



Aaron's Promise

Written by Chris Cairns
Illustrated by Mike Nicholas

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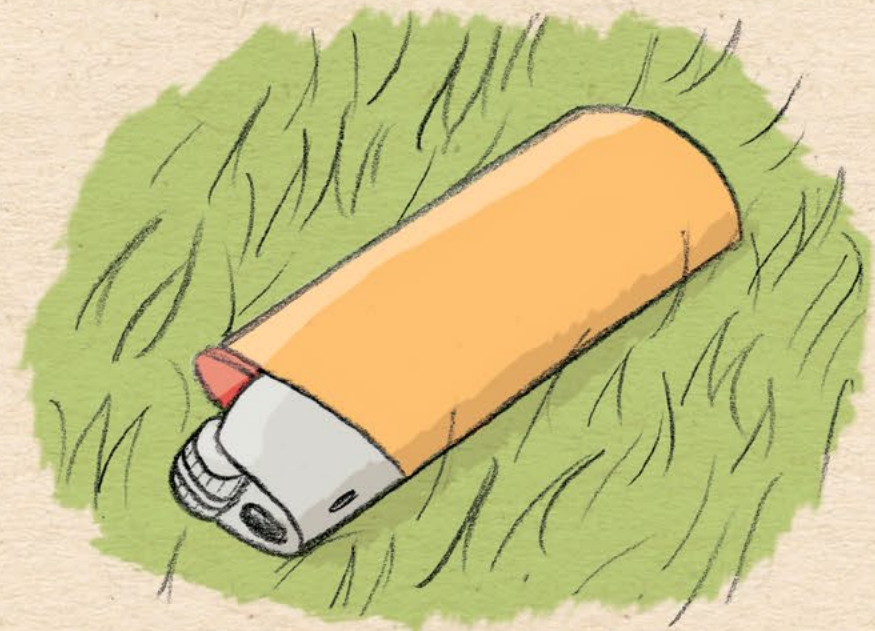
The Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) strives to keep the community safe from fire and other natural hazard emergencies. DFES provides fun, stimulating and interactive learning experiences that increase safety awareness.

Note to parents and carers:

It is recommended that you go through each picture of the story with your child before reading this book. Then read the book with your child, relating the story to each illustration as you go.

You are encouraged to use this book and its activities as part of your family's fire safety learning experience.

This book includes discussion questions and a fire safety checklist for you and your family to complete. DFES encourages your family to develop a home fire escape plan so everyone knows what to do and where to meet if there is a fire.



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“Thanks for lunch Mum, can I go and play?” asked Aaron as he jumped from the picnic blanket.

“Yes, please take your sister with you,” Mum replied smiling. “Don’t forget Ted too.”

Aaron grabbed his Teddy and put it under his arm. He thought, “I love you, Ted.”

“You’re it Stella!” Aaron shouted as he ran into the park. Stella and Dasher ran after him.



