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A child from the future tells

The Rainbow Shower

Singapore, Year 2088

My name is Meng.

I am eight years old and I live in Singapore.

If you ask me, Singapore is the most beautiful city in the world.

There are trees everywhere.

Gardens hang between the skyscrapers.

Flowers grow on rooftops.

And there are so many playgrounds that the whole city feels like one giant adventure park.

Every day I meet my friend Mei.

She is seven years old.

Mei lives in a skyscraper that looks like a giant mushroom.

My skyscraper looks more like a huge vase.
In Singapore, nobody thinks that is unusual.
Today is hot again.
Very hot.
Just like almost every day.
Nearly thirty degrees.
The air sticks to my skin.
Even in the shade, I am sweating.
It is just after lunchtime.
Mei and I are sitting at our favorite playground.
The climbing structures look like enormous flowers.
You can balance on petals, climb giant stems, and crawl through tunnels made of leaves.
But today we are not climbing.
Not yet.
We are waiting.
“How much longer?” Mei asks.
“Not long now,” I reply.
We look up.
Between the skyscrapers stand tall silver towers reaching toward the clouds.
Suddenly, a deep rumble echoes through the city's speakers.
“It's coming!” I shout.
Mei jumps to her feet.
“Finally!”
And then it happens.
The first rainbows appear between the green skyscrapers.

Bright.

Colorful.

Beautiful.

They float between the buildings like giant paintings in the sky.

Red.

Blue.

Yellow.

Green.

The whole city seems to glow.

Then we feel it.

At first, only a little.

A cool breeze.

Then a few tiny drops.

And finally, the Rainbow Shower begins.

The cloud towers have collected enough water from the warm air.

Now they release a gentle cooling rain throughout the city.

Not too much.

Not too little.

Exactly right.

The cool air touches my arms.

It tingles on my skin.

Almost as if the city itself is giving me a hug.

“This is my favorite moment of the day,” Mei says.

I nod.

It is my favorite too.

As the drops land on the leaves, I spot a bird.

It is sitting on a flower nearby.

“Look!”

I say.

Mei follows my finger.

The bird has long yellow feathers that glow in the sunlight.

“Wow,” she whispers.

We watch it for a while.

Water droplets hang from every leaf and blade of grass.

The plants seem bigger every year.

As the climate has become warmer, the tropics have grown.

Many animals now live in Singapore that once lived much farther away.

I look around.

At the flowers.

At the rainbows.

At the trees.

At the shining drops of water.

Then I say,

“Mei?”

“Yes?”

“I think Singapore is the most beautiful city in the world.”

Mei smiles.

“Maybe.”

After a while, the rainbows slowly fade away.

The sun begins to take over the sky again.

The air grows warmer.

I stand up.

“Come on.”

“Where?”

asks Mei.

I grin.

“To the flowers.”

“Why?”

“Because today we're climbing all the way to the top.”

And before she can say anything, I start running.

Straight into our giant flower forest.

The Comic



The Cloud Milkers of the Dead Mountains

Welser Hut, Summer 2101

My name is Toni.

I am 13 years old and I live at the Welser Hut in the Dead Mountains of Austria.

My dad is the hut keeper.

And if you ask me,
he is the best craftsman in the world.

Today, my older sister and I are hiking up the steep trail to the hut.

The climb is brutal.

The sun is burning from the sky.

Sweat runs down my forehead.

My backpack digs into my shoulders.

And my legs feel like cooked noodles.

“Can we take a break?” I ask.

“Just a short one,” my sister replies.

We sit down on a rock and drink some water.

Only two hundred vertical meters left.

Not much.

But right now it feels like two thousand.

“Do you think Dad has everything ready?”

My sister laughs.

“Of course.”

“How do you know?”

“Because he’s Dad.”

That seems like a good enough explanation.

And somehow, I suddenly find new energy.

Switchback after switchback, we make our way up the mountain.

The last section is steep and rocky.

Then I finally see the hut.

And standing in front of it, waving both arms wildly, is a familiar figure.

Dad.

A few minutes later he wraps us in a big hug.

“Welcome home!”

But then he leads us behind the hut.

And there, waiting for us, is a surprise.

A huge dark sail stretches between the rocks.

Beside it stands a small pool filled with crystal-clear water.

“Allow me to introduce,” Dad says proudly,

“Version Seven.”

“Version Seven of what?” I ask.

“My cloud catcher.”

My sister and I exchange glances.
Then we look back at the enormous sail.

