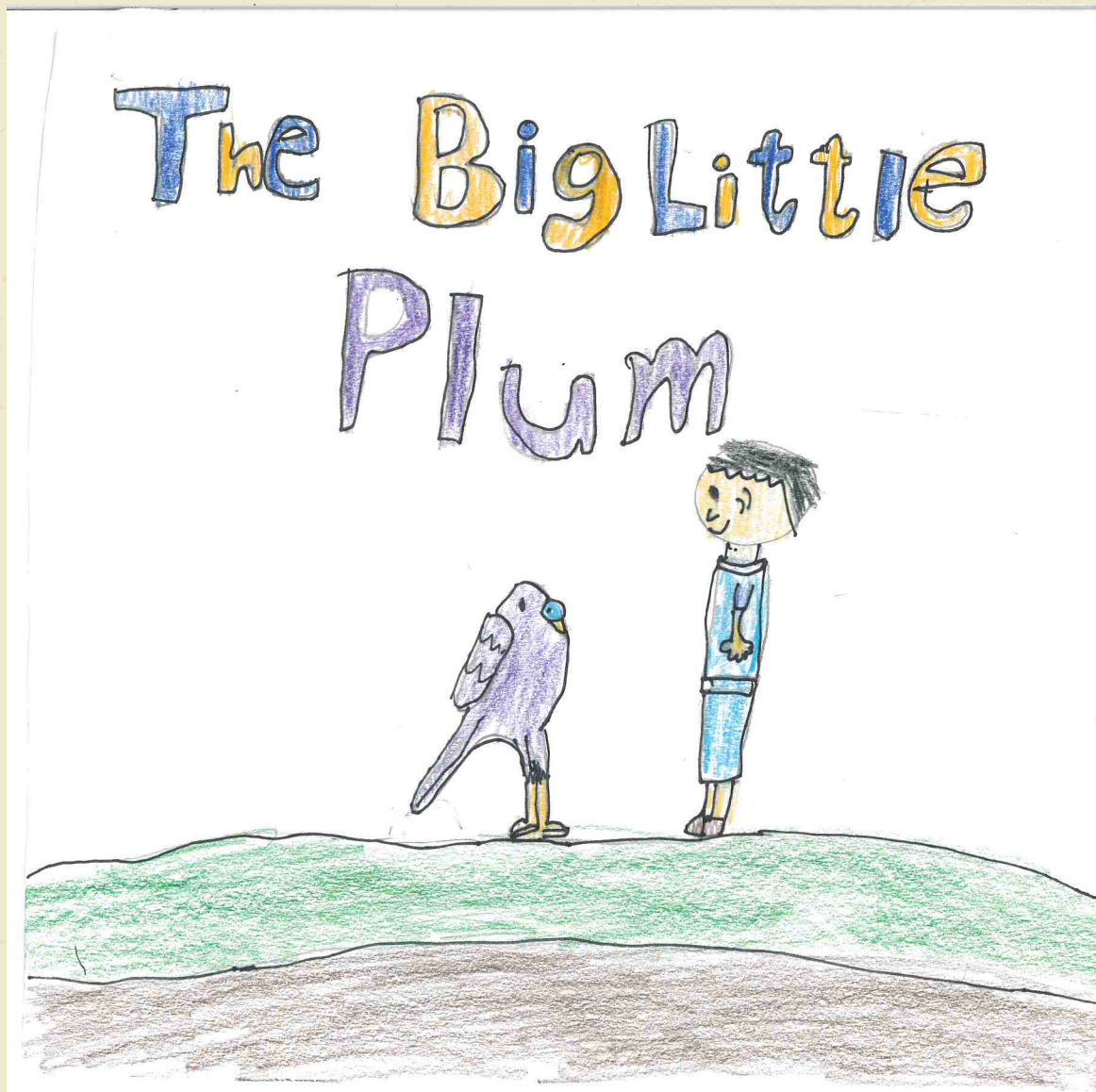




The Big Little Plum

By Charlotte Kan



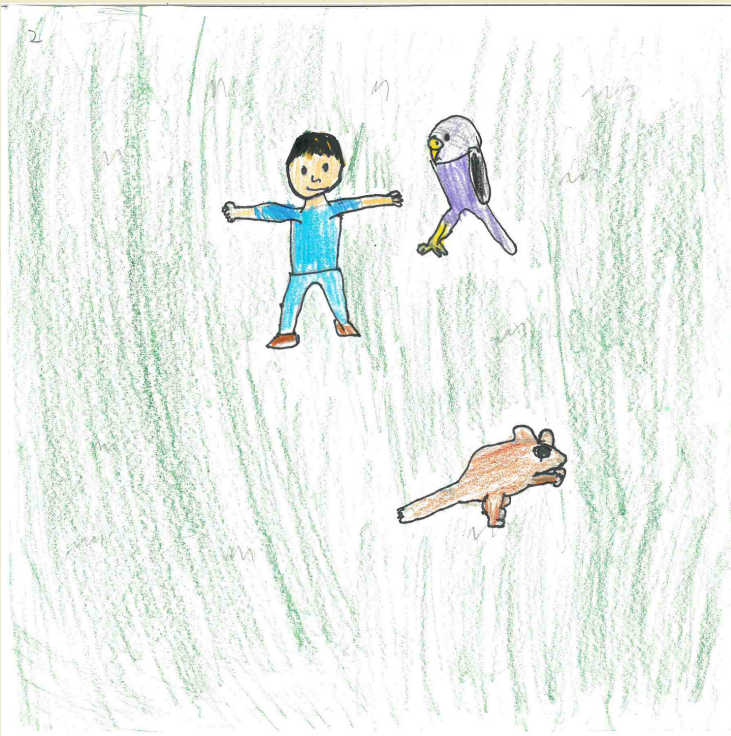


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Ray wanted to try out for his school's rock-climbing team because he loved heights, but he felt too small to compete against his schoolmates. He walked up the mountain that led up to his home, looking forward to talking about his feelings with his new parrot Plum.



Ray rested on a patch of grass, with Plum perched beside him. "If I were bigger, I would be brave enough to try out for the team," Ray mumbled. The only problem was that Plum never made a sound. Ray glumly said, "Oh, Plum. If only you were trainable."



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Immediately, Plum made a squawk which made Ray's jaw drop. It was more of a sound than a word, but he was ecstatic to finally hear Plum. Plum started squawking repeatedly which alarmed him. "Is he trying to say something?" Ray wondered aloud. He looked around in bewilderment.

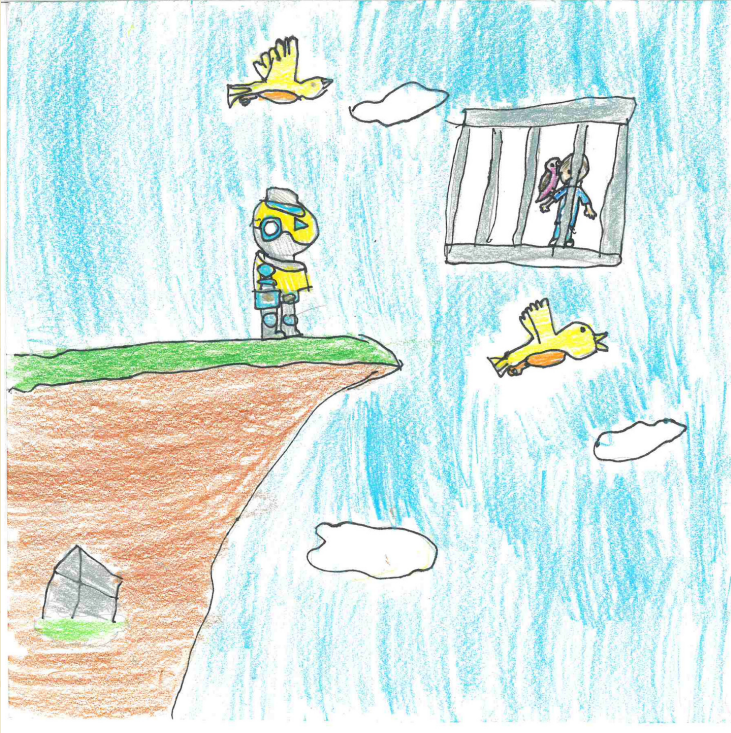


Ray was right! Bizarre blue and green particles came out of nowhere and a robot appeared. "I was sent from an alien planet to obliterate your kind," the robot threatened. Plum rammed into the robot and knocked it off a cliff. Thud! The robot crashed onto the ground.



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Ray hid behind a rock, thinking that the robot would get its revenge. "Squawk!" Plum cried as he landed on Ray's shoulder. "What are you trying to say this time?" Ray asked curiously. The ground shook beneath his feet. Ray cried, "I think you are saying the robot is rebooting!"



