

LEVELED BOOK • N

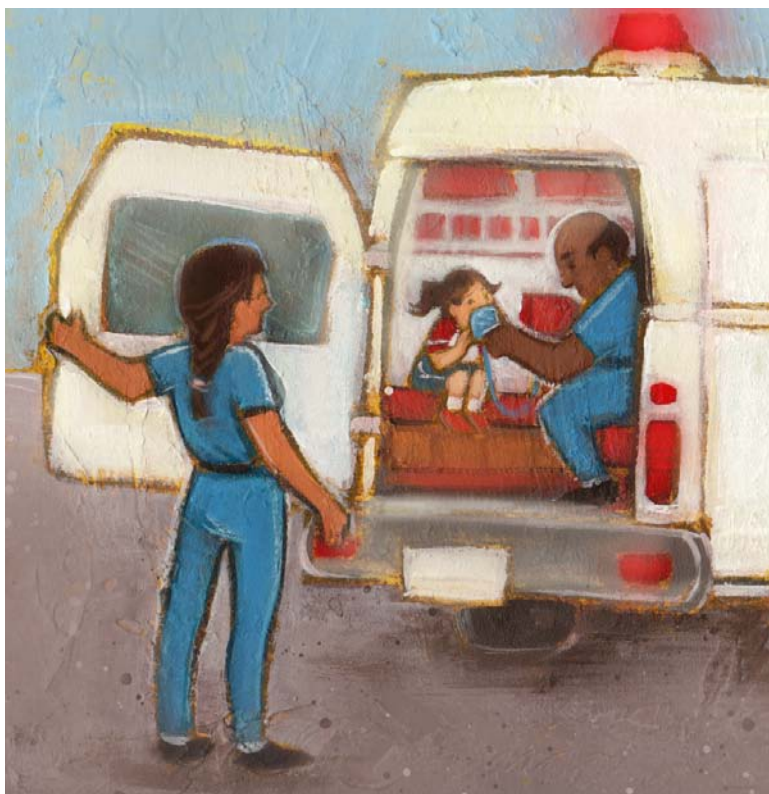
The Day I Couldn't Breathe



Written by Ursula Feversham
Illustrated by Rebecca Stuhff

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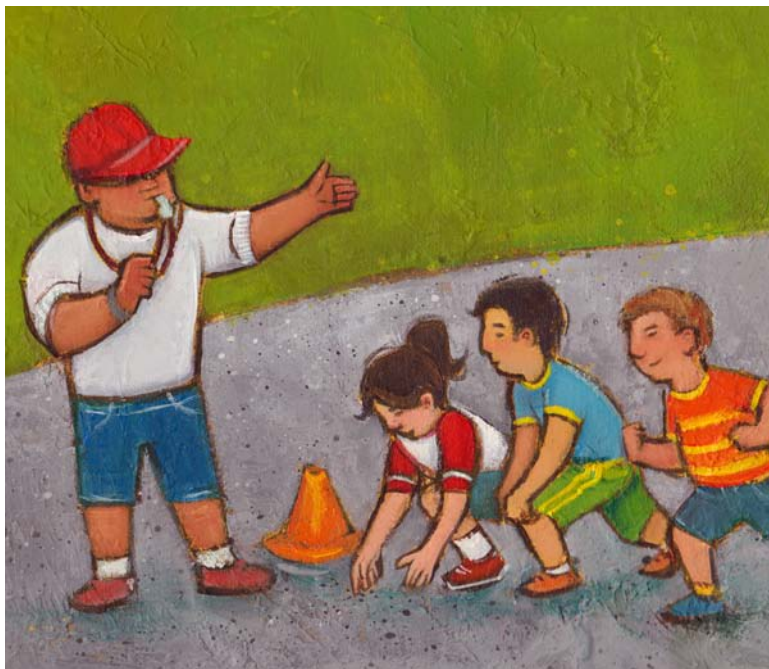
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Running the Mile

It was a warm day, and the class was outside for the yearly fitness tests. It was time to run the mile. This year, I was going to be first. I wanted that big blue ribbon and a letter from the president. We all stood at the starting line, stretching and getting ready.



