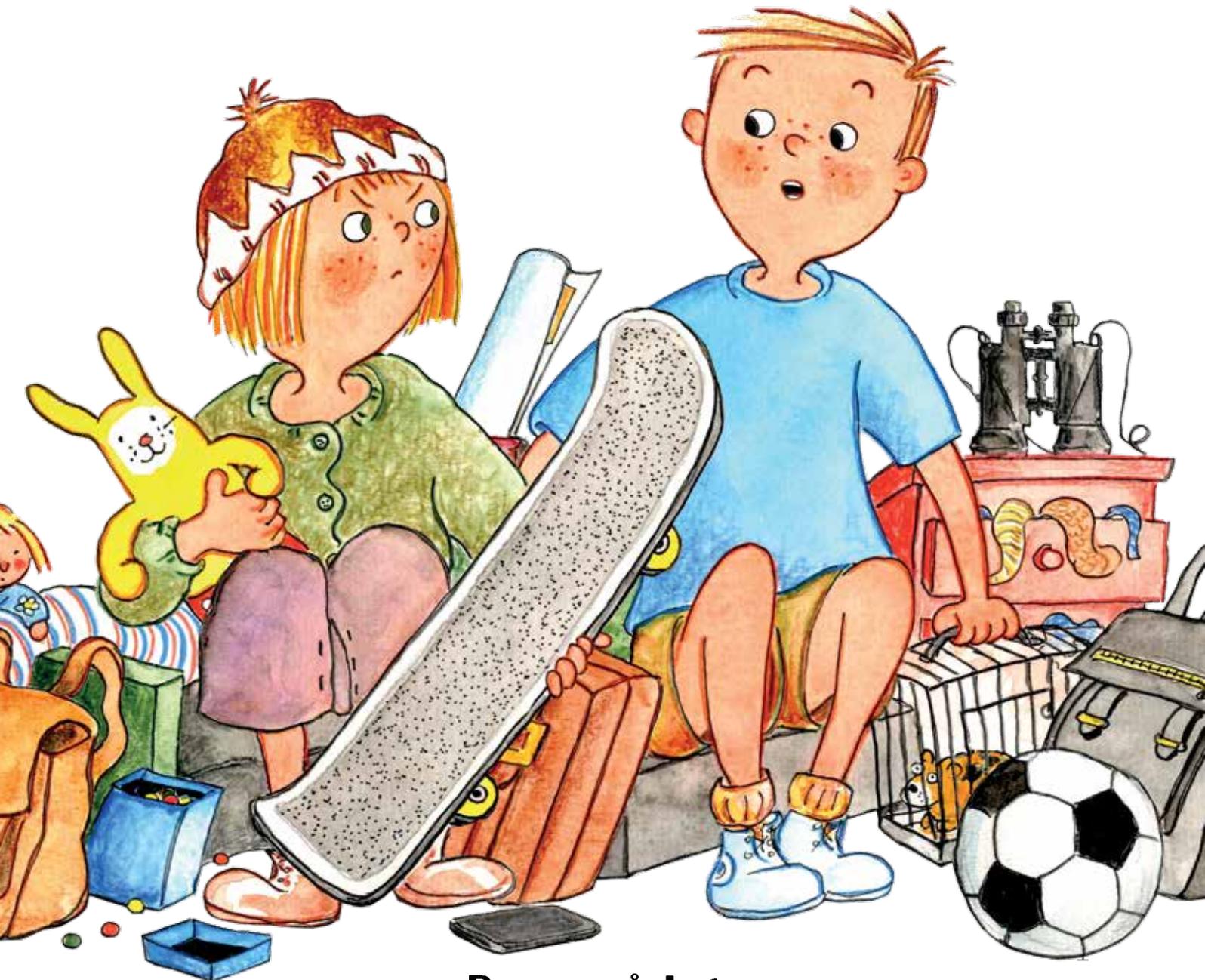


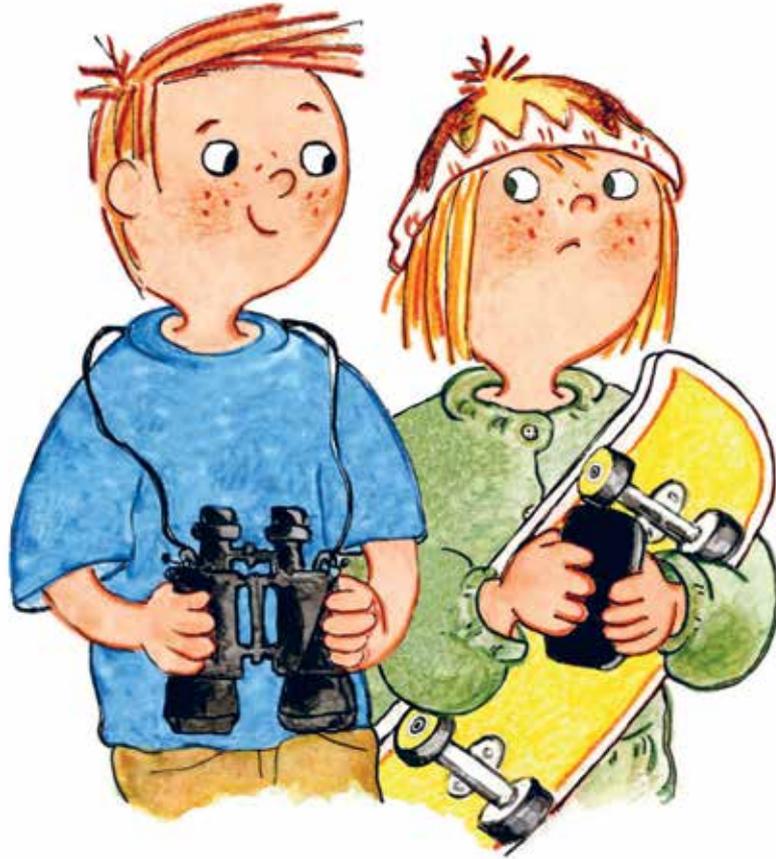
Bodil Nygaard

Nadia and Magnus are leaving home



Børnerådet

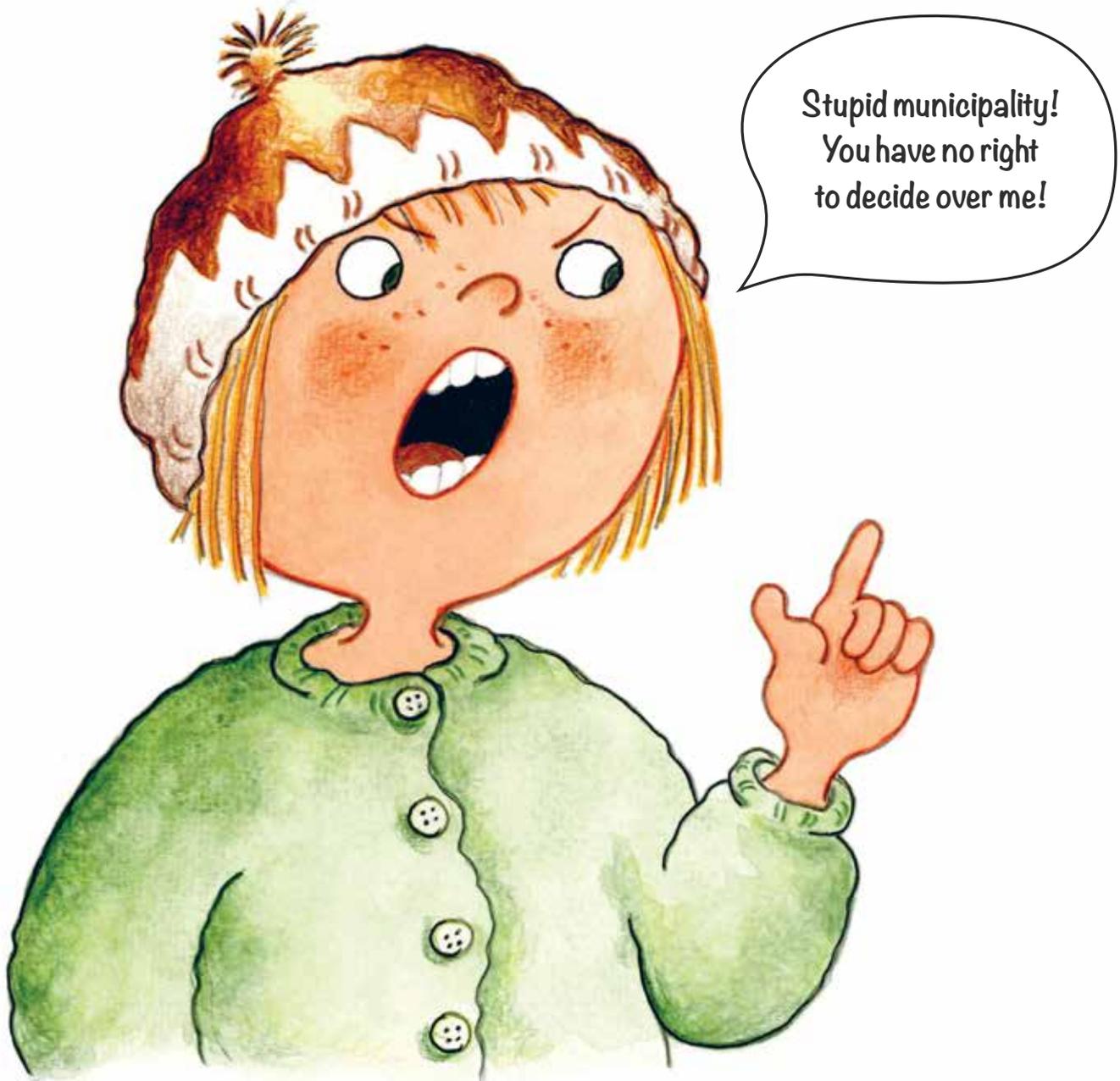
Bodil Nygaard



Nadia and Magnus are leaving home

Børnerådet

Nadia will no longer be living at home. She is moving. First to a children's home and then to a foster family, which is not her own family. Someone at the municipality has decided this because Nadia is not feeling good at home. However, Nadia absolutely does not want to move.





But Nadia,
the municipality is
not a person
you can take it out on!
The municipality is some
kind of an office!

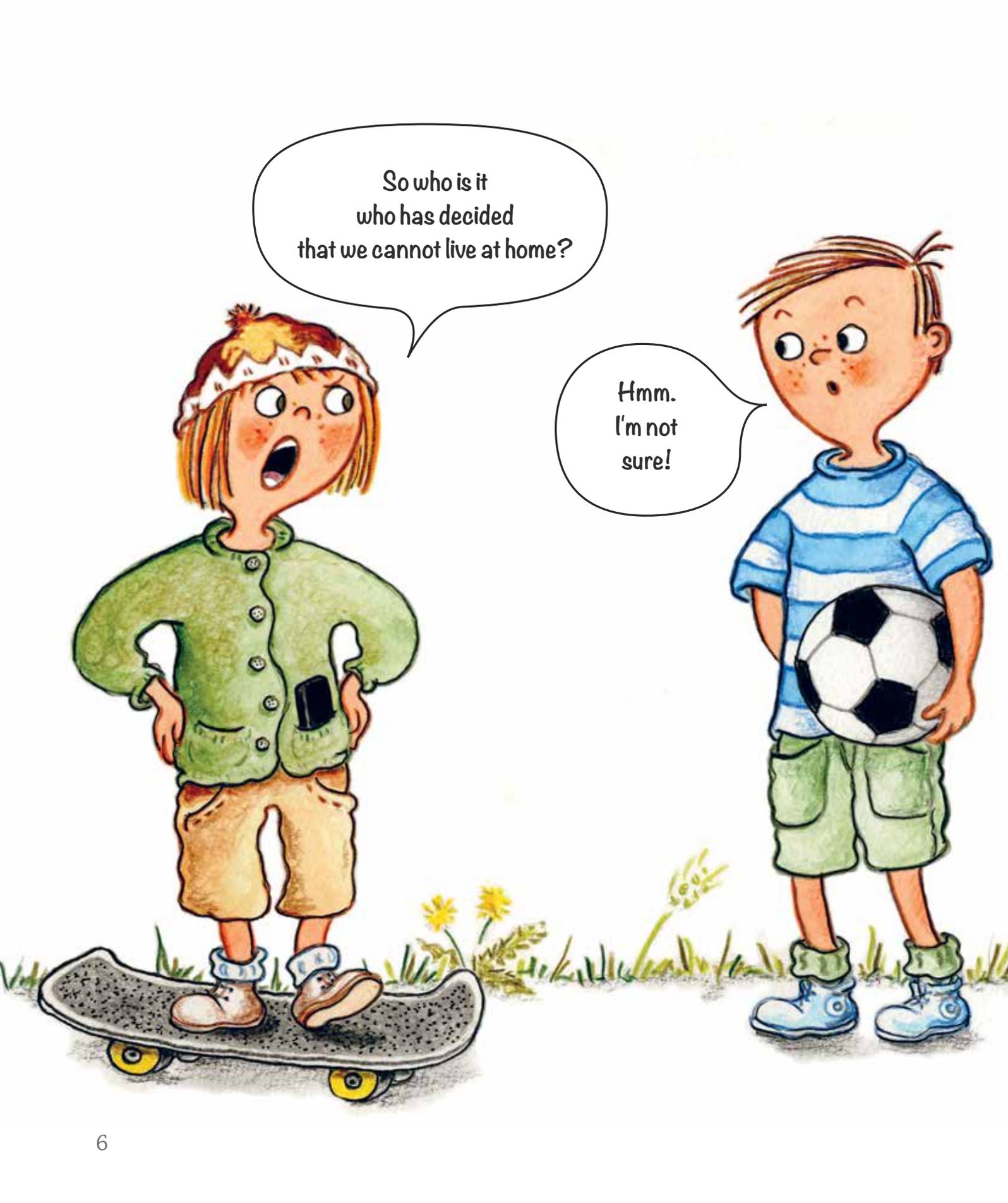
Magnus is Nadia's brother. He is also leaving home. They will be living together. Magnus has no problem with the move because he believes that they will do better together with someone else than their father and mother. Someone who is better at taking care of him and Nadia.



The municipality has an office where a lot of people work. They make decisions about the things we all share: Busses, roads, drinking water, schools and so on. Some of them are responsible for ensuring that old people have a place to stay.



Others make sure that people who are sick get help. And it is also them who must make sure that children are doing well.



So who is it
who has decided
that we cannot live at home?

Hmm.
I'm not
sure!

