



To Mom and Dad,
and to my shiny new husband, Mike

Rufus the dog was a very energetic pup. Everyday his owner Travis would take him to the dog park to run and play with the other dogs in the neighborhood.

Rufus and his friends would romp and run and chase each other until they were very tired. They would race around the trees, play fetch with their owners, and play all kinds of games they made up in their heads.



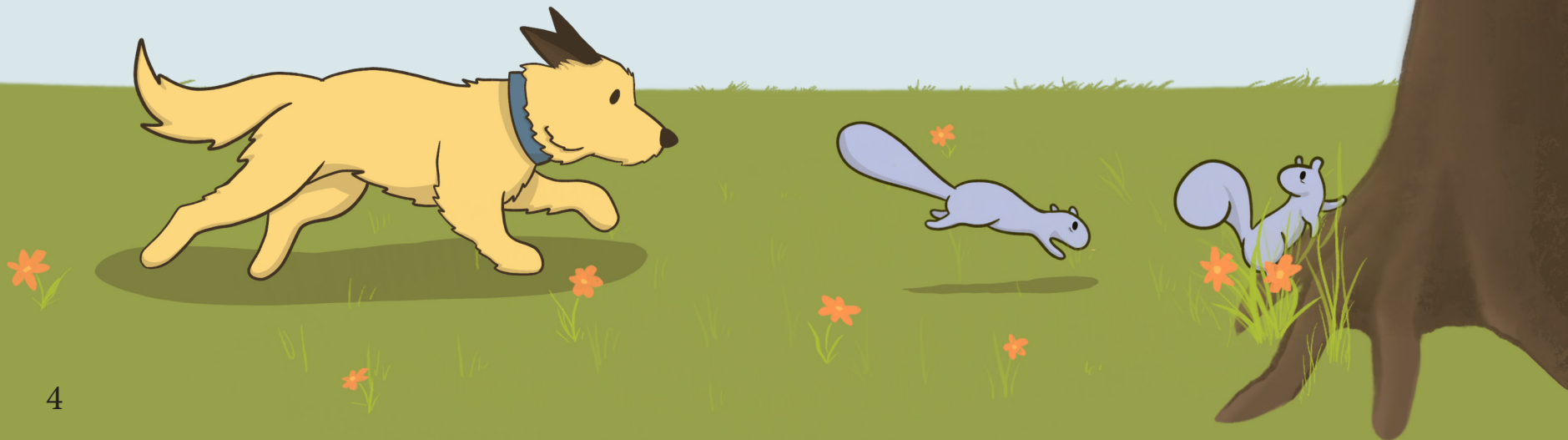
One cool Autumn day, Rufus came up with a really fun game for him and his friends to play.

“Hey everyone, do you see those squirrels over there?” he barked, pointing with his nose to a nearby oak tree. There a squirrel and her family were collecting acorns to eat. “Let’s see who can catch a squirrel first,” Rufus suggested.



Before giving his friends a head start, he ran after the squirrels.

The squirrels saw Rufus and the other dogs coming and were scared. Luckily, they all scurried to the top of the tall oak tree where Rufus and the other dogs could not reach.



All Rufus' friends barked up the tree to the squirrels.

“Hey! That’s not fair! We can’t climb trees!
Come down here squirrels!” They barked.

The squirrels looked down at the dogs terrified.

“*No way* are we coming down,” one squirrel said.

“You dogs are **CRAZY!**”



“We just wanted to play, why are the squirrels being so mean?” Rufus asked his friends.

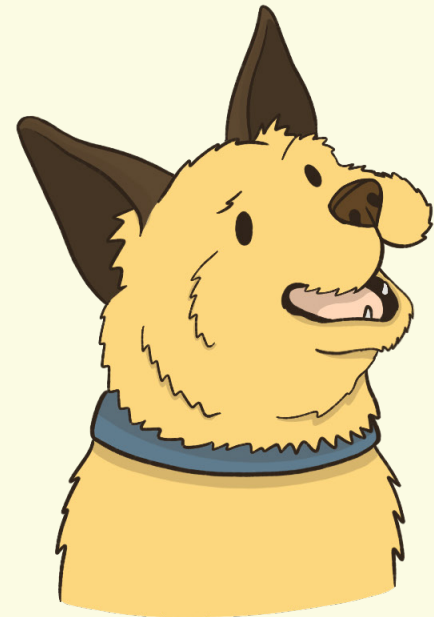
“Squirrels are no fun, Rufus. I don’t think dogs and squirrels can be friends. We are too big and scary. Squirrels are too small and fast.”

