Wattle Woods

Benjamin and the Leaf That Would Not Hurry



Hiro Noda

Benjamin and the Leaf That Would Not Hurry

A Wattle Woods story

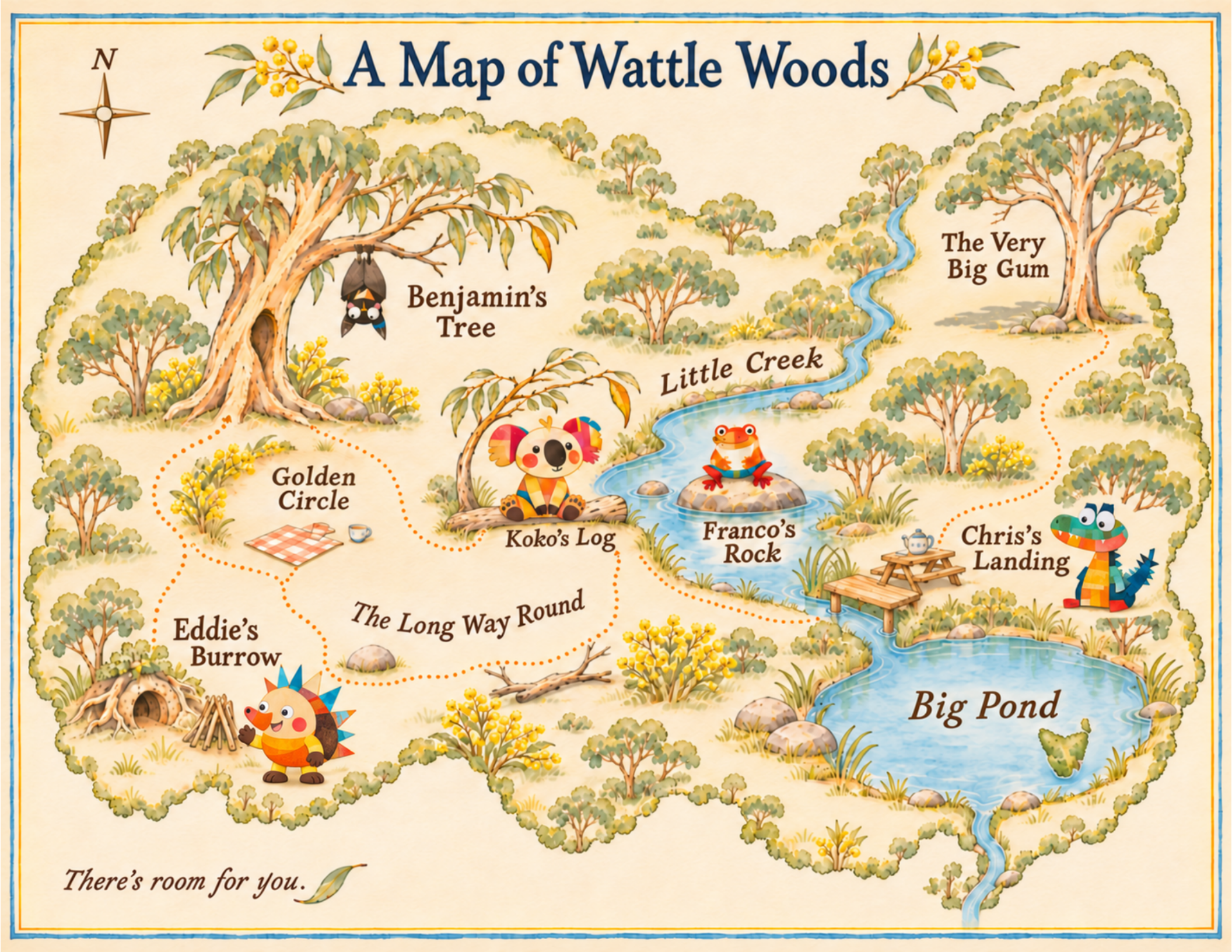
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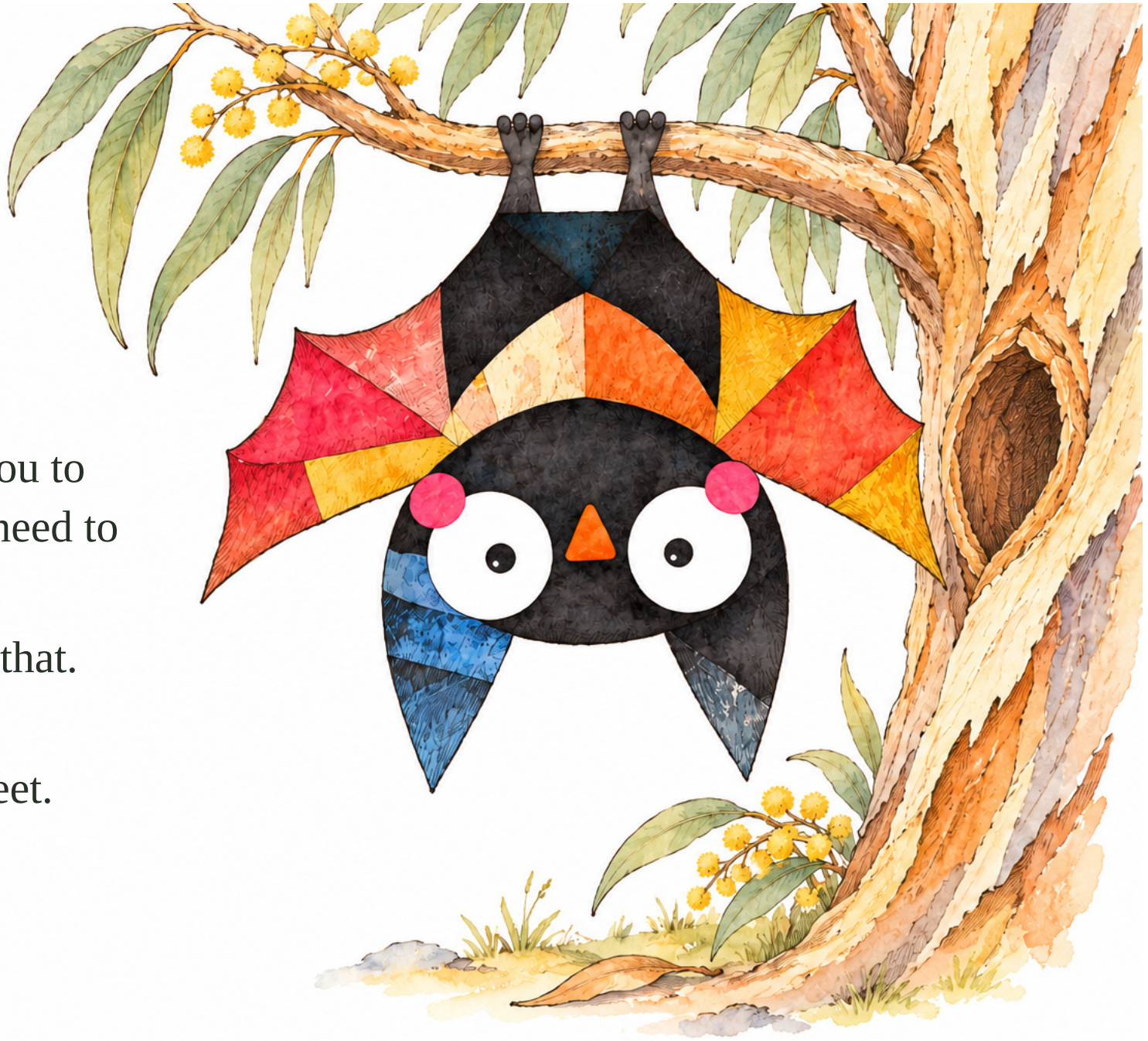
Double-tap story text to enlarge it in supported Kindle readers.


