

BELLY BUTTON MISSION

TEXT BY JULIETA MONTELONGO

ILLUSTRATIONS BY FLOR GUGA





JULIETA MONTELONGO was born in Mexico City. She studied Communication Sciences at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. She is the author of more than 60 books for children and young people. She has written fantastic, scholarly and, above all, popular science texts. She received the Antonio Robles award in 1981 for the series *Cuentos del abuelo*. For 10 years she directed the magazine *Chispa*, dedicated to disseminating science among children. She currently coordinates the Lúdica publishing house and the Robopek project, focused on teaching science, art and environmental workshops. Some of her books are (several have been translated into English): *Chiquito pero listo*, *Un mundo de rechupete*, *Ciencia para preescolares 1, 2 y 3*, *¡Viva Miguelito!*, *los mundos del chamaco Covarrubias*, *Un cuento de papel*, *Diez científicos mexicanos entrevistados por diez niños curiosos*, *Un estuche misterioso*, *La Luna es mía y de cualquiera que la quiera* and *La niña encerrada*.

BELLY BUTTON MISSION

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BELLY BUTTON MISSION

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PRESENTATION

Belly Button Mission is a literary proposal that joins the **Árbol** collection, that the Instituto Nacional Electoral (INE, National Electoral Institute) makes available to children and teenagers with the intention of disseminating in a simple and entertaining way, topics of citizenship training and democratic values.

This publication is part of the Estrategia Nacional de Cultura Cívica 2017-2023 (National Civic Culture Strategy 2017-2023), which through its thematic axes aims to contribute to the improvement of our quality of life in society, as citizens with rights and duties. In this context, it seeks to encourage the active participation of young people in matters of public interest, so that over the years they become relevant actors in the political life of our country.

In view of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted at the UN in 2015, which contains the so-called Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), this publication aims to contribute to the awareness of children and their families about the importance of citizen participation in environmental issues as the most accurate way to take care of our natural resources and to build public policies that lead to committed actions in this area. The protagonists of *Belly Button Mission* experience how the decision to care for our biological and cultural diversity can be a reason for unity.

This little literary story is an opportunity to enjoy with family or friends. The story is intended particularly for students in the early grades of elementary school, but it can appeal to people of any age. Readers will be able to reflect on the importance of collective organization in the conservation of the natural heritage as a democratic principle of citizenship.

The final pages of the book include the section “To reflect and discuss”, designed so that the children, alone or with the support of a close adult, can learn about the most elementary legal frameworks and conclude which actions similar to those that occur in this story can be applicable in the care of the environment in the immediate surroundings.

The Moon was reflected over the Texcoco lake,
leaving there its scar, its print, its belly button.

Mexico
Metzi, the Moon
xictli, belly button
co, place

Xu-8 and K-7 landing

“We will turn that way!” announces Xu-8 and presses a purple button.

“Nooo!” corrects Ka-7, “We’ll go this way,” and presses a yellow button.

“Over there.”

“No, over here.”

The ship spins, out of control. It spins and spins until the crew members get dizzy and stop pressing buttons.

“I think it would be better we come to an agreement,” suggests Xu-8.

“Yes,” admits Ka-7, “cause my head is driving me crazy.”

They both move their antennas and say together: “Mexico.”

In front of them deploys the image of their destiny.

“It looks like a ladle with a handle,” says Ka-7.

“I think it has a trumpet shape,” claims Xu-8.

“It’s small,” says Ka-7.

“It looks huge to me,” disagrees Xu-8.

Ka-7 and Xu-8 touch their antennas at the same time, and the airship lands in the Northwest of the selected country.

Xu-8 climbs out of the silver-colored vehicle shaped like a squashed orange, does a somersault on the sandy ground, stands on tiptoes, and covers her eyes with one hand, protecting them from the overwhelming sunlight.

When Ka-7 reaches her side, she has already looked in all directions around her and says firmly:

“There’s nothing here.”

“There’s a lot of sand,” affirms Ka-7.

Xu-8 gets some tools from her handbag and begins to dig in.



“I may find something underground.”

When he sits down, Ka-7 gets his butt pricked with a thorn from a round vegetable. Then, unable to understand what’s happening, lies down under a strange tree, shaped like a hand with long fingers pointing towards the sky. He puts himself in pause and thus fall into a deep sleep.

Meanwhile, a screen installed on his chest records the surroundings: barrel cactus, saguaros, agaves. His antennas shake slightly, but they cannot succeed to awake him when detect a rattling sound; the screen records: snake.

Xu-8 continues digging and Ka-7 is still in pause. They don’t see the coyote nor the fox passing by;



they don't observe the roadrunner's quick walk or the very slow walk of the turtle, nor the exercises that the iguana seems to do. They don't hear the calandra lark song, nor the majestic flapping of the eagle in the air.

Only their screens keep detecting and recording.

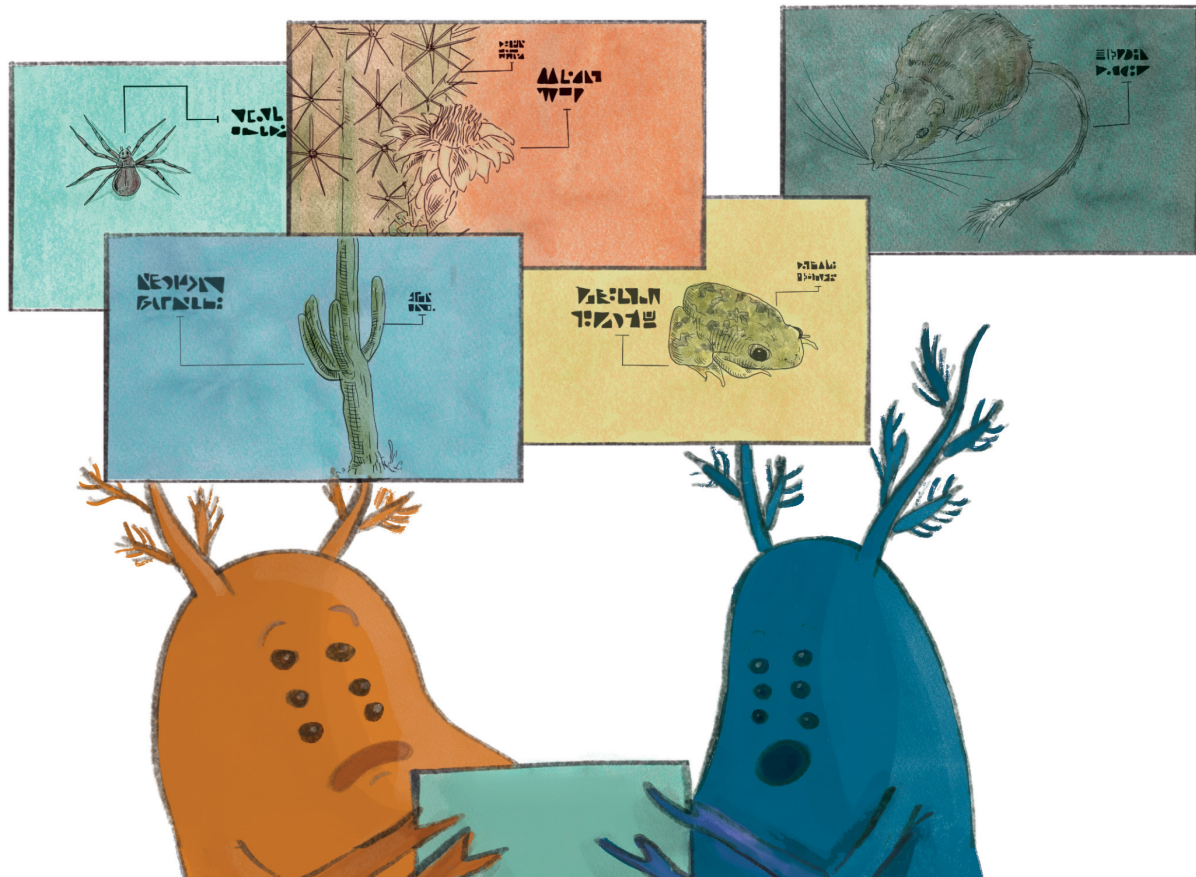
"Let's go!" shouts Xu-8, trying her journey partner wakes up. "There's nothing here!" When their airship takes off, they get shocked seeing at the screens:

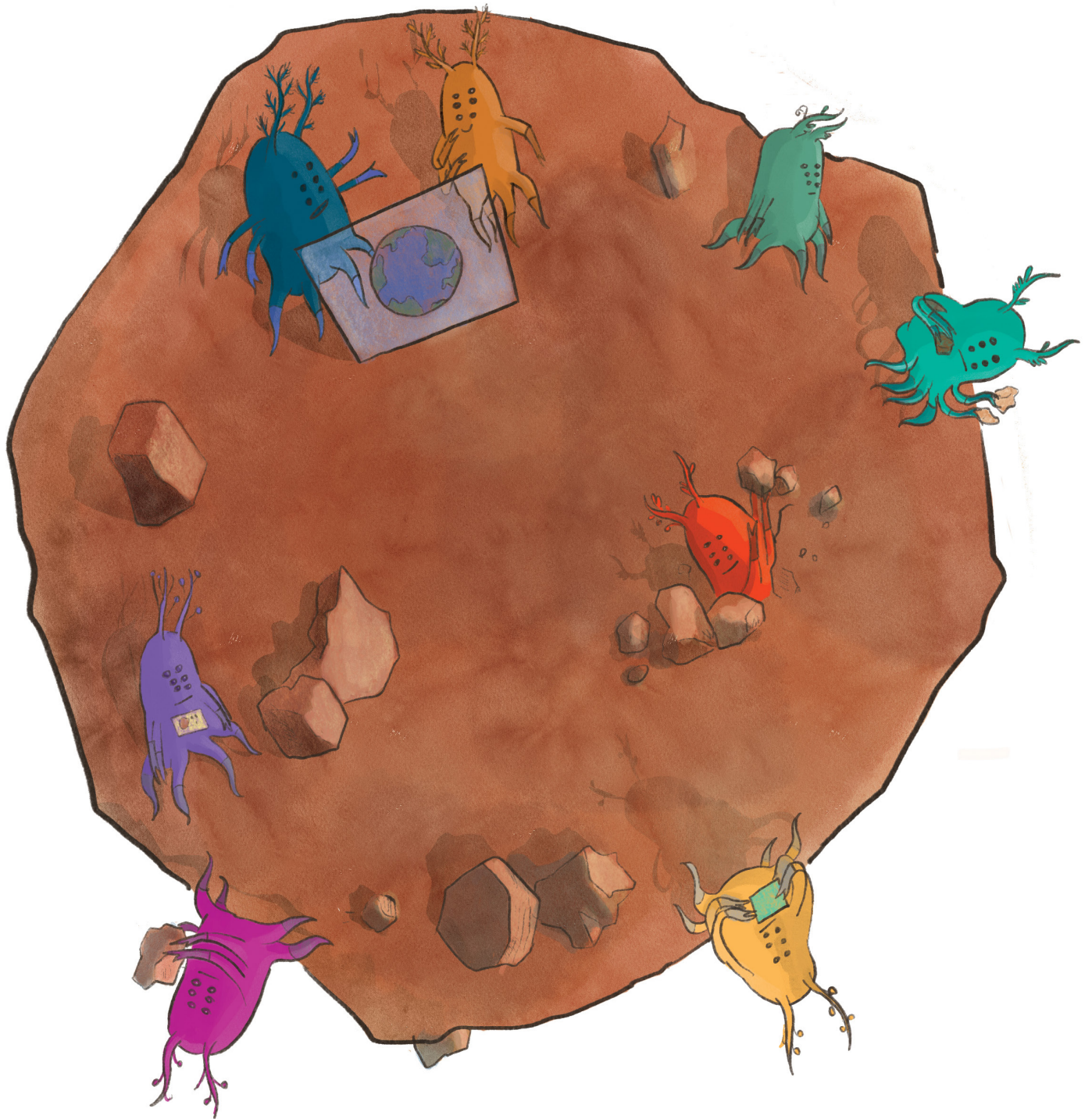
Mexico's Northwest desert, 560 plant species, 53 mammal species, 22 bird types, 43 of reptiles and 5 of amphibians (animals that can live on land and in water, like frogs and toads).

"Hmmm. I think you don't pay enough attention," protest Ka-7.

"Well, next time you dig, and I watch," Xu-8 replies.

On their first visit, none of them had recognized the richness of the place.





Belly Button Mission

Aka, the distant planet where Xu-8 and Ka-7 live, has a rocky center surrounded by a thick layer of rocks, and on the surface there are... rocks.

Its inhabitants, the Akamese, have only two entertainment activities: they put themselves in pause and imagine they are having great adventures, or they dig searching something, anything. However, they always find the same: more rocks. They pile them up, classify them, and build with them all kinds of structures. That's pretty boring. They say that in ancient times there was something else in Aka, but Xu-8 and Ka-7 had not known nothing of that.

That day they were extremely bored. That's why they decided to undertake an interstellar journey, searching for adventures.

They turned on the "whole info" and select randomly a distant planet named Earth.

"Look, it says Earth has a huge diversity of places!" said Ka-7, surprised.

"And that there are millions of different beings! Can you imagine that?!" added Xu-8. "That must be crazy!"

Then, they found out that the planet was split up in 194 countries. They reviewed them in a glance: Albania, Cameroon, Mexico. They liked the word *Mexico* from the very moment they enunciated it, but when they knew its meaning, they got very intrigued, shacked up their antennas and said:

"We must go there!"

Mexico means "place of the Moon's belly button".

"Belly Button Mission!" they said at once.

Emilio

After their first landing on the desert, Xu-8 and Ka-7 decide a strategy change. In their next come down, instead of digging or putting themselves in pause, they will try to meet an Earthling.

The airship zigzags to the Southeast. From the heights, they see a beautiful, strong green site and decide to come down in a lagoon.

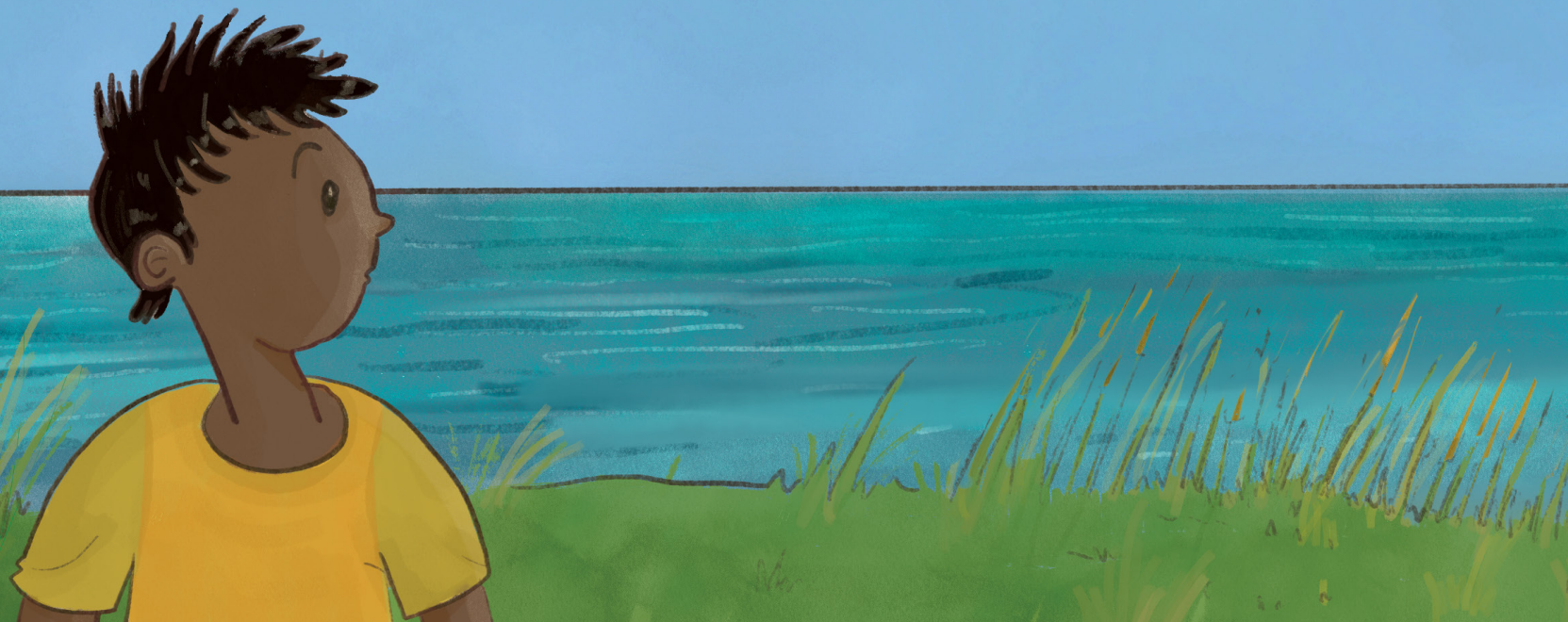
“I thought blue was just blue,” says Ka-7, excited. “Here there are like 200 thousand different tones of blue.”