“Can we jump in the pool?”
my sister asks.

“Of course!”

Ten seconds later we splash into the water.
It is wonderful.
Cool.
Fresh.
Perfect.

“Do you like the new sail?” Dad asks.

“It’s amazing!” I shout.

Dad grins.

“This one collects twice as much water from the air as the old version.”

That’s what Dad does.
He is always building something.
Sometimes pipes.
Sometimes water systems.

Sometimes cloud catchers.

Later he helps us out of the pool.

“Now I need to get to the kitchen.”

“Why?”

“Because even brilliant inventors have to cook dinner.”

An hour later we sit together in the dining room.

The air smells of herbs, fresh bread, and vegetable stew.

As we eat, Dad tells stories from the time when he was a young hut keeper.

Back when many hikers and climbers came here.

When people climbed the summit of the Großer Priel.

And continued on to the Prielschutzhaus.

“Back then,” Dad says,

“there was still enough water in the valleys.”

I try to imagine it.

“And then what happened?” I ask.

Dad looks out toward the mountains.

“Then it became drier and drier.”

“Water disappeared from the valleys.”

“Springs dried up.”

“And people needed new ideas.”

“And that’s when the sails arrived?”

Dad nods.

“Austrian scientists had a crazy idea.”

“They wanted to milk the clouds.”

My sister bursts out laughing.

“Milk the clouds?”

“Exactly.”

Dad points toward the mountains.

Together we step outside.

Huge gray sails cover the ridges and slopes.

On the Schermberg.

On the high ridgelines.

Even on the summit of the Großer Priel.

From a distance they look like a strange forest of giant trees.

Between them run long tubes carrying water down into the valleys.

Slowly the evening sun begins to glow.

The sails shine golden in the light.

“Beautiful, isn’t it?” Dad asks.

I nod.

“Dad?”

“Yes?”

“You are a great craftsman.”

Dad laughs.

“Oh, come on.”

“No. Really.”

I look at the mountains.

At the sails.

At the pipes.

At the water.

“A long time ago this place was called the Dead Mountains.”

Dad nods.

“Today it’s an oasis.”

I put my arm around him.

“And you are the lifeguard everyone loves.”

Now even my sister starts laughing.

Dad shakes his head.

But I can tell he likes it.

Together we sit outside the hut for a long time.

Above us, the stars begin to shine.

Below us, the valleys fall asleep.

And all around the mountains, the giant sails silently gather water from the clouds.

And I think:

There are many ways to change the world.

Some people write books.

Some people build machines.

And some people simply milk the clouds.

The Comic



The House That Gave Us Mushrooms

Shirakawa-go, December 2138

My name is Himari.

I am nine years old, and I live in Shirakawa-go, Japan.

Yesterday, my friend Anders arrived from Svalbard.

We met during my summer vacation in Longyearbyen.

Since then, we have become very good friends.

Now he is visiting Japan for the first time.

The moment he entered our house, he looked confused.

Anders sniffed the air.

Then he touched the wall.

Then another wall.

And finally, he even smelled the wall.

"Why does your house smell so strange?" he asked.

"Strange?"

"Well," he said, "fresh somehow. Like a forest after rain."

I laughed.

"That's our house."

"Your house?"

"Yes."

"But houses don't smell."

"Ours does."

Anders looked completely confused.

So I explained.

"There is a fungus living inside our walls."

"A fungus?"

"Yes."

"Inside the walls?"

"Of course."

Anders stared at me.

"And why?"

"The fungus keeps the house cool during summer and warm during winter."

"Wow!"

He knocked excitedly on the wall.

"A living house!"

"We don't have anything like that on Svalbard," Anders said.

"In winter, we still have to turn up the heating when temperatures drop below minus ten degrees."

"How do you make the heat?"

"Wind turbines."

"Wind turbines?"

"Lots of them. Out on the sea."

I imagined giant wind turbines standing among icebergs.

The picture in my head made me smile.

"Would you like to play Go?"

I asked.

Anders nodded immediately.

I brought out my Go board.

"My parents taught me to play."

"Is it difficult?"

"A little."

"Do you have to run?"

"No."

"That's a shame."

We both laughed.

Then I began teaching him the rules.

Within a few minutes, Anders was completely fascinated.

While we played, we talked about our summer on Svalbard.

About polar bears.

About beaches.

About tourists.

About school.

And about our favorite teachers.

Suddenly, Anders jumped to his feet.

"Himari!"

