



Drake
AND HIS
Magical
Drawings
ROBERT IRISH

Drake
AND HIS
Magical
Drawings

...

Written and illustrated by

Robert Irish

Drake and His Magical Drawings
Written and illustrated by Robert Irish
robert@drakedodger.com

© 2021 by Robert Irish. All rights reserved.
Published by Robert Irish
ISBN 978-1-387-72171-9



For Braden, Mylie, and Clark

CHAPTER 1

—

A Dragon

I never thought drawing would bring such adventures as I've had. I'm Drake Dodger and I like to draw. It's kinda my thing. Since I can remember, I've been drawing. My mom and dad have kept almost every drawing I've done.

Many are crayon scribbles from when I was little including funny looking drawings of me and my family. When I was six years old, I drew my dad and me at a San Francisco Sharks baseball game. In the drawing, my dad has circles for hands and smaller circles for fingers. My dad's hair

looks as though he had stuck his finger in a wall outlet. Though I was only a few feet tall back then, I drew myself as tall as my dad.

The drawings got better, of course, as I got older. I give a lot of my drawings away to other kids, grown-ups, aunts, and grandmas—the people always asking me to draw them stuff. I don't always mind because I love drawing. Sometimes, I want to do other things, but my mom will then ask me something like, "Drake, have you finished that drawing you said you'd make for Grandma's birthday?"

I'm in the sixth grade at Metro Middle School. I like drawing more for kids at school. Girls will ask me to draw them pictures of cute stuff like rabbits, turtles, or flowers. Boys will ask me to draw them

cars or superheroes. Between you and me, I like drawing for girls the best.

That's where my story begins. One day, I drew Rachel Richardson a sunflower because a few days prior she asked me to. I kept it in my binder all day until I saw her between fifth and sixth period.

"Rachel!" I shouted down the hall. Several kids turned their heads in my direction. I didn't mean to draw so much attention to myself. I waited for heads to turn back to what they were doing before jogging over to Rachel. She was putting her science book in her locker as I approached her.

Rachel and I had known each other since preschool. Back then, our moms were friends and we would sometimes have "play dates" as our moms called it. I'm

pretty sure Rachel has completely forgotten we used to play together.

Rachel has long, sandy blonde hair and is always wearing cozy sweaters, usually pink, purple or white in color. Even though I've known her for years, I always get nervous talking to her. Especially when her friends are beside her. I'm pretty sure they all think I'm a dork. But right now she didn't have any of her friends with her.

As I ran over to her, I almost collided with the lockers.

"Hi, Drake. Do you have my sunflower?" asked Rachel.

"I sure do," I said as I swung my backpack off my shoulder onto the floor in front of me. I pulled out my binder and handed the drawing to her. I had drawn the

sunflower in colored pencils. The sunflower top filled the center of the paper, slightly tilting off its stem. The stem had one small leaf coming off it. I had used my famous coloring technique. I first applied the base color of yellow on the flower's petals. Then I applied a second layer of orange in the areas where the petal is darker or shaded. The trick is to press really hard to blend the colors enough for a vibrant look. I then blended in hints of green on the petals. After a while, the muscles in my forearms would ache from pressing on the colored pencils so hard. But it's always worth the result.

“Oh! I love it! Thank you, Drake!”

Rachel reached over and wrapped her arms around me. You know, one of those hugs that you don't expect and you don't

have time to hug back? You just stand there like a tree.

She continued to close her locker and zip her bag. I was still standing there like a tree. *Be cool*, I thought and replied, "You're welcome, anytime." Anytime? It's not like I was doing her a favor or something.

"Thanks again, Drake. I'll see you later!" And she was off to join a group of friends across the hall. I stood there watching her show her friends the drawing. They all oohed and awed over it for a few seconds until one of the girls showed the group something on her phone.

I cracked a smile as I placed my binder back into my bag. Pleased with myself, I walked to geography class.

...

Being good at drawing does have its drawbacks. Group projects that involve any creativity are always the most work for me. In geography class, Mr. Marsing announced, "Listen up, class! You'll be breaking into seven groups for this next project. Each group will be assigned a country in Central America and do the following:

"1. Create a map of the country, major cities, and important landmarks.

"2. Create a brochure about the country including information on the country's leadership, culture, and history.

"3. Present your country to the class in three weeks."

I dropped my face into my arm resting on my desk and sighed. I knew exactly what would happen. Mr. Marsing put me with three other kids: Conner Chase, Millie Mason and Hunter Halifax. He assigned our group to the country of Belize. The four of us pushed our desks together. Conner spoke first. "I'm so glad we got you in our group, Drake!"

"Yeah," Millie said, "you're gonna rock that map and brochure, Drake."

"Wait a minute, guys." I wasn't going to let this happen again. "I can't do both those things."

"Come on, man," Hunter said. "I thought you loved to draw."

Hunter sat slouched in his chair. He looked as though he belonged in the eighth

grade, not sixth. He also looked like he wanted to beat up anyone that got in his way. In fourth grade, Sam Samuels got snarky with Hunter and he sent Sam's big round glasses across the room.

"I-I do," I said. "I just don't want to be the only one working on this project."

"Of course, Drake," Conner said. He looked down at the paper Mr. Marsing handed out with all the project requirements. "It says here the brochure must include stuff about the country's culture. I can get that for us."

Then Millie chimed in. "And I'll do the country's history summary. What will you do, Hunter?"

Hunter said nothing. I was certain he was doing none of it.

“How about you research Belize’s leadership?” suggested Millie.

Hunter spun a dull, chewed up pencil between his fingers. He must not have sharpened the pencil for weeks. I never dared chew my pencils or let them get too dull. A pencil to me was like Leonardo Da Vinci’s paintbrush or like Taylor Swift’s microphone. A pencil is my tool for making art.

“Sure,” Hunter muttered.

“Okay,” I said, “but what about—” The piercing beep of the school bell interrupted me. The others left the classroom before I could defend myself from all the work dumped into my lap.

In the lunchroom, I met up with my best friend, Ricardo Rodriguez. Ricardo

lives in my same neighborhood. We both love basketball, but he's the only one of us who's actually any good. In fact, he's very good. He started on the YMCA basketball team for our age group. He's so tall, he towers over me and the rest of the kids in our class. Ricardo waved at me from across the lunchroom, yet standing there made him obvious enough to see.

"Drake! Over here!" Ricardo had already gotten in line for hot lunch and taken his tray of food to a table in the middle of the room. I got over to the table and sat down.

"What's for lunch today?" I asked.

"Looks like orange chicken. What do you got?"

I pulled my lunch bag from my backpack. I always brought my own lunch.

I prefer knowing what my lunch is made of. You can never be sure about school lunches.

I placed my food on the table as I announced my menu to Ricardo. "Peanut butter and jelly, chips, apple slices, and a Capri Sun drink."

"Don't you get tired of PB&J?" Ricardo asked as he pushed his chicken through a pile of rice.

"If I could bring a cheeseburger from King's Kastle to school, I would. But I like routine and PB&J tastes good, especially when I put chips inside." I peeled the top piece of bread off my sandwich and placed a few chips on the peanut butter.

"Basketball after school?" Ricardo asked.

“Sure. My house?”

“Sure.”

Rachel walked up to our table. “Hi, boys. How are you?”

“Great!” replied Ricardo.

“Thanks again for the drawing, Drake. All my friends loved it.”

My face started to get hot with embarrassment.

Rachel continued. “I’m having a birthday party this Saturday. Can you guys come?” She handed Ricardo and I each a printed invitation.

“Um, maybe,” I said.

Ricardo decided for both of us. “For sure, Rachel. We’ll be there!”

“Great, see you then. Bye!” Rachel trotted back over to her friends.

I looked at the invite and was reminded of the embarrassing experience I had at the last birthday party. I had stood in the corner for the first hour. Then, the group insisted I take a whack at the piñata. I tried to have as much fun as everyone else, but ended up hitting Jake Jenkins with the stick, giving him a bloody nose. I got dirty looks from everyone, including the parents, for the rest of the day.

“It will be fun,” said Ricardo.

“Sure,” I said and took a bite of my PB&J chip sandwich.

My last class that day was English. I had finished my work early. Mrs. Mitchell said we could have free time if we got done early. So I pulled out my drawing pad and flipped it open. I took my drawing pad with me every day to school. I've lost count of how many drawing pads I've gone through. I was halfway through this one. It was spiral bound and had a green cover. The corners were starting to wear from being in my backpack so much.

I rested my head on one hand and started doodling with the other. Doodling led to drawing the head of a dragon. Nothing special—just your everyday dragon. After the head, I drew a body, wings, and a tail. It wasn't my best work. One wing was bigger than the other. His hands and feet all had four fingers and talons except his left hand had only three.



Soon the school bell rang. I closed my drawing pad, shoved it into my backpack and was off to meet up with Ricardo for the bus ride home.

The brakes on the bus screeched as it pulled up to my neighborhood bus stop. Ricardo and I hopped off and started toward our houses.

