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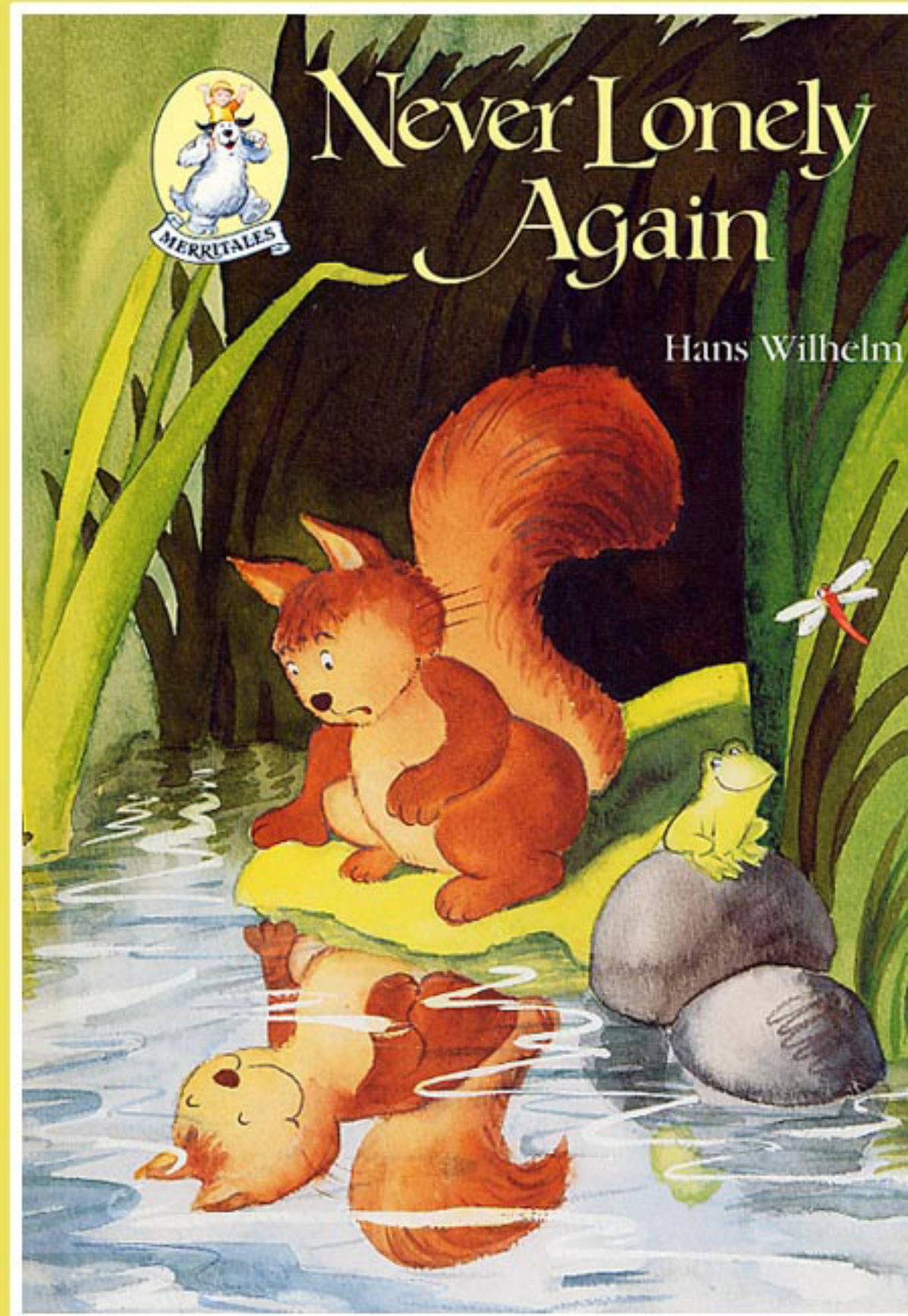
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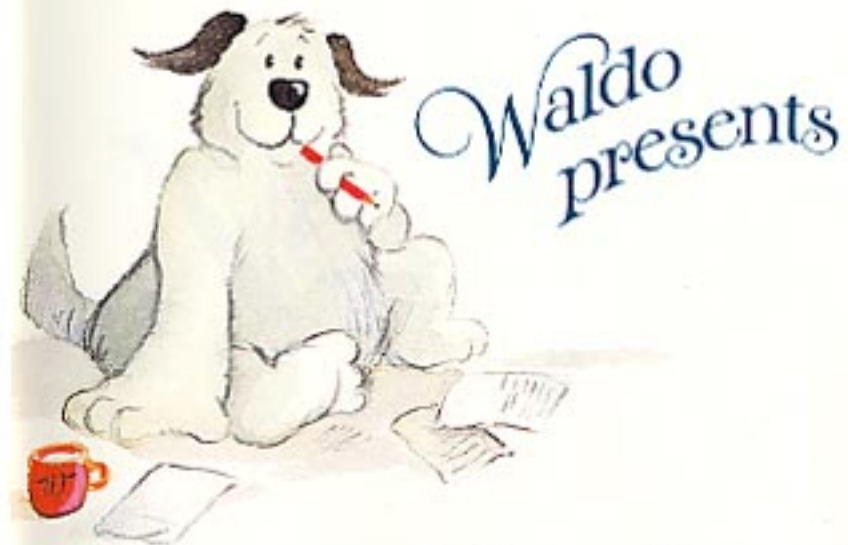
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Never Lonely Again

