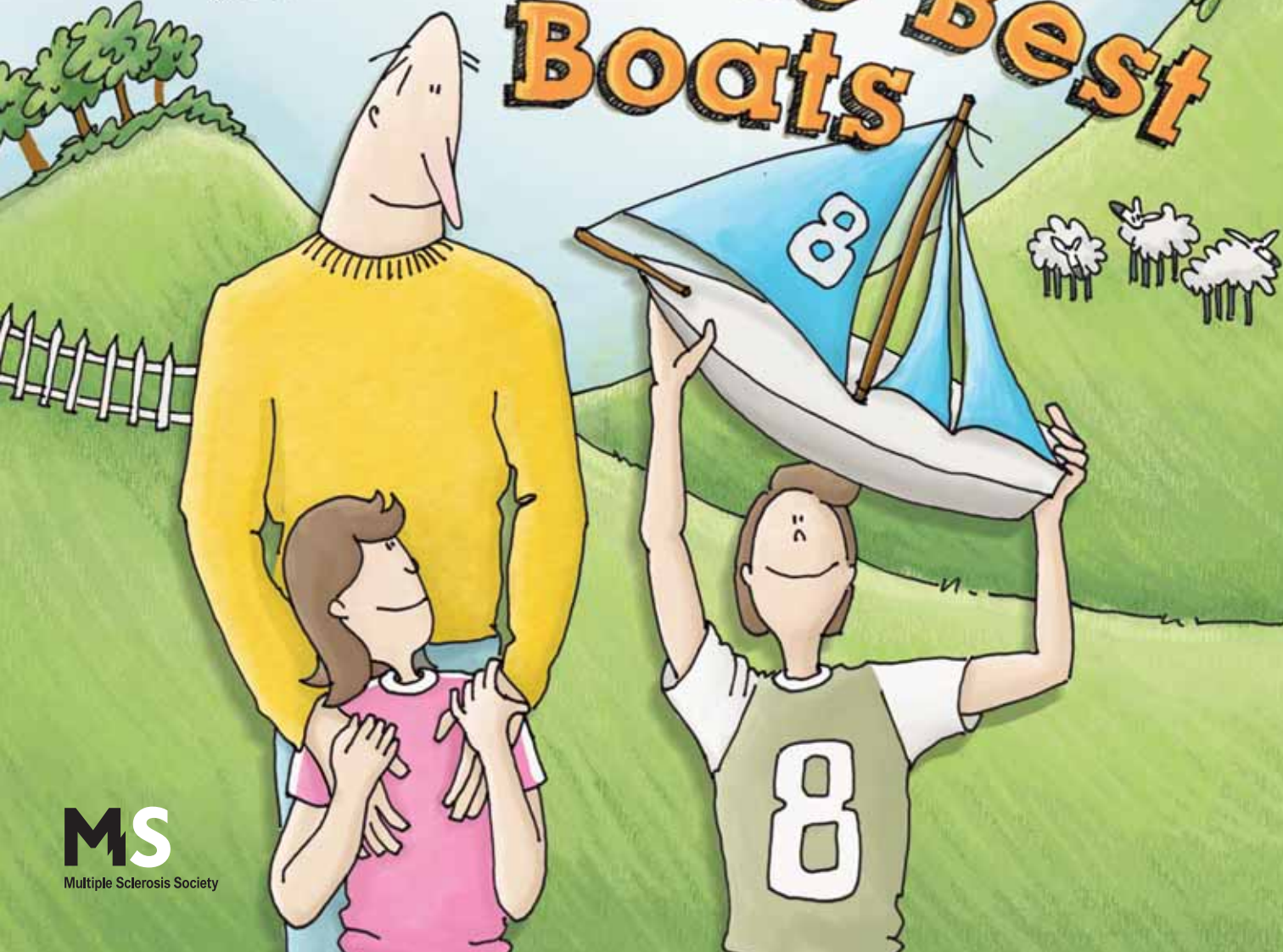


Our Dad Makes The Best Boats

by Jo Johnson



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Multiple Sclerosis Society

Everyone in Mrs Rutter's class is very excited. Tomorrow is the children's boat race along the stream near the school. The race happens just once a year. The winner is the first boat to go under the bridge.

"Who made the winning boat last year?" asks Mrs Rutter.

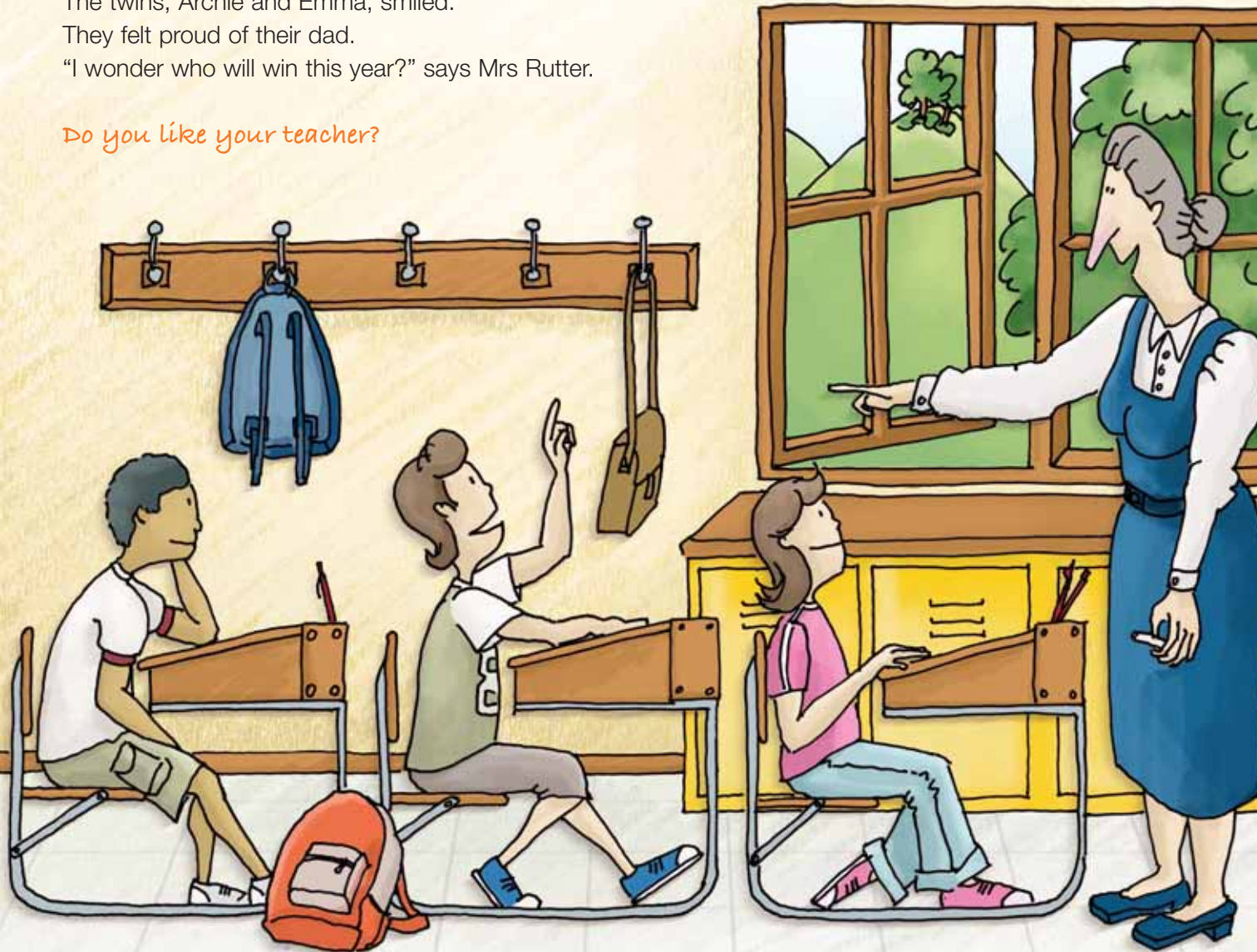
"The twins won last year," says Sam, "because their dad makes great boats."

The twins, Archie and Emma, smiled.

They felt proud of their dad.

"I wonder who will win this year?" says Mrs Rutter.

Do you like your teacher?



