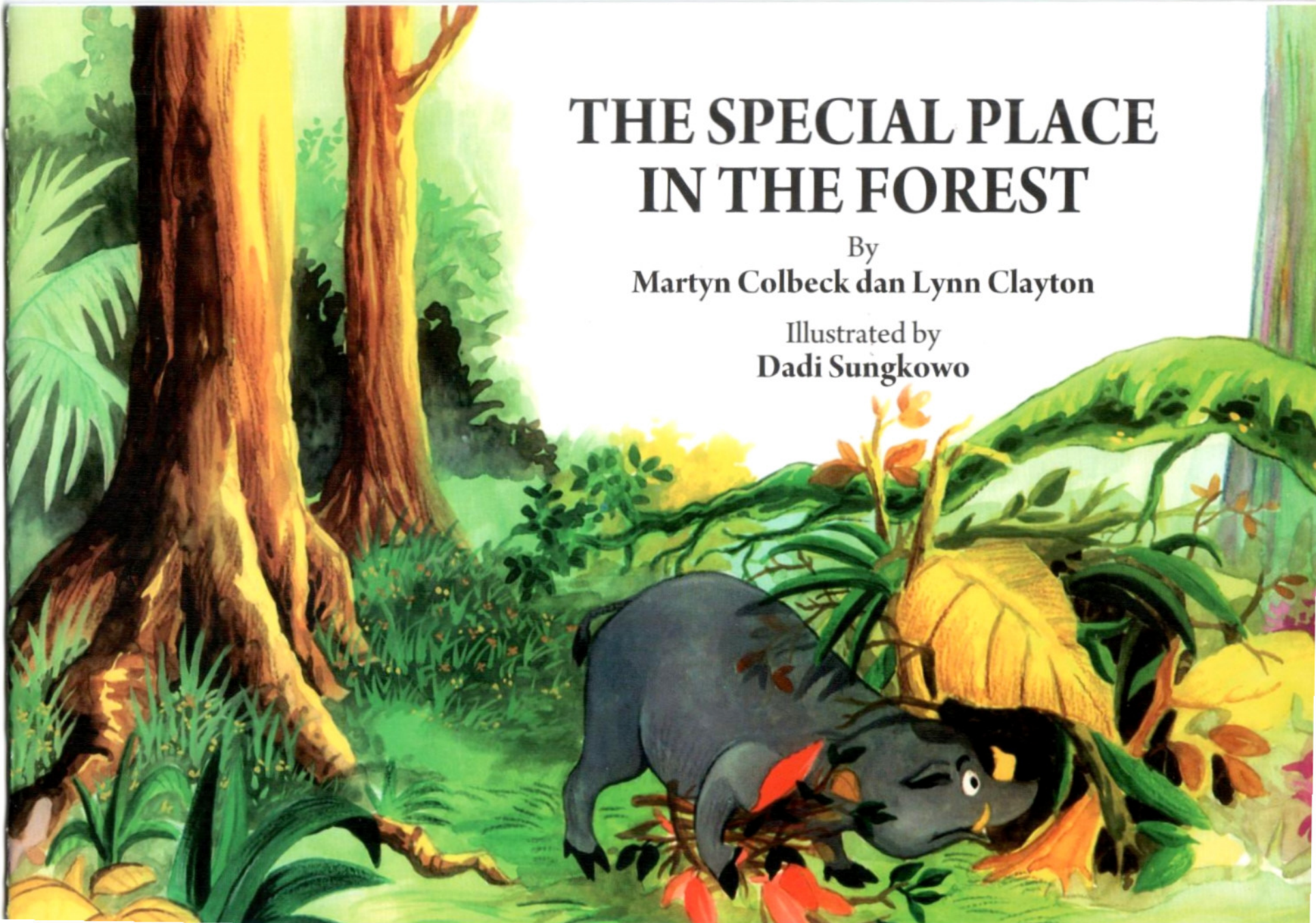


# THE SPECIAL PLACE IN THE FOREST

By  
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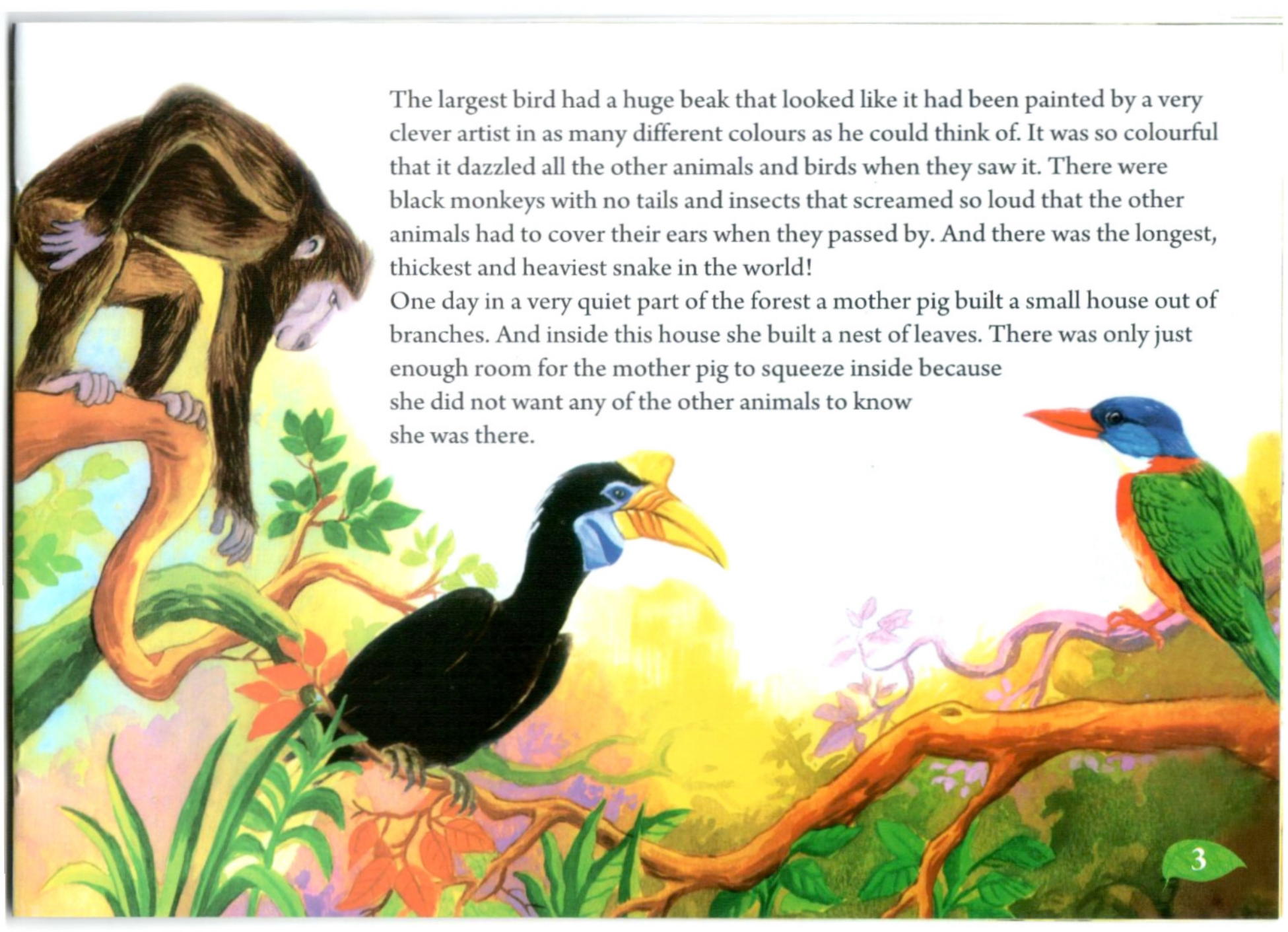




