





Sam Moves West to East

FABLE DESIGNER



For every child standing on the edge of a big change.



In his San Diego room, Sam packed his dinosaur toys into a box, one by one. Dad hummed while he wrapped mugs in newspaper. Sam leaned close to the box and whispered, **"But what if nobody in Massachusetts likes dinosaurs?"**



Ana marched in with a plan. They would trade one toy each, she said, so they'd always carry a piece of the other. She named his dinosaur "**Ana Junior**" and did not cry, though her voice wobbled just a little.



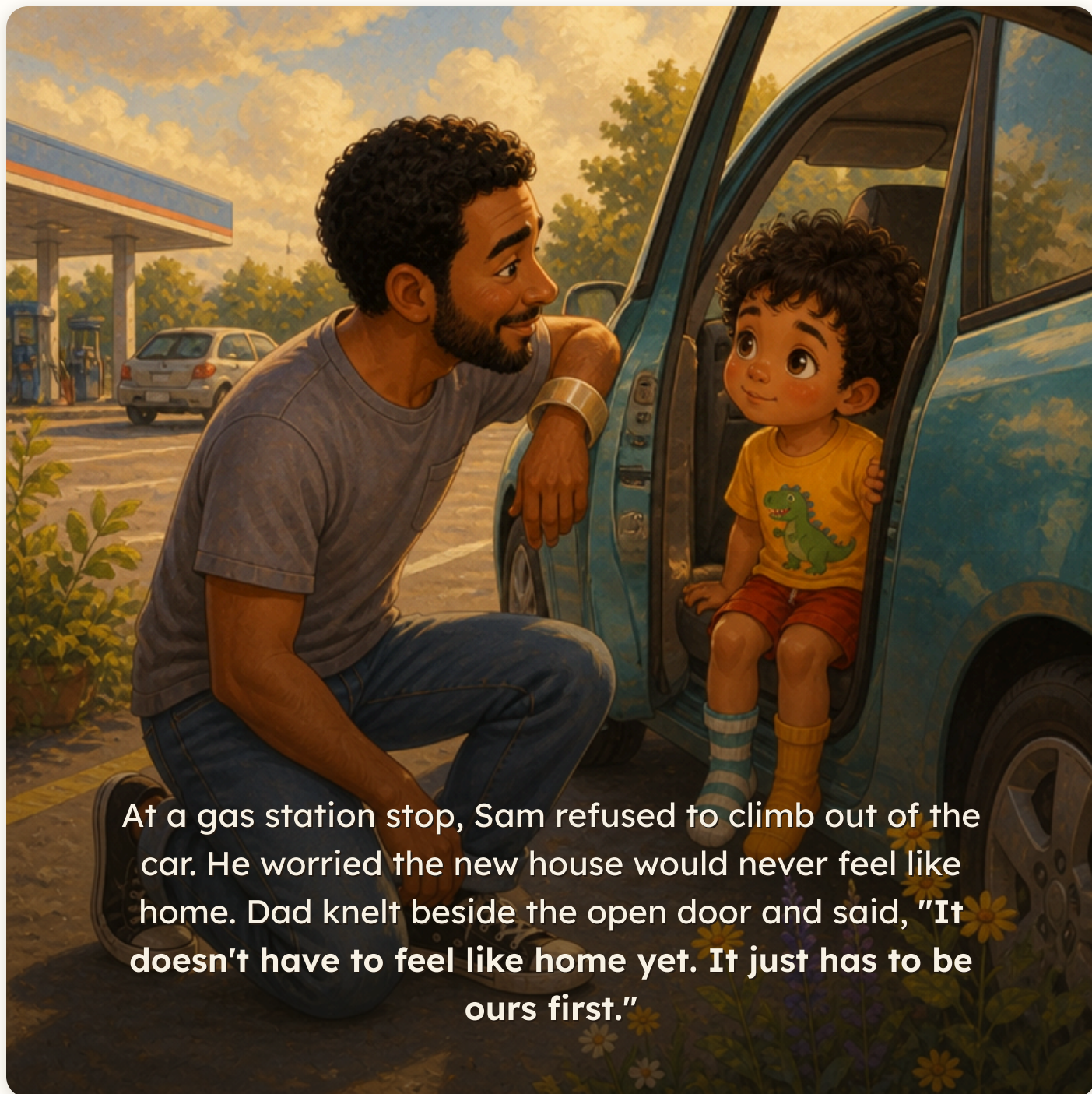
On the porch steps, Sam and Ana shared one last popsicle, splitting the final bite right down the middle. Ana promised to send a drawing every week. Sam hugged her so hard his mismatched socks slipped clean down to his ankles.



The moving truck rumbled away from the house. Sam watched his yard shrink smaller and smaller out the back window, gripping Ana Junior so tight his knuckles turned pale.



Days into the drive, palm trees turned into red barns and rolling hills. Sam asked Mom if snow really felt as cold as it looked. Mom asked him what he thought. "Shaved ice?" he guessed. "Or a popsicle you could stand inside?" They laughed and guessed some more.



At a gas station stop, Sam refused to climb out of the car. He worried the new house would never feel like home. Dad knelt beside the open door and said, **"It doesn't have to feel like home yet. It just has to be ours first."**



They pulled up to the new house, tall and narrow, with a big maple tree out front. Its leaves were a color Sam had never seen. He stared up through the car window and said nothing at all.



Inside his empty new room, Mom held out paint chips lined up like a rainbow. Sam pointed to a deep ocean blue, the same blue as the pool back home. Dad tapped the chip twice, like sealing a deal.



While the paint dried, Sam wandered the backyard and found the maple tree had a low branch shaped just right for climbing. A voice called over the fence. It was Theo, holding a worm the length of his hand. "**Worms have five hearts,**" he said, "**exactly five.**"



Sam and Theo spent the afternoon digging by the fence, comparing worm counts and comparing mismatched boots and socks. Theo declared Sam's dinosaur shirt "**scientifically excellent**" and they agreed to build a fort in the maple tree tomorrow.



That night, Sam's room was finally blue and full of his own things. Ana Junior sat propped on the windowsill. Through the glass, Sam could see the maple tree's branches and Theo's porch light glowing next door.



Sam grabbed a scrap of paper and started a list. Show Theo the dinosaur box. Climb the low branch. Ask if Massachusetts snow tasted like popsicles. He fell asleep mid-sentence, the list still in his hand, already looking forward to morning.

The End

Sweet dreams.

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