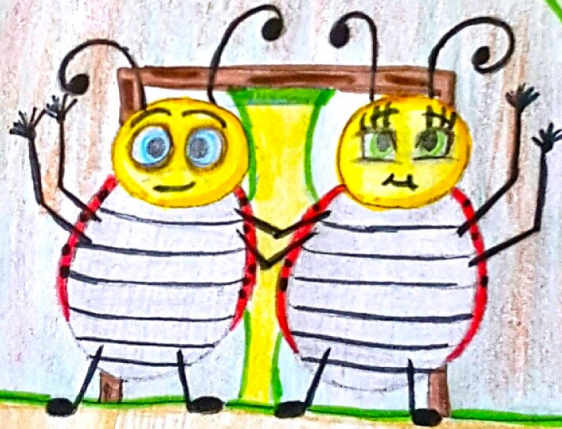


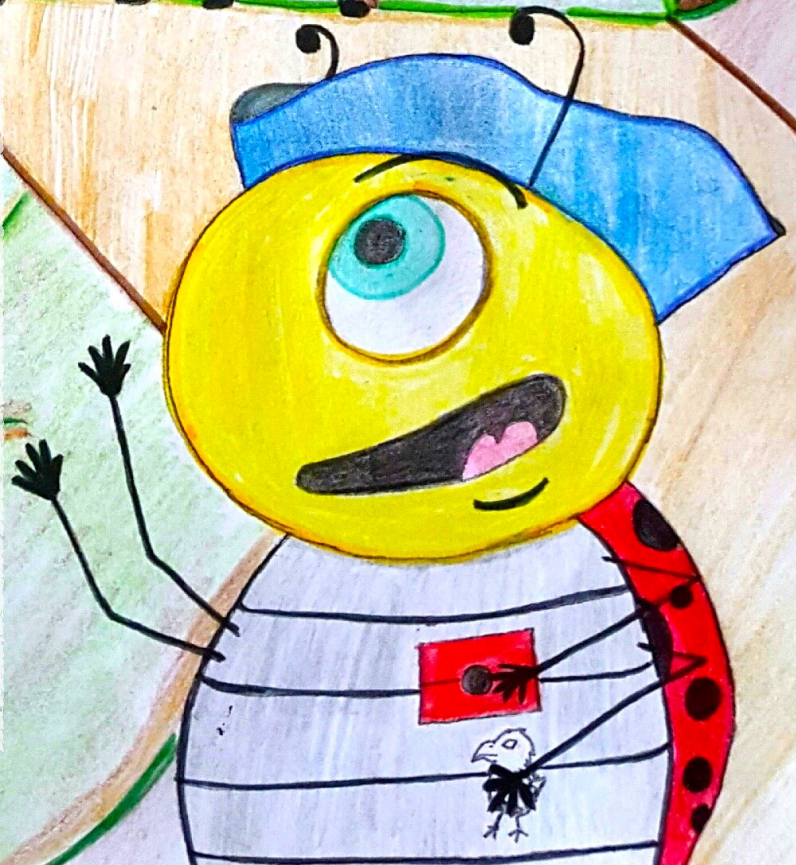
LAFAYETTE THE LADYBUG

There once lived a little ladybug named Lafayette. Lenny was his papà, and Lisa was his mamma. They all lived in the city of Chavaniac in central France where the French hero Lafayette had lived. Ever since his birth, he had heard tales of his father's adventures with Napoleon Bonaparte and how his papà had become a Freedom Seeker. Lafayette was named after the French hero who had helped the Americans win their independence from Great Britain.



One day, Lafayette received a letter. "How exciting to get a message from cousin Lucas all the way in England!" he exclaimed, ripping open the envelope. "Look, papà, mamma! Lucas has asked me to visit him in Waterloo, Belgium! He says that there is a surprise waiting for me. May I go? Please, please? Oh PLEASE?"

"Well, I suppose you may," said Lafayette's father. You're old enough to leave Elba by yourself. Go and have an adventure! I'll have to be leaving too. I have a secret Freedom Seekers meeting that I don't want to miss."





