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Luiza Laffitte

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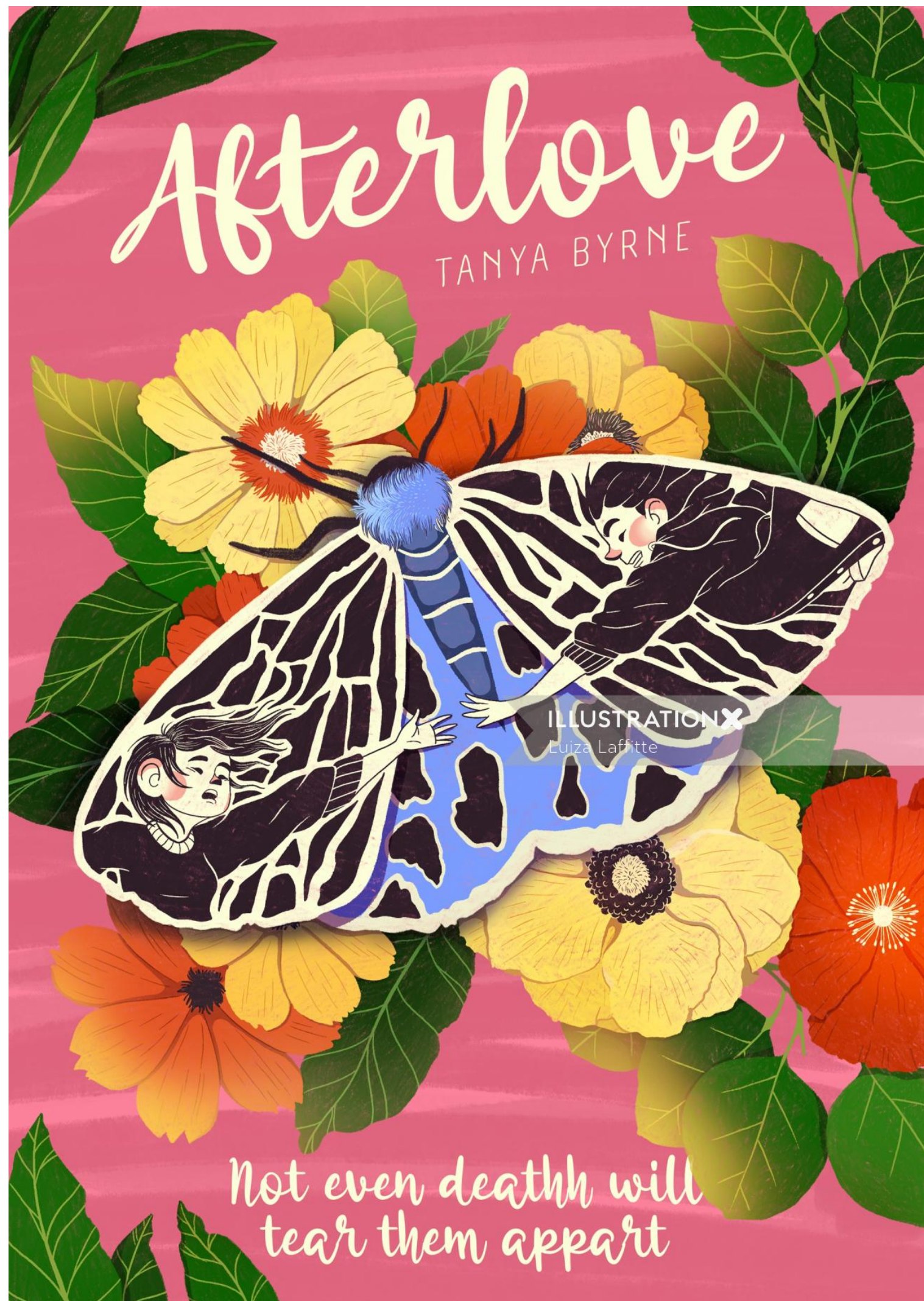
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OFF THE SHELF



ILLUSTRATION
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school book reports

BOOKS OFFER children an imaginative world to explore or historical facts to fascinate. When casual reading becomes a chore through assigned book reports, you may find it hard to motivate your kids to read. Here's how two authors found inspiration to write their books, which are on our list of books for your grade and middle school kids to consider.

