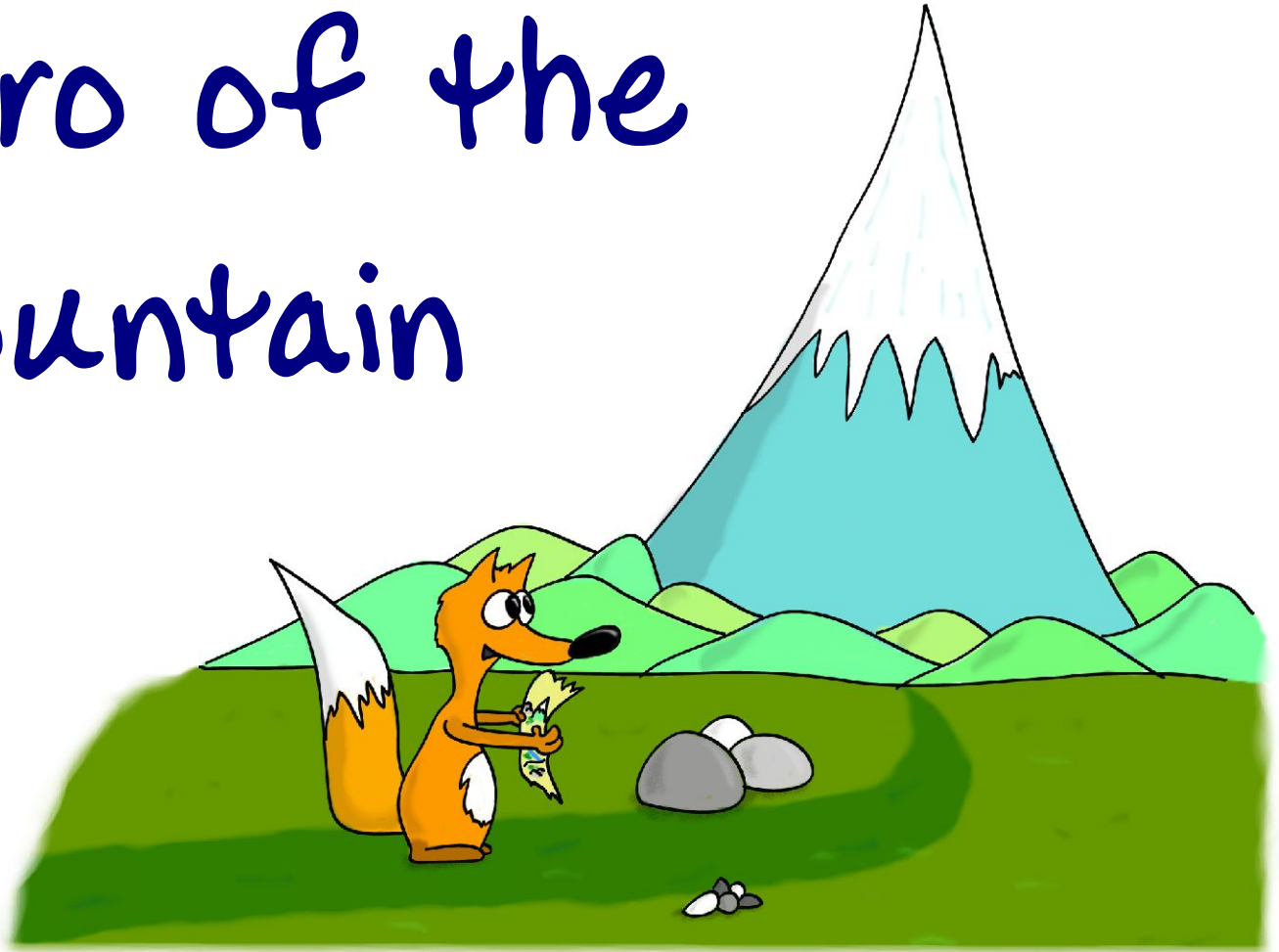


Hero of the Mountain



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Ivan Parvov, Hero of the Mountain

