

Foreword

On the evening of December 14, 2012, my husband and I were faced with the unimaginable task of telling our older daughters of our family's loss. Our precious daughter and their little sister, Josephine, had perished in the tragedy at her school, Sandy Hook Elementary.

Though a mother and former elementary school teacher, I grasped for words that could explain the events of that morning...but there were no words.

What I did manage to say was that I knew our Joey was in heaven and we would find a way to carry on together. That we loved them, and so did she, that we would never allow her sparkling personality and loving spirit to be lost in this tragedy.

We came together with family, friends, neighbors, and our community to defy this tragedy with our love.

In the weeks following, we sent our daughters back to school, confident in the love and support they would receive in our community. I volunteered to stay. I wanted to deliver a message: that we were meant to carry on together. And so we began our journey.

Julia Cook's *Ant Hill Disaster* honors this journey out of loss and into hope. She lights the path for the youngest of readers with words, colors, and a familiar setting that young children understand and need. Her adorable characters model team work, empathy, and compassion in a child-friendly story that may translate to a tragic event in their own community or another, man-made or natural.

Ant Hill Disaster is a message of hope and love that will touch and inspire young children and the adults who love them.

Michele Gay

Mother of Josephine Gay, Co-Founder of Safe and Sound: A Sandy Hook Initiative



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It's almost time for school,
but I don't want to go.

I'm afraid.

I go to the school
up on the hill.

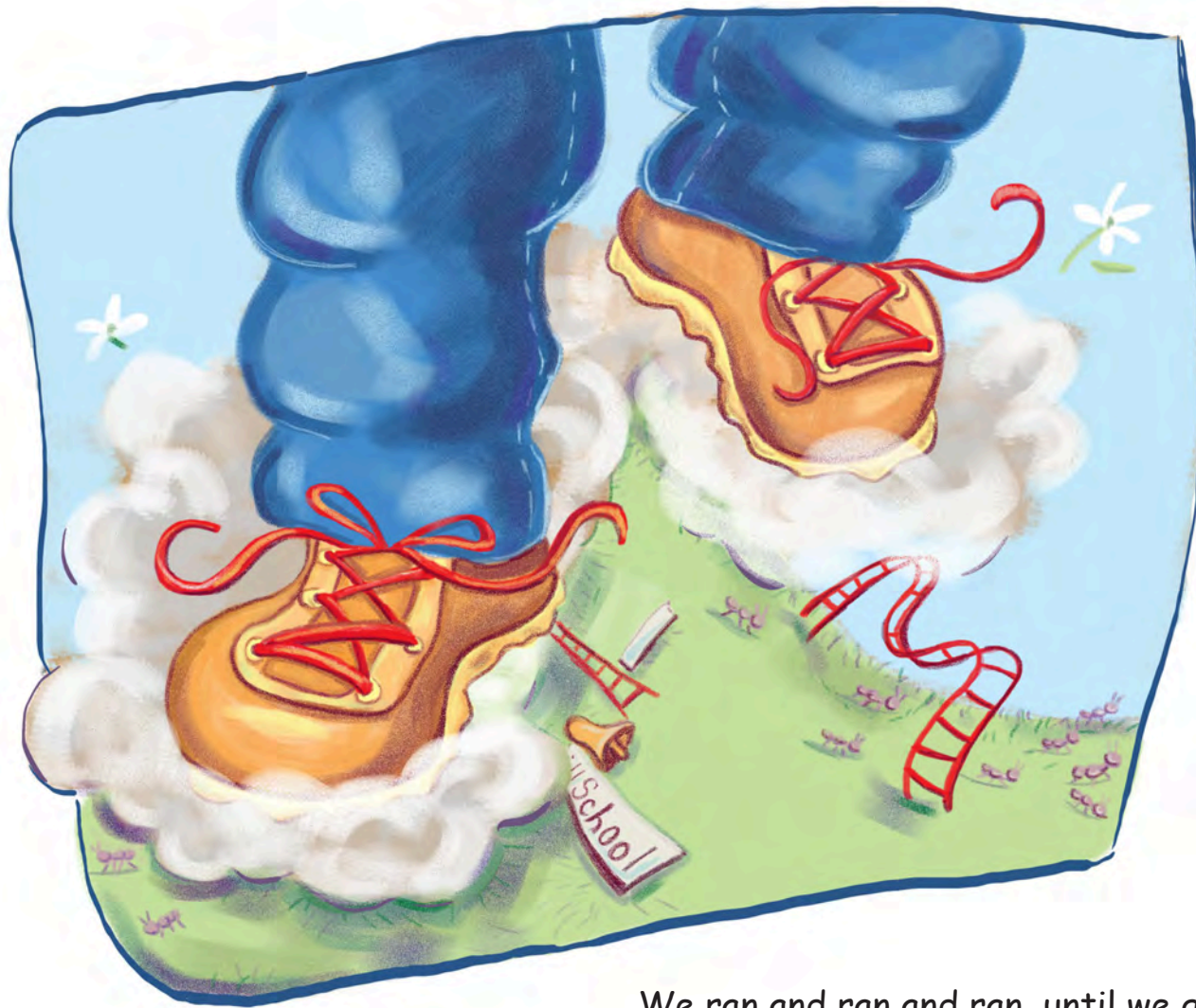
It's for ants.