“What? That’s crazy talk. I can be friends with anyone!” Rufus said.

Rufus’ friends all shook their heads and wagged their tails.

“I don’t think so this time, Rufus.” They said.

“Squirrels and dogs just *can’t be friends.*”

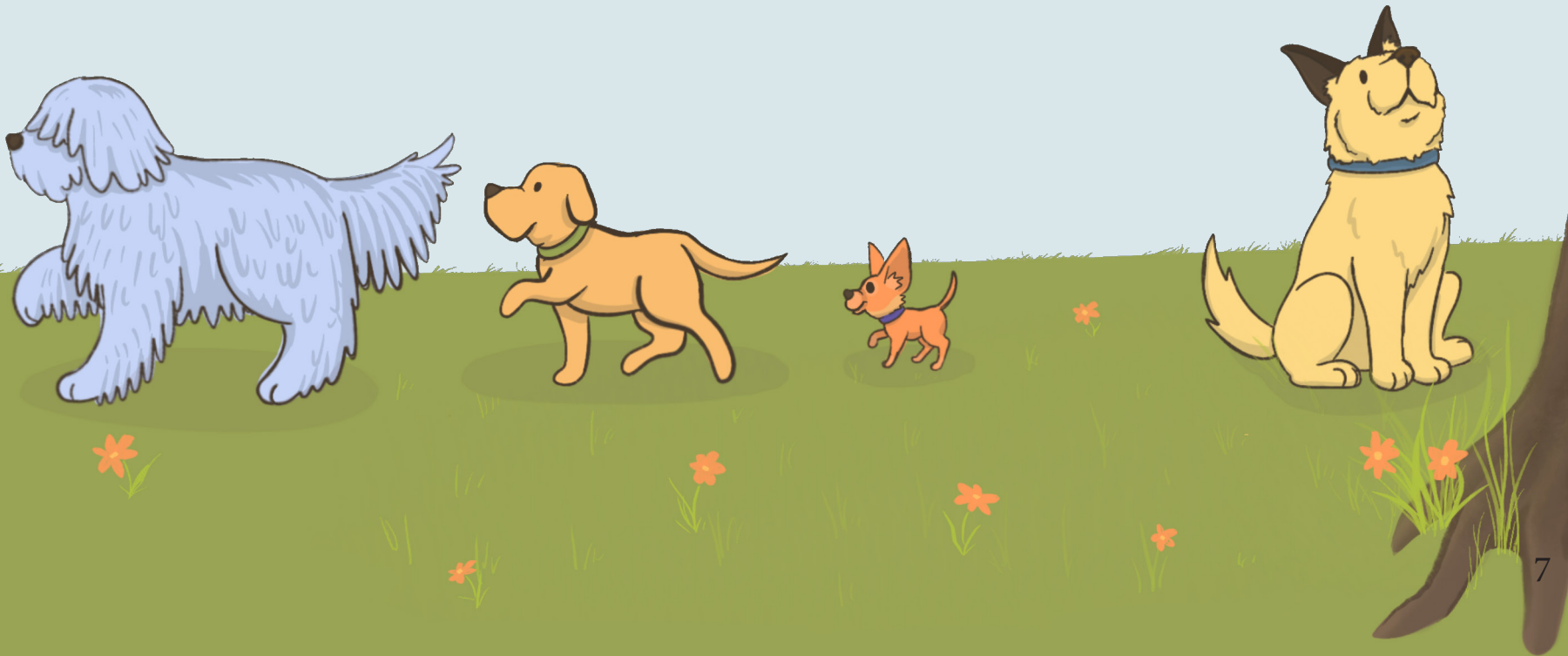


Rufus' friends all ran back to their owners.

But Rufus sat under the oak tree, waiting for the squirrels to come down. He waited a really long time, until he was starting to get very bored.

