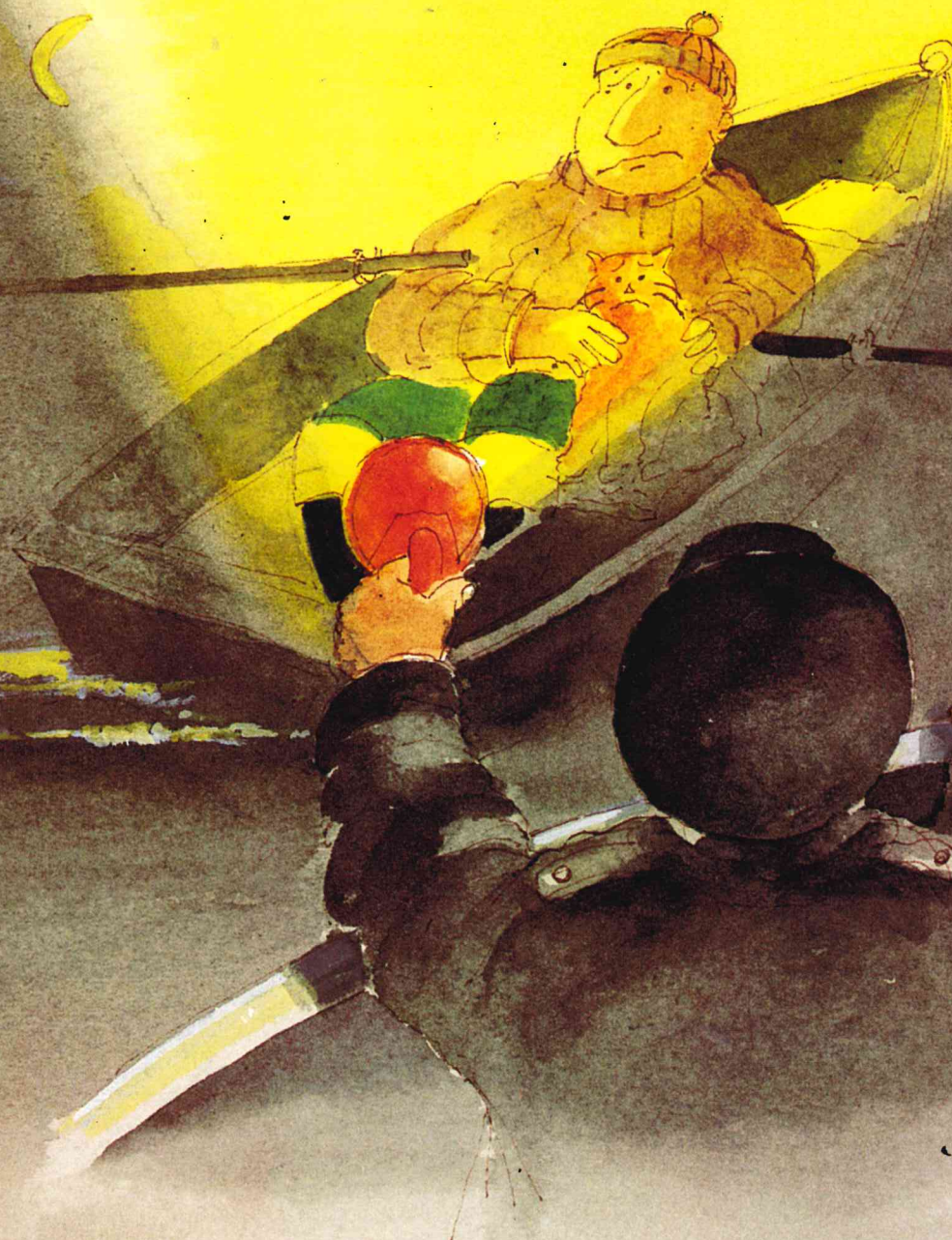




But Mr Grinling and Hamish found the coastguard first.

The crunching noise as the dinghy hit the launch woke Mr Grinling. For a moment he was very frightened.

