

LULU

and the
HUNGER
MONSTER™

Erik Talkin

illustrated by
Sheryl Murray



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free spirit
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For Mari (without whom . . .);
Ella, Felix, Lili, Hannah, Max, & Mia;
and a hunger-free future that starts today.

—E.T.

For Dad:
Thank you for a lifetime of love and support.
Always remember—the Driver is the Chief Guru.

—S.M.



With a **GRIND** and a **CLANK**, our old van slows to a stop. Mom can't start it.

Monster waves from the roadside. "Hi, Lulu. Long time no see."

When we get a ride home, Monster buckles in next to me.





All Mom's money goes to fix the van.
She needs it to drive to work. That means
there's no money left for groceries.



Mom says she doesn't think
we can get help because
she has a job.



So we make do.
And make do.

Ava runs up to me at school, her half of our twin necklaces dancing.
She can't see Monster **SMIRKING**. And I can't tell her.



Monster made me promise never
to say its name to anyone:
HUNGER MONSTER.



“Tell me one of your jokes,” Ava says.

All I can think about is food, food, food.

“Why do the French eat snails?” I ask.

“Because they don’t like fast food.”



Ava laughs and we join our friends to play tag before the bell. Soon I have to sit.

My head is **SPINNING**.
My stomach is **NOISY**.
Hunger Monster
is **GROWLING**.



In math, Monster bounces on my table so the numbers **SQUIGGLE** and **JIGGLE**.
Mr. Abidi turns around. "Lulu, please sit still."

I want to tell him it's Hunger Monster's fault. Monster **GLARES** at me.
So my mouth stays closed.





During morning recess, Ava wants to play.
My stomach is empty and achy, and I yell at her.
She doesn't know why I'm being so grumpy.



I go hide in the school garden.

This year, Mr. Abidi is teaching us how to plant vegetables.
Maybe there's something to eat in here. But the tomatoes
are still green and hard. I kick at them.

