

A Gift *From the* Heart

by Katacha Díaz
illustrated by Erwin Madrid

Genre

Drama includes plays, which are stories written to be performed for an audience. As you read, think about how this story might appear if it were being acted out.



Question of the Week

When do people choose to make sacrifices?

CHARACTERS:

NARRATORS 1, 2, AND 3

LITTLE ONE, orphan girl

WISE EAGLE, old shaman

LITTLE BUFFALO, warrior

SHADOW HUNTER, old warrior

BLOSSOM, wife of Shadow Hunter

ONE-WHO-RUNS, son of Shadow Hunter

STARGAZER, old woman

HUMMINGBIRD, flute girl

BLUEBIRD, flute boy

COMANCHE PEOPLE

COMANCHE CHANTERS

SETTING:

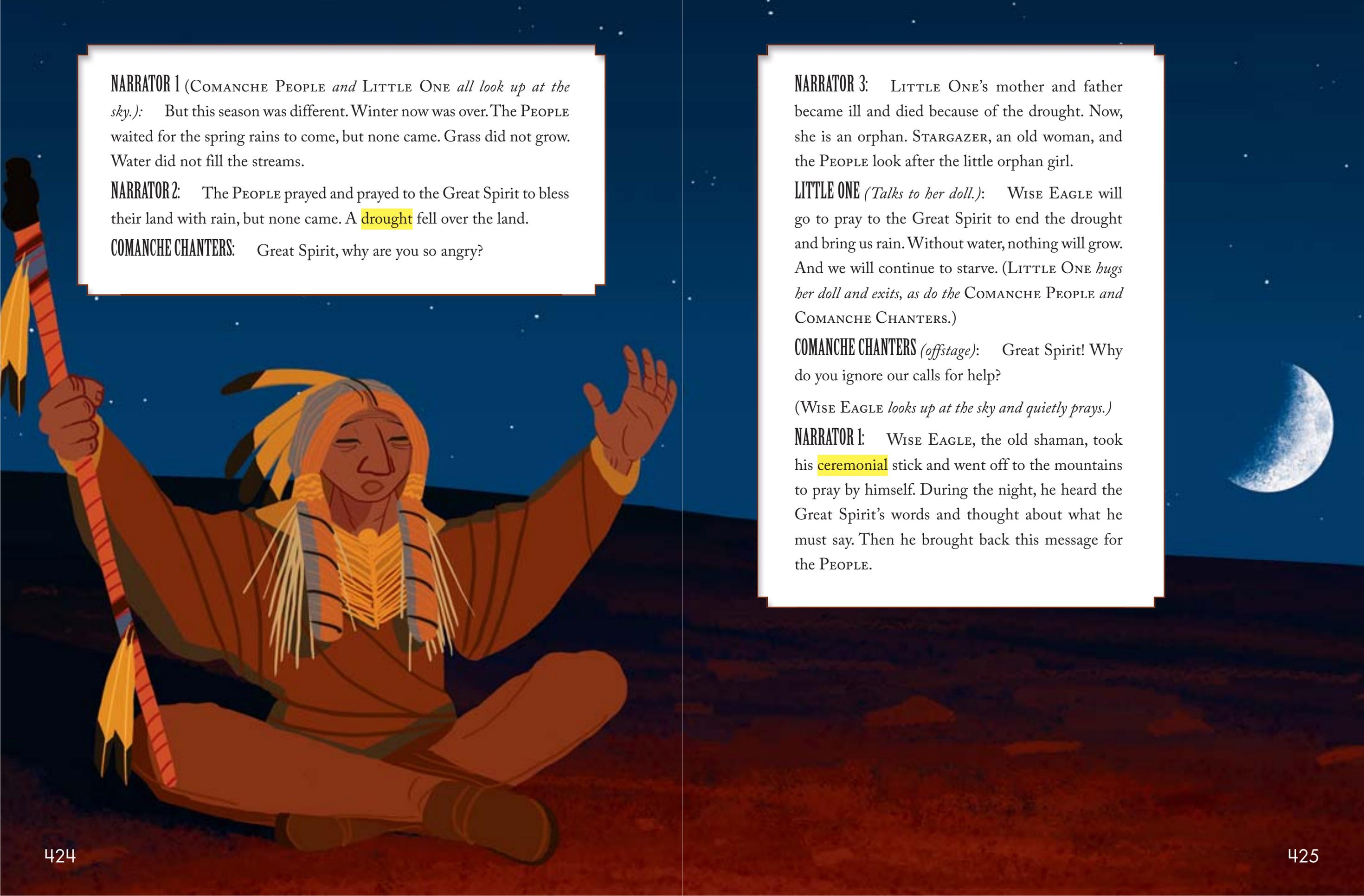
The Texas prairie. The play opens to a backdrop of mountains. Tepees and actors are in place. COMANCHE PEOPLE stand on both sides of the tepees and up in front. LITTLE ONE is holding her treasured doll.

