



Mother Hippo Shares Pancakes

A Full English translation is available.

河馬媽媽分鬆餅

Author: Ngar-Yi Leung **Illustrator:** A-Meow **Publisher:** The Eastern Publishing

Date: 08/2021 **Rights contact:** bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

36 pages | 21.5 x 25.5 cm **Volume:** 1

Rights sold: Simplified Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Thai

BFT 2.0 Translator: Michelle Kuo

Mother Hippo loves making pancakes for all the animals in the forest—until sharing turns into chaos. Some animals, like the cheetah, race to the front of the line, while others, like the sloth, struggle to get their turn. Mother Hippo keeps adjusting her rules in an effort to be fair and kind, but a few animals manage to exploit loopholes. Frustrated and ready to give up, she closes her kitchen and decides to stop sharing altogether. Without her pancakes, the forest falls silent.

Then one day, Little Pig emerges from her house holding a warm pancake. Has Mother Hippo changed her mind—or discovered a better way to share? It turns out she's teaching each animal how to make their own.

Imaginative, humorous, relatable, and full of heart, this picture book explores fairness and the challenge of setting boundaries while still choosing kindness.



Author **Ngar-Yi Leung**

Ngar-Yi Leung holds a Bachelor of Education from The University of Hong Kong and two Master's degrees in Cultural Studies and Literature from The Chinese University of Hong Kong. She is a seasoned language teacher and children's book author, has received multiple accolades, including the Hsin Yi Children's Literature Award, the Hong Kong Picture Book Award, the Awards for Creative Writing in Chinese, and the Hong Kong Publishing Biennial Awards. Her works include picture books such as *I Want a Pet Whale*, *Mum Stinks*, *All About the Mobile Phones*, and *Identity Proven*, as well as the humorous and thought-provoking early reader series *The Charming Stationery*.



Illustrator **A-Meow**

A-Meow, whose family name is Tsai, is an illustrator from Tainan. She draws inspiration from everyday life, cats and dogs, and the natural world. Working primarily with colored pencils and crayons, her style ranges from humorous to soothing. In 2020, she created the illustrated character Market the Cat, whose signature cool poses quickly won the hearts of cat lovers everywhere.

The Boundaries of Kindness: A Generous Hippo Learns a New Way to Give

by Tzu Ning Huang

In everyday life, we're constantly faced with moments that invite us to share—an act often equated with kindness. In this story, Mother Hippo is a generous, talented cook who makes irresistible pancakes and eagerly offers them to every animal in the forest. But the pancakes aren't endless, and before long, some of the animals are left without a single bite.

Determined to make sure everyone gets a taste, kind-hearted Mother Hippo begins setting rules. She asks them, for instance, to form a line and limits each animal to a single portion. But no matter how carefully she constructs her rules, she can't satisfy everyone. Although some animals follow the rules, others take

advantage of her kindness and exploit loopholes. As frustration builds, the forest turns chaotic, and the animals even begin to blame Mother Hippo—accusing her of making too few pancakes, or of creating flawed rules that caused the problem in the first place.

At this point, the book reveals one of its central themes—an issue well worth exploring with readers of all ages: Should kindness and sharing have boundaries? Without clear rules, unfairness is bound to arise. Kindness is a virtue, but when good intentions lead to collective dissatisfaction, what other choices are left?

Author Ngar-Yi Leung cleverly weaves each animal's characteristics

into the story. For example, the cheetah is incredibly fast and always manages to arrive early and get in line first. Meanwhile, the vast difference in size between the elephant and the ant raises another important issue: fairness. One pancake can feed an entire ant family, yet it is barely enough to fill the space between an elephant's teeth.

Feeling deeply frustrated, Mother Hippo decides to stop sharing altogether. The once lively forest, filled with the warm aroma of pancakes, falls silent. The animals begin to realize their attitudes were inappropriate. Those who were once noisy and demanding now wish to apologize and express goodwill, but they do not know how to begin.

