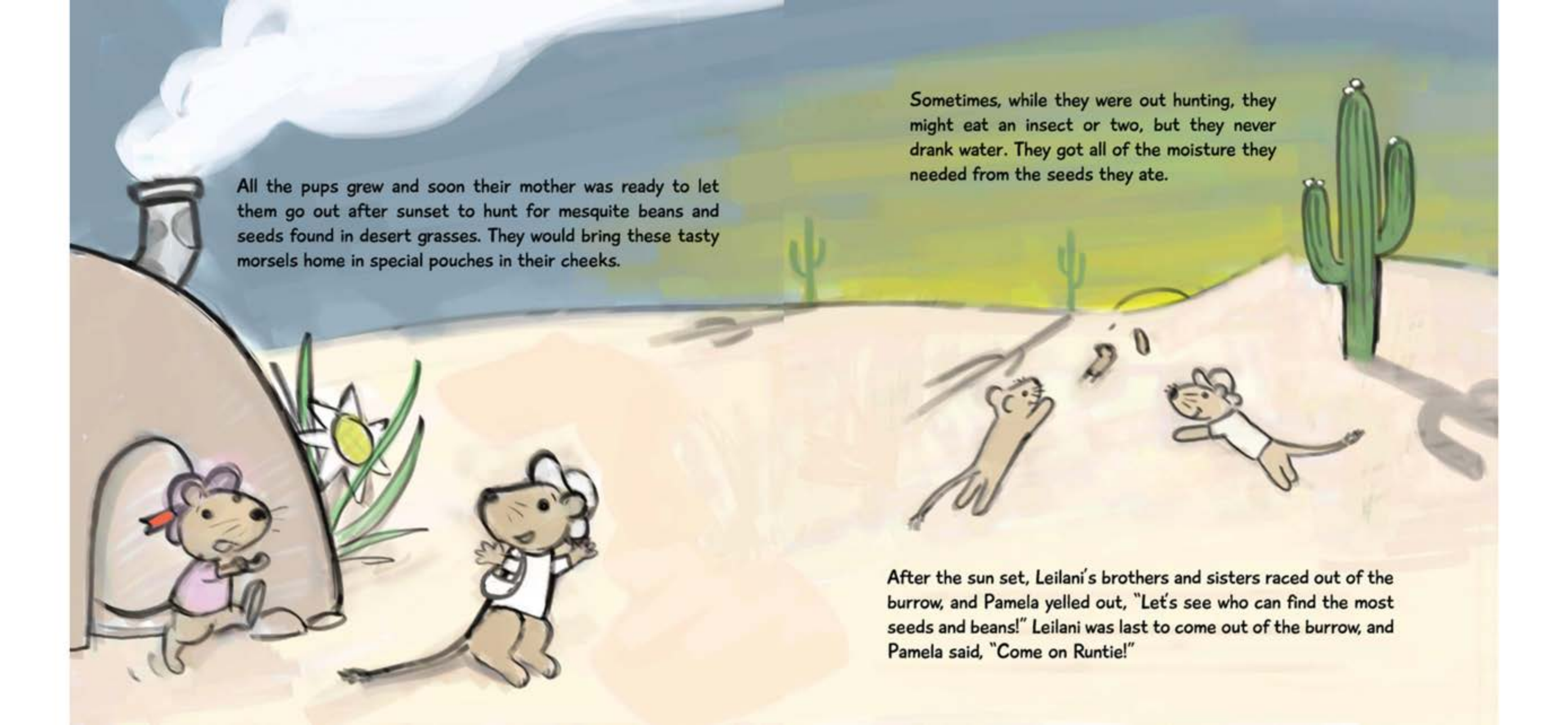


Once upon a time a mother desert rat gave birth to seven pups. She looked around her underground burrow and thought, *Each of my pups should have a name.* She began with her first born pup and said, "Gordy," and then "Pamela . . . Marty . . . Payton . . . Jackson . . . Zander . . ."

