



Screenwriting and project by [REDACTED]

Pitch bible/ 02/01/2017 version

-WAY BACK HOME-

26x24'

WAY BACK HOME

A [REDACTED] series
Medium : 2D Animation
Genre : Adventure/ Sci-fi
Structure : Overarching plot
Demographics : Children and teenagers
Duration : 26x24'

PITCH

What do two average children, an insect-looking alien and a Chinese astronaut get in common? Nothing, but they will all be part of the upcoming deep-space adventure "Way back home".

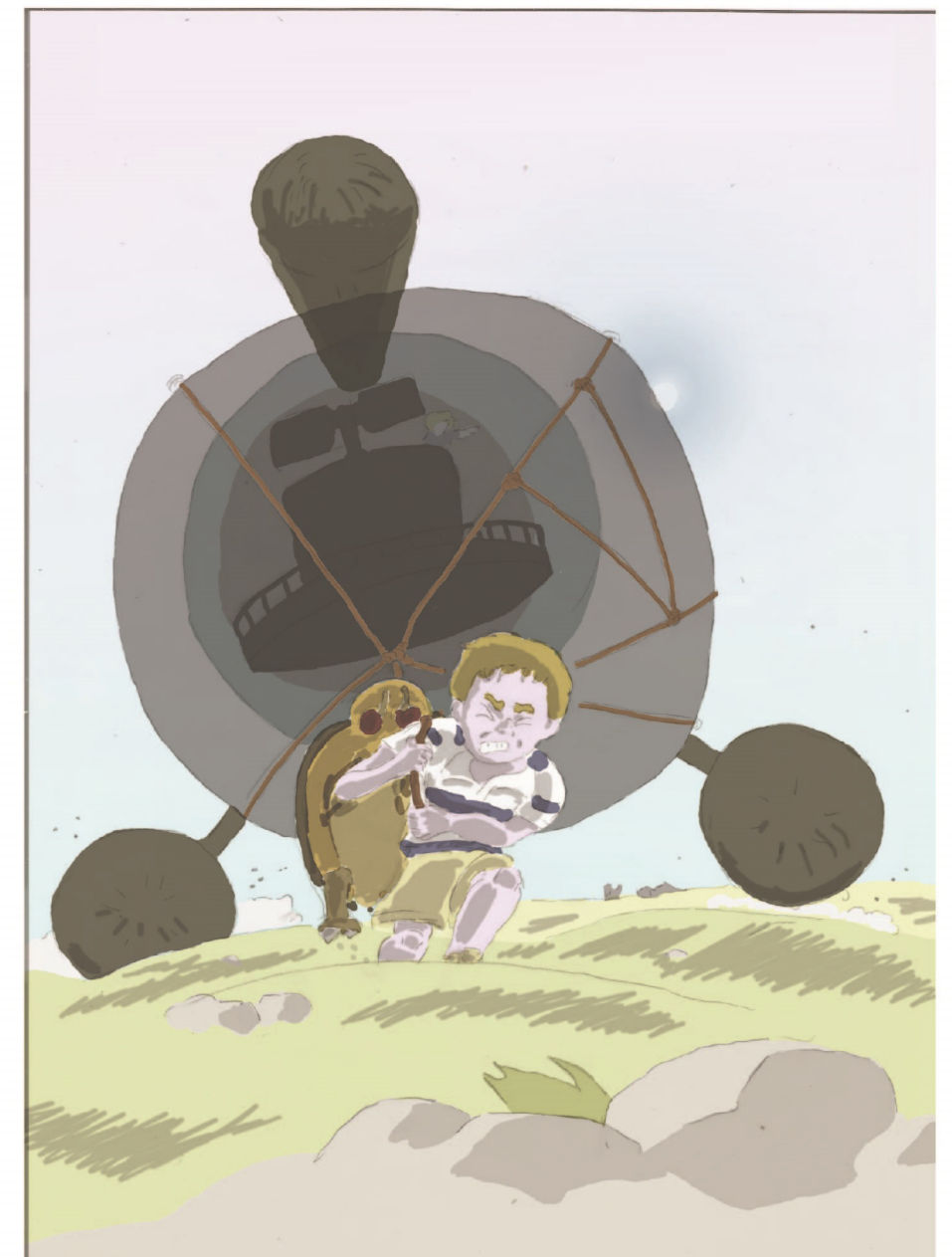
Meet Jules and Julie, two ten-years-old siblings addicted to television shows and laying around, as they are sent to spend summer holidays with their grandparents. Nothing too exciting. Except that one night, while the siblings are home alone, aliens land in the surroundings. As they won't leave our beautiful planet empty-handed, the aliens choose to bring back with them a very special souvenir: The children.

