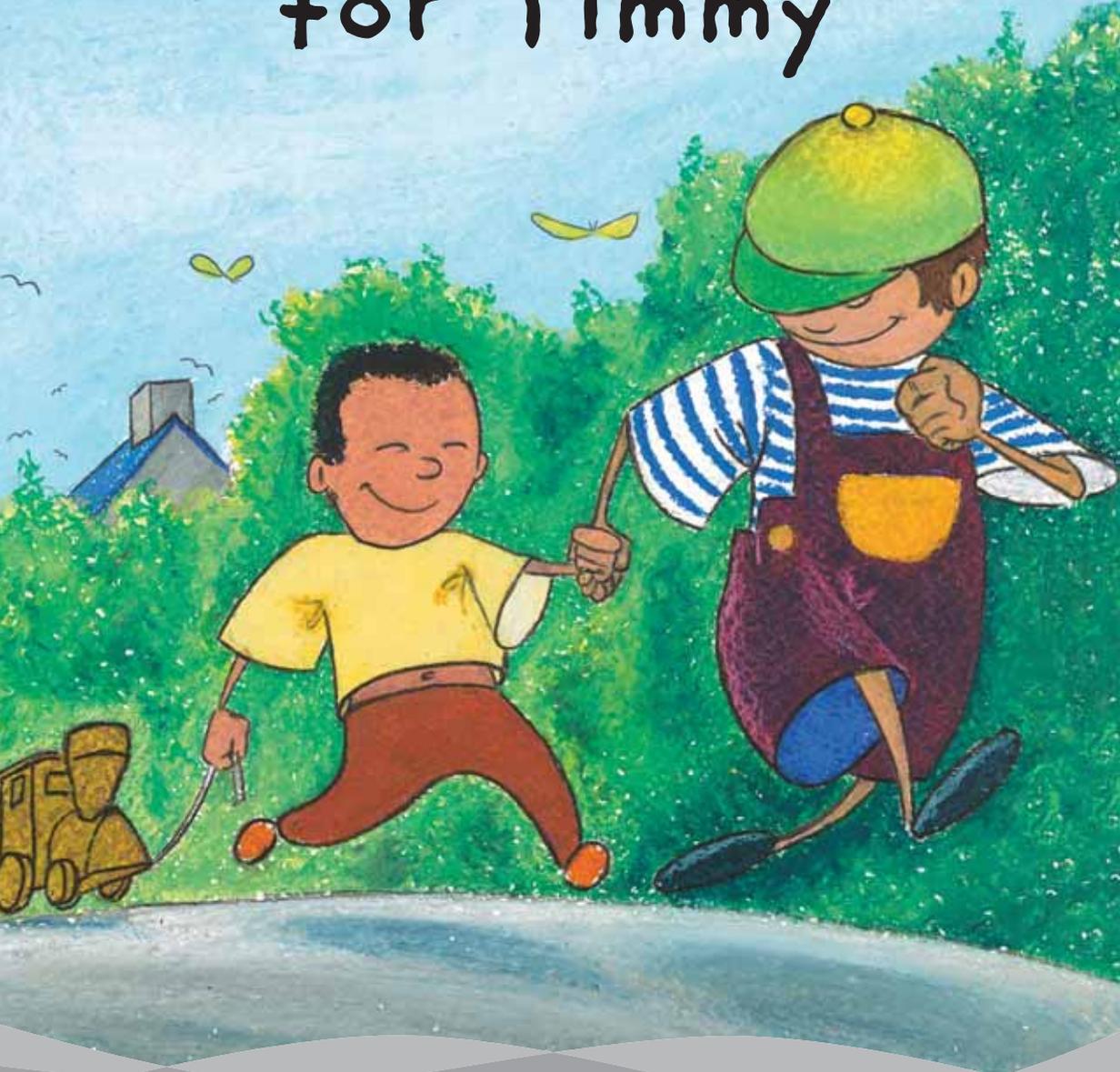


# A present for Timmy



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What a lovely warm day! Lila the fox woke from her afternoon nap in her favourite spot amongst the bushes. She stretched, yawned and peered out through the leaves. Not far off was Tom's house, and Mrs Green the neighbour was outside talking to Tom's mother. Mrs Green was carrying her small son, Timmy, and both mothers were looking anxious. Mrs Green put Timmy into her car. Lila heard the doors slam shut and saw the yellow car speed off towards Merlin City.



"What's up, Mum?" asked Tom.

"It's our neighbour. Little Timmy. Mr and Mrs Green's boy. He's swallowed a battery!" said Tom's mother.

"A battery?!" exclaimed Tom.

"Yes, one of those little ones shaped like a button. It was inside a toy."

"Is it dangerous?" asked Tom.

"It could be," his Mum replied.





“You see, if it opens up in Tim’s tummy, the stuff inside the battery could burn him.”

“What – set him on fire?!” asked Tom, in astonishment.

“No, but it could damage his stomach,” said Tom’s Dad.

“I don’t want Timmy to get burnt!” yelled Tom.

“Mrs Green promised to tell us how he is,” answered Tom’s Mum, quietly.

“Well I’m going to the shops to get Timmy a nice present!” said Tom – and without further ado he set off.



Tom ran to the shopping centre and went into Flash Toyz, the biggest toy shop in Merlin City. He had made up his mind to buy Timmy the best present in the whole world, to show how much he cared about him. So Tom went to the section where there were lots and lots of toys for young children. He felt really happy as he thought of the pleasure it would give Timmy to receive the biggest and best of all presents...



