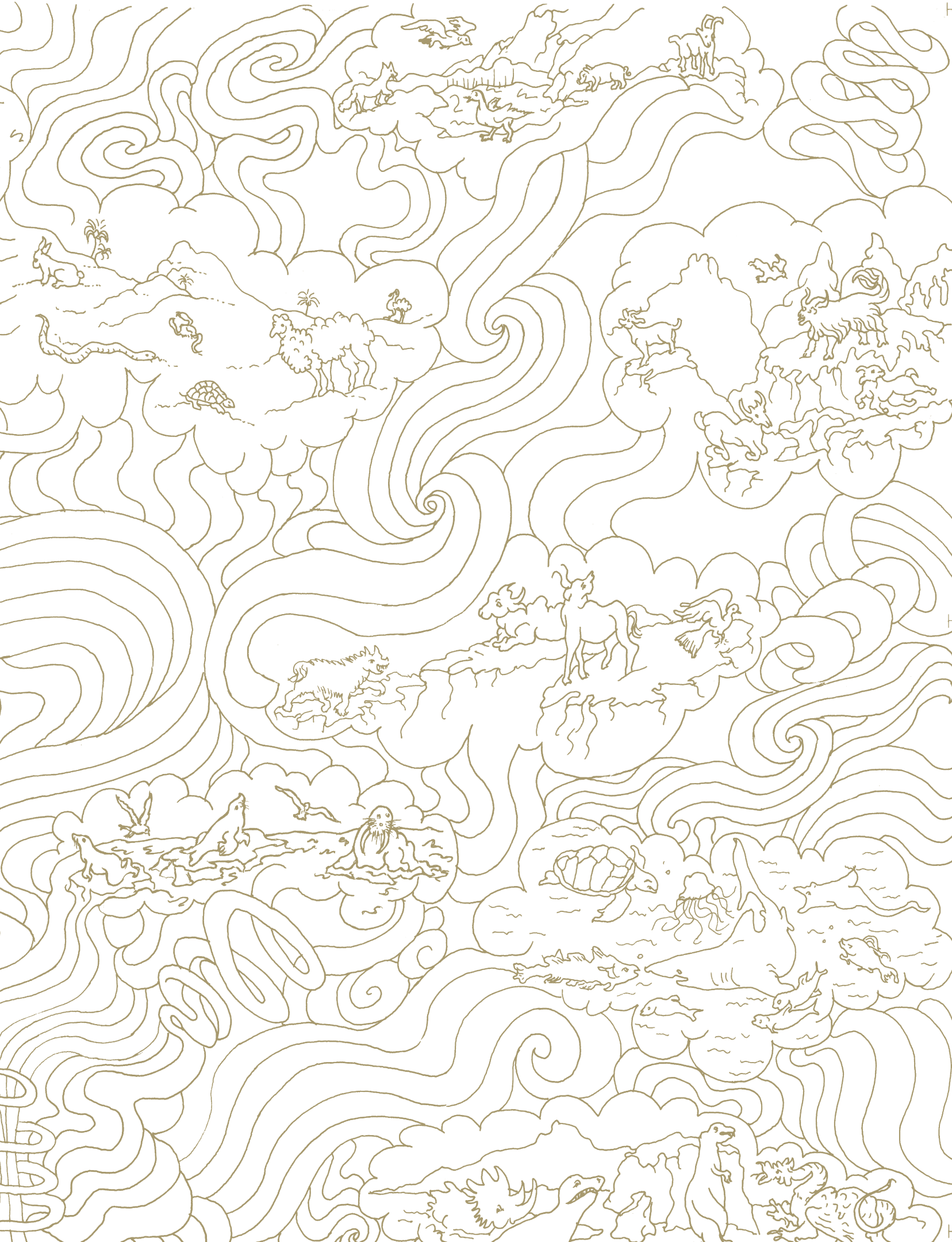
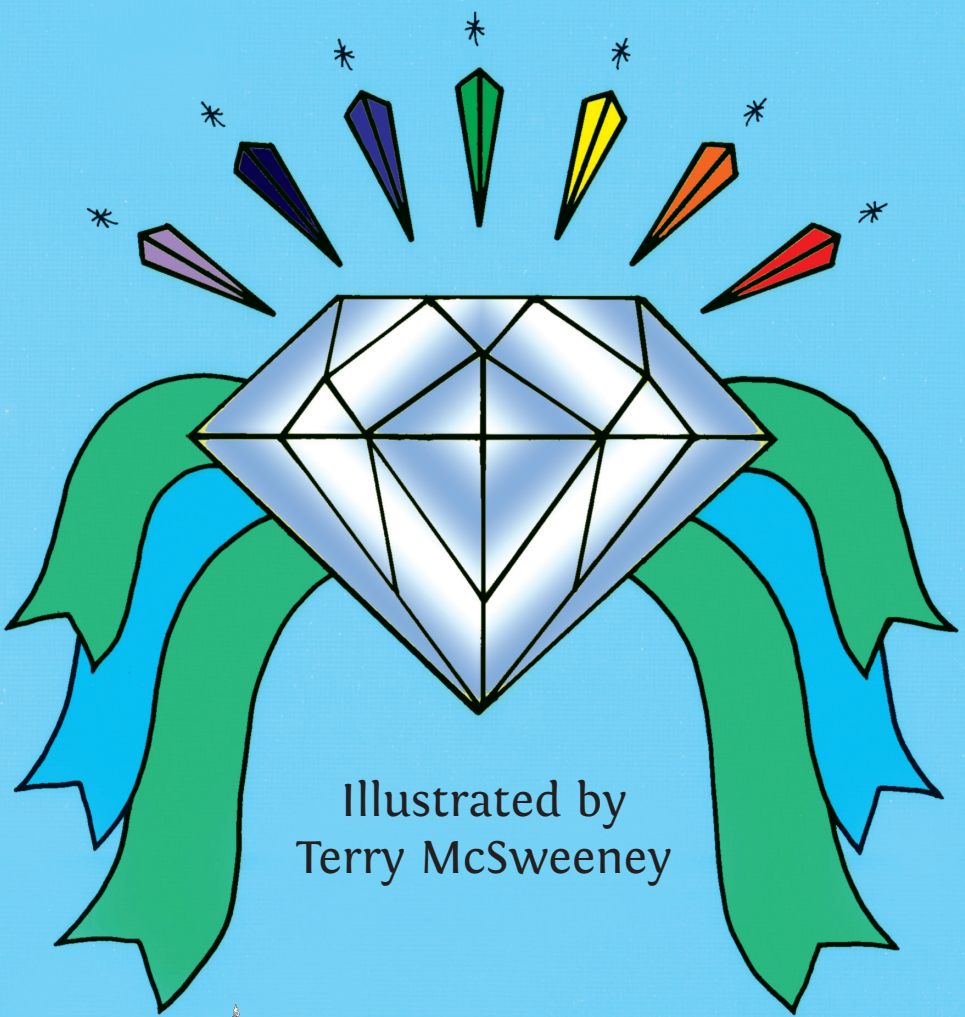


