

# Eli Celli and Mario

Words by John Bonthron

Illustrations by Fiona Hagmann and Stefan Hagmann



This is a story about a boy who lives in Switzerland.  
His real name is Elia Can but lots of people call him by his nickname which is Eli Celli.

Mami Fiona is his mother and his father is Baba Haki and he has a little sister called Nuria. Mami Fiona's parents live nearby; they are called Nini Stef and Nana Pia.

Eli Celli and Nuria have an uncle called Simon who has a dog called Gwin but they are not really in this story except at Eli Celli's birthday party.

Switzerland is a very special place with very high mountains and lots of sheep and goats and lovely brown cows. All the cows wear cow bells each with their own tunes.

If you would like to find out more about Switzerland, ask Mummy or Daddy to get this YouTube link:

<https://youtu.be/oDTrfCX9GGM>

When this story begins, Eli Celli and Mami Fiona were at home. Nuria was ready to go out with Nana Pia. Eli Celli was waiting to go for a for hike with his grandfather. The phone rang.

"... Rrring ... rrring ... rrring ..."

Because of his very special ears he always knew when it would ring, even before it rang. It would be Nini Stef. He lifted the phone and pressed the button.

'Allo Nini Stef, are you still coming today?'

'Yes, but I'll be a bit later, maybe about two o'clock.'

'OK, see you later alligator!' said Eli Celli, pressing the *Off* button.

'Mami, is it OK if I go out to play for a bit? I want to look for a piece of wood to make a new walking pole, you know, while I wait for Nini Stef.'



*Before we get on with the story proper, I want to tell you about this special boy.*

A few days before this story began, Eli Celli had his seventh birthday. To celebrate there had been a family barbecue, high up in the woods, near his house in Switzerland.

All his family had been there including Nini Stef Nana Pia, his parents and his sister Nuria.

It had been good fun with nice food and games, lots of singing and telling made-up stories. Everyone enjoyed Eli Celli's stories. He was a good storyteller. As a special present, Nini Stef had given him a Swiss Army Knife and he had been shown how to make pointed sticks for everyone to toast their marshmallows at the barbecue.



Everyone agrees Eli Celli is a very good singer like Nin Stef, who is in a choir. And so is his little sister, Nuria who is four, nearly five and very good at finding the right sort of sticks for him.

At his party, everyone sang his favourite song. It is a Yodelling song:

**Try it in German, Eli Celli's language:**

*Vo Luzern uf Wäggis zue,*

*Holje-guggu, holje-guggu,*

*brucht me weder Strümpf noch Schueh,*

*Holje-guggu, holje-guggu...*

*Hoduliduli hopsassa holje-guggu, holjeguggu,*

*Hoduliduli hopsassa holje-guggu-guggu.*

Ask Mummy or daddy to get this YouTube link:

<https://youtu.be/WmGtNtupnu0>

**And here it is in English:**

From Lucerne to Weggis zoo,

Ho lay hoo hoo, ho lay hoo hoo,

No socks or shoes are needed.

Ho lay hoo hoo, ho lay hoo hoo...

Yodel ye oodee hopsassa ho lay hoo hoo, ho lay  
hoo hoo,

Yodel ye oodee hopsassa ho lay hoo hoo, hoo  
hoo.

If you want to learn to sing it with all the actions, ask  
Mummy or Daddy to find YouTube link:

<https://youtu.be/NLpQINfCCfU>

When Nini Stef gave Eli Celli his Swiss Army Knife as  
a birthday present, this is what he told him:

'Eli Celli, you must always point the blade away from  
you and be very careful not to stab or cut yourself or  
anyone else.'

Eli Celli was not allowed to take it to Kindergarten but at other times he could keep it closed, safely, in his pocket, attached by a silver chain to his shorts so he would not lose it, even when he was running.

He had been told many times he must never do anything bad with it and must use his knife 'responsibly'.

Nana Pia had been very stern about this and Eli Celli knew she was worried about the knife, even though he had heard her say to people many times:

'Eli Celli is a very sensible boy, very sensible. And he is very thoughtful too. I am very pleased with him.'

Nana Pia did not know Eli Celli had overheard her. Because of his special ears, he could hear people speaking, even quietly, from over 500 metres away.

Everyone said that Eli Celli's hearing was 'acute' and 'exceptional'.

