

Sam and Charlie Love Pudding

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Chapter 1

Sam took a small slice of sausage out of her sandwich and placed it on the ground between her feet. Charlie watched and waited. He wasn't going to put any of his lunch on the ground until he knew that the cat was there.

They both saw a ginger and black paw stretch out from underneath the wooden steps they were sitting on. The claws sank into the sausage and dragged it back under the step.

"There!" said Sam, "I told you she was here. She's always here at lunchtime."

Charlie laughed as Sam knelt and looked through the gap in the steps.

"Here pud, pud, pud," she said in a high voice. "Here puddy, pud, pud."

Charlie laughed again. "She won't come if you call her that. She's a cat, not a pudding. This is how you get her to come out."



Charlie pulled a piece of tuna out of his sandwich and placed it on the ground about two metres in front of him. He didn't have to wait for long. Soon wide eyes peered around the side of the steps. The cat crept carefully up to the tuna, steadied it with one paw and took a bite.

"Cats prefer tuna to pudding," Charlie said.

Sam watched. She waited until the cat was focused on the tuna, then she slowly stood and reached out. The cat looked up but continued eating. Sam touched the cat's neck. It didn't move. Gently she stroked the fur. The cat closed her eyes and seemed to smile.

"There pud, pud," said Sam. "I knew I'd be the first one to pat you. I think I'll call you Pudding from now on."



Chapter 2

The school was Pudding's home. She had been abandoned and the dark and dusty space under the sports shed had been her shelter ever since.

Apart from the food that Sam and Charlie gave her at lunchtime, she lived on food scraps she found on her nightly prowling. She drank water from an old bowl Sam had brought from home. Charlie had written the word "Pudding" on the side of it and one of the children filled it with fresh water from the drinking fountain most days.

Sam and Charlie were the only people Pudding trusted. She missed them when they didn't come to school on the weekends.

The school holidays were the loneliest time for Pudding. Some days Sam and Charlie would turn up to give her food and water and talk to her when they skateboarded on the tennis courts.



Chapter 3

Pudding thought that today was going to be one of those days. As soon as she heard the sound of skateboards on the tennis court, she ran out from under the sports shed to greet her friends.

What she saw made her run back under the shed. It wasn't Sam or Charlie, it was three other children and Pudding knew they meant trouble.

She had seen them before. They were the boys who had thrown stones at her during the last school holidays. They had laughed when she ran away.

Pudding crouched under the shed. She hoped the boys hadn't seen her, but as soon as she heard the sound of water being tipped out of her drinking bowl, she knew they had.

