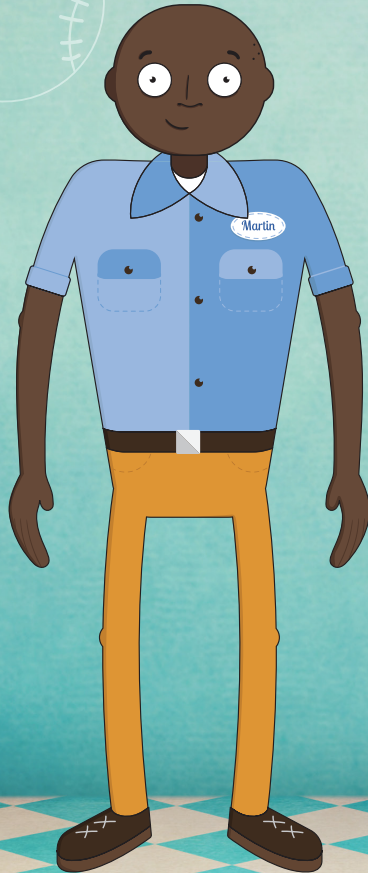
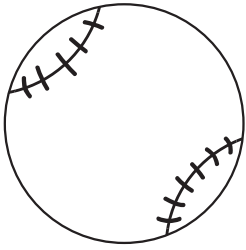


A stylized illustration of a person from the waist down, wearing a purple dress and green tights. Their hands are clasped together, holding a large, yellow, rectangular sign with rounded corners and four screws. The sign has the text 'The Forever Boy' written in a black, cursive font. The background is a light teal wall and a floor with a teal and white diamond pattern.

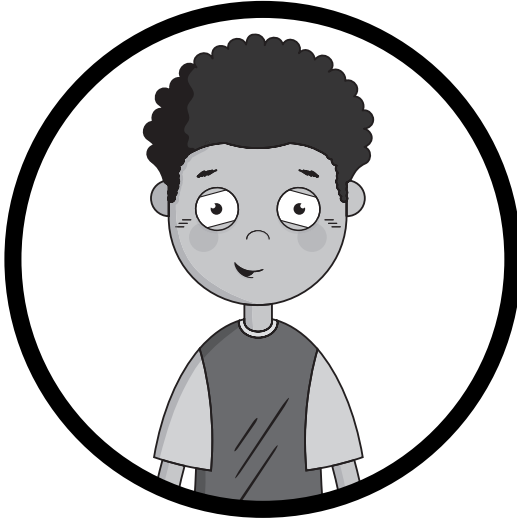
The
Forever
Boy

ANNE SCHRAFF





MEET THE



Bruno

Age: 10

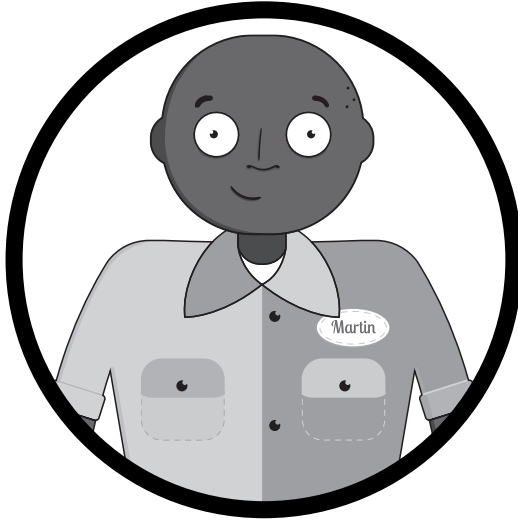
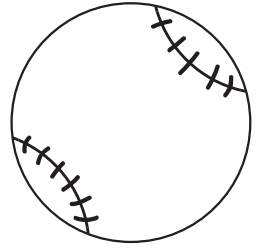
Career Goal: to pitch for the New York Yankees

Favorite Cookie: chewy chocolate chip with Reese's Pieces

Allergic To: pineapple

Best Quality: is never bitter

CHARACTERS



Martin

Age: 38

Big Secret: likes Eve's pies better than Mama's

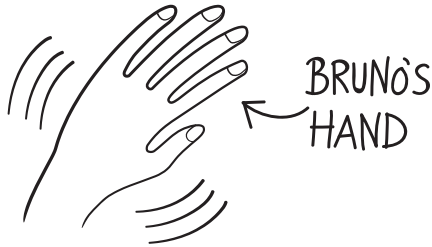
Hidden Talent: speaks fluent French

Favorite Movie: *Glory*

Best Quality: puts his family first

FOSTER HOME

Bruno Hayes stood. He was in the living room. Shaking. He had the chills. But it wasn't cold. His foster parents were in the kitchen. They were fighting about something. Bruno was afraid the fight was about him.



