



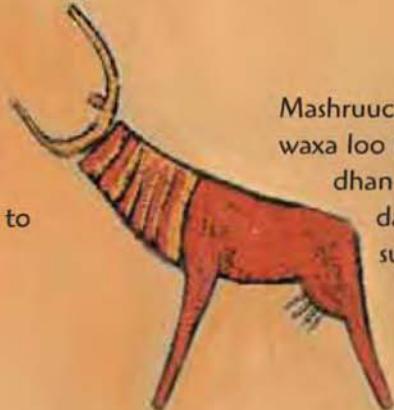
Dhegdheer

A Scary Somali Folktale

*retold by Marian A. Hassan
illustrated by Betsy Bowen*



The Somali Bilingual Book Project is dedicated to all refugee children and their families. Many thanks to those who shared stories to make this project possible.



Mashruuca Buuggaga af-Soomaaliga ee labada-af ah, waxa loo hibeyey dhamaan carruurta qaxootiga ah oo dhan iyo qoysaskooda. Way ku mahadsan yihiin dadkii sheekoooyinkooda noo soo bandhigay ee suurta galiyey hirgelinta mashruucan.

*In honor of Barbara Knutson
and her love of the stories of the world. — BB*

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Buugaan waxa ku qoran qaybna dib looma daabaci karo marrinaba iyada oo aan ogolaasho qoraal ah laga helin soo saaraha.

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The illustrations are painted in gouache on black gesso.

The Somali Bilingual Book Project is a component of the Minnesota Humanities Commission's Bilingual and Heritage Language Programs. These programs strengthen families' English literacy skills while recognizing and supporting the role of families' home languages in early literacy development. Through these programs, MHC reaches out to K-6 teachers, parent educators, early childhood educators, librarians, social service providers, and other literacy professionals. Bilingual and Heritage Language programs connect educators to existing resources that enhance language development; offer professional development on oral traditions and the connection between language and culture; and collaborate with community representatives to develop new culturally and linguistically appropriate resources. The Somali Bilingual Book Project initially includes the publication of four traditional Somali folktales — *The Lion's Share*, *Dhegheer*, *The Travels of Igal Shidad*, and *Wil Waal* — in hardcover and paperback editions and a dual-language audio recording of all four stories.

Visit www.mnnesotahumanities.org to download free online resources for use in educational settings.

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Author's Note

A favorite Somali folktale, Dhegdheer has been passed down through many generations. Like the "boogey man" from European folklore, Dhegdheer is used to "scare" children into good behavior. Families caution their children: *Don't wander out alone or Dhegdheer is going to get you.* The story of Dhegdheer imparts the very important message of good and evil. Essentially, it illustrates the idea that we are protected by universal justice, which is at work all the time.

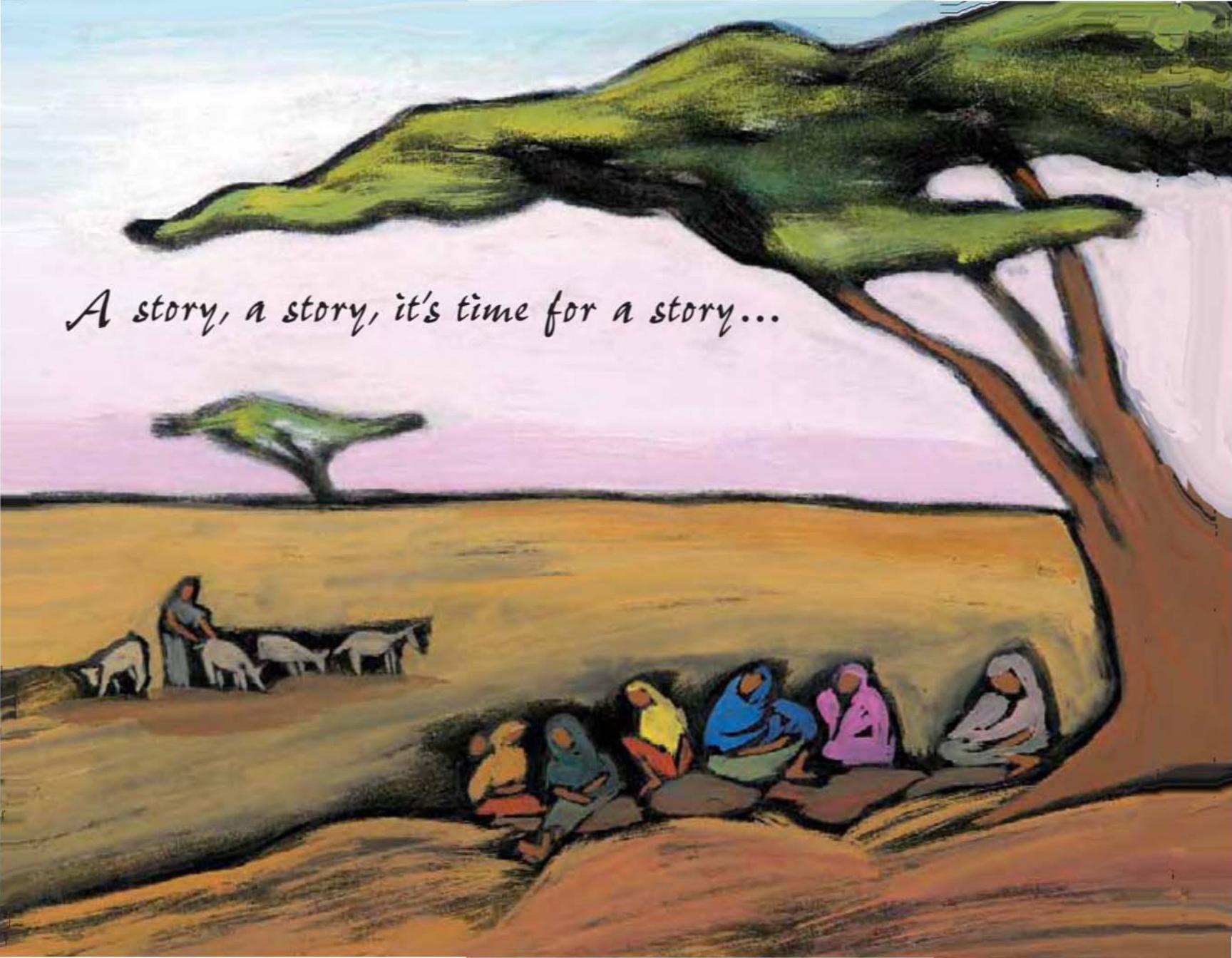
Dhegdheer is told in many versions throughout the different regions of Somalia. In the most common version, Dhegdheer dies at the hand of her daughter. In this retelling, that ending has been changed to one in which a greater force intervenes.



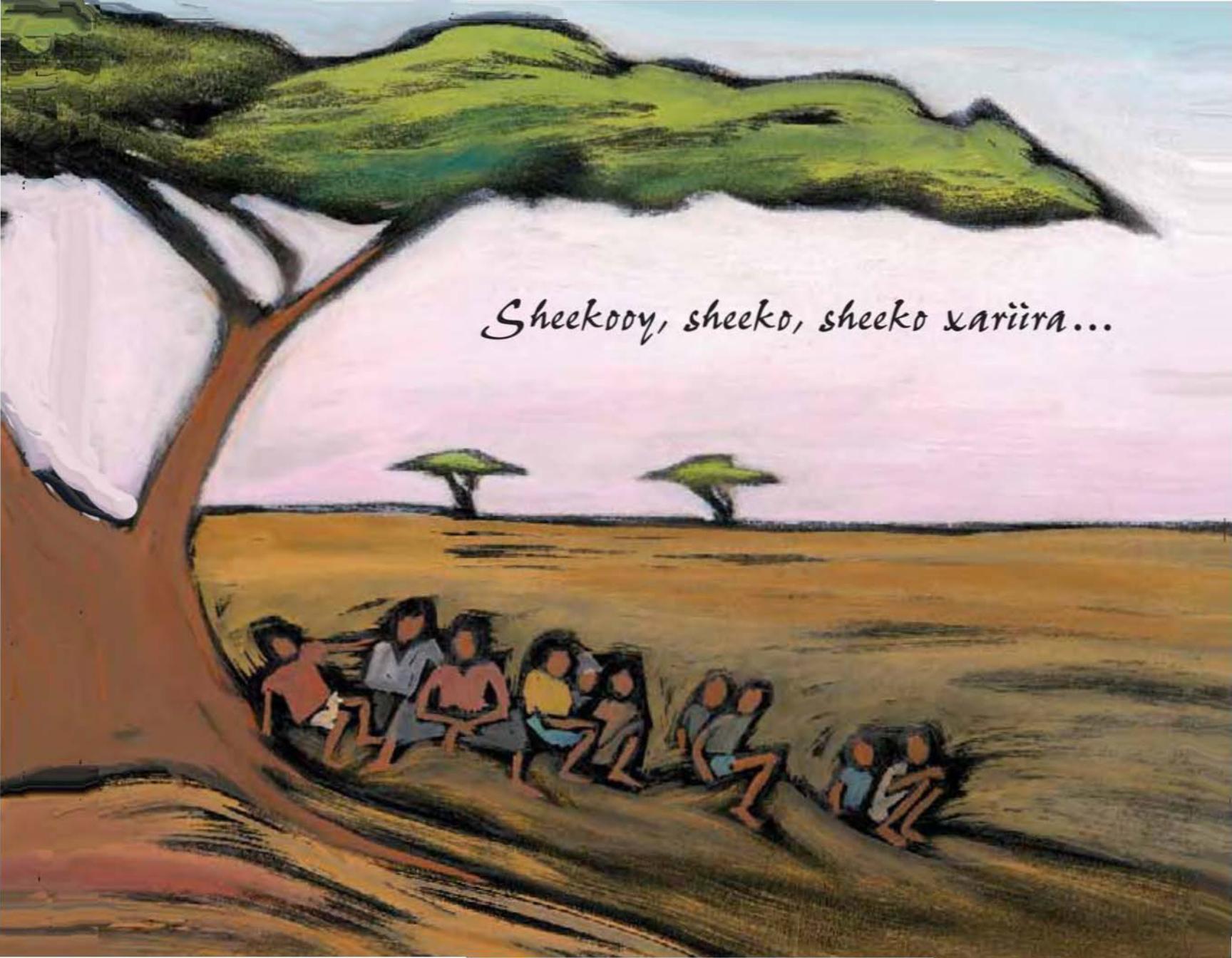
Ereyga Qoranga

Dhegdheer waa mid ka mid ah kuwa loogu jecel yahay sheeko xariirooyinka Soomaalida. Waa sheeko qarniyo badan jiilba jiil u gudbinayey, sida sheeka-xariirta reer Yurub ee "boogey man" oo ku saabsan nin lago baqo. Dhegdheer waxaa loo adeegsadaa in carruurta lagu "cabsiyo" si ay uga haraan dhaqammada xun-xun. Waalidiintu carruurta yaryar bay uga digaan: *Keligaa dibadda ha aadin ama Dhegdheer baa ku qaadan doonta.* Sheekada Dhegdheer waxaa lagu fasiran karaa inaan magan u nahay awoodda dhabta ah oo kala wadda dunida, mar walbana garsoorka leh.

