

EMILY AND THE DRAGON

Best friends come in all shapes, sizes

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In a quiet part of the forest, with grass so tall and thick it came up to your ankles and you had to push slowly just to get through, there was a small cottage made of logs. Across from the house there was a little green frog pond. And in the house lived a woodcutter, his wife, and their little girl.

The girl had straight shoulder-length brown hair and the deepest shade of green eyes. Her name was Emily. She loved swinging on the swing her father had made for her from branches of trees, for he had no money for rope.

Emily was happy being near the house. But at school, things were different. Kids teased her for being poor. Emily wished she had a best friend to be there for her. Even more, she wished she could do something about her poverty.

One day, as Emily was swinging on her swing, she heard a strange sound. It sounded like an elephant with nasal congestion. Emily was really surprised. Then came the noise again! She was determined to find out what was causing the sound.

She had been walking for an hour when she came to the mouth of a huge cave. Emily braced herself for another deafening, rumbling sound. Then it came again, this time louder. She was sure it was coming from deep inside the cave. Emily bravely stepped in. There was a tunnel that seemed to go on for miles.

"I might not be home for dinner," she thought, "but I will start now."

Emily sprinted up the tunnel until she could go no farther. She was just about to give up, when she heard that monstrous cry again. Only this time, it seemed to be right around the corner! Emily tiptoed around the corner, and yelped at what she saw.

There was a gigantic green foreign-looking thing lying on an equally large, green rug, in an enormous room. The thing appeared to be holding a handkerchief to its snout, and madly blowing into it. Then it sneezed. Everything in the room jumped a few feet into the air, then came back down. Emily had to hold on to the wall to stay on the floor. It took Emily a few minutes to figure out that

the thing was a dragon. She took a few steps toward it, and then quickly tried to run back down the tunnel. Too late, for the dragon had already turned around and spotted her with its blue eyes.

Emily froze with terror. She shut her eyes tight and waited for fire to come pouring out of the dragon's mouth to burn her. But when it did not come, she opened her eyes. The dragon's eyes were flooded with tears. Emily found some courage and walked up to it.

"Why are you crying, dragon?" she asked.

The dragon sniffed and replied. "I'm happy. I hoped it would be today!"

Emily didn't understand what he meant.

"What?" she asked.

"You don't know?" Then he sighed. "I guess I will tell you the story."

"It all started when I was a tiny dragon chick. My mother ignored me because I was born with the flu. Don't ask me why, I just was. Anyway, they

left me as soon as I could hunt my own food. When I asked my mother why I was always sick, she just told me that I would never get better unless a human child could be my best friend." He sighed again. "That's why I was so happy when you came."

"I'll be your best friend!" cried Emily. The dragon looked ecstatic.

"Hurrah! I shall get better! By the way, what is your name?" the dragon asked happily.

"Emily," said Emily.

"My name is Drake," said the dragon.

When Emily got home, her mother didn't even talk to her, because she had been working all day, and was too tired. She was mending some old socks that were too worn out. Emily just went upstairs to her room and went to bed.

The next day was Saturday, so Emily went back to Drake's cave. She found him outside, eating what appeared to be a barbecued bird. He looked a lot better. Emily walked up to her new friend.

"Good morning, Drake," she said. The dragon looked up.

"Oh, hello. I didn't hear you coming." Drake suddenly sat up. "Since we're going to be best friends, we should help each other. Do you need help with anything?"

Emily was excited. Maybe he could help her with her problems. "Yes, actually, I have two." Then she told him about her problems. When she finished, Drake began to smile.

"Yes, I think I can help you with both of your problems at the same time, he said. "Follow me."

He led her to the colossal room again. Then he pointed to a giant wooded chest. It had rubies carved into it and the lock was encrusted in gold leaf. When Emily asked what was in there, Drake just smiled. He stuck one of his claws into the lock and pulled back the heavy lid. Inside, was a huge pile of gold and silver coins, diamonds, rubies and emeralds.

Emily gasped at the sight and then looked at Drake.

"This is my hoard. I inherited it from my older brother who passed away. I guard it with my life."

Then he reached in his large paw, and pulled out a large pawful of treasure. You can have this. So nobody teases you or your family about being poor."

Emily didn't know what to say, so she just took it with a very grateful smile and a thank you.

She was overjoyed at this. Her problems were over!

"Now I owe you," stuttered Emily.

