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The Newt Come Home

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The partners of this project are: the BiH Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, the Federation Ministry of the Environment and Tourism, the Republika Srpska Ministry of Spatial Planning, Construction and Ecology, the Republika Srpska Ministry of Trade and Tourism, the Federation Fund for Environmental Protection, and the Republika Srpska Fund for Environmental Protection and Energy Efficiency.

The Bosnian Alpine Newt (*Ichthyosaura alpestris reiseri*)

The Bosnian alpine newt is a small, long-tailed animal that lives in mountain lakes. It looks a bit like a lizard, but it lives in water and belongs to the group of amphibians. This special type of newt can be found in only one lake in the whole world, in Prokoško Lake in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The newt found in Prokoško Lake has a slightly larger head and a stronger body than other newts. Scientists believe that it is a separate subspecies, because it develops in a unique way and looks different from other newts. This makes the Prokoško Lake newt very important and valuable for nature.

There used to be a lot of newts in Prokoško Lake. However, when people introduced the fish that did not belong there, the number of newts began to decline. Today, there are very few of them still living there, and most of them survive only in small ponds around the lake. These ponds often dry up, especially in summer, and so the newts are in danger of extinction.

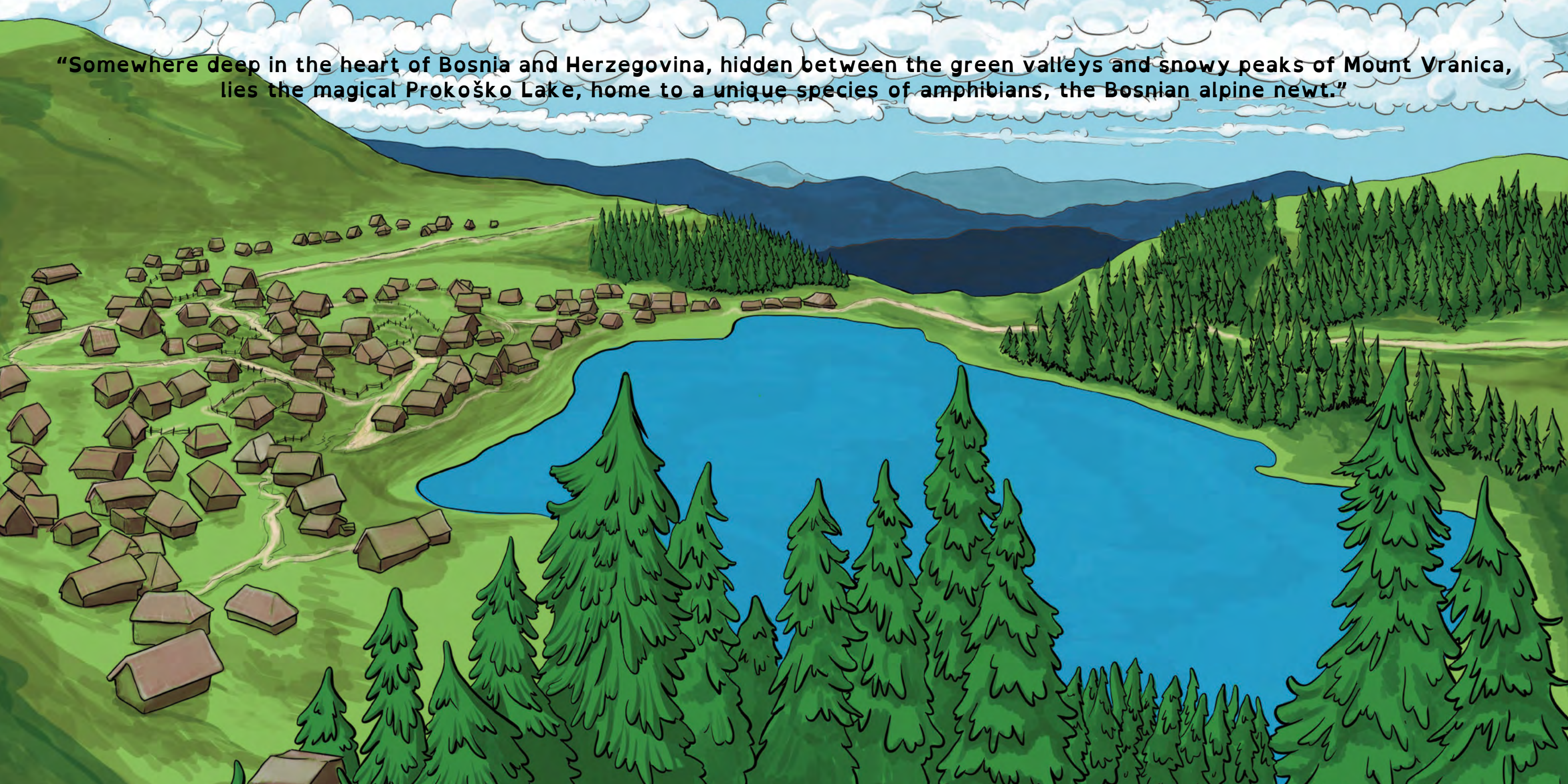
In addition, climate change, pollution, and other threats make their lives even more difficult. As a result, the newt has become a critically endangered species.

