



RUTH BEHAR '77

Lucky Broken Girl

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Lucky Broken Girl is based on author Ruth Behar's own experience as a young Cuban immigrant growing up in Queens, New York, in the 1960s. In it, Behar—the first Latina to win a MacArthur “Genius Grant”—tells the story of her 10-year-old self, Ruthie, who longs for go-go boots and to move out of the “dumb” class in school, where she has been placed until she can speak better English. Ruthie lives in a one-bedroom apartment with her little brother, Izzie; her homesick Mami, Rebequita, whose “sadness gets so bad she can't hold back her tears”; and her father, Alberto, who longs to live the American Dream.

Just when it seems the family is on the cusp of adjusting to their new life, a tragic car accident shatters their immediate plans for the future: leaving a teenage boy and his friends dead, a woman paralyzed, and Ruthie confined to a body cast for a year—broken, but lucky to be alive.

“We were scared. We didn't have money. We didn't speak English. We didn't know if they'd ship us back to Cuba. And if we had to flee again suddenly, what would become of me? I was immobile, a girl confined to her bed,” Behar writes in the book's Author's Note. “Writing this book gave me permission to return to my youth and re-experience that time, and even better, it has allowed me to make my childhood a bit happier than it really was.”

Written for young readers with a message that will resonate with all, *Lucky Broken Girl* is a story full of hope and love and the healing power of community, compassion, and forgiveness.