

A colorful illustration of a young girl with glasses and a white shirt standing in a garden. Behind her is a house with a dreamcatcher hanging from the roof. The garden is filled with various plants, flowers, and birds. The title 'Dream Catcher' is written in large, bold, black letters across the center of the image.

Dream Catcher

by

Tien-Li Cheng

Illustrated by Dianne Green



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



15 LIFE ON LAND



Dream Catcher



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foreword

Tien-Li is a student who has participated in many of my outdoor courses focusing on nature observation including bird migration, ecological environment and Indigenous community culture. She is a student with keen observation skills and is also good at expressing her thoughts by words. She always has creative ideas in her head, which impresses me. It is my pleasure to receive an invitation from Tien-Li to write the foreword.

In her coherent narrative, Tien-Li ingeniously weaves various environmental issues that require our attention today into the story. I also marvel at the child's broad knowledge including overbuilding, the accelerating global warming caused by meat consumption, and marine debris, and so on.

Writing from the perspectives of animals (such as the night heron attracted by the colorful rivers), Tien-Li leads us to experience how innocent animals are now being harmed by humans without a chance to stay away from danger. Readers are also reminded of the knowledge of bioaccumulation in the heartbreaking confession to her animal friends. We should be fully aware that, after all, we share only one earth. Being ignorant of what we humans have done to the animals while focusing only on profiting humans actually creates a no-win situation for ourselves.

In addition, the ability to observe nature is the most important basic ability contributing to the success of this book. The daily nature observations of the protagonist "A-tian" in this story reflect the author Tien-Li's utmost care for the surrounding environment.

Observing in detail everything happening on the land where she grew up — the Jianan Plain in southern Taiwan — Tien-Li realizes that any small change reveals the worsening disasters that the entire planet is now faced with. She also extends this concern to everyone in the world, hoping that citizens of the world can be more capable of observing nature and become deep thinkers of the issues in our society.

Upon becoming observant, it won't be hard for us to see the social inequality linked to environmental issues, and this will become the starting point for a new change: things that are often regarded as normal by the public will be noticed, and that's when we can start to make changes and make the world better.

Just like the protagonist "A-tian" takes a small step to help her animal friends in her hometown and devotes herself to protecting the environment, this book is Tien-Li's first little step towards her dream of calling for bigger changes. I look forward to seeing that day.

— *Shih-Chieh, Wang*
Member of the Science Guidance Committee, Ministry of Education,
Natural Science Teacher



preface

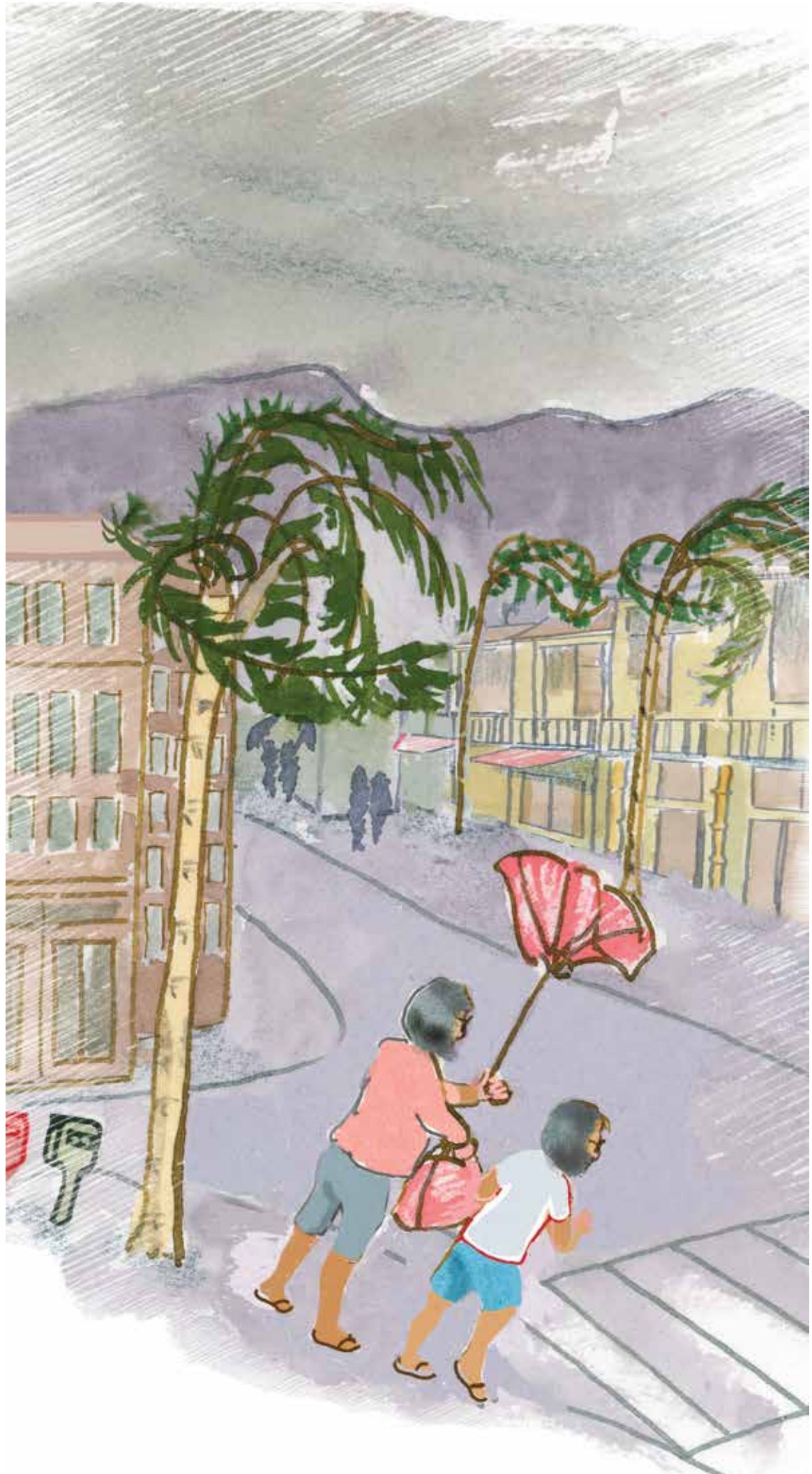
Since the signing of the Kyoto Protocol by the member states of the United Nations in 1997, more than 20 years have passed. The problem of global warming has not been satisfactorily resolved. Large-scale natural disasters caused by climate change are still spreading frequently and increasingly violently. This year's outbreak of severe special infectious pneumonia (COVID-19) is raging and sweeping across the world. It is almost like a large-scale premonition of the consequences of the long-term humiliation of the environment. In light of the unfriendly environment imposed by the people of the earth, this story is even more precious.

Tien-Li's story is based on rich life experience, accumulates the touch of interaction with the surrounding creatures, and adds some fascinating plots to create a semi-autobiographical, fantastic novel. Because the narrative is vivid and the context is well arranged, the reader will not feel as if they are being preached to, and can understand the author's concerns.

“Where to come from, where to go?” Tien-Li clearly pointed out that all things cycle, and eventually they will return to their own principles. It can be good fortune or self-reliance. Although there is still some uncertainty and ups and downs in the future, the author still holds hope and welcomes the future. I feel very gratified by this point, which echoes the American writer Hemingway's view in *The Old Man and the Sea*: “It is silly not to hope, he thought. It's a sin.” In addition to being hopeful, we should imitate the protagonist, reduce damage, restore and create a friendly environment, and cultivate a sustainable and beautiful world.

— *Chuan-Kai, Hung*

Tainan Municipal Sinying District Tuku Elementary School Principal



chapter 1

Autumn Commences is upon us as the Great Heat ends, and one can feel the heat and humidity everywhere as if inside a food steamer, even on the Chiayi–Tainan Plain. There should be typhoons from time to time, during summer vacations with an abundance of rainwater, based on the geographical location of Taiwan as an oceanic island. However, we have only heard about the news of passing typhoons for the past two years, rather than actually having typhoons visit.



When typhoons do occur, they always bring torrential rain. Conditions of either water scarcity or flood have caused anxiety and discomfort not only for people—it has also been unsettling for animals.

It was around April or May of this year when A-tian first noticed this phenomenon. During the past few years, she was always able to pick up fallen bats on campus during the breeding season of the Japanese house bat—but not even one was found this year.

She barely saw bats soaring in the sky and catching insects in groups when she took walks in the evening. The gourds growing on the trellis built by A-tian's father in the garden produced three quarters less than compared to past years, yielding only enough gourds for their family. There were not enough gourds to share with relatives and friends.