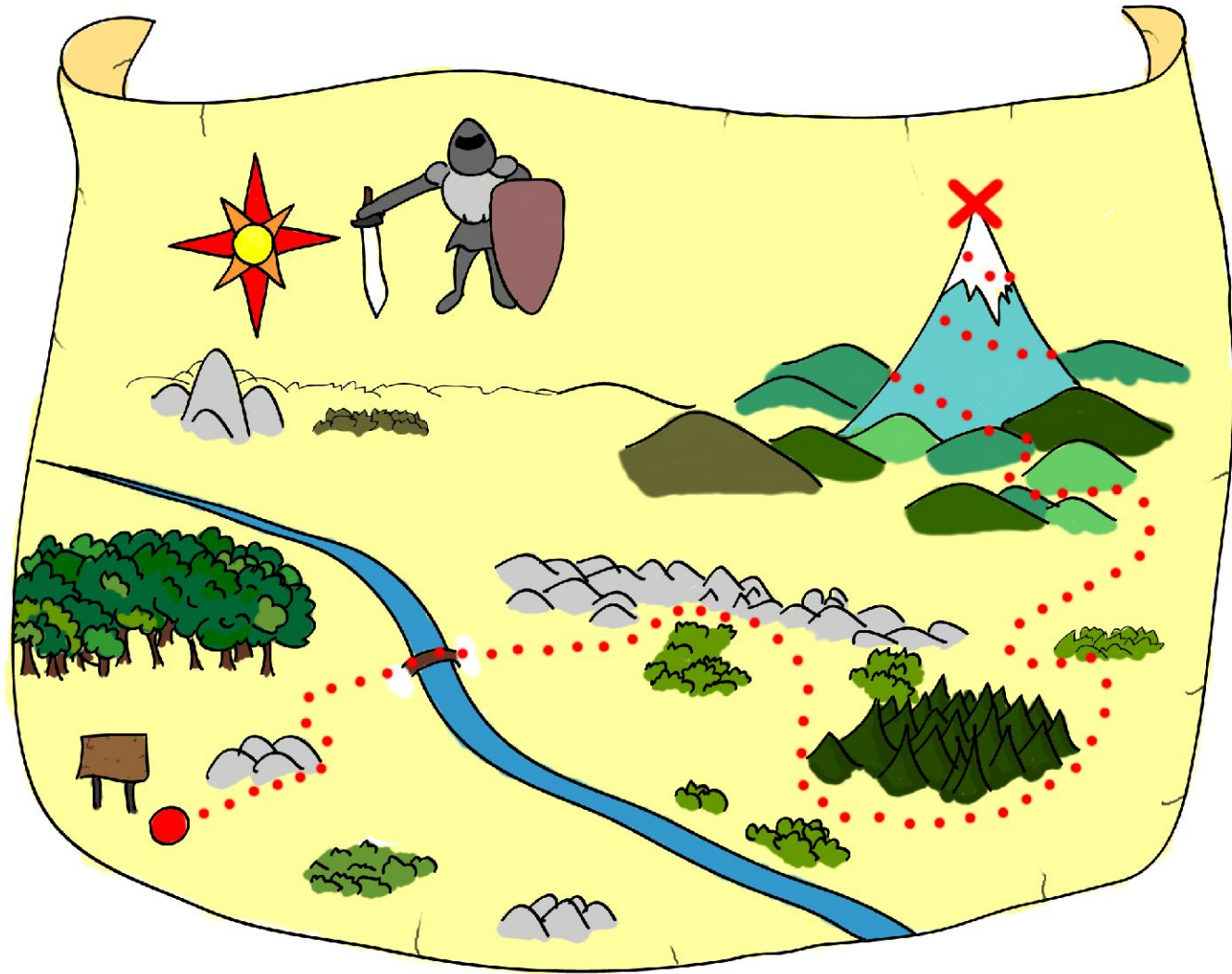
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The little fox Bubu was very excited. The big contest “Hero of the Mountain” was going to take place the next day. The bravest and most powerful animals and people were going to take part in it.



