

Aurora Mateos



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EVERYBOY



ILLUSTRATIONS: LUIS EDUARDO MEJÍA AYALA

english version

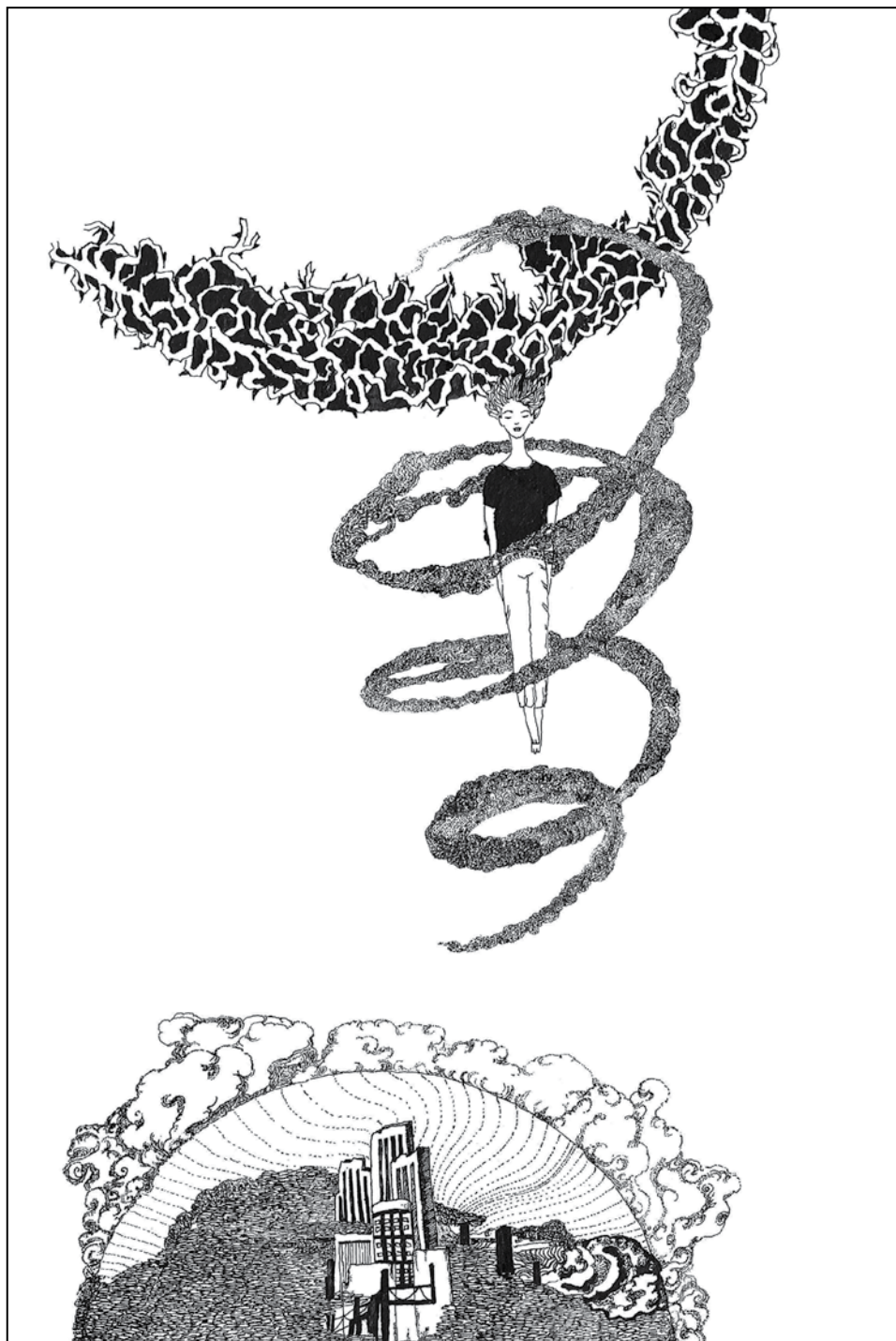


ILLUSTRATION I: «THE BOY FROM MONDIA»

For Chiquito, the boy who was the world

ACCORDING TO THE UNITED NATIONS, 168 MILLION CHILDREN ARE TRAPPED IN CHILD LABOUR. OF THESE, 85 MILLION ARE ENGAGED IN DANGEROUS WORK.^(*)

KAM SIMA COULD BE ANY ONE OF THESE CHILDREN. MONDIA COULD BE ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD.

(*) Source: *Marking progress against child labour – Global estimates and trends 2000-2012* (ILO-IPEC, 2013).

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE^(*)

(For four actors)



HUGO

A boy, aged 10 (9 when the play begins).

—

KAM

A boy, aged 10.

—

MOTHER

Hugo's mother, aged 45.

—

FATHER

Hugo's father, aged 48.

—

MARIA

Hugo's sister, aged 15.

—

LILITH

Kam's sister, aged 15.

—

ASTAROTH

A factory manager, aged 30–50.

() Hugo and Kam can be substituted with female characters
and Lilith with a male one.*

SETTING

Present-day Mondia, every country and none

ONE



(Hugo's house).

HUGO

I've got a Playstation, an Xbox, a Nintendo, 63 games for my laptop, a tablet, a smartphone, a DVD player all to myself, two bikes, two pirate ships and 36 toy cars, one of them with an engine and big enough for me to sit in. I always get a new DVD when I get good marks at school. When I don't, Grandma gets me one anyway. I've got all the Disney films, but I gave Frozen to my cousin Max because he's smaller than me. I've got comics, a skateboard, rollerblades, a pile of board games and ... a sister who likes any singer with weird hair.

(The audience sees Maria with a poster of a pop singer).

Plus a mother who likes credit cards.

(The audience sees Mother taking a stack of plastic cards from her handbag. She picks out a gold one and kisses it).

I've got a father who likes to hang out in pubs and restaurants after work.

(We see Father chatting to his friends and ordering lots to eat and drink from a waiter).

Mum and Dad always argue at the beginning of the month, when the phone and credit card bills come in. Today I turned ten, and they gave me tons of presents.

(We see a pile of presents).

Plus an envelope full of money.

MOTHER From your uncles and aunties. Ten hundred notes.

HUGO Plus a *Star Wars* t-shirt, a *Star Wars* lightsabre, the new *Star Wars* computer game, the new *Star Wars* soundtrack and a pair of trainers.

MOTHER Look, darling, they have something on the back ... See? The *Star Wars* logo.

HUGO Mum ...

MOTHER What's up, darling?

HUGO I don't like *Star Wars* stuff any more.

MOTHER Since when?

HUGO Well, it's just that yesterday the latest *Pirates of the Caribbean* came out on DVD, and I want that.

MOTHER Mmm, I wonder where I put those receipts. Okay, darling, no problem.

(She puts the toys in the corner. Hugo starts surfing the internet).

HUGO Ever since that thing happened to my sister Maria when she was thirteen, she's had all sorts of jars of stuff, she's worn clothes that are too small for her, she's taken her phone with her to the toilet, and she's said the same thing over and over again ...

MARIA No! No! No!

HUGO My favourite member of the family is ... the internet. I can chat with my friends and download all my favourite shows.

(Hugo fiddles with the mouse).

MOTHER Up you get, darling, here comes your cake!

MOTHER-FATHER-MARIA

Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you ...

(Hugo blows out the candles without taking his eyes off the PC screen. Everyone else looks at the screen too).

PC SCREEN Don't be a loser, switch to the invincible taste of "superpower" vanilla ...

HUGO Mum, I don't like this icing ... I want the vanilla one...

MOTHER Go on, darling, eat your cake! Think of all those poor starving children in Africa. Think of all the unemployed people.

(Hugo shakes his head. Mother takes the cake and puts it in the bin).

MOTHER We'll get you one with vanilla icing tomorrow ...

PC SCREEN Today's programme takes us to the remotest corners of this great country of ours, Mondia.

(Hugo tries on his trainers).

HUGO Mum! One of my new trainers has a hard lump in it. I can't walk.

MOTHER Well, try to remove whatever it is.

HUGO I can't! It's on the inside!

EVERYBOY

FATHER Leave your mother be. She's been shopping all day.

HUGO Mum, it won't come out!

FATHER I'll be back later.

MOTHER Where are you off to?

FATHER To the pub, to see a friend.

MOTHER It's your son's birthday. Surely it's not too much to ask to spend some time with him.

FATHER *(Gives her a kiss).* I'll be back for dinner. *(Leaves).*

MOTHER Some father you are! Well, you can have your dinner cold! *(She slams the door. She turns, in two minds).*

MARIA *(Surfing the internet).* Can you stop making so much noise?

HUGO For quite a while my parents have had a problem with 'you-know-what'.

FATHER You never want you-know-what anymore ...

MOTHER Oh, for crying out loud, is that all you ever think about?

FATHER It means a lot to me. But you couldn't care less about it.

