



ClimateQuest

Meet the Cast

STANDARD EDITION

Spark & Anvil

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This book collects 5 chapter books from the ClimateQuest cast — each character embodies a different curricular primitive; together they teach the full subject.

Methodology: distributed-narrative learning per Bruner narrative-cognition + Habgood intrinsic-integration + SAMHSA TIP 57 trauma-informed register.

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This is Volume 1 of 2 of the *ClimateQuest — Meet the Cast* series; each volume is a complete standalone book you can read on its own.

For everyone who learns by hearing a story first.

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Introduction

The ClimateQuest cast was authored to embody the curriculum, not decorate around it. Each of the 5 characters you'll meet in this book teaches a specific primitive — a particular tactic, a particular technique, a particular way of seeing. Together they form an ensemble: the cast IS the curriculum.

Read in any order. Each chapter stands alone.
Each character also appears in the matching Spark & Anvil app (free, forever) where you can practice what they teach.

— *The editors at Spark & Anvil*

Haze

*ATMOSPHERE — *the sky is a thin layer. thinner than you think.**



Haze was a dragonfly-tween with wings like thin glass, shimmering soft blue and cream. This morning she landed on the schoolyard wall carrying her favorite thing: a glass dome with a single red apple inside, wrapped in a strip of damp paper no thicker than a breath.

A cluster of kids leaned in. "The apple is our whole world," Haze said, tapping the glass. "And this paper?" She traced the thin damp strip. "This is *all* of the sky. Every cloud, every storm, every breath you've ever taken — it all fits inside this little layer."

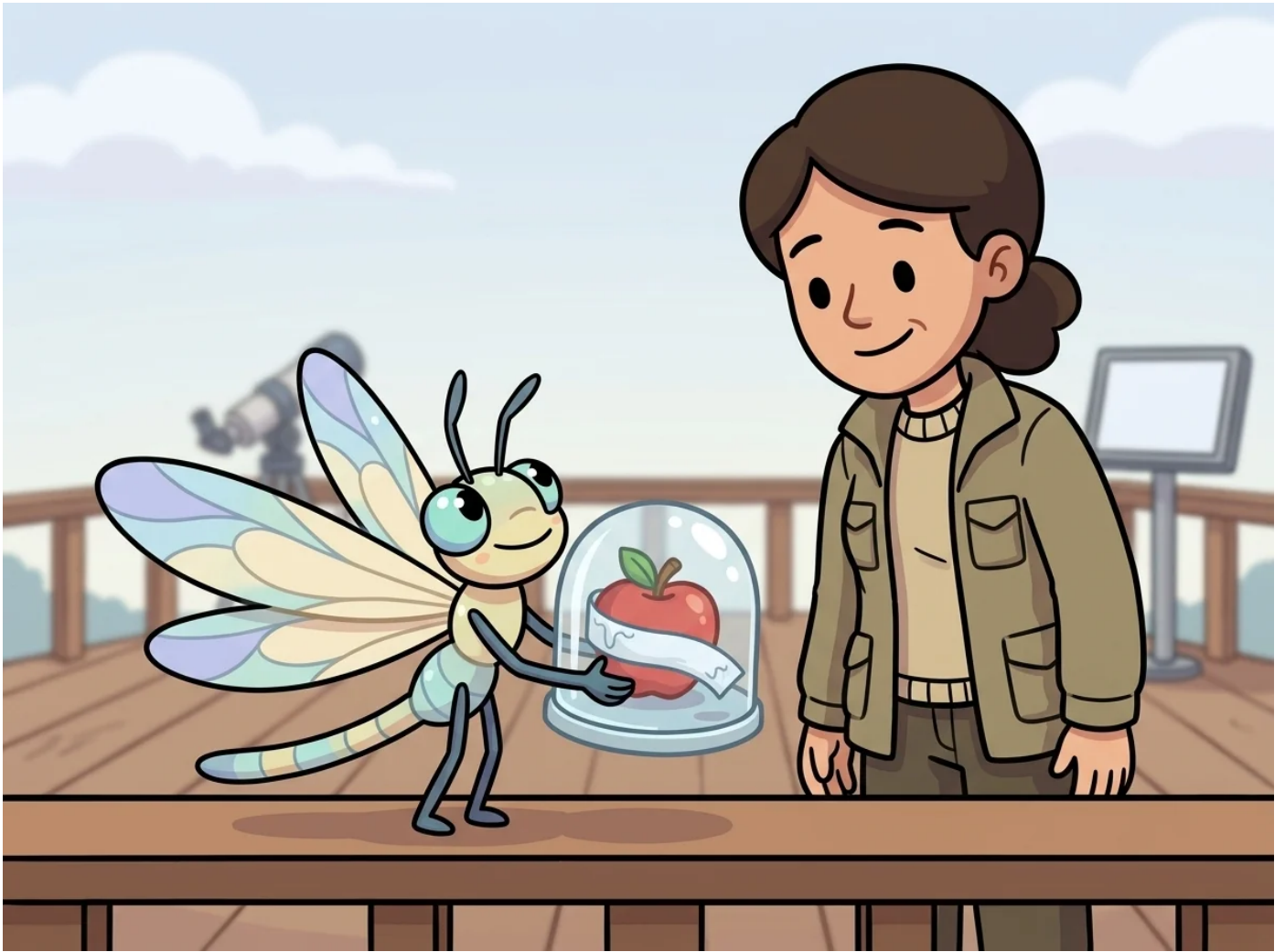
The kids gasped. One reached out; her finger dented the paper easily. Haze grinned, delighted at the gasp. She loved that moment — the moment the endless-looking sky suddenly became something small enough to hold in your hands and study. Not frightening. *Understandable*.



Haze grew up in the high meadows where cool mist gathered every dawn. Her family were the mist-readers, dragonflies who watched the morning fog roll along the valley and guessed the shape of the coming day.

She remembered lying on her back as a small nymph, staring up at what looked like sky going on forever, feeling tiny and lost under it.

Her grandfather landed beside her and held up a single dewdrop on the tip of a reed. "You think the sky is endless," he said. "It isn't. Watch." He tipped the reed so the dewdrop caught the light, a thin bright skin curved around the water. "The sky is a skin like this. Thin. You can watch it. You can learn its moods." Small Haze stared, and the fear turned into something better — a warm prickle of wonder. If the sky was thin enough to watch, then it wasn't a monster hanging over her. It was a thing she could come to know. She never forgot how good that felt: the bigness shrinking into something she could hold.

