

# My Pet Tree, Albert

Written by Stephen Krensky  
Illustrated by Ioana Hobai

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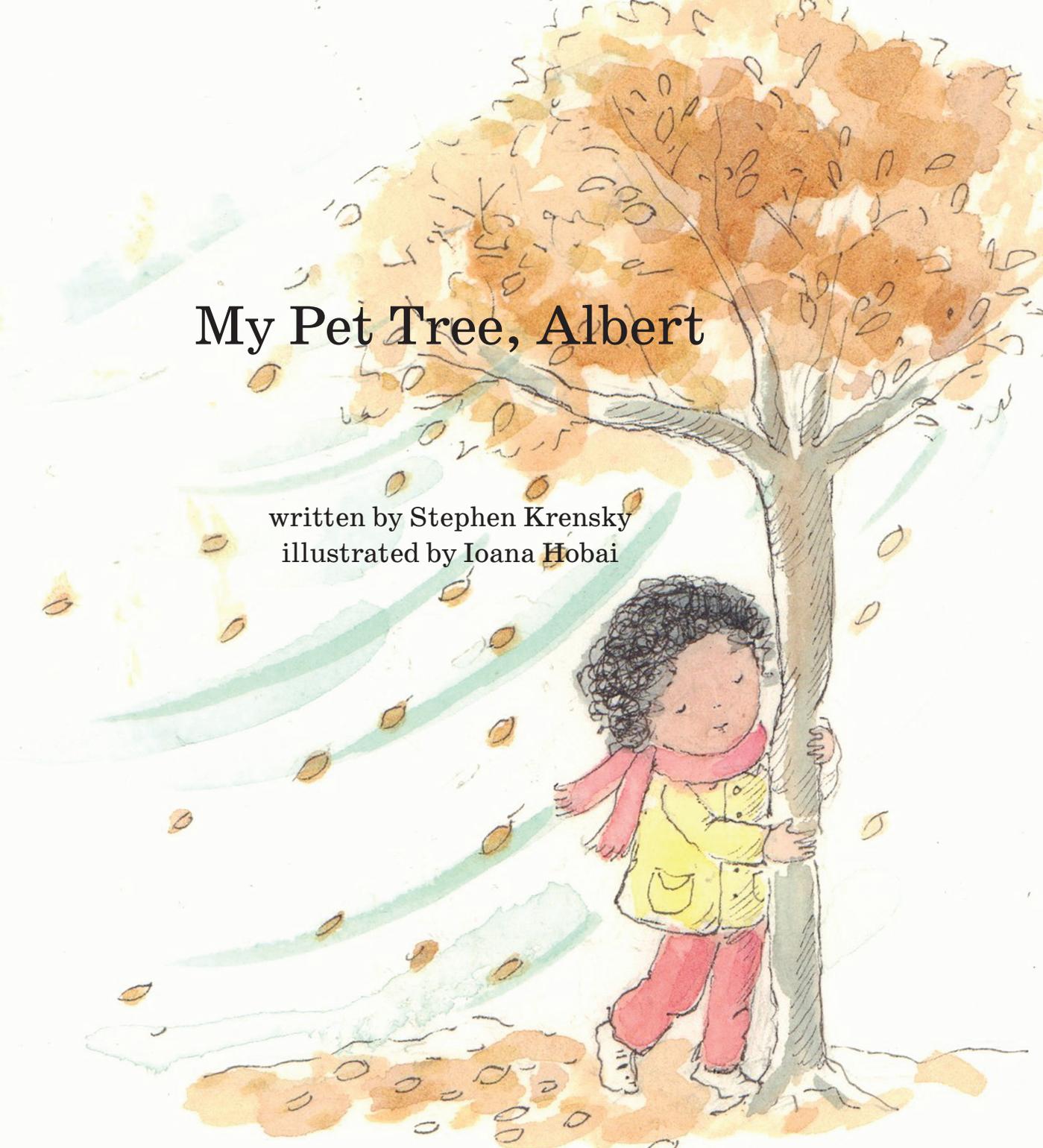
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The SAE Foundation gratefully  
acknowledges Arne and Steffi Siegel  
for their passion and support of the  
AWIM PreK programs, providing STEM  
education to the youngest learners.