Furthermore, the three sisters' favorite longan and lychee trees did not produce anything, even though they worked so hard with their father to pollinate them by hand with writing brushes. In addition to climate change, the plummeting bee population might be another cause of the decline in fruits and vegetables.

A-tian really missed the little bee friends who have accompanied her since childhood.



With the approval of her parents, A-tian cleaned up the toolshed in the backyard and set up a “Bird Consultation Center,” hoping that she could receive some news regarding the whereabouts of her little friends through the well-informed birds, and maybe resolve some other difficult problems as well.



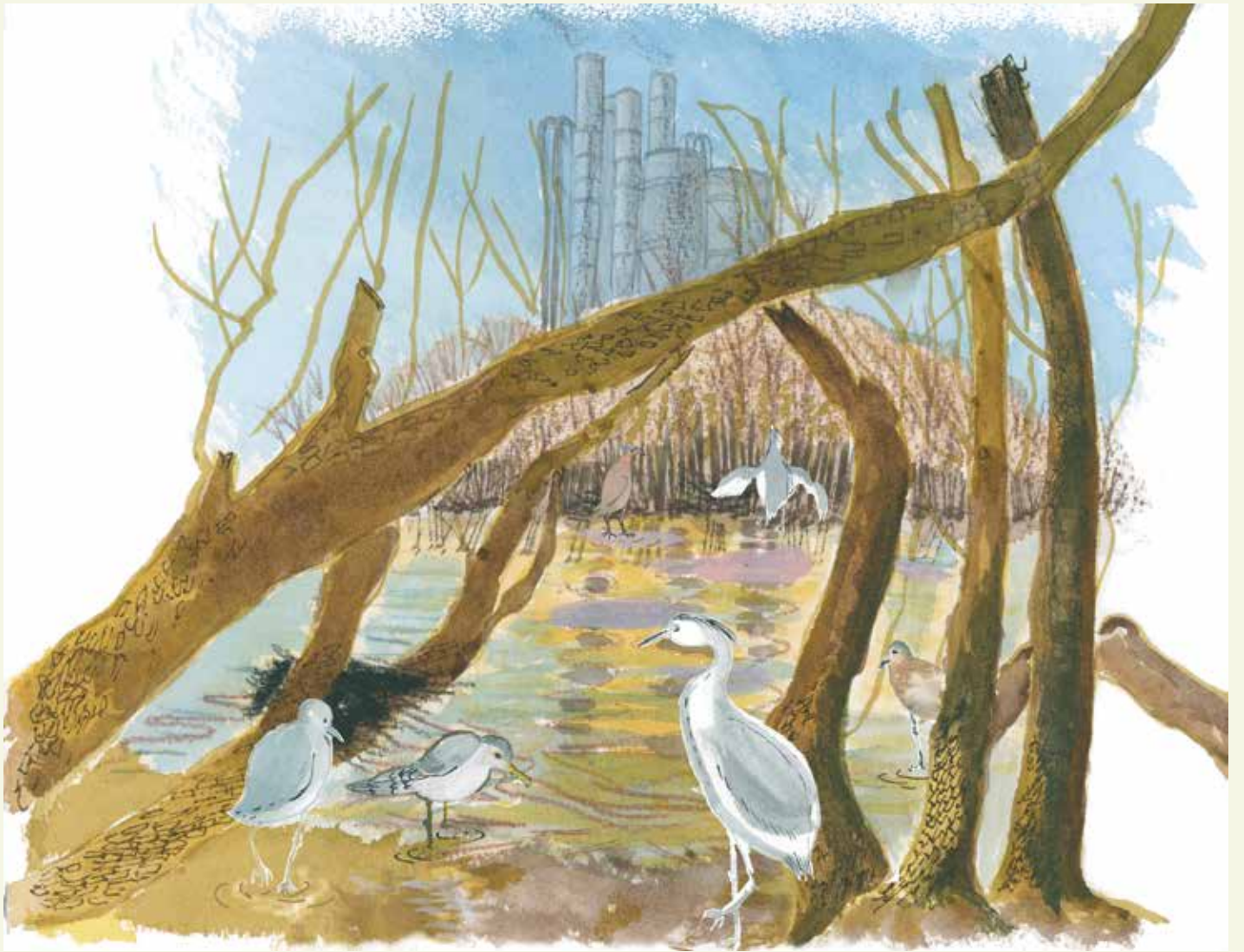
chapter 2

One afternoon, a disoriented black-crowned night heron staggered into the yard. A-tian hurried it to the Bird Consultation Center for some water and rest. After a big bowl of water, the night heron seemed to be satisfied and said, “I haven’t tasted such delicious water for a long period of time! Thank you so much!”



The clear river has become colorful over the last few years. We thought the colored water was beautiful, so my friends and I often played in the river happily.

Nevertheless, the night heron family's health is getting worse and worse recently. Some weak fledglings fell gravely ill with no reason. Even I suffer from frequent headaches and losing balance all the time, but this had never happened when the river was still clear. What went wrong?"