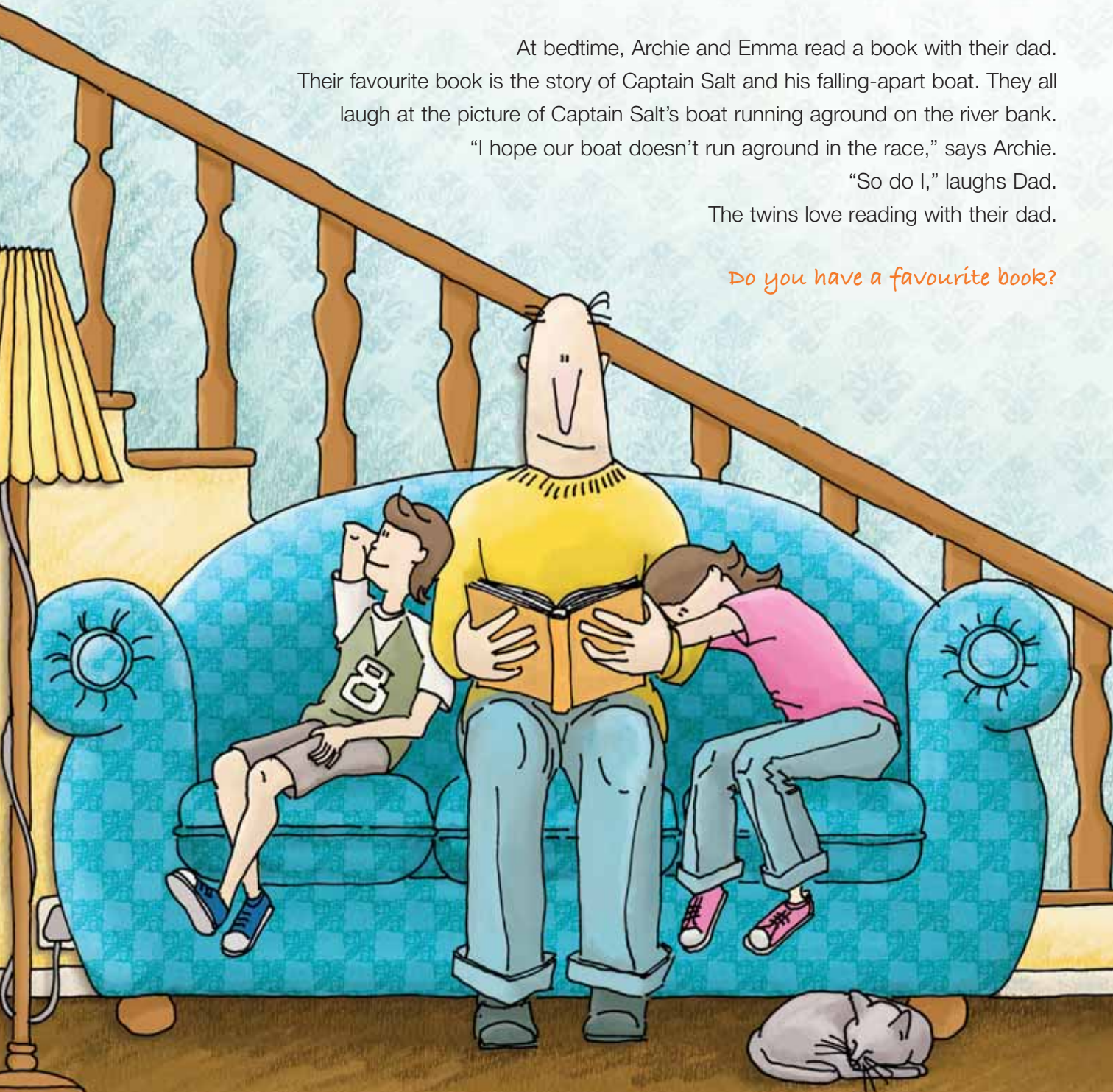
At bedtime, Archie and Emma read a book with their dad. Their favourite book is the story of Captain Salt and his falling-apart boat. They all laugh at the picture of Captain Salt's boat running aground on the river bank.

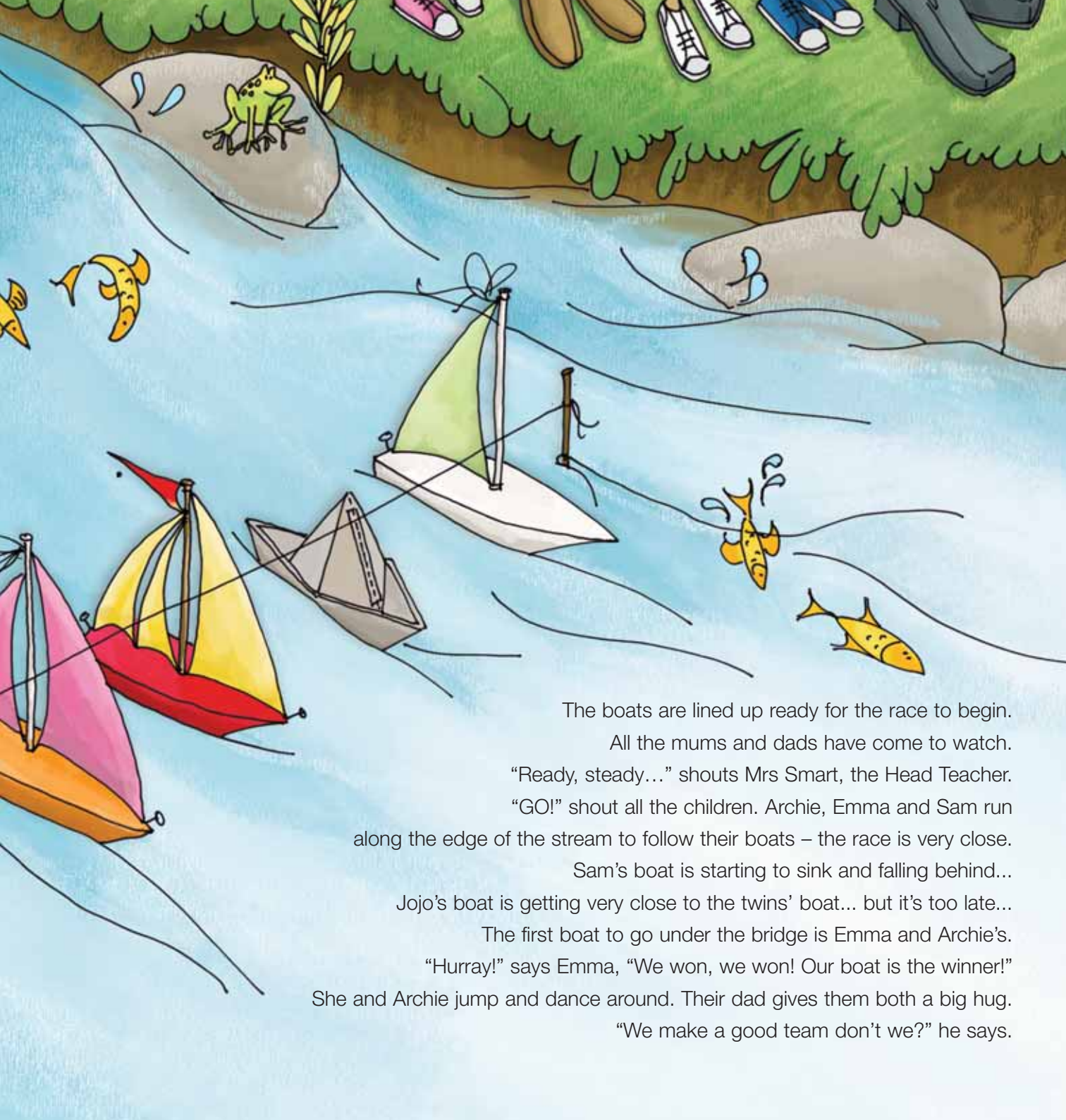
"I hope our boat doesn't run aground in the race," says Archie.

"So do I," laughs Dad.

The twins love reading with their dad.

Do you have a favourite book?





The boats are lined up ready for the race to begin.

All the mums and dads have come to watch.

“Ready, steady...” shouts Mrs Smart, the Head Teacher.

“GO!” shout all the children. Archie, Emma and Sam run along the edge of the stream to follow their boats – the race is very close.

Sam’s boat is starting to sink and falling behind...

Jojo’s boat is getting very close to the twins’ boat... but it’s too late...

The first boat to go under the bridge is Emma and Archie’s.

