KALOPSIA:
A PLANET that’s not so DIFFERENT
DISCOVER EUROPE FROM OUTER SPACE
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Illustrated by Sonia González
Peering into space through a telescope at night, you’ll get a close view of the Moon and the stars. If it’s a clear night, and if you look a little harder, you might see an orange dot in the middle of the sky: that’s Mars. And if you’re really good, you can also see Venus, a little brown marble that spins in the opposite direction to the other planets and is covered in volcanoes.

Beyond that are Mercury, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto.

If you look even further you’ll see the Milky Way, a milk-white patch in outer space made up of stars and planets. And even further still, so far that it would take thousands of centuries to get there, you’ll find the galaxy of Oneiric, home to the planet Kalopsia.

Kalopsia is millions of kilometres from the Milky Way. It’s a planet of colours. The sky’s a different colour every day on Kalopsia; it can even change from green to yellow within a single day.

The water in the rivers and lakes is also different from the water on Earth. It’s neither cold nor transparent. On Kalopsia the water is red, it tastes of strawberry syrup and it provides the Kalopsians with an excellent drink.
There are certain creatures on Kalopsia that have lived there forever: the Kalops. Every family on Kalopsia has a pet Kalop that goes with them wherever they go.

Kalops are normally the size of a hand, but, if necessary, they can shrink themselves to the size of a grain of sand or make themselves as big as a lorry. They play many roles.

If their owners are unsure of something, Kalops always find the answer.

If their owners get bored, Kalops can turn themselves into toys they can play with.

If their owners need to travel, Kalops can fly them, carrying them on their backs.

Kalops are the best friends of the inhabitants of Kalopsia. In fact, owners and their Kalops almost always end up looking alike.

Four very different species live on Kalopsia.

The Kairos live in the south and are known for their extremely long nails. In some cases their nails are so long that they curl up into spirals.

The Merakis live in the north of Kalopsia. They’re extraordinarily hairy creatures. They’re easily recognised by the crazy hairstyles they create from the hair all over their bodies.

The Rakhis live in the east. They’re tall and skinny. Their arms and legs look like freshly cooked spaghetti.

The Yugen live in the west and have long tongues. Compared to them, chameleons’ tongues seem tiny. The Yugen can catch whatever they need to with their tongues. They not only hunt insects, but with a very quick movement they can grab anything they like.

Hello, I’m a Kalop!
But not everything is as wonderful as it seems on Kalopsia. The four species have to live apart, because when they get together all they do is argue.

Who do you think you are? If you’re not careful we’ll tie knots in your tongues.

It’s a disgrace! You block all our best views because you’re so tall.

You’re always leaving hairs wherever you go! It’s disgusting! You even clog up our rivers!

We’re too old of you going around scratching everything with your long nails. Get out of here!

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As the four species were unable to agree on anything and were nearly always fighting, they finally took a decision: each species would build a very high wall around their land so they wouldn’t have to live together.

The Suripanta family were of the Meraki species, the hairy ones. When she was born, Wabi was little more than a ball of hair with eyes as bright as two glass marbles, and she was always smiling. From day one, her Kalop followed her everywhere. It was her best friend.

Meraki families with children had very clean houses because the babies, without realising it, would sweep the floor as they crawled around.

Wabi’s parent, Suri and Panta, always styled her hair in different ways. They gave her vertical coloured plaits, very tall quiffs, fanned-out hair, or even nest-shaped styles in which her Kalop would sometimes take its nap.

What Wabi enjoyed most was to explore every corner of the house and to watch the sky changing colour from her bedroom window.
Each of Kalopsia’s four species had its own customs.

The Merakis could use the tips of their hair as paint brushes, painting everything from enormous buildings to tiny pictures. Their land was the cleanest and the most colourful of all. They hugged each other a lot because they were all like fluffy teddy bears.

The Rakhis, being so tall, had become specialists in gathering fruit from the trees. They were a very timid species, so they loved to be able to hide among the clouds.

The Kairos, with their nails that were as long and hard as rakes, were the perfect farmers. They worked the land with their nails, and sometimes even found buried treasure.

The Yugen were the laziest of all. As they could do whatever they liked with their tongues, they spent the whole day on the sofa. From there they could prepare meals, tidy the room, and even play tennis with a friend.

Wabi’s parents were traders. Once a month they took their spaceship, which was the shape of a fried egg, and travelled to different planets to buy items that they would sell on Kalopsia. Of all the places they went, they had most success with items from a planet in the Milky Way called Earth.

The Suripanta family’s shop was called the Galactic Bazaar. Wabi loved to spend hours inspecting the items her parents brought back from every part of the universe.

At school, everyone was eager to see what extraordinary thing Wabi might turn up with, and she often surprised her schoolmates with some special accessory:
At the back of the Galactic Bazaar there was a metal door. Suri and Panta had told Wabi that she could play with and try on anything in the shop, but that she could NEVER EVER open that door. In there they kept unidentified objects that they brought from other planets and which could be dangerous.