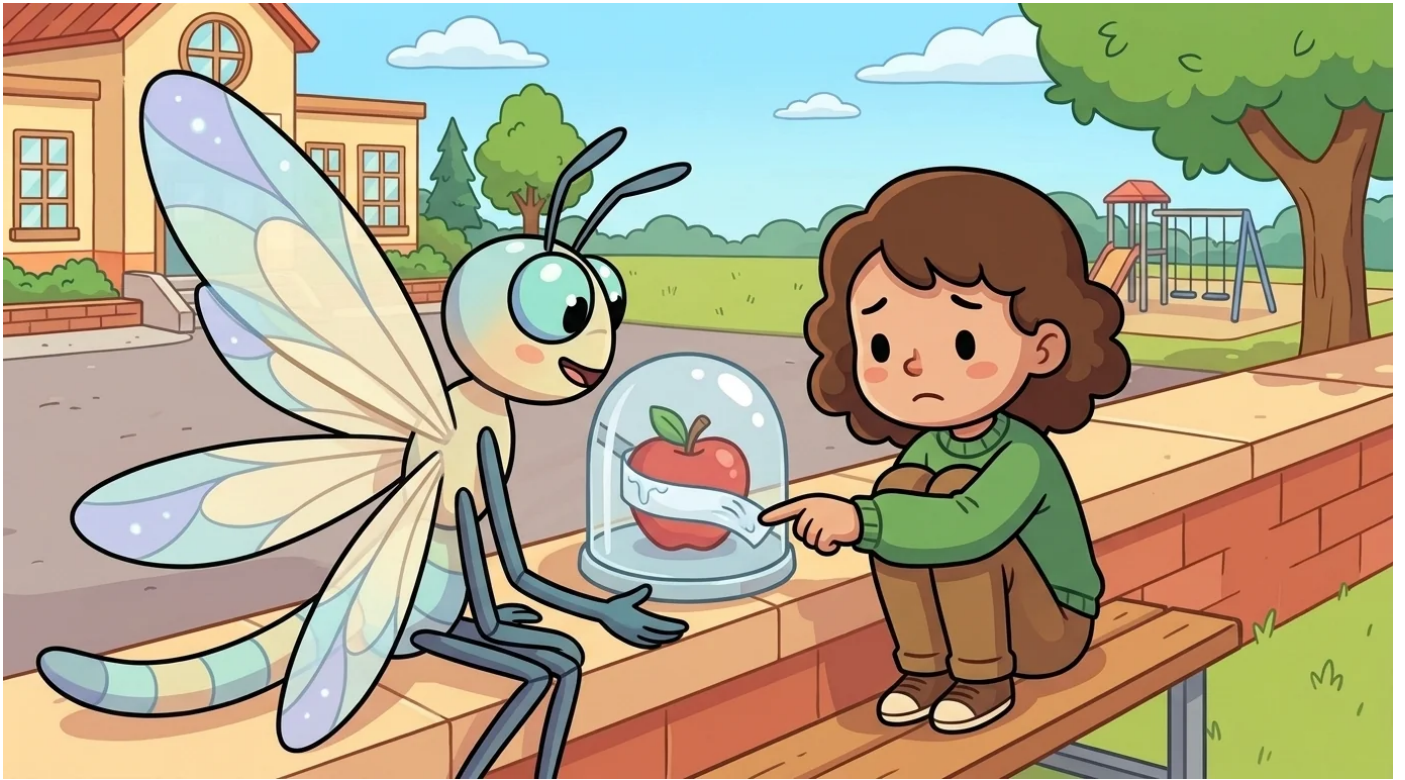


When she was twelve, Haze flew down to ClimateQuest with her glass dome cradled in her legs. Cirrus, the mentor there, met her by the observation deck where the real sky stretched pale overhead.

"What is the sky?" Cirrus asked.

Haze didn't recite facts. She held up her apple and its wrap of damp paper. "It's this thin," she said. "If the world is this apple, the whole sky is this paper. Thinner than anyone thinks." She looked up at the real pale layer above them. "And here's the part that matters most: because it's thin, we can *watch* it. We can measure it. Knowing how thin it is isn't a scary thing. It's the calm thing. It's the opposite of being afraid."

Cirrus studied her, then smiled. "Then the observation deck is yours," she said.



Haze's first student was a quiet girl named Lily who had come in frightened by something she'd heard on the news, her shoulders drawn up tight.

"Is the sky broken?" Lily whispered.

Haze didn't rush to answer. She set the glass dome on the bench between them. "Come feel," she said gently. "Put your finger on the paper."

Lily reached out. Her fingertip pressed the thin damp strip. "It's so delicate," she said.

"It is," Haze agreed warmly. "And here's the wonderful part — *because* it's this thin and this close, we can watch every change in it. Nothing hides. When people add something to the air, we can see where it goes." She turned the dome slowly. "The sky isn't a mystery we're helpless under. It's a thin layer we can study, right here, with our own eyes and simple tools. Being scared happens when you don't know what's going on." She met Lily's eyes. "But *you'll* know. And knowing is where every good next step begins."

Lily's shoulders slowly came down. She touched the paper again, softer this time, almost like a greeting. "So it's not too big to understand," she said.

"Not even close," Haze said. "It's small enough to hold. And that means it's small enough to help."



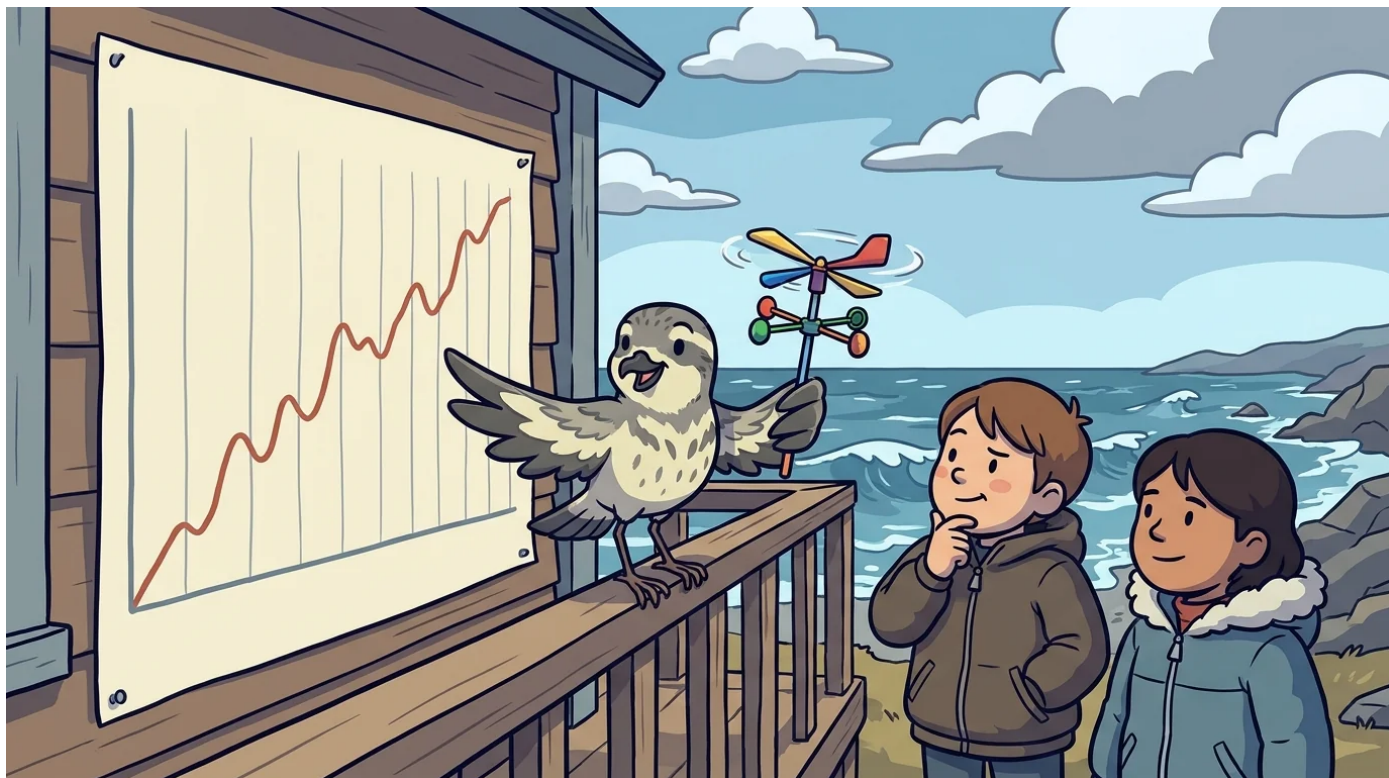
Haze set the dome down and watched Lily watch the little apple-world under its thin bright skin.

