

The Bugville Critters



By **Robert Stanek**
BESTSELLING AUTHOR

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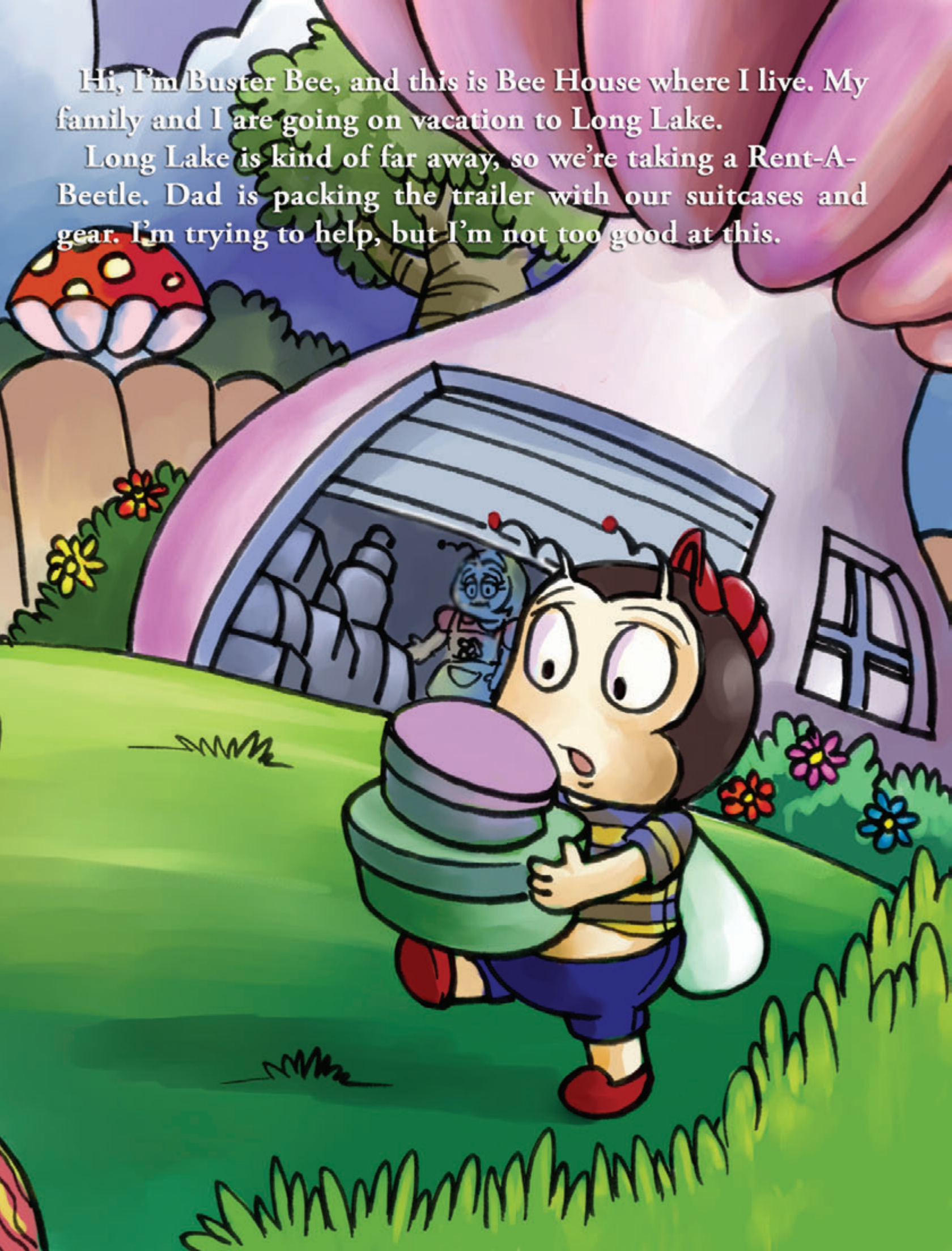
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Hi, I'm Buster Bee, and this is Bee House where I live. My family and I are going on vacation to Long Lake.

