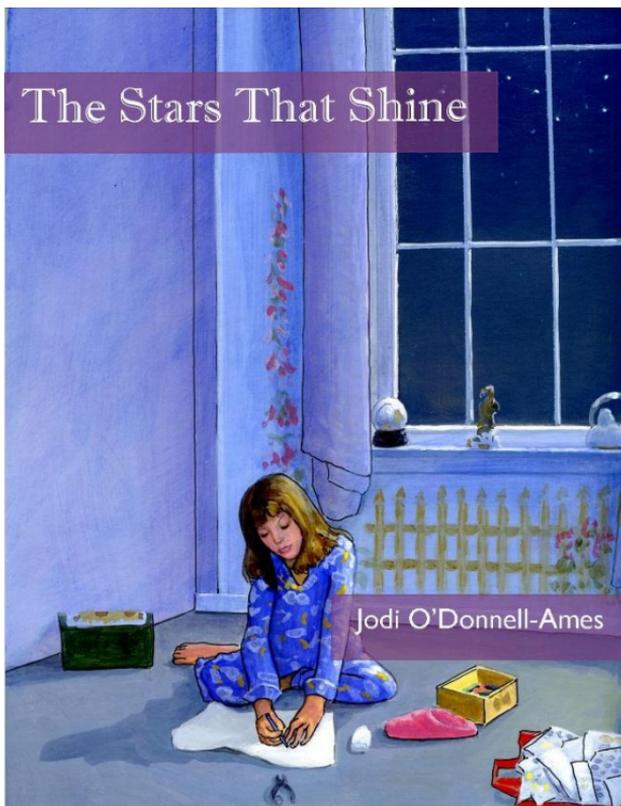


# The Stars That Shine

Jodi O'Donnell-Ames



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By  
Jodi O'Donnell-Ames 

Interior illustrations by  
Alina N. O'Donnell



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# ★ Dedication

To the many stars that shine in the battle against ALS, especially my late husband, Kevin Gerard O'Donnell, whose heroic journey encouraged all that I do and am.

To Alina, whose love and admiration for her daddy inspired this story.

To Benton, Nora and Adam, my harbingers of hope and love.

To Mom, the first writer in the family.

# ★ Acknowledgements

Thanks go to Mike Budden, a gifted artist, for a beautiful cover illustration, and to the many people who have read and encouraged me to write this story. Also, a special thank you to the Hope Loves Company Board. Your dedication to HLC means the world to me.

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## Chapter One

Sarah sat next to her mommy at the breakfast table. Mommy was having hot buttered toast and honey. Like every morning, Sarah was starving and couldn't inhale breakfast quickly enough to silence the growls of her unruly stomach. Sarah's mom had plopped her head alongside the plate of toast, resting her forehead on her folded arms. Her hair was messy. Sarah touched her mommy's knotted hair and her mommy, scooping her arm under the table, held Sarah's other hand. When

Sarah was mid-bite of her usual breakfast of crunchy oats, raisins and bananas, her mommy lifted her head, rubbed her eyes and began to speak.

“Have you thought about riding your bike in the Fourth of July parade tomorrow?” Then her eyes fluttered, begging to close.

Sarah stopped chewing. She placed her spoon on the table and slid the bowl away.

It was only last summer when Sarah and her daddy had decorated their bikes with streamers and flags and joined the excited marchers in the parade. But this year was different.

“Do I have to be in the parade tomorrow?” Sarah wanted to know.

Sarah’s mom lifted her coffee mug to take a sip and had a bite of toast. Then she wiped her mouth free of sticky crumbs, put her hand on Sarah’s arm and said, “But you made a special hat and shirt for the parade, aren’t you excited?”

The truth was that things were different this year and Sarah was anything but excited. She wanted to forget what made this year different. She wanted to forget that her daddy could no longer walk and needed a wheelchair. Yesterday, there was a beeping noise, and then a truck pulled into her driveway and left a wheelchair, Daddy's wheelchair. Sarah wanted to scream how mad she felt because her daddy's disease, which was called Lou Gehrig's Disease, made his muscles soft and weak. She wanted to yell, WHY MY DADDY? But instead she muttered, "No."

"But I thought that you loved parades," Mommy said.

"Not anymore," said Sarah. "May I be excused? I'm not hungry."

Sarah's mom nodded yes.

It was exactly one year ago that Sarah knew something was wrong. She and Daddy were playing soccer when Daddy fell. He fell several

times, and he was normally very good at soccer. When Daddy took a shot at the goal, he fell hard and needed help standing again.

After that, Sarah had many visits with Grammy and Poppy while Mommy and Daddy went to see different doctors.

At first, the doctors and her parents weren't too worried. But when no one could figure out what was wrong with Daddy's wobbly legs, everyone was worried.

It was soon before the Fourth of July parade last year that Daddy was told he had Lou Gehrig's Disease.

Now, a year later, Sarah hoped to make the disease disappear. On her way to Daddy's room, she saw her magic wand from her fairy princess costume, shimmering on the carpet. Delighted, she gave it a whirl and said, "Abracadabra!" After she hopped onto Daddy's messy bed, among blankets and pillows, and showered his cheeks

with kisses, she asked, “Can you walk now, Sleepyhead?”

Daddy smiled. His face was scratchy. He tried to move his hand closer to Sarah but his hand wouldn’t budge.

“Why don’t you come snuggle with me, Sarah?”

Sarah snuggled next to her daddy’s warmth and waited for his answer.

“No, sweetie, I still can’t walk, but that won’t keep me from parading with my princess! We have lots of decorating to do today if we want to look patriotic tomorrow.”

Sarah hopped off the bed and dropped her magic wand into the trash can where it hit the bottom with a clang.

“That’s no magic wand!” she muttered as she left the room.

## About the Author



Jodi O'Donnell-Ames is a certified teacher, writer, massage therapist, member of Union Fire Co. and Rescue Squad and tireless advocate for people with Lou Gehrig's Disease, or ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis). She is also the founder and president of Hope Loves Company, a non-profit organization committed to helping the children and grand-children of people living with ALS. She lives with her husband, Benton, and three wonderful children in New Jersey.

## ★ About the Illustrator

Alina O'Donnell is currently studying English and Environmental Studies at the University of Delaware. She has been involved with Hope Loves Company since its inception and has always loved to doodle and paint since her first art class at age two.