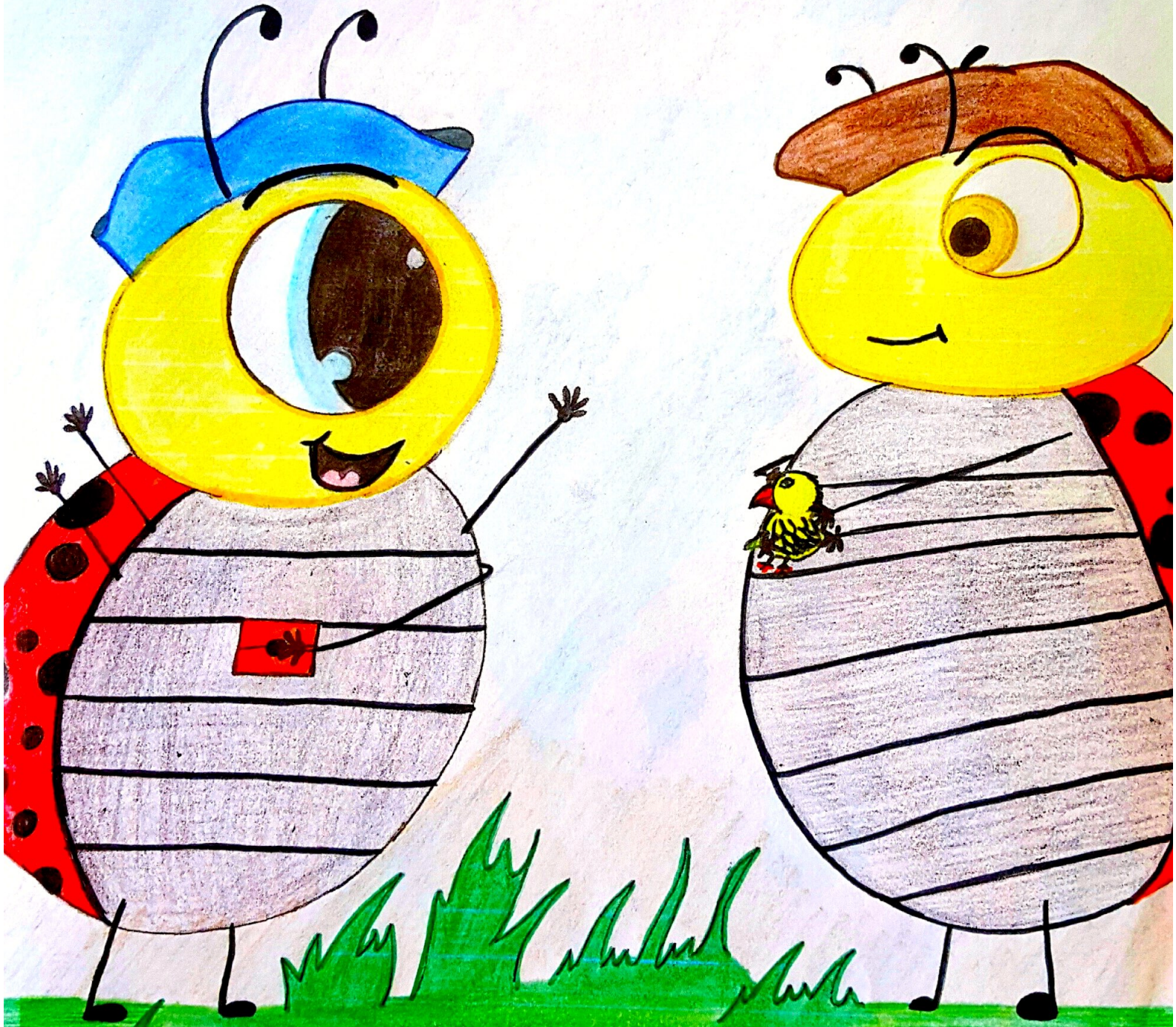
Lafayette hugged his parents tightly and rushed off to pack. Lenny and Lisa gave their son many gifts for his journey, including a box of aphid cakes, a ladybug's favorite treat, and a little blue tricorne hat just like Napoleon's.

"I'm off now! Bye!" Lafayette said. And just like that, the little ladybug flew off into the bright blue sky. Day after day he flew, over mountains and forests, until at last he reached his destination.

Waterloo was a small town in Belgium, hidden among the trees. Poor Lafayette... He was exhausted from flying for two days straight without rest. Suddenly, an unexpected gust of wind stole Lafayette's hat from his head. "Oh, no! My father's hat!" he cried.

