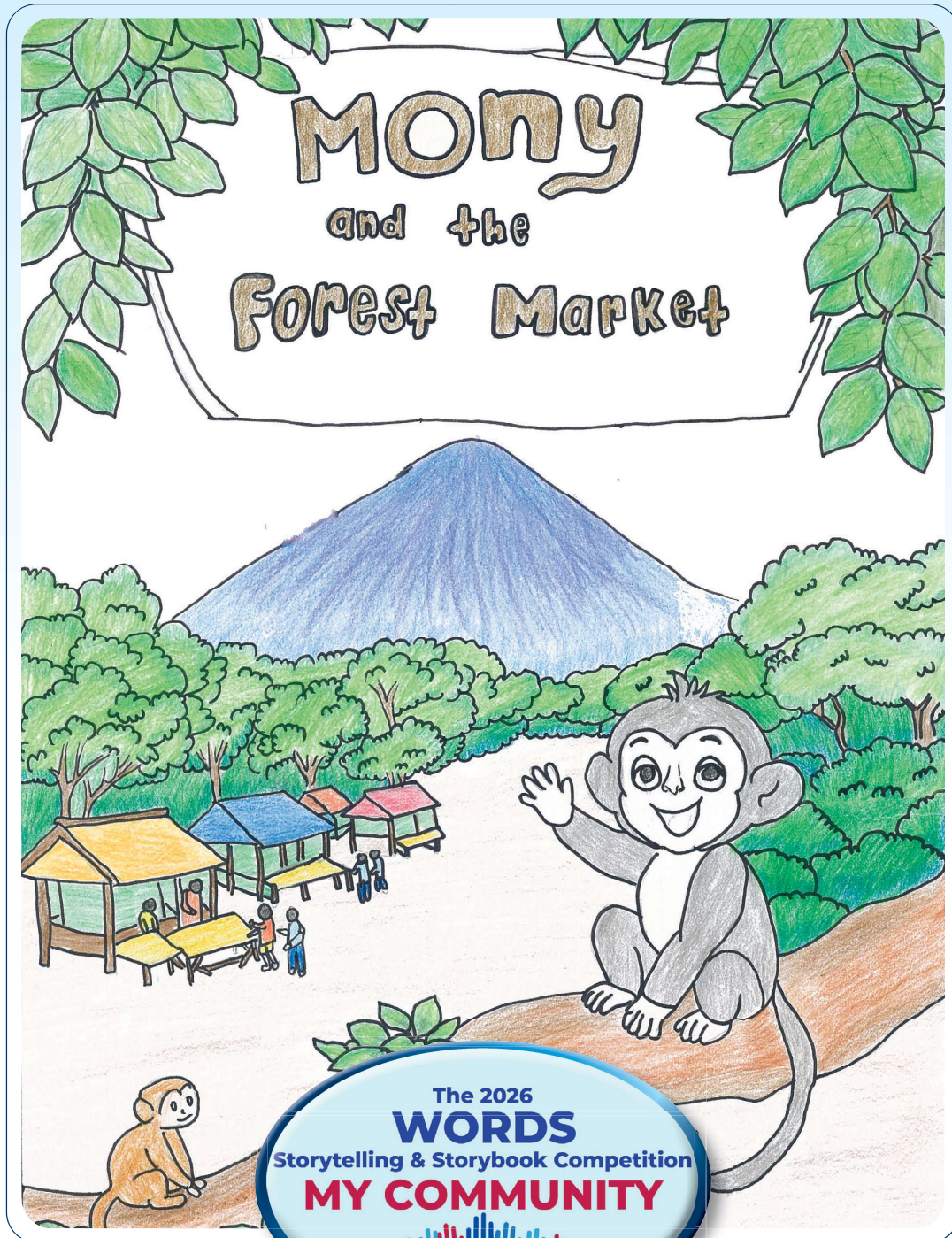


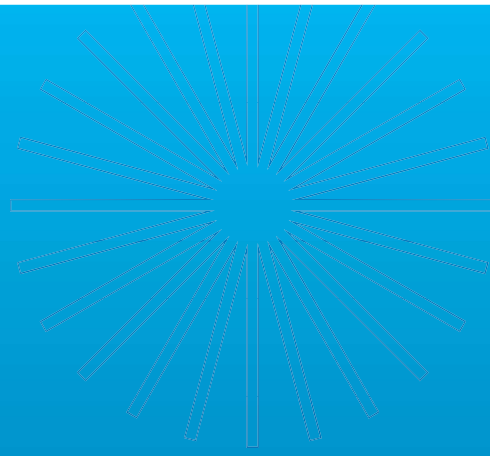
INTAN VATMA JUWITA

- MONY AND THE FOREST MARKET -



The 2026
WORDS
Storytelling & Storybook Competition
MY COMMUNITY





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These storybooks have been lightly edited for clarity.

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Foreword

The seventeen stories presented in this book came from a collaborative process between students and their teachers— both their home institution teacher (co-teacher) and the Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) serving in their schools. At the heart of the collaborative process is the desire to foster understanding and to bridge differences. The schools where they taught were selected through a collaborative process between AMINEF, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs to host the ETAs. Indeed, everything about this program underlines cooperation between all parties involved.

After a long selection and preparation process, the ETAs served in Indonesia for eight months. They came from various states in the US, from New York to California, Vermont to Louisiana - some from urban areas, others more rural. Together, they represent the rich landscape of places and cultures in America. Likewise, in Indonesia, the ETAs were exposed to and experienced life in various places and cultures. They co-taught English in various areas, spreading from Padang, Jambi, Lampung, Kulon Progo, Kudus, Sidoarjo, Praya, Palangkaraya, Makassar, and Kendari.

Over the eight months the ETAs, co-teachers, and students, in essence, serve as cultural ambassadors to one another. They forged friendships beyond the classroom walls and invested their time and energy in the communities. And this year's theme for the WORDS Storybook competition is indeed "My Community".

The stories you are about to read here were written by the stars of each school. The authors won a local competition organized by the ETAs and the co-teachers. They then worked intensively on their books and on how to best narrate the stories. In April, the students, co-teachers, and ETAs were invited to Jakarta to celebrate their journey – from beginning to learn English to becoming authors and, subsequently, storytellers.

