

Among friends, we help each other

Plants, Animals, and Pollination



told by Antenita



“Among friends, we help each other”
Plants, Animals, and Pollination

© Camila Benavides-Frias

© Sissi Lozada Gobilard

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Plants, Animals and Pollination



Where do baby plants come from?



Antenita, your bee friend, has travelled very far
and arrived at the patio of a house in La Paz.

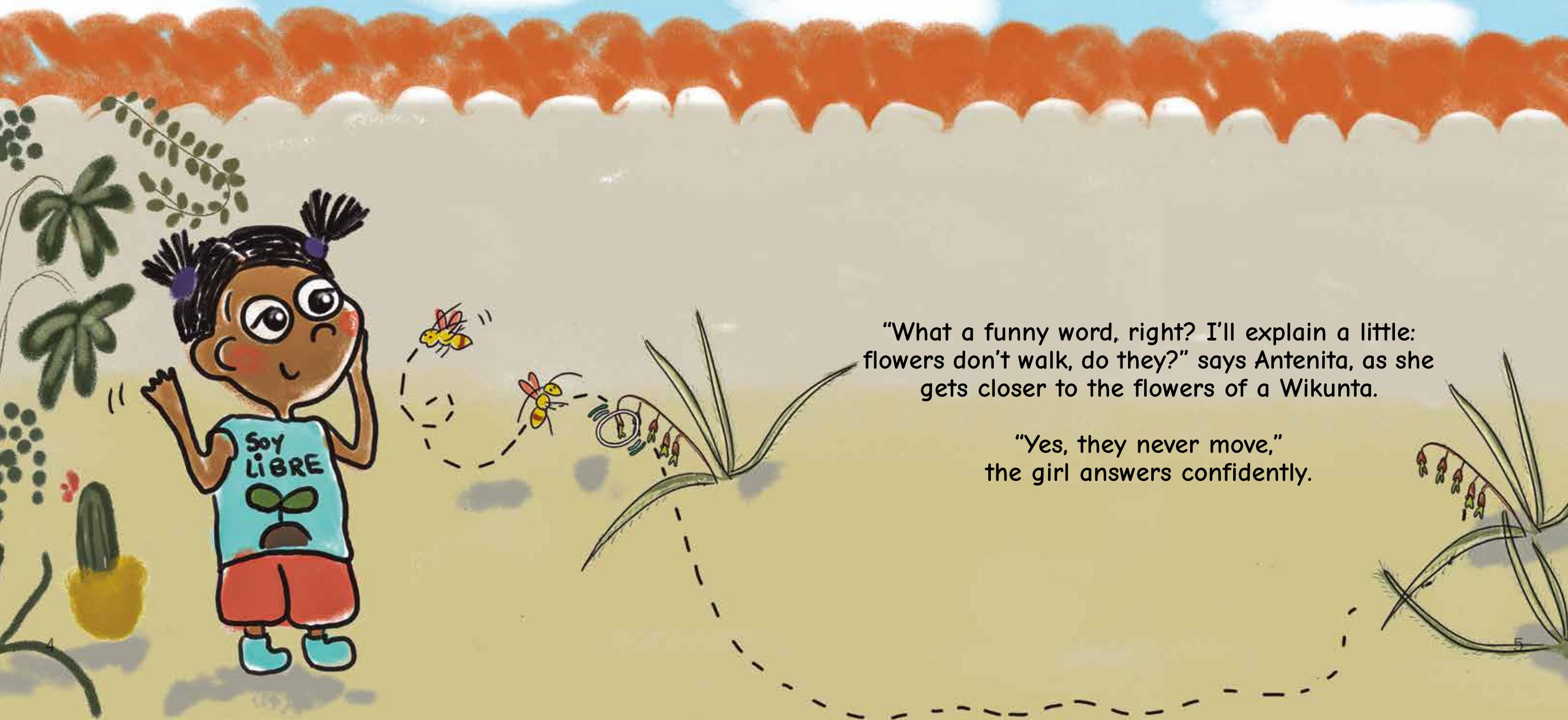
A girl plays among her grandmother's plants.

"Hello! I'm Antenita, a very curious little bee.

Your flowers are beautiful—I love them because I'm
a pollinator."

"Polli... what?" Anahí says, laughing.



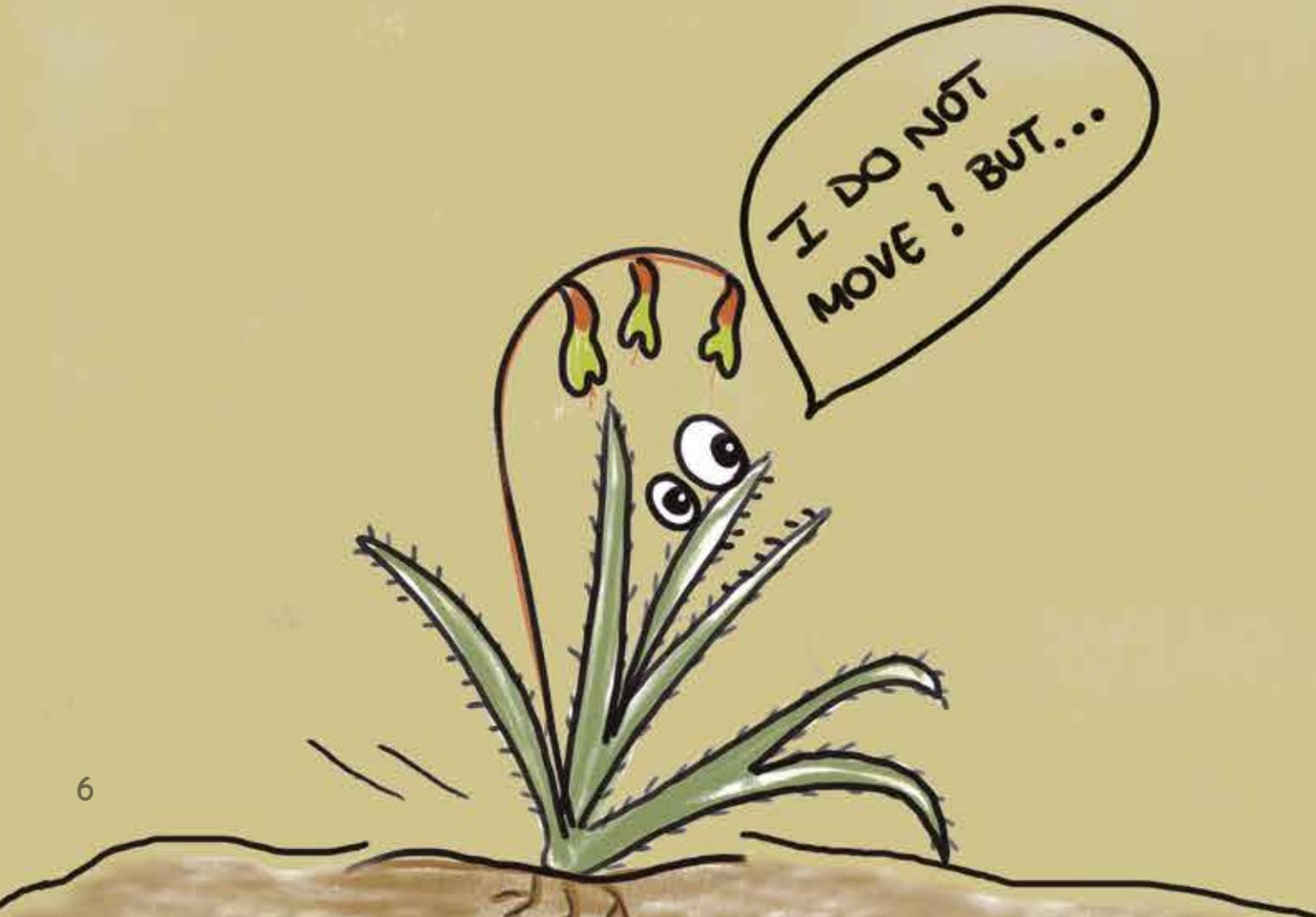


“What a funny word, right? I’ll explain a little: flowers don’t walk, do they?” says Antenita, as she gets closer to the flowers of a Wikunta.

“Yes, they never move,” the girl answers confidently.

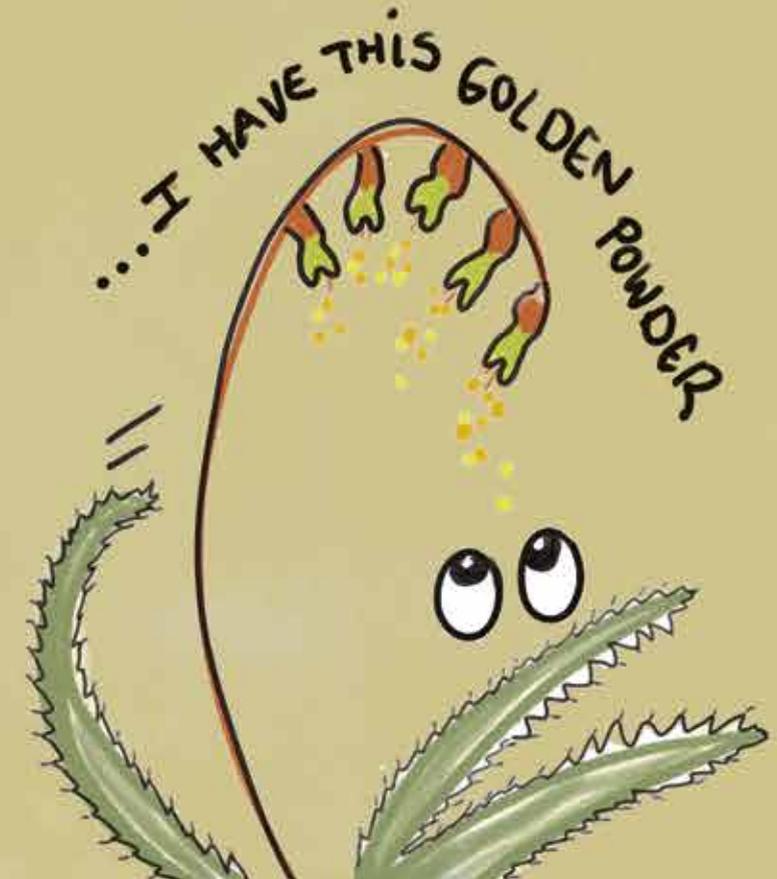
“Since plants don’t walk, they need friends to help them when they want to have their babies.

We little bees are their friends!”

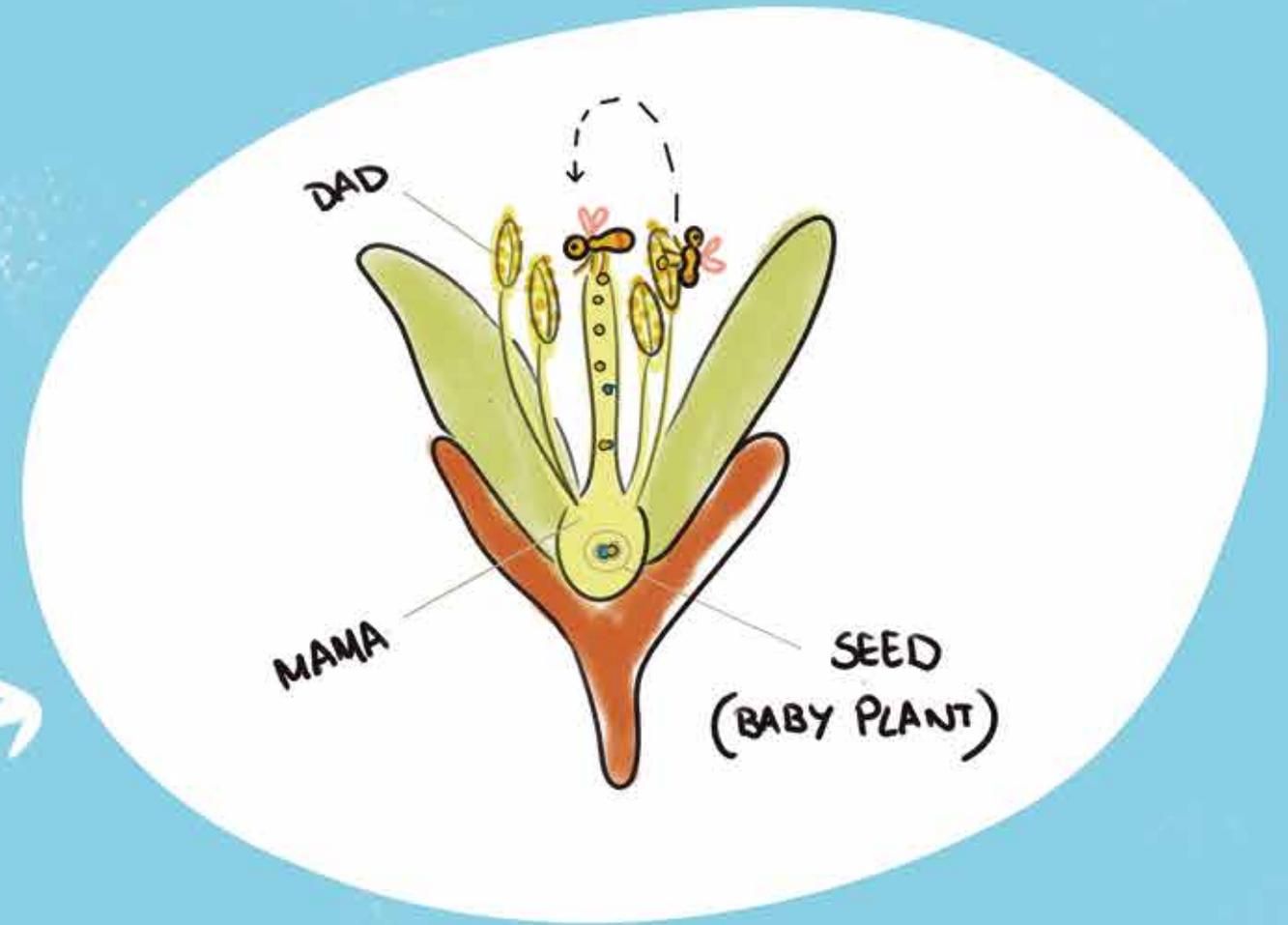


We help them by carrying, from flower to flower, a golden dust that they produce so they can have babies.

That dust is called pollen—that’s why we are called pollinators.”

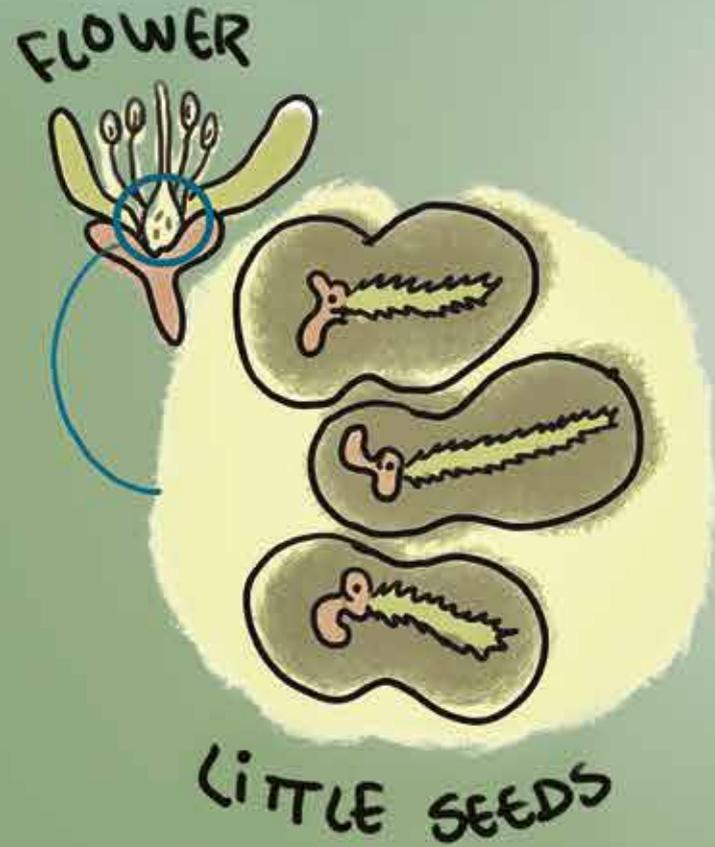


“Imagine cutting a flower in half—this way I can show you better how I help plants have their babies:”