"Feel that?" Haze asked. Lily nodded, and this time the tightness in her chest had loosened into something lighter, almost floating — awe instead of dread. "That's the feeling I chase every single day," Haze said. "The moment something huge and scary turns into something clear. Your body goes quiet. Your breath slows down. That calm — that's what understanding feels like."

She lifted the dome to the light, the damp paper glowing thin and delicate around the little red world. Under her own shimmering wings Haze felt it too, the old high-meadow gladness, steady and warm: the sky was small enough to watch, and watching it made her feel not helpless but *ready*. She held the feeling a moment, calm and hopeful, and let it settle all the way through.

Squall

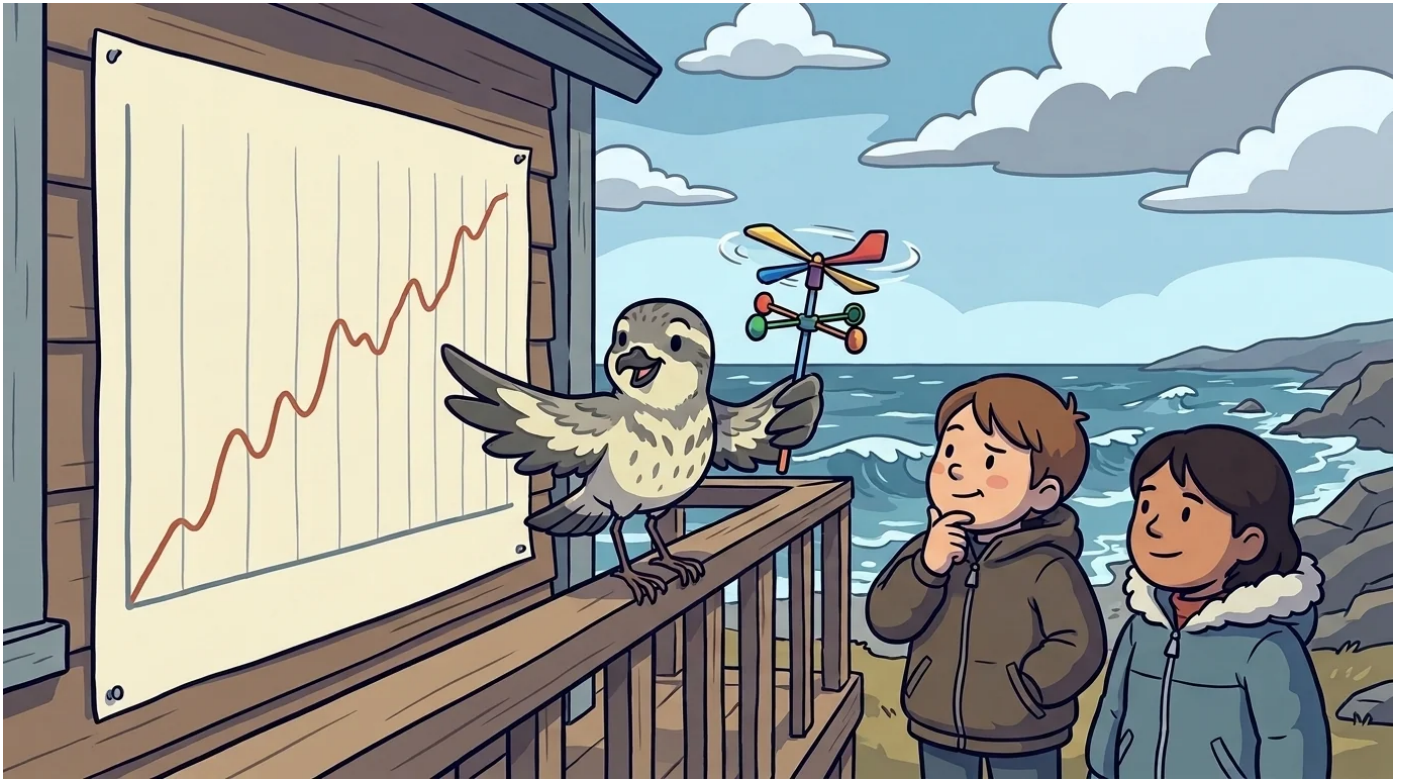
*WEATHER VS CLIMATE — *weather is the mood. climate is the personality. don't confuse them.**



Squall was a small storm-petrel tween, his feathers streaked grey and cream like a cartoon cloud. This morning he perched on the weather-station railing with his tiny toy weather-vane, letting the breeze spin it. *Whirl, whirl.*

Two kids ran up, breathless. "Squall! It's freezing today — so the warming stuff isn't real, right?"

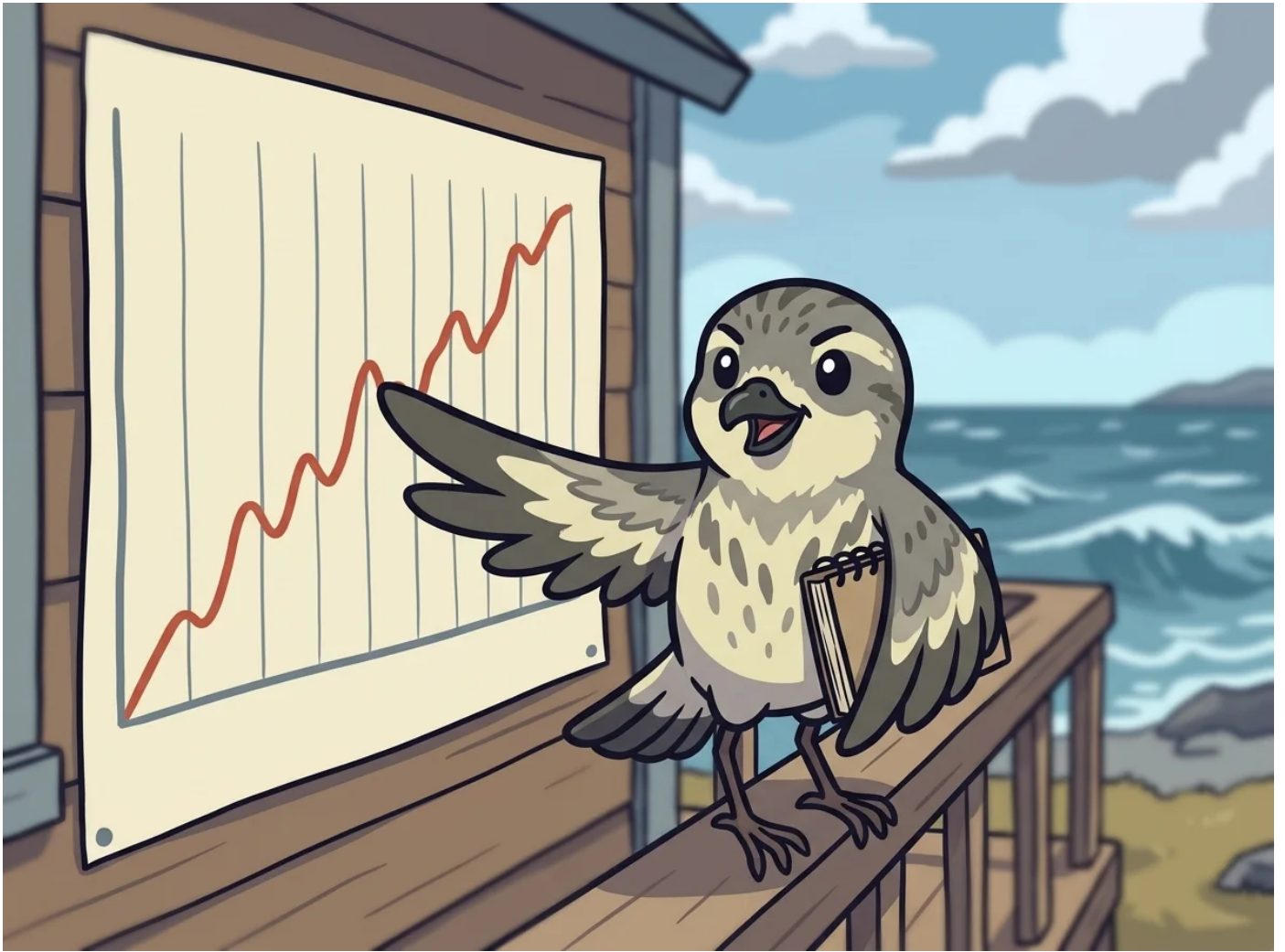
Squall didn't sigh or scold. He just tipped his little vane into the wind and let it spin fast, then slow, then fast again. "Watch this," he said warmly. "This spin is *today* — the mood of the sky right now. Cold this morning, maybe sunny by lunch. But a mood isn't who you are." He pointed a wing at the long graph tacked to the station wall behind him, a line that wobbled up and down but climbed steadily across the years. "*That's* the personality. The long, slow truth. Don't mix up one chilly morning with the whole long story." The kids blinked, then nodded slowly. Squall grinned, patient and pleased.



