



# Once Upon Our Planet

By Vitta Murrow

## Once Upon a Paradise



Long ago, before there were plants or animals, before there was ocean or land, there was one thing: Darkness. Darkness was rambling, it was consuming, and it was quiet.

Darkness permitted nothing. Not even a speck of dust. And the world was rather boring. It lacked contrast and eventfulness, rhythm and joy. So, Darkness called upon a friend. This friend's name was Light.

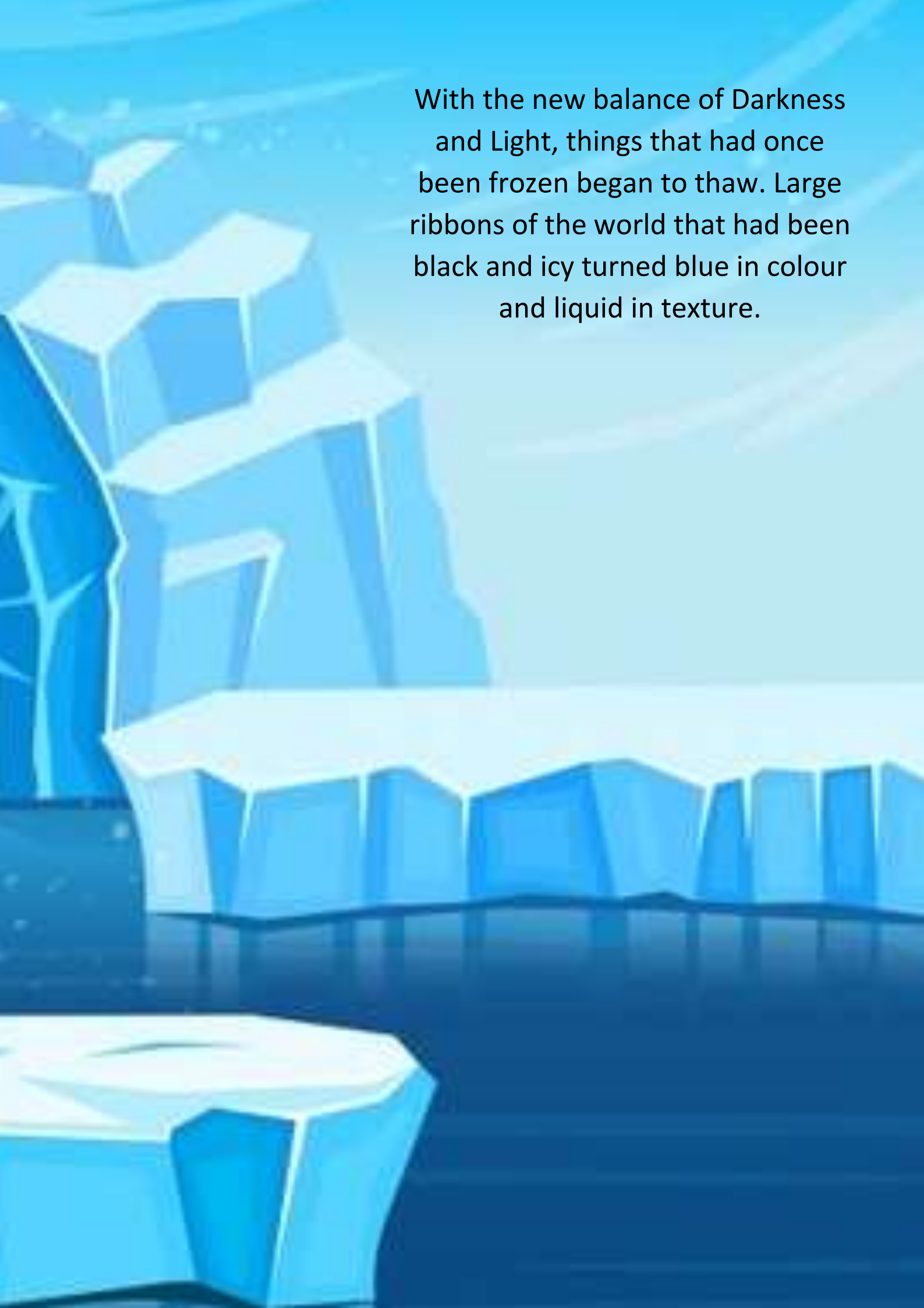
Upon invitation, Light arrived with a subtle approach. It began a tiny pinpoint and gently expanded into a ball. The ball glowed brightly and found itself a spot to rest. The bright bundle Light and Darkness shared the world like old friends.



Darkness and Light determined a pattern of rotation so that they would each be in charge, part of the time. It was an amiable dance and goodness they offered one another brought other good things into being – so much goodness that a paradise was born.







With the new balance of Darkness and Light, things that had once been frozen began to thaw. Large ribbons of the world that had been black and icy turned blue in colour and liquid in texture.

Soon, great oceans came into being.

