

Once upon a time, in the Sonoran desert of Arizona, there was an unusual drought.

It hadn't rained in nearly a year.

Even the plants and animals of the desert, accustomed to life without water, were having a very hard time.

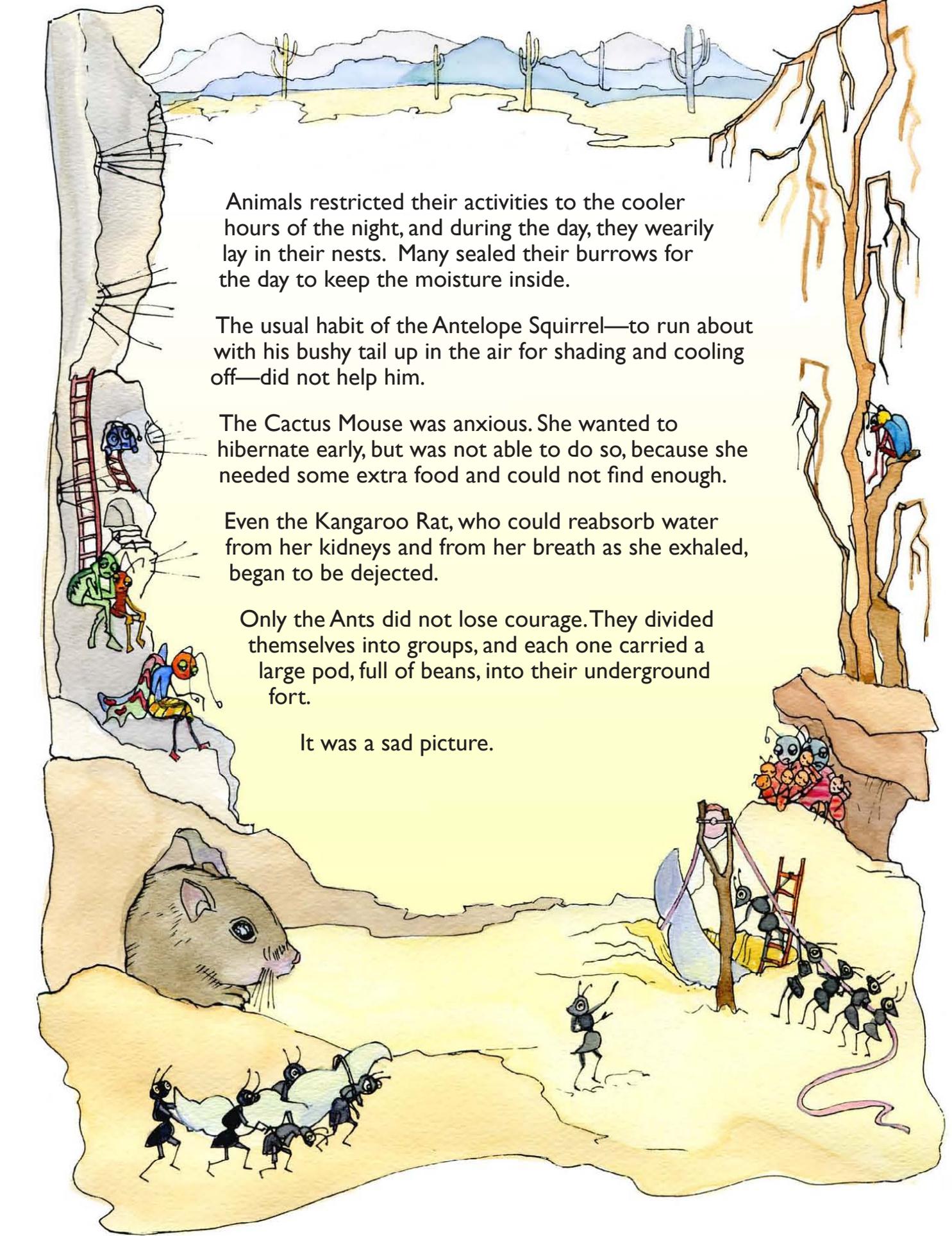
Usually, in February and March, wildflowers decorated the washes and trails with bright fringes, but only a few had come out this year.

Creosote bushes and mesquite trees curled up their leaves to allow less water to evaporate into the air. Palo verde trees panted, patiently absorbing energy from the blazing sun with their branches and trunks.

Cactuses, which stored water in their fleshy stems, shrank to their limits. Even though June was the fruit season, fruits on the cactuses were scarce and wrinkled.

The Gila River shallowed. The birds flew away to the river and to nearby canals, but not everyone could migrate so easily.





Animals restricted their activities to the cooler hours of the night, and during the day, they wearily lay in their nests. Many sealed their burrows for the day to keep the moisture inside.

