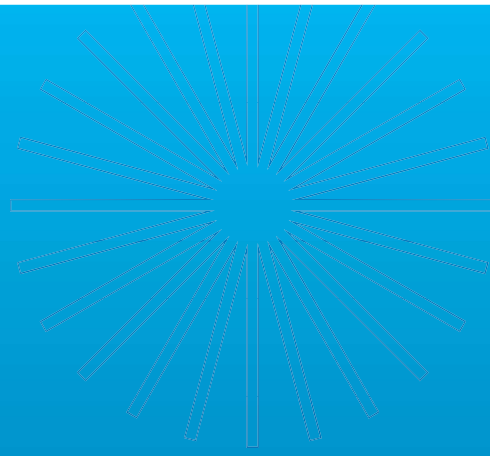


LATHIFAH AMALIA

- EMMY'S REGRET -



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.

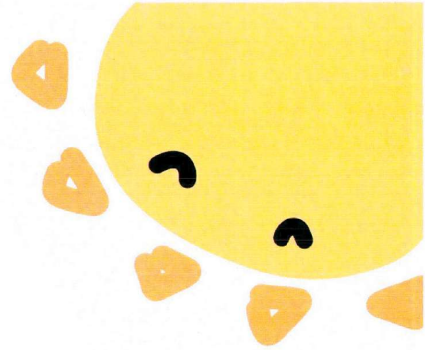
A highlight of the AMINEF year, the WORDS Competition allows 10th and 11th graders to showcase their storytelling skills, English proficiency, and cultural insights. In 2026, seventeen finalists will bring the theme **“My Community”** to life through their original stories.



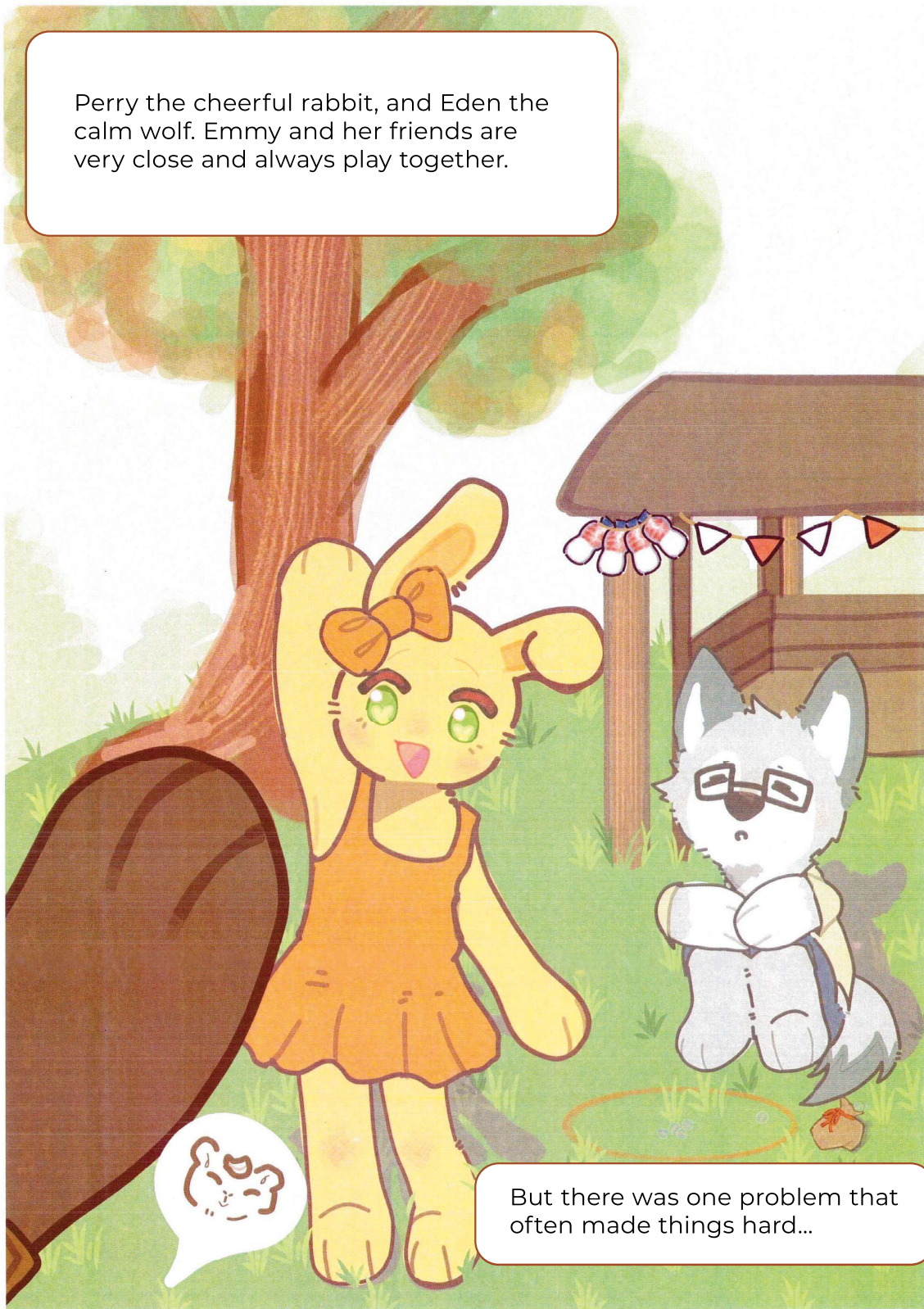


LATHIFAH AMALIA
SMKN 10 MAKASSAR

In a lovely green forest, there's an energetic capybara named Emmy. Emmy has two special best friends.

