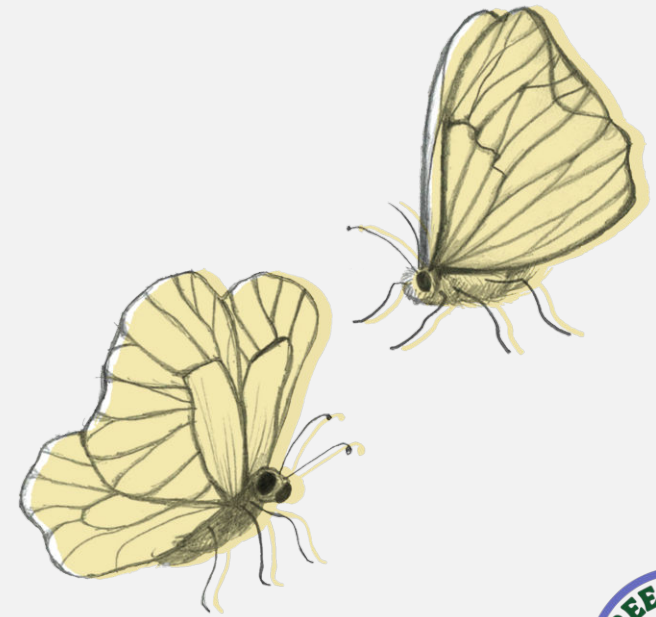


Like a butterfly in the storm

Adventure Book



START



Chapter 1. Hidden within herself

Hidden among the plants in the garden, Amanda watches the plants swaying, the leaves slowly rustling. She is lulled by the gentle rustling of the leaves. It is a habit she cannot break, despite her age. As a child, she would spend whole days in silence, lying among the feather grass bushes with which her mother had decorated large areas of the garden, not even responding when they called her to come and eat.



CONTINUE

Looking at the sky, she felt that if she watched it long enough, the oppressive feeling inside her would melt away. The intense blue made her breathe and it seemed to her that everything could become relative.

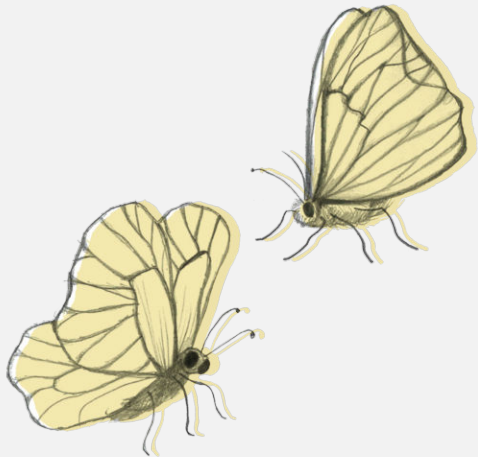
At twenty, she still hadn't had the courage to tell the world who she really was, what and who she liked, what made her feel good. She had confided this one day to Ginevra, her friend since elementary school.

She had loved her immediately, a pretty blonde with big eyes.

CONTINUE

As she grew up, that feeling had turned into something she couldn't name, because that word scared her. When the weight became unbearable, Amanda simply told her that she was in love. She could never forget her face when she made that declaration.

They were studying, their heads close together, their hair brushing against each other. Ginevra had started laughing at something she had said, turned to her with laughing eyes, and was so beautiful that she couldn't help but say, "I love you."



CONTINUE

Then, like a river in flood, the other words came out without her being able to stop them.

"I always have been, maybe since the first day of school. I was too young to understand then. It's a classic cliché, and I'm ashamed of it too. In love with my best friend."

Amanda looks down at her hands, her thumb scratching the inside of her palm. She feels like she's about to cry, laughing nervously as her thumb continues to rub rhythmically to stay focused.

"I didn't realize that, I'm sorry. You know I care about you deeply, but I'm not in love with you, at least not in the way you would like." Ginevra says, her eyes widening in that particular way, a mixture of surprise and self-awareness. The same look she gives all her admirers.



CONTINUE

"I understand. I knew you weren't like me... but I had to talk to you because it really hurts too much. Please don't tell anyone, my parents don't know. I think they might be disappointed, I don't know, it just never seems like the right time."

Ginevra smiles kindly, hugs her to comfort and reassure her, promising not to say anything: "Our secrets belong to us, you know, you don't have to worry."

However, nothing was really the same as before. Amanda couldn't say whether it was her or Ginevra who had cut back on phone calls and outings. In reality, she was ashamed of herself, not for being a lesbian, but only for not having the courage to be open about it.

High school was over, and each had made her own choices: Ginevra, who had always been inclined towards writing, had left for Milan to attend a prestigious school where she could hone her talent, while Amanda had had no doubts and had chosen to study natural sciences.



CONTINUE



Distance and the passing of time had definitively separated them, although there were still “places” that made her heart skip a beat, as if memories were suddenly flooding back.

It wasn't enough to pretend nothing had happened, or to lie to herself by saying “it's better this way.” Amanda continued to feel that she missed her friend, not the girl she was in love with, but Ginevra, her lifelong friend.

Hidden in the grass, these thoughts came and went like pollinating insects, rummaging through her mind. After Geneva, she had kept herself away from everything, friendships and relationships of any kind. It wasn't that she lacked suitors, but they were always of the wrong sex.

CONTINUE

Chapter 2. A new beginning

In that small provincial town, everyone knew everyone else, and boredom seemed to encourage gossip. She couldn't forget how cruel people could be and what had happened a few years earlier to her schoolmate, who had been targeted for the way he dressed.

At first, he seemed indifferent, immune to the jokes, the harsh comments, their pettiness and narrow-mindedness, until one spring morning he threw himself into the void. She was petrified when she arrived at school, and when she heard the news, she cried, feeling guilty and experiencing the pain that he must have felt. Once again, she hadn't had the courage to expose herself and claim her right to be who she was, continuing to hide in life and take refuge in the grass, invisible to the judgments of others.

It was with this childhood habit that she began to observe insects.

CONTINUE

Motionless in the grass, the insects came and went.

Ladybugs, bees, wasps, butterflies.

Butterflies had always fascinated her because of their special characteristic of living two lives, of changing, transforming themselves from strange, funny crawling creatures into elegant, sinuous flying creatures.

She wanted to be a butterfly and still felt like a caterpillar. The opportunity to get away from the city and the places that still made her too sad had arrived: her science teacher had mentioned a study trip and the possibility for the most deserving students to accompany her. Amanda believed, or rather hoped fervently, that she would be among them.

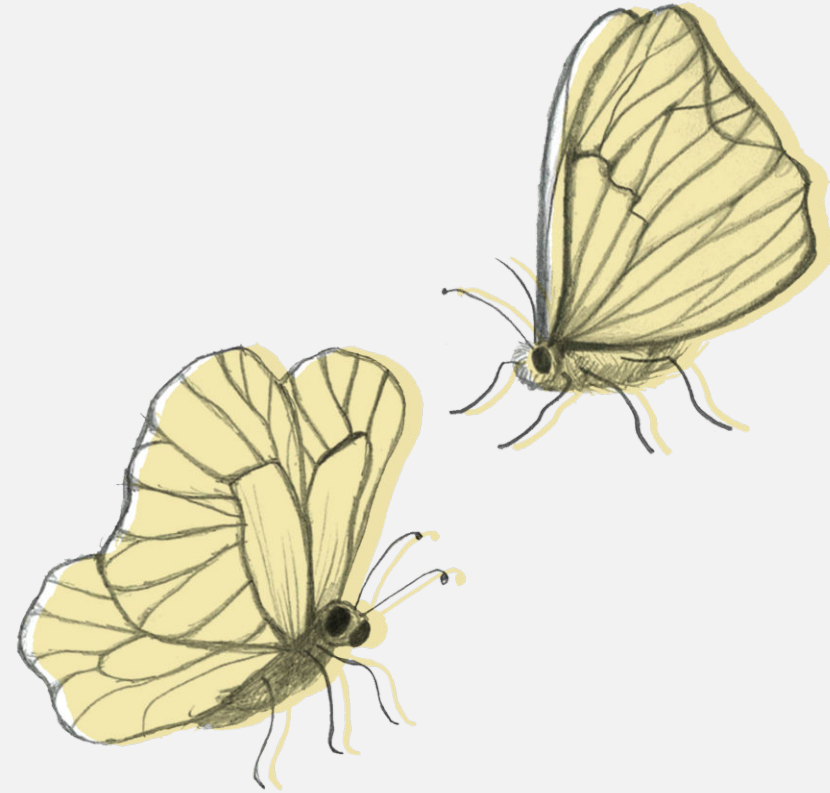


CONTINUE

That morning, she sat in the front row, as her eyesight had deteriorated further and if she sat too far back in the classroom she would not be able to see the lesson properly. Professor Ortenzi was already behind her desk, busy setting up her computer. A giant white vanessa c-caterpillar, or Polygonia C-album, appeared on the screen.