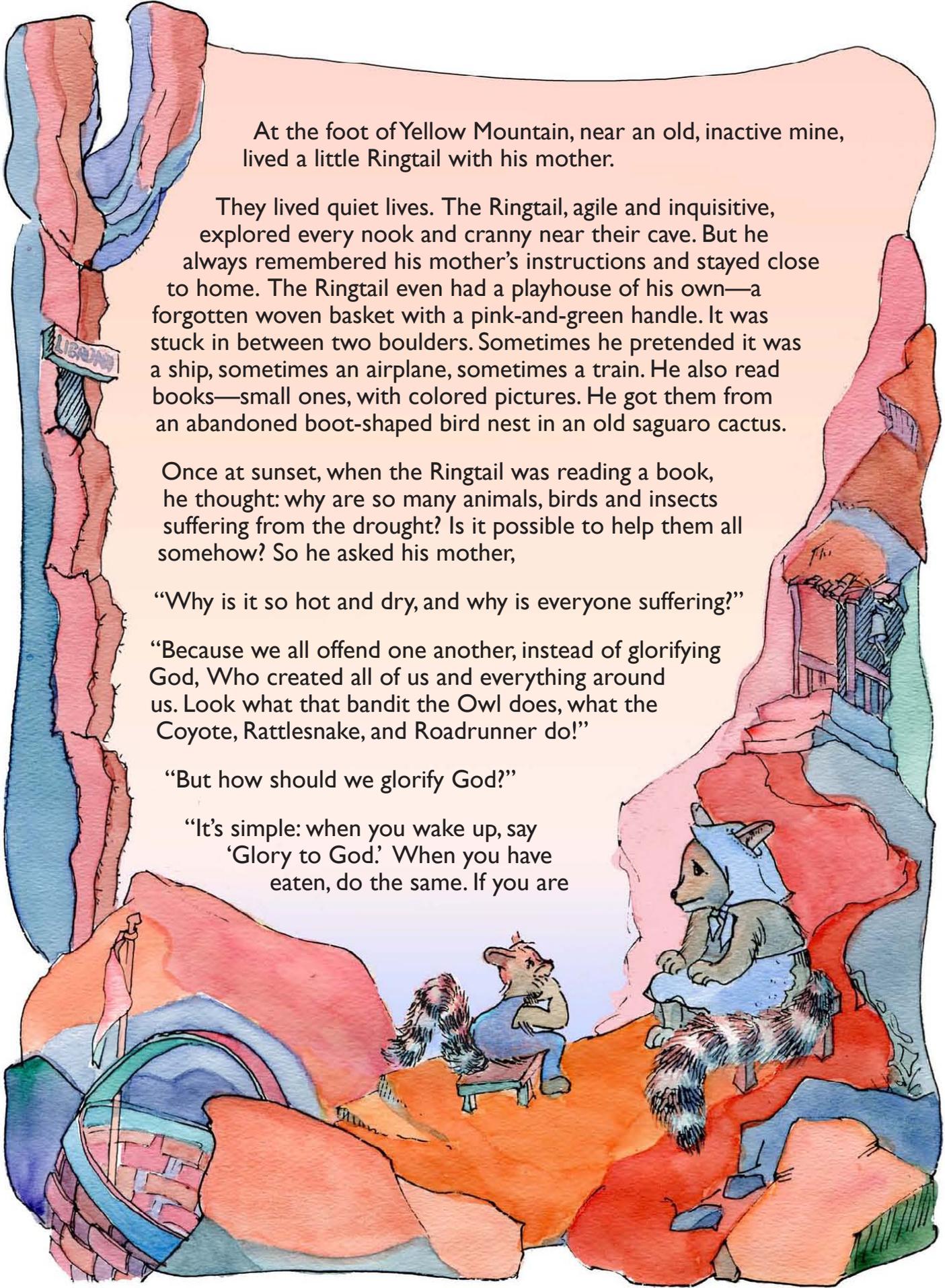
The usual habit of the Antelope Squirrel—to run about with his bushy tail up in the air for shading and cooling off—did not help him.

The Cactus Mouse was anxious. She wanted to hibernate early, but was not able to do so, because she needed some extra food and could not find enough.

Even the Kangaroo Rat, who could reabsorb water from her kidneys and from her breath as she exhaled, began to be dejected.

Only the Ants did not lose courage. They divided themselves into groups, and each one carried a large pod, full of beans, into their underground fort.

It was a sad picture.



At the foot of Yellow Mountain, near an old, inactive mine, lived a little Ringtail with his mother.

They lived quiet lives. The Ringtail, agile and inquisitive, explored every nook and cranny near their cave. But he always remembered his mother's instructions and stayed close to home. The Ringtail even had a playhouse of his own—a forgotten woven basket with a pink-and-green handle. It was stuck in between two boulders. Sometimes he pretended it was a ship, sometimes an airplane, sometimes a train. He also read books—small ones, with colored pictures. He got them from an abandoned boot-shaped bird nest in an old saguaro cactus.

Once at sunset, when the Ringtail was reading a book, he thought: why are so many animals, birds and insects suffering from the drought? Is it possible to help them all somehow? So he asked his mother,

“Why is it so hot and dry, and why is everyone suffering?”

“Because we all offend one another, instead of glorifying God, Who created all of us and everything around us. Look what that bandit the Owl does, what the Coyote, Rattlesnake, and Roadrunner do!”

“But how should we glorify God?”

“It's simple: when you wake up, say ‘Glory to God.’ When you have eaten, do the same. If you are