



*A TALE OF BAT, OR HOW TO KEEP PEOPLE  
FROM GETTING SICK*

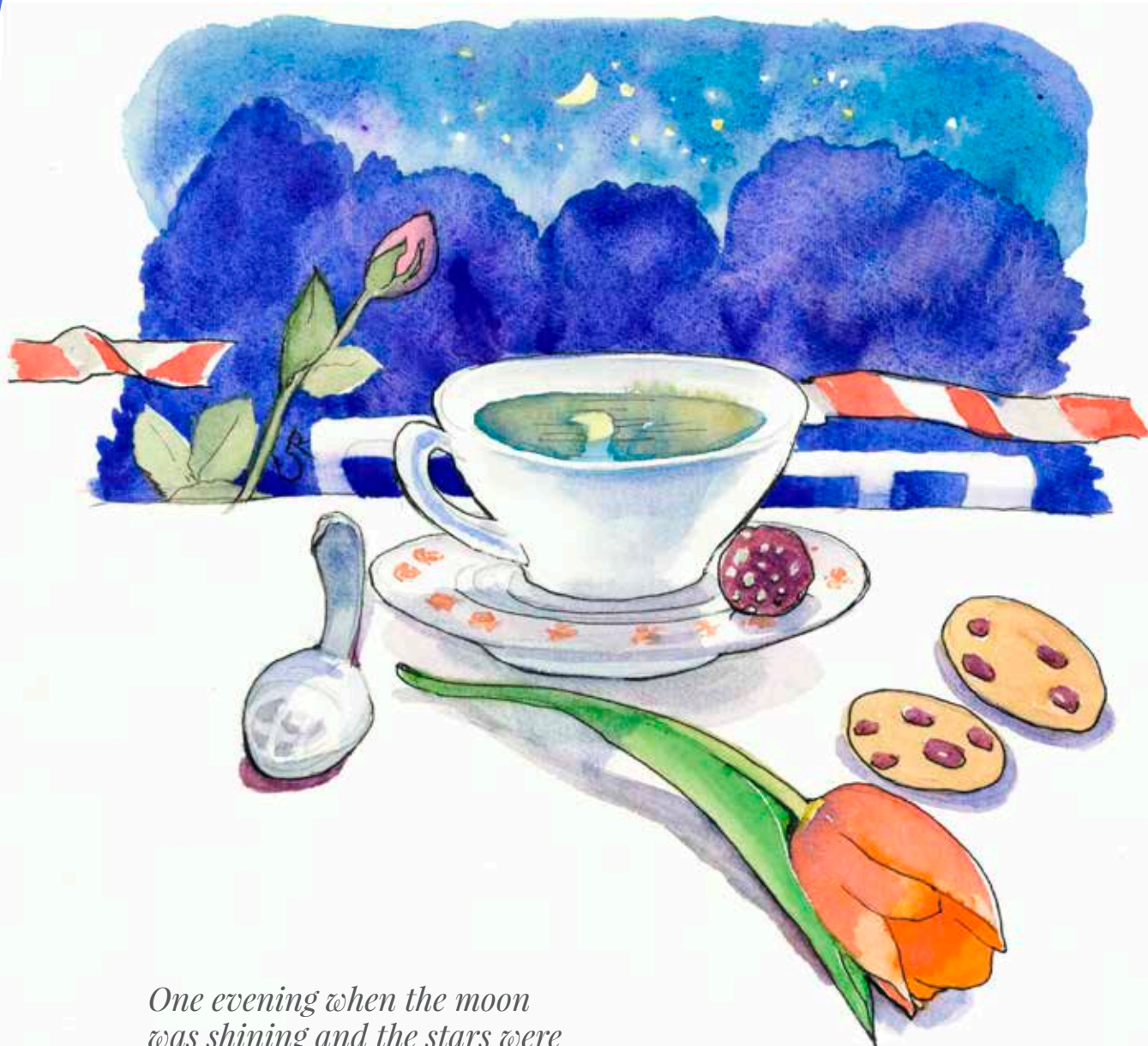


*Little Lenchen, who lives in a cozy little house with a small garden in the old city Marburg along the Lahn River Valley, has been staying home with her dad and mom for several weeks now because of quarantine.*

