

THE TRUTH ABOUT DRAGONS

**Younger
Nominee**

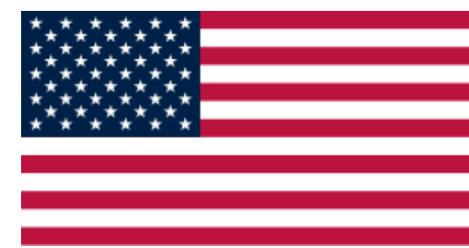
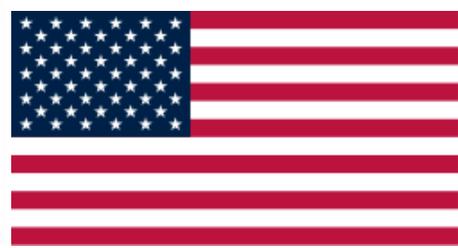


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Written by
Julie Leung



Illustrated by
Hanna Cha



The Truth About Dragons

Julie Leung - Author



Hanna Cha - Illustrator



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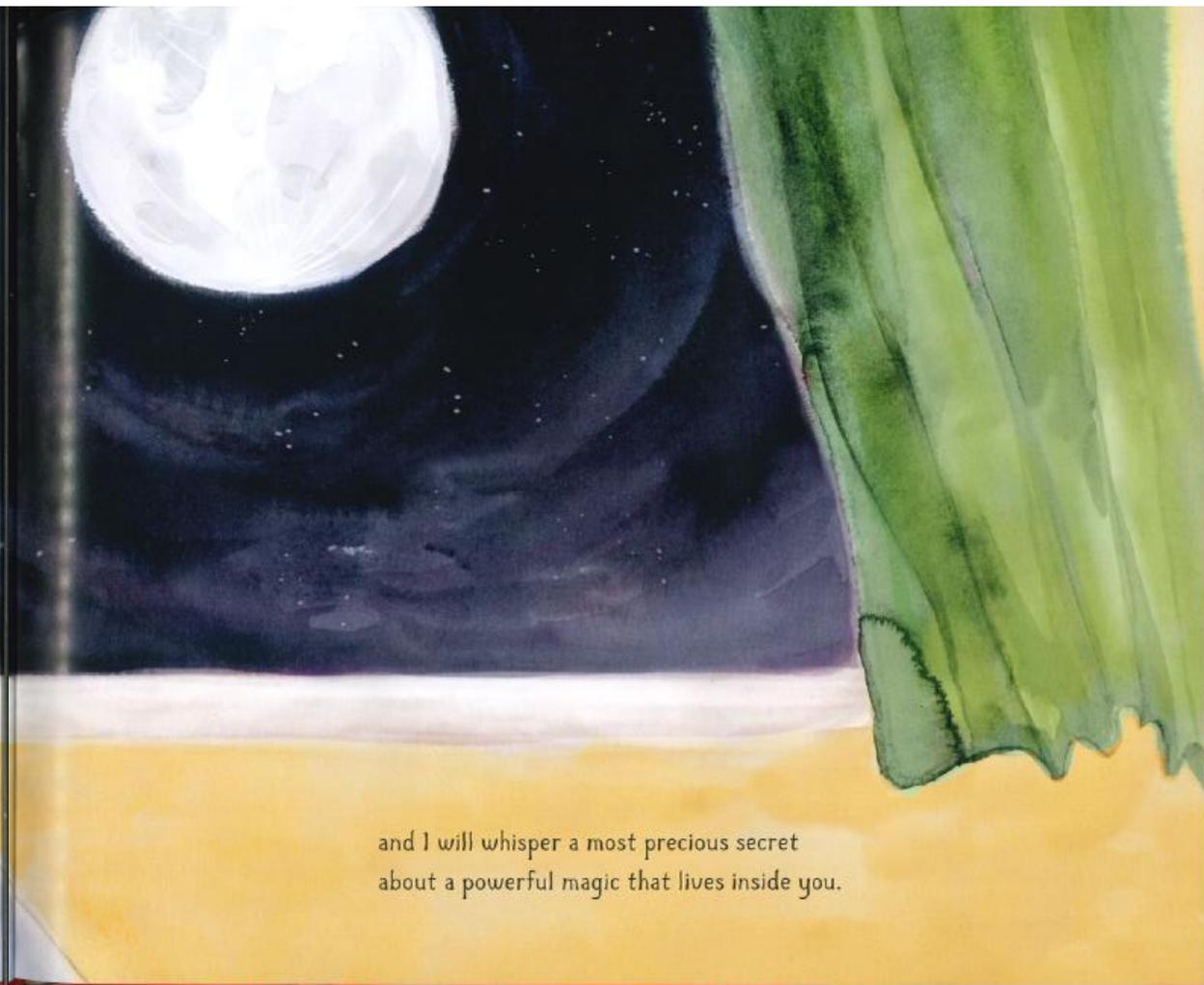
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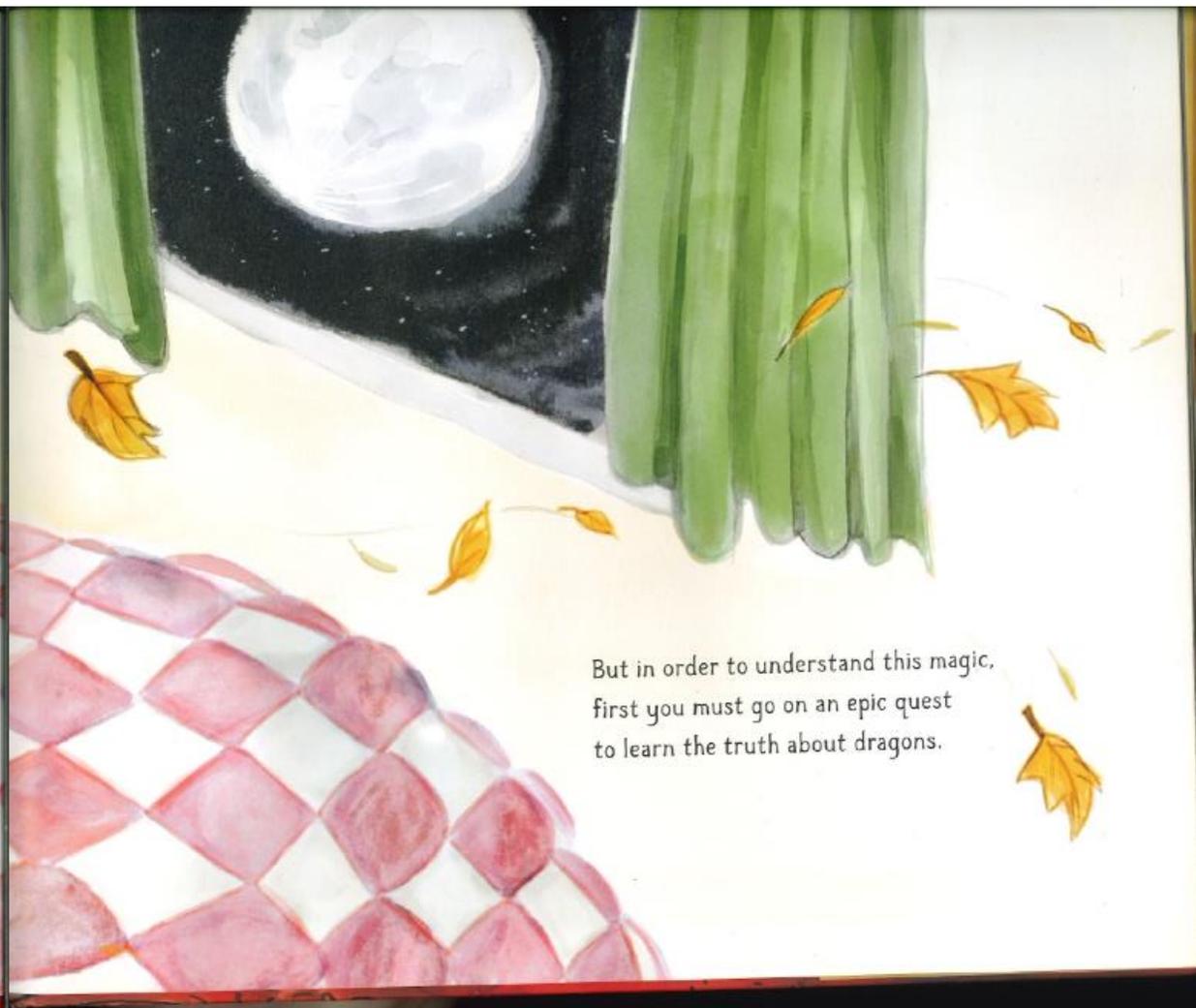


Illustrated by
Hanna Cha

Lean in close, my darling bao bei,



and I will whisper a most precious secret
about a powerful magic that lives inside you.



