



The Pangolin Protectors

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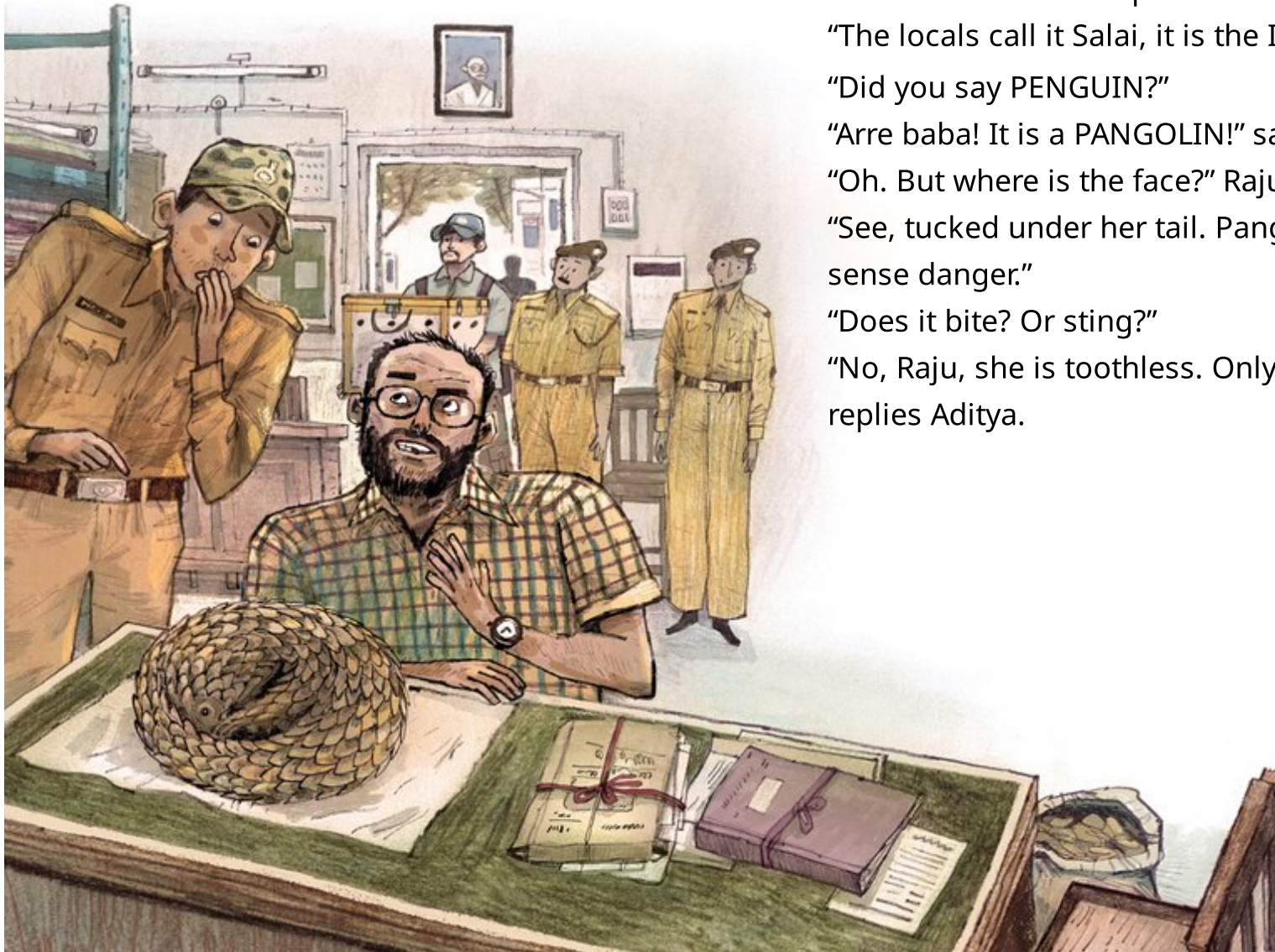
Illustrator: Rajiv Eipe

Level 4

POACHERS ARRESTED, PANGOLIN AND SCALES
SEIZED AFTER A DARING INVESTIGATION







The forest officials involved in the investigation call in the pangolin protectors. Aditya and his team of scientists come as quickly as they can.

