

Dear Reader,

Growing up, no question terrified me more than, “*What do you want to be when you grow up?*”

The answer was too scary to say out loud: I wanted to be a writer, but I didn’t know any writers like me—a Peruvian American daughter of immigrants.

Lulu and Milagro’s Search for Clarity is about sisters who are finding the courage to dream big. With every lab and extra-curricular activity, Lulu is one tiny step closer to Stanford University—and three giant leaps farther from her overprotective mom, who doesn’t quite *get* Lulu’s passion. Meanwhile, Milagro is convinced that college isn’t in her future—after all, she’s nothing like her brainiac little sister. Their older sister, Clara, seems to have it all figured out . . . or does she?

When I was applying to college, I was so lucky to have my family’s enthusiastic support, even if they had no idea how to help (testing? applications? essays?—it was all literally foreign to them). This novel was born from that experience, along with my days on the road as an admissions officer for an Ivy League university. I traveled everywhere from sunny border-town high schools in Texas to sprawling prep school estates in Rhode Island. The students I met all had one thing in common:

they were bold and brave enough to imagine a new life for themselves.

Lulu and Milagro's Search for Clarity is a celebration of that hope, along with the messiness it brings: tough conversations with parents, deep soul searching, and the surprising joy that comes from reimagining what you want. It's an acknowledgement that not everyone has the same support system—or the same journey—but that doesn't mean their goals are any less possible. Maybe most importantly, this book is an ode to sisterhood, and having a life-long ally who bugs you (never), keeps your secrets (sometimes), and champions you to the world (always).

To all the dreamers out there: this book is for you. I hope it makes you laugh, celebrate how far you've come, and dream even bigger. I believe in you.

With so much love,
Angela