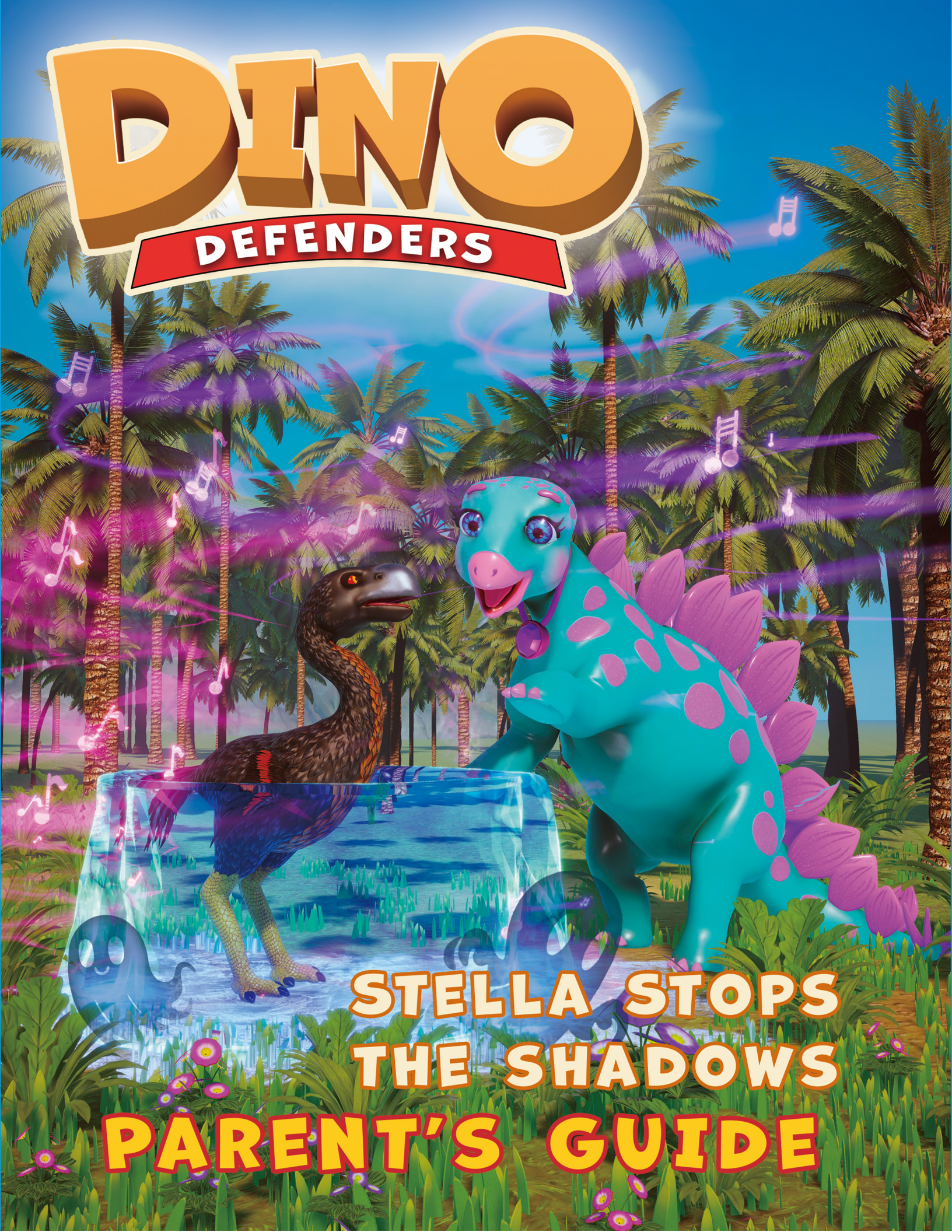

DINO
DEFENDERS
STELLA STOPS
THE SHADOWS
PARENT'S GUIDE

Stella Stops the Shadows

A Parent's Discussion & Feelings Guide



A Note for Grown-Ups

Stella is practicing a new song when a frightened scream interrupts her music. She finds MirageBeak surrounded by shadows and tries to help, but he is too scared to understand. Stella Stops the Shadows invites families to talk about fear, patient friendship, and trying a different kind of help. Together, Stella, Crosby, and Queso help MirageBeak feel safe and find his way home.

Enjoy the book together first, then choose a few questions or activities. Your child can point, talk, draw, or act out an answer. If a picture feels too spooky, pause or revisit the ending, where MirageBeak thanks his helpers. There's no need to finish every section. Follow your child's interest and leave room for their own ideas about what feels comforting.