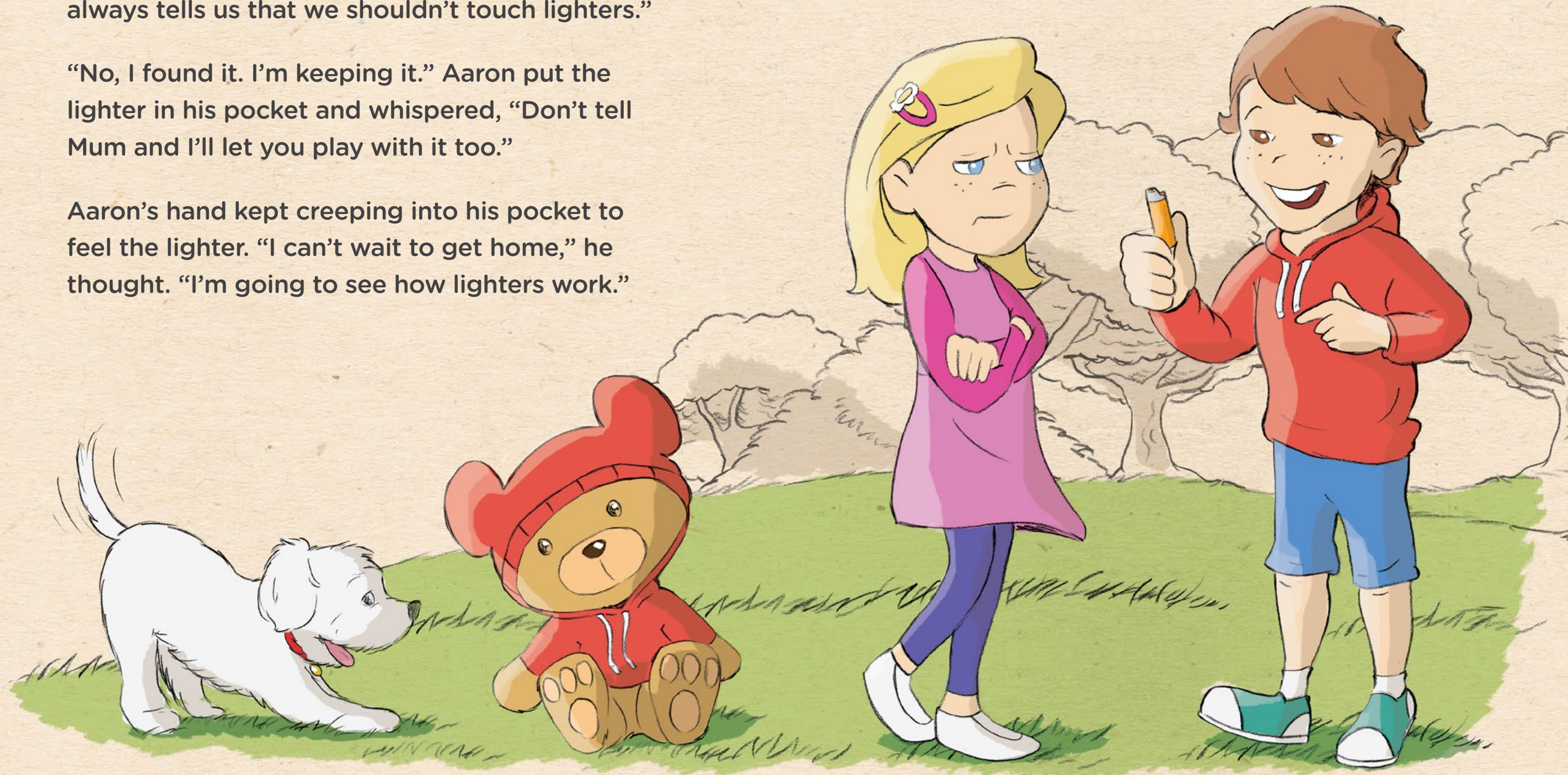
Aaron stopped suddenly. "Hey Stella, look what I found in the grass. It's a lighter. I hope it works."

"You have to give it to Mum," Stella said. "She always tells us that we shouldn't touch lighters."

"No, I found it. I'm keeping it." Aaron put the lighter in his pocket and whispered, "Don't tell Mum and I'll let you play with it too."

Aaron's hand kept creeping into his pocket to feel the lighter. "I can't wait to get home," he thought. "I'm going to see how lighters work."

Aaron knew Mum would not be happy with him if she knew he had the lighter. His tummy started to feel funny.

