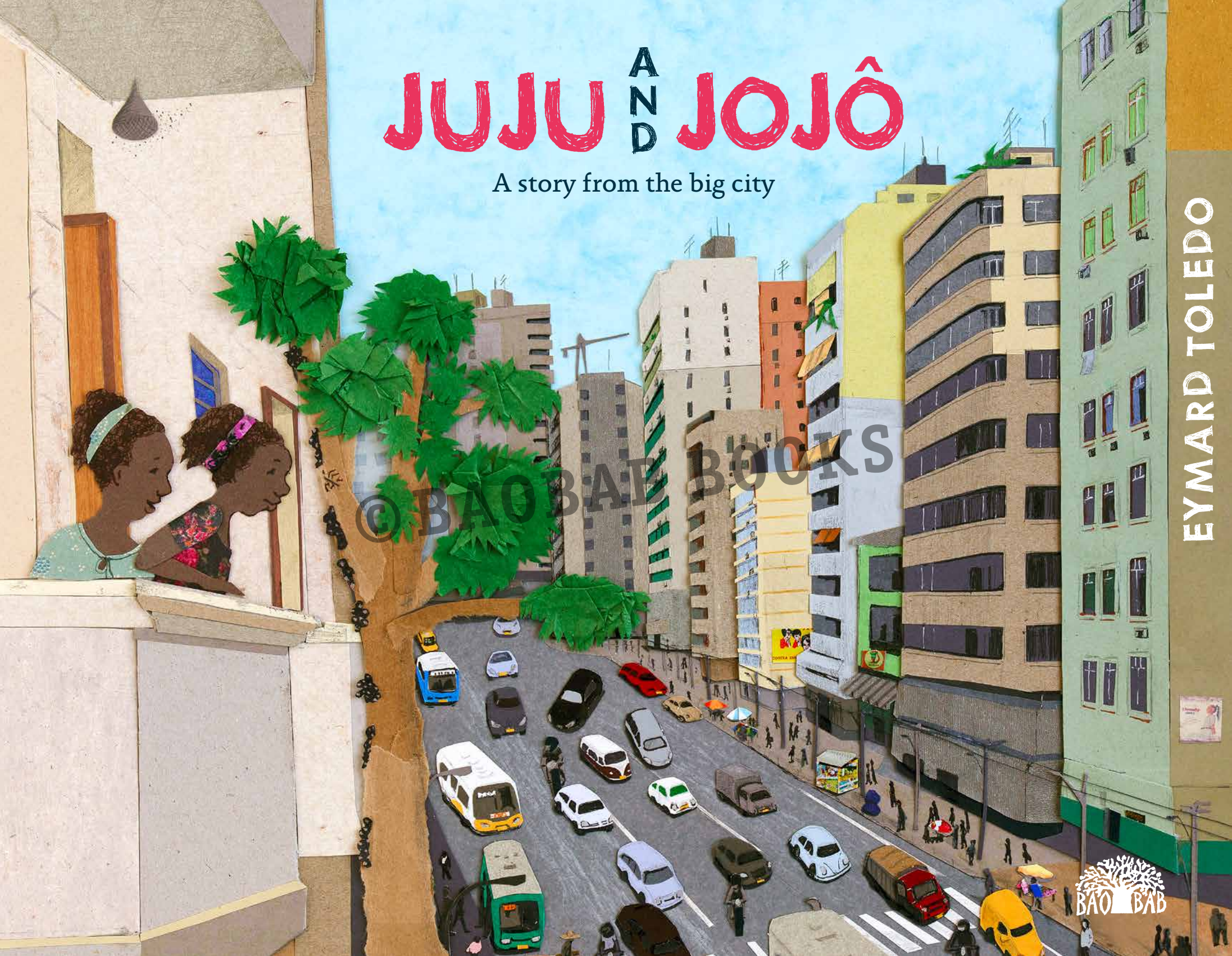


JUJU AND JOJÔ

A story from the big city



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EYMARD TOLEDO

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For Clemens, Lucas and Antonio
For my mother Loreto and my brother João



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Baobab Books dankt terre des hommes schweiz und zahlreichen weiteren Geldgebern, insbesondere dem Bundesamt für Kultur, das den Verlag mit einem Förderbeitrag für die Jahre 2019–2020 unterstützt.