Long Lake is kind of far away, so we're taking a Rent-A-Beetle. Dad is packing the trailer with our suitcases and gear. I'm trying to help, but I'm not too good at this.

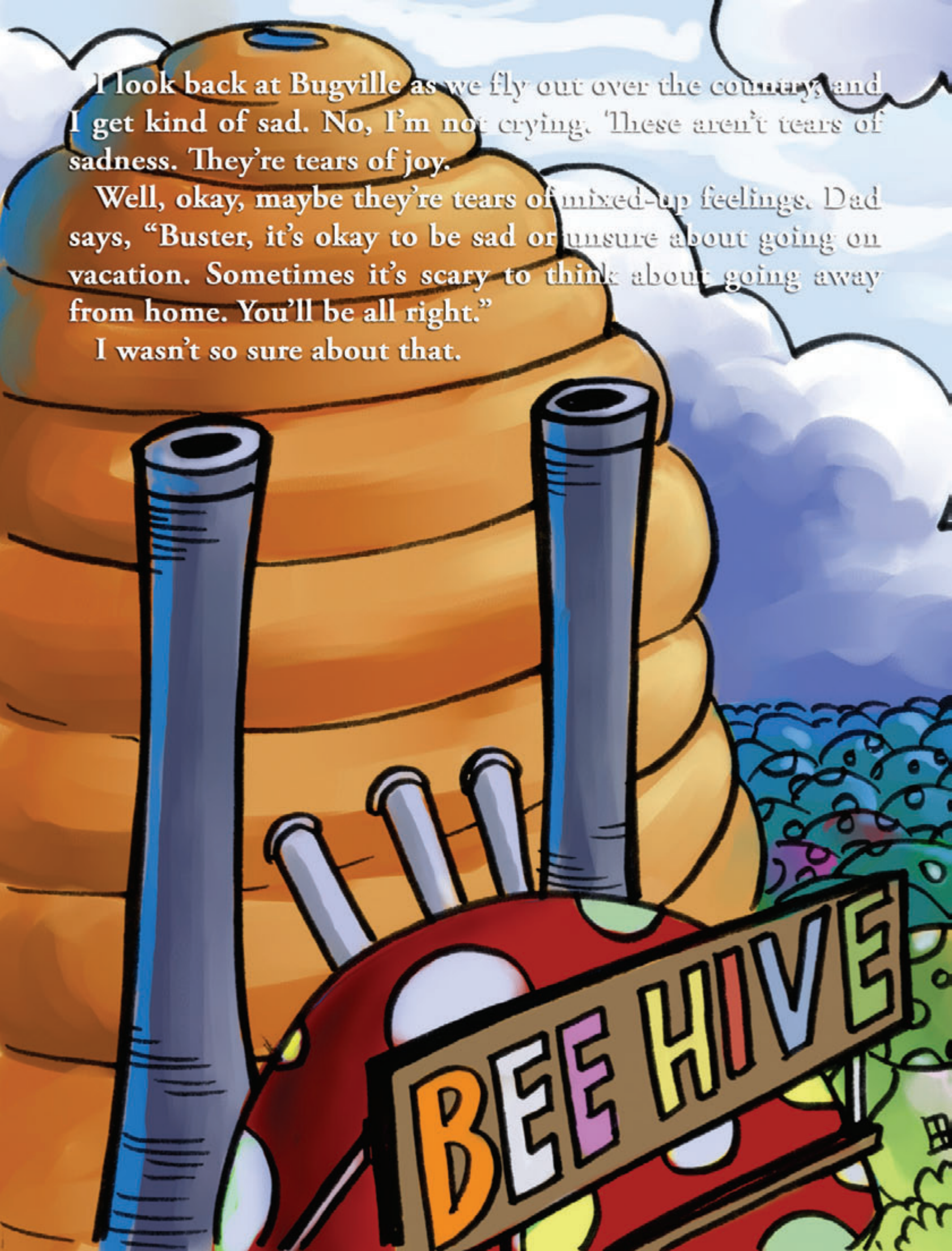




As we climb on the beetle and fasten our seat belts preparing to fly off to the lake, the only thing I can think about is my friend Dag. I sure hope I see Dag at the lake.

