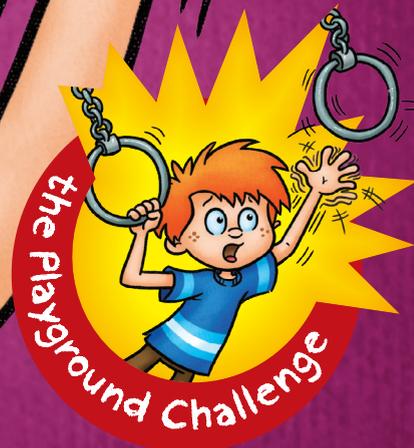


Zach Hangs

In There



William Mulcahy

illustrated by
Darren McKee

free spirit
PUBLISHING®

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Dedication

To Kegen, Makenna, and Masen.
Never forget: Life and love are extraordinary. Hang in there.

Acknowledgments

Thank you once again to Eric Braun, master editor and occasional mind reader.

For ideas on the makeup of persevering, thank you to Rebecca Toetz, principal at Cushing Elementary, and Kelli Lewis.

For the endless nourishment I have received through the years while working there on my stories and my life, thank you to Rochester Deli.

To the rest of the crew that circulates ideas and images in my heart and mind at home: Thank you, Liam, Luke, and Jack.

Lastly, I am thankful for Melissa, for the great gift of parenthood, and for our newest addition. Welcome, Shannon Helen.

Zach went out to recess with his best friend, Sonya.

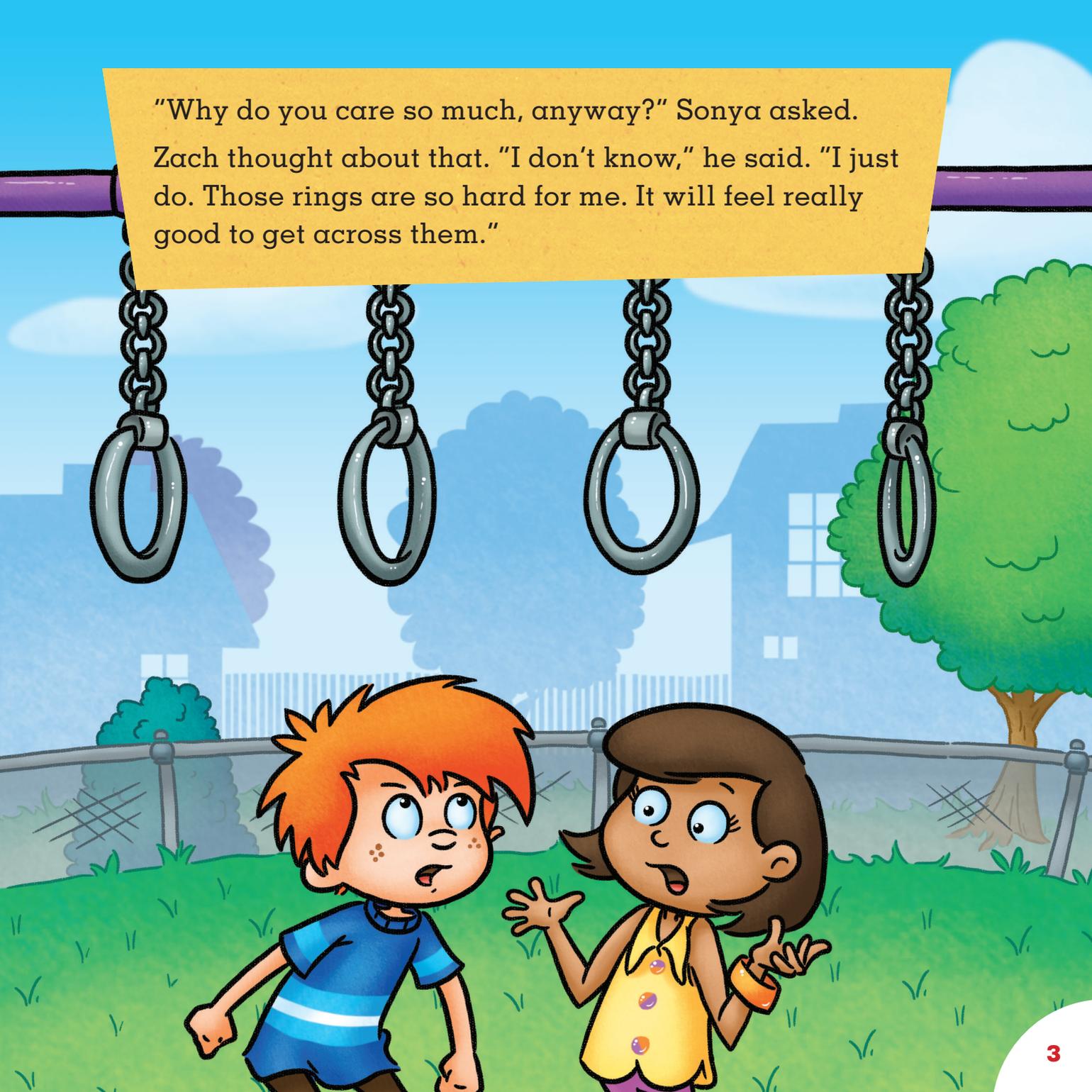
"Are you going to the trapeze rings **again**?" Sonya asked. Lately they had been going there every recess.

