out, laughing.

“Correct,” Ms. Landon said. “You’ll create a project and hand it in after spring break.”

Some of the kids in my fourth-grade class who had been looking out the window swiveled around to stare at her. Others whispered to one another when they heard the words “spring break.”



“Spring break seems like an eternity from now, doesn’t it, Rayna?” Andrew complained to me in a quiet voice. He sat in the desk next to mine.

I nodded. I couldn’t wait. I was planning to have lots of fun working on all my hobbies during spring break. My heart collection, my shell collection, my...

“Quiet down, please, class,” said our teacher, with a smile. “It’s still just the beginning of February! Hang in there!”

Everyone groaned loudly, including me.

“So, the project. Begin to think of some ideas,” suggested Ms. Landon. “Tomorrow, I’ll put several topics up on the board. You can choose one of them or you can come up with your own ideas. Oh,” she said, “and you’ll choose a partner tomorrow, too. This project will be done in pairs.”

My class began buzzing again. Who would partner with whom?

The end-of-day bell rang.

“OK, class dismissed,” said Ms. Landon.



“See you all here again tomorrow!”

Jackie signaled to me from her seat across the room, and I saw three of my other good friends talking to one another. I’m lucky to be part of a close group of five friends, but my friends always find it difficult when we have to pair up for a project.

Why? Because two doesn’t divide equally into five. One of us is always left out when we work in partners.

“Rayna!” Loredana hurried over. “How should we figure it out this time? Who were you partners with for the last project? Jackie?”

But as usual, I didn’t have time to talk once the afternoon bell rang.

“S-s-s-sorry, L-L-Loredana,” I apologized. “I I I I have to leave right now.” I shrugged. “J-j-j-j-just pair me up with whoever! I’m cool.”

“You’re always way too cool,” Loredana teased. “You’re going to meet up with your brother?” she asked.

When I gave a quick nod, she said, “OK. See you tomorrow, Rayna!”





My friends know that on most days, my 16-year-old brother, Bernard, and I walk together to our family restaurant, Neighborly Grill, so we can help out after school. Today was no different.

Fifteen minutes later, we pushed through the door, the bell tinging. Mom looked up from the cash register and gave us a smile.

*Oh, does it smell good in here! Dad must be grilling*, I thought. And sure enough, Dad, in the kitchen, leaned out through the order window and gave us a wave. Bernard and I each whipped on an apron and were soon doing our chores.

Dad's the cook, and we have a baker, Lorenzo, who comes in really early to make muffins, buns, and pies. Mom does all of our ordering and much of the serving. Yeung also helps serve part-time.

Together, Dad and Mom decide what goes on the menu every month. We mainly offer local produce and fresh grilled foods, mostly fish and other seafood.

Our restaurant is small, but it's near the



beach and we have lots of regulars\*. I think they keep coming for our fresh food. Also because it's clean, it's bright, and is such a friendly place to hang out. Mom knows everyone's name within minutes of meeting them—and she remembers them the next time they drop by!

I started to bus\* the tables, taking the dirty dishes into the kitchen where Bernard was preparing to wash them.

Dad washes dishes, too, when he's not busy grilling, and sometimes I ask him if he minds. But he always shakes his head and grins. "There's no place I'd rather be, Rayna!" he laughs.

And he's not joking. Mom and Dad always dreamed about running their own restaurant, from the time they first met. They didn't have lots of money, but they didn't care. They scoured\* the real estate ads in the newspapers and online.

They saw a little grocery store with a food counter, in a small town, go up for sale for a low price, and they grabbed it.

They had Bernard and then me, and struggled



a bit to make ends meet\*, but they didn't mind working hard.

Together, they also cooked a lot at home at night, creating new recipes, experimenting with different ingredients, and revising their menus—dreaming of launching their restaurant. Mom says now that the only thing she's sorry about is that there was no speech therapist\* in our town or anywhere nearby. So even though I had speech difficulties early on, I didn't have a chance to work with anyone to tackle them. Not like now.

Anyway, as soon as Mom and Dad had saved up enough to make a down payment\* on a restaurant, they began searching again. Then one day, about four years ago, our parents called a family meeting for the four of us. We all gathered around the kitchen table.

“We've run this little store for some time, and it's been hard work, but we've learned lots over the years and also had some fun! Plus, we've managed to save some money,” said Dad.

“There's a restaurant for sale in a small



city on the coast,” Mom explained. “Dad and I think we can afford to buy it. There’s even a small apartment above the restaurant for us to live in. I know we can make it work!”

Dad told Bernard and me that we’d have to go to a new school, of course, but instead of going on the school bus every day, we’d be able to walk to school.

It was great to see Mom and Dad so excited.

“Le-le-le-let’s do it!” I said.

“I’m in!” Bernard said.

“And you two will help us out?” our parents asked.

“Of of of of course,” I said, and Bernard agreed, too.

So here we are!

The bell tinged, and Mom called out, “Welcome, Harriet and Fred!” with a cheerful smile. As I showed the two customers to a table, I felt all happy inside.



## *Chapter Two*

### PROBLEM SOLVED

“How about if Rayna and Tal are partners? And Jackie and Emily?” said Loredana.

“But what about you, Loredana?” asked Emily. “You’ll be left out, and you were left out last time. Luckily you ended up being partners with Kyle.”

“True,” said Loredana.

We were chatting outside the school doors the next morning, still trying to figure out who would buddy up for the big project.

“But there are five of us,” pointed out Tal. “No matter what we do, one of us will be left out!”

“Tal, it’s been this way since we all became friends,” sighed Jackie. “This isn’t exactly news!”

Tal frowned.



“Do-do-don’t worry,” I said, quickly, trying to defuse\* the situation. “We’re all friends, r-r-r-remember? We’ll w-w-w-work it out.”

The school bell rang and we all lined up and headed inside.

The day began with a surprise. Our teacher was standing with a girl I didn’t recognize, and when we were all sitting and settled, Ms. Landon introduced her.

“This is Miranda,” she said. “It’s difficult for her to join the class midway through the year, but her family just moved here from out-of-state. Please welcome her.”

We all smiled and some of us even clapped a bit. But when Ms. Landon asked Miranda to tell the class something about herself, Miranda shook her head. She seemed shy and a bit nervous.

Ms. Landon showed Miranda to a seat near mine, and she gave me that special teacher-look which I knew meant, “Keep an eye out for her.” I nodded back.

Later that morning, Ms. Landon outlined the



project, explaining that the topic could be anything with a strong connection to food. “Now, class, could everyone please choose your partners?”

Ms. Landon headed toward Miranda, probably to help her with getting a partner, but then the office called on the classroom phone and she had to answer it.

My four friends gathered by Jackie’s desk to talk more about pairing up, but Miranda just sat at her desk with her head down. So it was an easy choice for me to decide what to do.

I pulled up a chair next to her. “W-w-w-would you like to be my partner?” I asked.

Miranda lifted her head quickly and stared at me in surprise.

I sat down with her. “D-d-d-did you do many projects at your old school?” I asked. I spent a few minutes filling her in on the project in general to give her some time to check me out and make up her mind.

“So, do do do you think you could stand working with me?” I asked again, with a grin.



“Yes,” she said, with a small smile. “Thanks.”

I told her I’d be right back, and I hurried over to tell my friends that Miranda was going to be my partner, so—problem solved!

As promised, Ms. Landon had written a list of topics on the board for us all to consider, and I returned to sit with Miranda.

But before we got working, I decided I should talk to Miranda about my stutter, just to get it out of the way. Everyone else in my class is used to it, I think, and I really don’t think much about it myself anymore, except when I meet new people like Miranda. *Maybe she has some questions about it that she might be too polite to ask*, I thought.