The students performed confidently in front of a panel of four prominent judges who are all Fulbrighters from Indonesia and the US: Ahmad Fuadi, an author of best-selling novels including "Negeri 5 Menara" and a prominent public speaker; Anna Grundström, a performing artist and independent researcher based in Brooklyn, New York; Azalia Muchransyah, filmmaker, scholar, and lecturer at BINUS University; and Douglas Ramage, AMINEF Board Member and founding Managing Director of Bower-GroupAsia Indonesia.

The third place went to Clarintha Glory Amungin Allokendek from SMK Raden Umar Said Kudus with "Hannah The One-Man Team" whose story reminded us of the importance of collaboration with others. Putri Permata Sari from SMK 9 Padang's story "The Pursuit of Happiness", won second place. It is a beautiful story about self-acceptance and creating a community of your own.

In first place was Florencia Kirana Wilman from SMK 6 Padang, with her story "The Day Coffee Called Us Home." Ms. Wilman presented a powerful reminder that, amid disasters and challenges, communities can work together and find solutions. Her story showed that sometimes what the community needs is one person to plow the way, helping each other, and others will follow.

The WORDS Competition is a celebration for all: the students, the ETAs, and the co-teachers. It is a celebration of a new, and hopefully lasting, connection among people. And AMINEF is proud to have been part of these connections.

Dr. Sandra Hamid

Executive Director, AMINEF

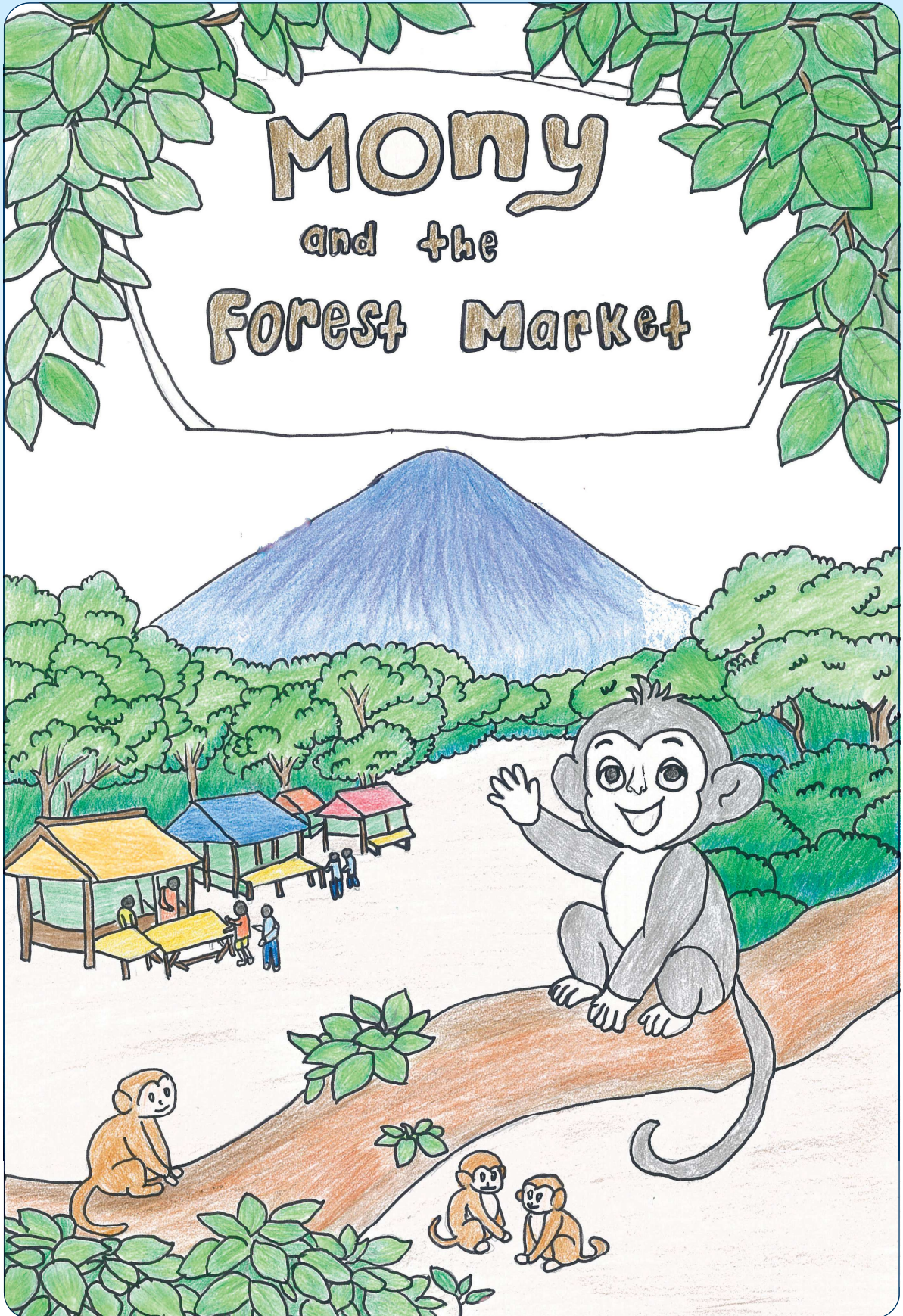
About the WORDS Competition

WORDS is a national English-language competition that brings together one student from each Fulbright ETA host school. Launched as a speech and talent contest in 2007, it evolved into a storytelling and storybook competition in 2018.

Finalists first win their school-level competition, which Fulbright ETAs organize in collaboration with the co-teachers. ETAs support students through brainstorming sessions, workshops, and performance feedback.