Julie and Jules find themselves locked up in a kind of zoo, light-years away from their planet, where, all kind of strange beings gather to discover what a Human look like.

While all hope seem lost the children manage to break free from their jail. With the help of a mysterious alien tramp and many more characters, they will travel across the Milky Way with one goal in sight: Reaching Earth to come back home.

Alas, the way is yet long and many dangers await the siblings. From clueless millennial children, Jules and Julie will become responsible self-reliant individuals through hardships and survival. They will also have to find ways to overpass the language barrier in a world where Human languages are still unheard of, if not downright the ability to speak. This unwanted journey will change definitely the two children, making them stronger both physically and emotionally.

No guides, no translators, no maps. Adventure, real adventure, is finally back.



MAIN CHARACTERS

JULES JANTEL

Jules is your average 10 years old boy. He is passionate with Sciences, discoveries, and fondles the sweet dream of becoming one day a renowned explorer.

Unfortunately for the moment Jules has explored nothing more than his own home, and more precisely the couch where he spends his days watching documentaries or football matches on TV.

These holidays in the countryside sounded for him the perfect occasion to start exploring the many hills and ruins of the region, if only he wasn't so lazy.

Despite being no higher than three apples Jules wants to make very clear that he is not a child anymore, he hates with a passion the daycare shows his sister spends watching on TV and wishes he reached adulthood as soon as possible. The events to come will fulfill his desire beyond all expectations.

