



Rosa M. Curto / Aleix Cabrera

The
fairies
tell us about...
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One acorn, two acorns, one mushroom, three pine nuts, one walnut... Valentina the fairy picked up everything she found in her path.

"I think somebody is losing the day's harvest."

And she was exactly right. At the entrance to the pine forest, there was a squirrel carrying a sack and the sack had a hole in it big enough for some pine nuts, some acorns, a walnut and a small mushroom to pass through. “What have you got in the sack?” asked the fairy in a mocking tone.



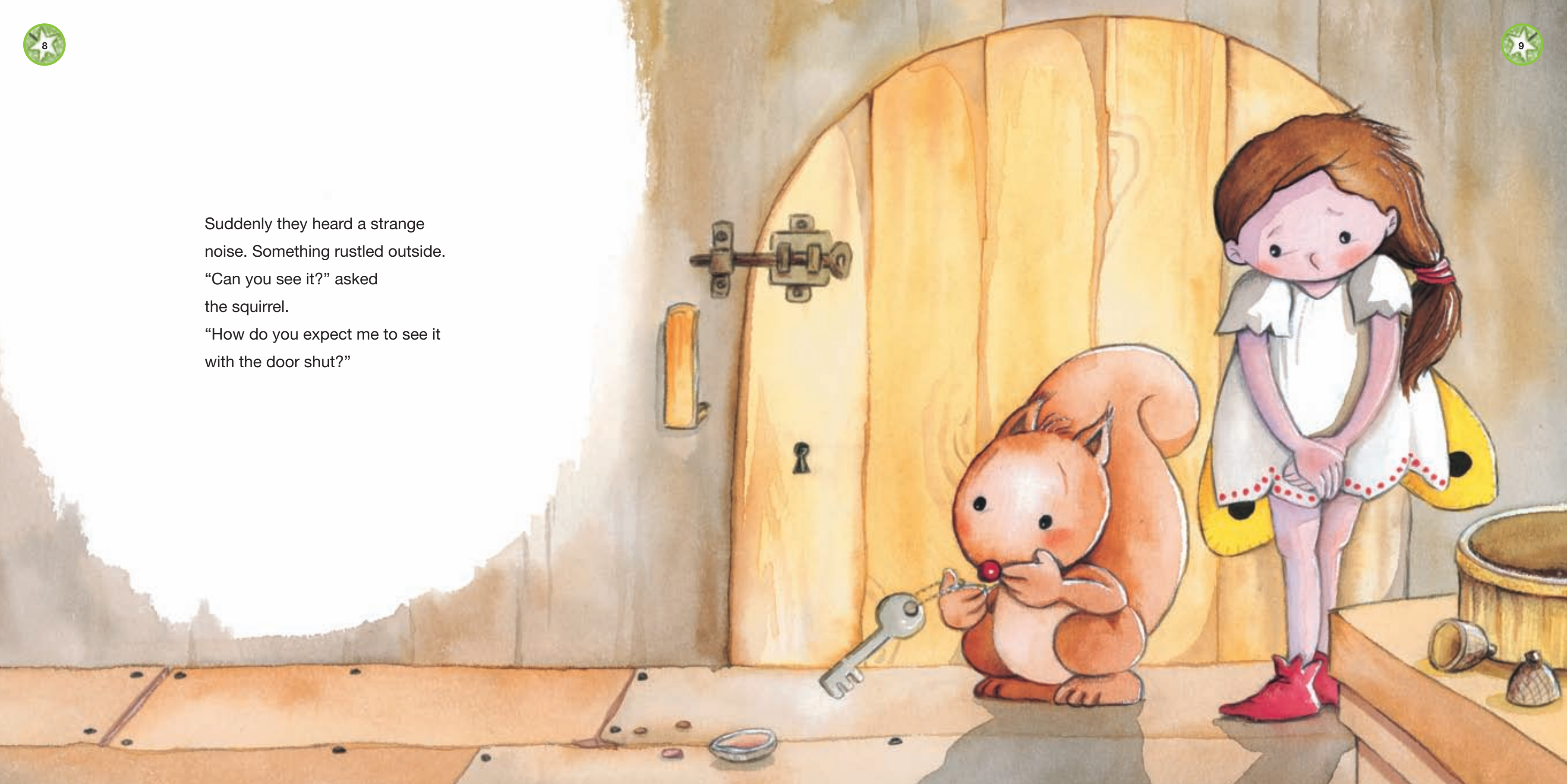


The little animal was very surprised and ran to his den and Valentina went after him.

