



THE  
**Coconut  
Monk**

*By*  
**Thich Nhat Hanh**

**ILLUSTRATED BY VO-DINH MAI**



THE  
**Coconut  
Monk** *By*  
Thich Nhat Hanh

ILLUSTRATED BY VO-DINH MAI

# The Coconut Monk

Plum Blossom Books  
P.O. Box 7355 • Berkeley, California 94707  
[www.parallax.org](http://www.parallax.org)

Plum Blossom books is an imprint of Parallax Press, the publishing division of Unified Buddhist Church, Inc.

Copyright © 2005 by Unified Buddhist Church.  
All Rights Reserved.  
Distributed by Publishers Group West.

As told to Rachel Neumann.  
Cover drawing by Vo Dinh Mai.  
Cover and text design by Gopa & Ted 2, Inc.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Nhật Hân, Thích.

The coconut monk / by Thich Nhat Hanh ; as told to Rachel Neumann ; illustrated by Vo-Dinh Mai.  
p. cm.

ISBN 978-1-937006-17-4

1. Buddhism—Juvenile literature. I. Neumann, Rachel. II. Vo- Dinh, Mai, 1933- ill. III. Title.

BQ4032.N58 2006

294.3'4432—dc22

2005029496

1 2 3 4 5 6 /10 09 08 07 06 05

---



# THE Coconut Monk

By  
Thich Nhat Hanh

AS TOLD TO RACHEL NEUMANN • ILLUSTRATED BY VO-DINH MAI

PLUM BLOSSOM BOOKS ♦ BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA



# Contents

[The Coconut Monk](#)

[Who Was The Coconut Monk?](#)



There once was a monk who lived on a small island in Vietnam. He spent his time sitting in a coconut tree and eating coconuts, so people called him "the Coconut Monk."







The Coconut Monk had two good friends,  
a cat and a mouse. Every day they would  
climb up the coconut tree and play  
together.





The Coconut Monk enjoyed sitting high in the tree with his friends. He would watch the boats going by on the Mekong Delta and listen to the birds sing.





The Coconut Monk lived in a time when Vietnam was at war. All the fighting made him very sad.

One day, he went out walking. While he walked, he collected bits of metal, pieces of bombs and bullets that littered the land. He melted all the pieces and molded them together to make a beautiful bell.





He told the pieces of metal, "You have been playing the game of war. Now you can help create peace."

Every night, before going to sleep, he would strike the bell.

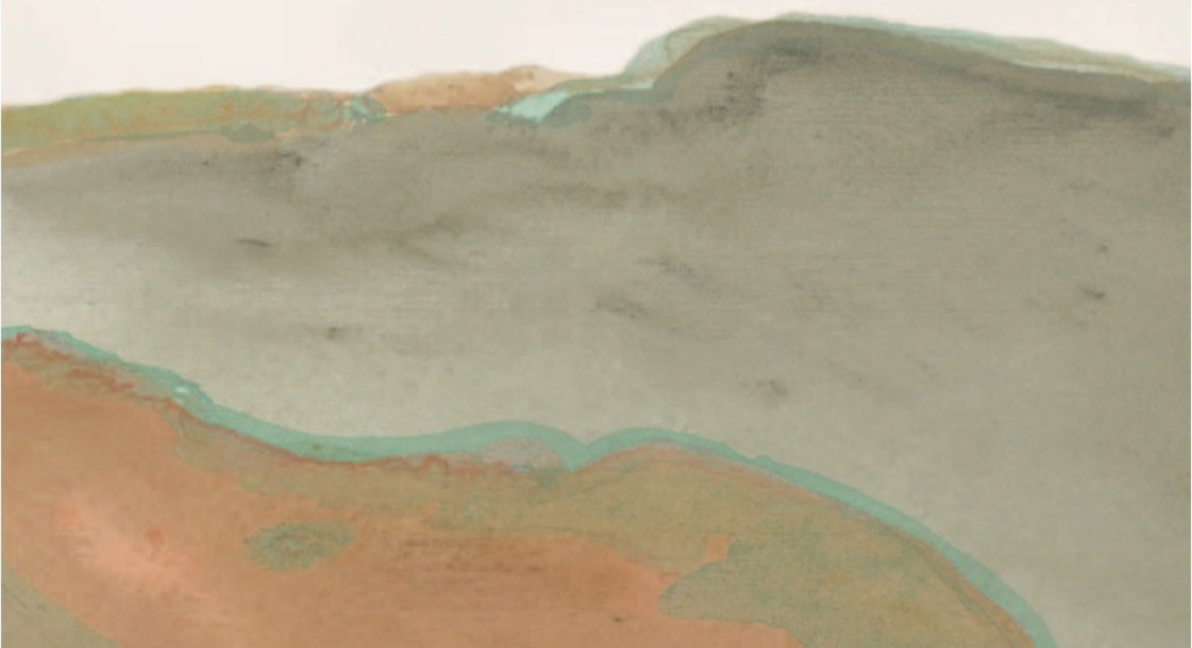
Its music echoed out into the night sky.