Let me tell you a little secret. When I was about your age, I often felt very lonely. Sometimes I had no friends to play with and I thought that nobody cared how I felt.

I still remember that very well. Most grownups have forgotten how it feels to be lonely, because they always seem to be so busy.

Chestnut, the squirrel in our story, also felt lonely. But one day something happened that opened his eyes.

Your friend,

Waldo



A MERRITALE™ Book

Never Lonely Again

Written and illustrated by
Hans Wilhelm





One morning Chestnut stayed in bed longer than usual. He didn't feel like getting up. There was nothing for him to do, and worst of all, he had no friends to play with.

"I might as well keep on sleeping," he thought to himself, when suddenly his whole house began to move and shake.

"An earthquake!" Chestnut thought, and was wide awake right away.



But it was no earthquake. It was only Morris, the otter, who was playing with a branch of Chestnut's tree.



"Are you crazy," Chestnut said furiously, "making such a rattle this early in the day?"



"What's the matter?" replied Morris. "Why can't you come out and play?"

"Phaa!" said Chestnut, who didn't want Morris to know that he had no friends to play with.

"I think I know what your problem is," said Morris as he dried his coat. "You are just bored with your own company! That happens to all of us at times.

"Have you ever wondered why we otters are always so happy?" continued Morris. "It's because every new day we have to make one new friend."

"Then you must have hundreds of friends," Chestnut said skeptically.

"Oh, maybe even more than that," said Morris. "Come along. I'll show you some of my pals!"



Chestnut didn't believe Morris for a moment. But he was curious enough to go along with him.



"Look here! These are some of my friends!" said Morris, and he jumped into the middle of a patch of flowers.

"But these are just dumb flowers!" cried Chestnut. "They're not friends."

"Why not? Aren't they lovely with their nice smell? Look at them—they all seem to smile at us! Someone who smiles at me is my friend!" insisted Morris.





"Now let's try to catch a butterfly," Morris said.
"They can be very tricky friends."
Chestnut still thought Morris was silly, but he liked catching butterflies.

