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The Diversity Cube and the Cloud Wizard

Written and illustrated by

Hazem Nassar

Dedication

To all the children in the world wherever they are. A special dedication to my little Nadine; I hope your beautiful mother and I will read this story to you over and over when you're all grown up and ready to make this world a better one.

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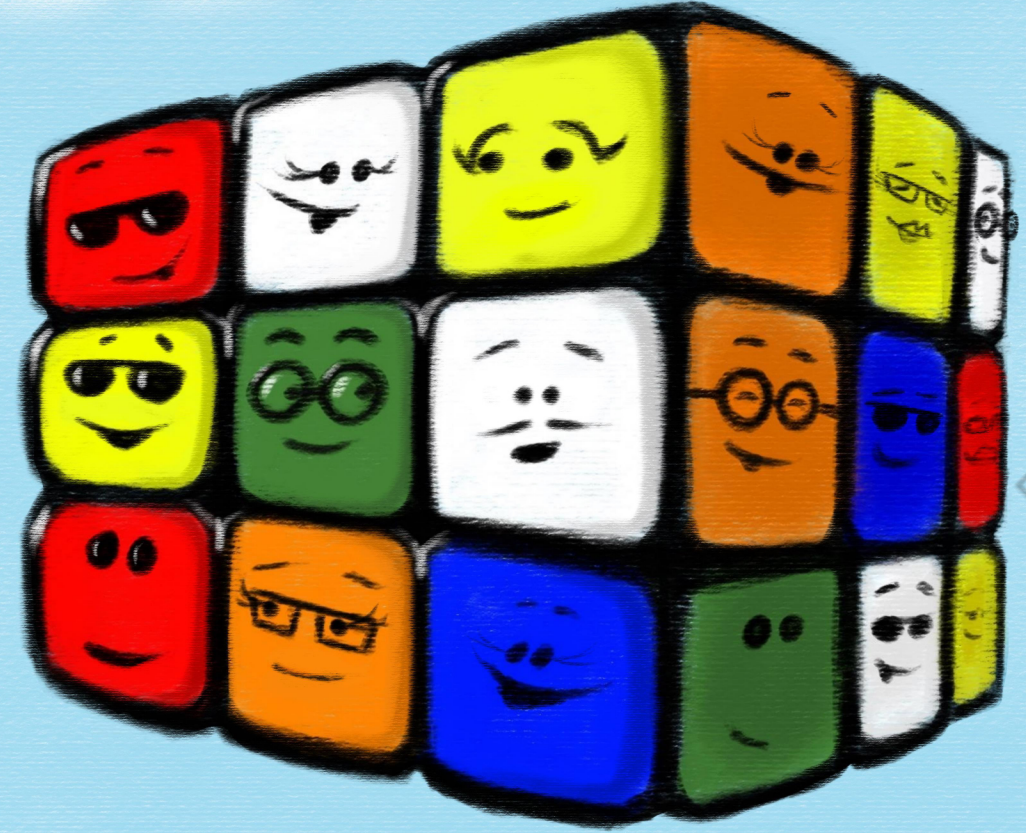
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Long ago, in a land far, far away, there lived a group of squares. The squares were all different colors. They all had different names and spoke different languages.



And yet, they lived together in peace.

The squares were a curious group. They wanted to learn more about their neighbors.

And so it was that they often moved around, eager to get to know one another.