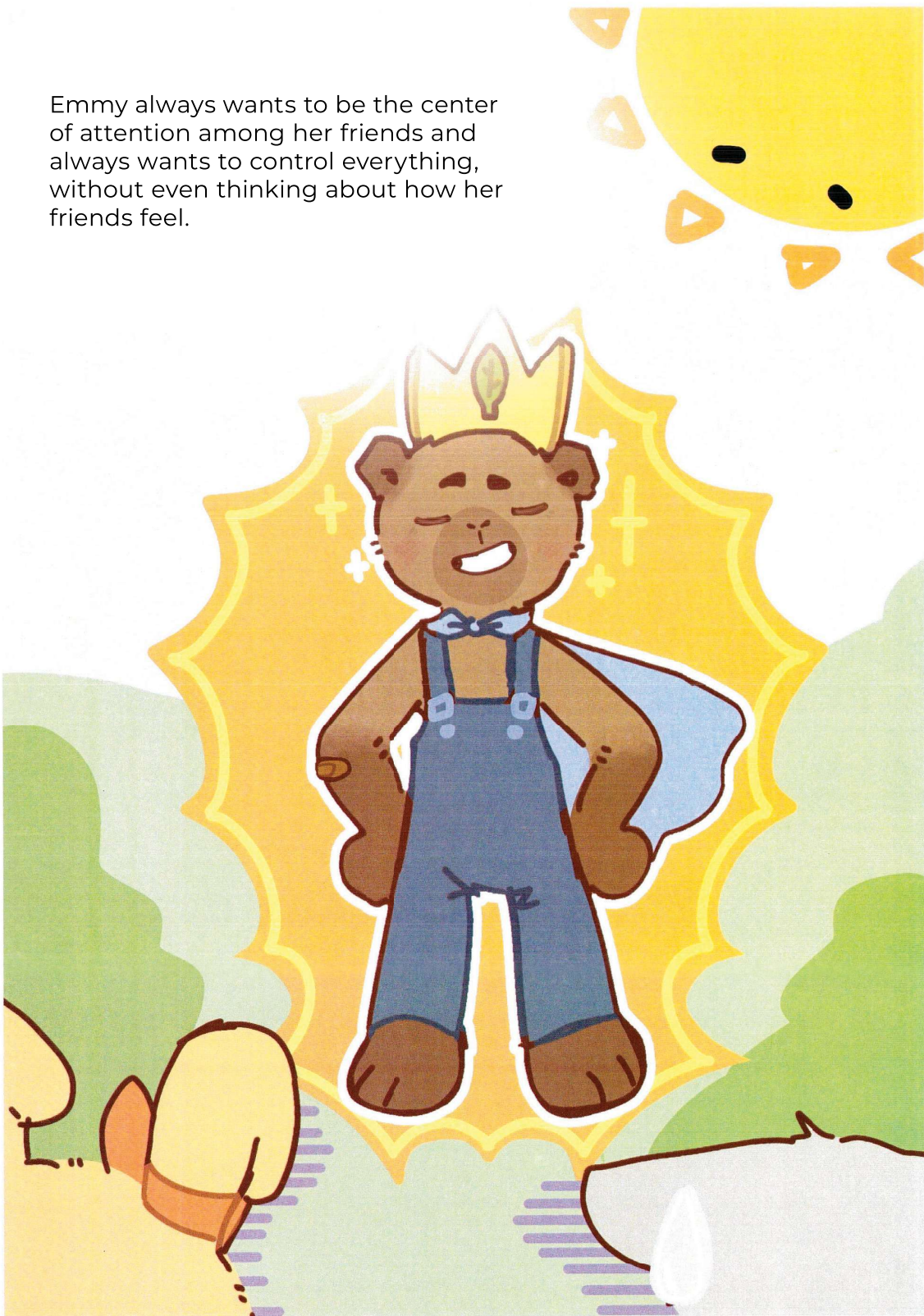


Perry the cheerful rabbit, and Eden the calm wolf. Emmy and her friends are very close and always play together.



But there was one problem that often made things hard...