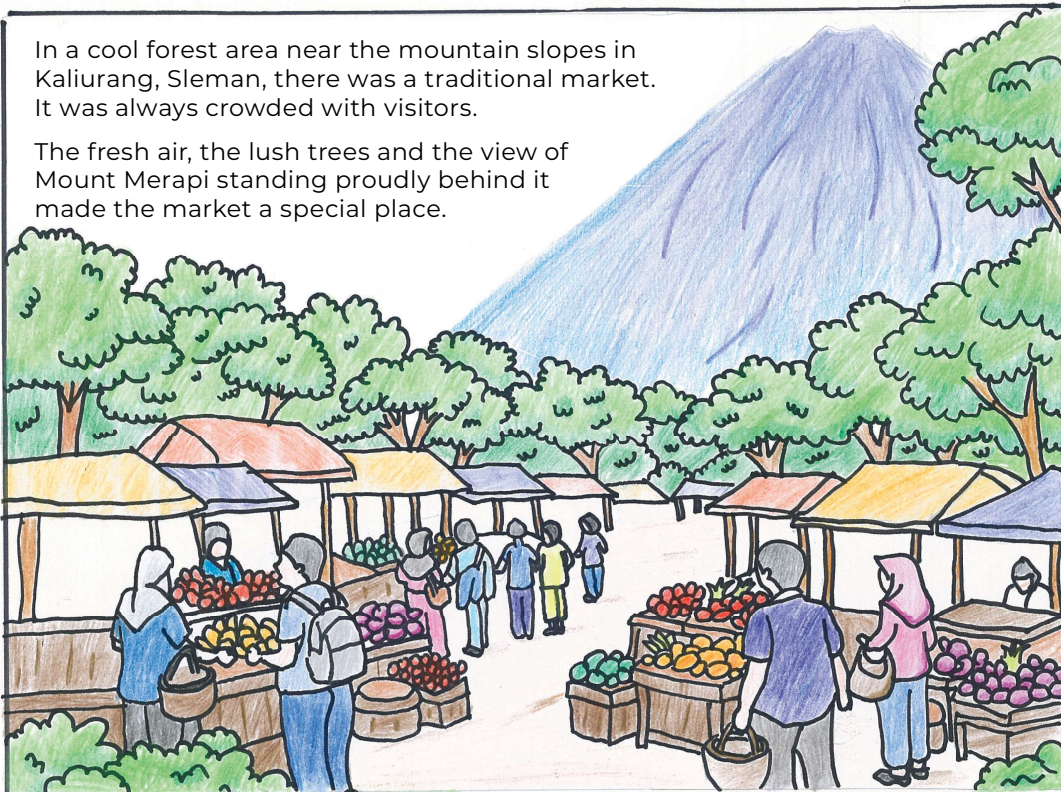
A highlight of the AMINEF year, the WORDS Competition allows 10th and 11th graders to showcase their storytelling skills, English proficiency, and cultural insights. In 2026, seventeen finalists will bring the theme **“My Community”** to life through their original stories.





In a cool forest area near the mountain slopes in Kaliurang, Sleman, there was a traditional market. It was always crowded with visitors.

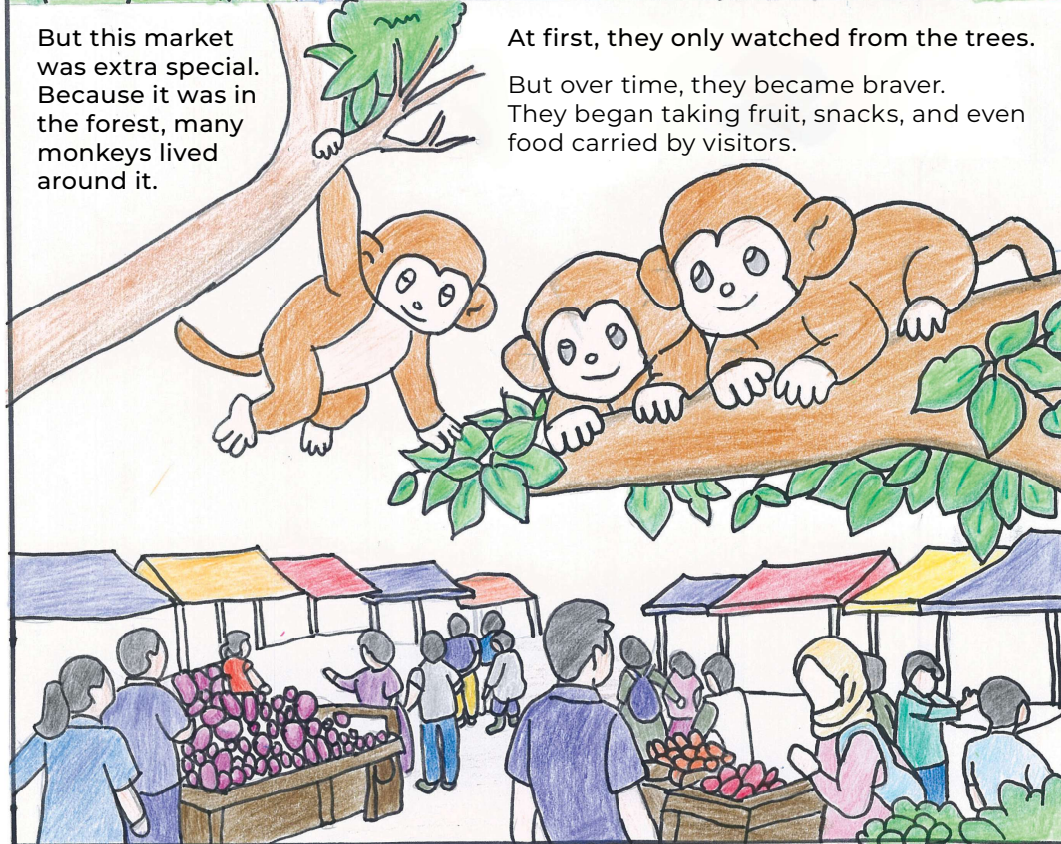
The fresh air, the lush trees and the view of Mount Merapi standing proudly behind it made the market a special place.



But this market was extra special. Because it was in the forest, many monkeys lived around it.

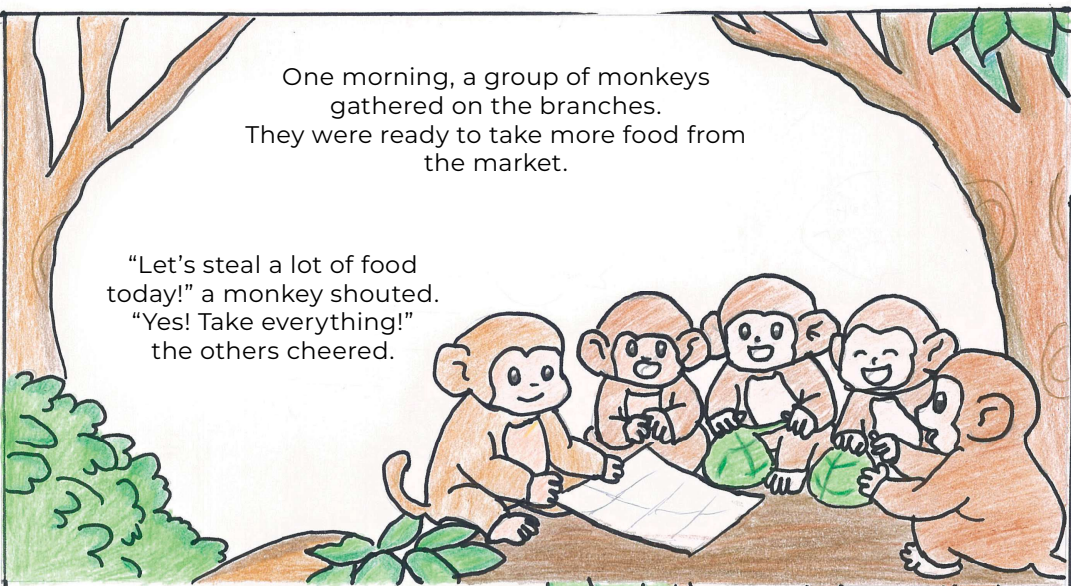
At first, they only watched from the trees.

