

By  
**Jeff  
Williams**

Davey  
Dobbs is  
**NOT  
SUPPOSED  
TO**



**Hiya, kiddo.**

I was just writing you a letter.

It started like this ...

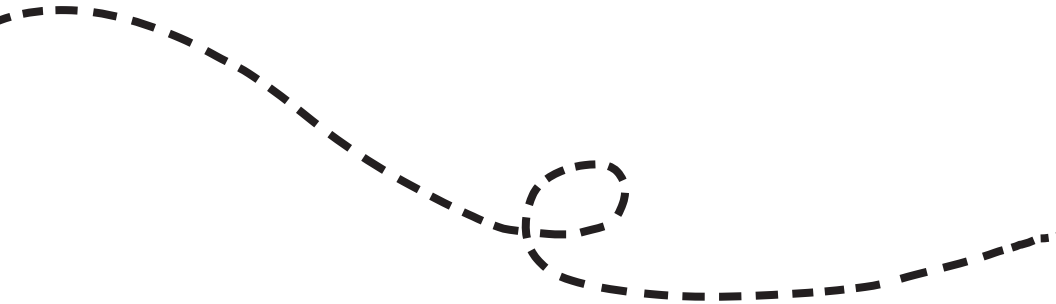
***You have the right to daydream.***

***You have the right to change your mind.***

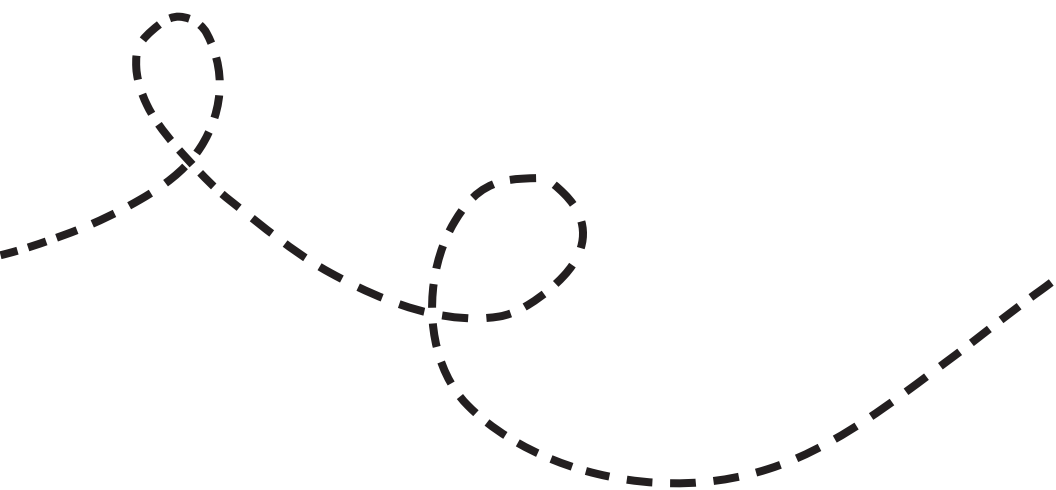
***You have the right to try some of this thing  
and some of that thing and even some  
of that other thing way over there.***