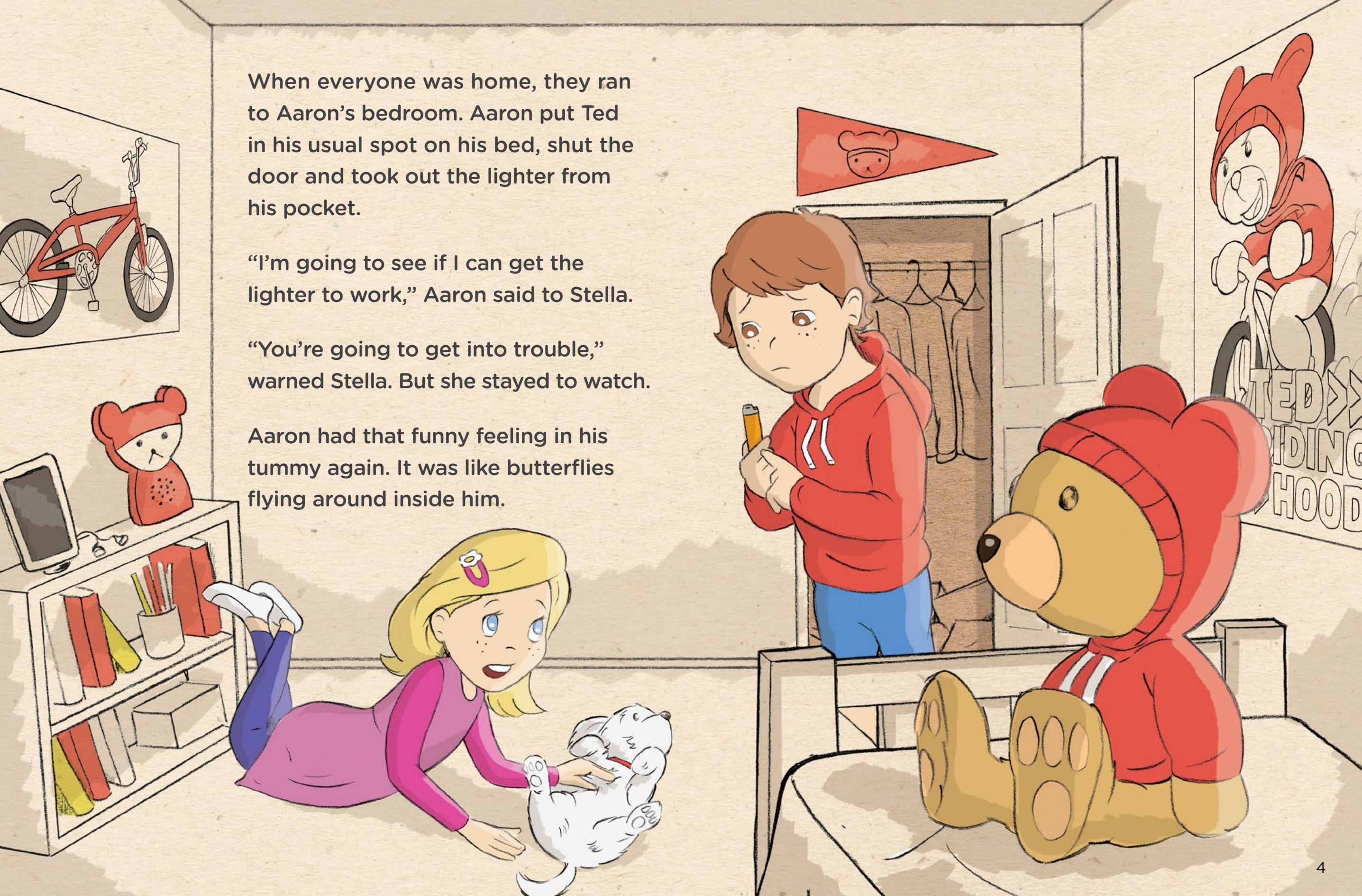


When everyone was home, they ran to Aaron's bedroom. Aaron put Ted in his usual spot on his bed, shut the door and took out the lighter from his pocket.

"I'm going to see if I can get the lighter to work," Aaron said to Stella.

"You're going to get into trouble," warned Stella. But she stayed to watch.

Aaron had that funny feeling in his tummy again. It was like butterflies flying around inside him.





Aaron flicked the lighter. Nothing happened! He flicked it again, a flame shot up.

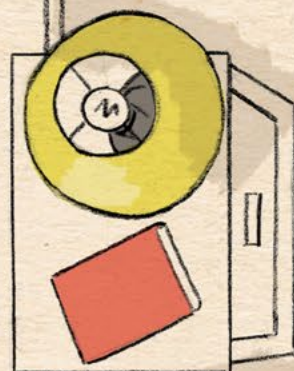
Aaron laughed but Stella backed away.

“Stella, give me that paper,” Aaron asked as he walked towards his wardrobe. “It’s dark in there and the fire will look good.”

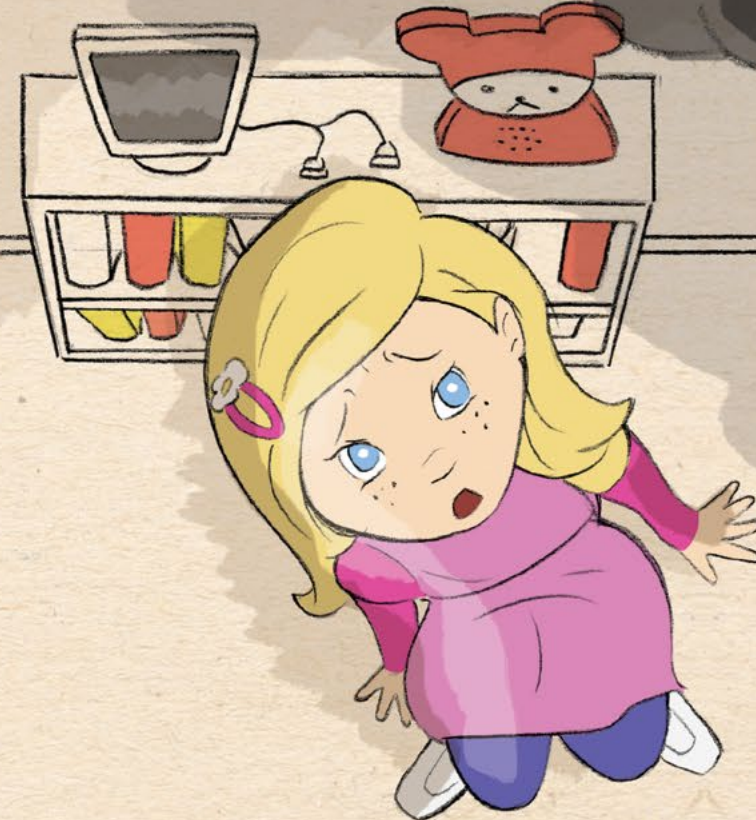
Aaron took the lighter into his dark wardrobe. He flicked the lighter. The flame was very bright. He held the flame to the paper that Stella had given him.