*What is quarantine? Oh, now we are all experts in it. This is when a lot more people than usual get sick, and even some pets fall ill, so everyone is asked politely to stay at home and not go out unless absolutely necessary.*







*One evening when the moon  
was shining and the stars were  
scattered across the sky, Lenchen  
thought of her kindergarten, the  
little friends she had not seen for a  
long while, and this made her very sad:*

- Mom, will Owl Sofia visit us? She promised.*
- Yes, of course, Sofia always keeps her word.*

*The Lenchen family had a tradition: in the evenings, they would  
all get together for tea in the garden gazebo. Once a week, their  
feathered friend Owl Sofia joined their tea party.*

*Lenchen was in the garden, waiting impatiently for the owl to drop by when something black and brown suddenly fell from a tree. This «something» straightened out its leathery wings and started flapping them real quick right in front of the little girl's nose. It was also making strange noises.*

*- A-ah-ah, Mom, how scary!*



*Frightened Lenchen darted right off to her mom. A small sparrow-sized chiropteran turned out to be... a bat. It did not want to scare anyone. The Bat fell into the grass head down and wept bitterly: «Why is everyone so scared of me?»*





«Who is afraid of you, dear?» said the Owl, who had just flown into the garden. «Oh, Owl, don't eat me, please,» the bat squealed and wept even harder. «I know from our bat ABC that you, owls, like to nibble at us.»

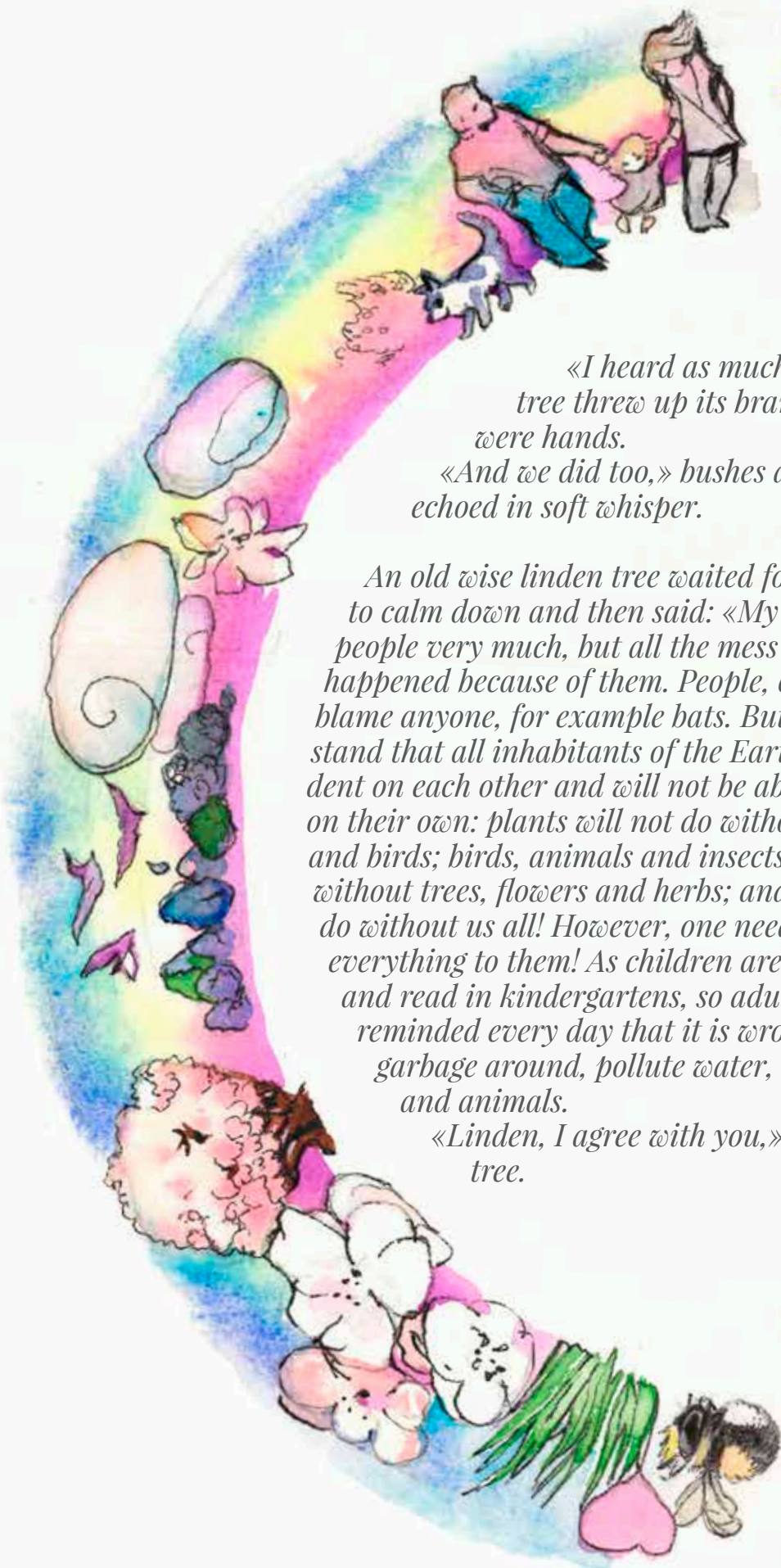
«Here, here, baby,» the Owl began to lose temper. «I'm here for a visit, not for hunting.»