Scientists and conservationists want to protect the Bosnian alpine newt. They are planning to help it survive, so that future children can also see this amazing little water dragon that lives only in our mountain lake.



The Management Plan and the website of the Nature Monument Prokoško Lake were consulted during the preparation of this text.

"Somewhere deep in the heart of Bosnia and Herzegovina, hidden between the green valleys and snowy peaks of Mount Vranica, lies the magical Prokoško Lake, home to a unique species of amphibians, the Bosnian alpine newt."



Newt Jute: "Newt Cute! Look how beautiful and sparkling the lake is today!"

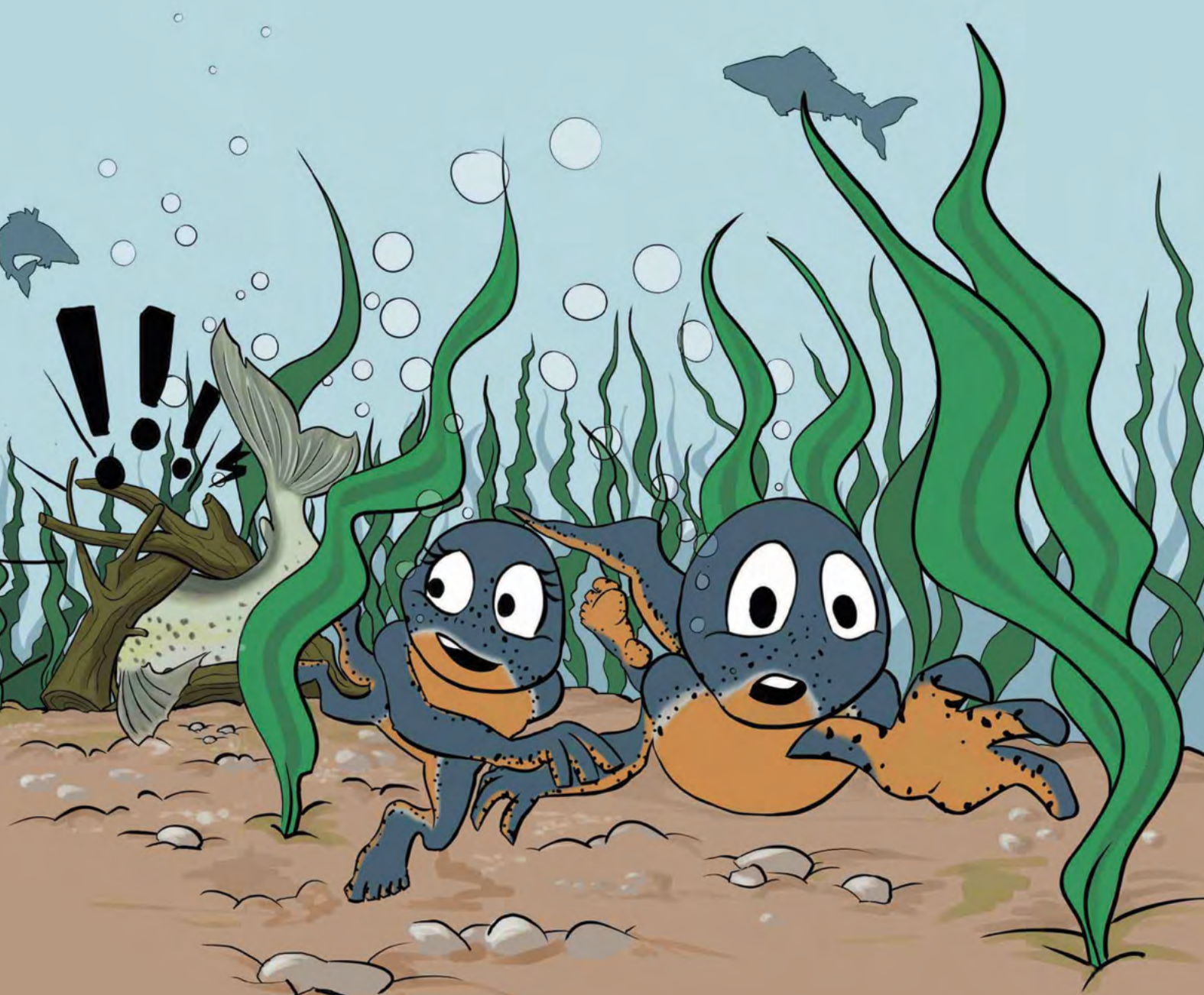
Newt Cute: "It's really beautiful, Newt Jute, but I just feel like something is wrong."



The Big Trout: "Yum-yum...what a tasty little snack!"

