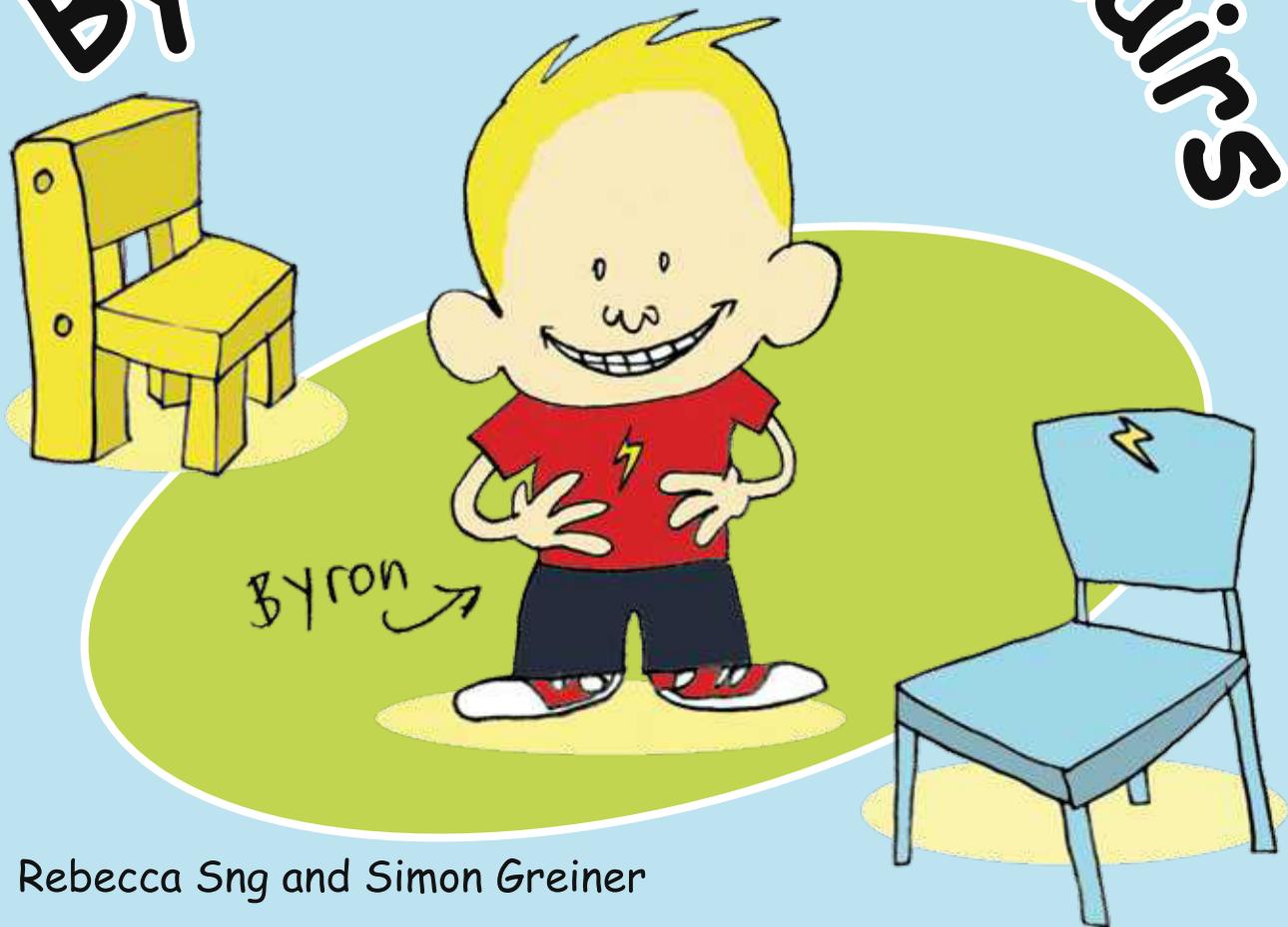


# Byron and the Chairs

Digital Version



Rebecca Sng and Simon Greiner

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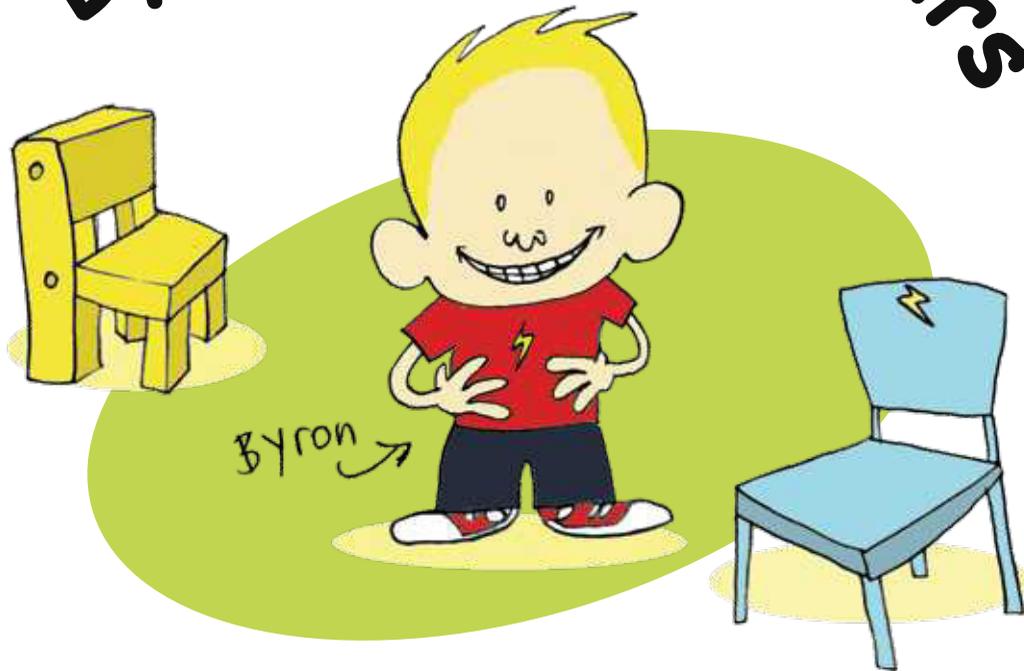
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# Byron and the Chairs

