

Ethan Makes It Right



Ken Spillman
Illustrated by James Tan

Copyright © Ken Spillman 2015
Illustration © James Tan 2015

Special thanks to Audrey Lim for designing the discussion questions.

Published by Little Knights
An imprint of Armour Publishing
Block 1003 Bukit Merah Central #02-07 Singapore 159836
Email : sales@armourpublishing.com
enquiries@armourpublishing.com
Website : www.armourpublishing.com

19 18 17 16 15
5 4 3 2 1

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system,
or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical,
photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the
copyright owner.

Printed in Singapore

ISBN 978-981-4597-47-0

National Library Board, Singapore Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Spillman, Ken, 1959-

Ethan makes it right / Ken Spillman ; illustrated by James Tan. –
Singapore : Little Knights, [2015]
pages cm. – (Let me read. Genius level 4. The virtues series)
ISBN : 978-981-4597-47-0

1. Forgiveness – Juvenile fiction. 2. Virtues – Juvenile fiction. I. Seiji.
II. Series: Let me read. Genius level 4. III. Series: Virtues series. IV. Title.

PZ7
828.99343 -- dc23

OCN898528415

Contents

Chapter 1 5

Chapter 2 13

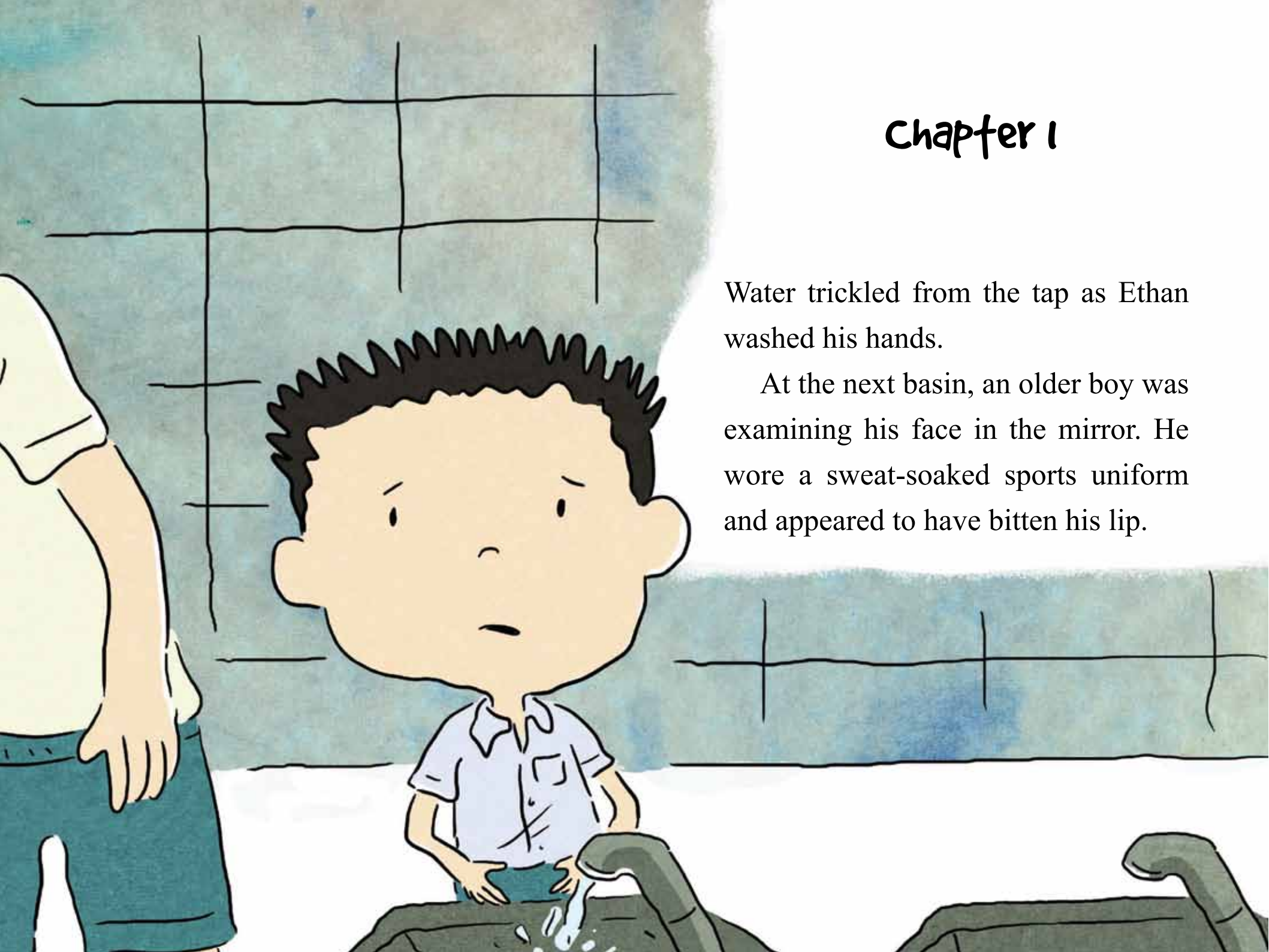
Chapter 3 21

Chapter 4 29

Chapter 1

Water trickled from the tap as Ethan washed his hands.

At the next basin, an older boy was examining his face in the mirror. He wore a sweat-soaked sports uniform and appeared to have bitten his lip.



The boy leaned over to splash water on his face. He did it with sudden, careless gusto, as if Ethan was invisible. Water flew everywhere.

Ethan jumped back, but heavy drops of water landed on his shirt and shorts. The older boy didn't seem to notice and did it again. This time, Ethan was out of range.



Outside the washroom, Ethan's thoughts darted back to the group projects they were starting in class. Before asking Miss Toh for permission to leave the room, he had been teamed with Lucas, Chloe and Heather.

Ethan was sure they could do well—and right now, they were sitting in their group, dividing up the tasks assigned to them.



“Hey, look,” Lucas said in a low voice as Ethan was about to sit down. “Ethan couldn’t wait!”

The girls followed Lucas’ eyes to Ethan’s blue shorts. Ethan looked down too. The water had made a dark blotch in the worst place possible.