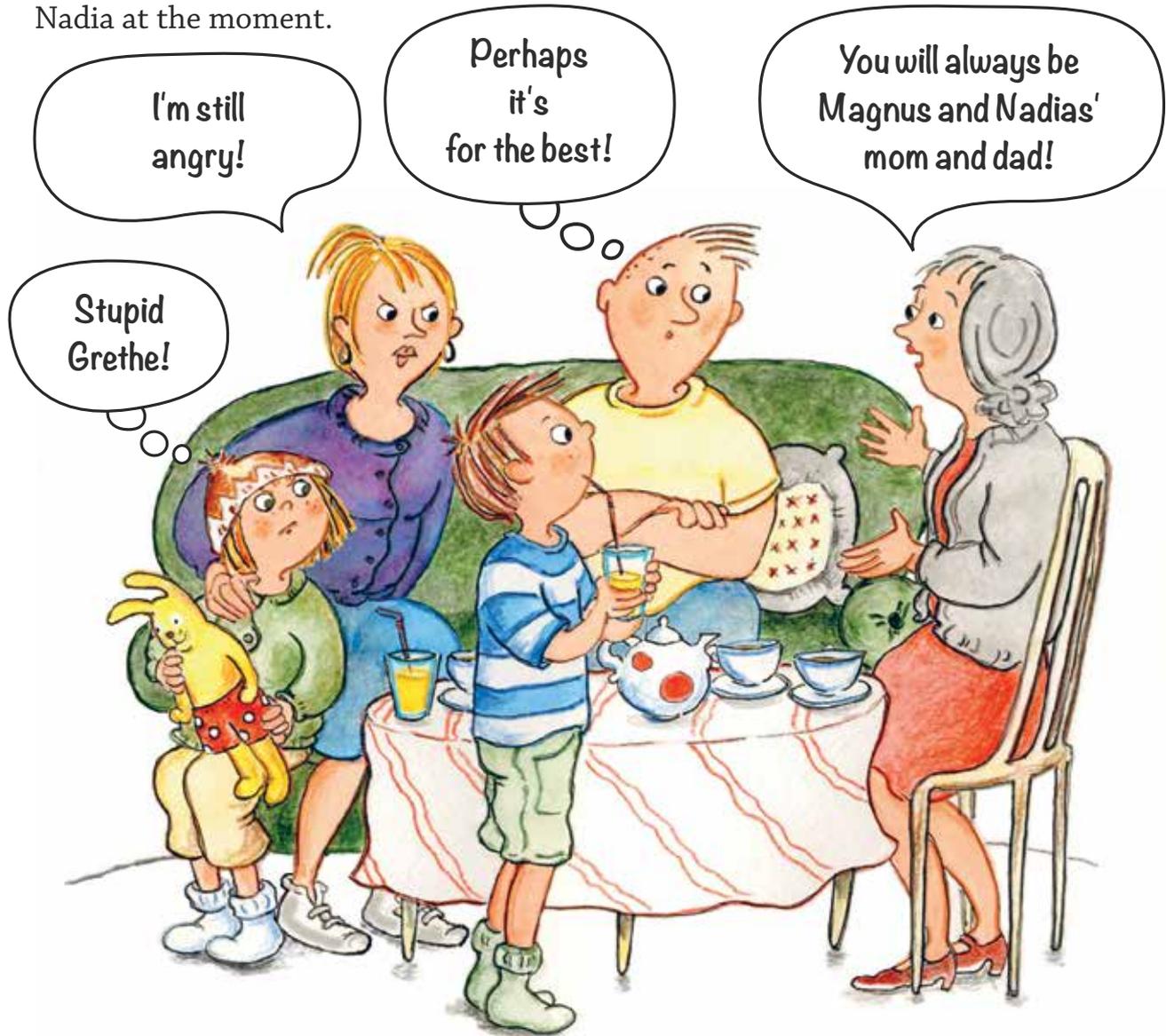
It is Grethe who has decided that it is best for Nadia and Magnus to live somewhere else. Grethe is Nadia and Magnus' caseworker and works for the municipality. She has visited them several times and talked to them about how things are in the family. Mom and dad says that they have no problems taking care of their children. And mom is angry that the municipality can make decisions that affect them all.

However, Grethe can see that mom and dad drink a lot of beer and sleep so much that Nadia and Magnus have to handle everything themselves: Make sure to get up in the morning and take care of food. Do the laundry and remember to brush their teeth. And tell each other bedtime stories.

It is almost as if Nadia and Magnus are the adults and mom and dad are the children. That is not how things are supposed to be.



Today, Grethe is visiting and Nadia and Magnus join the conversation about what is about to happen. Grethe says that even if you love each other in the family, it may still be for the best that you do not live together. Mom is still angry and upset, but she can see that she and dad are not able to take proper care of Magnus and Nadia at the moment.



“But why do we need to live at a children's home, when we are supposed to live with a foster family?” asks Magnus. “That is because the municipality has to find a family that is perfect for you and Nadia first,” says Grethe. “We want to be absolutely sure that you will get better.”



Nadia becomes upset after Grethe has left. “We’re doing ok here,” she cries. She does not want to leave home. But Magnus consoles her and says that some families are very different from their own. He tells her that at Bjørn’s and Pia’s from his class, the adults make sure that the children get up in the morning and go to school. The adults also make sure that there is enough food—and in the evening the adults often read bedtime stories for their children.

“I would like to live with such a family,” says Magnus. “And Nadia—that kind of family almost always has a dog!”

Nadia and Magnus will soon move to the children's home. They have packed the things they want to bring along. Grethe comes by to help them pick the things that are most important to them.



I hope
that we have room
for everything!



“You have picked so many wonderful things” says Grethe when she sees all the things that Magnus and Nadia has picked out. “I can see that you have been busy. Unfortunately, you cannot bring so much! You will need some of you stuff here when you come to visit.”

“What about Mr Sørensen?” asks Magnus. “It will be very hard to live without him.” “You cannot bring pets to the children's home,” says Grethe, “but your mom has promised to take good care of Mr Sørensen—and then he can also take care of your mom.”



“I always talk to Mr Sørensen when I'm sad,” says Magnus.

“But now you can talk to the adults at the children's home,” says Grethe, “both when you feel upset and when you are happy.”

Grethe asks Magnus, what he would like to bring instead of his guinea pig. "Then I want to bring my grandfather's old binoculars," says Magnus and smiles a little again.

"Then I can look at birds and look at things far away."

"That sounds like a good idea," says Grethe. "What about my phone and skateboard," asks Nadia, "they are important to me?"

"I think that you should bring them along," says Grethe and smiles.



Grethe has also come to make an agreement on how to arrange visits once Nadia and Magnus have moved. This can be done in many ways.

Mom and dad visit Magnus and Nadia at the children's home once a week.

Nadia and Magnus come home to visit once a month with an adult from the children's home.

Magnus and Nadia visit mom and dad every other weekend and stay the night.

Nadia visits mom and dad alone and Magnus visits mom and dad alone.

Nadia and Magnus get visits at the children's home from their friends and maybe also from some of dad and mom's family—and they can also go visit them.