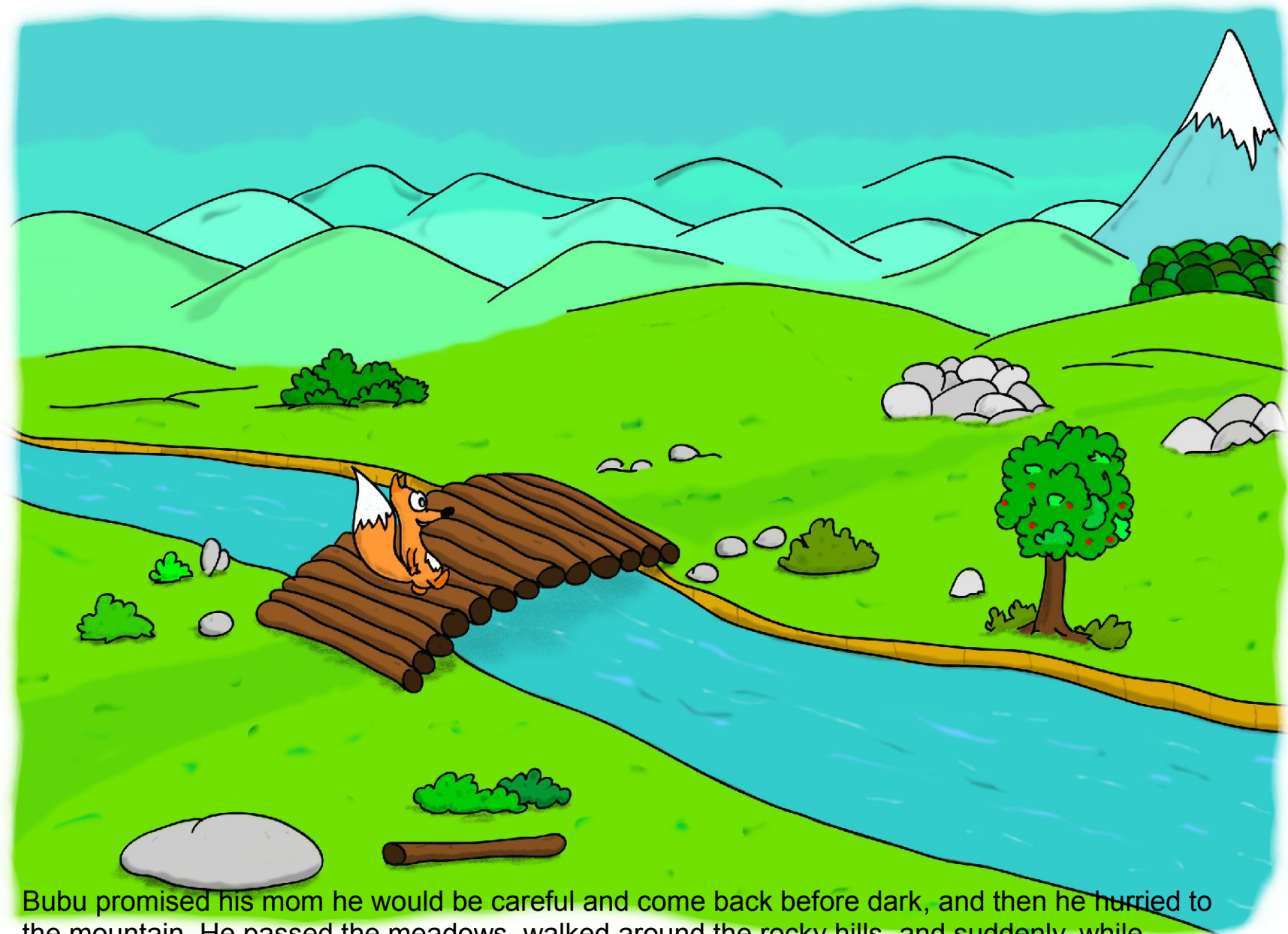
Bubu wanted to see the contest and meet the most famous heroes in the world. He carefully studied the map. The contest would take place high on the mountain, on the grounds of the owl-magician, Boran. Bubu was going to have a long trip the next day . . .



That evening, Bubu could not fall asleep till late at night. He was looking at the distant peak, dreaming about the contest. He was eager for the morning to come.



In the morning he woke up early, brushed his teeth and ate his breakfast quickly. He had a long way to go, so he had a good meal. The breakfast, prepared by his mom, was very delicious.



Bubu promised his mom he would be careful and come back before dark, and then he hurried to the mountain. He passed the meadows, walked around the rocky hills, and suddenly, while crossing the river, he heard someone screaming for help . . .



Bubu looked around and saw a beetle, who had fallen into the river. The slope of the bank was too steep for the little beetle—he couldn't get out of the river!—and he was waving its legs and antennae in panic.