Long, long ago in the middle of a vast blue sea, there was a beautiful island. The sea surrounding the island was over-flowing with fish. There were small ones and big ones but every single one of them was more colourful than you can imagine.

The island it self was covered in thick, dark forest. The trees of the forest clung to the mountains and valleys like a coat clings to your body. The forest was home to all sorts of birds and animals, most of which were found nowhere else on earth

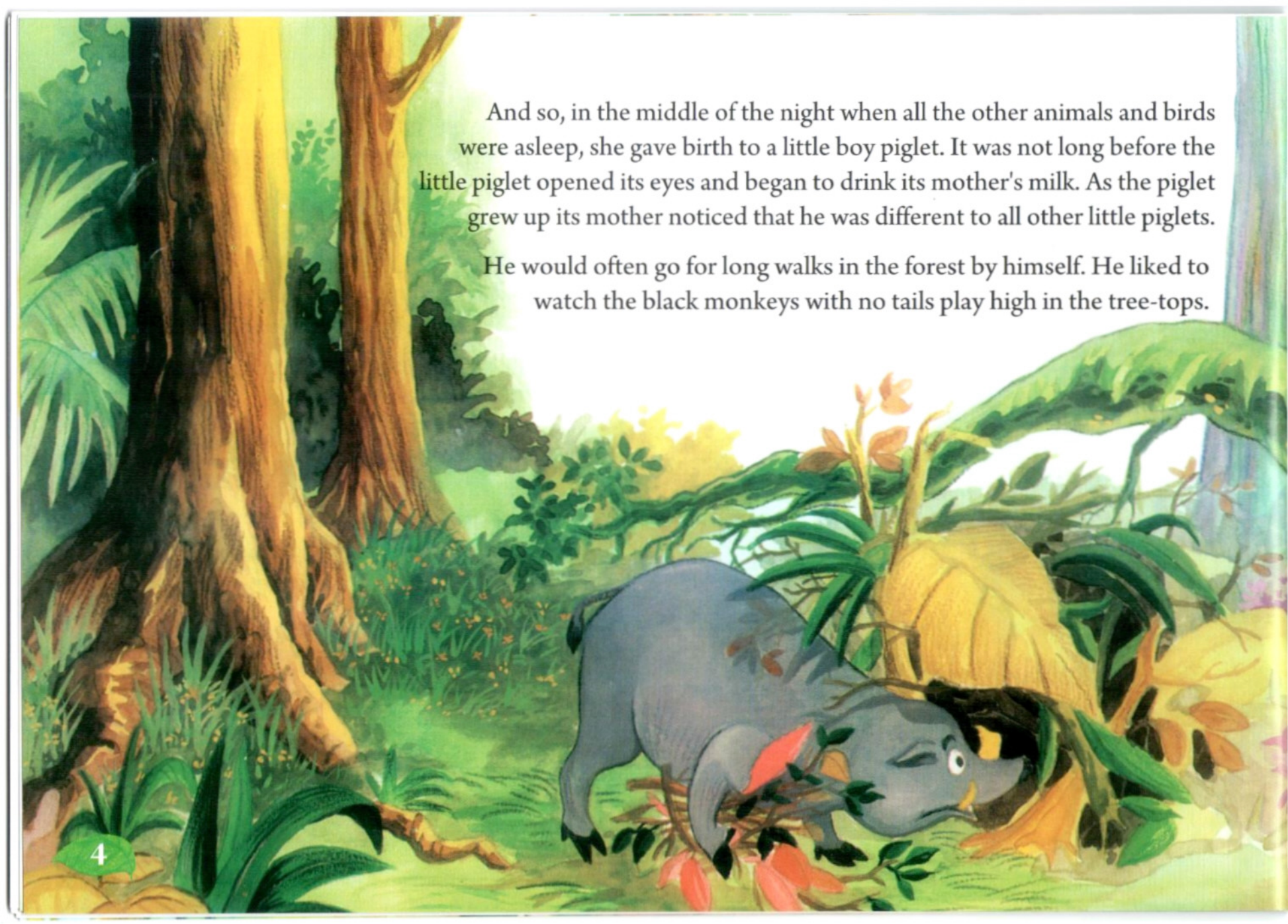




The largest bird had a huge beak that looked like it had been painted by a very clever artist in as many different colours as he could think of. It was so colourful that it dazzled all the other animals and birds when they saw it. There were black monkeys with no tails and insects that screamed so loud that the other animals had to cover their ears when they passed by. And there was the longest, thickest and heaviest snake in the world!