He lives at Pier One on the lake, and he's always doing something fun. Still, I think I'm going to miss B. Havior School, Mrs. Beeswax, and my friends.





I look back at Bugville as we fly out over the country, and I get kind of sad. No, I'm not crying. These aren't tears of sadness. They're tears of joy.

Well, okay, maybe they're tears of mixed-up feelings. Dad says, "Buster, it's okay to be sad or unsure about going on vacation. Sometimes it's scary to think about going away from home. You'll be all right."

I wasn't so sure about that.



I wonder what my friends Barry Beetle, Lass Ladybug, and Cat Caterpillar will do while I'm gone. I bet Barry will sail his toy boat on the pond, Lass will fly leaves in the park, and Cat will read a book.

I hope they practice for the big bugsball tournament. Did I tell you my team, the Pint-sized Pests, made the playoffs?





After a while, I get tired and cranky. I want to stretch my wings. Dad says, "Almost there, little bee. Hang in there. You're being a good bug."

I guess I can be patient a little longer, but I don't remember Long Lake being so far away.



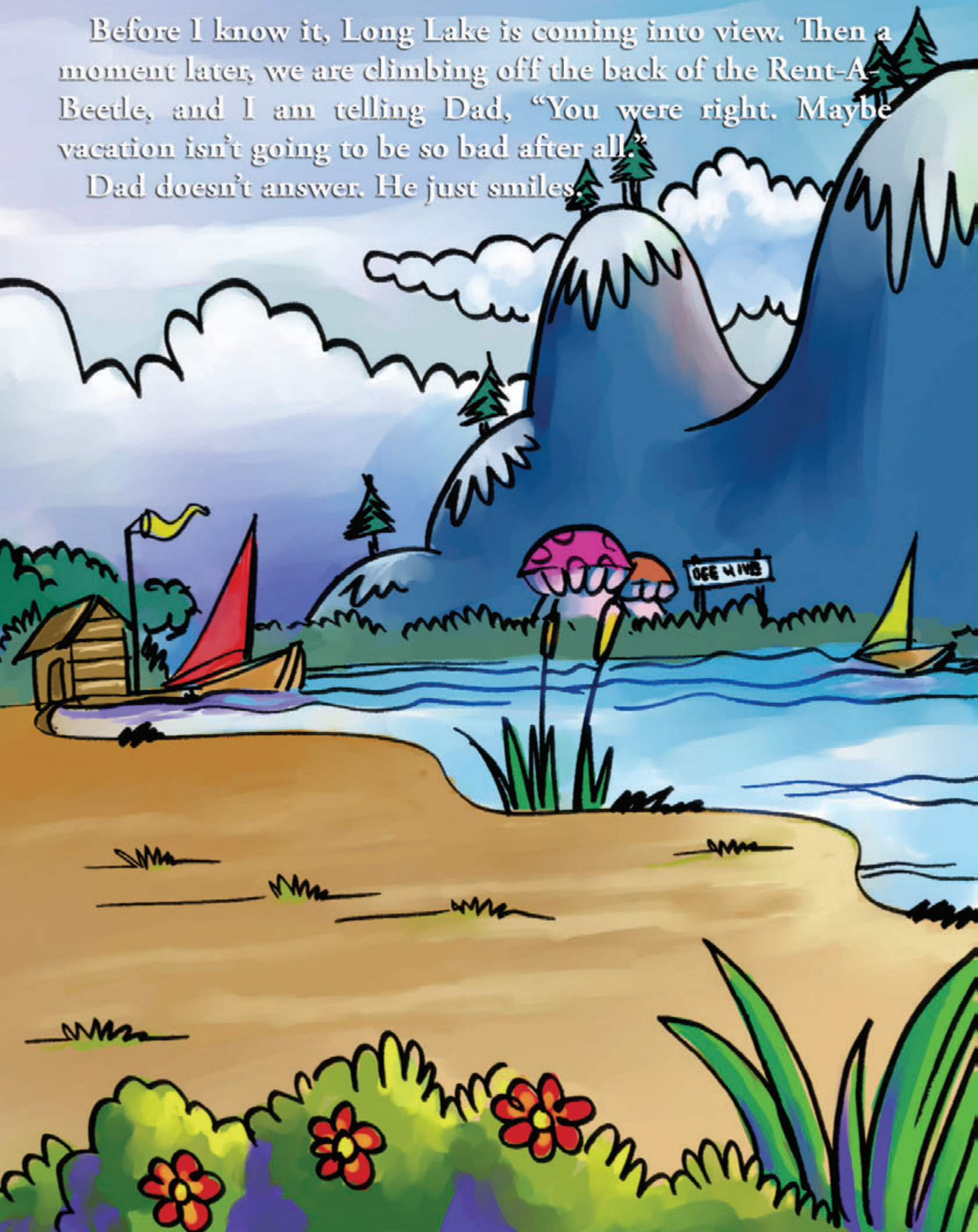


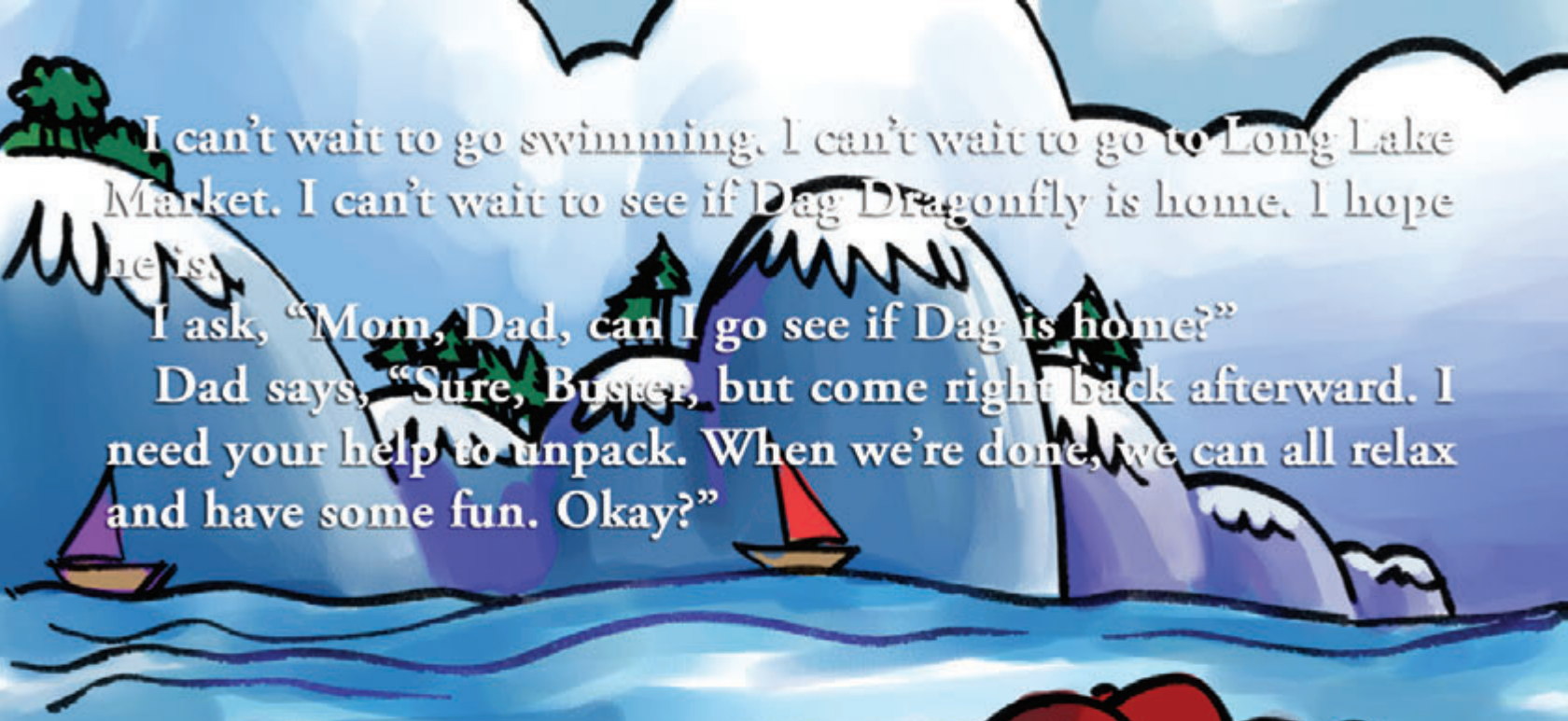
Just as I start to doze off, I see a sign that says: DON'T MISS LONG LAKE JUST AHEAD. "Look, Dad," I say, "That sign says Long Lake is just ahead." Dad says, "See I told you so, little bee."



