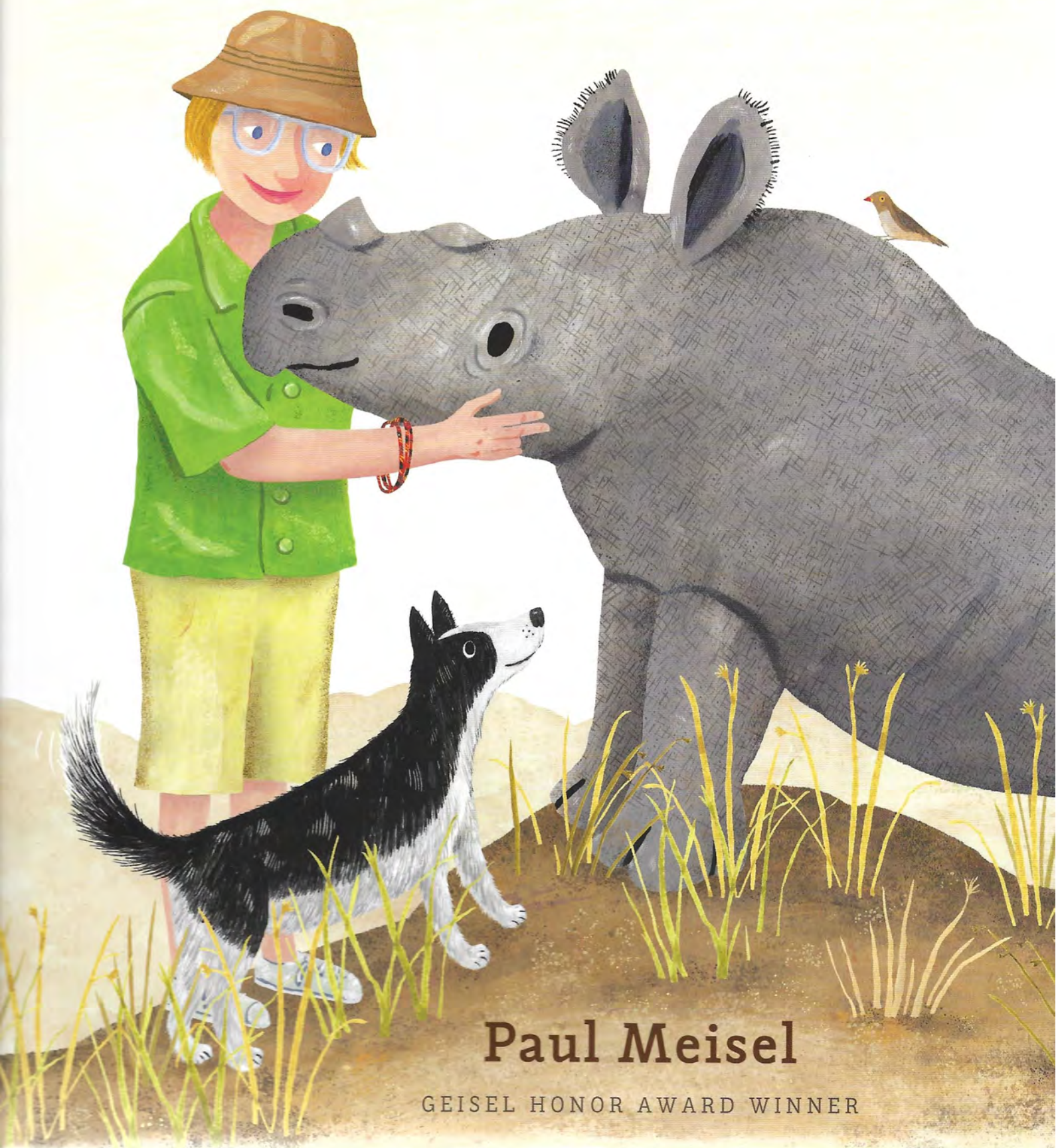


ANNA & SAMIA

The True Story of Saving a Black Rhino



Paul Meisel

