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Rama and the Squirrel



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KAPWING

Classics for Kids

Rama and the Squirrel

Story told by
Indira Ananthakrishnan

Illustrations & Colour
Sabu Sarasan



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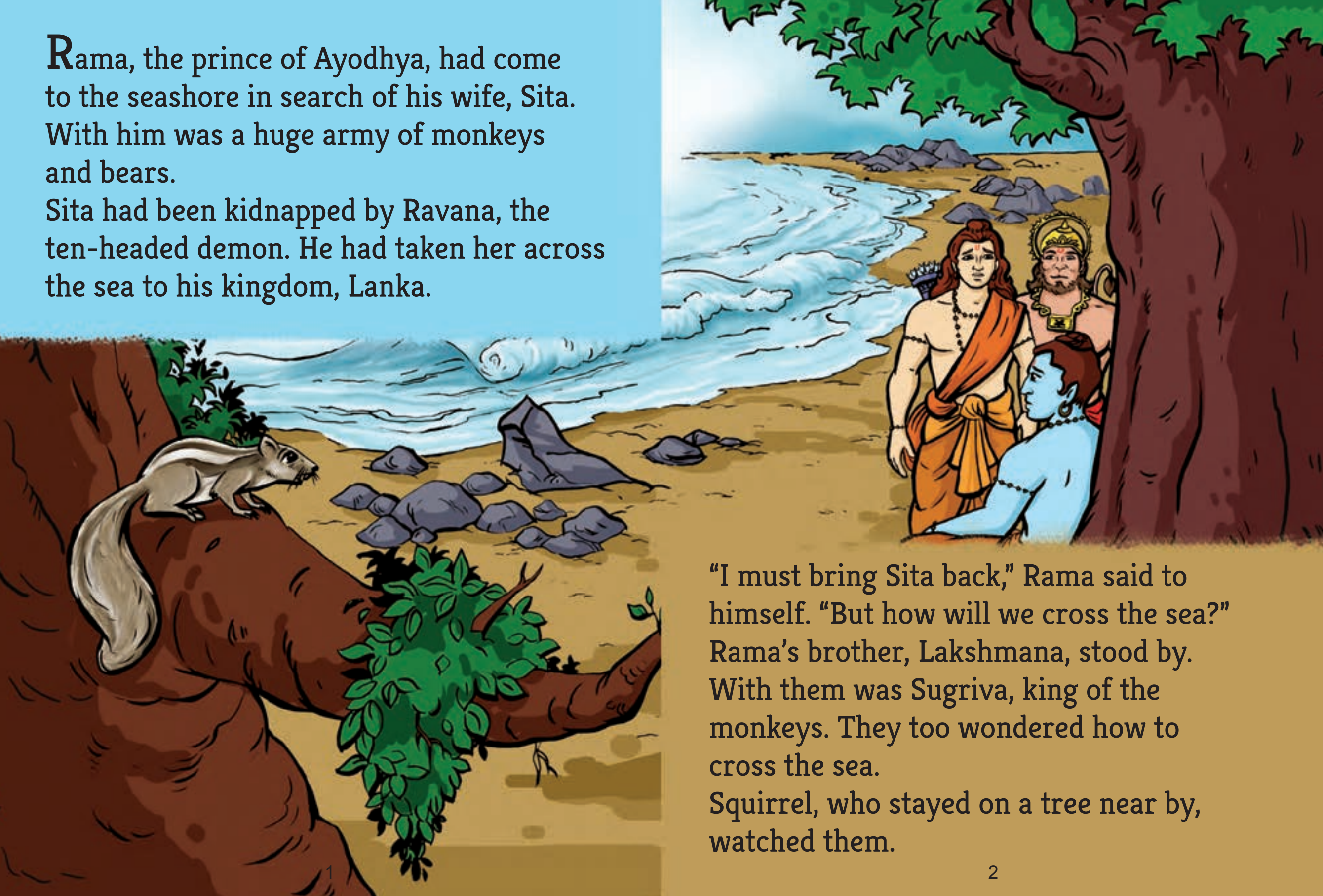
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Rama, the prince of Ayodhya, had come to the seashore in search of his wife, Sita. With him was a huge army of monkeys and bears.

Sita had been kidnapped by Ravana, the ten-headed demon. He had taken her across the sea to his kingdom, Lanka.



“I must bring Sita back,” Rama said to himself. “But how will we cross the sea?” Rama’s brother, Lakshmana, stood by. With them was Sugriva, king of the monkeys. They too wondered how to cross the sea. Squirrel, who stayed on a tree near by, watched them.

