

# WOODFER GOES TO SCHOOL

Woodfer didn't want to go to school. He wanted to stay in the Old Oak Tree. He liked it there. He wanted to listen to the wind rustling in its branches. He wanted to look at the shadows moving over the bark in the sunshine. Or watch the rain drops race down the leaves.

But most of all he wanted to be alone.

His four brothers and sisters went to school. They told him about their new friends; about Mrs Teachem and about all the things they had learnt about living in the park.

"Woodfer, it is time for you to go to school," said Mum one evening.

"Bramble will look after you and make sure you are okay!"

Woodfer was squinting at the sun through his eyelashes. It was big and red.

He didn't hear what his mother was saying.



When Woodfer woke the next day he knew something was wrong. He ran to the hole in the tree to look at his acorn collection. But it was just as he had left it.

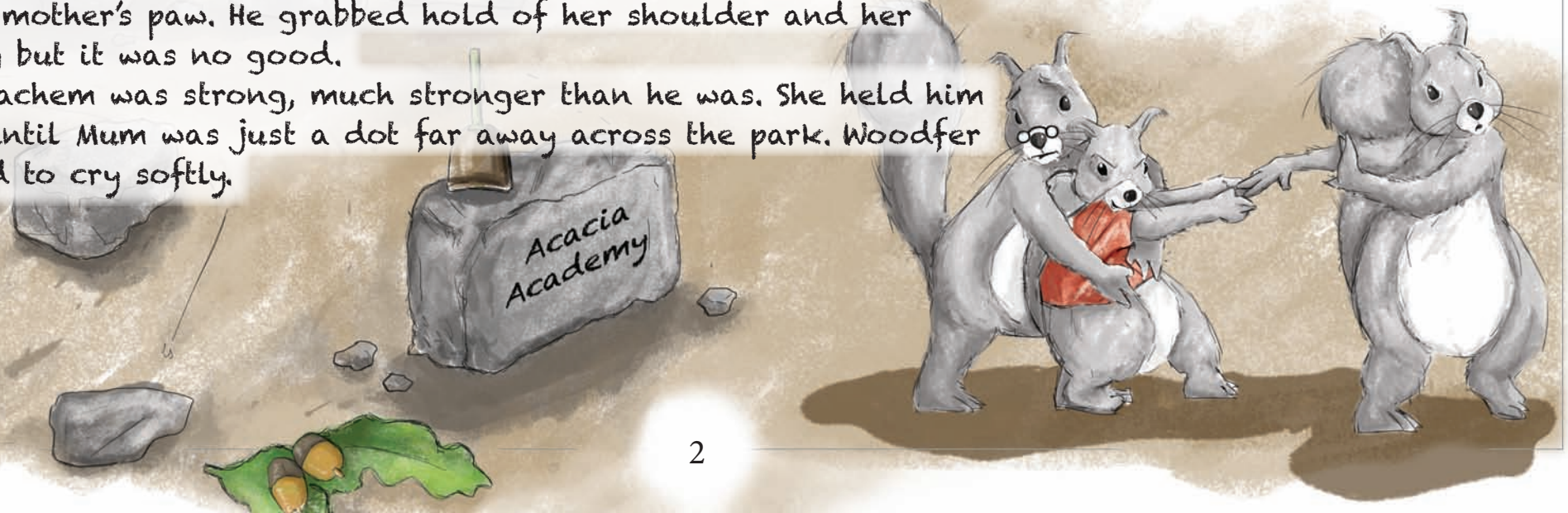
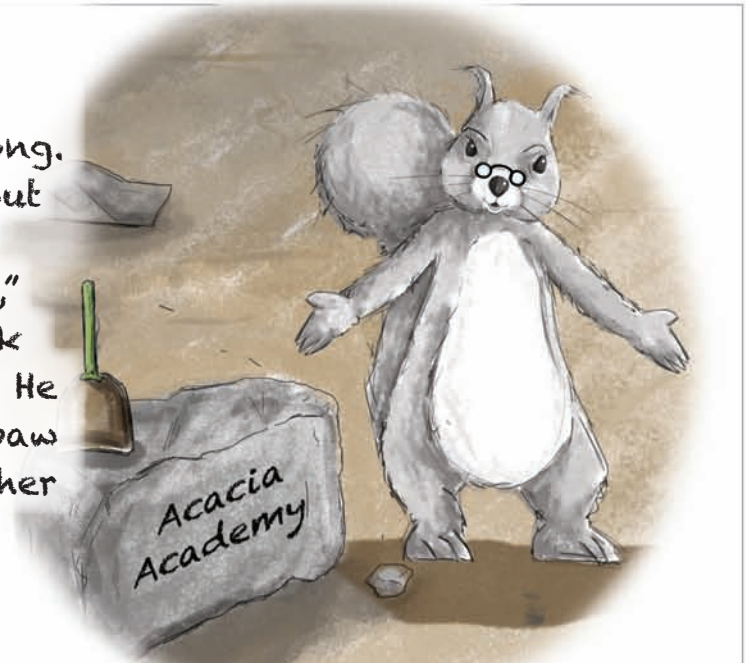
"Woodfer, you'll be late! Your brothers and sisters left ages ago," said Mum. She grabbed his paw and led him down the tree trunk and into the park. Woodfer wanted to stay in the Old Oak Tree. He struggled and struggled but his mother kept tight hold of his paw and did not let go until they reached the Acacia bush at the other side of the park.

