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Opening extract from
Mouse Bird Snake Wolf

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Long ago and far away, in a world rather like this one, and with people in it rather like us, there were three children: **Harry, Sue and Ben.**



Ben was known as
Little Ben, because
he was so small.



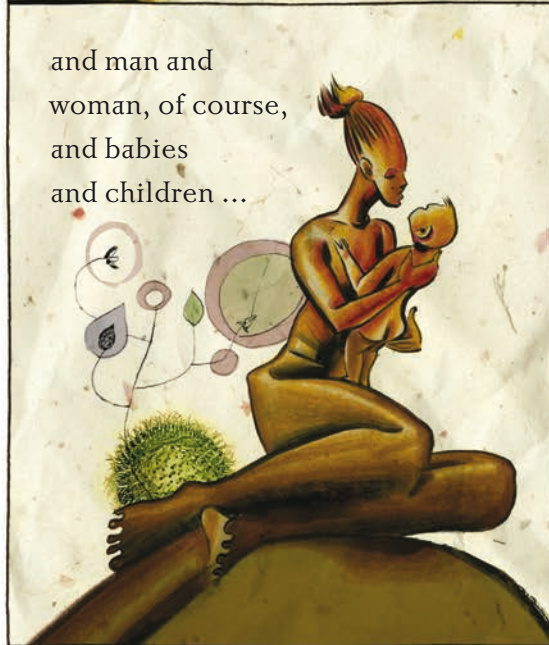
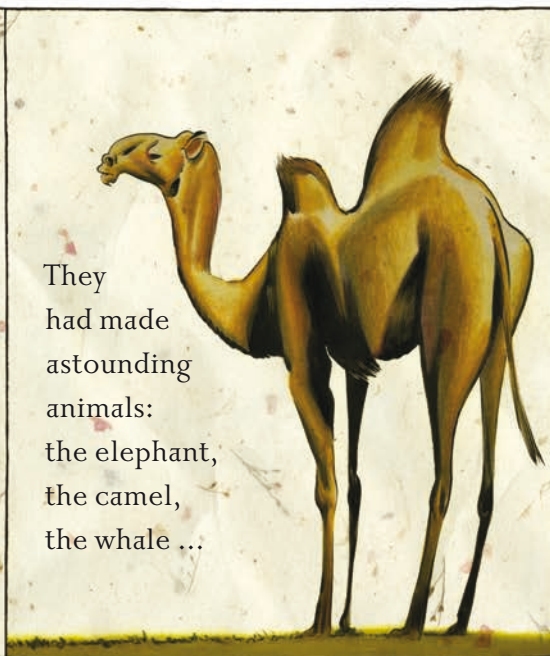
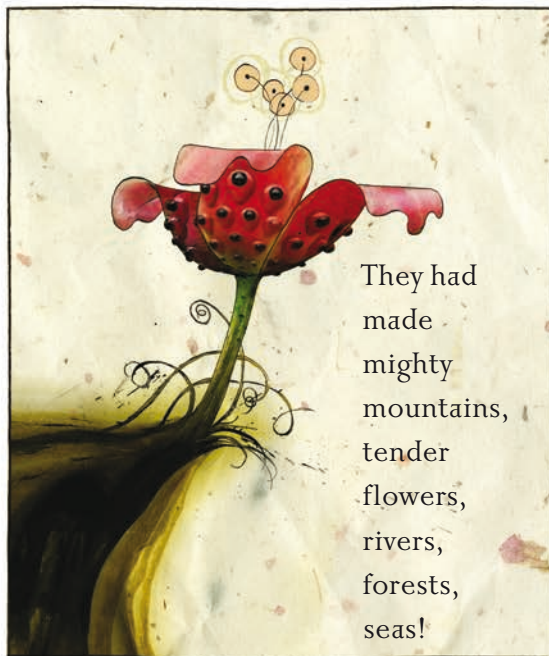
Like many worlds, the world
they lived in was a marvellous
place filled with marvellous things.
It was safe and calm and rather
wonderful. But it was a strange
old place as well. There were
gaps and holes in it. There were
places where there seemed to be
nothing at all, places that were
filled with emptiness.