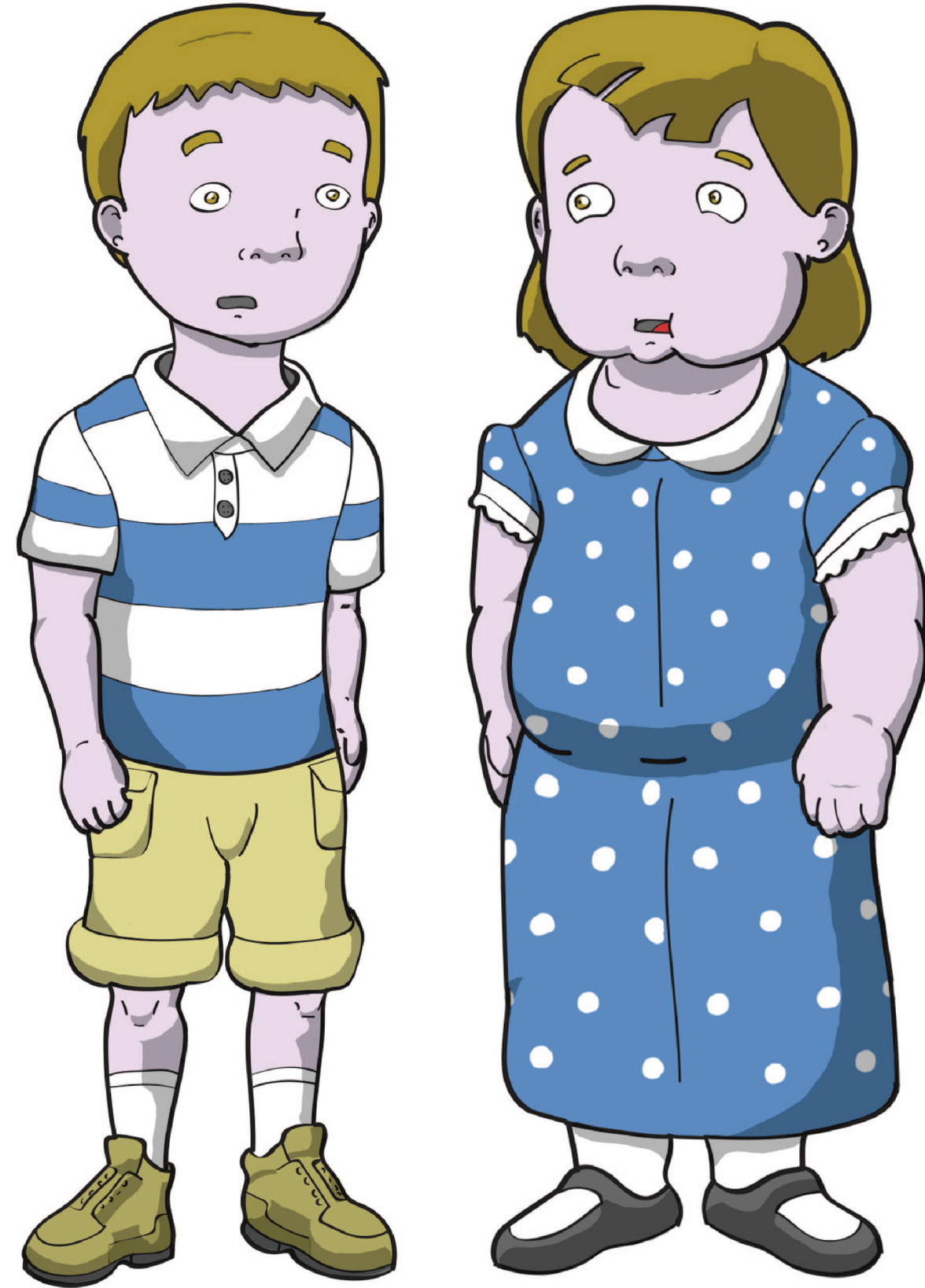
JULIE JANTEL

Julie was born the same year as her brother. She shares many common points with him, starting with laziness. Not only Julie likes spending as much time as possible in front of the TV but also she keeps filling herself with all kind of sugary junk while doing so, which makes her pudgy and very frustrated about her weight.

Unlike her brother, Julie does not want to grow up. She watches shows for children, acts like a child, speaks like a child and openly behaves in a way that would make one wonder if she isn't a bit retarded. This, of course is only a facade to cope with the stress of growing up.

Apart from that Julie shares the same interests as any girl of her age; Chatting on the cellphone, celebrity gossips, listening to trendy songs and reading novels about magic or romance.

To put it simply, Julie does not like reality and wants to stay away from it. However, if she doesn't want to deal with the Truth it is the Truth that will come to her.



BUG

The unpronounceable name of this 2meters-high alien will remain a mystery for most of the series. Other characters always refer to him as "Bug" because of his insect-like appearance, and since he does not know what an insect is in the first place he has no problem with that.

Bug was on a stop to fix once again his flying dumpster of a spaceship when he came across Jules and Julie for the first time. He was as much afraid as them to see these "limbed worms", as he like to call them, since they were the first creatures of this kind he ever met.

Bug left his own home long ago, he crossed most of the galaxy going from one fast money job to another. Mercenary, poacher and bounty hunter are among his common occupations, but most of the time he simply wanders aimlessly from one planet to another as a bum would do.

The time spent with the kids enabled him to learn slowly human words and language, making dialogue with other characters more and more easy for him. However, his speech is broken and a strong accent remains which makes him difficult to be understood.

"You, do not take that riffle!" becomes "Oo no tak h-shl!" when said in Bug's voice.

