

The Folk of Rijk's



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illustrated by Sandy Mitchell

Once upon a time, many years ago, before Rijk's was a hotel – before the magnificent Cape Dutch building stood amongst the vineyards and roses – there was just the valley, the wild mountains, the river and the whisper of tiny voices in the rushes.

The Fairies were known as the Folk of Rijk's – helpers to all who needed them. But over time, as people got busier and did more and saw less, they stopped believing in the Folk of Rijk's and so the fairies took on a disguise to protect themselves. They turned into dragonflies of many colours, and they flitted amongst the grasses and reeds and they worked and they waited. One day, they knew someone would come and give them a reason to reveal themselves.





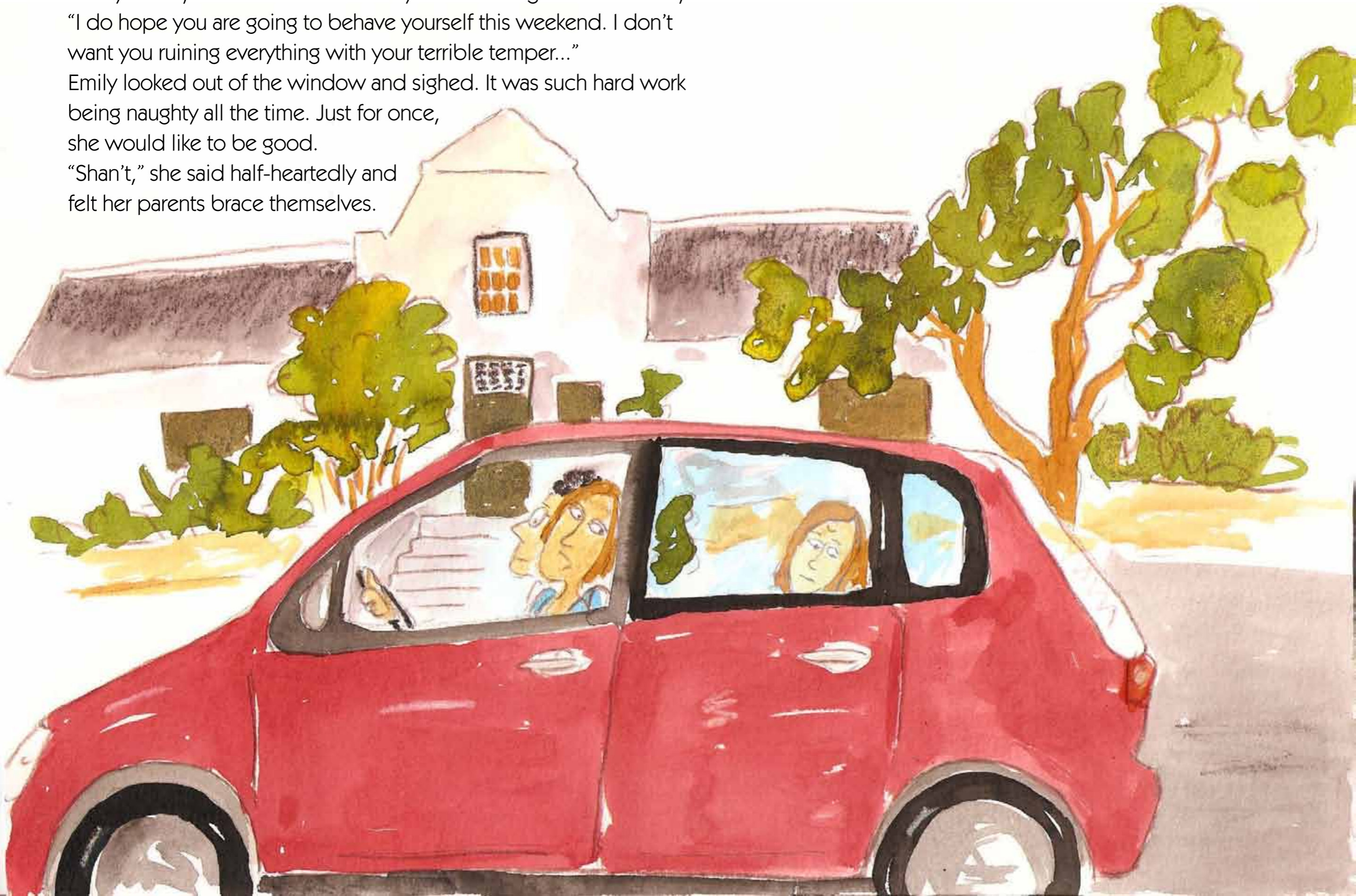
Emily Barker was not so much naughty as misunderstood. Her mother, father, nanny and teacher all misunderstood her and being adults, they did what adults are prone to: “Emily Barker,” they would shout, “Go To Your Room!”

