



Growing Frogs



Vivian French



illustrated by
Alison Bartlett

Once, when I was little, my mum
read me a story about a frog that
drank and drank and drank,
and grew bigger

and bigger
and bigger.



Afterwards Mum asked me if I'd like
to watch some real frogs growing.

"I know where there's a pond with lots
of frogs' eggs in it," she said. "We could
bring some home."

I was frightened.
"I don't want any
frogs jumping about
getting bigger

and bigger
and bigger," I said.

But Mum gave me a hug. "It's only a story,"
she said. "Even when our frogs are grown up
they'll still be smaller than my hand."

"Oh," I said. "OK."

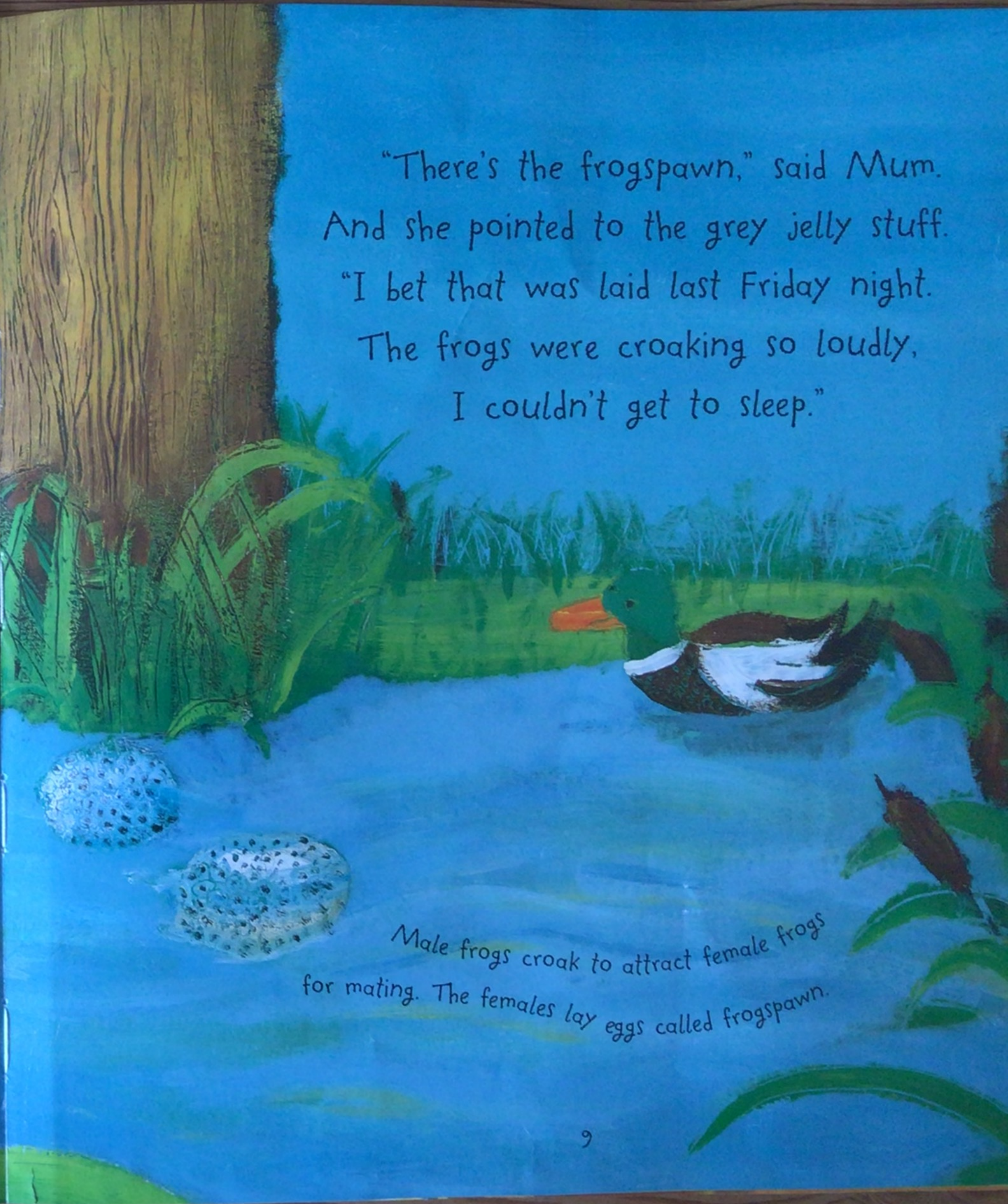


Next day we went
to look at the pond.
The water was dark
brown, and there
was grey jelly stuff
floating on the top.

