



Animal Sidekicks

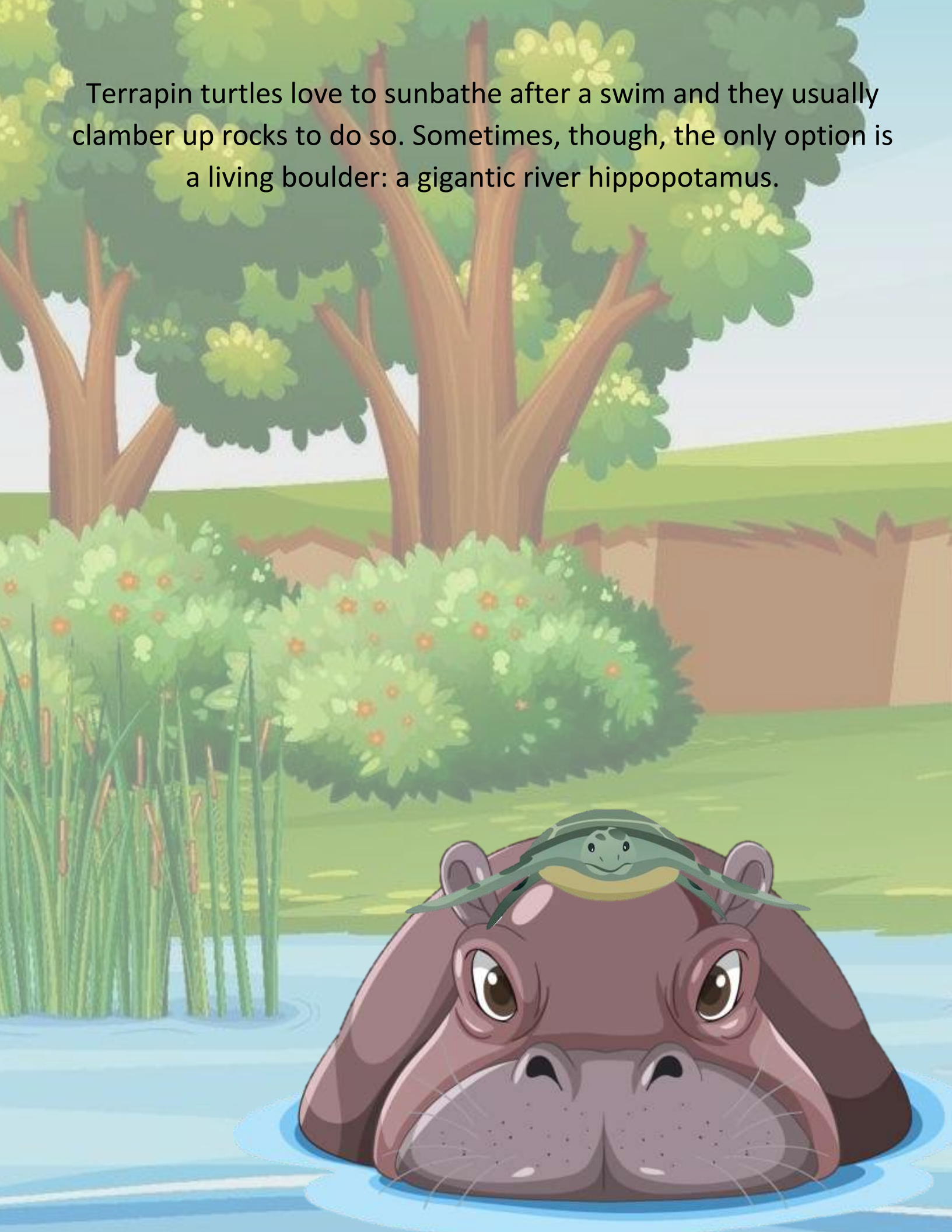
The Hippo and the Terrapins



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Terrapin turtles love to sunbathe after a swim and they usually clamber up rocks to do so. Sometimes, though, the only option is a living boulder: a gigantic river hippopotamus.



The hippo is almost as stable as the shore, making it an ideal sunning spot. Even when dozens of turtles climb aboard, the hippo doesn't seem to mind its passengers – heck, it might not even notice.