The Coconut Monk decided to go and ask the president to stop the war.

He didn't have any belongings, so packing was very easy. He just climbed down the tree and he was ready to go!

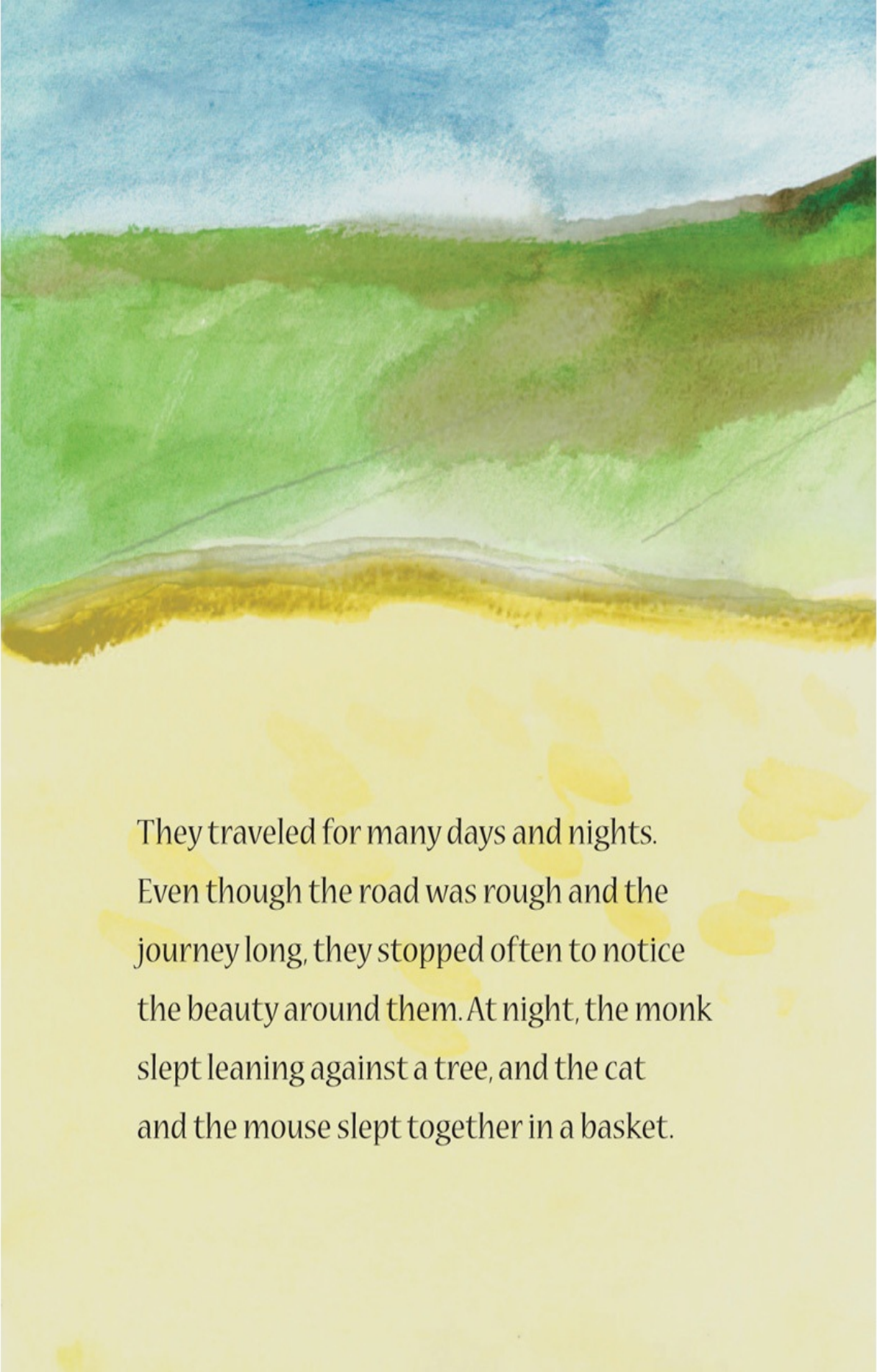




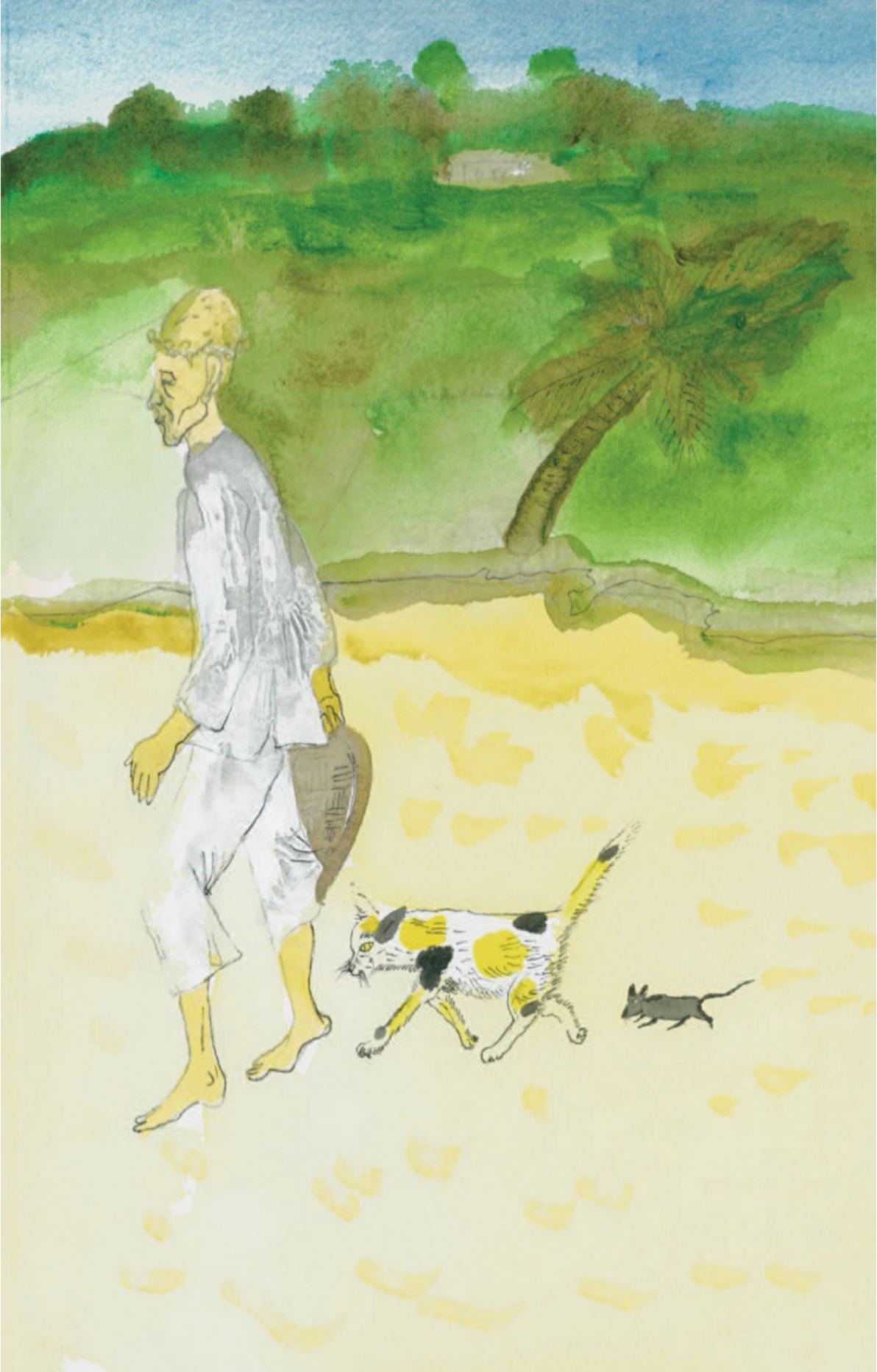
But the Coconut Monk didn't go alone.  
His two friends, the cat and the mouse,  
came along to keep him company.



