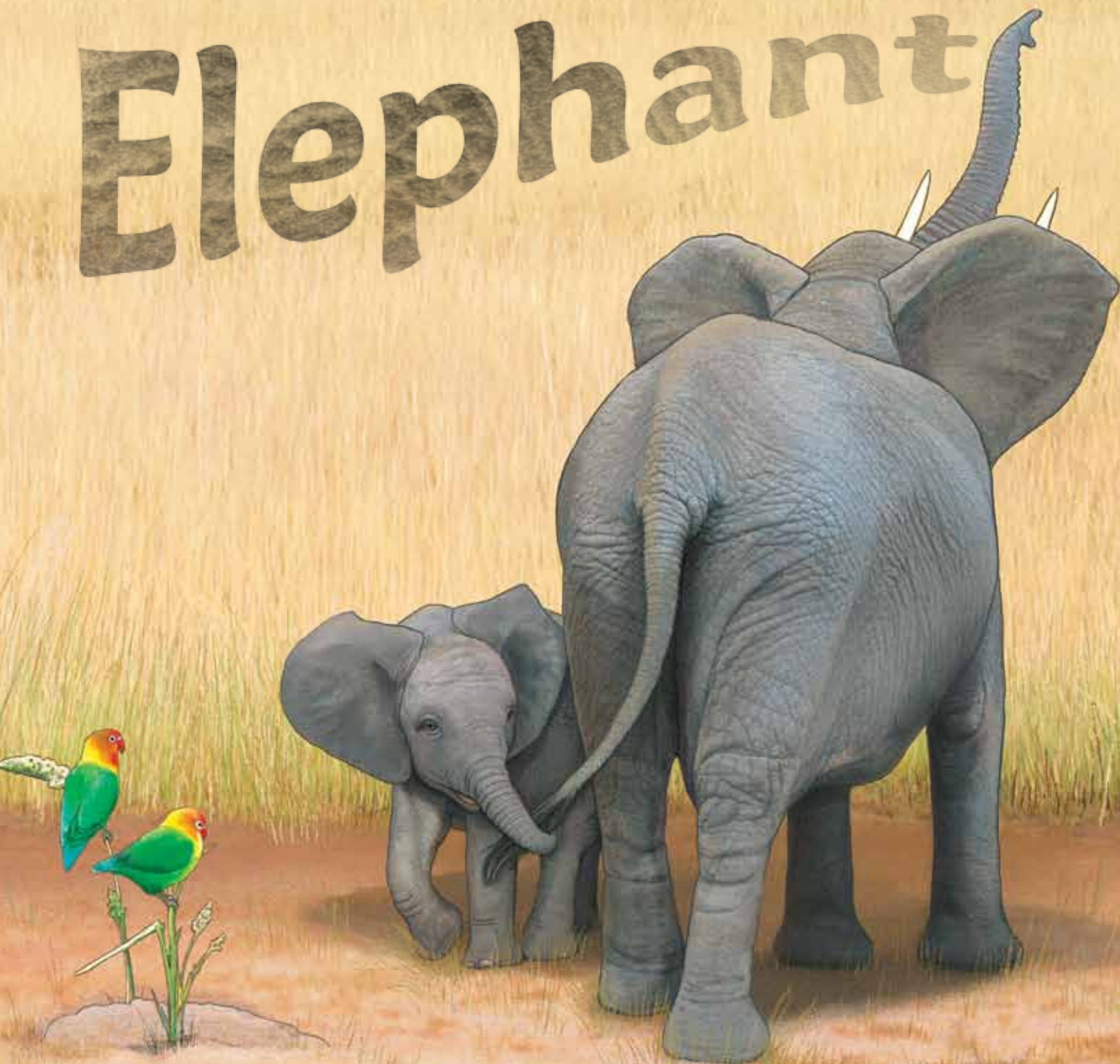


Once Upon an

Elephant



by Linda Stanek

illustrated by Shennen Bersani

Once Upon an Elephant

From slowing wildfires to planting seeds, one animal is the true superhero that keeps the African savanna in balance. Elephants dig to find salt that other animals lick, their deep footprints collect water for small creatures to drink, and they eat young trees to keep the forest from overtaking the grasslands. In every season, the elephants are there to protect the savanna and its residents—but what would happen if the elephants were only “once upon a time”? Read along to discover the important role this keystone species plays in the savanna and explore what would happen if the elephants vanished.

