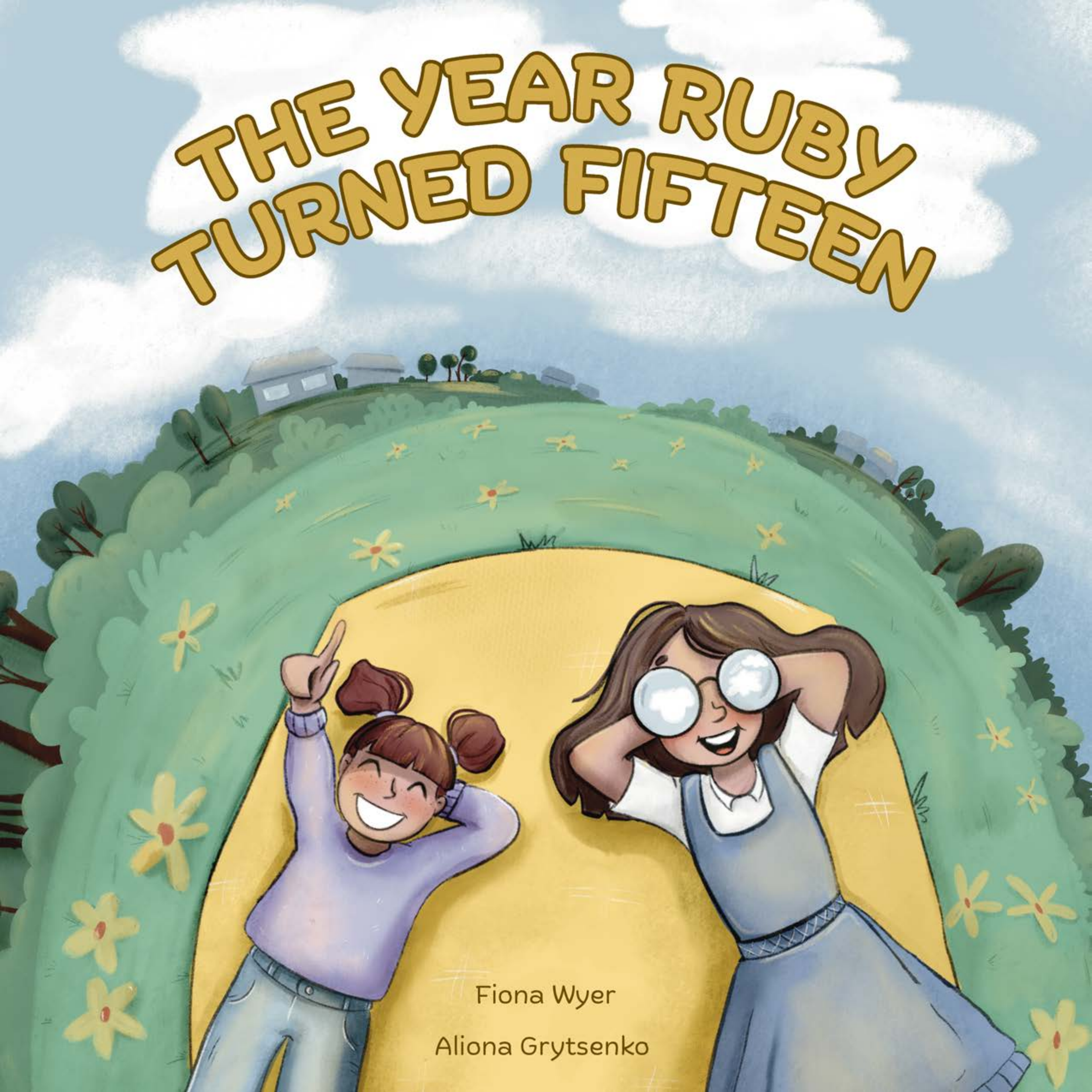
THE YEAR RUBY TURNED FIFTEEN



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THE YEAR RUBY TURNED FIFTEEN
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THE YEAR RUBY TURNED FIFTEEN

My name is Eloise,
and this is my big sister Ruby!

This story is not about me, it is about
Ruby and the year she turned fifteen.

Each year on her birthday, Mum, Dad,
Ruby, and I would visit the big city.

We would go on all the rides and
pat the horses and sheep.

But we really loved to go for the
special strawberry ice-cream!

Ruby and I loved to play, we
dressed up in all things fun!

Then we would lie on the grass,
watching the clouds and
squinting from the sun.

We also loved to climb trees,
to see how high we could go.

Sometimes Ruby tried to catch me,
but she would be too slow!