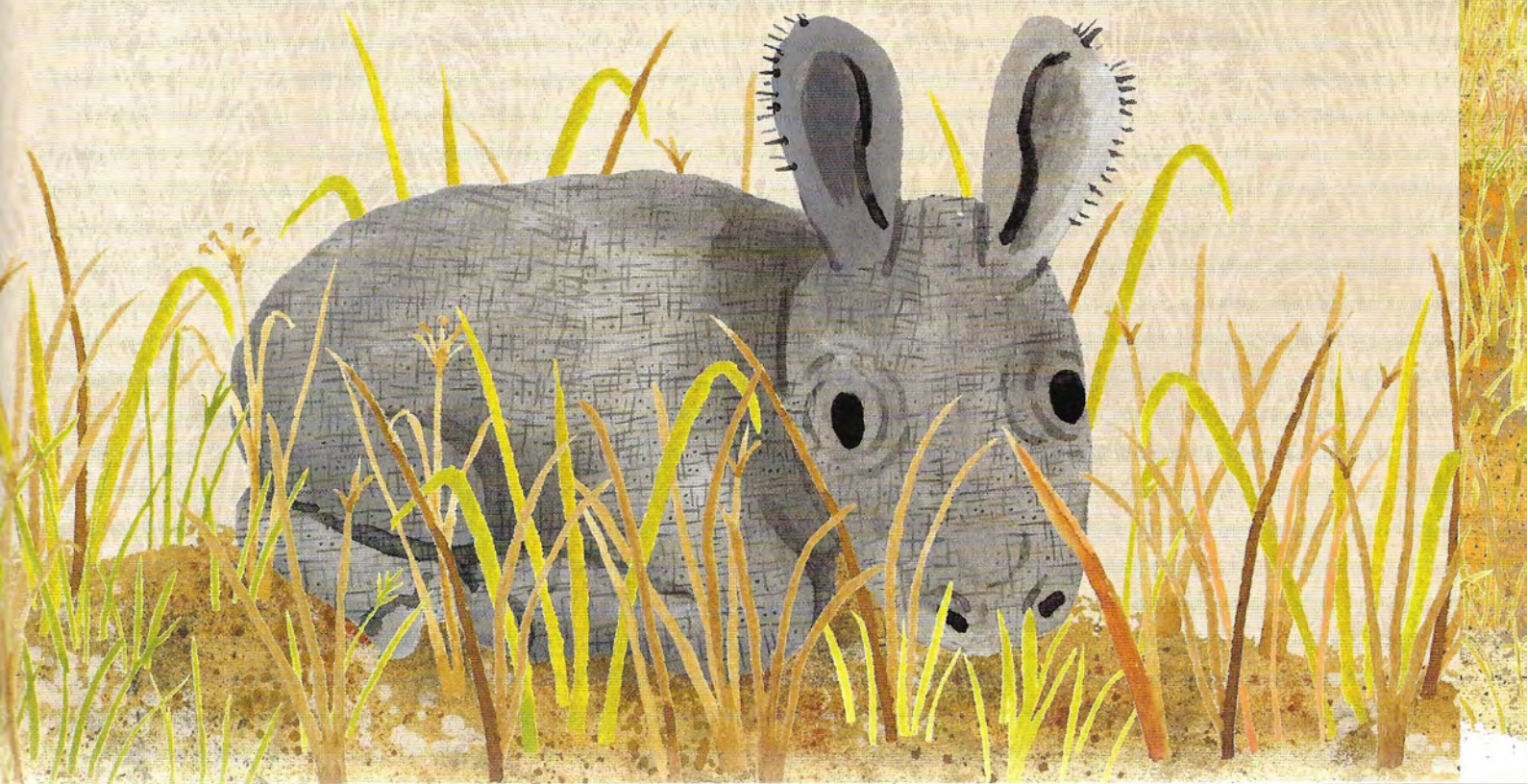
GEISEL HONOR AWARD WINNER

ANNA & SAMIA

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