Digital Version



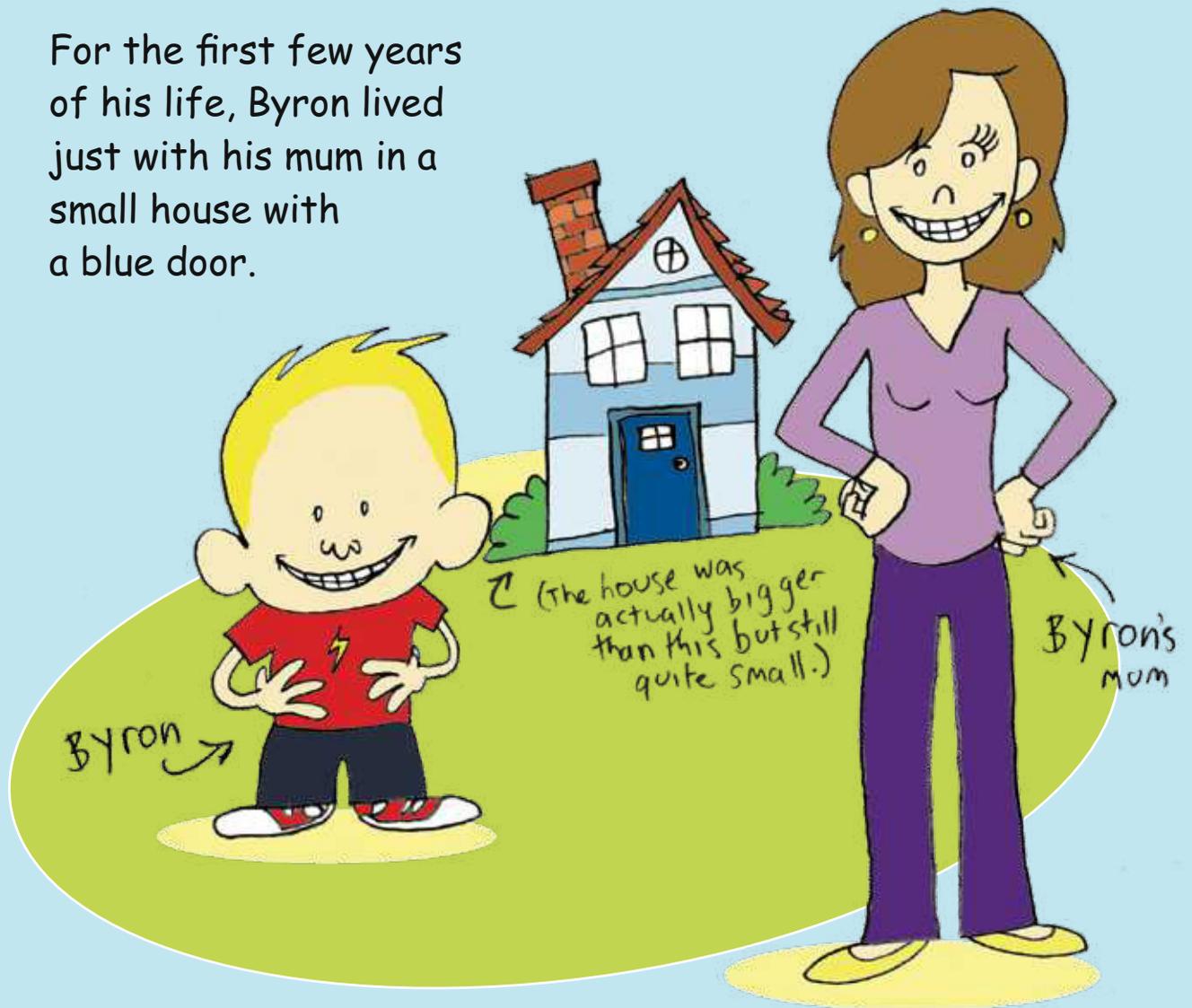
Written by Rebecca Sng  
Illustrated by Simon Greiner  
Designed by Jacqui Lynch

Published by Innovative Resources

To my Mum, Dad and  
big brother.  
R.S.