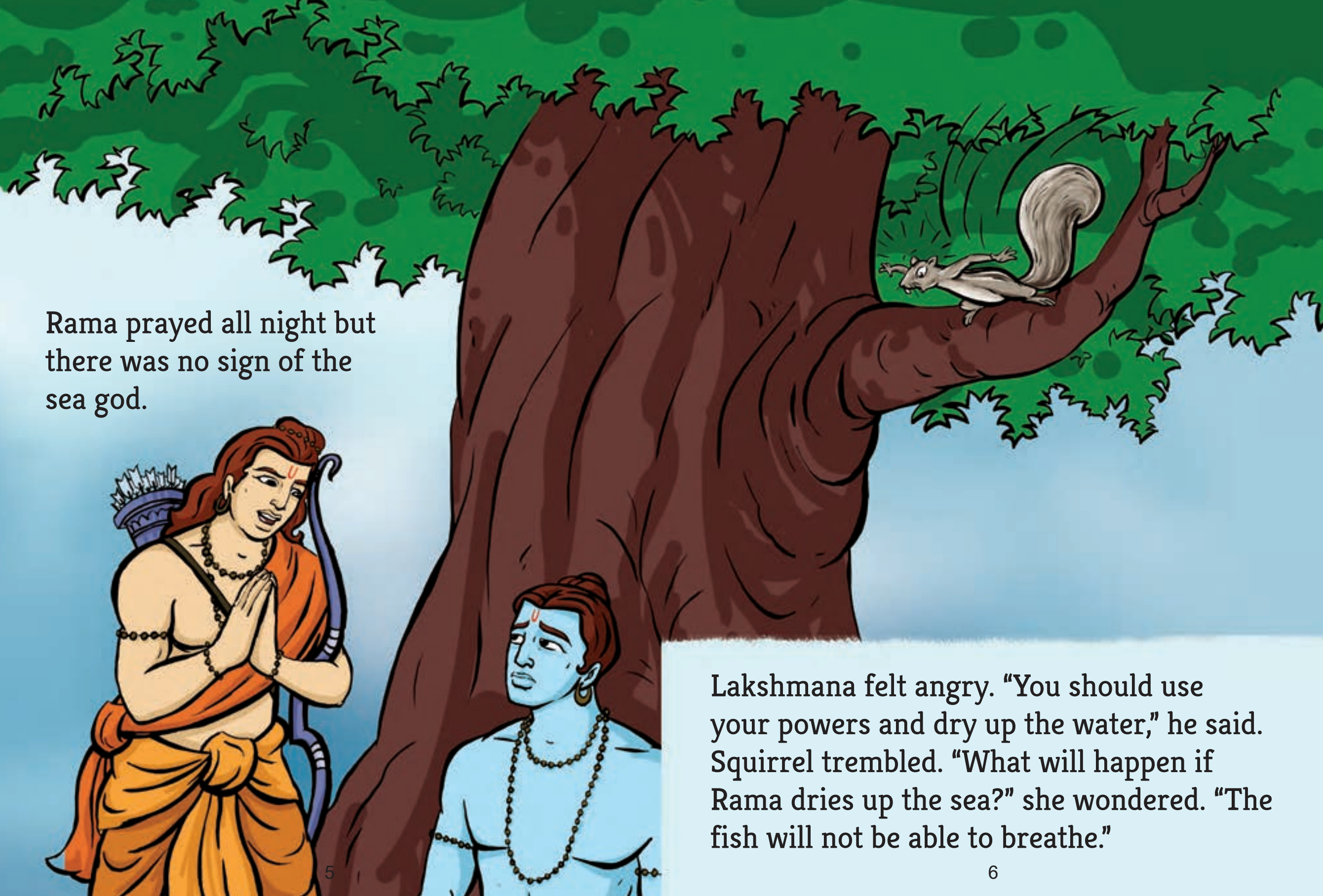
"We must pray to Varuna, the god of the sea," said Sugriva. "He will show us how to get across the water."

"Yes," agreed Lakshmana. "That's a good idea."



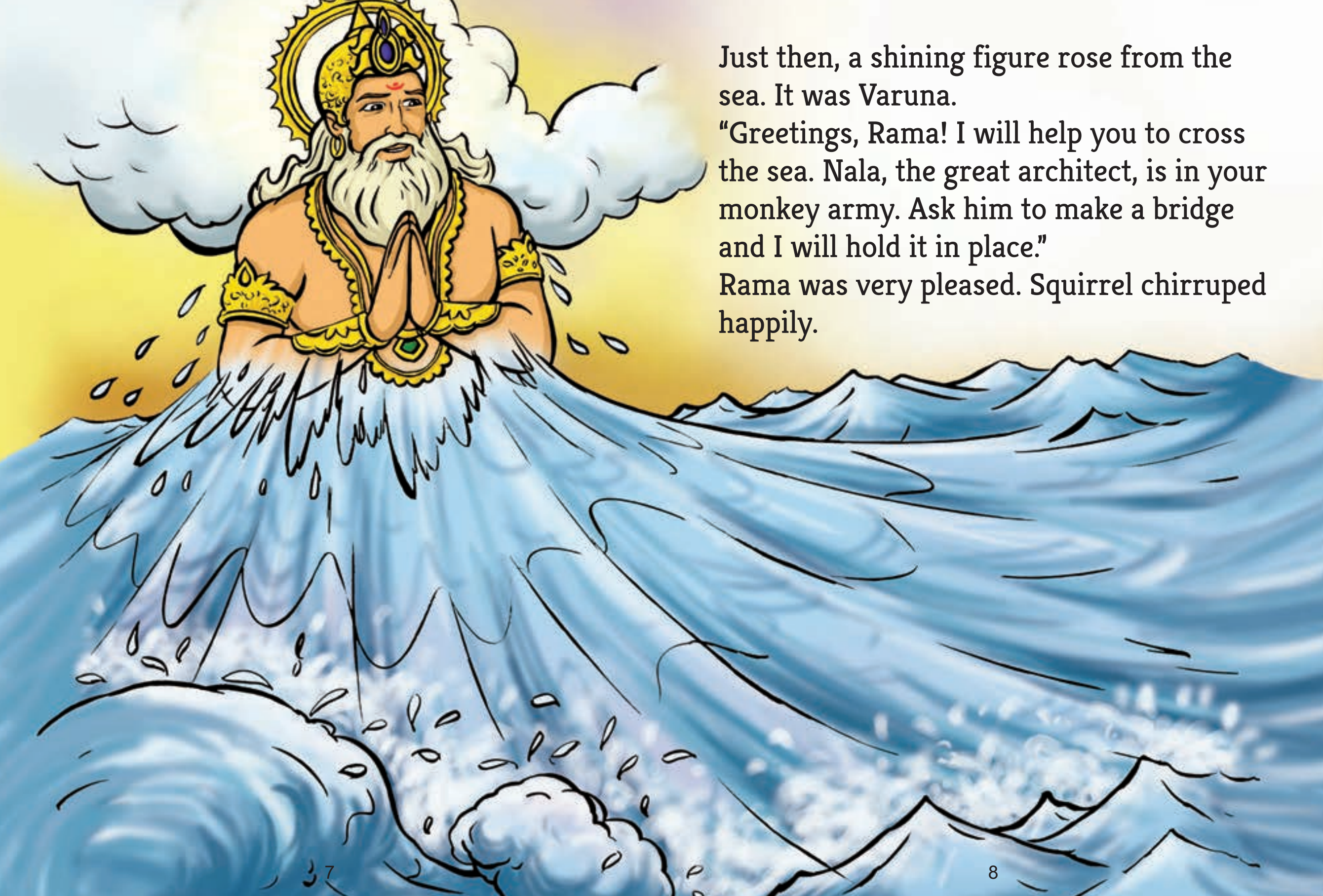
Rama looked up at the two of them and nodded. He sat facing the dark blue sea and prayed.

Squirrel prayed too. She wanted Rama to bring Sita back as soon as possible.



Rama prayed all night but there was no sign of the sea god.

Lakshmana felt angry. "You should use your powers and dry up the water," he said. Squirrel trembled. "What will happen if Rama dries up the sea?" she wondered. "The fish will not be able to breathe."



