

Deadly Poison

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Dear Colleagues,

Dear Parents,

The aim of this imaginary story which takes place on the Antarctic continent is to encourage children to become "Sea Ice Ambassadors" like Dr. Jack.

A good follow up for this story would be to discuss and find concrete actions they can take to reject the deadly poison which destroys the glaciers - the two baby penguins' playground.

Children will also discover that a glacier is a river of ice which moves forward. At the same time, they will be transported through their imagination to polar life both harsh and wonderful ...

Once upon a time, on the cold continent, there was a very clumsy prospective daddy.

Hidden in the warm folds of its feathery abdomen, a large egg lay balanced precariously on its paws. Daddy penguin didn't dare move !

- My first baby, I have to watch him ! he kept repeating to those around him, as they laughed to see him standing so still.

Hundreds of other more experienced future dads moved easily in spite of their egg. They were even holding animated discussions. Meanwhile, their females, the mommy penguins, were out at sea stuffing themselves with krill and fish they would regurgitate as oil to their little ones when they were born.



The days of sitting on the eggs passed slowly in the freezing cold of the last winter days. Many eggs had already hatched, but not Daddy penguin's egg. Mommy penguin was inexperienced and had laid it too late...

- I'm hungry, sighed Daddy penguin. I'll be glad when my little one is born ! Its mother will come back and then it will be my turn to go fishing.

As Daddy penguin, his empty stomach gurgling, dreamed of all the delicious fish he would soon devour; a violent katabatic wind (= going down a slope) rose suddenly ... giving the warning signal: all the penguins had to stand close together to keep each other warm and to protect the newborn babies.

Trying very clumsily to join the others, Daddy penguin lost his balance ...

The wind grabbed the egg!

- My baby, my baby! Daddy Penguin yelled, rushing on his stomach in pursuit of the wind.

But the fiery wind stifled his cries and only a few single penguins followed him.



Too late! The wind was playing with the egg and tossed it down to the bottom of a deep crevasse unreachable to the penguins...

Helpless, Daddy penguin cried: huge tears falling and freezing on his beak. While his companions of pursuit were trying unsuccessfully to cheer him up, a little noise was heard in the deep silence of the white continent...

- Toc Toc Toc ... the shell was cracking !

A few moments later, to their great surprise, not one, but two baby penguins came out of the egg...

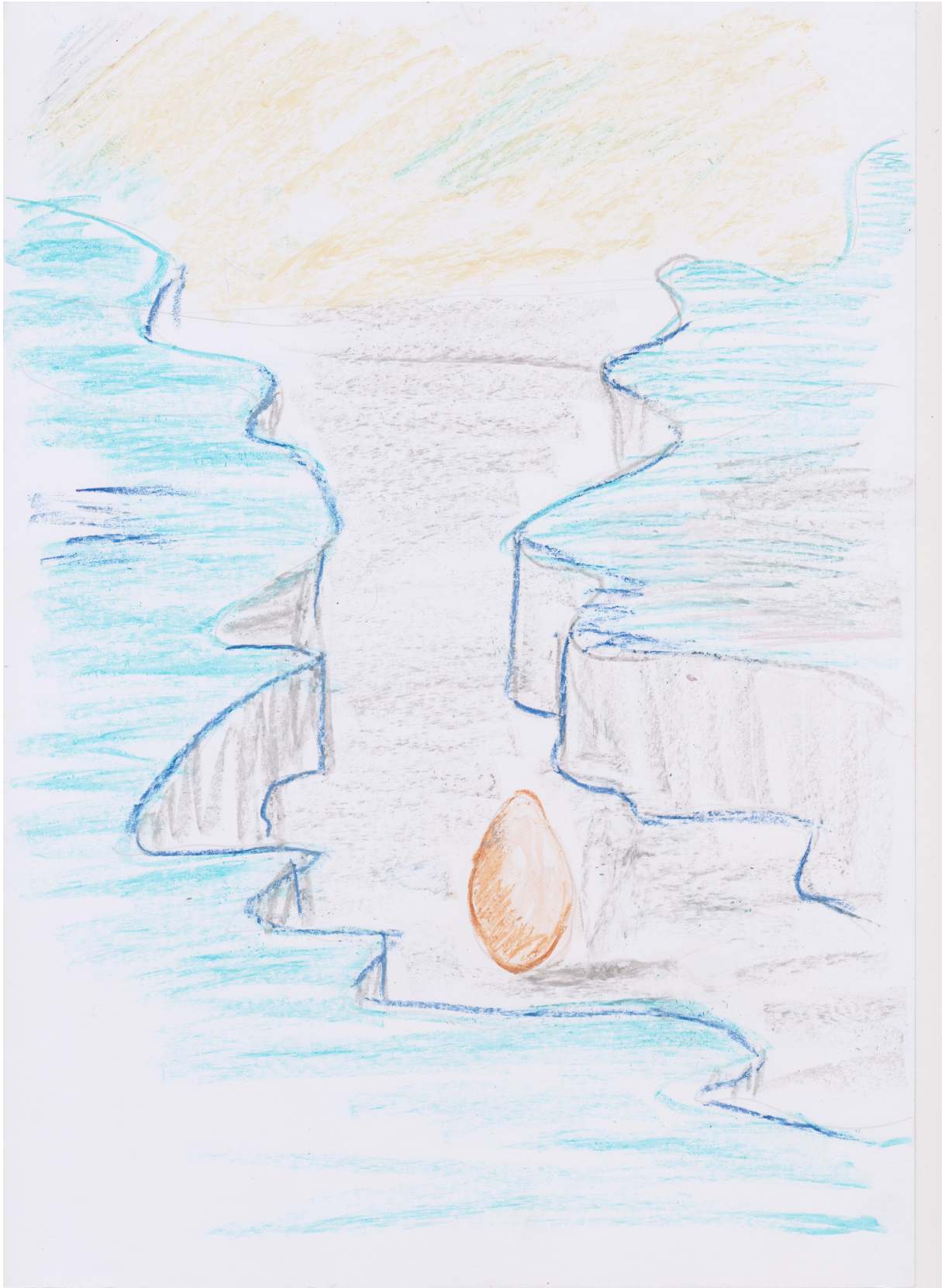
- Oh ! Twins ! rejoiced Daddy penguin.