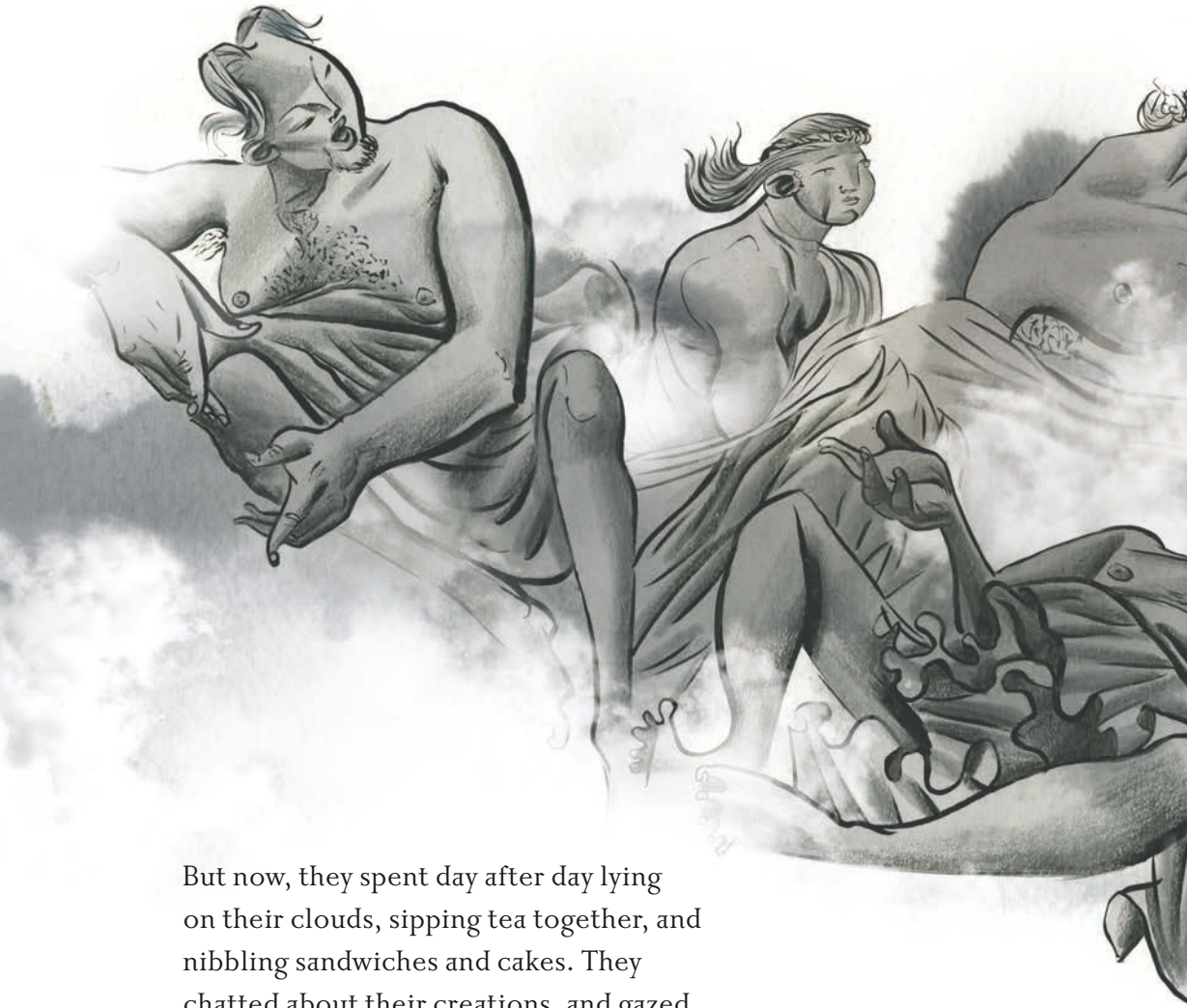


Some of these were
huge as deserts;
some were no bigger
than a fingernail.

