

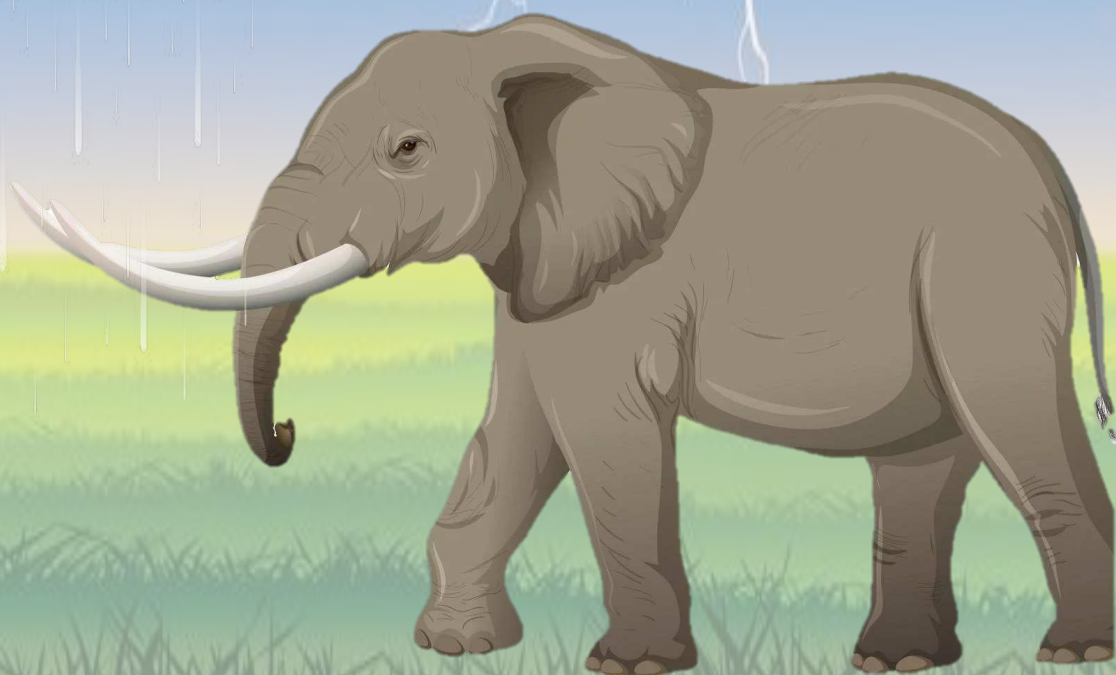
# AFRICAN TALES

## The Elephant and the Rain



There were once two great powers in the natural world: Elephant and the Spirit of Rain. Now Elephant, who as you know was proud and boastful, was always arguing with Rain, trying to make him agree that of the two of them, he, Elephant, was the greater.

One day they were arguing as usual, when the Rain Spirit said in his wet, gurgling voice, “How can you, Elephant, be a greater power than I, when it is I who nourishes you!”





Elephant was far too proud to admit that Rain was right. Indeed, he didn't even think before replying, "You do not feed me! I find my food for myself. I am my own master in all things."

Rain, angered in earnest this time, decided to act. Instead of arguing any further. He turned dark gray, thundered and said, "If I go away, will you not die?" And then he vanished.



Once Rain had departed, Elephant laughed loudly and said to himself, “Ha! Now I may rule alone. Rain has admitted defeat by running away!”

For many months, Elephant lorded it over the plains and forests, and life continued normally. In fact, it was quite peaceful without the constant loud quarrels of Elephant and Rain.