Each time Emily spilt, dropped or fell over something she was sent away to ‘think about what she’d done.’ Over time, she began to deliberately spill, shout and stamp her feet. This way, at least she felt she deserved it when she was sent to her room.

“Emily Barker,” said her mother as they drove through Church Street,
“I do hope you are going to behave yourself this weekend. I don’t
want you ruining everything with your terrible temper..”

Emily looked out of the window and sighed. It was such hard work
being naughty all the time. Just for once,
she would like to be good.

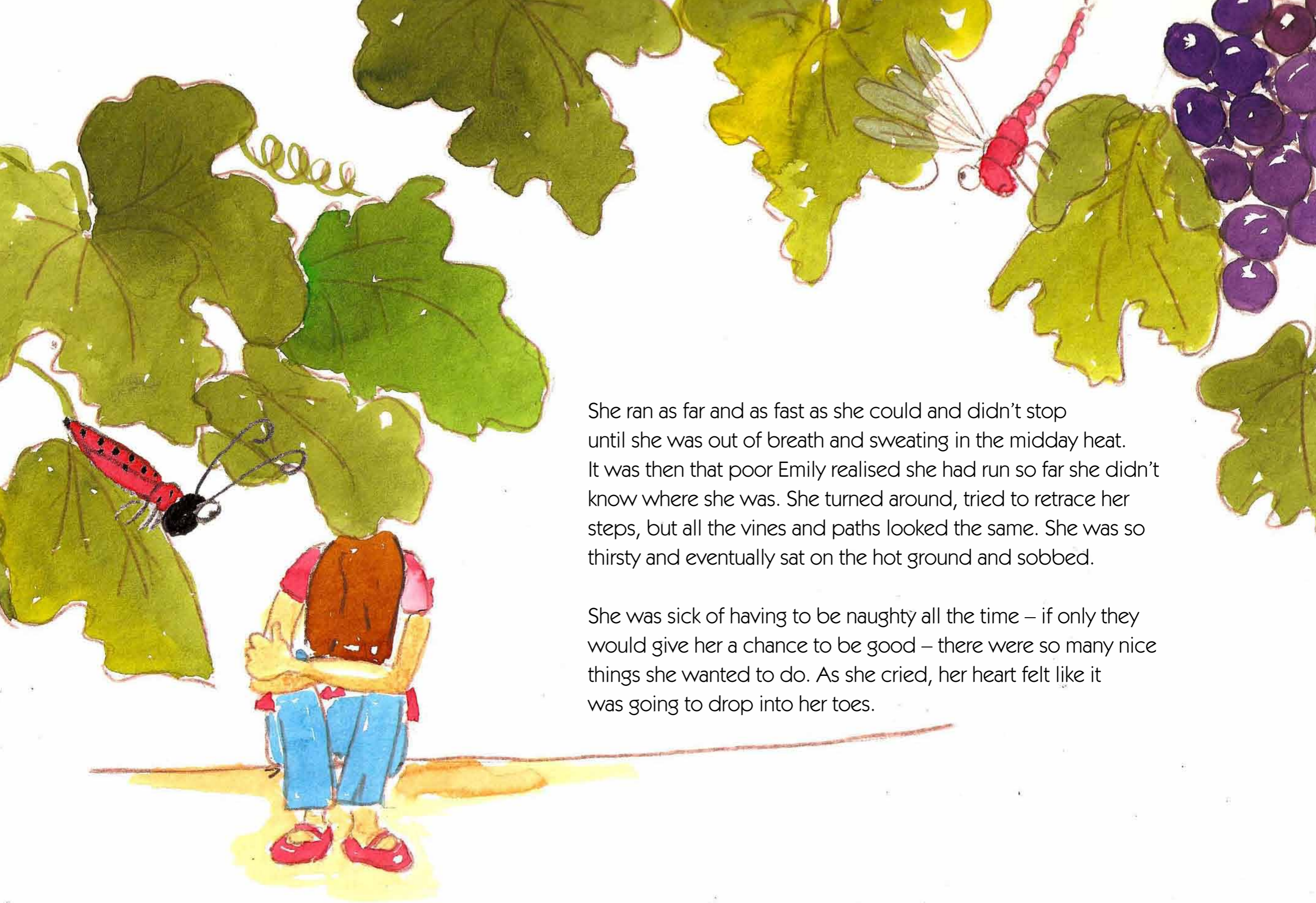
“Shan’t,” she said half-heartedly and
felt her parents brace themselves.