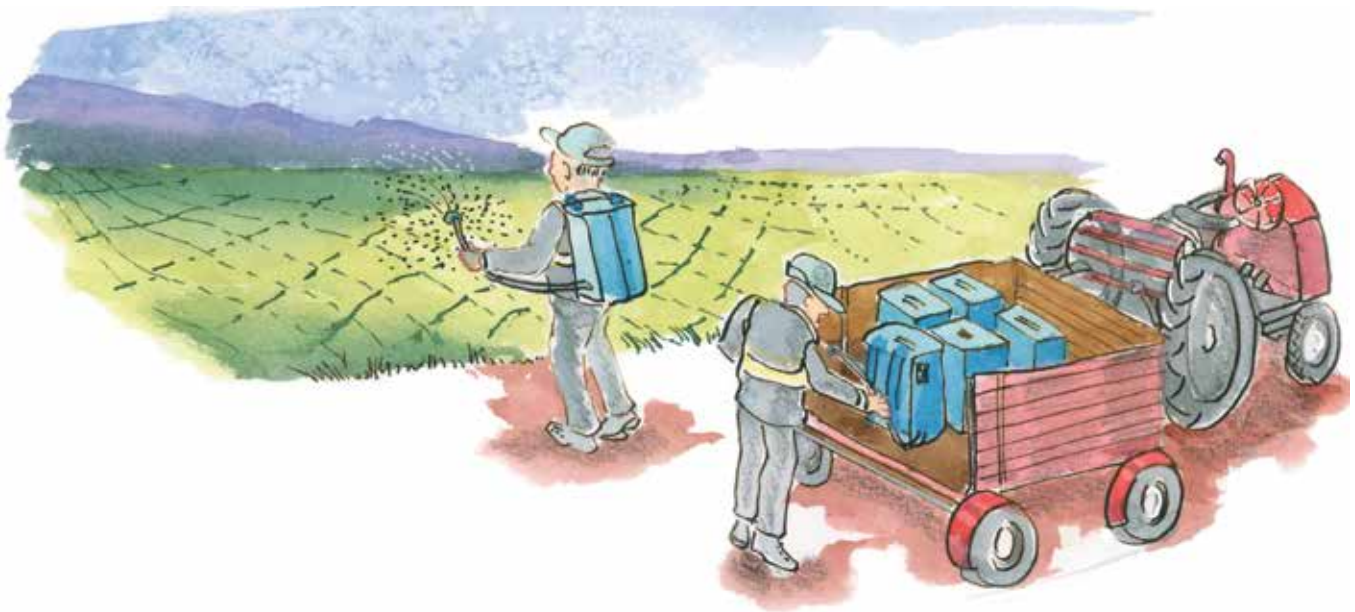


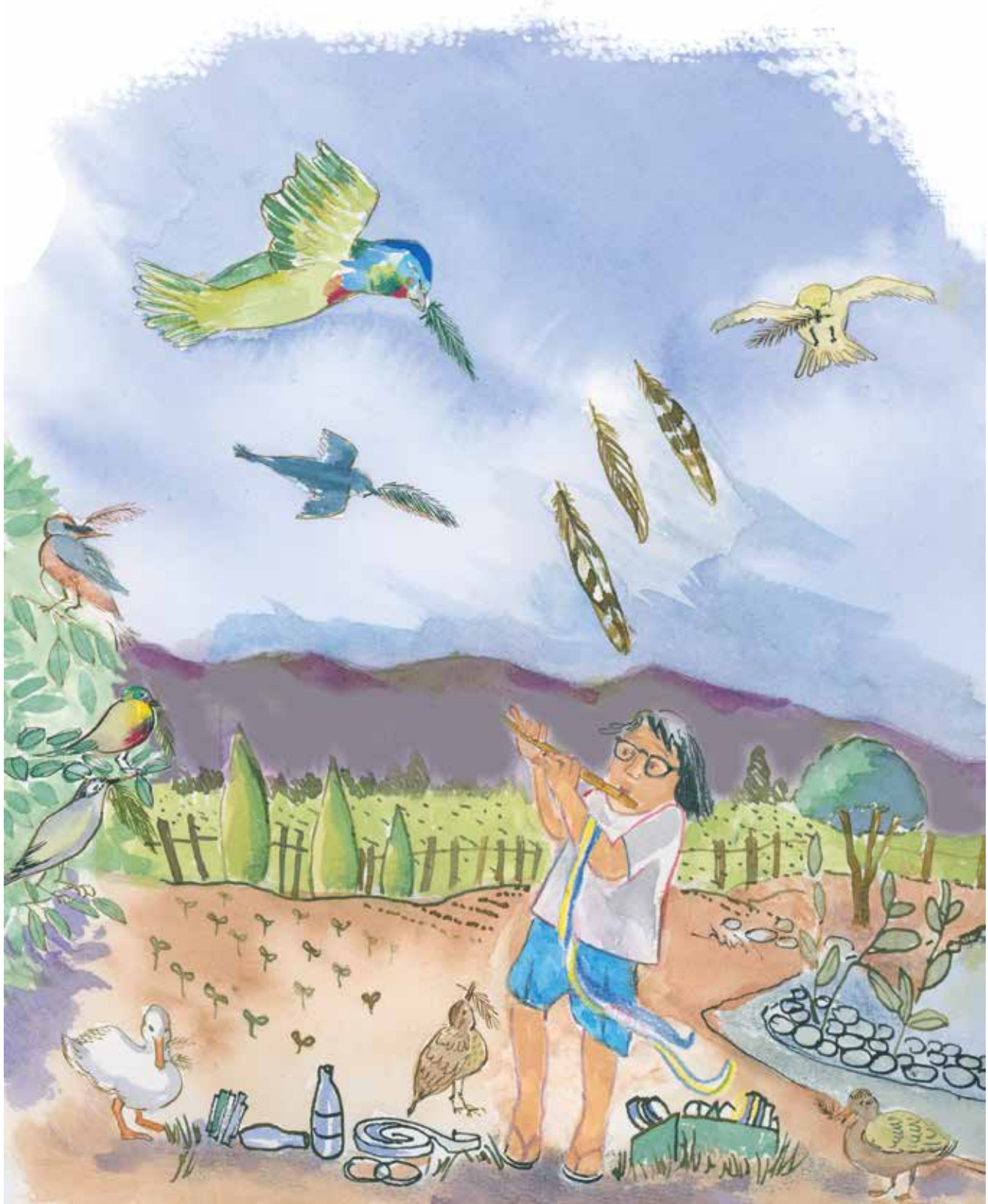
A-tian was morose after hearing this story, and told the night heron in a shameful tone, “Unethical businesspeople are too lazy to handle wastewater properly and secretly discharged it into the sea and rivers for the sake of convenience. This makes the river look colorful, but in reality, it is contaminated by wastewater containing heavy metals and poisonous substances. The fishes live in poisonous water and eat toxic food every day, while you and other birds indirectly ingest those toxins by preying on small fishes and shrimps. This eventually leads to sickness over time, without a doubt!”

Before departing, the night heron gave one of its feathers to A-tian as a thank-you gift and advised her to ask the nosey parker sparrows, who travel in large numbers, if she wished to know the whereabouts of her little bee friends. The night heron then flapped its wings and flew home as quickly as possible to inform its family of the cause of the mysterious disease.



In order to hear the news about her friends without delay, A-tian started to sprinkle rough rice everywhere in the yard, hoping to summon the sparrow family. Days passed and A-tian did not see any sparrows come for the rice. Instead, she ran into a white-headed bulbul that was pecking fruits on an orange jasmine tree. The white-headed bulbul swallowed the fruit, scratched its head, and said angrily, “These days the farmers often carry big buckets on their backs, walk around in the rice fields, and use a narrow tube to spray stinky mist. The mist chokes us and makes us dizzy and woozy. The sparrow family had no choice but to move away since they can’t live here anymore.” A-tian realized he was talking about pesticides after listening to the white-headed bulbul’s complaint. She asked the bulbul to tell the sparrows to drop by sometime at the Bird Consultation Center as she had some questions for them.





chapter 3

The Bird Consultation Center received 18 more bird guests while waiting for the sparrows, and one after another they brought some news. Each bird guest left one of their feathers as a souvenir before leaving. The most special visitor among all of them was the return of the Taiwan barbet that A-tian saved from the field near her house.

Three years ago, A-tian was taking a stroll and chatting with her great-grandfather at dusk. Suddenly, she noticed from a distance that there was a huge net surrounding the bountiful rice field and something seemed to be struggling in the net. She quickly got closer and... Wow! It was a bird net.



Birds were stuck in the mesh, including sparrows, warbling white-eyes, white-headed bulbuls, swallows, and even a colorful Taiwan barbet. Her great-grandfather said that the net was installed by farmers to catch the sparrows and prevent them from eating the matured rice. Her great-grandfather shook his head in dismay, “They are catching both the adult birds and baby birds.”



A-tian scurried home for a pair of scissors and cut the net to free the birds, not caring about whether this would irritate the farmers. Some of the birds were in very bad shape after having been stuck in the mesh for so long. The Taiwan barbet who visited her Bird Consultation Center was one of the birds that she saved.



A-tian still remembered washing the Taiwan barbet inside a shallow water bowl, and how it leaned its head on the edge of the bowl as its legs were slightly trembling. A-tian and her older sister were extremely nervous and afraid that it won't make it... Time seemed to have stopped until it finally started to turn its head and move its feet. Slowly, it began pecking at the water and tidying its feathers slowly. It felt like a century before A-tian's mind was put at ease. The Taiwan barbet rested at her home for a week before flying high in the sky again. Words cannot express how happy A-tian was to see it eventually return to normal life. Knowing your friends are safe and sound is the most joyful thing in the world.

chapter 4

It was getting warmer and more humid. After struggling to find a safe home, the sparrow family finally returned. The very first thing A-tian did upon seeing them was to ask if they knew where the bats, bees, and fireflies had gone. “Why can’t we see them anywhere?” she queried.



The sparrows were furious and exhausted, and they all started complaining at once: “They have either disappeared or are in hiding because of the artificial light sources. The fireflies are impacted by artificial lights while looking for partners, so they cannot find a mate to reproduce with. Even if they are pregnant, mother fireflies are not able to find an optimal place to give birth. Certainly, they are declining in numbers.

The situation is even worse for the bees. Electromagnetic radiation is disturbing the navigation system in their brains. They are having problems returning home after collecting nectar. Even if they make it home, the whole group could be poisoned and die if the nectar is collected from polluted flowers by accident. Plus, the flowering stage has been disrupted or extended by climate change, which also scrambles the biological clock of bees and makes them ill from overwork. In fact, if you go look through haystacks and find no insects, you know the land has been polluted.”