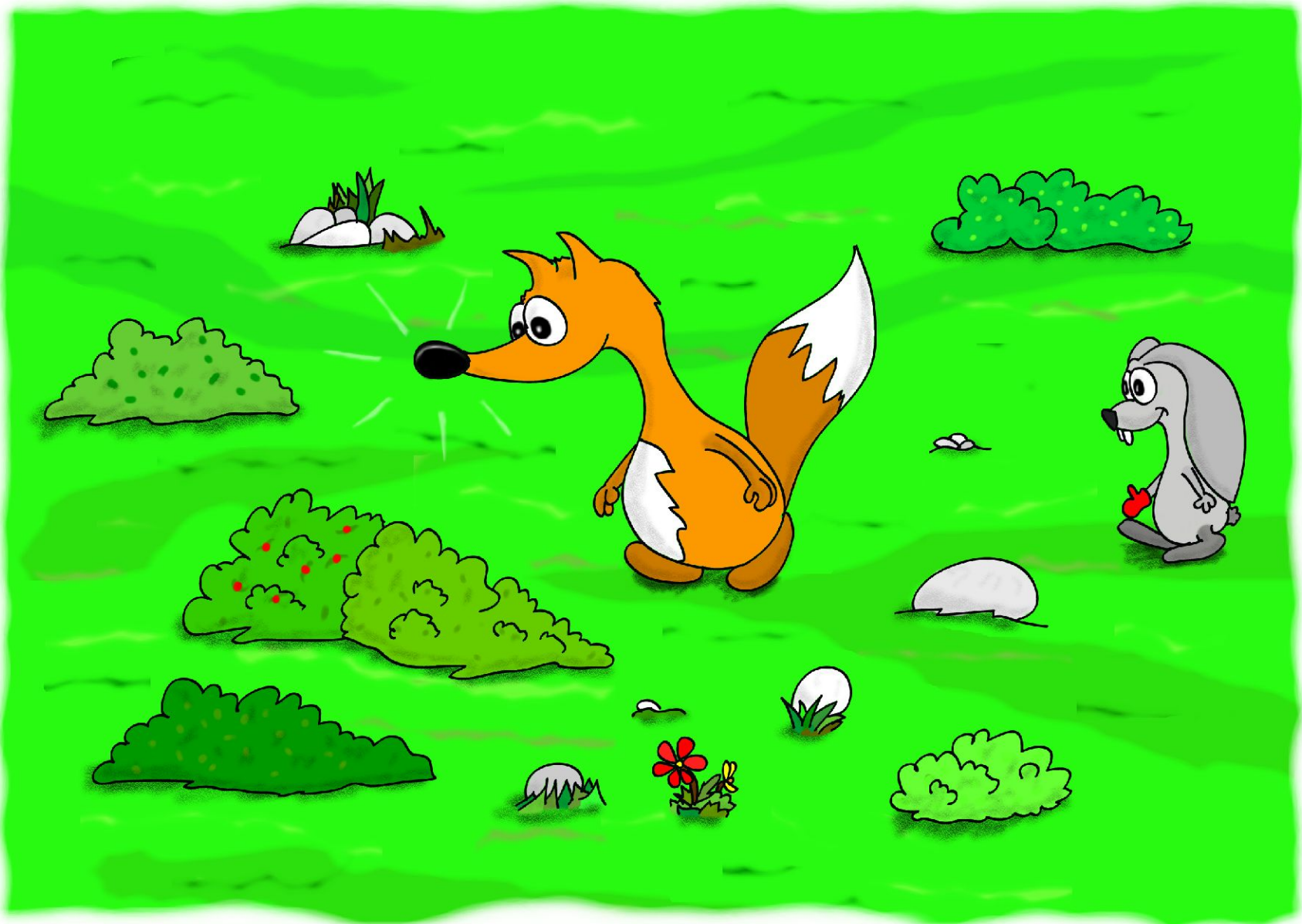
Bubu looked around for a float or a stick, but he could not find anything useful. As time was pressing, Bubu sank his tail into the icy water and cried out to the beetle to grab it.



In a little while the beetle was lying on the grass, drying off in the sun—exhausted but very happy for being rescued. Bubu was tired as well, but he had no time for rest. He squeezed his tail, which had become heavy with water, and hurried on to the contest.



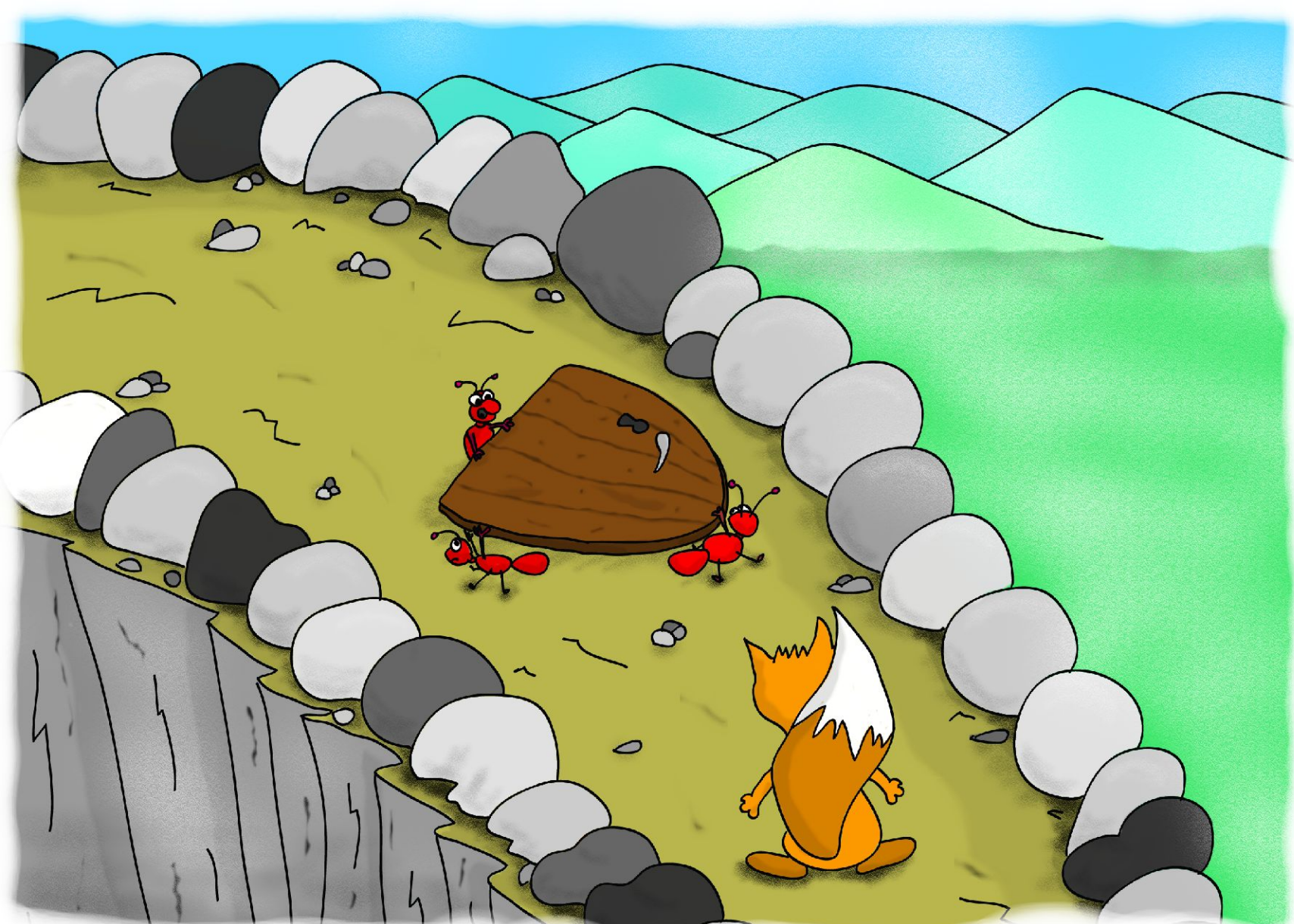
Soon he saw ahead a little bunny, crying sadly. It had lost one of its gloves and did not know how to find it.