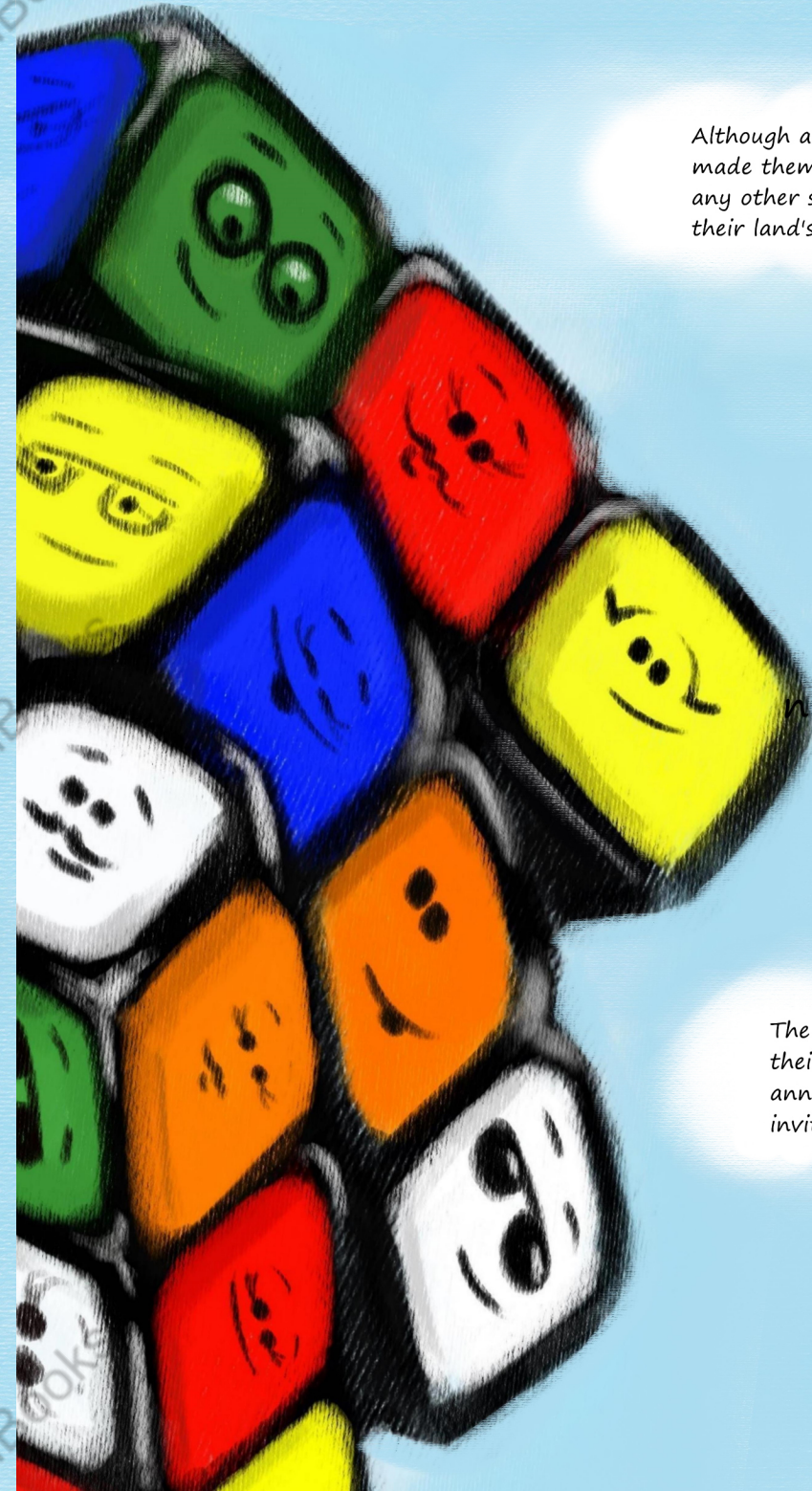


Among these squares were a group of best friends. They called themselves "the bestest six."



Although all of different colors, their curiosity made them alike. These six read more than any other squares, and wanted to know about their land's history.

The more they read, the more they appreciated their diversity. The bestest six decided to hold an annual festival to celebrate diversity, and they invited the other squares to join them.



The festival began with the blowing of a whistle.



At the sound, the squares started moving around to meet their friends of different colors. With each stop, they learned new things about each other.

All day this went on, until at last, the whistle was blown again.



In one voice, the squares shouted:

We are the diversity cube!

One night, as they were getting ready for the festival, Clem's neighbor Orong started whispering to him.

Hey,
Clem

Yes, Orong

"Do we have to do this festival thing? I never understood the point of it. Why do we have to mingle with other colors? They look and sound funny. They're too loud. And besides, we're much smarter than they are."

Clem was confused and concerned. "That's not nice, Orong. You wouldn't want anyone to talk like that about you."

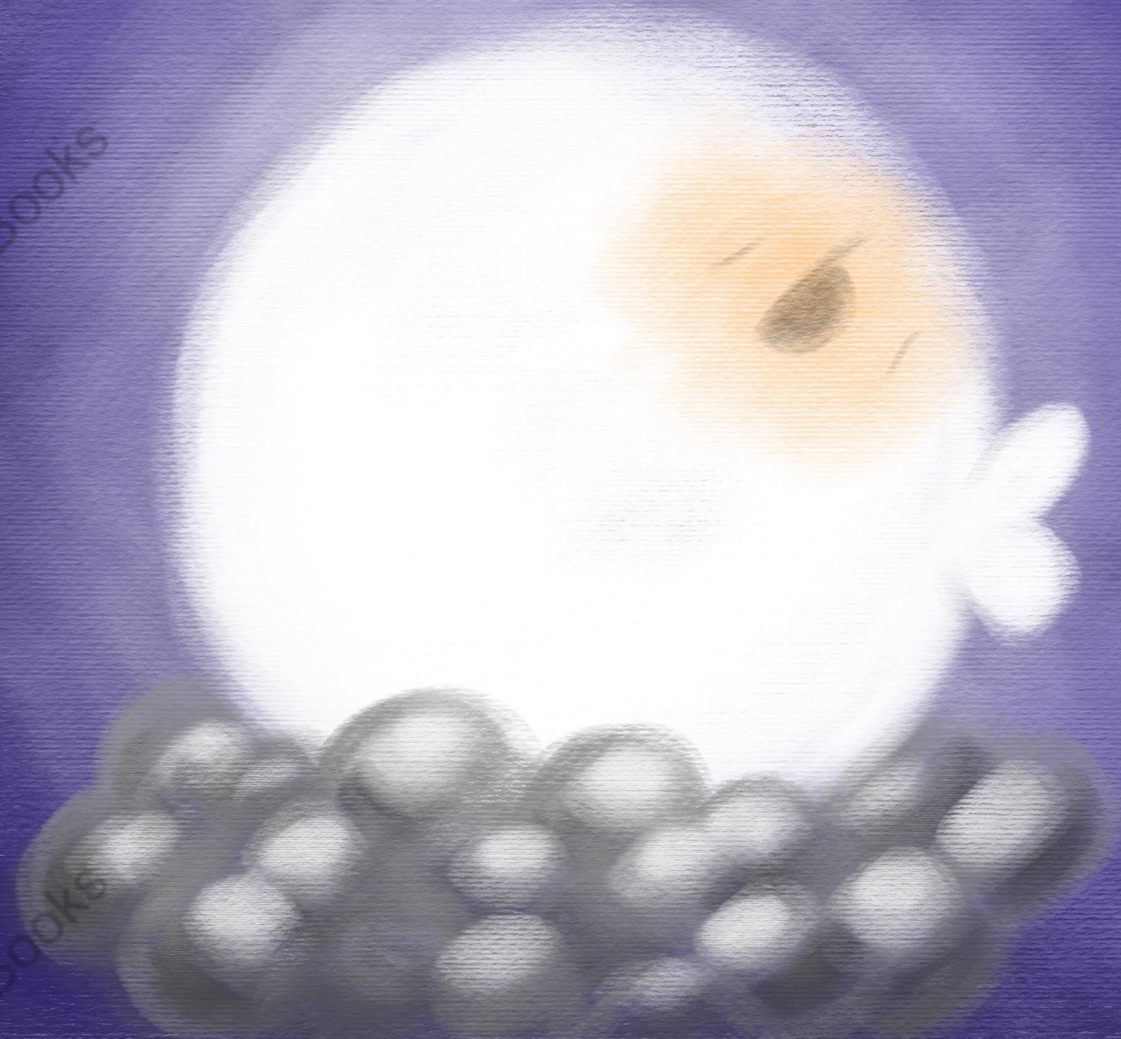
"My friends and I read that there used to be other cubes like ours," Clem continued. "But their colors remained separate. Then they mysteriously disappeared. The festival is to remind us of our unity despite our differences."

