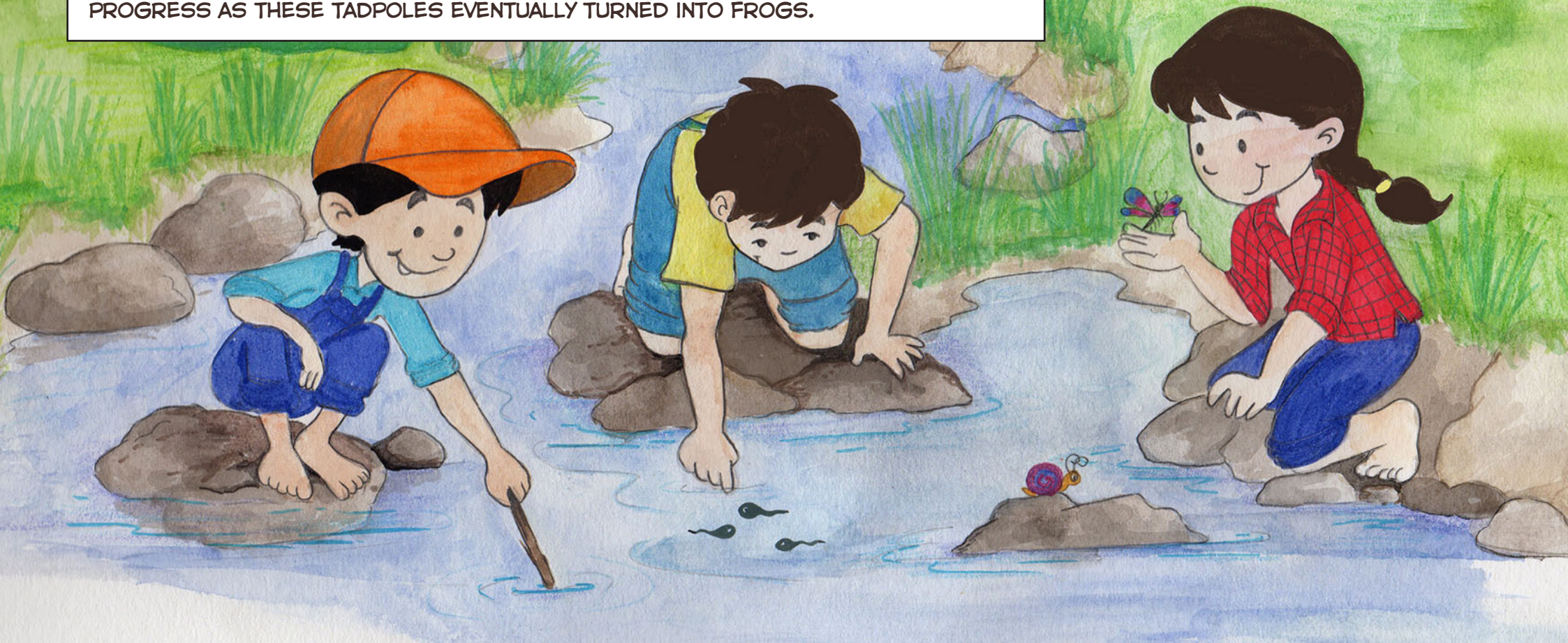


TALES OF FARM FRIENDS

THE CREEK

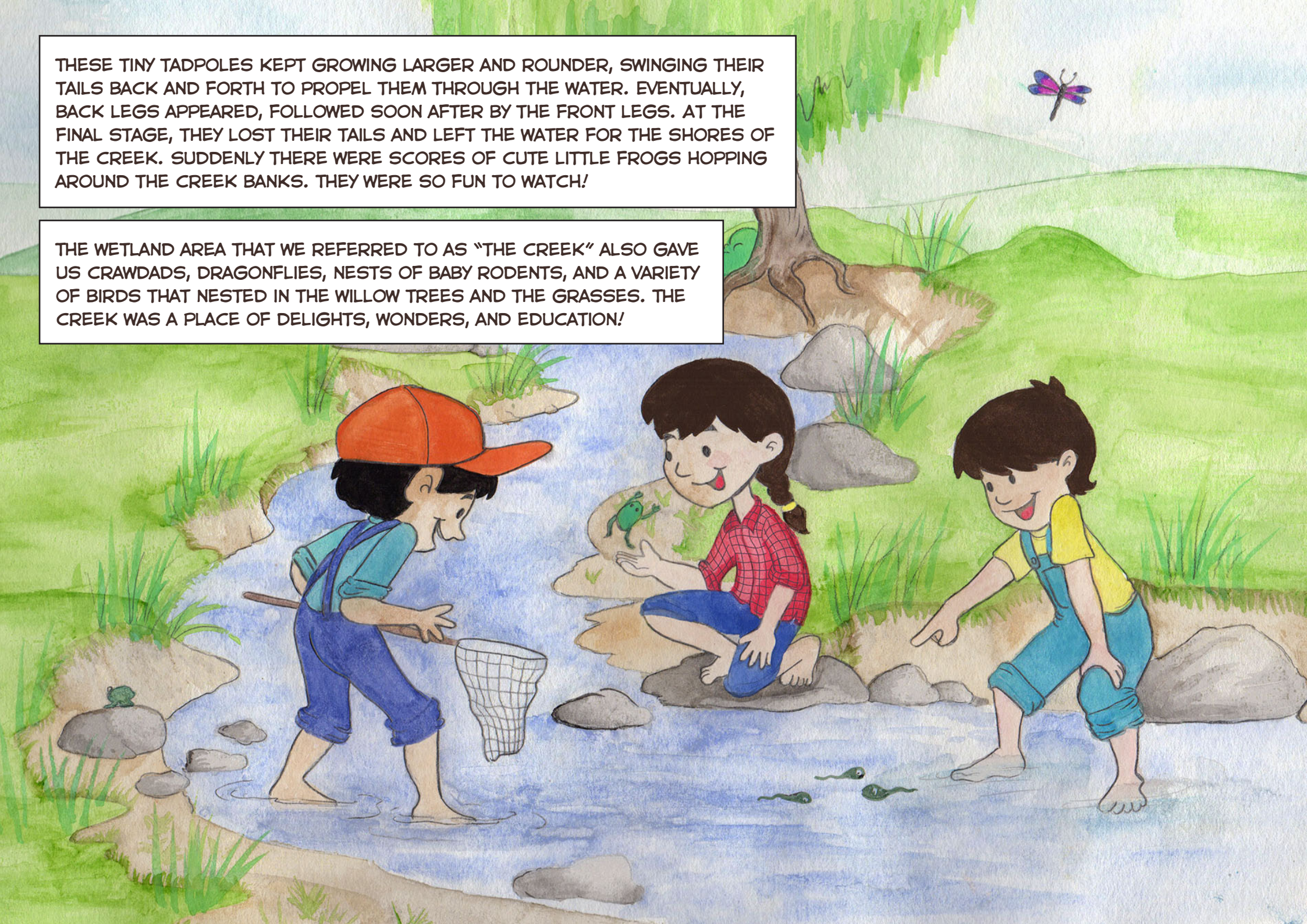
WHEN TELLING THE STORIES OF FARM FRIENDS, I CAN'T IGNORE THE GREAT FRIENDS WE HAD AT THE CREEK ON OUR PARENTS' FARM. IT WAS A FAVORITE PLACE TO PLAY DURING SPRING AND SUMMER, FULL OF ALL SORTS OF FUN LEARNING EXPERIENCES.