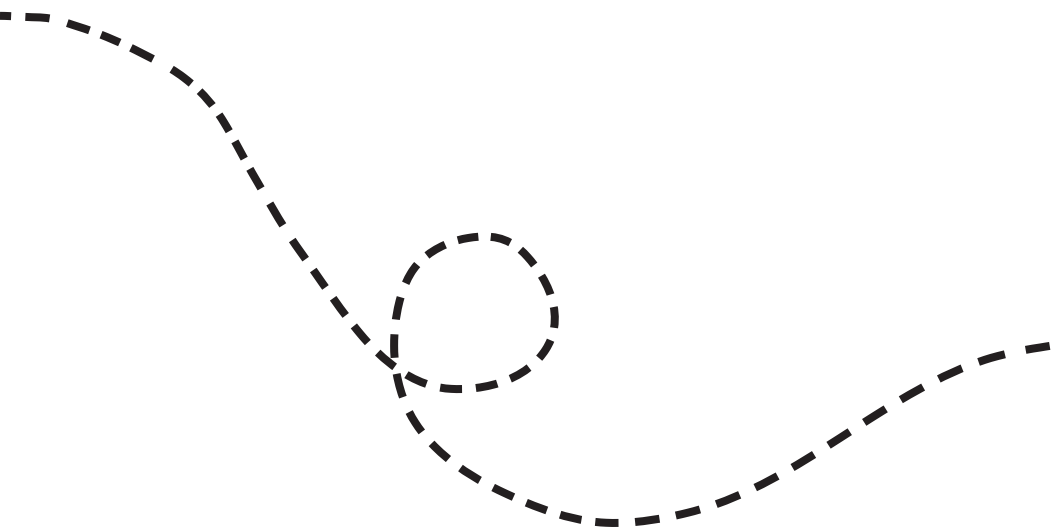
***You have the right to ...***

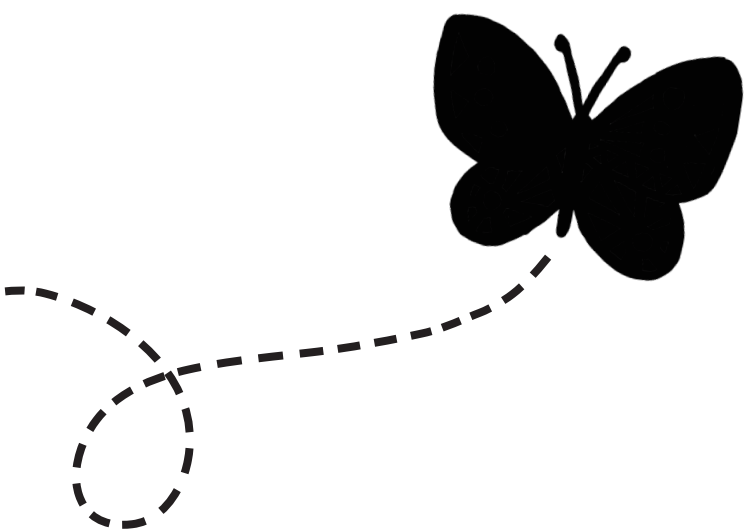
When suddenly a butterfly fluttered by



and landed on the next page.





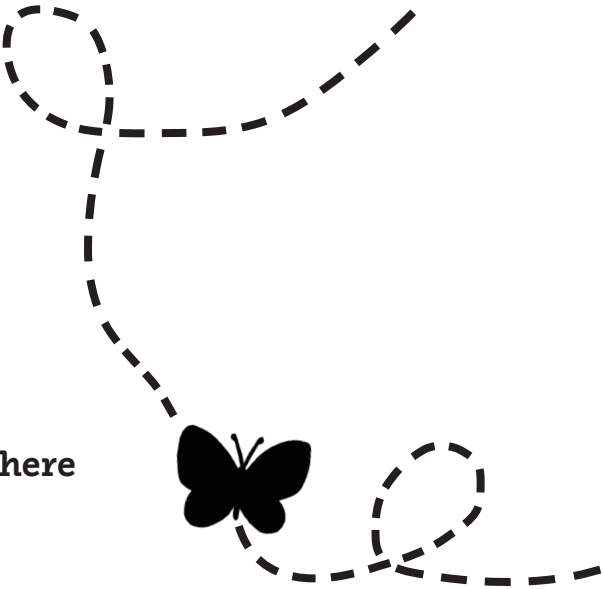


I like butterflies.

They travel from



to





but always

get

where



they need



to go.

My letter to you was  
just getting going.



But while I was watching the butterfly,  
the word that was supposed to go next  
fell right past me and tumbled

DOWN  
DOWN  
DOWN  
DOWN  
DOWN  
DOWN  
DOWN

toward  
Davey  
Dobbs's  
house  
one  
Saturday  
morning  
in  
May.

There's Davey now.

He staggers  
out of his house  
under a backpack  
stuffed full  
of **SUPPOSED TO's**.

Davey is **SUPPOSED TO** go to soccer practice.

After soccer practice, he is **SUPPOSED TO**  
go to math tutoring.

After soccer practice and math tutoring,  
he is **SUPPOSED TO** go to his violin lessons.

And after all that soccer and math and  
violining, he is **SUPPOSED TO**

***THUNK!***

Whoa.

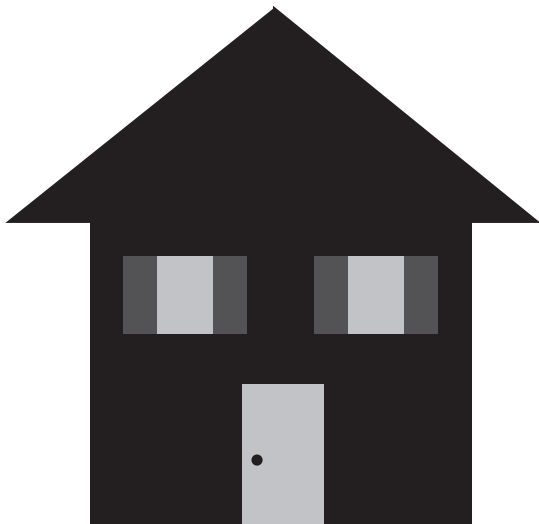
Davey is **NOT SUPPOSED TO**

***THUNK!***

The ***THUNK!***  
is the noise  
the

*Tumbling  
Word*

makes  
as it meteors  
into the front lawn  
of the house  
where Davey Dobbs lives.