He could hear birds singing from very far away, like skylarks tiny and invisible above the clouds and woodpeckers tapping their beaks on dead trees, and

cows mooing in the next valley. He could even hear tiny bees collecting honey from tree flowers far, far away, high up in the woods above his house. There was no other boy in Switzerland with such special ears.



And another thing you should know about Eli Celli is that he has very good eyesight. One time, from very far away, the boy had heard Nini Stef say to a friend:

'I think Eli Celli must have been an Owl in a previous life because of his hearing and his eyesight.'

This had been said as a joke.

Of course, it could have been true because, as most people know, Owls have really super-duper hearing and excellent eyesight as well which they use for hunting mice and voles hiding in the long grass, swooping down to grab them with their sharp-clawed feet.

From when he was a little boy, Eli Celli had always been interested in Owls.

If you would like to see a Barn Owl hunting, ask Mummy or Daddy to get this YouTube link:

[https://youtu.be/M-a6QjHrI\\_c](https://youtu.be/M-a6QjHrI_c)

Barn owls are almost silent when they fly.

Even Eli Celli must listen very hard to hear them.

At home, in his room, Eli Celli has a giant poster of an Owl staring down at him, unblinking. He calls it Oswald the Owl. Now you know a Barn Owl is white, can you guess which kind Oswald is?



Oswald is a Long-Eared Owl which can be very noisy. To listen to one, ask for this YouTube link:

<https://youtu.be/DUf0I--ITFO>

In fact, Oswald is a *Scottish Long-Eared owl* and his picture was drawn by Eli Celli's Mami Fiona. Fiona was made in Scotland her parents Nini Stef and Nana Pia lived in a city called Glasgow.

*Now you know quite a lot about Eli Celli, let's get back to the story of the day when the Swiss boy was waiting for his grandfather, Nini Stef.*

'What time did Nini say he would be here?' asked his Mami Fiona.

'About two o'clock.'

'Two o'clock! No! But Nini Stef said yesterday he would be here at ten o'clock. Oh, but don't worry, Eli Celli, when I go to work, Mrs Brunner downstairs will look after you until Nini Stef comes.'

A few minutes later it had all been arranged.

Mrs Brunner was a kind old lady who made delicious jam sandwiches. She also gave him at least two glasses of special lemonade called 'Rivella' which is very fizzy and made bubbles tickle up into his nose.

It was a lovely sunny day, quite hot, without even a whisper of wind, a very good day for a boy with special ears.

Eli Celli sat on a little stool in Mrs Brunner's garden and ate a Cherry and Apple jam sandwich with a glass of Rivella. To the boy, she looked very, very old. He thought she might even be a hundred. Everyone knew she had very poor eyesight and dull hearing. As he did on every visit, he kindly told her about all the birds and butterflies and insects he could see and hear, not just in her garden but all along the valley and up to the woods.

'Eli Celli, how many woodpeckers do we have today?'

'Four. And three skylarks, nine blackbirds and six robins. And the bees are very busy, all up and down the valley.'

'How many cow bells?'

'Thousands, maybe five thousand?'

'Really? That's a lot of cows. I'm glad it's not my job to milk them any longer. My hands would get very tired.'

'Yes, but they use machines nowadays.'

'Oh, really? Well, tell me about your birthday present.'

Eli Celli took out his knife, opening it to show the old lady all the different blades, making sure he kept it away from her in case she might cut her fingers.

'Mrs Brunner, this knife is really, really sharp and you must never touch the blades with your fingers and never have the knife open when you are running or even walking. And you must always slice away from your body when using it.'

'Oh my, Eli Celli, is that right? I can see at once you are an expert with knives. What a clever boy you are and only five years old, too.'

'No, Mrs Brunner, not five, I'm seven now! And I'm going to Big School next month.'

'Well, well. So, you're seven already! I wish I was seven again. I think you deserve another glass of Rivella, Eli Celli, don't you?'

'Yes, please!'

'Careful now dear, when closing your knife.'

'No, don't worry, Mrs Brunner, Nini Stef showed me how to do it. Look! Like this, one blade at a time.'

'Of course, you know how to do it, Eli Celli. Of course, you do. I know I shouldn't worry about you. You are a very clever boy, very clever. And very serious and very sensible as well. Your Nana Pia has told me many times she is very pleased with you. Keep up the good work.'