Great Gift and the Wish-Fulfilling Gem

Great Gift and the Wish-Fulfilling Gem



Illustrated by
Terry McSweeney

Dharma Publishing



Jataka Tales Series

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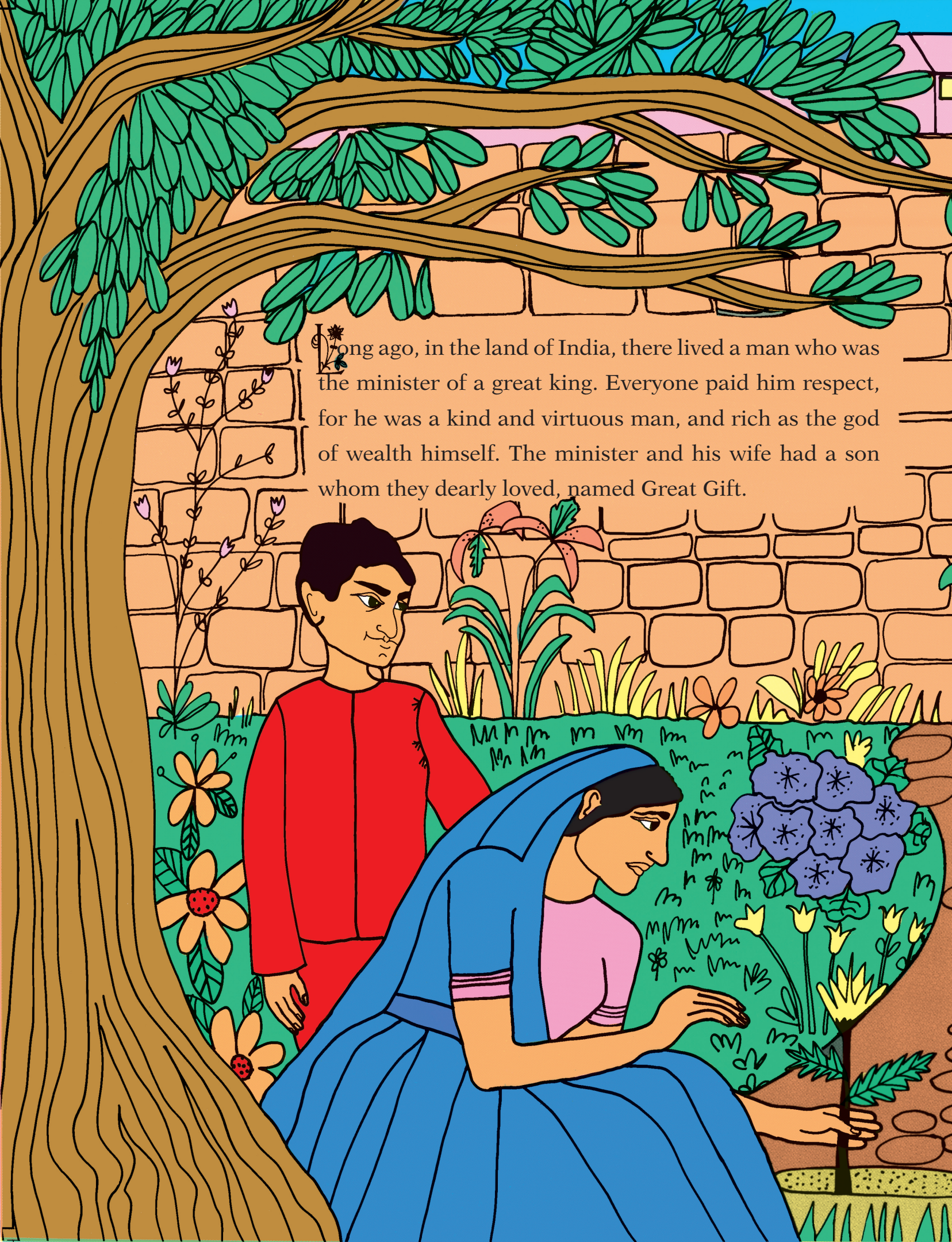
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Dedicated to children everywhere



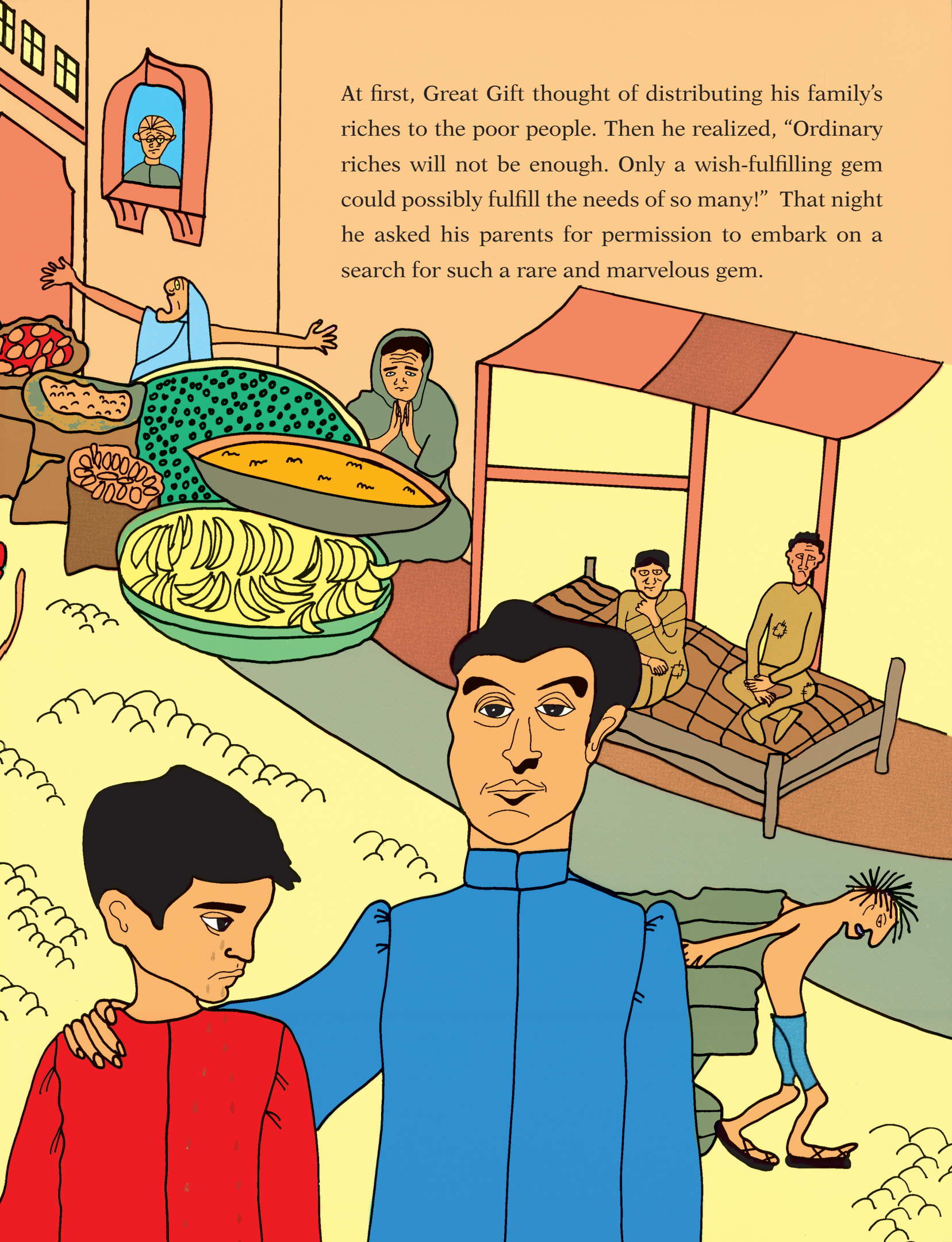


Long ago, in the land of India, there lived a man who was the minister of a great king. Everyone paid him respect, for he was a kind and virtuous man, and rich as the god of wealth himself. The minister and his wife had a son whom they dearly loved, named Great Gift.





One day the minister went to town and took his son with him for the first time. In the streets, Great Gift saw many people who were so poor that they had to work like beasts of burden or even steal for their living, and he became deeply distressed.



At first, Great Gift thought of distributing his family's riches to the poor people. Then he realized, "Ordinary riches will not be enough. Only a wish-fulfilling gem could possibly fulfill the needs of so many!" That night he asked his parents for permission to embark on a search for such a rare and marvelous gem.



Wish-fulfilling gems are wondrous jewels that are guarded by powerful nagas, dragons that dwell beneath the lakes and oceans or in far-away realms where human beings dare not go. Since his parents were well aware that no one had ever returned from such a challenging journey, they would not allow Great Gift to undertake the trip.