This is me.



And this is my pet tree, Albert.  
Albert lives in my backyard.



I haven't taught him any tricks,  
and Albert can only give me a hug  
if the wind helps a little.



But he is very good at keeping me company.  
I wouldn't trade Albert for anything.

My friends have pets, too.  
Carlos has a dog named Ruckus  
who likes to run in circles.



Jenna has a cat named Fluff  
that purrs when Jenna  
scratches her chin.



And Mason has a rabbit.  
His name is Thatcher.  
Thatcher is a good jumper.  
He can jump faster  
than Mason can catch him.

When my friends heard about my pet tree, they laughed.  
“Albert couldn’t be a real pet,” they said.  
“Why not?” I asked.



“Because a pet is alive,” said Carlos.  
“It does things,” said Jenna.  
“It does things with you,” said Mason.

I frowned.  
“Albert is alive,” I said.  
“He does things.  
And he does things with me.”





“You don’t understand,” said Carlos.  
“A pet grows up.



My dog Ruckus used to be  
a puppy. Now he is big.”



I nodded.  
“But I’ve seen old pictures of Albert.  
He used to be smaller than I am.



And now he is tall enough to  
shade me from the sun.”



“This is different,” said Jenna.  
“Pets get hungry and thirsty.  
My Fluff drinks a bowl of water every day.”



