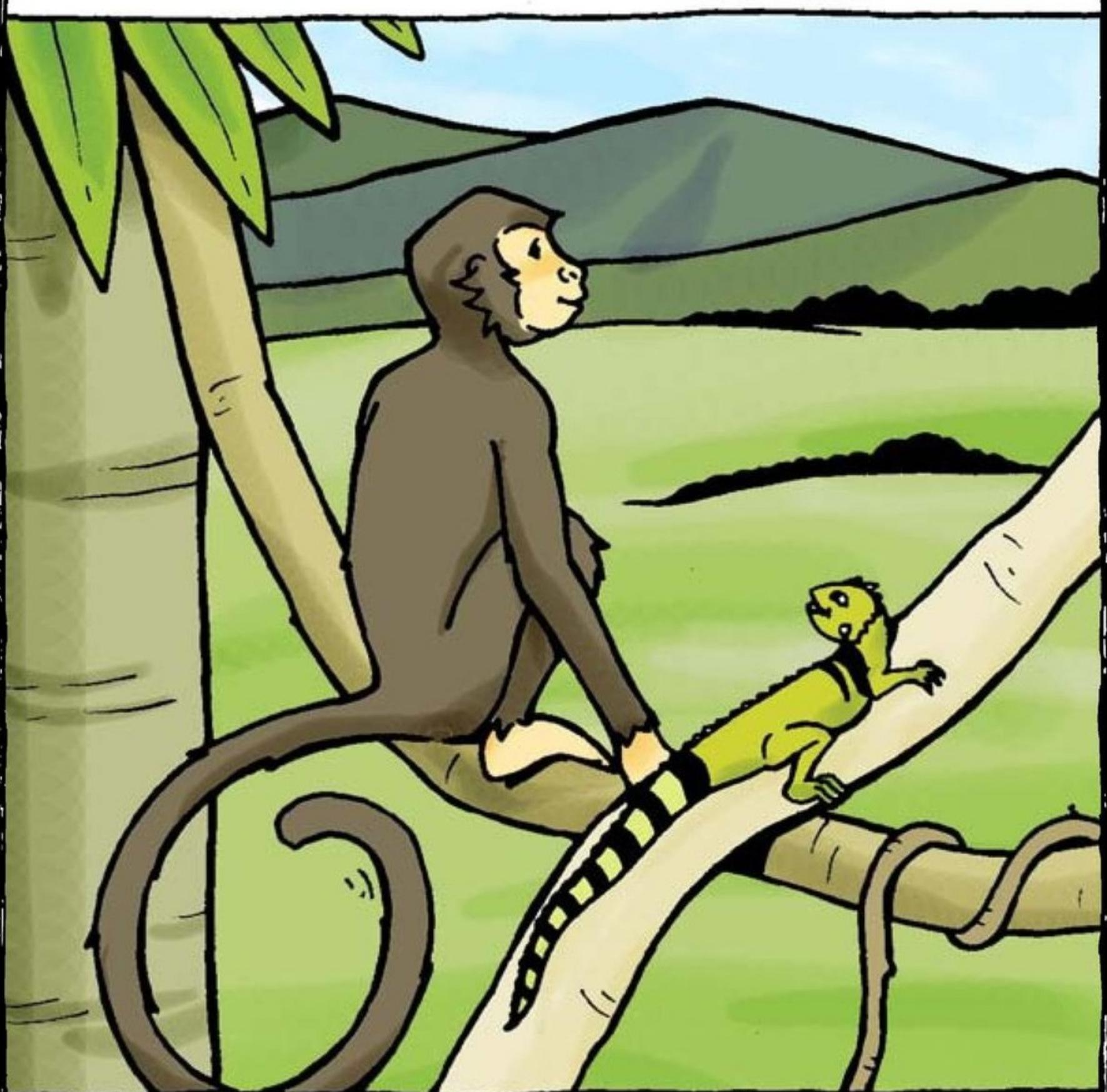


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Spider Monkey's Question

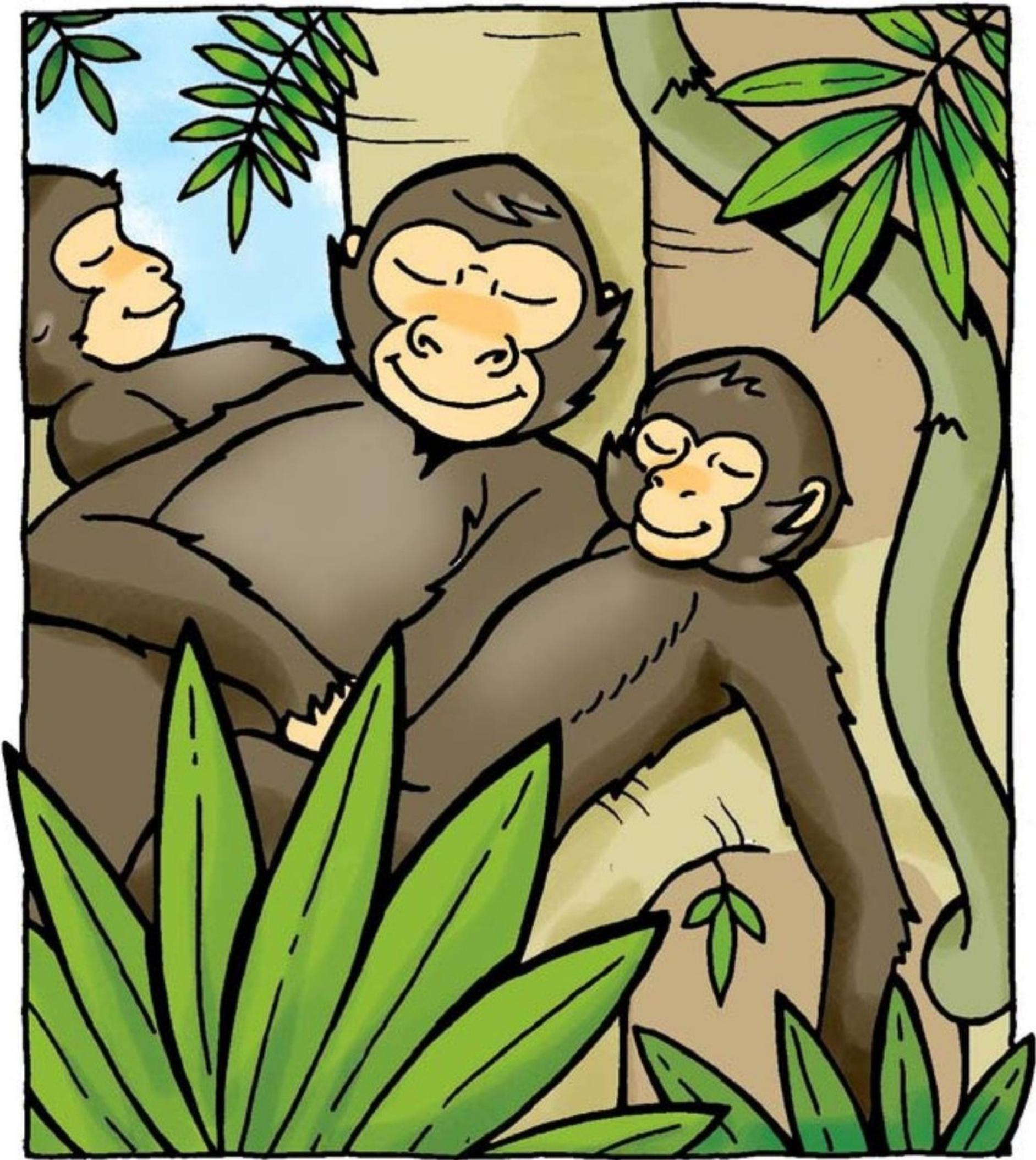


Written by Julie Harding • Illustrated by Maria Voris

Spider Monkey's Question



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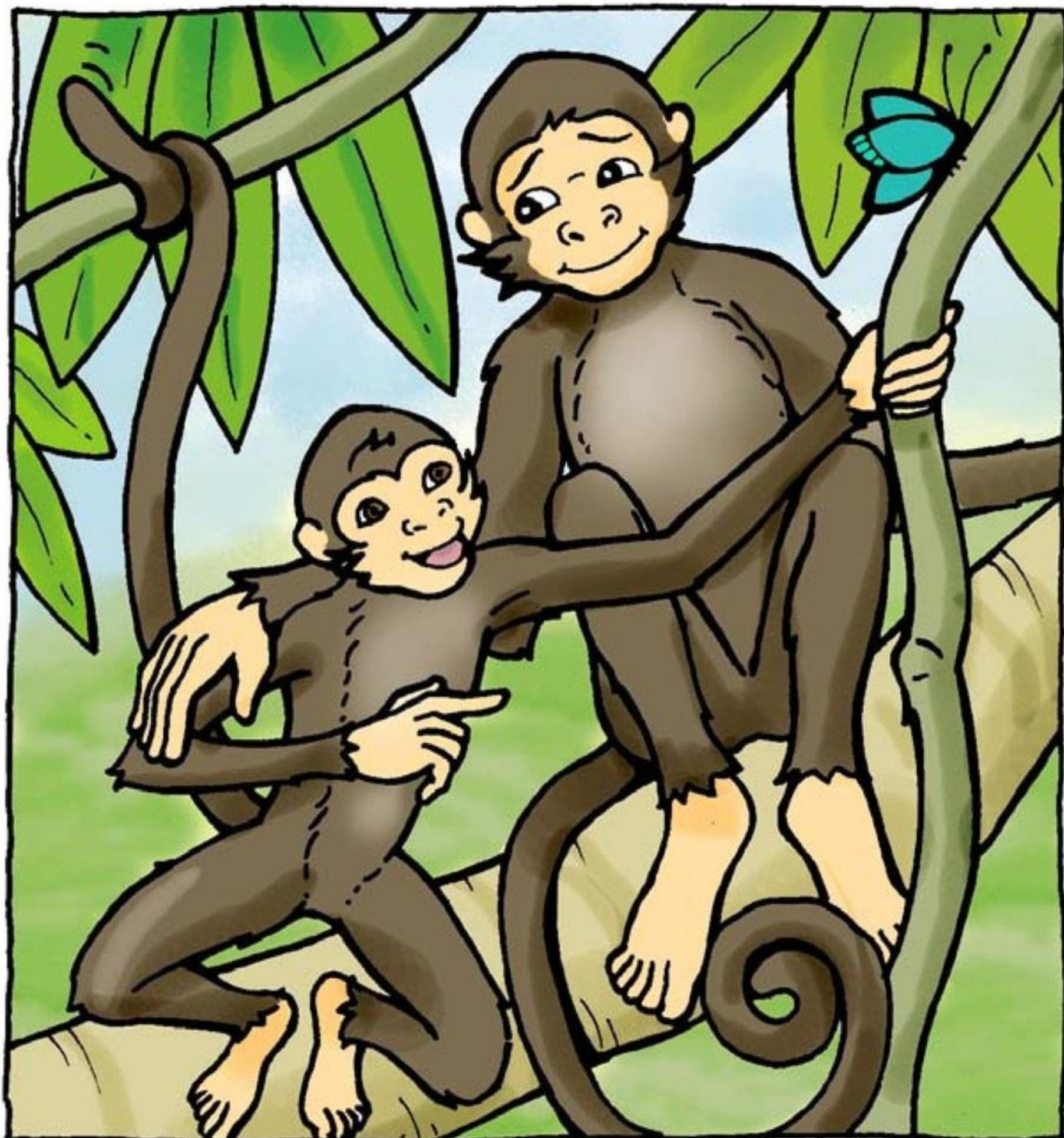
The morning sun shone dimly through the canopy of rainforest leaves. A few spots of light danced on the thin fronds of the ferns on the ground. A family of spider monkeys slept in the branches of a tall tree. Father rolled over in his sleep and bumped his young son, Tari.