'Nana Pia and Nuria have gone on the bus to Goldau Animal Park but I'm going hiking in the woods with Nini Stef instead.'

'So that's where they are. How many times is that Nuria has been there, is it four times now?'

'Seven times. I've been eleven times, I think.'

'What is it like, the Park?'

'Well, it's quite big and they have lots of animals and all sorts of birds. My favourite bird is Henry the Hoopoe. Nuria's favourite bird is Roger the Raven. We both love Pippa the Pine Marten but she is very hard to spot because she is shy and very good at staying

hidden. My other favourite is Ollie the Otter. He is so funny and can be naughty, swimming underneath the Ducks and Geese at Blue Pond and tickling their toes pretending he is a crocodile.'

'No, Eli Celli, surely they don't have crocodiles!'

'No, Mrs Brunner, Ollie the Otter is just *pretending* to be a crocodile!'

'Oh, thank goodness. I was getting worried for Nuria and Pia.'

Eli Celli found a good stick to carve into a pretend dagger and made a start at it.

Mrs Brunner put on her sun hat and climbed up into her hammock. Swinging gently, she began speaking in her slow voice almost as if she was talking to herself.

Eli Celli had heard all her stories before and this one was about when she was a little girl. She had to milk six cows twice a day by hand. And she had to groom her father's big farm horse. His name was Duncan, a Scottish name chosen because he was a Clydesdale

breed from Scotland. The horse was so tall she had to use stepladders to reach his back and head.



After a while she stopped talking and fell fast asleep. From far away at the top of the hill beside the trees, some bees were buzzing near the ground, moving from one flower to another, gathering honey. Others were flying higher, up into the tops of the trees, collecting tree honey and tree pollen. It was a perfect day for bees.

Because of his extra-sensitive ears, Eli Celli could hear them talking and laughing in bee language.

If you would like to listen to the sound of happy bees, ask Mummy or Daddy to get this YouTube link:

[https://youtu.be/W63cp\\_OrjU8](https://youtu.be/W63cp_OrjU8)

Mrs Brunner's snoring started off quietly but it quickly became very loud and began to hurt Eli Celli's ears. The trouble about having special ears is some loud noises can be annoying. Eli Celli moved his stool away to the corner of the garden to escape.

From the other side of the hedge, he heard a very odd sound.

He poked his head through and, pretending to be Oswald, he stared without blinking at the exact spot where the odd sound was coming from.

*Urrrugh! Urrrugh! Uuuuurrrrrrough!*

The odd sound seemed to be coming from the edge of the woods, high on the hill above him. Then the sound changed and it became a voice, a very odd and quiet voice but not a human voice. It took Eli Celli a little while to figure out what the tiny voice was saying:

*Help me! Help me! I'm trapped! I need help. Help me!*

At first Eli Celli thought it was a faraway goat, maybe stuck in a ditch. The call for help came again.

*Help me! Help me! I'm trapped! I need help. Help me!*

Eli Celli looked across to Mrs Brunner. He realised the call for help was not from a goat but another animal, one he had always wanted to see.

It would be rude to waken her, he thought. She was very old and needed her sleep. He closed his knife and put it back in his pocket then slipped underneath the hedge and ran towards the strange voice to try to help.



When he reached the edge of the woods he stopped and looked back. Faraway, in her garden, Mrs Brunner seemed as small as a bee or even smaller, more like an ant. He listened. She was still snoring, still fast asleep. Eli Celli moved towards the voice.

*Help me! Help me! I'm trapped!*

*I need help.*

*Help me! Somebody, please.*

*Help me, I'm trapped.*

There were lots of bees flying about now, swooping down around Eli Celli and buzzing angrily.

*Hurry up! You out there, I need help. Help me!*

*They are stinging me now.*

Eli Celli moved closer and what he saw was amazing.

This was the place where old Mr Stocker kept one of his huge beehives. The beehive was knocked over and it was rocking from side to side because someone was inside, thumping and banging. Outside, bees were buzzing around it, buzzing very loudly because they were angry, swirling around and around and around without landing.

Then the voice spoke again:

*Help me! Help me! I'm trapped, Eli Celli!  
Don't just stand there watching. Get that  
Swiss Army Knife of yours out of your  
pocket and get me out of here.'*

'Who are you?' asked Eli Celli.

*We can introduce ourselves later.  
But first get me out of here!*

'Don't you know it is polite to say 'please' when you ask someone to help you?'

