

The Northern Lights

Zuri and Friends

Made for Tlaloc

With love from the Faust book maker

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Zuri, Teo, and Juno were friends. Pip was their owl. Outside Tromsø, Zuri led them along a path. A puddle shone green. "What makes that green glow?" Juno asked. Juno opened her sketchbook. "I want to draw the answer!"



"Does our lantern make the green?" Teo asked. He slid its cover shut. The puddle stayed green. "It's still green! What else can we try?"



"I'll block more light!" Teo said. He blocked the lantern with his backpack. Its flag tickled his nose. The puddle stayed green. "What makes that green glow?" Juno asked.



“I'll scoop the green away!” Teo said. He dipped a spoon from his pocket. Clear water splashed his red boot. “The water is clear,” Zuri said. “You cannot scoop light.”



Zuri led everyone onto the grassy rise. The puddle settled below. “What shall I draw?” Juno asked. Clouds crept closer. Pip pointed up. Something green moved overhead.



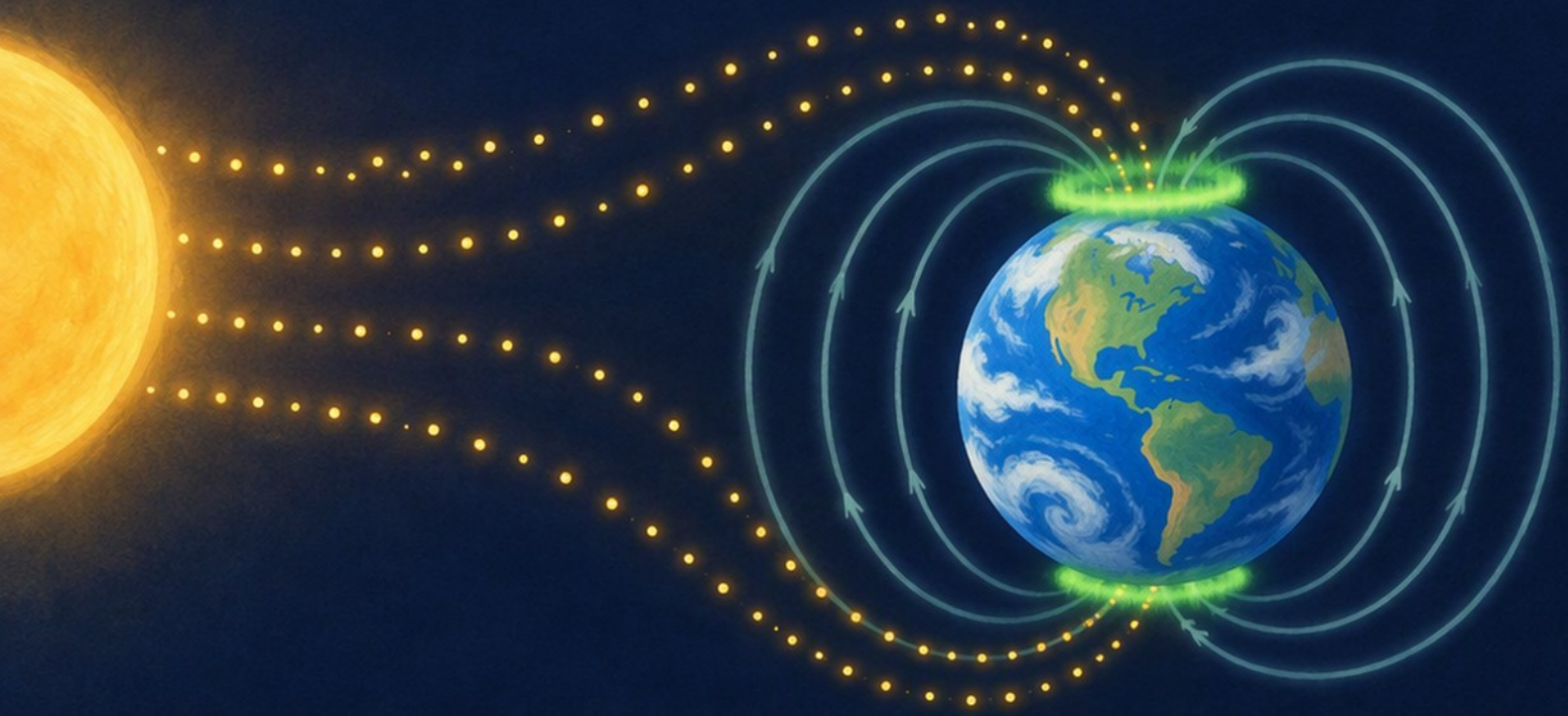
Juno followed Pip's wing. “Those green wiggles match!” Zuri pointed upward. “Still water shows light, like a mirror. The puddle shows the sky's green light!”





“What lights the sky?” Teo asked. “The Sun sends tiny bits,” said Zuri. “We cannot see them.” Juno tipped her sketchbook toward the glow.