"After hiking Chicagoland's forest preserves for years with my kids, I discovered they contain archaeological sites of Illinois tribes. *Mystery in Crooked Creek Woods* raises awareness about native peoples and the places where we build our homes, ride our bikes and live our lives today. This topic then led me to explore the telling of good stories, the pursuit of the truth and Jesus' command to love our neighbors."
—Amanda Cleary Eastep

"I went canoeing with a friend in Florida, and the primeval beauty of the swamp shook something loose in my imagination. At the same time, I was listening to some of Eugene Peterson's sermons about young David and his 'earthy spirituality.' It felt like a providential mashup: 'The Wilderking Trilogy' started there, with a spiritually attuned boy whose calling required that he not get more 'spiritual,' but earthier, swamplier, even a little wilder."
—Jonathan Rogers

BIOGRAPHY

Series: "Christian Heroes: Then & Now"
Richard Wurmbrand: Love Your Enemies
by Janet and Geoff Benge

Series: "Christian Heroes: Then & Now"
Helen Roseveare: Mama Luka
by Janet and Geoff Benge

CONTEMPORARY

Series: "Tree Street Kids"
Mystery in Crooked Creek Woods
by Amanda Cleary Eastep

Series: "The Ben Washington Series"
Ben Watson is . . . the Newbie on the Block
by Jasmine Mullen

BIBLE FANTASY

Series: "Patrick Wigglesworth's Dangerous Dilemmas Bizarre Bible Adventure"
by Liz and Jack Hagler

Series: "Passages"
The Marus Manuscripts Volumes 1 and 2
by Paul McCusker

HISTORICAL ADVENTURE

Series: "The Imagination Station"
Big Risks in Russia
by Marianne Hering

Courage at the Castle
by Marianne Hering

HUMOR

Series: "Adventures of Average Boy"
Average Boy's Above-Average Year
by Bob Smiley

Dolphins in Danger
Series: "The Magnificent Mulligans"
by Bill Myers

MYSTERY

Series: "The Last Chance Detectives"
Quest for the King's Crown
by Robert Vernon

Series: "Young Whit"
Young Whit and the Cloth of Contention
by Phil Lollar and Dave Arnold

READER FAVORITES

Series: "The Chronicles of Narnia"
The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe
by C.S. Lewis

Series: "The Wilderking Trilogy"
The Bark of the Bog Owl
by Jonathan Rogers

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board. It was a huge hit with Dad. The finished product has since found a prominent place in our home, and it never fails to attract the attention of visitors.

—Jesse Neve

on the counter so that they spelled "DAD." As a bonus, my husband was able to enjoy a few hours to himself while we were occupied in the kitchen.

—Katherine Mixon

a board game of memories

My kids made a personalized board game that they called On the Road. They fashioned the board after Monopoly, but they put their unique spin on the properties by customizing the board with hotels and people's homes we've stayed at while traveling. They also added favorite cafés where we've shared meals and made memories.

The kids decorated the board, cut out activity cards and hand colored paper money. They laughed a lot as they dreamed up ideas for the penalty cards:

-Ate too many samples at the hotel buffet. Skip a turn.

-You ate all the popcorn at the theater. Pay \$25.

-Forgot to close the car topper. Go to jail.

I was proud of them for sticking with it when the project turned into a much longer job than anticipated. Their time was rewarded the minute their dad opened his gift. He loved it.

We still have Monopoly on our game shelf, but it gets passed over every time for the homemade version.

—Julia Springman

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ON AN EARLY SPRING DAY in southeastern Pennsylvania, Roger Latham '83 walks through the wooded property that he and his husband, Stephen Demos '84, have maintained for the last 30 years. Their garden, better described as a densely planted patch of restored native forest, stands in contrast to the neighboring neatly trimmed suburban lawns. Walking into Latham's yard, one feels like they've wandered much further into the woods than they intended, and perhaps further back into time, too — before this land was cleared and subdivided into private lots, before the Lenape were driven away by European and American colonizers, and even before humans themselves became part of the ecosystem.

