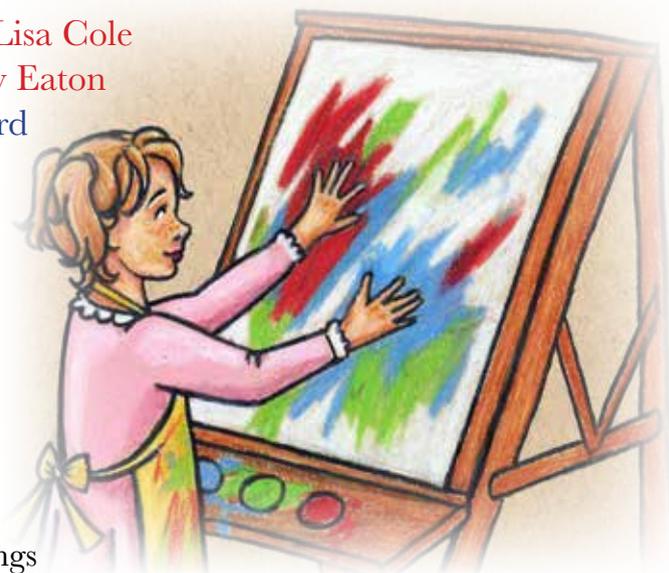


WHILE *Mommy* WAS FAST ASLEEP



Story by Lisa Cole ♥ Illustrations by Joy Eaton

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Edited by John Mark Crawford



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Dedication

—For Mom and Dad who shaped my past.
For Kevin, Jack, Maggie, Caleb and Juli who shaped my present.
And M.A.B. who shaped my future.

L.C.



—For Momma, who taught
me how to teach my Charlotte
about gratitude, simplicity,
and above all, love.

For all you were, I am
thankful.

J.E.



AUTHOR'S NOTE

An estimated 1.3 billion people live with vision impairment worldwide. Roughly 36 million of those are completely blind. The younger sister in this story is one of them.



For resources, teaching guides and list of nonprofits who help families realize visionless never means hopeless, visit our website.