So I asked if I could give her a crash course\* in my speech challenges, and she said sure. I told her that I’d always spoken like this but that I had even stuttered a little worse for a while when I was younger. I explained about not having a chance to do any speech therapy but that since I moved here, I’ve been attending one-on-one sessions\* with Becky, my speech therapist. I mentioned that





I'm learning breathing and speaking techniques\* to help me control my stuttering.

She looked interested, so I kept going. I told her I attend group sessions to practice these strategies\* with other kids who have similar challenges. "And I've m-m-m-met two really good friends in that g-g-group," I added.

"Cool," Miranda said.

I asked if she had any questions because I know lots of people do, but all she wanted to know was whether the stutter would ever be "cured."

I shrugged. "P-p-p-probably not completely," I said. I explained it was because I hadn't started speech therapy when I was really young. "B-b-b-but it's OK. I'm l-l-l-l-learning how to manage it."

Ms. Landon looked over at us and both Miranda and I started saying to each other at the same time that we should get working on the project—and then we both burst out laughing. I think we were kind of hitting it off!

We looked at the list of topics on the board, and we talked about them all. Fruits from around



the world. Spicy foods. Foods of the ancient world. None of the topics really appealed to either of us.

“OK, class,” Ms. Landon said, glancing at the clock. “It’s time to switch from food to math. So please get out your notebooks. You don’t have to finalize your project topic choices until next week.”

Quickly Miranda and I decided we’d come up with our own idea.

“Do-do-do you want to m-m-m-meet after school tomorrow?” I asked Miranda. I explained that I had to go to my family’s restaurant most days and help out a bit, but if Miranda met me there, we could brainstorm some ideas.

“I can’t tomorrow. I have two brothers and I have to help them out with something,” said Miranda, “but is Thursday OK? I’ll check with my parents. And can I have your phone number? I know my parents will want to call and speak to yours first, before I come over.”

“Sure,” I said, and gave her the number. I was about to ask what she had to help her



brothers with, because I'm naturally curious! But Ms. Landon had her hands on her hips and was looking right at Miranda and me.

So I just hurried back to my desk to get ready for math.



## *Chapter Three*

### LOOK WHO'S HERE!

After school on Thursday, I introduced Miranda to Bernard, and the three of us walked to the restaurant together.

“Here it is!” I said proudly, opening the restaurant door. “Neighborly Grill!”

Miranda was a little shy about meeting Dad and Mom. But when Dad waved hello, she waved back.

“It was a pleasure speaking to your mother last night on the phone. I hope you feel welcome in this town—and in our restaurant and home!” Mom said, and Miranda said a soft “thank you.”

But when Mom excitedly introduced her to three of her regular customers, my new friend could barely manage to say hello. Did she regret coming over?



I'm pretty sure Mom and Dad noticed how uncomfortable she looked. "We can manage with just Bernard's help today, Rayna," Mom said quickly. "Why don't you and Miranda begin your schoolwork together?"

And after we sat at one of the tables near the window, Dad came out of the kitchen and presented Miranda and me with a fruit smoothie and a piece of warm, homemade apple pie each.

"Oh wow!" said Miranda, with a smile. "Thanks!"

I breathed a sigh of relief. She seemed fine again.

So we slurped and snacked, enjoyed the sunshine coming through the big windows, and tried to brainstorm. However, though we kicked around\* lots of food project ideas, we weren't really excited about any of them.

Bernard laughed at us. "You've been working for an hour and have nothing?" he teased.

He made some suggestions, and Mom and Dad did, too, but Miranda and I turned them all



down.

“Maybe we should just pick one of these—one of the ones we don’t like so much,” Miranda sighed, pointing at our list.

“No way,” I said. “Let’s not give up. We’ll just think for a little longer. I’m sure we’ll get a good idea.”

“Yoo-hoo! Hello! Look who’s here!” called a cheerful voice.

“Auntie Leah!” I cried, jumping up and rushing over to her. “What a surprise!”

“Rayna! And Bernard!” cried Auntie Leah. She hugged us both at the same time.

“Sis!” she said, greeting my mom, who is her older sister. When Dad waved to her through the ordering window, Auntie Leah enthusiastically waved back.

“It’s so nice to see you all!” she exclaimed. “I was up north, working my food truck, serving comfort foods\*, and I got tired of cooking with my parka, snow boots, and woolly gloves on! I woke up a few days ago and decided to come south to





find the sunshine—and you all—and relax a bit!”

“I’m s-s-s-so glad you’re here,” I said. I love it when Auntie Leah is around. She’s so outgoing and so much fun! She helps out Mom and Dad a lot, and me, too. She always offers to drive me to my sessions with Becky. She even offers to help me practice some of my speech exercises.

I introduced Miranda to Auntie Leah, and my aunt grabbed Miranda’s hand and said a big hello. Miranda said hi back, in a soft voice.

I think Auntie Leah realized she’d sort of overwhelmed my quiet friend because she didn’t try to hug her, which is what she’d normally do. Instead she just patted her hand a bit and said it was nice to meet her.

Auntie Leah went into the kitchen to say hi to Dad and to grab an apron so she could help out.

“Your aunt has a food truck business? Food must run in your family!” Miranda laughed, as she and I sat back down at the table.

I explained that Auntie Leah doesn’t like living in one place—she likes being free as a



bird\*—so she travels around in her truck, serving food in different states. She makes up new menus as she goes, depending on what type of foods are available in different places and what people in different places like to eat.

Suddenly Miranda’s face lit up. “That’s it! I’ve got it!” she cried. “Let’s do a project on the different foods your aunt sells from her food truck. That’ll be our special focus!”

“P-p-p-p-perfect,” I agreed. “We-we-we can ask Auntie Leah for her recipes and where the ingredients come from.”

“Maybe we can even get her to help us make some of the food items,” suggested Miranda.

“W-w-we can do research at the l-l-l-library, too,” I said.

“And we can take photos of everything!” suggested Miranda.

We grinned at each other and high-fived. “N-n-n-n-nice one, partner!” I said.



## Chapter Four

### QUIRKY CAN BE COOL

We were even more excited when Ms. Landon approved our project idea and said it sounded like fun.

“Your project is due four weeks from Monday,” she reminded the entire class. She also explained that, when people work on a project, they sometimes enlist\* the help of an advisor or “mentor.”

Miranda and I looked at each other. We were thinking the same thing: *Auntie Leah!* We decided we’d meet up on Saturday and ask her if she would be our mentor.

“C-c-c-c-can you c-c-c-come by early so we can make some plans?” I asked Miranda.

“Sure,” said Miranda. “I’ll check with Mom first but....” She thought for a minute. “Oh, hang



on. It'll have to be in the afternoon because I need to help my brothers with something in the morning.”

Once again, I was about to ask what's going on with her brothers when the bell rang, and I didn't get a chance.



The next afternoon, Miranda came by the restaurant with her mother. Dad and Bernard were inside with Yeung, who helps out on Saturdays. I was outside, halfway up the stairs leading from the restaurant up to our apartment. I was helping Mom water the gorgeous flowers we'd planted in pots on the landings.

Miranda introduced her mother to Mom and me. As our moms began to chat, I invited Miranda to come on up.

“Sure,” she said, “but we were going to phone your aunt first. Right?”

“R-r-r-right,” I agreed.

“Excuse me, Mom,” I interrupted, speaking



in a really soft voice. “Can you give us Auntie Leah’s cell phone number, please?”

Miranda pulled out a notebook and pencil from her backpack, and when Mom recited the number, she wrote it down.

I called Auntie Leah from the kitchen phone in the apartment. Like Miranda and I had decided, I described our project to her. I told her it was about the foods she sells in different states around the country. I asked if she could be our mentor, and she said she’d be happy to help! She agreed to come over in a while.

As we went into my room to work on preparing questions for Auntie Leah, Miranda looked at me curiously. “You didn’t stutter at all just then, when you spoke softly to your mom,” she said.

