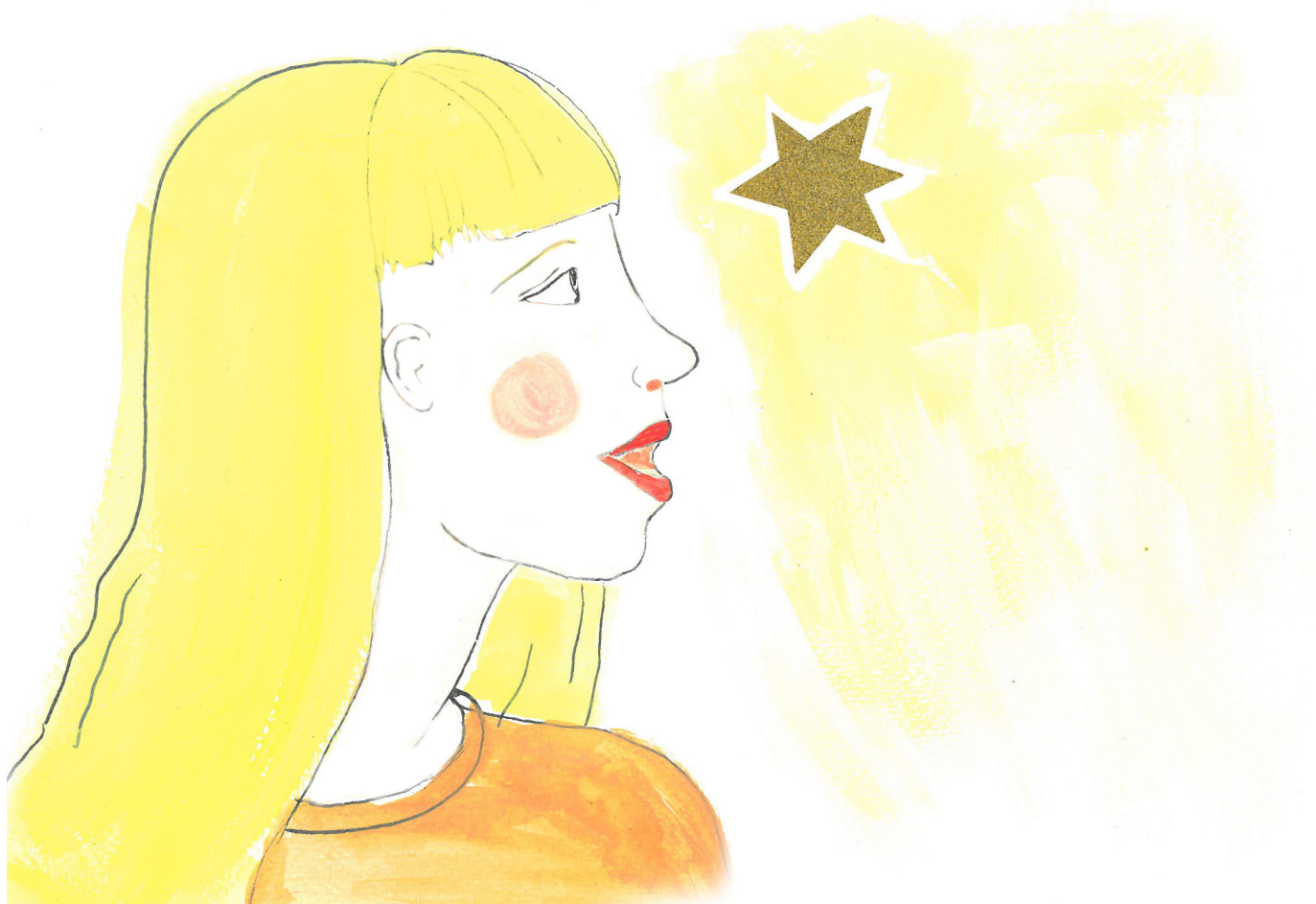


WHERE THE WORLD MEETS

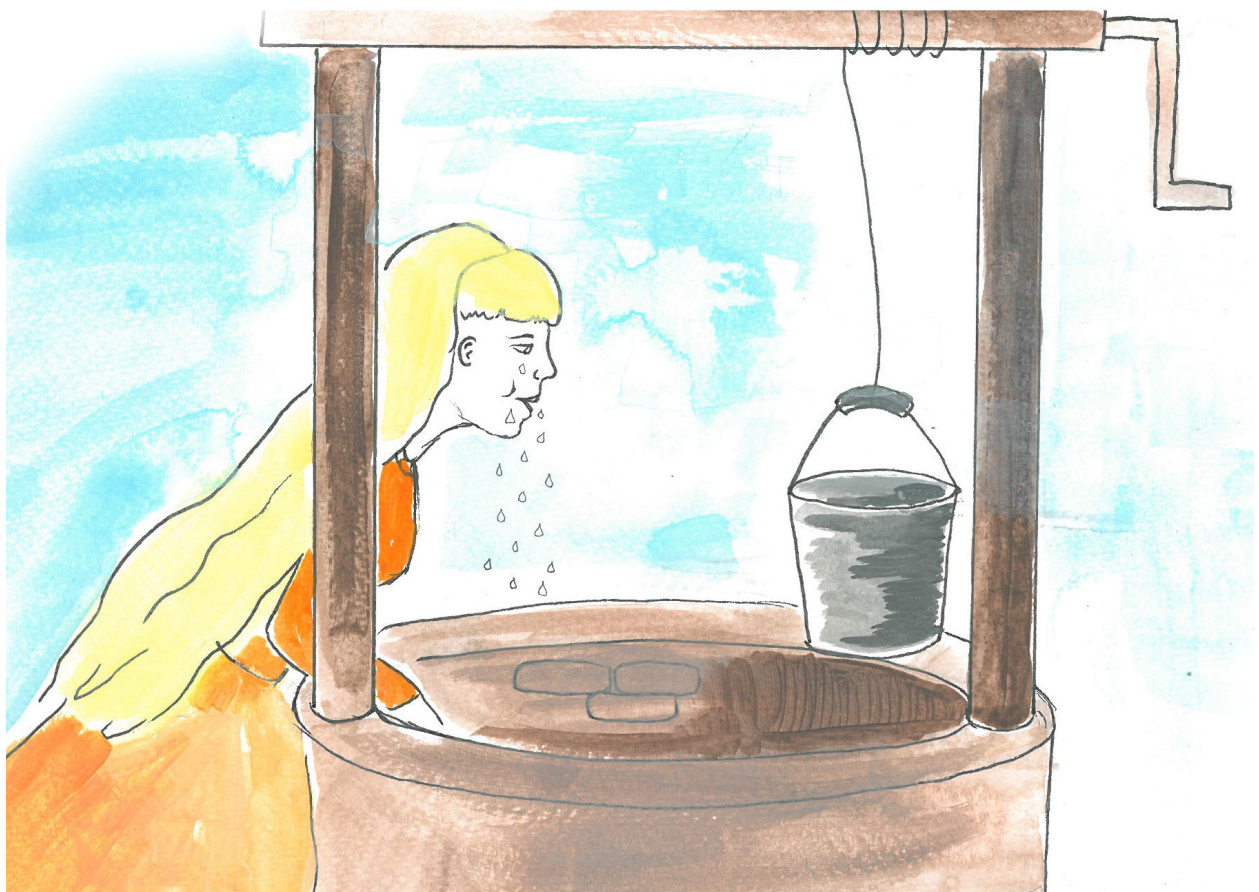


WHERE THE WORLD MEETS

TWO SISTERS



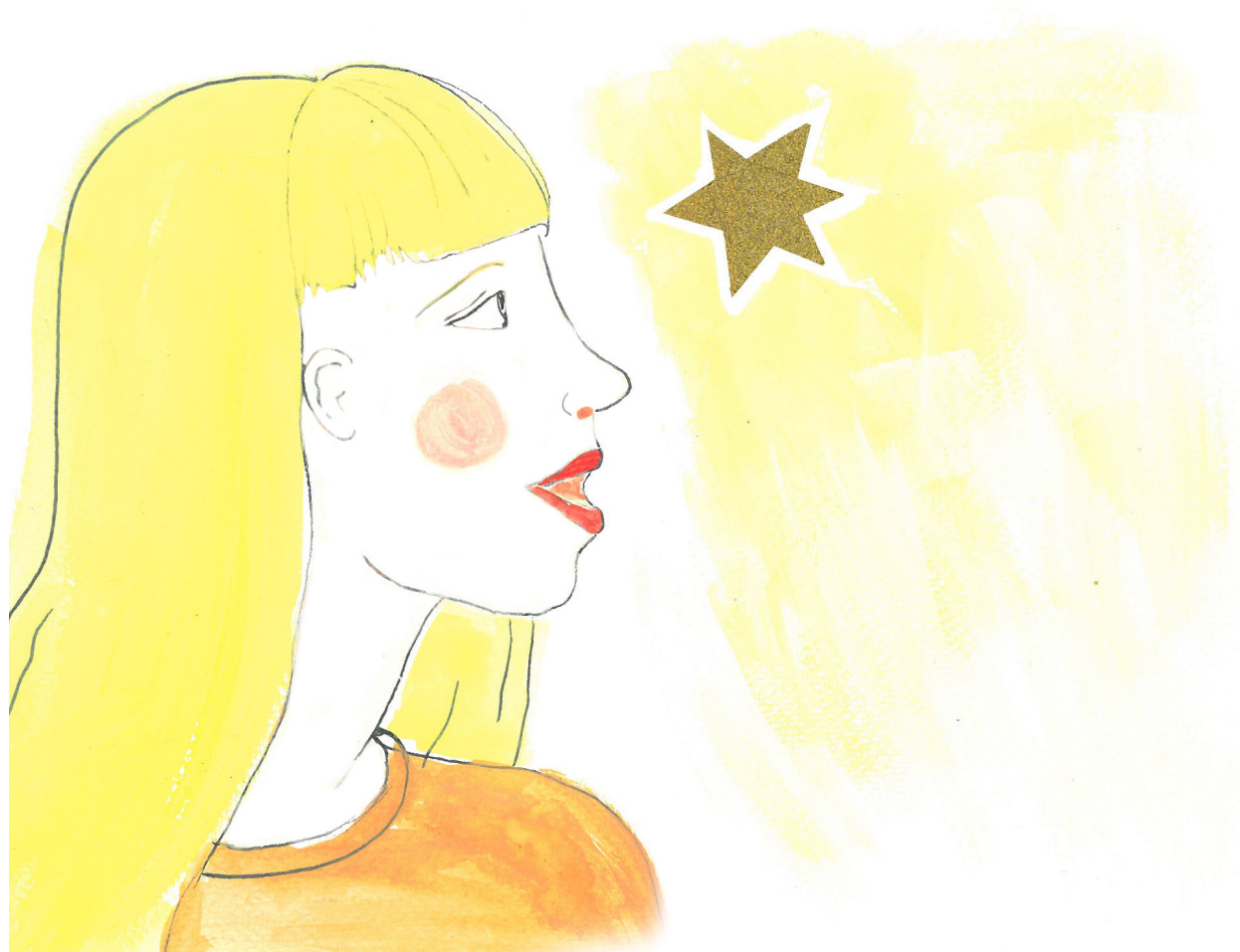
Once upon a time there were two stepsisters, one beautiful and kind and the other ugly and mean. The beautiful one was always asked to do the housework. One day she goes to the well where she drops her soap. She starts crying. An old woman sees her and tells her that cats are living in the well and that they could help her if she were nice to them. She tells her to go down and visit them, but to take her shoes off as down there the stairs were made of crystal.





So she goes down, she meets the cats and helps them in their housework. Eventually she meets the king of the cats, who upon hearing how helpful she was, gives her back the soap and her clean laundry, and warns her that in case she heard a donkey sound on her way back, she was not supposed to turn around, but to do so in case she heard a rooster's crow.

While walking back home she hears a rooster's crow, turns around, and a star comes on her forehead making her even more beautiful.



After seeing her, the stepmother tells her ugly daughter to do the same and go to the well so she would get the star as well and become beautiful. So the ugly sister goes to the well, throws the soap down the well and starts crying.