HUGO When they start talking about 'you-know-what', Maria turns her music up and I download a cartoon...
(Hugo continues to struggle with his trainers and to walk).

PC SCREEN You'll need to cut the sole open to get it out ...
(Hugo takes a knife and removes the object from his trainer, cutting himself in the process).

- HUGO *(Calling out from his room).* I've cut myself! *(He sucks the blood).* Mum, there's a piece of paper inside my trainer!
- FATHER Maybe we need some help to sort it out.
- HUGO There's something written in pen!
- MOTHER The problem isn't 'it'. The problem is that you only think of yourself.
- HUGO I bet it's a secret message. *(He unfolds a large note).*
 (Mother and Father continue to argue. Then something they say catches Hugo's attention. He runs to Maria's room).
- HUGO Maria! Maria! Did you hear that?
- MARIA What?
- HUGO Mum and Dad are splitting up!
- MARIA *(Turning the music down).* No!
- HUGO Dad's leaving. He just told Mum.
- MARIA Go and watch cartoons, Hugo.



TWO



(Hugo's house. Hugo is restless, with the note and the trainer in his hands).

MARIA Would you mind telling me why you're pacing up and down outside my room?

HUGO The secret message ...

MARIA What's it say?

HUGO I have to find out who sent it.

MARIA Why?

HUGO Because he's just like me.

MARIA It's from a boy?

HUGO Yes. But from another world.

MARIA *(Laughs)*. You're from another planet.

HUGO He's, he's ... *(He becomes thoughtful)*. He's just like me but with worse luck.

MARIA Let me read the letter!

HUGO No way!

(They start wrestling with each other).

MARIA Give to me!

EVERYBOY

HUGO Get your hands off it, it's mine!

MARIA Is he from Mars?

HUGO No, he's from Mondia.

MARIA Give it to me!

HUGO I said no! Mum!

(They continue wrestling with each other).

MOTHER Stop fighting, you two!

MARIA Hugo wants to find the idiot who sent him the letter.

MOTHER The one in the trainer?

HUGO Yes!

MOTHER Darling, one sociopath, your father, is enough for this house.

HUGO You're wrong, Mum. Whoever wrote this is very brave.

MARIA So you're telling us it was Superman who wrote it!

HUGO Maria, you get stupider by the day.

MARIA Mum, it's your duty as a mother, in the interests of your son's safety, to find out what that piece of paper says.

HUGO You're such a ... !

MOTHER Enough! Hugo, show me the piece of paper.

HUGO It's private.

MOTHER I'm your mother.

HUGO And I'm your son. I may be small but I have a right to keep some things secret.

MOTHER That's true. But you can forget about looking for that boy. It's probably some paedophile making it all up, just like on the TV.

HUGO But I've got to find him! It's super-mega-important!

MOTHER No!

HUGO Please take me to find him!

MOTHER No way. When you get good marks in all your subjects, maybe we can talk. But I'm not promising anything.

HUGO Okay.

MOTHER Now go and do your homework, the pair of you, and stop fighting.

MARIA You're such a sucker, Mum.

MOTHER And you're grounded this Friday.

THREE



(Hugo's room).

HUGO *(Reading his piece of paper). Super-interesting!*

FATHER *(Enters suddenly. Hugo hides the piece of paper).* We have to talk, son. Don't worry, nothing's wrong.

HUGO You're leaving?

FATHER I've been posted to another branch of the bank to learn the new software. The employees are starting to know more about these things than I do!

HUGO What about Mum?

FATHER I'll be back on weekends.

HUGO But ...

FATHER There's nothing to worry about.

HUGO But ...

FATHER Son, I'm worried about losing my job. They're firing a lot of people.

HUGO But you'll be living only three streets away ... Maria told me.

- FATHER *(Uncomfortable, not knowing what to say).* I'll phone every day, and on Sundays you can come to the football with me and my friend Boris. I'll buy you the shirt and cap. The six days will fly by ...
- HUGO And Maria?
- FATHER She has her own credit card, all to her self. She's perfectly happy ... What's up, son?
- HUGO I don't know ...
- FATHER Do you want me to buy you something?
- HUGO I want you to take me to see the boy who made my trainers.
- FATHER But ... What for?
- HUGO Because he's my friend.
- FATHER But you've never met him.
- HUGO You don't understand these things, Dad.
- FATHER Okay, but it won't be for a while ... I've got lots to sort out first.
- HUGO Summer?
- FATHER Summer you have to go to that camp to work on your English. We've talked about that.
- HUGO But it's only a few hours away in the car.
- FATHER I'm not driving a thousand kilometres to visit the armpit of Mondia, with all those factories and pollution. I'm not spending what little holidays I get on this nonsense.
- HUGO You're leaving, aren't you?

EVERYBOY

FATHER Only for a few months, no more ...

HUGO But you're leaving ...

FATHER *(Heads for the door, then hesitates)*. I'm going, but I'll be back. And when someone comes back it's like they've never been gone.

HUGO No ...

FATHER *(Very nervous, feeling guilty)*. Okay. Let's find a day to go and see that boy. I'll get the secretary to check my diary.

FOUR



(Hugo is in his room, reading the letter for the umpteenth time).

KAM

“I am Kam Sima and I am ten. I live in a factory, in the country of Mondia, in the city of Sincielo. I made these shoes for you all by myself. My factory is very big but I have known it since I was born, so I could go to the different sections to make you the shoes. It was easy with all these cool machines. I live here with my mother and father and last year I learned how to write. I have a sister who is fifteen called Lillith, but she does not live with us, she lives in the city of Gris, where she works in a factory that makes powdered milk. I do not remember what she looks like any more because she left when I was very little, but I have a photo of her that my mother gave me. My dad went to see her two years ago but I could not go. When I grow up, I will be able to leave this place and find her. Then, when I see you on the street wearing these shoes, I will recognise you and we will be friends. I do not have any friends at the moment, but that is okay.”

FIVE



(Hugo's bedroom, which is now plastered with photographs of Sincielo, of factories, of shoes, etc, and with all sorts of maps, diagrams, etc. Mother and Father can be heard arguing in the living room).

HUGO Mum, Dad ... I got a ten in maths!

MOTHER So you passed?

FATHER What more could you ask for?

MOTHER Hugo, go to your room, please, I'm talking to your father.

HUGO I came top of the class!

FATHER Do as your mother says, Hugo.

(Hugo leaves).

MOTHER It's been nearly a year now. You disappear when it suits you, you come home when it suits you ... Very convenient! Do as you please while I take care of your children ... !

TV SCREEN When having a marital crisis, it's important to shout a lot and to communicate as little as possible ...

FATHER Oh, give me a break! I'm sick to death of this!

TV SCREEN To blame the other and not to admit one's own mistakes ...

MOTHER It's your fault, you gutless sleazebag, not mine!

TV SCREEN And to display contempt and superiority.

FATHER I don't know why I ever married you. I knew you were hysterical!

MARIA (*Enters Hugo's room. Hugo is studying*). I'm going out. I won't be back tonight. If they ask, tell them I'm staying at a girlfriend's place.

HUGO But you're grounded. You're not allowed.

MARIA So what?

HUGO Are you going out with the guy with the motorbike?

MARIA What's it matter to you? Haven't you got enough to worry about with this assembly line you're building in here?

HUGO It's where my friend lives.

MARIA How did you manage to cram so much crap into such a small space?

HUGO I saw you smoking the other day with the guy with the motorbike ...

MARIA If you tell anyone, you're dead. Get it? You just keep studying your little drawings and shut up.

HUGO But it gives you cancer and stinks.

MARIA How would you know? You've just been brainwashed.

HUGO Do you take pills with him?

EVERYBOY

MARIA I can take whatever I want and I don't have to explain it to anyone, especially some kid like you.

HUGO So people tell me.

MARIA Mind your own business! I've been hearing this garbage from you for the past year now.

HUGO You can't go out, you're grounded!

MARIA Say a word and, I swear, I'll trash your new bike. Get it? I'm out of here. I can't deal with those two anymore!
(She leaves).



ILLUSTRATION III: «SINCIELO»

SIX



(Hugo goes to Maria's room, which is empty. He sits down, with a serious expression, and crosses his arms. Maria enters).

MARIA What are you doing in my room? Get out!

HUGO We need to talk.

MARIA What's gotten into you?

HUGO Business.

MARIA *(Starts to laugh).* Business?

HUGO *(Produces a banknote).* Nice, huh? If you agree to the deal, it's yours.

MARIA You're joking! I didn't know I had the Godfather for a brother. Okay, don Corleone, tell me what you're after.

HUGO I want you to go to the bus station and buy me a ticket for Sincielo.

MARIA You're out of your mind.

HUGO Everyone promises to take me, then they forget about it. I'm fed up. So I've decided to do it myself. I'm off to see Kam.