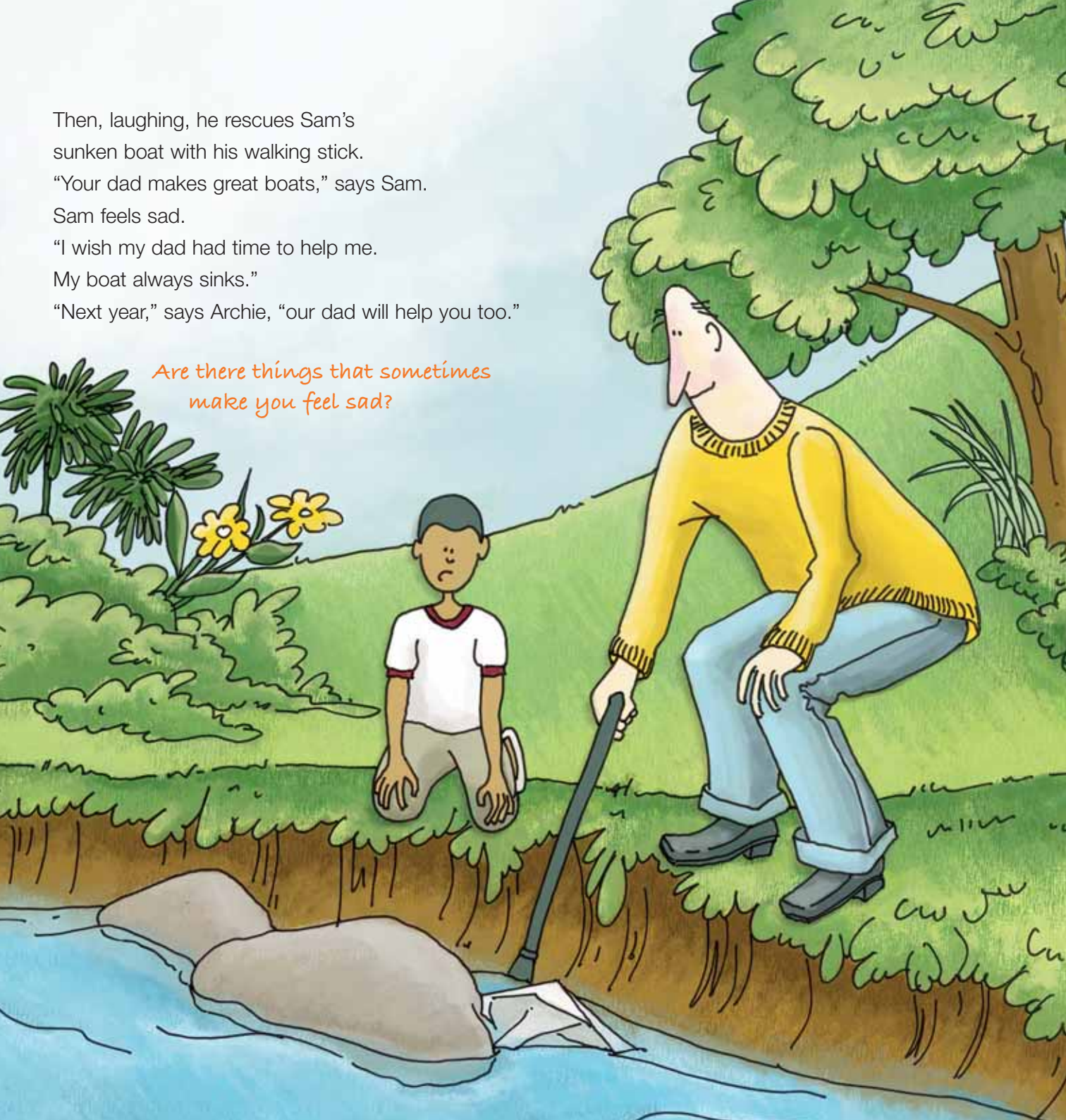
“Hurray!” says Emma, “We won, we won! Our boat is the winner!”

She and Archie jump and dance around. Their dad gives them both a big hug.

“We make a good team don’t we?” he says.

Then, laughing, he rescues Sam's
sunken boat with his walking stick.
"Your dad makes great boats," says Sam.
Sam feels sad.
"I wish my dad had time to help me.
My boat always sinks."
"Next year," says Archie, "our dad will help you too."

*Are there things that sometimes
make you feel sad?*



After school one day, Sam is going back to the twins' house for tea.

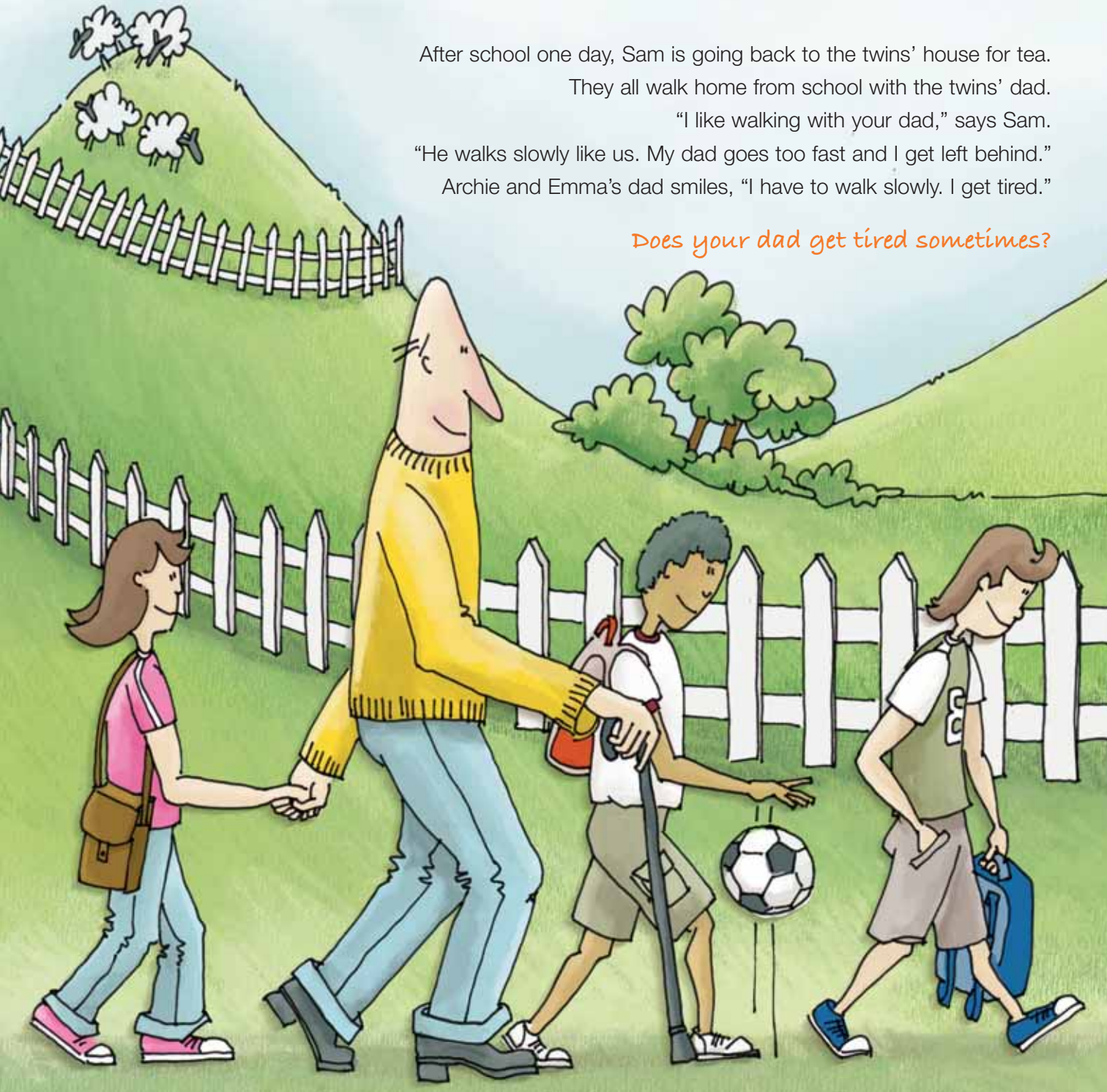
They all walk home from school with the twins' dad.

"I like walking with your dad," says Sam.

"He walks slowly like us. My dad goes too fast and I get left behind."

