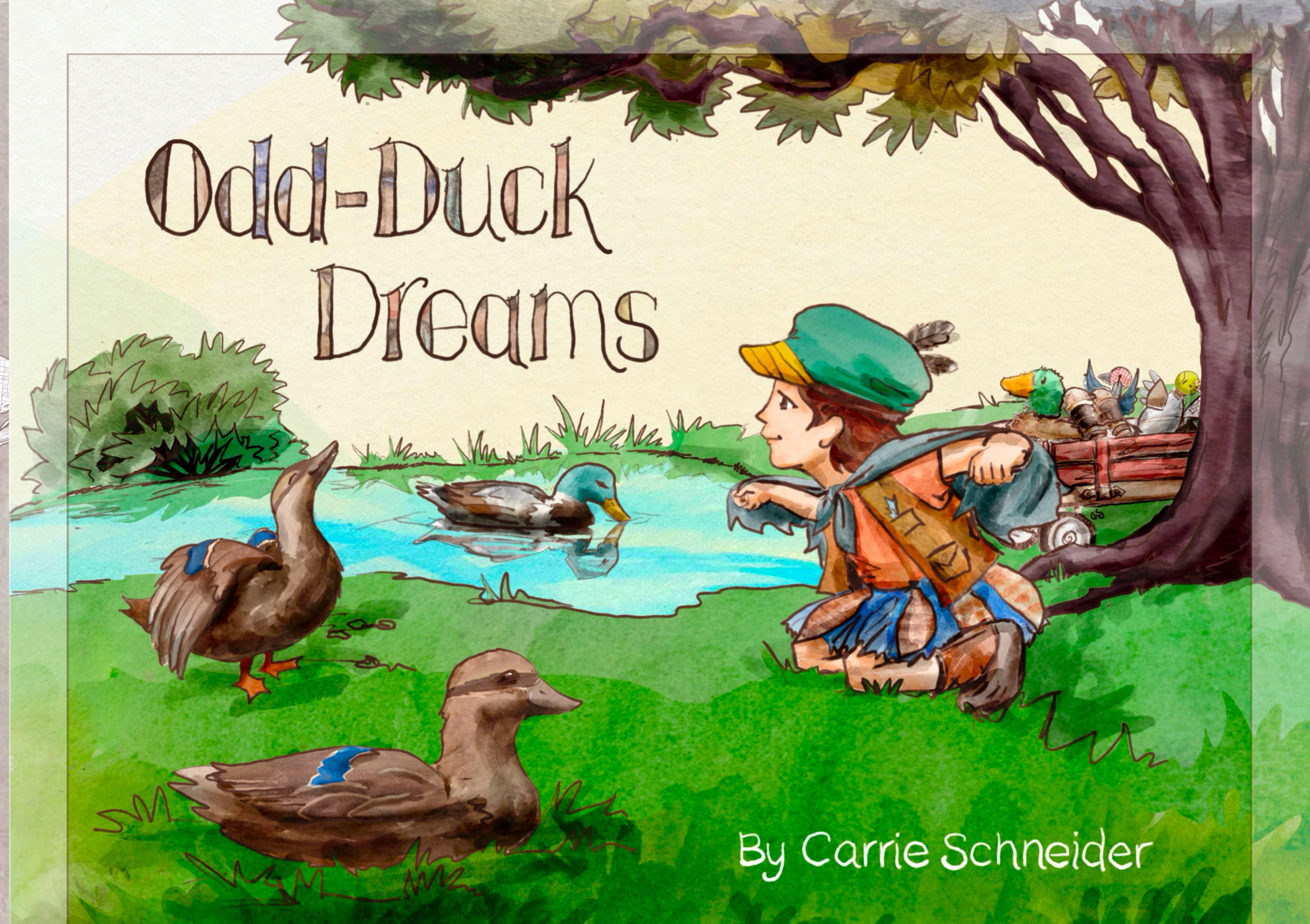






Look, Dabbler!
Our mallards.

Devin *adored* ducks. And ducks adored Devin!

Loyal stuffy
Dabbler did,
for sure.

Her homemade Cobbles did, too!
They were some of
the greatest friends
she'd ever made.

And the wild ducks welcomed
her as one of them.

Which she was, of course
— at least partly.



She was also human.
But the humans didn't welcome Devin at all!

She studied people-plumage so carefully,



and mimicked people-calls so precisely,

but she never fit in.



Why are you standing there?

Why are you standing there?

That's what I said.

That's what I said.