Just then, a shining figure rose from the sea. It was Varuna.

"Greetings, Rama! I will help you to cross the sea. Nala, the great architect, is in your monkey army. Ask him to make a bridge and I will hold it in place."

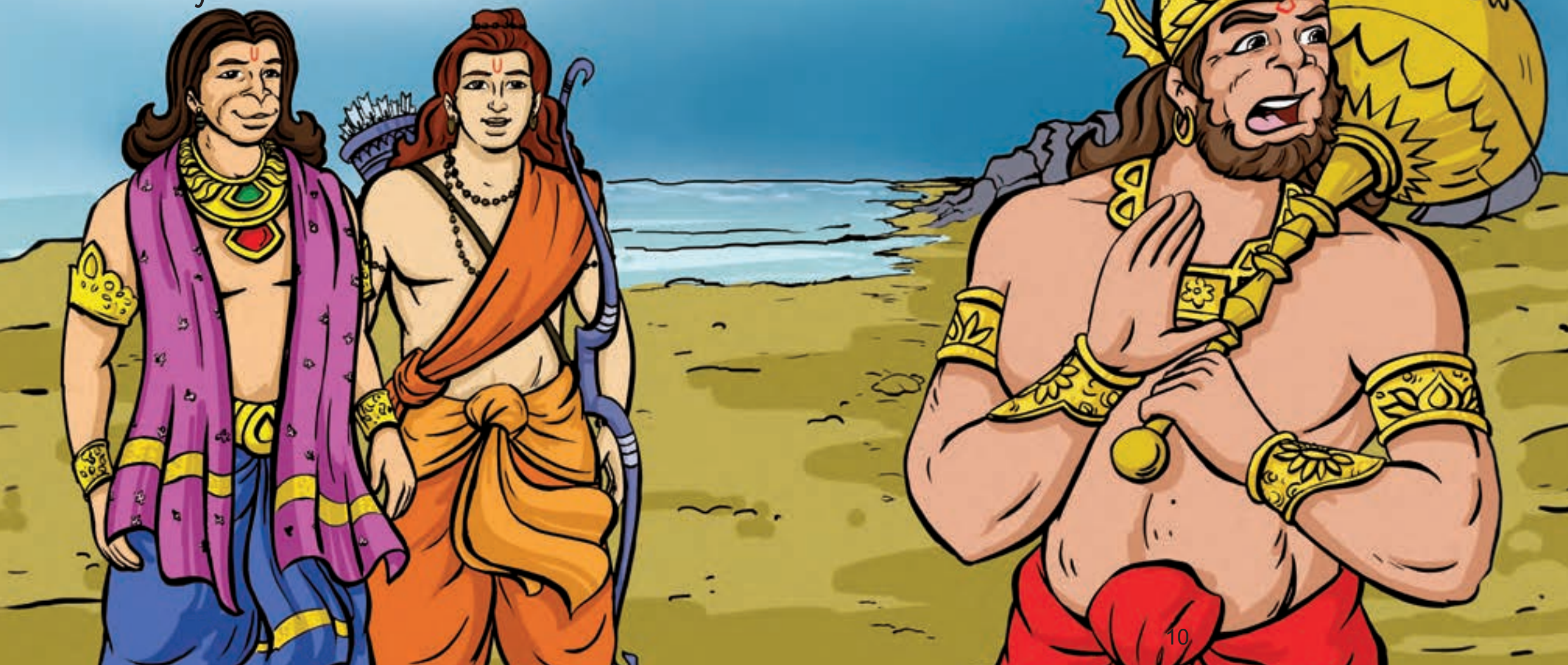
Rama was very pleased. Squirrel chirruped happily.

Nala agreed to build the bridge.
“With what shall we build the bridge?” asked Sugriva.

“We will use the huge rocks that can be found here,” said Nala.

“Call all the strong monkeys, Sugriva,” said Lakshmana. “Ask them to bring the biggest rocks they can find.”

Sugriva called loudly, “Vana, Bana, Tana! Bring your friends and come here. Ask the bears to come too.”