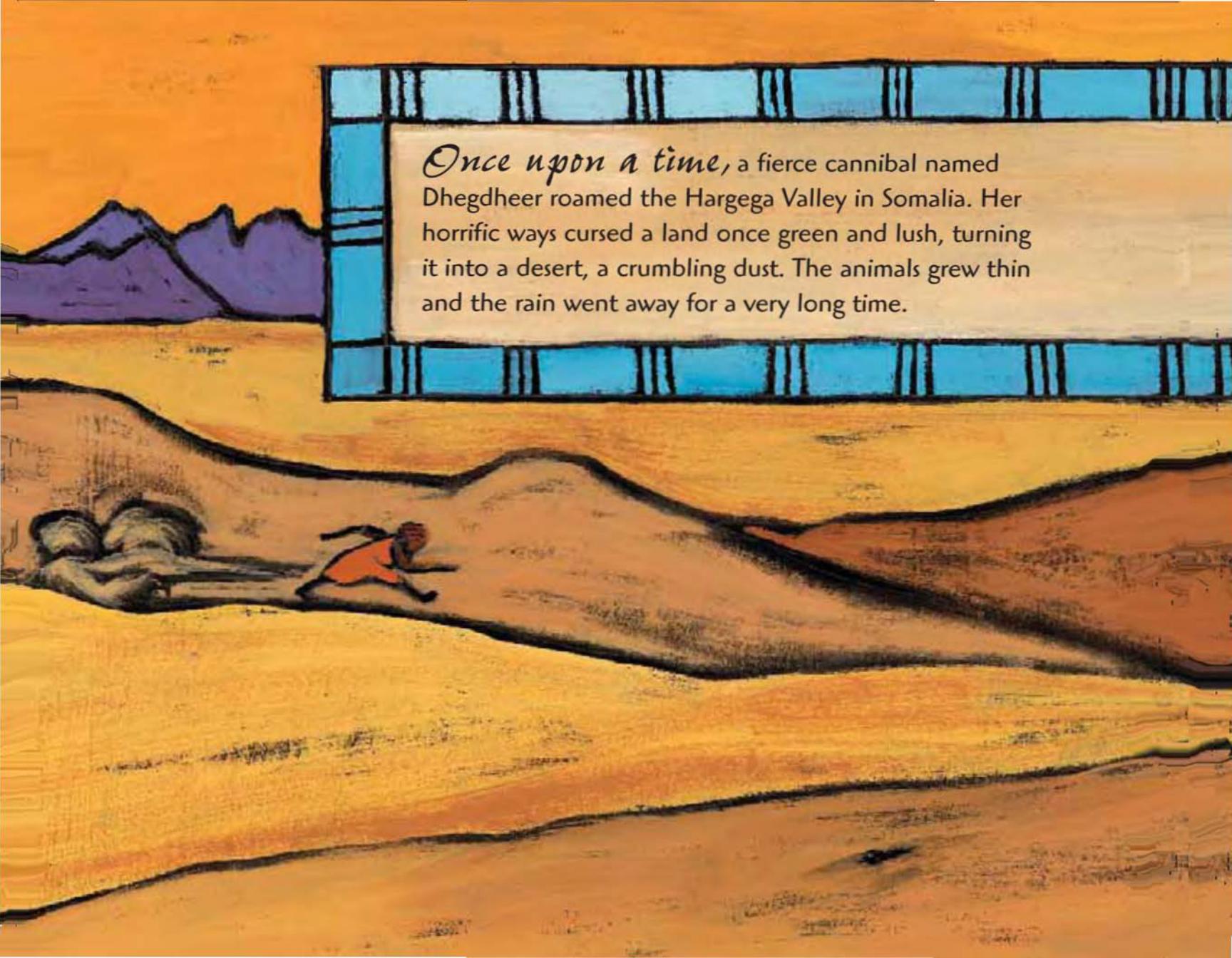
Dhegdheer waxaa sheekadeeda gobollada Soomaalida looga sheekeeyaa siyaabo kala duwan, tan ugu caansanna waa midda Dhegdheer ay gabadheedu aakhirka dilayso. Sida halkan looga soo tebinayo, Dhegdheer dhimashadeeda waxaa sabab looga dhigay musiibo xagga rabbi looga soo diray.



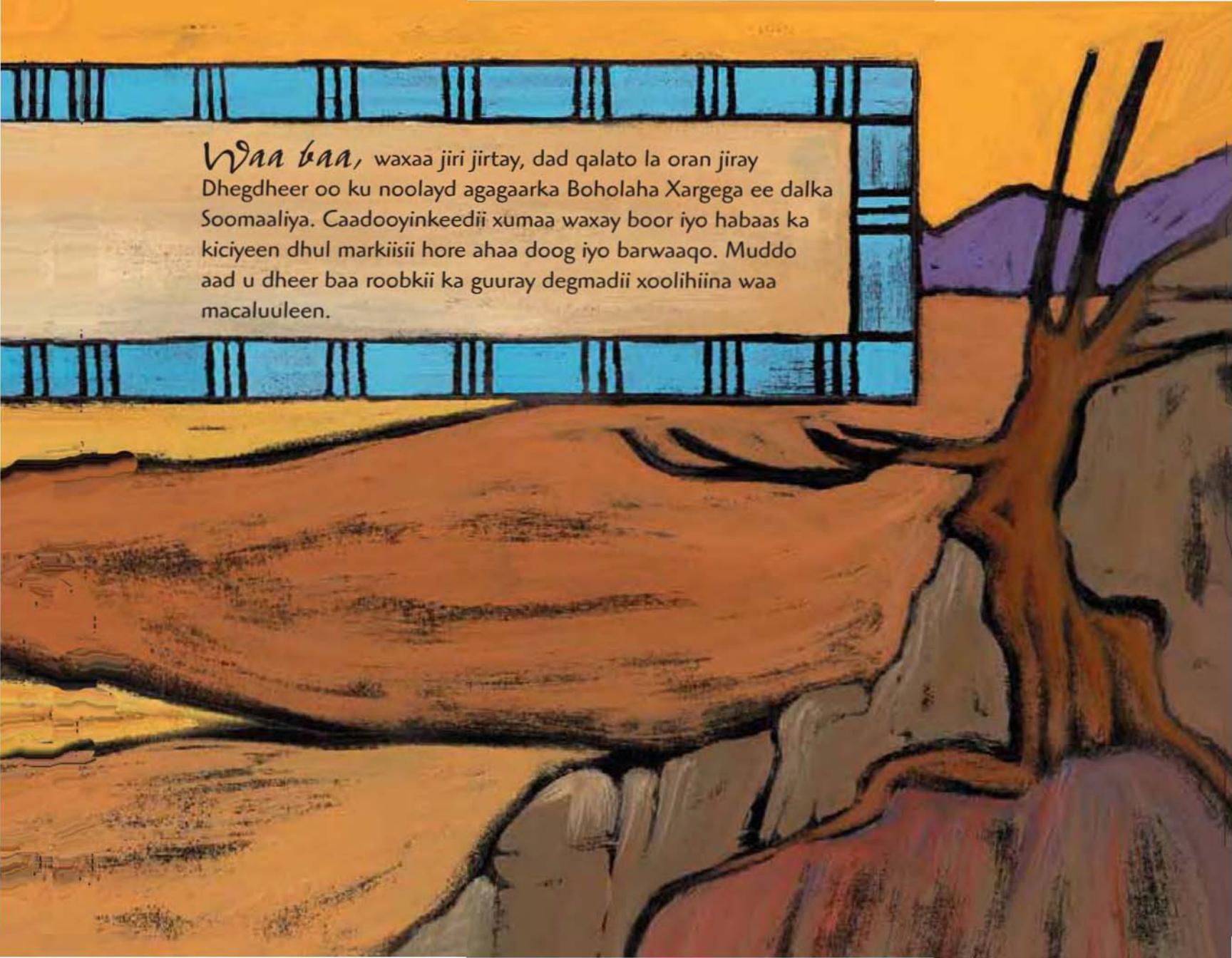
A story, a story, it's time for a story...



Sheekooy, sheeko, sheeko xariira...

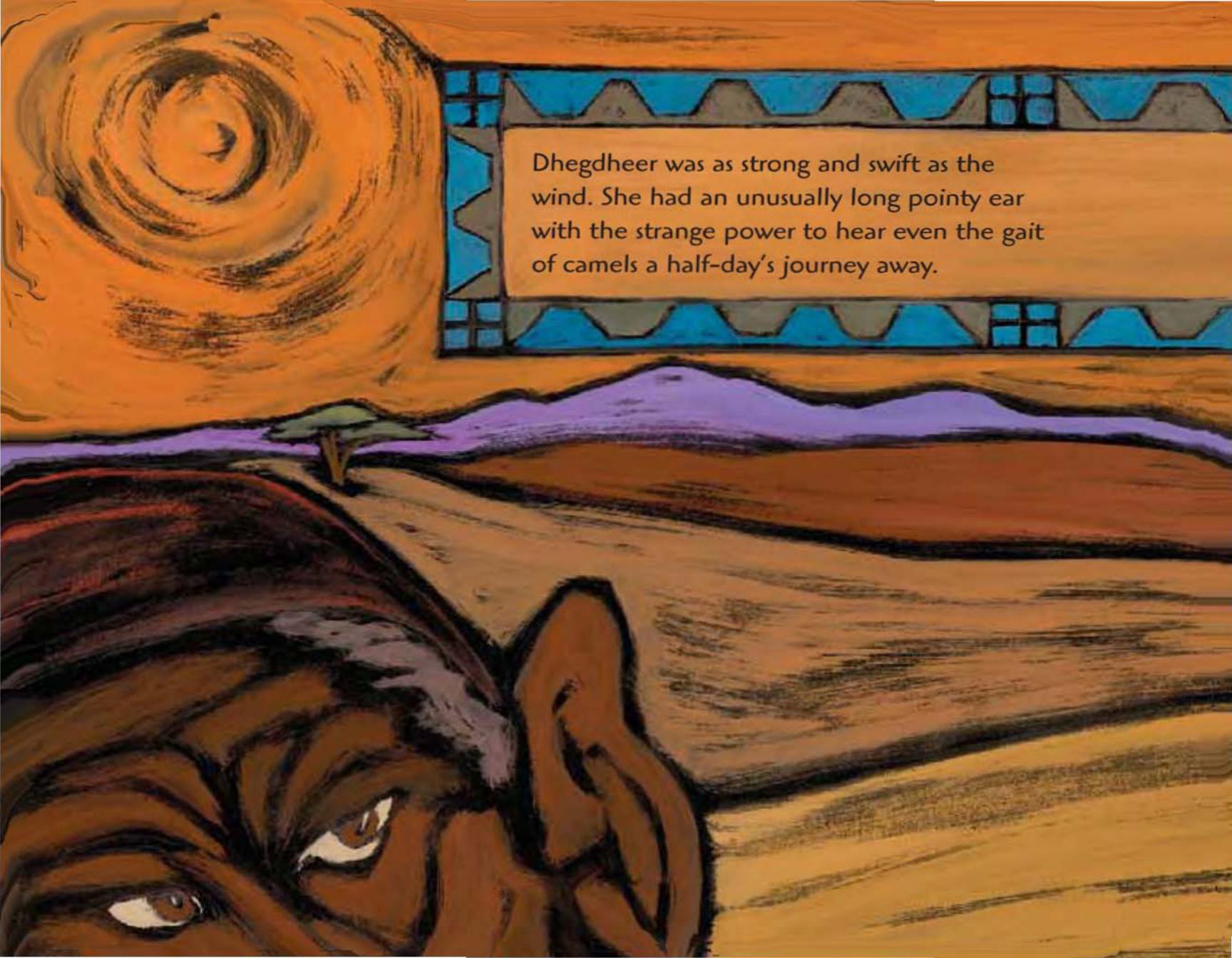


Once upon a time, a fierce cannibal named Dhegdeher roamed the Hargega Valley in Somalia. Her horrific ways cursed a land once green and lush, turning it into a desert, a crumbling dust. The animals grew thin and the rain went away for a very long time.