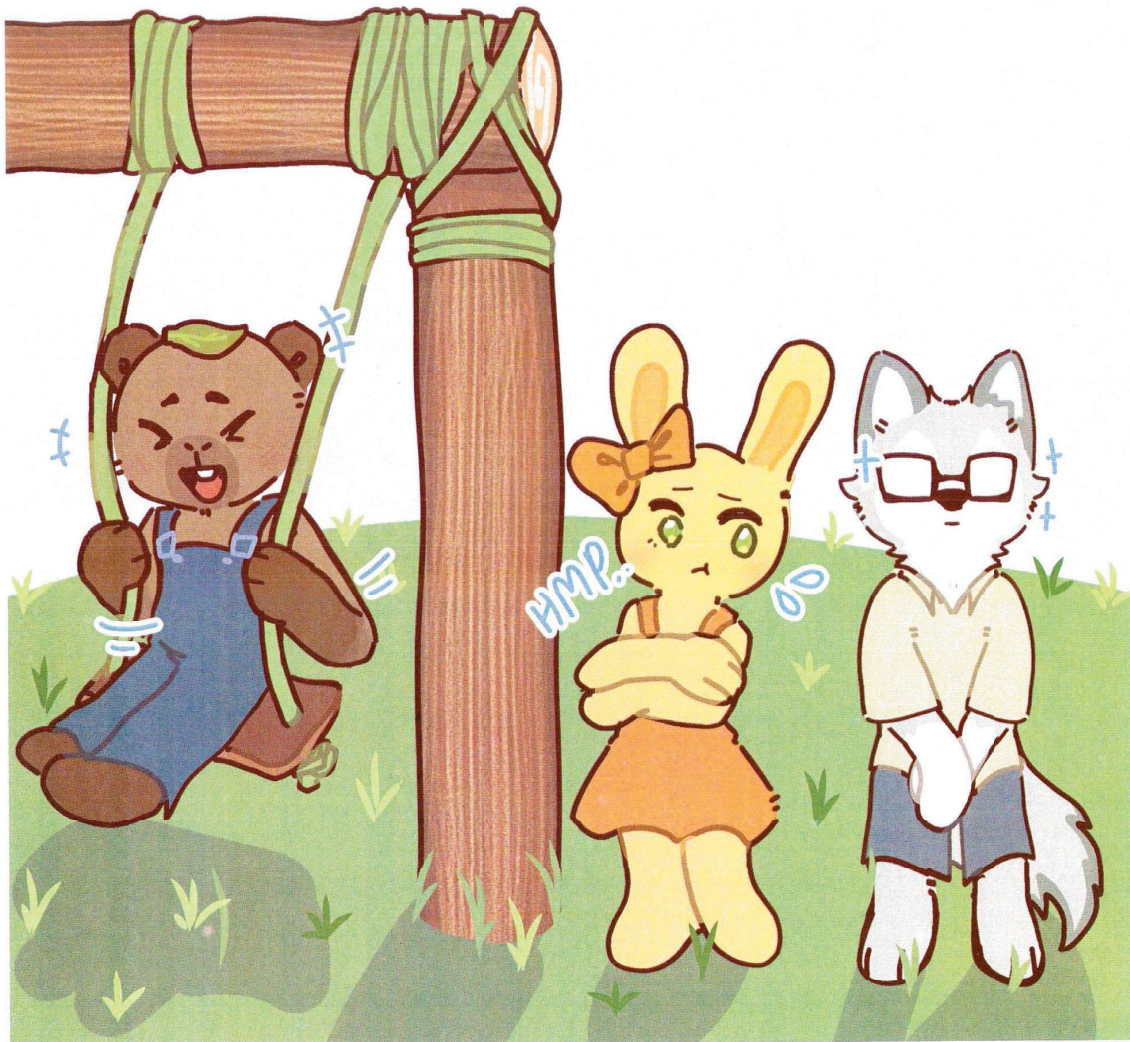
Emmy always wants to be the center of attention among her friends and always wants to control everything, without even thinking about how her friends feel.



Emmy always thought that everything had to go her way. Whenever they played, she had to be the leader and never wanted to take turns. "Let's just run around!!!" Emmy exclaimed one day, even though Eden really wanted to play a quiet game of hide-and-seek.