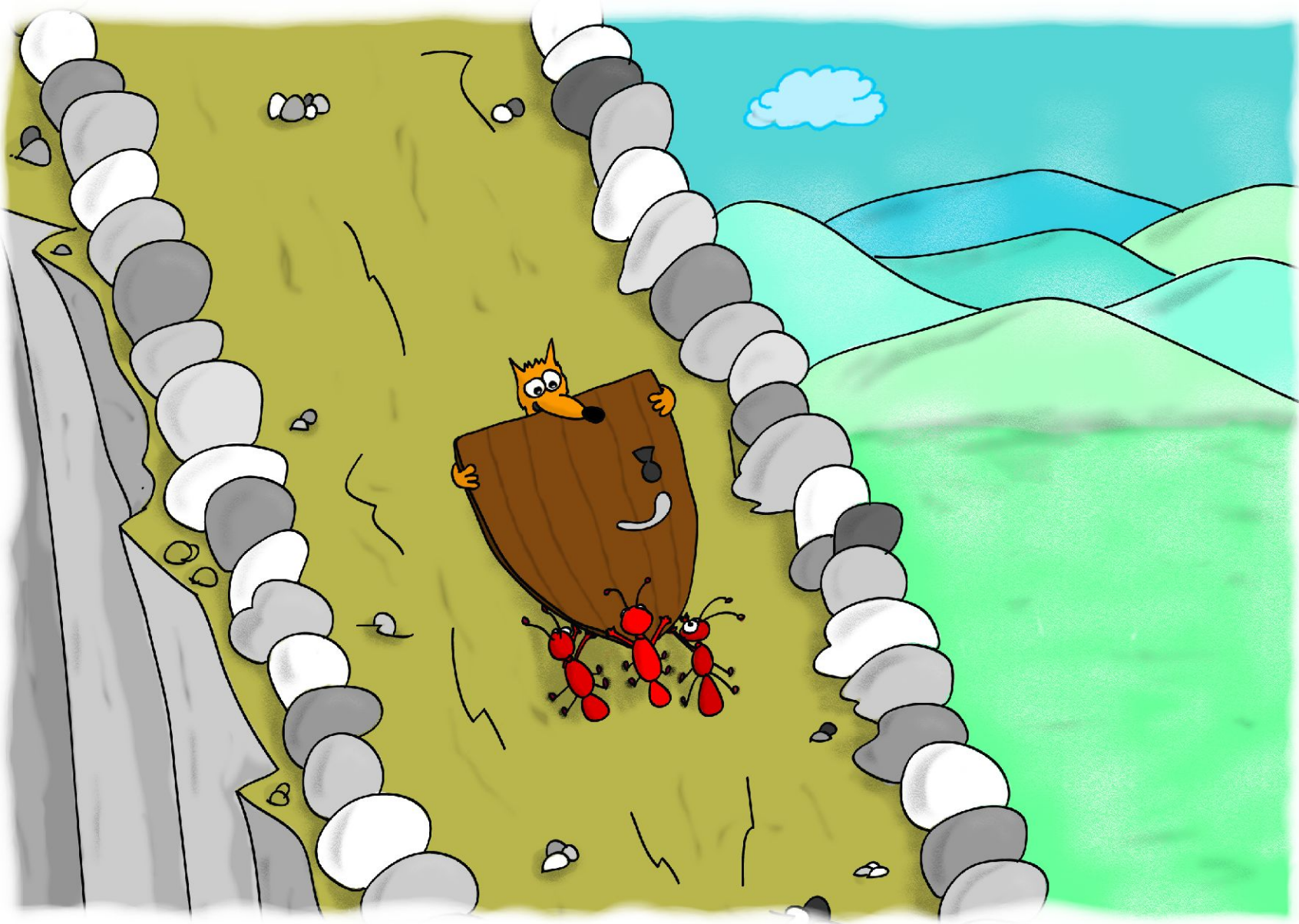
Bubu was in a hurry to get to the contest, but he decided to help the bunny. He lowered his big sensitive nose to the ground and began sniffing, searching for the bunny's glove. The bunny followed him with hope.



