



Gabby the Bubble Gum Fairy

by Daisy Meadows

SCHOLASTIC INC.

To Tianna, who loves the fairies

Special thanks to Rachel Elliot

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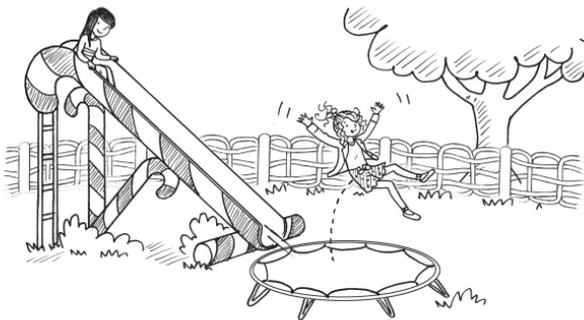
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The Playground Buddy



Rachel Walker slid down the candy-cane slide. She squealed with laughter as she zoomed off the end onto a trampoline and bounced into the air.

“This is the best park in the whole wide world,” she called happily to her best friend, Kirsty Tate, who was sitting at the top of the slide.





“WHEEEEEEE!” Kirsty sang out as she shot down the slide and bounced down beside Rachel. “It’s so much fun. I’m so glad that Aunt Helen asked us both to meet her here.”





Rachel was staying with Kirsty for a whole week. It was always fun visiting Wetherbury, but this time it was extra exciting. Kirsty's aunt Helen, who worked at Candy Land, a candy factory, had asked the girls to help her with some very special deliveries. Candy Land was giving out Helping Hands awards for people who were doing wonderful things to help the community. It was part of Aunt Helen's job to present the winners with bags of their favorite candy, and Rachel and Kirsty were proud to help.

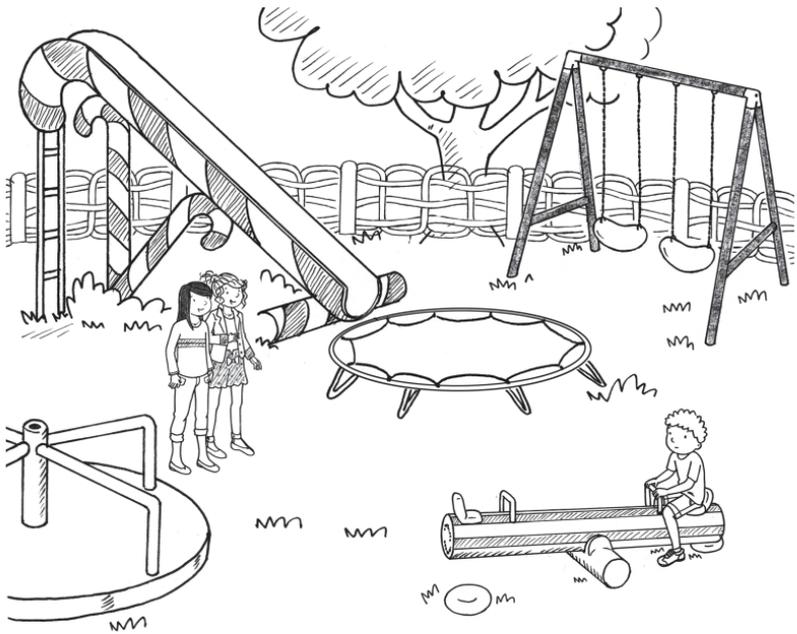
"Your aunt Helen should be here soon," said Rachel, checking her watch.

The girls stopped bouncing and looked over at the factory. The candy-themed park was on the beautiful grounds of the factory, on the outskirts of Wetherbury.





The tall slide looked as if it had been made from candy canes, the swings were shaped like jelly beans, and the merry-go-round looked like a big cookie. On the far side of the park, some boys were playing by a fence that seemed to be made of strawberry licorice laces.





Just then, Kirsty noticed a little boy sitting on one end of the seesaw, which was shaped like a hard candy stick.

“That little boy looks sad,” she said.

“I wonder if he is lonely. Maybe one of us should go sit on the other end of the seesaw so he can actually play on it.”

“I think someone else has the same idea,” said Rachel.

A girl with long brown hair was walking toward the seesaw, smiling. She





said something to the little boy, and a smile lit up his face. Then she sat on the other end of the seesaw and started to go up and down.

“What a kind thing to do,” said Kirsty. “I noticed that girl earlier, pushing a little girl on the swings.”

When the little boy’s mom called him away, the girl left the seesaw and walked toward Rachel and

Kirsty.



“Hi,” she said in a friendly voice. “I haven’t seen you here before. I’m Olivia. I’m the playground buddy for this park.”

“I’m Rachel and



this is Kirsty,” said Rachel. “I’ve never heard of a playground buddy before.”

“I look out for anyone who seems lonely or on their own, and I make sure they have someone to play with,” Olivia explained. “Sometimes people make new friends here. It’s so great.”





“What a nice idea,” said Rachel with a smile. “What made you think of it?”

“When I moved to Wetherbury, I missed my old school and my old friends,” said Olivia. “I

remember how it felt to be lonely and have no one to play with. I want to make sure that no one else feels like that. So I play with children who are alone, and I help them meet new friends.”



“It sounds as if you’re not lonely anymore, either,” said Kirsty.

“Definitely not,” Olivia said, laughing.

“I always have friends to play with now that I’m a playground buddy.”

“Every park should have one,” said Rachel with a smile. “It’s an idea I’ll remember.”

“Unfortunately, it doesn’t seem to be





working very well with everyone today, though,” said Olivia, glancing toward the strawberry–licorice lace fence. There were three boys huddled by it, looking around and laughing. “Those boys over there have driven most of the children away.”