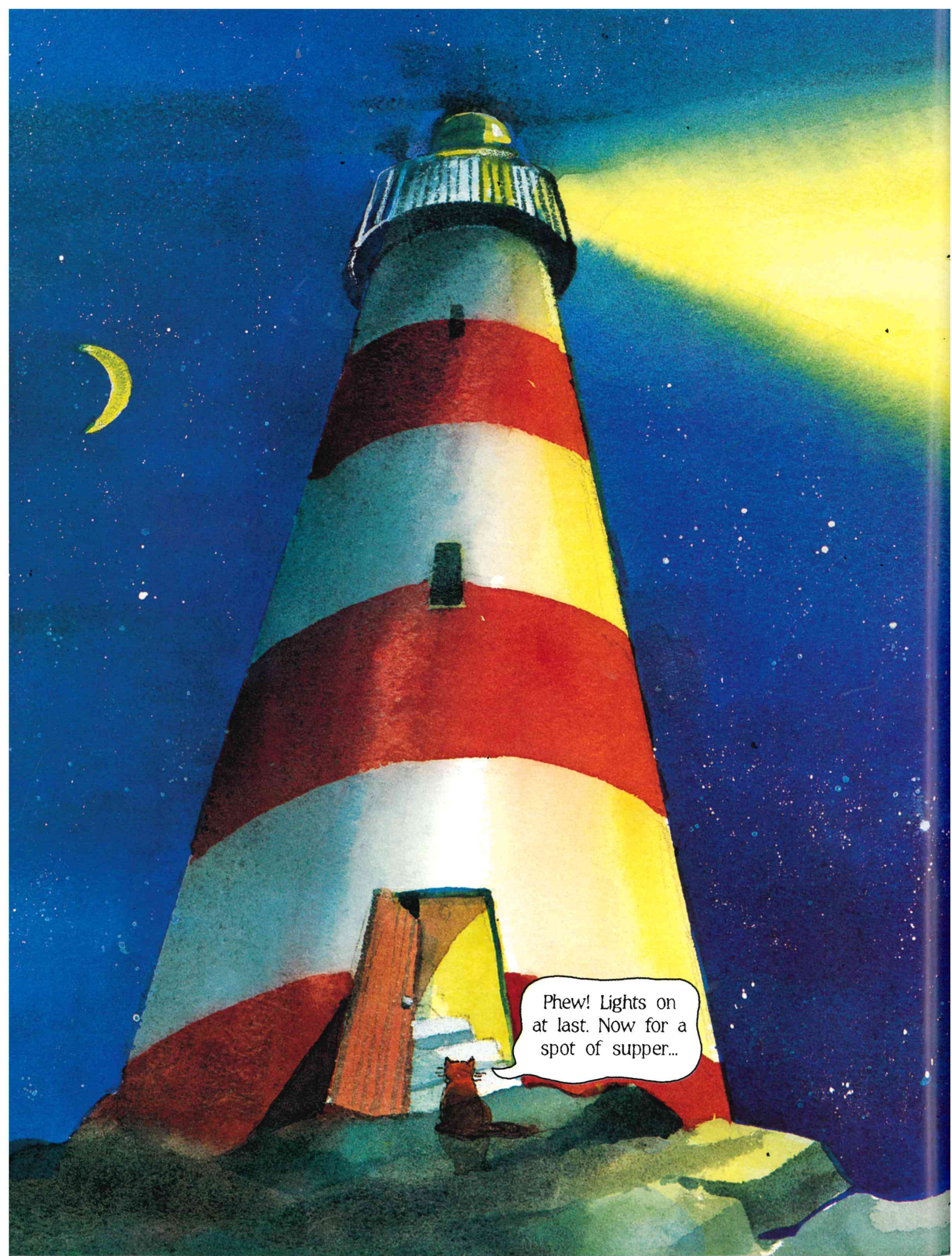




The coastguard shouted down to him. "At last! Hold tight now and we'll give you a tow to the lighthouse. With luck you might get the light on before anybody notices."









But Mr Grinling was not lucky. The next day three inspectors of lighthouses arrived at the little white cottage.

They wore grey suits and long faces. "We are extremely cross, Mr Grinling," they said. "You cannot keep falling asleep, it isn't right for a lighthouse keeper. We must take **FURTHER ACTION**. You have always been a good and conscientious lighthouse keeper, but now you need to rest. We have given your job to a younger man. Goodbye, Mr Grinling." They shook his hand, took the lighthouse key and left.



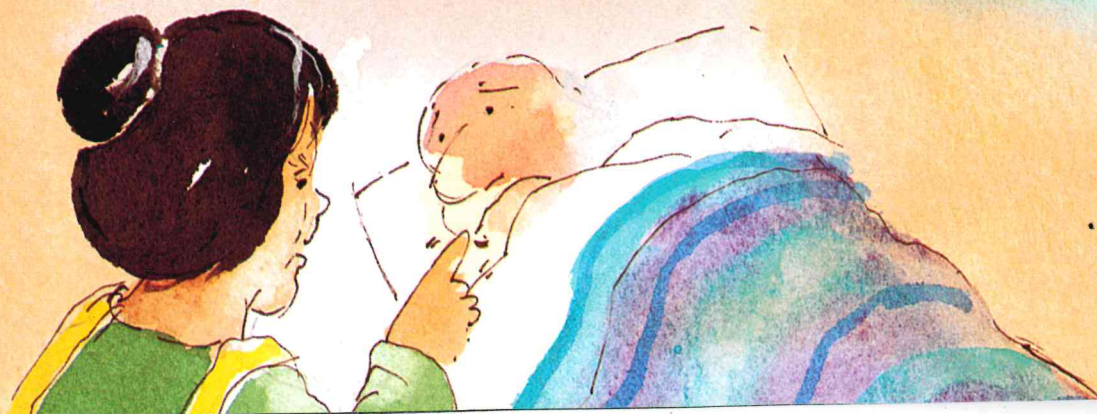


Mr Grinling was so upset that he went straight to bed.

Nothing that Mrs Grinling did would comfort him. She cooked him his favourite breakfast and his favourite dinner. She sang him '*Humpty Dumpty*' – his favourite song, but Mr Grinling didn't stir. He just lay there staring at the ceiling.



After a week Mrs Grinling decided she'd had enough. "Mr G," she said sternly, "I've had enough. You can't lie in bed forever. I need you to help me pack. Now stop this nonsense at once."