Bruno was 10 years old. This was his fifth foster home. He'd been here for almost six months. It seemed to be going well. But he

was always nervous. It had happened like this before. He'd feel okay in a foster home. But then his foster parents got tired of him. Or something else happened. Then he had to leave.

What were the Browns talking about? Sending him away?

Bruno really wanted to stay. This was the best foster home. He had never known one better. Martin and Eve Brown were nice people. They treated him well.



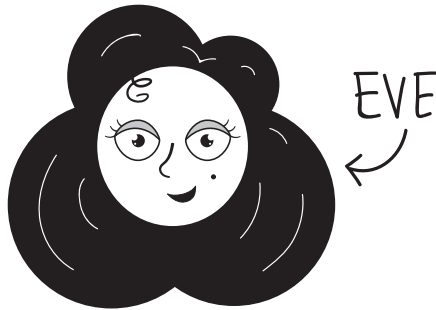
Bruno had wished for a family. He'd wanted someone to adopt him. But nobody had. So far. He'd dreamed about a forever

family. Now his dream of being adopted was gone. He just wanted to stay here.

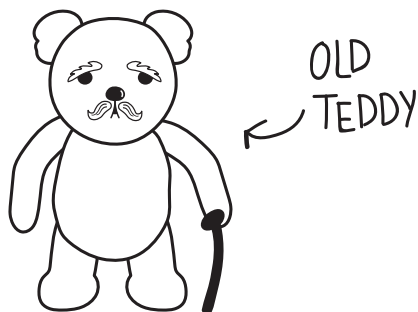
Bruno tried to listen. What were they were saying? He prayed. He didn't want to hear his name. He hoped he hadn't done something wrong. Something to make them mad.

Bruno got closer to the kitchen. He listened.

“Martin Brown,” Eve Brown said. “You’re always moaning about something.” Eve was a curvy woman. She was super pretty. “Get your hands off my apple pie! It’s not even dinner yet.”



“I was just tasting it, Eve. Don’t get mad. You know something? Your pies aren’t sweet enough. Now my mama? She knows how to make an apple pie. It’s as sweet as honey.” Martin was a big man. He looked a little scary. Especially when Bruno first came here. But he was cuddly. As soft as an old teddy bear.



“I am so sick of hearing about your mama. Go live with her,” Eve said. “Don’t mess up my life.” She sounded mad. But she wasn’t. It was just her way. Bruno was used to it. He liked Eve a lot.

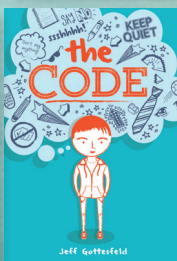
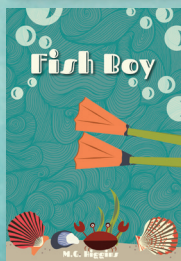
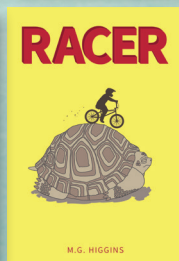
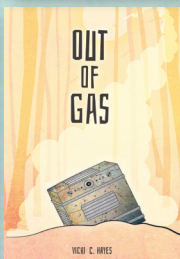
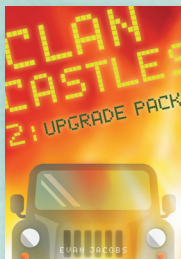
Bruno felt better. Phew! They weren't fighting about him. They weren't talking about sending him away. The Browns fought a lot. But it never got mean. In one foster home it was bad. The people hit each other. Then they hit him. And another foster boy. He was scared the whole time he was there. Bruno was glad to leave that place.

"I'll make some sugar syrup. That will sweeten the pie, Martin," Eve said. She laughed a little. Bruno smiled too.

It was okay. For now.



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The Forever Boy

I say we are a family,
Eve and me. Then
along comes Bruno.
Man, life is sweet.



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