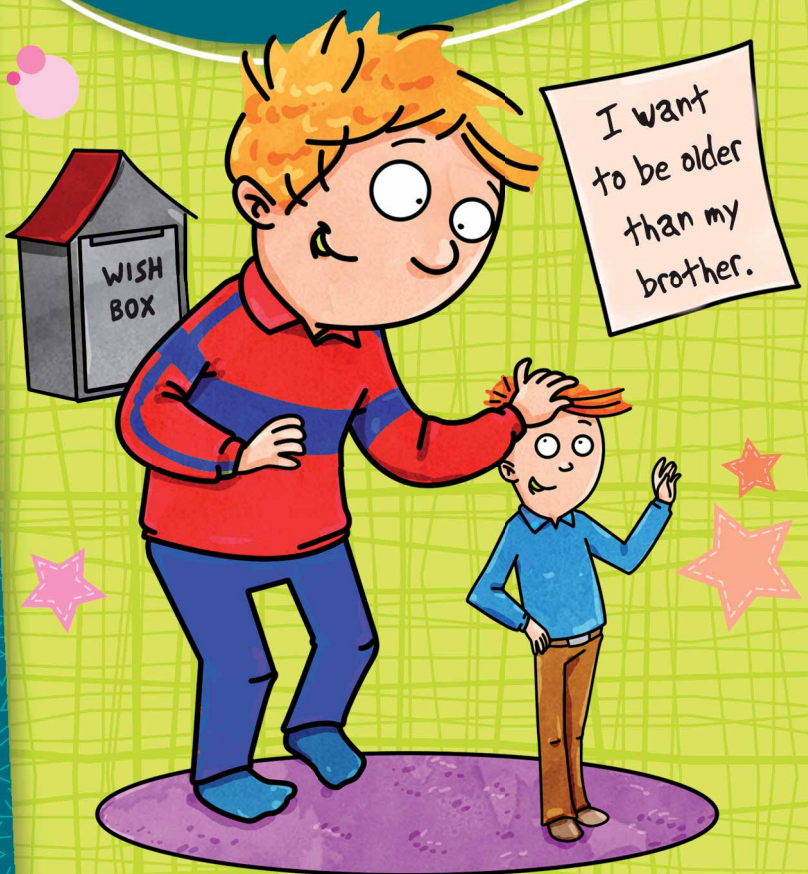


# SELIM

## and the Wish Box



# How do you get to China?

Class is sometimes fun, but sometimes it's boring. When our teacher laughs, time goes by fast. But if he is all straight-laced, we can't wait for recess to come. After our teacher had said, "Good morning," he smiled. I thought, "This class is going to be great."



Our teacher said,

“Okay class, today we are going to work in groups. Everyone divide yourselves up into groups of four.” We all started looking around. **Kenny**, **Chris**, **Oscar** and I had formed a group before. It is usually a good idea to work together with friends who live in your neighborhood. Then you can work and play together after school.





Kenny is my best friend. Sometimes he makes me crazy, but best friends are like that.

Chris looks just like me. We could be twins. Only our names are different. When we break the rules, our parents say, "one is no better than the other." That shows you how alike we are.



Let's talk about Oscar. Oscar just moved into our neighborhood. Every group needs a smart kid like Oscar.



It's like he's got a ten pound brain.



The teacher stood up from his desk and spoke.

“We are going to study a different country each week. The country this week is China. Groups will collect information about China. I will give you a few facts just to get you started.”

The teacher began to read a note from his notebook.

“China is on the continent of Asia. It is the most populous country in the world. Its population is beyond 1.2 billion.”

We couldn't believe what we had heard.



“What a crowded country!

That’s unbelievable!”

Everyone listened carefully to what the teacher said. The teacher continued.

“There are more than one hundred million people who have the last name of ‘Lee’. The Great Wall of China is the only man-made structure which can be seen from space. That is how I want you to share the information that you find about China.”



As soon as the teacher finished talking, we all looked at each other. We were all thinking the same thing. “What the heck are we gonna do?”

I saw Kenny looking at the globe on the teacher’s desk.

“What are you looking at, Kenny?” I asked.

“I’m looking for China.” He replied.

