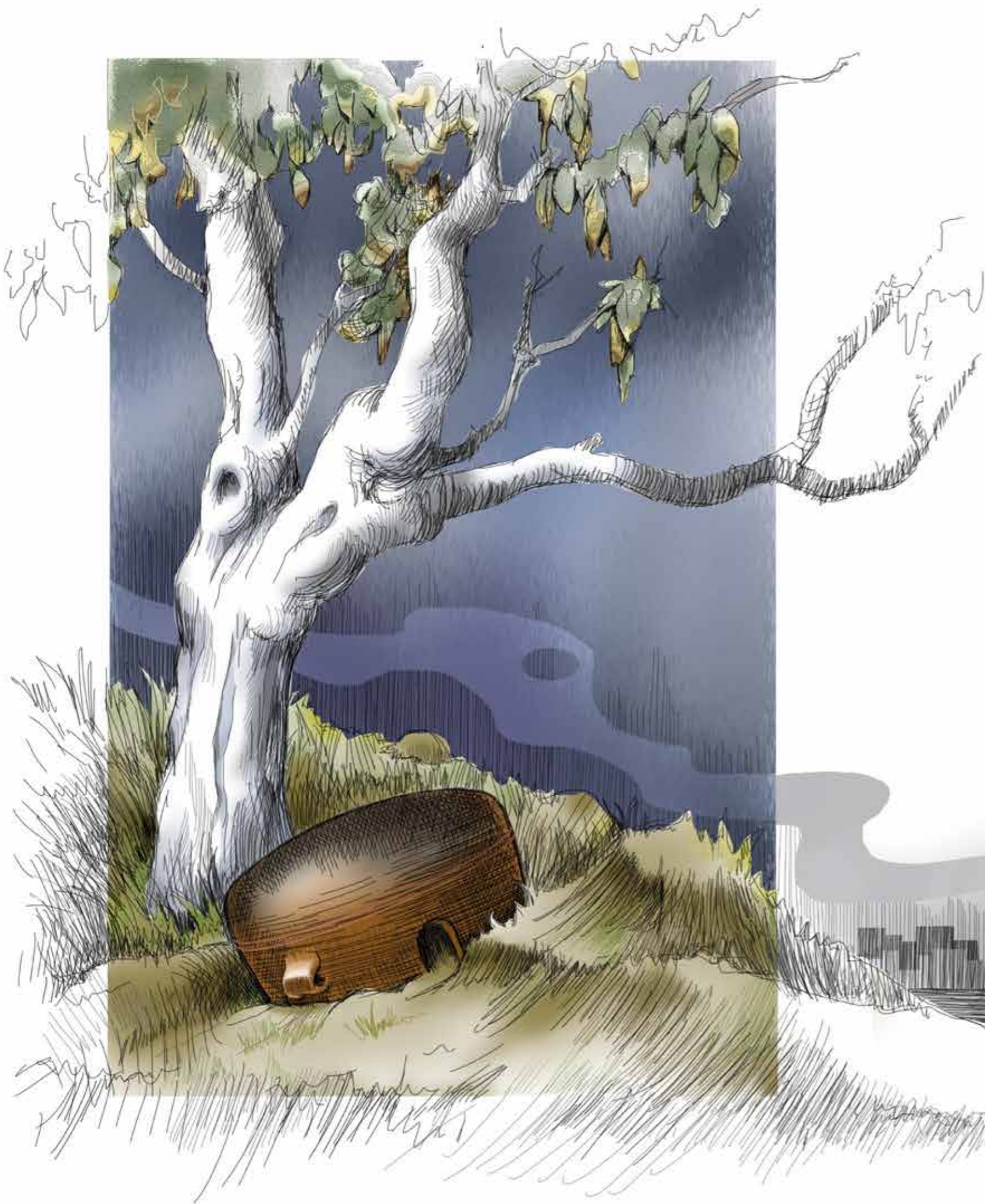


GEORGIA GALANOPOULOU

Voraka, Koraka
and
Fani's Sonata

ILLUSTRATION VANGELIS PAVLIDIS





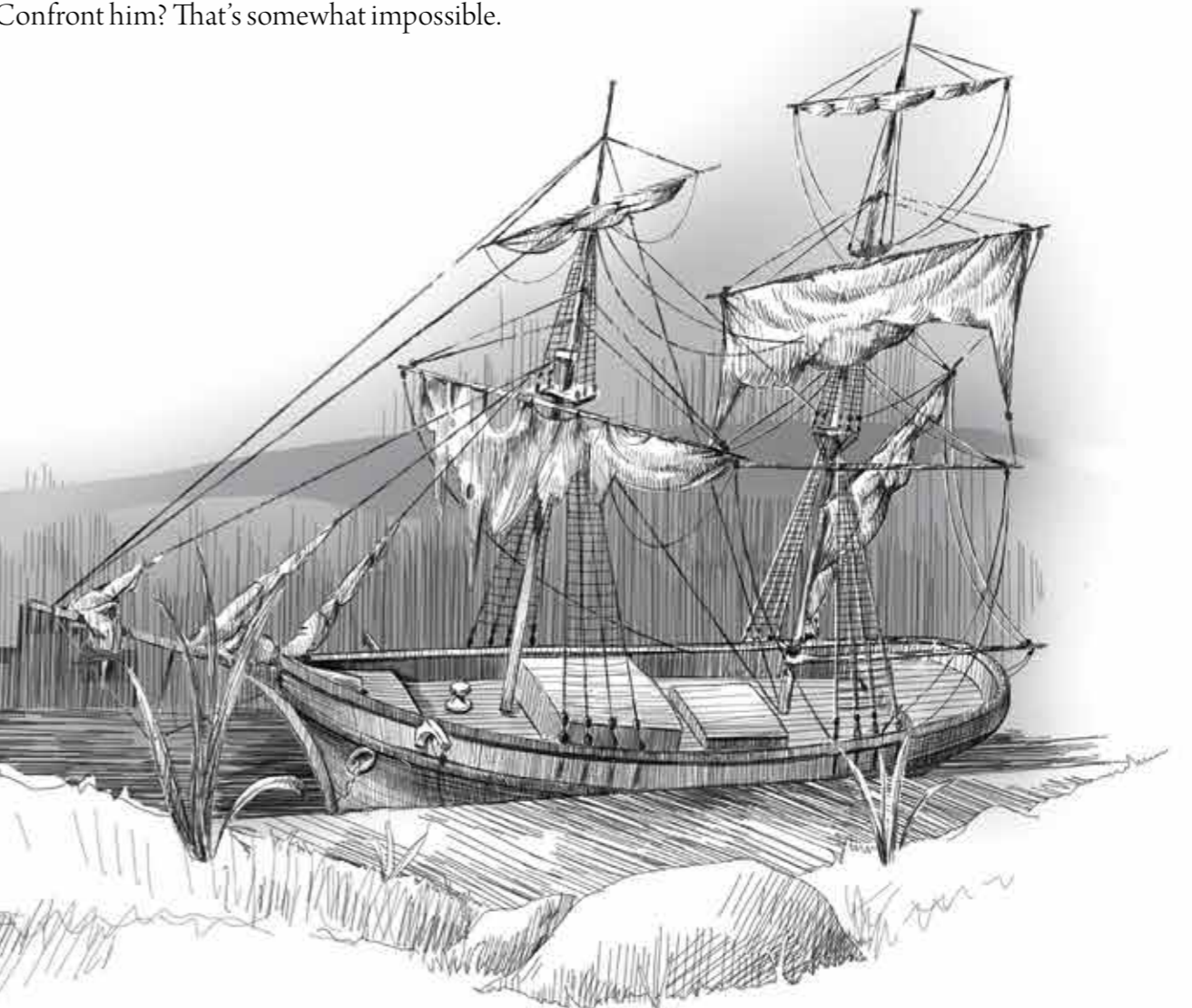
Long long time ago,
when the shore with the ocean
were exchanging kisses with emotion,
where the whitetree that bloomed and shone
now stands withered and all alone,
once dwelled someone known as Fani
sparkling, glittering and sunny.
In fact, the older generation is certain and
insists
that Fani's place still exists
in the old clay pot by the whitetree's trunk!