Amanda couldn't take her eyes off that image, which she knew so well. Since she was a child, she had been given book after book, learning the names, habits, and lives of all the many species of butterflies and moths that exist. There was nothing Professor Ortenzi could say that would add to her knowledge.



CONTINUE



"Well, this morning I'm going to talk to you about the Vanessa and how its habitat is expanding. Although this may seem like good news, it is not at all. We all know that Polygonia is a European species found in many areas, with Great Britain representing its northernmost limit. However, since the 1990s, it has been sighted in the Scottish Highlands. Scientists have confirmed that..."

The teacher presents numbers, graphs, and photos, but Amanda isn't listening. She just wants to know the name of the person who will accompany her. So when the teacher says it aloud: Amanda Merian!

She replies: Present! Making the whole class laugh.
"I wasn't taking attendance, Miss Merian, I was reading the list of students who will accompany me."

CONTINUE

Chapter 3. Departure for Brazil

The days before her departure had literally flown by, and now, as the plane touches down on Brazilian soil, she feels ready for whatever life has in store for her. Porto Alegre unfolds beneath her, a vast metropolis teeming with life and color, nestled between green hills and the wide, sparkling estuary of the Rio Guaíba.



She can't wait to see it up close. Spring is the best time of year, the climate is mild, and everything seems to suggest that this will truly be the right place for her to discover herself.



CONTINUE



Porto Alegre is a Brazilian metropolis and the capital of Rio Grande do Sul. A melting pot of cultures, it boasts a wealth of museums and urban parks, offering a blend of bustling city life and direct contact with nature. Equipped with modern infrastructure, it is home to one and a half million people and is one of the country's most important economic centres.

Located in the southernmost part of Brazil, it is one of the country's largest cities by population.

Porto Alegre is the capital of the state of Rio Grande do Sul. It is a city of nearly one and a half million inhabitants, with a metropolitan area of around four million.

Portuguese settlers arrived here during the 18th century, and the city played an important military role in the wars of the following century.

Porto Alegre is a city rich in industry (chemical, metallurgical, textile, food, mechanical, wood and rubber plants), as well as universities and research institutes. A lively and vibrant city.

When she arrives on campus, she is assigned a small but clean room, with warm, bright air coming in through the window. A noise behind her makes her turn around, and she realizes she is no longer alone. Her classmate has just entered and will also be her roommate.

During the flight, Amanda had been lost in her thoughts, paying no attention to anyone, but in the small room, it is necessary to introduce herself. “Ludovica Fitzwilliam,” she says, extending her hand.

Amanda looks at her in surprise and, as she shakes her hand, says, “Like Elizabeth Bennet's Mr. Darcy.” She spoke too soon and, blushing, thinks she has said something inappropriate.

She nervously extends her hand: “I'm Amanda.”

“Actually, I already knew your name: I like your contributions in class, you know so much, and I've seen your drawings... sorry, I peeked at your notes, they're beautiful,” said Ludovica, smiling as she tucked a stray strand of her honey-colored hair behind her ear, revealing an undercut and a long row of earrings.



CONTINUE



Amanda seems to be seeing her for the first time, she blushes and doesn't know what to say, but Ludovica fills the silence.

"You can call me Ludo, everyone calls me that. Anyway, I think we have some busy days ahead of us, but before leaving I did some research on things to do and see. You like drawing and I like taking photos, and there's an interesting exhibition in town by a photographer I really like. Would you like to see it together?"

Amanda had prepared her own itinerary and had made a half-promise to Lucas, the third student, who wanted to take her to a party instead.

AMANDA'S CHOICE

⇒ Amanda goes to the photo exhibition with Ludovica. Go to page 14

⇒ Amanda reluctantly goes to the party with Lucas. Go to page 19



Chapter 4: Photography exhibition

Ludovica's smile is truly convincing, and she answers yes enthusiastically. The city is beautiful, full of sounds and colors, and Amanda is overwhelmed by the atmosphere. She feels good and free, as she hasn't felt in a long time.

Ludo talks rapidly and smiles, walking quickly with her long, slender legs, occasionally turning to her to seek approval for what she has said.

CONTINUE



“We're almost there,” she says, checking the route on her phone, then suddenly, in a natural way, she takes her hand and starts running towards the entrance to the gallery. It is a working-class neighborhood, with low houses shaded by a row of trees and people walking around smiling in colorful clothes.

The gallery is full of people, hundreds of photos hang on the walls, immediately capturing Amanda's attention, drawn in by their communicative power. Images of life in a circus on the streets of London, of homeless people. Photos of shiny, thin bodies, of African women and men waiting for the rains, while others are submerged by water.

CONTINUE



Ludovica has not yet let go of Amanda's hand, and together, their heads close together, they look at the details of the photos.

"It's not just a question of light, but of its ability to tell stories! I wish I were half as good at telling stories like this!" says Ludovica, looking at the photos in ecstasy.

Amanda is happy and scared, she feels her hand in Ludovica's and something she can't quite put her finger on. "I can't believe it, he's here," says Ludovica, pointing to a man with thick, tawny hair.

The two girls approach together, and Ludovica introduces herself. "Mr. Mendel, I love your work, it's wonderful and powerful at the same time."



CONTINUE

Gideon Mendel is a world-renowned photographer, artist, and activist. His forty years of socially engaged photography constitute a profound testimony. His projects are designed to be useful, both in documenting the world we live in and in changing it. With compassion and visual ingenuity, he has captured the human experience behind some of the most significant issues facing his generation: from the struggle against apartheid in South Africa to the tragedy and hope of HIV/AIDS, to the global climate emergency.

Over the past sixteen years, his focus has been on capturing the human experience and physical impacts of the global climate emergency, with his projects Drowning World and Burning World weaving complex narrative threads to describe it.

By showing catastrophic floods and the consequences of forest fires, Mendel takes us into the lives of those affected as they face the devastation left behind and come to terms with a profoundly altered landscape.

<https://gideonmendel.com/submerged-portraits/>



Gideon turns around smiling and shakes the girls' hands.

"Are you photographers too?"

"No, we're students. We're here for a study on butterflies and climate change. But Ludovica is a great photographer," Amanda begins, surprising herself.

"Climate change is an interesting subject, I'm documenting it with my photos. What do you photograph?"

"People, insects, I don't have a specific subject yet, but everything around me that moves me," replies Ludovica.

CONTINUE



The evening passes pleasantly with new friends and interesting conversations.

“We have to go back tomorrow, our first site visit is waiting for us,” says Amanda, looking at her watch.

“Wait a little longer,” asks one of the boys they just met.

“Or at least come visit the city with us tomorrow,” propose João and Pedro.
“You have to visit the port and Praça da Alfândega! Don't say no, you won't regret it.”

