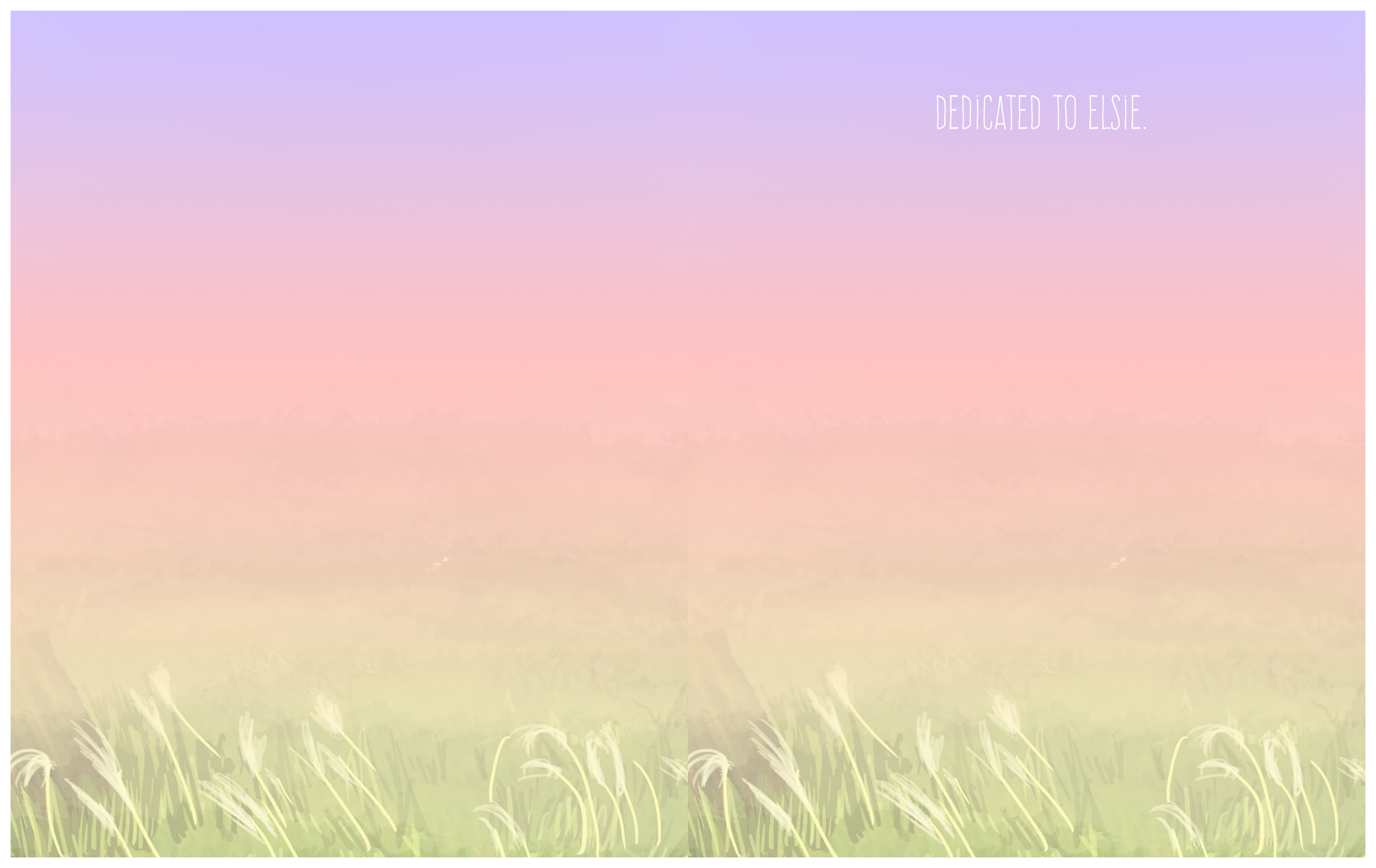


# FUR AND FEATHERS



WORDS AND ILLUSTRATION BY ALISON GRAHAM

DEDICATED TO ELSIE.

