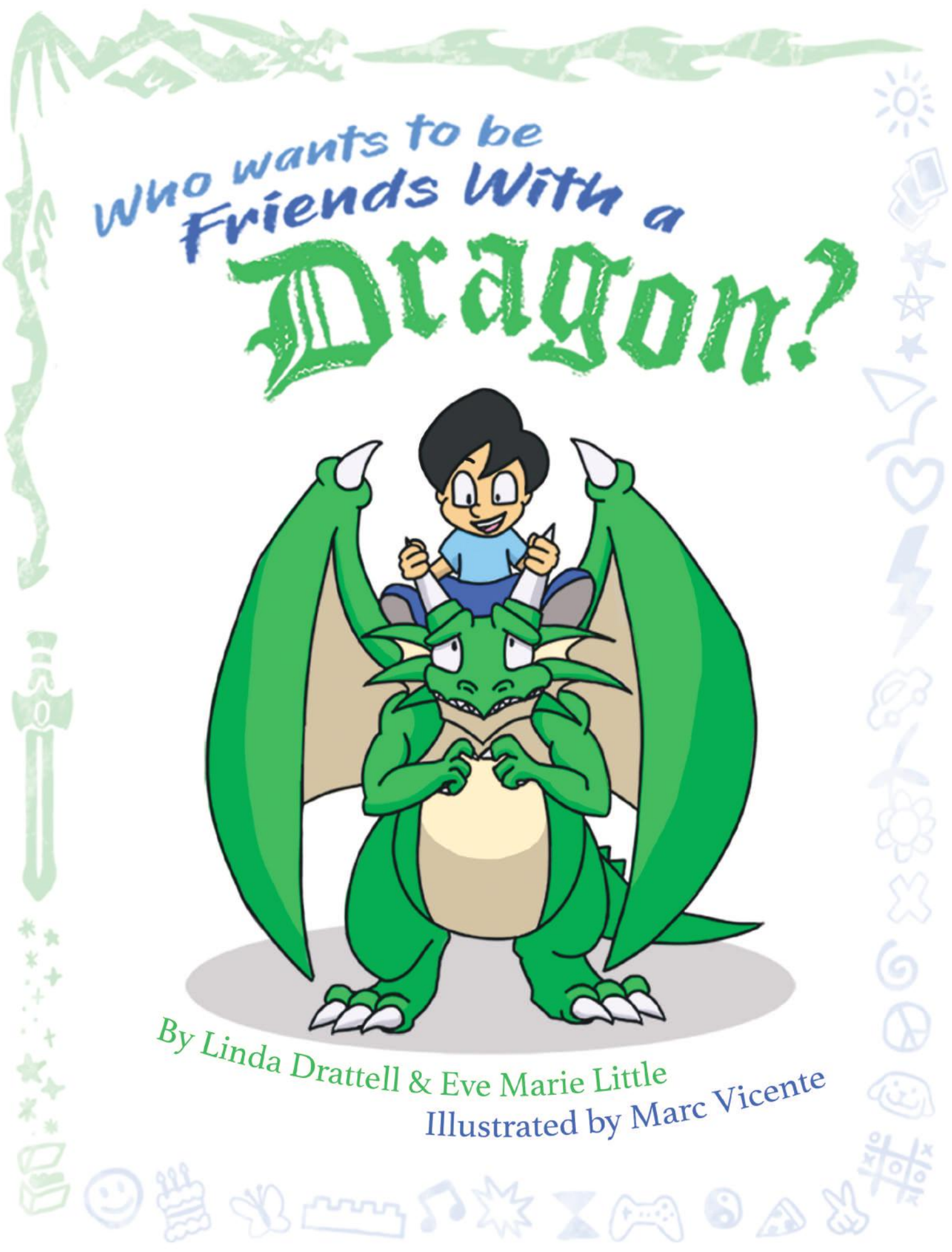


Who wants to be
Friends With a
Dragon?



By Linda Drattell & Eve Marie Little
Illustrated by Marc Vicente



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Dragon



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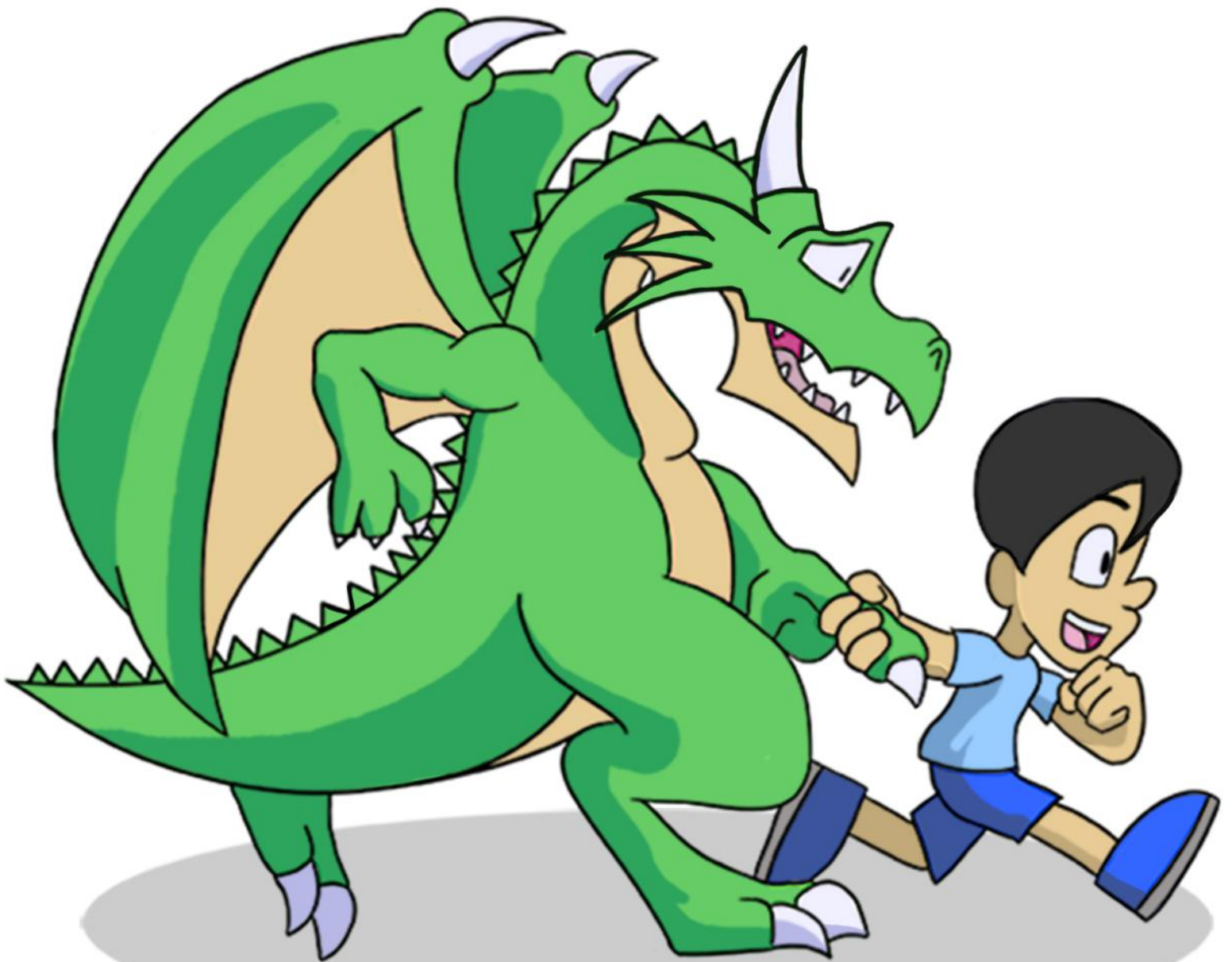
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For all the boys and girls who look past their differences
and find kindness and friendship in others.





