

# HERCULES AND ROSEHIP

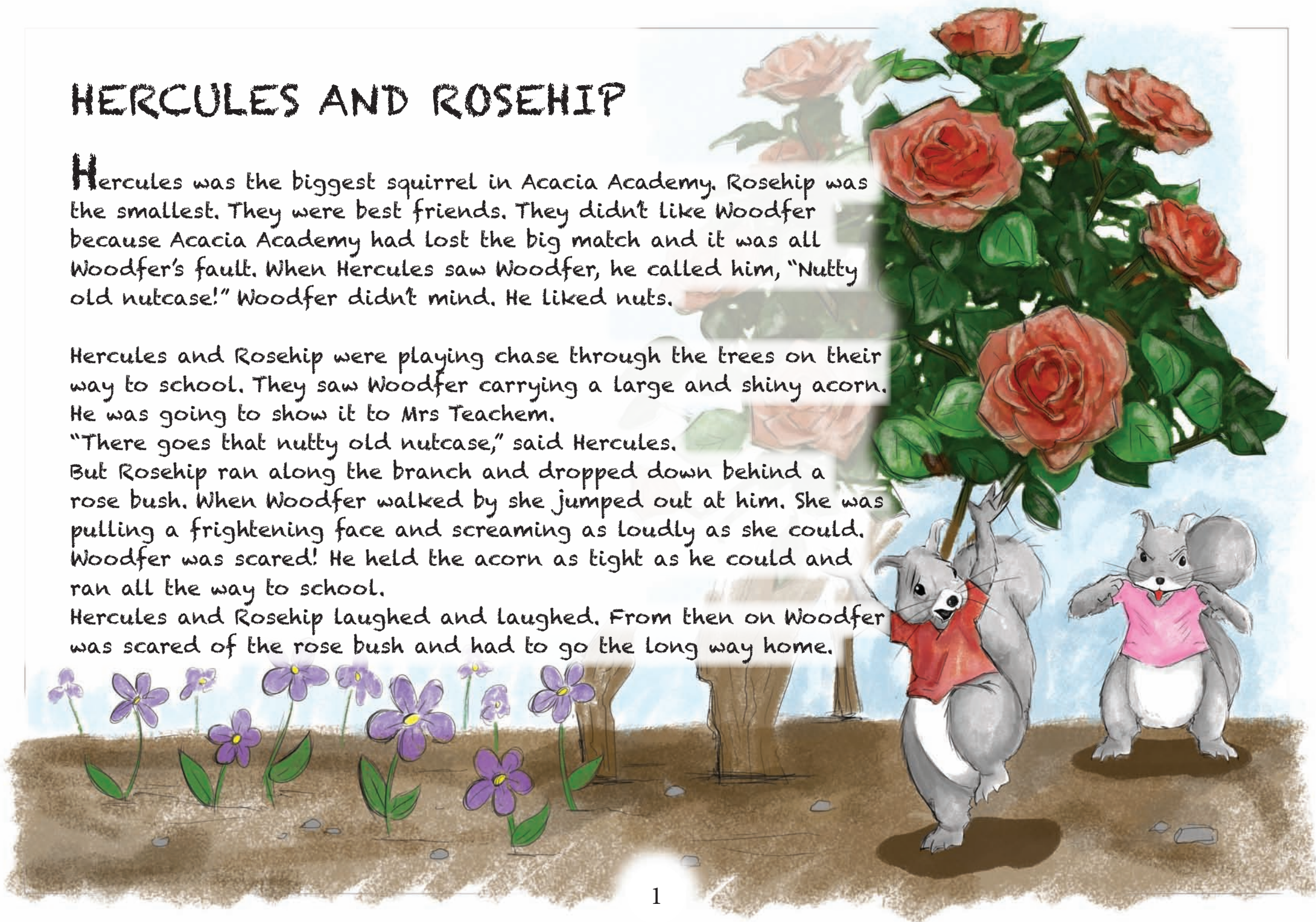
**H**ercules was the biggest squirrel in Acacia Academy. Rosehip was the smallest. They were best friends. They didn't like Woodfer because Acacia Academy had lost the big match and it was all Woodfer's fault. When Hercules saw Woodfer, he called him, "Nutty old nutcase!" Woodfer didn't mind. He liked nuts.