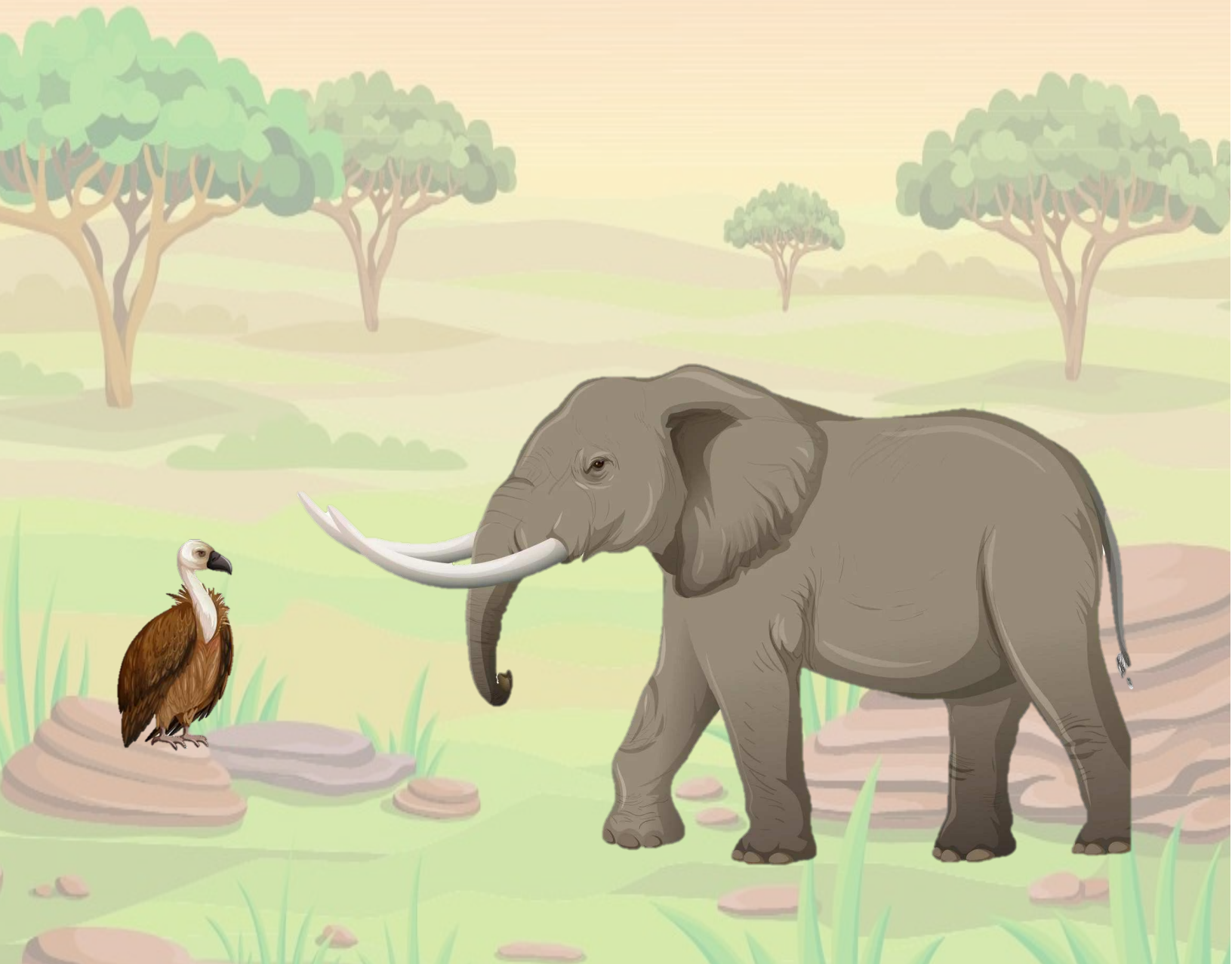
Then the time of the rains arrived. Many of the animals were full with their unborn young ones. Every animal was looking forward to the flush of green grass, and clean flowing rivers once again.

But, of course, Rain had gone away. The skies remained hot and bright blue. Not even a cloud was seen for weeks. The animals became worried because their newborn young were starving.



In great distress, they went to find Elephant, for was he not their Lord? Elephant looked a bit uncomfortable, but he replied to their demands by saying, “I will call Vulture, the most potent of all the rainmakers.”