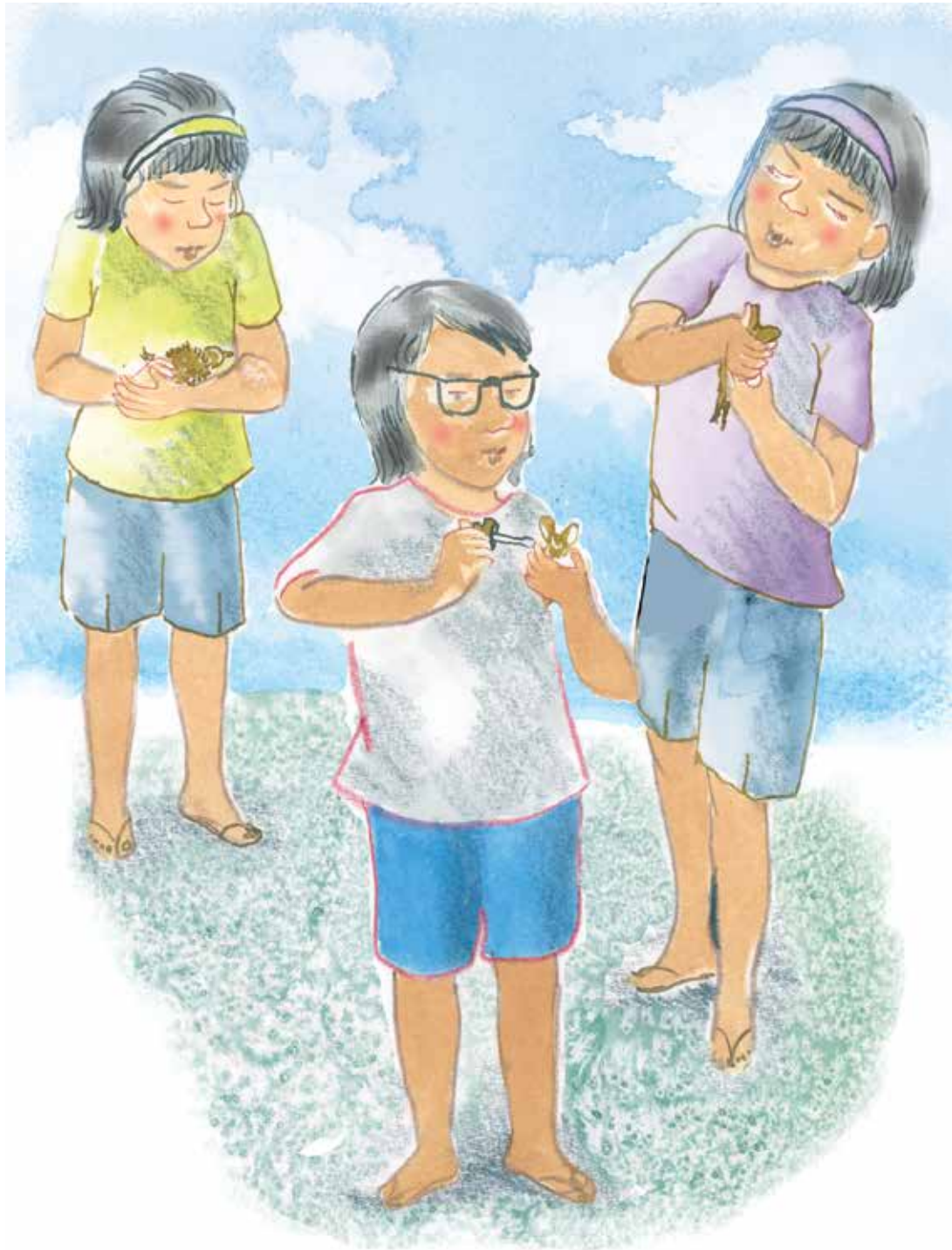
A-tian felt extremely ashamed while listening to the accusations of the sparrows. Weren't all of these caused by the evildoings of humans? The barren fruit trees this year is ironclad proof. If there were more bees, she wouldn't have had to pollinate the trees with writing brushes in vain.



The sparrows continued, “We also bumped into the four bats that were living inside the air conditioner in your house. They wanted us to tell you that they are safe and sound, and to thank you for not driving them away when you found them in your air conditioner. You fed them with milk and mealworms, and acted as a substitute mother bat to help the baby bats practice flying before releasing them back into the wild. They had no choice but to live inside the air conditioner. Severe climate change, lack of food, along with constant habitat destruction by humans forced most bats to move deeper into the mountains in order to survive.”



A-tian recalled caring for the bats. Her mother was terrified in the beginning, and then she came to accept them and even brought the three sisters to attend a volunteer course for bat conservation. Because they had gained a better understanding, her mother went to different schools to disseminate information about bats through storytelling.



A-tian and her two sisters became little nannies who sheltered fallen bats, fledglings, and wounded birds. A-tian had learned to take responsibility for other living beings and witnessed the resilience and beauty of life through nurturing several baby bats. She thought there must be more that she could do.

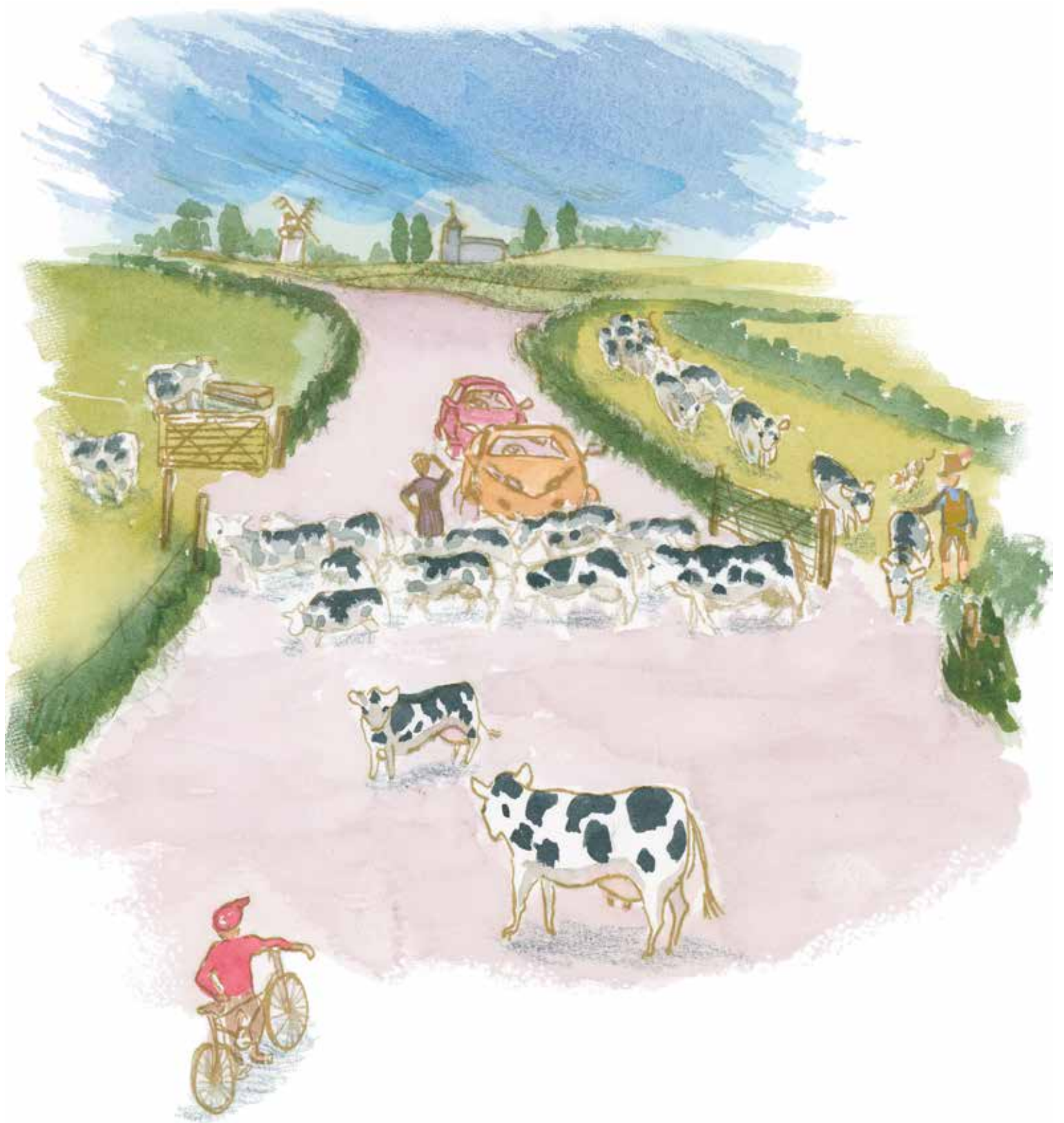
chapter 5

Suddenly, a pheasant-tailed jacanas who just flew in told her about the scattered dairy farms he saw along the way, and how the smell of cow poop was unbearable. A-tian thought of a news story she heard about a dairy farm in Germany that had ninety cows in their cattle pens. Large volumes of methane had accumulated and unexpectedly led to an explosion in combination with static electricity friction. She shared the story with her bird friends. They thought it was unbelievable and asked her to tell them more.



A-tian told them research has shown that polluted air creates holes in the ozone layer, causing dangerous UV rays to reach the Earth's surface. As a result, icebergs are melting, the sea level is rising, and the temperature is getting higher and higher. Cows' gas produces so much methane that their "farts" are the prime culprit for speeding up global warming!

People are now advocating for vegetarianism in order to help save the Earth! In spite of this, the number of cattle farms has been increasing instead of decreasing, and global warming is accelerating.





