

# The salmon

from the red spring



This publication has been edited by DG Environment and is published in all the official languages of the European Union: Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Swedish.

The publication is also available at the DG environment web site for Young People and Environment: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/youth/index\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/youth/index_en.html)

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Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2003

ISBN 92-894-4542-4

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*Printed in Belgium*

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER



It is raining. Thunder and lightning are shaking the sky. Lila the fox is crossing the open countryside as fast as she can run. She is looking for shelter. Yes, there on the farm, she will be able to hide! Lila runs. She leaps over the river. But at that moment, she hears a little voice.

- Help!...



Lila lands on the other bank. Soaked with rain, she turns around.

- Who needs help? the fox asks.
- Help me...

Lila notices a shadow. It is the shadow of a bird. Its claws are enormous. Its beak is sharp. Lila is very impressed.

- Help! Help me! The salmon needs help! cries the heron.

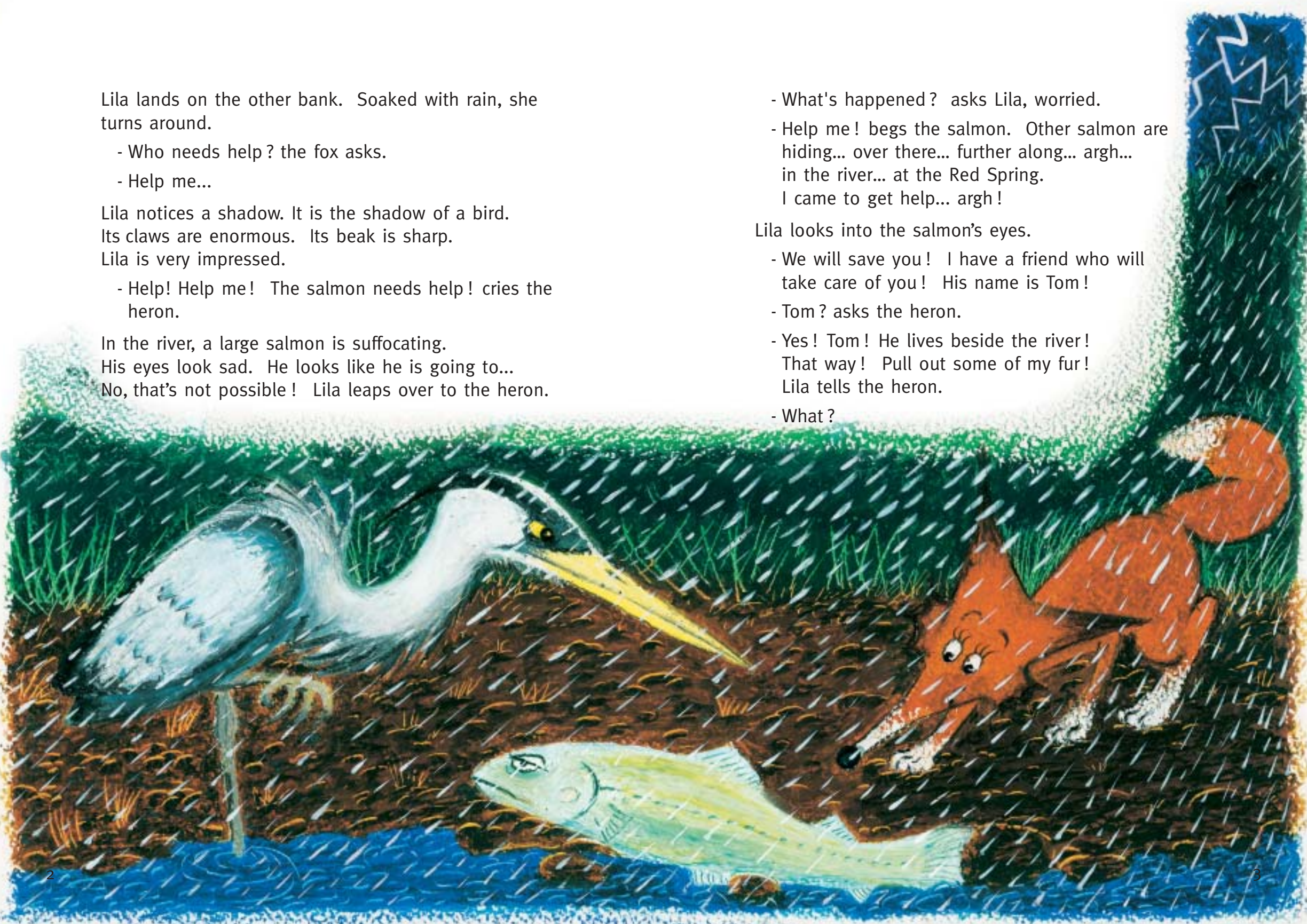
In the river, a large salmon is suffocating. His eyes look sad. He looks like he is going to... No, that's not possible! Lila leaps over to the heron.

