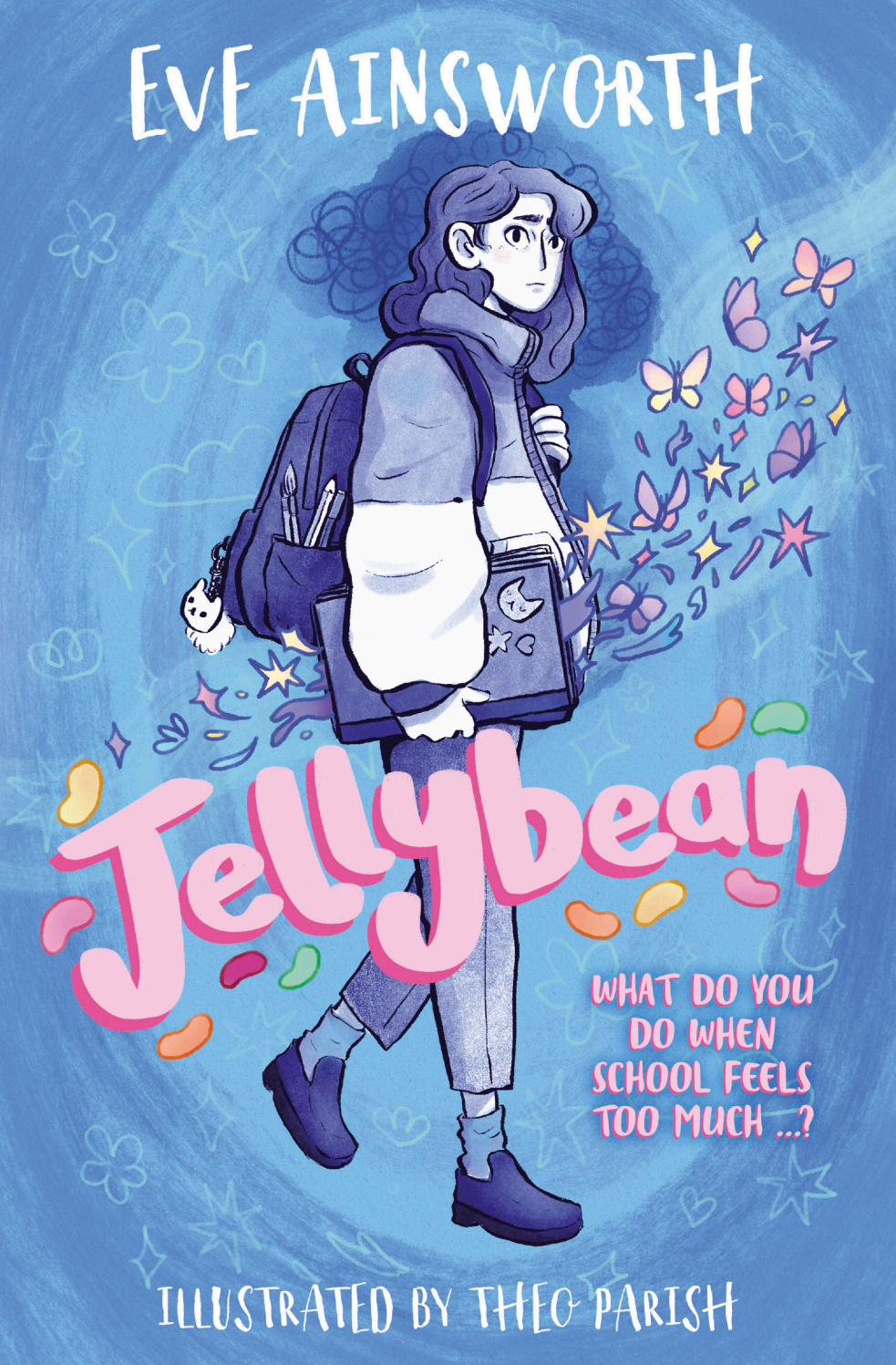
EVE AINSWORTH



Jellybean

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN SCHOOL FEELS TOO MUCH ...?

ILLUSTRATED BY THEO PARISH

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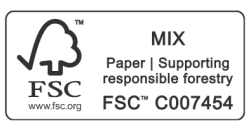
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To anyone who has ever struggled with anxiety.
You are not alone x



CHAPTER 1

Ellie Bean is walking. It's a walk she knows well. She knows she has to go along the street outside her house down to the end and then turn right onto the main road.

There's a lot of traffic on the main road. It's loud at this time of the morning, and Ellie has to use the lights to cross over. Then it's three more roads, one more set of lights and a short trip down the path that runs past the shops.

And then she will be there.

She will be at school.

Ellie takes a deep breath. Her bag isn't that heavy, but it's uncomfy. She's not used to carrying it any more.

Her new school shoes feel stiff and tight, and they hit the ground hard as she walks. Her coat is a little too big, and she is already feeling hot in the soft morning light.

It will only take a few more minutes and she will be there. It's not a big deal. All she has to do is keep moving.

But Ellie feels like she is moving through thick mud. Her legs don't seem to want to take her in the right direction, and her head is full of thoughts and questions.

Because Ellie is terrified.

This isn't a normal day for her.

In fact, it's one of the scariest of her life.

*

Ellie's mum had done her best to keep Ellie calm before she left the house this morning. She had made Ellie's very favourite breakfast

(pancakes with maple syrup) and played her favourite music to help her relax.

"It's just another day," her mum said. "Your friends will be there. Holly, Sophie and Meg can't wait to see you."

Ellie had nodded. She wanted to see them too. They had sent her messages last night. They called her by her nickname "Jellybean" and made her laugh with silly jokes. They had made lots of plans. They were going to meet up every break and lunchtime. Holly was going to walk with Ellie to lessons. Ellie wasn't ever going to be by herself.

"You're doing your favourite things today too," her mum added. "Art, History and double English."

These were the lessons that Ellie had missed the most. She loved English, and part of her couldn't wait to get back to the class.

And yet it had been so difficult to finish her breakfast, to chew her pancakes and to tell her mum that she was going to be OK.

It felt like a lie.

*

Ellie is closer to school. Every breath, every step is taking her nearer. At the end of the road, she sees other pupils in the same uniform as her. They are in small groups, laughing and joking as they walk to school.

Ellie feels as if there is a dark cloud inside her.

This is the first time she has done this journey in so long because Ellie hasn't been to school for nearly a year.