



Violeta

Written by
Daisy Bratcher
and Megan Roth

Illustrated by
Gaby Zermeño

Chapter 1: A Phone Call

Once there was a nine-year-old girl named Violeta. She had curly black hair that tumbled past her shoulders, and her eyes were as blue as the sky after rain.

She lived in a family named after flowers. Her father's name was Lirio, and her mother's name was Margarita. Her older sisters were Rosa, Azucena, and Jazmin.

These four sisters were as different as the flowers they were named after. Azucena loved to play outside with her friends, and Jazmin loved to draw and paint. Rosa loved to care for children, and Violeta loved to



La

Familia Pérez



read anything and everything. She read books about animals, adventures, and history. Her oldest sister, Rosa, understood her love of stories and encouraged her to keep reading.

Violeta's family lived in a small Mexican village far away from the bustling city. Their home was surrounded by lush bushes, big green trees with gnarled branches, and—of course—many, many vibrant flowers! A small, clear stream also flowed past their home.

One morning before school, Violeta came downstairs as her mother hung up the phone. “Violeta,” her mother said, “your teacher, Mr. González, just called us. He is very worried about you because you don't participate in class and you don't interact with the other children.”

Violeta bowed her head, not knowing what to say. She liked learning and she was intelligent, but her classmates at school made fun of her because she was shy.

“It’s that. . . It’s that. . . they laugh at me and call me names, and Mr. González doesn’t always notice what they do. I don’t want to go to school anymore!”

Violeta remembered the day when Mr. González had called her up to the blackboard to solve a math problem. As she walked to the board, Juan tripped her and she fell to the ground. Everyone started to laugh. When she got up, her face was red like a tomato, and this made her classmates laugh even harder.

How could she explain this to her mother? Her mother, who was so confident,



didn't understand how it felt to be shy. Only Rosa understood her.

“Violeta, I don't like to see you hiding and crying,” said her mother. “Life would be easier if you had more courage like your sisters.”

“I'm not like my sisters, Mother. I like to read, and I can learn more by reading books at home than by going to school where I'm teased. You don't understand how that feels!” Violeta ran upstairs, taking the steps two at a time.

“Hey! Watch where you're going!” said Jazmin as Violeta ran past her sister and into her room. She lay down on her bed and began to cry. Soon she heard footsteps.

“Violeta, what's wrong?” asked Rosa. “Why are you crying so early in the morning?”

“It’s the same as always,” Violeta said. “I don’t want to go to school—ever! And now Mr. González has called Mother, and she doesn’t understand why school is so hard for me. Every time I go, I feel something here,” Violeta said, pointing to her stomach.

“What does it feel like in your stomach?” asked Rosa.

“It feels shaky and tight like a knot,” Violeta answered.

“I believe what you are feeling is fear,” Rosa said as she knelt by the bed and wiped a tear from Violeta’s cheek. “I am going to share a secret with you. When I’m scared, sometimes I laugh.”

“You laugh?” asked Violeta.

“Yes, I do. Laughing helps my stomach feel better, and it helps me remember I’m

okay just how I am. If you laugh when you feel scared, the kids will lose interest in teasing you. Does that make any sense?" asked Rosa.

"Mmm, I think so. Do you mean the kids won't know how to tease me if I'm laughing? And if I laugh, I might feel better too?" asked Violeta.

Rosa nodded in response and sat next to Violeta. "Will you please sit up and let me comb your beautiful hair?" Violeta rolled to her side and sat up with her back toward Rosa. Rosa gently combed Violeta's hair while reassuring her. "You're stronger than you realize," Rosa said, giving her a big hug.



Chapter 2: A New Friend

When Violeta came home from school, Rosa greeted her at the front door with a plate of fresh mango, Violeta's favorite snack. "How was school today?" Rosa asked.

"It was about the same," said Violeta while eating a slice of mango. "During our history lesson I wanted to raise my hand because I knew the answer, but the feeling in my tummy came back, so I kept my hand down."

"It's okay, Violeta," said Rosa. "It might seem hard, but sometimes you have to take the first step before you feel ready." Rosa put her arm around Violeta.

“I am going to finish this mango, and then I’ll change clothes so I can go help Mother. Thank you, Rosa,” said Violeta.

Violeta took off her uniform and hung it up. She put on a pair of jeans, a shirt, and an old pair of sneakers. Then she grabbed a book and put it in her bag before she ran to the stream where her mother was washing the family’s clothes.

