

Will - O - Wisps in the Bear's House

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D/2010/M.Dielemans, Editor

Dear Colleagues and Parents,

Through this story, children discover that it is urgent to prevent the climate from warming to keep the methane, that is the greenhouse gas emitted by tiny bacteria from decomposing dead plants accumulated in the tundra, imprisoned in the frozen Polar Regions.

They also learn that the dramatic forest fires that they frequently see on television are in part due to the warming climate.

Finally, they will understand that saving energy is more necessary than ever.

The story ends on an optimistic note. Each character secretly makes a wish for the planet.

From this sentence, a discussion is possible with the children:

- In your opinion, what did Professor Sneeze wish for?
And Breakneck, Doctor Shrimp and Ms. Pretty ...?*
- And you, what would you wish for the planet?*
- How do you save energy?*

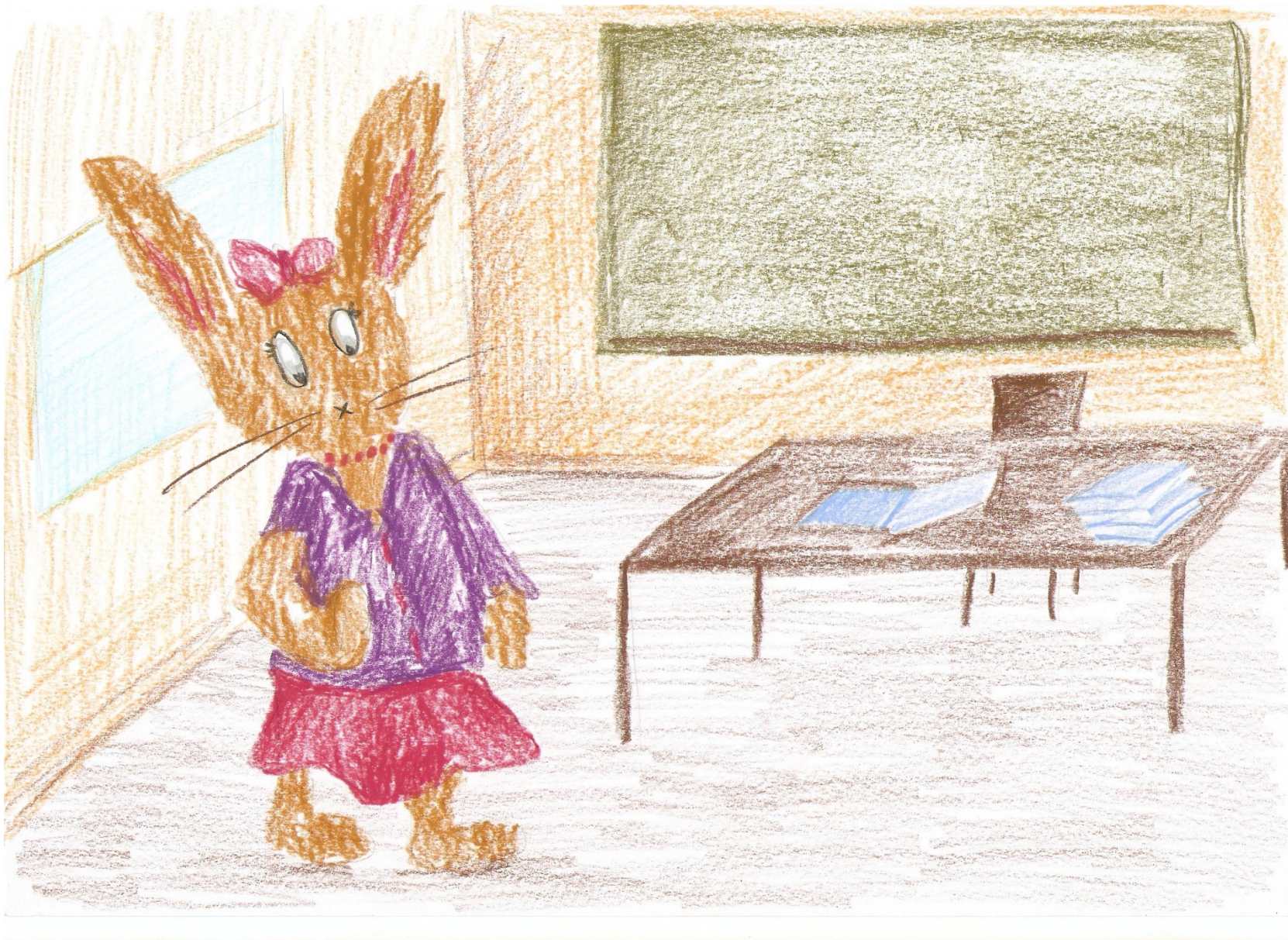
The summer vacation approaches quickly...

Behind her office, Ms. Pretty, the teacher of Rabbitville prepares the certificates and chooses the rewards that she will distribute soon at the banquet in the forest organized by all of the inhabitants of the town in honor of the children.

But today, Ms. Pretty is day-dreaming. This morning, on the beach in front of the school, Breakneck and Reckless, two adventurers are exercising by pulling immense sails inflated by the wind.