"Yuck!" I said.



"There's the frogspawn," said Mum.
And she pointed to the grey jelly stuff.
"I bet that was laid last Friday night.
The frogs were croaking so loudly,
I couldn't get to sleep."



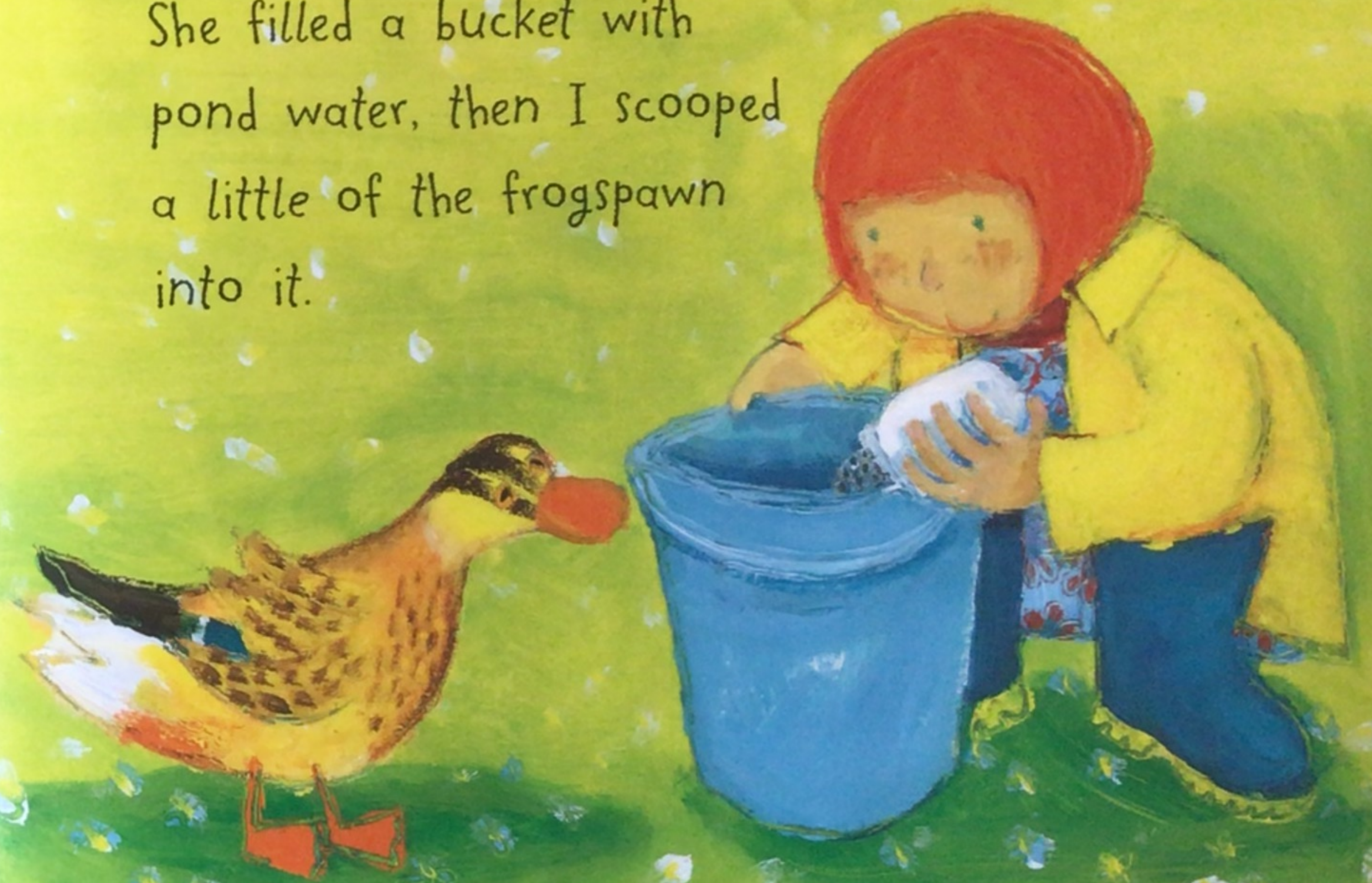
*Male frogs croak to attract female frogs
for mating. The females lay eggs called frogspawn.*

"You see the black dot in the middle of each jelly shell?" said Mum. "That's going to grow into a tadpole."