"What?"

"Something is growing out of the wall!"

A small mushroom had appeared near the window.
I walked over and gently twisted it from the wall.
Then I held it up.

"Oh."
"What does 'oh' mean?"
"It's ready."
"Ready?"
"Yes."
"For what?"

I laughed.
"For dinner, of course."

Anders looked at me.
Then at the mushroom.
Then back at me.

"You eat your walls?"

Now I laughed even harder.
"No."
"Yes, you do!"
"No."
"Yes!"
"Only the mushrooms."

I ran downstairs carrying the mushroom.

My mother was in the kitchen wearing a beautiful kimono.

She was already preparing dinner.

"Mom, the house gave us another mushroom."

Mom smiled.

"Perfect timing."

Then she looked at us.

"Dinner will be ready in ten minutes."

Anders and I raced back upstairs.

One more game of Go.

Then another.

And another.

Right on time, we sat down at the dinner table.

There was rice.

Fresh fish.

Vegetables.

And, of course, the mushroom from our wall.

Anders recognized it immediately.

"Wait a second!"

Everyone looked at him.

"That's the wall mushroom!"

For a moment, nobody spoke.
Then we all burst out laughing.

"Can you really eat it?"
Anders asked carefully.

"Of course!"
we all answered at almost the same time.

Anders tasted a small piece.
Then another.
And another.

"It's really delicious!"

Mom smiled.
"The house will be happy to hear that."

Later that night, I lay in bed.
I thought about Anders.
About Svalbard.
About wind turbines.
About polar bears.
And about our house.

Tomorrow, I will show Anders our garden.

And the forest.

And the mushrooms.

Maybe even the secret mushrooms growing in the bathroom.

But I think I'll save that surprise for tomorrow.

The Comic



Summer Holidays in Svalbard

Longyearbyen, July 2138

My name is Anders.

I am eight years old and I live in Longyearbyen on Svalbard.

Today is the beginning of the summer holidays.

Most people love this time of year.

I don't.

My parents have decided not to travel this summer.

Again.

To be honest, I understand them.

No matter where we traveled in recent years, it was simply too hot.

My family loves cool air.

Unfortunately, there is not much of it left.

Even here on Svalbard, summer temperatures can easily climb above 20 degrees Celsius.

Right now, I am sitting with my parents at lunch.

We are having fresh fish from the sea.

While I eat, my parents are once again talking about the past.

As always.

"It used to be really cold here," Dad says.

"And sometimes polar bears even wandered through Longyearbyen," Mom adds.

I love polar bears.

Unfortunately, I only know them from zoos.

Soon my parents begin debating who was responsible for the final surge of global warming.

The industries?

The war machines?

The endless conflicts?

Dad insists that the invasion of Taiwan was the final act of madness that pushed the climate beyond a critical point.

I don't really know.

History is complicated.

Polar bears are much more interesting.

"Mom?"

No answer.

"Mom?"

Still nothing.

"Mom! Can I go to the beach tomorrow?"

Finally, both of them stop talking.

Every summer there is a huge holiday program for children at the beach.

Since thousands of tourists started visiting Svalbard during the summer months, there are:

- ball games
- children's theatre
- painting workshops
- music events
- water attractions

For children from Longyearbyen, everything is free.

When I think about it, we do not really need to travel on vacation.

There is so much happening right here.

The only thing I don't like are the enormous tourist hotels.

Fortunately, they are hidden away in the valleys.

Far from town.

Our beautiful mountain view remains untouched.

"Of course you can go," Mom says.

"And if you make new friends, you can bring them home."

"Really?"

"Of course."

"Even if they come from another country?"

"Especially if they come from another country."

Mom smiles.

"Maybe they would like to learn something about Svalbard."

"Or about polar bears," Dad adds.

"Or about our stories."

That sounds great.

Really great.

The next morning, the sun is already shining brightly.

"Don't forget your sunscreen!" Mom calls after me.

"They are expecting over 20 degrees today!"

Twenty degrees.

On Svalbard.

My great-grandmother would probably have laughed.

Or cried.

I am not sure.

Before I head to the beach, I make a quick stop at the zoo.

Today is a special day.

The young polar bears are allowed onto the outdoor viewing area.

Of course, everything is carefully cooled.

The tourists love it.

To be honest,

I love it too.

While I am watching the polar bears play, I hear a voice beside me.

"They are beautiful, aren't they?"

I turn around.

A girl about my age is standing next to me.