- They are training for the ice country. I would like to go with them, she dreamed, but I will never dare to ask them!

She then tried to stop thinking about the beautiful photos of the cold regions that illustrate her favorite book and to concentrate on her work.



After more than a month of hot sunshine in Rabbitville, they decided that a barbecue in the shade of the trees would be good for the party. They would bring roasted carrots, corn, turnips and a lot of other good vegetables.

Ms. Pretty, who was very gifted in the kitchen proposed to prepare toasts from flowers to accompany the drinks.

In answer to the skepticism of some, she said mysteriously:

- Some flowers are tasty and delicious, but this is my secret ...

And she walked toward the clearing to begin her picking ... leaving to the others to organize the party.



Doctor Shrimp, the specialist of the sea, was annoyed. He thought that a barbecue was a very bad idea. First, he did not at all like the roasted vegetables, but he was especially afraid of the possibility of a forest fire.

As no one wanted to do a cold meal, he declared:

- It is I who will cook the vegetables. I will be the only one to have matches and will be very careful.*
- It is a very good idea! replied Breakneck who did not want to annoy a friend.*

No one smoked cigarettes in Rabbitville, Doctor Shrimp left, reassured, for the forest to search for a good place for the children's party.

On the way, he sang:

- No cigarettes, only my matches, this barbecue will be great.*



What a beautiful party this was going to be!

Early in the morning, the whole town gathered in the forest. Everyone was wearing their beautiful clothes to welcome the students and Ms. Pretty.

As usual, Doctor Shrimp's son arrived last, running and apologizing:

- *She was so pretty that I watched with my magnifying glass, ... please excuse my delay.*
- *Who is « she » ? Ask Ms. Pretty, a bit annoyed.*
- *« She » was, a spider who weaved her web, he answered with so much enthusiasm it made the teacher smile.*

The small beasts so fascinated her student that he spent most of his time flat on his stomach examining the ground with his magnifying glass. Ms. Pretty nicknamed him affectionately "Little Detective".

Pim, Pom, Scamp, Cheeky, Patatras, Bigoudis, Turlutu and the other children who were usually talkative, said nothing, for Professor Sneeze, the scholar of the town soon was going to give them the certificates that Ms. Pretty hid very poorly in his big bag.



But Professor Sneeze was so absorbed with the scholar's calculations he remained locked up in his laboratory and he lost track of time.

In Rabbitville, everyone knew that if you annoy the professor while he is working it causes him to sneeze endlessly and it is very contagious.

They decided to wait and enjoy the food. Every person in Rabbitville wanted to have a moustache that tickled. Carrot juice, toast made of flowers and a good mood ... the party started beautiful.

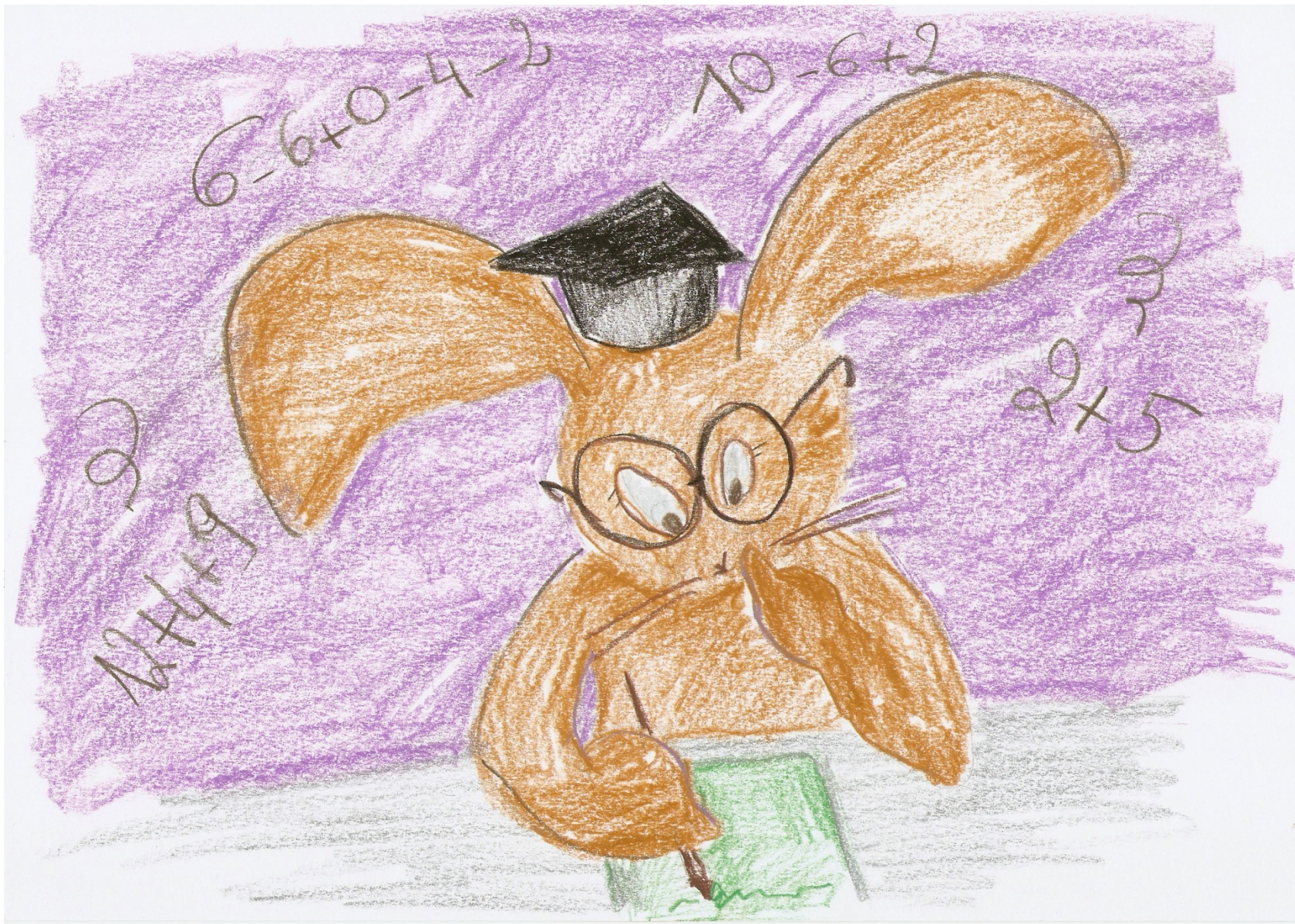
The Little Detective, whose mouth was full of toast, suddenly spied a very rare beetle that passed discreetly very close to him.