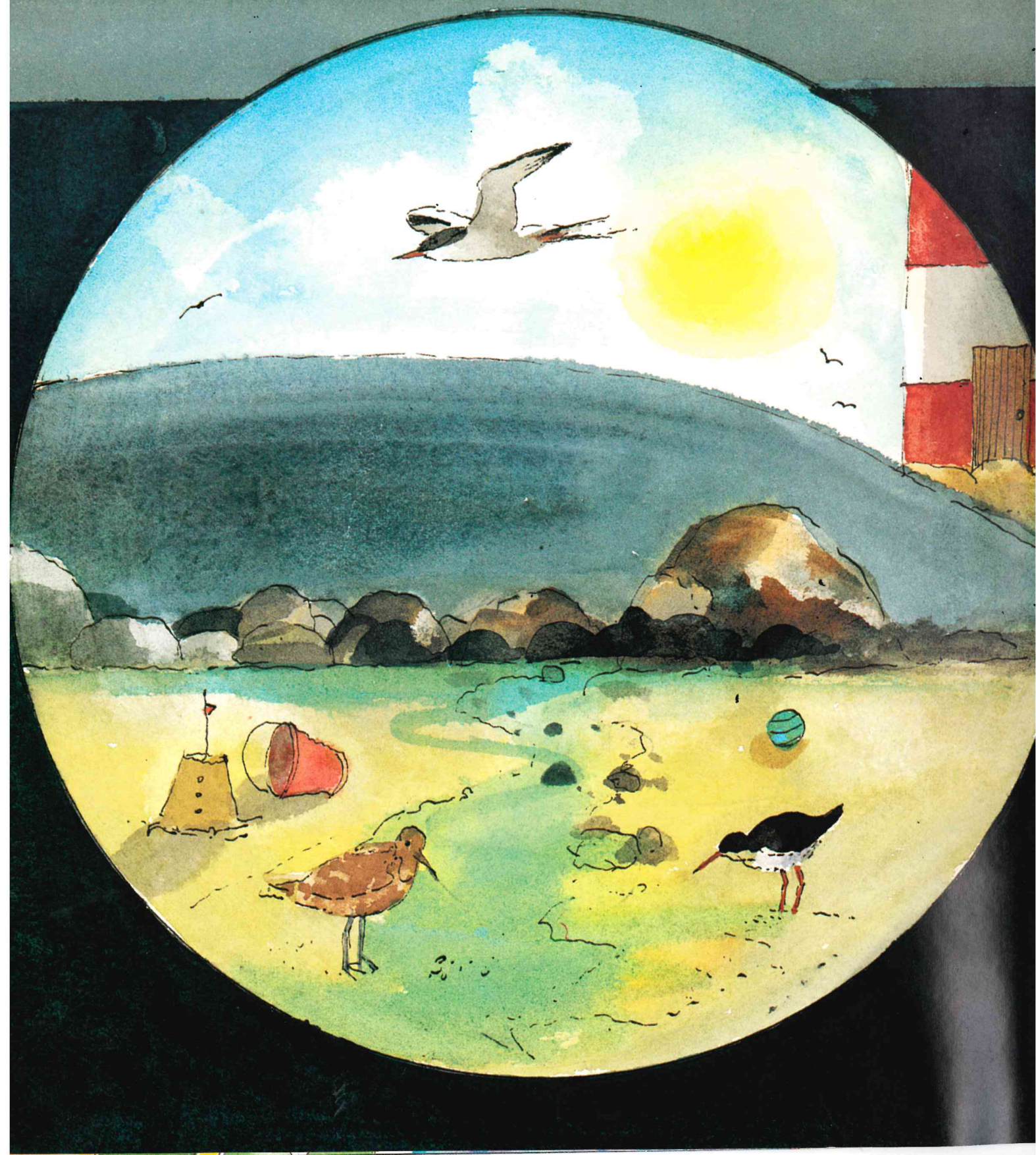






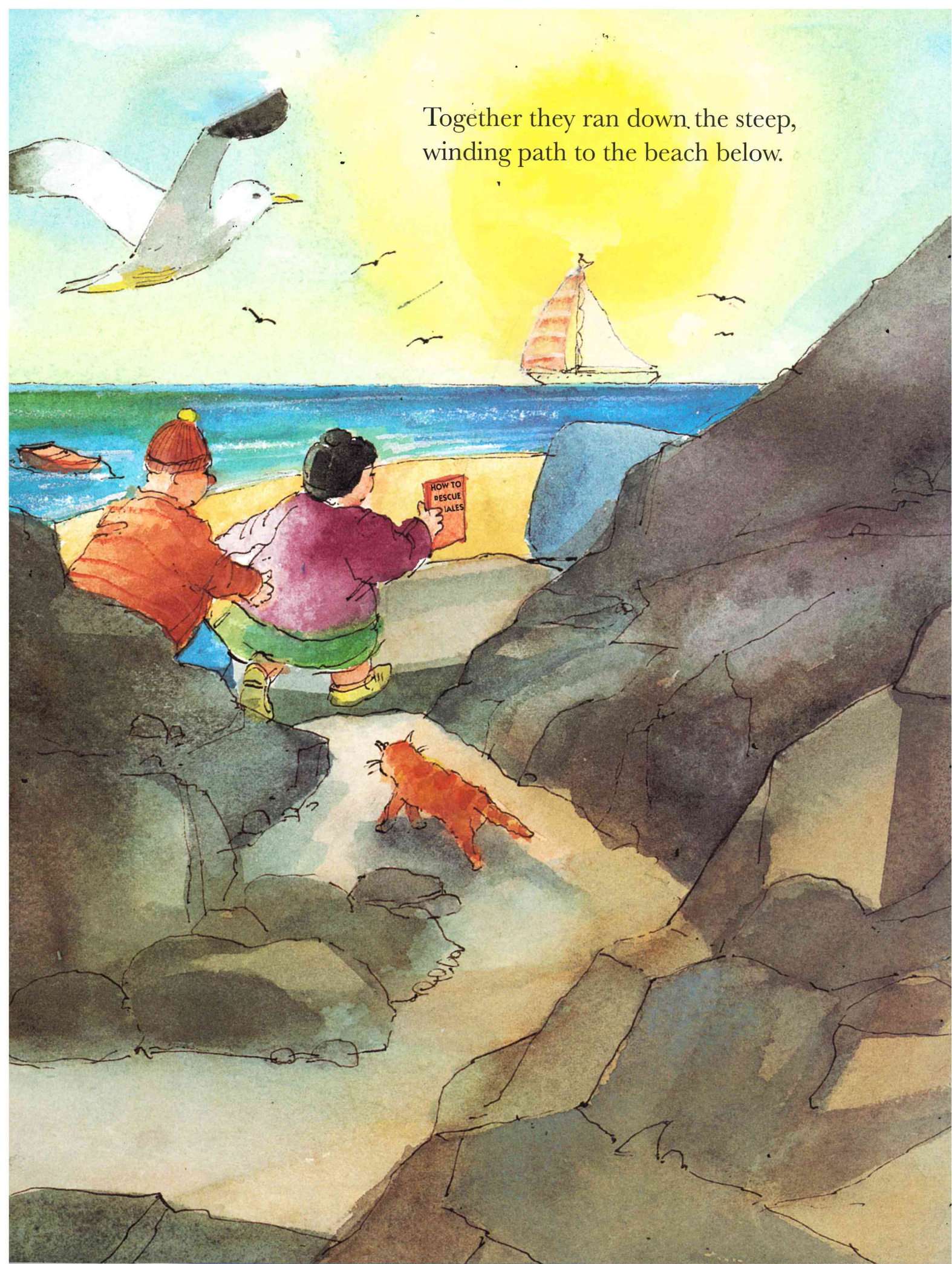


“Whatever’s that?” she exclaimed. “There’s an enormous black shape on the beach, Mr G. We must find out what it is.”