One day in a very quiet part of the forest a mother pig built a small house out of branches. And inside this house she built a nest of leaves. There was only just enough room for the mother pig to squeeze inside because she did not want any of the other animals to know she was there.





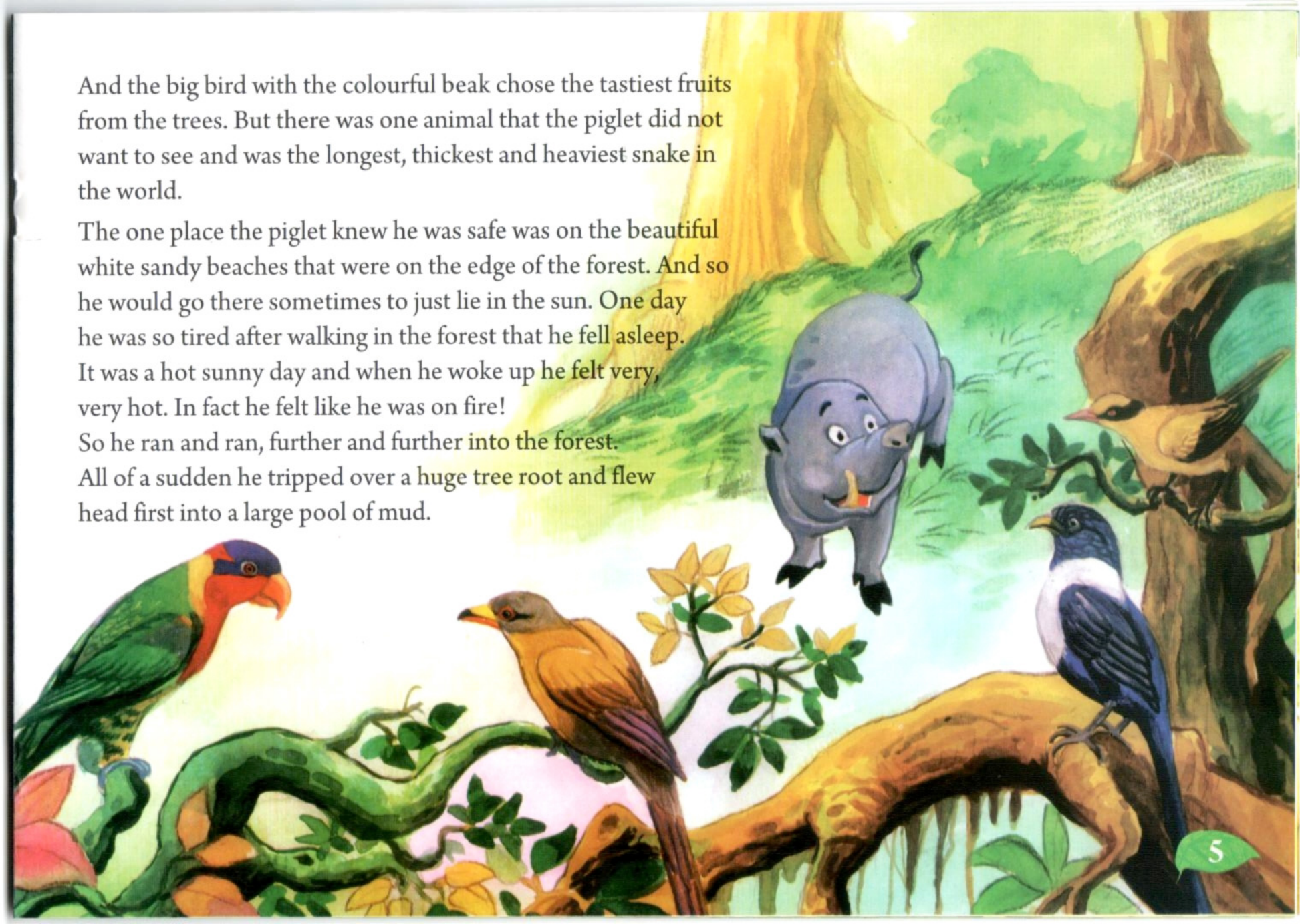
And so, in the middle of the night when all the other animals and birds were asleep, she gave birth to a little boy piglet. It was not long before the little piglet opened its eyes and began to drink its mother's milk. As the piglet grew up its mother noticed that he was different to all other little piglets.

He would often go for long walks in the forest by himself. He liked to watch the black monkeys with no tails play high in the tree-tops.




And the big bird with the colourful beak chose the tastiest fruits from the trees. But there was one animal that the piglet did not want to see and was the longest, thickest and heaviest snake in the world.

The one place the piglet knew he was safe was on the beautiful white sandy beaches that were on the edge of the forest. And so he would go there sometimes to just lie in the sun. One day he was so tired after walking in the forest that he fell asleep. It was a hot sunny day and when he woke up he felt very, very hot. In fact he felt like he was on fire! So he ran and ran, further and further into the forest. All of a sudden he tripped over a huge tree root and flew head first into a large pool of mud.







There was a "psssst" sound and steam rose into the cool forest air.

The lovely wet mud cooled the little piglet in no time. A few days later a strange thing happened. All the little piglet's hair fell out and his skin became very pink and very smooth. and every time after that if the piglet wanted to go the beach he had to cover his little pink body in mud so he wouldn't get burned.

