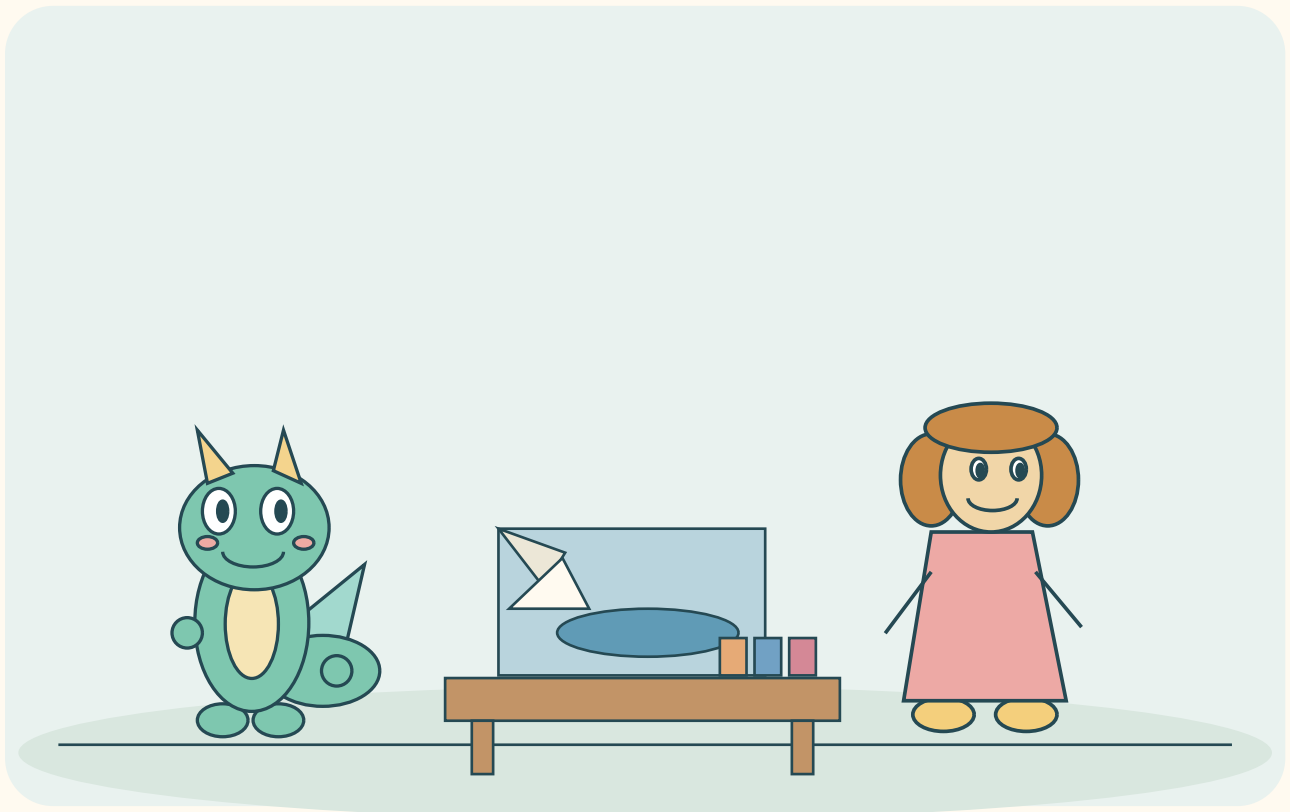


FINN & FRIENDS

The Dragon Who Couldn't Say No



So many helpful yeses.
One painting worth making time for.

LITTLE STORY HARBOR

Ages 6–9 • Illustrated read-aloud edition

On Monday morning, Finn had a plan.