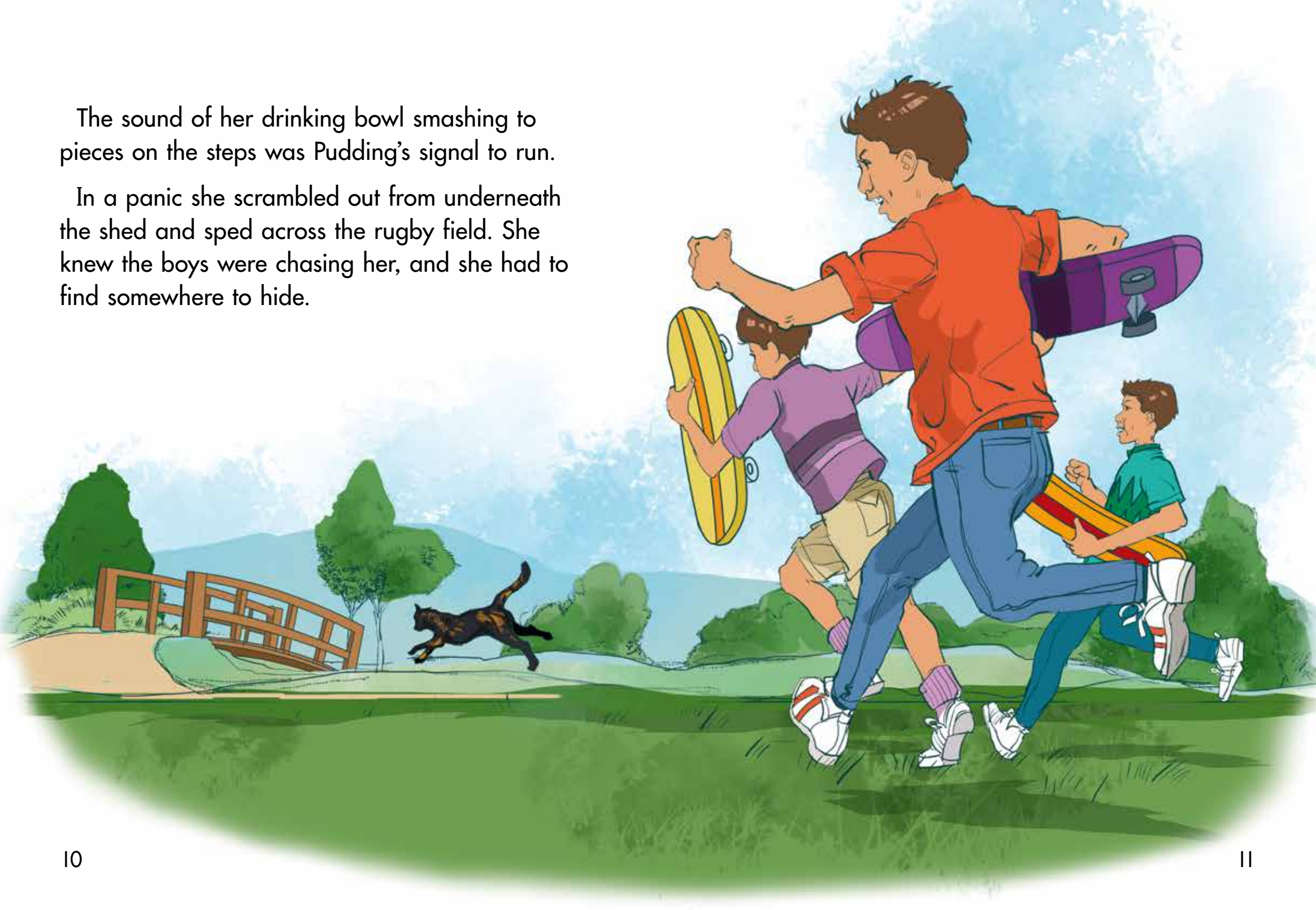
"Look at this! It's Pudding's bowl," one of the boys scoffed. "Now the scruffy cat has nothing to drink."

"It's not a drinking bowl," said another boy, "it's a Frisbee. Here, I'll show you."



The sound of her drinking bowl smashing to pieces on the steps was Pudding's signal to run.

In a panic she scrambled out from underneath the shed and sped across the rugby field. She knew the boys were chasing her, and she had to find somewhere to hide.



Chapter 4

Panting and frightened, Pudding lay in the dark. She could see daylight at the entrance of the concrete drainpipe where she was hiding and she could hear the sound of the nearby creek.

Then a face appeared at the end of the pipe and a loud voice echoed down the concrete walls.

“Hey! I think she’s in the pipe! I can see her muddy paw marks heading in.”

Two other faces appeared and blocked out the daylight.

“Come on, cat! Come and play with us.”

Pudding didn’t move. The pipe was too narrow for the boys to crawl into. She decided to wait until they had gone before trying to escape. But then came the sounds of a large rock being rolled over the drainpipe entrance.

The noise and the light were gone. Pudding lay alone and trapped in the dark.



