

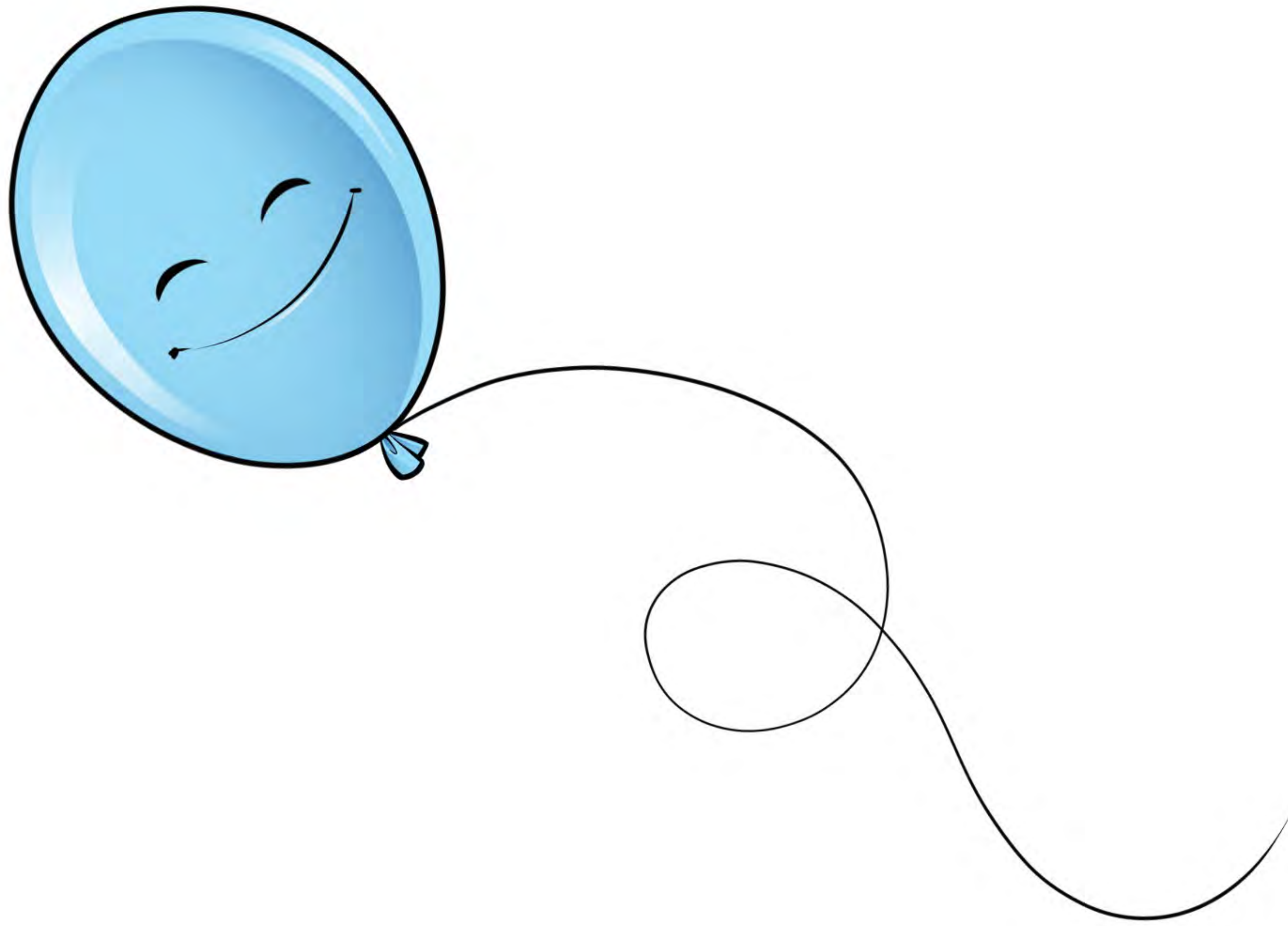
Natasa Angjeleska

THE RARE BOY

AND THE TALKATIVE LITTLE BALLOON



illustrated by
Aleksandar Sotirovski