- What's happened? asks Lila, worried.

- Help me! begs the salmon. Other salmon are hiding... over there... further along... argh... in the river... at the Red Spring. I came to get help... argh!

Lila looks into the salmon's eyes.

- We will save you! I have a friend who will take care of you! His name is Tom!
- Tom? asks the heron.
- Yes! Tom! He lives beside the river! That way! Pull out some of my fur! Lila tells the heron.
- What?



- PULL OUT SOME OF MY FUR! shouts Lila.  
Then take the fur to Tom! Over there!  
He lives in the fifth house in Merlin City! He'll  
understand that I am in trouble. Quickly, heron!  
I beg you! If not, the salmon will... Oh! Hurry!

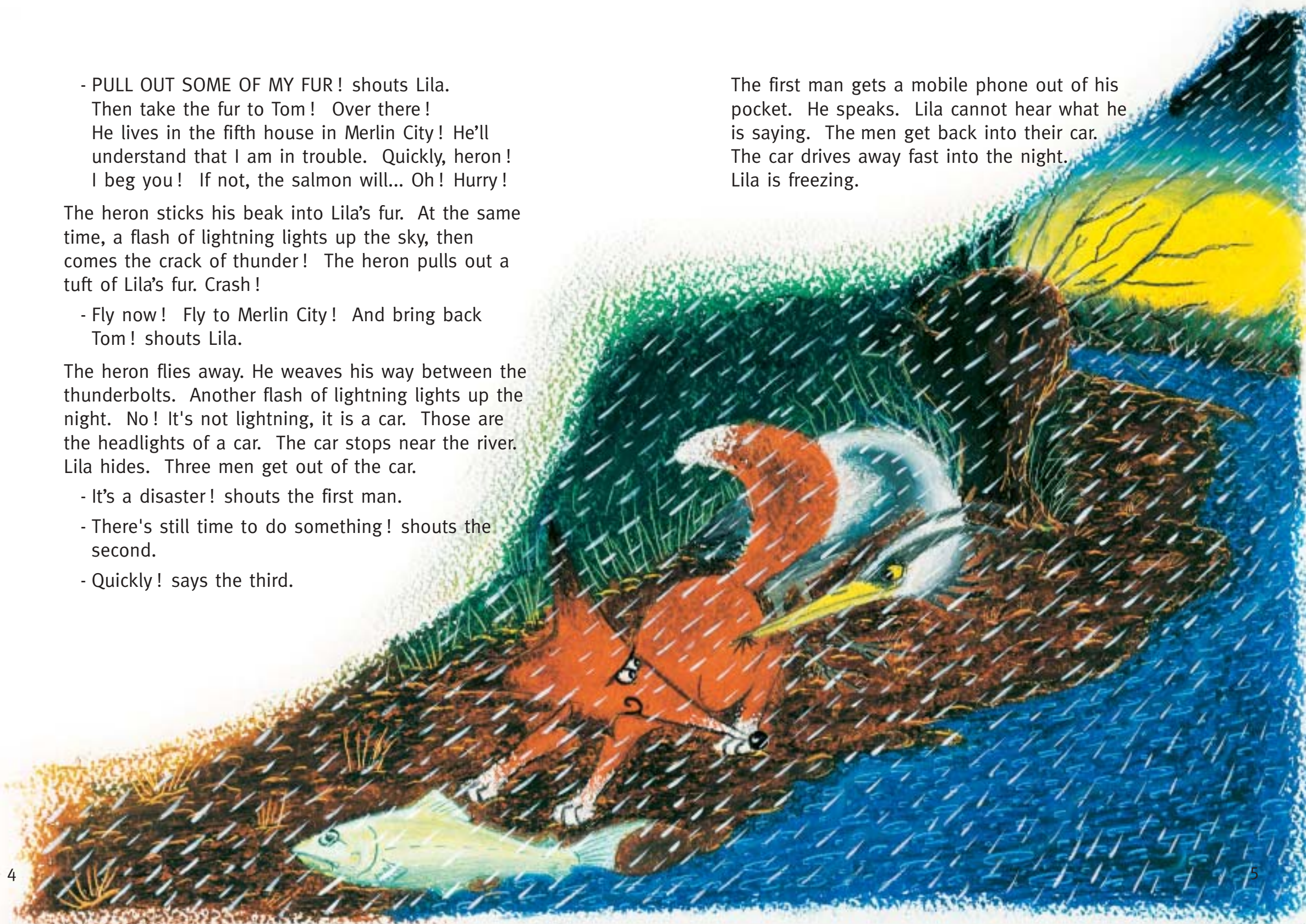
The heron sticks his beak into Lila's fur. At the same  
time, a flash of lightning lights up the sky, then  
comes the crack of thunder! The heron pulls out a  
tuft of Lila's fur. Crash!