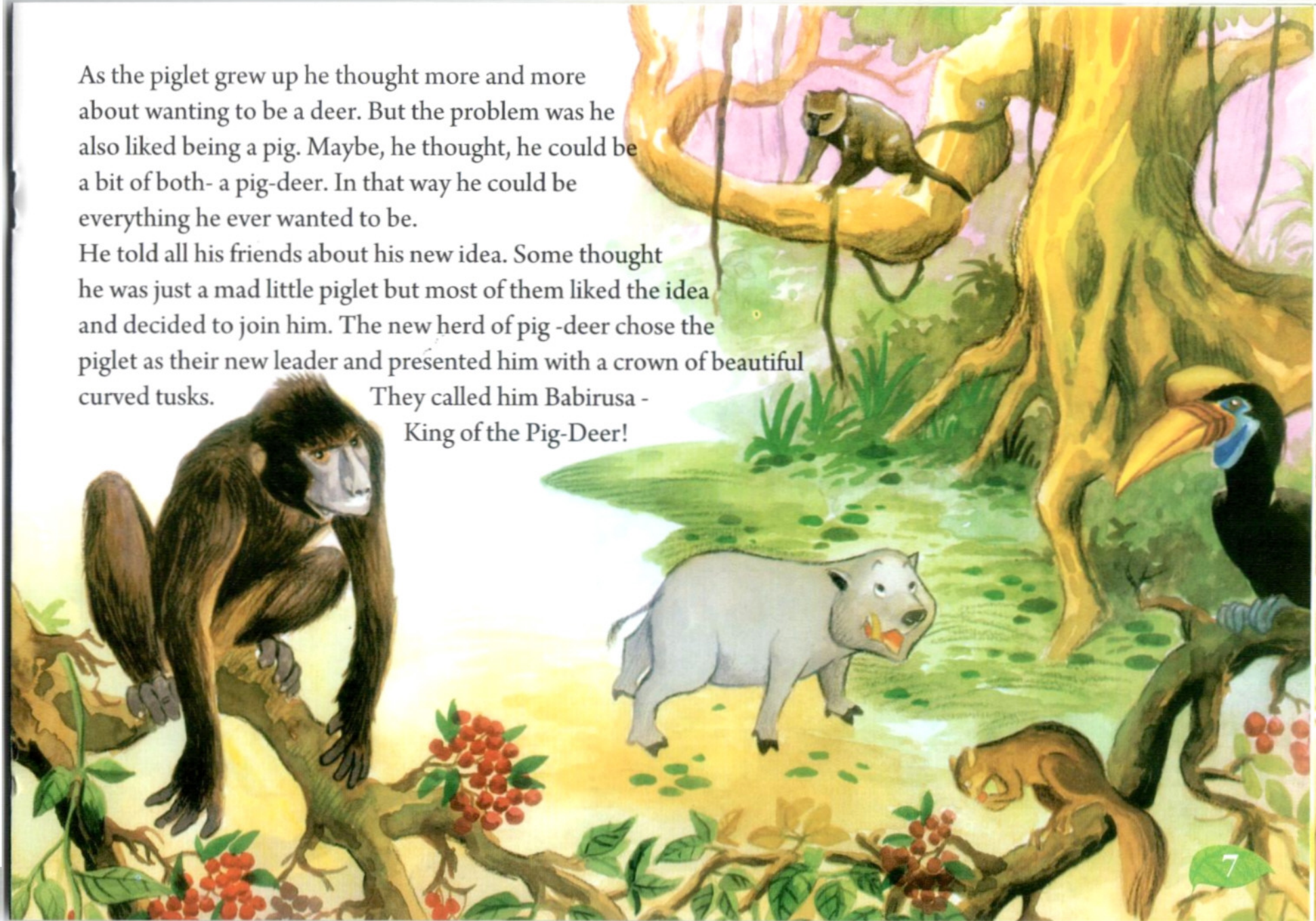
One of the piglet's favourite forest animals was the deer. he liked it because it was so quiet and shy which made it very difficult to find. The piglet liked the idea of being able to hide in the forest so no one could find him. Sometimes he wished he were a deer.



As the piglet grew up he thought more and more about wanting to be a deer. But the problem was he also liked being a pig. Maybe, he thought, he could be a bit of both- a pig-deer. In that way he could be everything he ever wanted to be.