AMANDA'S CHOICE



Amanda goes to the hills for her scheduled study visit. Go to page 29



Amanda and Ludovica go to visit the city with their new friends. Go to page 39

Chapter 5: The party with Lucas

Amanda would like to hide, to find time to reflect while she listens to the reply:

"I'm sorry, but I promised Lucas I'd go with him. His mother is from here. She knows the city well and has some friends waiting for him for a party in his honor... of course you can come too!" She immediately regrets mentioning the party and Lucas, but it's too late now. She looks at Ludovica and hopes that she will decide to accompany her.

"No, thank you, I'd rather go to the exhibition. Gideon Mendel is a truly extraordinary photographer and I don't want to miss this opportunity. See you tomorrow for the site inspection. Have a nice evening."

Ludovica smiles, but her eyes are sad and perhaps disappointed. Amanda feels strange. She watches her leave and close the door. She wants to stop her but doesn't have the courage. She lets herself fall onto the bed and curls up as if hiding in the grass to reflect and think, but someone knocks on the door. For a moment, she hopes it's Ludovica who has changed her mind, but Lucas's curly head and face peek out from behind the door.

"Are you ready? My friends are waiting for us!"

CONTINUE



"Just a minute and I'll be with you." Amanda opens her suitcase, takes out her white shirt dress and wedge sandals, sprays on her perfume and leaves.

"You look beautiful."

"Thank you, you're very kind... but what kind of party is it?"

"You'll see, you'll love it. There will be lots of people and you'll really get to know how to have fun here!"

"Maybe I'm not dressed appropriately..."

"You're perfect, don't worry!" Lucas guides her through the streets of the city to the most refined and glamorous neighborhood, Rua Padre de Chagas in Bairro dos Moinhos de Vento. The neighborhood has a very European style, with luxury boutiques, cafes, and restaurants filled with music.

CONTINUE



They walk along avenues where the greenery seems to explode, trees, plants, and flowers striking Amanda with a kaleidoscope of colors, sounds, and scents. Amanda is nervous, she keeps thinking about Ludo as Lucas pushes her through the crowd. “Here we are!” he says, pointing to the door of a luxurious building.

Music welcomes them as they enter, smiling faces greet them, Lucas's brother and childhood friends overwhelm her with kisses and hugs. Introductions and smiles, Amanda feels nervous and out of place, but she keeps smiling.

“I’ll be right back, I’ll go get you something to drink,” says Lucas as he walks away, disappearing into the crowd.

CONTINUE

"I should have stayed with Ludo," she says, without realising she has said it out loud, loud enough for someone to hear her.

"Are you talking to me?" asks a tall, pale guy with a glass in his hand, blond hair combed back and a strong jaw.

"Oh, sorry, no. Of course not. I didn't realise I said that, I thought I was just thinking it."

"You're strange. Anyway, I'm Barron."

Amanda smiles, a tight, forced smile. She doesn't like the guy's face, with its narrow, piggy eyes, expressionless and evasive. She wants to walk away, but she's afraid she won't find Lucas again and desperately wants to get back to campus.

CONTINUE





"You're very pretty. Are you friends with Lucas? His house is very nice, but mine is amazing. I'm much richer than him. It's nearby, by the river." He says, touching his pomaded hair, which highlights his two large ears.

Hoping not to say anything but just to think it, Amanda tells herself that she is dealing with a real idiot and walks away with a smile.

However, Barron cannot accept that someone is not charmed by him and continues to walk behind her, towering over the crowd that parts for him.

CONTINUE



As they walk, he exchanges pats and smiles, but Amanda just wants him to leave her alone.

"I came here to go hunting along the river..."

"Listen, I don't care. In any case, if there's one thing I really hate, it's hunting. I'm vegan, and anyone who thinks they can treat animals as if they were objects is, in my opinion, nothing more than..."

It is at that moment that Lucas returns, clutching two glasses in his hands.

"I see you've met..."



CONTINUE



"I'm sorry, Lucas, but I don't feel very well. I'm tired and would like to go home. I'm sorry, I don't want to spoil your party. Just call me a taxi..."

"I'll take you home. I'm really sorry," Barron offers.

"That's not necessary. I'd rather go alone!"

"You have to give me a chance to make it up to you. Please stay."

Amanda cannot help but be kind; hurting people is not in her nature.

AMANDA'S CHOICE



Amanda is upset, but stays at the party. Go to page 26



Amanda is too angry and goes home. Go to page 27

Amanda sighs heavily and, even though she would like nothing more than to kick him, she says yes.

Lucas's presence makes Barron more cautious, but he continues to say things that irritate Amanda, especially when she starts talking about her beloved butterflies and climate change.

"Please don't tell me you're one of those people who believes in climate change. Rain and snowstorms have always existed..."

"Are you serious? Are you one of those people who think the earth is flat? Let me tell you something: it's round and in serious trouble. I attend the University of Natural Sciences, and what I know is based on research and scientific studies, not on the opinions of people sitting in bars drinking beer. I stayed for Lucas, not to listen to this nonsense. I always try to respect everyone, but arrogance and conceit do not deserve my respect. Can I have my taxi now?"

Amanda feels like crying. She feels stupid; she thinks of Ludovica, but above all, she's afraid she's thrown away an opportunity for nothing. Without waiting for Lucas's reply, she walks away sadly.

GO BACK

Amanda gives Lucas a determined look and he immediately accompanies her outside and calls her the taxi she so desperately wants.

"I'm really sorry, I hadn't seen Barron in a long time and I didn't remember him being like that. But I think he really likes you, he only acts like that when he likes someone."

"I'm sorry too, but the news is: I don't like him, I don't like what he says, what he does and what he is!"

She kisses him hastily on the cheeks and gets into the taxi heading for the campus.

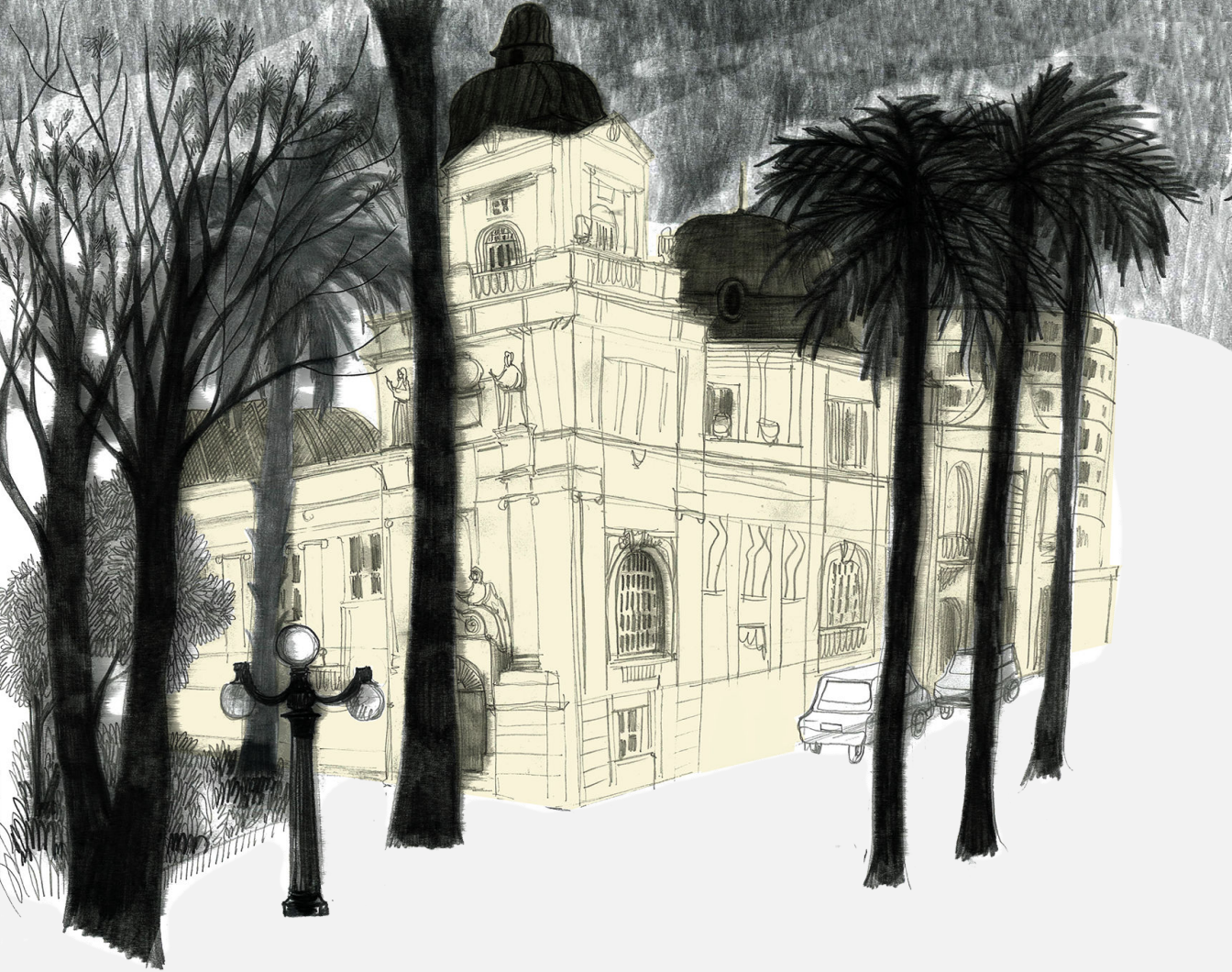
Sitting on the bed, still awake, Ludo waits for her, pretending to leaf through the exhibition catalogue.