“I’m gonna run. I’ll see you in a few minutes at your place.” And he was off running toward his house. He always loved to run places.

I continued to walk toward my house. I looked up at the clouds as I walked. The clouds were particularly fluffy and tall. They moved slowly across the sky. I tried to imagine what they looked like. A clump of clouds looked like the profile of an old bearded man’s face. The farther I walked, the clump of clouds dissipated and the man’s face stretched and distorted until the image was gone.

I looked at another clump of clouds and saw what looked like the hump of a dragon's back and fluffy wings spreading out from it. Another small cloud made up the snout of the dragon's head. As the image of the dragon transformed into something else I had made my way up my driveway, unlocked my front door, and walked in.

"Mom, I'm home!" I said, but there was no response. Then I remembered, she was taking my younger brothers to their check-up at the doctor that afternoon. My older sisters were nowhere in sight. Probably at their friend's house. My dad was at work for another two hours.

Ricardo would be here soon, so I thought I would grab the basketball from the garage. I opened the door into the

garage and flipped on the light. Then I saw
it—a dragon!

CHAPTER 2

—

A Cave

I am the middle child in my family. I have two younger brothers who are twins and always in need of attention from my mom. On the other side of me, I have two older teenage sisters who are also twins. They do everything together and are always with their friends. What they say about middle children is true. We get overlooked. Especially, when we're between two sets of twins. Fortunately for me, none of my family was home when I walked into my garage and found the dragon.

I froze mid-step. Where my parents' cars usually park was a green, scaly dragon asleep on the concrete floor. His chest rose and fell with each breath. His long tail curled around himself, raising up and down every few seconds.

Was I dreaming? This can't be real, I thought. I thought I was imagining it just like the clouds I saw minutes earlier. I inspected it further from where I stood. I could see its fingers. One hand had three fingers and the others four—just like my drawing. *That's weird,* I thought. I shook my head to try and snap out of it, but I could still see the green beast lying there. *I should stop eating so many PB&J sandwiches,* I thought. The basketball was right by the door. I picked it up, turned the light off and slipped back inside the house. I didn't dare look in there again.

Then, I heard a knock at the front door. I jumped at the sound and almost dropped the basketball. I opened the door and saw Ricardo standing there.

“Ready?” Ricardo asked and noticed my frightened face. “Are you okay, Drake?”

I shook off the fear and stepped outside. “I’m fine. Let’s play.” We walked out to my driveway where my basketball hoop was.

I tried to forget what I saw in my garage. It couldn’t have been real. *Where would a dragon have come from? Are they even real?* I tried to forget, but questions kept popping into my head.

Ricardo passed me the ball, but I was too distracted by what I thought I saw in the garage that I let the ball bounce right

past me. I ran over to retrieve it and lobbed it at the hoop. It missed the hoop entirely and BANG!—the ball smashed against the garage door. A second later a crashing noise came from inside.

“What was that?!” Ricardo asked.

Fright came rushing back to me and I immediately knew it was true. I had a dragon taking a nap in my garage. Or rather, it *was* taking a nap until I woke it up.

Ricardo went rushing into the house.

“Wait!” I shouted. “Ric, don’t go in there!”

I tried running past him to stop him from going into the garage, but no one is faster than Ricardo. He turned the knob,

flung the door open, and flipped on the light. My fears came true. The dragon now stood with his back to us and his head pushing against the ceiling.

“Shhh,” I said and pulled Ricardo back.

Ricardo froze and said nothing. He stared up at the dragon. Then I noticed the dragon’s wings. One was smaller than the other—just like my drawing.

“Where did it come from?” Ricardo whispered.

“I don’t know, but my mom will be coming home any minute now. We gotta get rid of him.”

At that moment, the dragon turned its head around and looked at me. He locked eyes with mine and we weren’t sure what

he would do next. He turned his whole body around toward me and bowed his head.

I turned to Ricardo. "I don't think he'll hurt us. I mean the dragons in the movies aren't this polite." Then turning to the dragon I said in a soft voice, "You're a nice dragon, right? Where did you come from, boy? You are a boy, right?" I only assumed he was a boy because when I drew the dragon earlier, I thought of it as a male dragon.

The dragon lifted his head up and looked to be smiling at me. His tail wagged like a dog's. His whole body started wagging until he jumped up and THUD!—he crashed his head on the ceiling.

"Drake?" Ricardo's voice cracked.

“We need a place to hide him. He can’t stay in here,” I said.

“I got it!” Ricardo’s face lit up. “We can put him in that big shed in the back corner of my yard. There’s plenty of space in there since Dad sold the boat.”

“Your dad sold your boat? Why?” I asked. Ricardo’s family is always buying and selling stuff.

“He’s using the money toward buying a bigger one.”

“Of course. Anyway, not important. That will work for now. We just have to get him to your house with no one seeing him.”

“We’ll go over the fences. We just have to get through two yards before getting to mine,” Ricardo said.

“Okay, buddy,” I said to the dragon. “We need to move you, okay? You’re not safe here. Do you understand what I’m saying?”

To our surprise, the dragon nodded yes.

“Ok then. Ric, hit the garage door button.”

Ricardo pushed the button. The garage door started to open making the world’s loudest noise. The commotion spooked the dragon and he flapped his wings and made a screeching noise. His wings knocked over a shelf, spilling worn out basketballs, baseball mitts, and other sports equipment

across the floor while the door nearly flew off its track as it went up.

I tried to calm him down. "It's okay buddy, it's okay, shhhh."

He calmed down and the door finished opening. Ricardo ran out to the driveway and looked around for anyone who might see us.

"No one in sight," he reported, surprised at our luck.

"Okay, buddy, nice and slow." I crept out the garage and the dragon followed close behind. So close it made me nervous he might step on me with his claws. We made our way to my back yard.

We stood at the fence between us and my neighbor's yard. Ricardo and I had

taken this route to and from our houses countless times. All the trees that sat along the fence lines hid us from view making it the perfect shortcut. Ricardo peeked over the fence. "No one in the yard," he reported. He tried looking into the windows. "I don't think they're home."

Ricardo jumped the fence first, then I did. "Okay, buddy, step over the fence."

Buddy started to gracefully lift one leg over the fence. On his attempt to get the second leg over he accidentally kicked the top of the fence with his foot. A few of the boards snapped. The dragon fumbled the rest of the way over, knocking one of the trees with his tail. Leaves came falling down on us from the impact.

The dragon gave an embarrassed expression. "No problem. Just two more

fences,” I said. We crept our way between the neighbor’s trees and got to the next fence. Ricardo peeked over the fence. “Clear,” he reported. We each took our turn over the fence. Luckily, the dragon had no issues this time.

Ricardo lived just behind the yard we were in. “My backyard is just over this fence. Let’s go,” Ricardo said and hopped over.

The dragon got distracted by a bee flying around his head. Before he could get his tiny arms to shoo the thing away, the bee flew up his nose. He tried shaking his head, but like a feather tickling a nose, there’s nothing you can do but—
ACHOOOO! The dragon let out an enormous sneeze and a blazing ball of fire hit the fence in front of us. The force of the sneeze and ball of fire knocked a portion of

the fence over into Ricardo's yard. Small flames singed the edges of the fence still standing.

"Yikes!" Ricardo and I both shouted. Immediately, Ricardo ran over to his garden hose, turned on the water, and dragged the hose over to the fence to distinguish the flames.

The dragon was rubbing his nostrils with his bigger wing. "Wow. Bless you," I said in amazement.

Ricardo had the fire out and the dragon and I walked through the opening in the fence. "Your parents are gonna freak," I said.

Ricardo, in his usual cool, calm, and collective attitude responded, "It will be fine. I'll think of something."

We walked over to Ricardo's shed. It was plenty big for a dragon to stay in. More the size of a barn than a shed as Ricardo called it, but Ricardo was always humble about making things not sound too fancy. It had a garage door that Ricardo opened for us. We got inside and closed the door. "This will work. Thanks, Ric."

The dragon found a spot and then walked in a circle three times before lying down like I've seen cats and dogs do. He looked content there.

I leaned against a workbench that had tools and broken down appliances waiting to be fixed. I gazed at the dragon. "Ric, I can't believe this is really happening. The crazy thing is, I had just drawn this exact dragon in English class today."

"What? Really?!"

“You sure no one will come in?” I asked.

Ricardo reassured me no one ever came in there. His brothers and sisters were always too busy with their sports and activities. His mom was always busy with club memberships, shopping, and driving his siblings around. His dad was always working on the computer.

“I better get home and make sure the garage is clean before my mom goes in there,” I said.

“I’ll check on him tonight and in the morning,” said Ricardo.

We gently closed the door to the shed as the dragon fell back asleep.

That night in my room, I pulled my drawing pad out from my backpack and flipped to the page with the dragon. Aside from the drawing being in pencil and not colored, it looked like the dragon hiding at Ricardo's.