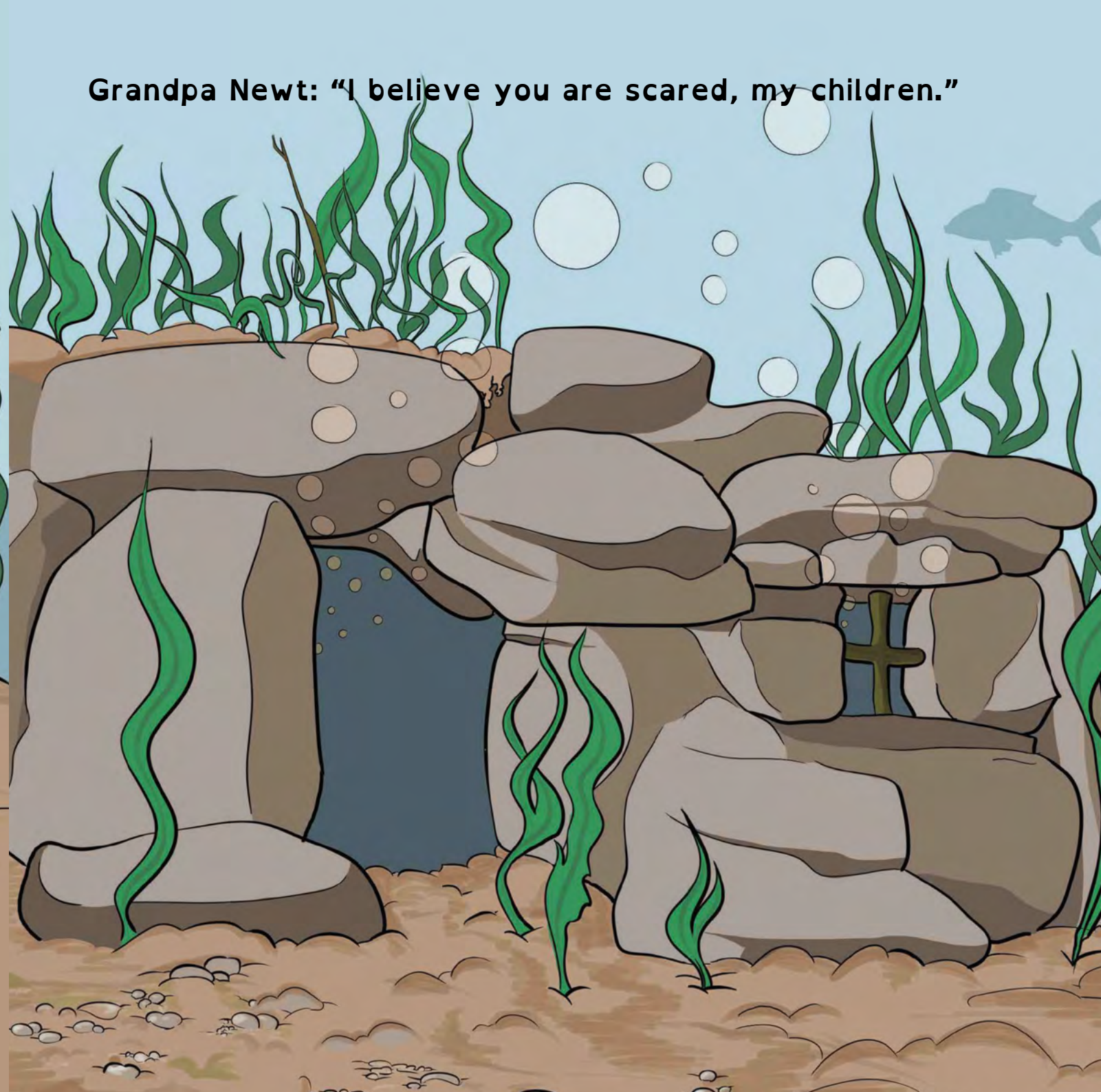
Newt Cute: "Watch out, Newt Jute!"





Newt Jute: "Newt Cute! Move quickly and go inside Grandpa Newt's hiding place!"
Newt Jute and Newt Cute: "Let's hurry!"