It’s so much more than a picture book . . . this book is specifically designed to be both a fun-to-read story and a launch pad for discussions and learning. We encourage adults to do the activities with the young children in their lives both at home and in the classroom. Free online resources and support at www.ArbordalePublishing.com include:

- For Creative Minds as seen in the book (in English & Spanish):
 - Keystone Species
 - Rainy Season, Dry Season
 - All About Elephants
- Teaching Activities (to do at home or school):
 - Reading Questions
 - Language Arts
 - Science
 - Math
 - Geography
 - Coloring Pages
- Interactive Quizzes: Reading Comprehension, For Creative Minds, and Math Word Problems
- English and Spanish Audiobooks
- Related Websites
- Aligned to State Standards, Common Core & NGSS
- Accelerated Reader and Reading Counts! Quizzes
- Lexile and Fountas & Pinnell Reading Levels

Ebooks with Auto-Flip, Auto-Read, and selectable English and Spanish text and audio are available for purchase online.

Thanks to the International Elephant Foundation for reviewing the accuracy of the information in this book.

As an early and middle childhood educator, **Linda Stanek** wants to inspire young learners, including children with written language disabilities, to write about things that excite them. Her own passion for saving endangered animals and teaching children about the importance of each link in natural world provide the inspiration for *Once Upon an Elephant*. Linda has also written *The Pig and Miss Prudence* and *Beco’s Big Year: A Baby Elephant Turns One*. Linda has two grown sons and lives in Ohio with her feline family members. Visit her website at www.lindakstanek.com.

Shennen Bersani is an award-winning illustrator with 2 million copies of her books cherished and read by children, parents, and teachers throughout the world. Her art delivers heartfelt emotion, the wonders of nature and science, and creates a unique joy for learning. Some of Shennen’s other illustrated works include *Animal Partners*; *Sea Slime: It’s Eeuwy, Goopy and Under the Sea*; *Shark Baby*; *Home in the Cave*; *Astro: The Steller Sea Lion*; *The Glaciers are Melting!*, *The Shape Family Babies*; and *Salamander Season* for Arbordale. She is also the author and illustrator of *Achoo! Why Pollen Counts*. Shennen lives with her family near Boston. Visit her website at www.shennenbersani.com.