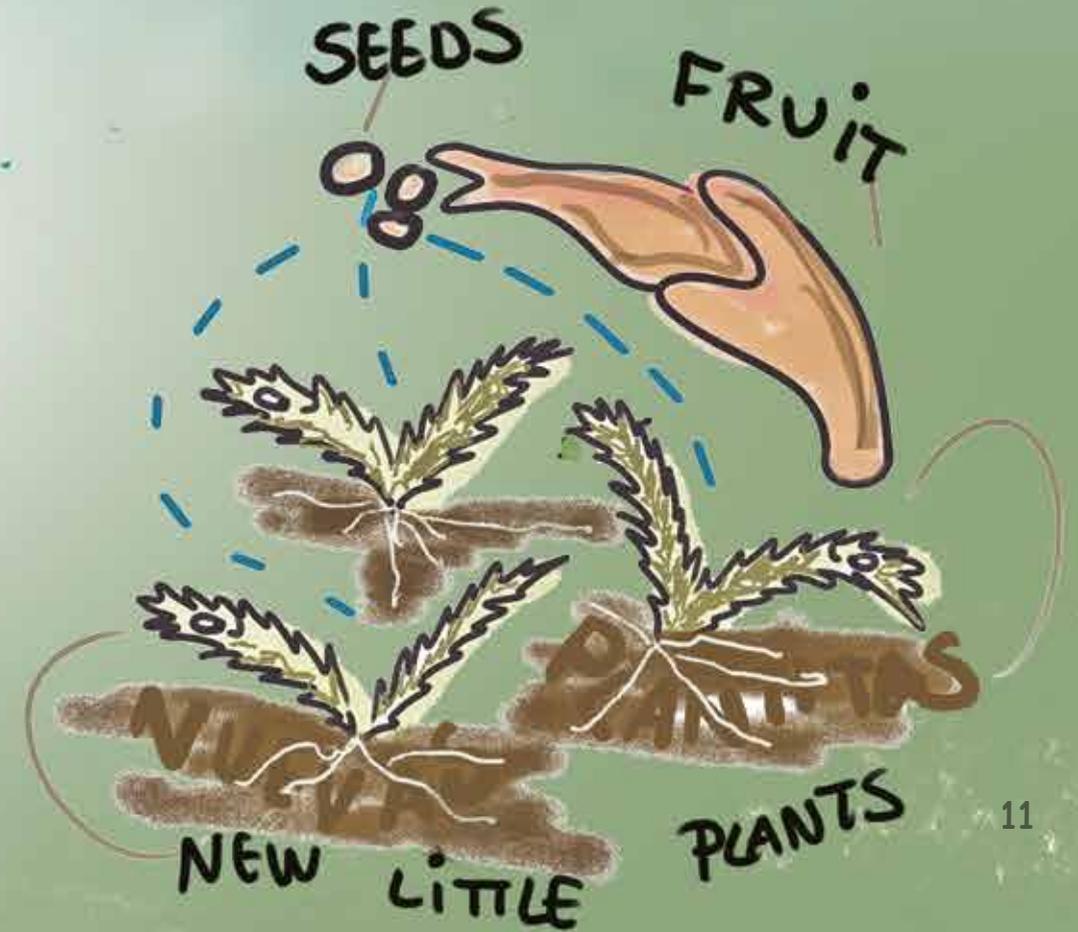
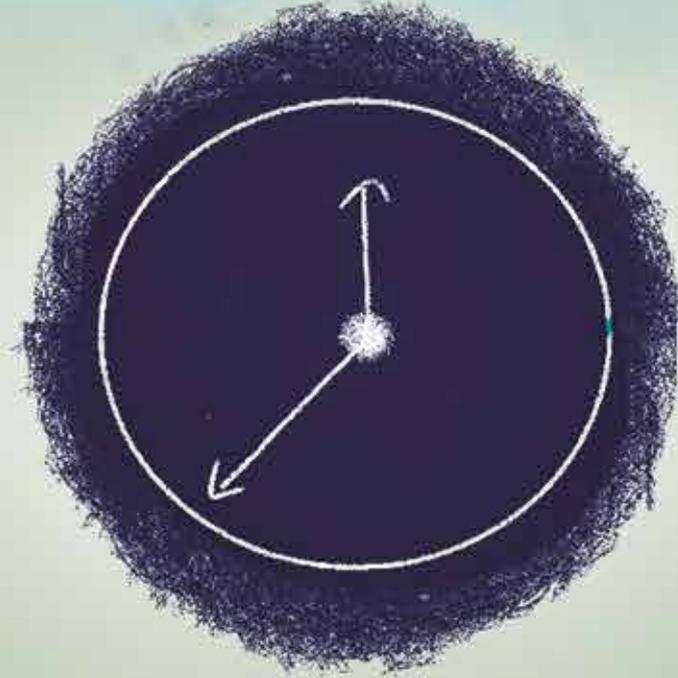
Inside there is a daddy part (which makes pollen) and a mommy part (where the babies grow),”
Antenita tells the girl.

Once the pollen joins with the mommy —thanks to my help— fruits are formed, where the babies (or seeds) are protected.



Later, when the fruit dries, the seeds fall to the ground and *poof!* life goes on."

TIME



“But don’t think that only little bees help our plant friends. Many other animals do too—like hummingbirds, butterflies, flies, and even bats and little mice.

Oh, I almost forgot! As good friends, flowers give us all a little gift for our help. A sweet juice called nectar, and sometimes they also give us some of their pollen...”

Both are really delicious to eat! And when they don’t give us food, they let us sleep inside their flowers or give us perfumes... those are long stories to tell, but very interesting ones.”



“Wow! What a crazy world!” Anahí shouts,
running among the flowers.

“I have time until my next trip—would you like
me to tell you a bit more?” asks Antenita.

“Yes!” says the girl as her black eyes shine brightly.

So the two friends sit down, and Antenita
begins to tell her stories about flowers and
their pollinator friends.



Inter-andean dry valleys
3600 - 2500 m.a.s.l.

The karalahua and her good friend the giant hummingbird

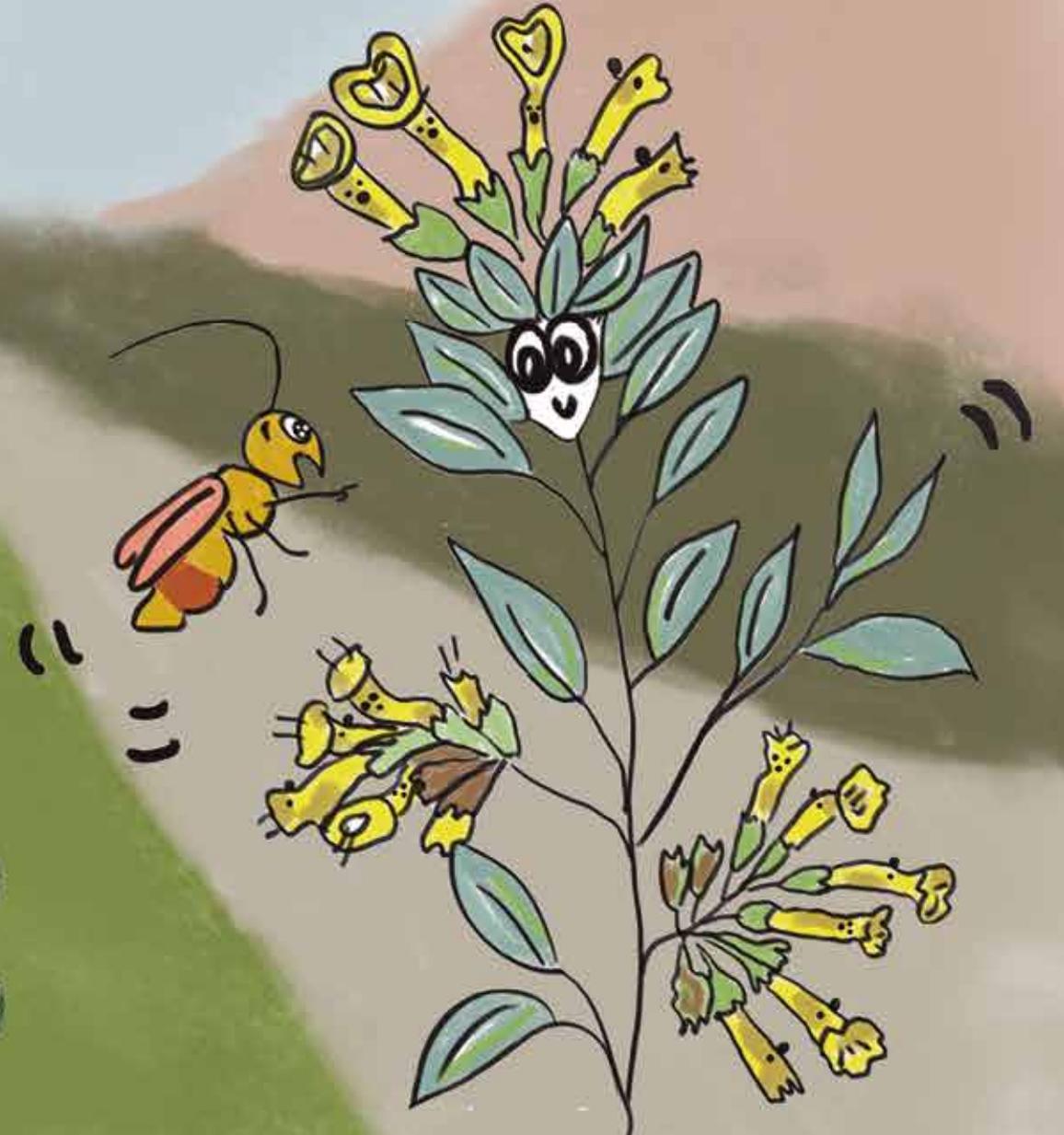
- *Nicotiana glauca* and *patagona gigas* -

Antenita was flying through Río Abajo, where it is warmer and there are flowers of many colors. Suddenly, she saw a little plant with yellow flowers.

"Hello! I'm Antenita," says the little bee.

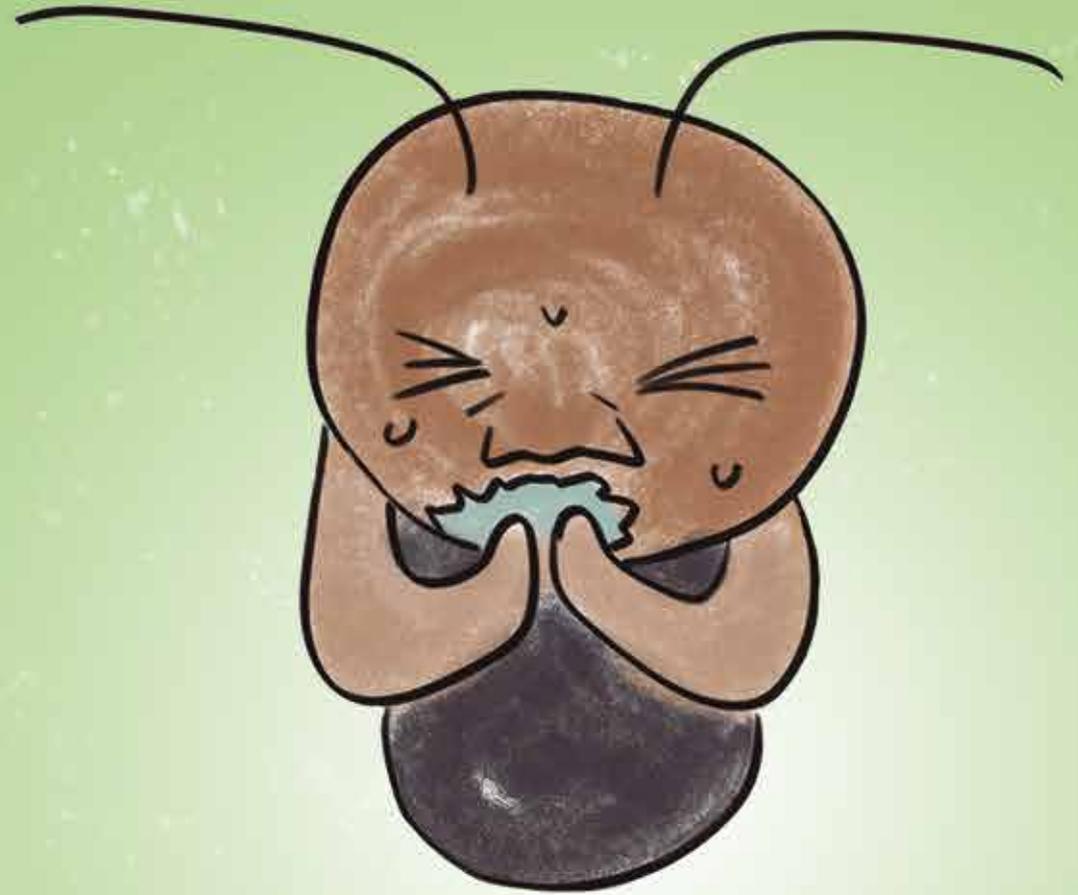
"Hello, I'm the Karalahua," replies the little plant.

"Your leaves look tasty—do little bugs eat them?"





“Well, actually they don’t! My little leaves are very bitter
—I prefer that they don’t eat them.”



But my flowers hide a sweet nectar. Look! Here comes
my friend to drink my nectar and carry my pollen to
another little plant like me.”



Suddenly, a giant hummingbird arrives—this is what they call him because he really is the largest hummingbird in the world!

“Wow! What a huge little bird!” says Antenita.

“He is my best pollinator friend. His name is Patagona,” says the Karalahua as she happily watches her friend approach her flowers.

At that very moment, a bumblebee arrives and makes a little hole in her flower.

“Oh no! They’re back! Everything was so perfect until now!”



“What happened? I’m confused—I thought they were some of your other friends!”

“No! These bumblebees and common bees are not my friends. They steal my sweet nectar and don’t carry my pollen!”

“Nectar thieves?” says Antenita.

“Yes! They pollinate other little plants, but from me they only steal my sweetness.

Oh dear! How important it is to have good friends like Patagona—he really does help you.”



While they keep talking about friends
—and not-so-friends—

the Karalahua tells her that in the city it is becoming
harder to find pollinating animals because there are
fewer plants.



“Even though there are fewer plants in the city, some hummingbirds dare to come and pollinate me,” explains the little plant.

“We call them *Lulinchu coruscans* and *Lulinchu cometa*. They are very beautiful and good friends.”

“Very interesting! I will try to tell girls and boys how important it is to let little plants like you grow in the city.”

“Thank you very much!” replies the Karalahua.



Puna
4300 m.a.s.l.

The transporter of andean pollen

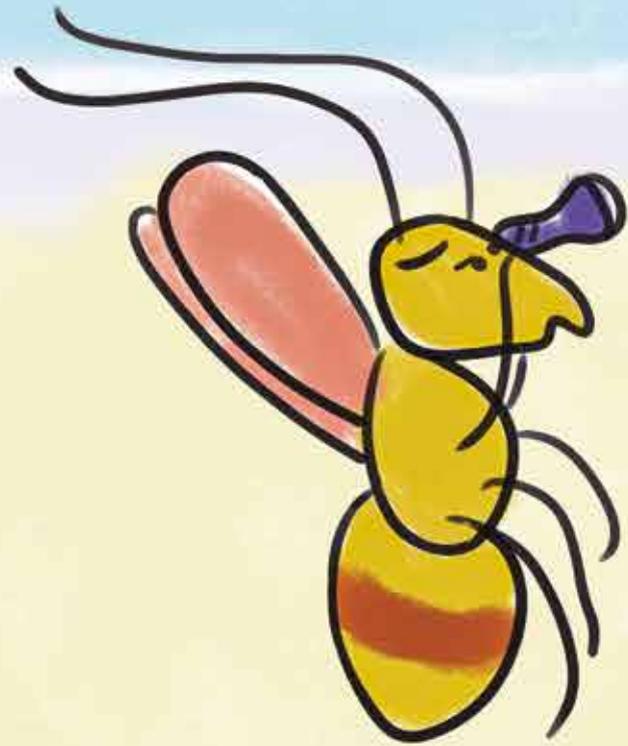
- *Caiphora chuquitensis* and *Oreotrochilus estella* -

Antenita was out for a fly in the Puna to enjoy the fresh air and the flowers that grow there.

The high plateau is full of colorful and unexpected flowers.

“This flower is called Itapallo,” Antenita explains.
“It stings when you touch it, but it has a great friend: the Andean Hillstar.”





The Andean Hillstar is a tiny hummingbird with a long beak that eats while flying—this way it doesn't get hurt and helps the Itapallo by carrying its pollen.

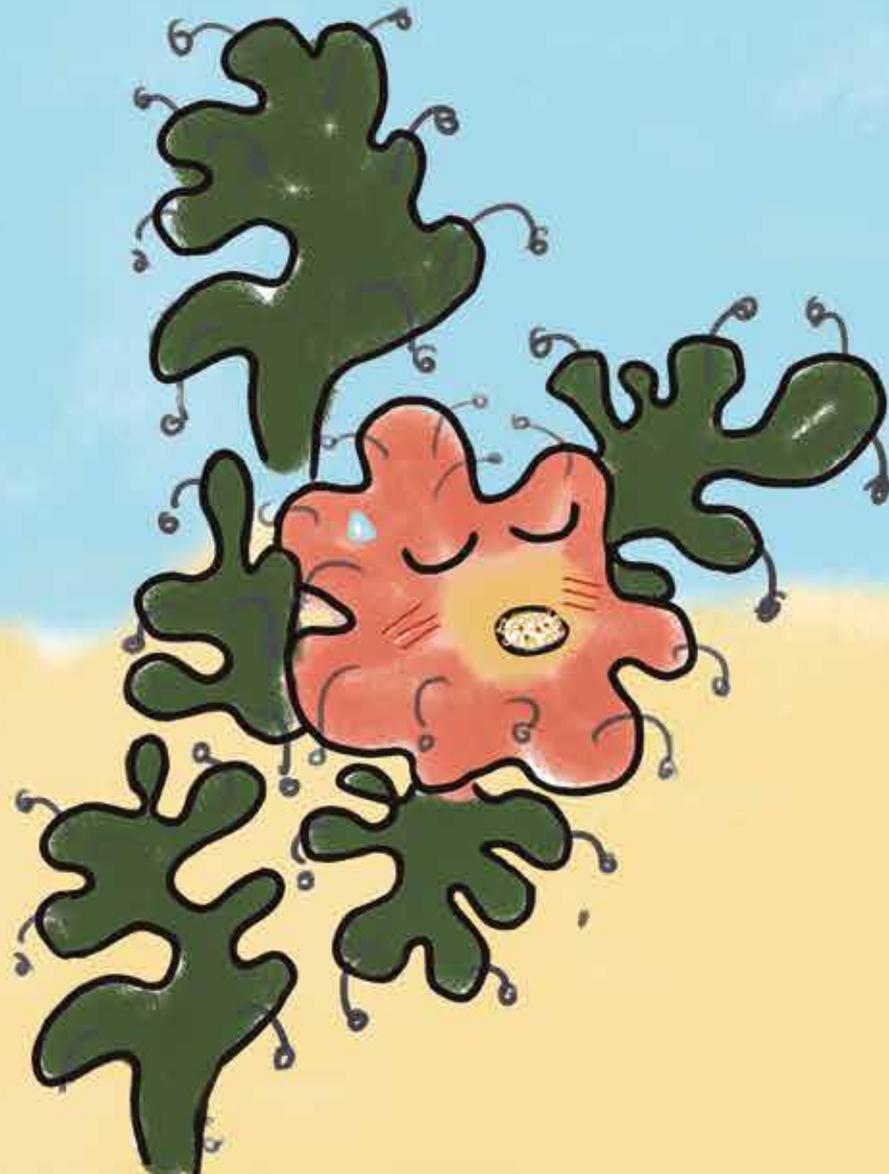
"Look! They're almost meeting!" says Antenita, looking through her binoculars.