Now that is what we used to do
before we got the news...

Ruby was sick and the doctor said,
"Ruby has cancer."

She started treatment, but it did not seem to make her feel better.

I saw her tired all the time,
she was not like herself.

It made me very sad that I
could not fix her and help.

She would often wear these funny hats tied around her head.

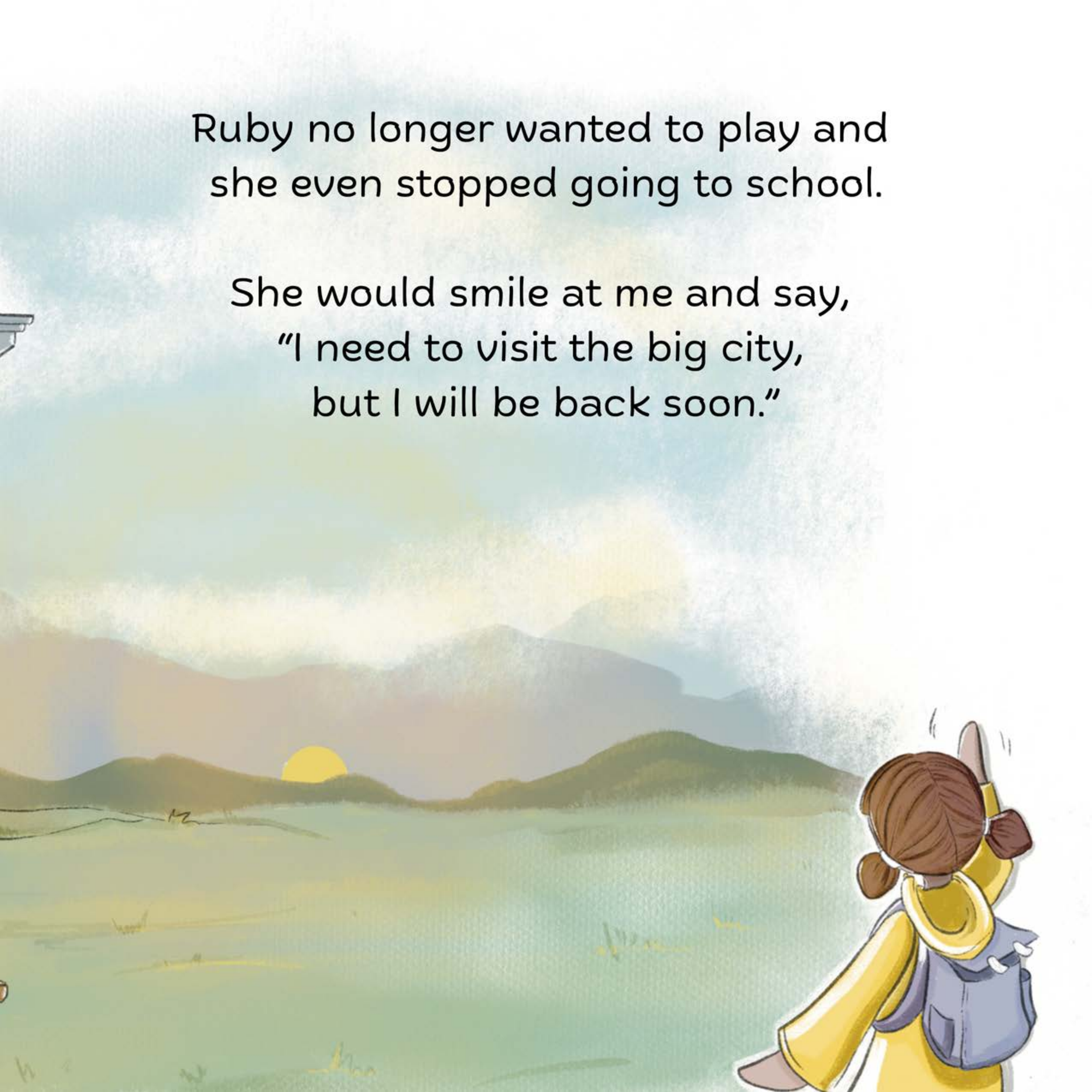
She would always need to nap and
sometimes never leave her bed.

Ruby always felt so sick,
she would rarely eat.

And weirdest of all, I did not understand why she now hated strawberry ice-cream.

Ruby no longer wanted to play and
she even stopped going to school.

