

When a little snout
can **LIFT** the world





When a little snout can *LIFT* the world

Chapter 1
Pebble the pig



"Good morning, everyone," said James the farmer cheerfully, while entering the barn in the early morning as he always does.

The pigs instantly got up and walked to the entrance gate of their pen. They were very excited because the presence of the farmer meant it was time for breakfast!

Checking on his pigs, James noticed that something was not right with one of them, Pebble. She was always the bubbly one in the group, always ready to eat, play, and explore. But not today.

She looked healthy, she had food and water in front of her, and straw to keep her warm, but today she looked restless, uneasy, uninterested. James decided to call the vet.



The vet arrived in the barn and leaned over the pen.

"Four strong legs, bright eyes, perfect coat with no injuries. Nothing to worry about", she said.

Pebble turned towards her group mates and whispered:

"They were looking so closely at me. Do you think there is any trouble?"





"How do you feel?" asked one of her group mates.

"Well, they say I'm healthy", replied Pebble, "but I don't feel so good. I don't feel sick, hungry, or cold... just... not so happy today."

Suddenly, a shadow flitted across the pen roof. It was Pig-eon, a slightly scruffy pigeon with a crooked wing, living on the farm, who always seemed to appear at the oddest times. Pig-eon flew over Pebble with two acorns, one in each claw, and dropped them on the ground.



One acorn fell right in front of Pebble. She sniffed it.

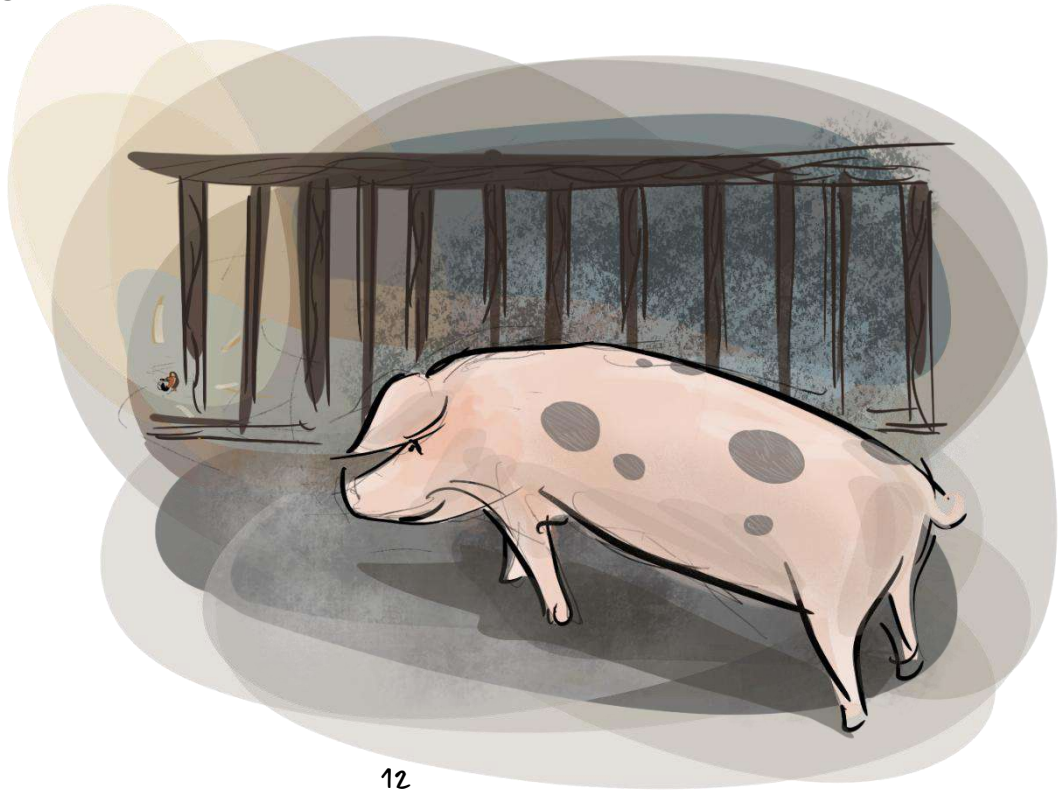
"That's interesting!"

Like any pig would do, she carefully took it into her mouth. It cracked a bit. She chewed slowly. "Mmmm, what a flavour! What is this?!" "A taste of adventure!" Pig-eon's voice said mysteriously...



She looked around for more. She couldn't see any so she continued sniffing around. She picked up the smell. With her snout on the floor, she suddenly bumped into the gate. She peeked under it. There it was! She saw the acorn lying under the gate door, almost within reach. She started nudging the door. It moved a bit, she pushed it harder. She was almost within the reach of this delicious smell.

She pushed again.

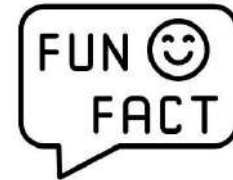


Suddenly, the door gave way. "Follow me!" said Pig-eon.

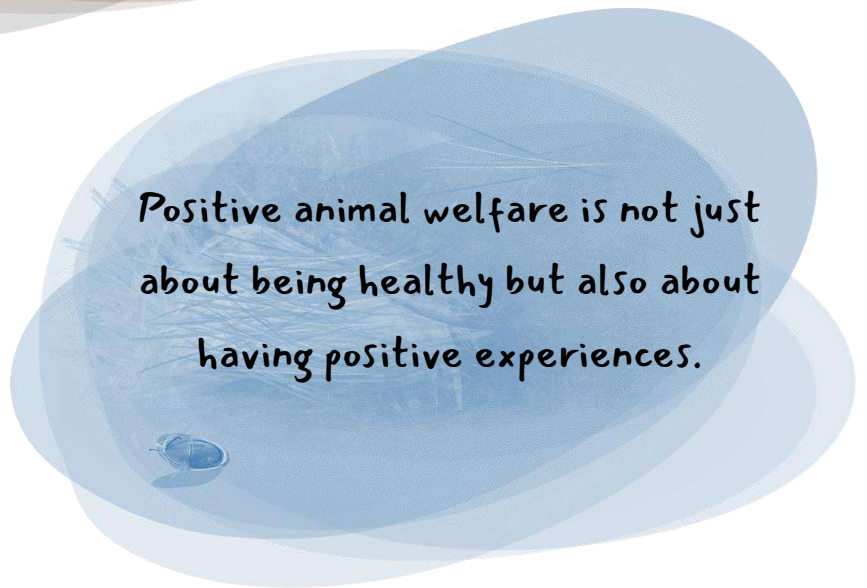
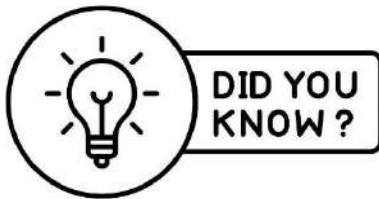
Pebble stepped outside her pen for the first time, and as the gate locked behind her, she knew she was ready to explore the world.