"Where are the frogs?" I asked. "Tadpoles grow into frogs," she said. "Little ones - no giant frogs here!"

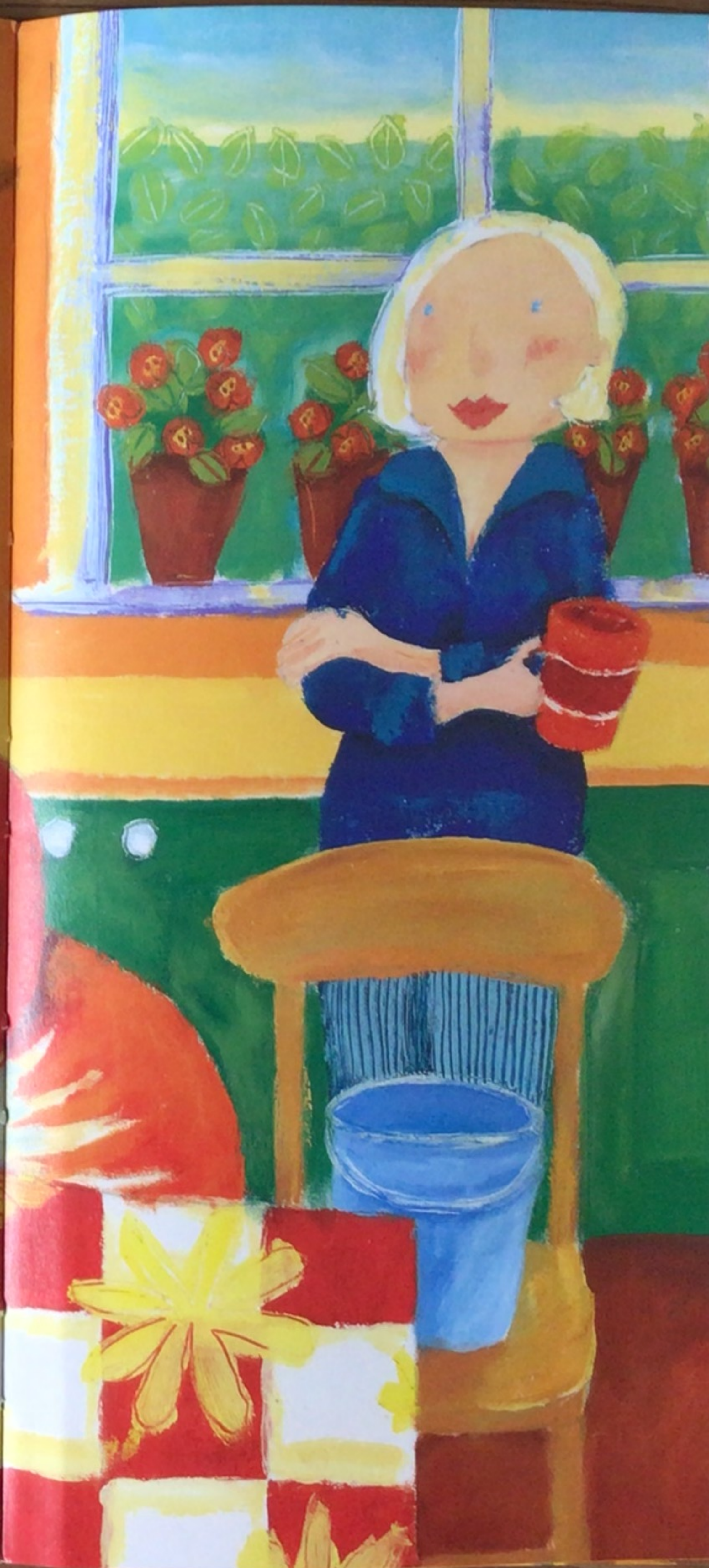
Mum put some pondweed and some stones into a bag. She filled a bucket with pond water, then I scooped a little of the frogspawn into it.