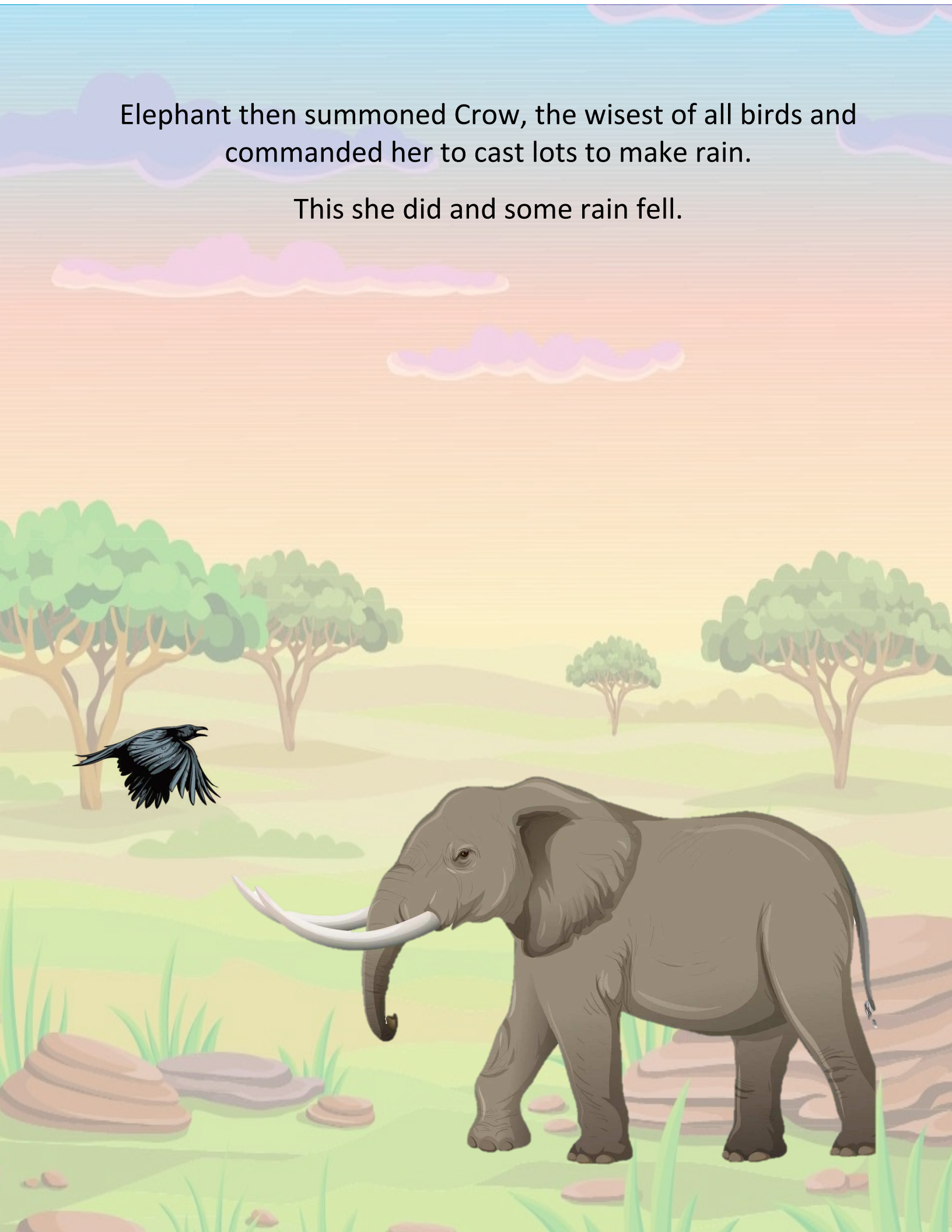
Elephant then called Vulture and commanded him to cast lots and make rain. But Vulture was Rain’s servant, and knew about the quarrel that the two mighty ones had had. He excused himself, explaining to Elephant that he was too afraid of the great Elephant to try, in case he failed.





Elephant then summoned Crow, the wisest of all birds and  
commanded her to cast lots to make rain.

This she did and some rain fell.



Enough rain fell to fill a few pans, but soon they all dried up, except one, the deepest.

Elephant claimed this last waterhole for himself, and ordered Tortoise to guard it for him while he was away feeding during the day (food was becoming rather difficult to find). Tortoise settled down to guard the pan.





Soon, a herd of giraffe came down to drink and asked Tortoise for water, for they had searched all day and found none.

But Tortoise had to refuse, saying that pan was the property of Lord Elephant.



Zebras, gemsbok, wildebeest, springboks and many more other animals were all refused a drink.

They moved off in the distance, whispering among themselves and wondered what was to become of them.





In the evening, Lion came down to drink and, as before, Tortoise told him he could not as the pan belonged to Elephant.

But Lion was not impressed. He simply cuffed Tortoise out of the way and drank his fill.