Hercules and Rosehip were playing chase through the trees on their way to school. They saw Woodfer carrying a large and shiny acorn. He was going to show it to Mrs Teachem.

"There goes that nutty old nutcase," said Hercules.

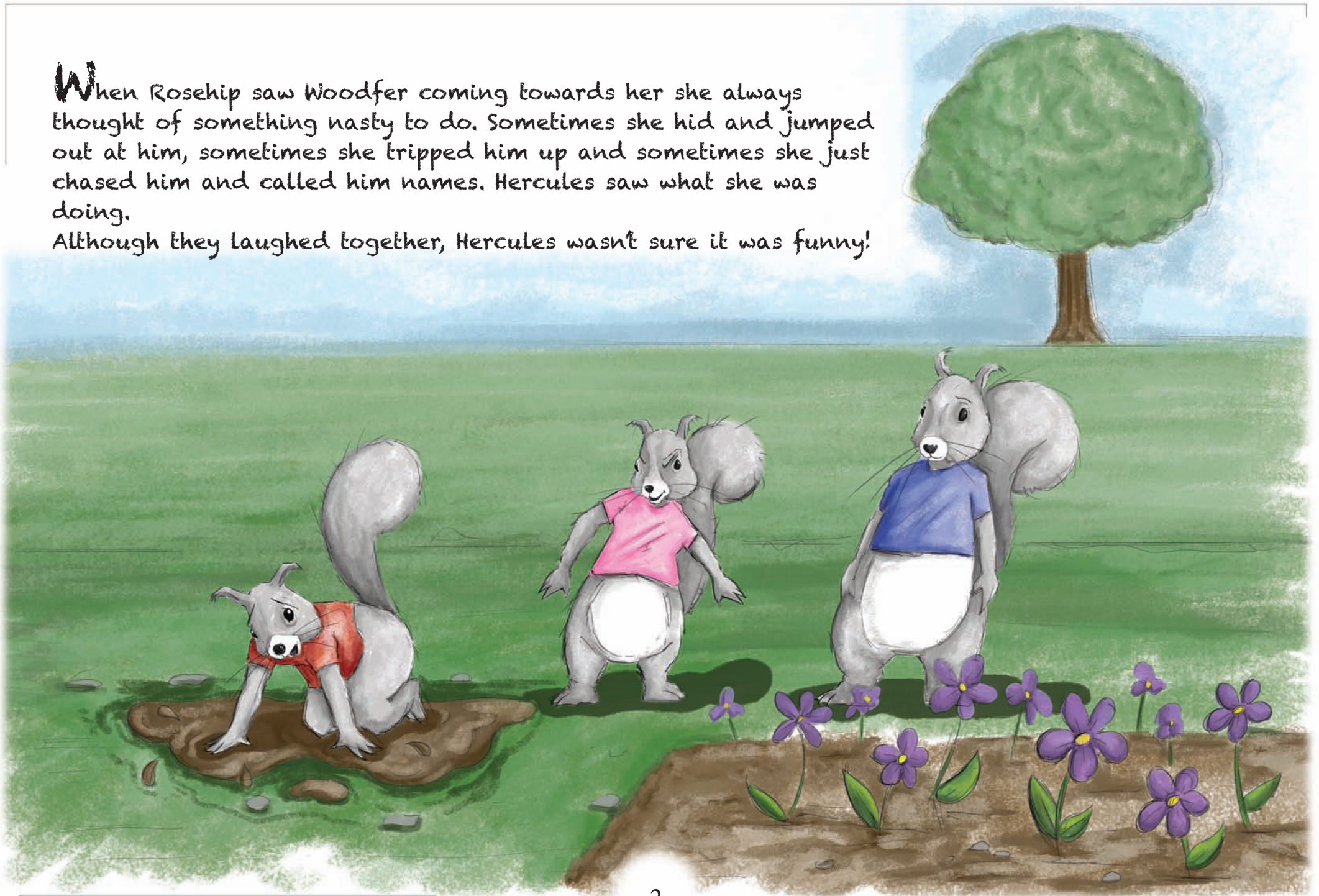
But Rosehip ran along the branch and dropped down behind a rose bush. When Woodfer walked by she jumped out at him. She was pulling a frightening face and screaming as loudly as she could. Woodfer was scared! He held the acorn as tight as he could and ran all the way to school.

