

LEVELED BOOK • M

The Sometimes Friend



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Lucy **scanned** the cafeteria and tried not to **panic**. It was her first day of third grade at a new school. She had no idea who to sit with.

Then a girl with a big, bright smile waved Lucy over to her table. Lucy sank down beside her with a small sigh of **relief**.

“I’m Dinah,” the girl said.

“Hi,” Lucy said. “I’m Lucy.”

“I like your hair,” Dinah said. “Wish mine was curly.”

“Thanks,” Lucy said.

“You look like an artist,” Dinah said.

“I like art,” Lucy said.

“Me, too!” Dinah said. “Let’s draw at your house this weekend. I’ll bring my markers. You can bake us cookies.”

“Okay,” Lucy said, excited to have a new friend.

On Saturday, Dinah came to Lucy's house. Lucy served snickerdoodles, fresh from the oven.

"I like chocolate chip better," Dinah said. "I told you that."

"Oh," Lucy said. Dinah had told her nothing of the kind.

Dinah ate the snickerdoodles anyway. Lucy watched her drop crumbs on the rug.



“You have a great room,” Dinah said.
“My favorite color is purple, too. But my room is green.”

Dinah had finished the cookies. She sank down on Lucy’s bed and said, “Let’s draw here.”

Lucy **hesitated**. But she wanted Dinah to like her, so she agreed.

It wasn’t long before Dinah’s marker slipped. It made a long, black line through the purple flowers on Lucy’s bedspread. Lucy gasped.

“Oopsie,” Dinah said. Her eyes were big and round. “It was an **accident!**”

Lucy nodded but she wasn’t so sure. It didn’t seem like an accident.



On Monday, Dinah and Lucy jumped rope at recess. When a girl and boy smiled at Lucy, she waved at them. Dinah stopped her.

“Don’t look at Ana and Eugene,” she said. “They’re laughing at you. They think you’re a **weird** jumper.”

After school, Ana and Eugene asked Lucy to jump rope with them the next day.

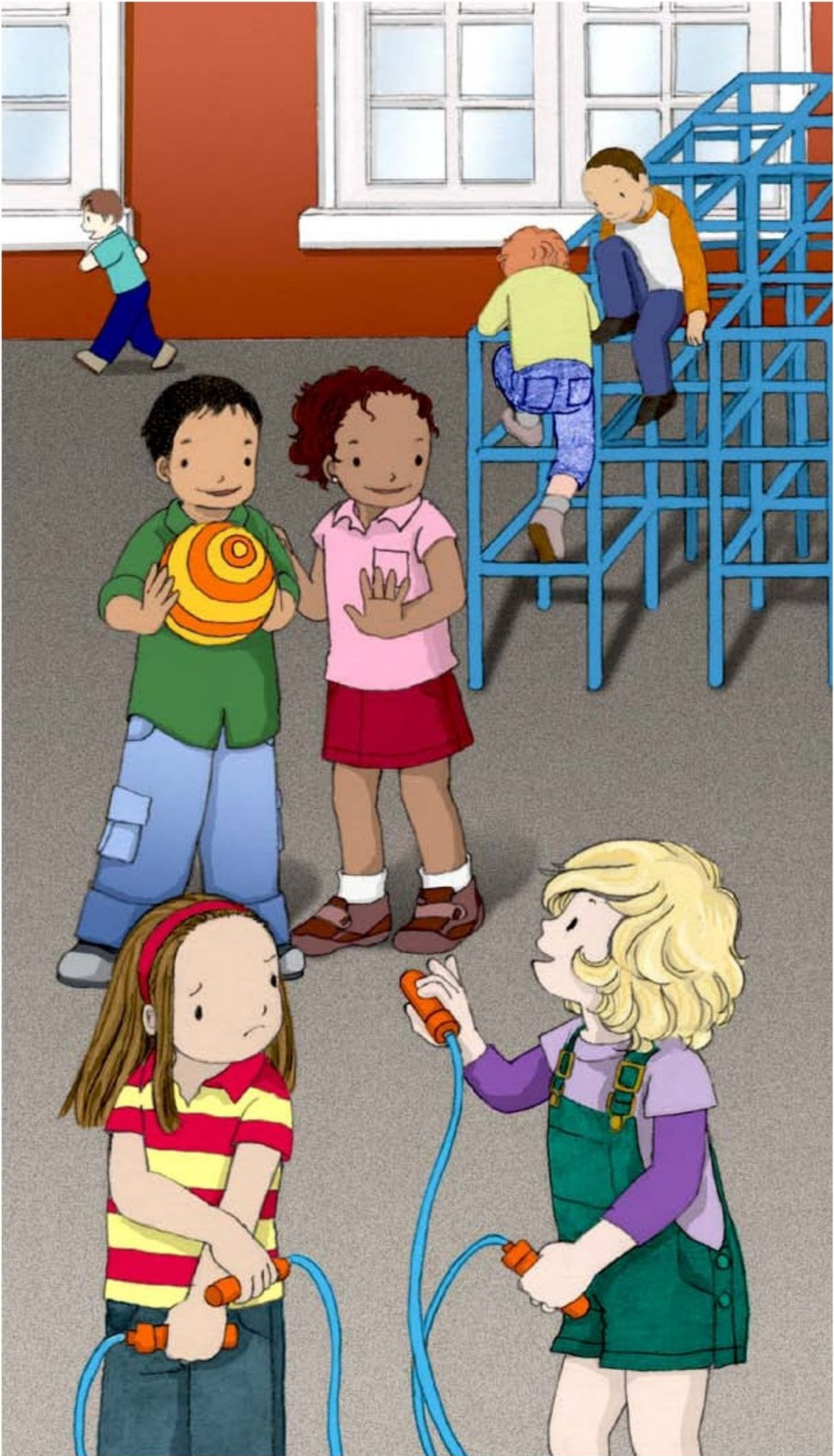
“Not if you’re going to laugh at me,” Lucy said.