"Here, here! Don't go awaaaay, heeeey! Look over here! He's going to leeeeeeave!" shouts an excited Itapallo.

"Kamisaki, Itapallo! Please forgive my delay—I was collecting pollen from other plants first.

Would you like me to carry your pollen? Do you have nectar? I'm very hungry."

"Kamisaki, Andean Hillstar, I was worried you might not come..."

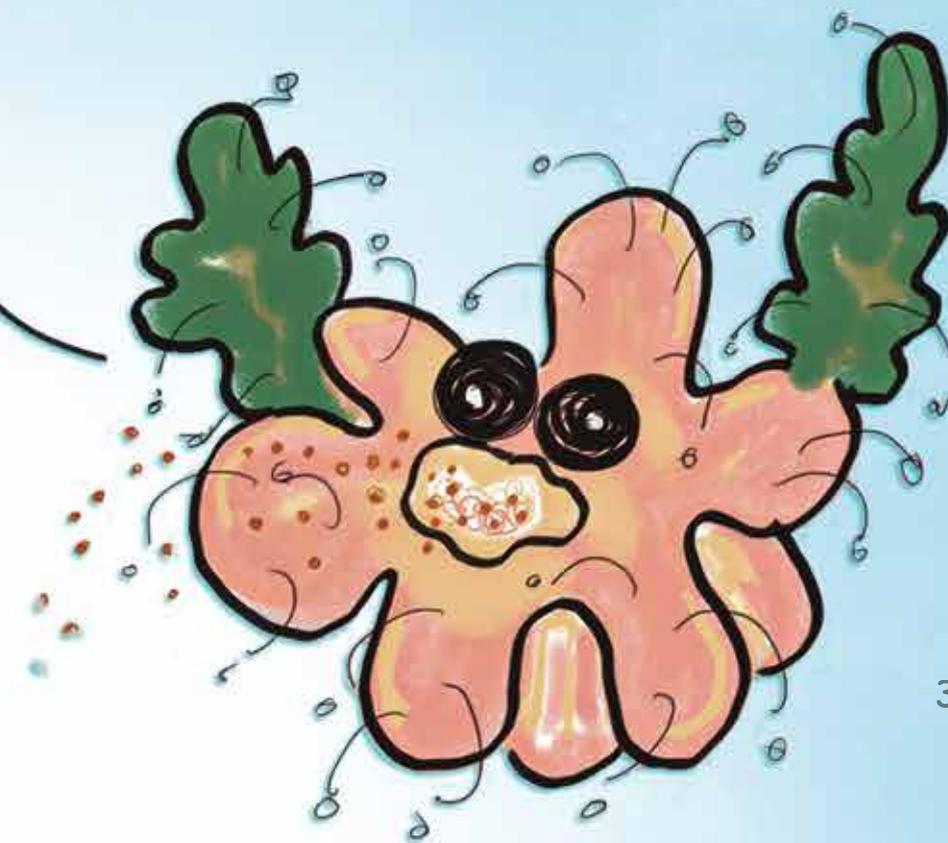




"The lizard Sut'uwalla wanted to help me, but he got badly hurt when he touched my flower."

"HAHAHA!" bursts out the Andean Hillstar laughing.
"Oh no! Poor little lizard!"

"Yes," replies the Itapallo, a bit embarrassed, "that wasn't my intention."



The Itapallo continues, now much calmer:

“Now then, sister, I would like you to carry my pollen to the Itapallo behind those rocks—that’s where I would like to have my new babies.”

“Of course, sister. That’s what friends are for. I’d better go so I won’t be late.”

The Itapallo and the Andean Hillstar exchange a warm goodbye, hoping to meet again soon.



Puna - upper yungas (cloud forest)
3100 - 2500 m.a.s.l.

The chilcas and their "dance floor" flowers

- *Baccharis latifolia* and many kinds of flies, bees, beetles, butterflies, and wasps -



After her trip to the puna, Antenita flew up to La Cumbre and began to descend on the other side of the mountain. There, she found a cloud forest full of plants and flowers.

Some plants with white flowers and many insects flying around them caught her attention.



“Hello, little plant! Wow—sooooo many little bugs are visiting you!”

“Hello, dear little bee, I am the Chilca. I’ll tell you—bugs really like my flowers. Since they are flat like dance floors, many insects can visit them at the same time.

Once they are on my ‘dance floor,’ they can all drink my rich, sweet nectar.”



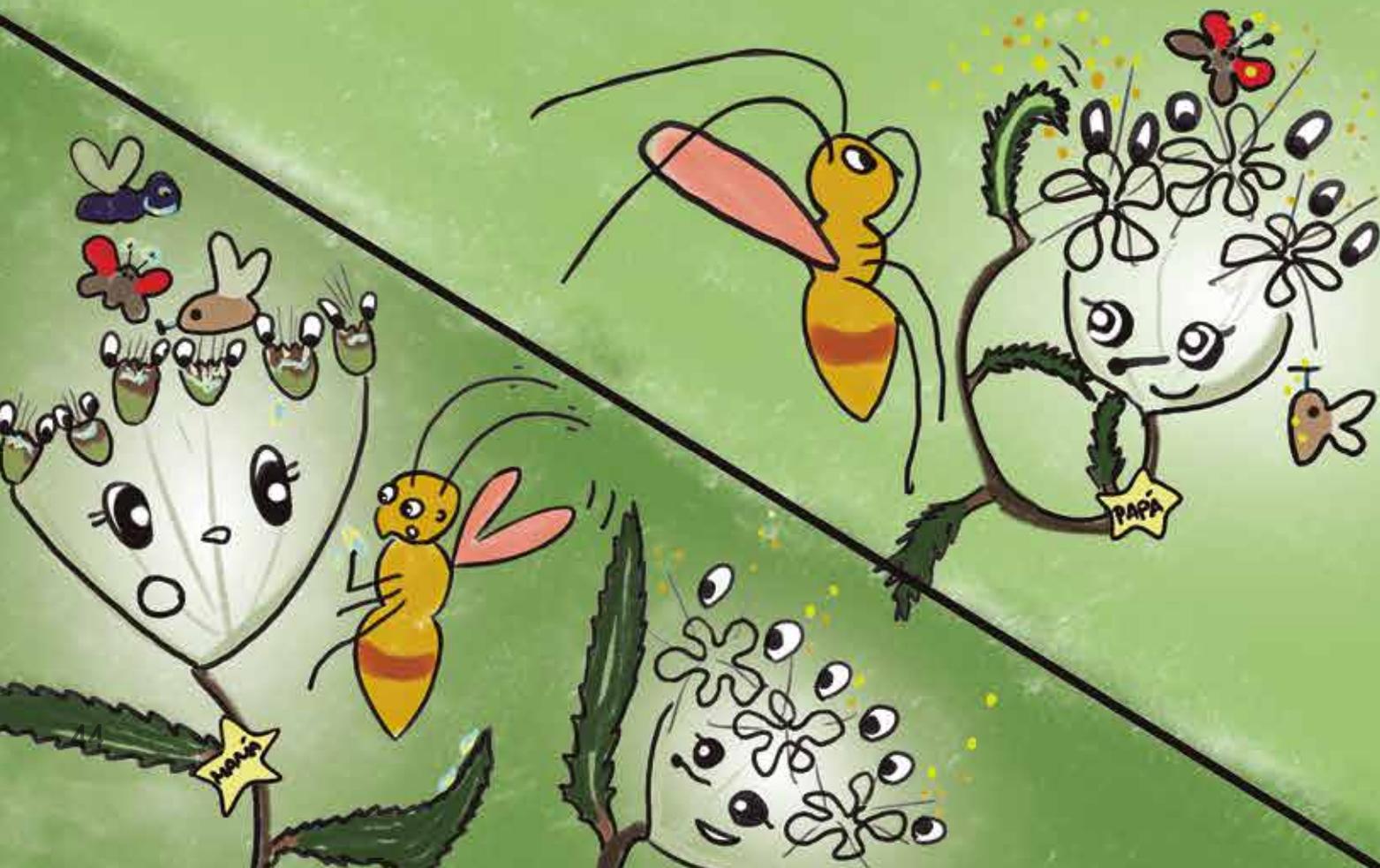
“Wow! It really looks like a party,” Antenita says, laughing, as she joins the insects dancing.

“Yes! Look! More and more insects are arriving at my little flowers,” replies the plant, very happily.



Suddenly, another little plant speaks:

“Antenita, Antenita! I am also a Chilca, but I am a daddy Chilca.”



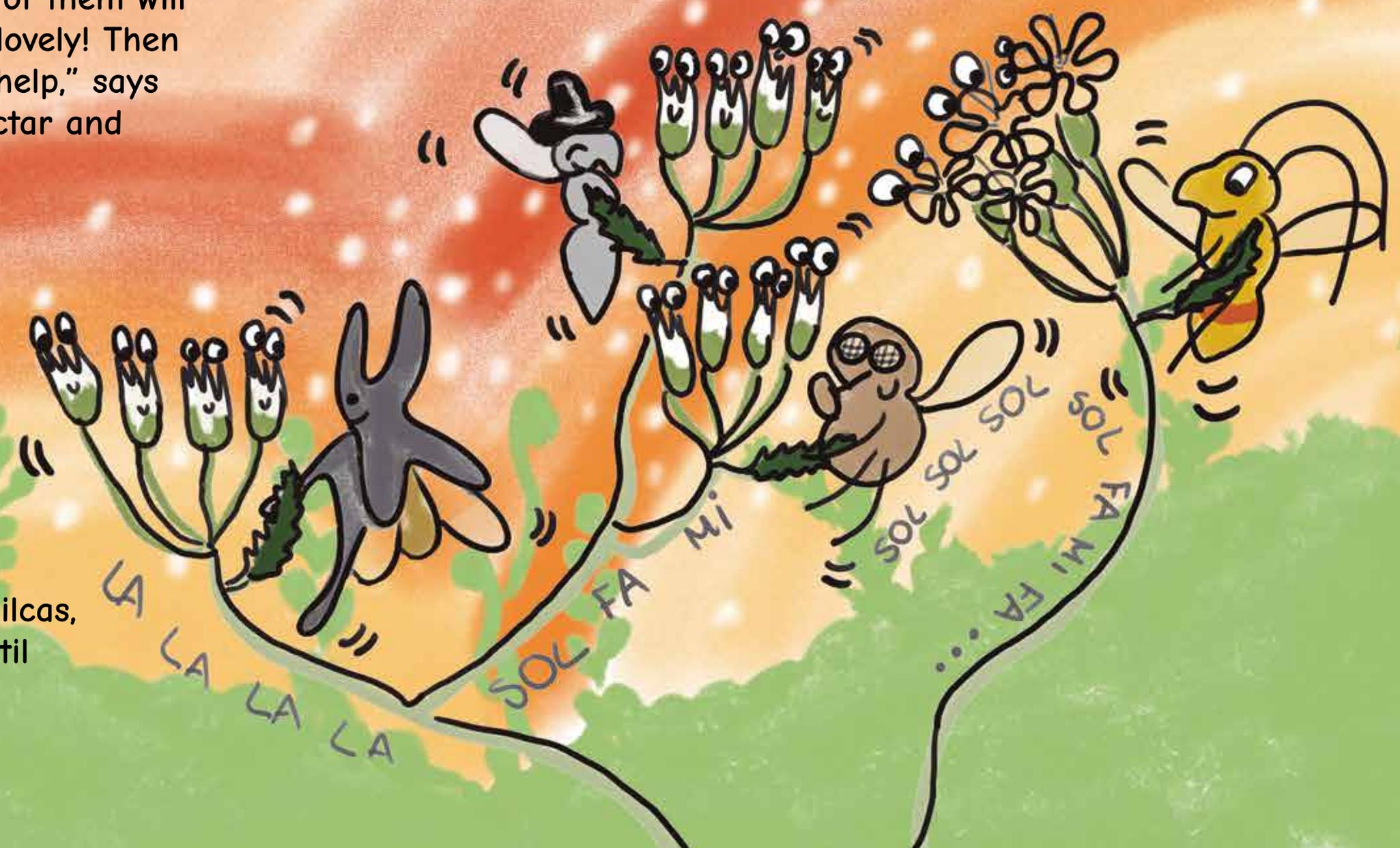
“Hello, little plant, sorry—I hadn’t seen you with all the party and dancing.”

“Don’t worry! I know that the mommy Chilca’s parties are very fun and sweet.

My flowers, on the other hand, only have pollen. But even so, she and I make a great team.

You see, insects fly between her sweet flowers, and when they fly close to me, they carry my pollen. That way, we make sure to have our babies.”

“Oh, now I understand! The more friends one has, the more likely it is that one of them will become a very good friend—how lovely! Then I want to be your friend too and help,” says Antenita happily as she drinks nectar and carries pollen.



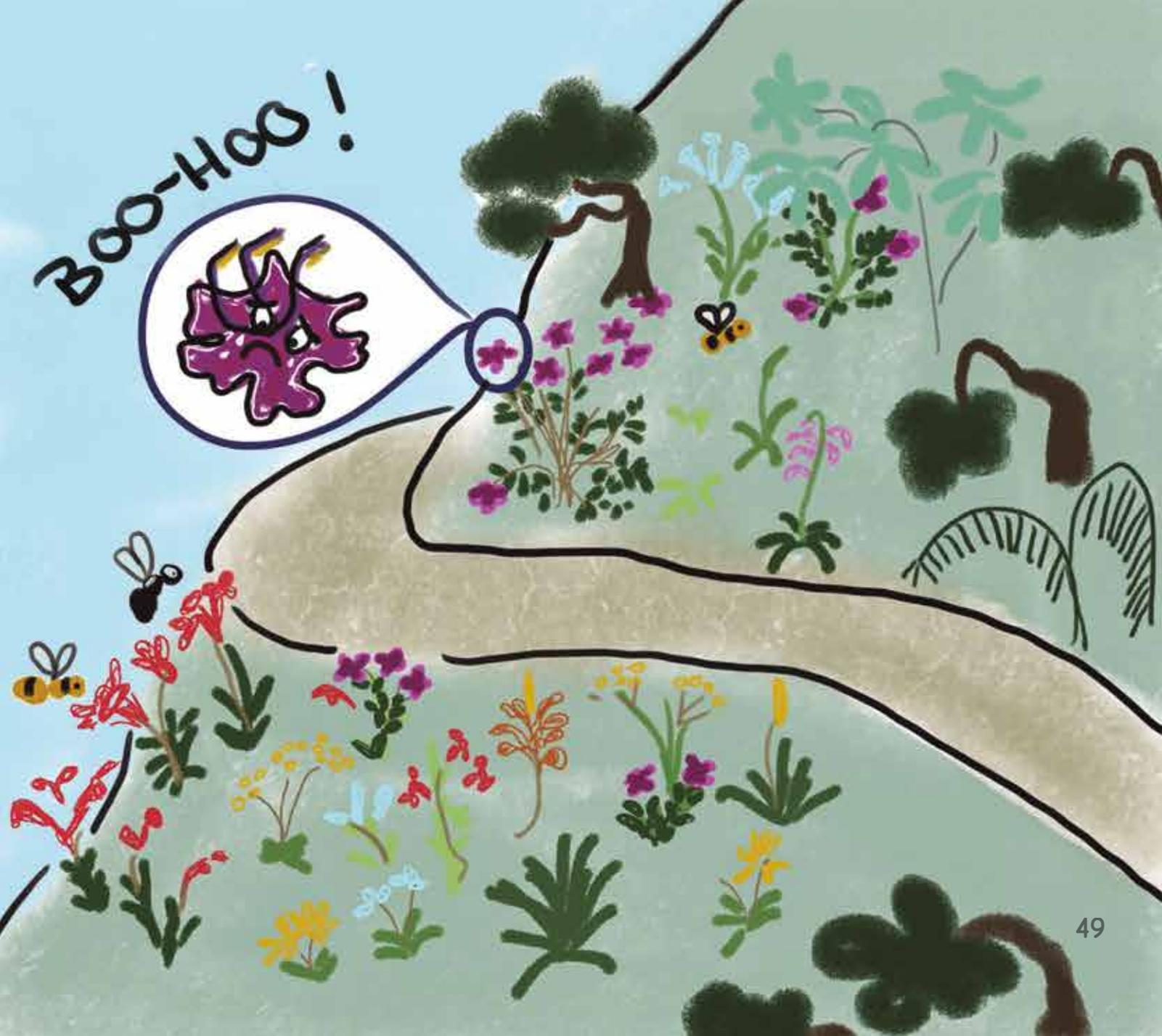
“Yippee! Teamwork!” shout the Chilcas, and the insect party continues until sunset.

