Tampere University of Applied Sciences

Using Blender's Grease Pencil Tool to Illustrate a Children's Book

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Interactive Media

ABSTRACT

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There are numerous methods to create illustrations for children’s books ranging from traditional techniques to digital painting. Digital illustration methods have a range of flexibility in work methods and there are numerous software and apps available for computers and mobile devices. Digital methods excel in non-destructive ways to edit and create variations of images. This thesis explores a less conventional method to digitally illustrate a children’s book project by utilising a 3D software Blender's Grease Pencil tool to create 2D illustrations.

By examining the advantages and disadvantages of Grease Pencil while working on the illustrations for a children's book project, this thesis aimed to discover the potential of Grease Pencil as a digital illustrative tool and provide insight for artist interested in discovering new ways to illustrate and, more importantly, what there is to consider when choosing Grease Pencil for a creative endeavour.

This thesis found that Grease Pencil has potential as a digital illustration tool and could be used to illustrate a children’s book. In the end, this thesis wanted to discuss and inspire artists to try new and different creative methods to illustrate be innovative.

Key words: illustration, blender, grease pencil, 3d, 2d

CONTENTS

TERMS

3D	Three dimensional
AI	Artificial Intelligence
Blender	3D creation software
Clip Studio Paint	Digital illustration and editing software
Grease Pencil	2D tool in Blender for drawing in 3D-space
Mesh	3D shape
Modifiers	Operations in Blender that automatically affect an object
Shader	A program processing a 3D scene during rendering that controls lighting and shading effects before image is drawn on computer screen
Stroke	The outline or path that defines the shape of a graphic element, like line, curve, or border
Photoshop	Digital illustration and image manipulation software
Topology	Distribution and structures of vertices, edges and faces of a 3D model
Vector	Graphics based on points, lines, curves and shapes that are based on mathematical formulas

1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to explore the potential of Blender’s Grease Pencil tool as an innovative and unique way to illustrate a children's book. Creating illustrations for children's books has changed and evolved in the recent decades from traditional tools like watercolour and pencils towards digital programs. Grease Pencil is a 2D tool within the open-source 3D software Blender, allowing its user to blend both 2D and 3D in their workflow. This thesis examines how Grease Pencil compares to other popular digital illustration software like Photoshop, Krita and Procreate in terms of usability, flexibility and quality.

Illustrating a children's book offers unique artistic challenges, as illustrations complement the story and capture the attention and imagination of children and adults alike, being often used as a tool to engage and help children learn important lessons in life.

This thesis goes over practical benchmarking against a children's book project illustrated by using Blender's 3D tools, gains insights from an expert interview to offer personal and professional perspective on what advantages Grease Pencil offers to an artist and researches the viability and creative advantages of creating 2D illustrations inside a 3D software.

In the end, this thesis will discuss Grease Pencil’s advantages and disadvantages and concludes if it is a viable option for illustrating children’s books. The goal is to contribute to a conversation about innovation and the possibilities within digital illustration with the Grease Pencil tool.

2 ILLUSTRATING CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Illustrated children's books or picture books are a substantial part of children's literature. Some of the earliest books with illustrations suitable also for children were *Aesop's Fables*, published in English by William Caxton in 1484. (PICTURE 1.)

PICTURE 1. The beginning of 1485 Italian edition of Aesopus Moralisatus.

The Little Prince, written and illustrated by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry in 1943 (PICTURE 2.), is known as one of the most popular illustrated children's books, and the book's official website lepetitprince.com article from January 2023 estimates, that The Little Prince has over 500 official translations and has sold over 14 million copies in 80 years. True numbers are hard to get due to there being so many prints of the book throughout the years.

There are no specific sales figures resealed in public about children's book sales in Finland. *Tatun ja Patun fantasiaseikkailu* by Aino Havukainen and Sami Toivonen sold 20,200 copies in 2023, reports lastenkirjainstituutti.fi. The Finnish translation of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: No Brainer* by Jeff Kinney sold 19,000 copies. (lastenkirjainstituutti.fi, 2023). Evidently there is a market in Finland for children's books.

PICTURE 2. (Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, 1943.)

“Illustrations in picture books entice children to read and interact with text. They motivate young readers to find/name hidden objects/characters or to predict what is going to happen next.” (Fang, 1996, p. 137).

2.1 Tools for illustration

There are numerous methods in which children’s book illustrations can be created and truly only imagination of the creator is the limit for how to create illustrations. This thesis will briefly focus on some popular traditional and digital illustrative techniques.

Digital illustration has many advantages over traditional art such as controlled resolution, non-destructive ways to edit drawings being able to create and share work faster. Drawing tablets and stylus pens from brands like Wacom and Huion are used to create digital illustrations on a personal computer for greater accuracy and pen pressure than with just a normal computer mouse. Touchscreens like

iPads and Android tablets are mobile devices with capabilities to be used for art. There is a wide range of illustration programs like Gimp, Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator and Krita available for both personal computers and mobile devices. (PICTURE 3.) This kind of software often require a decently powerful machine to run smoothly, especially when working on a bigger number of pixels or vector graphics. Vector graphics are based on points, lines and curves using mathematical paths which allows a vector illustration to be scaled infinitely without losing quality. Raster-based art refers to each square pixel being placed individually. Resolution and size of canvas is important especially if the drawing will be printed later on, as raster illustrations lose quality when scaled.

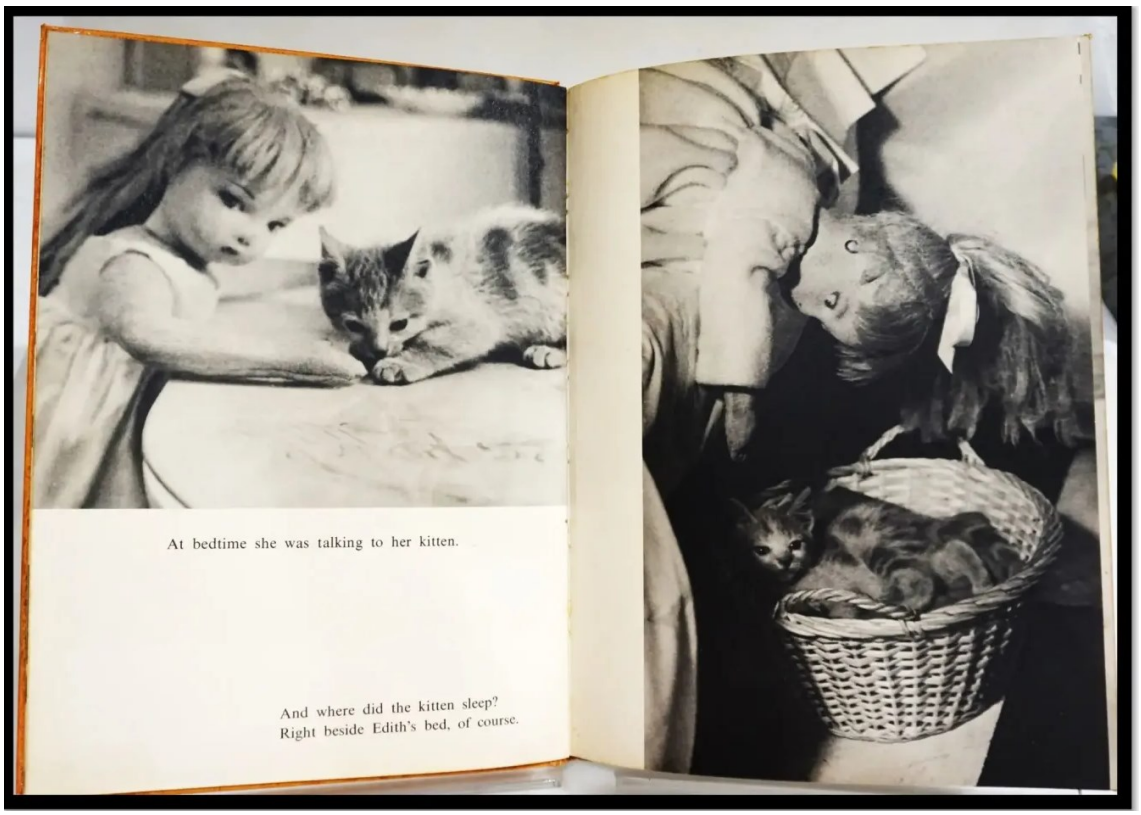
PICTURE 3. Touchscreen device, stylus pen and Procreate software. (Procreate.com, 2024.)

Traditional art has many methods to create illustrations for children's books. It is accessible, but high-quality materials may be expensive. Traditional art mediums often used for illustrating picture books include pencil or ink drawings and watercolour (PICTURE 4.).

PICTURE 4. (Beatrix Potter, 1901.)

They can be scanned and digitally touched up to correct small errors or to edit colours. Some other traditional methods include creating a diorama (PICTURE 5.) or creating a scene out of clay. A new picture can be created out of different pieces of paper (PICTURE 5.). Dare Wrights illustrated The Lonely Doll by posing dolls in hand-crafted sets and photographing them. (PICTURE 6.)

PICTURE 6. (Baye Hunter, 2014.)



PICTURE 6. (Dare Wrights, 1957)

Author, artist and art instructor Robert Marzullo writes in an article that the value of digital art has changed due to AI (artificial intelligence) generative images, which he believes makes traditional art more valuable. He concludes that the best is to find the right balance on using traditional and digital art. (Marzullo, 2024.) AI may be a new kind of competition in the future for artists, if companies choose to invest into generative AI tools rather than artists making original art.

PICTURE 7. (Marzullo, 2024.)

2.2 Use of 3D software to produce 2D illustrations

Illustration can be created by other digital means in 3D, where models are in a three-dimensional space. Whole scene can be modelled inside a 3D program like Blender or Maya. The 3D scene can be then rendered into a two-dimensional image. (PICTURE 8.)