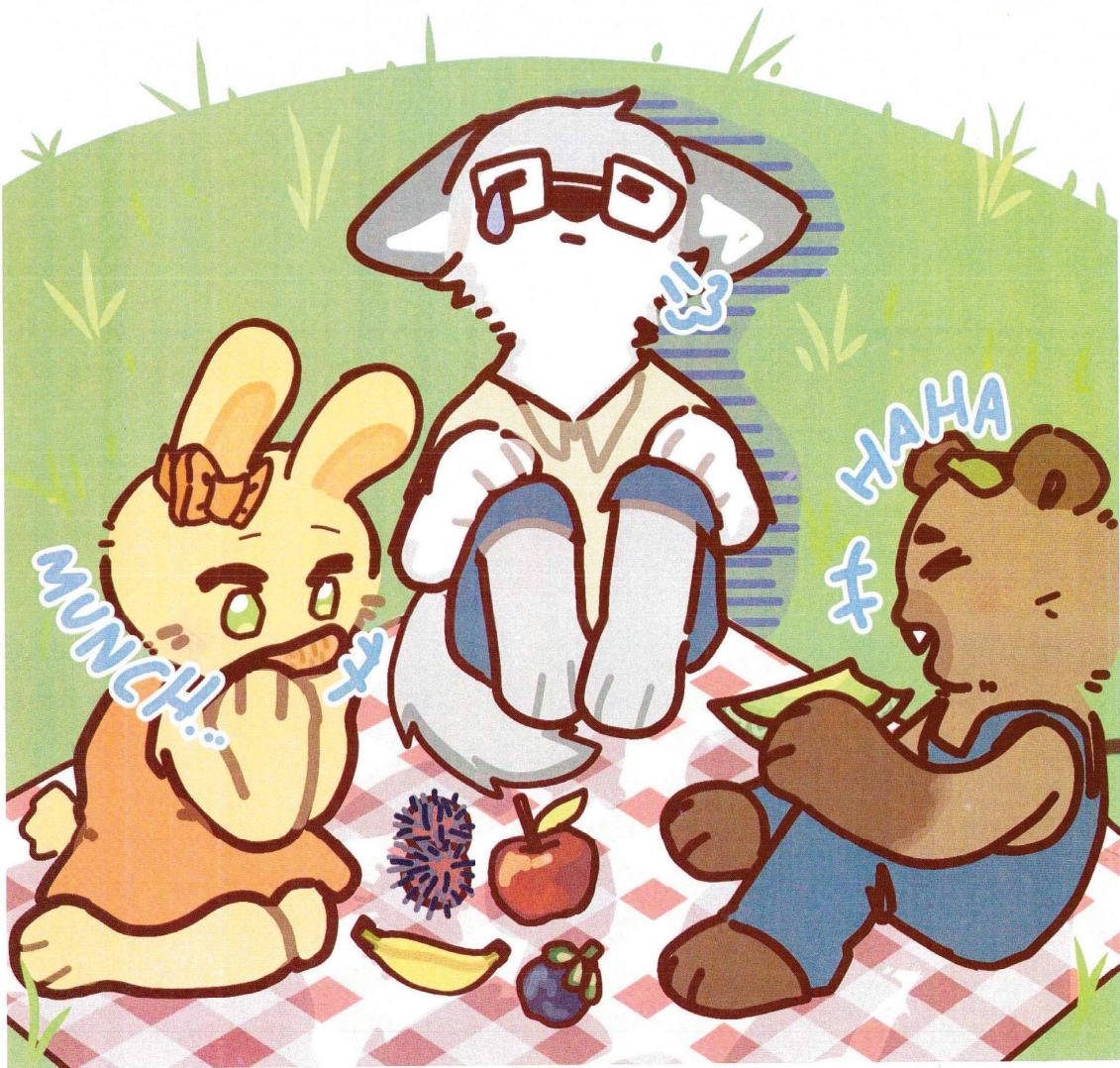
Another time, Emmy said,
"Let's just play on the
swing!" when Perry really
wanted to go on the slide.



Even on Perry's birthday, Emmy made Perry's birthday cake blue because it was Emmy's favorite color, even though Perry really loves orange.