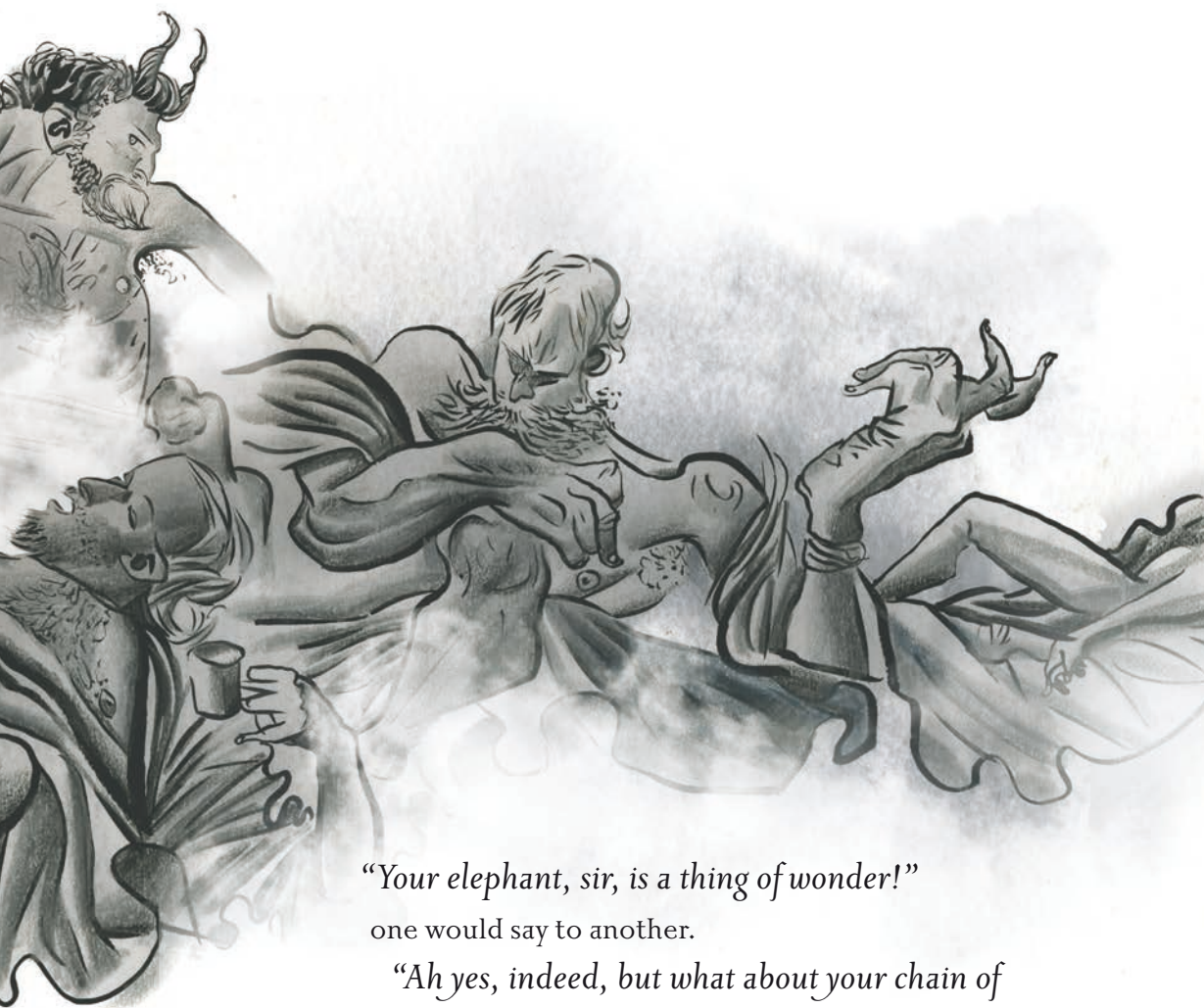


The trouble was, the gods who had made the world had become rather fat and rather too pleased with themselves. Oh yes, they had worked great wonders in days gone by.





But now, they spent day after day lying on their clouds, sipping tea together, and nibbling sandwiches and cakes. They chatted about their creations, and gazed down at them with deepest fondness.