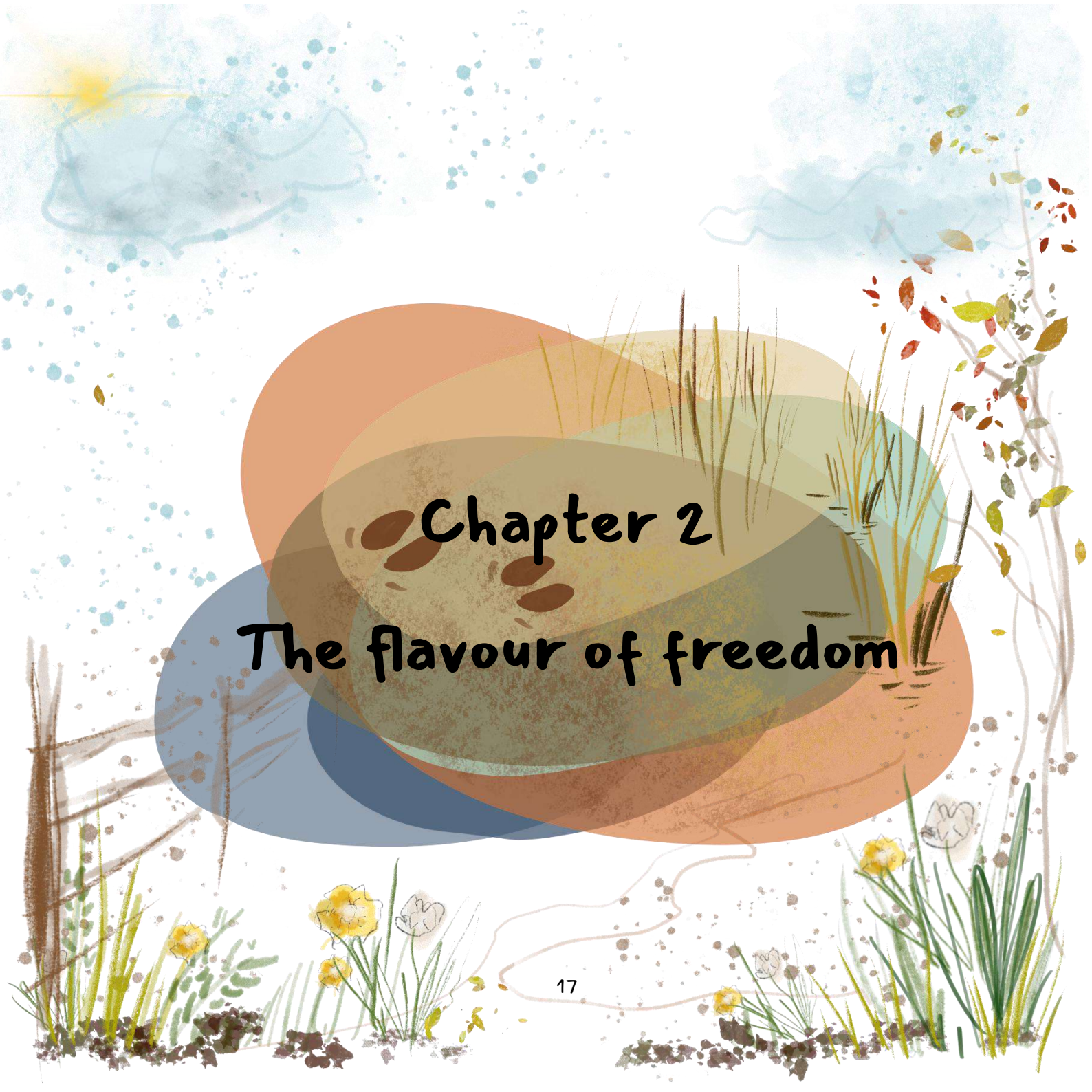


Pigs are masters in escaping, as well as destroying fences, gates and even the neighbour's garden.



Positive animal welfare is not just about being healthy but also about having positive experiences.



A watercolor illustration of a pond. In the center, there are three overlapping, semi-transparent ovals in shades of orange, brown, and blue. The text 'Chapter 2' and 'The flavour of freedom' is written in a black, handwritten-style font over these ovals. The background features a light blue sky with soft clouds and small blue dots. To the right, a tree with thin branches and autumn-colored leaves (red, orange, yellow) stands. In the foreground, there are green reeds, yellow flowers, and small white flowers with pink centers. The overall style is soft and artistic.

Chapter 2

The flavour of freedom



In the pasture, she met a calm cow, chewing thoughtfully on a patch of grass.

"Oh, hello, little one," the cow said.

"Hi, I'm Pebble. What are you doing out here? Where do you live?", Pebble asked.

"During the day, I come out to graze and return home in the evening," the cow replied. "See this pasture, all these patches? I can choose a different spot to graze each day".

Pebble tilted her head. "Choose...? But isn't grass just grass?"

"No, little one," said the cow.

"Look closer. Here. There, a yellow flower. Over there, fresh, sweet, and sour berries hang on tree branches. Each choice brings a different smell and taste, a different joy. Go on, give it a try."



She looked around, nudged a patch of clover, and tasted it.

"Hm, it tastes different from what James usually gives us", she thought. "Sweet." Then she went for a yellow flower. Slightly bitter, but refreshing. She had never noticed such a variety of sensations before. The joy of choice!

She trotted further, snout low, sniffing at everything.

A tuft of long grass near the fence. A cluster of tiny white flowers.
A damp patch where the earth smelled of rain.

"But how do I know which to pick?" she called back to the cow.

The cow looked up slowly. "You don't, at first. That is rather the point."

She wrinkled her snout. "That sounds... frightening."

"It is", said the cow, "and wonderful. Both at once."



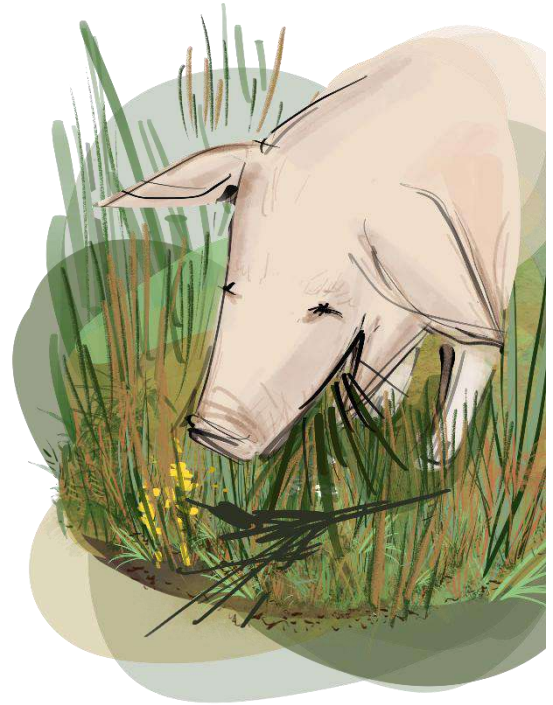
She stood very still for a moment, thinking about that. Then she stepped deliberately toward the long grass by the fence. It was tough and a little chewy, not especially sweet. But she had chosen it herself, and somehow that made it taste of something more.





"What if I choose wrong?" she asked. "Then you learn," said the cow simply. "And next time, you choose again."

She moved on to a damp patch. The smell was strange, almost too strong. She took one small bite and pulled back. «No, not that one», she mumbled to herself.





She started to feel...curious.

There were so many patches still ahead of her, stretching all the way to where the pasture met the sky.

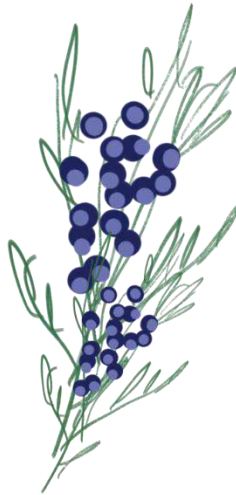
"Is this what you do all day?" she asked the cow.

"Choose?" The cow gave a slow, contented chew.

"Every day. And every day the pasture tastes a little different."

Pebble looked across the wide green field, heart light.