But in order to understand this magic,
first you must go on an epic quest
to learn the truth about dragons.

You must put your favorite cloak around your shoulders and your sturdiest boots upon your feet.



Leave on a day when the air is crisp as new paper, the wind is gentle, and the skies are clear.



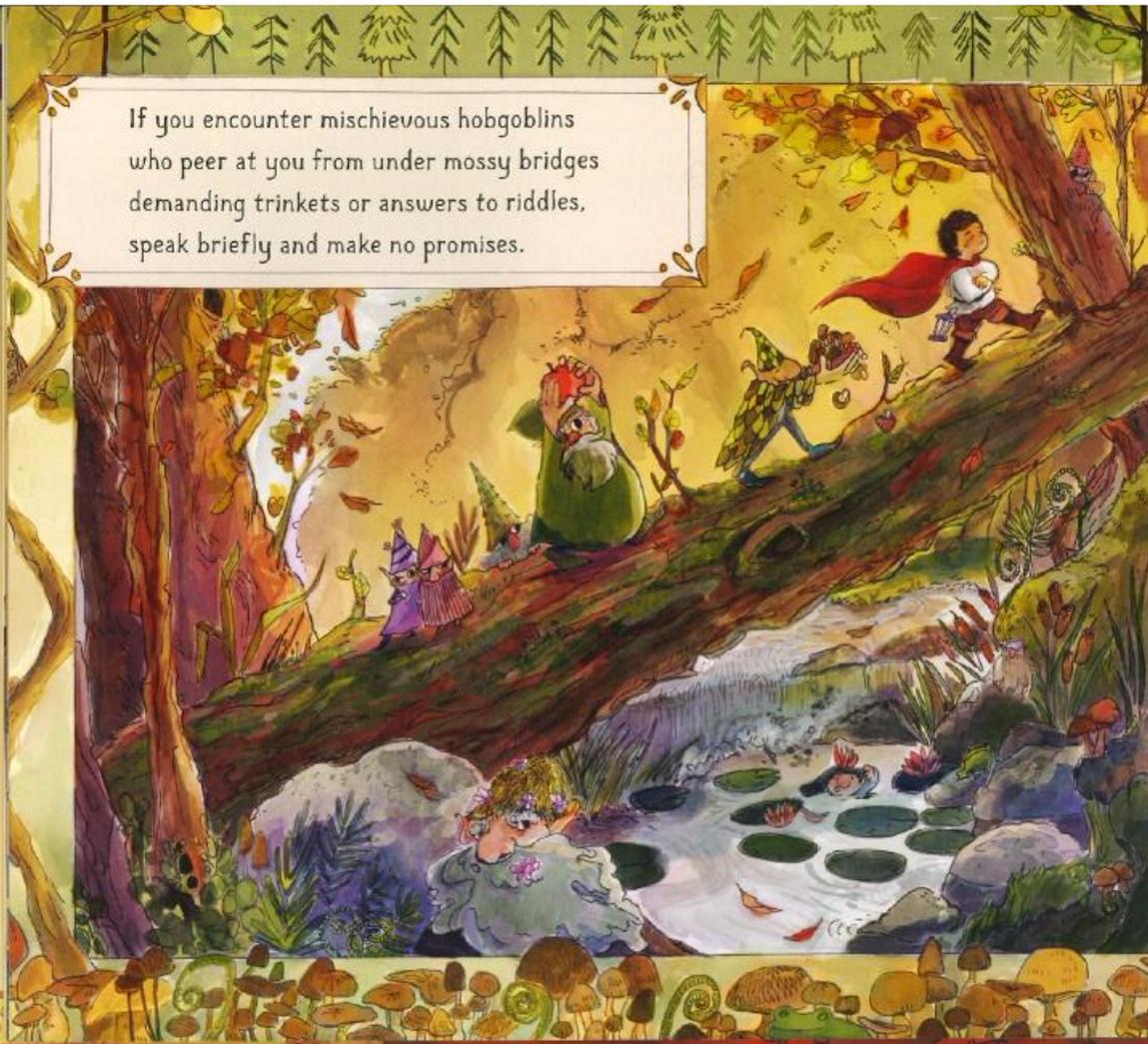
You will journey into the deepest heart of the forest.
Follow the brook as it winds through the gnarled groves.



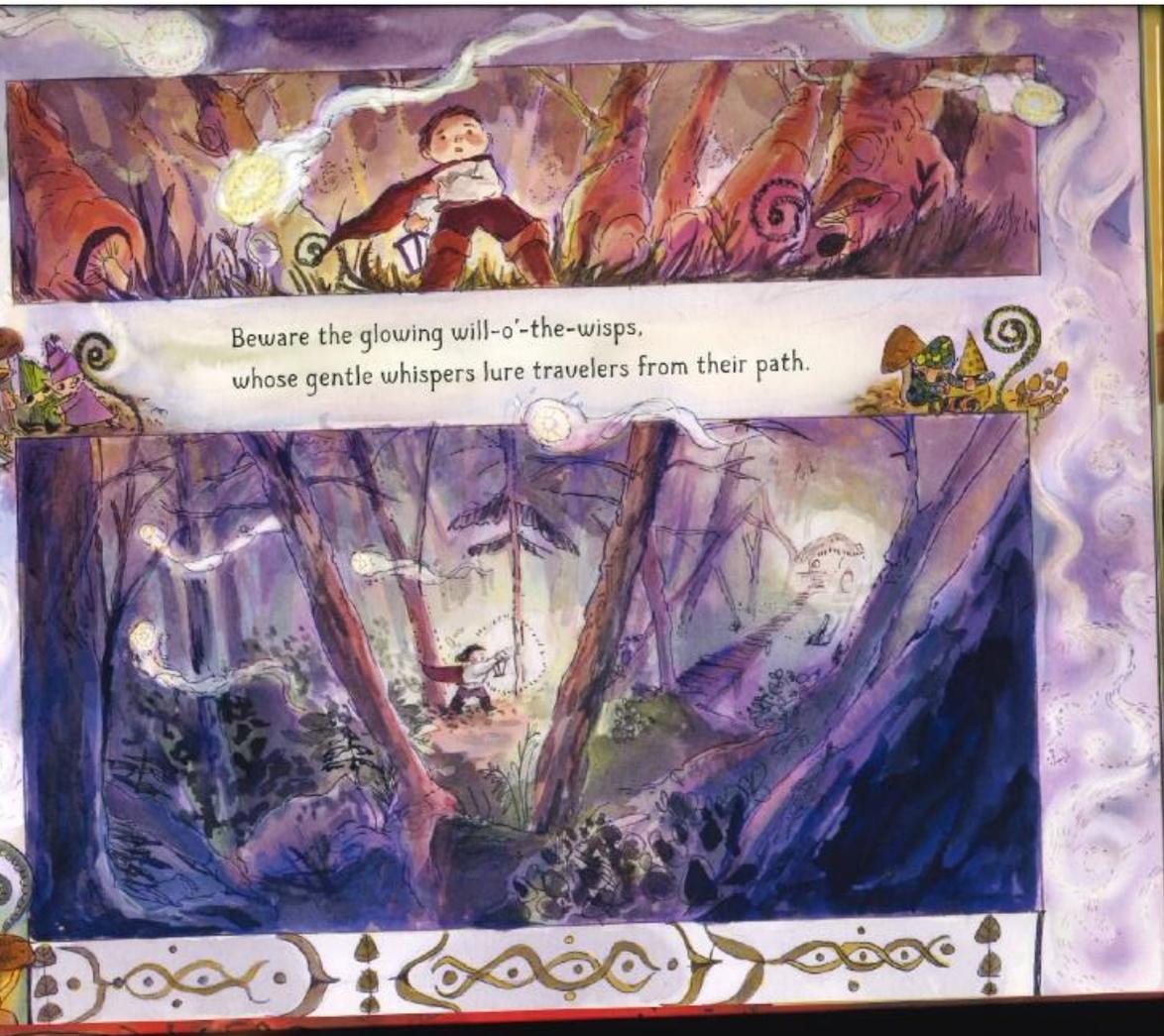
Dried oak leaves will crunch beneath your steps
as honey-colored sunlight trickles down from the treetops.