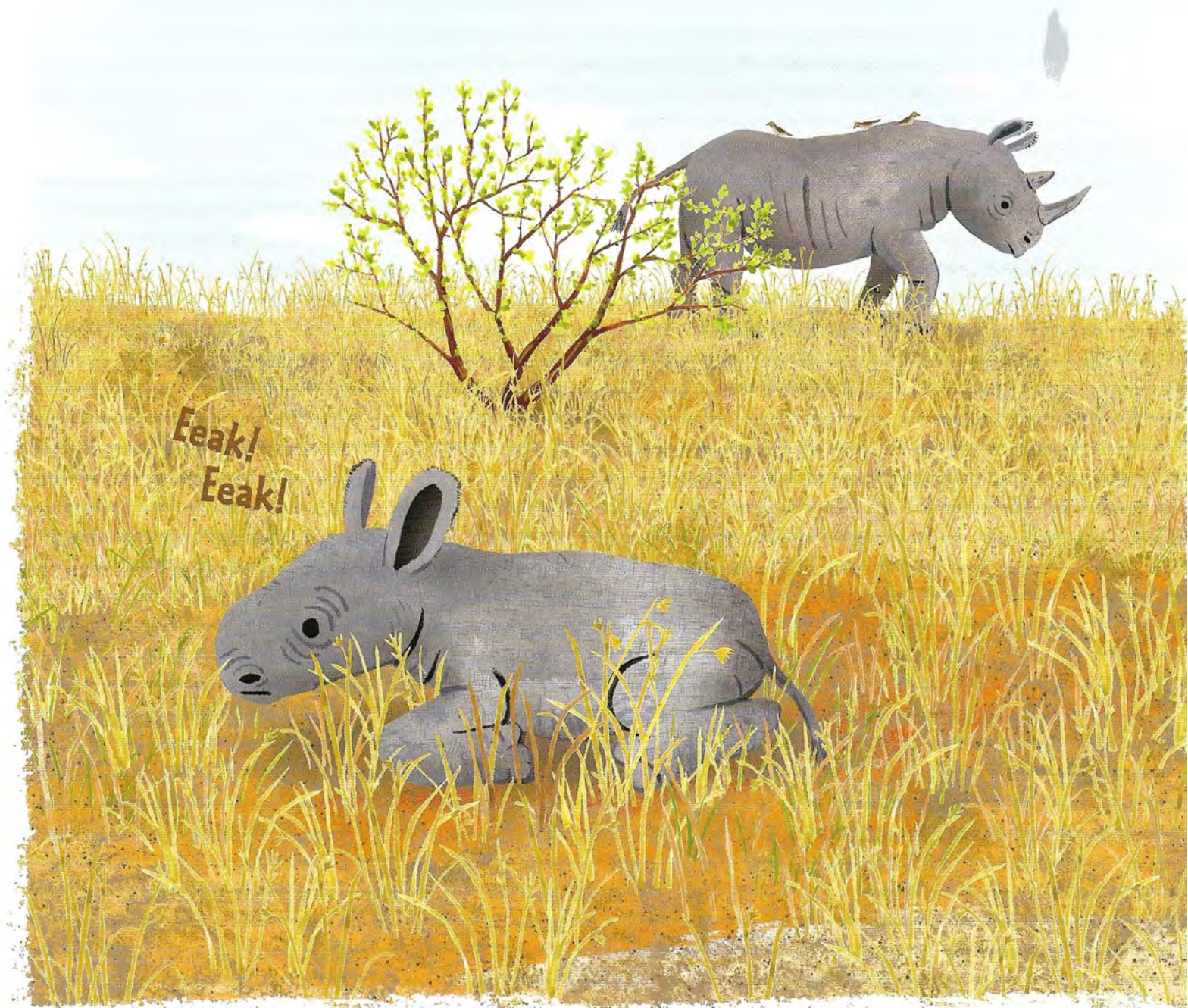
Farrar Straus Giroux
New York



“Eeak, eeak!” squeaked the newborn rhinoceros.