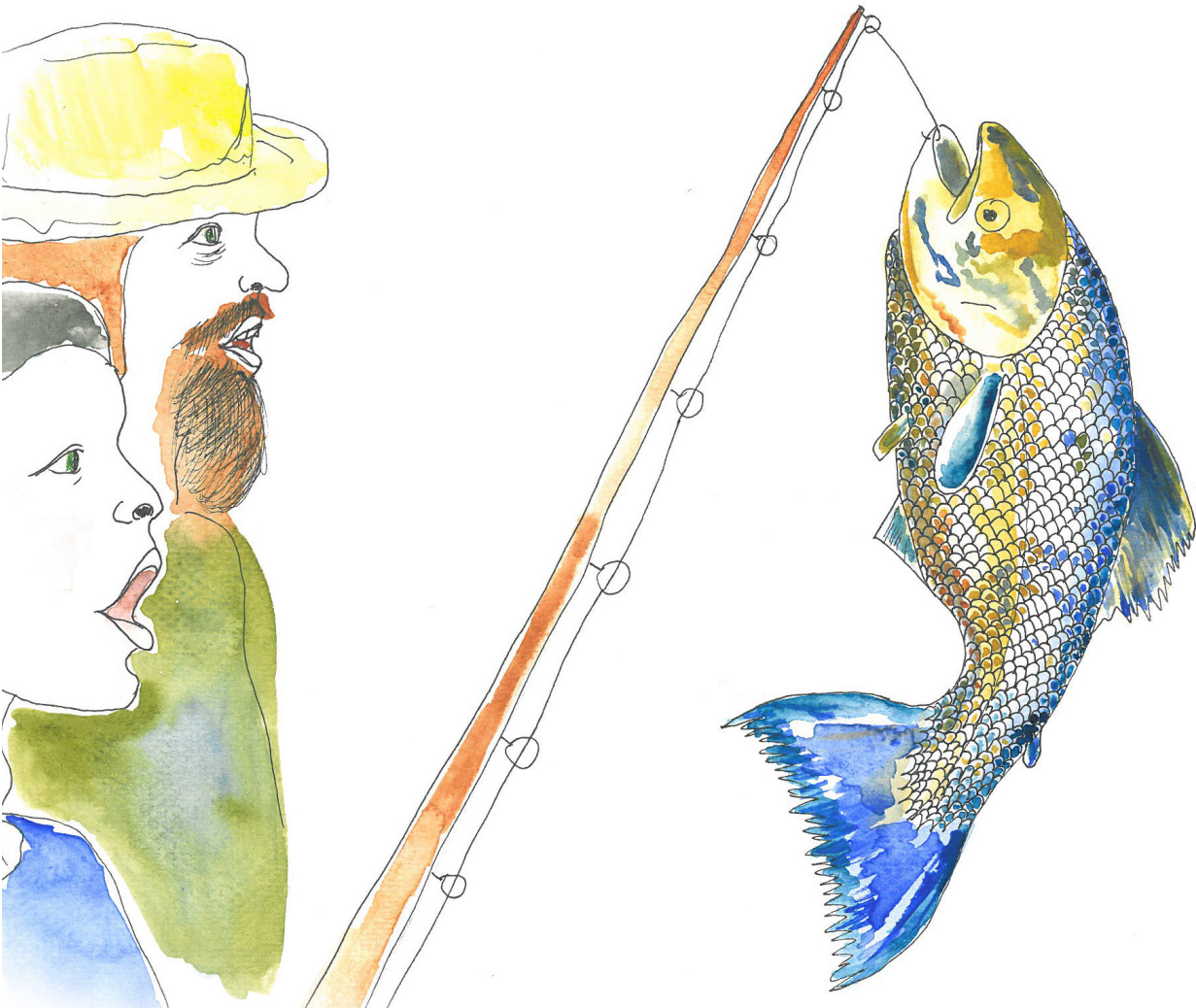
The old woman comes but the ugly sister mistreats her and after the woman tells her what to do and to be nice to the cats she goes down the well and treats them really badly. So the cat's king gives her back her dirty laundry and tells her that on her way back she should turn around if she heard a donkey sound . She does so and donkey's tail comes out of her forehead making her even uglier.





One day a prince passes by the sisters' house and sees the beautiful sister so he knocks at the door and asks her stepmother to meet her daughter. The mother puts a veil on her ugly daughter's face and introduces her to the prince. After taking the veil off he finds out she's not the girl he liked and imprisons her and her mother and marries the beautiful daughter.

THE SALOMON OF KNOWLEDGE



In Ancient Ireland there were not many fish in the rivers of Ireland and only occasionally could one catch a Salmon from the river, it was always believed that one of these fish was a great fish however. A fish that could give you all of the knowledge of the world. Finnegas, a great poet was a great believer in this story and knew a lot about the world.

