

SOPHIA MADOUVALOU

Monkeys and Owls Don't See Things Alike



illustration: Eleni Tsampra



Στη μαμά μου,
για τα πολύχρωμα
γονίδια.

Στον Dennis,
για τα παιχνίδια
επικοινωνίας
με μάτια
και χωρίς μάτια.



Στις κουκουβάγιες
και στις καρακάζες
και σε όσους πιστεύουν
πως η αλήθεια
είναι μόνο
μία.

Στον Αντρέα,
που υπερβαίνει
τα χρώματα.

Στο δάσκαλό μου
της ζωγραφικής
Δημήτρη Μανίνη,
αφορμή χ' αυτό το παραμύδι.
Στην Αλίκη και στο Θοδωρή,
που ζωγραφίζουν
με τα μάτια της ψυχής.

Στον Xu Fen,
για το κινέζικο
παραμύδι.

Στους ταύρους
της Ισπανίας,
που δε βλέπουν
το κόκκινο
χρώμα.



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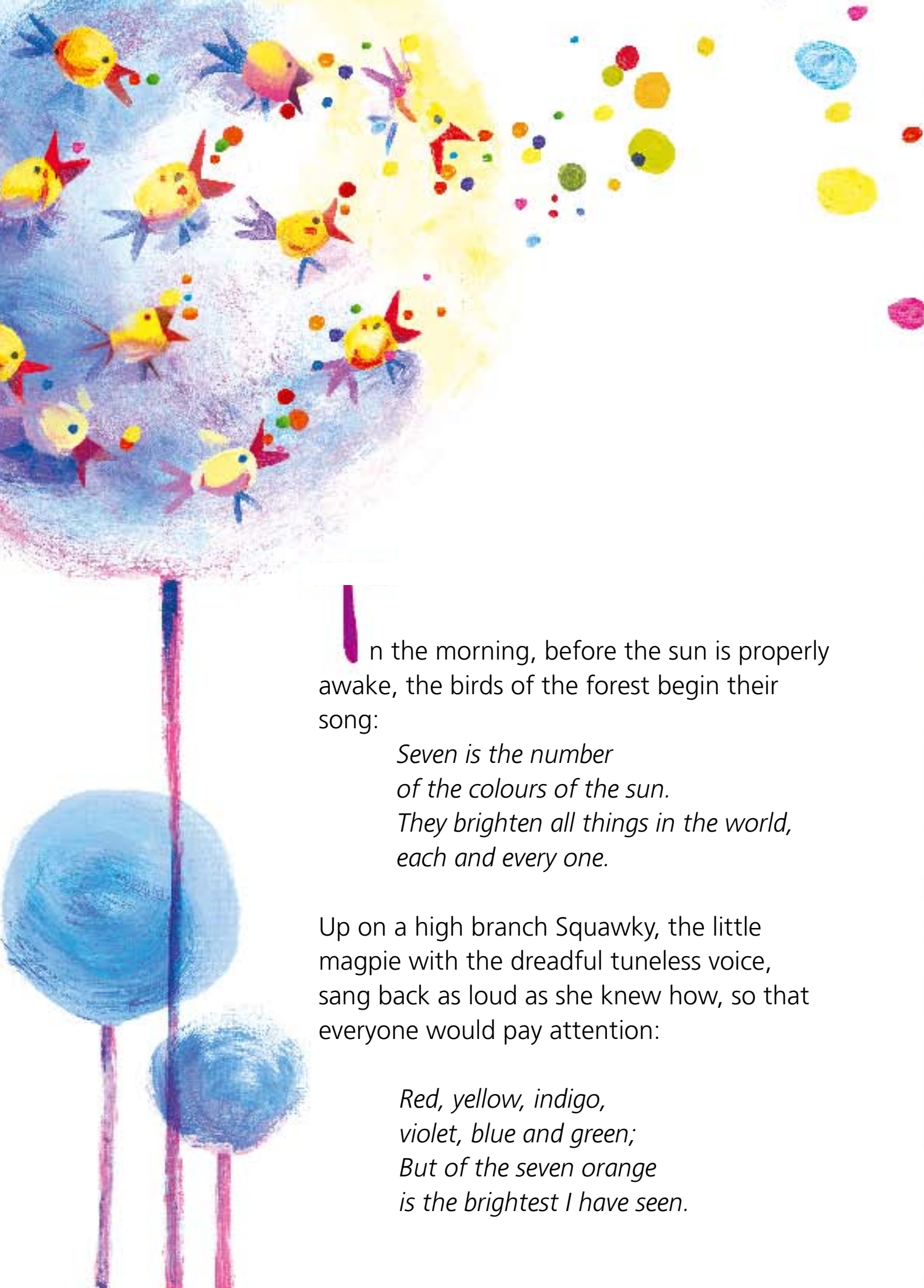
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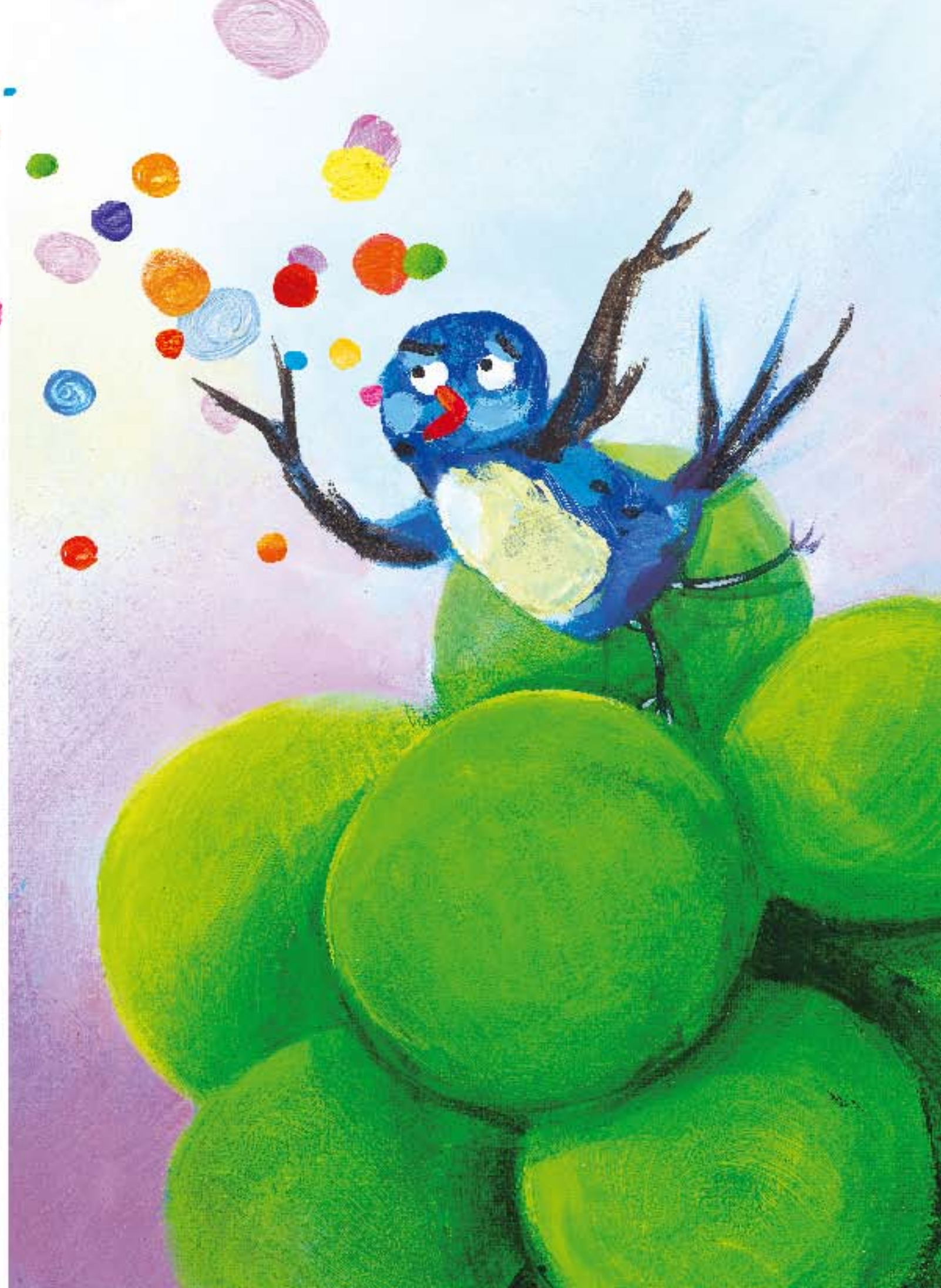