Juju and Jojô

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Text and illustration: Eymard Toledo

ISBN 978-3-905804-92-8

Original edition

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EYMARD TOLEDO

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A story from the big city

Originally published in German.
Translated to English by Regina Irwin

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On Sunday morning our city is still asleep. You can hardly hear any noise. No cars, no buses, no motorbikes, not even street sellers. Only sometimes a plane in the sky. The houses in our area are all very tall and stand so tightly together that you have to tilt your head right back to see the sky.

The planes are only visible for a very short time, before they disappear again behind the next house. From my window I can see their shadow on the street and straight afterwards their mirror image in the windows opposite. Really early in the morning, when Mum and Dad are still asleep, my sister and I go to the balcony to see whether our neighbour is up already: Dona Filó is the oldest person in the house, and she lives on the fifth floor, directly above us.



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“Good morning, Dona Filó,” we shout.

“Good morning, Juju and Jojô,” she calls back.

“Dona Filó, is it true that at one point our house was the tallest in the street?” I ask.

“Yes, that’s right. I used to be able to see the mountains on the outskirts of the city from my balcony. The houses around us were built roughly at the same time you were born,” says Dona Filó.

“Now those houses are twice as high as ours,” states my sister Jojô. “Surely there are even more people living in them than in ours.”

But I know better: “No, nobody lives in there. In those skyscrapers there is not a single bed, only desks with computers.”

On weekdays we can’t talk with Dona Filó from our balcony, because it is too noisy.

But on a Sunday morning you can even hear the wasps humming. All the time they buzz around their nest, which hangs on the ceiling of our balcony.





“Do you remember when your Dad planted the Jabuticaba* tree?” asks Dona Filó.
“He had to break open the pavement with a spade. And I looked after that little tree every afternoon, until you came back from kindergarten. Everybody thought it would die within a week.”

But it survived! And now it reaches already up to the fourth floor. Once it even got hit by a lorry, but it even survived that. The Jabuticaba tree is a sort of skyscraper for insects. When it flowers in September the wasps fly backwards and forwards from their nest on the balcony to the flowers of the tree and back. All day long. Even butterflies come to visit us. I wonder where they come from?

“Are the flowers just as tasty as the fruits?” wonders Jojô.

*Jabuticaba trees only grow in Brazil. They are also called Brazilian grape tree. The fruits grow directly on the trunk of the tree. The fruits look like dark cherries, but are white inside. They taste very sweet and contain two to four edible kernels.