One day, a little pig cautiously approaches Mother Hippo's house and notices that the whiteboard—once used to list the pancake distribution rules—now displays something different. The author wisely leaves the words a mystery, creating suspense. When the pig leaves the house, he carries a warm, freshly made pancake.

Amazed, the other animals draw closer. One by one, they step inside, brimming with curiosity, and emerge smiling—hot pancakes in their paws. The secret is finally revealed: Mother Hippo is

no longer making pancakes for everyone herself. Instead, she's teaching each visitor how to make pancakes on their own.

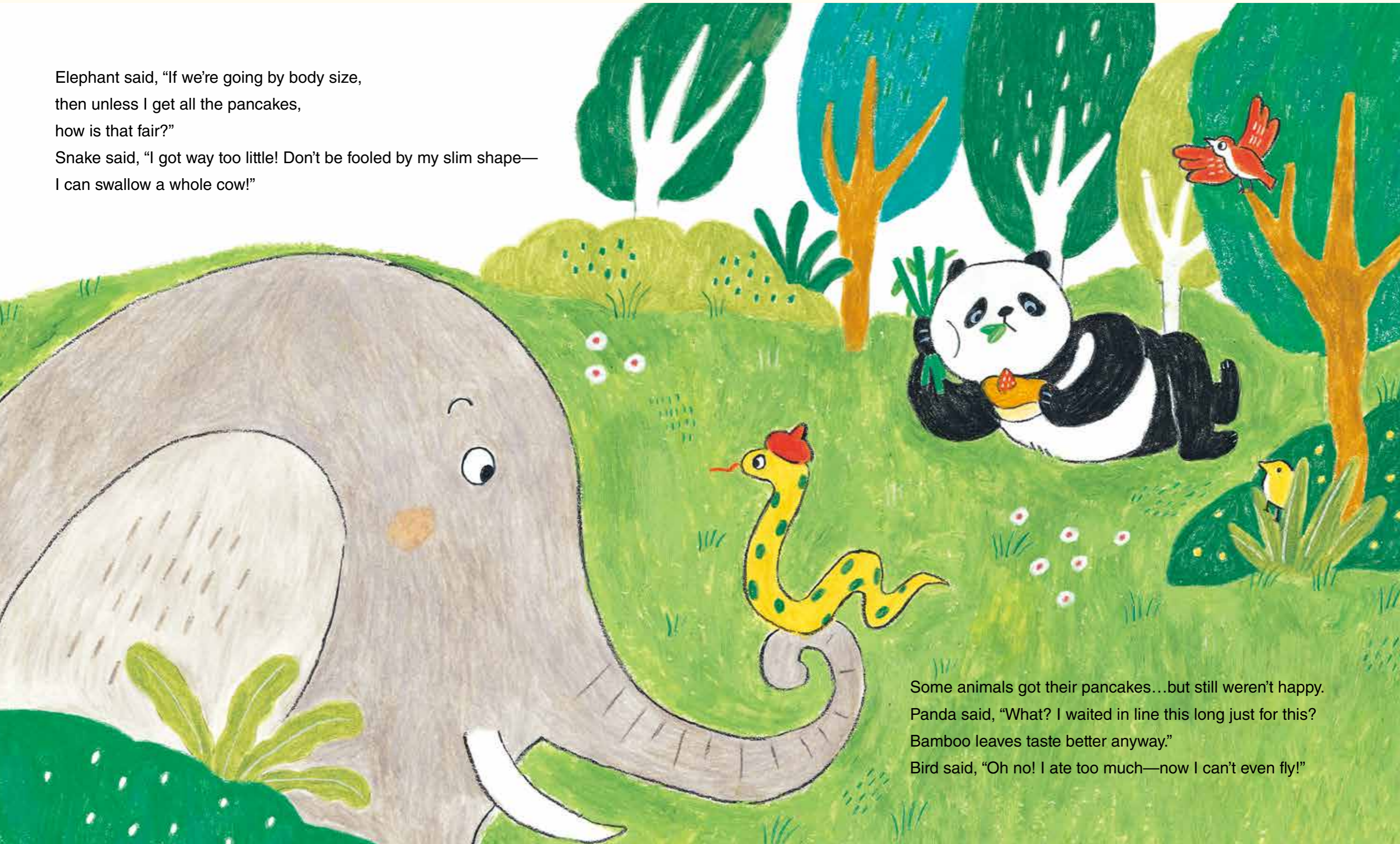
Finally, I can't help but mention a thought-provoking detail: the sloth—a character who appears throughout the story—doesn't get to eat a pancake until the very last page. The sloth's situation echoes the theme of fairness. No matter how rules are adjusted, there will always be someone who misses out. Perfection is difficult to achieve. In the end, Mother Hippo's solution encapsulates the aphorism *Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime*. Warm-hearted, funny, and engaging, this story delivers that lesson with charm and wit.