All that night and the next day at school, I thought about the dragon. *How could it look like my drawing? Where did it come from? Was it magic?*

...

The next morning, in First Period, Ricardo said he peeked in the window of the shed before going to school and saw the dragon was still sleeping.

"Why does it sleep so much?" he asked.

“I have no idea.”

“Anyway,” Ricardo continued, “I have baseball practice right after school today, so you’ll have to check on the dragon yourself. The shed’s not locked.”

After school, I went straight over to Ricardo’s. His family was so used to me being around, they were never surprised to see me wandering around or inviting myself in. I got to the side door of the shed. It creaked as I opened it. I looked in but didn’t see the dragon where we left him. I started to panic. I walked to the empty space on the floor. I turned around and in front of my face was the dragon smiling at me. His body was in the dark corner of the garage while he stretched his neck out down toward me.

“Oh there you are, buddy,” I said. “You had me worried for a second there.”

He stepped all the way out of the dark and started to pace around in the little room he had available. I took a seat on a rusty stool in front of the work bench.

“You need a name,” I told the dragon.

The dragon discovered a basketball lying next to him and started pushing it around with his long green snout. “You want to play with the ball, buddy?” I asked while I hopped off the stool and walked over to him. “Wait. That’s it! I’ll call you Buddy. Buddy the dragon.”

I picked up the basketball and tossed it toward him, not really sure what to expect from a dragon. He caught the ball on his snout above his nostrils. Then he started

nodding his head up and down bouncing the ball on his snout until the ball lost balance, fell off, and rolled under a shelf.

Buddy reached for the ball, knocking over a bucket of gardening tools in the process. Not the most graceful dragon. Then giving up on the ball, Buddy grabbed the garage door handle with his tail. He yanked his tail up and the garage door slid open. A burst of sunlight filled the shed. Buddy stepped out, spread his wings, and stretched his arms.

“Buddy, what are you doing? You’re going to be seen!” I ran over to him. Then, his tail wrapped around my waist and dropped me on his back. Before I could tell what happened Buddy flapped his wings and leaped into the air.

“Buddy, what are you doing?!” I held on to his back as tight as I could.

We got higher and higher. The smaller wing didn't seem to affect his flying ability. As we evened out I started to relax. I ran my fingers along the scales of his back. The greens and purples of the scales shimmered in the sunlight like nothing I had seen before.

I looked down and saw my neighborhood. The houses looked so small and identical to each other. All around us I could see the horizon in the distance. On our left was the ocean and I could see a bed of clouds settling along the shoreline. On our right was San Francisco Bay and beyond that was the Oakland area. In front of us I could see the skyline. It was all so beautiful. Whenever I see something

beautiful like this, I want to draw a picture of it. Now wasn't the time though.

We were getting further from my house and I was afraid of being seen. Down below I saw an empty field surrounded by trees. "Buddy, down there!" I pointed to the field. "Land down there!"

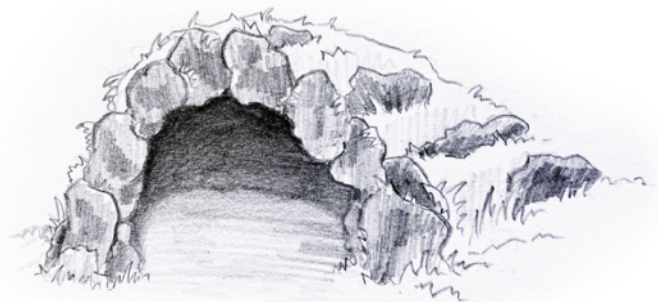
Buddy nose-dived toward the field and then touched down on the ground. I jumped off. "That was incredible! Terrifying but incredible!"

And then it became clear to me. Buddy existed because I drew him. My drawing came to life! It really happened. For some reason when I drew that dragon, it became real. "Buddy! I drew you to life! This is awesome!"

Buddy jumped for joy and whacked his tail against the ground. Then I had another realization. Could I do it again? Could I make another drawing come to life? I was still wearing my backpack from school. I swung it off and pulled out my drawing pad. I flipped to a blank page and stared at it. Tapping my pencil against the spiral binding, as I often did when suffering from artist's block, I thought about what to try next.

“Buddy, you need a place to stay.” I started drawing rock formations on the page. They formed an archway. Around the arch, I drew more rocks, dirt, and bushes. I shaded inside the archway to resemble the depth of a cave. Buddy bent his head down looking over my shoulder looking curiously at the drawing.

“There you go, Buddy. Your very own cave to sleep in.” I turned around in every direction, but still, no cave appeared. I thought by drawing the cave it would appear in real life. I dropped to the ground and tossed my drawing pad onto my backpack.



“I thought it would work.” Then I started to worry. “Oh, no! What if what I draw only appears in my garage like you did, Buddy? If that’s true, then a cave just took over my garage!”

At that moment, I felt a rumbling from the ground. The ground behind me made a deep crunching noise. I turned around to see the ground swelling up. Rock formations started shooting up from the dirt. Moments later, a cave was before us, like the one in my drawing.

“Yes! Buddy! It worked!” We both danced around for a second. “I can’t believe this. I have a superpower!”

Buddy walked over to the cave. He peeked inside. “Go ahead, Buddy,” I assured him. “It’s all yours.”

Buddy smiled, walked in and found a spot to lie down. “Ok Buddy, I got to get back home. Now, you stay here, and I’ll check on you tomorrow, okay?” He nodded yes.

I picked up my drawing pad, compared the drawing to the real cave and smiled. "Wow. Amazing." I closed the drawing pad and put it in my backpack. I waved goodbye to Buddy and ran off back to my house.

A few blocks from my house, a girl with long black hair about my age was riding her bike on the other side of the street. I had never seen her before. I could feel her staring at me the whole time I was on that street. Not thinking much of it, I continued on my way.

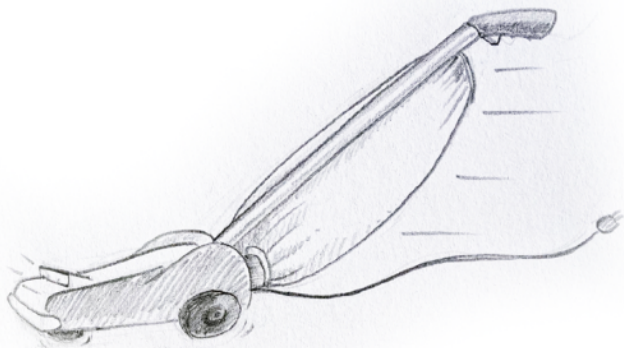
CHAPTER 3

—

A Vacuum, Shoes, and a Cheeseburger

I got back from the field in time for dinner. After dinner mom asked me to vacuum the basement. I wasn't in the mood to vacuum. When is someone ever in the mood to vacuum? I got out the vacuum, plugged it in, pushed it over to the basement couch, and then I plopped down on a cushion. My thoughts wandered to Buddy and the cave. *Could I make any drawing come to life?* I looked at the vacuum and had an idea.

I ran upstairs and grabbed my pencil and drawing pad. Back on the couch, I started drawing the vacuum in front of me. I drew the vacuum to look like it was on and moving. I thought as I drew, it was self-driving. I finished the drawing with one final stroke of my pencil. Then I waited.



A minute later a second vacuum unfolded into view right next to the original. The motor of the new and

improved vacuum revved and a puff of dust shot out from the bottom. It drove itself over the carpet in straight rows. It was like a grandmaster at vacuuming was doing all the work for me. "Yes!" I exclaimed to myself. It had worked. Then it started to move faster and louder until it crashed into the entertainment center across the room. On top of the entertainment center my mom's ceramic sculpture of a mother and child teetered, fell to the floor, and broke.

The vacuum laid on its side, the motor winding down, and a small stream of smoke reached the ceiling. *Someone must have heard the noise of the crash*, I thought. I had to act fast, so I picked up the steaming pile of broken vacuum and shoved it in the back of the basement closet. *I'll take care of that later*, I thought as I closed the closet door.

My two younger brothers came out of another room in the basement and saw the mess of broken ceramic.

“Oh, Drake!” started Jack. “You are in so much trouble,” Jake finished. They were always finishing each other’s sentences.

Then they ran to the bottom of the stairs and Jake yelled, “Mom, come quick!” Then Jack hollered, “Drake broke your stuff!”

“Come on, guys,” I said, but it was too late. The basement door opened. I sat on the couch and sunk further in as my mom made her way down the stairs. I quickly grabbed my drawing pad and shoved it under the couch cushion.

“Drake? What was that noise?” She walked over to me.

“Hi, Mom,” my voice cracked.

“What happened?” She looked around and then saw her broken decor on the floor. “Drake! My ceramic!”

“Sorry, Mom. It was an accident. I wasn’t paying attention and crashed the vacuum into the entertainment center.” I was telling the truth for the most part. I couldn’t tell my mom I drew a self-driving vacuum to life. She’d think I was crazy.

