



ALFONZO'S FIDDLE



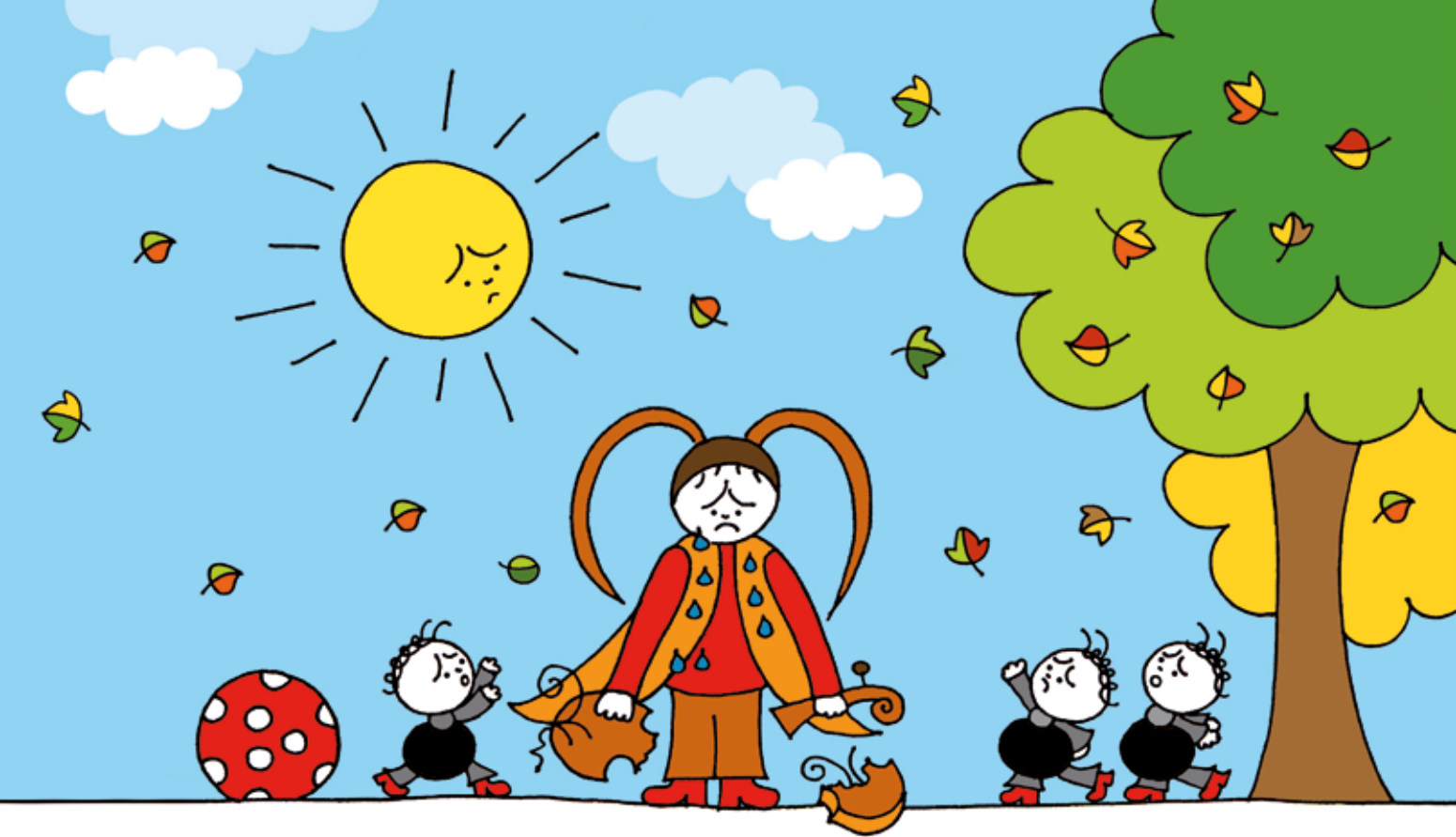
One autumn day, Alfonzo the cricket stood happily playing his fiddle in the mushroom field. The forest friends were all enjoying the lovely music.



The little ants were playing ball on the hill. They were having lots of fun throwing the ball backwards and forwards.



But, oh dear! The ball bounced away and knocked the fiddle clean out of Alfonzo's hands. It smashed on the ground and the music stopped. Alfonzo shouted in surprise, "My fiddle! My fiddle's broken!"



And then he burst into tears. He was sobbing so loudly that everyone came to see what the fuss was all about.



Alfonzo pointed angrily at the spotty ball.

"That ball! That ball is to blame! And those naughty ants! Where am I going to get a fiddle from now?"



He picked his broken fiddle up, went into his house and slammed the door shut behind him.

"Alfonzo, Alfonzo, come out! I'm sure we can help you," Berry said.
But Alfonzo didn't want to see anybody.