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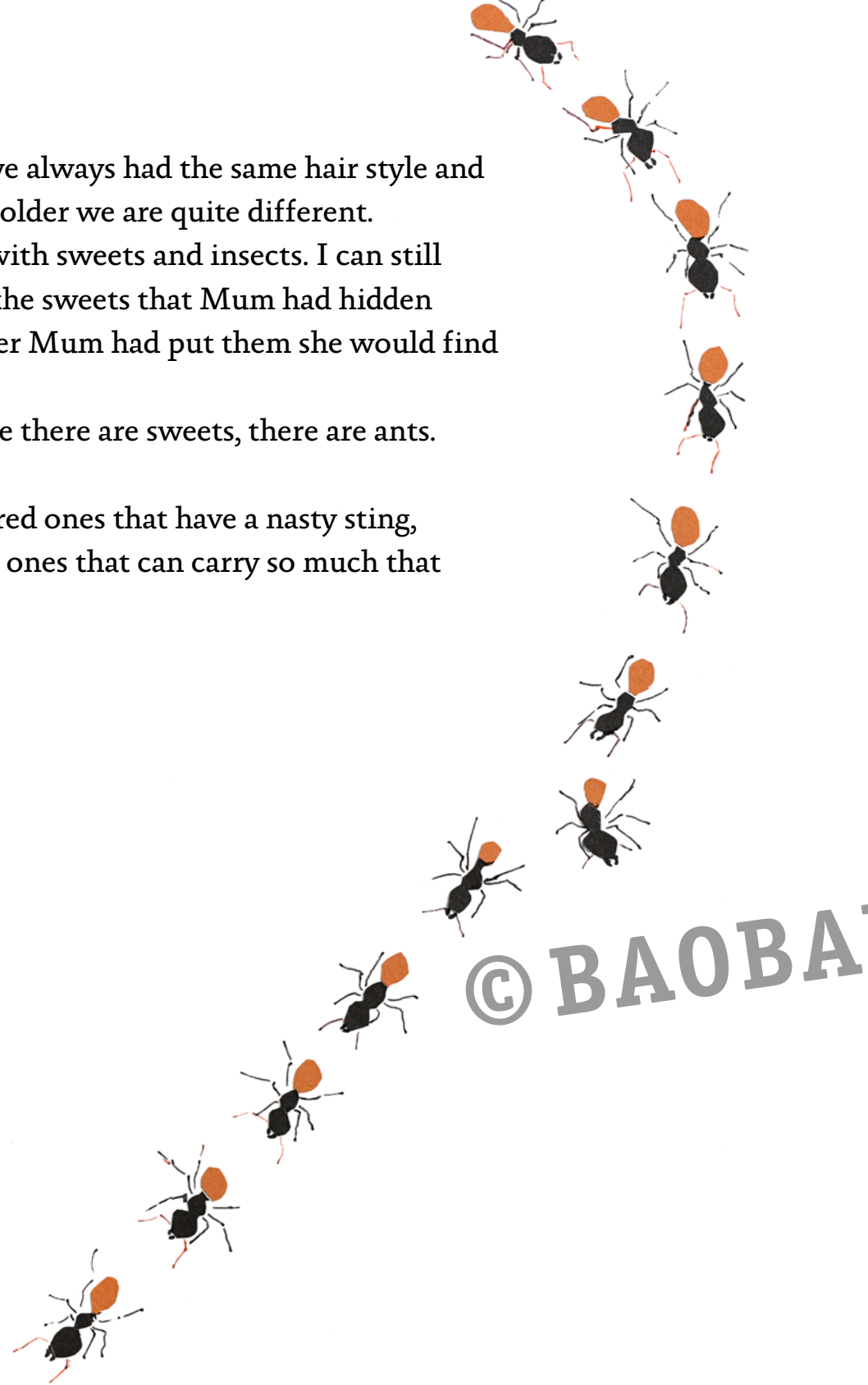


Jojô and I are twins. When we were small, we always had the same hair style and wore the same clothes. But now that we are older we are quite different.

It all started with sweets. Or to be precise: with sweets and insects. I can still remember how Jojô looked everywhere for the sweets that Mum had hidden from us. She searched for hours and wherever Mum had put them she would find every hiding place.

I always followed her around. Because where there are sweets, there are ants. And that's what I find interesting.

In our flat are three types of ants: the small red ones that have a nasty sting, the bigger ones with a large bottom, and the ones that can carry so much that they look like the porters at the bus station.





Every morning our mother leaves the house very early. I wait for her on the balcony in the afternoon and watch the insects at the same time. Some of them fly, others crawl and some jump from branch to branch in the Jabuticaba tree. The spiders weave their beautiful webs.

Once, I saw a stick insect with a missing leg. I watched it very carefully, but when I didn't pay attention for a second it had gone.

As always when Mum got off the bus Jojô and I quickly ran downstairs to help her with the bags that day. I nearly trod on a stick insect that crouched on the road between the cars and motorbikes. When I knelt down to have a closer look I saw that it only had five legs. I'm sure that was my stick insect!

I picked it up carefully and placed it on the Jabuticaba tree. I could watch it there for several weeks.



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Jojô doesn't understand why I have such an interest in insects.