Because it was forbidden, Wabi’s curiosity grew stronger every day, but whenever she approached the door her Kalop always stopped her.

The day after her eleventh birthday, Wabi heard a sound from behind the metal door. She approached with the greatest of care and heard a sound like someone knocking very lightly on a wooden surface. It was a very weak sound, but if she parted her hair from her ears she could hear it perfectly.

The Kalop looked after Wabi when her parents were away travelling. That day, when her parents had left for work, Wabi could resist no longer. She told the Kalop that she needed to find out what the sound was, and the Kalop, who was also very curious by nature, agreed straightaway; it too was fascinated.

—I could be dangerous, Wabi! Why don’t we just go and braid each other’s hair?
The Kalop was very curious, but also got scared very easily. It didn’t think it was such a good idea to explore the forbidden room anymore. But Wabi felt the opposite. The more strange things she saw, and the louder the sound became, the more she wanted to find out what was going on in there. And among that great pile of alien objects, she found out: the sound was coming from a blue box decorated with stars. Taking no notice of the Kalop, she decided to open it.

—According to my Galileo navigation system we’re on Kalopsia. The Kalopsian language has therefore been selected, but if you don’t understand me I can speak in Uranian, Martian, Tritonian… I know the 4,897 languages most widely spoken in the universe.

Wabi stared wide-eyed at that shining figure who had emerged from the box.
—But you... you... Who, what, how, why...? Who are you? Are you one of those genies of the lamp who grants three wishes?
—Nooo! You can rub, if you like, but all you’ll do is tickle me!
—So what are you doing here? Were you locked up in a tiny prison a long time ago, and now that we’ve freed you, you want to hurt us?
—NOOO! Do I look like a criminal?
—So who are you?
—I am... a tourist guide in the form of a hologram!
—How dull!! —complained the Kalop.
—It was more exciting thinking you were the genie of the lamp!
—said Wabi.
—I’m a guide from planet Earth; from a place called Europe, in fact. Have you heard of it?
—Yes... of course... I’ve heard of it... —She was lying, she’d never heard of it, but she didn’t want to look bad in front of that earthling.
—So what do you know about Europe?
—Mmm... Weel... —She’d been caught out! —Well I don’t know... that it’s on Earth?
—Good try!
—I think you could do with a little explanation.
—I don’t know whether...
—Let’s see what excuse you come up with. I’ve been shut up in here for months and months. If I don’t speak I’ll burst.
—Alright. Actually my parents never tell me anything about their travels.
—Well, make yourself comfortable and let me do my magic. For many centuries, Europe was one of Earth’s most troubled continents. Its different countries were constantly fighting. There was one war after another for nearly 700 years: the Hundred Years’ War, the Thirty Years’ War, the Napoleonic Wars, the Crimean War...
—There aren’t so many wars here, but almost! —said the Kalop.
—In the 20th century, however, there were the two wars that caused the most casualties: the First World War and, a little later, the Second World War. Human beings had the most advanced technology in history and they used it for destruction. It was one of the darkest eras, not just in Europe, but on the whole of Earth.

—That’s so sad! We haven’t had such a catastrophe here, luckily —added the Kalop.

—After the Second World War, certain countries began to meet. Everyone agreed that there could be no more wars between neighbours. The first countries that started to work together were France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Others joined a few years later. That was how the European Union, the EU, began.

—But if they were different countries, how did they manage to get on? — asked Wabi.

—Because they realised that if they only focussed on their differences they would never see eye to eye! So they stopped thinking about what divided them and began to work together on matters of interest to all of them: making trade between them easier; allowing their citizens to travel, study and live in any country of the EU; combining their forces in order to create better roads and infrastructure; fighting together to protect the planet...
—In 1989 an historic event took place: the fall of the last wall dividing Europe. Since then, more and more countries have joined that great agreement. There are now 27 of them!

—So are they all now the same country?
—Not exactly. There are many different languages, beliefs and cultures in Europe. Nevertheless, all of the countries can work together on this shared project. That is the European Union. What do you think of that story?

Wabi was amazed by everything the guide had said. She didn’t understand why what happened in Europe couldn’t also happen on Kalopsia. Why couldn’t the species on her planet get on with each other even though they’re different? Wabi looked at her Kalop, who was accustomed to her crazy ideas, like the time it let its whole body be dyed green, and said:

—Kalop, why don’t we ....?
—Oh no! Now I’m scared!
—Why don’t we go and explore some of the forbidden regions of Kalopsia?
—But... have you lost your mind?
As they didn’t have a compass, Wabi and her Kalop didn’t know what region they were in. From above, the landscape on the other side of the wall didn’t look so different from the landscape they knew.

