

Once upon a time, some pretty crazy stuff happened. It started with those big blue beasts and their beloved blue apples.

My friends and I—that's me there, the cute one—all we ever wanted was a taste of their precious blue apples.



Unfortunately, I was born small, and that's how those monsters treated me. No matter how many times I pleaded, no matter how polite and charming and lovable I was, they never let me or my friends anywhere near their fancy blue fruit.

Well, I might not have been as big as them, but I certainly deserved a little more respect than that. So naturally, when a nice sturdy stick floated my way, I did what any lovable hero would do.



I taught them some manners.

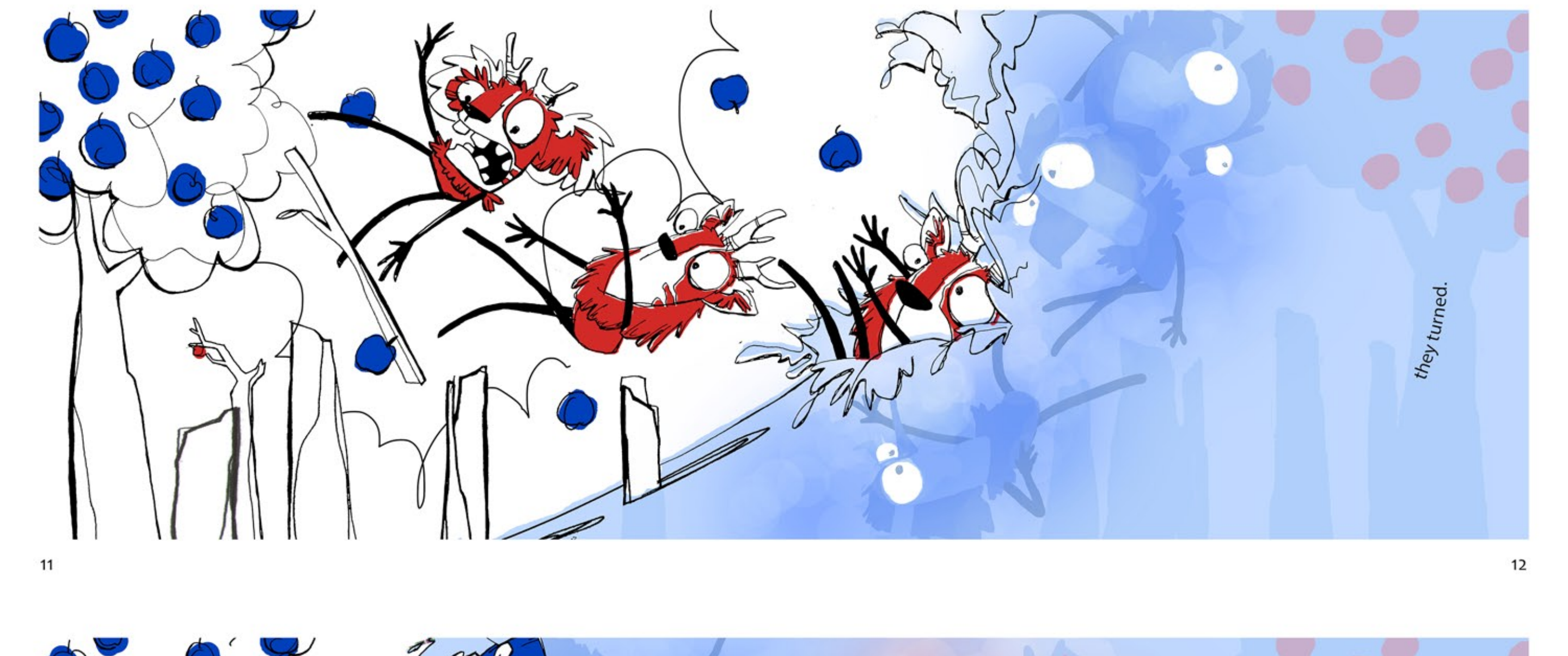


Now, it was just a little scare, but it worked! They apologized for their shameful behavior, and agreed to start showing me some respect, and complimented me on my perfect teeth, and even let me take all the blue apples I wanted! It was the beginning of a beautiful friendship!

