



6th Grade State Winner

HYDRO THE WATER HERO

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HI! I'M HYDRO,
AND I'M A RAINDROP, WHICH IS LIKE BEING
A TINY SUPERHERO, IF SUPERHEROES WERE
WATER MOLECULES.

I WANT TO TELL YOU ABOUT MY LIFE, AND MORE
IMPORTANTLY, ABOUT MY ADVENTURE THAT TOOK ME
THROUGH THE CALIFORNIA IRRIGATION SYSTEM.

IT SOUNDS BORING, BUT TRUST ME, IT WAS WILD!





IT ALL STARTED WHEN I WAS CHILLIN' IN THE SKY WITH MY FELLOW DROPLETS. SUDDENLY WE GOT THE URGE TO FALL. BEFORE I KNEW IT, I WAS RACING TOWARD THE SIERRA NEVADA MOUNTAINS.

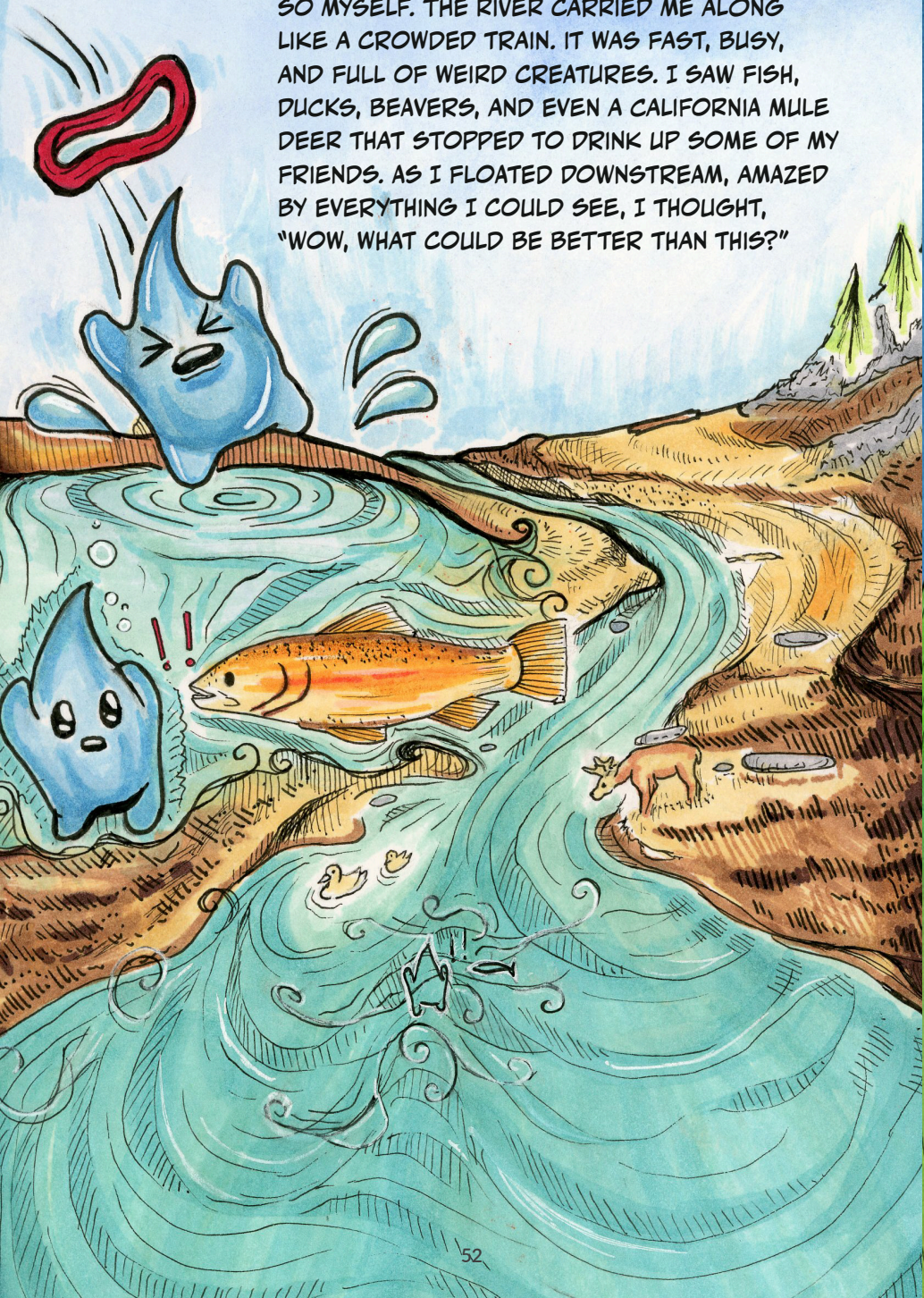
IT WAS SOME SERIOUS DOWNHILL ACTION. WHEN I HIT THE MOUNTAIN SNOW I SNUGGLED INTO THE FLUFFY SNOWPACK, READY AND WAITING FOR WHATEVER MAY COME MY WAY.