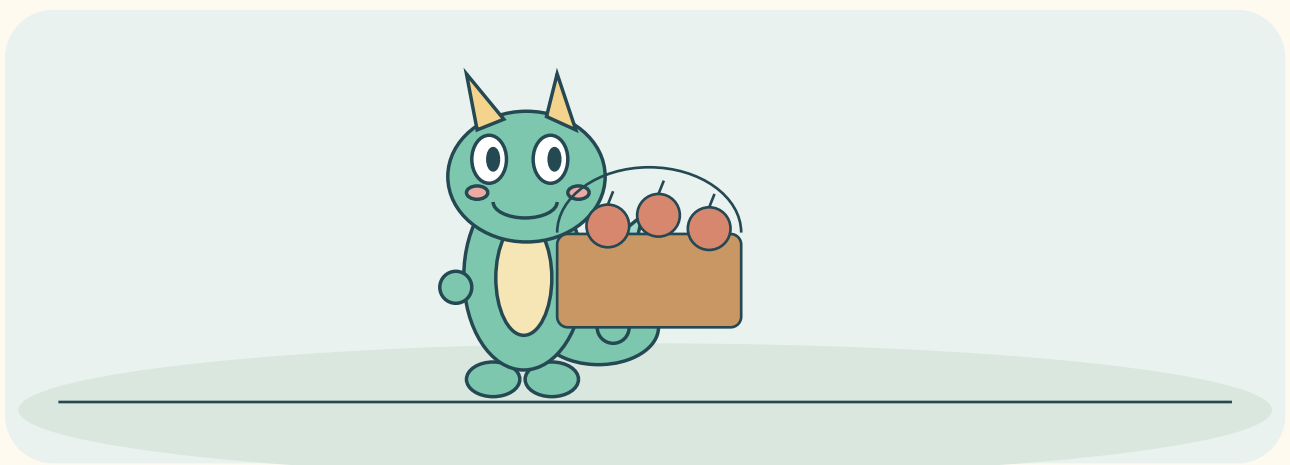
He was going to Lily's house to paint a picture.

Lily had bought new paints.

Finn had bought new brushes.

And he had practiced painting clouds without splashing paint on his nose.

It was going to be a wonderful day.



Then Mabel appeared.

"Finn! Could you help me carry this basket?"

"Of course," said Finn.

The basket was full of apples.

It was also very heavy.

Finn carried it to Mabel's house.

"Thank you!" said Mabel. "You're the nicest dragon I know."

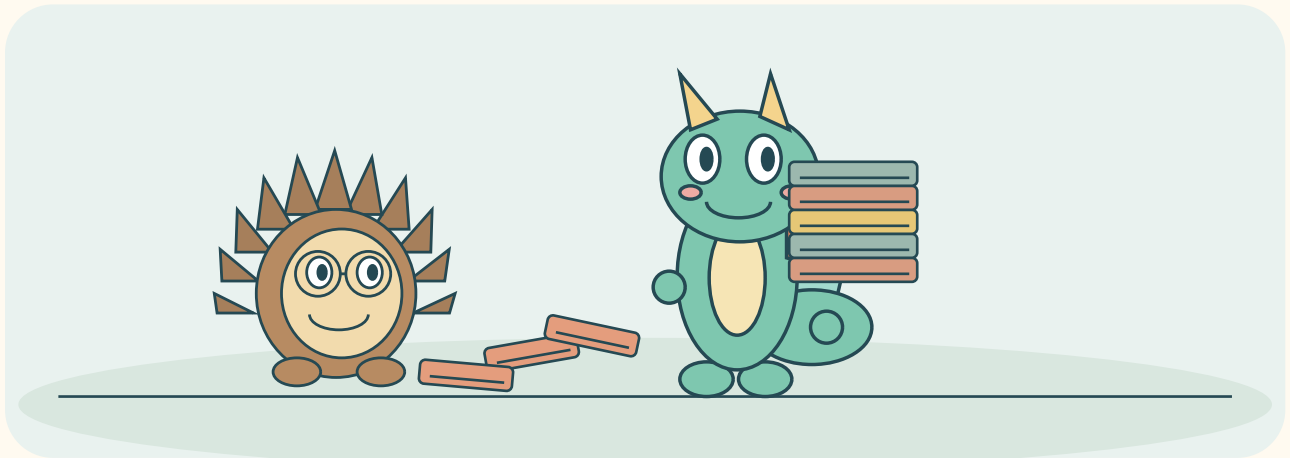
Finn smiled.