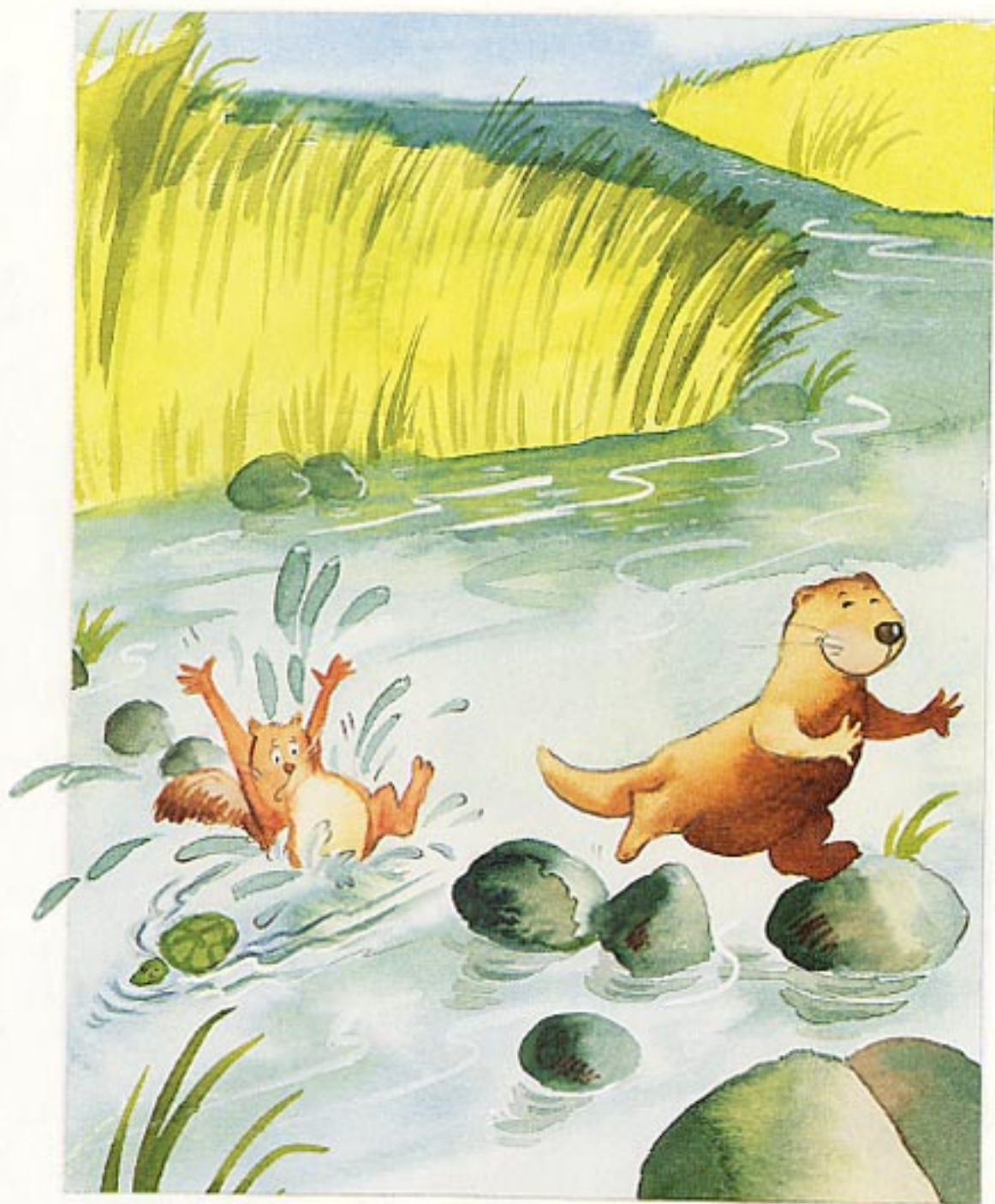


Whenever Morris caught a butterfly, he immediately set it free again.
"We can't keep a friend locked up," he said, laughing.

Then Morris pointed to a row of rocks leading across the river. "These friends are more fun than a bridge."

Chestnut wasn't quite sure.



