

Drew Anderson,
**Lemonade
Maker**

Can Drew's sour summer
turn sweet?

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*To my students, who listened to every chapter
and told me exactly what they thought.*

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Boredom and Flying Bears

“LOOK, MOM!” DREW waved as he flew down the sidewalk on his brother Mike’s skateboard, hauling his stuffed bear Bruno behind him in the wagon. Mom stopped pulling weeds to watch him whizzing past the house. Drew looped around and skateboarded back. “I didn’t tip the wagon once!” he announced proudly. “That proves I can give the baby really fast rides once he’s here. Bruno is perfectly safe with me. The baby will be too. You’ll see!”

Mom smiled. “Didn’t I see Bruno face-plant on the sidewalk half an hour ago when you started too fast?”

Drew dug his flip-flop into the freshly pulled pile of weeds. “I guess. But it won’t happen again. I’ll be more careful with the baby.”

“I know you will be.” Mom tossed another weed onto the growing pile. “I don’t have any doubts that our baby will be the most well-cared-for child we’ve ever had—with all three of you older children so eager to help.”

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“May I go the whole way up to the end of the street and try it one more time?” Drew begged. “I could go so much faster if I had a longer stretch to try it on.”

“I guess,” Mom conceded. “But after that ride, I want you to help me in these flower beds while it’s still nice and cool outside.”

“Okay. I’m off!” Picking up the wagon handle, Drew skateboarded up their street. When he reached the top of the hill where Cedar Street intersected Fifth Avenue, Drew turned the wagon around and settled Bruno into an upright position. “All right, bear, get ready to fly!”

Grasping the wagon handle firmly, he pushed off. Drew had skateboarded down the same hill many times, but not with the wagon behind him. “Whoo-ee! We’re really flying!” With gravity pulling and the wagon pushing, he had never coasted so fast.

Halfway down the hill, Drew glanced back to see if Bruno still sat upright and smiling. At the same time, the neighbor’s dog dashed out onto the sidewalk in front of him. By the time Drew saw Hank, it was too late to stop—he was going too fast.

Drew leaped off his skateboard onto the neighbor’s lawn to keep from hitting the dog. Landing on his feet, he staggered forward, trying not to fall. *Bang!* The wagon hit him from behind, knocking him down while something large and fuzzy sailed over his head and landed in the bushes. Dazed, Drew sat up. The wagon stopped on top of him. The skateboard lay upside down in the gutter, wheels spinning. Bruno stood on his head in a forsythia bush, still grinning.

“Drew! Are you okay?” Mom hurried over while Hank bounded toward Drew to lick his face.

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"I think so. No, Hank." Drew pushed him away, got up, and brushed himself off. "That was such a failure. Hank, you stupid dog! It's your fault." Hank bounced around excitedly, barking in agreement.

"I'm glad you're practicing on a bear and not a baby," Mom said, picking up Bruno and brushing leaves and sticks off him. "Bruno smiles regardless, but the baby probably wouldn't enjoy flying into a forsythia bush."

"Can I try it one more time?" Drew pleaded, picking up the skateboard. "I want to end with a really good ride."

"No, it's time to get busy," Mom said. "Put the skateboard and wagon away, and take Bruno into the house. Then I have a big pile of weeds for you to bag up for the garbage man."

Drew sighed and ran his hands through his curly brown hair. "All right." Dragging Bruno by one arm, he plodded into the house. His only sister Audrey stood in the kitchen, mixing something in a large bowl.

"What are you making?" Drew peered into the bowl.

"Cinnamon rolls," Audrey answered, whisking away. "Mom wants to give some to her doctor at her appointment this afternoon. What are you doing?"

"I have to help Mom with the flower beds."

"No, I mean, what are you doing with Bruno?"

"Oh, I was practicing how to give the baby wagon rides while I skateboard. I put Bruno in the wagon to take the baby's place."

"You're way ahead of schedule. It's only May, and the baby won't be here until August!" Audrey said. "And you know Mom won't let you give the baby wagon rides until she's older."

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"Duh, Audrey! I know all that!" Drew rolled his eyes. "But I don't have much to do, and it was fun. So there!" He licked his finger and stuck it into the sugar canister. "And I'll be giving our little *brother* rides, just so you know!"

"Drew, that's so gross." Audrey took the sugar away from him. "Shouldn't you get outside and help Mom?"

"I'm going." Reluctantly, Drew tossed Bruno onto his bed and headed back outside.

"Mom, do you think Dad will find anything for me to do this summer? I just know I'm going to be so bored unless he finds me a job!"

"He's thinking about it." Mom held out a trash bag. "Here, put all those weeds into this."

Drew slowly picked up a handful. "Do you think the job will be fun?"

"That depends on you," Mom said with a smile. "If you have a good attitude, even flower beds can be fun."

"I wish I could go to work with Dad or with Mike," Drew said wistfully.

"Someday you will," Mom assured him, smoothing soil around a freshly planted flower. "But you really don't want to sit in the office with Dad all day."

"No," Drew admitted. "But I'd love to go to Mike's job with him! Detailing cars all day would be fun!"

"Great idea! You can clean out the van after we're done here," Mom said. "It badly needs to be vacuumed."