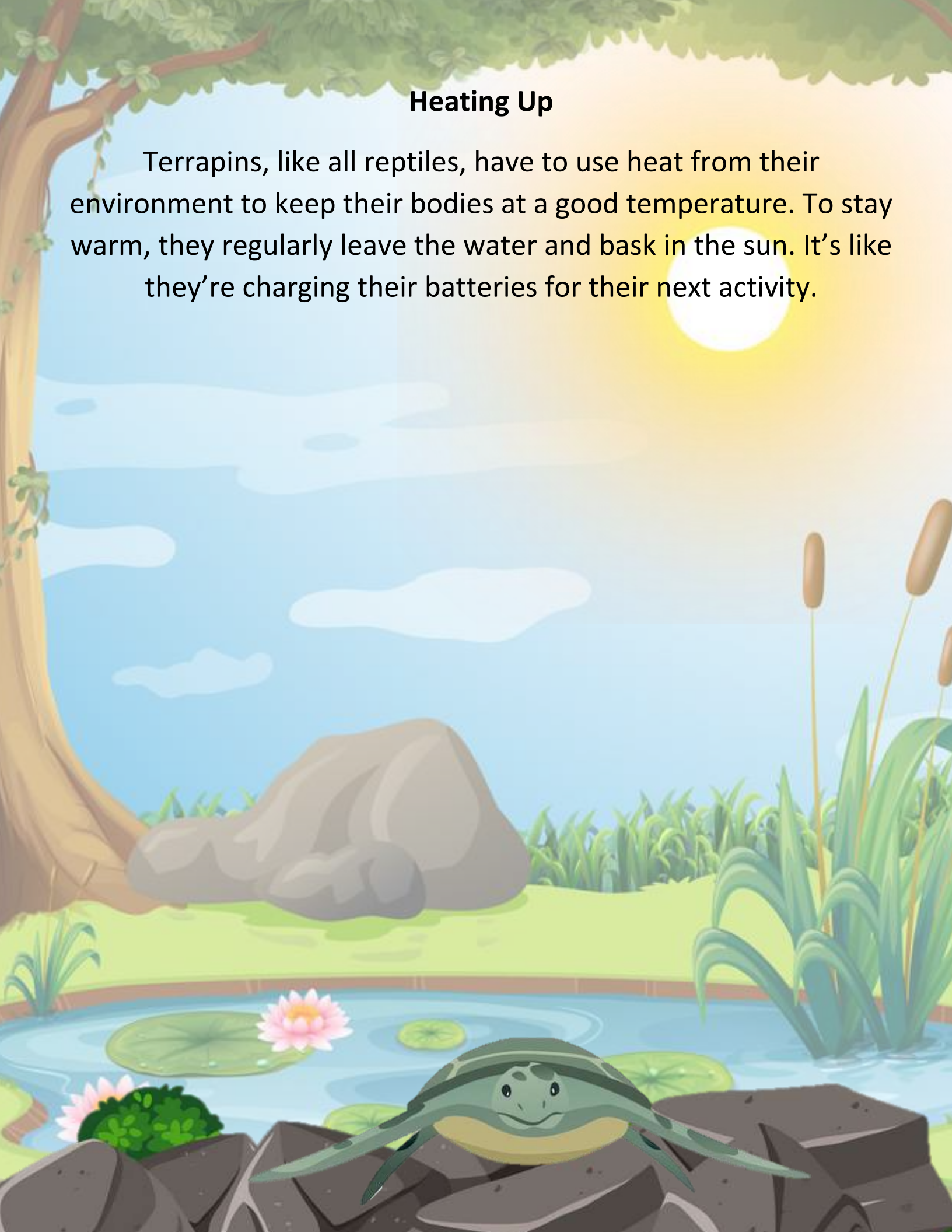


Even on a hot day in Africa, the waters can get a little too chilly for a terrapin.