Mrs Teachem was waiting with a big friendly smile.

"This is Woodfer. He needs to learn the ways of the park and how to be a proper squirrel," said Mum. She gave Mrs Teachem Woodfer's paw. She turned to go.

Woodfer wanted to go back to the Old Oak Tree. He grabbed hold of his mother's paw. He grabbed hold of her shoulder and her tummy but it was no good.

Mrs Teachem was strong, much stronger than he was. She held him tight until Mum was just a dot far away across the park. Woodfer started to cry softly.

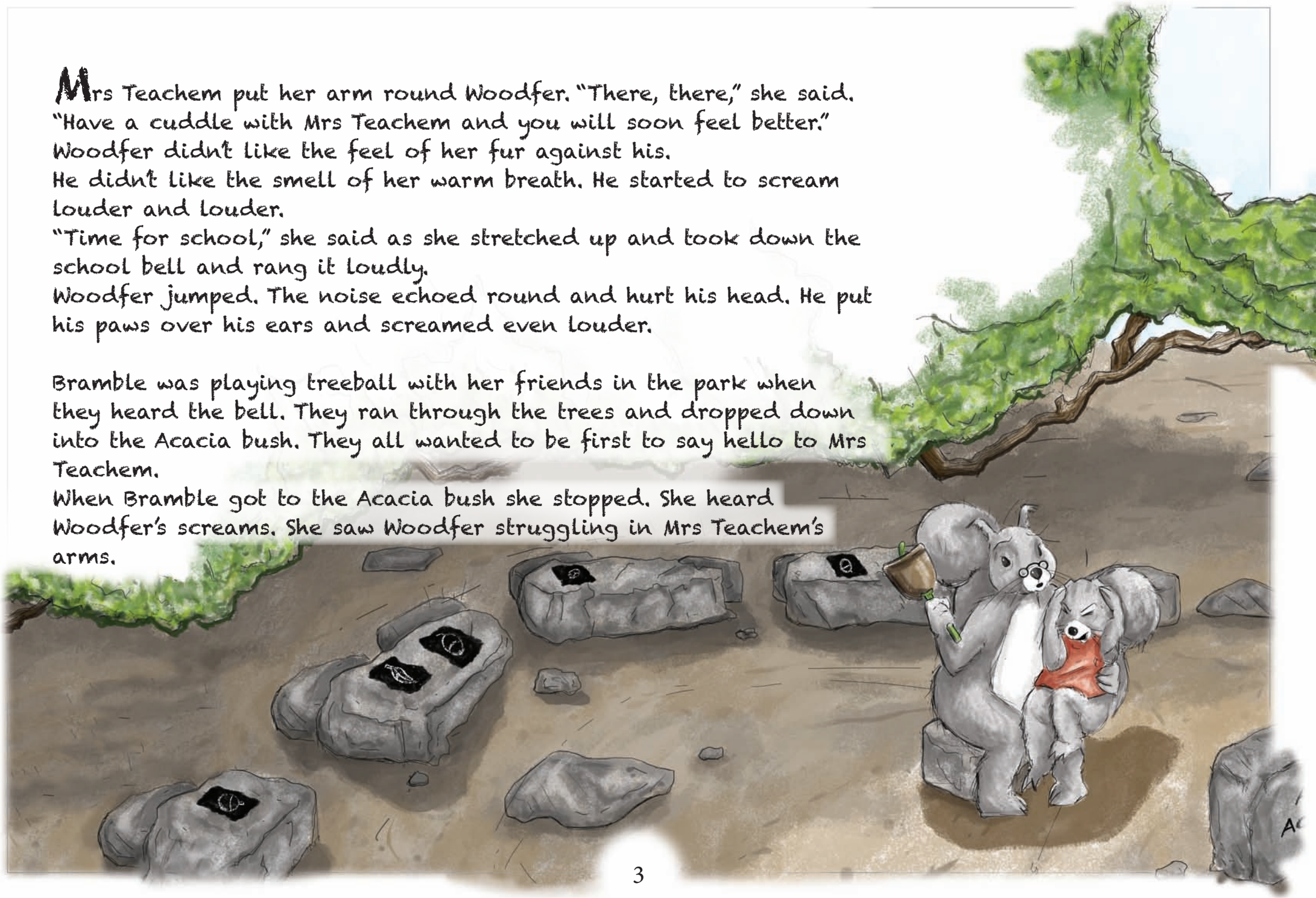




Mrs Teachem put her arm round Woodfer. "There, there," she said. "Have a cuddle with Mrs Teachem and you will soon feel better." Woodfer didn't like the feel of her fur against his. He didn't like the smell of her warm breath. He started to scream louder and louder. "Time for school," she said as she stretched up and took down the school bell and rang it loudly. Woodfer jumped. The noise echoed round and hurt his head. He put his paws over his ears and screamed even louder.