- Quickly my magnifying glass! he thought.

He impulsively put his hand in his pocket ...

- It is gone! It disappeared! What will I do without my magnifying glass? This is a catastrophe! He tried to say with a full mouth.

But the small beast was so magnificent that he threw himself flat on his stomach and contemplated it a long time, fascinated, ... forgetting even his precious magnifying glass.



At 4 in the afternoon, Professor Sneeze finally left his laboratory.

- The rays of the sun are really strong today! He thought while jumping towards the forest.

Absent-minded as usual, he did not see the magnifying glass that had fallen from the pocket of the Little Detective lying on the edge of the path.

The rays of the sun had spotted this small piece of strange glass and amused themselves with the shine.



When Professor Sneeze joined the group, at last, the inhabitants of Rabbitville became silent and the distribution of the certificates began immediately.

No one heard the moaning of very small voices close to them.

- Ouch! Ow! Stop, small magnifying glass, sending us such strong rays! You burn us! said a pile of twigs of dry wood.*
- Impossible! replied the magnifying glass. The sun hits me strong also!*

Then one of the twigs that was too small and sick to run shed a small tear of fire, hot and red, and was consumed by flames... The next twig and then the next twig was consumed in a red flame. The fire began to grow, to grow ... and to advance.



The first one to notice the thick cloud of smoke that climbed towards the sky was the wind.

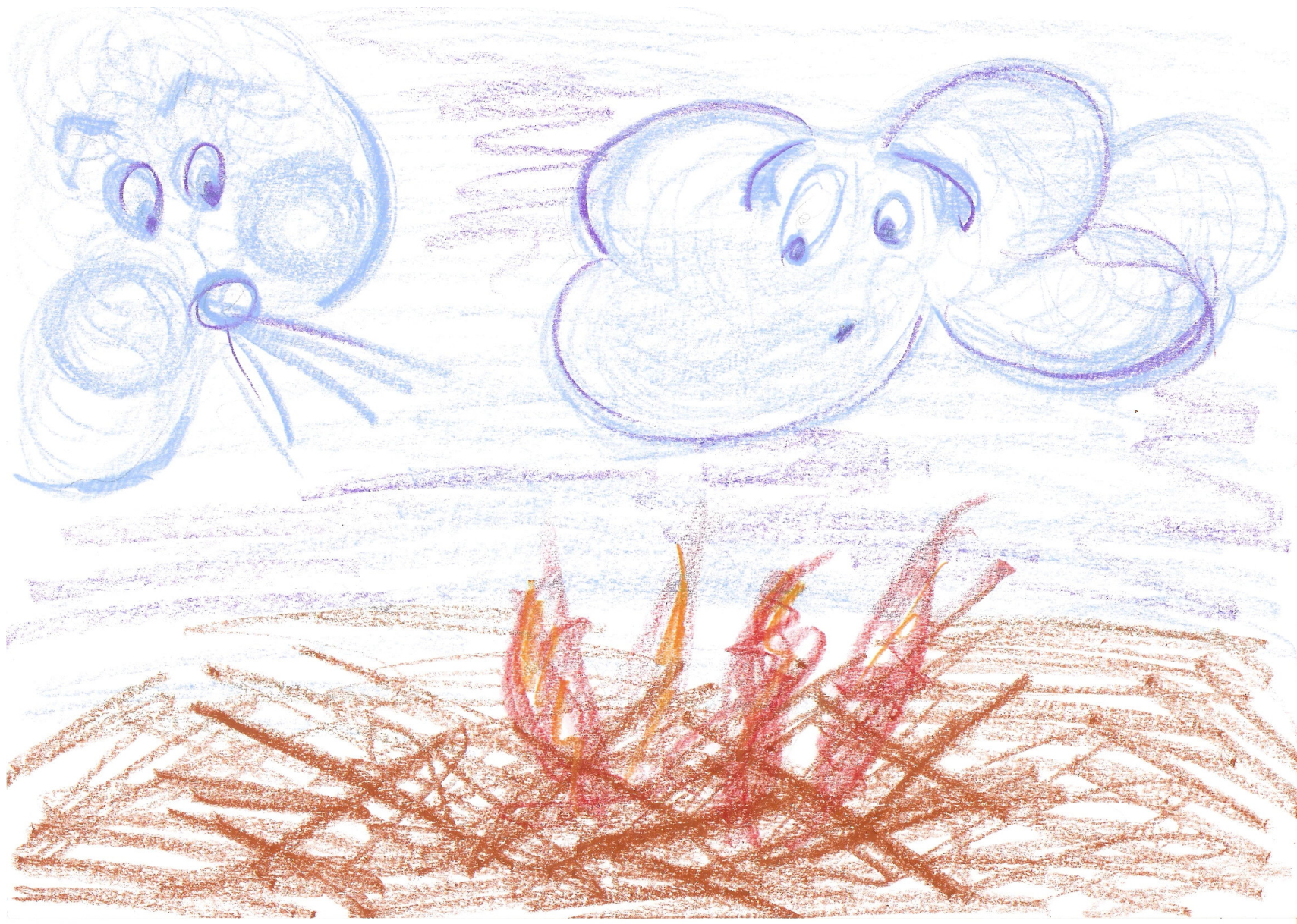
- Ouh! Ouh! it whistled heading for the small flames to have fun itself.*
- Again! they replied joyfully. We want to dance to your music and grow with your force.*