I agreed. First, I explained that my stuttering gets worse when I need to say something urgently. The more I want to say it, the more trouble I seem to have, and the more I stutter.

“B-b-b-but for some reason, I don’t stutter



when I whisper. So that's a st-st-strategy that I use sometimes."

She nodded. "Cool."

"Want to t-t-t-t-try something?" I asked. I grabbed a book from my bookshelf and flipped it open. "Let's read this to-to-to-together out loud," I said, pointing to a paragraph. "R-r-r-ready? Go."

When we finished, Miranda grinned. "You don't stutter when you read along with someone else?"

"Right," I said.

"Cool," she repeated. Now she looked around my bedroom. "I love how you can see palm trees from your window, and your posters are cool. Your bedspread is such a nice color."

She pointed to several jars on my shelf. "What's in those?" she asked.

"A-a-a-according to my family, I I I I have many quirks\*," I said. I told her about my love for collecting heart-shaped objects. I have jars of heart-shaped stones, leaves, bits of glass, rocks, and shells. I've collected them over the years—just





because I like them.

I pointed to my jeans and explained that my family teases me all the time about my strange obsession\* with patches. “I have them on my j-j-j-j-jackets and some of my sh-sh-sh-shirts, too. And my b-b-b-backpack! Quirky, right?”

Miranda laughed. “Quirky can be cool!” she said.

Then we got down to work. We sat on the floor, leaning against the bed, and made a list of questions to ask Auntie Leah.

Later, we went to the kitchen to grab a snack, and Auntie Leah arrived. We gave her our list and explained more about our project.

“I’m happy to help, but I’m not sure exactly how long I’ll be staying in town,” she warned us. Then Auntie Leah snapped her fingers. “Oh, Rayna! I have a special gift for you!” She handed me a tiny package.

I unwrapped it. It was a patch of a dancing taco!

“I love helping Rayna add to her collections,”



my aunt explained to Miranda. “I love all of my niece’s quirks!”

With a smile, Auntie Leah went to talk to my mom in the living room.

“Yeah, I guess we all have quirks,” Miranda said, softly. “I have some, too.”

“L-l-l-l-like what?” I asked.

She thought. “Well, I put hot sauce on almost everything I eat,” she said.

I laughed. “Wh -wh-what else?”

She paused. “I...I can’t...I can’t speak in front of groups. Like a class of students.” She didn’t smile this time.

“OK,” I said, nodding. “Why not?”

“Rayna, time for your speech-language group!” Mom called just then, and Auntie Leah popped her head back into the room, saying she’d drive me in Mom’s red convertible. “And I’ll drop you back at home on the way, if you like, Miranda,” Auntie Leah offered.

“A convertible?” Miranda said, with a grin. We high-fived. Miranda gave her mom a quick call



to let her know, and we headed out.

It was fun! Auntie Leah put the roof down and turned on some music we all liked. The sun was out, and the wind whipped our hair around.

My aunt asked how my group was going, and I told her and Miranda a bit about it. I explained some of the exercises we'd been doing, and how I felt relaxed there because the other kids had struggles similar to mine.

“Here we are!” said Auntie Leah, as we pulled up in front of Miranda’s house.

“Thanks for the lift,” said Miranda, as quick as can be. “Bye!”

Before Auntie Leah or I could answer, she jumped out of the car, shut the door, and headed for her house.

“Okeydokey,” said Auntie Leah. “And now, we’re off to your speech-language group, Rayna.”

But before she pulled away, I saw the door of the garage beside Miranda’s house was wide open—and inside, two kids were playing electric guitars. Wow!



*Who are they?* I wondered. I would definitely have questions for Miranda the next time I saw her.



## Chapter Five

### BACK IN BUSINESS!

Miranda and I met a couple of times during the week to work on our project. But twice, Miranda said she couldn't come over because she had to help her brothers. I wanted to ask her if it was them I saw in the garage playing instruments. Each time, Miranda changed the subject before I could ask. I was curious, but I didn't want to be too nosy, so again, I dropped it.

We'd arranged to meet up with Auntie Leah at the restaurant on Sunday morning. She'd offered to take us to the beach! Miranda arrived early while I was helping to serve brunch. I brought her a breakfast wrap to enjoy while she waited.

"Thanks! I love coming to your restaurant," Miranda said. "Everyone's so friendly here, especially your parents. I like to hear the music



they play on the sound system, too.”

“A-a-a-and we get f-f-f-f-free food!” I agreed.

I hurried off to visit with Mrs. Gambor and Ms. Bennett. They’re regular customers who always come for brunch on Sunday. They like to chat with me and I like talking to them, too.

Then Mr. Filipe came in with his toddler, Michael, and I helped them find a table.

“H-h-h-h-h-here you go,” I said, dragging over a high chair for Michael. He’s sweet and a bit shy so I always get him crayons and a kid’s menu and spend a few minutes coloring with him.

Just as the brunch rush was ending, Auntie Leah popped her head in. Miranda and I grabbed our beach gear, waved goodbye to Mom, and we all set out for “our” beach. We call it that because it’s only a short walk and we go there lots.

As we walked, Auntie Leah said she’d read our project questions and she had lots of information for us. She explained that she sells foods from all around the world: Mexican fish tacos, Mediterranean shrimp and veggie kebabs\*



with pitas\*, North American hamburgers and vegan\* burgers made with quinoa\*, lobster rolls, spinach salad, corn on the cob, and fresh fruit cups.

She sells drinks, too: mango, berry, avocado, and banana smoothies, and also lemonade and fresh-squeezed orange juice.

She recited the names of some of the ingredients she uses and told us she'd give us a menu from her truck and a list of the ingredients when she brought her truck by to show us.

“Hey, Rayna, I have an idea,” Miranda said. “Let’s make a world map and show which country each food comes from.”

“Let’s s-s-s-s-see,” I said. “L-l-l-l-lettuce is from...the United States. So so so is corn on the cob. But wh-wh-where’s quinoa from?”

“And lobster?” said Miranda. “And pitas?”

As the two of us talked, I nudged Miranda to look at Auntie Leah. She was just staring ahead as we walked, looking a bit pensive\*.

“Hey, C-C-C-Canada g-g-g-geese\*!” I cried, pointing to some of the big northern birds, pecking



away at the grass near the beach's edge.

“Many species of birds migrate\* to Florida for the winter,” Auntie Leah said, nodding.

“L-l-l-like you do, right?” I asked.

“Right,” said Auntie Leah, with a smile. She still seemed thoughtful. “You know, girls, I did come south to get away from the cold, but I actually feel a bit bored now, even though I'm helping out in the restaurant and being your mentor!”

“Wh-wh-why not get back in b-b-b-business and set up your food truck on the beach for a while?” I asked.

Auntie Leah grinned. “Now there's a good idea,” she said. “I'd need a permit\*...” she paused... “but I can go tomorrow morning and see if I can get one. And if I can do that, I'll be back in business. I'll figure it out as I go!

“Now, let's have some fun, OK?” Auntie Leah said, pulling a soccer ball out of her beach bag. She tossed the ball and Miranda and I ran across the sand after it, screeching happily.





## *Chapter Six*

### WHAT'S WRONG WITH MIRANDA?

The next week, during our English lesson one morning, Ms. Landon was asking our class questions, as usual. And as usual, Miranda didn't put her hand up. She's kind of shy at school. But this time, Ms. Landon called on her anyway, and Miranda got flustered. She blushed and mumbled her answer. I could tell she felt embarrassed.

During recess, Jackie and Emily took me aside.

“What's wrong with Miranda?” Jackie asked.

“Isn't it awkward working with her on your project?” Emily asked. “Does she ever speak to you?”

