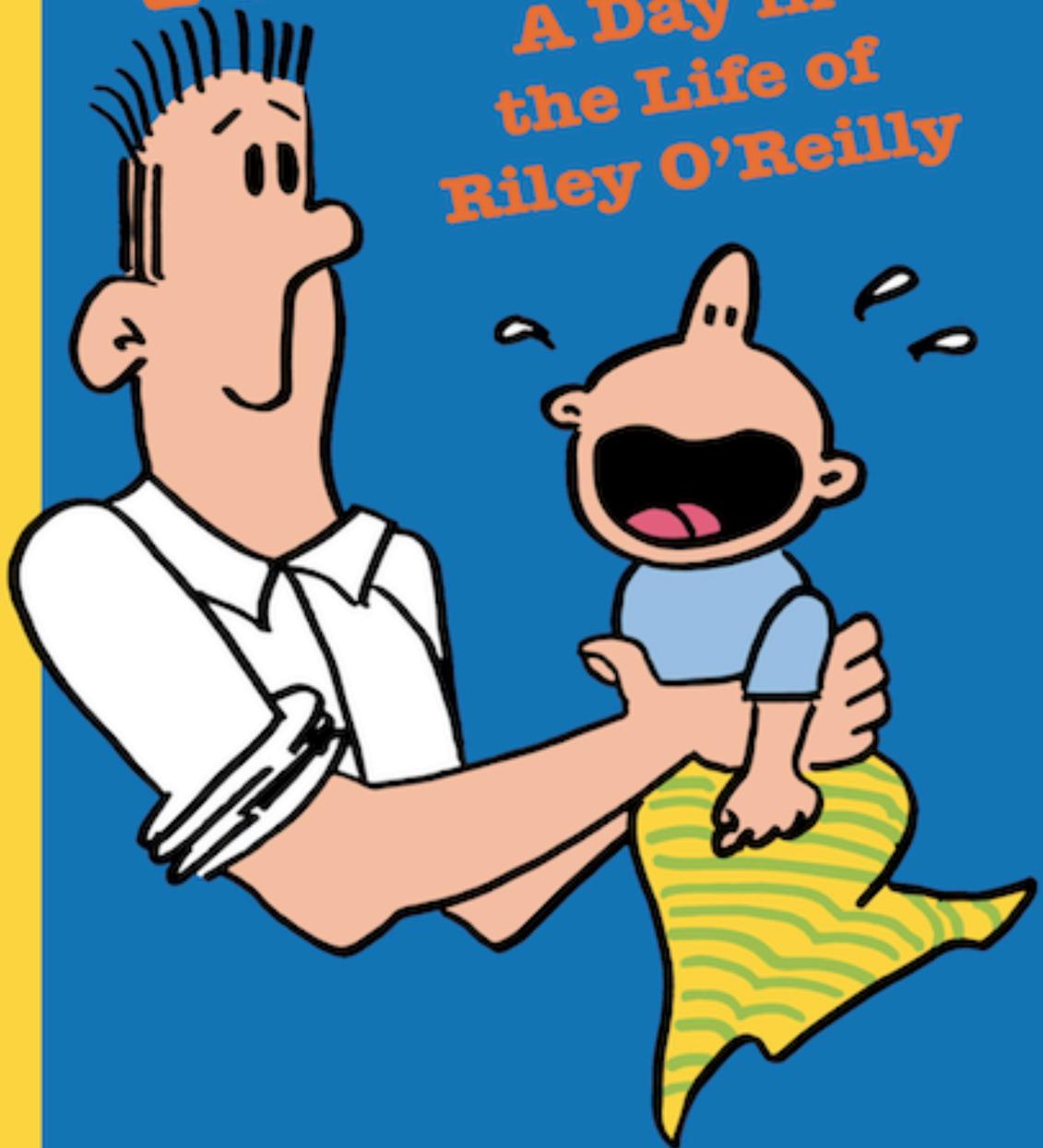


WAHH!

A Day in
the Life of
Riley O'Reilly



Lisa Rowe Fraustino

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This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, locales, or trailers is entirely coincidental.