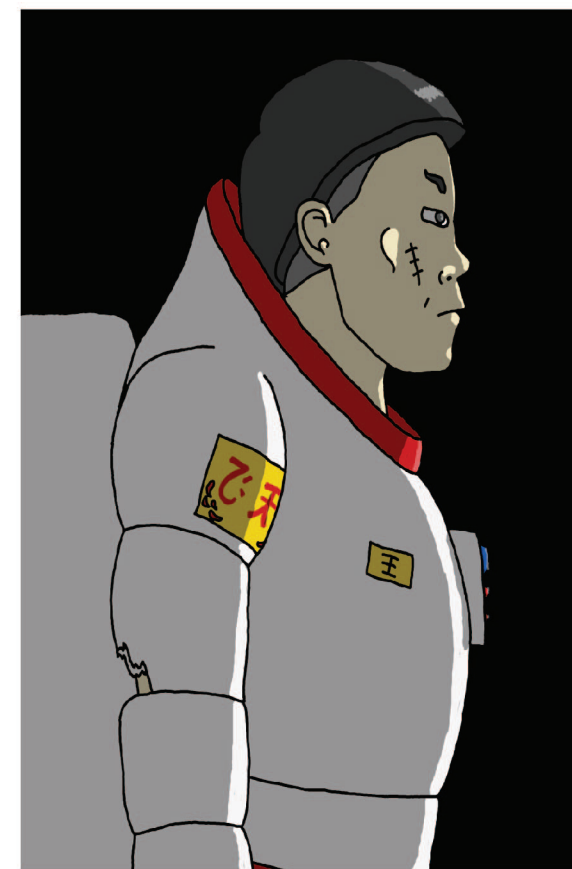
His endless days spent in company of Jules, Julie and Wang has also convinced him of one thing: That Humans are crazy.

WANG LI-YU (First seen in episode 8)

Wang was a Taikonaut in mission around Earth for his country when he got abducted by aliens. His disappearance has been kept as a state secret by the Chinese authorities. Hopefully Wang is not aware of this fact because he spent 10 years in the mines of a faraway planet as a slave. All this time being worked to exhaustion has made him into a strong hardened man and left him with unpleasant memories. Because of this he prefers not thinking too much about the past, and rather focus on things to come. His past life will therefore remain a complete mystery.

Wang built his way to Taikonautship through perseverance, vast knowledge and high mental capacities. He knows how to speak English (French in the original version) without much noticeable accent yet with the same kind of grammar mistakes any other Chinese speaker would make.

It is not clear whether Wang had children, back in China, or not. What is clear, though, is that trough the time spent in this journey paternal instincts start growing in him towards Jules and Julie. Consciously or not, he will become their unofficial tutor and will try to protect their life at any given occasion.



SYNOPSIS D'EPISODES

EPISODE 1 : Disappeared in the night

Two 10 years-old siblings, Jules and Julie, are sent to spend holidays at their grandparent's house in the countryside. Unfortunately one of the grandparents has an accident and must be taken to the hospital while the children await them alone at home for the whole night. That very night while they are alone in the house they get abducted by aliens. The kids are then taken to another planet at the other side of the milky way, where they are locked in a kind of zoo for the greatest amazement of visitors. They later manage to escape from the zoo and leave this planet thanks to some alien space tramp (he looks like an insect, so the kids name him Bug) they met, with the hope of getting back to Earth as soon as possible.

EPISODE 2 : Road to the stars

The kids manage to communicate with Bug (who does not speak human) thanks to hand signs. Their spaceship is chased by troops sent by the zoo owners, trying to get the kids back. Meanwhile on Earth a man is wrongfully thought guilty of Jules and Julie's disappearance by the police. By the end of the episode, after the spaceship successfully escapes enemy troops, Bug and the children learnt a few words from each other language.

EPISODE 3 : A traitor's kiss

Bug try to sell the two humans on the black market of his homeplanet, in order to make some cash. All his belongings get stolen by a kind of plant-alien, who is vulnerable to CO2. The kids manage to neutralize him thanks to their breath. As an act of gratitude, Bug ask the kids to pardon him, and he make them promise that he will help them going back to Earth. But in order to do so he will need help from his relatives.