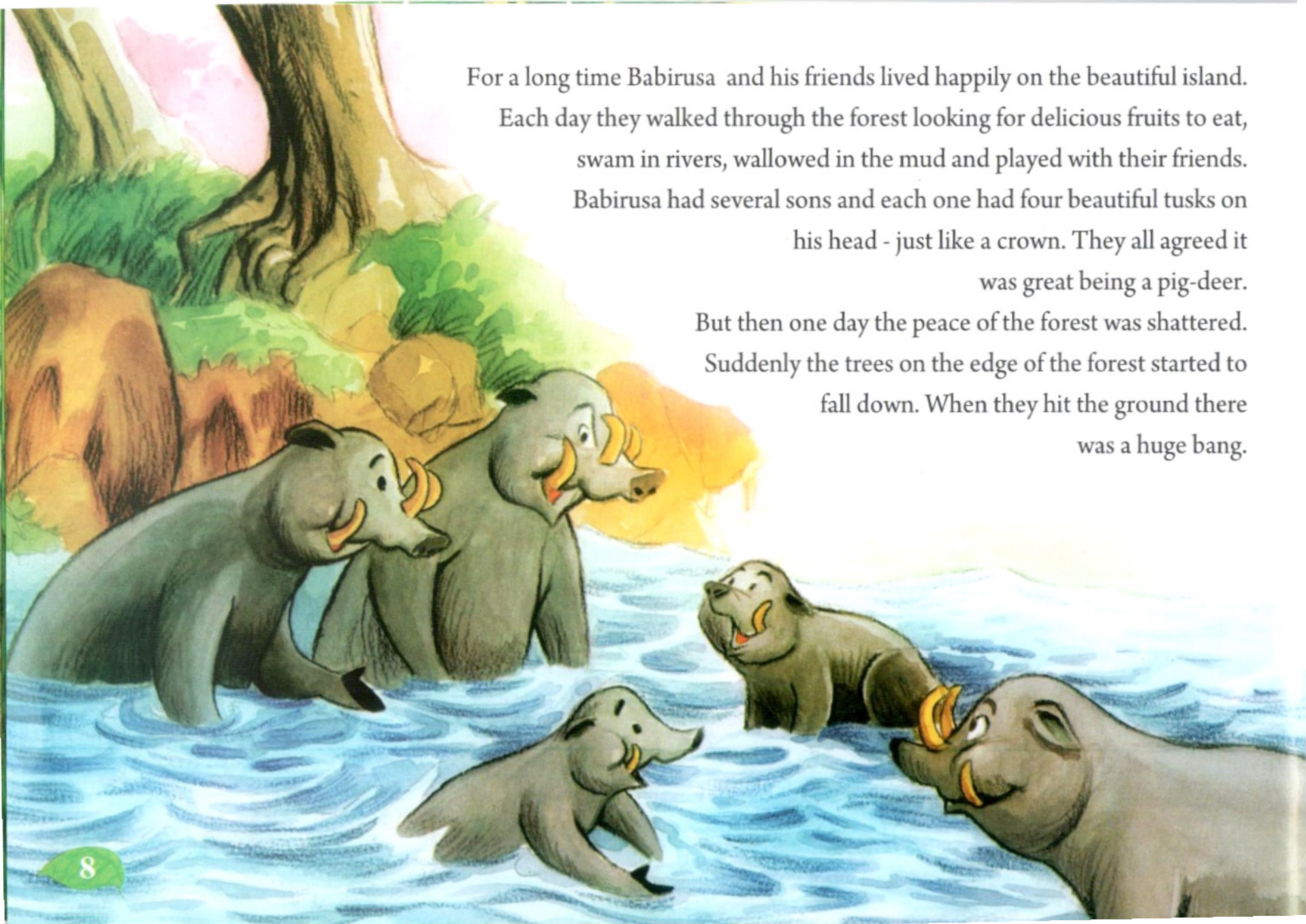
He told all his friends about his new idea. Some thought he was just a mad little piglet but most of them liked the idea and decided to join him. The new herd of pig -deer chose the piglet as their new leader and presented him with a crown of beautiful curved tusks.

They called him Babirusa -  
King of the Pig-Deer!





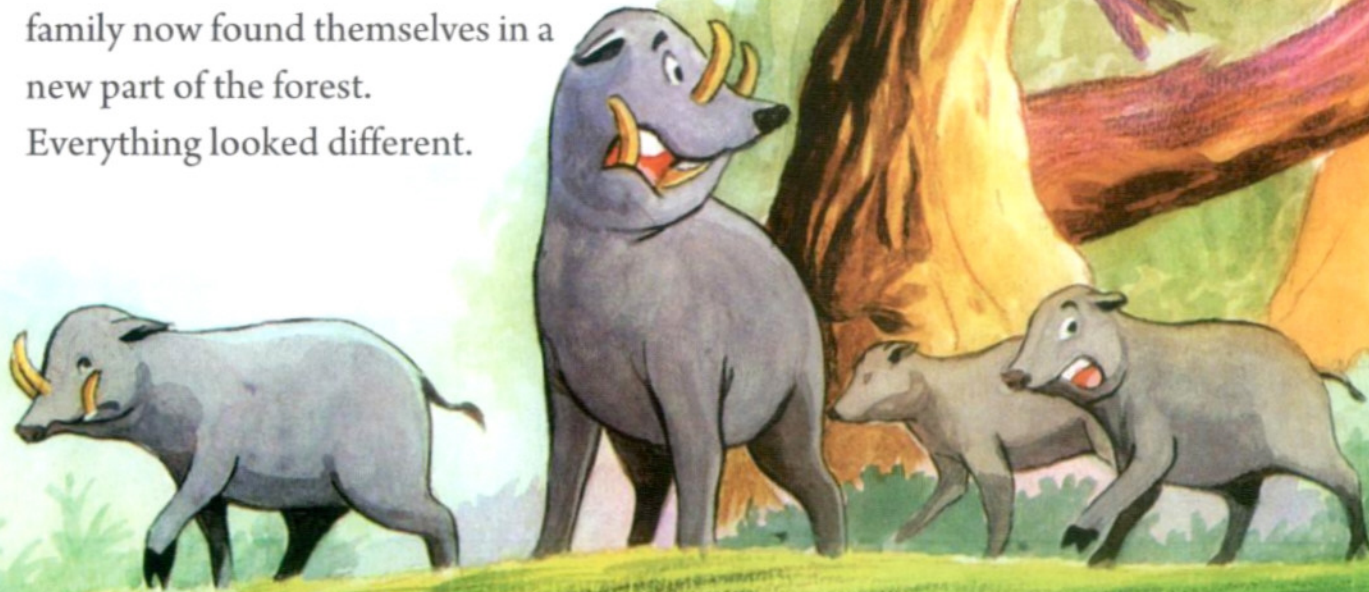
For a long time Babirusa and his friends lived happily on the beautiful island. Each day they walked through the forest looking for delicious fruits to eat, swam in rivers, wallowed in the mud and played with their friends. Babirusa had several sons and each one had four beautiful tusks on his head - just like a crown. They all agreed it was great being a pig-deer. But then one day the peace of the forest was shattered. Suddenly the trees on the edge of the forest started to fall down. When they hit the ground there was a huge bang.