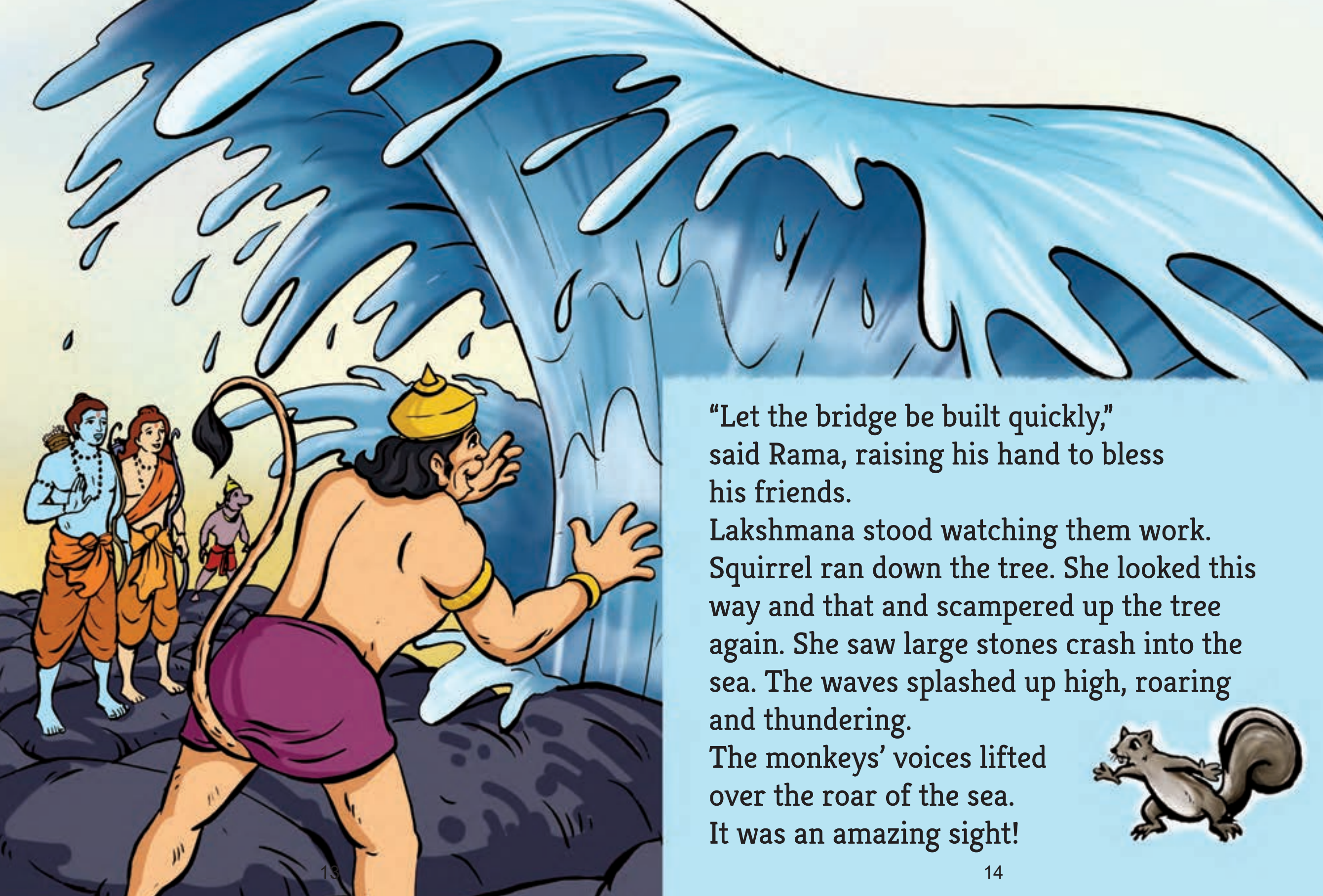


Squirrel squeaked in delight as hundreds of monkeys and bears came rushing to help. As they worked, they sang loudly.

*Heave ho! Heave ho!
Lift the rocks and forward throw.
A bridge we build o'er the sea,
For Rama's mighty army.*

*See these rocks big and round,
Wrench them out from the ground.
The bridge we build o'er the sea,
Will carry a mighty army.*





“Let the bridge be built quickly,”
said Rama, raising his hand to bless
his friends.

Lakshmana stood watching them work.
Squirrel ran down the tree. She looked this
way and that and scampered up the tree
again. She saw large stones crash into the
sea. The waves splashed up high, roaring
and thundering.

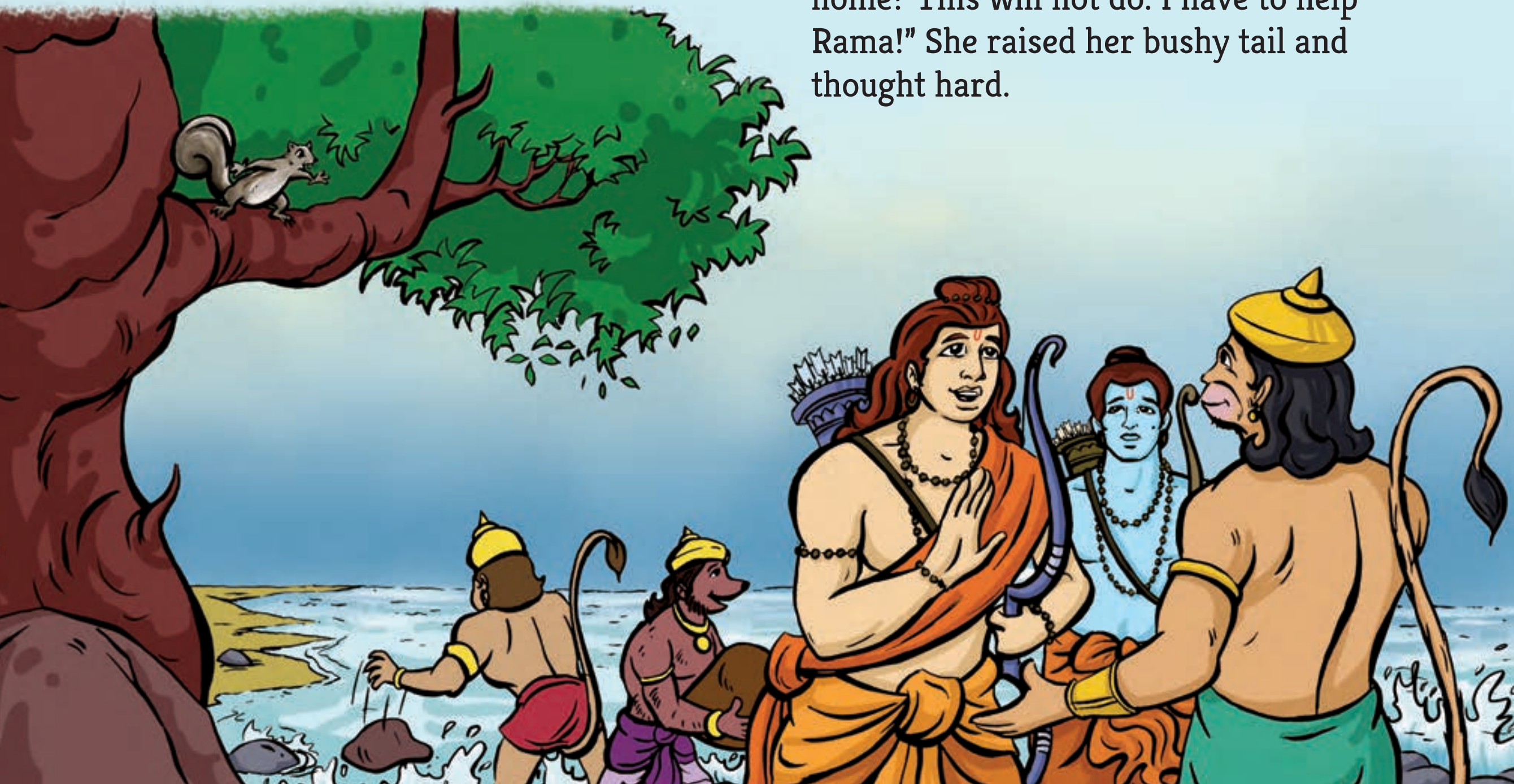
The monkeys’ voices lifted
over the roar of the sea.
It was an amazing sight!



“Should we cut some trees and put them between the rocks?” asked a monkey. Squirrel was shocked. Cut the trees? That would be terrible!

“No,” said Lakshmana, “No tree must be harmed.”