*'OK, OK, OK. PLEASE will  
you help me? Please?'*

'Certainly, my pleasure, right away,' said Eli Celli, copying the way Nini Stef always spoke.

Eli Celli studied the situation just like Nini Stef would do, working out what to do. Then took out his Swiss Army Knife and opened the Screwdriver blade and

started to undo the six screws which held on the roof panel of the beehive.



The bees seemed to know the boy was doing his best to help them and they calmed down.

The sound of their buzzing became quieter, softer, more friendly and they did not try to land on Eli Celli or sting him.

The little bear kept struggling inside, rocking the beehive, making it difficult for the boy.

'Hey, you in there, stop bashing around. I can't do this if you keep rocking backwards and forwards.'

*It's all right for you; you're not getting stung on your bum every two seconds!*

'No, bees seem to leave me alone. Maybe it's because I don't try to annoy them like you, by wrecking their house.'

***Ouch! Ouch! Ouch!***

Soon the last screw came out and Eli Celli put it into his pocket beside the other six. Then, before doing anything else, he carefully closed the Screwdriver blade and put his Swiss Army Knife in his pocket.

Standing up he took a big breath, lifted off the roof panel and stepped back. A round blue face covered in honey looked out, checked all around and said:

*Hi, Eli Celli, I'm Mario.*



Grunting and pushing hard, Mario squeezed out of the beehive and stood up with a big smile on his face.

Although Mario was smaller than Eli Celli, he was quite tubby which made him seem bigger.

The little bear was dripping from head to toe with honey. Because he had stolen their honey, the bees were really angry, buzzing all around him, attacking his face. His paws came up to swat them, but they kept missing, making the bees even angrier.

*Come on Eli Celli, run! Come on. Quickie Quick!*

There was something magical about Mario's voice which made Eli Celli obey him. The bear ran off into the woods Eli Celli followed, running at top speed. Eli Celli was a good runner, the fastest in his class, but Mario was even faster.

After a few minutes the bees gave up chasing. They flew back to the beehive the sound of their buzzing getting quieter and quieter until only Eli Celli could hear them.

Up ahead, Mario stopped and climbed up onto a rock in a sunny clearing, in the middle of the woods.



When Eli Celli caught up, he was puffed out, panting.

*Oh, here you are at last Eli Celli. Fancy some honey? It gives you energy, helps you run faster.*

The bear reached down his paw, offering a fresh lump of honey wiped from his chest.

Eli Celli stood on his tiptoes and reached up to take it.

It was the strangest honey he had ever tasted, like Mrs Brunner's Cherry and Apple jam with a hint of Rivella bubbles.

Eli Celli looked around. He knew this place.

It was the exact same spot where they had been for his birthday barbecue picnic, the day when Nini Stef had given him his Swiss Army Knife.

'Thanks, Mario. This is delicious, very nice and almost as yummy as Mrs Brunner's jam but not as good as Nana Pia's honey which is the very best in the whole world.'

*'What? Even better honey than this?'*

'Oh yes. Mami says I have to tell the truth, always, even it is inconvenient.'

*Are you sure? Try another taste, to check.*

Eli Celli is a very polite boy so he took another lick.....

..then another ...

... then another.

The sun was shining. Eli Celli felt very tired from all his running and sat down with his back to the rock. High above him, Mario lay flat on his back and used his paw to swipe another lump of honey into his mouth.

