

Written and illustrated by

Katarina Šoln

Stories About Endangered Plants

TINE AND THE WOLF PLANT



About the book series "Stories About Endangered Plants"

Before you lie a children's book brought to life through the collaborative efforts of the COST Action ConservePlants. Comprised of dedicated researchers from Europe and beyond, ConservePlants is at the forefront of protecting endangered plant species. Our researchers are committed not only to their scientific work but also to sharing knowledge with people of all ages, especially children. And what better way to captivate young minds than through stories!

Within this collection, we proudly showcase the captivating tales of endangered plants, lovingly penned by our passionate researchers. These stories offer a unique window into the lives of these remarkable plants, providing valuable insights into their importance and the challenges they face. Each narrative is crafted to both entertain and educate, fostering a love for nature and promoting conservation.

Join us on an exciting journey of discovery as we explore the wonders of the natural world through these stories. Immerse yourself in the captivating narratives and vivid illustrations that bring these endangered plants to life and embark on a quest to protect and preserve the remarkable biodiversity of our planet.

Živa Fišer, ConservePlants Action Chair



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COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) 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.

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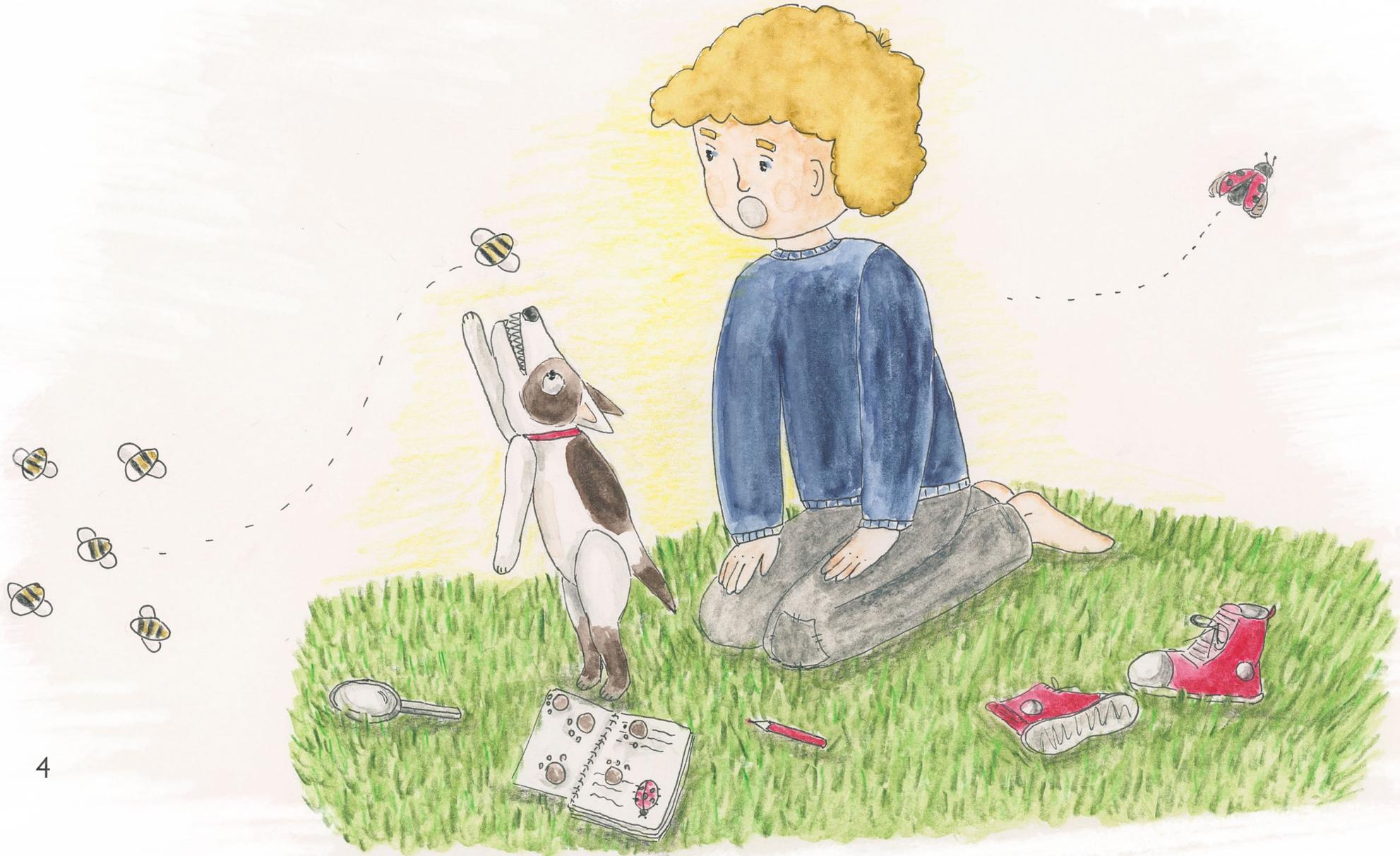
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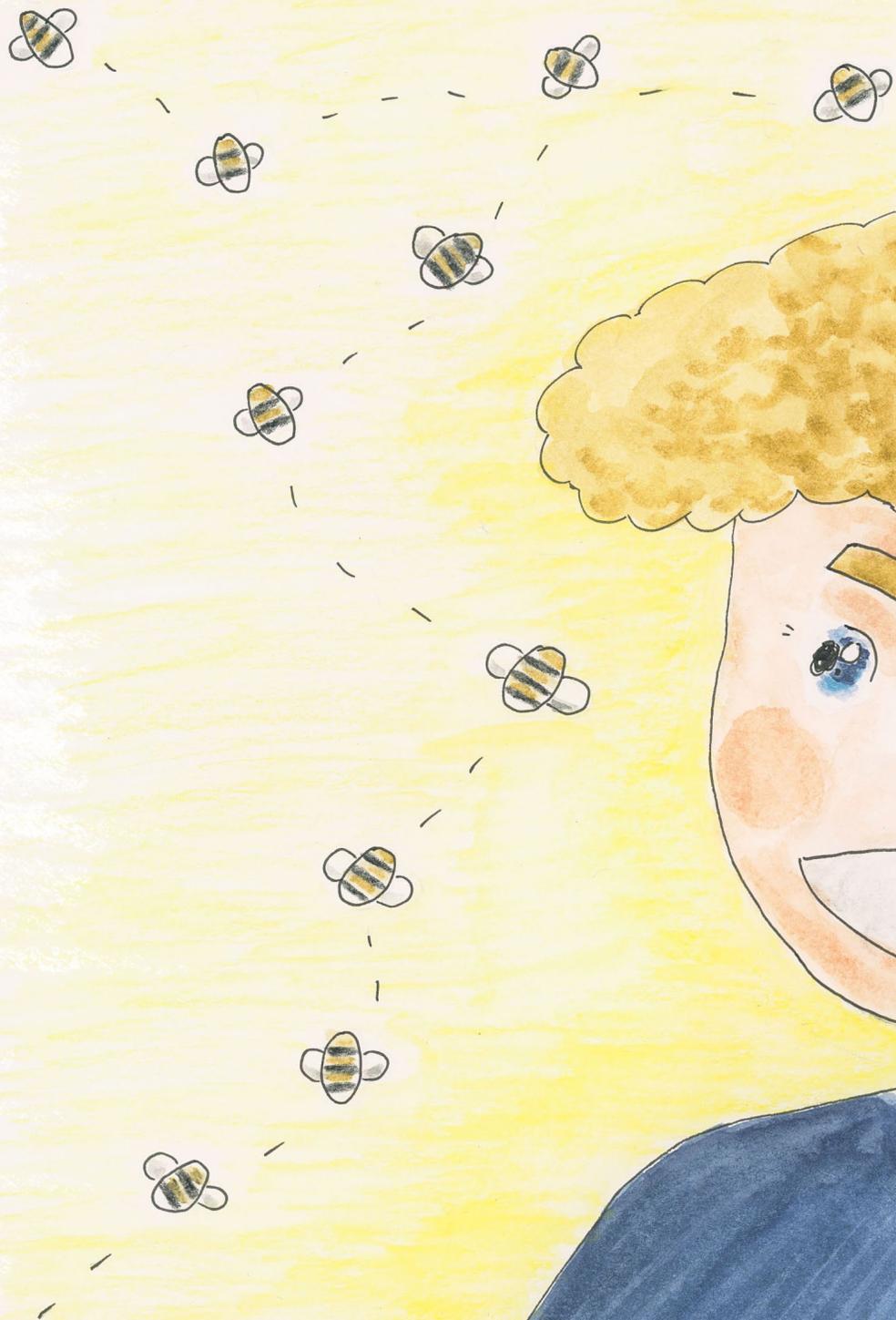
Written and illustrated by **Katarina Šoln**