“Juju you don't think about anything but vermin. The termites have bitten chunks out of my books on the bookshelf and even gnawed at the money that Dad had hidden behind the toilet cistern. The moths eat holes in our clothes and there are cobwebs everywhere in the flat. I don't like it. Why aren't you interested in birds? At least they sing and are entertaining. Or flowers – they look nice. Your insects are ugly ... Nobody needs them!” said my sister. She was angry.



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I also got in trouble with my mother because of the insects. She finds them terrible. Sometimes she chases them with a duster or the vacuum cleaner, and when she spots a cockroach she grabs the red spray can to kill it. She does everything so that insects don't like being in our flat.

“Mum, I don't mind you chasing away the mosquitoes. And I will take the cockroaches that come in from the lift, back into the streets myself. But please leave the spiders, ants, wasps and termites in our flat alone.”



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But a short while later I saw how my mother flicked through a magazine about insects that Dona Filó had given me.

Just by chance Dona Filó rang our door bell on that day and the two of them talked for a long time. I couldn't hear everything, but my mother looked worried and Dona Filó talked and gesticulated with her arms and hands.

In the evening I pretended to visit Dona Filó by chance, and she told me everything: "Your mother wanted to call the caretaker to get rid of the wasps' nest on the balcony. I could persuade her to put a mosquito net in front of the balcony door, so that the wasps can't come in any more." Dona Filó and I get on really well where insects are concerned.



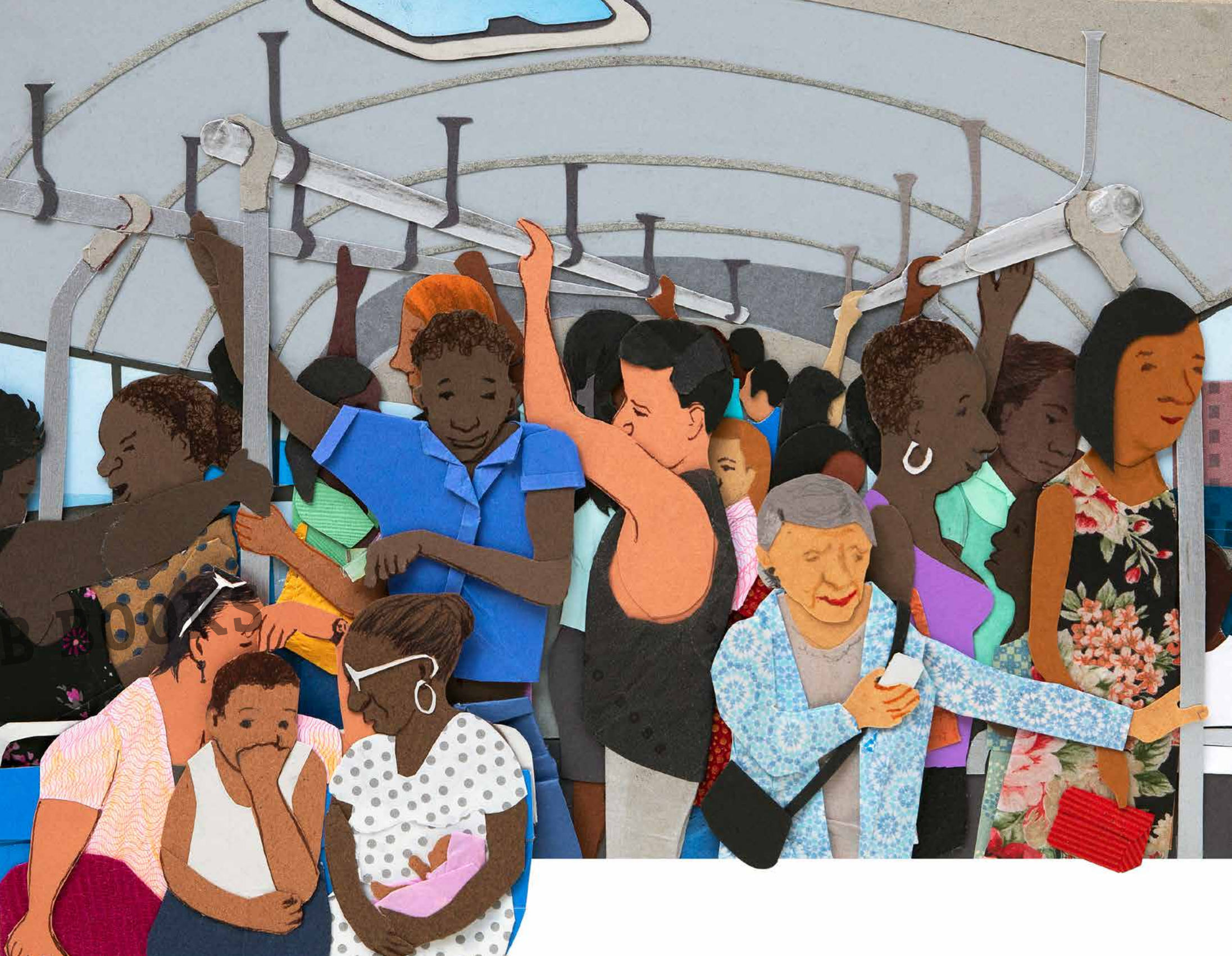
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Then, one Saturday, my mother took me with her to her place of work for the first time. We had to get up early because the bus leaves at 5am. A lot of women go to work that early. They cook, wash, iron and clean in the houses of other people. The bus takes more than two hours, because there are roadworks everywhere. And one has to hold on tight, because there are a lot of potholes in the road. It was so crowded and hot on the bus that I nearly passed out. The other people didn't seem bothered by it, they looked at their mobiles or talked to each other. Then I spotted a wasp. A few women were scared, but after a zigzag flight and a loop-the-loop it disappeared quickly through the back door. What a pity, I would have liked to watch it for longer.