“My home is safe,” squeaked Squirrel, happily. “But what am I doing sitting at home? This will not do. I have to help Rama!” She raised her bushy tail and thought hard.





"I'm too small to do anything," thought Squirrel, looking at her tiny paws. Then she straightened herself up. "But help I must," she said, loudly. "I cannot carry rocks, but I can crack a nut. And if I can crack a nut, I can gather grains of sand."

"I'll sprinkle the sand between the stones to bind them together and make the bridge stronger."

Squirrel came tumbling down the tree with joy. She landed right at Rama's feet and he smiled at her. She chirruped with delight!

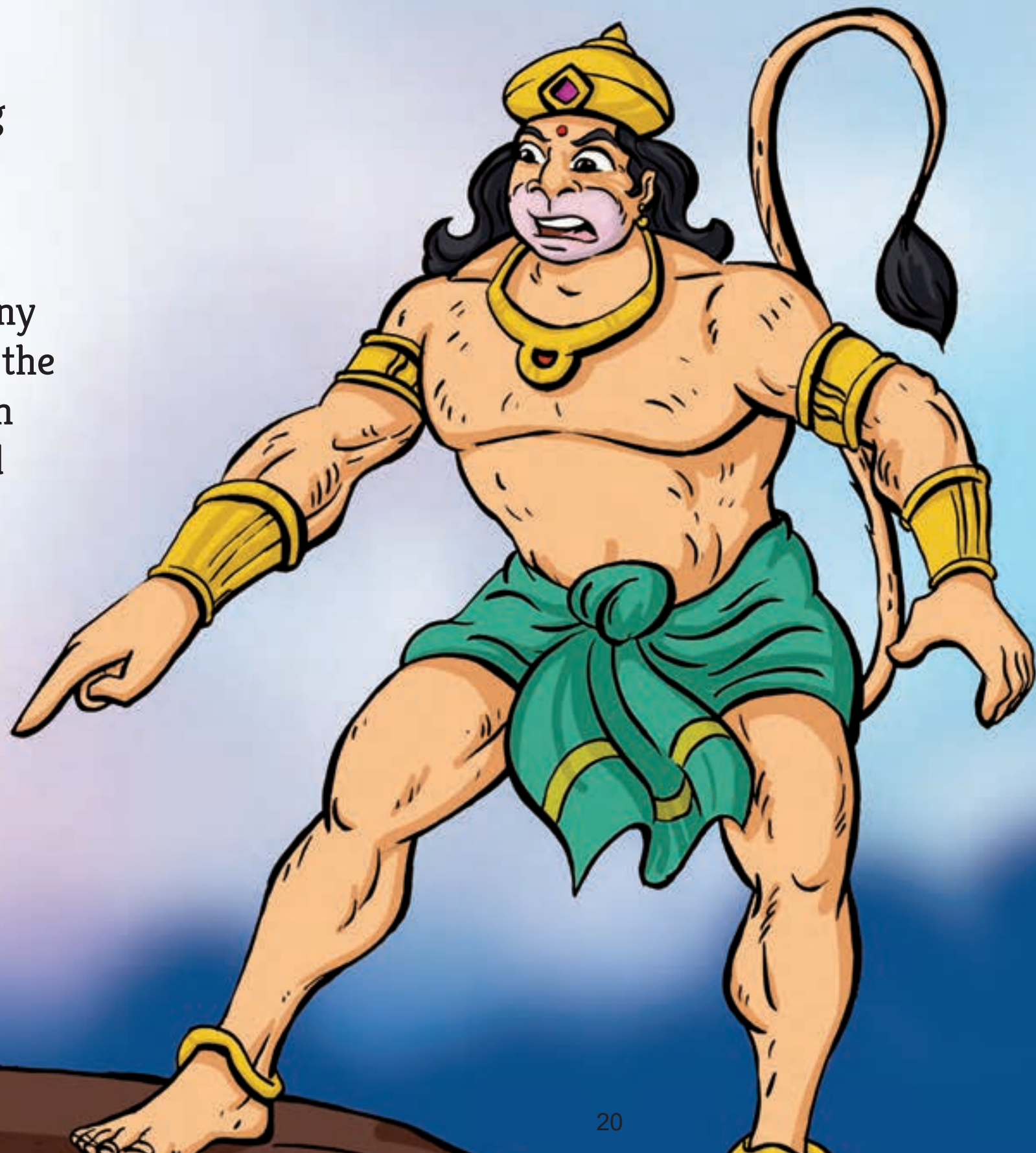


Scrambling to her feet, Squirrel made a dash towards the seashore. Skipping through the large tramping feet of so many monkeys, she reached the sandy edge.

