

WHAT WOULD MY BOOK CHARACTERS DO IN ISOLATION?

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Last week two new titles in my *Besties* series released into the world. In this series junior readers follow the everyday lives of best friends Ruby and Oliver.

Hmm... *everyday lives*?

I wrote these books BC – that is, *Before Corona*. But now, in these AC times – *Amid Corona* our *everyday lives* have really changed.

A friend asked me how I thought my book characters might be handling these trying times in isolation. Good question. ‘Many of them would be climbing the walls by now,’ I answered. ‘I reckon Specky Magee’s mother has finally had enough of him kicking a nerf football around the house and taking specky marks over the couch.’

As for the Besties, well, my mind goes to the precocious Ruby. In the books I don’t reveal a lot about the Besties’ extended families, but I thought it would be fun to do so here, to dip into their isolation world. I’ve reimagined this slice of quarantine life in the form of a television script.

So here goes...

Ext. Ruby’s House – Day

Ruby, 8, is jumping on her trampoline. Her Bestie, Oliver, 8, lives next door.

RUBY

Ollie! Hey, Oliver! You there? Are you in your treehouse?

There’s no response from Oliver. Ruby continues to bounce. Her father, Dave, 42, trudges across the backyard in his pyjamas.

DAVE

Move over, Rubes! I’m gonna have a go!

RUBY

What? Really?

Dave hops and wobbles onto the trampoline.

DAVE

Gotta work off this quarantine weight?

RUBY

You mean your big belly?

DAVE

Eh! It's not that big!

Ruby and Dave bounce on the trampoline. Ruby is having a ball. Dave is struggling to keep his balance.

RUBY

Higher dad! Yeeeeeaaah!

DAVE

Woo-hoo!

RUBY

Dad, what day is it today?

DAVE

Friday. No, um, it's Thursday. Wednesday! I have no idea.

RUBY

Am I still not allowed to go over to Ollie's to play?

DAVE

Sorry, pumpkin. No yet. But it won't be long. Why don't you go FaceTime him - see what he's up to?

Ruby hops off the trampoline and runs inside.

Int. Ruby's House – Day

Ruby's mother, TINA, 38, is seated at the kitchen bench in front of her computer, in the middle of a ZOOM session with her work colleagues.

TINA

I think if sales drop, then that might be the case. Oh... I think we just lost you, Leanne. Oh, no, she's back... but I can't hear her. You have no audio, Leanne. Oops... now you've disappeared again!

Ruby walks into shot.

RUBY

Mum, where's the iPad? I want to call Ollie.

TINA

Not now, Ruby! Mum's in the middle of a meeting.

Tina's colleagues call out to Ruby and wave. Ruby waves back. Tina's colleague LEANNE pops back up on screen.

LEANNE

Oh hi, Ruby! I thought of you the other day and your ukulele playing. Tina, have you seen Sam Neil playing his ukulele on Instagram? He's adorable.

Tina's work colleagues respond to Leanne and talk over the top of each other.

RUBY

Who's Sam Neil? Does he know how to play You Are My Sunshine?

TINA

Ruby, go ask sister about the iPad? And go wash your hands!

Ruby goes off to find her big sister, MADDIE, 13. She barges into Maddie's bedroom, who is the middle of recording a Tik-Tok dance.

MADDIE

What do you think you're doing? Get out of my room!

RUBY

Have you seen the iPad? I want to call Oliver.

MADDIE

I said... get out! Can't you see I'm social distancing!

Ruby leaves her big sister and makes her way downstairs, only to discover her mother has finished her Zoom meeting and is stepping back inside from the backyard. She rushes to her phone – panicked.

RUBY

What's happening?

TINA

Your father! He's done his back! Thought he could do a forward flip, silly man.

Tina quickly thumbs a series of numbers on her phone.

TINA

Yes, hello. Um, my husband has thrown his back out and... oh, okay... so there's no need to come in... Telehealth, you say? Okay, um, and we can set up a time with our GP now... great....

Ruby pops her head outside to see her father flat on his back on the trampoline, groaning.

RUBY

Dad! Do you know where the iPad is?

DAVE

Pumpkin, I'm in pain!

RUBY

So am I. I miss Ollie!

Ruby steps back inside and spots a corner of the iPad sticking out from under the couch – and her ukulele.

RUBY

Found it!

Ruby FaceTimes Oliver. OLIVER'S MOTHER answers.

OLIVER'S MOTHER

Oh, Ruby! Ollie was just asking for you. I'll pass my phone over to him.

Oliver pops up on screen.

OLIVER

Hi, Ruby!

RUBY

Hi, Ollie! What are you doing?

OLIVER

Mum and I were making Anzac biscuits. We also made scones, carrot cake, and a croquembouche. Hey, can you play me a song?

Ruby strums her ukulele and suddenly stops.

RUBY

Do you know who Sam Neil is?

OLIVER

No.

RUBY

Do you know what day it is?

OLIVER

No.

RUBY

Yeah, me neither.

Ruby returns to playing her ukulele. She sings “You are My Sunshine” and Oliver joins in the chorus.

For the REAL adventures of Ruby and Oliver make sure to check out The Besties, which is out now and perfect for kids aged 5-8