A Map of Wattle Woods
N
Benjamin's Tree
The Very Big Gum
Little Creek
Golden Circle
Koko's Log
Franco's Rock
Chris's Landing
Eddie's Burrow
The Long Way Round
Big Pond
There's room for you.

Before I introduce you to Benjamin, you will need to look a little higher.

Not quite as high as that. The branch below.

Yes. Those are his feet.



The rest of him is underneath, which is where Benjamin generally keeps it when he is at home. He is a bat, you see, and lives in a hollow in the old gum tree, although on a pleasant afternoon he likes to hang outside and see who is going past.

“Could you tell them I'm doing it on purpose?” he asked.

“I think they understand.”

“Only they may be concerned.”

If you were not concerned, there is no need to begin now. Benjamin had been hanging like that for some time, and was considerably better at it than you or I would be.



His name was Benjamin. His ears were large, his wings were bright, and he liked to know the reason for things. When there wasn't a reason, he was quite willing to provide one.

“There usually is,” he said.

“A reason?”

“One I can provide.”

That is Benjamin.



Below his tree, a sandy path wandered off between the wattles. It went round a stone, past a fallen branch and down towards the creek. There were shorter ways of reaching the creek, but the path had been going that way for years and nobody had liked to interfere.



It was late afternoon. The bush was warm, the shadows were getting longer, and Koko the Koala had found a comfortable place to sit.

This last part was not unusual.