- Fly now! Fly to Merlin City! And bring back  
Tom! shouts Lila.

The heron flies away. He weaves his way between the  
thunderbolts. Another flash of lightning lights up the  
night. No! It's not lightning, it is a car. Those are  
the headlights of a car. The car stops near the river.  
Lila hides. Three men get out of the car.

- It's a disaster! shouts the first man.
- There's still time to do something! shouts the  
second.
- Quickly! says the third.

The first man gets a mobile phone out of his  
pocket. He speaks. Lila cannot hear what he  
is saying. The men get back into their car.  
The car drives away fast into the night.  
Lila is freezing.



At the same moment, the heron arrives in Merlin City. He counts the houses. One, two, three, four and five! This is Tom's house! The heron looks in the window. Yes, Tom is there, sleeping! The heron taps on the window with his beak. Tom wakes up and opens the window. The heron holds out Lila's fur.

- Oh! That's Lila's fur! Is she in danger? asks Tom.

- No! says the heron. But she needs you! To save the salmon! Follow me!

Tom puts on his jacket. He jumps out of the window. The heron flies over the river. Tom is sitting on his back.

- There, shouts the heron! Down there, near the farm!

- Lila! cries Tom. LILA!

Lila hears Tom's voice. She breathes an immense sigh of relief. The fox's eyes begin to shine with joy. Lila turns towards the salmon.