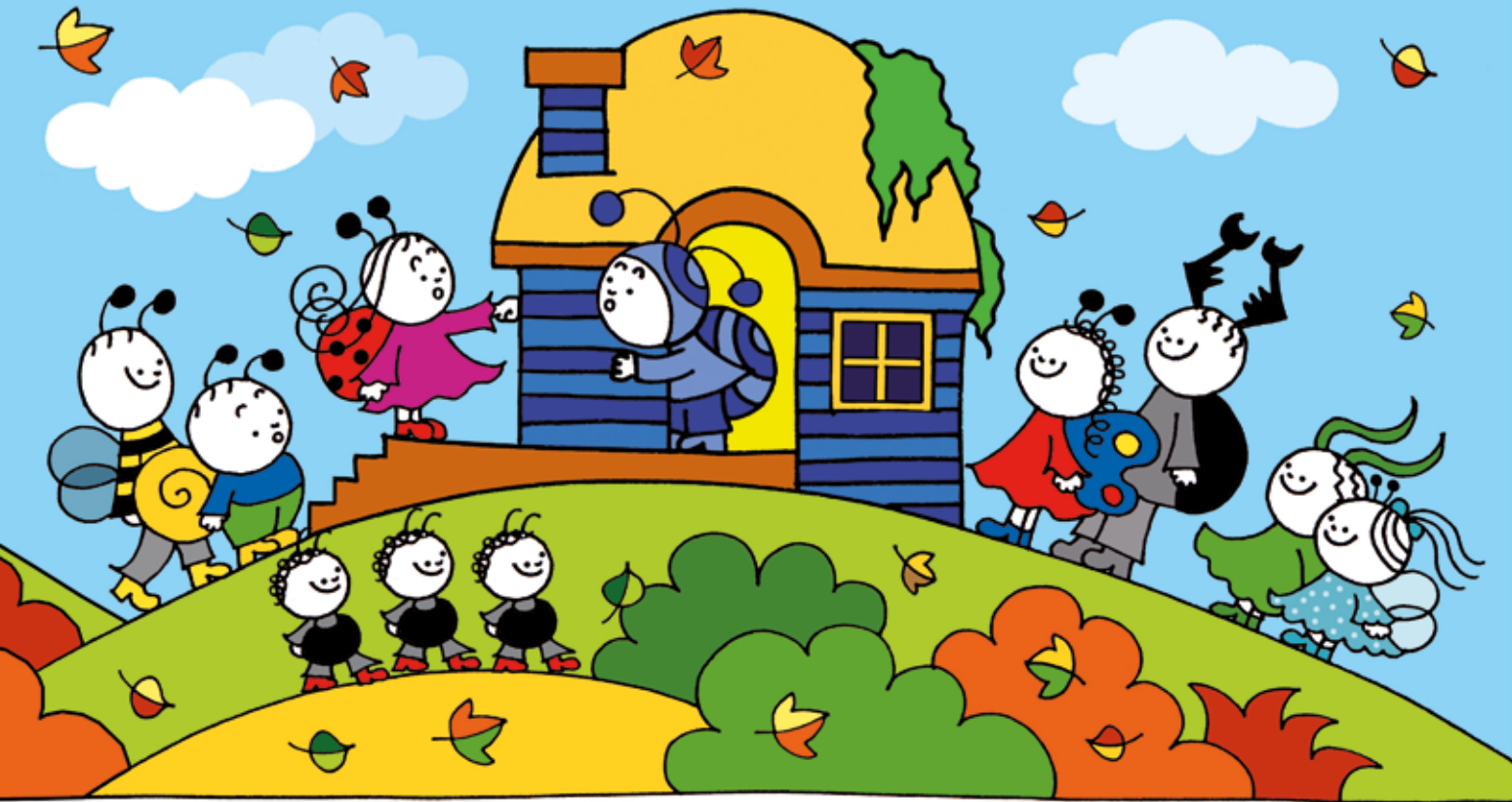
His friends sat sadly in the mushroom field and didn't know what to do. Then Dolly had an idea. "I know, let's make Alfonzo a new fiddle!"



"Yes, let's make a new fiddle," Flutter the butterfly nodded. "I know who can help us. We have to find Charlie the click beetle. He made Alfonzo's first fiddle."



The band of friends set off and walked and walked until they reached a blue house. They knocked on the door.



A tiny timid beetle popped his head out. He wore a blue hat and had beautiful dark blue wings.

"Who are you?" he asked.

Dolly told Charlie the whole story.



"Oh, if that's your problem, I'm happy to help. Don't be sad. Alfonzo will be playing music on his new fiddle in no time at all!"



The click beetle gave everybody a job to do. Some collected wood for the body of the fiddle while others gathered grass for the strings. Now he had everything he needed, Charlie got to work.



He sawed, sanded, polished and waxed, and then, like a little miracle, the new fiddle was ready!



"Can I try it?" Dolly asked.

"No, it's Alfonzo's instrument," Flutter told her.

"But I want to have my own musical instrument!" Dolly sulked.

"Me too, me too!" the little ants shouted.



"Quiet!" said Charlie. "Why don't you start an orchestra? A great big orchestra?"

"Like a music band? And everybody could have their own instrument? That's a very good idea," Berry said with a smile.



The first thing they made was a harp for Dolly. The tiny harp was carved out of wood and the strings were blades of grass. Then they made some large strings. Stanley got a double bass and Eddy the potato beetle had a cello. Everybody worked hard.



Berry made a trumpet out of a lily and Maurice the maybug made a horn from a honeysuckle flower. It made a very deep sound. The big spider used horse chestnuts and acorns for drums while Zephyr and Leapy made cymbals out of pebbles.



Charlie carved flutes from birch twigs for the ants. Flutter the butterfly made a lute for herself and Balthazar built a zither. Bubble the baby beetle played a triangle.



Now it was time for rehearsals. It took a long time before all the instruments were ready and the little friends learned how to play on them. When they sounded nice together, they headed for Alfonzo's house.



Alfonzo heard the music and looked out of the window to see where it was coming from. He was surprised by what he saw.

"Please, Alfonzo," the little ant began, "don't be mad at us for breaking your fiddle. We'd like you to have this new one as a present. Charlie made it."



They didn't have to say it twice. Alfonso began to play straight away and the sound of his fiddle filled the forest once more. They played music and sang until they all fell asleep.