A special buzz!

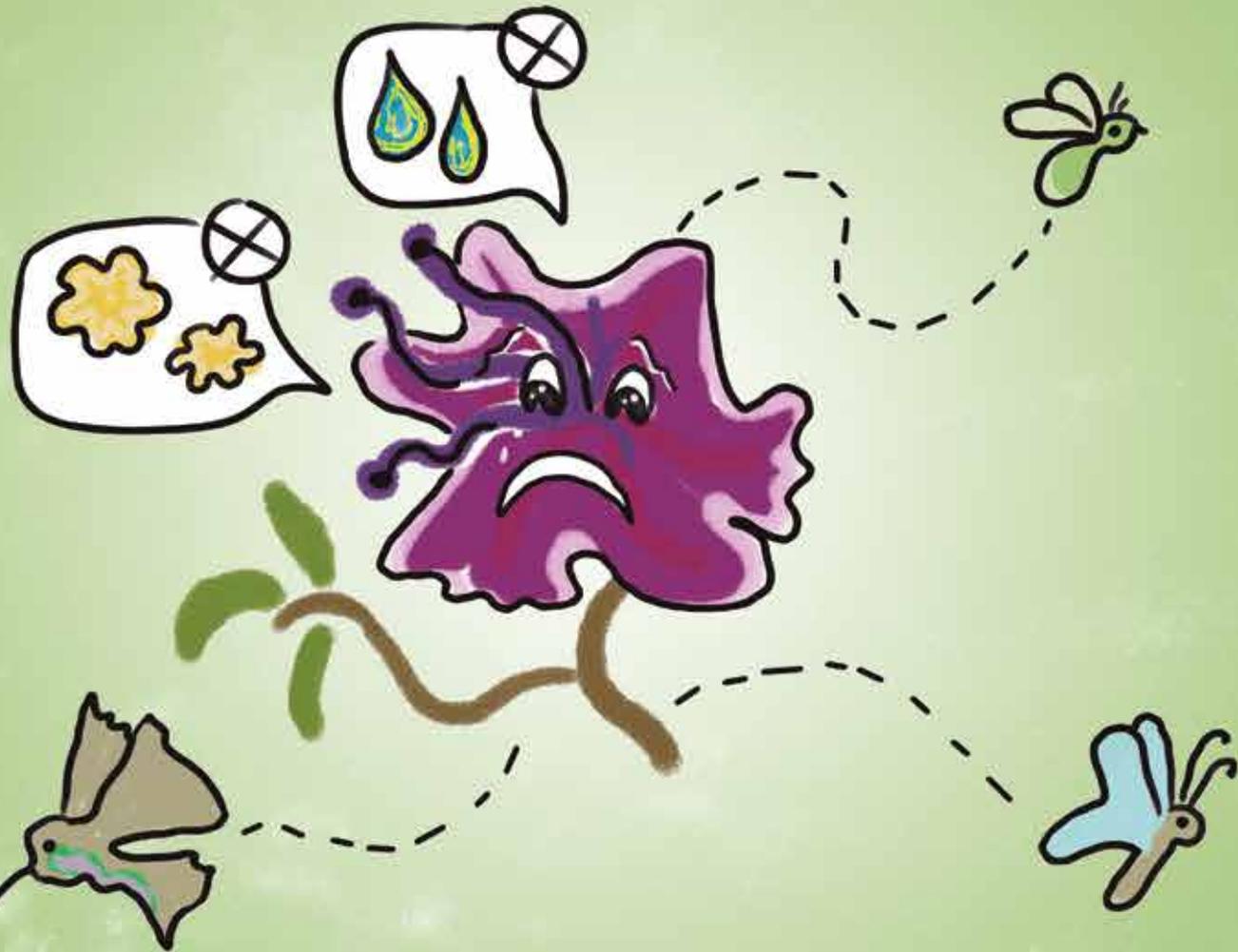
- *Tibouchina bicolor* and *Bombus funebris* -

Antenita was flying even lower towards the Yungas, happily watching the plants growing along the hillsides. Suddenly, she heard a beautiful flower crying.

"Hello, little flower, why are you crying?" asks Antenita.



"Hello, my name is Gloria," says the flower in a soft voice.



"I'm sad—no one visits me. I think I have nothing to give as a gift to my friends. I don't have sweet juice, and I think I don't even have pollen."

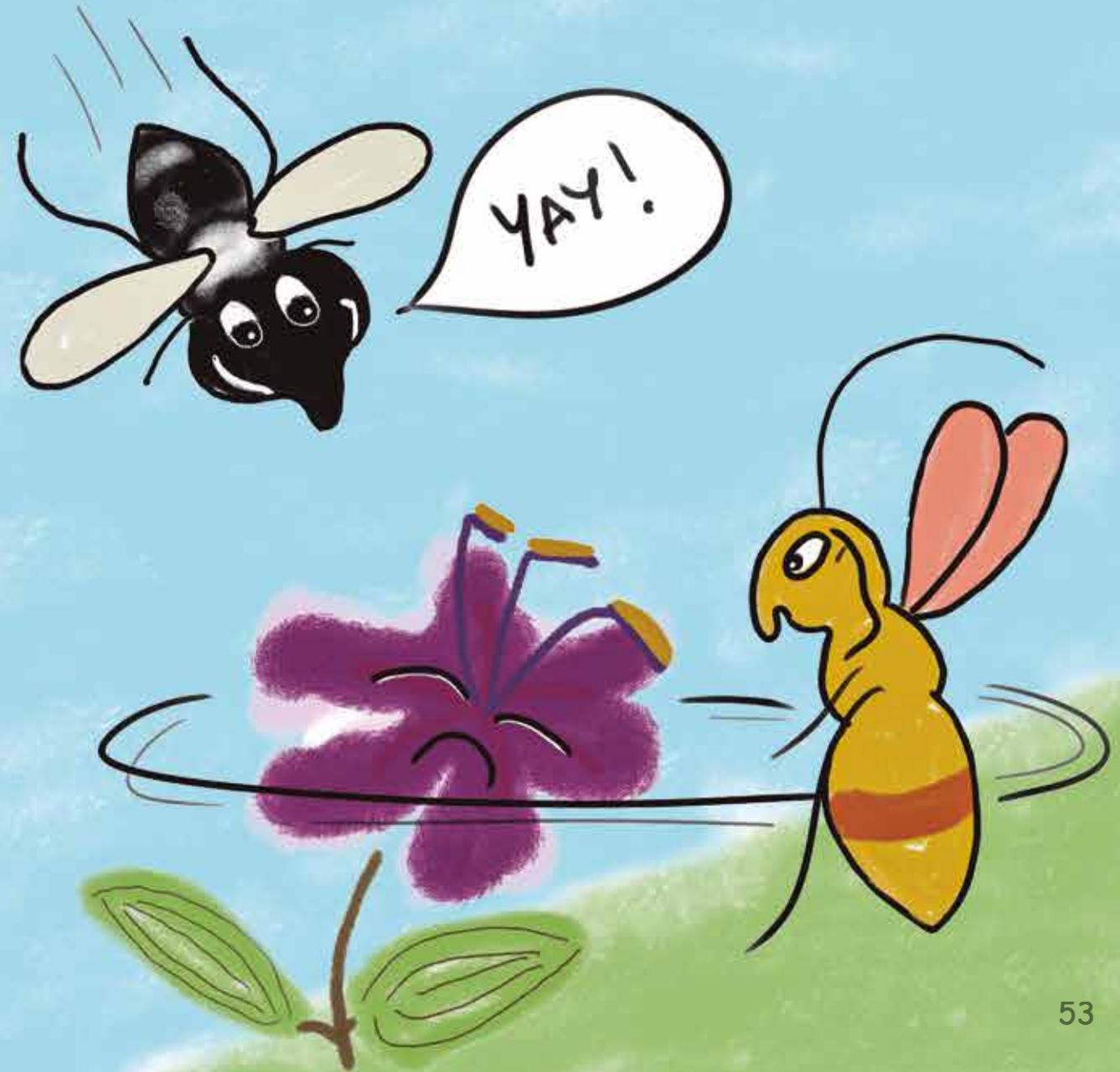
"Don't worry, pretty flower! Let's see—I'll try to find your nectar or pollen," Antenita replies, flying circles around the flower.

After flying around the flower many times without finding anything, Antenita landed on one of its branches to think about what might be happening and how to help her new friend... but at that very moment she heard a loud buzzing.

It was a bumblebee approaching the flower, going “Bssssss, Bsssssss.”

“It’s your chance!” shouted Antenita.

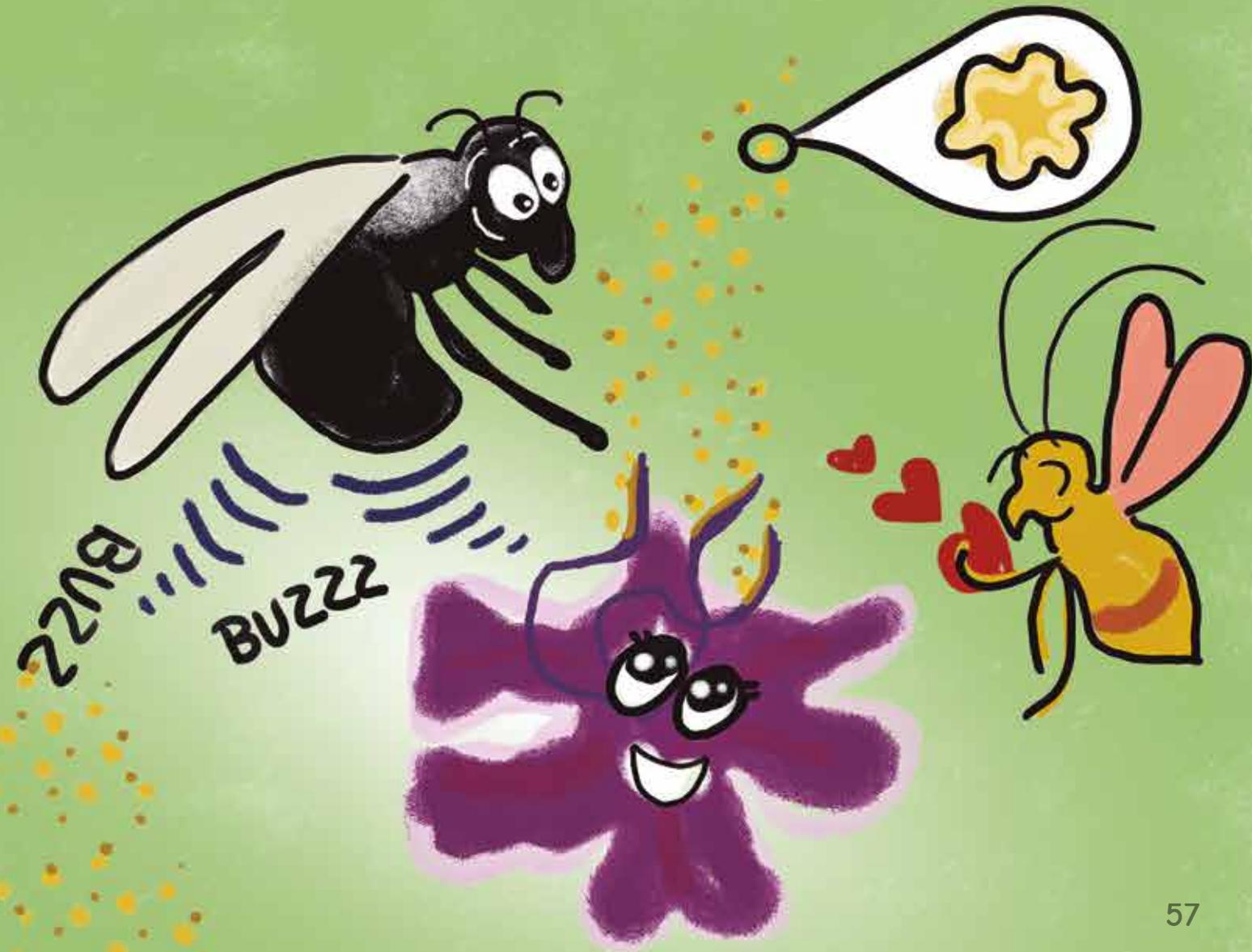
The bumblebee came closer with a big smile.



...as if by magic, a lot of golden dust began to fall from the flower Gloria—it was her pollen!

“Wow! My pollen only falls when a bumblebee buzzes in a special way!” Gloria shouted with joy.

“How wonderful! You found your pollinator friend—you are a very unique flower,” said Antenita smiling.



Yungas (submontane forest)
c 1000 m.a.s.l.

A well-kept secret

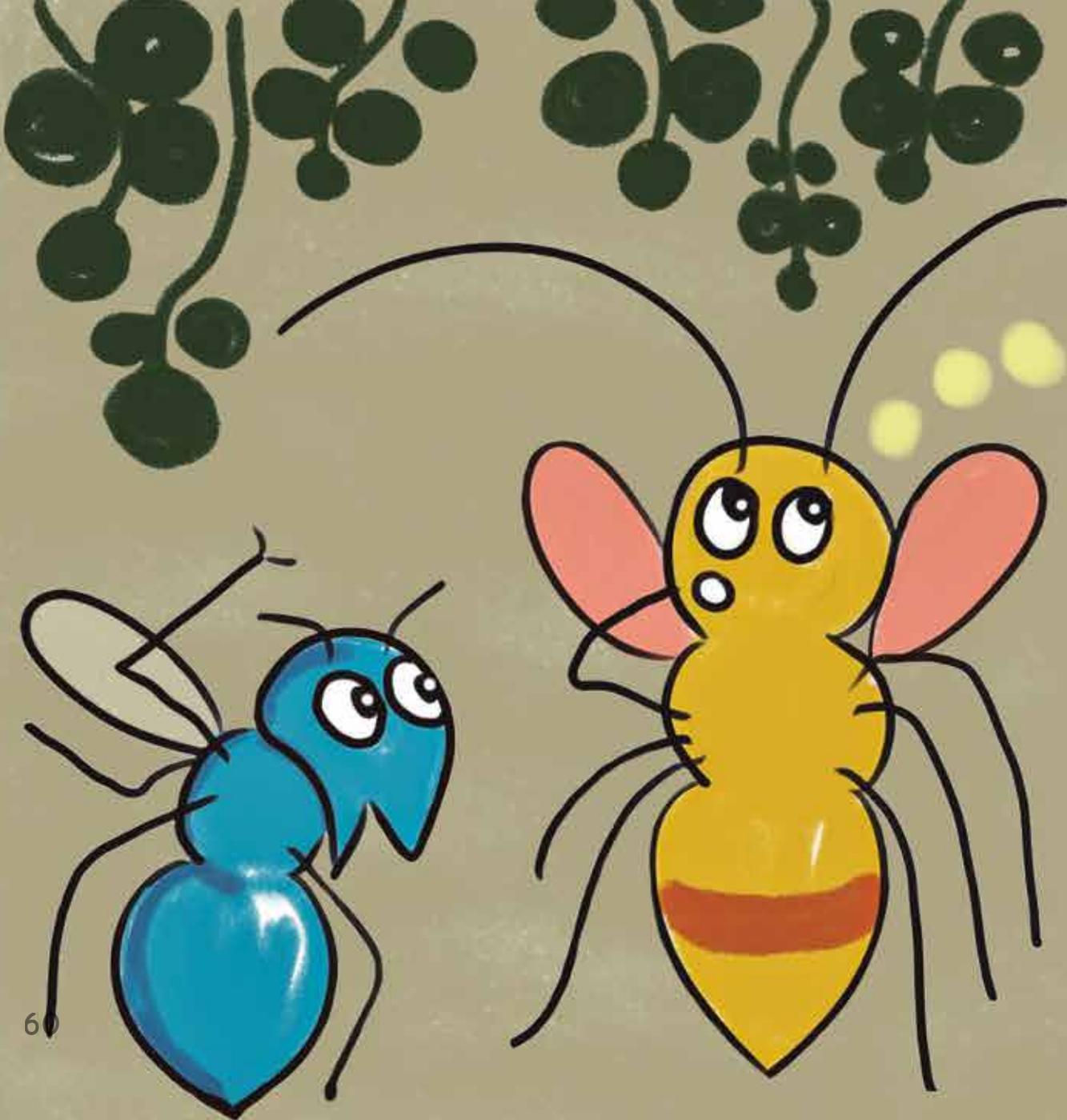
- Dalechampia sp. and Euglossa sp. -

In the Yungas lives a little bee named Rolando-Volando. That day he was very happy: he was going to meet his beloved.

"Antenita, I'm so happy to see you! Today is a very special and very secret day, but since you are a good friend, I'm going to tell you..."

"Tell me, then!"