"How was it?" she asks with feigned indifference.

"I'm so sorry I didn't come with you!" Ludo raises her head and smiles at her.



CONTINUE



Chapter 5. Together

The following day, the sky lost its colour and brightness, turning leaden; thick clouds filled it and enveloped it without end.

Grey, swollen and heavy with rain.

Ludo and Amanda can't wait to start studying and researching. They get dressed in silence after spending the night talking and sharing their secrets, desires and hopes.

CONTINUE



They take everything they need, calmly packing their rucksacks, smiling every time one meets the other's gaze.

They move in silence, a sweet silence full of promise, as if there were no need to speak, but both remain confidently waiting for each other, as if they had known each other forever. Amanda smiles and Ludo smiles back.

The rain could cancel the excursion to the surrounding hills, as butterflies do not come out when it rains. The teacher is waiting for them in the common room.

AMANDA'S CHOICE

⇒ Despite the rain, Prof. Ortenzi decides to go ahead with the trip. Go to page 30

⇒ Prof. Ortenzi cancels the trip. Go to page 39

Professor Ortenzi welcomes the group and, despite the bad weather, decides to go ahead with the field trip.

Everyone gets on the bus and takes their seats. Amanda and Ludo, sitting in the back, can barely hear the professor's voice as she explains and gives out the final assignments. They cannot stop looking at each other and smiling, without needing to speak. Meanwhile, the professor continues her explanation, of which they only catch a few words.

"We will look for *Methona Themisto*, our delightful and not-too-small butterfly with pale yellow wings. Make a note of every sighting and, if possible, collect a few specimens. But also our "postman", the Red Postman (*Heliconius erato*)..."

Amanda, waiting and feeling awkward, takes her notebook and leafs through it nervously, distractedly lingering over the drawings she made before leaving.



CONTINUE



Ludo rests her head on her shoulder as if to peek, but then stays that way.

"They're really beautiful. They don't just look like scientific illustrations, they have a poetic aura that resembles you. You are a poetic girl, my lovely Miss Merian." Then, lifting her head, she looks at her.

"Only now have I realised that you have the same surname as the famous Sybilla Merian. It's an incredible coincidence that you also love insects and have travelled to study them.

Amanda blushes. Ludo's face is very close, but she is too afraid, so she closes her eyes.

CONTINUE



Something soft and tender rests on her lips.

Amanda opens her eyes but sees nothing; Ludo is too close and is kissing her.

"I like you, Miss Merian... I hope you don't mind me kissing you."

"Yes, no, I mean... I like you too, and no, I don't mind, rather, I'm happy."

CONTINUE

Meanwhile, it has started to rain. The professor doesn't know what to do: whether to turn back or continue on to the research station and hope that tomorrow will be better.

The rain falls incessantly, and turning back seems unthinkable.

"I hope you all brought your sleeping bags. We'll stop at the station and wait for the rain to stop," she says, trying to be reassuring.

It continues to rain furiously, the drops seem like stones, producing a deafening noise that fills her head. Fear rises along with the water, overflowing from the river, which can no longer contain the enormous quantity. It rises and surrounds the houses, invading them and sweeping away everything in its path: cars, animals, people.



CONTINUE



It is raining incessantly, as if it will never stop. The news coming from the city is not encouraging; the death toll and number of missing persons are rising every day. The news reports speak of one of the worst floods ever, even worse than that of 1941. The airport has been closed and the dams have burst. The city is completely submerged.



AMANDA'S CHOICE



The group decides to stay safe. Go to page 35



The group decides to go down to the city to help with the rescue efforts. Go to page 36



In the state of Rio Grande do Sul, between the end of April and mid-May, 300-600 mm of rainfall fell over a large area, with peaks of up to 800 mm in a region north of Porto Alegre. In the southern hemisphere autumn, this region receives an average of 100 mm of rainfall per month. The exceptional rainfall was caused by a virtually stationary disturbance zone, within which, thanks to the presence of warm, humid air of tropical origin, heavy thunderstorms developed. After an initial period of rainfall from 27 April to 4 May, a similar weather situation gave rise to a second wave of heavy rainfall between 10 and 13 May.

As a result of the heavy rainfall, river levels in the Porto Alegre area rose significantly, reaching record levels.

As frightening as it is, the hills proved to be the right choice. They are sheltered in a safe place, and everyone here is safe.

After days when no one thought the rain would ever stop falling, they can finally go outside.

They are hungry but safe, yet a shiver runs down everyone's spine and through their thoughts.

Below them lies an unrecognisable city, and yet it is as if they are looking at something that the future will reserve us more and more often.

THE END





The city is submerged in murky, muddy water.

It is no longer water but a substance that has completely lost its transparency and liquid consistency.

It is an opaque element full of debris and floating objects.

None of them are really prepared to see what they are facing. Helicopters fly over the city to rescue people. Amanda cannot help but think of those who have remained in the city.

“We could contact the Italian consulate, maybe they will be able to tell us what to do”.



CONTINUE

In the days that followed, the Italian students joined the many others and made themselves available to the local civil protection agency.

In the small boat that wanders among the houses, they collect the inhabitants who have found shelter on the roof and a frightened American student named Barron who has been clinging to a tree for days.

Perhaps because of the fear of those nights, the hunger of those endless days among the branches of the tree that at times seemed to embrace and hold him back, Barron decided to set up a foundation dedicated to climate change research and, despite his father's disapproval, to donate money to research in an attempt to save everyone's future.