"Yes," I say.

"I think they're amazing."

"So do I."

"What is your name?"

"Himari."

I like the sound of her name.

"What does Himari mean?"

I ask.

The girl smiles.

"Sunflower."

I start laughing.

"A sunflower? On Svalbard?"

Himari laughs too.

"Sounds strange, doesn't it?"

Together, we watch the polar bear cubs.

Then she tells me about Japan.

I tell her about Svalbard.

And before long, we are walking together toward the beach.

That evening, I lie tired in my bed.

I think about the polar bears.

About Himari.

About the children's festival.

About the beach.

About the stories my parents tell.

And suddenly I wonder:

What did children feel like one hundred years ago,

when Svalbard was still cold,

polar bears still roamed freely across the landscape,

and nobody would have traveled here for a summer holiday?

The Comic



The School Sports Day in the Year 2226

My name is Tina. I am 9 years old and I live in Dresden in the year 2226.

Today is a very special day.

A little while ago, I had breakfast with my parents, and now we are driving to the school sports festival.

Actually, our car isn't really a normal electric car.

My dad calls it a classic car.

The old vehicle has been passed down from generation to generation, and it rattles every time we drive over a bump.

"Dad, you promised to repair the air conditioning before our next trip!"

Dad smiles.

"Oh, right... I forgot."

That happens more and more these days.

When we arrive at the stadium, I immediately spot my friends:

Thomas,

Robert,

and Tina.

Yes, we actually have two Tinas in our class.

It gets confusing sometimes.

Our parents are sitting together in the stands, waving at us.

The first event is the 75-meter sprint.

The starting signal sounds.

I run as fast as I can.

This morning, my mom sprayed a little dandelion oil onto my sports socks.

It smells wonderfully fresh.

Maybe it even makes me faster.
Apparently not fast enough.
Thomas and Tina run like rockets.
They pull me along, and in the end I achieve my personal best.
We all cheer together.

Next comes ball throwing.
An 80-gram rubber ball.
My favorite event.
My first throw lands five meters farther than the throws of my friends.
“How do you do that?” Robert asks.
“Secret training,” I say.
Of course, that's not true.
A girl has to keep some secrets.
We all laugh.

By now, it has become dark.
A clear sky full of stars stretches above the stadium.
In history class, we learned that about 200 years ago people used to sleep at night.
Hard to believe.
Today, most people sleep during the day and stay active at night.
Back then, children would lie in sunny meadows and read books.
That sounds somehow wonderful.

The final event is the long jump.
Or at least what long jump means today.

A long time ago, children landed in sand.
Today, we jump into a huge pool of water.
And everyone has their own landing style.
I do a cannonball.
Thomas does a belly flop.
Robert and Tina dive in headfirst.
Water splashes all the way to the judges.
We laugh so hard that our stomachs hurt.

After the competition, we sit together on the grass for a long time.
We talk about our jumps.
Our records.
The stars.
And the strange stories from history class.

Late in the evening, we finally drive home.
In our rattling family classic car.
I am already looking forward to dinner.
Mom has made my favorite lentil stew.

We sit together around the table.
Mom and Dad enjoy the stew.
And I get a large extra portion.
A wonderfully refreshing charge of electricity.
A pleasant tingling flows through my muscles.
Exactly the right frequency after a long day of sports.

For a while, we talk about the competition.

About Thomas.

About Robert.

About Tina.

About my throws.

Then everything becomes quiet.

I look out into the night sky.

And suddenly, a thought comes to my mind.

What was a school sports day like 200 years ago?

Back then...

when humans had to recharge themselves with food.

The Comic



The Ice Cream Story from the Year 2080

My name is Anna, and I am 11 years old.

Right now, I am sitting at my desk, doing my homework.

It is summer.

Outside, it is 40 degrees.

The ground shimmers, and the air feels hot and heavy.

Suddenly, the doorbell rings.

I tap the door viewer,

and the front door becomes transparent.

Oh! It's my grandmother.

I open the door.

"Anaa!", my grandmother says. "Come on, let's go outside!"

"Grandma... it's 40 degrees," I reply.

"Exactly! Perfect ice cream weather!" she says.

I roll my eyes.

But then my little sister Berta appears:

"Ice creaaam!!!"

Alright... let's go.

Outside, it's hot.

Really hot.

But Grandma knows the way,

always walking through the shady streets.

And then we arrive.

The ice cream shop.

Inside, it's cool.

And it smells... like vanilla.