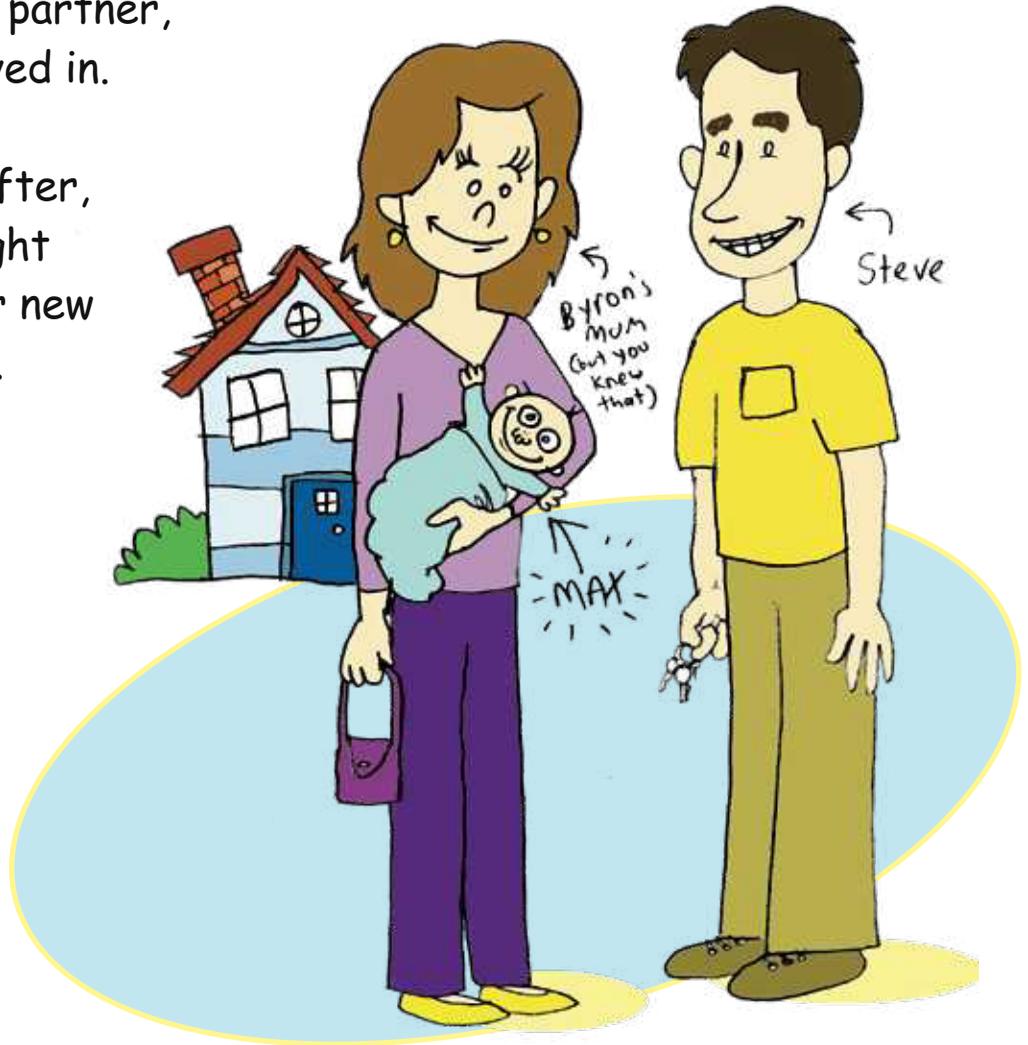
For Virginia and Chris.  
S.G.

For the first few years of his life, Byron lived just with his mum in a small house with a blue door.



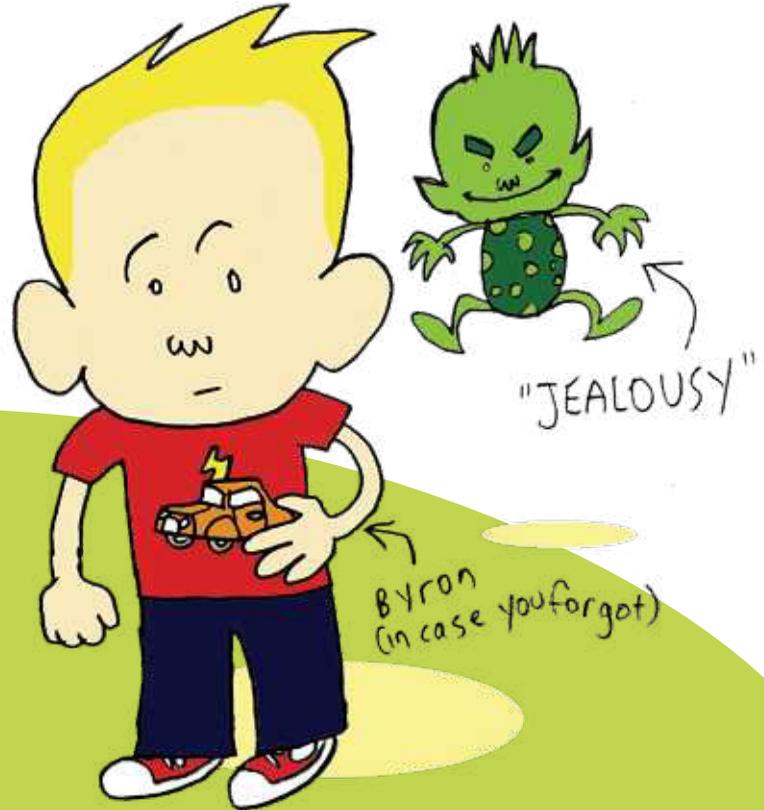
When Byron was three years old,  
Mum's new partner,  
Steve, moved in.

Not long after,  
they brought  
home their new  
baby, Max.



The same day a little monster accidentally moved into Byron's room.

It had beady green eyes and liked to whisper in Byron's ear.

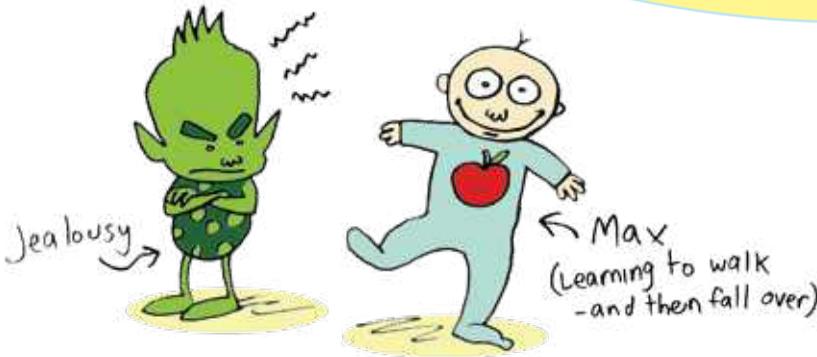
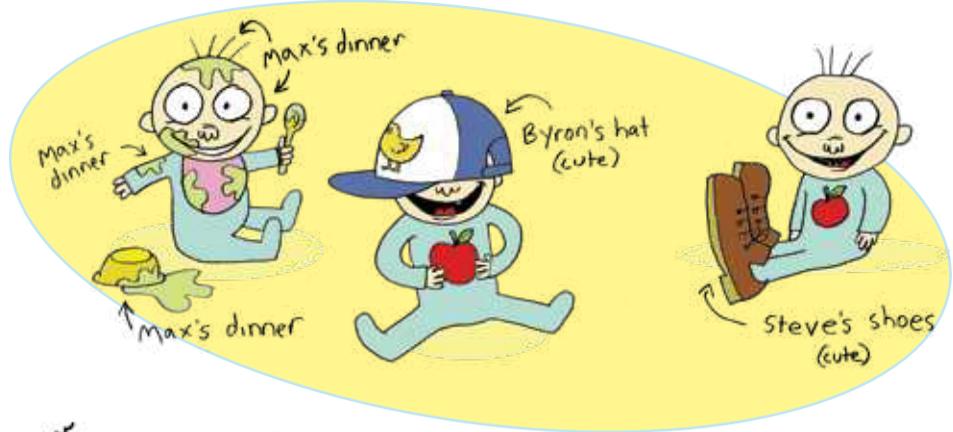