But he stayed, just as if his master said "stay."

Rufus knew that if he was patient, he would get a reward.



“Hey, dog. You should get lost!” One squirrel said. “Why don’t you go play with the other dogs?”

“Hey, that’s not very nice.” Rufus said. “You should really be nicer to strangers. But you don’t have to be a stranger to me. My name is Rufus, what’s your name?” He asked.

“Hmmm... I guess you’re right, Rufus.” The squirrel replied, ignoring his small talk. “But my family and I really want to get back to collecting nuts. We’re not interested in being friends. Besides, you are just going to eat us if we come down. Squirrels just can’t trust dogs.”

“But I am a very good dog,” Rufus said. “Look how patiently I waited at the bottom of this tree! And dogs don’t eat squirrels! I eat puppy chow, and treats, and sometimes chew on toys.” Rufus made his eyes big and sat pretty for the squirrels.



“HA! I am not going to be your chew toy, dog!” The squirrel said as he scurried higher up the oak tree.



“What game were you playing together before my friends started chasing you up this tree?” Rufus asked the squirrels.

“Game?” The Squirrel said. “We weren’t playing a game, dog. We were collecting nuts for the winter! We squirrels need to hibernate for survival!”

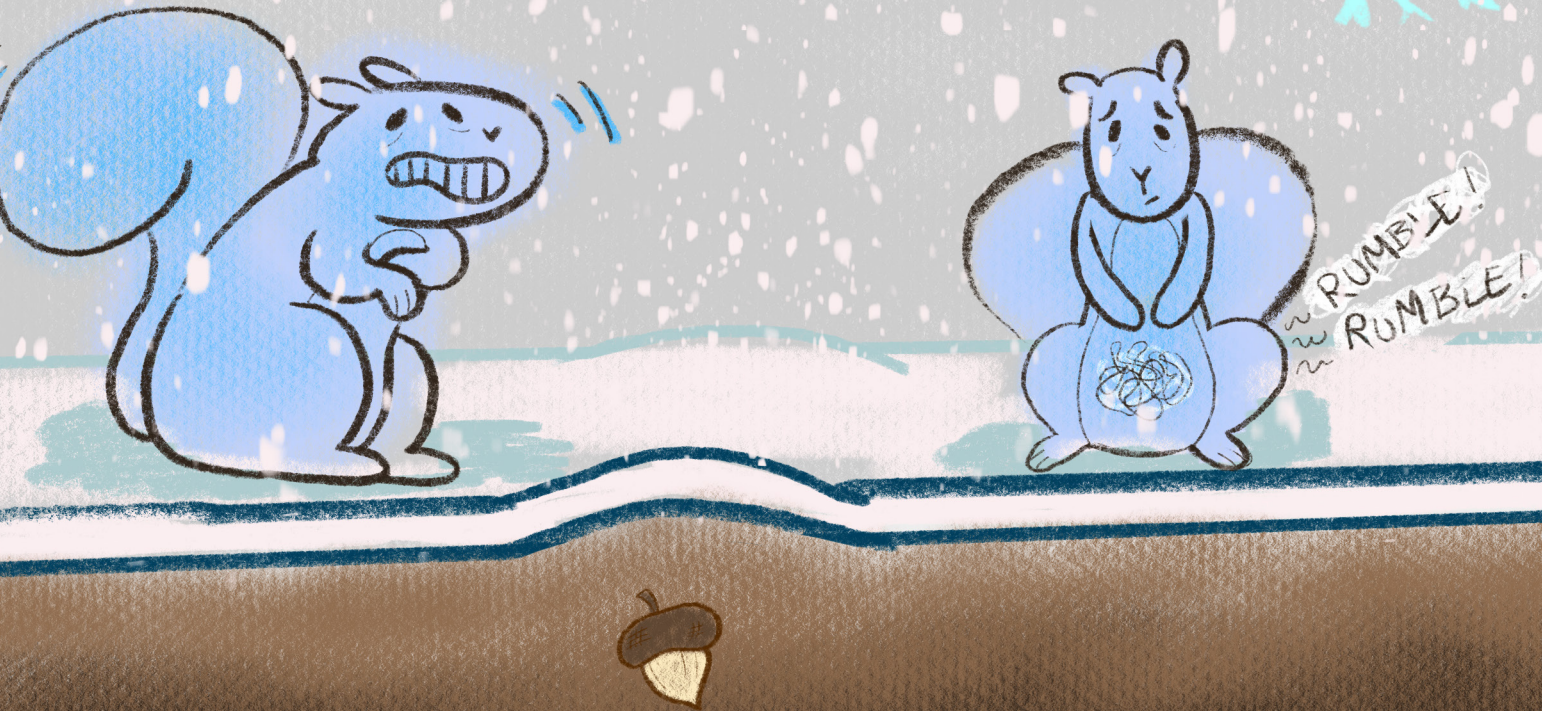
Rufus thought for a long time. He wondered what hiber-watsits was. Was it a game that only squirrels played? Rufus wondered if the squirrels would rather play that. Maybe dogs could play too.