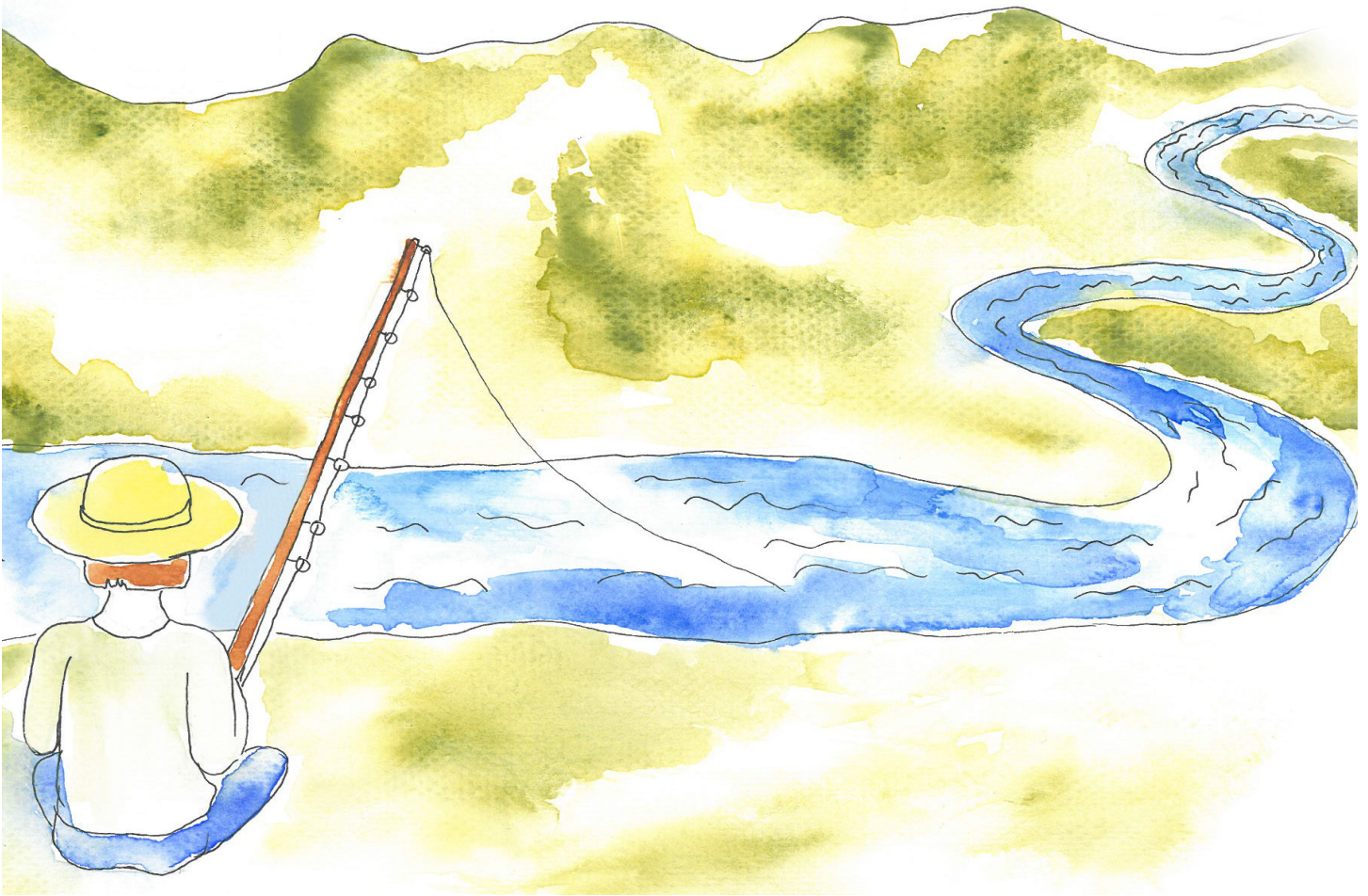


He was a great warrior as well as a keeper of secrets of the animals and birds As well as a truly great teacher. Once a young man called Fionn Mac Cumhaill came to learn from him. Fionn wanted to know everything about the world and was always asking questions. Soon Fionn discovered that Finnegas did not know everything and could not answer all of his questions.

Fionn had been sent to Finnegas because he already knew so much, One day Fionn got so frustrated about not knowing everything that he asked Finnegas if it was even possible to know everything.

Finnegas told him about the fairytale of the salmon of knowledge. He also told Fionn about how much he wanted to eat that fish and how much time he has spent looking for it. Often he could not even catch an ordinary fish.

For seven days in a row Fionn and Finnegas kept fishing for the salmon of knowledge, but could not find this fish or any other source of food for that matter. They were cold and hungry. Suddenly Finnegas could tell that he had caught a very special fish on his fishing rod.



He yelled, I think I have caught it , I think I have caught the Salmon of Knowledge. Fionn almost fainted when he heard this news. However Finnegas had one problem, he was too old and too weak from a lack of food too catch the fish. So he asked Fionn to try to reach the fish. Because Fionn was younger he was able to reel in the fish after a hard struggle.

When Fionn and Finnegas together managed to take the fish out of the water they were both astonished at the size of the Fish. It was almost as long as Finnegas' fishing rod. Both men decided to cook the fish. However there was one problem, the fish was huge, and they were both afraid that if they cut the fish before cooking it, the fish would lose all of its special powers. Then both men realised that they would have to make a spit to put the fish on.

Both men used the wood of one whole tree to make this spit, as the fish was so big. It took one whole day to do so. By now Finnegas was getting really tired and hungry and was delirious from a lack of food. As a result he told Fionn that he was going for a walk.

By the time that he got back the fish was cooked, yet Fionn has respected his wishes to not eat the fish yet. When Finnegas went to eat the fish he realised that the fish was still alive, but had been drained of its knowledge. He wondered how this had happened if Fionn had not eaten the fish.

Then he asked Fionn how this could have happened. Fionn looked back at him, Finnegas saw a twinkle in Fionn's eye that was totally different from anything he had seen before. It was clear that Fionn had developed some new features. Finnegas immediately thought that for some reason Fionn must have developed knowledge. Therefore Finnegas asked 100 questions about the world, Fionn knew every single answer and did not even have to think long about the answer to each question.

Finnegas became furious when he saw this. It was clear that Fionn had developed all of this knowledge from the Salmon. Finnegas was very jealous, extremely jealous. In fact he was so jealous that he started to think of the ways to kill Fionn. However Finnegas was a wise old man, and he quickly realised that Fionn would be able to do a lot more.

