

A Jataka Tale

Come Back, O Tiger!



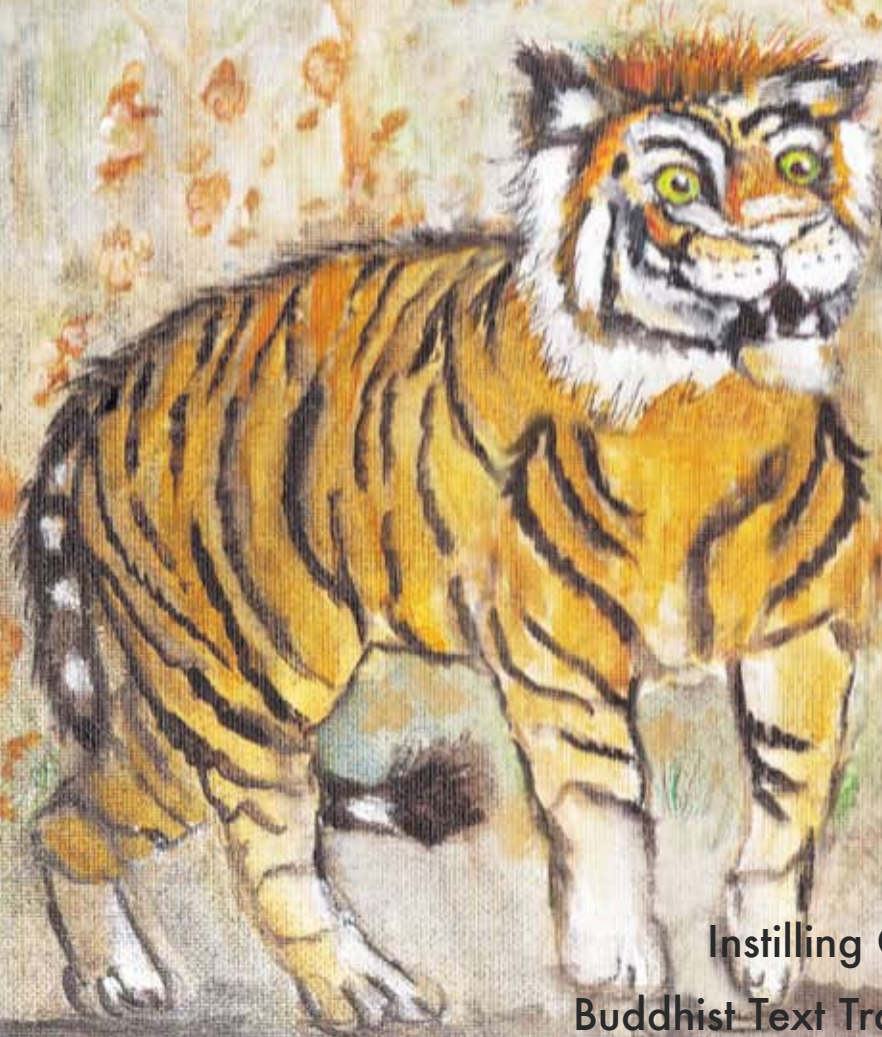
Kindness to Animals and Respect for the Earth Series

Instilling Goodness Books

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Instilling Goodness Books
Buddhist Text Translation Society

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Dharma Realm Buddhist University

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Retold by Bhikshuni Jin Rou

Illustrations by Christy Whitworth

Design by Laura Tan

Come Back, O Tiger! is a story retold of one of the Buddha's earlier lifetimes, with ecological implications. The original tale is The Little Tree Spirit, No. 272, in the Pali Jataka collection.

