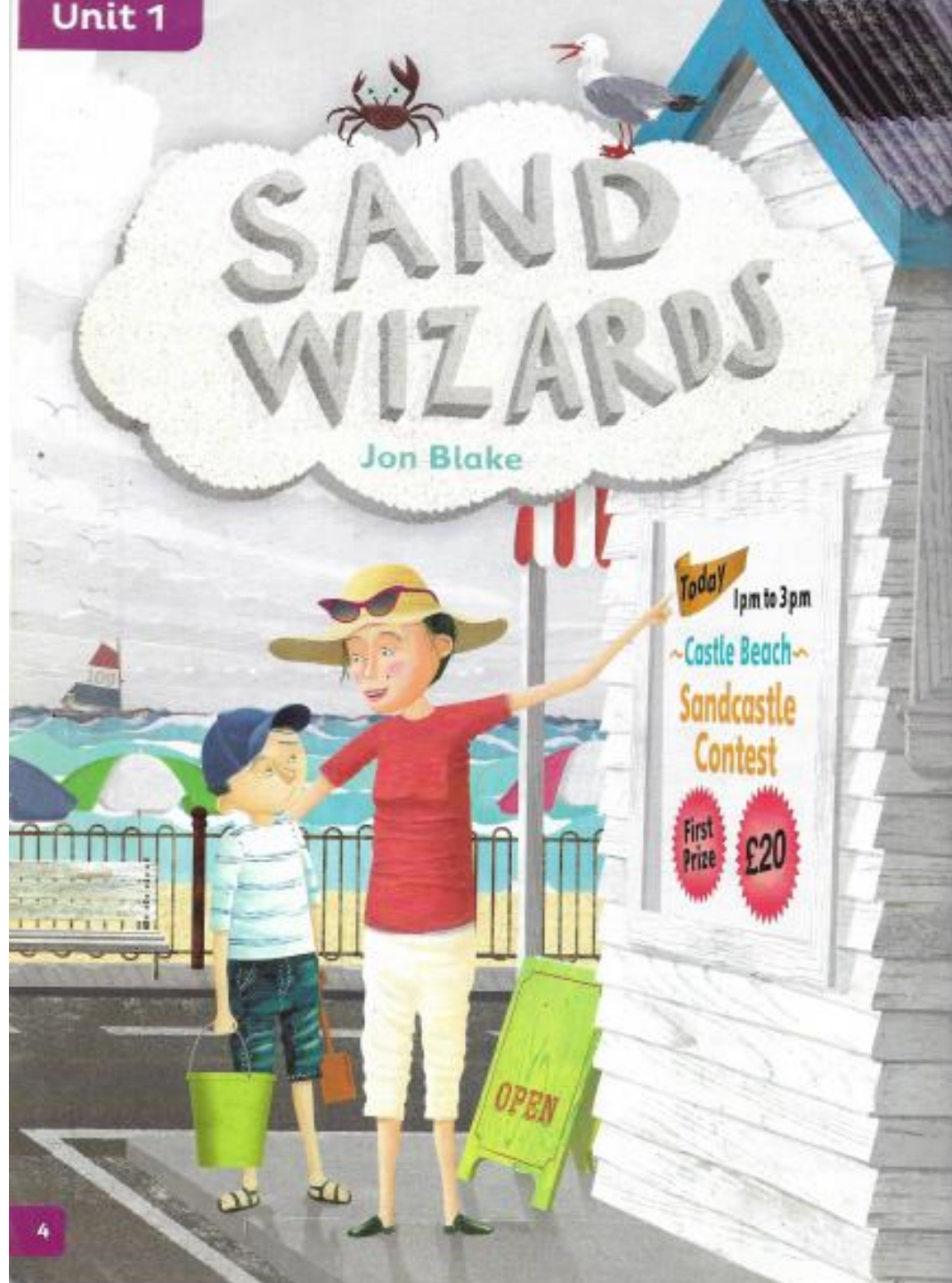


SAND WIZARDS

Jon Blake



Cole's mum smiled at the poster:

Sandcastle Contest

First Prize – £20

“That will be perfect for you, Cole!” she said. “Why don't you have a go?”