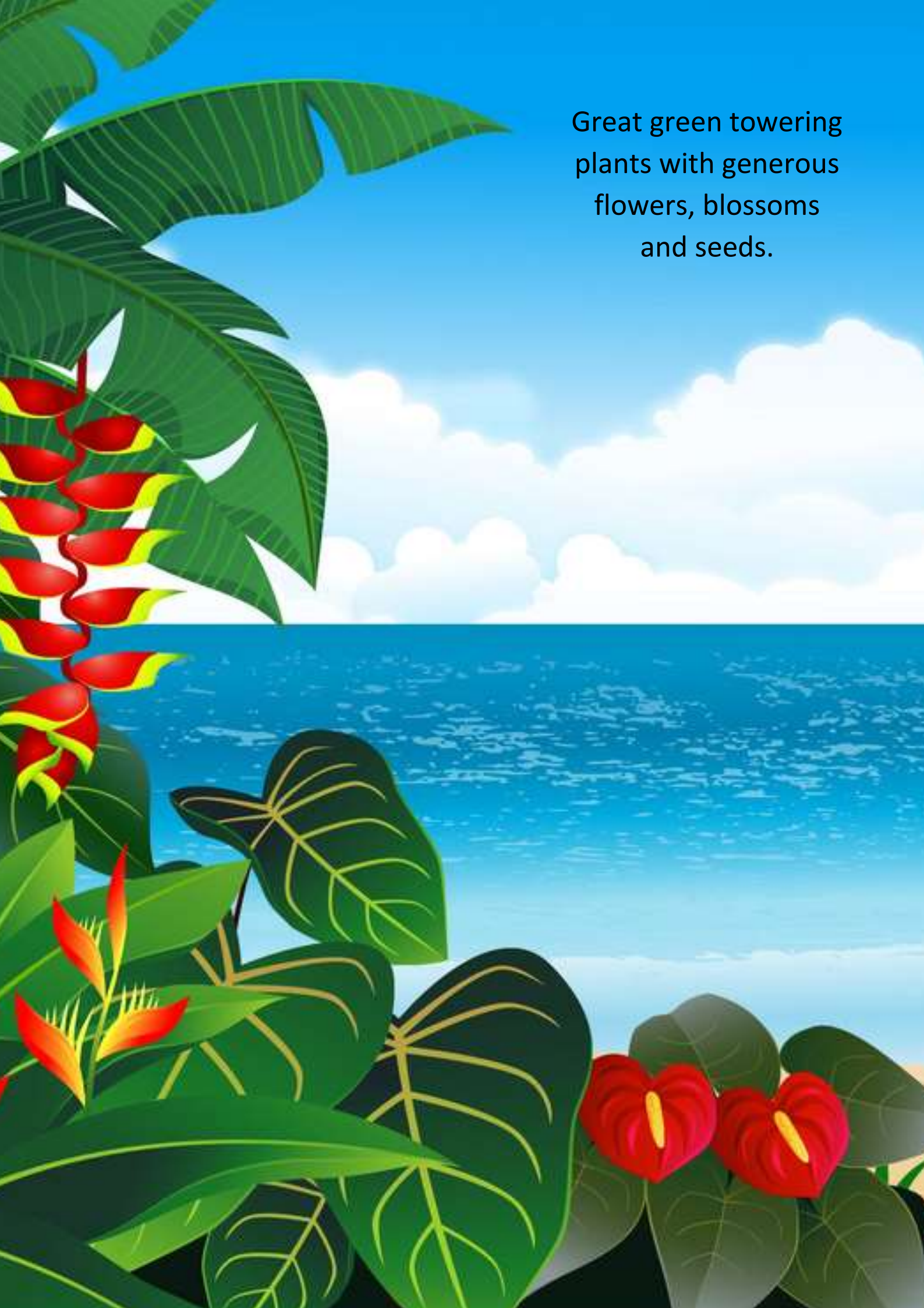




From large areas of water rose small patches of earth that reached for the light. When light showed on these isles, plant life began to grow.





A vibrant tropical scene featuring a blue sky with white clouds, a blue ocean, and various tropical plants. In the foreground, there are large green leaves with prominent veins, a cluster of red and yellow flowers, and two bright red anthurium flowers. The text is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the image.

Great green towering  
plants with generous  
flowers, blossoms  
and seeds.



Below the water plants  
grew too. In a fringe  
around the isles... Until it  
became a mighty reef.

And with each new  
growth came a Spirit to  
guide it.



A Spirit of the reef, a Spirit of the shoreline, Spirits of the hills and forests. The Spirits were stewards of the new life and each tended to its duty with care and reverence. They made sure each new living thing in paradise had light, air and nutrients. They made sure there was harmony.





This wasn't always easy, because of one Spirit in particular, whom the other Spirits called 'May', as in, May we know your purpose? You see, May was the Spirit of a strange new thing. The things was the size and shape of an oblong ball. It was hard to determine its purpose in the paradise.





May the Spirit was also a little irregular. Unlike the other Spirits, who tended diligently and seriously. May was silly and wanted to frolic and play pranks.



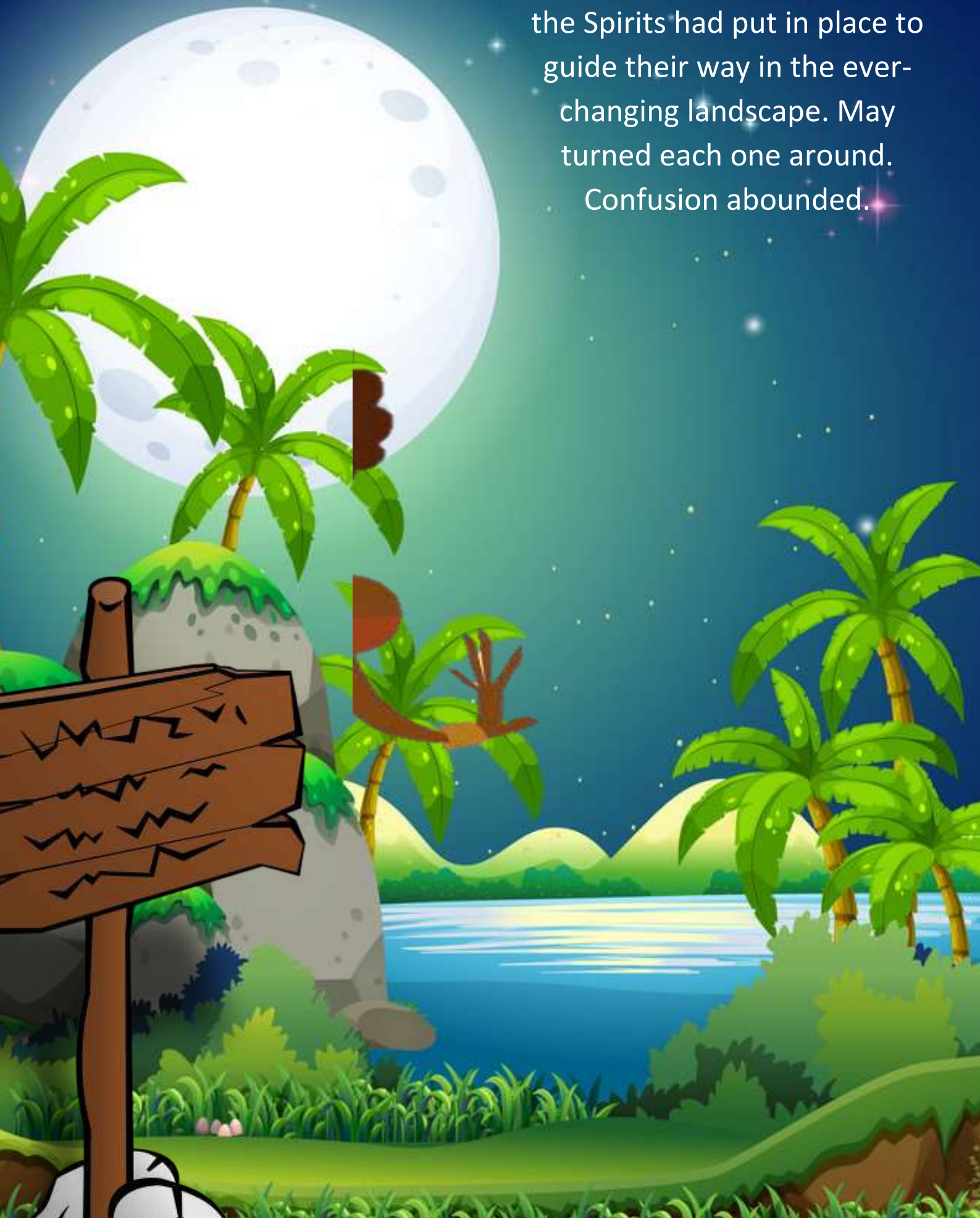


Once May dammed up a stream with rocks so the forest Spirits had to visit a rushing waterfall to help their plants.