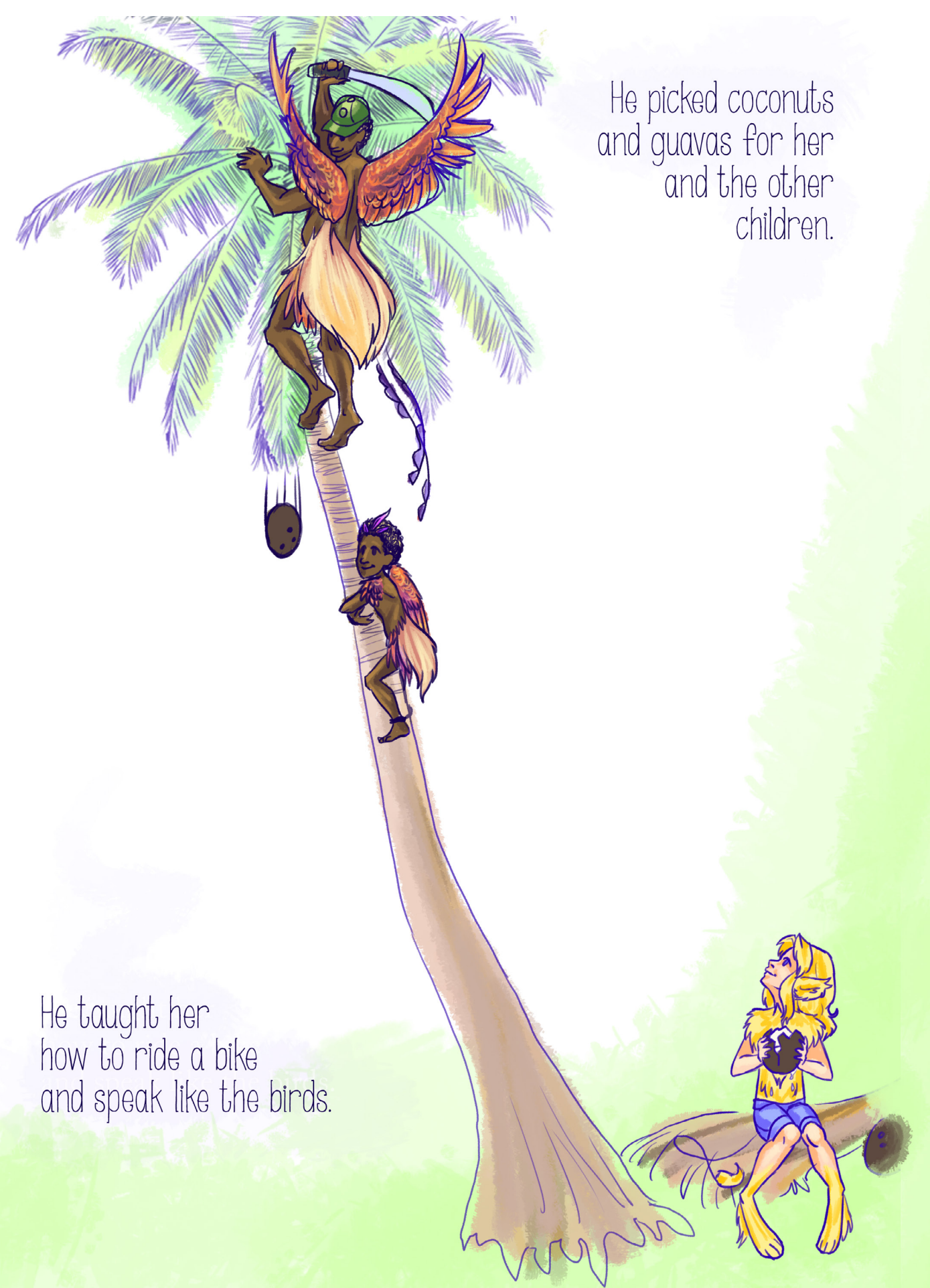


When the lion girl was little, the world was bright and sunny. Everyone was warm and friendly.