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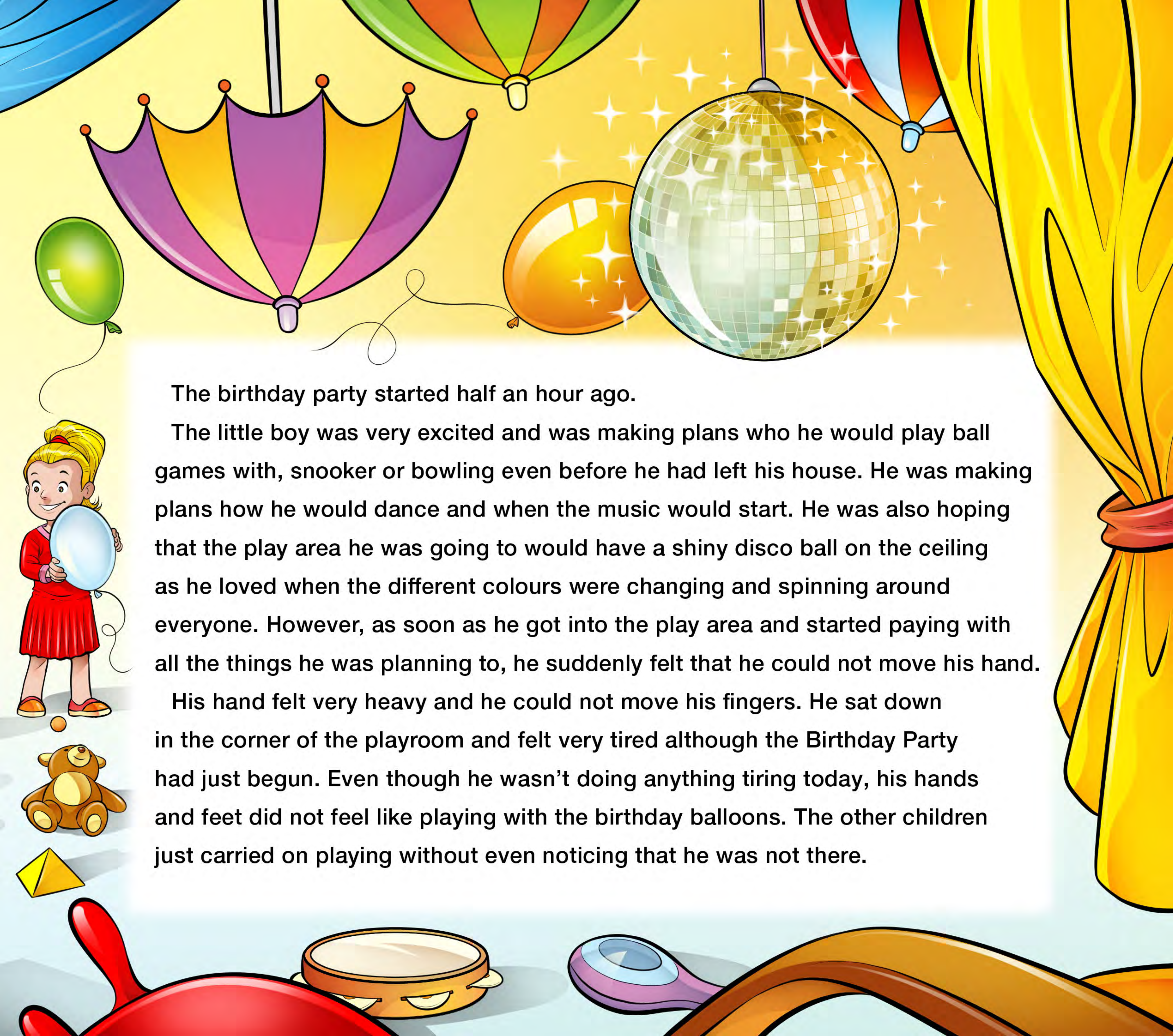
Illustrations and design:
Aleksandar Sotirovski