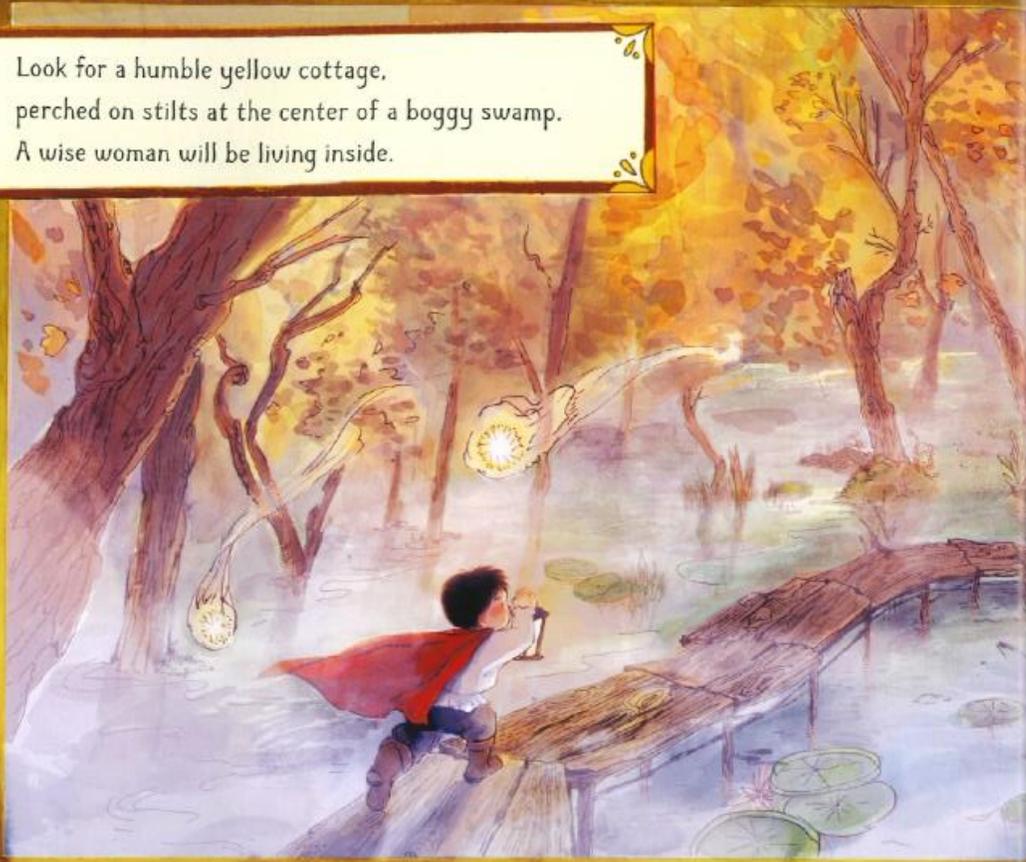
If you encounter mischievous hobgoblins who peer at you from under mossy bridges demanding trinkets or answers to riddles, speak briefly and make no promises.



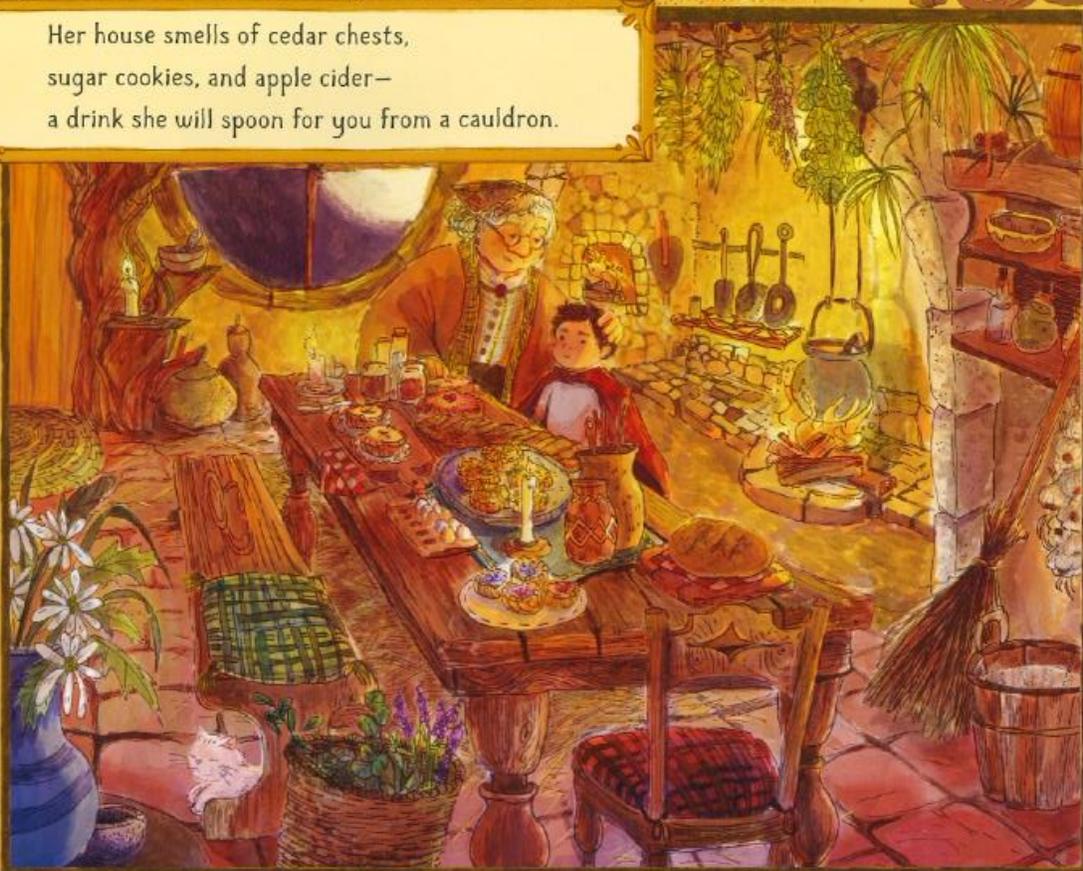
Beware the glowing will-o'-the-wisps, whose gentle whispers lure travelers from their path.



