

It Takes a Village - Behind the Scenes

What I was thinking...

I spent a lot of time in my memories, trying to bring childhood moments into the illustrations. My big cousins, how they towered above me and made me feel safe and brave all at once. The surety of knowing that my Nana and Pop, and some combination of aunts and great-aunts, would be laughing and talking at the food court every Friday. My Grandma and Grandad's garden, magical and enveloping. The adults (librarians, parental colleagues, neighbours) who I can't even really picture anymore, but about whom I say to my Mum "oh yes, I remember liking them". The village is enormous, and includes strangers who pulled faces at me in supermarkets and kids who taught me how to play new games and everyone who laughed with me when I ran across the grass in this photo.



And now I'm older. I've been the big cousin, who took the littlies to the playground. I've been the foreign aunt who read a picture book at Christmas and disappeared again. I've met with a friend on Fridays, while her toddler ate berries and searched for acorns. I pull faces at babies in supermarkets. And now that I've been on both sides, I know that all those experiences are both giving and receiving at the same time.

To me, this is a book about how we need each other, all of us. Babies very much included!

How I made the pictures...

The illustrations were made with traditional collage. It's all watercolour, coloured pencil and blu-tac, and a bit of tidying things up digitally at the end.

I'd never done collage for any work before - just a bit in my sketchbook for fun - so it was quite new and exciting and scary. I love working this way now though. It's incredibly satisfying to stack up all the elements to make an illustration. Plus, I really like the shadows it gives, and that I still have the ability to rearrange things like I would digitally. (If the hand didn't come out right, I can just cut out a new one and stick it on!)

Who my co-creators were...

[Penny Harrison](#) wrote the love-imbued words. She pulled on so many of my heartstrings with the text that, even though I hadn't really drawn many babies or toddlers before, I couldn't say no. I felt myself in it, both as child and carer, and it felt special.

[Alyson O'Brien from Little Book Press](#) made everything happen. I really cannot express enough how much guidance she gave me, and how delighted I am that this is where we ended up. She nudged me into doing it in collage, and helped me get through when I wasn't sure how.

[Kristy Lund-White](#) is the incredible designer! Her work gave the book such a beautiful tone that I finally managed to stop worrying about my role in it all and trust that she would make everything wonderful. (Those endpapers! Gorgeous!)