The flame shot up the paper. Aaron threw it down as the fire started to burn his hand. The burning paper fell onto his library bag. The bag started to burn.



Aaron couldn't believe his eyes. Stella began to cry and Dasher was whimpering and scratching at the bedroom door.



The fire quickly grew bigger and suddenly ... WHOOSH! The clothes in his wardrobe caught fire.



“Oh, no!” yelled Aaron as he watched the flames leap to the ceiling. It started to get very hot and the room was filling with smoke.

Aaron saw Stella crouched on the floor and staring at the fire. He grabbed her by the hand.

“Stay on the floor. We have to keep low!” Aaron shouted.

As Aaron opened his bedroom door the smoke alarm started to scream ... BEEP, BEEP, BEEP! Dasher pushed past them and they all crawled down the hallway towards the front door.





Mum was in the back room when she heard the smoke alarm.

“There must be a fire in the house,” she said. Mum ran towards Aaron’s bedroom.

Smoke was billowing out of his doorway. Mum screamed, “Aaron! Stella! Are you in there?”

Mum turned as she heard Aaron’s voice call from outside the front door. “Mum, we’re outside!”

Mum started to cough. She was finding it very hard to breathe in the smoke. Both Aaron and Stella screamed, “Mum get down low, you have to crawl under the smoke!”

The neighbours had already called 000 by the time everyone was safely outside. Everyone stood behind the letterbox and waited for the fire service.

Suddenly Aaron froze. "TED!" he screamed. "I left Ted in my bedroom. I've got to get him." "No!" Mum shouted. "You can't go back in there. It's too dangerous."

Mum looked at Aaron and said, "Well done Aaron for looking after your sister." She stopped and then asked, "Where were you when the fire started?"

Aaron took a deep breath and began to cry, "I'm sorry Mum. I found a lighter at the park and I hid it in my pocket. I wanted to see how it worked. I didn't mean to burn our house down. It was an accident."





When the fire was out, one of the firefighters came out of the house and handed Aaron his burnt Teddy.

Aaron held Ted close and said, "I promise I will never play with lighters again."

Discussion questions

We hope you enjoyed reading Aaron’s Promise. Here are some questions for discussion:

- 1. Aaron found the lighter in the grass at the park. What would you do if you found a lighter?
- 2. Aaron’s room began to fill with smoke. What did Aaron say which helped get everyone out of the house safely?
- 3. Why do you think it was important that everyone stood at the letterbox? Where would you go if there was a fire emergency in your house?
- 4. What was the promise that Aaron made to the firefighter? What promise will you make?

Fire Safety Checklist – How Fire Safe is your Home?

- ☐ Are all matches and lighters kept in a safe place where children cannot reach them?
- ☐ Are your smoke alarms working? (Test the smoke alarm by pressing the ‘test’ button)
- ☐ Are your smoke alarms located outside the sleeping areas?
- ☐ Are all electrical appliances, plugs and cords in good condition?
- ☐ Are powerboards dust-free and not overloaded with too many appliances?
- ☐ Are heaters kept at least 1 metre away from furniture, curtains and other flammable materials?
- ☐ Are there safety guards around fireplaces, fuel, stoves and heaters?
- ☐ Do you have a fire blanket in your kitchen?
- ☐ Are curtains and towels kept away from the stove?
- ☐ Electric blankets are not recommended for children, but have you checked them for wear before using them for adults?
- ☐ Are all flammable liquids stored safely, in a place where children cannot reach them?
- ☐ Do you have a Home Fire Escape Plan? Does everyone know what to do and where to meet if there is a fire?

Look at the things you have not ticked. Which of these do you feel most capable of doing in the near future to make your home more safe?



AUTHOR CHRIS CAIRNS

Chris lives in a bushfire prone area of Perth Western Australia and has been a teacher for 30 years. She has spent the past 12 years educating young people about the dangers of fire through her volunteer role as a Juvenile and Family Fire Awareness Program support officer and volunteer firefighter.

This is a story for young children who may be curious about fire and parents who would like to discuss the dangers of playing with lighters and matches with their children.



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