They both laughed a bit. I frowned. “G-g-give her a break,” I said. “She's r-r-r-really nice,



but just a little shy.”

It bugged me that they’d be so intolerant\* of her. I know what it’s like to have difficulty speaking in front of other people!



Later that afternoon, after I hung up my apron at the restaurant, I joined Miranda at a table. Together, we worked on making the world map for our project.

Soon Auntie Leah’s cheerful voice rang out: “Hello, all!”

She beckoned to us. “Girls, Bernard, sis, Martin!” Martin is my dad’s name. “I’ve parked my OG’s Grill Truck right outside. Come see!”

The restaurant had just emptied out, so the five of us hurried outside. The food truck has a window that opens right up so you can take orders and serve food through the space on its built-in counter. Auntie Leah opened the back door, and set up the hinged table against the door.

“This is a good place to put condiments,



napkins, and utensils,” she explained.

We took turns looking inside at the little kitchen, with the grill, shelves, and refrigerator. It was great!

Auntie Leah explained that she’d managed to get a temporary permit and she had been given a list of places where she was allowed to set up in the city. “I think I’ll work three days a week or so in the truck, and the rest of the time, I’ll continue helping you out here at Neighborly Grill,” she said.

“You might look into updating all your papers and permits for running the food truck,” Dad suggested.

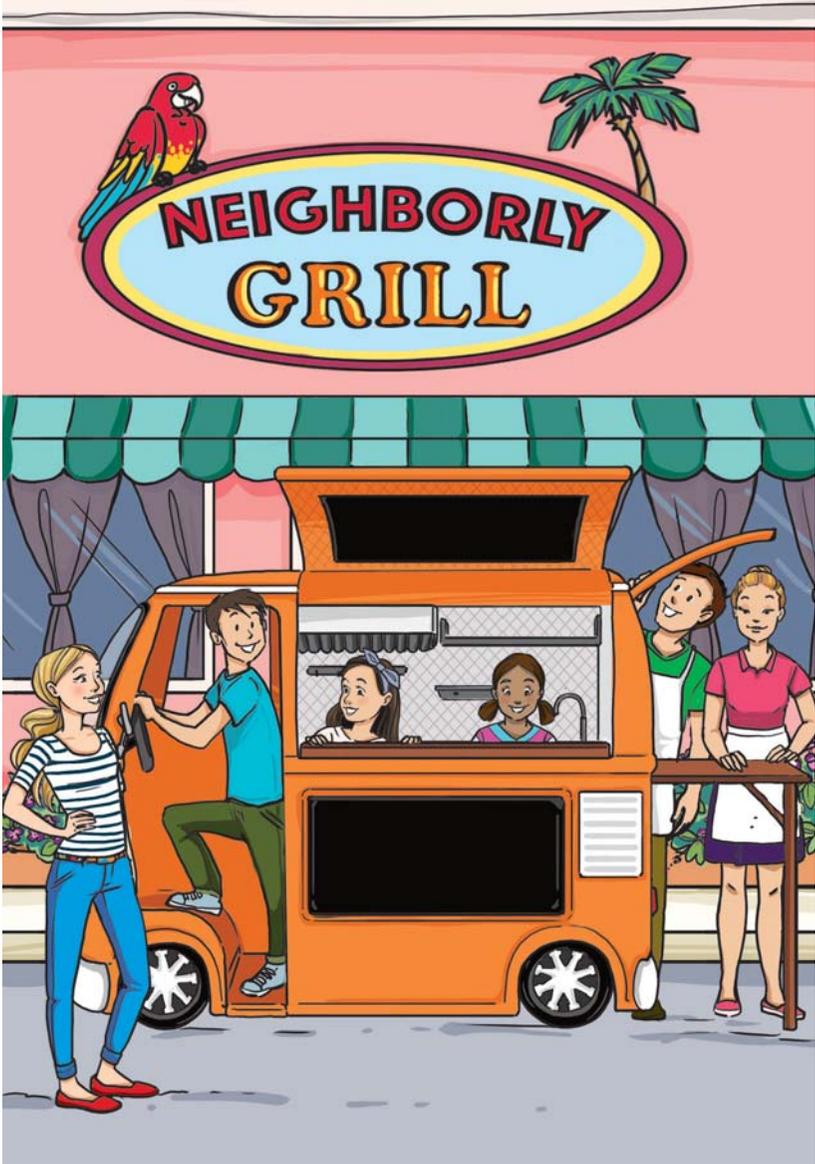
“And you’ll have to have a health inspection done on your truck,” Mom reminded her.

“I’ll go with you if you want, Auntie Leah,” Bernard offered.

“Wow, your family really pulls together for one another!” Miranda said to me, quietly.

“I hope to begin working my food truck two weeks from now, during spring break,” Auntie





Leah explained, “which doesn’t give me much time to get ready.” She looked at Miranda and me. “Maybe you two would think about giving me a hand, too?”

“Sure,” I said enthusiastically.

Miranda looked thoughtful. “OK,” she agreed, cautiously. She said she couldn’t tomorrow, but she could try to help whenever she was free, if it was alright with her parents.



## *Chapter Seven*

### YOU TALK JUST FINE

When Auntie Leah came by the next morning, I reminded her that Miranda wouldn't be able to help her after school but that I would be free.

"That's fine," she said. "There are only two seats in the food truck so it might work out well for you to help me alone today."

She smiled. "The city gave me a list of locations where I can park my truck and serve food. Could you come with me in the truck and help me choose three or four of the best spots, including one on the beach? I really want to do a "pop-up" idea.

"I'll move among these three or four locations during the spring months. I'll advertise on social media\* so customers can find me! It'll be fun!"

I told her I'd love to help, and Mom and Dad gave me the thumbs-up, so Auntie Leah picked me up



outside school right after class. I felt so cool jumping into the front of the food truck beside her with all my friends watching!

We drove through all different neighborhoods and looked at lots of sites that were on the list from the city. As we drove to the final site, I told Auntie Leah my favorites so far, and Auntie Leah liked them, too.

Finally, we ended up on the other side of the city at Sunset Beach, a long beach that I'd only been to a few times. It was so beautiful along the coast with the blue ocean stretching out into the distance and the sun shining down.

“Th-th-th-there!” I cried. “Th-th-th-that spot looks just perfect!”

Auntie Leah pulled over near a boardwalk.\* There were shops selling colorful clothes, sailboat and sailboard rentals, and seating areas—all close to the beach—but there weren't any restaurants or food kiosks\* close by.

“It is perfect, Rayna,” Auntie Leah agreed. “I'll try out my first pop-up right here.”





Miranda and I worked more on our project that week, adding lots of cool details to our map. We were going a bit overboard maybe, but we were having fun!

I helped out at the restaurant on the weekend for a bit. Jackie invited me to hang out with Emily, Tal, Loredana, and her. We all went to the beach with her older brothers, and we practiced cheerleading tricks that Tal had seen at her brother's high school football games.



On Monday, Miranda and I began putting together a list of foods that are popular in different places. We found some quite common—and some unusual—recipes for different dishes. We wanted to really wow Ms. Landon with our project.

Auntie Leah dropped by the restaurant. She gave Miranda and me more recipe tips. Then she explained that she needed someone to assist her in the truck, cooking or serving food, but she was having trouble writing an ad. “Can you girls give



me a hand?” she asked.

It was so cool she asked *us!* Miranda and I helped her come up with a good description of the type of person she needed. We looked at some examples of real ads on Auntie Leah’s laptop, and then we wrote it up together. It was fun, and I liked that Miranda was becoming even less shy with my aunt.

Auntie Leah said she was going to post the ad on her social media accounts. Miranda and I asked if we could make “OG’s Grill Truck Coming Soon” posters and put them up around town.

“Great idea,” said Auntie Leah.

