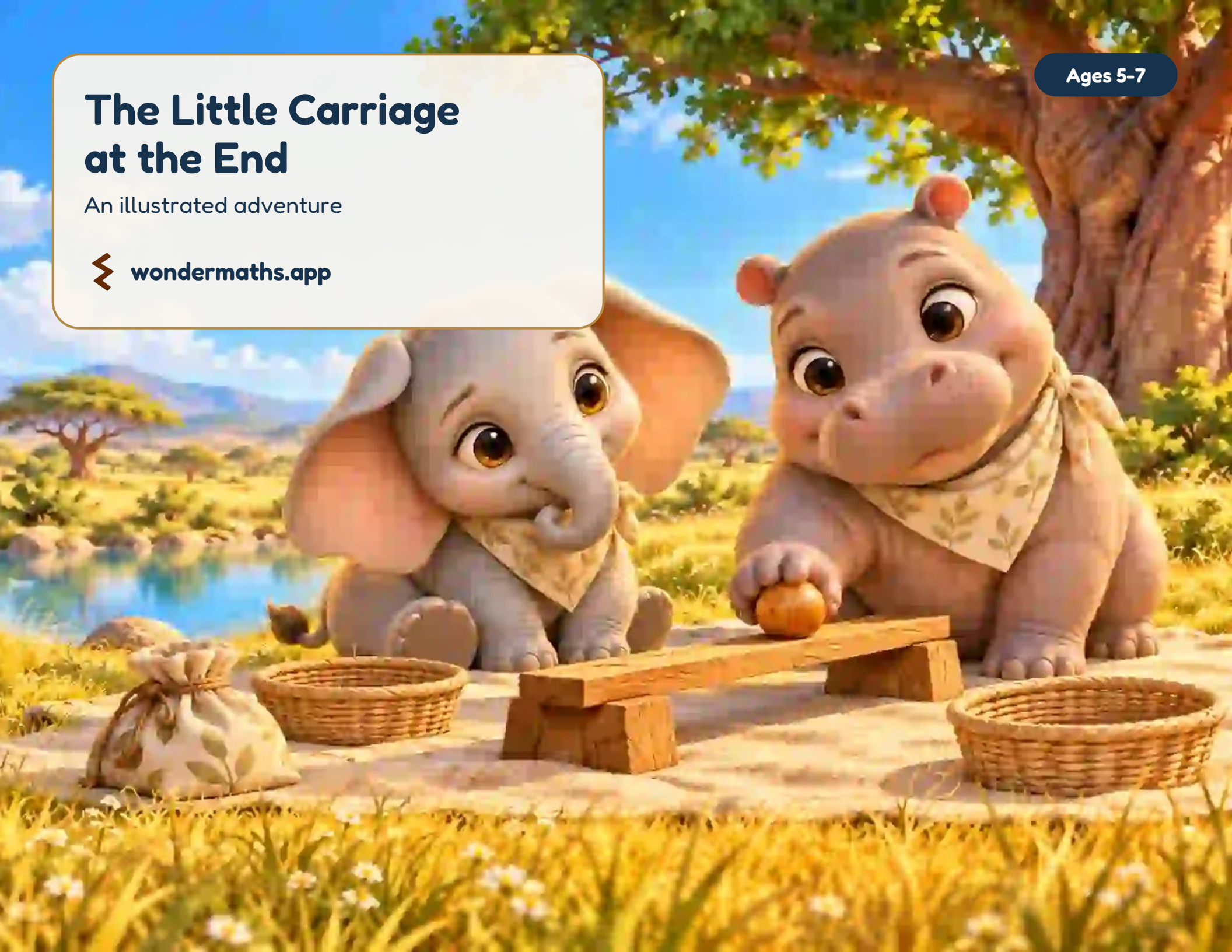