Her mother had wandered off.

Now the baby rhino was all alone in the vast Kenyan rhino sanctuary.

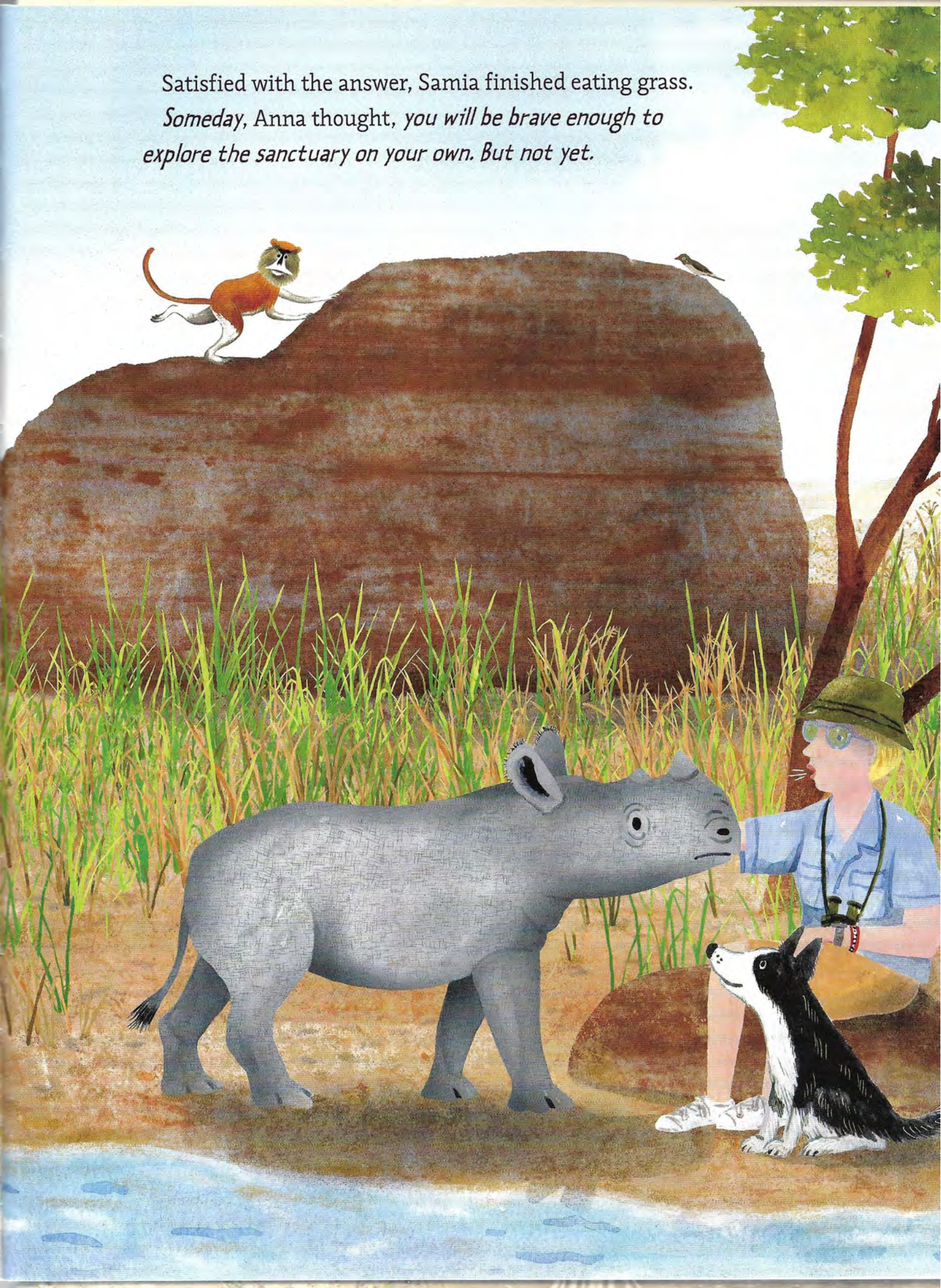


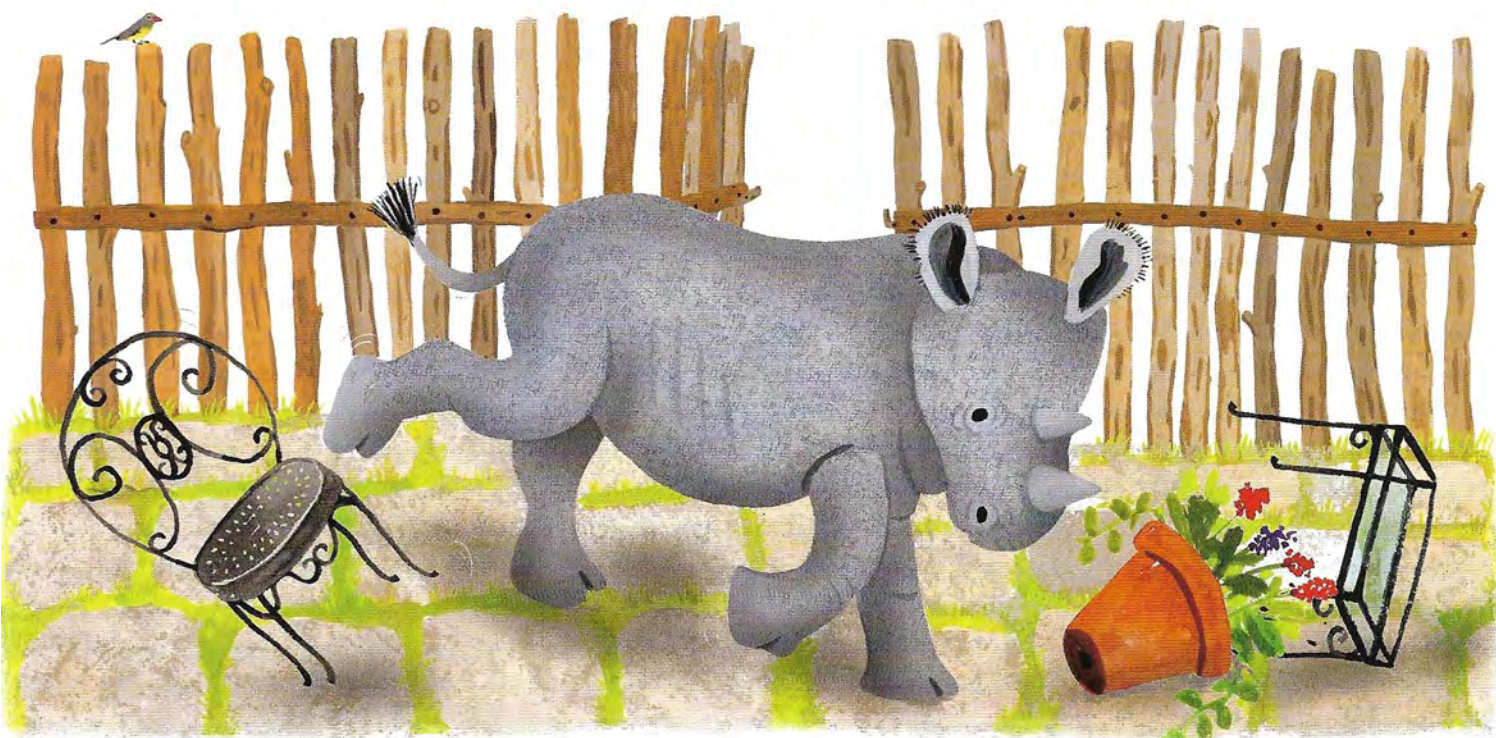
Anna fed Samia from a bottle. The baby rhino slowly got bigger and stronger. At two months old, Samia could sleep in the stable on her own, but Anna had to sit with her until she fell asleep.