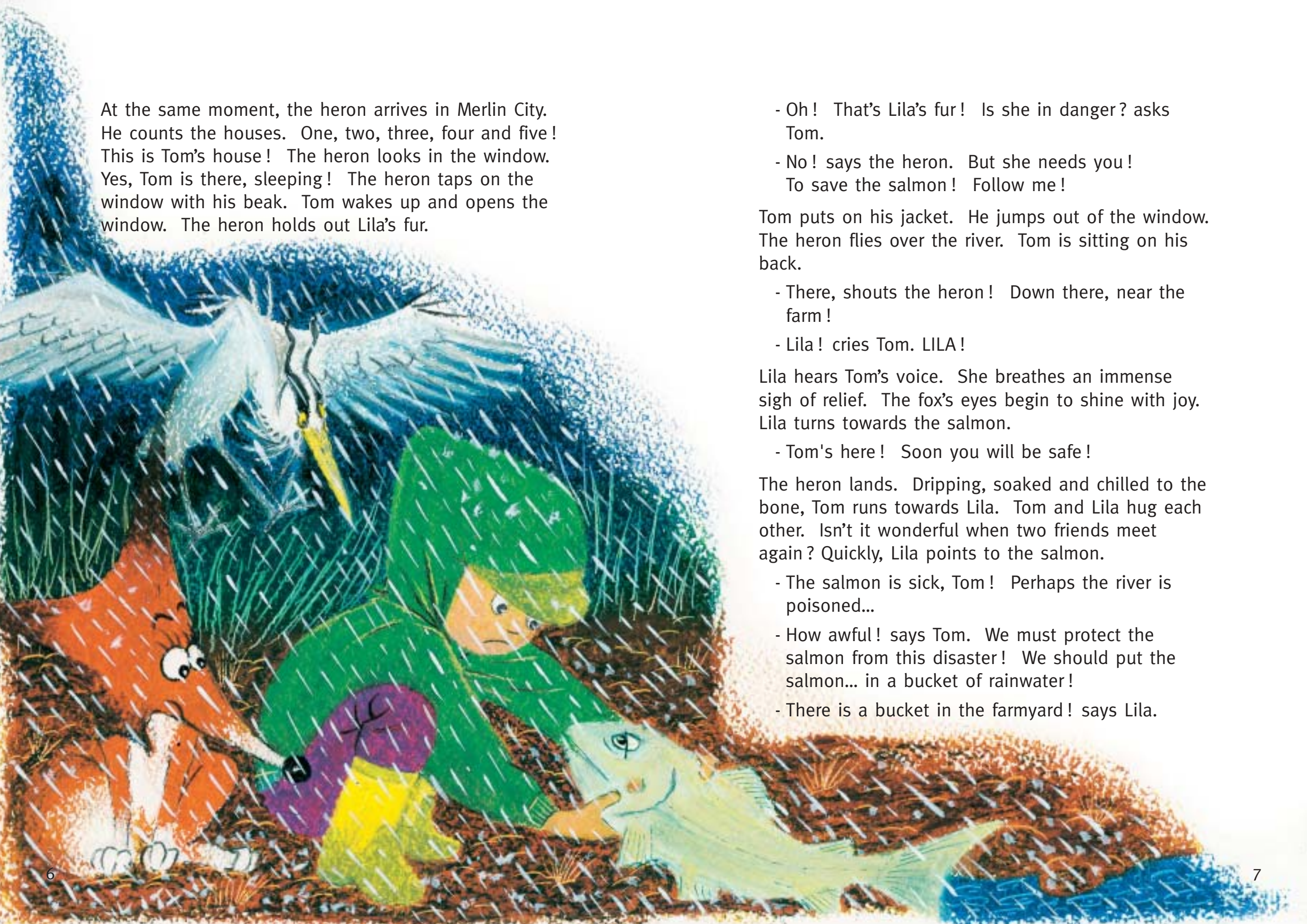
- Tom's here! Soon you will be safe!

The heron lands. Dripping, soaked and chilled to the bone, Tom runs towards Lila. Tom and Lila hug each other. Isn't it wonderful when two friends meet again? Quickly, Lila points to the salmon.

- The salmon is sick, Tom! Perhaps the river is poisoned...

- How awful! says Tom. We must protect the salmon from this disaster! We should put the salmon... in a bucket of rainwater!

- There is a bucket in the farmyard! says Lila.





Tom runs to the farm. He grabs the bucket and lifts it. With some difficulty, he carries it and puts it down just beside the salmon. Tom's small hands gently pick up the salmon. That's it! The salmon is safe, at least for a while.

- We need more help! says Tom.

Tom drags the bucket to the farm. Ow, it is so heavy! Tom knocks at the door. An old lady opens it.

- Oh, what are you doing out at this time of night, young man? the lady asks.

- We must raise the alarm! The river water is polluted! The salmon is sick! It needs help!

- What salmon, young man?

- Here, the salmon in the bucket!

The old lady grabs an umbrella. She walks over to the bucket. Tom is speaking very fast.

- We need a safe place for the salmon. Could we put it in your bath?
- A bath? exclaims the old lady. But... I haven't got running water here, in my farmhouse... I wash in the spring water... I don't have a bath...
- Uh? You haven't got a bath?
- No indeed, young man! Nor any taps!
- When I grow up, I'll come and put in a tap for you, says Tom!
- I don't need one! I get along fine without one...