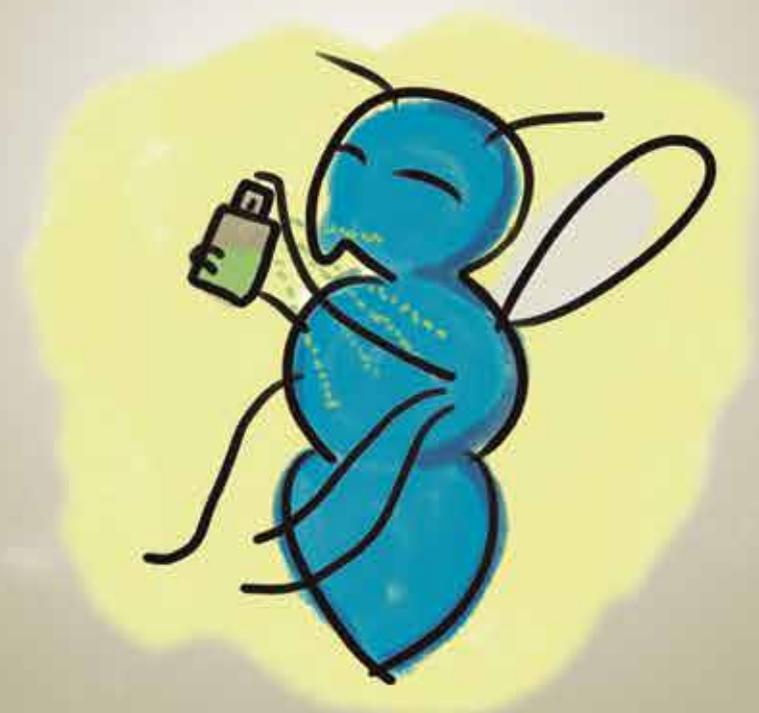




"...Little bees like me put on perfume to win over our partner," Rolando-Volando says in a secretive voice.

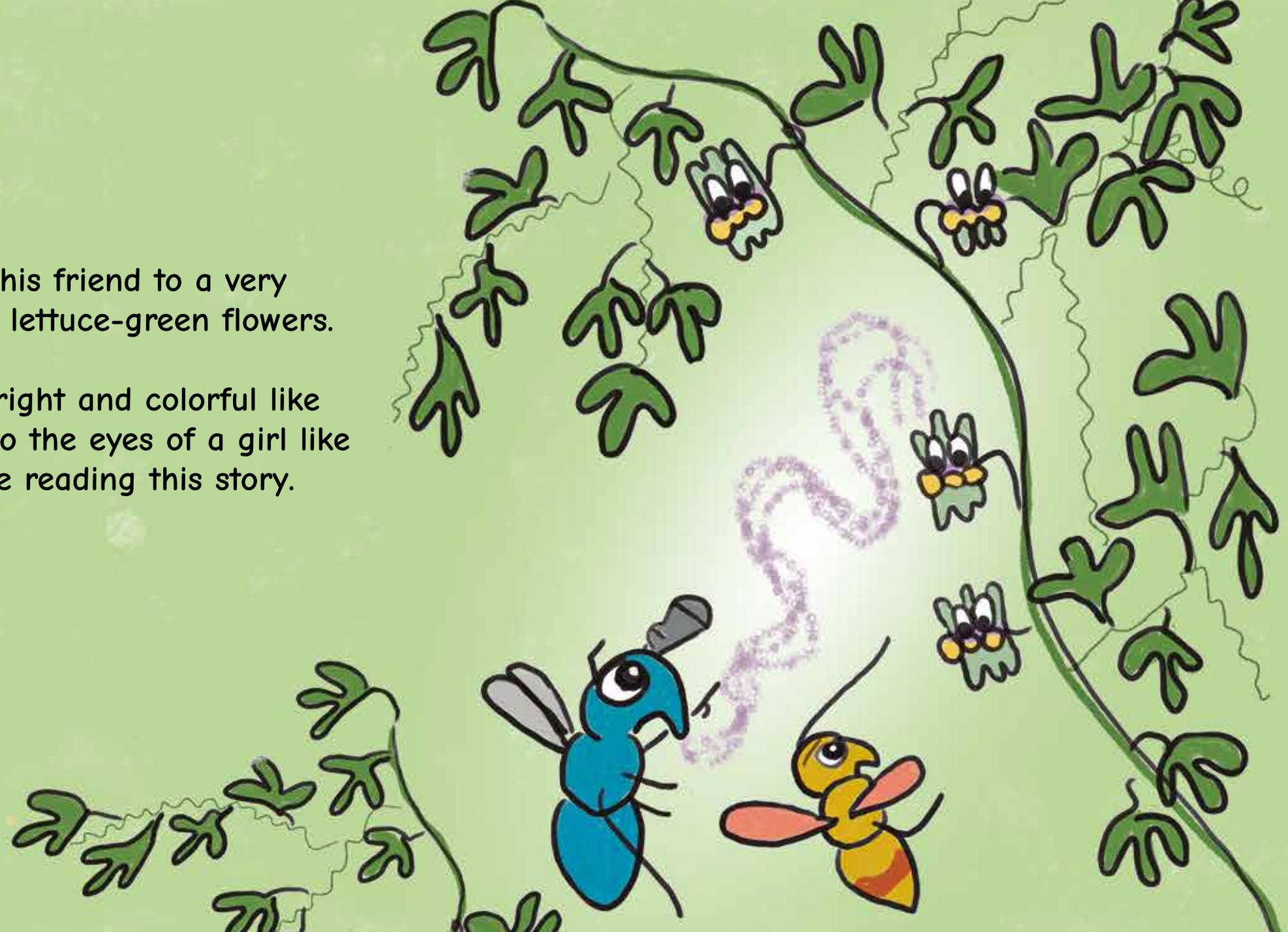
"Perfume? How lovely!" Antenita flutters in surprise.

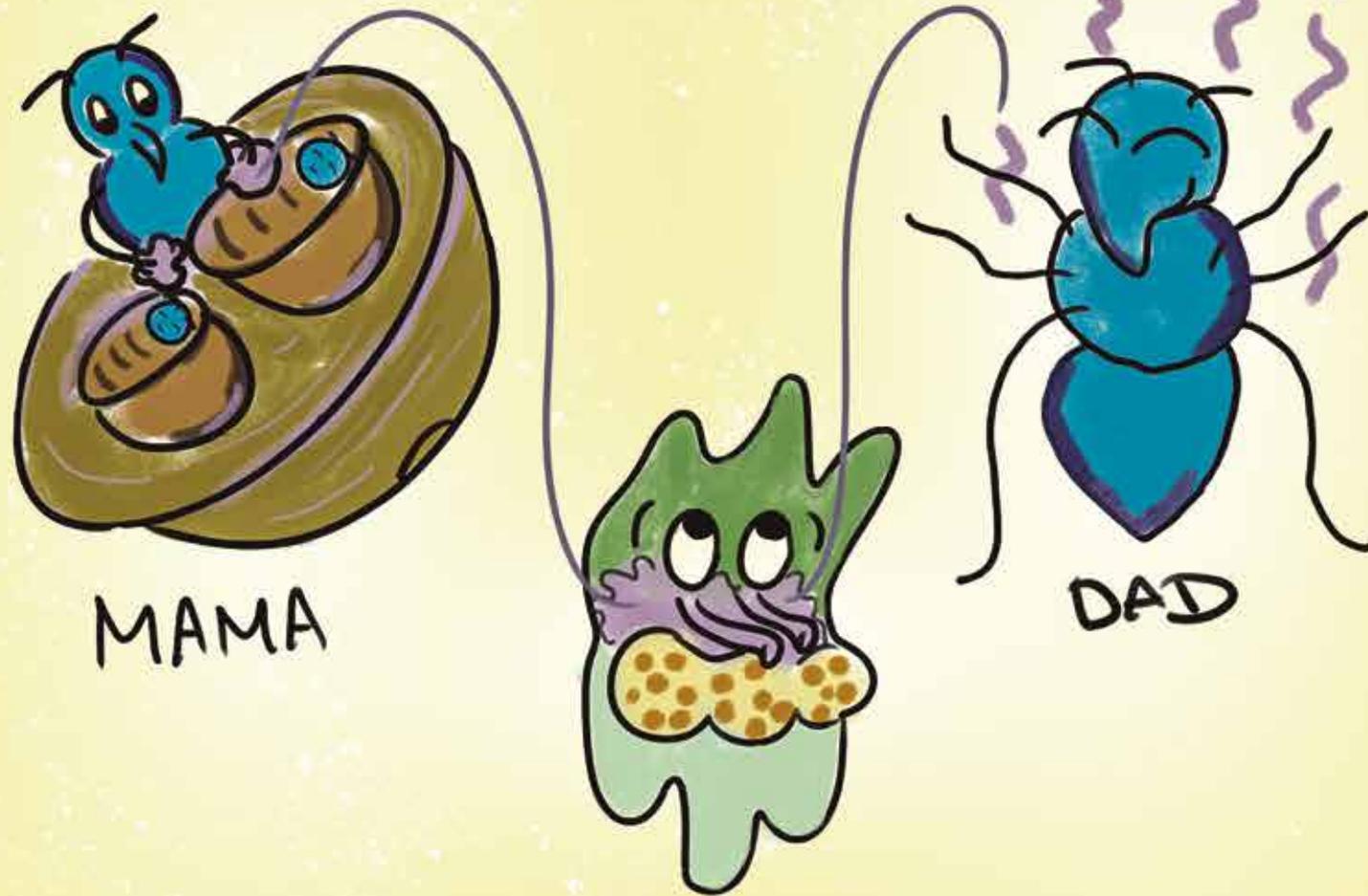
"Come on, I'll show you," says Rolando-Volando, as he starts flying away at full speed.



Rolando-Volando takes his friend to a very interesting little plant with lettuce-green flowers.

Those flowers were not bright and colorful like most flowers—at least not to the eyes of a girl like Anahí, or to you who are reading this story.





Rolando-Volando continues telling his story:

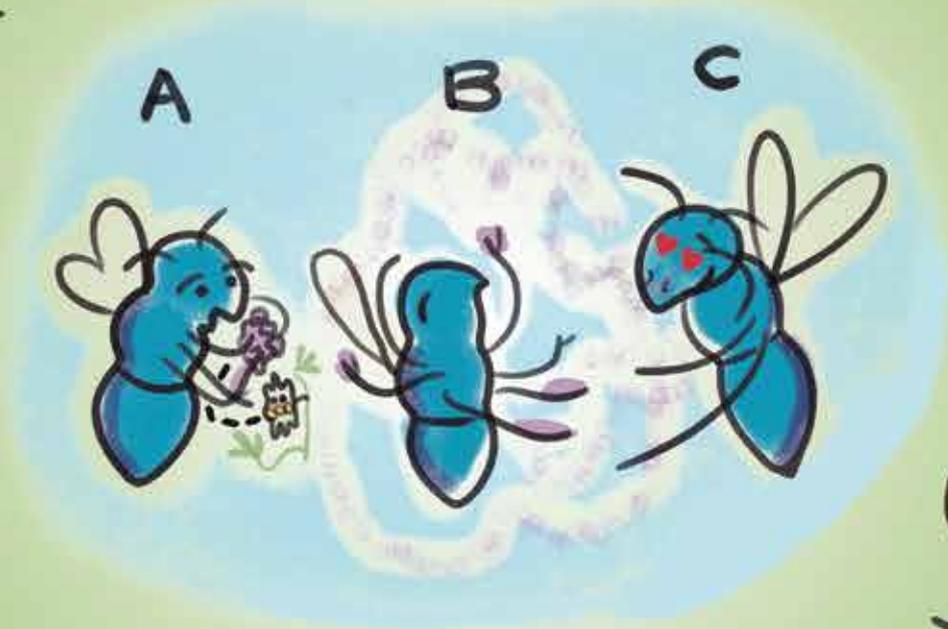
“That little plant you see over there with greenish flowers gives me a kind of thick juice called resin.

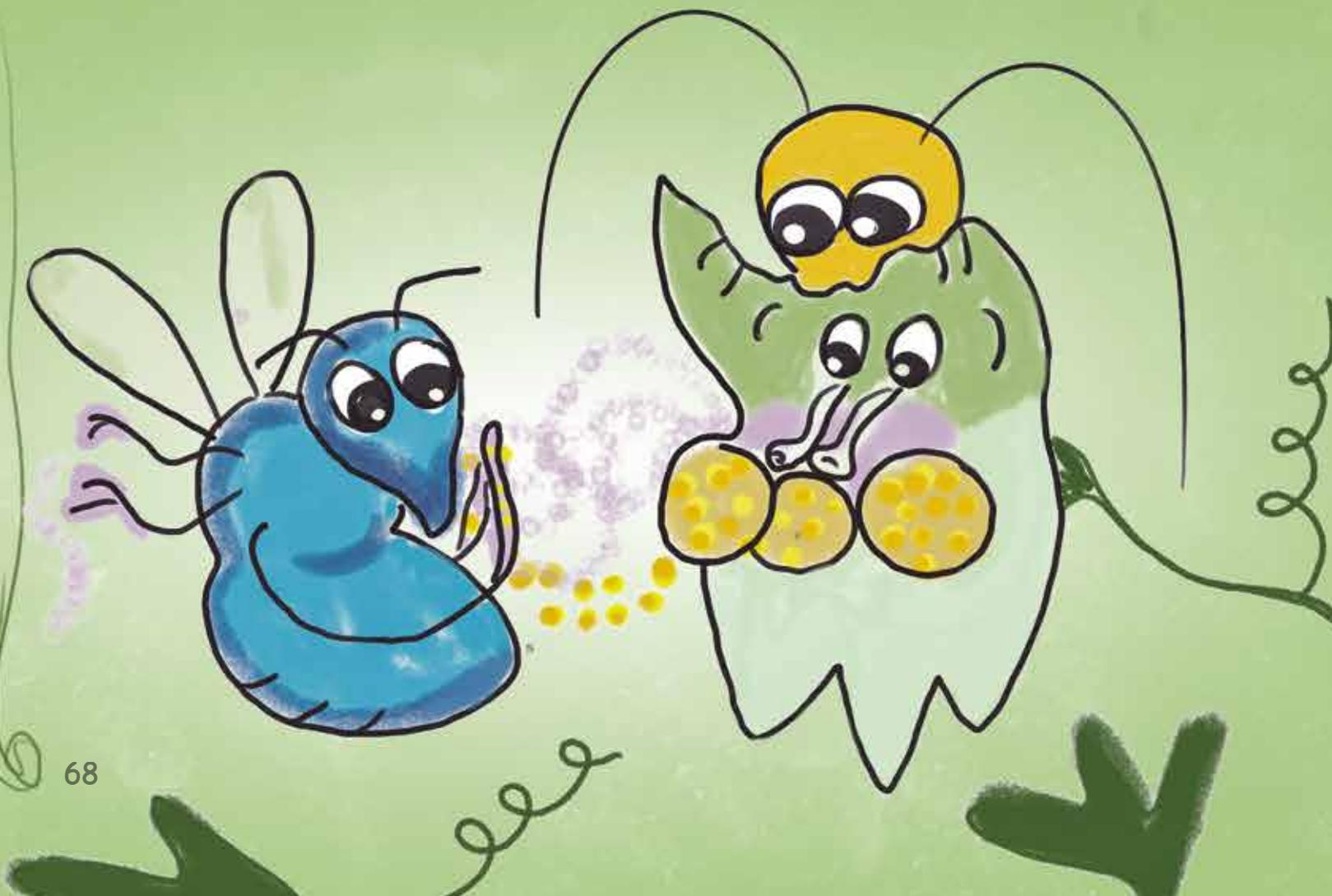
Mama bees use it to build the nests for their babies, and papa bees collect resin and orchid fragrances to make a perfume that always smells very good—this is how I make my secret perfume!”

The resin that each flower of the Verdecita gives me, I store on my little legs. And while I'm making my perfume, I carry its pollen from flower to flower.

Once I've collected enough perfume, I fly past a little bee and—zap!—she falls in love of my effort to smell nice.