Egrets have always been good friends of cows, and they couldn't help but stand up for the cows and speak out for justice: "It's the humans suffering the consequences of their own actions. You cannot expect the cows to graze without farting and burping!" "That's right." A-tian said, "Humans did bring this on themselves to satisfy their appetite, but not everyone is to blame. Some innocent humans have also been accused of hurting the Earth, which is very unfair.



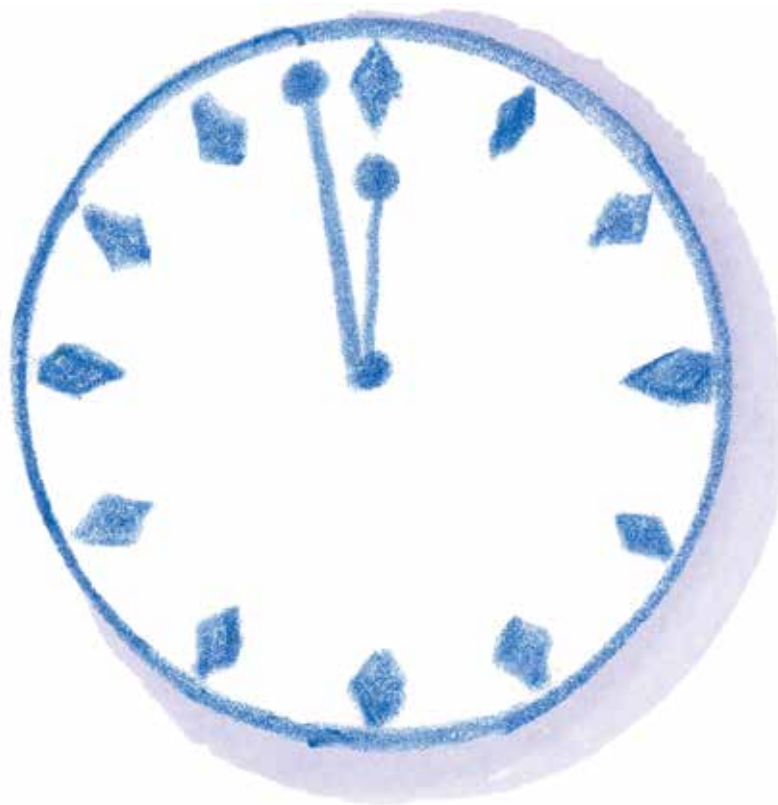
The exhaust and marine debris produced by overdeveloped countries travels throughout the world through air and ocean currents, which impacts undeveloped countries as well. Nevertheless, it's the advanced countries that enjoy the benefits, not the undeveloped countries.”





A-tian continued, “But when it comes to global climate change, all of us suffer the consequences together, including those who did not enjoy the benefit. People from undeveloped countries sometimes do not have enough food to eat, let alone eating beef. But the effects of global warming are everywhere, and Mother Nature fights back against people in undeveloped countries, too. We have to admit the fact that advanced countries have become invisible perpetrators and undeveloped countries have become victims. Perhaps we all believe that it makes no difference whether or not we care for the Earth as a powerless individual.

But the Doomsday Clock will only accelerate if everyone thinks so.” All the birds were silent while listening to A-tian’s explanation. “In fact, humans know exactly what their problems are. It’s just a matter of whether they want to face up to the problems or not.”



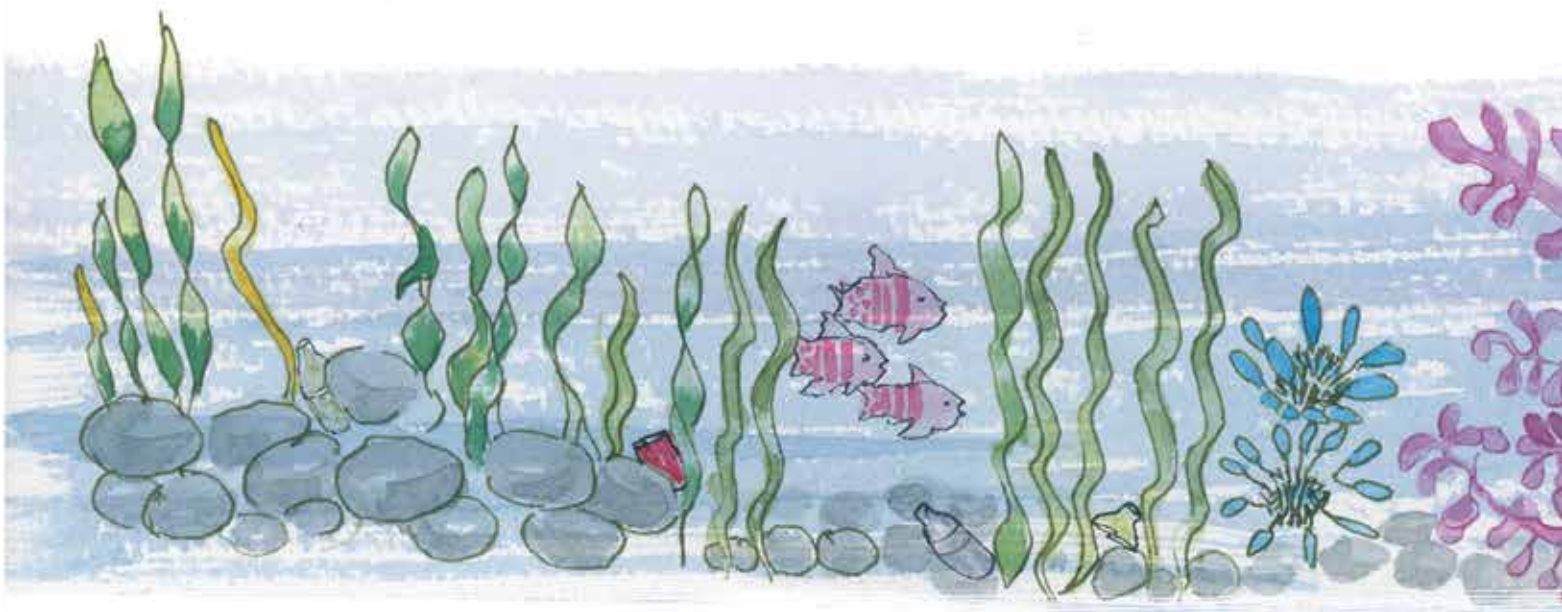
The next day, A-tian started to research about climate change. She wanted to change the Earth's future destiny, save the plants and animals, and also to save herself. She found out that living things were being harmed by human beings whether in the sea, in the sky or on the land. The only difference is how they are being harmed.