Davey shudders. He blinks like he is just waking up.

He totters across the lawn toward the *thunked* thing.

He is wearing his cleats – something he is **NOT SUPPOSED TO** do because it makes unsightly cleat-holes in the lawn



which has won  
the prize for  
Most Orderly Lawn  
8 years in a row,  
a fact that  
puffs his parents  
with pride

which his mom  
and dad spend  
all their free  
time watering  
and trimming  
and singing little  
lullabies to

and he tugs the chunk free from the grass.

Now there's a jagged divot in the precious, precious lawn. Davey doesn't notice. He's enchanted by the *thunked* thing.

He is surprised to find it is not a meteor but a word. He wipes the dirt off. He polishes the word on his soccer jersey and looks at it. The word is solid, but not too heavy. He scrutinizes it. The word is

***m e a n d e r***

It means “to wander.”

His parents do not like that word.

Davey is **NOT SUPPOSED TO** use that word.

But the word feels ... important. It feels mysterious. It feels like it matters.

Davey has a thought

***“I want to find out where the day goes”***

which is strange because Davey isn't used to having thoughts of his own.

Davey sets down his





and

meanders

out of the story.

It takes me a few pages to find him.









There's Davey.

In a clearing.

In the woods.


He lies on his back looking up,  
doing nothing.

Doing nothing

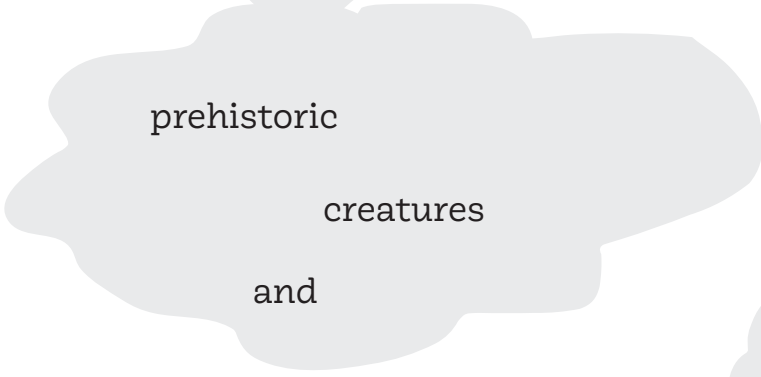
is the biggest  
**NOT SUPPOSED TO** of all.

But do it he does.


The clouds concoct a  
shape show  
just for him,



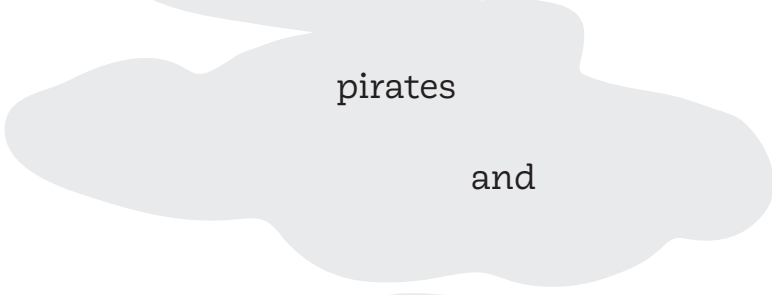
a parade  
of



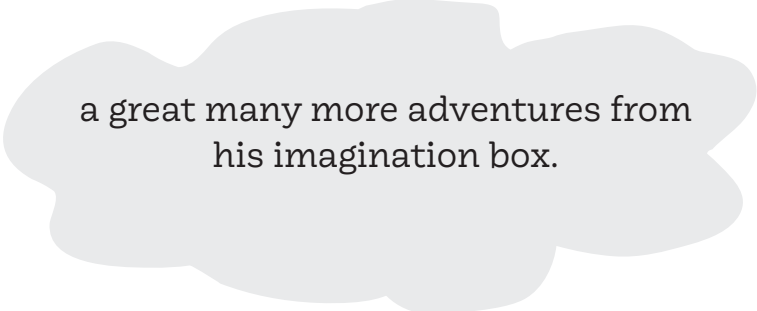
prehistoric  
creatures  
and



planets  
and



pirates  
and



a great many more adventures from  
his imagination box.