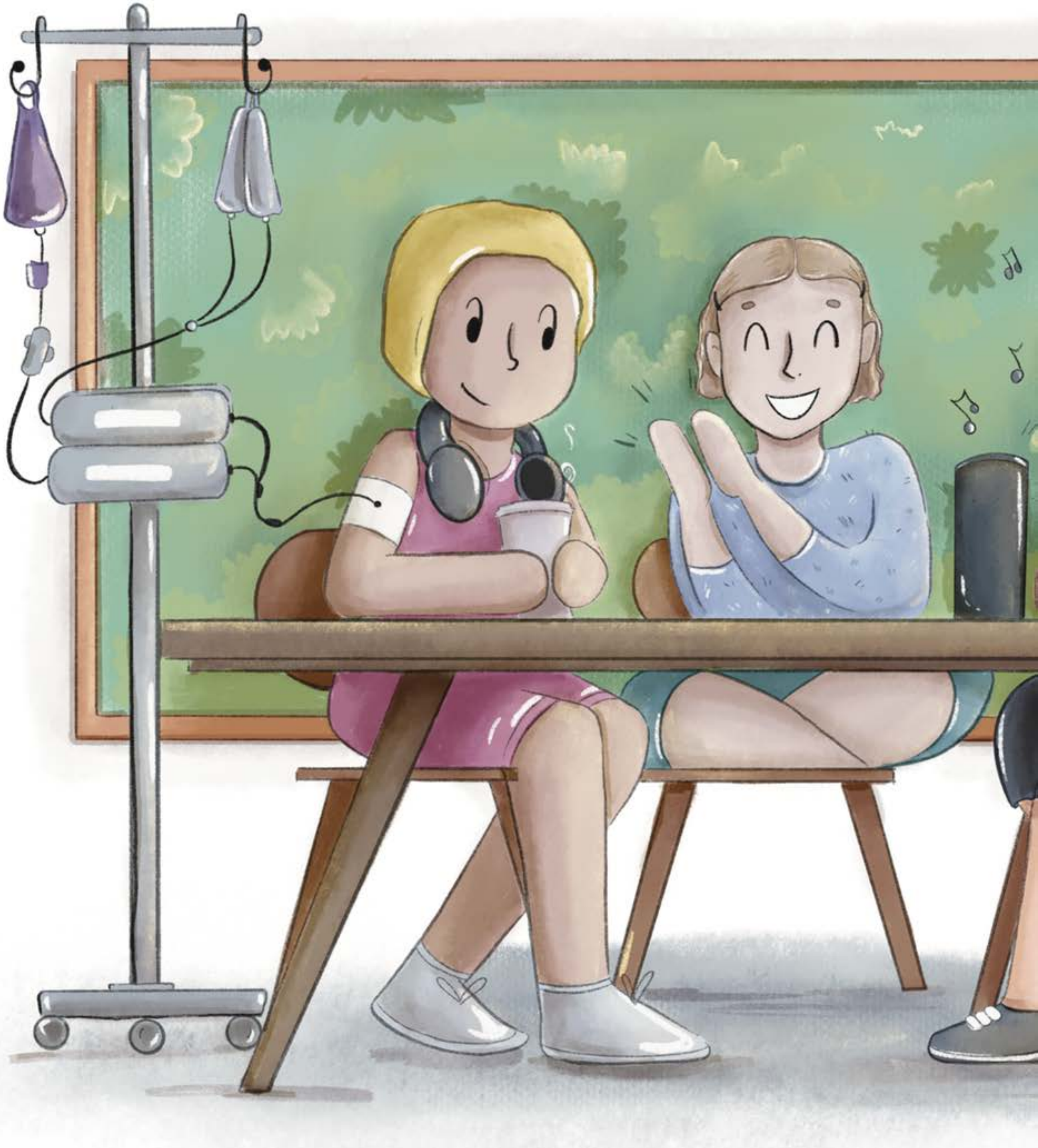
She would smile at me and say,
“I need to visit the big city,
but I will be back soon.”