When they arrived at the hotel, Emily thought how beautiful everything was: gravel driveway crunching like peanut brittle under the car, tall trees like soldiers and so many roses it was like the hotel had been iced around the edges. Her mother had told her about the play areas, pony riding,



mountain biking and swimming, but as usual, she would probably spend most of the weekend in her room, thinking about 'what she had done.' By the time Marie from Rijk's approached with a tray of iced drinks, Emily sprung from the car, knocked the tray out of Marie's hands and ran away from them all. "Oh dear," she heard her father say. "I'm afraid she's quite out of control..."



She ran as far and as fast as she could and didn't stop until she was out of breath and sweating in the midday heat. It was then that poor Emily realised she had run so far she didn't know where she was. She turned around, tried to retrace her steps, but all the vines and paths looked the same. She was so thirsty and eventually sat on the hot ground and sobbed.

She was sick of having to be naughty all the time – if only they would give her a chance to be good – there were so many nice things she wanted to do. As she cried, her heart felt like it was going to drop into her toes.



The Folk of Rijk's heard Emily. A child crying is the worst sound a fairy can hear so when they heard Emily's sobs they had no choice; they would have to reveal themselves, no matter what the consequences.

You can imagine the look on Emily's face when a tiny fairy, dressed in scarlet, darted in front of her. She wiped her eyes in disbelief and stopped crying for a moment but then she said, "You're not a proper fairy. Proper fairies have wings," and she started to cry all over again.

“Please, don’t cry! We can’t bear it! And don’t you know that proper fairies don’t have wings.”

Fairy Blue lifted a lock of Emily’s hair, Fairy Yellow took her finger and Fairy Scarlet said, “We’ll help you get back.”

“I don’t want to go back,” Emily wailed. “I just want to sit here and cry.”



The crying was like sharp glass in the fairies’ ears. “Oh, please let us help you,” said Fairy Scarlet. “There’s nothing anyone can do,” said Emily, sniffing. “I have to be naughty and that’s that. I’ll be in terrible trouble when I get back and I’ll have to spend the rest of the weekend in my room.”





“Why do you have to be naughty?” asked Fairy Blue.