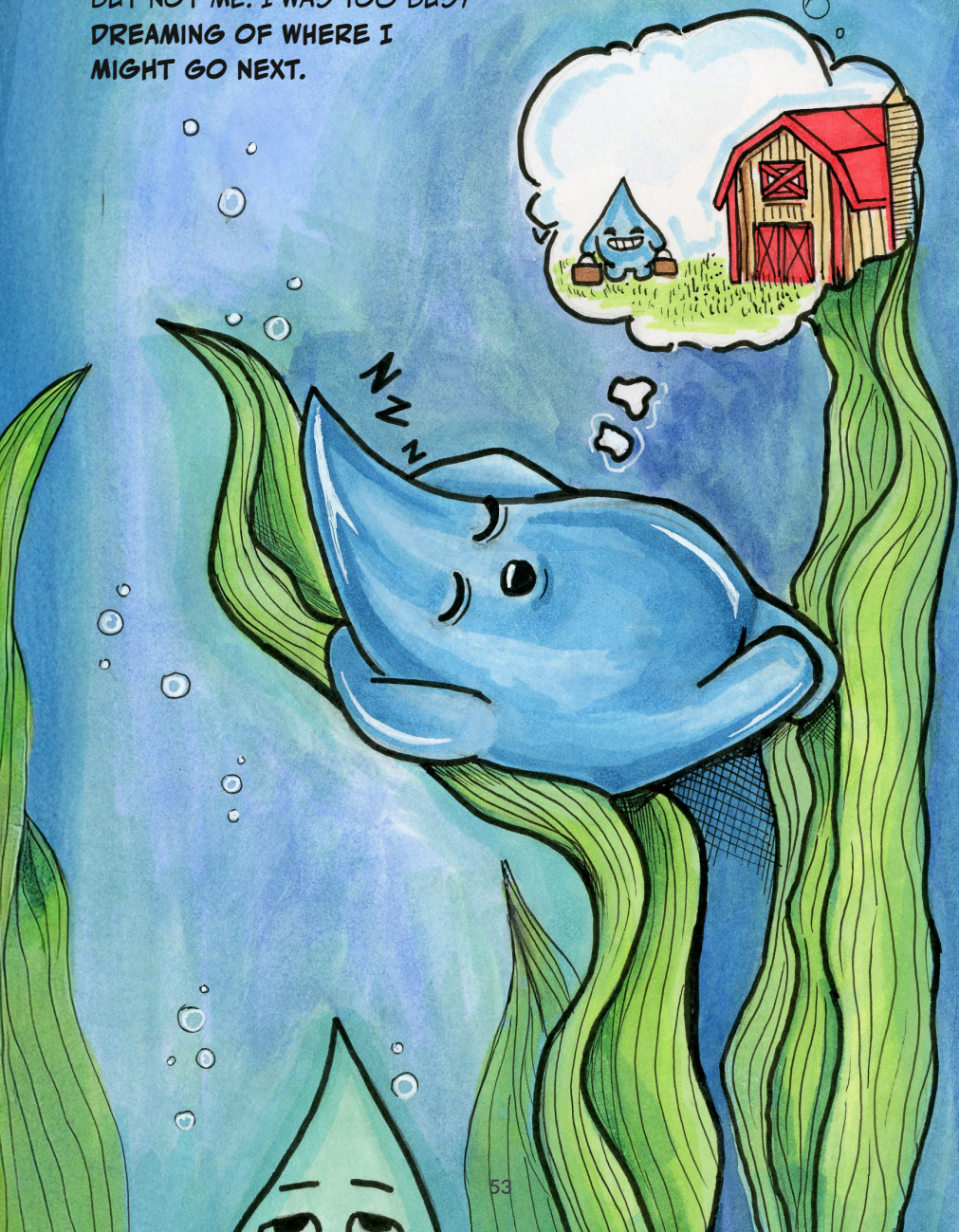
SEVERAL WEEKS LATER, ON A BEAUTIFUL SUNNY DAY, THE SNOW STARTED TO MELT. IF THERE IS ONE THING I LEARNED, IT IS THAT SUN AND SNOW DO NOT GO TOGETHER.