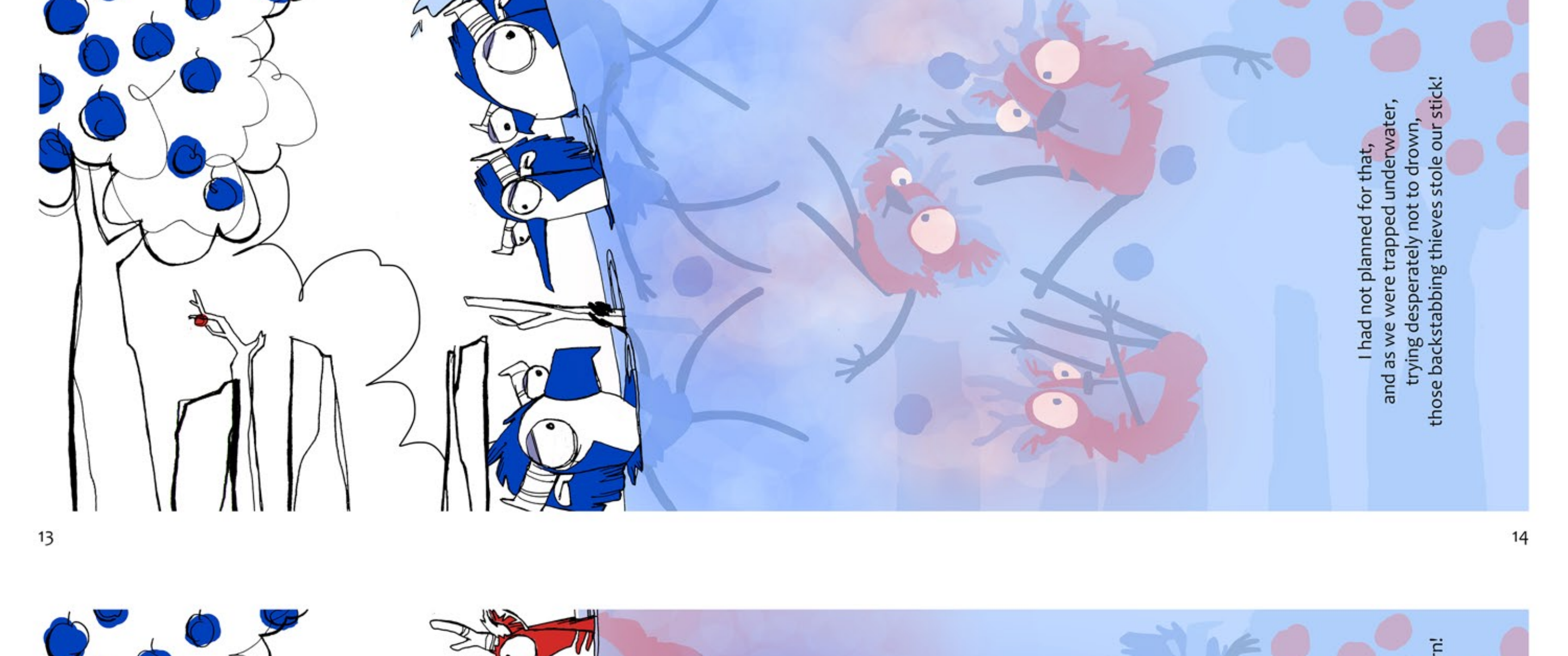
... as far as I could tell.



But before I could take a bite, something a tad bit strange happened, and the tides, well ...