But over time, they became braver. They began taking fruit, snacks, and even food carried by visitors.



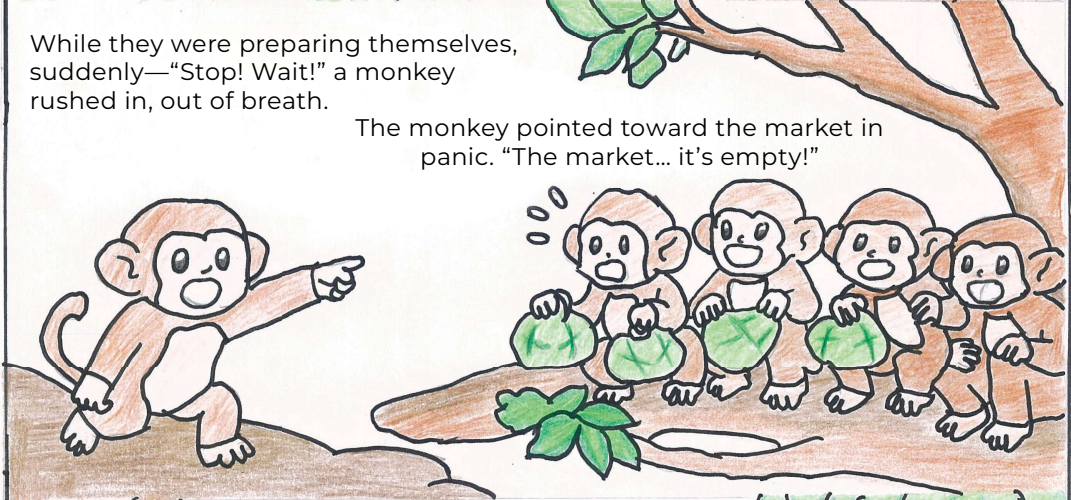
One morning, a group of monkeys gathered on the branches. They were ready to take more food from the market.

"Let's steal a lot of food today!" a monkey shouted.
"Yes! Take everything!" the others cheered.



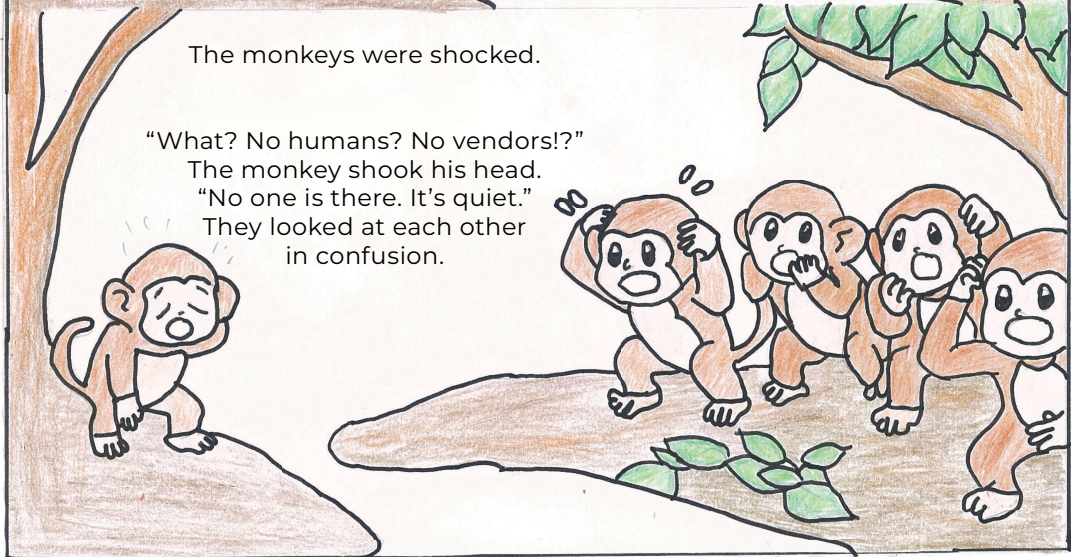
While they were preparing themselves, suddenly—"Stop! Wait!" a monkey rushed in, out of breath.

The monkey pointed toward the market in panic. "The market... it's empty!"



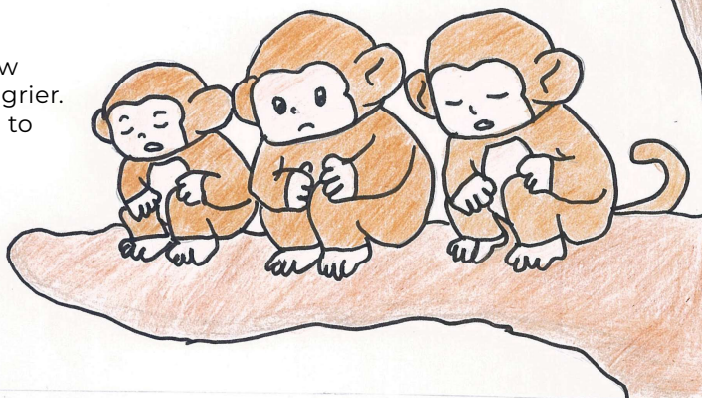
The monkeys were shocked.

"What? No humans? No vendors!?"
The monkey shook his head.
"No one is there. It's quiet."
They looked at each other in confusion.