AS THE SNOW MELTED, I LIQUEFIED INTO A TINY TRICKLE, RUNNING DOWN THE MOUNTAIN'S FACE. MAN, WAS I RUNNING FAST. RACING MY FELLOW DROPLETS OVER ROCKS AND DIRT, UNDER TREES AS I HEADED TOWARD MY NEXT BIG MOMENT.

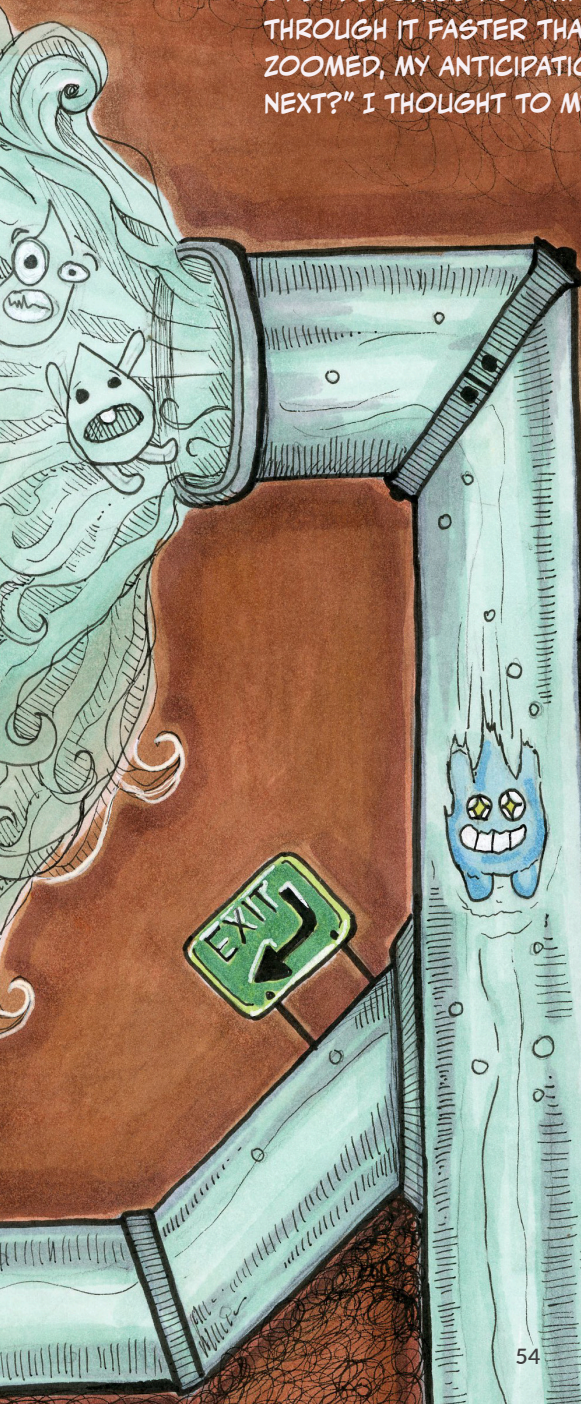
SPLASH, I MADE IT INTO THE TUOLUMNE RIVER. IT WAS A SPLASH-TACULAR ENTRY, IF I DO SAY SO MYSELF. THE RIVER CARRIED ME ALONG LIKE A CROWDED TRAIN. IT WAS FAST, BUSY, AND FULL OF WEIRD CREATURES. I SAW FISH, DUCKS, BEAVERS, AND EVEN A CALIFORNIA MULE DEER THAT STOPPED TO DRINK UP SOME OF MY FRIENDS. AS I FLOATED DOWNSTREAM, AMAZED BY EVERYTHING I COULD SEE, I THOUGHT, "WOW, WHAT COULD BE BETTER THAN THIS?"