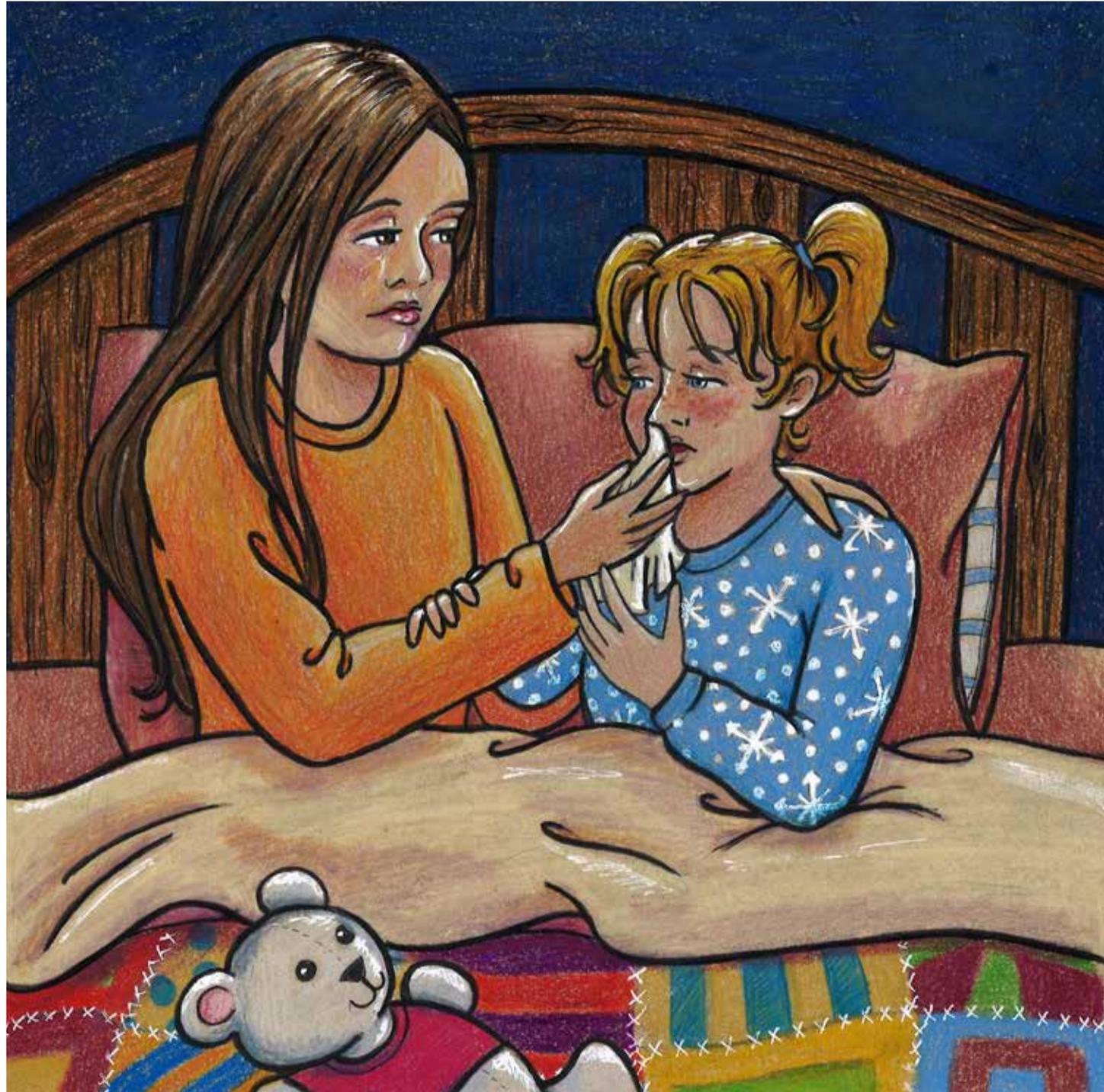
www.WhileMommyWasFastAsleep.com





One crisp winter night, beneath a full moon, whispers of sisters drift up from their room. Two little girls, one bunk bed, and from the bottom the younger one said, “My tummy aches and so does my head. But Mommy is fast asleep.”

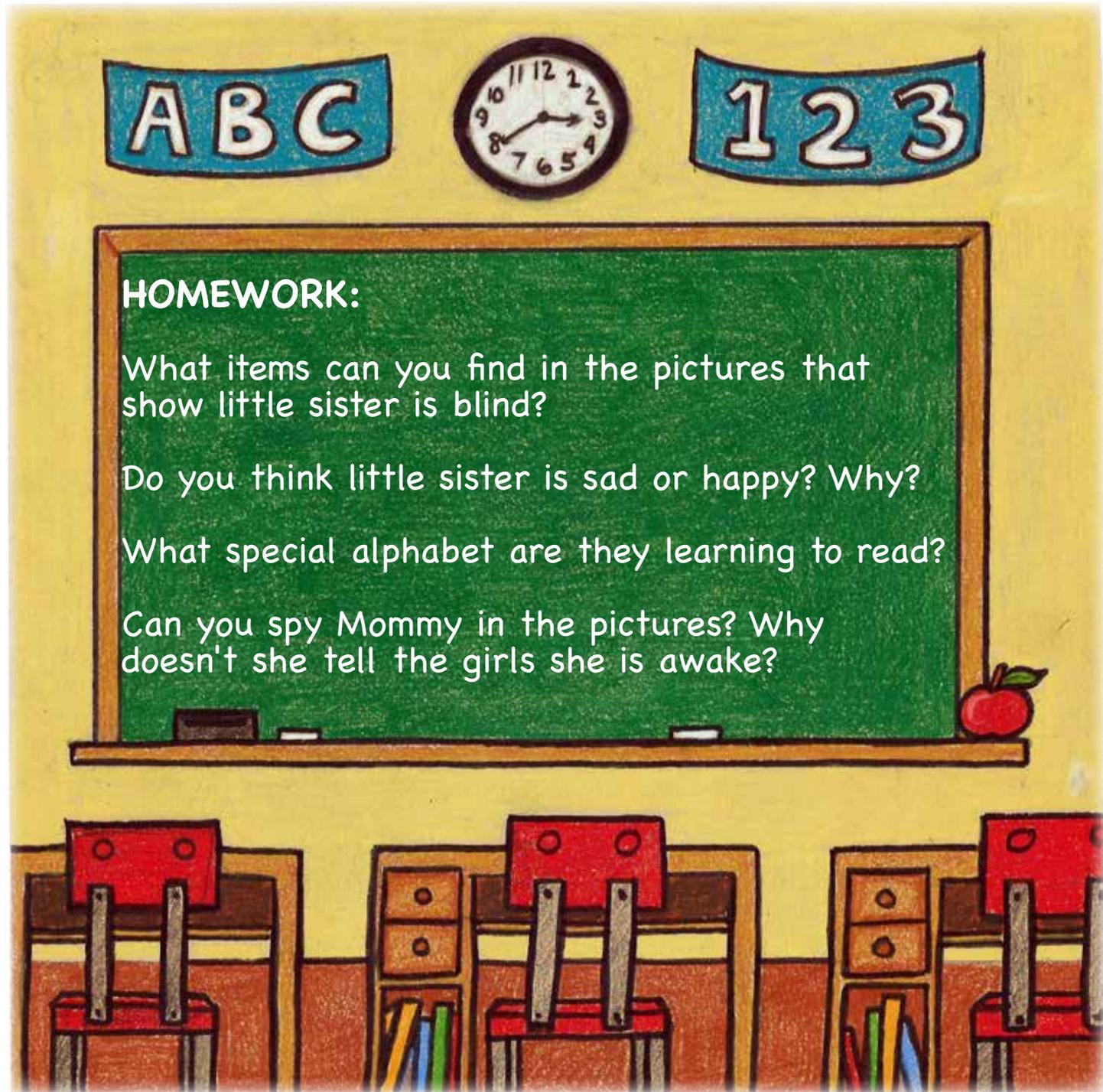
The elder peeked down from the bunk bed above at a face full of sadness, a face needing love. “You’ll be okay. Come sleep up here.” She reached out her hand to calm any fear. “I’ll cuddle you tight, my sister dear, while Mommy is fast asleep.”



