

AFRICAN TALES

Chameleon and the Greedy Spider



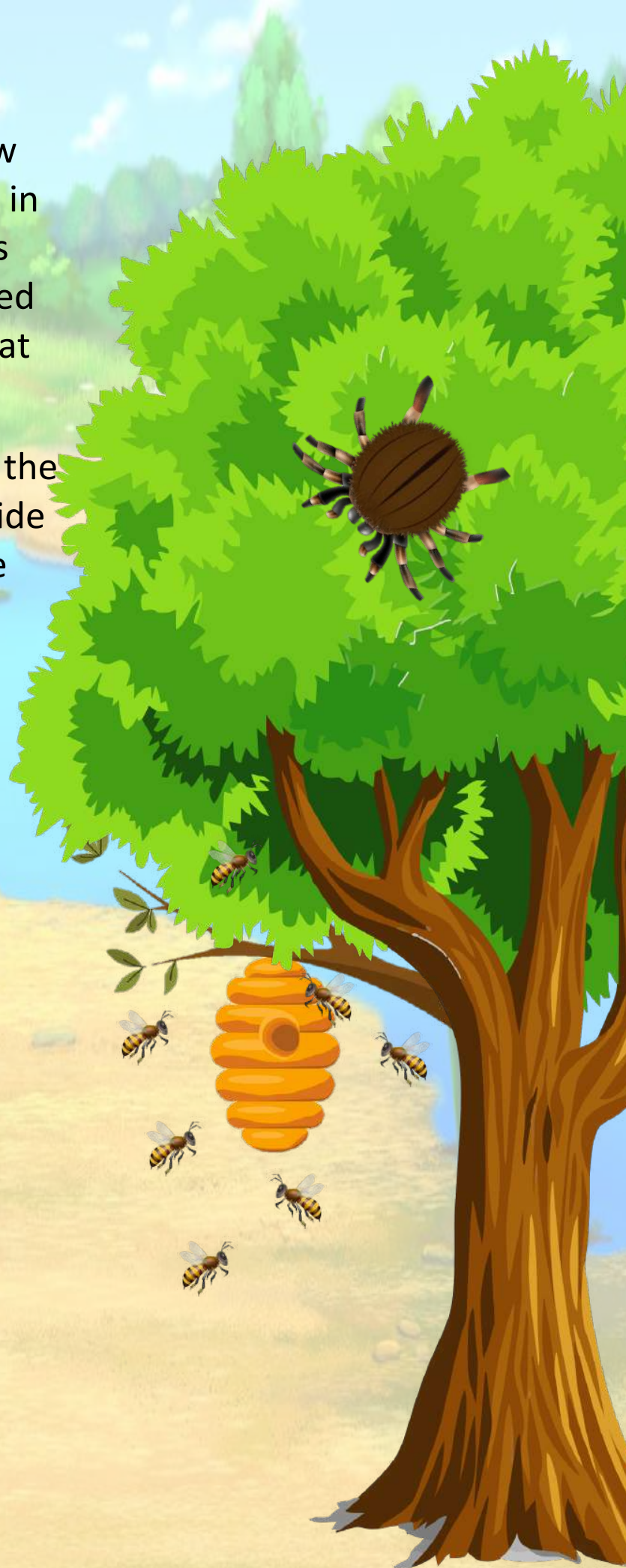
Long ago, in the most ancient of times, the great, great grandfather of all spiders lived in a huge web in a massive tree in the edge of the vast Okavango Swamps.

This fat spider was completely round and, as he was always hungry, there was nothing he loved more than a feast.



Spider boasted that he knew everything that was going on in the bush and he made it his business to hide in unexpected places and eavesdrop on what everybody had to say.

Most particularly, he spied on the Bees, who traveled far and wide and brought news from the furthestmost places.



Ants were also very wise and
knew all sorts of secrets.