“That’s nonsense,” Xu-8 replies, “but there are at least seven.”

They get down from the airship and slide to the water. Suddenly...

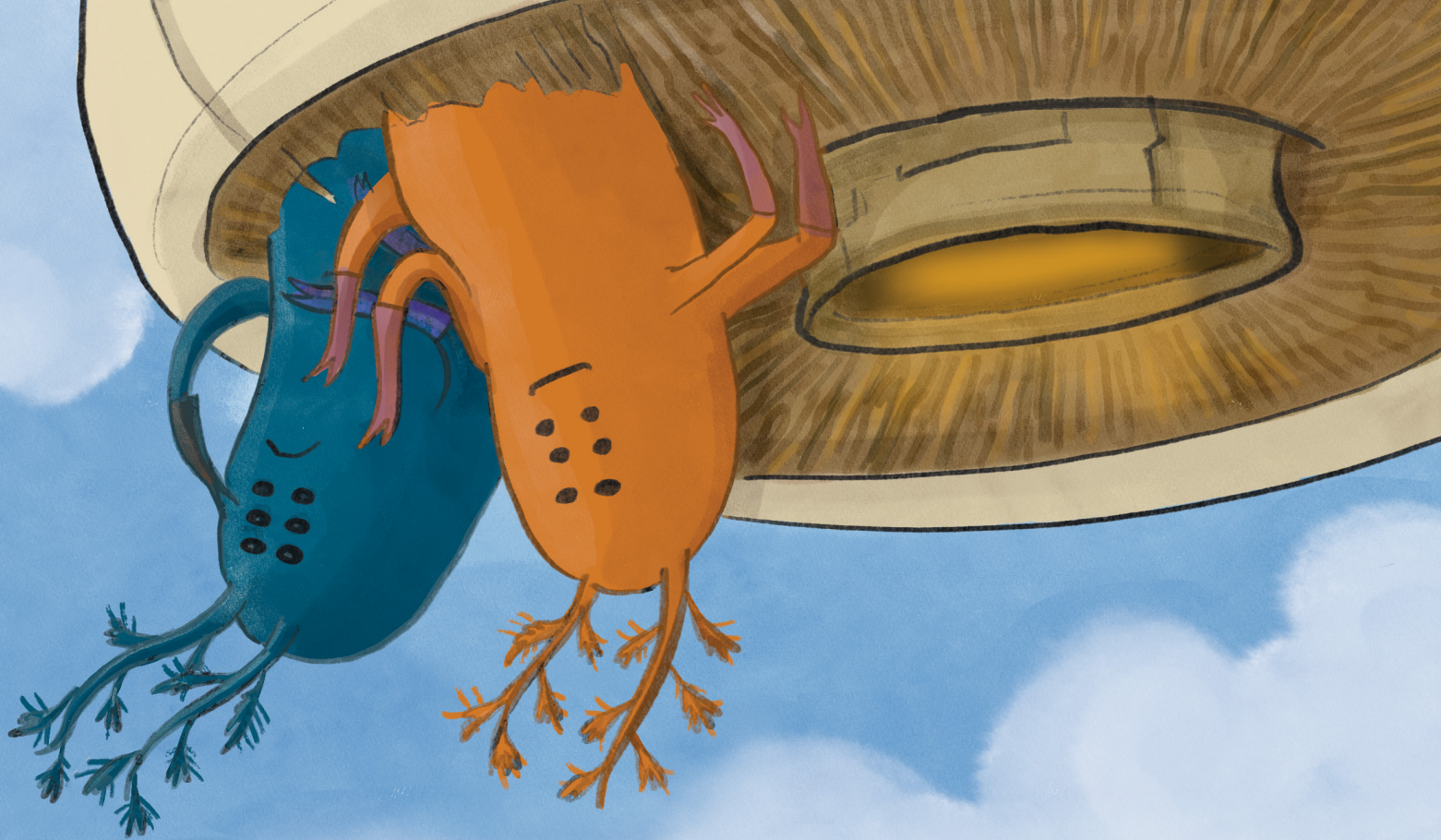
“Look at that rare being coming towards us. It has the same height that us, but it’s so... so... I don’t know what,” says Ka-7.

“My screen says it is harmless,” states Xu-8.









The strange being is a kid and seems not to be afraid. He feels an unexplained confidence and sympathy for the newcomers.

“Wow!” he says as he confidently approaches on his rowboat. “How rare they look. Could they be aliens? My uncle say they do exist, but the rest of my family doesn’t believe so.”

“Uncle? Family?” repeats Xu-8 while she curiously inspects him.

“Hi! I’m Emilio. Nice to meet you,” he smiles and extends his hand to say hello.

The Akamese are very smart. Soon, they learn and imitate Emilio.

“Where are we?” Xu-8 asks.

“There’s no doubt. These beings with antennas come from outer space,” think Emilio. Then, responds:

“You are in Mexico, on planet Earth. Welcome. This is your home!”



“Our home!” cries out Xu-8, excited. “We are going to our home!”

“Well, well. Give me a break. The truth is I must prepare my family. The grownups get easily scared.”

“What’s that family thing?” Ka-7 demands an answer.

“Ah! Family are your grandmas, grandpas, parents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, sisters-in-law, nephews and in general those who take care of you and love you very much, and that you take care of and love as well. Did I explain myself?” he adds, seeing the ‘I don’t understand anything’ expression on the strangers’ face.



After consulting his screen to get an idea of what they just heard, Xu-8 suggests: “Well, you better take us for a ride in your weird aquatic ship.”

Emilio gladly invites them. While rowing he acts like a guide, as he does with the tourists that visit the area.

“This lagoon is gorgeous. Its seven shades of blue are result of different types of soil and depth. Here we have a lot of queen conch, manatee, spiny lobster, grouper, snapper, barracuda, otter, lizard, turtle.”

“Wow!” Xu-8 says. “Her screen displays images of the species named by Emilio.”

“On land there are animals such as *tepezcuintle*, wild boar, and white-tailed deer. Lots of toucans too.”

“Ui, ui, ui, ui, ui,” Ka-7 makes little noises with his antennas, which doesn’t stop spinning.

Emilio feels very happy and proud. Seeing Xu-8 and Ka-7 excited, he keeps going:

“We also have trees like *chicozapote*, *guayabillo*, *yaxnic*, *siricote*, *palo de tinte*...”