# Suddenly

the underbrush **rustles**.

Davey **SITS** up

**LOOKS** up

**STANDS** up

and sees he's



S

D

U

E

R

D

R

N

O

U

by soccer coaches

and soccer players

and soccer parents

(but not HIS parents

(who I'm sure are busy

(doing something un-Davey-related))).

“You’re **NOT SUPPOSED TO** be here, Davey,”  
say the soccer coaches and soccer players  
and soccer parents.

They advance on Davey, chanting.

**“NOT SUPPOSED TO!  
NOT SUPPOSED TO!  
NOT SUPPOSED TO!”**

They close in.

Davey turns slowly in place.

Closer.

Davey holds up his hands to surrender.

No escape.

**“NOT SUPPOSED TO!”**

Or is there?

One of his hands still holds his *meander*.

He remembers a book he was read once,  
long ago.

About *meander*.

How did the book go?

He's almost out of time

time

time

Davey clutches the *meander*.

"I have the right to meander," he mutters.

Time ...

slooooooows

then stops

then spins backward through millennia  
until Davey tumbles down through  
a prehistoric sky and lands with a

# ***THWOP!***

in



a muddy waterhole      a watery mudhole

where

a posse of stegosauruses glares at him.

Hmm.

Davey Dobbs is definitely **NOT SUPPOSED TO** ride a stegosaur. But guess what?

He slops over to the closest one, says hello, and climbs on its back. “Hi-YAH!”

The startled stegosaur shudder-shakes and suddenly sprints off with Davey gripping the great plates of its spine.

Now the other startled stegosauruses also shudder-shake and also sprint away.

Davey Dobbs is **NOT SUPPOSED TO** start a stegosaur stampede.

But he does!

Davey whoops and hollers as the harried herd hurriedly hurtles.

Dinosaurs everywhere!

**Brontosaurus! Allosaurus! Dogasaurus!  
Frogasaurus! Some-other-saurus!  
Iguanadon! Iguanadonna! Iguana-lama-  
ding-dong! Triceratops! Tricerabottoms!  
A pileup of tyrannosaurus wrecks! And  
in the sky, pterodactyls pturning and  
ptumbling and ptwisting. Plus, a pflock  
of pbugosaurs.**

Wait a second ... that's no pflock of pbugosaurs!

Those are soccer coaches

and soccer players

and soccer parents

(but not Davey's parents)

paratrooping down into the story, Davey's story, carrying giant banners that flutter out behind them and say

## **NOT SUPPOSED TO.**

They are falling fast.

Davey is racing fast.

The soccer-troopers are going to intercept him!

Davey grips the plates of his stegosaur, urging it left. The stegosaur snorts once and ignores him. Davey tries to steer right. The stegosaur snorts twice and ignores him. Davey gives one last leftward tug. The stegosaur finally veers away from the stegopack

and thunders toward the edge of a cliff.

"Whoa!" says Davey. "Whoa, whoa!" But the stegosaur speeds on. "Whoa!"

Here comes the cliff!

The stegosaurus finally whoas, digging her feet into the soft earth and skidding to a stop at the cliff-edge.

Davey doesn't whoa.

He flies off the back of the stegosaur clutching only air and his *meander* and he falls through space

space

space

Davey clutches the *meander*. "I have the right to meander" he yells.

Space ...

is a big place for an astronaut alone.



Space Ranger Davey Dobbs doesn't mind.  
Adventure is his middle name.

(Not really, because then his initials  
would be DAD, which would be weird.)

Space Ranger Davey slows his ship,  
squeezes some pizza from a tube, and  
stares out at a carnival of stars.

Davey Dobbs is **NOT SUPPOSED TO** take  
the rocket-cycle for a joyride.

Moments later, Davey is zooming away  
from the mothership on his rocket-cycle.  
He pats the *meander* in the back pocket  
of his spacesuit and whooshes the rocket-  
cycle up to maximum speed. He banks.  
He arcs. He slaloms through an asteroid  
patch. He shouts with joy, not caring that  
no one can hear him.

Until he spots the chasers.

Soccer players on star-bikes. Math tutors,  
too.

Captain Math Tutor fires a warning shot  
from his laser cannon. **Pssshew!**

A voice crackles across the radio in Davey's helmet, "You're **NOT SUPPOSED TO** be here."

Davey zooms away.



Back toward the asteroid patch.

The chase-posse pursues.

*Davey zigs. The posse zigs.*

*He zags. They zag.*

**Up**

and

**down**

and

**over**

and

**around**

the space rocks.

