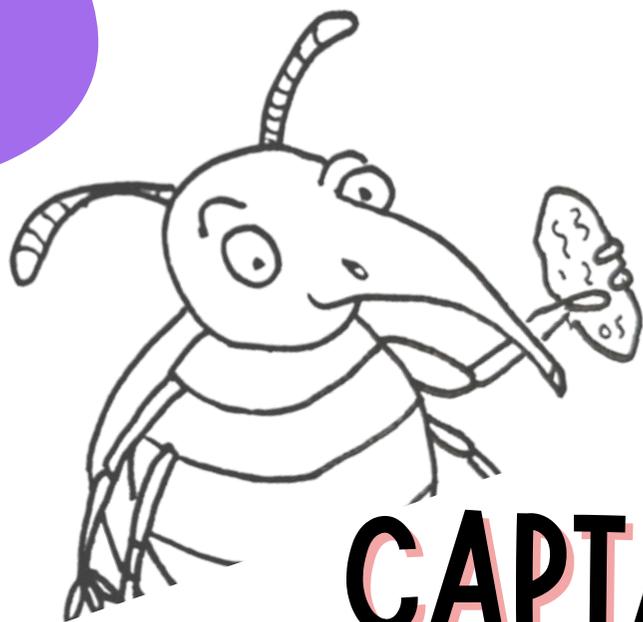
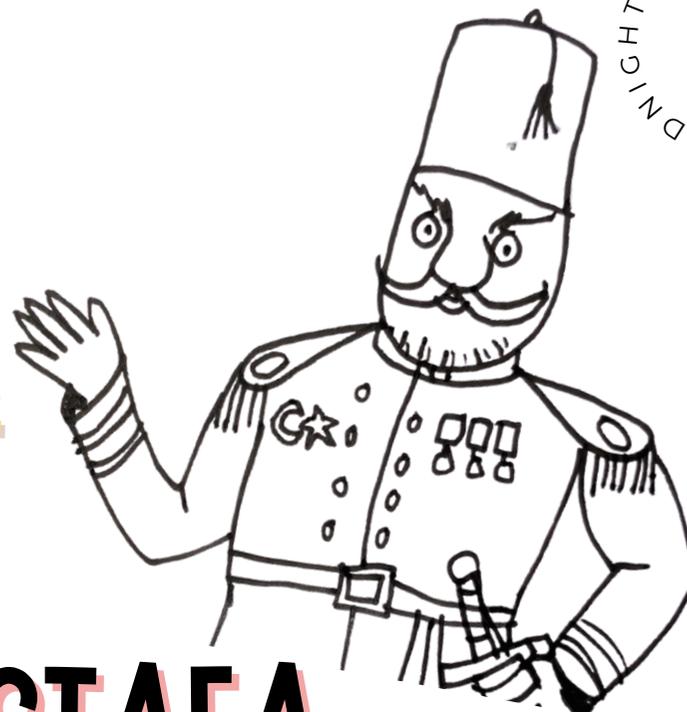


22MIDNIGHT
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ONCE UPON A
GOSPORT



CAPTAIN MUSTAFA AND THE TALE OF THE WRONG WEEVIL





ONCE UPON A GOSPORT

Step into a magical world where Gosport's stories spring to life, where the past isn't something you read about, but something you meet. Here, heroes and heroines, sailors and scientists, inventors and dreamers transcend time, space, and history to share their adventures with you.

Every page is a doorway into Gosport's spirit of curiosity, courage, and imagination.

Once Upon a Gosport has been lovingly created by Annelies James of 22Midnight, bringing together local tales and timeless lessons for new generations to enjoy.

This enchanting project is funded by the Gosport Heritage Grant, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Hampshire Cultural Trust, and Gosport Borough Council, each helping to ensure our heritage continues to inspire wonder for years to come.





With Thanks...

Special thanks to Richard Oakes the fantastic Gosport based artist and illustrator.

Thanks also to Charlie Fletcher, Hannah Boyd and the 'GHG Girls' Claire Hargreaves, Charli Street and Lu Mellors. Big thanks to my people, Ian Richardson and Phyllis Sheldon.

Projects are only ever as good as their community and we have welcomed an amazing community of creatives, supporters and volunteers to make this project happen.

For more thanks and resources visit the website.