And there it was! A huge plastic dog that went “WOOF WOOF! WOOF WOOF!” when you switched it on. The dog was in a colourful box wrapped in shiny, sparkling material. Feeling very pleased with himself, Tom took the box to the checkout. But just then he heard shouts and scuffling noises coming from the back of the shop. A flying ball of fur zoomed towards Tom, landed on him and almost knocked him over. He dropped his present. Crash! Then the ball of fur dragged him out of the shop and growled at him. It was Lila.

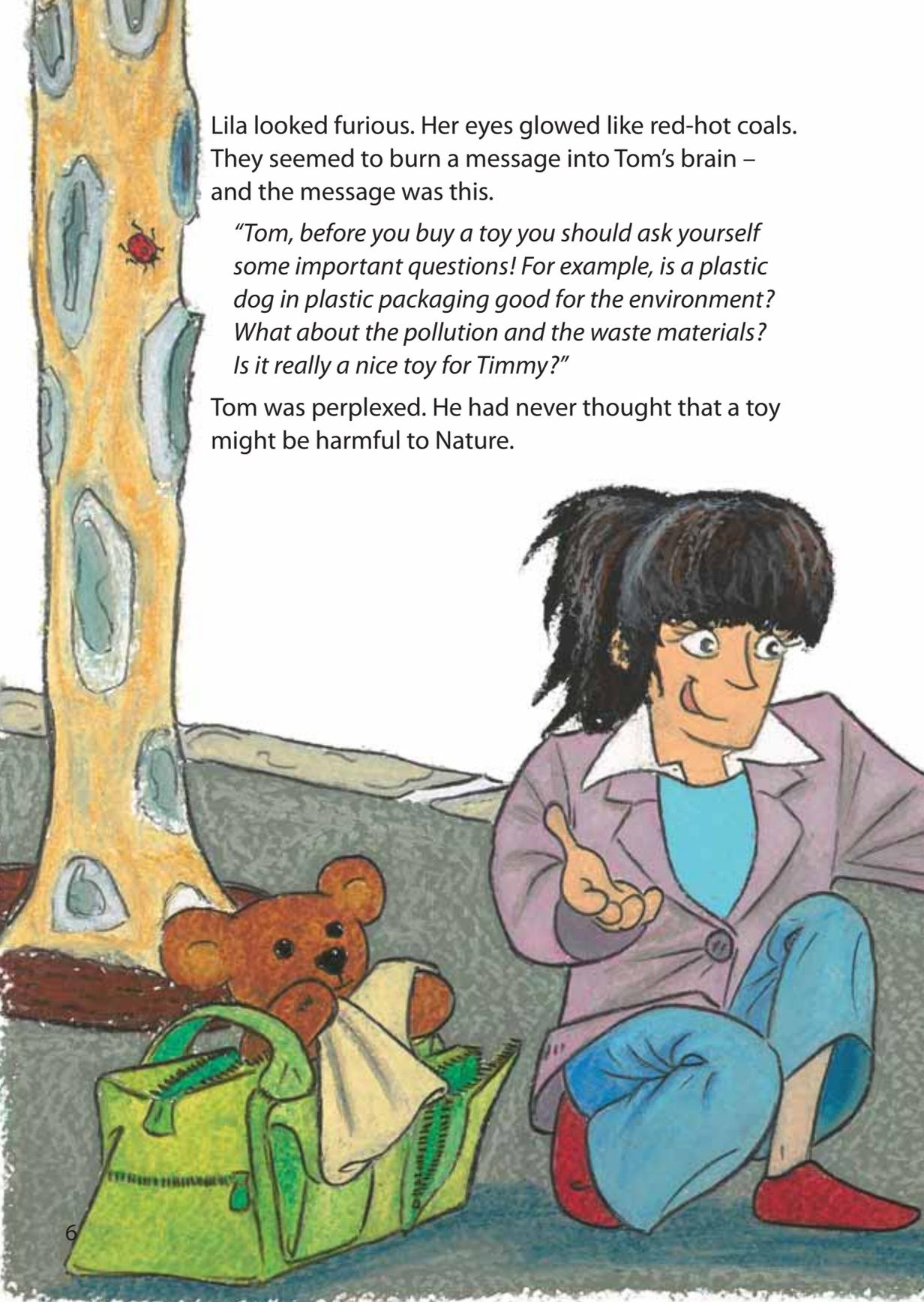
“What on earth’s the matter with you, Lila?”  
asked Tom, angrily.



Lila looked furious. Her eyes glowed like red-hot coals. They seemed to burn a message into Tom's brain – and the message was this.

*"Tom, before you buy a toy you should ask yourself some important questions! For example, is a plastic dog in plastic packaging good for the environment? What about the pollution and the waste materials? Is it really a nice toy for Timmy?"*

Tom was perplexed. He had never thought that a toy might be harmful to Nature.



Lila kept glaring at him with fiery eyes.

They seemed to say:

*"Tom, this toy contains a battery – like the one Timmy swallowed. Is that a good idea?"*

Tom hardly knew what to think.

"Well, Lila," he said, "those are very good questions!"

Then he spotted Mrs Green coming towards the shop.

"Hello, Mrs Green," said Tom. "How's Timmy?"

"He's at the hospital," said Mrs Green. "They're keeping him there for a while. I'm on my way to bring him his favourite cuddly toy."



She hurried on her way. "The hospital!" said Tom to himself, feeling anxious. Lila nudged him with her wet nose.

"Shall we go for a walk?" asked Tom.

Lila smiled at him.

"OK, let's go!" said Tom, and the two friends set off.

