

A young man, wanting to find out how to become rich and happy, sets off on a journey to find a wise man. Along the way, he encounters a fish, a tree and a wolf. All three ask him to help them find the answer to a question of their own. When the young man finally meets a wise man, he is told that he will find what he's looking for during the journey home. The wise man also entrusts him with answers for the fish, the tree and the wolf. Can the young man benefit from their good fortune as well?

Part of a rich body of literature from Central Asia and the Middle East, this story is one of many collected by the late Afghan author and thinker, Idries Shah.

'These teaching-stories can be experienced on many levels. A child may simply enjoy hearing them, an adult may analyse them in a more sophisticated way. Both may eventually benefit from the lessons within.' ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, NPR

'Shah has collected hundreds of Sufi tales... In this tradition, the line between stories for children and those for adults is not as clear as it seems to be in Western cultures... the lessons are important for all generations.' SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL



by IDRIES SHAH

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DABY ZAINAB FAIDHI



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PRACTICAL WISDOM & PSYCHOLOGY





IDRIES SHAH



There was once a man who was dissatisfied with almost every part of his life,



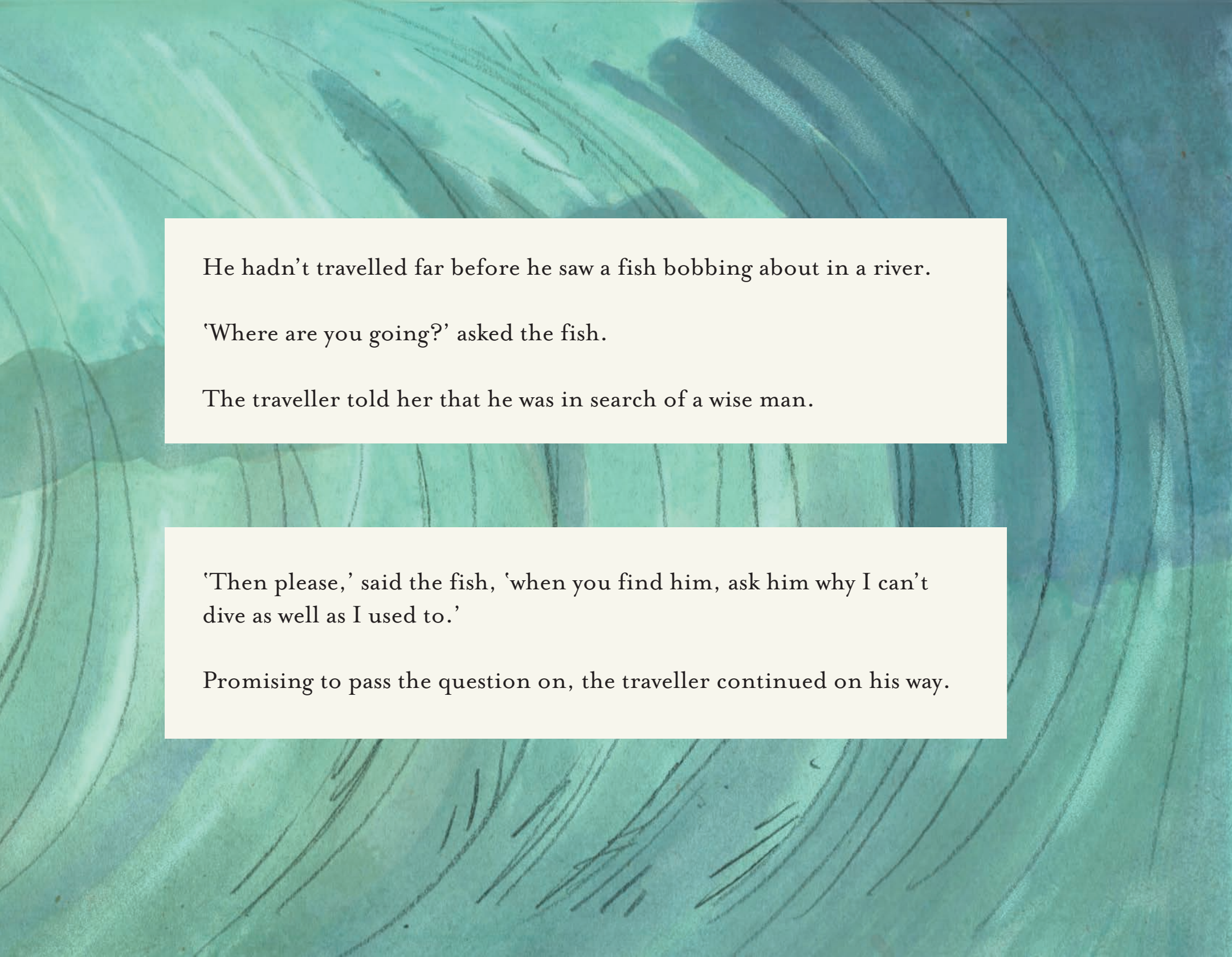
so he set off to find his fortune.