This picture book invites rich discussion and reflection long after the last page. If you were in Mother Hippo's place, would you choose the same solution—or would you try a different approach?

Tzu Ning Huang is an editor at Books from Taiwan. She loves to listen and tell stories, enjoys conversations and encounters with others, and appreciates time alone. She also loves to use photography and writing to explore the world.

Elephant said, "If we're going by body size,
then unless I get all the pancakes,
how is that fair?"

Snake said, "I got way too little! Don't be fooled by my slim shape—
I can swallow a whole cow!"



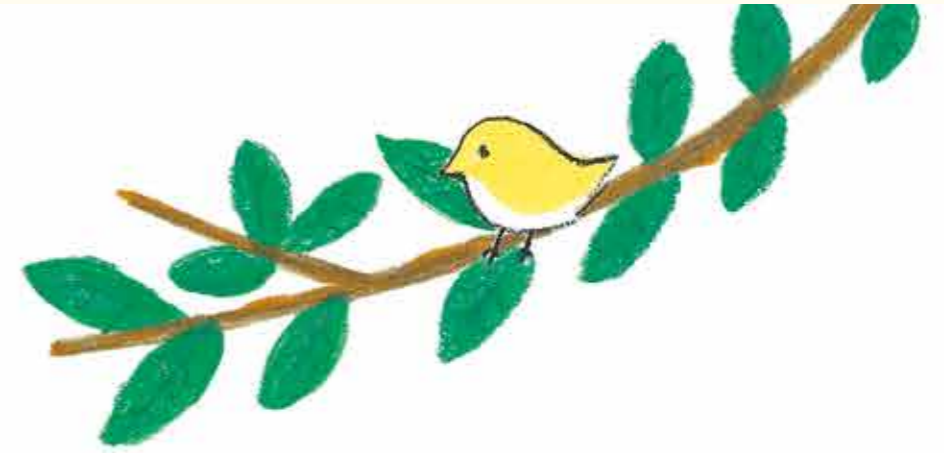
Some animals got their pancakes...but still weren't happy.
Panda said, "What? I waited in line this long just for this?
Bamboo leaves taste better anyway."
Bird said, "Oh no! I ate too much—now I can't even fly!"