Lila led Tom to a quiet spot by the stream. They sat down on the grass.

"It's hard to choose a good present," said Tom. "To save the environment, is it better to choose a plastic toy, or a wooden one?"

Lila shrugged. Tom went on:

"Is it better to choose a toy with batteries or without them? And then... do we need all that packaging? Come to that, do we need all those toys?"



Lila scratched one ear. Tom carried on thinking.

“Is it better to have a toy to play with all on your own, or a toy you can share with your friends?”

He sighed.

“You know what, Lila, I think I’d like to give Timmy a present I’ve made myself. That way, I’ll be giving him a bit of me!”

Lila smiled.

“I know!” Tom suddenly exclaimed. “I’ll make him a TRAIN! A lovely wooden train with an engine and trucks and carriages.”



Tom led Lila down to the stream.

“Look, Lila, there’s everything we need here! See that round bit of wood on the other bank? We can use that for making the train wheels. And we can fill one of the trucks with those little white pebbles there.” Tom began picking them up and putting them in his pocket. This was going to be fun!

Lila was happy too. She leaped across the stream, grabbed the round bit of wood with her teeth and brought it proudly back to Tom.



“See these little black stones here, Lila? We can use them to fill one of the other trucks. And look at the shape of that log! It’s just right for making the engine! Isn’t that great, Lila? All this stuff just lying here, ready to use. And we don’t have to spoil anything!”

He gave the fox a hug.

“I like it here, Lila. By the stream, in the sun. And I’m so looking forward to giving my present to Timmy! I hope he’s all right. Poor little Timmy... I hope he’s not feeling too lonely in the big white hospital in Merlin City.”



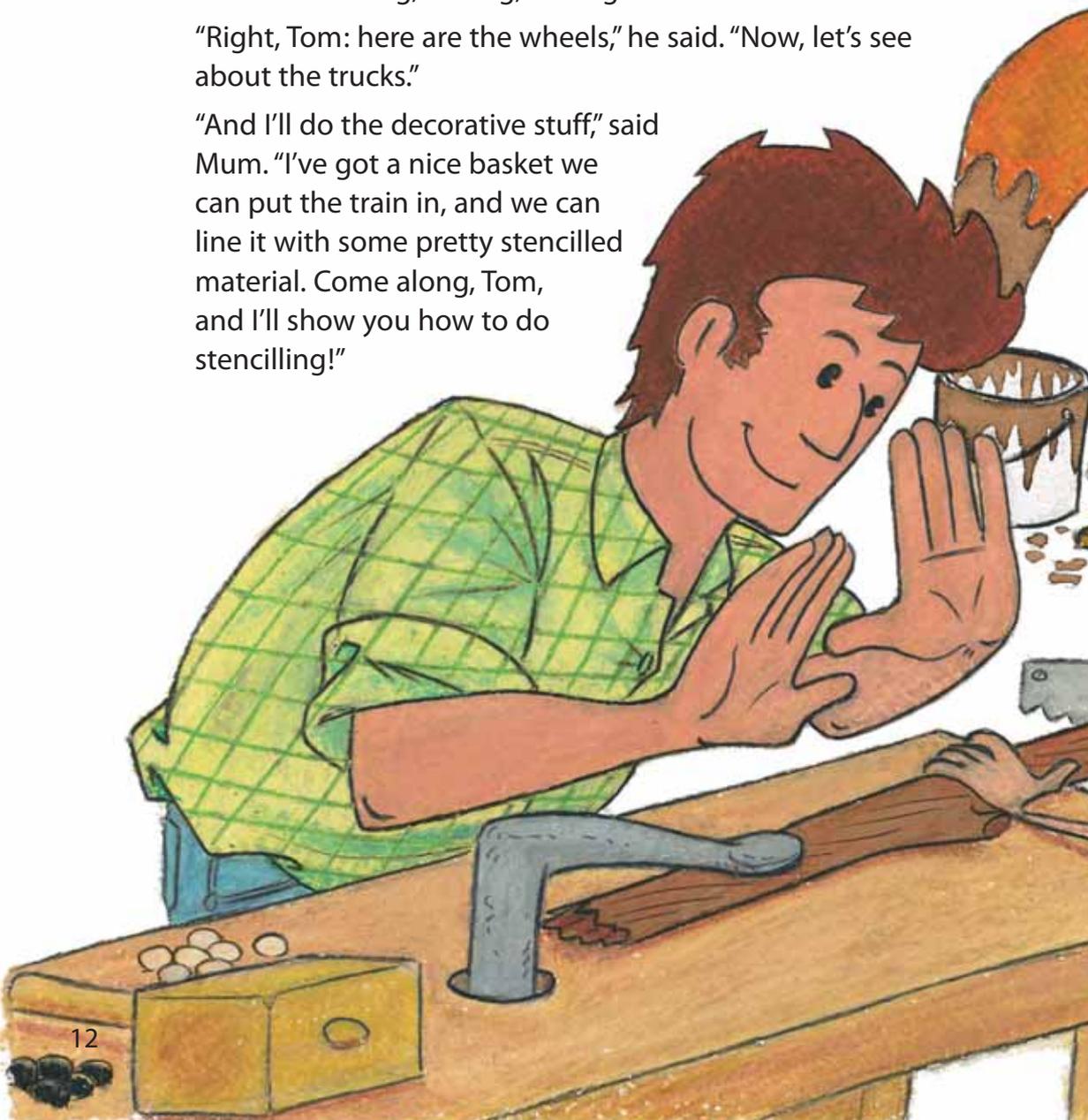
Tom and Lila took their treasures home. Twigs, logs, pebbles... Tom explained his plan to his Mum and Dad, who both thought it was a great idea.