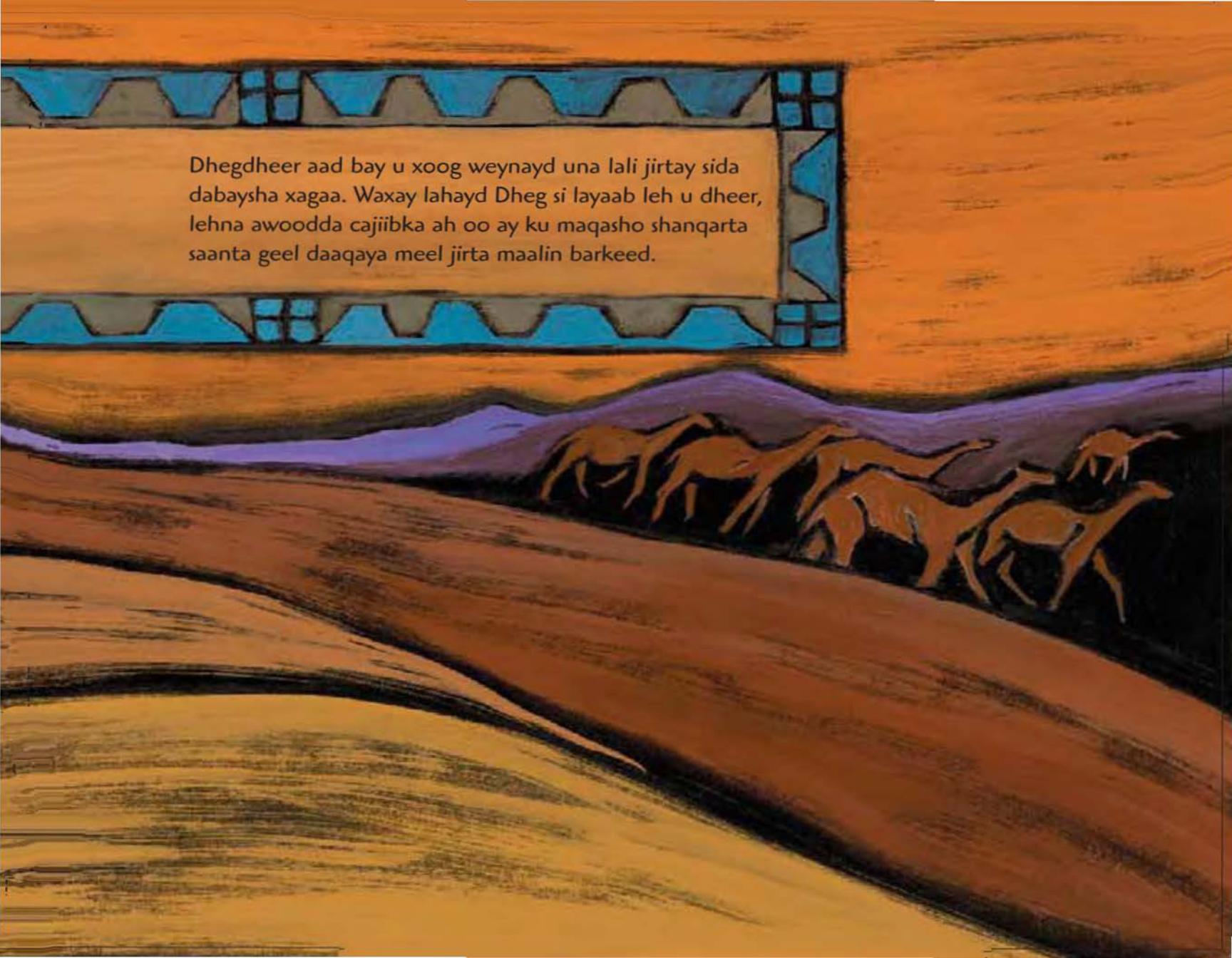


Waa baa, waxaa jiri jirtay, dad qalato la oran jiray

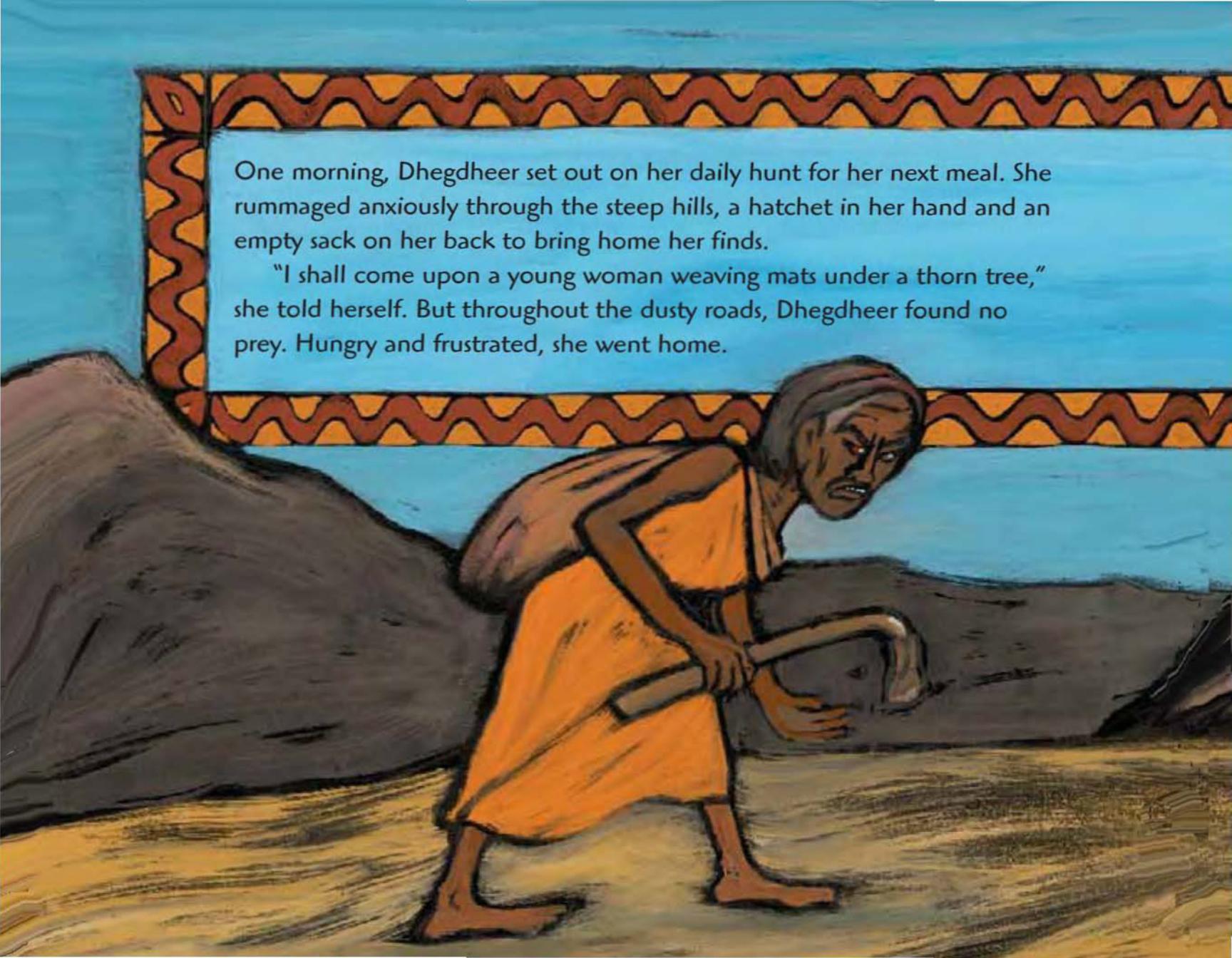
Dhegħeer oo ku noolayd agagaarka Boholaha Xargega ee dalka Soomaaliya. Caadooyinkeeđii xumaa waxay boor iyo habaas ka kiciyen dhul markiisii hore ahaa doog iyo barwaaqo. Muddo aad u dheer baa roobkii ka guuray degmadii xoolihiina waa macaluuleen.



Dhegdheer was as strong and swift as the wind. She had an unusually long pointy ear with the strange power to hear even the gait of camels a half-day's journey away.

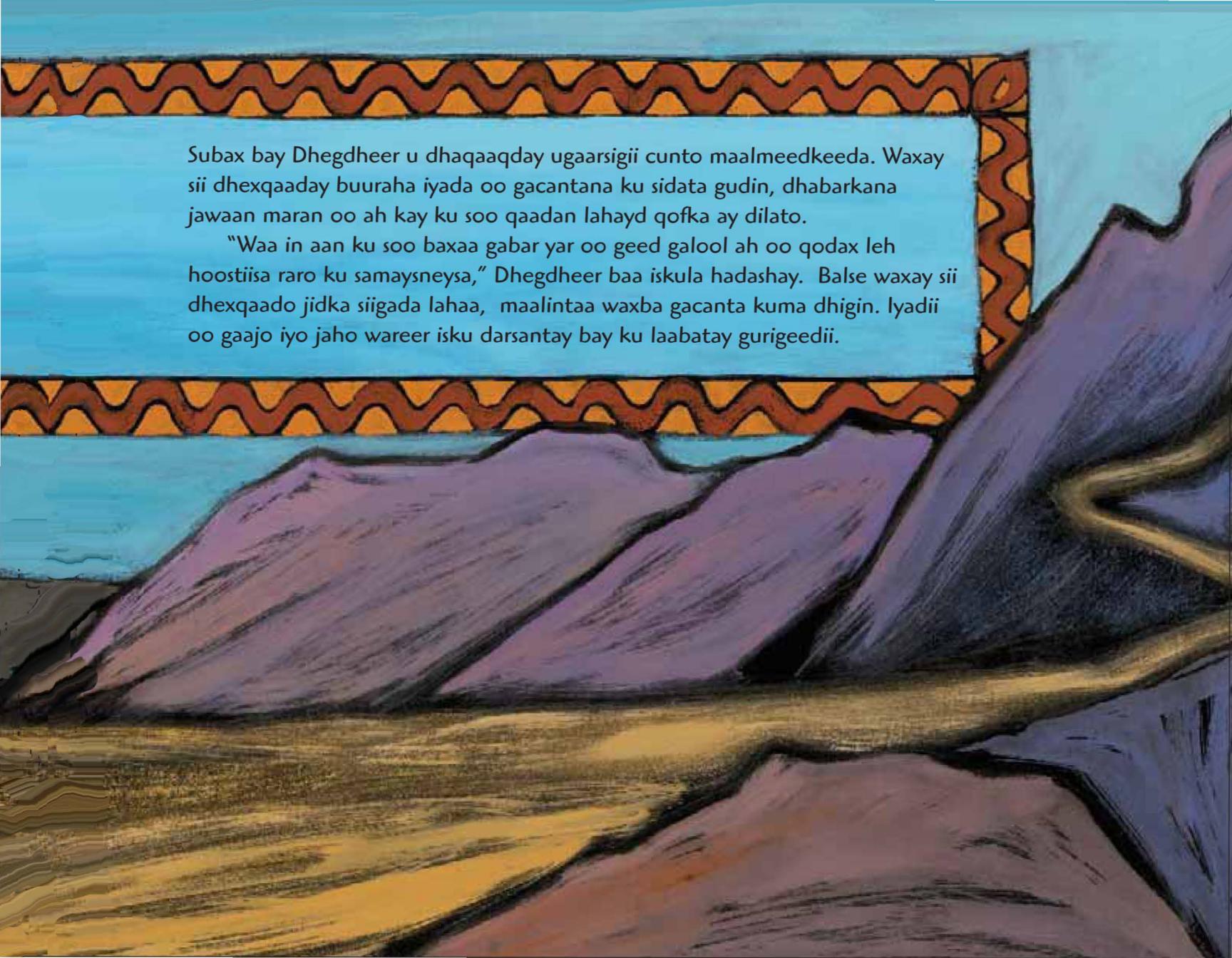


Dhegdheer aad bay u xoog weynayd una lali jirtay sida
dabaysha xagaa. Waxay lahayd Dheg si layaab leh u dheer,
lehna awoodda cajiibka ah oo ay ku maqasho shanqarta
saanta geel daaqaya meel jirta maalin barkeed.