“It’s okay, Drake. Accidents happen.” My mom carefully picked up the ceramic pieces and took them upstairs. After I finished vacuuming with the regular vacuum, I put it away in the closet. While my brothers were distracted in the other room, I grabbed a garbage bag from the kitchen pantry and covered the self-driving vacuum with it. Without anyone seeing me,

I snuck the broken vacuum outside and tossed it in the garbage bin.

I took my drawing pad and the vacuum drawing up to my room and plopped it on my bed in front of me. "Well, that didn't turn out like I hoped," I thought out loud. "How can I draw a dragon that breathes fire, but not a self-driving vacuum? I need to be careful with this...this power. Where does the power come from? Is it me....the pencil....maybe the paper? Next time, I'll try a different pencil. Maybe a pen."

...

The next day at school, sitting in First Period, I had this feeling like I had forgotten something. *What was it?* I wondered. *I brought my homework. I know I*

brought my lunch because I put it in my locker when I got to school.

After class, Ricardo ran over to my desk and whispered, “Drake, I checked in on the dragon this morning and he was gone from the shed! Is he gone for good?”

“Holy cow! Buddy!” I almost shouted loud enough to draw the attention of the teacher and others still in the classroom.

“Buddy? What’s wrong, Drake?”

I pulled Ricardo out to the hallway. “I forgot about Buddy! I hope he’s okay.”

“Buddy?” Ricardo asked.

“Buddy, I named the dragon Buddy. I went to check on him in your shed and he

threw open the door, grabbed me and we flew away.”

“What? Wow, where did he take you?”

“We landed in a field a couple neighborhoods over. Ric, I drew him a cave.”

“What?”

I pulled Ricardo to a quiet corner of the hallway and explained. “Remember when I said that Buddy looked just like a drawing I drew that same day? It’s because he *is* the dragon I drew. In that field, I drew a cave for him to sleep in and, bam! There it was, a cave. He walked in and found a cozy spot to stay in. I left him there. I hope he’s okay.”

“Wow, Drake, that’s incredible! We have to check on him.”

“Are you free after school to check on him with me?” I asked.

“You bet!”

“Okay, I hope no one has found him,” I said.

...

The next class for that day was P.E. and Mr. Mackey had the class go to the track field.

“Okay guys, we’re going to be timing you on your mile run today,” Mr. Mackey announced. Some kids groaned, including me, while others cheered. Some kids love to run around. I’ve never been a fan of

running. It would be more fun if I could go super fast.

Then it hit me. I had another idea. I grabbed my drawing pad from my backpack. This time I grabbed a pen instead of my usual pencil to draw with. I thought, *if these don't become real then I know it's the pencil that's magic.*

Without anyone looking, I drew a pair of running shoes. Except these were no ordinary shoes. These would make me run at incredible speeds, but not so fast people couldn't see me. I added a final touch of lightning bolts on the sides. Then I waited.

I thought, *maybe it's the pencil.* If it was, then I could break the pencil and then the power and Buddy would be gone and I could go back to how things were. Or

perhaps the power would run out when the pencil had no more lead left.



Then, my backpack beside me jumped. I peeked in and there were the shoes I had drawn. *Okay, not the pencil*, I thought. It could still have been the paper causing the drawing to come to life, but I'd have to test that later.

I grabbed the shoes and put them on.

“Dodger!” Mr. Mackey shouted.
“You’re up!”

I walked over to the starting line. Next to me were a few other kids including Hunter.

“I’m going to smoke all you guys in this race,” Hunter sneered.

“It’s not a race guys,” said Mr. Mackey. “Run the best you can and complete the mile. You’ll need to run around the track four times to go the full mile.”

We all squatted down like real runners in an Olympic race. If it wasn’t a race, it sure felt like one and I was certain my shoes were going to win.

“On your mark, get set...go!” Mr. Mackey shouted.

I took off running. I started out slow as I didn't know what the shoes might do. Hunter ran as fast as he could with his chest sticking out, huffing and puffing as he ran. He was getting far ahead of everyone else.

I picked up my pace and then I felt my shoes taking control. I could feel myself running faster than I normally did. Faster and faster until I ran past the others and then past Hunter. I was getting far ahead and feeling good. It was so easy running that fast.

When I finished my first lap, the others had finished half of theirs. On the second lap I slowed down a little so not to make too much of a scene. By the start of the fourth lap, I wasn't even breaking a sweat.

I looked behind me at the other runners. They looked tired. Hunter was panting while glaring at me. "What's the deal, Dodger?" he yelled.

I finished the last lap. I felt great. I didn't feel tired at all. I thought I should show some fatigue, so I accelerated my breathing a little and rested my hands on my knees. Hunter fell to the ground after crossing the finish line.

With his face in the grass, he pointed at me and said, "When did you start running so fast, Dodger? I thought artists didn't run."

"Of course we do," I said and then rushed over to my backpack to avoid any more questioning. I placed my speed shoes in my backpack and put on my regular shoes.

...

On our way to the lunchroom, I told Ricardo all about the shoes.

After Ricardo got his hot lunch, we sat down at an empty table and I pulled out my lunch bag.

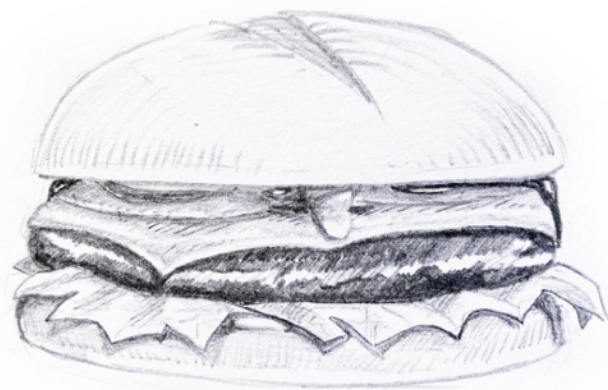
“What are you going to draw next?” Ricardo asked.

“I don’t know.” We sat there deep in thought. I unwrapped my peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

“I’ve got it!” I said. I pointed at my sandwich and looked at Ricardo. “You know what’s better than this sandwich?”

“Anything?” teased Ricardo.

“A cheeseburger!” I pulled out my drawing pad and pencil to start drawing a hamburger. I paused. “Wait. This time I’m going to try a different paper. The magic is not in the pencil or pen I used, but maybe it’s in this drawing pad.”



I pulled out a napkin from my lunch bag and started sketching a delicious cheeseburger from my favorite restaurant, King’s Kastle. It was a juicy burger with cheese, lettuce, tomato, mayonnaise and ketchup. I got hungrier and hungrier as I

59

drew. I finished, put my pencil down, and smiled at Ricardo.

“What if it doesn’t work?” Ricardo asked.

“Then we’ll know it’s gotta be the paper.”

We looked around and made sure no one was looking. Then a mouth-watering burger unfolded into view on top of the napkin in front of us.

“Whoa!” Ricardo shouted.

“Quiet!” I said. “We don’t want anyone to find out.”

“Right, sorry. It looks delicious.”

I pushed the sandwich aside and picked up the hamburger. I looked it over.

“Looks safe to eat,” I said. I took a bite.
“Sooo good.”

Ricardo looked longingly at the hamburger. “You gonna eat all that?”

I just smiled and enjoyed my lunch.

CHAPTER 4

—

A Frog

On our way home, Ricardo and I decided to get off the bus a couple of stops sooner. Then we could get to the field Buddy was staying in faster. We jumped off the bus and started running down the street. I could tell Ricardo was holding back his speed as he often did for me. I thought about getting out my speed shoes, but we were almost there anyway.

As we ran, something caught my eye from across the street. It was the same girl on a bike I saw the other day. She had stopped and stared at us as we ran.

Ricardo had noticed her too. "What's her problem?" he said.

"I don't know. I don't think I've seen her at school."

We approached the trees that led to the field and ran past them. "I see the cave," I said. I ran into the cave, hoping to find Buddy there. "Buddy! Buddy?"

I ran back out to Ricardo. "He's not in there!" We checked the rest of the field and the trees surrounding it, but Buddy was nowhere.

"He's not here. Where could he be?" I stared into the cave.

"Maybe," Ricardo said, "maybe he's gone."

“What do you mean?”

“I mean maybe these things you draw don’t last forever.”

“Yeah, it’s possible. As much as I would love Buddy as a pet, it would probably be best if he could stay imaginary. I mean, if he’s still around then he’s probably scaring a lot of people or worse.”

“Come on, Drake. Let’s go home,” Ricardo suggested.

We took our time walking back home. On the way, Ricardo perked up. “On the bright side, Rachel’s birthday party is tomorrow. You haven’t forgotten, have you?”

I shrugged my shoulders. "I don't know if I should go. I never know what to do at parties."

"C'mon, it will be fun," Ricardo said. "Besides, she's your friend. You want to be a good friend, right?"

"Yeah, I guess so."

...

