

### [What inspired Mañanaland?](#)

My editor, Tracy Mack, and I had been talking about what my next book might be after ECHO. We had thought that I might do a picture book. When I was in New York next, as luck would have it, we were able to meet Peter Sis, who illustrated my book, THE DREAMER, for tea. He had a portfolio with him with many sketches of stone arch bridges in Prague, where he is from. The bridges were ancient and intriguing and mysterious. I loved the metaphorical quality of the bridges, too—the connecting of one side of the river to the other. After that get-together, Tracy and I discussed ideas about a picture book, possibly with Peter. As so often happens in publishing though, he was busy with projects, and my story grew and grew until it was no longer something that might fit into 32 pages.

Initially, I imagined a boy walking near a bridge on the bank of a river with his father. At first, I saw the boy with a wild imagination who asked his father questions like, “How can I catch the moon?” And “How can I reach the horizon?” But it evolved into the boy asking his father if he could hold tomorrow in the palm of his hand. I didn’t know why the boy wanted to hold tomorrow. I didn’t know the adventure that would ensue. I *did* know from that very first visualization that there would be some sort of conflict or frustration between the boy and his father, and hopefully, a reunion.

### [Tell us about Maximiliano Córdoba.](#)

Max lives somewhere in the Americas, long after once upon a time, and long before happily ever after. He is twelve years old and loves fútbol. He comes from a long line of stone masons who build bridges. It is a humble, yet noble legacy. Even though he grows up not knowing his mother—her identity is shrouded in secrecy—he has the loving support of protective relatives. Then, his life unravels.

### [Please share some of your creative process and how you imagined and wrote this story.](#)

I began to wonder about the circumstances that would allow Max to hold tomorrow, and who could facilitate such a thing. I created a legend that had been handed down by generations of bridge builders about a hidden bridge and a mysterious gatekeeper who would allow a person who is true of heart to go on a journey with her to hold tomorrow.

The more important question then became *why* Max needed to go on this quest. Something dramatic needed to happen in his twelve year old life. I looked within. I was Max’s age when my mother asked me if I remembered my biological father. I

didn't. He was never discussed in any circles in my presence. Nothing bad. Nothing good. Nothing. It was a strange sensation growing up—the knowing, but the not-knowing and the not-acknowledging, and the raised eyebrows when the talk was too close to the subject. So I began to wonder if Max's angst could be for a similar reason—family secrets that makes him question where he fits into the world. I mined my experience to write about Max's frustration and all the questions that followed his revelations, not the least of which was, "What will become of me?" He sets out to find the answers, putting his faith in the legend.

[What is something about this book that you'd like to share that isn't often asked?](#)

How many times did I rewrite? I never get it right the first time or the first five times. I often become sidetracked. Thank goodness I have a wonderful editor, Tracy Mack, who keeps me headed in the right direction. I wish writing was an orderly process for me. Instead, it's a messy evolution fraught with self-doubt, do-overs, deletions, and going back to revisit. Any final success is the tip of an iceberg built on many unsuccessful attempts at sculpting a character and a story.

[What is something you strived for in \*Mañanaland\*? Tell us why it is important to you.](#)

I wanted this story to be far-reaching and parable-like so that it would reflect the age-old legacy of people needing protection and those who rise up to protect them—people helping people and the never-ending story about those in hiding and their guardians.

I purposefully set the story in an obscure place that could be any number of countries, villages, or even in our very own backyards. And with equal intention, I did not set the story in a particular year because it happened centuries ago, it is happening now all over the world, and is likely to continue in the tomorrows-to-come.

At its core, I wanted *Mañanaland* to be about adults modeling kindness and courage, and nurturing in their children, a legacy of compassion. And I hoped that the reader would realize that *Mañanaland* is not only a place, but a state of mind.