Venturing deeper into a winding path, lush with leafy understory growth and shaded by towering sugar maples, Latham points out what draws many people to his garden: his pawpaw trees. The pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*) is shrub-like and unassuming with a modest stature, thin trunk, and spindly branches. Its leaves, which, by the summertime, will grow nearly

12 inches long into ruffled, overhanging leaves, are just starting to appear. Compact greenish-burgundy flowers dot the otherwise bare branches, marking spots where the pawpaw fruit — the largest edible fruit native to North America — will appear in early fall. "Some say they taste like banana, mango, and pineapple," Latham says. "It's a mild, slightly sweet kind of custard flavor." Tropical yet autumnal, often with hints of vanilla — an unexpected flavor to be emerging in a year from the mid-Atlantic fall. Latham is an ecologist, evolutionary biologist, researcher, gardener, and former professor of biology at Swarthmore who lives in nearby Valley Forge, Pa. Clad in sturdy, well-worn workwear bearing evidence of the labor required to maintain a small forest, Latham begins to describe the world as it was nearly 40 million years ago during the Eocene period — a time when pawpaws emerged. "This was after the asteroid impact after the dinosaurs, when life rebounded. The earth had reached the peak of warmth," Latham says. "Mammals had gotten bigger, more diverse than they ever had been before, and the earth was there was no ice at the poles, and the ocean was significantly deeper than it is today. "But then things began to cool during the Pleistocene. About 2 million years ago, the polar ice caps grew very big, resulting in a series of ice ages. And pawpaws, they lived through all of that," Latham says. He pauses to point out the other native plants scattered throughout his garden: mature sugar maples planted as tiny whips 25 years ago, a red mulberry; a patch of Jerusalem