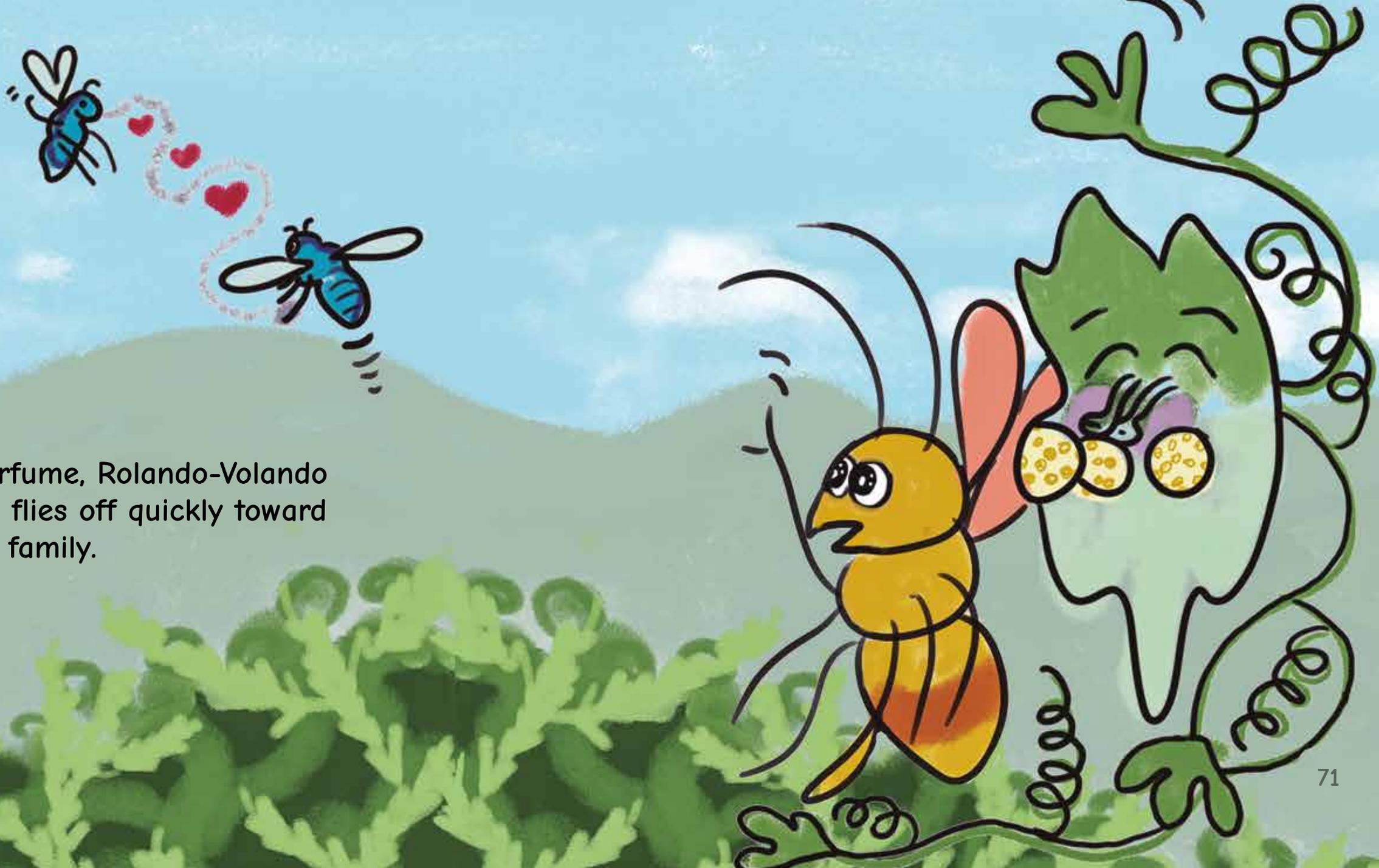
“What a big secret, brother! I won't tell anyone!”
Antenita replies.

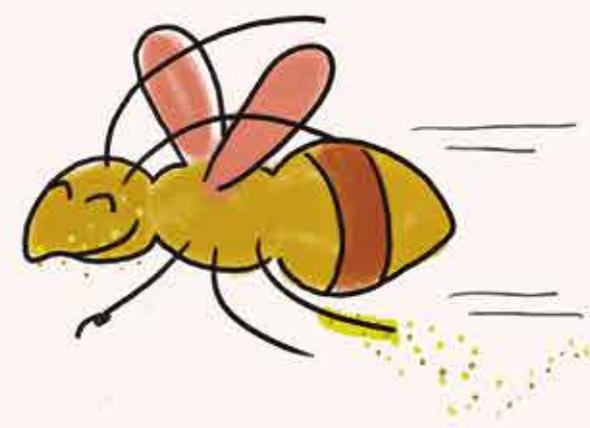




Like when you play with mud and wipe your hands on your pants, Rolando-Volando uses his little legs and gets covered in sticky, smelly resin while flapping his wings. His friend Antenita and the plant Verdecita watch him astonished.

Once he is full of pollen and perfume, Rolando-Volando says goodbye to his friends and flies off quickly toward a little bee who will soon be his family.



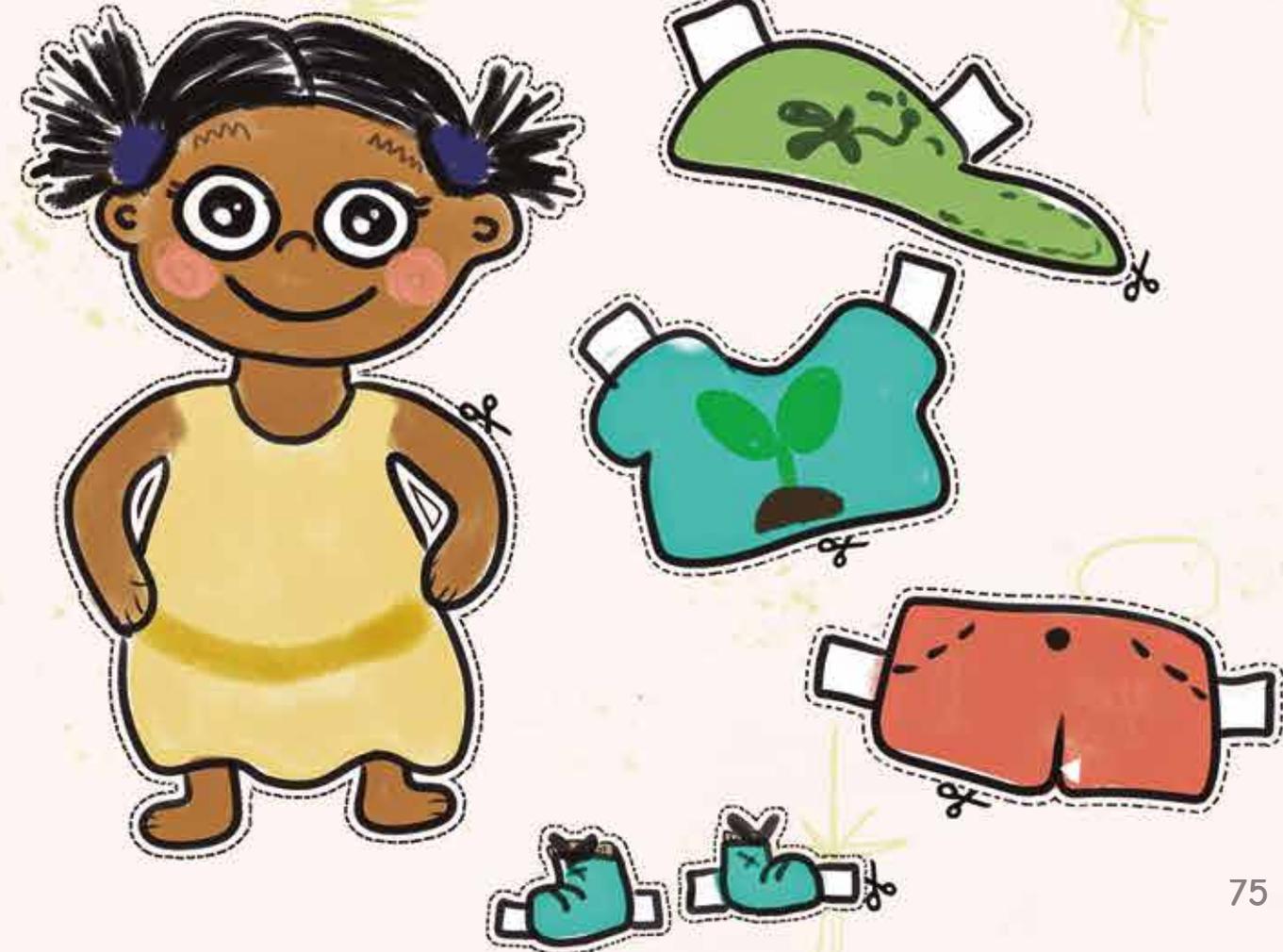


Activity booklet



Activity 1.

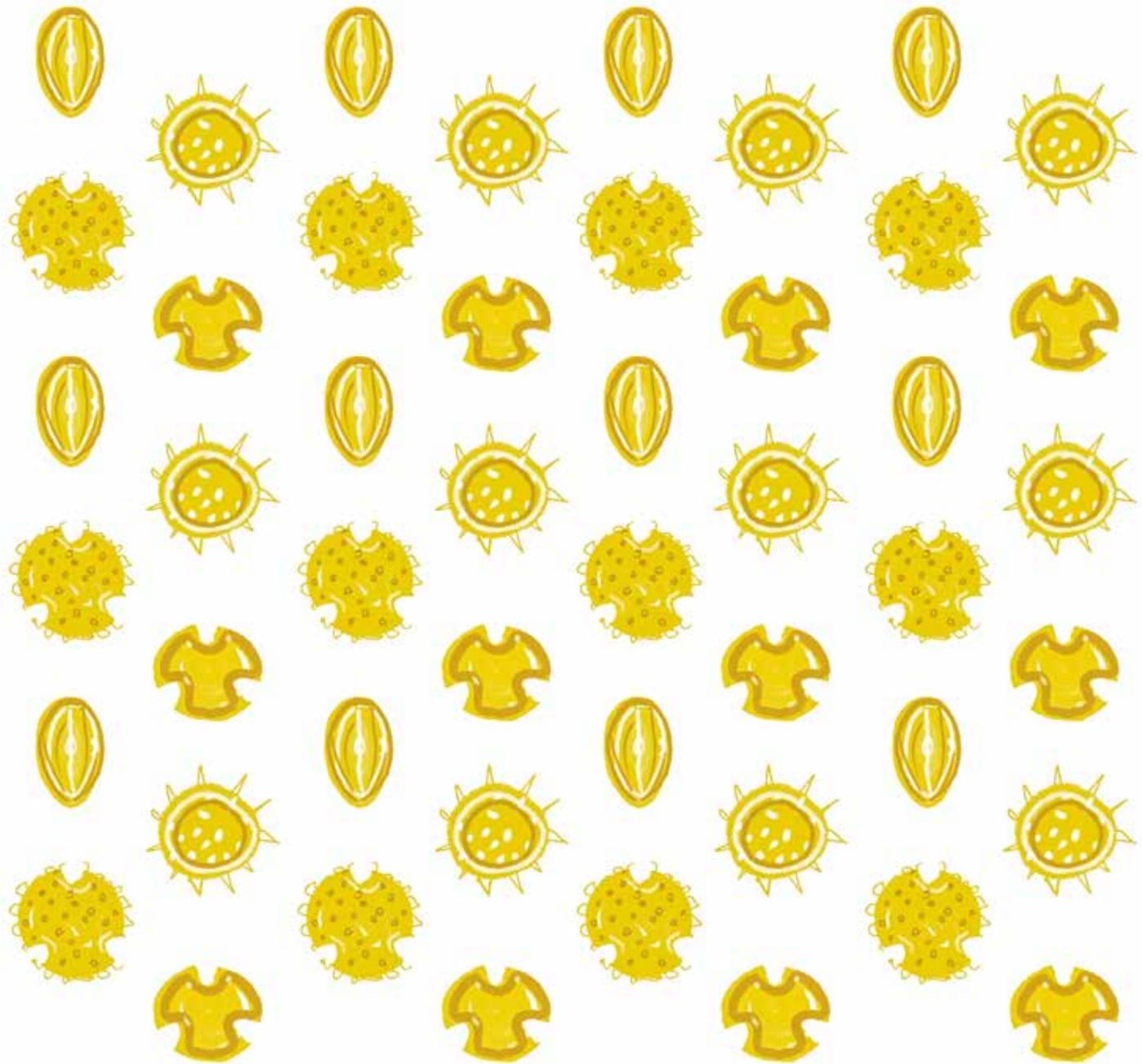
Cut out Anahí and dress her with her clothes to go play outside.



This is a booklet to have fun!
We recommend that the adults responsible for children do the activities together with them.

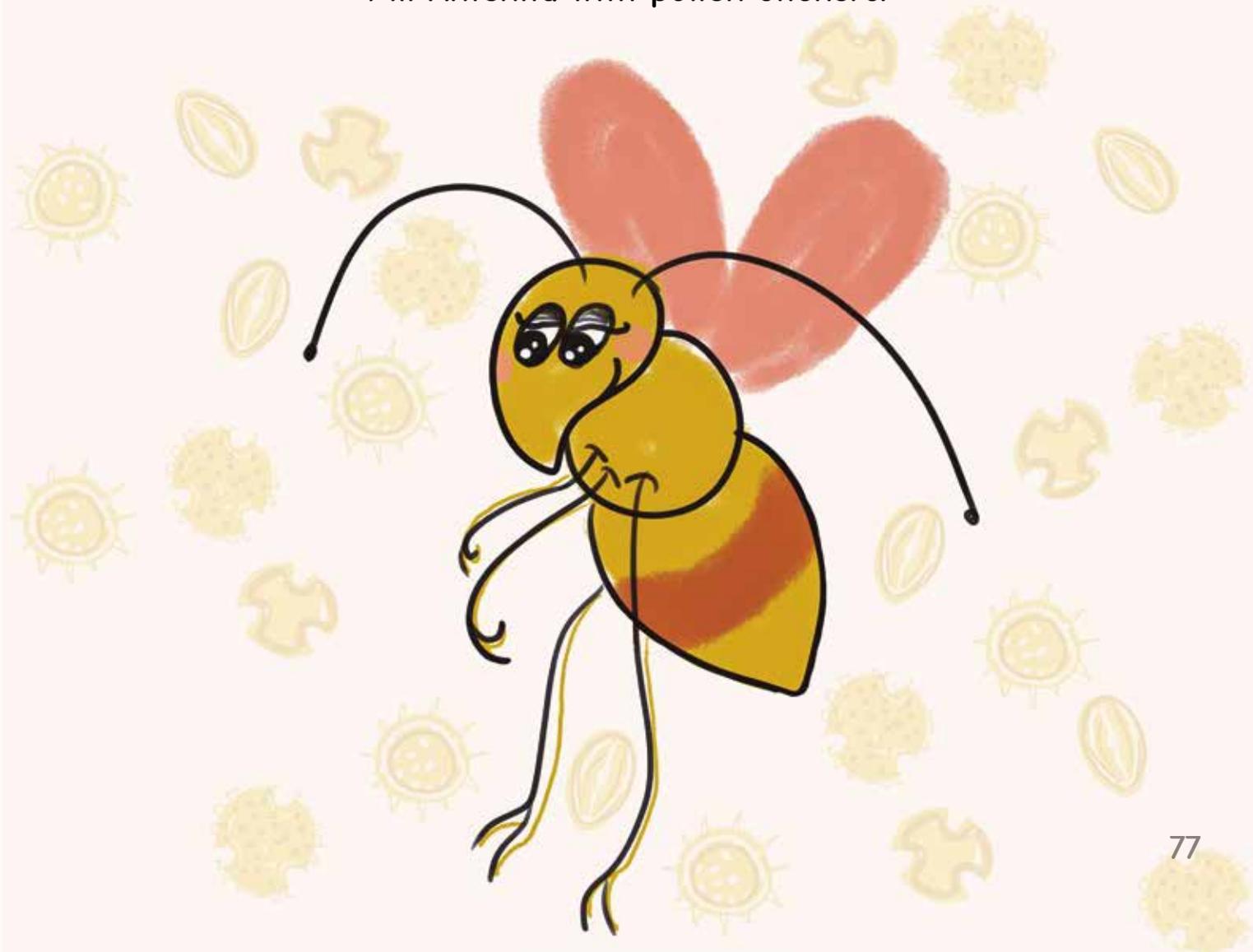
Some activities require the use of scissors or materials that adults can help obtain and supervise to avoid accidents.

We also suggest using materials that are already available at home, to avoid unnecessary purchases and to reuse materials that would probably be thrown away. Let's think about reusing and recycling.



Activity 2.

Fill Antenita with pollen stickers.



Activity 3.

Color the hummingbirds from the story following the example.
Which one is the biggest?



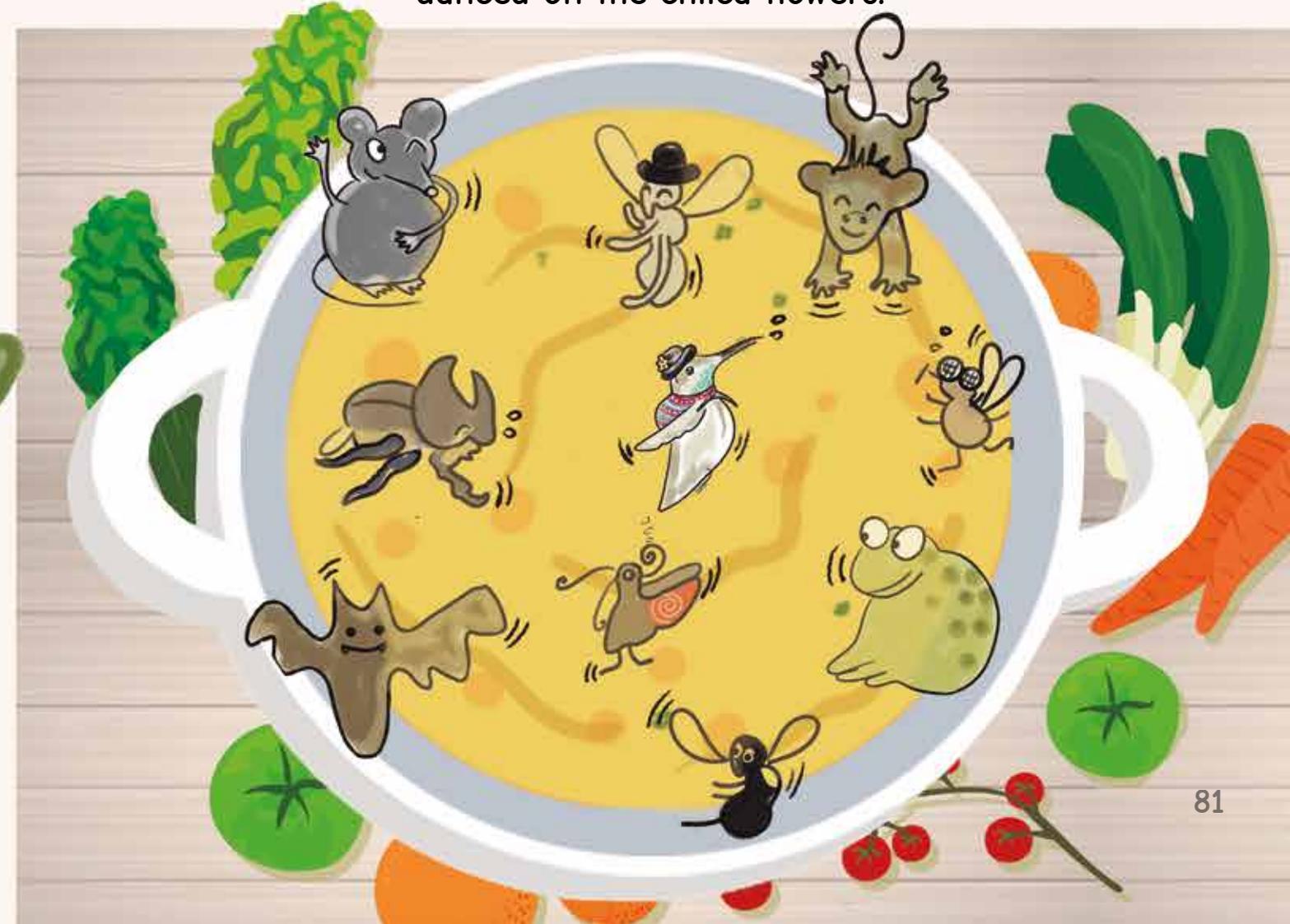
Activity 4.