There was Hendri, who worked in her garden, and made beautiful



He picked coconuts and guavas for her and the other children.



He taught her how to ride a bike and speak like the birds.



Her favourite gardens were not the ones Hendri tended, though. The gardens she loved best rose out of deep blue abysses, refuges of colour and activity. Instead of birds, fish flitted through their coral branches.



They were pretty, but these gardens were dangerous to lions.

Once she'd stepped on a poisonous fish that filled her foot with agony.



But the Dive Master had been there, and he brought boiling water and plants, and made her dip her foot into it, and told her stories and made her laugh until she forgot the pain.



There was Menalla, who cleaned their house and cooked and only spoke the bird-tongue, but understood the lion girl's demands for food all the same.



And there were also her friends!

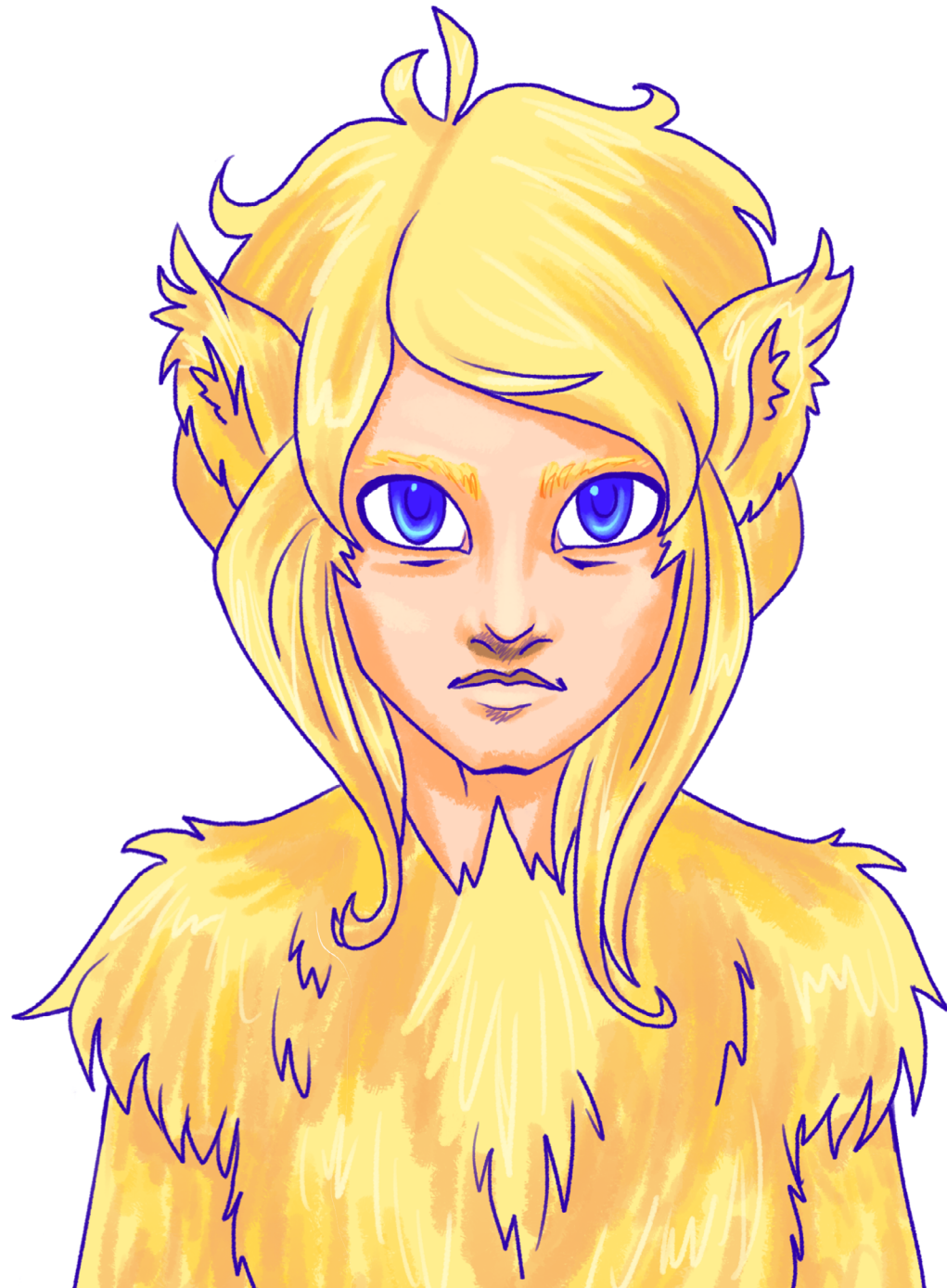