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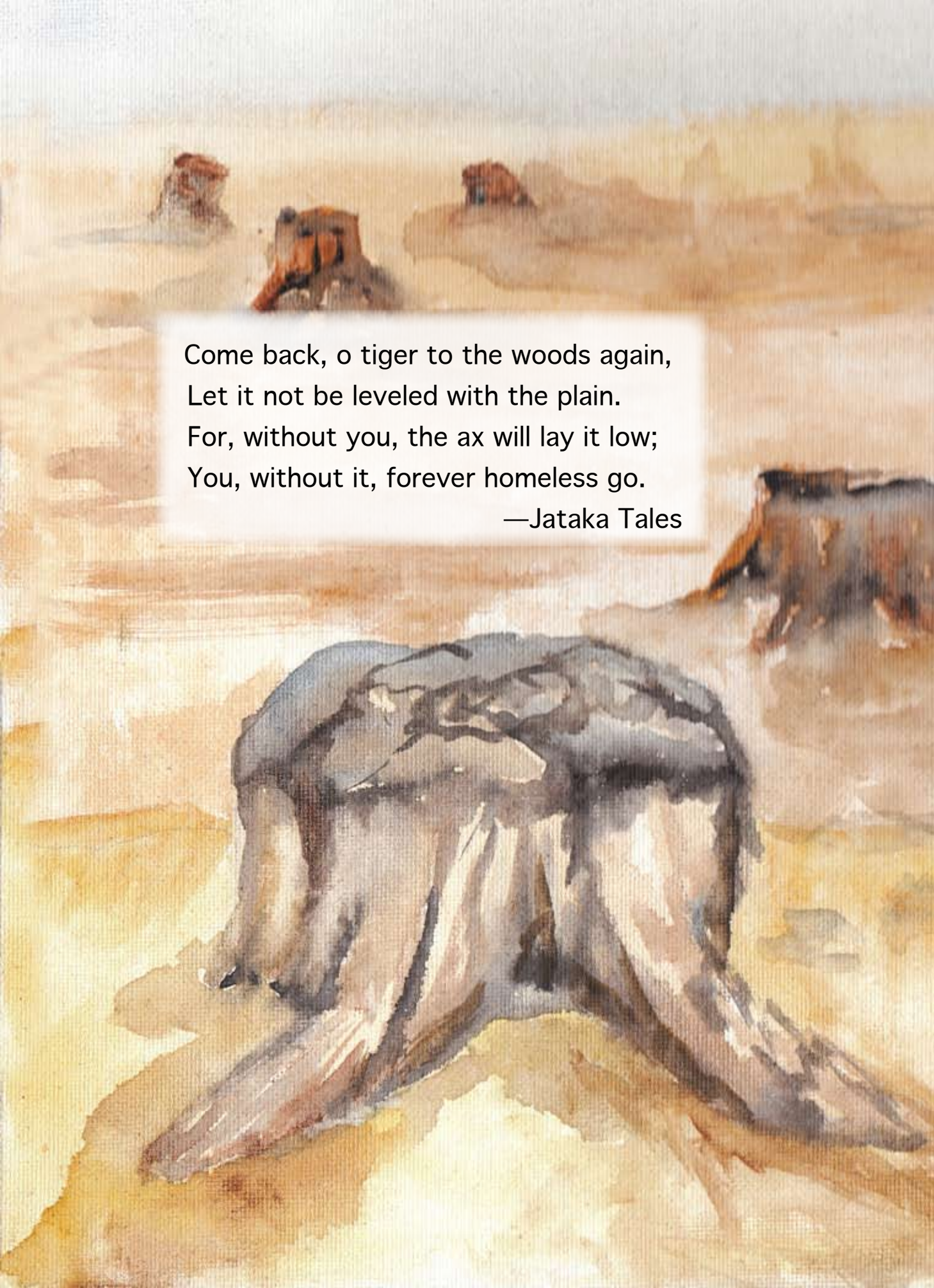
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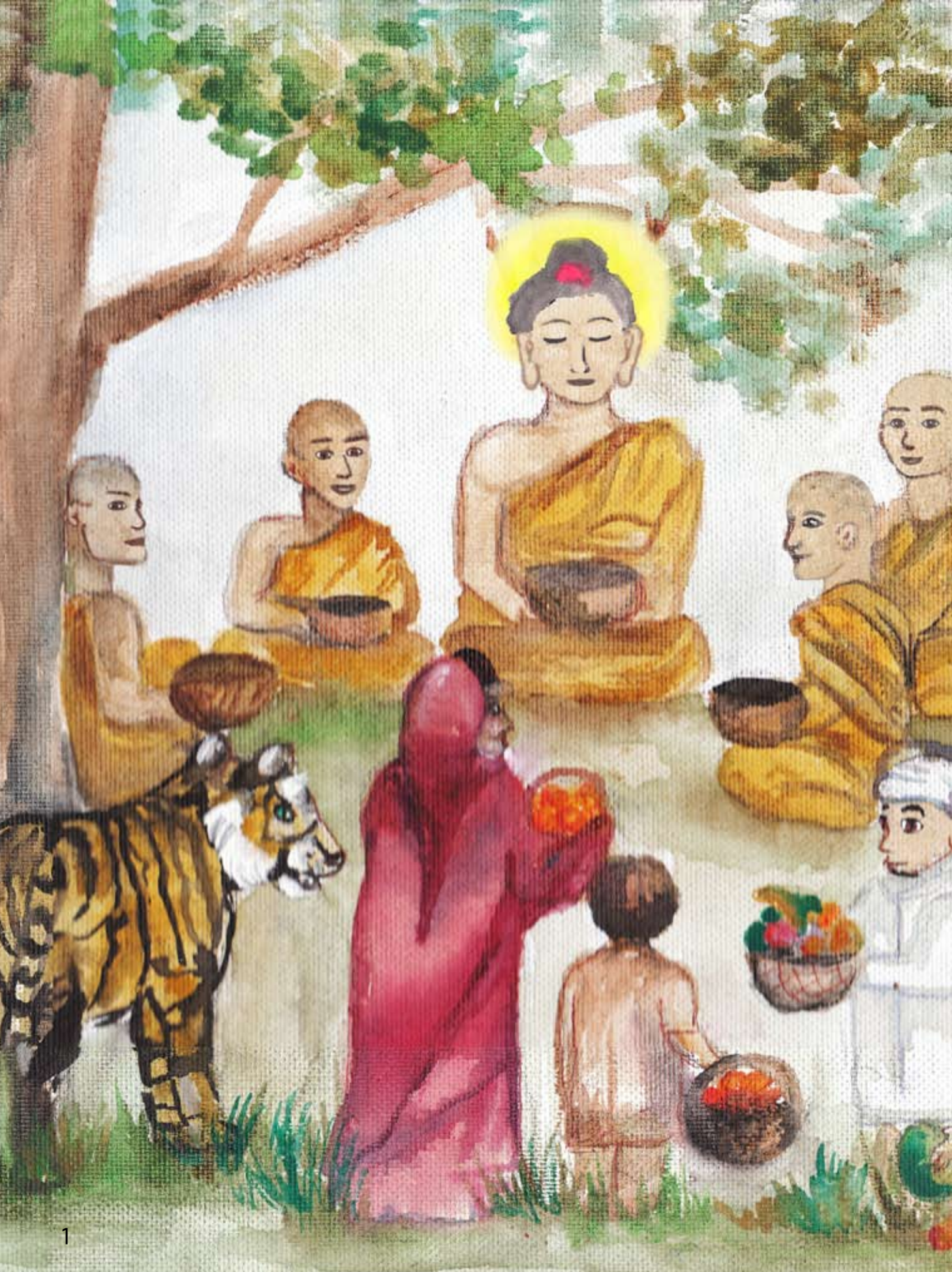
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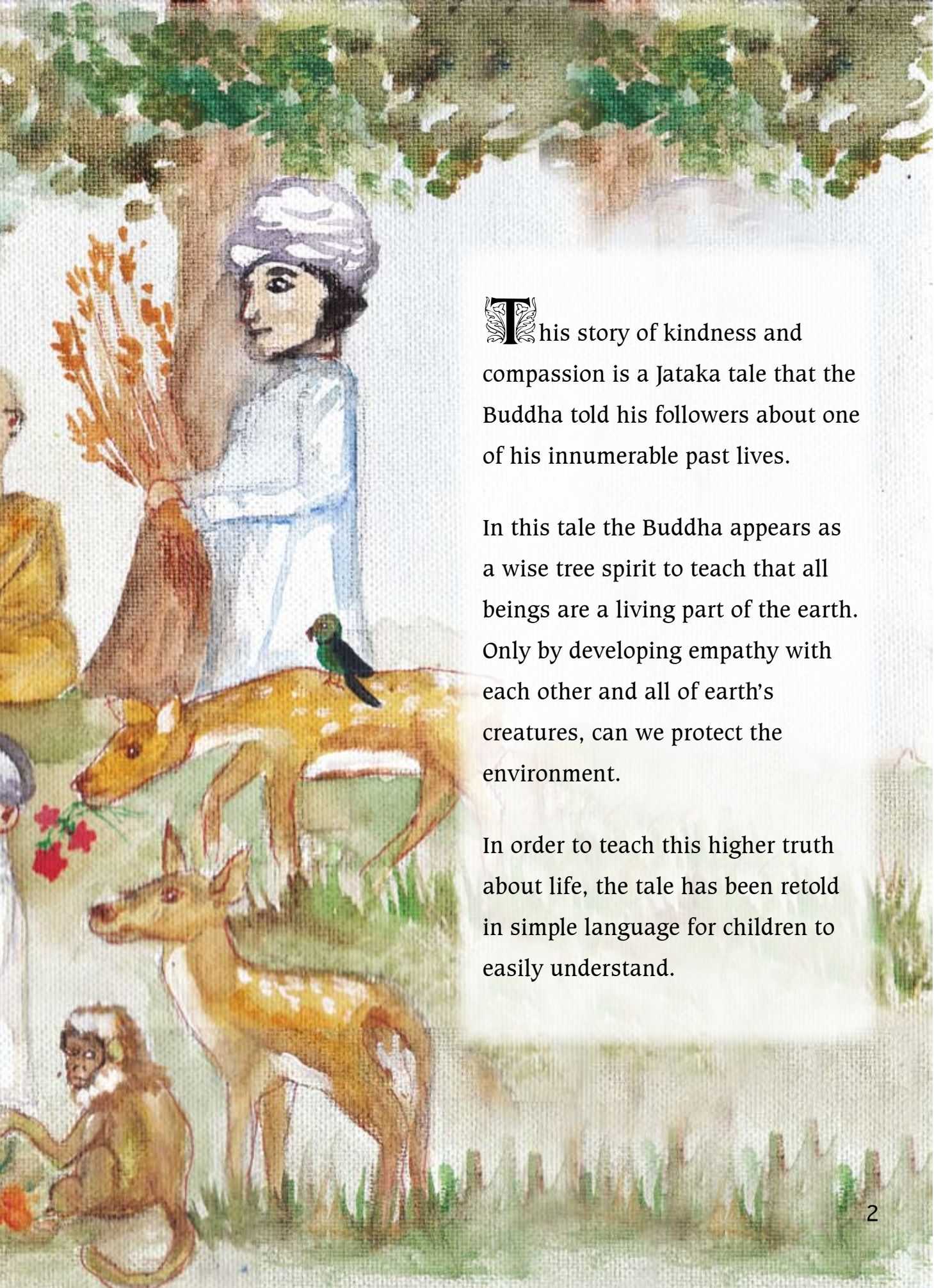
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A watercolor illustration of a tiger lying down in a landscape. The tiger is the central focus, lying on its side with its head down. Its fur is depicted with various shades of brown, tan, and grey, showing stripes. The background is a soft, hazy landscape with several tree stumps or small trees in the distance. The overall color palette is warm, dominated by yellows, browns, and greys. The style is soft and painterly, with visible brushstrokes and a textured appearance.