"But you'll have to help me," said Tom. "I want it to be a really good toy train for Timmy!"

Dad took the wood into his work shed, rolled up his sleeves and started sawing, sawing, sawing...

"Right, Tom: here are the wheels," he said. "Now, let's see about the trucks."

"And I'll do the decorative stuff," said Mum. "I've got a nice basket we can put the train in, and we can line it with some pretty stencilled material. Come along, Tom, and I'll show you how to do stencilling!"



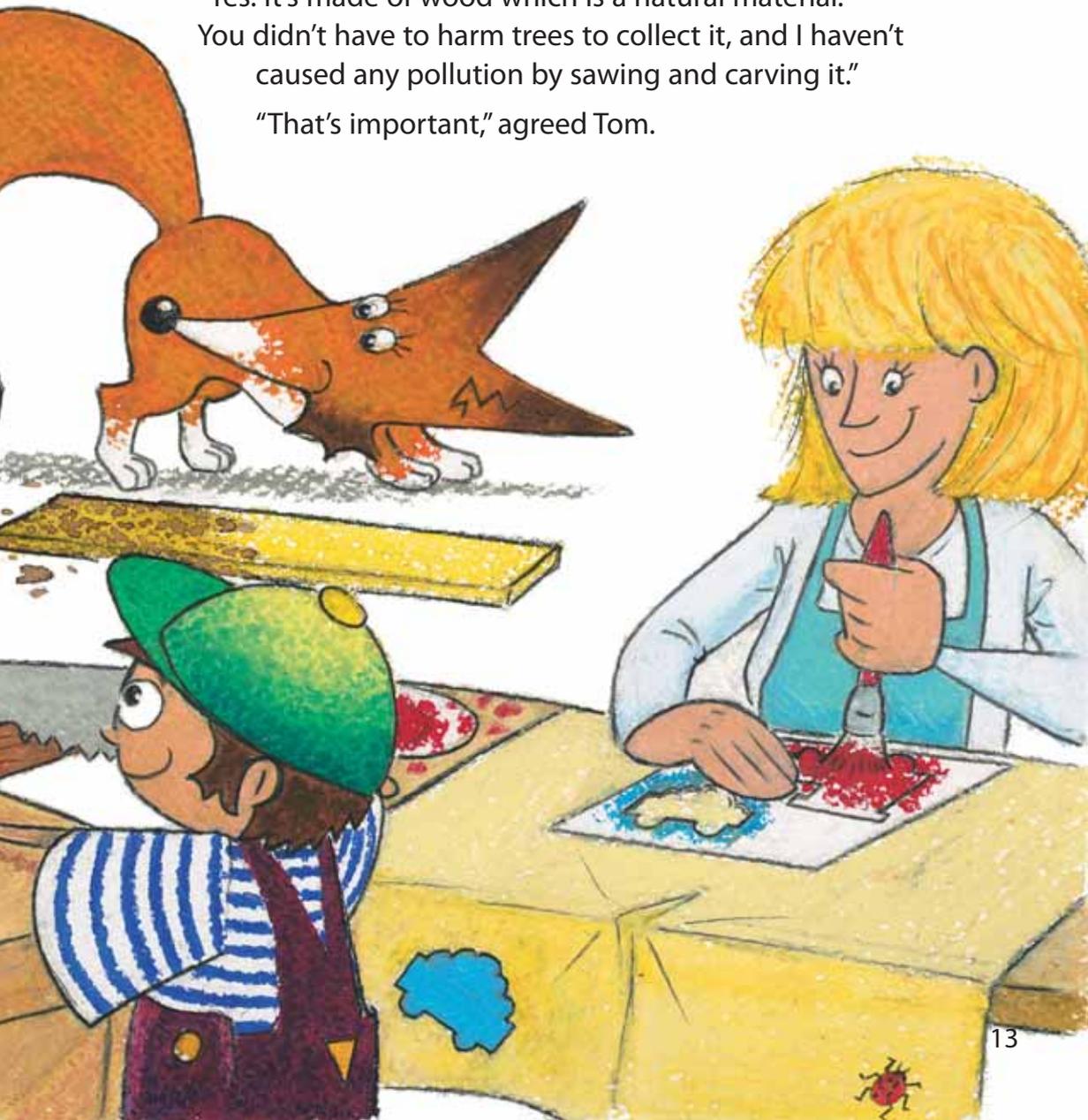
"Great," said Tom and they all set to work.

"I like this," Tom told his Dad. "It's nice working together because I can learn how to do things. And this present for Timmy... I think it's good for the environment, isn't it?"

His Dad stopped sawing and smiled at him.

"Yes. It's made of wood which is a natural material. You didn't have to harm trees to collect it, and I haven't caused any pollution by sawing and carving it."

"That's important," agreed Tom.



It was tea-time. Mum made some delicious pancakes while Tom and Dad admired their masterpiece – a beautifully carved engine with a carriage and two trucks – which stood on the kitchen table.

“Well, Tom, you can be proud of your idea,” said Dad.  
“It will make a fine present!”