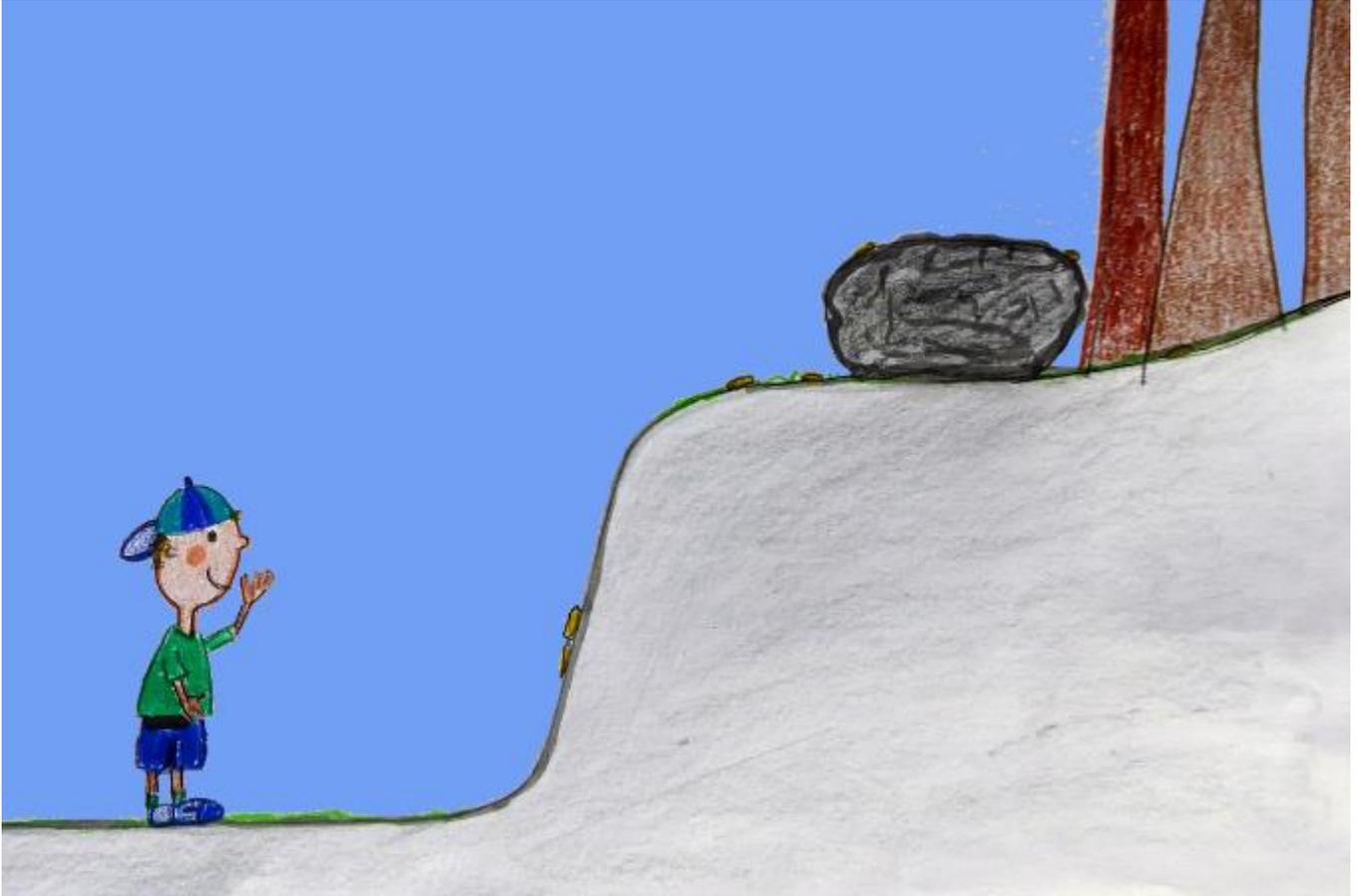
Eli Celli closed his eyes and took yet another lick ...

... then another ...

Far away down the hill, in her garden, Eli Celli could hear Mrs Brunner snoring. Somewhere behind him, deep in the woods, he could hear three Robins singing. There were six Skylarks now and a Buzzard whistling to her babies waiting at her nest for their parents to bring food. All up and down the valley, the farmers were out in their tractors, cutting and collecting grass.

'Mario, how did you get stuck inside the beehive?'

There was no reply.



Eli Celli looked up, but Mario was gone.

Eli Celli was all alone and still very tired. He sat back down again and closed his eyes again to wait for Mario to come back.

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Eli Celli was still fast asleep when a voice he knew very well sounded inside his head.

'Allo! Allo! Ha, there you are, Eli Celli. What are you doing lying under the bushes, eh? And look at you, all covered in jam.'

Nini Stef took out his big red hankie, wet the corner with water from Mrs Brunner's tap and wiped the jam from Eli Celli's face.

'So, Eli Celli, ready for our hike? Let's go up to the woods and see if we can find a good straight stick to make you a new walking pole. What do you say?'

'Yes Nini. Will you help me find Mario, please? He ran away and I was too tired to try to find him. He said I should eat more honey, to give me more energy.' With Nini Stef's quick walking, they were soon halfway up the hill.