EPISODE 4 : Fields of light

Our three characters are on the way to Bug's birth village when their spaceship run out of fuel. They then roam along deserted roads, in the magnificent landscape of fluorescent prairies glowing in an eternal night. An asteroid falls far away in the distance, the characters realize that they have been lucky for if they landed safely they would have been squashed by the meteor. The next morning, fire from the impact start spreading through the fields, they must take hide themselves in the spaceship wreck as soon as possible to escape the flames. Some strangers join them on the way. After the fire is over the strangers help main characters to fix the spaceship as sign of gratitude.

EPISODE 5 : Family picture

Bug is back in his family. He introduce them to Jules and Julie, who are saw with amazement as they are the only humans ever seen in that part of the universe. Bug has learned some words of human language, which allow him to act as an interpret. Unfortunately no one here knows what is Earth, neither where to find it. However the older of relatives teaches them that a huge library exists somewhere, where all planets of the galaxy are kept on record. The three main characters thank them, then they go back on their quest.

EPISODE 6 : Solar storm

Bug's spaceship is ready to work again, he take-off with the kids on the way to another planet. There he will hope to meet old friends of him, who will help him to know more about the library he is searching for. Unfortunately, the three main characters get attacked and seized by slave traders on their way.

EPISODE 7 : By pure luck

Main characters are taken apart on the slave market. Jules and Julie are sold to a rich landowner (let's call him the Master) who show them off to his guests as curiosities of some sort, in his huge mansion. The master has a passion for gambling games, he progressively become more friendly with the kids as he spend time practising his play with them. One day Jules and Julie offer him a bet: If they win they will be allowed to go free again, but if they loose they will be sent away to work like regular slaves. The master accepts the gamble. The kids win the game, they are free and the Master will have to help them setting Bug free.

EPISODE 8 : The three-sunned hell

The master and the children are escorted by a mercenary army, recruited thanks to his money. They find back Bug in the bottom of a mine where he got sentenced to forced labor. They manage to trigger a massive rebellion among slaves, Bug escapes. They also help a Chinese astronaut (let's call him Wang) to escape, who was abducted in space 20 years ago. Jules, Julie, Bug and Wang thank the Master for his help, they tell him goodbye then leave the planet.

EPISODE 9 : Out of sight

On Earth, the police has set free the man who got wrongfully charged of kidnapping in episode 2, the children's disappearance then become an unresolved mystery. Meanwhile, Jules, Julie, Bug and Wang are spacefaring since monthes on the way to the great library of planets. Once again the spaceship runs out of fuel. They make an emergency landing on the nearest planet, hoping to find help. The ship is crashed, almost ruined, but everyone on board is living and safe. The four characters will have to spend time repairing it. They feel as if they were spied on by someone or something.

EPISODE 10 : Night again

Night never ends on that planet, the sky is starless and soon fog starts appearing. In other words: Complete darkness. The characters feel lost, they try to make contact through their telecommunication equipment, without a single answer. One night, while everyone is sleeping, a huge wild beast enter the wreckage searching for food, it attacks the characters. Bug and Wang try to shoot it down but they get badly hurt and their weapon is thrown away from them. Bug shouts Jules to bring him the weapon but he get caught by the beast doing so. While he is about to be eaten, Jules shoots everywhere with the weapon, out of fear. He manages to kill by accident in the way. All other characters cheer at Jules for his act, he proudly keeps a claw from the dead beast as a trophy. The characters realize that the beast is actually edible (with a strong crayfish taste). They make a nice barbecue out of these kilos of flesh around their fire camp.