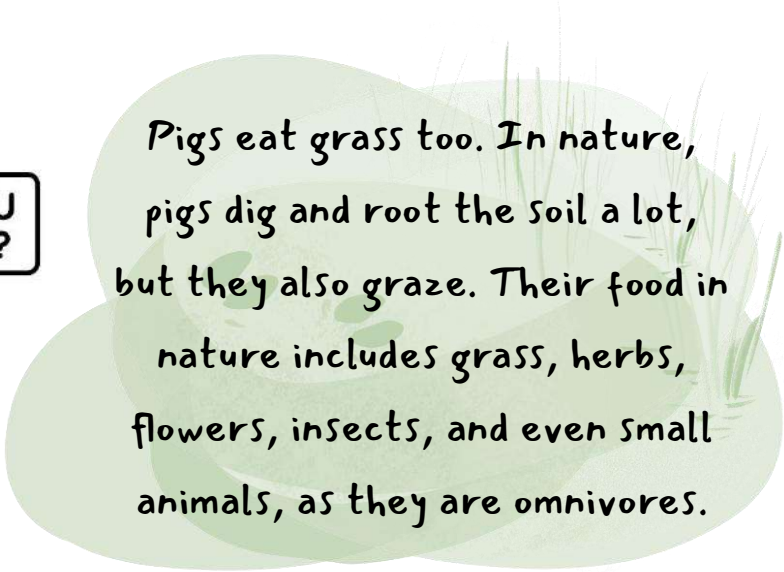
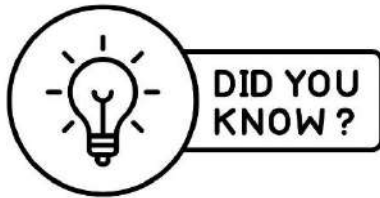
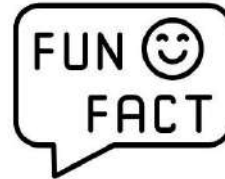
There was so much to try!



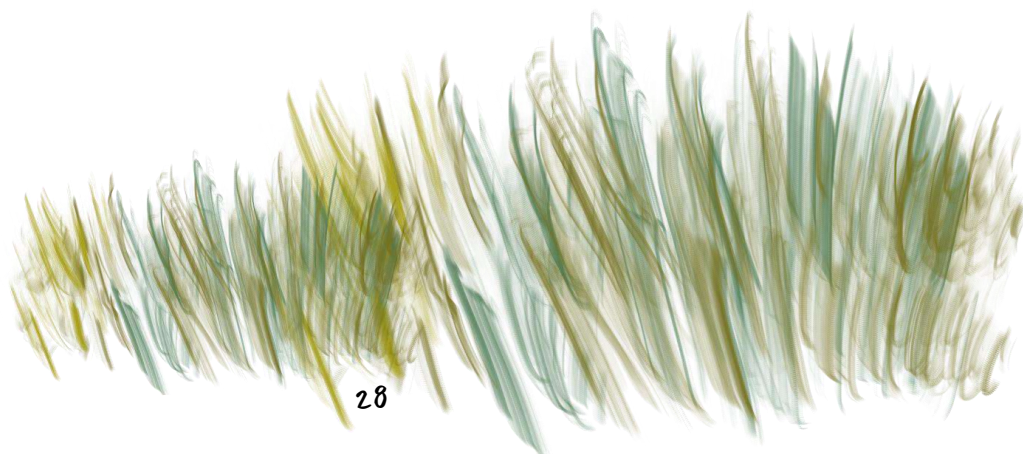




The pig Pigcasso, from South Africa, was making paintings, which have been sold as the most expensive paintings ever made by an animal.



Pigs eat grass too. In nature, pigs dig and root the soil a lot, but they also graze. Their food in nature includes grass, herbs, flowers, insects, and even small animals, as they are omnivores.



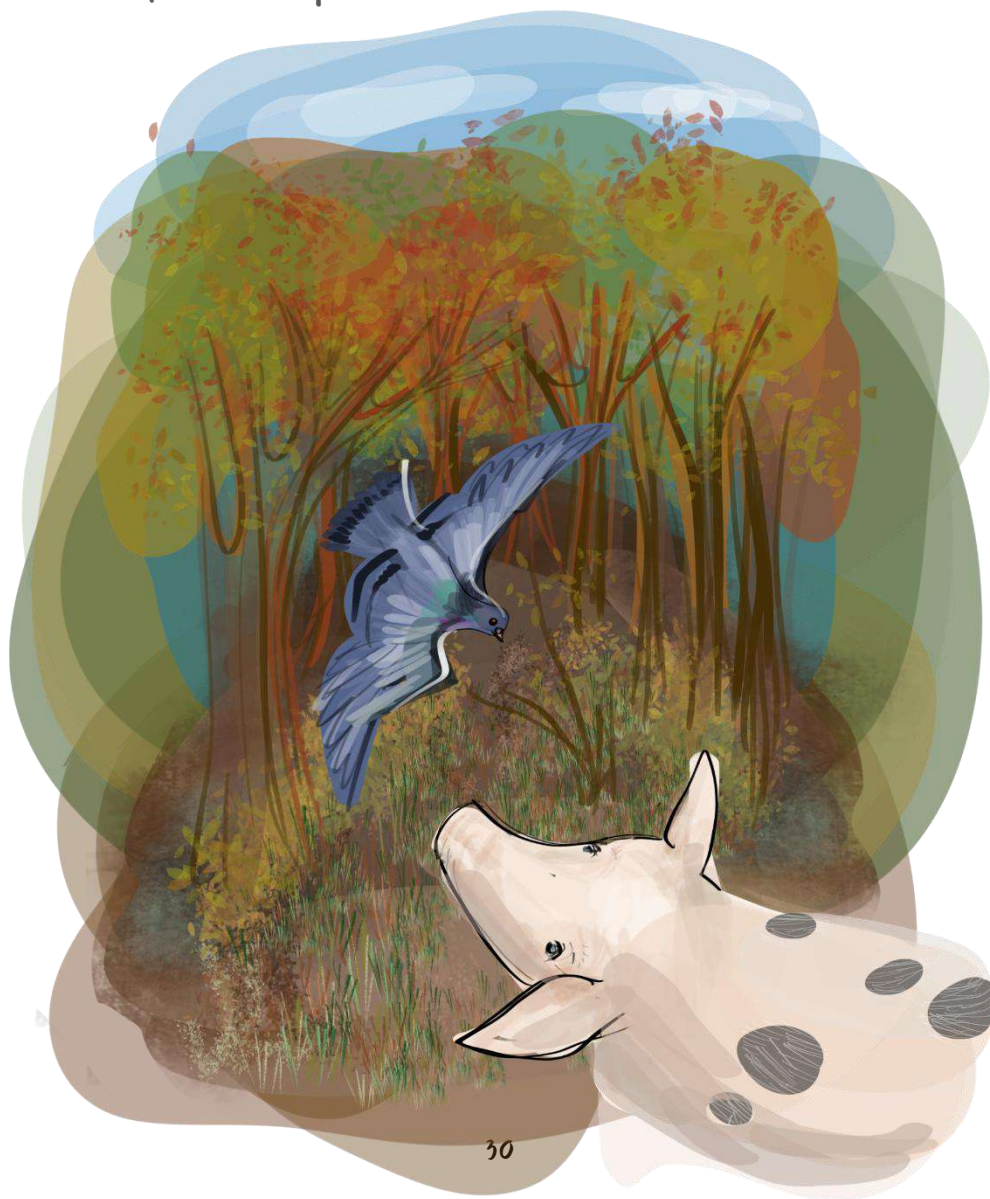


Chapter 3

Being brave

Pig-eon flapped ahead, squawking loudly, "Follow me!

Next mission... forest exploration!"