Soon the forest of Rabbitville caught fire ... and at the party, everyone panicked.

But Breakneck, the explorer, who was used to reacting quickly in all circumstances declared with self-control:

- Quickly, dig and burrow under the earth!*

Without thinking, they quickly used their paws and everyone was rapidly under cover, far from the flames and smoke, deeply under the earth.



- The earth is strangely dry, thought Professor Sneeze uncomfortably sitting in his improvised burrow.

That annoyed him so much that his moustache began tickling.

- Aaaaaa...shoooo! he sneezed very noisily.

And quickly through the dug rows between the burrows, he contaminated all the inhabitants of Rabbitville.

Soon there were so many sneezes from the depths of the earth that the frightened wind fled towards other regions. The flames tired of dancing and died little by little.



- *What desolation! exclaimed Professor Sneeze climbing back up to be the first one to the surface*
- *It is stupefying! Our forest is dead! Nothing remains! Someone said as they all emerged out of the earth.*
- *And our town? asks Doctor Shrimp, suddenly worried.*

With fear in the pits of their stomachs, jumping quickly because the soil was still warm and their feet hurt, all the inhabitants of Rabbitville rushed to their homes.

Only Breaneck and Reckless did not budge. Being used to listening to nature, they knew that the wind had not blown in the direction of the town and that they did not have anything to fear.

- *It's too sad here Breakneck finally said, upset. Forward! The North Pole lies ahead!*

And they went away without saying goodbye to anyone ...

Shortly afterwards, Dr Shrimp left to join colleagues on a frozen lake in the ice.



In the following days the heat was still oppressive in Rabbitville. Everyone was afraid that a fire might start again, but nobody dared to show it.

Then Lady Trumpet started watering the garden around Professor Sneeze's laboratory several times a day so that it would not burn. Others collected the dead branches that they found and watered them also.

The water supplies diminished very quickly in Rabbitville.

As for Ms. Pretty, she organized games on the beach to keep the children close to the sea, safe from fire...

- This cannot continue, mumbled Professor Sneeze. Why did the forest burn so quickly? Why is it so hot and so dry? He ask himself while smoothing his moustaches and reflecting...

He then received a strange message on his cell phone from Breakneck:

"Fire also in the ice country – we need measuring equipment – come join us."



Professor Sneeze immediately packed his measuring instruments in his bag and left his home quickly.

- In route to the North! he muttered.

But distracted as usual, he did not notice the long watering hose that had been left by Ms. Trumpet. His legs became tangled and he fell hard.

- Crack ! was heard.

The two back legs of Professor Sneeze were broken!

- Ouch Ouch! he moaned. It's a disaster!

And like every time that he was upset, he sneezed without being able to stop.



Intrigued by the very loud "sneezing", a few curious ones found Professor Sneeze spread out on the ground.

- First the suitcase! You take care of the suitcase! Verify that nothing is broken! screamed Professor Sneeze so strongly that no one dared to disobey him.*
- Who will carry this equipment to Breakneck now that I can no longer walk? moaned Professor Sneeze while they transported him with difficulty to his place.*

Alas, in Rabbitville, no male would travel to the frigid and inhabitable regions and each had a good excuse.



Professor Sneeze was desperate to call and warn Breakneck when Ms. Pretty arrived wearing an enormous backpack.