When we finally arrived my mother said at our stop: "It's going to get even busier and hotter on the bus on the way back this afternoon, and perhaps we get caught in a traffic jam for even longer." That's what it's like in our city.



Now I go to work with Mum every Saturday. Before we leave the house I'll put an empty jam jar with small holes in the lid in my bag.

Once there suddenly was a big commotion on the bus. A few people screamed, others jumped off their seats. It was a wasp again and everybody was chasing it. Some tried to squash it on the bus window.

But then Mum got up and said firmly: "Let my girl get through." As fast as I could I got the jam jar out of my bag, caught the wasp on the bus window and put the lid on the jam jar. Unfortunately, nothing else exciting happened on that bus journey.

But in the evening I sat in front of my jam jar for a long time. It looked as if the wasp was tired; it didn't move. When it grew dark I took it to the balcony, opened the jar and it flew away as quick as an arrow.



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I am pretty much the only one who is interested in insects in our street, but a lot of people like the Jabuticaba tree. People sit in its shade in their lunch hour. The shop owner next door has put up a bench especially. Even the bus stop has been moved to the tree.

Sometimes people are so engrossed in watching the birds in the tree that they miss their bus. But there are people who are annoyed about the tree. Like our neighbours on the third floor, who find the sound of the cicadas and the chirping of the crickets irritating. I am surprised by that, because the many cars, motorbikes and planes are much louder.



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Some people in our house find myself strange. One of our neighbours asked my Mum recently: “Is everything alright with Juju? Whenever I see her she is looking at the wall, the ceiling or the ground. A few days ago I was going to take the elevator, and there were Jojô and Juju and Juju sat on Jojô’s shoulders. That isn’t normal!”

“Don’t worry, Dona Eulária,” said my mother. “When there’s a small insect involved, Juju gets the strangest ideas.”

That day Jojô and I had been going up and down in the elevator. But then there had been a power cut again, as so often in our quarter. The elevator got stuck between two floors and for a few minutes we were all alone in the dark. Then we saw a firefly that had got lost in the elevator. I would have liked to watch it longer, but then the lights came back on and the elevator started moving again. We were looking for the firefly everywhere. When the elevator stopped at the third floor, Dona Eulária got in.