- No! says Tom. When you are very, very old, you will need a tap! Because perhaps you won't be able to get to your spring!
- That's a good idea! I would be very lucky, because I hear that many people haven't got water close to their homes... Children like you, Tom, have to walk miles to fetch some.
- Please come quickly, we need help! repeats Tom.
- Oh, yes... I'd forgotten... said the old lady.



The old lady looks at the bucket and the salmon.

- Well! We'll take the salmon into my kitchen. We'll put it in a big saucepan...
- A big saucepan? says Tom.
- Don't worry, my boy, we're not going to cook him! We'll give him some very pure water! Water from my spring!

The old lady picks up the bucket. And the whole gang follows her. It is quite a procession. Oh, the rain has stopped! The clouds are disappearing. The moon is shining brightly. Everyone goes into the kitchen. The old lady fills a large saucepan with water.

- I won't put too much water in the saucepan. Just what's needed. Because water is precious.
- That's true... It can't be made and it can't be invented! answers Tom. And while I am brushing my teeth, I make sure I turn off the tap! Because Mummy and Daddy told me that water is as precious as gold.
- Oh! cries the old lady. The salmon's not moving any more!



Tom, Lila and the heron open their eyes with fright.

- IT CAN'T BE! cries Tom.

- NO! screams Lila.

The heron, who has kept calm, rests the end of his beak on the salmon's skin. The heron nibbles the salmon's fin.

- Heh? What's happening? asks the salmon.  
My tummy really hurts...

Bang! Bang! Bang! Oh! What's happening? Someone's banging at the door! The old lady looks anxious. Through the windows of the house, orange and blue lights are flashing into the room. It is the flashing light on top of a car. The old lady opens the door. Three men dressed in white walk into the kitchen. One of the men has a very kind face. He is wearing glasses and big boots.

- Madam! We are responsible for water quality. We have come to warn you about a risk! Somebody must have dumped some dangerous products into the river! They could enter the water in your spring! They might give you a stomach ache!

- That's why the salmon is sick! Says Tom.  
Come quickly!

Tom leads the man over to the salmon. Crouching down, the man looks at Tom.

- Was it you who brought the salmon here?  
asks the man.

- Yes, sir...

- I think you saved his life...





Suddenly, the salmon looks at the man.

- There are other salmon... over there... further along... argh... in the river... where the children usually go swimming... in the Red Spring.

The man stands up straight again. He looks strict, and gives his instructions.

- Madam, for the moment, please do not drink the water from your spring! We need to check it quickly! Just a precaution! Max, there's some clean water in the car! Put the salmon in that water! And give this lady a few litres of clean water too! Jonas, go down to the Red Spring! We need to save the other salmon in the river!

The man wants to thank Tom.

- Shhh! whispers the old lady. He's asleep...

The sun is rising. Tom has woken up. He is happy. The salmon that he rescued this night is better now. All the other salmon have been rescued too. Men and women are already cleaning up the river. Tom walks towards them.