Creating 3D art requires a decently powerful computer, which may not be easily accessible to every creator as they are often expensive. Despite this, 3D has become a viable option to create illustrations, as creating and posing 3D models and rendering them into 2D images can be much faster than creating every illustration for a book from scratch.

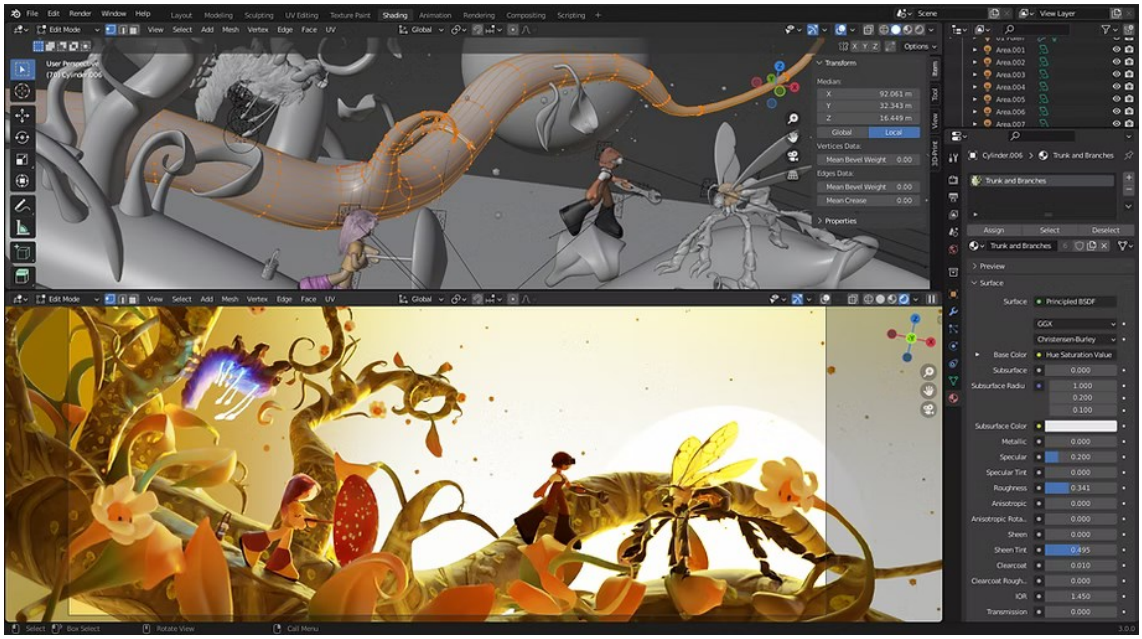
PICTURE 8. (Metin Seven, 2025.)

2.3 Benchmarking: Diego Araujo

Diego Araujo is an artist from Singapore who utilises 3D software Blender in his illustrations. He worked on his own children's book project in 2021 for which he created illustrations completely by using Blender. According to Araujo (2021), there are easier things to do through analogue methods and things that are easier through digital media. Both require work, dedication and effort. He thinks a good artist can create good art no matter the medium.

Araujo's book project *The Spiral of Life* was entirely illustrated using Blender to create a digital 3D diorama inspired by the works of Steve Ferrera, who sculpts and photographs scenes using several different materials. "For several reasons, I couldn't do the same. I am not a sculptor and don't have the proper physical space and materials at home to practice and do it. So, I resorted to doing it in the digital world." (Araujo, 2021, para. 3).

When comparing traditional medium like dioramas to a digital software like Blender, creating illustrations using Blender enables the creator to make multiple scenarios without taking up any physical space. There is no need for strings to make objects float in the air. It is very non-destructive and fast to change things as needed, saving the creator a lot of time.



PICTURE 9. (Diego Araujo, 2021.)

His work differs from the practical project of this thesis in many ways. Araujo does not use the Grease Pencil in his illustrations and relies just on the 3D side of Blender. His aim is to create 2D illustrations by creating a 3D scene with assets in Blender and making diorama-like scenes without the need for physical space or materials. Trying new mediums, both traditional and digital, and trying to find new innovative ways to create art is both fun and educational.

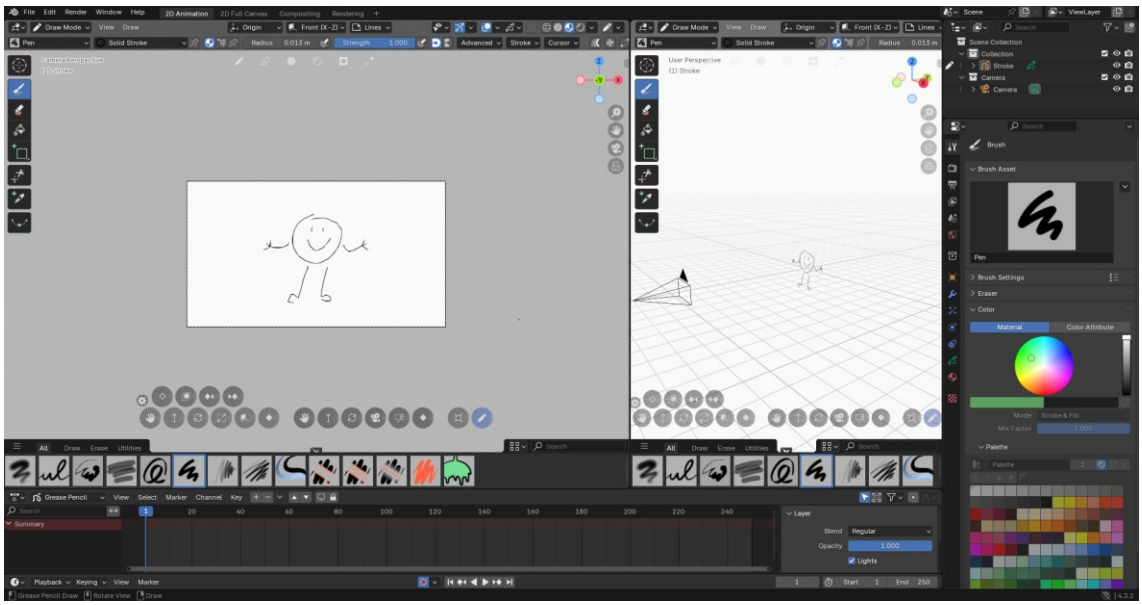
3 BLENDER AND GREASE PENCIL

Blender is a popular program. In 2021, blender.org reported the software has over 14 million downloads on its official website. This does not include downloads on other sites and platforms like the digital distribution service Steam. (blender.org, 2024.) Blender is a software for 3D pipeline, including modelling, rigging, animation and rendering. One of the biggest advantages Blender is being a completely free software. It is relatively simple to learn and there are numerous official and unofficial tutorials on the internet teaching you to use its features and tools.

“Grease Pencil is a set of vector drawing tools, named for the easily erased pencils used in the days of animating on paper.” (Baechler, Greer. 2020.)

Grease Pencil has been a feature and tool of Blender since 2019. The first version of Grease Pencil was designed to be a simple annotation tool with basic colour settings and animation capabilities. In November 2023, Blender 4.0 was released with Grease Pencil 3.0 replacing the old system with the goal of improving performance, memory usage and opening the door for new features and tools. (Falk, 2023.)

Grease Pencil is intended to be a 2D drawing tool within Blender’s 3D workspace. The main use is to create 2D animations, but it can also be used to draw in 3D space and straight on a 3D mesh. (PICTURE 10.)

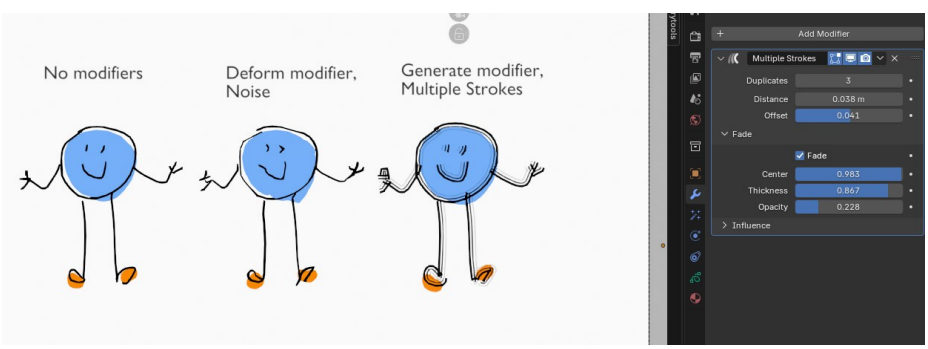


PICTURE 10. Grease Pencil drawing.

3.1 Modifiers

Blender's modifiers are a tool that affects an object's geometry in a non-destructive way, meaning that you can always remove a modifier, and the object will return to its original form. Modifiers are automatic when applied and can be adjusted through modifier properties in Blender.

For Grease Pencil objects there are Generate, Deform and Colour modifiers. These modifiers can be helpful to shortcut the workflow or to add life and character to a Grease Pencil drawing. With the Deform-category Noise modifier it is possible to give the strokes a more hand-drawn feeling. Generate-category Multiple Strokes modifier on the other hand gives the drawing sketchy lines. With colour modifiers hue, saturation and opacity of the Grease Pencil object can be adjusted easily.



PICTURE 11. Examples of different modifiers used on a Grease Pencil object.