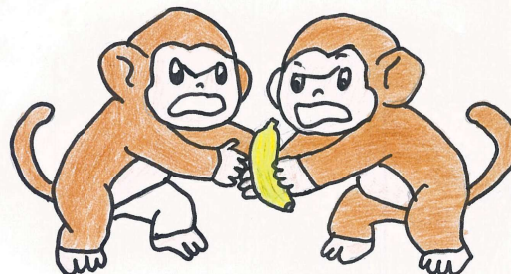
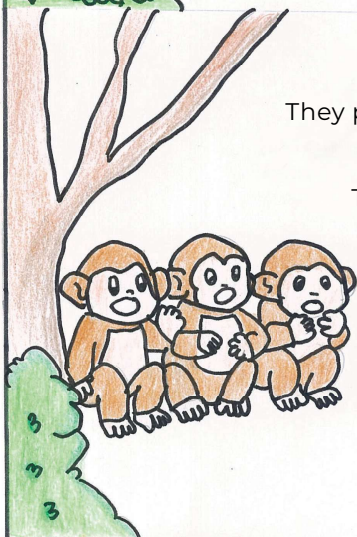


They waited. But no one came.

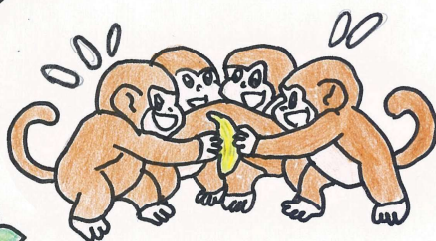
Days passed.
The monkeys grew
hungrier and hungrier.
Soon, they began to
fight.



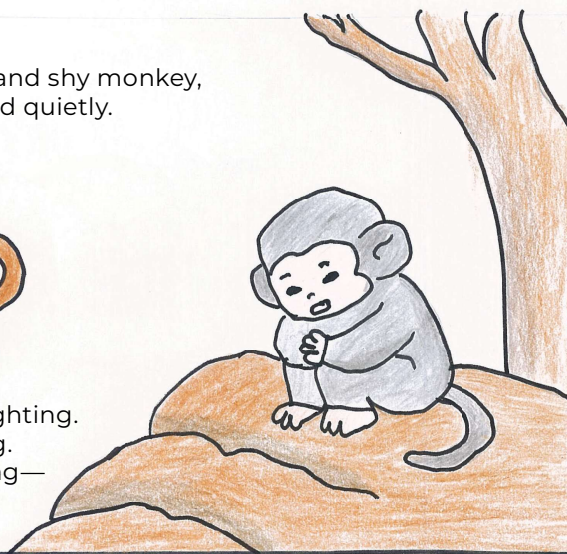
"That's mine!"
"I saw it first!"
They pushed, hit, and scratched each other—
just for one small banana.
There was no more sharing.
There was only hunger...and anger.

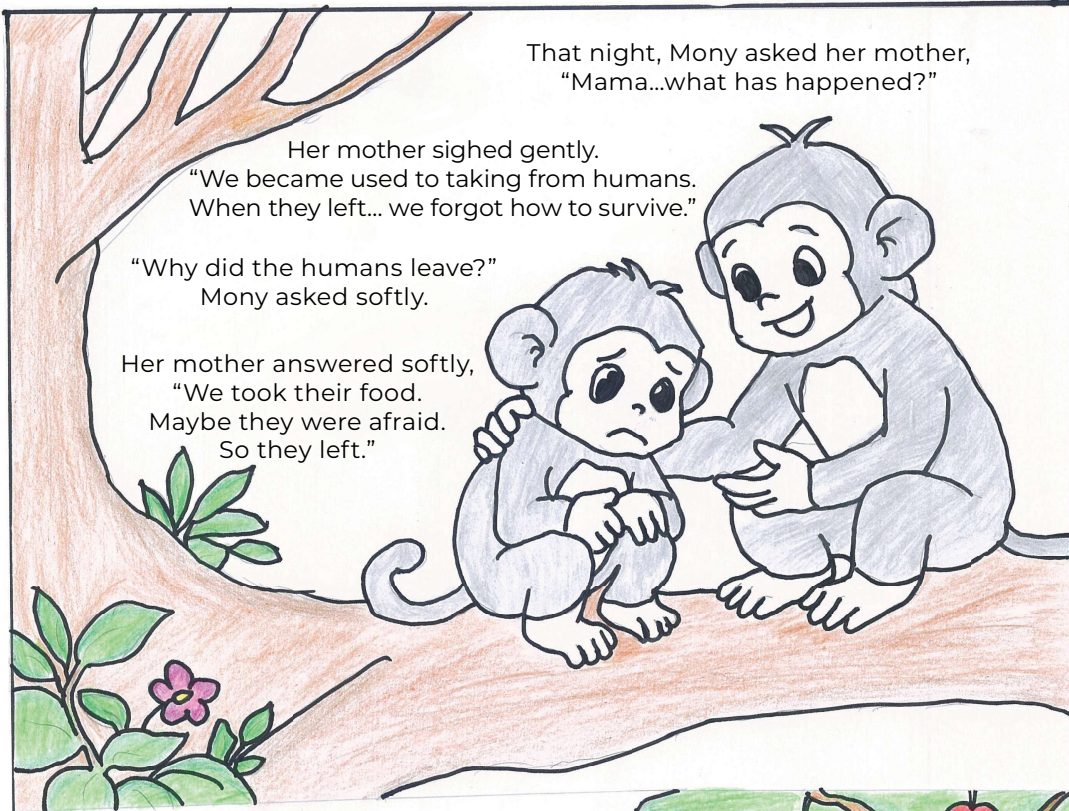


Mony, a small and shy monkey,
watched quietly.



She saw adult monkeys fighting.
Baby monkeys crying.
Their troop—once strong—
was now broken.





That night, Mony asked her mother,
"Mama...what has happened?"

Her mother sighed gently.
"We became used to taking from humans.
When they left... we forgot how to survive."

"Why did the humans leave?"
Mony asked softly.