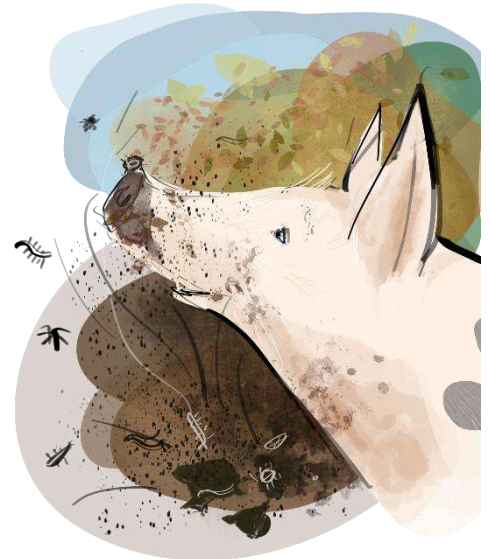
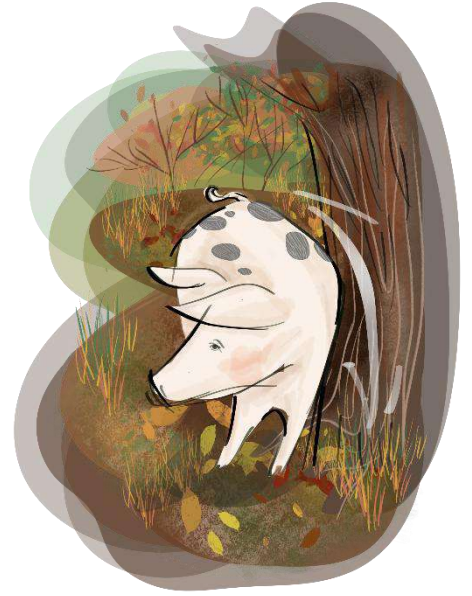


The forest smelled like wet soil and adventure. She breathed deeply, sniffed the damp leaves, and scratched her back using the trunk of a tree.



She dug her snout into the soil for the first time in her life. She felt excitement pulse through her.

She realised that her snout is so strong that she was able to dig many big, deep holes. She saw many little forest fellows, bugs and insects, living beneath the soil.



Suddenly, a troop of strawberry-red mushrooms decorated with white spots under a tree caught her eye. "Aren't they lovely?" She thought. "On top of that, they look so tasty!" She trotted over and devoured all the bright-coloured mushrooms, secretly hoping that later her skin would glow as colourful as these mushrooms.



A few hours passed. Pebble felt excited, using her strong snout to investigate this unusual smell and the moist soil in the forest.

Pebble suddenly tripped over a tree root and fell. She stood up and immediately felt dizzy. The world started to spin, and her vision blurred. Her stomach gurgled.

"What is this sensation?" She didn't know what to do, but the next thing she knew, she was feeling sick...

Pebble was lying under a tree, feeling too weak to stand up. As the symptoms of the poisonous mushrooms set in, she felt cold, weak, and dehydrated. While she was shivering, a low, rumbling growl echoed through the trees...

Her heart raced, but she couldn't escape from it. A shadow with a similar outline to hers, but much larger, approached...





A wild boar slowly appeared. Large, dark, and fearless.

"Are you ok? What are you doing so far from home?" asked the wild boar. Pebble answered, "I am here to seek what I am missing."
"And what is that?" replied the wild boar. "...Freedom..., I think?" replied Pebble, without much certainty.

"You seek freedom," said the wild boar, "but freedom is not the same as happiness. You must learn to make choices wisely, to understand your strengths... and your limits."

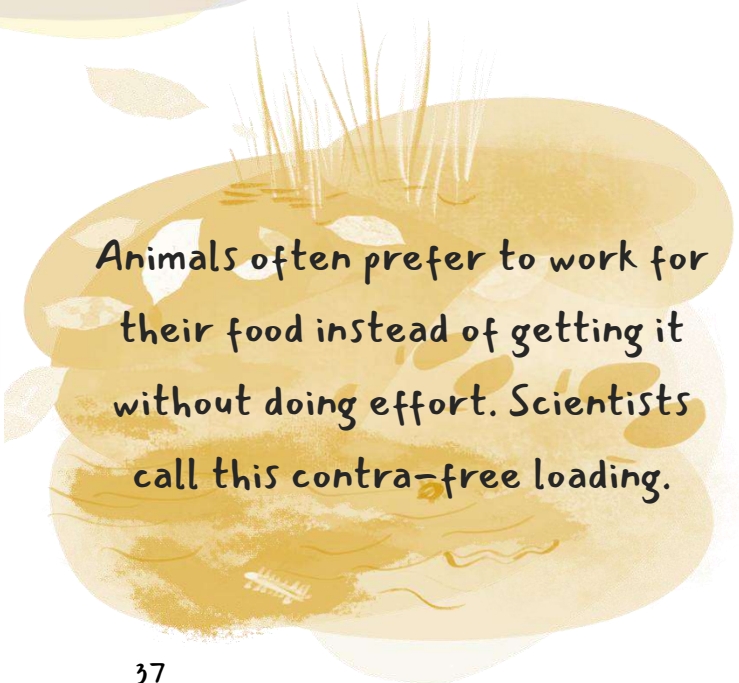
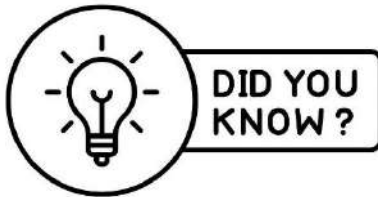
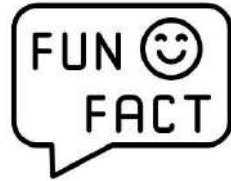
She shivered. "I don't even know what I can do here. I don't feel well, and I'm scared...". The wild boar snorted. "Each challenge you overcome in nature makes you stronger. Each choice you make in nature teaches you resilience."

Over the next few hours, after Pebble recovered from eating the mushrooms, she practiced digging in the soil, rolling in mud, sniffing new scents, and foraging for forest foods. Some were delicious, others... not so much. She learned to be more careful about what to taste. She realised how safe and consistent her farm life had been.





Rolling in mud helps pigs stay cool
and protects their skin from
sunburn and insects. It's a joyful
and healthy activity!



Animals often prefer to work for
their food instead of getting it
without doing effort. Scientists
call this contra-free loading.