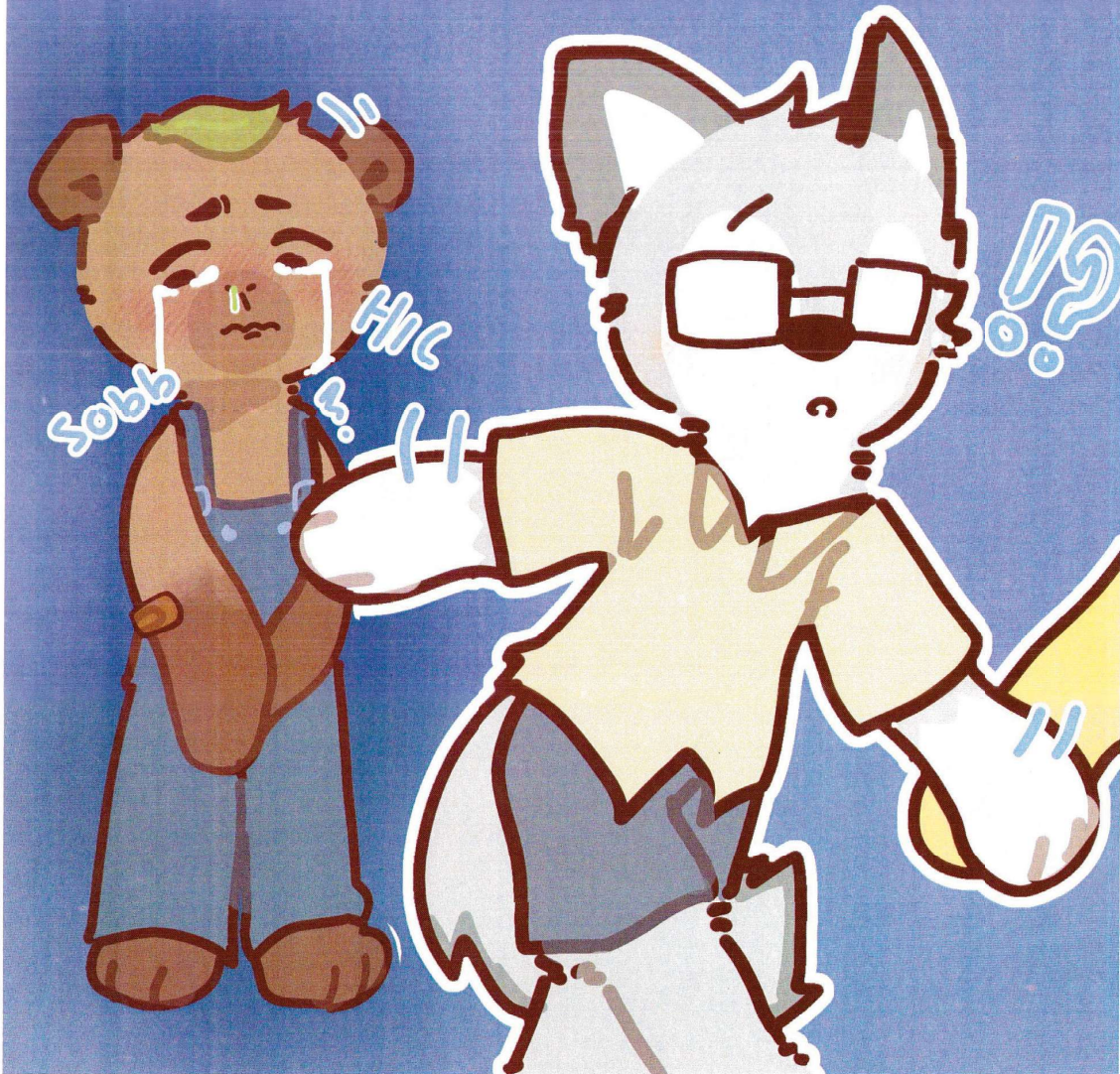
At lunchtime, Eden always stayed hungry because Emmy always decided they would only eat fruit or vegetables. Eden slowly got tired of Emmy's selfish personality.



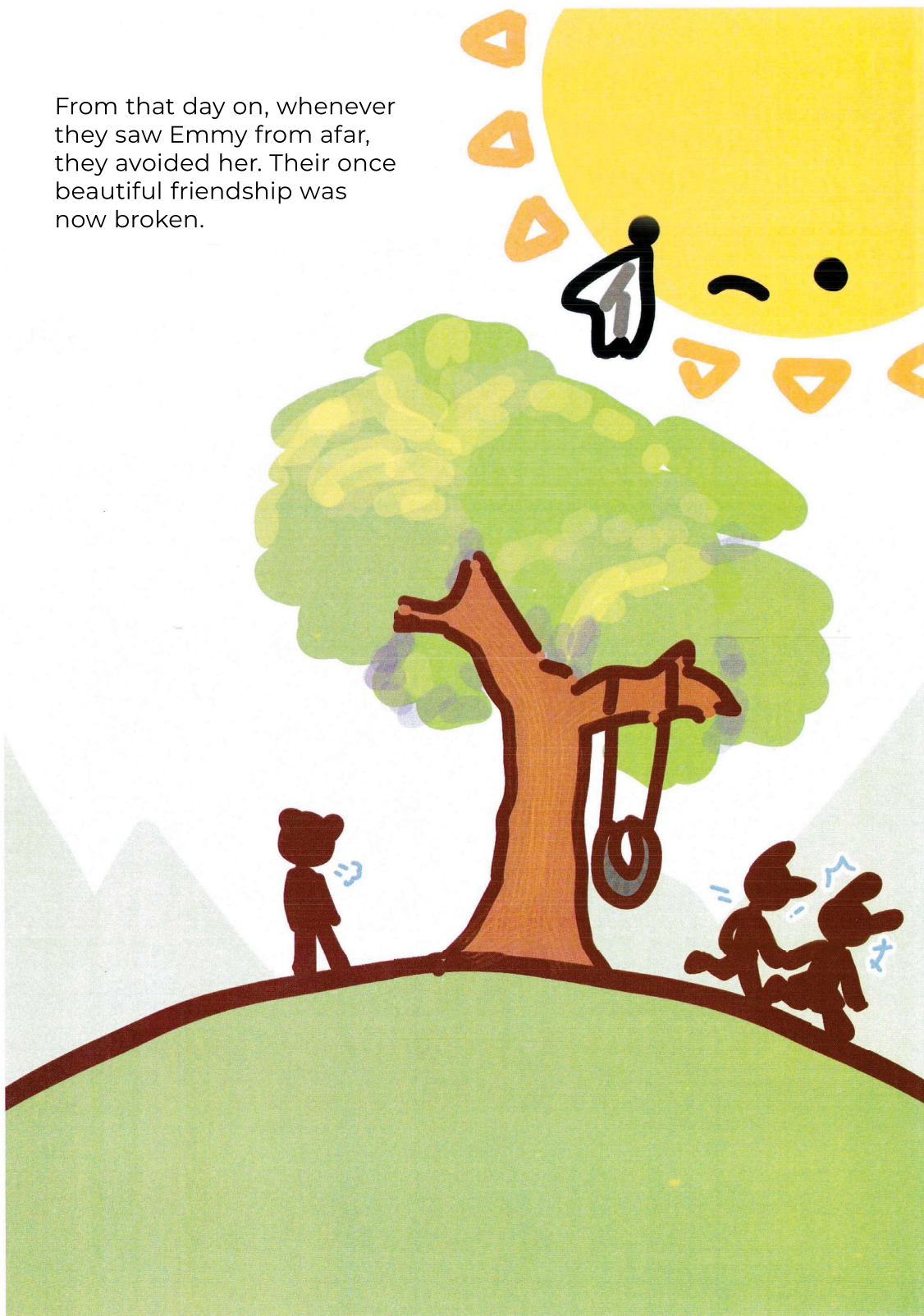
One day, everything reached a breaking point. Perry, who was usually a cheerful rabbit, finally lost her patience. "Enough, Emmy! You only care about yourself! You selfish capybara!!" Perry shouted angrily.