SOON, THE RIVER DUMPED ME INTO THE DON PEDRO RESERVOIR. WHAT IS A RESERVOIR YOU ASK? A RESERVOIR, IS A MAN-MADE LAKE, KIND OF LIKE A GIANT WATER HOTEL, FOR DROPS LIKE ME TO REST IN. I WAS STORED IN THE RESERVOIR WITH TONS OF OTHER DROPS, JUST RELAXING AND WAITING. SOME OF MY FRIENDS WERE BORED WITH ALL THE WAITING, BUT NOT ME. I WAS TOO BUSY DREAMING OF WHERE I MIGHT GO NEXT.



SUDDENLY, I FELT THINGS START TO MOVE, SLOW AT FIRST, BUT THEN FASTER AND FASTER. MY FRIENDS AND I WERE BEING SUCKED INTO A PIPE THAT I CAN ONLY DESCRIBE AS A WATER HIGHWAY. I ZOOMED THROUGH IT FASTER THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE. AS I ZOOMED, MY ANTICIPATION GREW. "WHAT COULD BE NEXT?" I THOUGHT TO MYSELF.



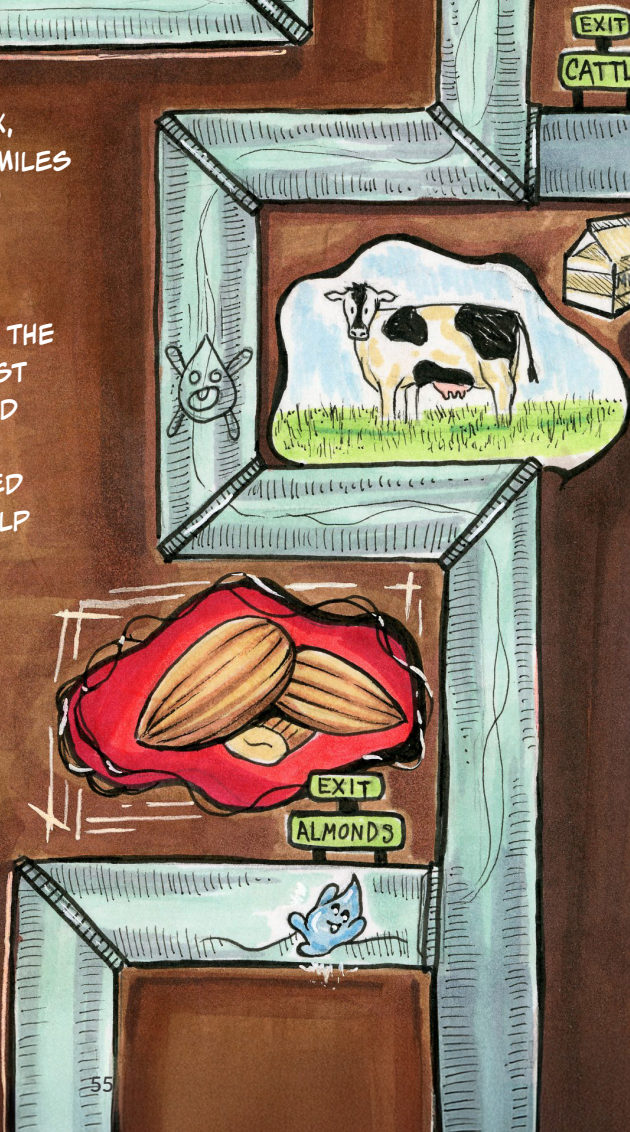
EVEN IF SOMEONE HAD TRIED TO DESCRIBE MY NEXT EXPERIENCE TO ME, I WOULDN'T HAVE BELIEVED IT. I WAS BEING DIVERTED INTO THE TURLOCK IRRIGATION DISTRICT SYSTEM, WHICH IS BASICALLY A GIANT WATER DELIVERY SERVICE FOR FARMERS.