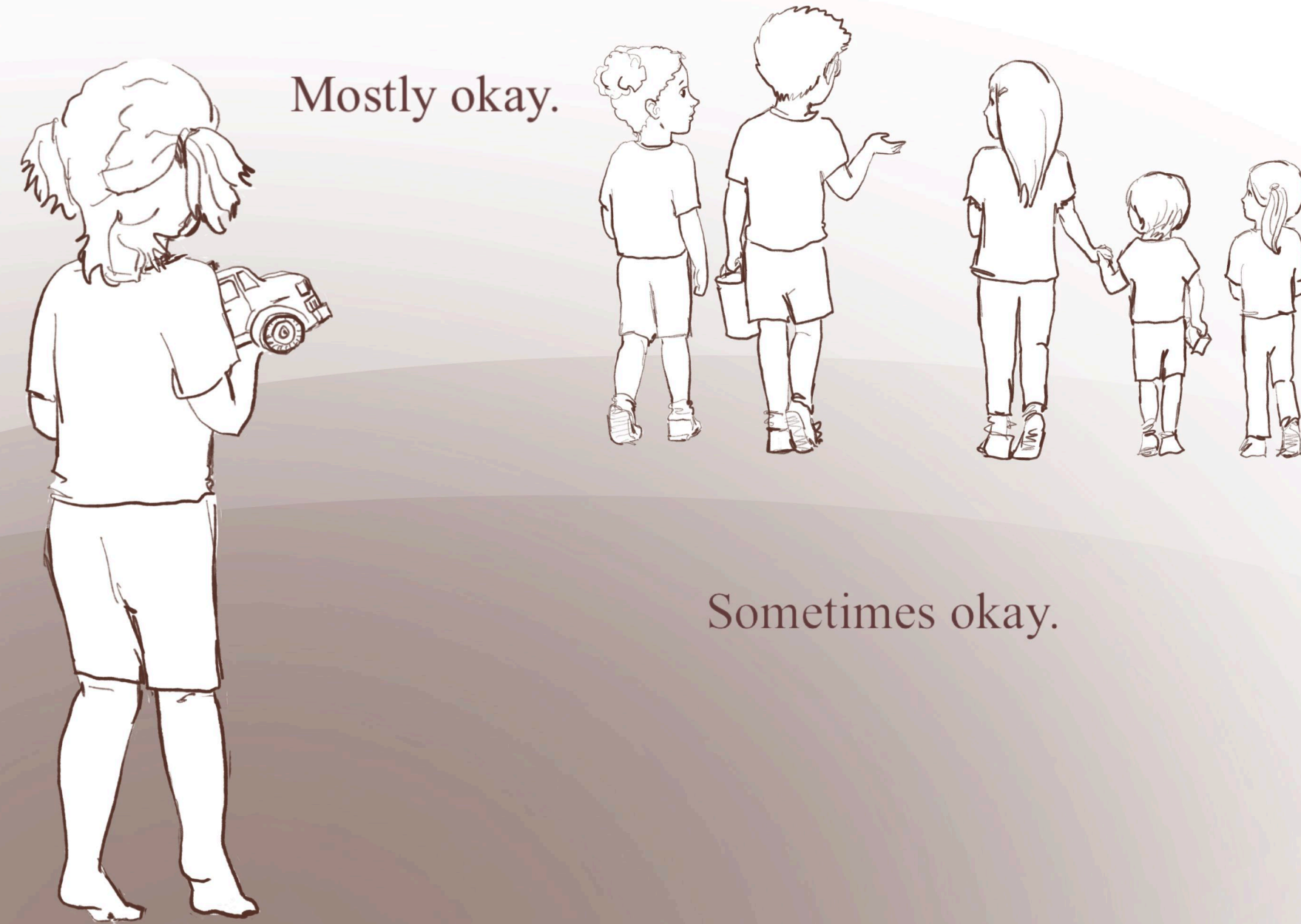
What?

What?

But that was okay.

Mostly okay.

Sometimes okay.



Today, at least, would be wonderful!

“Get up, Dabbler! We have work to do!”

It’s Cobble-making time!!”



Cobbling old wonders into new treasures was the BEST.

What would the shed's dark corners and dusty shelves share today?
Tools and trinkets, furnishings and fastenings, spokes and spools and springs?



It was none of those!





Dabbler, look!

A new kind of wonder...

a wonderfowl!