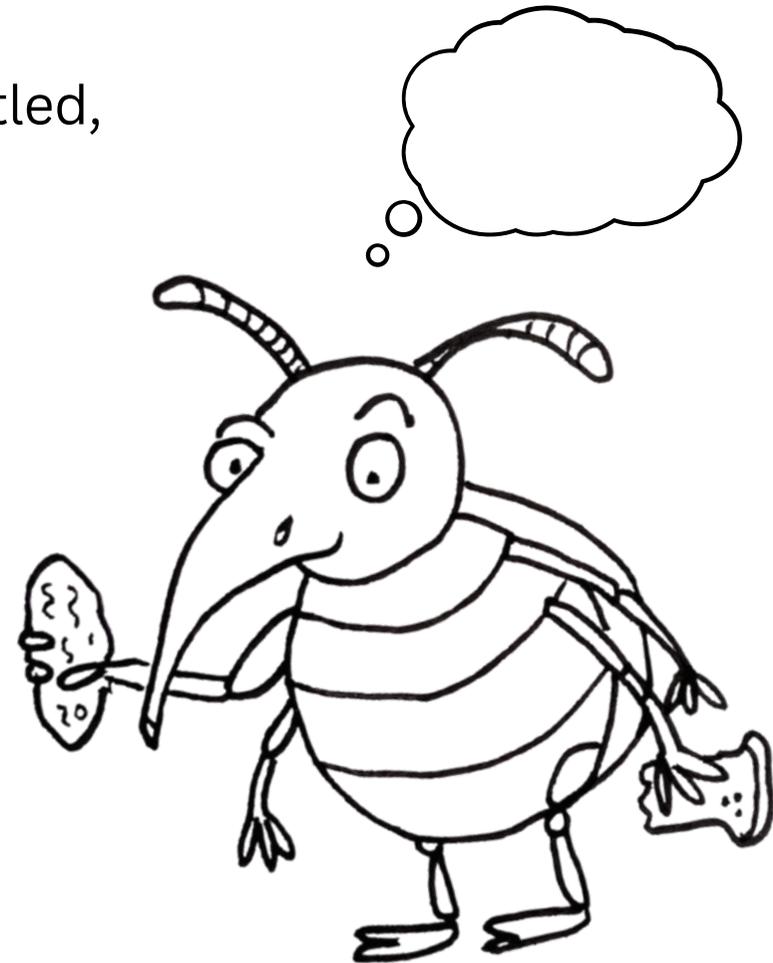
Long ago, when great Turkish ships anchored at Gosport, the town grew lively with sailors in red fezzes and gold-braided coats.