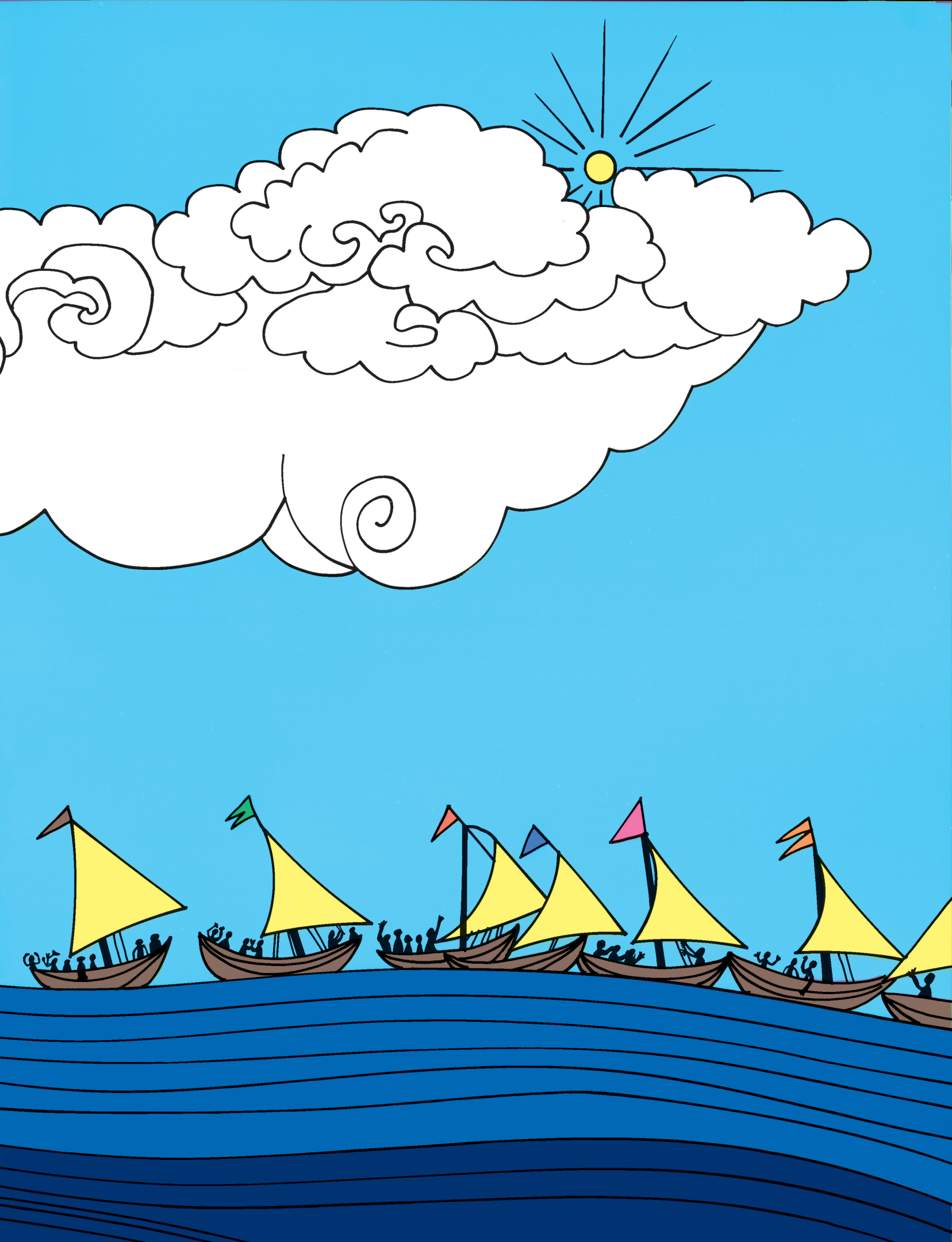
For six days the boy could not eat or sleep, constantly thinking of the poor people he had seen on the streets. Finally his parents could not bear to see him suffer any longer and agreed to let him go.

Soon afterward, Great Gift joined a caravan of five hundred merchants. Mounted on a camel, he set out to find the wish-fulfilling gem.

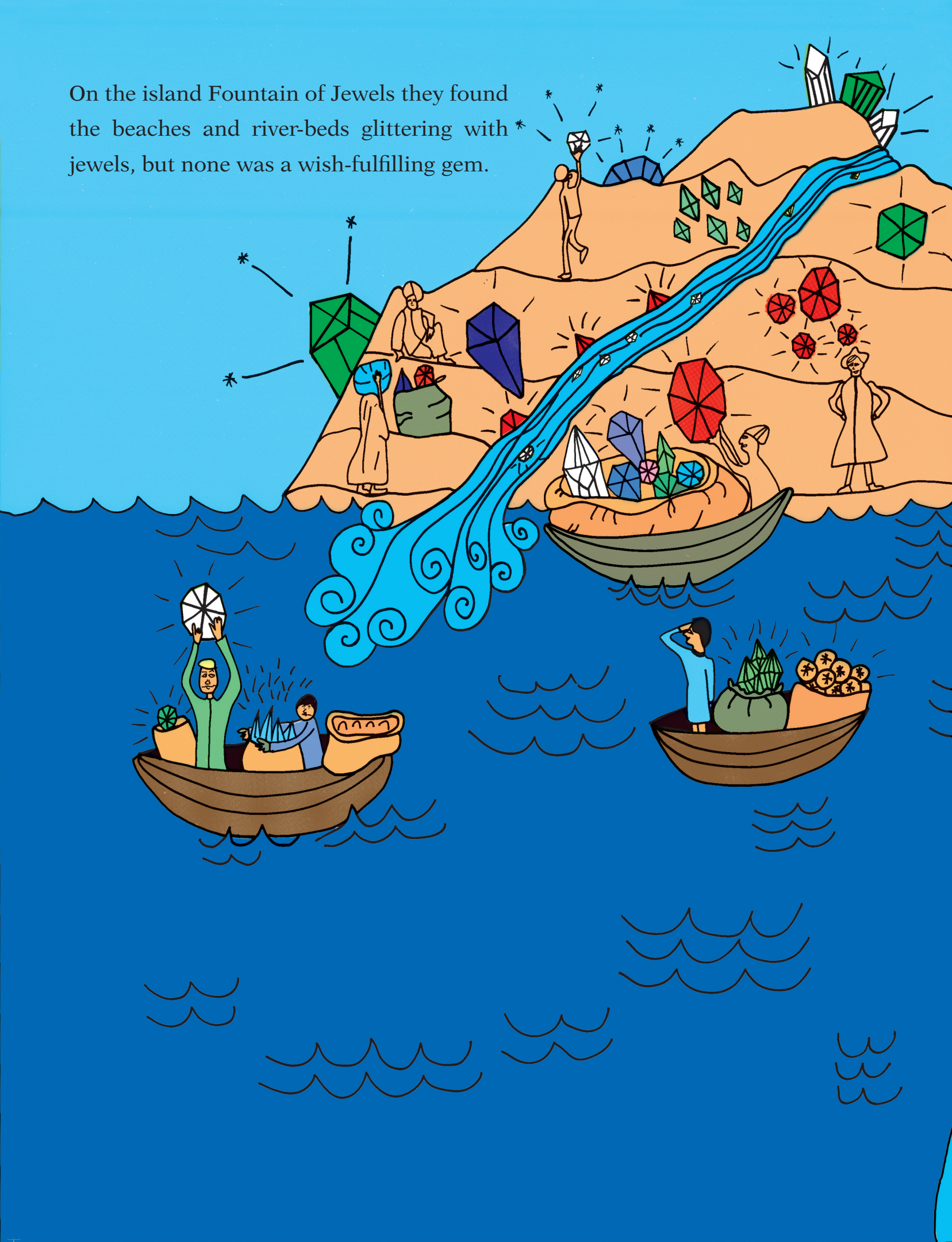


After many adventures, Great Gift and the caravan of merchants reached the ocean where they had carpenters build them a fleet of large boats. With these ships they set sail for an island known as the "Fountain of Jewels."