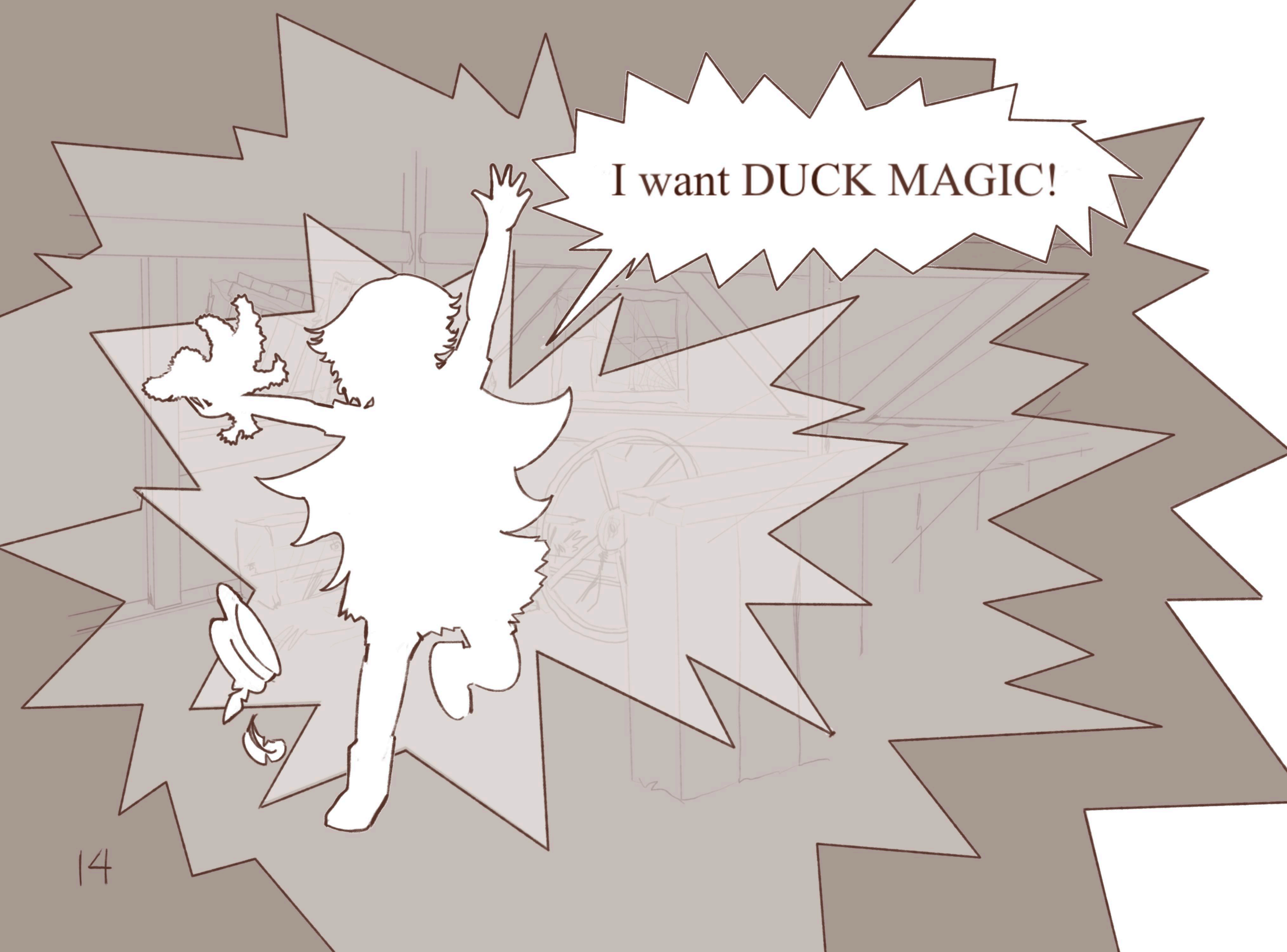
And listen, too! He recognizes us!

... Oh! You don't speak
Wood Duck, only Mallard?

It's okay, I'll translate for you!

He asked me,

What do you wish for, fledgling?



I want DUCK MAGIC!

“Oh yes, you’re right. I have that already, of course!
Oh, what do I *really* wish for?”

And Devin didn’t need to think
long before covering Dabbler’s
ears and whispering,



*Real people friends.
Will I ever have
some of those?*

“I will? But what do I DO? How do I camouflage better? Make more observations, more people-plumage?” She dug in her wagon for her notebook.

But this was not what the magic duck was recommending!