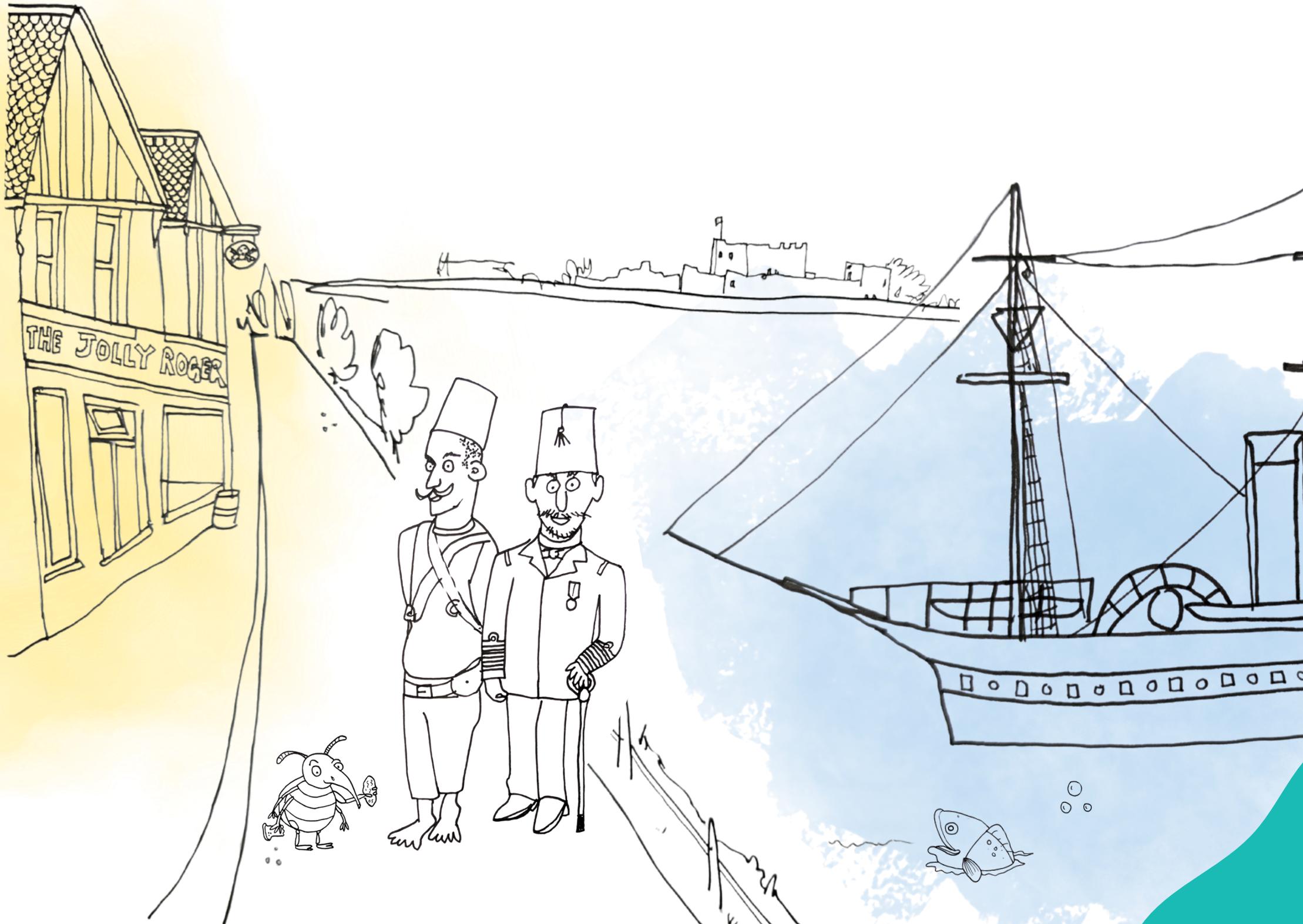
So many gathered near Priddy's Hard and Forton that the locals nicknamed it "Turk Town."

Among the cobbles and chatter, a tiny beetle scuttled, Gilby the Gilkicker Weevil.

He overheard someone joke, "Best keep the biscuits safe – or the weevils will have them!" Gilby's antennae twitched.

"That must be my kind! I should belong on that ship," he thought.





THE JOLLY ROGER

Up the gangplank he crept, slipping between barrels and sacks.



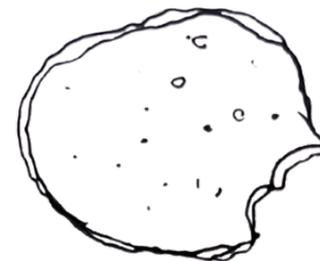
But when he tried nibbling a biscuit, his little jaws ached. It was like stone.
Gilby drooped.