Another time, May swapped the direction and location signs the Spirits had put in place to guide their way in the ever-changing landscape. May turned each one around. Confusion abounded.

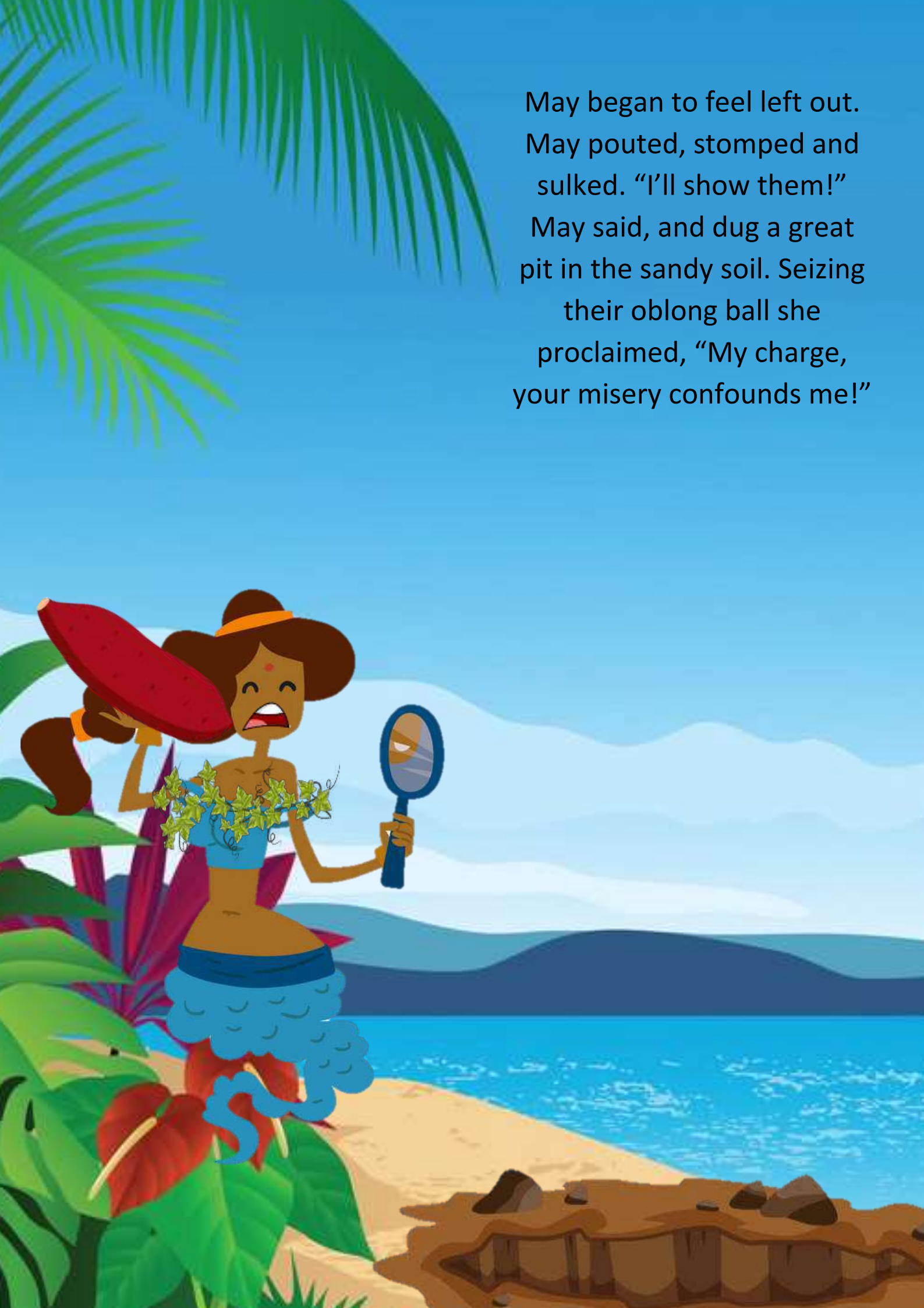




The Spirits were not amused;  
while they were busy working,  
May was up to mischief! And so,  
the Spirits began to ignore May.



May began to feel left out. May pouted, stomped and sulked. “I’ll show them!” May said, and dug a great pit in the sandy soil. Seizing their oblong ball she proclaimed, “My charge, your misery confounds me!”





And with great drama, May placed the oblong ball in the pit and buried the curious object.

To mark the spot, May crafted a big sign that read: 'YAM!' For May insisted on being silly even in the signing of her very own name.





All the other Spirits rolled their eyes. “What could May be up to now?” the Spirits murmured. Yet they were mostly glad it wasn’t a bother to them.

Little did they know, with this one final prank, May had set in motion a great change that would mark their paradise forever.



As the pattern of Darkness and Light continued, days passed into months, then years, then eons ... and along the way, the land and water transformed.