In a little while Bubu found the glove, fallen aside the path. Nothing can hide from a fox's nose. The bunny was very happy and, grinning widely, hopped home with its gloves on. Bubu hurried to the mountain.



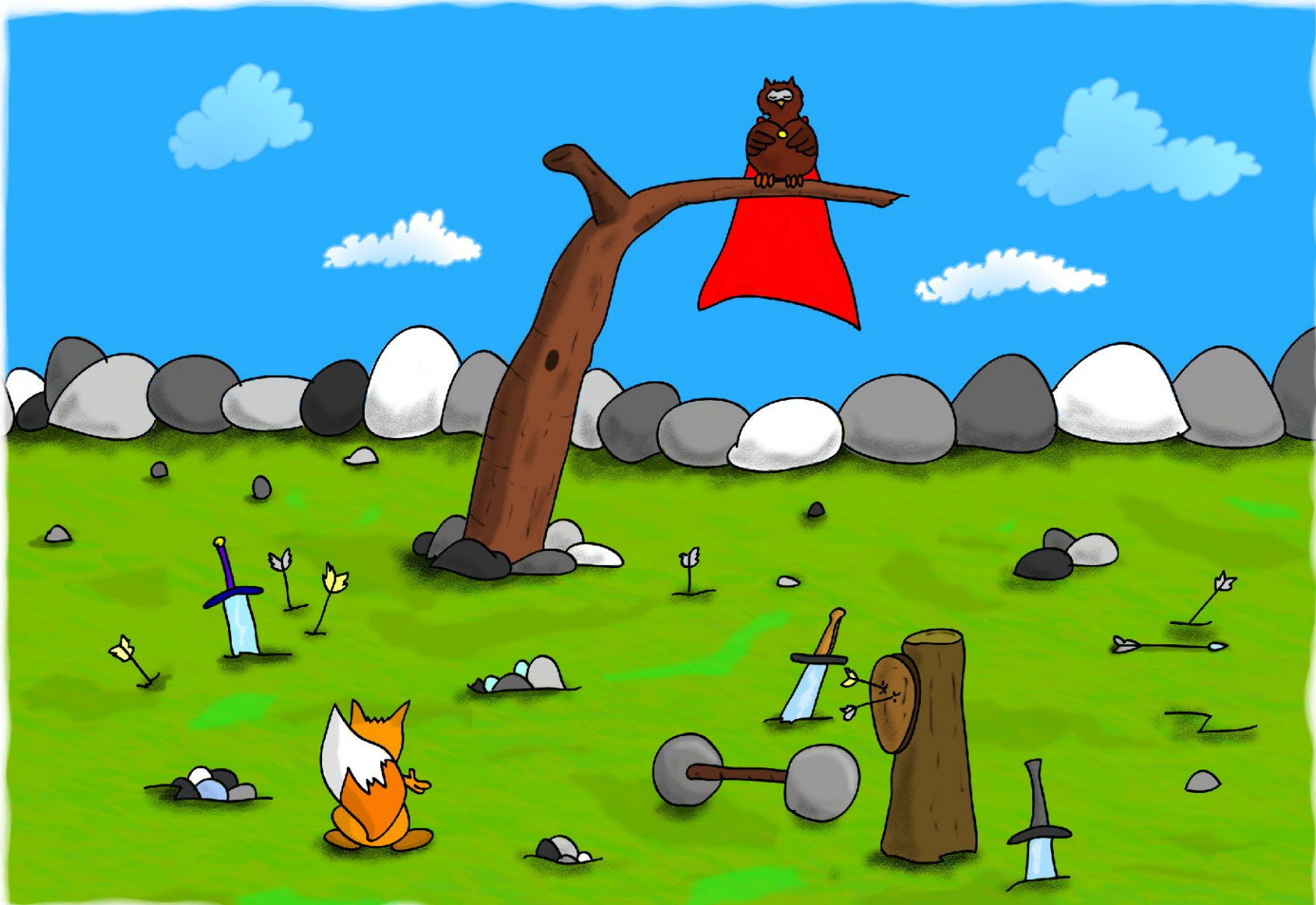
While climbing the steep mountain path, Bubu met three firemen-ants carrying a new door for the ants' observation post located high on the mountain—the ants looked for forest fires from there. The door was too heavy and the three ants gasped for breath.