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Then, on a hot summer's day, we got a very special visitor: a bee! When it came into our flat I ran after it. And Jojô ran with me. I only wanted to take a photo of it. But us running around must have made such a noise that Dona Filó turned up and asked what was going on. When we showed her the bee she said: "When I was a child there were many bees around here. I had asked myself for a long time where they'd all gone." Even before I could take a photo the bee flew out through a gap in the window and landed headlong in one of the flowers of the Jabuticaba tree. Since then the bees come back every spring and stay all summer. Not just one bee – a whole swarm.



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The Jabuticaba tree is now high enough to reach Dona Filó's fifth floor. And Dona Filó is still looking after it. When the water in the house has been switched off again, she goes to the fountain in the park and comes back with a full watering can. Dona Filó is also thinking of putting a bee hive on the top of our building, and Mum says she would help her with it. Sometimes they dream of having a stall outside our house from which they would be selling their own honey at weekends. My mother still keeps our flat very clean. But she leaves the insects alone now. Jojô also gets on better now with our small visitors. At least she doesn't say they are ugly any more.

Sometimes I can go to work with Dad. He now works as a gardener and plants trees all over the city. They are all still small, but they already attract many insects. Our new school is further away, and Jojô and I have to take two buses in the morning. I always have a jam jar in my school bag ...
When I'm grown up I want to be an insect doctor, but I don't think this job exists yet. In that case I might become an insect researcher.



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THE INSECTS



WASPS are insects without hair that can sting. In Brazil they are called Marimbondo. Their nests are round and hang from branches or under the roofs of buildings. Wasps collect pollen like bees and produce a small amount of honey in their nests. But they also eat small insects that might be harmful to plants. This is why wasps are important for a balance in nature.



BUTTERFLIES can cover very long distances. They are also important for the pollination of plants. The difference between a butterfly and a moth is a small bulge at the end of a butterfly's antennae. And they only fly during the day. The hatch from caterpillars that pupate, and when they have a rest they fold their wings together.

Worldwide there are 13,000 species of **ANTS**, mostly in tropical countries like Brazil. Winged ants are females who will lose their wings eventually. Others are workers who can carry more than they weigh themselves.



STICK INSECTS are related to praying mantis and crickets. They camouflage as small pieces of wood or leaves and that keeps them safe from enemies who want to eat them.



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TERMITES look like ants with wings and can cause huge damage to wood and other materials like paper in tropical countries. Apart from that they don't cause any harm to people.

MOTHS are like small butterflies and live in food and other things in the household. Other moths like to live in wardrobes and eat bit out of pullovers.

SPIDERS are not insects, but their own species. They have eight legs, whereas insects have only six. Different to insects the head and body of a spider are only one body part. Cob webs are secretions that look like fine threads.

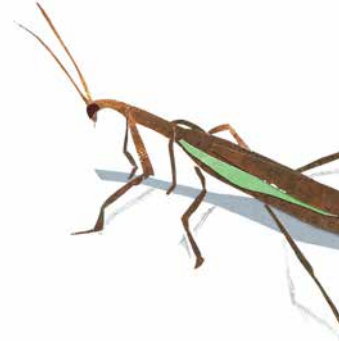
COCKROACHES have been around for more than 300 million years and can be found all over the world. They are especially common in cities of warmer countries. They eat anything, but love anything sweet, fatty and animal products. Apart from that they can transmit diseases.

CICADAS are very interesting insects. To attract females the males make a singing sound using a membrane under their belly. Cicadas live between one and 17 years in the ground. Then they moved up into trees, pupate, turn to adults and mate.

CRICKETS have a flat body with with long feelers. They are night-active and often get confused with their relatives, the grasshopper, because they look similar and can jump a long distance using their hind-legs.