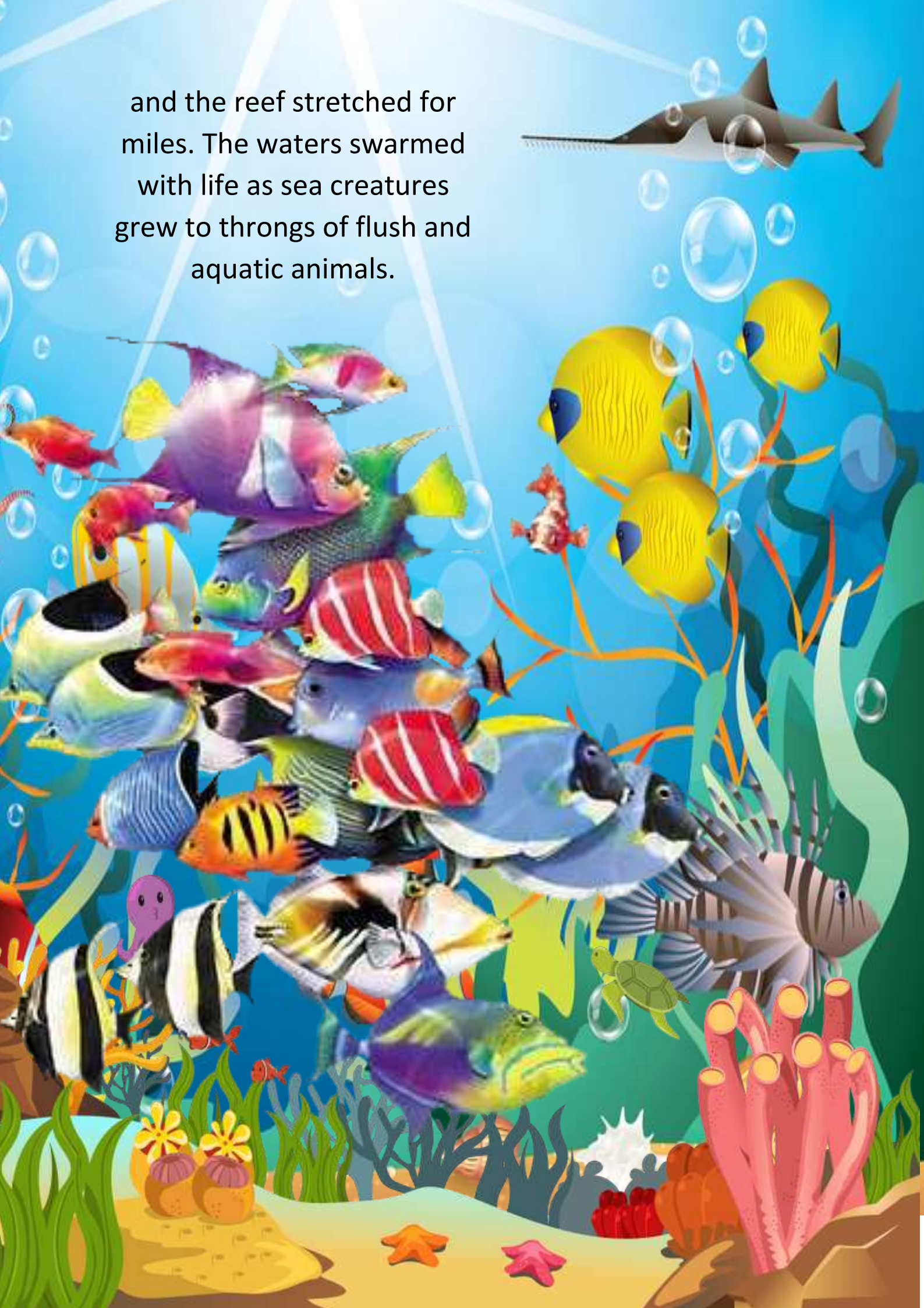


The plants bore fruit  
and nuts ...





and the reef stretched for miles. The waters swarmed with life as sea creatures grew to throngs of flush and aquatic animals.

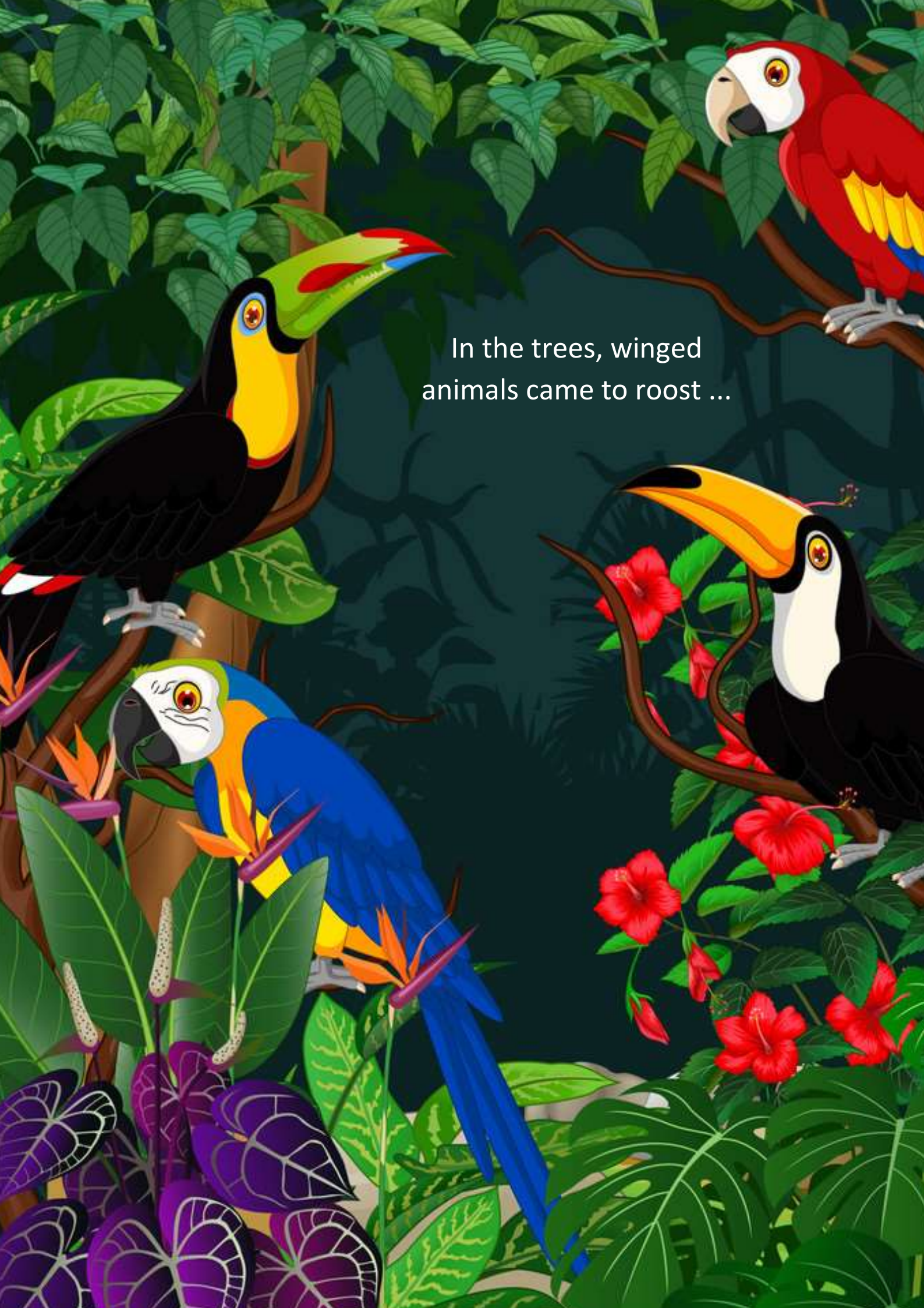






Immense trees, sumptuous grasses,  
blossoms and vines covered the land, and  
even covered up Mary's sign.





In the trees, winged  
animals came to roost ...



... and beneath them bugs and insects created busy pathways.







The Spirits watched  
on contently ...



... until one day, a new creature arrived... Tall and two-footed, it was curious and crafty, and it was hungry!



The new addition drew fish from the sea and gobbled them up.





The same creature shook fruit from the trees and  
chewed it down.





And soon beside it stood more and more of the same creature in all shapes and sizes.





The two-footed creatures began to make camps. They bent branches for shelter. They cut grasses to make pathways and moved materials from the lush areas to beaches.