"Maybe they ended up moving to a better place, where the colors don't have to mingle with each other," Orong grumbled. "You'll see. Mixing is no good. And I'm sure many oranges will agree with me."

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But what Orong didn't know was that someone far away was listening to him—an evil wizard named Druff who was bent on destroying all the diversity cubes.

"Looks like we found the one you're looking for, Master," the wizard's crystal ball said.



"Indeed, my dear, Tenticle," Druff said, sly smile crossing his face. "Indeed we have."

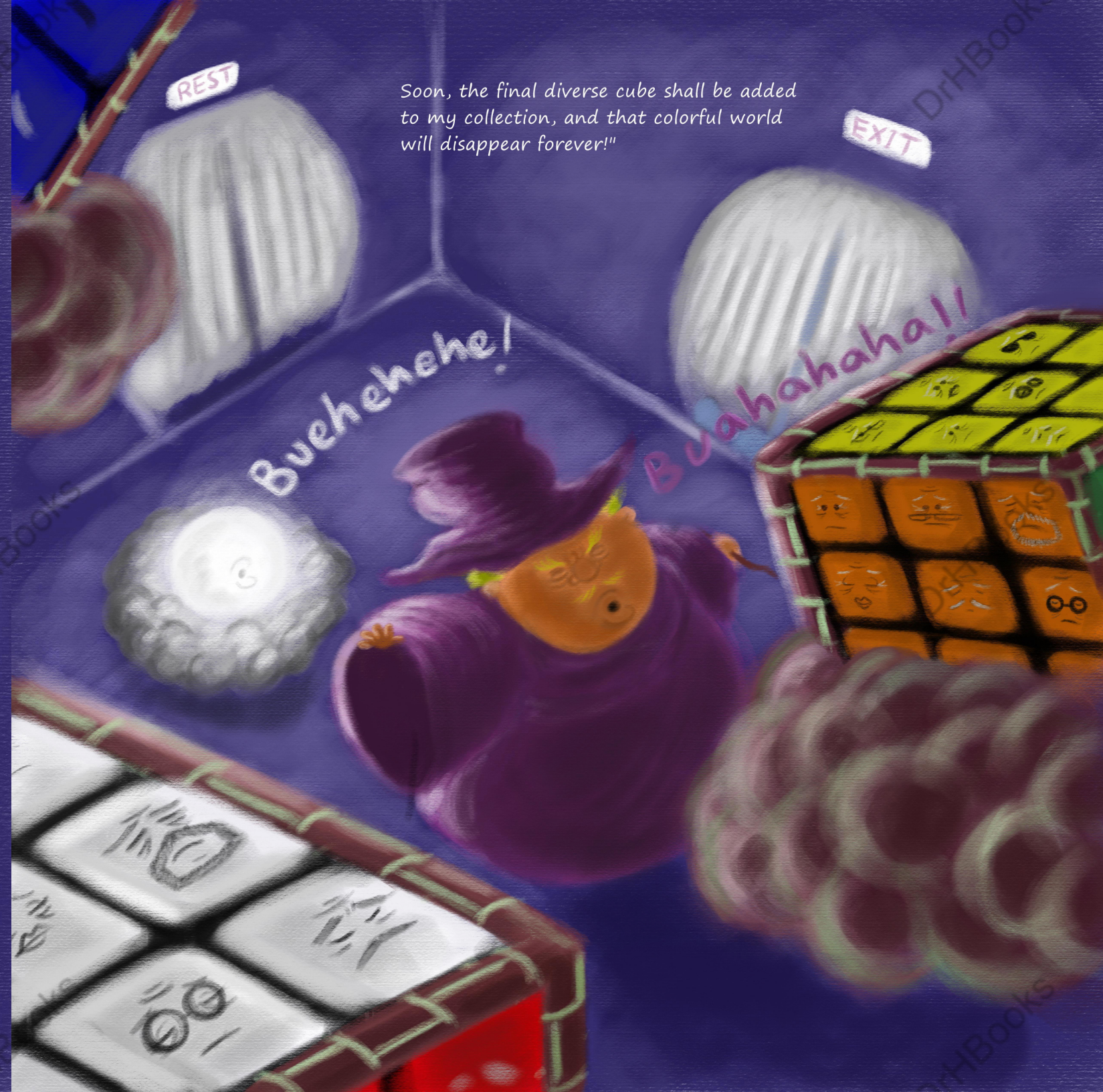
Druff wasted no time. Mixing together his evil potions, he soon made a covering of clouds. But one ingredient was missing. One that he could never give to his potions on his own.