Her friends were other young birds who played with her, And gave her small gifts and food.

They showed her new things, taking her to explore the hot green world that was home.



When the lion girl grew older, the world became harsh and searing.



The words the birds spoke were not kind. they saw her mane and tail and presumed her ignorant, and did not realise that she would know they talked about her.



Sometimes they wanted her to know they talked about her, yelling lewd things she did not want to understand.



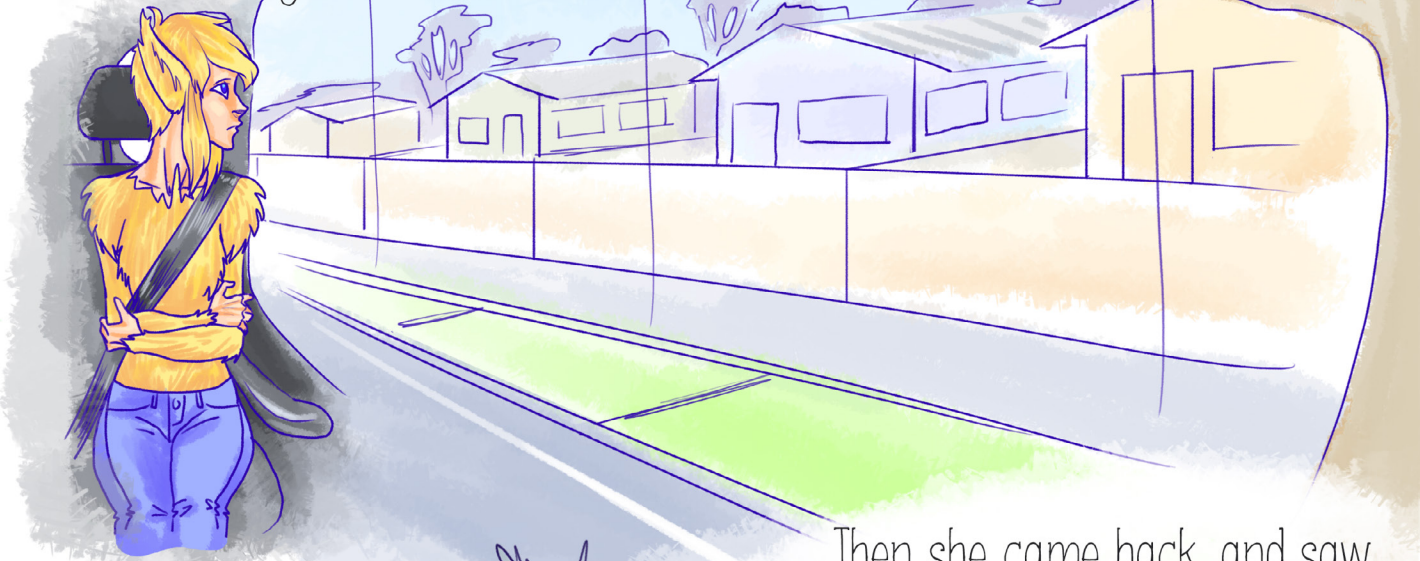
She saw how things were wrong, had always been wrong outside her garden of coconuts and guavas and coral reef adventures.

She saw how birds were struck down by diseases that, in other places, did not exist or were not deadly.

This worried her, but it did not hurt until a bird she'd been friends with as a child was spirited away by illness, leaving a son behind.