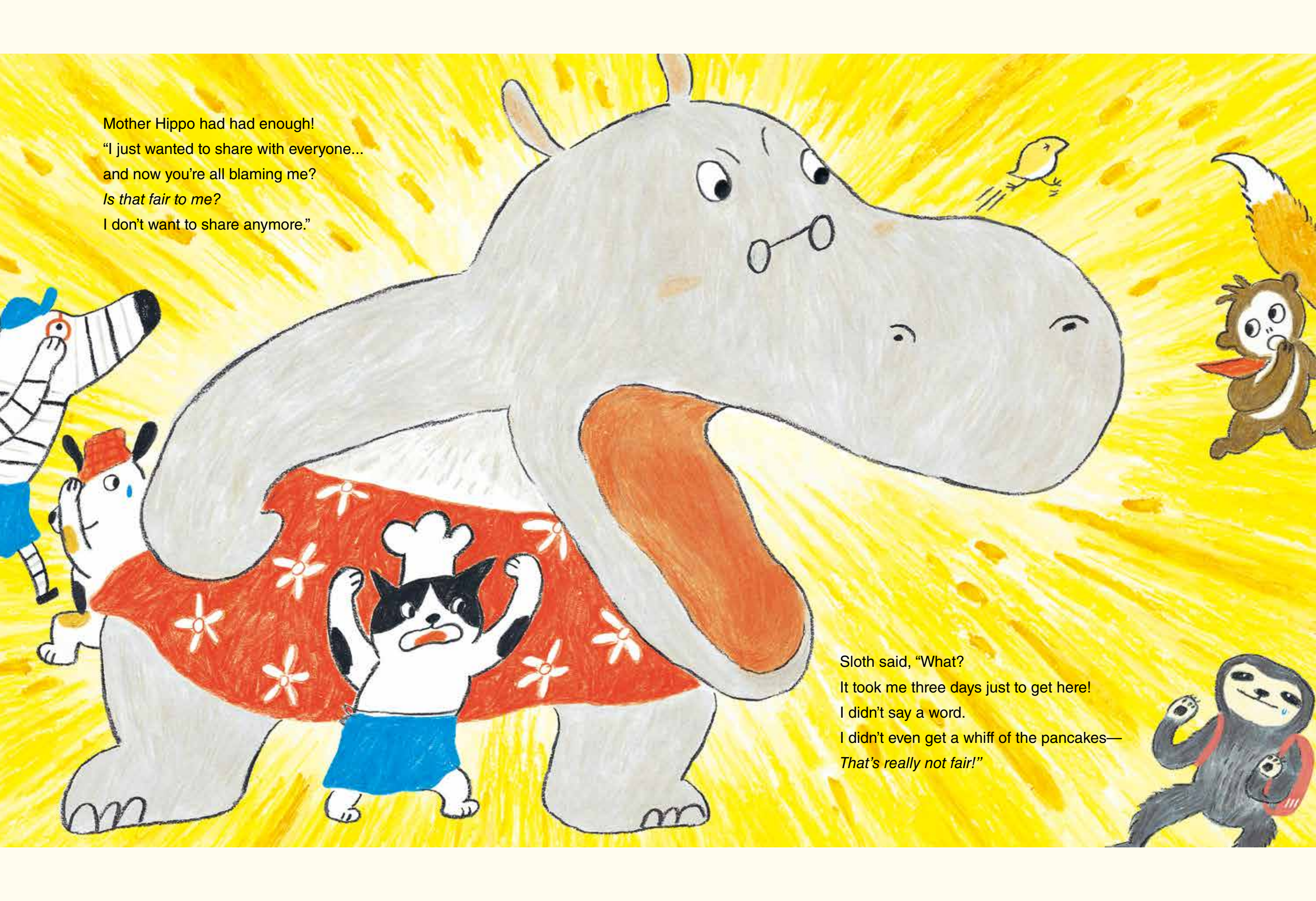
Soon, everyone started complaining to Mother Hippo.

Fox said, "This is all your fault! There aren't enough pancakes!

If we could just take as much as we wanted,
no one would be fighting!"

Owl added, "Exactly! And you always hand them out in the morning—
that's when we're supposed to be sleeping! Your planning is the worst!"





Mother Hippo had had enough!
“I just wanted to share with everyone...
and now you’re all blaming me?
Is that fair to me?
I don’t want to share anymore.”

Sloth said, “What?
It took me three days just to get here!
I didn’t say a word.
I didn’t even get a whiff of the pancakes—
That’s really not fair!”