"No matter how powerful my sorcery is, I always need someone's willingness to help spread my poison," Druff said. "Orong shall be our target."

Yummy...



Soon, the final diverse cube shall be added to my collection, and that colorful world will disappear forever!"



Druff gathered the fumes of his evil potions and fed them to Tenticle. As the crystal ball pushed the clouds toward the Diversity Cube to work their magic, Druff cast his favorite spell . . .

Racism.

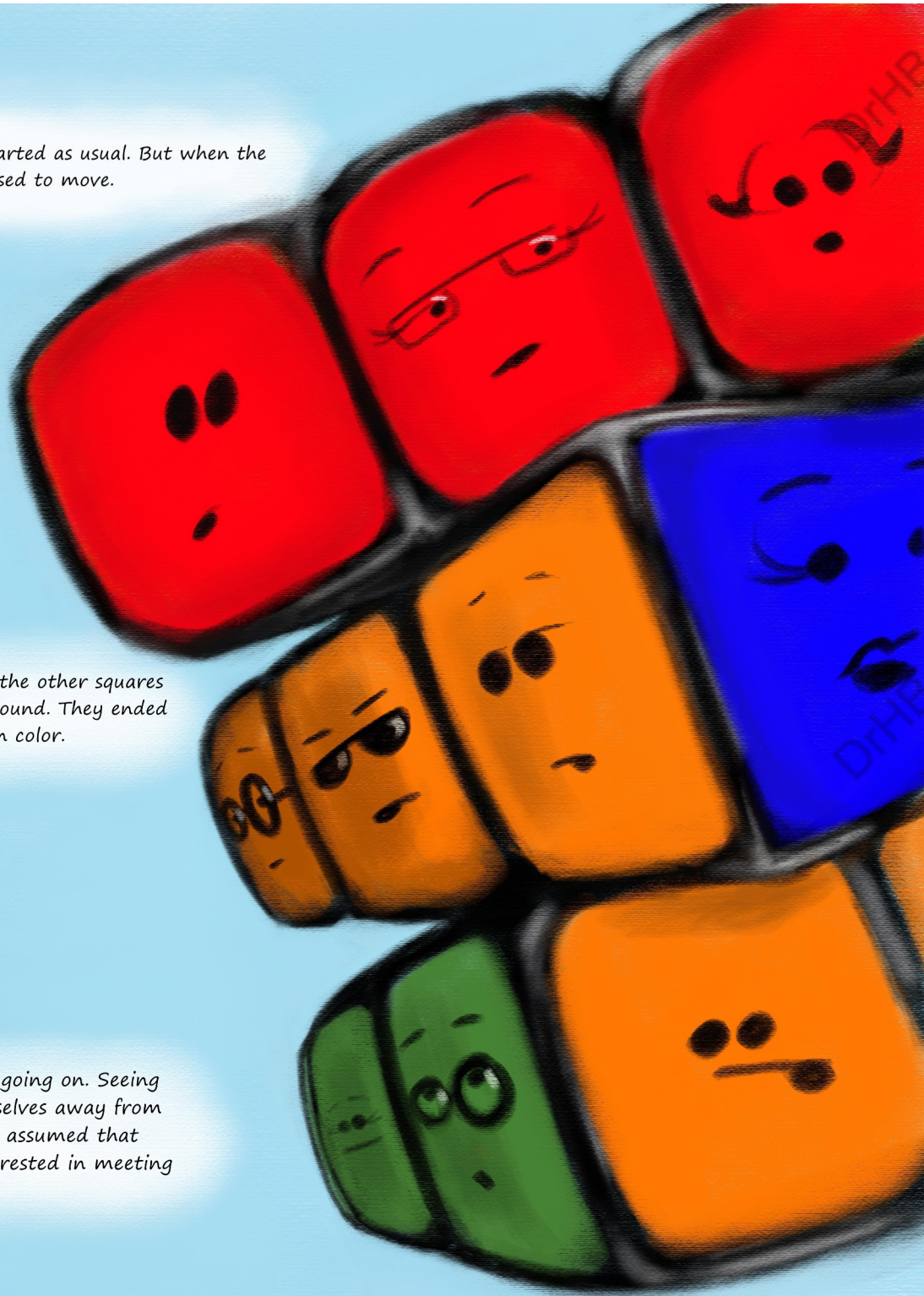
Cloooooouds
Borders

Spells
and
Walls!!