Kenny turned the globe and put his finger on china. Then he turned the globe again and put his other finger on our country.



“I think I’ve found a way to make this assignment a piece of cake. I have an idea.”

“Do you really? That’s incredible! I’ll call the newspaper.” I teased.

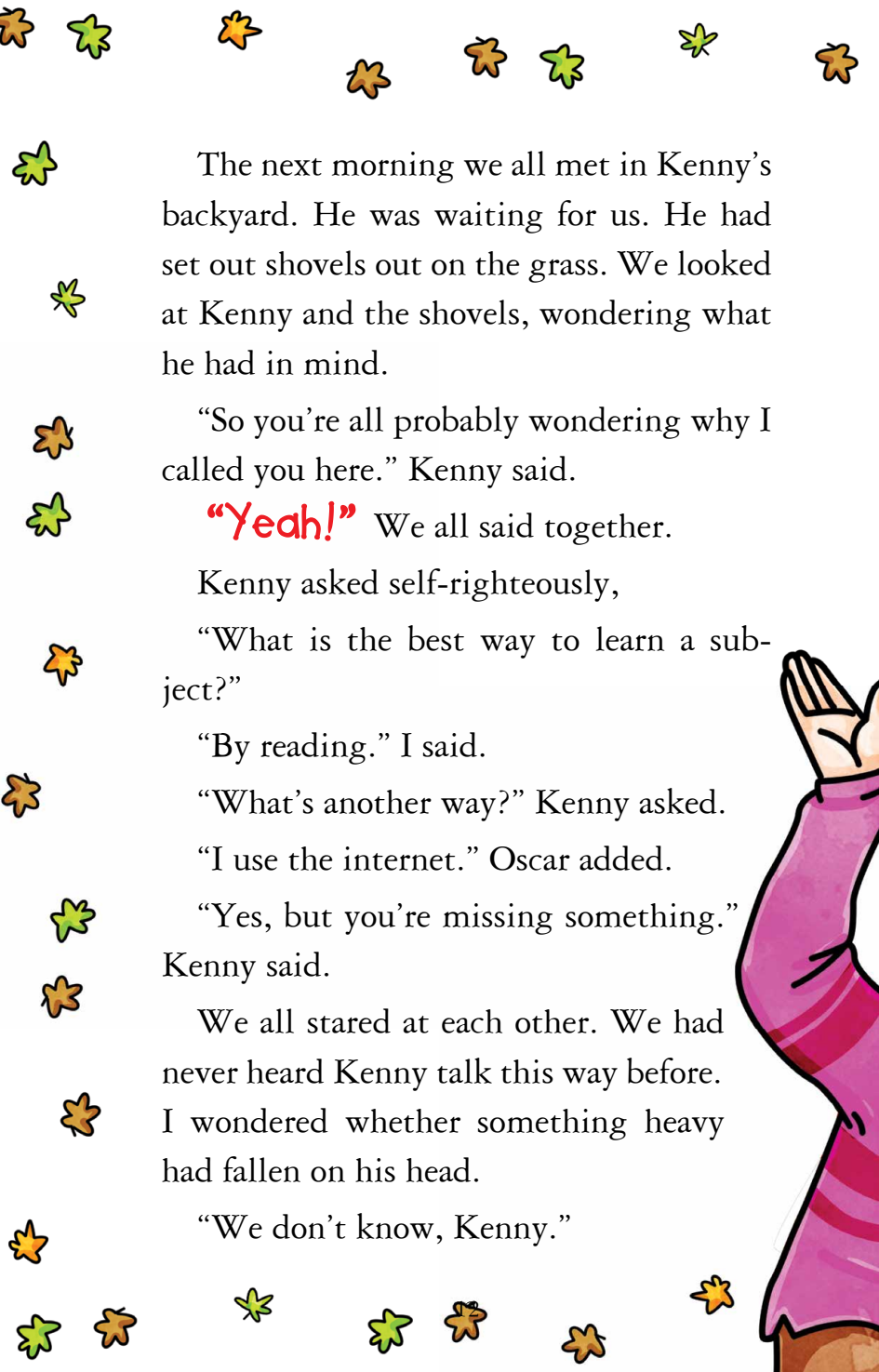
“Come on now. I have lots of ideas.”