In the morning, before the sun is properly awake, the birds of the forest begin their song:

*Seven is the number
of the colours of the sun.
They brighten all things in the world,
each and every one.*

Up on a high branch Squawky, the little magpie with the dreadful tuneless voice, sang back as loud as she knew how, so that everyone would pay attention:

*Red, yellow, indigo,
violet, blue and green;
But of the seven orange
is the brightest I have seen.*



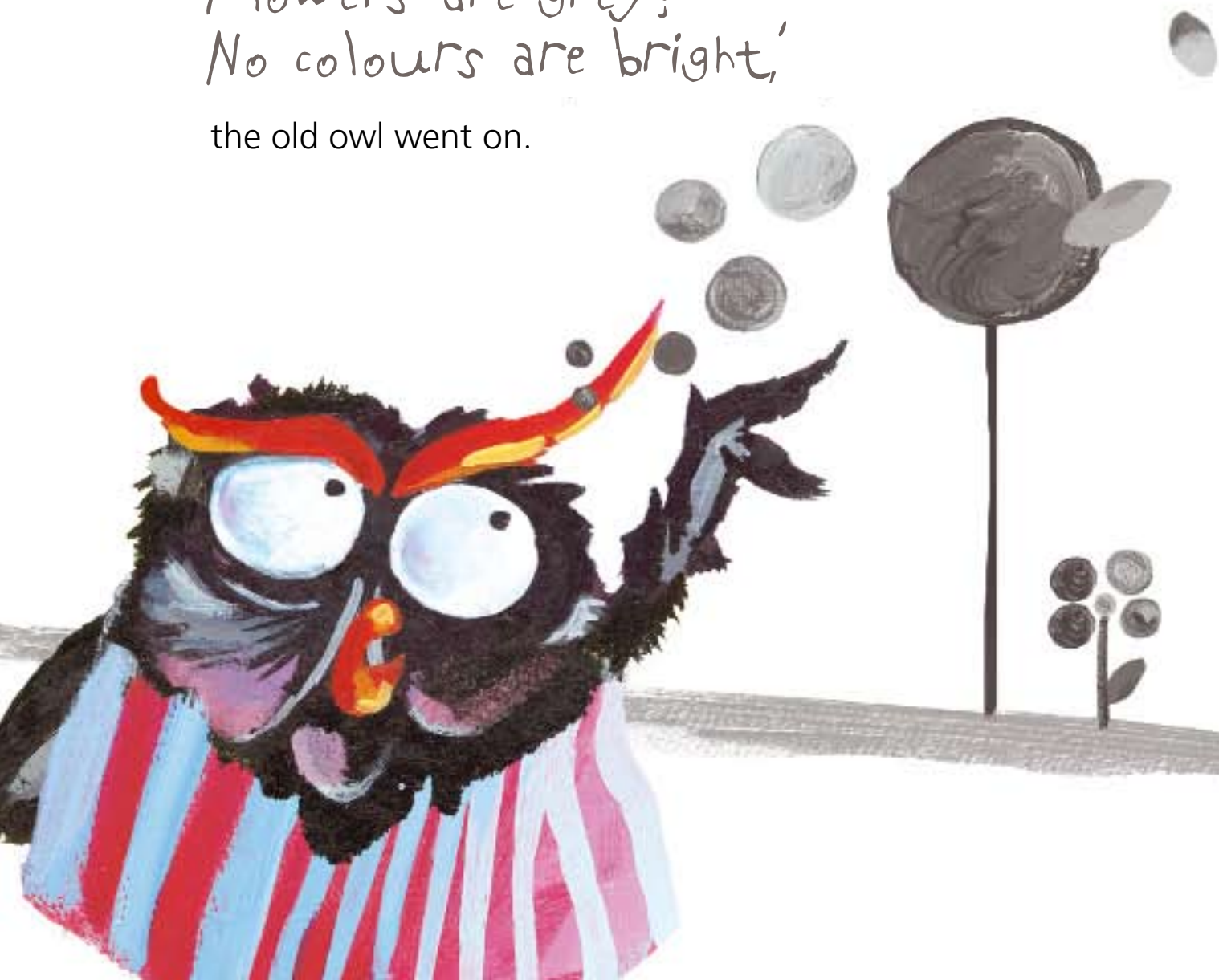
'Hey! Not so loud!