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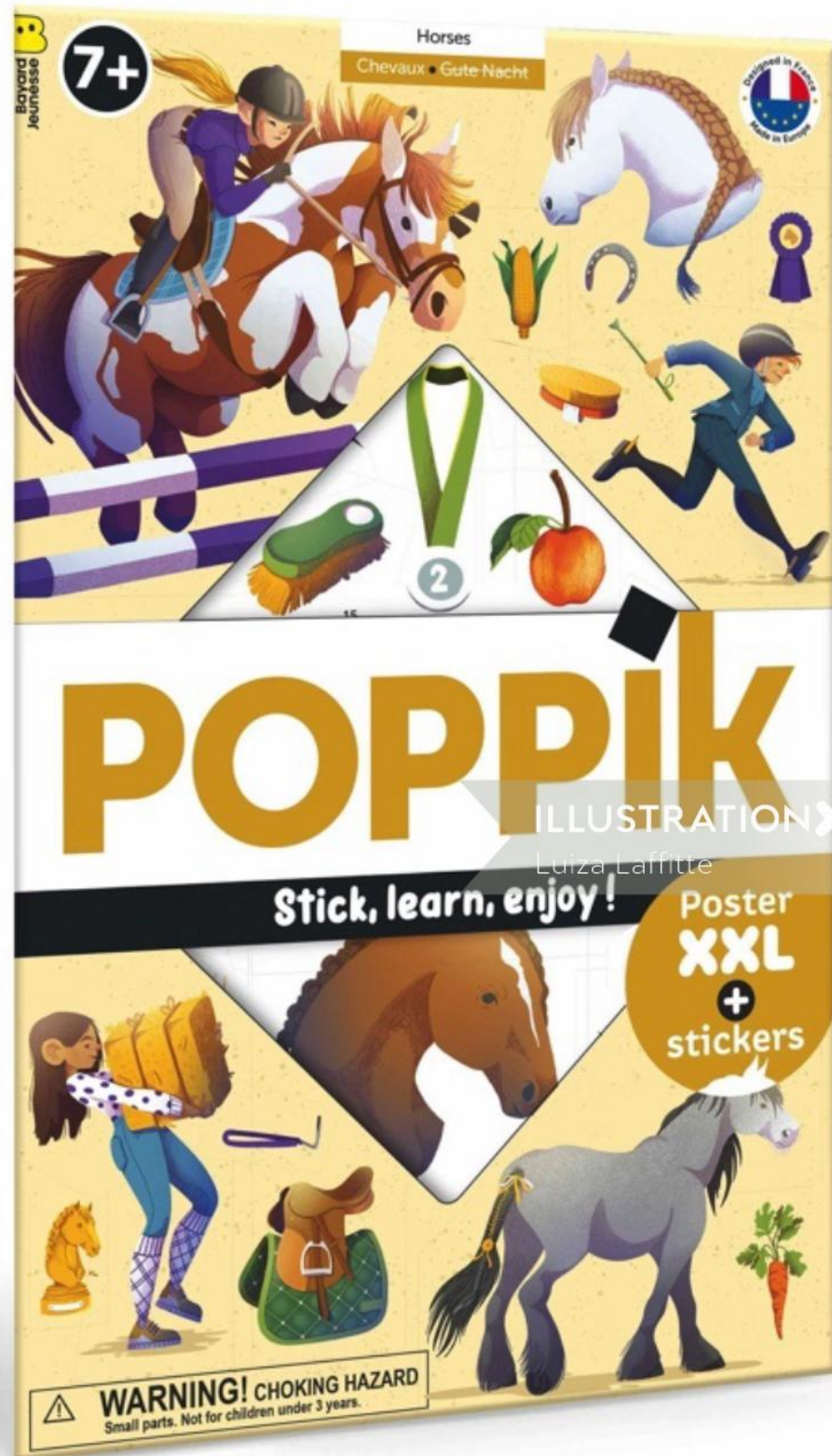
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