Drew sighed and packed another handful of weeds into the bag. Trust Mom to find more work for him. Maybe they should

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talk about something else. “Could we go to the library this afternoon? It’s the first day of summer vacation, and we always go to the library during summer vacation!”

“Not this afternoon. I have a doctor’s appointment.” Mom stood up, brushing the dirt from her hands. “Maybe another day, Drew. Your summer vacation has just begun!”

“I sure hope Dad finds me a real job. A paying job,” Drew said. “That would make this summer vacation so much more fun!”

“Ask him tonight,” Mom suggested. “But right now, I’d like you to run to the garage and bring me another bag of mulch.”

At the supper table that evening, Dad asked, “Drew, how was your first day of summer vacation?”

“Boring,” Drew said. “Mom and I weeded flower beds, and I folded piles of laundry and cleaned the van. Oh, and I made Bruno fly! That’s about it.” He helped himself to a large serving of lasagna. “When will you find a real job for me?”

Dad grinned. “I already did. Or maybe I should say, I found some part-time work for you. It won’t keep you busy all day, but I think it will help that boredom problem.”

“You did?” Drew set his fork down. “Tell me quick!”

“Have patience, and I’ll explain.” Dad drizzled ranch dressing on his salad. “On my way home tonight, I was praying about you and your need for work. Then God gave me a wonderful idea! When I picked up Mike, I asked him what he thought of the plan. He thinks it’s brilliant—the perfect job for you—if we could find someone who would hire you. So we stopped and talked to a few neighbors before we got home. They liked our idea too.” Dad paused and took a bite of lasagna.

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"Go on, Dad."

"We have at least three neighbors with dogs cooped up in their backyards. They would love for you to take those dogs out every day for exercise. What do you think? Walking dogs!"

"Dad! Are you serious? That would be so much fun. I've often felt sorry for Hank. Mr. and Mrs. Riley almost never walk him, and I can hear him whining in their backyard. Did you ask them, Dad?"

"Sure did. They were excited about it. When they do let Hank out in the front yard, he goes crazy."

Drew smiled at Mom. "Yes, I had to deal with him just this morning."

"You'll be walking four dogs, two at a time, for half an hour each day. It'll come out to an hour of walking. Are you up to that?"

"Oh, that's easy. I could do way more dogs than that." Drew reached for the dish of applesauce.

"We'll start with four and see how you get along," Dad said. "The other three dogs are farther down the street. The nurse who lives in the blue house has a chocolate Lab and a German shepherd that she calls her babies. She said if you do a good job, she might have you feed them when she works night shift since her schedule messes up their mealtimes."

"Dogs with mealtimes." Drew grinned. "She must be a real dog lover. And that Lab and German shepherd are beauties. I've seen them. Who is the other person with a dog, Dad?"

"I can't remember his name. You boys shoveled snow off his walks last winter, I believe."

"The man who lives in the green house with white shutters, Drew," Mike interjected.

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“Oh, yes, George Lewis.” Drew nodded. “He’s always so chatty. I didn’t know he had a dog, though.”

“His dog lives in a kennel at the back of the house,” Dad continued. “It actually belongs to his son, but the son is gone a lot of the time. Because of his knee problems, Mr. Lewis can’t walk the dog. It never leaves the kennel unless the son is home. Mr. Lewis will be glad for it to get some exercise.”

“Poor critter. It’s going to have an awful lot of bounce, if it doesn’t get out more than that,” Drew exclaimed. “I can hardly believe this. Four dogs to walk every day!”

“I have a few guidelines for you,” Dad continued. “I don’t want you going far from home. We’ll figure out a loop you may walk. Then you’ll go around and around it until you get the dogs’ time in.”

“This is perfect. Why didn’t we think of it before?” Drew’s eyes shone. “If I can’t have a dog of my own, this is next best. God really answered your prayer.”

“Yes, but it will take work, son. Every day, except Sundays or rainy days, you’ll be walking those dogs up and down the same sidewalks, unless one of us can go with you. You can’t shorten that half-hour walk without a good reason because they are paying you for that amount of time. And once you commit to doing it, you need to see it through.”

“I can do it, Dad. What about when we go to the family gathering or go camping?”

“I’m sure you can get time off for those events,” Dad assured him.

“It’s only an hour of work a day,” Mike said. “What else are you going to find for him to do, Dad?”

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"I'm not sure yet. Maybe we'll find more dogs for him to walk. One step at a time."

"Can you come show me the route right now, Dad?" Drew asked. "I can't wait to get started."

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Betty, Max, Oswald, and Hank

DREW TAPPED HIS foot impatiently. He checked his watch again. He had been waiting more than five minutes for Audrey to appear. *I'm not planning to sit on the porch steps all morning*, he grumped to himself. Today was the day—the day he would start walking dogs. Audrey was going with him to talk to the dogs' owners, but she was still cleaning up the kitchen.

Minutes later—though it felt like hours—the door opened behind him, and Drew leaped to his feet. “Let’s go! That took you forever.”

“If ten minutes is forever, then I guess it did.” Audrey shut the door behind her and hurried to catch up with him.

Crossing the street, Drew strode up the sidewalk with Audrey at his heels until they reached the house at the corner. Then he stopped and took a deep breath. “Shall I knock or ring the doorbell?”

“Whichever you like,” Audrey said. “I can do it, if you’re scared.”