I can't sleep,' came the voice of Mrs Toowhit-Toowhoo the owl, who had just gone to bed after spending the night flying over the fields in search of mice.

'And it's not enough you've got a dreadful voice; you can't see properly either!

The trees are black
And the sun is white.
Flowers are grey;
No colours are bright,'

the old owl went on.



'You're wrong!'

the little magpie protested.

'It seems to me that spending all day with your eyes closed has made you forget what colours are.'

'No, it's you that's wrong!'

insisted the old owl.

'No, you are!' shrieked the little magpie.

'Instead of quarreling, let's go and ask the monkey who knows about colours,' Mrs Toowhit-Toowhoo proposed, certain that she was right.

'Great! Why not?' replied Squawky happily, sure that Rosie the monkey would agree with her.

'Just let me take a little nap,' the old owl said, 'and then we'll go.'

'Sweet dreams, then – and I hope they're hung with coloured balls!' said the little magpie teasingly, and flew off to enjoy herself in the green depths of the forest.

In the afternoon, Mrs Toowhit-Toowhoo the owl and Squawky the magpie flew to the edge of the forest to meet Rosie the monkey, who was an artist. They found her next to a banana tree, readying her palette so she could start painting.

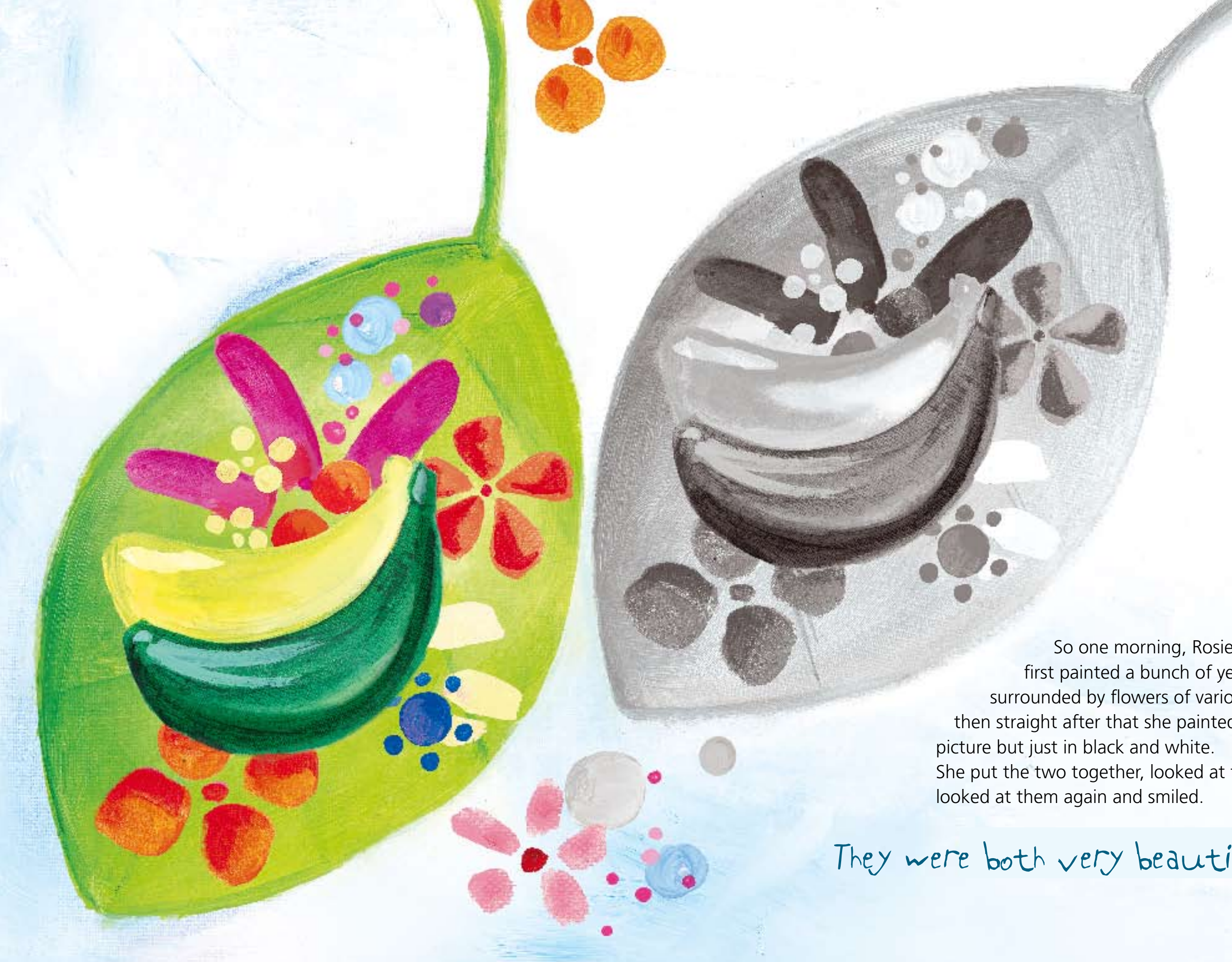
'What lovely yellow and green bananas!' exclaimed the magpie. 'Just looking at them makes me hungry.'
'What gorgeous grey bananas!' gasped the owl

'Paint them for us!'

they shouted in one voice.