Before I know it, Long Lake is coming into view. Then a moment later, we are climbing off the back of the Rent-A-Beetle, and I am telling Dad, "You were right. Maybe vacation isn't going to be so bad after all."

Dad doesn't answer. He just smiles.






I can't wait to go swimming. I can't wait to go to Long Lake Market. I can't wait to see if Dag Dragonfly is home. I hope he is.

I ask, "Mom, Dad, can I go see if Dag is home?"

Dad says, "Sure, Buster, but come right back afterward. I need your help to unpack. When we're done, we can all relax and have some fun. Okay?"



The illustration shows a young girl with large, round white cheeks, a red bow in her dark hair, and a blue dress with yellow trim. She is running across a green lawn with flowers, looking back over her shoulder with a happy expression. The background features a blue lake with two sailboats, a waterfall cascading into the water, and snow-capped mountains under a blue sky with white clouds.



So I race over to Dag's house. I can go pretty fast by wing when I want to.

Dag lives right at Pier One on Long Lake. How cool is that?

I knock on the door to Dag's house and he answers. I am so happy I give him a Big Bug High Five.

Dag and I have so much to say we're both asking each other more questions than we can answer.





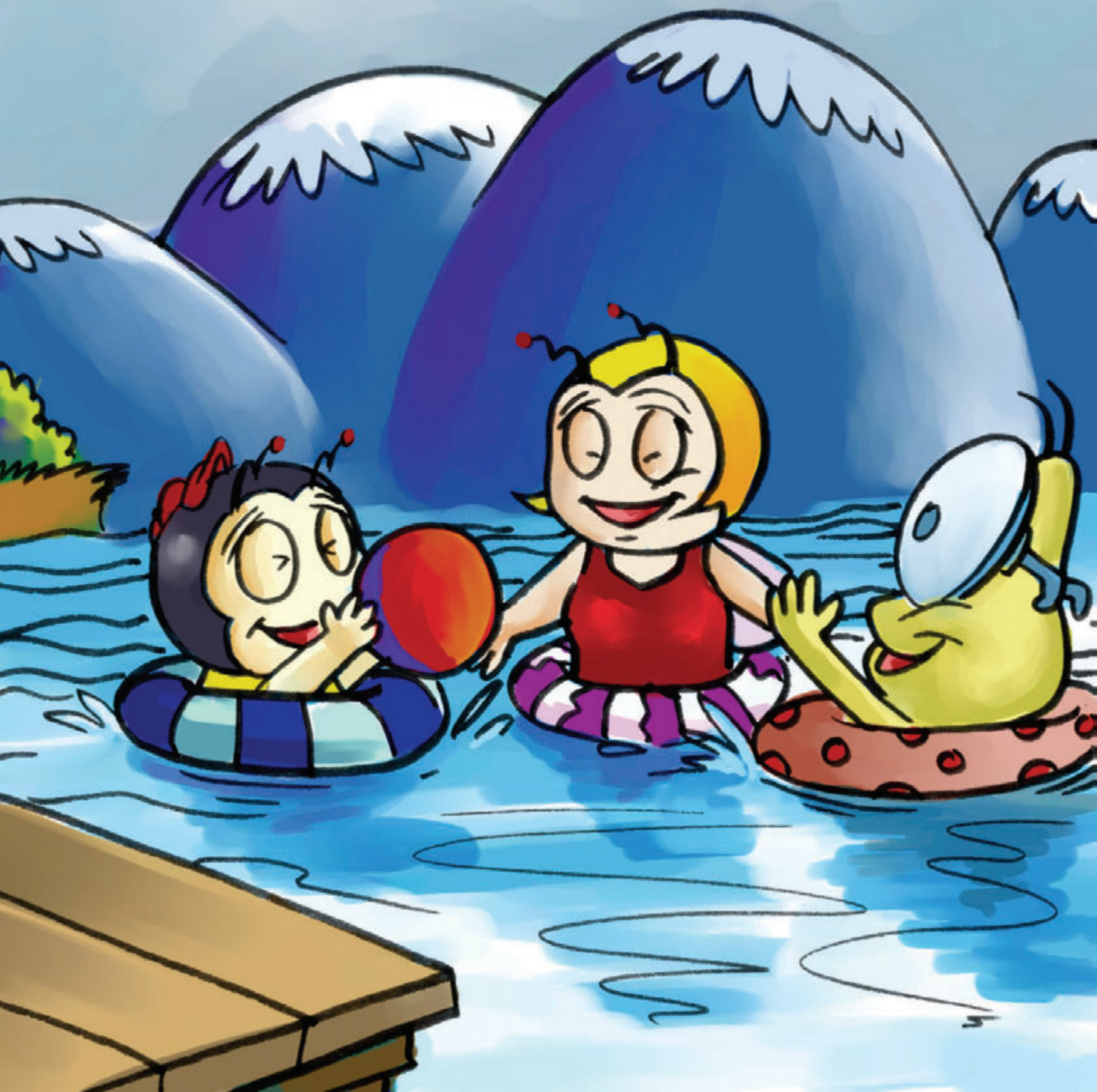
I tell Dag I have to help unpack. He says he'll help too. But before he leaves, his mom says he has to take his little sister with him.