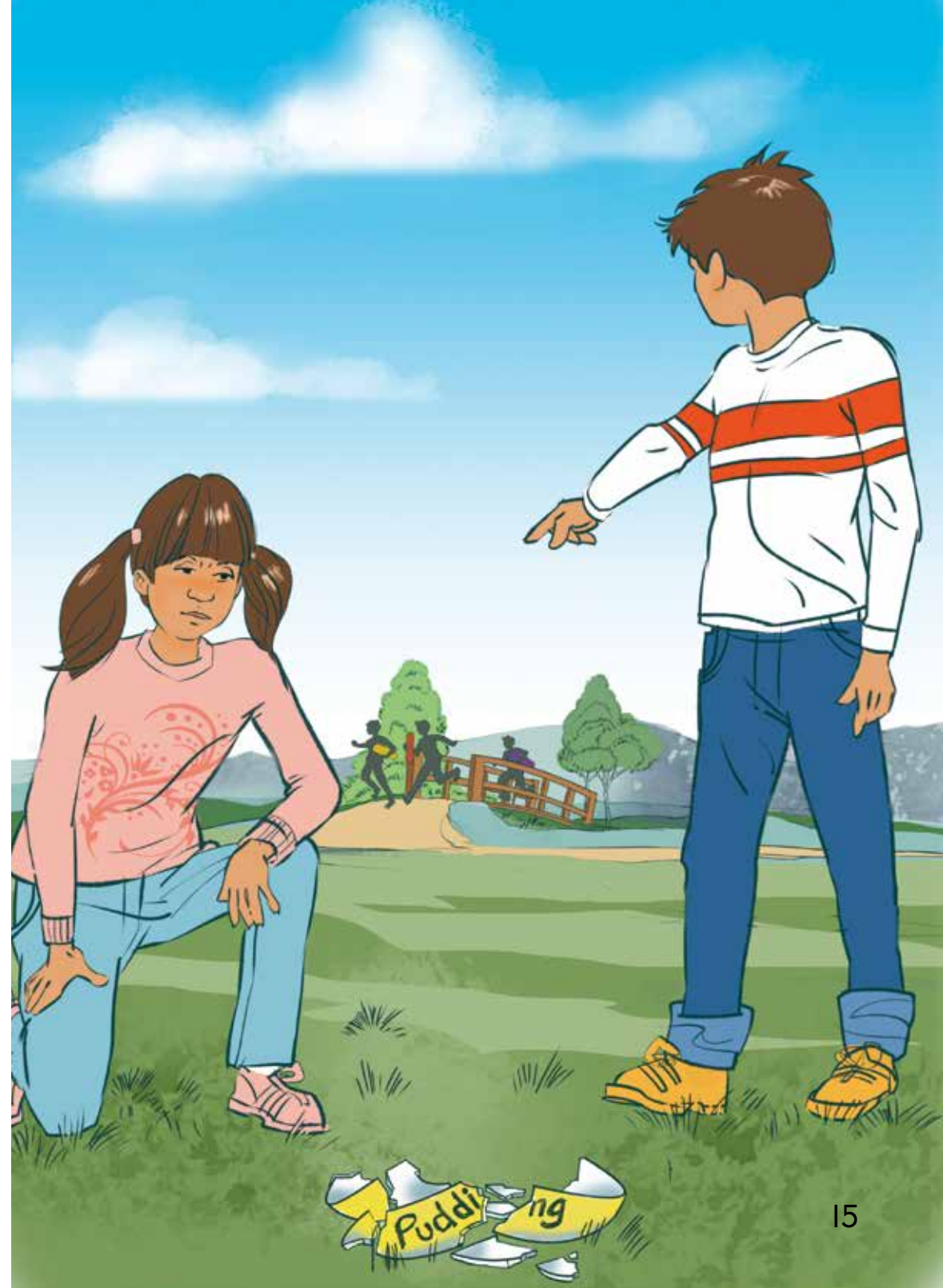
Chapter 5

Sam and Charlie were sad. They had gone to school to see Pudding but she wasn't there. They were worried when they found the broken bits of Pudding's water bowl on the ground.