Meet Our Crew

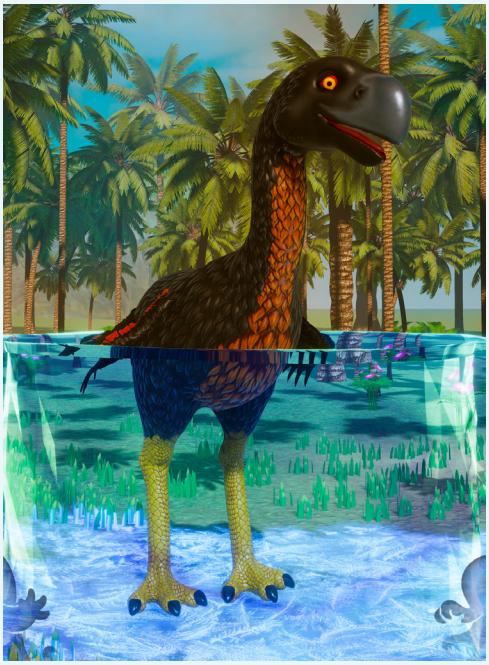
Find these four characters in the pictures. Notice what each one does, and how MirageBeak's understanding of the others changes during the story.



Stella the Stegosaurus

Stella makes music with her spikes. When she hears a frightened scream, she stops playing and listens. She finds MirageBeak, tries speaking to him, and calls for help. When the friends need a new idea, she plays a soft melody. Her music helps the shadows fade so MirageBeak can begin to feel safe.

Fun detail: *The story starts with Stella practicing a song and later shows her playing to comfort someone. Find both scenes and talk about the different reasons she makes music.*



MirageBeak

MirageBeak is frightened and uses his Shadow Scream, creating shadows and illusions around him. The shapes make him even more afraid, and he mistakes the helpers for monsters. As Stella's music reaches him, the shadows begin to fade. He takes a deep breath and starts to recognize the Dino Defenders as friends.

Fun detail: *At the end, MirageBeak thanks the friends and describes them as kind and helpful. Compare that moment with the earlier picture showing how frightening they seem to him.*



Crosby

Crosby arrives after Stella calls for help. He uses FrostCraft to make icy barriers that keep MirageBeak from running away in fear. Later, once MirageBeak is calm, Crosby makes an ice path to help him travel safely through the tricky areas on his way home.

Parent note: *Crosby's ice belongs to the fantasy story. For an everyday helping activity, practice getting a trusted grown-up and offering space; leave the barriers in the book.*



Queso

Queso swoops down and offers to keep an eye on MirageBeak from above. He stays involved while the friends look for a way to help. On the journey home, he circles overhead and gives directions. His view from the sky helps MirageBeak find his way.

Fun detail: *Look for Queso above the ice path. He and Crosby contribute different kinds of help: one creates the route, and the other gives directions along it.*

The Hardest Moment: When Fear Keeps Growing

MirageBeak's Shadow Scream creates more shadows, and their strange shapes frighten him again. Stella wants to help, but her words don't reassure him yet. Walk through this part slowly. The reader can see that the Dino Defenders are trying to help, while MirageBeak sees something very different.

Stella finds MirageBeak hiding among the bushes.	› *What clues in the picture tell you how he might be feeling?*
MirageBeak creates shadows, then becomes more frightened by their shapes.	› *What happens when he looks back at the shadows?*
Stella tells MirageBeak she is there to help, but he keeps screaming.	› *How might Stella feel when her words don't seem to reach him?*
Even with three helpers nearby, MirageBeak thinks he is seeing monsters.	› *What do we know about the helpers that MirageBeak hasn't understood yet?*

For Grown-Ups: Listen to the Feeling

Keep the fantasy and your child's experience distinct. MirageBeak creates magical illusions; children do not create dangers by feeling afraid. The everyday connection is that being very upset can make it hard to take in reassurance. You can acknowledge the feeling: "That sounds frightening. I'm here with you."

If your child shares a worry, ask what happened and listen before deciding what it means. Check the situation together when they are ready. They don't need to explain everything while upset, and they don't need to stop feeling afraid to deserve support. Stella's care gives you a starting point for that conversation.

› *What could you say to a grown-up when you feel scared and need help?*
› *Would you like someone to sit nearby, listen, or help you understand what happened?*

Stella's New Idea: A Gentle Melody

The friends realize that their first efforts haven't helped MirageBeak feel calm. Stella thinks about something else she can offer. She uses her music in a new way, and the story begins to change as the melody reaches MirageBeak's ears.

> **"Maybe my music can soothe him."**
>
> **— Stella**

For Grown-Ups: Discover What Feels Comforting

Stella's music works for MirageBeak in this story. Use that moment to ask what your child likes: a familiar song, soft humming, quiet company, or a peaceful place. Try an option when everyone is settled so your child can tell you what they prefer. Quiet is a choice too.

If an idea doesn't feel helpful, you can change it together. Stella notices that speaking hasn't been enough and tries something different. You might ask, "Would you like me to sing, or would you prefer quiet?" Leave time for an answer, including a nod or a point. There is no need to make calm happen on a schedule.