However, the frightened Bat didn't listen and kept muttering: «Don't get anywhere near me, please! I know, nobody loves us, they all want to chase us away.»

Only the weeping of the Bat and the chirping of crickets could be heard in the garden.

The Owl felt sorry for the bat.

«Bat, would you calm down, pretty please? Indeed, they could be rude to you. I even heard that they blame you for a terrible disease because of which people all over the world have to hide at home.»




*«I heard as much,» an apple tree threw up its branches as if they were hands.*

*«And we did too,» bushes and herbs echoed in soft whisper.*

*An old wise linden tree waited for everyone to calm down and then said: «My dear, we love people very much, but all the mess on our planet happened because of them. People, of course, can blame anyone, for example bats. But we understand that all inhabitants of the Earth are dependent on each other and will not be able to survive on their own: plants will not do without insects and birds; birds, animals and insects can't live without trees, flowers and herbs; and people can't do without us all! However, one needs to explain everything to them! As children are taught to write and read in kindergartens, so adults should be reminded every day that it is wrong to throw garbage around, pollute water, maim trees and animals.*

*«Linden, I agree with you,» said the Apple tree.*





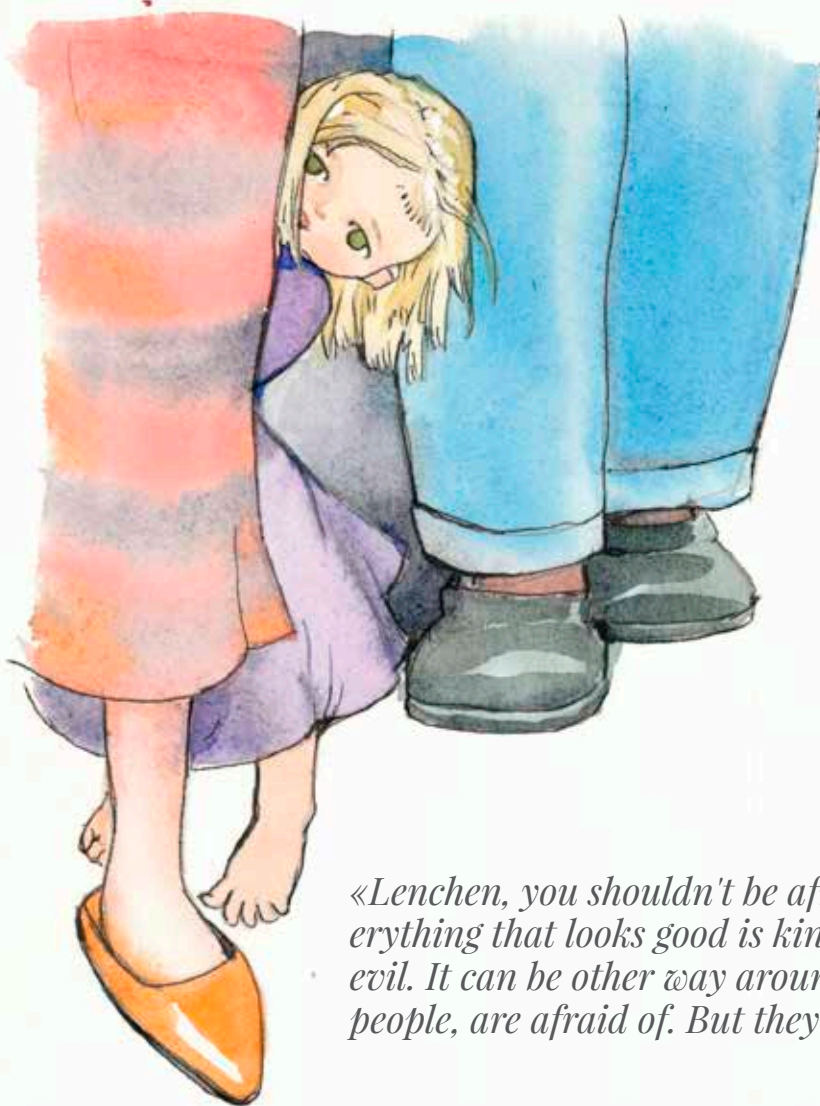
*"Yes, we all agree," the Owl answered. «We are all lucky here because the whole city of Marburg and the Lenchen family, our kind hosts, know our language. These people understand us well and would never hurt us.»*