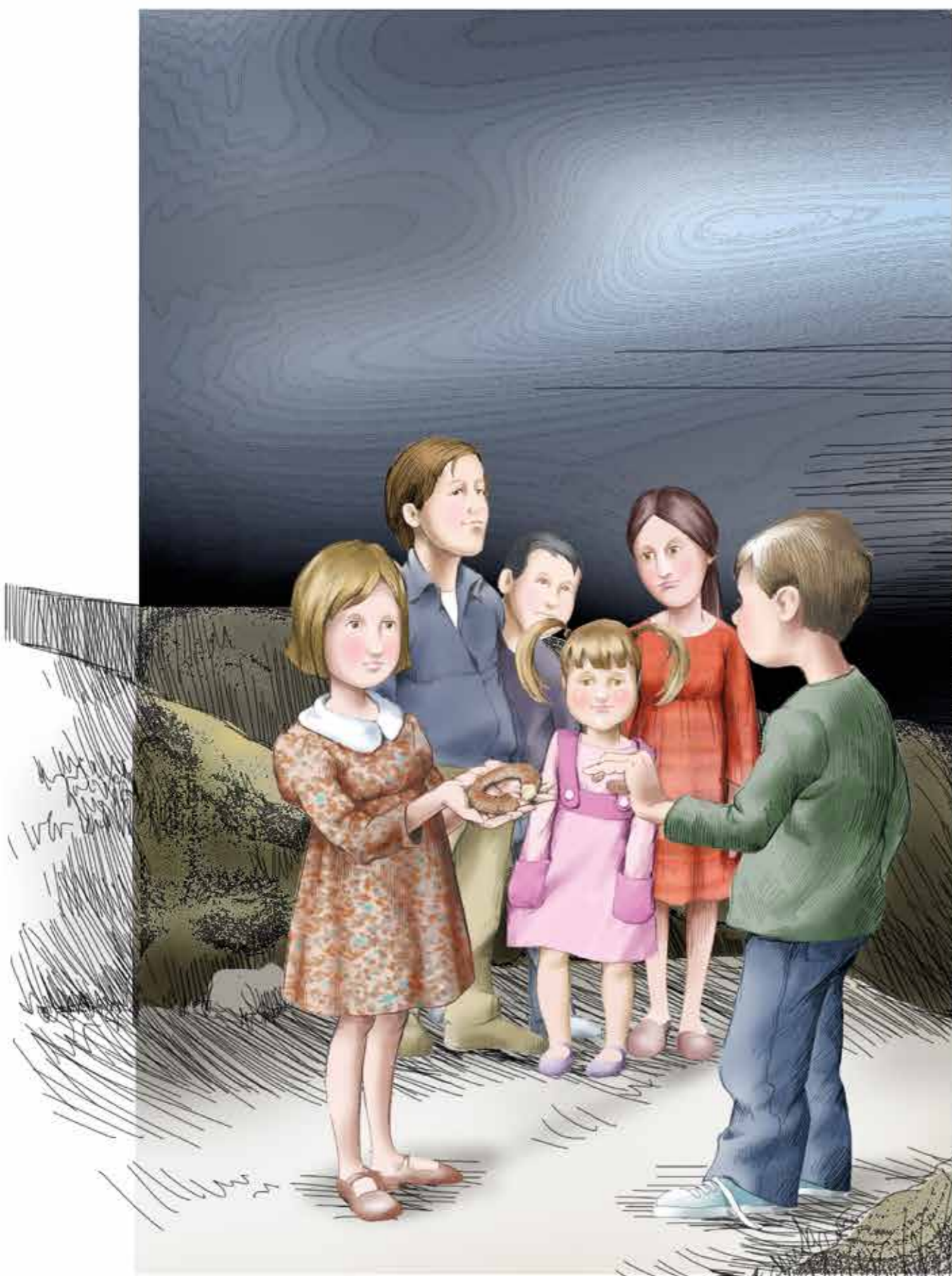
Would anyone say without fear
how did Fani disappear?
Along with the sun, wind and rain
and draining the ocean with a mighty drain?

Some people think Voraka is responsible
Confront him? That's somewhat impossible.