“On your mark! Get set!” Mr. Markel, the gym teacher, called. We all leaned forward, ready to take off.

Mr. Markel blew the whistle.

I flew off the line. My legs felt strong and quick, and my lungs were full. After the first lap, I was in the lead and felt good. I really had a chance this year—I could win it all!



The Attack

Halfway through the second lap, I tried to take a deep breath—and it hurt.

No, not now! I thought. *I can't have an **asthma** attack today!* I tried to take another breath. It felt as if something huge was sitting on my chest. I stopped running and slowly crossed the field.



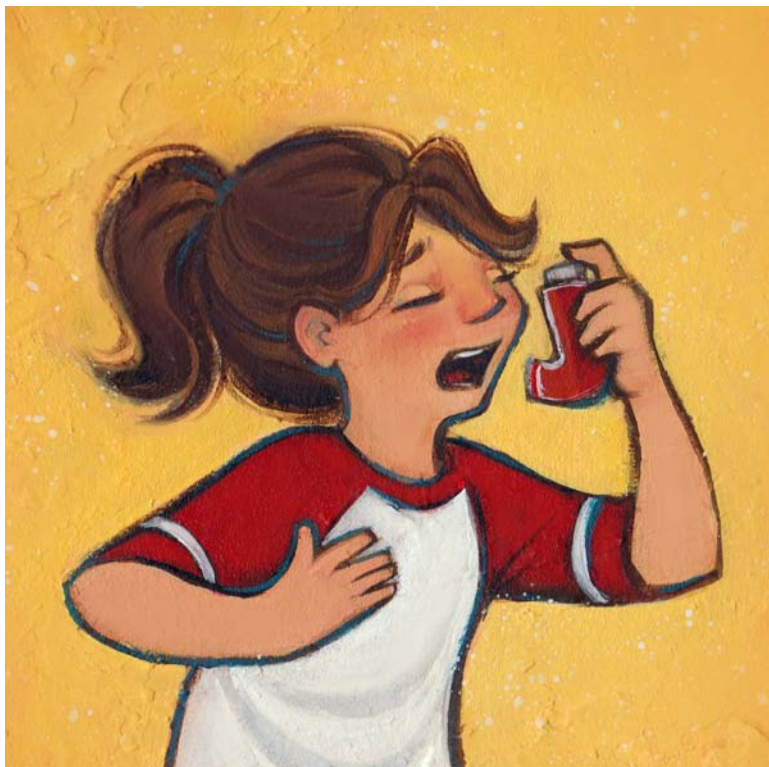
Mr. Markel ran to meet me. I was starting to **wheeze**.

“You’re going to be okay. Just stay calm, and we’ll get you to the nurse’s office,” Mr. Markel said. He asked my friend Lauren to walk with me.



Nurse Marge

It felt like a long walk. I was wheezing and gasping with every step. Knowing that the nurse had my **inhaler** kept me moving. If I could just make it there, I'd be fine.



The nurse, Mrs. Marge, jumped up from her desk. She opened a wide drawer, pulled out an inhaler, read my name, and handed it to me.

I shook it, squeezed, and inhaled. Very little medicine came out—not enough. I tried it again. My inhaler was empty!



I **panicked**. Panic was the worst thing I could do. My breathing became quicker, but I wasn't getting any more air. The room began to spin.

Mrs. Marge called an ambulance. Then she joined Lauren in trying to calm me down. It helped—a little.



Riding in the Ambulance

The **paramedics** showed up and helped me to the ambulance. They had me put a plastic mask over my mouth and told me to breathe deeply. They said it was medicine, but it tasted bad. It helped, though. The paramedics kept checking me over.