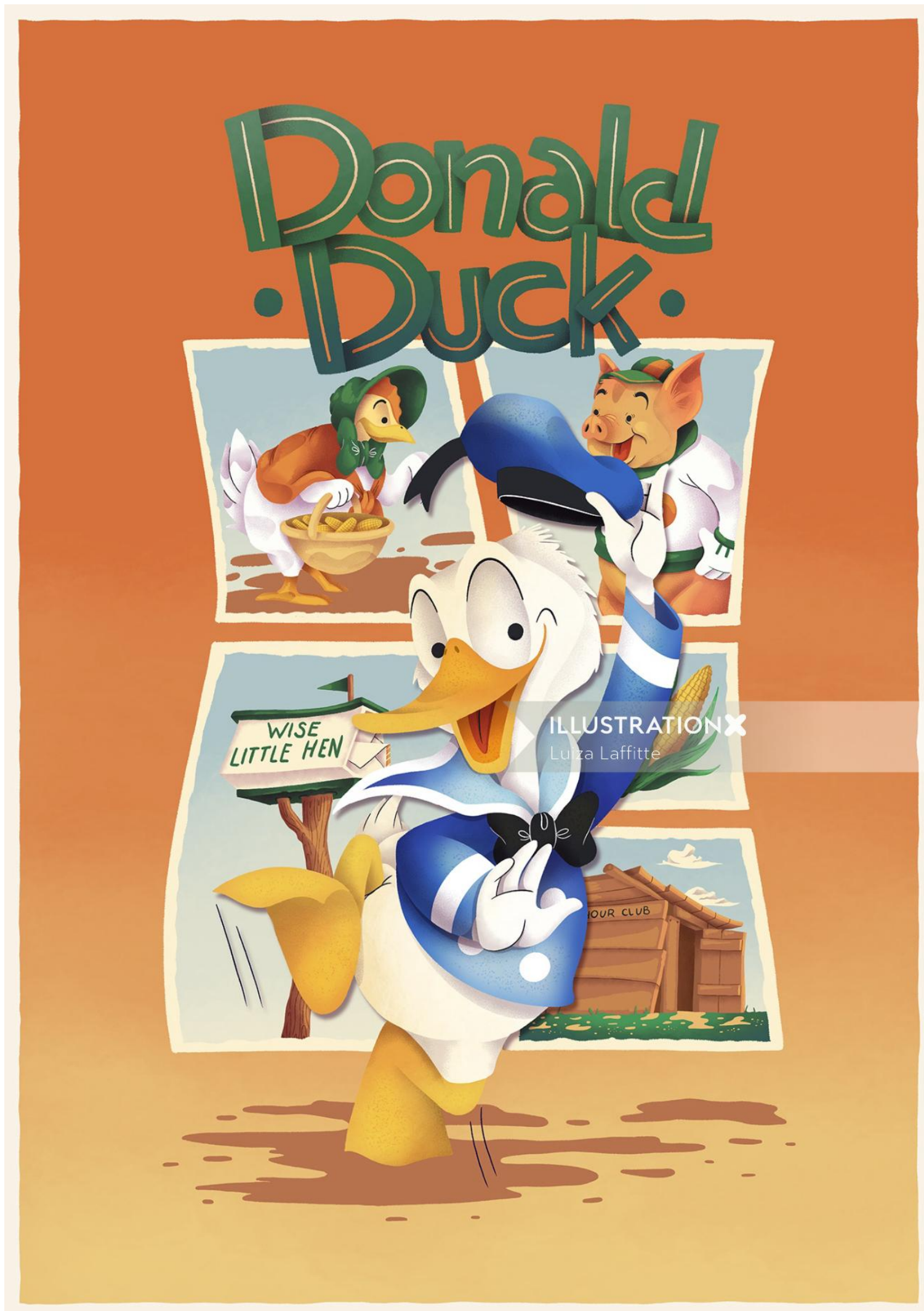
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