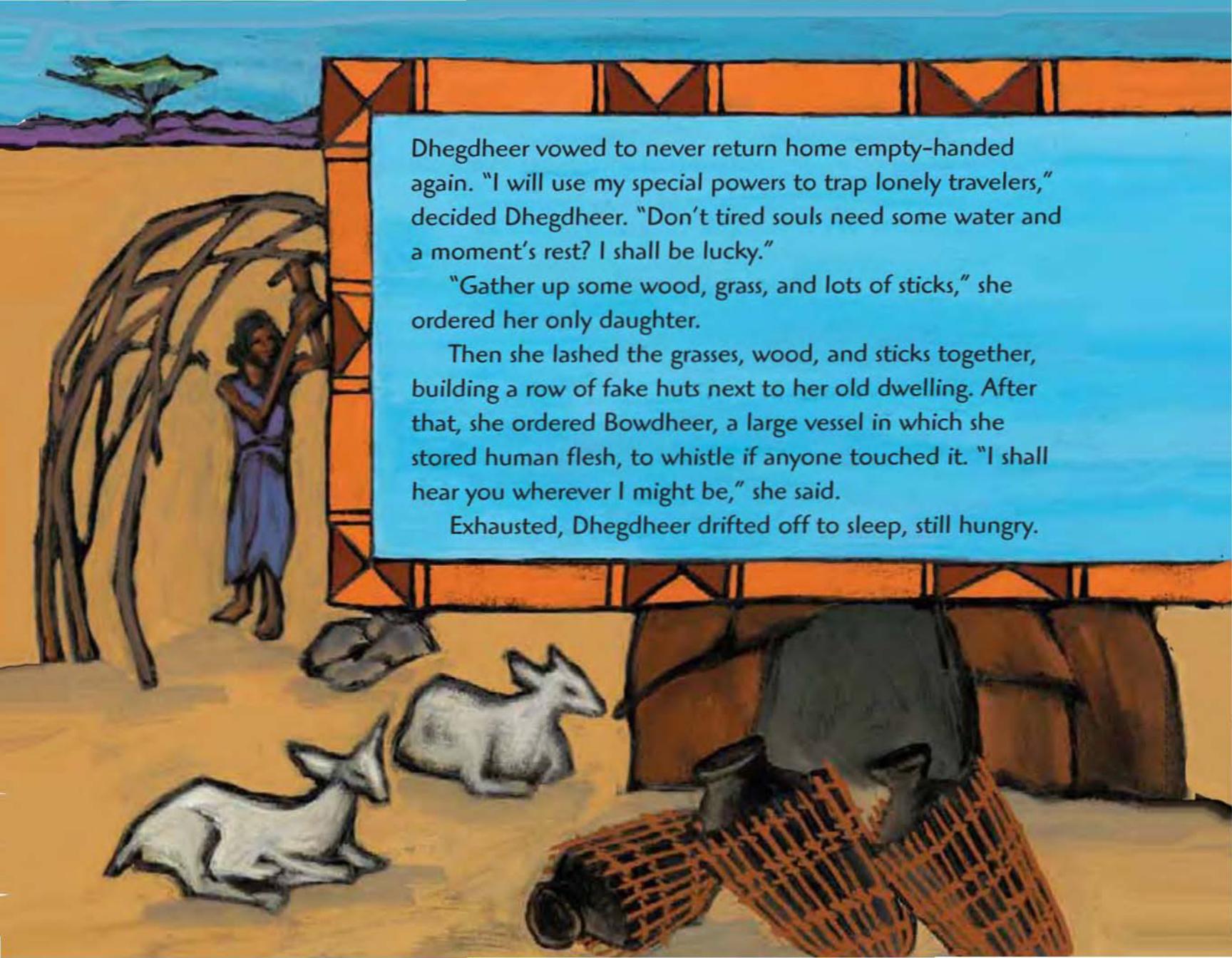
One morning, Dhegdheer set out on her daily hunt for her next meal. She rummaged anxiously through the steep hills, a hatchet in her hand and an empty sack on her back to bring home her finds.

"I shall come upon a young woman weaving mats under a thorn tree," she told herself. But throughout the dusty roads, Dhegdheer found no prey. Hungry and frustrated, she went home.



Subax bay Dhegdheer u dhaqaaqday ugaarsigii cunto maalmeedkeeda. Waxay sii dhexqaaday buuraha iyada oo gacantana ku sidata gudin, dhabarkana jawaan maran oo ah kay ku soo qaadan lahayd qofka ay dilato.

"Waa in aan ku soo baxaa gabar yar oo geed galool ah oo qodax leh hoostiisa raro ku samaysneysa," Dhegdheer baa iskula hadashay. Balse waxay sii dhexqaado jidka siigada lahaa, maalintaa waxba gacanta kuma dhigin. Iyadii oo gaajo iyo jaho wareer isku darsantay bay ku laabatay gurigeedii.

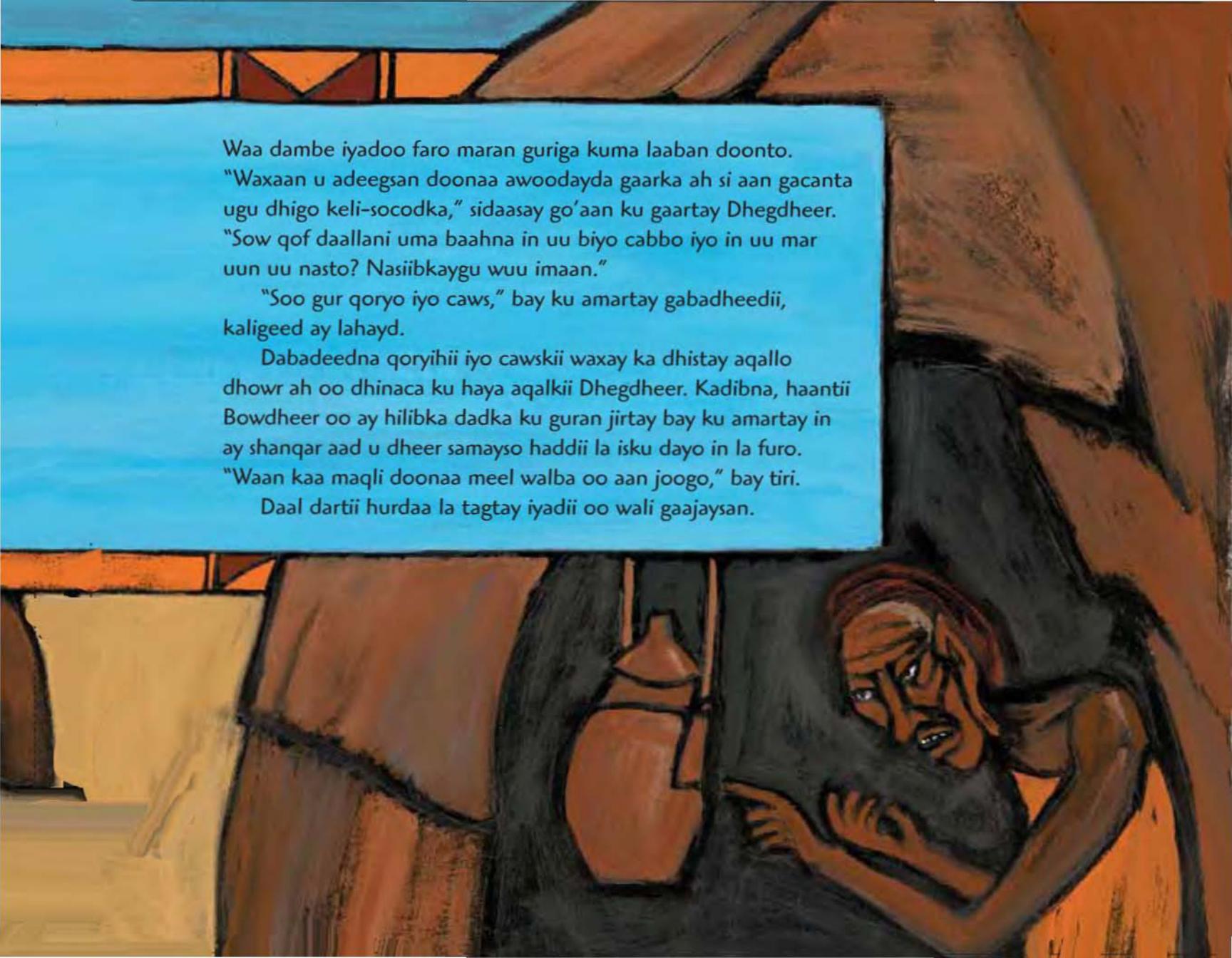


Dhegdheer vowed to never return home empty-handed again. "I will use my special powers to trap lonely travelers," decided Dhegdheer. "Don't tired souls need some water and a moment's rest? I shall be lucky."

"Gather up some wood, grass, and lots of sticks," she ordered her only daughter.

Then she lashed the grasses, wood, and sticks together, building a row of fake huts next to her old dwelling. After that, she ordered Bowdheer, a large vessel in which she stored human flesh, to whistle if anyone touched it. "I shall hear you wherever I might be," she said.

Exhausted, Dhegdheer drifted off to sleep, still hungry.



Waa dambe iyadoo faro maran guriga kuma laaban doonto.
"Waxaan u adeegsan doonaa awoodayda gaarka ah si aan gacanta
ugu dhigo keli-socodka," sidaasay go'aan ku gaartay Dhegdheer.
"Sow qof daallani uma baahna in uu biyo cabbo iyo in uu mar
uun uu nasto? Nasiibkaygu wuu imaan."

"Soo gur qoryo iyo caws," bay ku amartay gabadheedii,
kaligeed ay lahayd.

Dabadeedna qoryihii iyo cawskii waxay ka dhistay aqallo
dhowr ah oo dhinaca ku haya aqalkii Dhegdheer. Kadibna, haantii
Bowdheer oo ay hilibka dadka ku guran jirtay bay ku amartay in
ay shanqar aad u dheer samayso haddii la isku dayo in la furo.
"Waan kaa maqli doonaa meel walba oo aan joogo," bay tiri.

Daal dartii hurdaa la tagtay iyadii oo wali gaajaysan.



That evening, along the dirt road near Dhegdheer's home came a grieving widow with a chubby child on her back. The woman was determined not to rest until she returned to her family's home. But she and her child were hungry and tired. They were thrilled to come upon the huts.

"Please give us some water so you might someday be spared of thirst?" the woman asked in the traditional way.

Dhegdheer's daughter quickly responded to the woman. "Here, drink this," she said, handing the woman a cup.