- *I am your starting line up. To see the Aurora with it's magnificent magical green and red lights that exist only in the polar region sky is my dream, she explained shyly,*

Without thinking, Professor Sneeze happily phoned Breakneck and told him the news.

- *Oh ! No ! Not her ! responded Breakneck in a biting voice.*
- *The boat leaves tomorrow morning, Professor Sneeze said, pretending that he did not hear Breakneck. Then he sneezed, very upset.*



Professor Sneeze inspected Ms. Pretty from head to the foot. In fact, there was a problem! The suitcase for Breakneck was almost bigger than she.

He smoothed his moustache in silence then said at last:

- An expedition needs to be carefully planned. Empty your backpack!

Docile, Ms. Pretty complied, emptying her make-up, scarves, necklaces, and her big polar book that she knew by heart, ...

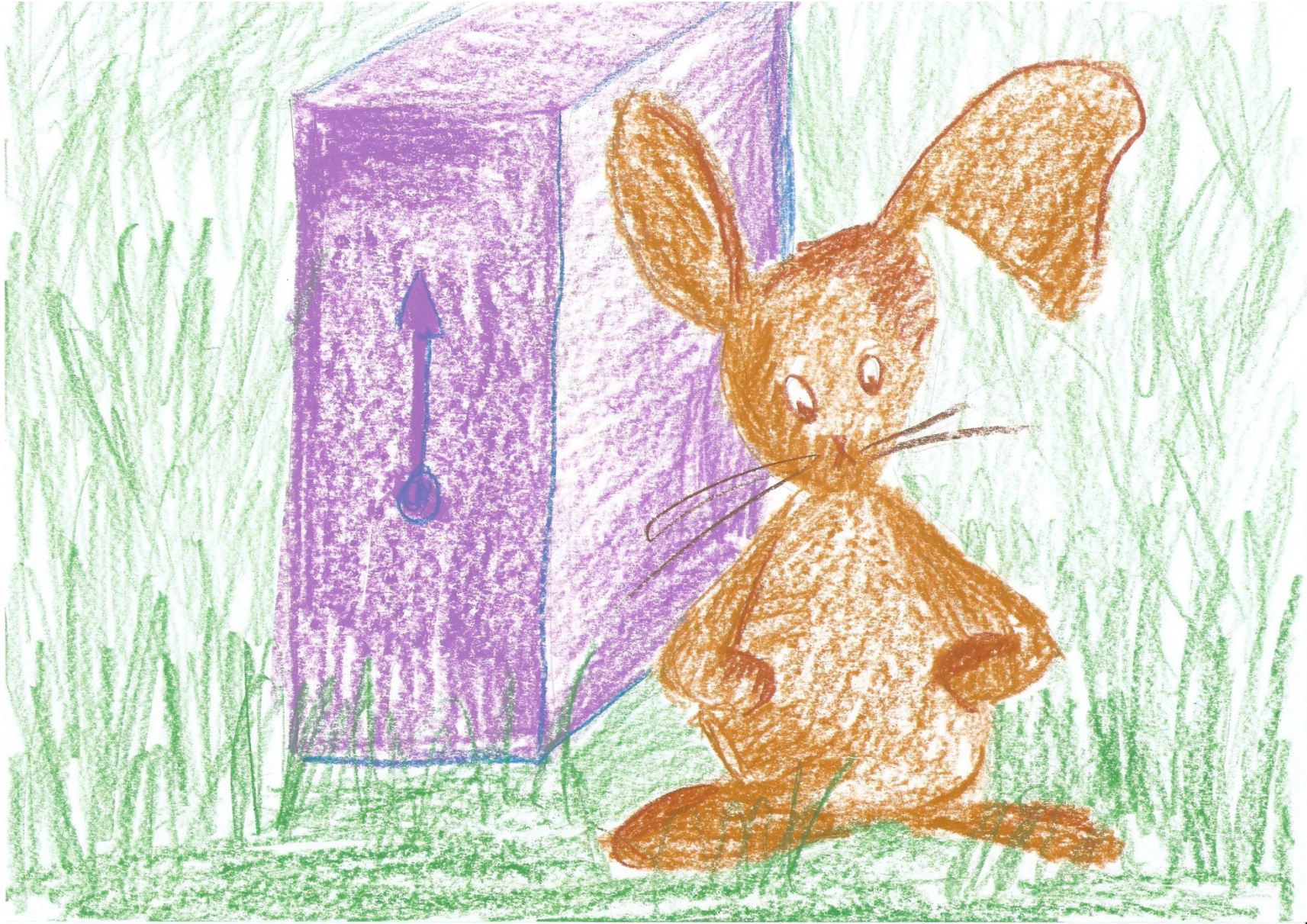
- It is not possible! thought Professor Sneeze stunned.

From his armchair, he helped Ms. Pretty to keep only the basics necessary to the polar regions. But Professor Sneeze's legs hurt so he closed his eyes and went to sleep.

Ms. Pretty took the opportunity to hide candles and matches in her big bag.

- For a candlelight dinner in the beautiful magical light, she thought.

Then on the tips of her paws, she left full of dreams ...