'Good evening, ladies,' said Rosie the monkey, who was now cleaning a thick paintbrush. This reminded them of their manners and Squawky now said politely, 'Good evening, I would like a painting of those wonderful green and yellow bananas', while Mrs Toowhit-Toowhoo hastened to add, 'Good evening, I would very much like to have a picture of those delicious grey bananas.' The artist smiled and agreed to paint their orders.



So one morning, Rosie the monkey first painted a bunch of yellow and green bananas surrounded by flowers of various colours, then straight after that she painted exactly the same picture but just in black and white. She put the two together, looked at them, looked at them again and smiled.

They were both very beautiful indeed.



After a few days, Mrs Toowhit-Toowhoo flew to the artist's studio to collect her painting. She didn't find Rosie there, but one of her students showed her the two paintings. Her eyes glowing with joy and satisfaction, the owl took one of them and left.

'Let's see what you have to say to this, my little magpie!' she murmured gleefully.



Next day it was Squawky's turn to go and collect her picture. 'I'm afraid my student gave the owl your painting by mistake,' confessed the monkey, showing her the black and white picture that was left.

'It's very beautiful, but what a pity it isn't coloured,'
said the little magpie, looking disappointed



She flew to the owl's nest
'One, two, three four!' and found her counting the
mice she'd caught in the night.

*'Is it pink ones or grey
that you like more?'*

Squawky chanted, making Mrs loowhit-loowhoo lose
count of the mice.

'Here we go again!' she snapped crossly. 'Can't you see
that all the mice are grey?'

'I didn't come here to quarrel with you,' Squawky
answered. 'I only want to exchange the pictures the
monkey painted for us.'