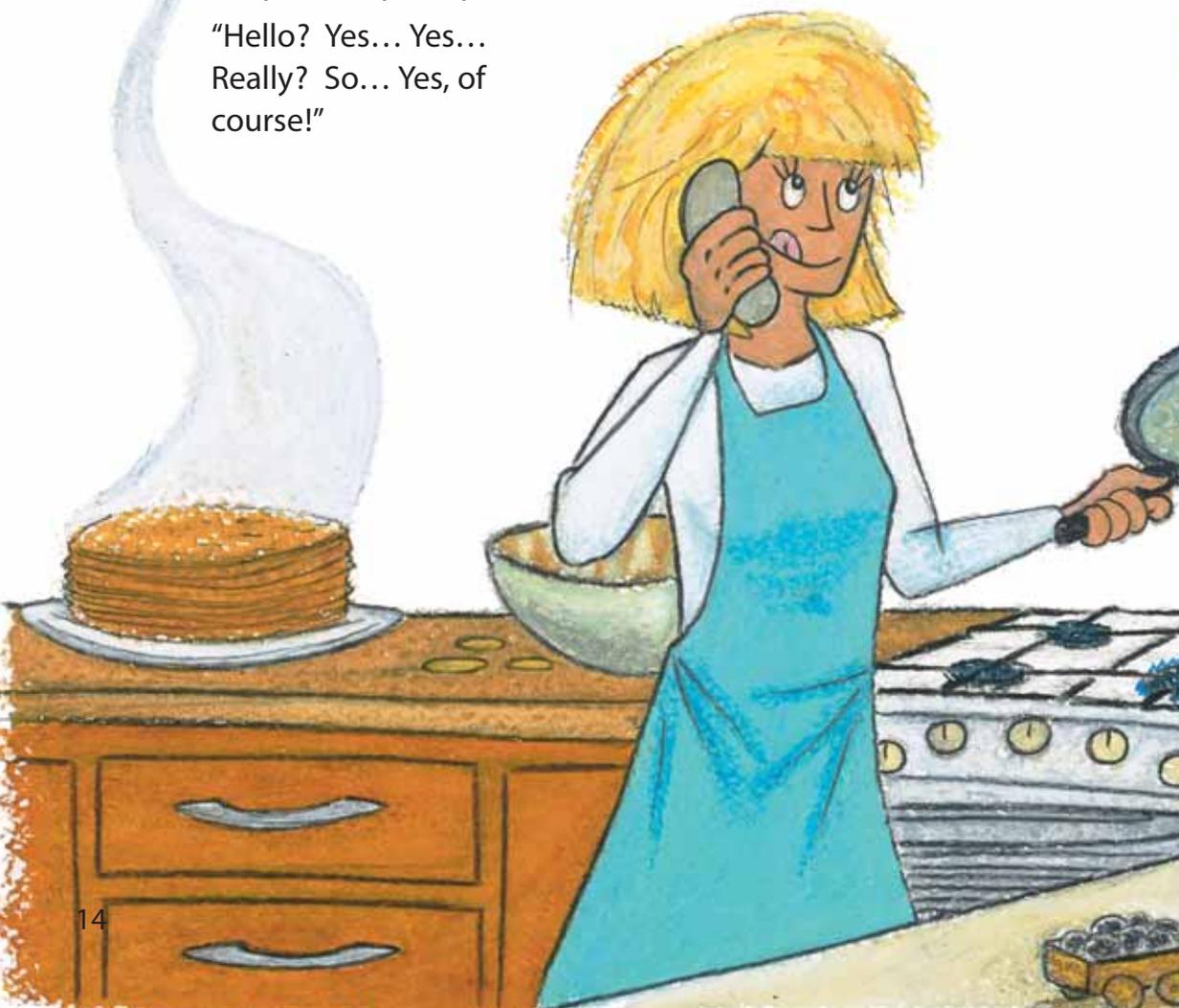
“Thanks for your help, Dad!” said Tom. “I would never have managed it without you and Mum!”

Just then, the phone rang.

“That will be Mrs Green,” said Dad.

Mum picked up the phone.

“Hello? Yes... Yes...  
Really? So... Yes, of course!”



She put the phone down.

"That was Timmy's Mum" she announced. "The doctors have taken an X-ray photo of his tummy..."

"Is it burnt?" asked Tom, anxiously.