One day, thought Anna, you'll be able to live on your own. But not now.



Satisfied with the answer, Samia finished eating grass.
*Someday, Anna thought, you will be brave enough to
explore the sanctuary on your own. But not yet.*





Most of all, Samia just wanted to be with her friend Anna. She visited Anna's garden. And once she learned how to open doors, Samia visited Anna in the bath.



“What Joy Adamson was to lions, Dian Fossey was to gorillas, and Jane Goodall is to chimpanzees, Anna Merz [was] to rhinos.” —Desmond Morris

ABOUT ANNA

Anna Merz was born Florence Ann Hepburn in Radlett, England, on November 17, 1931. She lived in London and Cornwall, England, while growing up. After graduating from Nottingham University, she studied law and then traveled around the world. She settled in Ghana, then retired to Kenya in 1976. There, she became aware of the widespread killing by poachers of black and white rhinos for their valuable horns. This horrified Anna, and she decided to devote the rest of her life to the preservation of the African rhinoceros.

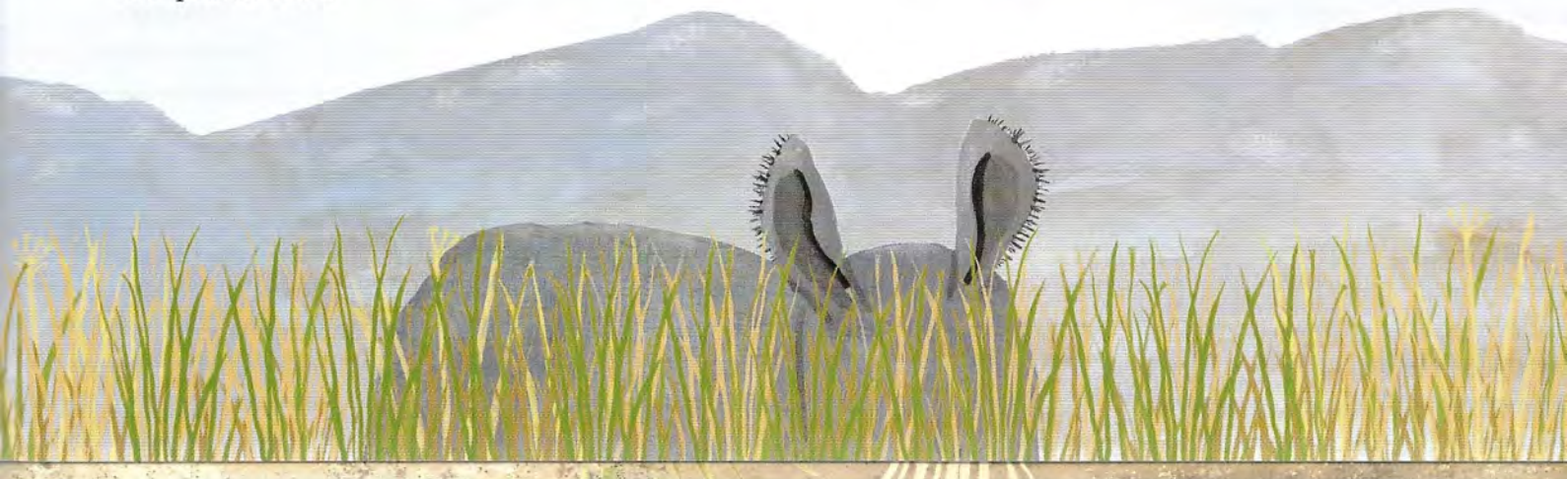
Anna searched for land to be donated for a rhinoceros sanctuary. After being turned down many times, she came in contact with David and Delia Craig, ranchers who agreed to set aside five thousand acres of their land for the preservation of rhinos and other endangered animals. In 1983, Anna and the Craig family opened the Ngare Sergoi Rhino Sanctuary. It was reestablished as the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy in 1995, and today it spans more than sixty-one thousand acres.