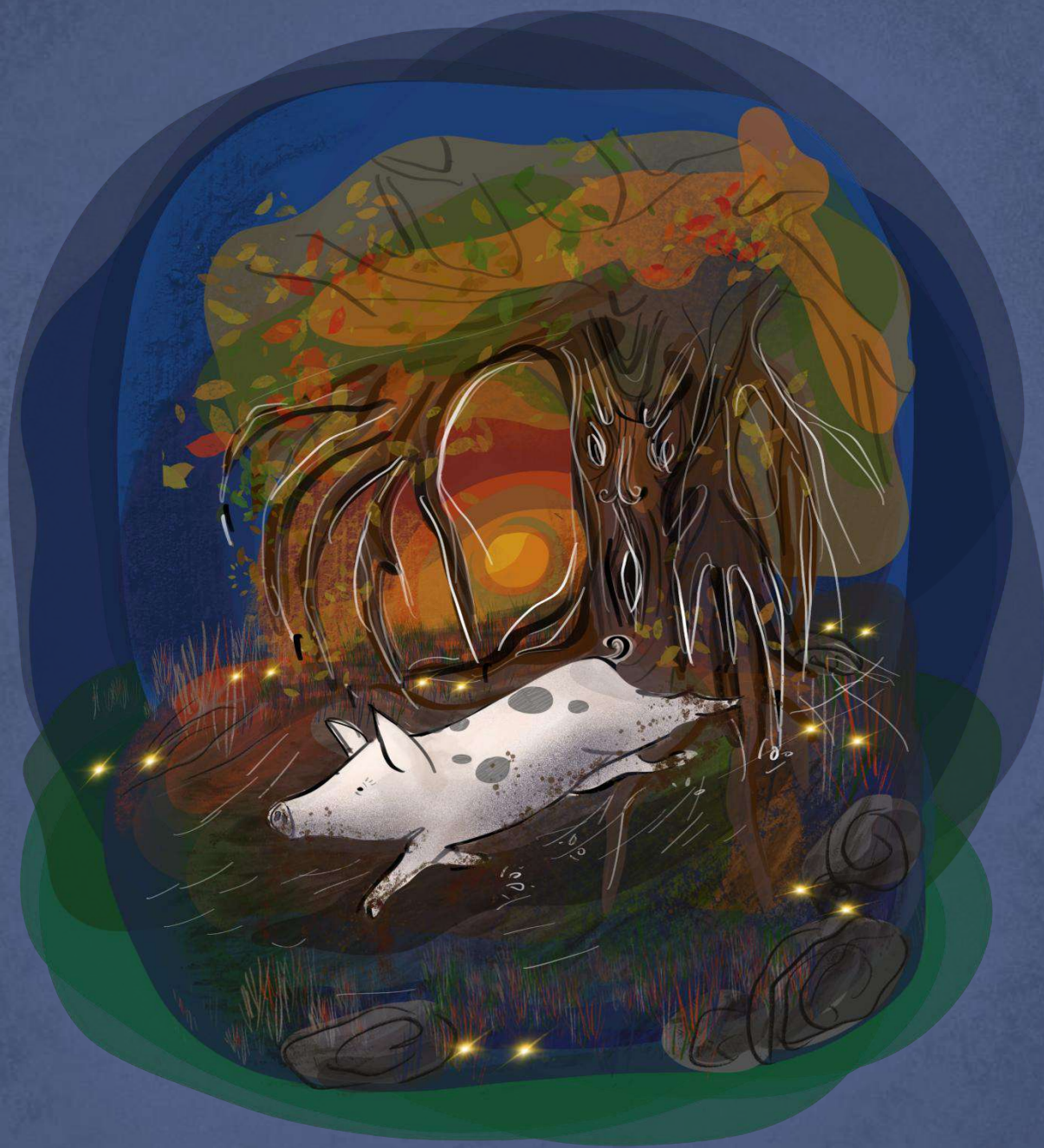
A watercolor illustration of a night landscape. In the center, a large, dark, rounded shape represents a hill or a cave entrance, with a crescent moon and several stars visible within it. The background is a mix of light blue and white, with splatters of blue and purple. To the right, a tree with thin branches and autumn-colored leaves (red, orange, yellow) stands. At the bottom, there are patches of green grass and small rocks. The overall style is soft and artistic.

Chapter 4

The warmth you carry

As night approached, she faced her biggest challenge: loneliness. Apart from this, she also started to feel a little hungry as she had not really been eating much after the mushrooms, afraid of choosing something wrong again. The forest was thrilling, but she missed the warmth of her companions from the farm. She missed the routines, the safety, and the friendship. Even the clumsy Pig-eon made her smile and reminded her of home. She felt alone. And pigs are not meant to be alone. Being alone means danger.

A rustle in the bushes made her ears twitch. Predator-like growls sent shivers down her spine. She started to run, dodged fallen branches, and finally stopped, exhausted. She carefully listened to hear if someone had followed her.





The wild boar appeared beside her, calm. "You have learned agency, competence, and resilience. But no forest can replace the comfort of your social bonds."

Pebble looked up at him, breathing hard. "I know," she said quietly. After calming down, she added, "I felt it today. When I found a clover, I wanted to tell someone. When I was frightened, I wished that someone was close."

The wild boar nodded slowly. "That wanting, it means that they mean a lot to you." He disappeared back into the trees without another word, the way inhabitants of the wild forest do.



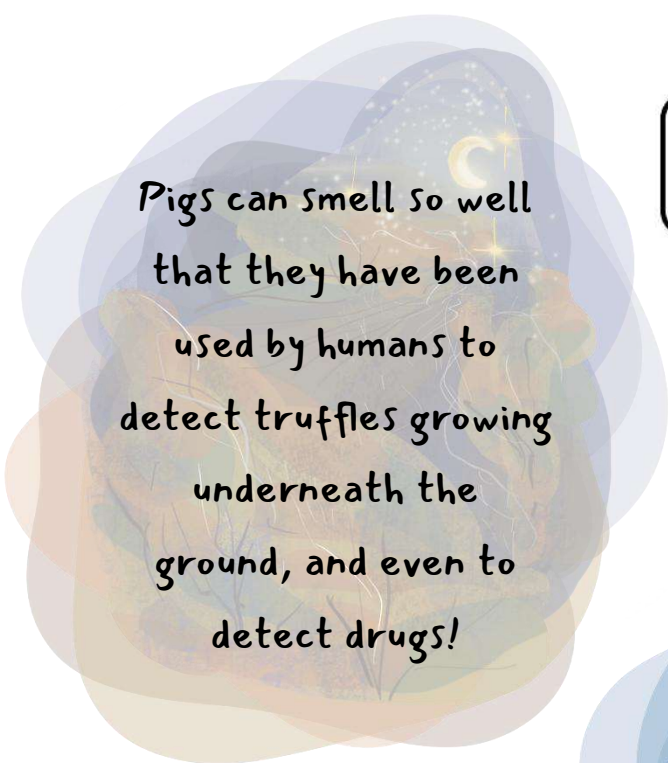
Pebble stood alone in the growing dark. Pig-eon landed beside her on a low branch, unusually quiet. For once, he seemed to have nothing mysterious to say.

She thought about her friends at the farm. The smallest one, always curious. The grumpy one who grumbled but always made space. The way they slept cuddling together on cold nights, snout to snout, warm, and breathing as one. She had not realised until now how much those memories stayed with her and continued to comfort her. The forest settled into its nighttime sounds. She found a hollow between two roots and curled up like a ball, tucking her legs beneath her. It was not the farm. It did not smell of straw and familiar things. But she held the memory of her friends close, like holding something precious when you are far from home, and it gave her just enough warmth to close her eyes. Tomorrow, she told herself. Tomorrow I will find my way back to the farm.

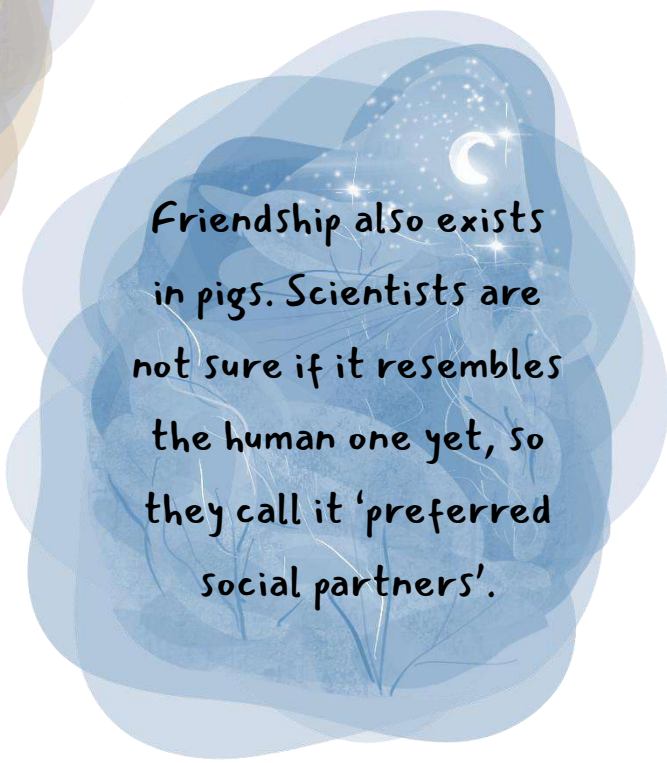
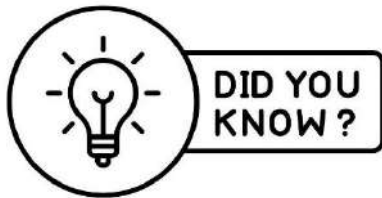
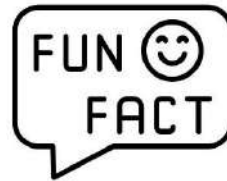
But she would not go back empty-handed. She had experienced so much, things she had tasted, felt, and learned. Things worth sharing. She fell asleep to the sound of wind in the high branches, thinking of home.