Poor Tortoise was helpless, as the other animals, made desperate by thirst, followed Lion's example.

They crowded around the pan and drank deeply.





When Elephant returned, the animals had drunk the pan dry, leaving only a mess of churned-up mud. He trumpeted in rage and turned upon the unfortunate Tortoise.

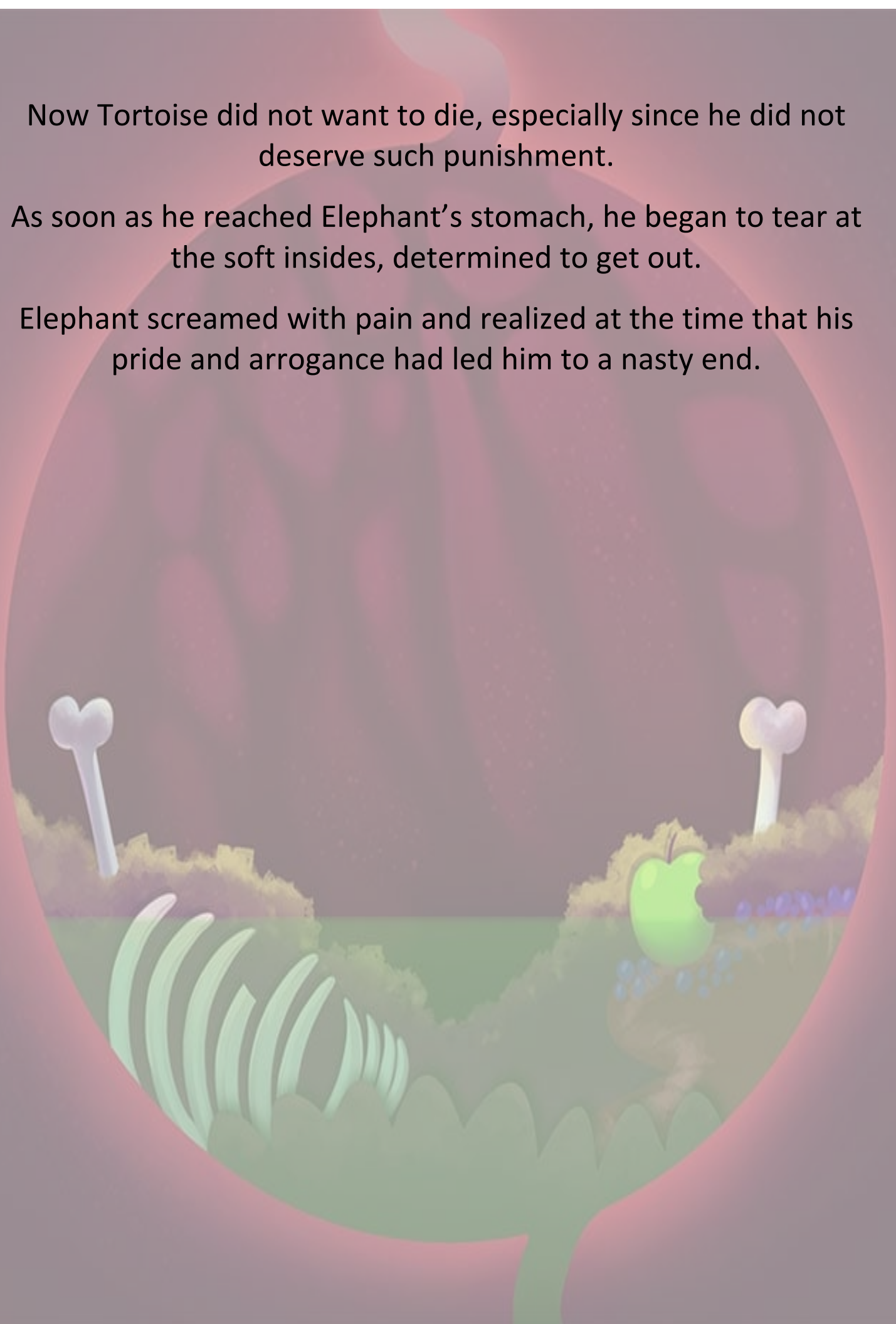
Poor Tortoise tried to explain that he has been too little and weak to stop the thirsty animals, but Elephant was in such a rage that he picked up Tortoise and swallowed him whole.



