

**To my little MVP and all of those who  
felt like they don't belong, may this  
book help you realize you do!**

**You Really, Truly Do Belong!**

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**ISBN: 979-8-9864674-0-5**

**Library of Congress Control Number: 2022911896 (print)**

**First Edition 2022**

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YOU REALLY,  
TRULY DO  
BELONG!



Written by  
Gina Casazza

Illustrated by  
Lia Ampleeva

When I arrived to this world,  
Everything was one big whirl.  
So many places, so many faces,  
And, oh, so very many races.















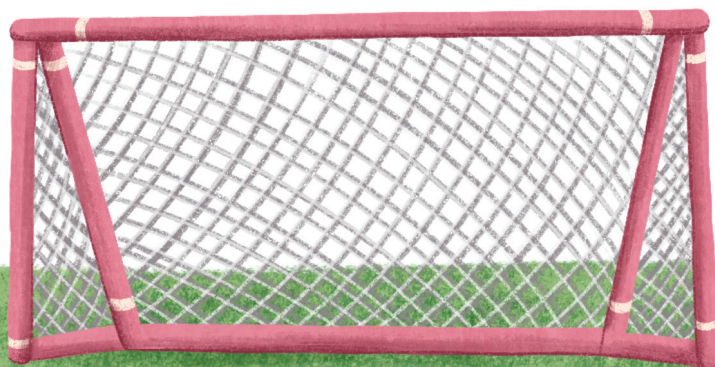
**Where should I go exploring first?  
I was so excited, I could burst.  
This world was so big and vast.  
I couldn't wait to find friends fast.**



The first group that I came across  
Was outside, playing lacrosse.  
I'd never played that game before,  
And I didn't want to ruin the score.







Since I couldn't play along,  
I felt like I did not belong.  
I walked up the hill and around the bend,  
Hoping to find some different friends.



The next group that I landed on  
Was playing outside on the lawn,  
Dancing and singing with each other,  
One song after another.





I couldn't dance or sing a song.  
Another place I didn't belong.  
So I continued on my way,  
Hoping I'd find a place to play.





The next group that I found  
Was lifting rocks off the ground.







**This group was so strong and tough,  
It made me feel not good enough.**



I kept on chugging right along,  
Hoping to find a place I belong.  
After a little bit of walking,  
I found a new group of people talking.





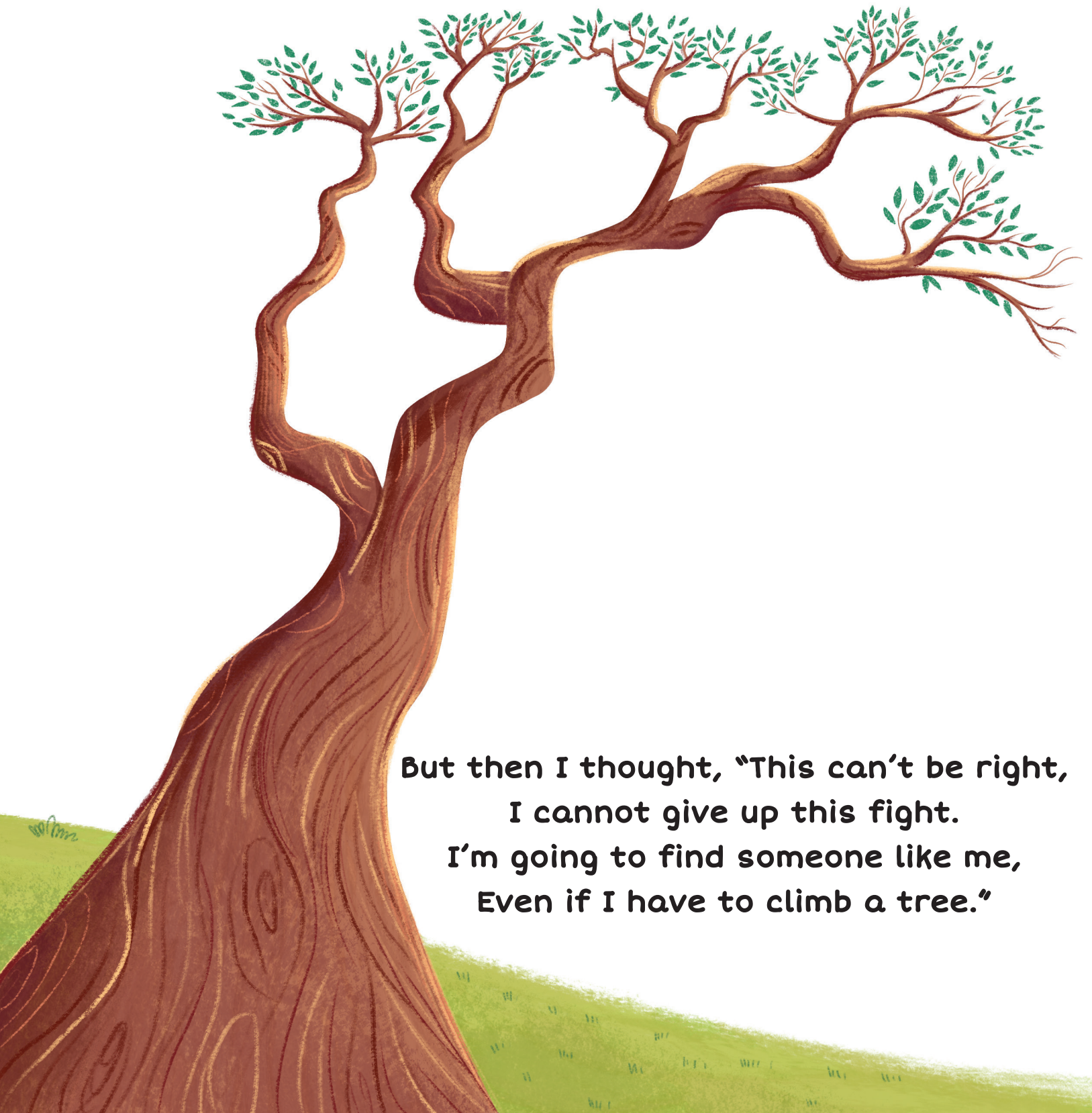
This group had to be the one.  
They were having so much fun.  
They were building a racing car.  
I could tell they were really smart.