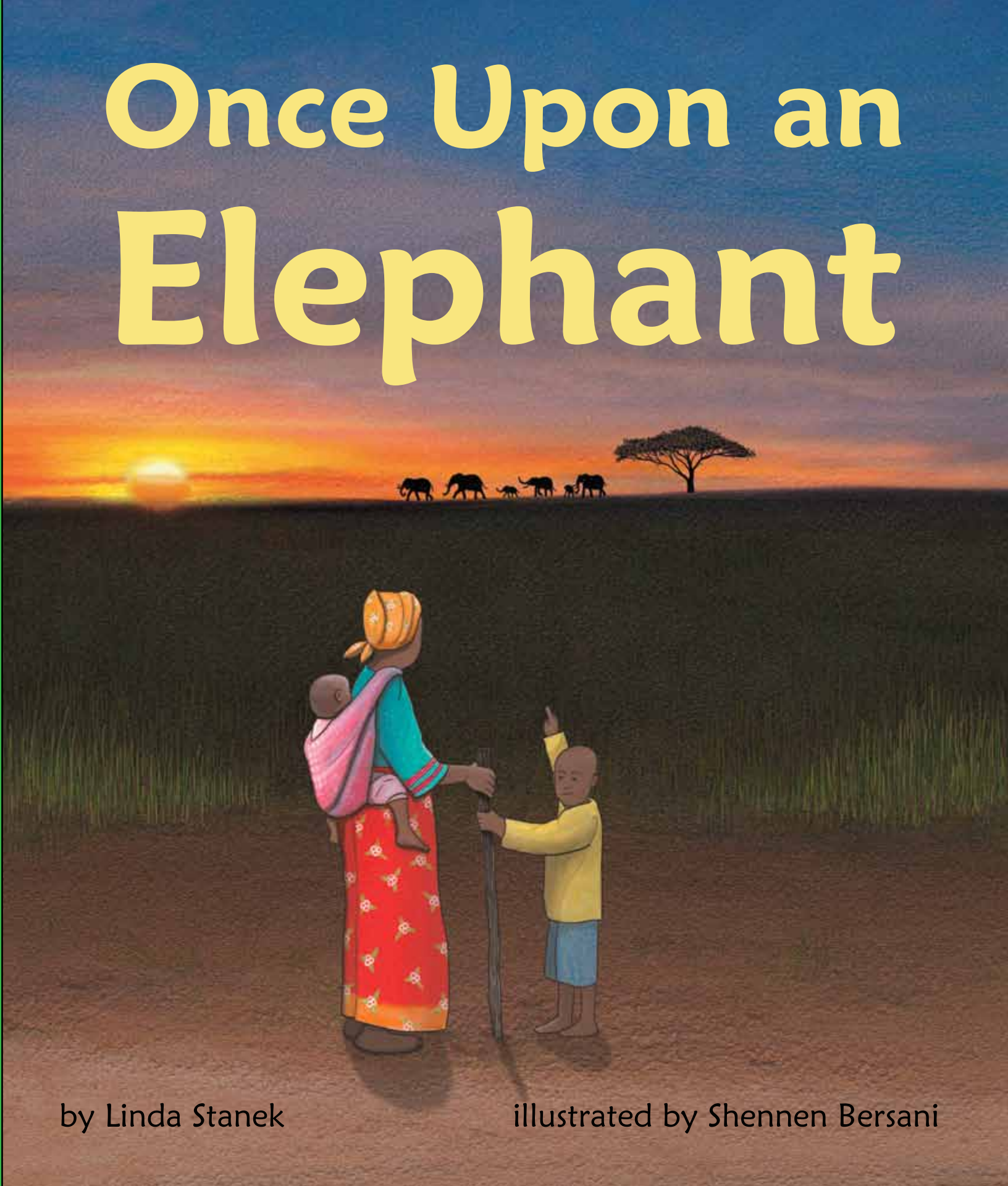


Linda Stanek



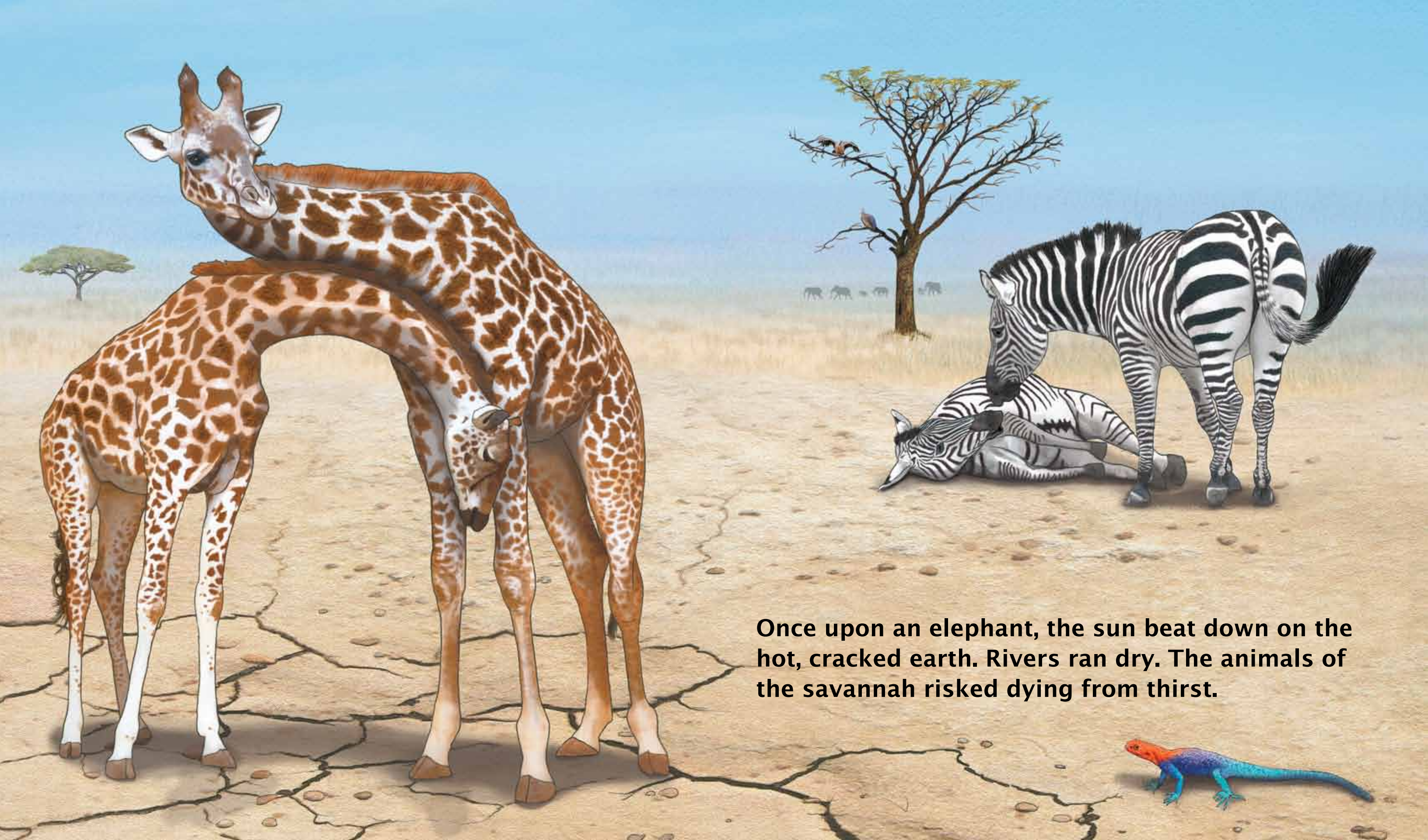
Shennen Bersani

Once Upon an Elephant