Spells
and
Walls!!

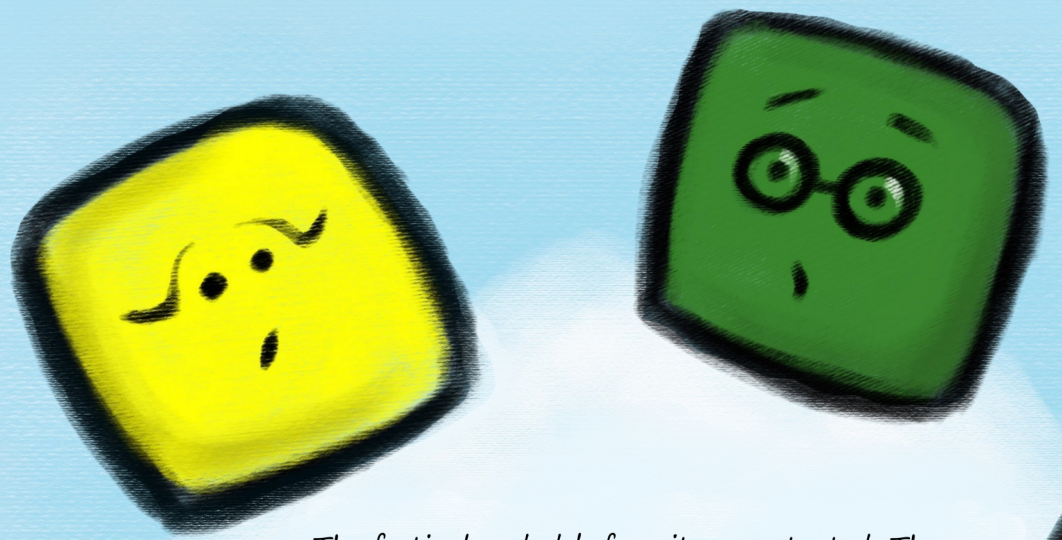


The next day, the festival started as usual. But when the whistle sounded, Orong refused to move.



With Orong staying still, the other squares found it hard to move around. They ended up staying near their own color.

Nobody knew what was going on. Seeing the colors keeping themselves away from other colors, the squares assumed that the others were not interested in meeting them.



The festival ended before it even started. There was no moving. No mingling. And no shouting. Instead, the colors started talking about how others kept themselves away. Some said they didn't even care to be near other colors who weren't as smart as they were, or who looked, acted, and sounded different.



The bestest six could hardly believe their ears. They did not agree with what was being said, but what could they do?





On the orange's side of the cube, Orong repeated his claims that the other squares were not worth speaking to.



As he spoke, Druff's cloud appeared over the cube.

Suddenly, the other orange squares began to agree with Orong. The cloud swirled over the cube. It rained drops of evil over the oranges and formed walls around the squares.

And then . . . THE CUBE FROZE!




Some squares tried moving again, but couldn't. Now they were more convinced than ever that it was the other squares' doing.

They did not want to meet and were keeping the cube from moving! Each group started claiming that their color was superior. They even started calling each other names!

The cloud started raining again, but this time over the whole cube, forming walls similar to the ones around the orange squares.

Only the bestest six were able to keep the evil emotions from getting to them.





"My stomach is turning, Master Druff,"
Tenticle complained. "These six are annoying
with their friendship and tolerance. How
much longer before we bring them over here?"

"Patience, Tenticle. They will soon forget
about their friendship and follow the
others," Druff answered.

But Druff had misspoken. Hearing the words
"friendship" and "tolerance" woke something up
inside the squares of his imprisoned cubes.

These were words they have not heard
since they were separated. They, too,
had fallen prey to Druff's poisons. They
had lost tolerance with each other and
lost their unity. Now, they were stirring.

On the Diversity Cube, Yolky, Khadar, and Clem managed to sneak closer to each other.

Clem told them about Orong's talk the other night.

"It seems like there's someone on each side who felt the same way." Khadar said.