This is *Tine*. Tine loves to explore nature. A meadow, a forest, a stream – in every place Tine can discover something new. Tine also carries a magnifying glass with him, so he can take a close look at an interesting insect or a blade of grass he found during his walk. Sometimes Tine also draws the animals and plants that catch his eye in a little notebook. *Wolf* the dog keeps him company during his explorations.





But on this day Tine does not observe with a magnifying glass or draw. Something strange is happening. *Bumblebees!* And another one! How many there are ... One of them even sits on the snout of a surprised Wolf.



“Where are they flying to?” wonders Tine and then smiles broadly: “Now the real *adventure* begins!”

Tine and Wolf run after the bumblebees: past the colourful meadow and further along the forest path. *Quick!* *Quick!* Then they jump over the stream, turn around a green beech and come into the forest clearing.





Tine and Wolf stop. An *unknown* plant grows in the middle of the clearing.



“Look, the bumblebee dance!” exclaims Tine. He points to the bumblebees buzzing around the flowers, competing which of them will first taste the sweet nectar hidden in the blossoms. Tine has never seen a plant like this before: its leaves are slightly wrinkled and its flowers are bell-shaped.

Tine scratches his nose. Is that a snowdrop? No, a snowdrop has white flowers, but the flowers on this plant are red. A few more bumblebees join the party in the flowers. This looks very *tasty* ...





Tine is already reaching out to touch the flower of this strange plant when Wolf growls. Tine quickly pauses. *Of course!* You must not put an unknown plant in your mouth. That's what his mother told him too. You can get seriously ill ...



“Woof, woof!” barks Wolf loudly. Then Tine also notices: the bumblebees are no longer dancing! They lie on the ground like the dead. What’s going on there?

Tine runs home.
His father will help him
solve this riddle.







When Tine, Father and Wolf return to the clearing, the bumblebees *have disappeared.*

“I do not understand,” sighs Tine. “Where have they been hiding?”
Father smiles: “They flew away.” He points to a round bumblebee that is trying to lift itself off the ground in a daze.

Tine and his father sit down under a beech tree. Dad takes a thick book out of his rucksack. It is full of photos of plants. Dad spends some time looking for the right page in the book. Then he smiles: “Look, that’s your plant.”

“Wow!” exclaims Tine. “What’s its name?”

“The wolf plant,” Father explains.

“But why the wolf?” Tine becomes curious. “This plant does not look like a wolf cub at all ...”

“The wolf plant is a very poisonous plant,” Father clarifies. “People have often named poisonous plants after dangerous animals ...”