Mum called the monster 'Jealousy'.

Jealousy didn't like Max.

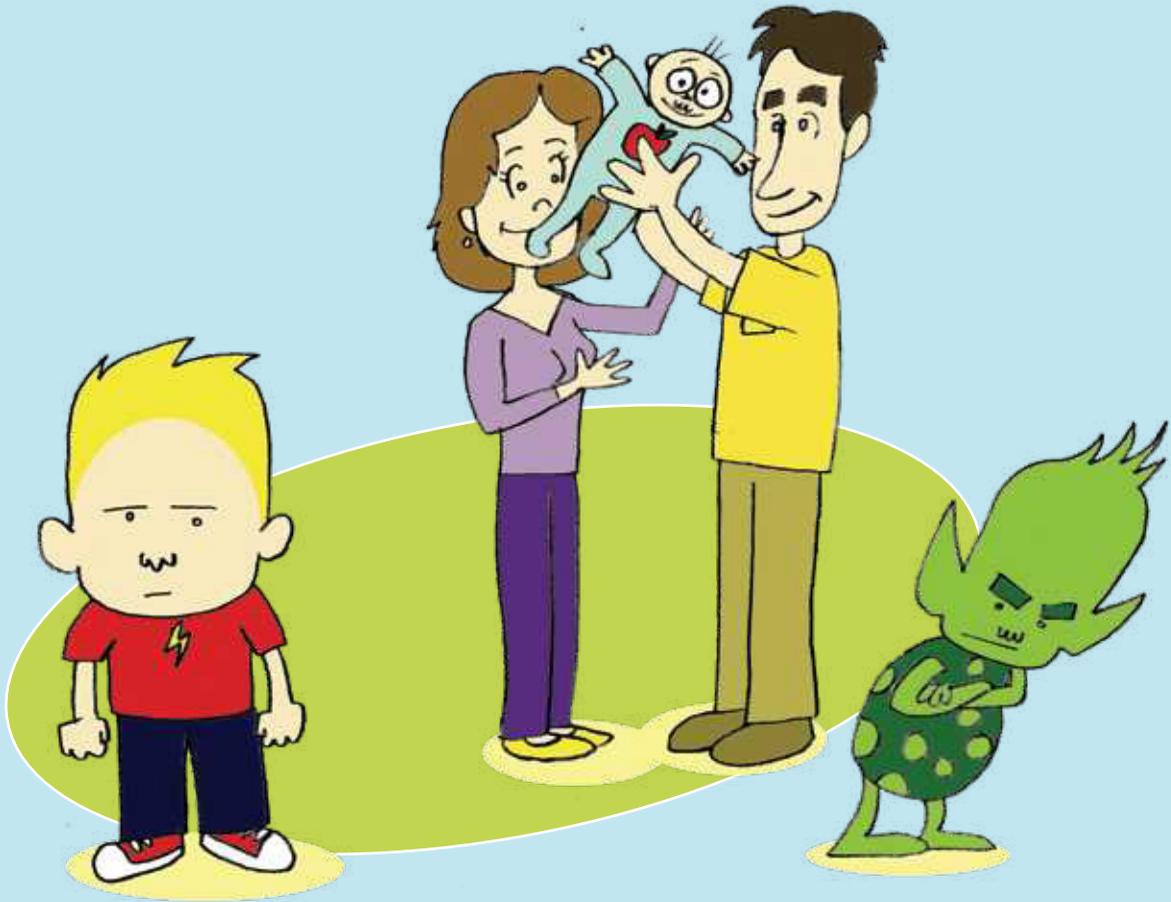


It didn't like it when Max did cute things and laughed and giggled.



It didn't like it when Max learnt new things.

And it really didn't like it when people paid more attention to Max than they did to Byron.



When Mum or Steve spent time with Max, reading or singing to him, Jealousy would whisper in Byron's ear.