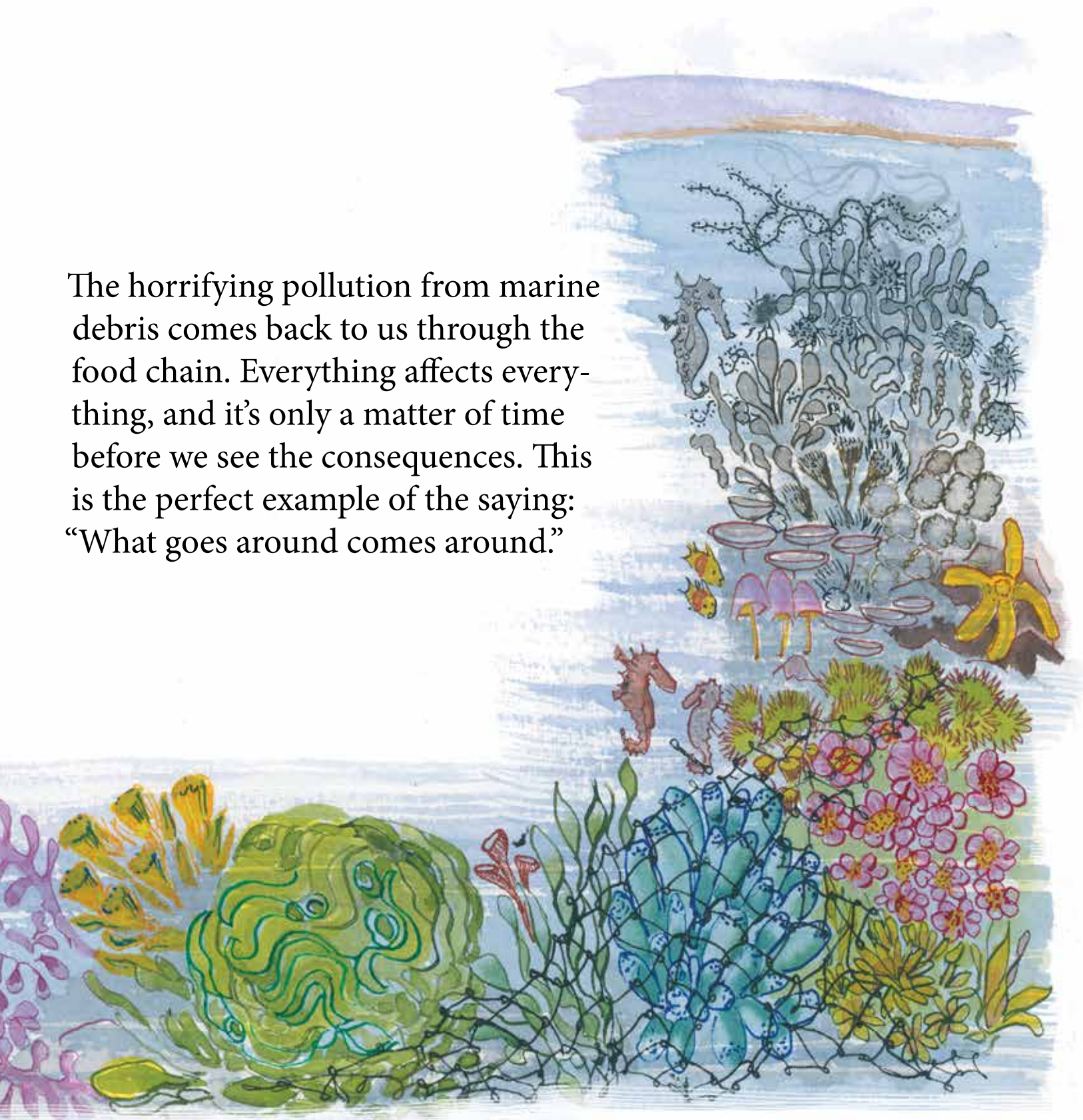




She read from news reports that once-exquisite coral reefs have been bleached due to excessive discharge of sewage into the water by humans. A significant drop in fish populations of all sizes was caused by over-fishing. Seahorses cling onto cotton swabs and other pieces trash while swimming in the ocean...



The horrifying pollution from marine debris comes back to us through the food chain. Everything affects everything, and it's only a matter of time before we see the consequences. This is the perfect example of the saying: "What goes around comes around."



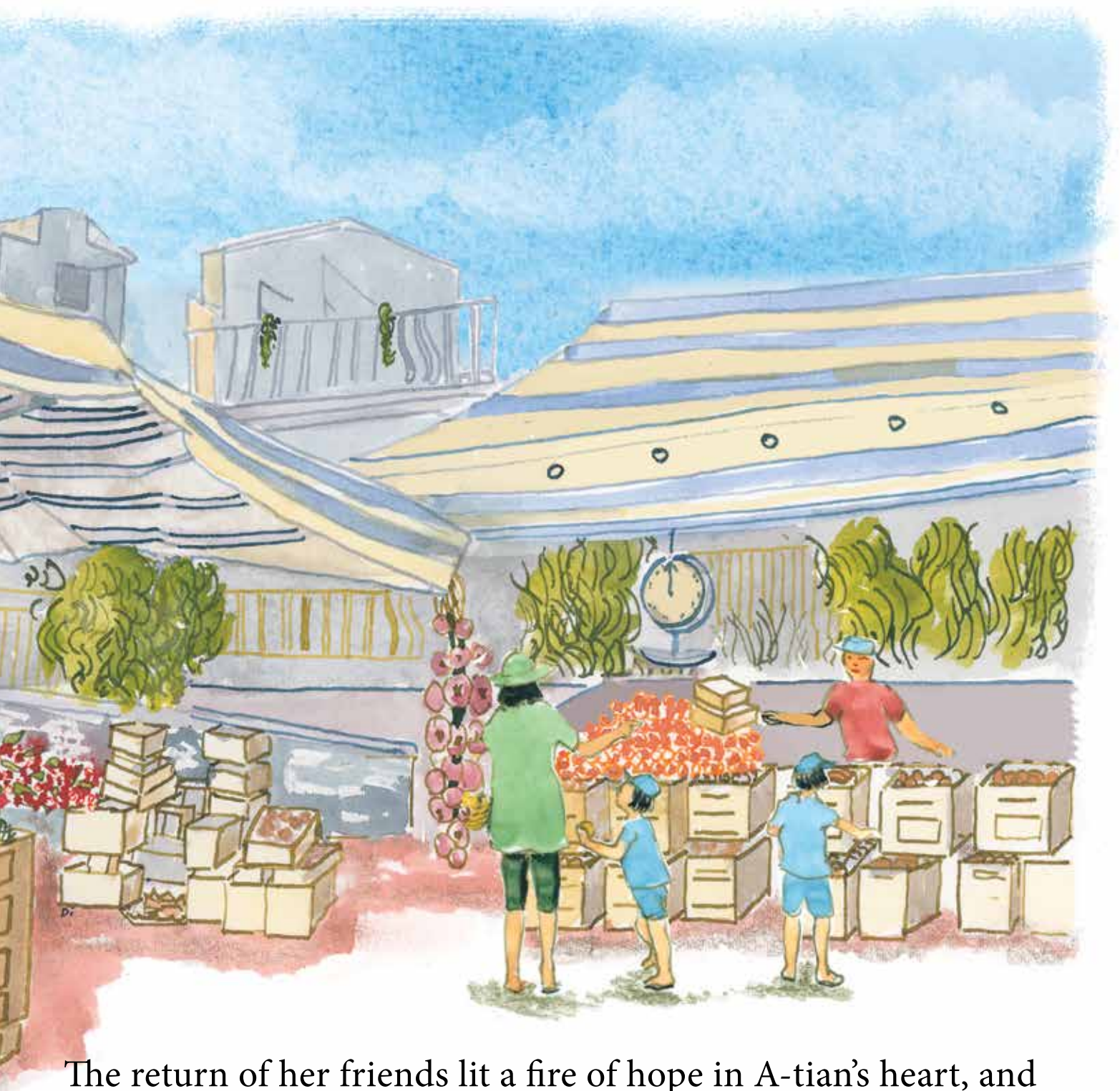


chapter 6

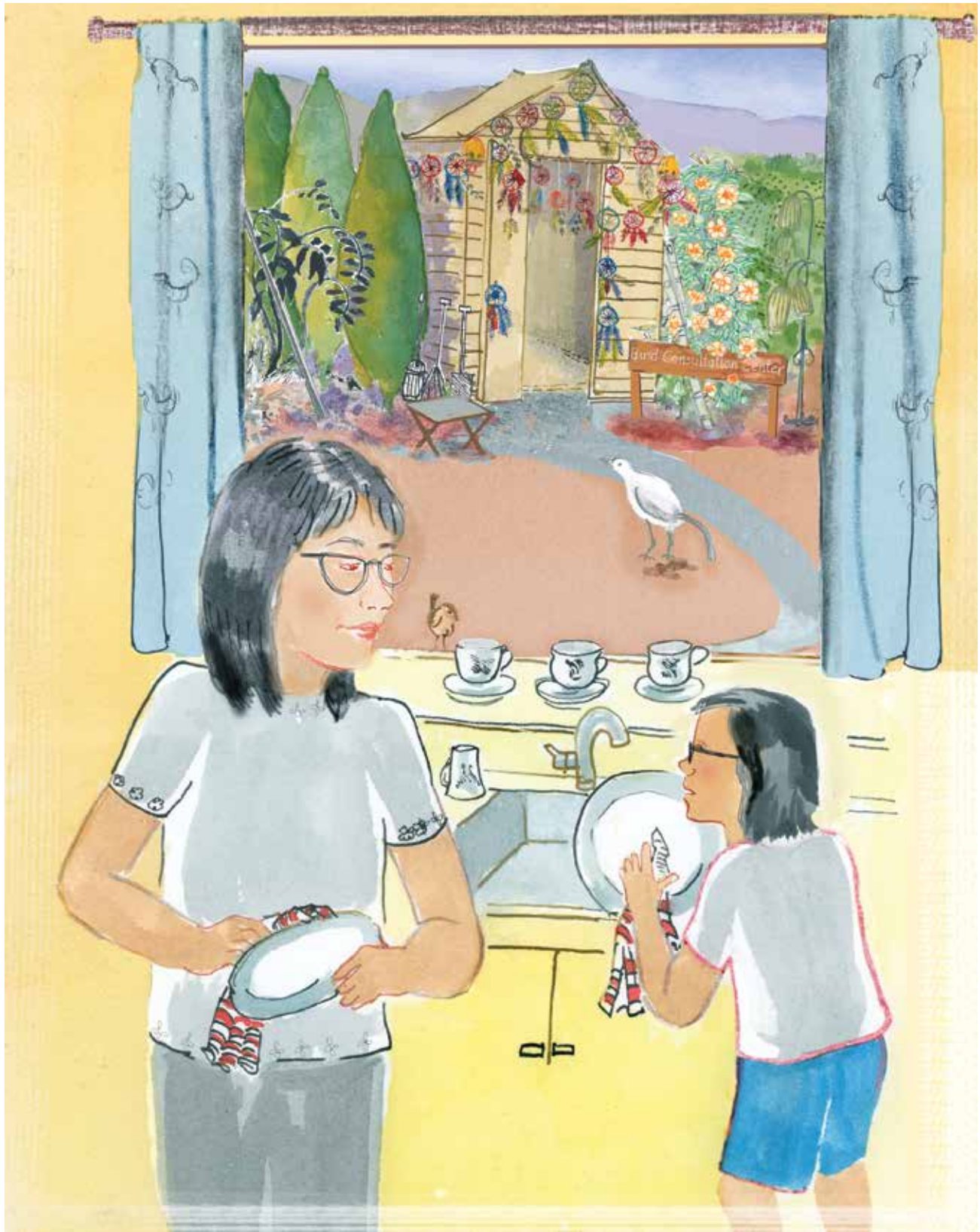
After getting approval from her father, A-tian conducted a small experiment in the backyard. She did not weed for three months. Although the lawn was no longer grassy and neat, some fireflies came back and flew among the knee-high weeds with faint light after a few rain showers. But the most moment was when she heard the faint buzzing of...bees!