As he walked, he planned how he would find a wise man to help him.





He hadn't travelled far before he saw a fish bobbing about in a river.

'Where are you going?' asked the fish.

The traveller told her that he was in search of a wise man.

'Then please,' said the fish, 'when you find him, ask him why I can't dive as well as I used to.'

Promising to pass the question on, the traveller continued on his way.

He hadn't journeyed much further before he felt his eyelids drooping and his shoulders sagging, so he decided to stop and rest under a tree.



As the branches creaked in the wind, the traveller realised that the tree was asking him a question:



‘Where are you going?’ asked the creaking tree.

The traveller told the tree that he was on his way to find a wise man.

'Then please,' said the creaking tree,
'ask the wise man why I
cannot grow taller.'



Promising to pass the question on, the traveller went on his way, plodding on and on, until a skinny grey wolf blocked his path.





'Where are you going?' asked the skinny grey wolf.

The traveller explained that he was going to see a wise man.

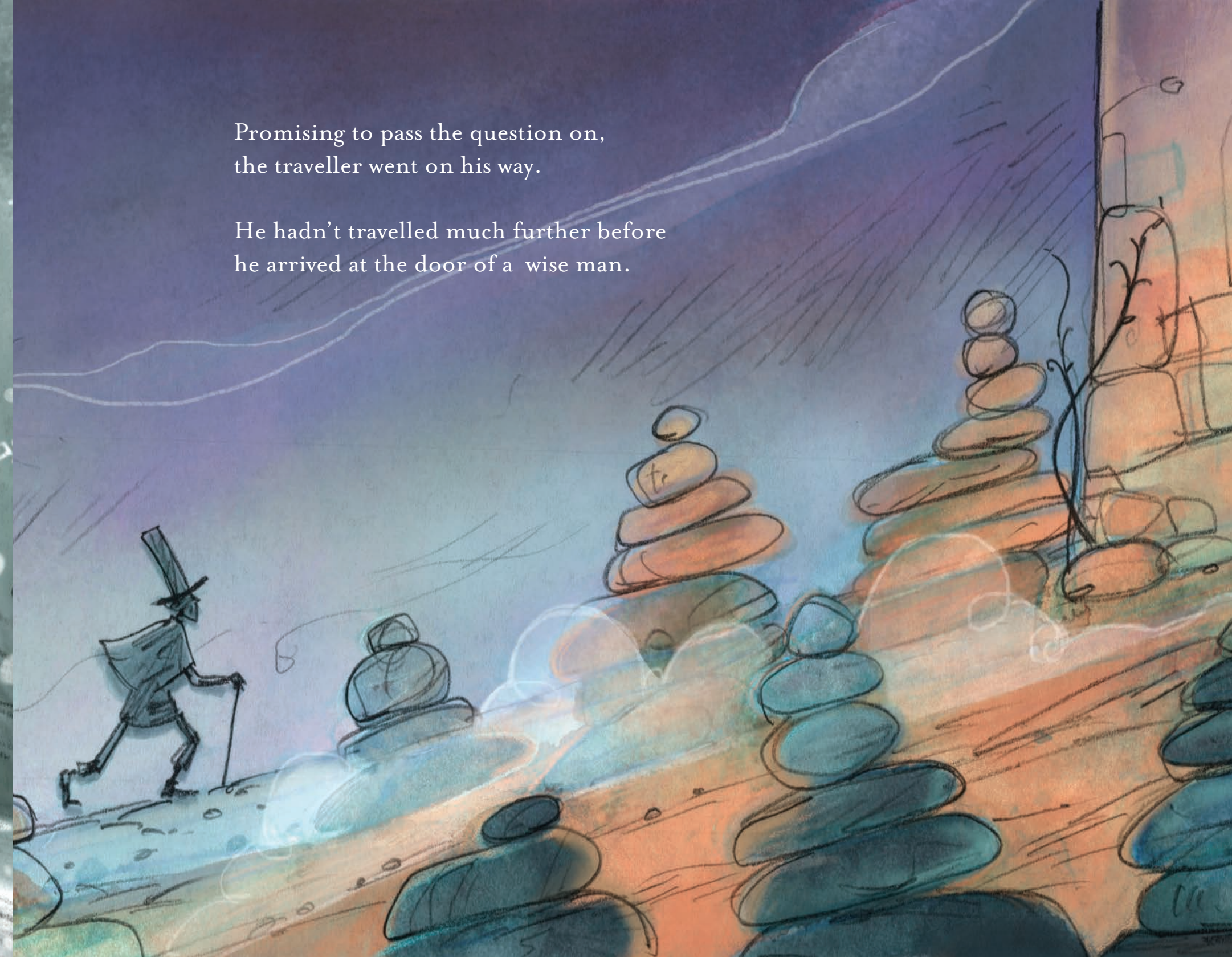


'Then please,' said the skinny grey wolf,
'ask the wise man why I am so thin that I
freeze every winter?'




Promising to pass the question on,
the traveller went on his way.

He hadn't travelled much further before
he arrived at the door of a wise man.







'O wise man!' he said. 'I have travelled far to find out how I may become rich and satisfied.'

'And also, I have three questions from others whom I met on my journey.'

He passed on to the wise man the questions from the fish, the tree, and the skinny grey wolf.

The wise man gave the traveller advice for each of the three supplicants.

He said: 'Now go home. On your way you will encounter all the opportunities you need to find what you wish for and deserve.'