THE END

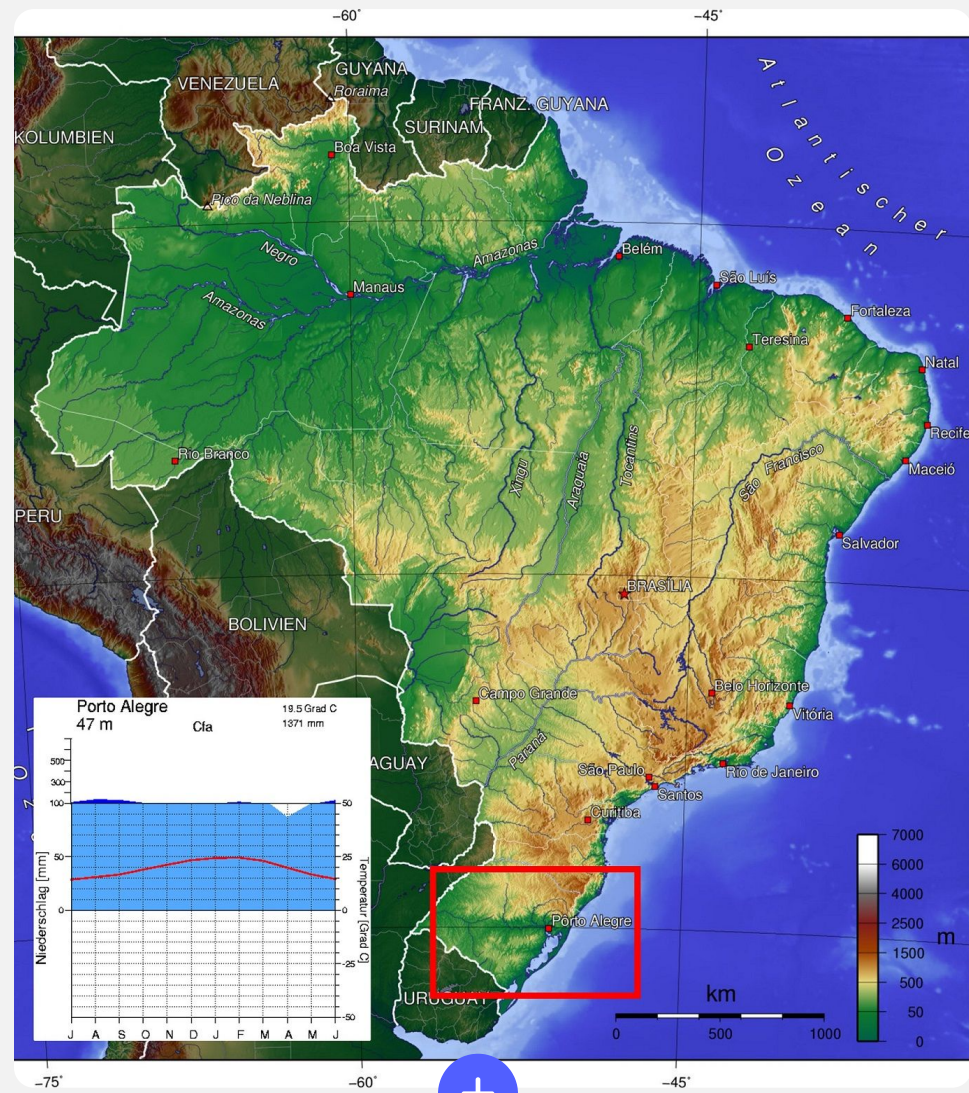
Chapter 6 On the riverbank

The sky had turned leaden, with large clouds seemingly invading it without interruption. Grey, swollen and laden with rain. Professor Ortenzi therefore decided to postpone the expedition to the hills.

“Perhaps we could really consider a tour of the city and along the river, even if the day does not seem particularly favourable. We can call João and Pedro, maybe even Lucas.”



CONTINUE



"I agree, because why waste a day locked in our rooms!"

A round of phone calls and everyone is ready.

The group of friends heads to the park in the neighbourhood. The mill that gives it its name stands out white against an increasingly threatening sky.

"We can go to the Museu de Arte Rio Grande do Sul. Or maybe we could go to the Casa de Cultura Mario Quintana. He was the city's poet and wrote beautiful poems, even about the flood that hit the city in 1941..." 

"I would say let's forget about the alarmism and head to one of these destinations. In any case, we'll be indoors if it starts to rain! Or we can go to the public market, one of the oldest in Brazil, which is full of delicious things to eat, so you can also get to know the flavour of the city."

"We won't make you eat benches or lampposts, but real food!" says Pedro, laughing.

CONTINUE



Before the catastrophe that occurred in 2024, the worst flood in the history of Porto Alegre was recorded in 1941, when the Guaíba River reached 4.76 metres. After the flood at the end of April, Brazil declared a state of natural disaster due to the devastation caused, with the Guaíba River rising to 5.33 metres. A total of 497 towns were affected by the flood, with 15,000 homes flooded, more than 600,000 people displaced, around 800 injured, over 150 confirmed dead and more than 150 missing. This is not the first time that Brazil has experienced emergencies of this kind, with destroyed roads, collapsed bridges, and communication and electricity outages. In fact, in 2023 alone, there were 12 extreme weather events, with major flooding occurring in July, September, and November.

Lucas greets someone behind them, while everyone laughs at Pedro's joke. Amanda feels someone's hand on her shoulder, turns around and finds herself face to face with a burly guy with big ears and a cheeky smile on his face.

"This is Barron," says Lucas, "a childhood friend."

Everyone responds with polite smiles, but it's as if the pleasant atmosphere has been spoiled. They are still undecided about where to go when the rain interrupts any thoughts.

Surprised, they run towards the cultural centre, while Barron lingers in the rain and, as if to tease them, starts singing and improvising a few dance steps:

"I'm singin' in the rain. Just singin' in the rain. What a glorious feelin'. And I'm happy again. I'm laughin' at clouds. So dark up above."

The others find shelter near the buildings, huddling together, watching Barron's clumsy bear-like steps with embarrassment.



CONTINUE

Only Ludovica and Amanda seem not to pay too much attention. Ludo leans close to her ear and whispers the last words of the song, squeezing her hand as he does so: "The sun's in my heart, And I'm ready for love ..."

Amanda smiles at her and repeats softly, "And I'm ready for love".

"We can wait for it to stop..." suggests Lucas.

But the rain seems to have other ideas and continues to fall unabated, as if the sky had opened up and was pouring all its reserves onto the city.

Barron, completely soaked, joins them, shivering. Even though it's May, his wet clothes are making him cold.



CONTINUE

"I hope it won't be like last year..." says Pedro worriedly, remembering the floods and disastrous consequences of the previous year. "...climate change..."

Barron blurts out annoyed: "It's just a bit of rain, it's not going to be a flood! You always have these catastrophic ideas."

"Actually, last year the city was flooded after it rained for days. And it's not by pretending nothing is happening or telling ourselves that it's always been this way that we'll solve the problem of climate change..." adds Pedro, irritated.

Lucas wants to calm everyone down and not scare anyone.



"Barron, your house is nearby, perhaps... you could offer us a more comfortable place than this."

CONTINUE

CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF CLIMATE CHANGE



In recent years, we have increasingly witnessed extreme weather events, with periods of **drought** alternating with **heavy rainfall**, resulting in flooding and dramatic environmental damage. Heavy rainfall causes sudden violent flooding, which is one of the most terrible threats to our cities, with consequent impacts on **public health**, the **economy** and **infrastructure**. The main cause is climate change, compounded by uncontrolled urbanisation.

The intensification of atmospheric heat (every year temperatures reach new records, with increasingly hot summers and especially winters) causes more intense rainfall, which increases in frequency and increasingly turns into extreme events: **torrential rain** and "**water bombs**". Global warming accelerates the water cycle: arid soils are less able to absorb intense rainfall, but above all, cities and metropolises reveal their extreme fragility, made more vulnerable by asphalt and concrete, which make the soil impermeable, effectively preventing water absorption, resulting in increased surface runoff and flooding.

Droughts and **floods** are therefore two equally tragic sides of the same coin. The alternation of the two situations hardens the soil, which becomes unable to absorb enormous quantities of water.

Rising temperatures also cause glaciers to melt, leading to rising sea levels, which contributes to coastal flooding that increasingly destroys coastlines.

“Yes, my house is not far away. I need to change, and I think you need to dry off a bit too. I’m sure it will stop raining soon and we can all go back to what we were doing: me to my hunt and you to your climate change,” says Barron.

If it weren't raining so heavily, no one in the group would accept the invitation, but with no alternative, they follow Barron.