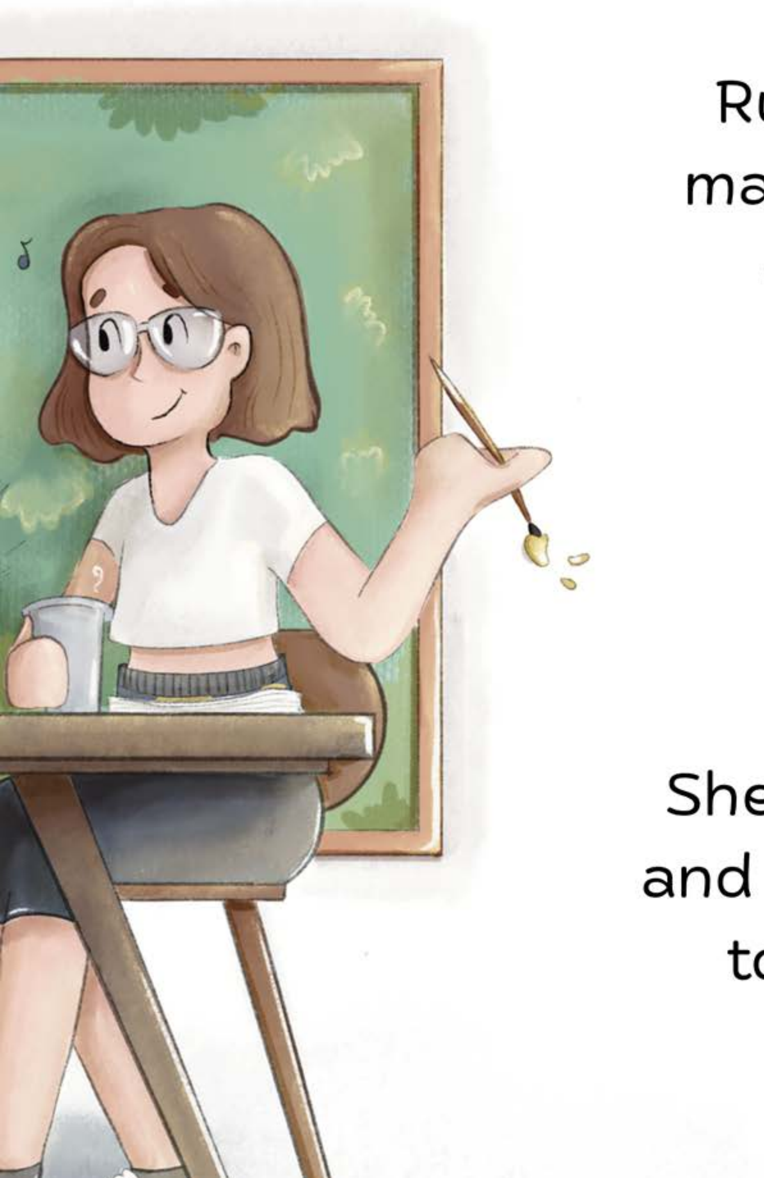


I would wait until she came home...

Hoping she would be all better and I would no longer have to play alone.

We talked over the phone almost every day.
It made me happy to see she was doing okay.





Ruby told me she had
made some friends with
other kids her age.

She met them at hospital
and now they are planning
to perform on stage!

One day Mum, Dad, and I
went to see their show.

There were guitars, violins, and
instruments I did not know!

Ruby stood front and centre
with a microphone.

I had never heard her sing before,
when we were at home.

After she sung her final song,
I ran to Ruby and hugged her so tight!

Then, we all went outside to see fireworks lighting up the night.

Ruby kept going to the hospital for the medicine she needed. And after many months of driving six hours for treatment...

Ruby and Mum came home smiling, but in tears.
They were not upset, because Ruby was in
remission and could stay here!

Ruby and I began to play again.
It started with board games,
where she would always win!

We then watched the
clouds and climbed
the highest trees.

Ruby would smile
at me and say,
"When I was sick, this was
where I wanted to be."

Now after school each day we get dressed up in her funny hats and play!

We even went back to the big city
for Ruby's sixteenth birthday!

Ruby invited her
new friends and
their families.

We went on all the
rides and patted the
horses and sheep.

At the end of the day, Ruby asked me,
"Eloise, would you like a special treat?"

Then, we sat down to watch the fireworks and
enjoy our favourite strawberry ice-cream!

Afterword

The Queensland Youth Cancer Service (QYCS) provides specialist care for young people aged 15 to 25 who have been diagnosed with cancer. A cancer diagnosis is difficult at any stage of life, but it can be particularly challenging during adolescence and young adulthood, when individuals are still navigating their path toward independence. QYCS supports these young people and their families across both public and private cancer treatment settings.

The QYCS team recognises the significant impact a cancer diagnosis can have on all aspects of a young person's life; physically, emotionally, socially, and practically. Our Youth Advisory Group (YAG) is made up of a remarkable group of young people who know this journey firsthand.

Formed in 2013, the YAG works closely with health professionals and support workers to help improve the quality of medical, nursing, psychosocial, and allied health care provided to young people, both during treatment and into survivorship. They bring their lived experience and advocate on behalf of their peers.

Discussing cancer is never easy, and it becomes even more complex when trying to explain it to young children. Many adolescents and young adults have younger siblings or children in their lives and often feel unsure about how to talk to them about their diagnosis. This gap in children's literature was identified by the QYCS YAG, leading to the creation of this book.