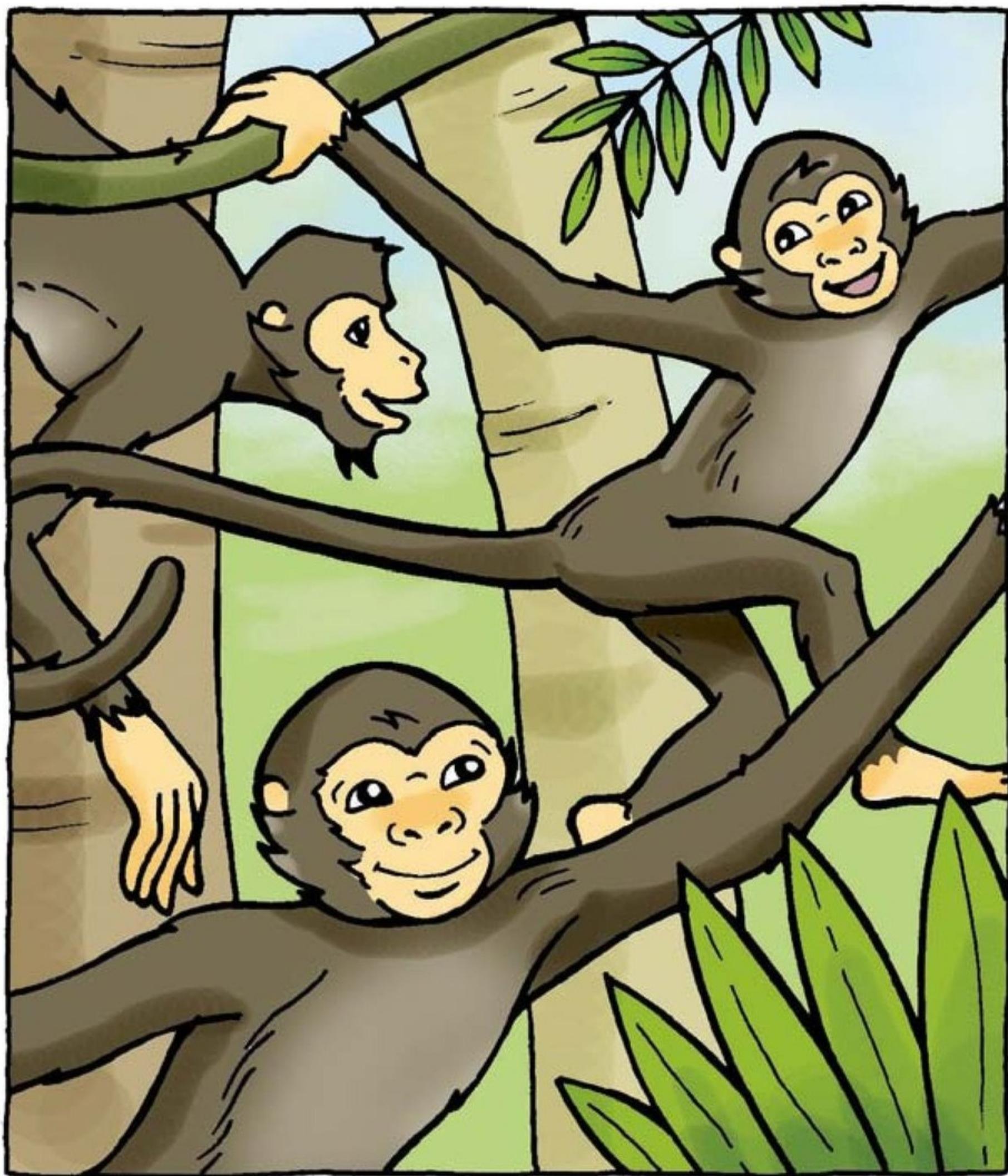


"Who bumped me?" Tari shouted, jerking awake. "Did you do it in your sleep? Why do we move in our sleep?"

Mother's eyes snapped open. Another day of questions had begun, and no one had even had breakfast yet.

Luckily for the young spider monkey, his parents were very patient. They were also very wise. They had been able to answer nearly every question Tari had ever asked. Tari's mother thought it was wonderful that his first word was *why?* But she began to worry when it was the only word he seemed to know.

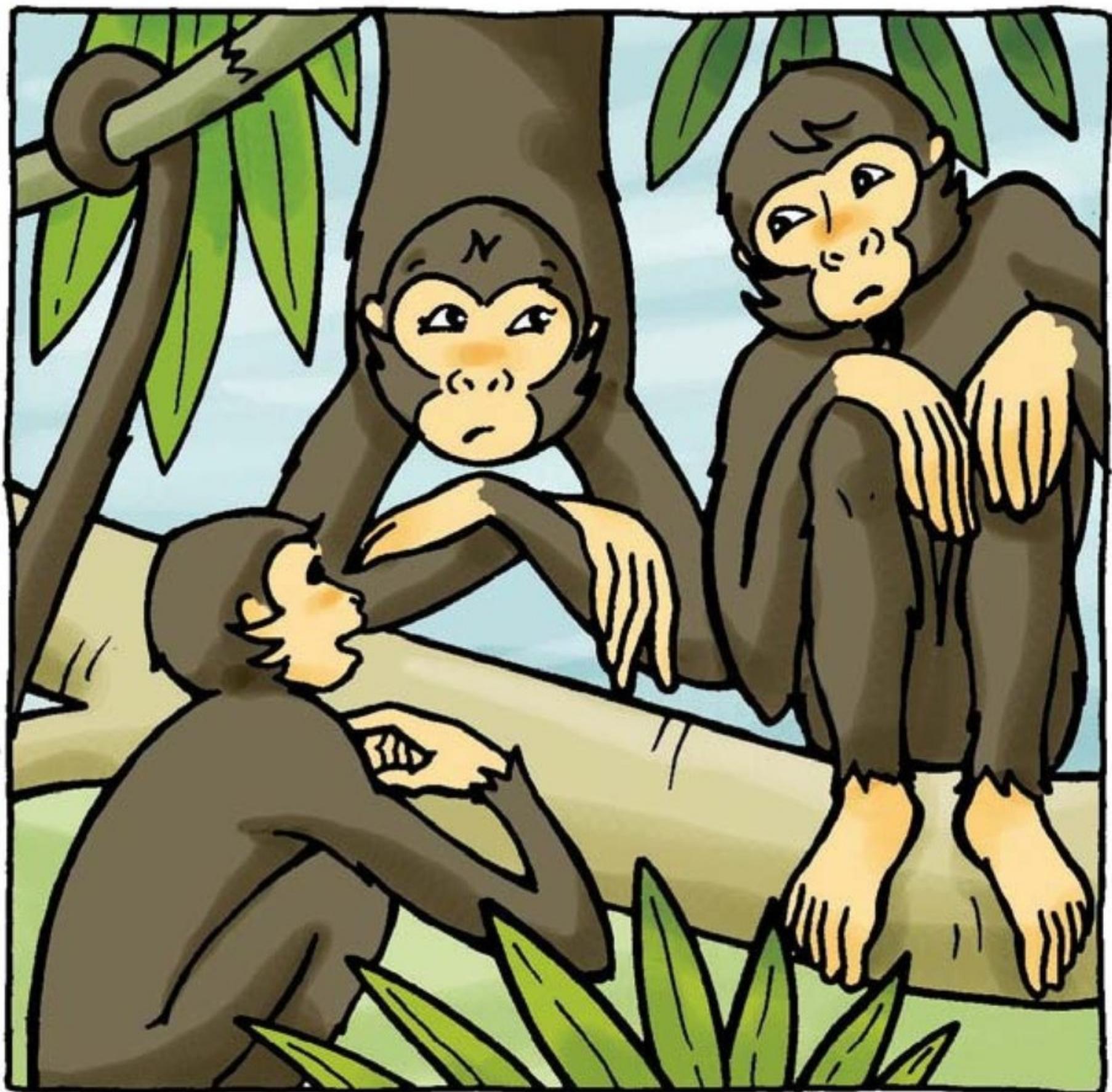




Tari asked questions about the landscape as the family swung through the trees. “Why is the sky blue? Why are the hills high?” He asked about other animals’ lives when they went to visit friends. “Why does Jaguar have spots? Why do ants live underground?”

He asked about the tree they lived in while he fell asleep in its branches. “Why is it tall? Why does it have leaves?” He asked about foods while the family prepared meals. “Why are bananas tasty? Why is corn yellow?” Tari’s curiosity was truly endless.