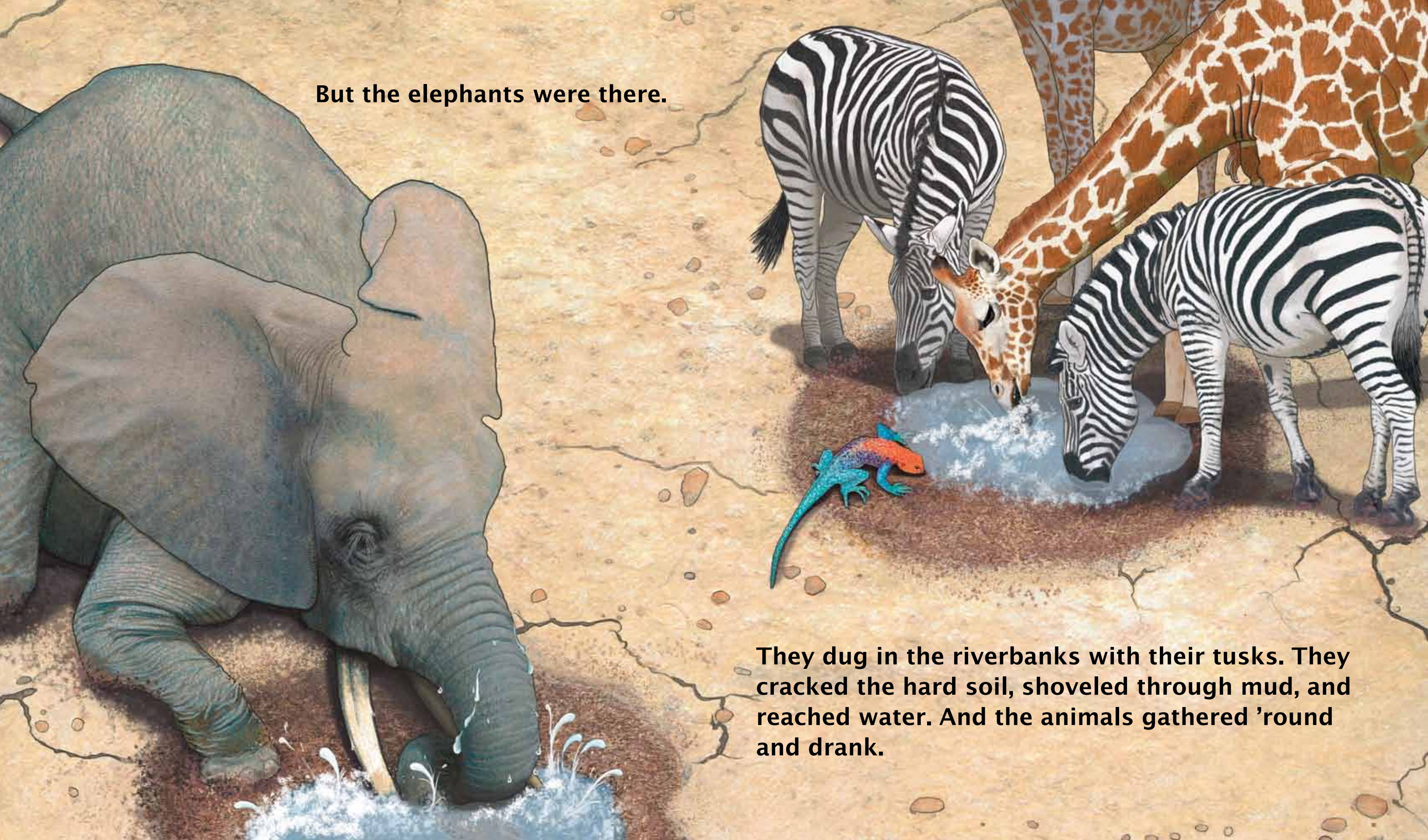
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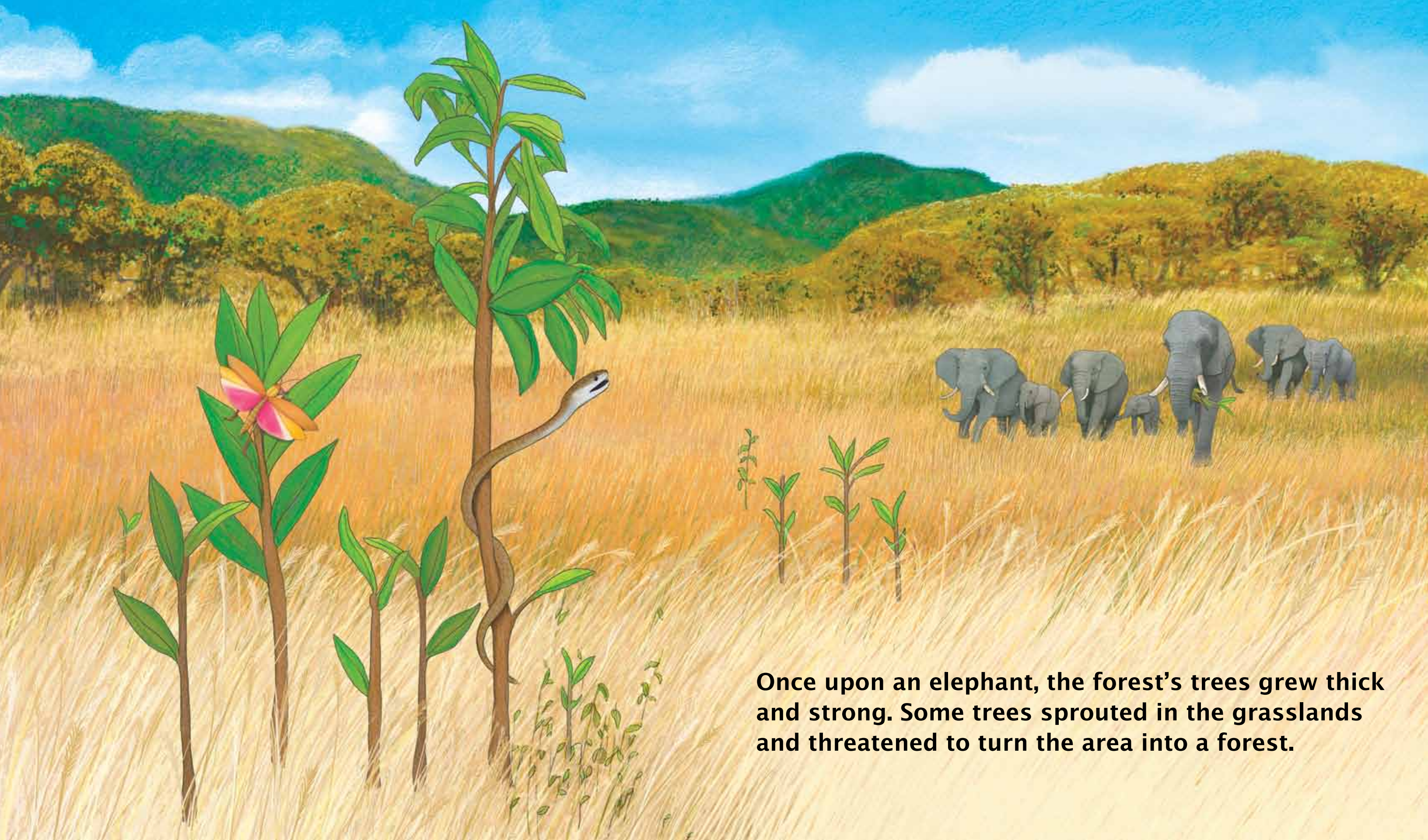


Once upon an elephant, the sun beat down on the hot, cracked earth. Rivers ran dry. The animals of the savannah risked dying from thirst.