"Lafayette, old chap!" a voice called out. Another ladybug with a beret—a round, flat hat—perched upon his head popped up from the trees.

"Lucas!" Lafayette cried, running up to his cousin with outstretched arms. "You found my hat! Just for that, you get one of my mamma's delicious aphid cakes."

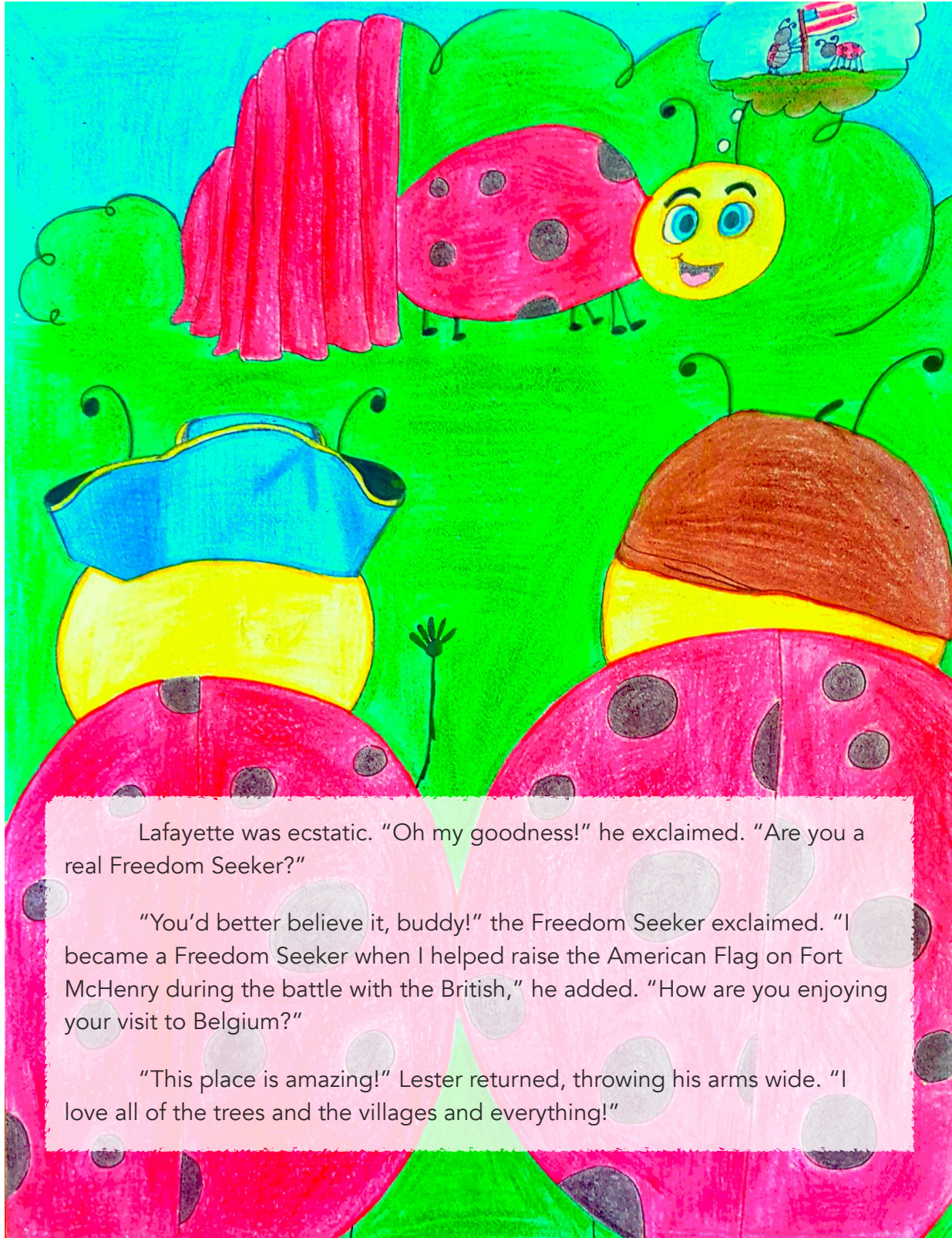


"Then I believe that this hat belongs with you, my good man," Lucas said with glee. "And one of those cakes belongs in my belly. Give me a taste, eh?"