Now Tortoise did not want to die, especially since he did not deserve such punishment.

As soon as he reached Elephant's stomach, he began to tear at the soft insides, determined to get out.

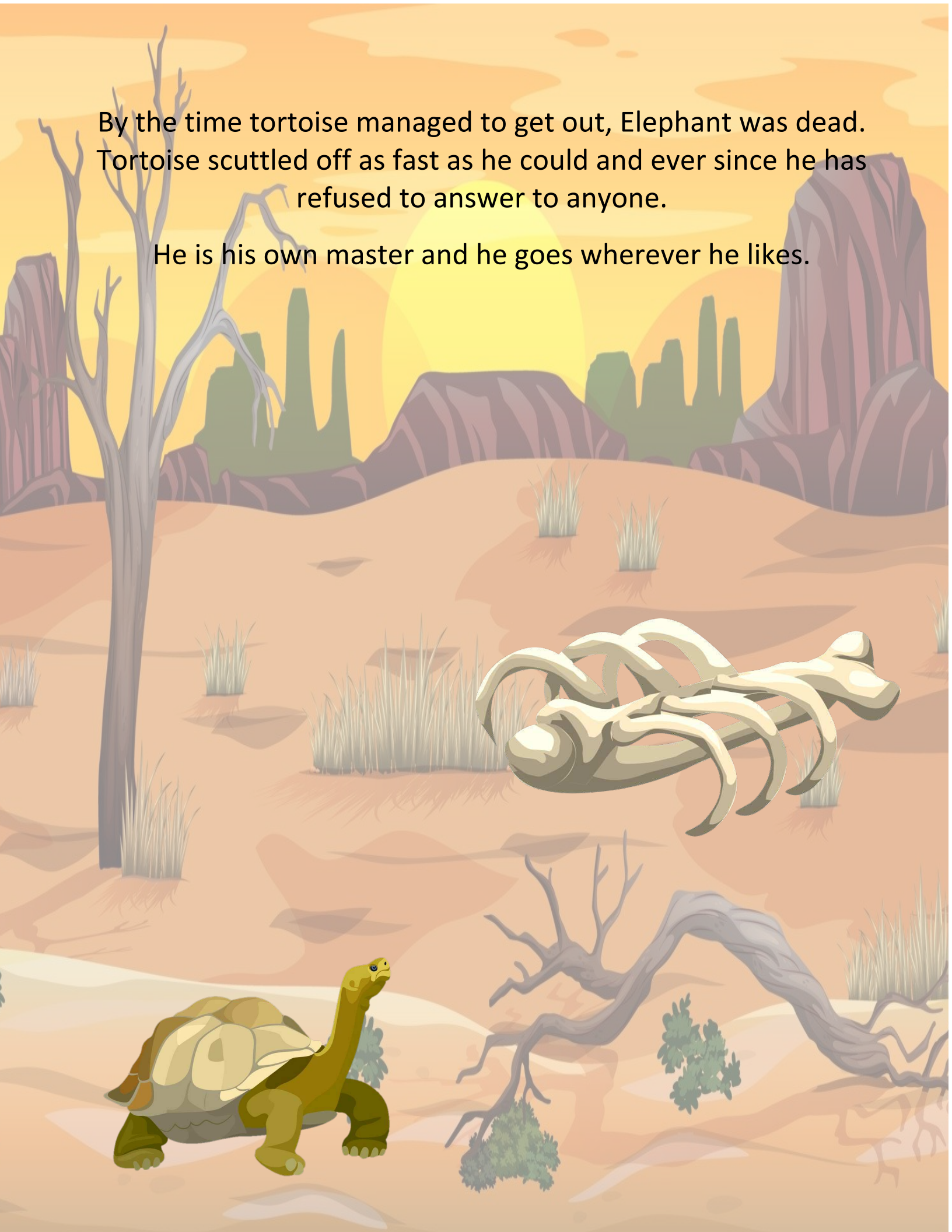
Elephant screamed with pain and realized at the time that his pride and arrogance had led him to a nasty end.





By the time tortoise managed to get out, Elephant was dead.  
Tortoise scuttled off as fast as he could and ever since he has  
refused to answer to anyone.