He glanced around, hoping nobody else had seen it.



“That’s water,” Ethan said hurriedly. “I got splashed.” He tugged at his shirt, trying to laugh it off. On the flimsy white material of the shirt, Ethan noticed, the water was now barely visible.

Chloe and Heather giggled.

“Left it too la-ate, couldn’t wa-ait!” Lucas taunted, wanting to make the girls laugh even more.



Ethan was blushing now. He hated the way he blushed, sometimes for no reason at all.

“Miss Toh is looking at us,” he said. It was true. She was at the back of the classroom, glancing up while helping another group with its project plan.

Chloe picked up her pen and they got to work. But every now and then, Lucas raised an eyebrow in Ethan’s direction and the three of them would smile and snort at his expense.

It was as though they had formed a little club—a club that only Ethan couldn’t join.

He felt like crying but held back his tears, knowing that it would make things worse.

He felt like telling Miss Toh, but that would be embarrassing too. How could he tell her what his three group mates found so funny?

All Ethan could do was wait for class to end.



Chapter 2

Ethan's blood boiled. It had been bad enough in their little group. Now Lucas was spreading the story around as if it was the latest episode of a TV show everyone else had missed.

Ten minutes into recess, Ethan could no longer be bothered telling them, "It was water."

He just felt like lashing out at Lucas.





The worst part of it was that Ethan couldn't understand why it was happening.

Sure, Lucas had never been his best friend—but there hadn't been any argument between them either.

Why was Lucas suddenly so determined to embarrass him?



“Because he’s such a loser,” Russell told Ethan, emptying a spoonful of rice into his mouth.

They were sitting in their regular place at the canteen. For Russell, nothing was ever a big deal. Ethan tried to picture how Russell would have reacted in the same situation, but he couldn't.

Russell slapped him on the back. “Don't worry about it,” he said. “Let's play badminton.”

Badminton didn't help. Ethan could smash the shuttlecock, but not the anger that was flying about inside him.



As Ethan was going up the stairs, he noticed Lucas in front of him.