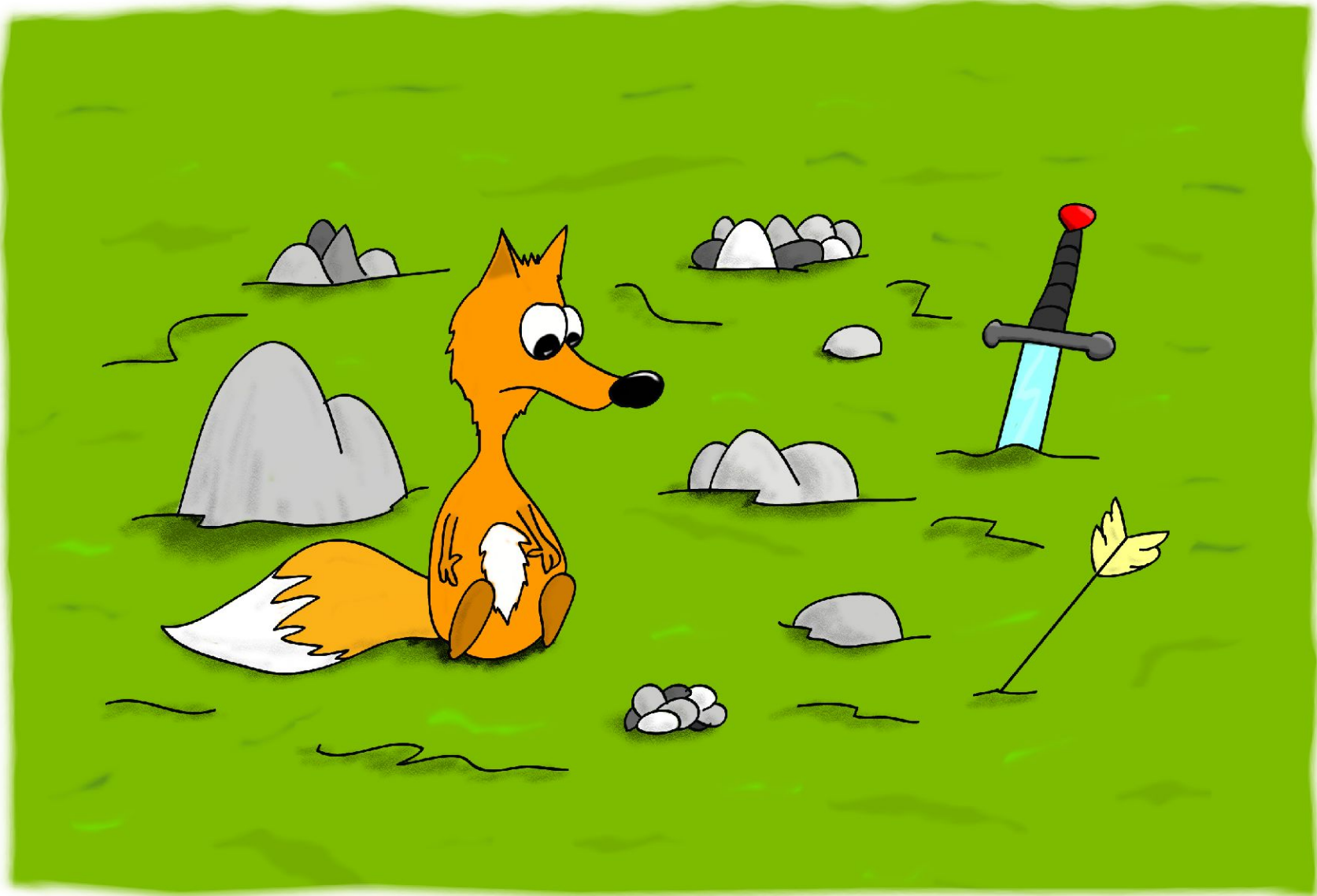
Bubu decided to help them, though he was already late for the contest. He took the heavy door and, together with the ants, carried it up the mountain.