Ricardo's mom dropped us off at Rachel's the next afternoon. When we walked in there were already several people lounging on her couch. A couple of kids were playing a dance video game on the TV.

"Hey, guys!" Rachel said. "I'm so glad you could come."

“Our pleasure,” Ricardo said as he handed her a present.

I handed her my present. “Happy Birthday, Rachel.” That morning, my mom took me to the department store to pick out Rachel’s present. I had no idea what to get her. We walked around the store as my mom would point and say things like, “Oh that’s cute, she’d love that.” We landed on a 3-pack of “cute” pattern socks. One pair had avocados, another llamas, and another sloths. We also picked some fancy caramel chocolates because my mom said the socks weren’t enough.

“Oh thank you so much for the gifts! Come in, guys. We’ll start the activities soon.”

I stood by the couch and watched the two kids on the video game. One of

Rachel's friends, Stacey, saw me and came over. "Drake, hi! I saw the drawing you did for Rachel. So cool. Could you draw something for me?"

"Sure, okay," I said hesitantly. With my newfound drawing power, I was nervous about drawing for anyone else but myself. Then Rachel walked up. "Yeah, Drake, you should totally draw Stacy something. And speaking of drawing it's time for our first game."

Rachel turned off the video game and announced, "Okay everyone, our first game is 'guess the drawing.'" She pointed to a giant pad of paper standing on an easel. "Half of you are on one team and half of you are on another." The group split into two.

Rachel continued. "This bowl has words of things in it. The first person will pull a word and start drawing it. Whichever team guesses the drawing first wins the round."

My stomach dropped to the floor. How was I going to play this game? I could pull out "plane" or "skyscraper" from the bowl. I looked over at Ricardo. He looked just as sick as I did. I snuck to the back and stood behind my team.

The other team went first and pulled out the word "roller coaster". *I'm glad that wasn't me*, I thought. After that team guessed it right, my team was next. "Drake, go up there. You're our best artist!" Jackson Jenkins shouted.

"Yeah!" another cheered.

I stayed put. "Come on. Drake, don't be shy now," said Rachel.

I stepped up to the bowl of words Rachel held in her hands. "No peeking," she said and covered my eyes with her hand.

I reached into the bowl and grabbed a strip of paper. I turned to the drawing pad and looked down, afraid to unfold the paper to see the word.

"Come on, Drake!" my team shouted.

I unfolded the paper. Written in Rachel's perfect handwriting was the word "frog." *It could be worse*, I thought. Maybe the frog will appear outside in the yard.

I picked up a marker and began to draw. I started with an outline of a frog

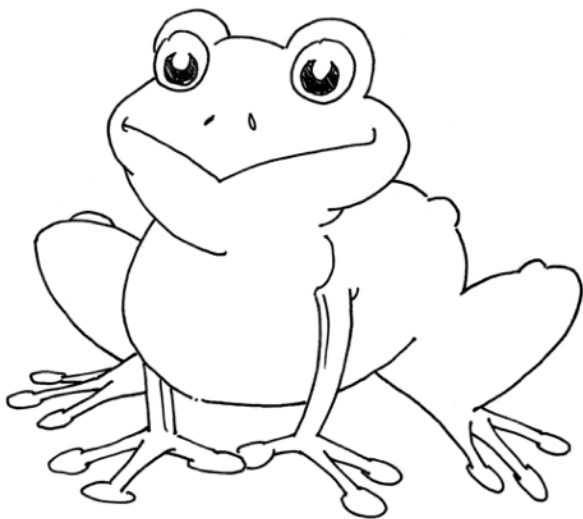
head, then down its back, the hind legs and belly. Then, I drew the front legs and up its neck. No one was guessing. I'd seen this before. When I draw, people don't say much. They only watch.

"Come on, guys," I said. I thought, if they guess before I'm done, the drawing won't come alive.

I continued with the eyes, mouth, and then warts. Surely, warts would give it away.

"A frog," Oliver from the opposing team said.

"Yep," I said and then tore the paper off the pad, folded it up, and threw it in the corner—a last hopeful act to prevent the frog from being real. I went back to my place behind my team. Ricardo looked over at me with his eyes bulging.



“Okay,” said Rachel, “who’s up next?”

Then a screech from one of the girls on the couch filled the room. “Eeeek!”

Lacey jumped up and screamed again, “Aaaack!”

Then Lacey's twin sister, Stacey, jumped up in fright and soon everyone was off the couch. They all looked down at the cushion. On the couch sat a fat, warty frog.

"Ribbit," it croaked.

"Whose frog is that!" asked Lacey. Nobody owned up to it, of course.

Would somebody think it was from my drawing? I wasn't going to let the others look at it long enough to figure it out. "It's mine!" I said.

I walked over to the couch and scooped it up in my hands.

"Why did you bring a frog?" asked Rachel, looking almost disgusted and confused.

“I, ah, I’m frog-sitting for my friend. He must have escaped from my bag. I’ll take him outside. Sorry, everyone.”

I picked up my backpack by the front door and went outside. Outside, I put the frog in my bag and placed it on the ground. I found a spot under one of the trees in Rachel’s front yard, sat down, and let out a big sigh.

What a disaster, I thought. How am I ever going to draw in public again?

After a while when I thought the drawing game was over, I came back inside. Ricardo pulled me aside.

“Yikes, that was close,” he said.

“Yeah, now everyone thinks I’m the crazy frog-sitting kid.”

Rachel walked over. "Drake, is your friend's frog okay?"

"Oh yeah, he's fine. I'm really sorry."

"It's okay. It's so weird that you drew a frog for the game and then a second later a frog escaped from your bag. What a coincidence, huh?" Rachel said.

"Yeah, strange." I tried not to dwell on it. "What's next on the party agenda?"

...

Ricardo rode his bike to my house after the party. We arranged for him to sleep over. As usual, we played basketball in the driveway until it was time for dinner.

"Come inside and eat, boys!" my mom shouted from the screen door.

Ricardo threw one more shot of the basketball. The ball fell perfectly through the hoop and the net made a snapping noise.

I grabbed the ball and at that same moment we both noticed across the street was that girl with long black hair we had seen before. She stared at Ricardo and me. She sat on her bike and peddled slowly down the sidewalk.

“Weird,” Ricardo muttered.

“Who are you?” I yelled to the girl, but she just peddled away.

After dinner, Ricardo insisted that he help the family clean up. My dad went to the living room and turned on the news. As Ricardo and I finished drying the last of the

dishes, we overheard something coming from the news report:

“In other news, what witnesses are calling a large lizard was spotted in downtown San Francisco earlier today...”

Ricardo and I looked at each other with curiosity. We went running to the living room entryway to watch.

“...The sighting has raised enough concern to involve animal control and the police and fire departments. Officials are encouraging anyone with information to call the number on your screen.”

“Let’s go to my room,” I whispered. We ran upstairs and I closed the door behind us.

“What are we going to do?” Ricardo asked.

“I guess he’s not totally gone after all.” I stared out the window. I turned around to Ricardo. “We got to go find him.”

“How we going to find a dragon that can fly anywhere?” Ricardo said.

“He’s big. He should be easy to spot, right?”

“What’ll the police do if they find him?”

“I don’t know. Probably nothing good. That’s why we need to find him first. But where do we start?”

“Well, he’s a dragon,” Ricardo noted. “Where do dragons hang out?”

“Not in caves apparently.”

“Castles?” Ricardo guessed. “But where’s the nearest castle?”

After a pause, we looked at each other with bulging eyes. We both shouted, “King’s Kastle!”

King’s Kastle is a family restaurant. I might have mentioned before, it’s my favorite restaurant. Inside and outside the whole building looks like a medieval castle. Aside from amazing cheeseburgers their fries are the best I’ve had.

“Okay, let’s start there,” I said. “We’ll leave first thing in the morning on our bikes. We’ll tell our parents we’re playing basketball at the park.”

“I don’t know, Drake,” Ricardo said. “I already made up a story to my parents about the neighbor’s bar-b-cue blowing up and knocking that hole in the fence.”

“Ric, we can’t tell them the giant lizard on the news is Buddy or that I have magical drawings. They wouldn’t believe us.”

“You’re right.”

The rest of the night Ricardo and I played video games in my basement. We switched the TV over to the *News at Nine* to see if there were any new developments in the Buddy story, but there was nothing that gave us a clue where to find him.

CHAPTER 5

—

A Pencil and a Space Pod

The next morning, my mom told me that she had a lot of errands to run after she took the younger twins to our grandma's. Trying to act casual, I said, "Ricardo and I are going to the park to play basketball and will probably just hang out at one of our houses afterwards."

"That was easier than I thought it would be," said Ricardo as we pushed our bikes out of the garage. We took off on our bikes down the street. King's Kastle was a few miles away. It was the farthest distance I or Ricardo had ridden. We arrived at the

restaurant close to noon as the lunch crowd was growing.