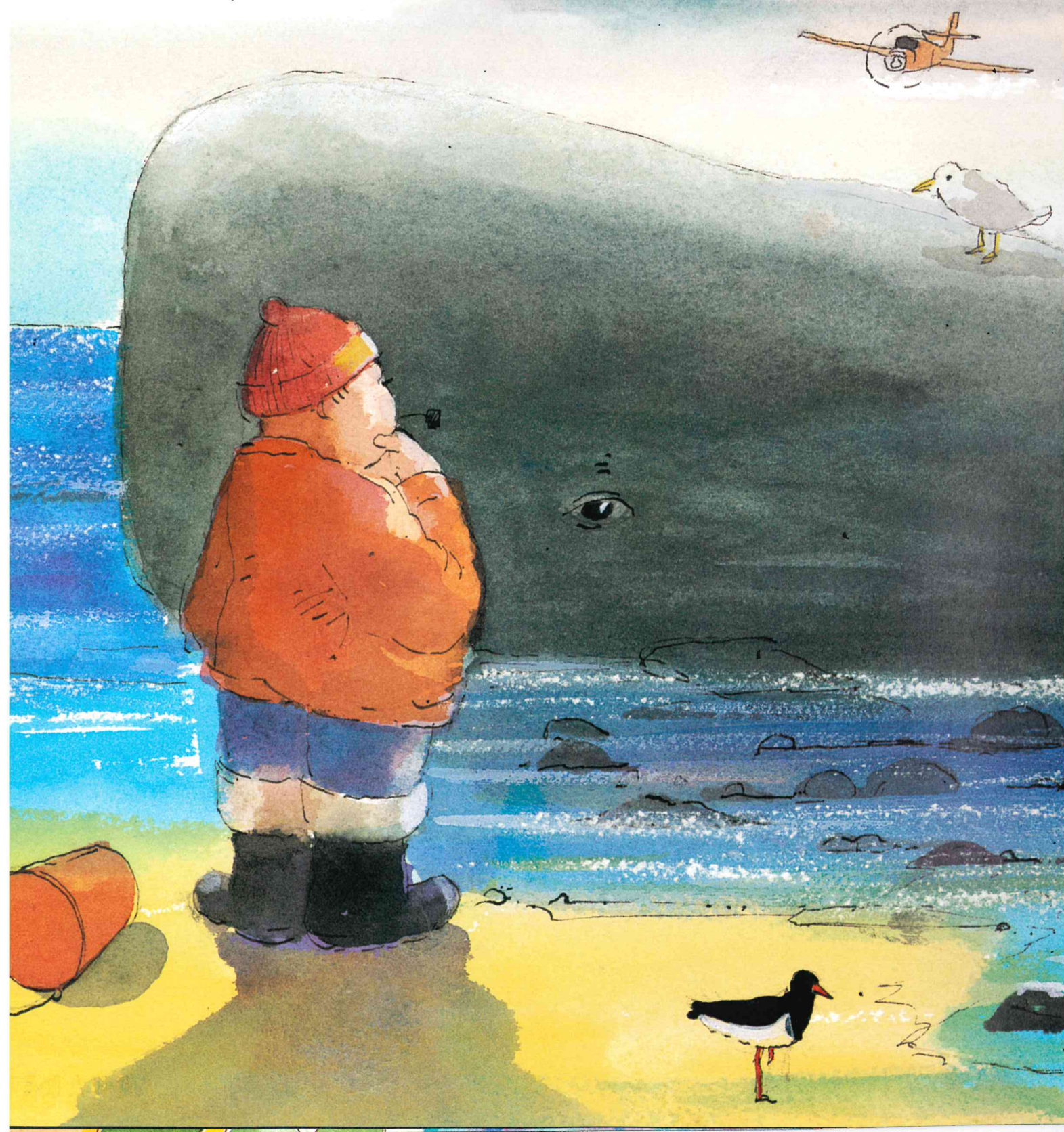
Together they ran down the steep,  
winding path to the beach below.





And then they stopped. There it lay on the sand, a great black, shiny whale.

"Jiminy Cricket!" exclaimed Mr Grinling. "It's a whale. He must have got lost. We can't leave him here, Mrs G. If he stays out of the water he will die."





“We won’t let him die,” said Mrs Grinling firmly. “I’ll just consult my book.” And she did. “We will need help to push him, Mr G,” she decided. “You must ride to the village and bring back as many people as you can find. At 3 o’clock it will be high tide. We might be able to float him then.”



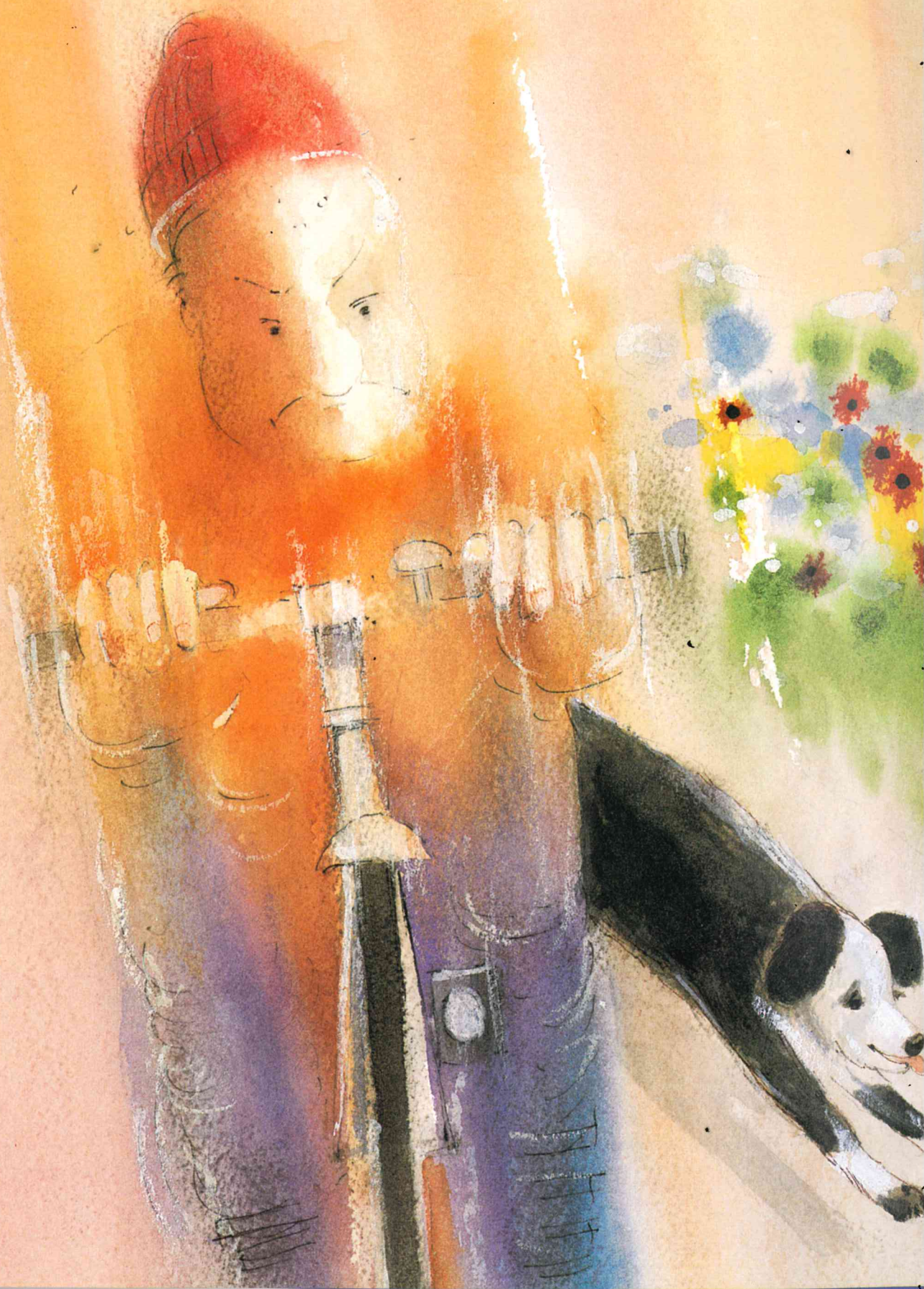


“While you’re away, I shall throw water over him to keep him cool  
and I shall talk to him so he doesn’t feel lonely.”