THIS SYSTEM IS COMPLEX, STRETCHING OVER 250 MILES AND SERVICING 150,000 ACRES OF IRRIGATED FARMLAND.

AS I TRAVELED THROUGH THE GRAVITY-FED CANALS, PAST THE INDIVIDUAL GATES AND TURNOUTS TO FARMERS' PROPERTIES, I WONDERED HOW I WAS GOING TO HELP THE FARMERS.

MAYBE I'D MAKE SOME CORN TALLER, OR ENRICH THE GRASS THAT FEEDS CATTLE, OR EVEN HELP FILL AN ALMOND WITH THE MOISTURE NEEDED TO DEVELOP.

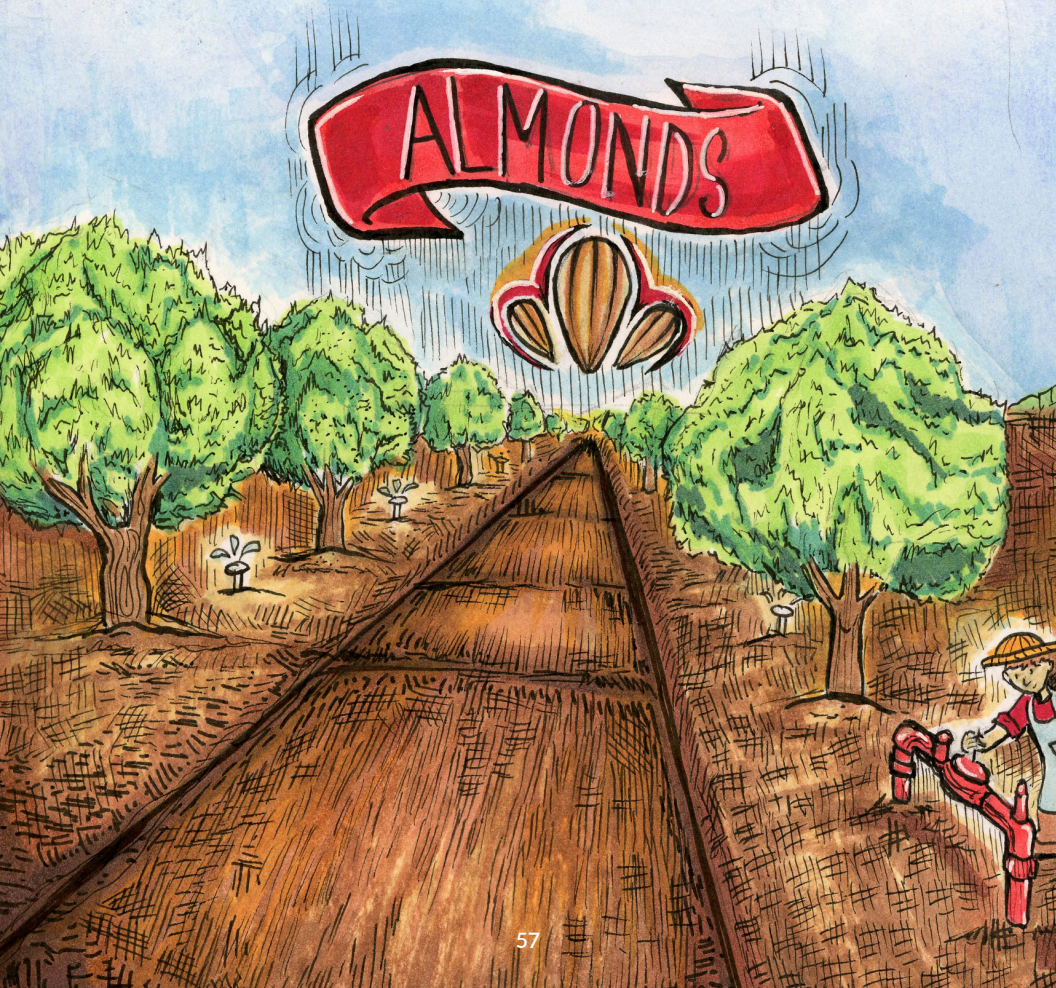


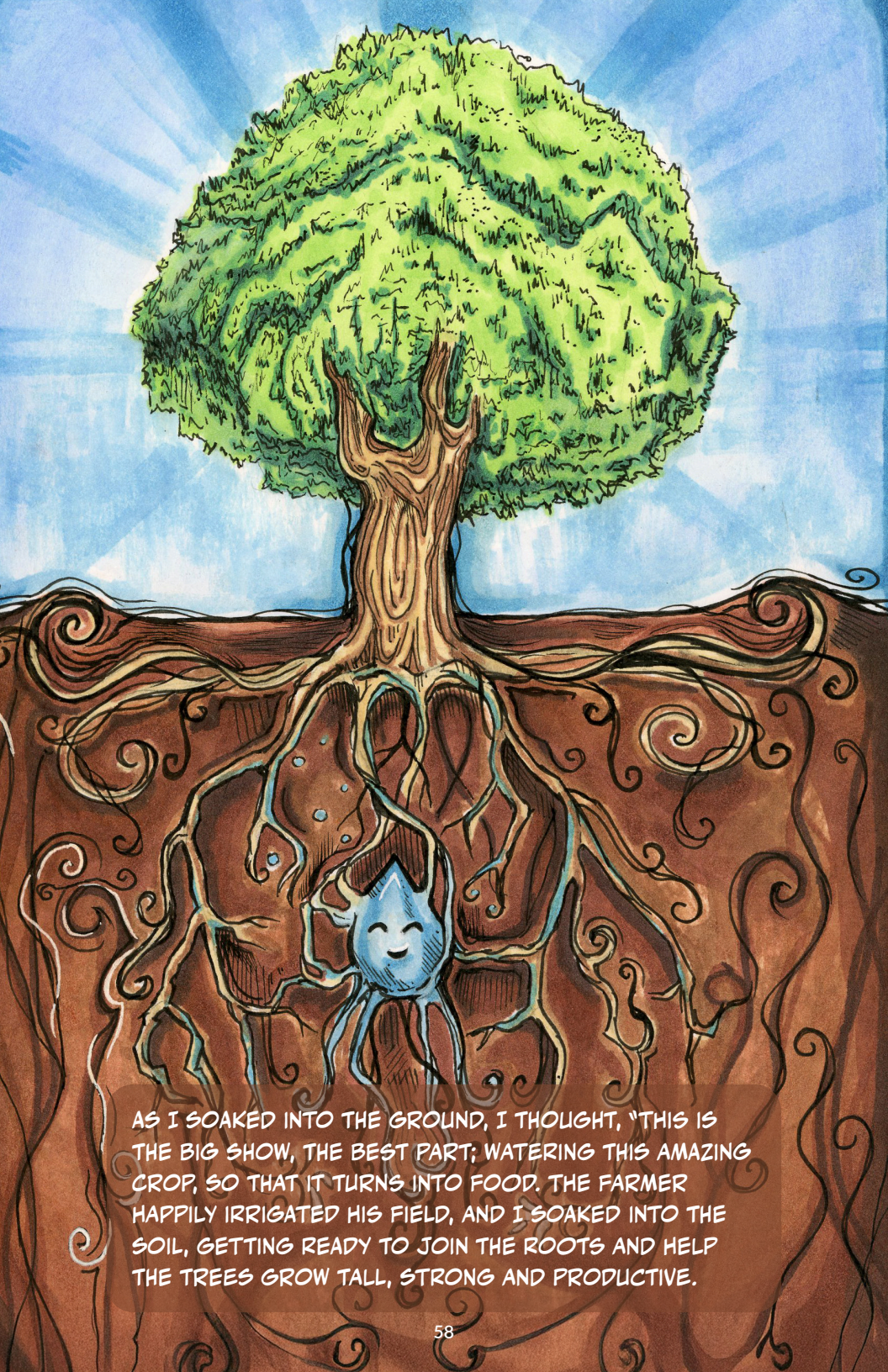
WHICHEVER WAY I WENT, I KNEW THAT I WOULD BE HELPING THESE FARMERS PRODUCE THEIR CROPS AND HELP EVERYONE PUT FOOD ON THEIR TABLE. I WAS GOING TO BE A PART OF SOMETHING BIG. A LITTLE RAINDROP LIKE ME WAS GOING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE MOST IMPORTANT JOB OF ALL, FEEDING THE WORLD.