Heating Up

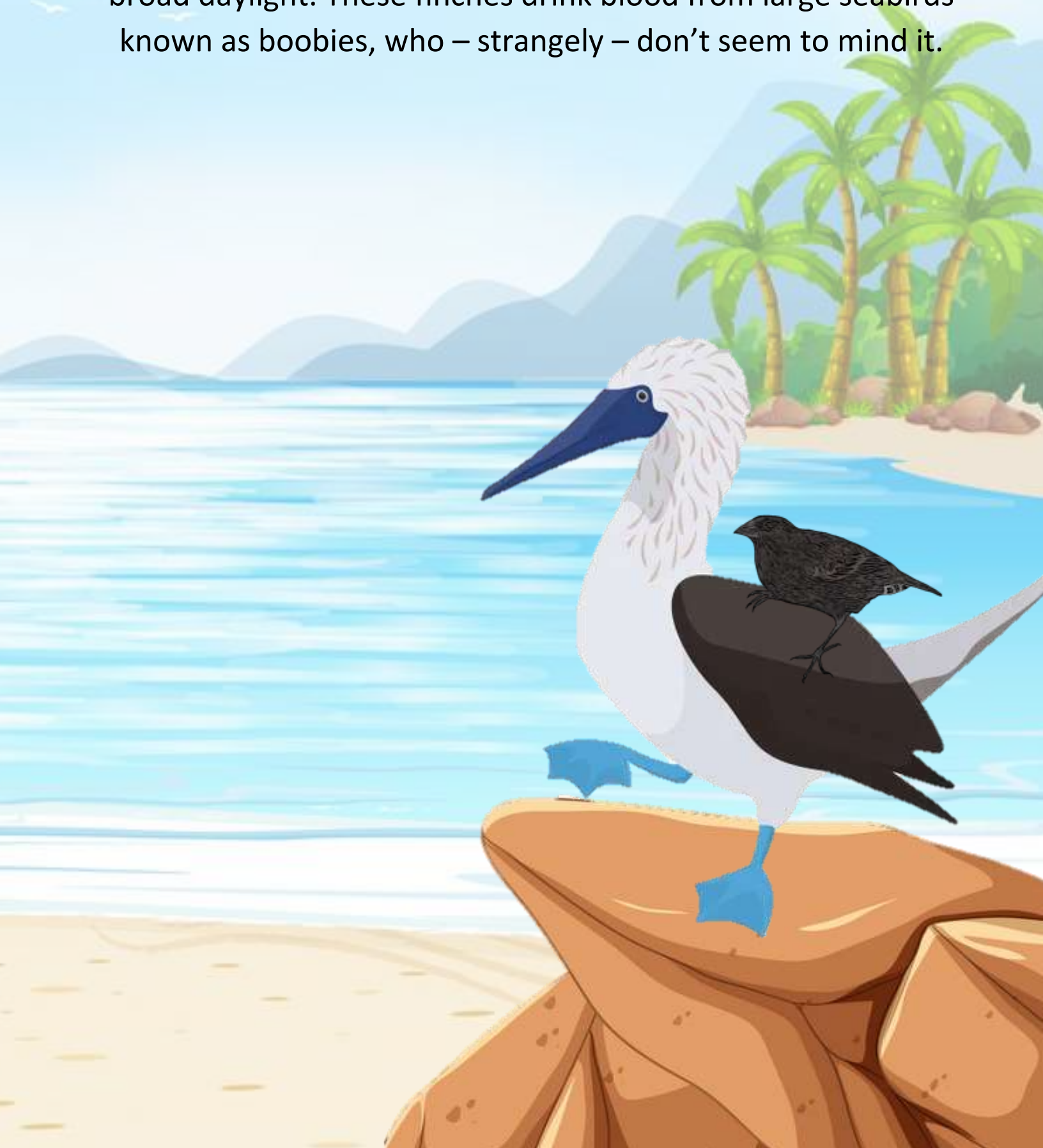
Terrapins, like all reptiles, have to use heat from their environment to keep their bodies at a good temperature. To stay warm, they regularly leave the water and bask in the sun. It's like they're charging their batteries for their next activity.