- MARIA You're going to go see some kid who probably doesn't exist or is a juvenile delinquent or something?
- HUGO Well, you'd know all about it, wouldn't you, with that boyfriend of yours?
- MARIA I'm going to kill you ... and for real this time.
- HUGO Whoa, whoa ... ! Remember what I said about the money.
- MARIA I couldn't care less about your stupid money!
- HUGO Really? You couldn't care less about buying nice stuff for yourself? Or a present for your Hell's Angel?
- MARIA You really should join the mafia when you grow up. What do you want me to do?
- HUGO Go to the bus station and buy me a return ticket to Sincielo, an open one, so I can go whenever I want. It should cost you 81.50. Here's a hundred. Keep the change. When you hand over the ticket, I'll give you the rest.
- MARIA You don't trust me?
- HUGO Of course I don't. It's my life savings.
- MARIA You'll need more than that. Where are you going to sleep?
- HUGO I'll find something online.
- MARIA You can't book without a card.
- HUGO I'll get a hold of Mum's.
- MARIA You're going to get into so much trouble.

EVERYBOY

HUGO You think? With everything that's going on here at the moment, they won't even notice I'm gone.

MARIA You're so annoying, believe me, they'll notice.

HUGO Deal?

MARIA Deal. But only if you don't tell them I helped you.

HUGO Promise.

MARIA Hugo, are you really going to do this?

HUGO To be honest, I'm not sure ...

MARIA Be careful. And if it looks suspicious, come straight back.

HUGO Sure. I've studied the map of the city, I know the factory by heart, I know where the medical centre and the police station are, and ...

MARIA Okay, okay, whatever. That's your business.

HUGO When will you buy it?

MARIA Tomorrow, after school. My boyfriend'll take me.

HUGO Perfect!

MARIA I could do with running away myself one of these days.

HUGO You want to come with me?

MARIA Travel with you? Are you out of your mind?

HUGO I'll ring you when I get there.

MARIA Oh, one more thing.

HUGO What?

MARIA If you don't come back, can I have your computer?

SEVEN



(Hugo enters the house and finds Mother crying).

HUGO What's wrong, Mum?

MOTHER Nothing, darling.

HUGO But you're crying ... Is your credit card not working again?

MOTHER No, Hugo ... Go and see if you like your cake.

(Hugo stays by her side, unnerved by seeing her like this).

MOTHER Why not go and invite your friends over for your birthday?

HUGO What about Dad?

MOTHER *(Crying)*. Your father is very busy at work and can't come. But he left a present for you in your room.

HUGO What about Maria?

MOTHER When she found out how busy your father is with you-know-what, she slammed the door and took off. The way that girl is going, we'll need new hinges ...

HUGO And is 'you-know-what' going to take Dad a long time?

MOTHER *(Takes Hugo's head in her arms and cries)*. Yes, Hugo, 'you-know-what' is going to take him a very, very long time ...

(The telephone rings).

HUGO It's probably Dad calling to say he's coming over!

MOTHER Hi, Mum ... I'm feeling better, thanks ... Hugo's here ... No, I can't go to the sales with you, it's his birthday. It's bad enough his father's not here ... *(She cries)*. I can't believe this is happening!

HUGO Mum, please don't cry, it gives me an ache here. *(He touches his stomach. Then he covers his ears)*.

MOTHER I suspected something for a while, but ... Then one day he comes home and says that I'm too wrapped up in my anxieties to see what's happening ... How could he do this to us? Yes, I've taken another Valium, but it hasn't helped ... I'd love to see the new shop you mentioned, but I have to get ready for Hugo's thing. *(Hugo calls her gently)*.

MOTHER *(Holding the receiver to her chest)*. Yes, darling?

HUGO I'd think I'd rather have a party just with my friends. I'm ten now, I'm almost a teenager ... Why don't you go shopping with grandma?

MOTHER *(Laughs)*. Okay, Mum, I'll come with you ... Your grandson is going to throw his own party. Get ready. I'll come over and pick you up. I'm heading off now ...

HUGO Promise not to cry? Mums shouldn't cry. That's for kids.

MOTHER You be good, okay? Oh! I forgot! I haven't had a chance to buy you anything, so take this card, there's a little bit left on it, and download a game you want. Give me a kiss ...

(She kisses him and leaves. Hugo is left on his own, thinking. He stares out the window. Then he takes a large bin bag and puts his birthday cake and all the decorations in it, and starts surfing the internet).

PC SCREEN They've all abandoned you.

HUGO Get lost ... *(He moves to a different site).*

PC SCREEN You're a grown-up now. It's time to leave the nest ... Go for it ...

HUGO I shouldn't.

PC SCREEN A day with him is priceless. For everything else, there's Mastercard.

HUGO You're right ... I've got Mum's card. She wouldn't notice for a couple of days. But I can't ... I'd get into so much trouble.

PC SCREEN Divorce! I want a divorce!

HUGO Give it a rest!

PC SCREEN Divorce!

HUGO Alright! Should I go find Kam?

PC SCREEN Divorce!

HUGO That's it. I'm going find Kam. I'll tell him I got his trainers, and we'll go rescue his sister with my money ...



ILLUSTRATION IV: «I WILL RECOGNISE YOU AND WE WILL BE FRIENDS»

EIGHT



(Hugo is holding a backpack. He puts it under the bed and takes it back out, again and again).

HUGO

But later I wasn't so sure about running away. I knew Sincielo by heart, but I was afraid to go by myself. So instead I decided I had to grow up fast, to learn as much I could first, to get stronger. That way I wouldn't be scared, and I could go wherever I wanted. Plus Mum would have been worried sick, and my sister as well ... Well ... Anyway, I put the trip off until I could convince my parents. *(Mother and Father can be overheard arguing)*. But then I changed my mind again. I just needed an excuse to get away for a bit.

NINE



HUGO One day Mum had to sign a permission form for me from school for a summer camp. She didn't look at the sheet of paper I handed her because she was trying on a new shirt. The next day, before I set off, she gave me a kiss.

MOTHER *(She is speaking on the telephone and interrupts her conversation to talk to Hugo).* Be careful, and have fun.

HUGO Don't worry, Mum.

MOTHER Don't forget to ring. Did you leave the number?

HUGO I'll send it to you, don't worry ... Mum ...

MOTHER A kiss for my big boy.

HUGO I love you.

MOTHER Are you okay? *(She continues her telephone conversation).* And I ran into him with her again! I think he's getting a bit of you-know-what with her ... How could he? With that scrawny creature! The miserable thing's so skinny!

HUGO Mum, please stop going on about this, it'll give us both a stomach-ache.

- MOTHER *(Putting the telephone aside for a moment)*. What was that?
- HUGO I think you should go shopping and book a nice holiday or whatever ... Stop going on about this, stop popping those pills ... And stop crying. Mums ...
- MOTHER No crying. *(She hugs him)*. My boy ... *(She cries)*.
- HUGO No more crying. Promise? It gives me a ...
- MOTHER *(On the telephone again)*. Did you hear what my son said? You can tell he's nothing like his father.
- HUGO *(Angry)*. I'm off ... You forgot to say she's got big boobs and is half Brazilian.
- MOTHER What's that? You know her? You've seen her?
- HUGO Let me go, Mum! That hurts!
- MOTHER So now you're on his side, are you?
- HUGO Leave me alone!
- (Hugo breaks free and runs out)*.

TEN



HUGO

Not even Maria cottoned on that there are no summer camps in March. I don't think anyone really lived there at home. They were all just playing hide-and-seek. That's why it was so easy for me to sneak out. They wouldn't realise I was gone for a fortnight. I ... Whenever I got really scared I thought of Kam, which made my stomach ache ... and about those pirates of the Caribbean, of course!

Getting on the bus was easy. Everyone stared at me, but no-one asked me anything. It was a really long trip. I forgot to buy a sandwich before I got on, so I was really hungry until the first stop. Then it got dark, and I fell asleep, and when I woke up we were there.

ELEVEN



- HUGO Sincielo is just like I imagined. Chock-full of factories and fumes. People everywhere. You have to look where you're going, just like at carnival in southern Mondia. Everything's buzzing. Markets, ultra-modern buildings and run-down houses, bikes, motor-bikes, cars, buses, pedestrians. No-one stops or looks around or says anything to each other. I didn't have far to go. You could see the trainer factory from the bus station. I couldn't resist having a peek. I felt like I knew the place backwards already! There was a man standing near the fence, so I went up to talk to him.
- HUGO Good morning, mister.
- ASTAROTH What do you want?
- HUGO Man, he sounds like my sister!
- HUGO I'm looking for a ten year-old boy called Kam.
- ASTAROTH No-one here's under fourteen. It's not allowed.
- HUGO Whoops, you're right. Sorry, I meant fourteen year-old.

EVERYBOY

ASTAROTH There are thousands of youngsters here, I can't possibly know them all. Have you been speaking to the police?

HUGO He's my friend. He wrote me a letter.

ASTAROTH (*Laughs*). No, I don't know him, but you can go and ask about him at reception, if you want.

