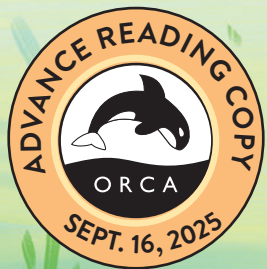




# Maya Inside



Illustrated by  
**Alison Hughes**      **Brady Sato**



# It's safer inside



**Maya went into her box** when a classmate teased her, and again when another hurt her feelings. Now she's there most of the time. It's safe and quiet and best of all it can be anything she wants it to be. She brings her box on bike rides and to school, and now the other kids barely see her at all. But Maya can't help but wonder if there might be something she's missing. Yes, it's noisy and scary outside her box, but it's also exciting and fun. Finally, Maya bravely decides to step out into the sunshine and find her place in the world—without her box.

**Alison Hughes** is an award-winning author of many books for children and young adults, including *The Silence Slips In*, winner of the R. Ross Annett Award for Children's Literature and *Hit the Ground Running*, a nominee for the Governor General's Literary Award. Her books have been nominated 11 times for children's choice awards across Canada, and her short stories have appeared in anthologies and have been finalists for the CBC Nonfiction Prize and the Writers' Union of Canada Short Fiction Competition. She lives in Edmonton with her family.

**Brady Sato** is a Japanese Canadian illustrator who specializes in digital illustration. They developed an appreciation for visual storytelling from watching TV shows and reading manga as a child in Japan. Brady studied visual narrative at The Art Department (TAD) in Austin, Texas, with Pixar artist Kelsey Mann. They are the creator of the popular webcomic *All That You Are* and their first picture book, *Kunoichi Bunny*, was named a 2022 New York Public Library's Best Book for Kids. Brady lives in Canmore, Alberta.

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# Maya Inside

**Author:** Alison Hughes

**Illustrator:** Brady Sato

September 16, 2025

In this sweet picture book, Maya retreats into a box when some kids tease her. But when she sees how much life she's missing out on outside her box, Maya realizes it's time to put it aside and rejoin the world.

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## KEY SELLING POINTS

- Maya retreats into her box when she's teased by classmates, because inside, she can be herself. But as time passes, she realizes that there's a lot she's missing and bravely steps back outside to embrace the world.
- This story gets across the vulnerability of being different or left out, while highlighting the resilience of the main character and her way of coping, in a warm, relatable and comforting way.
- The central metaphor of the box provides a great springboard for discussion of figurative language and how metaphors can express feelings and situations that are harder to explain directly.
- Brady Sato's bright and expressive illustrations bring out both the beauty of Maya's inner world and then, when she gets the courage to embrace the outside again, the vibrancy of the world around us.
- Alison Hughes has published 20 books for children and young adults and was a finalist for the Governor General's Literary Awards and CBC Nonfiction Prize.



BARBARA HENTZMAN

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alison Hughes is an award-winning author of many books for children and young adults, including *The Silence Slips In*, winner of the R. Ross Annett Award for Children's Literature and *Hit the Ground Running*, a nominee for the Governor General's Literary Award. Her books have been nominated 11 times for children's choice awards across Canada, and her short stories have appeared in anthologies and have been finalists for the CBC Nonfiction Prize and the Writers' Union of Canada Short Fiction Competition. She lives in Edmonton with her family.



## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

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# Maya Inside



Alison Hughes

Illustrated by

Brady Sato

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Maya sat inside her box.



She'd crawled into it first  
when a friend hurt her feelings.

And again when a classmate  
called her weird.



And again. And again.

Now it was her favorite place to be.  
On the outside it was a plain cardboard box.



But inside...

it was more.

Inside her box, Maya could  
dream and wonder.

She could be weird and wild  
and brilliant.



*do worms  
like to sing?*

The box felt like home.

Outside the box did not.

*are rainbows  
full circles?*



Maya took her box everywhere.  
When she went to the store.



When she rode her bike.



She wore it on the bus.



She wore it at school.  
Especially at school.

“There’s that strange box girl,”  
the other children said at first.