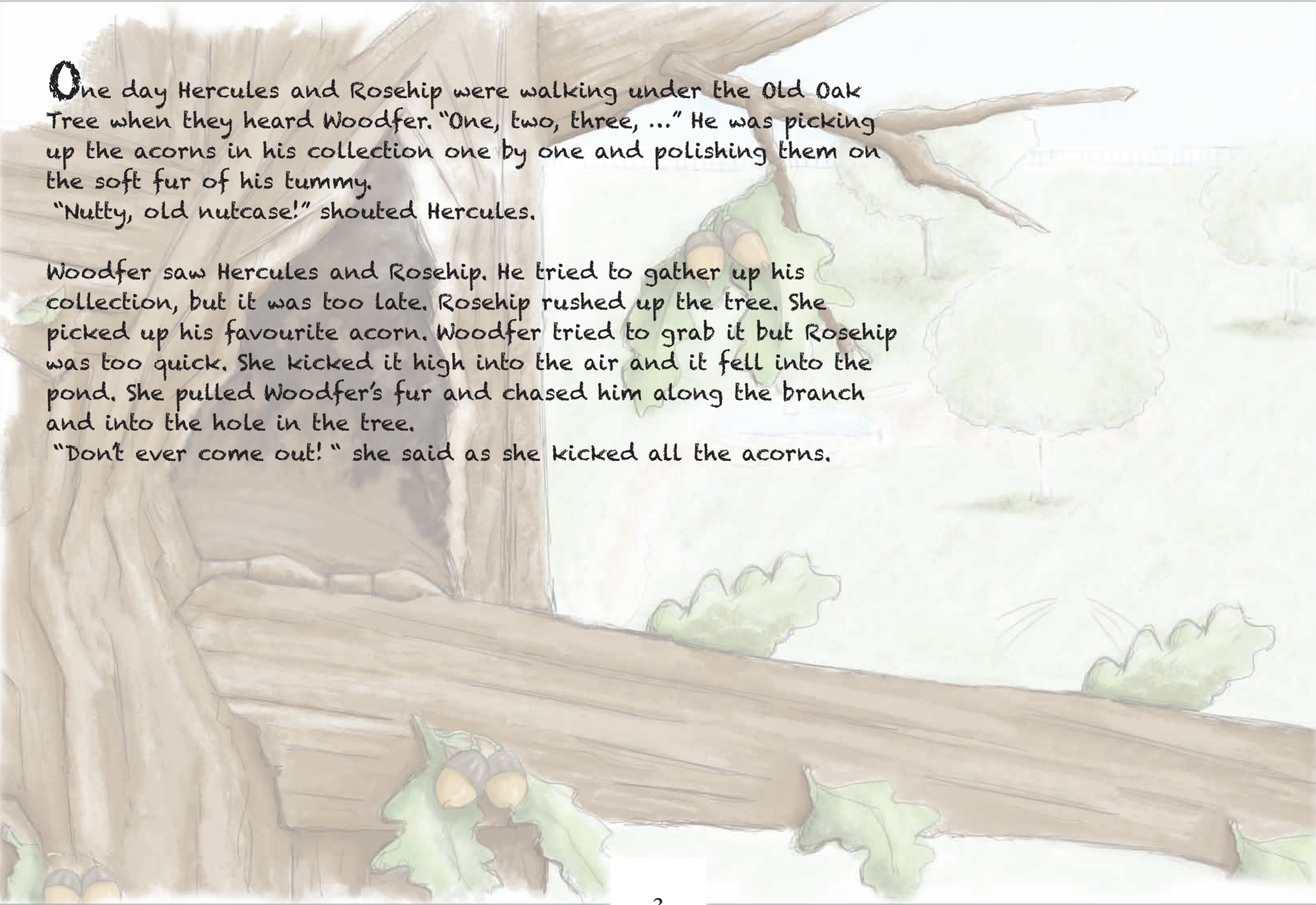
Hercules and Rosehip laughed and laughed. From then on Woodfer was scared of the rose bush and had to go the long way home.