“What are you running away from? Are you scared of me?”

“No, I’m not scared” replied the rodent, as he closed the door and locked it behind them. “But I don’t like nighttime and it’s starting to get dark.”

Suddenly they heard a strange noise. Something rustled outside.
“Can you see it?” asked the squirrel.
“How do you expect me to see it with the door shut?”

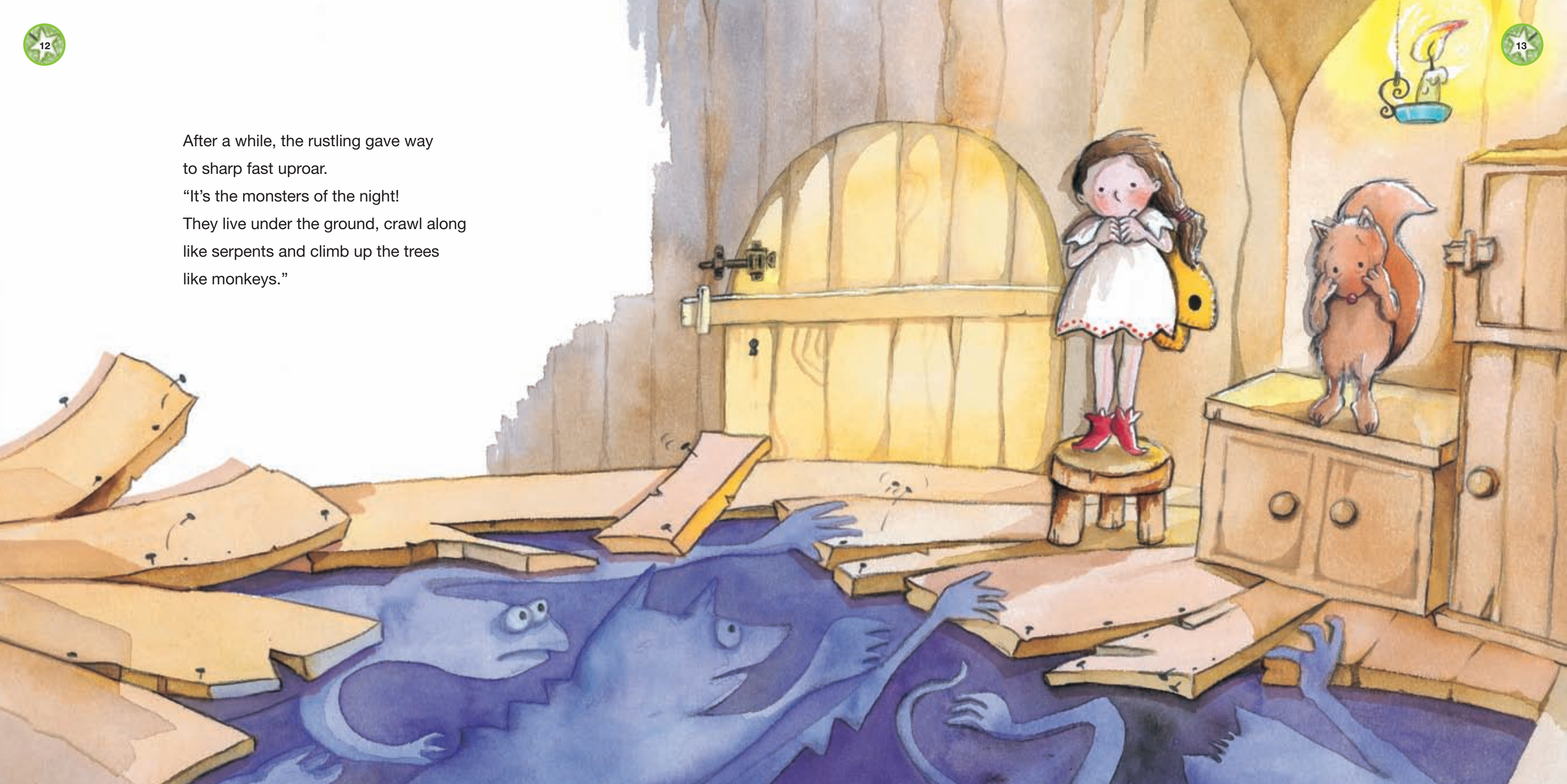




The rustling grew more intense.

"It's the sound of the ground cracking. Like I was saying, the night isn't safe. You never know where you're treading and what you're treading on."

After a while, the rustling gave way
to sharp fast uproar.
“It’s the monsters of the night!
