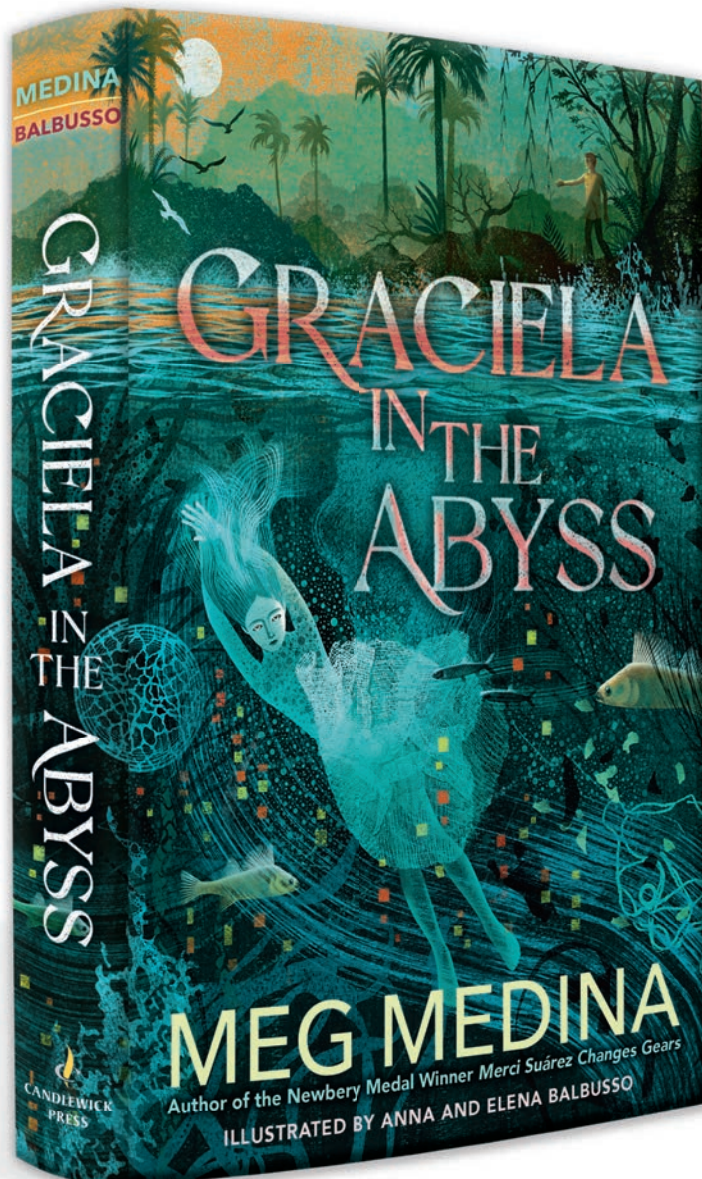


A thrilling new dark fantasy, set in the deep ocean, from
beloved author **MEG MEDINA**

A SEA GHOST, A MORTAL BOY, AND A DANGEROUS ENCHANTED HARPOON . . .

A Newbery Medalist takes us far beneath the waves in this extraordinary foray into fantasy.



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In the deepest recesses of the ocean, Graciela—once an ordinary girl—now makes sea glass and assists her friend, Amina, as she welcomes newly awakened sea ghosts from their death sleep. Though Graciela’s spirit is young, she has lived at the bottom of the ocean for more than a hundred years. Meanwhile, in the mortal world on land, twelve-year-old Jorge Leon works in his family’s forge. He’s heard of the supernatural spirits living beneath the ocean’s waves—tales that do nothing to quell his fear of the water. But when Jorge discovers a hand-wrought harpoon with the power to spear a sea ghost, he knows he must destroy it any way he can.

When the harpoon is accidentally reunited with its vengeful creator, unlikely allies Graciela and Jorge have no choice but to work together to keep evil spirits from wreaking havoc on both the living and the dead. If only the answer to saving what they care about didn’t lie within the depths of the abyss . . . Newbery Medal winner Meg Medina and illustrators Anna and Elena Balbusso have crafted a thoughtful tale infused with magic and high-stakes adventure that will leave readers wondering what power lies in the depths of the ocean—and inside each of us.

MEG MEDINA is a former National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature and the author of the Newbery Medal-winning book *Merci Suárez Changes Gears*, which was also a Kirkus Prize finalist, and its sequels, *Merci Suárez Can’t Dance* and *Merci Suárez Plays It Cool*, as well as several award-winning young adult novels and picture books. About this novel, she says, “To survive in the darkest depths of the sea, creatures must learn to make their own spectacular light. In so many ways, that ability mirrors what young people need on their journey of growing up.” The daughter of Cuban immigrants, Meg Medina lives in Richmond, Virginia.

ANNA and ELENA BALBUSSO, also known as the Balbusso Twins, are an award-winning Italian sister artist team. Their illustrations have been published throughout the world in various media, including more than fifty books. Their artwork has received more than ninety international honors and awards, including the Stevan Dohanos Award from the Society of Illustrators. They live in Milan.



A note from Meg Medina about *Graciela in the Abyss*

My new novel, *Graciela in the Abyss*, might not be what my readers expect. Most of my best-known books, like the Merci Suárez series, have been contemporary realism. This time I have written a dark fantasy.

Two things drew me to writing a fantasy. The first was the readers. Any teacher or librarian will tell you that spooky fantasies are beloved by young readers. They enjoy being terrified—at least within the pages of a book, where they're guaranteed a safe landing when it's all over.

The second draw to this genre was that dark fantasy seems like the perfect choice as we emerge together from the acute pandemic years and their aftermath. The chaos, conflict, and loss left behind so many fissures in everyone's lives, including children's. As we have broken apart and tried to knit together again, there have been questions about what we owe one another in a family, in a school, and in a community.

Graciela in the Abyss is set in the deep ocean, which is largely unknown. Only about 5 percent of the ocean has been charted, and even less of the abyss. I built on the fascinating facts that we do have: some creatures that survive there, the volcanoes belching acid, the caves and the trenches. It is a setting that could be equally awe-inspiring and foreboding.

Of all the wonders of the deep—true and invented—the one that hooked me most was bioluminescence. The abyss is a place where sunlight cannot reach, so what lives in the deep must learn to make its own light, whether to lure, hunt, escape, deceive, or scream for help. The same might be said about growing up in trying times: Even in the darkest of places and circumstances, such as during a global pandemic, young people must discover their own light to survive and thrive. Their light is their source of power and, if we're lucky, what they'll use for the common good.

It was scary to write a fantasy for the first time. I hope it will be scary to read, for all the right reasons. But mostly, I hope young readers enjoy the thrill, even as they ponder the bigger questions tucked inside the adventure, the questions about what we owe one another, questions that loom big and dark and deep.

Illustration © 2025 by Anna and Elena Balbusso



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