I didn't know Dag had a baby sister. After we finish unpacking, Dag and I play Catch Me If You Can. Dag knows the greatest games. Dag's little sister doesn't want to play. She says she'll just watch.



The next day Mom said Dag and I could go swimming, but only if Dad watches us. Dad thinks it's a great idea since he wants to catch up on his reading anyway. He's reading "The Last Bug Standing" by B. G. Bookworm.

Dag's a great swimmer. I sure wish I could swim as fast as he can. I guess I need more practice.



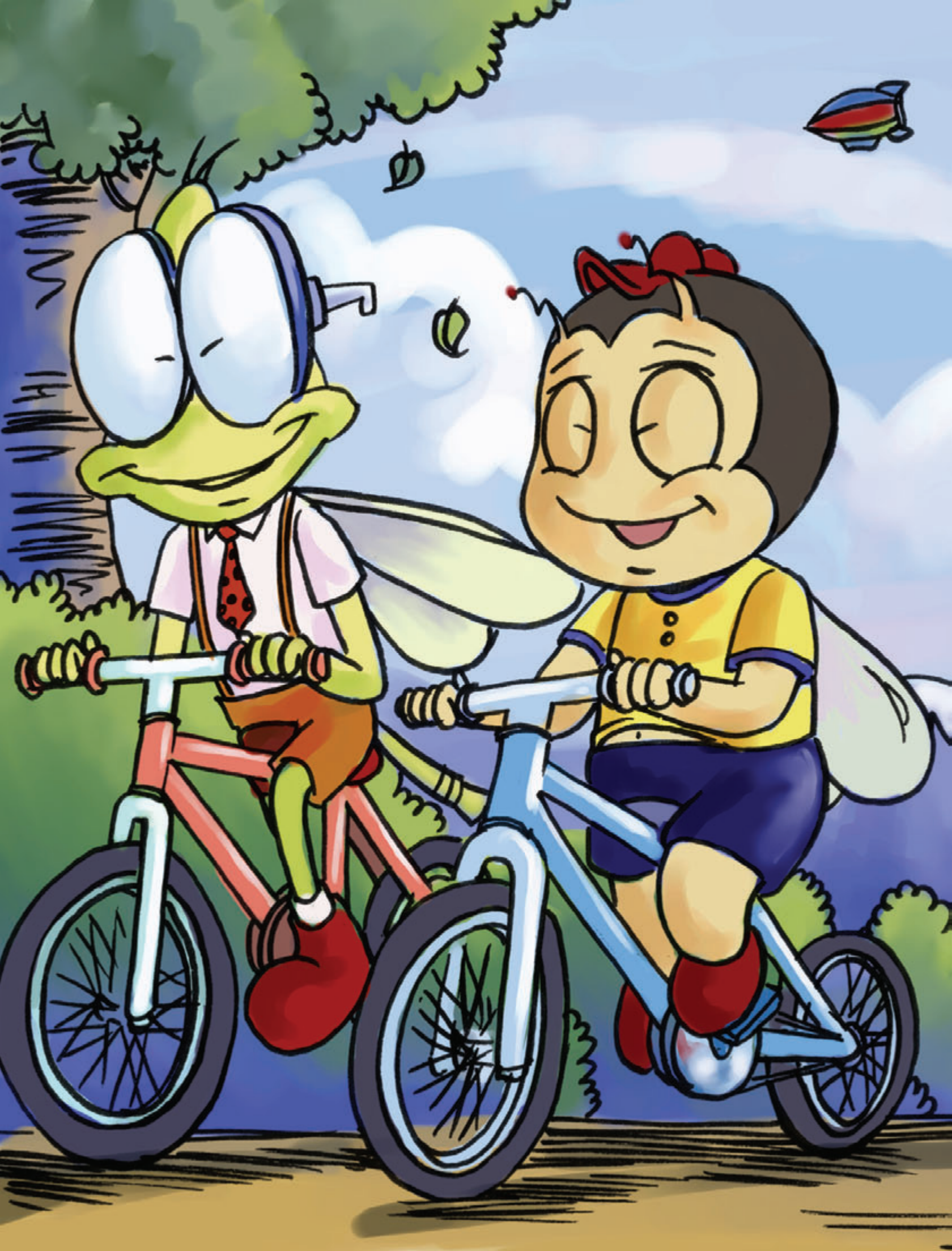
My dad and Dag's dad have a big surprise for everyone on our next day of vacation. They are going to rent sail boats and take everyone sailing on the lake.





Dad will captain one of the boats. Dag's Dad will captain the other one. My dad and Dag's dad are the best captains ever to sail the waters of Long Lake.

Dag and I pretend we're pirates. We make everyone walk the plank. "AAAARRRGHHH!" we shout together.



Today, I am the first one to wake up. I am sooooo excited because Dag and I have big plans. After breakfast, I ask Mom, “Mom, is it okay if Dag and I ride our bikes around the lake?”

Mom smiles a big smile and says, “All the way around the lake is pretty far, Buster. Why not have races between our cottage and Dag’s house?”

I say, “Okay, Mom!” Then I race over to Dag’s house. Dag’s mom says it is okay if we ride bikes, too, but only if Dag’s little sister can come with us. So I say, “Okay, Mom Dragonfly.”