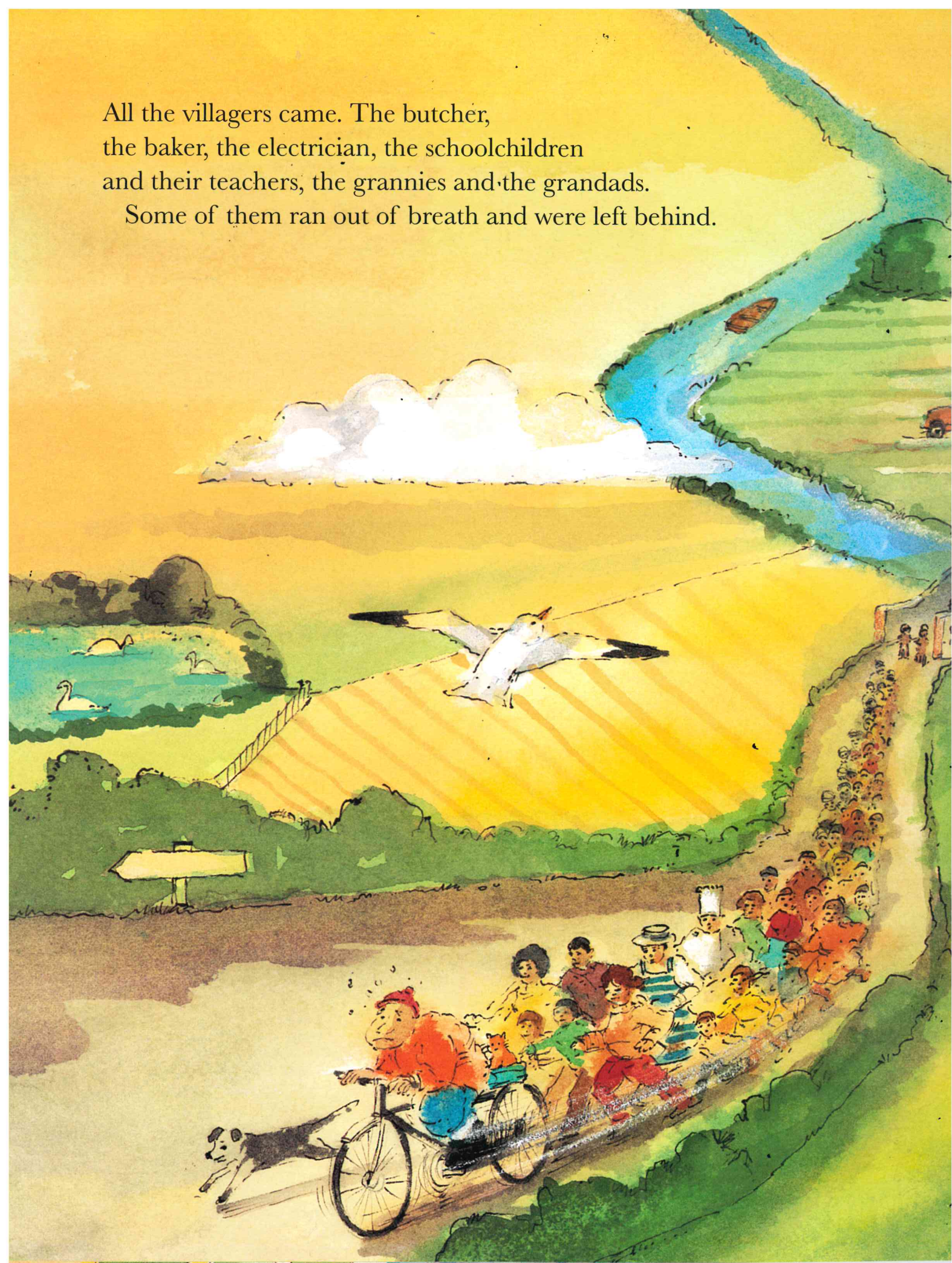


Away went Mr. Grinling as fast as his fat little legs could pedal.