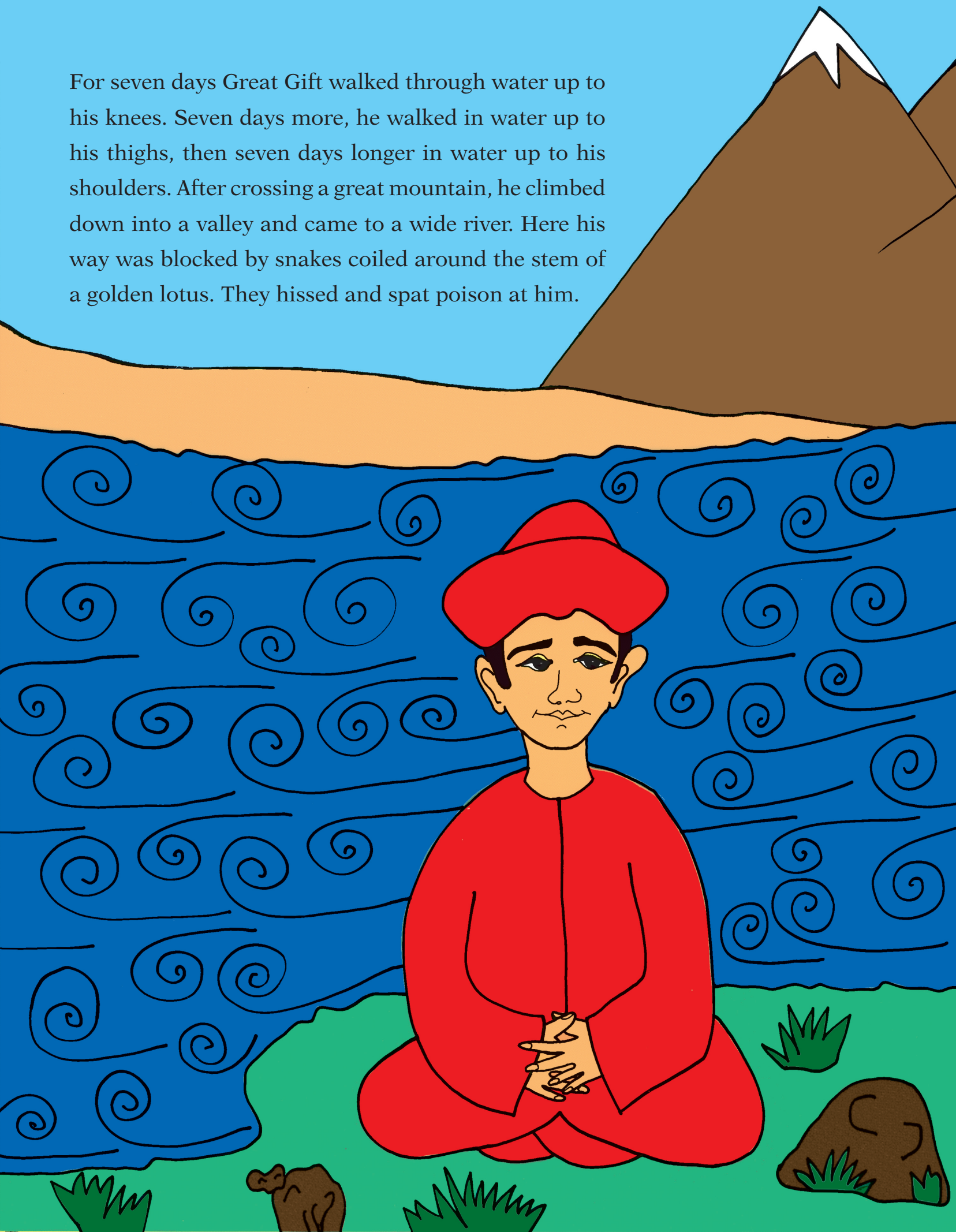
On the island Fountain of Jewels they found the beaches and river-beds glittering with jewels, but none was a wish-fulfilling gem.

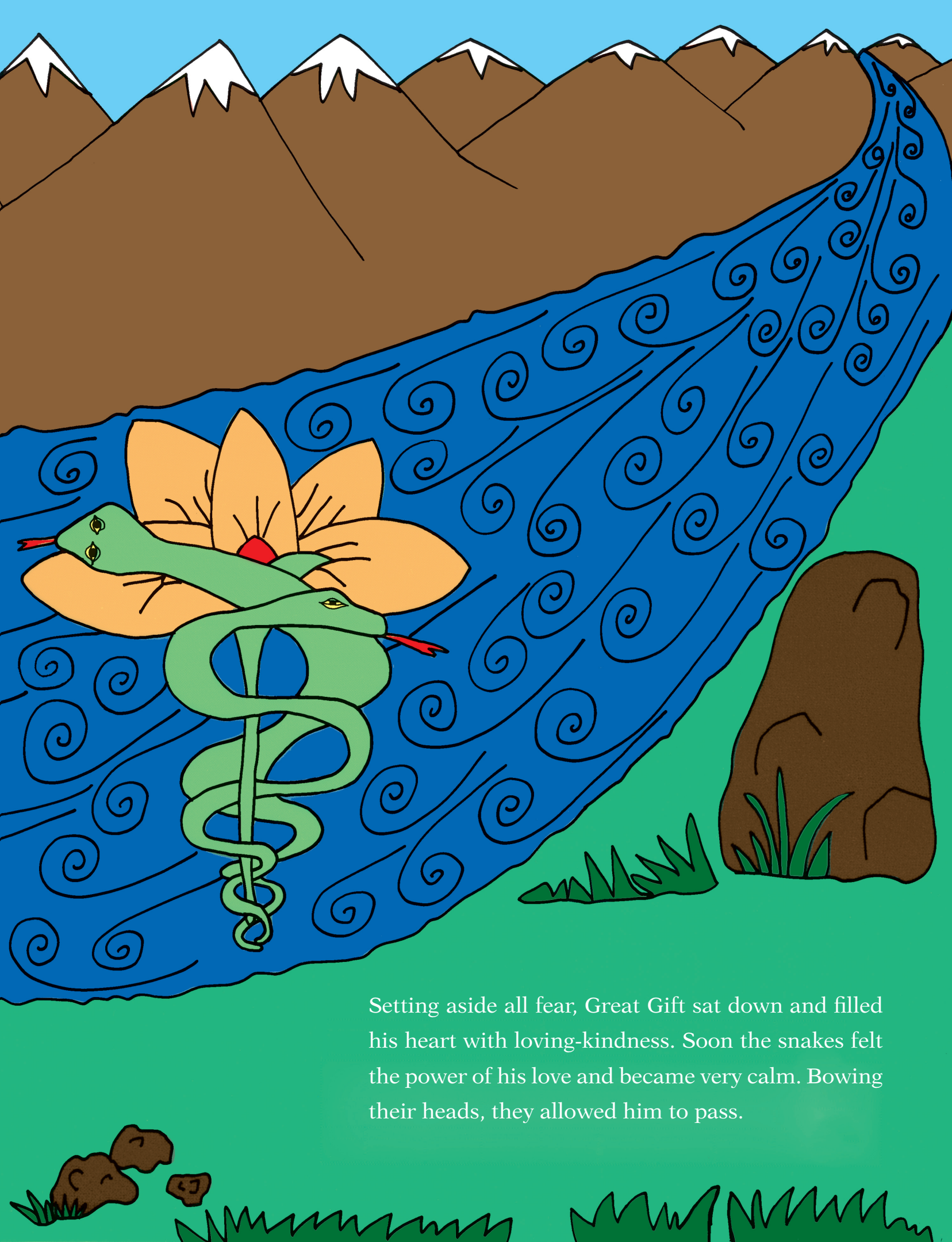


Great Gift helped the merchants fill large bags with jewels and load them onto their ships. When the ships were overflowing with treasure, the merchants were very happy and offered to share them with the boy. But Great Gift refused. He was determined to continue his search for the fabulous wish-fulfilling gem. When they reached the next shore, he bade the merchants farewell and went his way alone.



For seven days Great Gift walked through water up to his knees. Seven days more, he walked in water up to his thighs, then seven days longer in water up to his shoulders. After crossing a great mountain, he climbed down into a valley and came to a wide river. Here his way was blocked by snakes coiled around the stem of a golden lotus. They hissed and spat poison at him.





Setting aside all fear, Great Gift sat down and filled his heart with loving-kindness. Soon the snakes felt the power of his love and became very calm. Bowing their heads, they allowed him to pass.