But the elephants were there.

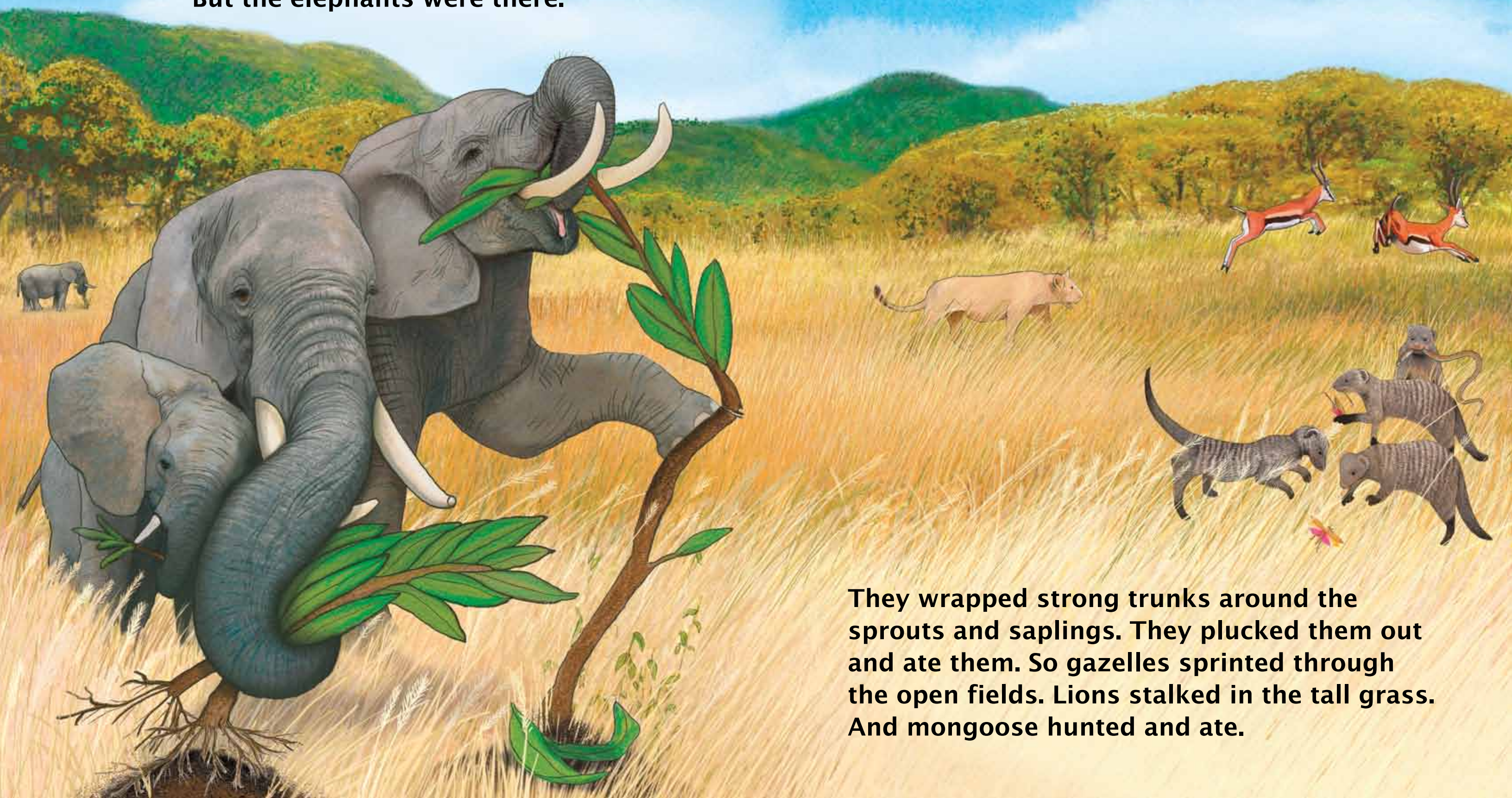


They dug in the riverbanks with their tusks. They cracked the hard soil, shoveled through mud, and reached water. And the animals gathered 'round and drank.