I look at the menu.

“Grandma... what is ‘Milk Ice Classic 2026’?”

The ice cream seller smiles a little.

“That’s a historical ice cream,” they say.

“That’s how ice cream used to be made... from real milk.”

“From cows?” Berta asks.

“Yes,” says Grandma.

“Cows only exist in zoos today,” the seller explains.

“A long time ago, there were many.

But then it became too hot.

There wasn’t enough water.

There were diseases.

And... too much CO₂.”

I look at my ice cream.

“And this one?” I ask.

“That’s a new recipe,” they say.

“No cows needed.”

Grandma orders three ice creams.

Of course, everything is paid digitally.

Money hasn’t existed for a long time.

I take a first bite.

...and it tastes really good.

Berta laughs.

Grandma laughs too.

And somehow, it doesn’t feel so hot anymore.

“You know,” Grandma says softly,

“a long time ago, ice cream was just... ice cream.”

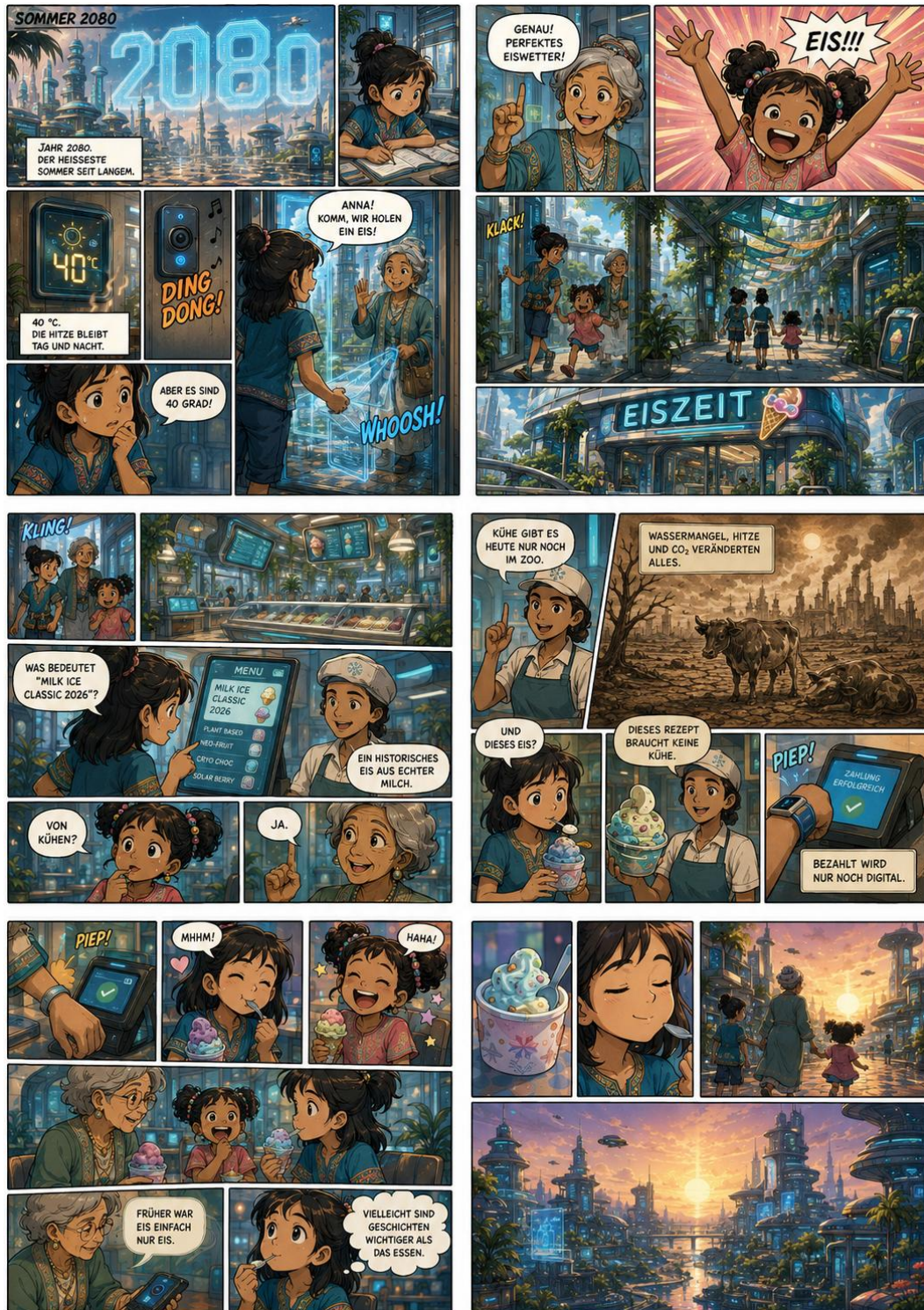
I nod.