The healthy environment welcomed her dear friends back into her neighborhood. She smiled as she imagined the longan and lychee trees producing an abundance of fruit later that year, all thanks to the help of the bees.





The return of her friends lit a fire of hope in A-tian's heart, and motivated her to continue her work to protect the environment. She worked hard to prevent the use of disposable products, learn about the carbon footprint of foods on the dining table, participate in beach cleanups, reduce waste and do her best to sort recycling... hoping that her actions could help Mother Nature to slowly recover.

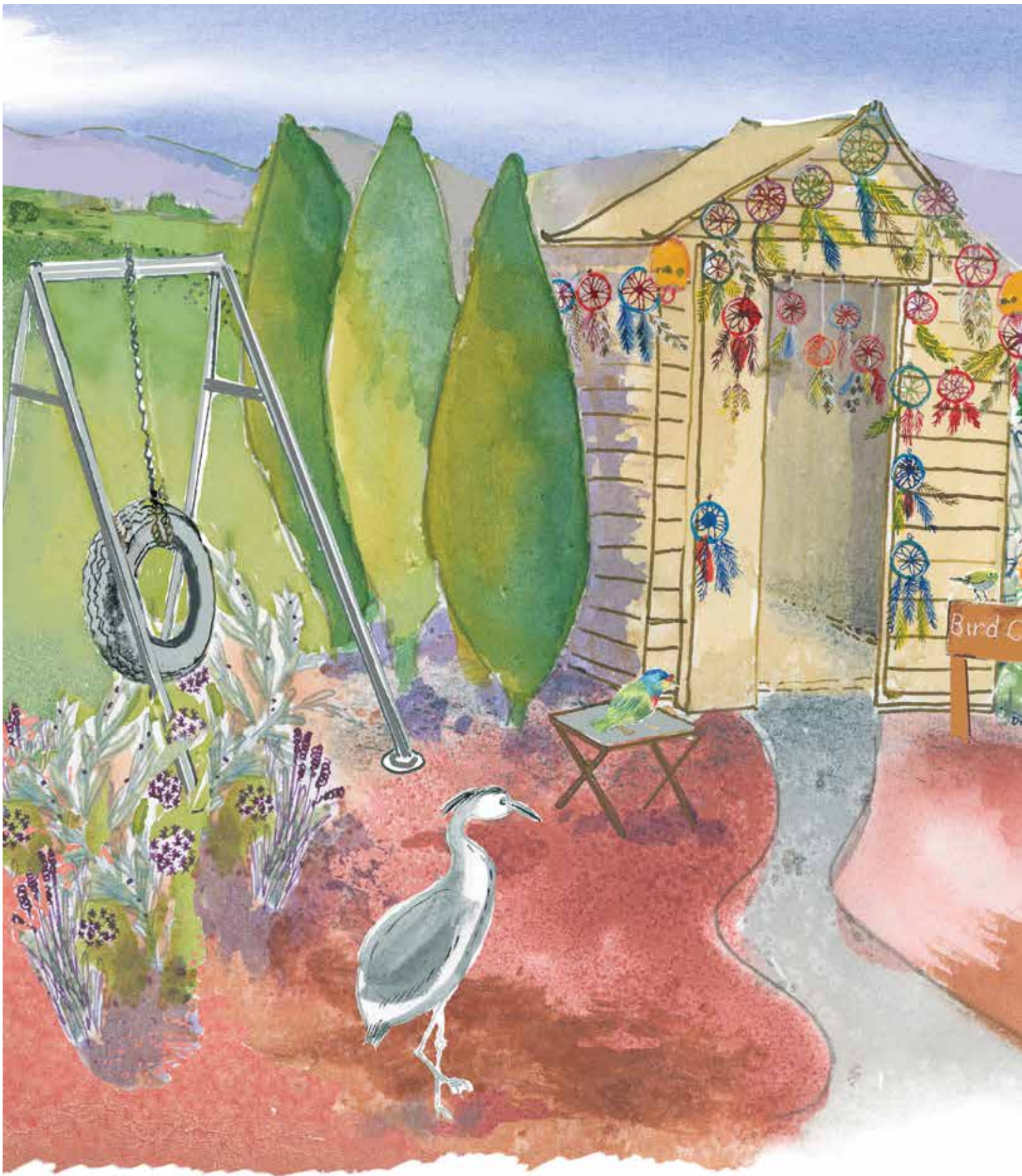


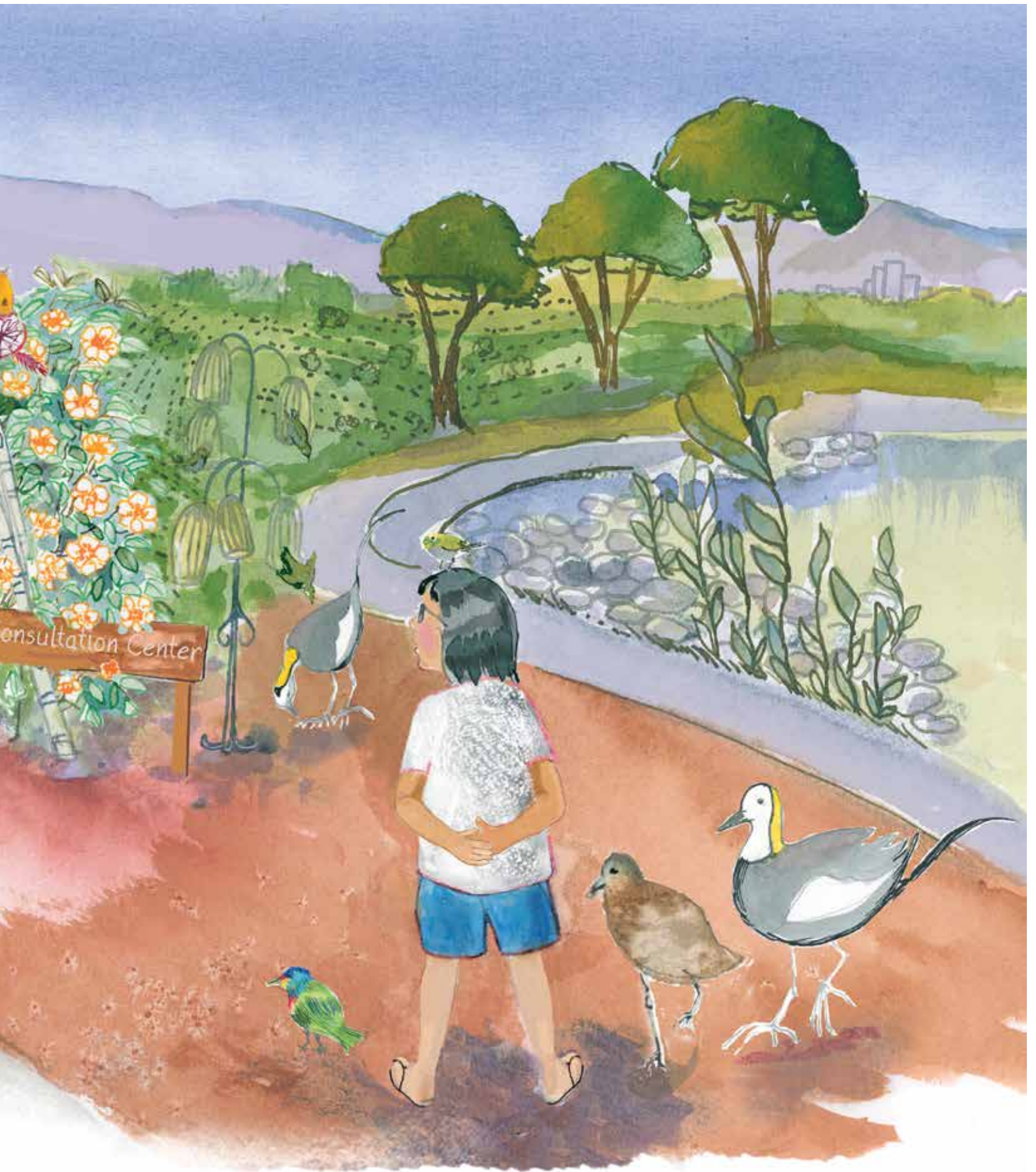
Life always looks for a way to prosper, and what she can do is minimize damage to restore and build a friendly environment.