Most people think dragons are scary and mean, right? Not our sweet, peaceful dragon. He was a different kind of dragon, a quiet and lonely dragon.

One day, he decided to go for a walk through the forest in search of a friend. He sang a tune in his head:

I see the sunrise

It took me by surprise

I'm in the mood for French fries!



His head bobbed as he sang.

I'm ready to soar!

Jump off the floor!

Gonna explore!

My feet are sore!



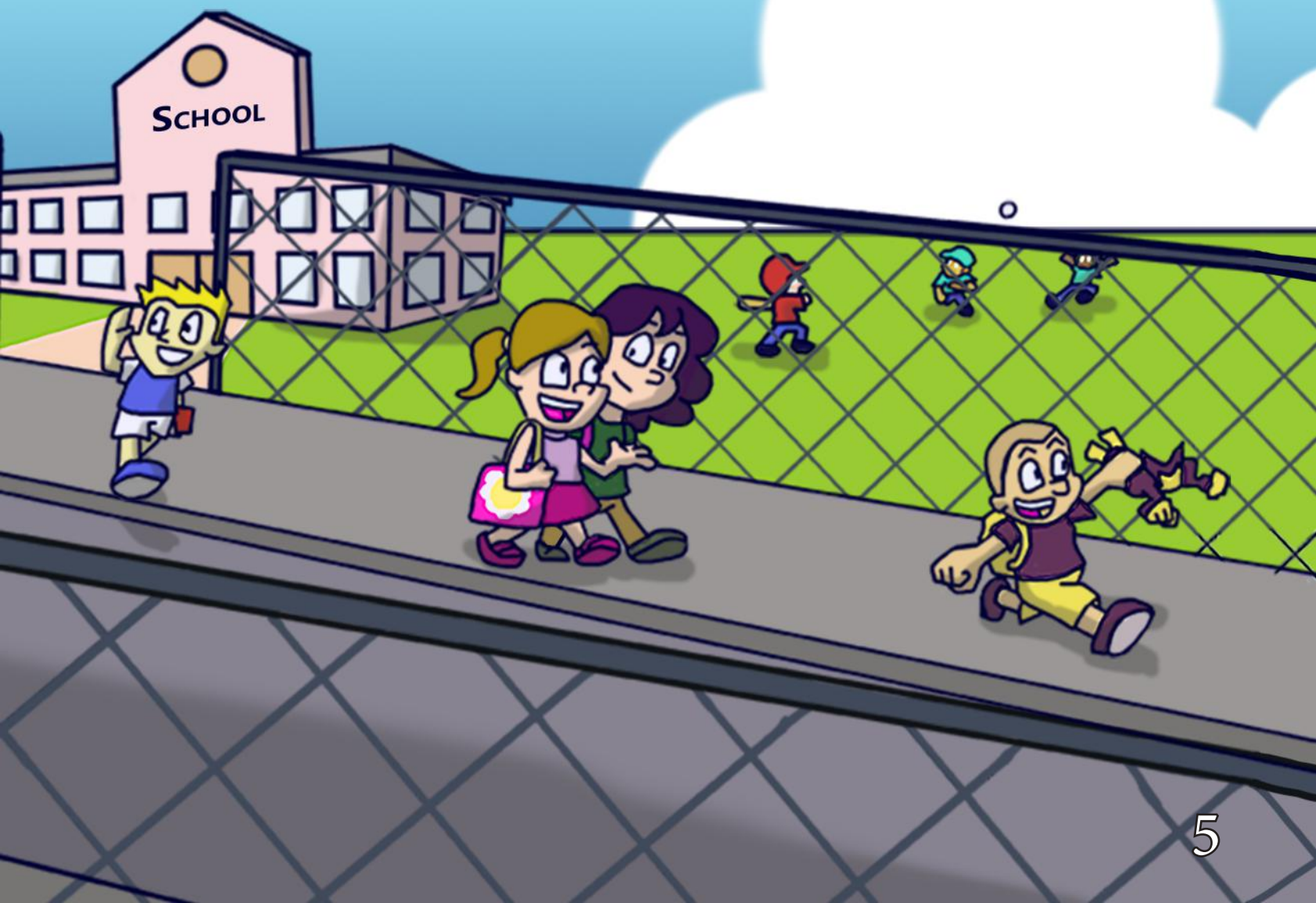
He saw birds and frogs and squirrels and deer, and tried introducing himself to them, ready to shake their hand. But the animals were scared. He was so big. He was so green. He was so... different. They wanted nothing to do with him.



He kept walking until he reached the edge of the forest, a place he had never been. There was a large building with the word “School” written on it, and he saw children with books walking and skipping away. He quickly hid behind a tree.



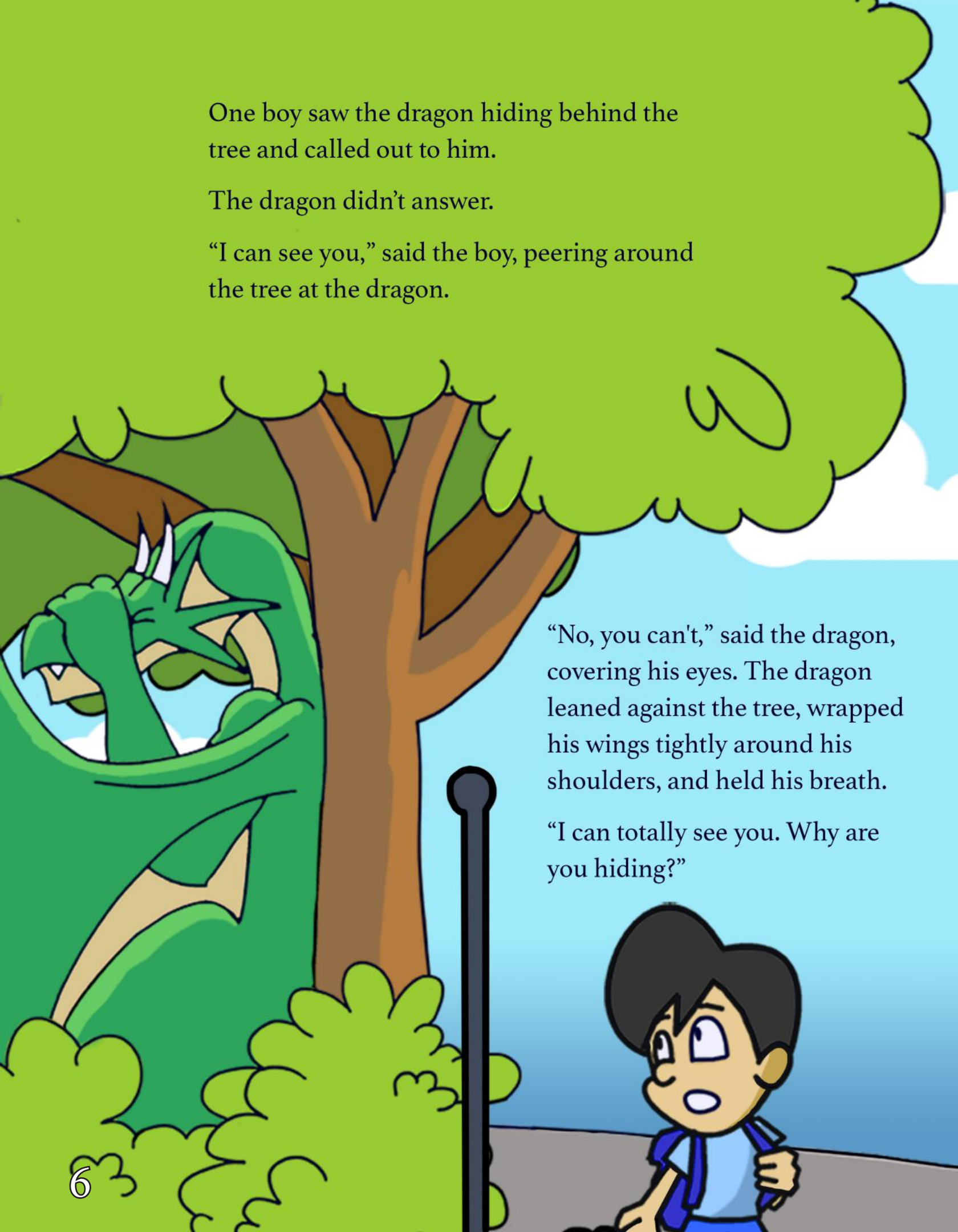
The children looked happy chatting with their friends. The dragon sadly sniffed, “Who am I kidding? I should just go home. Who would want to be friends with a dragon?”