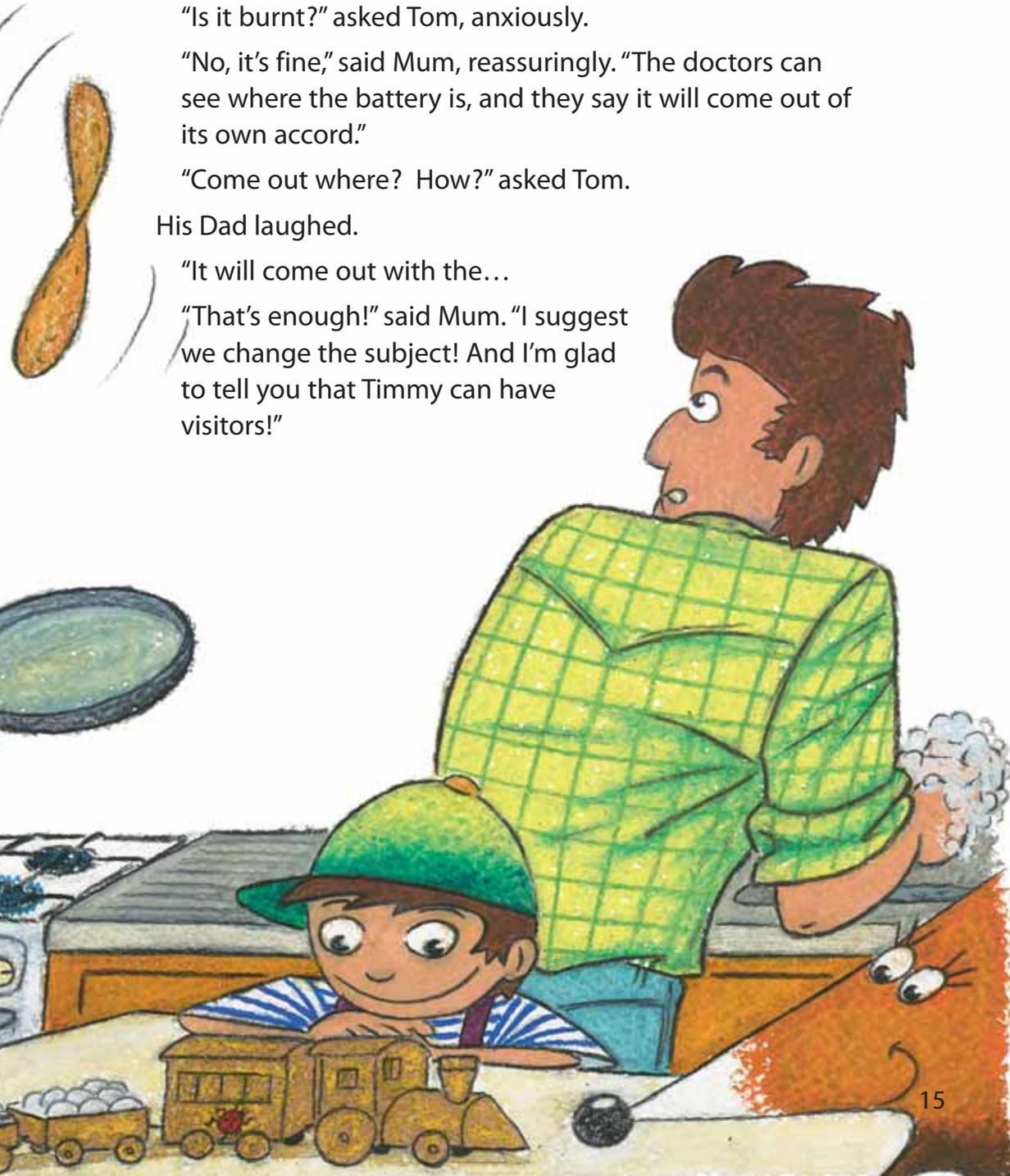
"No, it's fine," said Mum, reassuringly. "The doctors can see where the battery is, and they say it will come out of its own accord."

"Come out where? How?" asked Tom.

His Dad laughed.

"It will come out with the..."

"That's enough!" said Mum. "I suggest we change the subject! And I'm glad to tell you that Timmy can have visitors!"



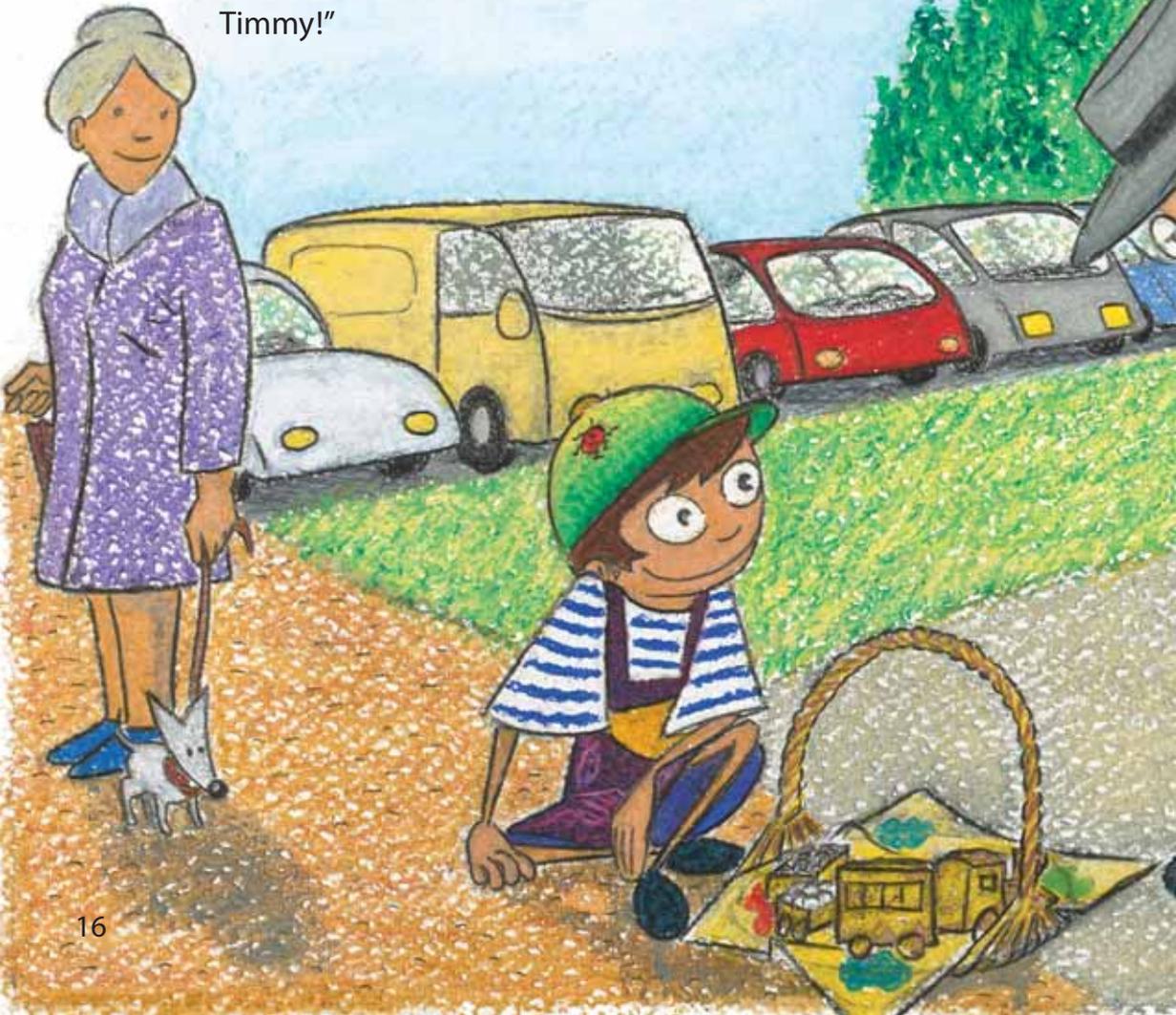
Tom jumped for joy and picked up the toy train. "Come on, then!" he yelled. "Let's go and give it to him! Wow! This is the happiest day of my life!"