Pigs can smell so well that they have been used by humans to detect truffles growing underneath the ground, and even to detect drugs!



Friendship also exists in pigs. Scientists are not sure if it resembles the human one yet, so they call it 'preferred social partners'.





Chapter 5

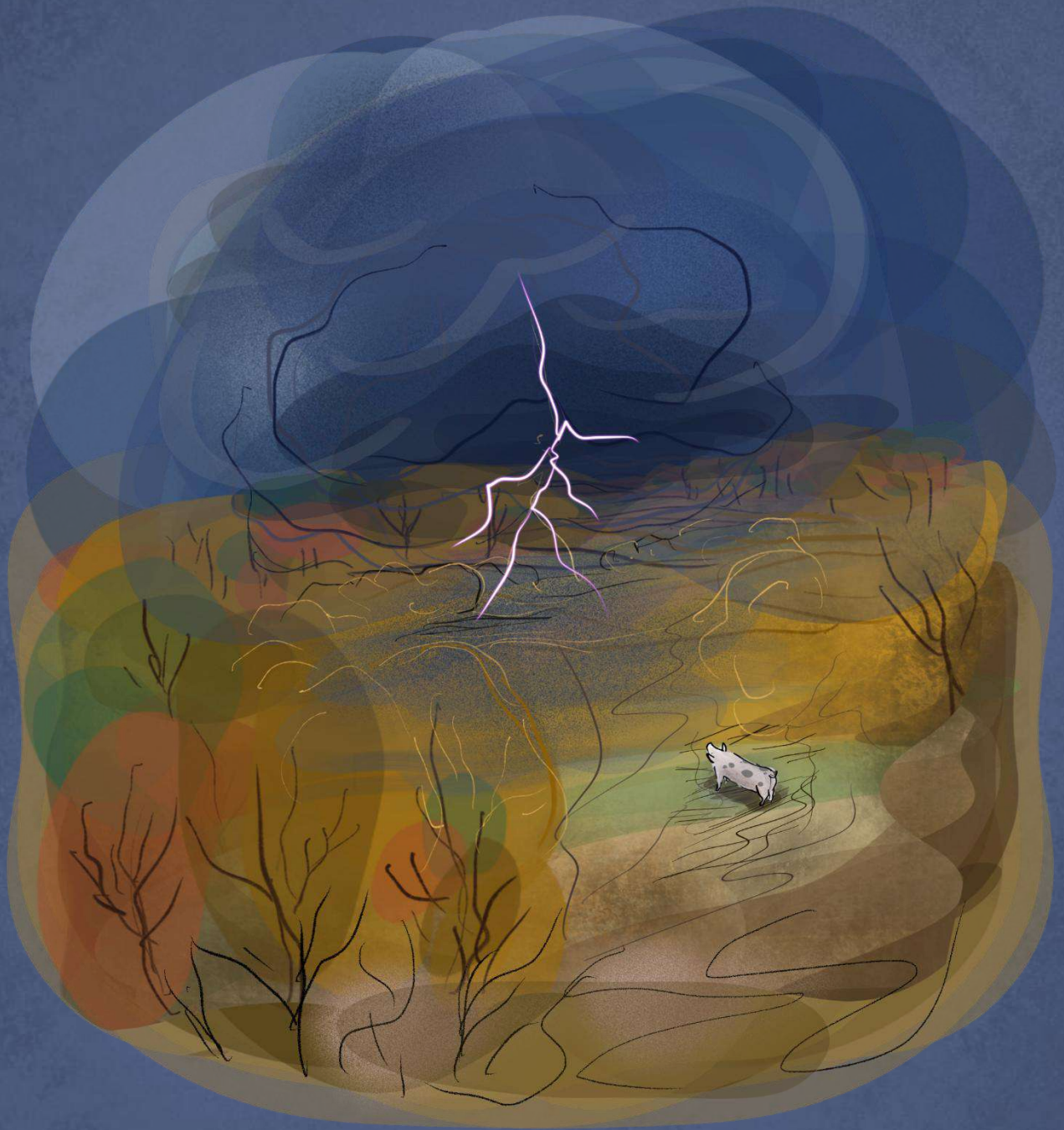
The nest



Clouds were forming in the sky. Pebble had never seen this before. They rolled in low and grey, swallowing the blue space, and the air changed, heavier, cooler, carrying a smell she couldn't name.

Not long after, drops of water started to fall on her back. She shivered. What to do now?

She looked around for Pig-eon. The branch where he usually perched was empty. She listened for his lopsided wingbeats. Nothing. For the first time since leaving the farm, she was completely alone. Just her, the rain, and the forest closing in.

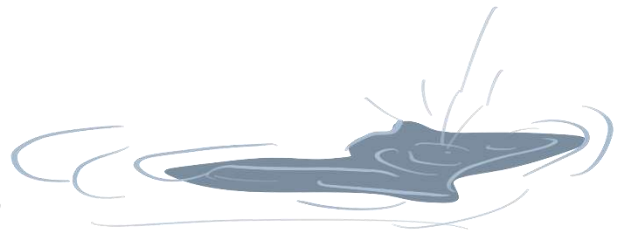




She trotted into the trees expecting shelter, but the rain found its way through the canopy in fat, cold drops that ran down her ears and settled in the creases of her neck. She tried one tree, then another, then a cluster of dense young birches, but the wind came sideways, and the wet came with it.

The rain began to pour in earnest. The cold autumn wind blew low and sharp, and she shivered uncontrollably, legs trembling, snout close to the ground. The wild boar was not there to guide her now. No Pig-eon to drop a cryptic clue. No cow to offer gentle wisdom. Just herself.

She kept walking, more slowly now. The forest looked the same in every direction, dark, dripping, indifferent. Her goal to return to her friends at the farm seemed unreachable.



She found a large oak with wide roots and crouched beneath it, but the wind came and sent the leaves skittering around her. She closed her eyes and tried to think. And then a memory rose, not a thought, but a feeling. Her friends on a cold night, tucked in tight, snout to snout, the deep warmth of bodies pressed together, the smell of dry straw and sleeping pigs. What a perfect, ordinary nest that was.

A nest! That is it! She opened her eyes.

She began to dig with her snout, pressing into the soft, dark earth at the base of the oak. The ground was cold but yielding, and slowly, awkwardly at first, then with growing purpose, a hollow began to form.



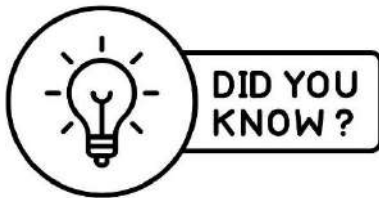
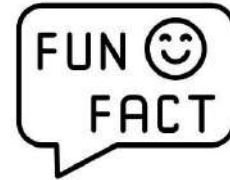
She dragged branches from nearby, laying them over the top, weaving them loosely the way she imagined how a roof might work. It was clumsy. It was lopsided. But it was entirely hers. She crawled in, tucked her legs underneath her, and waited. The wind still found her a little. The drips of rain still came. But she had made this herself, out of cold and necessity and one warm memory. She shivered, but differently now. Not helplessly. Proudly. She felt calmer now, and kept listening to the rain, waiting for tomorrow.