One boy saw the dragon hiding behind the tree and called out to him.

The dragon didn't answer.

"I can see you," said the boy, peering around the tree at the dragon.

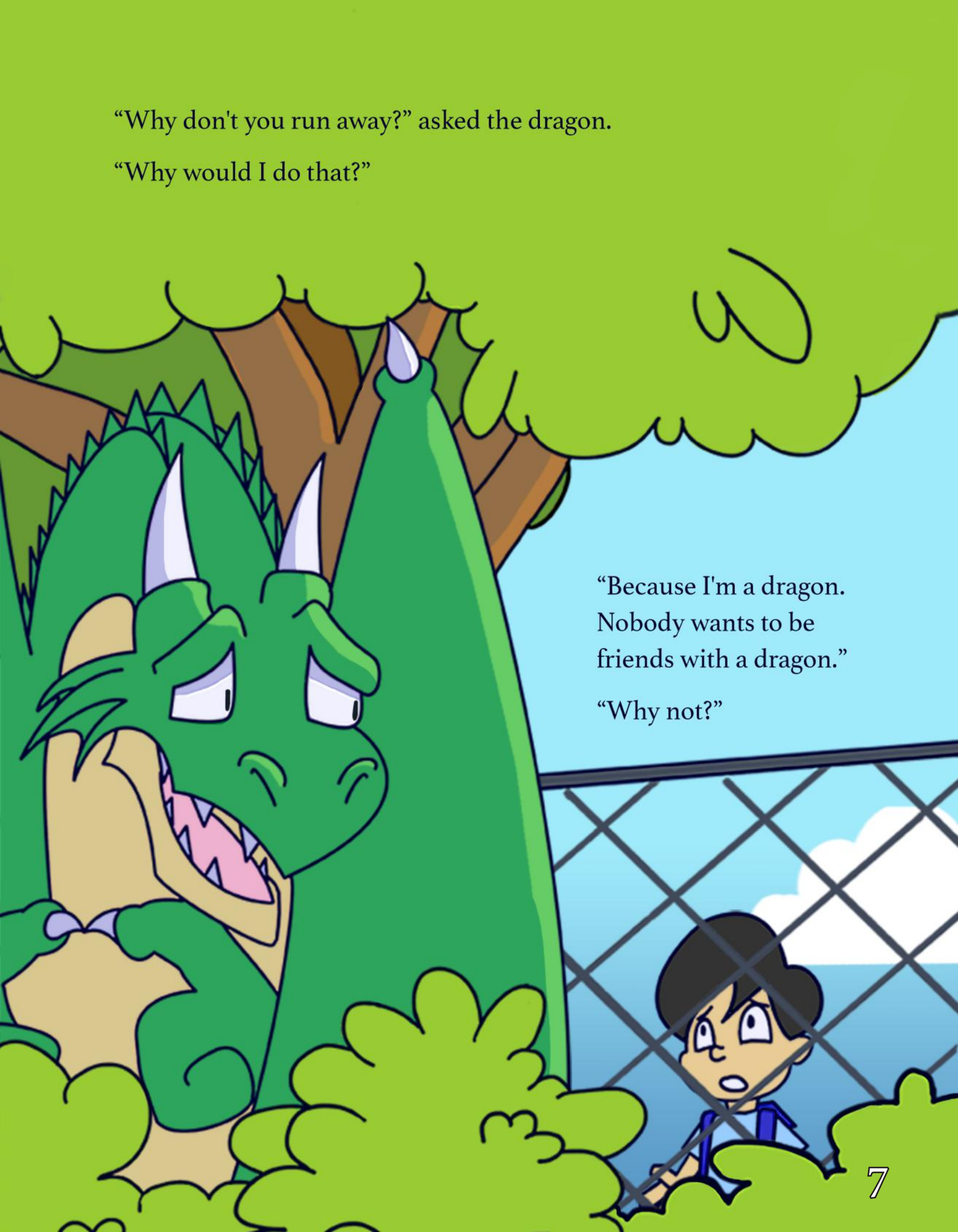


"No, you can't," said the dragon, covering his eyes. The dragon leaned against the tree, wrapped his wings tightly around his shoulders, and held his breath.

"I can totally see you. Why are you hiding?"