The house is enormous and consists of a single floor overlooking the Guaiba River. It is surrounded by a lush garden, which the rain makes gloomy and menacing. Large windows separate the interior from the garden. Antique furniture alternates with modern pieces, but for Amanda it is all too flashy and ostentatious.

Amanda looks through the large windows at the swelling river and feels a shiver run down her spine, like some kind of disturbing premonition. Barron tries to be a good host despite everything and offers everyone a change of clothes.

CONTINUE

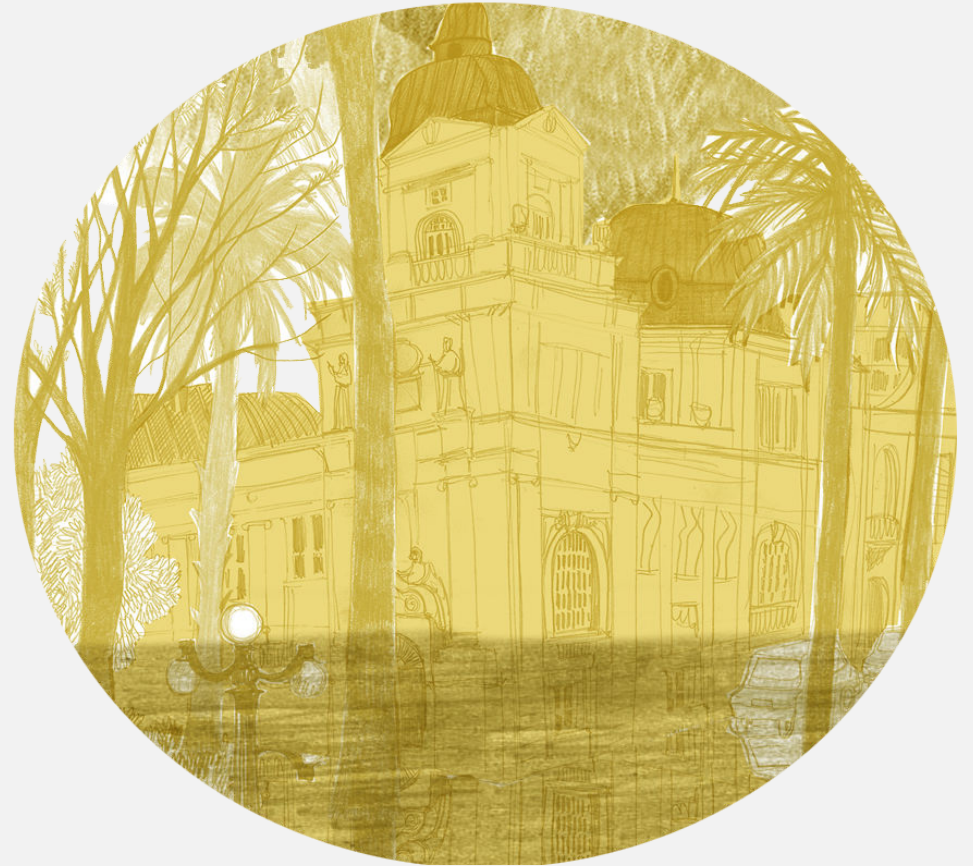
Dry and warm, they wrap themselves in soft bathrobes and sit scattered on the sofas in the large living room. Amanda and Ludo sit close together but are too distressed by what is happening outside to resume their conversation.

“We have to let the Professor know that we are safe and that we will return as soon as possible.”

The house offers every comfort and there is plenty of food, but the sound of the rain seems to occupy everyone's mind. They hear it beating on the roof and windows as if insistently asking to come in.

The night is even more frightening, everything around is gloomy.

The thick, dense rain seems almost like a huge sheet enveloping everything. It falls incessantly with increasing violence; it does not stop as Barron had presumptuously predicted.



CONTINUE

For three long, endless days it rains, turning the sky into a swirling vortex where clouds and rain merge. The worried children watch it from the windows that frame the landscape.

“It reminds me of a painting by Turner, entitled Snow Storm: Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth. A violent whirlwind, a crazy and angry nature...” says Ludovica.

“There's no snow, it seems to me, it's just water!” replies Barron wearily, who despite everything does not seem to have lost his strength to argue, although by now, like everyone else, he is aware that days have passed... and that the water no longer falls only from the sky but also rises from the river, rising like nervousness and unease.

The tension and poorly concealed fear cause Barron to explode: “Enough with this talk of change, it's just rain, that's all!”



CONTINUE

Amanda, more angry than scared, gets up from the sofa where she had sunk as if seeking shelter among the bushes in a garden, looks Barron in the eyes and shouts:

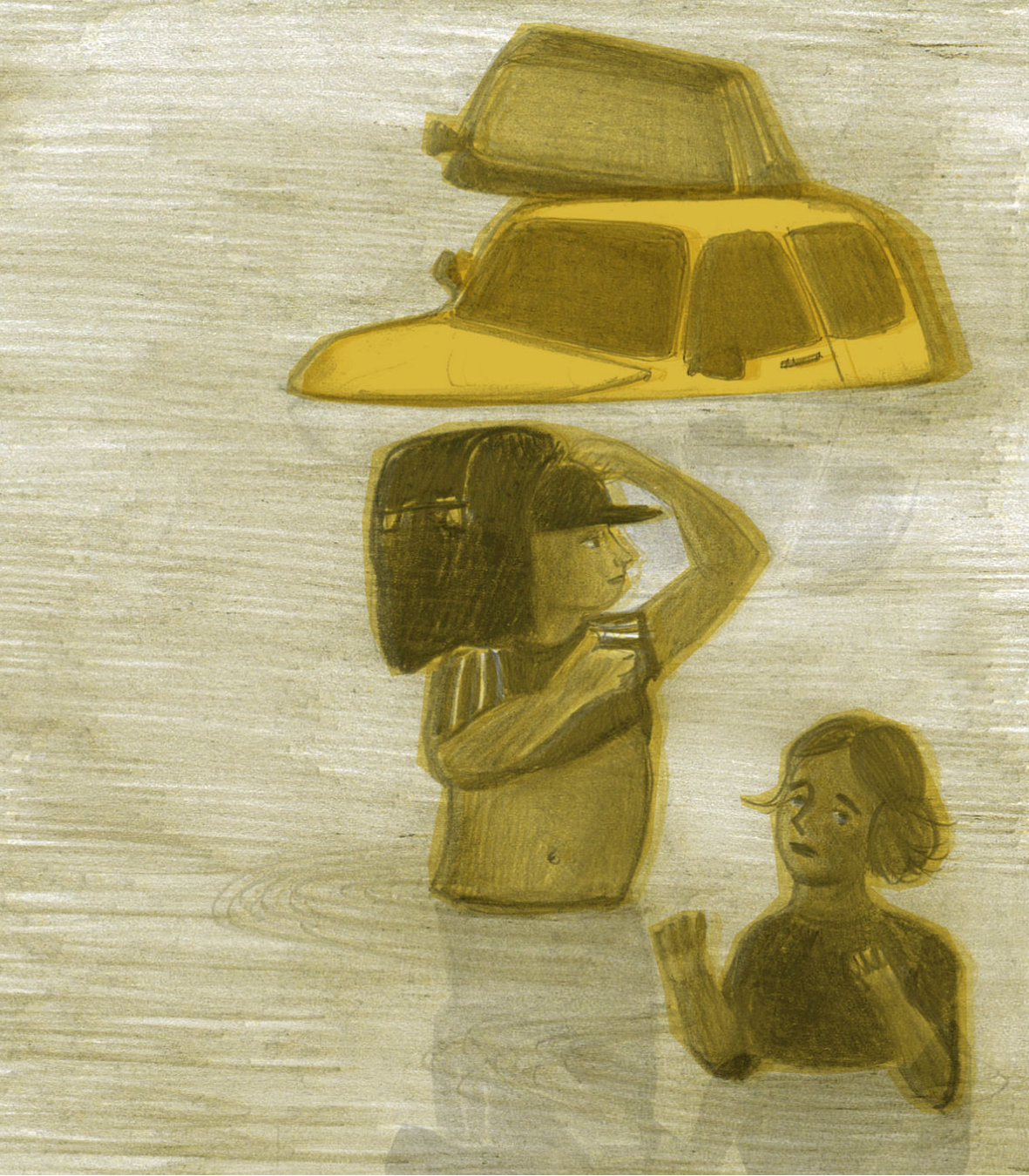
"It's not just rain, it's not a simple episode of rain, how can you not understand that, how can you not want to see it? It's not normal, there's nothing normal about this rain and the other events afflicting our poor planet. The melting glaciers, rising sea levels, heat waves. The climate is changing! It has changed, and it's our fault!"