I was afraid that I'd look dumb,  
And that a place would never come  
Where I would feel like I belong,  
And so I just kept moving on.

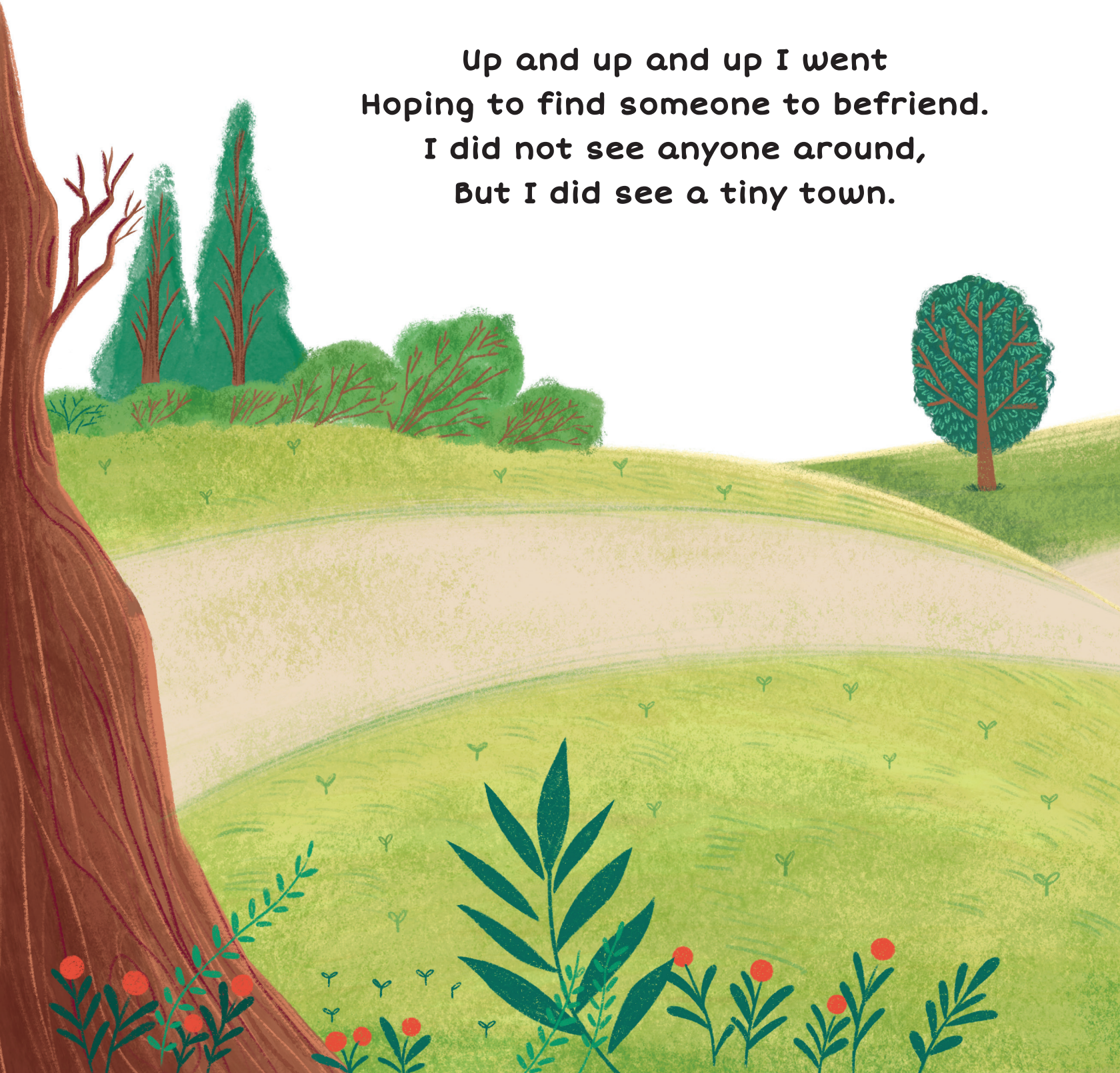




**But then I thought, "This can't be right,  
I cannot give up this fight.  
I'm going to find someone like me,  
Even if I have to climb a tree."**



Up and up and up I went  
Hoping to find someone to befriend.  
I did not see anyone around,  
But I did see a tiny town.





I ran and ran to the town square,  
Hoping to find people there.  
There was not a single person in sight.  
Things were not looking bright.





I released a great big sigh  
And tried really hard not to cry.  
I closed my eyes and made a wish.  
At this point, I would have taken a fish.





But then a voice said,

Come along...

I hoped it would take me where I belonged.  
I followed the voice through the town,  
And I couldn't believe what I found.



The voice led me to a stage.  
I was a little nervous, it felt so strange.  
Whoever was out there, I couldn't see,  
But suddenly a spotlight came on me.





“Is anybody there?” I asked.  
The crowd responded, “You made it at last!”  
Who were these voices, I had no clue,  
But my curiosity grew.





I moved in to get a better look.  
My hands trembled and my knees shook.  
What a magnificent and happy sight.  
I wasn't sure if this could be right.







It was all the people I had met,  
Telling me something I would never forget.  
"You were so fast to run away,  
We never got a chance to say..."



**We really want to be your friend,  
If you would just come back again.**



**We've been trying to tell you all along,  
You really, truly do belong!"**



For the first time since I'd come here,  