Do you have colored paper? Cut many small pieces with scissors or with your fingers and glue them onto the neck of the beautiful Andean Hillstar. Don't you have colored paper? Then color the Andean Hillstar's neck.



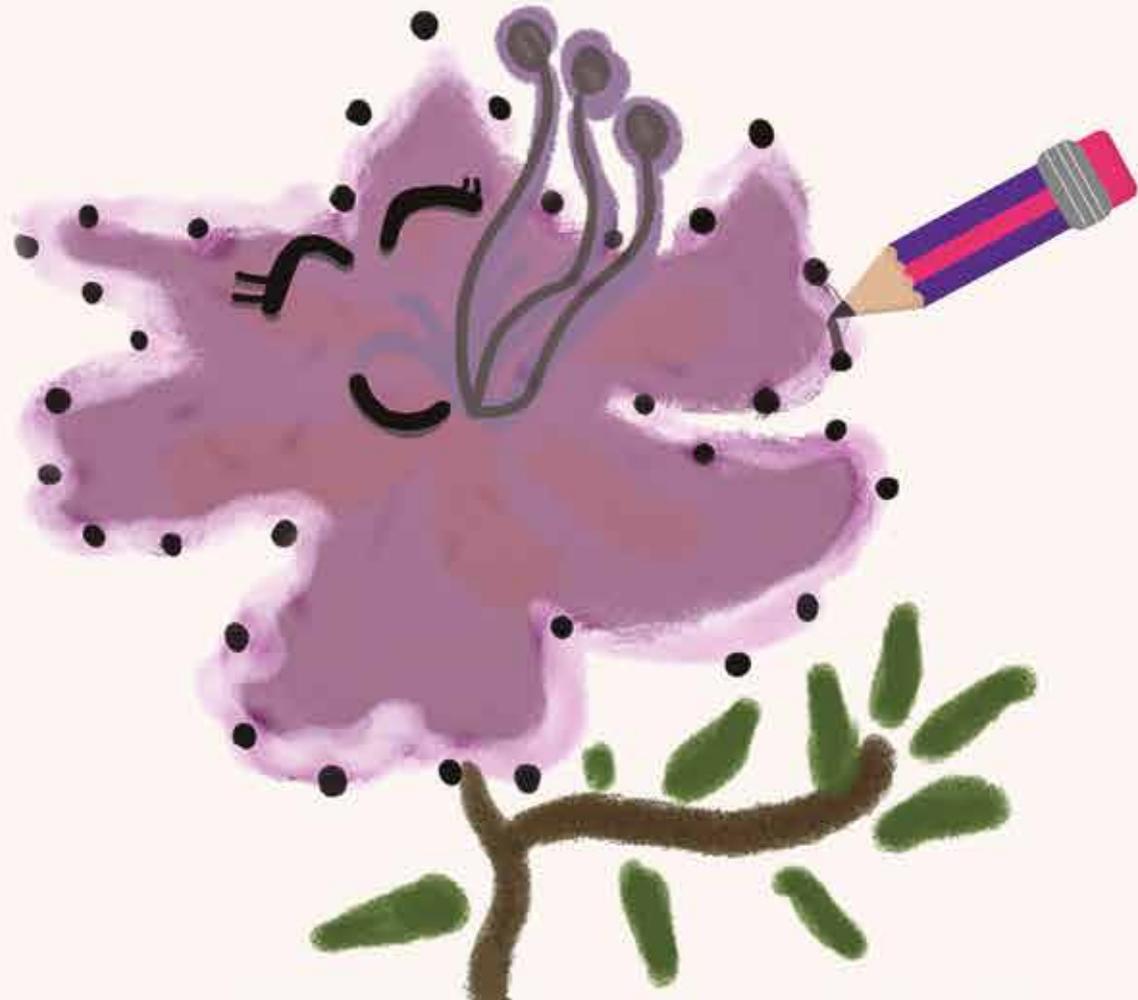
Activity 5.

Pollinator Soup! Circle all the pollinator friends who visited and danced on the chilca flowers.



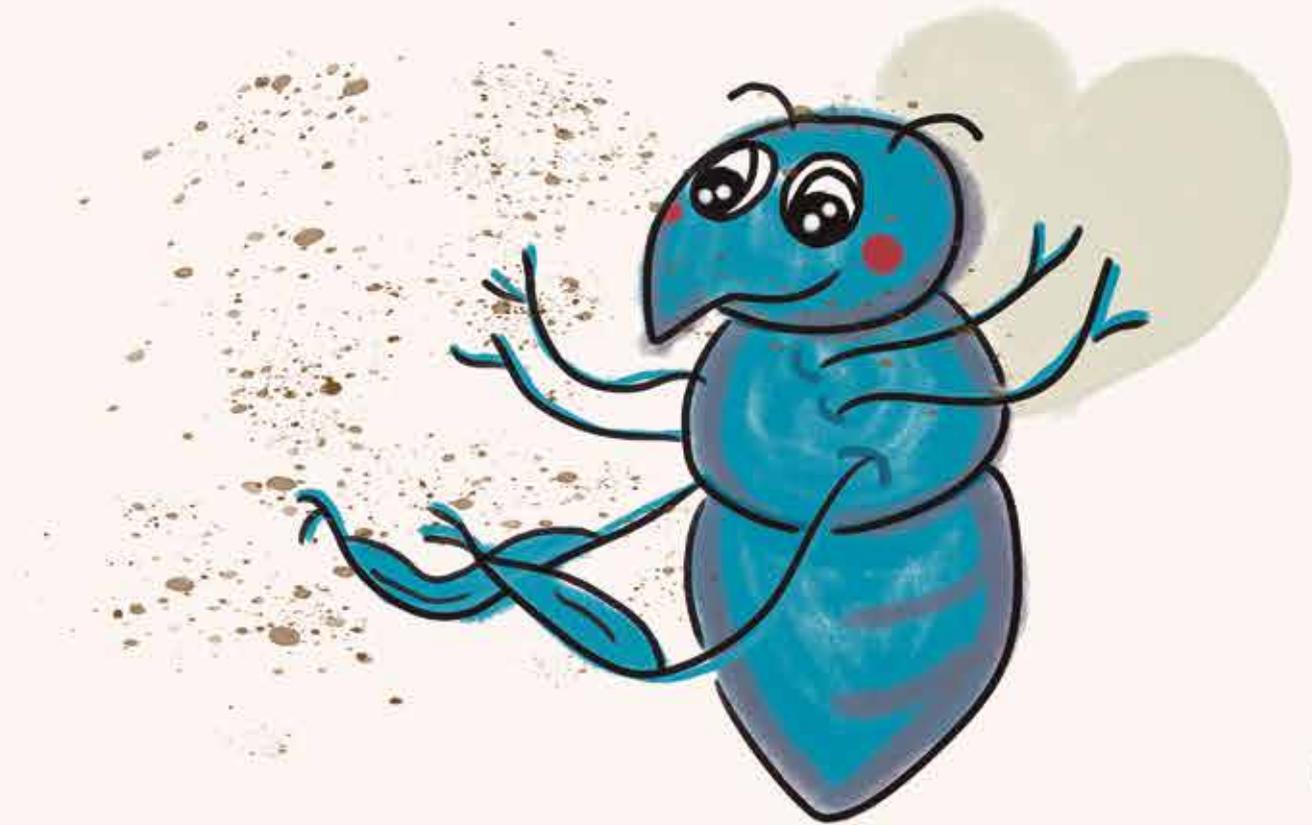
Activity 6.

Connect the dots to draw the little plant Gloria, color her, and write lots of “buzzzzzzzzz” around her to help her release her pollen.



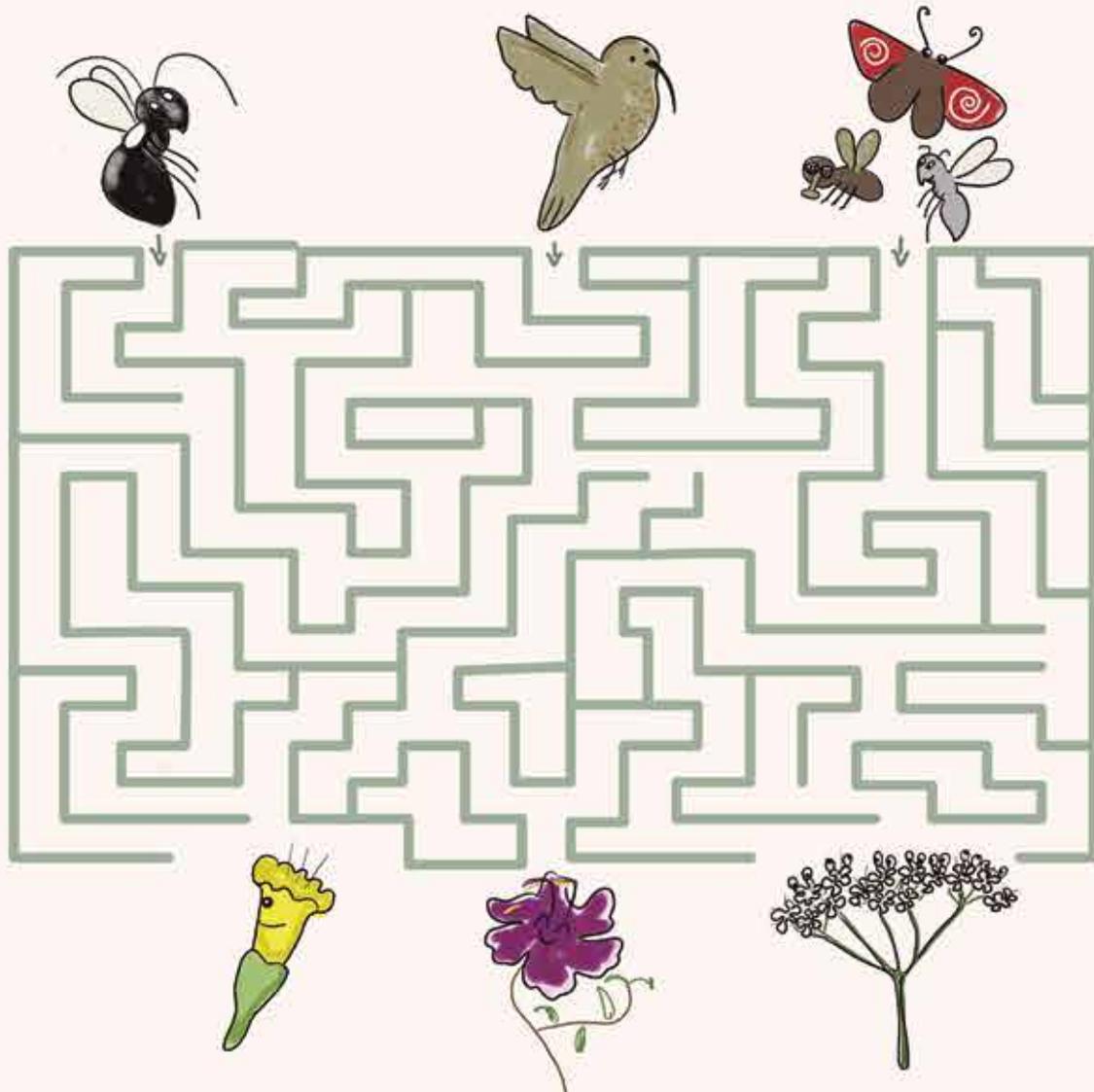
Activity 7.

Just to know how Rolando-Volando feels when he gets covered in resin, gather some soil and, if necessary, moisten it. Cover your hands really well with mud, just like Rolando does when collecting resin. Now, cover Rolando-Volando's legs and face with mud and imagine that he is putting on his perfume.



Activity 8.

Help the pollinator friends find their plant friends.



Outdoor activities

1. Are there any of the flowers from the stories near where you live or in your home? Draw the plants!
2. Let native plants grow in your garden or on your balcony. How can you do this? Leave a pot or a patch of soil in your yard without planting anything and watch which plants grow on their own. Water the soil at least once a week so the plants don't die of thirst!
3. Go outside and look for a plant with flowers. Spend some time observing it—what little bugs or other animals visit the flowers? Draw the little visitors.

We hope you had fun!

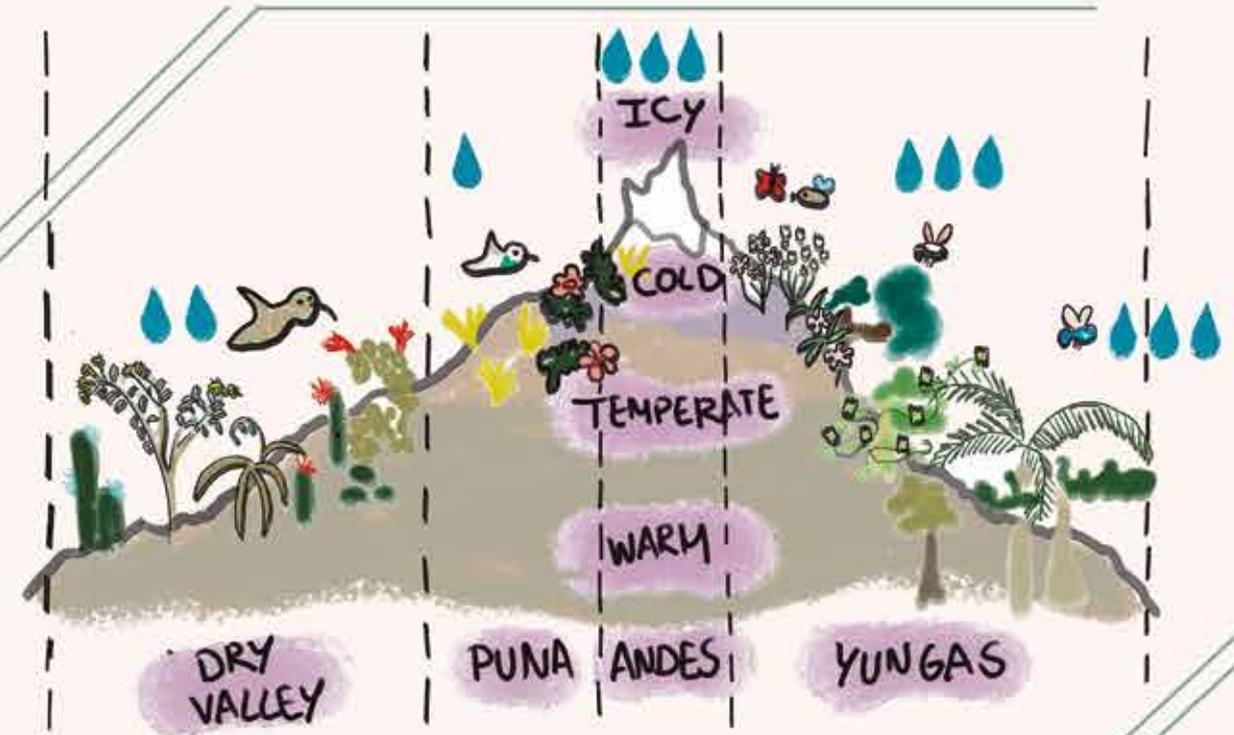
Scientific notes



Information for adults and very curious children

Between mountains and valleys, there are different friendships.

These stories explore some of the pollinators that live across different altitudinal ranges in the city of La Paz and its surroundings.