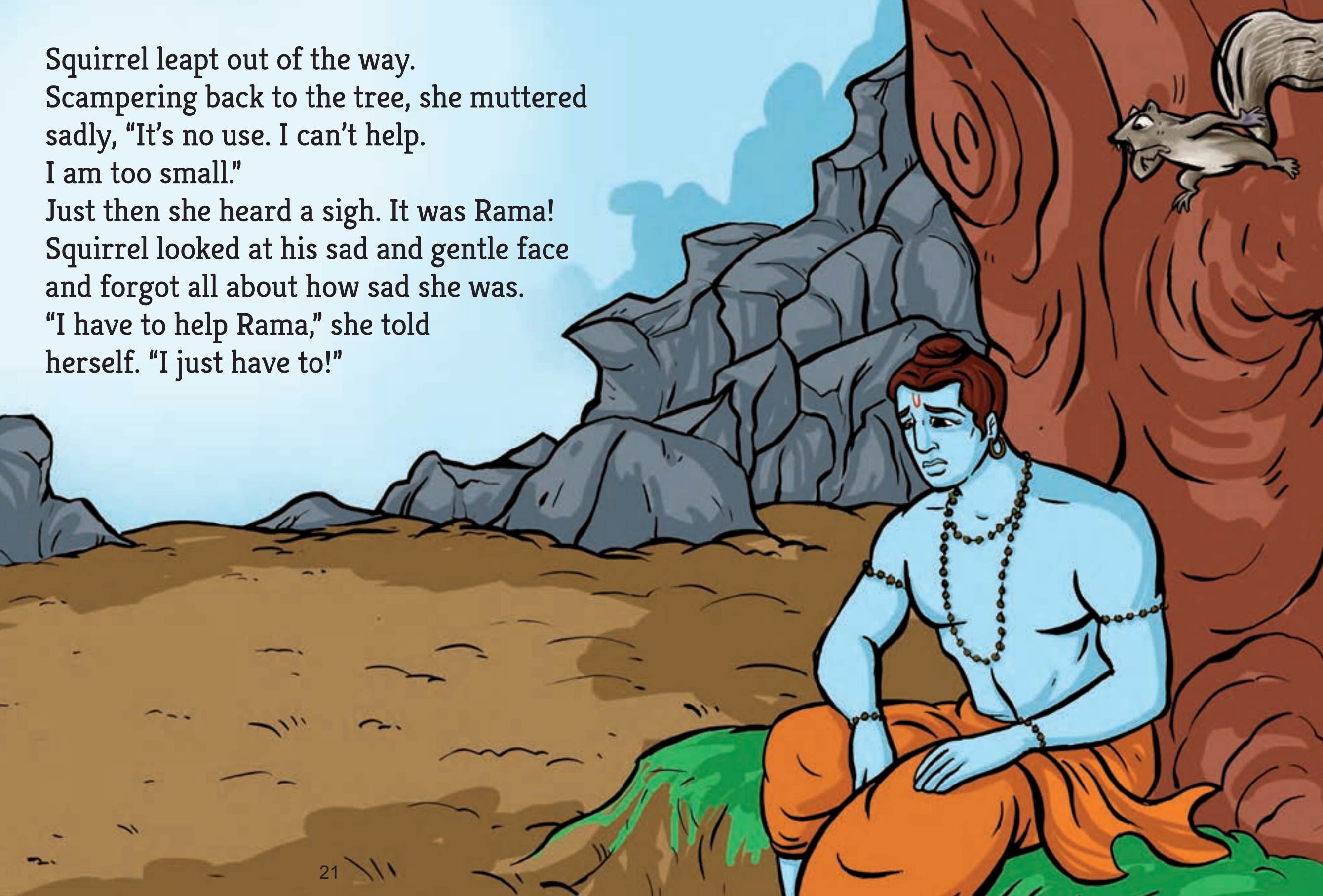
There, she bent down and filled her tiny mouth with sand. Then, she darted to the bridge and sprinkled the sand between two stones. It fell through the gap and disappeared.

A huge shadow loomed over her.

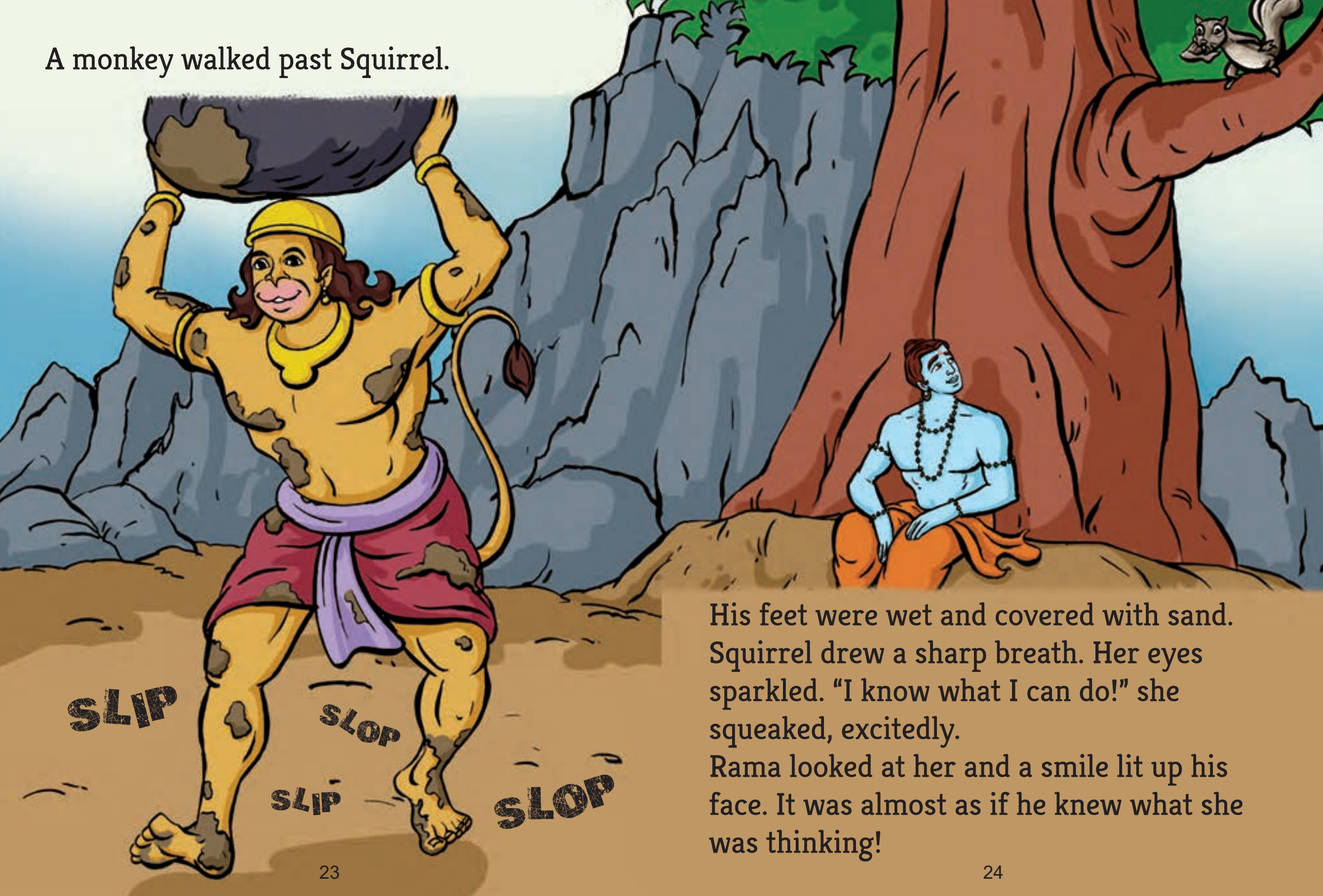
"Out of my way, you tiny creature!" shouted a big monkey. "You will be squashed if you come here."