Charlie looked across the rugby field and saw the Burton brothers running across the Mangrove Creek bridge in the distance. He knew the Burton brothers from school and he also knew that whatever they had been up to at Mangrove Creek was probably not good.

It was raining by the time Charlie and Sam got to the creek. They were too worried about Pudding to care about getting wet. The Burton brothers had gone, but there were signs they had been there.

A trail of footprints in the mud led Charlie and Sam to a drainpipe blocked by a large rock. Sam spotted what looked like paw prints leading into the drain.



“Pudding must be trapped in the drainpipe,” said Charlie. “Let’s move this rock before rain fills the drain.”

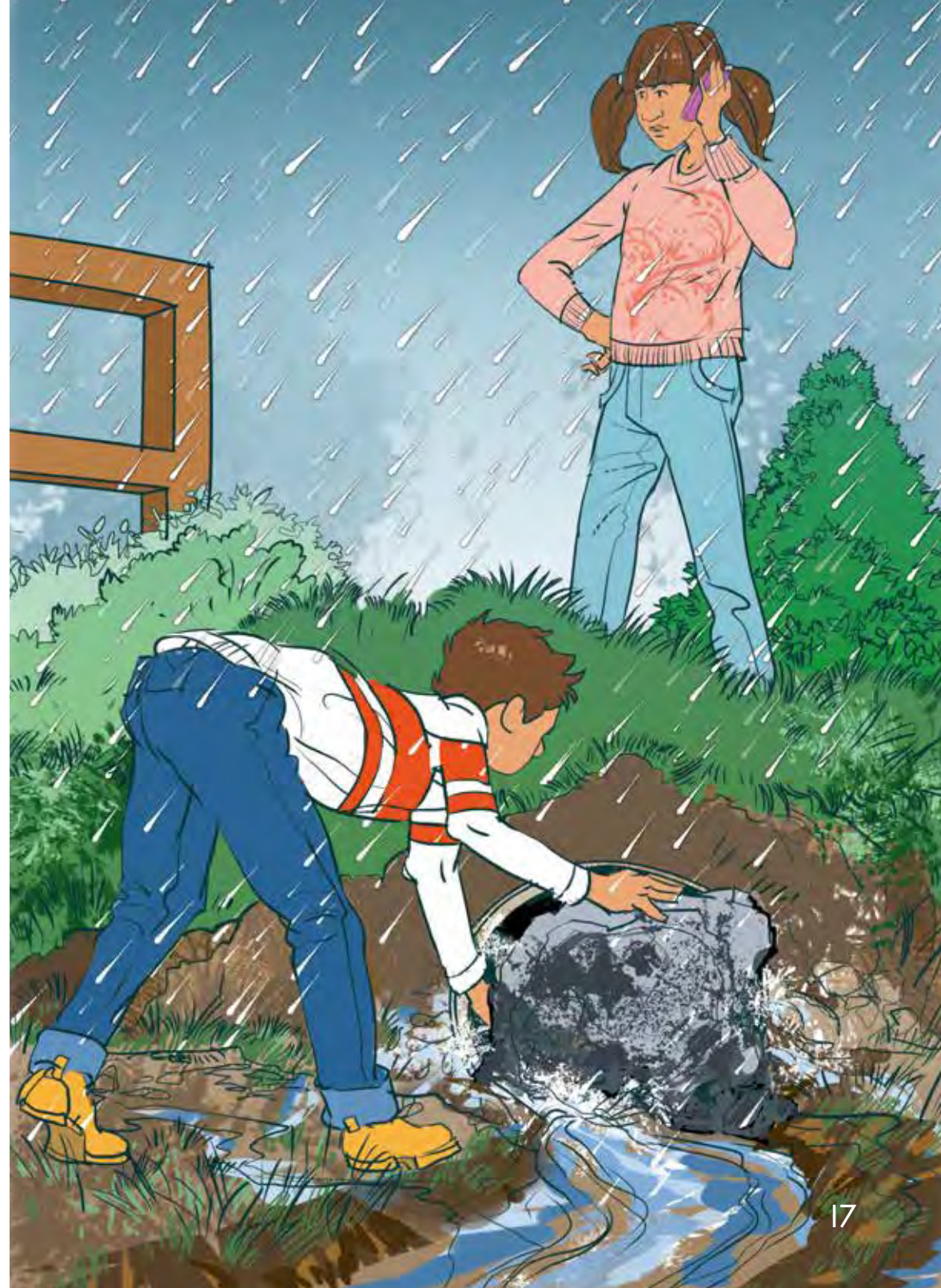
They tried to move the rock but the wet slippery mud under their feet made it impossible.