The Vampire Finch and the Booby

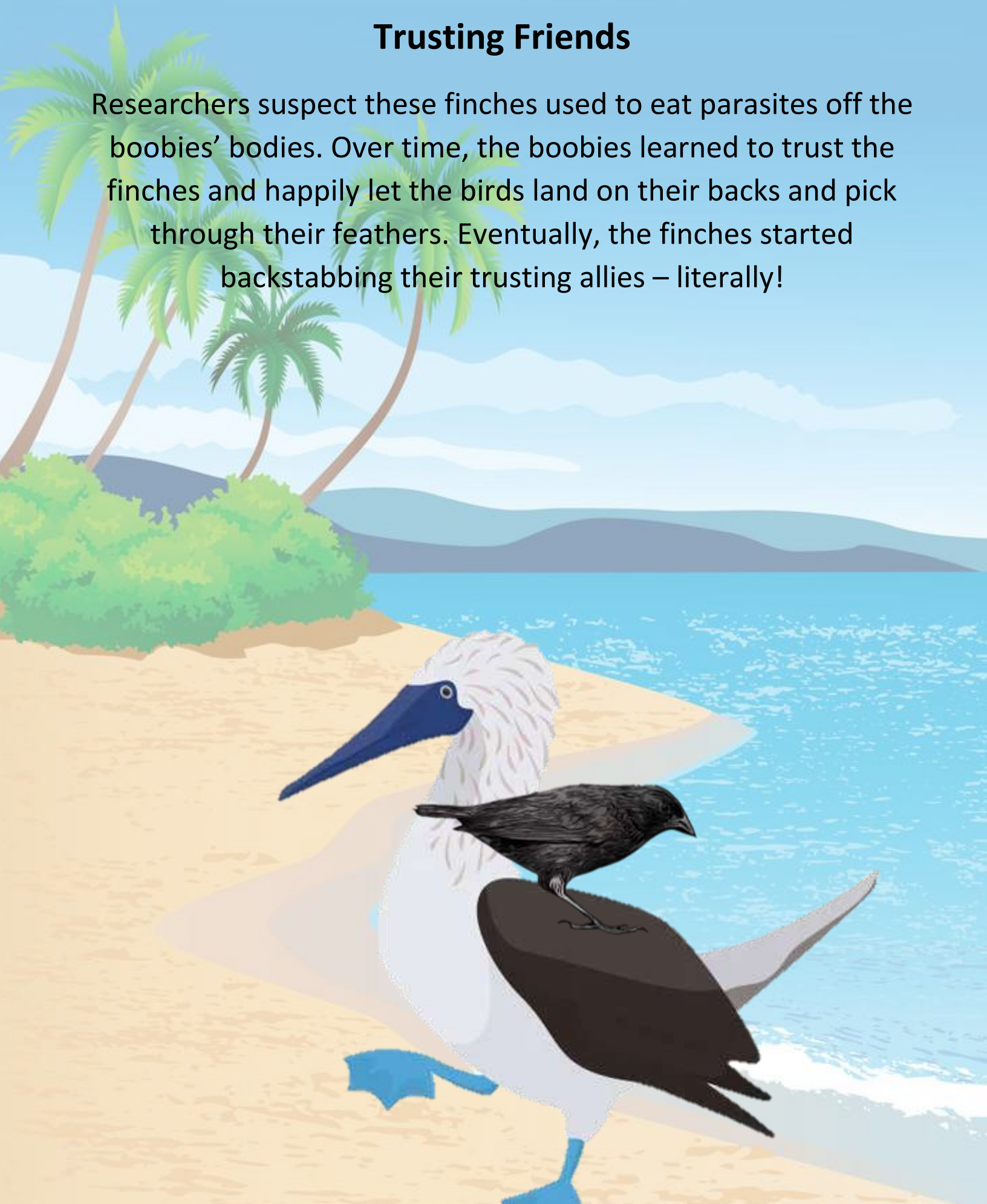


A tropical paradise is the last place you would expect to find vampires, but on the Galapagos Islands bloodthirsty birds feed in broad daylight. These finches drink blood from large seabirds known as boobies, who – strangely – don't seem to mind it.