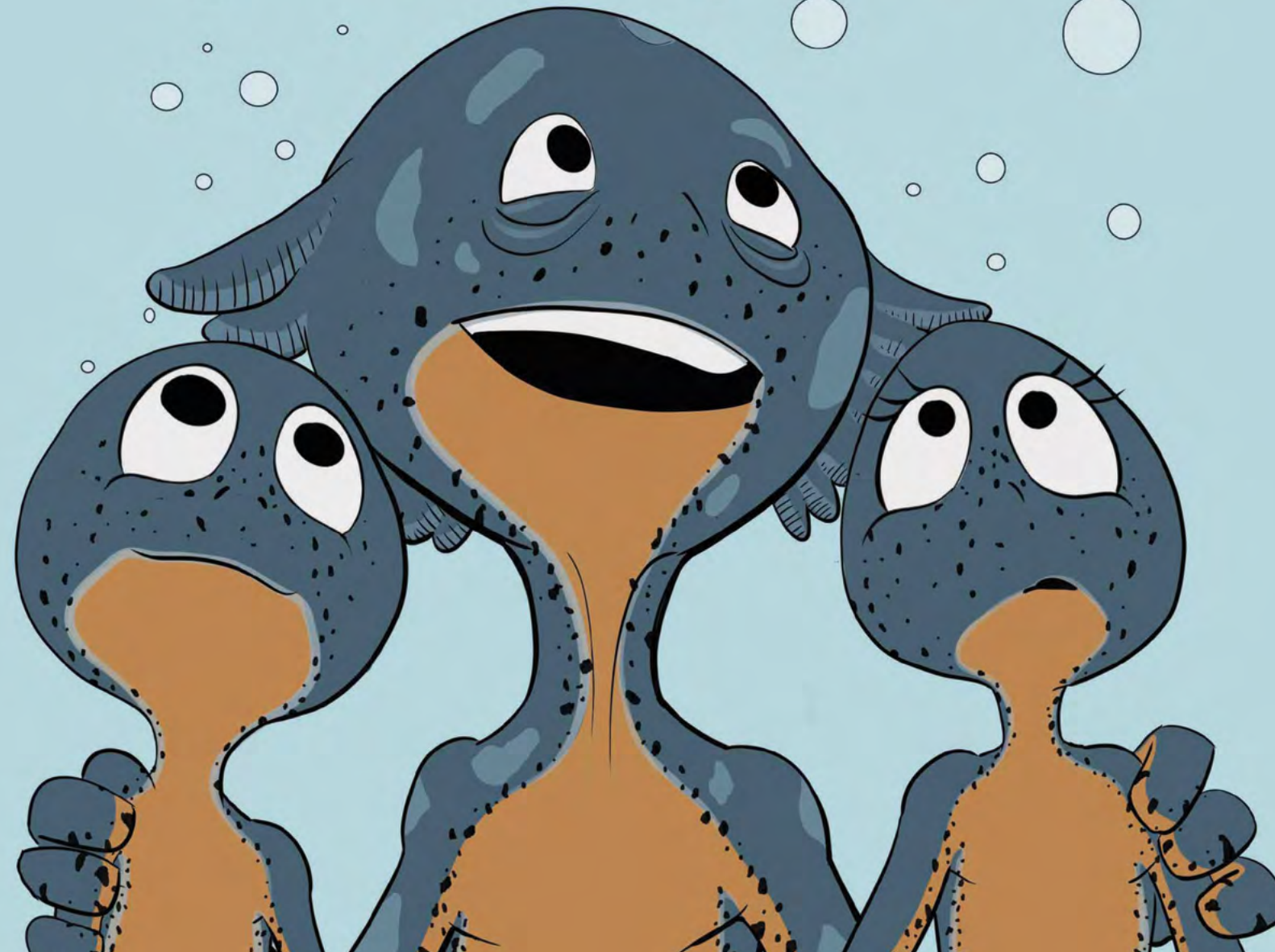
Grandpa Newt: "I believe you are scared, my children."



Grandpa Newt: "You know, people brought us this fish over here. I remember the old days when there was no such fish, and when we could move freely, and the whole lake was ours. Now, this fish eat both us and our juveniles, and pollute our home. I would like to go back to the time when our only guests were frogs, snakes, birds, cows and sheep that drank the clean lake water."