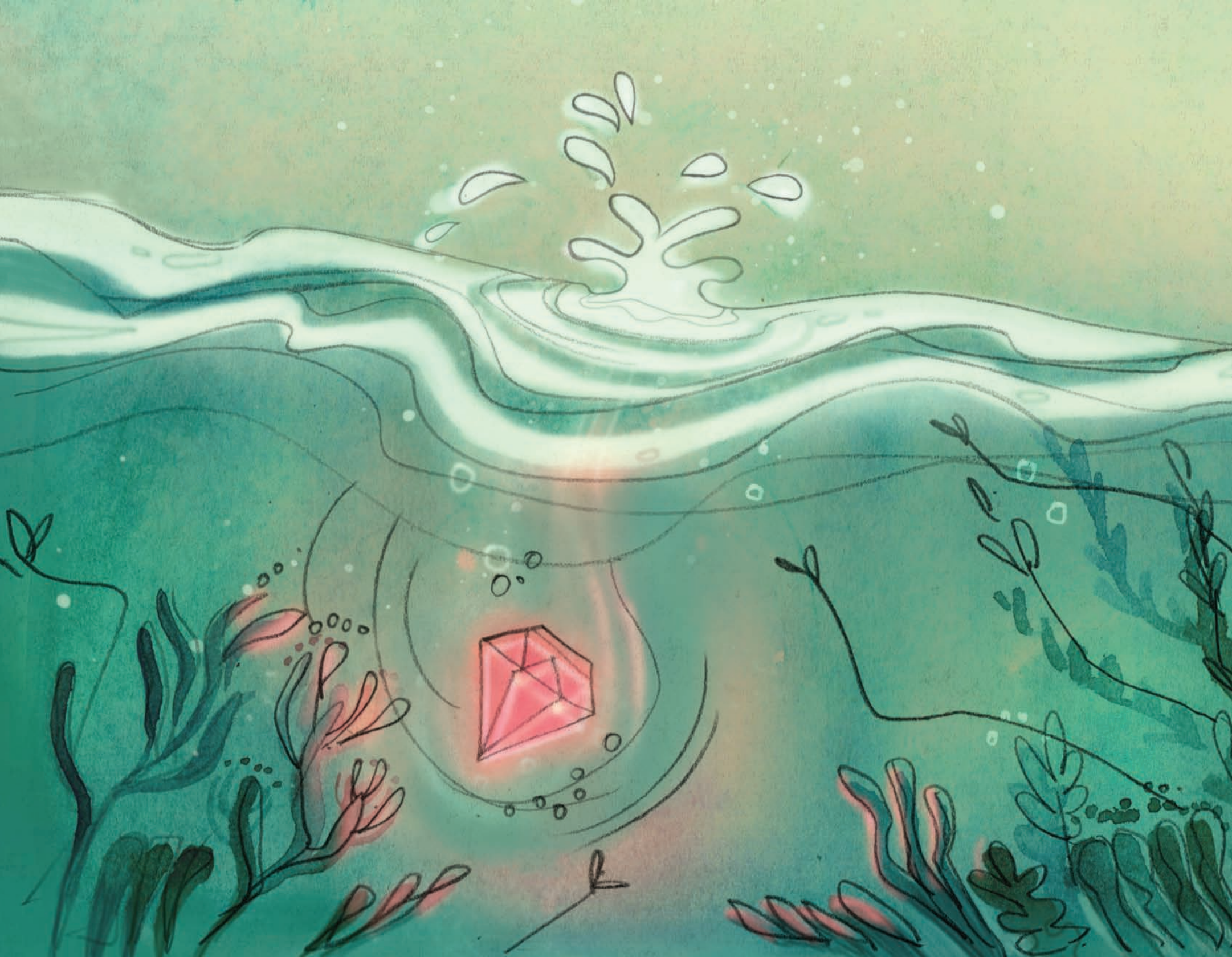


So the traveller set off back towards his own land.