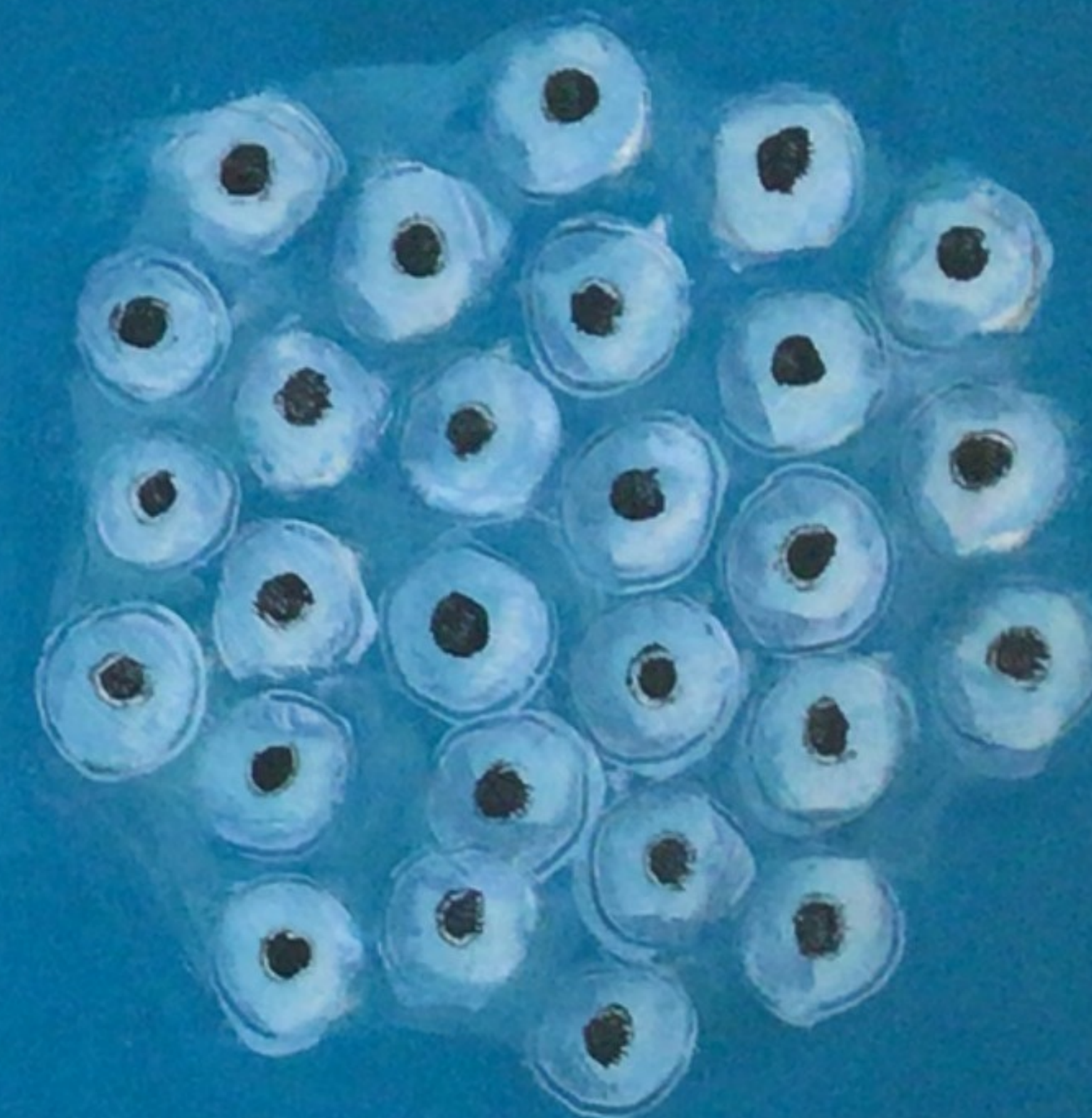
Always use pond water for growing frogs at home. Tap water has chemicals like fluoride in it, which might poison them.

When we got home we put everything into a big fish tank in the kitchen.

The cat kept peering at it, so we had to put a wire net over the top.



I counted
twenty-seven
little black dots.
Each dot was inside
its own jelly shell.



The tank needs to be somewhere that's cool and away from direct sunlight.

Every day when I woke up
I went straight downstairs
to look at the frogspawn.



The little dots
grew into bigger dots.



and then into
tiny commas.