Monday



Tuesday



Wednesday



Thursday



Friday



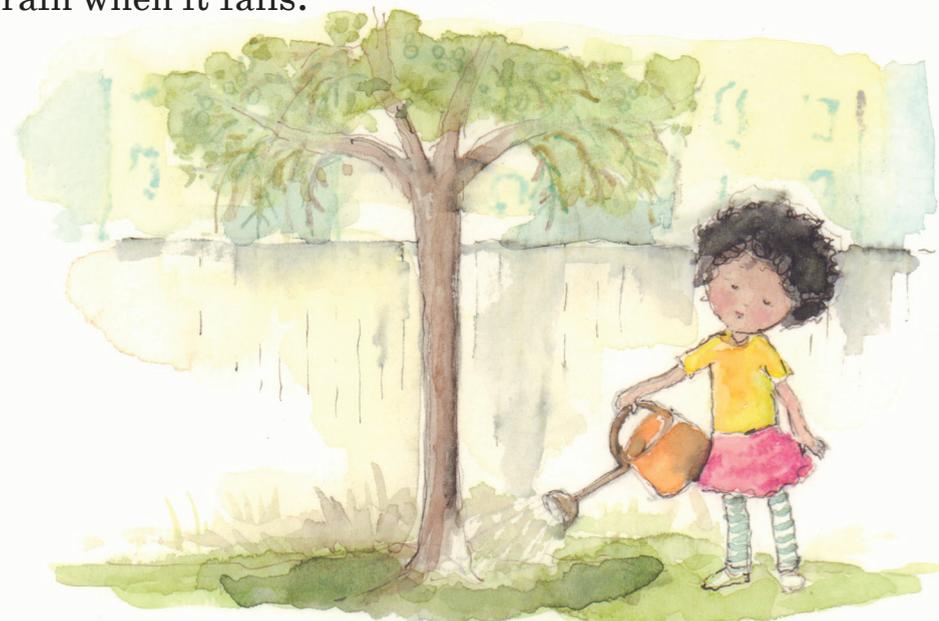
Saturday



Sunday

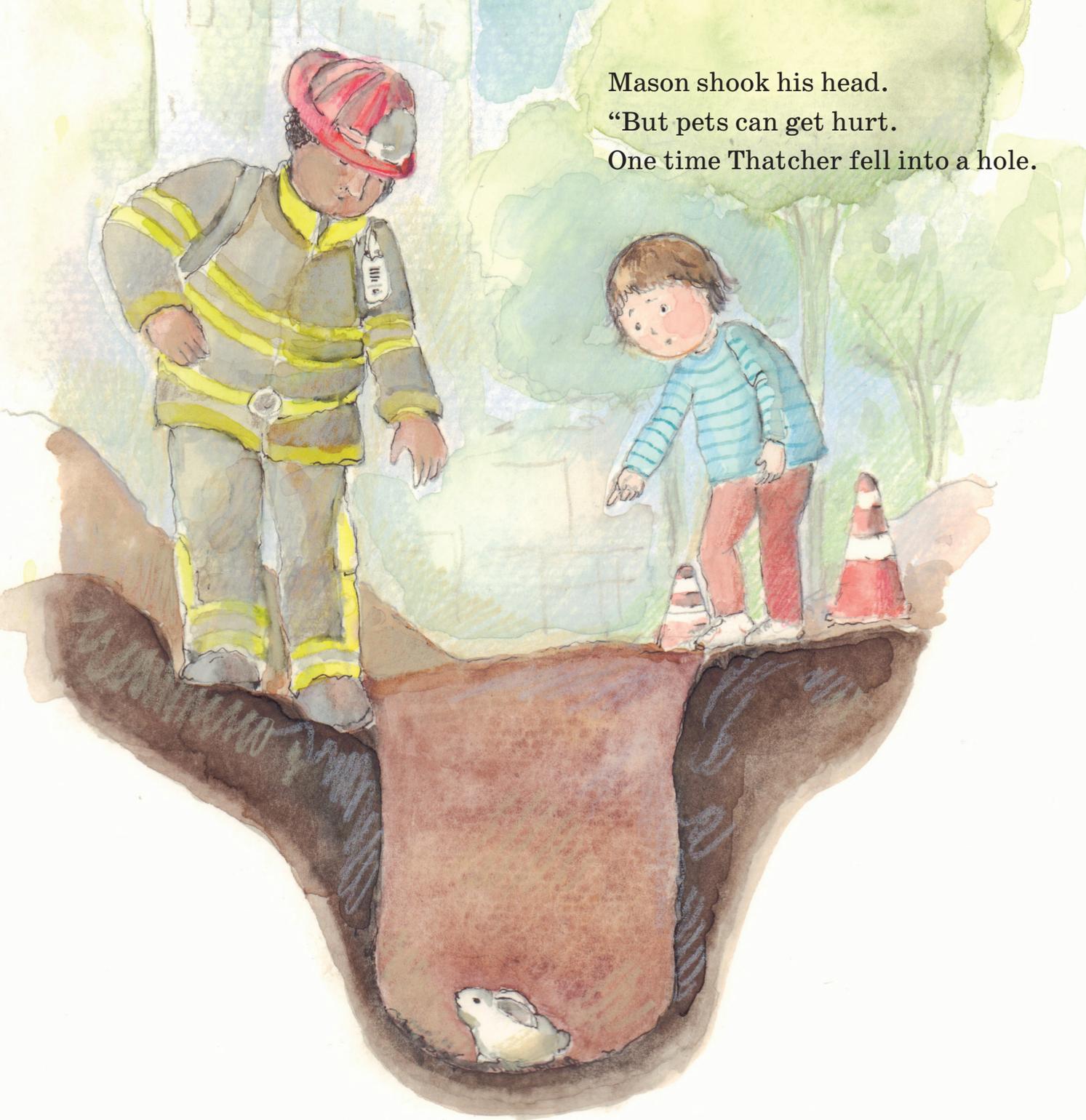


“Well,” I said, “Albert drinks water, too. He drinks the rain when it falls.”



And if there isn't enough rain, his branches get droopy.  
Then I have to water him myself.”

Mason shook his head.  
“But pets can get hurt.  
One time Thatcher fell into a hole.



He really hurt his front left paw.  
He didn't jump well again for a whole week.”





“Do you remember that big thunderstorm last week?” I asked.  
“Albert was all alone in the backyard. For hours.”



One of his smaller branches broke off. I think he will be okay.  
But I was afraid he might get hit by lightning.”

My friends whispered to one another.  
“Maybe you’re right,” said Carlos.  
“We didn’t give Albert enough credit.”  
“He sounds like a great pet,” said Jenna.

“Thanks,” I said.  
“Why don’t you come say hello?  
After all, I’ve met your pets.  
You should meet mine.”