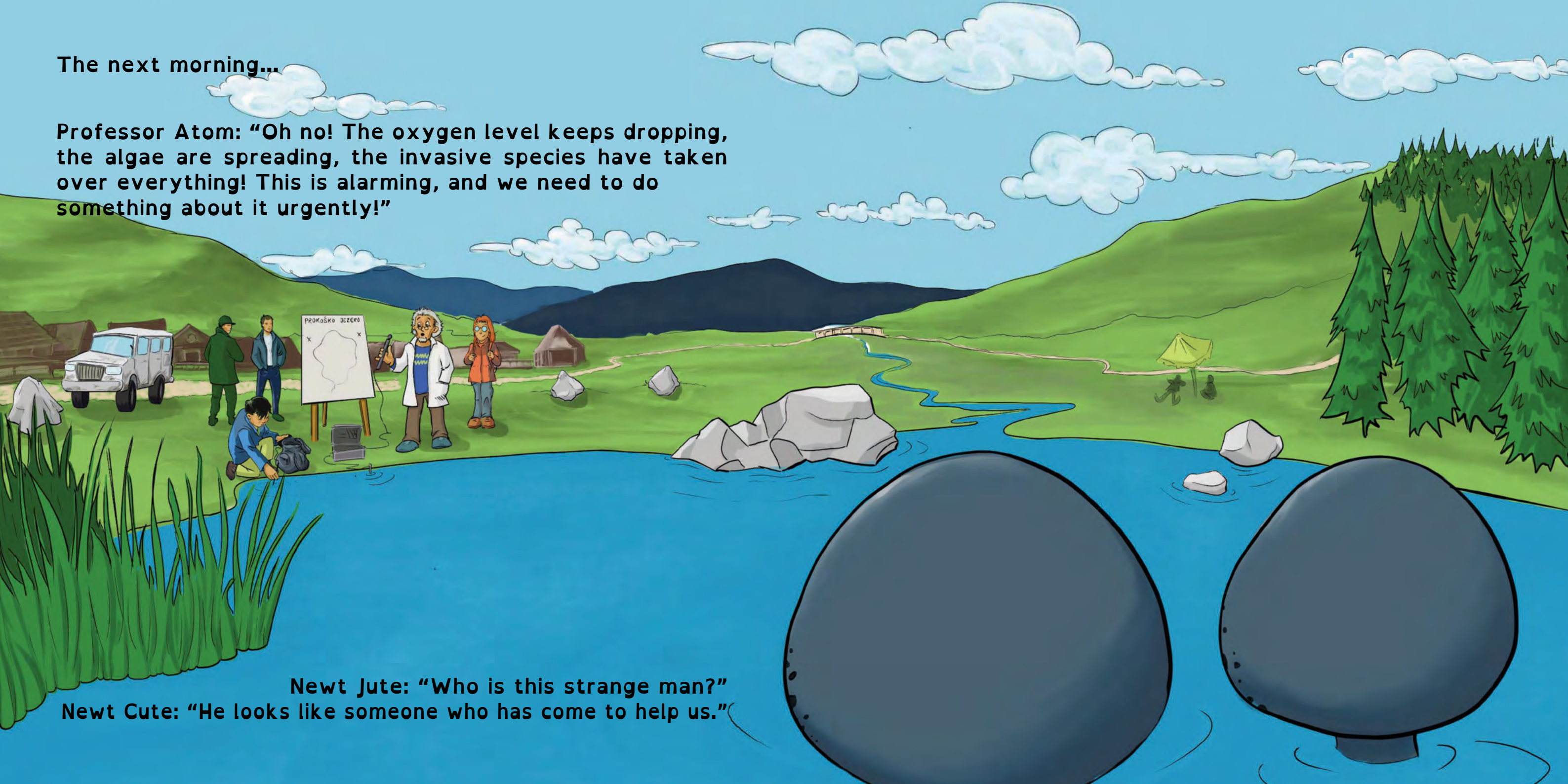


Grandpa Newt: "Stay with me tonight, it will be safer to swim to the surface in the morning."



The next morning...

Professor Atom: "Oh no! The oxygen level keeps dropping, the algae are spreading, the invasive species have taken over everything! This is alarming, and we need to do something about it urgently!"



Newt Jute: "Who is this strange man?"

Newt Cute: "He looks like someone who has come to help us."

Professor Atom: "Research has shown us that the Šestica and Zavol ponds are the newt's last refuge. We can build two shelters there, two hotels for the newts!"

Students: "Is that all we can do for them?"



Professor Atom: "Good question. No, some individuals of the newt population need to be taken to the Department of Natural Sciences at the National Museum of BiH until their home becomes safe again!"





Newt Jute: "Newt Cute, it seems you were right. Maybe this man can really help us."

Over the next few days, Professor Atom and his helpers built two hotels for the newts.



Newt Jute: "The water is ideal, the hotel accommodation is excellent. Now I feel safe!"

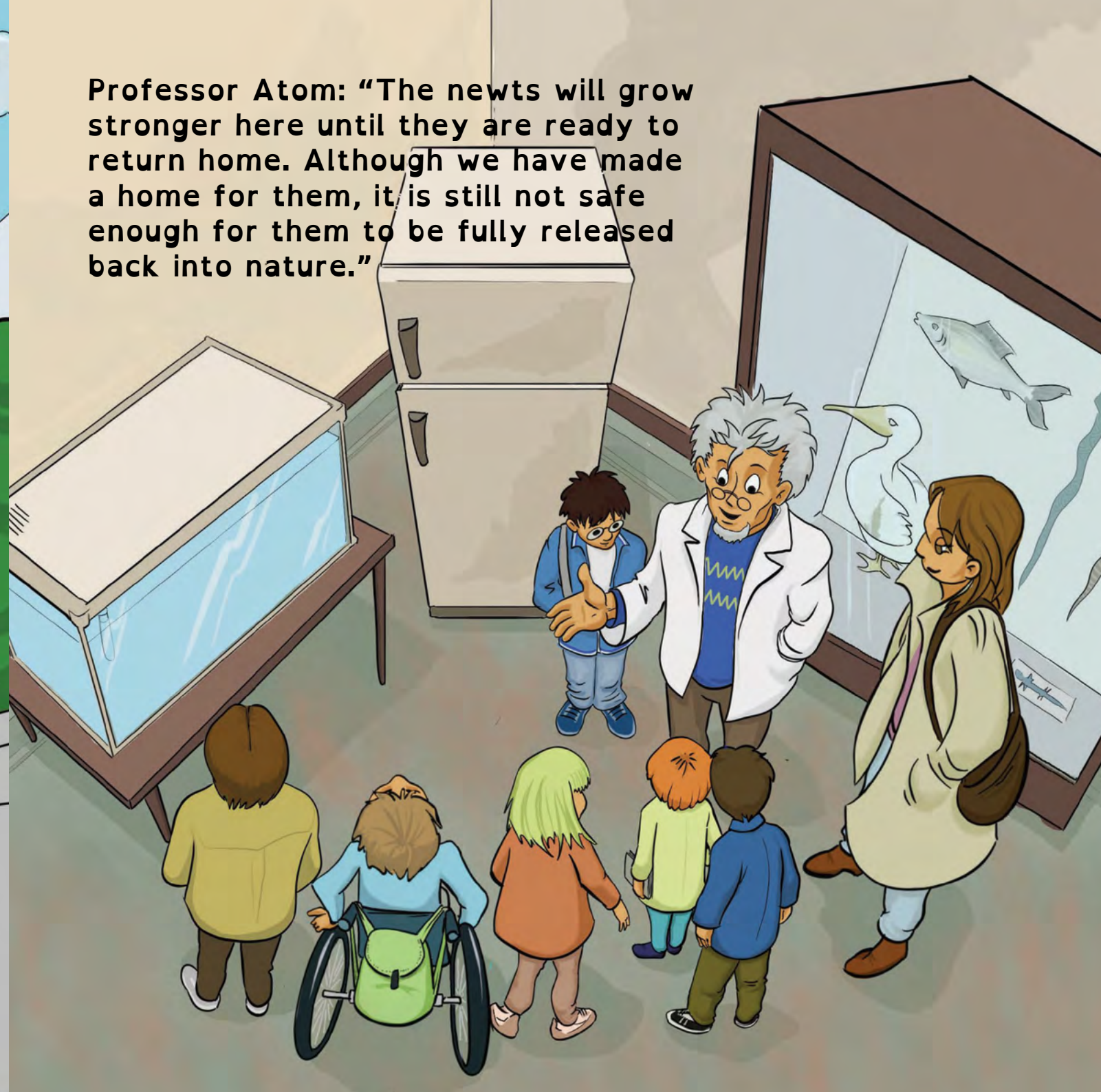
Newt Cute: "A new home, finally. I hope our friends at the Museum feel safe too."