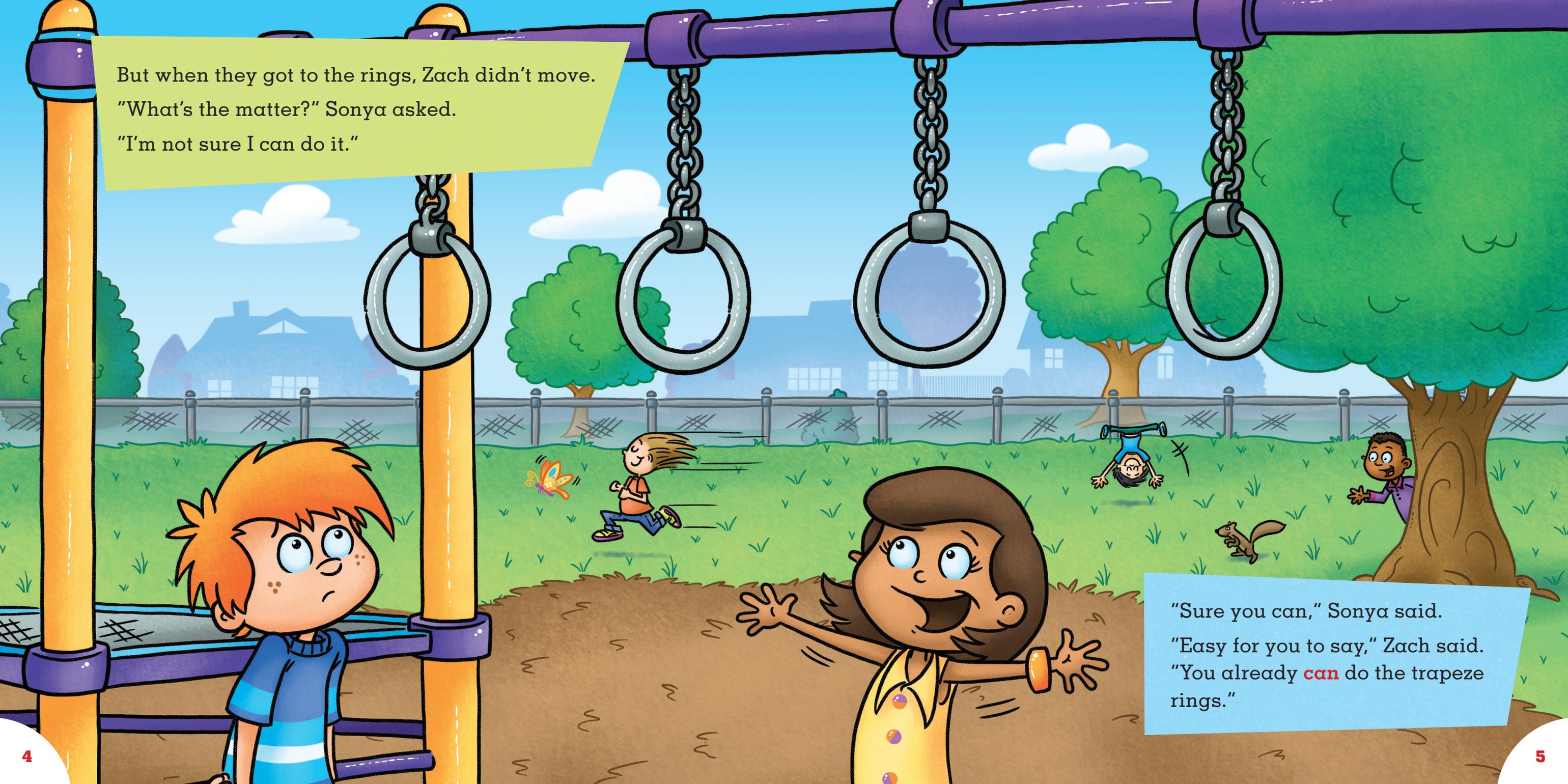
"I have to get across them," Zach said.