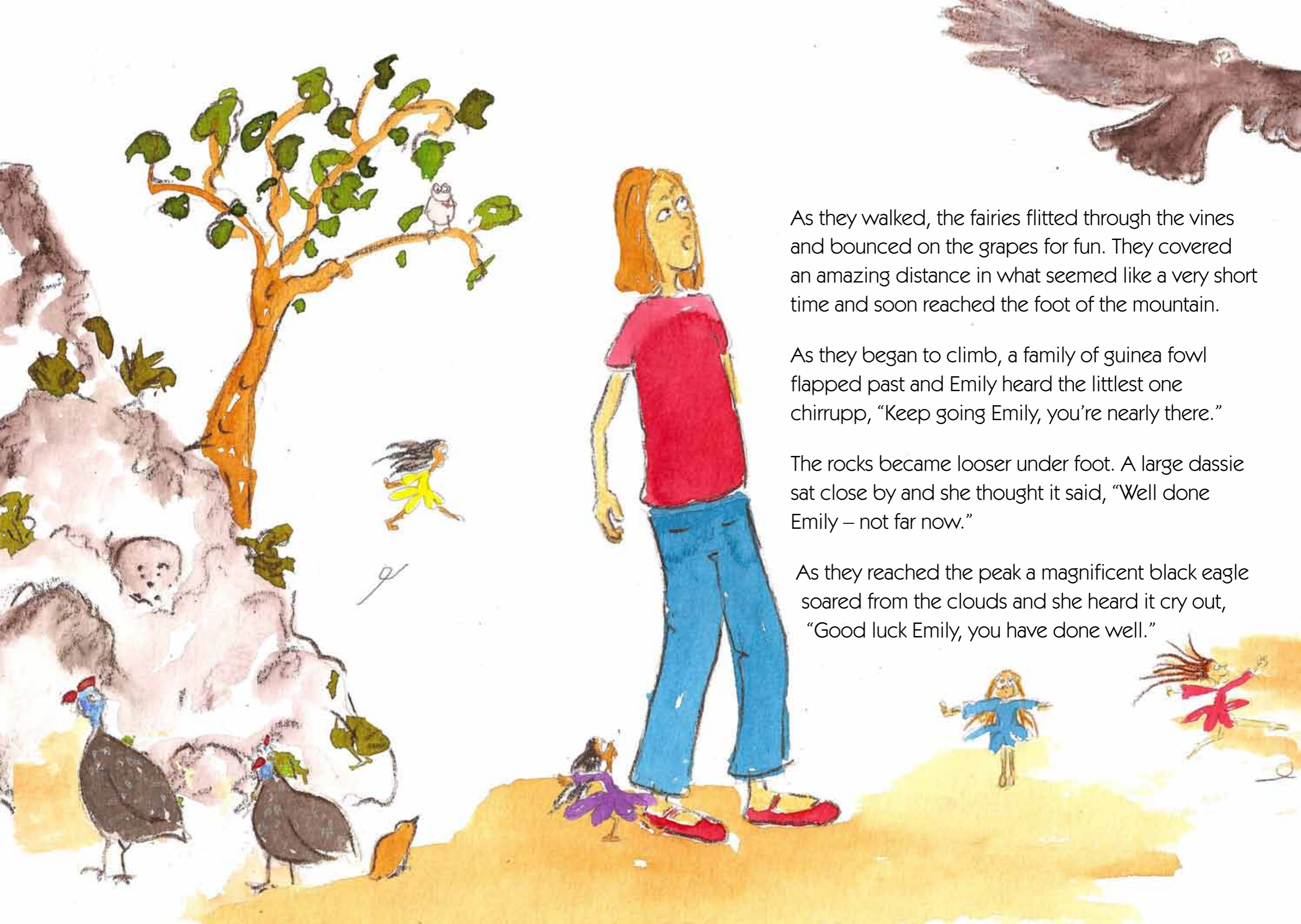
“Because it’s expected of me,” said Emily. “And now I don’t know how to be any other way.”

“Do you know you’ve already done something amazingly good today?” said Fairy Yellow.

“Really?” asked Emily and she stopped crying. “What?”

“Come with us and we’ll show you,” the fairies giggled.

As Emily got up she felt a drop of liquid on her tongue. It was sweet and cool and she no longer felt thirsty, hungry or tired.



As they walked, the fairies flitted through the vines and bounced on the grapes for fun. They covered an amazing distance in what seemed like a very short time and soon reached the foot of the mountain.