Suddenly, he shuts up. For his mind crosses first a sad idea, and then a ray of hope.

“Well, we had. The truth is that this great wealth is in danger.”

“What do you mean ‘is in danger’?!” asks Xu-8, concerned. “This is a marvel, a treasure, a beauty! You said so, isn’t it?”

“I tell you because... I don’t know... I like you and you might think something to fix this situation.”

They sit on a rock on the shores of the lagoon, and Emilio tells them that human activities multiply everywhere, destroying the huge variety and richness of the lagoon and many other places.

Then, Kay-7 and Xu-8 tell him that Aka, their planet, was very rich too, but now all it has are rocks and more rocks.

“That’s so sad!” says Emilio.

“You should do something so that doesn’t happen here,” says Xu-8.







“Of course! I’m convinced of that. But, what to do?”

“I got it!” claims Ka-7. “Ask your family for help.”

“But they are always worried solving their own problems.”

“Scare them!” suggests Xu-8. “You said that grownups are easily scared, isn’t it? Tell them that the lagoon and the whole planet could turn to rock.”

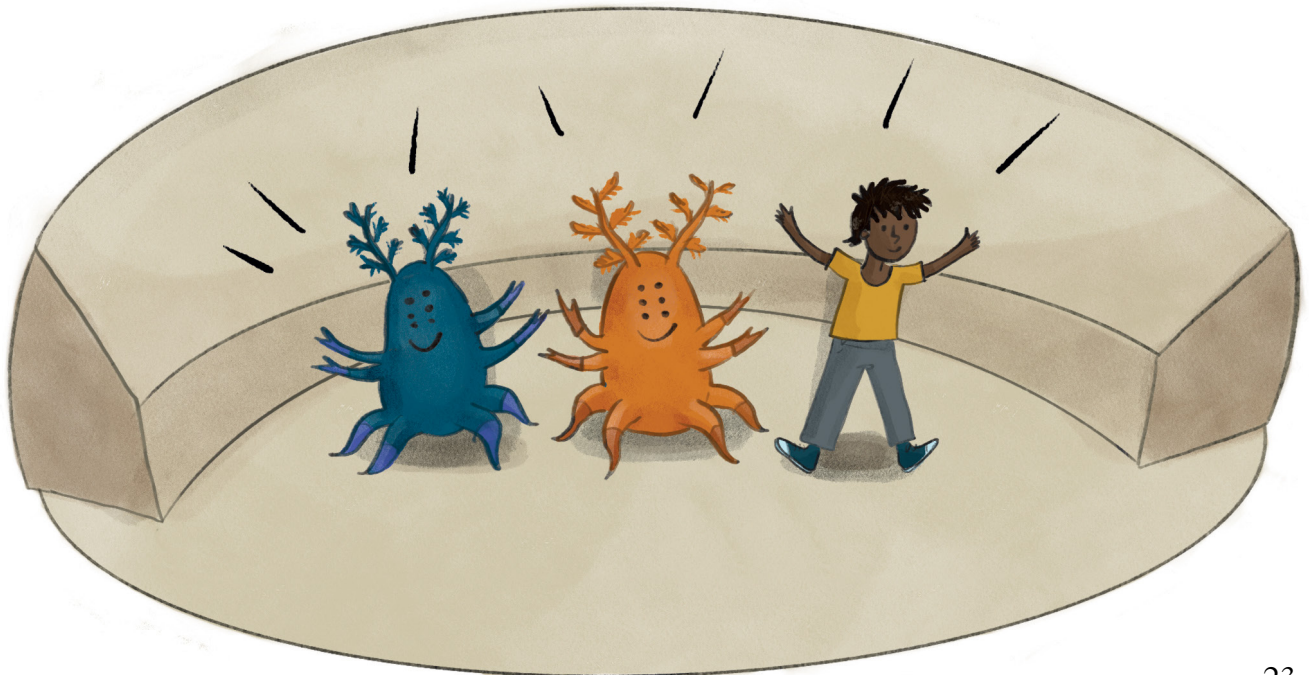
“Ups! Speaking of fears!” says Emilio, pointing to a group of people approaching with terrified faces.

“Emilio, don’t move! We’re coming to help you!” they yell at him.

“Hurry! Hide!” Emilio asks Xu-8 and Ka-7.

Then he feels a hard pull and, suddenly realizes that he is inside the airship.

To the astonishment of the people who thought they were coming to his aid, only a few swirls of shimmering dust remain where they were, while the setting sun paints the lagoon in new shades of orange and silver.



Where to Begin

“Oh, super! This is called teleportation!” says Emilio, surprised. “I thought there would be a lot of wires, instruments and weird devices in an airship, but no, it’s almost empty.”

“Everything is here,” clarifies Xu-8. Then, she puts a finger on the wall, move her antennas and says: “diagnosis of this lagoon.”

“Diagnosis?” Emilio asks.

“To solve a problem, we must first know the situation, gather the needed information.”

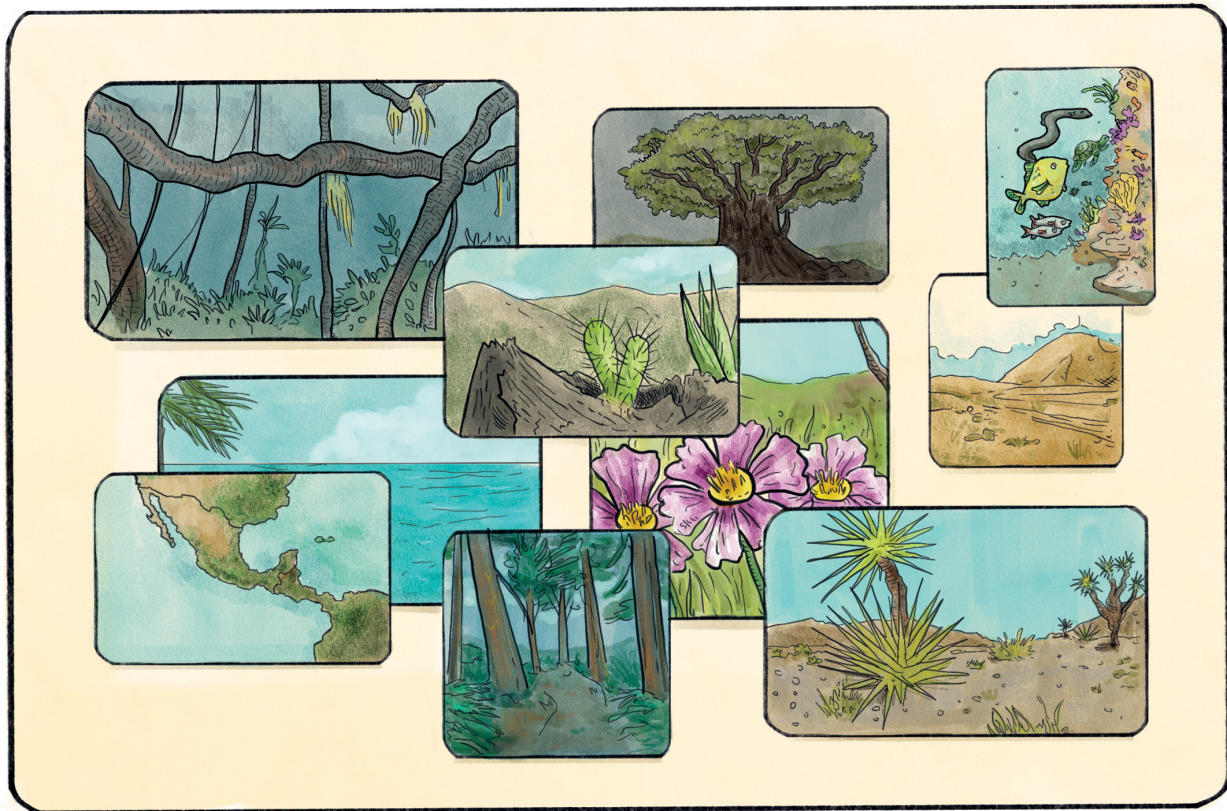
“But it is not just this lagoon,” Emilio says. “It’s the whole country. In fact, the whole world.”