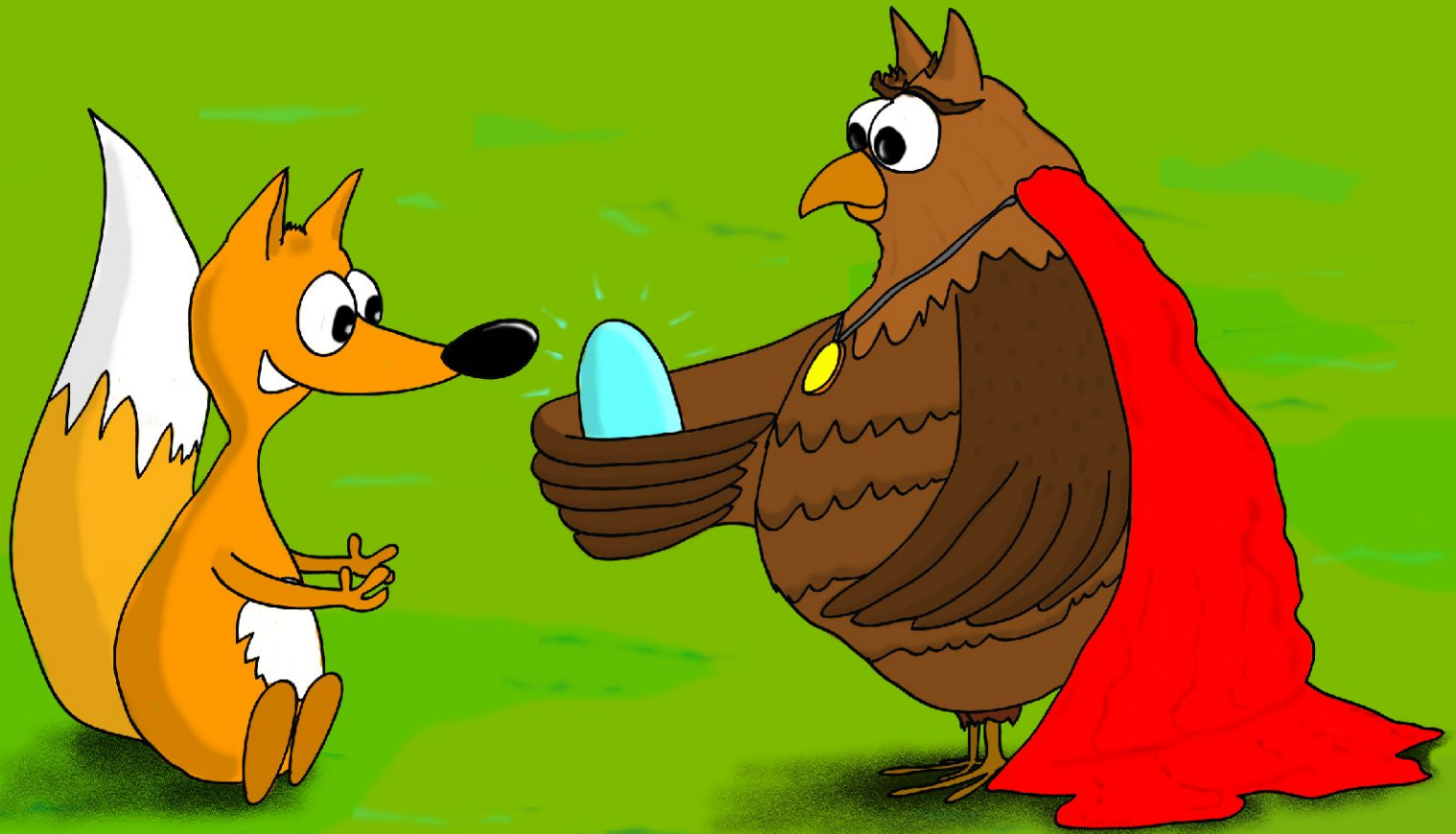
Finally they reached the observation post of the firemen-ants and managed, together, to fix the door in its right place. The ants sat on the ground, tired and satisfied. Bubu was also tired, but there was no time for rest; he continued up the path, climbing the peak.



When he climbed the peak at last, the contest was over. Broken arrows, targets, and swords were spread all over the peak meadow . . . but all the heroes had gone.



Bubu sat sadly on the ground. He so much wanted to see the contest and meet the greatest heroes in the world, but he had missed everything.



Suddenly he heard a flap of wings. He looked up and saw the owl-magician, Boran, alight before him.

“Don’t be sad, Bubu. You did not miss anything so interesting actually. Look, I have something special for you” and the owl gave Bubu a crystal. On it was inscribed: HERO OF THE MOUNTAIN”—it was the highest-honor award one could receive for the contest!

“But . . . why?” asked a very surprised Bubu. “I have not done any great heroic deed.”

“Is there a greater heroic deed than all the small deeds you have done today?” smiled Boran. “You missed the contest you so much wanted to see, to help the beetle, the bunny, and the ants. You are the real hero of the mountain.”



Bubu managed to make it back home before dinner and told his parents what had happened. Everybody at home was pleased and very proud of him. After dinner, Bubu went to bed tired and satisfied. He needed a good night's sleep—may be tomorrow new great deeds and adventures were waiting for him.

THE END



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