Pigs can't fly but
they can swim!



Animal agency is to
return the control
over the
environment back to
the animals.



A watercolor illustration of a pond with a fence and autumn foliage. The pond is dark brown with green reeds and lily pads. A wooden fence runs along the top edge of the pond. The background is light blue with white clouds and falling leaves. The title 'Chapter 6' and 'Home sweet home' is written in white text over the pond.

Chapter 6

Home sweet home

Tomorrow arrived with the kind of morning that seems almost apologetic after a hard night. Golden and bright, the sky washed clean, everything sparkling at the edges.

Pebble uncurled herself slowly from her nest, blinking her eyes. Her hooves were muddy. Her belly rumbled loudly. The branches she had woven above her lay slightly askew, not quite the roof she had imagined. But it had held, mostly. And she had held, entirely.

She stood up and looked at the forest. The same trees, the same shadows, the same light coming through in long angled beams. It looked different today, though she couldn't quite say why. A little less enormous. A little more knowable.



She knew what she had to do. She trotted, then ran. Mud was flying from her heels, the cool morning air rushed past her ears, and the farm smell pulling her forward like a thread she had always been attached to. Pig-eon appeared from above, flapping alongside with tremendous self-importance.

"Mission accomplished!" he announced, to the trees, the sky, and anyone else who would listen.



James was in the yard when she came through the gate. He stopped, looked at her for a long moment. He noticed her muddy hooves, the twig still caught behind her ear, the brightness in her eyes, and smiled the slow smile of someone who understands something without needing to say it.

The other pigs surged to the gate. There was pushing and snuffling, and the particular chaos of a herd reunited. Pebble stood in the middle of it and felt the warmth she had been carrying in her chest finally, fully land.







That evening, when things grew quiet, they gathered close, and she told them everything.

She told them about how she learned to choose what to eat, and what not. She told them about the cow's slow wisdom, and the long grass by the fence that tasted of something more just because she had picked it herself. How the pasture had taught her that no one could pick for you, and that making a mistake just means that you have to choose again.

She told them about the scary-looking but kind wild boar, and the night she got sick, had been frightened, and how missing them had not been a weakness but a kind of knowledge.

She told them about the rain, and the nest she had built alone, from cold ground and memory. How she had dug with her snout and dragged branches and made something out of nothing. While she was telling this, she realised how much she had learned all by herself.

The smallest of the group listened with wide eyes. "Were you scared?" she asked. "Often," said Pebble.

"But you kept going?"

Pebble thought about the yellow flower, bitter and bright. The hollow where she had nestled into the cold earth. The spark of warmth she had carried through the dark forest like a small light.

"I kept going," she said, "because I had things to come back to."

The herd was quiet for a moment. Then the grumpy one in the corner shifted, made room, and said nothing — which, from her, was everything.



A few days later, the vet visited,
leaned over the gate, and asked: "This
pig is thriving. Did you change anything?"

James nodded: "I listened to the pig". *

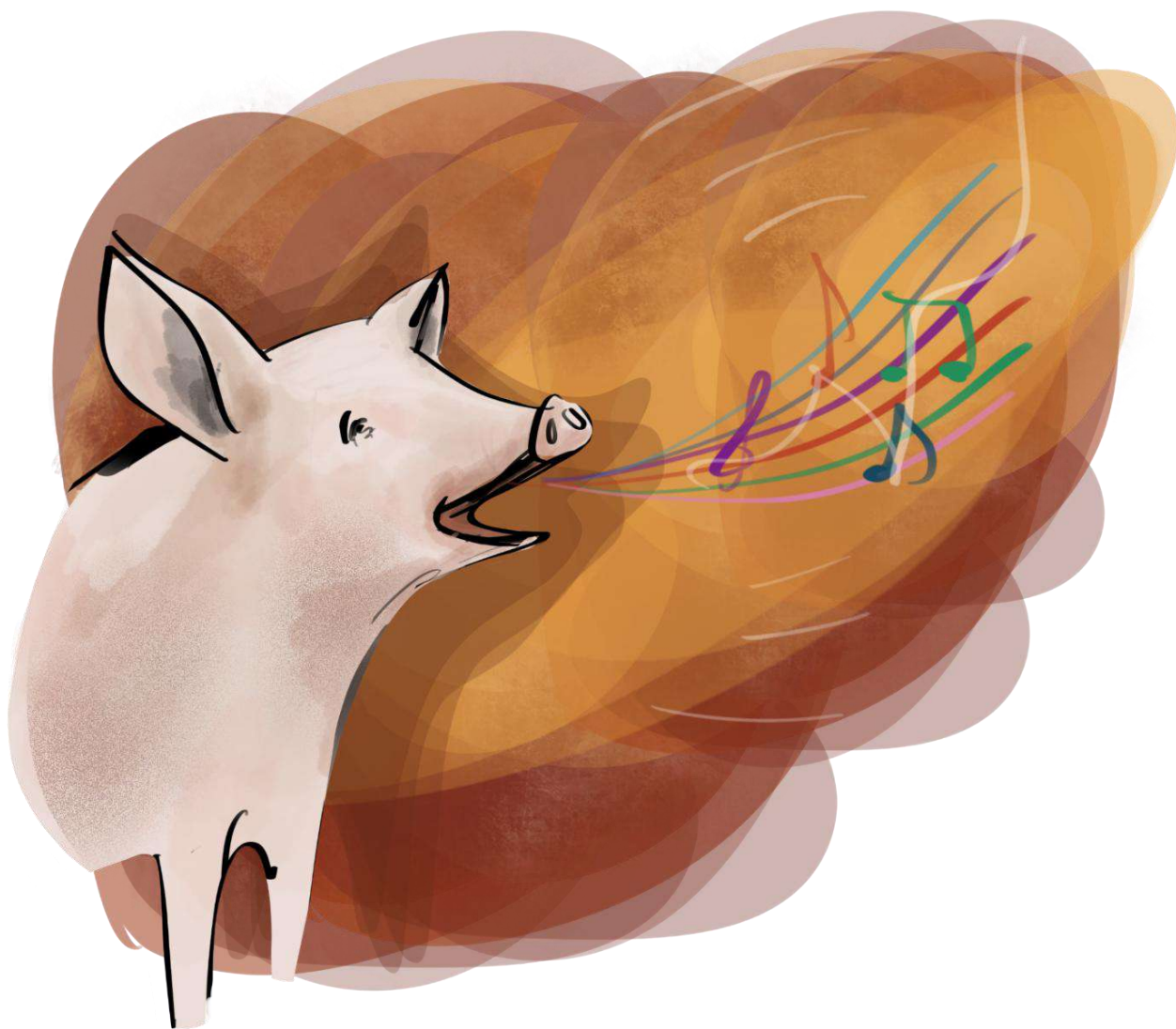
Pebble smiled, and gave a small,
satisfied snort.

Mud between her toes. Friends around
her. Sunshine on her back. And a world
she now knew was wide and full of
choices, waiting patiently beyond the
gate, whenever she was ready.

* What would you change at the farm?

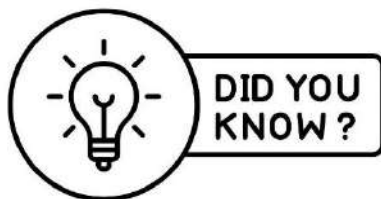
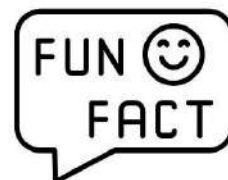
see page 70







Pigs bark like dogs
and quack like
ducks!