“We ought to introduce Koko,” said Benjamin.

“I was just doing that.”

“She won't know unless we go over.”

So Benjamin let go of his branch, opened his wings and flew down the path, which saved a good deal of walking round the stone.



Koko was sitting on a smooth log beside the creek, with her feet in a patch of sunshine. A gum leaf hung from a twig above her head. It was yellow at the edges and brown in the middle, and every now and then it turned a little, as though it had heard something behind it.

“Hello, Benjamin,” said Koko.

“I've brought someone.”

Koko moved along the log to make room for you.



She was a round, warm-looking koala with a large nose and a way of getting comfortable which made you wonder why you hadn't thought of sitting there yourself. She liked a little company, a little shade, and finding that the bit of sunshine had reached her toes.

“What are you doing?” asked Benjamin.

“Watching that leaf.”

Benjamin looked up.

“What's it going to do?”

“Come down, I expect.”

“When?”

“I haven't asked.”

Koko moved one foot into the sunshine beside the other.



Now, if you had been there yesterday, you might have found Koko watching a beetle. And if you had asked what the beetle was going to do, she might have said she was waiting to see. This was one of the pleasant things about visiting Koko: you didn't have to bring anything interesting. There was usually something there already.



Benjamin settled on a low branch beside the log and inspected the leaf.

The leaf trembled.

Benjamin leaned forward.

The leaf stopped.

“It nearly did,” he said.

“Mm,” said Koko.

The leaf trembled again.

Benjamin leaned further.

“Do you think it knows how?”

“It looks like a leaf.”

“Yes, but it may be its first time.”

Koko considered this while she scratched the back of one ear.

“I suppose it would be.”

That settled it. Benjamin felt that somebody ought to explain things.

“You just let go,” he called up. “The ground is underneath.”

The leaf turned slowly away.

“Perhaps it couldn't hear,” he said.

“Perhaps it's looking at something,” said Koko.



Benjamin looked over his shoulder. He could see the creek and a stone and the end of his own branch. None of these seemed a good enough reason for keeping anybody waiting, even if Koko did not appear to mind.

“I could give it a little breeze.”

He opened one wing and flapped it carefully.

Koko's ears stirred.

The leaf did not.

He tried both wings.

This time a small piece of bark blew off the log and landed in the creek.

“That wasn't it,” said Benjamin.

“No,” said Koko, watching the bark float away. “But look at it go.”



Benjamin was not looking at the bark. He was looking at the leaf, and thinking of a rather larger breeze.

I should tell you that he was being helpful. If it looks a little like being impatient, that is because the two sometimes wear very similar expressions.

“I wasn't impatient,” said Benjamin.

“What were you, then?”

“Ready.”

And indeed he was. Unfortunately, the leaf wasn't.



Benjamin took a breath and gave one splendid flap.

The twig shook. The leaf spun. Three quite different leaves came off a branch behind him, and one of them landed neatly on his nose.

For a moment he could see nothing but brown.

“Has it come?” he asked.

“One has,” said Koko.

Benjamin lifted it off.

The yellow-edged leaf was still on its twig.



Koko held out her paw, and he gave her the brown one. She put it beside her on the log.

“It can watch with us.”

Benjamin folded his wings. He was a little warm now, and his branch had a knob in precisely the place where he wished it hadn't.

“You could sit here,” said Koko.

There was a space beside her. Beyond it, she had left a space for you.

Benjamin climbed down onto the log.

“Only for a moment,” he said.

Koko nodded. She had no objection to moments. Quite a few of her nicest afternoons were made of them.



Across the creek, something small made a plip.