“Check out the roof.” I pointed up at the castle’s fake towers. The towers were cut outs positioned all along the edge of the roof and they were large enough to conceal Buddy if he was up there. “Buddy could easily hide up there with no one bothering him.”

“We’ll have to get up there somehow,” Ricardo said.

“Let’s go inside and see if we can find some stairs.”

We parked our bikes and walked in the front door. A hostess greeted us. “Welcome to King’s Kastle, just the two of you?”

“We’re just catching up to my parents,” I said. “They’re already seated.” I pointed at a random table in the back of the restaurant where sat a couple who looked to be my parents age. “I see them over there. Thanks.”

We walked past the hostess and into the dining room. Scattered throughout the restaurant were knight armor, swords, jousting sticks, and medieval costumes. On one side of the dining room, there was a large round table where they hosted parties. It looked as though they were getting ready for a birthday party. There was a plastic king’s crown and a bag of party favors at each seat. Tied to the chairs were balloons with knights, swords, and shields printed on them.

In the middle of the restaurant was a giant statue of a knight fighting a dragon. I

had known it was there before, but when my eye caught it this time, I flinched and thought for a second it was Buddy.

“What about over there?” Ricardo pointed to a hallway.

“Yeah, c’mon.”

We quickly shuffled to the hallway. At the end was a set of stairs. Without anyone looking we followed the stairs that led us straight to the roof access door.

I slowly opened the door to the roof as not to alarm Buddy if he was there. We walked out onto the flat roof. Surrounding the edge of the roof were the backs of fake, flat castle spires and towers.

We walked around large air conditioning units and other bulky machinery.

“Buddy,” I called out. “Buddy, where are you?”

Ricardo and I looked everywhere on the roof, but no Buddy.

“Sorry, Drake. He’s not here.”

“I should’ve known,” I said with a shrug. “I drew a smart dragon, not a dumb one that would mistake a fake castle for a real one. C’mon, let’s go.”

As we got back inside and to the bottom of the stairs, a waiter came down the hallway and spotted us. “Hey, what were you kids doing up there? You’re not allowed up there. Get back to your table.”

“Yes, sir. We got lost finding the bathroom,” I said as Ricardo and I walked right past a restroom door that read, *King’s Throne*. Across the hall another door read, *Queen’s Throne*.

Outside, we got back on our bikes. “Even if we do find him,” Ricardo said, “what’ll we do with him?”

“I don’t know, but we need to find a way to hide him or...”

“Or what?” Ricardo asked.

“You know, make him disappear. I mean if I made him appear, maybe I can make him disappear.”

“Sounds logical. You brought the drawing with us. What if you tear up the

paper or burn it or something like that?" suggested Ricardo.

"Hmmm, that might work, but it might also do something not so good," I said. "I mean, if I tear up the paper, Buddy *could* disappear, or he could get ripped up into pieces. Or he could keel over on the spot and land on some people or fall off a building. If I burn it, he could catch on fire and..." The thoughts were not pleasant. "We need to test it out first. C'mon. I got an idea."

We rode our bikes to a nearby park. Cutting through the grass we stopped at a lone bench in the middle of the park. We sat down, and I pulled out my drawing pad and pencil. I turned to a blank piece of paper.

“Okay, I’m going to draw something simple, meaningless, and not living,” I said.

“How about a pencil?” Ricardo suggested.

I was a little offended at the notion. After all, what kind of artist would I be without pencils? “Well, pencils are not exactly meaningless. Without them, I couldn’t draw. But that’ll work.” I started drawing a standard looking pencil. When I finished, we waited and looked all around. We never knew where the drawings would come to life.



“There,” I said. On the ground beside the bench, the pencil popped into view. I picked up the new pencil and placed it on the bench between Ricardo and me.

“Okay, now I’m going to tear up the paper.” I pulled the paper out of the drawing pad and then proceeded to rip it into tiny pieces. For extra measure, I threw the paper pieces into a garbage can next to the bench.

We watched the pencil. We stared at it without blinking. A minute went by and the pencil was still there in front of us. Then two minutes went by.

“I don’t think it worked, Drake.” Ricardo picked up the pencil and inspected it.

We heard a voice from behind us say,
“That’s not going to work.”

Ricardo and I both jumped off the bench as we heard it. We turned around and saw a girl about our age. She had long black hair and looked like the girl on the bike we’d seen a few times that week.

“Ripping up the drawing isn’t going to work,” the girl said.

“We’ve seen you before. You following us?” I replied.

“Yes,” she said matter-of-factly.

Ricardo and I gave her odd looks.
“Okay. Why are you following us?” I asked.

“I’ve been watching you, Drake, ever since your dragon showed up in your garage. You call him Buddy.”

“How do you know about that?”

“You and I are Imagos. My name is Grace.”

“I’m Ricardo,” politely replied Ricardo, holding out his hand.

“A what?” I asked, interrupting the introductions.

“An Imago,” answered Grace. “The Imago Council sent me to observe you and possibly assist.” Grace grabbed the pencil out of Ricardo’s hand. “And you are in serious need of assistance.”

“Well, it’s not like I was expecting this or had training or wizard’s school. Is this drawing power some kind of magic?”

Grace snickered. “Something like that. People like us always come from a line of Imagos, but not everyone in your family has the ability. You may have gotten it from your parents or your grandparents or maybe no one in your family has had it for several generations. I wasn’t told your genealogy.”

I thought for a minute. *Could it be one of my parents? Why wouldn’t they tell me? Maybe they don’t know. Maybe it skipped them.* I didn’t know my grandparents very well, but I had a vague memory of a few of my Grandpa Gene’s oil paintings.

“Maybe my grandpa?” I guessed.

“If it was him, he would have had an Imago’s case,” Grace explained.

“An Imago’s case?”

“Yes, a special bag or case for storing your drawings when you don’t want them in real life. Think of it like a toy box you can pull toys in and out of.”

“Wait, what!?” I gasped. “You’re saying all I need is this special case thing to put Buddy’s drawing into and instead of being in the real world, he’ll be safely hidden?”

“Yeah. Then you could take him out to play when you are in a safe space.”

“That’s great! Where’s this Imago’s case?”

“You just need to find your grandpa’s or whoever’s case. It’s common for families to pass down these cases from Imago to Imago.”

I thought for a moment. “There’s an old leather briefcase thing in my hall closet where my parents used to keep my drawings. They said it used to be my grandpa’s. That’s gotta be it.”

“Perfect,” Grace said.

“So we need to get this drawing into the case and Buddy will be safe and away from people?” Ricardo asked.

“Well,” Grace said, “the only way to get the real thing to disappear is to place the drawing into the case while nearby the real thing.”

I threw my arms in the air in despair.
“But we don’t know where Buddy is!”

“That is a problem,” Grace said.

At that moment, we heard a screeching roar in the distance.

“What was that?” Ricardo asked.

“It sounded like...” Ricardo and I ran to the corner of the street. I could see there was commotion coming from a building a block down from the park. A ball of fire exploded above the building. It was Buddy. He had landed on that building, got scared and started making a scene. A group of people and cars had formed on the street below. One by one, police cars came whizzing by and gathering below.

“Buddy! That’s buddy up there,” I said. Ricardo and I ran back to our bikes and were about to peddle toward Buddy until Grace stepped in front of us and asked, “Aren’t you missing something?”

“What?”

“The Imago’s case.”

“That’s all the way at my house. It will take forever to get there and back. Someone could capture Buddy by then.”

“Drake.” Grace grabbed my handlebars and gave me a stern look. “You are an Imago. You can draw anything to get you where you need to go.”

That was the first time since having this ability that I felt the heaviest burden. The thought of drawing anything and

having it become real excited me and scared me at the same time. The responsibility of putting an end to all the commotion Buddy was causing weighed on me. It was almost too much to bear. I let out a deep sigh, slowly got off my bike and picked up my drawing pad and pencil.

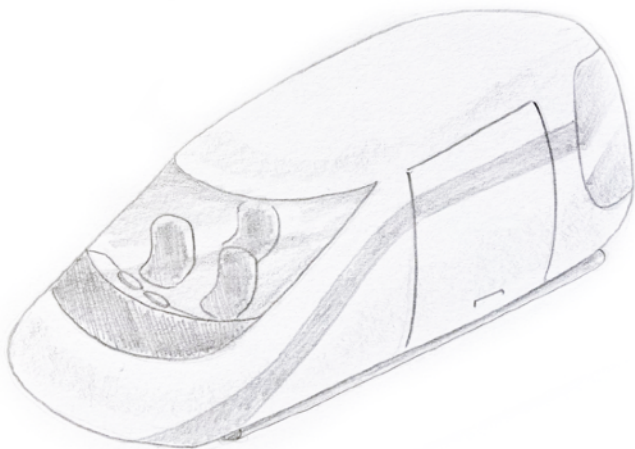
We heard another screech from Buddy as a fire truck whooshed by with its sirens blaring. I stared at the blank page in front of me and panicked.