“Can dogs play hibernate?” Rufus asked.

“No,” Said the squirrel. He started to get frustrated.

“Dogs don’t bury nuts, that’s only a squirrel thing. Squirrels need to bury their food so they can have food for hibernation. Hibernation is where you sleep for the whole winter. Without food or shelter, we squirrels may not survive. When will you understand? It is not a game, dog!”

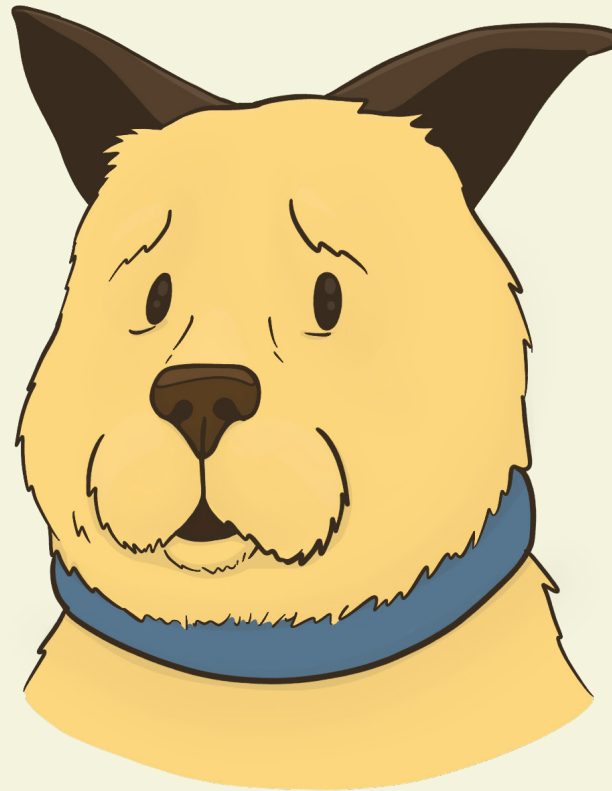


Rufus began to see that hibernation was not just for fun, he felt bad for messing with the squirrels. He wondered if he could still help them. Rufus burried lots of things in his and Travis' back yard. Maybe, he thought, he could help the squirrels bury their nuts. But first, he knew he had to apologize.