English translation:
Daniela De Silva

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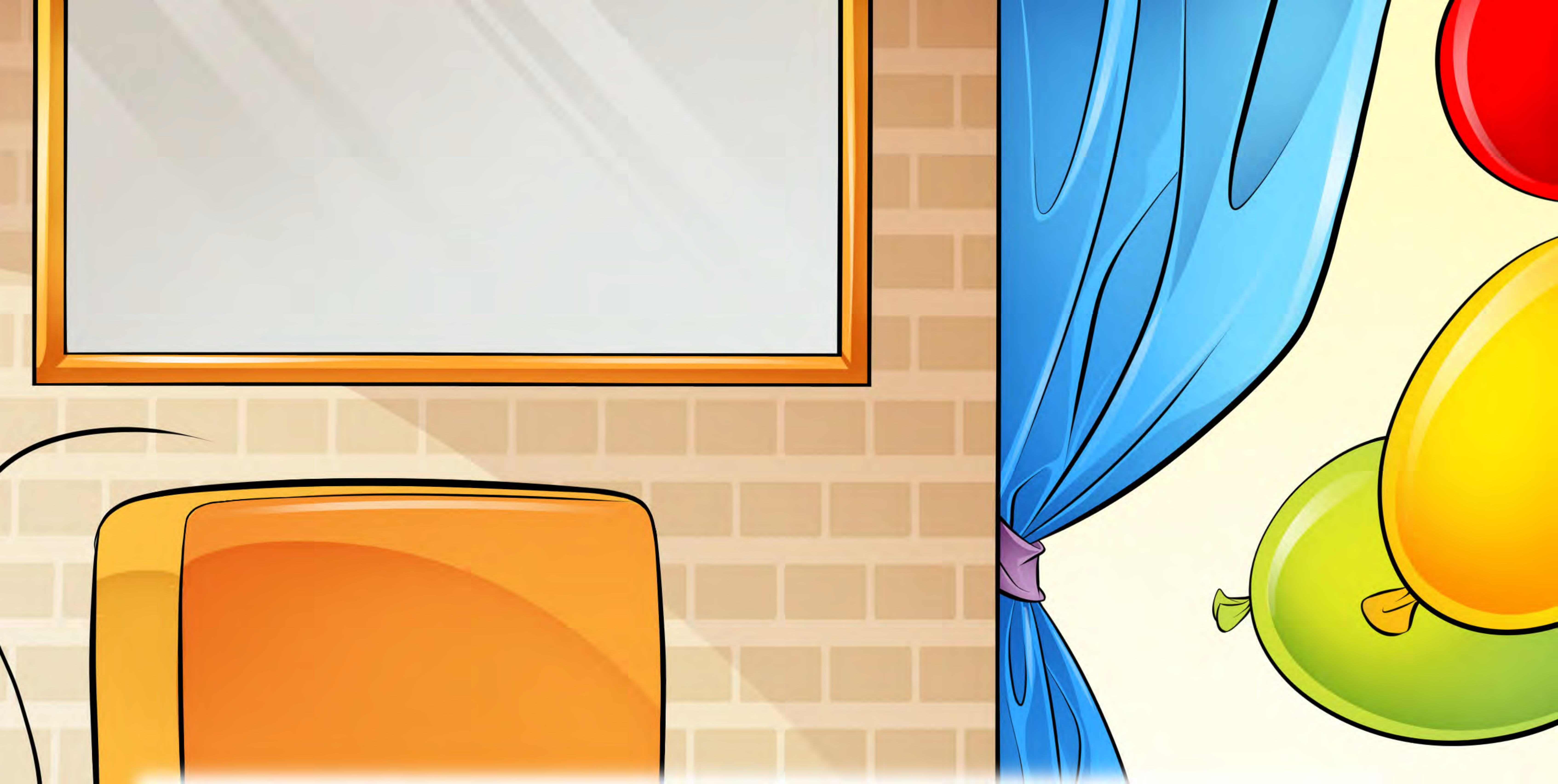


The birthday party started half an hour ago.