"You said you had a surprise waiting for me here," Lafayette said, handing his cousin a cake. "Where is it? Lead me to it!"

"Why of course," Lucas mumbled in between bites. "Just as soon as I finish this delicious cake. These are absolutely top-hole, my lad! You must give my mummy the recipe." Still licking his fingers, Lucas led his cousin to a bush covered with a red curtain.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he exclaimed, throwing back the cover. "May I present a Freedom Seeker from the far-off United States! Please welcome Lester the Ladybug!" A figure sauntered out from under the curtain, a dazzling smile upon his face.



Lafayette was ecstatic. "Oh my goodness!" he exclaimed. "Are you a real Freedom Seeker?"

"You'd better believe it, buddy!" the Freedom Seeker exclaimed. "I became a Freedom Seeker when I helped raise the American Flag on Fort McHenry during the battle with the British," he added. "How are you enjoying your visit to Belgium?"

"This place is amazing!" Lester returned, throwing his arms wide. "I love all of the trees and the villages and everything!"

"Well, before we lie down for the night, I have something to show you two." Lucas led the ladybugs to the top of a small hill. "There..." he exclaimed, gesturing four arms, "...are the great plains of Waterloo!" Both Lester and Lafayette marveled at the size of the plain, and how grand it was.

Lafayette spotted something in the distance with his keen vision. "Look, look!" he exclaimed, jumping up and down. "There's Napoleon Bonaparte, the Emperor of France, and his men!"



"By Jove, so it is!" said Lucas. "And look over there, it's the English Duke of Wellington with his troops! And there far away is the Prussian army. I wonder what they could be up to."

"I'll tell you what," Lafayette shouted. "There's going to be a battle between Napoleon and Wellington and the Prussians! Lucas, I'll bet you fifty aphid cakes that Napoleon wins this war."

"The bet's settled, old chap," agreed Lucas, shaking hands with his cousin. Shortly after the battle began, the Prussian commander and his troops arrived to help Wellington. The three armies clashed, and even though Napoleon and his troops fought well, it was soon evident that the combined forces of the British and Prussians were too much for him.

Lafayette intently watched the battle from the safety of the ridge. "Wow, look at all those cannonballs coming down like a shower of asteroids, meteoroids, meteorites, and comets!"

Suddenly, he felt a tap on his shoulder. "I'm afraid Napoleon won't be winning this fight, Lafayette," Lester explained. "He shipped so many soldiers to other countries and parts of Europe, all over from the White Sea to the Barents Sea, the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea, and the Aral Sea, that there aren't enough troops to win this battle."

"Maybe you're right," Lafayette said, worried. "Well...let's just watch and see what happens."

"Oh, that's another thing," Lester added. "I know you think Napoleon's a great hero, but he's actually a dictator and has taken over much of Europe. He took over the French empire for himself. Lafayette, the person who you were named after, argued with Napoleon and was put in prison."

"Well! Of all the mean little scoundrels," Lafayette exclaimed. "And imagine me making a bet that he would win the battle . . . I hope Duke Wellington beats him now!"

When the dust cleared away, it was clear that Napoleon had surrendered. There was no way that he could defeat the armies fighting against him. Sadly, he handed over his sword just as Lafayette handed over the fifty aphid cakes.

"It was a good fight on both sides," Lester said. "But I'm afraid Napoleon Bonaparte has lost for good. However, in honor of your observing this Battle of Waterloo, I, Lester Ladybug, hereby pronounce you, Lucas, and you, Lafayette, Freedom Seekers!"

"Say, Lafayette, old chap," Lucas said slyly. "I'll bet my beautiful beret that I can beat you back to my hotel in Waterloo!"

"You're on!" Lafayette replied, and the three friends raced off together!

When Lafayette finally arrived home, he was met with some shocking news. His father had never returned from the meeting of the Freedom Seekers. Lenny had gone missing!

British General Wellington and his allies defeated Napoleon in the Battle of Waterloo on June 18, 1815, making Great Britain the global power for the next one hundred years. Just a year before, the United States defended their territory from British attack in the War of 1812, with the help of Marquis de Lafayette.