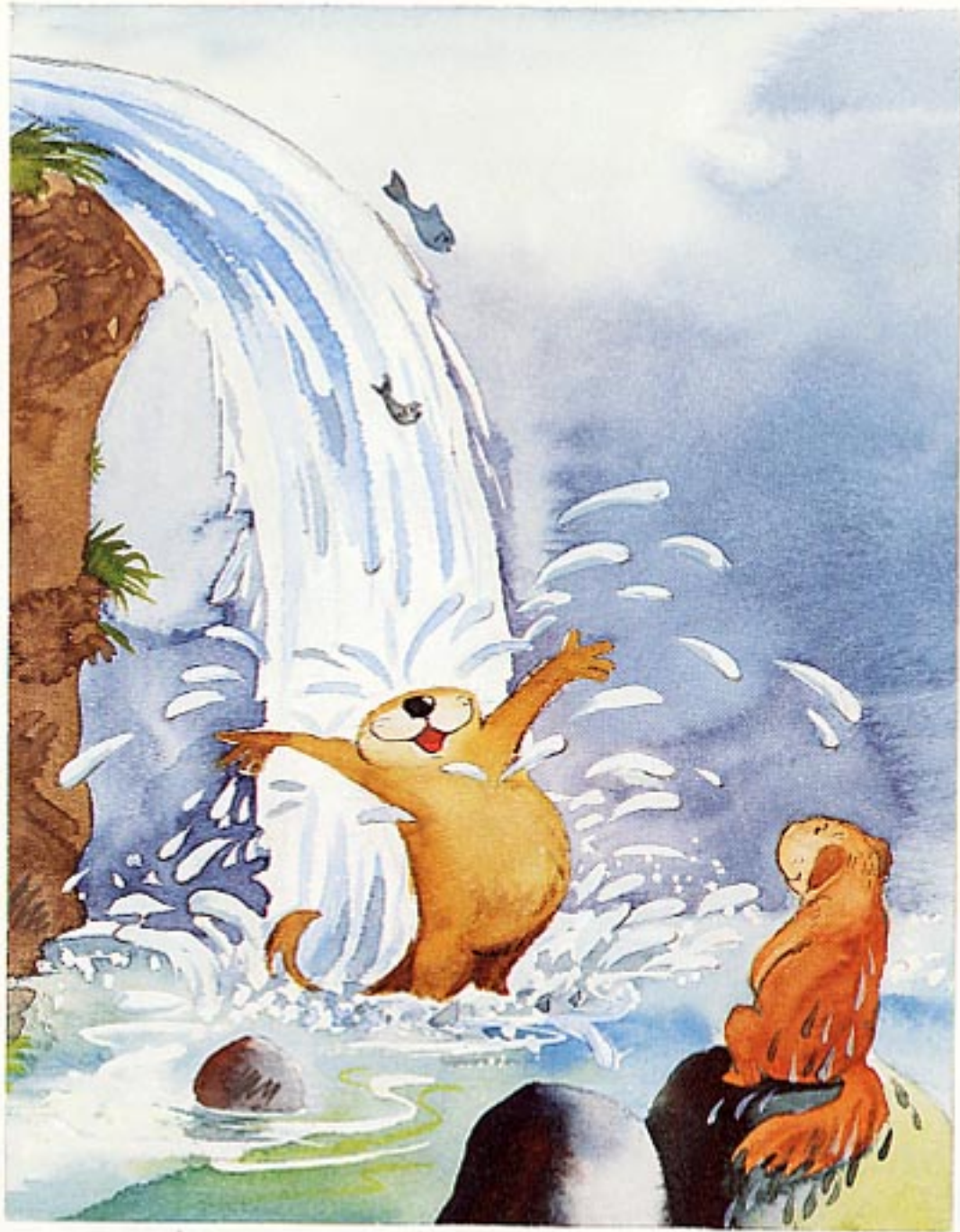


Chestnut jumped from stone to stone. He had nearly made it to the other side of the river when he slipped and fell into the water.

As he climbed to the shore with his coat and tail dripping, Chestnut said angrily, "I guess the water is also one of your friends!"

"Of course!" Morris said with a laugh. "No reason to be upset. Water can be fun. Come. Watch me!"