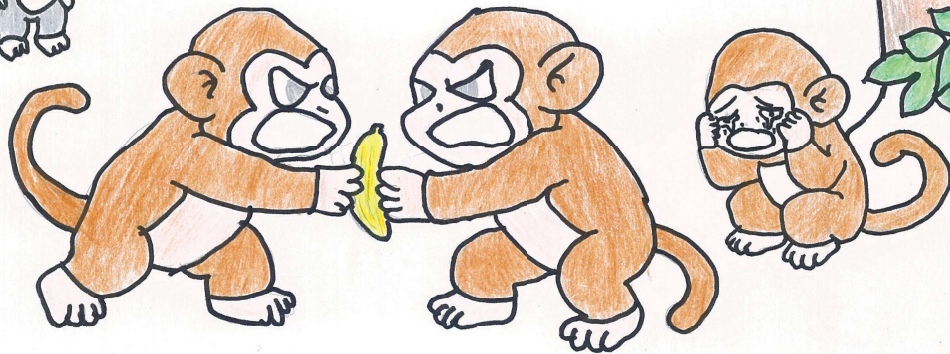
Her mother answered softly,
"We took their food.
Maybe they were afraid.
So they left."



Mony lowered her head.
"So... this is our fault?"

Her mother nodded.
"The forest is our
home. It has always
given us food.
We just forgot how to
look for it."

The next day, Mony saw two monkeys fighting hard.
She saw a small monkey crying because its fruit was stolen.
Mony's heart hurt.
She could not stand it anymore.

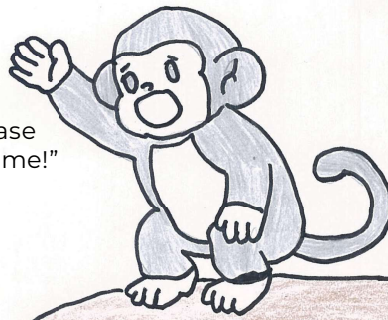


Mony climbed to the highest branch and called out to all the monkeys.

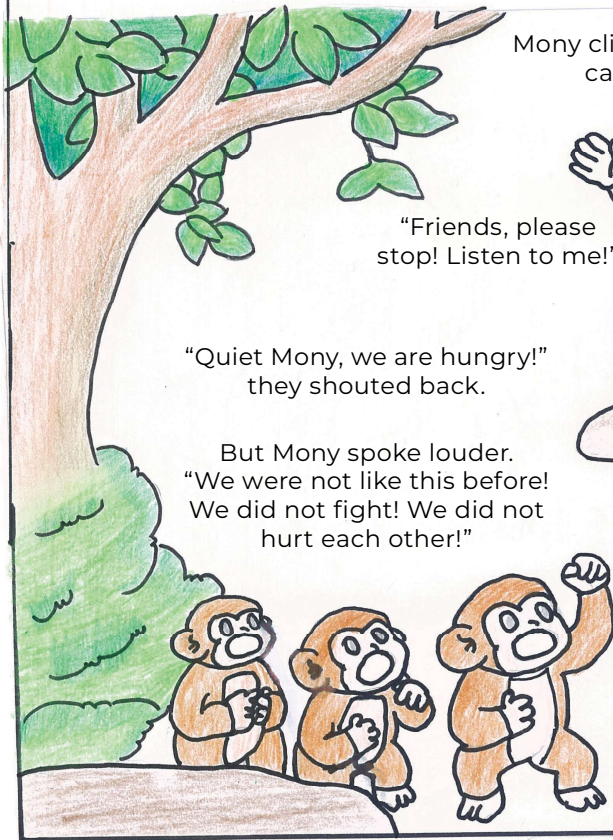
"Friends, please stop! Listen to me!"

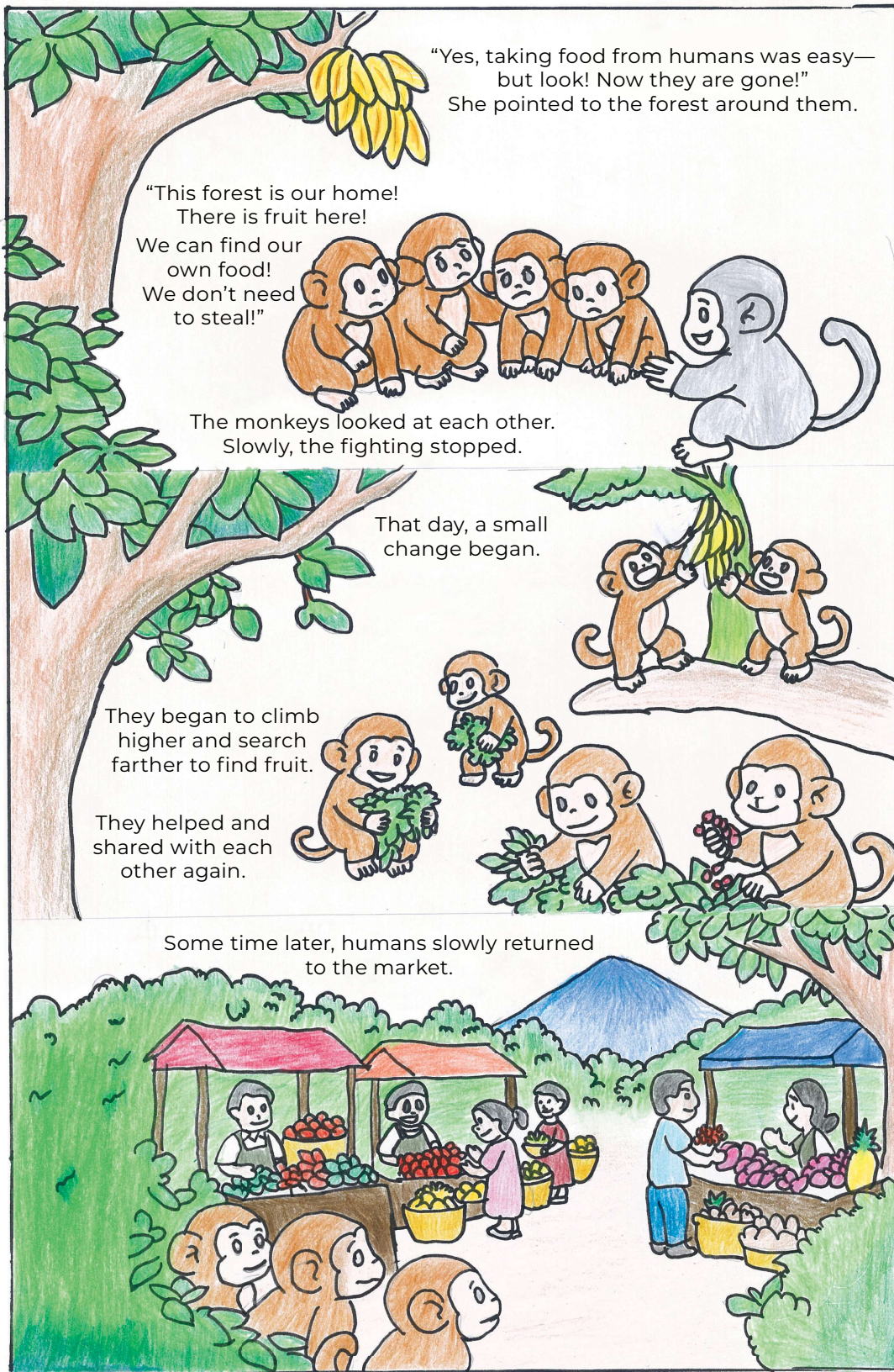
"Quiet Mony, we are hungry!" they shouted back.

