

Arthur and the sparkling pond

A story about the right to a clean and safe environment



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LE GOUVERNEMENT
DU GRAND-DUCHÉ DE LUXEMBOURG
Ministère de l'Éducation nationale,
de l'Enfance et de la Jeunesse



Have you met Arthur?

No? Well then, it's about time you do! Arthur is a forest owl. But listen up! He's anything but an ordinary forest owl.

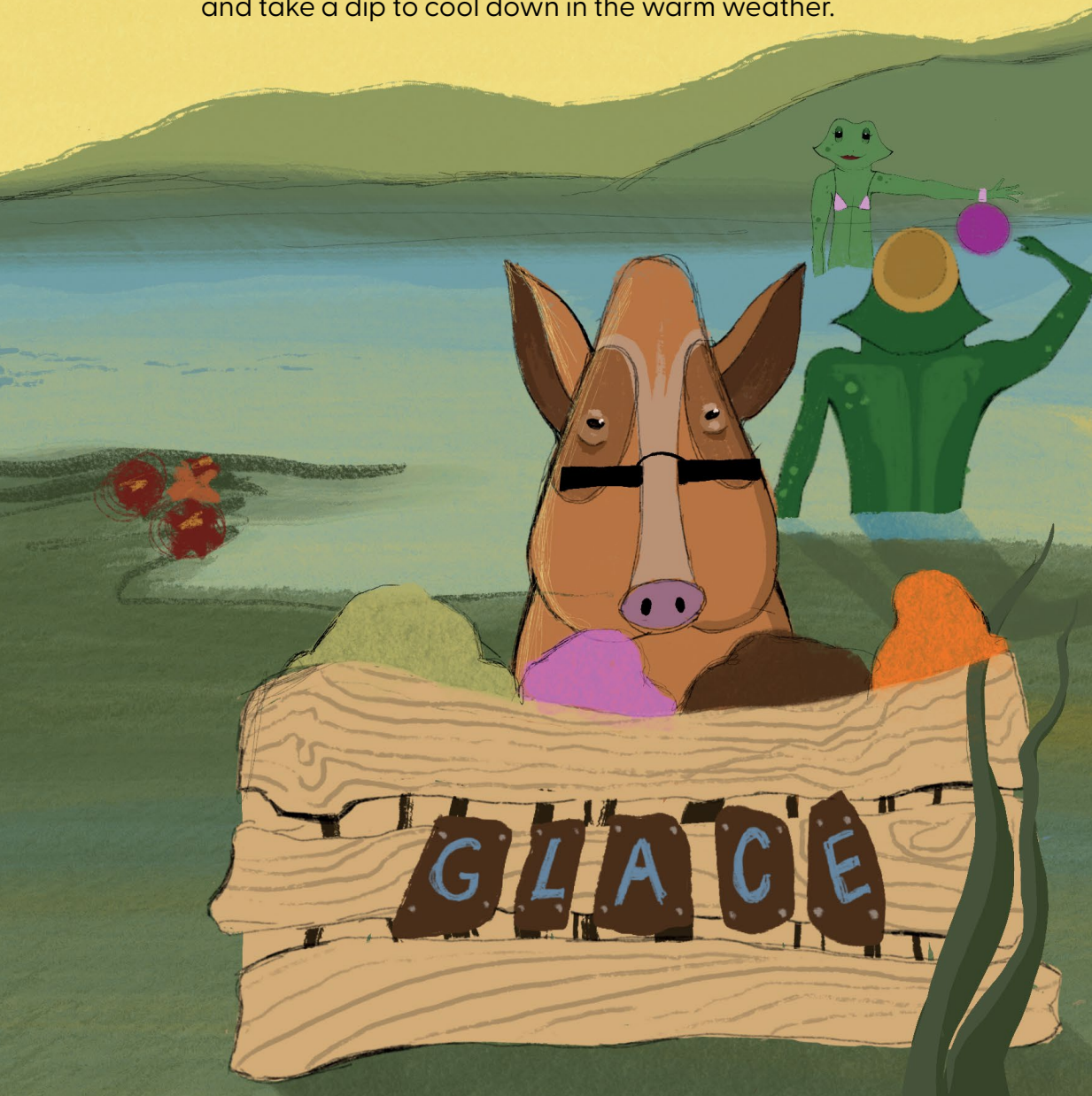
Arthur is the coolest guy you could ever imagine.

