

There's a Dragon in My Closet

by John F. Green
illustrated by Linda Hendry



This book is for Maureen. —*J.F.G.*
For my friends —*L.H.*

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Jonathan Longfellow Magee awoke one morning and found a dragon in his closet. It wasn't one of those little lizards you find in a pet shop. Hardly! This dragon was huge!

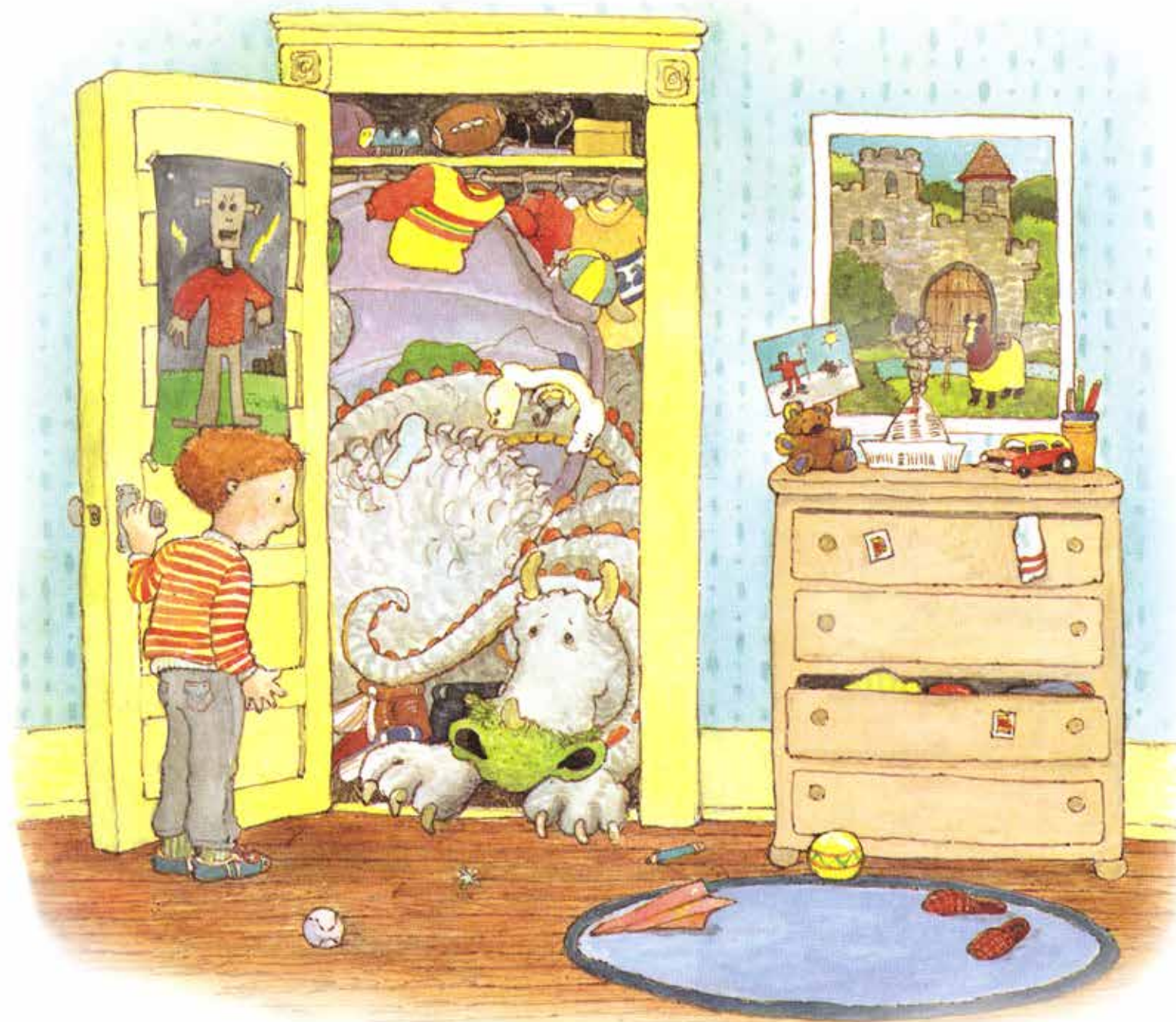
The dragon was sitting all scrunched up like a pretzel, its long tail wrapped around its neck three times just so it could fit in the closet. It was covered with silver scales that curled up like sardine can lids. Spikey whiskers stuck out from its broad green snout, where two nostrils perched like twin railway tunnels in the side of a mountain. Unhappy eyes peered out at Jonathan.

