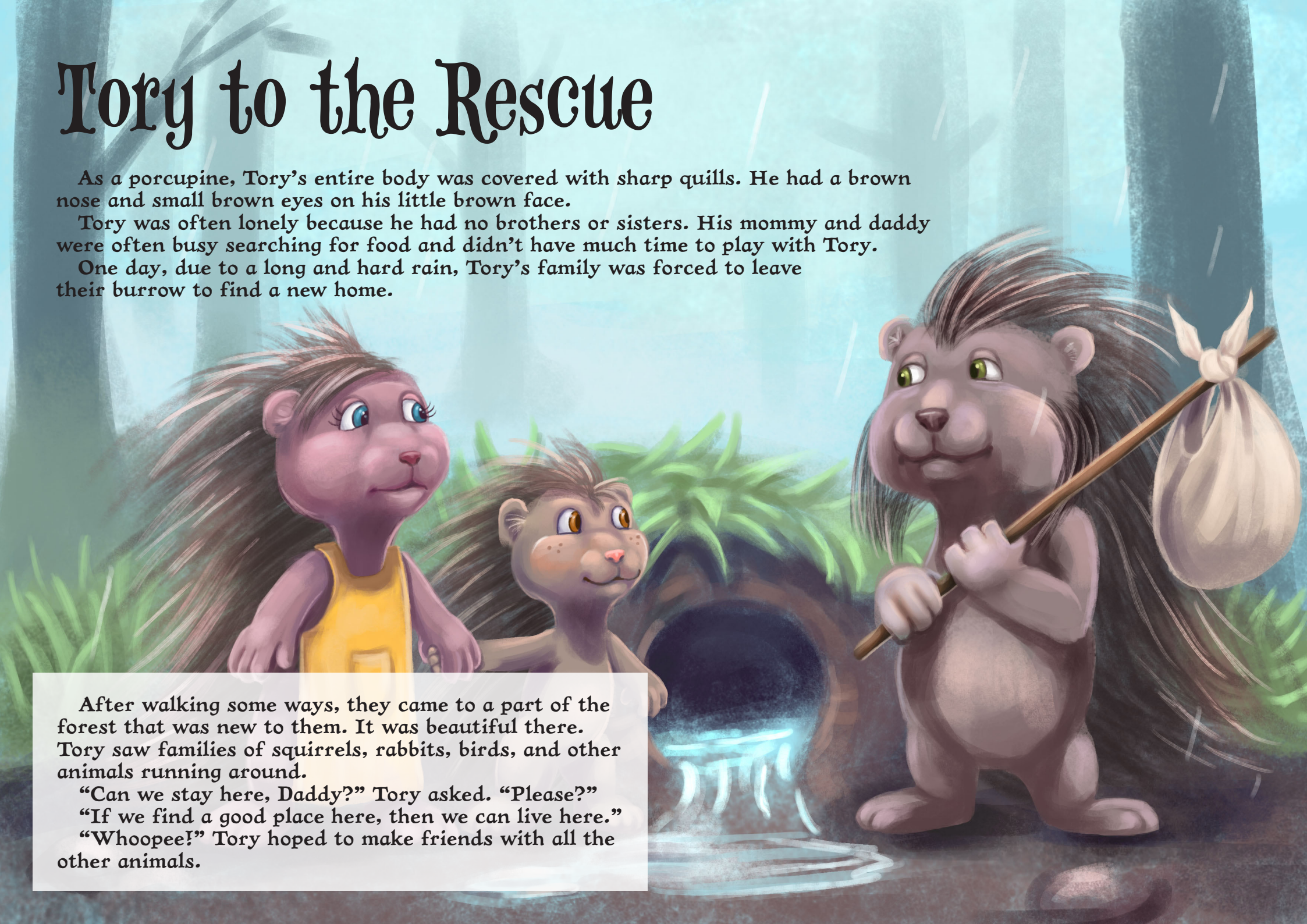


Tory to the Rescue

As a porcupine, Tory's entire body was covered with sharp quills. He had a brown nose and small brown eyes on his little brown face.