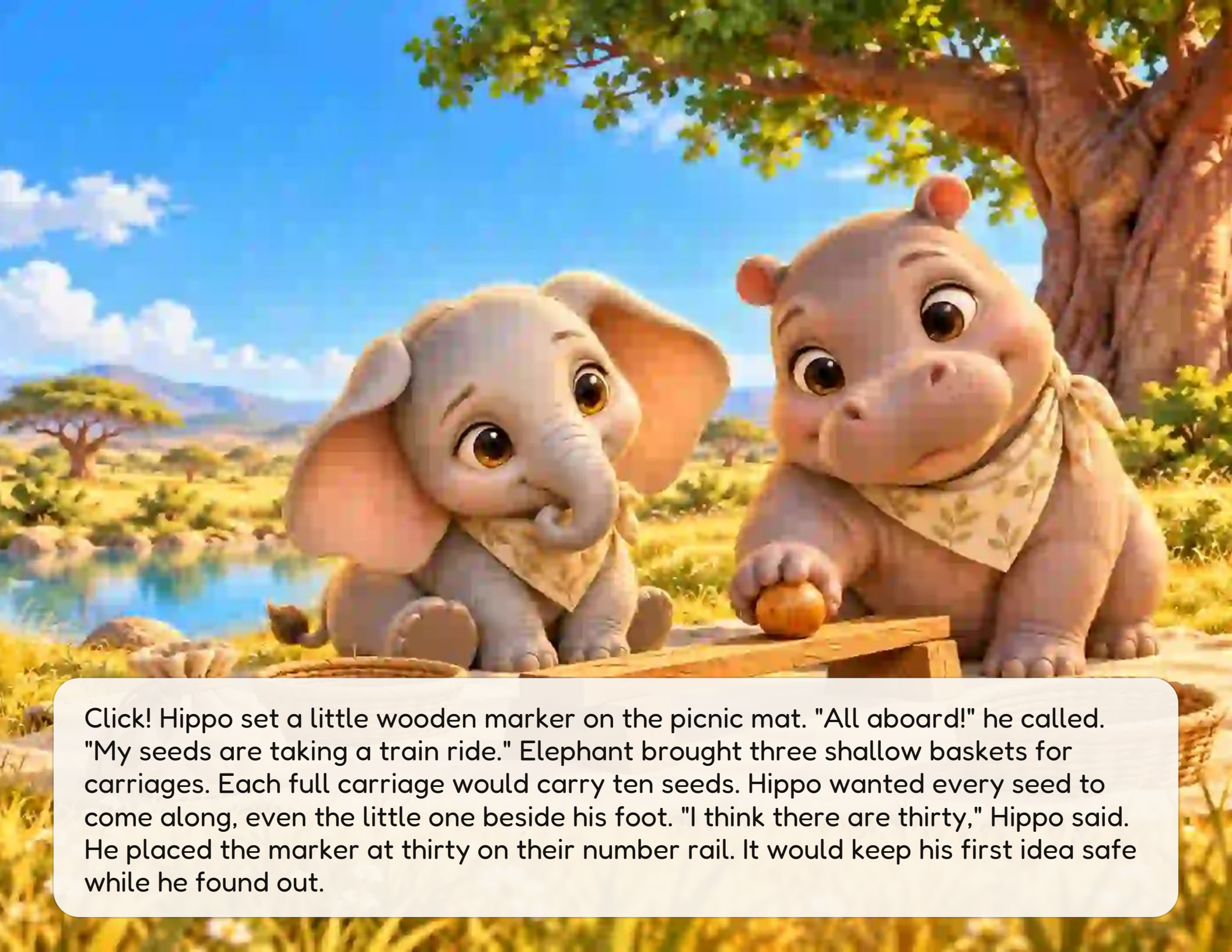