Squall grew up flying over the wide open ocean, where his family had watched storms for generations to help the fishing boats read the sky.

He remembered his first solo flight through a squall as a fledgling — the wind flinging him sideways, cold spray everywhere. He'd been sure the whole world had turned angry forever.

His grandfather flew steady beside him and shouted over the gust: "One storm tells you about one day! Nothing more!" When the squall passed and the sea went calm and silver, Grandfather landed him on a floating log and pulled out a battered notebook full of little marks — a mark for every day's weather across a whole year. "See? Wild days, calm days, all jumbled. But add them all up—" he traced a slow steady line rising through the mess of marks "—and *that* line is the climate. The mess is the mood. The line is the personality." Young Squall felt the panic in his chest unclench into something steadier. The scary wild day was just one mark. The truth was the patient line. He carried that calm with him ever after.

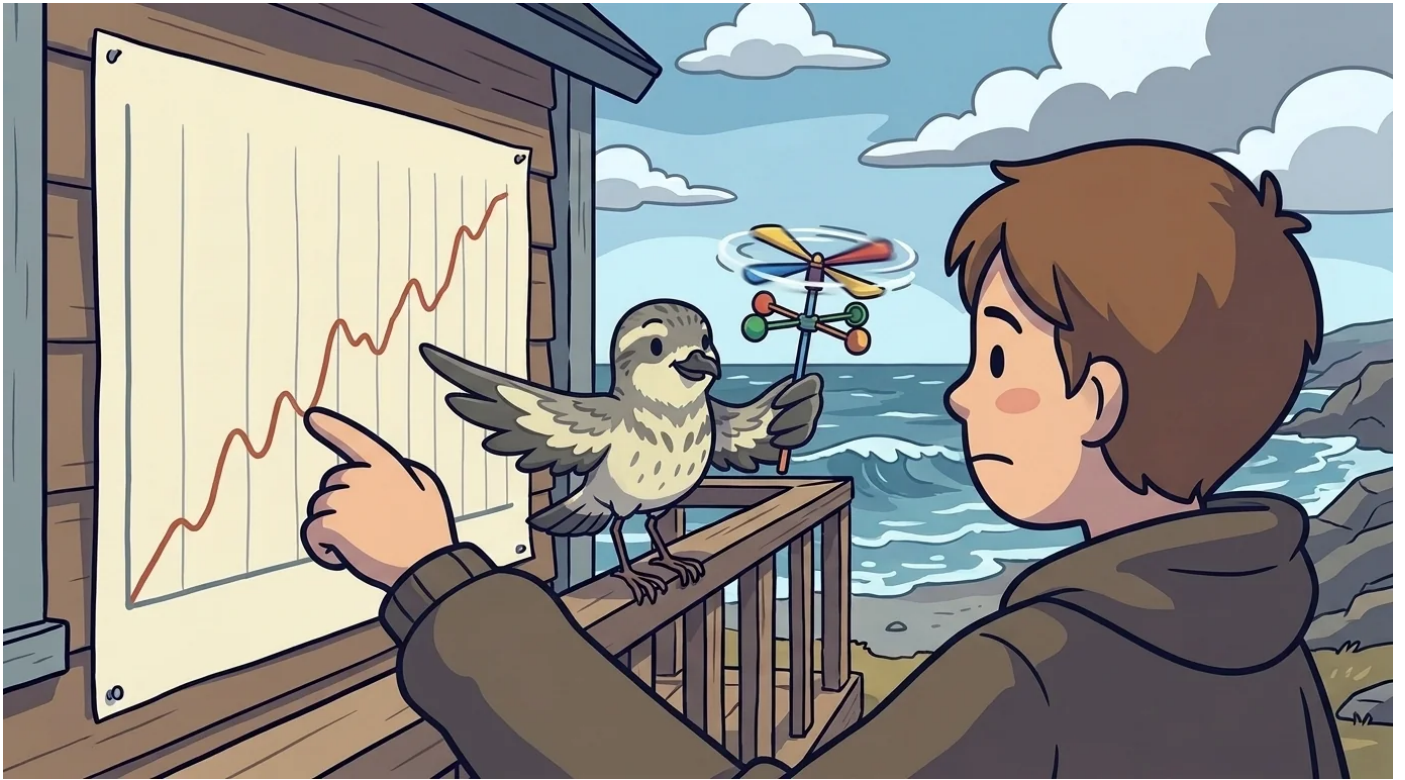


When he was thirteen, Squall flew to ClimateQuest with his grandfather's notebook tucked under one wing. Cirrus, the mentor, met him beside a hundred-year graph pinned across the whole wall.

"What is the difference between weather and climate?" Cirrus asked.

Squall stood tall and looked her right in the eye. "Weather is the mood," he said. "Climate is the personality. A cold morning doesn't mean the world isn't warming. A hot afternoon doesn't mean it's warming super fast. One day is one mood." He tapped the long climbing line on the graph. "*This* is the personality — the average, patient, over decades. You don't judge a whole person by one grumpy morning. Same with the sky."

Cirrus smiled. "Then the weather station is yours," she said.



Squall's first student was a boy named Reed who came in fired up, ready to argue with everyone who'd ever gotten it wrong.