Without looking back, Perry pulled Eden's hand and walked away, leaving Emmy all alone.



From that day on, whenever they saw Emmy from afar, they avoided her. Their once beautiful friendship was now broken.



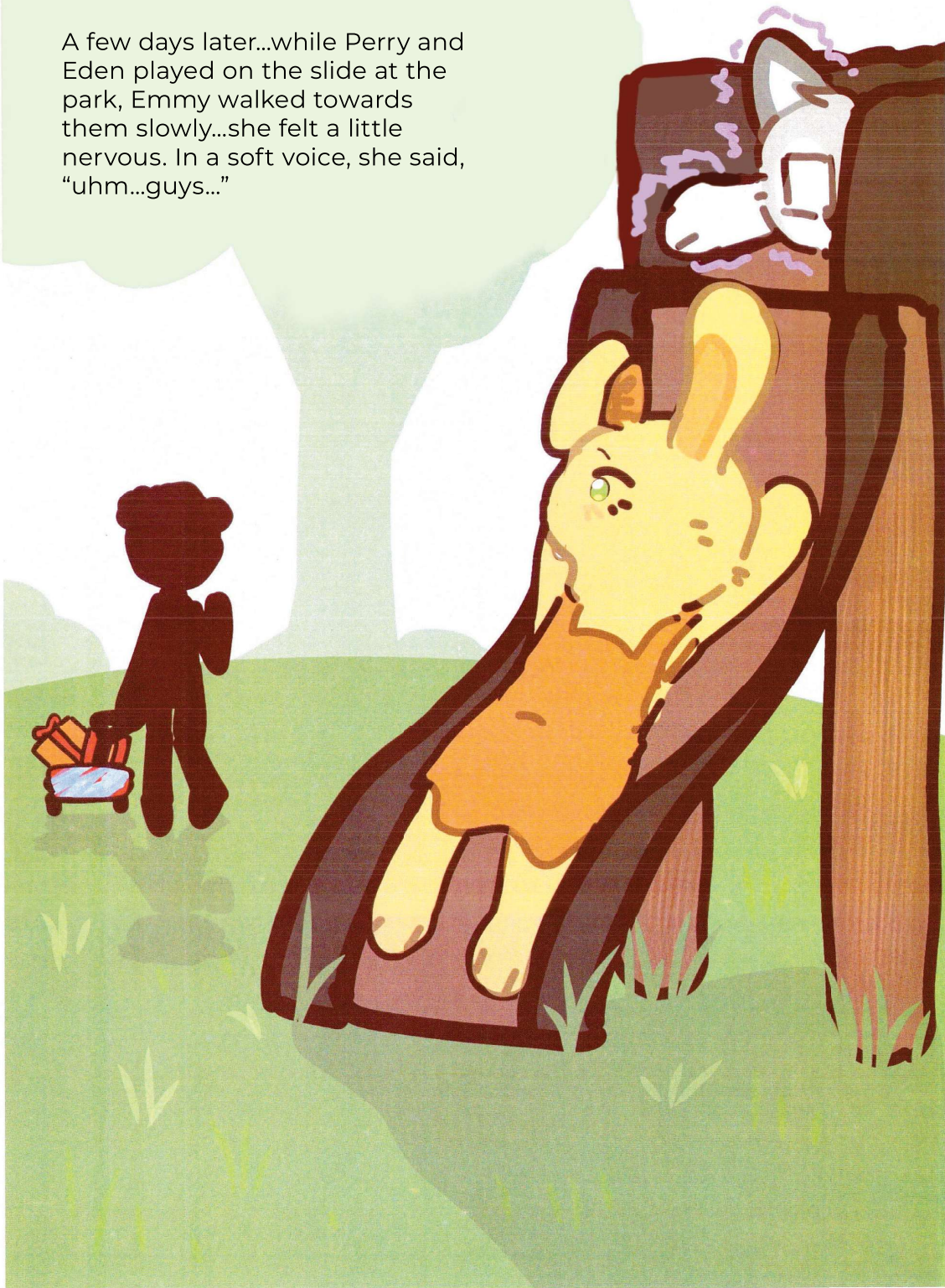
Emmy felt very sad. She regretted being selfish to her friends.