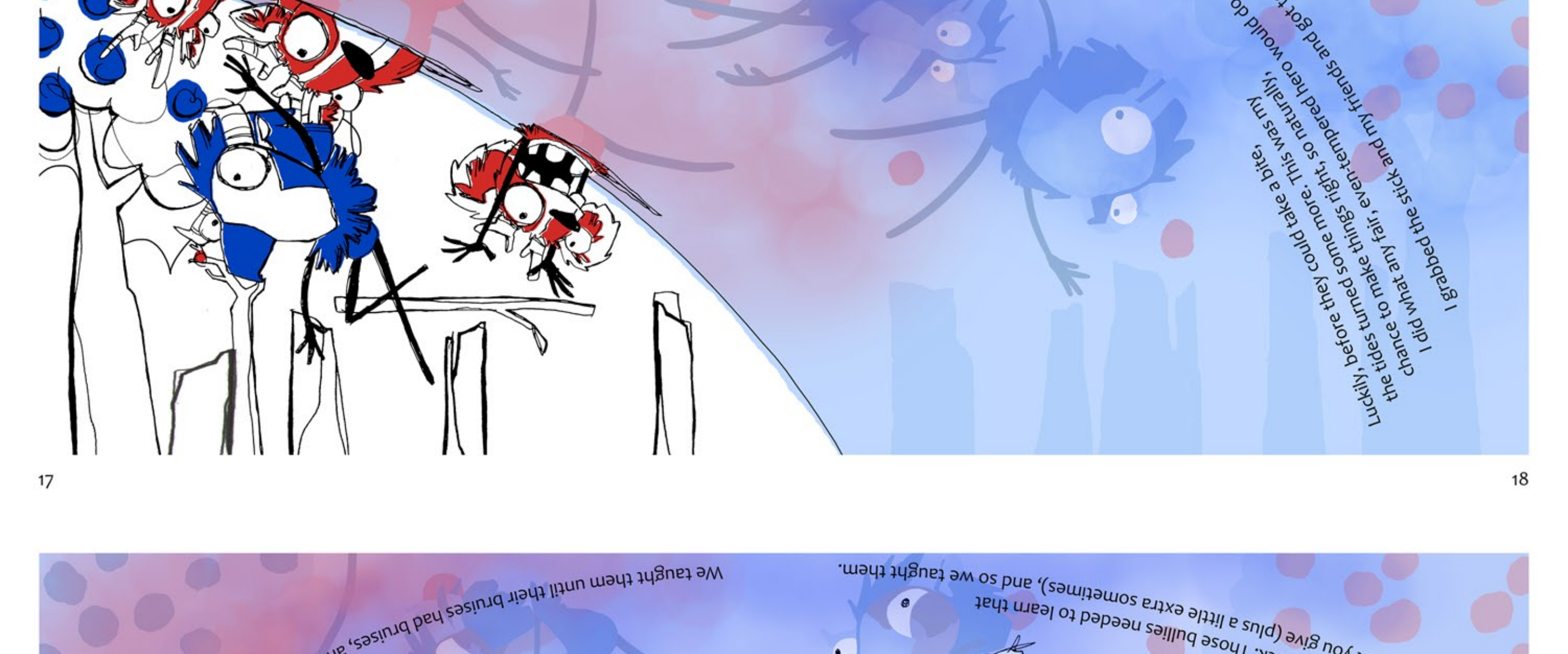
they turned.



I had not planned for that, and as we were trapped underwater, trying desperately not to drown, those backstabbing thieves stole our stick!



Even worse, they turned the stick against us, and for every apple we took from them, they took TWO in return!



Luckily, before they could take a bite, I gave the stick back. Those bulls needed to learn that you get what you give (plus a little extra sometimes), and so we taught them.



We taught them until their bruises had bruises, and then we taught them some more, but the more we taught, the more we turned, and the more we turned, the harder it was to hang on to that stick.