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**For my son, Dan, because Riley has always
been his favorite character.**

Chapter 1

The Lucky April Fool

One cloudy April Fool's Day night many years ago, an orderly named Orman O'Reilly was whistling his way out of Mercy Hospital, where he worked, and with nothing on his mind but the delicious chicken leg and red potato waiting in his refrigerator, he was not watching his feet. They were rather large and bumbling feet, so when the first big toe reached the strange object that had only seconds earlier been placed at the doorstep, Orman went head over heels and landed on his sit-downer, facing, of all the strange things possible, a wicker laundry basket.

Inside of the basket lay a hand-knit yellow and green baby blanket with a note pinned to it, and inside of the blanket wiggled a baby with an unusually long and pointy nose. The note said READ ME. The baby said "WAHH!"

"Kootchy-kootchy-koo, how are you!?" said Orman, reaching for the note. He caught himself in the nick of time and wagged his finger in all

directions. “I’m not falling for this April Fool’s!” he called. “Come out, come out, whoever you are!”

Nobody came out of the hospital. Nobody came out of the shrubs. Nobody came out of the garbage can. But the newborn cried until its face came out looking like a little red cabbage. “WAHH!”

It was the most unique cry Orman had ever heard, and he had heard thousands of babies wailing in the pediatrics ward of Mercy Hospital. There were no words in the English language to describe that baby’s howl. Nine out of ten people who heard it could only say one thing: “MAKE IT STOP!” In fact, at that very moment dozens of windows were thrown open all over town, dozens of heads poked out of them, and dozens of voices shouted, “MAKE IT STOP!”

“Oh, all right. April Fool I’ll be,” said Orman. He picked himself up off the dusty steps, then picked up the laundry basket and

propped it on his hip. The baby stopped crying as Orman unfolded the note and read:

Here is a baby, to have and to hold,
From this day forward until he grows old.
I love him so! I wish I could keep him,
But if I do, his chances will be slim.
This is no joke! Take it from me,
This baby needs a family.

An unlucky day for that poor baby, right? Born on April Fool's! But it was just that baby's luck that Orman wanted a family more than anything in the world. The right woman hadn't come along yet, and Orman wasn't about to marry the wrong one while he was waiting for her to show up. Well, now he'd just have to get started without her.

Orman peeked under the baby's diaper, named him Riley, and took him straight to the grocery store. Orman was no dummy. Hadn't he delivered supplies by the gazillions to the pediatrics ward? Hadn't he carted the supplies

to the dumpster after they became trash? He knew all about what babies need.

“First you’ll need your bottle and a burp,” he told Riley, “and after that you’ll need a diaper, and then you’ll need your blankie for a nap,” Orman cooed as they wheeled along the Baby Needs aisle at the SuperDuper Market. “Then you’ll need a bath and a new diaper and a bottle and a burp and a diaper and a blankie nap. Then you’ll need a diaper and a bottle and a burp, and after that you’ll need a bath and a diaper.”

“But,” came a voice from the soap section at the end of the aisle, “sometimes it’s diaper, diaper, diaper, bath instead of nap, bottle, diaper, bath. Orman O’Reilly, what in Ralph’s green earth are you doing in this aisle?”

“Marina Maria Martinez!” Orman said in joyful surprise. It could only be her, with her beautiful flowing white hair held back from her face by the cat’s eye glasses on top of her head. The widow Marina Maria Martinez was

Orman's share-a-wall neighbor at Green's Acre, which Orman thought was a fancy name for a simple house. The Greens, who owned it, lived on the entire second floor. Orman and Marina Maria Martinez lived in the two apartments on the first floor.

Orman gestured proudly toward the nose poking out of the blankie in the wicker laundry basket surrounded by disposable diapers, baby bath soap, baby formula, bottles, and an artichoke. (The artichoke was for Orman.)

“Riley, I'm pleased to introduce Marina Maria Martinez. Marina Maria Martinez, meet Riley. Riley O'Reilly.”

As Marina Maria Martinez approached, she took her glasses off the top of her head and rubbed them on her It-Took-Me-Thirty-Years-to-Look-This-Good tee shirt, which had become very soft and faded in all the years she had been wearing it. She put her glasses on her face, stared at Riley, stared at Orman, stared at Riley, and thought: *Oh boy, where did you get that*

nose? But what she said when she stared back at Orman was, “Oh boy, where did he come from?”