“Hey, how did you get in there?” asked Jonathan.

The dragon looked embarrassed. “I’m not too sure. I was chasing a knight through the forest when he disappeared around a corner. I was going so fast I couldn’t stop, and I guess I skidded off the page. The next thing I knew I was folded up inside this closet.”

“Hmm,” said Jonathan thoughtfully, “it must have been that book about dragons I brought home from the library yesterday.”

“Maybe you’d better find a different place to keep your books,” said the dragon. “It’s a bit crowded in here. Got any ideas how I can get back where I came from? I sure could use my nice roomy cave.”



“Let me work on it,” Jonathan answered, and he closed the door. Then he opened it again. “By the way,” he asked, “do you breathe fire?”

“Only when I sneeze,” sniffed the dragon, “and I only do that when I’m nervous.”

“Oh,” said Jonathan. He closed the door again, carefully, and went downstairs.



Jonathan's mother was in the kitchen. "Mother," he said quietly, "there's a dragon in my closet."
"That's nice, dear. Eat your breakfast, or you'll be late for school."



Jonathan's father was in the den. "Father," he said politely, "there's a dragon in my closet."
"Not now, son, I'm late for a meeting."



Jonathan's big brother was in the hall getting his books ready for school. "Guess what," said Jonathan. "There's a dragon in my closet." His brother laughed. "Don't be silly," he said.



Jonathan's baby sister was under the piano bench in the living room playing with the dog. When he told her about the dragon, she said, "Yecchpssth."



As he left for school, Jonathan met the letter carrier coming up the walk. "Hi, Jonathan. What's new?"

"There's a dragon in my closet," he answered eagerly.

"Yeah, and I've got Moby Dick in my bathtub!" said the letter carrier, slapping her leg in glee.



At the house next door, the delivery man from the meat market was ringing the doorbell. "Hey," Jonathan yelled across the hedge, "there's a dragon in my closet!"

The delivery man raised one eyebrow and said, "Humpf!"

Things didn't go much better at school.

"Oh, sure," said one friend when Jonathan told him his news.

"Fat chance," said another.

One shrugged, one snickered, one doubled over laughing. No one believed him.

At recess Jonathan asked his teacher if he could speak to him privately.

"Of course, Jonathan. What would you like to talk to me about?"

"Well," said Jonathan carefully, "when I got up this morning, there was a dragon in my closet."

