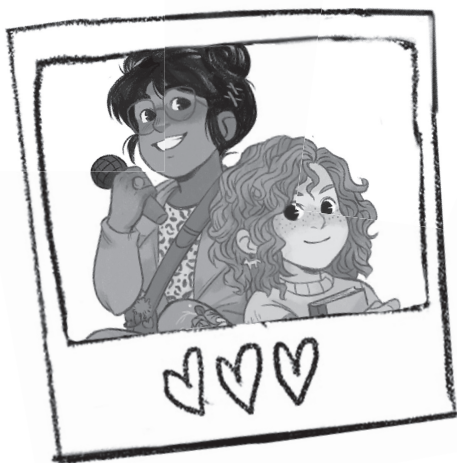


# SARAI

IN THE SPOTLIGHT!



SARAI GONZALEZ  
AND  
MONICA BROWN

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ISBN 978-1-338-23669-9

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

18 19 20 21 22

Printed in the U.S.A.

40

First printing 2018

Book design by Carolyn Bull



## CHAPTER I

# ALARM BUNNY

I sneak out of my room, careful not to make noise. I love it when I'm the first one up. I grab my stuffed bunny and walk across the hall to my sisters' room. I get down on all fours and crawl toward the bed so Lucía can't see me, and I hold the bunny up over my head and near Lucía's ear.

"Luuuuuuuuuuuuuuucía," I say in my bunny voice, "alarm bunny says it's time to WAKE UP!" I yell the last part, and then I tickle her. She yells, jumps up out of bed, and climbs into Josie's bed and pulls the covers over her head for protection.



I tickle both my sisters until I am sure they are awake. We make so much noise, so I know my parents must be awake now too.

“You are so silly, Sarai!” my sister Josie signs and says. Josie is deaf. She has special implants that help her hear sounds. She uses a combination of signs and words to communicate. Lucía and Josie start jumping from bed to bed, which is one of their favorite games. I don’t even try to stop them because when I do, Lucía says “It’s not your job to boss us,” and then she jumps even higher.

I go to my room to get dressed for the day. I feel sparkly, so I put on my favorite jeans and a pink shirt that says “Girls Rock!” in glittery letters. I lace up my pink high-tops and grab my purple jacket for later.

“Come and eat, girls!” my dad says, poking his head into our rooms. “We’ve got pizza and ice cream for breakfast!”



“What?” I say, and race out of my room.

“Just kidding!” he says. My dad thinks he’s pretty funny.

There’s toast on the table and Mom is frying eggs, and it feels like the start of a good week.



Dad and Josie leave early to make the long drive to her school. It’s a school for deaf and hearing-impaired children. They spend a long time in the car each way, but it’s worth it because Dad says Josie deserves the best education in the world—that we all do. The teachers at Josie’s school sign, speak and demonstrate in action what they teach. Lucía and I go to Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary, the public school nearby. Martin Luther King, Jr. is a hero who fought for equal rights for us all.

Mom and Dad say we should all be like Dr. King and stand for justice. After all, we are the Gonzalez five—Dad, Mom, Josie, Lucía, and me.

“I want you girls to stand up for yourselves,” Mom always says, and I agree. Right when mom leaves for her job, Lucía and I leave to walk a block to the bus stop.

“Have a great day!” Mom always says before she leaves.

“You too!” I call back.



As soon as Lucía and I get to the bus stop, kids start talking to her. “Hi, Lucía!” they say, and “How are you?” and “Will you sit next to me on the bus?” She’s super popular and has a lot of friends. I don’t have as many, so it’s kind of nice that Lucía always wants to sit next to me on the bus.



Lucía has a big imagination. That’s a fact. Another fact is that she has a little bit of a temper. One year, for example, we didn’t get a real Christmas tree. We just had a little plastic one because our apartment was so small. Lucía got so mad that she decided to draw a giant tree on the wall. She signed her name, Lucía G., right next to it. And she STILL tried to say, “Josie did it!” Whenever anyone tries to get Lucía to do something she doesn’t want to do, she says, “You got to be kidding me!” even though we usually aren’t.





When we get to school, Lucía goes off to the first-grade class and I head to my fourth-grade homeroom. Josie is in the second grade at her school.



I'm getting settled at my desk, when my teacher, Ms. Moro, says, "Sarai, come up to my desk for a minute. There's something I'd like to share with you." She sounds serious, and that makes me a little anxious, even though I know I haven't done anything wrong.

"Sarai," Ms. Moro says. "I have some unfortunate news. It looks like Isa Lopez won't be coming back to Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary."



“What?” I say. “That’s impossible. She’s my super best friend, and she would have told me. Is she okay?”

“She’s fine. I know it’s surprising, but I have a letter for you here from Isa. Isa’s father’s work transferred him out of state, and everything happened in a rush, so she didn’t get to say goodbye to her school friends.” Ms. Moro smiles. “I know it seems terrible, Sarai, but you are an amazing girl, and there are lots of new friends to make. In fact, a brand-new student just enrolled. She’ll be here tomorrow.”

*I don't care about new students or new friends, I think. I want Isa, my old and best friend. Some of the girls in my class are kind of mean, to be honest, and it's always been Isa and me against the world—or at least in our own world. Isa and I have so much in common. We both like pink and sparkles, and singing, dancing, and acting,*