She whispered,

I’m a unique specimen, you see.
Undocumented in the wild.
Nobody wants more Devin.

But the duck was silent.

Wait... are you sure?

You want me to use my
own plumage?

To be *more* Devin,
not *less* Devin?



And so Devin again braved the human habitat, this time with a script prepared.

Good day, people. I am Devin,
a duck-human hybrid
seeking people friends.
The magic duck said...

But the children giggled
and turned away.

You see, the scientific families *Anatidae* and *Hominidae*...

And Devin
and Dabbler
were alone again.

They flew back to the shed in red-cheeked, tear-streaming panic.



Why did you lie to me?

You told me to be me!
I knew that couldn't be right!

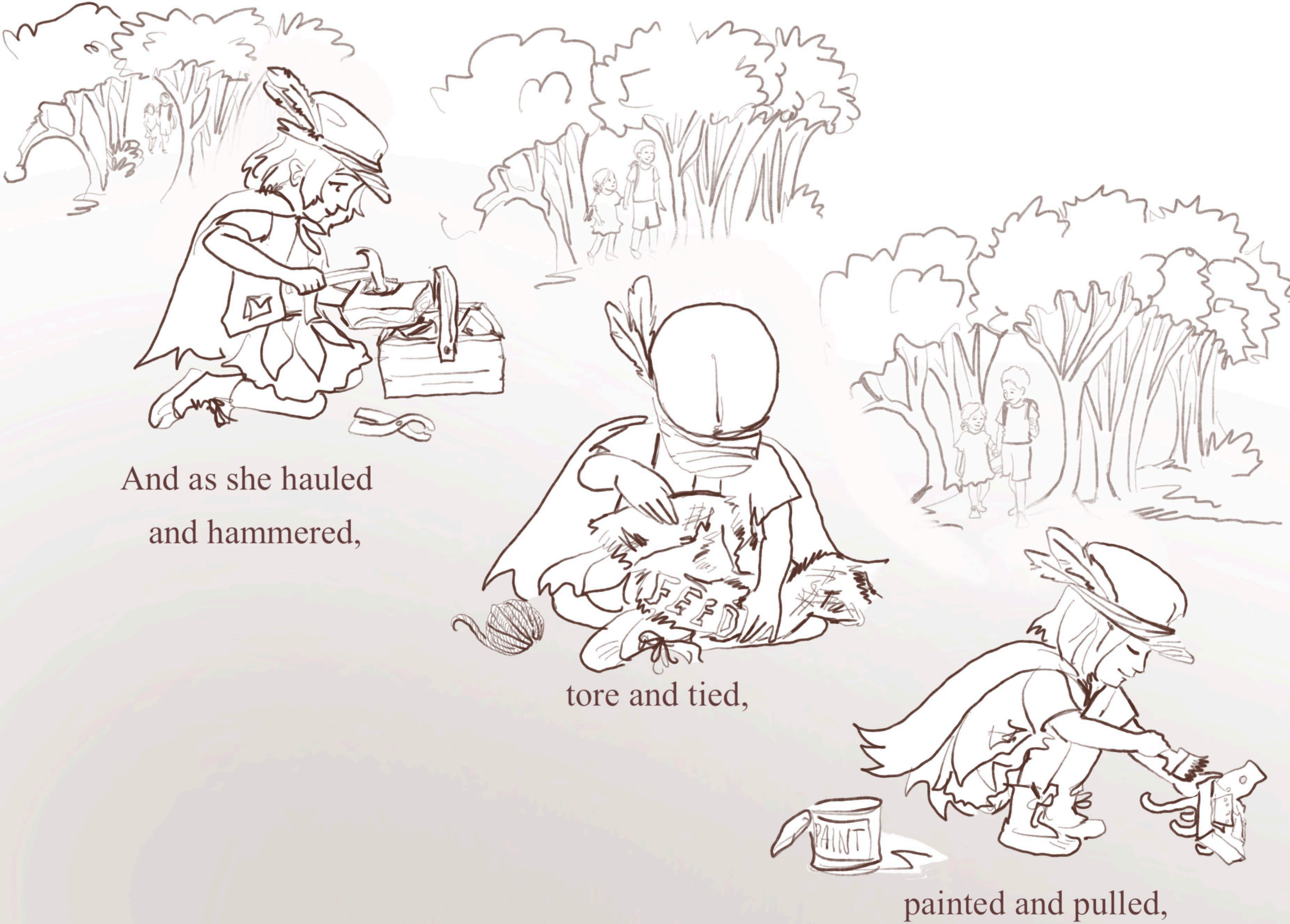


But there was no answer.