The posse closes. Lasers ping off asteroids.

**Pyew!**

**Pyew!**

**Pyew!**



A laser blast hits Davey's rocket-cycle and breaks the engine.

Davey tumbles toward an asteroid, unable to steer. If he hits it, he'll be smashed to

pieces

pieces

pieces

Davey clutches the *meander*. "I have the right to meander!" he shouts.

"Pieces ...

of eight, me hearties!"

Captain Davey Dobbs of the pirate ship *Different* holds up a fistful of gold coins and roars down from the poop deck to his pirate crew.

"That's what we're a-fightin' forrrrr.  
A bounteous fortune for all o' ye!"

The pirate gang roars their approval. "Aye, Captain Davey! Aye! Aye!"

"And how shall we spend this glorious pirating day, me hearties?" he bellows.

“Shall we do what we are **SUPPOSED TO** – which is swab the decks and iron the sails? Or shall we do what we are **NOT SUPPOSED TO**, which is pluck our ukuleles and quaff grog all day?”

“Naught but the **NOT!**” the shouts go out.

“By unanimous vote it is decided then,” declares Captain Davey.” Music and grog and a hearty ho-ho!”

The good ship *Different* heaves through heavy seas. Captain Davey squints his one good eye into the sea-spray. He taps the *meander* in his back pocket for luck.

“Aye, this is the good life!” says Captain Davey.

A sail appears on the horizon.



“Garrrrr. Nothing good can last. ‘Tis the foul ship *Should*.”

Captain Davey growls through clenched teeth. “Arr. Avast, me hearties! The gig’s afoot. Full sail, now! Hop to it!”

The *Different* unfurls its sails and rides the wind like a gull.

The *Should* gains.

All through the day and all through the night.

When morning comes, the foul ship is near. Too near.

Captain Davey pulls out his spyglass and beholds the scurviest lot of soccer players and math tutors and violin players he’s ever set eye on.

Lieutenant Violin hails Davey. “You’re **NOT SUPPOSED TO** be here!”

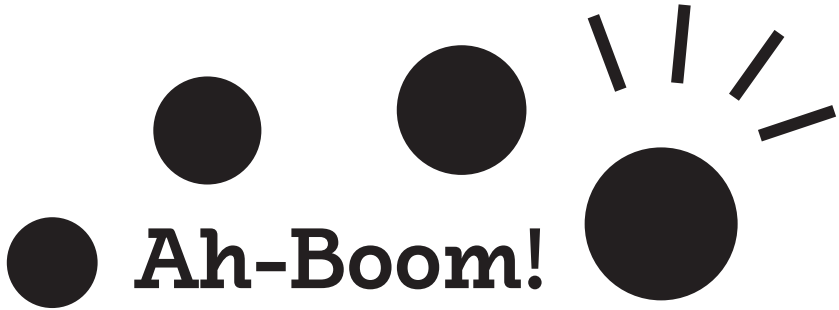


Voices ring out around from behind the sneaky-stinky string-scraper. **“NOT SUPPOSED TO be here! NOT SUPPOSED TO be here!”**

“Final warning!” calls Lieutenant Violin.

“Never!” shouts Captain Davey.

Along the hull of the *Should*, a string of small square windows open with a **click-click-click-click** and a line of cannons bristles out. The *Should* unleashes a volley of cannonballs.





Down goes the *Different*, leaving Captain Davey and his pirate crew bobbing in the drink.

The crew of the *Should* launches forth to rescue them all.

Davey holds the piece of eight in his hand, then lets it fall to the bottom of the ocean

the ocean

the ocean

Davey clutches his meander.

**“I HAVE  
THE RIGHT TO  
MEANDER!”**

he roars.

The ocean of sand stretching to forever all around Davey's camel caravan as it picks its way across the desert ...

**"NOT SUPPOSED TO."**

... The deserted Pacific island where Davey brings his airplane down for an emergency landing ...

**"NOT SUPPOSED TO."**

... Landing his hot air balloon on top of Mount Everest ...

**"NOT SUPPOSED TO."**

... Resting on his throne after a long day ruling Rome ...

**"NOT SUPPOSED TO."**

... Roaming the Arctic, mushing his dogs toward the North Pole ...

**"NOT SUPPOSED TO."**

... Poling his gondola  
through the canals of  
old Venice, warbling a  
romantic tune ...

**"NOT SUPPOSED TO."**

... Tuning his electric  
guitar before stepping  
on stage at Woodstock ...

**"NOT SUPPOSED TO."**

... Stalking the upland  
gorillas, gently, gently,  
camera at the ready ...