HUGO Thanks very much.

ASTAROTH (*Blocking his way*). You're hiding something from me, aren't you?

HUGO Why would I do that?

ASTAROTH Good ... Hmm ... How old are you?

HUGO Ten ... I mean fourteen.

ASTAROTH I tell you what, I've got a vacancy in the kitchen, helping one of the cooks and serving the food in the canteen ... It's only a few hours a day ...

HUGO (*Pushing through*). Thanks. I'll ask my mother if I can come and work here instead of going to summer camp.

HUGO **I spent the rest of the day asking every child and every woman who looked like she might have been a mother, although most of the women were barely over twenty.**

HUGO Do you know a boy called Kam Sima? He's fourteen but really ten.

HUGO **But people always answered with Maria's favourite words.**

MARIA No, no, no.

- HUGO **How many people have I talked to? A hundred? A thousand?**
- ASTAROTH *(Laughing)*. And what if 'Kam', as he calls himself, gave you a fake name?
- HUGO No, he wouldn't do that ... because I know he always tells the truth.
- ASTAROTH But you don't know him. I bet he doesn't.
- HUGO I know him — not by sight, but I know him.
- HUGO **Hours and hours went by ...**
- ASTAROTH You'll never find him unless you stay here for a while.
- HUGO That's a possibility.
- ASTAROTH If fate doesn't find you your friend today, it's because it doesn't want you to meet him, for reasons best known to it.
- HUGO Do you know Kam Sima? Do you know him? Please, have you seen him?
- ASTAROTH I told you, you won't find him. So, how about it, kitchen-hand? Going once, going twice ...
- HUGO I can only stay for two weeks.
- ASTAROTH Go find an apron.

TWELVE



HUGO I took my backpack to hangar K, a huge workers' dormitory, with row after row of beds, just like in those soldier movies. It was amazing. You could eat in bed, smoke in bed, jump on the bed, whatever, without your mother hassling you. Plus I was earning money for the first time in my life, half a Mondia dollar a day ... I'd have heaps by the time I got back! Every morning they woke me up at six and I helped out the cook, who was really bossy, until lunch-time, when I had to serve the food ...

HUGO Here you go, mister ... Do you know Kam Sima ... ?
No ...? I'm sorry too ...

HUGO **But I kept at it ...**

HUGO Have you seen a boy called ... ? Okay ... Well, please try to remember the name in case you come across him ...

- HUGO Another problem was that the other kitchen-boys started bullying me. They made fun of me and threw food at me so the cook would tell me off ... although sometimes ...
- ASTAROTH Leave the boy alone or I'll send you to the Wind House! You hear me?
- HUGO They were after my tablet.
- ASTAROTH They'll get used to you. It's just a question of time.
- HUGO I can't find Kam anywhere. It's been over a week ...
- ASTAROTH Don't worry, you'll end up liking the factory even without Kam. Just you see.
- HUGO Mr Astaroth, would you mind having a word to the cook to let me go and look for Kam in the other building?
- ASTAROTH I'm sorry, it's impossible to leave here without a special permit.
- HUGO Could you at least put up these signs I've made?
- ASTAROTH That I can do. Give them to me.
(Hugo gives him the signs and continues to serve the food).
- HUGO Do you know Kam? Yes, his name is Kam Sima, he's my friend ...
(Astaroth takes the signs and throws them in the bin).

HUGO I was sure I would find him. The problem was I wouldn't get much time with him before I had to go home. Meanwhile the kitchen-boys were getting meaner and meaner. I had to let them take my tablet. When they kept going, I let them take my watch and finally my trainers, so I had to wear a pair with holes in them, but even that didn't keep them happy ...

HUGO Leave me alone, you hear me? Get away from me!
(Taking a knife). Leave me alone!

(The boys hit Hugo and throw him to the ground. His nose starts bleeding. Suddenly a boy appears from nowhere doing karate).

KAM Get out of here or I'll beat you to a pulp!

HUGO That was amazing! They just took off!

KAM What are you doing wearing those worn-out trainers?
I made them ... I did the whole Star Wars series.

HUGO You're Kam!

KAM How do you know?

HUGO I found your message!

KAM Wow! Really? So that's why you were looking for me. The whole factory knew about it, but my mum was scared. That's why I didn't come before ... At least now everyone knows you're way too weird to be working for the cops.

HUGO I'm ... I'm so happy!

KAM Me too! This ... this is so amazing!

HUGO *(Almost crying)*. I'm so happy! This is better than meeting Santa Claus.

KAM I always knew you'd come.

HUGO And I always knew you'd be waiting for me.
(The two boys shake hands, then hug).

KAM Thanks for coming.

HUGO Thanks for inviting me.



ILLUSTRATION V: «I MADE THESE SHOES FOR YOU ALL BY MYSELF.»

THIRTEEN



- HUGO From then on everything was different. The boys in the kitchen stopped hitting me, and Kam came every day after work to find me. He always had something new to show me.
- KAM Let's go to the storeroom. That's where they keep the rubber for the soles. It's really fun.
- HUGO Every now and then we would go and bounce up and down on giant rolls of plastic, build slippery-dips out of piles of boxes, make disguises out of the fabrics, and ...
- KAM Found you! Now it's my turn to hide!
- HUGO And play hide-and-seek in the dark, which I wasn't scared of anymore ... (*Looking for Kam among the high stacks of things in the huge warehouse*). Found you!
- KAM So fast! Amazing! You always win!
- HUGO Really? Okay, what'll we do now?
- KAM How about I show you how to make a pair of trainers? It's super-easy.
- HUGO How come they let you go so early today? Shouldn't you still be there? You're going to get busted.

EVERYBOY

KAM I told them I was sick. But you're right, we can't let them see me playing with you. I've got an idea.

HUGO What?

KAM Let's go look at the girls' legs. I know a place where you can stare at them from underneath while they're sitting down.

HUGO Girls? How disgusting!

(They run off and stare from their hiding place at the girls working on the production line).

HUGO I can't see anything!

KAM Have a look here. What do you reckon?

HUGO I prefer chicken legs.

KAM That one on the left is called Priya. She looks like my sister. I used to come and stare at her nearly every day before you and me met.

HUGO That one is pretty.

KAM Maybe you can marry her.

HUGO I don't know. Girls are a pain. They're always in a bad mood, they always say no, they always think they're right. You're lucky you don't have to live with one.

KAM You think? I really want to go and see my sister.

HUGO We should go and see her with your parents.

KAM I can't stand my parents. They argue non-stop.

HUGO So are they going to get divorced like mine?

- KAM No, but my mum is permanently annoyed because she doesn't want to live here in the factory and because my dad let them take Lillith away. When I rescue her, I'm going to get out of this place and see the world ...
- HUGO We need to get her back.
- KAM How?
- HUGO I've got my mum's card. All we've got to do is sneak out and find her. You've got the address, don't you? We could go to the bus station right now.
- KAM To check out the timetable and plan everything ... We should try go this week, if we can.
- HUGO **Great! We decided to leave the following day, on the 10 o'clock bus, but when we went to pay for the tickets the card didn't work. It was the first time this had ever happened.**
- KAM Can't you call your parents?
- HUGO They would go berserk at me.
- KAM Then we'll have to save up.
- HUGO And get our hands on money whichever way we can.
- KAM Let's head back to the factory. We'll think of something.
- HUGO **I racked my brains to think of how we could find the money for such a long trip.**
- ASTAROTH Where've you been? Shouldn't you be working?
- KAM I had a stomach ache and Hugo came with me to the infirmary since he'd finished his shift in the kitchen.

EVERYBOY

ASTAROTH Don't lie to me! You haven't been to see the doctor.
You've been slacking.

HUGO We weren't doing anything wrong!

KAM Keep quiet, Hugo, don't say a thing!

ASTAROTH You lazy good-for-nothing, you'll pay for this! (*Beating Kam violently*). You're lucky I know your parents, otherwise I'd fire you! You know where you'll be spending the next two days, don't you?

KAM Please, no, not the Wind House!

HUGO What's that?

KAM Run, Hugo, get out of here!

ASTAROTH Hugo, go to the kitchen. You won't be seeing him for a couple of days. After that you can have his bad influence back.

FOURTEEN



HUGO The Wind House turned out to be hangar seven, the highest spot in the whole compound. The wind howled through there. People said it was the howls of former workers. They gave you only just enough to eat, you had to sleep on a mat, and it was dark the whole time.

Kam! I stole this from the kitchen for you ... How can I pass it through? Are there really rats in there?

KAM Are you sure no-one saw you? On your right, in the corner, you'll see a hole.

HUGO Are there spiders in there?

KAM No, I haven't seen any rats or spiders.

HUGO *(Crouching down and passing the food through)*. A burger and some biscuits.

KAM Great, thanks a lot!

HUGO I saw your dad. He looks worried. In fact, he didn't eat today so he could give you his burger.