From morning to night he is so happy and full of energy that he captivates everyone with his favourite hobbies: singing and dancing. The animals party from dawn and keep going until dusk.

In summer, the forest is especially lively. Everyone has fun and lives their best life.



There definitely isn't a swimming pool in the forest where Arthur lives, but there is **a magnificent and vast pond** where the animals can paddle to their heart's content and take a dip to cool down in the warm weather.



So it's hardly surprising that Arthur and his friends spend lots and lots of time there in the summer.

And that's exactly what they did last summer, when, remember, it was really sunny.

Armed with their large sun hats, sunglasses, sun cream, swimming gear and inflatable rubber rings, our friends would meet by the pond day after day. With their paws in the water, they'd relax and contemplate the sky, count the butterflies and row across the pond in the boat they'd built for themselves.



When the heat became stifling, they would take a dip or do a few lengths in the cool water. The tireless ones would dance to Arthur's songs, play water ball and make up unbelievable stories. They'd chill, joke about, play fight and snack on herb salads, fruit cocktails and juicy berry ice cream... a real banquet!

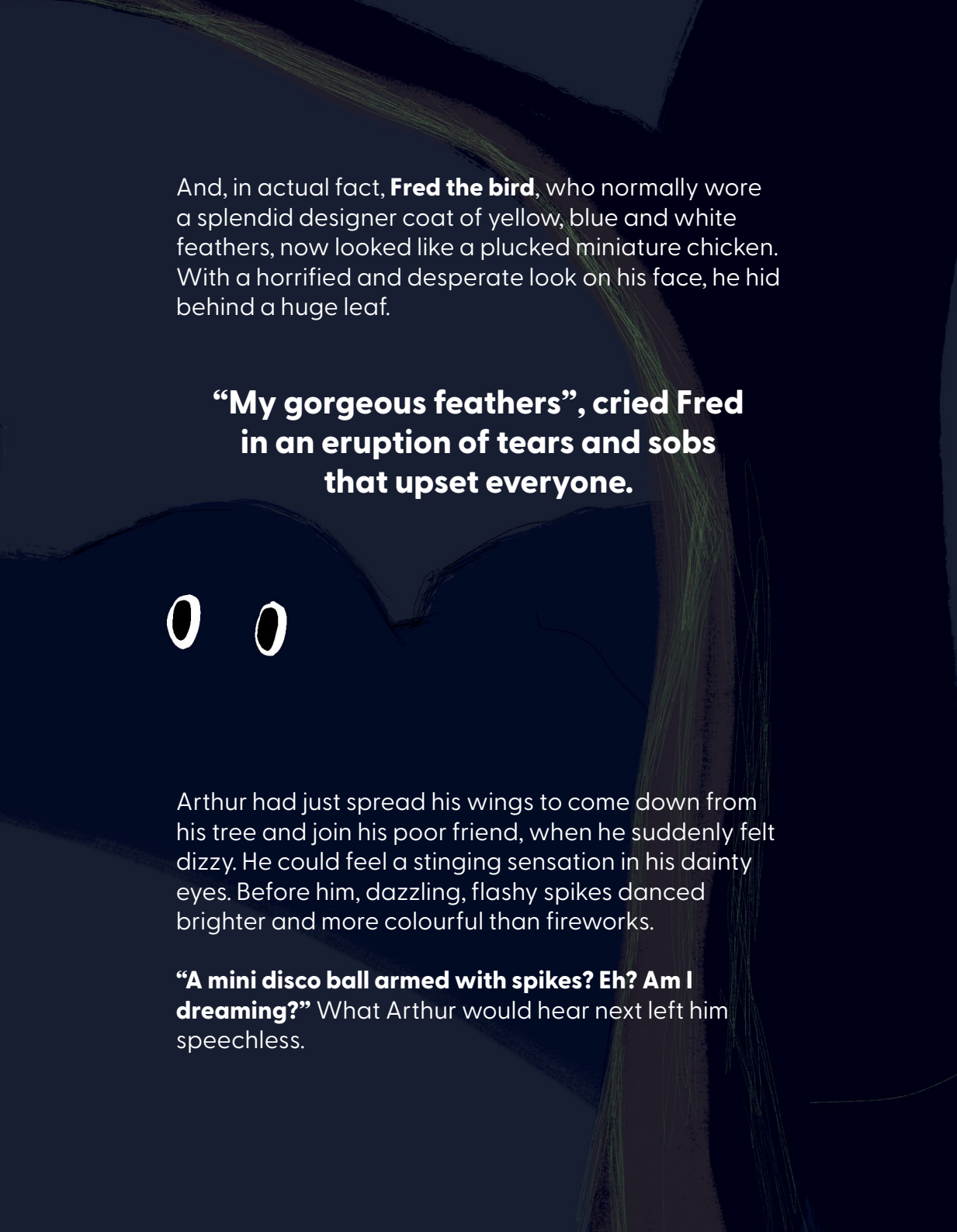
**If only that summer
could have lasted forever.
Unfortunately, it was not to be.**

The season suddenly took an unexpected turn for Arthur and his friends.