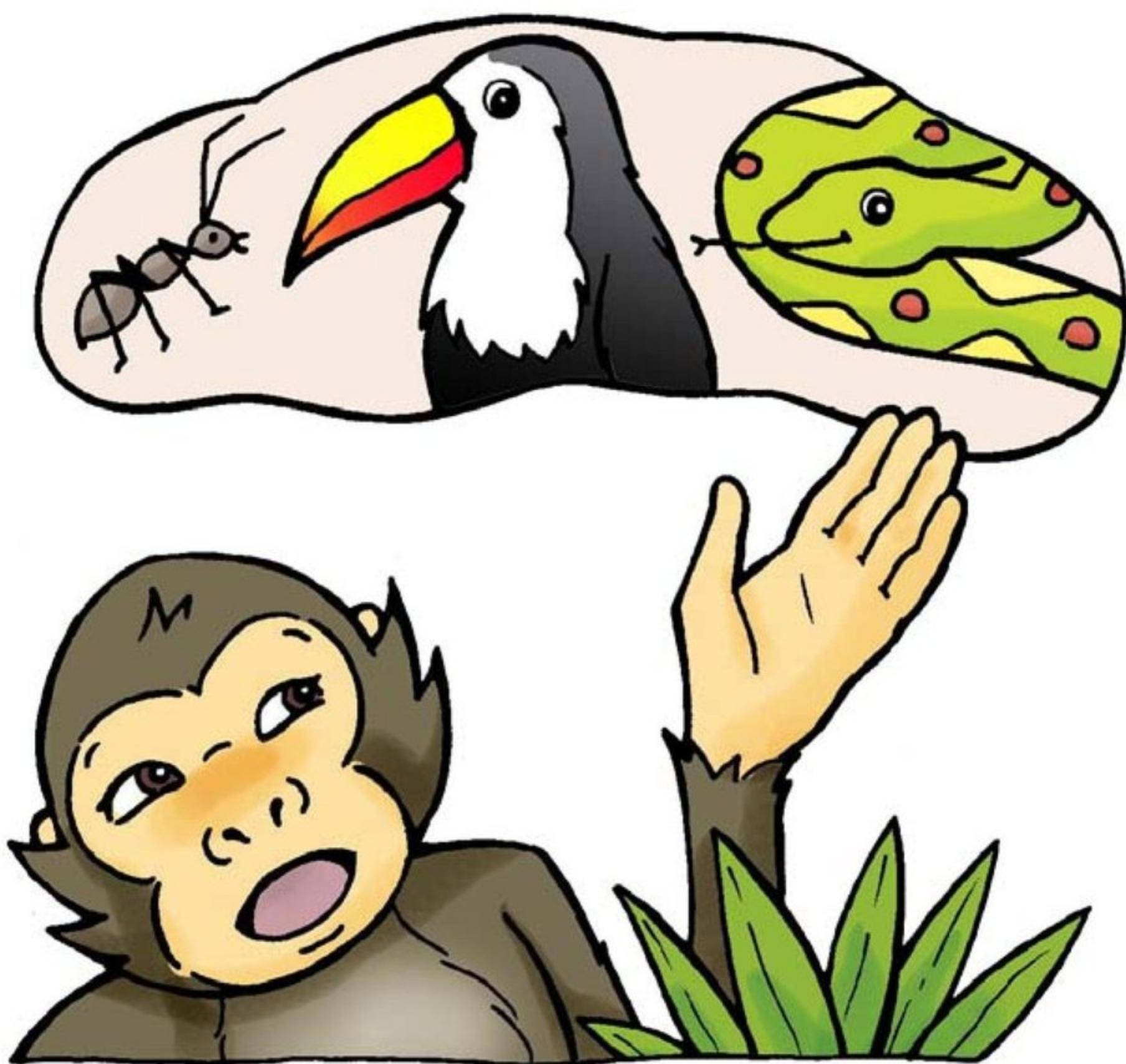


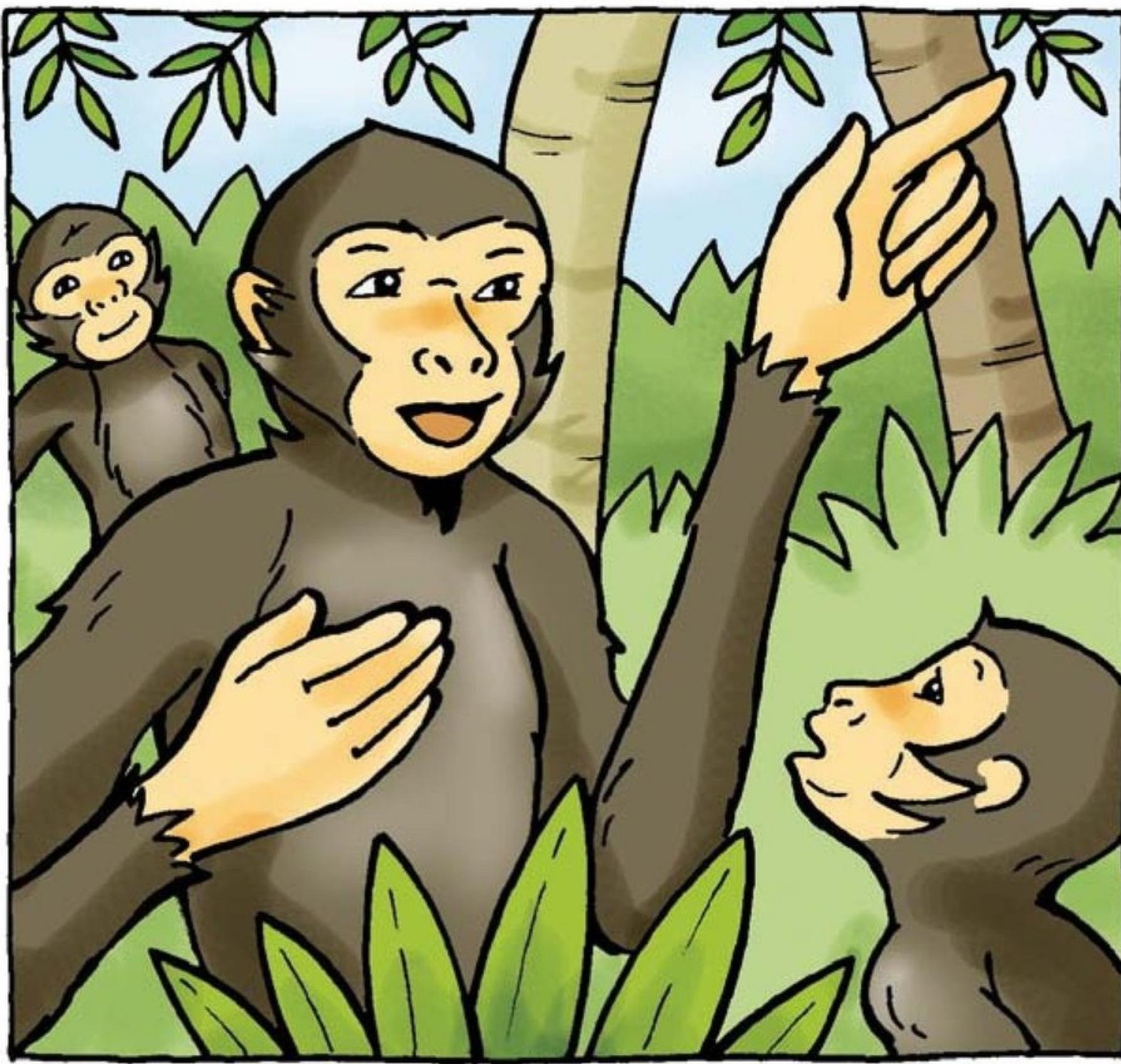


As Tari grew older, his questions had become more difficult. Then one day, Tari asked a question that his parents could not answer. "Why are we called spider monkeys?"