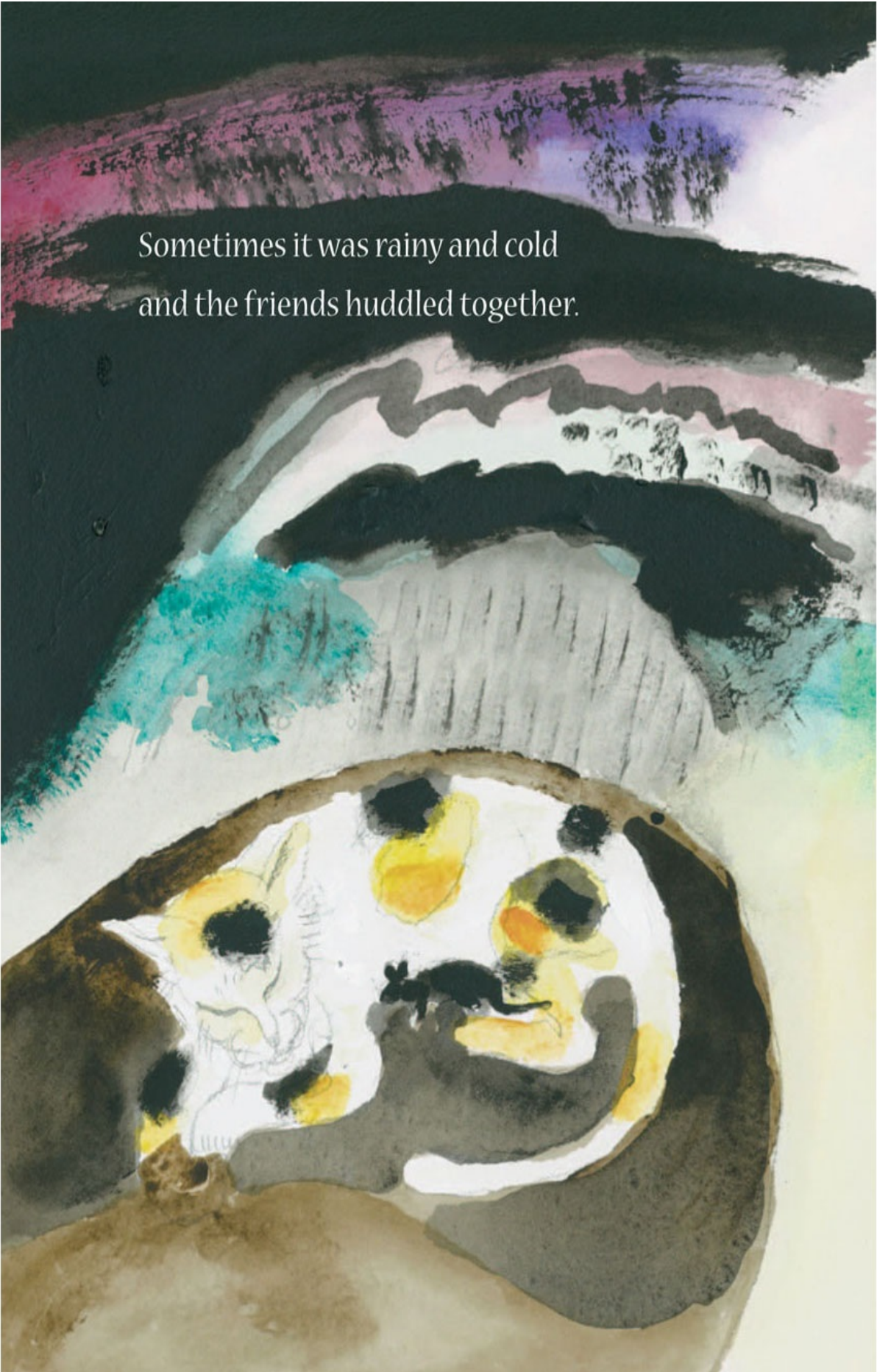


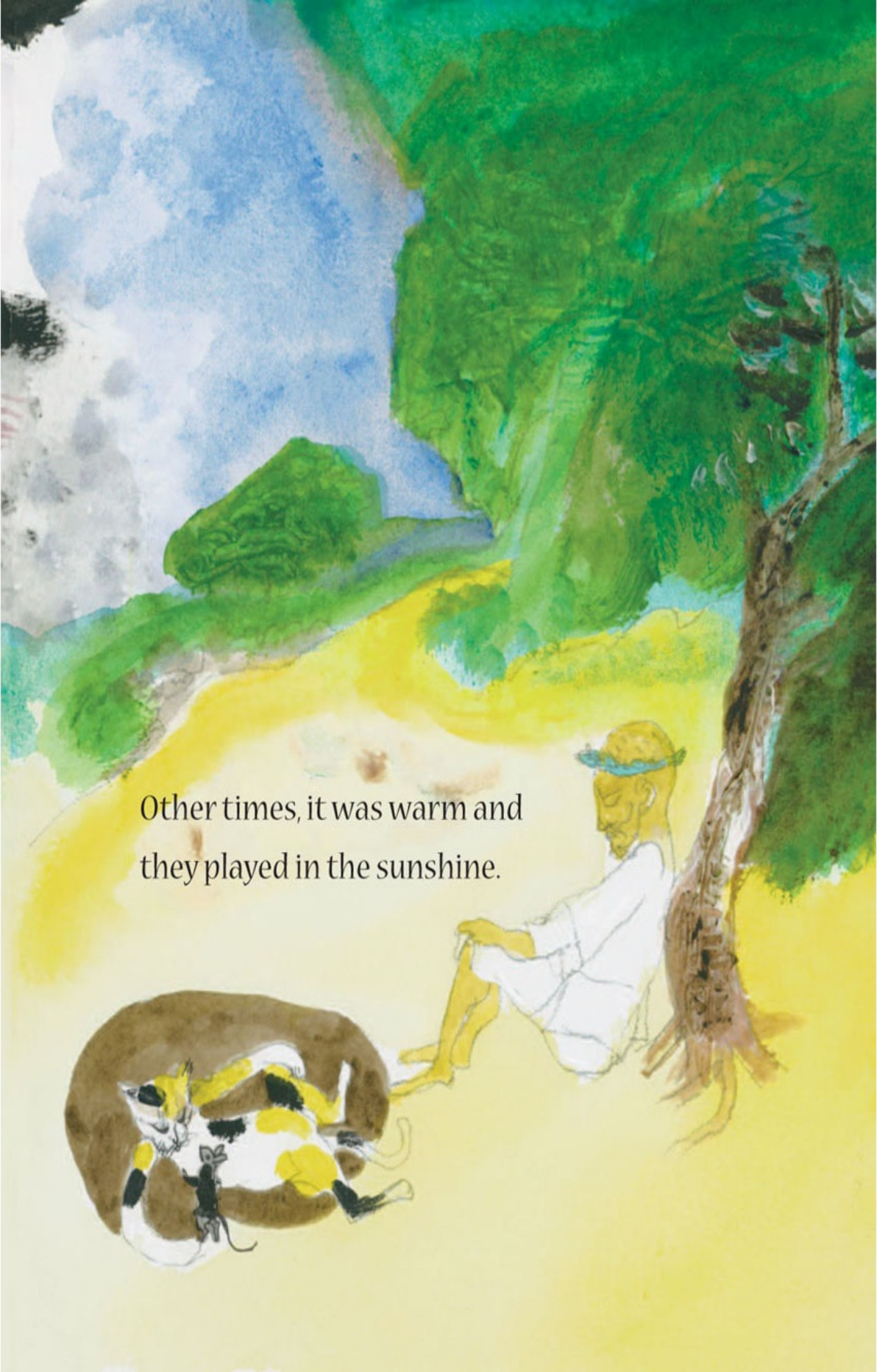


They traveled for many days and nights.  
Even though the road was rough and the  
journey long, they stopped often to notice  
the beauty around them. At night, the monk  
slept leaning against a tree, and the cat  