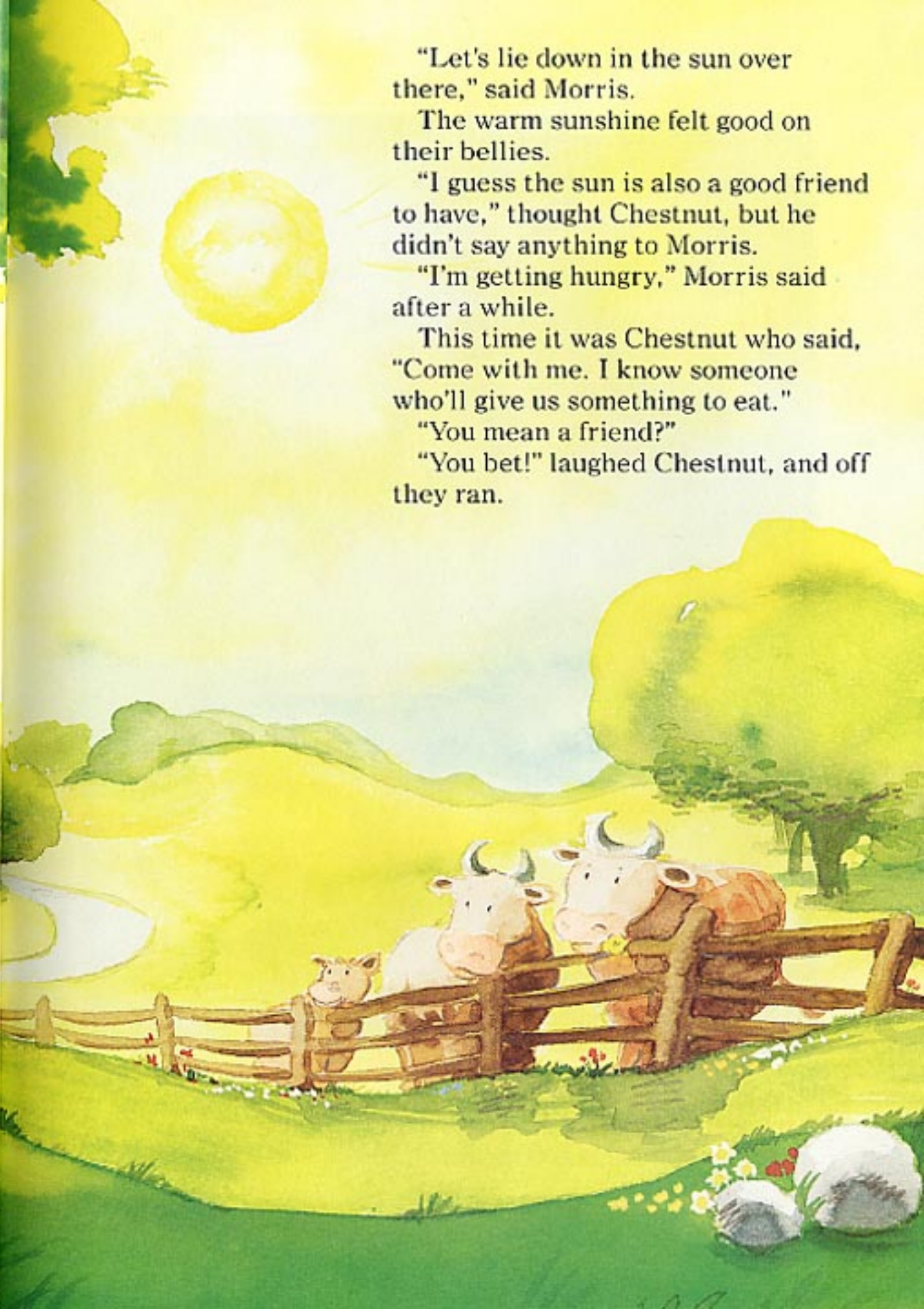
"I love water!" said
Morris. "It cools and
tickles me all over!"

Now Chestnut had to laugh. He felt a little silly for having been so clumsy.

After Morris finished his shower, both of them were dripping wet. They shook off some of the water and then Morris ran up the hill and opened his arms wide.

"Now let my friend the wind dry our coats!"
And in no time they were dry again.





"Let's lie down in the sun over there," said Morris.

The warm sunshine felt good on their bellies.