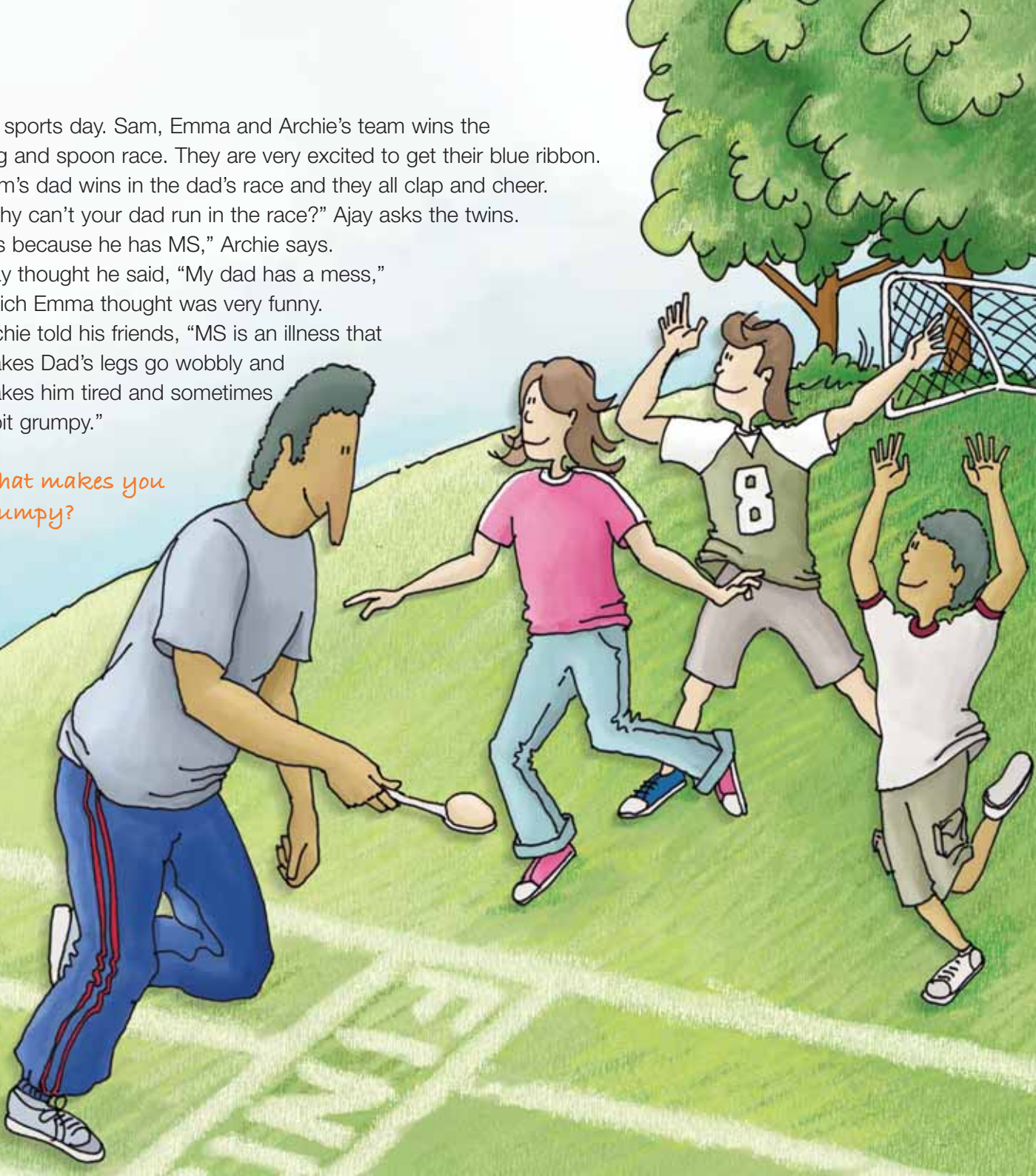
Archie and Emma's dad smiles, "I have to walk slowly. I get tired."

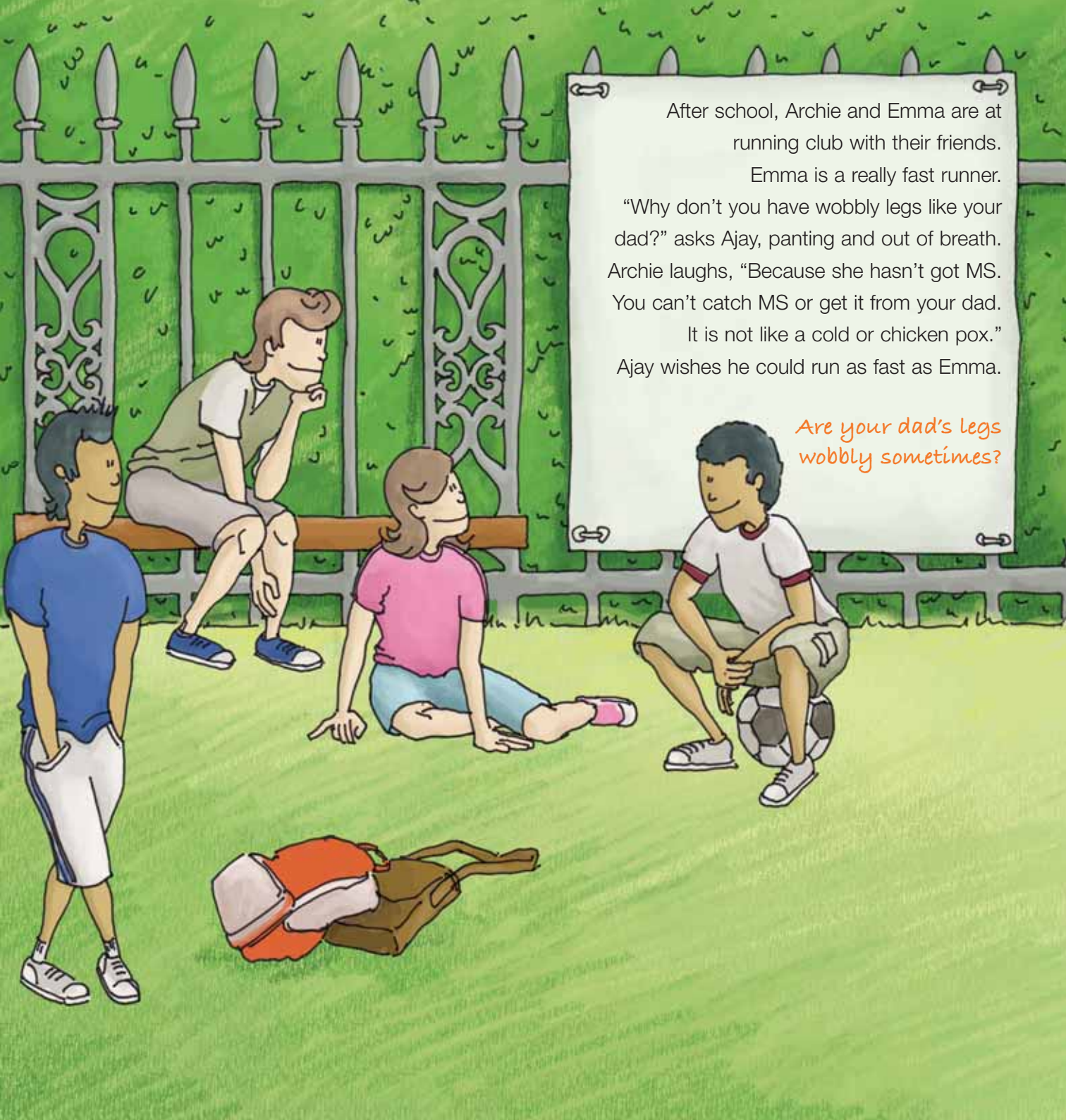
Does your dad get tired sometimes?



It's sports day. Sam, Emma and Archie's team wins the egg and spoon race. They are very excited to get their blue ribbon. Sam's dad wins in the dad's race and they all clap and cheer. "Why can't your dad run in the race?" Ajay asks the twins. "It's because he has MS," Archie says. Ajay thought he said, "My dad has a mess," which Emma thought was very funny. Archie told his friends, "MS is an illness that makes Dad's legs go wobbly and makes him tired and sometimes a bit grumpy."

What makes you grumpy?





After school, Archie and Emma are at running club with their friends.

Emma is a really fast runner.