And I think:

Maybe today, the stories are sometimes more important
than what we eat.

I take another bite of my ice cream.

The Comic



Maybe This Is the Right Answer

My name is Rana. I am 14 years old, in the 8th grade, and I live in Pakistan. It is the year 2126.

I am lying in bed, thinking about today's German class. It was a demanding day. We had to write an argumentative essay and were given two lessons for it. The topic was whether we should grow grain again on our meadows. It is a topic we often discuss at home. My father works at IndoorAgri, a company where grain is produced for all of Pakistan.

I turn onto my side and look out of the window. Where there once were fields, there are now beautiful wildflower meadows. It is quiet, and yet full of life. I imagine what it looks like during the day, how it sounds, how it hums. Many insects move from flower to flower. My grandmother says that many of them had disappeared in the past. Now they are back.

Far on the horizon, I can see small lights. They glow softly into the night. That is where my father works. It is one of the large IndoorAgri halls where the grain for our country is grown. He says it is the cleanest way to produce food. And when I look at the flowers, I believe him.

I close my eyes for a moment. Maybe it is good that we have learned to live differently. Maybe we have made space for something that had once been lost.

I think about my essay. I wonder if I wrote it correctly. In the main part, I tried to explain why I want things to stay the way they are. If we plough the meadows again, the flowers will disappear. And with them the animals that live there. If chemicals are spread on the fields again, the air and the water will be polluted, and maybe I will get sick. If we grow crops outside again, and heavy rain or drought returns like before, the harvest could fail, and we might not have enough food.

We are still living with the consequences of climate change that generations before us set in motion. Our scientists say that it may take another hundred years until the climate stabilizes again, around the year 2226.

I turn onto my back and look at the ceiling. I wrote my conclusion differently than I had planned at the beginning.

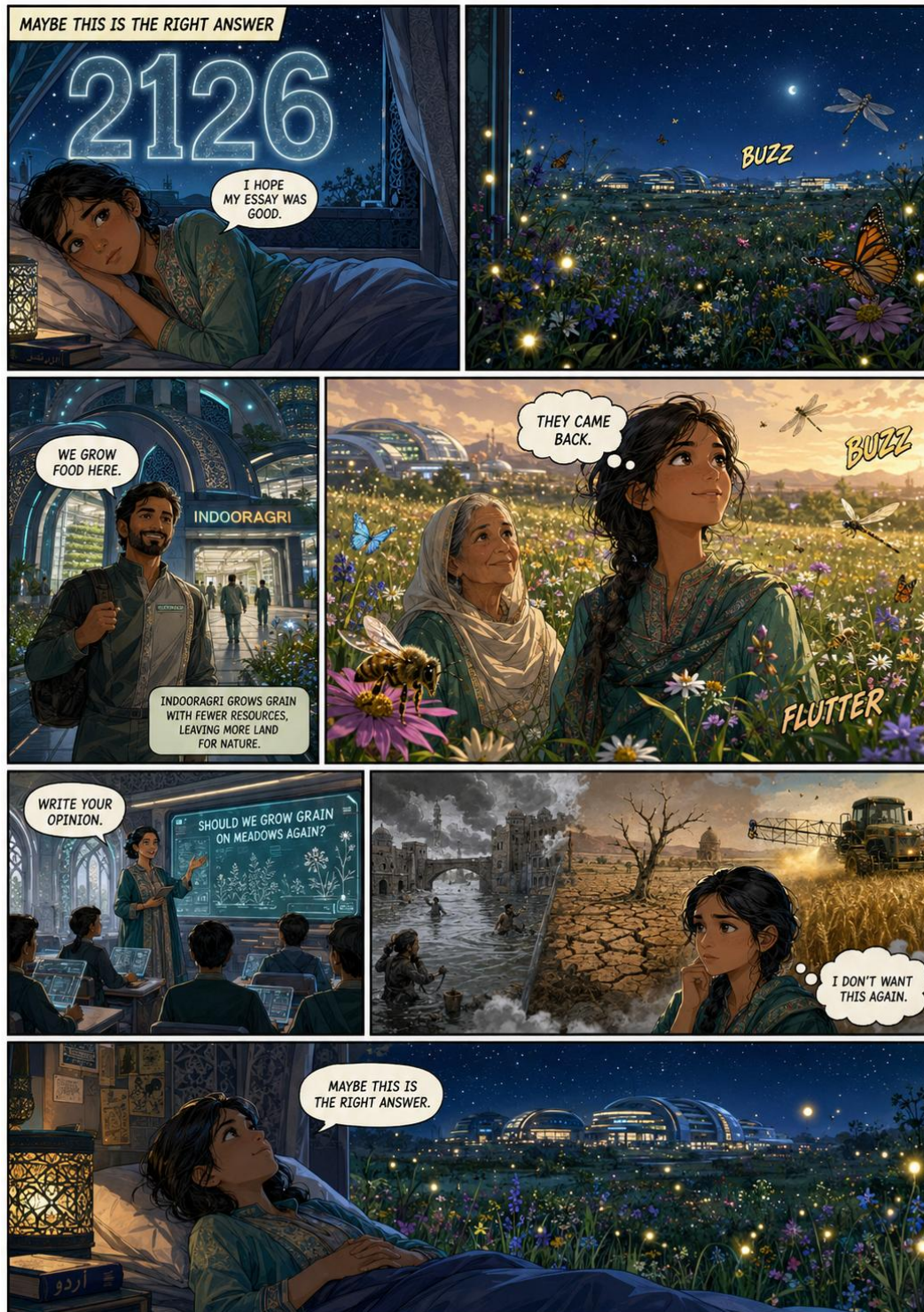
I wrote that I hope everything can remain as it is. IndoorAgri uses only as many resources as necessary, and if more children are born in Pakistan, we will simply build more halls.