They live under the ground, crawl along
like serpents and climb up the trees
like monkeys.”





The fairy started to imagine it. And what if it were all true? Why wouldn't it be true?

After all, the squirrel knew the pine forest, while she lived a long way away, near the pool.

Crouching down next to each other, they could hardly tell who was trembling the most.



“If they’re monsters of the night, that means that they go away in the daytime, doesn’t it?” whispered the fairy.

“I hope so, because we wouldn’t last a week with what I’ve got in the cupboard.”

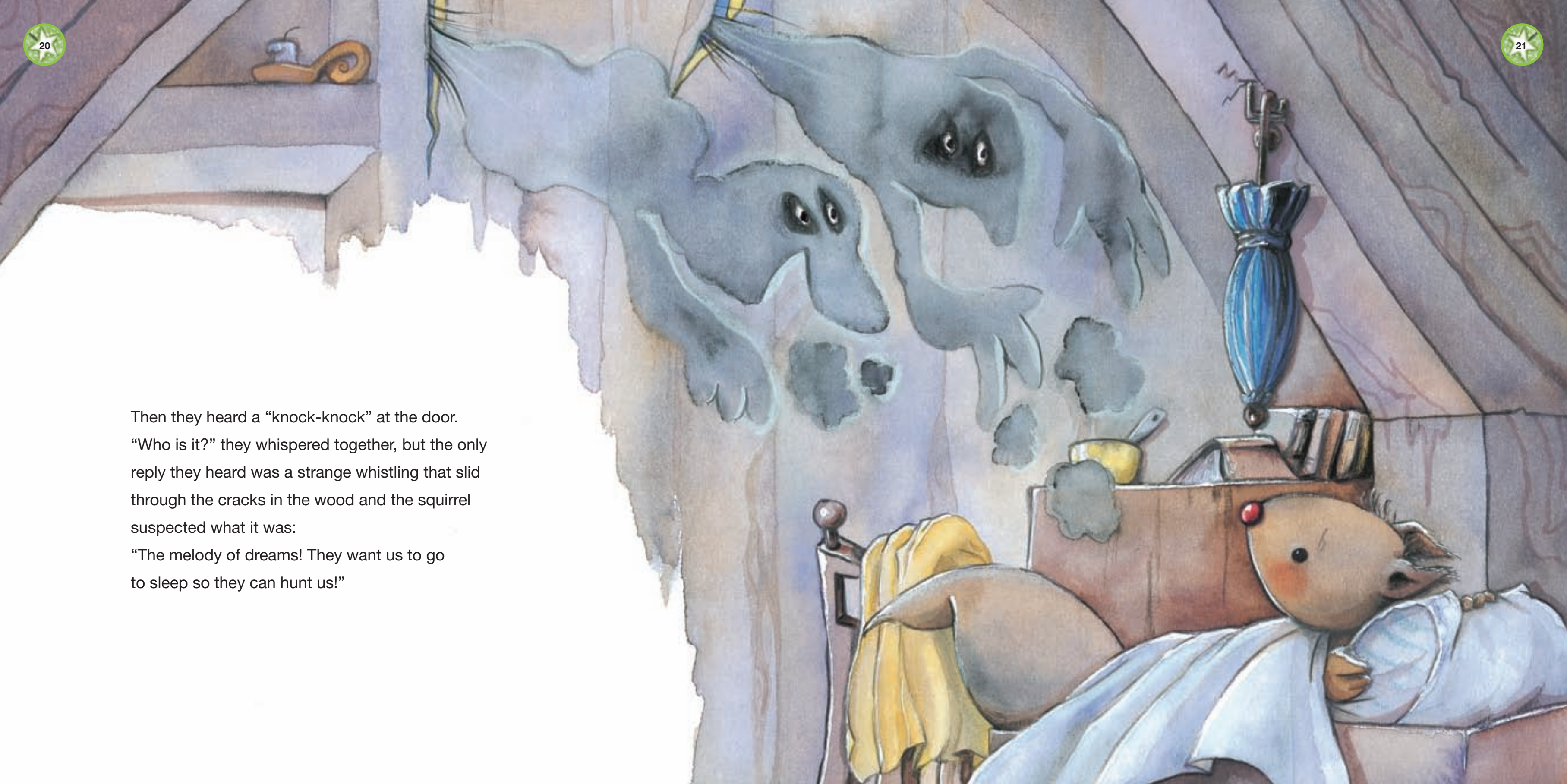
“And if we try to sleep?” suggested Valentina. “When we wake up it will be daytime.”





