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## Finder

ended on an island what three items  
with you?"



I'd bring chicken nuggets, a beach ball to play with and someone else to have as a roommate.

**BENJAMIN PULICE**



A lot of water, my princess books and a castle to play with.

**ANNABEL YEE**



Well, I'd bring an umbrella to keep the sun off me, my baby-doll to play with and a couple of buckets of ice cubes to keep me cool.

**KATHRINE STEPHONSON**

## Ciao, Bella!

### Sandy-survivor launches children's book series "Bella Bambolina"

By **JASMINE BLENNAU**  
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"If I had to give you one word that explains what this is, it's wholesome," said Rae Jean Ferreri, a Long Beach resident and creator of "Bella Bambolina," a new book series and virtual game world for children.

The "Bella Bambolina" adventure series is a multimedia children's series featuring the Italian character Bella Bambolina and her sidekicks, the Bellas, who work together to solve a "magical mystery" during each adventure.

The books and games expose children to different languages, cultures and landmarks, as the Bellas travel all over the world to collect clues and make new friends. The series is a picture and chapter book written in English that is geared toward children age five to 10.

The first book in the series, "Bella Bambolina — Magic Happens, the Adventure Begins!" was released earlier this year on Amazon, and includes a list of translated words in Italian and English. Additionally, a narrated and scored eBook is available on iBooks, Kindle and Nook. Book Two, "Quest for the Lost Book," will be released in the fall.

On June 30, Ferreri held a book reading for kids at Kings 'n Things! in the West End. As creator of the Bella Bambolina universe and its characters, co-author of all its music and lyrics and co-developer of its game world, Ferreri is involved in every aspect of the series.

"This was somewhat new territory for me — it came easier to me than I thought it would," she said.

Ferreri has always made her living from writing or performing music. After losing both of her parents at a young age, she said she supported herself through Brooklyn College by working odd jobs and playing gigs. Soon after she earned her degree in music composition, she worked in a private music school. Once Universal Studios published her original music, Ferreri said that she began writing for numerous television shows and movies such as "A Foreign Affair," "ER," "Without a Trace," "General Hospital," and "Will and Grace."

Her current project, the 12-book "Bella Bambolina" series, has taken her creativity and musical talents to a completely new audience — children. The eBooks in particular are fully scored to music written by Ferreri and her co-authors, Tim Lawless and Greg Schleich. Original music from the eBooks is also available on iTunes.

"Every page is scored like a movie," Ferreri said. "We hope the readers will appreciate it."

The eBooks have a read-along function to help children hear the pronunciation of the English, Italian and other conversational languages spoken. In order to solve the mystery and save Bella Bella Island, the Bellas have to work together, travel to different countries and meet other characters that help them on their journey.

"While they are stuck on solving the mys-



Kristie Arden/Herald

**"BELLA BAMBOLINA — MAGIC HAPPENS, THE ADVENTURE BEGINS!"** was released earlier this year on Amazon.

tery, they are learning without realizing that they are learning," she said.

Additionally, Ferreri has launched a virtual game world on BellaBellaIsland.com and a mobile app for Apple and Android devices, Bella Bella Island, create an environment where children can explore the Bella universe and play games, she said. Children can also interact with the Bellas, all of whom have individual styles and personalities.

Ferreri said that Bella Bambolina's story is one of triumphing over adversity. The character of Bella is often teased and does not fit in, but becomes more confident and goes from being bullied to being accepted as a leader. Ferreri said that she sees Bella Bambolina's strength as a reflection of herself, and hopes it will resonate with young girls.

"We were in the middle of the whole project when Hurricane Sandy happened," Ferreri said. "There was up to six feet of water in my apartment. I lost everything."

Ferreri has lived in Long Beach since 1988, and moved to the West End 10 years ago after selling her home in the Canals. During Sandy, Ferreri lived in a ground floor apartment on Kentucky Street. When the water rushed in, she ran to safety with only her cell phone in hand.