And then I wrote something else. Something we are not really supposed to write, but I wanted to keep it.

I am proud of my father. He works so that we can have wildflower meadows again. Meadows that hum with life. Meadows that live.

I close my eyes and think: maybe this is the right answer.

The Comic



My Most Beautiful Birthday

My name is Lena, I am 11 years old, and today is my birthday.

The sun is shining through the big windows of our apartment, and around the table sit everyone: my great-grandparents, my grandparents, my parents, my older brother—he is two years older than me—and of course, me.

In the middle of the table stands the thing.
My birthday cake.

We have already cut it, and I am eating my first piece. Strawberry. Of course strawberry.

My mom makes the best strawberry cake in the world. No one else even comes close. The strawberries are fresh, the sponge is soft, and the cream tastes like summer.

While I chew, people are talking—about the world, as usual.

My great-grandfather clears his throat. He tells stories from the past. From the time when coal and nuclear power plants pushed the world into a climate crisis.

People knew, he says. They really knew. And still, so little happened.

There were protests. Demonstrations against nuclear power. Police taking people away just because they wanted the world to stay livable.

Wow, I think.

I can't imagine that at all.

Today, in the year 2086, everything is calm. The air is clear. The sky is blue. It feels normal—but it wasn't normal back then.

Now Grandma speaks.

She talks about the COVID pandemic. About how suddenly everything stopped. How people started to dream again.

Wind power. Solar energy. Hope.

“For a while, people truly believed everything would change,” she says. But then governments, car manufacturers, and many others wanted things to stay the same.

I slide my plate a little closer.
To be honest, I would really like to open my presents now.
But I stay seated.

“Mom, could I have another piece?” I ask carefully.

She smiles and cuts me a second piece of strawberry cake.
I keep listening. And eating.

Now it’s Dad’s turn.
He talks about the time after the wars in Ukraine and Iran.
European countries wanted to become independent from oil and gas—
really independent.

It was an innovative time, he says.
Windows that produced electricity. Building facades that generated
energy. Road surfaces that created power.

Mom interrupts him—like she always does—and adds that since then,
CO₂ emissions have been negative.

“Obviously,” my brother says. “Every kid knows that.”

Then he looks at me.

“Can we talk about something else? It’s Lena’s birthday.”

Finally.

I gather my courage.

“Mom,” I ask, “when do I get my presents?”

Mom claps her hands.

“Oh yes, my sweetheart!”

We stand up and walk to the gift table. Mom has decorated it with
flowers. It looks like a little piece of art.

Everyone congratulates me, hugs me, kisses me.

I feel happy and safe and full.

I have a wonderful family.

Then I’m allowed to unwrap my gifts.