Neither of them slept a wink. The night seemed to last forever. It was as if time had stopped.

“Maybe they’re intelligent monsters that eat clocks to make time stop, so that it’s always night and we’ll have to go out sooner or later” finished the squirrel.



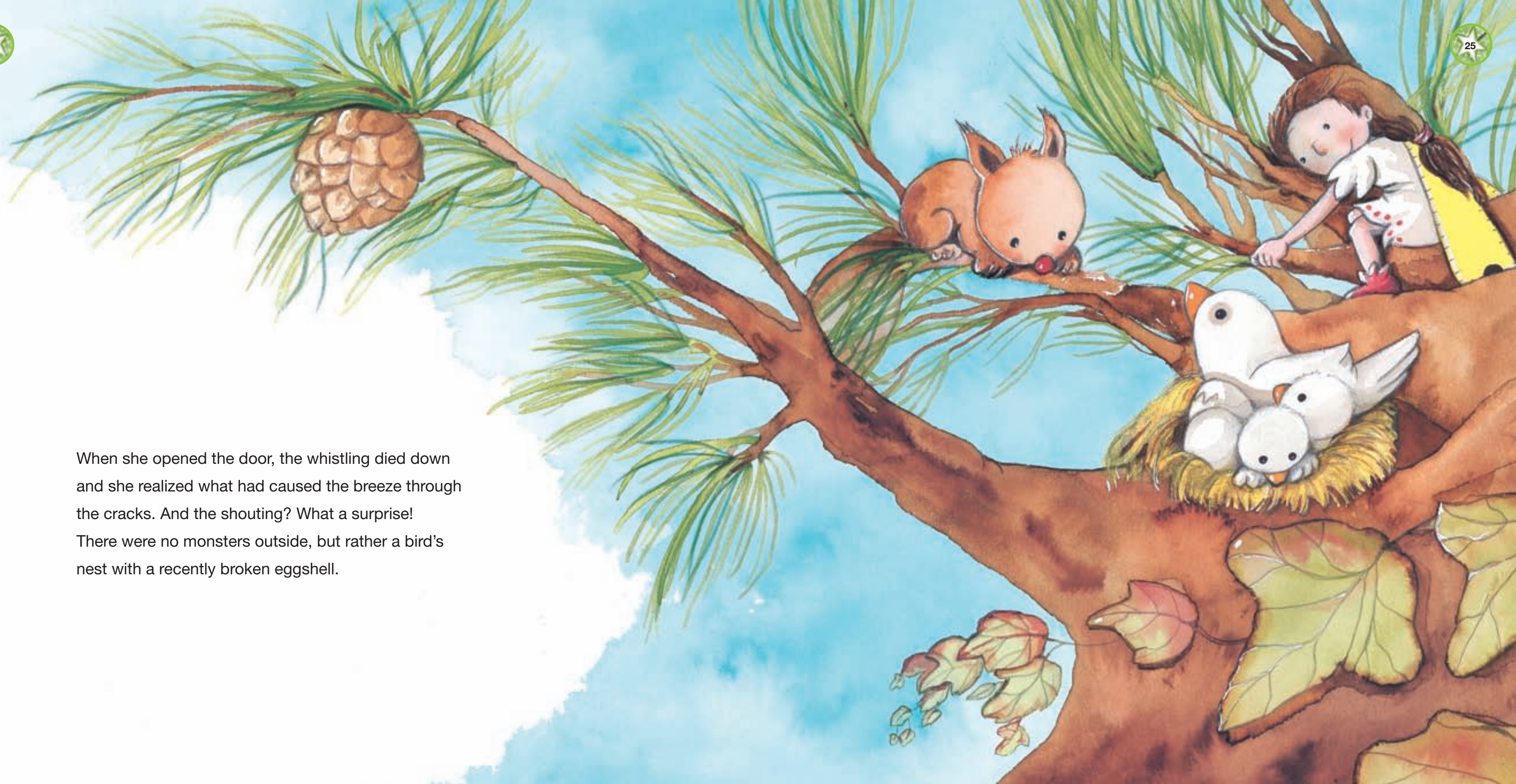
Then they heard a “knock-knock” at the door.
“Who is it?” they whispered together, but the only
reply they heard was a strange whistling that slid
through the cracks in the wood and the squirrel
suspected what it was:
“The melody of dreams! They want us to go
to sleep so they can hunt us!”