Trusting Friends

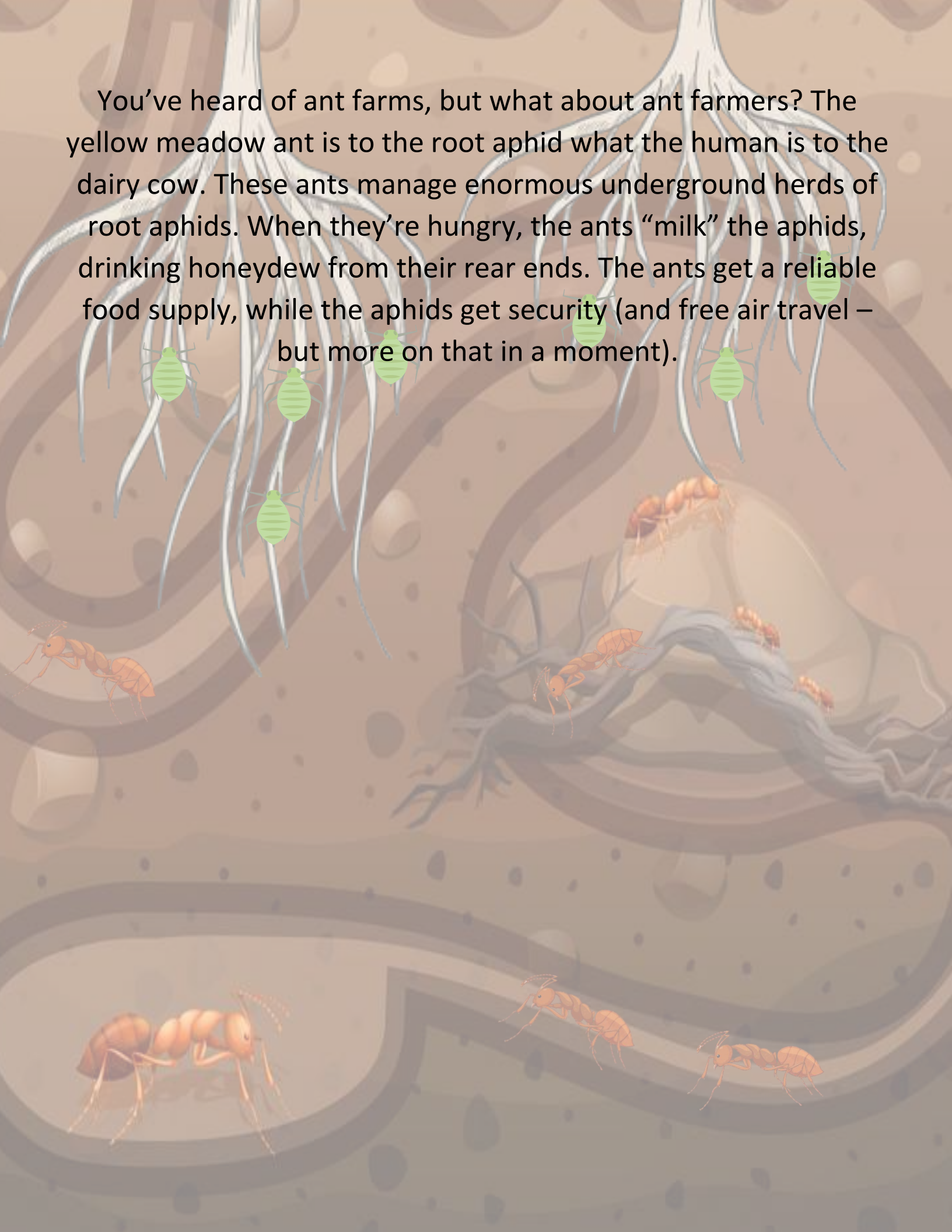
Researchers suspect these finches used to eat parasites off the boobies' bodies. Over time, the boobies learned to trust the finches and happily let the birds land on their backs and pick through their feathers. Eventually, the finches started backstabbing their trusting allies – literally!