**W**hen Rosehip saw Woodfer coming towards her she always thought of something nasty to do. Sometimes she hid and jumped out at him, sometimes she tripped him up and sometimes she just chased him and called him names. Hercules saw what she was doing.

Although they laughed together, Hercules wasn't sure it was funny!





One day Hercules and Rosehip were walking under the Old Oak Tree when they heard Woodfer. "One, two, three, ..." He was picking up the acorns in his collection one by one and polishing them on the soft fur of his tummy.

"Nutty, old nutcase!" shouted Hercules.

Woodfer saw Hercules and Rosehip. He tried to gather up his collection, but it was too late. Rosehip rushed up the tree. She picked up his favourite acorn. Woodfer tried to grab it but Rosehip was too quick. She kicked it high into the air and it fell into the pond. She pulled Woodfer's fur and chased him along the branch and into the hole in the tree.

"Don't ever come out!" she said as she kicked all the acorns.

Woodfer went to the back of the hole and sat looking at the wall.

Bramble found him there when she got home. She saw the acorn collection in a mess. She picked them up.

"Woodfer, here's your acorn collection," but Woodfer said nothing. He just sat silently at the very back of the hole.

Woodfer wouldn't come out of the hole. Mum took him his supper. He didn't eat anything. He didn't come out of the hole at bedtime and spent the whole night in the hole.