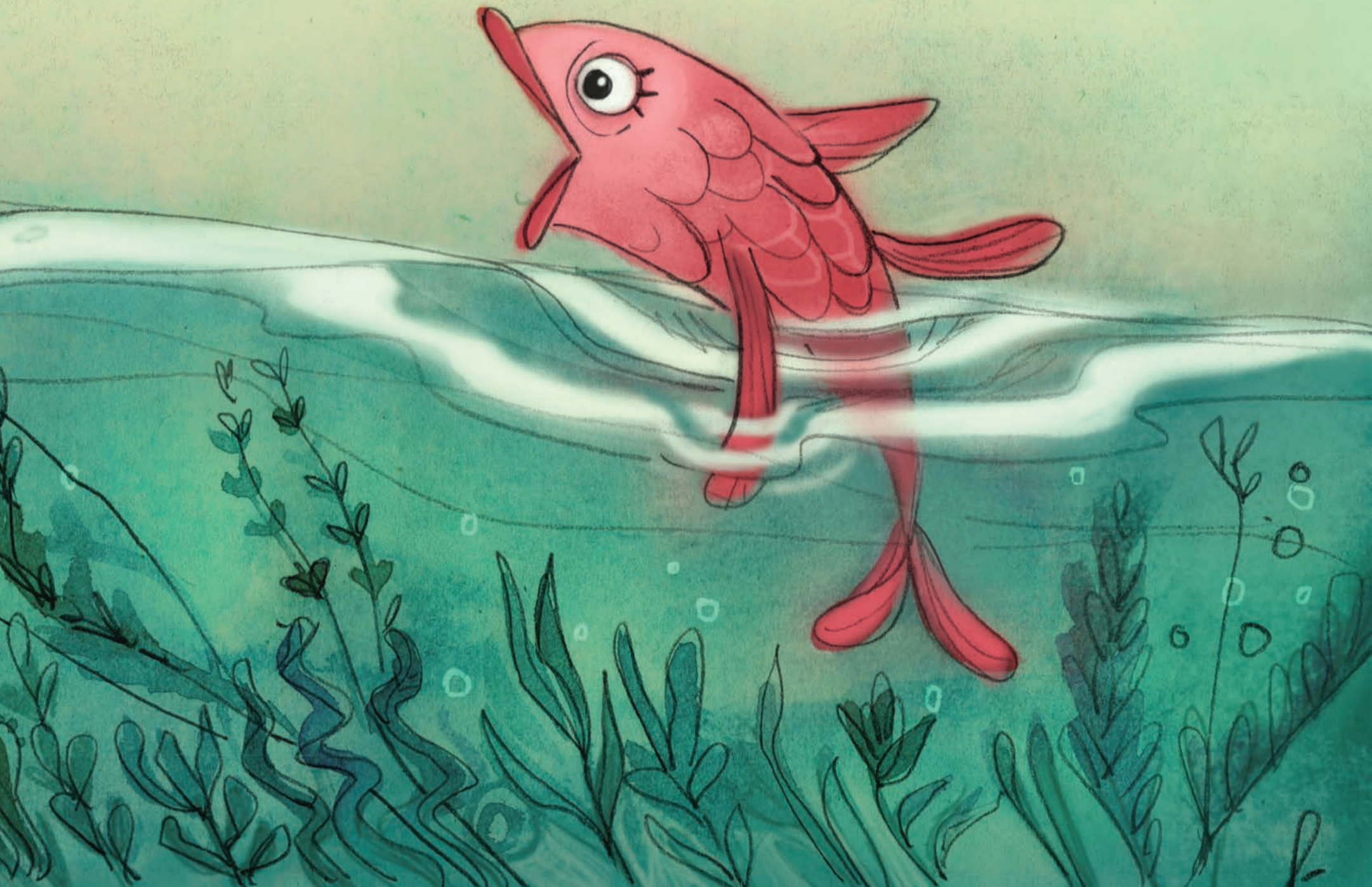
He hadn't gone far before he saw the fish and told her, 'The wise man says you have something stuck in your gill. Once it is removed you will be able to dive again.'







Delighted, the fish swam to the bank. The traveller removed the obstruction from her gill, and they saw that it was in fact a huge diamond.