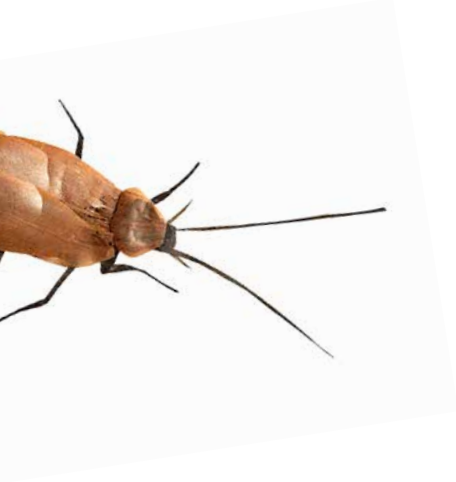
FIREFLIES or glow-worms are insects that create a phosphorescent light. They eat roots and the sap from some plants. They have glow organs under their belly. In Brazil only the male fireflies glow.

BEES are flying insects. They are related to wasps and ants and together with many other species of insects they are important for plant pollination. There are many types of bees, but only the honey bee produces larger amounts of the precious honey.





EPILOGUE



Juju and Jojô live in a skyscraper in a large city in Brazil – like I as a child. There was little space to play for a child. And unfortunately we didn't have a Jabuticaba tree in front of our house. It would have been nice to be able to stretch out our hands and pick sweet Jabuticabas from the trunk of the tree from our fifth-floor balcony!

But we always thought of something new to do: races through the stairwell against the elevator, making a lot of noise on the landing outside the caretaker's flat on the top floor... What we liked best was when there was a power cut in the whole neighbourhood, which happened at least once a month. If we were lucky, the lights stayed off for a couple of hours. It was always an adventure to play hide-and-seek with my brother in the dark.

Although I wasn't as crazy for insects as Juju I was curious. I could watch a small insect for hours and totally forget the time over it. When I didn't have any homework or anything else to do, I spent the afternoons in the kitchen and watched how the ants scurried around on the tiles. Or I watched from my fifth-floor window the chaos of pedestrians, street-sellers and traffic jams down on the street.

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Then I always asked myself: “Are we people really that different from ants? We ran around all day, we build things everywhere in the city and we carry loads around all day and night.” I am still not sure about it.

I also had a jam jar, so that I could watch insects more closely. When I was in year 4, I even draw a comic about ant life.

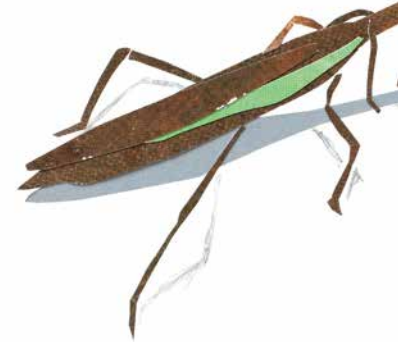
Today I look at insects not just with interest, but also with worry. We hear about insects dying, and that is unnerving. The beauty of many insects only becomes obvious when we look at them closely. Many of them are colourful, some of them look like a leaf, a twig or another insect ... We don't know enough about all the things seemingly annoying insects do for us – even in a big city!

There is always noise in the big Brazilian cities, day and night; and if it wasn't Sunday once a week, people would not notice it any more. People in the cities get used to so much: noise, being cramped, having neighbours above, below and next door, and the stench of buses. But my childhood experiences cannot confirm the cliché that people don't even know their next-door neighbours. Quite the opposite. I, for example, was for a long time friends with an elderly neighbour, like Juju with Dona Filó.

And something else that shaped my life in Brazil were the many hours that people spend in overcrowded buses. It is not easy in the big cities to reach a certain destination at a certain time, and the heat does not make the journey any more pleasant. There is always big chaos on a bus, and very rarely is an insect at fault. This is why I dedicate this book not only to the many children who live in huge cities all around the world, but also to the many women who have to get up every morning before sunrise and spend several hours on a bus to get to work.