- This is scary ! This is not normal ! exclaimed the older penguins.

The wind, taken aback, died down; and then, he spread the news so quickly that soon, a line of curious penguins sliding on their tummies came to the edge of the crevasse.

- How can we get them out of there? asked Daddy penguin both proud and worried. Time is short, my babies are in danger !

Sheepishly, lowering their heads and swinging their wings, the penguins shuffled slowly away one behind the other, showing Daddy penguin that nothing could be done to save his twins.



- Huddle up together my babies ! ordered Daddy penguin to Melvyn and Baldyn who had just been born. I'll get some help !

He rushed on alone at full speed, slipping on the ice.

Fortune smiled on him ! ... Humans, warmly dressed, were collecting odd stones that had fallen from the sky.

- Surely they are nice because they are collecting stones! thought Daddy penguin. I too gave Mommy penguin a stone to tell her "I love you."

So, using a pile of ice as a slide, Daddy Penguin rushed forward and landed in the middle of the group, thus disrupting their activity.

Then, he got up with dignity, and asked politely :

- My little ones are in danger, can you help me?



But the humans did not seem to understand anything and after a moment of surprise, they continued collecting stones. Perhaps they were not so nice after all?

Daddy penguin then yelled out his pain so loudly, that a puzzled individual, totally dressed in red and black, came out of one of the protection tents nearby.

- He must be the leader, thought Daddy penguin. He will help me !

He immediately rushed to him and pricked him violently on the legs with his beak. He was hoping the man would run away in the direction of the crevasse where his babies were waiting for him.

- Let's help Dr. Jack ! panicked the geologists leaving their precious stones on the ice.

... But Daddy Penguin was not going to let them push him away and he led them all to Melvyn and Baldyin. The wind, ashamed of its foolishness, spread the news of an imminent rescue. Mommy penguin, having got wind of the drama hurried there as fast as she could.

Seeing the two freezing babies, Dr. Jack was overcome by an inexplicable tenderness and at the same time, he understood the language of the desperate parents.

This moment was so magical that he thought he was dreaming !



- *Poor little ones ! They are doomed ! We can't help them. This continent must remain wild. Here, only nature decides. That's too bad!* said one of the stone pickers.

- *He is right ! responded the others.*

- *Do not leave my little ones, please ! begged Daddy penguin famished and exhausted .*

Then, coming out of his apathy, Dr. Jack replied :

- *It is true that a treaty forbids it ! but I am a doctor and a life saver. My job is to save all lives. Moreover, the biologist who is, by law, the only one authorized to touch them won't contradict me ... the treaty will still be respected! I'm going down to get them.*

Ashamed of their heartless attitude, the geologists changed their minds and helped him in this delicate task.

- *They are so beautiful ! exclaimed the tired Dr. Jack looking at the small reunited penguin family waddling away*

- *Oh yes! they are so beautiful ! proudly repeated the geologists.*



As he was putting away his tools, Dr. Jack thought he heard someone asking :

- Are you also an ice rescuer?

- I must get warm, I'm hallucinating, he thought hurrying up...

But Daddy penguin had also heard the question. A little surprised, he let his family walk and went back...