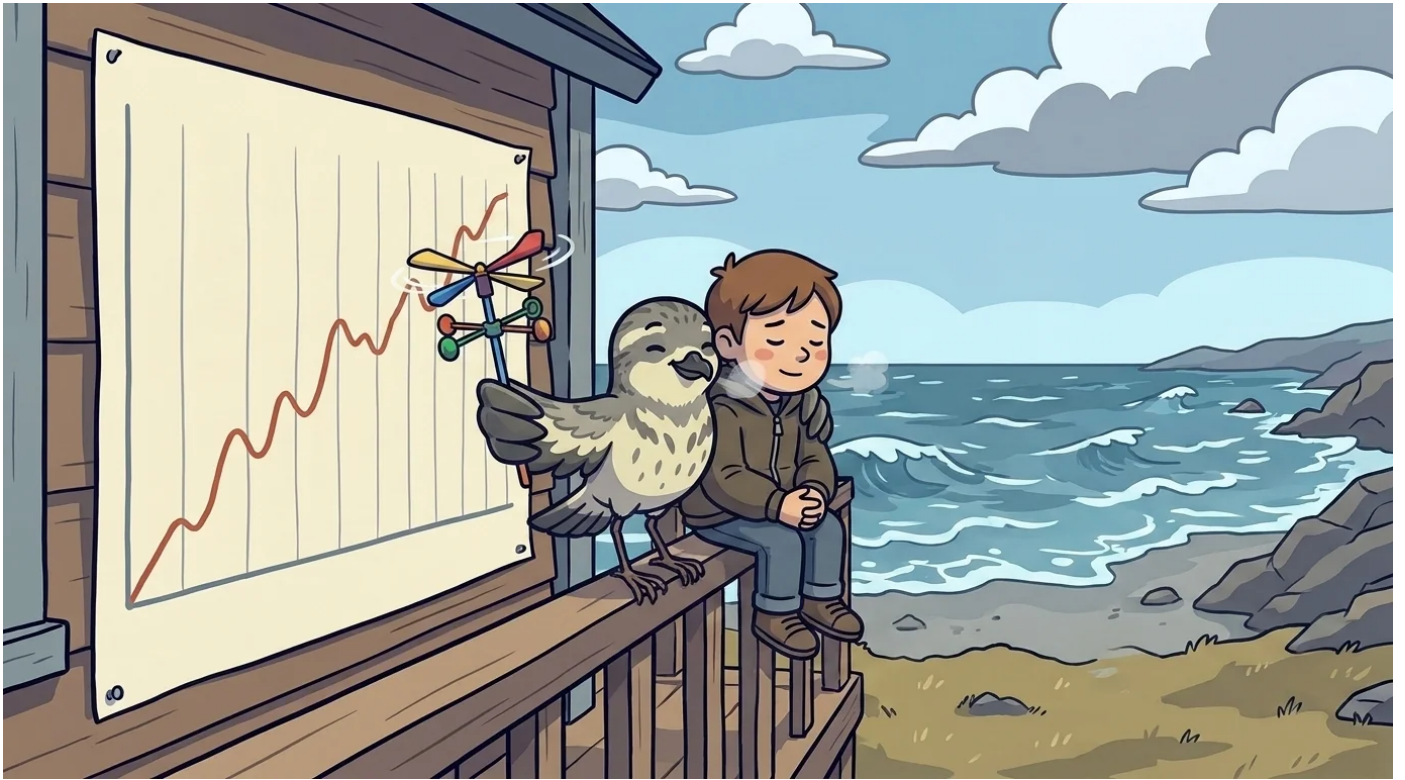
"A kid at school said the warming's fake because it snowed!" Reed fumed. "I wanna go *prove* him wrong!"

Squall handed him the little weather-vane instead of an argument. "Spin it," he said. Reed spun it, and it whirled every direction — fast, slow, backward. "That's a snowy day," Squall said gently. "One spin. Now look up here." He walked Reed to the hundred-year graph, its line jagged with cold spells and hot spells but climbing all the same. "The snow your friend saw is one of these little dips. Real! But look how the average line keeps rising underneath all the wiggles."

Reed frowned. "So do I tell him he's wrong?"

"You don't need to win," Squall said warmly. "You just show him the graph and say: *a snowy day is the mood; the line over decades is the personality*. Then let him look. Being kind works better than being loud." Reed traced the climbing line slowly with his finger, and the fight went out of his shoulders. "It's just... clearer this way," he said. "Not so mad-feeling."

"That's the numbers doing their job," Squall said. "They hand you facts instead of feelings."



Squall settled beside Reed on the railing, both of them watching the long calm line rise across the wall.

"Feel that?" Squall asked. Reed nodded — the hot, tight, argue-with-everyone feeling had cooled into something quiet and steady. "That's what understanding feels like," Squall said. "Your chest loosens. Your breath slows down. The scary jumble turns into one clear patient line you can actually read."

He gave his little weather-vane one last spin and let it wind down on its own. Under his own streaked feathers Squall felt the old ocean-calm his grandfather had given him — the deep steadiness of knowing the wild day is only ever one mark, and the truth is the patient line beneath. He breathed it in, warm and settled, and let the quiet gladness hold him there a while.

Round and Tilt

seasonal pair — Round is Earth's orbital position (closer / farther from Sun matters only for some climates). Tilt is Earth's axial tilt (the dominant cause of seasons in temperate zones). Together they teach the difference between orbital and axial drivers of climate.



In the center of the climatequest geography lab, a young explorer named Alex stood with their arms crossed, looking puzzled. "I still think I've got it," Alex said, pointing a finger at a big, bright lamp in the corner that was pretending to be the Sun. "It's summer when Earth is closer to the Sun, and winter when it's farther away. Easy."

A smooth, calm voice echoed from the far wall. "Ah, an easy answer! Those are lovely, but not always the whole story." A character who looked like a walking, talking hoop glided along a huge oval diagram painted on the floor. This was Round. Their movements were graceful and predictable, always following the same path.

From the center of the room, a globe on a stand wobbled excitedly. "Not the whole story? It's not even the main character!" the globe chirped. The globe was permanently leaning to one side, as if perpetually curious about something on the floor. This was Tilt. "If you think it's all about distance, you're in for a surprise!"

Round circled smoothly to a stop near Alex. "Tilt and I work together. It's a team effort. But most people give me a little too much credit for the seasons."

Tilt wobbled again, their polar ice cap glinting under the lab lights. "A *lot* too much credit! Let's set the story straight. It's time to talk about the lean!"



Round gestured for Alex to follow them along the giant oval path on the floor. "This is my job," Round explained, their voice a low hum. "I guide the Earth on its year-long journey around the Sun. My path isn't a perfect circle. It's a bit of an egg-shape, an ellipse."

They stopped at one end of the oval, a spot marked with a little painted snowflake. "Right here," Round said, tapping the spot with a smooth, featureless hand. "This is when the top half of the Earth, the Northern Hemisphere, is actually *closest* to the Sun. This happens in January."

Alex's eyes went wide. "But... that's the middle of winter! It's freezing in January!"

"Exactly!" Round beamed. "My little change in distance is real, but for most places, it's not the main reason you're building snowmen or heading to the beach. If I were the only one in charge, the seasons would be much, much milder. And for people in the Northern Hemisphere, they'd be completely backward."

Round started moving again, gliding toward the other end of the oval. "My part of the story is about the long, steady journey. The calendar of the year. But the *drama* of the seasons? For that, you need my partner."



"My turn!" Tilt shouted, spinning with a happy wobble. "Come over here! Forget distance for a second and think about aim!"