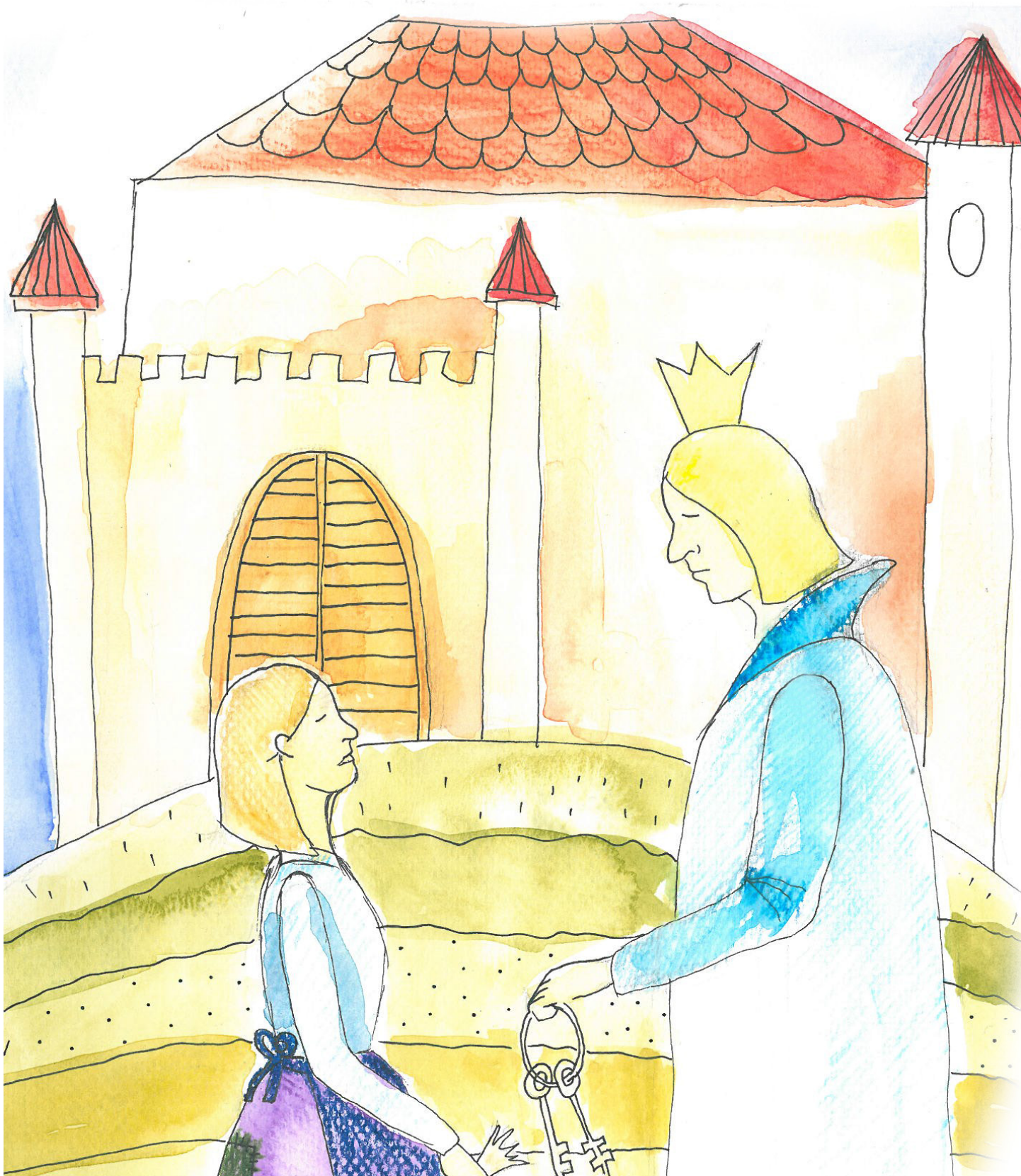
The salmon of knowledge continued, Once Finnegas saw that the Salmon of knowledge had been touched by Fionn he was instantly distraught, and immensely angry. He decided to get some revenge on the supposedly deceitful Fionn by attacking him. Finnegan did not know that Fionn could now sense that something was wrong with his new level of knowledge, and repelled Finnegan's attack. The two men were now furious with each other, and shouted quite offensive words at each other for quite a while.



Eventually the two men calmed down, and after a short period away from each other they managed to realise that they had both been at fault, and had been playing tricks and deceiving each other for too long. Of course Fionn knew this, but his new sense of humility allowed him to see that Finnegas needed some time to accept the new situation. Finnegas even accepted that he could support Fionn he now sought to devote his life fighting off the enemies of Ireland as well as seeking peace throughout the lands he went to be the leader of.

For the 120 years that he lived Fionn was an inspirational leader, and people from around the country of Ireland would come to see him, he was also of course a great teacher, who taught some of the great heroes of Ireland, including Cu Chuillann.

THE CURSED CASTLE



Once upon a time, long ago and far away, there lived a poor woman who had a daughter. They were terribly poor. They lived in a crumbling hut, which was all they had.

One day the old woman fell ill and said to her daughter, "My darling daughter, I feel I am about to die. I have nothing to leave you, so you should go, find work as a servant and try to live as best you can." With that, she closed her eyes and died. The people of the village buried her, because her daughter had no money to pay for the funeral. All she had was a blanket. She took it and off she went to find her way in the world.

From time to time she tried begging for food or shelter, but no one gave her anything. The people said, "You are a strong girl, go and find work!" However the girl was lazy and she much preferred to sit around hungry than to work. She found shelter in a garden, and stayed there while summer passed. When autumn came she would hide in sheds, barns and stables.

One fine day she arrived in a big city. One morning she heard the town crier shouting that the king was offering one of his castles for sale. The castle would be sold to anyone who would not haggle or bargain, but simply pay the price on the spot.

So the girl thought to herself, "I should buy that castle. I will simply lie and tell them that I have the money." And she did exactly that. She went to the king and told him that she would buy the castle.

"Well, well," said the king, "the castle has as many windows as there are days in the calendar, as many doors as there are weeks in a year, and as many rooms as there are months. And that is the asking price, 365 golden coins, no more, no less. If you pay without bargaining the castle will be yours."

"I will not try to bargain, Your Majesty. I do not have the money right now because I have many debtors who owe me money. I will pay you as soon as I get the money back from them, all you have to do is set a deadline for payment."

"All right young lady, let's agree on 365 days."

"All right," she thought to herself, "that is exactly one year from now, and even if they hang me when that day comes, on my last day I will be able to tell everyone that I slept in a real palace."



The king gave her the keys and the girl went to the castle. She checked all twelve rooms one by one. Then she locked the door, and placed one half of her blanket on the floor, using the other half as a cover.

All of a sudden, she heard something that sounded like the meowing of a cat. "Poor cat, you must be as lonely as I am." So she got up and let the cat in. It was a horribly big, black cat.

"Come over here! Come on, lie next to me and purr in my ear, at least I won't be lonely!" The cat cuddled up to her and purred so sweetly that the girl fell asleep.

When she woke up around daybreak she couldn't find the cat anywhere. She reached for the key, which was under her head where she had put it. But the door was locked and the windows were closed.

"How did he leave the room? Well anyway, if you have left, you have left, you surely know how."



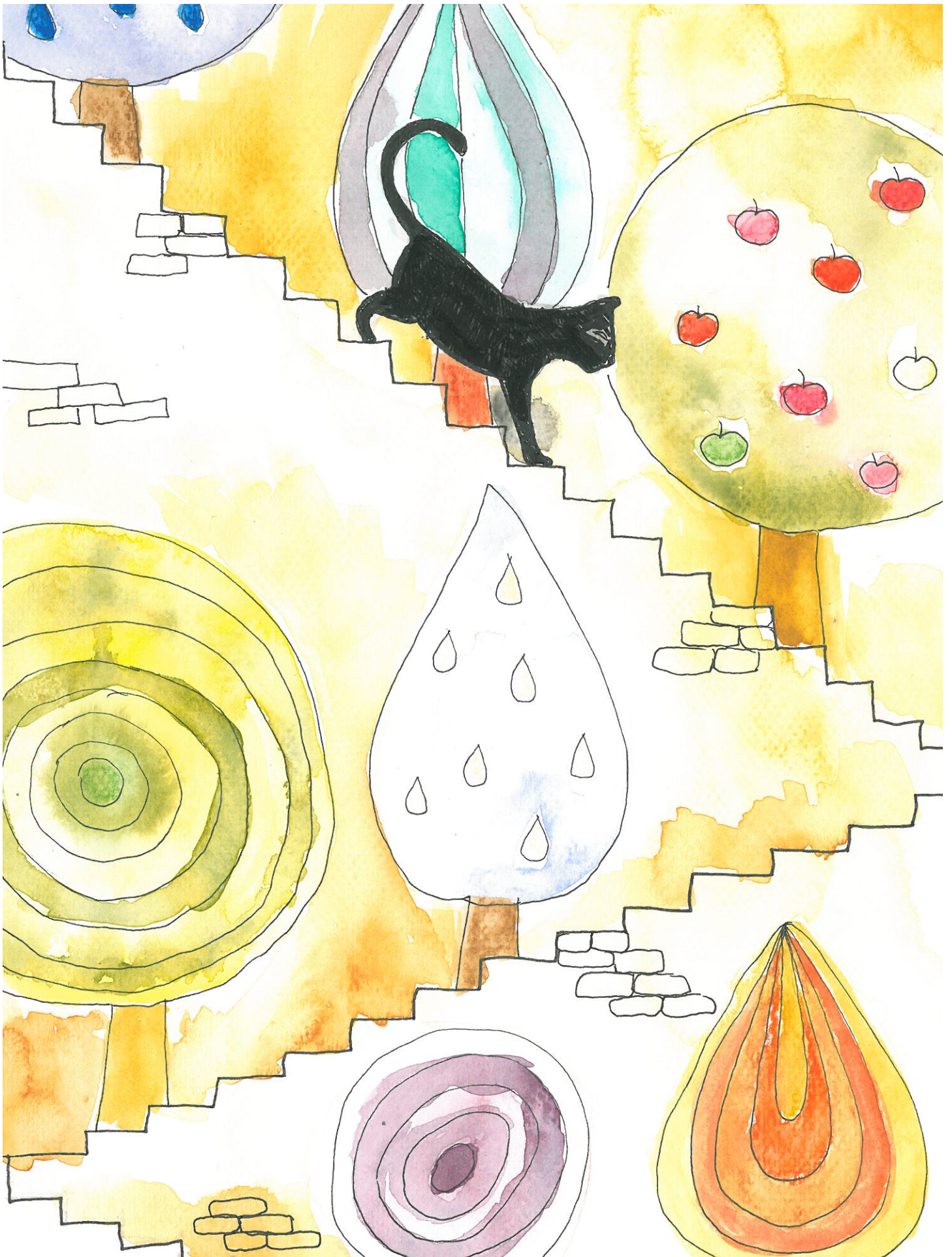
When evening came, she lay down once again. The cat turned up again. So she said to him, "Where have you been? How did you get out?" But the cat merely meowed, and, as he opened his mouth a magnificent diamond rolled to the floor. The girl picked it up, turned it around in her hand, not quite knowing what it might be. Finally she put the stone into a pot and pulled the cat next to her. The cat started purring and the girl fell asleep.