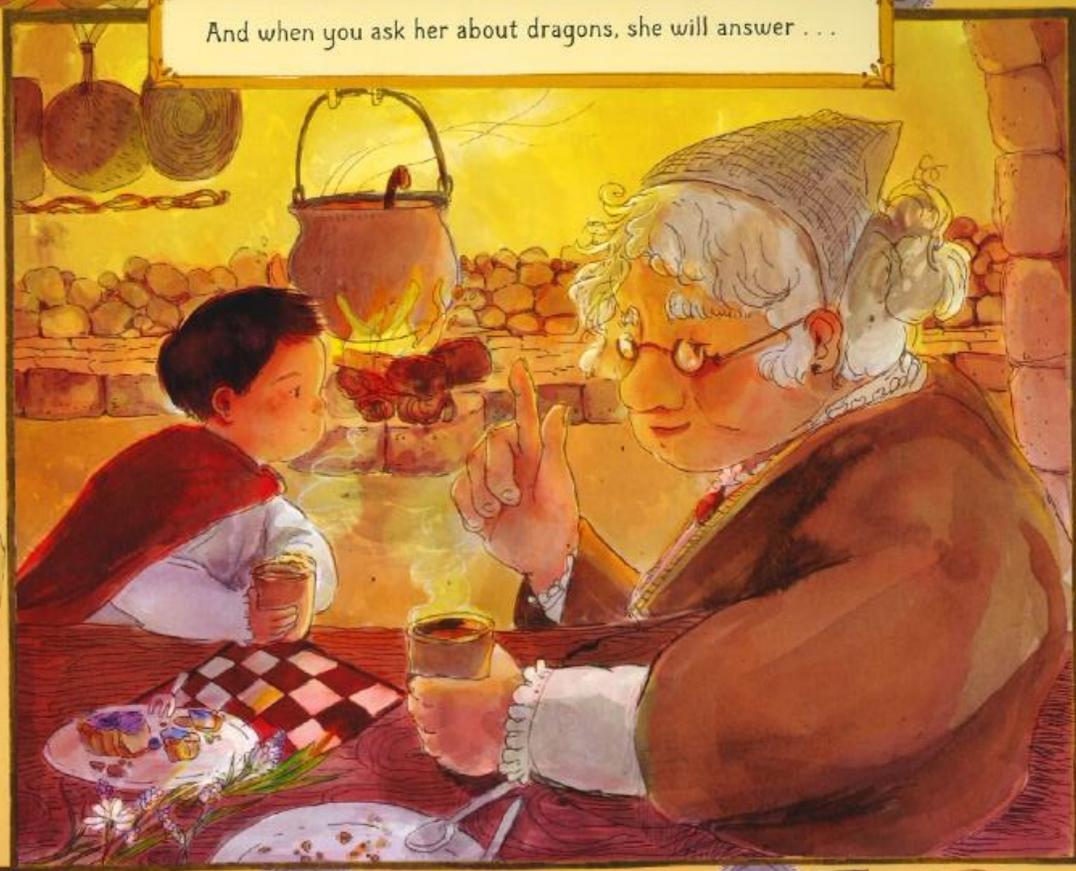
Look for a humble yellow cottage,
perched on stilts at the center of a boggy swamp.
A wise woman will be living inside.



Her house smells of cedar chests,
sugar cookies, and apple cider—
a drink she will spoon for you from a cauldron.



And when you ask her about dragons, she will answer . . .



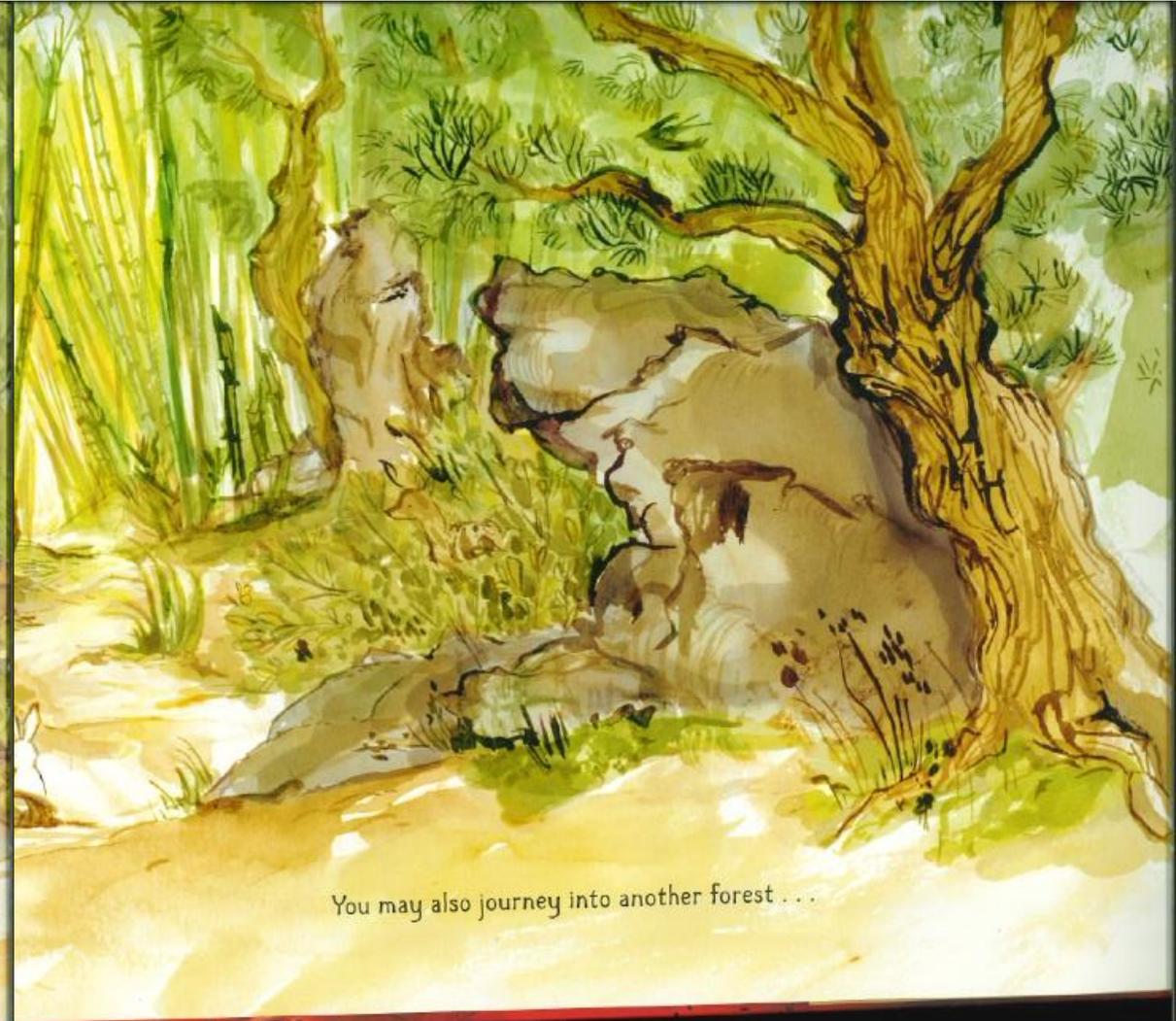
"Dragons are fearsome and fire-breathing, my child,
with wings like a bat's and the body of a lizard.
Piercing horns grace their reptilian heads!





"They live deep underground,
hoarding piles of treasure.
Many a foolish knight has failed
in their pursuit of a dragon's
gold and fortune."