Tari's parents could have guessed the answer to this question. But they felt it was time for Tari to figure some things out on his own.

They tried to explain why they could not answer Tari's simple question. His mother took a deep breath and said, "In the days before monkeys could talk with one another, the Namer of Animals gave every creature a name. Each animal carries its given name until the end of time. Generation after generation of spider monkeys have been called by that name."





“But how can I find out where the name came from?”

Tari’s parents exchanged glances. “Well, Tari,” said his father, “there is someone who knows. The Namer herself lives in the other world beyond our forest.”

Tari had heard about the Namer before. The animals in the forest had a great respect for her and all of her mysteries.

Tari guessed that the Namer must be an incredible being. Tari believed there were reasons for most things in the world. He wanted more than anything to find out what those reasons were. Tari began wondering about the many names of forest animals. *Spider monkey* was not the strangest. There was *iguana*, *jaguar*, *macaw*, and *puma*. Tari began to think the Namer might be a little silly.

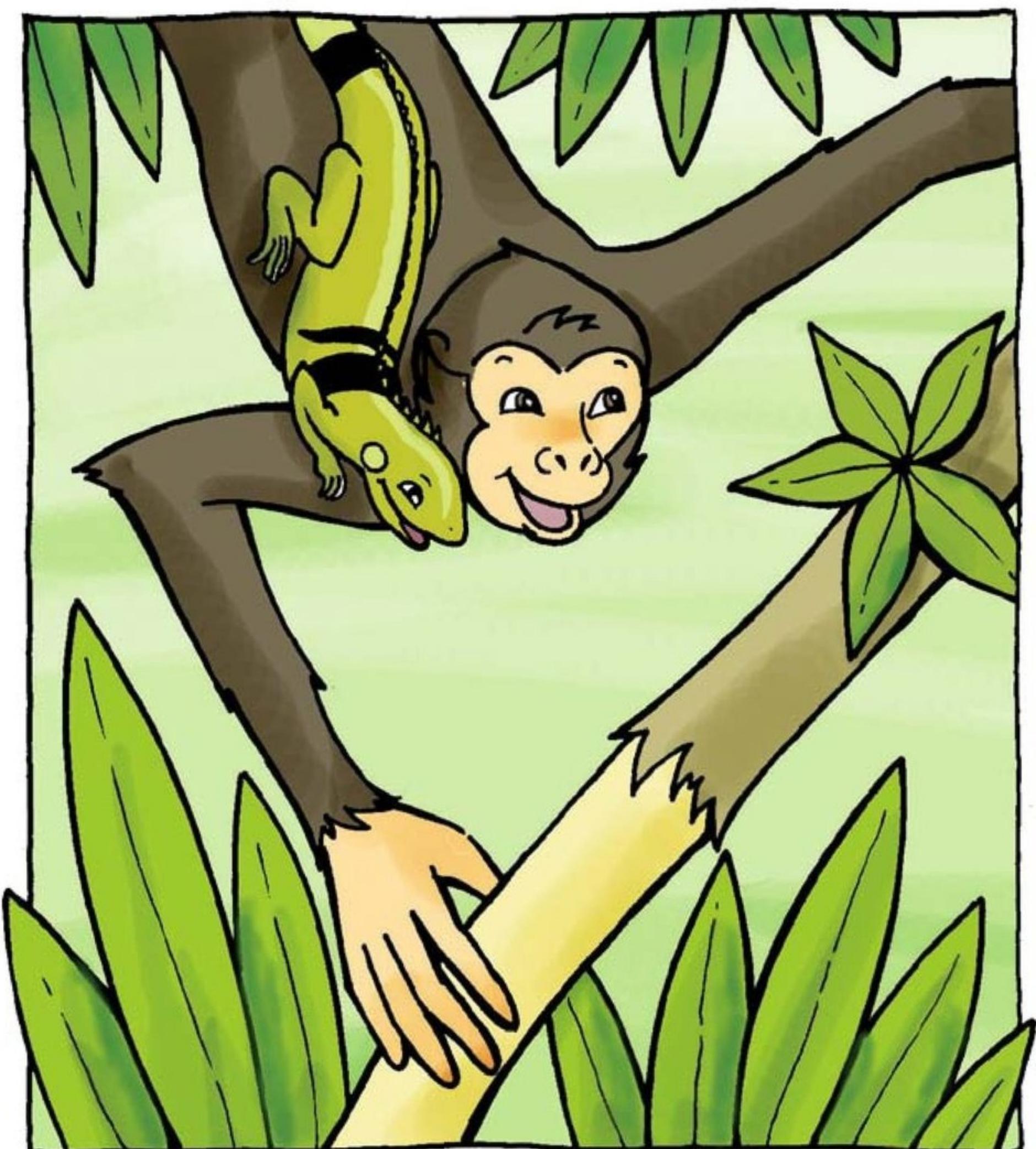




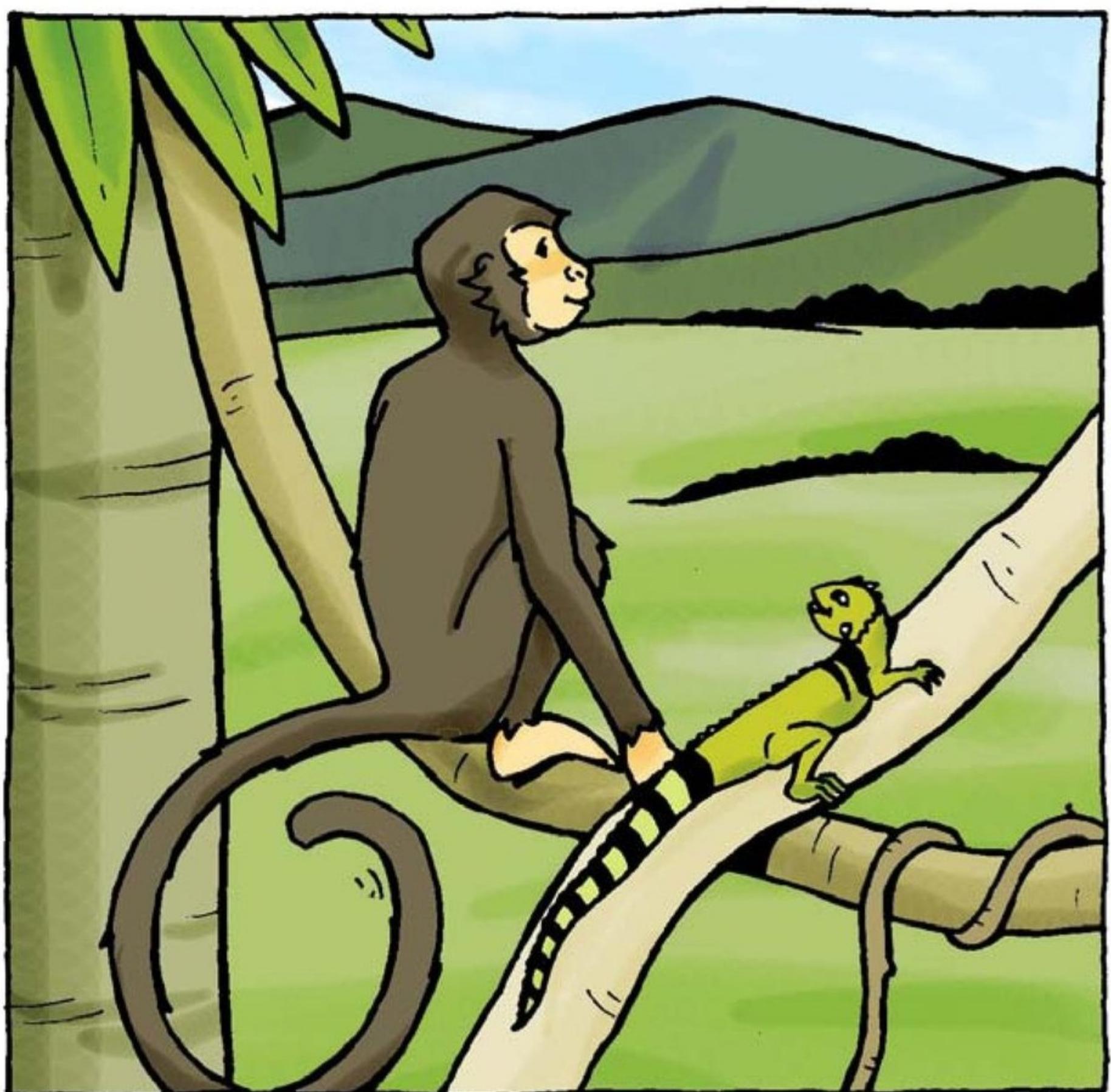
Tari went to find his friend, Balam Iguana. She was always up for a good adventure. Sometimes she and Tari could figure things out without asking their parents. Balam was very excited by the question of where names came from. Her parents could only guess where the word *iguana* came from.

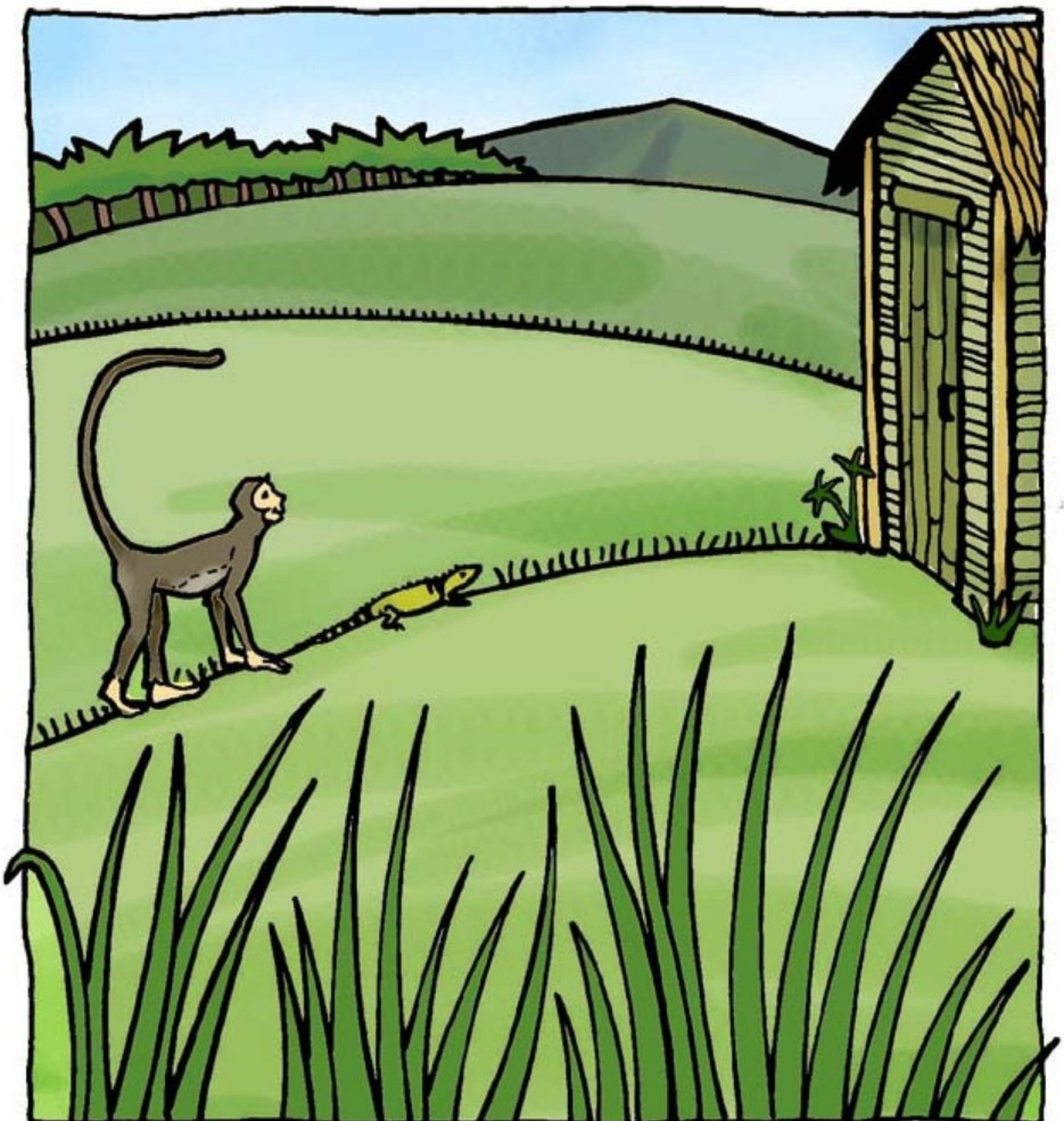
Tari and Balam decided to find the Namer in the other world and ask her where she had gotten their names. This was no small journey for a spider monkey and an iguana. But the reward seemed well worth the trek.

After asking their parents' permission, they were off to the other world to get to the bottom of their curiosity. Tari swung himself through the trees, carrying Balam on his back. After all, iguanas are not known to be fast on their feet.