"It looks like a ball of petals!" says Raju, the youngest forest guard.

"The locals call it Salai, it is the Indian Pangolin," says Aditya.

"Did you say PENGUIN?"

"Arre baba! It is a PANGOLIN!" says a senior forest official.

"Oh. But where is the face?" Raju has more questions.

"See, tucked under her tail. Pangolins curl up this way when they sense danger."

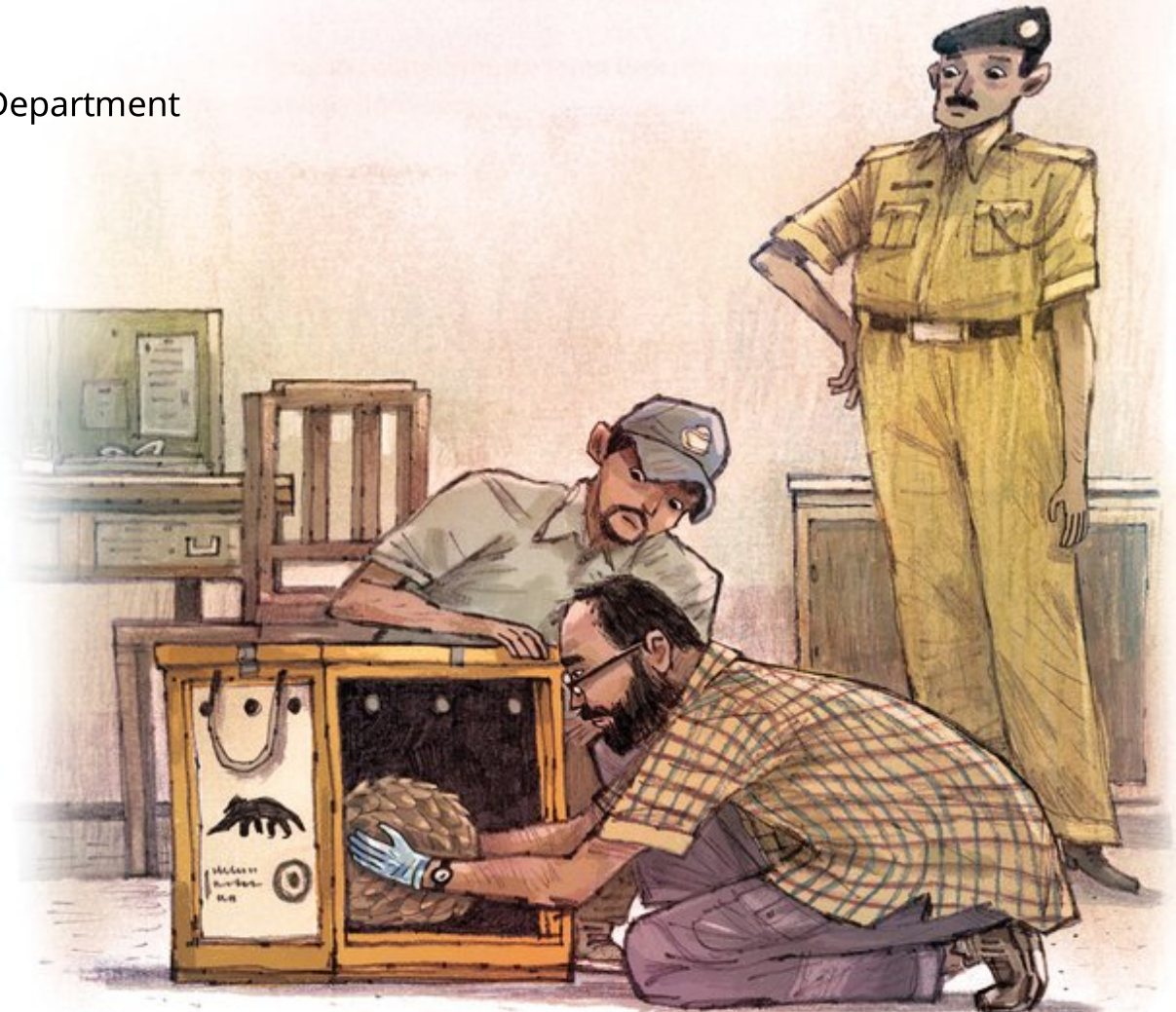
"Does it bite? Or sting?"