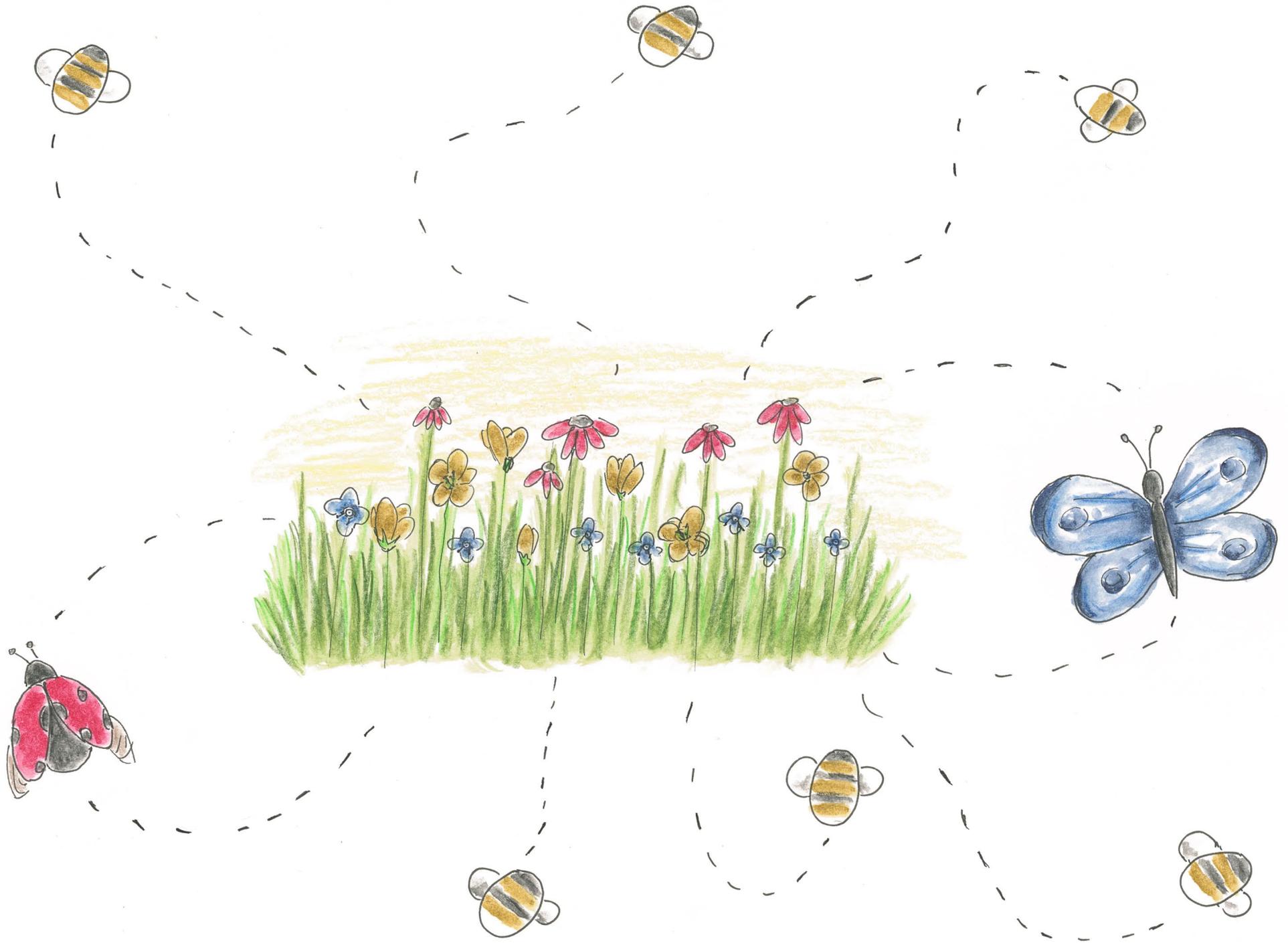




Tine remembers the bumblebees. Is that why they were laying there like dead?

He gets *angry*. He runs to the plant to trample on it.

His father stops him. “No, we are not destroying! In nature all things are intertwined.” The father points to a snail hiding under a leaf. “You see, what is poisonous to humans is an easy lunch for some animals ...”



Suddenly Tine hears the buzzing of the bumblebees. *They are back again!* And not only bumblebees but also bees and butterflies!
“Bumblebees collect sweet nectar and when they fly from flower to flower, they also pollinate the plants ...” his father explains.

“And why were the bumblebees lying around?” Tine still does not understand.

Father points to the wolf plant. “The whole plant is *poisonous*. But in small quantities, the poison can also be a medicine ... The nectar of this plant contains substances that make bumblebees addicted to wanting more of it. That’s why they end up lying dizzy. Remember, Tine: *too much of one food is not good for your body either.*”

“So if we eat too much sugar, we can get poisoned?” asks Tine with a mouthful of chocolate.

