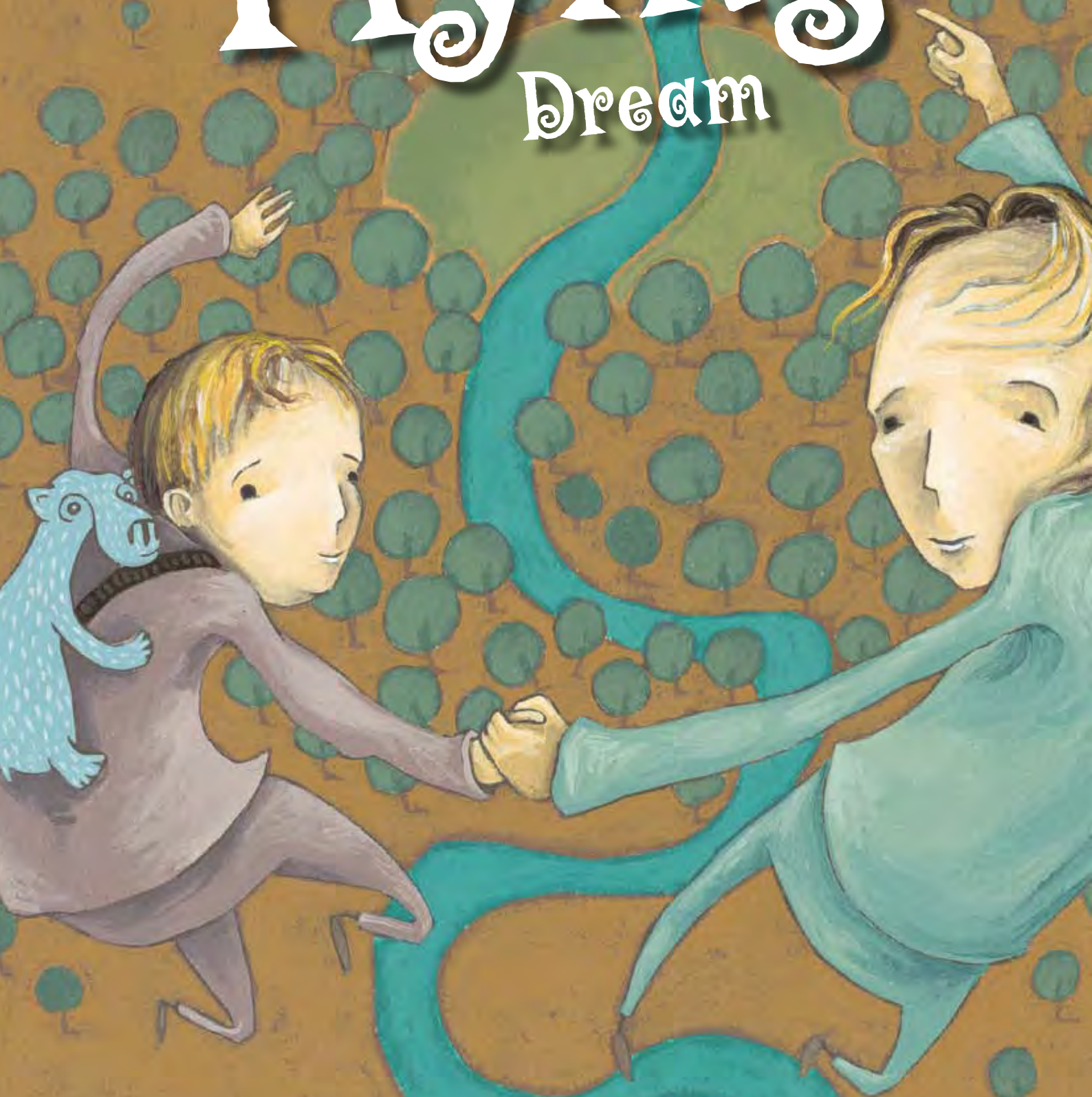


The Flying Dream



Written by **Samantha Tidy** Illustrated by **Connah Brecon**

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My mum is sick again.

She gets sick a lot. This time, she had to go away to hospital.

I hate it when that happens because it means that my brother James and I have got to stay with a foster family for a while, like where we are staying now.

James and I stay with different families sometimes.

It's hard because we have to learn new rules all the time – like how late we're allowed to stay up at night – and I don't get to take all my clothes or books.

And I also have to stop doing some of the things I really enjoy, like going swimming.





You see, our mum has a mental illness and she takes bad drugs. She gets upset sometimes – she cries a lot and just sits around the house or she gets really crazy and busy and goes out late at night.

When she's not around to look after us, it can be a bit scary.

One time, we didn't know where she was and had to call the cops.

I worry about Mum ... I wish she was more like other mums. I get really angry that she seems so weird.

My friend Ashley's dad is kind of the same – when he drinks he goes a bit funny. But most kids I know have normal Mums and Dads.

How come my family has to be so different?





My head hurts. I can't sleep.

I wriggle around and try to get comfy, but it's not my bed – the pillow is too hard and it's too hot.

I wish I could go to sleep and forget about going to visit Mum at the hospital tomorrow. I miss her, but I'm also scared – I wonder how she'll be.

I look over at my little brother James. He's all curled up and asleep. He misses Mum too – I heard him crying before. He is only six.

I kind of look after him when Mum is sick – like, I make sure he eats cereal for breakfast instead of just lollies.

It's okay. But sometimes he drives me crazy with all his questions about Mum – how am I supposed to know?

The light is on the other side of my door.

I wonder if our foster mum, Sarah, is up? Maybe she'll let me watch TV like I do at home when I can't sleep.