Tory was often lonely because he had no brothers or sisters. His mommy and daddy were often busy searching for food and didn't have much time to play with Tory.

One day, due to a long and hard rain, Tory's family was forced to leave their burrow to find a new home.



After walking some ways, they came to a part of the forest that was new to them. It was beautiful there. Tory saw families of squirrels, rabbits, birds, and other animals running around.

"Can we stay here, Daddy?" Tory asked. "Please?"

"If we find a good place here, then we can live here."

"Whoopee!" Tory hoped to make friends with all the other animals.

The next day, Tory's father gave him permission to explore. "Be careful and don't go too far," he told Tory. Tory promised and scurried off.

Tory was looking behind some rocks when a rabbit came up to him. "Hello. What's your name?" the rabbit asked.

"My name is Tory. I just moved to this part of the forest. What's your name?"

"Dusky. My parents call me that because of the gray color of my coat, see?" He turned around to show Tory his dark gray body. Soon, other animals approached.

"This is Tory," Dusky said, as he introduced him to a group of animals. "And these are my friends, Jed and Milo." Dusky introduced him to a nearby squirrel and robin. "And this is one of my sisters, Claire."

"Hello, Tory," Claire said.





As time went on, it seemed that Tory didn't really fit in. Sometimes the other animals would tease him about his sharp quills. They would say that he couldn't play with them because they were afraid of being hurt by his quills.

Tory was very sad. He wanted to be friends with the other animals, but only Claire would stand up for him and tell the other animals off when they teased him. She would talk with Tory and they soon became very good friends.

One day, Tory went to the big acorn tree where Dusky, Milo, Jed, and Claire would often gather to play. Jed's brother Ced and a raccoon named Milton were there also.

"We can't play here today," Ced told everyone else. "My parents are going to be getting acorns from this tree. There will be acorns dropping everywhere."

“I’m sure that won’t be a problem for Tory,” Jed said. “The acorns wouldn’t hurt him a bit.” Everyone laughed.

“Be nice, guys,” Claire said angrily.

“It’s okay. I’m used to it.” But Tory felt sad inside. *Why don’t they like me?* he thought.

“Come on,” Milo said. “I know where we can play.”