So Devin took a deep breath
and counted to
three times three,
three times
and firmly started her day over again.

It's cobbling time, Dabbler.





And as she hauled
and hammered,

tore and tied,

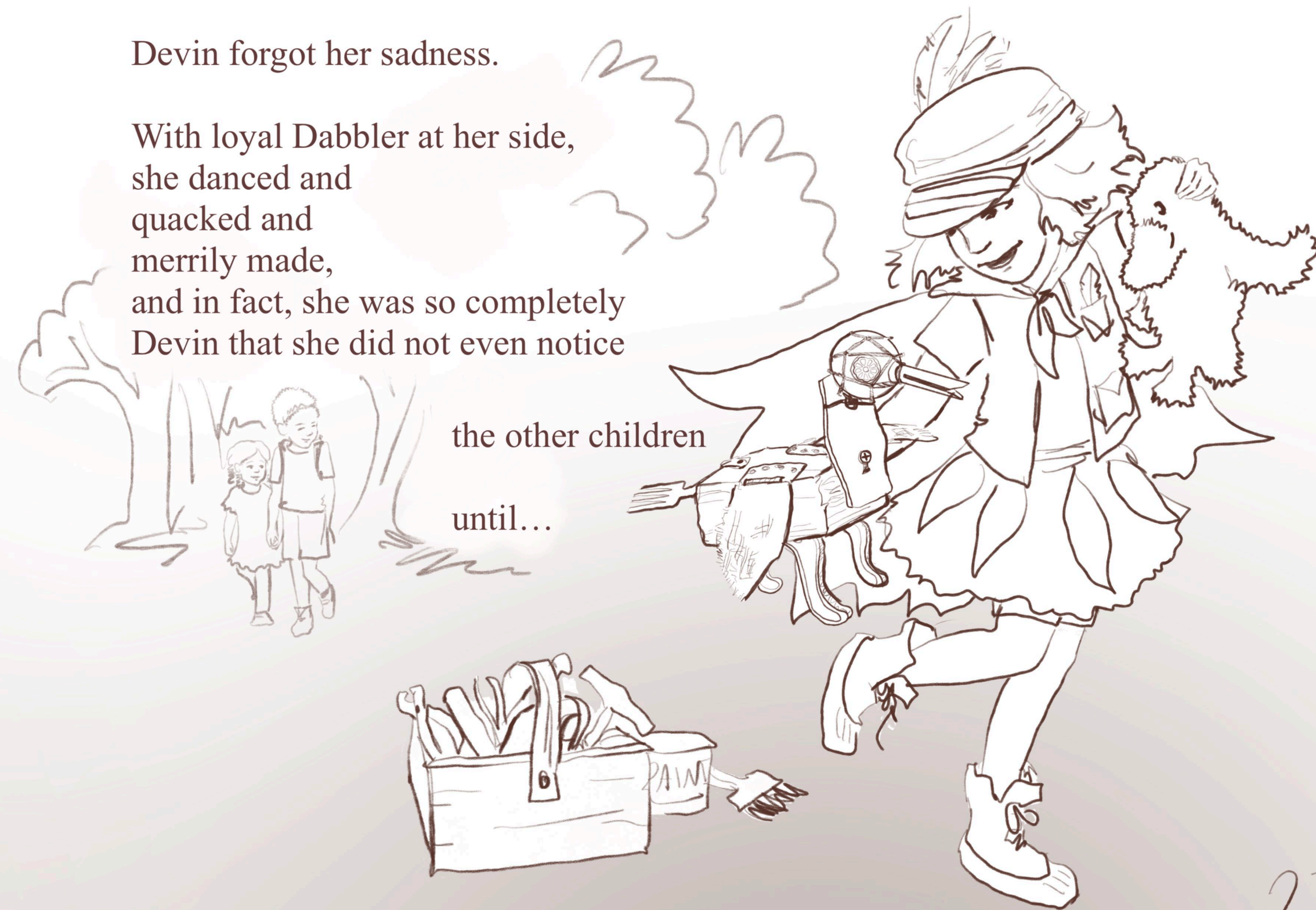
painted and pulled,

Devin forgot her sadness.