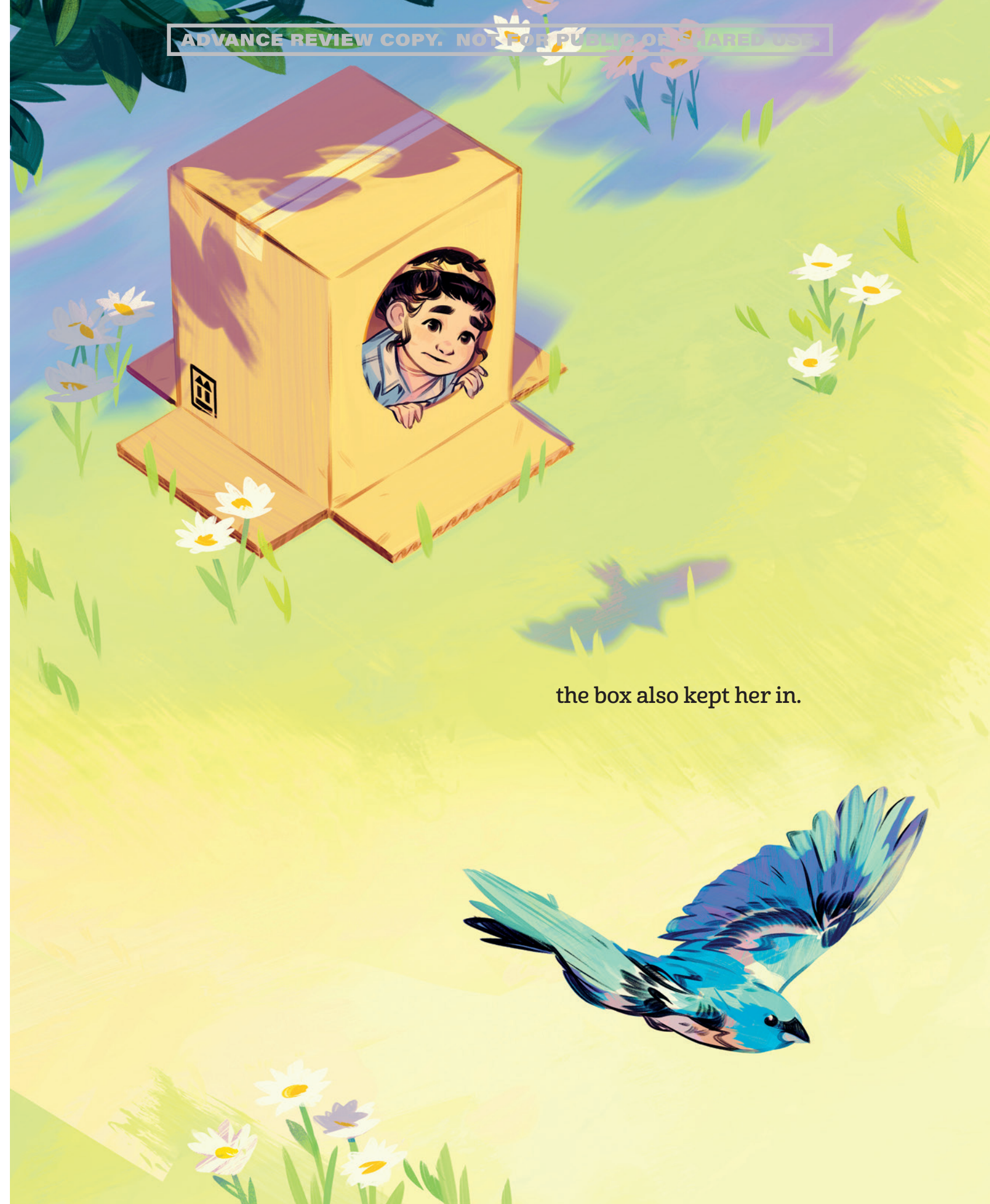
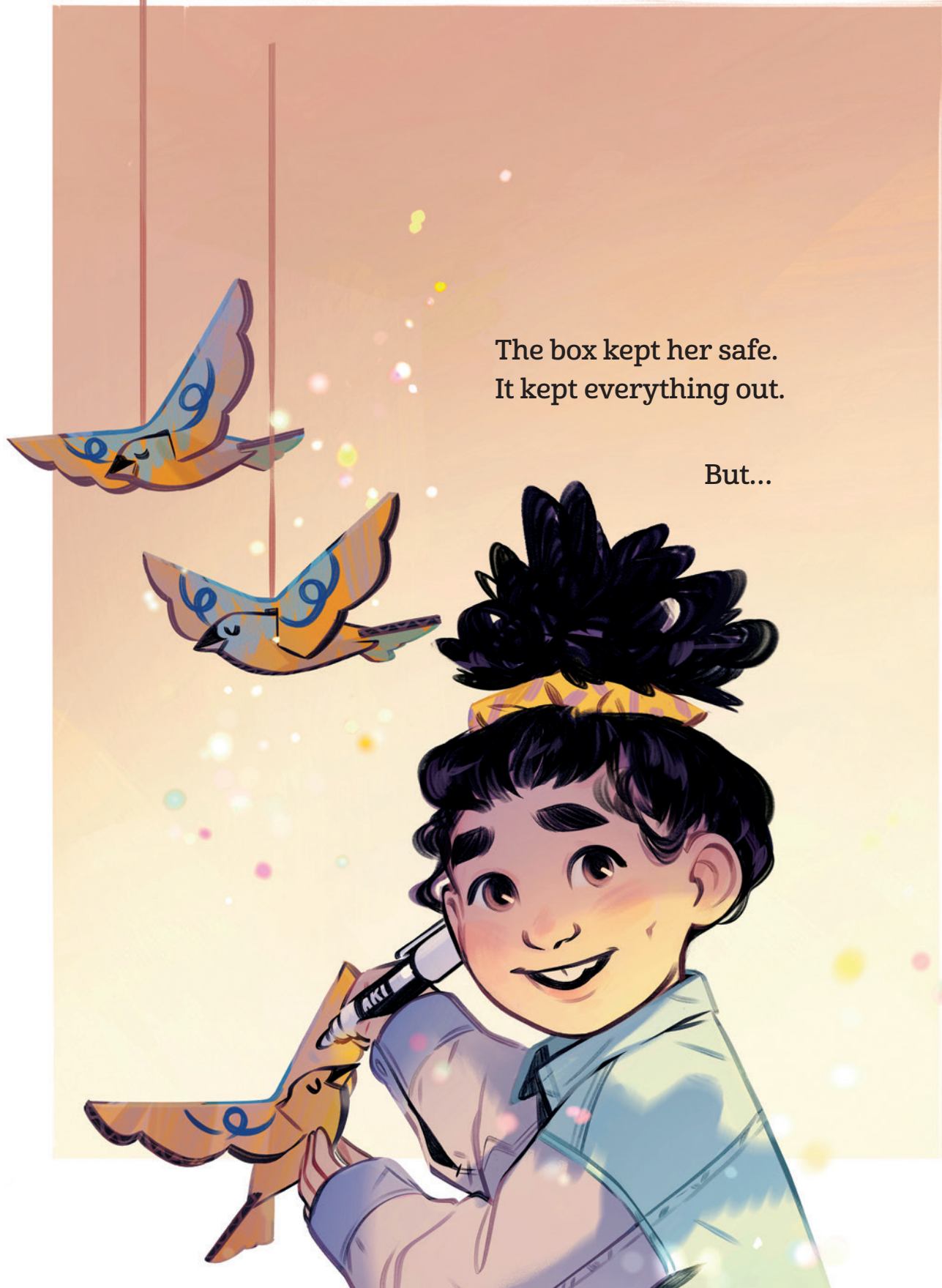


But then they got so used to seeing the box,  
they forgot anybody was inside it.

It was calm and quiet in Maya's box.

The box kept her safe.  
It kept everything out.

But...



the box also kept her in.

Maya watched the other children running  
free and boxless in the field.

And she began to wonder what would  
happen if she left her box.

It would be hard to do after so long.



It looks scary out there in the  
wide open, she thought.

Crowded and noisy.



She peeked again.

But it also looks exciting, she thought.  
Fun and free.

Her heart started to pound.



Could she?  
Did she dare?

Maya looked around at the box  
she'd made beautiful,



took a deep, brave breath...





and slipped outside.



Maya blinked in the sunshine.

“Hi,” she called to two kids playing nearby.  
“Can I play too?”

“Sure!” they said, waving her over.

Maya took a step toward them.



It felt wonderful to stretch her arms and legs.  
But then she stopped.



Would her box be okay without her?  
She knelt down and peeked inside.

All the wonder and mystery of her box was  
still there, exactly as she'd left it.

Waiting for her if she needed it.





with her —  
outside the box.

She turned and ran toward the noise  
and excitement,  
toward her new friends,  
bringing her wonderful weirdness,  
her beautiful brilliance

# For Tia. —A.H.

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