On a night like any other, Arthur was singing his last lullaby to his friends as usual. **Then suddenly, a piercing cry interrupted the song.**

**“Help, help!
My feathers!
I’ve lost all my feathers!”**





And, in actual fact, **Fred the bird**, who normally wore a splendid designer coat of yellow, blue and white feathers, now looked like a plucked miniature chicken. With a horrified and desperate look on his face, he hid behind a huge leaf.

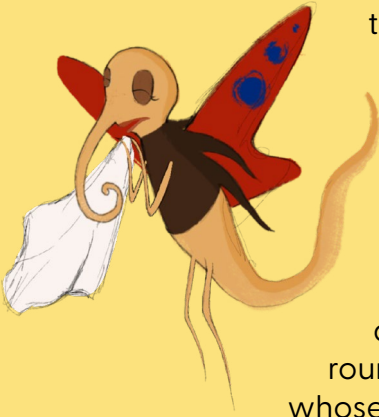
“My gorgeous feathers”, cried Fred in an eruption of tears and sobs that upset everyone.

Arthur had just spread his wings to come down from his tree and join his poor friend, when he suddenly felt dizzy. He could feel a stinging sensation in his dainty eyes. Before him, dazzling, flashy spikes danced brighter and more colourful than fireworks.

“A mini disco ball armed with spikes? Eh? Am I dreaming?” What Arthur would hear next left him speechless.

“Have no fear”, a voice said.

“It’s me, Mike the hedgehog. I don’t know why I’m shining so brightly. But it’s really getting on my nerves...” And it did not stop there.

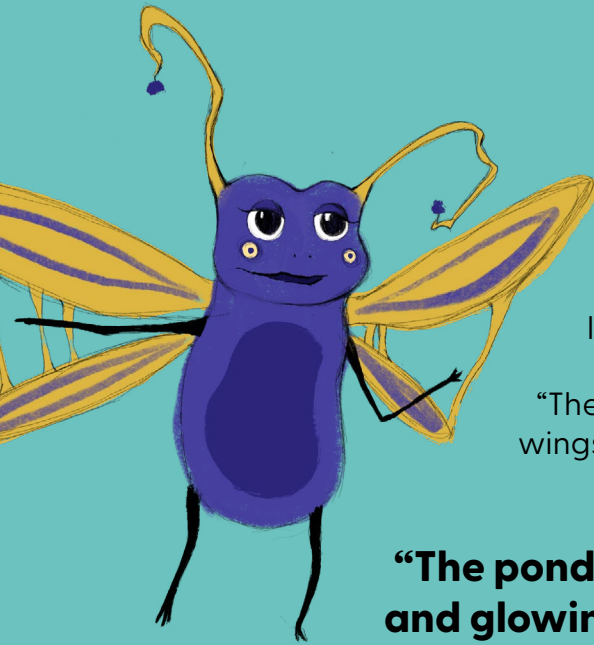


Jackie, the squirrel, whose coat had turned as curly as a pig’s tail, fell out of the tree screaming. **Lizzie the butterfly** flew in a zigzag in a fit of sneezes. Blue tongues hung from the mouths of **the boars**. And instead of croaking, **the frogs Carlos and Kiki** could only manage a hoarse noise. The ears of **Jeannie, the mouse**, had suddenly doubled in size and her snout was as round as the moon. And **Nello the worm**, whose body had gone rough all over, was dotted with purple spots.

And Arthur?

Well, he was still a little dizzy. Then his beak began to itch so badly that he let out a high-pitched yelp as if he’d been nipped on the backside.





Right at that instant, **Bello Libello, the little dragonfly**, excitedly rushed towards Arthur at lightning pace.

“The pond!” He was batting his wings furiously.

“The pond is shining, sparkling and glowing like the moon, the sun and the stars combined!”

He was out of breath. “At the start I thought it was some kind of treasure... but now... now... look!”