FINALLY, WHEN I ARRIVED AT MY GATE, I COULD SEE THE FARMER TURNING THE VALVE TO LET ME INTO HIS FIELD. I WAS PUMPED; I WAS FINALLY GOING TO HELP GROW STUFF! AS MY FRIENDS AND I FLOODED OUT OF THE VALVE AND RUSHED DOWN THE ROW, WE PASSED SEVERAL TREES BEFORE STOPPING. I SAW THAT WE WOULD BE IRRIGATING ALMONDS. ALMONDS ARE A POPULAR COMMODITY IN STANISLAUS COUNTY.

THIS IS AN IMPORTANT JOB!





AS I SOAKED INTO THE GROUND, I THOUGHT, "THIS IS THE BIG SHOW, THE BEST PART; WATERING THIS AMAZING CROP, SO THAT IT TURNS INTO FOOD. THE FARMER HAPPILY IRRIGATED HIS FIELD, AND I SOAKED INTO THE SOIL, GETTING READY TO JOIN THE ROOTS AND HELP THE TREES GROW TALL, STRONG AND PRODUCTIVE.

WELL, THAT'S MY STORY, A TINY, BUT BRAVE, WATER HERO. FROM THE SNOWY MOUNTAINS OF THE SIERRA NEVADA TO THE FARMER'S FIELDS OF STANISLAUS COUNTY, I HAVE TRAVELED FAR, SEEN MANY THINGS, BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY, I HAVE HELPED SERVE THE WORLD.

SO NEXT TIME IT RAINS, JUST REMEMBER THAT SOMEWHERE WAY UP IN THE SKY, A LITTLE RAINDROP LIKE ME IS ABOUT TO TAKE A BIG ADVENTURE TO HELP PUT FOOD ON YOUR TABLE.