But Mony spoke louder.
"We were not like this before!
We did not fight! We did not hurt each other!"



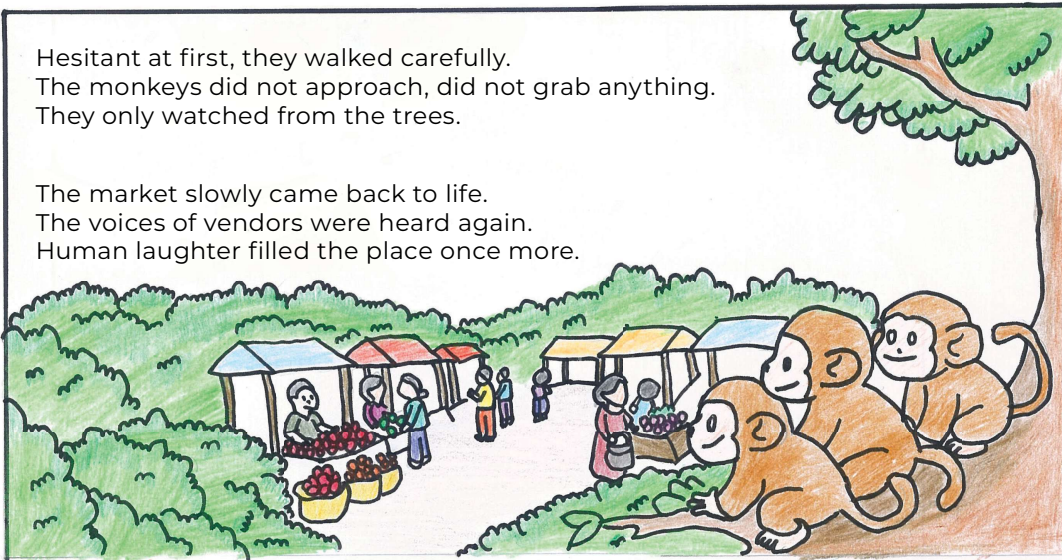
Everyone began to listen.



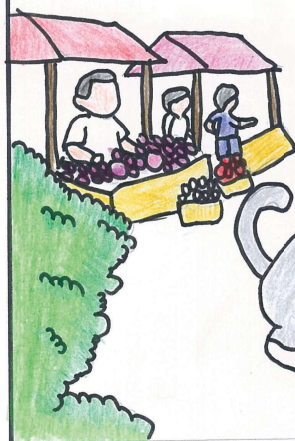


Hesitant at first, they walked carefully.
The monkeys did not approach, did not grab anything.
They only watched from the trees.

The market slowly came back to life.
The voices of vendors were heard again.
Human laughter filled the place once more.



One morning, Mony came down from a tree holding bananas and forest fruit.

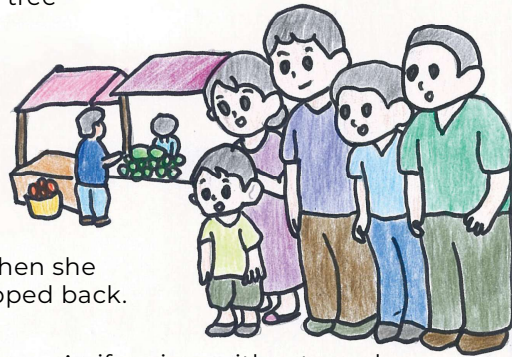


She placed them on the ground in the middle of the market.

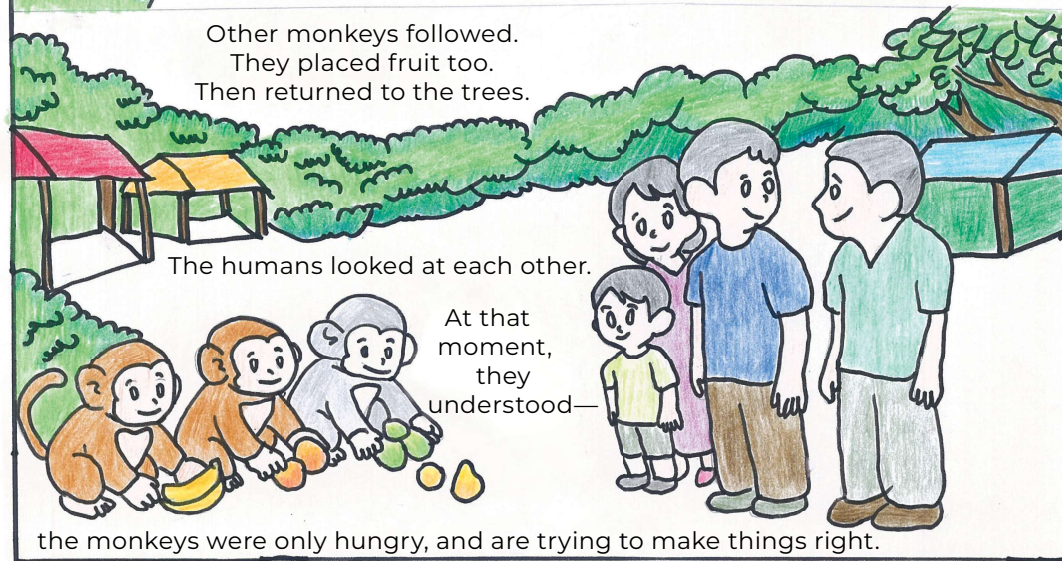
Then she stepped back.

As if saying, without words:
These are for you. We are sorry.

The humans were silent.