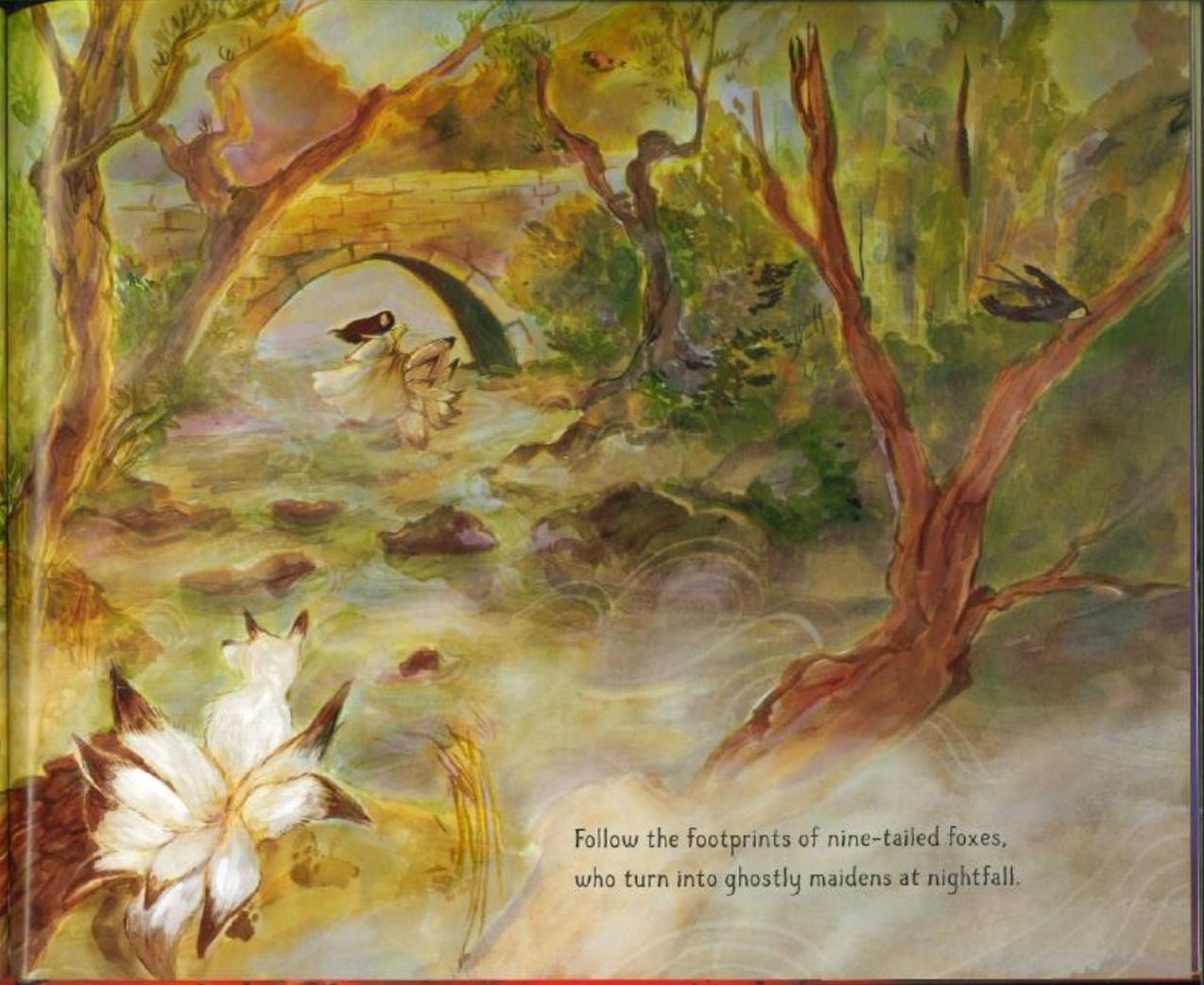
And that would be
one truth about dragons.



You may also journey into another forest . . .

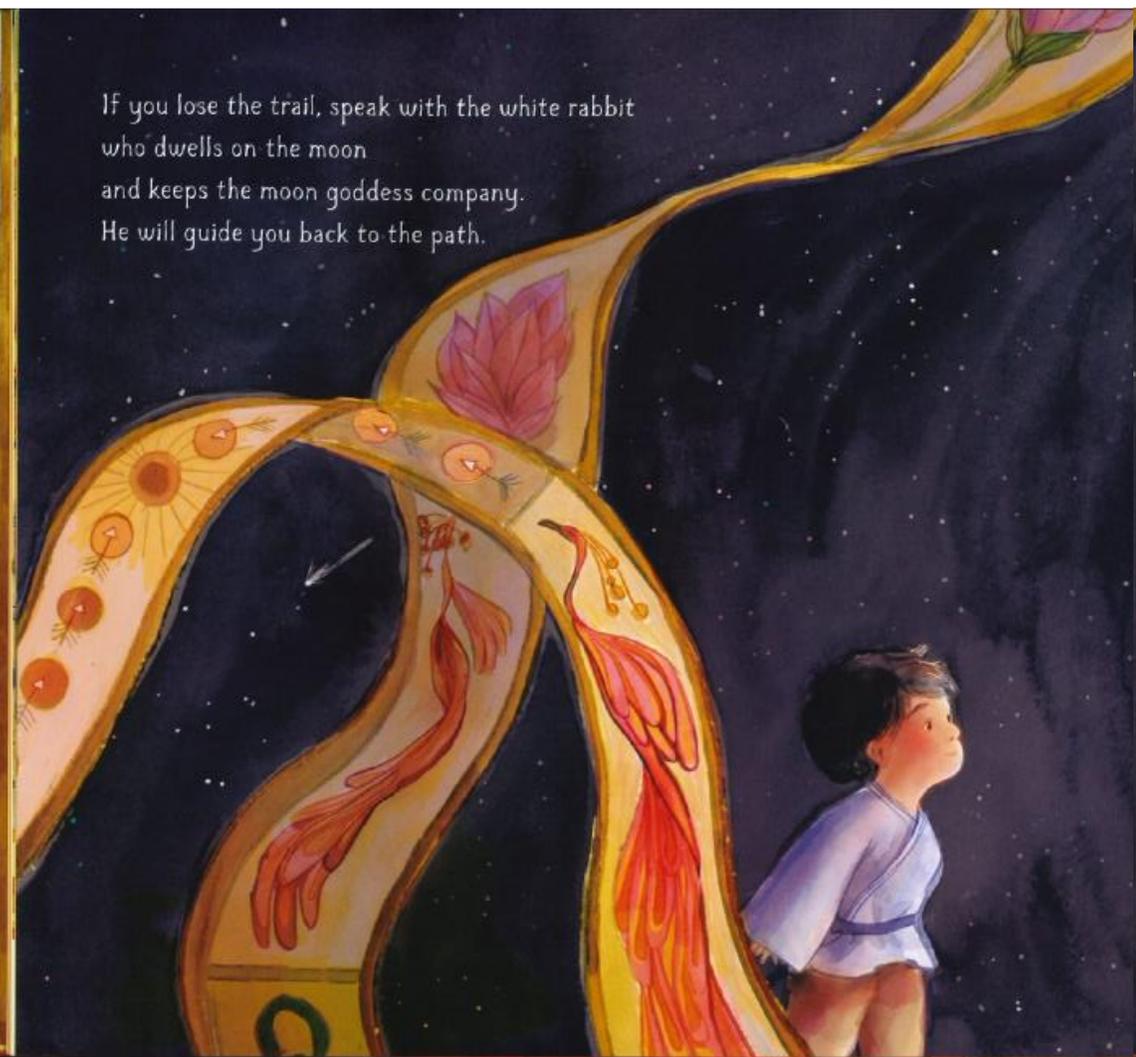
A young boy with dark hair, wearing a light blue long-sleeved shirt and brown pants, is walking along a dirt path through a dense bamboo forest. The bamboo stalks are tall and green, with some leaves falling around him. The ground is a mix of dirt and fallen bamboo leaves. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