See his ship? Standing like a wooden fort
way down the road in the waterless port?
Voraka sleeps inside and snores
with eyes half-open, behind locked doors.
But, sometimes, in the middle of the night,
he wakes up hungry and looks for a bite
to munch outside
on the cold creaking deck.
What a dark, spooky sight,
what an awesome old wreck!

Are you bold enough, fearless and daring?
If so, you could hear him swearing
at himself and Koraka, his tricky assistant!
And if you're lucky and a little bit cheered
you might find out how Fani disappeared
along with the sun, wind and rain
and draining the ocean with a mighty drain.



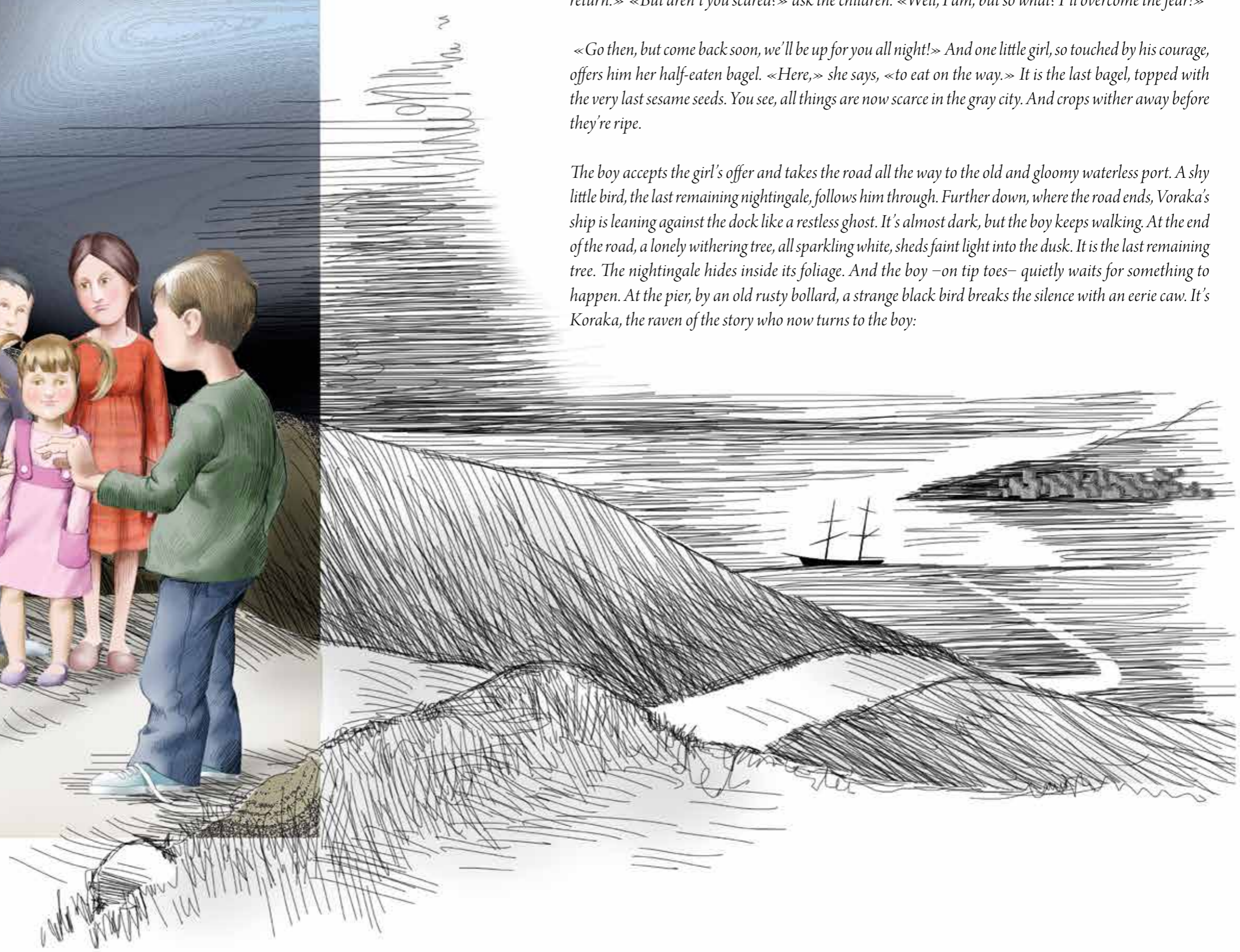


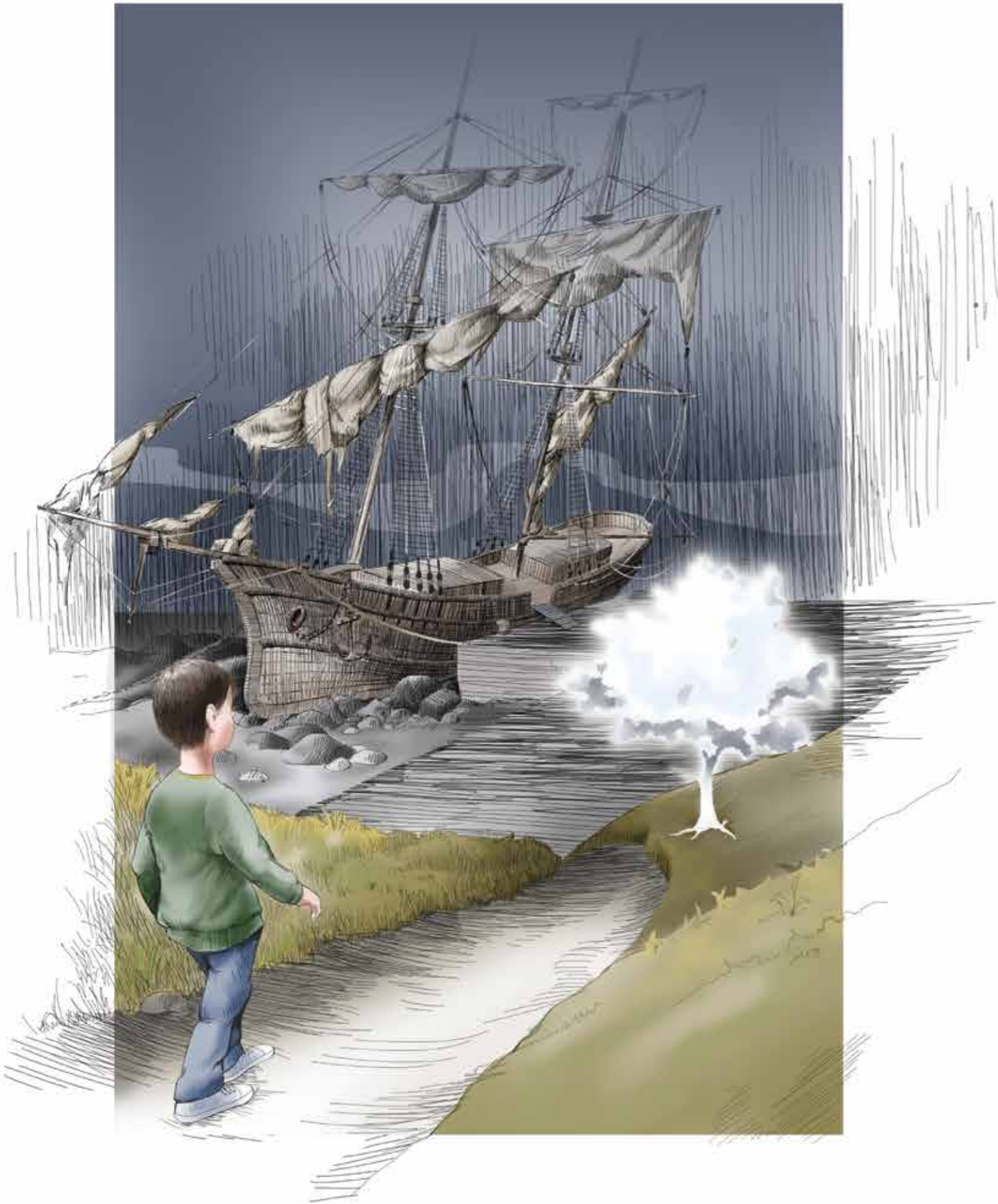
So said the legend told over and over by old and young in the distant gray city. The children knew it by heart and their pulses pounded each time they looked out to the waterless port where the old ship stood. Of all the children though, one little boy was awfully daring.