Following Breakneck and Reckless in the tundra (an expanse without trees, covered with grass, flowers, moss and lichens, situated around the pole) and analyzing clues was not easy for Ms. Pretty who was not trained.

Her paws ached from the cold, the wind tickled her moustache and she was so afraid of meeting a bear ... but the phrase heard on the phone "Ah! No! Not her" resounded in her ears and she dared not complain.

Every night, to give herself courage, she looked at the sky hoping to see this beautiful light that only appears in the dark polar sky ... but nothing... only the stars shined.

Then one evening, Breakneck announced:

- Tomorrow, back to Rabbitville, there is nothing to find here.

A tear rolled down the cheek of Ms. Pretty: she would never see this magic light from her book, the one called the Aurora.

Then to console herself, for her last night in the cold country she lit her candles ... and sat down to watch.



All of a sudden in the silence of the night, she heard a strange noise.

- There is nothing here and the light is silent, she thinks out loud for comfort.

But sudden, she was paralyzed with fear: a few yards from her a big bear showed its white teeth.

- It will make mincemeat of me! she thought before fainting and upsetting all of her candles.

The tent caught fire and the frightened bear bolted before Breakneck, who always sleeps with one eye open, pulled his gun.



After this big fright, it was impossible to sleep...sitting with a hot cup of tea in Breakneck's tent, the three rabbits saw such a surprising spectacle that they telephoned Professor Sneeze:

- *Nothing remains of Ms. Pretty's tent, but the flames continue to come out of the earth all around us. This new fire is very strange, explained Breakneck.*
- *There are even flames above the frozen lake, where there are holes in the ice, continued Reckless more and more astonished.*

Ms. Pretty who had not said anything since her adventure with the bear, mumbled at last:

- *Will-o'-the-wisps, I read it in my book.*

To these words, Professor Sneeze whose paws were feeling better jumped. He ordered Breakneck to take immediate new measures.

- *We must discover the secret of this soil! he says. Keep working! I am coming!*



But since her encounter with the bear, Ms. Pretty had become strange.

- Monsters, there are monsters in the depths of the earth! she repeated continually.

Breakneck, very worried for her, finally dug deeply into the frozen ground to reassure her and to show her that she was mistaken. He even placed a measuring device at the far end of a hole.

- Gads! He shouted while watching the figures.

Terrified, he measured another hole a little further, then again another and another and every time, the same figures appeared on his device that measures the gasses.

- Ms. Pretty felt a danger and she was right, he thought. This is probably a reaction to her fear ...

And he warned Professor Sneeze quietly by telephone



Arriving near the holes dug by Breakneck, Professor Sneeze stroked his whiskers for a long time. He thought.

Neither Breakneck or Reckless or Ms. Pretty dared to break the silence. Nevertheless it was cold. Then quietly Ms. Pretty collected snow to prepare tea. She got the heater out of the bag and tried to light it, but with her big thick mittens, the matches slipped and fell one after the other in the hole.

- Give me your matches! says Professor Sneeze, annoyed.

He struck it rather easily and instead of lighting the heater, he threw it in the hole. A huge flame gushed throwing everyone on their behind.

Proud, he rose and said :

- It is ice that burns: that means that under the earth, there is a very dangerous gas for the planet. It is absolutely necessary to find where it comes from.*
- There are rude monsters! repeated Ms. Pretty, but no one listened .*



In the following days, everything was analyzed but without result. A Mystery? Where did this gas come from?

- *And what if Ms. Pretty was right, wondered Professor Sneeze. Fear sometimes allows you to feel certain things.*

He gathered everyone around a cup of tea and encouraged Ms. Pretty to talk.

- *It is embarrassing, she says, I am afraid of being rude*
- *Don't worry, we promise not to repeat anything, encouraged Professor Sneeze.*