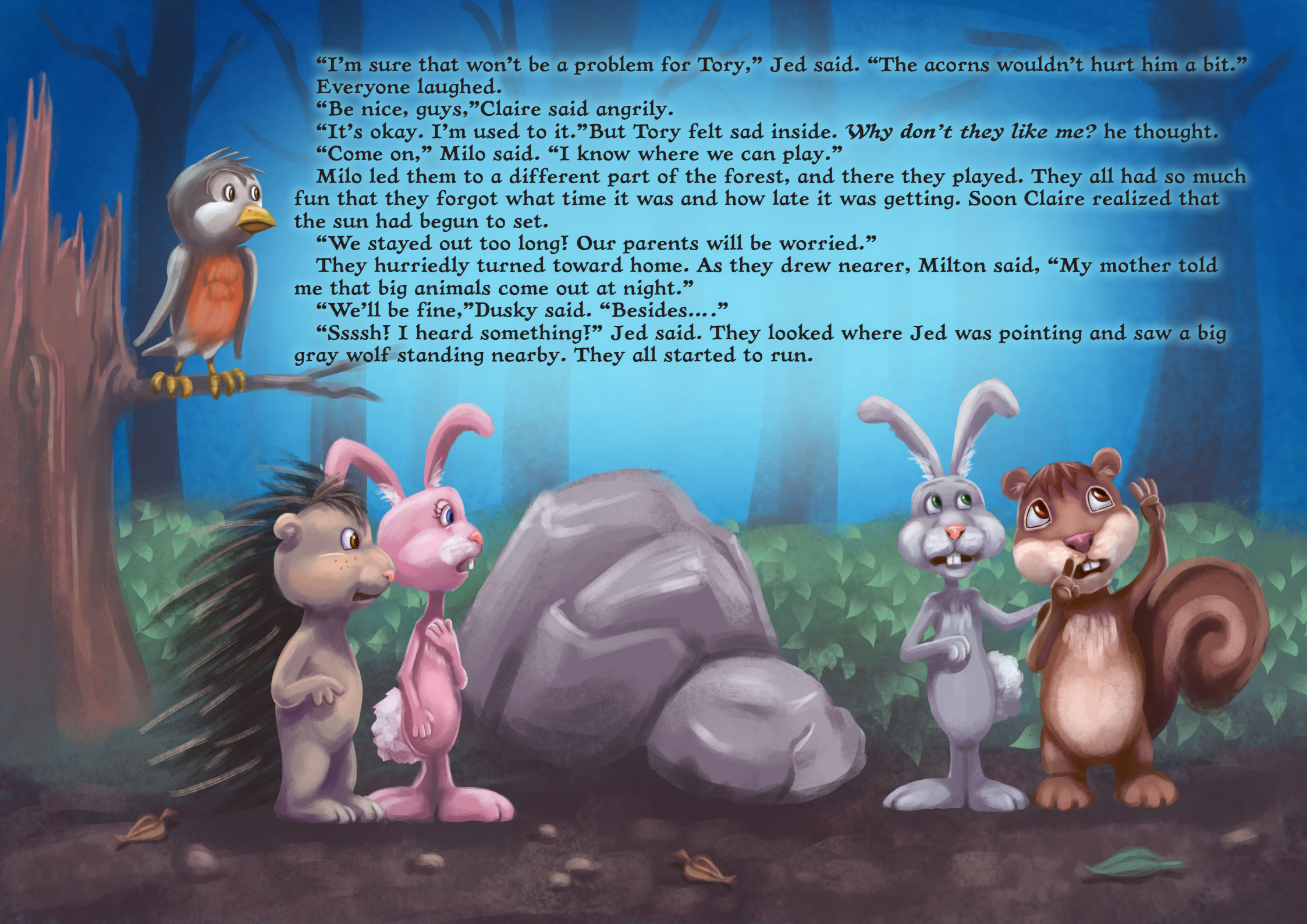
Milo led them to a different part of the forest, and there they played. They all had so much fun that they forgot what time it was and how late it was getting. Soon Claire realized that the sun had begun to set.

“We stayed out too long! Our parents will be worried.”

They hurriedly turned toward home. As they drew nearer, Milton said, “My mother told me that big animals come out at night.”

“We’ll be fine,” Dusky said. “Besides....”

“Ssssh! I heard something!” Jed said. They looked where Jed was pointing and saw a big gray wolf standing nearby. They all started to run.



“Come this way!” Tory called out suddenly. “The acorn tree is over here.”

The little creatures began running as fast as they could, but the wolf was much faster.

“Help! Help!” Dusky, Claire, and Milton cried out.

Suddenly distracted, the wolf stopped chasing the other little creatures. Tory had stepped onto the path.

“Quick! Run!” Tory called out to them.

“But what about you, Tory?” Claire cried.

“Just go!” Tory told her.

Claire and all the other animals scurried off to hide in the first bush or burrow they came across.

Tory got up and walked away from the acorn tree. The wolf followed, wondering what this strange animal was.

But as soon as the wolf bent down and sniffed Tory’s back, he yelped and jumped back! A few of Tory’s sharp quills had pricked his nose and he ran off, yelping in fear.



"It's okay, everyone. You can come out! The wolf is gone," Tory called.

"You saved us, Tory!" Claire said joyfully.

After arriving home, they told their parents what had happened.

"You saved my little squirrels!" Ced and Jed's mother exclaimed. "You're a hero!"

All the animals cheered for Tory. His parents smiled proudly.

"I'm really sorry for teasing you about your quills, Tory," Jed said, looking down at the ground. "Your quills are what saved the day!"

Dusky and the others nodded in agreement.

"It's okay. I forgive you," Tory said.

And from that day forward, they were all best of friends.

The End