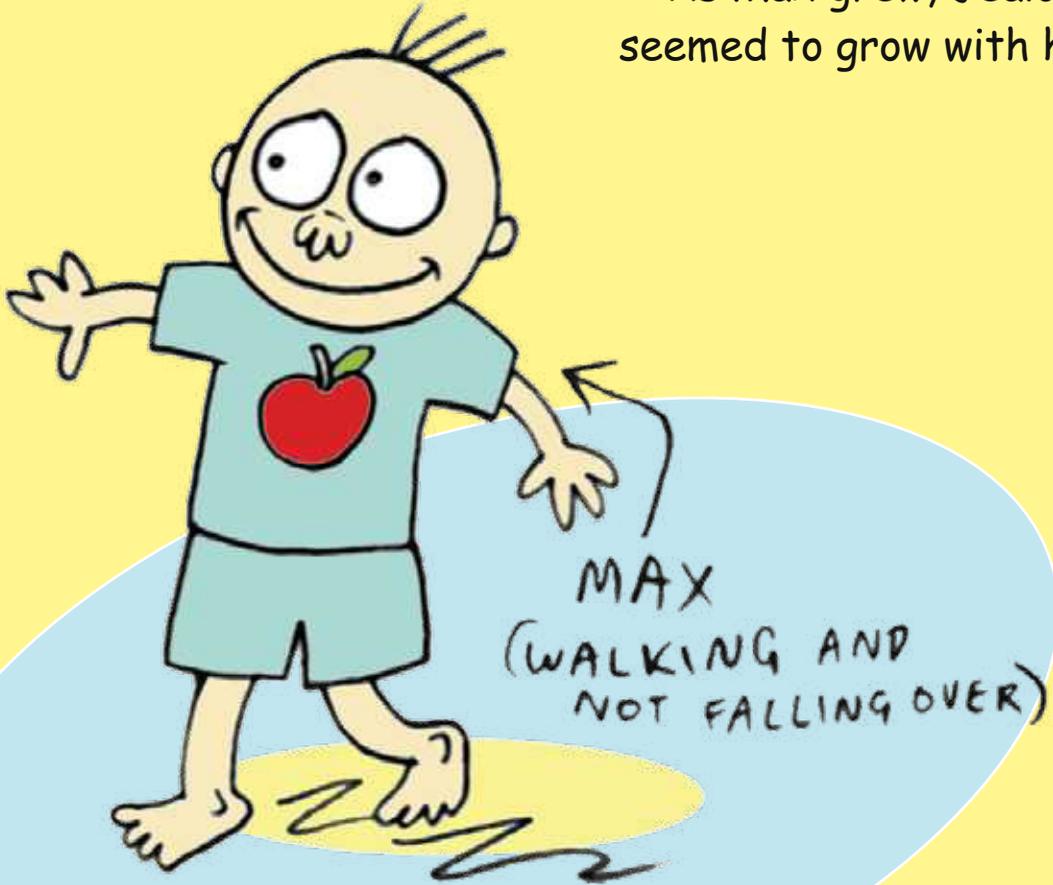


It would say things to make him angry.

It would  
say things  
to make him  
scared.



As Max grew, Jealousy  
seemed to grow with him.

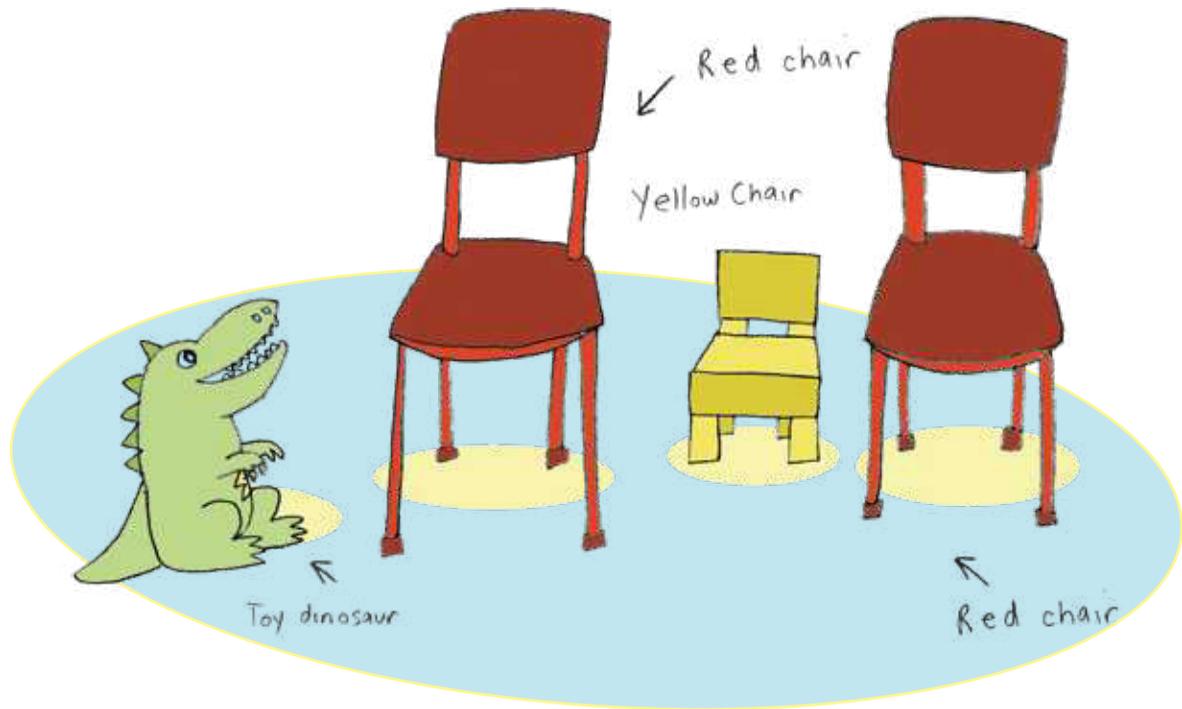


By the time Max was walking, Jealousy sat heavily on Byron's shoulder.