I creep out of bed and open the door.

Sarah is in the kitchen.





“Hi Casey. Can’t sleep?” Sarah asked.

“Yeah, maybe I could watch some TV?” Sarah is okay. I don’t really know her, but she kind of tries her best. Things are a bit different at Sarah’s place – we have dinner at the table and we can’t stay up too late.

“What’s up – you want to talk about it?”

“Maybe... I dunno... I feel a bit scared about tomorrow. Jenny is taking us to the hospital. You know, to see Mum.” Behind me, I could hear the bedroom door creak.

“Yeah, it must be really hard for you having your mum in hospital.”

I looked up and nodded. “It really gets to me. I’m don’t know what goes on when Mum gets sick.”

“It’s pretty normal to feel that way. You must be missing your mum and also missing your home. I would have missed my mum too if she had to go away when I was your age.”

I nodded. “It’s really hard ‘cos I don’t know when she’s going to come home.”

“Yeah, I understand. But you know, it’s better for her that she is in hospital where they can help her. It’s not your job to look after her. But it’s important that you talk about some of this stuff that you are feeling. You can talk to me anytime and you know you can also talk to Jenny. Maybe have a chat with Jenny tomorrow?”

“Yeah, okay. I might talk to Jenny – she’s good at answering my questions. She knows a lot about Mum’s illness.”

“Well, she’ll be here in the morning. Maybe have a chat with her then. Do you want to watch a bit of TV for a while?”

“Nah... I might go back to bed now.”

“Okay. Goodnight, Casey.”





I crawled into bed, feeling a bit better.

Before long, I had dozed off into a deep sleep and I had a really cool dream.

I dreamed of being so relaxed that I floated out of bed and high above the house.

I stretched my arms out like a bird. Before long, I was flying through the clouds.

I felt like a seagull, I could see everything below.

Suddenly, I was aware of someone else flying by my side.

James was flying, too, like a bird above the clouds.

He flew over and smiled, and reached out to link his hand with mine.





Together, we flew above the houses, high above the park, the cars on the street, and I could even see the ocean, far, far away on the horizon.

This was the best dream. I've always wanted to fly.





Soon I saw a building.

I knew it was the hospital where our mum was staying while she was getting better.

I said to James, "Let's fly over there."

Together we soared, and soon, we were high above the hospital.

I saw the dark, red brick walls and the gum trees out the front.

I wondered where Mum was.





In the middle of the hospital, there was a small courtyard with a bench. Our mum was sitting on the bench with some people from the hospital. They were having a bit of a chat.

I felt like waving, but I don't think she could see us high above the hospital.

I'm sure we looked just like birds, gliding in the air.

Mum looked okay. Well, she looked tired and still a bit sad, but she looked just like my mum.

In a funny way, she seemed stronger than she had before she got sick. Her hair looked pretty again and she wasn't so skinny anymore.

She looked like she was getting better.

And there were lots of people looking after her.





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e flew high up over the hospital and then we flew back towards the house.

As we flew in the window, James let go of my hand and flew back to his bed.

In the morning, I woke up feeling good.

I sat up in bed thinking about my flying dream. It had been cool to be a bird.

Like I was free from all of this stuff I had been feeling.

I didn't feel so stressed about the visit to the hospital to see Mum.

I remembered the conversation with Sarah and how I felt better after our talk.





I got out of bed and looked out the window. Outside, the clouds were still there, and I stretched my arms and felt just like the bird in my dream.

I thought about my mum. I knew it was a dream, but it felt like things would be okay.

James woke up and looked up at me. "We get to go and see Mum today, don't we?" he yawned.

"Yeah. We get to see Mum."

I grinned at him as I remembered my dream.

I wondered if James had had the same dream.





Jenny picked us up in her car and drove us to the hospital. Out the front of the hospital, there were some seagulls on the grass.

James ran at them and they flew up all around him. He ran over to me, pretending to be a bird with his arms outstretched and grabbed my hand tightly as we entered the sliding doors of the hospital.

I hate waiting rooms. They are always so cold.

I told Jenny I had been feeling a bit mixed up. "I wish Mum was better. I wish we were back at home. We always have to go away to a foster home when Mum gets sick. Why can't she just be normal?"

Sometimes just saying this stuff out aloud makes me feel a bit better.

Jenny is a good listener. She let me talk and have a bit of a cry. Then she told me it was okay to feel all this stuff and that other kids like me feel the same.

She told me that we can keep visiting and phoning Mum to see how she's going while she's in hospital.

Jenny also told me that I should still do some of the things I like doing, like go swimming again.

James listened and I think it helped him, too.

Soon, the nurse came into the waiting room and took us out to the courtyard.





Mum was sitting on the same bench as in my dream. She turned around and smiled. I could see that she was still sad but that she was feeling a little better.

I knew that she would be here for a while, but I think it's the best place that she can be, so that she can get better.

She gave both of us a hug. "How are you doing, kiddo? And how are you, James?"

I could tell that Mum was just holding it together.

I thought for a bit about a lot of things. About my chat with Sarah the night before, about my flying dream with James and about what Jenny had just said about all the feelings I have. I also thought about how, maybe, I would go for a swim tomorrow.

You know, even if Mum got sick again, things wouldn't seem so bad.

I looked over at James. He was chasing seagulls again and was kind of squawking at them, which made Mum laugh. That was cool – she hasn't laughed for a while.

"We miss you ... but I think we're going to be okay," I kinda half smiled and cuddled up to her like I used to when I was little.

Above us, the seagulls were gliding over the gum trees.





The End