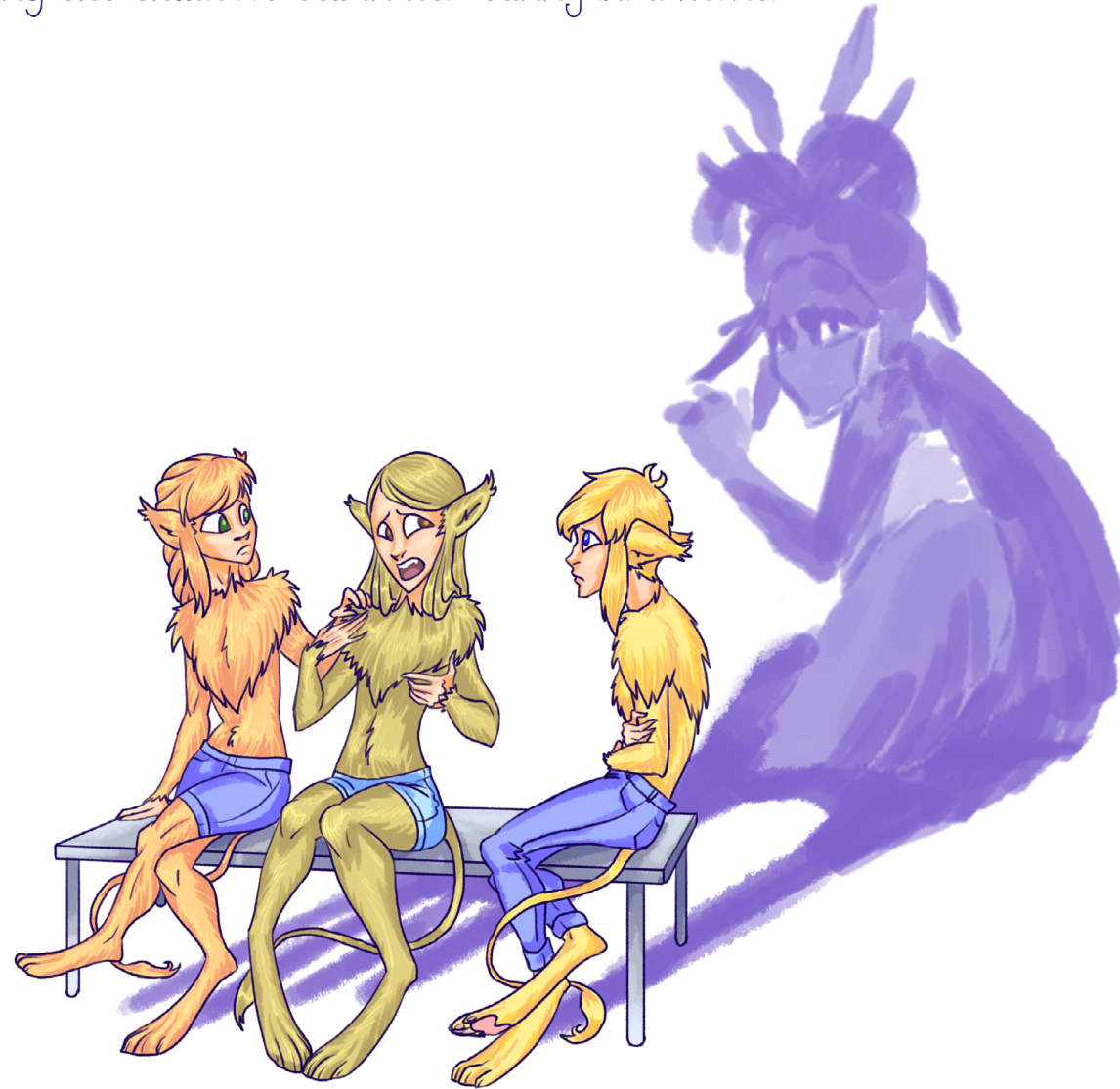
It did not hurt until she left to live in a country with lots of other lions, Menalla weeping on the day she left, and became used to lions and good health and things working.



Then she came back, and saw how things did not work, and it hurt.