Barron doesn't move, feeling crushed by Amanda's words. He tries to respond, but Amanda presses him:

"No, no! It's the fault of people like you, who do nothing, who don't believe what is right before everyone's eyes, that things are getting worse and worse!"



CONTINUE



And suddenly the irreparable happens, the river overflows and water floods the house, submerging sofas and lamps, overturning tables and chairs.

The water rises quickly and there is no escape. They see it rising and enveloping them, they feel the force with which it pushes and drags them.

There is frantic shouting and slow-motion movements, as if it were a dream, a nightmare that forces everyone to climb onto the roof while the rain continues to pour down violently.

CONTINUE

Outside, it looks like a circle of hell.
Other people are forced to leave their homes, taking with them bags and the few belongings they can carry.

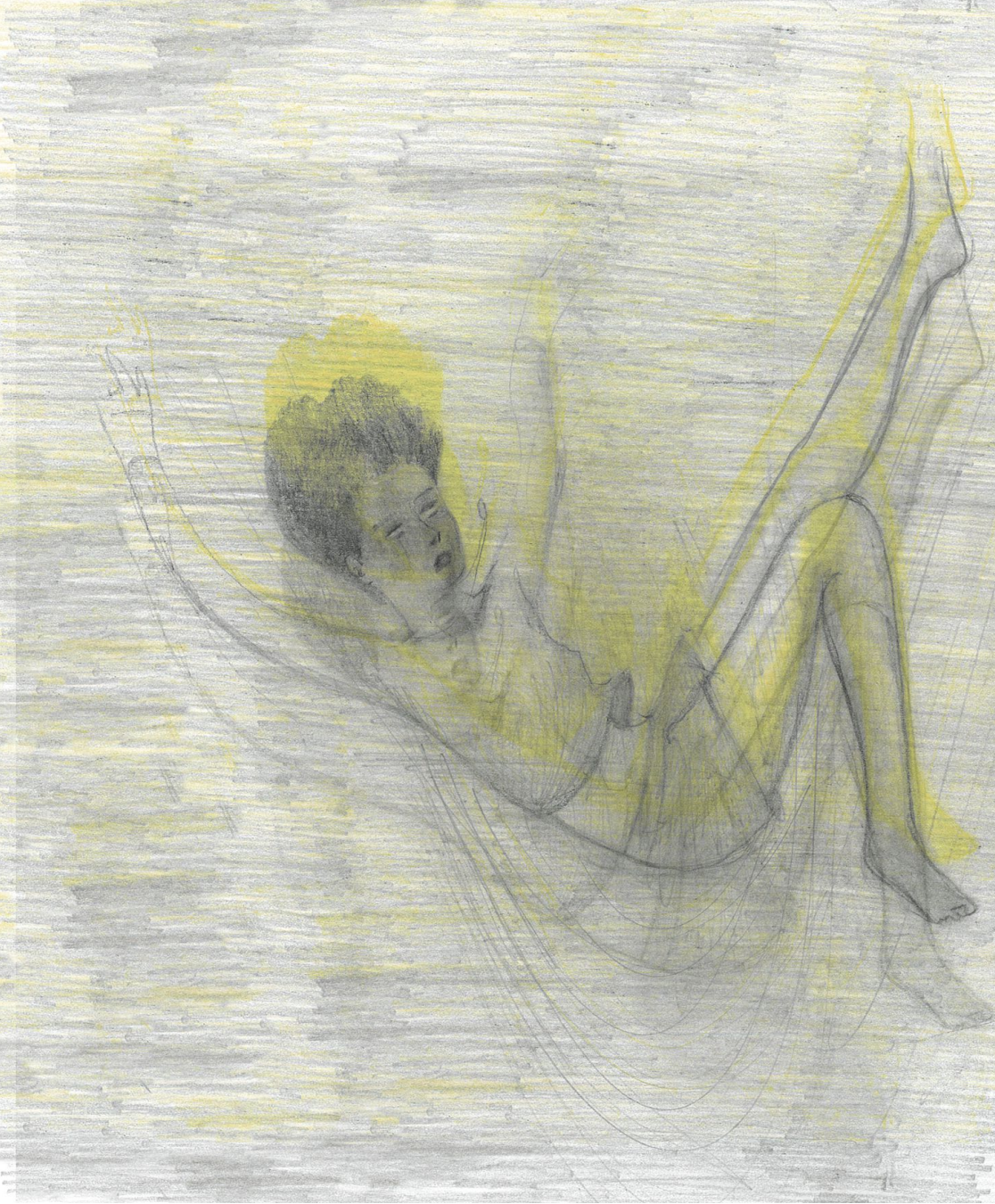
Helicopters fly from roof to roof to pick them up, while others are reached by rubber dinghies.

On the roof, a frightened horse nervously swishes its tail as water surrounds it. Drones and helicopters show the city from above, besieged, invaded, trapped.

The cold and frightened youths wait, embracing each other, but a stronger, more violent wave breaks their embrace and carries them away.



CONTINUE



Amanda feels Ludo's grip loosen and a force drag her underwater. The water is thick with mud and debris, and something hits her on the head.

She sees a submerged bell tower and hears the bells continuing to ring their last toll despite being underwater.

Her body settles among the seaweed, a safe place where she can think.

Perhaps it is a dream, something is dragging her away, it is a big fish swallowing her, like Jonah's whale, keeping her safe in its belly.

