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About the Artist: Dana Meachen Rau received her BA in Creative Writing and Art History at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, and is currently pursuing her MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults at the Vermont College of Fine Arts. Besides freelancing as a children's author, Dana has also worked as an editor and illustrator.

About the Work: Over the past 20 years, Dana has written more than 300 books for readers pre-K to high school in a variety of genres — early readers, picture-books, historical fiction, biographies, cookbooks, and nonfiction on scientific, historical, geographical, and other popular topics. Recently, she has turned her focus to contemporary middle-grade fiction.

Where to Purchase: Dana's published books can be found at local libraries around the state, bookstores, and online at Amazon and Barnes & Noble.

The Checkpoint

"Take off your sneakers," Walt's mother said.

Walt gritted his teeth. "Not yet!"

Dad glanced up from his phone. "Listen to your mother."

The line at airport security snaked its way across the gray carpet tiles. Walt was about ten people away from the checkpoint.

"You packed snacks, right honey?" His mom pushed his long bangs out of his eyes. "Some international flights sometimes just have pretzels."

"I'm fine."

"You have your cell phone? And a book to read? And your grandpa's number for when you land?"

"Yes!" They'd been over this a thousand times.

While his mother kept babbling, Walt watched the family ahead of him.

A little boy zoomed his toy car up and down the mother's pants while she tried to take off her belt. A girl about Walt's age kicked her flip flops right up into her hand and tossed them into a gray bin.

Walt would *not* take off his sneakers while she was still there.

"Walt!" His mother poked him with an empty bin. They had reached the conveyor belt. "Shoes!"

"Listen to your mother," his father said, poking at his phone screen.

"Trust me...you don't want me to take these off," Walt said.

"Load them up," she insisted. "Then we'll say our good-byes."

The family in front of him was through the metal detector. The little boy eagerly watched the other side of the x-ray machine to reunite with his car. The girl wiggled her fingers in Walt's direction. A little wave.

Walt smiled back.

"Walt! Your father and I have a meeting to get to!" his mother scolded. "No more procrastinating."

Walt unslung the backpack from his shoulder. He unstrapped his watch. He emptied the loose change from his pockets. He stepped out of his sneakers and placed them in the bin with all of his other stuff.

His mother's nostrils flared. "Oh, my..."

"I told you," Walt said.