The little boy was very excited and was making plans who he would play ball games with, snooker or bowling even before he had left his house. He was making plans how he would dance and when the music would start. He was also hoping that the play area he was going to would have a shiny disco ball on the ceiling as he loved when the different colours were changing and spinning around everyone. However, as soon as he got into the play area and started paying with all the things he was planning to, he suddenly felt that he could not move his hand.

His hand felt very heavy and he could not move his fingers. He sat down in the corner of the playroom and felt very tired although the Birthday Party had just begun. Even though he wasn't doing anything tiring today, his hands and feet did not feel like playing with the birthday balloons. The other children just carried on playing without even noticing that he was not there.





Sitting all alone he said to himself: “I am not going to make any plans anymore before I go anywhere as my plans never work out. “ However, all of a sudden, he felt a gentle pat on his hand, which was becoming heavier and heavier, as it had already swollen. He touched the Blue Balloon. The Blue Balloon looked at his melancholy little eyes and asked him: “Why aren’t you playing anymore? Are you by any chance annoyed with me as I am not as firm and round anymore? It’s obvious that I have started deflating, but you kids really exhausted me rather quickly”!





The little boy got frightened from the unexpected touch and he got even more scared when he heard a whisper. He turned to the left, then to the right and looked around in case any children had hidden and tried to joke around. There was nobody around him so he gazed at the balloon and looked at it bewilderingly.

“How is this even possible, a talking balloon”? – the boy wondered.

“And the Balloon is also complaining”?!? He wondered if this was still some kind of a joke although it was not the right time for a joke as he was not feeling well.







However, he did need somebody to talk to as all the other children were too busy playing games with the other balloons.

So, the boy confessed to the Balloon: “I am not annoyed with you, you know.

I am annoyed with myself... If only you knew the plans I had for today. I invented my own steps and dance choreography. I was also prepared to sing if there was a mike there, you know like in a karaoke show! Well, it all amounted to nothing...

I even knew I was going to win in bowling as I am good at it. I am sure that I would have won bonus points, you know the ones the computer awards you. Oh I wish I lasted until cake time, I wish my hand did not swell until the end of my party so I can play for a bit longer and then go to the hospital...”