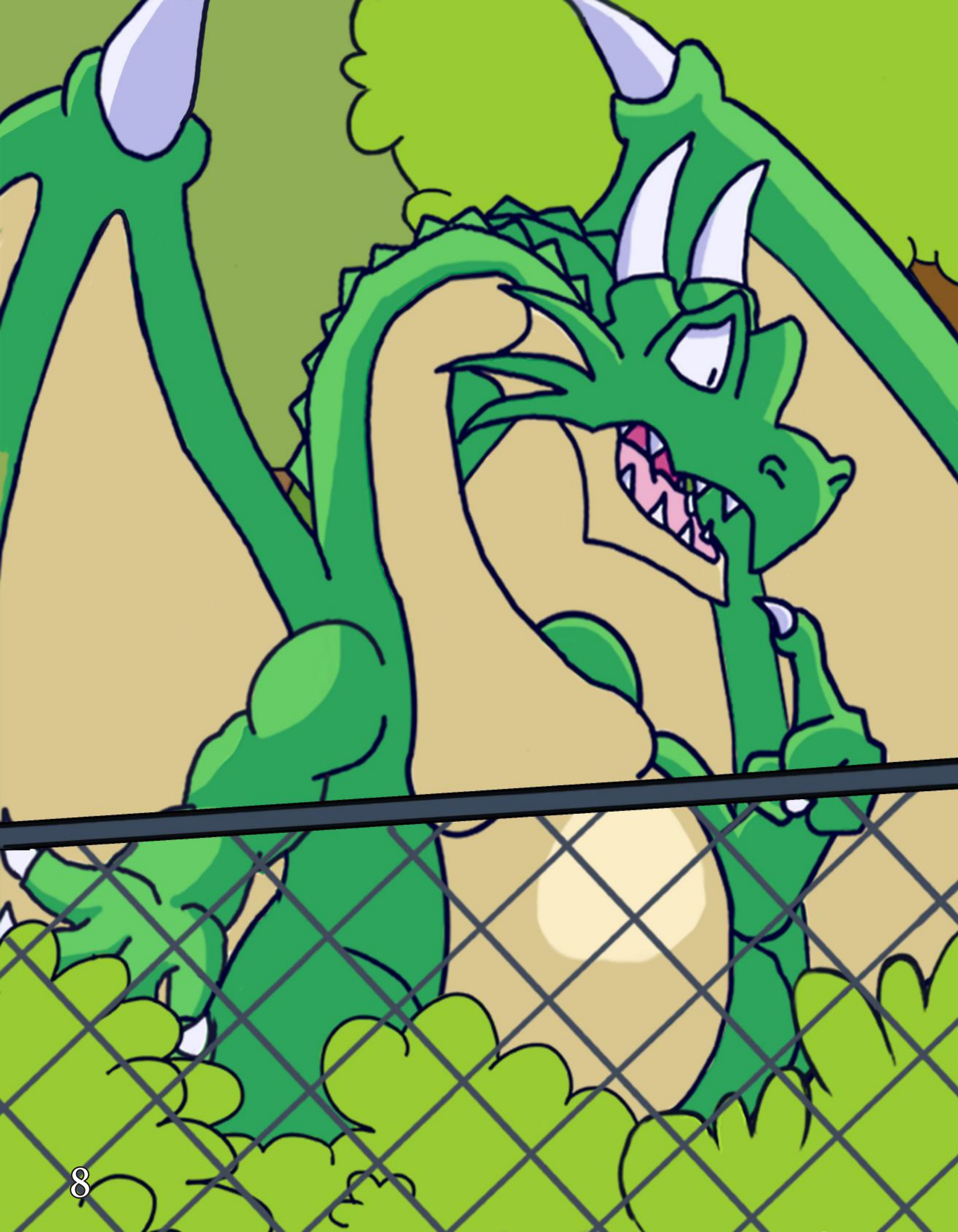
“Why don't you run away?” asked the dragon.

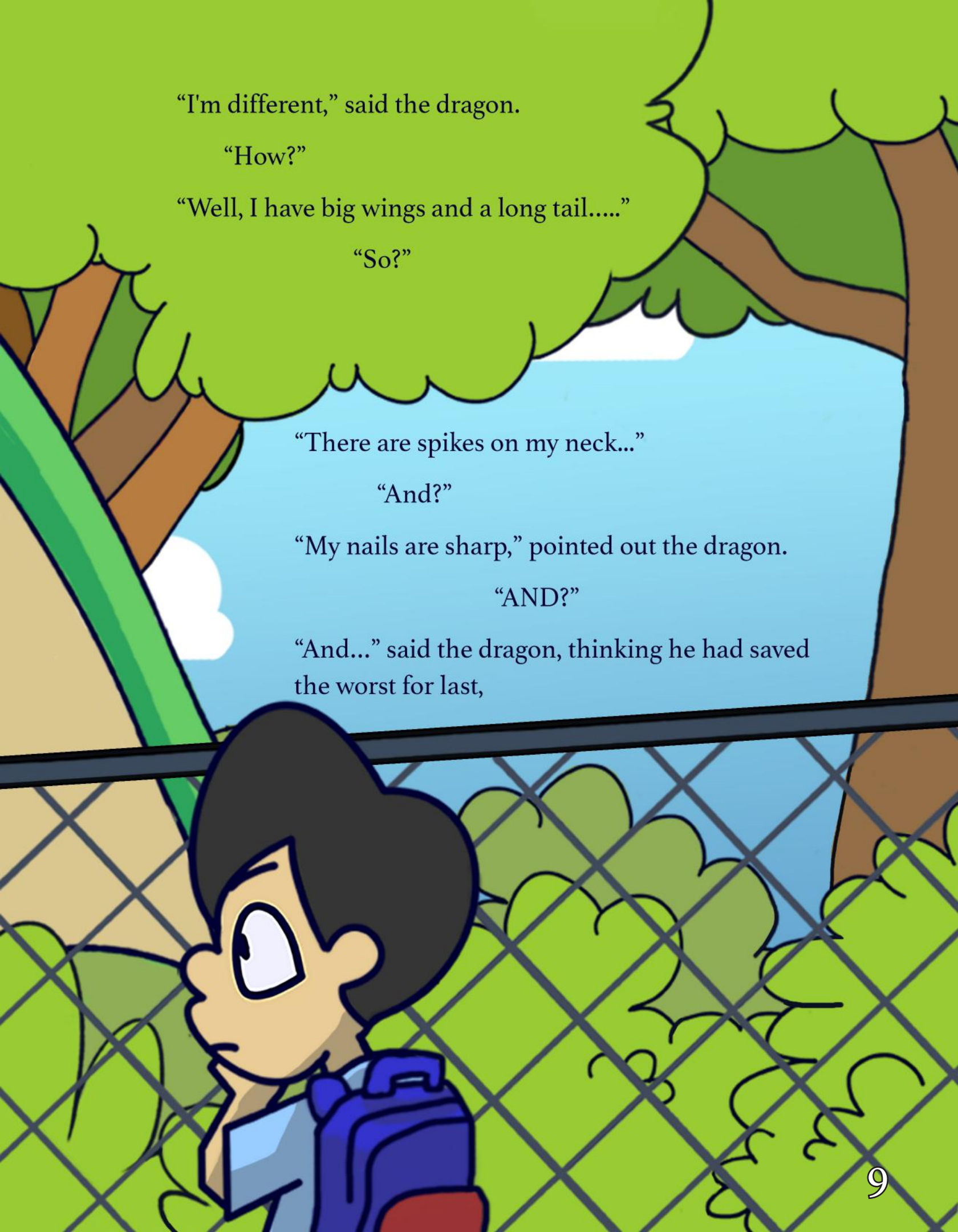
“Why would I do that?”



“Because I'm a dragon.
Nobody wants to be
friends with a dragon.”

“Why not?”





“I’m different,” said the dragon.

“How?”

“Well, I have big wings and a long tail.....”

“So?”

“There are spikes on my neck...”

“And?”

“My nails are sharp,” pointed out the dragon.


“AND?”

“And...” said the dragon, thinking he had saved the worst for last,



“and... I
breathe fire!”





“Well, my mom says I have real bad breath, too,” said the boy, stepping through the brand-new burnt hole in the fence. “Want to play a game?”

“Umm, what kind of game?”

“How about a rhyming game?” asked the boy.

“Okay, you start.”

The boy climbed the dragon's tail and shouted, “You're mysterious!”

The dragon smiled nervously and responded, “You're hilarious?”

The boy laughed. “You're ferocious!”

The dragon tilted his head back. “I'm delirious!”

The boy slid down the dragon's back. “I broke one of your scales, don't be furious.”

“Are you serious?”