Other monkeys followed.
They placed fruit too.
Then returned to the trees.



The humans looked at each other.

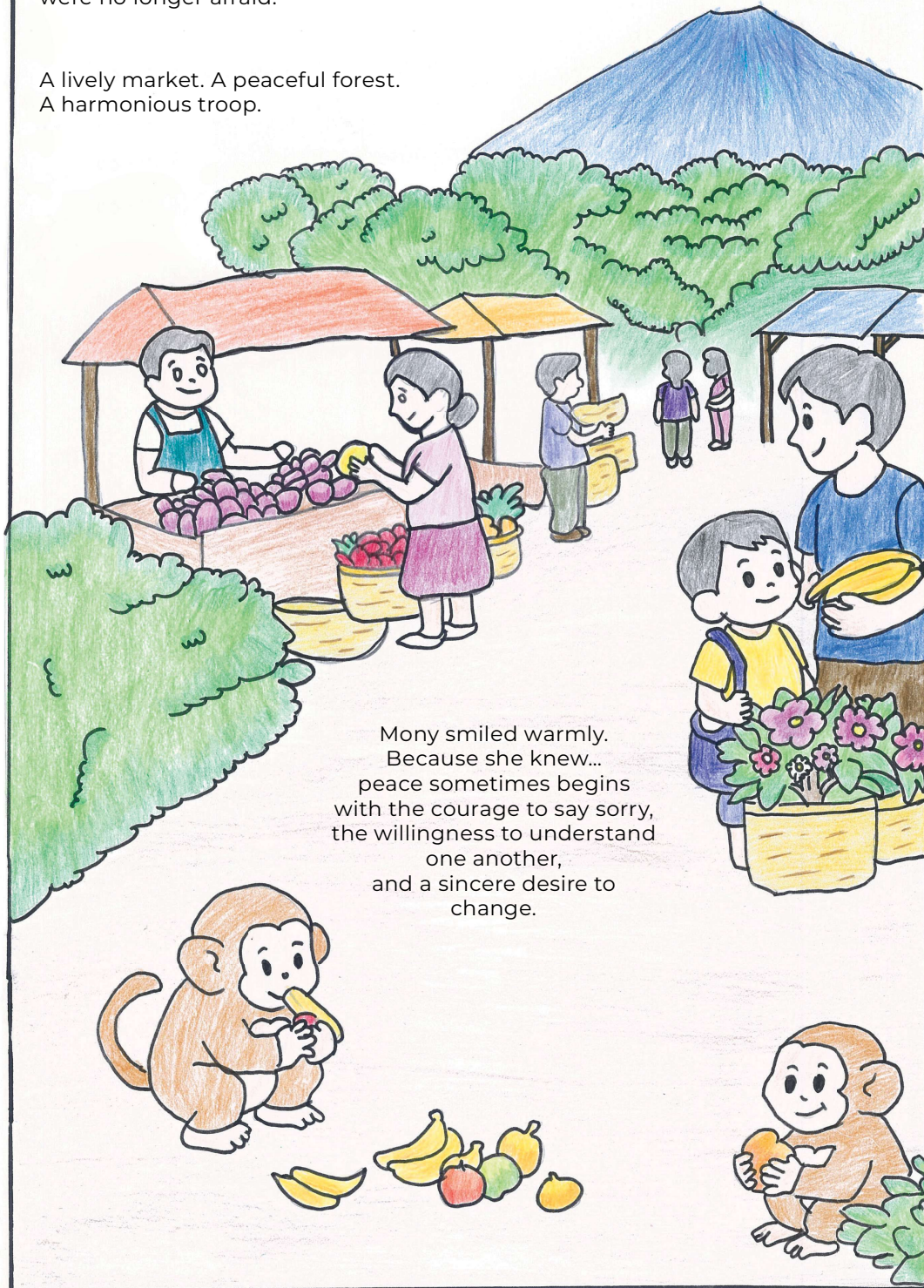
At that moment, they understood—

the monkeys were only hungry, and are trying to make things right.

Then...slowly...they smiled.

The forest did not change, the monkeys did.
From that day on, the market became lively again.
The monkeys searched for their own food, and humans
were no longer afraid.

A lively market. A peaceful forest.
A harmonious troop.



Mony smiled warmly.
Because she knew...
peace sometimes begins
with the courage to say sorry,
the willingness to understand
one another,
and a sincere desire to
change.



About the Author

Intan Vatma Juwita SMKN 1 Kokap



Sup! I'm Intan Vatma Juwita, but you can just call me Intan.

I'm a 16-year-old 11th grade student majoring in Hospitality at SMKN 1 Kokap. I'm friendly, outgoing, and love meeting new people, which totally matches my hospitality major. I enjoy creating positive vibes and making people feel comfortable wherever I go.

In my free time, I'm usually binge-watching K-dramas or listening to pop music that fits my mood. I love good stories, good energy, and meaningful moments. Still learning and growing, but always aiming to be a better version of myself.

About AMINEF

The American Indonesian Exchange Foundation (AMINEF) is the binational Fulbright Commission for Indonesia. AMINEF's many educational exchange programs have increased mutual understanding between the United States and Indonesia and strengthened the ties that unite our two countries.

Since 1952, more than 3,500 Indonesians and 1,400 Americans have participated in exchanges. Annually, 80-100 Indonesians travel to the US through Fulbright grants for degree study, teaching, research, or non-degree professional fellowships. Similarly, up to 60 Americans receive Fulbright support to contribute their expertise in teaching, research, or as Specialists, offering insights to Indonesian institutions.

For detailed information on degree scholarships and non-degree fellowships available to Indonesians and Americans, visit the AMINEF website at www.aminef.or.id.

About the Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) Program and ETA in Indonesia

The Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) Program, one of the US State Department-funded Fulbright programs in many countries worldwide, places recent college graduates and young professionals as English teaching assistants in primary and secondary schools or universities overseas.

The program helps improve international students' English-language abilities and knowledge of the US while increasing the US student's language skills and knowledge of the many host countries worldwide.

In Indonesia, the Fulbright ETAs are placed in high schools (SMA, SMK, and Madrasah) that assist local English teachers. The program has been running for over two decades, since 2004, affecting thousands of Indonesian students and their communities across the archipelago. AMINEF works closely with the Indonesian Ministries of Primary and Secondary Education and Religious Affairs to administer the Fulbright ETA program in Indonesia.



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