Squirrel leapt out of the way.
Scampering back to the tree, she muttered
sadly, "It's no use. I can't help.
I am too small."
Just then she heard a sigh. It was Rama!
Squirrel looked at his sad and gentle face
and forgot all about how sad she was.
"I have to help Rama," she told
herself. "I just have to!"



A monkey walked past Squirrel.



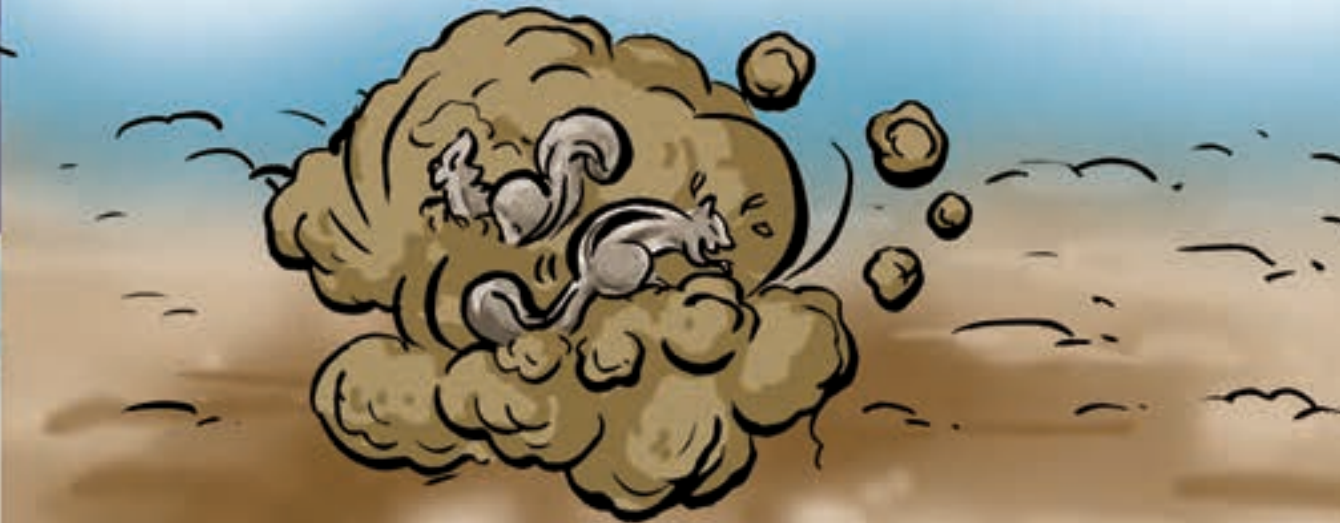
His feet were wet and covered with sand. Squirrel drew a sharp breath. Her eyes sparkled. "I know what I can do!" she squeaked, excitedly. Rama looked at her and a smile lit up his face. It was almost as if he knew what she was thinking!



Squirrel did not waste another moment! She ran to the sea as a big wave came rolling in. Then, she jumped into the water and soaked herself.



Dripping wet, Squirrel shot back to the beach and rolled herself in the dry sand. The sand stuck to her wet fur and she looked like a little sand ball!



Next, Squirrel went straight to the bridge and shook herself hard. A shower of sand fell from her body into the gaps between the stones.



Squirrel ran down to the sea again, soaked herself, rolled in the sand and shook it out on the bridge. She bathed, rolled and shook without stopping till sundown.



Soon, it became dark. The work was over and the bridge was made. Nala walked slowly over the bridge for a final look. He bent down, surprised.

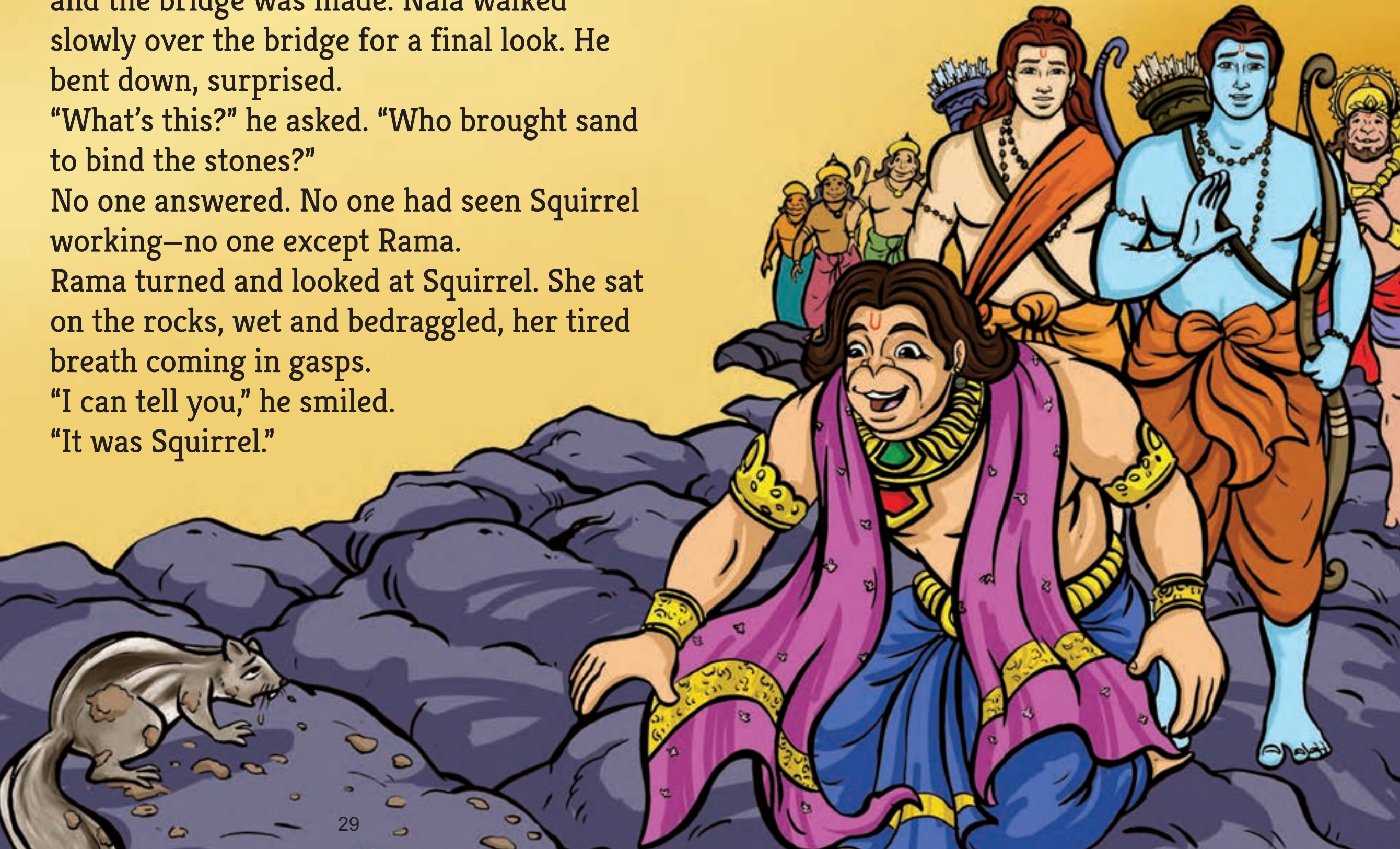
“What’s this?” he asked. “Who brought sand to bind the stones?”