“Yeah, sorry about that.”

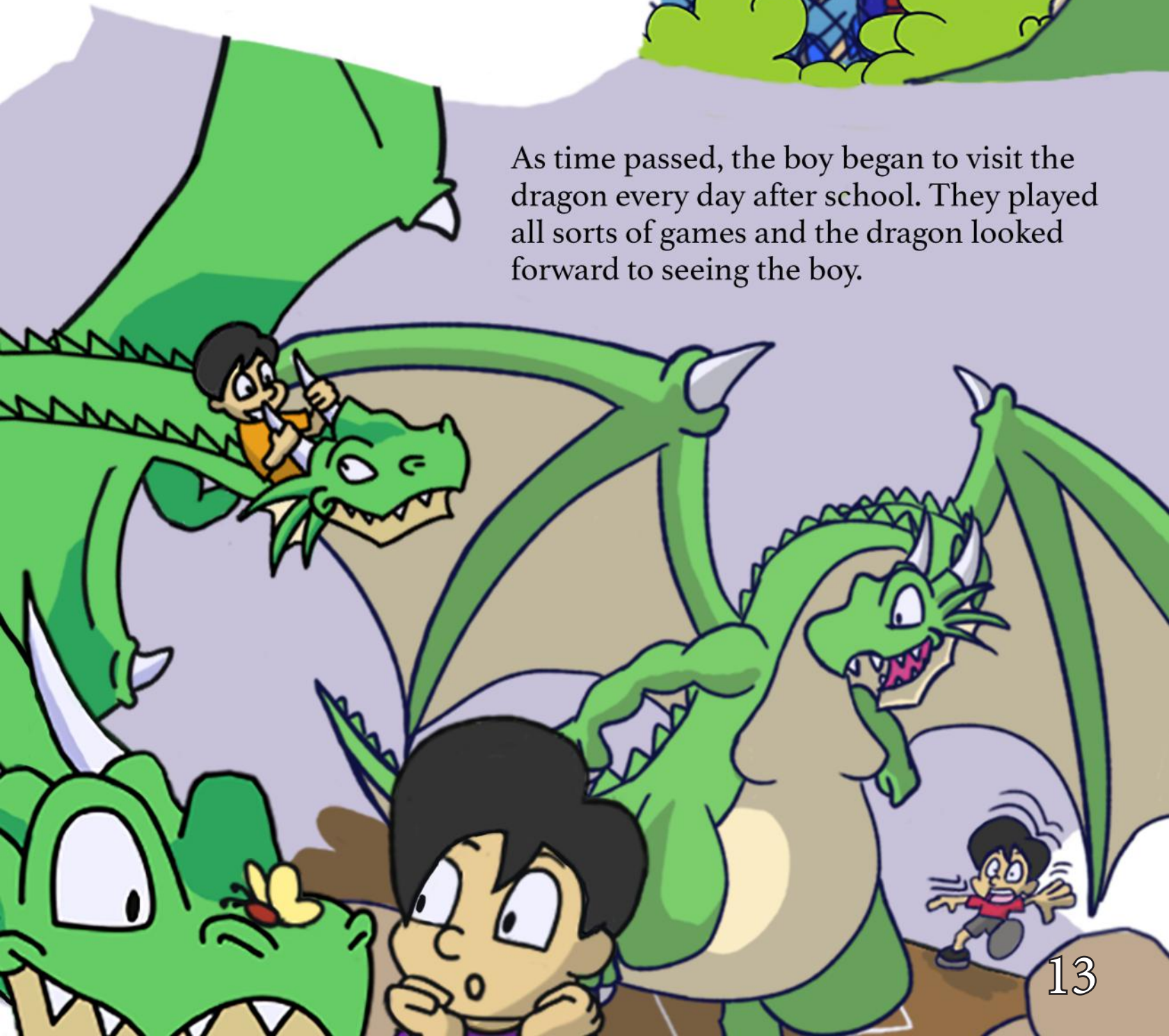
“Can I see you tomorrow? Same place?”
asked the boy.

The dragon didn't really think the boy
would come by again but went ahead and
agreed. “I guess so. Same place, same
space...”

“Next time, don't hide your face!” the boy
called as he left.



As time passed, the boy began to visit the
dragon every day after school. They played
all sorts of games and the dragon looked
forward to seeing the boy.





One day, the boy handed the dragon an envelope. "My birthday is tomorrow. Please come to my party."

"Tomorrow? No, no, no, no, no, no, no."

"Why not?"





“I have an appointment.”

“With the dentist?”

“No.”

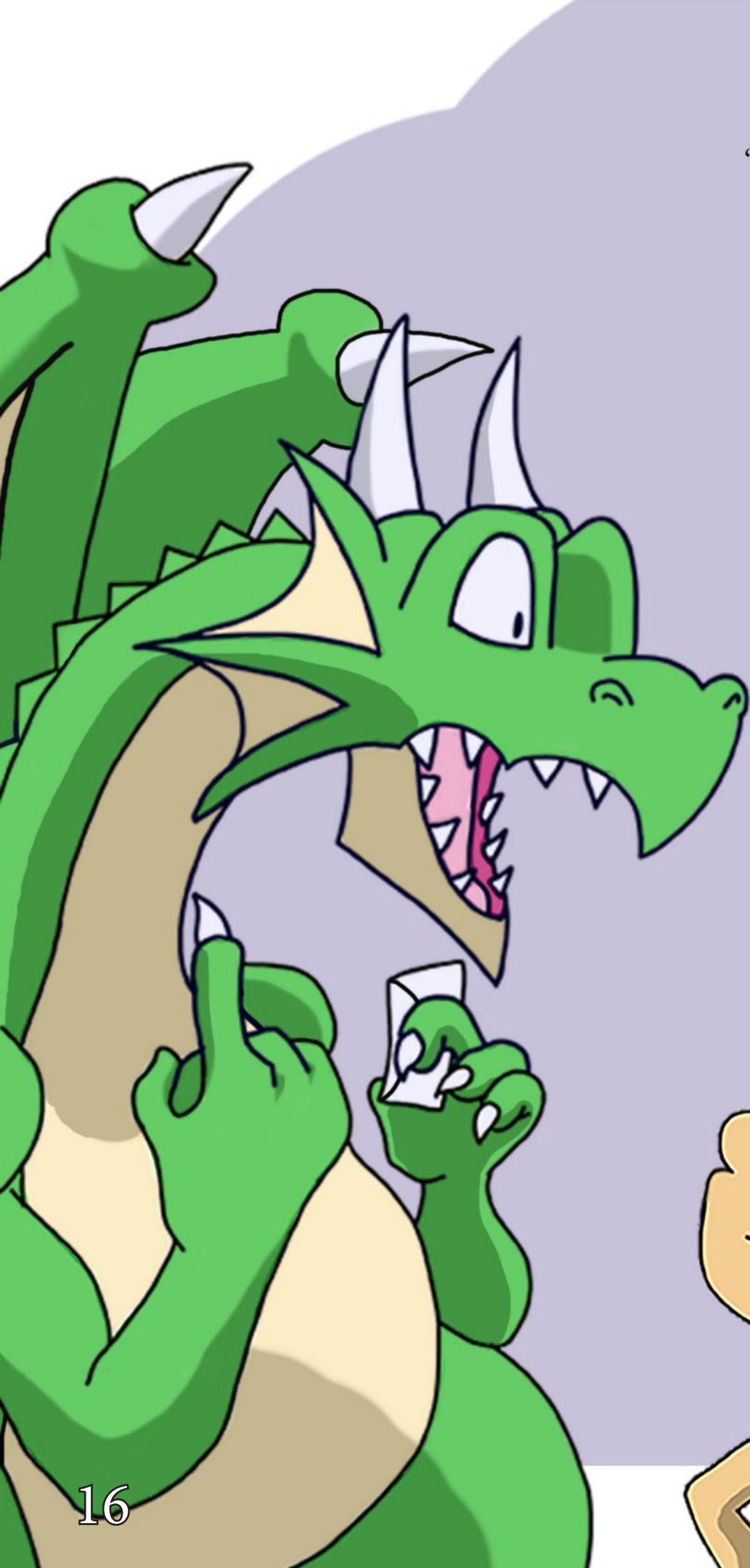
“The doctor?”