- This is the glacier speaking, he explained to Dr. Jack ... and he groaned.

Taken aback by what he was hearing, Dr. Jack had the typical ER doctor reflex and asked:

- Can you hear me? Where does it hurt?

- Nowhere answered the glacier. I am a river of ice and I usually slide slowly, but now I am sliding too quickly out of my bed and calve (= give birth to) too many icebergs. At this rate I'm going to die soon, he stammered.

Then, taking a syringe out of the toolkit he takes everywhere, Dr. Jack laughed.

- My equipment is way too small for this ice giant. It's impossible to make a diagnosis with it. I need the core equipment of glaciologists for this sample.

- Ouch ! Ouch ! No ! No shots ! Oh, I should have shut up ! moaned the soft glacier.

Dr. Jack pretended not to hear, and finally the ice giant gave in.



- What a disaster ! What a disaster repeated Dr. Jack when he got the test results.

Devasted, he thought of his native mountain and glacier which he liked climbing so much. Was it also the victim of a deadly poison that kills it slowly?

Dr. Jack would have liked to go home to check, but it was impossible; he was trapped in the ice, in the middle of nowhere, with, as his only refuge, this station for scientists perched on a cliff. No plane would come to fetch him before the end of the austral summer.

So, he launched a "Mayday appeal" to all the ice specialists via the Internet :

- "Antarctic Glacier in great danger - Worrying blood tests results... error, worrying ice tests results - Deadly Poison detected !"

A great fear swept over the scientists and all the glaciers around the world were quickly tested. It was discovered that all of them, without exception, were poisoned ! What a terrible disaster!



The terrible news quickly spread around the white continent and, little by little, the anxious glacier was left alone, abandoned by all. Animals which usually rested on it ran away.

- It might be contagious ! We could get poisoned too ! they whispered.

- A killer is trying to kill him ! It's dangerous ! We must leave ! said others.

- Plic ! Plop ! Plic ! Plop ! cried the glacier melting and sliding faster and faster towards the sea.

Dr. Jack, alone and on foot, paced up and down the glacier whenever the weather allowed, in order to make the best diagnosis.

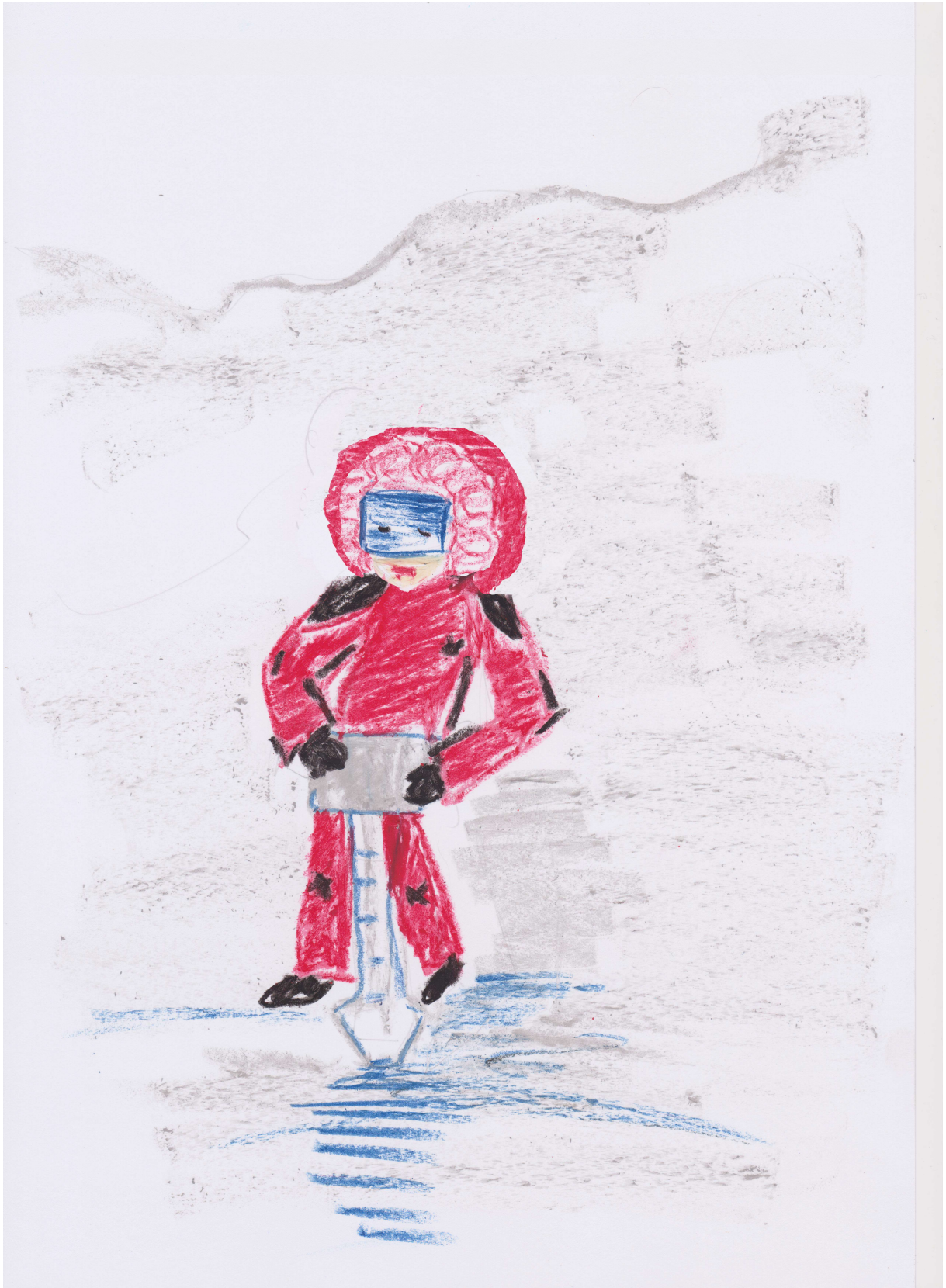
- My stethoscope too is so tiny compared to this giant ice mountain! How am I going to examine this huge mass of ice? he wondered.