The next day at the National Museum of BiH...



Professor Atom: "The newts will grow stronger here until they are ready to return home. Although we have made a home for them, it is still not safe enough for them to be fully released back into nature."



A boy: "They are amazing! They are so small!"

A girl: "How can we help them? What should we do?"



Professor Atom: "Everything happens in its own time, there is a plan for how and when we will return them, and how you, kids, will help us."



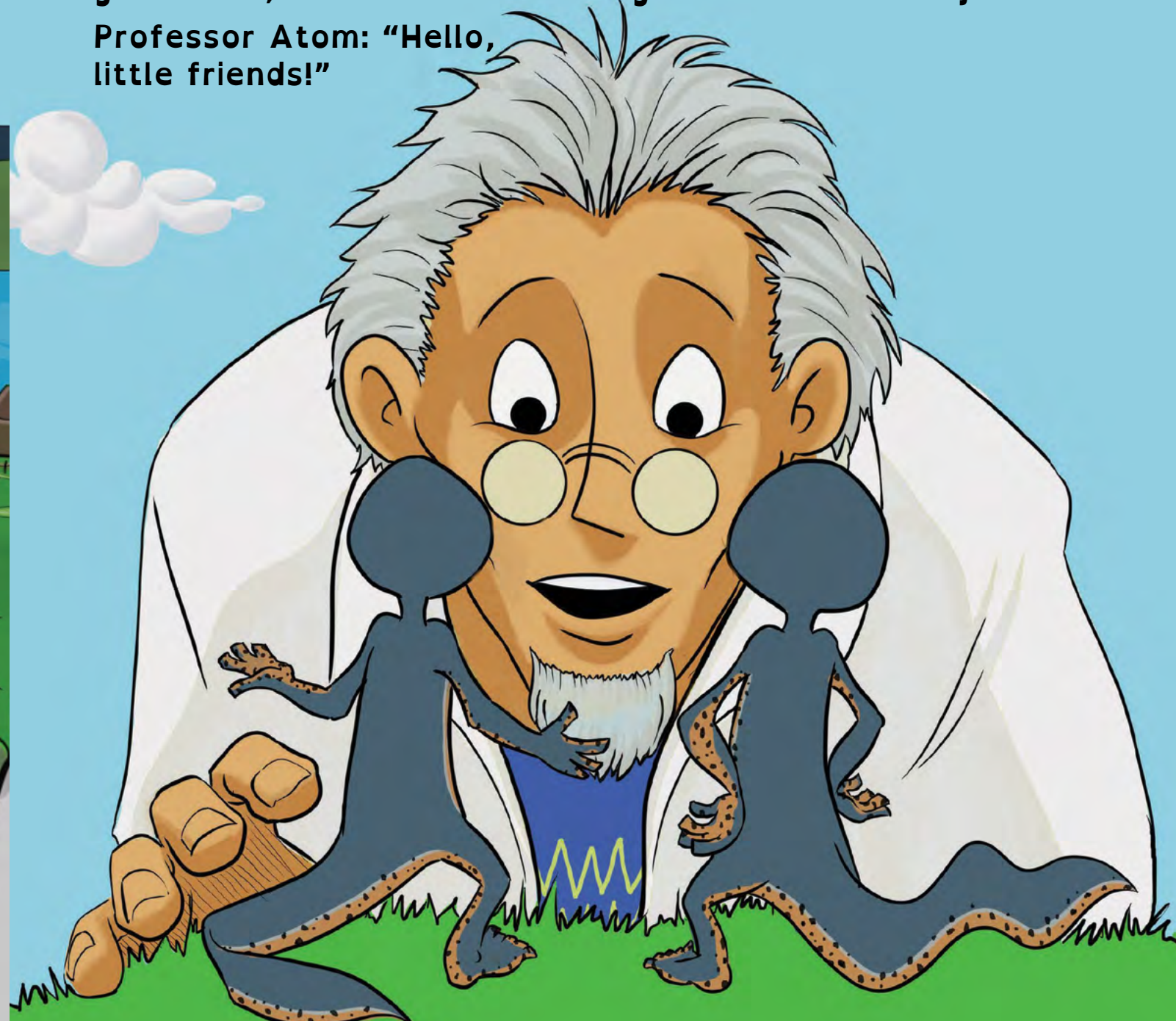
Professor Atom and his team returned to Prokoško Lake after some time to examine the situation at the newt hotel.

Professor Atom: "It is important that we check whether the newts have settled in the hotels, and whether they are enjoying themselves!"



Newt Jute: "Professor! It's you, you're back. Everything is great here, and now we're waiting for our friends to join us."

Professor Atom: "Hello, little friends!"