He pointed at his wings. “Something’s wrong! **I can no longer fly... My wings are stuck together... and I’m all shiny.**”

Bello Libello’s wings were glowing fluorescent yellow in the dark of the night.

“And I must say, I hate yellow! Everyone is going to take me for a stinging wasp”, he moaned.

“And what about me?”, retorted a bright pink blob in the air. “Look at me! **I look like a crazy fly in a wacky costume rather than an elegant wasp!** The bees have already put me on their Instabuzz and Bee-Tok!”

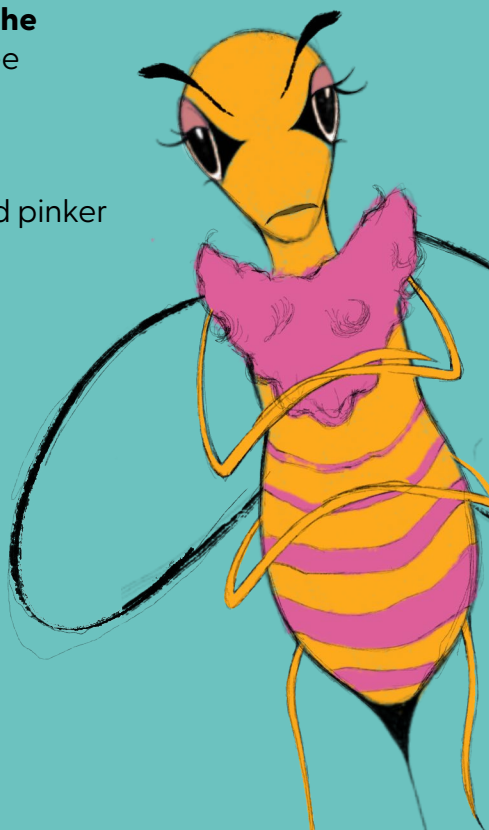
“Is that you, Gigi? Oh, at least, I’m not the only one who looks like a floodlight”, said Mike, thrilled.

Gigi the wasp was buzzing with anger and doing loop after loop until she landed on a white flower, out of breath. She rubbed her little legs against the branch.

“Yuck! This thing’s itchy”, she complained. “**All I wanted was a drink of water from the pond because I am parched.** And see what happened!”

She waved her antennae in every direction and they turned pinker and pinker by the second.

“It’s as if some strange magician has waved his magic wand over the pond and cast an evil spell on us.”



Arthur scratched his beak as if an army of fleas were dancing all over it. **He thought long and hard.**

Then, he cocked his head, went back to his tree and grabbed his whistle to summon all the animals.



**They all listened
as Arthur laid
out his plan
enthusiastically.**



“We have to remove this thing from the pond, this thing that is making us sick. But first...” Arthur stretched out his wings.

“First, we have to find out how this strange-scratchy-shiny-thousand-flame-thingy ended up here.

Friends, you are now part of our mission ‘Sparkling Pond’.

Long live the pond special forces!

First step: observe.”



“Awesome! I’ve always dreamed of joining the police”,

exclaimed Mike the hedgehog. And believe it or not, **his spikes were glowing a red-blue colour.**

“Cool!”, cried Gigi the wasp. “With Libello and Lizzie, we’re the **whirlybird trio!** From up above, nothing will escape us!”

“On the ground, plenty of things can happen too. We’ll be the **hedge scanner team**”, rejoiced the boars.

“A-a-qua-a-tics team!”, exclaimed Kiki and Carlos, the two brave frogs. “Let’s goooo.”

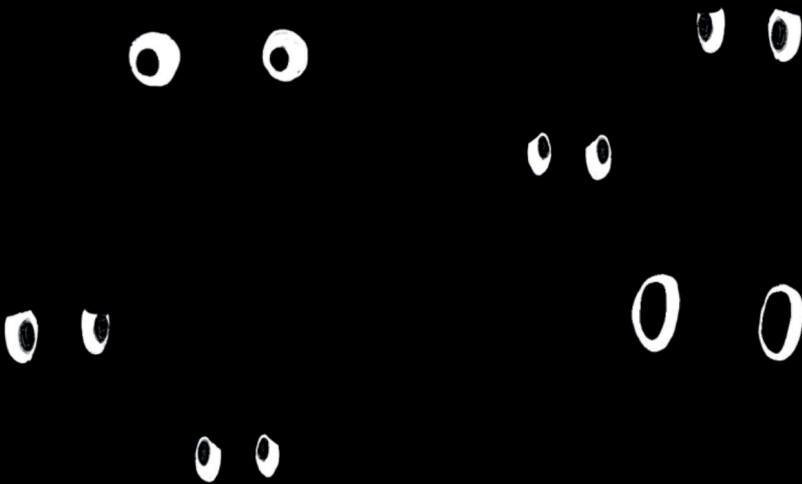
“Whoopee, I’m **spiderwoman!**”, cried Jackie the squirrel.