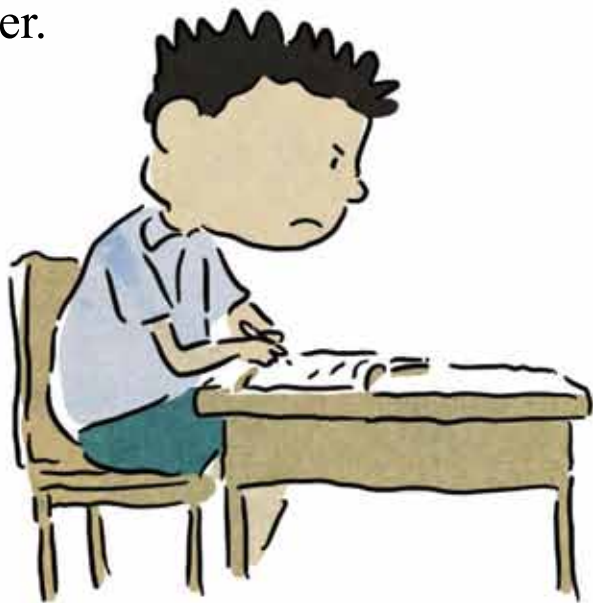
Without thinking, he gave one of Lucas' ankles a firm rap with the palm of his hand. Lucas' feet tangled and he fell forward.

"Sorry!" Ethan said, showing Lucas a fake smile. He brushed past his stunned classmate, hoping a teacher hadn't seen.



For the rest of the day, Ethan wished he hadn't tripped Lucas on the stairs. It had been rash and dangerous. There would be *big* trouble if Lucas reported him, and it would be just as bad if Lucas decided to spread more lies about him.

Even so, Ethan could not let go of his anger.