*«But this is an exception. There are very few such people,» sighed the Bat. «For example, people never understood us, bats: they cut down the forests where we live and poison the insects we eat, even though we save their trees and crops in their fields... Just now little Lenchen got scared of me and ran away.»*

*«That's what I think,» said the Apple tree. «We need to talk more about you, bats.»*

*«Why?» the Bat was surprised.*

*«Why?» The Apple tree continued. «All living beings on the planet are interconnected. And if one of them gets in trouble, it will affect everyone else. You have been harassed – now look at people.»*



*Suddenly everyone went silent because they could hear the sound of footsteps. It was the smiling girl carrying fragrant peppermint tea to the gazebo in the garden. Her parents' hands were full of pretzels, water vases and seeds for Owl Sofia. When Lenchen saw a little bat hovering in the air and flapping its wings next the Owl, she immediately hid behind her mother's back.*

*«Lenchen, you shouldn't be afraid!» said Sofia. «Not everything that looks good is kind, sometimes beauty conceals evil. It can be other way around too: like with bats that you, people, are afraid of. But they are true friends!»*







*The Bat was stunned: for the first time in her life, she heard people say such nice words about herself and her kin.*

*«All our guests are very-very welcome,» Lenchen said, sounding slightly moved. Having overcome her fear, she smiled.*

*The girl and her mother laid the tea table. Dad took the hose and treated all the trees, bushes, and grass in the garden to spring water.*

*Just when everyone was getting ready to have some tea, the Owl asked sternly: «Has everyone washed their hands and paws?»*

*Lenchen showed her clean palms but her parents, who did some cleaning up in the garden, went to wash their hands with soap. The Bat flew along.*

*Oh, how difficult it was for the Bat to wash her wings. But Lenchen gave her a helping hand and even taught the Bat to blow bubbles.*

*«What beautiful bubbles you make, little Bat!»*

*«Yours are cool too, Lenchen! Thanks!»*

*And the bat started dancing with joy in the air.*





*That evening was filled with various fairy tales, rainbow bubbles and laughter. The Bat was especially chatty because no-one had ever listened to her with such attention before. «We do not offend anyone, at night we 'see' with our ears,» the bat was on the roll. «I love my mom and dad very much, and our whole family adores trees and flowers, sky and night.»*



*It was so good that all decided that they should have more tea parties in the garden while it is still warm, and write a book about the language of birds and animals, trees and flowers. And even people! But only of those who love Nature from their very childhood.*





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*Coordinator of the Project Anna Scheidemann*

*Athror Myroslava Makarevych*

*Illustrator Olena Ryazantseva*

*Special thanks for the help with Translation:*

*Anastasia Petrokvitka, Ana dos Reis, Maksim Ryazantsev, Maria*

*Kondrachuk, Bianca Spindler*

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