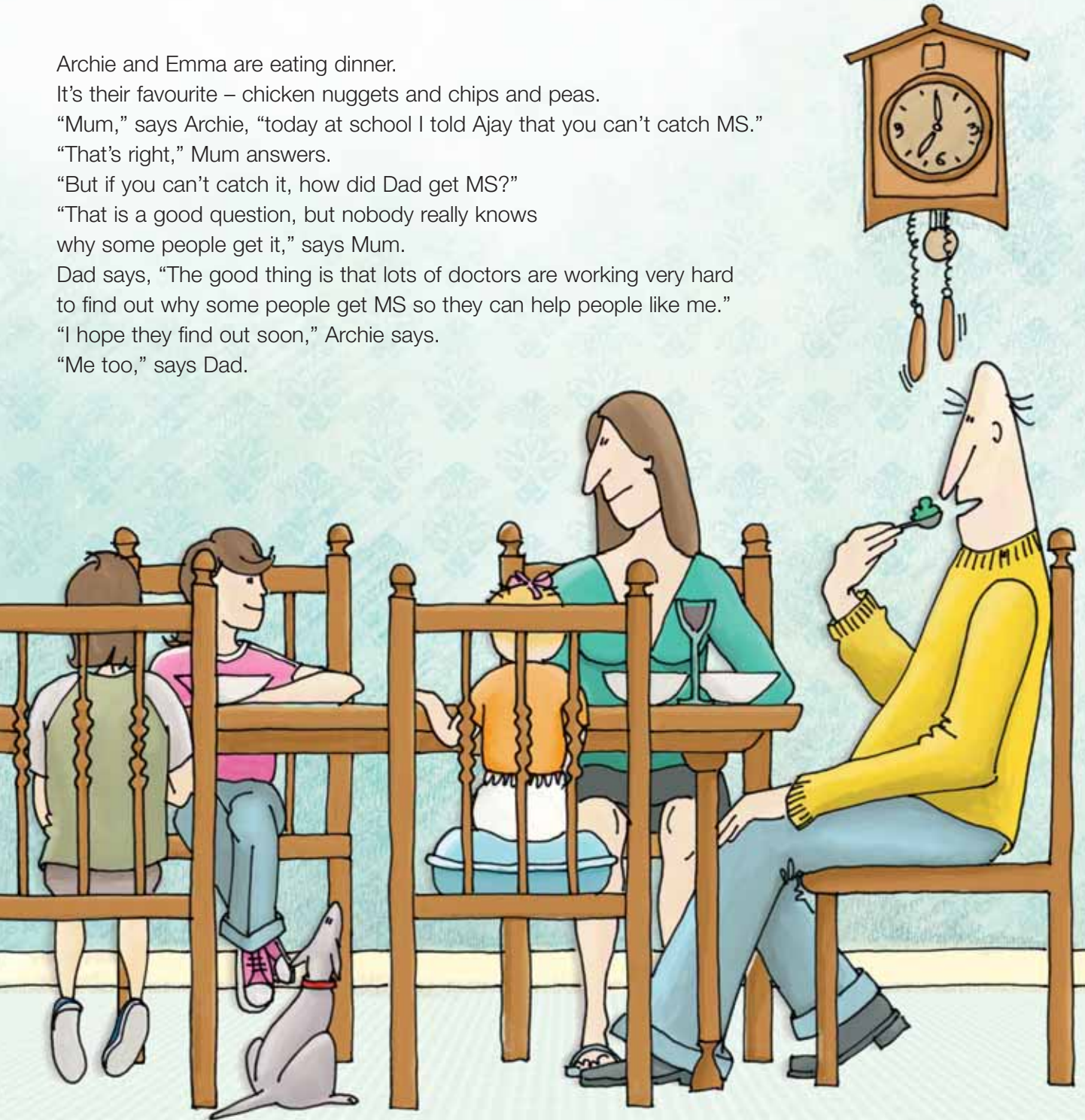
“Why don’t you have wobbly legs like your dad?” asks Ajay, panting and out of breath. Archie laughs, “Because she hasn’t got MS. You can’t catch MS or get it from your dad.

It is not like a cold or chicken pox.”

Ajay wishes he could run as fast as Emma.

Are your dad’s legs wobbly sometimes?

Archie and Emma are eating dinner.
It's their favourite – chicken nuggets and chips and peas.
“Mum,” says Archie, “today at school I told Ajay that you can't catch MS.”
“That's right,” Mum answers.
“But if you can't catch it, how did Dad get MS?”
“That is a good question, but nobody really knows why some people get it,” says Mum.
Dad says, “The good thing is that lots of doctors are working very hard to find out why some people get MS so they can help people like me.”
“I hope they find out soon,” Archie says.
“Me too,” says Dad.





Sometimes, when Sam is having his tea with his dad, he gets sad. He thinks about Archie and Emma's dad.

He worries that he might die because of his MS.

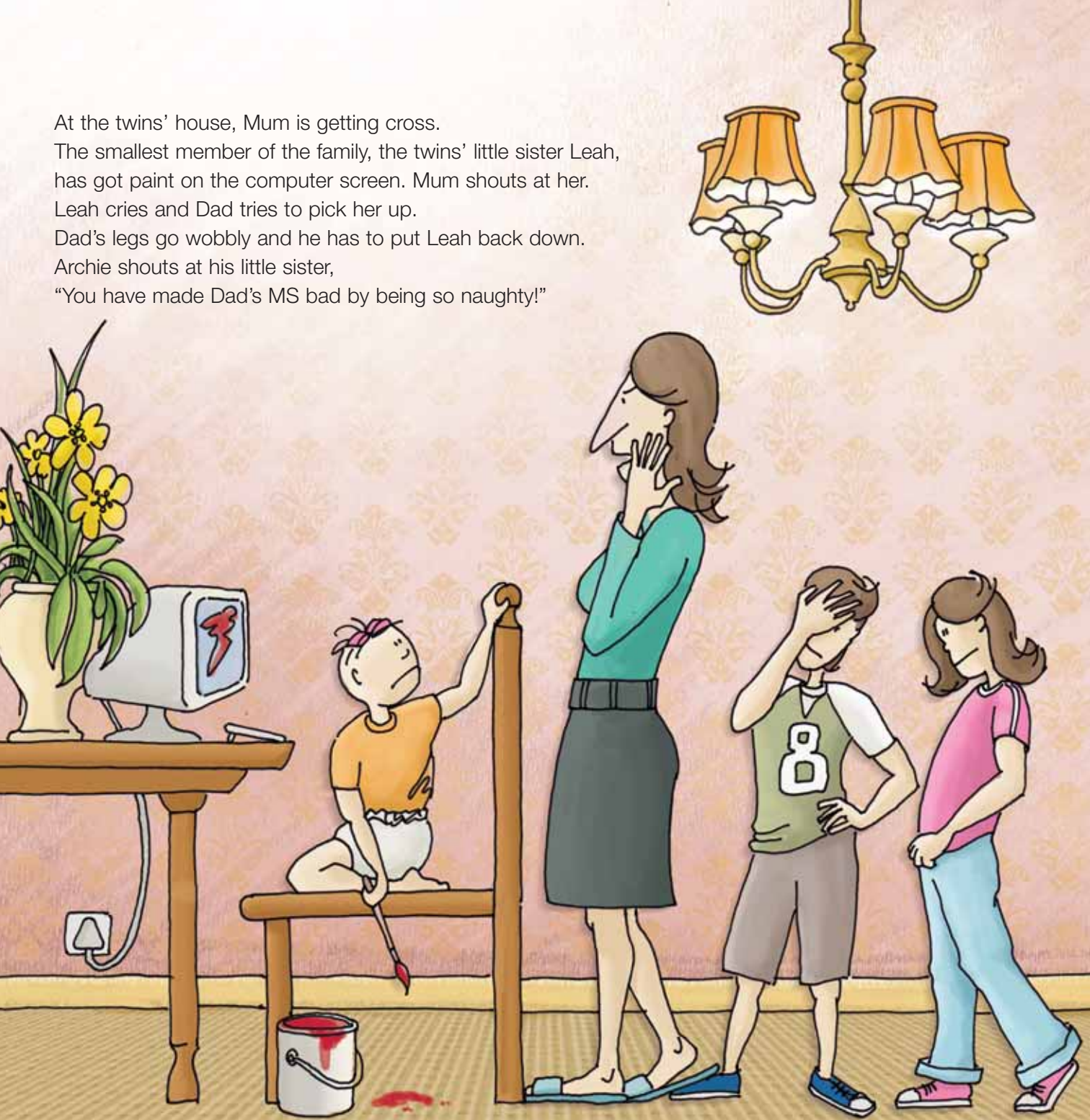
Sam's dad smiles and gives him a hug.

"The twins' dad is not about to die. His MS just makes some things difficult," he says.