And finally, she had a great idea to say sorry to her friends.



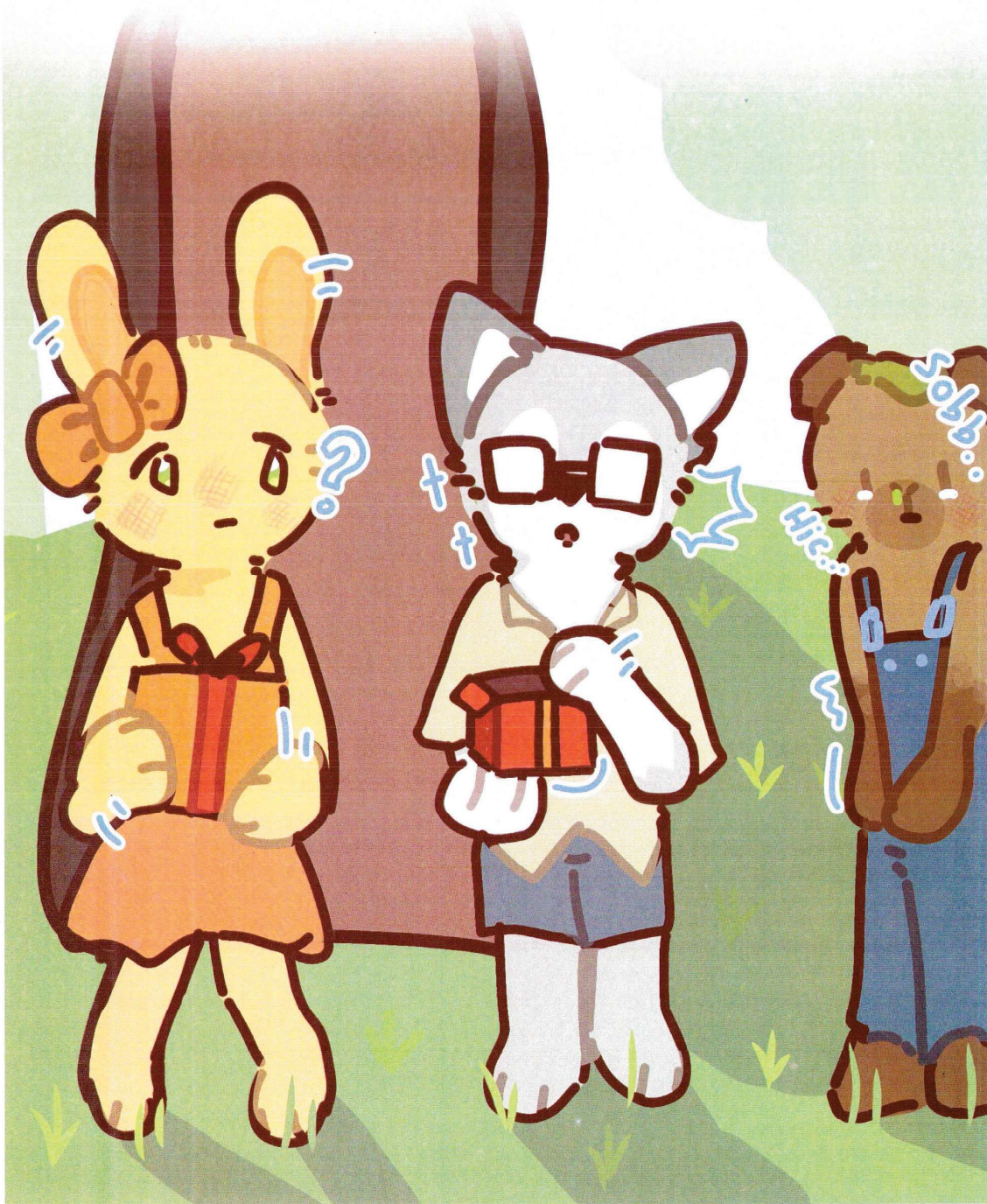
A few days later...while Perry and Eden played on the slide at the park, Emmy walked towards them slowly...she felt a little nervous. In a soft voice, she said, "uhm...guys..."



Perry quickly looked away, planning to leave her again, but Emmy immediately said, "I am sorry! I am sorry for being selfish to you two!!" Emmy cried out. "I just want to be friends with you two...and to show you I am sorry...I have this for you two..." Emmy gave Perry and Eden gift boxes in their favorite colors, orange and red.