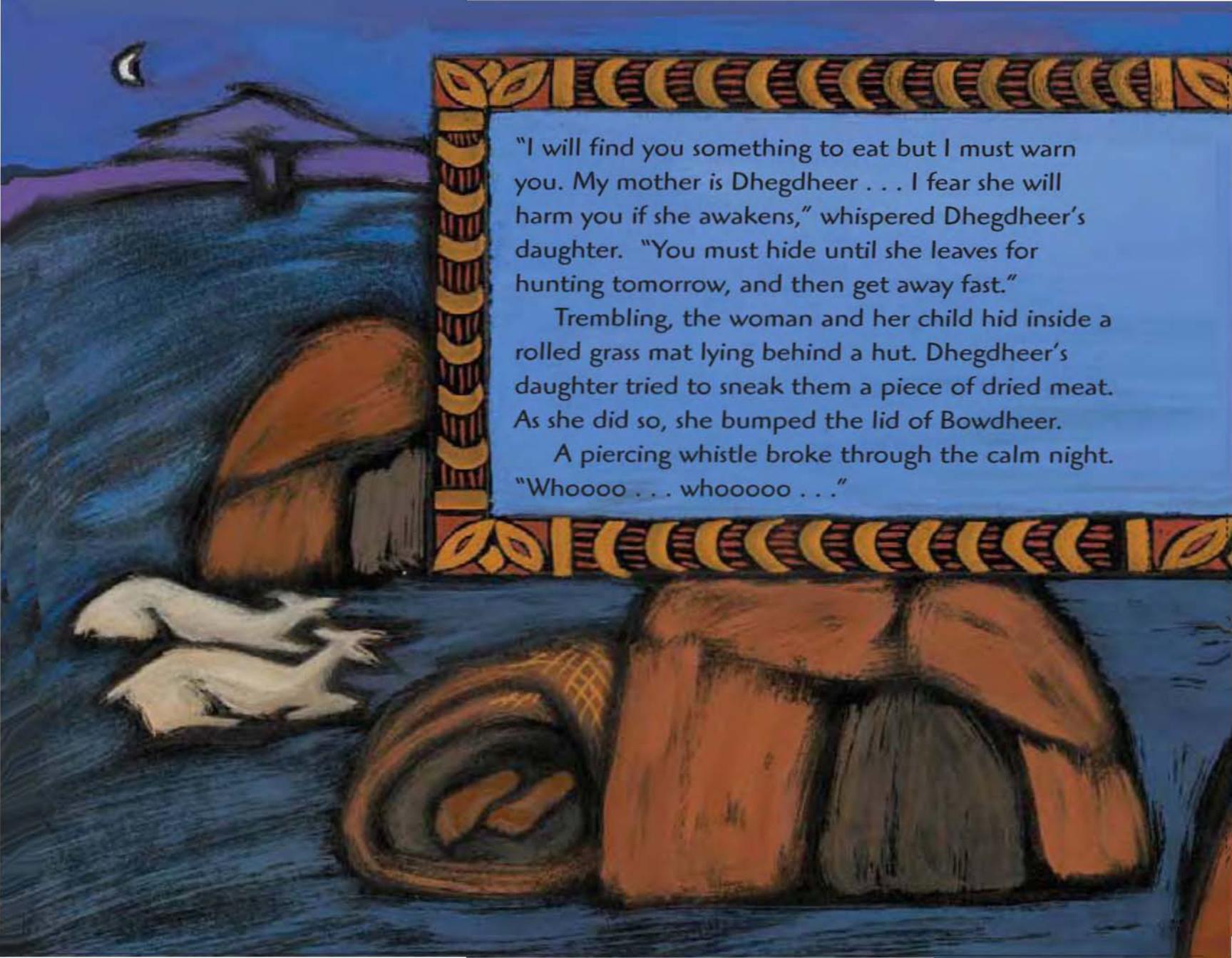


Habeenkaas, waxaa waddada soo martay haweeney ninkee dii dhintay, ilmo yarna xambaarsan. Nasasho ma aysan rabin ilaa ay ka gaadho gurigii reerkooda. Hase yeeshie, iyada iyo ilmaha yari way daallanaayeen, wayna gaajaysnaayeen. Aad bay ugu farxeen markay indhaha ka qaadeen deegaan-lamoodkii Dhegdheer.

"Gabadhooy, na warabi, in aan Ilaahay ku oomin?" ayey haweenaydii u wediisatey gabadhii Dhegdheer siduu dhaqanku ahaa.

Gabadhu si dhaqso ah bay ugu jawaabtay. "Hooya biyahan cabba," iyada oo u dhiibaysa aagaan biyo ah.

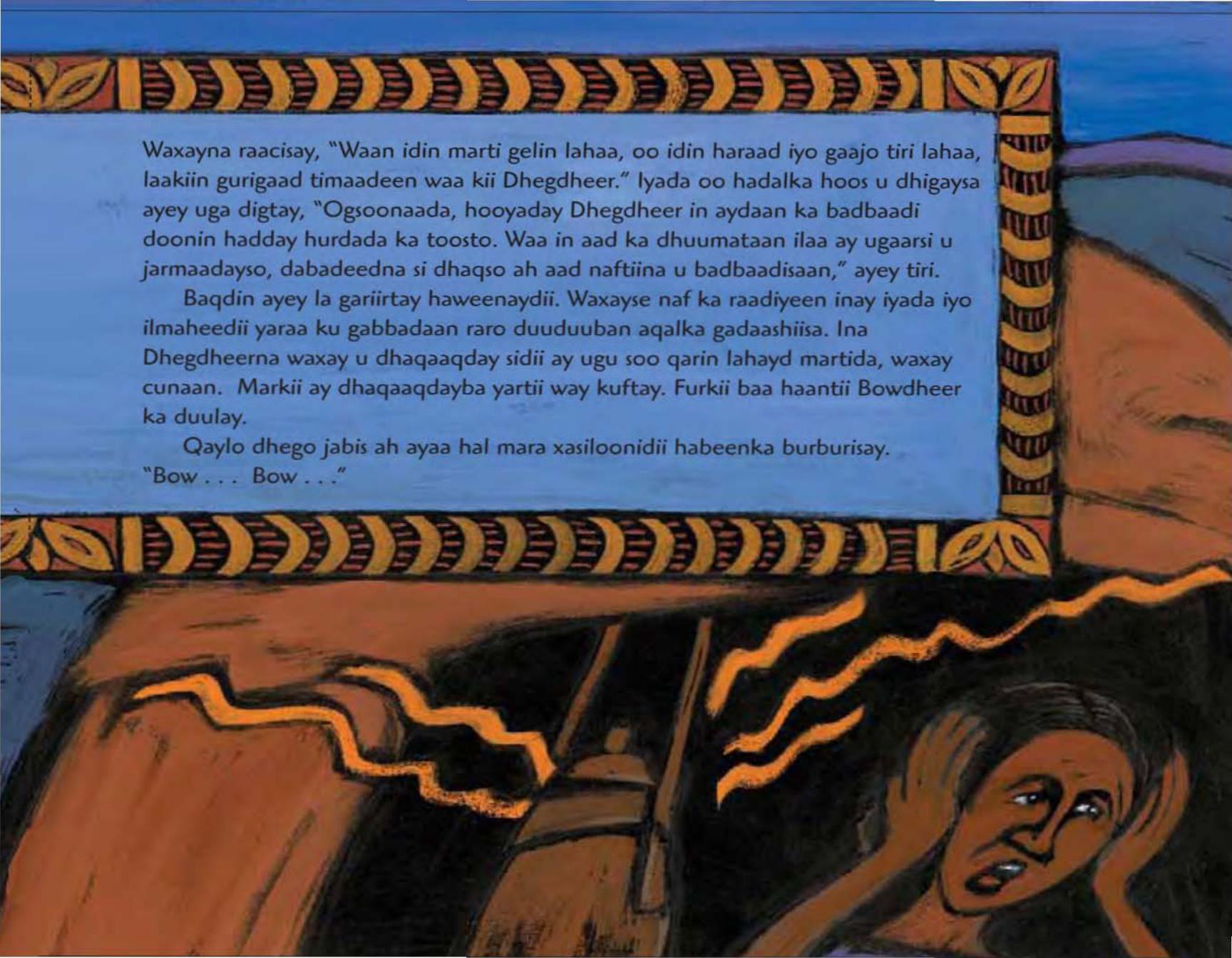




"I will find you something to eat but I must warn you. My mother is Dhegdheer . . . I fear she will harm you if she awakens," whispered Dhegdheer's daughter. "You must hide until she leaves for hunting tomorrow, and then get away fast."

Trembling, the woman and her child hid inside a rolled grass mat lying behind a hut. Dhegdheer's daughter tried to sneak them a piece of dried meat. As she did so, she bumped the lid of Bowdheer.

A piercing whistle broke through the calm night.
"Whoaaaa . . . whoooooo . . ."



Waxayna raacisay, "Waan idin marti gelin lahaa, oo idin haraad iyo gaajo tiri lahaa, laakiin gurigaad timaadeen waa kii Dhegdheer." Iyada oo hadalka hoos u dhigaysa ayey uga digitay, "Ogsoonaada, hooyaday Dhegdheer in aydaan ka badbaadi doonin hadday hurdada ka toosto. Waa in aad ka dhuumataan ilaa ay ugaarsi u jarmaadayso, dabadeedna si dhaqso ah aad naftiina u badbaadisaan," ayey tiri.

Baqdin ayey la gariirtay haweenaydii. Waxayse naf ka raadiyeen inay iyada iyo ilmaheedii yaraa ku gabbadaan raro duuduuban aqalka gadaashiisa. Ina Dhegdheerna waxay u dhaqaaqday sidii ay ugu soo qarin lahayd martida, waxay cunaan. Markii ay dhaqaaqdayba yartii way kuftay. Furkii baa haantii Bowdheer ka duulay.

Qaylo dhego jabis ah ayaa hal mara xasilooniidii habeenka burburisay.
"Bow . . . Bow . . ."



Dhegdheer leaped out of her sleep. "Oh!
My Alla! Who touched my vessel?"

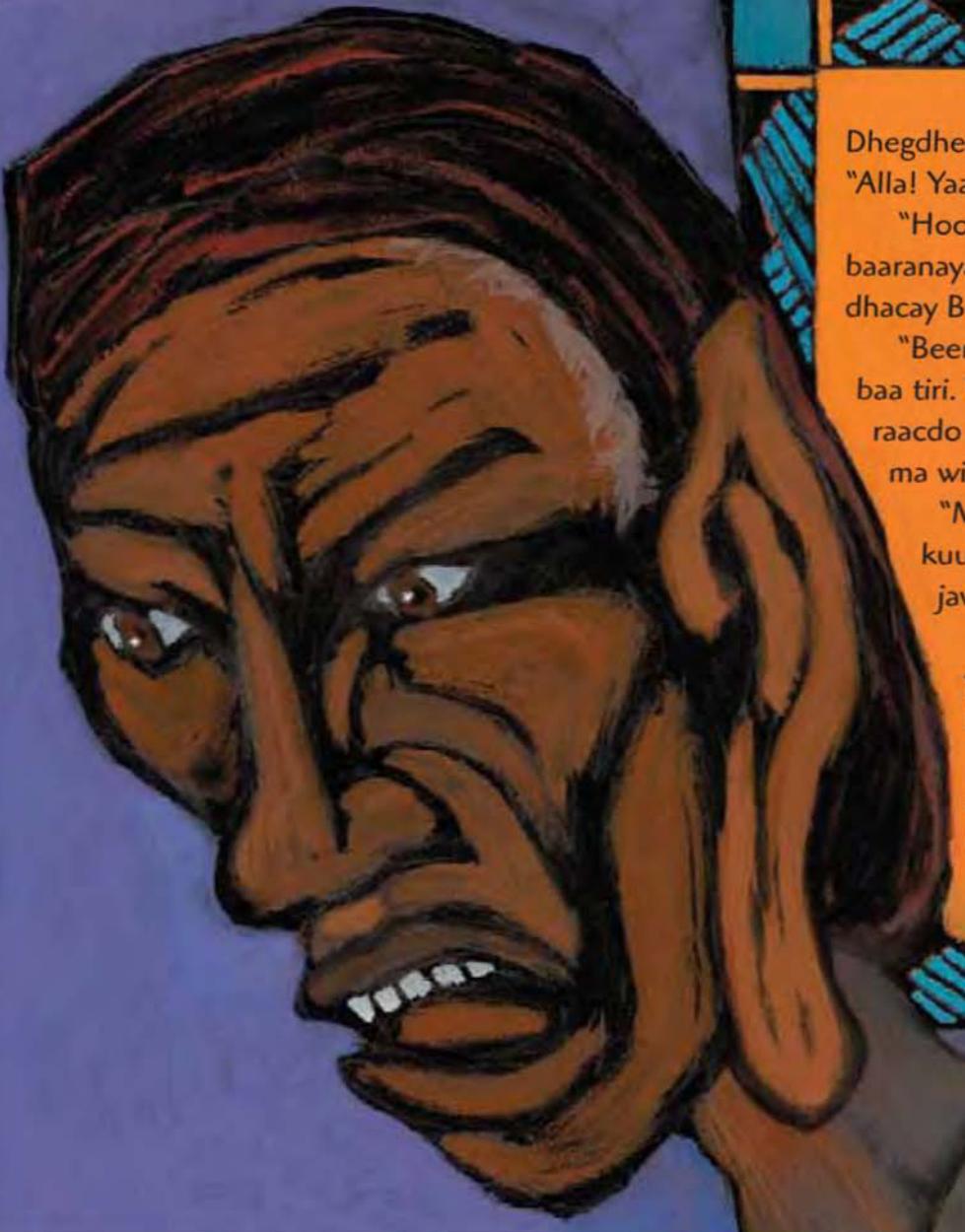
"I tried to find my dried goat meat
inside the clay jar but I mistakenly bumped
Bowdheer," said Dhegdheer's daughter.