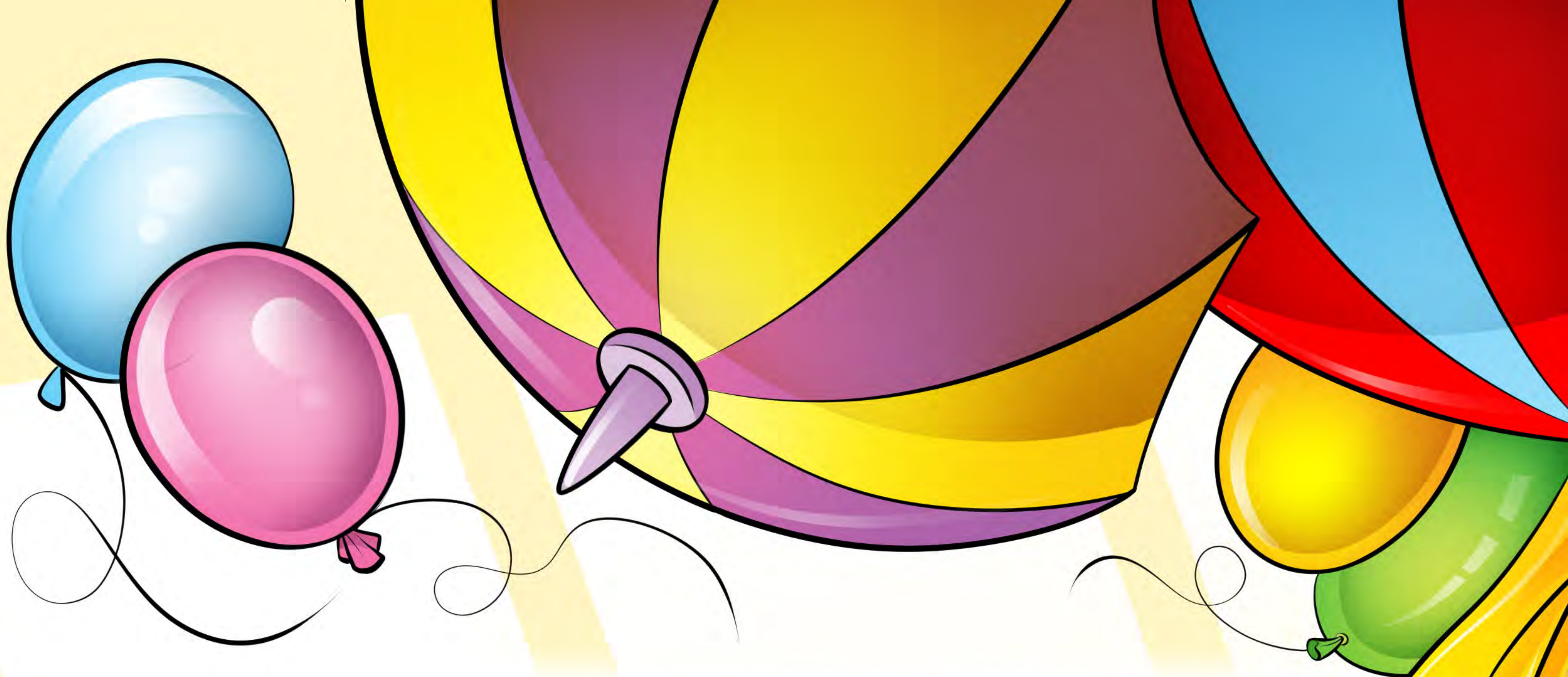




The balloon was puzzled how enthusiastically the little boy was talking about his plans and then suddenly how tired the little boy felt, so the Balloon asked him, although it was already deflating and becoming smaller and smaller: “And why do you need to go the hospital? Have you hurt your hand? Have you injured yourself?

Are you sure that bowling ball was not too heavy for you? Or maybe you swung the ball too much before placing it on the bowling lane? Or maybe you were in a hurry so you were not holding the bowling ball properly and you hurt yourself”?