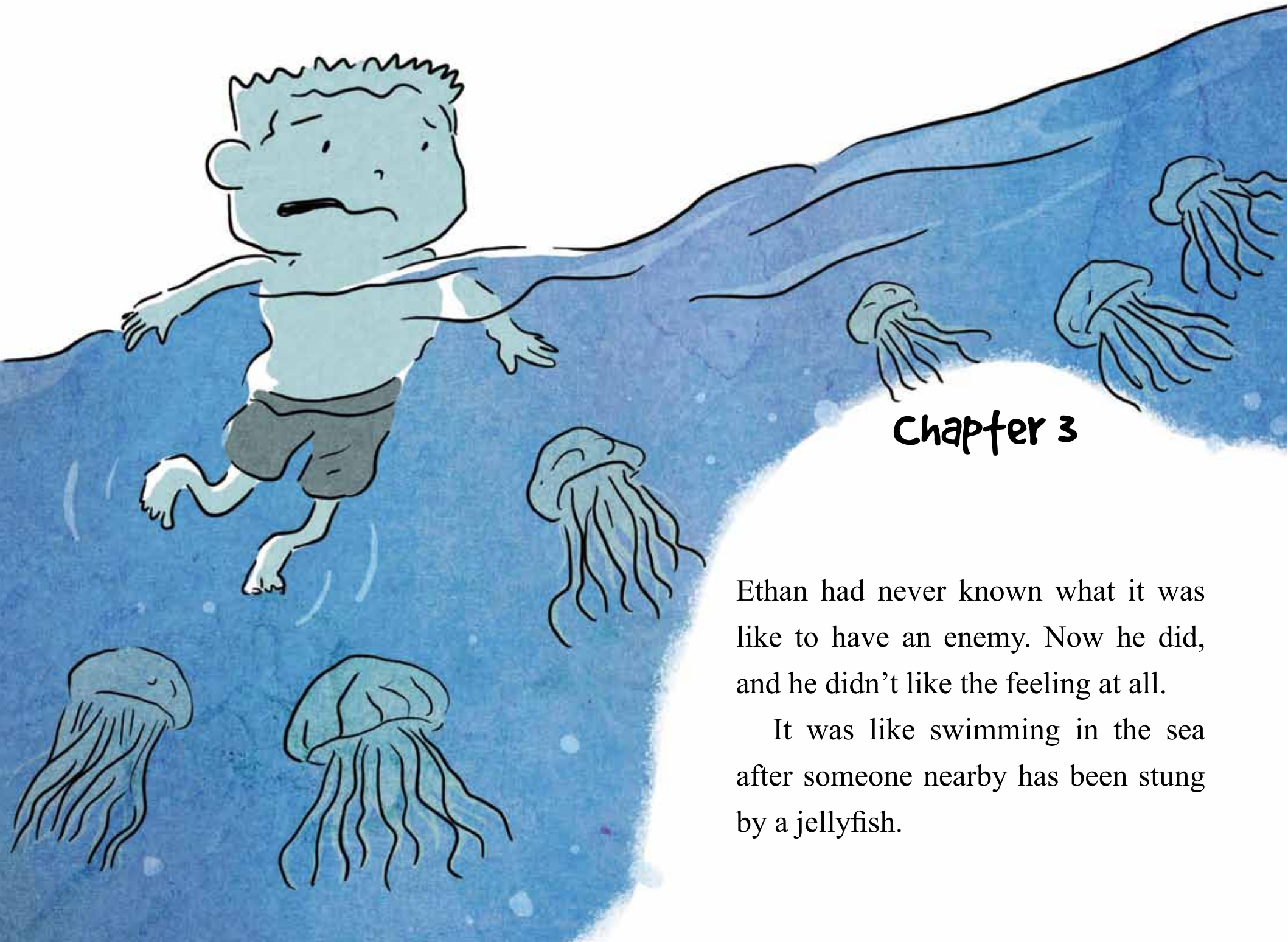


As Mum drove him home from school, Ethan could only grunt and mumble answers to all her usual questions.

“What’s wrong?” she asked. “Do you have a lot of homework today?”

Ethan shook his head. No, he thought, it’s much worse than that.





Chapter 3

Ethan had never known what it was like to have an enemy. Now he did, and he didn't like the feeling at all.

It was like swimming in the sea after someone nearby has been stung by a jellyfish.

Lucas didn't seem to have told anyone about what happened on the stairs. He had also stopped making jokes about Ethan's shorts.

But Ethan was on his toes. He watched what Lucas was doing at any given moment, and guessed that Lucas was equally watchful.



Avoiding someone was harder than Ethan had ever imagined. Being in the same group made it impossible.

The boys didn't look at each other. Whenever Ethan said something, he said it to one of the girls. Lucas did the same, while still trying to act the funny guy.



“Get over it, you two,” Chloe told them. “Miss Toh is going to mark us down if she sees we’re not getting along.”

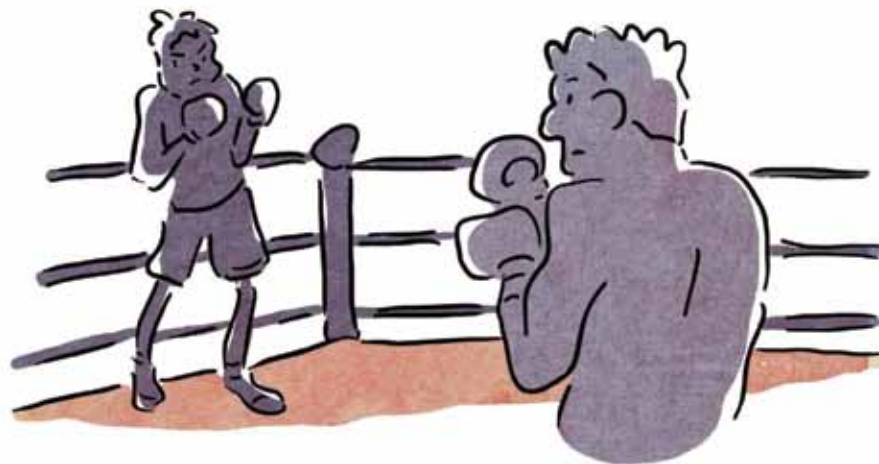
“You’re being such babies,” Heather said.



That stung. Ethan could see Heather’s point.

At the same time, there were other thoughts—bitter thoughts that kept his anger fresh.

He hadn’t started it. He hadn’t asked for a clash with Lucas. It wasn’t *his* fault they were facing off like boxers do in movies. Right?



A few days later, Ethan noticed an ugly bruise on Lucas' arm. He couldn't be sure that he'd caused it by making Lucas fall, but thought he probably had.

