

Butterflies in Me

An anthology
bringing awareness
to mental health

Written by *Denisha Seals*
Illustrated by *Gabhor Utomo*



Butterflies in Me

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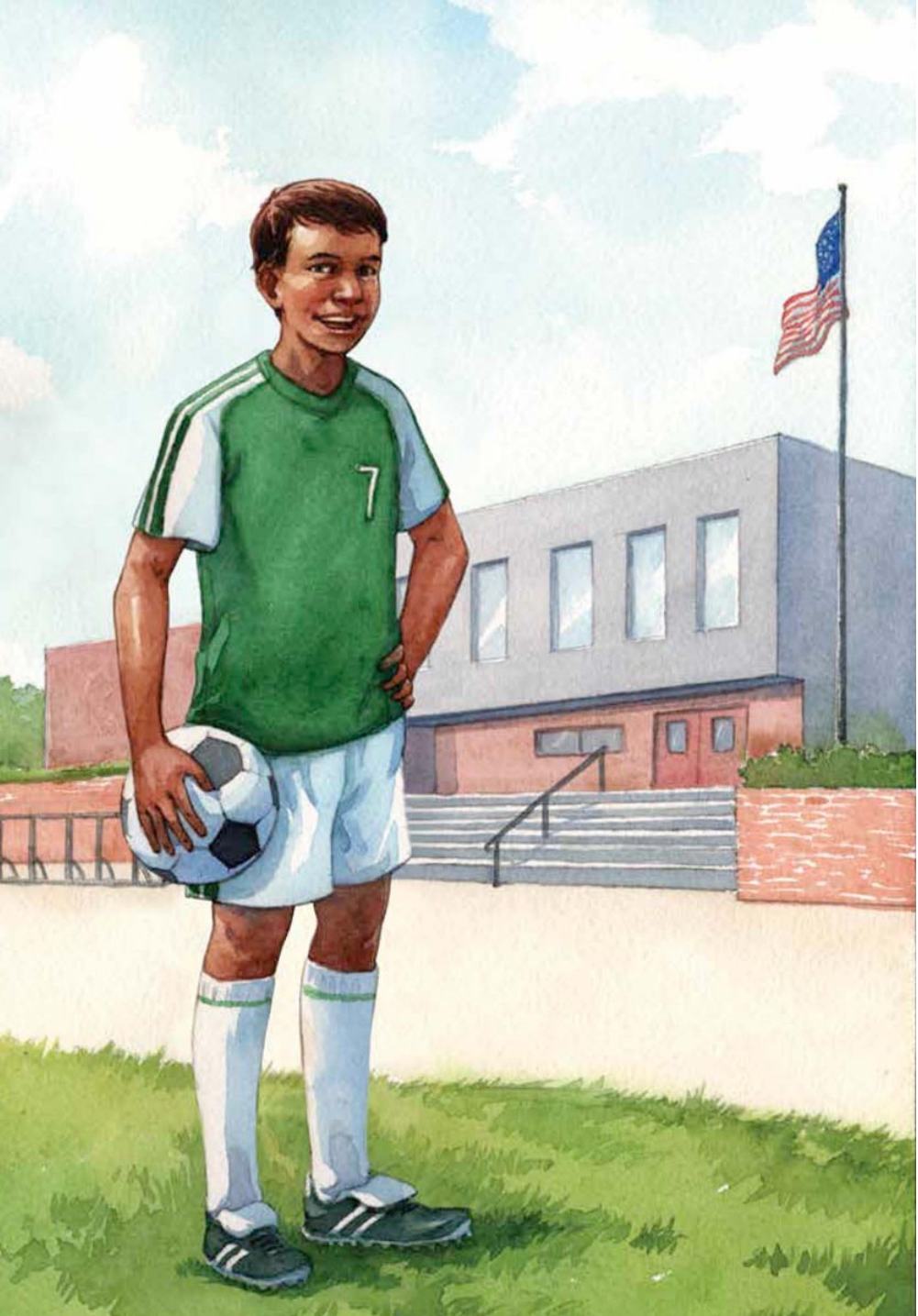
Subjects: LCSH: Abused children--Mental health--Juvenile fiction. | Abused teenagers--Mental health--Juvenile fiction. | Child mental health--Juvenile fiction. | Teenagers--Mental health--Juvenile fiction. | Self-esteem in children--Juvenile fiction. | Self-esteem in adolescence--Juvenile fiction. | Resilience (Personality trait) in children--Juvenile fiction. | Resilience (Personality trait) in adolescence--Juvenile fiction. | Social acceptance in children--Juvenile fiction. | Vulnerability (Personality trait)--Juvenile fiction. | Emotions in children--Juvenile fiction. | Emotions in adolescence--Juvenile fiction. | Depression in children--Juvenile fiction. | Depression in adolescence--Juvenile fiction. | Abused children--Mental health--Handbooks, manuals, etc. | Abused teenagers--Mental health--Handbooks, manuals, etc. | Self-care, Health--Handbooks, manuals, etc. | CYAC: Abused children--Fiction. | Abused teenagers--Fiction. | Mental health--Fiction. | Self-esteem--Fiction. | Resilience (Personality trait)--Fiction. | Social acceptance--Fiction. | Emotions--Fiction. | Depression--Fiction. | Self-care, Health. | BISAC: JUVENILE FICTION / Social Themes / Physical & Emotional Abuse. | JUVENILE FICTION / Social Themes / Depression & Mental Illness. | JUVENILE FICTION / Diversity & Multicultural.