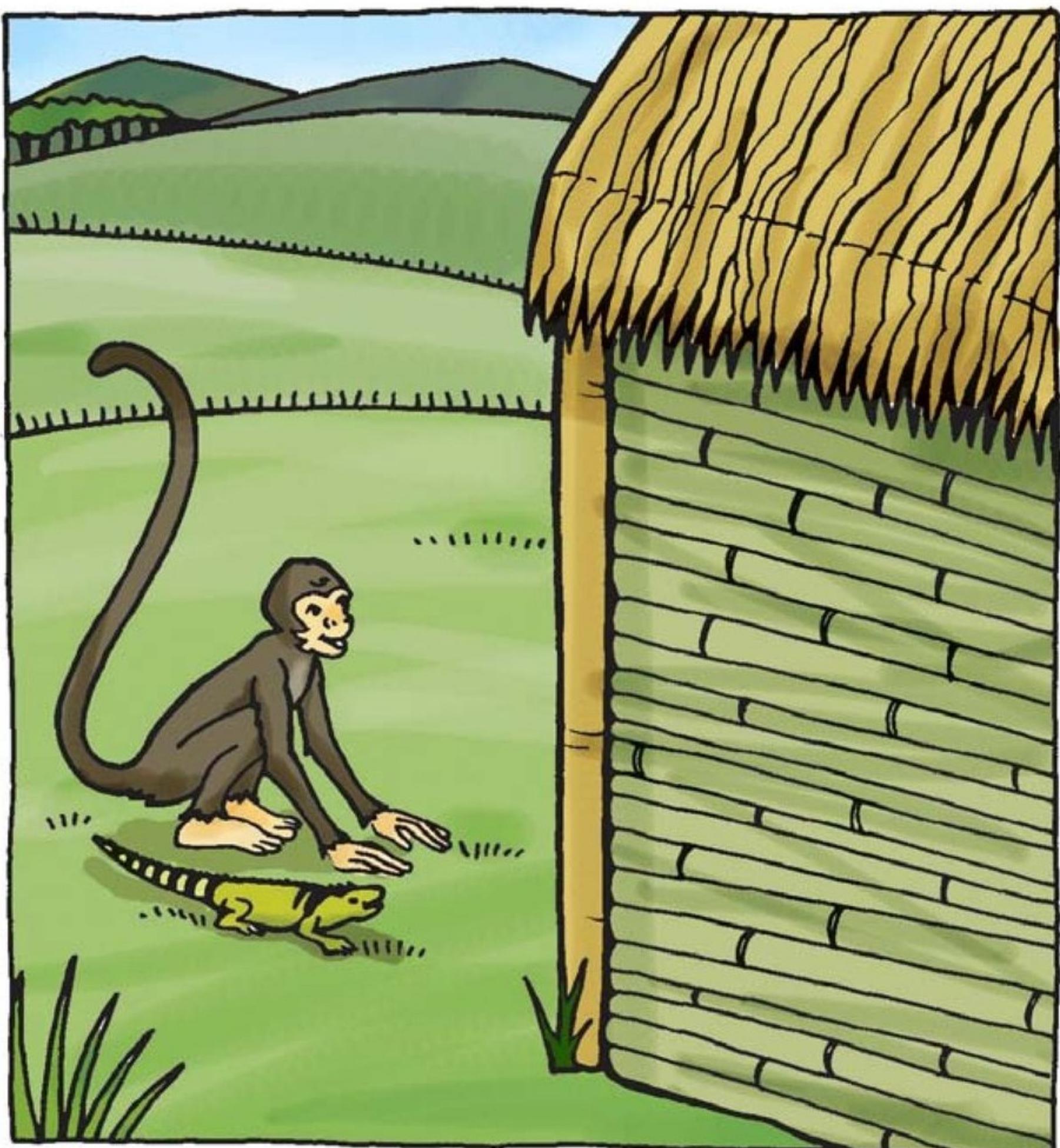
After swinging his arms for what seemed like days, Tari reached the edge of the trees and Balam stepped off his back. They could not believe their eyes. Neither had ever been outside the forest. And neither of them had even begun to wonder about the other world beyond. A whole new series of questions drummed in Tari's head.





He climbed out of the tree and stared in amazement. There was space here where no trees grew! The sky was huge. Bigger than anything! Little green spikes covered the earth. The friends were silent until their eyes settled on a strange object before them. It was the home of the Namer.

The object was smaller than many of the trees in the forest. And it was much less impressive. Tari and Balam went to the base of the object. It looked like a lot of branches were stuck together. Tari had seen things like this in the middle of the forest. They were left over from some long-ago creatures.