NARRATOR 1: This story takes place on the Texas prairie, where the COMANCHE PEOPLE make their home.

(COMANCHE CHANTERS enter holding bluebonnet flowers and stand on both sides of the stage.)

NARRATOR 2: The Great Spirit blessed the PEOPLE with rain and their crops grew tall. There was an abundance of food and wildlife.

NARRATOR 3: The buffalo roamed and grazed on prairie grasses. Eagles, hawks, and bluebirds flew in the sky, while hummingbirds went from flower to flower to get food.



NARRATOR 1 (COMANCHE PEOPLE *and* LITTLE ONE *all look up at the sky.*): But this season was different. Winter now was over. The PEOPLE waited for the spring rains to come, but none came. Grass did not grow. Water did not fill the streams.

NARRATOR 2: The PEOPLE prayed and prayed to the Great Spirit to bless their land with rain, but none came. A drought fell over the land.

COMANCHE CHANTERS: Great Spirit, why are you so angry?

NARRATOR 3: LITTLE ONE's mother and father became ill and died because of the drought. Now, she is an orphan. STARGAZER, an old woman, and the PEOPLE look after the little orphan girl.

LITTLE ONE (*Talks to her doll.*): WISE EAGLE will go to pray to the Great Spirit to end the drought and bring us rain. Without water, nothing will grow. And we will continue to starve. (LITTLE ONE *hugs her doll and exits, as do the COMANCHE PEOPLE and COMANCHE CHANTERS.*)

COMANCHE CHANTERS (*offstage*): Great Spirit! Why do you ignore our calls for help?

(WISE EAGLE *looks up at the sky and quietly prays.*)

NARRATOR 1: WISE EAGLE, the old shaman, took his ceremonial stick and went off to the mountains to pray by himself. During the night, he heard the Great Spirit's words and thought about what he must say. Then he brought back this message for the PEOPLE.

WISE EAGLE: I heard the Great Spirit's words. We took the many gifts Mother Earth gave us but did not give back. Mother Earth continued to sacrifice for us. But we never sacrificed for her. Now we must give the Great Spirit a special gift—something that is very dear to us. Who will be the first to sacrifice a gift and toss it in the campfire? (The PEOPLE look at each other in **shock** and shake their heads.)

(Enter COMANCHE CHANTERS; LITTLE ONE clutching doll; LITTLE BUFFALO holds drum; SHADOW HUNTER holds a bow and arrow and stands next to his wife, BLOSSOM, and their son, ONE-WHO-RUNS; STARGAZER holds blanket; and HUMMINGBIRD and BLUEBIRD hold flutes.)





LITTLE BUFFALO (*Looks down at his drum.*): This is my favorite drum. It took me a very long time to carve and make it. I don't think Great Spirit wants me to toss my drum in the campfire. (**LITTLE BUFFALO** *bows his head and exits.*)

COMANCHE CHANTERS: Who will make a sacrifice to the Great Spirit?