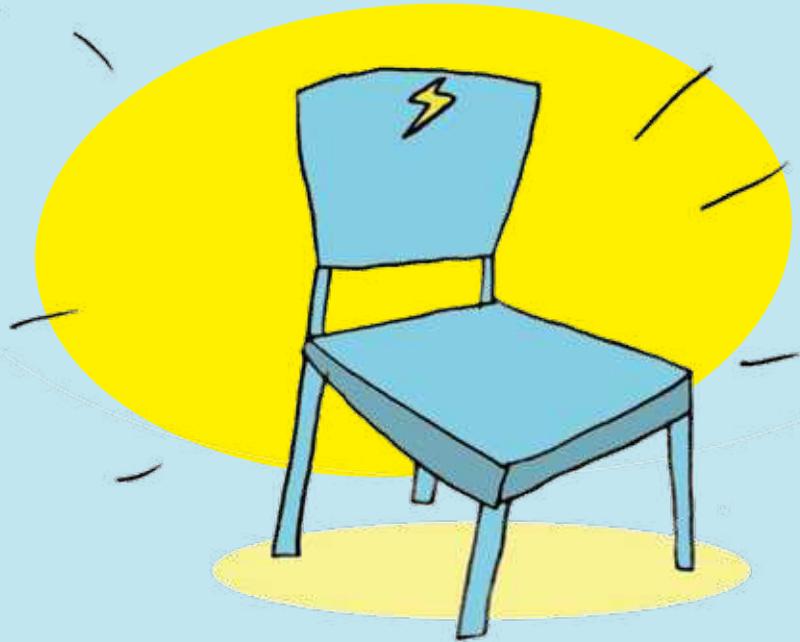
heavy



Now, in the kitchen at Byron's house there were three chairs: two red grown-up chairs for Mum and Steve, and one special little yellow chair for Byron.



One day, Mum brought home a new chair.  
A medium sized blue chair.



BLUE CHAIR  
for  
BIG KIDS  
⚡

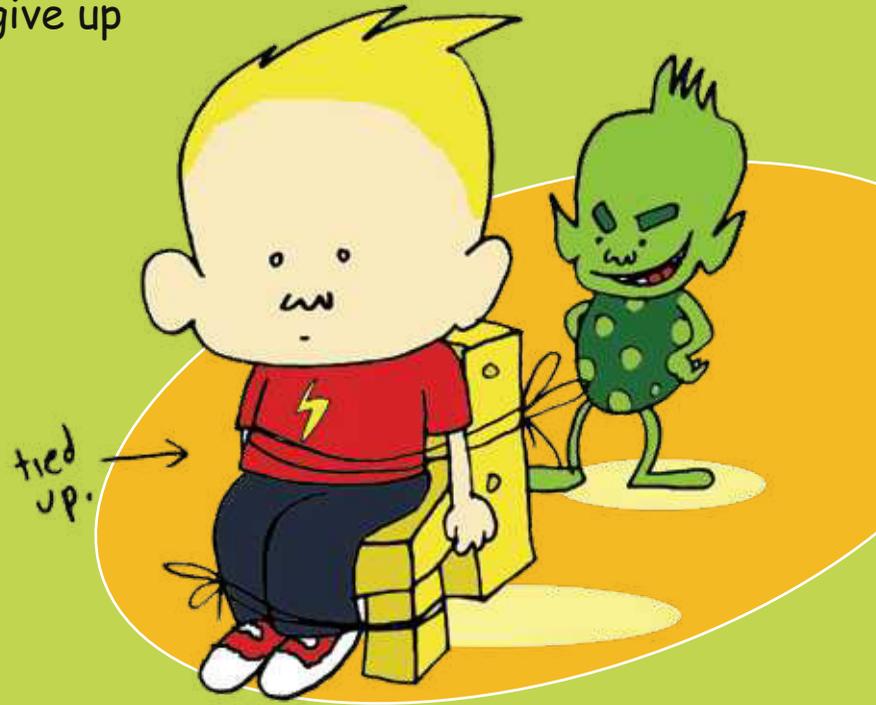
'Look, Byron, I've bought you a new chair,' she said. 'It's a blue chair for big kids like you.'

Byron kind of liked the look of the blue chair.

Then Mum said, 'Now Max can use the yellow chair.'

This made Jealousy very angry.  
It said to Byron, 'It isn't fair!  
You shouldn't have to give up  
your chair for Max.'

Jealousy was so angry,  
it tied Byron to  
the yellow chair.



Mum and Steve got very angry when Byron wouldn't move  
to the blue chair. They didn't understand that Jealousy  
had tied him to the yellow chair.

Night after night Mum would get cross with Byron because he wouldn't change chairs.

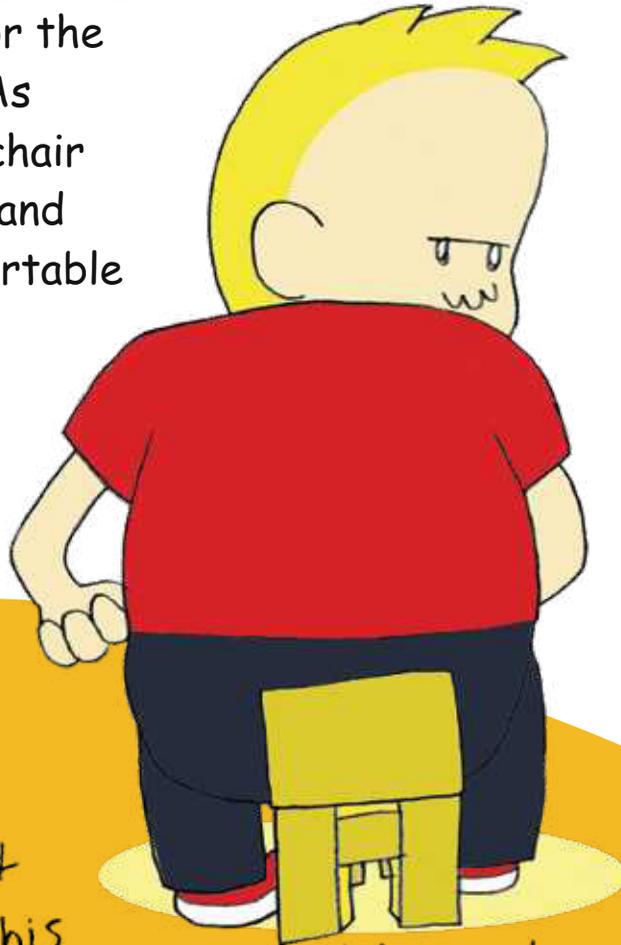


He was sick of everyone getting cross with him ...

Night after night, Jealousy would get cross with Byron if he tried.



... and he was getting way too big for the yellow chair. As he grew, the chair became more and more uncomfortable until he could hardly fit on it at all.