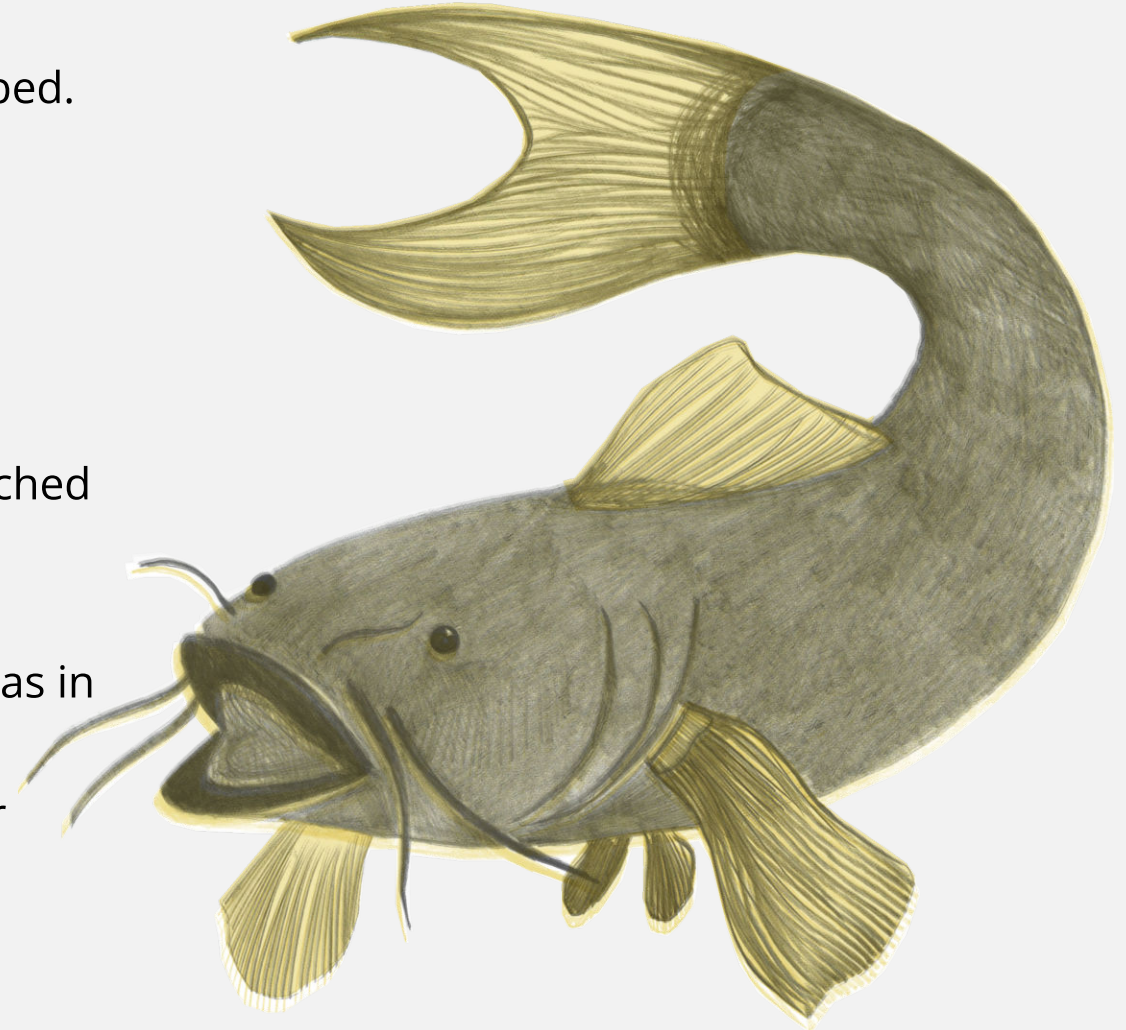
CONTINUE

A few days later, Amanda wakes up in a hospital bed.

"You were rescued a few hours after being swept away," Lucas tells her, moved.

Her injured body was found lying on the roof of a house not too far away. The others were also reached by boats and helicopters and brought to safety.

Ludovica stayed by her side the entire time she was in a coma, never leaving her for a single day, until Amanda woke up and opened her eyes to see her smile.



CONTINUE

Amanda called her parents to reassure them that she was fine and would be coming home soon.

Her mother's voice is interrupted by tears of emotion and fear.

"Mum, I'm fine. I've fallen in love. Her name is Ludovica," says Amanda, waiting for a reply.

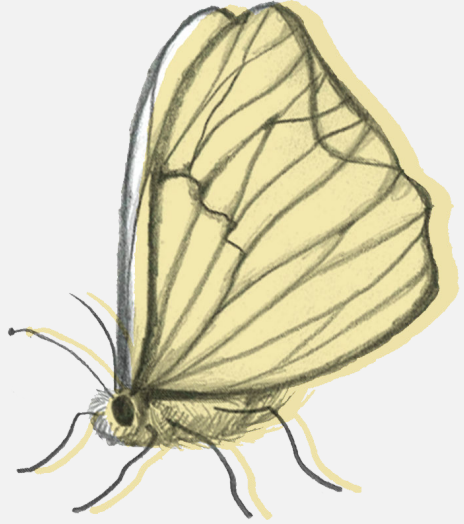
"I'm so happy, darling, I can't wait to hug you both."

Amanda is overwhelmed with emotion: "I'm sorry I told you over the phone, but now I feel brave enough to do anything."

"It doesn't matter, we'll have time to talk about everything you want... But we already knew. We were just waiting for you to tell us. We love you, darling. We're waiting for you!"



CONTINUE



Then, for a moment, the muddy water floods his mind once more, wiping away his smile and all the beautiful things.

"What's wrong? You don't look well," asks Ludo.

"I know it sounds silly," she says, looking at Ludovica, "it's a thought that won't leave me; you know that concept that the beating of a butterfly's wings can cause a hurricane on the other side of the world? I believe - please don't laugh - in my half-sleep I imagined that the beating of the wings of butterflies that are forced to change territory, those that disappear, that beating is the yearning of nature, the same that caused this storm... And more and more they are affecting and will affect our planet.

And no one has the right to ignore it."

CONTINUE

Then, as if that thought had reminded her of something else, she asks about Barron.

“There’s no sign of him. Unfortunately, there are still many people missing,” Ludo replies softly, as he embraces her. Soon, however, everyone is smiling again and looking out of the window. The sun has returned.

It was only in June that Barron’s body was found, yet the news never reached Italy.

Professor Ortenzi’s group was busy on other fronts: not just research but also public outreach. Their experience, if proof were needed, had made it even clearer that climate change affects everyone’s lives; pretending it doesn’t exist, or worse, ignoring it and remaining indifferent, is the cause of its continued worsening.

Thinking like Barron, that problems are always someone else’s and that money can solve everything, often makes us forget that there is a connection, an interdependence between nature and our choices; so it sometimes happens that we have to pay the harsh consequences.

THE END

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

Next



Why do some people struggle to recognise the seriousness of climate change?

Barron tends to downplay the warning signs until it is too late.

In your opinion, why do some people deny or underestimate climate change, even when its effects are visible?



Why do some people struggle to recognise the seriousness of climate change?

Barron tends to downplay the warning signs until it is too late.

In your opinion, why do some people deny or underestimate climate change, even when its effects are visible?



What role do relationships play in helping people face a crisis?

Amanda changes not only because of the flood, but also thanks to her bond with Ludovica and with the people she meets. How can friendship, love, or support from others help people face fear, change and uncertainty?



What can young people do when faced with climate anxiety and an uncertain future?

The story presents both emotional fragility and environmental crisis. What concrete actions can young people still take when the future feels unstable or frightening?



What did you learn from this story?

Did the story help you understand something new about identity, fear, love, friendship, or the effects of climate-related disasters?



What message do you think the story leaves with the reader?

In your opinion, what is the most important idea that remains at the end of the story, both on a human level and on an environmental level?



**How do fear and silence influence
people's choices?**

For much of the story, Amanda hides her feelings and tries not to expose herself.

How does fear prevent her from living fully?

When does she truly begin to change?



What does the story suggest about climate change and extreme weather events?

The Porto Alegre flood is not presented as “simple rain”, but as part of a wider climate crisis. What message does the story convey about the difference between a natural event and a disaster intensified by climate change?



Is there a choice that, looking back, you would make differently?

If you could go back in the story, would you change one of Amanda's decisions? Why?



What does courage mean in this story?

Is courage shown more clearly in the way Amanda faces the flood, in the moment when she speaks openly about climate change, or when she finally finds the strength to say who she truly is?

In your opinion, can courage be personal, relational and environmental at the same time?



How could you act differently in real life?

Has this story made you reflect on your own behaviour, your fears, or the way you respond to environmental issues? Is there anything you could do differently in your everyday life?



Which ending did you reach? Which choices led you there?

Think back to the decisions Amanda made throughout the story.

How did her choices, connected to trust, courage and relationships, influence the ending?

FURTHER RESOURCES

NEXT



The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

<https://www.ipcc.ch/>

European Environment Agency

<https://www.eea.europa.eu>

Copernicus Emergency Management Service (EFAS)

<https://emergency.copernicus.eu>

UNDRR – Disaster Risk Reduction

<https://www.undrr.org>

Climate-ADAPT

<https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu>

The new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0082>



This adventure book is a creation of Erasmus+ Green Saga Project

Funded by the European Union. However, the views or opinions expressed are those of the author(s) alone and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the European Union or the Agency of Youth Affairs. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Project code: 2024-2-LT02-KA220-YOU-000293123



**Co-funded by
the European Union**