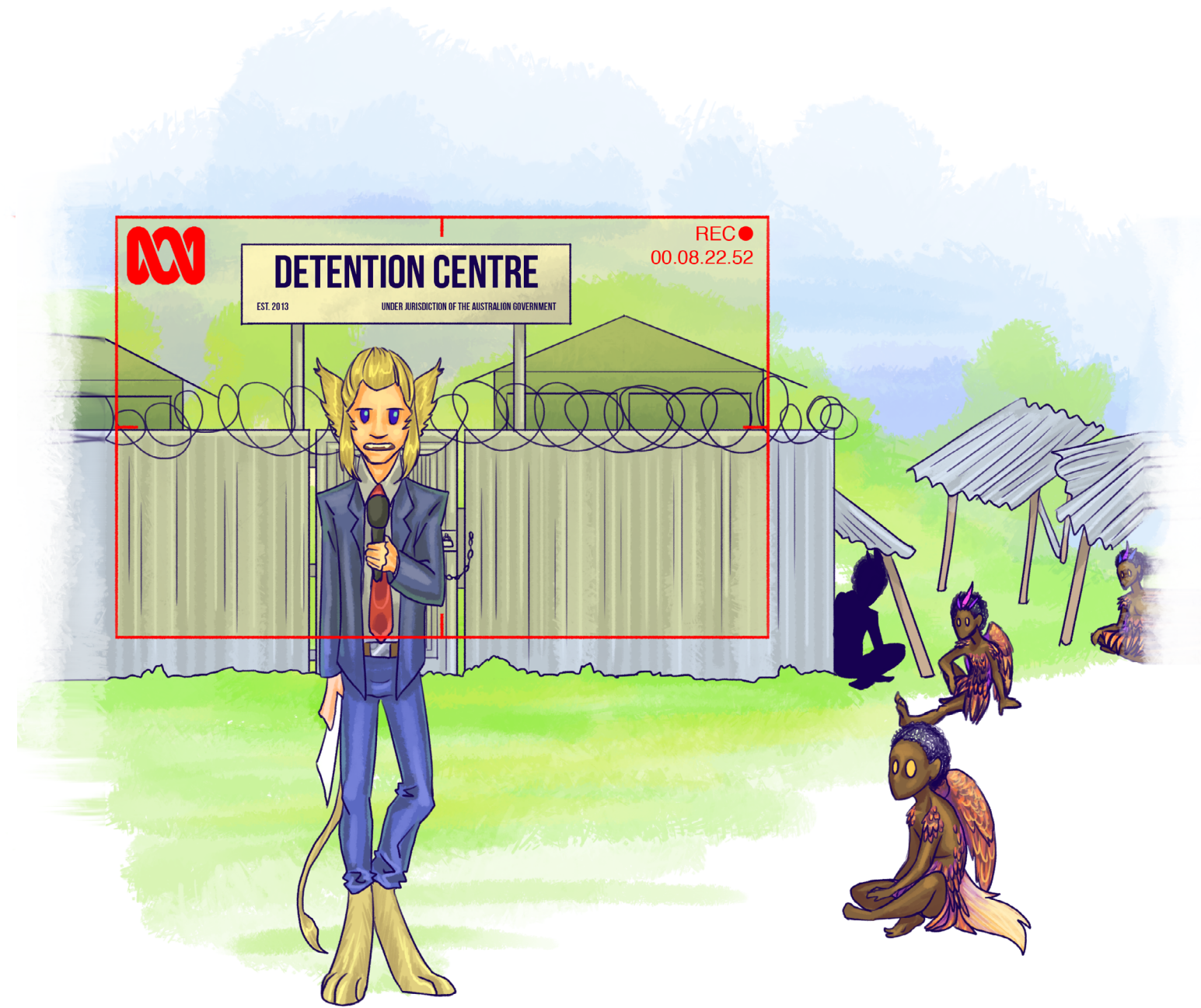


The difference between fur and feathers began to show. Growing used to the lion's world made it painfully clear how long the shadows fell in her sunny bird home.