This went on for about three weeks or so. "Just wait, I am going to find out about the cat!" the girl thought. And she did exactly that. When the cat appeared in the evening, she stroked him gently, with loving care. The cat brought a gem in his mouth and the girl placed it in the pot. The cat started purring to lull the girl to sleep, but this time the girl only pretended to fall asleep.

And all of a sudden, when the cat thought that the girl was sleeping, he sprang up, stomped his foot once on the ground, the door swung open, and in a flash he was gone. The girl followed him. She sprang to her feet and raced after the cat. The cat ran down a long corridor leading into the castle. There were doors on both sides, but the cat did not enter any of them.

When he reached the very last room he stomped his foot and entered. The girl followed him. When she stepped into the room she saw the opening of a door in the wall. There were stairs leading downwards. The cat started descending.

The girl still followed him. There were magnificent trees on both sides of the stairs! The girl broke little twigs from each of them, but when the twigs broke they started jingling. The cat heard and turned around. Had she not been hidden behind a tree, he would certainly have discovered her. As he went on, the girl heard beautiful music coming from down below.



When the cat reached a certain spot he did a somersault, and when he landed again he turned into a handsome young prince. Music was playing and there were people smiling and there was great merriment everywhere. The girl watched closely, observing everything carefully, then finally returned to her room.

That evening the cat returned once again, bringing another gemstone in his mouth. He dropped it on the floor in front of the girl. The girl pretended to know nothing about what she had seen the night before. "You are such a good for nothing cat! Where have you been again? You keep escaping from me!"

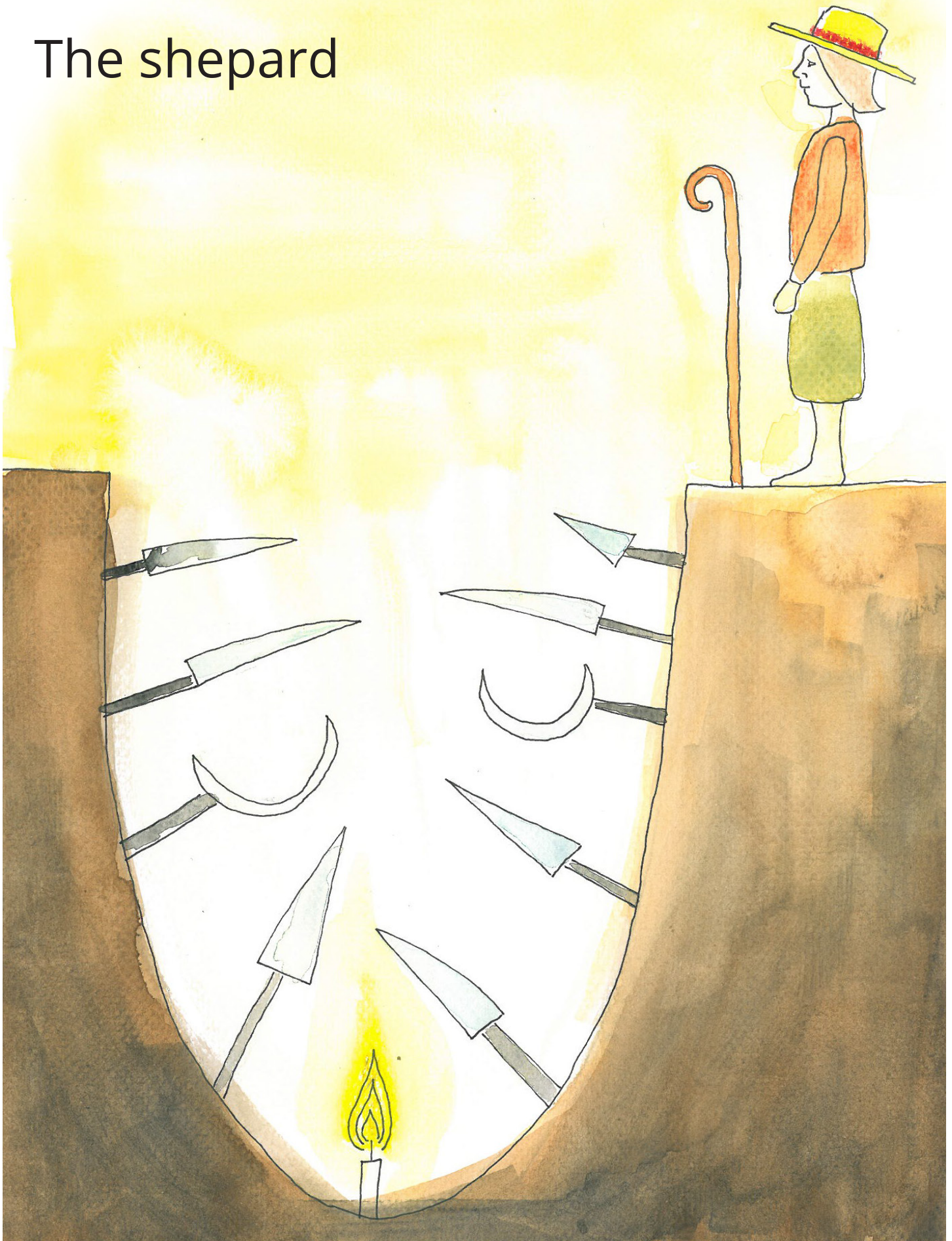
But the cat just kept on purring to her. After a while the girl said, "I know where you have been, I know who you are, I have seen everything! Look at this, this is the proof."

The cat let out a scream that was so loud that all the windows broke. The cat's skin fell to the floor, and the girl found herself looking at a very handsome young prince.

The cat-turned-prince said, "I was cursed to live as a cat until a girl came and discovered where it was I was going. Now that you have discovered my secret, I will let you have all of these gemstones. Sell them and use the money to pay for the castle."

And so it came to pass. The girl paid 365 golden coins for the castle, she and the prince got married. They had a magnificent wedding celebration and they lived happily ever after.

The shepard



Once upon a time there was a poor man. He had a wife and one son. One day the little boy said: "Dear father, I shall go somewhere to find work, to try my luck in the world."

Father: "Go my son, I wish you well on your way."

He gave the boy a sack full of food and sent him on his way. He walked for a long time and crossed at least seven different lands. He stopped for first time when he arrived in a large field. He saw that on the other side of the meadow there were some sheep grazing unattended.

"Oh those sheep must not be left unattended. I will watch them until the shepherd comes back."

Time passed, but no shepherd appeared. One day the boy ran out of food. He thought of taking the sheep to town to sell a few of them in order to buy some food. He went into town and sold some of the lambs to the butcher. With the money he bought what he needed and settled down with his sheep at the edge of the town.

A king lived in the town. He was a great and cruel king. He would have anyone executed who failed to say "Bless you!" when he happened to sneeze. One Sunday morning the king sneezed an unusually loud sneeze. His soldiers quickly mounted their horses and rode all over the country ordering the people to say "God bless the dear king with good health!"



At that time the young shepherd was out in the field with his sheep. When the soldiers saw him they told him to say: "God bless the dear king with good health!" but the boy replied that he would not do such thing until the king gave him the hand of his beautiful young daughter in marriage. The soldiers took the shepherd to the court and presented him to the king. The king's daughter happened to be there too. She took a liking to the young man at once, but said nothing of it.