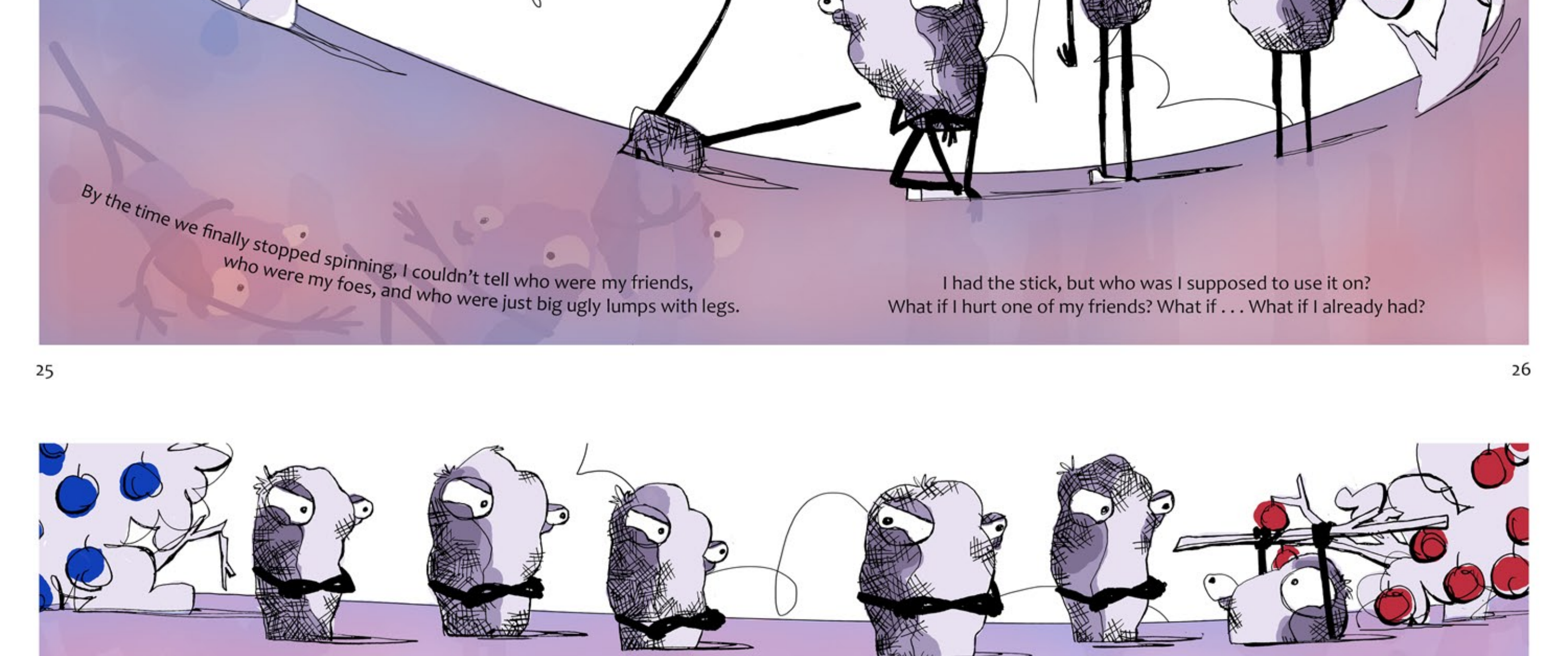


Back and forth it went. Everybody got a turn. We were whacked, smacked, cracked, I'm pretty sure somebody bit me, and for every bruise we gave them, they gave us TWO in return! It was a nightmare. Everything was spinning completely out of control!