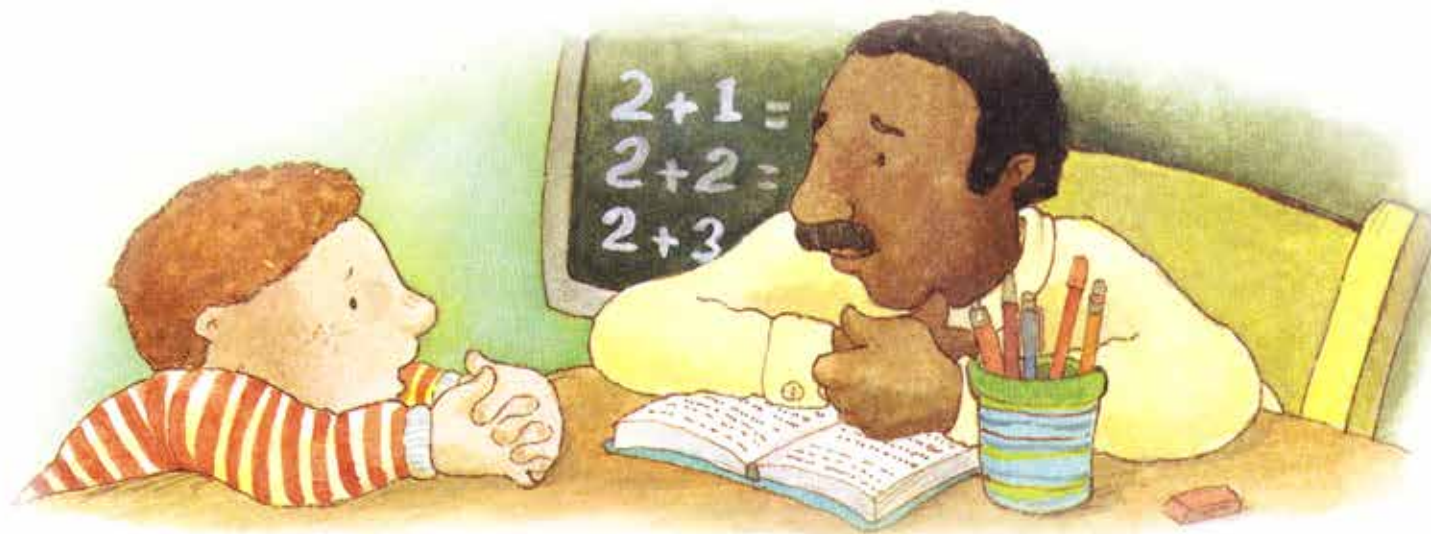
"How exciting!"

"The problem is," Jonathan continued, "nobody believes me."

"You must admit," his teacher said, "that a dragon is a strange thing to find in a closet." He winked at Jonathan.

"What do you think I should do about it?"

His teacher coughed politely. "Maybe you should take another look. Maybe you just imagined you saw a dragon."



After school Jonathan hurried home as fast as he could. He burst through the front door, bounded up the stairs to his room, took a deep breath, and yanked open the closet door.

The dragon was still there.

"You're still here," said Jonathan.