The king asked the shepherd: "Will you say God bless the dear king with good health?"

I will not your royal highness, even if you have me killed. Though, I will if you should give me the hand of your beautiful young daughter in marriage.

"I would never give my daughter's hand for such a trifle!"

And the king ordered his soldiers to throw the shepherd to the hungry swine.

The shepherd took his flute and began to play a nice tune to the swine. The swine listened to the music and enjoyed it tremendously. They even began to dance. The shepherd made them dance until they began to sweat. And soon they fell asleep. The star-eyed shepherd fell asleep too and slept until morning.

In the morning the marshal went to see if the shepherd was still alive. And he was. The marshal took the shepherd to the king again.

Now, shepherd say "God bless the dear king with good health!"

"I will not your royal highness until you give me your daughter's hand in marriage. Not even if you send me to the gaol (jail)."

Well, throw him into the well with the scythe blades!

"Ay" thought the shepherd, "If they throw me into this well it will be my death, as the blades will cut me to pieces."

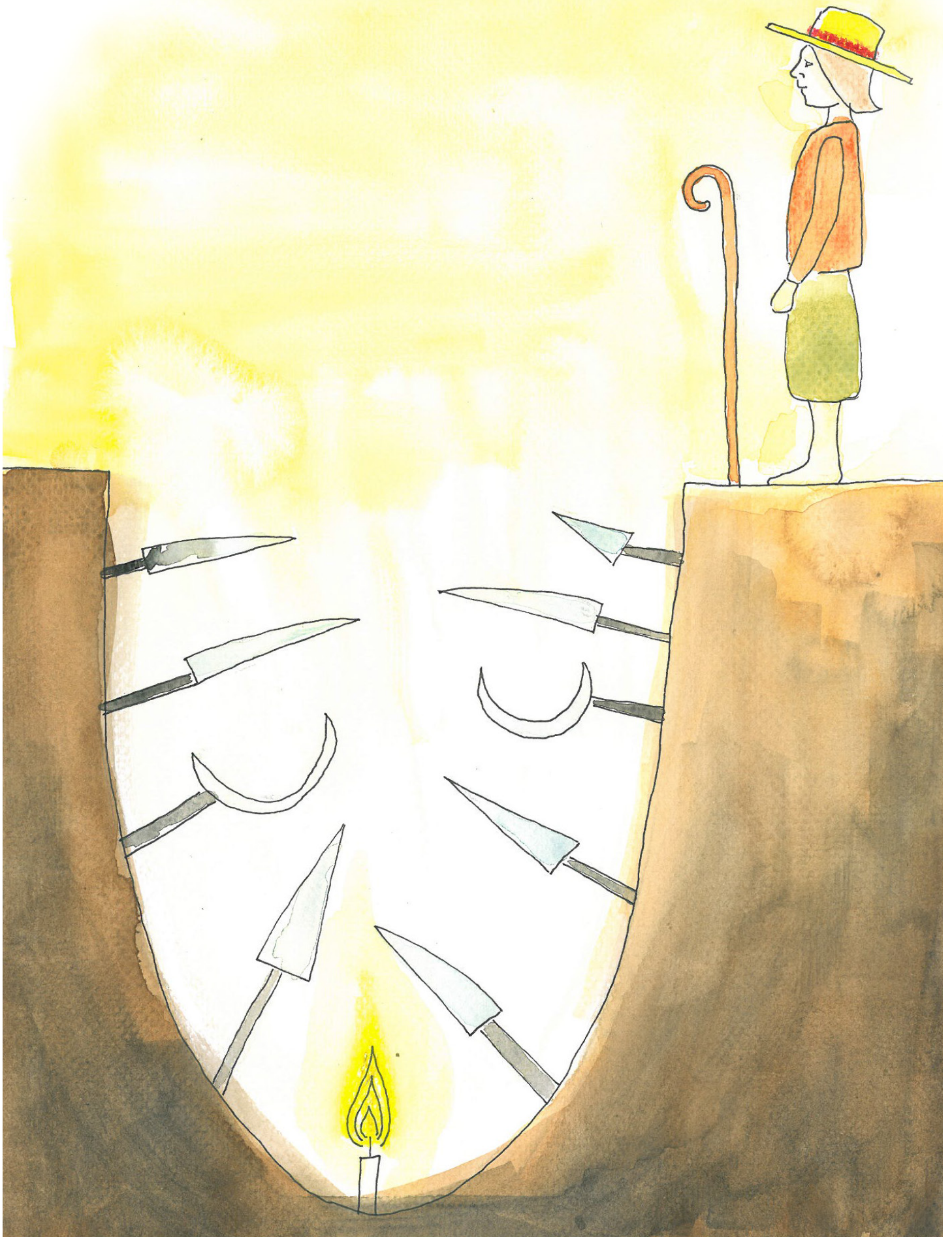
The soldiers asked him: "Now will you say, "God bless the dear king with good health"?"



"Just wait a minute, dear soldiers. Leave me alone for a moment and let me think it over. So the soldiers left him alone. The shepherd took off his jacket and the hat, and put them on a rod. Then he shouted to the soldiers. You may come in and do with me as you please, for I shall never say it.

He quickly hid himself in a dark corner. As it was quiet dark in the house, the soldiers mistook the rod with the mantle and hat for the shepherd and they pushed it into the well. The candle, which was burning deep down at the bottom of the well, went out. They assumed the shepherd had landed on it and died. The next morning the marshal went to the house with the well. He heard a pleasant tune being played on a flute inside the house.

"What on earth can that mean? It is not possible that the shepherd is playing on his flute."



He opened the door of the house and saw the shepherd merrily playing his flute. The marshal ran to the king. "Your royal highness, the star-eyed shepherd is still alive!"

"Bring him here at once!"

When he was standing in front of the king again the king told him:

"Shepherd, say God bless the dear king with good health!

I shall say no such thing until you give me your daughter's hand in marriage, even if you have me thrown among the owls.

"Take him to the room in the tower. As soon as the owls and bats start pecking at his eyes he will cry out, "God bless the dear king with good health!"

They took him to a room in the tower. But as soon as the door was closed behind him he took his flute out of his pocket and began to play it. And a wonderful thing happened. All the animals in the room began to dance merrily. The shepherd made them dance until they grew weary. Then they nestled into the corners of the room and were quiet. He also fell asleep and slept until morning.

The next morning the marshal went to the room in the tower to see what had happened to the boy during the night. As he opened the door he saw that the boy was sitting on the ground and laughing.

"Your royal highness, the shepherd is still alive and he is laughing as if the whole country were his."

"What a man! He cannot be killed! Bring him here at once!"

"It seems you cannot be killed. Come, take a seat on this golden carriage."

They drove into a silver forest. "Tell me shepherd, if I were to give you this beautiful silver forest, would you say "God bless the dear king with good health."?"

No, your royal highness, I would not. It's not the silver forest that I desire, but your daughter."

What a boy!



They drove further. They reached a beautiful golden pond in which even the fish, the crabs and other creatures were all pure gold.

Again the king asked, "If I were to give you this pond, would you say,

"God bless the dear king with good health"?"

"No, never, your royal highness."

"Never mind then. Let's drive further."

After a while they reached a splendid garden wall made out of white marble. On the other side of the wall stood a palace built of diamonds. It was glimmering enchantingly.

"Good shepherd, one and for all, say "God bless the dear king with good health", and I will give you this diamond palace."

"I will say no such thing, your royal highness until you give me your daughter's hand in marriage."

"What a terrible man you are!"

As there was little else he could do, the king had it proclaimed all through the land that his daughter would marry the shepherd. The wedding party was to take place two days later. Anyone fit to rise from bed was told to come.

There would be plenty of food and drink assuming the guests brought enough with them when they come. Many people gathered to attend the wedding ceremony. Lots of different foods were put on the tables. Horseradish was served. Its smell made the king sneeze.