He wasn't really this big but it seemed like it

But Jealousy was bossier than ever  
and wouldn't let Byron change chairs.

One day Byron got really angry with Jealousy.



He was sick of the way it ordered him around and always got him into trouble.

He was sick of hearing its voice.

Byron put his hands over his ears.

Jealousy tried to yell louder  
but Byron was  
determined.

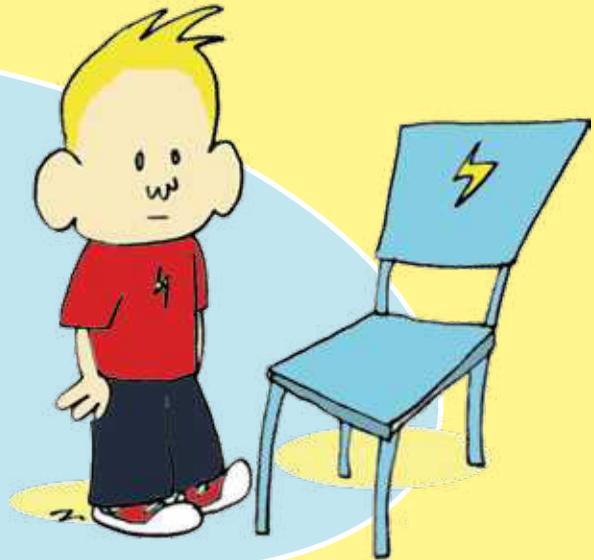


He kept his hands  
over his ears and  
ignored Jealousy.

After a while, Jealousy ran out of things to yell.



When all was quiet, Byron calmly took his hands from his ears.



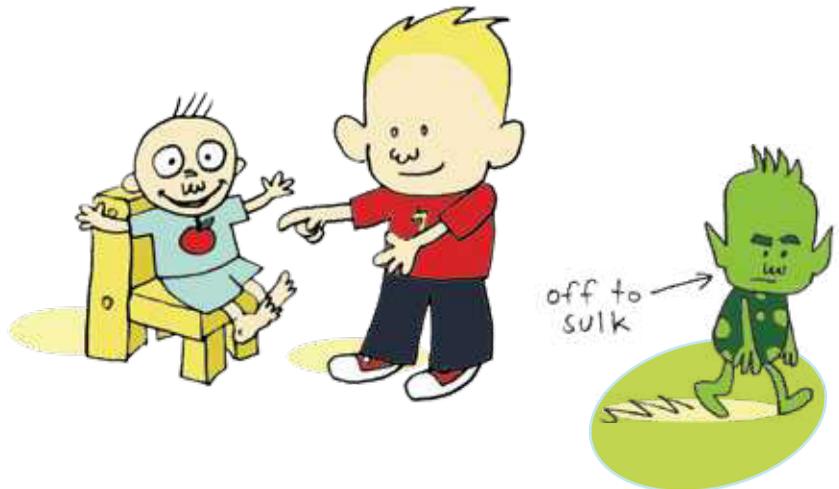
Quickly, he got up from the yellow chair and sat down on the blue chair.

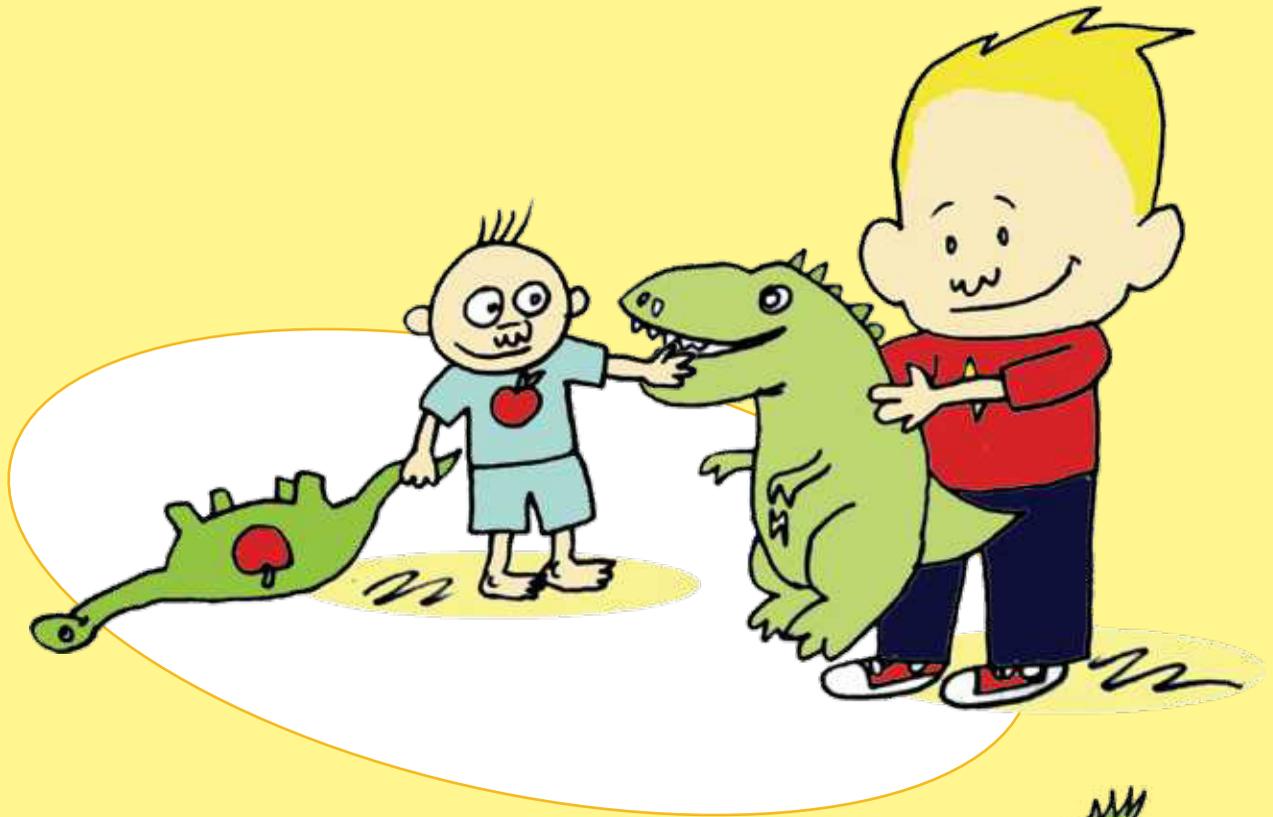


Mum was really pleased. 'I'm proud of you, Byron,' she said. She picked up Max and popped him on the yellow chair. He smiled and giggled.