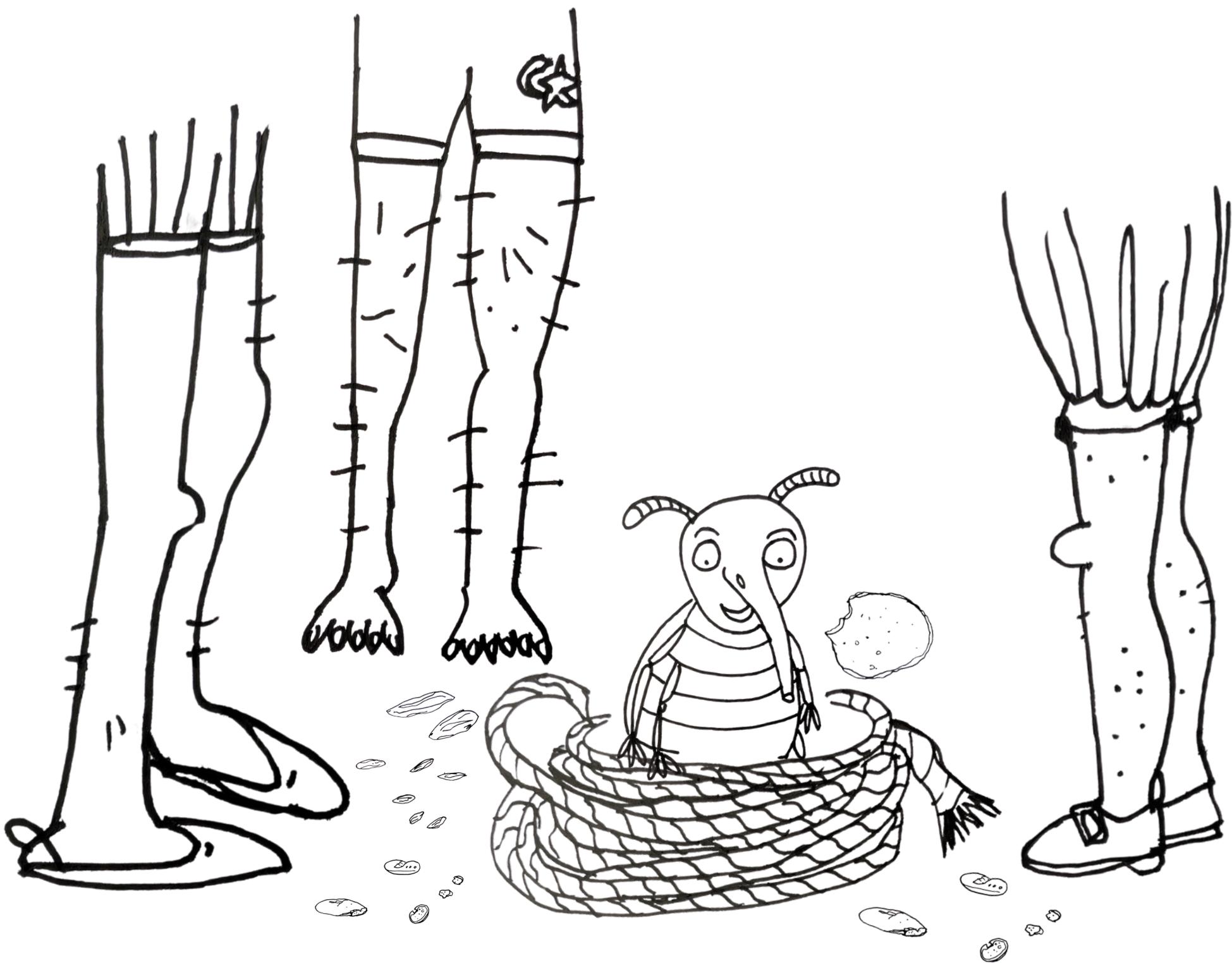
“I’ve made a terrible mistake...”

Just then, a tall figure loomed above. His uniform gleamed, and his red fez caught the sun.

It was Captain Mustafa.

“A weevil?” he frowned. “Here, among my sailors’ food?”
Gilby bowed his head.