“Why here?” Teo asked. Zuri answered. “Earth has an invisible magnetic pull. It guides Sun bits far north and south.” A green streak appeared.



Sky and puddle brightened. Zuri said, “The Northern Lights are glowing air. Sun bits hit air high above us. They give it energy to glow.” Juno drew the sky.



An airplane passed below the glow. Zuri explained. "That glowing air is far above airplanes." Juno drew green above the path. She colored her drawn puddle green, too.

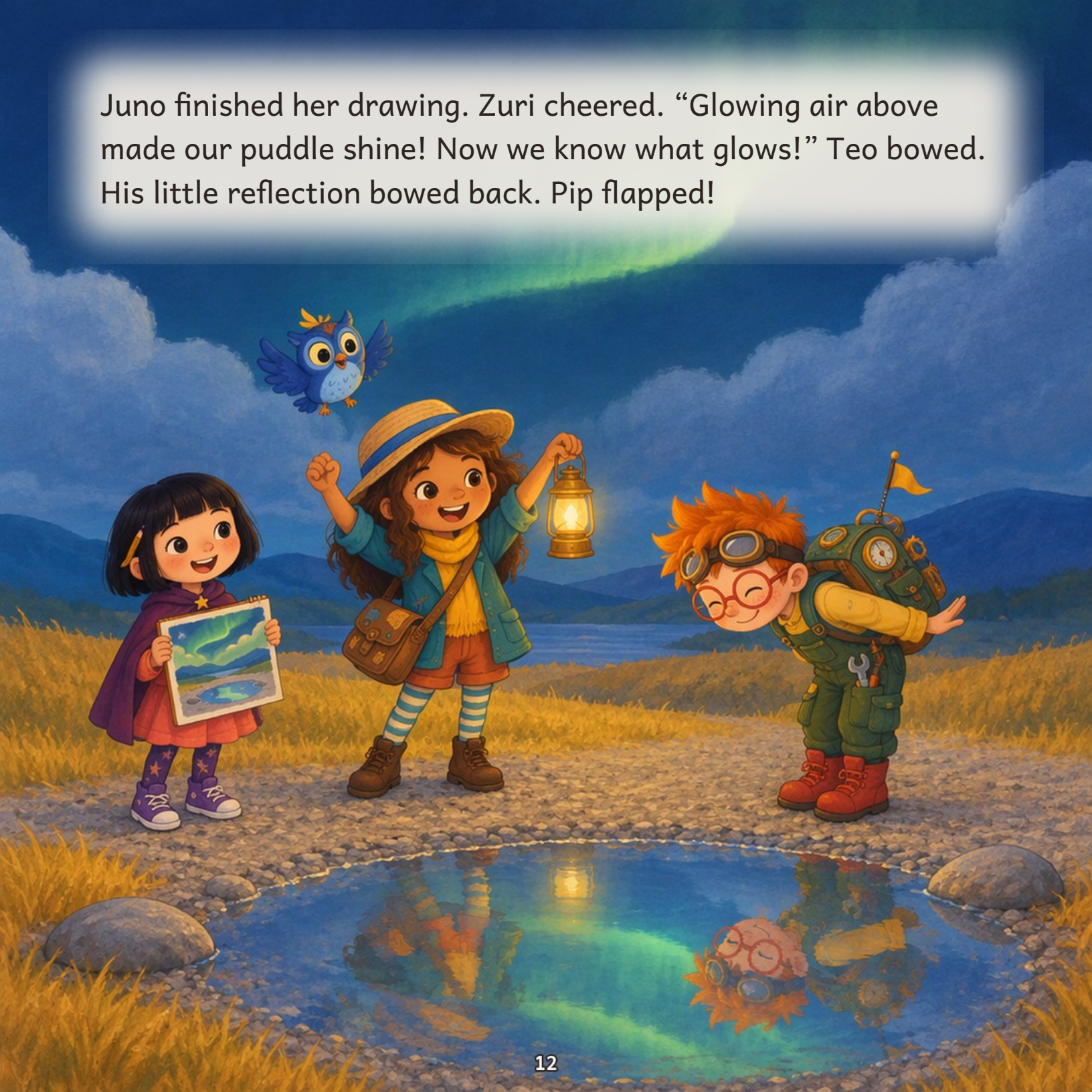
Did you know? Oxygen is a gas found in air. High above Earth, oxygen can glow green. Oxygen can also glow red.



Clouds hid all but one green fold. Its puddle twin stayed clear. “Keep still while I draw!” Juno said. Everyone kept their feet away from the water.



Juno finished her drawing. Zuri cheered. “Glowing air above made our puddle shine! Now we know what glows!” Teo bowed. His little reflection bowed back. Pip flapped!



For grown-ups

The Sun sends out tiny particles carrying electric charge. Earth's magnetic field guides some toward the far north and far south. When these particles hit gases high above Earth, they give the gases energy. The gases release this energy as light. Oxygen often makes green light about 100–150 kilometers above Earth. Oxygen can also glow red. Still water reflects the sky's light. Clouds can hide the glowing air from view.