

Ben & Blue

SEARCHING FOR LUCKY #3002

by Ellen Melissa Cohen
with illustrations by Donald Wu

Ben knows only three things about his dad:

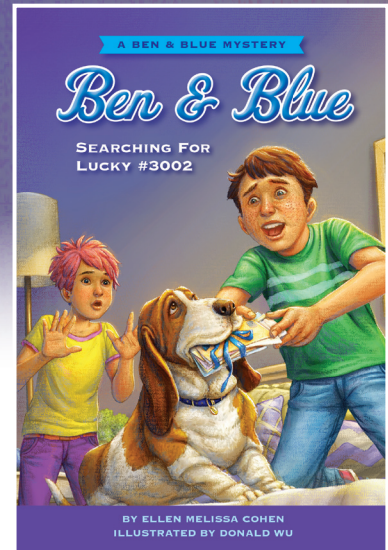
- 1) he has green eyes,
- 2) he has a number,
- 3) at one point in his life, he made a deposit at a bank.

Ben's mom is usually good about answering his questions. But not this one. So, when Ben is assigned a family tree project at school, he confronts his mom (for the zillionth time), and instead of telling Ben the truth, she buys him a dog (Blue). With the dreaded day of oral reports looming, Ben rallies Blue and his best friend Cooper to uncover his dad's whereabouts and complete his family tree. But what Ben discovers is stranger than anything he could have ever imagined. And to make matters worse, Blue's former owner enters the story and unusual things start to happen.



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Instead, I sat down on the bed and examined the papers. They were a little soggy from Blue's drool.

I realized what I held in my hands was a stack of greeting cards. Each one was addressed to my mother...



*"Your baby boy is here and I couldn't be happier for you!"
"Beyond delighted for you. Can't wait to meet your new son!"*

*"Congratulations! You are going to be a wonderful mother!"
"So proud of you Gracie! Ben is adorable! So glad you did it! Lucky #3002!"*

This last card was from Aunt Silly. That's Mom's sister Cecilia.

"Let me see," said Cooper.

I handed her the cards.

"Hey these are from when you were born!"

"Look at the last one," I said trying to keep my voice steady.

Cooper read it out loud. Then she said, "Gracie's your mom. Cecilia's your aunt. But what does she mean by Lucky #3002?"

"That..." I said. My voice was definitely shaking now. "I'm pretty sure that's my dad."

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My class was lining up in the hallway. "Ben!" Jassi called. "Where have you been?"

"Sorry!" I said. "Just feeling a little nervous. That's all."

"We can't wait any longer Ben," she said. "Get in line. It's showtime!"

Showtime? No.

Nightmare? Yes.



Chapter 48

Jassi had strung white lights above the stage. The audience clapped as we entered the auditorium. We took our seats in the front row.

I saw Mom waving at me. I was surprised to see Grandpa Lou here too. He raised his hand in a high-five. And next to Grandpa Lou was Grandma Lou! And next to her was...

Pete.

Seeing Mom, my grandparents, and Pete just made me more nervous.

I closed my eyes. Breathed slowly. And thought of some place peaceful: a big empty land of ice.

It didn't help.

"Welcome family and friends," Jassi began.

"The students have worked very hard on their Family Projects. And we are delighted that you are here to listen to their stories. We know you will be

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With illustrations by award-winning artist Donald Wu