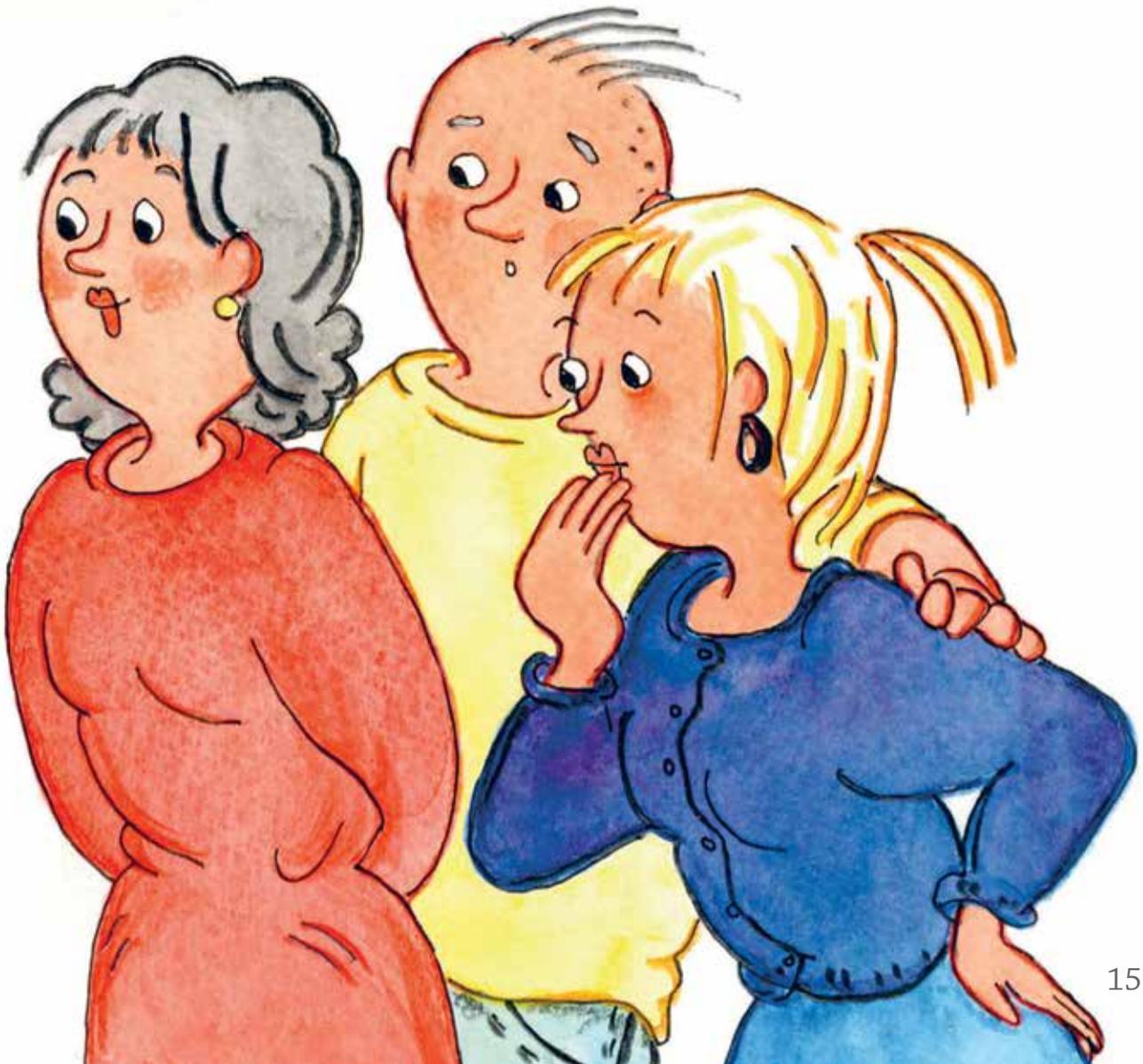
No way!

No!



First the adults suggest that mom and dad come visit at the children's home once a week. But Nadia and Magnus are not happy with this. "We will miss our rooms and our stuff if we don't come home at all," says Magnus. Grethe says that Magnus and Nadia must help decide, so the adults take another talk and decide that Nadia and Magnus can visit their mom and dad on the last Saturday of each month.

Grethe explains that she and mom and dad will come when Nadia and Magnus move to the children's home. And the day after she will come and visit them again to hear how they are getting on. Magnus thinks that it is a good plan, but Nadia does not say anything and just stares into the floor.



Grethe can see that Nadia is upset. "What are you thinking about?" she asks. "I'm afraid that the children's home will be some kind of prison," Nadia whispers, "for children."



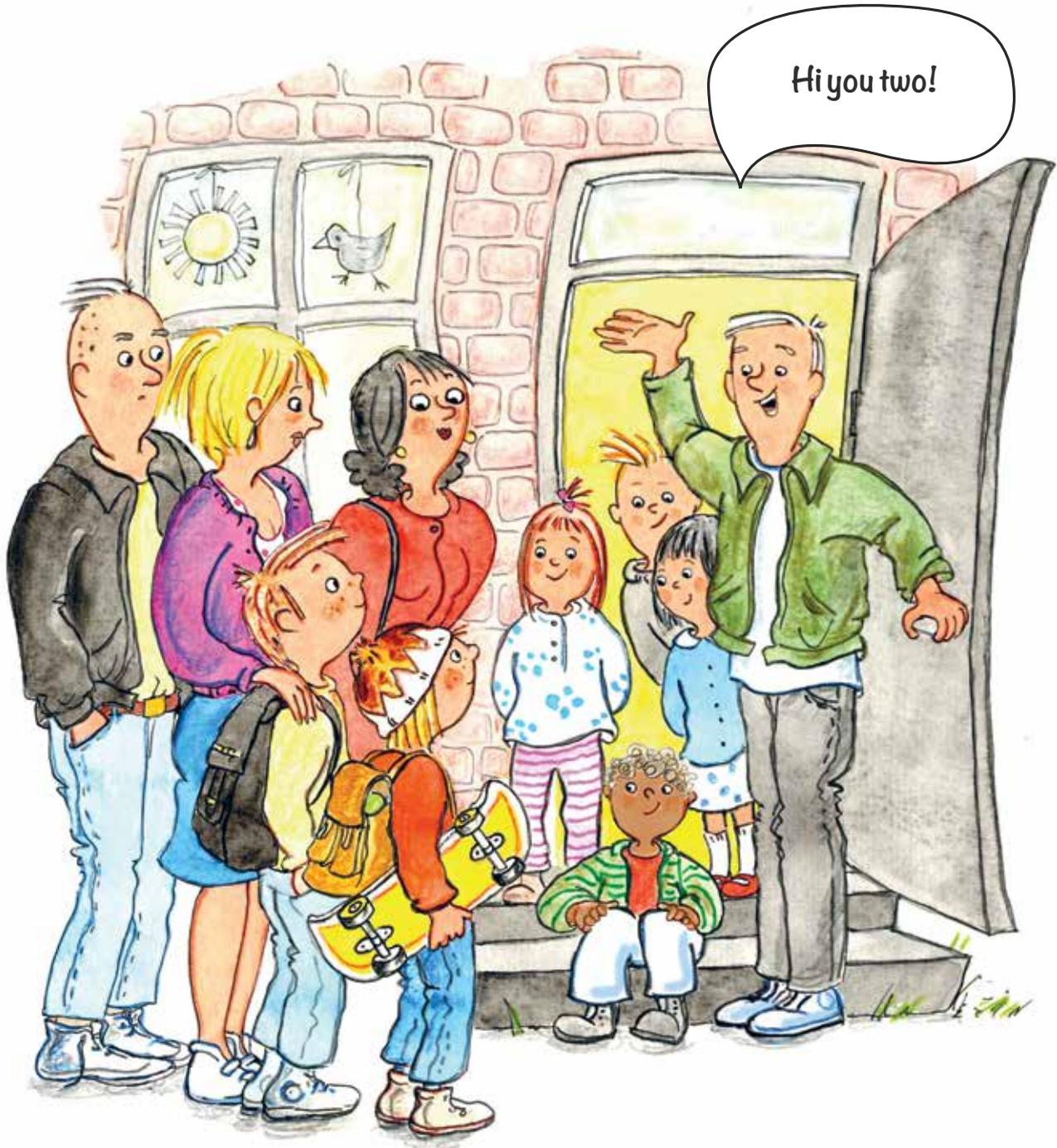
"Of course not," says Grethe quite surprised, "a children's home has nothing to do with a prison. It's a nice place where children who cannot live at home can stay. And where there are adults who will take care of the children."