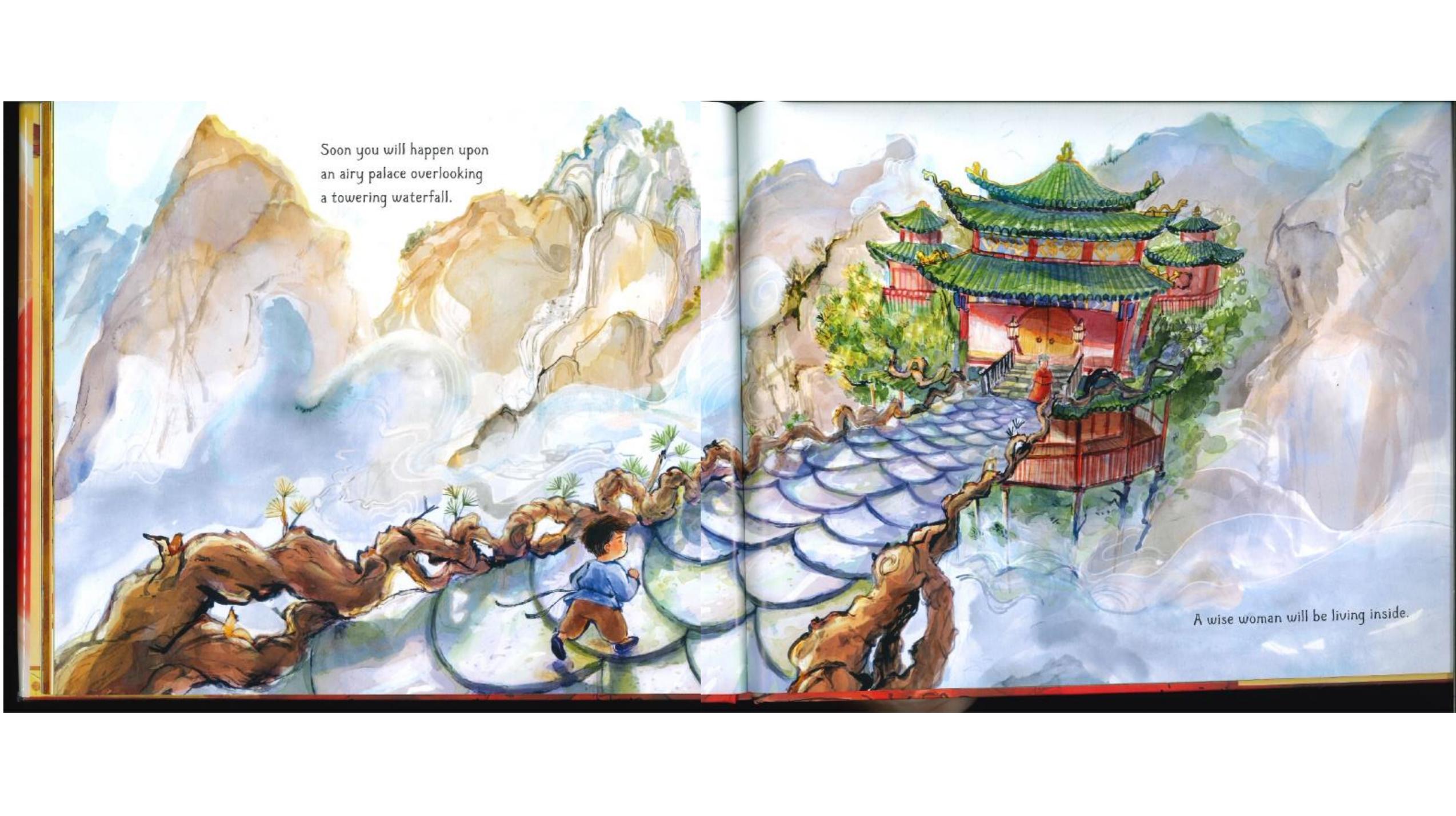
This one of towering green bamboo,
crackling and swishing in the breeze.
A sticky mist clings to jagged mountaintops,
and crickets chirrup a merry tune.

A white fox with nine tails is sitting on a rock in the foreground, looking towards a stream. The stream flows through a lush, green forest with large, gnarled trees. In the background, a stone archway spans the stream, and a figure is visible under it. The scene is misty and atmospheric, with soft lighting.

Follow the footprints of nine-tailed foxes,
who turn into ghostly maidens at nightfall.

If you lose the trail, speak with the white rabbit
who dwells on the moon
and keeps the moon goddess company.
He will guide you back to the path.



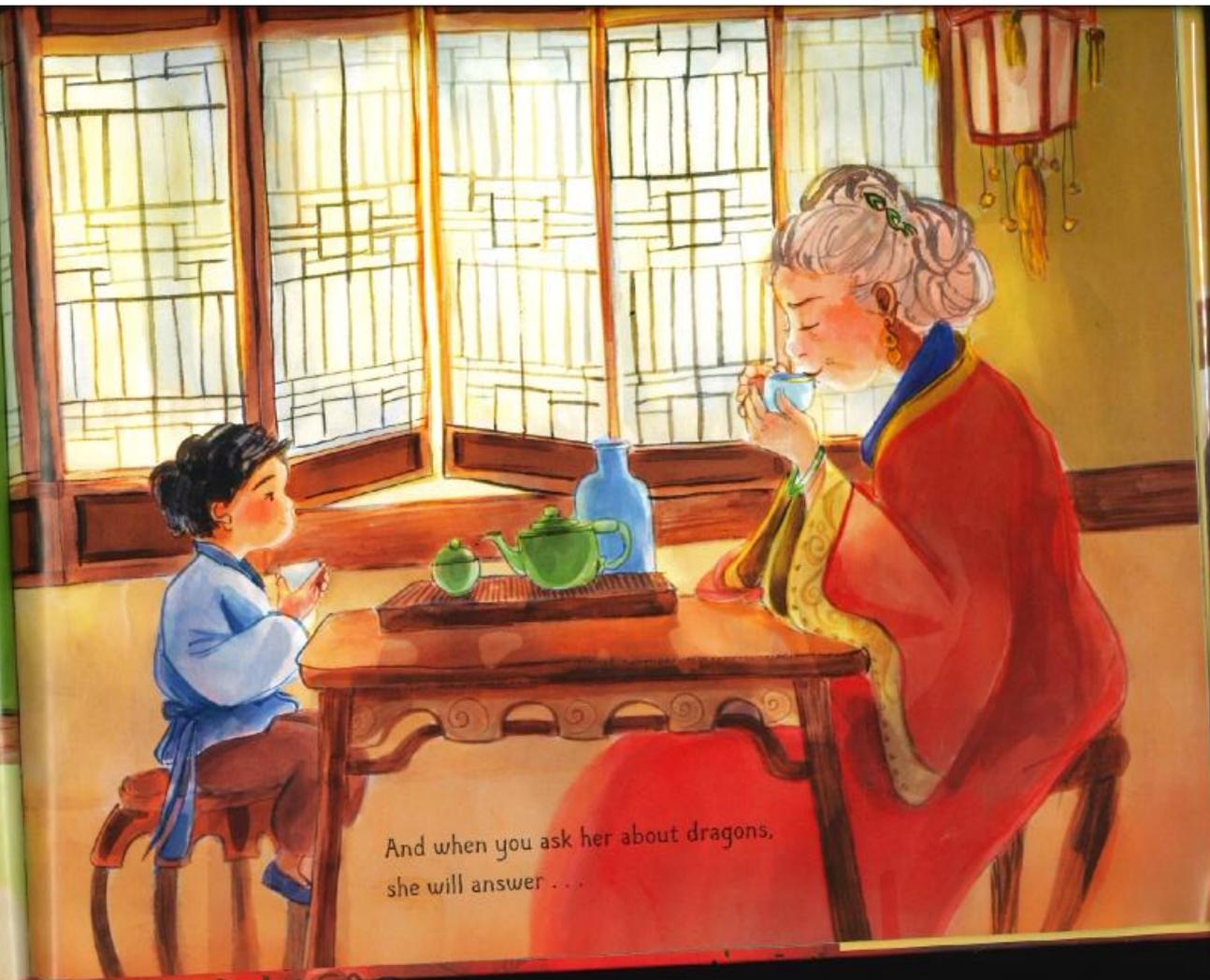


Soon you will happen upon
an airy palace overlooking
a towering waterfall.