Pigs' tail posture
changes based on
how they feel. When
afraid, they tuck
their tail like a dog.



Epilogue

Some seasons later, Pig-eon perched on the fence post with that scheming look in his eyes, clearly planning something.

Maybe the next "secret mission"...

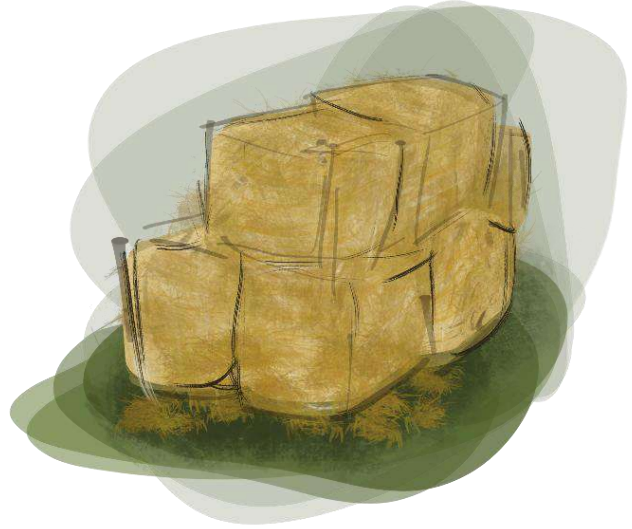
Pebble smiled at Pig-eon.

She would be ready.

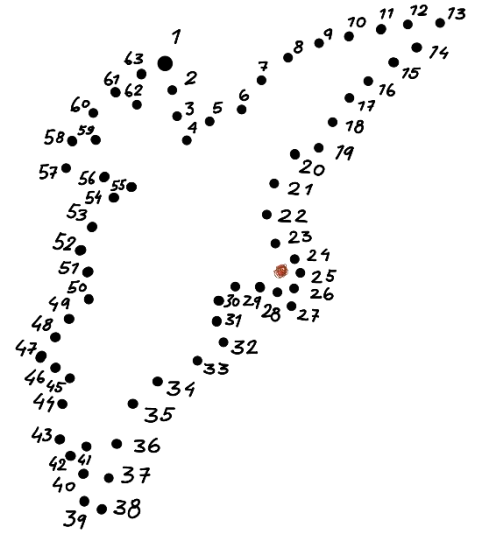
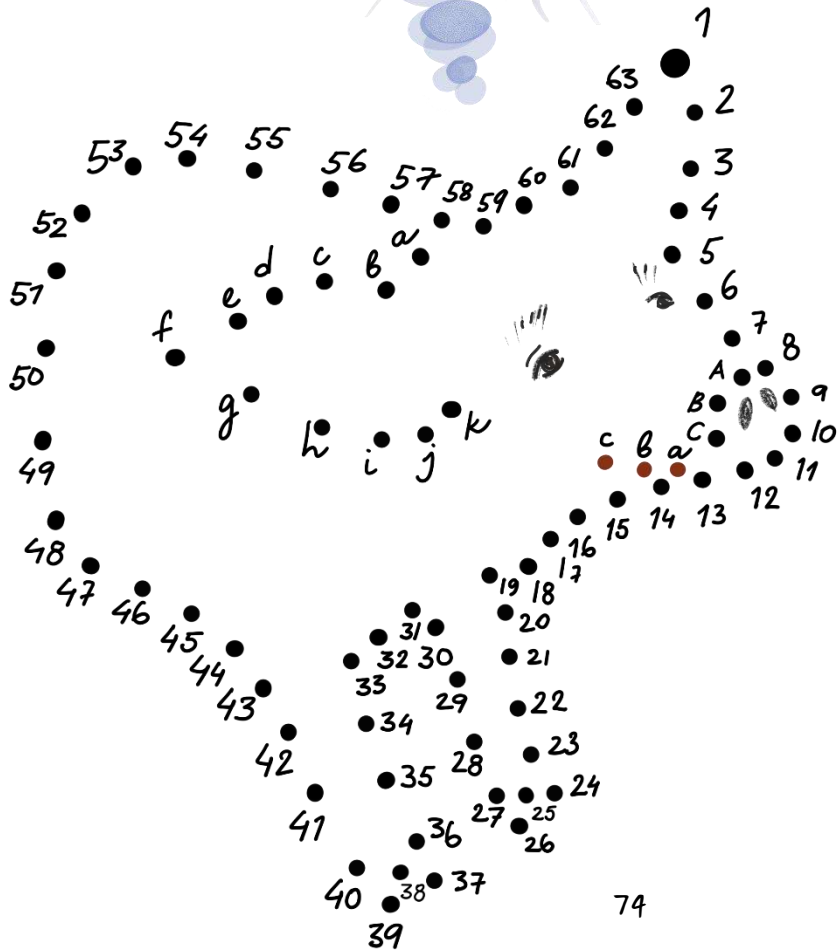
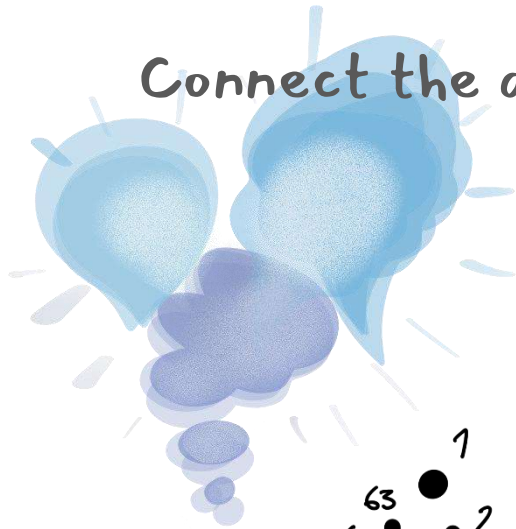




What would you change at the farm?



Connect the dots!



The LIFT project

LIFT is a scientific project that aims to increase the understanding of positive animal welfare in farm animals, and to improve animals' lives in practice. Through *Pebble's* journey, you can follow some of these developments and contribute to a better life for pigs.

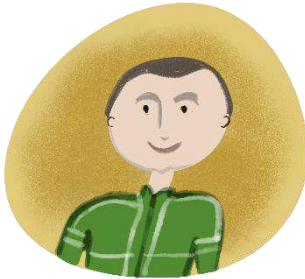


This book is based upon work from COST Action LIFT 'Lifting Farm Animal Lives - laying the foundations for positive animal welfare', CA21124, supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology). COST is a funding agency for research and innovation networks. Our Actions help connect research initiatives across Europe and enable scientists to grow their ideas by sharing them with their peers. This boosts their research, career and innovation.

Behind the book

This book was written by Sébastien Goumon, Heng-Lun Ko and Irene Camerlink, and was illustrated by Lena Pozdnyakova. You can find the book in PDF format in multiple languages on www.liftanimalwelfare.eu

Sébastien Goumon



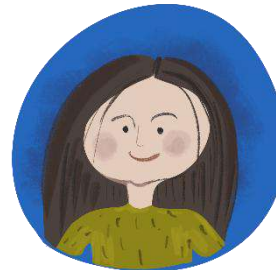
Heng-Lun Ko



Irene Camerlink



Lena Pozdnyakova



Written by Sébastien Goumon, Heng-Lun Ko & Irene Camerlink
Illustrated by Lena Pozdnyakova
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What does a good life look like for farm animals?

Positive animal welfare is not just about whether an animal has food and a shelter, but is about their inner experience. Through an unexpected journey, Pebble, a young farm pig, experiences what positive animal welfare means for her.