“And me, I will help any team that needs me”, announced Arthur. Fred, in the simplest of outfits, was the only one to remain silent. Not only was he terribly embarrassed, but he was so cold he was shivering. Arthur quickly passed him some of his feathers.

“We’re also going to find a mission for you”, he promised him.

That very night, the animals took up their posts beside, above, around and on the pond.

**They watched, waited and anticipated
until their eyes closed in the
early morning.**



They continued for hours and days without the slightest clue of anything that would help them solve the mystery of the pond.





From time to time, **humans** would pass by.
They would walk or run, take photos or have
a picnic. **Sometimes they left things behind.**

The animals found bottles on the ground and little plastic containers in the hedges. Bags and tumblers. Someone had even left behind a pocket radio, an old phone and a broken doll. More than one animal got injured walking through the shattered glass.

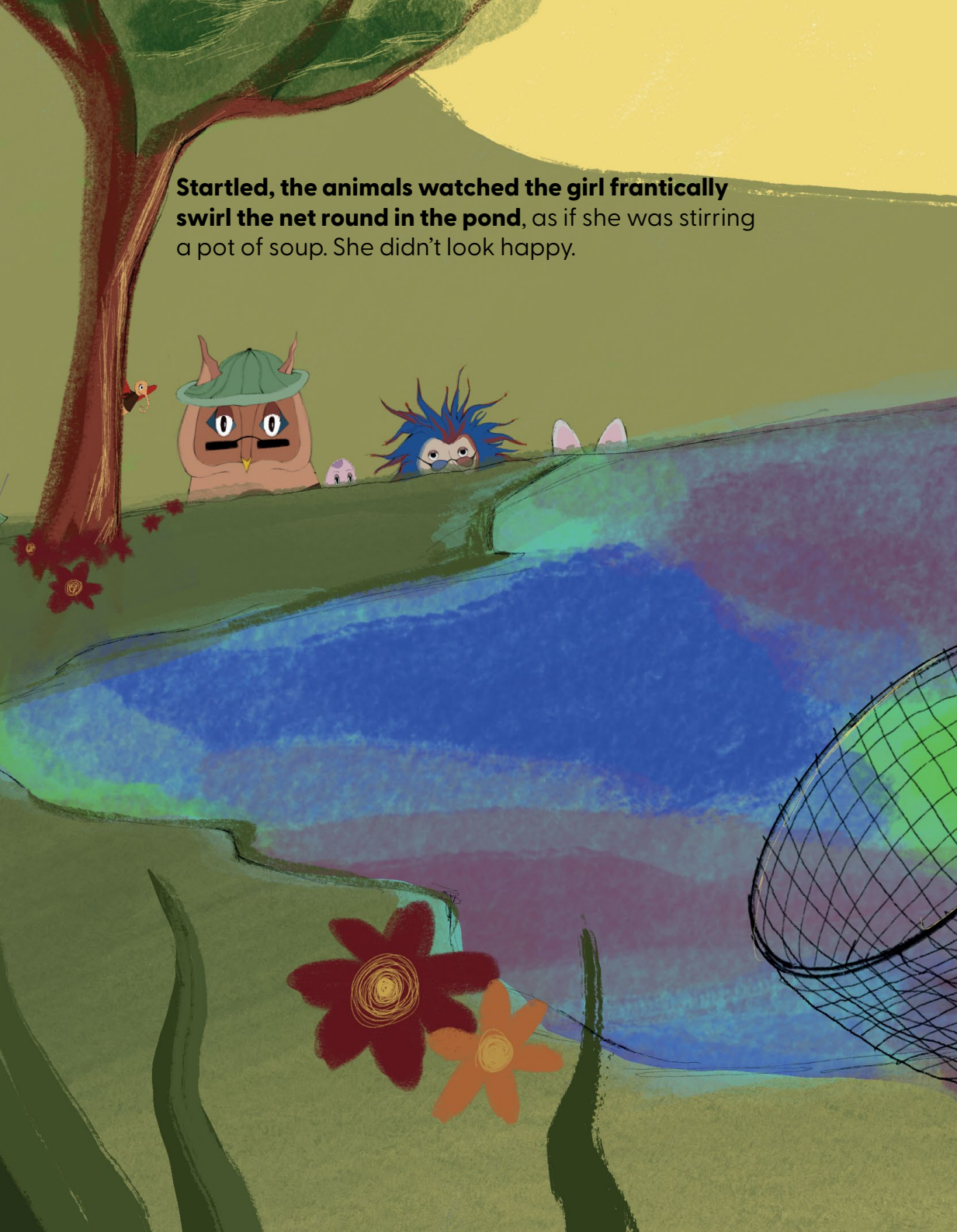
“Do you think it’s them who poured this shiny thingamajig into the pond?”, asked Lizzie Arthur. He shook his head.