I looked at Kenny. His face looked more serious than I had ever seen it.

“Alright Kenny. We are listening. Tell us your idea.”

“No. Not yet. Meet me in my backyard at nine o’ clock tomorrow morning. I will tell you then.”





The next morning we all met in Kenny's backyard. He was waiting for us. He had set out shovels out on the grass. We looked at Kenny and the shovels, wondering what he had in mind.

"So you're all probably wondering why I called you here." Kenny said.

**"Yeah!"** We all said together.

Kenny asked self-righteously,

"What is the best way to learn a subject?"

"By reading." I said.

"What's another way?" Kenny asked.

"I use the internet." Oscar added.

"Yes, but you're missing something." Kenny said.

We all stared at each other. We had never heard Kenny talk this way before. I wondered whether something heavy had fallen on his head.

"We don't know, Kenny."



“Friends, experience is the very best teacher. If we go to China, we will have the most information about China that we could possibly have.”

We were speechless.

“Wait, so we are going to go to China to finish our homework?”

“Kenny, are you serious? China is on the other side of the planet. How the heck are we going to get there?”



Kenny took the ball that was in Chris's hand. He put his finger on the ball.

"Okay, so let's say that here is America, okay?"

"Okay."

"Well then, where is China?"

Chris pointed.

"It's right about here."

*"That's right. All we have to do is go straight down and a little bit to the right. Then when we get there, we will see it for ourselves, write our reports, and finish our homework that way. How about it?"*



Something sounded a little funny about Kenny's idea, but there was no harm in trying. And it sounded like way more fun than searching the internet. We all agreed.

"That's a good idea. So when do we start to dig?"



Kenny said self-confidently,

"If we start now, we can dig our way to China by dinner time."

"So then what are we waiting for? Let's get digging!"

We started to work with the shovels in Kenny's yard. I don't know why, but all of us were excited. We were digging with all of our strength. We didn't even slow down as the weather got hot. After all, we were going to China!



A long time passed. We wanted to work but we were getting tired. When we had no more strength to lift the shovels, I said,

“Why don’t we take a break? Let’s go eat something, and we can continue afterwards.”

My friends nodded their heads.

While I was daydreaming, Adam was suddenly in front of me. My mom had sent

While I was walking home, I imagined China.  
I had only ever met a couple Chinese  
people before. Now I was going to see  
lots of them all together in one place.  
I was very excited.



him to find me. We walked home together. As soon as I got home, my mom asked me,

“Where were you, Selim?”

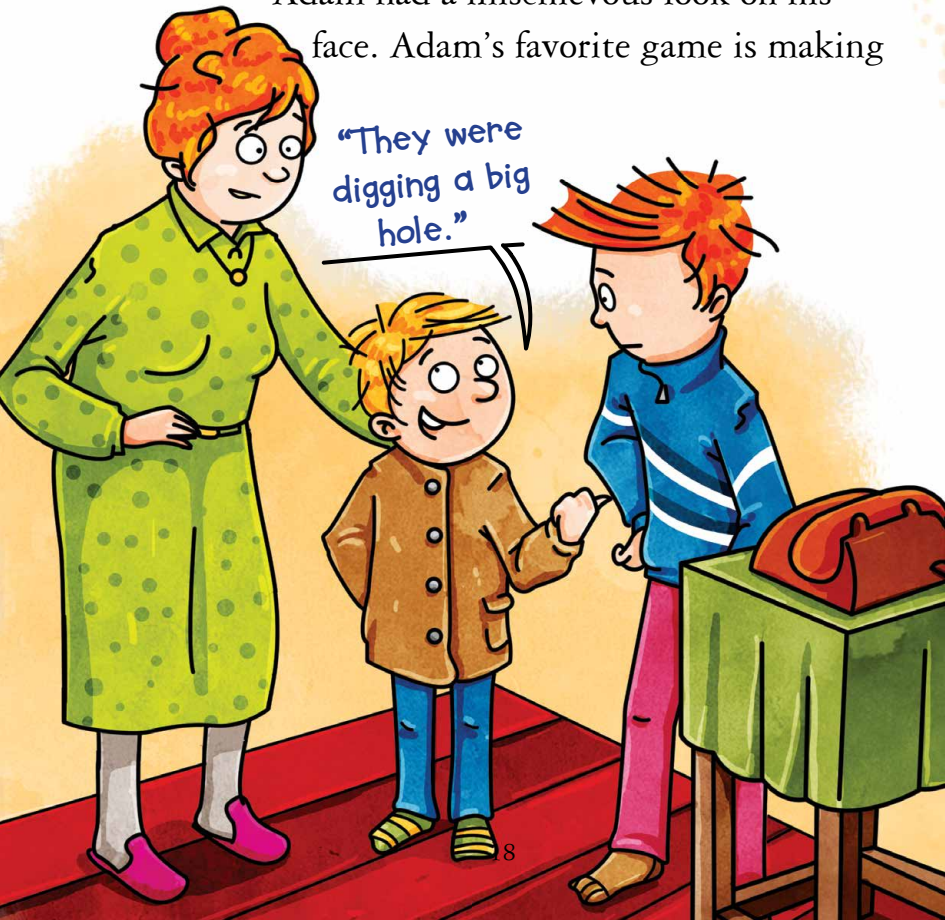
“I was with Kenny.”