“Why would we laugh at you?” asked Eugene.

“Dinah told me you just want to make fun of me,” Lucy said.

“That isn’t true,” Ana said.

“Sometimes Dinah **lies**.”



That night
at dinner,
Lucy didn't
feel hungry.

"What's wrong,
Lucy?" her
dad asked.

"Dad," she
began. "You
know Dinah?"



"The one who **complained** about
your cookies?" he asked.

Lucy nodded.

"The one who got magic marker all
over your bedspread?" he asked.

"She said it was an accident," Lucy
mumbled.

“So she did,” her dad agreed.

“She **confuses** me,” Lucy said. “She **compliments** me and says she’s my friend. But sometimes she seems like just the **opposite**.”

Her dad waited for her to go on.

“Today Dinah told me some other kids were making fun of me,” Lucy continued. “But later, they told me she was lying.”

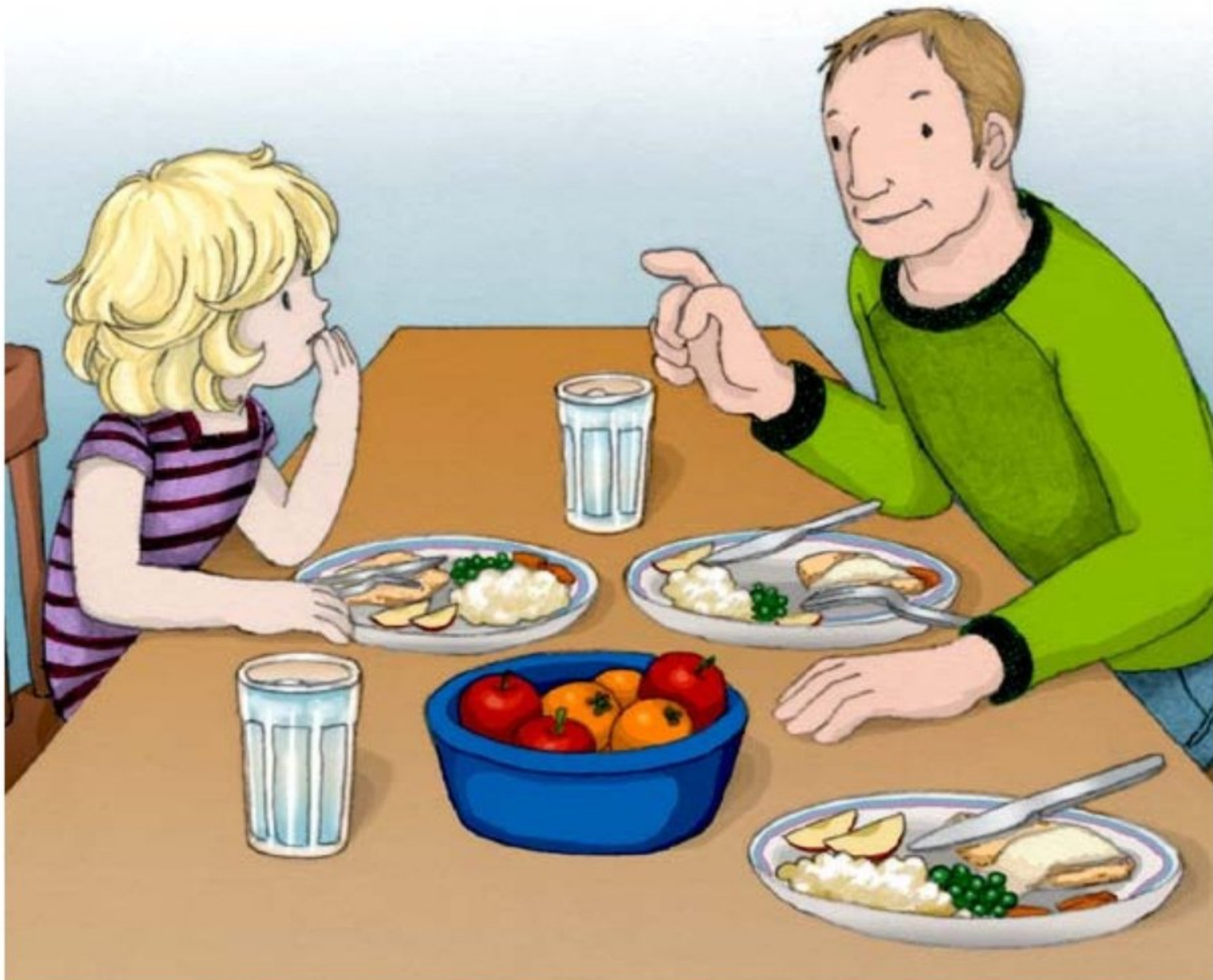
“Friends make us feel better,” her dad said. “Does Dinah make you feel better?”

“Sometimes,” Lucy said. “Sometimes I’m scared of her.” She thought for a moment. “And sometimes I feel sorry for her. I think maybe I’m the only friend she’s got.”

Lucy's dad smiled. "To have a friend, you have to *be* a friend. Maybe Dinah hasn't learned that yet. You have. When the other kids get to know you, you'll make more friends."

"Dinah told me not to play with the other kids," Lucy said.

"Dinah's in charge of Dinah," he said. "You're in charge of you."



The next day at lunch, Dinah waved and patted the seat beside her.

Lucy's voice shook when she spoke. "Let's sit with Ana and Eugene," she said.

"No," Dinah said. "They're mean."

