

MARCO THE LITTLE RIVER BUILDER

BY JULIZA GIRON



HI! I'M MARCO, AND
I'M A BEAVER





I LIVE BESIDE THE RIO GRANDE WITH MY
ABUELOS—ABUELA AND ABUELO BEAVER

OUR DEN IS MADE OF STICKS, MUD, AND
LOTS OF LOVE

ABUELA SAYS THE RIVER USED TO DANCE



ABUELO REMEMBERS BUILDING BIG DAMS
IN DEEP WATER



A photograph of a desert landscape. In the foreground on the left, a saguaro cactus is partially visible. A dry, sandy riverbed winds through the middle of the scene, with small pools of water. The surrounding terrain is covered in low-lying desert vegetation, including grasses and shrubs. In the background, there are rolling hills under a cloudy sky.

BUT NOW... THE RIVER IS TIRED

THE RIVER DOESN'T FLOW LIKE IT USED TO

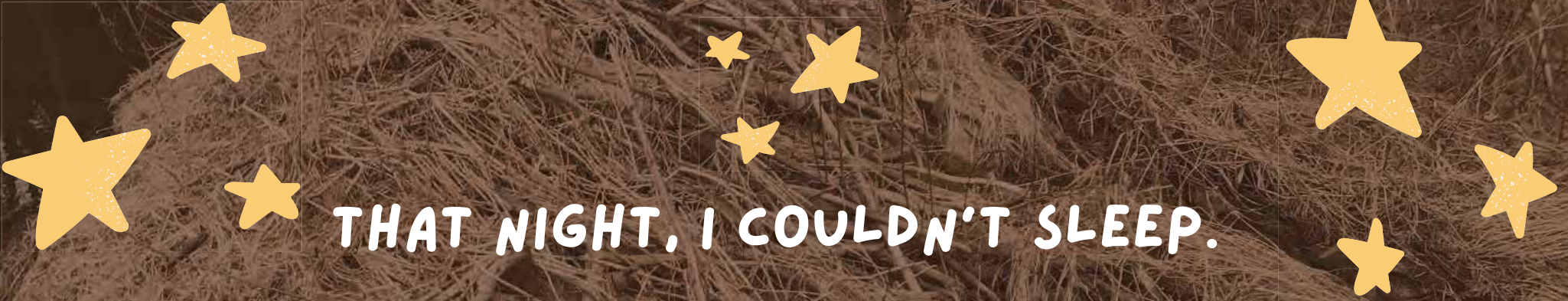
ABUELO SAYS THE HUMANS BUILT A BIG WALL
OF HARD STONE—A DAM—TO HOLD THE
WATER BACK. NOW THE RIVER IS QUIET. THE
FISH ARE FEWER, THE TREES ARE THIRSTIER,
AND MY FAMILY HAS TO WORK TWICE AS HARD
JUST TO STAY COOL AND FED



ONE DAY, I ASKED ABUELO, "WHERE DOES
ALL THE WATER GO?"

HE POINTED HIS PAW ACROSS THE RIVER.
"TO THE OTHER SIDE. OVER THERE, THE
WATER STILL RUNS FREE."