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The background of the page is white with numerous green butterflies of various sizes scattered across it. Some butterflies are in flight, while others are resting. The butterflies are a vibrant green color with some showing darker green or black markings on their wings.

My name is
Javier Sanchez.

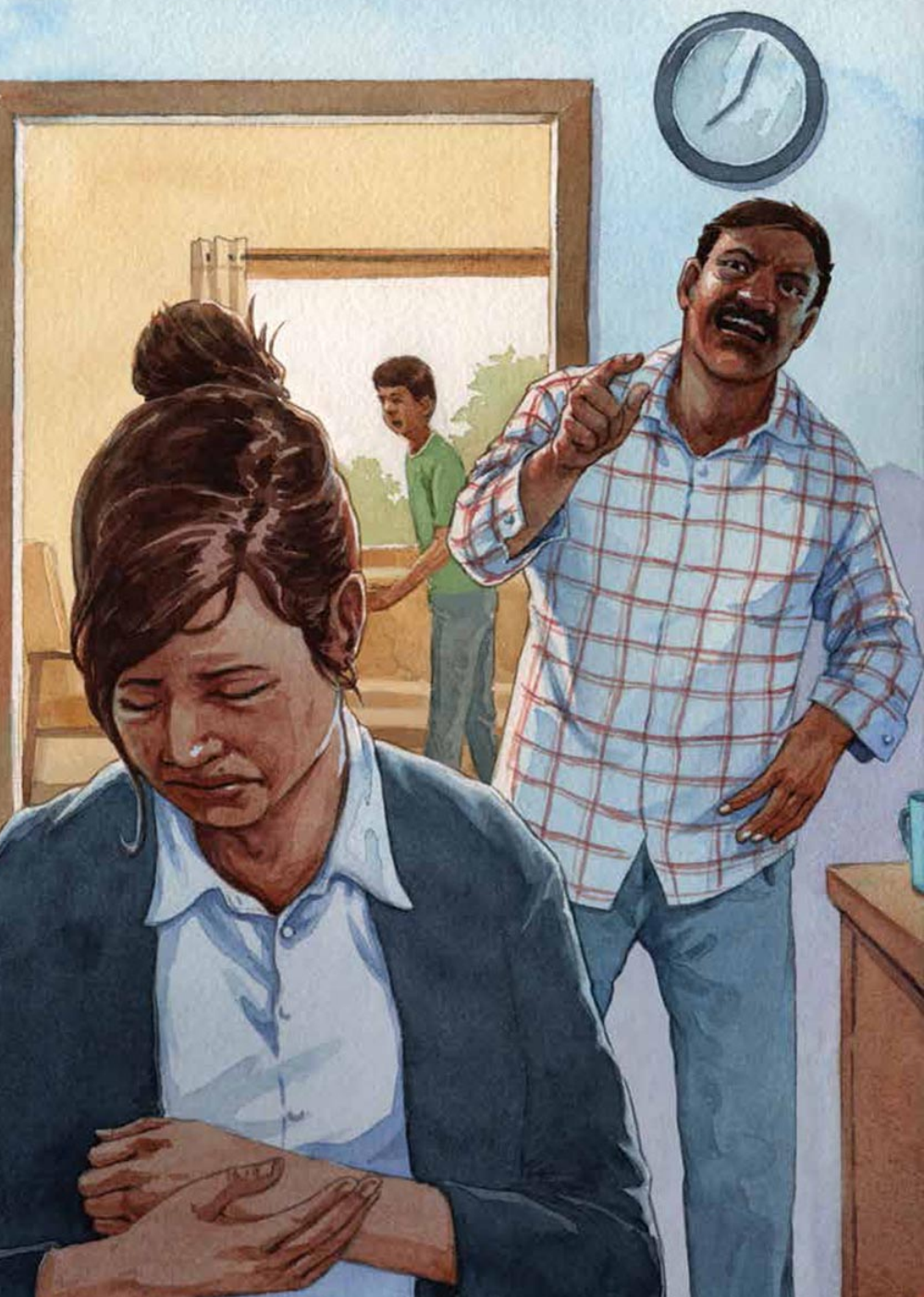
I'm 14 years old. I'm the captain of my school's soccer team. So many people call me their friend. I receive awards for getting good grades.

I love being at school. It's my safe place. I have a secret admirer, but I am too shy to ask her on a date.

When I have to leave my favorite place, I'm always sad.