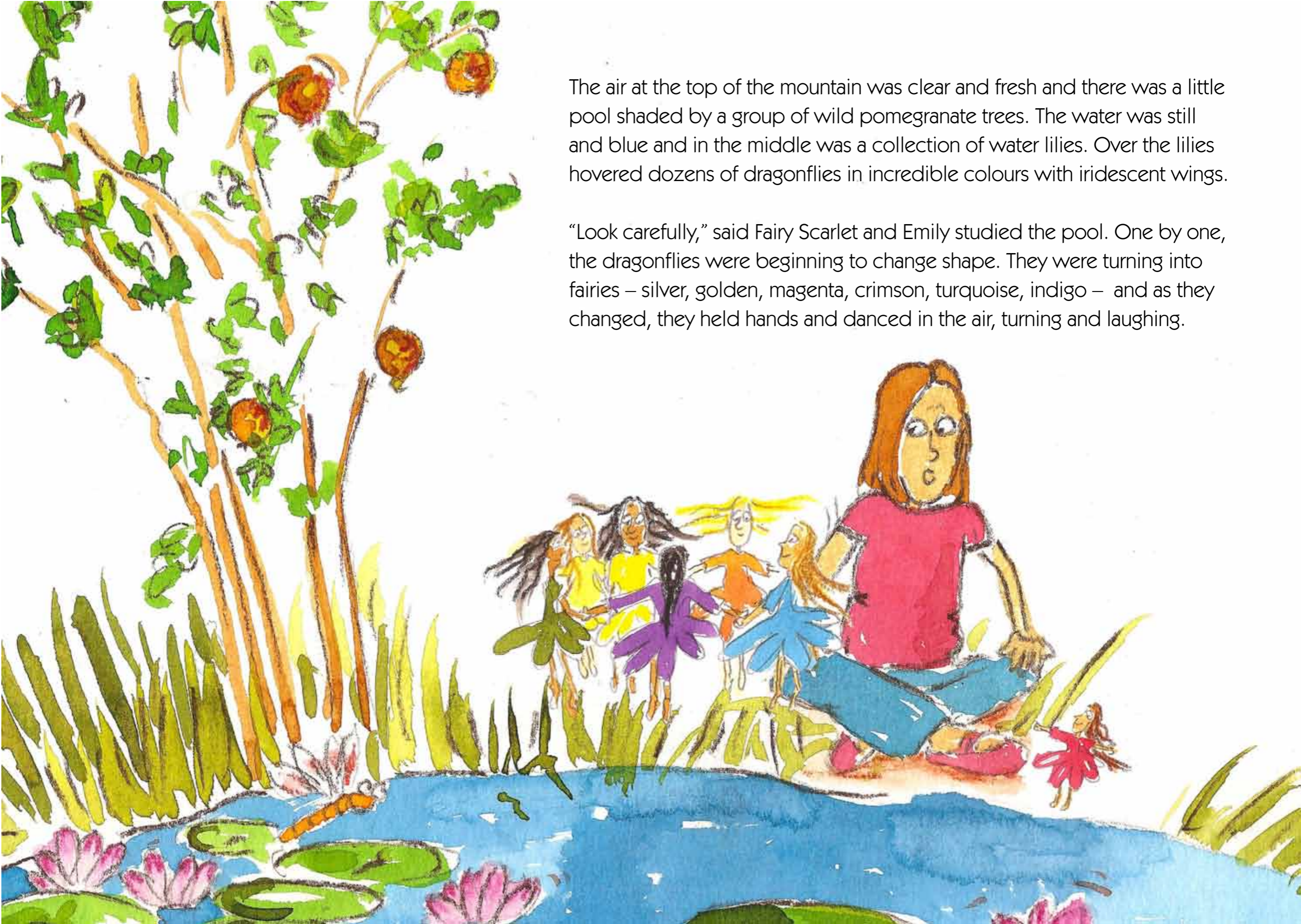
As they began to climb, a family of guinea fowl flapped past and Emily heard the littlest one chirrup, "Keep going Emily, you're nearly there."

The rocks became looser under foot. A large dassie sat close by and she thought it said, "Well done Emily – not far now."