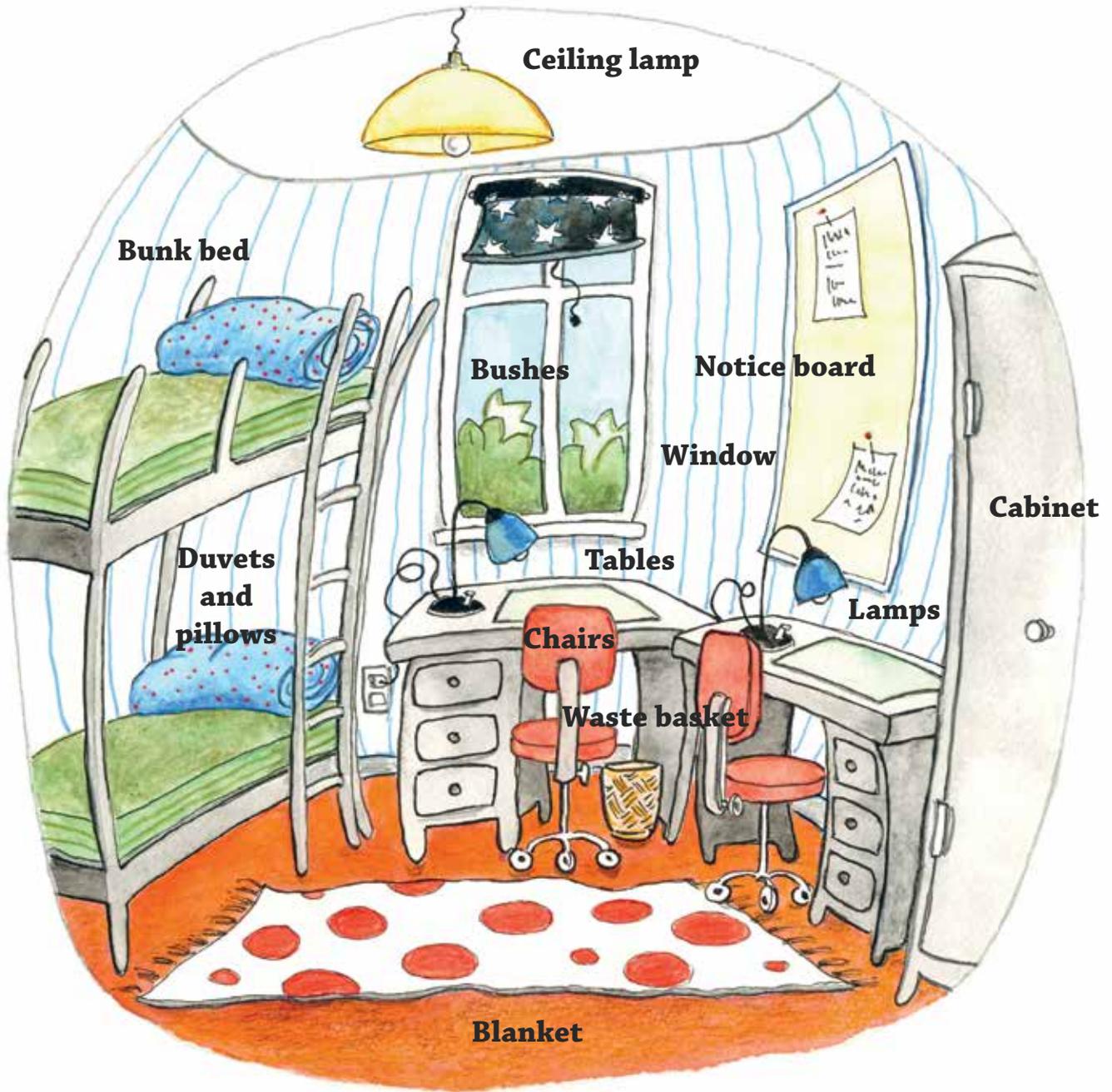
“But what if I don't like to be there?” asks Nadia. “Then you must promise to tell them at the children's home or me, so that we can help you,” Grethe says. “Perhaps there is somethings we can change so that you will become happy to stay there.”



Magnus wants to know whether there are rooms for the children. “Of course,” says Grethe, “and you get to share a room with a bunk bed. And you will also have an adult who will take extra good care of you and who you can always talk to about the things you are doing and thinking about. That is your contact person.”

The following day, Magnus and Nadia moves to the children's home. They are received by an adult and a small group of children. "Hi you two," says the adult, "my name is Jørgen and I will be your contact person." The other children also say hi and tell their names and that they are the ones who will be showing Magnus and Nadia around.





The children shows them the room where Magnus and Nadia will be staying and the bathroom and the kitchen and the garden and the table tennis table in the basement. Then they return for tea and freshly baked bread in the common room.

While they sit at the table, they talk about what will happen: That they will still go to their own school even though they move. That mom and dad will come visit, and they can go visit mom and dad. And that Magnus and Nadia will get to do the same things after school as other children of their age.