SHADOW HUNTER (*Stands by his wife and son and looks at his bow and arrow.*): Why, surely the Great Spirit doesn't want me to toss my bow and arrow in the campfire. How will I defend our PEOPLE or hunt for food? I will wait for someone else to make a sacrifice to the Great Spirit. (**SHADOW HUNTER** *bows his head. He exits followed by his wife and son.*)

STARGAZER (*Looks at the blanket she's carrying.*): This is my favorite blanket. It keeps me warm during the cold winter months. I don't think Great Spirit wants an old woman like me to be cold and suffer. I will go to my tepee and think about the Great Spirit's message. (**STARGAZER** *bows her head and exits.*)

HUMMINGBIRD AND BLUEBIRD (*They look at the flutes they each hold and shake their heads.*): The Great Spirit has blessed us with the gift of music. If we toss our flutes in the campfire, how will we play the Great Spirit's favorite songs during our special celebrations? Who will give our PEOPLE music? (**HUMMINGBIRD** and **BLUEBIRD** *bow their heads and exit.*)

COMANCHE CHANTERS: Who will make a sacrifice to the Great Spirit?



LITTLE ONE (*Hugging her doll.*): I know the Great Spirit wants a gift from the heart, but I can't bear to part with my favorite doll. It's all that is left from my family. (*LITTLE ONE holding her doll tightly to her heart bows her head and exits.*)

NARRATOR 2: The PEOPLE shook their heads and slowly walked away, taking their prized possessions with them, and leaving WISE EAGLE by himself. (*The PEOPLE bow their heads and exit.*)



WISE EAGLE (*Holding ceremonial stick.*): Before I give up my ceremonial stick, I will go to my tepee and think about the Great Spirit's message and pray for guidance. (*WISE EAGLE bows head and exits.*)

COMANCHE CHANTERS: Who will make a sacrifice to the Great Spirit to end the drought?

(*LITTLE ONE goes inside her tepee and sits with the flap open; she's holding her doll tightly to her heart.*)

NARRATOR 3: The PEOPLE went inside their tepees and talked to each other about the Great Spirit's message.

NARRATOR 1: As darkness fell, the silvery moon and a million stars filled the night sky. The quiet was unearthly. Not a breath of air stirred. Not a leaf moved on a tree. Even the dogs that always barked and howled at the moon were deep asleep by the campfire.

NARRATOR 2: Like all the other PEOPLE, STARGAZER was asleep in the tepee that she and LITTLE ONE shared. But LITTLE ONE could not sleep. She tossed and turned. Round and round thoughts about the Great Spirit's message swirled in LITTLE ONE's head. She whispered to her doll in the dark.