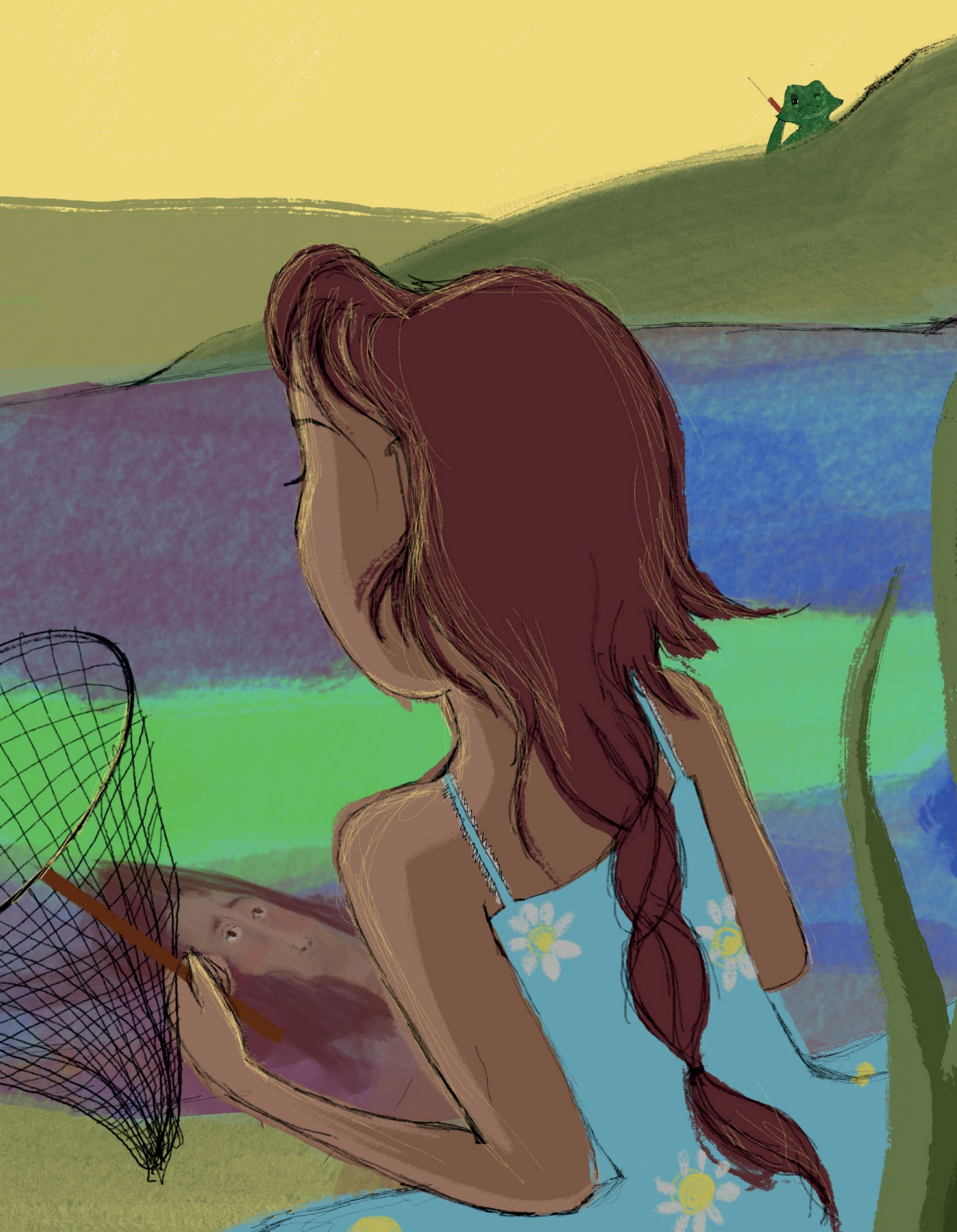
“No. Unfortunately, they’ve been leaving their things behind for years.