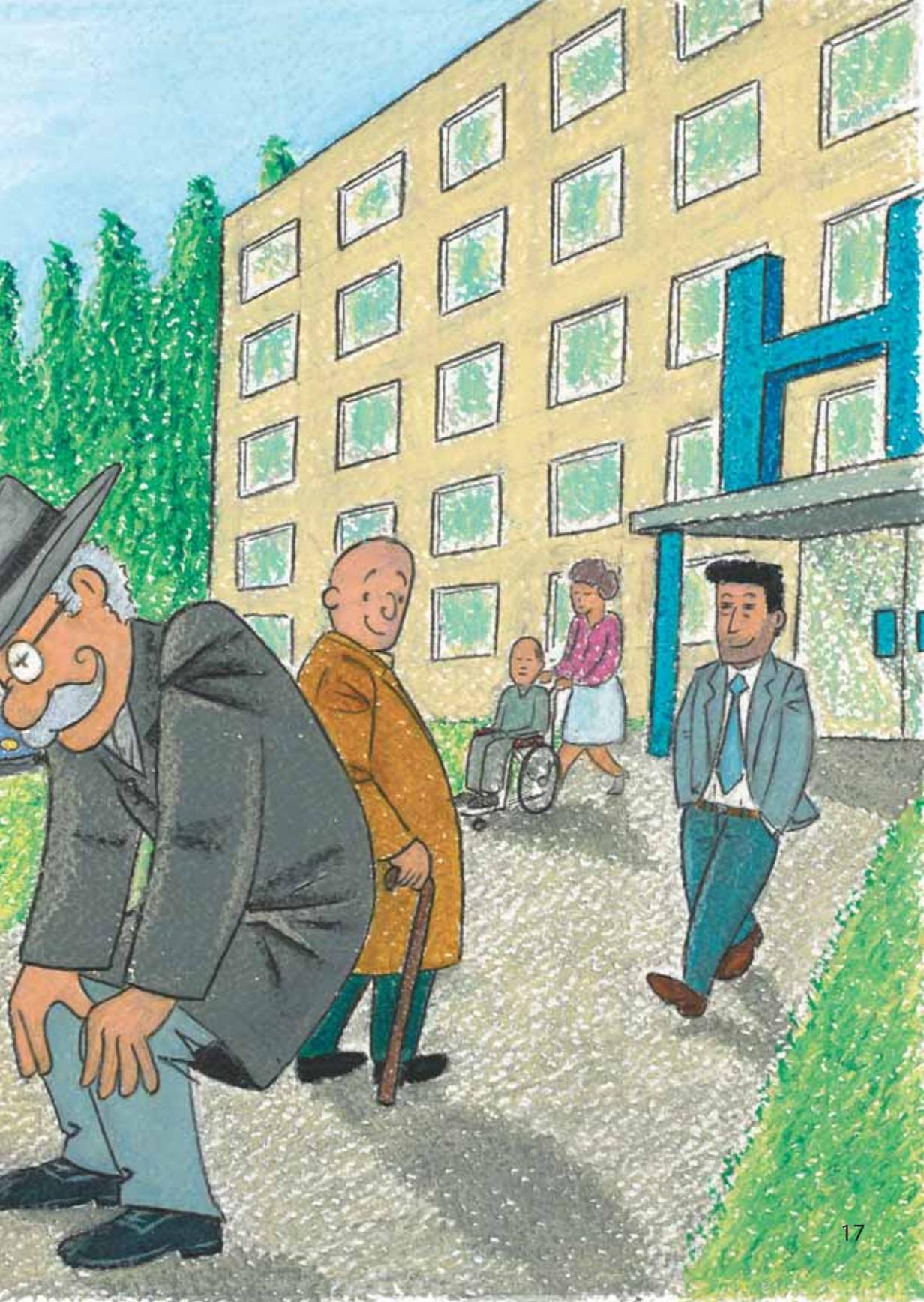
At the hospital entrance was an old man with a big moustache. He came up to Tom coughing, and looked closely at the train in his basket.

"That's a fine piece of work you've got there, my lad, cough, cough! I used to be a train driver, you know, cough, cough. Yes, that's a real work of art! Cough!!"

Tom blushed with pride.

"Thank you!" he said. "It's a present for my friend Timmy!"





Inside the hospital, in the reception area, Tom's train drew admiring glances from the passers-by.

"Where did you get it?" asked one lady.