› *What changes in the pictures after Stella begins playing her melody?*

- *What song, sound, or quiet activity feels comforting to you?*
- *What could you say if someone offered help that wasn't what you needed?*

Three Friends, Three Ways to Help

Stella offers music and reassuring words, Crosby creates an ice path, and Queso gives directions from above. Their help continues after the shadows fade. They make sure MirageBeak can find his way back to Mammal Metropolis, and he begins to see them differently because of what they do.

For Grown-Ups: Understanding Through Actions

At first, MirageBeak is afraid of the Dino Defenders. By the end, he has seen their kindness for himself. Ask your child to find an action that helped change his mind. Focus on the particular friends in the story; children can take time and ask a trusted grown-up for support when meeting unfamiliar people.

Stella also calls for help. That is a useful action for children to practice: noticing someone in difficulty and telling a grown-up. A child can offer a kind word without being responsible for calming another person. During pretend play, let the grown-up handle safety while the child chooses a small, caring contribution.

- *What does each friend contribute on MirageBeak's journey home?*
- *What helps MirageBeak decide that the Dino Defenders are kind and helpful?*
- *Who is a trusted grown-up you could tell if someone nearby needed help?*

Feelings Check-In

Point to a face, act out an expression, or choose another feeling. Several feelings can fit the same moment. Invite your child to explain using the words or pictures.

😊 **HAPPY** 😟 **SCARED** 😕 **WORRIED** 😮 **SURPRISED** 😌 **RELIEVED**

- *How might Stella feel when she first hears the frightened scream?*
- *How might MirageBeak feel when the shadows grow darker?*
- *How might Stella feel when she thinks of trying her music?*
- *How might MirageBeak feel when the shadows fade and he recognizes his helpers?*
- *How do YOU feel when MirageBeak returns home and the three friends are happy?*

Getting to Know Stella

These ten details come from the story and its pictures. Choose one and find the moment that shows it. What does that moment help you notice about Stella?

10 Things Stella Wants You to Know About Her

1. She was in the middle of a brand-new song when she heard the scream. She never did finish it.
2. Harmony Haven is her home, and she thinks it sounds better than anywhere else in DinoTopia.
3. Her spikes can shake the ground. She almost never uses them that way.
4. She hums without noticing. Her friends have stopped mentioning it.
5. She chooses the song to fit the listener. The one she played for MirageBeak was slow on purpose.
6. She knew MirageBeak was a Mean Mammal. It did not come up once, in her head or out loud.
7. The hardest part for her wasn't the shadows. It was trying to help and not knowing how.
8. She thinks Crosby's ice path was the kindest thing anybody did all day.
9. She believes almost everyone is frightened rather than mean, and she is right more often than not.
10. She still wonders what that new song was going to sound like.

Stella's Comfort & Helping Plan

You don't need Musical Spikes to ask for comfort or offer kindness. Use this page to choose a few things that might help you and a small way you could support someone else.

For Grown-Ups: How to Use This Page

Fill in the plan during a quiet moment. Let your child choose one or two options, or write down their own idea. Practice asking for help with toys, then keep the page somewhere familiar. Preferences can change, so check again when you use it. If your child wants to help a friend, remind them that a trusted grown-up can take care of the bigger problem.

Stella's Comfort & Helping Plan

I can ask for comfort and offer a little kindness.

When I feel scared or upset…

1. My feeling is: _____

2. A grown-up I can ask for help: _____
- ☐ "Please stay nearby."
- ☐ "Can we listen to a familiar song?"
- ☐ "I would like some quiet."

3. Another thing I can ask for: _____

When someone else needs help…

- ☐ I can tell a trusted grown-up.
- ☐ I can ask, "Would you like some company?"
- ☐ I can listen to their answer and give them space.

4. A kind sentence I can say: _____

When we are ready, we can talk about what helped.

One thing I want my grown-up to know: _____

Draw it: Draw a place where you feel comfortable, with someone you trust nearby. Add a song, an object, or an activity you enjoy.

Bring DinoTopia Into Your Day

- **Make a Stella playlist.** Let each family member choose a familiar song they find comforting. Listen at a comfortable volume and talk about your different choices. Include a quiet option for anyone who would prefer no music.
- **Offer two choices.** Use toys to practice helping someone who feels worried. One toy can ask, "Would you like company or some space?" Let the other choose. Swap roles so your child practices both offering and requesting support.
- **Be Queso's guide.** Draw a simple path on paper between a toy and its home. Take turns giving one direction at a time while the other moves the toy. Ask which words made the route easiest to follow.
- **Notice helpful actions.** At dinner or bedtime, name one small thing someone did that helped you. Invite your child to share one too. Connect it to MirageBeak noticing that the Dino Defenders' actions are kind.
- **Write a comforting song.** Make up a short tune with words such as "I'm here with you." Your child can sing, hum, or draw musical notes. Ask when they might enjoy hearing it and when they would prefer quiet company.

Thank you for reading Stella Stops the Shadows!

MirageBeak is safely home, and Stella, Crosby, and Queso have given him a new experience of friendship. Carry their kindness into your day: listen closely, ask for help, and make room for what someone needs.