“No.”

“Then why won’t you
come?”

The dragon sighed.
“Because everyone will
be afraid of me.”





“You have to come because I invited all of my friends,” said the boy. “Plus, don’t worry, you are nice. Everyone will like you.”

The dragon's eyes got very big, and he held his breath.

“Wait, am I your friend?”

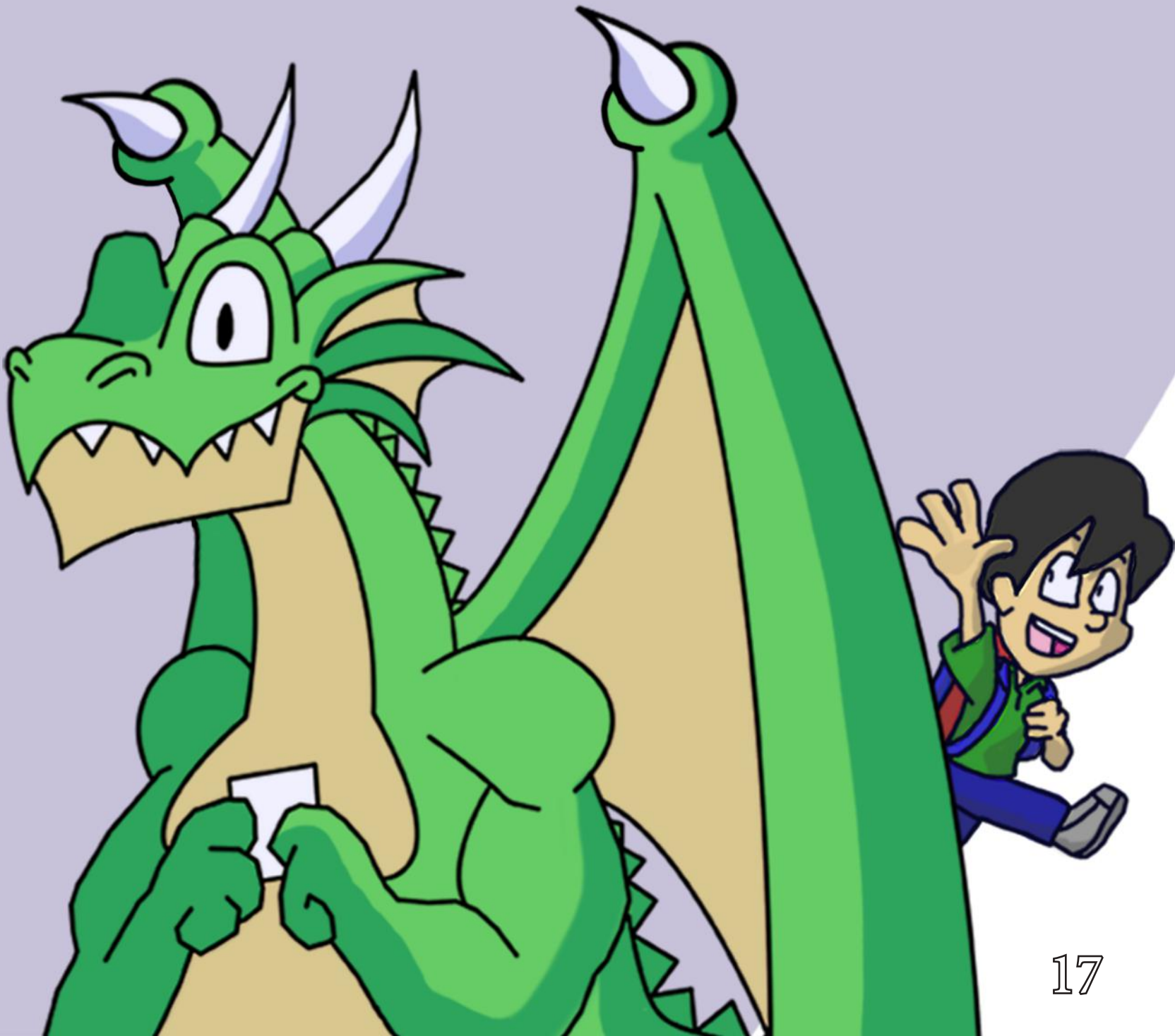
“Of course, you are! The address is in the invitation.

See you tomorrow afternoon at 2 o'clock!”



As the boy walked away, the dragon held his shoulders back, straightened his posture, raised his chin, and smiled.

“I have a friend.” Then his shoulders collapsed, and he sighed, “This is going to be a disaster.”





The dragon arrived at the boy's home the following day. He knocked and the boy's father opened the front door. The man, who was tall for a human but short for a dragon, raised his eyes all the way up to the sky to look at the dragon's face.