Then, he had an idea . . .

He drilled holes everywhere on the glacier. Next, borrowing the measuring instruments of seismologists (= scientists who study the movements of the earth and ice), he placed them in the holes. In the sea, he placed their special microphones in order to listen the cries of the glacier.

One day, seeing a huge crater, he even prescribed a scanner, via the internet! ... And from the sky a satellite took many pictures that scientists then studied.

The more he discovered, the more worried Dr. Jack became.



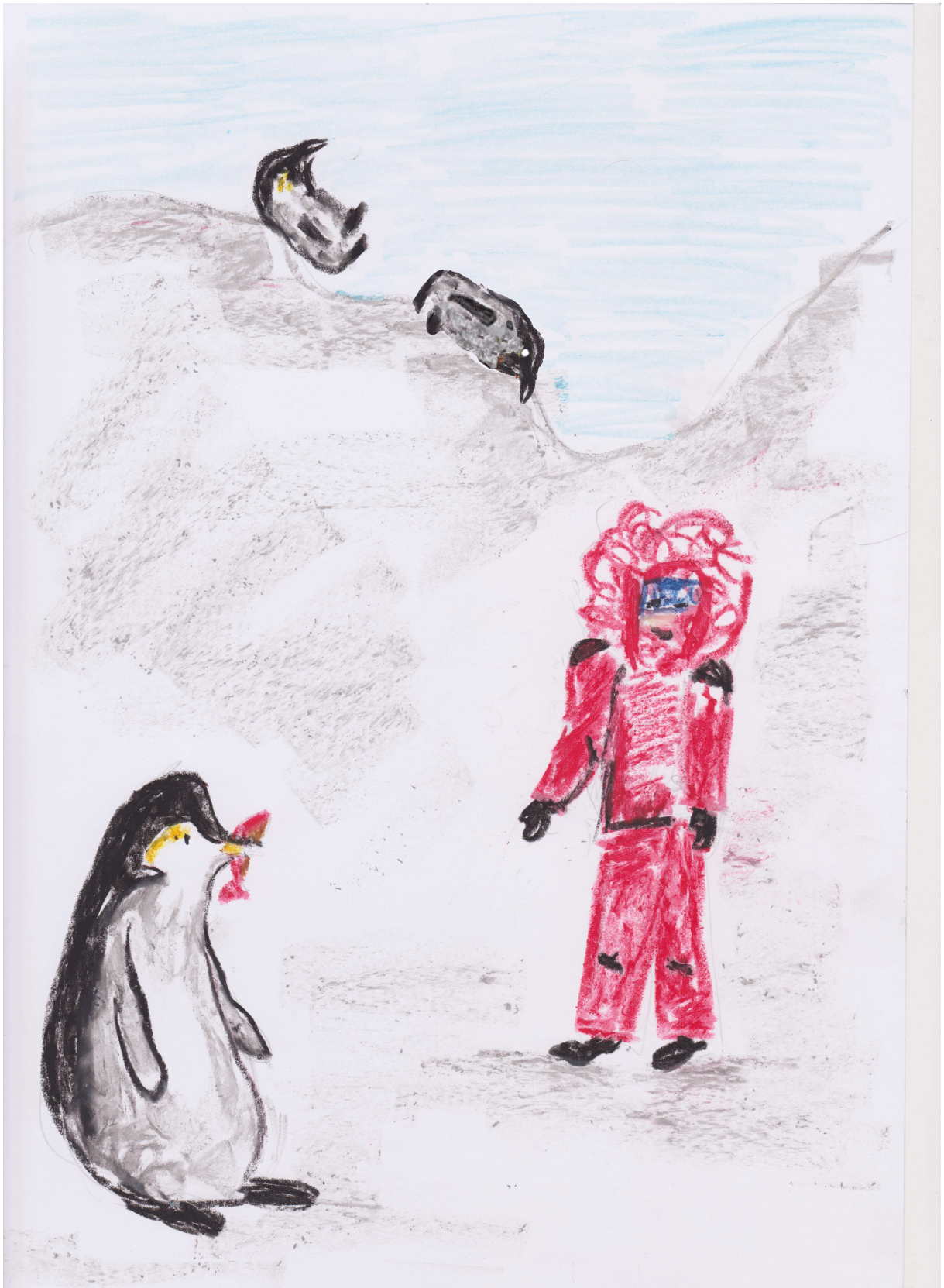
Daddy penguin, who knew how hard it had been to be alone looking for help to save his cubs, never gave up on the glacier where his twins were born.