I didn't want to disappear.  
My heart filled up with all their love,  
As everybody gave me hugs.






It didn't matter if I could play lacrosse  
Or dance or sing or toss a rock.  
It didn't matter if I could build a racing car.  
What mattered was what's in my heart.







It all came down to one belief  
That I'm now ready to put to sleep.  
That there was not a place for me  
To be the person I wanted to be.



**The new belief for which I've longed  
Is that I really, truly do belong!**







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### **About the Author:**

Gina Casazza is a first-time children's author. She got the idea to write this book during a time in her life when she was conquering her own belief that she didn't belong in the world.

Gina loves using a variety of outlets to express her creativity. She enjoys taking chances, pushing boundaries, and going through the uncomfortable.

Gina has trained with a Navy SEAL, paid to be kidnapped, conquered her fear of snakes, and worked for Ralph Macchio and Penny Marshall. She lost all hearing in her left ear, was told she would never get it back, and proved them wrong.

Gina is also a stand-up comic, actress, writer, director, business owner.



### **About the Illustrator:**

Lia Ampleeva is a children's book illustrator. Since childhood, Lia has been drawing and could not even imagine that ordinary children's entertainment would grow into her dream profession.

In her illustrations, Lia tries to preserve the feeling of handmade, using brushes and textures that imitate traditional materials.

She likes to create interesting characters and convey their unique personality.

Lia loves to create books that are full of magic, nature, humor, warmth and adventure.