*In a tank, the eggs hatch into tadpoles
about ten days after they are laid.*

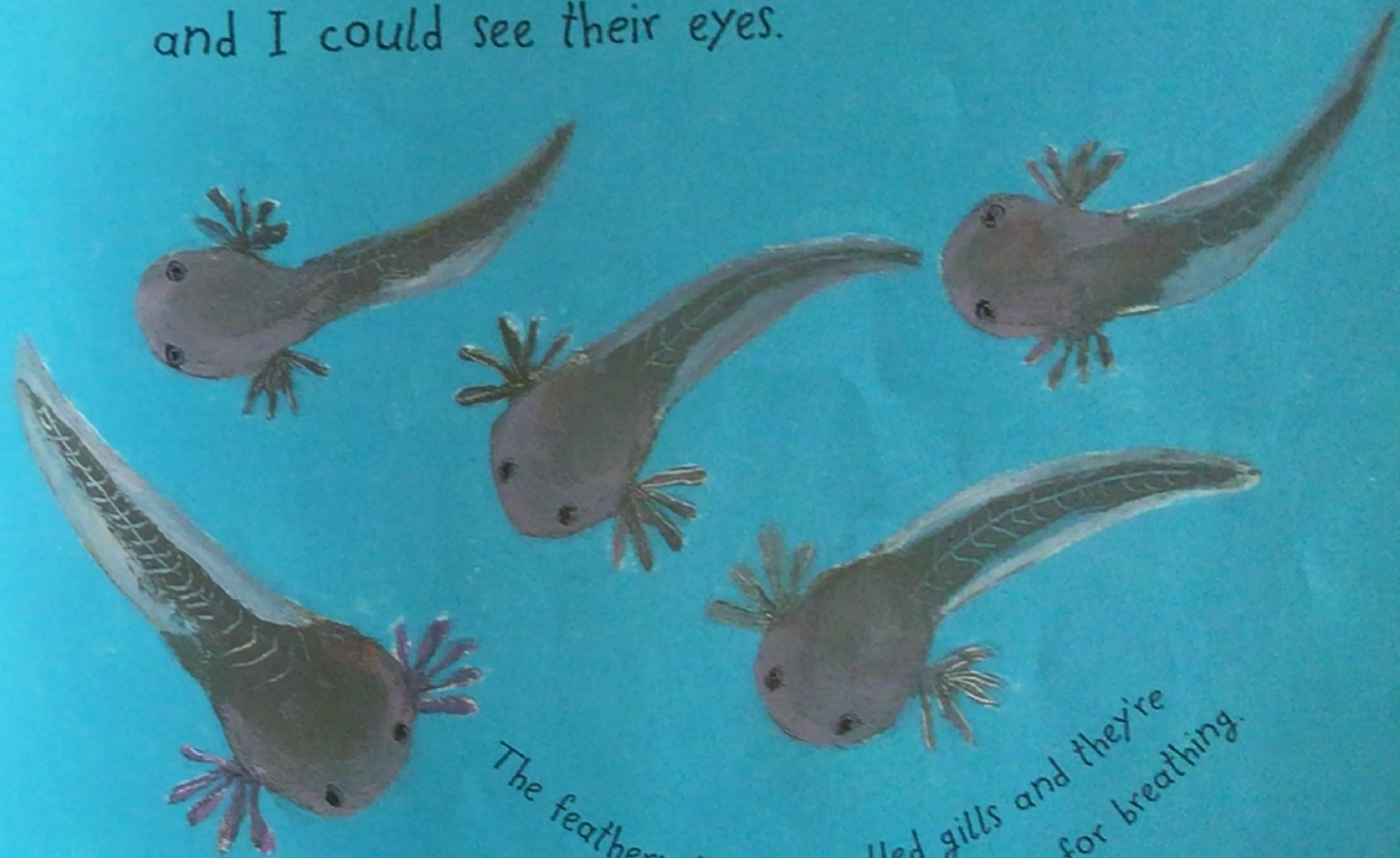
And one morning
I saw the first tadpole
wriggling out of its
jelly shell!



At first the tadpoles didn't do much.
They just stayed close to their jelly shells
and nibbled at the pondweed.