He often led Melvyn and Baldyn there to play and to teach them how to slide on their belly ... Melvyn and Baldyn however were not very obedient !

But during these moments, the glacier was radiant with joy and for these twins carefree and full of life, it decided to do its best to curb the progress and not slide down so fast.

Daddy penguin often took with him a big fish that he offered Dr. Jack to thank him and also in order to give him strength.

Dr. Jack too loved those special moments.



Austral summer went by quietly, without much change...

- *Two hungry mouths to feed ... what a lot of work! Daddy penguin sighed as he was coming back, his stomach full of fish to regurgitate in the form of oil.*
- *Fortunately there's the nursery to look after our little ones! Mommy penguin replied her belly equally full.*

Then, taking a shortcut through the glacier, they met a very busy Dr. Jack...

- *Winter is coming, he said. Tomorrow we're closing the base for several months. Everyone is going home to study the measures taken here. I'll take back the equipment of the glaciologists, seismologists and...*

Dr. Jack could not continue because the glacier, on hearing these words, went into a violent rage. It shook violently and cracked loudly, projecting the three terrified friends at the bottom of a deep crevasse. It yelled loudly :

- *Who is trying to kill me ? Who is poisoning me ? Who wants my death ? Why doesn't anyone tell me anything ? Why are you abandoning me ?*

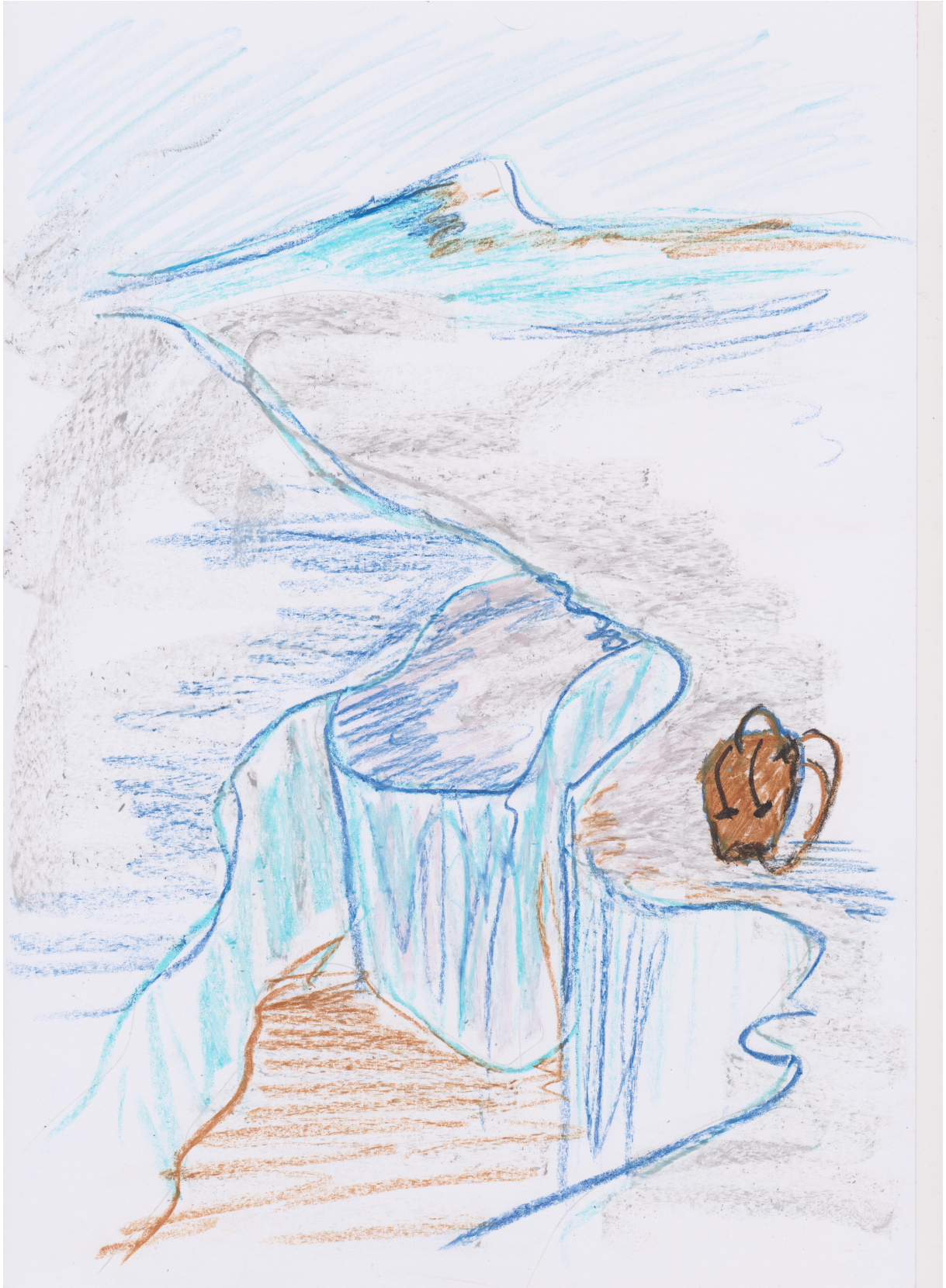
This piercing cry vibrated across the ice on all the white continent covering the calls for help of the three prisoners.