“Oh, Violeta, you are home just in time. I need you to start hanging up the clothes to dry,” her mother said.

Violeta let out a sigh of relief. She was grateful her mother had not asked about school. Violeta knew she needed to participate, but how? In the stories she read, the characters were brave and decisive.



They were not afraid to talk or act. She did not feel like the characters in the stories, as much as she loved them.

Once Violeta finished helping her mother, she walked to her favorite shady spot near the stream and began to read. Soon she was lost in the story. A noise



caught Violeta's attention, and she looked up. She saw a woman struggling to carry her heavy load to the stream. Violeta ran down to the stream to help her.

“Thank you, child. What is your name?” asked the woman.



“Violeta Pérez, at your service!” Violeta answered. “And yours, ma’am?”

“I am Natalia Villegas,” said the woman. “Thank you, Violeta, for helping me with my heavy basket as I am not as strong as I used to be. I can tell that you are kind and thoughtful. And, from the way you were reading that book, I can tell that you have a big imagination. What is your book about?”

Violeta smiled. She liked Ms. Villegas right away. Violeta began to tell her about the story, and Ms. Villegas listened carefully.

“I was an elementary school teacher when I was much younger, at the village school. I would have loved to have an intelligent student like you in my class. I am guessing you love school.”

Violeta looked at her feet. “No, Ms. Villegas, I don’t love school at all,” she said. “I am always by myself. During recess I read a book, which I like, but sometimes I want to play games with the other children. I don’t try because they tease me or ignore me.”

Ms. Villegas watched Violeta, wondering if she had more to say.

“Violeta!” her mother called. “I need your help!”

“I am sorry. I must go!” said Violeta.

“Of course, child. We will meet again,” said Ms. Villegas.

Ms. Villegas felt compassion for Violeta and wondered what she could do for her. Then she remembered a book that had helped some of her students. She planned to find the book and give it to Violeta.





ESCUELA

TANIA

2ºA

Chapter 3: A Gift

When Ms. Villegas got home, she opened her wardrobe. Inside was a large cardboard box filled with the treasures she had collected during her years as an elementary school teacher.

She found handmade cards from her students as well as class pictures. At the bottom of the box she found the book she was looking for, *Tania's Song*. The cover showed a girl, about Violeta's age, singing as she walked down a path.

Ms. Villegas gently dusted off the book and thought of Violeta. Violeta's fear was

stopping her from speaking up and having the courage to participate. Ms. Villegas knew that Violeta had many stories and thoughts to share. She was sure this book would help Violeta.

The next day, Ms. Villegas went to the stream again in hopes of meeting Violeta after school. She was in such a hurry that she left her laundry basket at home. Ms. Villegas sat on a tree stump to wait for Violeta. The sun was overhead, and it made her sleepy. She dipped her handkerchief in the crystal clear stream, wrung it out, and put it on her forehead to cool down. Then she returned to the stump to wait.

As she sat, many memories passed through her mind. She thought of her experience as a teacher. She smiled,

remembering all the children she had taught. There had been several who were like Violeta. Children who had great potential but didn't know it. Children who were shy and teased for it.

When Ms. Villegas saw Violeta coming home from school, it was late in the afternoon and the sun was less strong.

“Hi, Ms. Villegas! I am happy to see you again! Why are you sitting here on this stump?” asked Violeta.

“I have been waiting for you, Violeta, because I have a gift for you,” Ms. Villegas answered.

Violeta smiled and said, “Follow me to my favorite place where we can sit in the shade of the tree and you can rest against the tree trunk.”

Ms. Villegas followed Violeta. There was a large tree with wide branches, and the grass was so thick and green it almost looked like a carpet.

“Violeta, I came to give you this book. See this young girl who is singing? Her name is Tania, and she reminds me of you.”

“What?” Violeta asked. “People in books aren’t like me.”

“Well, maybe Tania is. Will you read the book and see what you think?” asked Ms. Villegas.

“Yes, I will! Thank you so much for the generous gift, Ms. Villegas. I will start reading it tonight!” said Violeta. “I will read it with my sister Rosa, just in case I don’t understand some words.”



“I think that’s great!” said Ms. Villegas. “I hope you enjoy the story, and you don’t need to return the book. It is a gift, given with a lot of affection.”

Ms. Villegas leaned against the tree while Violeta quickly finished her homework so that she could go home to read her new book.

Chapter 4: A Book

“Rosa! Rosa! Look at what I was given, a new book!” Violeta yelled as she searched for her sister.