Eymard Toledo,
January 2019

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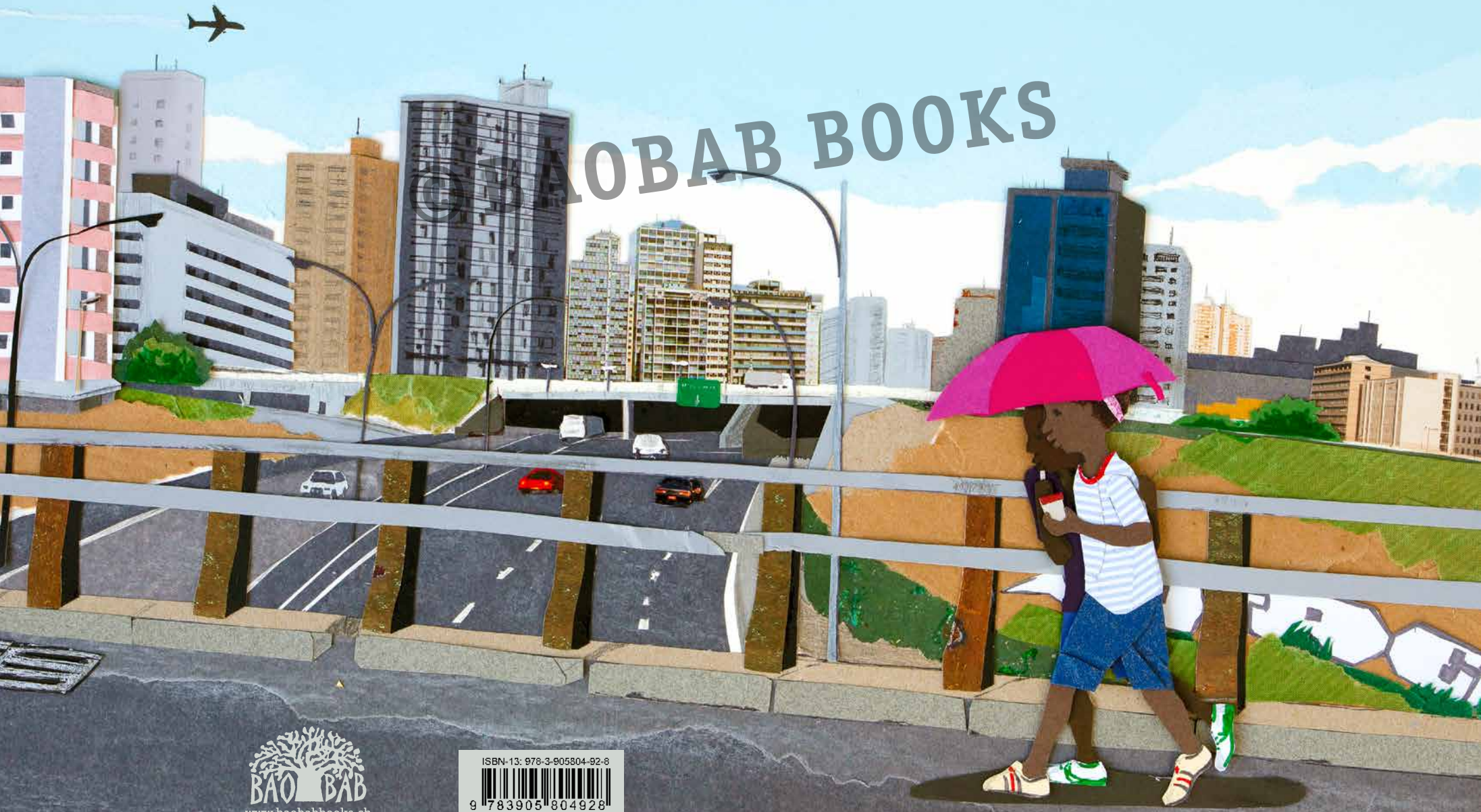


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Juju and Jojô live in a very big city. In the past their house used to be the biggest in the neighbourhood. The two girls can't imagine that, because today it is the smallest in their street, and they don't know anything else than life in a built-up city. But in front of their house there is also a tree. It is a Jabuticaba tree, a so-called grape tree. The tree has already reached their balcony. It not only supplies sweet fruit and a bit of shade, but also houses many insects. There crawls, flies and hums so much ...



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