**"NOT SUPPOSED TO."**

... Ready for liftoff,  
mission control counting  
down: Three, two, one ...

**"NOT SUPPOSED TO."**

... Wondering how long  
he can go on beginning ...

**"NOT SUPPOSED TO."**

... Beginning to lose hope ...

**"NOT SUPPOSED TO."**

... Hopeless ...

**"NOT SUPPOSED TO!  
NOT SUPPOSED TO!  
NOT SUPPOSED TO!"**

No matter where, no matter how fast, no matter how crazily Davey meanders, the chasers are always right behind, always closing in.

Finally, it happens.

Davey runs out of meanders.

He leaps from the edge of one page

t

u

m

b

l

e

s

through the air,

and lands

***FUMPF!***

way down at the bottom of another.

D a v e y

All his meanders (including some we didn't hear about) rush through the hole he's made in the story and pour in a torrent behind him, smacking into the bottom of the page and fracturing into fragments. Here are some of them.

sea-spray

**Ah-Boom!**

a sense of beginning

hope

this glorious pirating day

**Pyew!**

**Pyew!**

**Pyew!**

**ZING!!**

tricerabottoms    Antarctica

He zags.    good ship *Different*

zooming away from the    pizza from a tube

mothership    elephant's belly    space barnacles

thunders toward the edge of a cliff

They zag.    squints his one good eye

across the Atlantic    a lion-strewn savanna  
near Kilimanjaro



**Ah-Boom!**

emergency landing      camel caravan  
herd hurtles      a muddy waterhole  
music and grog and a hearty ho-ho!

**Ah-Boom!**

iguana-lama-ding-dongs  
meander      Davey      butterfly

The chasers stop at the edge of that page from a few pages ago, holding on to each other so the stories don't wash them over the edge.

Some sneak around to the sides of *this* page.

But wherever they are, everyone shakes their fingers at Davey

(including his parents, who had finally found him)

saying ...

(well, by now, you probably know what they were saying.)

Davey stares at the broken heap of stories, feeling broken himself.

Amid the chanting of the **NOT SUPPOSED TO**'s Davey hears his parents saying.

"Shame on you. So disappointed. Expected more. Not enough. You knew what you were supposed to do but you ignored it."

Davey looks up and sees them there.  
Scowling.

“Davey,” his mother says. “What will we tell our friends?”

“Davey,” his father says. “Tomorrow you’re doing double soccer, double math, and double violin.”

“You stay right there ... ” his mother says.

“... till you’re ready to stop all this meandering ... ” his father says.

“ ... and carry the story you’re **SUPPOSED TO**. The one WE made for you,” they say together.

Davey squinches his eyes shut and hugs himself to sleep.

When he wakes up, the page is dark.



Davey wants to see, so he crawls across  
the story pile looking for letters.

sea-spray

**Ah-Boom!**

a sense of beginning

hope

this glorious pirating day

Antarctica

**Pyew! Pyew! Pyew! ZING!!**

brachiosauruses, triceratops, T. rexes

good ship *Different*

whoops

He zags.

pizza from a tube

zooming away from the mothership

elephant's belly

space barnacles

thunders toward the edge of a cliff

They zag.

squints his one good eye

across the Atlantic

a lion-strewn savanna near Kilimanjaro

**Ah-Boom!**

emergency landing

camel caravan a muddy waterhole

herd hurtles

music and grog and a jolly ho-ho!

**Ah-Boom!**

a stegosaur stampede

Ankylosauruses, saurolophuses, iguanadons,

meander

butterfly

Davey



He makes them into a

flAshLIghT



He points the beam up toward the top  
of the page.

His parents are still there.

Still scowling.

Still holding the backpack.

“We have your story right here!” they say.  
“Are you ready?”

He points his beam at the pile of his  
broken meanders.  
Nothing makes sense.

Davey slumps.

DO his parents have his story?

What IS his story?

He doesn't know.



Davey howls and hurls the fLASHLIghT  
across the prison of the page. It rolls all  
the way to the bottom left corner.

Maybe his parents really DO know his  
story.

He stands up.

He clears his throat.

He is about to tell them, "Yes, I'm ready"  
when he sees a word illuminated in his  
little beam of light.

m e a n d e r

He lost it when he fell.

But it was there all along.

Davey dashes over and clutches meander  
to his heart.

He looks around again at the broken  
stories.

The prehistoric creatures, the planets,  
the pirates.

“What new story can I make?” he  
wonders.

He sees part of a word he knows. He fishes  
around for the rest of the letters.

“There,” he said.

butterfly



The word becomes real and Davey laughs  
as it scribbles into the air, making its own  
path as it flies up and out of the page.