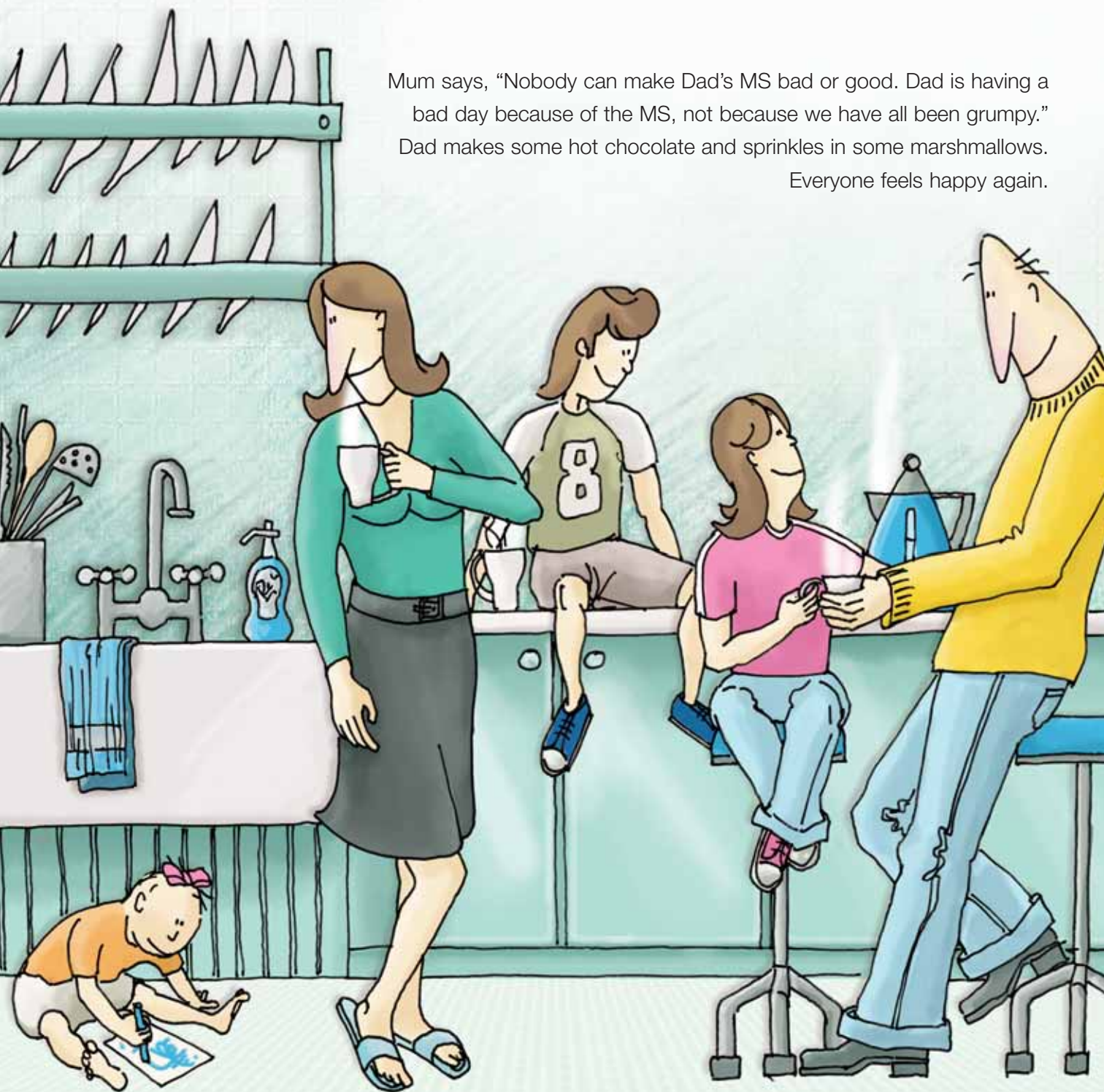
"Archie's dad gets more tired than other dads. Some of the time it is difficult for him to walk and sometimes his eyes go funny and he can't drive, but he will probably grow into an old man, just like I will, eventually."

Sam felt happy that the twins' dad could keep on making great boats.

At the twins' house, Mum is getting cross.
The smallest member of the family, the twins' little sister Leah,
has got paint on the computer screen. Mum shouts at her.
Leah cries and Dad tries to pick her up.
Dad's legs go wobbly and he has to put Leah back down.
Archie shouts at his little sister,
"You have made Dad's MS bad by being so naughty!"

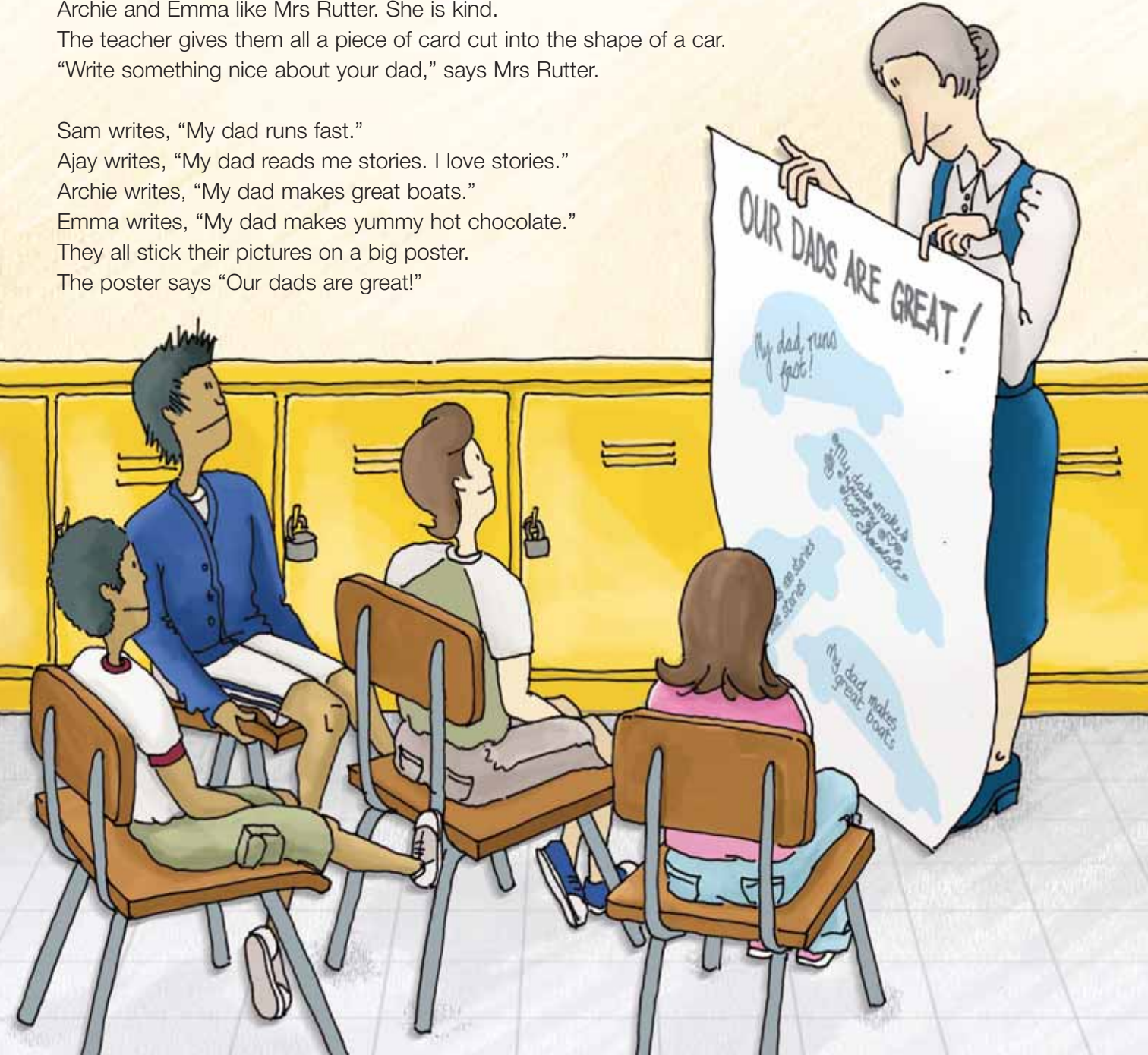


Mum says, "Nobody can make Dad's MS bad or good. Dad is having a bad day because of the MS, not because we have all been grumpy."
Dad makes some hot chocolate and sprinkles in some marshmallows.
Everyone feels happy again.