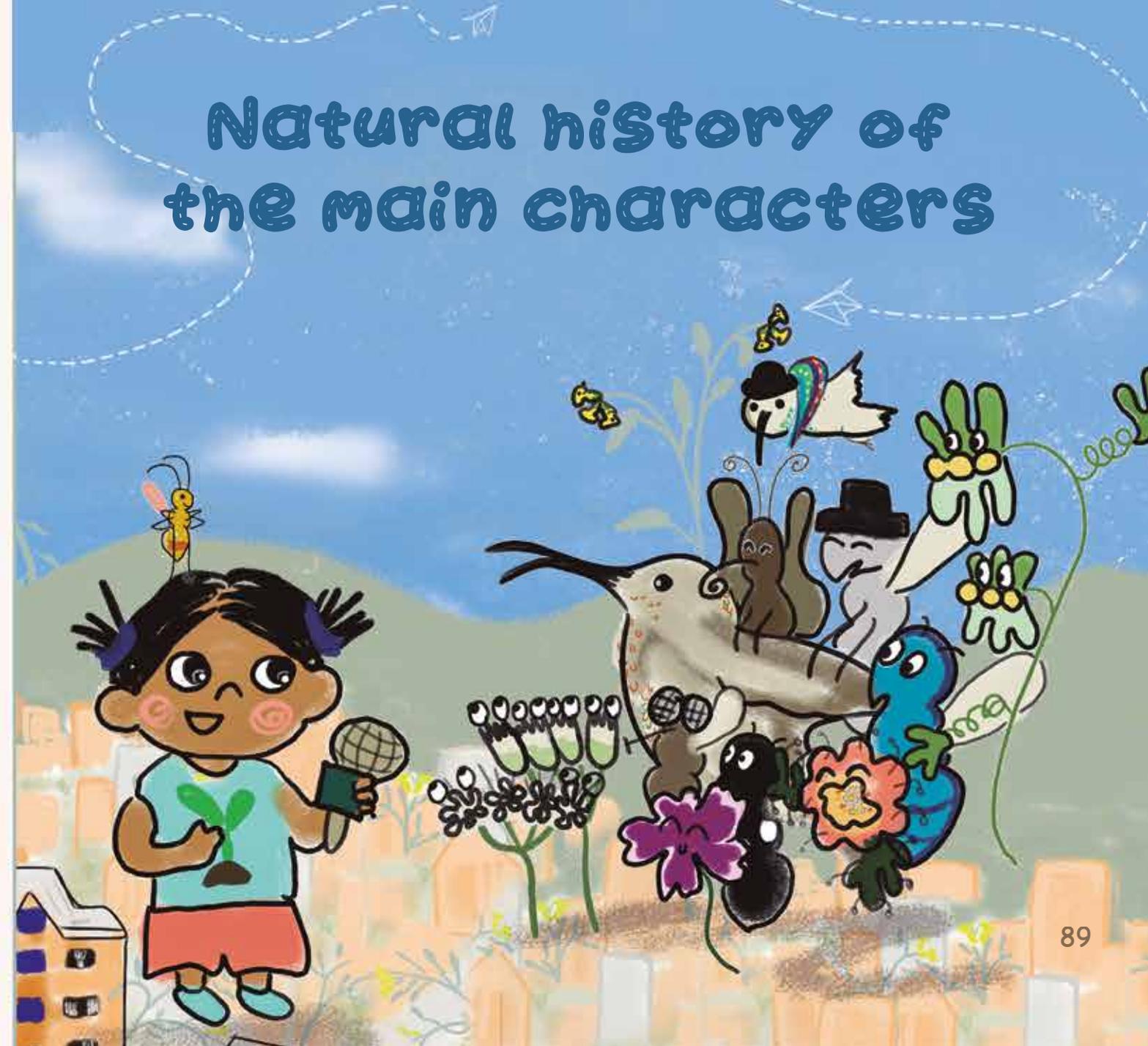
The structure of the altitudinal zones is inspired by Szykalski et al. (2016): Investigaciones de la Universidad de Wrocław/Polonia en los Valles Occidentales del extremo sur del Perú, Tambo - Boletín de Arqueología, 3: 9-74.

We travel between the Dry Valleys (where the city of La Paz itself is located) and the Yungas (for example, where we find Coroico or Tocaña). Differences in temperature and humidity in these places have made it possible for different forms of life to exist, and therefore for different pollinators and plants to thrive.

All the plants and animals presented have co-evolved (evolved in parallel) because they maintain mutualistic* relationships, which we present in this book as sincere friendships—fundamental for maintaining the balance of life. We hope that through these stories, children—as well as mothers, fathers, and caregivers—can pause to observe the beautiful relationships between animals and plants that exist in different places around the city of La Paz. We hope that learning about these sincere friendships will generate empathy for their care and conservation.

**Mutualism: a type of interaction between living beings in which both benefit. In the case of pollination, the animal carries pollen, helping the plant reproduce, and the plant provides food, shelter, or substances that help the pollinating animal maintain its metabolism and reproduction—that is, to continue living.*

Natural history of the main characters



The descriptions presented below are brief. If you are a person passionate about natural history, we invite you to read the book:

Historia natural del valle de La Paz, edited by Isabel Moya et al. (2015),



and to contribute to the conservation of our biodiversity by using applications such as:

PlantNet



iNaturalist



Anahí: She represents any girl or boy who plays freely in their yard, terrace, green space, or protected area near where they live. She is a child who is curious about understanding the world around her and who constantly goes out to explore and play.

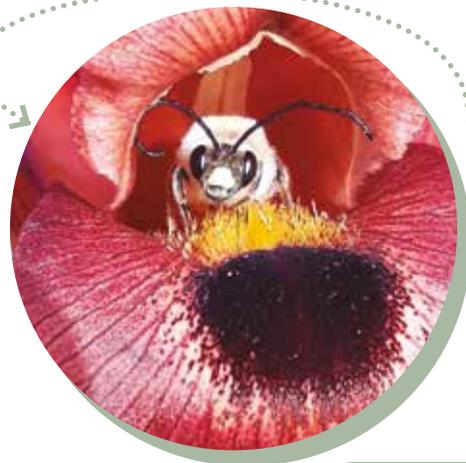


Photo: Yuval Sapir

Antenita (*Eucera* sp.): Bees of the genus *Eucera*, also known as long-horned bees because of their notably long antennae. They are solitary bees—that is, they do not form colonies like honeybees. In their underground nests, females lay their eggs and store food for their offspring, collecting pollen and nectar from flowers. They are distributed from Western Europe to China, being especially diverse in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. They also live in North and South America, often associated with squash crops. They inhabit grasslands, fields, gardens, and shrublands, nesting in soil—generally sandy or clay soils with good drainage. They play a key role in pollinating many plants and are generalist pollinators, although some species prefer certain plant families such as legumes or sunflowers.



Photos: Sissi Lozada Gobillard

Karalahua (*Nicotiana glauca*): Among shrubs in transition zones or sub-puna habitats, we find this plant from the family Solanaceae. These plants grow in patches and produce yellow flowers that are abundant throughout the year. Their leaves are grayish-green. This species adapts very well to living in human-impacted sites, such as along sidewalks, although it is often not noticed because it is removed as a “weed.”

Bumblebee (*Xylocopa rufidorsum*): Within the valley of La Paz, the genus *Xylocopa* is known as “carpenter bees” because these bees build their nests by excavating galleries in hard, usually dead wood, such as beams and posts. They measure between 18 and 20 mm. This genus visits a wide variety of plants for food. During the dry season, when food is scarce,

they steal nectar from plants such as the Karalahua, which would not normally be part of their diet.



Photo: Alejandro Bruno Miranda Calle

Giant Hummingbird (*Patagona gigas*): This bird belongs to the family Trochilidae, composed of small birds that feed on pollen and nectar. Interestingly, this hummingbird is the largest in the world, measuring between 15.5 and 16.5 cm (about the length of a new pencil). It lives at high elevations (between 2000 and 4100 m). Male hummingbirds generally have very bright feathers on the chest, head, and/or tail; however, this species differs by having few iridescent feathers on the wings and tail.



Photo: Sissi Lozada Gobillard

Common or European Honeybee (*Apis mellifera*): This bee was introduced to Bolivia during the 1960s. It lives in colonies made up of many bees that cooperate to feed and reproduce. Each bee in the colony has a body length of 10–12 mm and a black and orange bands on the abdomen. Despite producing large amounts of honey, these colonies can compete with native species for food resources and displace them. These bees are highly adaptable and are distributed from high mountains down to sea level.



Photo: Alejandro Bruno Miranda Calle

Andean Hillstar (*Oreotrochilus estella*): This beautiful hummingbird is restricted to high Andean environments, generally between 3500 and 4500 m. It can be found in the puna, especially in shrubland areas where it searches for food. These birds form territories around flowering shrubs. Males have iridescent green-blue feathers on the throat and a patch of coffee-with-milk-colored feathers on the chest. Females lack these feathers.



Photo: Arthur Sanguet

Itapallo (*Caiophora chuquitensis*): This stinging subshrub inhabits the puna and rocky alpine areas, mainly distributed between 3000 and 4000 m. Its bright orange flowers are very showy and abundant. The flowers have nectar-producing scales that attract pollinators. These scales are located near the stamens and are part of a system that releases pollen gradually over several days. In this way, the plant maintains pollinator interest for longer periods and improves its chances of pollination.



FEMENINA



MASCULINA

Photos: Sissi Lozada Gobillard

Chilca (*Baccharis latifolia*): Chilca is a shrub distributed from Venezuela to northern Argentina, including the Andes of Bolivia and Peru between 1000 and 3500 m. It has dense, glossy leaves that are resinous, helping prevent dehydration. This species is dioecious, meaning it has male and female flowers on separate plants. Its small white-to-cream flower heads are grouped in terminal inflorescences, and wind-dispersed seeds facilitate colonization of open or degraded sites. It is a pioneer species that helps stabilize soils and promote plant succession. It provides nectar and pollen to a wide variety of insects, including bees, butterflies, and flies, and serves as a host plant for herbivorous insects.



Photo: Sissi Lozada Gobilard

Gloria (*Tibouchina bicolor*): This shrub or subshrub belongs to the family Melastomataceae. It is distributed throughout Central and South America and in Bolivia in the Andes. It is commonly known as "glory bush." Its flowers are striking, deep violet in color, with two types of anthers that only release pollen when stimulated by specific vibrations produced by bumblebees.



Photo: Oliver Dangles

Bumblebee (*Bombus funebris*): This bumblebee species is distributed from Colombia to Bolivia, between 2000 and 3500 m. It is characterized by its black color and a white patch on the upper part of the thorax. It is a generalist pollinator that visits flowers from families such as Asteraceae, Solanaceae, and Fabaceae. Its robust, hairy body allows it to forage in cold environments. Queens establish underground nests or nests in cavities, developing annual colonies. Workers collect nectar and pollen, contributing to the pollination of wild and cultivated plants. This species is sensitive to habitat loss, pesticides, and climate change, highlighting its importance for the conservation of native pollinators.

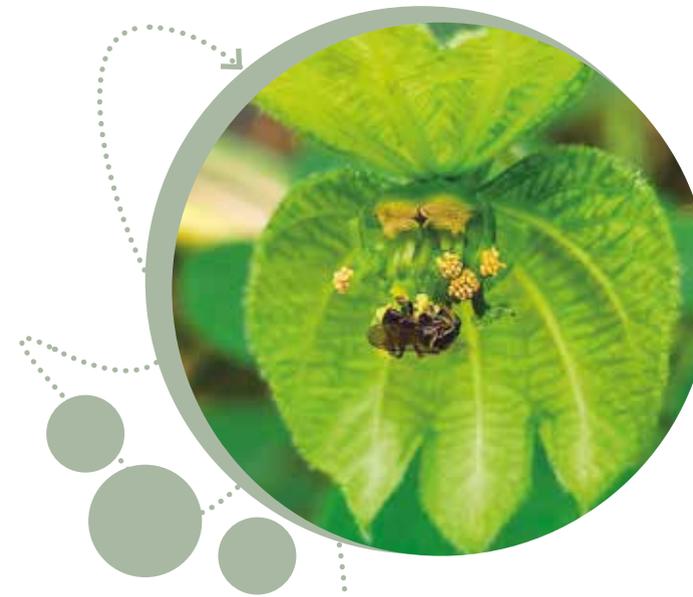


Photo: Sissi Lozada Gobilard

Verdecita (*Dalechampia sp.*): This neotropical vine is distributed from Mexico to South America. Its distinctive inflorescences, or pseudanthia, consist of two showy bracts enclosing small male and female flowers that function together as a single floral unit. This genus is pollinated mainly by female bees of the genera *Euglossa*, *Eulaema*, and *Hypanthidium*, which visit the inflorescences to obtain resin used in nest construction, accidentally transferring pollen between flowers. Variation in the color, size, and resin reward of the bracts reflects adaptations to local pollinator assemblages.

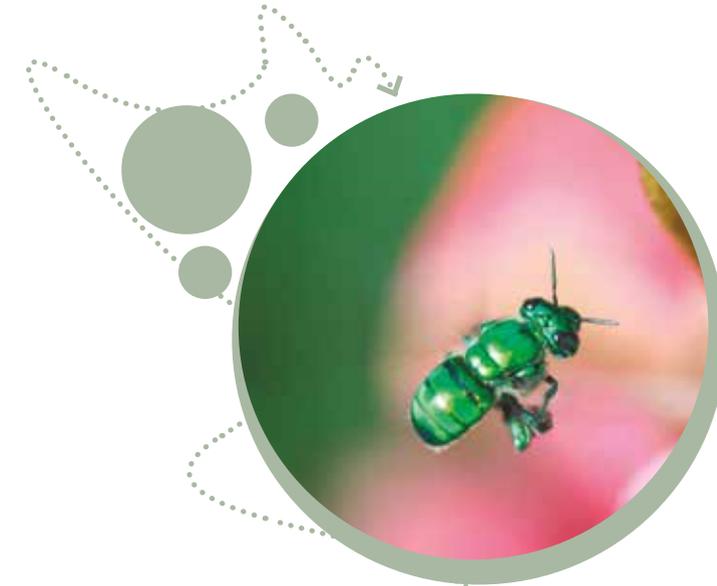


Photo: Marcelo Aliaga

Rolando-Volando (*Euglossa sp.*): These bees are known as "orchid bees" because in several genera, males collect pollen and other volatile compounds exclusively from orchids. They are very shiny with green-blue colors and sizes that can be considered large for bees (between 8 and 29 mm). These bees inhabit tropical forests. Female bees collect resin from flowers to build and seal brood cells, while male euglossine bees collect volatile fragrances used in courtship displays.

INDEX

Text and illustration

Where do baby plants come from?.....Pag. 2	Camila Benavides-Frias
The Karalahua and her good friend the Giant HummingbirdPag. 16	Sissi Lozada Gobilard (<i>original idea</i>) Camila Benavides-Frias (<i>adaptation and editing</i>)
- <i>Nicotiana glauca</i> and <i>Patagona gigas</i> -	
The transporter of Andean pollenPag. 28	Camila Benavides-Frias
- <i>Caiophora chuquitensis</i> and <i>Oreotrochilus estella</i> -	
The Chilcas and their “dance floor” flowersPag. 38	Sissi Lozada Gobilard (<i>original idea</i>) Camila Benavides-Frias (<i>adaptation and editing</i>)
- <i>Baccharis latifolia</i> and many kind of flies, bees, beetles, butterflies, and wasps.-	
A special buzzz!Pag. 48	Sissi Lozada Gobilard (<i>original idea</i>) Camila Benavides-Frias (<i>adaptation and editing</i>)
- <i>Tibouchina bicolor</i> and <i>Bombus funebris</i> -	
A well-kept secretPag. 58	Camila Benavides-Frias
- <i>Dalechampia sp.</i> and <i>Euglossa sp.</i> -	
Activity BookletPag. 73 - 85	
Scientific NotesPag. 86 - 88	
Natural History of the Main CharactersPag. 89 - 95	

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Camila Benavides-Frias

(she/her) is from La Paz and is an agroecologist. She loves studying interactions between bees and people in rural areas. Camila is also passionate about teaching ecology outside academia and believes the best way to do this is by awakening creativity through reading and arts. She has participated as an editor of the book *"Historias de nuestra vida con las abejas y sus mieles"* together with Gabriel Zuna, a writer from La Paz, who uses the ways in which we speak in our country to tell his stories. Camila believes in the importance of literary works that carry our voices exactly as we use them in everyday life, as a key part of making our identity visible and keeping it alive. For this reason, she wrote and edited these stories in the same spirit. Camila was invited by Sissi as editor and author of the stories you have just read because of their shared passion for childhood education. Camila hopes to continue giving voice to animals and plants by telling their stories in fun ways for Bolivian children.

Sissi Lozada Gobillard

is an evolutionary ecologist born and raised in the high mountains of La Paz. For more than a decade, Sissi has studied plants and their pollinators in places such as Bolivia, Germany, Czech Republic, and Israel. She currently lives in Sweden, where she works as a researcher in the SPACE group (Speciation, Adaptation, and Co-Evolution) at Lund University, leading a project on plant-pollinator interactions along altitudinal gradients in the tropical Andes of Bolivia, of which this book is part of. Sissi is deeply passionate and enthusiastic about plants, animals, and the interactions that occur between them. She believes in the magic of teaching science through stories and enjoys showing the natural world to young children through wonderful, reality-based tales. Her greatest inspiration is her children, Liam and Isabela, with whom she shares long afternoons of reading and adventure. This is her second children's book, in which Antenita tells her travels, teaching and entertaining both children and parents. Would you like to learn more about Antenita's adventures in the Middle East? You can read *"Antenita and the Black Iris"* and other similar stories through this QR code:



Have you ever wondered where baby plants
come from?

In this collection of illustrated stories, you will discover the amazing friendship between flowers and their pollinators. Antenita—the traveling little bee—will guide you through the city of La Paz and its mountains to introduce you to plants that, in very different ways, form special bonds with insects and birds.

Join her on this journey and learn how these encounters help plants have their babies, allowing the continuation of Andean biodiversity existence.

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