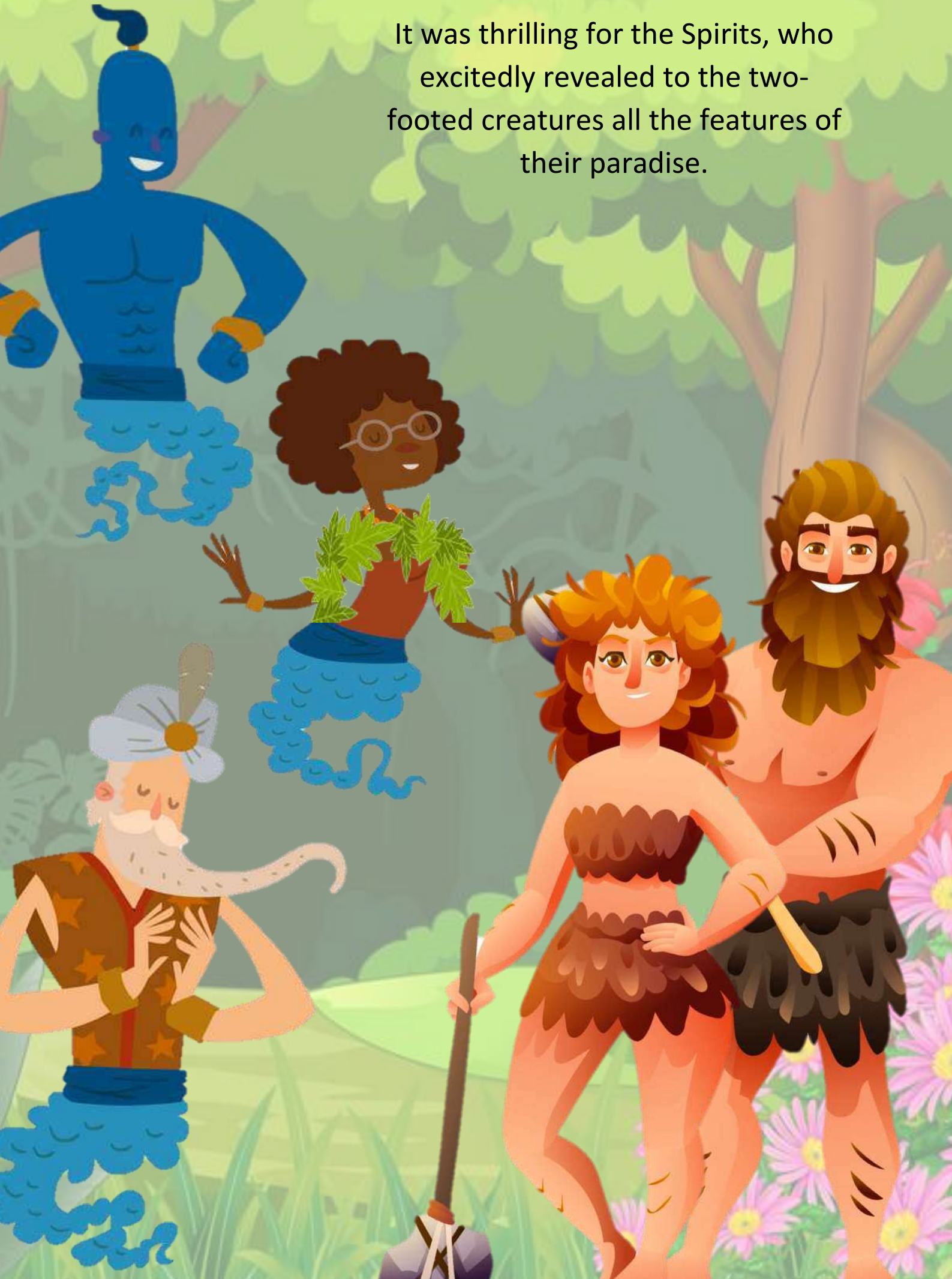


They made rafts so they could occupy both the water and the land.





It was thrilling for the Spirits, who excitedly revealed to the two-footed creatures all the features of their paradise.





The two-footed creatures sensed the Spirits and left little gifts for them. All the Spirits except May, for May hadn't yet shown the new creatures anything to be grateful for.





When the two-footed creatures came across the sign saying 'YAM!', they laughed. What use could such a strange and funny-sounding thing be to them? And so they forgot May and their sign, leaving no gifts behind.



One day, upon a raft, a great many two-footed creatures arrived. At first it was exciting. The creatures disembarked and greeted one another. There were offerings of foods and merriment.





But as the days wore on, it became clear there were not enough fish in the waters or fruit in the trees to feed all of the new inhabitants. The creatures gobbled everything up quickly, before the Spirits could replenish the ocean or sprout new nuts and berries. The Spirits were worried. The two-footed creatures were worried.







But May had no interest in worry. May was just bitter. No one had discovered May's secret gift buried in the ground; May had received no attention or special gifts. No one appreciated her humour, her nature, her zest.

So, May threw a tantrum, commanding the elements to produce a storm.



The sea life fled their homes for the unknown,  
May's rage grew until it was out of control,  
matched by the winds and the rain.





The two-footed creatures huddled in their shelters. Together with the Spirits they watched in pain as the greenery and flowers were overcome with water, torn and strewn about.





Wind hammered the shoreline and sands rose into swollen dunes. The reef abraded. The sea life left their homes and floated away into the unknown.



When the storm ceased, the two-footed creatures and the Spirits took store of their paradise. The isle had changed dramatically. It was no longer a place of harmony, richness, food or fish. It looked bleak. The waters had overtaken the shoreline.





And the trees were naked.