3.2 Interview of Tuomo Joronen on Blender

Tuomo Joronen was interviewed for this thesis as an expert on the Blender software. Tuomo Joronen is a Senior Lecturer of Animation at Tampere University of Applied Sciences. Joronen has digital animation background from Flash used to create vector-based animations and other interactive content. Flash was discontinued in 2020 and reformed by Adobe into Adobe Animate. Joronen (2025) says he has been using the Grease Pencil for at least the past five years. His main use for Grease Pencil is to create 2D animations. He has taught Grease Pencil animation to students in his courses. This often includes simple animations created using the tool to showcase its capabilities and possibilities. He has not tried using Grease Pencil for illustrative purposes, but finds it is a very good 2D animation tool. He does not reject the option that it could be used for 2D illustrations as well.

According to Joronen (2025), one of the advantages of Grease Pencil as an illustrative tool is the 3D aspect, which most other illustration software do not have. Grease Pencil is an accessible tool capable of vector-based graphics like how Flash software used to be. The biggest difference between them is that Grease Pencil animations exist in 3D space thanks to Blender allowing for more flexibility, while Flash was a frame-by-frame 2D software.

Blender’s user interface might be a bit challenging to learn. Joronen says controlling materials for colours should be easier, but making the interface simpler to use is not so easy, as the program is so complicated. (Joronen 2025, Appendix 1).

3.3 Comparing Blender's Grease Pencil to other software

Software	Blender	Adobe Animate	Adobe Photoshop	Clip Studio Paint	Gimp	Krita	Procreate
Price (€)	Free	27,41 (monthly)	27,41 (monthly)	46,99 (pc) 25,49 (12 months)	Free	Free	9,99
Operating system compatibility	Windows, macOS, Linux	Windows, macOS, Linux	Windows, macOS, Linux, iPad, iPhone, Android	Windows, macOS, iPad, iPhone, Android	Windows, macOS, Linux	Windows, macOS, Linux	iPad, iPhone
Source code	Open	Closed	Closed	Closed	Open	Open	Closed
Graphics	Vector, raster	Vector	Raster	Vector, raster	Raster	Raster	Raster

TABLE 1. Price, compatibility, source code and graphics comparison of a variety of programs and apps. Prices from March 17, 2025. These prices may change and vary based on region and promotions.

When choosing a suitable software or an app, it should be considered if the platform of choice is a personal computer or a smart device. There are several free software designed for digital illustration on computers. On mobile devices and tablets there is a more limited variety of programs to choose from. Most of the popular apps requiring a purchase or a monthly licence.

The choice of wanting vector or raster-based graphics depends on what purpose the illustration is used for. Vector-based programs would be the best for example when wanting to resize the art later without losing any quality. Raster images are dependent on the resolution they are drawn in, as scaling loses quality. Vector-based art is often used in printed media.

Grease Pencil is a versatile tool inside a free program with many free tutorials available on the internet making it relatively easy for anyone to try. It is open source allowing users to know what the program does without hidden algorithms. The graphics are vector based. It should be noted that Blender is only available for personal computers and there is no mobile version available.

4 PRACTICAL PART

4.1 Project background

I have a passion for creating illustrated books. I enjoy enriching written narratives with drawings. Especially animals, nature and Finnish folklore are often a source of inspiration in my artistic works.

PICTURE 12. (Martikainen, 2021.)

In my first children's book *Alma: Seikkailu Metsässä* (Alma: Adventure in the Forest) was published together with Mini Kustannus in 2021. The illustrations and story were first created for my nephew and were strongly inspired by one of our family cats called Alma. I had thought of self-publishing the book but decided to offer the story to different Finnish publishers anyway until Mini Kustannus replied with interest to work together. The book had only a small print of 100 copies, but I was very happy with achieving publication for my work anyway. As of now the book is sold out and there are no current plans for reprint.

I utilised my digital illustration skills and used a drawing tablet and pen. The digital art software I used and have enjoyed using is Clip Studio Paint made by a Japanese graphics software company Celsys. For illustration and text composition to create page layouts I used Adobe InDesign.

After researching Grease Pencil and seeing what the tool is capable of, I was intrigued to try it myself and see if I could use it for my own projects. I am interested in being innovative and learning new ways to create and enhance my illustrations.

4.2 Project details

My project focuses on a short book for children ages 6-10. The book tells a story of a small fox kit who lives in the forest with his mother and who must be brave about meeting new friends. This book is not related to my previous book, though the setting is a bit similar. I am fascinated by the Finnish nature and Finnish folklore, which often are a source of inspiration for my creativity. The aim is to publish this book in Finland in Finnish through a publishing house.

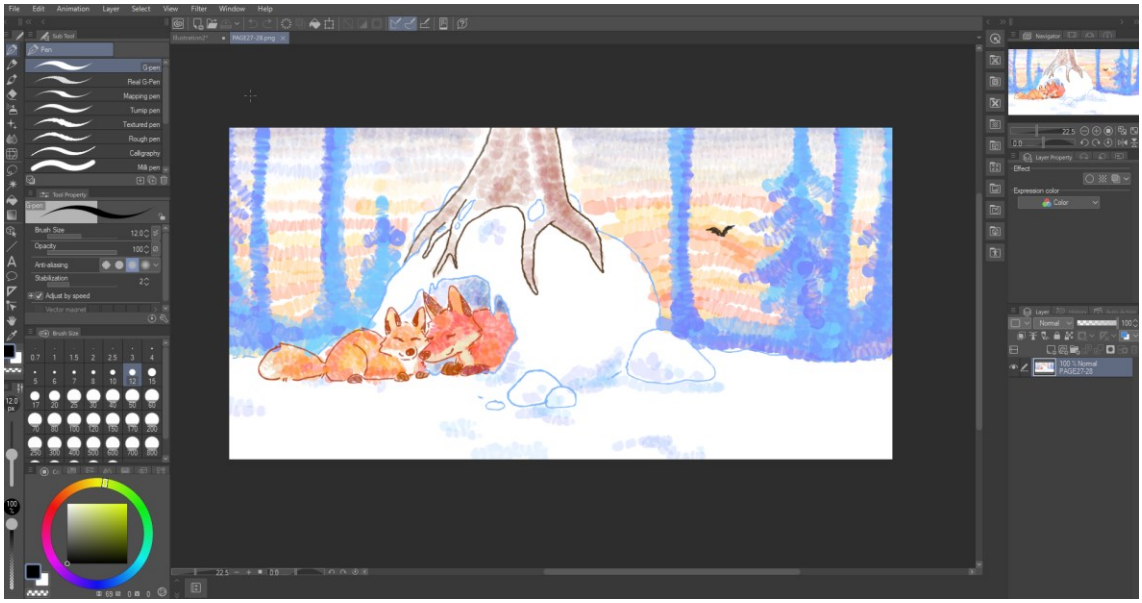
The story is just around 28 pages with illustrations on every page including a few two-page spread illustrations. I wanted most of storytelling to be focused on the pictures rather than on the text.

The aim of the story of this project is to create a short, joyful story for children to enjoy, the kind of children's book I would have enjoyed when I was a child. The primary goal of this story is to encourage children to make friends and start finding their independence while still staying safe and being considerate.

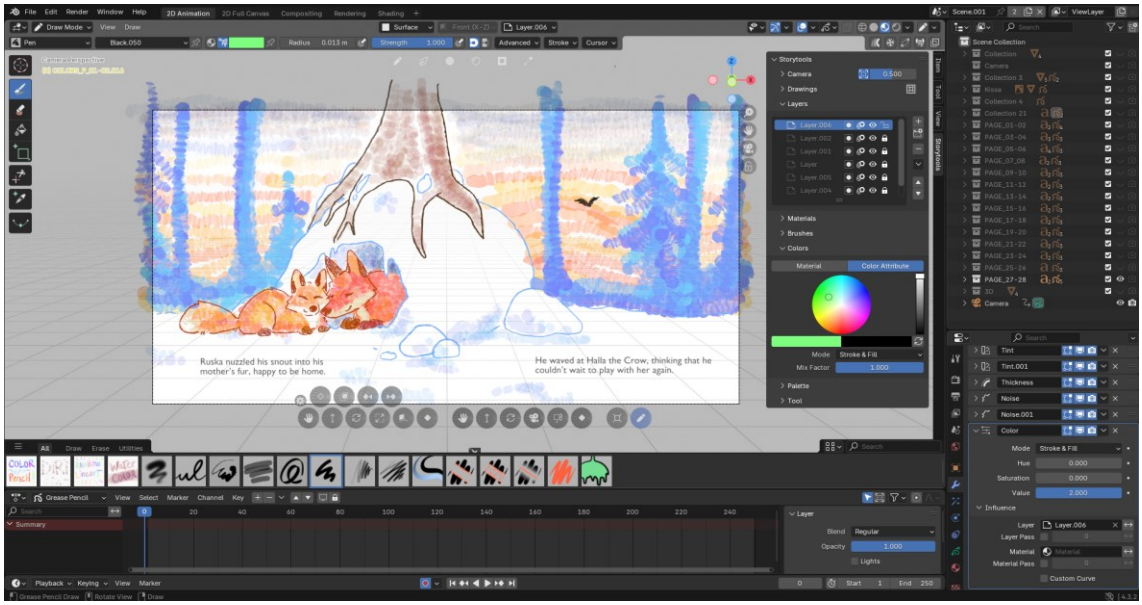
I want to innovate and inspire new ways to illustrate, especially because Blender is a free program anyone can download and learn to use. I use my personal windows computer, so I did not need to worry about there not being a mobile version of Blender. What caused my interest to try using Blender's Grease Pencil tool for illustrations was partly out of necessity. I had no digital illustration software avail-

able at the end of 2024 and I wanted to try challenging myself by learning something new. I was already very familiar with Blender's 3D side and somewhat familiar with Grease Pencil through 2D animation courses.

Having previously used software like Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator, I think Grease Pencil differs from them in some ways. Grease Pencil's UI differs somewhat from the UI of most digital illustration software. The interface is not as intuitive for someone with a digital art background from other illustrative programs.