"No, Raju, she is toothless. Only eats ants and termites," replies Aditya.

Aditya and his teammate Rajesh move the curled-up pangolin to a special box. The box is designed like a burrow, like those where pangolins live. Finally, a safe space for her. With water, and termites for food!

The box with the pangolin in it is safely handed over to the Forest Department, until the animal can be released into the wild.

After a long and dusty drive, the Forest Department team reaches the busy district court.



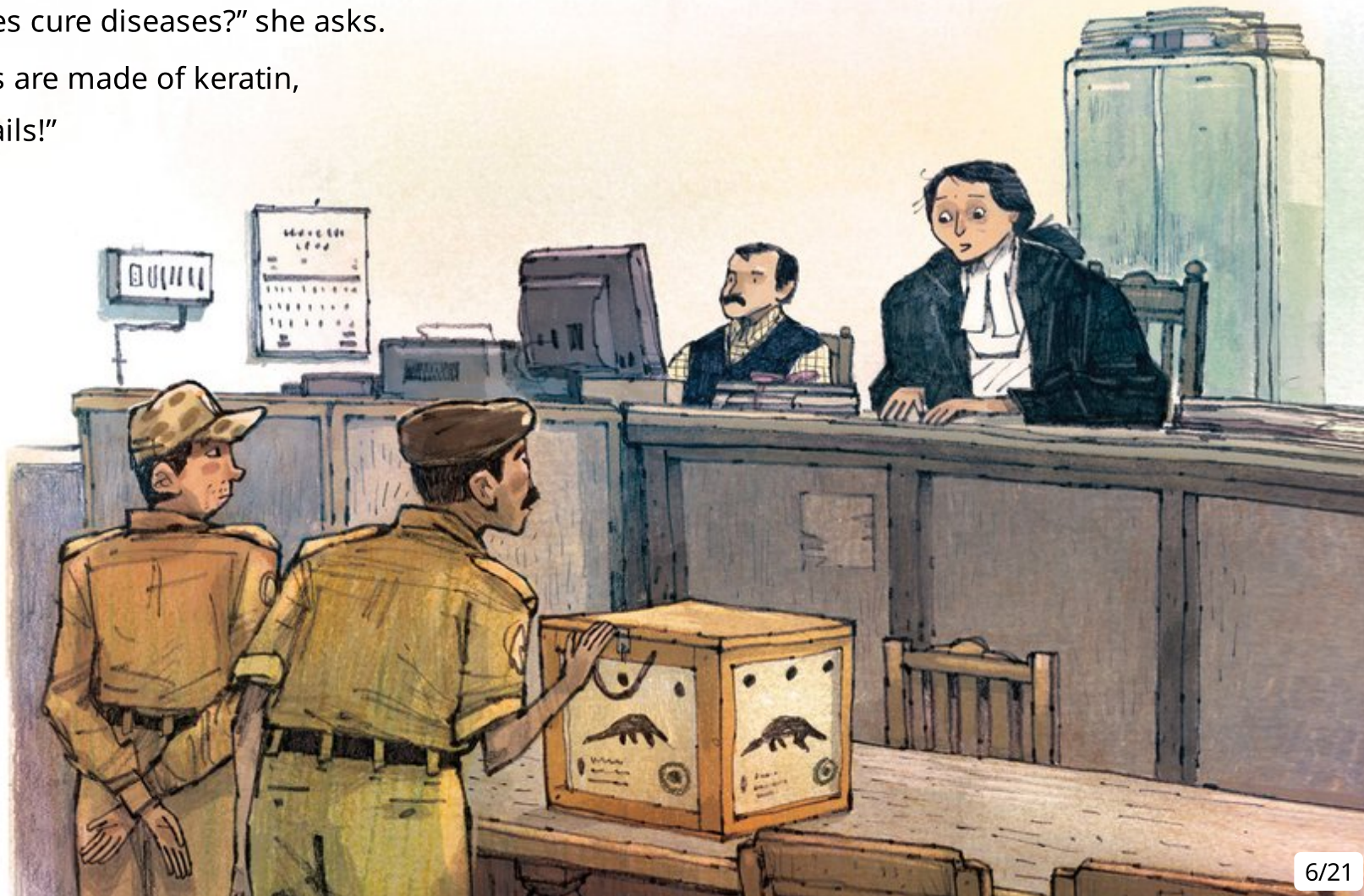
"Do they hunt the pangolin for its meat?" Judge Veena Roy questions the team.