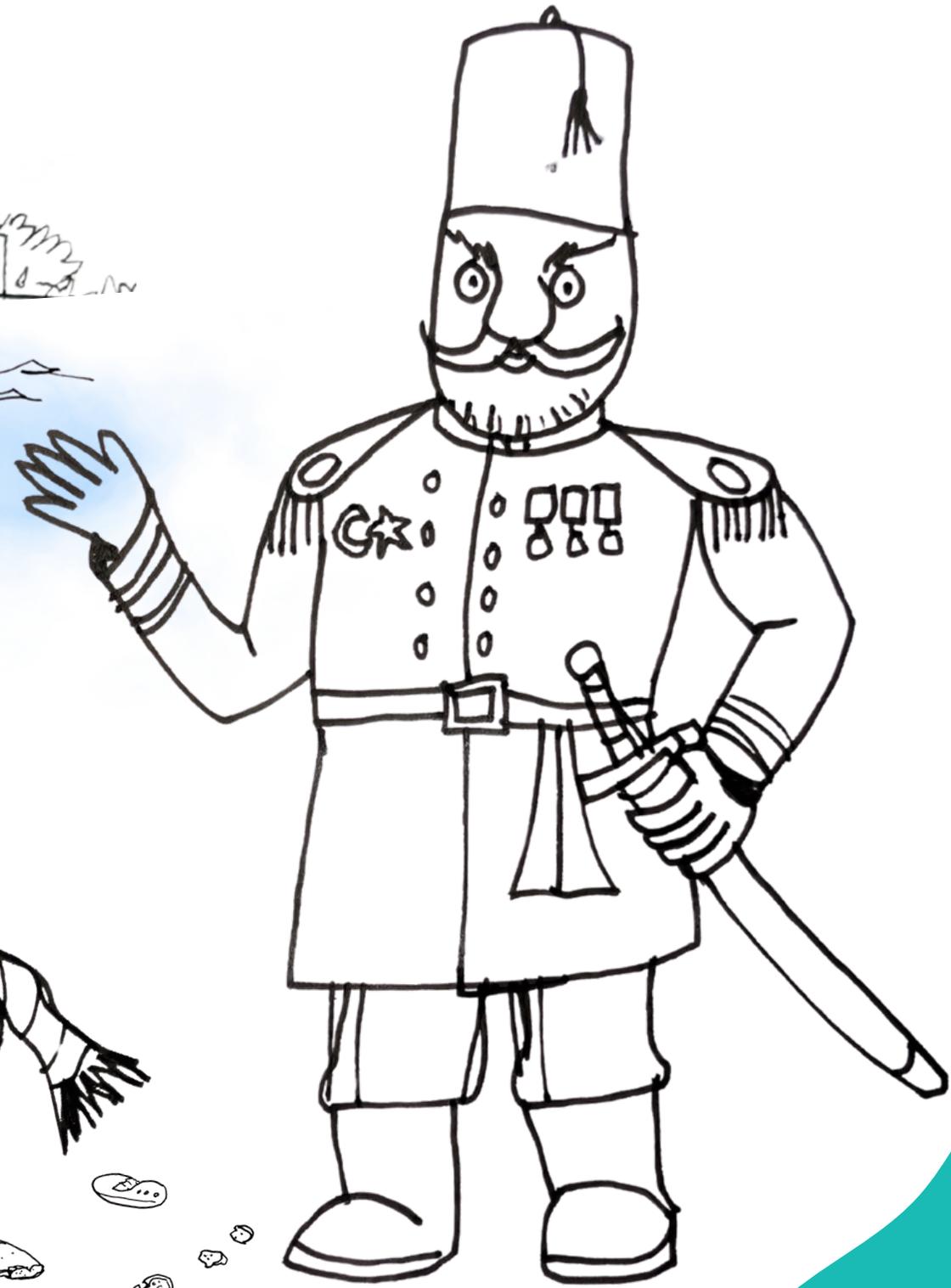


“I thought I belonged. But I was wrong. I am not that type of weevil, I come from Gilkicker and enjoy flora and fauna”

Mustafa looked closer at the small creature, who seemed more sorrowful than troublesome. His stern face softened.

“Then stay,” he said gently. “If you are far from home, perhaps we can learn from each other.”





The sailors prayed at sunrise, their voices carrying across the water.



Gilby peeked from a coil of rope, listening.

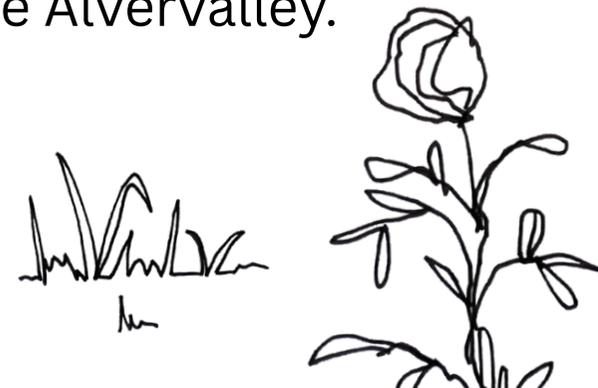
Later they shared bread and dates. Gilby sniffed – such sweet, unusual scents.

“Why do you eat together like this?” he asked.

“It binds us,” Mustafa explained. “Faith and food give strength to our crew.”

Gilby thought of the Wildgrounds back in Gosport, where every flower, insect, and bird shared the same meadow. He thought about the beautiful trees in Stanley Park and the winding paths and hills in the Alvervalley.

“Togetherness keeps nature strong too,” he said.