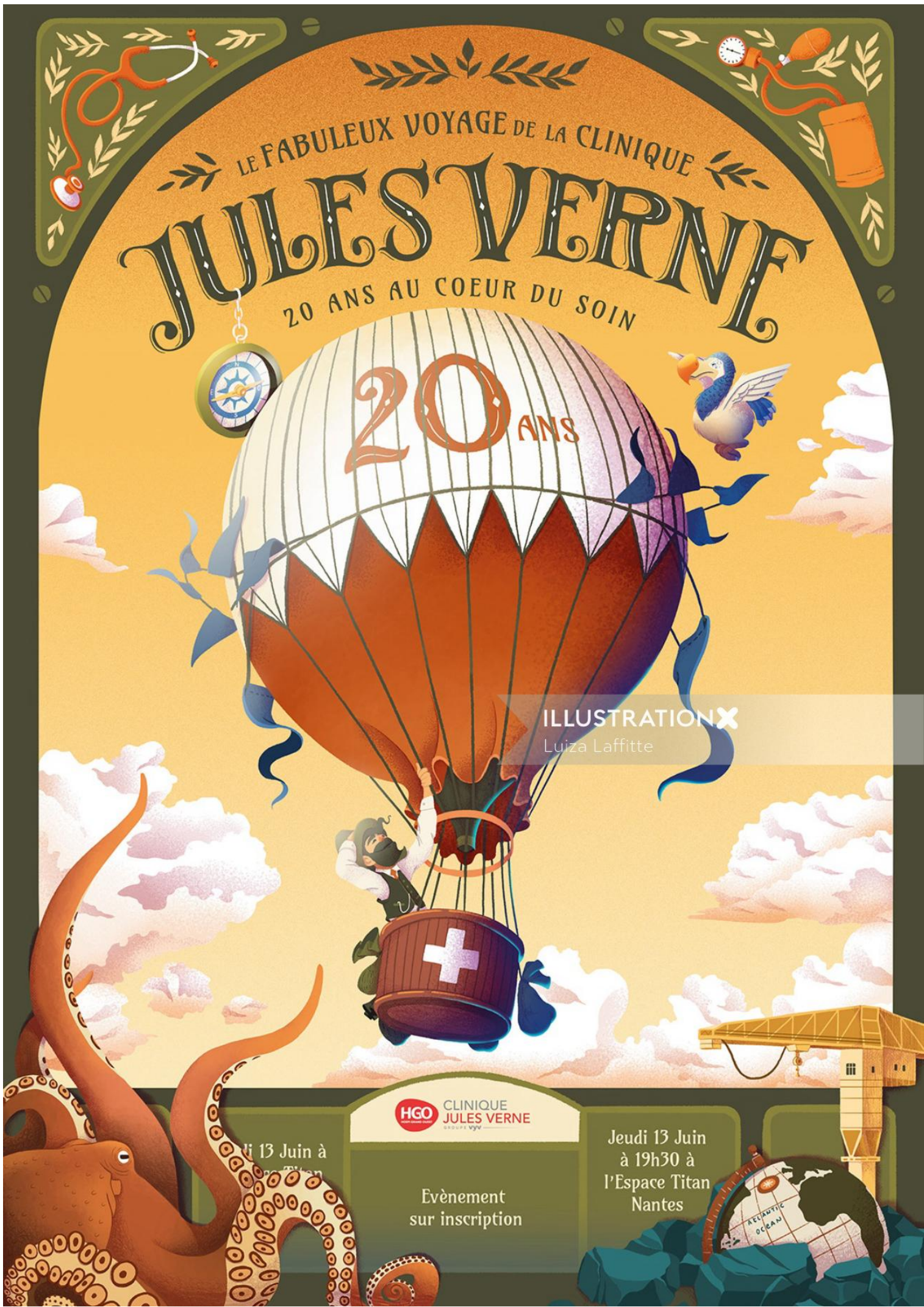
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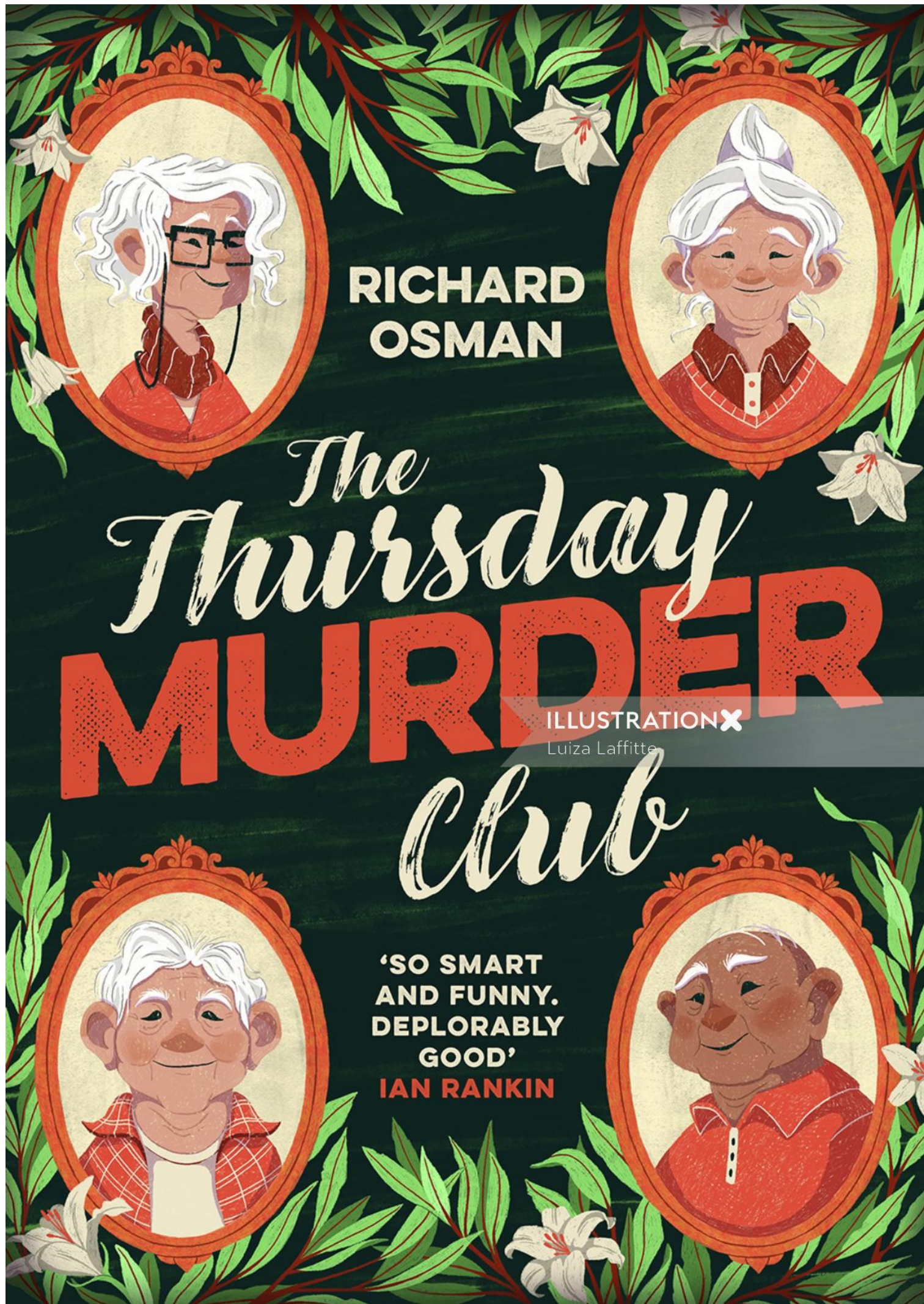