Rosa was at the desk in her room, surrounded by books and papers. She was studying to be a pediatrician, and with final exams coming up that meant a lot of studying.

“I’m up here, Violeta,” Rosa called downstairs. She had a special love for her sister, and everyone knew Violeta was Rosa’s favorite.



Violeta burst into Rosa's room like a small tornado. "Look! My new friend, Ms. Villegas, gave this book to me. She was an elementary school teacher many years ago, and she said Tania, the girl in the book, is a lot like me. Can we read it together, please?"

"Let me see it," Rosa said. She looked at the cover of *Tania's Song* and flipped through the pages. Then she paused, a look of recognition on her face. "It can't be! What did you say the lady's name was again?"

"Her name is Natalia Villegas, and she is an old lady. She might be a thousand!" Violeta said.

"Violeta! Don't be disrespectful," Rosa said. She tried to look serious but couldn't, and she had to turn her face away so Violeta

wouldn't see her laughing. Violeta always made her laugh with the things she said.

“You know, I think I remember Ms. Villegas. She was a teacher when I was in elementary school years ago,” said Rosa.

“Can we read it now, please, please, please?” asked Violeta.

“Very well. I need a break from all this thinking and memorizing anyway. Let's see what the book has to say,” Rosa said.

Rosa and Violeta sat on the bed, and Rosa wrapped her arm around Violeta's shoulders. Violeta propped the book up on a pillow and began to read. Soon she was lost in the story. She stopped reading only when she came to a word she didn't know, and then Rosa would explain the word to her.



Tania was a girl about Violeta's age. Tania was intelligent and she loved to sing—as long as no one was listening. Tania didn't enjoy school. The children teased her because she was so quiet and nervous. There was one girl, Gabriela, who teased Tania a lot.

One day as Tania sat in her seat quietly doing her work, Gabriela tied Tania's long braids around the back of her chair. When Tania got up, it pulled her hair and she fell to the floor. Tania began to cry, and she buried her face in her dress. When Violeta read this, a tear rolled down her cheek. She knew what that felt like.

Tania sang a sad song as she slowly walked home from school that day. She didn't know that her teacher heard her beautiful, sad song.

Violeta read on. She discovered how Tania's teacher encouraged her and how Tania stood up to Gabriela, even though she was scared. Violeta and Rosa took turns reading. It was getting late, but to Violeta it had been only a moment.

"I need to finish my studies, Violeta. Will you read the last few pages to me so we can find out what happens to Tania?" Rosa asked. She went back to her desk, and Violeta laid her head on the pillow and finished reading.

Violeta read about Tania accepting her teacher's invitation to sing a song in a class celebration. This time, a happy tear rolled down Violeta's cheek. She could only imagine how it would feel to be so brave.



Chapter 5: An Audience

As Violeta walked to school a few days later, she thought about *Tania's Song*. She imagined being Tania's friend and helping her when she was sad or shy. She imagined being there when Tania sang for her class.

Violeta walked quickly, so she arrived at her classroom early.

“Good morning, Violeta,” said Mr. González. “Have you finished reading the chapter I assigned?”

“Good morning, Mr. González. Yes, I finished it,” Violeta responded.

“We have a few minutes until the school day starts. Would you like to tell me about the chapter before your classmates arrive?” Mr. González asked.

Violeta, seeing that she was alone and that no other children were watching her, started to explain the chapter. It was about the Aztec people of ancient Mexico. She explained how the Aztecs had created a large empire with palaces, pyramids, and temples, all with beautiful carvings. She talked about their markets, schools, and calendar.

She was so immersed in her story that she didn't notice her classmates arriving. As they listened to Violeta, they were caught up in every word she spoke.

Then the first bell rang. That is when Violeta noticed her audience sitting in their

desks and watching her. Her face turned different shades of red and her stomach tightened. She began walking to her desk.

“Please continue, Violeta!” Mr. González said. Violeta saw her classmates nod in agreement.

Violeta wanted to sit down and hide her face. Then she remembered how Tania had sang, and she remembered what Rosa had said about laughing. So Violeta took a shaky breath and started to laugh.

For a moment, the children were quiet, and then they joined in the laughter. Violeta felt the knot in her stomach loosen. She also noticed the curious looks on her classmates’ faces.

Violeta continued by describing the Aztec symbols on the Mexican flag. When



she finished, her classmates applauded, making her jump.