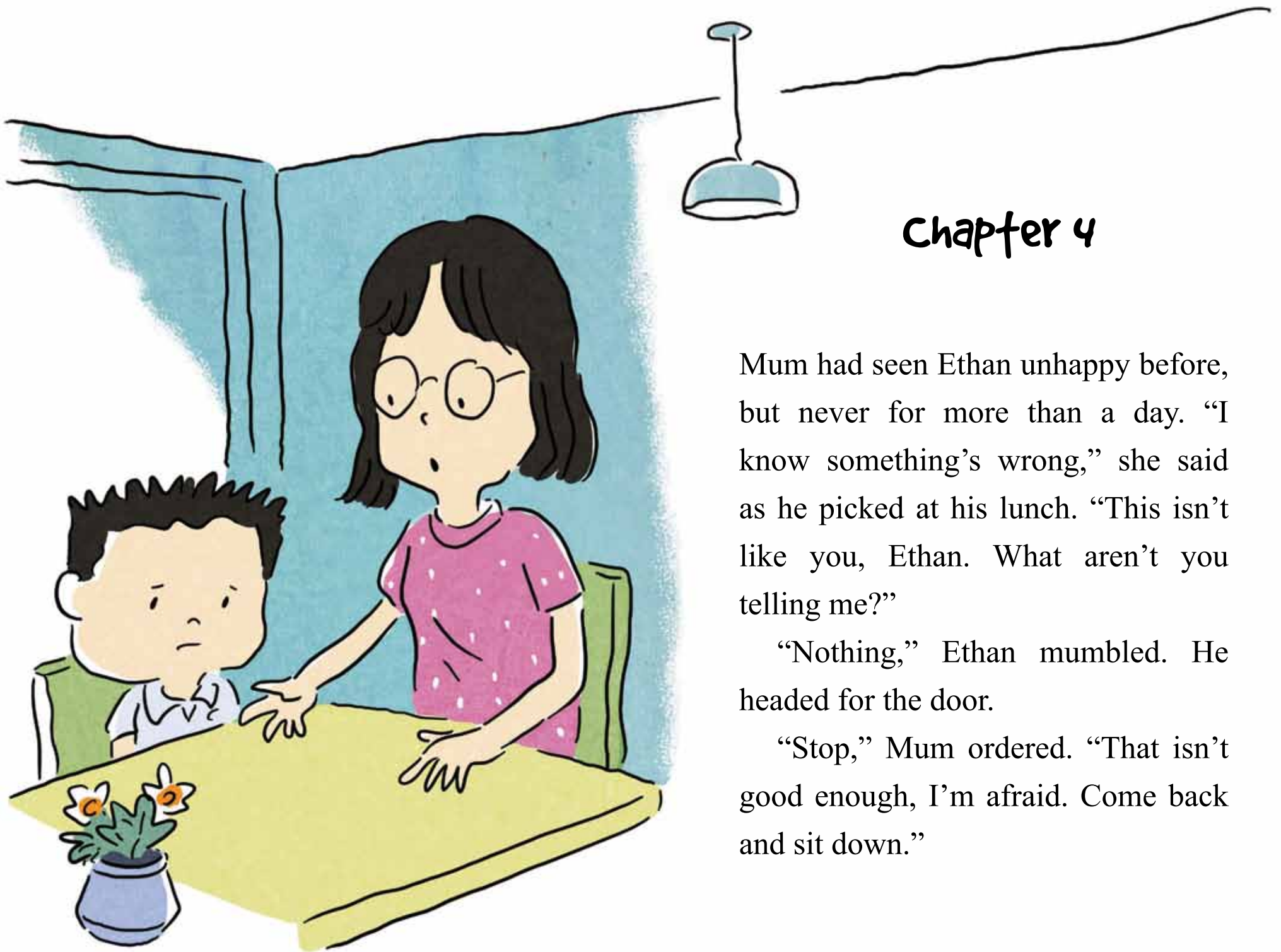
Ethan still had no idea why Lucas had been so mean—or why he might think being mean was funny.

But the joke about Ethan's wet shorts had dried up quickly, while Lucas was still wearing a bruise.

Now it wasn't anger that stopped him from looking Lucas in the eye—it was shame.

Ethan wanted to fix things, but didn't know how.





Chapter 4

Mum had seen Ethan unhappy before, but never for more than a day. “I know something’s wrong,” she said as he picked at his lunch. “This isn’t like you, Ethan. What aren’t you telling me?”

“Nothing,” Ethan mumbled. He headed for the door.

“Stop,” Mum ordered. “That isn’t good enough, I’m afraid. Come back and sit down.”

