



Hija!

Welcome to the second book in my *Lost & Found* series, all about refugee Sami who is still struggling to get to grips with the trauma of his journey from Syria, as well as life in the UK. With the long summer holidays stretching before them, the band seem to be losing their spark – and when Sami finds himself falling for fellow band member Lexie it feels like one complication too many. Can Sami build a new life for himself in Millford, or are his feelings on ice for good?

The refugee crisis is perhaps the biggest human tragedy of our time, and this book is my attempt to raise awareness by telling just one of its many stories. *Sami's Silver Lining* is an emotional book, but I think you'll love it! Switch off your phone, curl up and start reading . . . and remember that no matter how tough things may get, there is always, always a silver lining to be found.

Cathy Cassidy, x x x

Books by Cathy Cassidy

Lost & Found

LOVE FROM LEXIE
SAMI'S SILVER LINING

The Chocolate Box Girls

CHERRY CRUSH
MARSHMALLOW SKYE
SUMMER'S DREAM
COCO CARAMEL
SWEET HONEY
FORTUNE COOKIE

LIFE IS SWEET

BITTERSWEET: SHAY'S STORY
CHOCOLATES AND FLOWERS: ALFIE'S STORY
HOPES AND DREAMS: JODIE'S STORY
MOON AND STARS: FINCH'S STORY
SNOWFLAKES AND WISHES: LAWRIE'S STORY
THE CHOCOLATE BOX SECRETS

ANGEL CAKE
BROKEN HEART CLUB
DIZZY
DRIFTWOOD
INDIGO BLUE
GINGERSNAPS
LOOKING-GLASS GIRL
LUCKY STAR
SCARLETT
SUNDAE GIRL

LETTERS TO CATHY

For younger readers

SHINE ON, DAIZY STAR
DAIZY STAR AND THE PINK GUITAR
STRIKE A POSE, DAIZY STAR
DAIZY STAR, OOH LA LA!

Cathy Cassidy,

SAMI'S
SILVER
LINING



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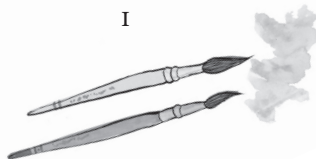


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The sun rises slowly over the island in a blur of red and gold – I think it will be the last thing I ever see.

My breathing is raw, ragged, and I'm struggling to keep my head above the crashing waves. I think that I have swallowed half the Aegean Sea, that I might as well stop fighting, give in to it, let myself sink down beneath the surface and die.

I am cold, so cold my limbs feel like ice, and the salt that crusts my lips feels like frost. The island looks closer now, but it might as well be a million miles away because I have no more fight left in me – I have nothing at all. Another



wave lifts me and carries me forward, leaving me face down in the shallows. My hands claw at wet, gritty sand, and I lie exhausted, frozen, gasping for air.

All is lost.



1

Lucky

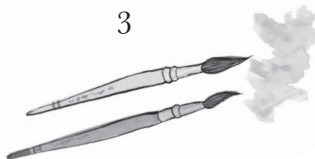
They say I am lucky, the luckiest boy alive. They say that I must be brave and strong to have survived the hardships life has thrown at me, that I have been given a chance for a new beginning and must grab that chance with both hands.

I am lucky, lucky, lucky . . . or so they tell me.

I didn't choose any of this, and new beginnings feel empty and hollow when you have nobody to share them with.

Well, I have my aunt, my uncle and two grown-up cousins I've barely met. But although they have opened their arms and their hearts to me, I cannot do the same. I cannot let myself care any more, because I am not as strong as people think. I am broken, useless, like a piece of damaged pottery

3



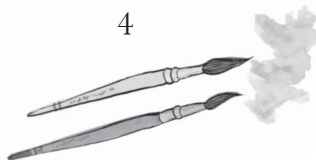
that looks whole but can never be the same again. I look OK on the outside, but inside I am flawed, fractured.

I am not what people think.

I am a fifteen-year-old boy held together with glue and good luck. There will come a time when my luck runs out, and I will fall apart. The world will see that I was damaged and hurting all along, and perhaps people will understand me a little better. Of course, it will be too late by then.

Sometimes I wish that we had never left Syria, even though our city was a war zone, and everyone an enemy. The government my father and mother once respected had turned against the people, and rebels took to the streets to fight back. Then came the extremists, like vultures feeding on carrion, bringing harsh new laws that dragged us all back to the dark ages. We prayed for the west to help us, but when help arrived it came in the form of western bombs that rained down from the skies and destroyed what was left of the place I once called home.

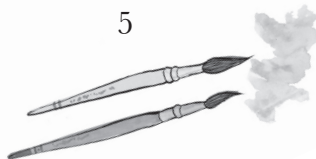
Sometimes I wish that we had stayed in the refugee camp, even though we were crammed three families to a tent, each tent so close they were almost touching. So close that sickness spread faster than wildfire.



I wish we hadn't taken passage on that boat to Kos, but my father said it would be one step closer to Britain, where my mother's brother lived. Uncle Dara and Aunt Zenna would give us shelter. Sometimes I wish I had stopped fighting then and sunk beneath the waves of the Aegean Sea, the way my father, my mother and my sister did.

I was the lucky one.

I swallowed down my grief, carried it inside me, but it was like a parasite that gnawed away at everything that was good. Eventually I got to the mainland and joined a long line of people who were walking across Europe. I walked until the soles of my boots were worn away, until I had gathered a group of kids around me, who like me were travelling alone. We stuck together because it was safer that way, but still we faced danger every day. We grew tough and cynical and ruthless, and we cried silently at night for all that we had lost. At a camp on the Italian border, charity workers tried to find us places to live. I told them I had family in Britain, and after a long wait they managed to trace my uncle and aunt and get me added to the last consignment of unaccompanied refugee minors to be allowed into the UK.



All I knew of my aunt and uncle were the stories my parents had told and a vague idea that they ran a tailor's shop in London. In fact, they didn't live in London at all, and the tailor's shop was actually a dry-cleaner's, but the charity that was helping me back then tracked them down anyway.

I remember the first time I saw Uncle Dara and Aunt Zenna, standing on the pavement outside the shop to welcome me, the nephew they hadn't even known they had. They were older than my parents, but Dara had a look of my mother all the same: dark wavy hair, stern brows, eyes that glinted with the promise of mischief.

'My little sister Yasmine's boy!' my uncle said, anguished. 'After all this time, how can it be? You are welcome here, Sami. We are family, yes?' He threw his arms around me and I felt the dampness of his tears against my cheek.

I was safe.

I was lucky.

I was home.

My father liked to look at the stars. He would sit on the flat roof of our old house in Damascus, where the railings were lined with terracotta pots of tomatoes, aubergines and peppers, and the warm breeze was heavy with the scent of jasmine, and we'd gaze at the big dark canopy of the night sky.

★ ★ 'Play the flute for us, Sami,' my father would say, and I'd work my way through my scales yet again, squeaky and slow. I got better, of course, until I could play pretty well, until I could provide a soundtrack for my father to look at the stars.

'Head in the clouds,' my mother would say, but there were rarely any clouds back then - just acres of sky, cool as silk, pierced with little bursts of silver light.

My father loved the night sky so much that he moved the old brass bedstead up to the roof. He and my mother slept there, while my little sister Roza and I would lie on our narrow beds in the room below and listen to the whisper of their voices, faint and reassuring, like distant birdsong. If it rained, which was rare, my mother would grab the pillows and the coverlet, and run down into the house, and my father would grab the bedroll and follow her.