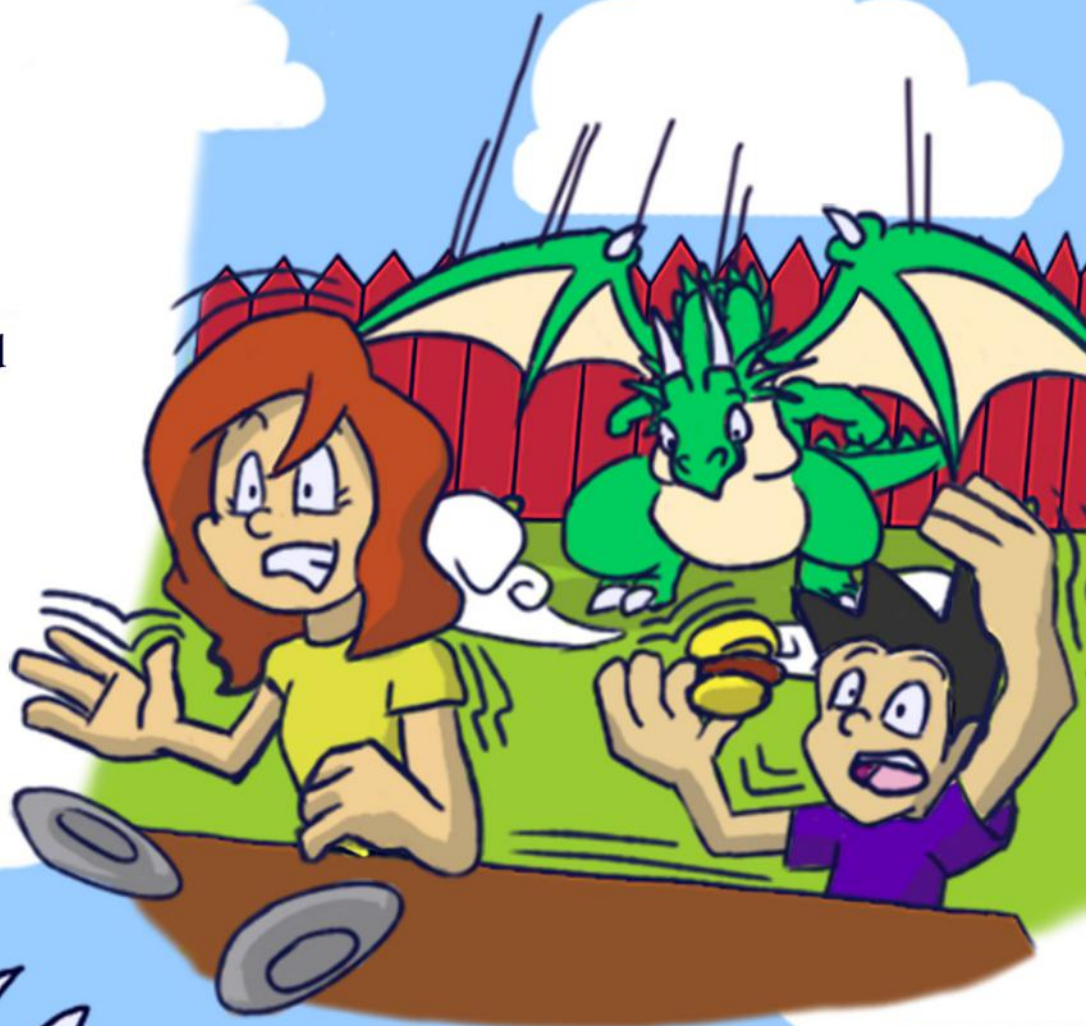
"I'm here for the party," said the dragon, nervously holding up the invitation. He stepped forward with one huge foot but, unfortunately, there was no way for his enormous body to get through the door.

"Hey, the party is in the backyard," the boy called from over a fence behind the house.



The dragon eyed the red fence and leaped over it, landing in the backyard with a thud. The ground shook and rattled the party table and the guests.

The children stopped what they were doing and stared at him.



I knew it wasn't going to go well, the dragon thought.

“See?” the dragon said to the boy, “Everyone is scared of me.”

“Nah, just let them get to know you.”



Right then, the boy's mother brought out the birthday cake, covered in candles.

“Oh no! Has anyone seen the matches?” she asked.



The boy shouted, “The dragon can help light the candles!”

“Are you sure about this?” the dragon whispered to the boy.



The boy whispered back, “Yes, do it!”

“Okay.” The dragon took a deep breath...



and blew fire on the candles ... and the cake and everything else!









“Ooops,” said the dragon. “Now I’ve really made a mess.”

But to the dragon’s surprise, the children raised their hands and cheered!



“That was AMAZING!” shouted one kid.

“Can we ride on your back?” another kid asked.

The dragon grinned shyly. “Sure, Jump on!”

He knelt on his knees so the children could climb up. They held tightly onto his scales. The dragon was surprised. The children liked him... they trusted him!



As they flew on the dragon's back, the children noticed a boat on the lake below.

“Look! Far away, a boat! Let's sail in the boat!” several kids shouted.



“But there's not enough wind,” said one girl.

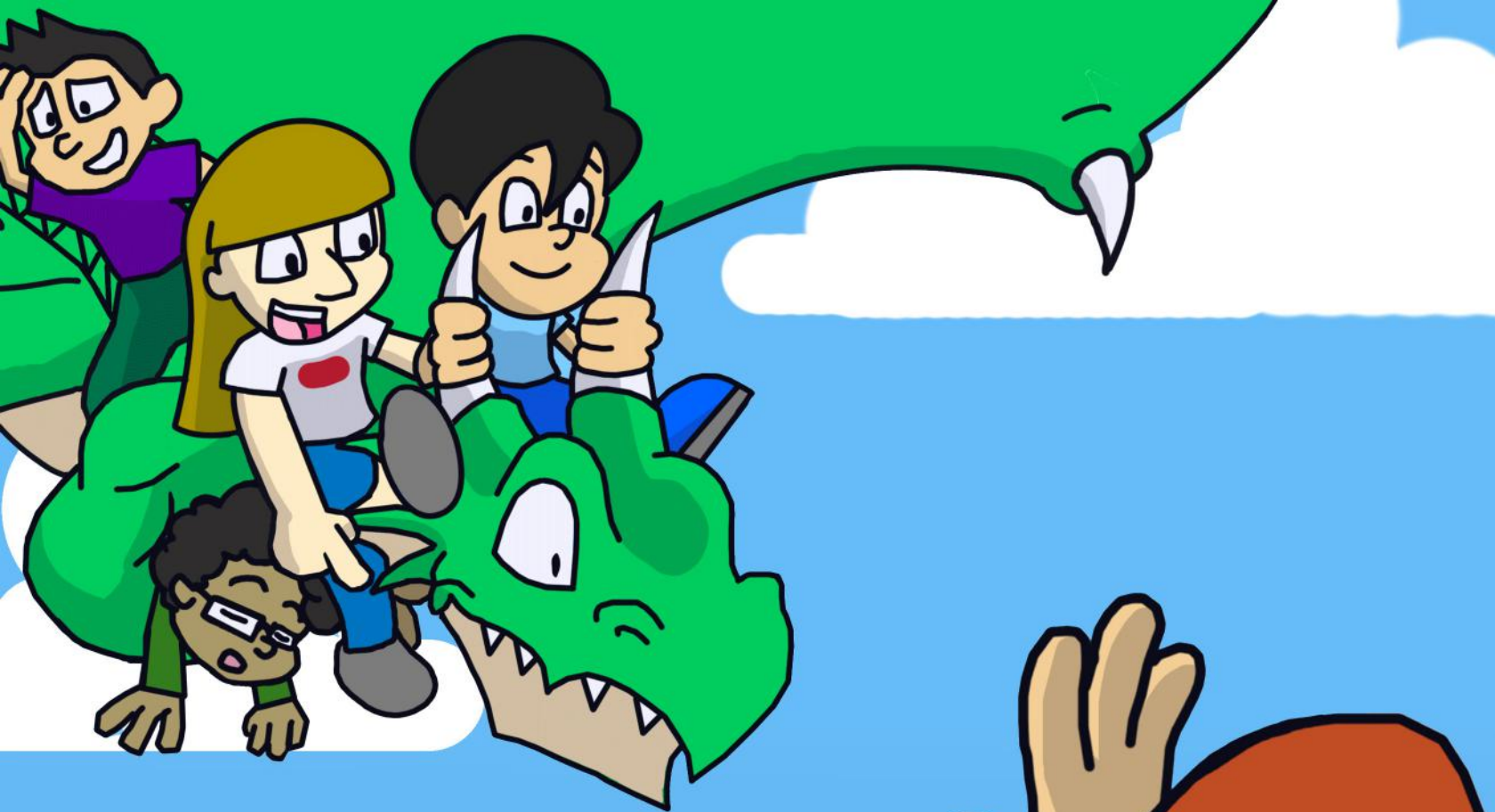
“I can help!” said the dragon, with growing confidence.