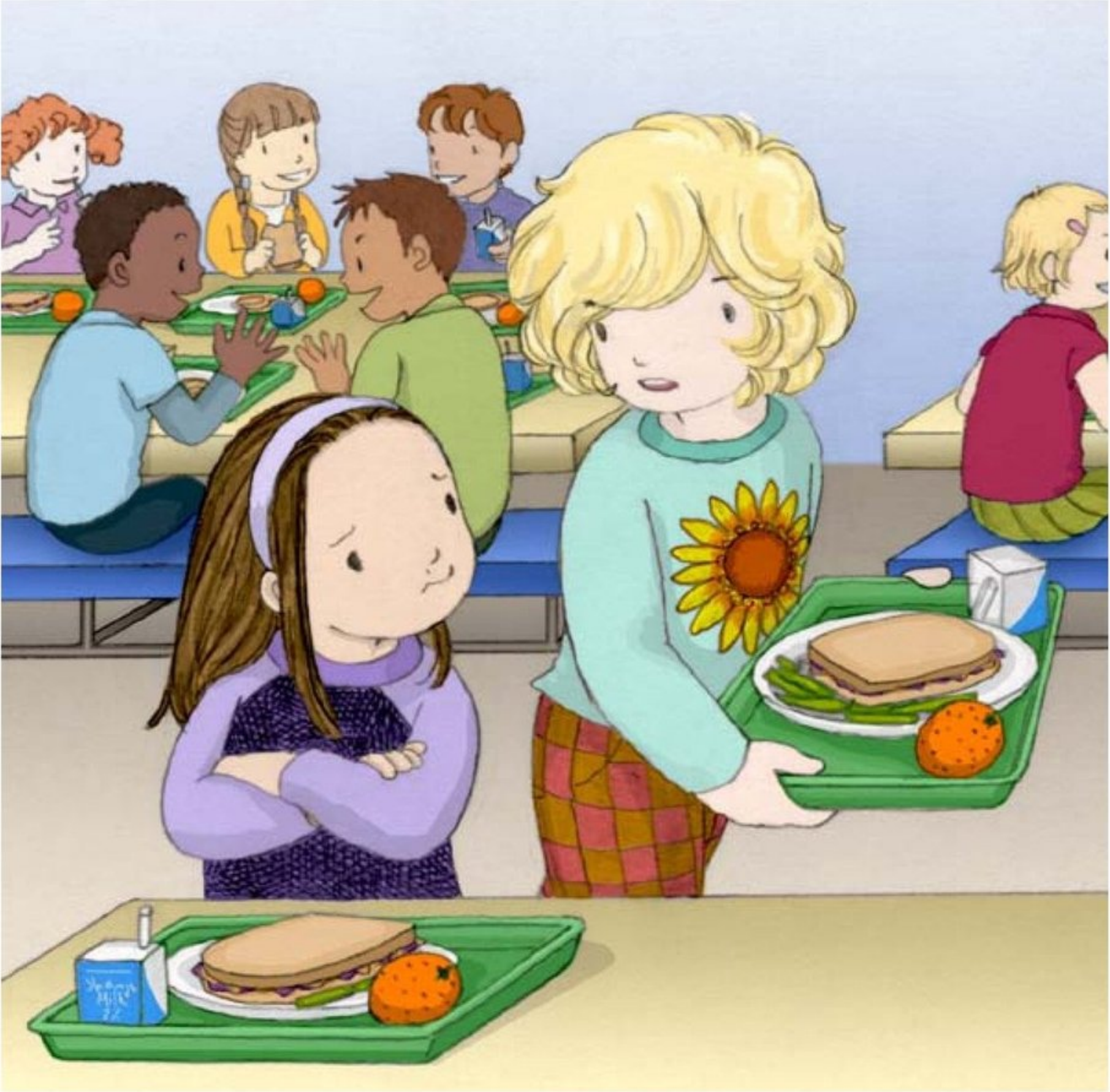
Lucy hesitated. Then Eugene smiled at her, and she felt a little braver.

"I'm going to sit with Ana and Eugene," she said. "Come with me."

"Lucy," Dinah said crossly, "sit down."

Lucy had a lump in her throat. She didn't think she could speak without crying, so she didn't try. She didn't sit down, though.

Dinah frowned and crossed her arms. "You'll be sorry," she warned.



Lucy swallowed. The lump in her throat disappeared. “I’m sorry about one thing,” she said. “I’m sorry we can’t be friends. If you want to be my friend, you need to be a friend to me. I hope you will.”

She turned and walked over to Ana and Eugene.

“Sit with us!” Ana said.

Lucy felt a little shaky. She sat down and looked at the two of them.

“How’s it going?” asked Eugene.

Lucy took a deep breath. She smiled. They smiled back.

“Better,” she said.



Glossary

accident (<i>n.</i>)	an event that was not planned (p. 6)
complained (<i>v.</i>)	used words to express unhappiness about something (p. 10)
compliments (<i>v.</i>)	uses words to express praise or admiration (p. 11)
confuses (<i>v.</i>)	causes someone to be mixed up about something; makes something harder to understand (p. 11)
hesitated (<i>v.</i>)	paused before doing something, especially because of uncertainty (p. 6)
lies (<i>v.</i>)	makes untrue statements told on purpose to trick people (p. 8)
opposite (<i>n.</i>)	completely different (p. 11)
panic (<i>v.</i>)	to feel sudden or uncontrollable fear or worry (p. 3)
relief (<i>n.</i>)	the state of being free from worry or suffering (p. 4)
scanned (<i>v.</i>)	looked over quickly (p. 3)
weird (<i>adj.</i>)	strange or odd (p. 8)

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