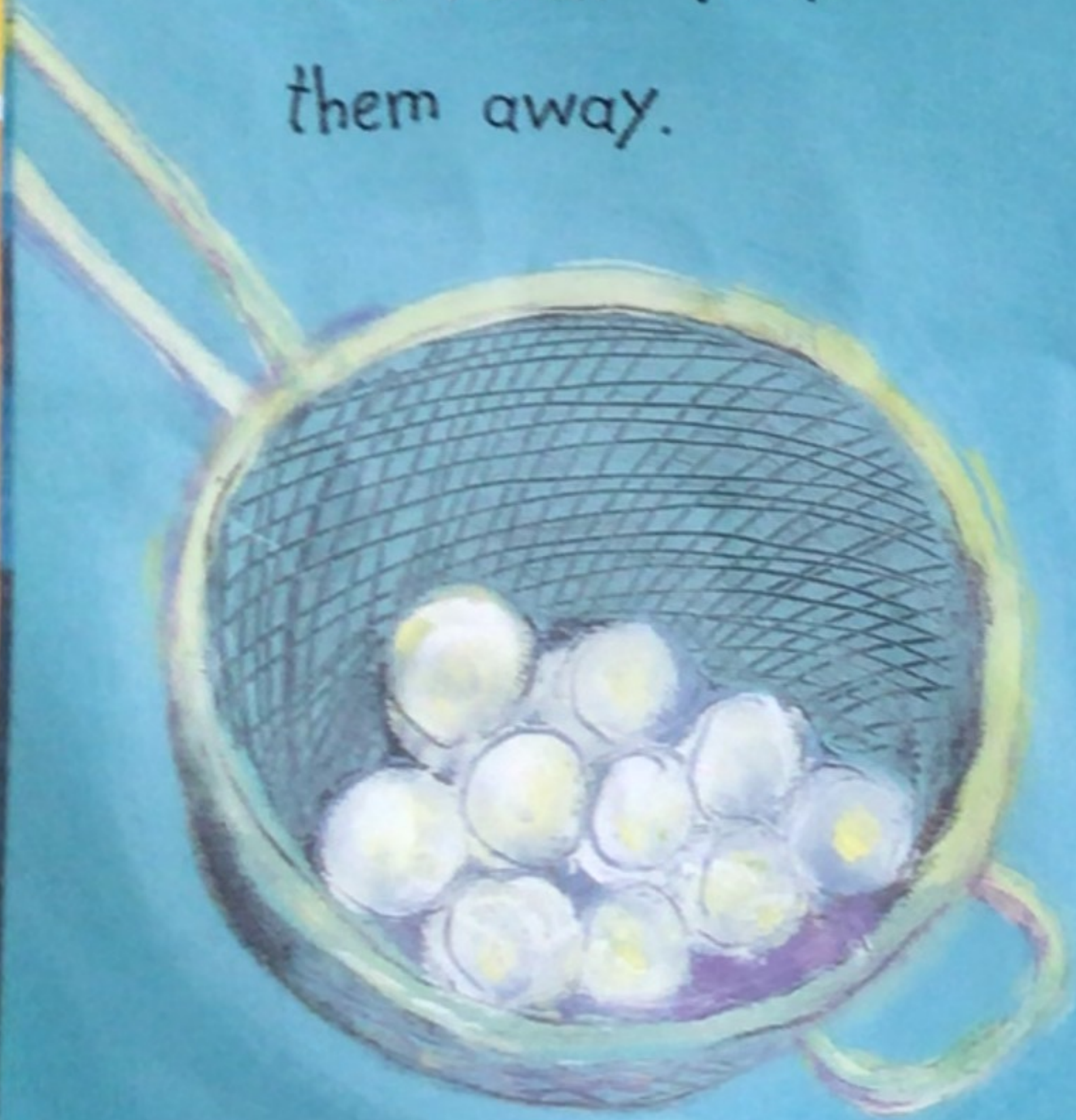
But after two or three days
they looked quite different. There
were feathery things on their heads
and I could see their eyes.



The feathery bits are called gills and they're
what underwater animals use for breathing.

They swam **very** fast.

Ten of the eggs
didn't hatch out.
The black dots went
dull and cloudy,
and Mum took
them away.



Then we cleaned out
the tank and put in fresh
weed and pond water.

One of the tadpoles swam
into my hand when I was
putting a stone back.
It was slippery and slithery,
and it made me jump.



After the tadpoles had
the pond water needs
to be changed at least
twice a week.

After a bit I got used to having tadpoles and I didn't look at them so often.

When Mum told me their little feathery bits had gone I didn't believe her.

But it was *true*.



Tadpoles only have gills outside their bodies at first.
Then they grow gills inside their bodies
and the outside ones disappear.

It was me that saw the next change, though.

“Look!”

I shouted, and Mum rushed to see.

Some of the tadpoles had grown two little bumps. Mum said the bumps would grow into back legs.



They grew very quickly.

One day there were
two little bumps.



The next day the
bumps were stumps.



The day after that
they were almost
proper legs.



And when the feet
unfolded they were
webbed, like tiny
brownish-green fans.



"They aren't tadpoles any more," I said.
"They're not-quite-frogs."



The not-quite-frogs grew front legs next.



And then their tails got shorter



and their mouths got wider.

"Now they're frogs," Mum said.
"Baby ones."



Soon the baby frogs were popping up and gulping at the surface of the water.

One of them tried to climb on to the stones, but it slid off. Mum said they were getting ready to leave the water.