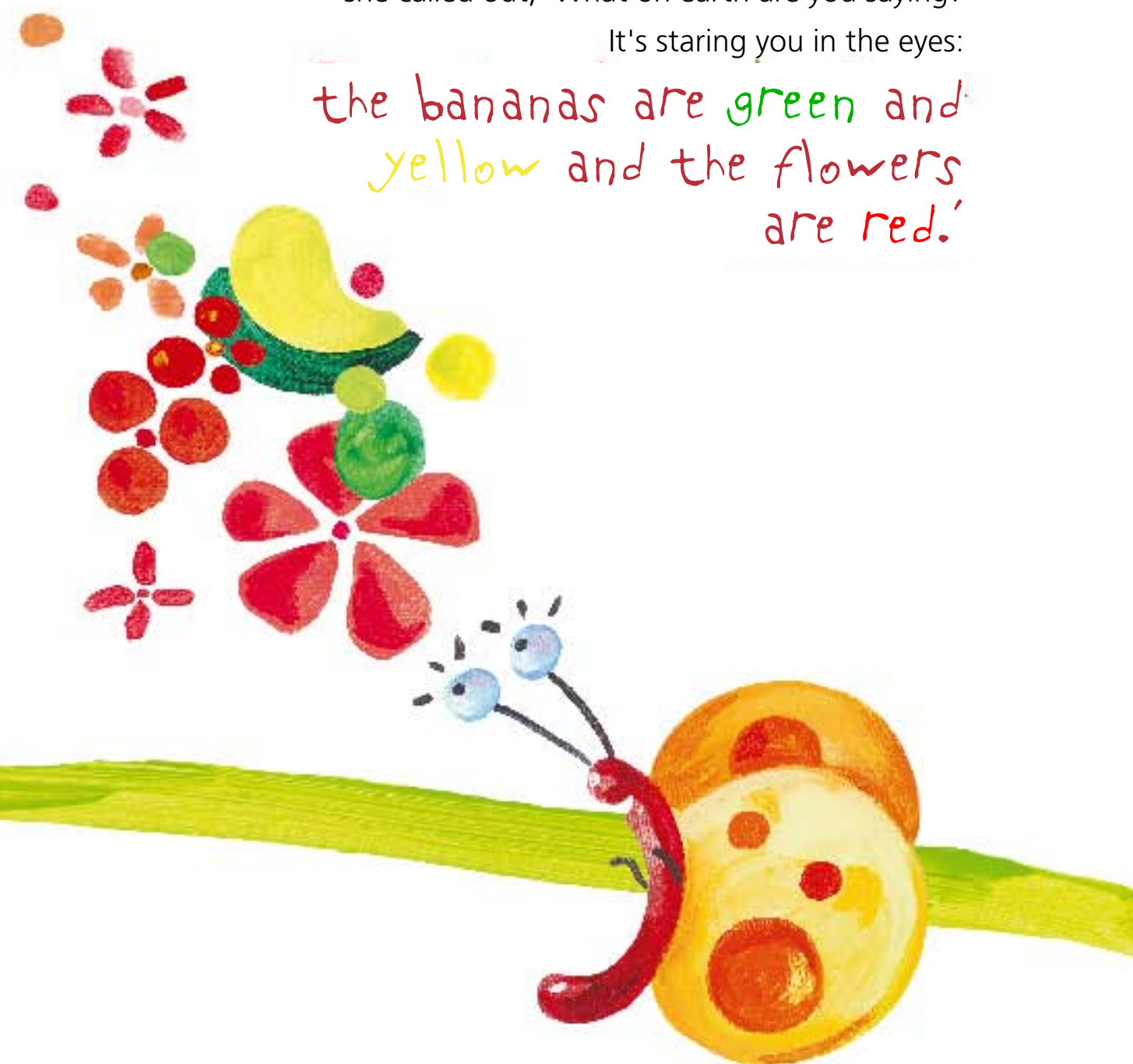
The owl looked at them both carefully and answered,
'They're both the same, so take whichever one you like.'
Squawky took the coloured painting and flew off as fast
as her wings could carry her, in case Mrs Toowhit-Toowhoo
should change her mind.