Next, Great Gift came to the land of the hairy man-eating cannibals. Smelling his flesh and blood, the cannibals rushed out to capture him. Once again Great Gift filled his heart with loving-kindness, and his love pacified the cannibals' greed. They calmed down and gathered around him.

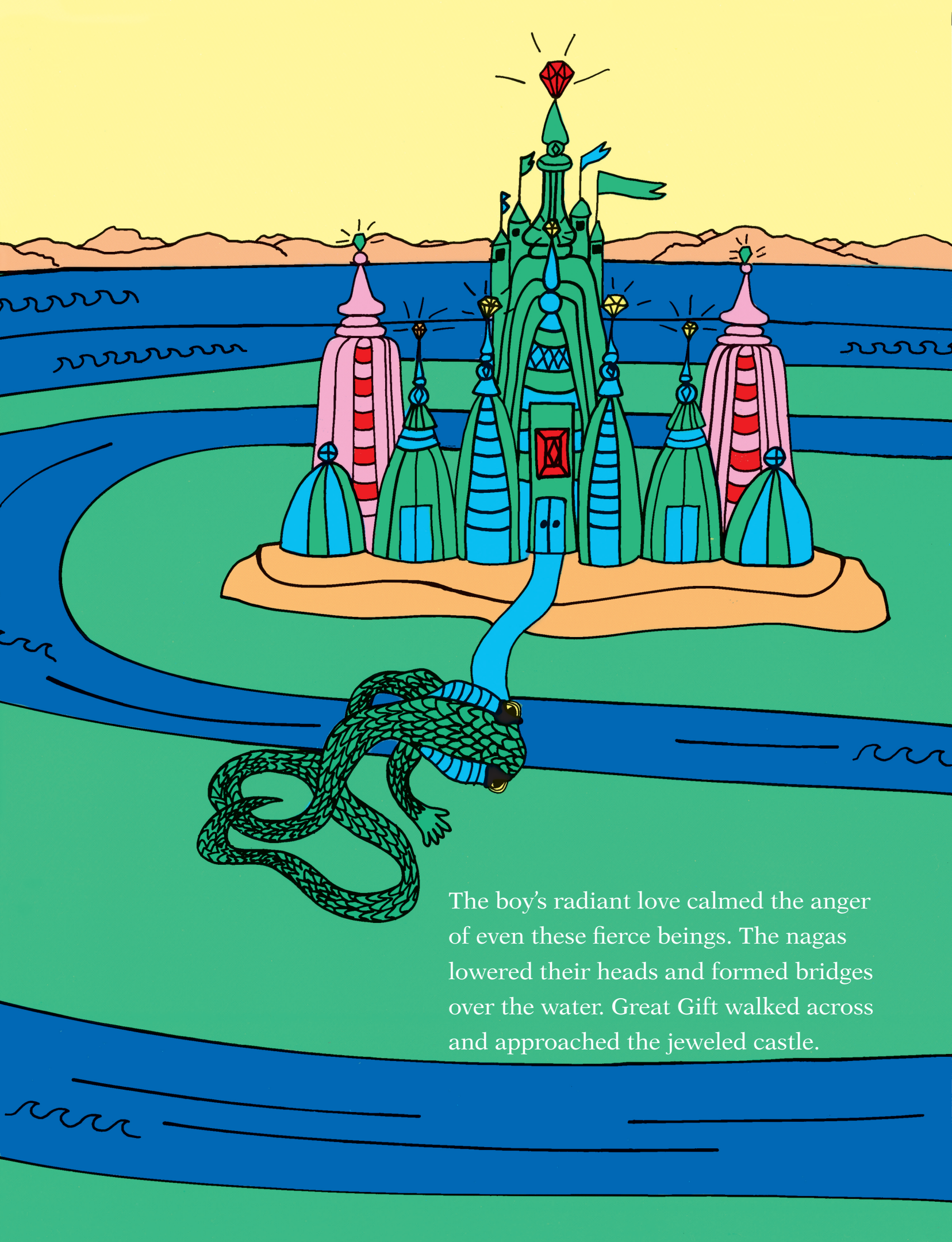
When Great Gift told the cannibals about his search for the wish-fulfilling gem, they offered to help. Taking Great Gift on their backs, they flew four hundred miles through the air and set him down in the land of the nagas, the guardians of the magical wish-fulfilling gems.



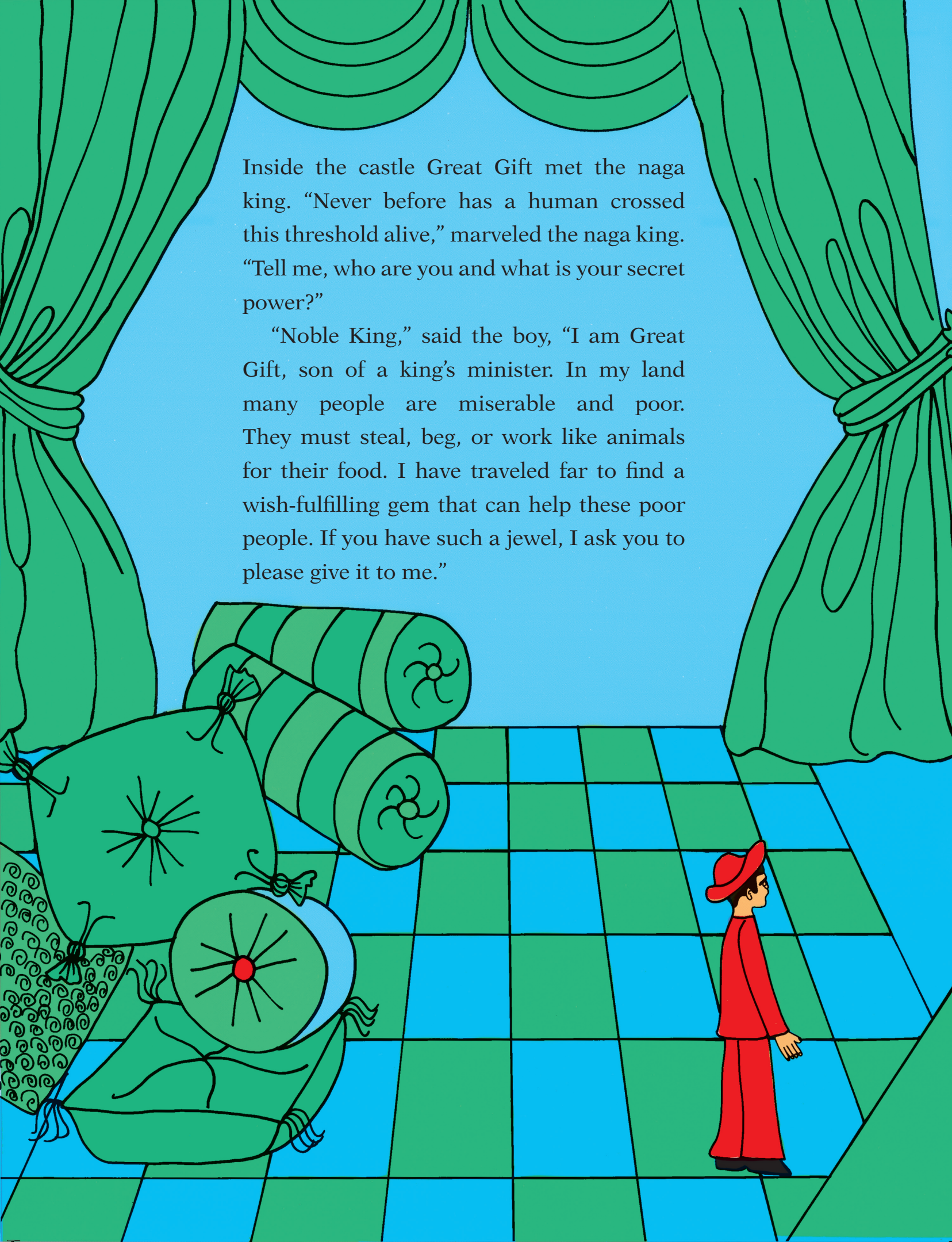


In the distance Great Gift saw a castle gleaming with precious jewels. As he walked toward it, he found that the castle was protected by rings of water filled with poisonous snakes and guarded by two colossal nagas.