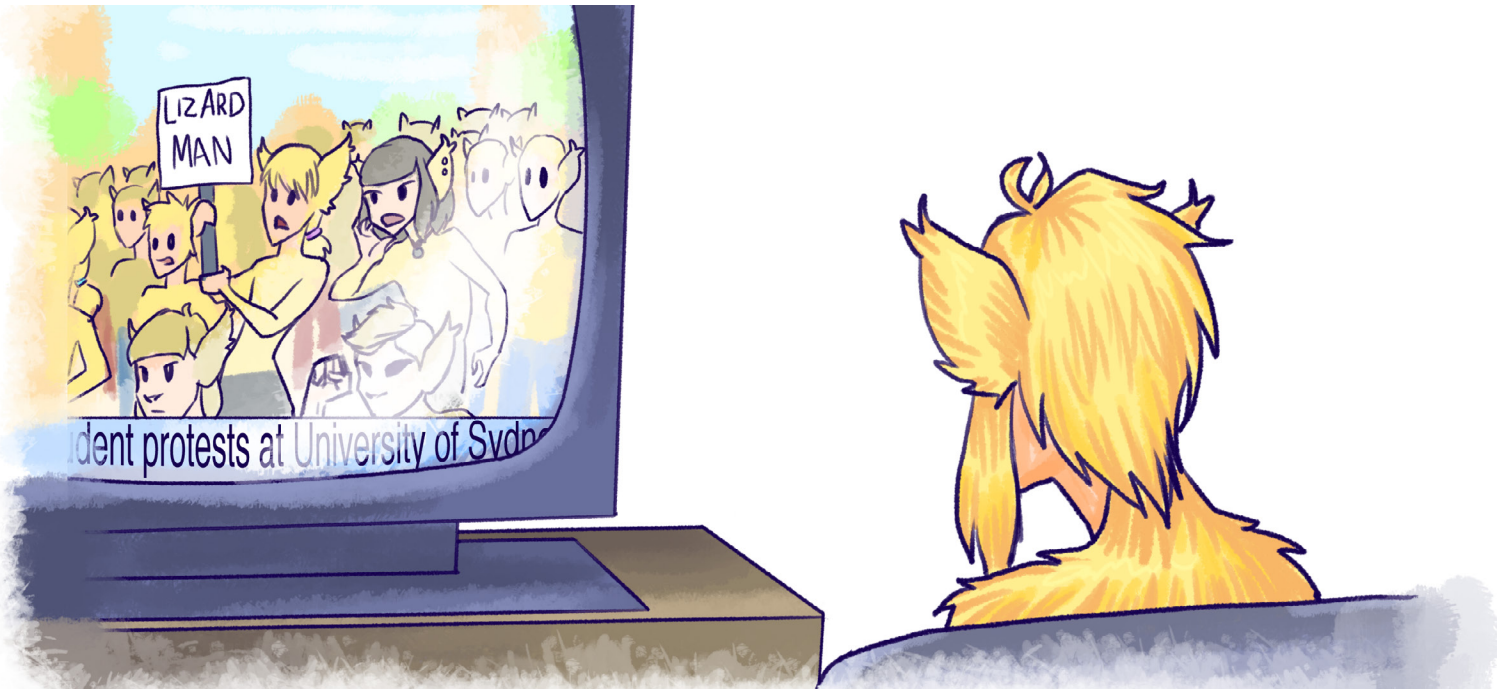
Where lioness friends complained about cat-calls from over-zealous lion boys, the lion girl remembered hostile bird screeches and scars under torn feathers.