KAM Let's talk about something else.

HUGO Why?

- KAM He let them steal my sister. It's his fault.
- HUGO I see ... um ... (*Trying to change the subject*). I made a bit of money selling pastries on the side.
- KAM Try not to get caught ... I was thinking we could also sell CDs. We could record them in secret in the office.
- HUGO We can record folksongs from the South. You don't hear about southern Mondia much here, do you?
- KAM Good idea. And what about doing something for the girls as well?
- HUGO You just want to meet Priya.
- KAM Sure I do. So what?
- HUGO You need to get her out of your head. Girls are stupid, take it from me. I know lots of them at school. You'll get over her once we find your sister.
- KAM How long do you think it'll take us to raise the money?
- HUGO Well, our profit margin is likely to be slim given our low earning capacity ... Don't look at me like that, Dad's a banker. We'll have to think of something else.
- KAM Posters of girls.
- HUGO Not girls again!
- KAM We can print them in the office. I know how to get in. My dad's been there lots, to sort out stuff with administration.
- HUGO I'm sick of talking about women. Next we'll be talking about divorce. I'm out of here!
- KAM No, please don't go, don't leave me here all by myself!

- HUGO Only if you promise not to talk about girls.
- KAM Okay. But let's play something. What about parent-teacher evening?
- HUGO No, we did that before, so you knew what it was like.
- KAM What about rodeo? Let's play rodeo! You be the horse!
- HUGO But I'm out here and you're in there! I know, let's play tax returns!
- KAM No, it'll give us nightmares!
- HUGO Okay, since I can't see you in there, let's play confession! I'll be the altar boy ...

FIFTEEN



Days passed, and we got tireder and tireder. (Both are seen lying on the ground). Whenever we weren't working, we were trying to make extra money. (Hugo is seen serving food). I learned how to be a grownup ... I learnt how to wash, to iron, to cook and to serve up. As for the boss, Astaroth, we weren't the only ones who hated him. Everyone did.

KAM *(Inhales deeply from a paper bag)*. You want some?

HUGO Nope.

KAM See some amazing stuff with this ...

HUGO I don't think ...

KAM You think we'll make it? *(Exhales loudly)*. It's going so slowly! How much money have we got?

HUGO Ten Mondia dollars ... We'll make it. Just be patient ... But will she want to come back here?

KAM *(Inhales again)*. We were all happy in this factory. We were warm at night for the first time in our lives, we weren't hungry all the time anymore.

HUGO Like the African kids you see online?

- KAM Exactly! We were so happy when we got here from the countryside! But when I grow up I don't want to stay here. I'm going to travel ...
- HUGO I'm going to be a pilot, so I can visit you wherever you are!
- KAM No, I'll come and see you. I'll drop in when you least expect it, at you and my sister's house, because you two are going to get married.
- HUGO I can't stand girls! But she can sleep in Maria's room if she wants. It's really big.
- KAM Let's go sell that stuff in the backpack!
- HUGO I don't feel like it!
- KAM Come on, up you get!



SIXTEEN



(Astaroth's office in the factory. He is online).

PC SCREEN A ten year-old boy from southern Mondia is still missing.

(Mother appears on screen).

MOTHER Hugo had been acting strangely ever since his father left home for that scrawny creature. I'm not surprised he ran away.

PC SCREEN The police have clues as to his whereabouts and say they should solve the case by the end of the week.

(Father appears on screen).

FATHER His mother is a hysteric. It's perfectly understandable he ran away. No-one can put up with her at home.

PC SCREEN Is there any message you would like to give your brother?

(Maria appears on screen).

MARIA No.

ASTAROTH (*Spotting a poster in the background*). How did they get that? 'World Cup Final 1970, Estadio Azteca, Mexico City'? Pelé heading in a cross from Rivelino? What's going on here? When I find out how they got their hands on that, then they'll see. Oh, yes, they'll see alright!

(*Meanwhile, somewhere else in the factory...*).

KAM How much have we made?

HUGO Not much. It'll be next year by the time we get the money. We've got to come up with something to increase sales and rescue your sister before she gets a boyfriend. Believe me, I know what I'm talking about.

KAM When do you have to go home?

HUGO I should have left already ... It's been more than a month ... I can't miss my exams.

KAM But if they're so terrible why do you have to sit them?

HUGO So I can become a pilot and come and visit you every week when I grow up.

KAM I couldn't get any barbecued chicken. It was way too expensive.

HUGO We'll have to smuggle out some ham.

KAM I've got an idea. Let's leave messages in the next series of trainers so other kids come and help us. It worked before, so it might work again. The next lot goes out next week. We might have to work nights if we want to make it. What do you reckon?

- HUGO That's how I learned to make trainers. I was a total novice when I made my first pair (*Showing a half-mangled trainer*), but by the third I was an old hand. We put messages in them just like Kam did before. The problem was that Astaroth kept watching us the whole time ...
- KAM Look out, he's coming!
- HUGO But we kept at it, because we didn't have much time.
- ASTAROTH Get to work, you layabouts! And don't think I can't see you ... Why all the chit-chat? And why're you taking so long to finish every time? You're not getting paid those two hours of overtime, end of story ...
- HUGO That's unfair!
- KAM Shut up, Hugo! Just keep working.
- HUGO We hid lots and lots of messages, and we kept selling our stuff on the side to our loyal customers. People went nuts over Southern Soul: Twenty Songs from Mondia's South.
- KAM (*Handing out CDs*). Sorry, they've gone up to fifty cents ... Hugo! Have we got any posters of the Virgin of Guadalupe left?
- HUGO No, but we've got a few of Mother Teresa.
- KAM Careful, he's coming!
- ASTAROTH Did you think I wouldn't notice you were stealing from the office?
- KAM We never stole a thing.

EVERYBOY

ASTAROTH You go there every night, after messing around with the trainers.

KAM Just to use the computer, nothing else.

ASTAROTH You're stealing. You're a toxic presence in this factory!

KAM The only toxic thing in this factory is the glue you make us use, and you know it.

ASTAROTH How dare you talk to me like that? This factory dragged you and your family out of misery. Maybe you've forgotten the state you were in when you got here.

KAM I remember perfectly, that's why I know the only thing wrong with this place is you.

ASTAROTH Well, you can go and reflect on that for a long time with your friend, in the Wind House. Your pillaging is officially over.

KAM He was only keeping me company. He doesn't know the rules of this place.

ASTAROTH Well, you'll have plenty of time to explain them to him. Get out of my sight!

KAM Hugo, whatever happens, don't be scared. Understand?

HUGO Yes. *(Kam puts his hand on Hugo's shoulder. Both walk slowly towards the Wind House)..*

SEVENTEEN



(Hugo and Kam are in the Wind House, in the dark. The place is cold, with mats scattered around on the ground. Hugo is lying down, Kam sitting up).

KAM See? This place is not so bad.

HUGO I'm cold.

KAM Here, take these sacks. *(Putting the sacks over Hugo).*
Better?

HUGO Yes ... Is there anything to eat?

KAM Bread.

HUGO I'm sick of dry bread!

KAM We'll be out of here soon.

HUGO I remember the time we threw a whole cake in the bin
just because the icing wasn't vanilla.

KAM When we get out we'll eat cakes with all sorts of icing,
you wait and see ...

HUGO I'm dying to see my parents. What about you?

KAM No.

HUGO Don't tell me you're still mad at them? It's hard work
staying mad at your parents.

(Hugo coughs).

KAM Is your chest still hurting?

HUGO Yes ...

(A terrifyingly loud crash is heard).

HUGO It's the evil spirits again.

KAM I told you, there aren't any evil spirits!

HUGO I'm cold. *(He coughs).*

KAM Again? That's fear talking ... Come on, sing something with me!

HUGO No, I'm not scared.

KAM That's better.

(Another crash is heard).

HUGO You sure you're not scared?

KAM Okay, a bit ...

(A trembling voice is heard, calling Kam).

KAM I'm cold too!

(Kam gets under the sacks next to Hugo).

HUGO You know any ghosts?

KAM No.

HUGO Ever done anything bad to anyone?

KAM One time I stole a kid's marbles when he left them down near the animals, back when we lived in the country.

HUGO You think the boy's dead?

KAM Don't know.

(The voice calls more insistently).

HUGO It doesn't want to go away ... You think it wants to kill us?

KAM No idea ...

VOICE I've got some of those coconut pastries you like.

HUGO Since when do ghosts bring pastries?

KAM *(Talking to the voice).* What do you want from us?

VOICE For you to come over to the hole in the wall and take the rice and pastries.

HUGO I like the sound of this ghost. Go get the food ...

KAM No, you go.

HUGO It's you it's calling.

KAM You're the one who likes it.

HUGO You're the one it brought the food. Come on, it's a friendly ghost ... and I'm hungry ...

KAM *(Reluctantly).* Okay then ...

(Kam cautiously goes up to the hole in the wall).