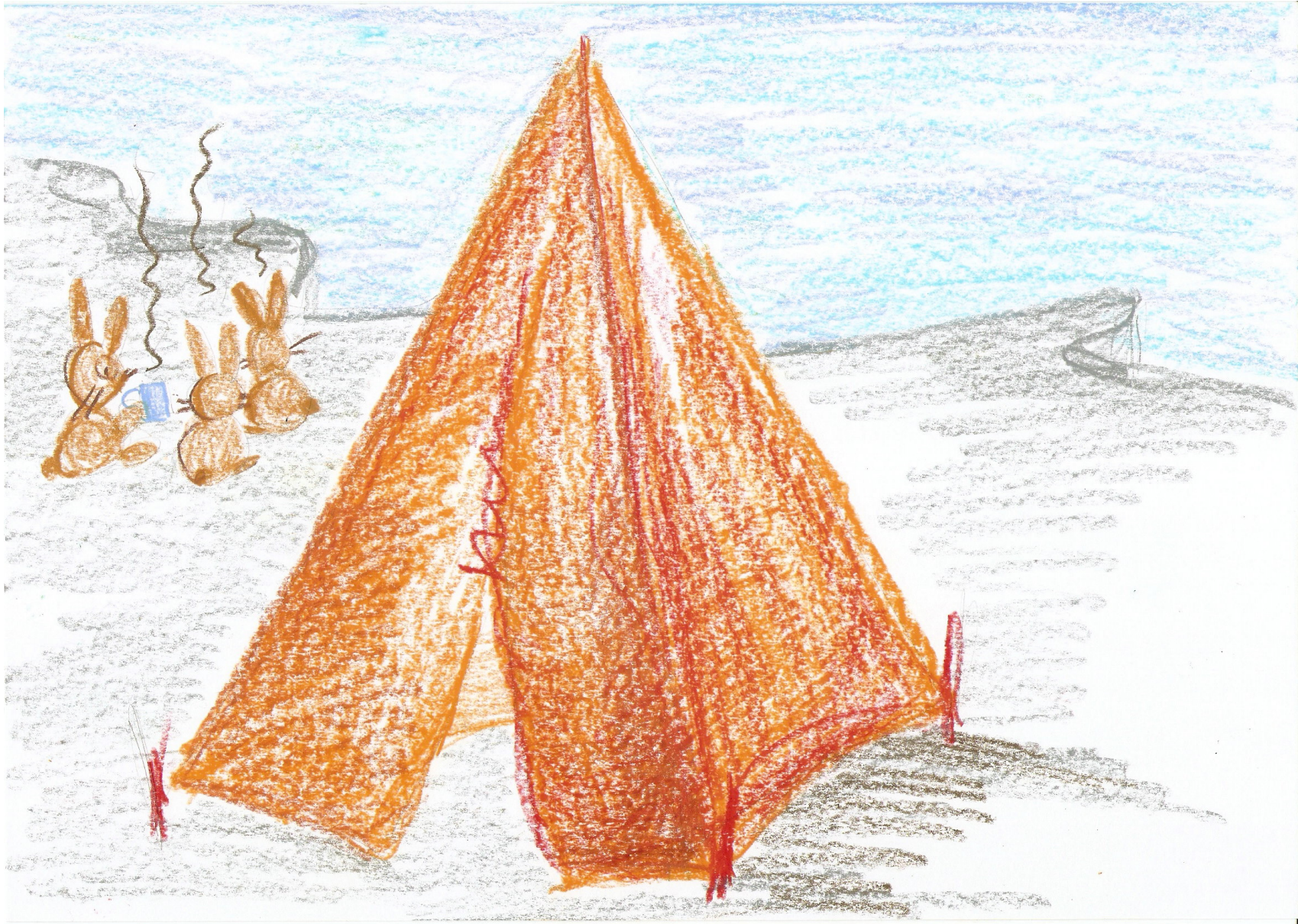
Very quickly, while swallowing her words and blushing, Ms. Pretty said:

- *Farts, I hear a lot of farts. Underground, someone who is rude is farting. That can only be a monster who was poorly taught. In the lake also, there are also farts.*

More than surprised, Professor Sneeze went into his tent to think.

- *Beings underground and at the bottom of the lake who fart ! Why not? Let us look for them! he says to himself.*

And he called Doctor Shrimp in for reinforcement.



Ms. Pretty often accompanied Breakneck... She was reassured by his gun in case of bears.

She understood nothing about the research of her friends. Often, in silence, she looked at the sky for a long time, wondering if this magic light really exists. Breakneck was really worried for her.

Suddenly, all excited, Doctor Shrimp screamed while looking in his microscope:

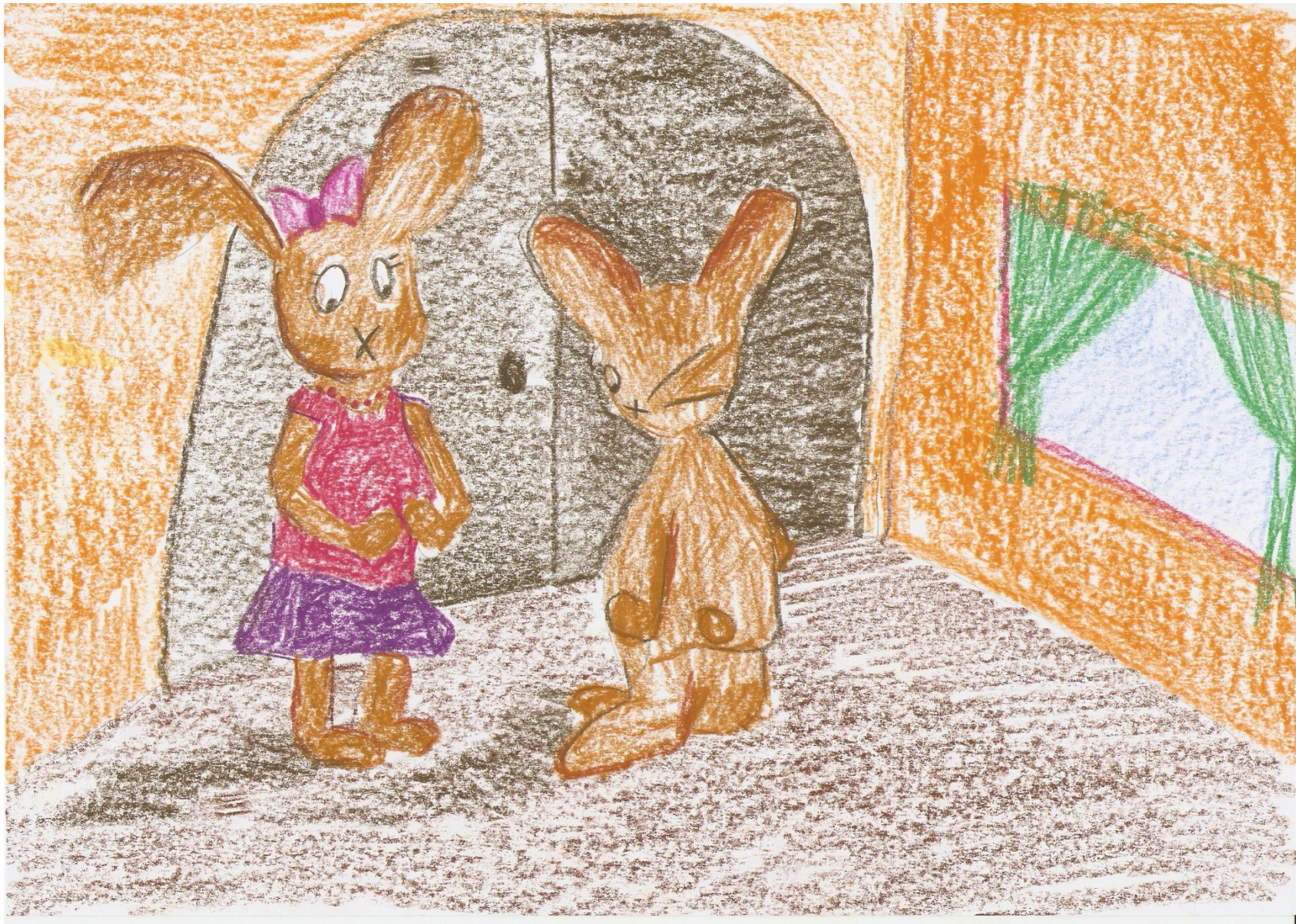
- *There, thousands of tiny forms were moving!*
- *Help ! The monsters are there, shouted Ms. Pretty with panic.*

Once, over the surprise, everyone except Ms. Pretty, who was too scared, took the time to observe these small creatures that live in the depths of the earth and lakes.

- *They are bacteria, noted Professor Sneeze. They eat everything that is dead in the ground, then in fact, very rudely, when they digest, they "fart" small bubbles of gas.*

And that worried him very much. After sneezing at length, he says with anguish:

- *If the ground thaws, all this gas, all these gasses, go out into the earth. It will be disastrous, the climate will warm again more quickly and there will be more fires everywhere.*



- *Our work is finished, we understand, concludes Professor Sneeze. If the ground thaws, it is the gas produced by these bacteria that will really become a monster. A big danger awaits us...*
- *Make sure that this monster remains imprisoned in the ice! implored Ms. Pretty , afraid.*
- *There is only one thing to do, said Breakneck. Save energy and prevent the climate from heating. This gas will be trapped in the frozen ground forever.*

Each of them made a wish for the climate and that night, for the first time in a long time, Ms. Pretty went to sleep reassured.

This same night, gently, Breakneck woke her. A beautiful green light carpeted the black sky and danced quietly.

The five friends were fascinated by this magic spectacle and each made a private vow to keep the world this beautiful.

Too moved, Ms. Pretty put her paw in Breakneck's, she was so happy ...



Suggested activity : let's extinguish the fire !

The story ends on an optimistic note. Each character secretly makes a wish for the planet. From this sentence, a discussion is possible with the children:

- In your opinion, what did Professor Sneeze wish for?
And Breakneck, Doctor Shrimp and Ms. Pretty ...?
- And you, what would you wish for the planet?
- How do you save energy?
- ...

Let's try to extinguish the fire ...

● Distribute to the children a sheet of paper on which a flame is drawn. Inside the flame, having written 4 gestures to do to save energy. For example :

- ask to mum to put a lid on the pan when she cooks ;
- switch off the light each time we leave a room ;
- in the shop, advise mum to buy products from our country and not these which come from a distance by plane ;
- switch off computers, television, domestic appliances as soon as we don't need them and not to let them in sleep mode...
-

● Each child colors his flame as he likes (yellow, red, orange), writes his name on it and then cuts it out.

● Gather all the flames and stick them on a panel in order to form a big fire. The teacher draws logs under the flames to make the fire real.

● Child's mission is to complete 4 gestures written on the flame. When he makes one, he crosses the sentence out. When the 4 sentences are crossed out, he takes the flames off. Little by little, gradually as children make gestures, the fire is going to reduce then to stop.

● This symbolically action wants them to understand that at their level, they can yet act for the climate.



"We stand,

carried by the same planet,

crew of one ship "

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

... A HUGE thank you for their invaluable help

- to Gauthier Chapelle, a doctor of biology, co-founder of Biomimicry Europa AISBL;

- to Alain Hubert, explorer and President of the International Polar Foundation;

- to Nathalie Vanisacker, agronomist, chief scientist of the International Polar Foundation.