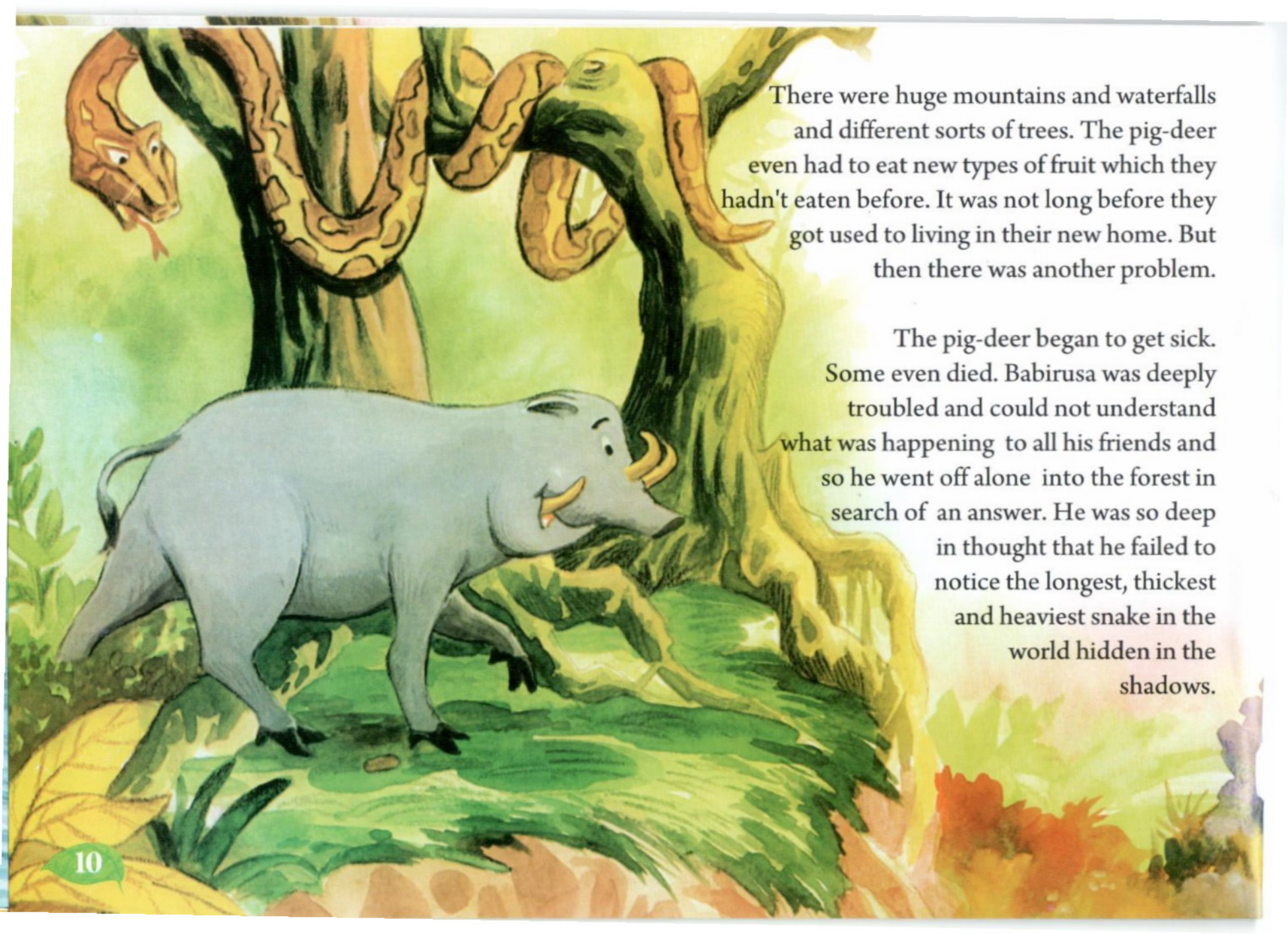


The noise frightened all the animals and they ran as fast as they could deep into the forest where they knew they would be safe. But the trees kept falling and so the animals had to run even further into the forest.

Babirusa and all his friends and family now found themselves in a new part of the forest. Everything looked different.







There were huge mountains and waterfalls and different sorts of trees. The pig-deer even had to eat new types of fruit which they hadn't eaten before. It was not long before they got used to living in their new home. But then there was another problem.

The pig-deer began to get sick. Some even died. Babirusa was deeply troubled and could not understand what was happening to all his friends and so he went off alone into the forest in search of an answer. He was so deep in thought that he failed to notice the longest, thickest and heaviest snake in the world hidden in the shadows.



In a flash the snake struck out and bit Babirusa's back leg. In no time it wrapped its whole body tightly around him and squeezed hard. It was difficult for Babirusa to breath and he knew he had to do something fast. He wriggled and squirmed, twisted and turned but the snake's hold got tighter and tighter. Babirusa had almost given up hope when he remembered his secret weapon- the crown of sharp tusks on his head.

Using all his strength he twisted and turned and with a huge shake of his head stabbed the snake in its side. And then he did it again and again until the snake started to uncoil itself from Babirusa's little pink body. As soon as he could Babirusa wriggled free and ran off into the forest. He had had a lucky escape from the clutches of the longest, thickest and heaviest snake in the world.