VOICE Are you alright?

KAM Dad?

FATHER Yes, son ... Your mother is worried sick ... and so am I.

KAM *(Brusquely).* We're fine, thanks.

FATHER Don't speak to me in that tone of voice ...

KAM I said we're fine, which is what you wanted to know ...

FATHER Calm down, Kam ...

KAM No, you let them take Lilith away ... One day they came and took her, and you never mentioned it ever again.

FATHER You were very small.

KAM But I saw everything.

FATHER And what do you remember?

KAM That she was crying, Mum was crying, I was crying ...

FATHER Son, your sister was dying ... They took her away to look after her, and they saved her ... There was no other way of doing it ... and she stayed there, to pay off the debt ...

KAM Dad ... I don't remember that ... Why've you never told me?

FATHER Because you never asked.

KAM Dad, I'm ...

FATHER I'm sorry too, son ... and I want you to know that she's coming in the spring. It was going to be a birthday surprise for you.

KAM How long for?

FATHER She's coming to live with us.

KAM *(Jumping for joy)*. Seriously? That's amazing! Did you hear that, Hugo? Thanks, Dad!

HUGO Is she bringing a boyfriend?

FATHER Look after yourself, and don't get into any more trouble.

KAM I promise.

(Kam says goodbye, and he and Hugo happily tuck into the food).

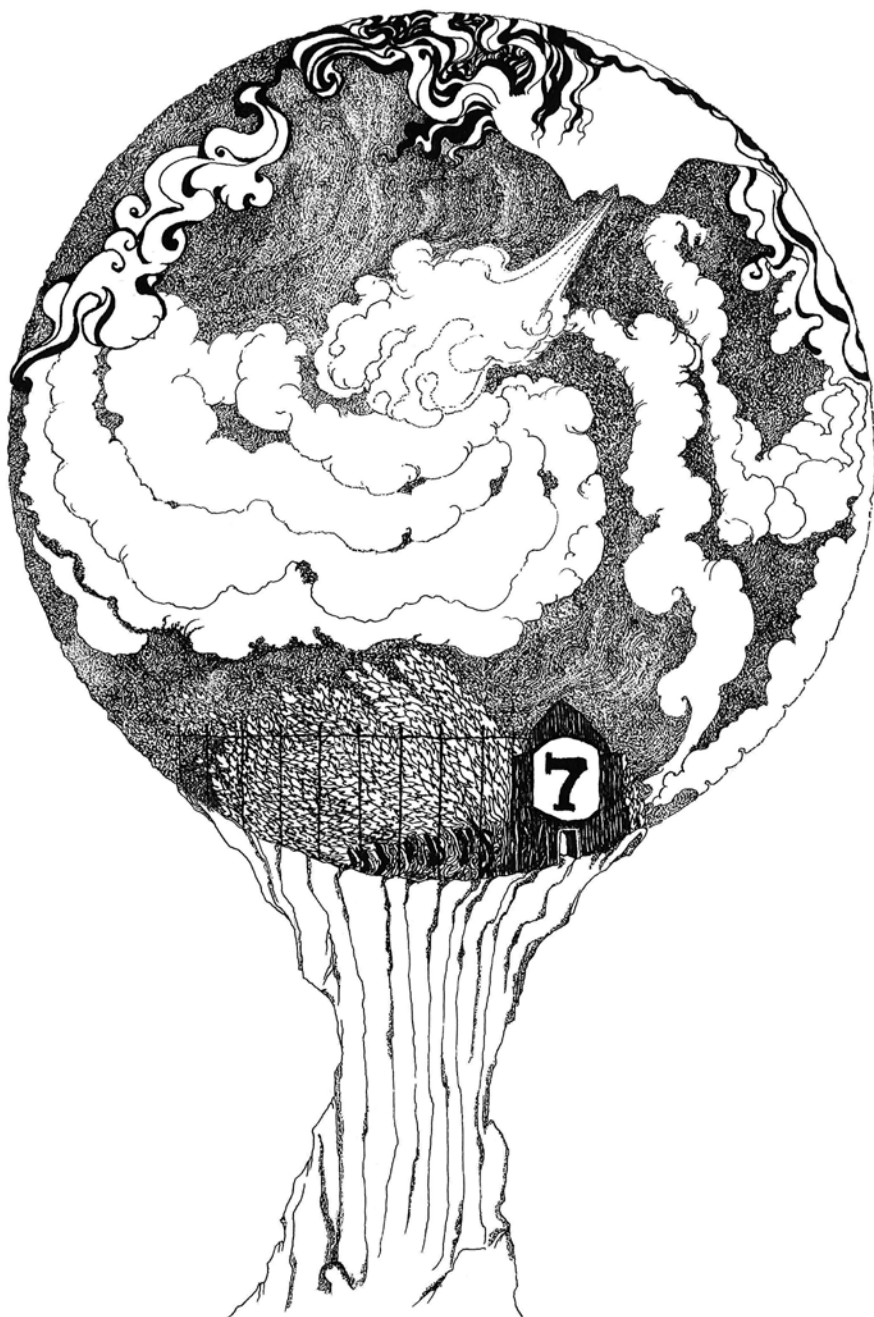


ILLUSTRATION VII: «HANGAR SEVEN, THE WIND HOUSE»

EIGHTEEN



(Hugo and Kam are still in the Wind House. Hugo coughs constantly).

KAM You're coughing more and more. I'll tell my father.
(Hugo coughs again).

HUGO *(Showing a bloody handkerchief).* Look what came out.

KAM You probably just banged your nose.

HUGO No, it's coming from my throat ... I want my Mum!

KAM We'll be out soon.

HUGO I'm cold ... and really thirsty ...

KAM Here's some water.

HUGO I want to leave ...

KAM Stop complaining. You're like a little girl ...

HUGO No, I'm a man! And when we get out of here I'm going
to beat the hell out of you!

KAM Sure ...

HUGO You think you know everything, don't you? Well, you don't ...

KAM Get some sleep. The fever's making you say stupid
things.

(Hugo gets up, coughing a lot).

HUGO You're so full of yourself! I just want to go home ...

KAM This is your home ... Hasn't it dawned on you that Astaroth isn't going to let you go?

HUGO I can go whenever I want!

KAM He knows everything that goes on in this city, and he'll find you sooner or later, like he would've if we'd gone up north.

HUGO I want to go home! *(Coughs and shouting)*. And you should go back to those rice paddies!

KAM This factory saved our lives. It's not perfect, but nowhere's perfect. Anyway, we're getting out of here tomorrow and no one, least of all me, wants you to leave. Why not try sleep for a bit?

(Hugo lies down, crying in silence).

KAM Stop crying! *(He covers his ears)*.

(Hugo cries. Pause).

(Someone opens the door. It is Astaroth).

ASTAROTH What's wrong with him?

KAM We need to get him to a doctor straight away.

ASTAROTH The factory nurse will do.

KAM Hugo needs to go to hospital.

ASTAROTH There's no need for that! Who knows what he might say there?

(Astaroth picks Hugo up and takes him out).

KAM Be strong, Hugo!

NINETEEN



(Hugo is in hospital).

HUGO I was taken to a super-modern hospital. There was so much equipment everywhere it looked like a spaceship. They gave me a videogame console and all the chocolate biscuits I wanted. The people were really nice, but they had these horrible needles. One day, a man from social services came to see me. He came back to see me a couple of times and told me that ...

PC SCREEN Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. The boy from the South who has kept all of Mondia, especially his hometown, on tenterhooks has been found. The search is finally over. His family are grateful for all the support they have received.

(Mother, Father and Maria appear on screen).

MOTHER Hugo, my darling ... We're waiting for you with open arms.

FATHER Hugo, I promise we'll spend more time together.

MARIA Hugo, you're going to be in so much trouble.

HUGO I really started to miss my family when I saw them on TV ... especially because Kam was still angry with me and hadn't even come to see me ...

(Someone knocks on the door).

HUGO Kam! Is that you?

MOTHER My darling!

HUGO Mum! Mummy!

(The whole family enters).

FATHER We're so happy to see you, son!

MARIA *(Giving him a kiss).* What a palaver! A few reports even said you'd been kidnapped by a satanic sect.

HUGO Serious?

(They keep hugging Hugo, bubbling over with joy).

MOTHER You've lost so much weight, my darling!

MARIA Yeah ... or that you were in a Buddhist monastery. I had to keep telling them you were more likely to end up a banker than a mystic.

HUGO Is Kam outside?

MOTHER There was a boy, but he ran off when he saw us. The nurses told us he'd spent all day and night outside your door ... Is that your friend?

HUGO He's not just my friend, he's my best friend, Mum.

MOTHER We'll find him and thank him. What's that?

HUGO Biscuits.