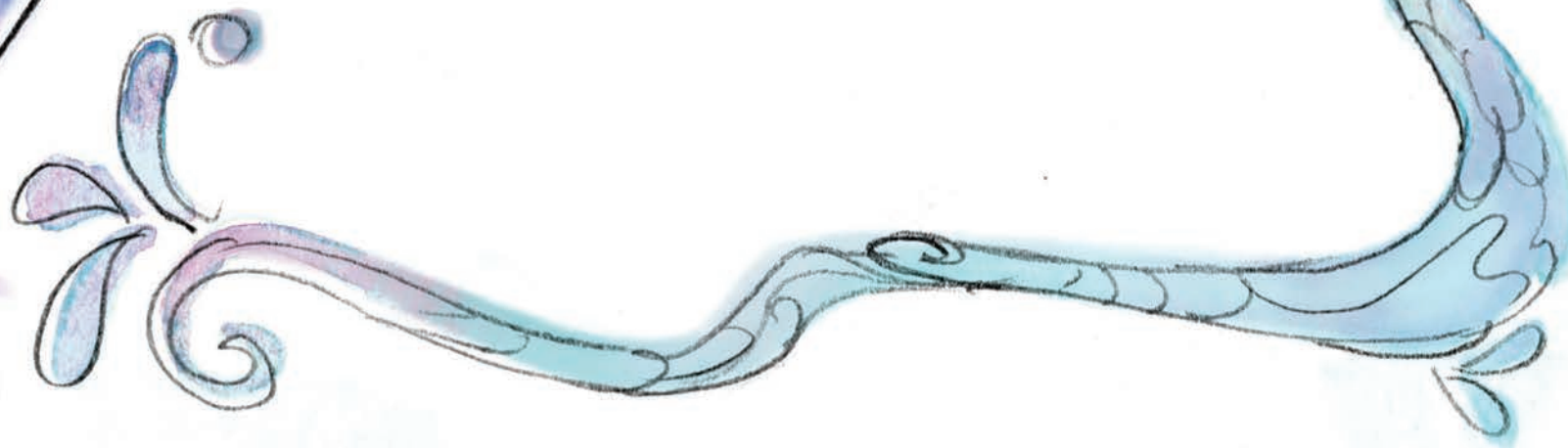
'Take it!' said the fish, 'as a reward for your kindness.'



'Diamonds are just a nuisance,' said the traveller.