"Grown-up frogs breathe air," she said. "That's what the stones are for – so our frogs can climb out of the water and breathe."



As tadpoles slowly turn into frogs, they grow lungs for breathing air and their gills disappear.

Not long after that Mum said it was time to take our baby frogs back to live in the pond with all the other baby frogs.

I was sorry to leave them, but Mum said we could come back and visit every day.

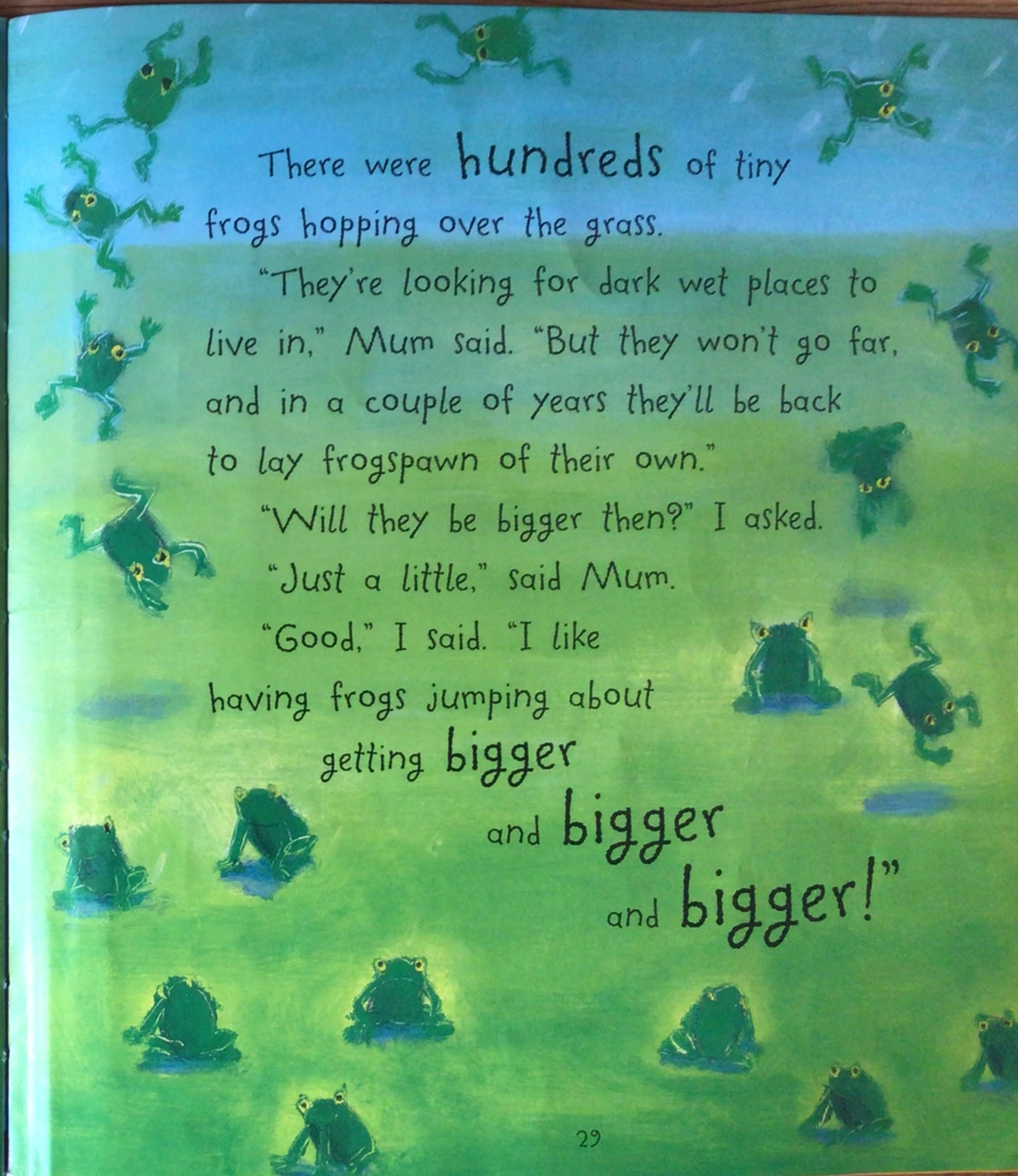


Baby frogs need space to grow and room to hop around. Grown-up frogs live most of their lives on land, only returning to their ponds to breed.



One rainy morning a week later
Mum woke me up very early.