“Ouch!” Ka-7 says and corrects himself: “Environmental diagnosis of Mexico and planet Earth.”

The “whole info” screen displays information that worries them even more:

Located on the American continent, Mexico is one of the five countries in the world with the greatest biological wealth. It has forests, scrublands, jungles and deserts, mangrove swamps, rivers, lagoons and enormous coastal extensions with seagrasses, macroalgae forests and reefs.



In this territory live about 12 percent of the terrestrial species of the entire planet. It has 5,512 species of vertebrates and about 65 thousand species of invertebrates, mostly insects. As for plants, it has 25 thousand different species and 7 thousand species of fungi. For all these reasons, it is considered a **megadiverse** country.

However, all this extraordinary richness is at risk, just like almost all the ecosystems of the planet.

The Earth is said to be in the Anthropocene Era, because a single species, the humans, is causing the rapid deterioration of their planet. They cut down trees and plant no more. They destroy natural areas to grow crops and produce livestock. They overfish. They dump pollutants into the air, soil and water and do not take care to clean them up. They capture and sell endangered animals. They waste water as if everyone had access to it. They consume too many useless products and generate too much waste.

“Uff, ouch, puf!” exclaims Ka-7. “It’s terrible!”

“I imagine that the Earthlings are doing something to solve this,” Xu-8 says, while checks again the “whole info” screen.

“I have read that are international organizations that are agreeing the countries should do some actions together,” says Emilio.

A red light appears on the screen. An electronic voice says:







The “whole info” continues:

In Mexico there are laws to protect the environment and it is recognized that its care is a right and an obligation of the government and all citizens. However, the challenges continue to outweigh the progress made.

“Uf, ouch, puf!” Ka-7 complains again.

“Calm down! There’s no problem without a solution,” assures Xu-8, while she asks the “whole info” for suggestions of concrete and efficient solutions.

Planet Earth requires the urgent and committed participation of its inhabitants.
ALL OF THEM! MEN, WOMEN, BOYS AND GIRLS!!!!



“What do you think, Emilio?” Xu-8 asks.

“That some people are doing their part, but I agree that it’s not enough. We should put in action and make a plan. My friend Camila has a great idea. Let’s go for her.”

On the way, Emilio looks out the window and discovers a crowd of people approaching in boats. They shout and point towards the ship with frightened and angry faces. Don Timoteo, the municipal president, is about to arrive when... flash! The extraterrestrial vehicle vanishes and leaves everyone terrified, sailing in a circle around a swirl of golden dust.

A second later, the airship lands in front of Camila’s house.

22MCh Plan

Camilia is singing while feeding the chickens. Emilio takes her by the hand and, while he pulls her towards the ship, tells her in a rushed way what happened.

Camila's eyes look like hoops when she sees Xu-8 and Ka-7. However, she's brave and recovers quickly.

"Hi! I'm Camila Benítez Betanzos. I'm delighted to meet you and you too and, above all, to share my plan with you both. But... Can I touch your antennas? They look great! I would like to have some!"

Then, with great confidence, she says to them:

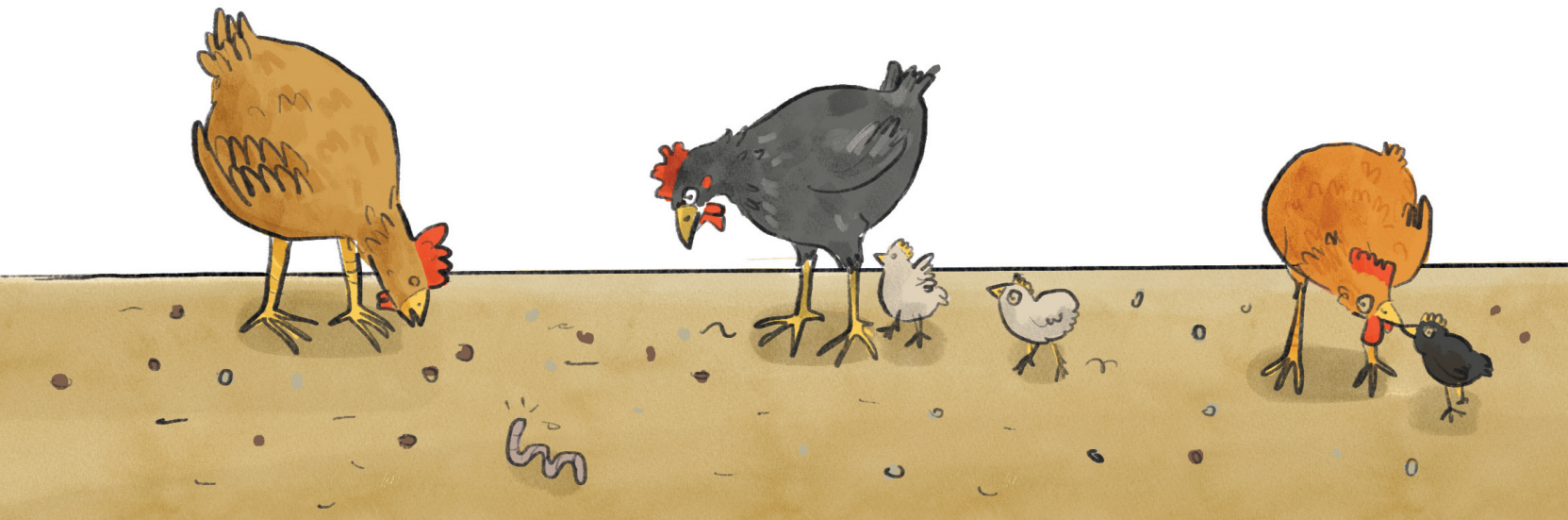
"I have always thought that there are 22 million of us, and that if we organize ourselves, we can achieve a lot."

"Who?" Xu-8 asks.

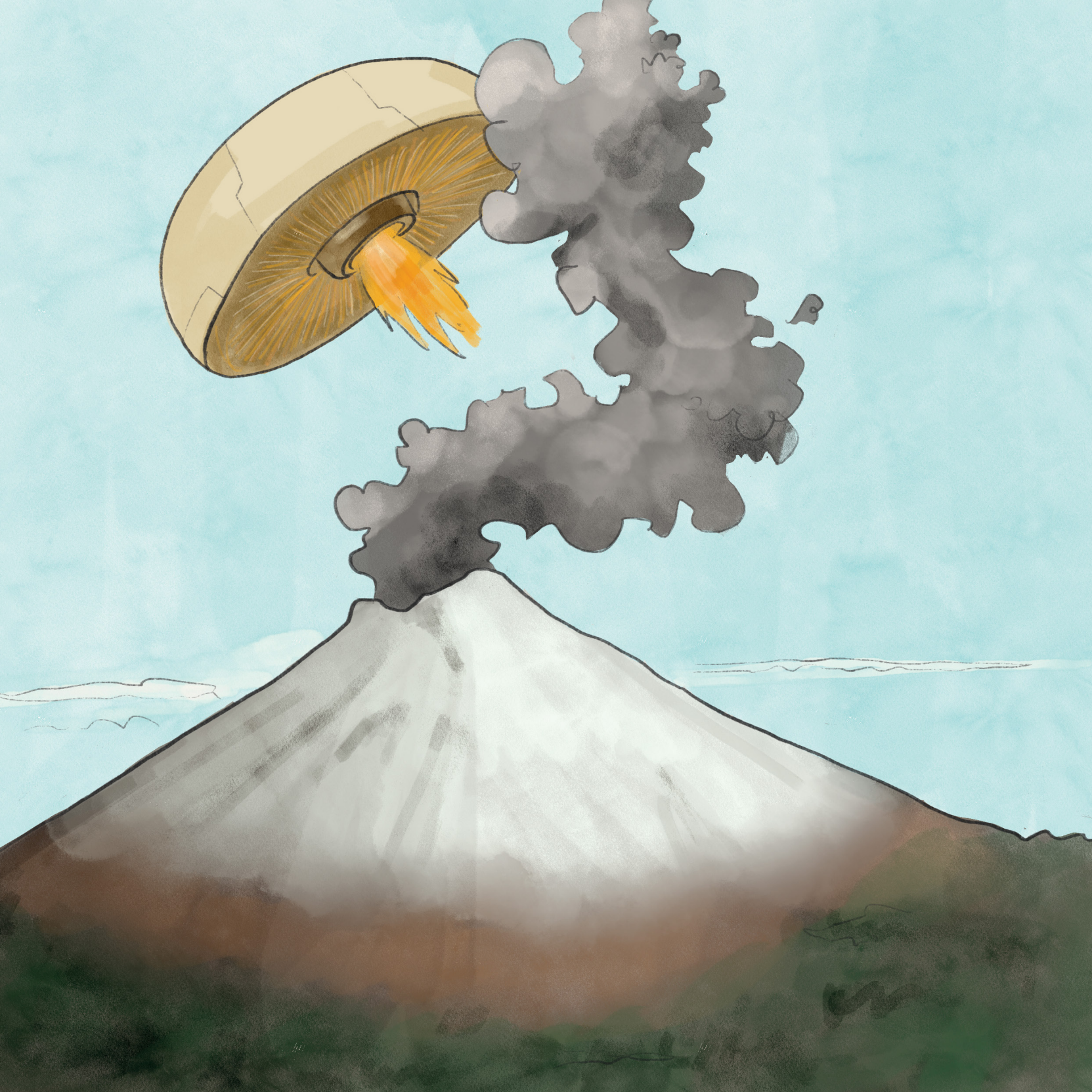
Excited, Camila continues:

"If Emilio plants a tree, it's important, but little if you think of the entire national territory. If each girl or boy plants a tree, that's 22 million trees in one go. Many small actions become a huge action, don't you think?" she asks with a smile of satisfaction.

After consulting the "whole info", Ka-7 claims:







“Oh, I get it! In Mexico there are 22 million children between the ages of 5 and 14!”

“Exactly!” says Emilio. “I’m sure they will like the plan and respond to our call.”

They decide to travel in the ship to reach the different regions of the country and invite boys and girls to get the mission started.

They go through rainforests and dry jungles; grasslands and scrublands; temperate forest and cloud forests; mangroves, rivers and lagoons and some coastal areas. Emilio and Camila are in charge of randomly choosing one girl or boy from each region to board the ship and design the **22MCh Plan** together. After a week, 20 accomplices of similar ages are already gathered in the airship, which is parked on a cloud, between the Iztaccihuatl and Popocatepetl volcanoes. They put forward their ideas and proposals, decide and take notes. Soon they have the **22MCh Plan** ready.

The Akamese commit to reproduce 22 million copies and distribute them throughout the Moon’s belly button country.



The Shocking Moment

In the meantime, the news is shocking all over the world: an extraterrestrial spacecraft is flying over Mexico. Wherever it has seen, 20 children have disappeared.

Among the volcanoes there is a large crowd looking at the sky. There are authorities and journalists from all over the world, and a crowd that manages to get close to the area. People do not take off from their TV sets and cell phones, shocked by the news.

Meanwhile, at the United Nations, representatives of the countries are discussing the issue: What do the extraterrestrials want? Will they have the missing children? What will we do if they attack us?

Inside the airship, the Akamese press buttons on the wall and instantly the Earthlings who participated in the plan arrive at their homes by teleportation.





There only remains Camila, who watches the action in amazement, and Emilio, who can't resist the temptation and begins to press buttons here and there as if he were an orchestra conductor.

The airship moves rapidly to one side and then the other. Down below, people shake their heads at the same rhythm without taking their eyes off the vehicle. Suddenly, it passes so close that the crowd dives to the ground to avoid being run over.

Emilio, amused, presses buttons and imagines things. With one he throws hundreds of marshmallows that cover the mountains; with another throws colored streamers that hang from the clouds. Then he makes chocolate drops rain and the rays of sun reach the ground loaded with green glitter.

Xu-8 and Ka-7 laugh at Emilio's crazy ideas, but Camila interrupts him.

"It's my turn!"

Camila concentrates with all the power of her mind and presses a button. Something incredible happens then, first in the forest below the ship, but later spreads rapidly throughout the country and beyond, to the entire planet. An unusual event! Dogs bark, sheep bleat, birds chirp, cows moo, cats howl! Elephants trumpet, crows caw, chickens cluck and insects buzz, all at once, like an overwhelming and deafening planetary chorus.

As if this were not enough, aquatic animals jump on the surface of rivers and oceans, plants shake their leaves and volcanoes spew out fumaroles.

Humanity is shocked, alarmed, paralyzed.

Xu-8 and Ka-7 shake their antennas and pull Camila out of concentration.

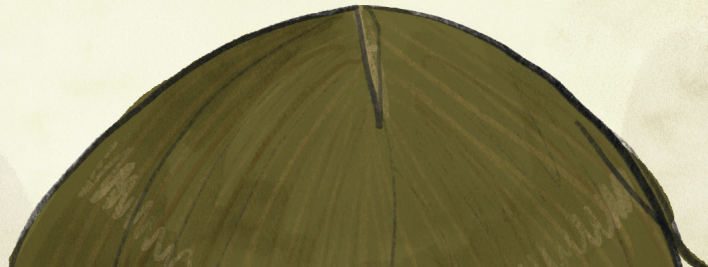
"We think you've managed to scare everyone," they say.

Then they wrap their Earth friends in a warm embrace and share the thoughts and emotions of those intense days.

The time has come.

A powerful light bursts from the airship and dazzles the people present, who are forced to close their eyes. Emilio and Camila appear in the center of the crowd. The silence is complete.





Cameras and cell phones focus on them; the recorders are on.

“Don’t be alarmed,” Emilio assures. “Our friends are leaving, and children have been returned to their communities. No one is in danger.”

“Don’t lie, Emilio!” says Camila and the people become tense again.

Camila’s face appears simultaneously on every screen in the world. She knows it and doesn’t want to miss the opportunity. In the United Nations boardroom, presidents and state secretaries begin to whisper.

“I suggest that we prepare our missiles to be sent to that area,” someone proposes.

Camila takes a deep breath and clears her voice:

“Our planet and its inhabitants, plants and animals, are in great danger.”

She pauses for a long time to increase the anxiety of her listeners and to think carefully her next words.

“But not by the visit of those who came from a distant planet.”

“Explain yourself, little one,” suggests a journalist nervously, as he removes a marshmallow from his mouth and shakes out the green glitter from the microphone.

“People, with our excessive activities, are seriously threatening the planet. By harming it, we are harming us. That’s why we must do something serious, seriously!” she remarks.

Emilio, proud of Camila, explains:

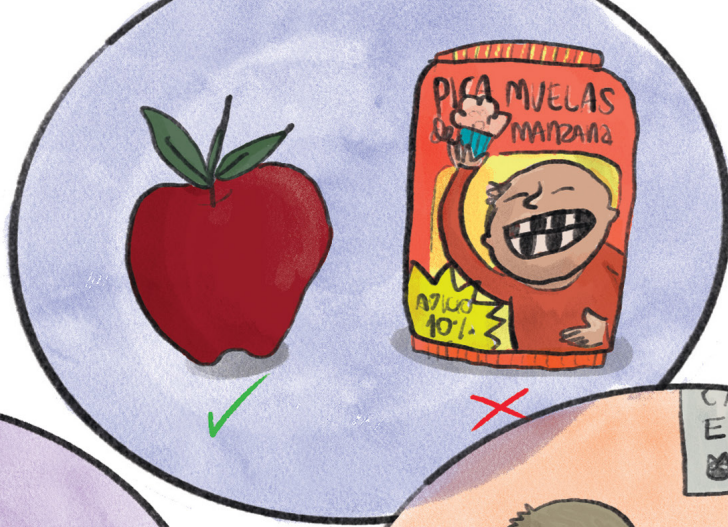
“Xu-8 and Ka-7 only helped us to draw up the **22MCh Plan.**”

At that moment, the airship disappears and leaves, in addition to the usual swirl of golden dust, a bunch of sheets of paper flying through the air. Everyone fights to catch one and read it.