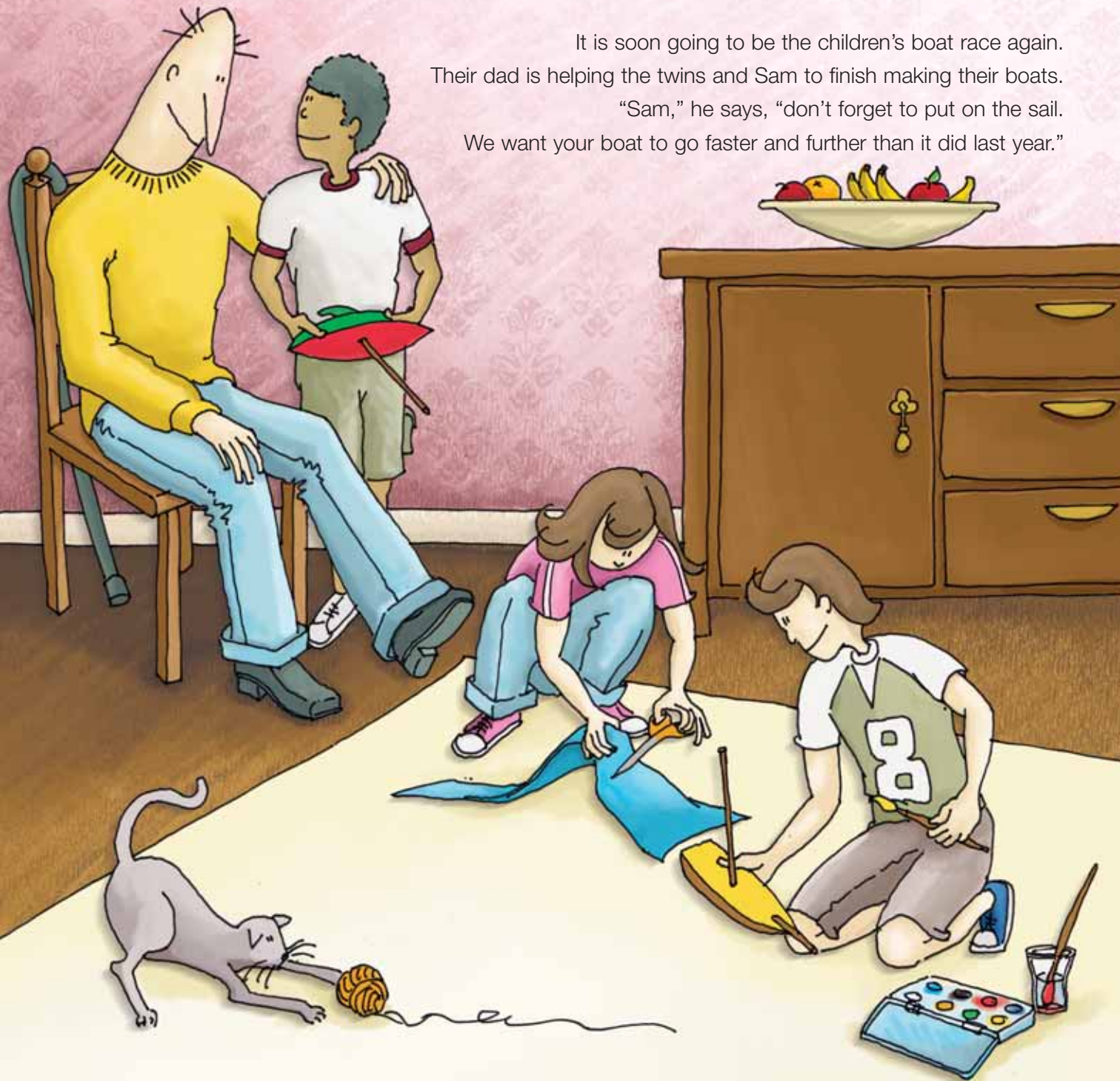
Today is Father's Day. Mrs Rutter asks the children all about their dads. Archie and Emma like Mrs Rutter. She is kind. The teacher gives them all a piece of card cut into the shape of a car. "Write something nice about your dad," says Mrs Rutter.

Sam writes, "My dad runs fast."
Ajay writes, "My dad reads me stories. I love stories."
Archie writes, "My dad makes great boats."
Emma writes, "My dad makes yummy hot chocolate."
They all stick their pictures on a big poster.
The poster says "Our dads are great!"