Miranda and I were excited to help advertise Auntie Leah’s business. First we looked at her menu and did a few sketches on scrap paper of all the foods Auntie Leah was going to offer in her truck. When we liked our results, we did it all for real with markers on poster board.

I made up some catchy phrases to write on the posters, too, like “Grrrrrowling stomach? Head to OG’s Grrrrrillllll!” and “Fresh Food in the



Fresh Air!”

“You’re a good writer. Those are cool,” Miranda said.

I sighed. “I I I I w-w-w-wish I could speak as easily as I can write,” I confessed.

“Rayna, you talk just fine,” Miranda said, looking surprised. “It’s other people who just need to get used to the way you talk. And most of them do, right? As far as I’m concerned you should stay just exactly the way you are.”

What a nice thing for her to say! It made me feel really good.

Miranda’s dad arrived to pick her up, and we all got to meet him for the first time.

“Miranda,” I told her, as she was leaving, “you know, I’d be h-h-h-happy to work on our project at your house sometime.”

She only smiled. “I really like it here at the restaurant,” she assured me. “It’s fine for me.”

“OK,” I said, but it was weird. It felt like she didn’t want me coming to her house because she wasn’t ready to tell me about her brothers.



## *Chapter Eight*

### MAKING A BIG SPLASH

Up until now, my four good friends hadn't paid much attention to Miranda. It wasn't like they'd been unfriendly to her. I think they were mainly just busy with their own projects, and Miranda wasn't going out of her way\* to talk to them.

I did my best to include Miranda when I was playing with my other friends, at recess or at lunchtime, but it never seemed to work out. I either ended up playing with them or with her, but not usually all of us together.

This week, though, finally, they seemed to be accepting each other. Maybe it had just been a matter of time. Anyway, on Tuesday, all six of us—Jackie, Emily, Loredana, Tal, Miranda, and I—ended up having lunch together and talking about our projects. It was nice. It felt like my two worlds



had joined up.

All my friends complained a bit about their projects, but they seemed happy with their topics overall. Miranda and I told the others about the big map that we have to finish up before the project is due right after spring break.

Because spring break is next week! We all talked about our plans for the week. Everyone was so excited, especially me!

I really like to spend time with my friends but they know I also enjoy working on my hobbies. So I told them that next week, I plan to organize and add to my collections. I'm excited about wandering the beach looking for more shells, heart-shaped objects, and pretty stones.

*Plus*, I got a calligraphy set last year on my birthday, and I've become really good at fancy writing. My set has real ink and quill pens. I want to make labels for some of the things in my collections and for my scrapbook. Since winter break, I'd saved up lots of bits and pieces—and I was looking forward to pasting everything into my





scrapbook and making fancy-writing labels.

My friends all giggled. They think my collections are a bit kooky, but they tease me about them in a good way!

Before we went back to class, I pulled Miranda aside. I asked her directly about the boys I'd seen in her garage with the instruments.

“Oh, they're just my brothers,” Miranda said, really quickly, like she wanted to get it over with. “They're 14 and 16, and they have a band. They both play guitar and sing, and they write their own songs.”

“Th-th-th-that's amazing!” I said. “C-c-c-c-can I come and listen to them sometime?”

Miranda hesitated. “I'll ask them,” she said. And we headed into class.



Later that afternoon, when we were at the restaurant working on our project, I realized something. “You n-n-n-never said wh-wh-wh-wh-what *your* plans are for spring break,” I said to



Miranda.

She shrugged\*. “Just hanging around with my brothers, I think,” she said.

“So so so maybe I can c-c-c-come next week and l-l-l-listen to their band,” I suggested.

Again, she looked uncomfortable, but she didn’t say no. She just said, “Maybe.”

Then Auntie Leah burst in through the restaurant doors. “I’m excited!” she announced. We smiled at her, and all our customers did, too. Everyone here is getting used to Auntie Leah’s enthusiasm!

She came over to sit with Miranda and me. “Girls, this vacation week will be a peak time\* for launching my business. There will be so many people out and about, hungry for snacks and a quick lunch. I’m so excited to make a big splash\* in this town!” she exclaimed.

“I’ve got all the paperwork done. Thanks to you two, and our wonderful ad, I’ve hired a young man to be my helper. And I’ve ordered all the supplies and ingredients I need for a few days.”



“W-w-w-wonderful!” I said.

“That’s great!” said Miranda.

Auntie Leah’s cell phone rang and she picked up. “Oh, hey, Richard!” she said. *My new helper*, she mouthed to us.

But her face fell\* as she listened. After hanging up, she told us that there’d been a misunderstanding. Richard couldn’t start work until *after* spring break.

Auntie Leah looked so disappointed. “I guess I’ll have to push back the start date and miss out on this big week,” she said.

Bernard was standing at the cash register, and he’d overheard. “Oh, Auntie Leah,” he said. “I’m going to be away, too, or I could help out.” He paused. “You know, I could cancel my plans.”

“No, no, no,” Auntie Leah insisted. She went over to the counter and hugged Bernard. “Thank you, but no. It’s not the end of the world. It’ll be fine. I’ll just start a week later.”

I whispered to Miranda that I was going to offer to help out, too. “What about you, Miranda?”



Will you help?”

But Miranda bit her lip. “I don’t think I’ll have time to help,” she said.

*What?* She’d just told me all she was doing on spring break was hanging around with her brothers.

Miranda’s dad arrived to take her home just then, so I didn’t have a chance to ask any questions. But I did offer to help Auntie Leah—alone.

She was so flattering. “You’re wonderful with customers, Rayna,” she said. She told me what a good job I always did in the restaurant, and how responsible I was.

And she accepted my offer! “Even if you help out at the food truck for just a few hours each day, I think I can make it work,” Auntie Leah said. “Thank you so much!”

I was happy because I’d still have time to work on my collections—but I’d get to spend time with my aunt *and* meet new customers!

Auntie Leah hurried into the kitchen to ask Mom and Dad if it was alright with them. They looked quite proud of me as they said yes.



## Chapter Nine

### YAHOO! SPRING BREAK!

Spring break had officially begun—and it was sunny and warm, perfect beach weather. Early in the afternoon, Mom drove me to OG’s Grill food truck. It was parked on the boardwalk at Sunset Beach, in the spot that Auntie Leah and I had picked out together.

Auntie Leah had just opened and a few customers were lined up, waiting to order food. She had done lots to prepare but she looked pretty happy to see us. Mom said she wanted to support her favorite sister! So she stayed, too, and we both helped out customers all afternoon.



Dad brought me to the truck the next day, and he stayed for a while to lend a hand. Then, after an hour or so, Miranda showed up.

I was so surprised!

“I can help every afternoon for the rest of the week, if you want,” Miranda offered to Auntie Leah—and that’s just what she did!

It was so nice to have Miranda with us. I did notice one thing, though. I’ve never let my stutter stop me from talking with strangers. I just do my best to communicate as well as I can. But even though she can speak perfectly fine, way better than me, Miranda was nervous about talking with customers. I couldn’t figure it out.

Anyway, Miranda just stayed more in the background at the food truck, and I was the one who did most of the talking. And after a few days, Miranda seemed to get more comfortable.

I thought about asking her more about her shyness. I don’t mind when people ask me about my stutter. It’s pretty hard not to notice it. Some people just pretend it isn’t there, but if others don’t,



and ask about it, I happily answer their questions.

But I know everyone's different. Miranda had told me she didn't like speaking in groups, but she might not want to talk more about it. So I decided not to ask. *Maybe she'll decide to talk to me about it one day*, I thought.

Besides, we were having fun being together this week and helping Auntie Leah. Plus helping out at the food truck was helping us with our project, too.

We got a first-hand look at the ingredients in each dish and drink that Auntie Leah served. We asked her what made her decide to serve some items in one location, and other items elsewhere. We took photos of her as she prepared the foods—the tacos, the burgers, the corn on the cob.... We worked on our map and menus during the slow periods.