"Why do you care so much, anyway?" Sonya asked.

Zach thought about that. "I don't know," he said. "I just do. Those rings are so hard for me. It will feel really good to get across them."





But when they got to the rings, Zach didn't move.

"What's the matter?" Sonya asked.

"I'm not sure I can do it."

"Sure you can," Sonya said.

"Easy for you to say," Zach said.

"You already **can** do the trapeze rings."

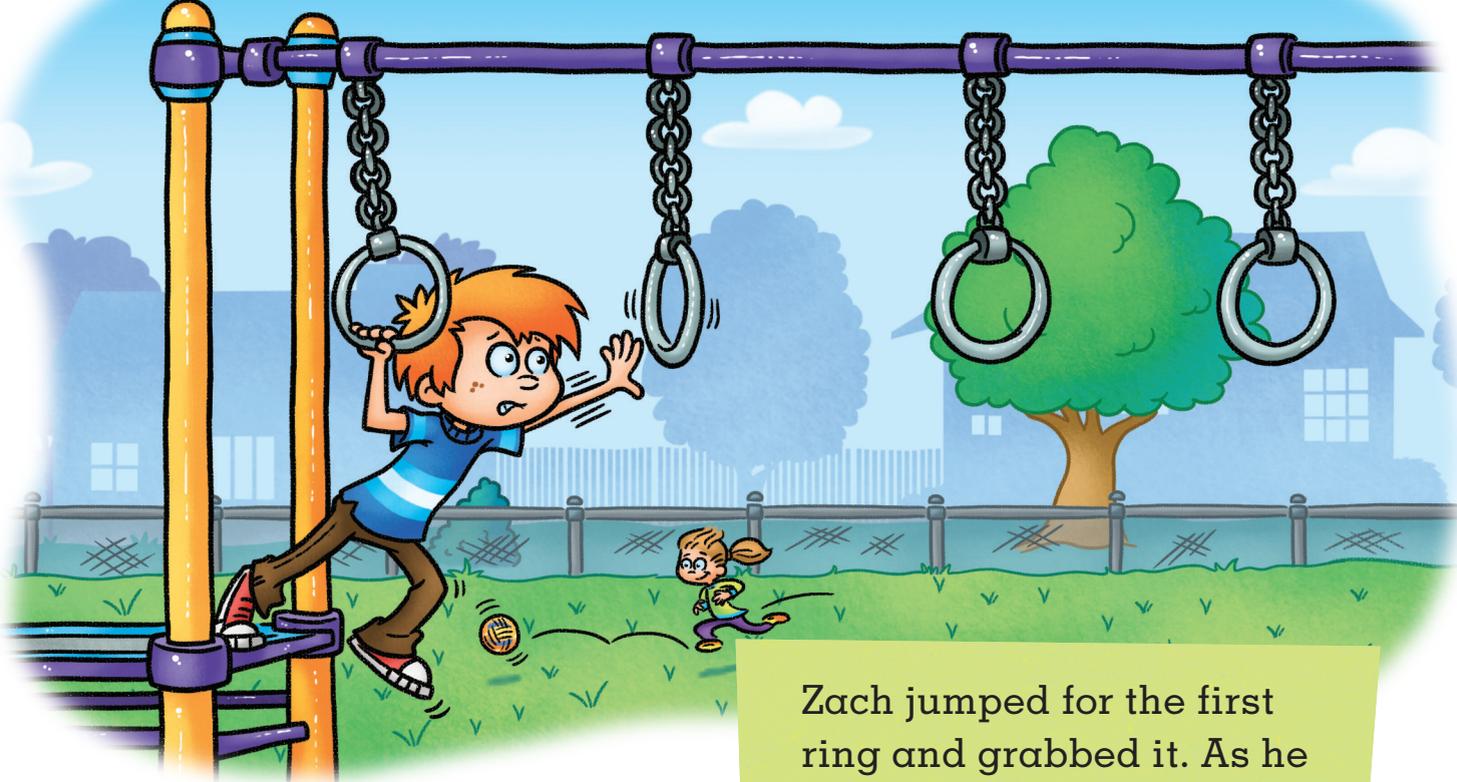


"I couldn't always do them," Sonya said. "It took me a lot of tries. Do you know what your plan is?"

Zach climbed up to the platform. "My plan is to try not to look stupid."