Come back, o tiger to the woods again,
Let it not be leveled with the plain.
For, without you, the ax will lay it low;
You, without it, forever homeless go.

—Jataka Tales






This story of kindness and compassion is a Jataka tale that the Buddha told his followers about one of his innumerable past lives.

In this tale the Buddha appears as a wise tree spirit to teach that all beings are a living part of the earth. Only by developing empathy with each other and all of earth's creatures, can we protect the environment.

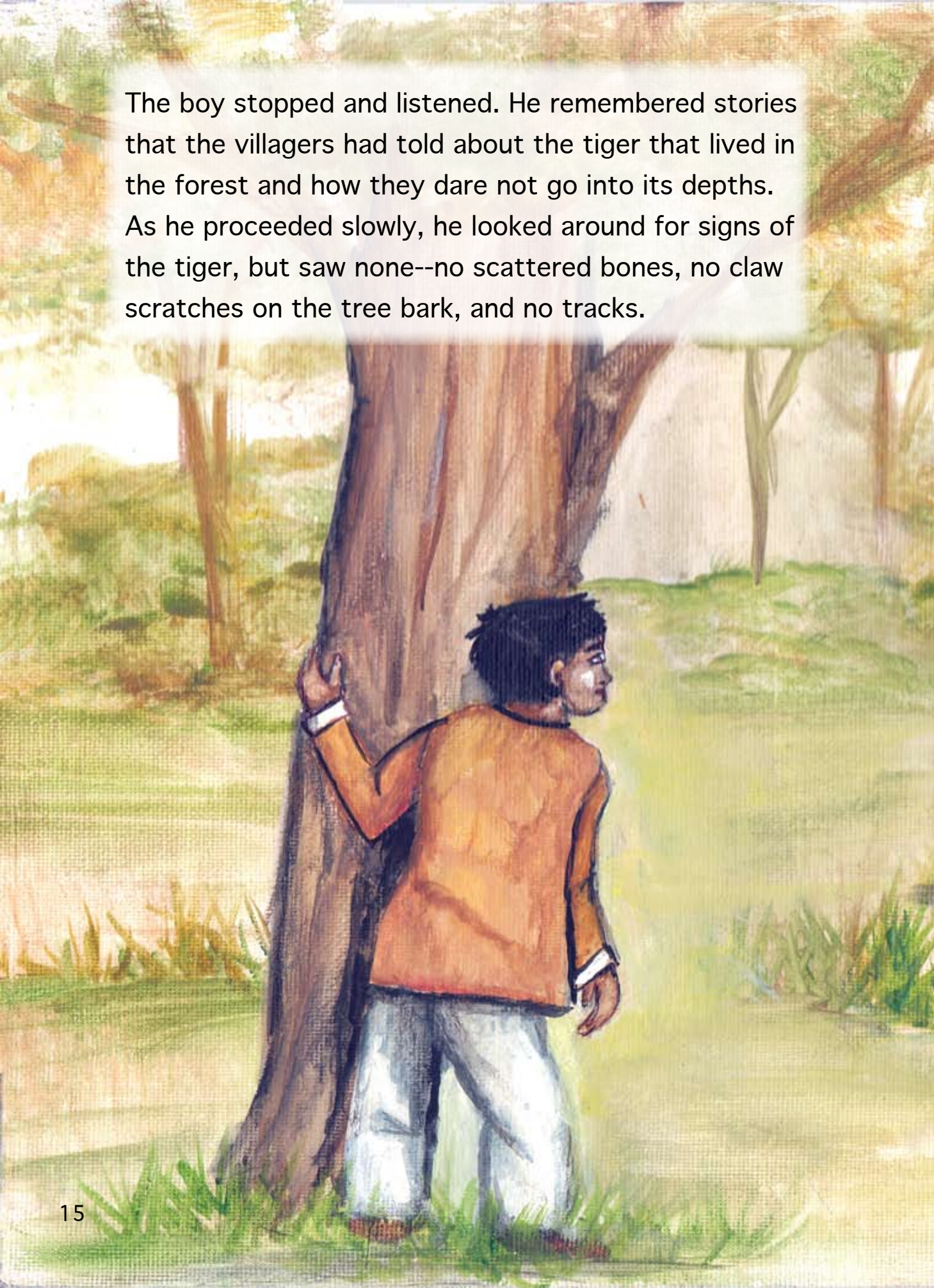
In order to teach this higher truth about life, the tale has been retold in simple language for children to easily understand.

An illustration of two monkeys in a tree. One monkey is sitting on a branch, looking towards the viewer, while the other is perched on a higher branch, looking away. The tree has thick brown branches and green foliage in the background.

A hot day slowly came to an end as the bright orange sun began to slide behind a forest in India. Lizards scuttled about and slipped into the cracks of an old cassia tree. A large Bengal tiger stretched and yawned after a nap under the shade. He rolled over and slowly got to his feet. He had not eaten in days and was hungry.



The boy stopped and listened. He remembered stories that the villagers had told about the tiger that lived in the forest and how they dare not go into its depths. As he proceeded slowly, he looked around for signs of the tiger, but saw none--no scattered bones, no claw scratches on the tree bark, and no tracks.





It is taking a while, but many people are working together to rescue the forests before it's too late. Trees are being planted and land is set aside for wildlife to roam freely again. What would life be like without trees and squirrels and butterflies? If we can save the tiger, we can save the earth.