22MCh Plan

Participate! It's urgent!

1. Boys and girls of Mexico, and of the whole world, we kindly ask to governments and people in general, to take more and better actions to protect the environment. What they do now is not enough. We know our families love us but, can you please think more about our future?
2. We commit to take care of the space in which we live, our home, our school and our neighborhood.
 - To take care of the water without wasting a single drop when bathing or brushing our teeth and hands.
 - To try to produce very little garbage, never throw it on the ground and make sure it is separated at home and at school.
 - To plant and take care of plants everywhere.
 - To respect and protect our pets and animals that are nearby.
 - To bring our snacks to school in reusable containers and do not eat junk food.
 - To play more and have fewer toys, specially those that use batteries or have large packaging.
 - To turn off light bulbs when not in use.
 - To form groups to monitor compliance with these points.
3. To insist that people close to us help us to form neighborhood groups, brigades of friends, neighborhood councils and thus participate in a more organized way. To detect the problems of our community and look for solutions together. For example, report water leaks, request more garbage cans, or whatever is needed.



4. We invite everyone to imagine, to create new proposals. Those of us who gathered together came up with a few: a network of hoses and buckets with stones and sand to collect rainwater and clean it; cardboard packages with seeds inside to bury them everywhere and have vegetables, even on balconies and rooftops in the cities; vacuum cleaners to suck up plastics from the sea and recycle them; solar batteries to charge all electrical appliances; sargassum bricks to clean up the sea and build houses.

Please help us!

Let's do more of what we already do!

The children of Mexico, and of the planet Earth.

After reading the **22MCh** Plan, some people scratch their heads, still covered in a mixture of chocolate, marshmallow and glitter; others nod and raise their thumbs. The boys and girls, of course, clap their hands and keep the plan to post it in their homes, in a visible place, in order to do not forget a single point.

At the United Nations, the leaders slump back in their seats, wipe the sweat from their brow and write down the toughest actions their countries could take.

Suddenly, the airship appears again, very close to the children's heads, and a voice is heard.

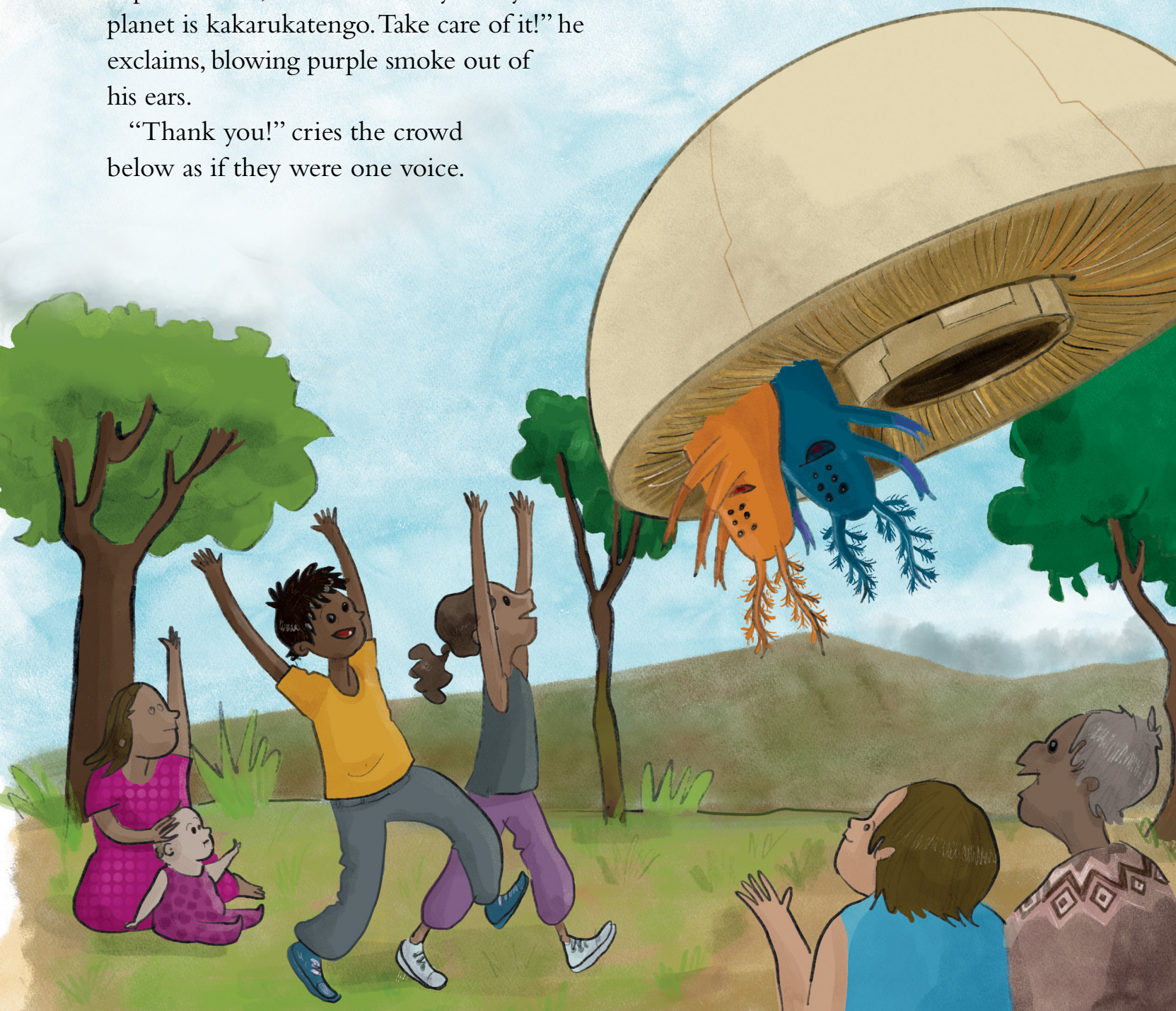
“What a shunquirusansata experience!” Xu-8 shouts, leaning out of the window and shaking his little blanket.

“What?” ask Emilio and Camila.



“That’s what we say in our planet,” explains Ka-7, “and we also say that your planet is kakarukatengo. Take care of it!” he exclaims, blowing purple smoke out of his ears.

“Thank you!” cries the crowd below as if they were one voice.



TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS

¿Vienen en paz?



¡LLEGARON!

¿Vienen en paz?



Reporta nuevas apariciones



Siguen las apariciones

¡LLEGARON!



¿Quiénes son?



Reporta nueva aparición



Environment and Citizen Participation

The Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos (Political Constitution of the United Mexican States) guarantees the right of every person to live in an environment adequate for his or her development, health and well-being.

Involving children in environmental issues is a right and an obligation that they have as part of their civic education; but it means, above all, the hope of a new attitude towards a better future.

Through fiction, this fun book addresses the urgent need to be responsible in caring for the environment and the importance of citizen participation in this laudable task. Its reading will provide pleasant moments for young readers, who will become aware of the possibility of being active agents in the transformation of their environment. These pages contain the main concepts addressed in Belly Button Mission, so that they can be identified at different moments of the narrative.