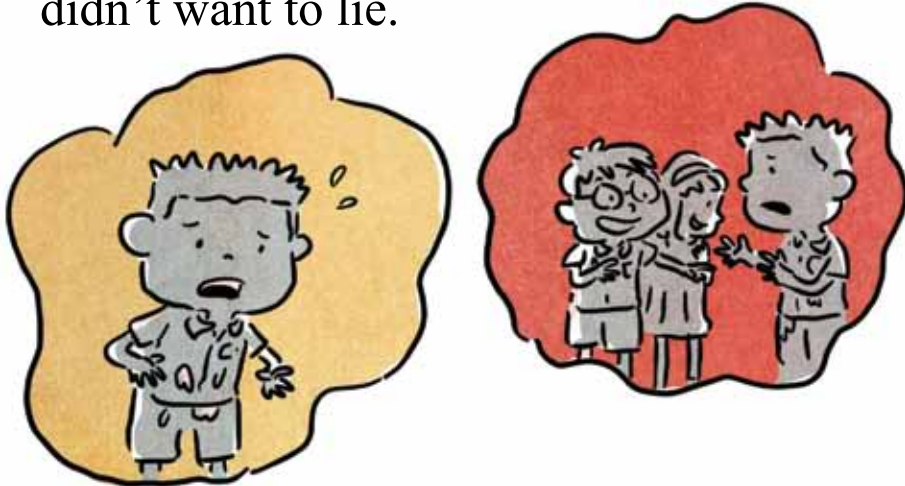
Ethan did as he was told.

“Now, what’s going on?” Her tone was gentler now. Slowly, Ethan stumbled through the beginning of his story. “And tell me, did you do anything to Lucas?” Mum asked.

Ethan shifted in his seat. “Mum... *He* started it.”

“Okay. But did you try to get even?”

Ethan sighed and nodded. He didn’t want to lie.



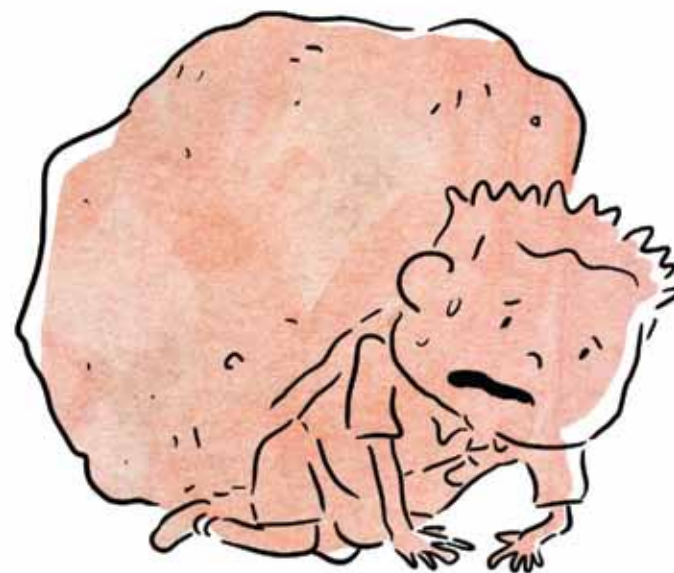
After Ethan had told her everything, Mum took a few moments to gather her thoughts.

“What Lucas did wasn’t nice at all,” she began. “I bet he doesn’t even know why he acted like that, but maybe he was desperate to make the others laugh. Do you think Lucas is a bit of a show-off? Sometimes, show-offs don’t have many real friends.”



Ethan nodded. “Russell says he’s a loser,” he said.

“Well, that’s not a very nice thing to say. But let’s say Lucas feels left out or lonely. It probably made him feel good when Heather and Chloe laughed, so he wanted to make other people laugh too.”



Ethan shrugged and Mum continued. “Look, I know it isn’t easy to figure these things out when you’re a kid. But carrying anger around wears you down. It was anger that caused you to...”

“I didn’t mean to hurt him, Mum,” Ethan interrupted.

“I know, Ethan. But you did. And it made things worse—for both of you.”

Ethan looked away. There were tears in his eyes, and he didn't want Mum to see.

“Things get better if you let anger go. If you had thought about Lucas instead of just what he did to you, you might have been able to forgive him more easily. You might also have felt lucky to have good friends like Russell. Lucas probably wishes he was more like you.”

Mum's words made Ethan feel even worse.

“I know you're upset. But here's what I think.” Mum put her hand on Ethan's knee. “You need to show

Lucas that you've forgiven him. But you also need to apologise for what you did. And then you need to forgive yourself for doing something you wouldn't normally do.”



That night Ethan found himself going over everything. It seemed like the hundredth time.