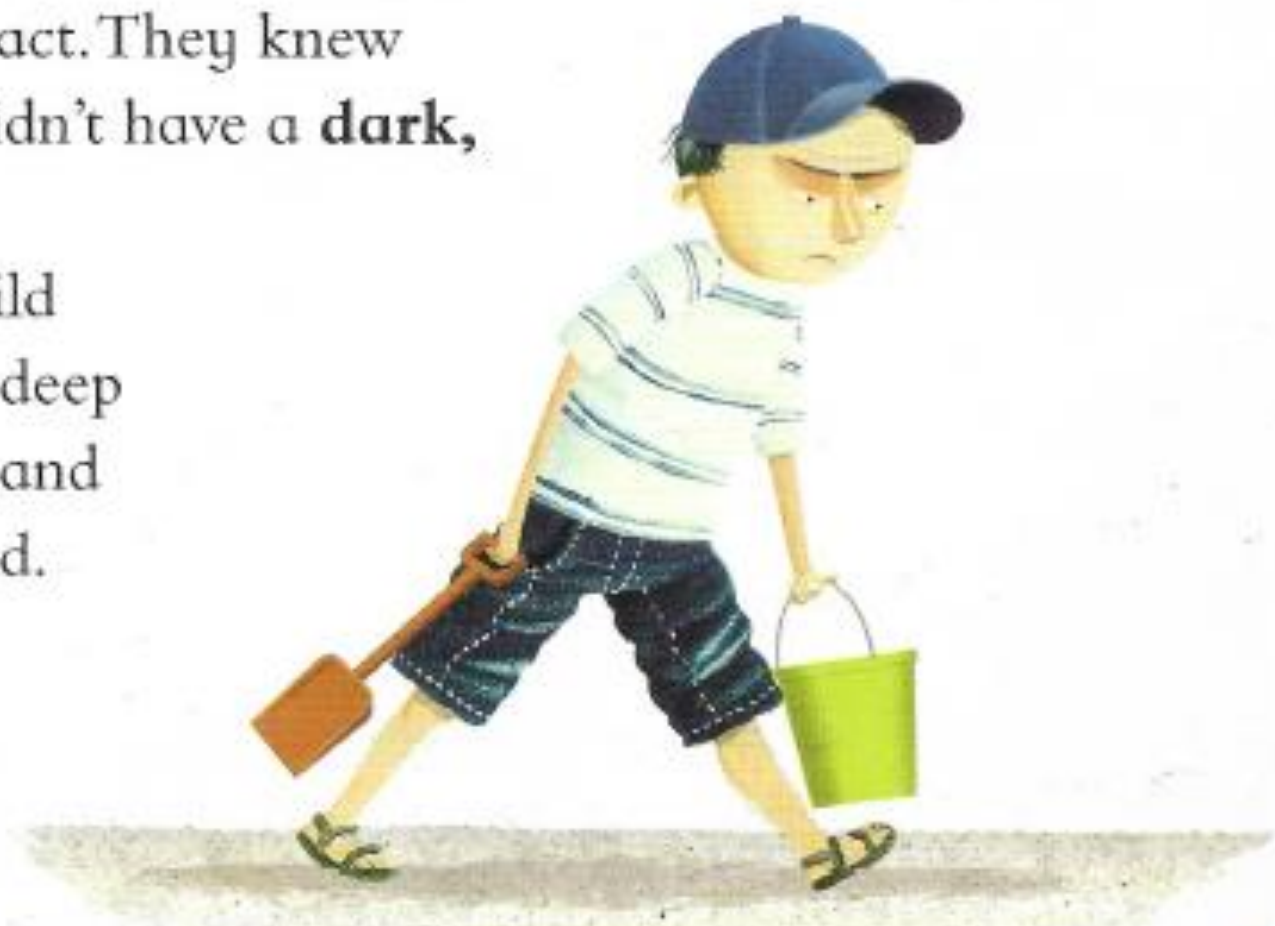
Cole frowned. He knew he could build a great sandcastle. But it would be no fun doing it on his own.