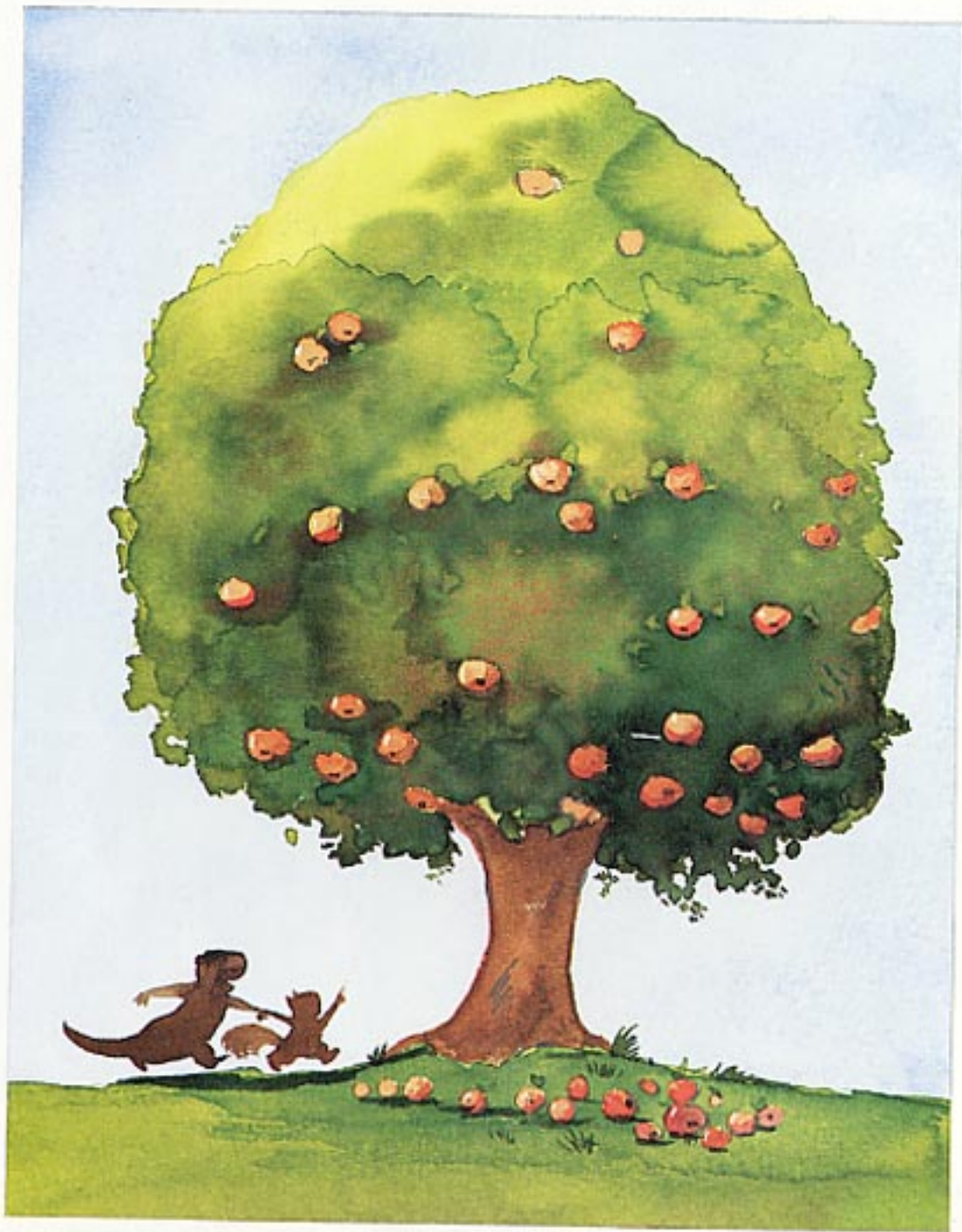
"I guess the sun is also a good friend to have," thought Chestnut, but he didn't say anything to Morris.

"I'm getting hungry," Morris said after a while.

This time it was Chestnut who said, "Come with me. I know someone who'll give us something to eat."

"You mean a friend?"

"You bet!" laughed Chestnut, and off they ran.



Chestnut showed Morris an apple tree full of ripe red apples.



"I like your friend!" said Morris.
"And so do I," replied Chestnut.



Then they watched the
different clouds going by.
The sun was getting low, and
it was time for them to return
home.

"Have you already made your new friend for the day?" Chestnut asked shyly.

"No, I haven't," replied Morris. "I forgot all about it. We have just been too busy."

Then he smiled and added, "But how about you? Would you like to be my new friend?"

Chestnut liked that idea very much! As they paddled home together he held tight to Morris.





Then the two friends said good night to each other.

"I'll see you in the morning," said Morris. "I still want you to meet my friends the bears, the rabbits, and the raccoons." And with that he disappeared in the water.





That night Chestnut went to bed early. He set his alarm clock to make sure he wouldn't oversleep the next morning.

After all, he couldn't disappoint all the friends who would be waiting for him!