Lucas had started it, yes. But what if the start had also been the end? What if he had ignored Lucas' behaviour and let the whole thing pass? Would he still be feeling bad now? Would their school project be suffering?

Mum was right. Anger had got the better of him, and he had then made things worse.

The next day, Ethan decided, he would start making things right.



Discussion Questions

- 1) Lucas taunted Ethan about the wet spot on his shorts, and other group members laughed at his expense. Ethan felt that they had “formed a little club—a club that only Ethan couldn’t join”. What does this mean? Why do you think Ethan felt this way?
- 2) When Ethan was teased by his group members, he responded in the following ways: (i) he tried to explain; (ii) he blushed; (iii) he felt like crying but held back his tears; (iv) he felt like telling his teacher, but thought it might be embarrassing to do so; (v) he realised he could not do anything but wait for the class to end.

Have you ever felt the same way as Ethan? Share more about your experience.
- 3) Ethan could not understand why Lucas was determined to embarrass him, and he felt angry. How did Ethan try to get even with Lucas?
- 4) How did Ethan feel after trying to get even with Lucas? Did his actions help Ethan let go of his anger?
- 5) For Ethan’s friend Russell, nothing was ever a big deal. Russell told Ethan not to worry about what Lucas had done. If Russell had been teased by Lucas, how do you think he might have responded?
- 6) Ethan started out feeling angry with Lucas. Later, he felt ashamed. What made Ethan feel ashamed?
- 7) Why do you think Lucas always wanted to act as the funny guy and make others laugh?
- 8) Ethan did not start the conflict with Lucas, and he did not mean to hurt Lucas when he got even. How did Ethan “let anger get the better of him” in the story?
- 9) Ethan’s mum told him that carrying around anger wears a person down, and that things get better when you can “let go” of anger. What are some of the ways that Ethan might have let go of his anger in a positive way?
- 10) How do you usually respond when you are angry with someone?

The *Let Me Read* series is a guided approach to reading. The four levels of reading difficulty are:

LEVEL 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Beginning to read. * Sight words, words to sound out and simple sentences for new readers. Repeated words. * Familiar themes. 	Emergent readers
LEVEL 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Growing readers. * Longer words and longer sentences. * Familiar and new themes. 	Readers learning to decode
LEVEL 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Increasingly confident reading. * Simple chapters or stories broken into parts. * Familiar and new themes. 	Increasingly confident readers
GENIUS LEVEL 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Confident readers. * Stories with four to six chapters. * Familiar and new themes. 	Confident readers

The *Let Me Read* series uses large, clear type, while carefully matching text and pictures to ensure your child will have a smooth and enjoyable reading journey.

Read more books by Ken Spillman!



More in the *Let Me Read* series

Level 1



Level 2



Level 3



Level 4



The *Let Me Read* series is a guided approach to reading. The four levels of reading difficulty are:

LEVEL 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Beginning to read. * Sight words, words to sound out and simple sentences for new readers. Repeated words. * Familiar themes. 	Emergent reader
LEVEL 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Growing readers. * Longer words and longer sentences. * Familiar and new themes. 	Readers learning to decode
LEVEL 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Increasingly confident reading. * Simple chapters or stories broken into parts. * Familiar and new themes. 	Increasingly confident readers
GENIUS LEVEL 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Confident readers. * Stories with four to six chapters. * Familiar and new themes. 	Confident readers

The *Let Me Read* series uses large, clear type, while carefully matching text and pictures to ensure your child will have a smooth and enjoyable reading journey.

Dear Parent or Educator,

We are sometimes surprised by how seemingly trivial things affect young children greatly. This series by Ken Spillman demonstrates sensitivity towards children's emotions and profound respect for children's judgment, without being didactic.

In the stories, characters navigate their way around everyday life circumstances. The stories show how the big choices or little compromises we make in life contribute to defining our character. The narratives are effective as they deal with ordinary issues that young readers can identify with. The characters' growth and insights also come naturally.

The power of literature to shape young people's minds and hearts has been firmly established through extensive research. According to scholars Gates and Mark: "Through the window of literature, we are allowed to enter worlds not physically open to us—to view, to empathize, and to participate emotionally in ways that may ultimately change the way we see ourselves and the society in which we live." This, I believe, is what Ken Spillman achieves in this series of books.

Assistant Professor Myra Garces-Bacsal, PhD
Coordinator of MEd in High Ability Studies
National Institute of Education, Singapore