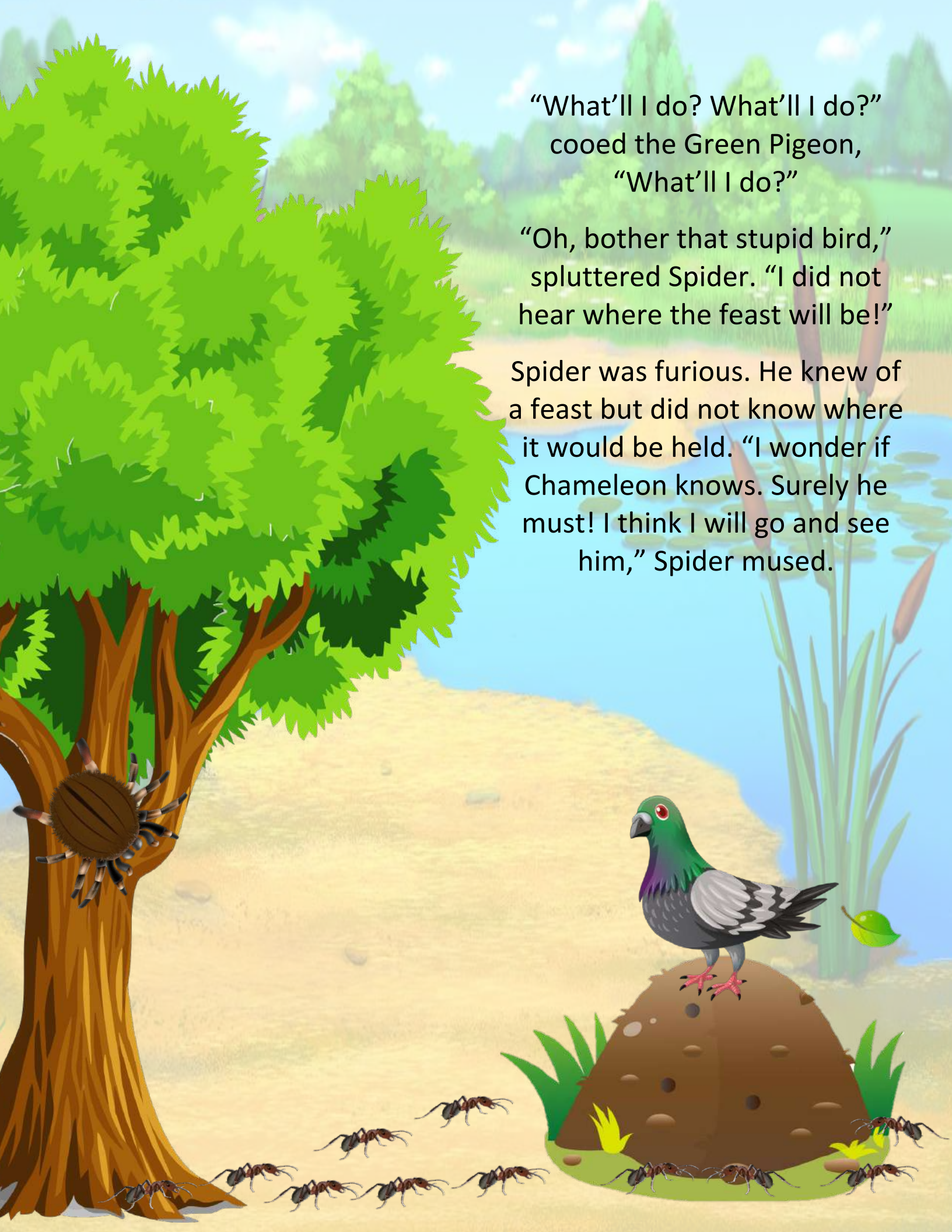
“They say there is to be a feast
at...” Ant began to whisper.



“What’ll I do? What’ll I do?”
cooed the Green Pigeon,
“What’ll I do?”

“Oh, bother that stupid bird,”
spluttered Spider. “I did not
hear where the feast will be!”

Spider was furious. He knew of
a feast but did not know where
it would be held. “I wonder if
Chameleon knows. Surely he
must! I think I will go and see
him,” Spider mused.



With practiced art, Spider spun
himself a silken silver thread.

He lowered it to the ground and
ran as fast as he could to where
Chameleon lived.



“Good morning, Chameleon!”
said Spider. “I hope you are
well and have had a pleasant
breakfast. You will be
attending the feast, I
presume?”

Slowly Chameleon swiveled
his eyes in Spider’s direction.

“To which feast are you
referring? I understand that
there are to be several.”



To Chameleon's surprise,
Spider began to shake with
excitement at the prospect of
not one but several fine feasts.

"Which feast would you prefer
to attend?" queried Spider
casually, trying to pry more
information out of Chameleon.
But knowing of Spider's greed,
Chameleon would not give
away any clues.



“Oh, whichever one takes my
fancy at the time,” said
Chameleon. “No doubt I shall
see you there.”

And slowly he left, amused at
Spider’s discomfort.



Spider was very annoyed. He had not found out when or where any of the feasts were to be held. So he summoned four of his children and asked them if they knew the whereabouts of any of the feasts.

“Yes!” they all replied. “But we don’t want to go to any of the feasts.”

“Aha!” chuckled Spider. “You youngsters do not know how to enjoy life. You don’t know how to look after yourselves. I always attend feasts!”



Spider gave each of his four children a thread and showed them how to tie the thread around their middles as he had done.

As soon as they found a feast, they were to pull on their thread and Spider would follow the thread and so be able to attend the feast.



His children scuttled off in
four different directions.

Spider climbed into his
favourite web and dozed off.

Greedily, he dreamed of all
the food he would eat. “Four
feasts! Four beautiful feasts!
And I shall attend them all as
I am so clever!”