He liked being nice.

Especially when people noticed.

On his way to Lily's house, he met Pip.

"Finn! Excellent timing."



Pip was standing beside a very large pile of books.

"I've made a list of books that need to go to the library."

"That's a lot of books," said Finn.

"Forty-three," said Pip. "I counted twice."

"Would you mind carrying them?"

Finn looked toward Lily's house.

He was already late.

"Well, I—"

Pip adjusted his glasses.

"It would be terribly helpful."

Finn swallowed.

"Of course."

He stacked the books on his back.

One fell off.

Then another.

Then seven more.

Pip hurried after him, picking them up and checking his list.

Neither of them noticed the thin book that had slipped snugly between Finn's wings.

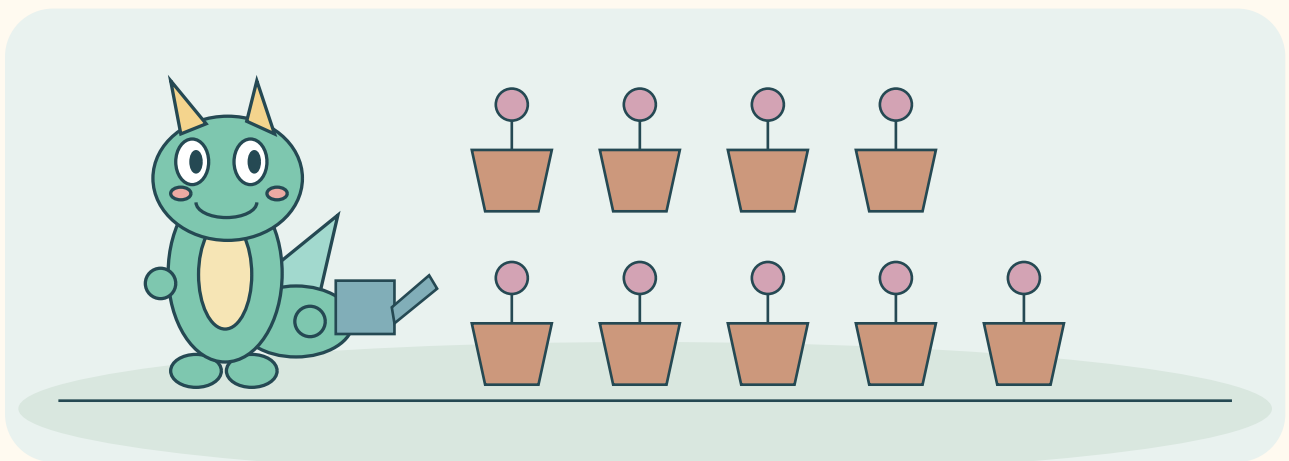
By the time they reached the library, Finn was very late.

"Thank you," said Pip. "You're the most helpful dragon in Willowbrook."

Finn smiled.

He liked being helpful, too.

But he was beginning to wish people would stop noticing.



Outside the library, Mr. Moss was watering his flowers.

"Ah, Finn. Could you give me a hand?"

Finn looked at his claws.

He had two hands.

Unfortunately, Mr. Moss had forty-seven flowerpots.

