

# The Neighborhood Giveaway



Chloe Chang wasn't sure about giving up her blue, pink, and purple mermaid palace. Her twin brother Clark had packed a paper bag full of T-shirts and shorts that no longer fit him.

"It's time to go," called their mother, Mrs. Chang.

The twins raced from their bedroom to the living room. On the floor, they saw a basket full of fresh zucchini, baby board books, and a candleholder that looked like a tree branch. Clark plopped his bag down. Chloe clung to her mermaid palace. Their dad, Mr. Chang, loaded everything into the family's big-wheeled wagon. When he reached for the palace, Chloe put out her hand.

"I want to carry it myself," she said.

"You've got it, kiddo," said Mr. Chang.



by Jennifer Chen  
Art by Gabby Correia

text © 2023 by Jennifer Chen, art © 2023 by Gabby Correia



Mr. Chang and Mrs. Chang took turns lugging the wagon to the park. Chloe and Clark walked behind them. The castle felt heavy in Chloe’s arms, but she refused to put it in the wagon. Clark pointed at a banner hanging between two tree trunks that read in big bold letters: “Neighborhood Giveaway.”

“Look! It’s right there!” Clark shouted.

Their neighborhood park was brimming with bags and boxes. Each family brought gently used items that they no longer needed, and everyone was invited to take what they would like at the monthly gathering. Chloe’s eyes grew wide as she took in all the toys resting on picnic blankets. Some were baby toys, but there



were also plastic sand buckets, stuffed animals, and 300-piece puzzles. One puzzle showed puppy dogs playing in grass. Clark picked it up and pointed at a pug on the box.

“He looks just like Chewie,” said Clark.

Their dad nodded as he unpacked the items they had brought, placing them on a red blanket. “But we have enough puzzles right now,” Dad said. Clark frowned, but he put the puzzle down.

“Clark, let’s check out what else is here,” said Mrs. Chang.

Clark happily bounced behind his mom. Chloe hung back with her dad.

“Why do we have to give away our stuff?” asked Chloe.

“Honey, I know it’s hard to say goodbye to things you used to play with. But your mom and I like to give away things we don’t need anymore. Our neighbors can use them,” Mr. Chang explained.

Ms. Ruby stopped at their blanket. Chloe waved at her. Ms. Ruby was their next-door neighbor. She grew large stalks of kale in her backyard. On the weekends, she often brought over colorful balloons for Chloe and Clark. Mr. Chang handed Ms. Ruby three shiny green zucchini.

“For your delicious zucchini bread,” said Mr. Chang.

Chloe perked up at the mention of Ms. Ruby’s zucchini bread. When she baked, Ms. Ruby always brought over a loaf to share, filled with chocolate chips and shredded zucchini.

“Thank you. I’ll make sure to double the chocolate chips in my next zucchini bread,” said Ms. Ruby, winking at Chloe.

Chloe smiled at Ms. Ruby. She looked around at her neighbors’ blankets. They had brought all sorts of things. Kitchen blenders, squeaky dog toys, ripe green apples, and potted plants were all waiting for new homes. The park’s picnic tables were filled with



blueberry muffins, fresh lemonade, and fruits and vegetables from her neighbors' gardens. On Mr. Thomas's blanket, she spotted a stuffed yellow duck.

"I'll be right back," said Chloe. She put down her mermaid palace and took off for Mr. Thomas's blanket.

Chloe bent down to pick up the duck. When she squeezed it, the duck let out a squeak.

"Chewie will love this," said Chloe to Mr. Thomas.

"Please take it. My poodle doesn't play with it anymore," said Mr. Thomas.

"Chewie loves all squeaky toys," said Chloe.

And Muddle loves all muffins.