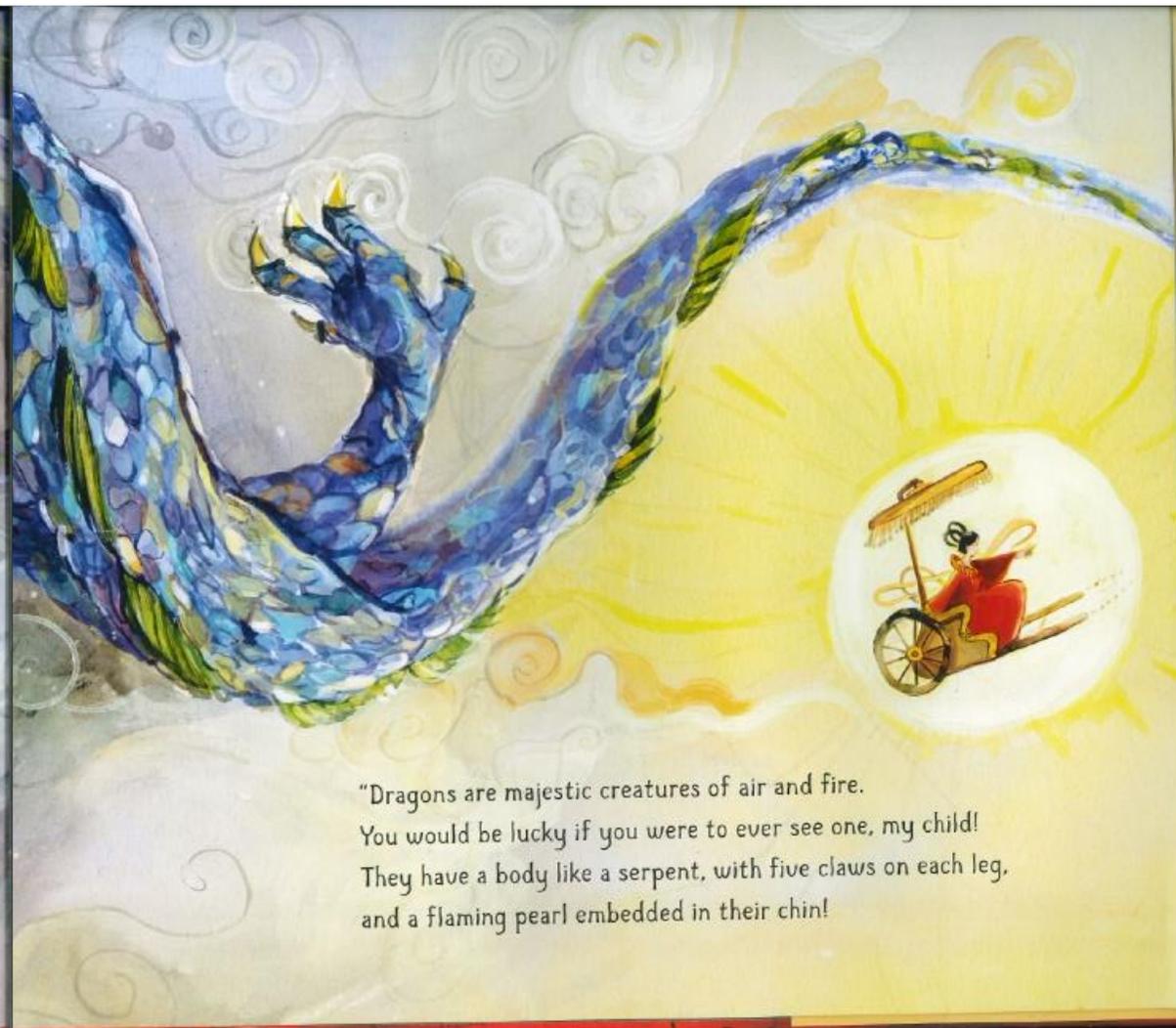
A wise woman will be living inside.



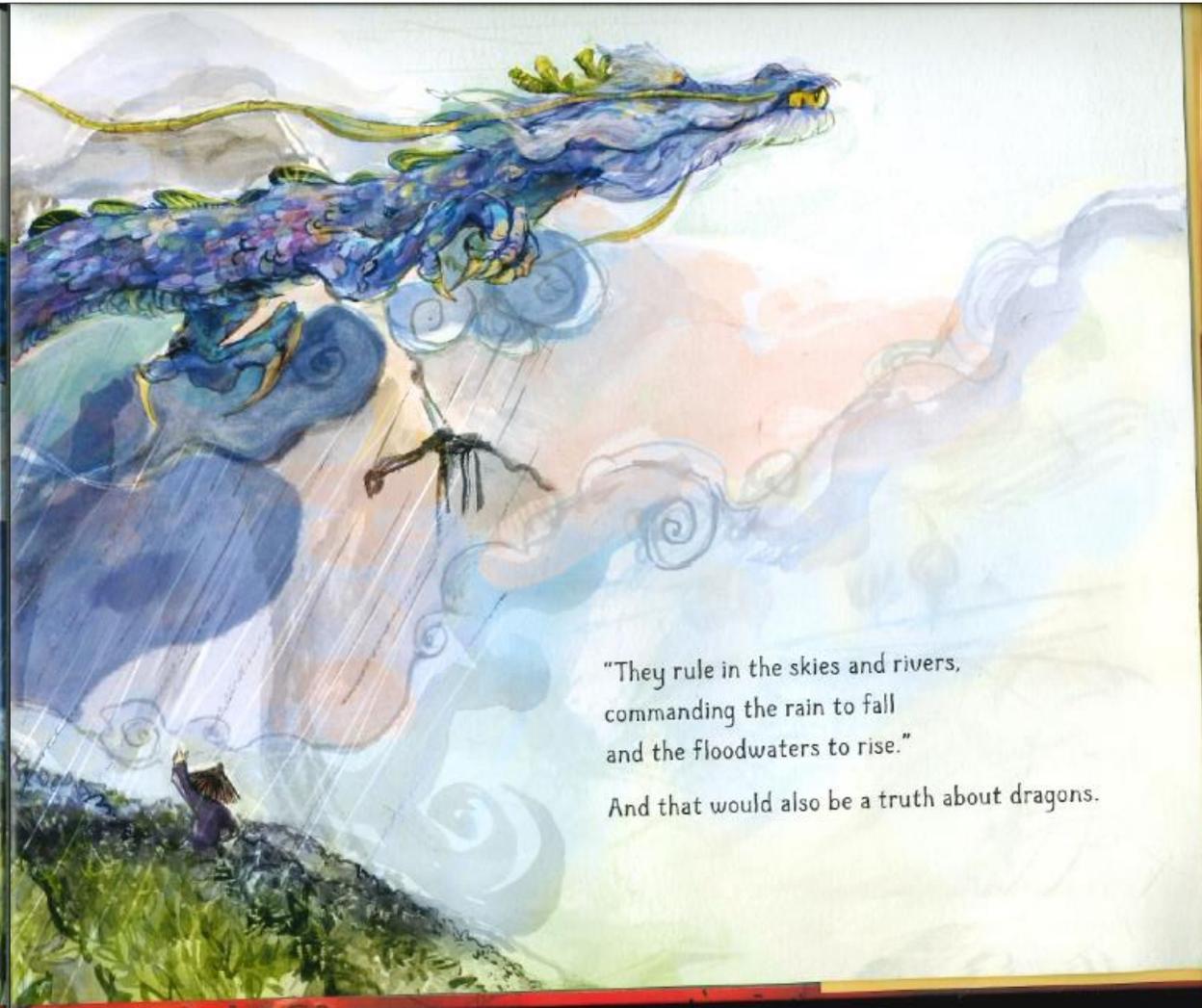
In a sitting room that smells of incense and jasmine rice,
she will serve you chrysanthemum tea in a delicate porcelain bowl.



And when you ask her about dragons,
she will answer . . .



"Dragons are majestic creatures of air and fire.
You would be lucky if you were to ever see one, my child!
They have a body like a serpent, with five claws on each leg,
and a flaming pearl embedded in their chin!"