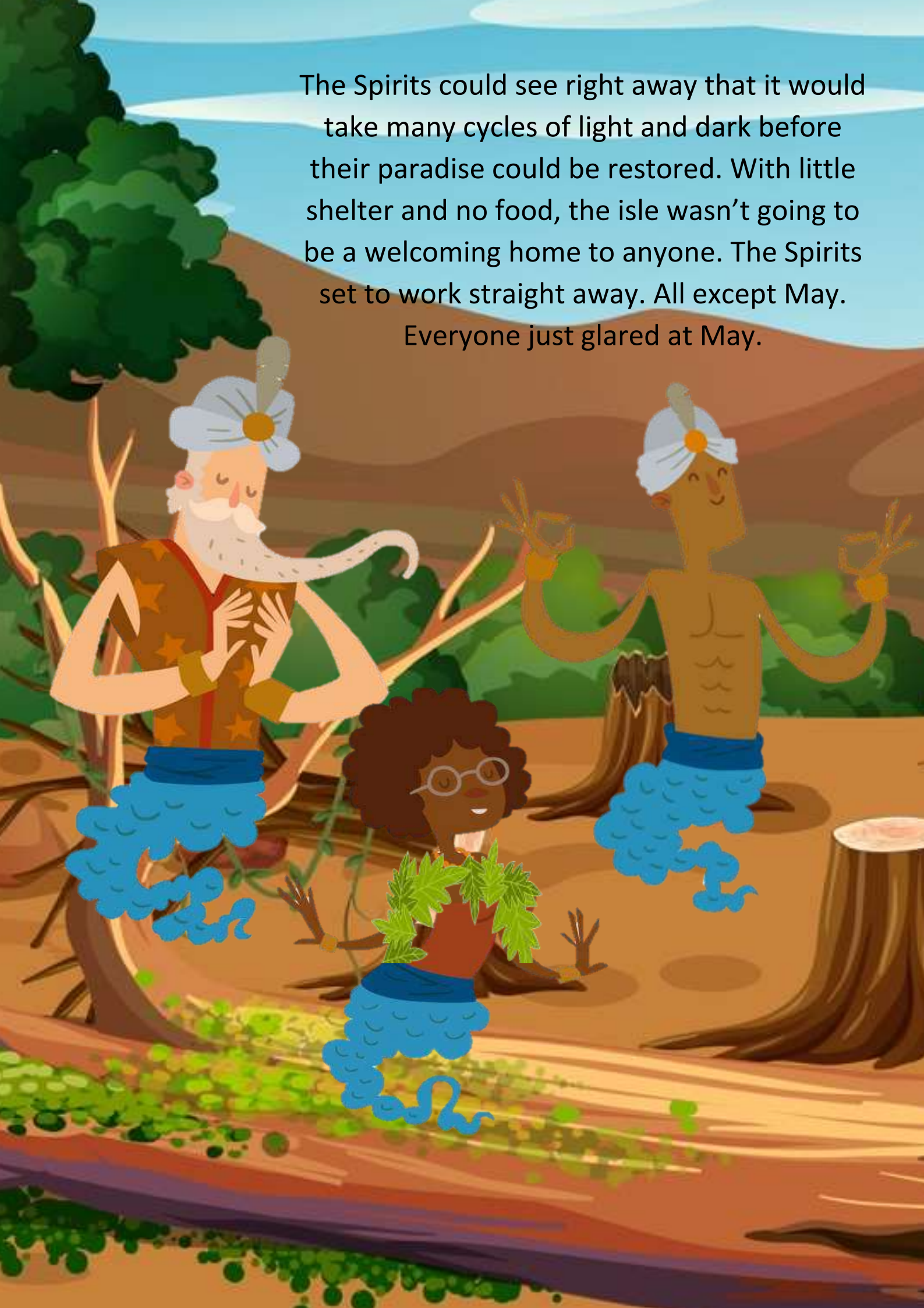


The two-footed creatures set about clearing debris to make a raft to sail away.





The Spirits could see right away that it would take many cycles of light and dark before their paradise could be restored. With little shelter and no food, the isle wasn't going to be a welcoming home to anyone. The Spirits set to work straight away. All except May. Everyone just glared at May.



May felt sheepish. She moped in remorse but none of the other Spirits felt sorry for her. And it didn't make them feel better either.





May moved to the beach and watched as the two-footed creatures boarded their raft. There wasn't enough room for all of them and a few smaller ones were left behind. May's heart broke for the little ones. And at once she stopped feeling sorry for herself.



Instead, May turned her effort to recovering from her mistake. May paced and paced and soon arrived on the spot where she had buried her object for safekeeping. Little did May know, behind her trailed the little two-footed creatures that had been left behind.



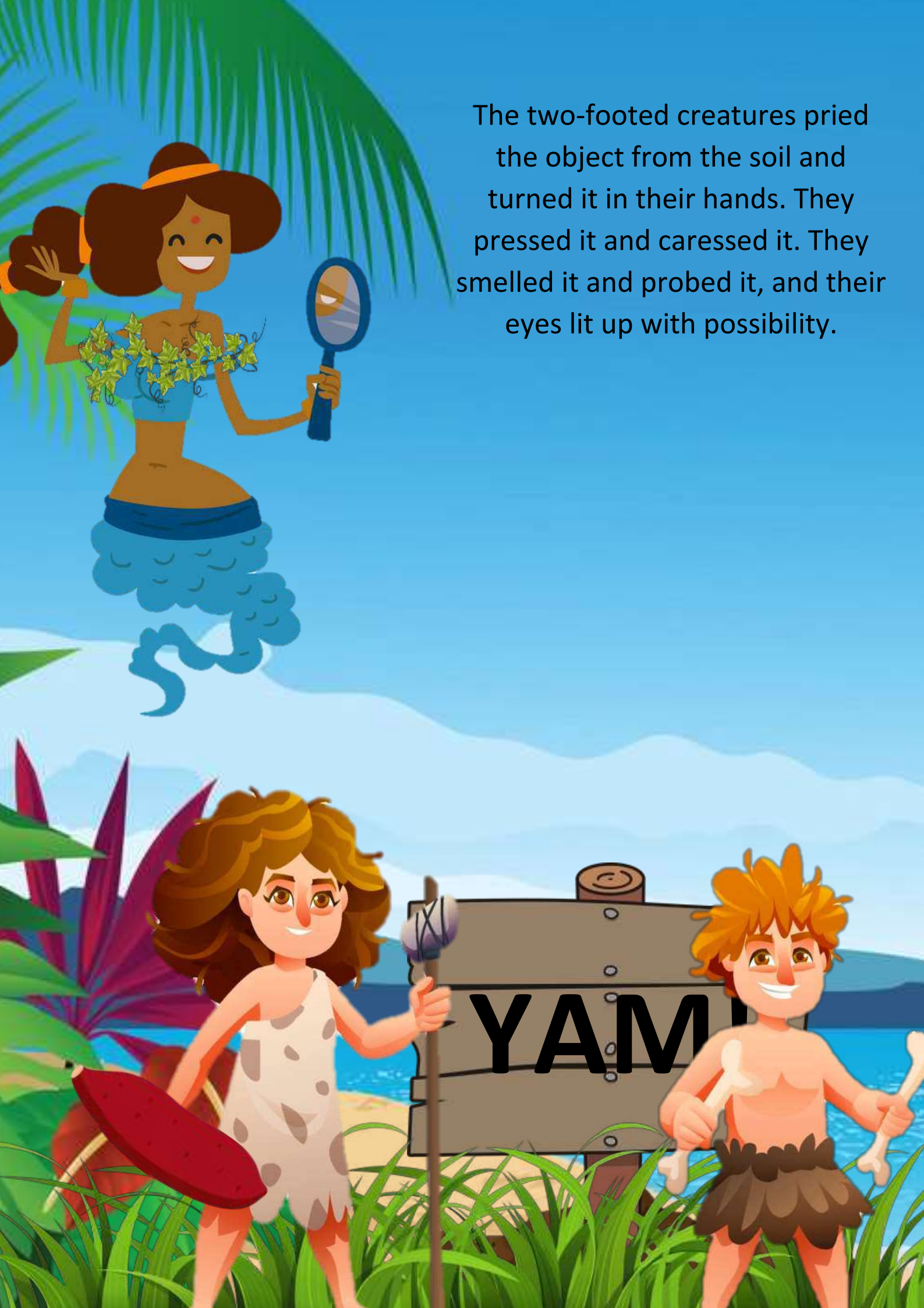




May watched on with surprise as the two-footed creatures gathered around the sign that read 'YAM!' The two-footed creatures inspected it with curiosity and then noticed that beneath their feet the soft soil had slid away in the storms. There, peeking out, was an end of strange object May had buried. May watched on in wonder.