The next day, the first young spider came to Hare's home. Hare lived to the North and his feast was about to start.

The young spider tugged excitedly at the silken thread around her waist and scurried to join the feast.



In the East, the second young spider came to Leopard's home. Leopard lived to the North and his feast was about to start, so he tugged an urgent message on his thread and scampered to the meal.



The third young spider found Bullfrog in the West. He had started his feast. She also tugged her silken thread.



In the South, the fourth young spider pulled at his silken thread too, as he dashed off to join Honey Badger's feast.



“Aha,” gloated Spider, as he felt the tug of his first child’s thread. He readied himself to join the feast to the North.

“Ooh!” cried Spider, as a second tug jerked him to the East. “Two feasts in one day! Which should I attend?”

“Oh my,” gasped Spider. This time he felt a strong pull to the West.

“Whoever heard of three feasts in one day?” he exclaimed.



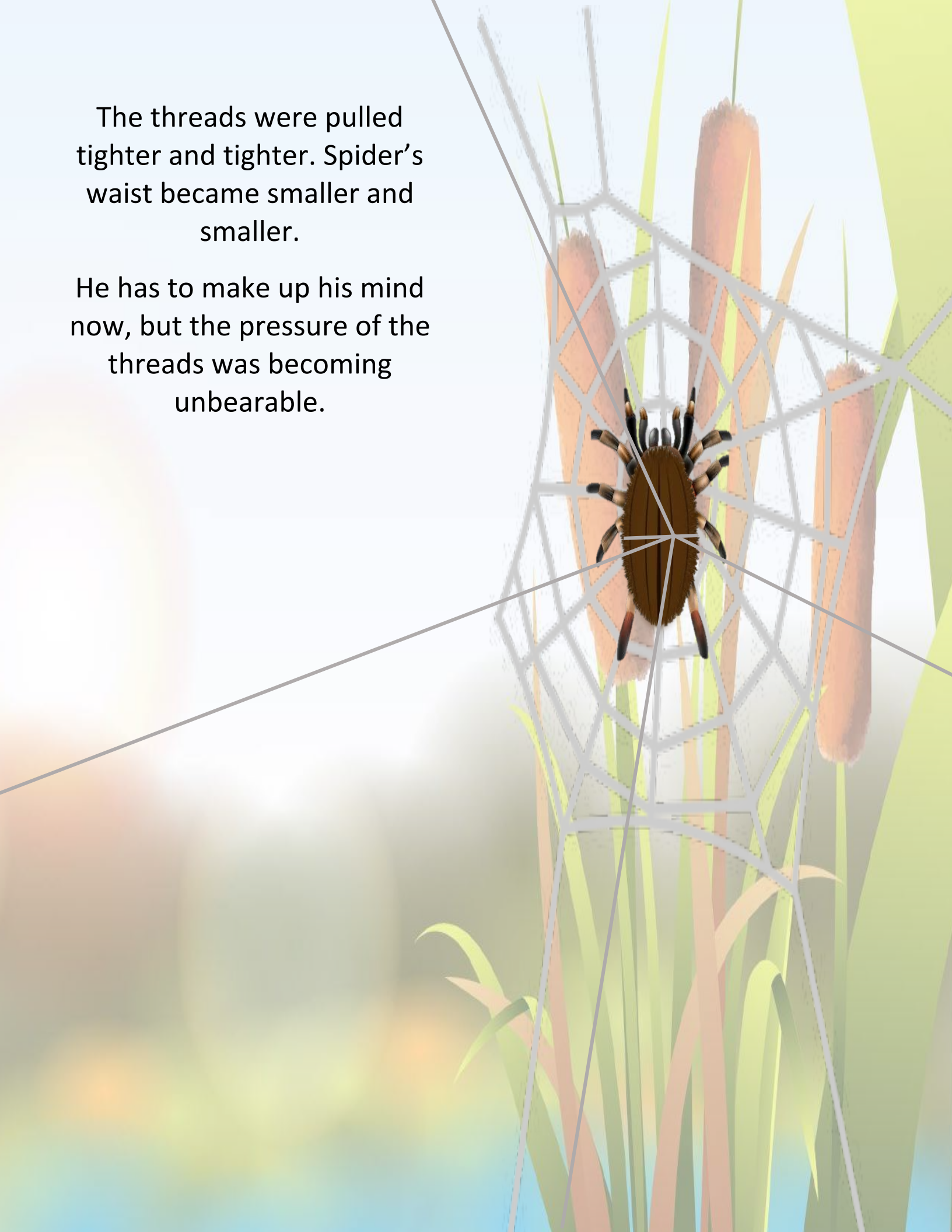
“Ow!” yelled Spider, as the fourth child pulled their threads urgently and the threads tightened around Spider’s waist.