Emilio, the protagonist of this story, knows that he lives in a place of extraordinary richness. However, he is concerned that this wealth is dwindling at an accelerated rate due the increasing human activity and he is not sure what to do or how to participate in stopping the deterioration of his environment. The global vision of his extraterrestrial friends helps him to size up the problem and take action. First, the story makes a recount of the riches of our country:

Located on the American continent, Mexico is one of the five countries in the world with the greatest biological wealth. It has forests, scrublands, jungles and deserts, mangrove swamps, rivers, lagoons and enormous coastal extensions with seagrasses, macroalgae forests and reefs. In this territory live about 12 percent of the terrestrial species of the entire planet. It has 5,512 species of vertebrates and about 65 thousand species of invertebrates, mostly insects. As for



plants, it has 25 thousand different species and 7 thousand species of fungi. For all these reasons, it is considered a **megadiverse** country. However, all this extraordinary richness is at risk, just like almost all the ecosystems of the planet.

In addition to article 4 of our Constitution, which establishes the right to have an adequate environment for everyone to enjoy the development and well-being, in Mexico we have several laws such as the Ley General del Equilibrio Ecológico y Protección al Ambiente (General Law of Ecological Balance and Environmental Protection), the Ley de Aguas Nacionales (Law of National Waters), the Ley General de Desarrollo Forestal Sustentable (General Law of Sustainable Forestry Development), the Ley General de Vida Silvestre (General Law of Wildlife), the Ley de Desarrollo Rural Sustentable (Law of Sustainable Rural Development), the Ley General para la Prevención y Gestión Integral de Residuos (General Law for the Prevention and Comprehensive Management of Waste), the Ley de Bioseguridad de Organismos Genéticamente Modificados (Law on Biosafety of Genetically Modified Organisms), the Ley de Productos Orgánicos (Organic Products Law), the Ley General de Pesca y Acuicultura Sustentables (General Law of Sustainable Fishing and Aquaculture), the Ley de Promoción y Desarrollo de los Bioenergéticos (Law for the Promotion and Development of Bioenergetics), the Ley Federal de Responsabilidad Ambiental (Federal Environmental Responsibility Law), and the Ley General de Cambio Climático (General Law on Climate Change), each one with its own regulations.

At the international level, countries have also set out to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and address climate change. To achieve this, they have undertaken various actions



that unfortunately have not been sufficient, from the first United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm in 1972 to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes 17 goals and 169 targets; it was approved by all countries in 2015, but the trends of environmental deterioration are still not reversed.

They sit on a rock on the shores of the lagoon, and Emilio tells them that human activities multiply everywhere, destroying the huge variety and richness of the lagoon and many other places.

Then, Kay-7 and Xu-8 tell him that Aka, their planet, was very rich too, but now all it has are rocks and more rocks.

“That’s so sad!” says Emilio.

“You should do something so that doesn’t happen here,” says Xu-8.

“Of course! I’m convinced of that. But, what to do?”

[...]

“I imagine that the Earthlings are doing something to solve this,” Xu-8 says, while checks again the “whole info” screen.

“I have read that are international organizations that are agreeing the countries should do some actions together,” says Emilio.

A red light appears on the screen. An electronic voice says:

NOT GOOD ENOUGH. NOT GOOD ENOUGH.
NOT GOOD ENOUGH.

The “whole info” continues:

In Mexico there are laws to protect the environment and it is recognized that its care is a right and an obligation of the government and all citizens. However, **the challenges continue to outweigh the progress made.**

[...]



“Calm down! There’s no problem without a solution,” assures Xu-8, while she asks the “whole info” for suggestions of concrete and efficient solutions.

Principle 10 of the 1992 Rio Declaration states that “Environmental issues are best dealt with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the appropriate level...”

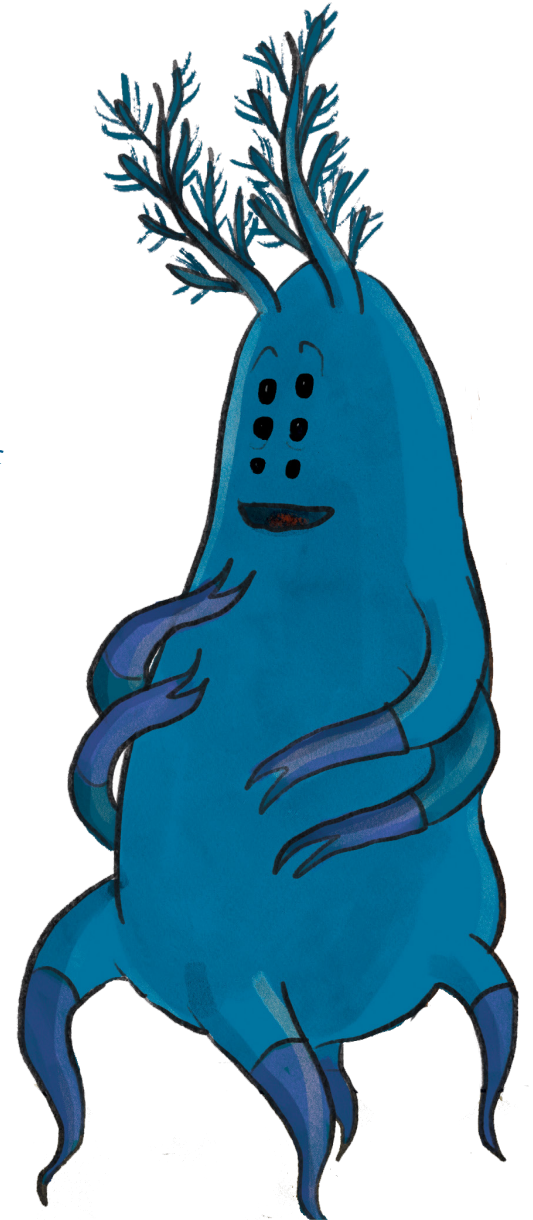
In the story, the characters agree that there is only one possible way, as assured by the “whole info”.

Emilio and his friends devise a plan that ensures the participation of Mexico’s children:

[Emilio and Camila] are in charge of randomly choosing one girl or boy from each region to board the ship and design the **22MCh Plan** together. After a week, 20 accomplices of similar ages are already gathered in the airship, which is parked on a cloud, between the Iztaccihuatl and Popocatepetl volcanoes. They put forward their ideas and proposals, decide and take notes. Soon they have the **22MCh Plan** ready.

Like Camila, Emilio and the extraterrestrials, all Mexicans, regardless of age or region of the country, can do our bit to improve the environment and, consequently, our quality of life.

People who enjoy reading this story will appreciate the richness of the diversity that our country has, as well as the imperative need for all of us to take an active role in its preservation. These actions range from the seemingly insignificant and domestic actions to the collective linkage and the demand for governmental actions with the knowledge of the regulatory frameworks that apply in this area.





BELLY BUTTON MISSION

The Bembo Std font family was used.



FLOR GUGA is a full-time cartoonist and author of *Guga Cómits*, a graphic narrative and fanzine project. Freelance animator and illustrator, she has been awarded one of the Massachusetts Independent Comic Expo (MICE) Mini Grants 2021 with the comic *El rastro*. She is also the illustrator of the project *Historieta de sargazos*, sponsored by IFAL in 2021. She has won the 24 Hours of Comic Book 2019 award organized by IFAL and *Marvin* magazine, as well as the Arturia prize in the GIFMe Space contest of the Animasivo Festival, 2019. She also received Honorable Mention in the MICE Mini Grants, 2020, with the graphic novel project *Baldía*. She illustrated the first five volumes of the S Collection of Children's Literature, published by the Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México from 2016 to 2017, and currently works as a professor of Animation at the same university.



Belly Button Mission tells the story of Emilio's worries about the increasing deterioration of the natural wealth where he lives, due to the incessant human activities. He is not sure what to do or how to participate in stopping the deterioration of his environment, but with the help of his best friend, Camila, and two friendly aliens, he manages to realize the magnitude of the problem and then take action.

This book from the **Árbol** collection is an invitation to enjoy reading and to reflect on the importance of citizen participation in the care and preservation of the environment.

The final pages include a section with suggestions for adults on how to exchange points of view between them and the children about the concepts addressed in the narrative.