Ages 5-7
The Little Carriage at the End
An illustrated adventure
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Click! Hippo set a little wooden marker on the picnic mat. "All aboard!" he called. "My seeds are taking a train ride." Elephant brought three shallow baskets for carriages. Each full carriage would carry ten seeds. Hippo wanted every seed to come along, even the little one beside his foot. "I think there are thirty," Hippo said. He placed the marker at thirty on their number rail. It would keep his first idea safe while he found out.



Hippo pushed the seeds into a long, wiggly line. Now the train reached almost across the mat. "That looks like more," he said. His paw reached toward the marker. Elephant rested her trunk beside the mat. "Did any seeds arrive?" Hippo looked at the empty pouch. He looked around the mat. None had arrived. None had left. He tucked his paw back. "The line grew. The seeds didn't. My first idea can stay."



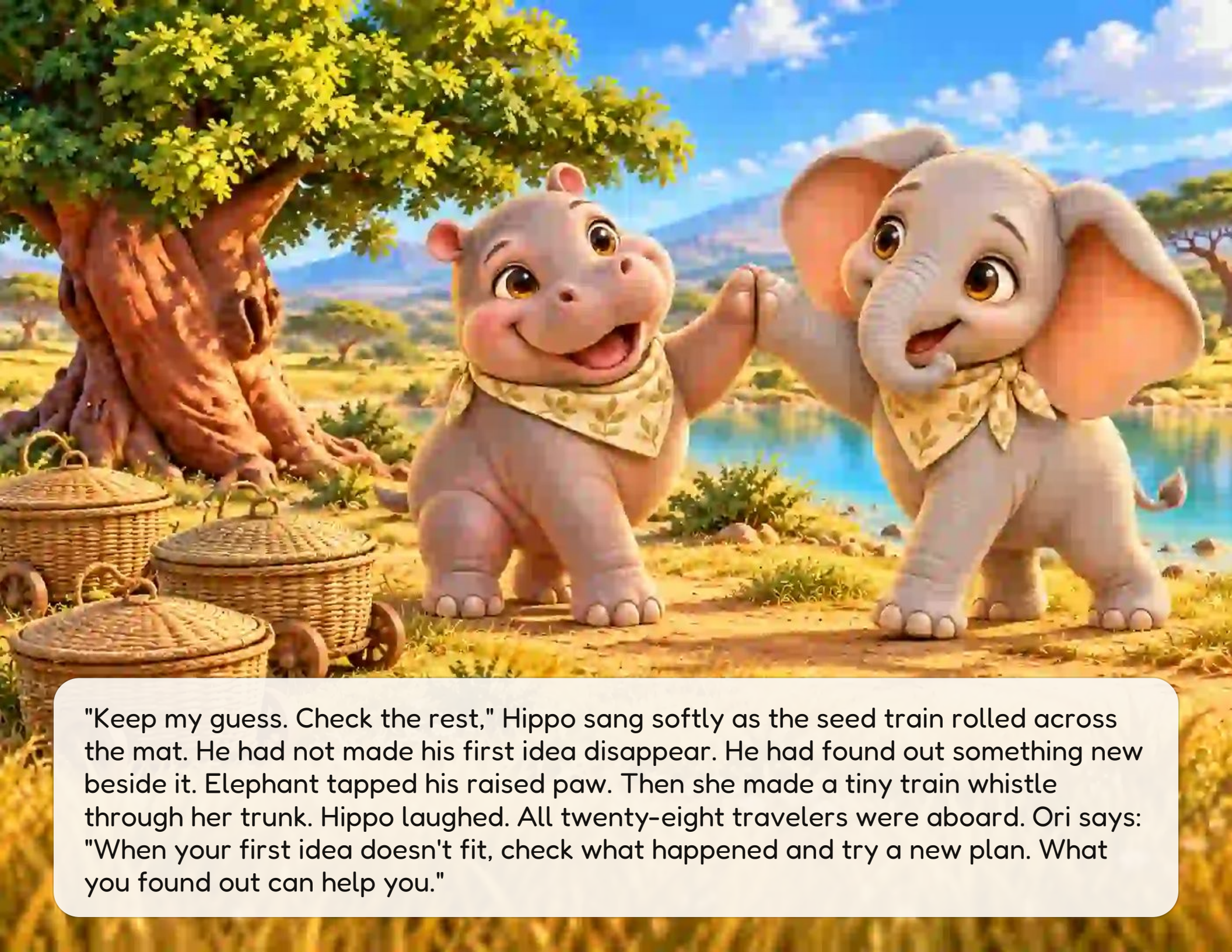
Hippo began counting from one end. Elephant's empty basket made a cheerful little creak. Hippo turned to listen. "Was that twelve? Or thirteen?" He started again, but the loose seeds all looked alike. His shoulders drooped. Elephant slid one empty basket closer. She did not fill it. Hippo touched its rim. "I could give the ones I've counted a place." He whispered, "Keep my guess. Check the rest."



Hippo moved ten seeds into the first basket. He left them there. Ten more filled the second. This time, when he paused, his counting had a place to wait. "Ten. Twenty." Eight seeds were still on the mat. Hippo counted them once, touching each one. "Twenty-eight!" He set a second marker at twenty-eight. The first marker stayed at thirty. "Keep my guess. Check the rest," he said, and smiled at what he had found.



Hippo put the eight remaining seeds into the last basket. It was not full. "My last carriage is too little," he murmured. Elephant waited beside him. The first two baskets held ten each. The little carriage held eight. Every seed had a place. Hippo's ears lifted. "It isn't too little. It's the carriage at the end!" He nudged it behind the others. The short carriage was just what his train needed.



"Keep my guess. Check the rest," Hippo sang softly as the seed train rolled across the mat. He had not made his first idea disappear. He had found out something new beside it. Elephant tapped his raised paw. Then she made a tiny train whistle through her trunk. Hippo laughed. All twenty-eight travelers were aboard. Ori says: "When your first idea doesn't fit, check what happened and try a new plan. What you found out can help you."

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Keep the first idea. Check what happened. A new plan can still carry everyone.

The Little Carriage at the End

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