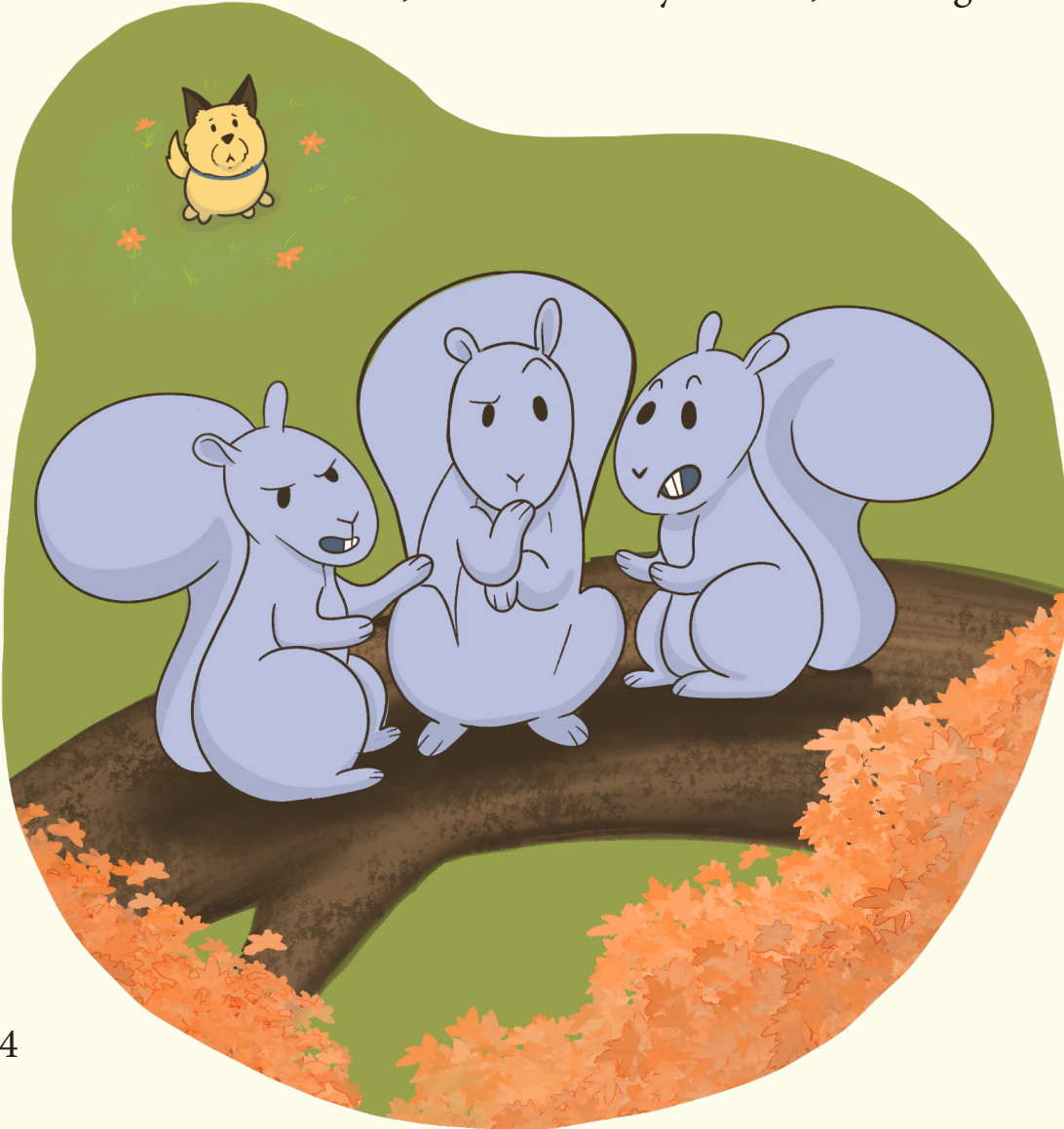
“I am so sorry, Squirrels,” said Rufus.

“I am sorry that I scared you, I am sorry that I chased you, and I am sorry that you weren’t able to bury your nuts. I had no idea that what you were doing was so important. I hope you believe me when I say I want to help you, and make it up to you, and earn your friendship.”



“Hmmm,” said the squirrel. “Your apology sounds pretty genuine, but how can a dog help squirrels collect nuts?”

“Well,” Rufus said. If you want, I can dig holes! I am really good at digging!”



The squirrels thought about it. They were beginning to think Rufus was serious about wanting to be friends.

They huddled together in the tree and discussed whether or not they would give Rufus a chance. They whispered for a while until they were all in agreement.

“Okay Rufus, If you really mean it, Will you please dig us a nice big hole? You say you are a good digger?”

“Oh, yes!” Said Rufus excitedly.
“I am the best digger! Watch!”



Rufus wasted no time. He began digging the biggest hole he's ever made. He dug and dug and dug until he found himself stuck at the bottom of the big hole he made.



“Is this big enough?!”

He called to the squirrels.



“Yes! Yes! This is perfect! Thank you, Rufus!” They all called to him.

They were so excited that began putting their acorns in the hole and they began collecting at Rufus’ feet. Rufus was happy that the squirrels were impressed with his digging, but he was also beginning to realize his predicament.