As they struggled with the rock, they heard a meowing sound coming from inside the drainpipe.

“It’s her!” shouted Charlie. “We need something strong enough to move this rock!”

“I might have a tool for the job,” said Sam, and she reached into her back pocket.

Charlie thought she was joking until she pulled a mobile phone from her pocket. She tapped it several times and raised it to her ear, “Is that the SPCA?” she asked.



Chapter 6

Inside the drainpipe, Pudding could hear the sounds of Charlie and Sam trying to move the rock. The water level in the drainpipe was starting to rise. The shallow puddle that had been there before was now a small stream flowing around her legs and lapping against the fur on her belly.

Between meows, Pudding could hear the voices of Sam and Charlie calling to her as they tried to move the rock.

“Hang on, Pudding,” they said, “we’ll have you out of there soon.”

Pudding wasn’t so sure. As the water level reached her neck, she heard a deeper, louder voice.

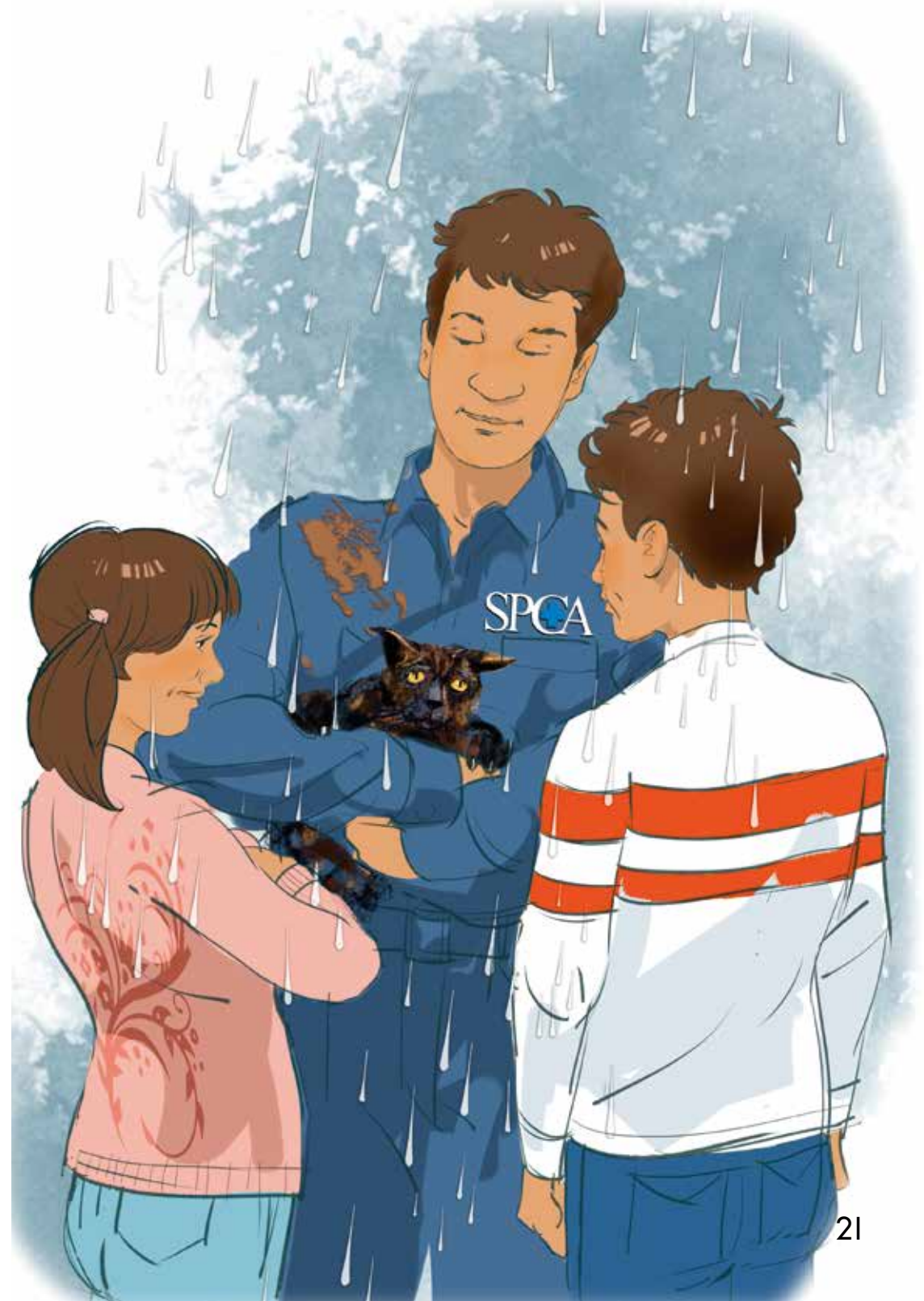


“Stand back kids, let me have a go,”
the voice said.

There were grunting noises then a flash of light. Pudding was swept out of the drainpipe by the water and into the safe arms of SPCA inspector Bob. He was smiling and so were Sam and Charlie.

“Sorry about the mud on your clothes,” said Sam. “I had to call you because we couldn’t do it ourselves.”

“Just as well you did,” laughed Bob. “Now let’s get this very wet ball of fluff back to the SPCA and get her checked out by one of the vets.”