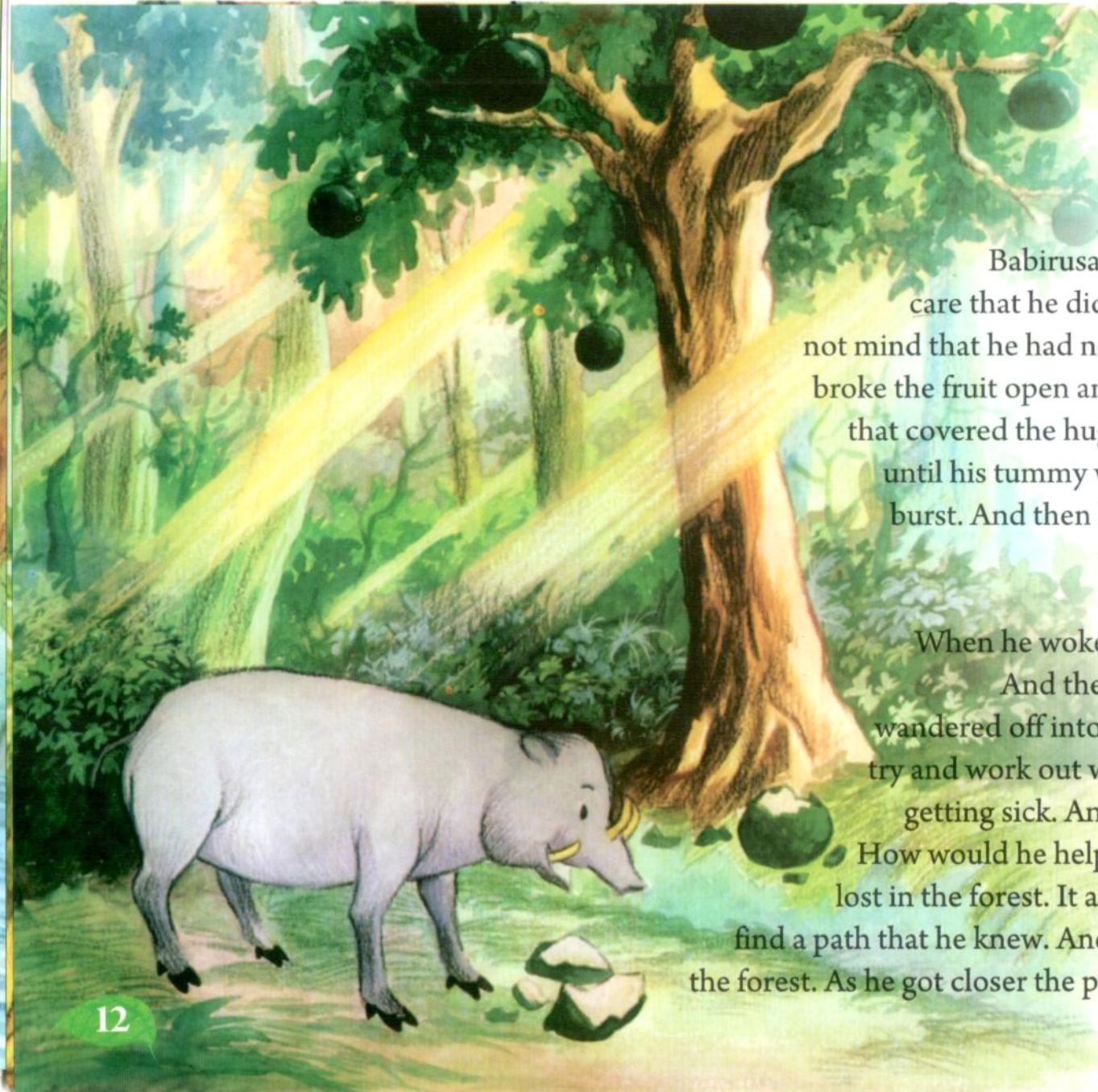


Babirusa was now very tired and lost in the forest. By the time the large brown rotting pangi fruit on the forest floor

Babirusa was so hungry that he did not care that he didn't recognize the fruit. He did not mind that he had never eaten it before. And so he broke the fruit open and ate the delicious white flesh that covered the huge seeds inside. He ate and ate until his tummy was so full he thought it would burst. And then he lay down on a bed of leaves and fell asleep.

When he woke up Babirusa did not feel well.

And then he remembered why he had wandered off into the forest in the first place- to try and work out why all the other pig-deer were getting sick. And now he too was getting sick. How would he help them now? Babirusa was still lost in the forest. It all looked the same. He tried to find a path that he knew. And then he saw a bright patch in the forest. As he got closer the patch got brighter and brighter.





Babirusa walked very slowly and very quietly until he got the edge of a large clearing in the forest. He had never seen any place like it before. It was a special place. In the middle of the special place was a small pool of water.

After his long walk Babirusa was thirsty so he drank from the pool. The water tasted good and sweet. Even the mud around the pool seemed to taste sweet so he found himself eating that too. He had never eaten mud before but this tasted so good. As he ate more and more of the mud he started to feel better. He no longer felt sick and the more he ate the better he felt.

Was this a magic potion?