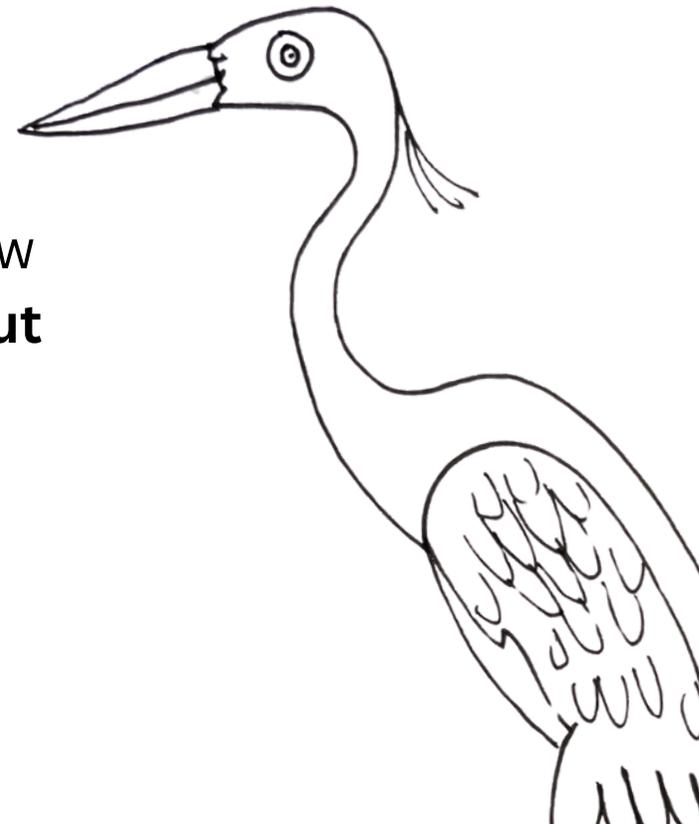


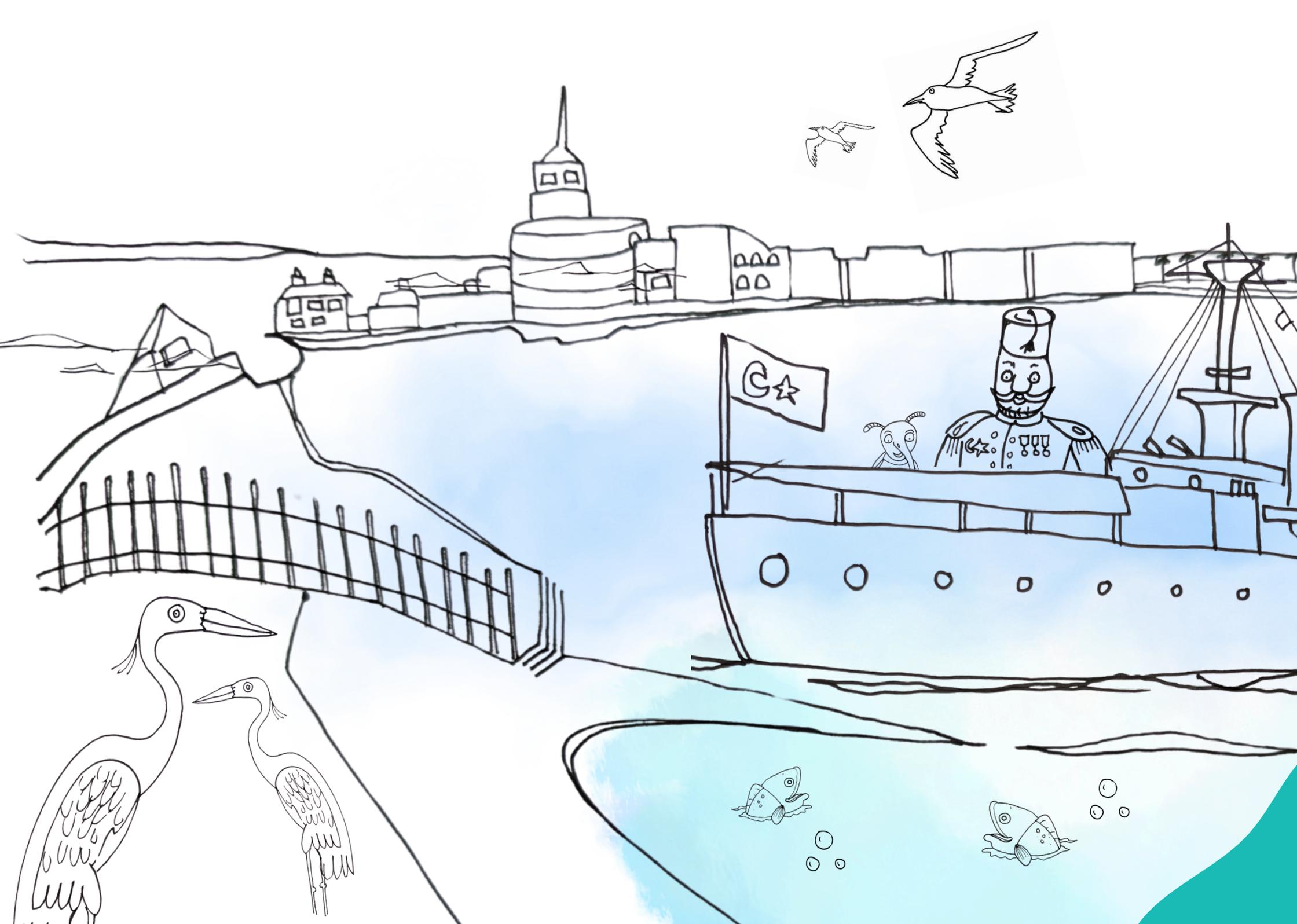
The ship drifted close to Haslar Sea Wall.