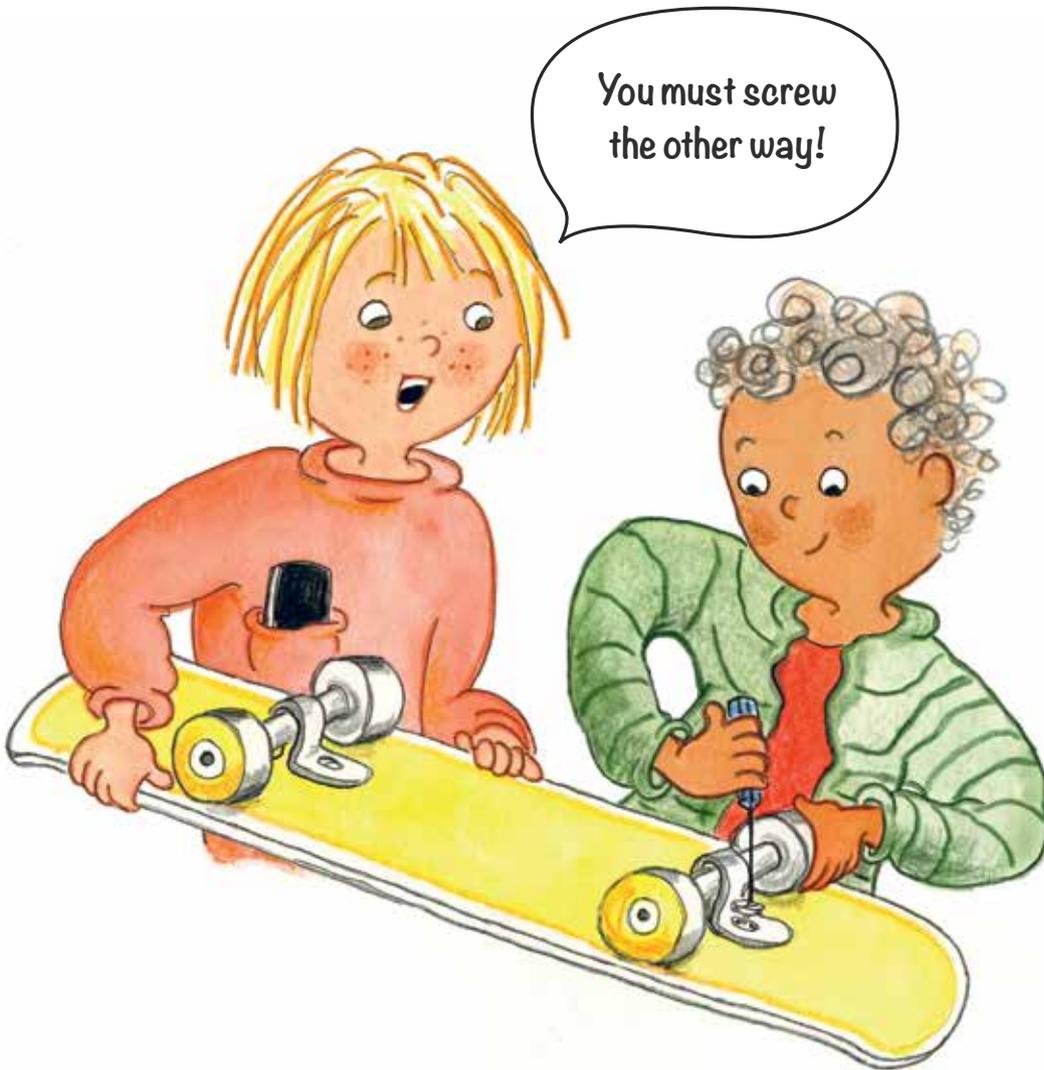
They also talk about the rules when you live in children's home: It is ok to have friends come over, but you need to check with Jørgen first. Bedtimes must be observed. Everyone must help make meals and do the dishes. And you will get pocket money and new clothes when you need it.

While Jørgen talks to mom and dad at the office about practical matters, Grethe talks to Magnus and Nadia about how they feel about the children's home and all the new things that they have experienced. "And while you live here, we will do our best to help your mom and dad, so they can stop drinking so many beers," says Grethe. "It's good that someone will also be taking care of them," says Magnus.



It is difficult when mom and dad come to say goodbye. Luckily, Mikkel comes and asks if they want to come and paint.

One of the first days at the children's home, Magnus and Nadia go with Jørgen to buy some of the things they need: A hairbrush for Nadia and new wheels for her skateboard and a large pack of pens and a book on birds for Magnus.

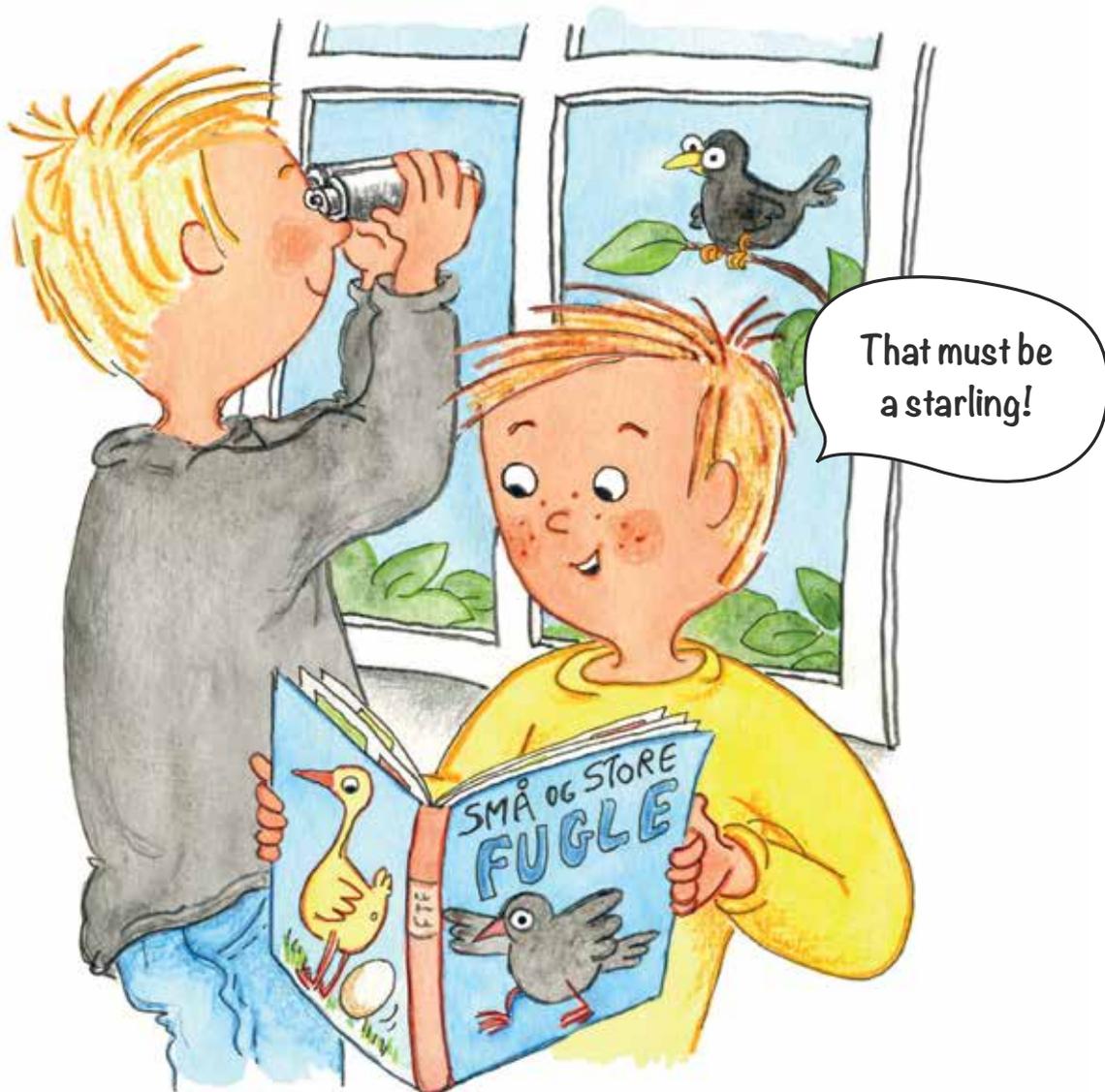


Back at the room, Magnus and Mikkel are looking at birds through the binoculars, and Emil and Nadia are putting new wheels on Nadia's skateboard.

Nadia asks why Emil lives at the children's home. "It's because my mom keeps taking pills and takes some medicine she cannot handle," he responds. "Then she cannot take care of me. And I never see my dad."

“I live here because my mom is ill,” says Mikkel. “She often acts strange and yells out loud and says things I can't understand. Sometimes she is gone for days. And then my dad comes, and I'm really afraid of him.”

“Then it is better to live here,” Nadia says.



Mikkel says that some of the children live at the children's home because their mom and dad have never learned what it means to be a family. “But then there is someone who can teach them,” says Mikkel, “and then the children may get to move back home.”

One day, Grethe visits them and tells them that she has found a really good foster family for Nadia and Magnus just a one-hour away from their mom and dad. “Do they have any other children?” asks Magnus. “They do,” says Grethe, “a boy who is 17 and who is called Rasmus. And your foster parents are called Morten and Hanne.”