The Ants and the Aphids

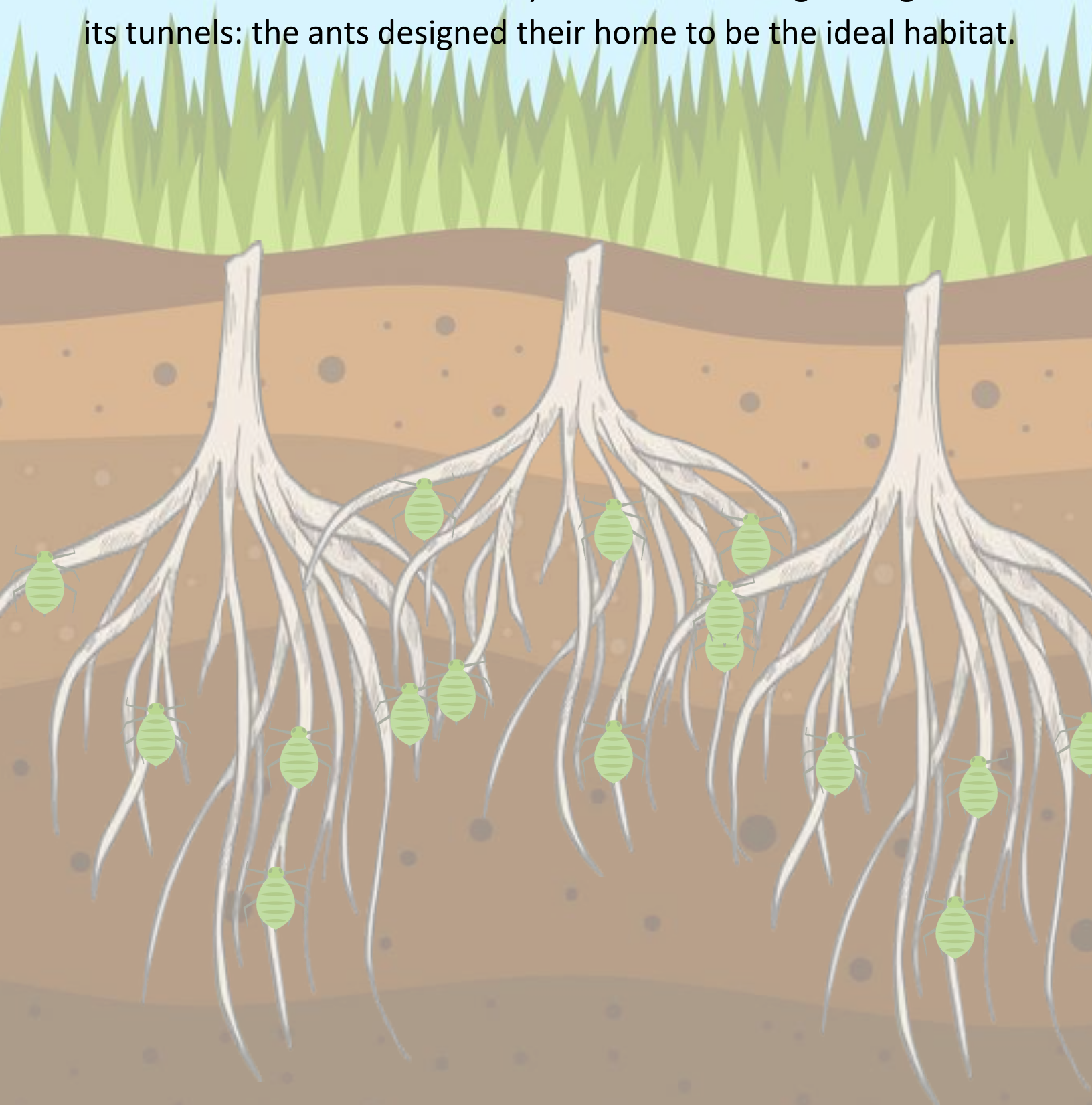


You've heard of ant farms, but what about ant farmers? The yellow meadow ant is to the root aphid what the human is to the dairy cow. These ants manage enormous underground herds of root aphids. When they're hungry, the ants "milk" the aphids, drinking honeydew from their rear ends. The ants get a reliable food supply, while the aphids get security (and free air travel – but more on that in a moment).



Out to Pasture

Dairy cows and root aphids both feed on grass – just different parts. These aphids eat grass roots underground. It's not a coincidence that the ant colony has roots crossing through all of its tunnels: the ants designed their home to be the ideal habitat.



Meet the Team

Below, we have aphids, ant workers and an ant queen.



Queen
Ant



Aphid



Worker
Ant



The queen is the mother of all the workers, who work together because they're related. In nature, if you share the same family genes, you're on the same team.



Milking Aphids

Root aphids secrete a sugary liquid called honeydew. Yellow meadow ants just have to “milk” them for a tasty drink.



Flying Ants

A young queen ant can fly to a new location when it's time to begin a new ant colony. When she leaves, she will bring aphid eggs with her, so she can start her own farm.





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