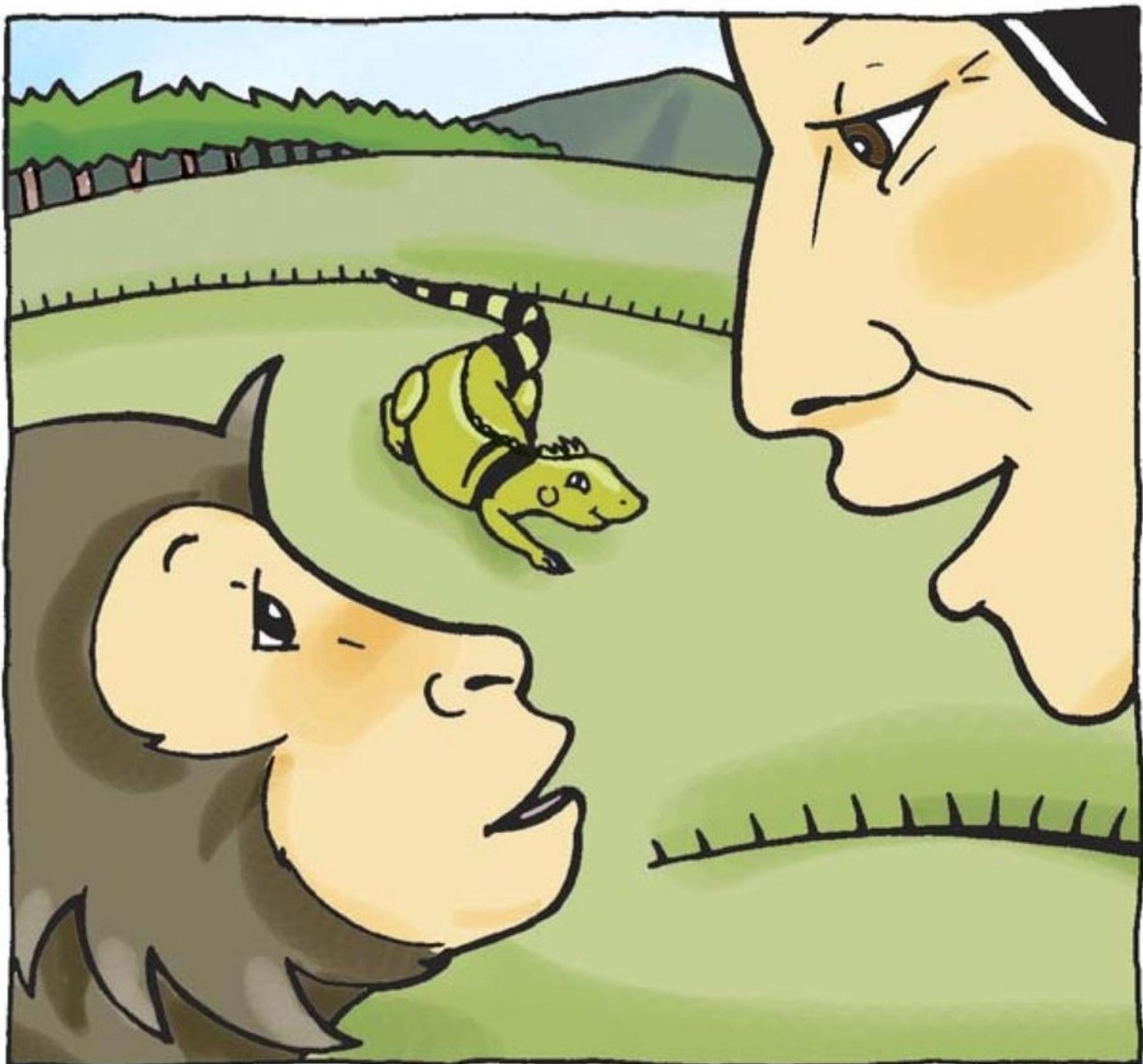


Just then, part of the object swung open. A giant monkey with no fur, except on her head, emerged. Tari's questions flew at the creature from the hut. "What's that you're wearing? Who are you? Did you name me? Why am I called a spider monkey? Why is Balam called an iguana? Why are things named *puma* and *jaguar*?"

"Slowly, spider monkey," said the Namer. "First of all, you are called spider monkey because the way you climb reminds me of a spider."

"Oh!" said Tari, "that makes sense! But what about *monkey*?"

"*Monkey* is a name for many kinds of creatures that resemble you," the Namer said.





“Oh. Why?”

Suddenly, the Namer got a strange look on her face. She herself did not really know why things were called what they were. “It sounded right,” she finally replied.

“That’s it? It sounded right?”

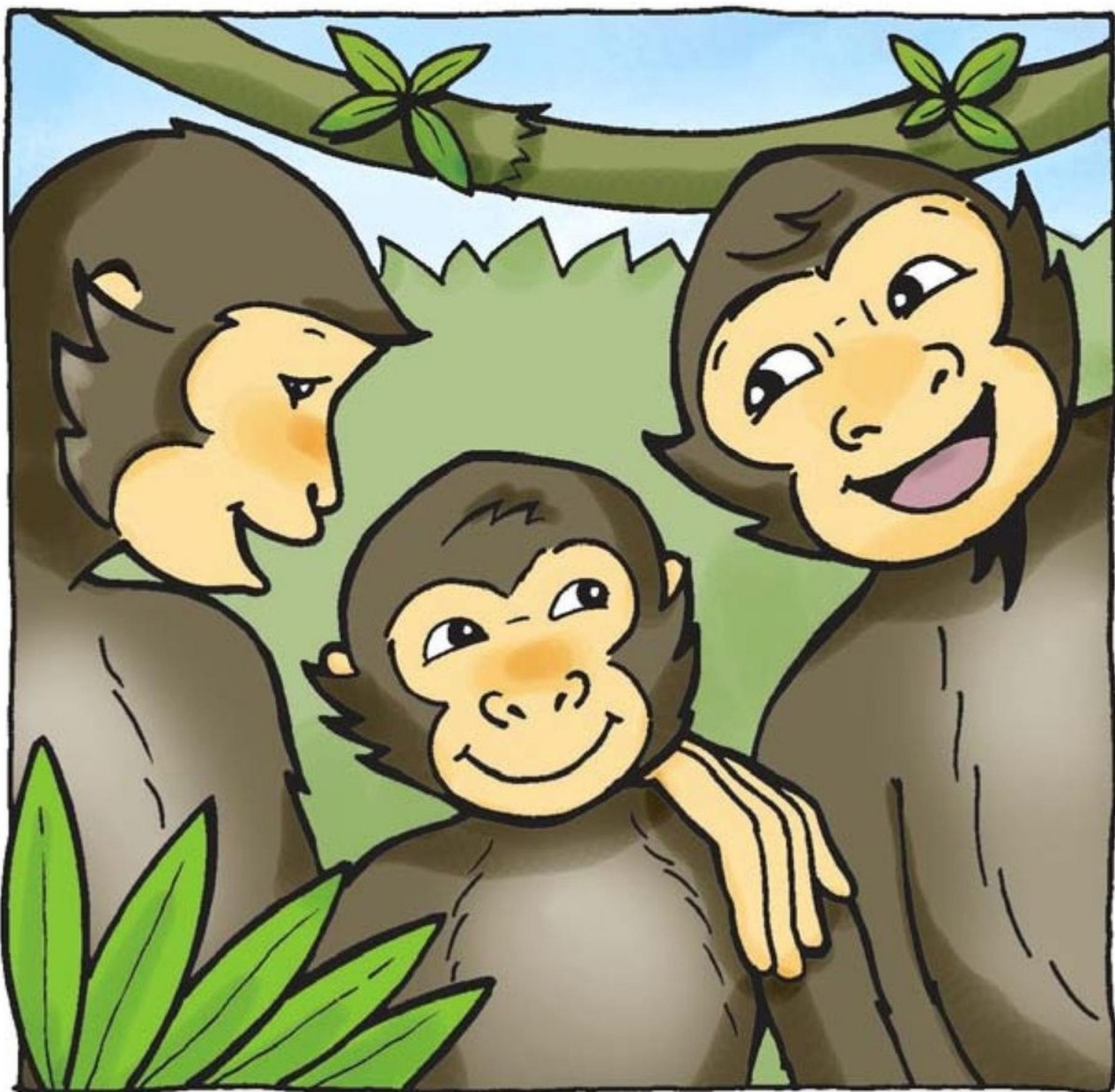


“Yes. You looked like a monkey to me.
And you, Balam, looked like an iguana.
My favorite name in this rainforest
is *sloth*. I named him with a sneeze.
I was allergic to him. The cuckoo named
herself, because of a sound she made.
And sometimes I just try to think of
words that sound fun or make me
laugh.”

“You see, when I was young, I began to name animals. I use names to separate one creature from another. But whatever name I chose, I was careful to stay true to each creature.”

Finally it made sense. Names were meant to set apart each special creature. They were just like the names that Tari and Balam were given specially by their parents.





Tari and Balam had reached their goal. While their names did not turn out to be as mysterious as they had thought, they were happy to know the truth. The Namer even invited them to come back if they ever had another question.

Tari's parents welcomed him home. This time, they were asking all the questions.

Spider Monkey's Question
Level O Leveled Book
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