"I was looking from the deck of my friend's second floor apartment and I could see the beach was no more, water from one end to the next," she said. "The bay touched the ocean. After all that I went through that was probably my scariest moment."

Ferreri said she stayed in Brooklyn with a friend for six weeks before finding a new apartment in Long Beach.

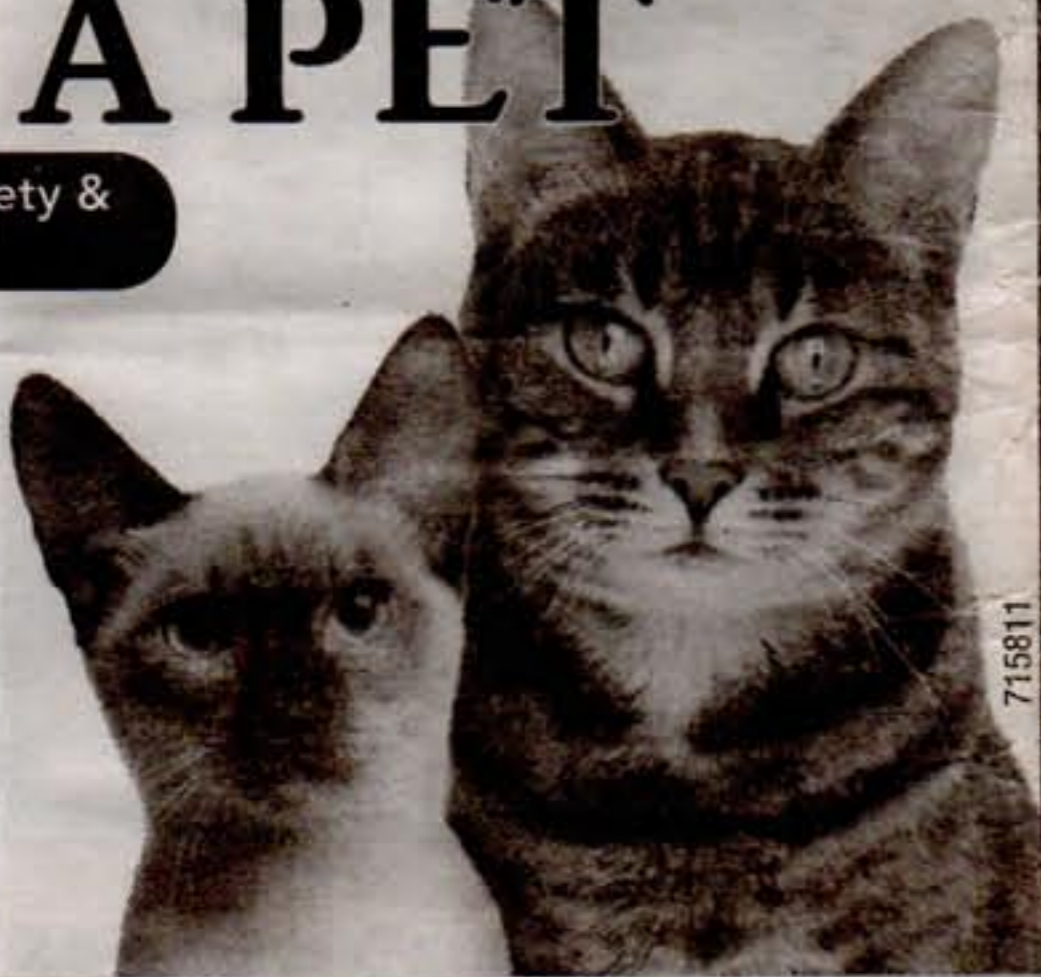
"I didn't care what it looked like, I was homeless," she said. "And of course I still wanted to live here."

Still, her book project kept moving forward in the aftermath of Sandy. She said that when she arrived in Brooklyn, immediately after she called her family, she contacted her creative team and they continued working.

"The project gave me a lot of focus through a difficult time — and I'm a pretty tough cookie," she said.

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