"You are lying to me!" Dhegdheer said.
She started to sniff and snuffle. "Is it a fat
little boy I smell?"

"Do you smell the creases of my own
fat, mother?" asked the daughter.

"I smell the flesh of a young
woman," Dhegdheer yelled,
growing impatient and angry.

"It's my own flesh, mother,"
replied her daughter.



Dhegdheer hurddadii ayey ka toostay!
"Alla! Yaa taabtay haantayda?"

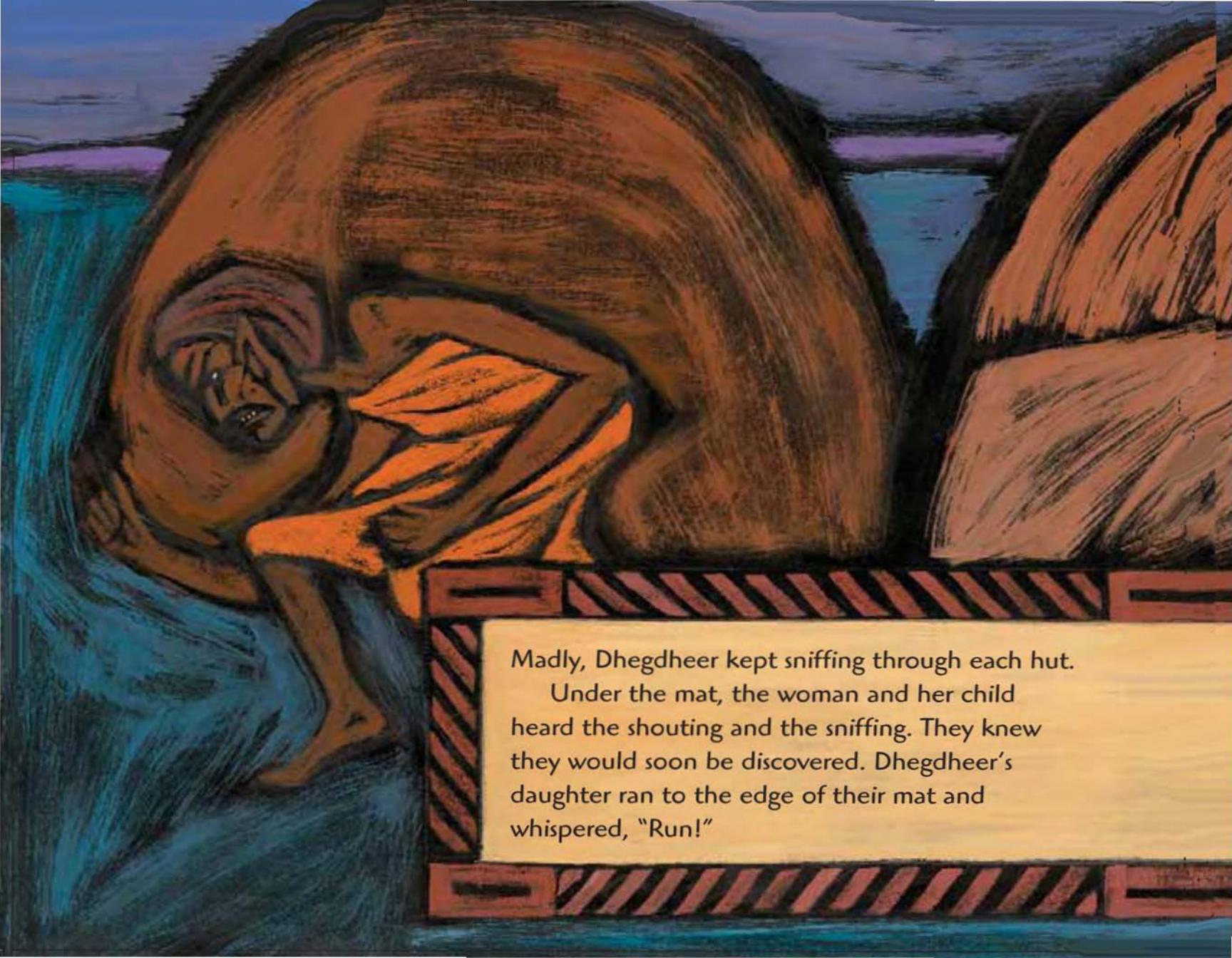
"Hooyo aniga oo hilib solay ah ka
baaranaya saabka dusha suran, ayaan ku
dhacay Bowdheer," bay tiri gabadhii.

"Been baad ii sheegi!" Dhegdheer
baa tiri. Waxay bilowday inay sanka la
raacdoo hadba jaho. "Waxa ii soo uraya
ma wiil yaroo buuran baa?"

"Ma baruurtaydaa hooyo waxa
kuu uray?" ayey gabadhii ku
jawaabtey.

"Waxa ii uraya hilbo gabar
yar," ayey si cadho ah u tiri
Dhegdheer.

"Hooyo waa jidhkayga,"
ayey mar kale, gabadhii
Dhegdheer ku celisey.



Madly, Dhegheer kept sniffing through each hut. Under the mat, the woman and her child heard the shouting and the sniffing. They knew they would soon be discovered. Dhegheer's daughter ran to the edge of their mat and whispered, "Run!"



Iyadii oo aan lahayn meel la qabto ayey hadba jiho sanka
la raacday, tuhunnsana in ay gabadhu wax qarinayso.

Haweenaydii iyo ilmahii yaraa rarada gudaheeda ayey
ka maqlayeen qaylada iyo sawaxanka jira. Way ogaayeen
inay mar dhow Dhegdheer gacanta ku dhigayso. Gabadhii
Dhegdheer inta ay orodday oo ay ku fariisatay rarada
cirifkeedii ayay kula faqday, "Carara!"



The woman stood with the child on her back. Trembling with fear, she could hardly move.

She called upon Allah, "May we be spared from the troubles of Dhegdheer." With her prayers, came the courage to run.

She knew Dhegdheer could run as swiftly as the wind.

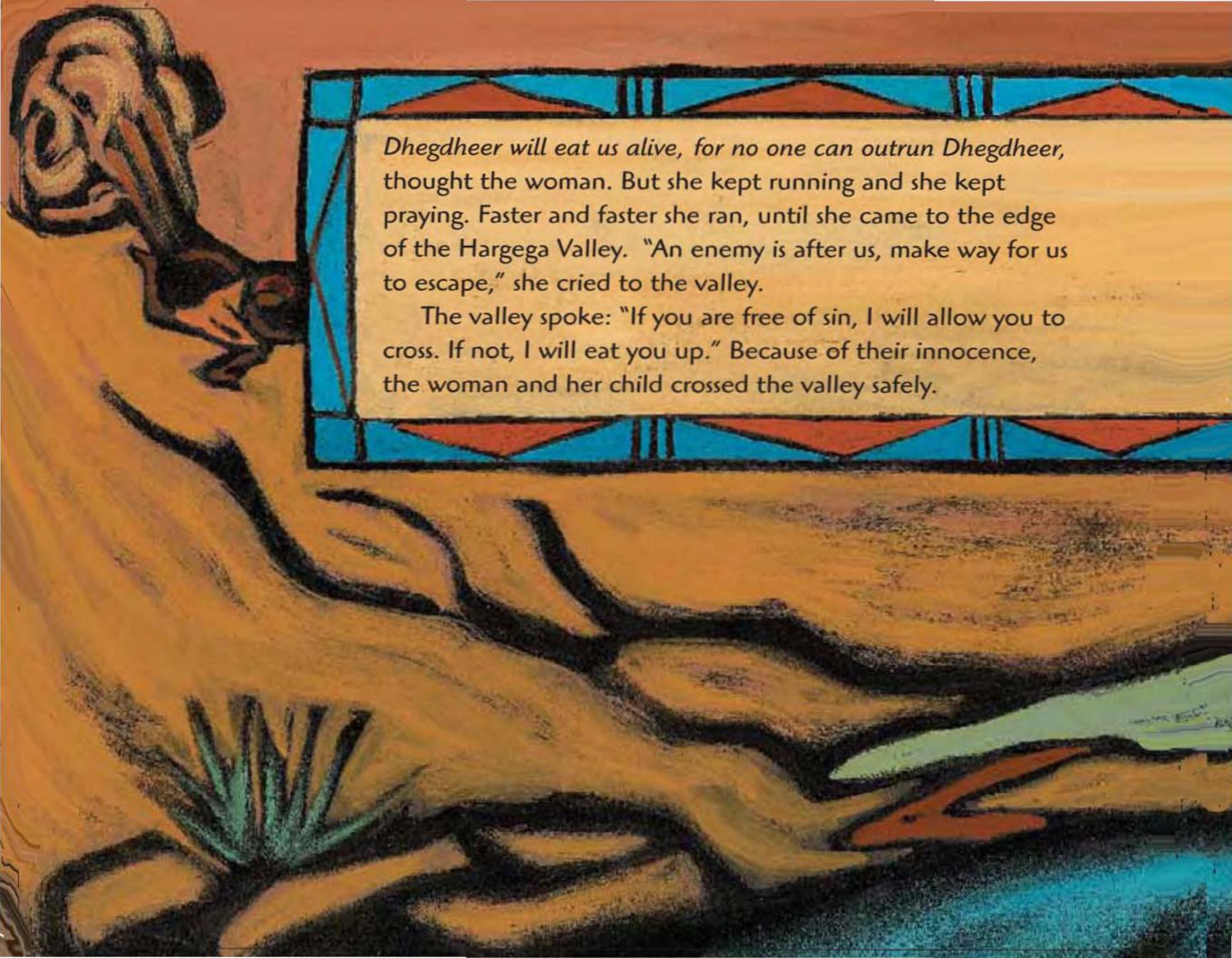


Haweenaydii sare ayay isu taagtay, ilmihi
oo weli dhabarkeeda saaran, baqdin
ayaye la dhaqaaqi waydey.

"Ilaahow naga badbaadi belada
Dhegdheer," ducadeedii waxaa loogu
bedalay karti ay ku oroddo.