“When will we be moving?” asks Nadia. “In two weeks,” says Grethe, “so you will have plenty of time.”

A few days later Morten, Hanne and Rasmus come to visit. They look nice, thinks Magnus. Especially Rasmus, even though Magnus thinks that his hair is strange.



They talk about the small town in which they will be living and that they will have to change school because the one they are going to now is too far away from the new place. Hanne promises that mom and dad can still come visit sometimes, and that Magnus and Nadia can go visit them once a month.

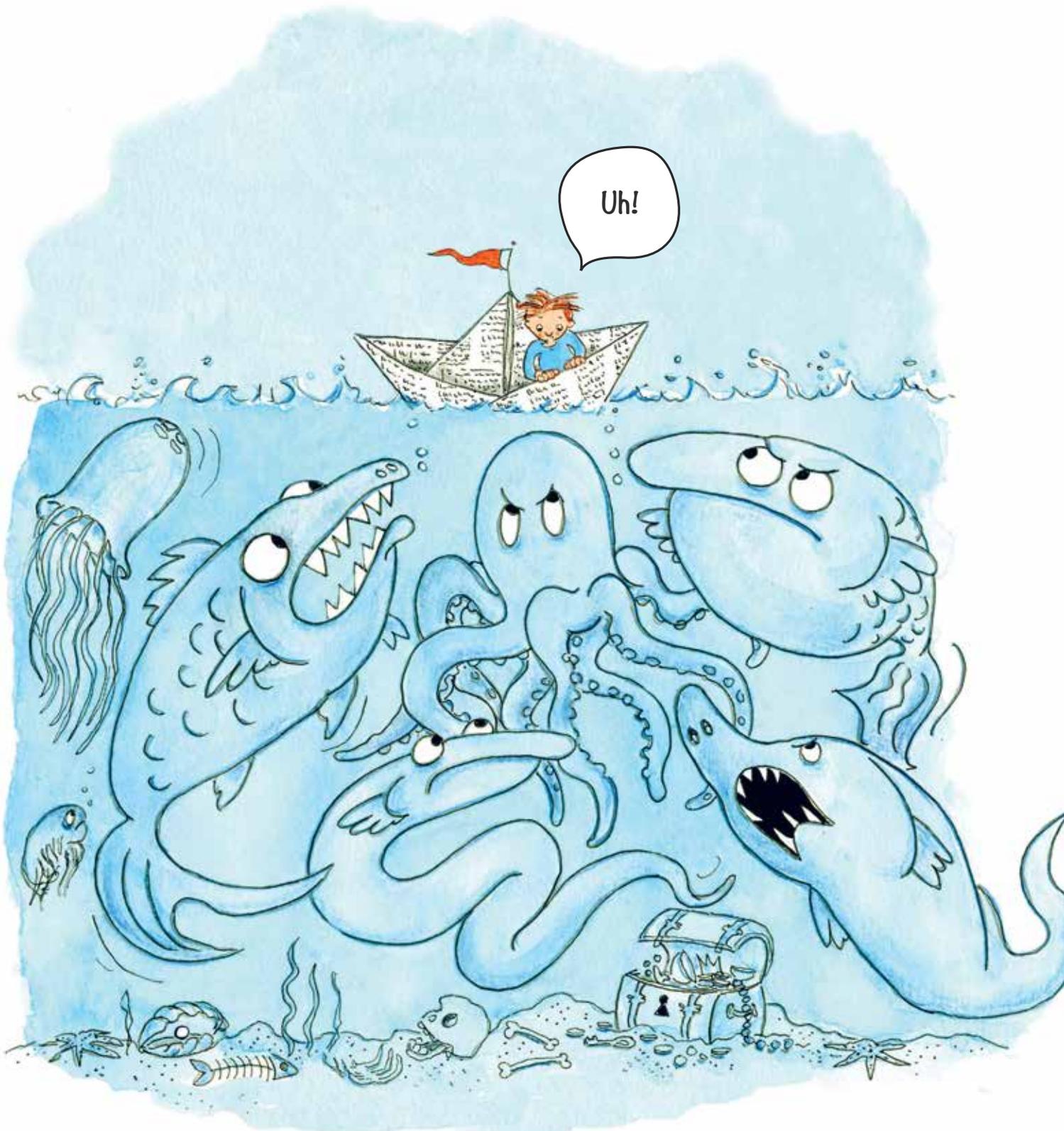
Morten, Rasmus and Hanne have made a small book about their family and the place they live. They give it to Magnus and Nadia and talk about the pictures. There is also a large picture of a dog. They agree that Magnus and Nadia can come visit a couple of times before they move.

On the day when Magnus and Nadia are to move to their new foster family, the children's home throws a small farewell party. Jørgen gives them a book and a booklet with the songs they have been singing at the children's home. Mikkel gives Magnus a drawing of four different birds they have seen through Magnus' binoculars. They have agreed that Mikkel can come visit once Magnus and Nadia have gotten used to their new home.





At Morten and Hanne's, Magnus and Nadia get rooms right next to each other—and there is also room for Mr Sørensen. Rasmus has painted name plates so that you can see that this is where Magnus and Nadia live.



One night Magnus is dreaming that he is sailing in a paper boat in a large sea filled with monsters.



Nadia is dreaming that her mom and dad are flying away in a spaceship to another planet.

The next morning, Magnus tells about this dream. "It was really scary sitting in that boat," he says and starts to cry. "A paper boat can be come wet and sink, and what would happen to me then?" Nadia is also crying. "Have you also had a bad dream?" asks Morten. Nadia explains how she saw her parents fly away in her dream. "I was so afraid that I would never see them again," she says.



"Aww," says Hanne and gives them both a hug. "I understand why you have these dreams. Everything is so confusing right now."



“It must be difficult for you to get your head around all the new things,” says Morten. “it is absolutely OK to feel alone or to miss your mom and dad and be afraid that they might disappear. Only they won't—remember that. And remember to talk with us whenever you feel like this. We want to help you, so that you can be happy again.”

“Sure, just speak up,” says Rasmus and gives Magnus and Nadia a high five before leaving out the door.