EVERYBOY

- MOTHER Well, they're going straight in the bin! From now on you'll be having lots of vegetables to get your strength back. Your mother's here now and you'll be better soon.
- HUGO But Mum ...
- MOTHER No buts! We need to get you out of here as soon as possible.
- FATHER I'll go get you another pillow.
- HUGO Mum, please hang onto the biscuits. From now on we're not going to throw anything out.
- MOTHER Alright, my angel, but ... let's go home.
- HUGO *(Pause)*. Which home?
- FATHER Both homes, son. There's no need to worry. Your mother and I have buried the hatchet, and we will never stop loving you.
- HUGO *(To Maria)*. For real?
- MARIA Yep. Now they both agree not to let me out ... and they go for dinner together more than ever.
- HUGO Does they get out of hand?
- MARIA They've got a horrible psychologist who busts them if they fight.
- HUGO And that's how we spent the afternoon, and the next one, and a couple more, until I got discharged. Then we went to the factory to say goodbye to everyone ... but I couldn't find Kam anywhere.

TWENTY



(Hugo and his family stand as the national anthem of Mondia is sung by uniformed workers. Hugo is in uniform too. Kam is hiding but Hugo sees him. He eyes Hugo but does not dare to talk to him. They exchange evasive but knowing looks, without approaching each other).

HUGO There was a band, television cameras, reporters, questions from all sides, lots of smiles, lots of new outfits, refreshments and lots of important people who wanted to be in all the photographs. My mother opened a new hangar at the factory ...

MOTHER *(Cutting a red ribbon).* It is an honour to be here with you today and to be the patroness of this new unit built to the highest environmental standards ...

HUGO They showered us with all presents of all sorts—even Maria, who got a motorbike and kept signing autographs like she was Madonna or something ...

MARIA As far as I'm concerned, you can run away whenever you like.

(Hugo stays alongside his family and receives a large gift from Kam).

EVERYBOY

- KAM *(Approaching Hugo shyly)*. I just wanted to say ...
(Kam runs off in tears. People applaud).
- HUGO Mum, could we take Kam back home with us?
- MOTHER We'll see, darling. For now we just need to get through all of this.
- HUGO **My father opened a new branch of the bank, which was apparently to be named after me ...**
- FATHER What could have been a sticky situation became an example of cooperation. What could have been a childhood trauma became a chance to mature. For this, I am grateful to everyone ...
- HUGO **But I couldn't see the boys from the kitchen anywhere or the ones from the factory ... Where had they all got to?**
- FATHER What an amazing place!
(Hugo and his family are saying goodbye to everyone in the factory).
- FATHER This is the way of the future!
- MOTHER Goodness, darling, what a lovely send-off!
- EVERYONE Thank you! Goodbye!
- HUGO *(Leaving the factory)*. Kam! Kam!
- MOTHER We don't have time, darling, we need to get to the airport or we'll miss our flight.
- HUGO I can't leave without seeing Kam!
- ASTAROTH Have a good flight! It's been a pleasure looking after your son until you got here. Bye for now, bye ...!
(Astaroth tries to shake Hugo's hand but Hugo refuses).

- MOTHER What's up, darling?
- TV REPORTER You must be over the moon!
- HUGO No, I'm not, because I didn't get to say goodbye to Kam or the other factory kids. I don't know what the story is. None of them are here.
- TV REPORTER What kids do you mean?
- HUGO The children who work here ... Who else do you think? Ask Astaroth about it. He's the boss.
- (The camera focuses on Astaroth, who bolts, chased by reporters).*
- MOTHER Son, we have to let the police know about this as soon as we get home. It's very serious.
- HUGO What's going on?
- (Kam is in the background, with a crowd of people between him and Hugo. Hugo shouts).*
- HUGO I'll be back as soon as possible, I promise!
- FATHER Let's go!
- (Hugo breaks free and hugs Kam).*
- HUGO Thanks for being my friend.
- (Kam kisses his own palm, then presses it hard against Hugo's).*
- KAM Thanks for being the best friend in the world!
- HUGO I'll come back soon, I promise ...
- (Kam shakes his head doubtfully and leaves).*
- FATHER Let's go, Hugo.
- MOTHER One more thing, darling.
- FATHER-MOTHER You're grounded ...



TWENTY-ONE



HUGO Time passed slowly. It was horrible. I had to get used to people staring at me in the street and girls wanting to give me sloppy kisses and asking me to write things in their diaries. To make matters worse, my parents took this grounding business seriously ...

(Hugo, Mother and Maria are eating).

HUGO I don't want any more.

MOTHER Well, you're eating it. We're not throwing food away. Remember the Wind House.

HUGO But you've piled so much onto my plate!

MOTHER So you grow big and strong.

MARIA I want some new jeans, Mum.

MOTHER You've got enough clothes already. Think of all the poor people who don't have anything.

MARIA This is all your fault! Before I could have whatever I wanted. Now if I stop wearing something for two weeks Mum sends it to the Third World.

HUGO So what? You've got plenty of clothes.

EVERYBOY

MARIA If you lot like this social work stuff, that's your problem.
I'm a globalised consumerist and proud of it!

MOTHER Finish your dinner or you won't get dessert.

MARIA See what I mean? I can't take this!

(Maria slams the door and leaves).

MOTHER Time for those new hinges ...

HUGO Can I go play football?

MOTHER Talk to your sister. You can't go on your own ... You're
not allowed until you turn fifteen.

HUGO That's unfair!

MOTHER It's an unfair world, as you of all people should know.

(Hugo goes to find Maria).

HUGO Can you take me to practice?

MARIA Only if you clean my room.

HUGO You're going to get it when I grow up!

(Hugo goes to his desk, annoyed, and sits down to write).

(The telephone rings)

MARIA I'll get it. (Answering the phone) Yes? ... (To Mother)
It's Dad. He wants to know if you're going over there
for dinner.

MOTHER Tell him I'm busy.

MARIA She says she's busy ... *(To Mother)*. He wants to know
if you're going out with that jerk from the estate
agents.

- MOTHER Tell him I am but that the only jerk I've ever gone out with is him.
- MARIA If I say that the psychologist's going to flip.
- MOTHER So ... tell him! And while you're at it tell him that if I'd known what a good friend he'd be I'd never have married him.
- (Hugo can be seen writing a letter).*
- HUGO I wrote every week, but Kam never answered my letters. He was obviously still angry with me. He'd forgotten he was still my best friend, the best friend in the world ...
- MARIA Deal?
- HUGO No.
- MARIA I'll take you to football if you clear the table and put the plates in the dishwasher.
- HUGO The plates.
- MARIA And the dishwasher.
- HUGO Plates.
- MARIA Or no football.
- HUGO Okay. Just hang on a minute, I'm finishing my letter so we can post it.
- MARIA Why do you write to Kam if he never writes back?
- HUGO So he knows I haven't forgotten him. Mum, can Kam come to stay this summer?
- MOTHER Yes, of course.

MARIA Are you going to hurry up or do you want me to go to football by myself?

HUGO I'll write to him when I get back.

MARIA Omar has asked me if I want to go to the movies with him. What do you think?

HUGO Is that the guy with the red car?

MARIA Yep.

HUGO Are you asking my opinion?

MARIA No, I want you to come with us. It's our first date and I'm nervous.

HUGO Okay. As long as you clear the table and there aren't any kisses or revolting stuff like that ...

MARIA He also wants your autograph.

HUGO If he pays for my ticket, fine. I'm saving up to see Kam.

MARIA I don't understand why, if you and Mum are taking Astaroth to court and they're paying for your flights ...

HUGO They haven't set a date for the case yet. I need to go much sooner than that.

MARIA And where's Astaroth at the moment?

HUGO Astaroth's in prison. He's an evil man.

MARIA And have you heard anything from Kam?

HUGO Mum's spoken to the police, social services, the factory, NGOs ... No-one knows what's happened to him.

TWENTY-TWO



- HUGO I wrote lots of letters to Kam inviting him to come and stay. I couldn't go and see him since my parents said I had to try and settle in again back home. Weeks went by without hearing from him, empty days when I felt really alone. My mother kept saying to me ...
- MOTHER Darling, you've felt things for a friend that one usually feels for the first time with a woman ...
- HUGO How can I make him like me again?
- MOTHER Hugo, I'm sure he thinks of you as much as you think of him, but not everyone expresses things the same way ...
- HUGO Months later, one afternoon after school, Mum had a surprise for me.
- MOTHER Look what's arrived for you!
- HUGO Mum! It's a letter from Sinciello, from Kam! At last!
- MOTHER I knew he'd write to you sooner or later ...
- HUGO It's Kam! We have to have him down here straight away! Promise?

MOTHER Yes, Hugo. He can come, as long as you don't leave again ...

(Hugo opens the letter anxiously).

LILITH 'Dear Hugo, This is Lilith, Kam's sister. I came back to Sincielo a few months ago. Kam has been very sick but he is now getting better. He suffered severe poisoning from the glue at the factory, which has left him paralysed down one side of his body. But the doctors say he will recover with time. He speaks about you non-stop. He dreams of travelling the world and going to see you. We wonder what southern Mondia is like. I will keep writing to you. I am so grateful for everything that you and Kam did to get me home. It was very brave. Best wishes, Lilith.'