Once upon an elephant, the forest's trees grew thick and strong. Some trees sprouted in the grasslands and threatened to turn the area into a forest.

But the elephants were there.



They wrapped strong trunks around the sprouts and saplings. They plucked them out and ate them. So gazelles sprinted through the open fields. Lions stalked in the tall grass. And mongoose hunted and ate.

For Creative Minds

This For Creative Minds educational section contains activities to engage children in learning while making it fun at the same time. The activities build on the underlying subjects introduced in the story. While older children may be able to do these activities on their own, we encourage adults to work with the young children in their lives. Even if the adults have long forgotten or never learned this information, they can still work through the activities and be experts in their children's eyes! Exposure to these concepts at a young age helps to build a strong foundation for easier comprehension later in life. This section may be photocopied or printed from our website by the owner of this book for educational, non-commercial uses. Cross-curricular teaching activities for use at home or in the classroom, interactive quizzes, and more are available online. Go to www.ArbordalePublishing.com and click on the book's cover to explore all the links.

Keystone Species

An ecosystem is made of all the living and non-living things in an area. A savanna is one type of ecosystem. Savannas are usually found between a desert and a forest. Savannas are made of grass with a few trees and bushes. They have a warm climate with a rainy season and a dry season. There are savannas all around the world. Many savannas are in Africa.

All the living things in an ecosystem are connected. Sometimes there is one species that plays an important role in the ecosystem. This is called a **keystone species**. A keystone species helps other living things meet their basic needs. If something happens to a keystone species, the whole ecosystem is hurt. In the African savanna, elephants are a keystone species.



Savannas in Africa



Elephant habitats in Africa

Elephants used to live across all of Africa south of the Sahara desert. Now the places where they can live (habitats) are shrinking. People build new cities and roads, use savannas for farmland, and cut down forests. There are fewer wild places for elephants to live. This is called habitat loss.

In many places, elephants are killed illegally for their ivory tusks. This is called poaching. Poachers kill elephants so they can cut off their tusks and sell them.

Elephants are a vulnerable species because of habitat loss and poaching. People need to help protect the elephants. Without our help, elephants could disappear forever (become extinct).



Rainy Season, Dry Season

In many tropical habitats, there are only two seasons: the rainy season and the dry season. Sort the following events based on whether they occur in the rainy season or the dry season.



A. Plants need water to grow. When rain falls on the seeds in elephants' dung, the seeds sprout.



B. Fire burns the dry grass. The fire spreads quickly until it is slowed by the elephant path.



C. Animals need water to live. Elephants dig into dry earth to find water underneath.



D. Rain gathers in the elephants' footprints. Animals drink out of the small puddles.

Rainy season: A and D. Dry season: B and C.

All About Elephants

Female: cow
Male: bull
Baby: calf
Group name: herd



Elephants are the largest land animal on earth.

Cows usually live in family groups. The oldest or highest-ranking female leads the herd.

Elephants eat only plants (herbivores). They spend 16 hours a day eating or looking for food.

Bulls leave the herd when they are young. They live alone or with other bulls.

Elephants usually live into their early forties. Some elephants can live for 50 years or longer.

Wild elephants weigh up to 14,000 lbs (6,350 kg). That is as heavy as a school bus!

To Mom and Dad with love. Special thanks to Harry Peachey for inspiring this book and for guidance and support along the way.—LS
While doing research for my illustrations, I visited Alice, Ginny, and Kate—the amazing African elephants at the Roger Williams Park Zoo in Providence, RI. Then I trekked back to Boston to visit the Franklin Park Zoo’s lion. Both zoos bring a piece of Africa home to New Englanders by showcasing large numbers of African wildlife. My heartfelt thanks to Lou Marcoccio for joining me on these “safari” adventures, and Cynthia Germain for her inspirational African jewelry. And, as always, thanks to my loving family for supporting my safari. In memory of my friend and fellow author, Michael Palmer, MD.—SB

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