“Bravo, Violeta!” said Mr. González, joining in the applause. “It almost seems as if you had been there with the Aztecs! Now it’s time to begin our lessons.”

When it was time for recess, Violeta ran to her reading spot on the playground. She wasn’t sure if anyone would approach her to make fun of her. To her surprise, several of her classmates came over to congratulate her.

“Violeta, you did it really well!” said Susana. “I thought the chapter was boring. But you made it come alive. I am going to start it over.”

“Yes, Violeta. You explained the chapter so well that I won’t have to start it over!” said Roberto.

“You really like history and books, don’t you? Why? There are so many words and not enough pictures. How can you like them so much?” asked Elena.

“Well,” said Violeta, “when I read, I get into the story. I imagine the people, and I try to feel what they are feeling. I imagine the colors and the smells. Sometimes it even seems like I can taste things!” Violeta explained.

“Will you play with us again, Violeta?” Roberto asked. “We’d love to hear more of your stories.” Violeta nodded and smiled.

When school ended, Violeta ran home. She couldn’t wait to tell Rosa all that had happened! She pushed the front door open and ran to the courtyard, where she found Rosa watering the flowers.





“Rosa! Rosa! Guess what?” Violeta called.

“What’s going on, sweetie?” asked Rosa.

“I got to school early today. Mr. González asked me to tell him about the chapter he assigned to us for history and . . .”

Violeta shared all that had happened. Rosa listened attentively, smiling and laughing along with Violeta. As Violeta talked, she bounced on the balls of her feet and waved her hands.

“Can you believe it?” Violeta asked.

“Yes, I can! You took the first step and faced your fear,” Rosa said as she kissed Violeta’s cheek. “As you keep taking steps, it will get easier to participate. I’m so happy you have some friends to play with now!”

“I can’t wait to tell Ms. Villegas what happened at school and to tell her how much I loved the book she gave me,” Violeta said. “I’m going to find her tomorrow at the stream.”

“I know she would love to hear all about what happened,” said Rosa. “Let’s finish watering the flowers and walk to the market to celebrate.”

“Yes, please!” said Violeta.

Violeta and Rosa watered the flowers with blooms big as plates and stems as high as their waists. They also watered the small, delicate flowers that hugged the ground. Violeta touched one of the small, delicate flowers gently and said, “I guess I didn’t notice how beautiful you are until now.”



When they finished watering, the sisters began walking to the market, hand in hand. “Rosa, thank you for helping me,” Violeta said. “You are more beautiful to me than any rose.”

“And you are sweeter to me than any violet,” Rosa said.



Daisy Bratcher lives in Taylorsville, Utah. She grew up mainly in the United States and also spent extensive time in Mexico, where she was born. Her desire has always been to influence children in a positive way so that they will be more empathetic and caring. *Violeta* is, in part, her story.



Megan Roth has found adventure and comfort in books since she was a child. In college, she studied English and editing and then began working as an editor and writer. She loves exploring the outdoors, attending soccer games and choir concerts, and playing the piano. She has three daughters, and they live by the beautiful mountains of Ogden, Utah.



Gaby Zermeño is a freelance illustrator based in Mexico City who enjoys drawing images of everyday life, designing characters, and teaching in art schools. In her spare time she enjoys reading science fiction books, spending time with her cat, and taking care of her plants. She likes to decorate her surroundings with color.

Copyright © Waterford Institute, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

**Published and distributed by Waterford Institute, Inc.,
Sandy, Utah.**

Waterford.org seeks to blend the best aspects of learning science, mentoring relationships, and innovative technologies to form community, school, and home programs that deliver excellence and equity for all learners.

Printed in the United States of America.

ISBN-13: 978-1-4256-1332-7

Waterford™, Waterford Institute™, Waterford A Nonprofit Research Center™, Waterford.org™, Light Atom logo®, Rusty and Rosy®, Waterford Early Learning®, Waterford Early Learning logo™, Waterford Reading Academy™, Waterford Early Reading Program®, Waterford Early Reading Program logo®, Waterford Early Math and Science™, Waterford Early Math & Science logo™, Waterford Early Learning: Reading™, Waterford Early Learning: Math & Science™, Waterford Early Learning: Classroom Advantage™, Waterford Early Learning: SmartStart™, Waterford UPSTART™, WACS™, Camp Consonant®, and Curriculet™ are trademarks of Waterford Institute, Inc. in the United States and other countries and are used pursuant to a license with Waterford Institute, Inc.