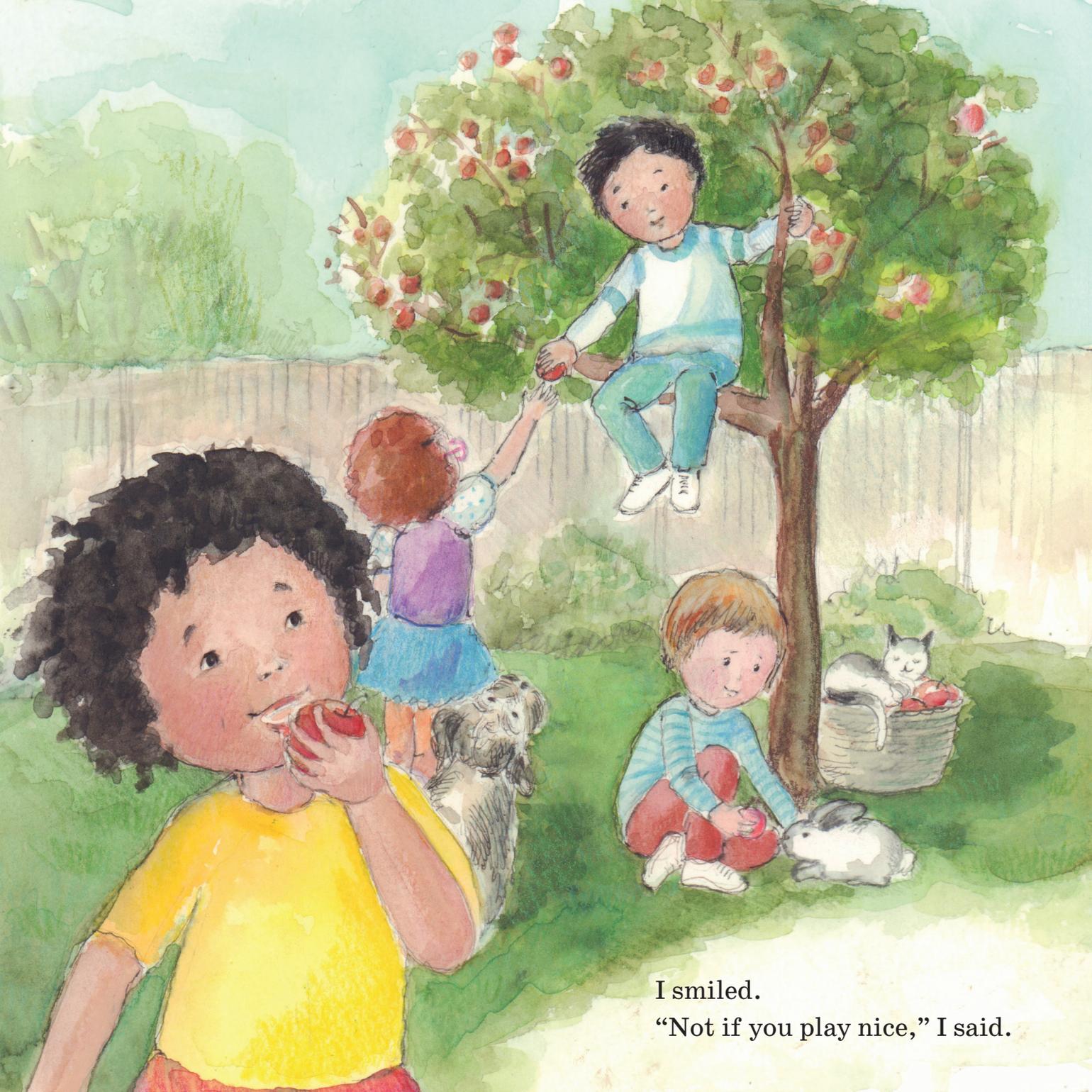
I headed for the backyard.  
Carlos, Jenna, and Mason started to follow.  
Then they stopped to whisper again.  
I turned back to face them.  
“What’s wrong?” I asked.

“Well,” said Carlos.

“We were wondering,” said Jenna

“Does Albert bite?” asked Mason.





I smiled.  
“Not if you play nice,” I said.



SAE International in partnership with Educational Development Center Inc., through SAE Foundation funding

**P**ets come in a lot of different shapes. There are dogs, and cats and rabbits — and lots of other animals, too. But when one girl claims to have a pet tree, her friends question whether this is possible. So it is up to her to prove that a pet can be more than you might think.



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