“What were you doing?”

“Nothing. What could we be doing?”

Adam interrupted,

Adam had a mischievous look on his face. Adam’s favorite game is making



my life impossibly difficult. Obviously he had been spying on us. How could I not notice that? I shot him a nasty look out of the corner of my eye. He knew I was angry with him, so he left right away. My mom was suspicious. She went on asking questions.



“What is this big hole about, Selim?”

“Nothing.”

“What do you mean, ‘nothing’? Why would you dig a big hole for no reason?”

“Just because.”

“You shouldn’t do such dangerous things, Selim.”

“Okay, mom.”



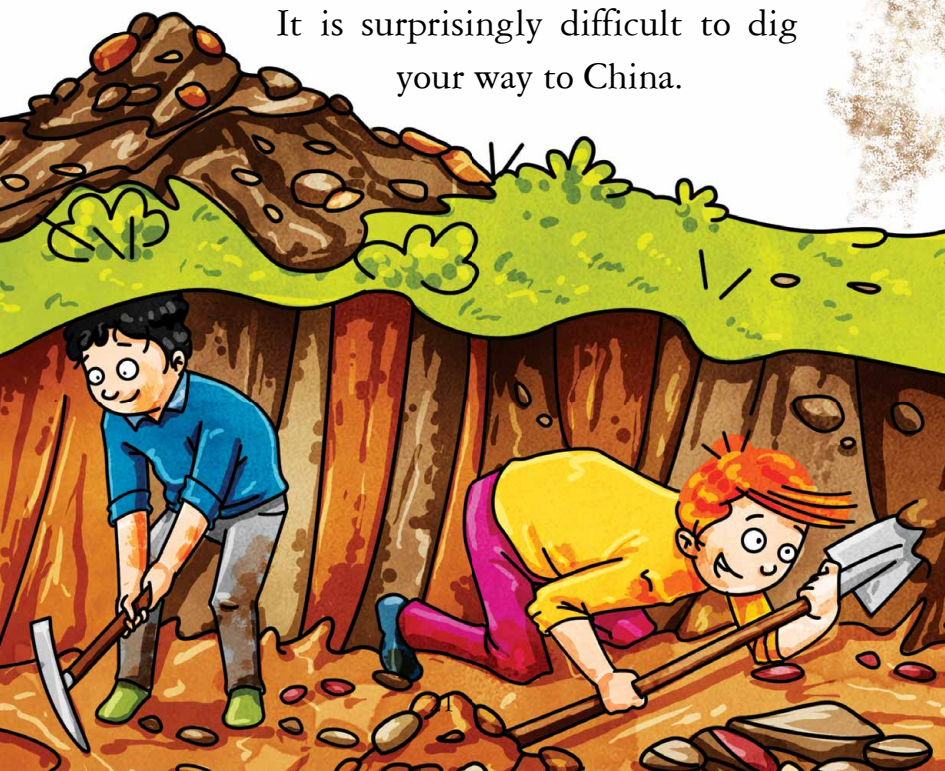
I ate my lunch quickly and started heading back to Kenny's house. It had done us good to have something to eat. We had gotten our strength back.