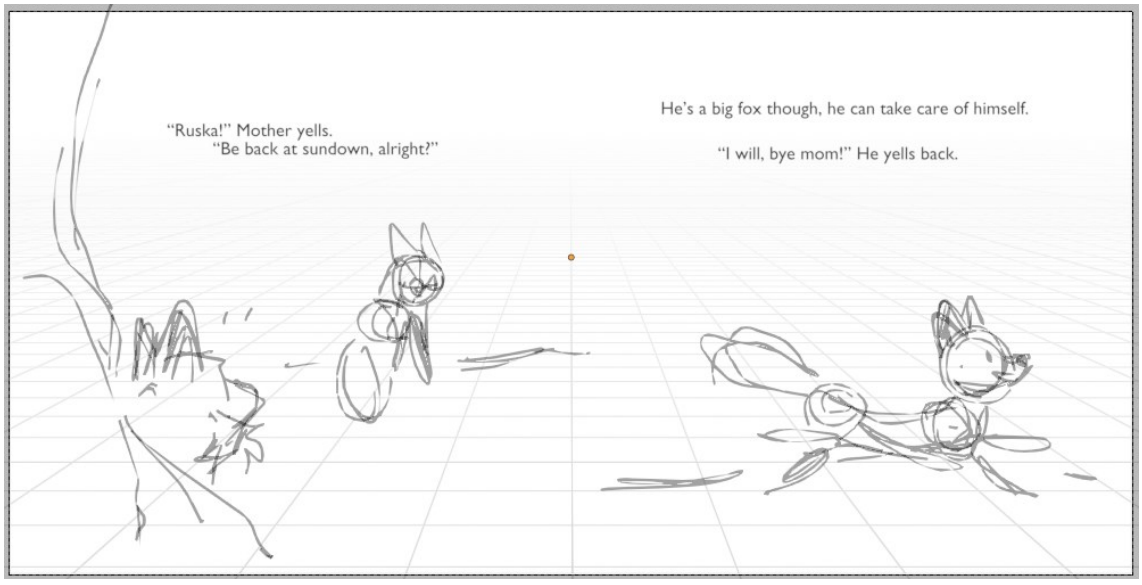
PICTURE 13. Screenshot of Clip Studio Paint.



PICTURE 14. Screenshot of Blender.

4.3 Thumbnailing

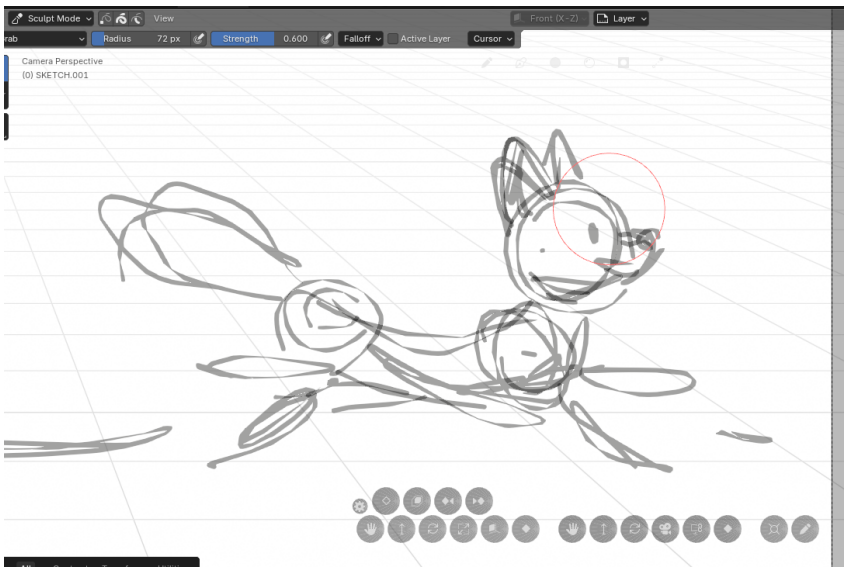
Before drawing, I had written a script for the story (Appendix 2). I had an initial idea in my mind for every illustration I wanted on each page. I thumbnailed and sketched a rough guideline for myself with Grease Pencil. I found it easy to edit sketches in edit mode, being able to resize and move parts of the sketch was helpful. Blender's sculpt mode can be used on Grease Pencil drawings to sculpt sketches.



PICTURE 15. Grease Pencil sketch.

"Sculpting strokes is a great way to modify a whole drawing, and many of the Draw mode settings work similarly in Sculpt mode, such as enabling pen pressure or stabilization." (Baechler, Greer, 2020, "The edit and sculpt modes" section, para. 4).

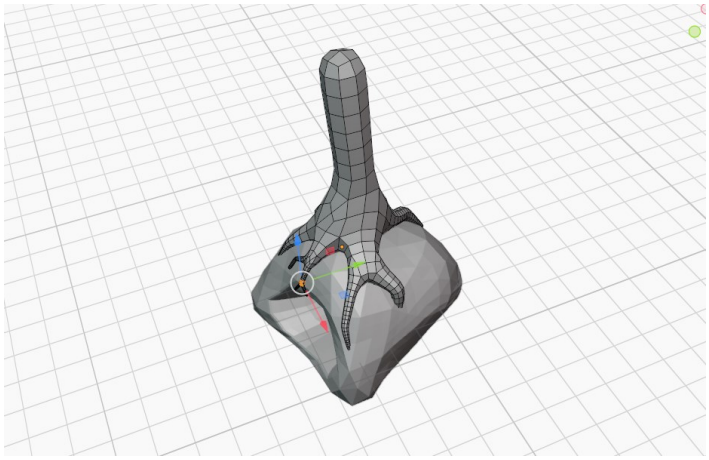
In sculpt mode it is easy to just click and drag individual lines of the drawing with a mouse and digitally mould them into the shape you want, making quick corrections without needing to erase or re-draw parts of the artwork again.



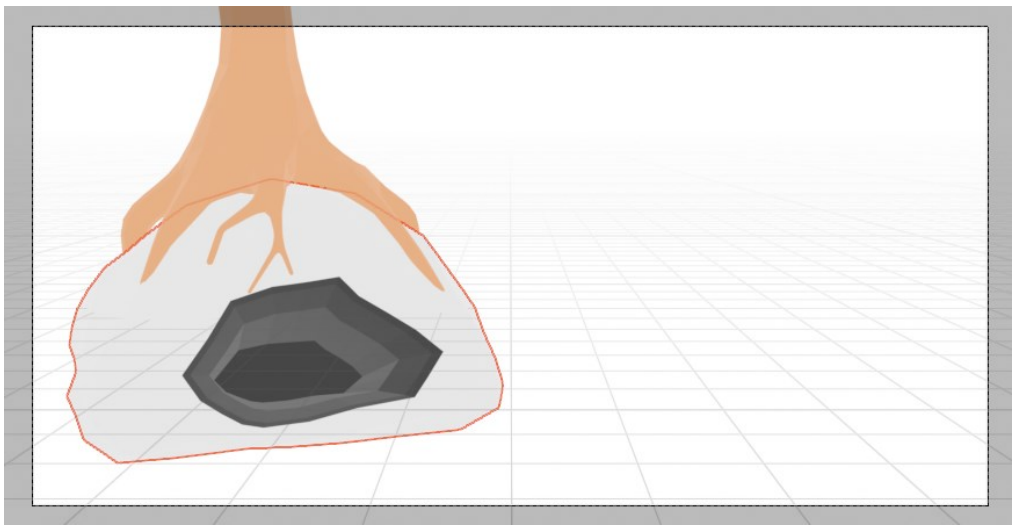
PICTURE 16. Using Blender's sculpt mode to edit sketch. Red circle indicates the area where the cursor currently is, and which is affected by the sculpt mode.

4.4 Using 3D models

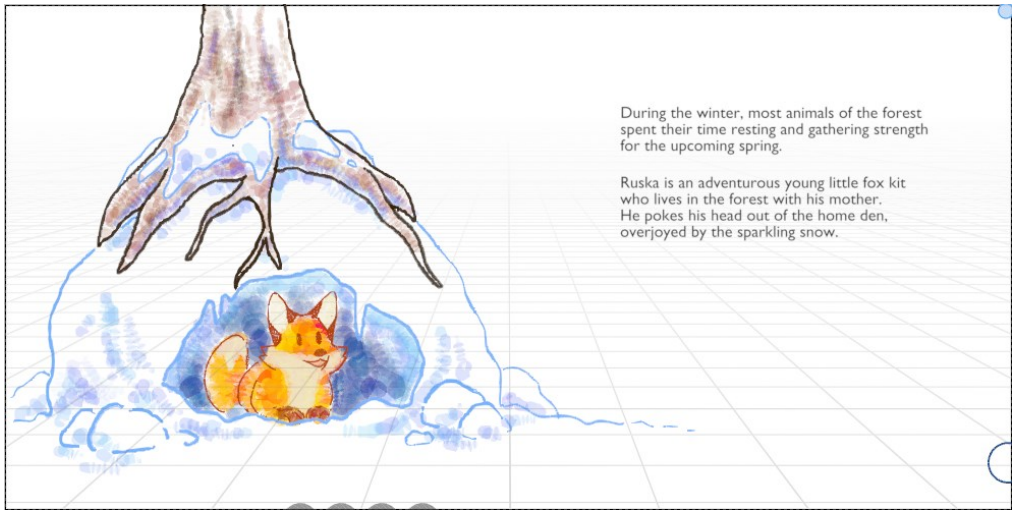
Since I am working inside a 3D program, I want to take advantage of the 3D side of Blender. I found that making quick 3D models of environmental assets made my work with Grease Pencil much easier. I was able to rotate the 3D model as needed and this ensured that important assets would look the same on different pages, even from different angles. I found it easy and quick to combine Blender's 3D and 2D tools to aid in working faster by being able to rotate 3D objects and drawing over them with Grease Pencil. Using the 3D tools will take a lot of learning from an artist who has not used Blender before.