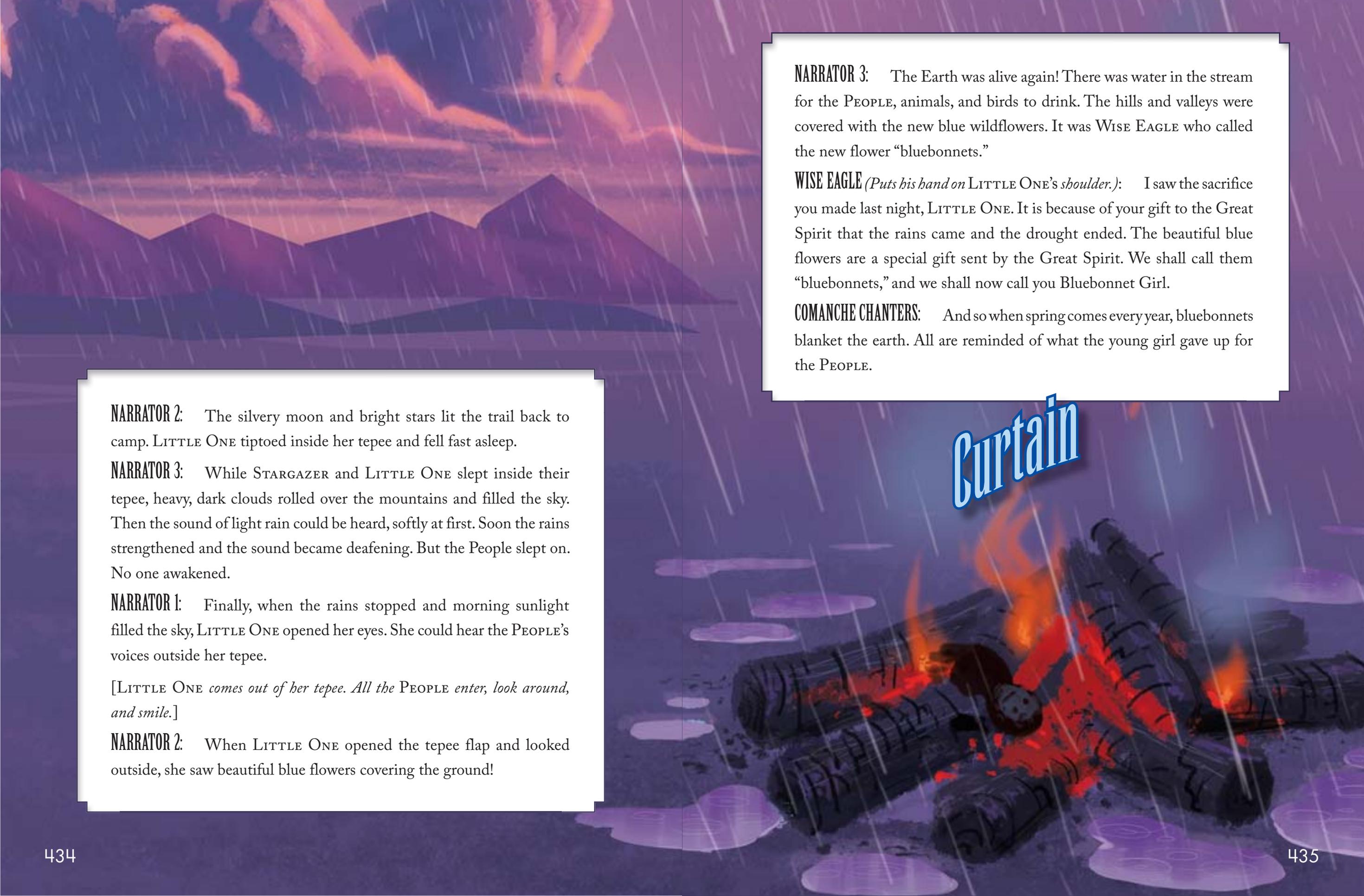
LITTLE ONE (*Clutching her doll, quietly tiptoes out of the tepee and whispers to her doll.*): I love you more than anything else in this world.

NARRATOR 3: LITTLE ONE went to the same place where WISE EAGLE prayed to the Great Spirit.

LITTLE ONE (*Holding her doll tightly to her heart, stands in the very place where WISE EAGLE had prayed.*): Oh, Great Spirit, please accept my gift.

NARRATOR 1: LITTLE ONE kissed her doll good-bye. While she watched her most treasured possession burn, LITTLE ONE asked the Great Spirit to help the PEOPLE.





NARRATOR 2: The silvery moon and bright stars lit the trail back to camp. LITTLE ONE tiptoed inside her tepee and fell fast asleep.

NARRATOR 3: While STARGAZER and LITTLE ONE slept inside their tepee, heavy, dark clouds rolled over the mountains and filled the sky. Then the sound of light rain could be heard, softly at first. Soon the rains strengthened and the sound became deafening. But the People slept on. No one awakened.

NARRATOR 1: Finally, when the rains stopped and morning sunlight filled the sky, LITTLE ONE opened her eyes. She could hear the PEOPLE's voices outside her tepee.

[LITTLE ONE comes out of her tepee. All the PEOPLE enter, look around, and smile.]

NARRATOR 2: When LITTLE ONE opened the tepee flap and looked outside, she saw beautiful blue flowers covering the ground!

NARRATOR 3: The Earth was alive again! There was water in the stream for the PEOPLE, animals, and birds to drink. The hills and valleys were covered with the new blue wildflowers. It was WISE EAGLE who called the new flower "bluebonnets."

WISE EAGLE (*Puts his hand on LITTLE ONE's shoulder.*): I saw the sacrifice you made last night, LITTLE ONE. It is because of your gift to the Great Spirit that the rains came and the drought ended. The beautiful blue flowers are a special gift sent by the Great Spirit. We shall call them "bluebonnets," and we shall now call you Bluebonnet Girl.

COMANCHE CHANTERS: And so when spring comes every year, bluebonnets blanket the earth. All are reminded of what the young girl gave up for the PEOPLE.

Curtain