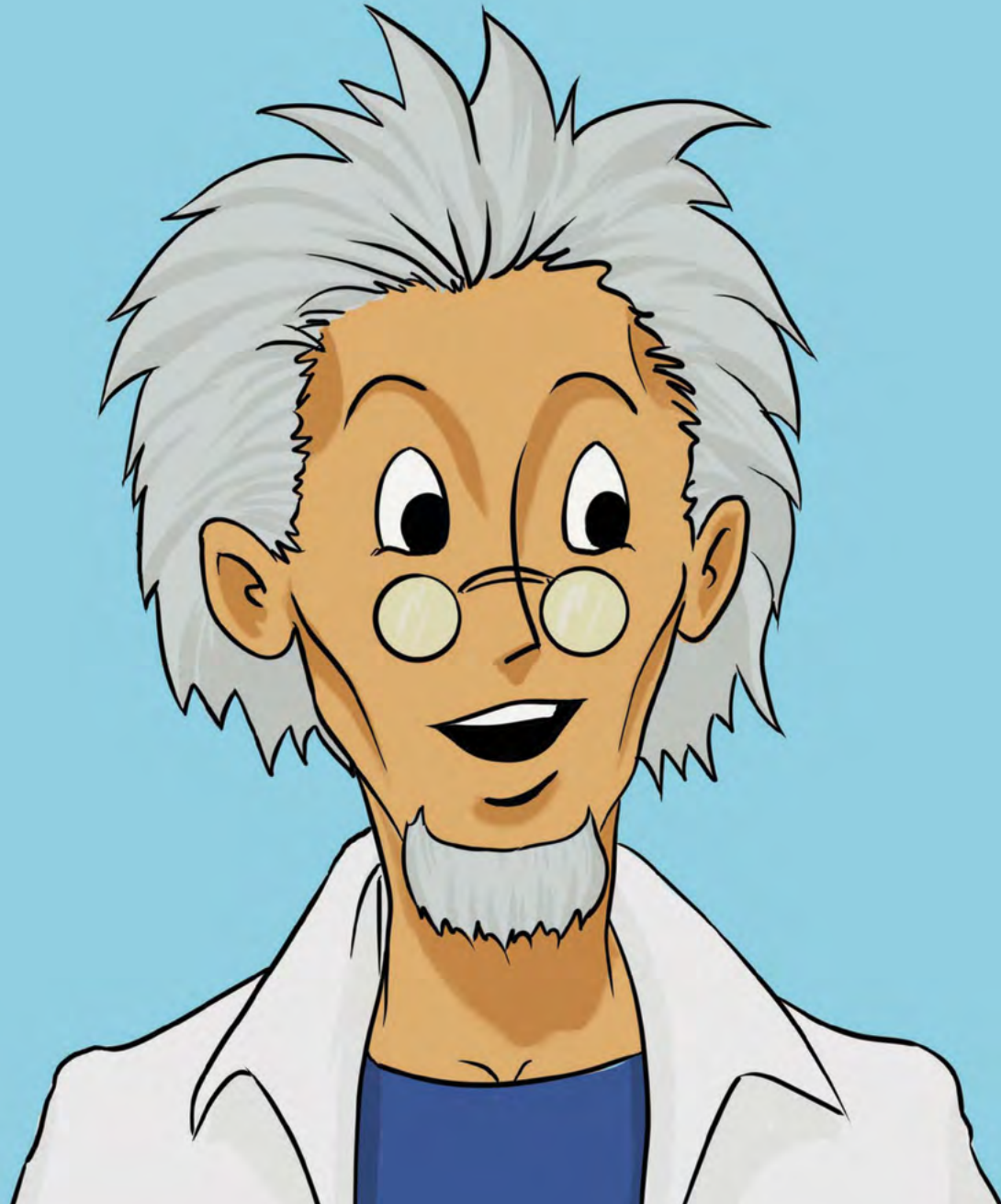
Newt Cute: “We’re not alone anymore, and we feel safe. Professor, you need to spread this to everyone. Please, tell people about us.”



Professor Atom: “Of course! We’ve come here to pursue our shared goal with our joint forces. You are indicators of our ecosystem’s health, and the guardians of the balance that nature has maintained for thousands of years. Your habitat is threatened, but we have an opportunity to act. Together we can do anything!”