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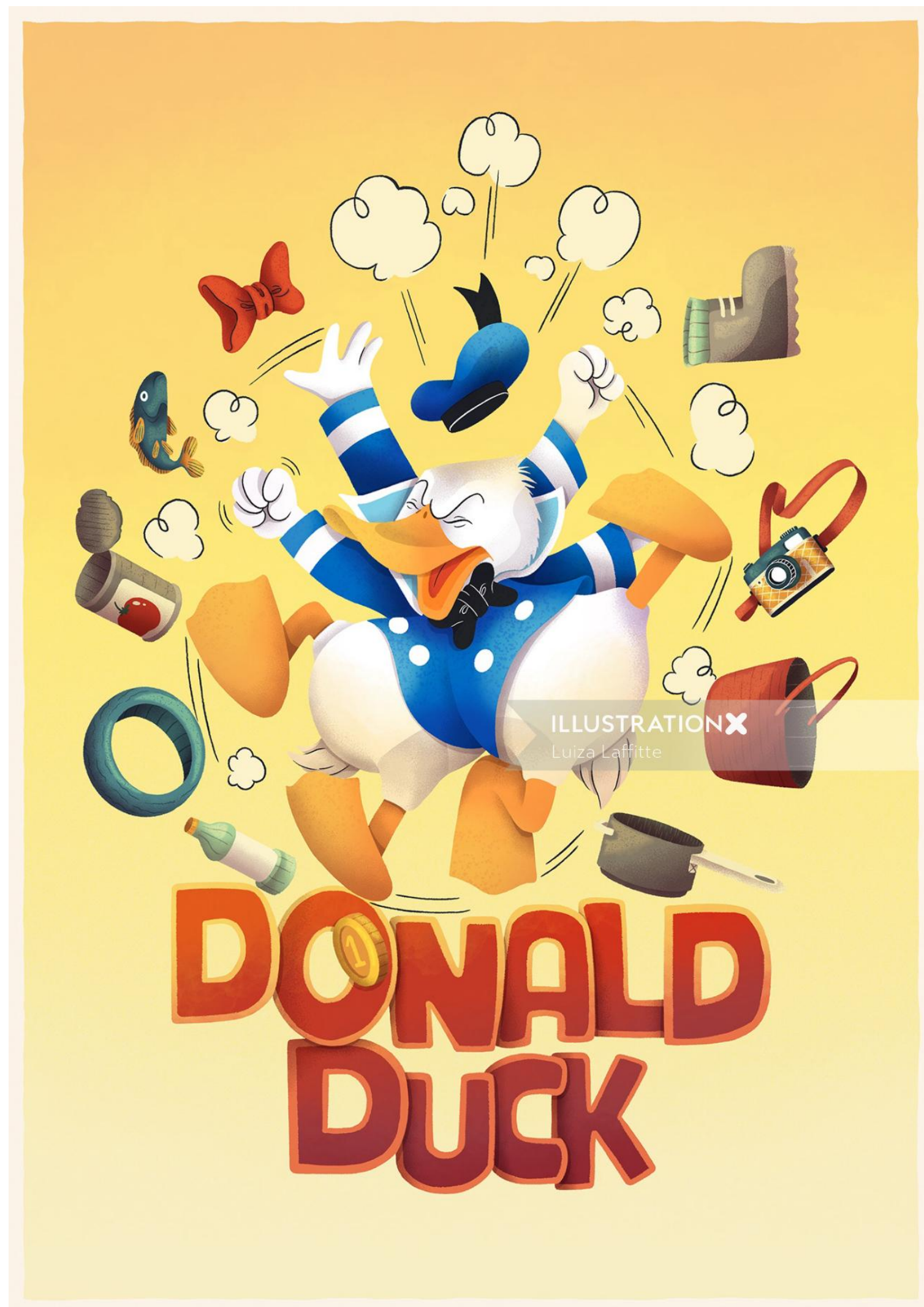