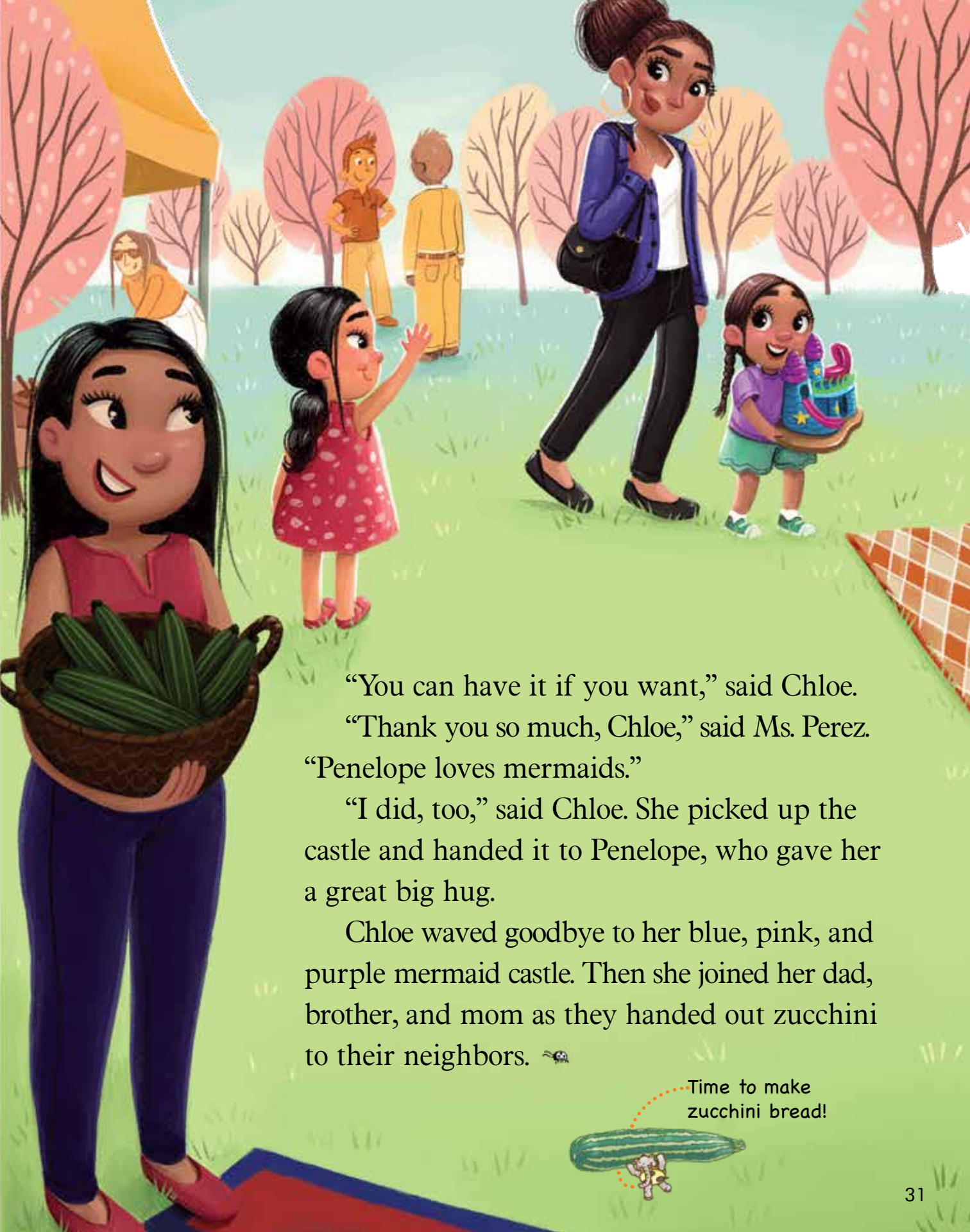




Mr. Thomas picked up a stuffed squirrel and squeezed the tail. *Squeak!* “Would Chewie like this one, too?” asked Mr. Thomas.

“Yes, please,” said Chloe. Hugging the squirrel and duck, she raced back to her family’s picnic blanket. “Look what I got for Chewie.”

Chloe saw that Ms. Perez’s young daughter, Penelope, was playing with her mermaid castle. Penelope opened the pink clam shell bed, giggling with delight as she put a mermaid inside to sleep. Chloe bent down and showed her the little seashell slide. Penelope clapped her hands when Chloe pushed the mermaid with red hair down the slide. Penelope picked up the mermaid and put her on the slide again and again. The palace made Penelope very happy.



“You can have it if you want,” said Chloe.

“Thank you so much, Chloe,” said Ms. Perez.

“Penelope loves mermaids.”

“I did, too,” said Chloe. She picked up the castle and handed it to Penelope, who gave her a great big hug.

Chloe waved goodbye to her blue, pink, and purple mermaid castle. Then she joined her dad, brother, and mom as they handed out zucchini to their neighbors. 🐛

Time to make  
zucchini bread!