'Who is Mario?'

'He is a little blue bear. I helped him to escape from Mr Stocker's beehive. I'll show you.'

'A **blue** bear? I've never heard of a *blue* bear.'

While they climbed the last part of the track to the woods, the boy told his grandfather the whole story and at first Nini Stef thought it was all a dream, another of Eli Celli's made-up stories.

Nini Stef laughed:

'Eli Celli, maybe one day you will be an author. You do have a vivid imagination. Well done. That's a great story.'

'But Nini, it did happen, I did meet a blue bear called Mario and I did help him to escape from the beehive. I really, really did.'

When they got nearer to Mr Stocker's beehive Nini Stef saw it was lying on its side, just as Eli Celli had told him it would be. Because the roof panel was off, the bees were very angry and swarming all around looking for someone to sting.

Nini Stef shouted, 'Run, Eli Celli! Run! Quick!'



At the big rock in the clearing they found little traces of dark, reddish honey on the rock. Nini Stef licked it then looked at Eli Celli very closely:

'Eli Celli tell me that story of yours again, from the start.'

Starting at the very beginning, the boy told his grandfather the story, answering every question about every detail until Nini Stef was sure he understood everything which had happened, exactly as his grandson told him.

What finally convinced Nini Stef the story was true were seven screws Eli Celli had in his pocket, sticky with the reddish honey.

On their way back home, they saw the bees had calmed down. While Eli Celli stood back at a safe distance, Nini Stef righted the beehive and, using the screws from his grandson's pocket, he screwed the roof panel back on using his own Swiss Army Knife, the one with lots and lots of extra blades.

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When Eli Celli got home to Mami Fiona, he told her the story again she laughed and shook her head. Looking at her, the boy knew his mother thought it was another of his made-up stories.

When Nini Stef got home to Nana Pia, he told her all about Eli Celli's adventure with Mario the Blue Bear. Nana Pia smiled and shook her head, just like her daughter Fiona had done:

'So, Shteffi, we have another great story from Eli Celli. He could win prizes for his stories.'

'But Pia, it *must* be true, Eli Celli had the screws in his pocket!'

'OK, Shteffi, so it must be true, because of the screws. OK, you have it your way then. I'm just glad my honey is still the best in the world!'

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That night, when Eli Celli was in his bed, his father Baba Haki looked in to check on him. The boy was fast asleep but muttering in a very strange language which he could not understand.

This is what Eli Celli was whispering:

*Hoy, there you are Mario!*

*Ah, you were hiding up a tree, were you?*

*You saw me with Nini Stef?  
Why did you not come down to speak to us?  
Yes, OK. You are my secret friend. OK. OK. OK.*



As Baba Haki watched, his son stopped speaking and fell fast asleep, wearing a big smile on his face.

On Eli his bedside table was his Swiss Army Knife and chain. Hidden under his pillow, Eli Celli had seven new fresh, clean screws. Carrying these screws in his pocket beside his knife was Eli Celli's secret idea, to practise using his Screwdriver blade.

The End

## About this story:

Fiona Hagmann is the Mami (mother) of Elia Can aka Eli Celli and Baba Haki is his father. Nini Stef and Nana Pia are his grandparents. Other characters are fictional.

For several years, Pia owned a large Bee House inherited from her father Gusti Stocker. Sadly, she had to give it up when she developed a severe reaction to bee stings, forcing her to give up bee-keeping, ending our supply of wonderfully distinctive honey from 'forest bees'.

The original storyline was written by John Bonthron (aka John Bee) to fulfil a promise. When John first met Eli Celli the boy was only a few weeks old. John remarked that he especially liked Elia's ears. About three year later, Fiona reminded John of his promise to write a story for Eli Celli and the first version of the story was created.

Another four busy years elapsed then Fiona took up the challenge of illustrating the story, with Stef helping as her colourist. I hope you will agree they have made a superb job. Fiona's drawings are a delight. Full of quirky detail, they are 'Swiss perfect'.

The original story for Eli Celli has evolved during translation from English to German and back again, work done by Stef and Pia Hagmann and their friend Renata Bachmann.

Nuria Melek is Fiona and Haki's second child. When Nuria discovered Eli Celli's story, she asked that John Bee write a story of her own.

Her story is called *Nuria Melek and Mario*.