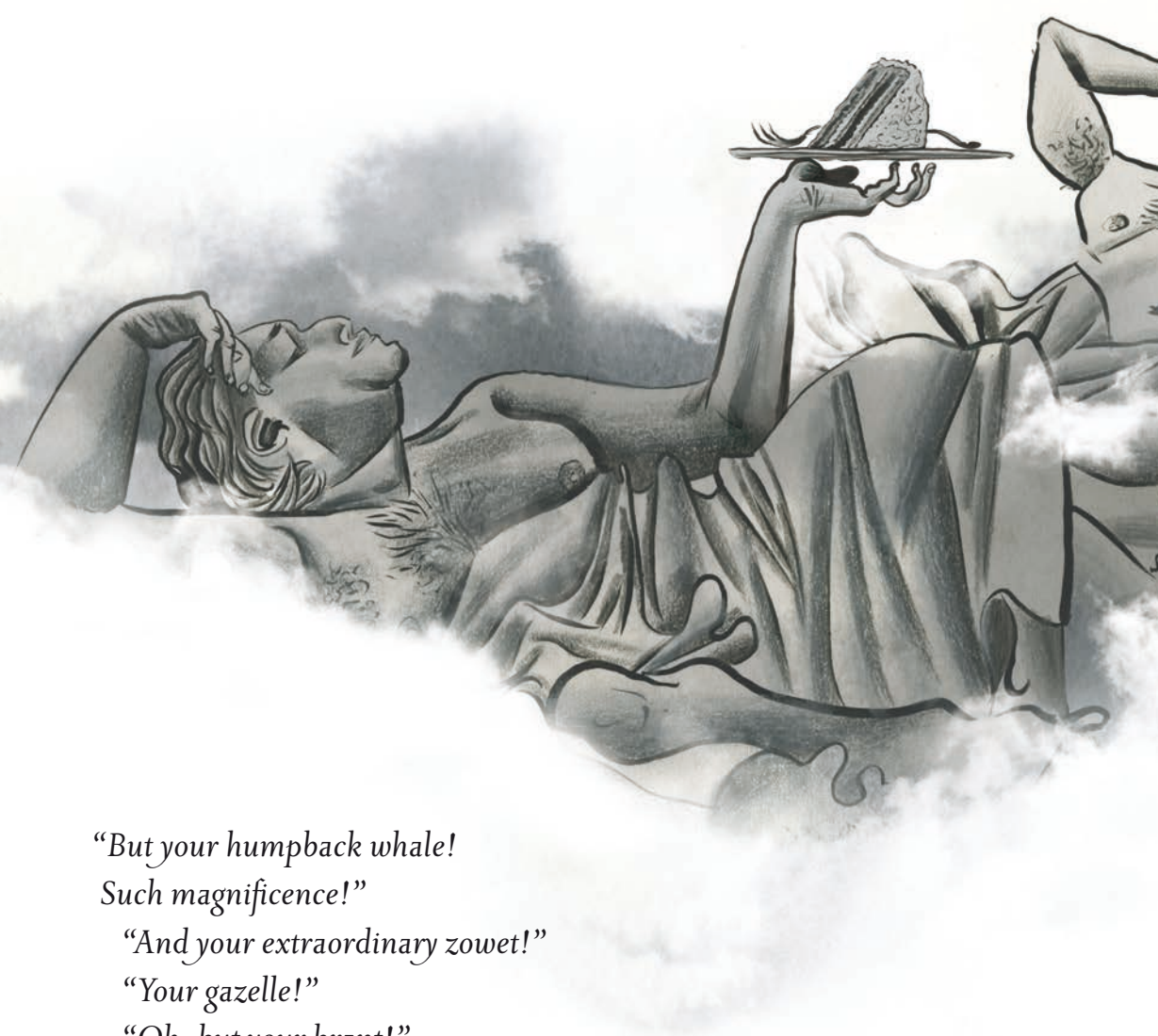
“Your elephant, sir, is a thing of wonder!”

one would say to another.

“Ah yes, indeed, but what about your chain of mountains, and your sparkling ponds and streams!”

“But each time I see your wisteria, my eyes fill with tears. Such restraint, such delicacy.

Oh, and those sweet daisies...”