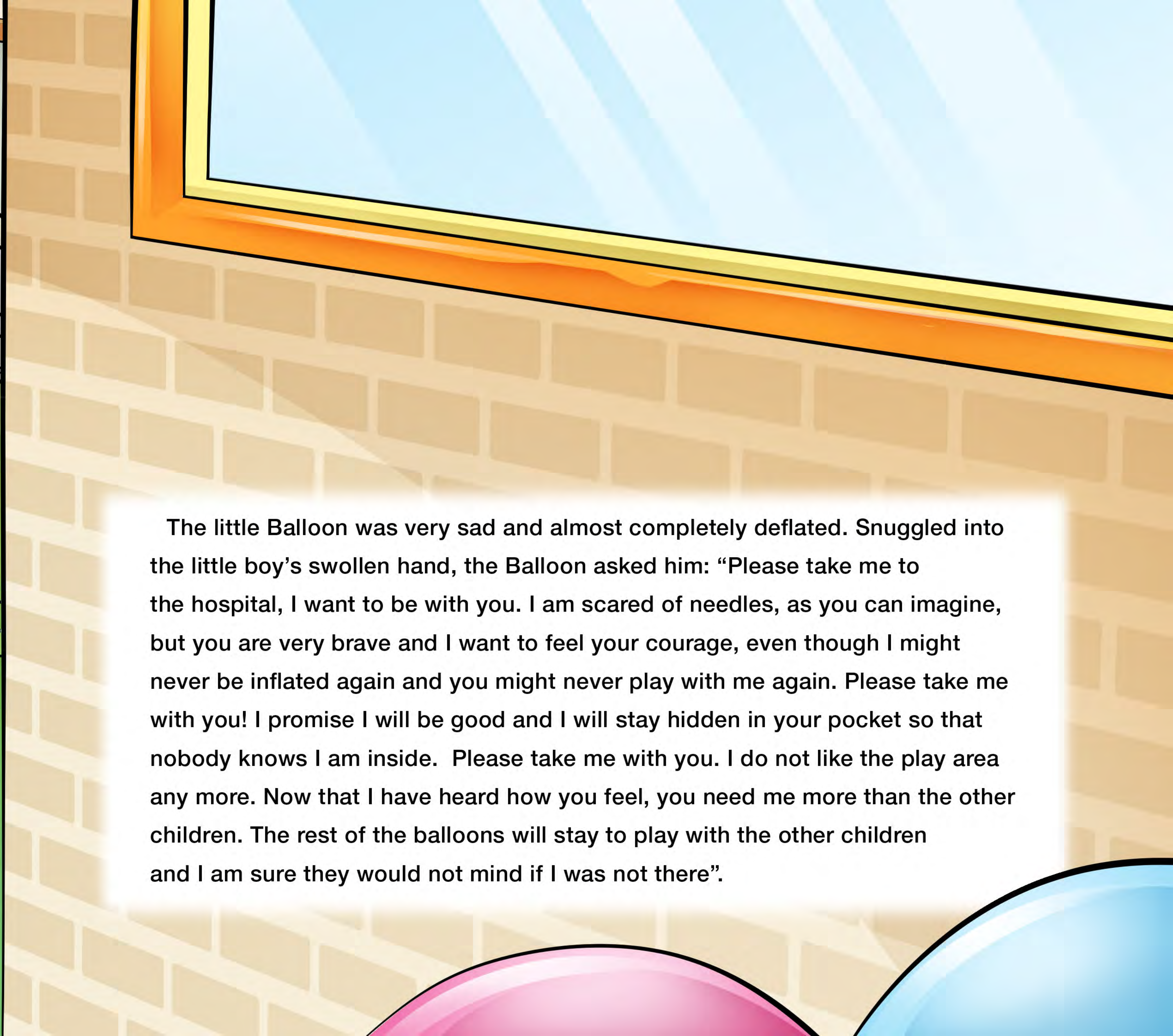




The little boy looked at the Balloon sadly and quietly explained: “No, that is not the reason. It is not the first time that I am bowling. I know very well how to hold the bowling ball and how to place it on the bowling lane. Something else happened.