Lewa employs many of the local people (around 300) in a number of different jobs. It offers accommodations for tourists who are interested in the preservation of animals and the beauty of the Kenyan landscape. The money that tourism brings in, along with donations and a partnership with the Kenyan government, affords the Lewa conservancy the opportunity to protect rhinos and to also benefit the local community by funding schools, water projects, health clinics, and small loans to women to run family businesses. Lewa also has programs for local farmers to teach them how to raise crops more productively while preserving the soil, forestry programs to promote the protection of woodlands, and youth sports programs. The Lewa Wildlife Conservancy also gives scholarships to local youth in need who would not have educational opportunities otherwise.

All of this was made possible by Anna’s vision for a rhino sanctuary. The Lewa website describes her as “fearless, with a spine of steel and [a] wicked sense of humor.” She is regarded as Lewa’s *mama kifarū*, which means “mother of the rhino” in Swahili. Anna Merz passed away on April 4, 2013, at the age of eighty-one.

ABOUT SAMIA

Much of the information about Samia’s life showcased in this book was taken from Chapter 8 in Anna Merz’s book, *Rhino: At the Brink of Extinction*. The chapter is titled “Samia’s Diary” and contains extracts from the notes that Anna made documenting her time with Samia from the day she was born on February 15, 1985. I recommend that you read Anna’s book to learn more about Samia’s life and rhino conservation and preservation.



When Samia was ten years old, she and her ten-month-old son died from injuries after an encounter with a large male rhino, which was perhaps defending his territory. As you can imagine, Anna Merz and everyone at the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy were devastated by this. However, comfort can be taken from the knowledge that the Lewa conservancy's protection allowed Samia to lead a natural life, free from the danger of poachers, on the land where she was born.

ABOUT RHINOS

There are five living species of rhinos today: Javan, Sumatran, black, greater one-horned, and white. Once, more than a million black and white rhinos lived in Africa. In 1970, around seventy thousand black rhinos like Samia remained. Poachers reduced the number of black rhinos to just 2,400 by 1995. Thanks to the efforts of Anna Merz and many others, the black rhino population is now over five thousand. But poaching continues to this day because the horns of rhinos are sold illegally on the black market and used as medicine, soup, and knife handles and for other purposes.

Male black rhinos can weigh over 3,000 pounds, females up to 2,500. Both black and white rhinos are the same color—usually dark gray, but sometimes a lighter gray or brownish gray. (No one is sure why the black and white rhinos were given their names, but it doesn't refer to their color!) Whereas white rhinos have a flat upper lip, black rhinos have a prehensile upper lip. The hooked lip helps them eat from trees, bushes, and shrubs by plucking leaves and fruit from branches and the ground. It also helps them to open gate latches and even car doors, as Samia did!

Black rhino calves weigh between fifty-five and a hundred pounds at birth. They suckle for sixteen to twenty months. They stay with their mother until her next calf is born. Black rhinos have poor eyesight. This is one reason why they have a reputation for not being terribly friendly. Unable to see well, they will often charge thinking that there's a threat. They do have an excellent sense of smell and excellent hearing. They communicate with grunts and snorts. Anna identified more than sixty different sounds that rhinos make.

Black rhinos have three toes on each foot. They can run at speeds of up to thirty-five miles per hour. Black rhinos live up to forty years in the wild and up to ten years longer in captivity. The small birds seen on Samia's back in this book are red-billed and yellow-billed oxpeckers. They eat ticks and other external parasites, helping to keep the rhinos healthy. They also alert the rhinos if danger is approaching.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Anna Merz's book: *Rhino: At the Brink of Extinction*, London: HarperCollins, 1991.

Lewa Wildlife Conservancy website: Lewa.org

Anna Merz's obituary: Douglas Martin, "Anna Merz, Rhino Guardian and Champion, Dies at 81," *New York Times*, April 21, 2013, nytimes.com/2013/04/22/world/africa/anna-merz-protector-of-black-rhinos-dies-at-81.html.



Anna and Samia. **Best friends forever.**