- *Good God! My bag stayed up there ! Dr. Jack swore furiously. Without the rope and climbing gear, it's impossible to get out of this hole. That damn glacier is going to keep us prisoners !*
- *Our children are hungry ! Save us Dr. Jack ! begged Mommy and Daddy penguin.*
- *Impossible ! And, as we're leave tomorrow, everyone at the station is busy completing their work. No one will notice my disappearance before the plane departure. The plane can never wait a long time. So, I am, like you, a prisoner ! Dr. Jack replied.*

And he added :

- *What an idiot this glacier ! I've found out what's poisoning it and I know the treatment for it and it's actually really urgent !*



- *Who's murdering me ? still furious, the glacier asked.*
- *The deadly poison that is slowly destroying all the glaciers around the world is scientifically called "greenhouse gases". These greenhouse gases become a deadly poison for you when there are too many in the atmosphere, because they cause global warming which, itself, makes you melt, slip and calve too fast. It is for the most part, men who when using fossil fuels, release them into the air. All my tests show that the only possible treatment is simply and urgently to stop rejecting these gases, Dr. Jack replied irritated*
- *Men are murdering me ? Are they that wicked ? asked the glacier anxiously.*
- *No ! said Dr. Jack furious that he was a prisoner. Most of them do not even know it. They just have bad habits they must absolutely change. This would require someone to tell them ! And because of you I'm stuck here without hope !*
- *Plic ! Plop ! Plic ! Plop ! sobbed the glacier regretting its anger.*

From the bottom of the crevasse, Mommy and Daddy penguin, huddled against each other, then howled in a concert of despair, calling their babies for help.