Ray made a run for it, but he halted when he heard lasers. Pew! Pow! Zap! went the lasers. The robot made it up the cliff! Ray was a bundle of nerves. A heavily-armored robot was upon them, and using its laser eyes, it created a buzzing laser cage around them.



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The cage levitated up, and they were trapped inside it as it hovered higher in mid-air. Suddenly, the cage disappeared with a snap of the robot's fingers. They were falling! Plum grabbed Ray in his claws then he beat his wings. He flapped rapidly, determined to save his friend.



They went up slowly but surely. Soon, they reached the top of the cliff. Plum preened himself, then he squawked the most uncomfortable sound in the world. It sounded like claws scratching a wall! Plum screeched at the highest pitch possible. He bit the robot until little metal bits fell off.



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"Error. Error," muttered the robot. The sound and pecking had broken down his system! "Plum, you were so great. Thanks for saving my life!" exclaimed Ray, "Sorry for thinking you were useless." "Plum happy," squawked Plum. Ray was bouncing off the walls to hear Plum speak. He teased, "Oh, Plum, fix your grammar."



Plum continued, "Ne-never underestimate the little creatures of the world." Ray realised Plum was right, so he decided to try out for the rock-climbing team. The following day, Ray came home with a big smile on his face. "Guess who made it to the team," exclaimed Ray, pulling out his new rock-climbing team shirt.