EPISODE 11 : Sluggish fever

Julie turns ill because of some fruits she found and ate. The next day her condition has worsened, she must stay in bed. Bug tell to other characters that she caught an illness that makes the body and bones progressively more flabby. If untreated, the illness could end up killing her from the moment her vital organs become crushed by her own bodymass. Bug knows how to make a cure for this illness but there is few time left. Bug, Jules and Wang leave the wreckage in search of ingredients for the cure, while Julie awaits them laying alone in the wreckage. A tribe of local aliens (who look like stereotypical primitive people) enters the wreckage, they start taking with them all kinds of objects they come across. Julie is afraid, she tries to hide but she is too sick to move. The aliens notice her, they take her along with everything else they took and they leave the place. When Jules, Wang and Bug come back they notice Julie is missing. They immediately go in search for her her, tying themselves one to another to avoid getting lost in the mist. Meanwhile Julie is at the tribe's village. Her condition is so bad they had to keep her inside a cocoon to avoid her death.

Jules Wang and bug walk for two days in the jungle. They come across one of the tribe aliens and take him as an hostage. The hostage leads them to his village. Bug threatens the tribe to kill his hostage if they don't let them get close to Julie, the tribe let him go. He gives the cure to Julie.

EPISODE 12 : One of us

Jules, Bug and Wang want to bring back Julie with them but the aliens object. They say that since she has been into the cocoon, it made her "reborn" as a member of their own species, and therefore she must remain in the tribe whether she likes it or not. They also taught her their language made of light signals while she was unconscious thanks to learning-drugs, which now allows her to act as an interpret between the tribe and the main characters. Her new native name is red-orange-red, as a mark left on her body can attest.

If they wish to set Julie free, the three characters must pass beforehand a series of tests and feats which will prove them to be as brave as the tribe members. Bug, Jules and Wang accomplish all the tasks required, with much difficulty, and win. Julie is now free to go; the characters are given a fuel supply as a reward. Julie learns the true name of this alien species: The Blue-blue-blues. She also learn that they have "brothers" in almost any planet and that she could get help from these at any moment by simply showing her mark. The four main characters say goodbye to the tribe, they repair the spaceship and leave this planet to continue their quest.



EPISODE STRUCTURE

«Way back home» episodes would preferably follow a mid-size duration, 24 minutes par episode more precisely, as these adventure cartoons of the 80's and 90's decades.

«Way back home» is mostly aimed at children, from 6 to 10 years old. Adults and teenagers can enjoy the show alike but they won't be the intended audience.

Having been a child yourself, long ago, you must remember that kids hate being taken for dumber than they are.

«Way back home» follows a pace, an atmosphere, close to that of french comics. The «Tintin», «Blake&Mortimer» and «Gil Jourdan» of our young years, among others: A pace where seriousness meets good-hearted humor, where realism is never gross, simple yet not simplistic. A pace suited for those who know how to offer their audience quality entertainment.



GRAPHICAL TREATMENT

Visually speaking, «Way back home» won't follow the surrealism of American cartoons. Laws of physics are to be respected in their strictest application. Settings cannot be only backgrounds, they must be full environments, where characters can tow, trip over, become ill or take shelter. Characters shape should follow the rules of Franco-belgian soberty, or so it should be for the first drafts. The visual identity of this series will rely on a level of details contrasted between main characters and their surroundings. Scott McCloud's book «The invisible art» (1993) put it clearly: Audiences instinct lead them identifying with simplified drawings, while keeping a distance with more complex ones. The difference lie in a familiarity issue.

Try drawing the sketch of an insect and audiences will see him as a cartoon character. Now give him hair, antennae, pore, claws and see how the audience reacts with suspicion. Miyazaki, Edgar P. Jacobs and Franquin perfectly understood the rule, and had it in mind when drawing their monsters.

An example is worth thousand words. Take à look at «Tintin»: Remember that bear attacking captain Haddock in «Prisoners of the sun»? Now put it next to these other bears seen in «Destination moon». The first one has hair, gums, fangs, claws, sclerae while de second one looks like a teddy-bear in flat colors.

The animals remain the same, but sentation is different. Only one of them bring in a real sense of danger when reading.

That's how drawing turn out to be a key element to get this atmosphere of unpredictability I so much long for. This constant sense of walking across unknown territory. Highly detailed landscapes, strange creatures, aliens repulsive enough to look creepy (even nicer ones) against sketchy-looking characters. There rests the secret allowing to carry audiences on another planet, in every sense of the word.