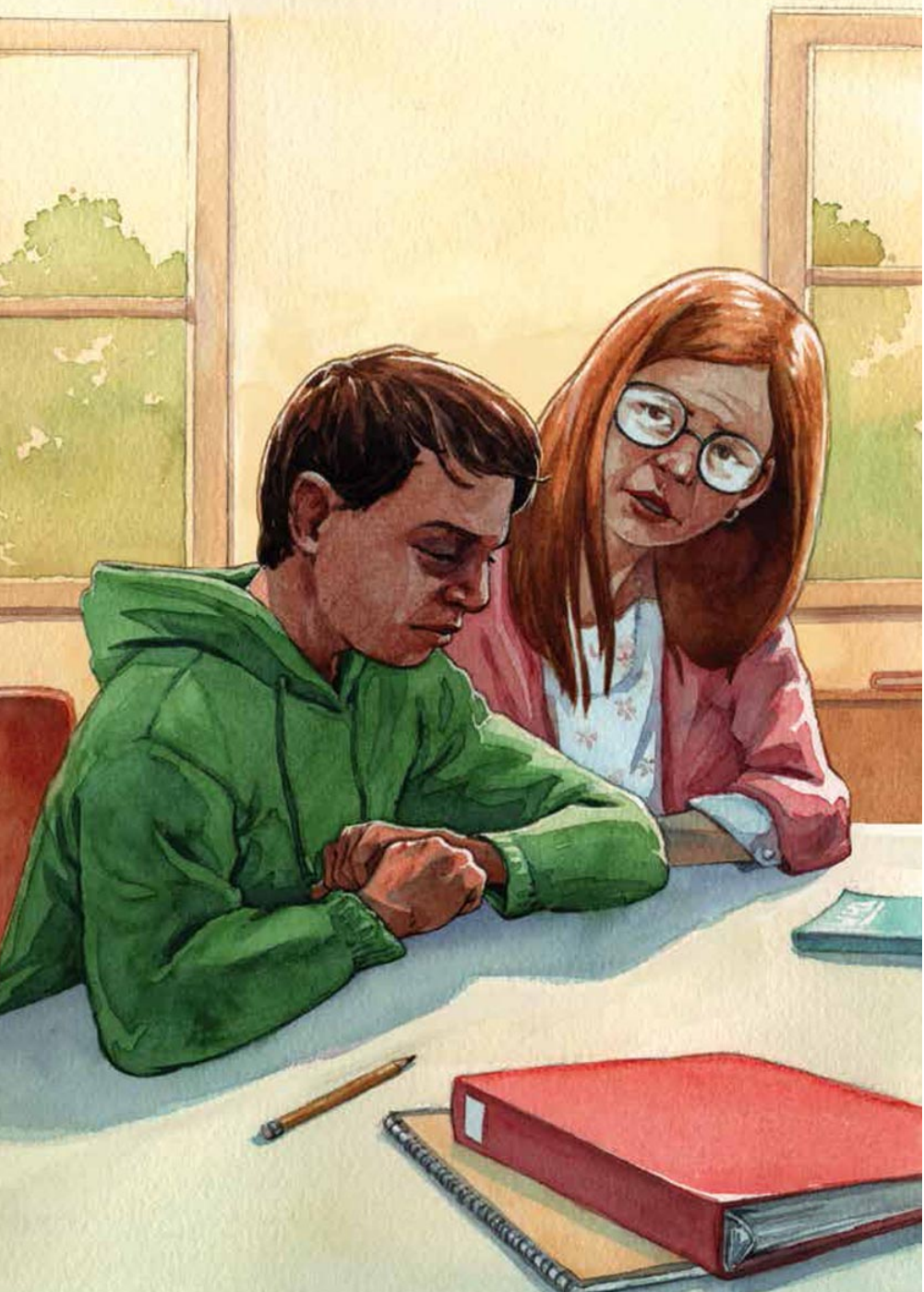
I'll tell you a secret. I'm tired of my mom and me getting beaten up by my stepdad.

Javier Sanchez



I beg Mom to pack up so we can leave. She says, “Mijo, we cannot. We have no place to go to be free.”

We had nowhere to go. My mother is an only child, and my grandparents passed away a long time ago. My stepdad moved us away from all of my mom’s friends. Mom would always cover her bruises with makeup. She always apologized to him, even if she did nothing to upset him. I think she tried to keep the peace in the house to avoid the fights, so she just did what he said. He made Mom wear her hair in an updo style. She was even forced to look down at the floor when he spoke to her. I even heard him say, “That’s what guilty dogs do when they displease their masters.”



He made us feel like the dirt on the ground people walk all over. I hated the way he treated her, the way he spoke to her and, most of all, I hated having to pretend we were the perfect family. I would stand up for Mom, but she told me to stop because that made his anger worse!

I covered up my blue and black bruises and hoped they would blend into my soccer uniform. A teacher asked me why my grades were falling. I told her a lie. I said, "Mrs. Carroll, everything is fine."

Everything was not fine. Days, weeks, and months went by, and everything still was not fine. One day, Mrs. Carroll told me to stay behind while the other kids went to lunch.

She told me she knew my black eye was not from playing too rough on the soccer field. She told me I was safe and could tell her what was wrong. She even said she could make the problem go away. But I was afraid.

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