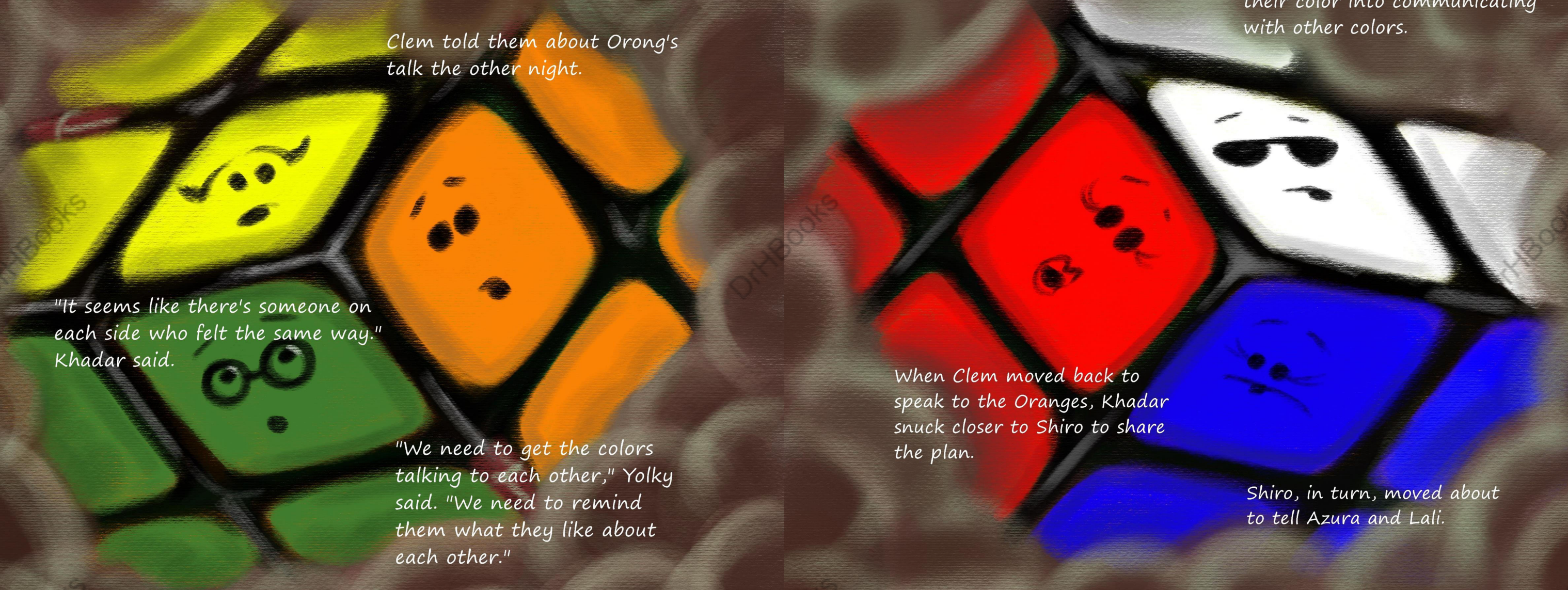
"We need to get the colors talking to each other," Yolky said. "We need to remind them what they like about each other."

Together, the three came up with a plan.

Each one of them needed to talk their color into communicating with other colors.

When Clem moved back to speak to the Oranges, Khadar snuck closer to Shiro to share the plan.

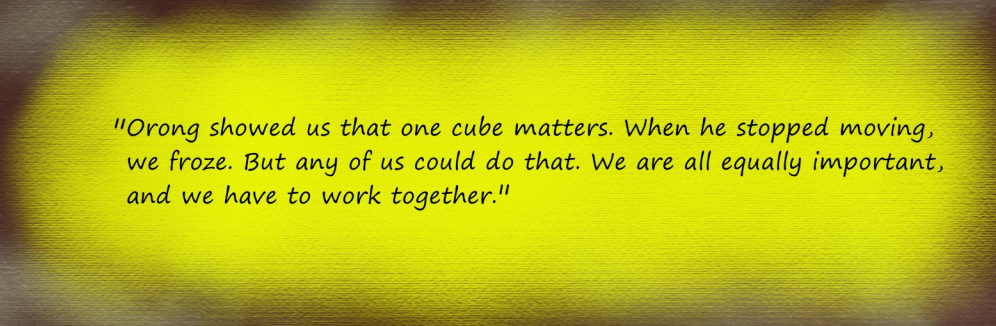
Shiro, in turn, moved about to tell Azura and Lali.



The bestest six got right to work.



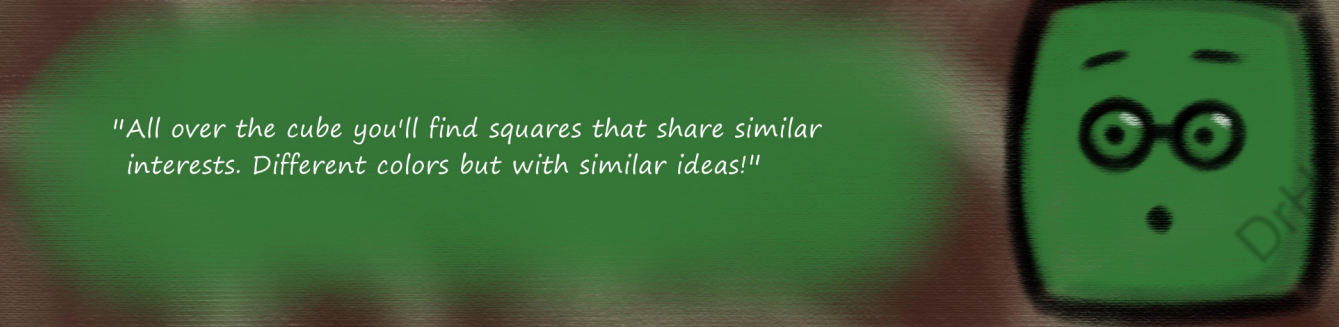
"We all have the same shape, and are made of the same material."