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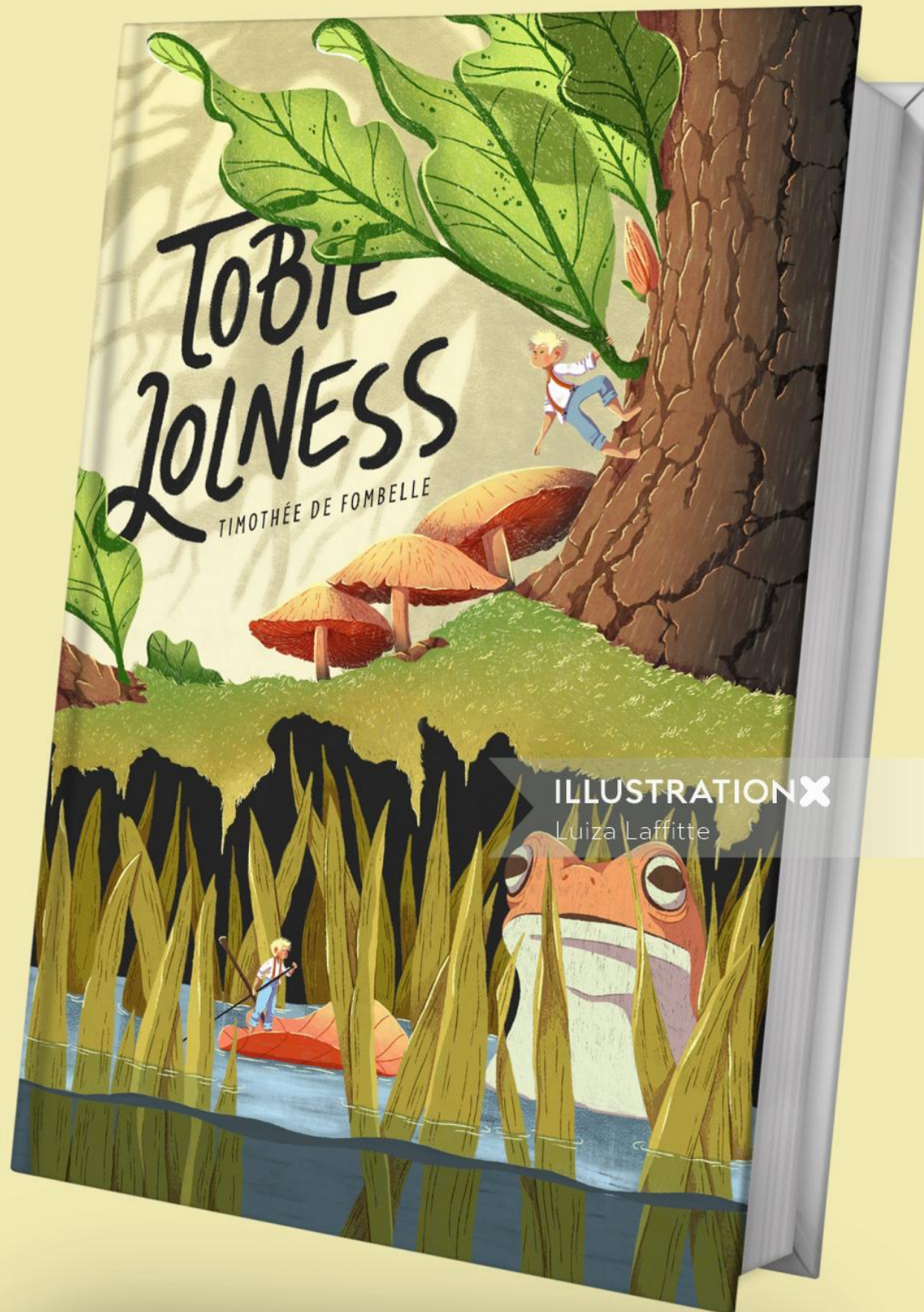
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