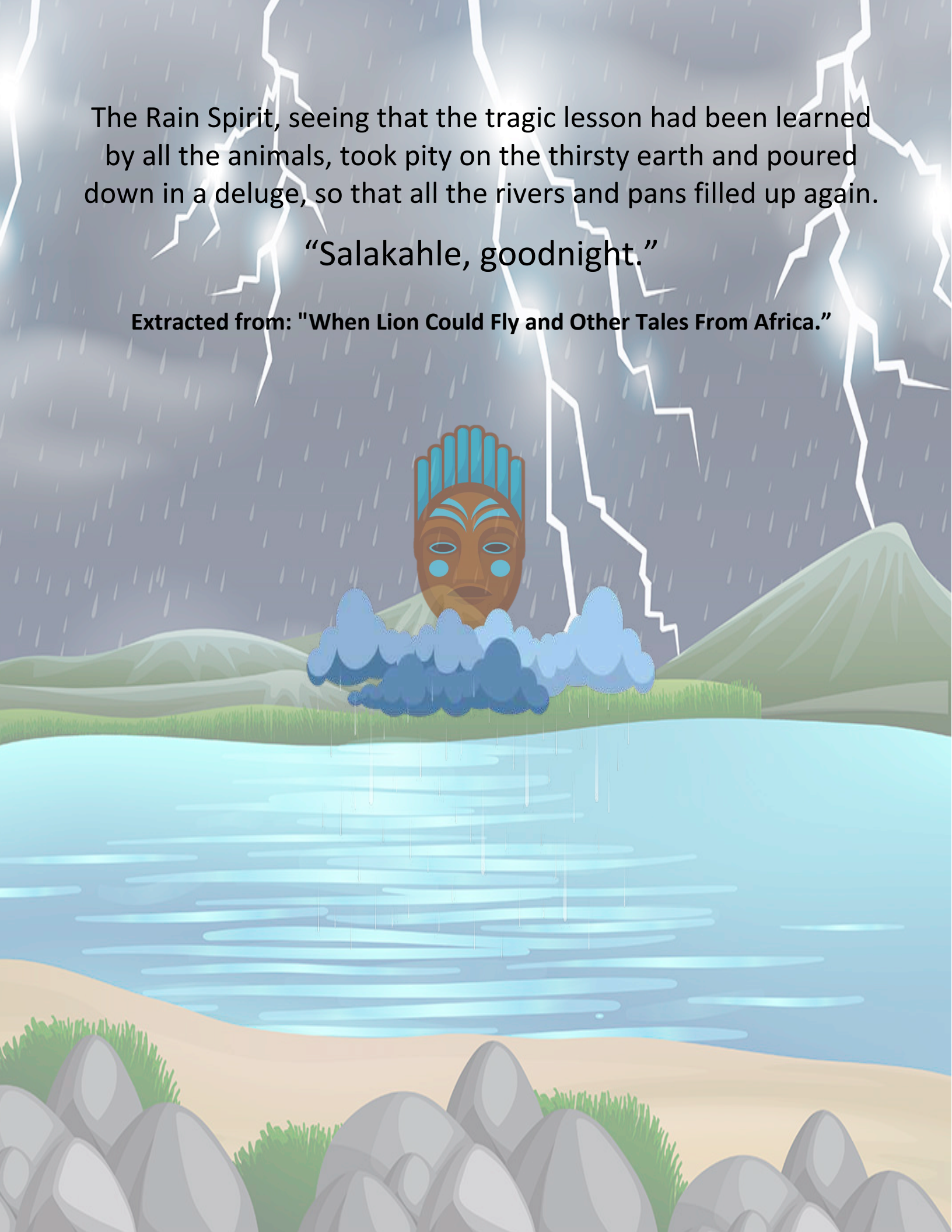
He is his own master and he goes wherever he likes.



The Rain Spirit, seeing that the tragic lesson had been learned by all the animals, took pity on the thirsty earth and poured down in a deluge, so that all the rivers and pans filled up again.