'It's a well-known fact that most of them are cursed.'

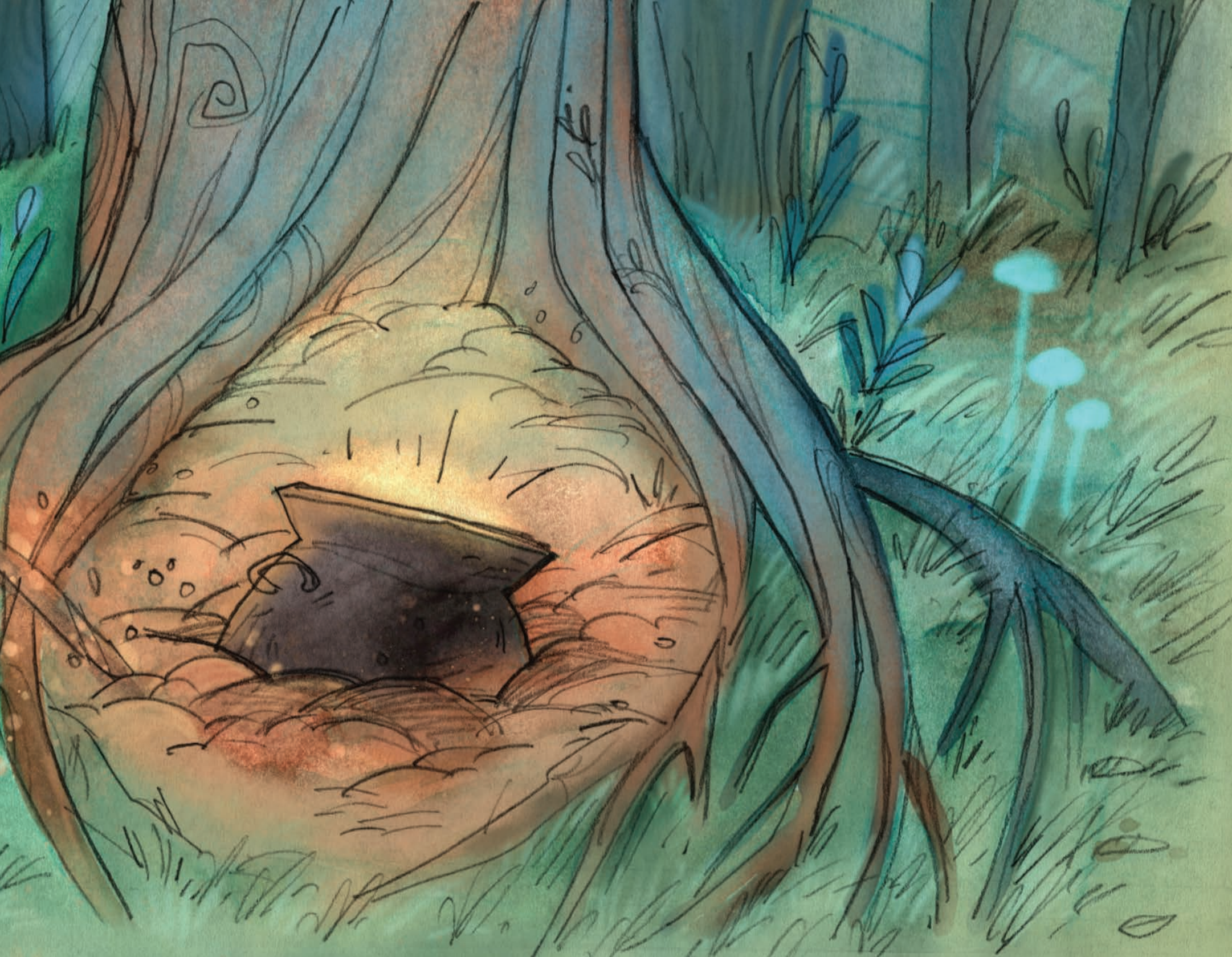
He threw the precious gem into the water and continued his journey.