Both stories are available in German and English at:

[www.thebuzzinbee.co.uk](http://www.thebuzzinbee.co.uk)

Here you will find many other stories for children (in English).

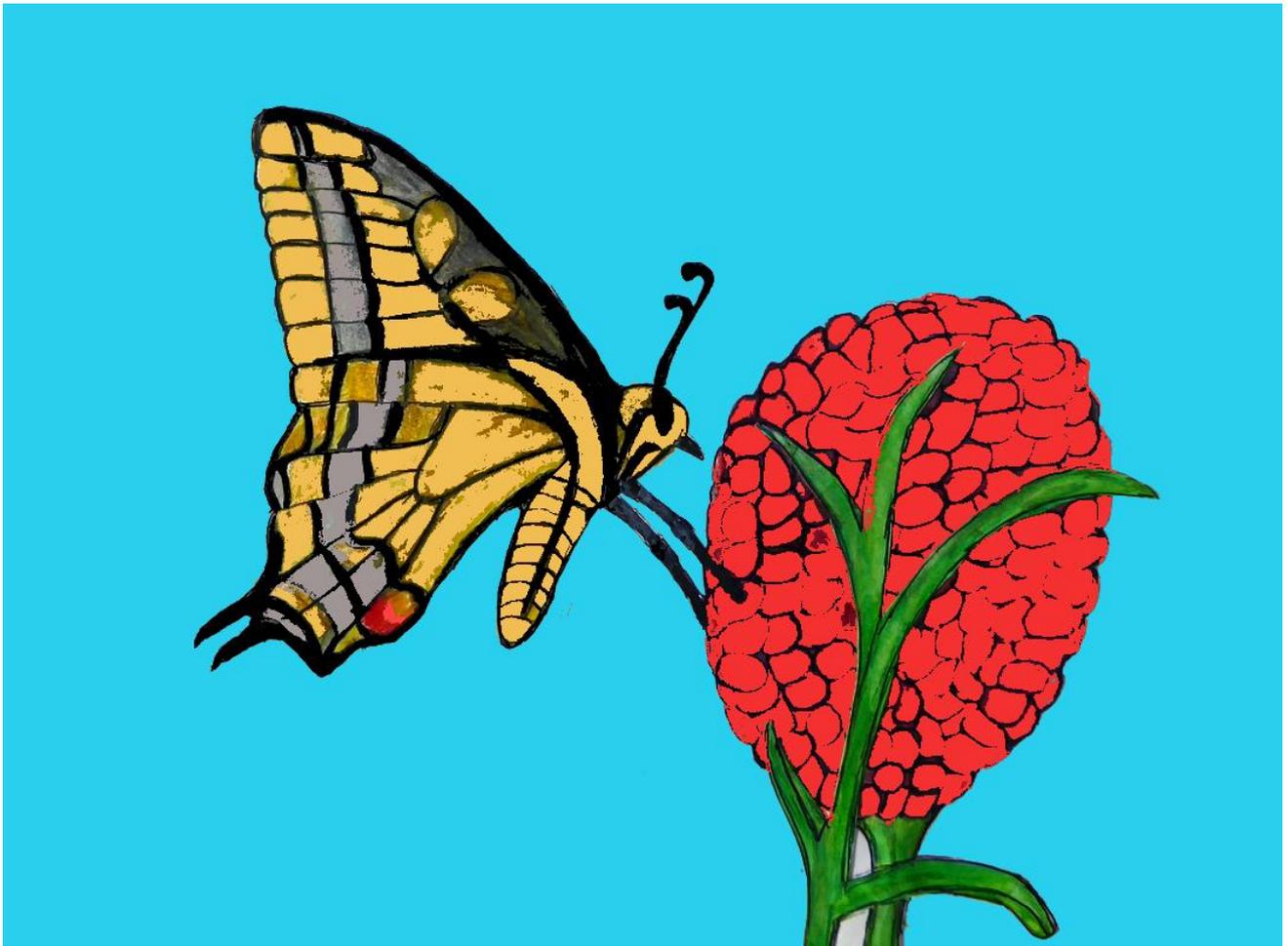
There are also stories for adults, some quite unsuitable for children!

You are warmly invited to download these PDFs to read on your iPad or Tablet for **personal** enjoyment. Please note that copyright must not be infringed or exploited for commercial purposes.

Thank you.

John Bonthron aka John Bee.





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