As they reached the peak a magnificent black eagle soared from the clouds and she heard it cry out, "Good luck Emily, you have done well."

The air at the top of the mountain was clear and fresh and there was a little pool shaded by a group of wild pomegranate trees. The water was still and blue and in the middle was a collection of water lilies. Over the lilies hovered dozens of dragonflies in incredible colours with iridescent wings.

“Look carefully,” said Fairy Scarlet and Emily studied the pool. One by one, the dragonflies were beginning to change shape. They were turning into fairies – silver, golden, magenta, crimson, turquoise, indigo – and as they changed, they held hands and danced in the air, turning and laughing.



“You see, Emily,” laughed Fairy Scarlet. “You’ve brought us such joy today. We haven’t shown ourselves for hundreds of years and tonight we’ll celebrate. Our Fairy Queen, deep below this pond, will come out at midnight. She is the most beautiful and wise creature you can imagine. When we see her, it will be because of you!”

“I’ve done all that?” asked Emily in astonishment. “Yes,” said Fairy Blue. “And we’d like to give you a gift.” She flitted into the middle of the pool and all the fairies began to help her pull at the centre lily. They heaved until they finally sprang into the air with their treasure.





“Take this back with you,” said Fairy Blue. “Give it to your mother. Tell her you’ve met the Folk of Rijk’s and they gave you a special flower to make you a good girl from now on.”

Emily looked at the flower. Edged with deep pink it had a creamy vanilla centre. It smelt of fresh mountain berries and spring water. But then Emily remembered her mother’s face back at Rijk’s and she was doubtful of the Fairies’ plan. Fairy Scarlet flitted right in front of her face. “We trusted you Emily,” she said. “Now you must trust us.”

The walk back to the hotel was so quick. Emily wanted to linger by the lake and through the emerald vines. She wanted to see the guinea fowl again, the daisies, the eagle, but it was as if the fairies were carrying her and she was floating over the distance. When she saw Rijk's; the white walls bright against the green vines and blue sky, the pool sparkling beyond rolling lawns, she felt peaceful and happy. Emily remembered all the fun things her mother had spoken about and wanted to explore the library and the playroom, eat a picnic by the lake and ride a pony.

They crossed the river and Emily touched down on the wooden footbridge. She saw her mother by the fountain.



“Emily! Emily...darling...where are you? Please come out wherever you are...”

As Emily approached her mother she felt the flower, soft and cool in her hand.

“Emily! There you are. We’ve been so worried...” Her mother didn’t seem as cross as Emily had expected – in fact – she hugged Emily tightly and kissed her cheeks.



“I’ve brought you a gift,” said Emily remembering the lily. “I met the Folk of Rijk’s. They gave me this flower and said I would never be naughty again.”

“Oh darling,” said her mother. “What an imaginative story.” Then she hugged her tighter and kissed her some more. “And what a pretty flower. Aren’t I a lucky mother?” she said, holding the lily to her nose and inhaling its sweetness. “And if you’re not going to be naughty anymore – how about some swimming and pony riding?”

“That sounds wonderful, Mum,” said Emily, then she turned towards the river.



The dragonflies were bright and sparkled against the water. They darted amongst the rushes and through the reeds and Emily smiled. "Thank you Folk of Rijk's," she said out loud. Then she took her mother's hand and together they walked to the pool.



"I'll order you a triple scoop of ice-cream with chocolate fudge sauce," said her mother and Emily couldn't believe how everything had turned out. Rijk's was the most magical place in the world and she hoped they would be visiting many more times in the years to come.



Rijk's Country House is a real hotel set on the Award-Winning Rijk's Wine Estate. Surrounded by mountains, nature and the famously historic Tulbagh Valley, Rijk's is a place of incredible tranquility and beauty.

This book has been produced and published by Sally Cranswick and is available in digital format. Please enjoy it, print it, share it and read it time and again with your children, friends and family... and you are very welcome to forward it!

I hope you and your children enjoy Emily Barker's story. Please feel free to contact me via [email](#) or the Rijk's Facebook page.

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