They fought against the sweet tones until the first rays of sunlight appeared under the door. It was daytime! But on the other side, the noise continued. So much so, that the fairy plucked up the courage to go and find out what it was.



When she opened the door, the whistling died down and she realized what had caused the breeze through the cracks. And the shouting? What a surprise! There were no monsters outside, but rather a bird's nest with a recently broken eggshell.





Valentina and the squirrel hadn't moved the whole night long, for fear of something that only existed in their imagination and they had missed their new neighbors' birth. From then onwards, they would confront their fears and never turn their backs on them again.

Have you ever asked yourself why it's so difficult to see fairies? Well, it's very simple. They hide, change shape, reducing their size by a hundred times and even disappear.

Learning more

How do fairies hide?



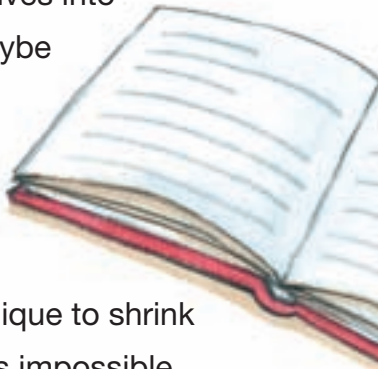
Hideouts

Like children, fairies like playing hide and seek very much and you'll never find them in the same place, because they are curious and playful. You can find them under the sand on the beach, inside a bamboo cane near the river, or in the teapot in the kitchen.



Transformation

Some fairies' ability to change shape makes them the queens of camouflage. They can transform themselves into snowflakes, dry leaves and twigs. It is said that they can camouflage themselves by imitating the colors and shapes of their surroundings, like certain insects and chameleons. But what they most like doing is changing themselves into writing and hiding inside books. Maybe one is hiding between the lines of this book, you never know...



Shrinking

Some fairies make use of this technique to shrink as small as a grain of sand. Then it's impossible to see them with the naked eye. You need a magnifying glass! But they run the risk of being carried far away from home by a gust of air or a flood.

Disappearing

There are three techniques for vanishing. The first one, which we can barely see, consists in moving very quickly, faster than a fly or a mosquito. The next one is the technique of mental teleportation. The fairy thinks about another place or another fairy and goes there instantaneously. Finally, some fairies can become invisible at will.



Animal camouflage

Just like the fairies, the little animals of the forest can also hide and blend into their surroundings. Can you find them all?