«I'm going!» he says one day. «I'll find out where Fani went. What she looked like, and if she's ever to return.» «But aren't you scared?» ask the children. «Well, I am, but so what? I'll overcome the fear!»

«Go then, but come back soon, we'll be up for you all night!» And one little girl, so touched by his courage, offers him her half-eaten bagel. «Here,» she says, «to eat on the way.» It is the last bagel, topped with the very last sesame seeds. You see, all things are now scarce in the gray city. And crops wither away before they're ripe.

The boy accepts the girl's offer and takes the road all the way to the old and gloomy waterless port. A shy little bird, the last remaining nightingale, follows him through. Further down, where the road ends, Voraka's ship is leaning against the dock like a restless ghost. It's almost dark, but the boy keeps walking. At the end of the road, a lonely withering tree, all sparkling white, sheds faint light into the dusk. It is the last remaining tree. The nightingale hides inside its foliage. And the boy – on tip toes – quietly waits for something to happen. At the pier, by an old rusty bollard, a strange black bird breaks the silence with an eerie caw. It's Koraka, the raven of the story who now turns to the boy:





Kraaahhh! Krohhh!
You curious little sport!
What is it that you're seeking
in our waterless port?

The boy replies:
I'm looking for someone named Fani
sparkling, glittering and sunny
who used to live around here
but has now disappeared.
They say Voraka is to hold responsible.
I'm here to find out. Would that be possible?

«Hmmm!» hums Koraka.
«That, I might be able to arrange
if I get something in exchange...»

He flies away, returns with a crooked pan.
«Place a jewel and a briberan
in my glorious frying pan!»
«I wear no jewellery, I'm only a kid.»
«Well,» says Koraka, «you must do as I bid!
Come on! Place a bri-bri briberan
in my gloorious frying pan!»

«Briberan? I never heard this word before!»
«Kraaah! caws Koraka and leaves the floor.

He flaps his wings, gets ready to fly.
«Don't go sir Koraka!» says the kid with a sigh.
«Stay around and explain! Make it simple,
make it plain!
Briberan and briberan! Please explain if you
can!»

«A gift, a token, an exchange
if you want me to arrange...»