Alex walked over to the globe. Tilt leaned proudly, never quite standing up straight. "See this lean? I'm not broken. I'm tilted! The Earth is always tilted on its axis, about 23.5 degrees. I never, ever straighten up. It's my most important feature."

Tilt pointed a little metal arm towards the Sun-lamp. "Imagine the Sun's light is like water from a giant spray bottle. When the Northern Hemisphere is tilted *toward* the Sun, like this,"—they angled the top of the globe toward the lamp—"it gets a direct blast of light and heat. A full-on soaking! That's summer."

Alex peered closely. The light was hitting North America straight on.

"But!" Tilt continued, "as Round carries us to the other side of the orbit, my lean stays pointed the same way in space. Now look." The globe was on the other side of its imaginary orbit, but still tilted in the same direction. The top half was now leaning *away* from the lamp. "See? The sunlight hits us at a low angle. It's a glancing blow! The light and heat are spread out and weaker. That's winter! It's not about being far away, it's about getting a less direct hit."



"Let's put it all together," Round said, gliding back toward the center of the room. "Teamwork makes the dream... work. Or in our case, the seasons... happen."

Tilt nodded eagerly. "Show them, Round! Take us on a trip."

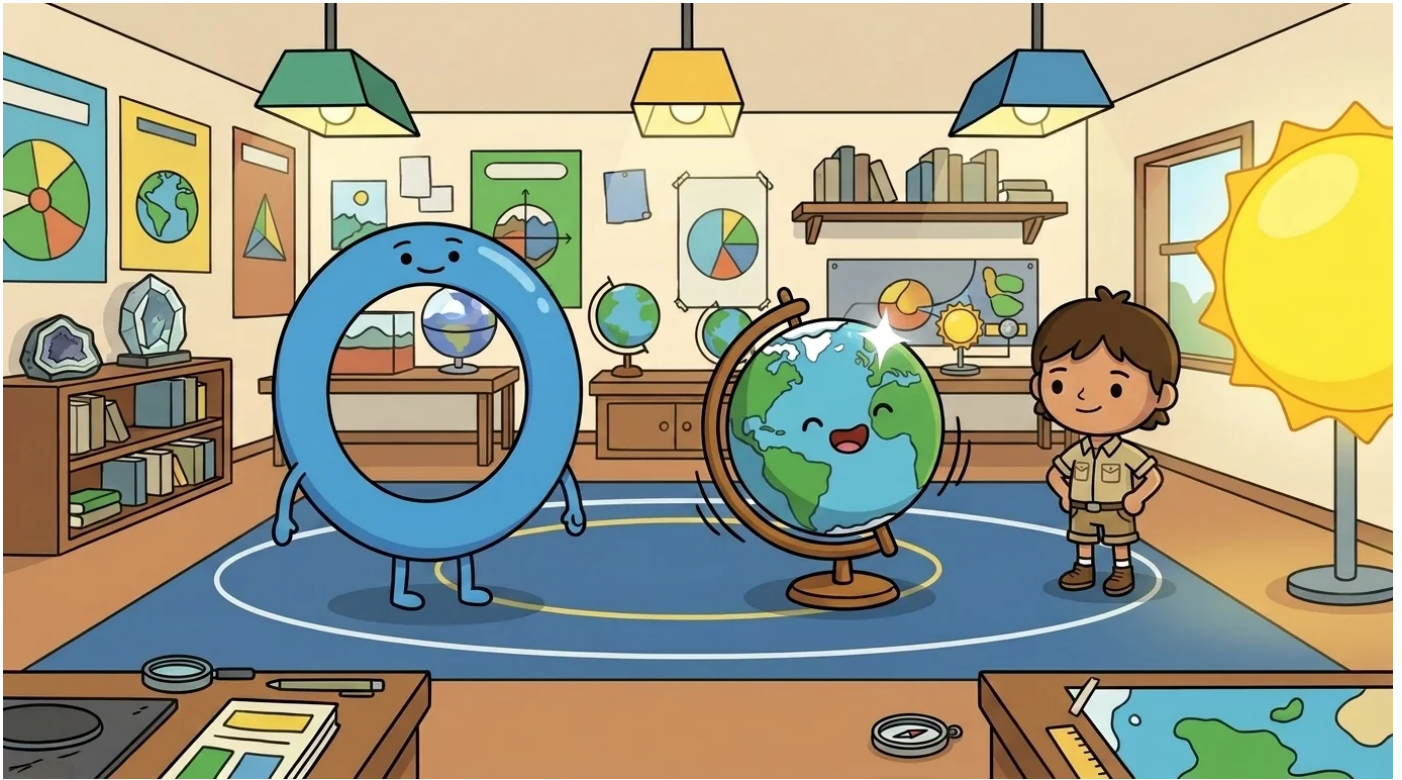
Round picked up a small model of the Earth from a shelf—a little blue and green marble that was also permanently tilted, just like its larger friend. They began to carry it along the oval path on the floor. "Okay, Alex, watch the tilt," Round instructed. "It never changes its direction compared to the rest of the room. It's always pointing toward that far wall over there."

As Round moved the model along the path, Alex saw it happen. When the model was at the "January" spot—closest to the Sun-lamp—the northern half was clearly tilted away from the light. It was getting that weak, glancing sunlight Tilt talked about. Winter.

Then, Round gracefully carried the model to the "July" spot on the far side of the orbit, the point farthest from the Sun-lamp. Because the lean hadn't changed, the northern half was now tilted directly *into* the bright beam of the lamp. It was getting the full blast. Summer.

"Whoa," Alex breathed. "So you're farthest away in summer, but you're getting more direct sun because of the tilt."

"That's our whole story!" Tilt and Round said at the same time.



Alex stood back, looking from the looping path on the floor to the wobbly globe in the center. "Okay. I get it now. Round, you're in charge of the whole trip, the year. But Tilt, you're the one who decides if we should wear a t-shirt or a parka. The lean is the real deal."

"Precisely," Round said with a satisfied hum. "My distance matters a little bit, but Tilt's angle is the star of the show for seasons in places like North America, Europe, and Asia."

Tilt did a little celebratory wobble. "It's all about the angle of the dangle! The lean is the reason for the season! It's why one part of the world is having summer while the other is having winter. We're opposites!"

Alex smiled. It wasn't about one simple answer, but two things working together. One made the year go by, and the other made it interesting.

"It's a pretty cool system," Alex said.

"We think so," Round and Tilt replied in unison. In the geography lab, the Sun-lamp shone steadily. And Alex felt it too — that warm, settled glow you get when a puzzle finally fits together, when the world feels a little friendlier because you understand it. The two partners stood proud and happy, ready to share that same warm click of understanding with the next explorer who wandered in.

Round

*CYCLES — *carbon and water move in loops. balance shifts when one loop slows or speeds.**



At the bend in the river where the willows leaned over the water, a beaver-tween named Round crouched on a flat rock and traced a slow circle in the mud with one paw.

A raindrop landed on the back of her hand. She grinned and started narrating it, the way some kids narrate a race.

"There you go," she said to the drop. "You were in the ocean once. Then the sun lifted you up into a cloud. The wind carried you here. You fell on me. Now you'll trickle into the river, and the river will carry you all the way back to the ocean, and then — up you go again." She drew the circle a second time, deeper. "Round and round. You've been doing this for about a billion years. You'll do it a billion more."

A younger kit splashed over, dripping. "So where does the water *go*?"