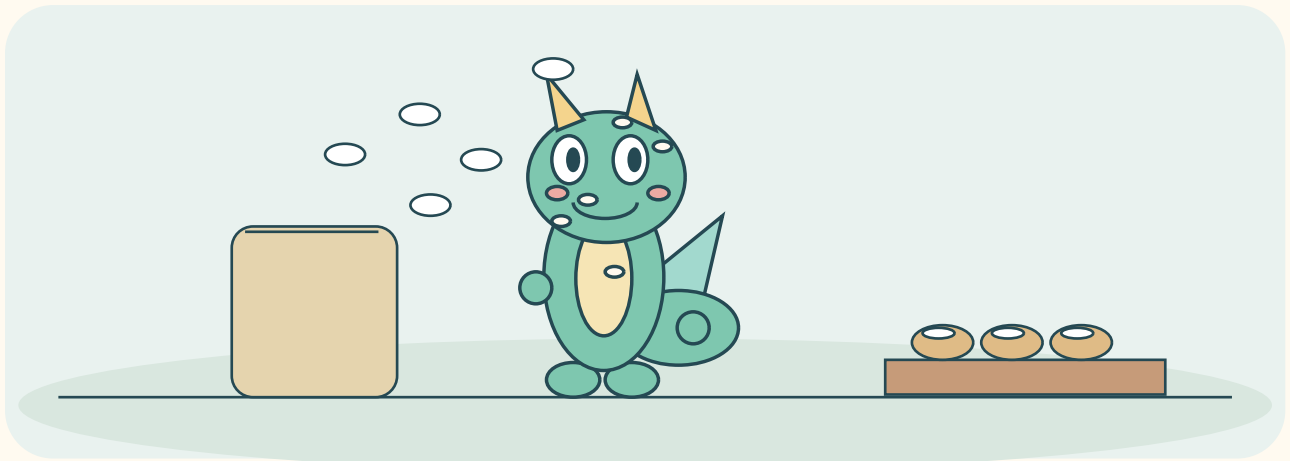
And a very small watering can.

It took a long time.

A very, very long time.

By the time Finn finished, the sun was high in the sky.

He hurried down the road.



Then Mrs. Crumble from the bakery waved.

"Finn! Just the dragon I need!"

Finn stopped.

That was becoming a very worrying sentence.

"This flour sack has the tightest knot in Willowbrook. Could you help me undo it?"

Finn looked at the clock above the bakery.

"Well, actually—"

"Just one little knot."

Finn tugged the string.

Pffff!

Flour puffed over three bread rolls.

And the baker's hat.

And Finn.

"Good heavens!" cried Mrs. Crumble.

She found a brush for the flour on his wings.

Unfortunately, it was a very small brush.

By the time he left the bakery, he looked like a powdered doughnut.

He ran toward Lily's house.

But near the bridge, he met Mabel again.

"Finn! Could you help me hang these curtains?"

Finn stared at her.

"Mabel, I really need to—"

"Oh, it will only take a minute."

It did not take a minute.

It took twenty-seven minutes.

And one curtain ended up hanging from the ceiling.

And another from Finn's tail.



When Finn finally reached Lily's house, the sun was going down.

He knocked.

He could knock now.

That was something, at least.

Lily opened the door.

She looked at Finn.

He had flour on his nose.

A curtain on his tail.

And a library book stuck between his wings.

"Finn?"

"Hello," said Finn.

"Where have you been?"

Finn opened his mouth.

Then closed it.

Then opened it again.

"I've been helping."

"Everyone?"

Finn thought about it.

"Nearly."

Lily looked at the paints on the table.

The brushes were clean.

The paper was empty.

"I waited for you," she said.

Finn's stomach felt heavy.

"I'm sorry."

Lily was quiet for a moment.

"Did you want to do all those things?"

Finn looked at his claws.

"Not all of them."

"Then why did you say yes?"

Finn thought very hard.

"Because..."

He paused.

"Because they might be sad if I said no."

Lily sat down beside him.

"And were you sad when you couldn't come here?"

Finn nodded.

Lily picked up a paintbrush.

"Well," she said, "that makes two people."