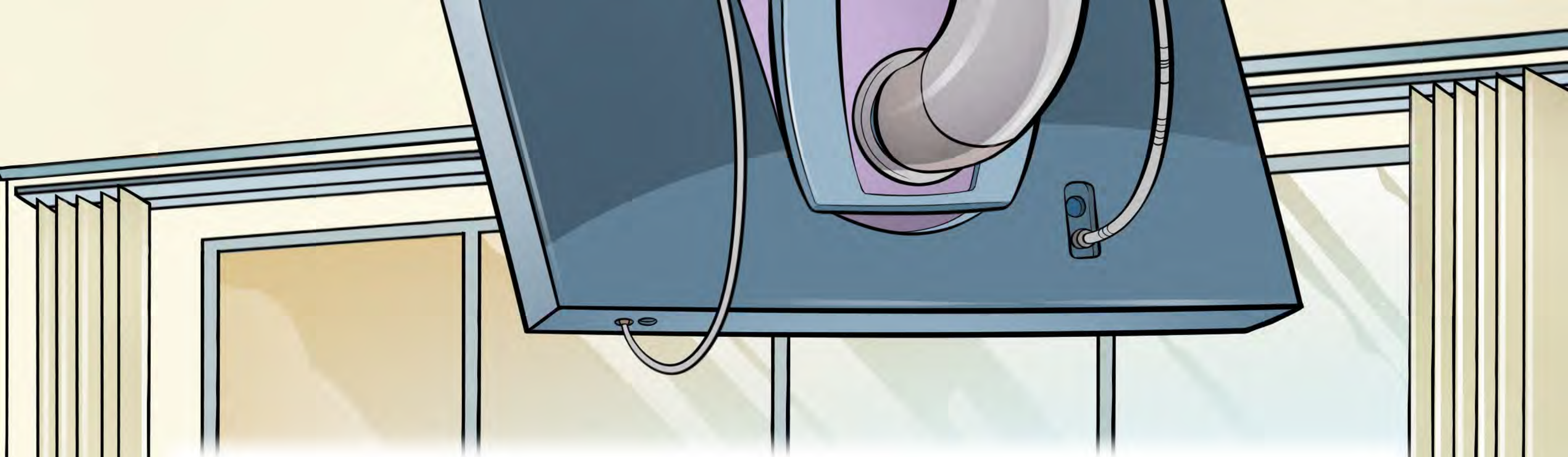
If you would like to know, I can tell you. I have a very rare disease and very often my body swells up... Without any particular reason, I simply swell and feel unwell. Everywhere. Sometimes my hand swells, sometimes my leg, other times even my face swells and then my eyes close so I cannot even see. On occasions, even my back swells up; my mummy is especially worried when I have sore throat as this is when my throat might swell up. At this time, I speak with great difficulty and cannot swallow... And often I am out of breath as well...This is the reason why I need to go to hospital and this is where I get the medicine”.





The little Balloon was very sad and almost completely deflated. Snuggled into the little boy's swollen hand, the Balloon asked him: "Please take me to the hospital, I want to be with you. I am scared of needles, as you can imagine, but you are very brave and I want to feel your courage, even though I might never be inflated again and you might never play with me again. Please take me with you! I promise I will be good and I will stay hidden in your pocket so that nobody knows I am inside. Please take me with you. I do not like the play area any more. Now that I have heard how you feel, you need me more than the other children. The rest of the balloons will stay to play with the other children and I am sure they would not mind if I was not there".