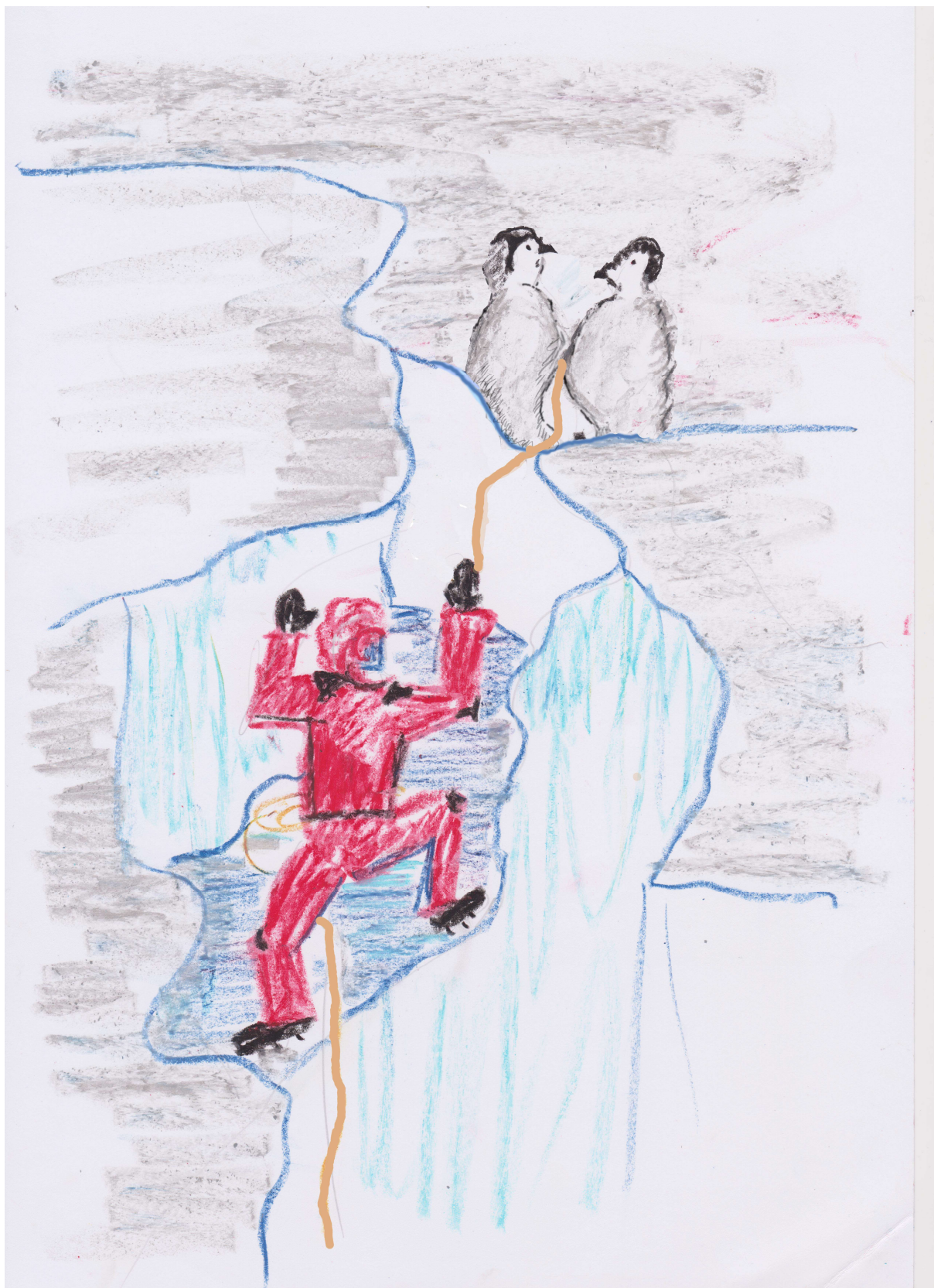
The wind carried their cries to the penguins' nursery and as soon as they heard the call, Melvyn and Baldyn, who were very hungry, rushed to the glacier they loved so much.

- My little ones, then ordered Daddy penguin, find Dr Jack's bag and, with all your strength, open it and throw us the rope !

- This isn't a fun game ! Melvyn said.

- I don't want to play. I'm too hungry ! Baldyn said.

The wind left them no time to discuss Daddy's orders. It tossed them over to the bag ... forcing them to obey and in their turn become "Ice rescuers."



When the three prisoners were finally released from its bowels, the glacier dared ask :

- Dr. Jack, will you still be my rescuer ?

The wind twirled around Dr. Jack, making him shiver and showing him the importance of the glacier's plea. Daddy penguin too, insisted :

- Go home and be the rescuer of all the ice. Ask your people to reduce the use of fossil fuels and to release less of this deadly poison that is killing our glacier.

Melvyn and Baldyn satiated and playful, set off on the ice splashing Dr Jack's beautiful red and black raincoat. An ice crystal got hooked on it and become embedded in it, like the badge of a great ambassador.

Looking at this funny badge, Dr Jack affected says :

- Better, I'll be your "Sea Ice Ambassador" !



On the flight taking him home, Dr. Jack proudly displayed his badge and clutched the small pebble that Daddy penguin had placed at his feet just before he left; a gesture that in penguin language means "I love you, Dr. Jack". He promised himself that others would also become, "Sea Ice Ambassadors" so that they could save the white continent together.

He was already beginning to think of all the easy actions that he would suggest to save energy, when, looking out through the porthole, he felt a heart wrench.

They were flying above the glacier ... He missed the white continent already !