"Yes, your honour, and for its scales. The poachers make huge amounts of money on the illegal market by selling the scales.

People in China and Vietnam believe the scales have medicinal qualities," explains the forest official.

"Really? Can the scales cure diseases?" she asks.

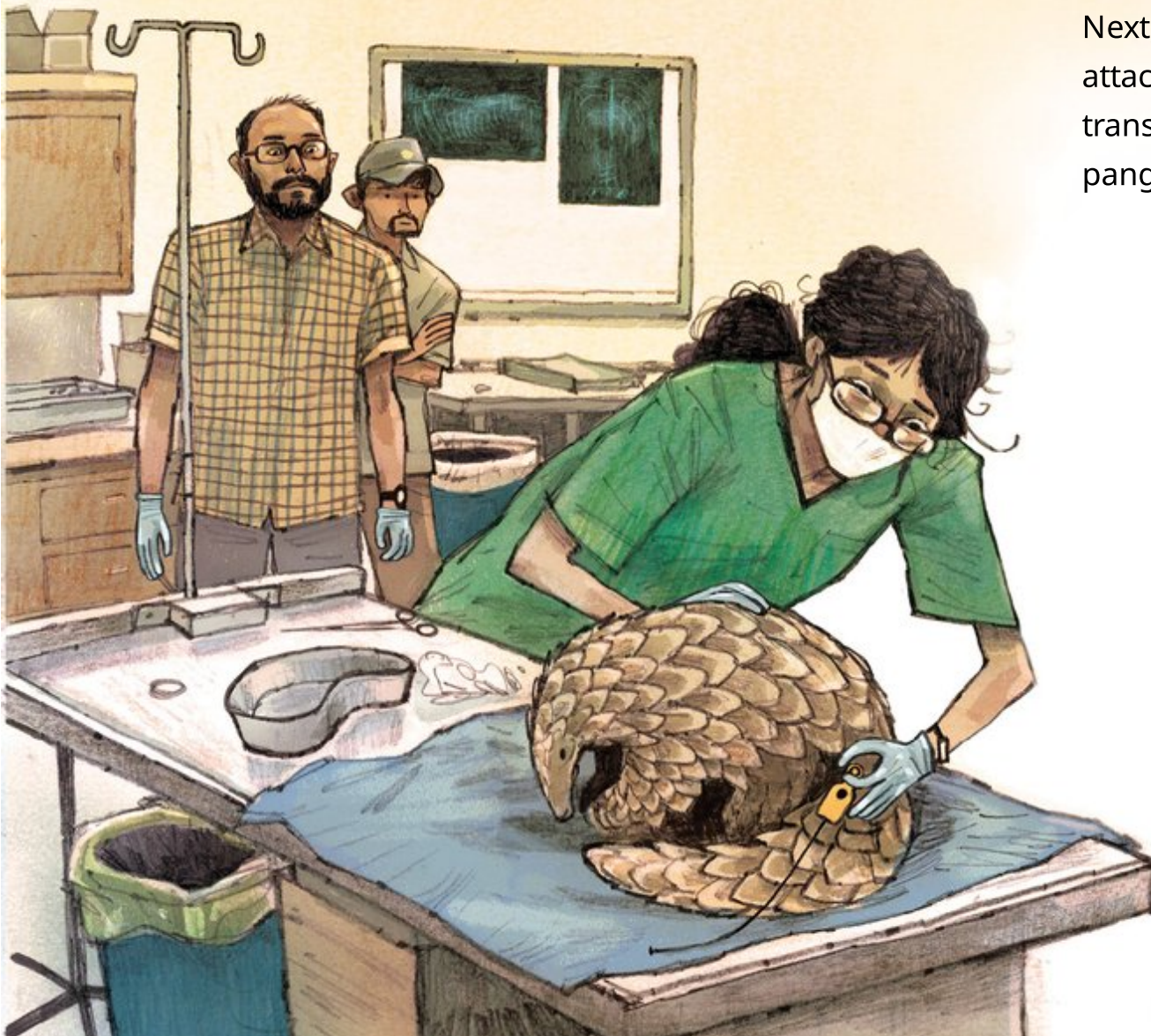
"Not at all! The scales are made of keratin, just like our fingernails!"