No one answered. No one had seen Squirrel working—no one except Rama.

Rama turned and looked at Squirrel. She sat on the rocks, wet and bedraggled, her tired breath coming in gasps.

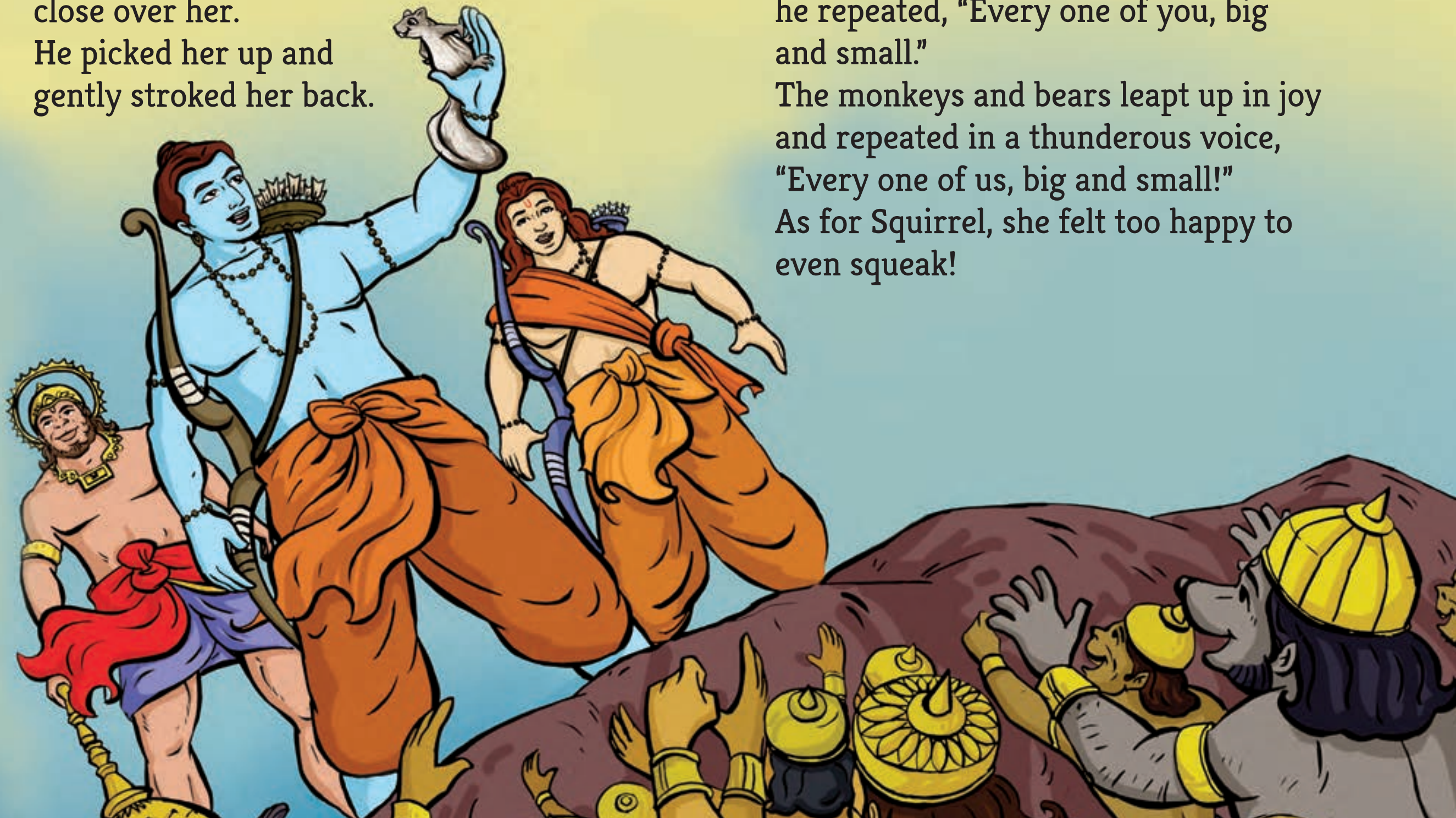
“I can tell you,” he smiled.

“It was Squirrel.”



"Rama saw me! He knows what I did!"
Squirrel closed her tired eyes happily.
Suddenly, she felt Rama's warm hands
close over her.
He picked her up and
gently stroked her back.

"You have all done a wonderful job," said
Rama. "Every one of you."
Then, lifting Squirrel high up in his hand
he repeated, "Every one of you, big
and small."
The monkeys and bears leapt up in joy
and repeated in a thunderous voice,
"Every one of us, big and small!"
As for Squirrel, she felt too happy to
even squeak!



Learning

Ladder

Kidnapped	Taken away by force
Architect	A person who plans and builds buildings
Chirruped	Made short high-pitched sounds
Wrench	Pull out
Scampered	Ran hurriedly with short steps
Bushy	Fluffy

Bind	Hold together
Loomed	Appeared in a large form
Bedraggled	Wet and untidy
Sundown	Sunset





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AFTER THE STORY...

Rama and Lakshmana were the sons of King Dashrath of Ayodhya.

Sita was the princess of Mithila.

The Ramayana was written by Valmiki.

Their story is told in a big book called the Ramayana.

The army of bears was led by their king, Jambavan.

The bridge across the sea was named Nala Setu or Nala's bridge.