*“But your humpback whale!
Such magnificence!”*

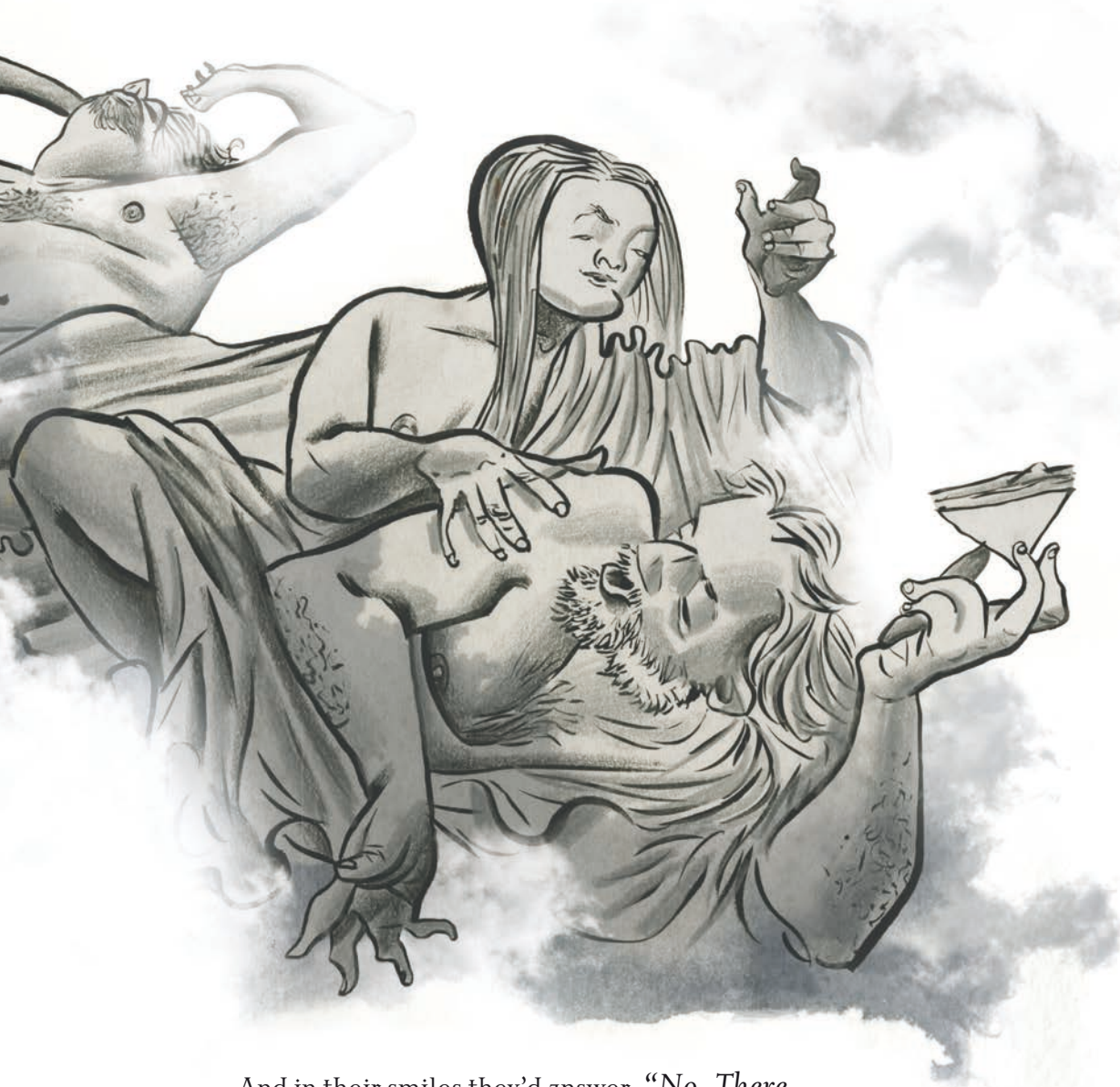
“And your extraordinary zowet!”

“Your gazelle!”

“Oh, but your brant!”

And they would shrug, and blush, and lower their eyes.

They’d be silent for a time; then they’d whisper, *“Could any other gods come up with anything more astonishing?”*



And in their smiles they'd answer, *"No. There are no other worlds like this one. There are no other gods like us. We are indeed the best of all gods in the best of all worlds."*



And so they lay on their clouds, and floated through the sky, and took tea, and slept and snored. And yes, they did tell one another what they would make once they got back to work, if only they had the energy, and if only they had the time, but in truth their world was still unfinished, still had many gaps and spaces in it, and there was still much making to be done.