We continued digging. By the time the sun was setting, the hole we had dug was as deep as we were tall. We had worked a lot that day and it was time to go home. I don't even remember walking home and getting in bed. I was so tired that I must have kept on digging in my dreams. We worked the next day, too, but we



didn't have the same enthusiasm that we had before. According to our careful calculations, we were supposed to be in China the day before. It wasn't as easy as we thought it was going to be. My friends were getting discouraged too. Our assignment was due the next day. Even if we made it to China, how would we have time to walk around, come home and write our reports? We dug even harder towards the second evening. How could we not? We had homework to do!

It is surprisingly difficult to dig your way to China.



Then do you know what happened? We couldn't get to China with the pit that we had dug, but it began to flood. Water started coming into the hole seemingly from nowhere. It came up so fast that it flooded the hole and came up to the grass. We were very happy about this and totally forgot our failure to reach China. We could do lots of things with this water.

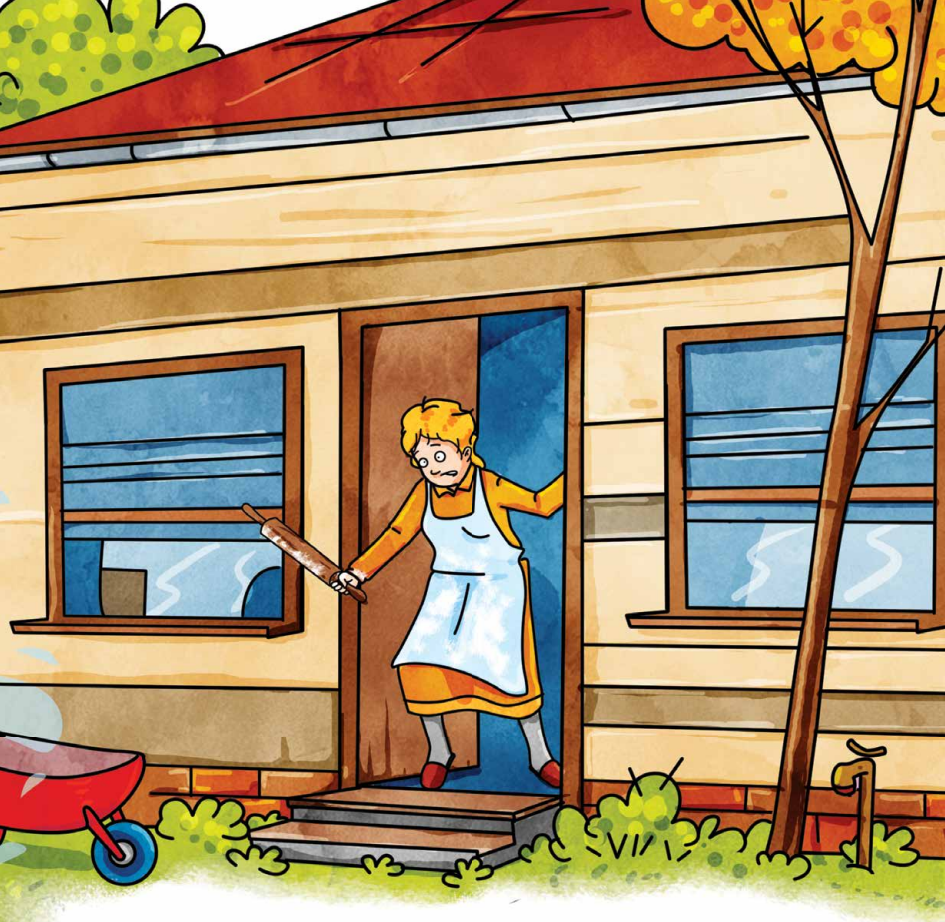
Chris said,

“Look! We didn't get to China, but we found water! It's enough for our whole street! Even though we didn't do our homework, we did something for our community. Right guys?”