“Why don’t you just draw a time machine or a teleporting device?” Ricardo suggested.

“No,” Grace said. “That’s way too dangerous. With time travel you could mess up time and erase your own life. With teleporting you could show up on the other end with half an arm.”

I took a deep breath and tried to focus. “Okay, we need something that will get us from here to my house and back fast.”

In space movies, I’d seen these little pod ships. They’d carry people from the big ship down to a planet or over to another spaceship fairly quickly. I drew a space pod to carry the three of us and our two bikes. Just like my speed shoes, as I



drew, I imagined the pod to be fast enough to get us across town and back. But not so fast that we'd crash.

Normally, I'd take my time with something as cool as a space pod, but this time, I kept it simple, yet sleek in design. It had a large back window, front windshield and a big side door that opened upward.

I finished the drawing and set it down. The pod unfolded into view next to a large nearby tree. The door opened, letting out pressurized air with a "POOOSH."

"Nice work, Drake!" Ricardo shouted.

"Let's get in."

All three of us boarded the pod and put our bikes in the corner. There were

three seats—two in front and one behind those.

We sat down and Ricardo asked worriedly, “You know how to drive this, right?”

I tried to be confident. “Yeah, of course. As I was drawing it, I pictured it to be easy to drive. So easy in fact it only has two options, see?”

On the dashboard in front of us were two large buttons: *To Ricardo’s House* and *To Park*.

“My house?” Ricardo asked.

“Yeah, you have a bigger backyard with space behind that shed we kept Buddy in. We can hide the pod there.”

I pressed the *To Ricardo's House* button. The pod began to make a humming noise just like I had heard in the movies. It lifted off the ground and rose above the trees and buildings. The humming got louder and we began to move forward accelerating faster and faster. Out the back window, I saw Buddy and the cityscape get smaller in the distance. "We'll be back, Buddy," I whispered.

CHAPTER 6

—

A Cup of Water, Jetpacks, and a Daisy

We slowed as we approached our neighborhood. Once we were directly above Ricardo's back yard, the pod lowered to the ground and landed behind the shed. The door opened and we jumped out. As we hopped the fences and backyards to get to my house, I kept thinking of what I could have done different with the creation of the pod. "I should have included invisibility with the pod so it wouldn't be seen."

“Grace, once a thing is drawn, can you change it or add something new?” Ricardo questioned.

“Yes,” replied Grace, “but you need to be careful with this power, Drake. You need to keep it managed or things get seriously out of control.”

Ricardo laughed. “A dragon on the loose in downtown San Francisco seems pretty out of control to me.”

We walked in the back door of my house. My mom, dad, and the younger twins were all watching the news in the living room. On the TV was video of Buddy at the top of the building we saw earlier. The building didn’t have a flat roof like King’s Kastle. This building’s roof was older with a steep, shingled roof. Buddy paced back and forth along the roof and

every step caused several more shingles to break loose and slide off. He looked scared and confused.

A fire chief spoke to the camera. "We're doing everything we can to keep downtown safe until we can capture this thing. We advise everyone to keep a good distance away from the area."

Everyone in the room had their eyes glued to the TV, but my mom managed to turn and see us. "Drake, you're home!" she said. "Did you hear about this downtown dragon? Scary. I didn't even know dragons existed!"

Jake and Jack were on the floor also captivated by the dragon. "Dragon!" Jake shouted. "Dragon!" Jack shouted, pointing at the TV.

Ricardo and I exchanged nervous looks. “No,” I said, “I didn’t. That’s crazy...um...oh, Mom, this is Grace from school. Ricardo and I ran into her at the park and we’ve been hanging out since.”

Grace extended a polite handshake. “Hello, Mrs. Dodger. It’s a pleasure to meet you.”

“You too.” Grace’s manners impressed my mom. “How nice. Look honey, Drake brought home a *girl*.”

My dad’s eyes stayed fixed on the TV, mesmerized by the dragon as he gave a feeble wave of his hand and muttered, “Mm.”

My mom rolled her eyes at him and turned her attention back to us. “So, what are you kids up to?”

I was still recovering from my mom's embarrassing mention of me bringing home a girl, but I managed to come up with the next part of my story. "Ahh, I was going to show these guys some of my old drawings."

Mom rubbed my head and said to Grace and Ricardo, "Drake is so talented, isn't he?"

"Oh yes, he's the best artist in school," Grace said, helping to play her part.

We managed to pull away from my mom and head upstairs. I opened the door to the hallway closet and the three of us peered in. I dug around for my grandpa's old briefcase.

“Found it!” I pulled it out and we retreated to my room. I placed the case on my bed.

“It’s just an old beat-up case,” said Ricardo.

The case was made of worn leather and had a shoulder strap. It had a large flap covering the opening. The flap stayed closed with two buckle straps. I undid the straps and flipped open the case. I pulled out the old drawings of mine that my parents had put in there when I was little and spread them across the bed.

“Wow,” teased Grace. “I guess all great artists start somewhere.”

“Yeah, Drake,” Ricardo said. “These are bad.”

I picked up a drawing of an extremely fat horse. Its head was misshapen and its eyeballs were bulging. "That is hideous," I said. "But it was a long time ago. I've improved."

I dropped the drawing back on to the pile. "Anything else inside?" asked Grace.

I opened the case as wide as I could, stuck my hand in and felt all around. There were variously sized pockets along the lining of the case, but nothing in those.

"Nothing."

I closed the flap and on the front was a small pocket clasped shut with a button. I undid the button and I reached my fingers inside. My fingers pulled out a small, folded piece of tattered paper. I unfolded it and read out loud:

I was taught to draw what I see, not what I think I see.

But Imagos know you draw what you don't see.

May this case find you at the right time.

Gene Goodwin

"That's my grandpa Gene. I think this is the Imago's case we need," I said.

"Great," said Ricardo, "now we just need to get it and your drawing near Buddy."

"Let's go," I said as I took off my backpack, pulled my drawing pad out, and started to place it in the Imago's case.

“Wait!” said Ricardo. “Do you still have those speed shoes?”

“Oh, I see where you’re going,” I said. I pulled the speed shoes out from my closet and placed them on the bed. Then I slid my drawing pad into the Imago’s case to test if the case really worked.

We stood there with eagerness. “Give it a moment,” said Grace.

Then the shoes popped out of view. Ricardo and I jumped with excitement and gave each other a high five. “Awesome! It works!” we said.

“Drake!” my mom shouted from downstairs. “We’re having dinner soon. Your friends are welcome to stay.”

I threw the case over my shoulder. We went downstairs and met my mom in the kitchen. "Ricardo's got to get home," I said. "We'll walk him home and Grace is not much farther, okay?"

"Okay," mom said. "It was nice to meet you, Grace."

"It was a pleasure meeting you, Mrs. Dodger," replied Grace.

Back at Ricardo's we ran to the pod where we left it. As we approached it, it suddenly folded up and disappeared. We halted in our tracks. "Where'd it go?" Ricardo and I both asked.

"Boys," said Grace, "where's the drawing pad?"

“In the case, why?” I said as if it were a silly question. Then it hit me. “Oh, right! The pod drawing is already in the case and once we get close enough it does its thing and disappears.”

“Bingo,” Grace said.

I pulled out the drawing pad from the case and a moment later the pod and the shoes unfolded back into existence. I ripped out the drawing of the shoes and put only that back into the case. The shoes then disappeared again. “Nice, let’s go!”

We jumped into the pod and I pressed the *To Park* button.

We zoomed over neighborhoods and trees, past the school, and over King’s Kastle. Ricardo and I checked the roof

while we passed. It seemed forever since we were up there looking for Buddy.

We landed between some trees at the park. After we stepped out, I handed the case to Ricardo. "Hold this open." I tore the pod drawing out of the drawing pad. Ricardo held open the case while I dropped in the drawing. A second later the pod folded up the same way it came and was gone. "Now for Buddy," I said.

We ran out of the park and down the street. As we got closer to the building Buddy was on, we saw that a fire had engulfed the roof and top floor. Buddy was perching on top of a gable. Scared, he was slipping and trying to keep his balance.

A crowd of people watched from the street. "Let's get closer," I said. We made

our way through the crowd until we had a clear view of the scene.

“Buddy must have breathed out fire,” I said.

“Or sneezed again,” said Ricardo half-jokingly. “Why is he doing this?”

“He’s probably just scared,” said Grace. “Drake, you need to get right up next to him before you can put his drawing in the case.”

The fire chief I saw on the news was yelling into a radio. “We’ve got to capture that thing. Where’s that helicopter with the net?”

“I have to get to him before they do,” I said.

Above us on the roof, Buddy let out a screeching howl. Then he jumped to the next building over, grabbing onto the windowsills with his claws and flapping his wings.

“Buddy!” I yelled. We started running toward the building, but the fire chief stopped us.

“Hold right there, kids!” he shouted. He put his large hand on my shoulder, preventing me from getting any farther. “Kid, did you just call out to that thing? You know where it came from?”