The poachers are sent to jail, while the pangolin in the box heads back home—to the forest.

But first, a visit to the veterinary doctor, to make sure the pangolin is all right.

Next, Aditya and the park veterinarian attach a small device called a radio transmitter to one of the scales near the pangolin's tail.





The transmitter talks to an antenna.
The antenna talks to a receiver.
Together, these machines will help trace the elusive pangolin once she is back in the forest.






But how will the pangolin find a home?

Hira and Ace are ready to help. They are intelligent, well-trained conservation dogs brought from South Africa. Their superpower is to find pangolin scents in the forest.

With GPS around their collar, Hira and Ace have only one command to follow: “Pingu Soek.” In Afrikaans, “soek” means to search and “pingu” is a word the scientists have made up for the pangolins. That’s how the dogs know they have to look for a pangolin.

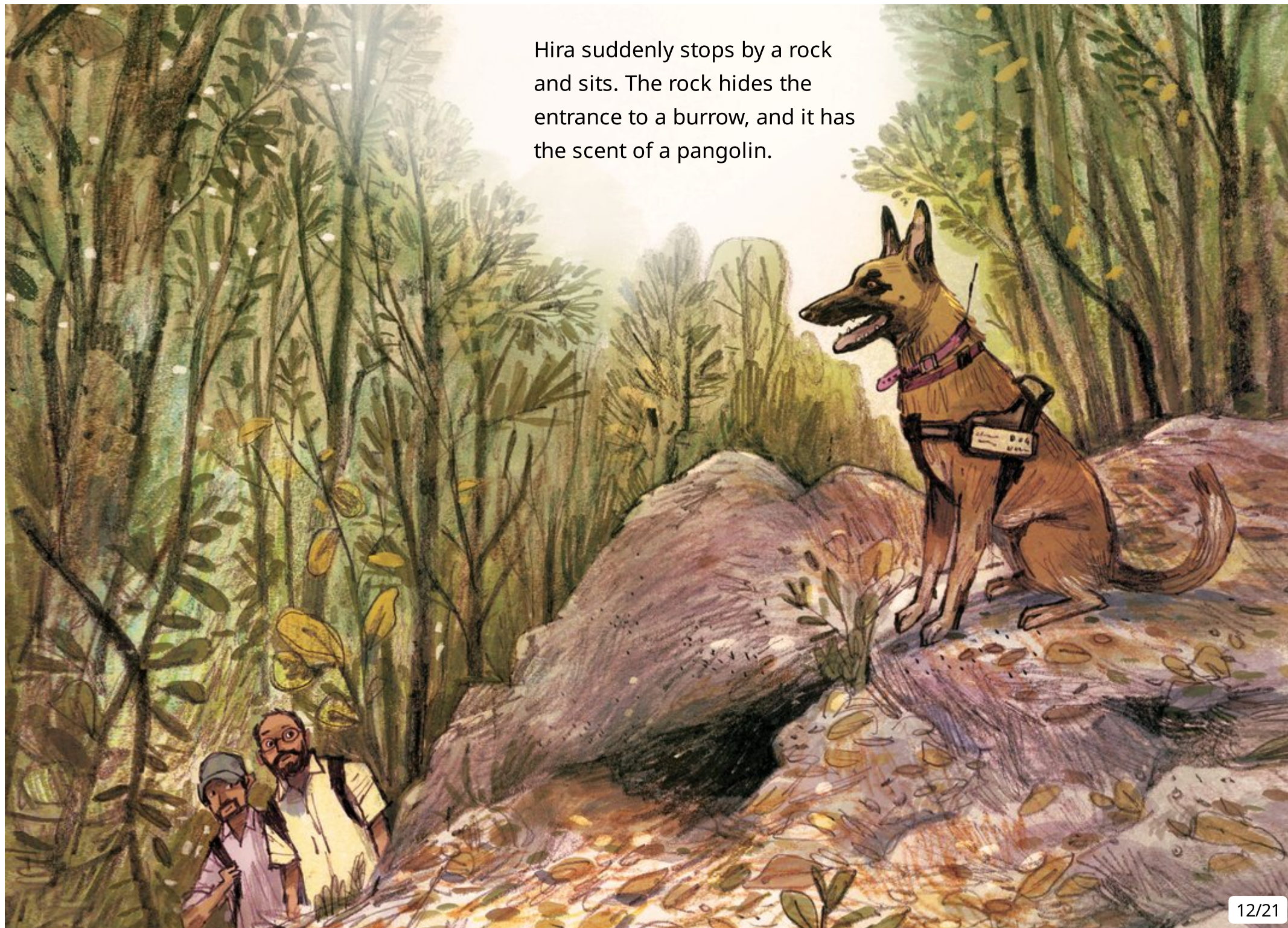
A person's arm and hand are visible on the left side of the frame, reaching out towards the dog. The person is wearing a grey sleeveless shirt. The background is a dense forest with many trees and bushes.