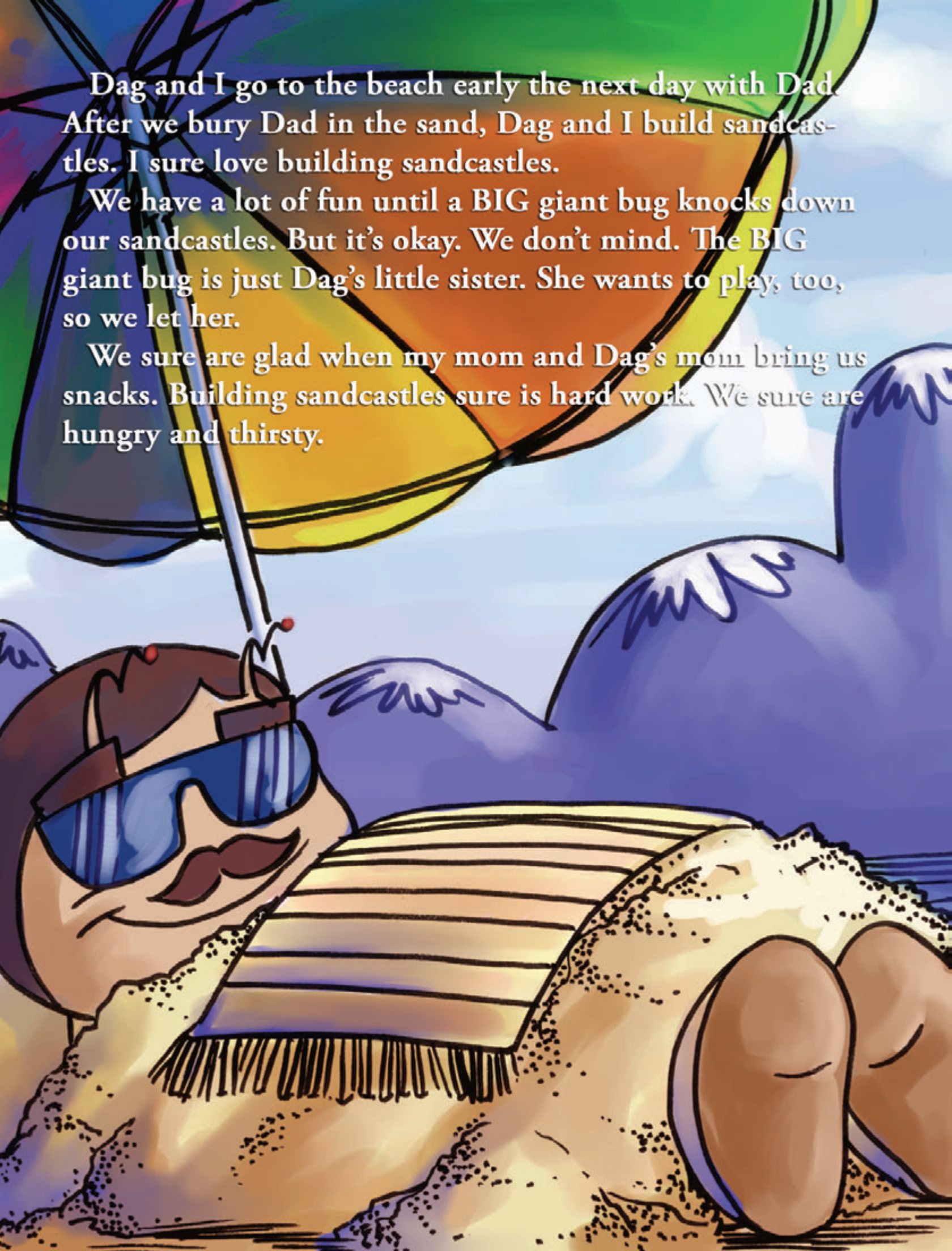


It is windy at the beach but Dag and I don't mind. We decide to fly our kites instead of swimming.

My dad and Dag's dad are talking about the book he's been reading. Dad says, "B. G. Bookworm sure knows how to write." Dag's dad agrees.

That's Dag's little sister over there. She's building sand-castles. Dag and I are trying not to bother her because our moms are taking a nap.



A vibrant, cartoon-style illustration of a beach scene. In the foreground, a man with a mustache and blue sunglasses is lying on a striped beach towel on the sand. To his left, a large beach umbrella with a rainbow-colored canopy (green, yellow, orange, red, purple) is open. In the background, blue waves with white foam are crashing against a light blue sky. The overall style is bright and cheerful.

Dag and I go to the beach early the next day with Dad. After we bury Dad in the sand, Dag and I build sandcastles. I sure love building sandcastles.

We have a lot of fun until a BIG giant bug knocks down our sandcastles. But it's okay. We don't mind. The BIG giant bug is just Dag's little sister. She wants to play, too, so we let her.

We sure are glad when my mom and Dag's mom bring us snacks. Building sandcastles sure is hard work. We sure are hungry and thirsty.





My family and Dag's family are having dinner together. Mom says, "Dag, your little sister is so cute."

Dad says, "It might be nice to have a baby bee around the house."

But I say, "I'm not so sure." Mom just looks at Dad and smiles. Hmmpph!





I can't believe a week at the lake went by so fast. I had so much fun. I'm sad to be leaving.

Dad says, "Buster, we'll all come back to the lake next year."

I say, "I sure hope so." I think I'm going to miss Dag.

