

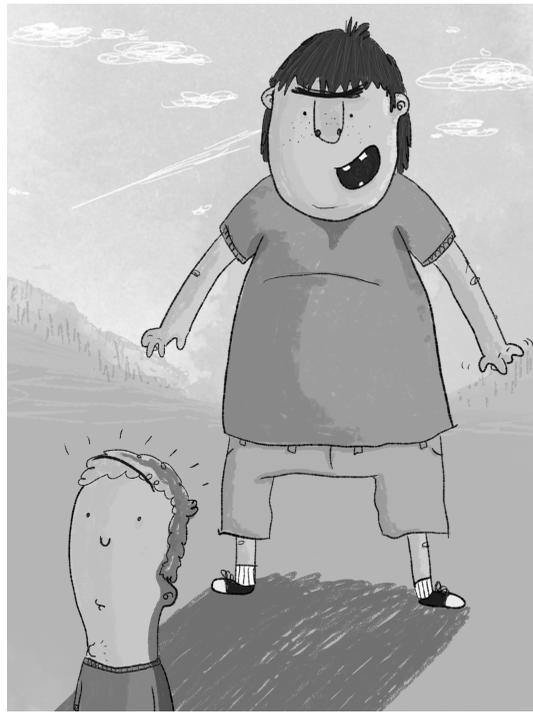
The & Quest

by Drew Rogers | illustrated by Tom Disbury



- 1 She sits in the same tree every day at lunch, feet dangling from the edge of her wooden defense tower behind the kickball courts.
- 2 I stay off the blacktop as I make my way around, keeping away from the big kids, not wanting to draw enemy action as I approach her.
- 3 My new shoes alone make me more prepared than the last time I was on this quest. But I also carry a secret weapon, which I keep hidden in the back pocket of my jeans. Like the green knight said in *The Stone War*, “When attempting to make allies with an unfamiliar group, show confidence, show charisma, show something you have that is super awesome.”
- 4 “Hi, Abby,” I say, stepping across the grass, coming nearer but not so close that I put myself at risk of her launching an assault.
- 5 Abby lifts her head from her book, *Dragon Bones: The Ancient and Arcane*. I know it well. She looks at me, her crystal-blue stare like that of a frost wizard, two brilliant glaciers that turn me to ice.
- 6 She says hi back, and I thaw out.
- 7 Suddenly I realize I’ve come unprepared. I have nothing to offer her other than the secret weapon, but I can’t use that yet. Patience is key; she must first show interest.
- 8 “I’ve read that book four times,” I say.
- 9 “I’ve read it five,” she says. “This is my sixth.” Her braces shimmer when she says “sixth.” *Sigh*. Brains and beauty. Then it occurs to me that she doesn’t need any allies.

- 10 Abby closes her book and sets it on the branch, letting me know that I have her attention, if only for a moment. She tucks a strand of hair behind her ear, reflecting gleaming threads of red-orange sunlight, spun by tiny fire fairies.
- 11 “My dad said I should invite you to my birthday party on Saturday.” I surprise myself, firing the words up at her without hesitation.
- 12 “I have to go to my grandma’s this weekend,” she says, effectively dodging my invitation.
- 13 Abby starts whistling at birds perched high in the tree—her winged protectors, ready to swoop down and carry me away at her command.
- 14 It’s quiet for too long, and I’m out of ideas. It’s all or nothing. I pull the secret weapon from my pocket and hold it up: a level 200 dragon card as a proposition to become allies.
- 15 “You said Klinkhammer was your favorite.” A holographic Goblin General Klinkhammer, my rarest card, but a small price to pay for her alliance. I wiggle it so she can see that it’s a foil.
- 16 “Nice,” she says. “I have a holo too. First edition.”
- 17 Plan fail. I pocket the card, trying to play it off like I hadn’t been offering it to her as a gift, but I feel no less defeated. Mine isn’t a first edition.
- 18 “Nice shoes, dork.” The earth shudders, and I cringe slightly at the armor-piercing voice that comes from behind me. “Did your mommy pick those out for you?”
- 19 Great. Bum-rushed by an opposing faction.
- 20 I turn to the 20-foot-tall beast-boy standing there and kick myself for letting my guard down, not watching my own back.
- 21 “Yeah,” I say—because my mom did, and because I don’t know how else to respond—“for my birthday.”
- 22 The enemy stares me down, kickball in one hand and my pride in the other. I feel like running. Then Abby hops down from her branch.
- 23 “Whoa, cool shoes,” she says. “Those are just like



- Reggie’s hyperspeed boots from *Amazing Undercover Middle School Superheroes*, episode seven.” Her words, though soft and sweet like a siren song, deflate him like a popped balloon. His mouth opens and closes a few times, but he’s unable to speak. Utterly spell-silenced.
- 24 “Yeah,” I say. I turn one foot to the side so she can really see the coolness of them, pressing my shoe into the grass. My heel lights up; her face lights up.
- 25 “I bet you can run as fast as Rapid Reggie,” she says. “Want to race to the swings?”
- 26 My shoe boosters activate.
- 27 I waste no time getting a head start. We’re rushing to the jungle gym, our paths igniting in flames as we leave our enemy behind.
- 28 She’s ultrafast, but I get to the swing set a nanosecond before she does. I’m out of breath, but she knows my power, my awesome speed.
- 29 “Come on,” my new ally says. Then she takes my hand in hers, and for a second I think this may have been a trick because I feel a powerful ignited spell inside my chest.
- 30 Any moment now, I’ll surely burst into flame.

The Quest

Test Questions

Circle the correct answer.

1. Which is the main idea of this story?

- a. a boy who wants to be friends with a girl
- b. a boy and a girl with special powers
- c. a girl who gets bullied
- d. a boy and a girl who run away from home

2. How does the boy's feelings in the story change?

- a. In the beginning, he is eager, and in the end, he is terrified.
- b. In the beginning, he is irritated, and in the end, he is content.
- c. In the beginning, he is anxious, and in the end, he is thrilled.
- d. In the beginning, he is fearless, and in the end, he is elated.

3. What is the theme of this story?

- a. Crime does not pay.
- b. Friendship is dependent on sacrifice.
- c. Those who are evil never succeed.
- d. New friendship comes with risk.

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Test Questions (*continued*)

4. Read this paragraph from the story.

Abby closes her book and sets it on the branch, letting me know that I have her attention, if only for a moment. She tucks a strand of hair behind her ear, reflecting gleaming threads of red-orange sunlight, spun by tiny fire fairies.

The author uses metaphor to let the reader know that...

- a. Abby's hair looks like fairy hair.
- b. Abby's hair looks magical.
- c. Abby's hair looks like something made by fairies.
- d. The color of Abby's hair looks like the sun.

5. Read the sentence from the story.

We're rushing to the jungle gym, our paths igniting in flames as we leave our enemy behind.

Which feeling is the author trying to create by using the imagery in this sentence?

- a. fear
- b. happiness
- c. defeat
- d. suspense