Gilby pointed with one tiny leg.

“Down there are herons and silver fish. That wall guards them, just as your Navy guards people.”

Mustafa leaned over, listening. For the first time, he saw Gosport’s stones and tides not just as fortifications, **but as a living home for creatures great and small.**





One afternoon, Queen Victoria's royal yacht sailed past on its way to Osborne.

The Turkish sailors lined the deck, trumpets and drums ringing out. Mustafa stood proudly at the rail and saluted.

Gilby was awestruck. "Why such honour for her?"

"She is our friend and ally," Mustafa said.

"Respect binds nations, just as nature binds your Wildgrounds."

Gilby's heart warmed. **Pride, he realised, could be shared across lands and seas.**







That night, a gust of wind blew a precious chart across the deck.

It fluttered towards the sea.

Before anyone could reach it, Gilby scurried forward, whiskers whipping in the wind.

He caught the map with all six legs and dragged it back to safety.
Mustafa picked him up carefully.

“Even the smallest among us can guard what is precious,” he said.





As the ship lay at anchor, Gilby perched on Mustafa's shoulder.

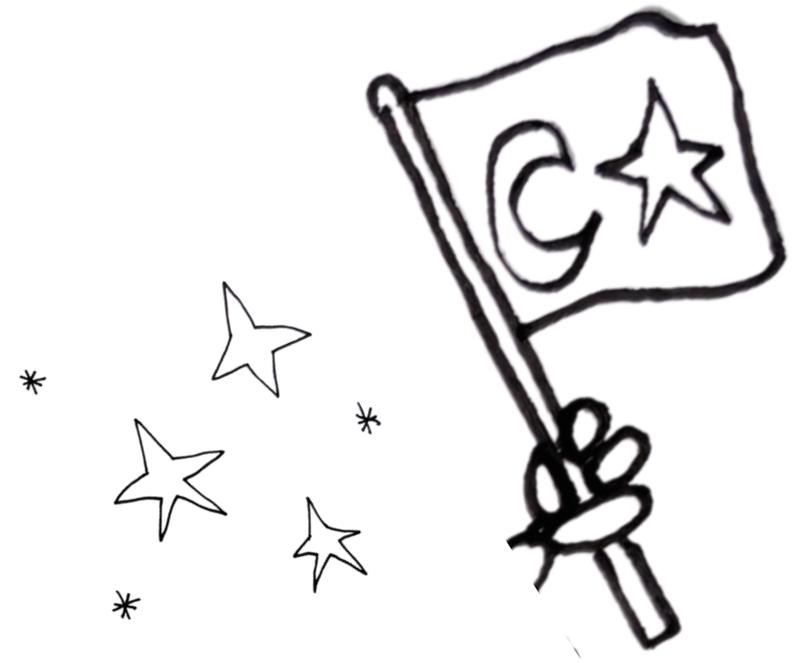
The Captain gazed across the Solent; Gilby looked back toward Gosport's wild meadows and marshes.