It has made me angry and upset. I’ve often whistled loudly to get them to tidy up after themselves. But they were happy to run off. Leaving their rubbish behind them. This glistening mess in the pond is new. **It has to be something else.**” On another sunny summer’s day, it turned out that Arthur was right.

From her position up high, Lizzie could see a girl far off. Her red hair was fashioned into a long plait. She was wearing a flowery blue dress and had a huge net in her hand. **She walked briskly towards the pond.** A little nervous, she glanced both ways before leaning forward to plunge the net into the water.

Startled, the animals watched the girl frantically swirl the net round in the pond, as if she was stirring a pot of soup. She didn't look happy.





Quite the contrary: suddenly she started to talk to herself in a furious tone of voice. Her face turned red and she raised her voice. Arthur and his friends perked up their ears.

“Drat! How am I going to get them out of there?”

We’ve thrown them too far and too deep. Oh my goodness... **The pond will be in a dreadful state.** And all because of my absurd and idiotic idea!”

Arthur and his friends looked at one another perplexed. In the excitement, Mike began to glow in all shades of colours and Lizzie, overcome with panic, had a sneezing fit and did five loop-the-loops in a row! Right at the moment that Arthur was going to open his itchy beak, there was a loud **splash.**



A cry. A shriek. And more splashing. All that could be seen was the girl's head and arms waving around wildly above the pond's surface.

“Quick! We need to help her”, exclaimed Arthur.

“But she's the culprit!”, retorted Jackie, angry.

**“Let's save her first,
then we'll see about
the rest!”**,

ordered Arthur. The animals rushed to the pond to help the girl out of the water using their beaks and paws. The girl was still shrieking. Hardly surprising when you fall into a pond and get fished out by a gang of angry animal detectives who know how to talk.





When she had finally calmed down, the animals confronted her. **The girl burst into tears.**

“All I wanted was to celebrate my birthday with my friends. That evening we had a picnic by the pond. We sang, danced and laughed until nightfall.” She was sniffling.

“We lit our glow sticks. They come in all kinds of colours: pink, purple, yellow, green, blue...”

The girl shrugged her shoulders. **“Then someone had the bright idea to test if they would glow in the water, too.”**

Tears started to stream down her face again.

**“Because they gave a pretty effect,
everyone ended up throwing their
sticks into the water...”**

At home, I saw online that these thingamajigs are **toxic** and I decided to try and fish them out. But I can’t manage alone.”



**“It’s because of you
that I look like a miniature chicken!”
“And I look like a disco ball hedgehog!”
“And me a curly-haired monster!”
“And me? I can no longer fly!”**

“What are we going to do now?”

Everyone started shouting and screaming angrily.
Until Arthur blew his whistle loudly yet again. “That’s
enough! **It’s time to clean up our pond.** And we’ll only
be able to do it if we pull together.”

**“Along with Miss Dirtmonster?”
“It’s down to her to clean the pond!
She’s the culprit!”
“It’s nothing to do with me!”**

“Enough!”

In his distress, Arthur took hold of the megaphone.

Everyone could have gone their separate ways. Walk away and wait for the subject never to be brought up again. Act as if nothing had happened and forget all about it.

They could have looked for a new pond without any glow sticks in its water. Or wait. Wait for a time when the sticks would stop glowing. Wait for a time when the poison would wear off.

**But they stayed.
And that's not all...**





The girl went to fetch her friends. She explained just how toxic glow sticks are. That they make the water unsuitable for both animals and humans. Some of them laughed and teased her. Some of them were indifferent. Others were concerned and went back to the pond with her.

Arthur called his friends, the cloudies, and told them about their run of bad luck with the pond. **They didn't hesitate for one single second and came to lend a hand.**


Fred and the frogs Kiki and Carlos built a submarine out of an old crisp box in order to locate the glow sticks in the depths of the pond. The animals assembled nets, sew protective clothing and put barrels in place.

They dived into the water, flew around and fished relentlessly until they had retrieved the last glow stick from the water.

The fire fighters arrived with specialist vacuum cleaning equipment. They filtered and purified the water. Together they planted algae with cleaning properties.