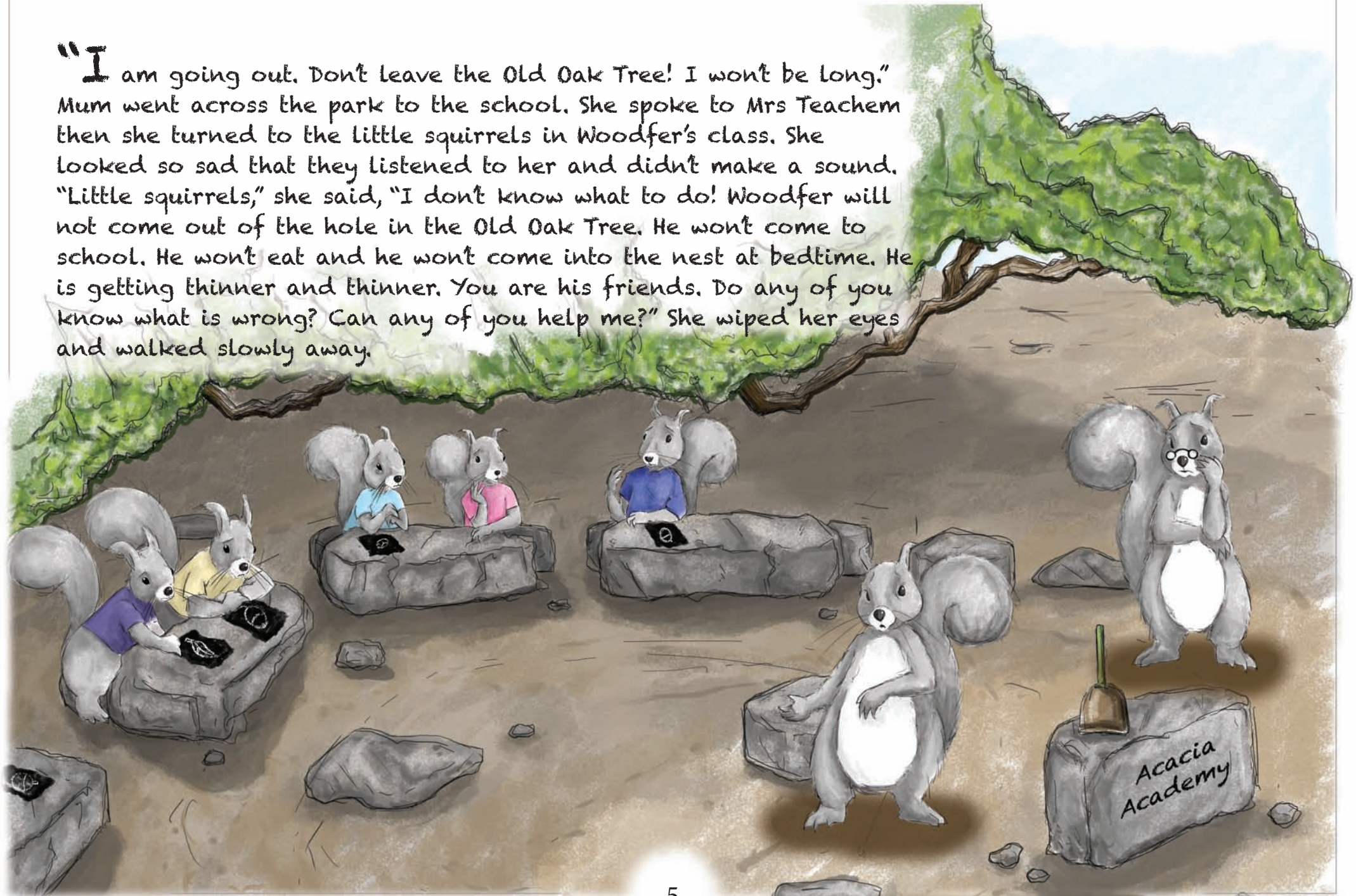
In the morning Woodfer wouldn't go to school. Mum thought Woodfer must be ill so she felt his head but that seemed okay. For three days and nights Woodfer stayed in the hole.