and the mouse slept together in a basket.



Sometimes it was rainy and cold  
and the friends huddled together.



A watercolor illustration of a man sitting on the ground under a large, leafy green tree. The man is wearing a white tunic and a blue headband. He is looking towards a dog lying on its back on a brown mat. The dog has white fur with yellow and black spots. The background features a yellow path leading through green hills under a blue sky with white clouds. The overall style is soft and painterly.

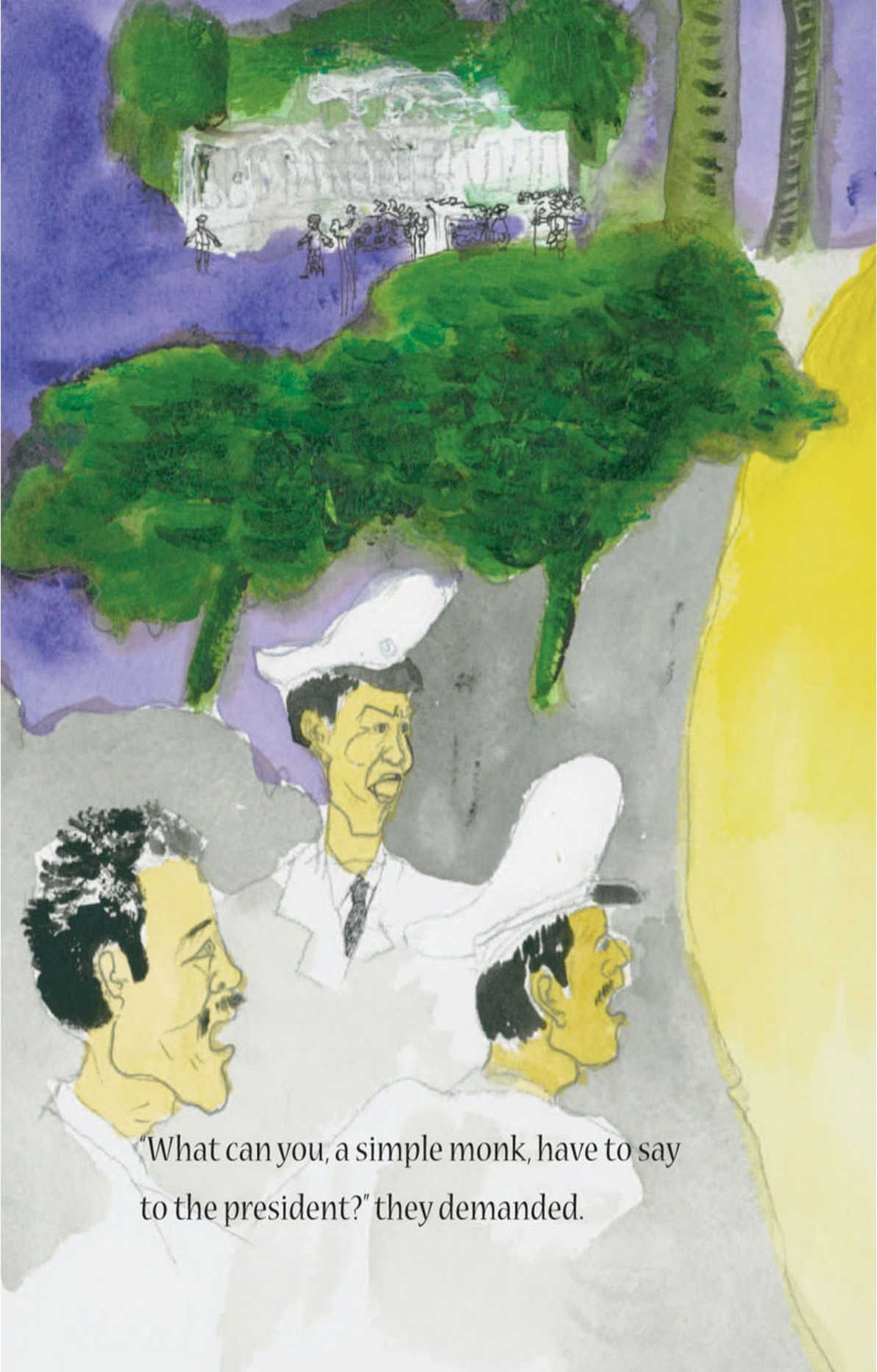
Other times, it was warm and  
they played in the sunshine.