“HEY!” Rufus yelped as he watched the acorns fall.

“I Think I’m stuck! I dug too deep! I can’t climb out!”

Rufus looked up.

The hole was deeper
than the big oak tree
was tall.

There was no way he
could climb out.

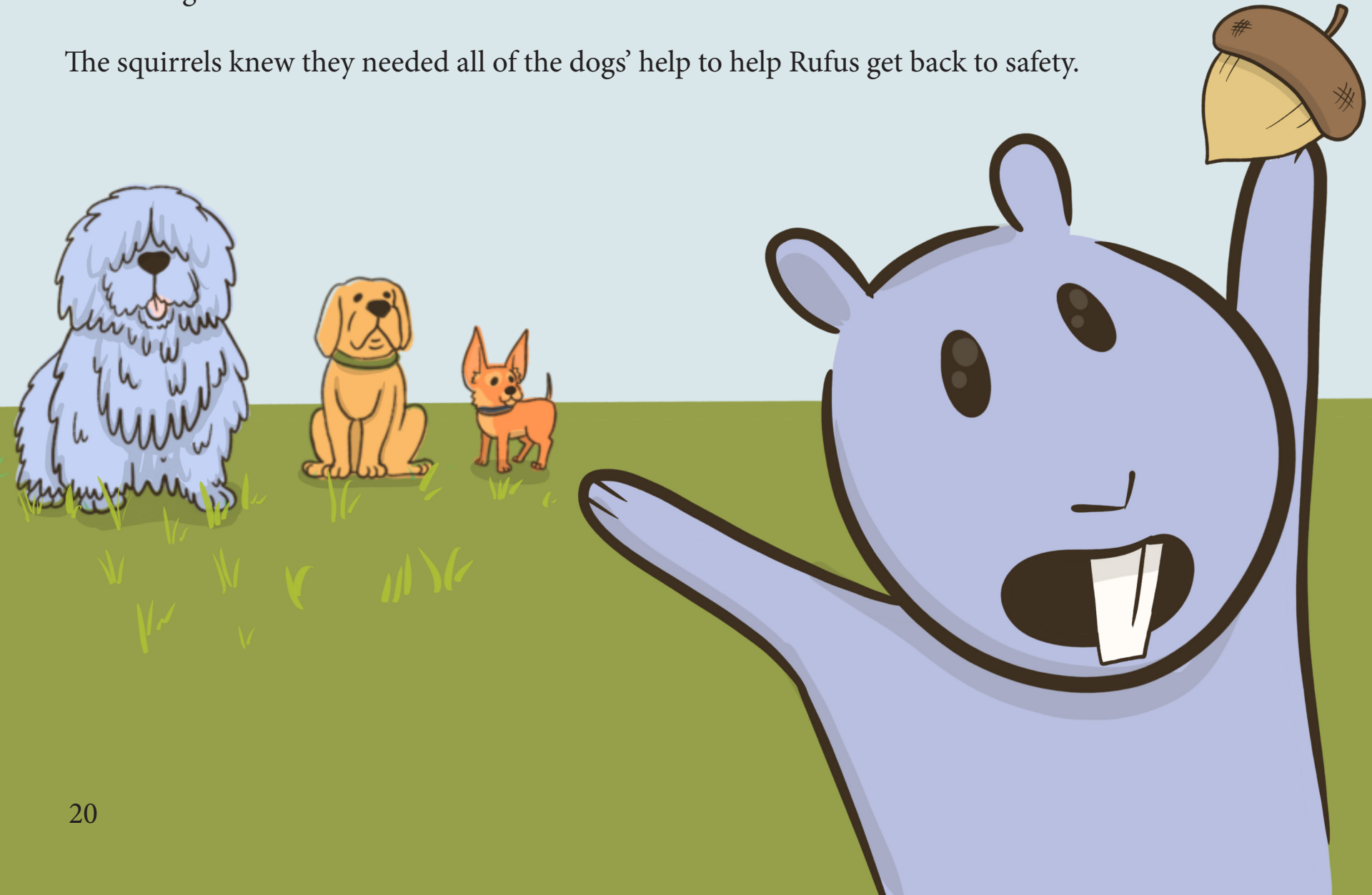
Rufus was
DOOMED!