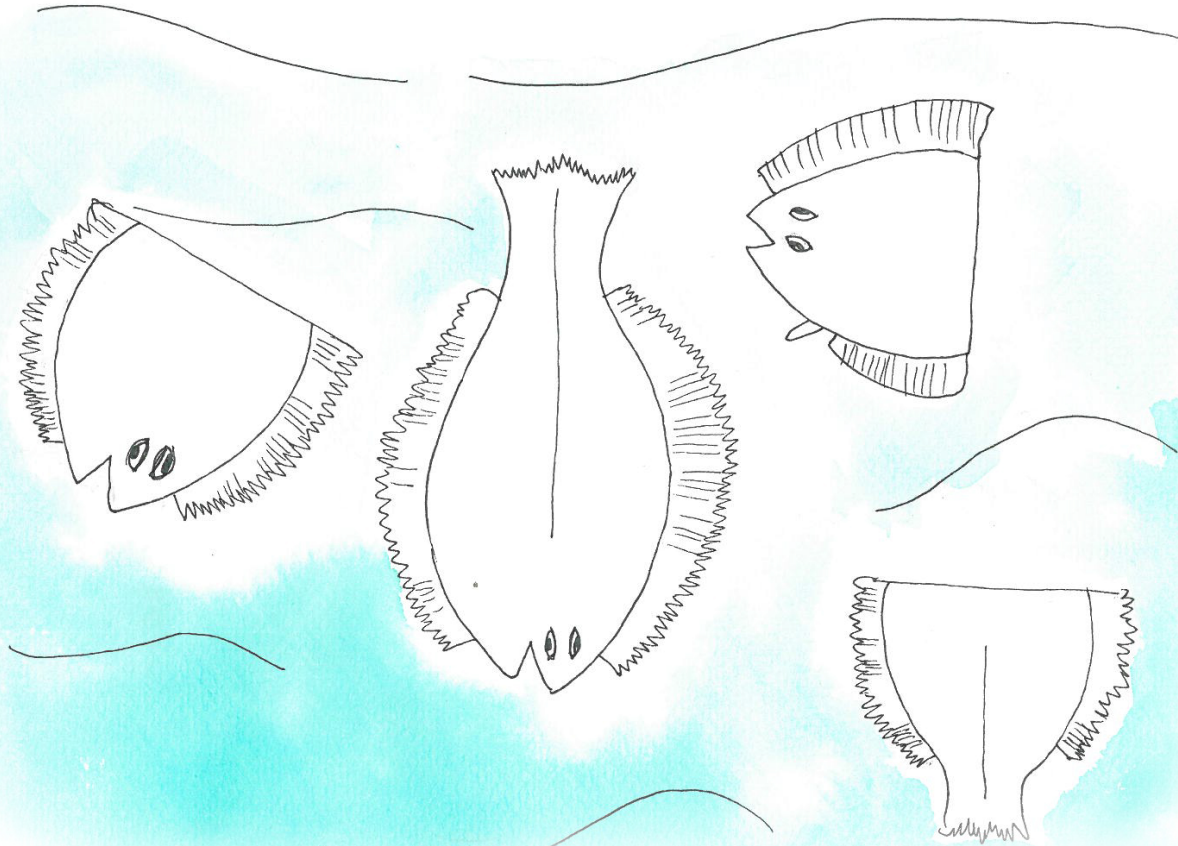
Then the shepherd began to say: "God bless you with good health! God bless you with good health!" He said it many times over. At last the king interrupted him: "Stop saying that, my dear son in law. If you stop saying it I will give you all I have, my country and kingdom."

The king gave his whole kingdom to the star eyed shepherd. They lived together happily ever after.



Jurata





Long, long ago, the Baltic Sea was ruled by Jurata, a beautiful queen. She had long golden hair and sea green eyes. Her loveliness caused Perkun, the fierce God of thunder and lightning, to fall in love with her. He would not let his storms disturb the waters of her kingdom.

Jurata was a kind queen. She established laws to protect her sea creatures. One law did not allow anyone to set traps that caught too many fish at one time. Though Jurata liked to eat flounder and had it served at the palace, she ordered her servants to keep only half of each fish and to throw the other half back to the sea.

These fish-halves stayed alive because of her magical powers. On the Baltic Coast lived a bold, free spirited young fisherman who had very little common sense. He knew about Queen Jurata's law, but disobeyed it. He set many traps and caught many, many fish which he sold to people who lived far from the sea. He spent most of his money on fine clothes.

The Queen found out about this fisherman and was very angry with him. Her plan was to swim close to the shore, get the fisherman to go in the water and drown him. Instead, when she saw him in his beautiful clothes, she fell in love with him as he did with her. Every night she would swim to the shore and see her new sweetheart.

Jurata herself had broken a law. The gods said that magical beings could love only magical beings. Perkun got very very mad about this. He went into a rage and with thunderbolts destroyed the amber colored palace while the Queen was inside and chained the young fisherman to the bottom of the sea.



They were never seen again. The fisherman can sometimes be heard calling for his love. The only things that remain from Jurata's palace are pieces of amber that sometimes wash up on the beaches of the Baltic Sea.



SALT AND WATER



A king had three daughters and he asked each one in turns, which one loved him the most.

The older one replied:

- I want more to my father than to the sunlight.

The middle one said:

- I like my father more than myself.

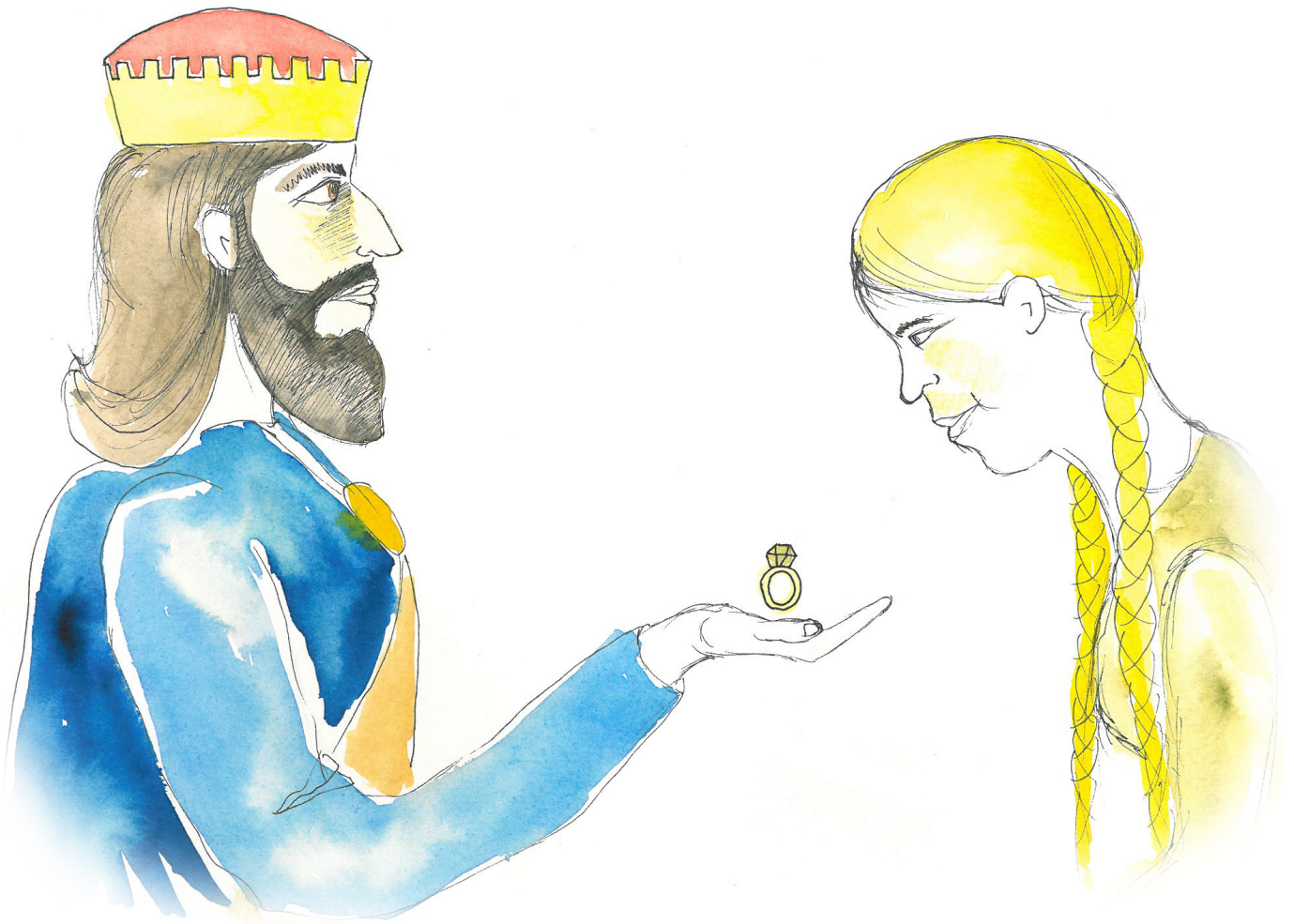
The younger one replied:

- I need you as much the food needs the salt.