PICTURE 17. 3D asset.



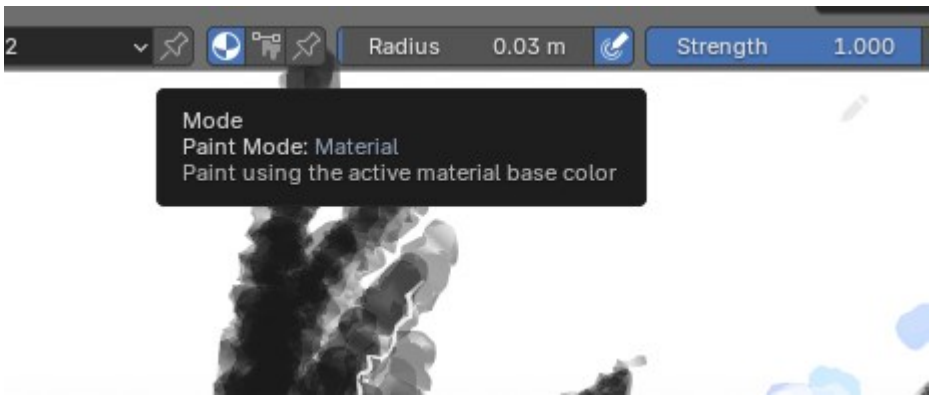
PICTURE 18. 3D asset placed in position.



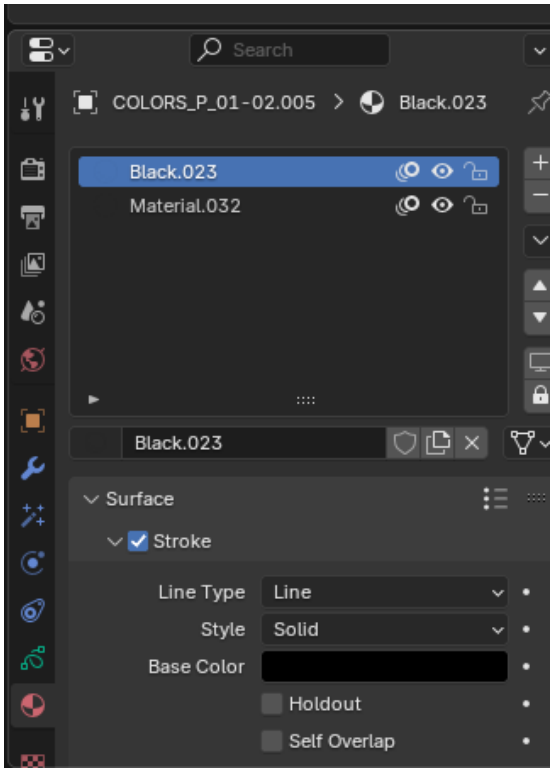
PICTURE 19. Grease Pencil drawing on top of 3D asset.

4.5 Illustrating

There are two modes in Grease Pencil used for drawing: Material and Paint mode. When using the material mode, materials need to be selected for a drawing stroke to be assigned its colour. This is non-destructive as all aspects about that material can be changed quickly afterwards. I also used modifiers for line thickness and noise. I found modifiers worked well to adjust Grease Pencil's default brushes without having to change the brush settings. Modifiers can also be changed and adjusted afterwards.

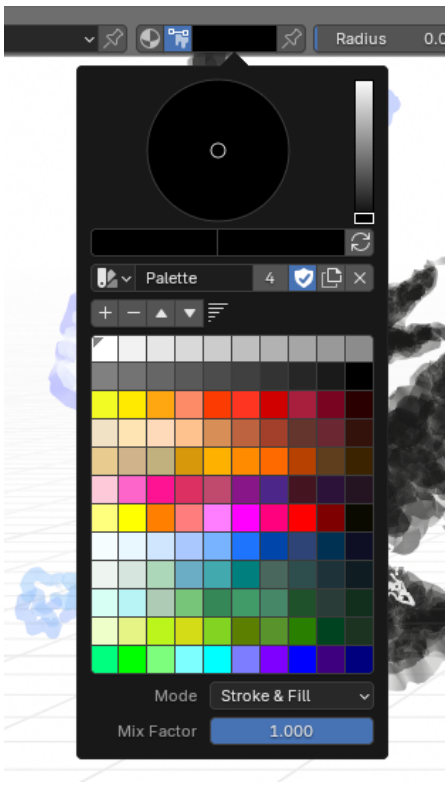


PICTURE 20. Material mode.

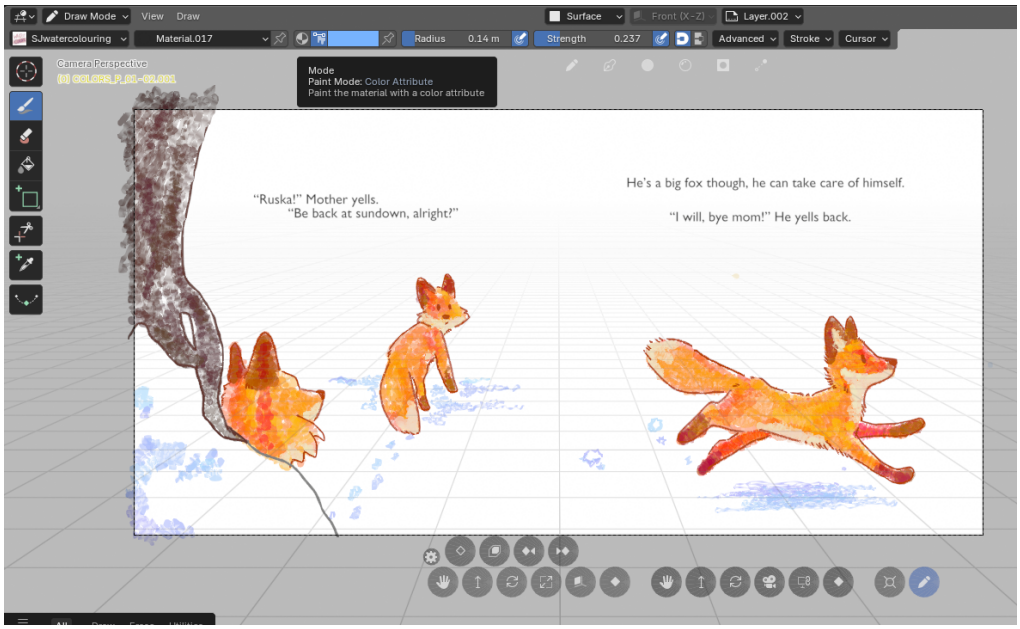


PICTURE 21. Blender's materials.

I decided to use the paint mode where I can easily select a new colour without creating a new material for it, making drawing more intuitive for me. I had set the canvas size to 2480 pixels x 4690 pixels for a page spread, as I planned the book to be around 20 cm x 20 cm. I left a 1 cm x 1 cm buffer around the canvas as in print a small amount of space may get cut. This way I could make sure the drawings will not be cut unintentionally.



PICTURE 22. Paint mode.

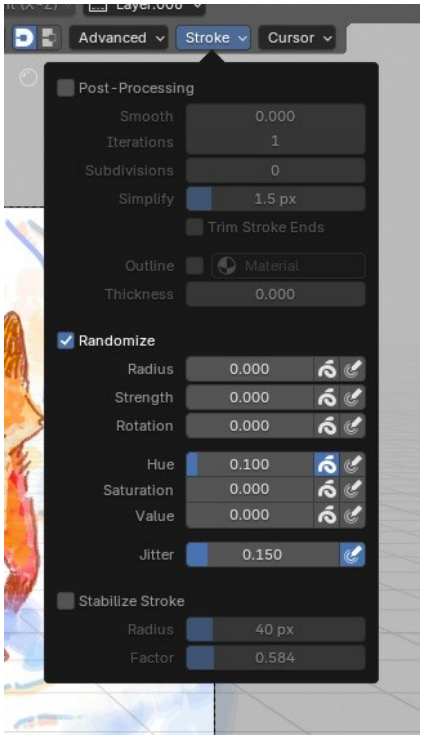


PICTURE 23. Grease Pencil illustration.

I found that the brushes and colour didn't feel as intuitive as in other digital illustration software I have previously used. The whole interface is very different from other software and took some time to get used to. I did find the sculpt mode especially nice to quickly edit strokes.

Blender allows you to add custom brushes. Sophie Jantak is a Youtuber whose videos centre around Grease Pencil. She uses Grease Pencil exclusively to create drawings and illustrations. She has created her own custom brushes, and I found a few of her brushes useful in my project. It is easy to change brush settings in Blender, giving a lot of freedom to the creator. I especially enjoyed how changing the hue randomizer setting for the brush gave each new stroke a slightly different colour hue, giving the drawing instantly more variety.

PICTURE 24. Custom brushes.



PICTURE 25. Brush settings.

5 FINAL PRESENTATION

5.1 Rendering and post-processing

2D digital art does not usually involve rendering, instead illustration software allows saving an image in wanted format inside the program. Blender requires the Grease Pencil objects to be rendered into a 2D image. I did not change many of the rendering settings Blender has set on default. I used the EEVEE rendering engine and rendering the images in high resolution of 300 dpi to save as much quality as possible. I chose EEVEE as my rendering engine after trying both and being more satisfied with EEVEE. It is also faster than the Cycles engine.