They were overheard by a butterfly who happened to be fluttering by, and without being asked she called out, 'What on earth are you saying?

It's staring you in the eyes:

the bananas are green and yellow and the flowers are red.'



She hung the picture on a branch then perched a little way off to admire it. Just then a cat and a dog passed by. 'Come and admire this lovely coloured painting!' she called out to them.

'But that picture's black and white,' the dog replied, rubbing his eyes to make sure.

'Yes, black and white,' the cat agreed, scratching an ear and looking puzzled.

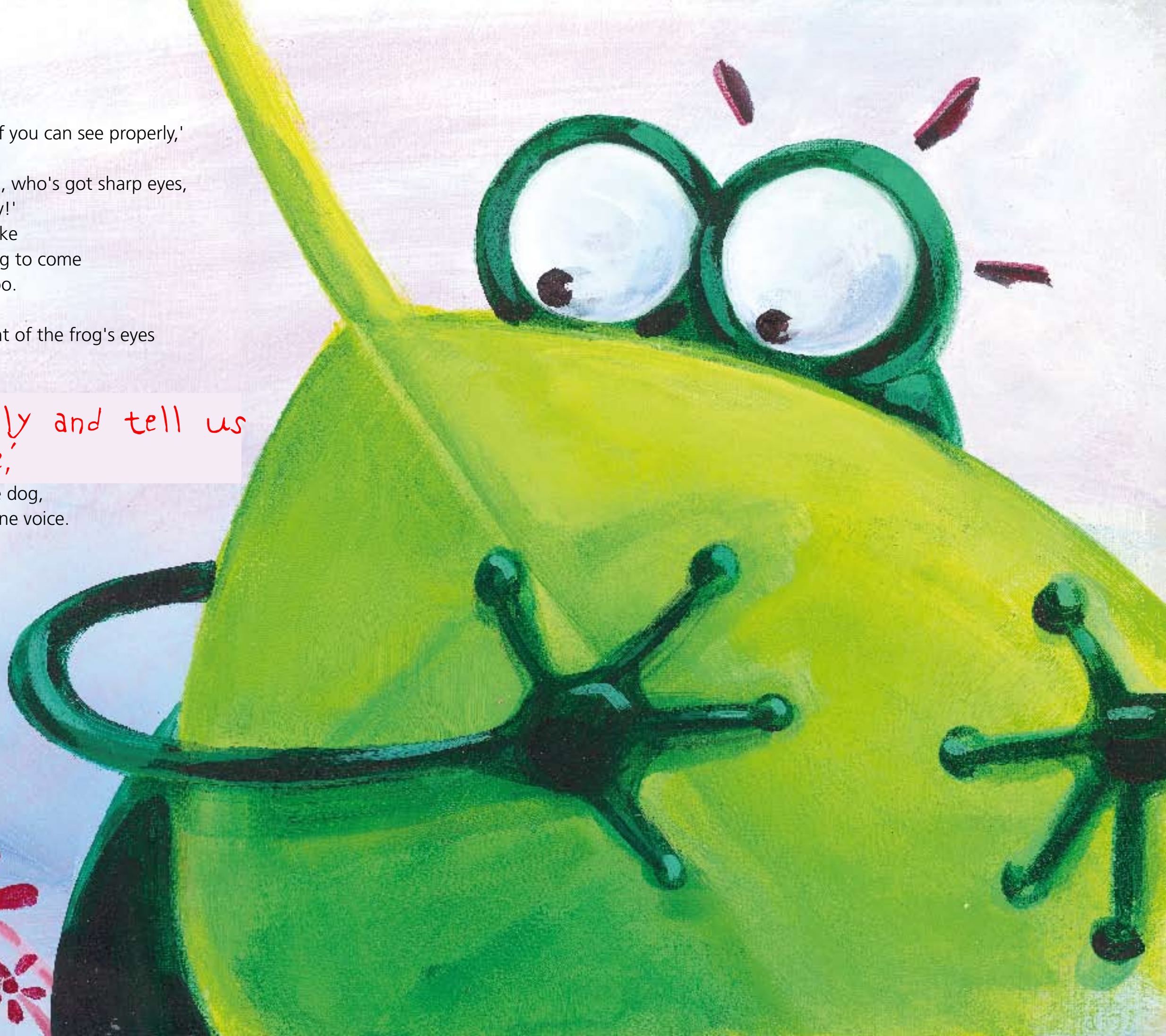
'It seems to me that none of you can see properly,'
said little Squawky.