The king understood that the youngest daughter did not love as much as the others, and he decided to send her away from the palace.

She was very very sad but she left, found another palace where a king offered her a job as a cook.

One day she prepared a very good pastry for the king, while eating it the king found a very small and expensive ring. He asked all the ladies of the court to whom did it belong to, all of the ladies tried the ring but it was too small, at the end he called the cook, the ring fit her finger. When the prince saw the ring fitting in the finger of the cook, he just fell in love with her, while thinking she had to belong to a noble family.



The prince then began to watch her closely as she only cooked in secret, and he caught her dressed in Princess costumes. He called his father the king and both saw her in what seemed to be a princess that.. cooked. The king gave license to his son to marry her, but the girl demanded a condition, she would cook with her own hands the wedding dinner.



For the engagement party all the kings where invited, including the king who had three daughters, and had put off the youngest one.

The princess cooked dinner, but the dishes that where to be given to the king, her father, did not have any salt. All ate heartily but only the guest king was not eating. Finally the king house-owner asked to his fellow king guest why wasn't him eating? He said, not knowing that he was witnessing his daughter wedding:

- It's because the food doesn't have salt!

The groom's father pretended to be angry and told the cook to come to the dinning room explaining why his guest food didn't have salt. Then came the girl dressed as princess, but as soon as her father saw her, he confessed his guilt for not having realized how much he was loved by his daughter, who had told him that she wanted him as much as the food wants salt, and that still after all she suffered, she never complained of his father's injustice.



BIG BLACK GATE



Once upon a time, there was a mother and her three daughters. After their father died, they started to put too much pressure on the youngest sister, the father's favourite. She was called the little girl. The mother and two elder sisters made her work a lot for them, and they did not give good food and clothes to her.

One day, they were travelling by the horse wagon to another city. They cooked something to eat on the way. The elder sisters put too much salt in one of the sandwiches and gave it to the little girl. She was so hungry that she had to eat the sandwich. And then she felt very thirsty. "I need to drink water", she cried to her mother, "I am very thirsty". They were laughing at her in the beginning. Then they left her in front of a big house with a big black gate, and said: "Go, bring some water to us and then you can also drink." The house had a garden with a fountain.



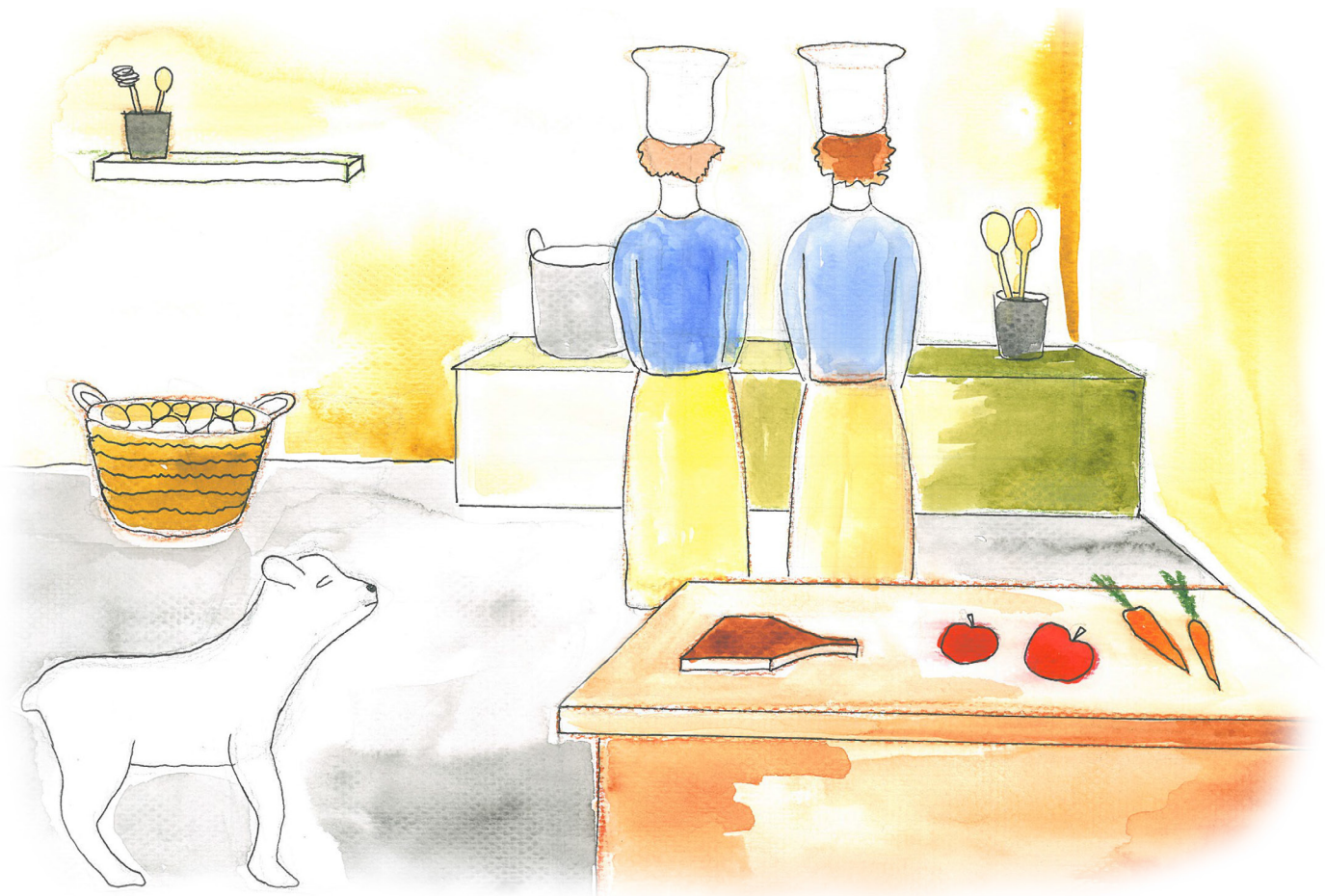


The little girl went inside, and three times brought water for her sisters and mother. She went back for the fourth time, finally for herself this time. But suddenly something very interesting happened: the big black gate of the house closed itself with a bang.

The mother and sisters left the little girl inside. They were scared of the big black gate. The little girl was crying inside, 'please do not leave me'. And then she started to follow a small cute black puppy and she entered the house. She saw 40 rooms with very nice furniture but she did not see any one. In the forty first room, there was a young man, sleeping on a bed. He was sick. It was written there, that if someone waited next to him for 100 days and healed him, he would wake up and marry the person who waited for him.

The little girl was so concerned for him that she wanted him to wake up. The little girl started to wait there. She waited there for days, she played with the little black dog, she washed the face of the man, and spent all her time there. She was very tired, but she insisted on staying there to save the man, and it was true that she was in love with this handsome man. She was very tired and she hardly eating ate and slept.

On the ninety ninth day, an old black lady came to the room, and talked to her. Her lower lip was touching to the floor while her upper lip was touching to the roof. The old black lady talked to the girl in a very nice way, appreciated her staying there for a long time and offered her help. "You may need to go to the bathroom", the old lady said. "If you want, I can wait here for a while." In the beginning, the girl did not agree. However, she wanted to look nice when the man wake up, and agreed on taking a shower. She left the old black lady there and went to the bathroom.



Old black lady followed her to the bathroom silently, and locked the door on her. She could not get out. She screamed, but nobody heard.

On the one hundredth day, the man woke up, and saw the old black woman. He said, "Okey, if you have waited here and saved me, I will have to marry to you." But he was not so sure about that.

After the man woke up, all the family members came back to their home, they finished the mourning and started to celebrate. The preparation for the wedding started. Because they believed the old lady saved the man, nobody said anything against this marriage.

Just minutes before the wedding, something very interesting happened. The little black dog turned into a wizard. He saved the little girl from the bathroom she was locked in. He explained everything to the guests. The man seemed very happy about that.

During the celebration, the old black lady tried to ran away, but the big black gate closed itself again. People caught the lying old lady and punished her.

Returning from their trip, the mother and sisters of little girl also saw the wedding and they could not believe what was going on. They apologized from the little girl. She forgave all of them.

They celebrated the wedding for three days and three nights. They lived happily ever after.



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