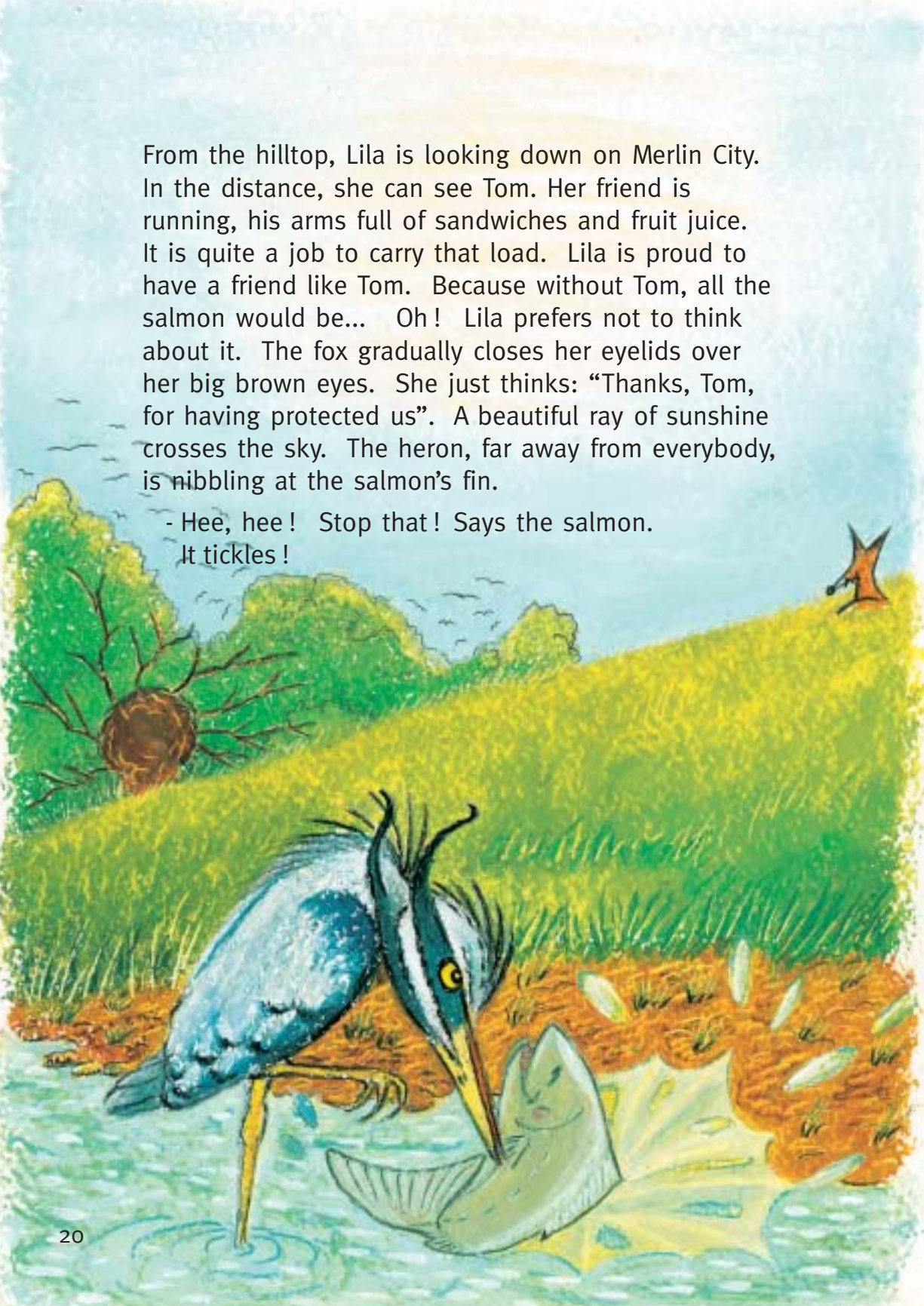
- When can we go swimming in the river again? asks Tom.
- Hold on, young fellow! answers the man. Not yet! We need to clean and purify the water! That will take time! Always in a hurry, eh? But if you help us...

- Help you? asks Tom.

- I am feeling a bit peckish! says the man, smiling.

Tom understands. He runs to the bakery in Merlin City. He asks for twenty chocolate-spread sandwiches and twenty fruit juices: "It is for the workers down at the river!" he says. "I am helping them in my own way!"





From the hilltop, Lila is looking down on Merlin City. In the distance, she can see Tom. Her friend is running, his arms full of sandwiches and fruit juice. It is quite a job to carry that load. Lila is proud to have a friend like Tom. Because without Tom, all the salmon would be... Oh! Lila prefers not to think about it. The fox gradually closes her eyelids over her big brown eyes. She just thinks: "Thanks, Tom, for having protected us". A beautiful ray of sunshine crosses the sky. The heron, far away from everybody, is nibbling at the salmon's fin.

- Hee, hee! Stop that! Says the salmon.  
It tickles!

European Commission

**THE SALMON FROM THE RED SPRING**

Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities

2003 — 20 pp. — 16,2 x 22,9 cm

ISBN 92-894-4542-4

Copies of this publication are available free-of-charge while stocks last from:  
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Information Centre (BU-9 0/11)  
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