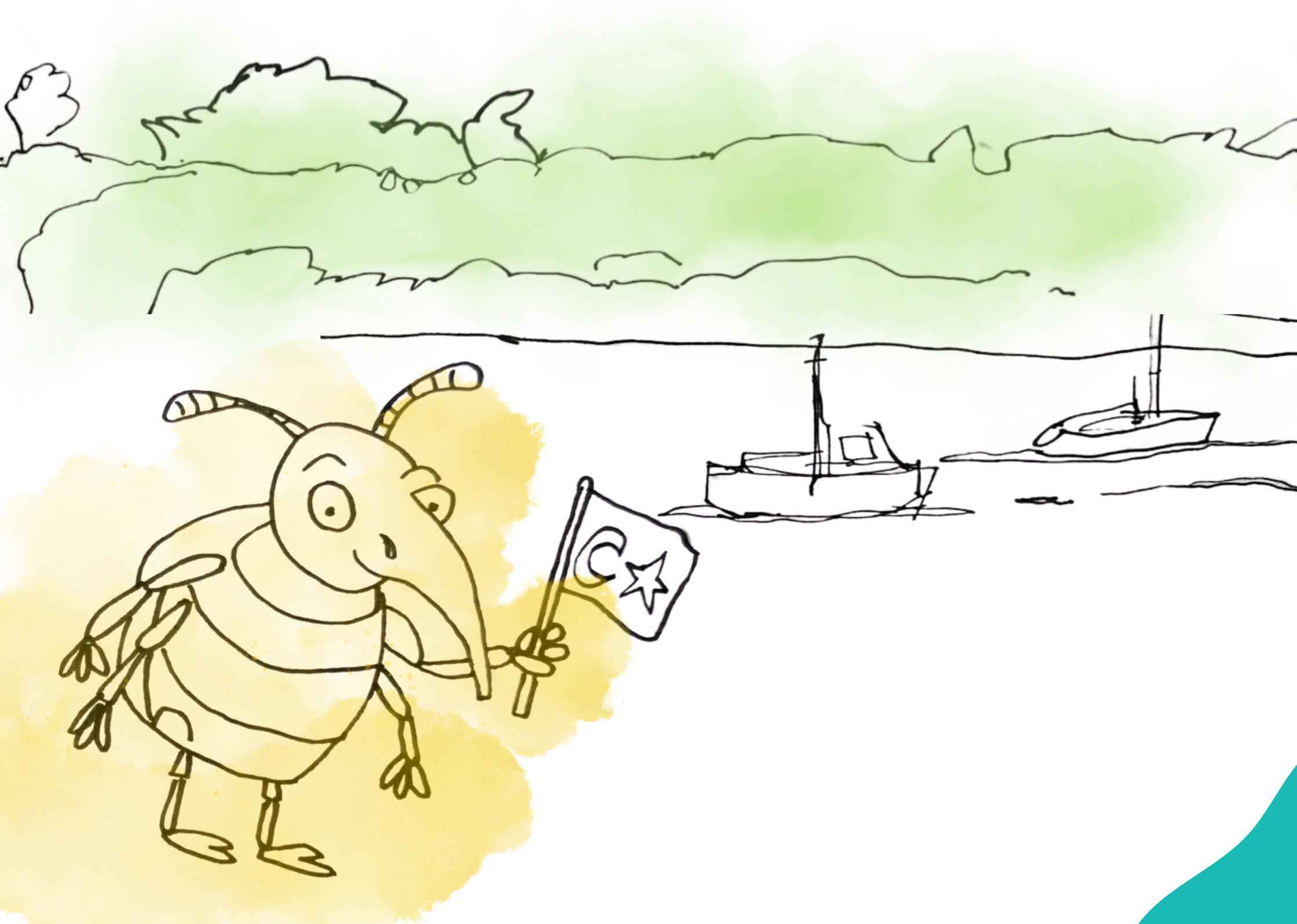
"You've shown me your world," Mustafa said. "And I will remember it, wherever I sail."

Gilby's antennae twitched with pride.

He had not found his place in biscuits.

He had found it in friendship.





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Visit the website for all the resources and to book
the Once Upon a Gosport Heritage Crate...

www.OnceUponAGosport.com