Colors would preferably be dull for main characters and Earth, constrasting with the color range of other planets. Ideally, I should be striving towards a vibrant but lowly saturated palet. Space itself would look sober: Empty, black, where only glows the distant light of white, orange, red or blue tiny stars.

For everything else, it was my pleasure building worlds with well-established biological and physical rules for every planets, shaping flora and fauna as well as civilisations. But that point should maybe be developed later.

QUERY LETTER

"On rentre!" (The way back home) is not a title that I chose randomly. It is short, easy to remember, allowing to understand with two words only the whole purpose of the series.

This title also sum up the main theme of this cartoon, which is the relation to home and travel.

As I was building up this concept, I realized that it was a personal story foremost. My parents used to work for foreign affairs office. I grew up in several countries along with my brothers and sisters. In the trade it is said that people have seven lives. What is true for employees is also for their children. I spent my childhood changing friends, houses, habits and even languages. In some way, it is as if I lived several times. Because of that, my sense of identity was quite unclear. Facing these everchanging borders and faces only one thing remained clear for me: Family, in the genealogical sense of the word.

The essence of "Way back home", unlike to most adventure stories is that Jules and Julie do not choose to leave. This is not the usual "hero's journey" plot but rather a homewards journey such as "The Odyssey" or "The wizard of Oz".

In some way it is also about divorce, another hallmark of my young years. The difference here being that children are taken away from their family in terms of space rather than time. Unlike past, one can come back to a place, it is only a matter of time. In other words, coming back home do not only means going back to their house, but also finding their family united, as when they left.

«Way back home» means coming back thrice: Back on Earth, back home, back to one's family.

Relation to languages will be another main theme, even a crucial one.

"Way back home" isn't one of these sci-fi stories with automatic translators or worse, aliens speaking English. Jules and Julie must toil to learn the language of their hosts and adapting to their customs in order to be understood. Most aliens don't speak English, some of them can't even emit sounds to "speak".

A child growing up in foreign countries faces a similar situation. When his vocabulary doesn't go beyond "hello", "goodbye", "thank you" and few basic words. Chattering around him turn into aimless music, words become sounds, answers become riddles. Any action, the slightest daily task become a test solved with big gestures and facial expressions.

Because he is deprived of speech and understanding abilities, he quickly feels falling to animal rank. Adults still have a chance, they can speak English and even when lost they can keep a sense of dignity. A child abroad, when he is alone, is a curiosity at best, something to show around. Learning a language becomes his first step toward maturity.

It is a lesson in modesty that, I think, deserve to be shared. Talking about languages to children isn't only about showing them the world. It is also about helping them discover who their neighbors are and, most importantly, who they are themselves.

Children as an audience, are future adults that hate being taken for idiots. "Way back home" will not only be a show that speaks to them but that also look like them. Jules and Julie Jantel ape adults hoping to be treated the same way. They find themselves confronted to real responsibilities: Deserving their freedom, finding something to eat, finding shelter, staying true to their friends, always staying vigilant to avoid death, being reliable, knowing how to orientate themselves.

This is a teen before teenagehood, throwing the two children away from any comfort to make them grow up. Physically also: Jules and Julie begin their journey as a wimp and an obese. Adventure will teach them that what they thought to be their personality traits were only flaws. Through work and hardship they will become stronger, more able. When they reach Earth they are already a Man and a Woman, before even reaching puberty.

Frankly I think audiences will first be deeply shocked. Imagine a minor front of his TV. Children like him, behaving like him, in a world like his. Abducted from their homes, deprived of their parents, without any mark, unable to call for help nor going back.

His worst nightmare actually. Oh yes he will be afraid.

But eventually he will want to know how the two characters will get out at each dead-end, what troubles await them. Because deep down he will think every time "How would I do in their shoes?".