And Davey knows. “Nobody can make my  
story but me.”

Davey doesn't know what his story will be.

No one ever does.

But he is going to find out.

He searches for the letters that will  
launch him.

It doesn't take long.

j

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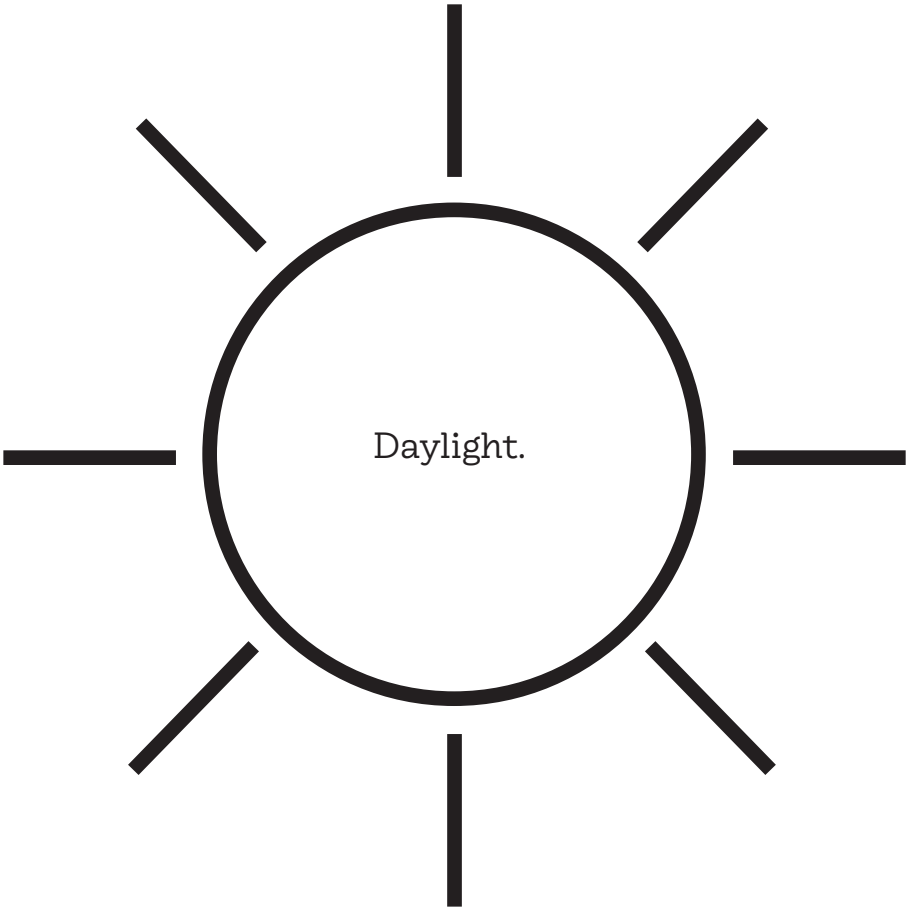
p

a

c

k

And  
just  
like  
that  
Davey  
Dobbs  
rockets  
off  
the  
page  
and  
into  
his  
own  
story.



Daylight.

One of the violin teachers had always wanted a jetpack.



She forgets what she is **SUPPOSED TO**  
be doing,

jumps into the storypile,

makes a jetpack,

and flies off on her own meander.

Well ...

after that, things get crazy, with

soccer players

and math tutors

and more soccer players

and violinists

leaping into the pile

to make

**j  
e  
t  
p  
a  
c  
k  
s  
.**

When the “j’s” run out, people make

hang gliders

helicopters

hovercrafts

and

things nobody has ever seen before

like

missile shoes

bouncy elevators

dirigi-buses

and

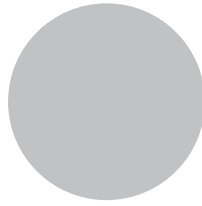
a floating chariot pulled by  
one million butterflies

until finally there are only two people who  
have not flown off on a new adventure.

Davey's mom and dad

standing at the top of the page

alone.



Davey's mom sighs a sad little sigh.

The quiet reminds her of a time before.

“Remember our first date?”

“The canoe,” said Davey's dad.

“The moonlight,” said Davey's mom.

“The quiet river.”

“How it ... “

“... meandered,” they said together.






“Shall we?” asked Davey’s mom.

“We shall,” said Davey’s dad.

Together they said, “Let’s go find our boy  
and wish him a Happy Meander.”