PINGU SOEK

Today, it's Hira's turn to help.
Everyone follows Hira into
the dense forest.



Hira suddenly stops by a rock and sits. The rock hides the entrance to a burrow, and it has the scent of a pangolin.



Rajesh and the team set up cameras on two sides of the burrow. The cameras will help track not only the pangolin but also her visitors—animal and human.



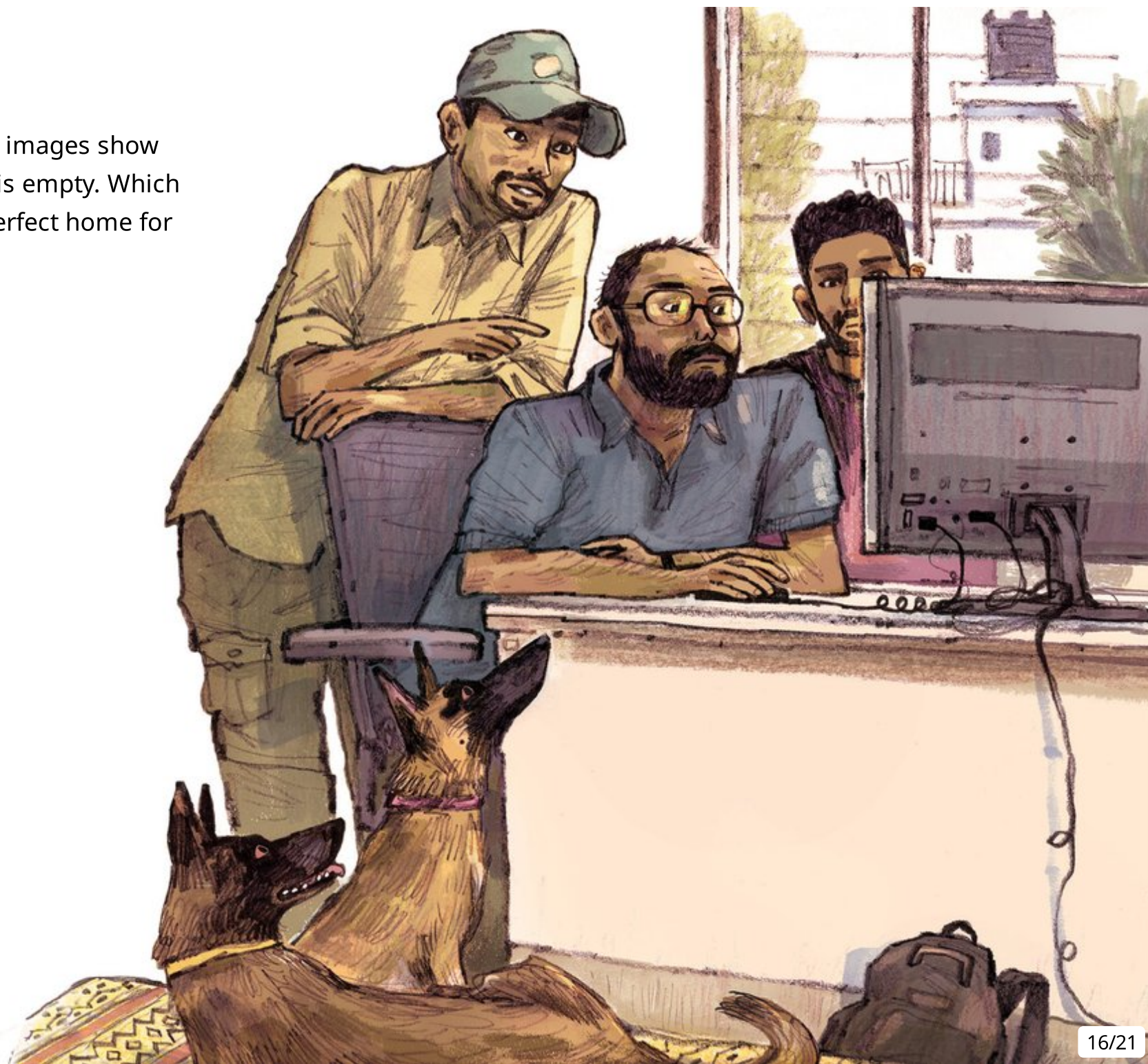
Hira gets a ball as a reward.



The team has to wait and observe the burrow for a few weeks, to make sure it can be chosen for the pangolin.



The camera trap images show that the burrow is empty. Which means it's the perfect home for the pangolin!







The pangolin protectors go home
with smiles on their faces.

And the pangolin?
She is home at last.



Pangolins are extraordinary animals.

- There are eight species of pangolins in the world—four in Asia and four in Africa.
- India is home to two species, the Indian and the Chinese Pangolin.
- They have long, sticky tongues to feed on ants and termites.
- When threatened, they curl up into a ball and are shielded by their armour of scales.
- They are nocturnal animals, which means they are active at night.
- Pangolin babies, called pangopups, ride on the mother's tail until they are independent.
- The pangolin is the only mammal with scales.





Sadly, it is because of these unique scales that the animal is in severe danger. Every ten minutes, a pangolin is poached somewhere in the world. They are the most trafficked mammals on the planet, because their meat is considered a delicacy and their scales are used in traditional East Asian medicine. More than a million pangolins have been poached in just the past decade.

MEET THE WILDLIFE CONSERVATION TRUST TEAM

In the heart of Central India, scientist Aditya Joshi and his team from Wildlife Conservation Trust, including Hira and Ace—a pair of fearless Belgian Malinois dogs—and forest officials from the Satpura and Pench Tiger Reserves are working hard to conserve the Indian Pangolin. Hira and Ace were trained in South Africa before being brought to India to detect pangolin scent trails in the forest and lead the scientists to burrows.

Pangolins rescued from poachers are fitted with a radio transmitter and released in the forest. This helps scientists keep track of the released pangolins, to monitor and ensure their survival. Radio transmitters and camera traps help scientists understand the behaviour of these shy animals about whom we know very little.



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The Pangolin Protectors

(English)

In the forests of Central India, pangolin poachers have been arrested. Forest officials and the Wildlife Conservation Trust team (including conservation dogs) get together to lead the pangolin to the perfect home.

This is a Level 4 book for children who can read fluently and with confidence.



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