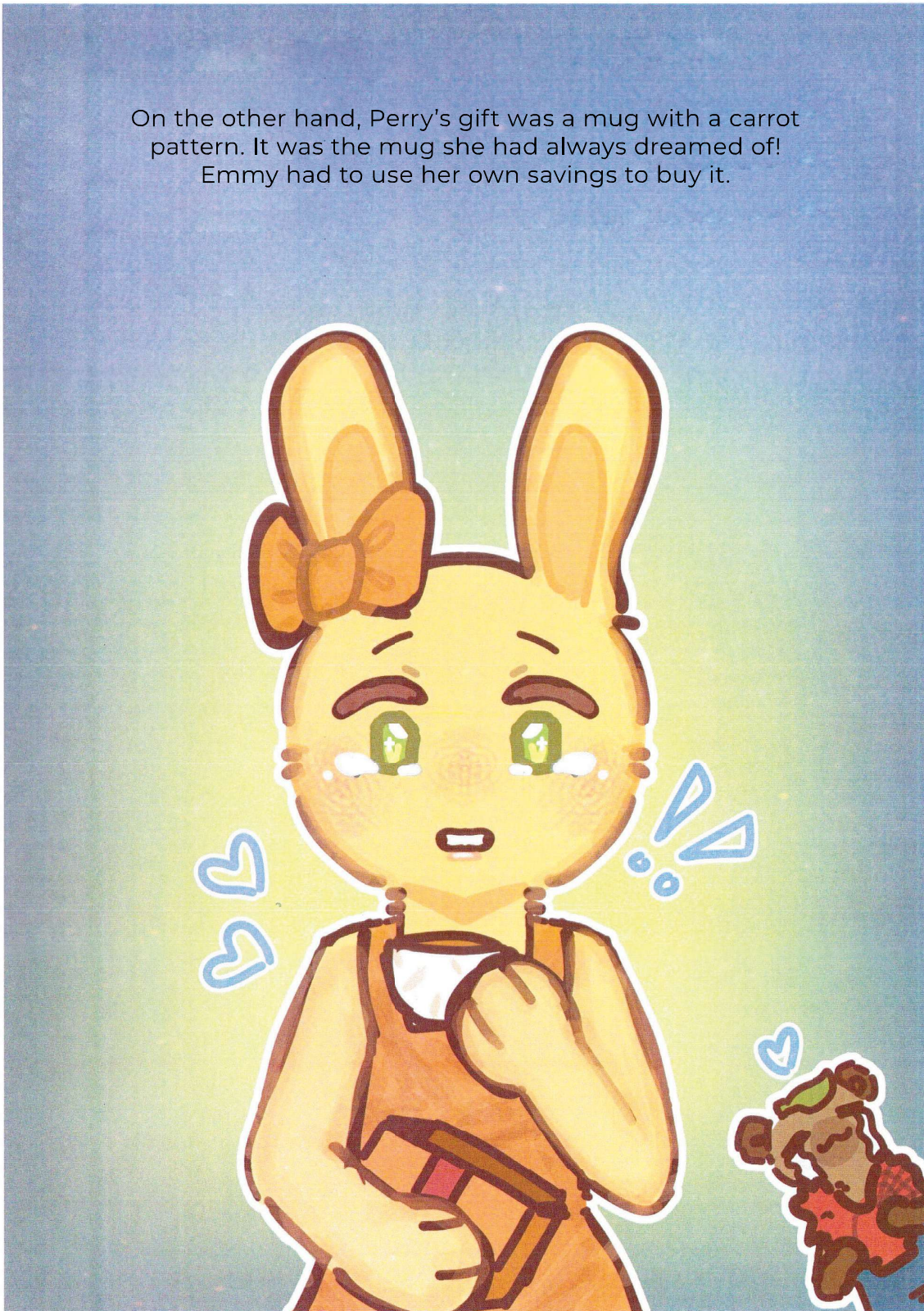
Perry and Eden took them with a nervous feeling and opened them. Inside Eden's box...



There's a slingshot in his favorite color, red! Emmy knew that Eden liked slingshots but didn't know how to use them. "I can teach you how to use it," Emmy whispered. "Thank you!" Eden said with a smile, holding his new slingshot.



On the other hand, Perry's gift was a mug with a carrot pattern. It was the mug she had always dreamed of! Emmy had to use her own savings to buy it.



"Thank you so much!!" Perry cried. She gave Emmy a big hug.



From that day on, their beautiful friendship became strong again. They learned how to understand each other without judging one another.



Emmy the capybara learned the value of her friendships.

THE END







About the Author

Lathifah Amalia SMKN 10 Makassar



Hello, everyone! My name is Lathifah Amalia, but you can call me Lathifah. I'm 15 years old and a 10th grader at SMKN 10 Negeri Makassar. My favorite color is blue and my favorite food to enjoy is fresh mangoes! My hobbies include drawing, making animations, and singing. In my spare time, I like to explore new art styles and mediums for my art. Since the beginning of the school year, I have actively been involved in my school's English Club as a team leader. I love learning English because you can use it nearly everywhere and I can practice with my friends. When I grow up, I'd like to be a professional artist as, with good skills, I can express myself in my drawings with satisfying results. I'm so excited to present my story and compete in the national WORDS competition and cannot wait to visit Jakarta—a famous Indonesian city that I haven't been to yet.

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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