Under the quilt they curled side by side, the younger one wiggling, eyes open wide. She coughed, she sneezed, she sniffled and shook until her little toe nudged her favorite book. “Read me a story down there in your nook, since Mommy is fast asleep?”

“Okay, but just one, for Mommy might hear.” Helping her down, she whispered so clear, “I’ll read to you now, my sister dear, while Mommy is fast asleep.”

Soft and gentle, they crept to their fort, wrapped in their blankets like royals at court. They shared poems and fables and fun fairy tales of knights and of kingdoms with



ABOUT THE BOOK

Download a Free Teacher's Guide at
WhileMommyWasFastAsleep.com

In our book, the younger sister was born blind. Yet, that doesn't stop her from using other senses to live a full life. In our research on books portraying people with visual challenges, lack of sight, rather than the person, was central to each plot. Characters without sight were all trying to prove they belonged in a vision-based world. Ms. Eaton and I longed to create an inclusive narrative where our characters were loved simply for who they are, rather than singled out for their perceived differences. In *While Mommy Was Fast Asleep*, the sisters' simple interactions and deep love for one another pops thanks to their parents' careful attention to the environment in which they live.

As a subplot, the tired mother has spent the past few years fearing that, despite her best efforts, she cannot handle the challenges of raising multiple children in a modern world. Having a child who must embrace life differently has weakened her coping skills. Ms. Eaton's adept ability at telling stories through art paints those first crucial moments in which Mommy's fears subside, for in observing her girls' maturing bond, she realizes everything is going to be ok.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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In Autumn of 1988, Jack and Priscilla Buckelew took their 5-year-old daughter Lisa to the optometrist after a failed vision screening at school caused alarm. For the next 16 years, severe nearsightedness, astigmatism and thick glasses were Lisa's companions until LASIK surgery on both eyes at age 22 allowed her finally see the big clock on the wall across the room without help.

Around the same time, Jack was diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa, a rare genetic disorder that destroys cells in the retina—the light sensitive tissue lining the back of the eye. As the years passed, he lost the ability to drive at night, see in low light conditions, or use his peripheral vision. Later, Priscilla was diagnosed with macular degeneration, which is when the central portion of the retina (the macula) deteriorates. This is the leading cause of vision loss, and is incurable. Lisa's oldest son, also named Jack, experienced sudden vision deterioration at age 10, leading to full time glasses.

Lisa Cole is a skilled writer and independent publisher who has dedicated her life to children, education and the nonprofit world. She lives in Cayce, South Carolina, with her husband, four children, brindle pitt and beagle Betty White.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

www.ArtWorkbyJoy.com | SOCIAL: @artworkbyjoy

Each morning, artist Joy Eaton wakes up and immediately dons her glasses. She wears them all day to help her see the world, paint beautiful pictures, and homeschool her daughters. Her glasses (and contacts!) are also the last thing she removes at night before going to sleep. She has worn corrective lenses full time since 2nd grade, and does not remember life without them. Like her author cousin Lisa, she too has astigmatism and nearsightedness. It is so severe, however, that she is not a candidate for LASIK eye surgery. Her daughter Charlotte also uses glasses to help her better navigate the world around her.

Olin Branham, Joy's late father, also developed vision challenges later in life. He was diagnosed with both diabetic retinopathy and macular degeneration. Joy's late mother Leola, younger sister to Lisa's mama, adapted to dim lighting which allowed her husband Olin to function well in the safety of their home. Despite life's ups and downs, Olin and Leola built a loving home for their four children during their 45 year marriage before passing away within a few years of each other.

Today, Joy creates art and life in the thriving creative community of eastern Oklahoma where she grew up. She credits her husband Randy and children for her daily inspiration.