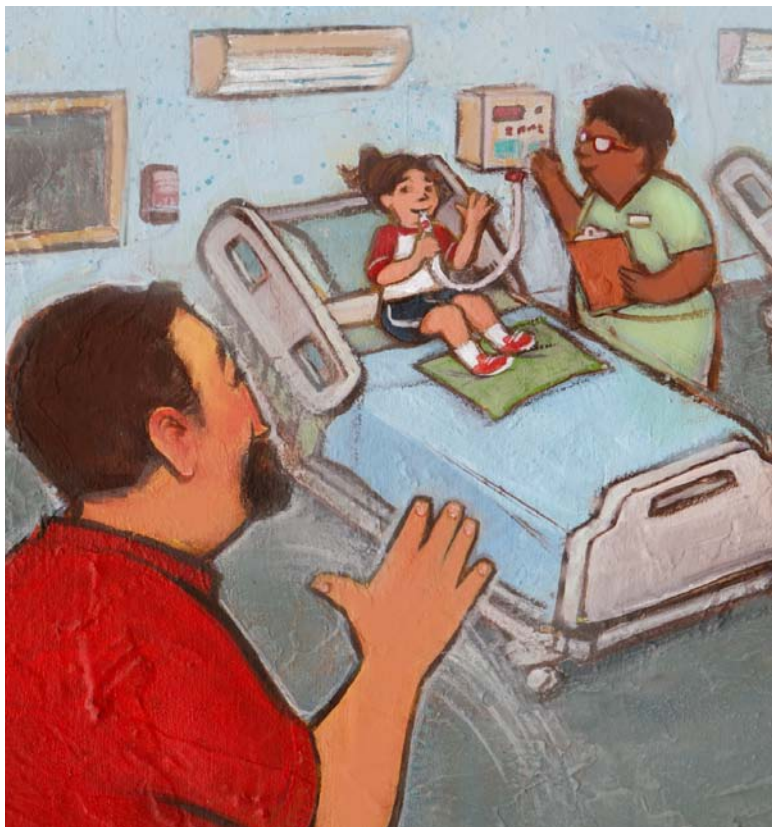


The ambulance sped through traffic with the siren blaring. The ride would have been fun if I had felt better.

When we reached the hospital, the paramedics took the mask away.

“I’m feeling okay now,” I said. “Can I go back to school?” I still wanted to finish my mile.

“Not yet. You need to see a doctor first,” the paramedic said. He helped me out of the ambulance and took me into the hospital.



At the Hospital

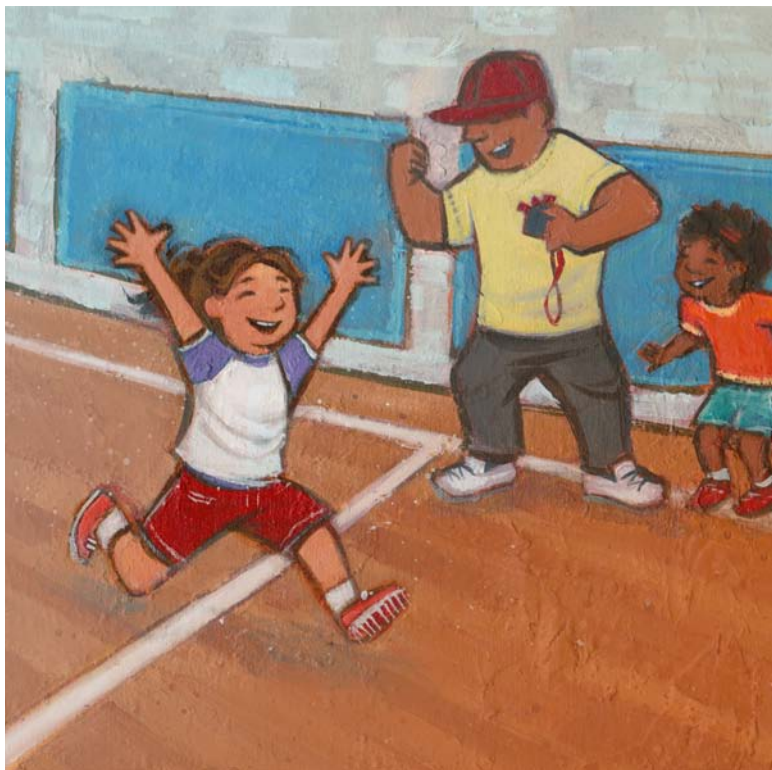
He had me sit on a bed in a row of beds. Soon a doctor showed up. She had me breathe through a tube while she examined me. The tube was attached to a boxy machine that sounded as though it was breathing.