Father nods seriously.





*Scopolia
carniolica*

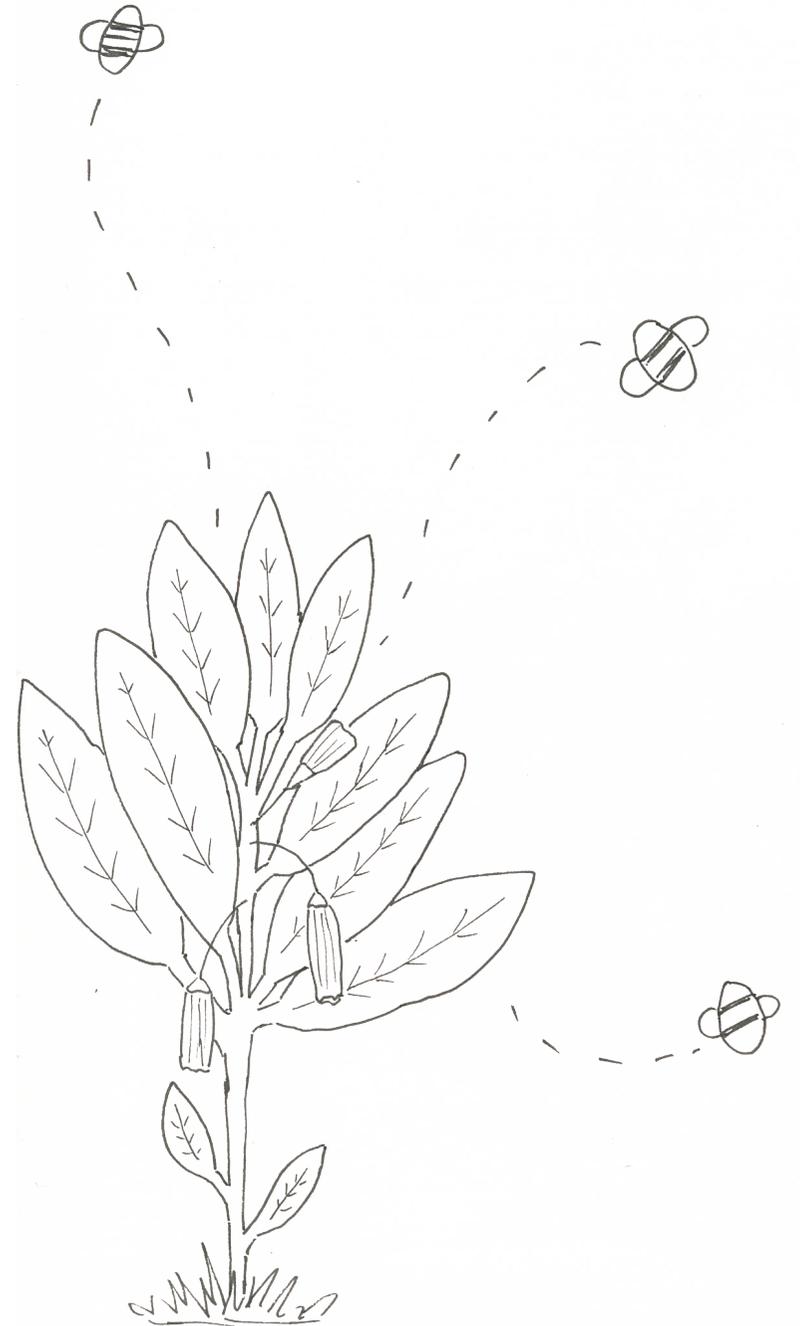
Tine looked at the book about plants again. There is something else written under the photo. Father reads: *Scopolia carniolica*.

“What does this strange name mean?” asks Tine.

His father explains: “All plants also have a Latin name. That way, scientists from different countries can recognise them even though they do not speak the same language.”