(After reading the letter, Hugo goes to speak to his mother).

HUGO Mum! It was Kam's sister who wrote to me. Kam's sick. We've got to go there!

MOTHER We'll see.

HUGO He needs me!

MOTHER He's got his family. They'll take good care of him. You need to focus on your life here, so things can get back to normal.

HUGO That's unfair! How can you be so mean? I have to go! Don't you understand?

MOTHER It's you who doesn't understand! Your life is here!

HUGO Then I'll go on hunger strike!

MOTHER We're about to have dinner.

- HUGO ‘Lilith, my parents won’t let me go. I’ve stopped eating in front of them so they take me seriously, although I still eat in secret. But it’s not working. Mum says I could do with losing a few kilos and that I’ll start eating again soon enough. This week she’s made my favourite food three times and I don’t know how long I can keep it up. I may have to think of something else ... Can you think of anything? I really want to see Kam!’
- LILITH ‘Hugo, things are as they are. If fate wishes, you will see him soon. If not, then accept your fate and stop suffering. No-one can erase you from Kam’s heart. He is stable and will recover in time.’
- HUGO ‘Lilith, the only alternative is to get good marks, flatter my mum and ...’
- LILITH ‘Do what you must but no more than you should.’
- HUGO Mum, you look so trim lately!
- MOTHER Thank you, darling!
- HUGO And so beautiful ...
- MOTHER This is starting to sound suspicious.
- HUGO ‘I’m doing everything I possibly can ... I hope Mum appreciates my interest in supermarket specials, what with her new mania for saving money, and in sitting through all those romantic comedies on a Friday night ...’
- HUGO Mum, Julia Roberts looks so much like you!

EVERYBOY

MOTHER Seriously? Oh, Hugo! What a gentleman! I hope this has nothing to do with wanting to go to Sincielo ...

HUGO ‘But I think the most useful thing for me to do is to keep saving and to watch what I spend, since I don’t have a card. But it’s depressing how long it’s taking me to get the money together, especially since everything my mum finds on me ends up going to charity, now she’s what she calls a Catholic Buddhist.’

LILITH ‘He’s still suffering the after-effects of the glue but he’s got a lot of mobility back ...’

HUGO ‘That’s a relief ...’

LILITH ‘I’ve got good news: Kam is better and we’re all getting ready to see you. We’re all saving up for your trip too. How much do you need? Best wishes, Lilith.’

HUGO Mum! I have to go and see him! Don’t you understand?

MOTHER In summer.

HUGO How can you be so mean? How can you do this to me?

MOTHER You’ve had quite enough adventures for now. Go and do your homework!

HUGO Time passed slowly. Everything went back to normal, just like everyone wanted and just as boring. To make matters worse, I didn’t get to go that summer. Or the one after.

LILITH ‘The factory gives us everything but Kam keeps causing trouble. He has founded a union, to stop workers getting paralysed and because he thinks it’s unfair that we’re paid only 20 cents an hour. They fired Mum and now they’re threatening to do the same to us. Mum says it’s adolescence, that it’s an evil spirit that will go away in a while. Anyway, I’m sure you’ll talk some sense into him. We can’t go back to the countryside to starve. We lived well when we all had a job but now it’s just me and Dad ...’

HUGO While Kam became a revolutionary leader of the future, my only concern was to outgrow my clothes so it would dawn on Mum that I wasn’t a kid anymore.

MOTHER But growing up is reflected elsewhere in the body, darling, and if you don’t believe me look at your father. He’s a size 44. I’m glad we got divorced before he got fat ...

HUGO Until I turned 15.

FATHER-MOTHER-MARIA

(Singing). Happy birthday to you! *(Hugo cuts his cake).*
And this is from us! *(They give him a present).*

HUGO It’s a ticket, a plane ticket to Sincielo! It’s a ticket to Sincielo!



ILLUSTRATION IX: «EVERYBOY»

TWENTY-THREE



HUGO So I posted my letter, because she didn't use e-mail. 'Dear Lilith, I'm coming to Sincielo in June, after I finish my exams. Please let Kam know. I've got my ticket. Best wishes, Hugo.' After that I spent the day wondering what to pack ... The big question was what games to take. *(Hugo can be seen looking at games and toys, tossing various ones aside before picking them up again).* However, that night, on the news ...

PC SCREEN A shipment of trainers impounded by customs for several months finally made its way to several countries. But the product contained a surprise: a message for the children putting the shoes on.

HUGO Uh-oh ...
(Mother and Maria look at Hugo angrily).

PC SCREEN Those responsible are two children from Mondia: Kam, a boy who is said to have worked in the trainer factory in Sincielo, and a boy from the south who had run away from home. The pair broadcast a cry for help, which has only now, months later, been heard. Here we see one of the two, Kam, leaving the police station, where he made a statement.

Buyers are unable to wear the shoes, although the scale of the losses to the company is still not known.

HUGO Mum ... Will I go to jail too?

(Mother and Maria both nod).

HUGO What's say we forget about going to Sincielo?

MARIA I think this time you'll be grounded for thirty years.

HUGO Mum, don't get angry or you'll get high blood pressure.

MOTHER *(Furious).* Hugo! What in God's name have you done?

HUGO **From then on, my mother gave up Buddhism and devoted herself to good old-fashioned saints.**

MOTHER Dear Saint Jude, patron saint of lost causes! Dear Saint Monica, whose wayward son came good! What am I going to do with this boy?

MARIA Are we going to go bankrupt, Mum?

MOTHER *(Phoning Father hysterically).* Can you go rob the bank? What do you mean 'Why'? Because with this son of yours it's the only solution!

HUGO **Mum was crying and there was nothing I could do ...**

MOTHER But ... What got into you?

HUGO We needed money to rescue Lilith.

MOTHER And you couldn't just buy a lottery ticket like everyone else?

(Long pause. Things appear hopeless. Everyone is down-cast).

- MOTHER Soup? (The children decline). Steak? (*The children decline*). Ice cream?
- MARIA (*Taking the ice cream*). We shouldn't waste food, right?
(*Hugo and Mother remain downcast*).
(*Long pause. The situation remains unchanged*).
- HUGO **But then something happened.**
- PC SCREEN A new children's fashion craze is sweeping the developed world. All the kids want a message in their trainers. Now several non-governmental organizations have teamed up with leading footwear manufacturers to launch a new range.
- HUGO Mum ... what they're saying ... What does it mean?
- MARIA That you'll have to wait until your next adventure with Kam to go to prison ...
- HUGO (*Jumping for joy*). Yay! Hooray!
- MOTHER This doesn't mean that ruining hundreds of pairs of trainers was right.
- HUGO Am I grounded again?
(*Mother nods*).
- HUGO So I won't be going to Sincielo?
- MOTHER We'll see.
- HUGO While I waited for Mum to calm down, I continued to swap letters with Lilith.
(*Hugo's voice alternates with Lilith's*).

LILITH/HUGO 'Dear Hugo. Ever since they found your messages, things have changed completely for us. Kam spends all his time on TV, talking about children's rights. He's started making lots of money and has gone back to school, because he says he wants to be a lawyer. We've bought a really nice house by the river ... Our first house! It's got ...

HUGO/LILITH Their first house has got four rooms, and they've put one aside for me. Kam is almost as famous as Brad Pitt. He's been swamped with offers of advertising deals, especially by the company we work for, but he's determined to become a modern-day Robin Hood. They're even planning to make a Hollywood film about him.

LILITH At last we can buy everything we want at the supermarket! Can you believe it?

HUGO Lilith bought herself a motorbike, and so did her father. Meanwhile Kam threw himself into giving lectures and making ads about human rights.

(Hugo can be seen walking around the trainer factory).

HUGO And I returned ... Hi! (He is greeted by the workers).

LILITH At last!

HUGO Are you Lilith?

LILITH Yes ...

HUGO I'm ... I'm so happy!

LILITH Me too! This ... this is incredible!

HUGO (Almost crying) So happy! I've been looking forward to meeting you for ages!

LILITH I always knew you'd come.

HUGO And I always knew we'd meet.
(They shake hands).

HUGO Where is he?

LILITH He's not here. He's working ...

HUGO Is he still angry with me?

LILITH I don't know.

HUGO Either way, I'm so happy to be here ...

LILITH Thanks for coming.

HUGO Thanks for inviting me ...

LILITH I ...

HUGO Me neither ...
(Lilith laughs flirtatiously).

HUGO Oh, yeah ... Just one question. Do you have a boyfriend?
(Lilith shakes her head).
(Kam appears and covers Hugo's eyes. They hug).

HUGO/KAM *(Hugging).* My best friend in the whole wide world!

PC SCREEN And they lived happily ever after ...

CURTAIN

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