By the time the week ended, Miranda and I had managed to put our final touches on our project.

As I went to bed the night before school



started, I thought, *What a great vacation!*



“Here it is,” Miranda and I said to Ms. Landon, as we handed in our project on Monday. It had been difficult, but we’d done a good job and, because of this project, we’d become friends.

Ms. Landon handed back our assignments the very next day.

“Miranda and Rayna’s project was one of the top three,” Ms. Landon said to the class. Miranda and I did an under-the-desk low-five.

But then Ms. Landon said, “This Friday is the school-wide Welcome Spring Festival, and I would like the three pairs who did so well to present their projects to the class at this event and share what they learned. I’ll invite all your parents and guardians to come, too. Everyone can celebrate your learning together!”

Ms. Landon continued, looking at me. “I know that, for some of you, doing a presentation will be more challenging than for others, of course.



So please, if I can help at all, come to me.”

Ms. Landon and most of the other kids in my class know I find it difficult to talk in front of a crowd in a formal setting. I swallowed, feeling nervous.

But Miranda looked completely panicky\*.

We didn’t have a chance to talk until lunchtime. “Hey, we-we-we-we did so well, right?” I said to Miranda. “B-b-b-but now we have to do that presentation...”

“I told you!” Miranda interrupted, angrily. “Weren’t you listening? I thought you were my friend! I told you. I won’t do public speaking. I won’t speak in front of the class. You’ll have to do it without me.”

“B-b-b-but...” I began.

Miranda stormed away\*. I just stood there, stunned\*.

I didn’t see Miranda until the bell rang and we went back into class. I tried to talk to her but she sat in stony\* silence, without looking at me. I passed her a note asking if we could talk, but she





didn't even open it.

When the end-of-day bell rang, Miranda hurried out of class. By the time I grabbed my backpack and ran outside, she was gone.



## Chapter Ten

### PUBLIC SPEAKING IS THE WORST

I tossed and turned in bed that night. Finally I turned my light on. I guess Dad was up getting a glass of water during the night and saw I was awake.

“Is everything OK?” he asked, poking his head into my room. “Wanna talk?”

I nodded. He sat on the side of my bed, and I told him about the presentation: how we had to do it this Friday, and how both Miranda and I were nervous about it.

Dad knows I don’t mind speaking to anyone one-on-one, but it’s always been more difficult for me to speak in front of the whole class. And it’s strange, but when I’m anxious or nervous about stuttering, my stutter gets worse. My whole family knows that. Even the kids in my class and Ms.



Landon know. That's why she looked right at me this afternoon when she offered extra help to anyone who needed it.

In the past, when I had to do something stressful, I'd have some extra sessions with Becky, my speech therapist, to help me prepare. But our presentation was in a few days, and I was sure Becky wouldn't have time to meet with me before then.

"Can you use some of the techniques you already know from Becky?" Dad suggested.

"L-l-l-like *not* trying *not* to stutter," I said, with a grin. "Because wh-wh-wh-when I try not to stutter, I always stutter more!"

I shrugged. "I I I I can try, Dad. I'll d-d-d-do my best. But I'm more worried about Miranda. I w-w-w-want to do the presentation even if I sound bad. But but but but Miranda says she won't do it, period. Sh-sh-sh-she was upset I wanted to talk to her about it. Should I just try to do the presentation alone, for both of us?"

Dad thought. "You could do it all alone. But



before you decide, I think you have to try to talk to Miranda about it again.”

I knew he was right.



“I’ve g-g-g-got an idea, and I want you to please listen,” I told Miranda the next morning. It was recess. I just went up to her and started talking. “I I I I know you said you won’t speak in public. It’s d-d-d-difficult for me, too. But m-m-m-m-m-maybe we can think of a way to make it work. Together.”

I held my breath. She didn’t walk away.

In fact she began talking. Hesitantly, she told me she’d had to present a project in front of her class last year. She only had to read a few sentences. She’d printed them out on cue cards. But after she said a few words, she froze. Completely.

“I was so nervous,” she said. “My hand started shaking. I couldn’t read the cue cards because they were shaking so much. Then I dropped them all!”



Miranda's eyes filled with tears.

“My teacher was really great and helped me pick up the cards. She said I could start again and just talk about my topic, which was music, and not read the cards, if I wanted. But I just couldn't. And some of the kids in the class began laughing....”

She looked down.

I didn't try to argue. “P-p-p-public speaking is the worst,” I said.

Miranda smiled at me. “Yeah, right?”

That's all we said then. But at lunchtime, I asked Miranda to come to the restaurant after school so we could figure out some way to do the presentation together so it wasn't as difficult for either of us.

She didn't answer right away. Then she said no.

*Oh!* I was so disappointed.

Miranda nudged my arm. “Can you come to my place instead?” she asked.

I grinned.





After school, Mom quickly agreed I could go to Miranda's house. Auntie Leah was heading out in the food truck to meet Richard, her helper, at one of their pop-up locations, so she drove me.

We pulled up in front of Miranda's house, and her brothers were practicing in the garage. Miranda was with them, playing drums and singing along with the two boys!

*Miranda?* I couldn't believe it!



## Chapter Eleven

“I’LL BE A DISASTER!”

Miranda waved at Auntie Leah and me, and we listened while the three siblings played two songs. Miranda introduced us to her brothers, Louis and Rico, and Auntie Leah invited the boys to look around inside her food truck.

“Miranda, *you’re* a member of the band, too?” I asked after Auntie Leah had left.

“I’m sorry I didn’t tell you before,” Miranda said. “I was embarrassed, I guess, because...I don’t know why but I’m just...I’m so shy most of the time *except* when I’m playing music or with my family.

“Or when I’m with you, Rayna,” she said. “Those are the only times I really feel like I can be myself. You made me feel that way from the first day of class.”



She and I stood in the driveway while her brothers put away their instruments. I listened while she talked, but I was also thinking hard—problem solving.

“But that’s why I *know* I can’t present our project in front of a big audience,” she went on. “I’ll be a disaster. I’ll probably cry or...”

“H-h-h-hang on, Miranda!” I interrupted.

She paused.

“You f-f-f- feel comfortable when you sing,” I said. “And w-w-w-when I sing I don’t stutter—at all.”

I waited for her to catch on to what I was thinking. And sure enough...

“So we’ll sing our presentation!” she said, her eyes lighting up. “Great idea, Rayna! I help my brothers write lyrics\* for our songs, so I’m sure you and I can turn our food facts into lyrics and then sing them to the class.”

“Yes!” I grinned.

“So, come on!” she said. “We only have a few days to prepare. Let’s get busy!”





It was Friday morning. The other two top projects had been presented. Now it was our turn.

Ms. Landon introduced Miranda and me. “Please welcome the “It’s a Rap” duo!”

Miranda sat down behind one of her drums, which she’d set up earlier in the morning. I opened up the big world map we’d made for our project, the one showing the locations of various foods.

Mom and Dad, Miranda’s parents, and Auntie Leah smiled at us. I felt relaxed, and Miranda started smiling.

Miranda tapped the rim of her drum: *one, two, three*—and we began.

*“Well, we’re both up here to tell you what we know  
’bout foods cooked fast, foods cooked slow—  
foods cooked here, foods cooked there—  
all different foods that come from everywhere!  
We’ll show you all the foods on our map—  
we’ve so much to share in our foodie rap!”*





We kept singing, one verse after another, and Miranda accompanied us on her drum.

All the kids and the parents were bobbing their heads and swaying. Jackie, Emily, Loredana, and Tal got up and started dancing in time to our words.

Miranda and I were actually having fun!