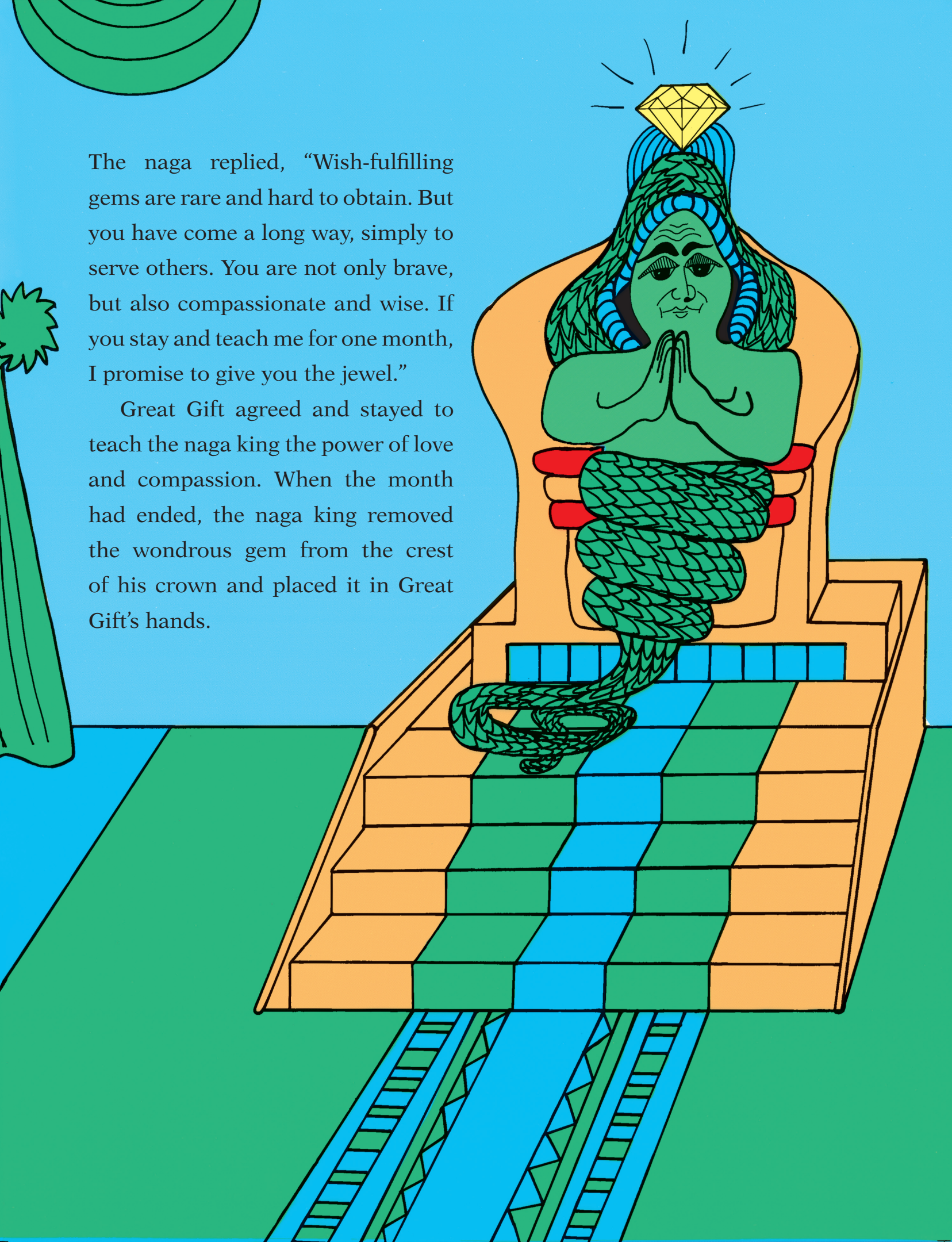


The boy's radiant love calmed the anger of even these fierce beings. The nagas lowered their heads and formed bridges over the water. Great Gift walked across and approached the jeweled castle.



Inside the castle Great Gift met the naga king. "Never before has a human crossed this threshold alive," marveled the naga king. "Tell me, who are you and what is your secret power?"

"Noble King," said the boy, "I am Great Gift, son of a king's minister. In my land many people are miserable and poor. They must steal, beg, or work like animals for their food. I have traveled far to find a wish-fulfilling gem that can help these poor people. If you have such a jewel, I ask you to please give it to me."

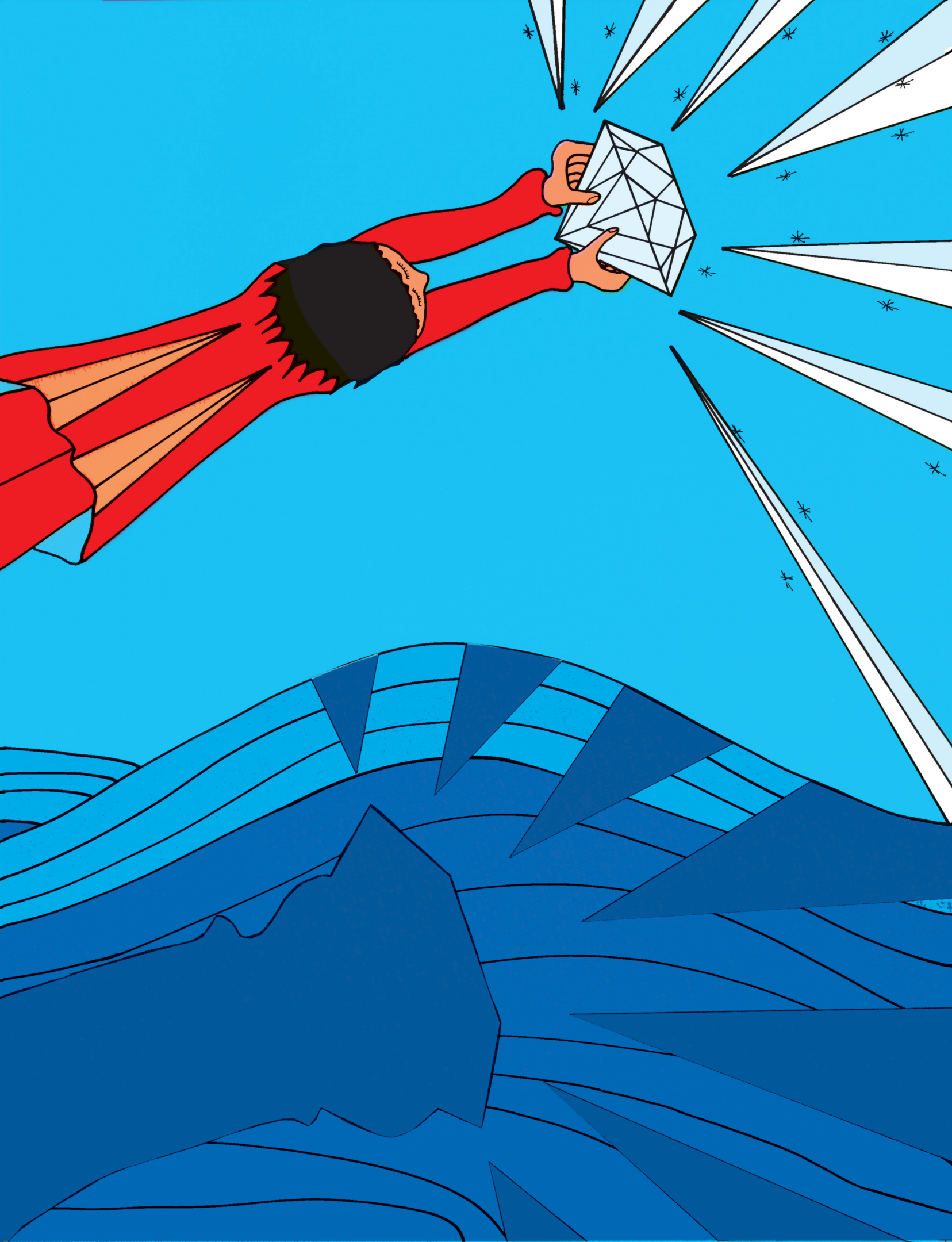


The naga replied, "Wish-fulfilling gems are rare and hard to obtain. But you have come a long way, simply to serve others. You are not only brave, but also compassionate and wise. If you stay and teach me for one month, I promise to give you the jewel."