"Hurry!" she said, and we ran downstairs
and out to the pond.



There were **hundreds** of tiny
frogs hopping over the grass.

"They're looking for dark wet places to
live in," Mum said. "But they won't go far,
and in a couple of years they'll be back
to lay frogspawn of their own."

"Will they be bigger then?" I asked.

"Just a little," said Mum.

"Good," I said. "I like
having frogs jumping about
getting **bigger**

and **bigger**
and **bigger!**"

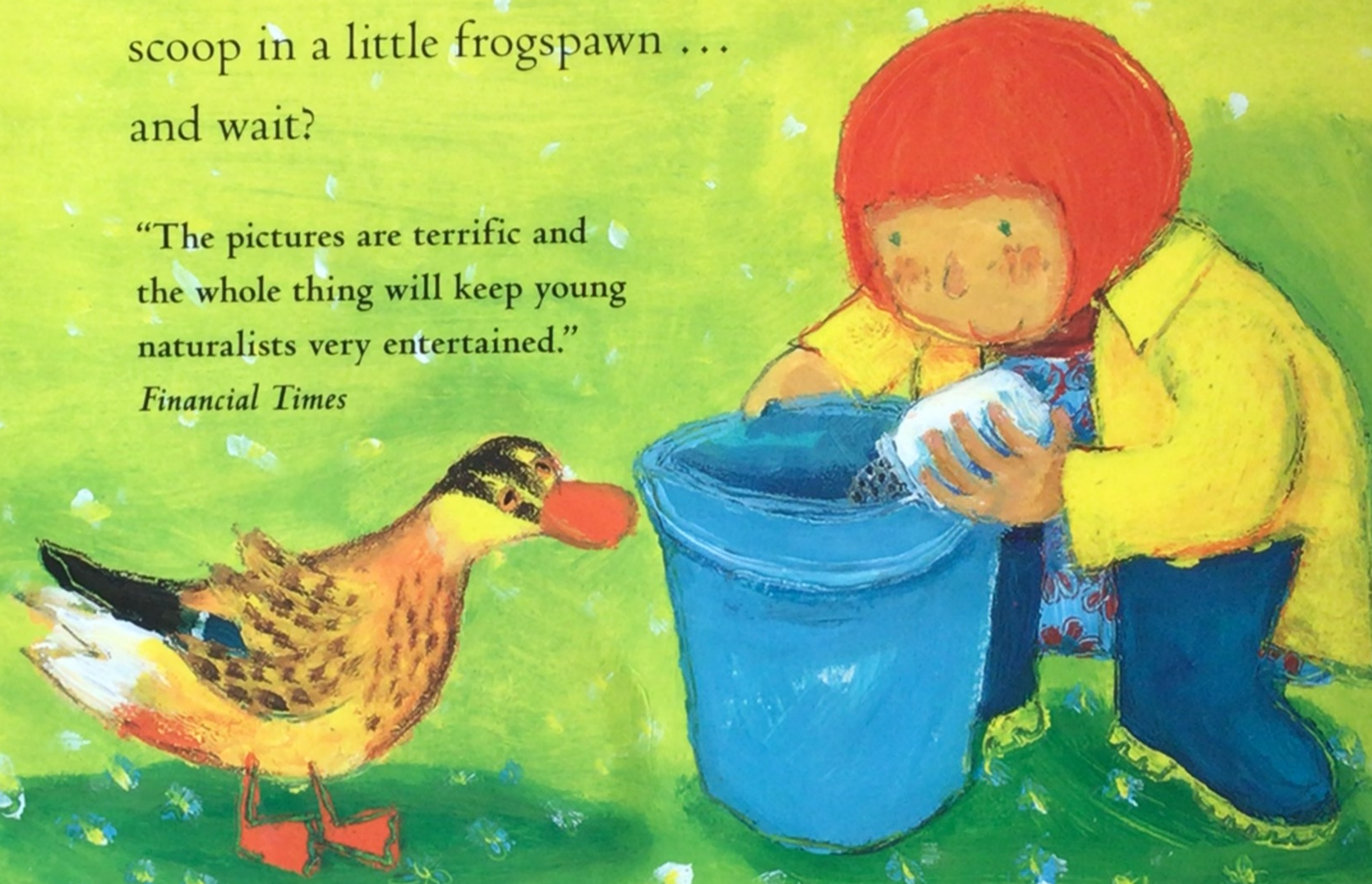
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What happens when you take an empty fish tank,
add some pond water and pondweed,
scoop in a little frogspawn ...
and wait?

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