'I'm going to bring the frog, who's got sharp eyes,
before you all drive me crazy!'
So she flew to the nearby lake
and asked her friend the frog to come
and see the lovely picture too.

They held the picture in front of the frog's eyes
and waited breathlessly....

*'Look carefully and tell us
what you see,'*

demanded the butterfly, the dog,
the cat and the magpie in one voice.



The frog opened wide his eyes,
then opened them again,
as wide as he could stretch them.

'Nothing,' he said.

'Nothing,' he said. 'I can't see anything.

If a thing's not moving, I can't see it.'

'You've got very strange eyes,' the magpie muttered and
waved the painting back and forth and left and right.

'I still can't see anything,' the frog insisted. 'I can't see things
that are under my nose, I can only see things that are far away.'



The magpie flew away holding the painting.

'Now, you can see?'

'Now I can see,' shouted the frog.

What a nice picture! What beautiful colors!

Red, yellow, green, blue, purple, black.

Wow, all these colours!



Just then the monkey passed by, on her way to paint in the forest.
'Now we'll learn the truth,' said the magpie.
'A pity the owl's not here to hear it.'
'I'm here,' answered Mrs Toowhit-Toowhoo,
appearing in her nightgown.
'Don't you let anyone sleep in peace round here?'
'Do you like my picture?' asked Rosie the monkey,
already knowing the answer she would hear.
'It's very beautiful, but we're all confused,' replied Squawky the
magpie, speaking on behalf of everyone.
'Can you tell us what colours you used to paint it?'



The monkey gave the six of them a playful look then smiled and
said,

*I painted it with the colours that
you see.
If it looks different to each of you,
it's because your eyes are different!*

As the monkey was leaving,
she raised her red hat, said,
'Goodbye!' and walked off
waving it.



'What a beautiful *red* hat she's got,' said
the magpie, and the butterfly agreed with her.
But the cat, the dog and the owl all agreed that it was a
beautiful *grey* hat.

'What hat?' asked the frog. 'I can't see any hat!'
But as soon as the monkey was far enough away, she jumped
for joy and cried,

*'What a beautiful red hat
I've got!'*





Σοφία

Η κολλητή μου φίλη είναι η φαντασία.
Χέρι χέρι παίζουμε τα παιχνίδια μας.
Με το που γεννήθηκα αγαπηθήκαμε.
Από τότε, παρέα με το χιούμορ και το παράλογο
κάνουμε μεγάλες αταξίες.
Όταν γράφουμε τα παραμύθια μας,
μπερδεύομαστε και δεν ξέρουμε
πότε λήμε ψέματα και πότε λήμε αλήθεια.
Και τότε ρωτάμε τα μικρά παιδιά,
που φτιάχνουν τα ψέματά τους
όπως φτιάχνουν την αλήθεια.



Ελένη

Άλλα τα μάτια του συγγραφέα
κι άλλα του εικονογράφου.
Η ζωγραφική δεν έχει ούτε αλήθεια ούτε ψέμα,
και η αλήθεια είναι μαύρη, είναι γκρι
κι άλλες φορές χρωματιστή.





'What a beautiful red hat she's got,'
said the magpie, and the butterfly agreed with her.
But the cat, the dog and the owl all agreed
that it was a beautiful grey hat.
'What hat?' asked the frog. 'I can't see any hat!'

*Is 'Monkeys and Owls Don't See Things Alike'
simply a tale about eyes and the way
that they see colours, or is it a story showing
how different we see things
so that for some the truth is monochrome
but for others comes in many different shades?
Can both be right?*