He could not decide which feast to attend. Leopard’s would be a sumptuous affair, but Hare was closer, and Honey Badger served his favourites...



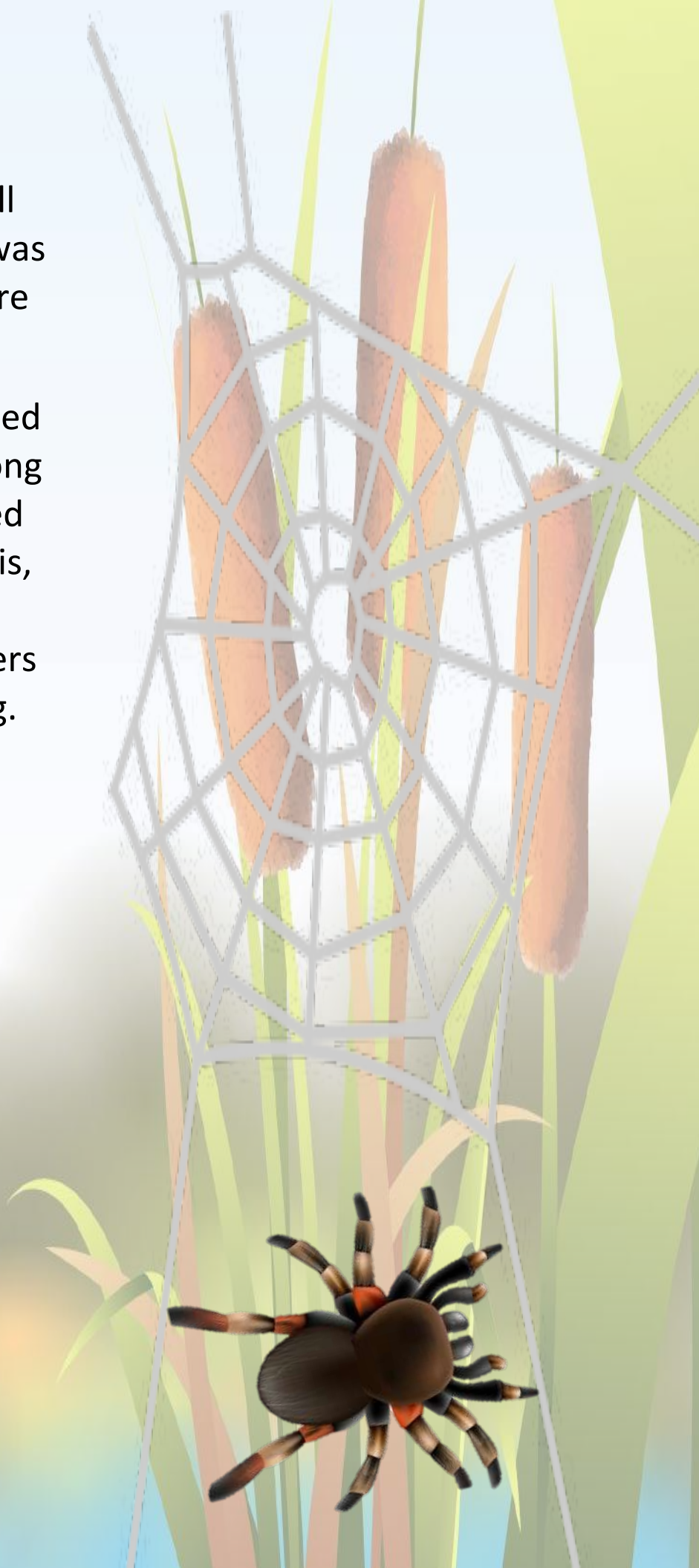
The threads were pulled tighter and tighter. Spider's waist became smaller and smaller.

He has to make up his mind now, but the pressure of the threads was becoming unbearable.



Unable to decide, Spider became faint. Suddenly, all four threads broke. Spider was thrown onto his back, where he lay unconscious.

The sound of the drums rolled over the plains for a long, long time as the animals enjoyed their many feasts. All, that is, except greedy Spider. Chameleon's evasive answers had been Spider's undoing.



Spider's waist never recovered and, ever since, all spiders have had incredibly small waists.

And spiders can no longer attend feasts as they can only eat very small amounts at one sitting. This is why they often bundle up their victims in their webs; so that they can eat them in their own time.



DID YOU KNOW

This About Spiders?

- Spiders are not insects. Instead, spiders are known as arachnids because they only have two body segments instead of three. Other arachnids are scorpions, mites, and ticks.
- Spiders spin webs to catch other bugs to eat, but not all spiders make webs! Some actively hunt their prey and pounce.
- Most spiders are not dangerous to humans.
- Most spiders live on land, but a few, like the raft spiders, live in and on water. These spiders can “run” across the water’s surface.
- On average, it takes a spider about 60 minutes to spin a web.
- The average house has 30 spiders.