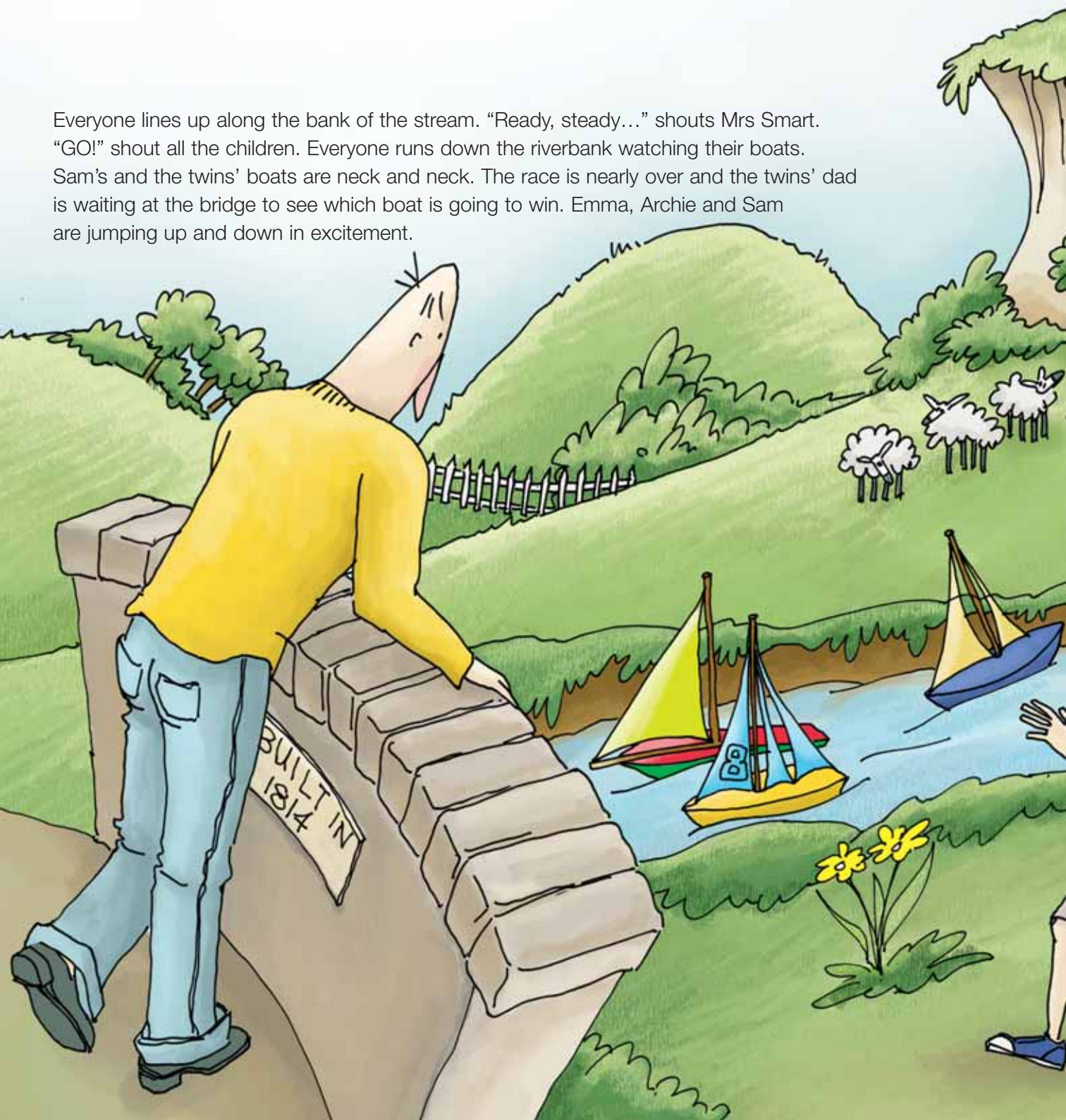


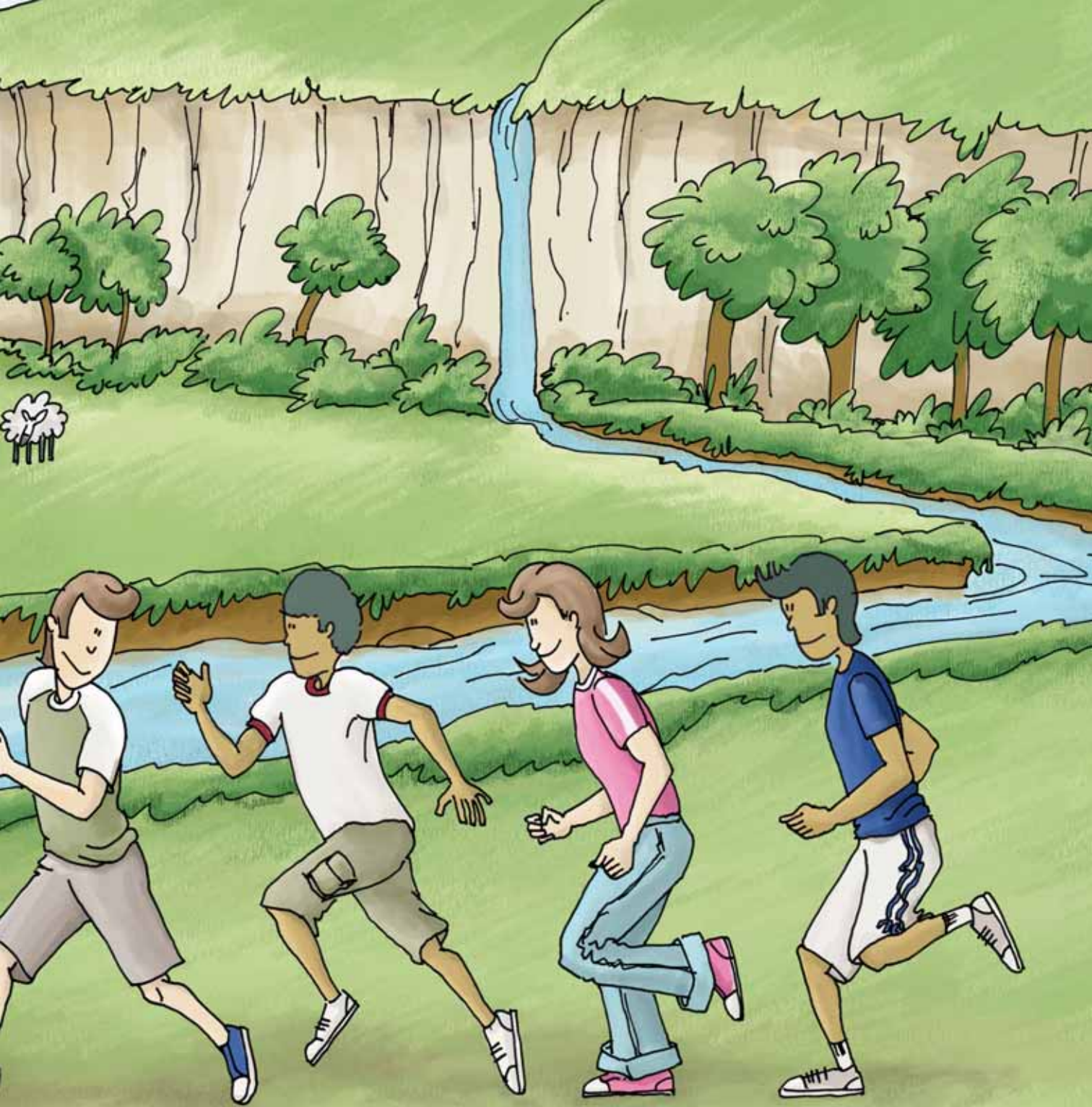
It is soon going to be the children's boat race again. Their dad is helping the twins and Sam to finish making their boats.

"Sam," he says, "don't forget to put on the sail. We want your boat to go faster and further than it did last year."



Everyone lines up along the bank of the stream. "Ready, steady..." shouts Mrs Smart. "GO!" shout all the children. Everyone runs down the riverbank watching their boats. Sam's and the twins' boats are neck and neck. The race is nearly over and the twins' dad is waiting at the bridge to see which boat is going to win. Emma, Archie and Sam are jumping up and down in excitement.





"It's a draw!" shouts Mrs Smart.

Sam and the twins have all won the boat race!

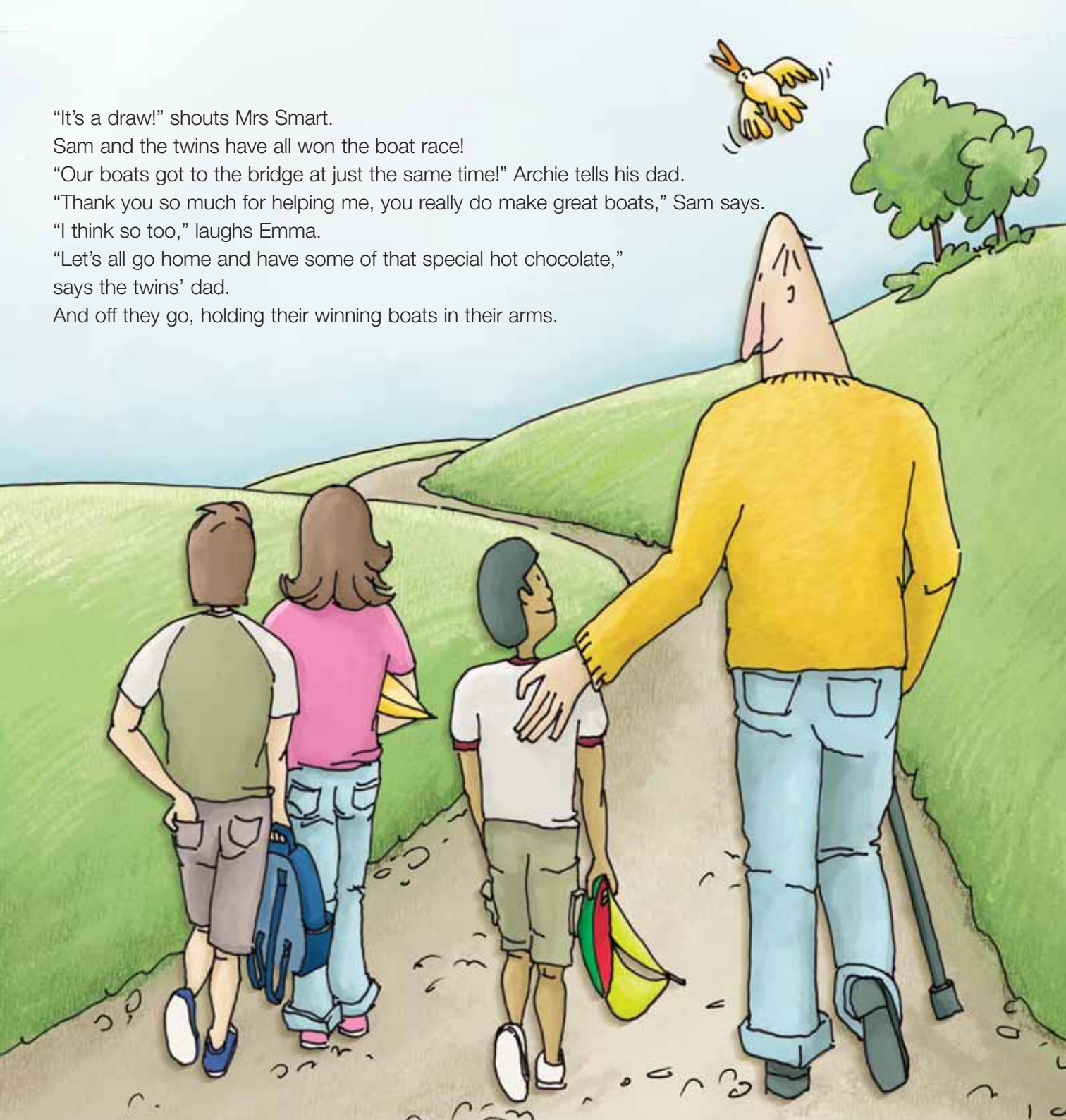
"Our boats got to the bridge at just the same time!" Archie tells his dad.

"Thank you so much for helping me, you really do make great boats," Sam says.

"I think so too," laughs Emma.

"Let's all go home and have some of that special hot chocolate," says the twins' dad.

And off they go, holding their winning boats in their arms.





FIND OUT MORE ABOUT MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS (MS):

For parents –

www.mssociety.org.uk and

www.mssociety.org.uk/pieces

or call the Information Team on

020 8438 0799 (weekdays 9am-4pm)

For children and teenagers –

www.youngms.org.uk

MS SOCIETY

The MS Society is the UK's largest charity dedicated to supporting everyone whose life is touched by MS. We provide information, support, grants, education and training, as well as specialist MS health and social care professionals and respite care. Our network of over 300 local branches is run by volunteers with direct experience of MS. We fund around 80 vital research projects, to improve care and treatments for MS.

You can help the work of the MS Society by:

- becoming a member
- making a donation
- offering your time as a volunteer

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Ratho Station, Newbridge, EH28 8PP

Telephone 0131 335 4050

MS Society Northern Ireland

The Resource Centre, 34 Annadale Avenue

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Telephone 028 9080 2802

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