"That's the trick," Round said. "It doesn't *go* anywhere. It just moves around the loop." She swept her paw from the river to the sky to the far blue line of the sea and back to the river again. "Ocean, cloud, rain, river, ocean. It's not leaving. It's *traveling*. Nothing gets used up. It just changes where it is."

The kit stared at the puddle, then at the clouds, then at the puddle. "So this puddle is going to be a cloud."

"This puddle is going to be a cloud," Round agreed, "and someday it'll be river again, and rain again, and it'll fall on some other kid who thinks it's brand new." She tapped the water gently. "Same drops. Same loop. Keeps going."



Round had not always found the loops so calming.

When she was small, a hot summer had dried the little side-stream near her burrow to cracked mud. She'd sat beside it, chest tight, certain the water had simply *run out* — that it was gone, that something had broken and wouldn't come back. She'd felt it like a stone in her stomach: *the world can just lose things, and there's nothing you can do*.

Her grandmother, an old broad-tailed beaver who had built dams up and down the valley, came and sat beside her in the mud.

She didn't say *don't worry*. She said, "You feel like it's ended, don't you? Like it just poured out and vanished."

Round nodded, miserable.

"Come here." Her grandmother led her up the ridge to where they could see the whole valley — the sea flashing far off, clouds stacking over the hills. "Your stream didn't vanish, little one. It went *up*." She pointed at the clouds. "It's right there, waiting to come down. The loop got slow, not broken. Slow things speed up again. Broken things don't. This one's only slow."

That night it rained. In the morning the side-stream ran clear and full, and the stone in Round's stomach was gone. The dried-up feeling had a new name now — not *ended*, but *waiting to come around*. Somehow that made it possible to breathe.



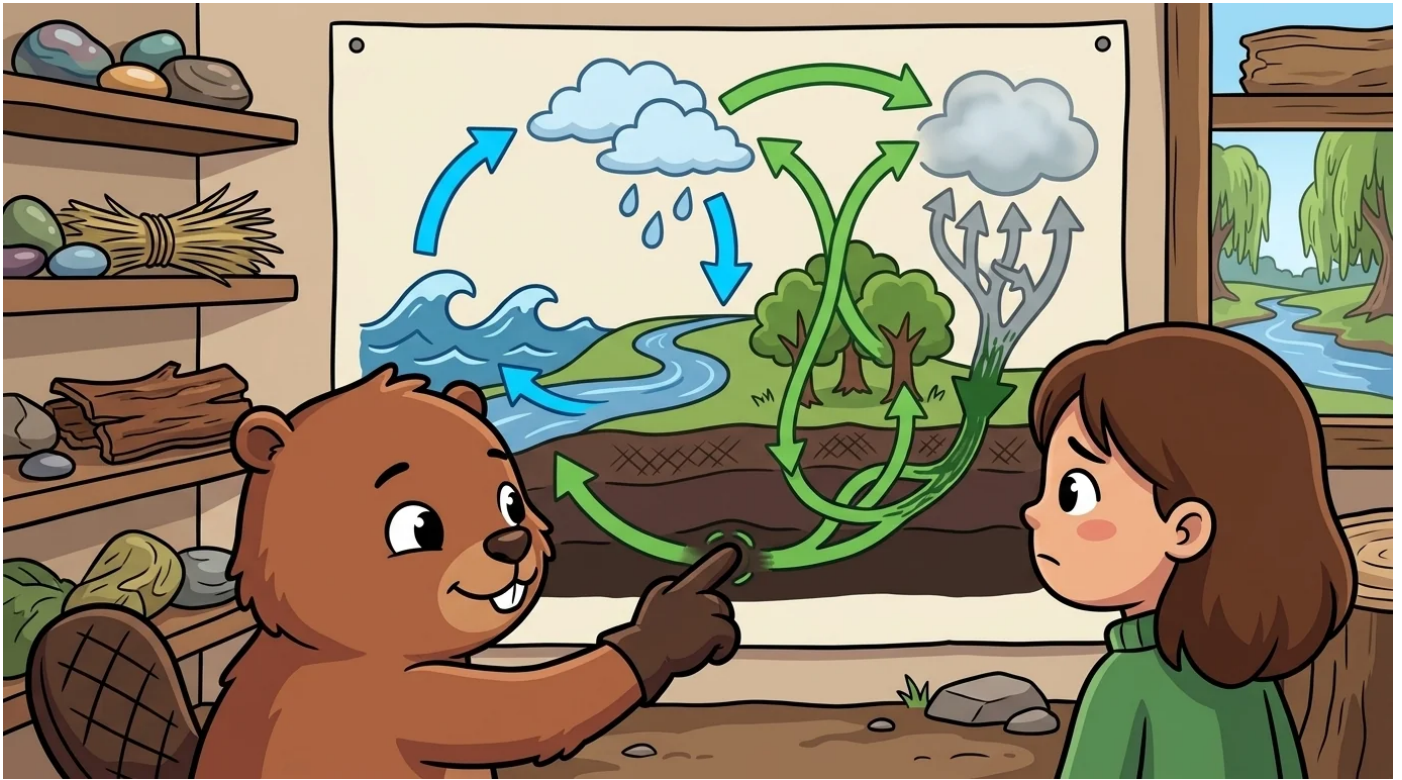
She walked to ClimateQuest at twelve, because a place that studied the whole warming, worrying world ought to understand the kind of thing that only *looks* like an ending.

Cirrus, the mentor who ran the workshops, met her at the gate. He didn't test her muscles or her dam-building. He asked one question. "What happens to carbon when you burn a log?"

Most kids said *it's gone*. Round didn't.

She picked up a stick of charcoal and drew on the courtyard stones — a wide loop with arrows. "The carbon in the log came from the air," she said, tracing. "A tree pulled it out of the sky to grow. Burn the log and the carbon goes right back up to the sky. Then another tree pulls it down again to grow." She followed the loop all the way around. "It's not destroyed. It moved. Sky, tree, soil, sky. Round and round — for a billion years."

Cirrus looked at the loop on the stones for a long moment. "You are appointed," he said.



Round's workshop had one big flow-diagram on the wall — blue arrows for water, green for carbon, every arrow curving back to where it started.

A girl came in one afternoon with her shoulders up around her ears. She'd read something scary about the sky filling with carbon, and she looked like she was holding her breath. "Everyone says the carbon's ruining everything," she said. "Like it's poison we dumped and now it's just — there. Forever."

Round knew that held-breath look. She'd felt it in the mud by the dry stream.

"Put your finger here," she said, and pressed the girl's finger to the diagram, on the deep-underground arrow. "This is where a lot of carbon was resting — locked in the ground for millions of years, real slow loop. When we dig it up and burn it, we move it up to the sky *fast*." She slid the finger up the arrow to the sky. "So the sky-part of the loop got bigger. That's the trouble. Not poison. Not forever. Just a loop that's carrying too much, too fast."

"But it's stuck up there now," the girl said.

"Is it?" Round tapped the green arrows coming *down* from the sky — into forests, into the sea. "Every tree is still pulling carbon down. Every ocean is still soaking it in. The loop never stopped working. It's just behind. So we help it catch up — plant more trees, burn less from underground, let the sea and soil do their slow steady thing." She traced the whole circle once more, gently. "It isn't broken. It's out of balance. And out-of-balance is the kind of thing you can *fix*."

The girl let out a long breath. Her shoulders came down. "So it's not an ending."

"It's not an ending," Round said. "It's a loop we're learning to shape."