"I made it myself!" answered Tom, proudly. "Er... with some help from my Mum and Dad," he added.

A whole group of visitors, doctors and nurses gathered round and congratulated him: Tom felt quite famous!

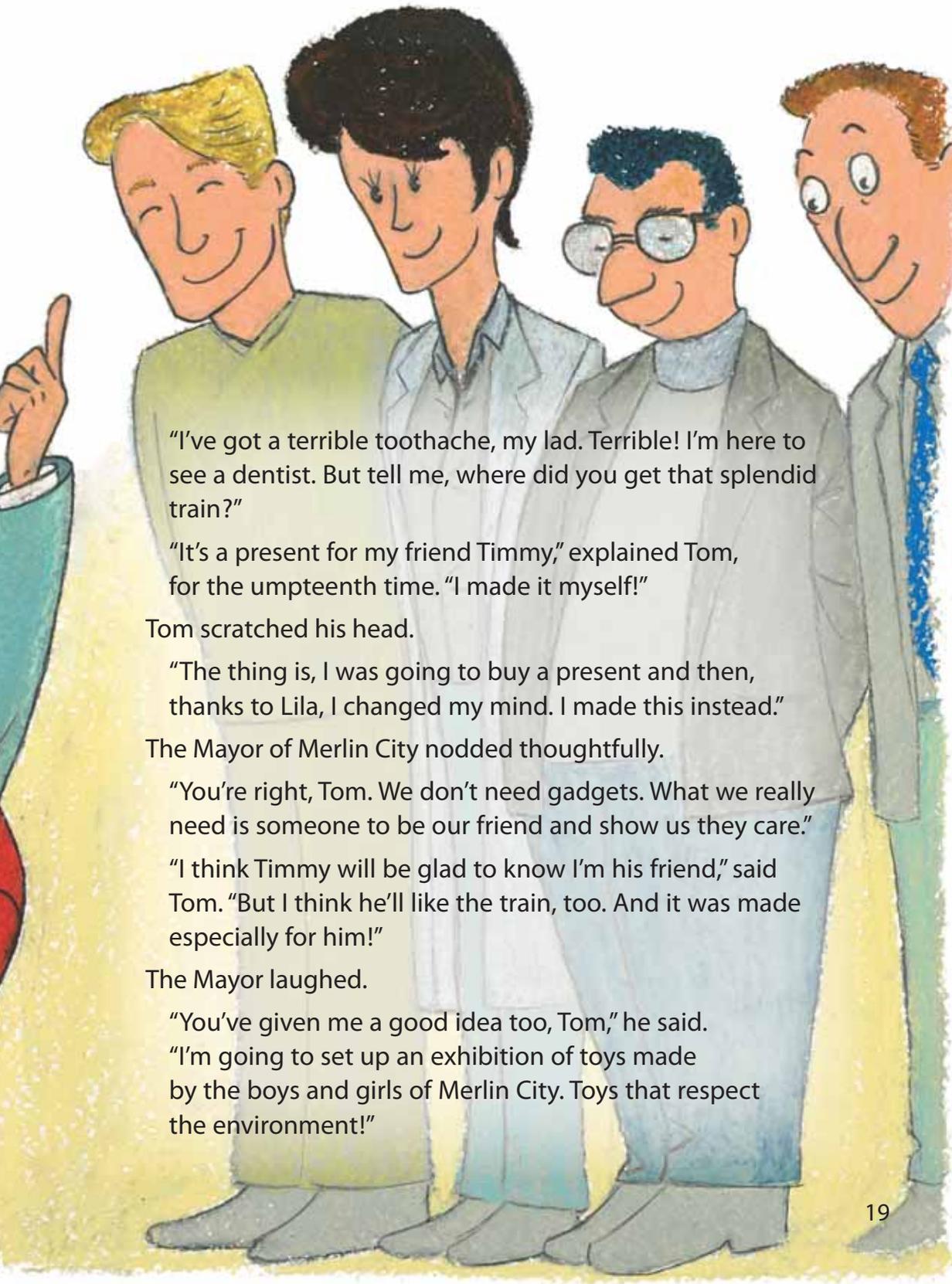
"But now I must go and give the present to Timmy," he said. "Excuse me!"

Then Tom saw someone he recognised.

"Oh, Mr. Mayor!" exclaimed Tom.

"What are you doing here?"





"I've got a terrible toothache, my lad. Terrible! I'm here to see a dentist. But tell me, where did you get that splendid train?"

"It's a present for my friend Timmy," explained Tom, for the umpteenth time. "I made it myself!"

Tom scratched his head.

"The thing is, I was going to buy a present and then, thanks to Lila, I changed my mind. I made this instead."

The Mayor of Merlin City nodded thoughtfully.

"You're right, Tom. We don't need gadgets. What we really need is someone to be our friend and show us they care."

"I think Timmy will be glad to know I'm his friend," said Tom. "But I think he'll like the train, too. And it was made especially for him!"

The Mayor laughed.

"You've given me a good idea too, Tom," he said.

"I'm going to set up an exhibition of toys made by the boys and girls of Merlin City. Toys that respect the environment!"

Gently, Tom pushed open the door of Timmy's room. The little boy was sitting up in bed. Very gently, Tom held out the present to him. Timmy's eyes lit up with pleasure. He pointed at the beautifully-carved locomotive and said: "Nice twain!! Choo Chooo!!" Tom smiled. If Lila had been there she would have smiled too – but they don't allow foxes in hospitals. In Timmy's hands lay the best present in the world. A priceless treasure. Friendship.



European Commission

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