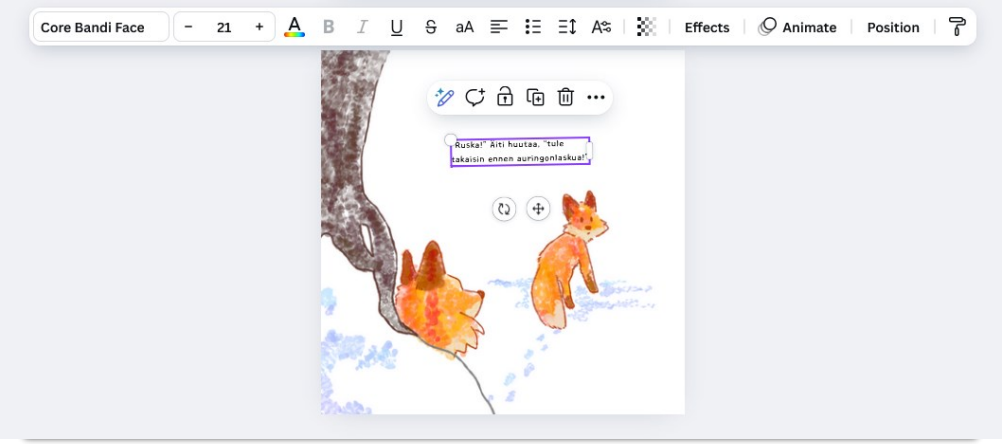
I did not need to do many adjustments or corrections outside of Blender, but I did use Clip Studio Paint to clean up a few minor strokes on some illustrations I had not noticed before rendering the images. For example, I cleaned up the fox character's face's colours to be more readable and the eyes are more clear to see (PICTURE 26). I found doing these quick corrections afterwards with Clip Studio Paint was faster than going back to Blender, fixing the lines and rendering the image again.

PICTURE 26. Before and after adjustment.

5.2 Compiling the final product

I decided to compile a mock-up of how the layout of the book could look by using a free browser program Canva. I find that I can do quick mock-ups fast with Canva and do not have the Adobe products available to me at home.

In this mock-up version I decided to pick similar fonts that my previous book. I want to achieve a cute, friendly feel through the font choices. The title text is in a sketchy and rounded Core Bandi style found within Canva and for the body text font I chose Core Bandi Face for its simplistic, child-like style, going well with the title font as they are in the same font family. I think it is important to try to find a coherent style between different projects, so they are recognizable.

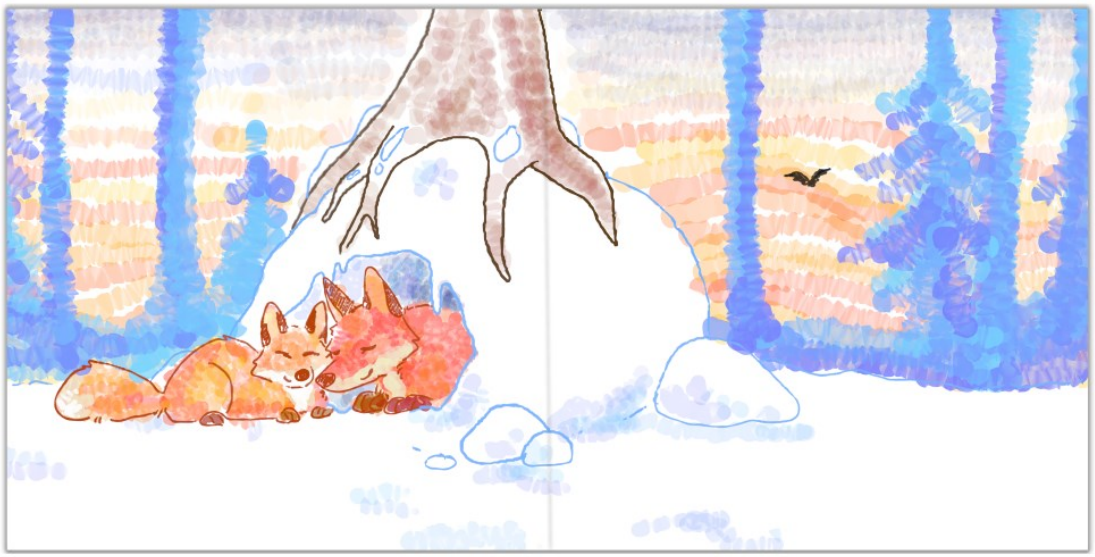


PICTURE 27. Screenshot from inside Canva.

When I succeed in having this book picked up by a publisher, I think the best tool for the final layout will be Adobe InDesign. Another option would be to discuss with the publisher if they would do the layout in-house. This would save me time to focus on other aspects of the book, like honing down the illustrations, or even start working on a new project.

I want to continue researching Grease Pencil as a tool for illustration, as I think it has a lot of potential to compete against traditional digital art programs. I will still be using my preferred programs too, as they are what I am most comfortable and familiar with to draw just for fun.

PICTURE 28. Mock-up of the cover of the book.



PICTURE 29. Mock-up of a page spread.

5.3 Publishing

To get my previous book published, I contacted a small publishing firm, Mini Kustannus, but unfortunately, they are not operating anymore. I could try to self-publish my work, but I prefer publishing houses because they are a great help with promotion and marketing especially for an author with barely any social media presence. I started searching for a new suitable publisher. I wanted to find another small publisher since I am not a big or well-established author yet and I find it much harder to get a book published through a large publisher house.

Orava-kirjat (Orava books) is a small publisher under Siltala publishing established in 2024 that focuses specifically on children's books. On their website they encourage authors to send in scripts for them to look. I wrote a simple email telling them about who I am and what I have previously published. I explained shortly about what kind of book I have to offer for their publishing plan and attached the script and the layout mock-up of the book to the email. It took several months to get an answer the previous time I was contacting publishers about my first book, so I expect it to take some time this time too. In the meantime, I intend to look for other small publishers.

6 DISCUSSION

One of the biggest advantages of using Grease Pencil to illustrate a children's book is it being a 2D tool inside a 3D software. This allows an artist to combine 2D working methods with 3D elements easily and helps speed up the workflow of multiple illustrations with similar elements. 3D models can be easily created and used as references within the 3D and 2D working space. Blender is a very accessible due to being completely free, making it appealing to explore and learn without the need of a monetary commitment. Blender has many free resources available online to speed up learning, ranging from official documentation to active users creating tutorials. Blender's Grease Pencil is a great choice for an artist interested in combining 2D with 3D. It is versatile and offers a unique dimension to illustrations.

For an artist with background from digital 2D painting software such as Photoshop or Procreate, Grease Pencil is not very intuitive to use. Blender has a steep learning curve and there is a lot to learn before even starting to work with the Grease Pencil tool itself. The toolset lacks conveniences of other digital art software such as layer blend modes and applying filters directly into the drawings. Another software might be needed for editing and fixing illustrations after rendering. Blender is also not available for mobile devices, limiting the possibilities to keep working on creative projects on-the-go. Blender requires a decently powerful computer to run smoothly, which can be a barrier for some artists.

Blender's Grease Pencil was intended as a 2D animation tool, but it can be used to create 2D illustrations for a children's book like any other digital painting software. I found Grease Pencil to be a viable tool to create illustrations for my project and throughout working on it I learned a lot about how Grease Pencil works and how to use it to my advantage. I think Grease Pencil offers a unique take to creating illustrations for a children’s book. To develop this tool further, it should be made more intuitive to use and learn how other digital art software have succeeded with things that Grease Pencil lacks, like better material and color control, layer control and user interface control.

Illustrations are a substantial part of children’s picture books. They enhance the story and help children engage and learn. Illustrations for children's books have been around since at least 1484 as evidenced by the publication of Aesop's Fables. From that, illustration has evolved throughout the years and more mediums have been explored by artist from traditional ways of watercolour and clay to digital painting with different software.

As AI-based image generation software becomes more popular and accessible to the public, many artists might feel their methods for illustration threatened. AI image generation might make traditional art more valuable in terms of authentic human creativity to people who value supporting art and artists.

I find that AI cannot truly replace the human creativity. After all, AI is only capable of learning to copy what has already been created. Combined with the ever-developing tools, be they traditional or digital, the artist’s greatest strength is the human imagination itself.

Adaptivity is important in an ever-developing environment. Illustrators should not get overly comfortable with their preferred mediums but instead try out new ones and keep on learning. It is crucial as an artist to keep improving and finding new ways of creating art, be they conventional or not. Illustration for children’s books and other similar works should not be tied to a specific tool or medium. Being creative is being innovative.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview with Tuomo Joronen (Conducted in Finnish via video call on 19.2.2025. Transcribed by the author.)

1. Kauanko olet käyttänyt Grease Penciliä? (How long have you been using the Grease Pencil?)

Vaikea sanoa, kuinka kauan olen käyttänyt Grease Penciliä. Opiskelijoille olen näyttänyt sitä ainakin viiden vuoden ajan. Muistelen, että olisin käyttänyt Grease Penciliä Blenderin 2.7 tai 2.8 versioista lähtien.

2. Millaisiin asioihin olet käyttänyt Grease Penciliä? (What kind of purposes have you used the Grease Pencil for?)

Me olemme kursseilla käytetty Grease Penciliä ainoastaan 2D animaatioiden tekemiseen. En ole oikeastaan käyttänyt sitä mihinkään muuhun.

3. Luuletko, että Grease Pencil olisi potentiaalinen 2D taide työkalu? (Do you think that Grease Pencil is a potential 2D art tool?)

Kyllä, Grease Pencil on hyvä ja sopiva 2D-työkalu. Mielestäni olennaista on se, että 3D-ohjelman sisällä oleminen antaa myös mahdollisuuksia luoda ja renderöidä sekä 2D että 3D-tyylillä, jolloin meillä on yksi ulottuvuus enemmän käytössä kuin perinteisissä 2D-työkaluissa

4. Miksi pidät Grease Pencilistä? (Why do you like Grease Pencil?)

Minulla on todella pitkä historia Flash-nimisestä ohjelmasta, joka nykyisin on Adobe Animate. Se oli vektoripohjainen grafiikka-työkalu kuten Grease Pencil, ja ohjelmissa on mielestäni paljon samaa.