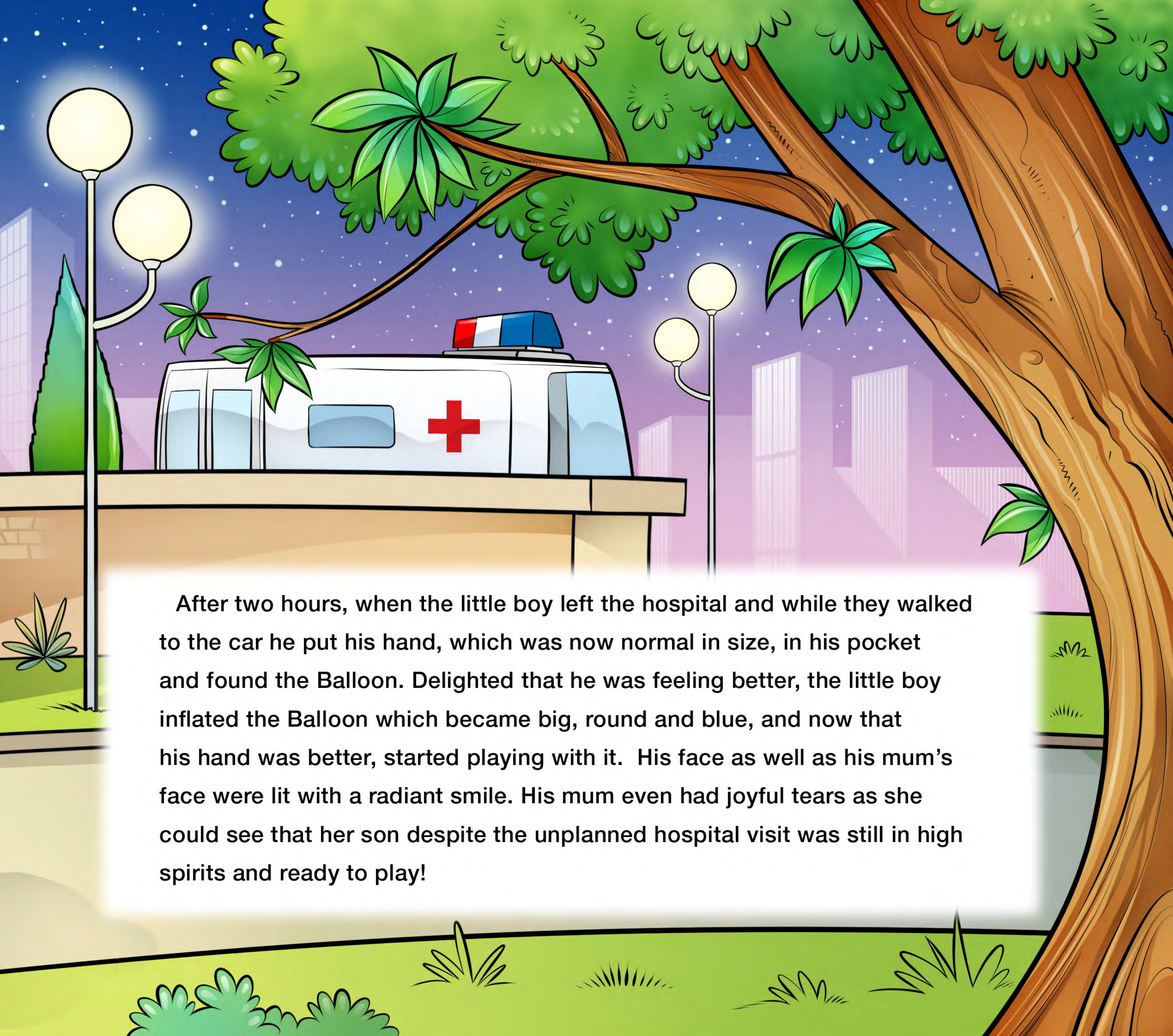


The little boy put the Balloon in his pocket while his worried mummy put on his coat and got him ready to go to the hospital. She was stroking his hair and smiling as they were driving towards the hospital.

On the way to the hospital, she called the nurses and asked them to make the therapy solution ready so her little angel can receive the life-saving therapy as soon as possible. As soon as they arrived at the hospital, nurse Mimi was already smiling as she had prepared the room where the little boy could receive his treatment and lie down to rest. The TV already had the children's channel on.

The Dr also came to say "Hello" and also to jokingly tell him off: "I thought we had an agreement that I will not be seeing you very often, didn't we! You need to grow up a bit so that when we take the measurements, we can write new numbers on your medical records". The little boy did not feel like talking, he just politely nodded and smiled.





After two hours, when the little boy left the hospital and while they walked to the car he put his hand, which was now normal in size, in his pocket and found the Balloon. Delighted that he was feeling better, the little boy inflated the Balloon which became big, round and blue, and now that his hand was better, started playing with it. His face as well as his mum's face were lit with a radiant smile. His mum even had joyful tears as she could see that her son despite the unplanned hospital visit was still in high spirits and ready to play!





They came back home and the little boy was greeted by a pleasant surprise. His friends who were at the Birthday Party brought lots of colourful balloons and were eager to carry on with the party. Was that even possible?

The little boy and the Balloon were over the moon! It goes without saying that they accepted the invitation from his friends and carried on having fun as if nothing had interrupted their play two hours ago. For a moment, they stood apart from the rest of the children and looked at each other, and they promised that whenever the little boy has a swelling on his body and needs to receive treatment, the Balloon will always go with him to the hospital to keep him company and to play with him after as if they were real best friends.