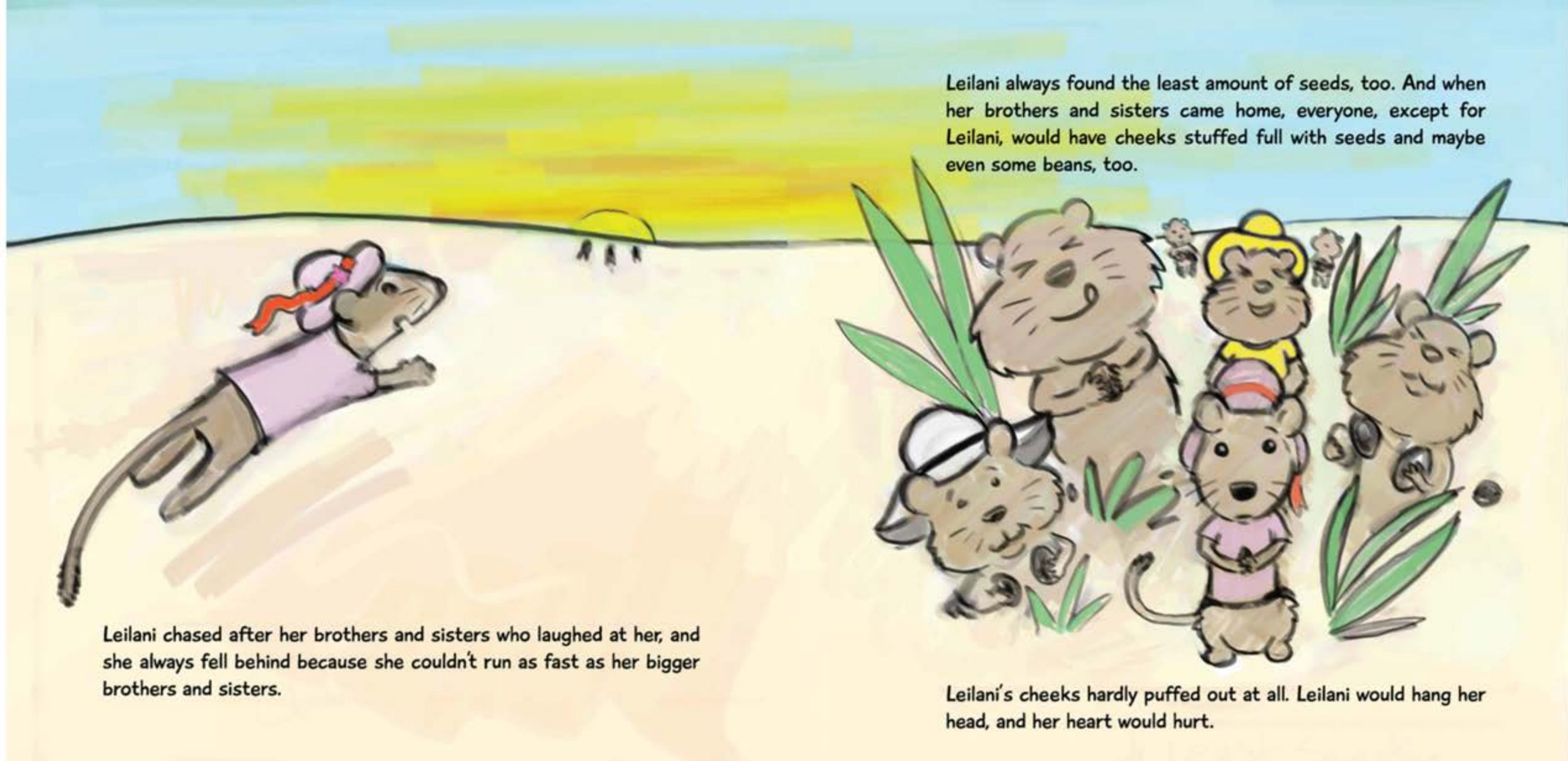
And when she came to her last born baby, which was smaller than her other pups, her children started shouting, "Call her Runtie . . . Call her Runtie." The smallest of her children hung her head, and her little heart hurt. "Hush children!" mother said. "She shall be called Leilani. Now all of you go to sleep. And I don't want to hear anymore name calling! A mother loves all of her children no matter what."



All the pups grew and soon their mother was ready to let them go out after sunset to hunt for mesquite beans and seeds found in desert grasses. They would bring these tasty morsels home in special pouches in their cheeks.

Sometimes, while they were out hunting, they might eat an insect or two, but they never drank water. They got all of the moisture they needed from the seeds they ate.

After the sun set, Leilani's brothers and sisters raced out of the burrow, and Pamela yelled out, "Let's see who can find the most seeds and beans!" Leilani was last to come out of the burrow, and Pamela said, "Come on Runtie!"



Leilani always found the least amount of seeds, too. And when her brothers and sisters came home, everyone, except for Leilani, would have cheeks stuffed full with seeds and maybe even some beans, too.

Leilani chased after her brothers and sisters who laughed at her, and she always fell behind because she couldn't run as fast as her bigger brothers and sisters.

Leilani's cheeks hardly puffed out at all. Leilani would hang her head, and her heart would hurt.

Leilani had an inferiority complex*, and there were no rat psychiatrists who could help her to talk through her problem.



* Inferiority complex: Feeling a lack of confidence, importance, or talent when compared to others.

* Open-field- anxiety: Being in a wide open space with nowhere to hide causes anxiety and fear.





One night Leilani fell far behind her brothers and sisters and soon found herself in a wide open space. Owls and other raptors hunted for food at night and with nowhere to hide, Leilani felt scared and began to tremble. Leilani was feeling open field anxiety*. An Owl or other creature that would like to eat her might be able to see her and she would be swept up and never see her family again.

Leilani, like all desert rats, had excellent hearing and big eyes to see at night. Soon Leilani spied the shadow of the wings of a great horned owl, and she heard the whispering sounds of the owl's feathers. *Whoa!* Leilani thought. This is too scary. And she ran to the nearest saguaro cactus, which had beautiful white flowers in full bloom.





As Leilani huddled and shivered with fright under a flower, she muttered to herself, "I can't even keep up with my brothers and sisters because I'm so small. I'm just good for nothing." Leilani began to cry. Of course, when she cried, she didn't spill any tears because desert rats conserve water. They don't even sweat in the heat of the desert. Leilani sniffled and sobbed as she rubbed her nose. Her heart hurt real bad.

Leilani looked at the full moon and said out loud, "Why wasn't I born big like my brothers and sisters?!"