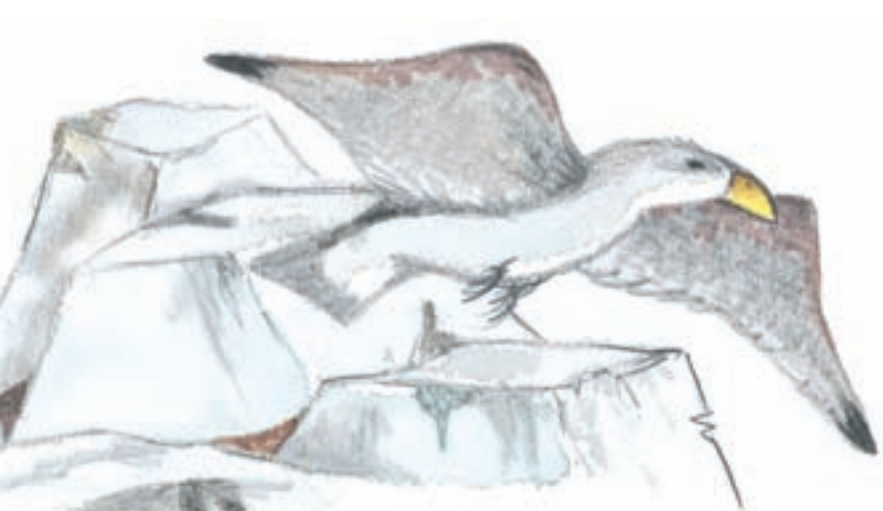
The curious art of mimicry



The phenomenon by which some animals adopt the visual shape, color and even the texture of other animal or plant species is called *mimicry*. This feature enables them to camouflage themselves, that is, blend into their surroundings. Thus they shake off predatory animals and escape from being hunted.

Protective color

Thanks to mimicry, baby animals often have additional protection. Fawns' coats have brown tints and white patches, like those the sun projects through the leaves of the trees and unlike an adult



deer, they don't give off any smell. Also, wild boars, hedgehogs, squirrels and lions are similar colors to the environment where they live. Similar examples are found among birds. Seagulls adopt the grey color of stony places, while the ochre and toasted colors of the undergrowth are the ideal clothing for female ducks, partridges and pheasants and their eggs. In damp areas, toads blend into the ground, frogs fade into the aquatic vegetation and water snakes blend into the rocks.

Keeping in shape

As well as color, some animals have evolved to imitate the shape of their surroundings.



This is the case with many insects, such as the praying mantis, stick insect and leaf insect. The pride of the Geometridae butterfly family is the ability to remain rigid for hours on end, as if they were the twigs or shoots of a tree.

Bordering perfection

Color, shape... can you go further in the art of camouflage? Yes. Some species benefit from having an identical visual texture to their surroundings. For example, the silver birch moth has the same texture as the bark of the tree. Undoubtedly, but the kings of camouflage are the animals that can change color and visual texture



depending on where they are. This is the case of the cuttlefish, sole, chameleon and some species of gecko.

Aposematism

Mimicry doesn't always mean that the animals go unnoticed. Sometimes, they imitate colors and shapes of dangerous species that contain venom or are larger, to warn off and frighten their predators. That's why some fish and butterflies look like they have eyes drawn on their bodies, like the owl butterfly.



Courage

Courage, which is also called bravery, is the firmness of spirit when faced with dangers or difficulties. It is the quality with which adverse situations are met with strength and decisiveness.

You are courageous when...

- You get up after falling and continue walking.
- You carry on with your projects despite criticisms.
- You acknowledge your limitations and try to overcome them.

Think about the first day of school. Did you know that most of the pupils are as scared as the teachers? Together, they can make this concern disappear in a simple way: By speaking about it.

Fear is part of human nature. When we share our fears with parents and friends, they become so small that we will soon be able to laugh about them. Remember that the bravest person is not the one who hides his fears, but rather who accepts them and tries to overcome them.

You are not courageous when...

- You're scared to read aloud for fear of making mistakes.
- You take the longer path to avoid meeting somebody who scares you.
- You act like the others to go unnoticed, but you're not convinced about it.

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