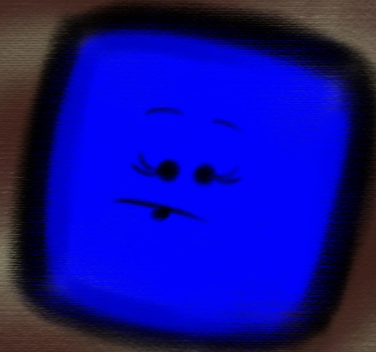
"Orong showed us that one cube matters. When he stopped moving, we froze. But any of us could do that. We are all equally important, and we have to work together."



"The difference in our color is what makes this cube a complete one. Think of how boring it would be not to experience new things. Think of all the things you're missing out on."



"All over the cube you'll find squares that share similar interests. Different colors but with similar ideas!"



"Look at us when the cube is shuffled. It's much harder to separate us! Our strength is in our unity."



"Some squares sing really well; some have the best jokes; some tell the best stories. They all learn from each other, and we're lucky to see the different styles of their skills."

Tenticle rushed into the rest room, where Druff liked to think and plan, startling him with urgent news.

Maasterr
Druffff!!

Whaattt!!

"You've got to see this, quick!" the crystal ball yelled.

"Can't you see me restin—oh, no . . ." Druff started panicking.

A collection of colorful, hand-drawn apology notes with various faces and messages:

- Red note:** Lati is absolutely correct
- Blue note:** I apologize
- Green note:** You're right, Khadar
- Yellow note:** I'm really sorry
- Orange note:** I'm so sorry everyone
- White note with glasses:** I shouldn't have acted like that

They are
communicating!!!

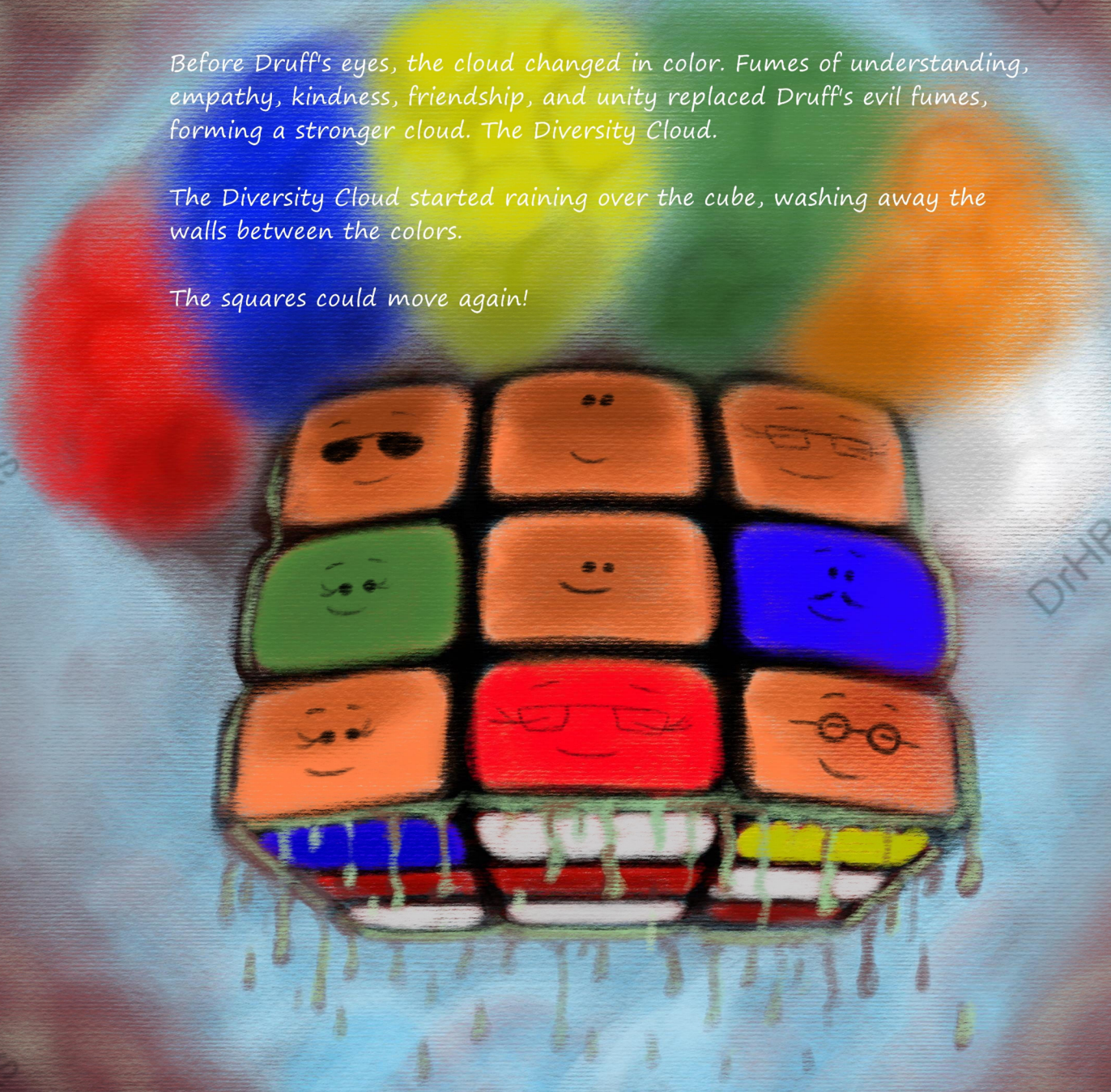


It stinks
in heere!!