Dad showed up a few minutes later. He looked worried, but he relaxed when I waved and smiled at him.

“Looks like you had a pretty bad asthma attack,” the doctor said to me. She took the tube away. “There’s a lot of pollen in the air. Pollen must be one of your **triggers**. Next time, tell your teacher you need to run inside.”

“I know,” I said. “I just wanted to run against everyone else in the fitness test.”

“Your health is more important. Besides, the only thing that matters in winning that blue ribbon is your time,” the doctor said. “I’m sure your teacher will let you retake the tests.”



After that day, I always checked the pollen report on the news. I stayed away from my other triggers. I also made sure Mrs. Marge had a full inhaler, just in case.

Oh, and I beat everyone else in running the mile that year—but I ran inside.

Glossary

asthma (<i>n.</i>)	a disease that causes breathing difficulty (p. 6)
inhaler (<i>n.</i>)	a device that allows a person to breathe in medicine (p. 8)
panicked (<i>v.</i>)	felt sudden or uncontrollable fear or worry (p. 10)
paramedics (<i>n.</i>)	people trained to provide emergency medical care to patients on their way to a hospital (p. 11)
triggers (<i>n.</i>)	things that cause something else to take place (p. 14)
wheeze (<i>v.</i>)	to make a rattling or whistling sound while breathing as a result of partially blocked air passages (p. 7)

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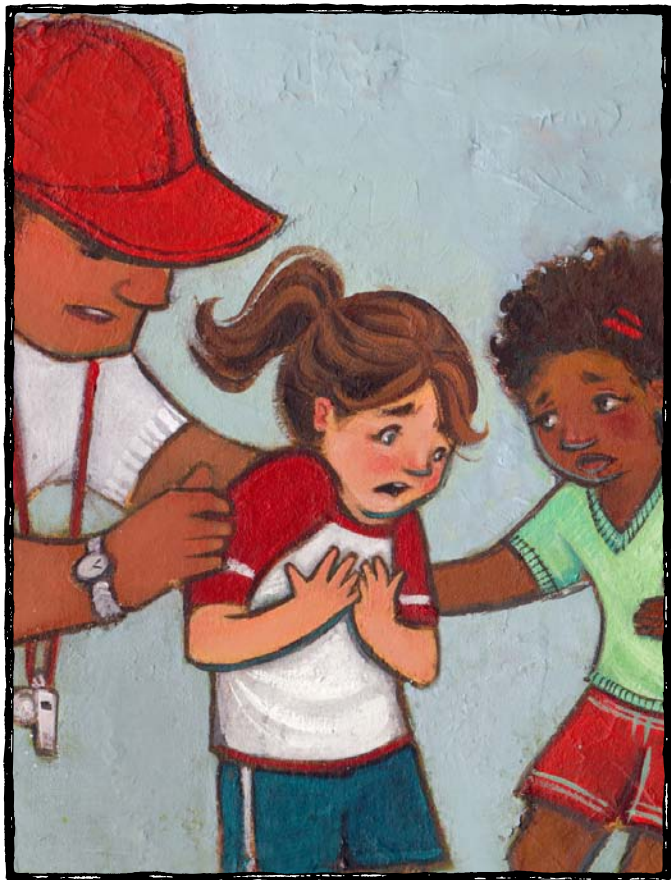
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