He inhaled deeply and blew very hard against the sails.

The children cheered as his breath filled the sails and pushed the boat back and forth across the lake.





After a while, the children started to get tired, and the dragon brought them back to the boy's house.



“Storytime!” called the boy's mother.

The children cuddled up close to the dragon, sitting on his knees and shoulders, and waited for the story to begin.

The dragon looked around in amazement and thought,
these kids WANT to be next to me!



“Let's break the piñata,” said the boy's father.

One of the children shouted, “Hey, we can use the dragon's tail!”

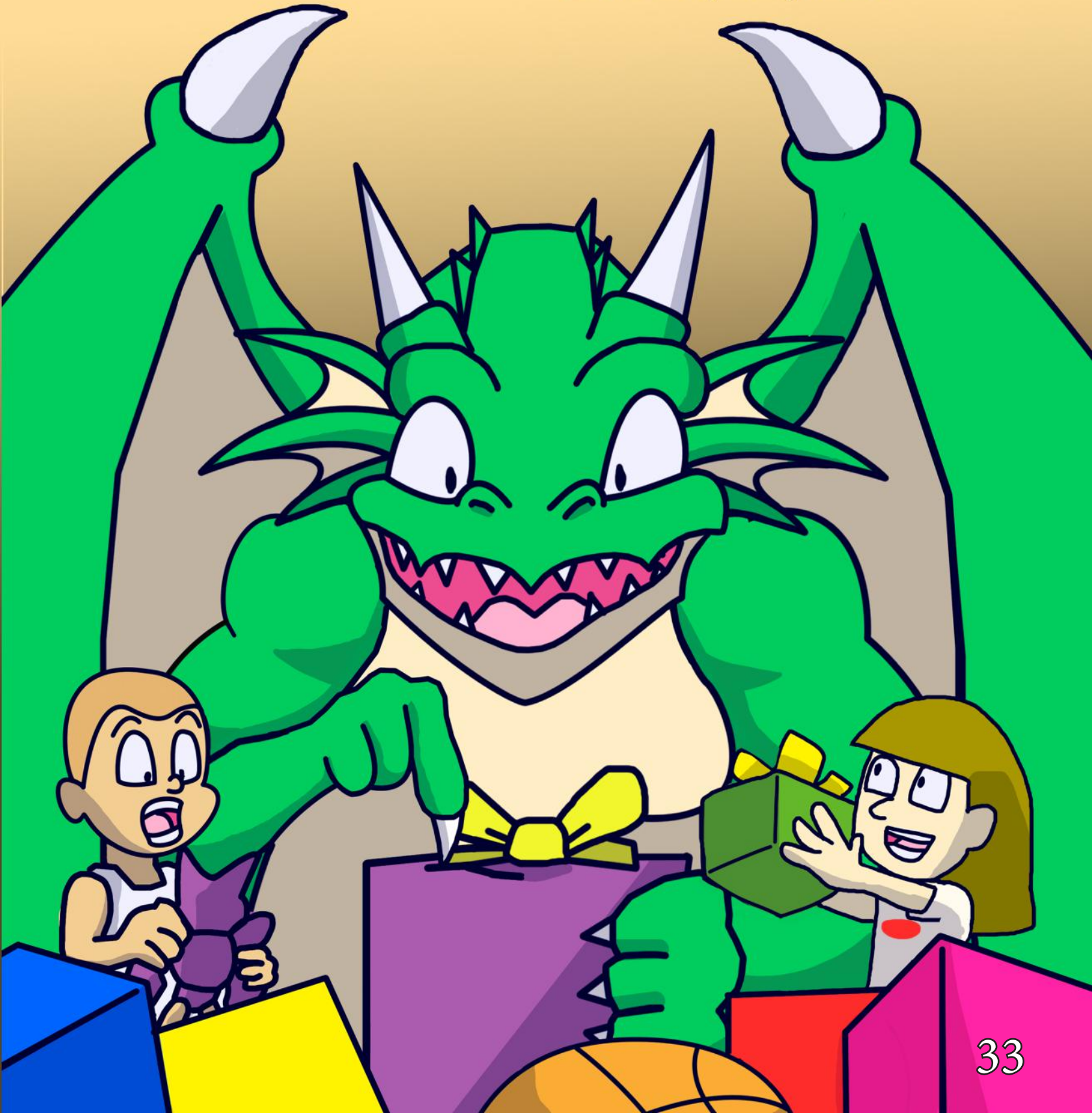


The dragon happily agreed. His tail was very heavy, so he lifted it into their arms.

“Go, go, go!” the children shouted.

“It’s time to open presents!”
said the boy’s mother. “I’ll
go get the scissors.”

The dragon glanced at his fingers
and toes, and said, “I can help. I
do have very sharp nails...”



“Thank you for coming to my party,” said the boy to the dragon.

“You’re welcome,” the dragon replied.

“The dragon is really cool!” said one boy with curly hair.

“He can fly too!” a girl with a ponytail called out.

“And breathe fire!” another boy shouted, wide-eyed.

“And cut paper with his nails!” said yet another.

All the children circled around him.

“Will you be my friend?”

“And my friend?”

“And mine?”

“Uhhh...sure!” said the dragon, smiling from ear to ear.



“You see?” said the boy, winking.

The dragon looked at the boy for a long time and twitched his nose.

“Why aren’t you afraid of me?”

The boy asked, “Why would I be afraid? Are you afraid of ME?”

The dragon laughed. “No, but you’re *normal*.”

“What’s *normal*? You’re so cool!”

“Ha!” said the dragon. “You know, you’re cool, too.”

The boy jumped on the back of the dragon and hugged him tightly.



The dragon grinned. He felt amazing.

“So.... Can I call you Spikey Mikey?” asked the boy.

“Only if I can call you Silly Billy.”

They both busted out laughing and were so happy they were friends.



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About the Authors



Linda Drattell is an author, poet, and advocate for the deaf and hard of hearing residing in Northern California. She earned a bachelor's degree in social work from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and an MBA from the American University in Washington, D.C. Deafened in her thirties, she relearned how to navigate social, professional, and family relationships, and has chronicled this process through articles in newsletters, magazines, and in an anthology. Her poetry has appeared in both online publications and anthologies, and her poetry collection, *Remember This Day*, will be published in August 2023. She serves on the boards of both the California Communications Access Foundation and the California Writers Club/Tri-Valley Writers Branch. She may be reached on both Twitter and LinkedIn at @LindaDrattell. To learn more about Linda, visit www.LindaDrattell.com.



Eve Marie Little is an author who grew up in Texas during the school year and spent the summers with her grandparents in Guadalajara, Mexico. Later in life, she worked in several countries including Peru, Ecuador, Thailand and South Korea. It's thanks to this diverse upbringing, she has had a focus on diversity and inclusion in our communities. She is currently a professor at California State University – East Bay and Mission College where she teaches courses related to hospitality, recreation and tourism. She believes that through hospitality, people can learn about others' cultures and help bring bridges of understanding. She also works as a Spanish interpreter in hospitals, law offices and the general community.



Marc Vicente, illustrator, is a Filipino-American graphic designer and illustrator who designs expressive cartoon characters and other branding assets for commission work, news articles and his original tabletop games. He has a bachelor's degree in Graphic Design from California State University – East Bay, and he has illustrated for clients both in the United States and the Philippines. His art can be found on Instagram under @marxsterart.