Educational note

1. Oral quiz to check text comprehension

- *At the beginning of the story, why is Daddy penguin awkward ?*
- *What is Mommy penguin doing during this time ? Why is she not with him ?*
- *What happens to the egg ?*
- *Where does the wind drop the egg ?*
- *What is happening while Daddy penguin is crying big tears ?*
- *How many little ones are born ? State their names.*
- *Will the penguins manage to get Melvyn and Baddyn out of the crevasse ?*
- *What is Daddy penguin going to do then? Tell the story.*
- *Who is he going to come across on the ice?*
- *Will they help him immediately? What does Daddy penguin do to lead them to his young?*
- *Why are the scientists reluctant to save the little ones ?*
- *Will they ultimately save them? Who makes the decision and why ?*
- *When the rescue ends, Doctor Jack hears a voice. Who is speaking and what does this voice ask for ?*
- *What is a glacier ? (It is a river of ice)*
- *What are the symptoms of the glacier illness ? (it is sliding too quickly out of its bed and calves too many icebergs)*
- *State all that Dr. Jack is going to do to find the disease of the glacier.*
- *What is discovered in the analyzes of the ice ? (a deadly poison for the glacier)*
- *Is the glacier of the white continent the only one which is sick ?*
- *Does Dr. Jack know the deadly poison ?*
- *What is the medicine to cure the glacier ?*
- *What do Daddy penguin, the wind and Melvyn and Baldyn ask Dr. Jack just before his departure ?*
- *To what does Doctor Jack commit himself? (to becoming a "SEA ICE AMBASSADOR")*

2. Update

- *Would you like to help Doctor Jack and become a "Sea Ice Ambassador" too?*
- *What is the mission of a "Sea Ice Ambassador"?*
Answer: to fight against global warming in order to save glaciers and sea ice.
- *What should we do to fight against global warming ?*
Answer: we must release fewer greenhouse gases in the atmosphere because they are like a deadly poison for the ice. To do this we must use less fossil energy.
- *What, according to you, are the easy actions that Dr. Jack will suggest on his return?*
 1. *I turn the lights out when leaving a room.*
 2. *I switch off the computer and television completely. Electric appliances still use energy when they are on standby. I also unplug my cell phone charger as soon as my cell phone is recharged.*
 3. *I remind adults to use the air conditioning in the car as little as possible.*
 4. *I advise mum to cover the pans when cooking.*
 5. *I advise mum to buy regional products rather than those from other countries, because these are usually transported by planes, which are very harmful for the Earth.*
 6. *I have a shower rather than a bath, which allows me to use less hot water.*
 7. *For longer journeys, I take the train instead of the plane.*
 8. *I get organized with my friends and neighbours to travel together in the same car, and I walk whenever it is possible.*
 9. *I close doors to preserve the heat and put on warmer clothes to avoid turning the heating up.*
 10. *I sort the garbage since recycling a product is more energy-efficient than producing it from scratch.*

- *What badge was embedded into Dr. Jack's raincoat, so naming him "Sea Ice Ambassador" ?*
Answer: an ice crystal
- *If you save fossil energy, you can also become a "Sea Ice Ambassador" and you can wear such a badge. Practice drawing an ice crystal and add it next to your name on*
<http://www.contespedagogiques.be> *(click on Ambassadors)*

3. Conclusion

The craft of "door hangers" will allow the children to memorize the actions they need to take to save fossil energy on <http://www.contespedagogiques.be/geste-porte-pgl-angl.html>

By hanging their crafts on the doors, the children will spread everywhere what actions need to be taken and will therefore encourage others to become, "Sea Ice Ambassadors" too.

"When a multitude of little people in a multitude of little places change a multitude of little things they can change the face of the world"

Friedrich Nietzsche

Dedicated to :

- Claude Lorius, glaciologist, CNRS Gold Medal, pioneer in Antarctic research, discoverer of the link between climate history and the composition of our atmosphere thanks to air bubbles in the ice. He is always ready to raise children's awareness of the climate problems and to pass on his passion for ice to them;

- Dr. Jack alias Jacques Richon, Sea Ice Ambassador and emergency doctor at the Princess Elisabeth Antarctic station, who, every year, answers with enthusiasm the children's questions on skype. He gives them a real and magical lead-in to the white continent.

- All those who, by simple actions to save energy, already are or will become "Sea Ice Ambassadors"

*For their verification of the scientific fact,
But mainly for always being there,*

from the bottom of my heart

MANY THANKS

- *to **Claude Lorius**, glaciologist, CNRS Gold Medal, Member of the Academy of Sciences ;*
- *to **Nathalie Vanisacker**, agronomist, Scientific Officer of the International Polar Foundation.*
- *to **Gauthier Chapelle**, a doctor of biology, co-founder of Biomimicry Europa AISBL;*
- *to **Jacques Richon**, FMH surgeon /emergency doctor, mountain guide and expedition doctor at the Princess Elisabeth Antarctica polar base*
- *to **Alain Hubert**, explorer and President of the International Polar Foundation ;*
- *to **Alexandra Hamilton**, American student in Geography and Education.*