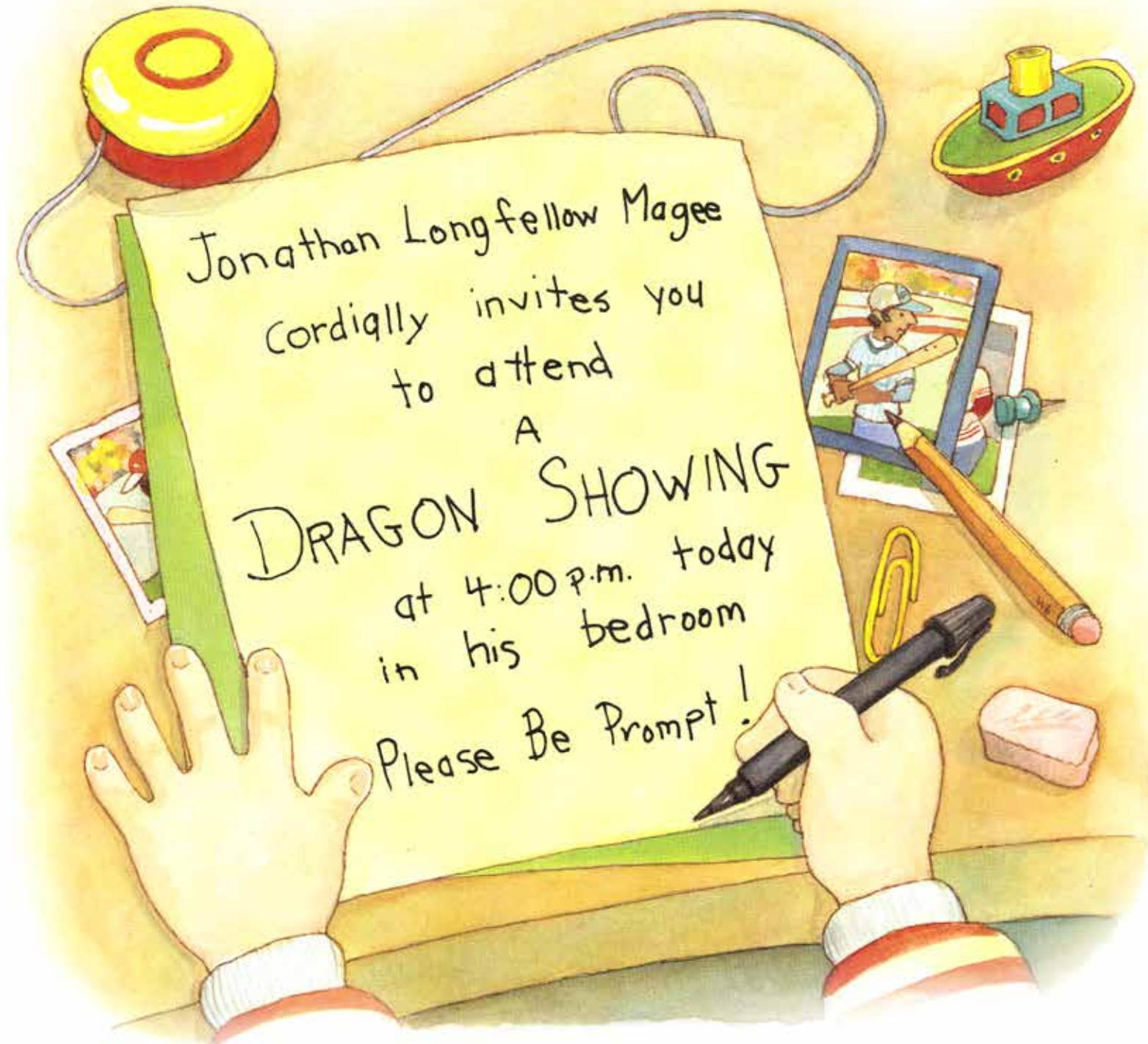
"Yes, I'm still here," replied the dragon crossly.

"You must be hungry," said Jonathan. "What do dragons eat for dinner?"

"Toads, snails, worms, bats—"

"Never mind," Jonathan interrupted. "I'll bring you a peanut butter and jelly sandwich."

After he fed the dragon, Jonathan sat down at his desk and took out some paper and a pen. This is what he wrote:



He wrote the same invitation over and over again. Then before he went to bed, he checked one more time to see if there really was a dragon in his closet.

The next morning at breakfast, Jonathan gave an invitation to his mother, who said, "How delightful! Of course I'll be there."

He gave another to his father, who said, "Very clever, Jonathan. You can count on me."

He gave one to his big brother, who stuffed it into his back pocket without even looking at it.

He even gave one to his baby sister, who chewed happily on it for the rest of the morning.

On the way to school, he gave one to the letter carrier and another to the delivery man. "Imagine that!" said the letter carrier to the delivery man. "The kid really believes he has a dragon in his closet!"

He gave each of his friends one, and at recess he handed the last invitation to his teacher.

"It's still there!" he whispered.

"No kidding!" his teacher whispered back. "Well, I'll certainly be there to see it."





Promptly at four o'clock that afternoon, Jonathan led everyone upstairs to his bedroom.

First came his mother carrying his baby sister in her arms. His father followed closely behind, then the letter carrier, the delivery man, his big brother, and his teacher. Two of his friends were there and a couple of kids from his baseball team who were curious about what was going on.