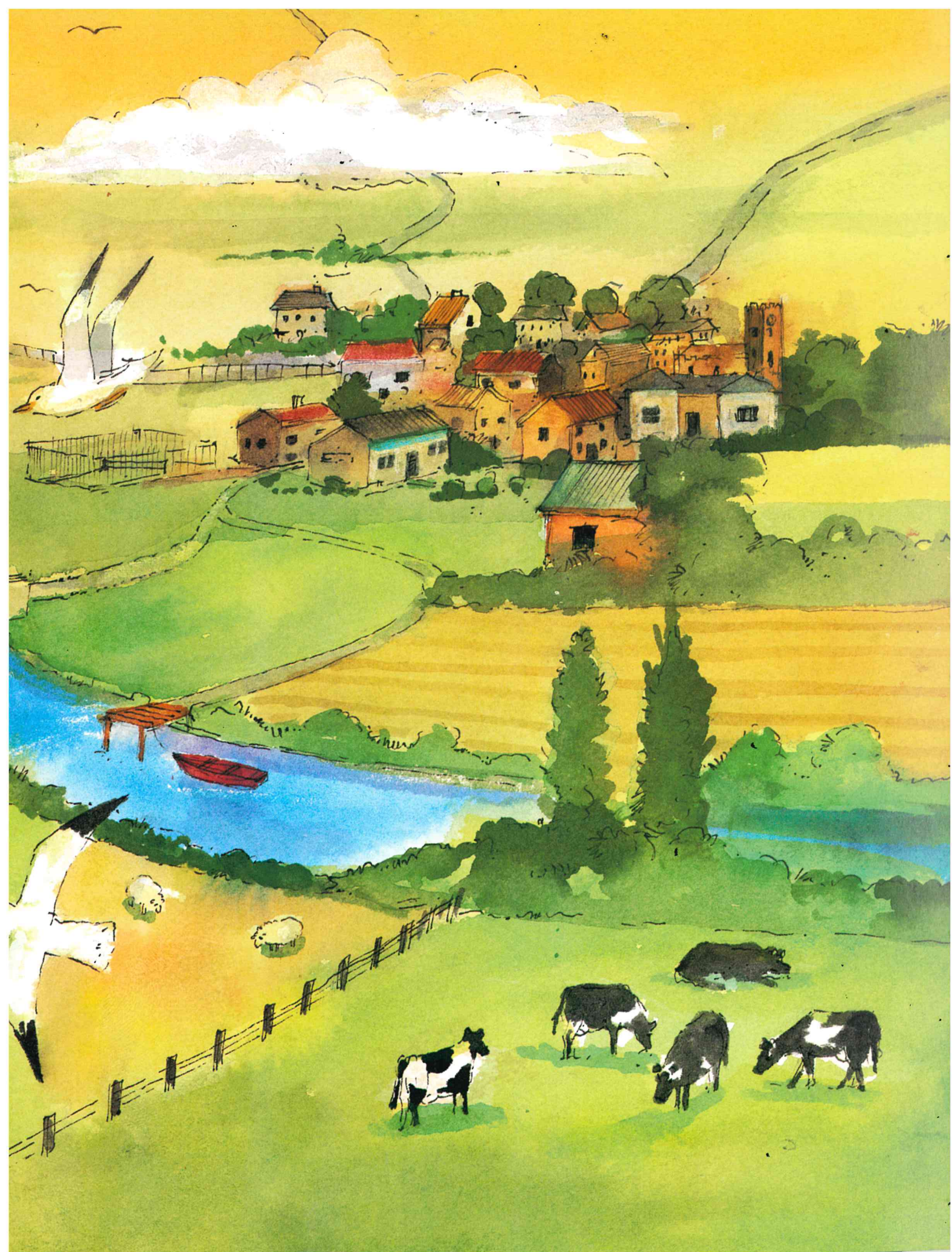




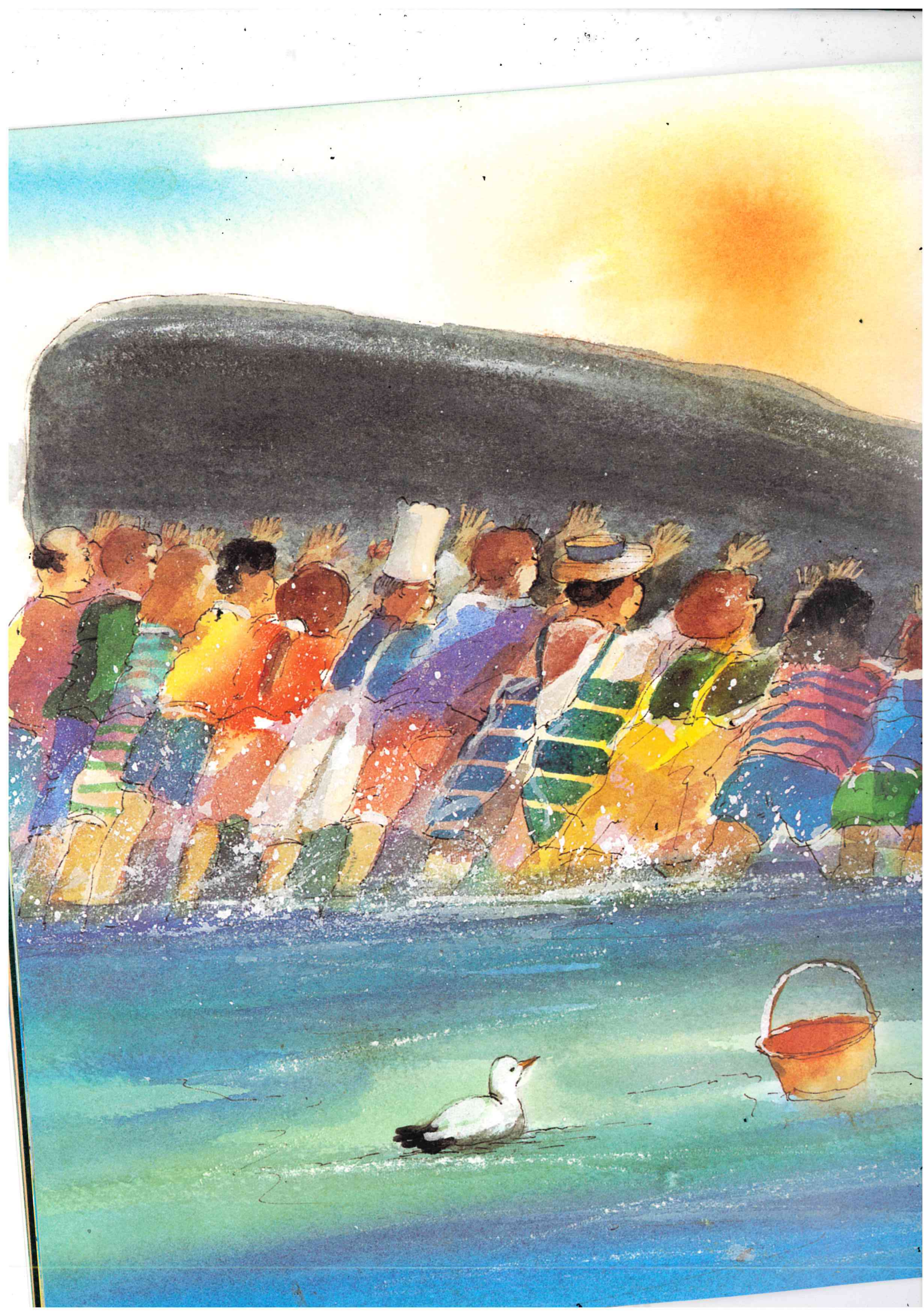
All the villagers came. The butcher,  
the baker, the electrician, the schoolchildren  
and their teachers, the grannies and the grandads.  
Some of them ran out of breath and were left behind.













"Hurry!" shouted Mrs Grinling as she saw them coming.

"The water's right in now, and it's time to push."

Everybody gathered round the whale.

"Ready, steady, push," called Mr Grinling.

They pushed and shoved and huffed and puffed until everybody was purple in the face. But the whale WAS moving. Slowly the water crept up his big, shiny sides until he was floating.