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Come Back, O Tiger!

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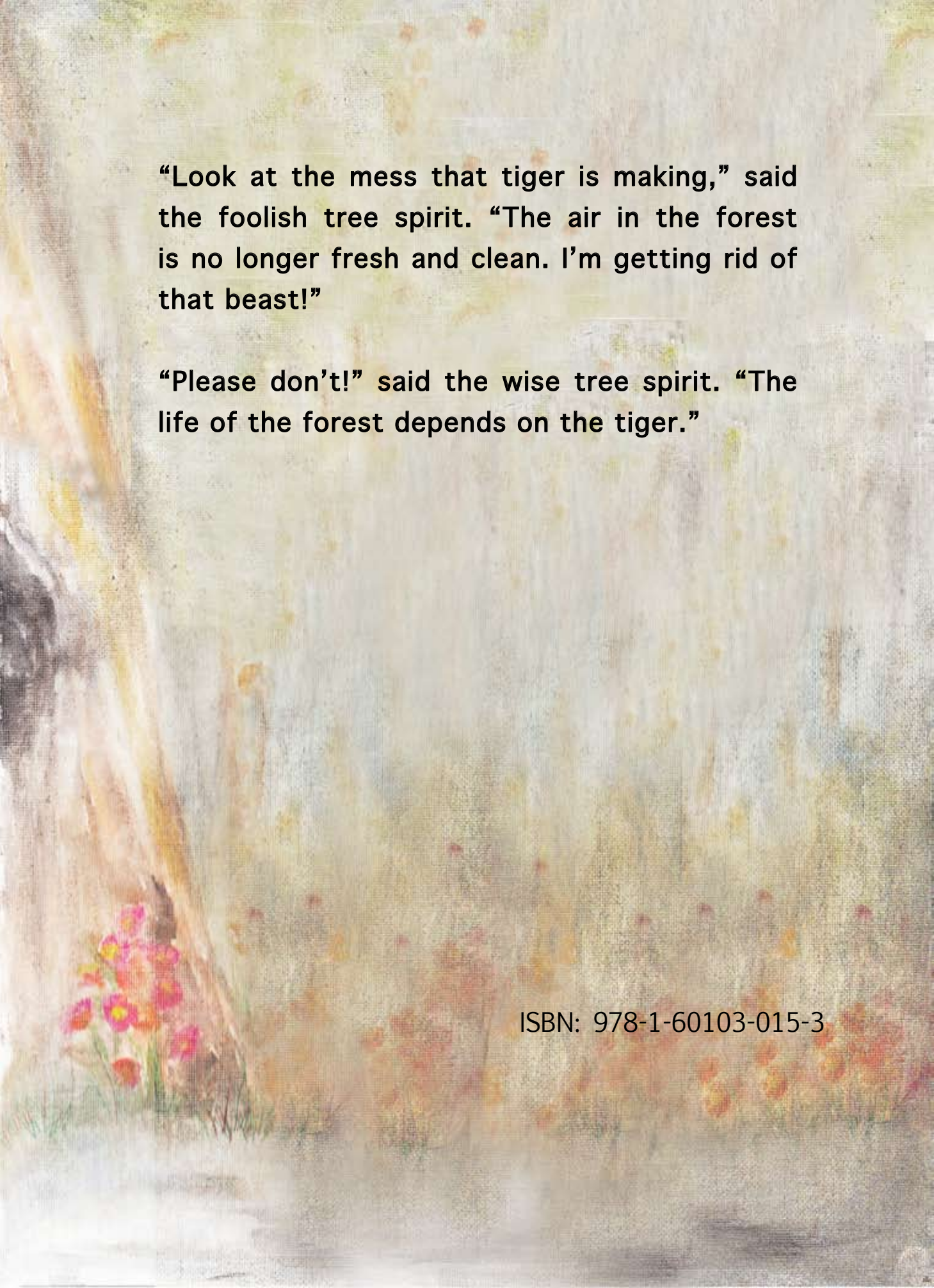
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“Look at the mess that tiger is making,” said the foolish tree spirit. “The air in the forest is no longer fresh and clean. I’m getting rid of that beast!”

“Please don’t!” said the wise tree spirit. “The life of the forest depends on the tiger.”

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