Where lion government inspectors looked at refugee camps built in her bird world and said they weren't fit to live in;

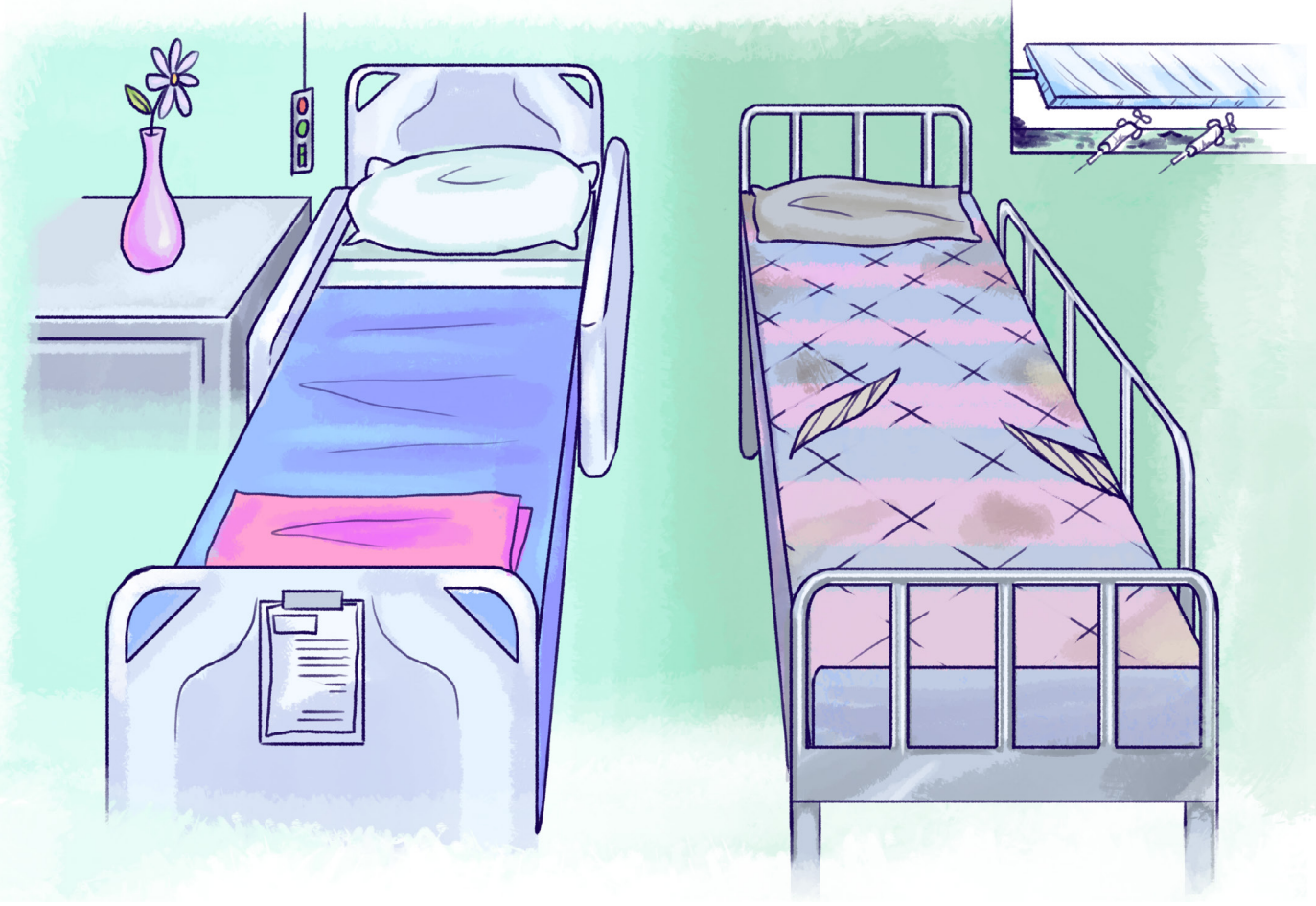


the lion girl thought of birds living on the other side of the camps living in shacks.





Where young lions protested against prime ministers and accused governments of corruption, the lion girl looked at pristine public schools and hospitals and roads, and thought of a bird world where public hospitals fell apart, schools were rare and expensive,



She thought of sky-high taxes and money disappearing in elder bird pockets.



The lion girl thought of  
ignorance and privilege, and was  
frustrated.



But she did not know how to fix  
things, because she'd forgotten  
how to speak like the birds.



For more information about the author, see  
[www.poweredbycokezero.com](http://www.poweredbycokezero.com)  
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