## Chapter Twelve

### RAP WRAP

“Very nice, girls!” said Ms. Landon. “We all enjoyed your rapping and we learned a lot about foods around the world.”

“Woo-hoo!” called out one of the boys in our class.

“We’ve learned lots about food from all three of our presenting pairs,” said Ms. Landon. “Let’s give them all another hand.”

The kids in the other two groups stood up again, and all six of us took big bows, grinning like crazy while everyone clapped.

“Now I’d like to invite everyone outside to enjoy the rest of the Welcome Spring Festival and sample a special foodie treat!”

“What’s this?” Miranda asked me.

I shrugged. “I I I dunno.”



Miranda and I headed to the playground with my parents and Miranda's mom, who were bursting with compliments and congratulations. We didn't have time to ask where Auntie Leah or Miranda's dad had gone when suddenly Miranda grabbed my arm and pointed.

Miranda's brothers were out in the yard with their guitars, the rest of Miranda's drum set, and a sound system all set up.

As Ms. Landon introduced Louis and Rico, Miranda's dad brought Miranda's drum out of the school and placed it with the rest of her set. Miranda's brothers gestured for Miranda to join them.

I gave her a thumbs-up and our classmates began to chant her name, "Miranda! Miranda! Miranda!" Grinning, she sat at her drums. She and her brothers launched into one of their amazing songs. They played and sang two songs together.

My classmates looked astonished\*, like they couldn't believe this was the quiet girl who had been in their classroom every day, the girl they had



just started getting to know.

Then Ms. Landon made another announcement. Auntie Leah was there with her food truck to provide lunch before the afternoon's festivities began. The truck was parked right alongside the yard. Richard opened the window on the truck and Auntie Leah invited everyone to come and eat.

Miranda and I rushed over to give her a big hug.

“You’ve both helped me out so much with my food truck, especially over spring break,” said Auntie Leah. “So to thank you, and in honor of your amazing presentation, I created something special.” She pointed to the chalkboard on the truck. It read:

*Today's Special: Rap Wrap!*

Auntie Leah handed one amazing-looking wrap to me, and one to Miranda. They were filled with grilled peppers, tomatoes, and cheese. Auntie Leah even remembered to put hot sauce on



Miranda's!

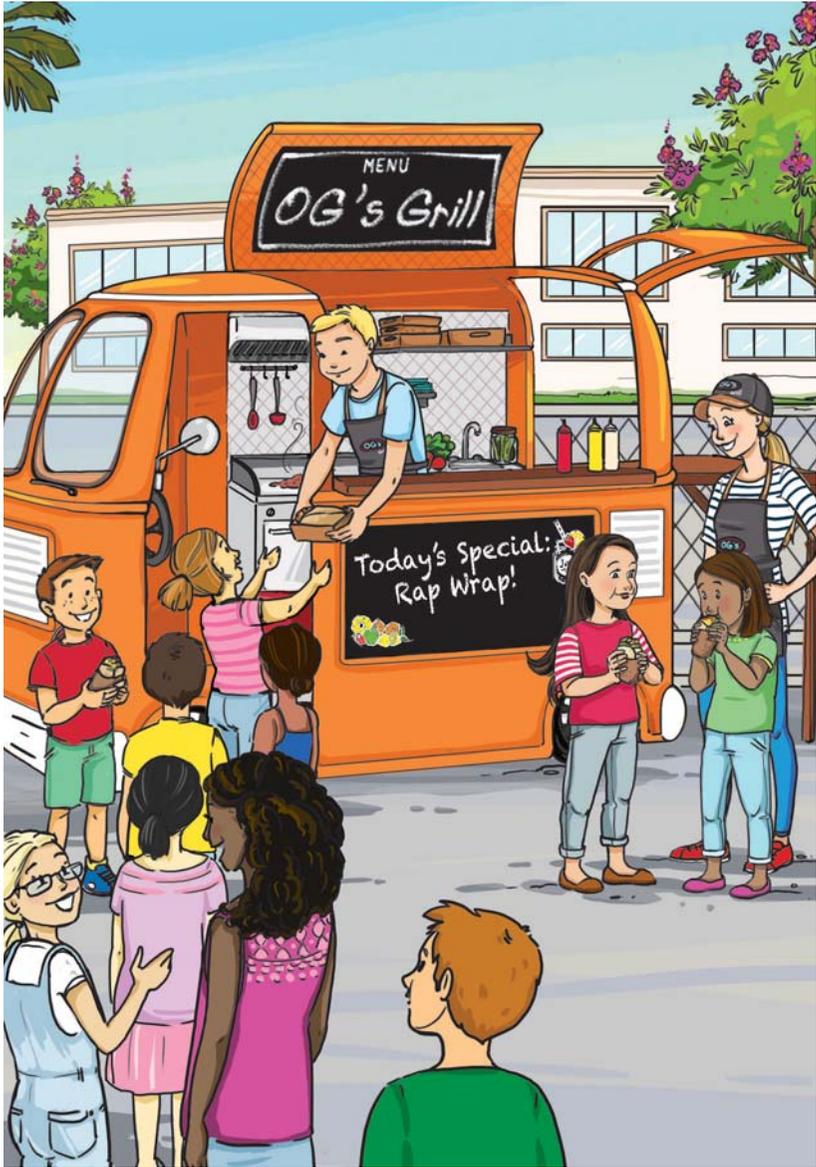
I felt so good. Miranda looked happy, like she was feeling relaxed, not just with me, and her brothers, and her parents, but also with Auntie Leah and this whole crowd of our classmates.

“O-o-o-one, two, three, go!” I said, and at the same time, my friend and I each bit into our honorary “rap” wraps.

“It seemed like the perfect way for me to thank you,” said Auntie Leah.

Even with our mouths full, Miranda and I laughed and nodded. We agreed. Definitely—perfect!





# Glossary

*Many words have more than one meaning. Here are the definitions of words marked with this symbol \* (an asterisk) as they are used in this story.*

**astonished:** *very surprised*

**boardwalk:** *a wooden walkway along a beach*

**bus:** *remove dirty dishes from a table  
in a restaurant*

**Canada geese:** *large grayish-brown wild*

*North American geese that often  
fly together in a “V” shape*

**comfort foods:** *foods that make you feel good*

**crash course:** *a quick but detailed explanation*

**defuse:** *make less serious or tense*

**down payment:** *the first part of a larger payment  
to be paid in full over time*

**enlist:** *to ask for and get help*

**face fell:** *expression suddenly changed to a look  
of unhappiness or disappointment*

**“free as a bird”:** *completely free to do  
whatever you want*

**“going out of [one’s] way”:** *making a special  
effort to do something*



**intolerant:** *unwilling to accept the way someone is*

**kebabs:** *pieces of meat, fish, or veggies grilled  
on thin, sharp sticks called skewers*

**kicked around:** *thought about and discussed*

**kiosks:** *small buildings with open sides from  
which people can sell food or other items*

**lyrics:** *the words of a song*

**“make a big splash”:** *create excitement  
and attract attention*

**“make ends meet”:** *earn enough money to  
live without having to borrow money*

**migrate:** *move from one place to another,  
especially when the season changes*

**obsession:** *something you spend lots of  
time thinking about*

**one-on-one sessions:** *meetings between  
two people*

**panicky:** *suddenly full of fear*

**peak time:** *a time of day when many people  
use the same service*

**pensive:** *thoughtful*

**permit:** *an official paper that gives someone  
permission to do a certain activity*



**pitás:** *thin flat breads that can be split open into a pocket to hold ingredients*

**quinoa:** *a plant with seeds that can be eaten, grown in the Andes mountains in South America*

**quirks:** *unusual or odd habits*

**regulars:** *customers who visit the same restaurant often*

**scoured:** *searched thoroughly*

**shrugged:** *raised shoulders slightly to show you're not sure or you don't care very much*

**social media:** *websites and cell phone applications that let people share information*

**speech therapist:** *a specially trained person who helps people manage their speech and language problems*

**stony:** *showing no feelings*

**stormed away:** *left angrily*

**strategies:** *action plans to achieve a goal*

**stunned:** *so shocked you can't react*

**techniques:** *special ways to do a certain task or activity*

**vegan:** *made without using any animal products*





# Foodie Fun Crossword Puzzle

Let's get cooking at the Neighborly Grill and OG's Grill food truck! Make copies of this page and use the clues to solve the puzzle. The answers are on the next-to-last page (no peeking!).