5. Voisitko verrata Grease Penciliä johonkin toiseen ohjelmistoon tai työkaluun? (Can you compare Grease Pencil to any other program or tool?)

Voisin verrata Grease Penciliä Flashiin, joka oli vektoripohjainen 2D animaatiotyökalu. Flashissä oli kuitenkin paljon aukkoja tietoturvassa ja kun selaimet ja käyttöjärjestelmät lakkasivat tukemasta sitä, Flashistä siirryttiin eteenpäin. Koen kuitenkin näiden ohjelmien olevan samankaltaisia siinä, mitä niillä voi luoda.

6. Mitkä ovat Grease Pencilin vahvuudet? (What are Grease Pencil's strengths?)

Yksi Grease Pencilin vahvuuksista on vektoripohjaisuus. Grease Pencil on helposti saavutettava työkalu ilmaisen ohjelman sisällä. Myös Blenderin muista osaalueista, kuten 3D-työkaluista, voi olla hyötyä.

7. Mitkä ovat Grease Pencilin heikkoudet? (What is the weakness of Grease Pencil?)

Blender käyttöliittymä on vähän haastava ja monimutkainen uudelle käyttäjälle. En kuitenkaan tiedä, kuka pystyisi tekemään 3D-ohjelmiston jossa ei olisi haastava käyttöliittymä. Epäilen, että muut 3D-ohjelmistot ovat yhtä haastavia.

8. Mitä haluaisit parantaa? (What would you want to improve?)

Mielestäni materiaalien hallinta voisi olla parempi. Materiaalit pitää luoda ja värit hakea erikseen, mikä ei ole niin suoraviivaista aloittelijalle. Käyttöliittymä on edelleen toinen parannuksen kohde, mutta en tiedä miten sitä voisi helpottaa.

9. Oletko huomannut jotain mielenkiintoista Grease Pencilin kehityksessä viime vuosina? (Have you noticed anything interesting with Grease Pencil's development in the last years?)

En ole seurannut viime aikoina ihan kauheasti Grease Pencilin kehitystä.

Appendix 2. Story Script

PAGE 1.
(No text.)

PAGE 2.
During the winter the animals of the woods spend their time resting and gathering strength for the upcoming spring. Ruska is an adventurous small fox who lives in the woods with his mother. Ruska admires the sparkling snow as he pokes his head out of the den. He could go out and play!

PAGE 2.
“Ruska!” Mom yells as he is leaving, “come back before sunset!”

PAGE 4.
Ruska is a big fox already! He can surely take care of himself. “I’ll be back in time! Bye mom!” He yells back.

PAGE 5.
Ruska walks through the woods and notices a giant icicle hanging from a branch of one of the trees.

PAGE 6.
Ruska reaches out for the icicle with his tongue… and then his tongue gets stuck! Oh no!

PAGE 7.
Ruska tries to get his tongue off, but it’s completely stuck on the ice. “Help, help!” He yells sadly. A raven flying overhead hears Ruska’s yelling and flies closer.

PAGE 8.
“Are you stuck? Let me help you”, the raven says and pecks on the icicle with her beak until it starts to break.

PAGE 9.
Ruska sits in the snow and melts the rest of the icicle in his mouth until his tongue is free. “Thank you! I’m Ruska, who are you?”

PAGE 10.
“I’m Halla!” The raven named Halla says happily. “You’re so silly, surely you know you shouldn’t lick an icicle?”
“I’m not silly!” Ruska defends himself, “or… maybe a little…”
“We’re all a little silly sometimes”, Halla laughs.
“Hey, you wanna play?” Ruska asks.
“Fun! Yes!” Halla says gladly.

PAGE 11.

The fox and the raven play in the snow, rolling and playing snow war.

PAGE 12.

(No text.)

PAGE 13.
They go to a frozen lake and try ice skating. Ruska’s paws get tangled up and it spends more time on his stomach.

PAGE 14.
Halla’s small feet and toes are perfect for ice skating!

PAGE 15.
Playing and adventuring continues until the duo end up at the mouth of a large den.

PAGE 16.
Ruska pokes his head into the den out of curiosity. “Wait! That’s…” Halla starts.

PAGE 17.
“The den of the bear!” Halla shouts finally when they notice a large bear sleeping in the den.

PAGE 18.
Ruska and Halla run away completely startled. “Hmm, what’s the ruckus?” The bear rumbles from being awoken, “Mm, not spring yet… sleepy…”

PAGE 19.
“Careful!” Halla manages to shout when they come to the edge of a hill but the snow gives out under Ruska’s paws, and he falls down the hill.

PAGE 20.
Ruska rolls at high speed through the snow like a giant snowball!

PAGE 21.
The snowball is finally broken when the speed dies down. Ruska’s head is still spinning.
“That looked fun! Again!” Halla laughs.
“No… not right away”, Ruska mumbles.
“Hehe, you make a great snowball”, Halla says.

PAGE 22.
Ruska throws snow on Halla’s face. “There’s a snowball for you!” Ruska laughs.

PAGE 23.
They both laugh and brush snow off their fur and feathers.

PAGE 24.
Hey, the sun has almost set!” Ruska notices, “I need to go home, or mom will get worried…”
“In that case let's play again another day!” Halla says.
“Of course!” Ruska promises.

PAGE 25.

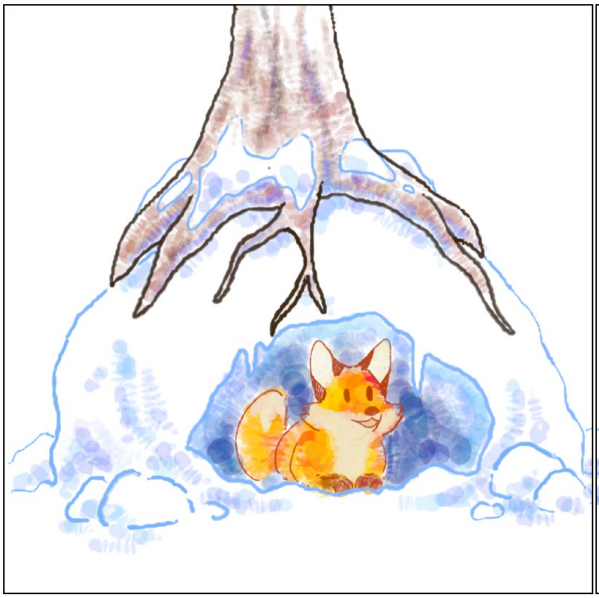
Ruska walks happily towards home. He had a fun day, and he got a new friend. He’s tired!

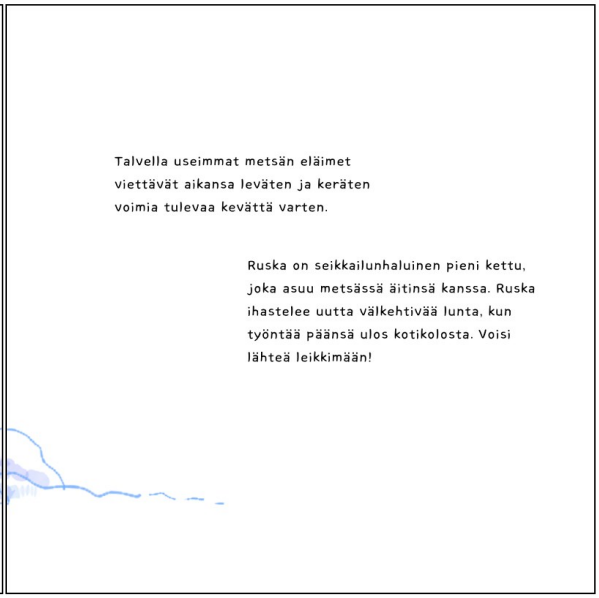
PAGE 26.
(No text.)

PAGE 27.
At the den Ruska presses himself against his mother.

PAGE 28.
He is getting tired now, it’s time to get some sleep… but Ruska can’t wait for a new adventure with Halla the raven soon!

Appendix 3. Illustrations and page spreads

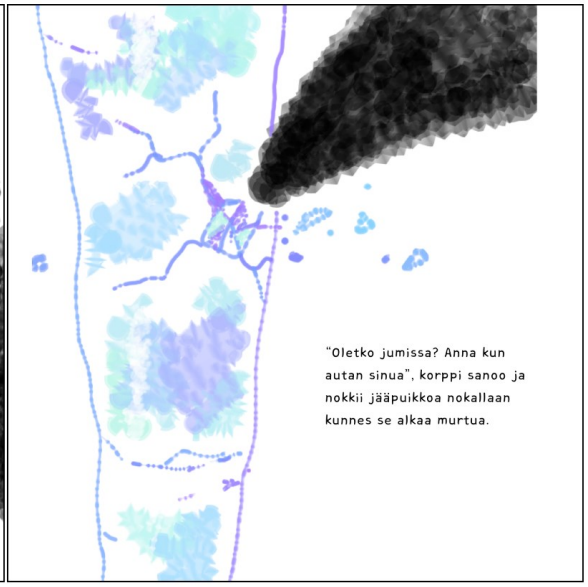





Ruska kävelee metsän halki ja huomaa jättimäisen jääpuikon roikkumassa erään puun oksalla.


Ruska kurottaa kielensä jääpuikkoon...
Ja sen kieli jää jumiin!
Voi ei!