Once they had finished, a **researcher** from the university took a sample of water to analyse it. A few days later, they received the verdict:



An illustration depicting a rescue operation. A bright orange helicopter with blue accents is shown from a low angle, hovering over a body of water. A red rope is attached to its side, and a large, brown, cartoonish fish is being hoisted by it. The fish has large, expressive eyes and a surprised expression. Below the fish, two children are in the water. A boy with short blonde hair, wearing a blue t-shirt and light blue shorts, is holding one end of a green fishing net. A girl with dark curly hair, wearing a pink tank top, is holding the other end. The net is spread out in the water, and a small pink object is visible inside it. The background consists of a yellow sky and green hills.

**the water
was clean
once again!**

**Everyone was knackered.
Knackered, but happy to
have successfully completed
this mission together.**

But they all agreed that they had to keep up the good work. **So the children and animals got into the way of meeting up regularly** to clean up the forest and collect discarded items. New kids and even adults would join the group each time. And the cloudies also continued to lend a hand, of course. They all hope to get a break at some stage. **They hope everyone would take slightly better care of the environment.** It's the kind of wish that only comes true if everyone does their part. But nothing is impossible...

You are probably wondering if the animals could get rid of their mysterious illness. Some time was needed before the hedgehog stopped looking like a disco ball, for Lizzie and Libello Bello to fly normally again, for Jackie to no longer have messy hair and for Gigi the wasp not to look like a fly in disguise. One day, the frogs started croaking again. Jeannie the mouse's snout and ears shrank and Arthur's beak stopped itching.

To celebrate, Arthur wrote a new song. A song about the right to a healthy environment and clean water.



Cans, bottles, paper,
should we throw them in the lake?
Plastic and waste in the wood,
The life of our fish is at stake.

**We only have one earth
more precious than gold.**

So, my dear friends,
let's join forces, wouldn't that be bold?

Yo, let's keep up the good work
sort, recycle, go berserk.

**In our forest there's no place
I must insist, for any waste!**

I just wish that you could see.
It's not too late, believe me.
My rubbish belongs to you.
And yours belongs to me.

We're all in the same boat,
affected by the same misery.

What kind of future awaits us?

**It's not too late to change.
Let's kick up a big fuss.**

So let's use all our might
to defend our precious right



**to clean water and
a healthy life
so tomorrow's world
is without strife.**



This book is the result of a collaboration between Anja Di Bartolomeo, Giulia Helminger and the class of Gilles Groben and Philippe Kieffer at the Useldange primary school for the International Children's Rights Day 2024. We would like to extend a huge **thank you to Wiam, Milo, Lina, Laurent, Maryam, Sebastian, Alessia, Daniel, Elias, Maya, Jaya, Fabio, Mahé, Charel, Kristina, Chris, Eric, Elodie, Tiana and Darija for their ideas and creativity in developing the story.**

Arthur is a forest owl full of zest for life. He's anything but ordinary! From morning to night, his joy and energy rub off on everyone around him. This summer, the forest is buzzing again: the animals are partying, chilling, swimming in the pond and telling stories. Right up until the day Arthur and his friends are hit by a mysterious illness...

Arthur's story addresses the dangers of pollution, the possibilities of acting in favour of a better and healthier environment and how to turn waste into something useful ("upcycling"). It is a tale about bravery, friendship, respect and the importance of standing up for yourself, your friends and the environment.

Just like Arthur, you have the right to grow up in a safe and healthy world, protected from illnesses. And just like Arthur, you are entitled to defend your rights and rally in favour of a fulfilling life. You will be supported in this.

**All people have rights – including you!
You even have special children's rights!**

Children's rights are defined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Almost every country in the world has promised to uphold these rights. Also Luxembourg! It is about the right to education, protection, leisure, the right to express one's opinion and the right to a clean and safe environment.

In order to be able to live your rights, you must of course first know them. Take a look here with your parents: (in German)



Luxembourg has an action plan with over 60 actions, which are intended to help protect your rights: (in French and German)



Some children experience that their rights are not respected or protected, or are in a situation where someone else wants to harm them. If you or someone you know is in such a situation, make sure to talk to someone you trust.

You can also ask for help from the following services that are especially for children:

Kanner- a Jugendtelefon: www.kjt.lu / Tel.: 116 111

Ombudsman fir Kanner a Jugendlecher: www.okaju.lu / Tel.: 26 12 31 24

Office national de l'enfance: www.officenationalenfance.lu / Tel.: 8002-9393

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