“Ahh, yeah.” I hesitated. I had to tell him the truth if there was going to be any hope of saving Buddy. “He’s my pet...my pet dragon.”

He paused for a moment, then sighed and rolled his eyes. "This morning, I didn't know there was such a thing as a dragon, so I guess it doesn't surprise me he's a kid's pet."

"I need to get to him," I said.

"No way, kid. It's way too dangerous."

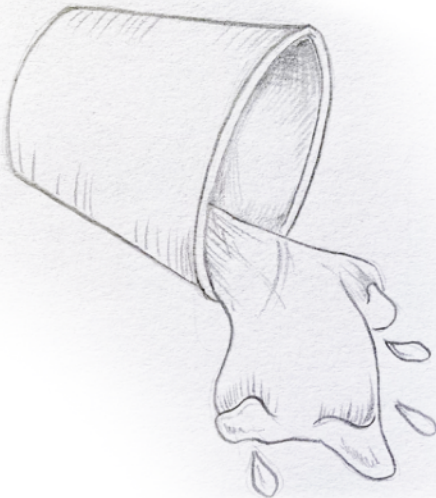
"He's just scared. He'll calm down if I can talk to him."

"No. We'll take care of it." The fire chief's radio sounded and he walked away shouting to the person on the other end. "Get that helicopter here quick. He's on the move!"

I looked up at Buddy and then to the fire. "This is all my fault."

“What are you going to do, Drake?”
Ricardo asked.

“You know what to do,” Grace said. I got out my drawing pad and started drawing. High in the air above the ground, I drew a floating cup the size of a house tipping and pouring water out. I ripped out the page and held it up toward the burning building.



Above the building, the cup unfolded into view. Immediately hundreds of gallons of water tipped out and poured onto the fire. Water flowed over the top of the building and in a few seconds, the fire was out and the water vaporized into the air.

The firemen and people below shouted cheers of astonishment and relief. "Drake, you did it!" Ricardo said. All three of us cheered.

"But what about that giant cup floating above the building?" asked Ricardo.

"There's no time to worry about that now," I said.

"Reeeek!" screeched Buddy as he jumped off the building side and nose-dived. I turned and saw him coming toward the crowd. Before I could run

toward him, he reached down, grabbed the fire chief with his hind legs, and flew back up into the sky.

“No! Buddy come back. It’s me!” I shouted but he didn’t hear me. Buddy landed on a roof a few buildings down with the fire chief. “We’ve got to get up there!”

I still had my drawing pad in my hand. “Come on, follow me,” I said. I led us to a nearby alleyway. I flipped to a blank page. I drew three jetpacks for Grace, Ricardo, and myself. The jetpacks were shiny, bullet-looking backpacks with small hand controls. They were easy to fly and quick to put on. Once they appeared, we all put them on.

“You sure about this?” Ricardo asked nervously.



“Yes, Ric. We can do this!” I said with encouragement. “Here.” I handed Ricardo the case and drawing pad. “You fly up to the cup and put its drawing into the case and then meet us where Buddy is. On three, push the button in your left hand. One, two, three!”

We each started rocketing into the air. Surprisingly, it was easy to maneuver the jetpacks. “Drake, this is awesome!” Ricardo shouted. I was too worried about Buddy to notice just how awesome flying around in jetpacks really was.

Moments later, Grace and I found the roof where Buddy had taken the fire chief. When we landed, the man was getting back on his feet and catching his breath.

“Kids, get out of here,” he shouted.

“It’s okay,” I said.

Buddy was walking in circles on the other side of the roof. He was breathing hard and anxiously. Just then, Ricardo caught up to us. “The cup is in the case.”

I started walking toward Buddy. “Buddy, it’s me, Drake. It’s okay. There’s nothing to be afraid of. I’ve got you.”

Buddy looked at me. I could tell he recognized me. Still anxious he let out a screech and without warning, Buddy hooked my jetpack with his tail and threw

me onto his back. He flapped his wings and lifted into the air. I held tight, though if I did fall off, I still had my jetpack. Buddy flew away, high in the sky. Ricardo and Grace followed behind us.

“Buddy, where are you going? It’s okay. You can relax. No one will get you. I found a way to keep you safe.”

I pulled myself farther up his neck and got closer to his ear. “Buddy, you’re alright.” I could hear his breathing slow down. “I won’t let anything happen to you. You are a gift to the world, but they are not ready for you. I don’t know why, but I’ve got this drawing power that the world is not ready for either. Let’s help each other, okay? Let’s go back to the cave. Remember the cave? Back to the cave, Buddy.”

Buddy slowed his flight and then turned left until he pointed in the direction of the field where I drew the cave.

We made a soft landing next to the cave and I jumped off his back. Ricardo and Grace landed with their jetpacks a safe distance from us.

I walked in front of Buddy and faced him as he bowed his head. We locked eyes. I put my hand on his nose. "Buddy, you're safe now."

Ricardo and Grace walked up behind me and smiled at Buddy.

"Buddy, you changed my life, but you can't stay in the cave or on buildings anymore."

Ricardo still had the case drawing pad. He handed them to me. I flipped to the drawing of Buddy. He looked down at it with curiosity. Then he turned and looked at the cave and back at me as if he were telling me he was going to stay there.

“I’m sorry Buddy. It’s not safe for you here even in this cave.” I showed him the Imago’s case. “You’ll be safe here with my other drawings.”

He lay down in front of me and rested his head against my legs. “I’ll take you out again someday. We can fly together again, I promise.”

I kneeled and rested the drawing on his nose. Grace took the case from me and opened it. Ricardo put his hand on Buddy’s snout. “Bye, Buddy,” he said.

I held the drawing over the case and looked at Buddy. "Goodbye, Buddy. I'll see you soon." I let go of the drawing and it fell into the case. A moment later, Buddy folded up before us and disappeared.

As I reached for my drawing pad and flipped to the drawing of the cave to put it in the case, Grace stopped me. "Leave the cave. It's like a monument."

After we put the jetpacks drawing into the case, the three of us started the walk back to our houses, quietly contemplating the adventure we just shared.

"What a week," I said.

"Yeah," Ricardo said, "I still can't believe all the things you drew. The rocket packs were by far the coolest. And Buddy, of course."

“Grace, how do you do it?” I asked.

“Do what?”

“Be an Imago without making a mess of things. I haven’t even told you guys what I did with a vacuum I drew. How do I draw anything now? I must be able to draw for school or whatever without it coming to life. In geography, I have a map of Belize to draw. How do I do that without the country of Belize flattening the entire city?”

“You learn to control it. When I don’t want a drawing to come to life, I focus on it staying on the paper. As long as I focus on it being only a drawing, it stays that way.”

“That’s it?”

“Yep.”

“I think I can do that.”

“I’ll teach you,” said Grace. “Better to practice, of course, on little things before drawing any countries.”

“Right!” I laughed. “Grace, we’ve only seen you on the street and at the park. Where are you staying?”

“I drew myself a house,” Grace humbly stated.

“What? No way!” exclaimed Ricardo. “Tell me you drew a basketball court inside!”

We all laughed.

...

The next week in geography class my group met to work on our Belize project. I pulled out my drawing of the map. The others looked it over. They had no idea what I had been through or how I could have brought to life the entire country of Belize if I wanted to.

After class, I saw Rachel in the hallway. I pulled out my drawing pad and as quickly as I could drew a daisy flower. When I finished, I covered my hand with the drawing pad and a moment later I held a live daisy.

I walked over to Rachel. I was a little embarrassed doing this in front of her friends. "Hey, Rachel," I said.

"Hi, Drake. How are you?"



“Good, thanks.” I held out the flower.
“I thought I would do better than a drawing and give you a real flower.”

“Thanks, Drake. That’s so sweet!”

“Sure. Well, maybe I’ll see you at lunch.” I left Rachel and her friends smiling as I continued down the hallway.

Ricardo caught up with me. “Drake, basketball after school?”

“Yeah, but I have to warn you about my shoes!”

THE END

DRAW YOUR OWN DRAGON

1. Start with a basic outline.



2. Define lines and add more detail.



3. Fill in darker areas.



4. Finish off with shading!



FIVE SHADING TECHNIQUES

Try these techniques when shading your drawings!



Stipple

Tap tip of pencil to make small dots. Overlap more dots for darker areas.



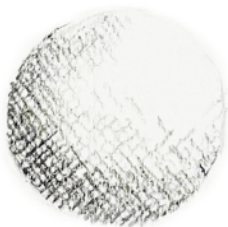
Scumble or Scribble

Scribbling marks. Press harder and overlap more scribbles for darker areas.



Hatch

Lines going in one direction.
Press harder and overlap lines for darker areas.



Crosshatch

Lines going multiple directions.
Press harder and overlap lines for darker areas.



Smudge

Use any other technique and then
blend or smudge with finger or
smudge tool.

*Robert Irish can be reached at:
robert@drakedodger.com*