Byron thought this was pretty cute and started to play with Max, which made him laugh even more.

Jealousy hated seeing Byron and Max playing together. He left the room to sulk.





Over the next few weeks  
Byron became really good at  
ignoring Jealousy.



He discovered he  
really liked playing  
with Max.



Eventually, Jealousy wasn't having any fun at Byron's house at all.

One fine Spring day Jealousy moved out. Byron was too busy playing with Max to notice.



Having too much fun



# Using this book as a learning tool

Byron was pushed around by a monster called Jealousy. We all have our stories of being pushed around by jealousy. Not only is jealousy unpleasant, it can be downright destructive. So it's great to think that we can learn to work with jealousy by using our strengths in useful and skilful ways.

This book arose out of a desire to help children develop the skills to tackle little monsters like Jealousy. The story draws on the ideas of narrative therapists including Michael White, Alice Morgan and David Epston. While some readers may wish to explore the work of these authors, no training, expertise or further reading is required to use this book with children.

These notes offer parents, teachers, counsellors—and any adult reading this book to children—some ideas for engaging with the story. As always, care and creativity are needed when planning and engaging in any activities with children. And a sense of fun and adventure is recommended too!

In the story, Byron's experience of jealousy is transformed into a little green-eyed monster who intrudes into Byron's life. It's a transformation that allows Byron's internal experience of jealousy to be externalised; to be turned into 'Jealousy'—a character with whom our hero can interact.

This allows the problem of jealousy to be talked about in ways that avoid attributing blame or criticism.

For Byron and readers of the story, questions can be phrased to reinforce the different viewpoints of the problem and the person who experiences it. For example: 'When Jealousy whispers in your ear, are there times you don't listen?' or 'How would you like to change the future that Jealousy has in mind for you?' These kind of questions not only emphasise people's sense of choice, but also provide a gateway to imagining change and life without the problem.

By grappling with his emotions in this way, Byron separates himself from his monster and can begin to focus on his strengths. The power dynamic between Byron and Jealousy is shifted, helping our hero to work towards the goal of happier relationships with his family members.

Of course, little monsters like Jealousy may never be entirely absent from people's lives. But as characters that we encounter, they can be managed, shaped and understood in constructive ways.

### How Byron dealt with Jealousy

- Draw a picture of Byron's jealousy monster. Around the picture of the monster, write down all the things that Jealousy likes and dislikes, according to the story.
- Describe the strategies which Jealousy used to try to convince Byron to stay in the yellow chair.
- Imagine you are Jealousy. How does Jealousy feel? Why doesn't Jealousy like Byron playing with Max? Some children may feel more comfortable choosing a puppet to speak as Jealousy.
- Draw Byron as Jealousy wanted him to be. Is this the kind of boy that Byron wanted to be? Now try drawing Byron as he wanted to be.
- Create a list of the qualities that make a good friend. Was Jealousy being a good friend to Byron? Adults may like to use Innovative Resources' *Mates Traits* card set to open up conversations with children about friendship and being a good friend.
- Underneath the heading 'Byron's Special Strengths', compose a list of the strengths Byron drew on to make Jealousy leave him alone. What strengths might Byron have had to help him? What strengths might he have had to develop?
- Create a picture showing Byron using his strengths to make Jealousy go away.
- What sort of relationship does Byron's family have with Jealousy? Invite the child to explore this relationship. How does Jealousy impact on each family member?



## Keeping Jealousy and other monsters under control

- Do you or your children have monsters like Jealousy in your lives? How do you tackle your monsters? What strengths do you use?
- Does jealousy affect those in your family in different ways? How do you look after each other if jealousy gets in? How do you share your different strengths?
- Who knows you are a hero at keeping Jealousy and other monsters under control? Do you have a supporter who would like to hear about your success? What strengths would your supporter say you had?
- What other success have you had at monster-taming? Can you describe the times when your monster was less bothersome?
- Can you write a story about your success at controlling Jealousy or other monsters? Perhaps there are others who might learn from your experience.



## About the Author

Dr Rebecca Sng works as a Clinical Psychologist at a Sydney clinic for children in out-of-home care. The story of Byron's heroic struggle with Jealousy began life as part of a group programme for children who struggled with problems just as tricky. Aside from writing stories and playing with kids, her other great joys are theatre, music, film-making, baking, and thinking about big problems. She is terrible at all ball sports but loves to dance.

## About the Illustrator

The first thing Simon remembers drawing is a pig. He thinks he was about three years old when he did it, but concedes that he probably drew things before that—even if they were mostly scribbles. Since then he has not been able to stop drawing, except briefly to eat, sleep and go to the toilet. He is excited about *Byron and the Chairs* because he created it with his friend Becky. He likes making puppets and playing soccer.

We all have little monsters that come into our lives.  
Byron has a little green monster in his life.  
Its name is 'Jealousy'.

When Mum brings home a new chair for Bryon,  
Jealousy decides to intervene.  
What will Byron do?

Parents, teachers, counsellors—  
here is the ideal resource for  
creating conversations with younger  
children about sibling jealousy ...and  
other emotional monsters who come  
into our lives!