That's why they call it,
"The Ant Hill School."

But now it's ruined.

A few weeks ago, a human wearing waffle stomper boots stomped all over the Ant Hill School until he made it flat. It was a disaster!



We ran and ran and ran, until we got to the great big tree that's two blocks away, and then we stopped.

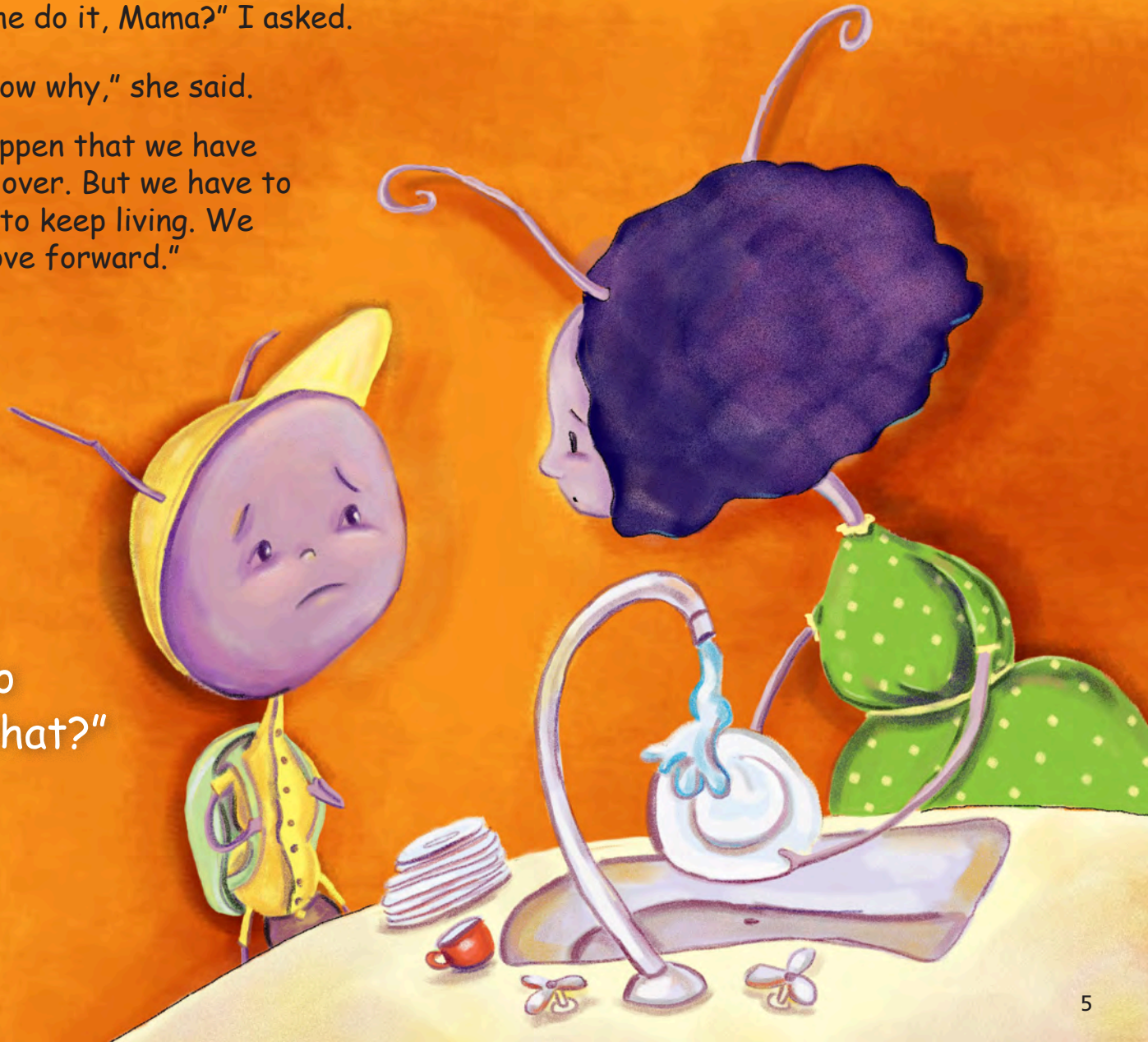
Now everything has changed.

"Why did he do it, Mama?" I asked.

"I don't know why," she said.

"Things happen that we have no control over. But we have to find a way to keep living. We have to move forward."

"How do we do that?"



"We breathe in and breathe out, and hold onto each other.
We shed a lot of tears, and we love one another."



"We all come together as a strong team of **ONE**,
and then we rebuild, and get things done!"



"I just can't go today, Mama. I'm too scared!"

"I know how you feel. I'm scared too. But you are safe now, and you need to go."

After school, I will be right outside the door waiting for you, just like always.
Then, we can spend some special time together, just you and me! Maybe we can
even go to the park!"

"What if it happens again?" I asked.

"Everyone is working together very hard to keep that from happening.
We are **STRONG** when we all work together."



"How strong?"

"VERY, VERY STRONG!"