The more Jantel siblings will react like normal children rather than cartoon characters, the more audiences will want to live through them. Because thousands of schoolchildren will say to themselves "If it works for them it will also work for me."

"Way back home" becomes more than just entertainment: For a whole generation of children from broken families, isolated, spending more time in front of their screen than with their parents it is a second tutor giving the taste of efforts and the desire to get by.

This practically means that Jules and Julie will sometimes be selfish, capricious, sneaky, jaded as true brats are. In order to make them change for better later in the story, when they become heroes, but not entirely.

With "The way back home" Space finds back its "last frontier" dimension. No explanations given by any extra character here neither some encyclopedia nor guide. No kind of exposure. The two children are alone facing the unknown. Their books are made useless, nothing that they have learned on Earth can be useful and even all the adults around them seem as they lost as they are. The Galaxy is too vast to be classified.

The viewer finds himself immersed in the same spirit as that of Conquistadors discovering America six centuries ago. Behind every wood, every hill, every rock a danger or at least a surprise hides waiting to happen. The map is empty, it is up to you to draw it. He finds himself giving names to everything encountered in order to avoid losing his path. Sometimes the script will chew this work, most of the time it will be up to fans coming up with nicknames themselves.

What is the point of leaving Earth to find it elsewhere. The aliens of "Way back home" won't be a parody of human society. Science-fiction is a genre that all too often tend to show space sailors, neon colored fast-food and three-headed cowboys in a futuristic or exotic setting. In other words, doing again in space worlds that could already work here. It's quite a shame because that is the only genre finally giving the opportunity to have something new under the sun.

Of course, making a model of society or biology back from scratch would almost be unfeasible. One will probably notice similarities with some civilizations or some earthly creatures. What is certain is that aliens in this series have a way to function of their own. Their characterization comes from their adaptation or maladjustment to the environment in which they live, organically speaking. A "terrestrial" species living under the sea, for example, will have to invent ways to breathe artificially. Most creatures will be treated in first degree.

Environment won't be the only measure for characterizing aliens. Many will be reminding of animals such as insects, mollusks or amphibians. In short: pests which are not seen as particularly endearing for most people, when not as repulsive. Their facial expression stays neutral most of the time, regardless of the side in which they stand.

Faced with beings from another world, without any sympathy bond, whose emotions can't be guessed, the viewer feels a sense of discomfort and above all suspicion. Even when relations are good Jules, Julie and Wang are unable to know when their new neighbors will raise the hand or devour them on the spot. For them and for the viewer, vigilance is required at any moment. The closest example I could think of to portray that impression is Ghibli studio's movie "Spirited Away".

Then again, the desired goal is a feeling of progression into unknown territory, which is proper to Adventures stories, in the REAL sense of that word. The mere gest of greeting a passerby may be as well be a chance for relieve as for signing one's own death warrant. No way to know until one try.

Imagine the King's first drogmen in Canada freshly off in a Huron tribe. "Who are these people, what is their language, what are their habits? Are they even human? Must I meet them, if yes how?". These were the kind of question that must have run in their heads gripped by panic.

Imagine again a man lost in a foreign country. His car broke down, he has to walk to the nearest village to seek help. In the village no one speaks his native language: How will he explain his problem? Drawing? Miming? Mimicking the sound of a car? This is the whole challenge that Jules and Julie Jantel will have to face during their adventure.

Being abroad means above all being a foreigner yourself. And the two children will understand that they have to watch out for everything they do if they want to avoid trouble.

"Way back home" stays faithful to a cornerstone of science fiction clichés: Each planet has its own biome and its own kind, at first sight. This of course is an easy solution, for writing purposes but also for the viewer. Remembering each episode better if each one corresponds to a different planet and setting.

This is a family-oriented cartoon dealing with serious things like violence, hunger or disease without seeking gratuitous humor or provocation. The audience is before most children, although an older fringe could enjoy it. In the end, "Way back home" stays quite close to the spirit of old French comics, often down to Earth but never vulgar, at least not for free.

M.B



 **ON RENTRE !!** 