“Just think what you could buy with twenty pounds!” said his mum.

Cole did think. He could buy a helicopter. Or a radio-controlled car. But he couldn't buy the thing he really needed. He couldn't buy a friend.

Cole tramped wearily across Castle Beach with his bucket and spade. The sky was grey, the holiday was nearly over, and everybody else was having a great time. It was so easy for everyone else to make friends. They knew how to act. They knew how to talk. They didn't have a **dark, depressing frown.**

Cole began to build his castle. He dug a deep moat and used the sand to build a tall mound. Slowly, the mound became a tower.



Suddenly, Cole became aware of someone watching. A scruffy-haired boy with pale lips and eager eyes. The boy seemed interested in Cole.

“That’s good how you do that,” said the boy.

Cole carried on building his tower. He didn’t want to look at the boy.



“I had an argument with my brother,” said the boy. Cole ignored him, but the boy moved closer. “I can build castles,” he said.

Cole knew what the boy meant. The boy wanted to join in. But why? What was his game? Did he mean to take over Cole’s castle then chase him off?

Time wore on. The boy didn't go. He told Cole his name was Evan. "What's your name?" asked Evan.

"Cole," replied Cole.

"Cole," repeated Evan.

That was good. Evan hadn't called him Old King Cole or asked if he lived on a fire. Cole chanced a look at Evan, and saw that his face was open and friendly. But behind Evan was the huge grey ocean, just waiting to rush in and wreck everything.

"I've got shells," said Evan. He began to clamber down into Cole's moat. Cole was worried, but did nothing to stop him. Evan took shells out of his pocket and began pressing them into the tower.



Unit 1



“We need more near the top,” said Cole.

Evan put more shells near the top. Cole watched for a while, then took a few shells himself.

“You’ve got to space them evenly,” he said.

Cole showed Evan what he meant and Evan listened. The two boys settled down to work together. It gave Cole a good feeling.

“Have you got a brother?” asked Evan.

“No,” said Cole.

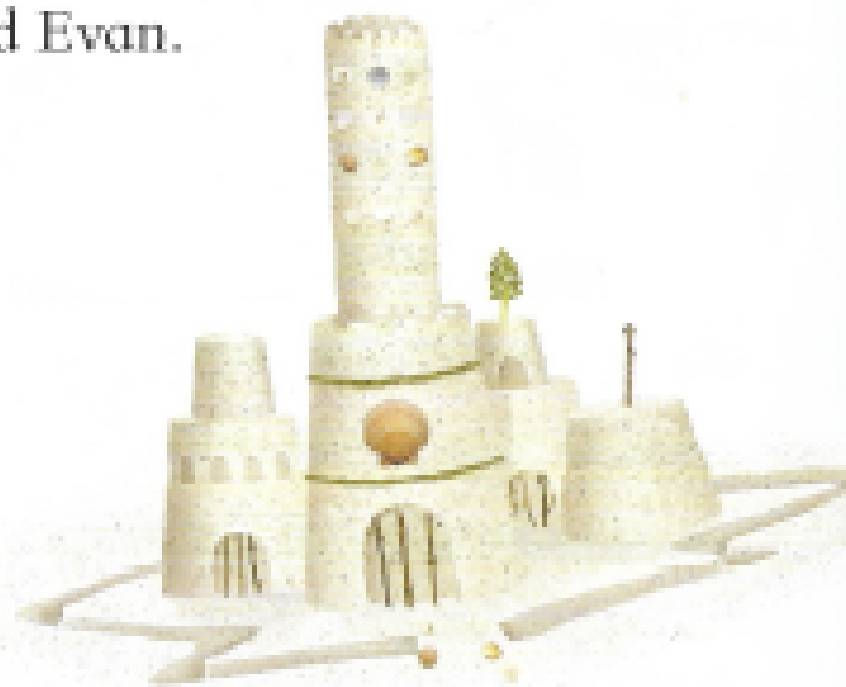
“You’re lucky,” replied Evan.