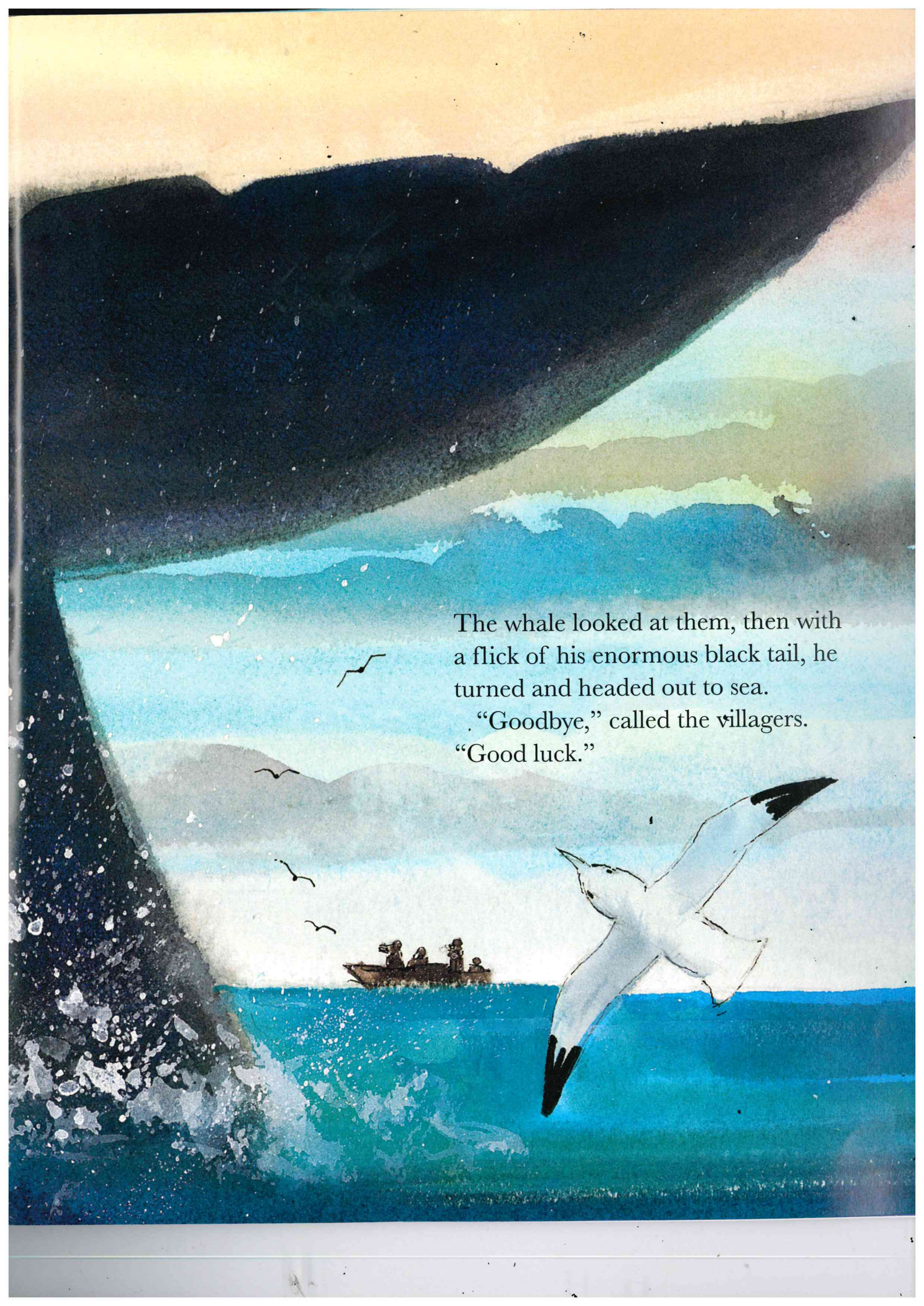




Everybody stopped pushing  
and watched.





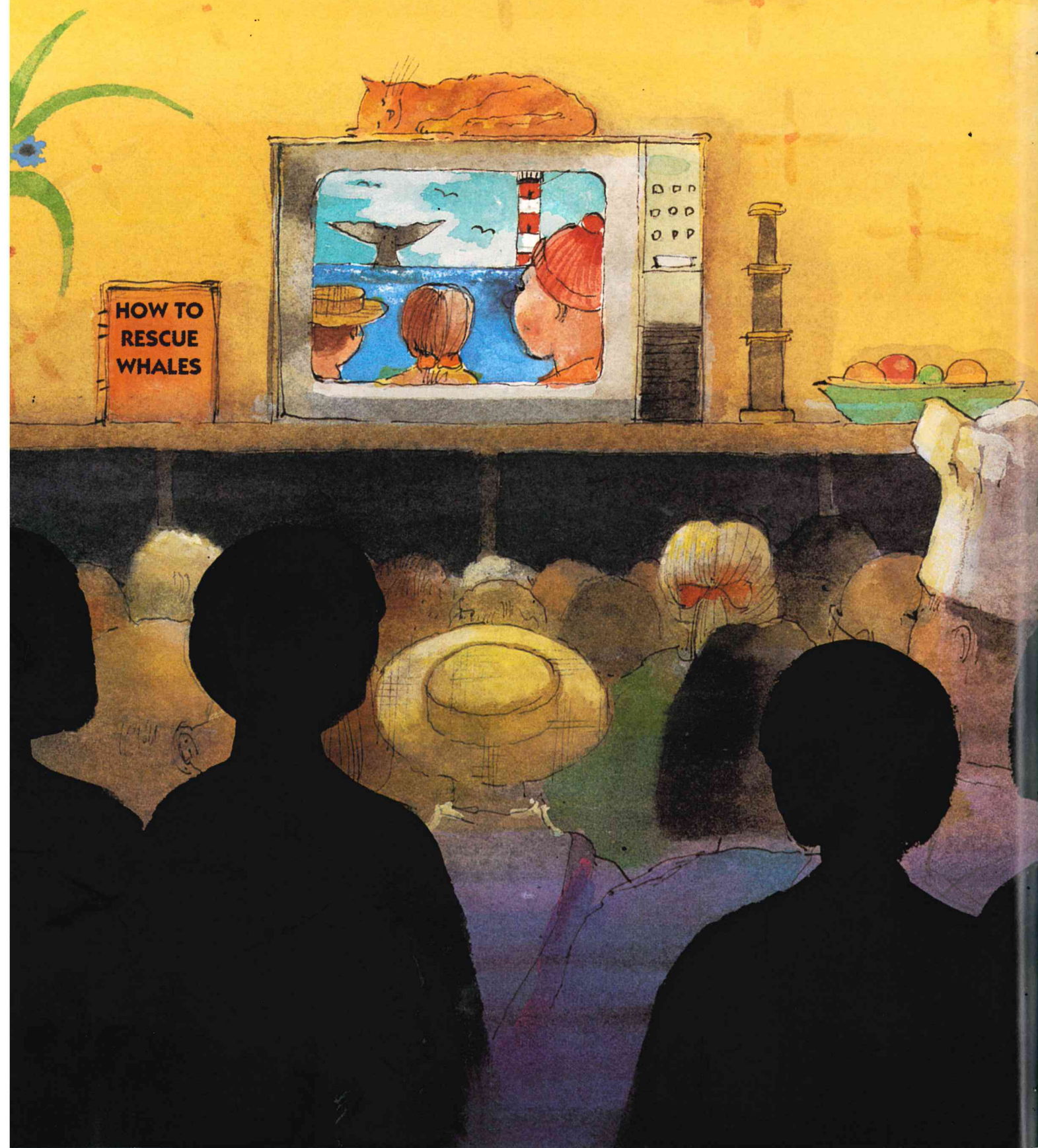


The whale looked at them, then with  
a flick of his enormous black tail, he  
turned and headed out to sea.