The two-footed creatures pried the object from the soil and turned it in their hands. They pressed it and caressed it. They smelled it and probed it, and their eyes lit up with possibility.





May watched eagerly as the two creatures carried the strange object to the shoreline. They jumped up and down and waved the thing in the air. May was in awe.



Then, May watched as the two-footed creatures warmed the beach with a blaze and buried the object beneath the smouldering earth.





After such time as they deemed it ready, they extracted it from the embers, unrolled it and inhaled the delicious smell of cooked food. And then, the two-footed creatures feasted.



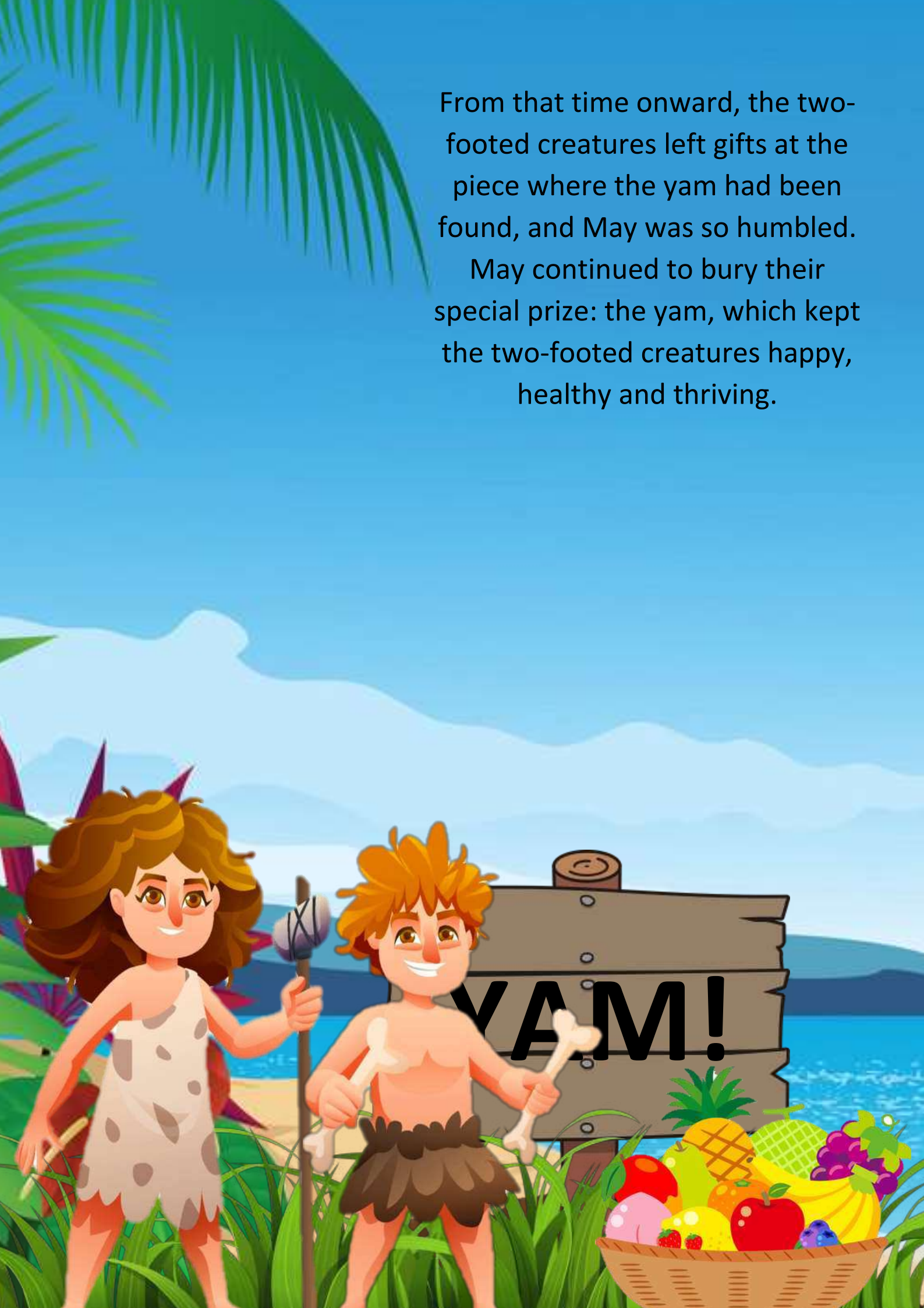
The two-footed creatures treated the yam with delicacy and reverence, taking off small bites and sharing it so each one of them could benefit the feast. May was filled with joy and purpose. And saw, finally, their important role in paradise.