Finally, they reached the presidential palace, a huge white building surrounded by guards. The guards would not let them in.





"What can you, a simple monk, have to say to the president?" they demanded.



The Coconut Monk held up the basket with the cat and the mouse playing happily together.

"I would like all people to live together in peace," he said, "the way my friends the cat and the mouse do. Surely our differences are not bigger than theirs."

When the guards heard this, they became angry. "You fool!" they shouted and grabbed the monk. They threw him in prison. Because the cat and the mouse wouldn't leave their friend, the guards had to throw them in prison too.





The prison was dark and cold.  
But the Coconut Monk sat very quietly  
and continued to breathe peacefully,  
just as he had in his coconut tree.





The Coconut Monk shared his food with the cat and mouse and all the other prisoners. And even though there wasn't much food, the cat didn't eat the mouse.







People started asking about the Coconut Monk.  
They wrote letters and visited him in prison.  
Soon, the guards had no choice but to release him.





The monk, the cat, and the mouse returned  
to their coconut tree.

If a cat and a mouse can live together in peace,  
don't you think we humans can too?



## **Who Was The Coconut Monk?**

DAO DUA (?-1990) was known as the “Coconut Monk,” because his vegetarian diet consisted largely of coconuts. Born Nguyen Thanh Nam, he was trained as a chemical engineer in Paris before becoming a Buddhist teacher in his homeland of Vietnam. A strong advocate for peace, Dao Dua established a religious community on Phoenix Island in the Mekong River in the early 1960s that drew from Buddhist, Taoist, and Christian traditions. He was imprisoned a number of times by the government for preaching his pacifist beliefs and advocating the peaceful reunification of North and South Vietnam. The “Coconut Monk” attracted thousands of followers and the island became a haven for those attempting to escape the ravages of the war in Vietnam, including Vietnamese peasants and American soldiers. The sanctuary that he built on the island where he made his home can still be visited by boat today.



## Plum Blossom Books

Plum Blossom Books publishes books for young people on mindfulness and Buddhism by Thich Nhat Hanh and other authors. For a complete list of titles for children, or a free copy of our catalog, please write us or visit our website:

Plum Blossom Books • Parallax Press

[www.parallax.org](http://www.parallax.org)

P.O. Box 7355, Berkeley, CA 94707

Tel: (510) 525-0101

## Practice Opportunities with Children



Individuals, families, and young people are invited to practice the art of mindful living in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh at retreat communities in France and the United States. For information, please visit [www.plumvillage.org](http://www.plumvillage.org) or contact:

Plum Village

13 Martineau

33580 Dieulivol, France

[info@plumvillage.org](mailto:info@plumvillage.org)

Green Mountain Dharma Center

P.O. Box 182

Hartland Four Corners, VT 05049



[mfmaster@vermontel.net](mailto:mfmaster@vermontel.net)

Tel: (802) 436-1103

Deer Park Monastery

2499 Melru Lane

Escondido, CA 92026

[deerpark@plumvillage.org](mailto:deerpark@plumvillage.org)

Tel: (760) 291-1003