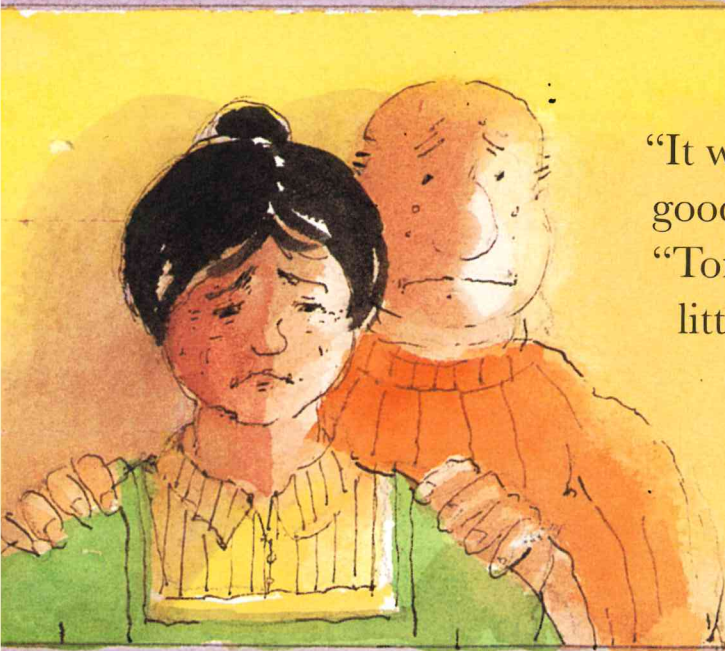
“Goodbye,” called the villagers.  
“Good luck.”



That evening the villagers and the Grinlings watched the whale rescue on the television news.







“It will soon be time for us to say  
goodbye,” said Mrs Grinling.

“Tomorrow we have to leave the  
little white cottage on the cliff.

But before we go we’ll have a  
farewell picnic. And we would  
like you all to come.”



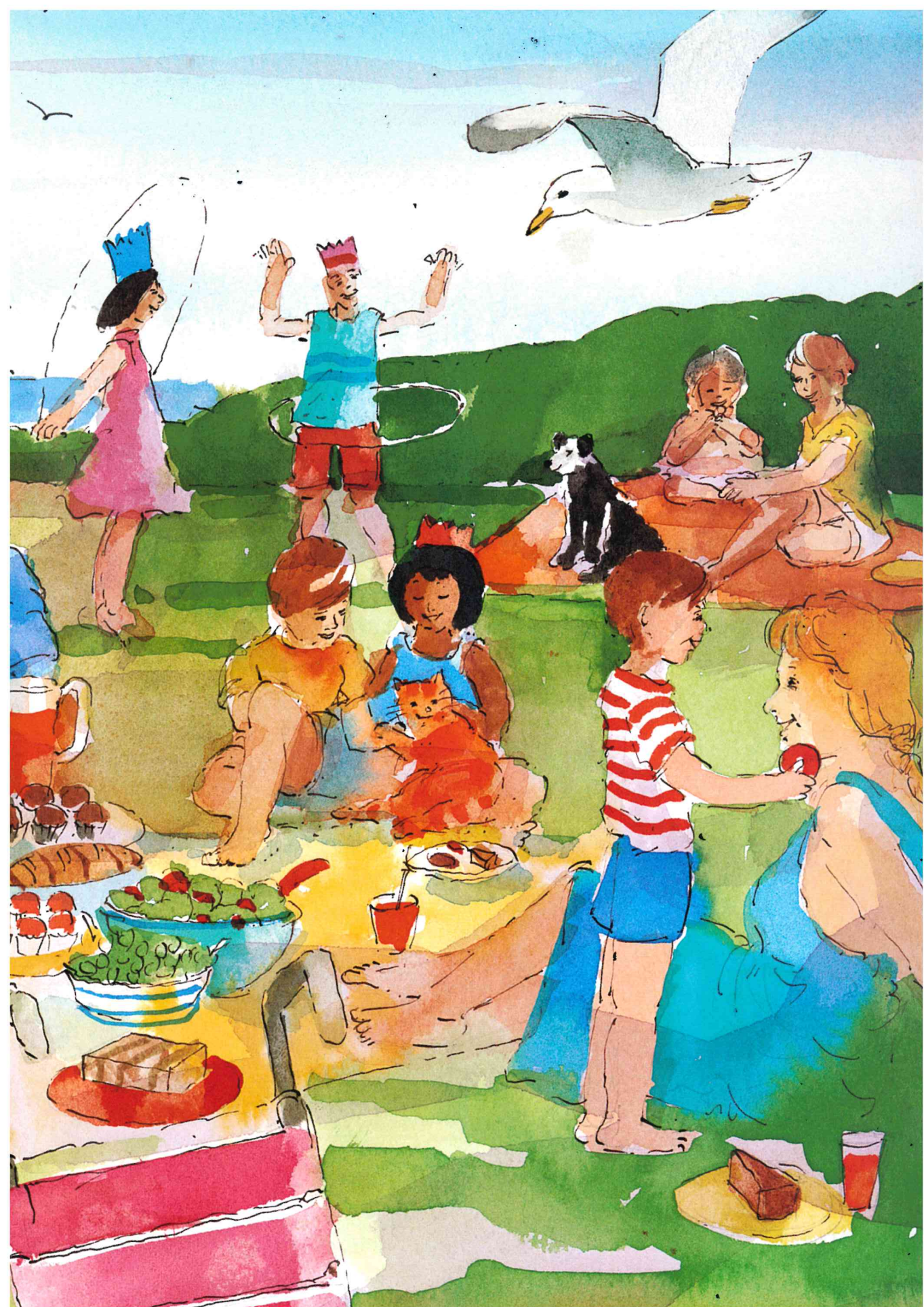


Everybody came. The butcher, the baker and the electrician,  
the children on their bikes and the babies in their pushchairs.  
It was a very merry affair.

Then three guests turned up, who had not been invited.











“We saw you on the television news,” explained the first inspector of lighthouses.

“Yes,” said the second inspector, “we were so proud of you and Mrs Grinling.”

“We want you to be the lighthouse keeper again,” said the third inspector, “but we will give you an assistant. You will work on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and he’ll do the rest of the week.”

Mr and Mrs Grinling were so delighted that they jumped up and down for joy.

“Three cheers for the inspectors of lighthouses,” shouted the villagers, “and three cheers for the Grinlings.”