The squirrels looked around. They were too small to lift him up.

Rufus kept calling for help, and soon all of Rufus' dog friends came to the hole to see what was wrong.

The squirrels knew they needed all of the dogs' help to help Rufus get back to safety.



“I have an idea!” One squirrel said. “Let’s ALL keep filling the hole with acorns!”

“What?!” Rufus cried. “Don’t bury me alive in nuts!”





The squirrels and dogs began filling up the hole with acorns. And as it began to fill, Rufus worked hard to stay on top of the pile.

Rufus felt hurt in his heart. He couldn't believe the squirrels wanted to bury him after the favor he did.

But then, he looked up and noticed the hole seemed a bit smaller. As the pile was growing, he was getting closer to the top!

Soon, Rufus could see that his other friends, the other dogs at the park, were filling the hole with acorns too. The dogs and the squirrels were working together!

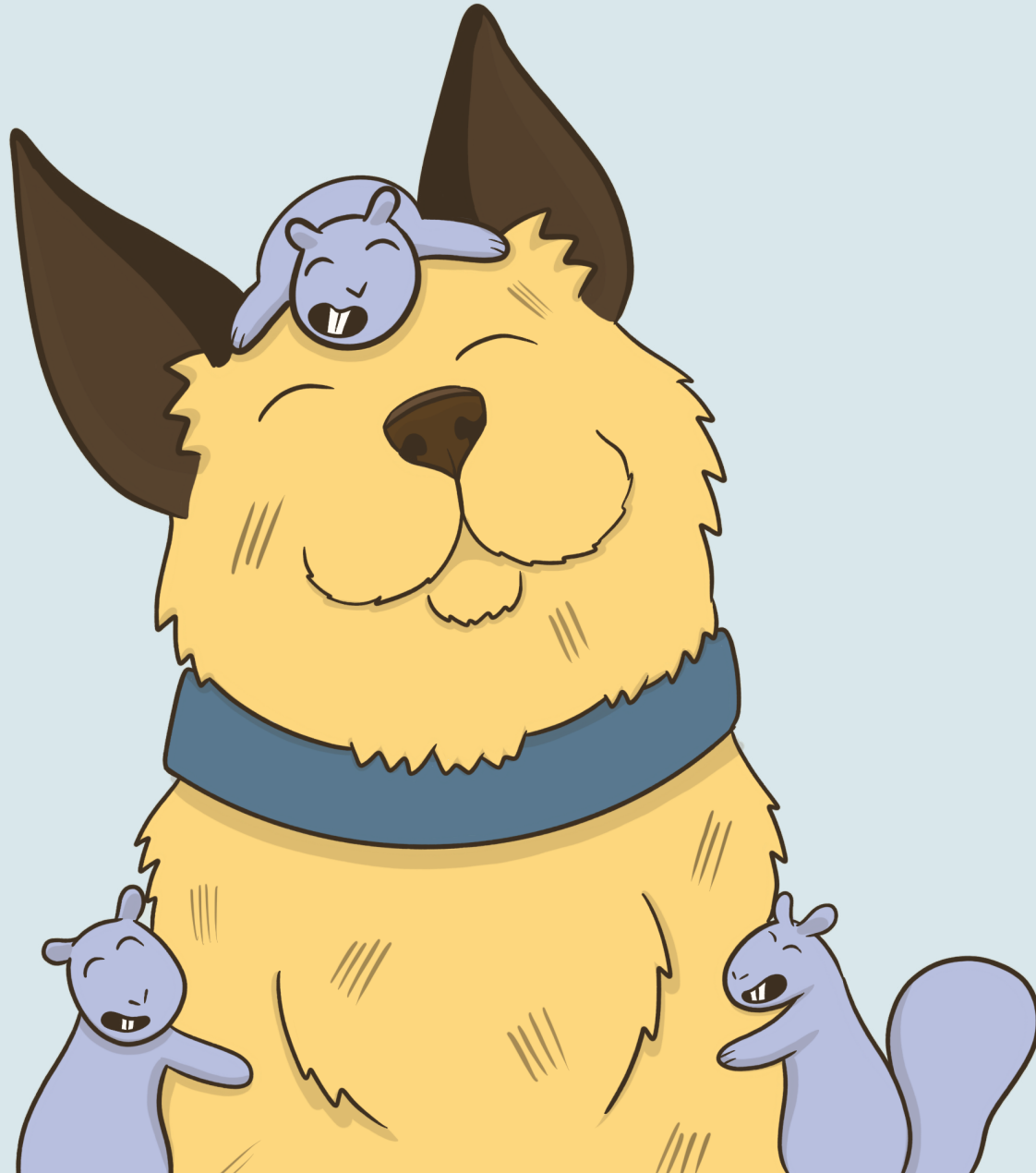
It wasn't long until Rufus could effortlessly jump out of the hole he dug.

