From the Creators of the *New York Times* Bestselling Ivy + Bean Series

Stella & Marigold

Mermaids and Mix-Ups



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Annie Barrows
New York Times Bestselling Author

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Two-Time Caldecott Medalist

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Stella & Marigold!

"Stella and Marigold are a force to be reckoned with."
—*The Horn Book*

★ "Readers will long for a sibling like Marigold or Stella."
—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

★ "[A] spot-on childlike perspective that is both funny and keenly observant."
—*School Library Journal*, starred review

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★ "Sweeps readers into a world of childhood misadventures and understanding family members."
—*Booklist*, starred review

★ "All of the heart. None of the pablum. Sisterhood at its finest and freshest."
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A *USA Today* bestseller
A Bookshop.org Best Kids Chapter Book of the Year
A Kids' Indie Next List selection
A Good Housekeeping Kids' Book Award winner

For our 25 best friends
—S. B. and A. B.

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Stella & Marigold

Mermaids and Mix-Ups

Book 2

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Written by **Annie Barrows** · Illustrated by **Sophie Blackall**

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The Purple Presents



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There was the whole world, and in it, there was a city, and in that city, there was a house, and in that house, there were two half-houses, and in one of the half-houses—the bottom one—Stella and Marigold lived with their mother and father.

Outside the half-house, in different houses in different cities (but of course still in the same world), there were other people who were part of Stella and Marigold's family. Some of them, like Grandma and Oona and Carson and JJ, they loved. Some of them, like Uncle Matt, who lived in Norway, they didn't know very well. And one of them, Cousin Judy, they didn't know at all. They had never met her, not even once. But for some reason, she sent them lots and lots of presents.

You would think that all those presents would make Judy Stella and Marigold's favorite cousin. But that's because you weren't the one getting the presents. They always looked exciting from the outside, wrapped in spangly paper and big stiff ribbons. But on the inside, they were things like matching velvet dresses with scratchy white collars. Or Little Belle makeup kits that spurted all over the carpet. Or gigantic china dolls that instantly broke.

Even if Stella and Marigold were glad about the present when they opened the spangly paper, they never stayed glad—especially not Stella, because she had to write the thank-you note, since she was seven. Marigold, who was only four and eight-twelfths, got off easy. She just had to draw a thankful picture.

As usual, Cousin Judy's latest present had looked good at first. She had sent two identical books—one for Stella and one for Marigold—with sparkling purple covers. Marigold could only read sometimes, so Stella read the silver words on the cover out loud: "*Me and My Besties! Our Secrets, Our Faves, Our Fun!*"

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"What?" asked Marigold.

There was a little lock on the front, with a little key. Stella unlocked it and opened the book. There was a purple pen inside. "Oh," she said. "I get it. You're supposed to write in it."

"Writing in books is not allowed," said Marigold.

"In this kind of book, it's okay," said Stella. "See? It tells you what to write. It says *My Fave Food*, and then you're supposed to list your favorite foods."

Marigold frowned. "Why?"

Stella didn't answer. She was flipping through her book. "*My Dream Day. Top Secret Thoughts*—why write them down, if they're secret? *My Besties*."

"What's besties?" asked Marigold.

"Best friends," explained Stella. She stared at the page. "Look how many lines there are."

Marigold looked.



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"That's how many friends you're supposed to have," Stella said. She counted the lines. Twenty-five! "I don't think I have twenty-five friends."

"Write them, and then count," said Marigold.

So Stella picked up the purple pen and wrote *Lucy*. Then *Ainara*. Then—Stella frowned. "Can I write *Grandma*?"

"Sure!" said Marigold.

Stella did. Then she wrote *Carson*, *Oona*, and *JJ* on the next lines. "That's only six."

Marigold looked anxiously at Stella. "You must have more than that."

Stella thought. "Oh! Evelyn!" She wrote the name.

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"Which Evelyn?"

"Evelyn-Evelyn. And Olivia, too. That's eight."

"Write down all the kids in your class," Marigold suggested. "Then you'll have more than twenty-five."

Stella hesitated. "It says *Besties*. They have to be real friends. Friends I would invite over."

Marigold thought hard. "What about Janai? She comes over!"

"She comes over because she babysits us," said Stella.

Marigold scowled. "I want Janai."

"Make your own list," Stella said, and shoved Marigold's book across the art table.

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Marigold shoved it back. "You make my list. I can't write that many words."

Stella was glad to stop writing her own list. She opened Marigold's purple book and took out her purple pen. "Okay," she said. "Who's number one?"

"Tamika! Tamika, then Chris!"

"But they're teachers," said Stella. "You can't invite them over."

"But I love them," argued Marigold. "Tamika, Chris, Grandma, Oona, Carson, JJ," she chanted.

"Okay, okay, okay," said Stella, writing. "What about kids? What about Ellie?"

"No," Marigold said firmly. "I love Didi."

Stella wrote *Didi*.

"But Didi doesn't love me," Marigold said sadly. "Didi only plays with Ellie."

Stella crossed Didi out. "Laredo?" Laredo lived with Ms. Raimondi in the half-house upstairs. "You like him, and he comes over."

Marigold looked up at the ceiling, where Laredo was. Then she shook her head. "He comes over when he needs to borrow Mommy's roasting pan." She frowned. "He doesn't come over to play." She peered over Stella's arm at the page. "That's only six."

"Do you want me to write Janai?" asked Stella hopelessly.

Marigold shook her head again. "I don't have enough friends."

Stella nodded. "Me neither." She got up from the art table and flopped on the couch. But Marigold continued staring at their lists.

"We need more," she said.


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