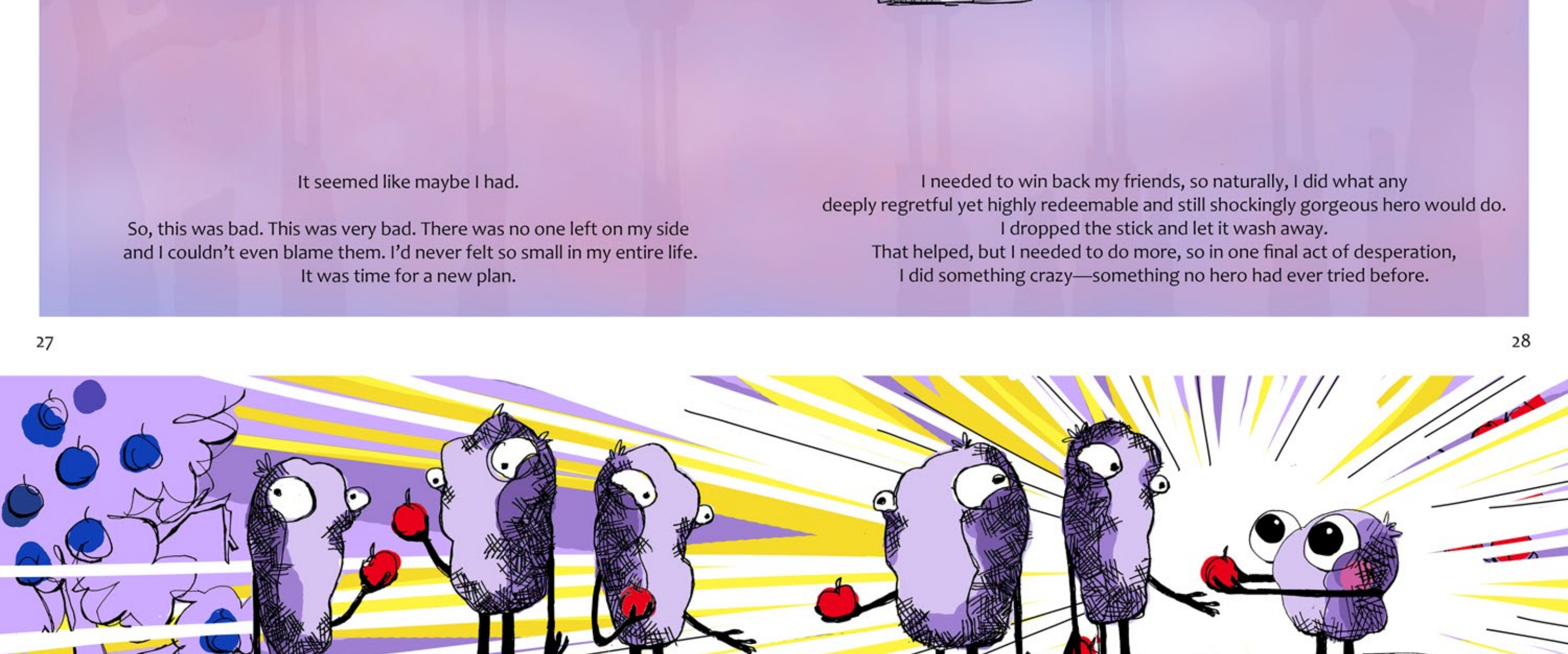
With each turn they doubled in size, and the harder they cracked down on us, the more a terror we lost and the more our color washed away!

And things were already crumbling as the battle grew more and more intense, so did the waves.



By the time we finally stopped spinning, I couldn't tell who were my friends, who were my foes, and who were just big ugly lumps with legs.

I had the stick, but who was I supposed to use it on? What if I hurt one of my friends? What if ... What if I already had?



It seemed like maybe I had.