Everyone cheered and celebrated, shouting,

“Yay, Rufus! Hip, Hip, Hooray!”

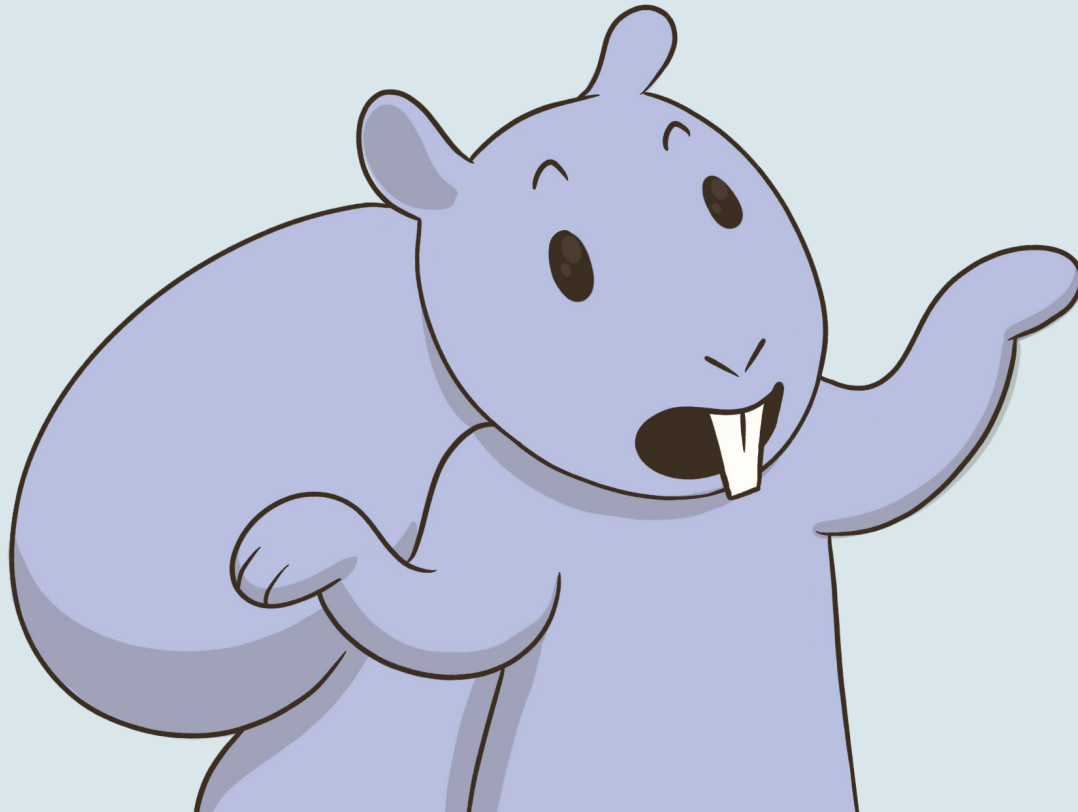


“Thank you so much, Rufus! Said the squirrel. I don’t think we will have to worry about food for the next five winters! *Maybe dogs and squirrels can be friends.*” Rufus and the other dogs agreed.



“Well, what do we do now?” Rufus asked the squirrels.

“Usually, we go to sleep after we are done collecting nuts!
The squirrel said.



“What a great idea!” Said Rufus. He flopped on his belly, tired from such an eventful day. And they all took a long afternoon nap, both dogs and squirrels alike.





The End