Wabi asked her Kalop if they could get closer to the garden of a house that looked very much like her own. As they approached, Wabi saw someone very similar to herself, but with very long nails. She had a Kalop by her side.

—Are they playing too? Nobody would think they were dangerous...

Wabi began to tiptoe towards them. The Kalop had made itself small and was hiding in her hair, trembling with fear. Wabi was also a bit scared, but she tapped the creature with the very long nails a few times on the shoulder. The Kairo leapt out of her skin, her legs shaking like jelly, but when Wabi began to speak she gradually calmed down.

—My name is Wabi and I’m a Meraki.
—A Meraki? But aren’t you very dangerous?
—Us?
—I’ve always been told that you Merakis are like rabid dogs.
—We have hair all over our bodies, like dogs, but we don’t bite.
—Aaah...
—I’ve always been told that Kairo’s, with those claws of yours, are more dangerous than hungry tigers...
—Ha ha ha! How ridiculous!

I think it winked at me.

I think it liked me.
The day finally arrived when Wabi’s parents returned from Mercury. Suri and Panta were tired and were loaded down with new items for the Galactic Bazaar.

When they entered the house, they were astounded to see Wabi and Gigil playing in the dining room with their Kalops and the guide.

Suri and Panta were horrified. The idea of having a Kairo in their living room sent them into a panic and they ordered her to leave immediately.

Wabi tried to convince them that Gigil and all of her species were entirely harmless. Suri and Panta then took another look at Gigil and realised that this Kairo seemed more like a friendly kitten than a tiger.

Wabi and her new friend Gigil played and chatted until night-time.

—By the way, Wabi, how did you dare to come here? Most people would think it’s too dangerous.

—I met someone who helped me to understand something very important: the fact that someone is different doesn’t mean they are dangerous. I’d even say that when you get to know someone different, everything becomes more fun. Look what a great time we’ve had today!

—My parents have always told me just the opposite.


—So who explained that to you?

Wabi took the blue box from her backpack and put it on the floor in front of Gigil.

—Hello, I’m a guide from planet Earth; from a place called Europe, in fact. Have you heard of it?
Wabi apologised to Suri and Panta for having entered the shop’s storeroom without their permission. When they had calmed down, Wabi showed her parents the blue box, which they looked at in puzzlement.

—Have you ever been interested in the history of Earth?
—Aaaagh... —cried Wabi’s parents.
—Let me introduce you to someone. Listen to what she has to say!

The guide approached them with an energy that lit up the whole room.

Several months have passed and Wabi and Gigil are now very good friends. Thanks to their friendship and everything the guide had told them about Earth, they both spread the message that they were not so different after all.

When the other species heard the story of the little Kairo and her Meraki friend, they decided to knock down the walls separating them and try to live together.

Everything that had annoyed them about the other species now delights them. With their hair, the Merakis make fun wigs and winter coats for everyone. The Rakhs, being so tall, carry the others on their shoulders so they can play at human towers. The Karios, with their long nails, are the best back-scratchers on the planet; they give fantastic massages! And the Yugen, with their super stretchy tongues, are very useful when someone gets a ball stuck on the roof; they grab it with a swipe of the tongue!
The European Union is a union of 27 European states.

Those countries take joint decisions, they help each other and cooperate in many different areas, ranging from agriculture and energy to environmental issues. European citizens can travel freely between the countries of the EU. Also, since 2002, many of those countries have shared the same currency: the euro.

A few years after the Second World War, six European countries created the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC): Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Germany, France and Italy combined their coal and steel production. The very materials that had to been used for war and for fighting each other—weapons are made using coal and steel—were therefore now being used to begin a period of peace. In 1957, those same countries formed the European Economic Community, which would later become the European Union, as we call it today. Other countries have joined since then: Ireland, Denmark and the United Kingdom were added in 1973 and later, in the 1980s, Greece, Spain and Portugal.

Austria, Finland and Sweden joined in 1995. A great enlargement took place between 2004 and 2007, when twelve countries joined the European family: Czechia, Cyprus, Slovakia, Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria. In 2013 the most recent country joined: Croatia. So that made 28 countries (also called Member States), but in 2016 the people of the United Kingdom decided to leave the European Union and there are now therefore a total of 27 countries in the EU.
Kalopsia is millions and millions of kilometres away from the Milky Way. It’s a planet full of colours. The sky’s a different colour every day; it can even change from green to yellow within a single day. On Kalopsia the water is red, and it tastes of strawberry syrup.

However, the four species that live in Kalopsia have separated their territories with high walls, in order to avoid arguing and fighting all the time.

Follow Wabi in an adventure full of surprises that will make her realise that, despite their differences, the inhabitants on her planet can actually get along, live together and help each other.

A fun story that will help you discover the European Union and its origins, and understand that diversity enriches us.