IN THE CREEK, THERE WERE SHOALS OF MINNOWS THAT WE'D DEVISE WAYS TO NET AND EXAMINE AND THEN RELEASE. ALSO SMALL DARK SNAILS THAT MEANDERED ALONG THE CREEK BED. AND A FAVORITE SUMMER ACTIVITY WAS SPOTTING A MASS OF FROG EGGS THAT WOULD SOON GIVE WAY TO TINY TADPOLES. WE WOULD WATCH THE DAILY PROGRESS AS THESE TADPOLES EVENTUALLY TURNED INTO FROGS.



THESE TINY TADPOLES KEPT GROWING LARGER AND ROUNDER, SWINGING THEIR TAILS BACK AND FORTH TO PROPEL THEM THROUGH THE WATER. EVENTUALLY, BACK LEGS APPEARED, FOLLOWED SOON AFTER BY THE FRONT LEGS. AT THE FINAL STAGE, THEY LOST THEIR TAILS AND LEFT THE WATER FOR THE SHORES OF THE CREEK. SUDDENLY THERE WERE SCORES OF CUTE LITTLE FROGS HOPPING AROUND THE CREEK BANKS. THEY WERE SO FUN TO WATCH!

THE WETLAND AREA THAT WE REFERRED TO AS "THE CREEK" ALSO GAVE US CRAWDADS, DRAGONFLIES, NESTS OF BABY RODENTS, AND A VARIETY OF BIRDS THAT NESTED IN THE WILLOW TREES AND THE GRASSES. THE CREEK WAS A PLACE OF DELIGHTS, WONDERS, AND EDUCATION!



PART OF THAT EDUCATION WAS ALSO IN OBEDIENCE. WHEN OUR YOUNGEST BROTHER WAS STILL A TODDLER, WE WANTED TO SHOW HIM THE CREEK. "PLEASE, MOM, LET US TAKE HIM TO THE CREEK," WE PLEADED. "HE'LL LOVE IT LIKE WE DO!"

MOM FINALLY GAVE IN. "ONLY IF YOU PROMISE NOT TO CROSS THE CREEK WITH HIM, OR GO INTO THE WATER." AND SO WE PROMISED AND SCAMPERED OFF TO OUR HAVEN OF NATURE'S SCHOOL.



ONCE AT THE SHORE, THE TEMPTATION TO CROSS TO THE OTHER SIDE WAS STRONG. "I'LL TAKE HIS ARMS, IF YOU TAKE HIS LEGS," I EXPLAINED. "THEN ON THE COUNT OF THREE WE'LL JUMP! MOM WILL NEVER KNOW."

"ONE, TWO, THREE!" AND WE JUMPED. BUT IN OUR HASTE, WE LET GO OF OUR LITTLE BROTHER, AND THERE HE SAT, COVERED IN MUDDY CREEK WATER. NOW MOM WOULD KNOW WE DISOBEYED HER!

MY MEMORY STOPS ABRUPTLY THERE, AND TAKES UP AGAIN LATER WHEN I'M LYING IN BED FOR AN EXTRA NAP MY MOTHER SENT ME FOR, TO REFLECT ON THE IMPORTANCE OF OBEDIENCE.

BUT THAT INCIDENT DIDN'T MAR THE JOY OF MANY CONTINUED YEARS OF SCHOOLING WE RECEIVED FROM NATURE AT THAT FABULOUS CREEK!

"ASK THE BEASTS, AND THEY WILL TEACH YOU; THE BIRDS OF THE HEAVENS, AND THEY WILL TELL YOU; OR THE BUSHES OF THE EARTH, AND THEY WILL TEACH YOU; AND THE FISH OF THE SEA WILL DECLARE TO YOU. WHO AMONG ALL THESE DOES NOT KNOW THAT THE HAND OF THE LORD HAS DONE THIS?" (JOB 12:7-9 ESV).