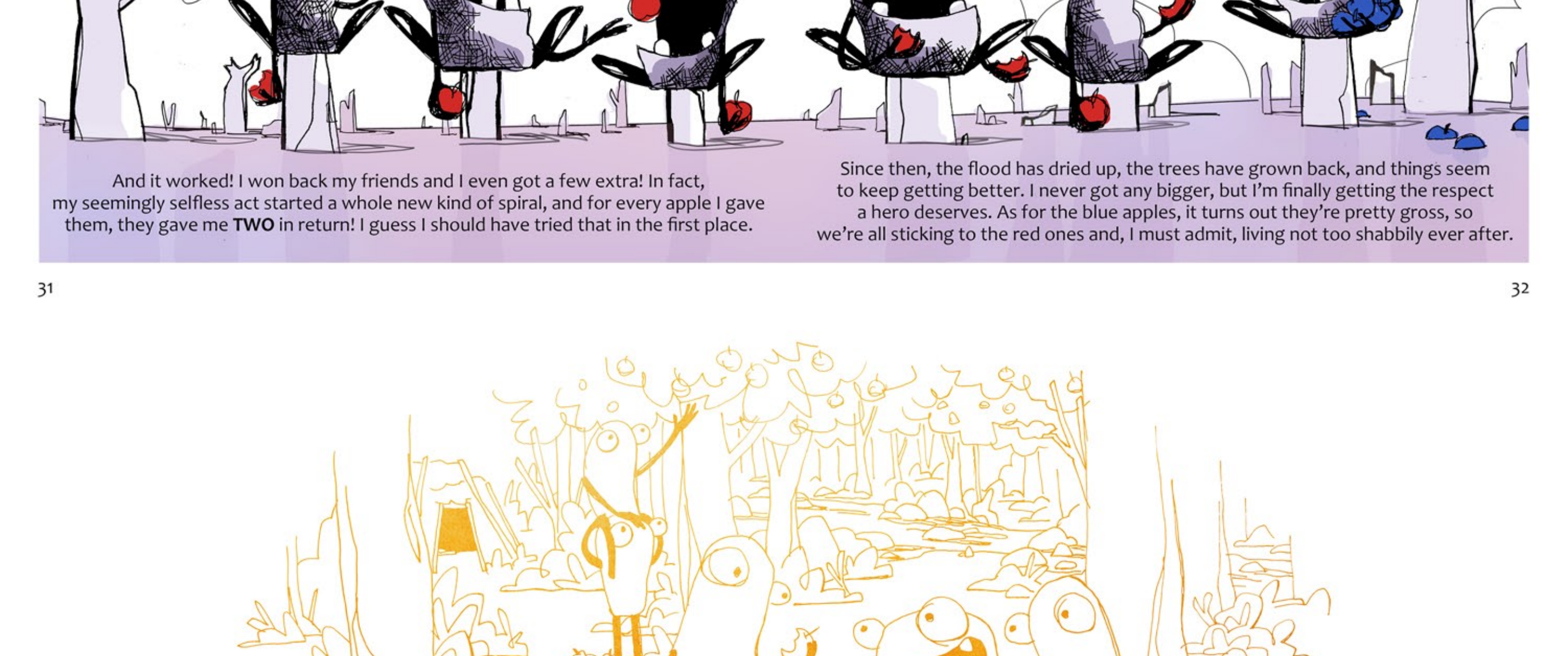
So, this was bad. This was very bad. There was no one left on my side and I couldn't even blame them. I'd never felt so small in my entire life. It was time for a new plan.

I needed to win back my friends, so naturally, I did what any deeply regretful yet highly redeemable and still shockingly gorgeous hero would do. I dropped the stick and let it wash away. That helped, but I needed to do more, so in one final act of desperation, I did something crazy—something no hero had ever tried before.



And it worked! I won back my friends and I even got a few extra! In fact, my seemingly selfless act started a whole new kind of spiral, and for every apple I gave them, they gave me TWO in return! I guess I should have tried that in the first place.

Since then, the flood has dried up, the trees have grown back, and things seem to keep getting better. I never got any bigger, but I'm finally getting the respect a hero deserves. As for the blue apples, it turns out they're pretty gross, so we're all sticking to the red ones and, I must admit, living not too shabbily ever after.



THE END