“Where do you think babies come from?” said Orman. “The hospital! His mother had to give him up. She didn’t want to, but this baby needs a family, and so do I.”

“Well, well, well,” murmured Marina Maria Martinez. She was shocked and didn’t know what else to say. She’d expected to hear that Orman was babysitting for someone like his cousin Zeke twice removed. The last thing she’d expected to hear was that Orman O’Reilly—Orman!—had become a father.

Orman pulled the blankie fringe aside so Marina Maria Martinez could see the baby’s face. “Well. Hm! Well!” she mumbled as Riley yawned a great big yawn. His little tongue came out of his mouth and his lips wiggled this way and that until the corners both turned up at once.

“He’s smiling! He likes you, Marina Maria Martinez!” Orman never knew he could be so

excited over such a little thing. Now, he could hardly wait for Riley's first step.

"It's just gas," Marina Maria Martinez said matter-of-factly. She had been the eldest of sixteen children. She knew all about babies. (That's why she had chosen never to have any herself.)

Just then the baby's eyes popped open. His mouth popped open, too, and out of it came the loudest wail ever heard in the Baby Needs aisle of the SuperDuper Market.

"Ouch!" said Marina Maria Martinez as tactfully as she could manage, instead of saying the first words that came to her mind. However, somebody in the pickle section did shout them: "MAKE IT STOP!"

And so Orman said to Marina Maria Martinez, "See you later!" and gave the cart a running start so he could jump on back for a free ride.

Marina Maria Martinez shook her head in disbelief, watching Orman whiz toward the

express lane with his basket of baby. “Now I’ve seen everything,” she said to herself. But she was mistaken.

To rest of WAHH! is available on Amazon and Barnes & Noble after July 1, 2015.

Author Biography

Lisa Rowe Fraustino is the author of many award-winning books. She received the 2010 Milkweed Prize in Children’s Literature for *The Hole in the Wall*, which was also named a *Booklist* Top Ten Environmental Book for Youth. Her first children’s novel, *Grass and Sky*, was a Junior Library Guild selection, and *Ash* was named a Best Book for Young Adults by the American Library Association. Her historical novel about the Salem Witch Trials, *I Walk in Dread*, is one of the most beloved titles in the popular Dear America series. Her picture book *The Hickory Chair*, illustrated by Benny Andrews, earned a long list of honors and is often taught in elementary schools.

When she's not writing, Dr. Lisa is a professor of English at Eastern Connecticut State University and a visiting professor in the Graduate Program in Children's Literature at Hollins University. She is married to a code monkey and has three mischievous cats at home. Her three children are grown up now but once upon a time were her inspiration for writing *WAHH!*

Acknowledgements

This little book was many years in the making. The earliest drafts were written in the 1990s when I was teaching fifth grade and a mother of three schoolchildren. The kids I read the drafts to really loved the story—loved it more, in fact, than any other work-in-progress I'd ever shared with young listeners. Subsequently, I showed the manuscript to a few editors, but none of them could see how the book might fit into their publishing markets. With a few notable exceptions—the Amelia Bedelia books, for instance, or my classic favorite *Mr. Popper's Penguins*—the expectation is that a children's book protagonist be in the same developmental age group or perhaps one small step ahead of the presumed reader. Neither the adult Orman nor the newborn

Riley matches that profile. These editors indicated that they considered the manuscript very well written and entertaining, but rather than take a chance on publishing it, they encouraged me to apply my talents to other projects they could sell. WAHH!

The manuscript would likely still be in a box of drafts literally collecting dust if it hadn't been for my college student Alee Rogan. After completing my course on Literary Publishing, she began an internship with me to enhance the new media content of the course and learn more about the process of publishing e-books. In brainstorming ways to obtain appropriate material for her to try her hand at digital publishing, I remembered my abandoned book. What better way to find the audience who will enjoy *A Day in the Life of Riley O'Reilly*?

I thank my three children and the umpteen fifth graders who inspired me all those years ago, and I thank my husband who inspires me every day now, but most of all I thank Alee for finally delivering this baby into the world.