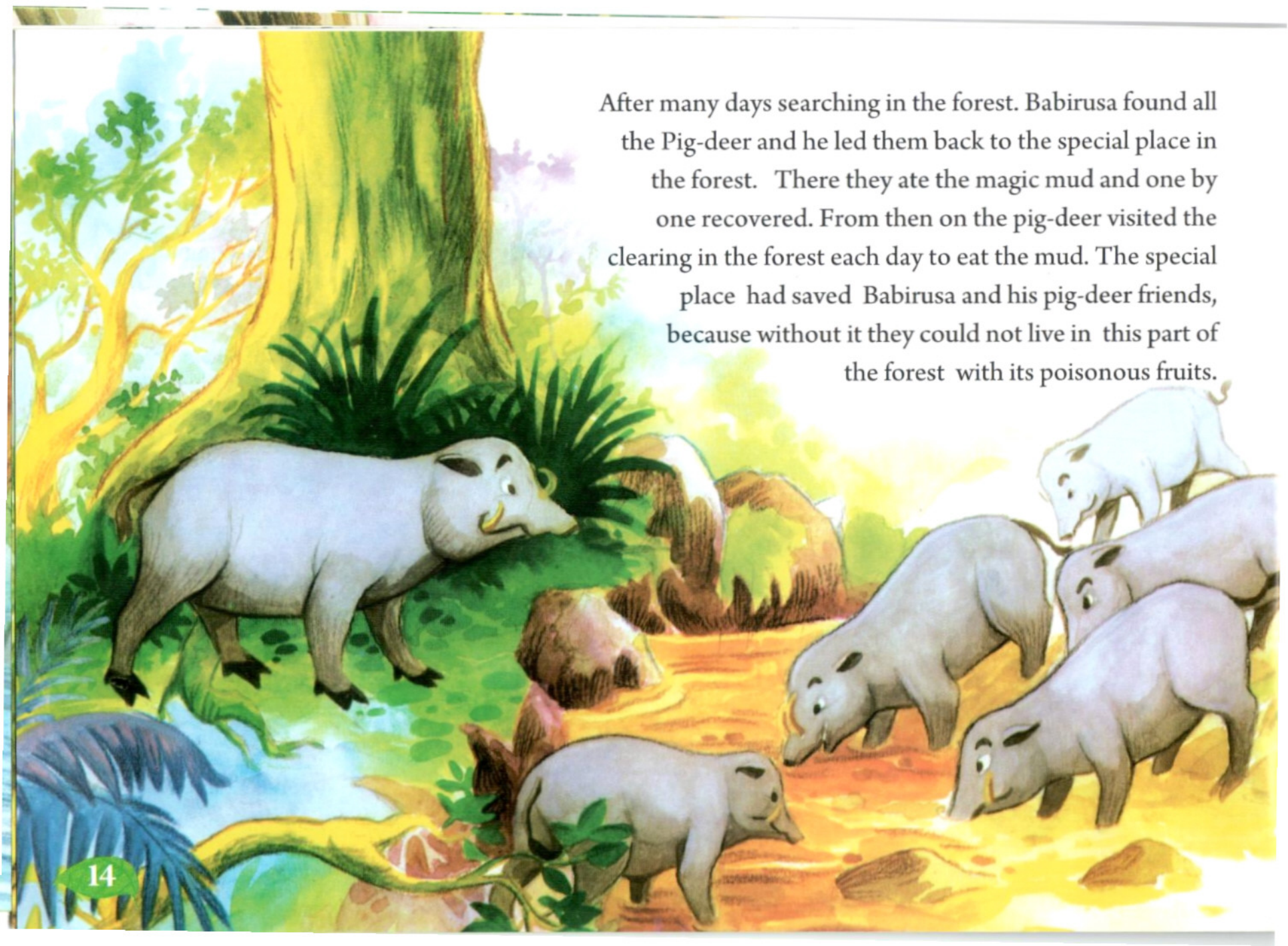
If it was, Babirusa had to tell his sick friends as soon as possible.

And so he set off to find them.





After many days searching in the forest. Babirusa found all the Pig-deer and he led them back to the special place in the forest. There they ate the magic mud and one by one recovered. From then on the pig-deer visited the clearing in the forest each day to eat the mud. The special place had saved Babirusa and his pig-deer friends, because without it they could not live in this part of the forest with its poisonous fruits.









But even though Babirusa had found a place where all the Pig-deer could live, all was not well. For in the distance, even from the remote clearing, the pig-deer could still hear the distant sound of falling trees. This worried them. It worried them a lot. Because if the trees fell any closer to their home they would have nowhere left to run, nowhere to hide. They did not want their forest home to disappear forever because that would mean the end of the pig-deer and all the other animals as well.

But for now there is still a special place in the forest-a place where Babirusa comes with all his friends and family. And if you are very quiet and sneak through the forest like a deer, you may, just may be very lucky and catch sight of them.



### Questions to think about :

- 1 *Why is it important for us to save the Nantu Forest?*
- 2 *The babirusa is an animal which is found only in Sulawesi and nowhere else in the whole world. Have you seen anything in the forest which would hurt the babirusa?*
- 3 *What do you think you could do, either on your own or with your friends, neighbours, family or school, to help so that the babirusa can continue to live in Sulawesi?*





## Lynn Clayton

is an international conservationist based in Sulawesi, Indonesia. She has conducted research and conservation work on the babirusa and Sulawesi's other wildlife for the past thirteen years. She was awarded her

doctorate from Oxford University, England, on the ecology of the babirusa in the wild at the Paguyaman Forest, Gorontalo Province (now gazetted as the Nantu Nature Reserve). She also gained her first degree and masters, both in biology, from Oxford University. Her scientific work has been widely published in international journals and featured on Indonesian, Japanese, English and French television. It is sponsored in Indonesia by the Centre for Research and Development of the Indonesian Institute of Sciences. Together with a team of Indonesian scientists and conservationists Lynn has founded the NGO Yayasan Adudu-Nantu Internasional (Y.A.N.I.) and is now working to help protect the Nantu Nature Reserve through public education and establishment of a research center. This conservation work is funded by the UK government's Darwin Initiative programme and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Environment Project Fund. Lynn was born in Sussex, England.

## Martyn Colbeck

is an award-winning wildlife film-maker and photographer. For nearly twenty years he has been travelling the globe filming



wildlife for the BBC's Natural History Unit in Bristol, England. His subjects have varied from the extraordinary gelada baboons of the Ethiopian Highlands to the rare and endangered pygmy chimpanzee in the Congo Basin. In 1993 Martyn won the Wildlife Photographer of the Year Competition with a dramatic photograph of one of the magnificent bull elephants in Amboseli National Park in Kenya. It was taken while he was making two films about a family of elephants. Martyn is currently working on a third film about the same family which will be completed in 2004. In 2000 Martyn won a Panda award for his cinematography at the International Wildscreen Wildlife Film Festival in Bristol, England, for his work on Elephants of the Sand River, a film about the rare desert elephants of Namibia.

The book "The Special Place in the Forest" was written while Martyn was filming the extraordinary babirusa for the David Attenborough series "The Life of Mammals". Martyn spent over two years filming for this highly acclaimed series.



This is a true story and really happened in the Nantu Nature Reserve, Paguyaman district, Gorontalo Province.

The Nantu forest is the home of the babirusa, which is only found in Sulawesi and nowhere else in the whole world. In the Nantu forest there is a muddy open place which is very special for the babirusa. Babirusa come to eat mud, wallow and meet with other babirusa. Other animals, like monkeys, the anoa and monitor lizards also come to this special place in the forest.

The Nantu Forest is also home to many other animals and birds, including the hornbill, monkeys, tarsiers, deer and civet cats, as well as many types of trees and plants, including the pangi tree, rao tree and the blue-and-red coloured Eucalyptus tree.

