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Author photo courtesy of Ángeles Ruiz

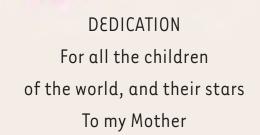
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Every time the clouds dyed themselves gray, Valentina would visit Monster in the forest. ADVANCE READING COPY



Strolling through the forest, they imagined they were skywalking. Valentina would jump on the clouds, trying to reach the moon.

One night, she scratched herself on a tree branch.

"Nothing a bandage can't cure," Monster said,
"Or a kiss. A gentle kiss can cure anything."





. . . and darkness covered everything. MANAGER BURNERS ADVANCE READING COPY ADVANCE READING COPY Valentina went to visit Monster.

But he wasn't there.

"Where are you, my friend?" she cried out.

Nobody answered.



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The unbearable silence was soon broken by the sound of small footsteps crunching on dried leaves.

The animals came from every corner of the forest to hug and hold Valentina.







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The rabbit elder approached her with great tenderness. "Life is a beautiful journey that we share with all that surrounds us. But at some point, when the body grows old, it stops feeling, stops breathing. It fades away. We leave this world to start a new journey. It was Monster's time to journey on." ADVANCE READING COPY ADVANCE READING COPY











Her nightmares never came back, but Valentina still missed Monster terribly. Her grief was something a kiss couldn't cure. She was sure she would never be happy again.

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But life went on. Valentina grew up.

She knew she could be happy. And indeed she was, far from the forest, among the clouds.

Now, each year, the forest animals eagerly await Valentina's visit. She comes with her beautiful child. "Do you think if we jump on the clouds we will reach the moon?" she whispers to her daughter, as pink cotton candy melts in their mouths. Meanwhile, in the night sky, the biggest star of all shines down ever so brightly . . .

... watching.



Ángeles Ruiz was born in

Barcelona, Spain, where she

lives with her artist husband and
daughter--her biggest inspiration
and toughest critic. She has
illustrated many books, including

The Lost Kitten. When not drawing and painting, she enjoys exploring nature and going to the library.



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