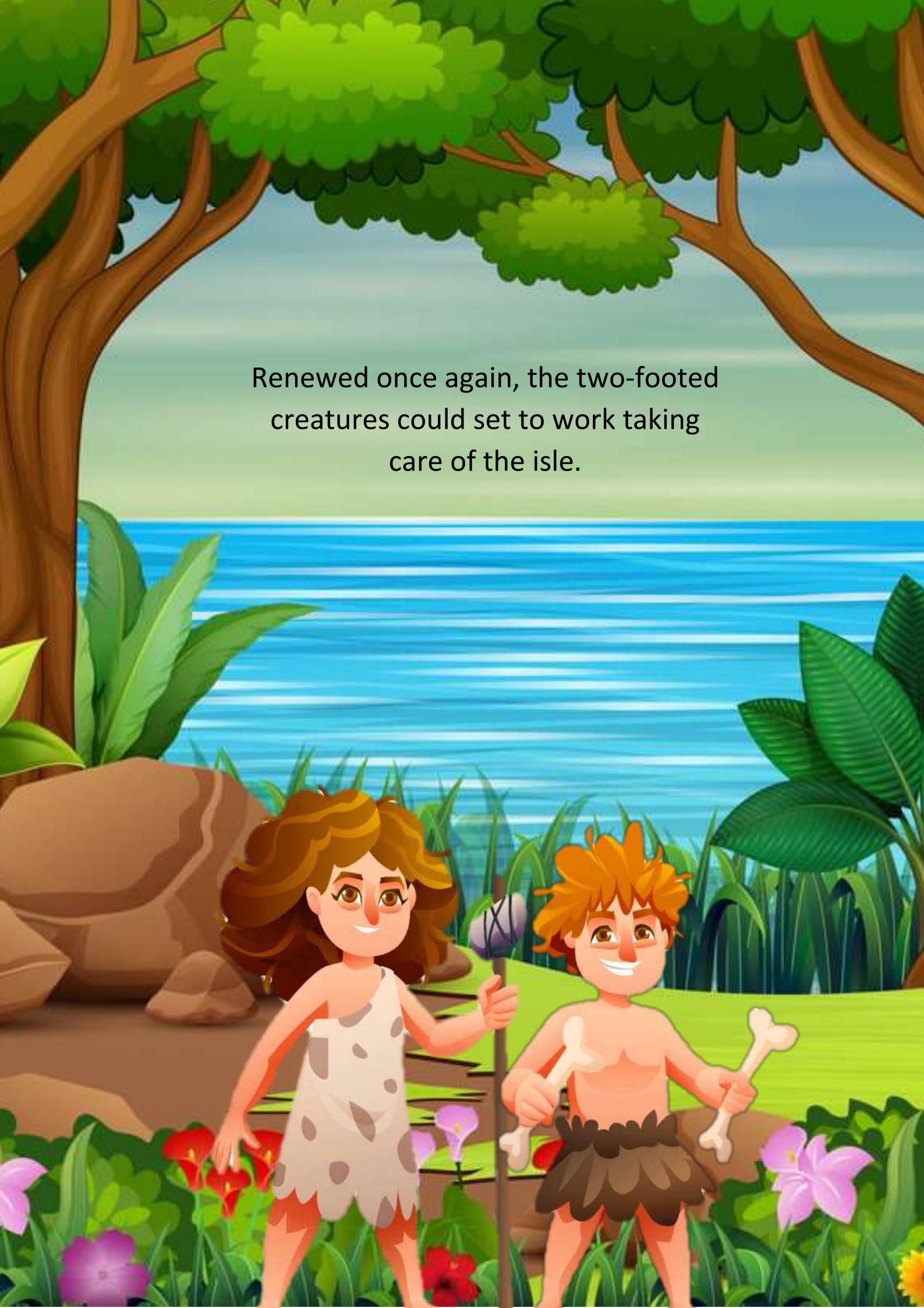
From that time onward, the two-footed creatures left gifts at the piece where the yam had been found, and May was so humbled.

May continued to bury their special prize: the yam, which kept the two-footed creatures happy, healthy and thriving.






Renewed once again, the two-footed creatures could set to work taking care of the isle.

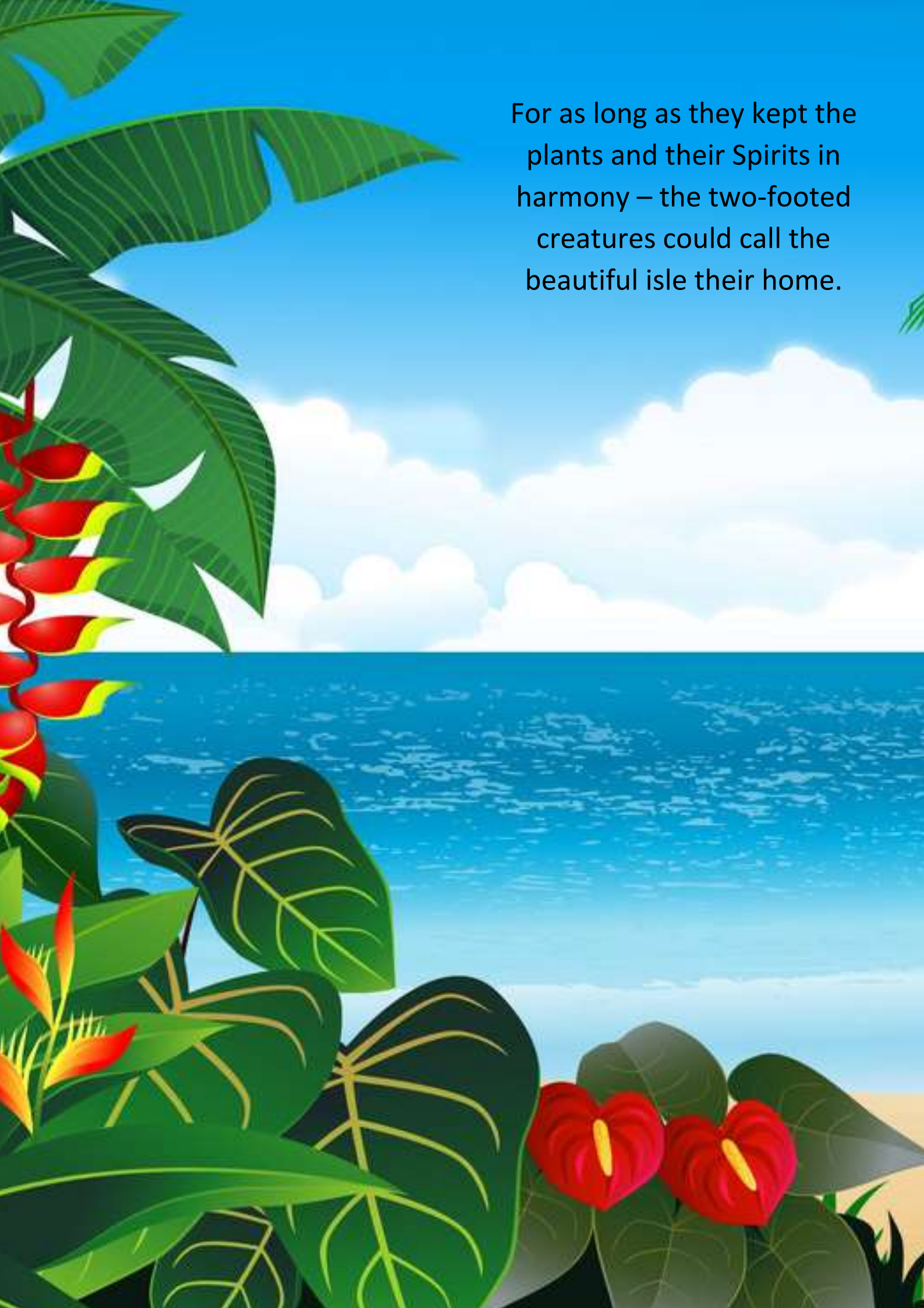






Slowly they helped the paradise,  
and its Spirits regrow and  
generate; the flora and fauna, the  
fish and the coral ... and most of  
all the precious yam



A vibrant tropical beach scene. The foreground is filled with lush green foliage, including large, dark green leaves with prominent veins and clusters of bright red flowers with yellow centers. The middle ground shows a clear blue ocean meeting a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. The overall atmosphere is bright and sunny.

For as long as they kept the  
plants and their Spirits in  
harmony – the two-footed  
creatures could call the  
beautiful isle their home.





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