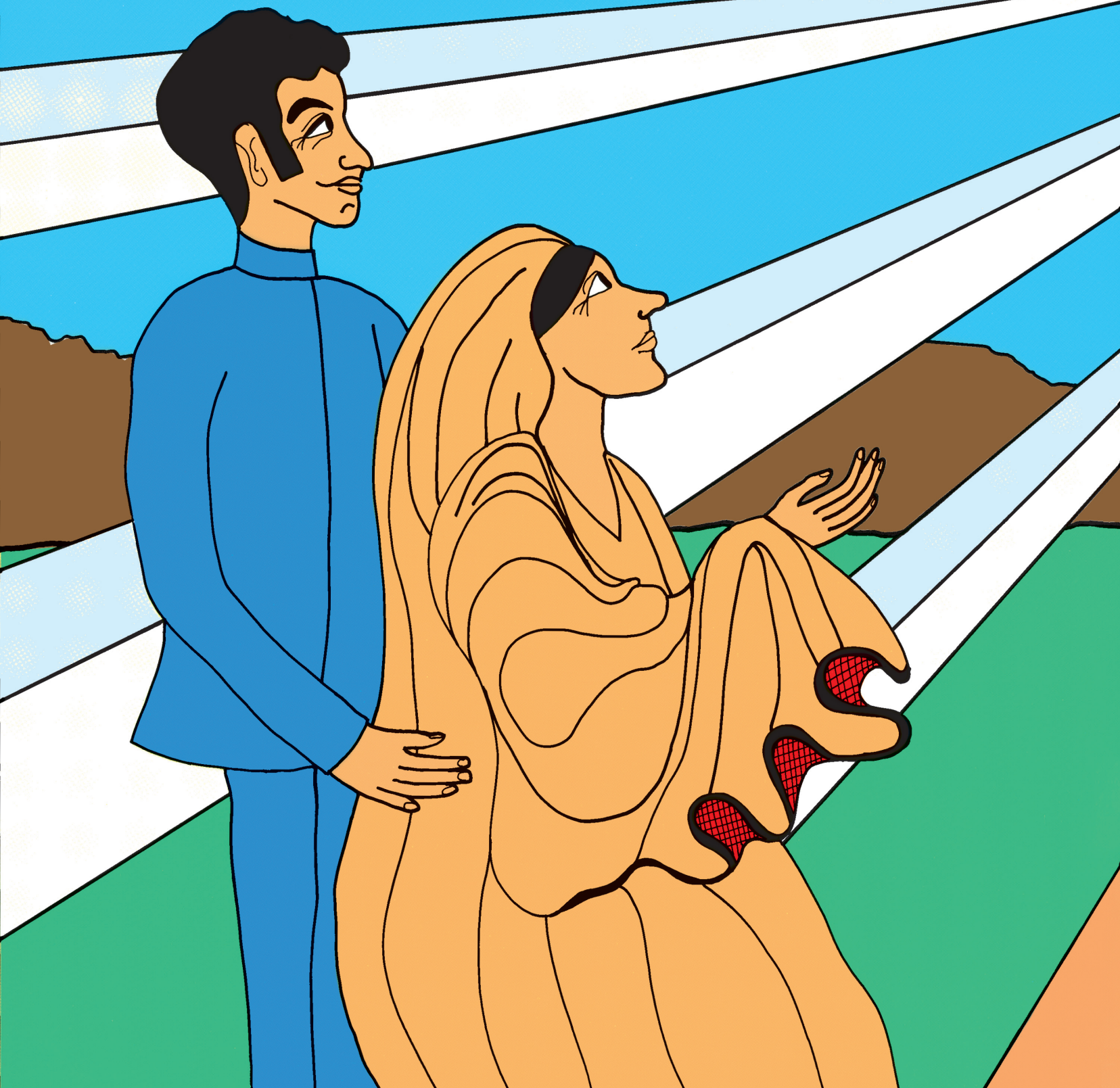
Great Gift agreed and stayed to teach the naga king the power of love and compassion. When the month had ended, the naga king removed the wondrous gem from the crest of his crown and placed it in Great Gift's hands.

Raising the jewel above his head, Great Gift asked it to take him back to where his voyage had begun. Instantly he rose in the air and soared across the ocean. Then the boy made a second wish, and the jewel brought him home.





There he found that his parents, fearing their son was lost, had gone blind from grief. Lifting the wish-fulfilling gem to his parent's eyes, Great Gift asked it to restore their sight. His parents were overjoyed to see their child alive and well. "My son," asked his father, "why did you risk your life for this jewel when we already have such great wealth?"





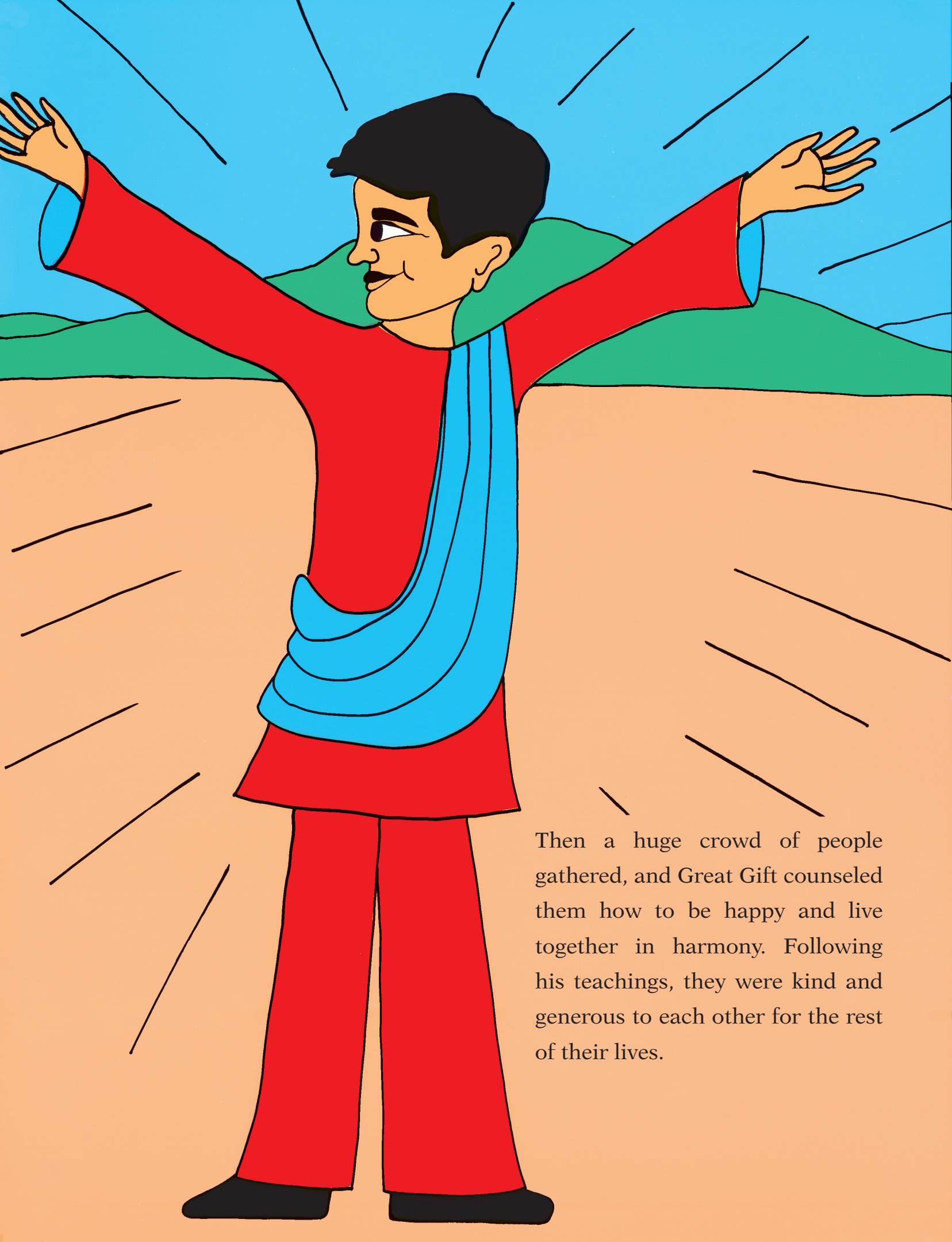
"This jewel has wonderful powers," Great Gift answered. He lifted the jewel again and said, "Many people are poor and desperate. If this is truly a wish-fulfilling gem, let it help them now! Let there be a rain of all that can satisfy their hunger and thirst."