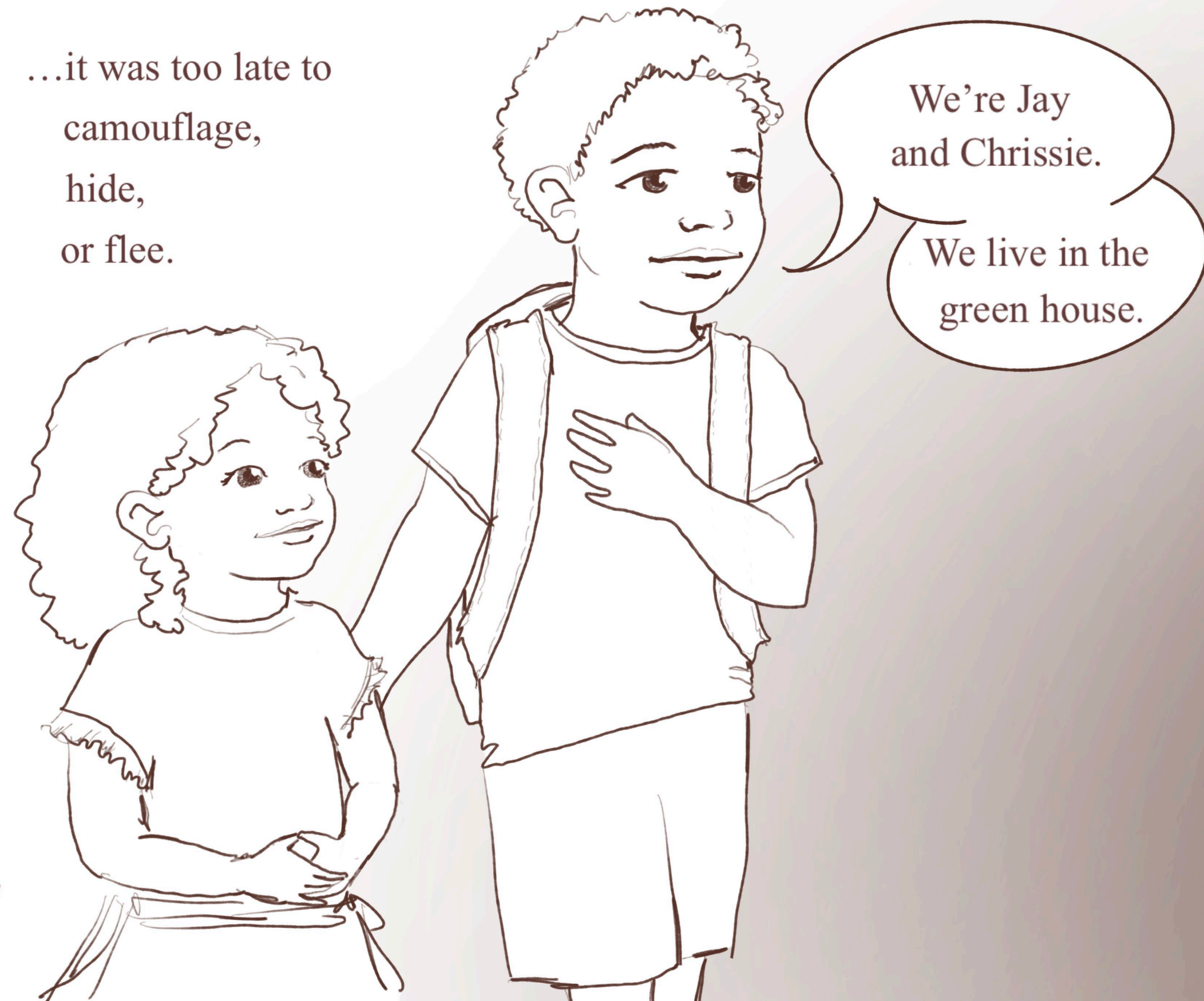
With loyal Dabbler at her side,
she danced and
quacked and
merrily made,
and in fact, she was so completely
Devin that she did not even notice

the other children

until...



...it was too late to
camouflage,
hide,
or flee.



Can we play birds, too?

Quack!

Oh no, Devin's duck
voice came out before
her mind could gather
the proper people words!



But the children quacked back!

Quack

Quack

And they wanted to see the Cobbles.

And cobble their own!



And at the end of a long,
free afternoon of glorious
play, Jay asked:

Can we play again
tomorrow?

Can we play again tomorrow?

Devin echoed, and the children smiled.

You sure are odd — an odd duck!

Jay grinned.

You're awesome!





And Devin found
more voice to reply:

“You are odd ducks, too.
No wings or feathers!
But I can fix that.”