Before long, he reached the creaking tree and declared,

‘The wise man says that there is something blocking your roots. We just need to dig it up and you will grow once again.’








Delighted, the tree moved aside its roots. The traveller removed the obstruction, and they saw that it was in fact a huge pot of gold coins.

'Take it!' said the tree, 'as a reward for your kindness.'







'How do I know that these are real gold?' said the traveller,
casting the coins aside.

He continued on his way, by now anxious to find his
fortune as the wise man had told him he would.



Very soon, the skinny grey wolf was blocking his path.

'What did the wise man tell you about me?' asked the skinny grey wolf.

'That you are too thin because you don't seize every opportunity to eat,' said the traveller.

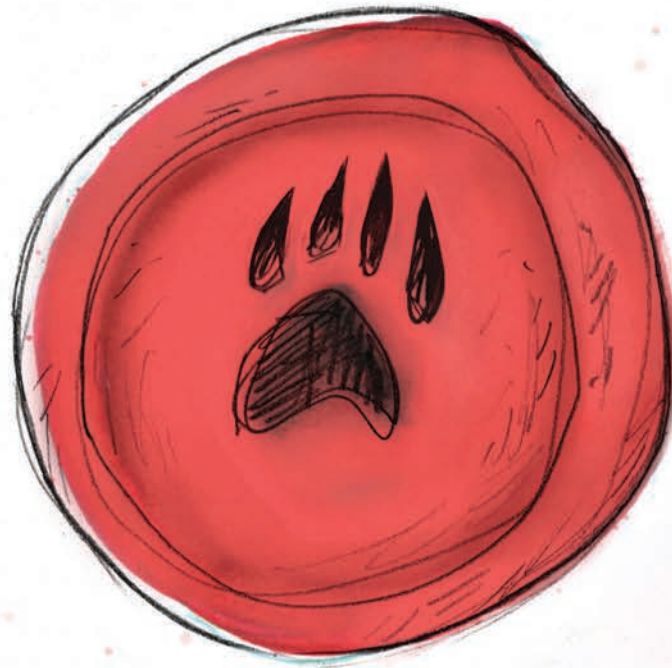




'Well, I'll not make that mistake again,'
said the skinny grey wolf,

A watercolor illustration of a forest floor. A light-colored path leads from the bottom left towards the center. The path is flanked by dark, sketchy tree trunks and branches. The ground is covered with patches of green grass and small, light-colored flowers. In the center of the path, there is a small, dark, curled object, possibly a snake or a log. The overall style is soft and painterly, with a focus on natural elements.

and jumping on the traveller, he gobbled the man up.



It just goes to show that even a wise man cannot help someone who refuses to see the opportunities that are there for him.



The End

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