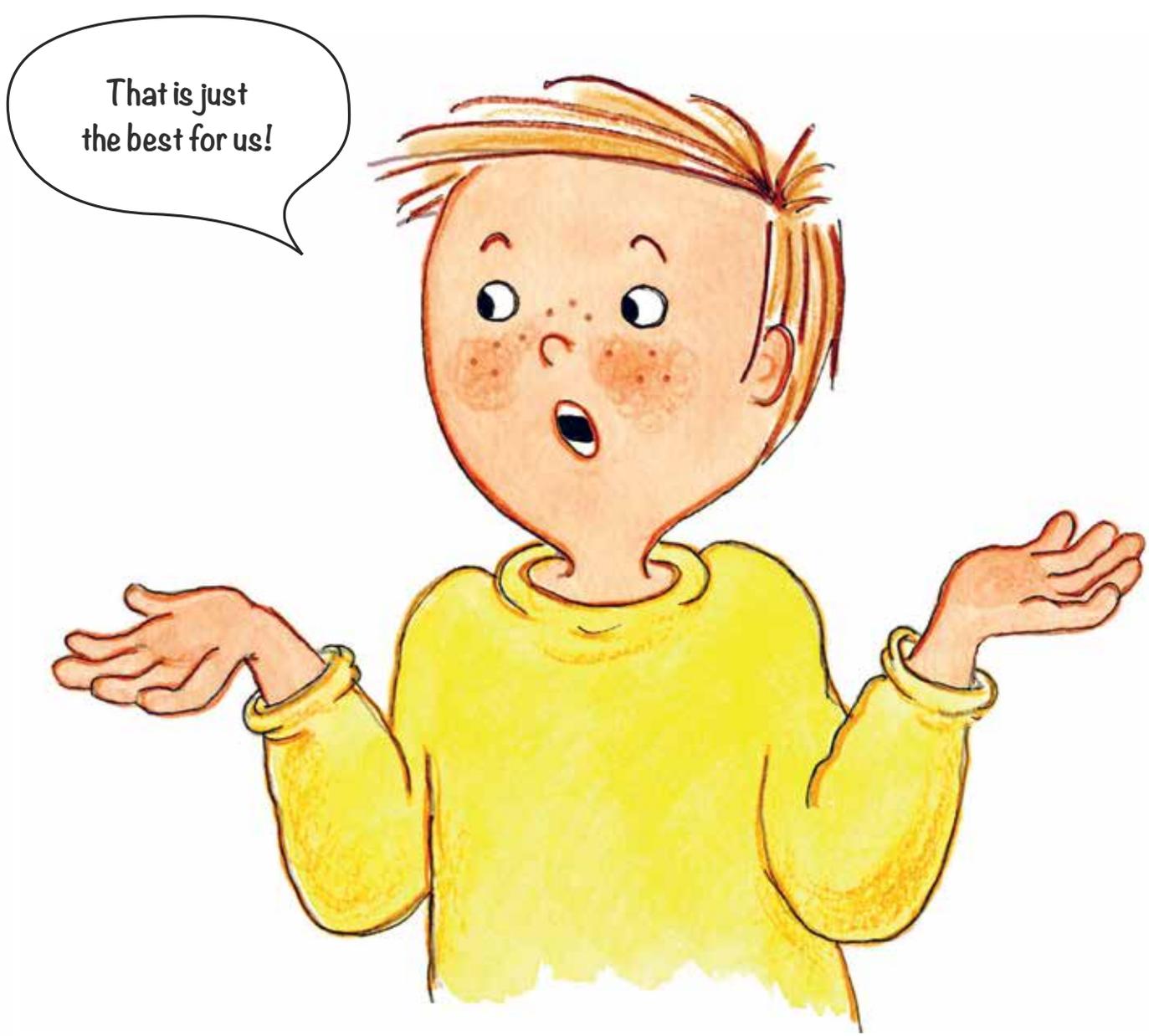
Magnus and Nadia's new school is smaller than the one they went to before and there are different rules and many things are done differently. Magnus and Nadia have been afraid that the other kids would ask them why they are not living at home with their mom and dad.



One day, both Nadia and Magnus bring home some friends for the first time.

“Is Rasmus your big brother?” asks Maja. “Yes, in a way,” says Nadia, “because Hanne and Morten are my foster parents, so he is almost like a foster brother.”

“But why don't you live together with your real mom and dad?” asks Jonas.



That is just
the best for us!

“Because...” Nadia starts, but then stops. “Because they cannot take care of us even though they want to,” explains Magnus. “So it's better that we live with this family. Here we are taken care of, we get help and support and we can talk and so on. It's just the kind of family that's best for us to live with.”

“That sounds great” Maja says.

“It sure does” Nadia says.

For you who are reading the book aloud

This book is a part of a series of booklets from the Danish National Council for Children, which communicates children's rights and their possibilities of receiving help when they are placed in care. The book aims at children placed in care at the age of around five and covers various topics and dilemmas which are relevant for many children when they are placed in care. This story is also an example of how to take account of the rights of the youngest children when they are placed in care.

Even though there is a considerable difference between placements, many children still go through the same experience and feelings as Magnus and Nadia. For some children, being placed in care may involve much more conflicts, some children experience that they are placed away from their siblings, and others experience that things are much more unfair or confusing than they are for Magnus and Nadia. That is why the story about Magnus and Nadia is simply to serve as a framework—and as a good story—that can form the basis for the conversation with the child. The primary objective of the book is to tell the children—and the adults—that even the youngest children have rights when they are placed in care. Rights that the adults who are around the child must ensure are taken into account. The book particularly emphasises the child's right to being heard, the child's right to love and care, the child's right to information and

the child's right to co-determination. To make sure that all children can relate to the story about Magnus and Nadia, it is important to talk to the child about similarities and differences in relation to the child's own story. In several places during the story, it is relevant to ask about the child's own experience of being placed in care compared to that of Magnus and Nadia.

The following provides a list of proposed discussion topics for the individual pages:

Pages 2 and 3

The child's own reaction to having to move.
The dilemma between living at home/away from home and doing good/not doing good.

Pages 4 and 5

The child's right to receive help.

Pages 6 and 7

The child's own situation in the home and the reason why the child has to move.

Pages 8 and 9

The child's parents' reaction to the child having to move and the fact that it is the municipality that makes the decision.

The child's reaction to the adults being upset/angry etc.

The course involved in placing the child in care.
The child's right to a good and safe childhood.

Pages 10 and 11

Things that are important for the child to bring along. Missing your things/your own room/pets/parents/family/friends/etc.

Pages 12 and 13

Who is the child talking to/who would the child like to talk to? For some, it might be relevant to talk about the child's possibility of having an advisor.

The right to being included and saying one's opinion.

Pages 14 and 15

Who is it important to get visits from/to visit – friends, mom and dad, grandparents, siblings, etc.? How are visits arranged for the child? The child's right to co-determination.

Pages 16 and 17

The right to know—in detail—what is going to happen.

Pages 18 and 19

The adults who the children meet while they are placed in care and their roles, e.g. case worker, support person, contact educator, foster care consultant, supervisor, foster family, etc.

The physical framework—what is an accommodation facility/an institution/a foster family?

Pages 20 and 21

Everyday life as a child being placed in care—what about school/kindergarten/school-based day-care facility/leisure-time activities?

Rules and co-determination.

Help for mom and dad while the children are away.

Pages 22 and 23

All children have their own story.

Pages 24 and 25

About moving in with a foster family—the new family, new surroundings and new routines.

The adults' responsibility for ensuring that the children are doing well and stay in contact with friends and family.

Pages 26 and 27

About the new friends they can get and about staying in contact with them and old friends.

Pages 28 and 29

The many feelings which placement may cause (anxiety, despair, sense of loss, relief, etc.)

Pages 30 and 31

About how important it is that the children talk to someone when they are upset or afraid.

Pages 32 and 33

About the fear of being different and having to explain to other children why you are placed in care.

The list is intended as inspiration for the conversation with the child about his or her specific placement in care, rights and possibilities of getting help.

We hope that you will have a good experience reading the story about Nadia and Magnus and that the book will serve as a usable tool for keeping focus on the rights of the youngest children when they are placed in care.

Nadia and Magnus are leaving home

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Editor

Flemming Schultz and Katrine Munch

Text and illustrations

Bodil Nygaard

Graphic design

Peter Waldorph

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Nadia and Magnus will no longer be living at home. They have to move out. First to a children's home and then to a foster family. This has been decided by someone in the municipality because Nadia and Magnus are not doing well at home.

Nadia and Magnus are leaving home is a read-aloud book for the youngest children being placed in care about the many feelings and dilemmas many children experience when they are placed in care. The story is also an example of how the rights of the youngest children can be safeguarded during placement.