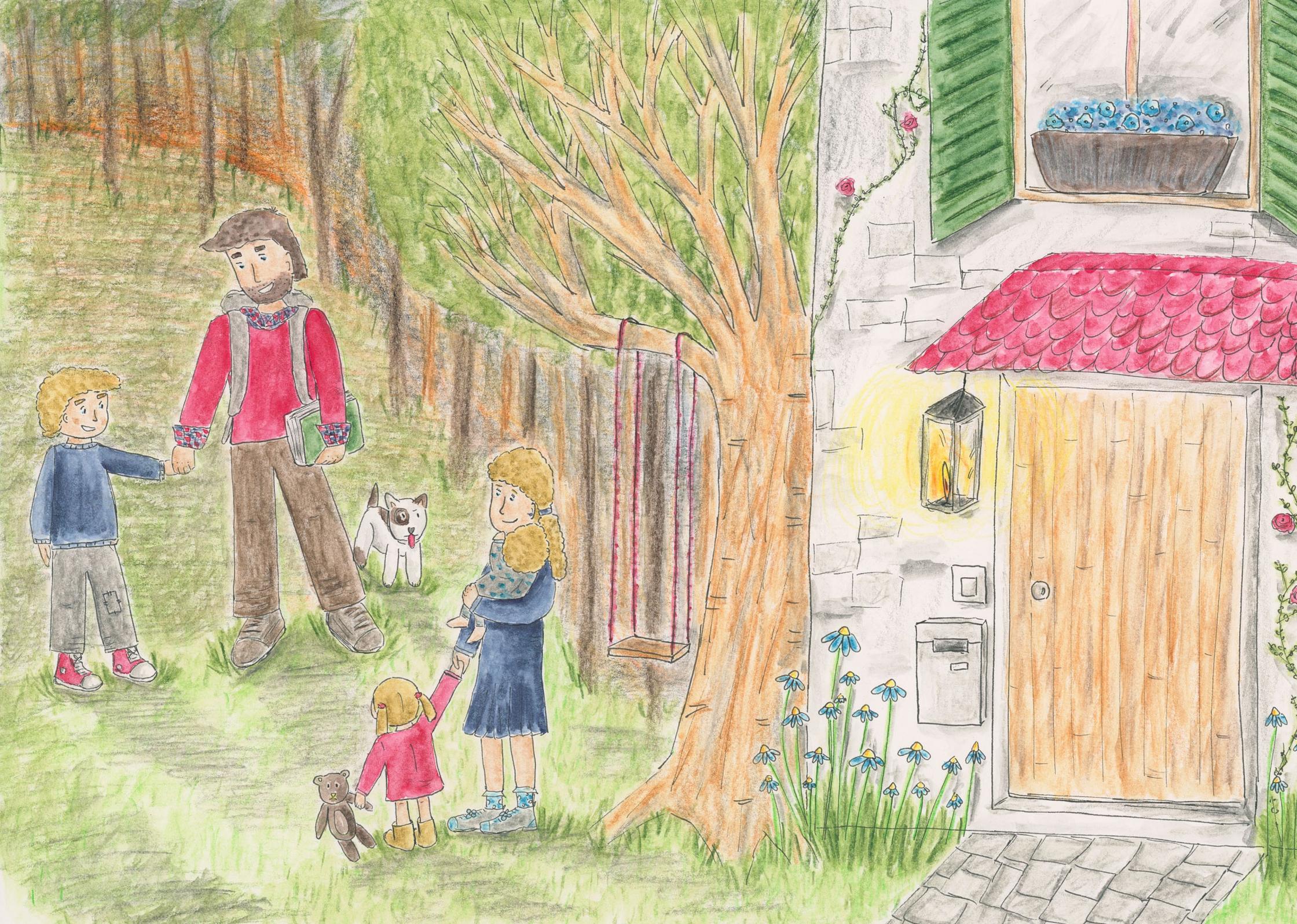
“So even plants have their own names and surnames!” exclaims Tine.

The father points to the photo of the grey-haired man in the book. “This plant was discovered more than 250 years ago by the naturalist Antonio Scopoli. Like you, he loved to explore nature and one day he found it ...”