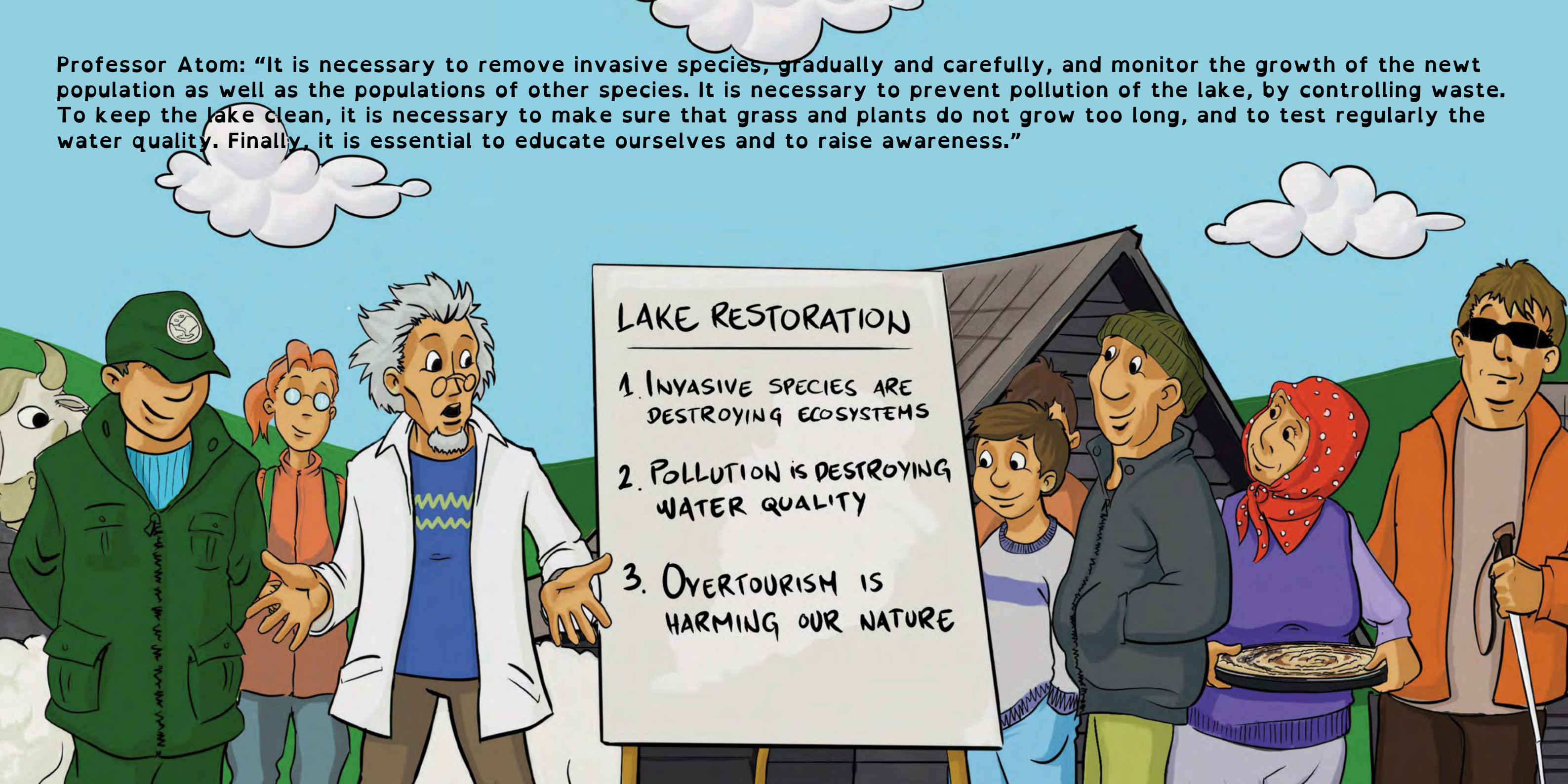
Professor Atom: "To do that, we need to improve the condition of the lake so that the newts can return home."



A local: "How can we help?"



Professor Atom: "It is necessary to remove invasive species, gradually and carefully, and monitor the growth of the newt population as well as the populations of other species. It is necessary to prevent pollution of the lake, by controlling waste. To keep the lake clean, it is necessary to make sure that grass and plants do not grow too long, and to test regularly the water quality. Finally, it is essential to educate ourselves and to raise awareness."



A child: "We want to help too!
What can we do?"

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Professor Atom: "Children, you are the future! Respect
and be careful with nature, show responsibility towards it,
and teach others to do the same. The essence of
sustainable development is to preserve the values of this
protected area where you and the local population have
space to develop."



Newt Jute: "Newt Cute, look, one day we will return home."

**Professor Atom: "We will make sure that you have a
safe home to return to!"**



About Prokoško Lake...

Prokoško Lake is situated high in the mountains, in central Bosnia, on Mount Vranica, in the municipality of Fojnica. It is surrounded by the valleys of the Vrbas, Bosna, Bistrica and Fojnička rivers. It is located at a height of 1,636 meters and because of its shape and position it is often called “the eye of the mountain”. This lake is one of the most special in the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina!

Prokoško Lake and its surroundings are full of natural beauty. That is why this place is visited not only by the people from Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also by tourists from other countries. Nature lovers come to enjoy the mountains, clean air and tranquility of nature. The area around the lake, which is protected as a natural good, spreads over 2,225 hectares!

The lake is temporarily managed by the Public Utility Company “Šćona” in Fojnica. Its task is to take care of the lake, to protect and maintain it, and to ensure that it remains clean and preserved for future generations.

Also, in order to protect the Bosnian alpine newt, the “Sustainability of Protected Areas – SPA” project, implemented by the United Nations Development Programme and financed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Public Utility Company “Šćona” Ltd. Fojnica and the National Museum of BiH have jointly launched activities within the territory of the Nature Monument Prokoško Lake to improve its condition and habitats.

As a result, two ponds were found near the lake where newts still live. To help them, these ponds were deepened, widened and improved. We call them hibernacula. These activities help to give the newts a safe home and a chance to survive.

Let's protect nature! Every living thing is important!

Let's keep our lakes clean because everything that enters the water affects the life in it!

Never introduce alien species into natural habitats!

Let's talk about everything! Awareness is the key to change!

