At the Beach: Abuelito’s Story
by Lulu Delacre

Realistic fiction features lifelike characters doing things that could really happen but that come from the author’s imagination. What makes this Selection Snapshot realistic fiction?

My family lived in Cuba. One Saturday, my aunts, uncles, and cousins arrived early. We all squeezed into Papi’s station wagon to go to the beach. Mami and the aunts put food in the back along with hammocks and other beach things. I was hungry already from the smell of Mami’s famous tortilla española.

When we got there, my cousins and I ran toward the water. Mami and Aunt Olga called sternly, “Don’t go far!” But Luisa, Mari, little Javi, and I were in the water already.

I said we should explore the reef. I reminded everyone to watch out for sea urchins. It really hurts if you step on one of those sea creatures and get their spines in your foot. Javi stopped to watch some beautiful little fish concealed in the tide pools. Suddenly, he slipped on an algae-covered rock.

Javi yelled and started to cry. He had stepped on a sea urchin. “Oh,” Luisa lamented, “we should never have come out here! We’ll all be punished.”

I found some driftwood and worked the spiky creature off Javi’s foot. But one spine was still stuck. Luisa had a great idea. She took the barrettes out of her hair and used them as tweezers. She pulled the last spine out.

We walked back. Javi was crying and limping, but we helped him as we went.

Mari and Luisa were worried. “We’ll have to tell,” Luisa said. “No!” I said. “If we do, we’ll be punished for sure.” I couldn’t bear the thought of not being allowed to eat Mami’s special tortilla because I had taken us where the sea urchins were.

So I said that we had found a sea urchin on the beach. And that Javi stepped on it by accident. Javi was still yelling. Luisa and Mari gave me strange looks.

“Let’s have lunch,” Aunt Olga said, after Javi calmed down. I looked at the delicious tortilla on my plate. I just couldn’t eat. I sat down by Mami. I had to tell the real story. Everyone listened. I said I knew I should be punished by not getting any of the special tortilla. I handed my plate to Mami. She looked at me with tears in her eyes.

She said that one of us could have been seriously hurt. But then she smiled. She said she was proud that I told the truth. She handed my plate back.

That tortilla española was the best I had ever tasted!