One day, after sorting the recycling, A-tian's mother sat on the steps in the yard and asked her curiously: "Why did you hang 22 dreamcatchers at the entrance of the Bird Consultation Center?" A-tian looked at the



“dreamcatchers” woven from bird feathers and recycled plastics swaying in the wind. She smiled and replied: “22 species of birds have visited my Bird Consultation Center, and the ‘dreamcatchers’ symbolize my hope for a beautiful future.”





about the author



Tien-Li Cheng is from Taiwan and was 12 years-old when she wrote ‘Dream Catcher.’ She enjoys studying at home, as well as volunteering for local museums and elementary schools. She likes reading, travelling, history, music, and ancient Chinese dramas. She loves writing about the simple pleasures in life and creating art with recycled items. She is a dreamer and hopes to learn by trying new and challenging things.

Tien-Li is a devoted advocate for children and youth rights in Tainan City. In addition, she focuses on issues of environmental pollution and nature conservation. Just like in her story “Dream Catcher”, she hopes that humans can do the right thing and make up for the harm they have done to the environment. She hopes that we can create a better world and allow people to dream. In particular, Tien-Li hopes to show people that there is no age limit on paying attention to public issues.

about the illustrator



Dianne Green is from England. She has an MA in Children’s Book Illustration from the Cambridge School of Art. She likes to use pencils, paint, and inks to add an emotional layer to texts. Her biggest influences are her three siblings and her son, all gifted, creative, and left-handed. Presently, she works on her own artists’ books, enjoys urban sketching, drawing from nature, and retelling family stories through illustrated picturebooks. Dianne enjoys libraries, museums, and collections of paintings. She advises young artists to draw directly from the world around them as “another way of learning about our amazing planet.”



Voices of Future Generations Children's Book Series



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All children are holders of important human rights. Twenty-five years ago in 1989, over a hundred countries agreed on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. In the most important human rights treaty in history, they promised to protect and promote all children's equal rights, which are connected and equally important.

In the 54 Articles of the Convention, countries make solemn promises to defend children's needs and dreams. They recognize the role of children in realizing their rights, which requires that children be heard and involved in decision-making. In particular, Article 24 and Article 27 defend children's rights to safe drinking water, good food, a clean and safe environment, health, and quality of life. Article 29 recognizes children's rights to education that develops personality, talents and potential, respecting human rights and the natural environment.

— *Dr. Alexandra Wandel*
World Future Council



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Sustainable Development Goals Statement

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are a bridge from the previous Millennium Development Goals adopted by the international community in 2000 to the future. Construction of this bridge began in 2012 at the United Nations Rio+ 20 Conference on Sustainable Development. At this Conference, countries agreed that it was time to take concrete action for the present and the future by acting on issues such as climate change, poverty, inequality and biodiversity. This resulted in *The Future We Want*, a global statement of priorities and responsibilities for countries toward the people, environment, biodiversity and future.

In 2015, the bridge took shape in the form of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which countries agreed to implement between 2015 and 2030. The SDGs, as they are commonly called, comprise a set of 17 specific goals, over 160 targets within these goals, and hundreds of indicators to measure if the goals and targets are being met. The SDGs address the key issues that face our world community now and that will define this community in the future, such as poverty, climate change, education rights, gender equality, discrimination, health, food and water access and safety, and the promotion of justice for all members of society. Since 2015, children around the world have joined in efforts to incorporate the SDGs in their countries and communities, adding their voices and perspectives as future leaders. The SDGs show the power of all people, including children, to create positive and lasting change that addresses the needs of local and global society.

— *Dr. Alexandra R. Harrington*
Centre for International Sustainable Development Law



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The World Future Council consists of 50 eminent global changemakers from across the globe. Together, they work to pass on a healthy planet and just societies to our children and grandchildren. (www.worldfuturecouncil.org)

United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO) strives to build networks among nations that enable humanity's moral and intellectual solidarity by mobilizing for education, building intercultural understanding, pursuing scientific cooperation, and protecting freedom of expression. (<https://en.unesco.org/>)

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the body of 18 independent experts that monitors implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and its three Optional Protocols, by its State parties. (www.ohchr.org)

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About the 'Voices of Future Generations' Series

To celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Voices of Future Generations Children's Book Series, led by the United Nations and a consortium of educational charities including the World Future Council (WFC), the Centre for International Sustainable Development Law (CISDL), the Environmental Quality Protection Foundation (EQPF), the Fundacion Ecos and the Trust for Sustainable Living (TSL) among others, as well as the Future Generations Commissioners of several countries, and international leaders from the UN Division for Sustainable Development, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the UN Education, Science and Culture Organisation (UNESCO), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and other international organizations, has launched the new Voices of Future Generations Series of Children's Books.

Every year we feature stories from our selected group of child authors, inspired by the outcomes of the Earth Summit, the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) and the world's Sustainable Development Goals, and by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) itself. Our junior authors, ages 8-12, are concerned about future justice, poverty, the global environment, education and children's rights. Accompanied by illustrations, each book profiles creative, interesting and adventurous ideas for creating a just and greener future, in the context of children's interests and lives.

We aim to publish the books internationally in ten languages, raising the voices of future generations and spread their messages for a fair and sustainable tomorrow among their peers and adults, worldwide. We welcome you to join us in support of this inspiring partnership, at www.vofg.org.



Ingenious arrangement! Tien-Li uses a “net” to connect the feeling of readers. When reading about the protagonist A-tian using a pair of scissors to cut through the bird-catching net to save a dying bird, readers feel refreshed. Seeing the greedy and selfish nature of human beings, A-tian did not want to turn a blind eye. Instead, she took aggressive actions. From building shelters for birds, saving baby bats, to recycling garbage, every action is like weaving a dream catcher to A-tian. Hoping it will make up for the mistakes of human beings, A-tian also build a new network of relationships between human beings and other creatures.

Dr. Ying-Shih Hsieh

Chairman, Environmental Quality Protection Foundation, Taiwan

Tien-Li, a talented young girl, has written an inspirational contemporary story. In *Dream Catcher*, the protagonist becomes aware of the damage caused by a changing climate and unchecked development in her home country and the world. As a result, “A-Tian” devotes herself to protect the animals and their habitats. *Dream Catcher* is a must-read for those who want to change the world for the better.

Dr. Odeeth Lara-Morales

Global Senior Programme Officer, UNESCO Voices of Future Generations

Dream Catcher leads us to experience how humans are now harming innocent animals without a chance to stay away from danger. The story reminds readers of bioaccumulation in the heartbreaking confession of the protagonist “A-tian” to her animal friends. We should be fully aware that, after all, we share only one earth, and while focusing on just profiting, we humans create a no-win situation. *Dream Catcher* reflects the author’s utmost care for the surrounding environment.

Shih-Chieh, Wang

***Member of the Science Guidance Committee, Ministry of Education,
Natural Science Teacher***

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