

Let's Not Talk About It Anymore

CANDACE BLAKE-AMARANTE

BELIEVER: I told my parents you are a non-believer.

NON-BELIEVER: And?

BELIEVER: They said we can no longer be friends.

NON-BELIEVER: Because I don't believe what you believe?

BELIEVER: Yes . . . and that you continue to refuse to believe what we believe.

NON-BELIEVER: So, I am not entitled to my own beliefs or opinions?

BELIEVER: You are, but I'm not allowed to tolerate non-believers, they say it's against our faith.

NON-BELIEVER: Why exactly is it against your faith?

BELIEVER: Because it's just wrong!

NON-BELIEVER: You still haven't told me why?

BELIEVER: Let's not talk about it anymore.

NON-BELIEVER: But I want to talk about it!

BELIEVER: My parents told me that I'm not allowed to talk to non-believers, and that all I can do is pray from them.

NON-BELIEVER: I don't need your prayers.

BELIEVER: You do or you'll be in trouble in this life *and* the next . . .

NON-BELIEVER: You don't know that.

BELIEVER: But I do.

NON-BELIEVER: How?

BELIEVER: Because my parents say we do; because we believe—

NON-BELIEVER: —And I believe that if you keep listening to your parents, you'll end up nowhere and with no friends.

BELIEVER: Let's not talk about it anymore; I must say goodbye now.

NON-BELIEVER: Do you really want to do this?

BELIEVER: (*silent*)

NON-BELIEVER: Is being my friend causing you any real harm or injury?

BELIEVER: No!

NON-BELIEVER: Do I make you do bad things, like say hurtful things to people who are different from you, or suggest that you do something bad to them because they are different from you?

BELIEVER: No, of course you don't!

NON-BELIEVER: Then, put your beliefs aside, and tell me if you honestly think I am a bad person who you should not befriend.

BELIEVER: I know you are not a bad person. You are one of the best people I know . . . you just . . . don't believe.

NON-BELIEVER: And that's enough to turn us into enemies?

BELIEVER: Honestly, I don't want us to be enemies because I really like you.

NON-BELIEVER: Then, let's stay friends.

BELIEVER: I can't because my parents say you are in the wrong for not believing like us.

NON-BELIEVER: So, you think I am unworthy of your friendship, because your parents and your faith tell you to do so?

BELIEVER: Well, yes . . .

NON-BELIEVER: But you admit you like me and think I am a good person?

BELIEVER: Yes.

NON-BELIEVER: So, if I were not a good person but believed in your faith, could we still be friends?

BELIEVER: Well, no . . . I mean, yes . . . I don't know; you're confusing me, let's not talk about it anymore.

NON-BELIEVER: You're right, we shouldn't talk about it anymore, but *you* should still think about it.

BELIEVER: My parents said—

NON-BELIEVER: —I know what your parents said, but I want to know what *you* think you understand of your faith.

BELIEVER: What I think I understand?

NON-BELIEVER: Yes. What is *your* answer to my question about what your faith says about being friends with a bad person who believes?

BELIEVER: I don't think it says anything about that . . .

NON-BELIEVER: But according to your parents, it does say something about becoming enemies with a good person who doesn't believe and who you really like.

BELIEVER: Oh, benevolent Sky who encompasses the holy land, I ask you to watch over the soul of my friend. Forgive my friend for not believing in you . . .

NON-BELIEVER: I don't need your prayers; I need you to think!

BELIEVER: And I need you to pray!

NON-BELIEVER: You're right; let's not talk about it anymore.

BELIEVER: Let my friend know that your way is the only way . . .

NON-BELIEVER: I thought we said we wouldn't talk about it.

BELIEVER: I wasn't talking to you; I was talking to my Sky.

NON-BELIEVER: Must you talk so loudly?

BELIEVER: I wanted to be sure She heard me, so She can save you.

NON-BELIEVER: Don't worry about me, nothing will happen to me because I don't believe in your Sky.

BELIEVER: Oh, benevolent Sky, my friend didn't mean it!

NON-BELIEVER: STOP!

BELIEVER: I'M SORRY! I'm sorry, I just care for you and don't want anything bad to happen to you.

NON-BELIEVER: You're the bad thing happening to me.

BELIEVER: What?!

NON-BELIEVER: How can not being friends with you be a good thing? I really like you, too. Now we can no longer be friends because of your parents, your Sky . . .

BELIEVER: Then believe in my Sky; She is the only way.

NON-BELIEVER: No, She's not. There are other ways; and I refuse to believe in something that would make a good person like me be perceived as an enemy, while a bad person who believes could potentially be your friend.

BELIEVER: Let's not talk about it anymore.

NON-BELIEVER: We won't ever have to talk about it since we can no longer be friends. I guess it's time for us to say goodbye.

BELIEVER: I guess so . . .

NON-BELIEVER: Well, goodbye.

BELIEVER: WAIT! . . . It doesn't feel right.

NON-BELIEVER: Because it isn't right.

BELIEVER: Maybe we could still be friends without my parents knowing?

NON-BELIEVER: That works for me, but on one condition . . .

BELIEVER: What?

NON-BELIEVER: Let's not talk about this *ever* again. ■

Candace Amarante is an artist-researcher specializing in writing children's stories and plays. In most of her stories, she pursues two main goals: bringing awareness of children's rights through the arts and incorporating, in children's literature, the voice of children with chronic illnesses. Her most recent work includes *The Sky Smiles at Me* (featured in the *Goodnight Bag-LEARN Quebec 2021*), *The Dream Machine* (in collaboration with Dr. Argerie Tsimicalis and Shriners Hospitals for Children-Canada; Tellwell Publishers, forthcoming), *The Blunder Family: Now where'd I put the pork?* (*East of the Web 2020*), and *The Pheasant's Tale or . . . was it its Tail?* (*Green Bamboo Publishing 2017*). She has also written a play on children's rights, *The Ugly Ones* (with Chelsea Woolley; Staged Reading Geordie Theatre Fest 2020), and a play for young audiences, *You, Me and Victor Hugo!* on the concept of censorship (Artist Mentorship Program at the Black Theatre Workshop 2018–2019). Candace holds a doctorate in political science from Columbia University in the City of New York. She has lived in Tokyo, Freetown, Nairobi, Salerno, Turin, and several places in the United States. Currently, she resides in Montreal, where she is a member of the Board of Directors of the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children.