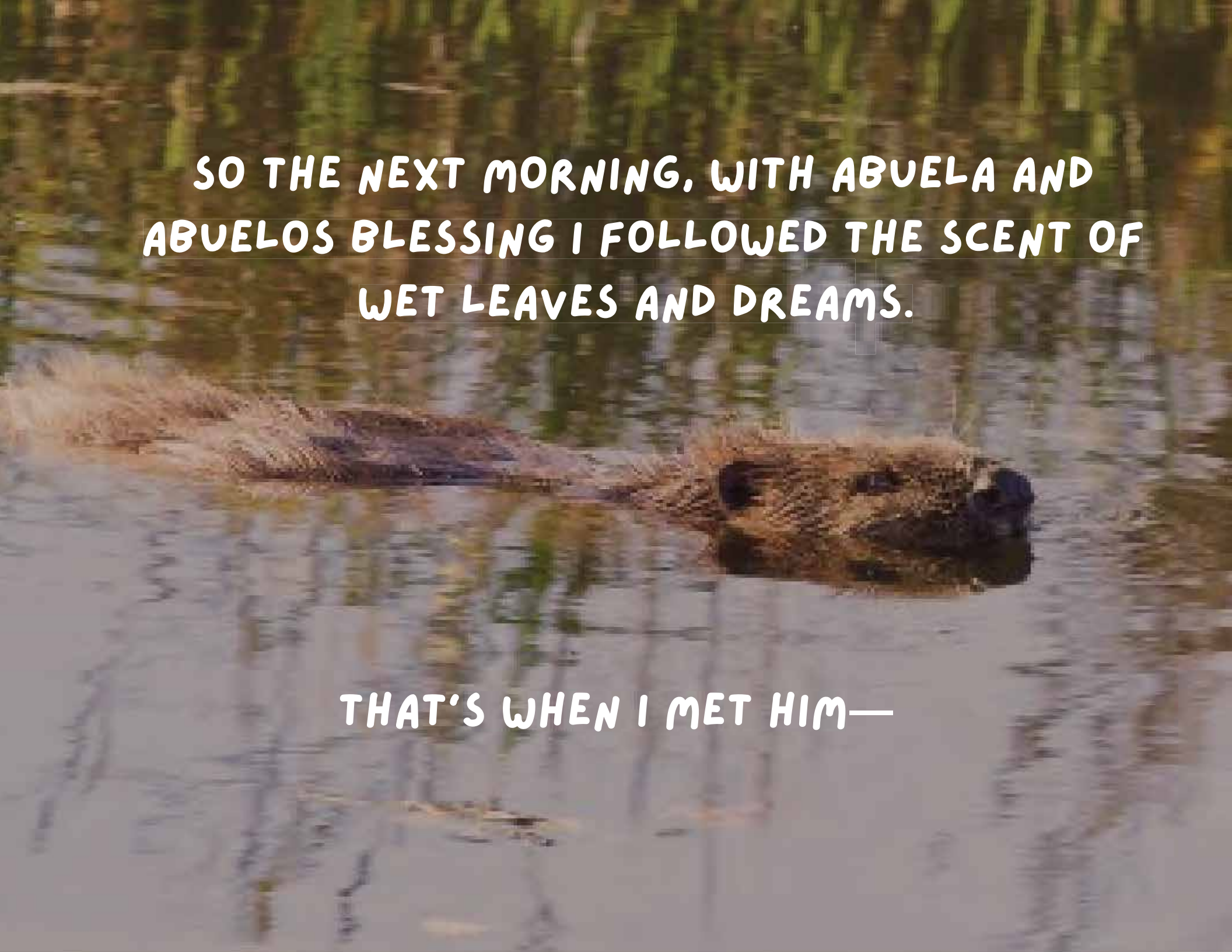
Several yellow stars of various sizes are scattered across the top of the image, appearing to be part of a night sky.

THAT NIGHT, I COULDN'T SLEEP.

I KEPT THINKING ABOUT THE FLOWING
WATER, THE KIND ABUELA SPOKE OF.

I WANTED TO SEE IT FOR MYSELF.





SO THE NEXT MORNING, WITH ABUELA AND
ABUELOS BLESSING I FOLLOWED THE SCENT OF
WET LEAVES AND DREAMS.

THAT'S WHEN I MET HIM—

A TALL, SKINNY COYOTE WITH EYES
LIKE THE MOON.

"LOOKING FOR SOMETHING, LITTLE
BUILDER?" HE ASKED.



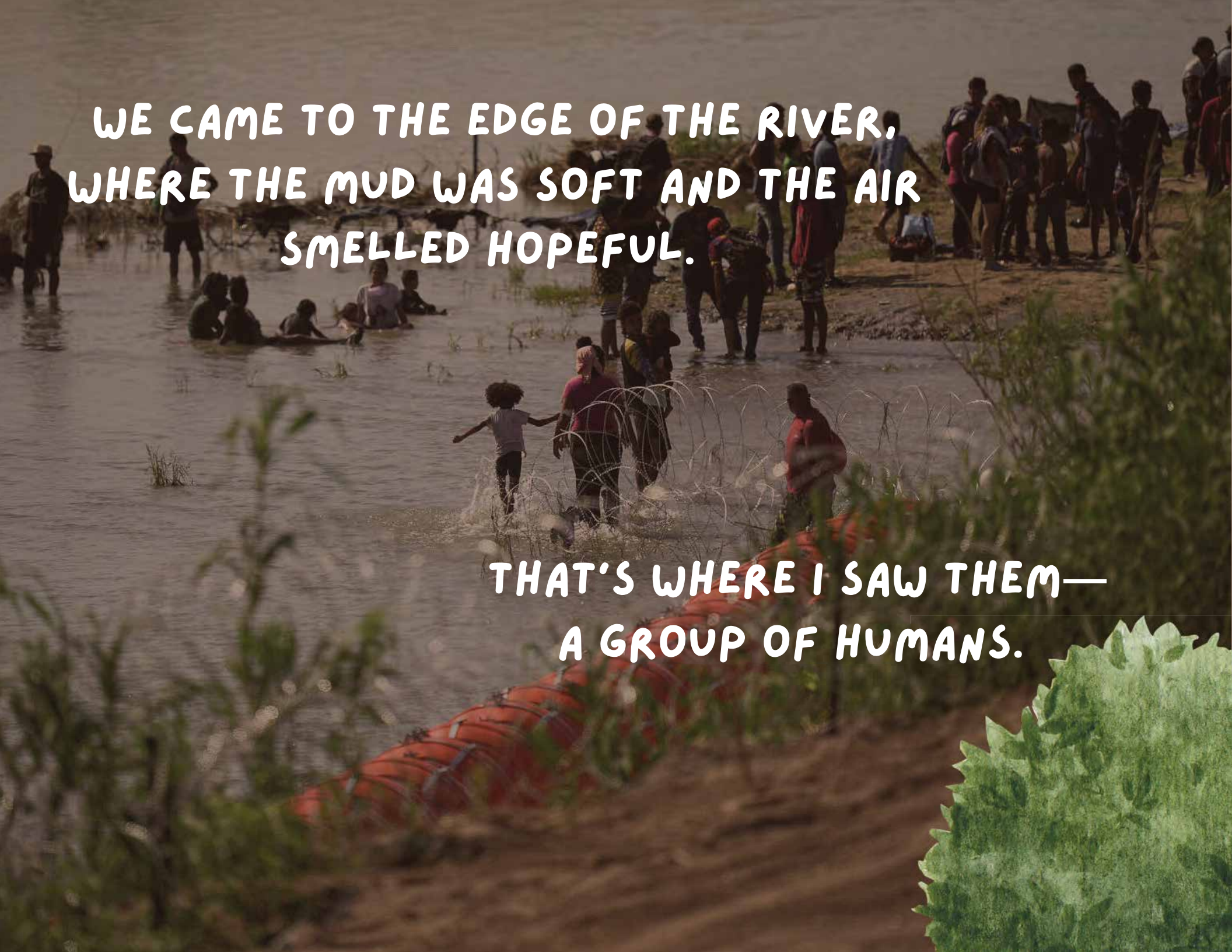
"I'M LOOKING FOR WATER," I SAID.
"THE OLD KIND. THE KIND THAT SINGS."