Bramble was playing treeball with her friends in the park when they heard the bell. They ran through the trees and dropped down into the Acacia bush. They all wanted to be first to say hello to Mrs Teachem.

When Bramble got to the Acacia bush she stopped. She heard Woodfer's screams. She saw Woodfer struggling in Mrs Teachem's arms.





Then she saw Woodfer bite the strong arm that was holding him.

Mrs Teachem let go of Woodfer. He ran to the other side of the bush. He stopped screaming and sat by himself sobbing quietly. Mrs Teachem looked cross. Then she swallowed and then she smiled, but her eyes said she was hurting and it wasn't just her arm.

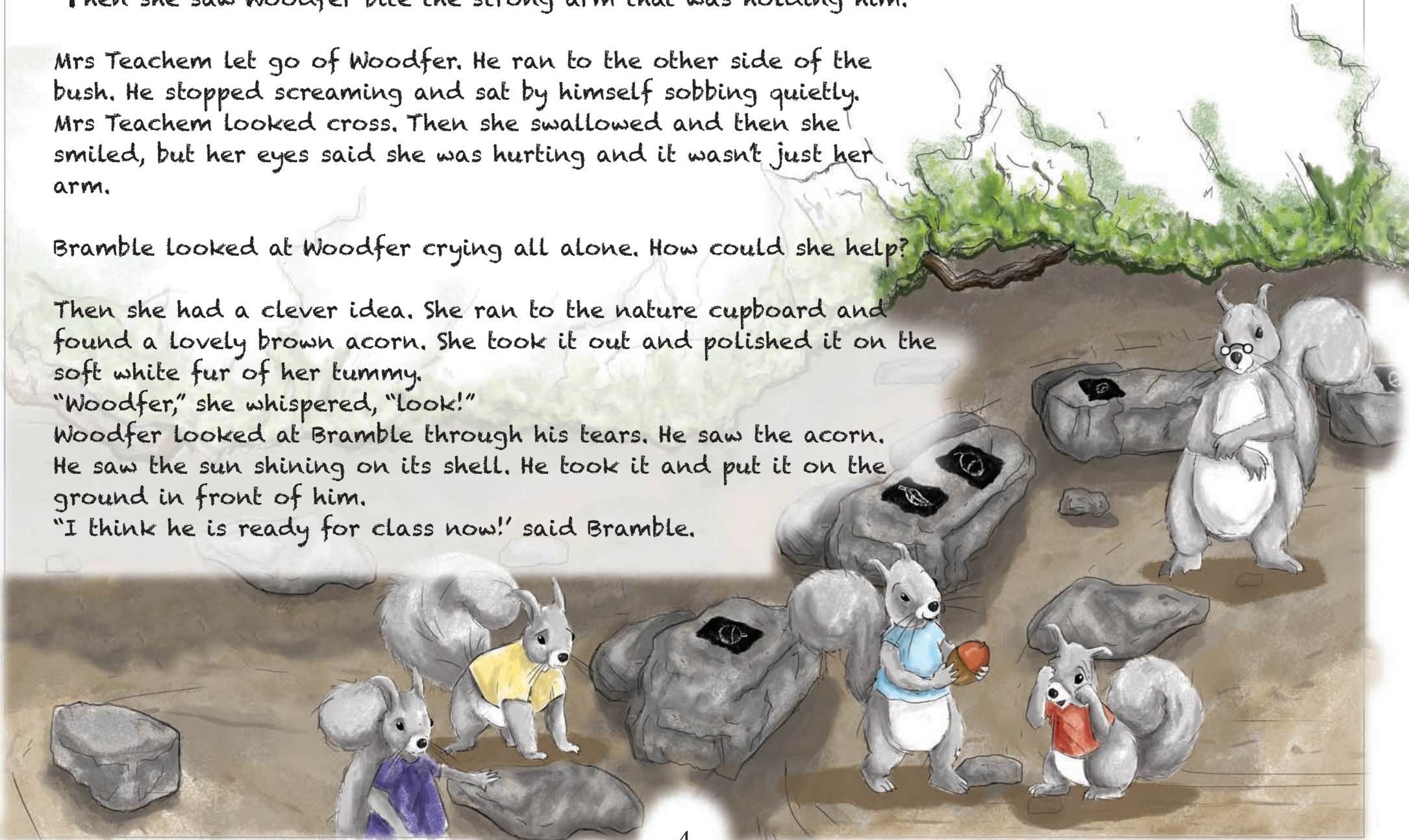
Bramble looked at Woodfer crying all alone. How could she help?

Then she had a clever idea. She ran to the nature cupboard and found a lovely brown acorn. She took it out and polished it on the soft white fur of her tummy.

"Woodfer," she whispered, "look!"

Woodfer looked at Bramble through his tears. He saw the acorn. He saw the sun shining on its shell. He took it and put it on the ground in front of him.

"I think he is ready for class now!" said Bramble.





After school, Woodfer ran home with his other brothers and sisters.

Bramble stayed behind. Mrs Teachem looked at her with her kind eyes.

Bramble said,

"Woodfer isn't naughty. You just need to understand him! I'll tell you how!"