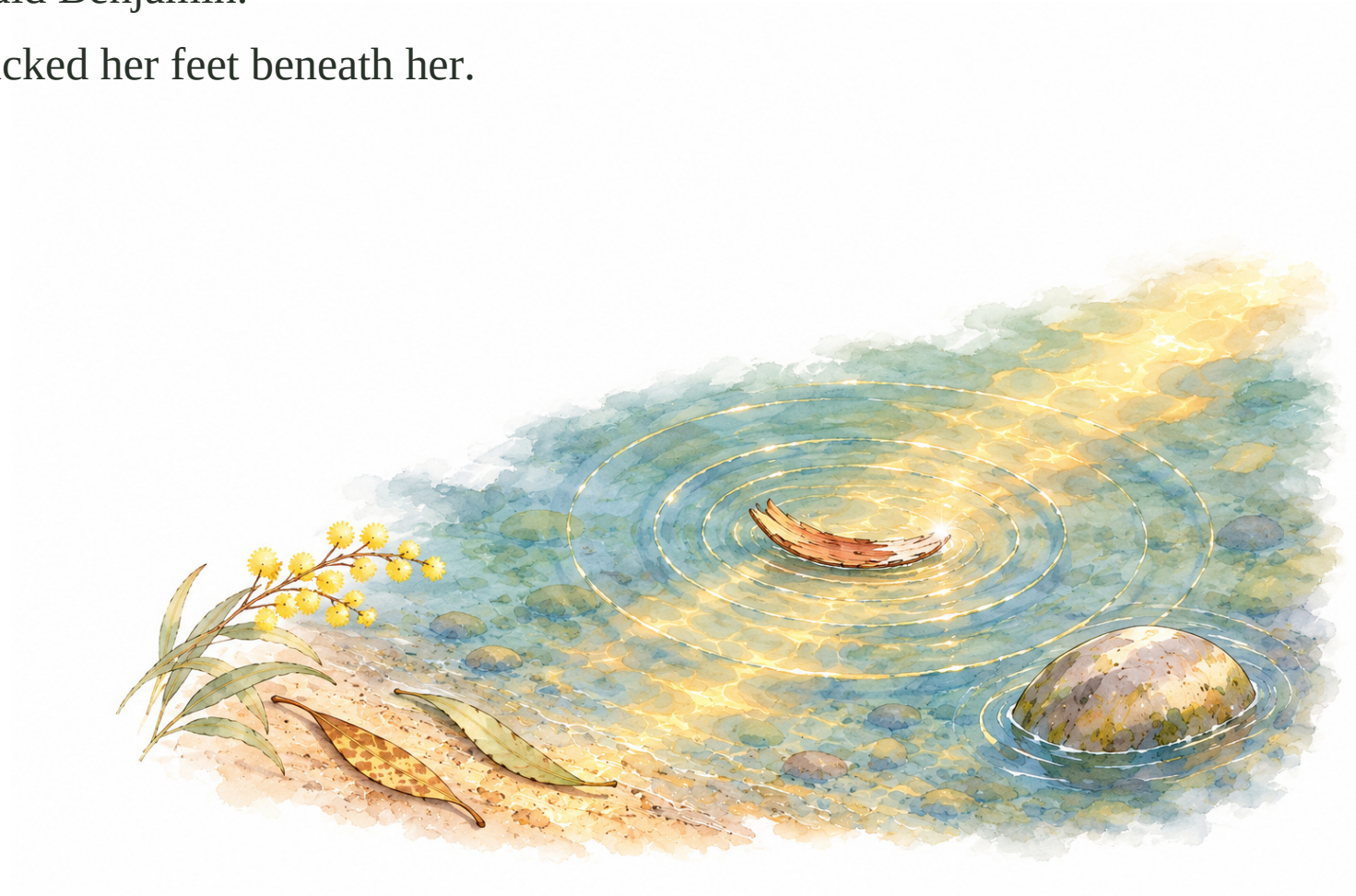
“What was that?” Benjamin asked.

They looked, but there were only widening circles on the water.

The circles reached the floating bark and rocked it gently. A strip of sunlight lay across the creek. When the bark passed into it, the wet end shone silver.

“Oh,” said Benjamin.

Koko tucked her feet beneath her.



They watched the bark turn past the stone. Then they watched a little water go over a root. Then Benjamin noticed that the yellow leaf above them had thin lines inside it, like the branches of a very small tree.

He was wondering how a tree had got inside a leaf when the breeze came back.

It went through the wattles, touched the creek, and lifted the fur beside Koko's ear.

The leaf let go.



It turned once in the air, turned again, and came to rest on Benjamin's head.

Neither of them moved.

“It's down,” whispered Benjamin.

“Nearly,” said Koko.

“Am I in the way?”

“You seem to be just where it wanted.”

Benjamin sat a little straighter. The leaf settled between his ears.



If you are thinking that he looked rather pleased with himself, you are quite right. But we needn't tell him that. He has already had a busy afternoon helping a leaf do something it was going to do anyway.

“Could you say it landed nicely?” he asked me.

“It landed very nicely.”

“Thank you.”



Koko picked up the brown leaf from the log and put it on her own head. It tipped over one ear.

Benjamin looked at her.

Koko looked at Benjamin.





Then they both began to laugh, and Koko's leaf fell into her lap, and Benjamin's slipped down the back of his neck, which made him laugh considerably more.

By the time they had found both leaves again, the sunshine had reached the end of the log.

Koko moved along a little.

Benjamin moved along too.

And as you had been left a place, there was nothing to prevent your moving along with them.





The End

Wattle Woods

Benjamin is quite ready for something to happen.

Koko has found a comfortable place to sit.

And a leaf is taking its time.

Join two friends for a very small adventure in Wattle Woods.



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