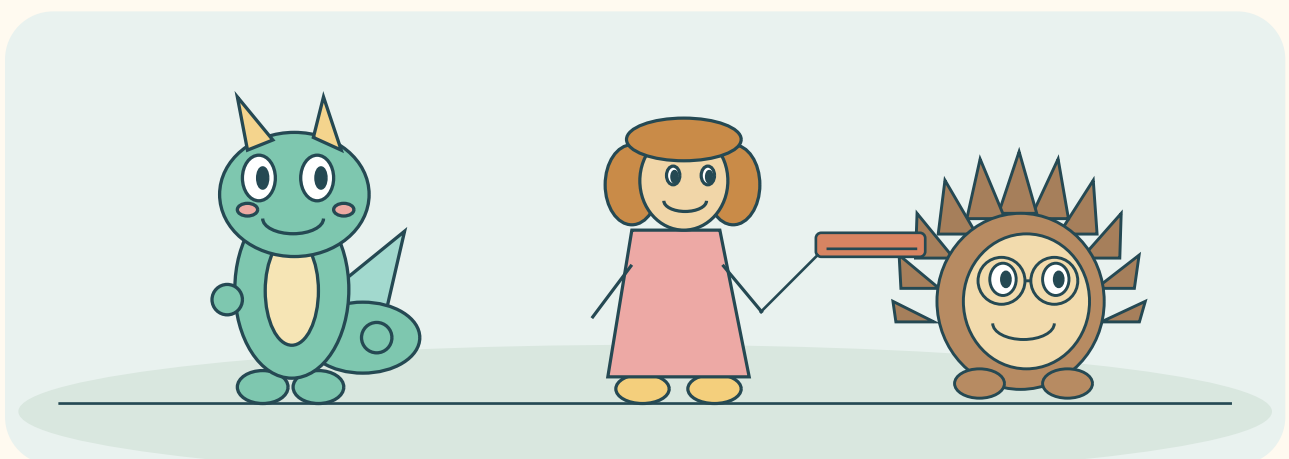
Finn looked at her.

"Two?"

"You and me."

Finn was quiet.

He had never thought of it that way.



Just then, there was a knock on the door.

It was Pip.

"Finn! I was wondering if you could help me organize my pencil collection tomorrow."

Finn stood very still.

His heart began to thump.

He thought about Pip's pencils.

He thought about his own plans.

He thought about Lily.

Then he took a breath.

"Not tomorrow, Pip."

Pip blinked.

"Oh."

Finn's heart thumped harder.

"I promised Lily we'd do our painting."

Pip looked disappointed.

Then he scratched his head.

"Would Wednesday work?"

Finn considered this.

"Yes," he said. "Wednesday would be fine."

"Excellent!" said Pip.

"Wait," said Lily. "I think this belongs on your list."

She gently freed the book from between Finn's wings and handed it to Pip.

Pip looked at the cover.

"Forty-three! I wondered where you'd got to."

He tucked it under his arm to return to the library in the morning, and hurried away.

Finn stared at the door.

Nothing terrible had happened.

Nobody had cried.

Nobody had shouted.

The sky had not fallen.

He turned to Lily.

"I did it."

"You did."

"I said no."

"You did."

Finn grinned.



Then he sneezed, and his wing bumped the blue paint pot.

Wobble.

Splash!

A puddle of blue spread across the paper, right beside a crumpled corner.

For a moment, they both stared.

Then Lily picked it up.

"Look," she said.

The crumpled corner looked rather like a mountain.

Finn tilted his head.

"And the blue looks like a lake."

Lily smiled.

She folded the curtain from Finn's tail and put it by the door, ready to take back to Mabel.

"Should we paint a dragon flying over it?"

Finn picked up his brush.

"Yes!"

And this time, he meant it.

The End.

An original story and original vector illustrations created with AI assistance and editorial review. For shared reading with an adult. Estimated read-aloud time: 7–9 minutes; not a timed listener test.