THE COYOTE CHUCKLED.

"THEN YOU'RE LOOKING FOR THE LAND THEY
CALL ESTADOS UNIDOS. I KNOW THE WAY."

HE WALKED AHEAD, HIS PAWS QUIET
ON THE DRY EARTH. I FOLLOWED.



A photograph of a group of people, including children, wading through a river. In the foreground, a red inflatable tube is partially visible. The text is overlaid on the upper half of the image.

WE CAME TO THE EDGE OF THE RIVER,
WHERE THE MUD WAS SOFT AND THE AIR
SMELLED HOPEFUL.

THAT'S WHERE I SAW THEM—
A GROUP OF HUMANS.

FAMILIES WITH TIRED EYES
AND STRONG HEARTS,
HOLDING HANDS AS THEY
PREPARED TO CROSS THE
SAME RIVER.

I STAYED LOW, WATCHING.



THEY STEPPED INTO THE WATER, CAREFUL
AND BRAVE. I FOLLOWED BEHIND, PAWS
PADDLING AS BEST I COULD.

BUT THEN WE GOT TO IT.
IT WAS HARD TO MISS.

A ORANGE WALL. RIGHT IN THE
RIVER. ROUND, BIG, AND SHARP.
THE HUMANS STOPPED. THEY
COULDN'T GO THROUGH.



BUT I WAS SMALL.
JUST A LITTLE BEAVER.

I SLIPPED THROUGH A HOLE AT
THE BOTTOM, BARELY BIG ENOUGH
FOR MY FLUFFY TAIL TO NOT GET
SCRATCHED!





ON THE OTHER SIDE,
EVERYTHING CHANGED.

THE RIVER WAS WIDE AGAIN, LAUGHING AS IT
ROLLED PAST WILLOW TREES AND MESQUITE.

I SWAM THROUGH CATTAILS AND
GRASS UNTIL I REACHED A QUIET
WETLAND FULL OF BUZZING BUGS
AND GENTLE RIPPLES.



I LOOKED BACK REMEMBERING
THE HUMANS.
I WISHED THEY COULD HAVE
COME TOO.

NOW, I'M BUILDING AGAIN—MY OWN
LITTLE DAM WITH FRESH WOOD AND
MUDDY PAWS.



THE WATER IS GOOD HERE.
IT FLOWS AND FEEDS.

BUT I STILL THINK OF MY ABUELOS
AND THE DRY BANKS THEY LIVE ON.

ONE DAY, MAYBE, THE RIVER WILL FLOW
FOR EVERYONE AGAIN.
UNTIL THEN, I BUILD.
BECAUSE I'M MARCO—THE LITTLE
RIVER BUILDER.



FIN.

A photograph of a small, calm stream flowing through a dense forest. The water is still, acting as a perfect mirror for the surrounding green trees and foliage. The scene is peaceful and natural, with sunlight filtering through the leaves, creating a dappled light effect on the water and the forest floor. The text is overlaid in the center of the image.

**BASED ON THE RIO BOSQUE'S
RESIDENT BEAVER OF 6+ YEARS**