As he spoke these words, winds from the four directions swept over the land and a sweet rain settled the dust. First there fell from the heavens many kinds of food, enough to satisfy the hunger of all beings. Then there rained down clothes and jewels.









Then a huge crowd of people gathered, and Great Gift counseled them how to be happy and live together in harmony. Following his teachings, they were kind and generous to each other for the rest of their lives.

PARENTS AND TEACHERS CORNER

The Jataka Tales nurture in readers young and old an appreciation for values shared by all the world's great traditions. Read aloud, performed and studied for centuries, they communicate universal values such as kindness, forgiveness, compassion, humility, courage, honesty and patience. You can bring these stories alive through the suggestions on these pages. Actively engaging with the stories creates a bridge to the children in your life and opens a dialogue about what brings joy, stability and caring.

Great Gift and the Wish-Fulfilling Gem

A young child of India wishes to alleviate the misery of the poor and embarks on a magical journey in search of a wondrous wish-fulfilling gem. His path leads across desert and ocean, to a jewel-island, a cannibal land, and finally to the realm of the dragon-like nagas, guardians of the world's natural riches. Through his kindness and compassion, he finds the tool to benefit all beings everywhere.

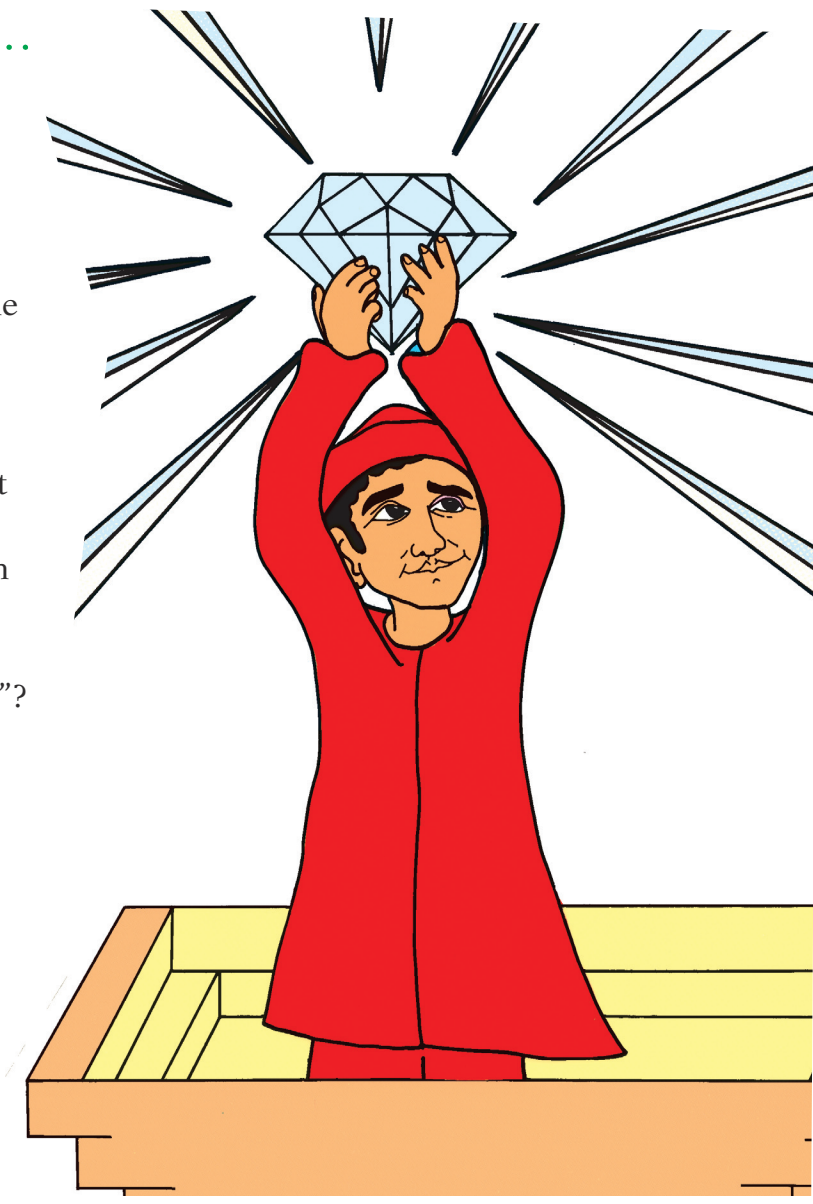
Key Values
Perseverance
Generosity
Courage
Compassion

Bringing the story to life

Engage the children by telling them, "Great Gift, a boy about your own age, leaves his mother and father on an adventure to find a jewel that can grant any wish. Do you think he will find the jewel? What would he wish for? Let's read the story to find out."

- What happens to Great Gift that changes him? How is his reaction like or unlike that of other people you know?
- Why do Great Gift's parents finally give him permission to leave?
- What happens when he and the merchants reach the island called "Fountain of Jewels"?
- How does he overcome the poisonous snakes, cannibals, and nagas?
- How does he use the wish-fulfilling jewel?

Discussion topics and questions can be modified depending on the child's age.



Active reading, active playing

- Before children can read, they enjoy story telling and love growing familiar with the characters and drawings. You can just show them the pictures and tell the story in your own words with characteristic voices for Great Gift, his parents, the cannibals, and the naga king.
- By reading the book to them two or three times and helping them to recognize words, you help young listeners to build a rich vocabulary.
- Have children construct and decorate character masks for Great Gift, a merchant, a cannibal, the serpents, the naga king. They can also borrow an item from a parent to speak in the voice of a mother or father. Act out how Great Gift faces his challenges. Then have children act out a current situation that requires patience and perseverance in working toward a desired goal. Doing so, children may experience how what is worthwhile often comes with obstacles that can be transformed.



Daily activities

- Display the key values of the story on the refrigerator or a bulletin board – at child's eye level – and refer to them in your daily interactions.
- Integrate the wisdom of this story during daily life. Have discussions over dinner or while working around the house. Ask, "What would you do if you had a wish-fulfilling gem? What do you think people need in order to be happy and satisfied?"
- With the child, practice the Great Gift style: sitting quietly, feeling a warm peaceful sun in the center of the body when someone is upset or angry. Also class or home discussion could focus on how being angry at others is like the hissing snakes; how greed and selfishness are like the cannibals, and how anger is like the guardian nagas.
- Find a local group that provides food, shelter, supplies for the homeless or a group in need. Have the children collect canned goods or such, to offer to this group. Find other ways of participating. Or you can locate different groups of these kinds and let the children decide how they would like to be involved. Let them see with "other eyes" the wishes of those in this group who they are helping.

Vocabulary

India: Large country in Asia, and the source of many spiritual traditions and the background of most Jatakas.

Wish-fulfilling gem: A jewel that makes all wishes come true.

Naga: In Indian mythology, dragon like creatures who live under water; nature spirits with a profound influence on the environment.

We are grateful for the opportunity to offer the Jataka Tales to you. May they inspire fresh insight into the dynamics of human relationships and may understanding grow with each reading.

This adaptation of a Jataka Tale is for children aged five to ten



JATAKA TALES SERIES

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