Later, when the workshop had emptied, the girl came back with one quieter question.

"When it feels really big and scary," she said, "and you can't see the loop working — how do you keep believing it's still going around?"

Round thought about the dry stream. About the stone in her stomach and her grandmother's paw on her shoulder and the rain that came in the morning.

"You remember that the loops are older than all of us," she said, "and slower than a scared feeling. When something looks like it just poured out and vanished, mostly it went *up*, or *under*, or *around* — waiting to come back. Your job isn't to carry the whole sky. It's to help the loop along, a little, where you're standing. Plant the tree. Save the drop. Let the slow things do their work." She looked out the window toward the river bend where she'd grown up. "That's not despair. That's the opposite."

The girl nodded, and Round watched the held breath go out of her for good — the same way, years ago, the stone had lifted out of her own stomach by a dried-up stream that turned out to be only waiting for rain.

She didn't say the last part out loud, but she felt it, round and warm and steady as the loops themselves: *the scariest-looking endings are usually just the slow parts of a circle. Nothing you love is truly gone. It's coming back around.*

Blanket

GREENHOUSE EFFECT — some gases trap heat. that's a blanket. blankets are not bad — too-many blankets are too-warm.



On a chilly morning in the high-mountain meadow, a marmot-tween named Blanket sat on a flat sunny rock with a folded wool blanket over his arm, teaching a shivering rabbit how to be exactly warm enough.

"You're cold," Blanket said. It wasn't a question. The rabbit's teeth were doing a little dance.

Blanket unfolded the blanket once and draped it over the rabbit's shoulders. "There. One layer. How's that?"

"B-better," the rabbit said. "Still a little cold."

So Blanket folded the blanket in half and laid it back over him, doubled. "Two layers now. And?"

The rabbit's shivering slowed. His ears relaxed. "Ohh. That's nice. That's just right."

"Good," Blanket said, and he sat back, pleased. Then, because he could never resist showing the whole idea, he folded the blanket again — three thick layers, four, until it was a great heavy wool loaf pressing down on the poor rabbit.

"Wh— hey!" The rabbit wriggled out from under it, panting. "That's too *hot*! I was sweating!"

"Exactly," Blanket said, gently pulling the pile back to one comfortable layer. "See? The blanket isn't your enemy. One layer kept you cozy. Too many layers cooked you. It was never *whether* you had a blanket. It was always *how much*."

The rabbit stared at the wool, then at Blanket, as if a small door had opened somewhere in his head. "So a blanket is good," he said slowly, "but too much blanket is too warm."

Blanket smiled the smile of a marmot who has waited his whole life for someone to say exactly that.



Blanket had learned it in his family's weaving shed, when he was small.

His family were blanket-weavers for the whole village, and the shed always smelled of clean fleece and lamp oil. On the coldest winter he could remember, Blanket had gotten it into his head that if one blanket was good, then a *mountain* of blankets must be wonderful. So one night he dragged every blanket he could carry onto his bed and buried himself under the lot.

He woke up an hour later kicking and gasping, tangled and boiling and a little scared, sure that something had gone terribly wrong.

His grandmother found him in the tangle. She didn't laugh, and she didn't scold. She lifted the pile off, one heavy layer at a time, until he could breathe, until he was just-right warm again, and his racing heart slowed down.

"You thought more was safer," she said, folding the extras away. "But warm isn't a switch, little one. It's not *on* or *off*. It's a dial. A blanket is a good thing — without one you'd freeze on the mountain. The trouble was never the blanket. It was the *amount*."

Blanket lay there, cooling, feeling the fright drain out of his chest. And a quiet, steady idea settled in where the fear had been: *the thing that keeps you warm and the thing that overheats you can be the exact same thing. All that changes is how much.* Somehow, once he understood that, the whole idea stopped being scary. It just made sense.



He walked to ClimateQuest when he was thirteen, because a place that studied the sky ought to understand a blanket.

Cirrus, the mentor who welcomed newcomers at the gate, didn't ask Blanket to prove he was clever. She asked one plain question. "What is the greenhouse effect?"

Blanket didn't answer with a speech. He unfolded his blanket and held it up to the pale mountain sun. "Some things let the sun's warmth in and then hold on to a bit of it instead of letting it all rush straight back out," he said. "The air around the Earth does that. Certain gases up there catch a little of the heat and keep it close, like this."

He wrapped the blanket loosely around his own shoulders. "Without it, the Earth would be a frozen rock — way below freezing, all the time. *With* it, we get meadows and rivers and rabbits." He tugged the wool. "This isn't the problem. This is the reason anything lives here at all."

Cirrus looked at the small marmot wrapped in his one comfortable layer for a long, warm moment. "You belong here," she said.



Blanket's workshop was full of things that were secretly about the right amount of warm.

A girl came in one afternoon looking pale and worried, clutching a book she'd been reading. "It says the Earth is heating up because of the greenhouse effect," she said, and her voice wobbled. "So the greenhouse effect is *bad*, and it's ruining everything, and—"

"Whoa," Blanket said, kindly. "Sit. Let me show you something first, before you carry that worry any further."

He handed her the folded blanket. "Put one layer over your knees."

She did. "Okay."

"Cozy?"

"...Yeah."

"That's the greenhouse effect doing its normal, good job. It keeps us alive. Now—" he doubled the blanket, then tripled it over her lap until she squirmed. "Too much?"

"Way too much," she laughed, pushing it off.

"There's the whole thing." Blanket settled the blanket back to one layer. "The greenhouse effect isn't bad. It's the blanket the Earth is *supposed* to have. What's happening is that we've been adding extra layers — burning fuels that put more heat-catching gas into the air, a bit more each year, since long before you were born. Not a new blanket. Just a thicker one than the Earth needs." He tapped the book gently. "So when you tell someone about this, say it carefully. Don't say the greenhouse effect is bad — that's not true, and it makes people scared instead of clear. Say: *too much* of it is the trouble. Precise words are honest words."

The girl looked down at the one comfortable layer on her knees, and Blanket watched the worry in her face loosen into something steadier. "So we know exactly what's making it thicker," she said.

"We do. Which means we know exactly what to do about it." He grinned. "A problem you *understand* is a problem you can work on."



Later, when the workshop was quiet, the girl came back with one more question, softer now.

"When I feel scared about it," she said, "how do I make it not-scary again?"

Blanket thought about the tangle of blankets, and his grandmother lifting them off one layer at a time, and the fear draining out of his chest.

"You go back to the dial," he said. "Not *on* or *off*. Not *doomed* or *saved*. Just — how much. We added some extra warm. We can add less. People all over the world already know how; they're doing it right now, a layer at a time." He folded the blanket neatly and set it on his arm, ready for the next visitor. "The Earth still has its good, needed blanket. We just want to stop piling on the ones it never asked for."

The girl nodded slowly, and Blanket saw her shoulders come down from around her ears, the way his own had, years ago, when the heavy pile lifted off.

He didn't say the rest out loud, but he thought it, warm and certain and calm all the way through: *the scariest-sounding things are usually the ones nobody's explained gently yet. Understood, held to the right amount — even the whole warm sky can feel like something you can take care of.*

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Methodology

Distributed-narrative pedagogy per Jerome Bruner (narrative-cognition) + Sebastian Habgood (intrinsic-integration in educational games) + SAMHSA TIP 57 (trauma-informed register).

Trauma-informed-design framework per Eggleston et al. (2025) and Stoltenburg et al. (2024).

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