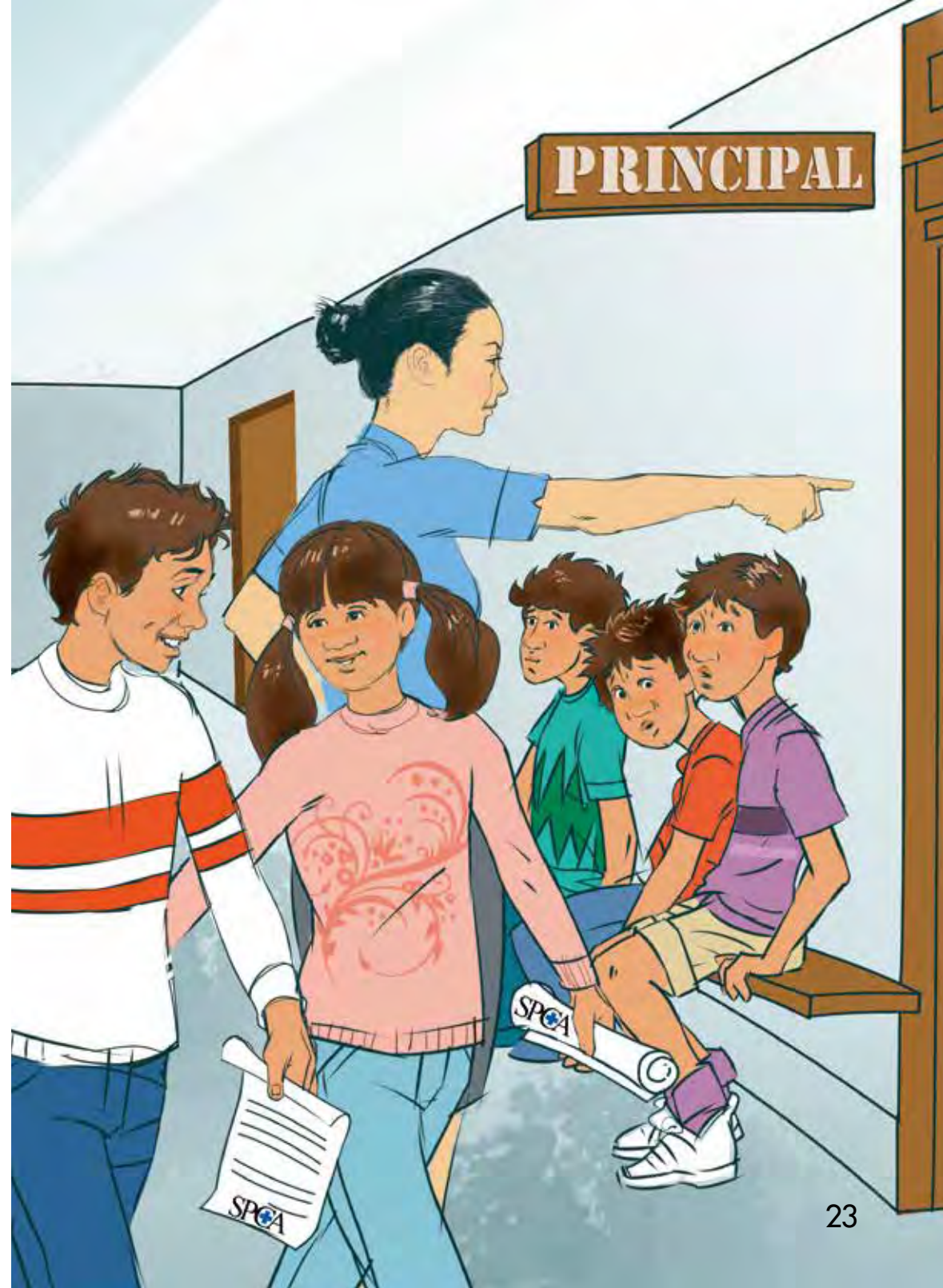
Chapter 7

Ms Ling, the school principal, smiled brightly as she handed Charlie and Sam their SPCA certificates for saving Pudding's life in the school holidays.

"Bob from the SPCA rang me yesterday and told me all about it," she said. "Everyone is very proud of you both. I'm so glad to hear, Sam, that your family is going to adopt Pudding when she's ready to leave the SPCA. She will be a much happier cat living at your house than she was living under the sports shed."

As Sam and Charlie left Ms Ling's office they passed the Burton brothers sitting outside. They weren't smiling, and neither was Ms Ling when she asked them to come into her office.

Charlie winked at Sam. "This is a perfect ending", he grinned. "You got Pudding and I think the Burton brothers are about to get their just desserts."



Hints for a Happy Cat



Cats make good pets and there are some things you need to know to make sure your cat is healthy and happy.

- Cats need fresh, clean water inside and outside.
- Cats like to have a safe hiding place to go to when they are feeling scared or stressed.
- Scratching furniture or carpet is natural behaviour for cats. Scratching keeps claws in good condition and strengthens muscles. Cats also use scratching to communicate with each other. Safely and gently clipping the tips of your cat's nails and providing a scratching post or scratching mat can save the furniture!
- Brushing your cat regularly keeps their coat clean, reduces shedding and cuts down on hairballs and matting. Grooming your cat can also increase the bond between you and it is a good opportunity to check for wounds or new lumps or bumps.
- Vaccinate your cat for protection against diseases.
- If your friends have a cat or kitten that is not spayed or neutered, ask them to speak with a vet about this special operation to reduce the number of unwanted animals.

Visit kids.spcaeducation.org.nz to learn more about caring for cats