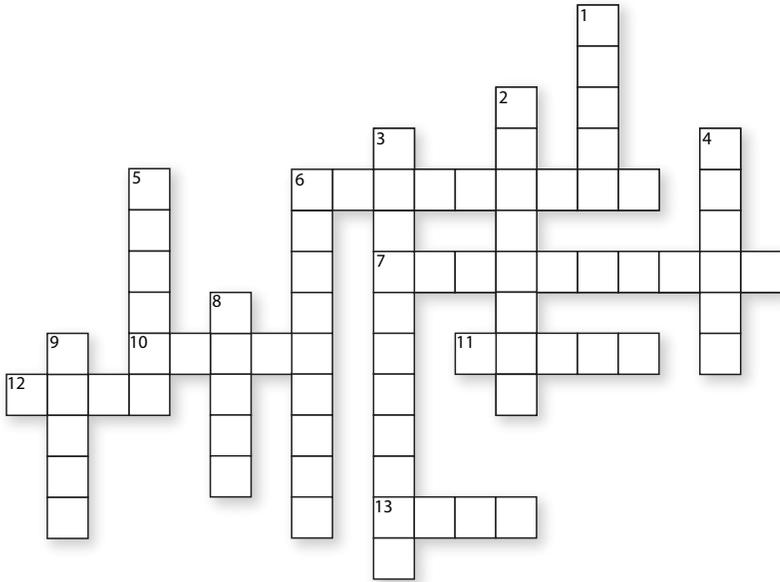
## Across

6. Something such as a spice or hot sauce that adds extra flavor to food
7. A place where people enjoy going out to eat, like the Neighborly Grill
10. One of the fresh smoothies at OG's Grill is made from this yellowish-red tropical fruit
11. Grilled and served on sharp sticks called skewers, this dish can be made with pieces of fish, meat, and veggies
12. Auntie Leah created a special version of this type of sandwich in honor of Rayna and Miranda
13. A folded, fried tortilla filled with different ingredients

## Down

1. Dishes that contain no meat or animal products
2. Grilled peppers, cheese—and these—filled the amazing sandwich that Auntie Leah served at Rayna's school
3. Any foods combined with others in a recipe
4. Auntie Leah's meatless burger is made using these seeds
5. The Mediterranean kebabs served at OG's Grill food truck include this shellfish
6. People who lined up at the food truck to order food
8. Something yummy that Rayna's parents made for Miranda and Rayna when they worked on their project at the Neighborly Grill
9. Rayna's dad cooks fish and meat over a fire on this metal frame







## The Power of a Girl

For every *Our Generation*<sup>®</sup> product you buy, a portion of sales goes to WE Charity's Power of a Girl Initiative to help provide girls in developing countries an education—the most powerful tool in the world for escaping poverty.

Did you know that out of the millions of children who aren't in school, 70% of them are girls? In developing communities around the world, many girls can't go to school. Usually it's because there's no school available or because their responsibilities to family (farming, earning an income, walking hours each day for water) prevent it.

WE Charity has had incredible success in its first 20 years. Together, we've built more than 1,000 school rooms, empowering more than 200,000 children with an education. As WE Charity continues to deepen its programming, it's focusing on creating sustainable communities through its holistic development model built on the five Pillars of Impact: Education, Water, Health, Food and Opportunity.

The most incredible part about this model is that roughly a quarter of WE Charity's funding comes from kids just like you, who have lemonade stands, bake sales, penny drives, walkathons and more.

Just by buying an *Our Generation* product you have helped change the world, and you are powerful (beyond belief!) to help even more.

If you want to find out more, visit:  
[www.ogdolls.com/we-charity](http://www.ogdolls.com/we-charity)



*Together we change the world.*

WE Charity provided the factual information pertaining to their organization.  
WE Charity is a 501c3 organization.



this is **OUR** story®



We are an extraordinary generation of girls.  
And have we got a story to tell.

*Our Generation*® is unlike any that has come before. We're helping our families learn to recycle, holding bake sales to support charities, and holding penny drives to build homes for orphaned children in Haiti. We're helping our little sisters learn to read and even making sure the new kid at school has a place to sit in the cafeteria.

All that and we still find time to play hopscotch and hockey. To climb trees, do cartwheels all the way down the block and laugh with our friends until milk comes out of our noses. You know, to be kids.

Will we have a big impact on the world? We already have. What's ahead for us? What's ahead for the world? We have no idea. We're too busy grabbing and holding on to the joy that is today.

Yep. This is our time. This is our story.

[www.ogdolls.com](http://www.ogdolls.com)

Answers to the Foodie Fun Crossword Puzzle:

**Across**

6. condiment 7. restaurant 10. mango 11. kebab 12. wrap 13. taco

**Down**

1. vegan 2. tomatoes 3. ingredients 4. quinoa 5. shrimp 6. customers 8. snack 9. grill



### *About the Author*

*Susan Hughes is an award-winning writer of more than 30 children's books, including picture books, chapter books, young adult novels, nonfiction books for all ages, and even a graphic nonfiction book. Susan is also a freelance editor who works with educational publishers to develop student books and teacher materials for a variety of grade levels. In addition, she helps coach and guide other writers in revising and polishing their own manuscripts.*

### *About the Illustrator*

*Passionate about drawing from an early age, Géraldine Charette decided to pursue her studies in computer multimedia in order to further develop her style and technique. Her favorite themes to explore in her illustrations are fashion and urban life. In her free time, Géraldine loves to paint and travel. She is passionate about horses and loves spending time at the stable. It's where she feels most at peace and gives her time to think and fuel her creativity.*



*The Foodie Friends Project became the book that you are holding in your hands with the assistance of the talented people at Maison Battat Inc., including Joe Battat, Dany Battat, Sandy Jacinto, Loredana Ramacieri, Laurie Gaudreau-Levesque, Ananda Guarany, Jenny Gambino, Natalie Cohen, Arlee Stewart, Karen Erlichman, Zeynep Yasar, and Pamela Shrimpton.*





this is OUR story®

## The Foodie Friends Project

When their fourth-grade teacher assigns a class project about food, Rayna™ and the new girl, shy Miranda, buddy up to work on it. Because Rayna stutters, and is unsure how Miranda will react, she talks to Miranda about it, just to “g-g-get it out of the way.”

The girls regularly meet up at Rayna’s family’s restaurant to brainstorm and soon Miranda seems comfortable there—especially as Rayna’s parents supply yummy snacks! But they just can’t come up with a good idea—until an unexpected visitor “wheels in” with her food truck, and their plans for the food project really begin to sizzle!

But why won’t Miranda ever invite Rayna over to her house to work on the project? What’s Miranda doing when she says she’s too busy to meet up or help with the food truck over spring break—and why won’t she tell Rayna?

It’s impossible to separate **Our Generation**® characters from the generation of girls who read about and play with them, for they are one and the same.

They’re changing the world by making their households greener. They’re baking cupcakes to help charities. They’re writing in their journals, practicing for recitals, doing cartwheels down the block and giggling with their friends until they can hardly breathe. **Our Generation** is about girls growing up together. “This is our story” reflects the community of these amazing girls as they laugh, learn and create the narrative of their own generation.

Ages 7 and up

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