They both laughed.

“This is going to be a brilliant castle,” said Evan, a few minutes later.

“It needs a flag,” replied Cole.

“I could get a flag!” said Evan.



“Where from?” asked Cole.

“I could buy one from the shop,” replied Evan.

Cole couldn't believe that Evan would do this. But Evan clearly meant it. He counted out the money in his pocket then set off towards the entrance to the beach, where there was a row of shops.

“Look after our castle!” he called.

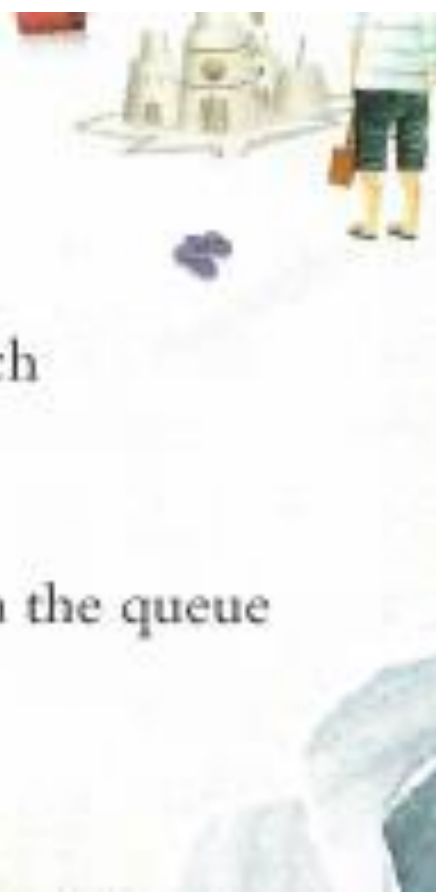


Our castle. That sounded great to Cole. The world suddenly seemed full of hope, and for a moment the sun broke through the clouds, turning the ocean a warm and friendly blue. Cole went back to building his tower with twice as much energy. It really was the best castle ever.

A few minutes passed, then a few more. Where was Evan?



Come on, Evan!
Cole did not want to lose his new friend.
He had to go and find him.
Cole's frown returned as he searched the beach
and the steps up to the shops.
Where *was* he?
Suddenly Cole's heart leapt. *There* he was – in the queue
for ice cream!
Time to say something funny.



"Double choc-chip for me, please!" cried Cole, jumping in front of his new friend.

Evan stared at him as if he were a complete stranger.

Then Evan turned his back.

Cole's ears burned with shame.

He began to walk away, faster and faster, until he was running full tilt across the beach. What an idiot! What a stupid idiot, trusting that boy, thinking he'd made a friend. Cole would *never* make a friend. Never in his whole life.

The spade was stuck in the moat. Cole seized it. Then SMASH! He brought the spade down onto the castle. Again and again he smashed it.

Then there was a shout,

"Cole! Stop!"





Cole looked up. Evan was racing towards him. Not far behind Evan was another boy, a boy who looked exactly like Evan. In this boy's hand was an ice cream.



The boy from the queue!

“Why are you smashing up our castle?” asked Evan.

“Is that your brother?” asked Cole.

“Of course it is,” said Evan. “Can’t you see?”

Cole had never felt so stupid, or **so relieved**. **With a heart as light as a feather**, he began to rebuild the castle. With help from Evan, it was soon complete.

Naturally it won the contest, and Cole and Evan shared the twenty pounds. The money was gone in a week, but the friendship would last much longer.