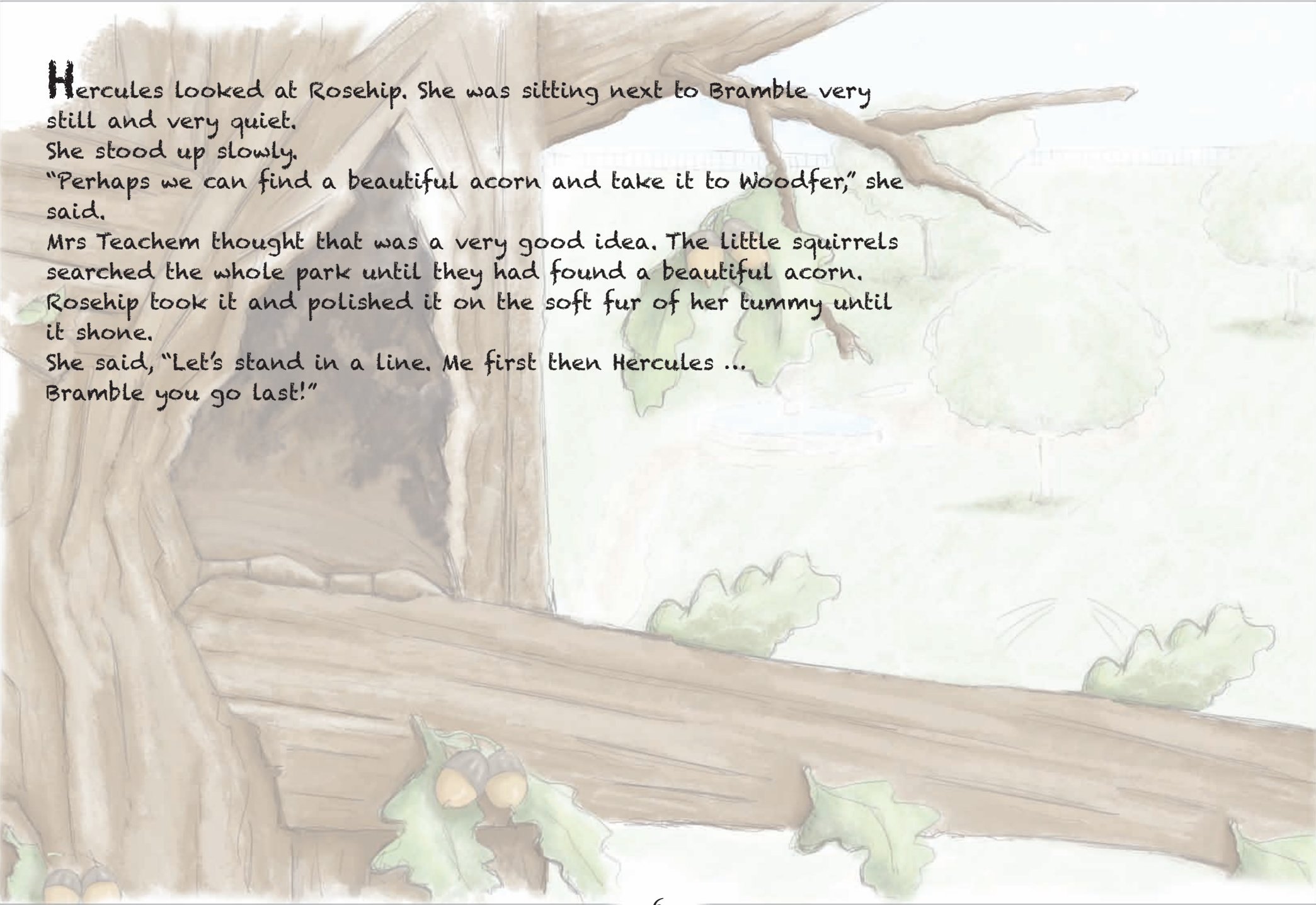
"This can't go on!" said Mum. "I must do something."

When Bramble and the other brothers and sisters left for school, Mum peered into the hole. "Woodfer, what is wrong?" Woodfer said nothing.



"I am going out. Don't leave the Old Oak Tree! I won't be long." Mum went across the park to the school. She spoke to Mrs Teachem then she turned to the little squirrels in Woodfer's class. She looked so sad that they listened to her and didn't make a sound. "Little squirrels," she said, "I don't know what to do! Woodfer will not come out of the hole in the Old Oak Tree. He won't come to school. He won't eat and he won't come into the nest at bedtime. He is getting thinner and thinner. You are his friends. Do any of you know what is wrong? Can any of you help me?" She wiped her eyes and walked slowly away.





**H**ercules looked at Rosehip. She was sitting next to Bramble very still and very quiet. She stood up slowly. "Perhaps we can find a beautiful acorn and take it to Woodfer," she said.

Mrs Teachem thought that was a very good idea. The little squirrels searched the whole park until they had found a beautiful acorn. Rosehip took it and polished it on the soft fur of her tummy until it shone.

She said, "Let's stand in a line. Me first then Hercules ... Bramble you go last!"

The little squirrels ran across to the Old Oak Tree. Rosehip climbed up the trunk. The others waited. Rosehip stood at the entrance to the hole.

"Woodfer! I'm sorry. Look at what I have got for you. Woodfer turned round. He looked at Rosehip and the acorn but stayed just where he was.

She said, "Woodfer, come out of the hole!"

Woodfer came out of the hole. He saw the acorn shining in the sunlight. He looked down and saw the little squirrels. They clapped and cheered. Rosehip waited.

The little squirrels set off across the park.

Rosehip said,

"Please, don't tell anyone! We are friends now, aren't we?" She smiled at Woodfer.

He shook his head, turned away and scampered down the trunk. Then he followed the other little squirrels across the park to the Acacia bush where his dinner was waiting for him.