The colorful paper is self-adhesive. No annoying tape anymore.

The biggest present is from my grandparents.

I tear it open.

A Lego castle. With knights. With dragons.
Exactly the one I wished for.

And it's not made of plastic—but from some kind of new, plant-based material.

I don't really know how it works.

I'm only 11. I don't know much about chemistry.

From my parents I get a red bicycle. It shines beautifully.

From my brother I get the new book in my favorite series—about the Olichs, who once lived on a giant garbage dump.

Garbage dumps don't exist anymore.

Everything is recyclable or turns back into humus.

I don't understand that either—but I really hope my bicycle doesn't turn into soil.

Soon I'll ride through the city with my best friend Susi.

We have wide bike lanes everywhere and bike playgrounds.

Cars haven't been allowed in the city for a very long time. They stay outside.

The city belongs to us.

We only have to watch out for buses—but they drive on separate roads.

I love my city.

Suddenly I think of my great-grandparents again.

They look very old. Their hands shake a little.

I am so grateful they are still here.

They visit us every week and bring fruit.

And of course—strawberries.

This year they gave me clothes:

a colorful skirt with spring flowers, matching socks, a pink shirt, and a cool cap to protect my head from the sun.

The sun is strong today.

I get headaches easily. My doctor says it's some kind of allergy.

Since the air became so clean, many people are more sensitive to sunlight.

I don't mind.

I'm outside every day.
On streets that aren't streets anymore—but green paths, with meadows,
trees, and small streams.
The gray asphalt roads are gone.
“Lena,” Dad calls, “come on! Let's try your bike!”
I quickly put on my new clothes.
Then I run outside, laughing.
It is the most beautiful birthday of my life.

The Comic



Torsten and the Book About the Forest

My name is Torsten. I am nine years old and I live in Berlin.
I am sitting on a bench at the playground with my best friend Tim. Tim is the same age as me. Today we don't feel like swinging. And we don't feel like playing football either.

Next to me lies a picture book that my dad gave me as a present.
A book about the forest.

I open it.
Big green pictures. Trees with so many leaves that you can hardly count them.

Tim leans closer.
"How many leaves do you think a tree like that had?" he asks.

I shrug. We think about it.
Because today, forests look very different from the ones in the book.

Then I remember a story.
A story my dad once told me.
And now I tell it to Tim.

"Many, many years ago," I say,
"the trees didn't feel like growing new leaves in spring anymore."

Tim frowns.
"Why not?" he asks.

"My dad said," I explain,
"that the air and the water had become too bad."

Tim doesn't say anything.
He just asks me to turn the page.

On the next page it says that every tree had its own smell.
Like fresh air.
Like joy of living.

Tim and I look at each other.

"What do our trees smell like?" I ask.

Tim sniffs the air.
"No idea," he says. "Our trees don't smell at all."

I nod.

"That's a pity," I say quietly. "I wish our trees could smell again."

We turn the page.

Now we see pictures of trees with red, round fruits.

"Cool," says Tim. "That must be fruit."

"Looks tasty," he adds after a moment.

"I wonder what it tastes like."

I think for a bit.

"No idea," I say. "Fruit doesn't grow on trees anymore."

Tim grins.

"I'd like to travel back in time," he says,

"and get two apples for us."

He asks me to turn the page again.

Now things get exciting.

The pictures show how a small brown thing turns into a big tree.

"That's called a seed," I read.

"If I understand it right," I say to Tim,

"the tree comes out of the seed. First one single leaf, and then it keeps growing."

"Like a magic tree," Tim says.

The text says that it takes a hundred years for a tree to be fully grown.

Tim points to the last picture.

"That tree is older than my grandpa," he says.

"And it's so green."

We turn the page again.

Now it gets difficult.

There are drawings explaining that the leaves and the tree can make air out of water and air.

I don't really understand it.

"Can you explain that to me?" I ask Tim.

He shrugs.

"Maybe there was some kind of air factory inside the tree," he says.

Then he points to the gray building next to the playground.

The fresh-air factory.

We turn the page again.

Now there are pictures of trees without leaves.

That was the time when the trees didn't feel like trying anymore.

On the last pages we see people building trees.

Trees like the ones at our playground.

They all look the same.

They don't smell.

They aren't green.

"Our trees are built by people," I say.

Tim nods.

We close the book.

It's quiet for a moment.

Then I ask,

"Do you want to play football?"

Tim stands up.

"Yeah," he says.

And we run off.

The Comic