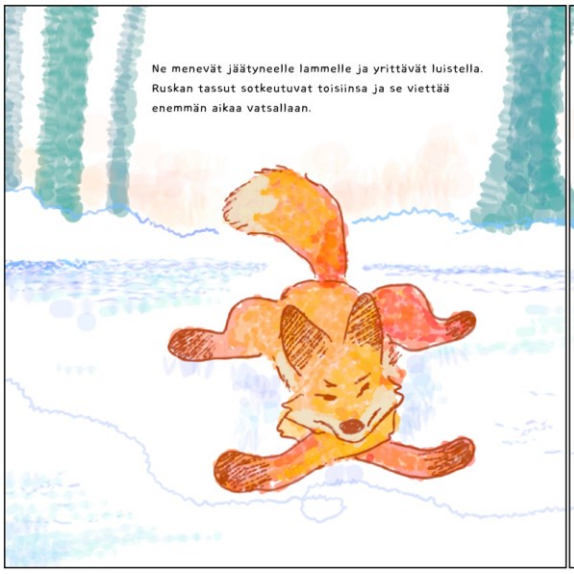

Ruska yrittää nykäistä kieltä irti, mutta se on tarrannut kiinni jäähän. "Apua, apua!" Se uikuttaa surullisesti.
Yli lentänyt korppi kuulee Ruskan huudot ja lennähtää lähemmäs.


"Oletko jumissa? Anna kun autan sinua", korppi sanoo ja nokkii jääpuikkoa nokallaan kunnes se alkaa murtua.


Ruska istuu lumessa ja sulattelee jäljelle jäänyttä jääpuikkoa suussaan, kunnes sen kieli vapautuu. "Kiitos! Olen Ruska, kuka sinä olet?"


"Olen Halla!" Korppi nimeltään Halla, sanoo iloisesti. "Oletpa höpsö, kai tiedät ettei jääpuikkoja kannata nuolla?"
"Enkä ole höpsö!" Ruska puollustautuu, "no... ehkä vähän olen..."
"Me kaikki olemme joskus vähän höpsöjä", Halla naurahtaa.
"Hei, haluatko leikkiä?" Ruska kysyy.
"Hauskaa! Joo!" Halla iloitsee.

Kettu ja korppi peuhaavat lumessa, pyörien ja leikkien lumisotaa.



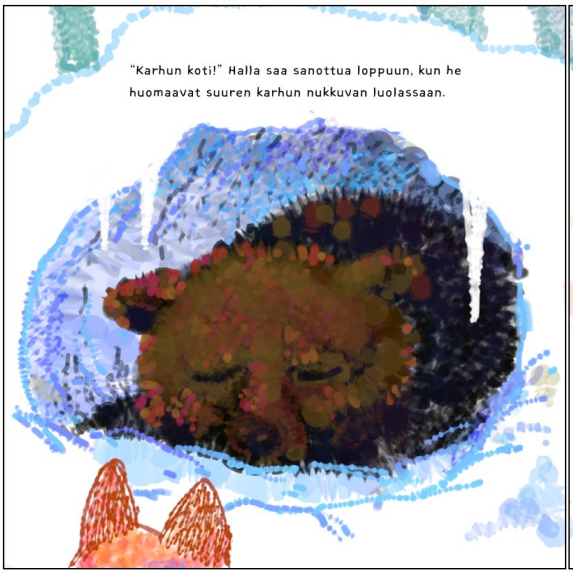
Ne menevät jäätyneelle lammelle ja yrittävät luistella.
Ruskan tassut sotkeutuvat toisiinsa ja se viettää
enemmän aikaa vatsallaan.

Hallan pienet jalat ja
varpaat ovat oikein sopivat
luisteluun!

Leikkiminen ja seikkailu
jatkuu, kunnes kaksikko
päätyy ison luolan suulle.

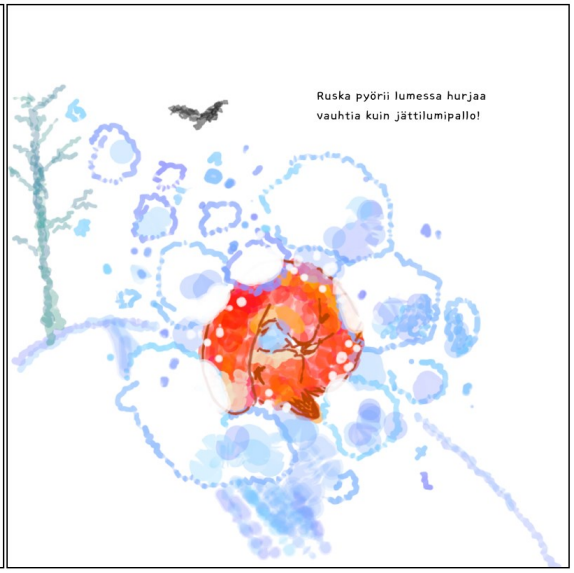
Ruska kurkkaa luolaan uteliaana.

"Odota! Se on..." Halla aloittaa.

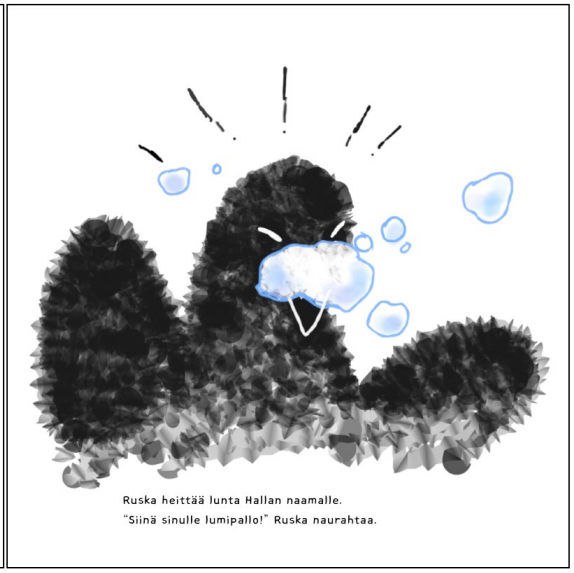

"Karhun koti!" Halla saa sanottua loppuun, kun he huomaavat suuren karhun nukkuvan luolassaan.


Ruska ja Halla pakenevat pahasti pelästyneinä.
"Hmm, mitä tämä meteli on?" Karhu mumisee havahduttuaan unestaan, "Mm, ei ole vielä kevät... väsyttää..."


"Varovasti!" Halla ehtii huutaa kun ne tulevat mäen reunalle,
mutta lumi pettää Ruskan tassujen alla ja se lentää alas mäkeä.

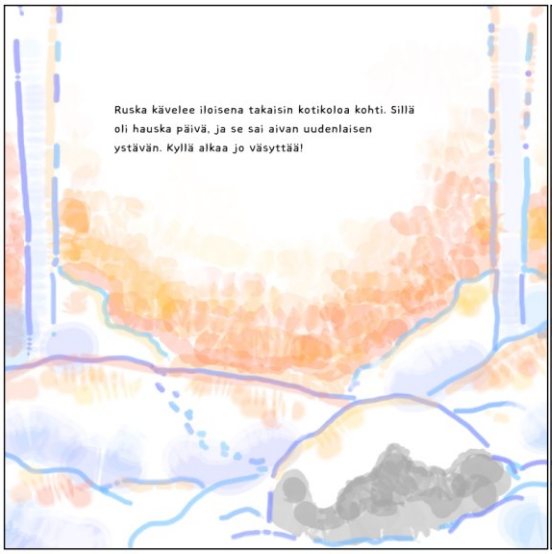

Ruska pyörii lumessa hurjaa vauhtia kuin jättilumipallo!


Lumipallo rikkoutuu vihdoin, kun vauhti hidastuu. Ruskan pää on ihan pyörällä.
"Se näytti hauskalta! Uudestaan!" Halla nauraa.
"Ei... ei ihan heti..." Ruska mumisee.
"Hehe, olet mahtava lumipallo", Halla sanoo.

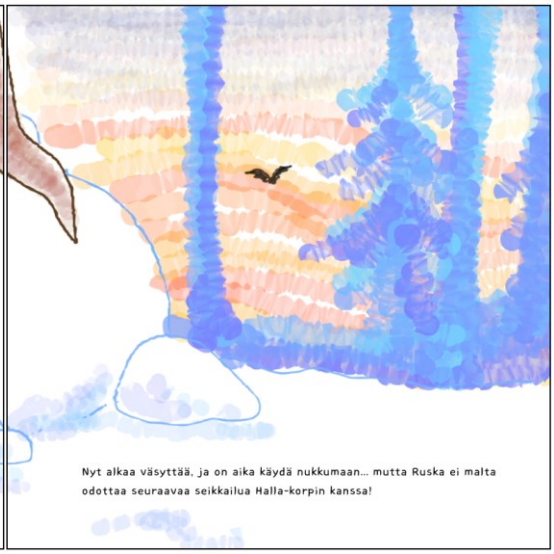

Ruska heittää lunta Hallan naamalle.
"Siinä sinulle lumipallo!" Ruska naurahtaa.


Molemmat nauravat tapahtumalle
ja pudistelevat lunta turkistaan
ja sulistaan.


"Hei, aurinko on melkein laskenut!" Ruska huomaa. "Minun pitää mennä
kotiin, tai äiti huolestuu..."
"Siinä tapauksessa leikitään uudestaan toisena päivänä!" Halla sanoo.
"Totta kai!" Ruska lupaa.


Ruska kävelee iloisena takaisin kotikoloa kohti. Sillä
oli hauska päivä, ja se sai aivan uudenlaisen
ystävän. Kyllä alkaa jo väsyttää!


Kotikolon suulla Ruska painautuu äitiä vasten.


Nyt alkaa väsyttää, ja on aika käydä nukkumaan... mutta Ruska ei malta
odottaa seuraavaa seikkailua Halla-korpin kanssa!