We all replied,

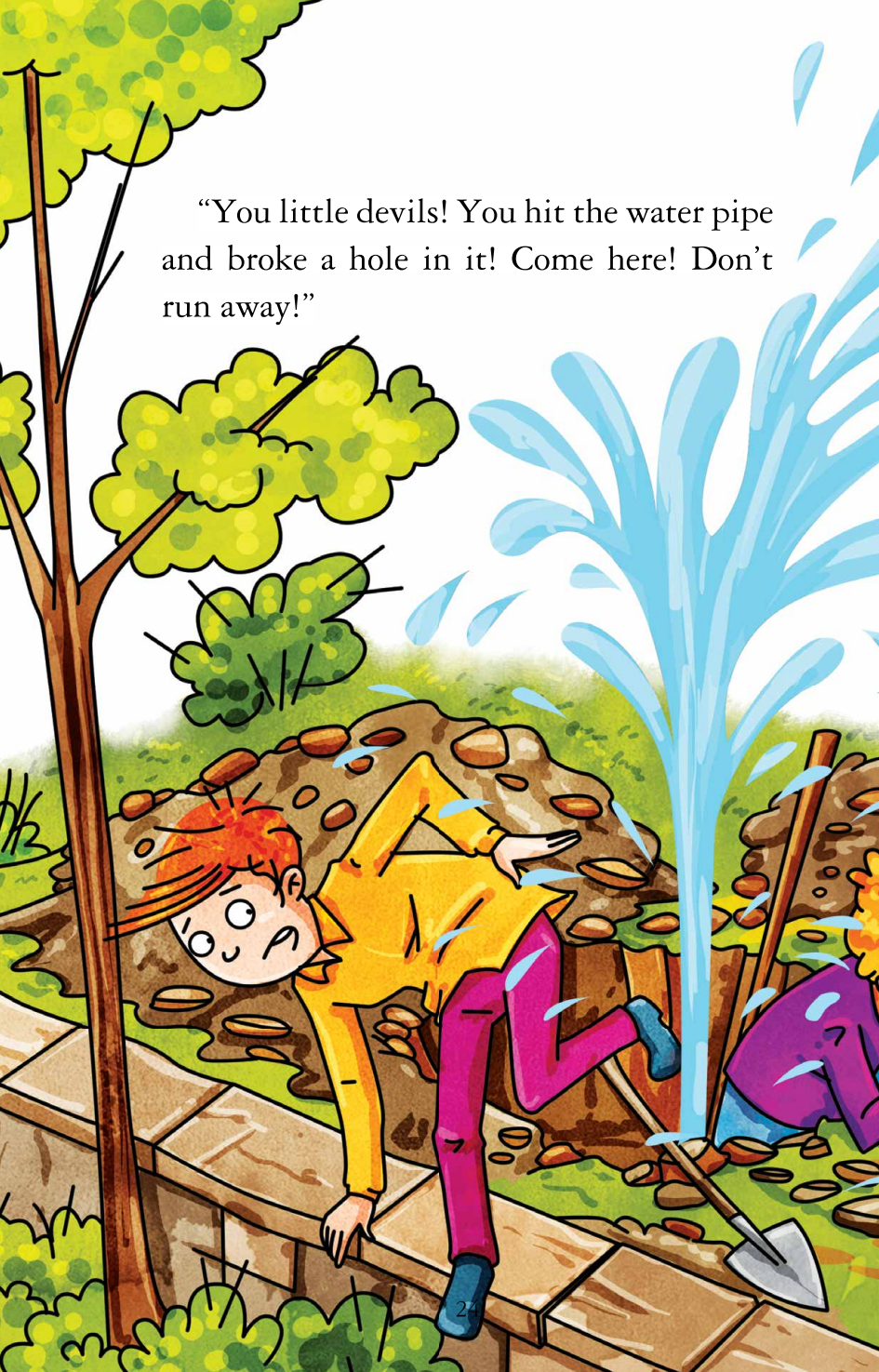
“Yeah!”





We were all thinking the same thing, and then Chris said it. While we were congratulating each other, Kenny's mom came out of the house. She was running towards us with a rolling pin in her hand. She was yelling something but we couldn't make out what it was until she got closer, and then we understood.

“You little devils! You hit the water pipe and broke a hole in it! Come here! Don’t run away!”



We all looked at each other and all shouted together,

“Everybody run!”

And we took off across the field with Kenny’s mom chasing us.