Before Druff's eyes, the cloud changed in color. Fumes of understanding, empathy, kindness, friendship, and unity replaced Druff's evil fumes, forming a stronger cloud. The Diversity Cloud.

The Diversity Cloud started raining over the cube, washing away the walls between the colors.

The squares could move again!





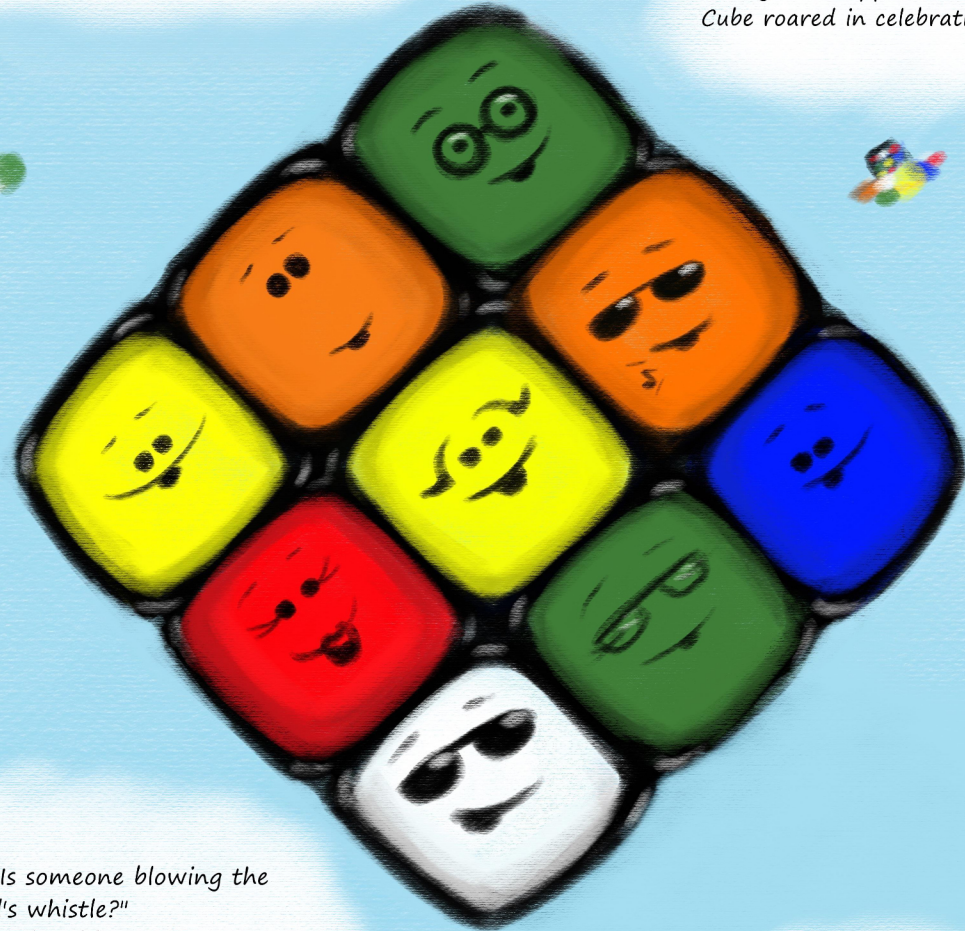
Tenticle tried to suck the Diversity Cube carried by the racism cloud into Druff's world, but instead, the more powerful Diversity Cloud came out.

Druff desperately chased Tenticle away, but it was too late.

More diversity clouds formed, dissolving the walls around the imprisoned cubes and setting them free.



Driven by immense joy and navigated by fond memories, the long-lost cubes rode the Diversity Clouds back to their land.



"Huh? Is someone blowing the festival's whistle?" Shiro said suddenly.

Seeing them approaching, the Diversity Cube roared in celebration.

Clem looked around. "Look! It's Orong!"

The bestest six smiled as, louder than ever, the squares all shouted:



"We are the diversity cubes!"

The End . . . ?

About the author

Hazem Nassar, the author of *The Peeking Chick*, and *Dr. Adam and the Virus*, was born in late 1979 to Palestinian parents in Kuwait, where he also grew up and completed his undergraduate education. He then graduated from medical school in Karachi, Pakistan, before moving to the United States, later on, to work as an internal medicine physician.

Ever since childhood, Hazem has had a passion for drawing and storytelling, which he eventually managed to dedicate more time to after completing internal medicine residency, leading to the selection of many of his works for several international theme-based exhibitions in different countries around the world.



A group of different-colored squares living in harmony. But someone does not like this.

Dive into this original, unique, unheard of, one-of-a-kind, unusual, extraordinary tale about diversity, tolerance, friendship, unity, acceptance, kindn...