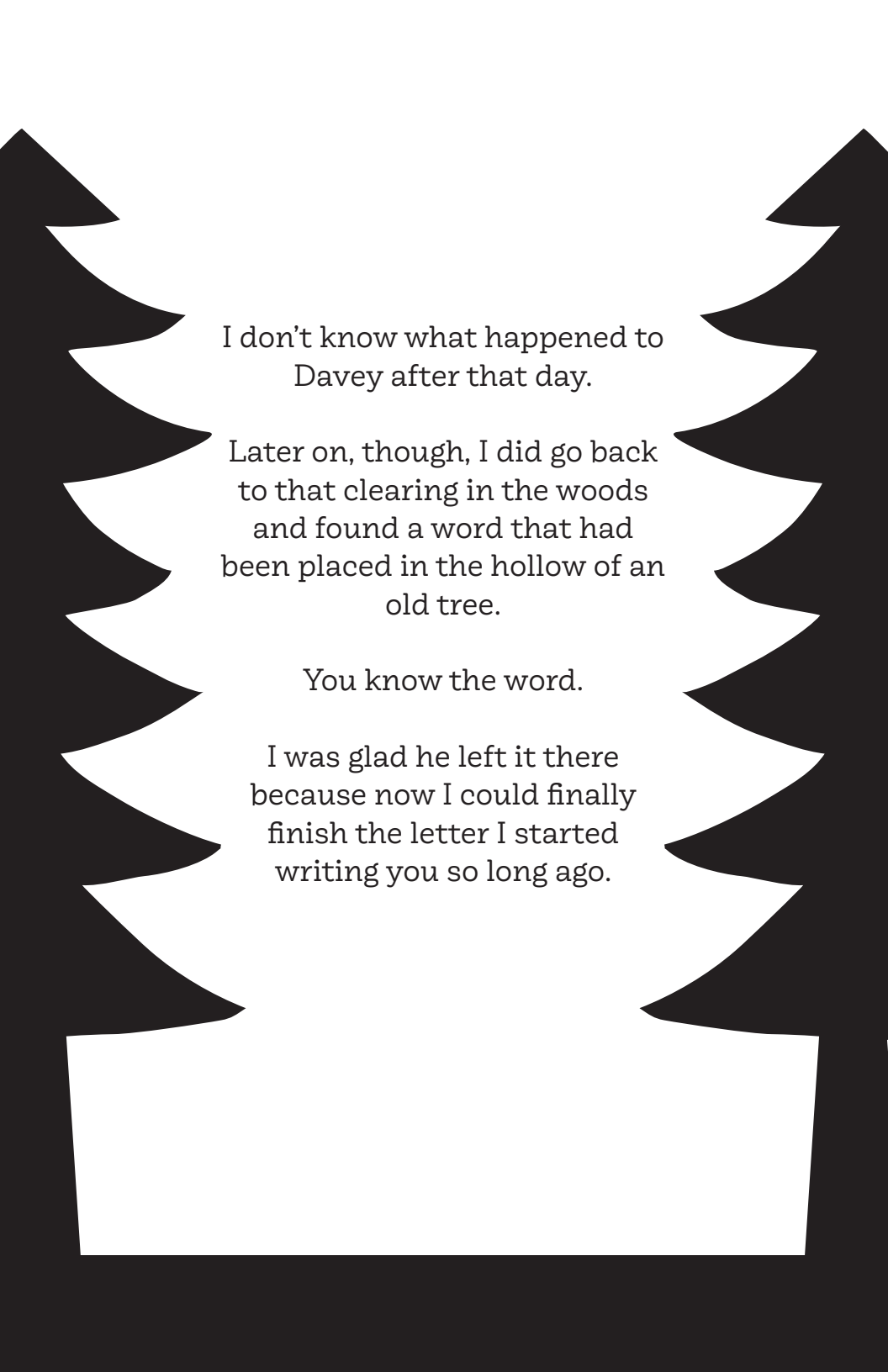
So Davey’s mom and dad made a canoe,  
the kind you can paddle through the air  
because that’s the kind of story this is,  
and they named the canoe the







*Never Too Late.*



I don't know what happened to  
Davey after that day.

Later on, though, I did go back  
to that clearing in the woods  
and found a word that had  
been placed in the hollow of an  
old tree.

You know the word.

I was glad he left it there  
because now I could finally  
finish the letter I started  
writing you so long ago.

***You have the right to daydream.***

***You have the right to change your mind.***

***You have the right to try some of this thing  
and some of that thing and even some of  
that other thing way over there.***

***You have the right to meander.***

***You have the right to take all the words  
out of this letter and rearrange them  
to make your own story.***

***There are no SUPPOSED TO's, child.***

***These are your meander rights.***

Look,