**“Salakahle, goodnight.”**

**Extracted from: "When Lion Could Fly and Other Tales From Africa."**

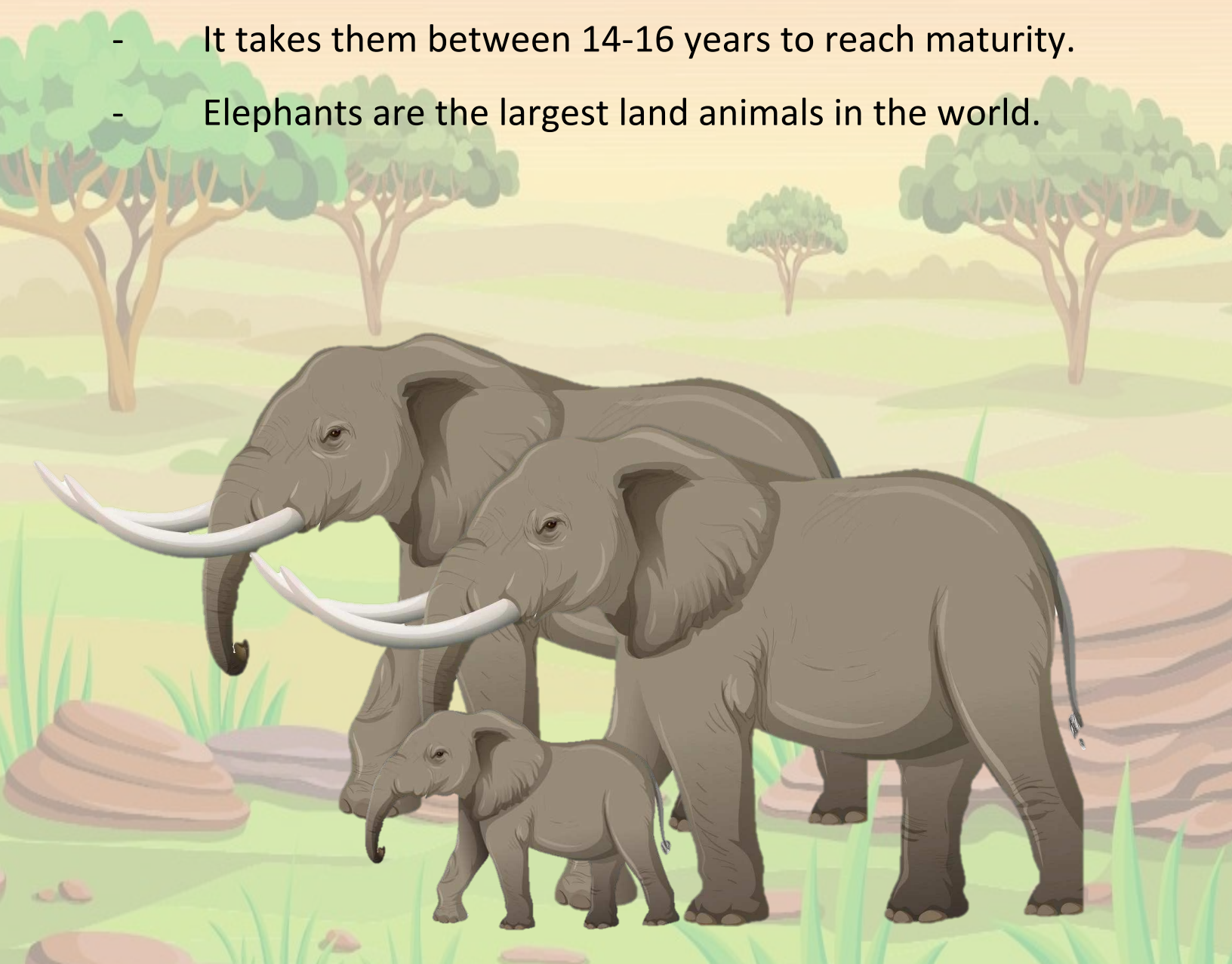




# FUN FACTS

## About Elephants

- Elephants can live up to 70 years.
- A mommy's gestation period is 22 months.
- Males are often solitary. Females live in family groups and temporary herds up to 200.
- It takes them between 14-16 years to reach maturity.
- Elephants are the largest land animals in the world.



# DID YOU KNOW

## This About Tortoises ...

- They are reptiles.
- There are about 40 different species.
- Females dig burrows to lay their eggs.
- Hatchlings will hatch after 3-4 months.
- The Hatchlings will dig their way into their mother's burrow, when she will protect them for another two months or so.