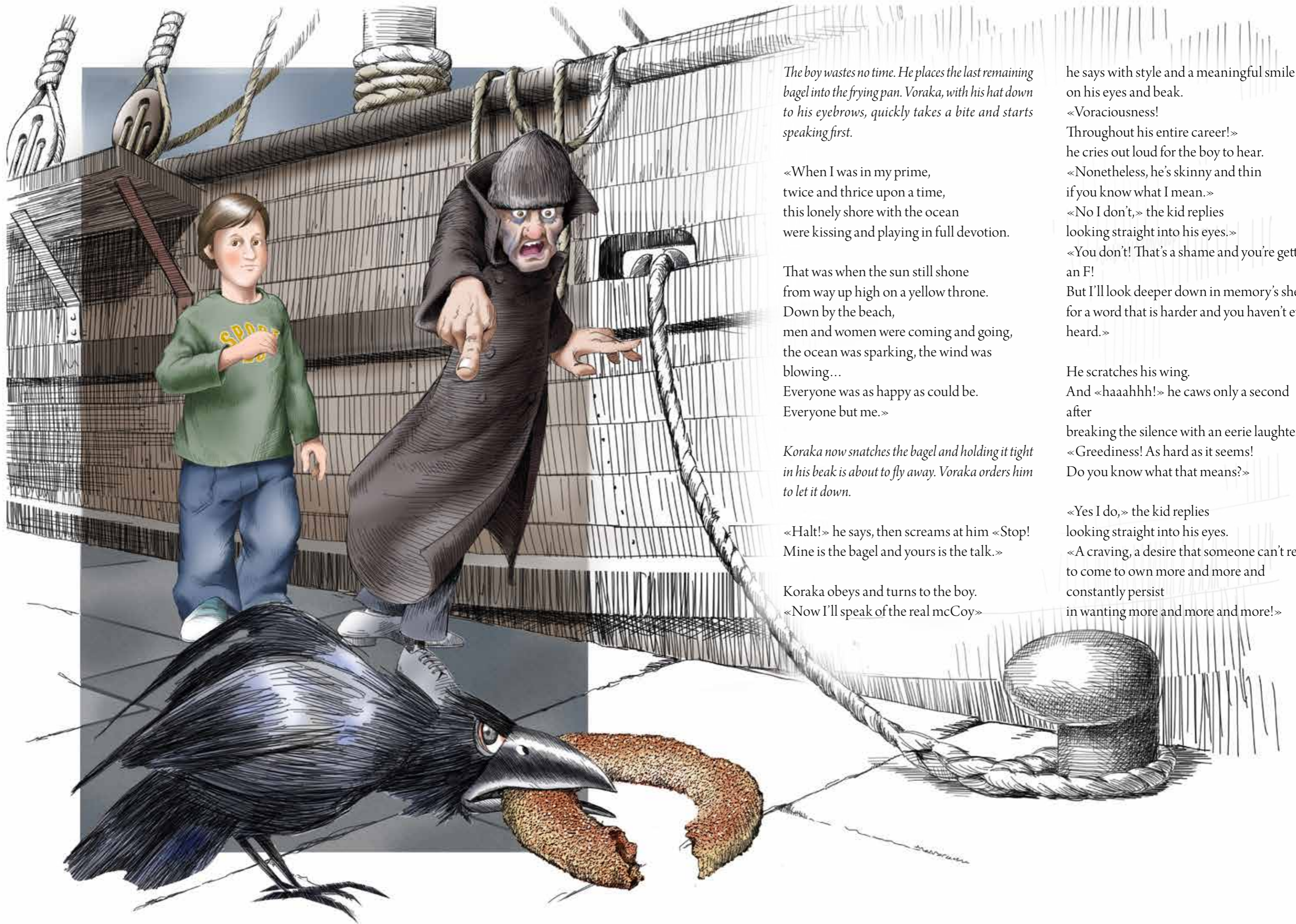
«I have no gift, I have no token
whatever means the word you've spoken...»

«But, you do have something hidden
somewhere!
Let me see... where is it? In your hands?
Or in the pockets of your pants?
What is it? I think you're hiding some fancy
beads...»

«It's a half-eaten bagel with the last remaining
seeds...»

«Hmmm...» says Koraka with a smile on his
beak.
«Voraka and I will be glad to share
Some untold little info might be able to spare.»





The boy wastes no time. He places the last remaining bagel into the frying pan. Voraka, with his hat down to his eyebrows, quickly takes a bite and starts speaking first.

«When I was in my prime,
twice and thrice upon a time,
this lonely shore with the ocean
were kissing and playing in full devotion.

That was when the sun still shone
from way up high on a yellow throne.
Down by the beach,
men and women were coming and going,
the ocean was sparking, the wind was
blowing...
Everyone was as happy as could be.
Everyone but me.»

*Koraka now snatches the bagel and holding it tight
in his beak is about to fly away. Voraka orders him
to let it down.*

«Halt!» he says, then screams at him «Stop!
Mine is the bagel and yours is the talk.»

Koraka obeys and turns to the boy.
«Now I'll speak of the real McCoy»

he says with style and a meaningful smile
on his eyes and beak.

«Voraciousness!

Throughout his entire career!»
he cries out loud for the boy to hear.

«Nonetheless, he's skinny and thin
if you know what I mean.»

«No I don't,» the kid replies
looking straight into his eyes.»

«You don't! That's a shame and you're getting
an F!

But I'll look deeper down in memory's shelf
for a word that is harder and you haven't even
heard.»

He scratches his wing.

And «haaahhh!» he caws only a second
after

breaking the silence with an eerie laughter.

«Greediness! As hard as it seems!
Do you know what that means?»

«Yes I do,» the kid replies

looking straight into his eyes.

«A craving, a desire that someone can't resist
to come to own more and more and

constantly persist
in wanting more and more and more!»