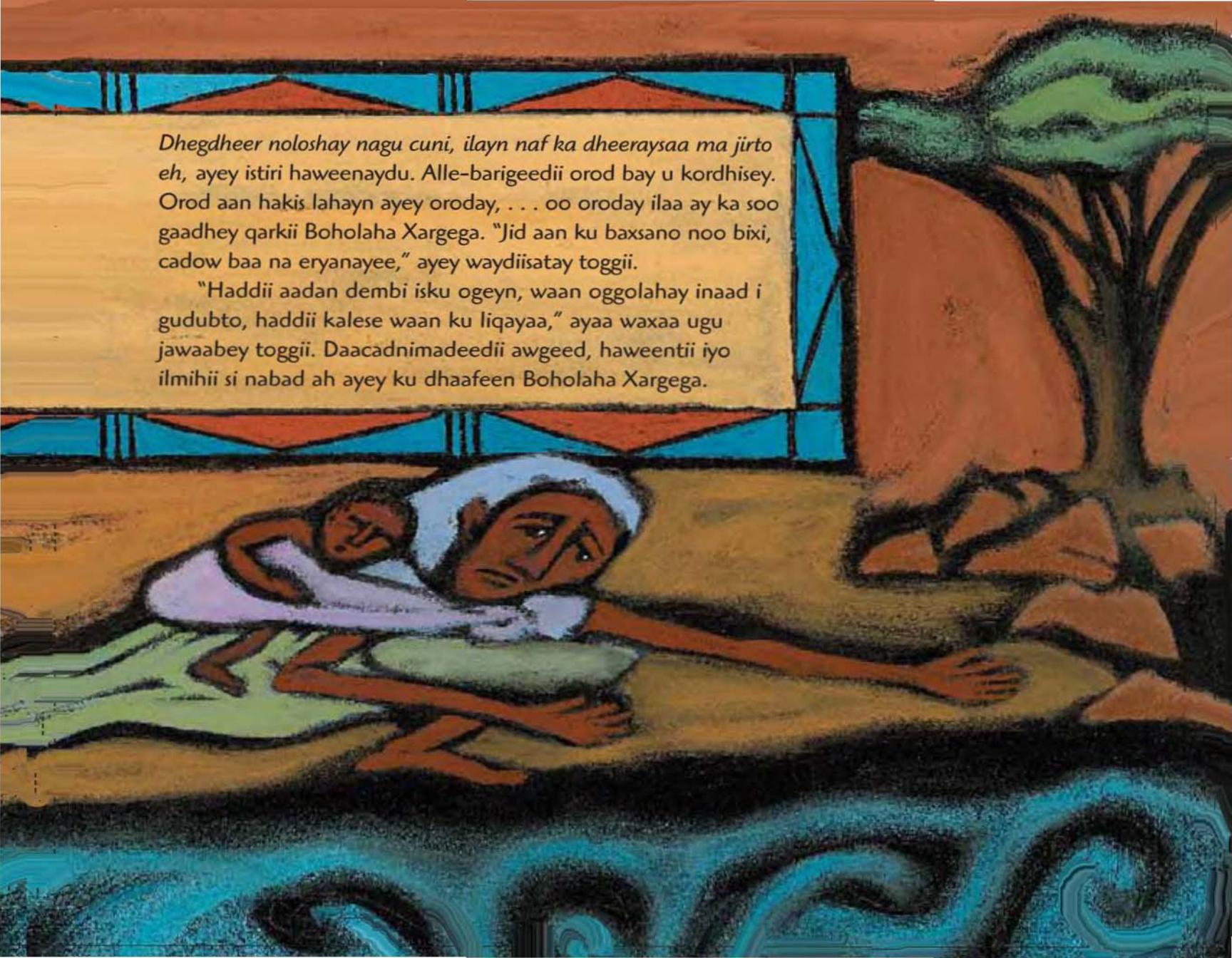
Haweenaydu waa ay ogsoonayd in
Dhegdheer dabaysha la orod tahay.



A stylized illustration of a woman and a child running across a vast, yellow-orange desert. The woman has a large head and is carrying a child on her back. They are moving away from the viewer towards a distant horizon where several small, blue-roofed huts are visible against a clear blue sky.

Dhegdheer will eat us alive, for no one can outrun Dhegdheer,
thought the woman. But she kept running and she kept
praying. Faster and faster she ran, until she came to the edge
of the Hargega Valley. "An enemy is after us, make way for us
to escape," she cried to the valley.

The valley spoke: "If you are free of sin, I will allow you to cross. If not, I will eat you up." Because of their innocence,
the woman and her child crossed the valley safely.



Dhegdheer noloshay nagu cuni, ilayn naf ka dheeraysaa ma jirto eh, ayey istiri haweenaydu. Alle-barigeedii orod bay u kordhisey. Orod aan hakis lahayn ayey oroday, . . . oo oroday ilaa ay ka soo gaadhey qarkii Boholaha Xargega. "Jid aan ku baxsano noo bixi, cadow baa na eryanayee," ayey waydiisatay toggi.

"Haddii aadan dembi isku ogeyn, waan oggolahay inaad i gudubto, haddii kalese waan ku liqayaa," ayaa waxaa ugu jawaabey toggi. Daacadnimadeedii awgeed, haweentii iyo ilmihi si nabad ah ayey ku dhaafeen Boholaha Xargega.



Dhegdheer stood on the edge of the valley, staring at the woman and the flesh of the little boy far on the other side. Restless and crying, she chanted her mournful song:

“Oh, Hargega Valley,
It traps the wings of one flying,
It closes the way of a fast-running man,
Look at the plumpness of the woman,
Look, look at the little boy she is carrying.”

Then she made a desperate request of the valley:
“Make way for me too, for I am after a chubby child and
a woman who have tantalized my appetite.”

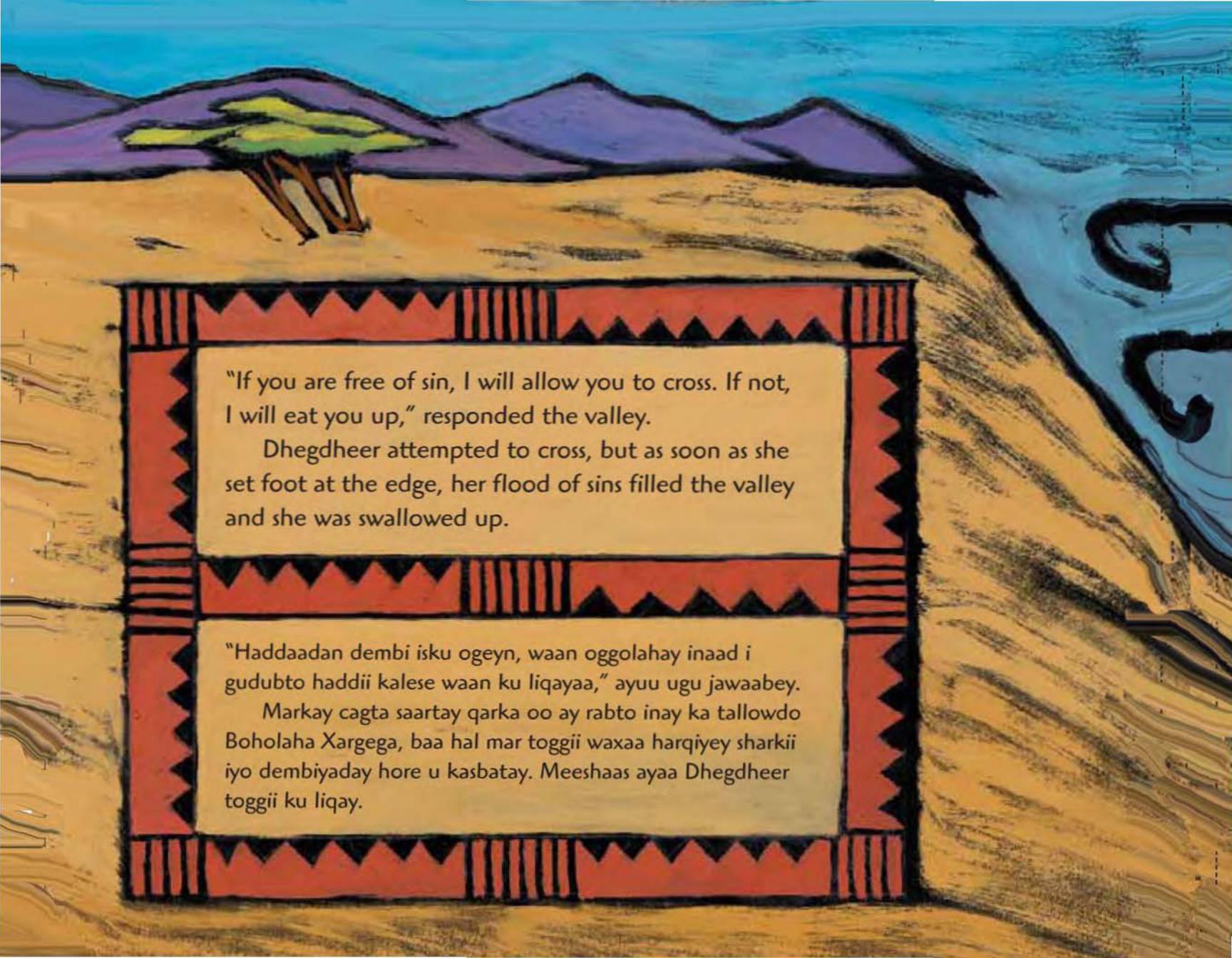


Dhegdheer shallaay ayay isla dul taagtey toggi, iyada oo ku sii dhaygagsan haweenaydii iyo wiilka cayalkiisa. Markaasay ku barooratay heesteddii shallaayga ahayd:

“Cakuye Boholaha Xargega,
Nin Duulaayeey Dabraan,
Nin xiimaayeey Xiraan,
Bal naagtaa barida daya,
Bal wiilkay sidato daya,
Bal bowdada cadaanta daya,
Bal buluq buluqdeeda daya.”

Kadibna, Dhegdheer waxay dhiibatey codsi quusasha ah:
“Anna jid ii fur waxaan eryanayaa cunug yar oo buuran iyo hooyadiis oo gaajo igu kiciyey,” ayey tiri.