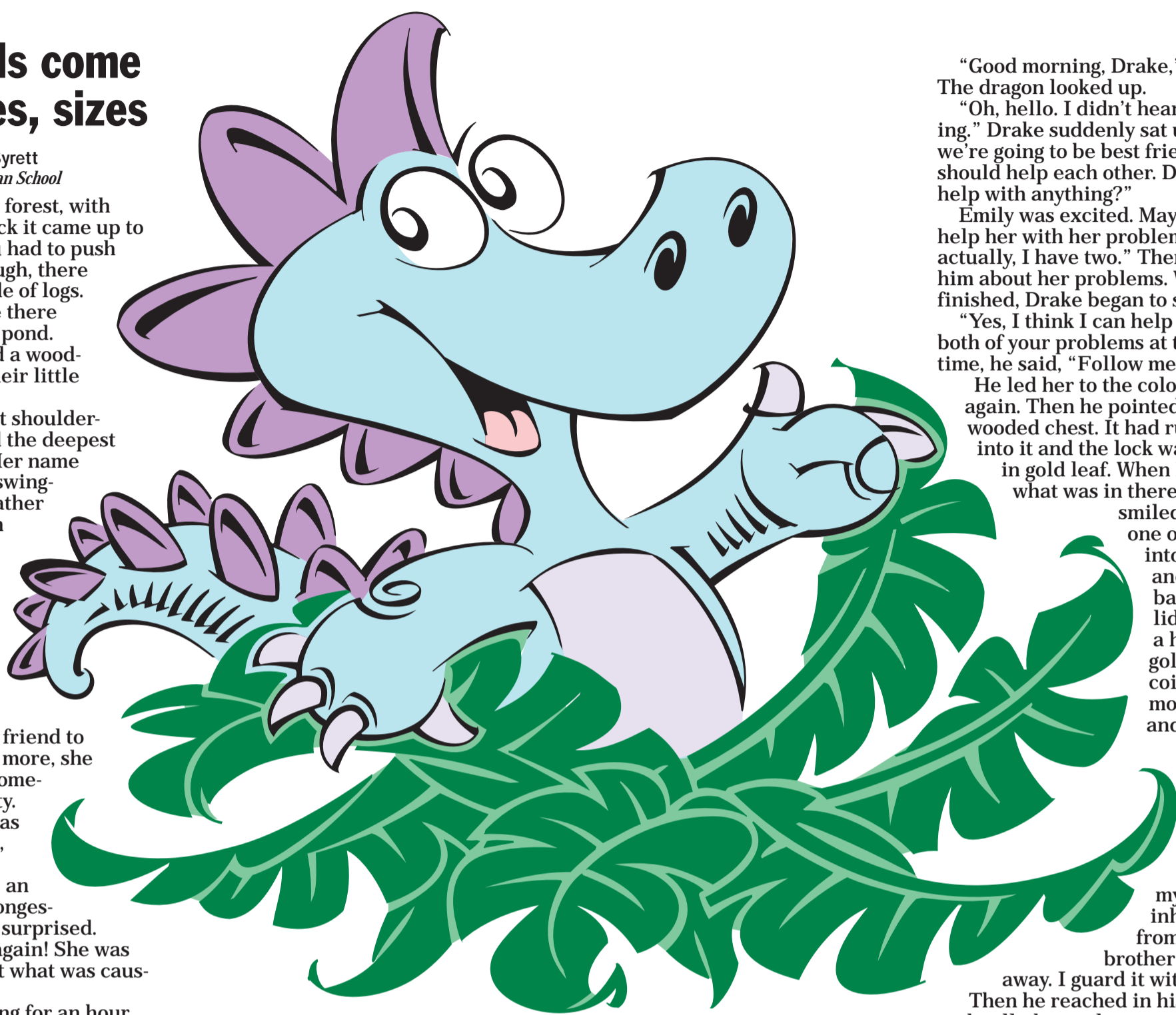
"You don't have to do anything hard," said Drake, "just promise never to tell anyone that I exist, because they will drag me to a zoo!"

Emily smiled. "I won't. I promise."

Emily's parents were so overjoyed that Emily got money that they didn't ask her where she got it. They bought a new house and nobody bothered Emily anymore.

From then on, Emily and Drake kept each other's promises and were truly best friends.

The author was a seventh-grader when this was submitted to the Solano County Reading Association competition in February 2007.



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