Tine smiles proudly as they return home. When he grows up, he will be a scientist too!





Tine hugs his dog and whispers:
“Tomorrow we'll go exploring again!”



Photo: Špela Pungaršek



Photo: Simona Strgulc Krajšek

Scientific Note

The actual name of the wolf plant is the European scopolia or henbane bell (*Scopolia carniolica*). In order to follow the typical Slovenian name of this plant “kranjski volčič” (which literally means “Carniol wolf cub”), I have decided to distort the name of the plant.

The European scopolia is a plant with reddish bell-shaped flowers that grows up to 60 cm high. It belongs to the nightshade family (Solanaceae). It is found in the undergrowth of forests, especially in the beech forests of Central and South-Eastern Europe. The European scopolia is a very poisonous plant as it contains toxic substances, among which atropine and scopolamine predominate. The latter was formerly used as a natural anaesthetic. It can also cause dizziness in pollinators such as bumblebees. Ingestion of large quantities of this plant causes poisoning with vomiting and hallucinations, which can lead to death.

The European scopolia was discovered and described in Idrija by the famous naturalist Joannes Antonius Scopoli (1723-1788), who worked as a doctor in Idrija (Idrija once belonged to the Carniola region, today this town is in Slovenia). Besides the European scopolia, Scopoli described more than 100 other plant species in Carniola. In 2023 we celebrate the 300th anniversary of Scopoli's birth.

About the writer and illustrator

Katarina Šoln (1993) is a biologist, writer and illustrator. She comes from Slovenia. Katarina has been interested in nature, words and images since her childhood. She graduated in Biology from the Biotechnical faculty at the University of Ljubljana in 2015, did her Master's in Molecular and Functional Biology in 2018 and her PhD in Biology in 2022. Now she works as a teaching assistant in botany and plant physiology in the Department of Biodiversity at the Faculty of Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Information Technologies at the University of Primorska. Katarina also leads biology workshops for children, prepares lectures and educational videos about nature and writes popular science articles about nature. In this way she tries to bring the secrets of the natural world closer to the general public. Katarina also writes stories for children and teenagers.



Photo: Mateja Grašič

Her youth adventure novel Mreža was published in 2010. In recent years she has also devoted herself to illustration.

Wherever she goes, therefore, she always has pen and paper with her ...

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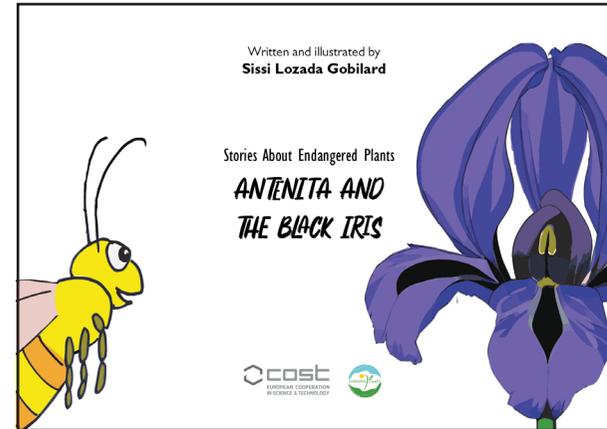
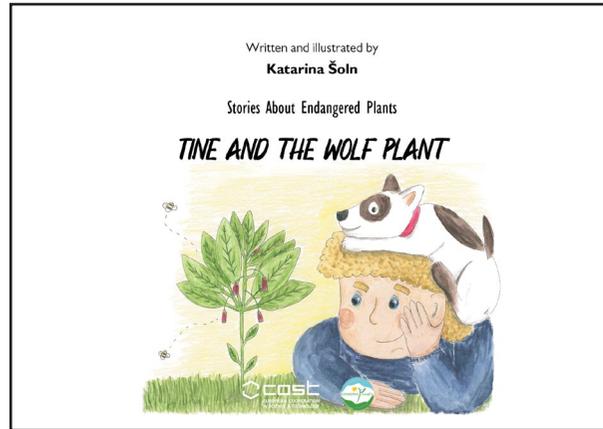


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