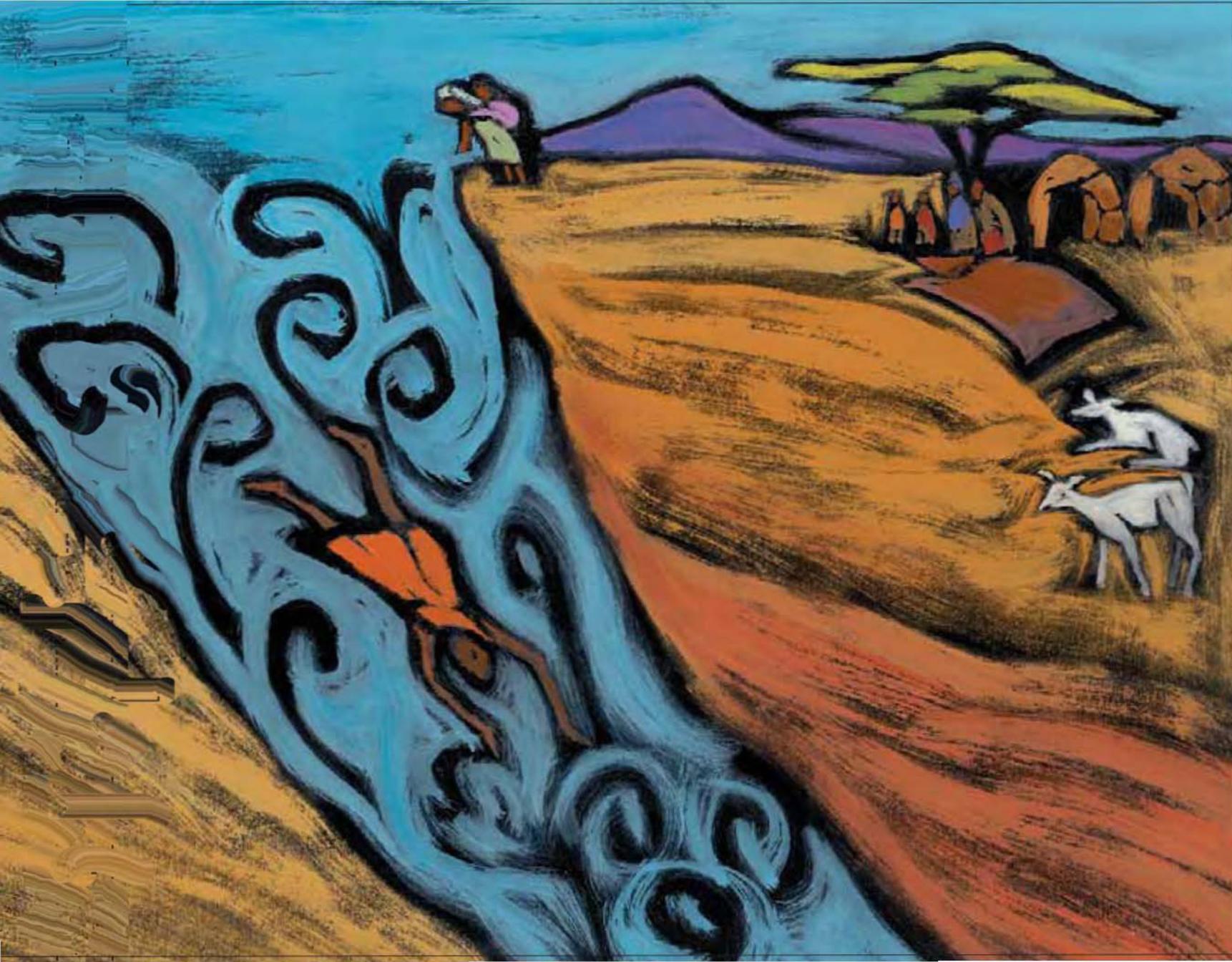


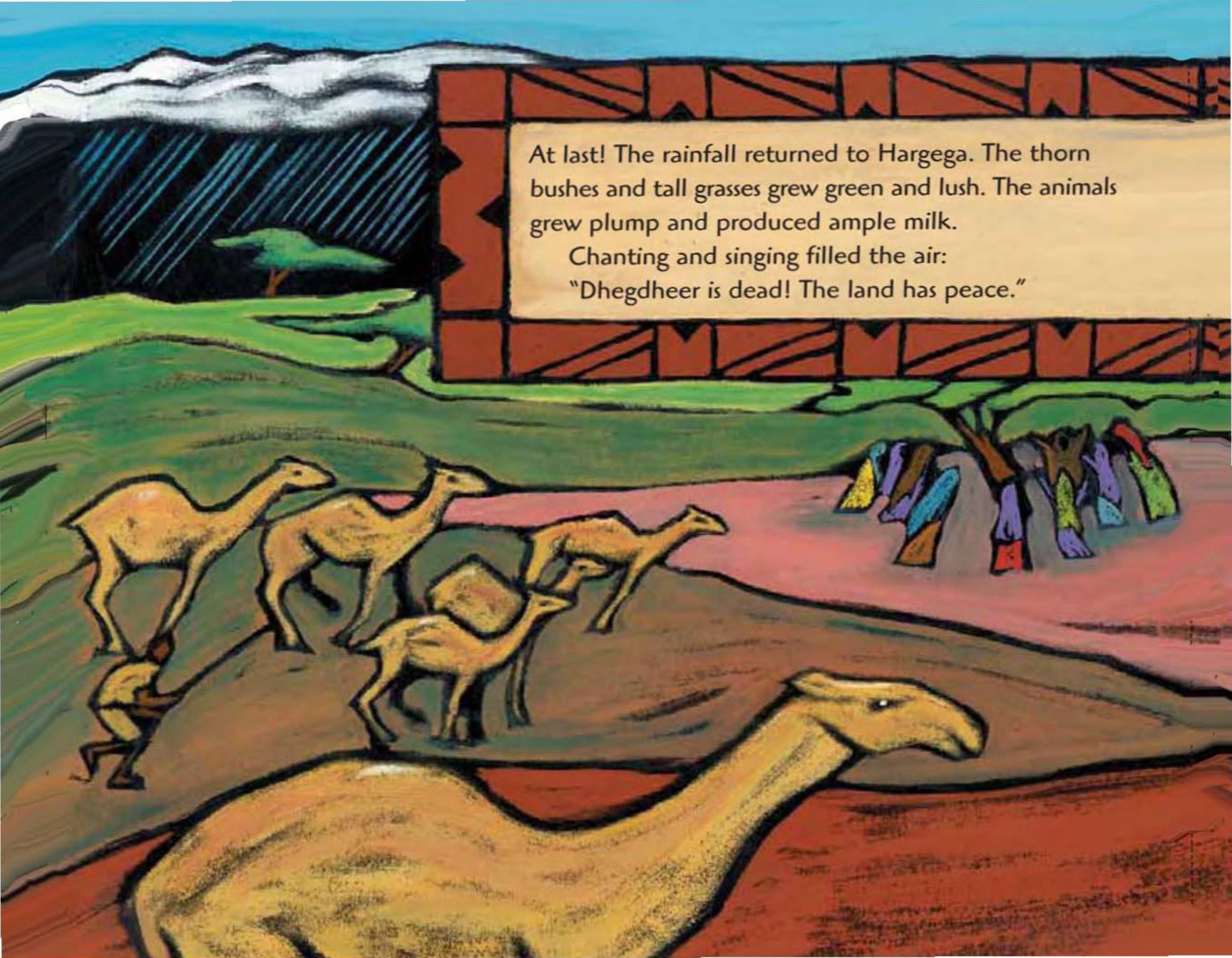
"If you are free of sin, I will allow you to cross. If not, I will eat you up," responded the valley.

Dhegdeer attempted to cross, but as soon as she set foot at the edge, her flood of sins filled the valley and she was swallowed up.

"Haddaadan dembi isku ogeyn, waan oggolahay inaad i gudubto haddii kalese waan ku liqayaa," ayuu ugu jawaabey.

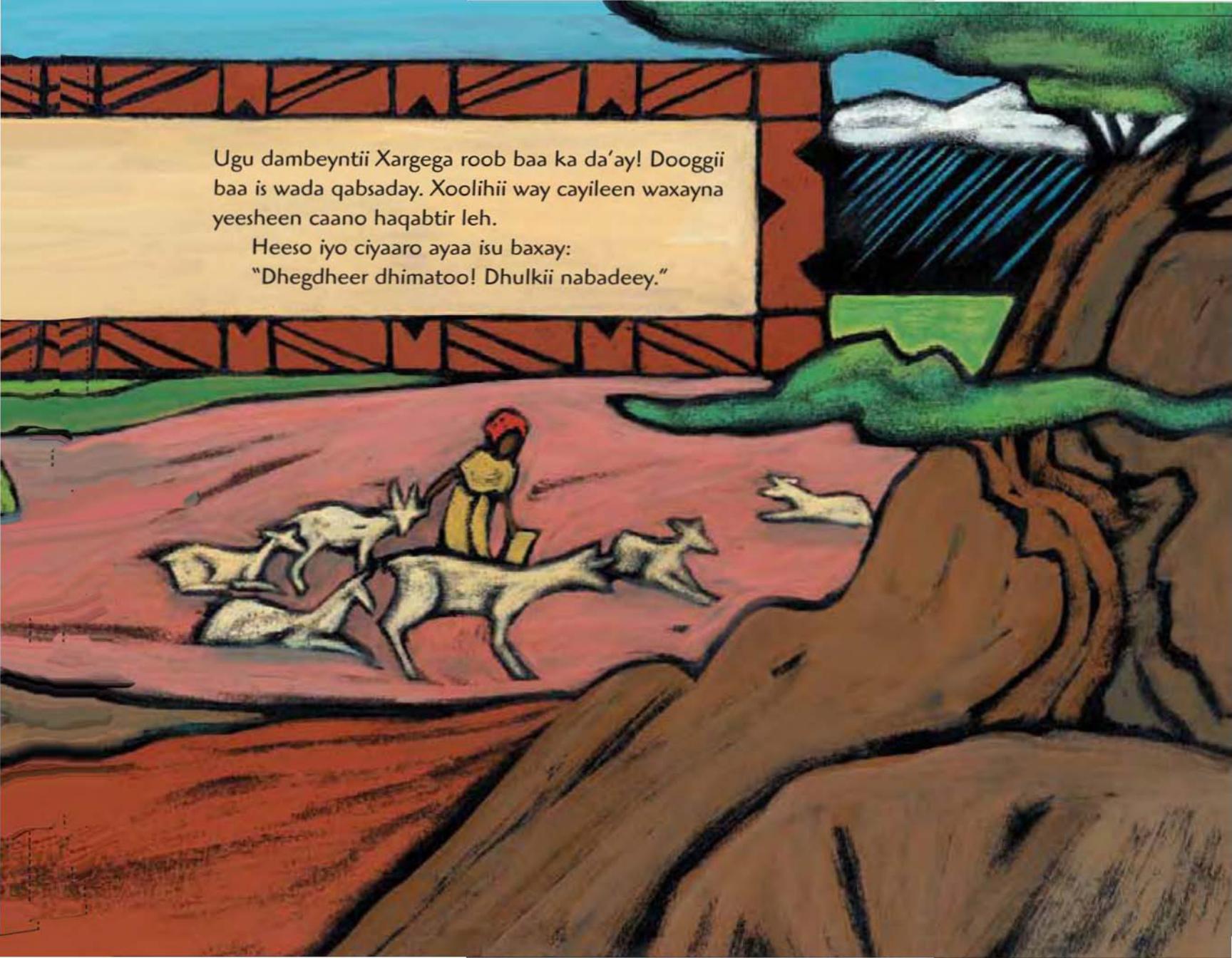
Markay cagta saartay qarka oo ay rabto inay ka tallowdo Boholaha Xargega, baa hal mar toggi waxaa harqiye sharkii iyo dembiyaday hore u kasbatay. Meeshaas ayaa Dhegdeer toggi ku liqay.



The background of the image shows a desert landscape with rolling green hills and a clear blue sky. In the foreground, several camels are walking across a sandy path. To the right, there is a large, brown, textured wall or mud-brick structure. A small, white rectangular box is positioned on the wall, containing the text.

At last! The rainfall returned to Hargega. The thorn bushes and tall grasses grew green and lush. The animals grew plump and produced ample milk.

Chanting and singing filled the air:
"Dhegdeer is dead! The land has peace."



Ugu dambeytii Xargega roob baa ka da'ayl! Dooggii
baa is wada qabsaday. Xoolihii way cayileen waxayna
yeesheen caano haqabtir leh.

Heeso iyo ciyaaro ayaa isu baxay:
"Dhegdheer dhimatoo! Dhulkii nabadeey."

THE SOMALI BILINGUAL BOOK PROJECT reflects the Minnesota Humanities Commission's commitment to promote and preserve heritage languages and increase English literacy skills of refugee and immigrant families. This collaborative project initially includes the publication of four bilingual children's books for shared reading and a dual-language audio recording. A portion of proceeds from sales of the books will support ongoing projects of the Minnesota Humanities Commission's Bilingual and Heritage Language Programs.

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BETSY BOWEN is the author-illustrator of several titles including *Antler, Bear, Canoe: A Northwoods Alphabet Year*. She has illustrated *Shingebiss, an Ojibwe Legend*, and *The Troll with No Heart in His Body and Other Tales of Trolls*. Her interest in folktales extends into puppetmaking and theater. She lives in Grand Marais, Minnesota.