This resource is designed to help initiate those difficult but important conversations. It offers a gentle starting point for families, encouraging open dialogue about cancer in a way that is accessible and supportive for younger audiences. The goal is to make space for understanding, connection, and compassion through storytelling. I hope that you were able to find it useful.

Dr Rick Walker
Paediatric and Adolescent and Young Adult Oncologist
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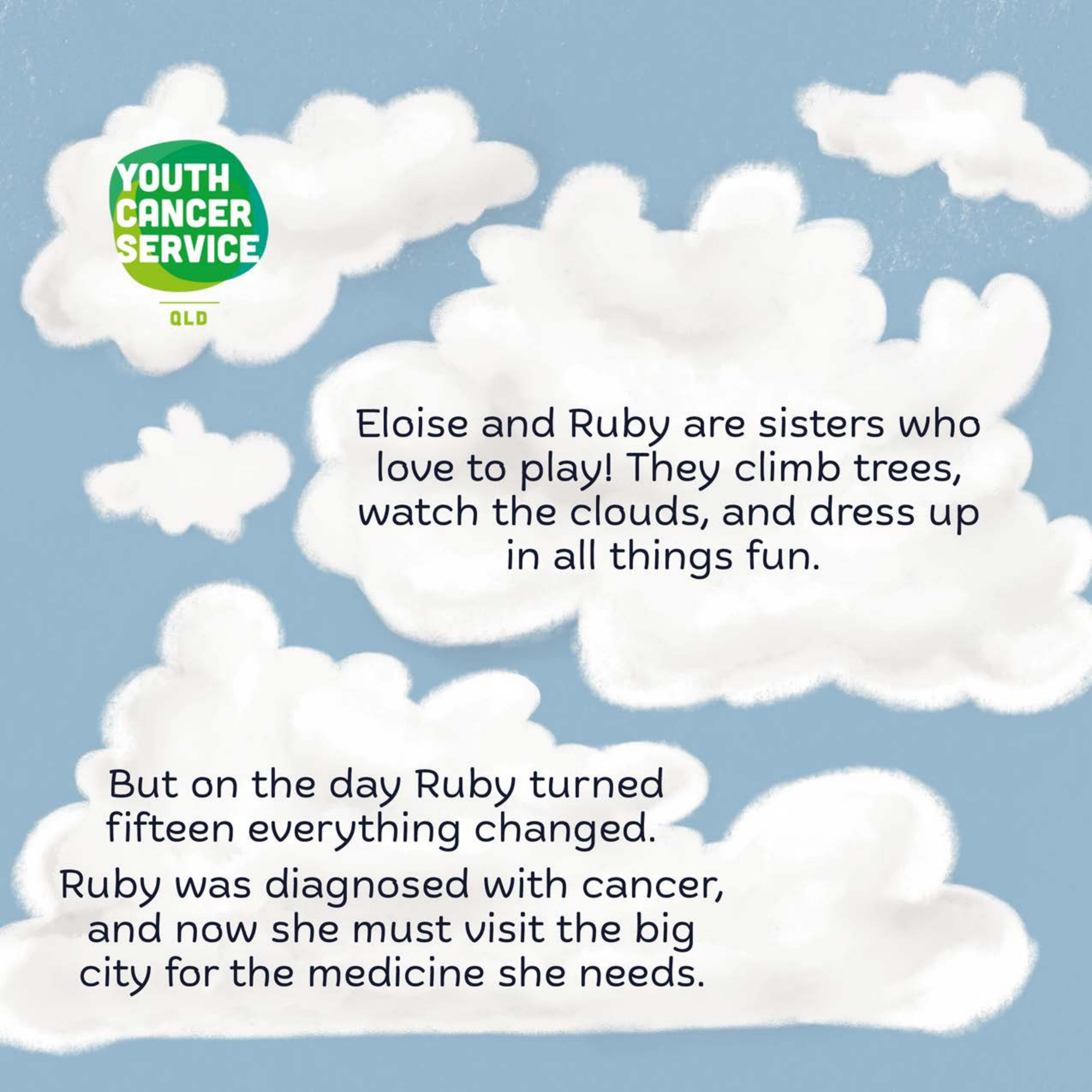
Princess Alexandra Hospital, Metro South Hospital and Health Service



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Eloise and Ruby are sisters who love to play! They climb trees, watch the clouds, and dress up in all things fun.

But on the day Ruby turned fifteen everything changed.

Ruby was diagnosed with cancer, and now she must visit the big city for the medicine she needs.