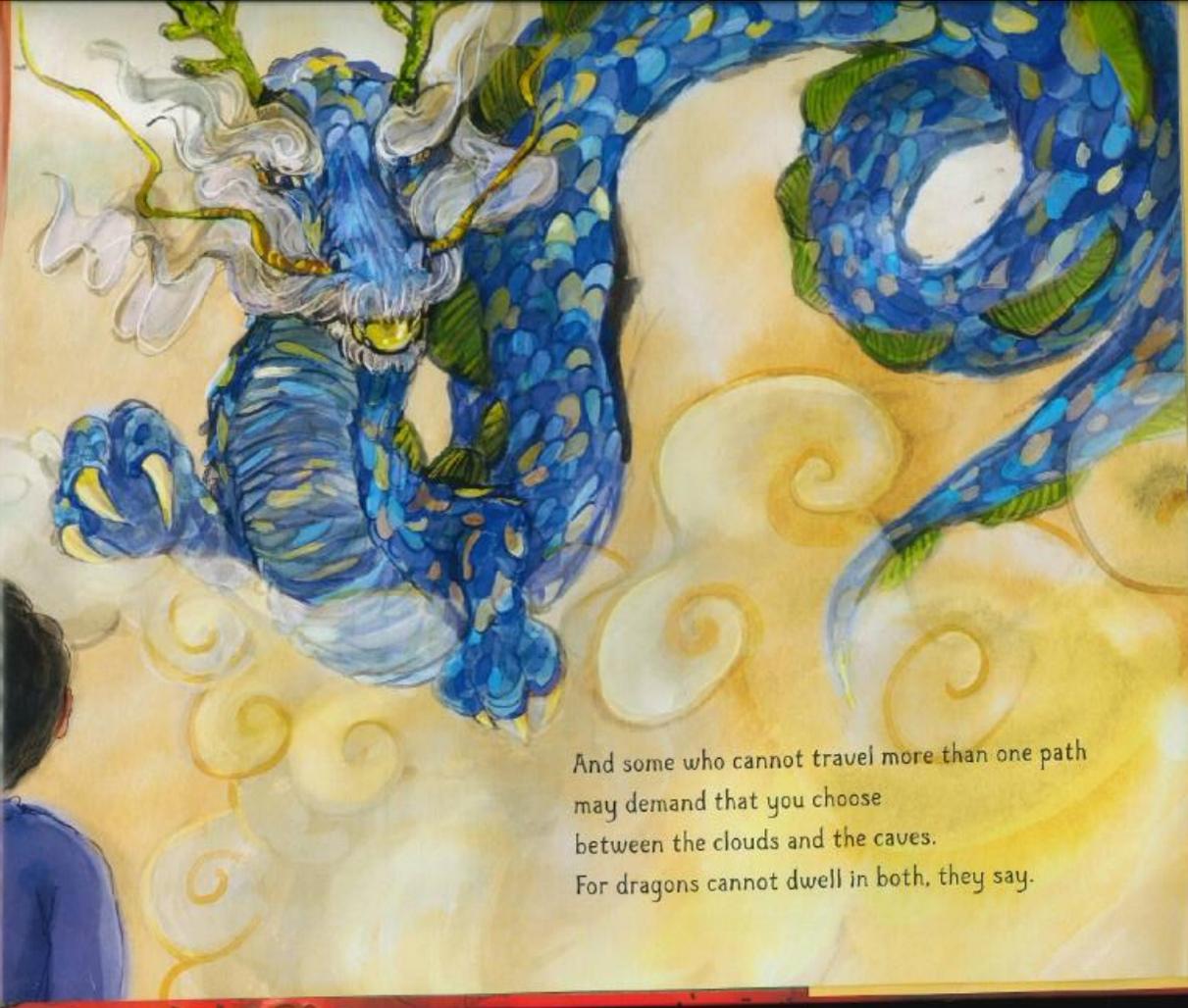


"They rule in the skies and rivers,
commanding the rain to fall
and the floodwaters to rise."

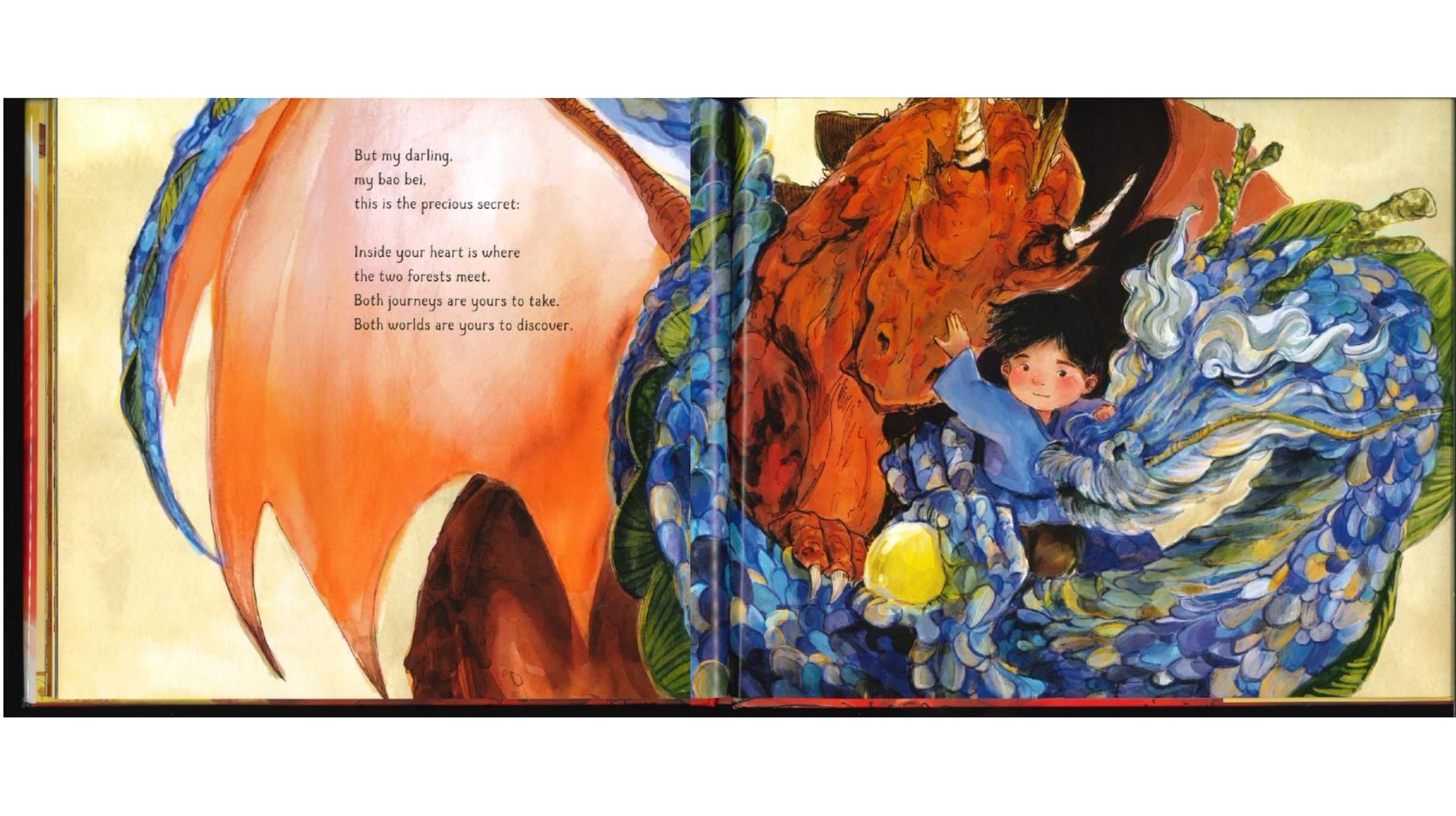
And that would also be a truth about dragons.



Most adventurers have only one
story to call their own.



And some who cannot travel more than one path
may demand that you choose
between the clouds and the caves.
For dragons cannot dwell in both, they say.



But my darling,
my bao bei,
this is the precious secret:

Inside your heart is where
the two forests meet.
Both journeys are yours to take.
Both worlds are yours to discover.

And two wise grandmothers await
to share with you
their truths about dragons.