"No, I'm serious," Sonya said. "My dad says when I try something hard it helps to have a plan."

Zach had never really thought of having a plan. He just wanted to get across without falling. Then he got an idea. "My plan is to go across as fast as I can before my arms get tired."

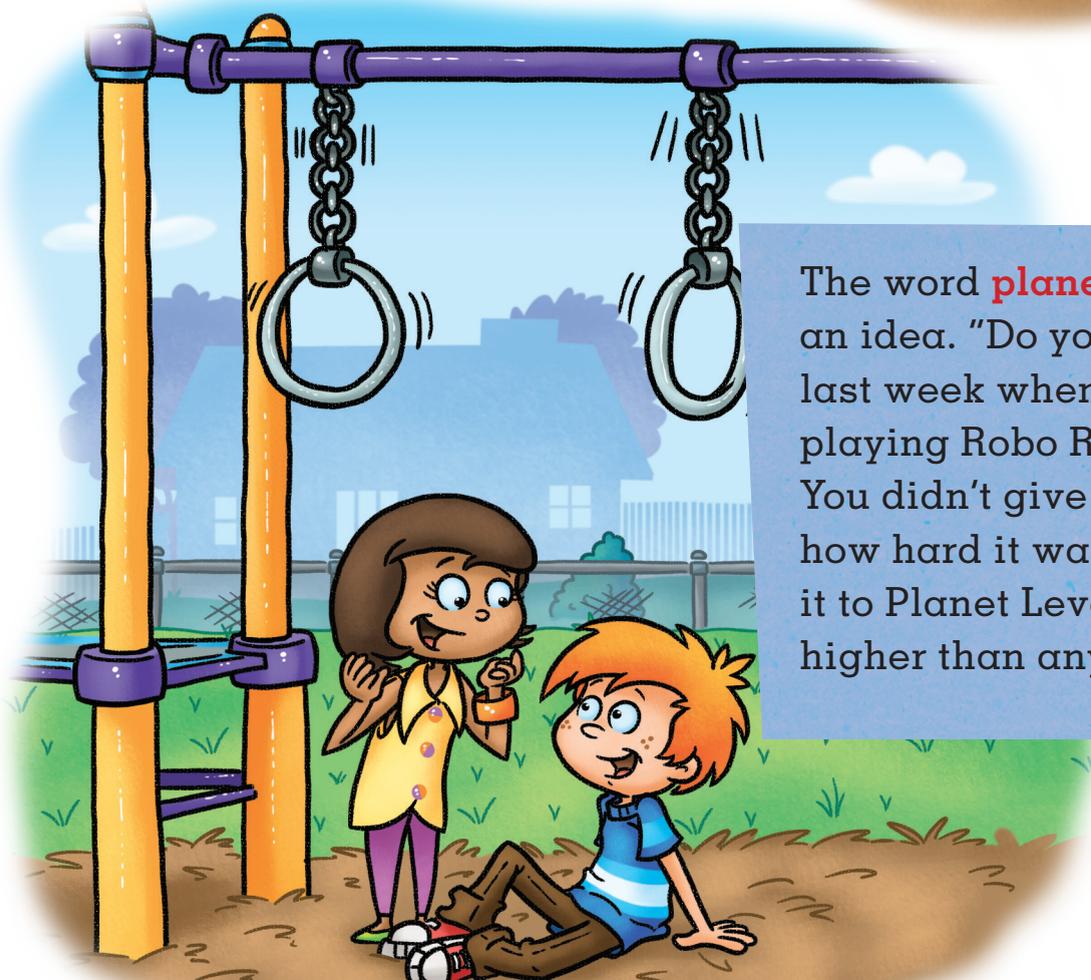


Zach jumped for the first ring and grabbed it. As he lunged for the second ring, his fingers slipped and he fell to the ground.

"Aargh!" Zach yelled. "I am so **done** with these rings!"

"But you almost made it," Sonya said.

"What planet are you on?" Zach said.



The word **planet** gave Sonya an idea. "Do you remember last week when we were playing Robo Rocket Quest? You didn't give up no matter how hard it was. You made it to Planet Level 12. That's higher than anyone I know."

Sonya was right. Zach had managed to get by the slippery banana missiles while moving backward and sideways through an asteroid field. Sometimes a missile destroyed his ship. When it did, he found a new way to get through the field on his next turn.

Zach said, "I've got to come up with a new way to do the trapeze rings. My way doesn't work. How do **you** do them?"

Sonya shrugged. "It's hard to explain. Here, I'll show you."

SCORE
2,369,541,322

LEVEL
12