

Mizhibizhu and the Black Snake



Written and Illustrated by
Esha Biswas & John Petoskey

Mizhibizhu

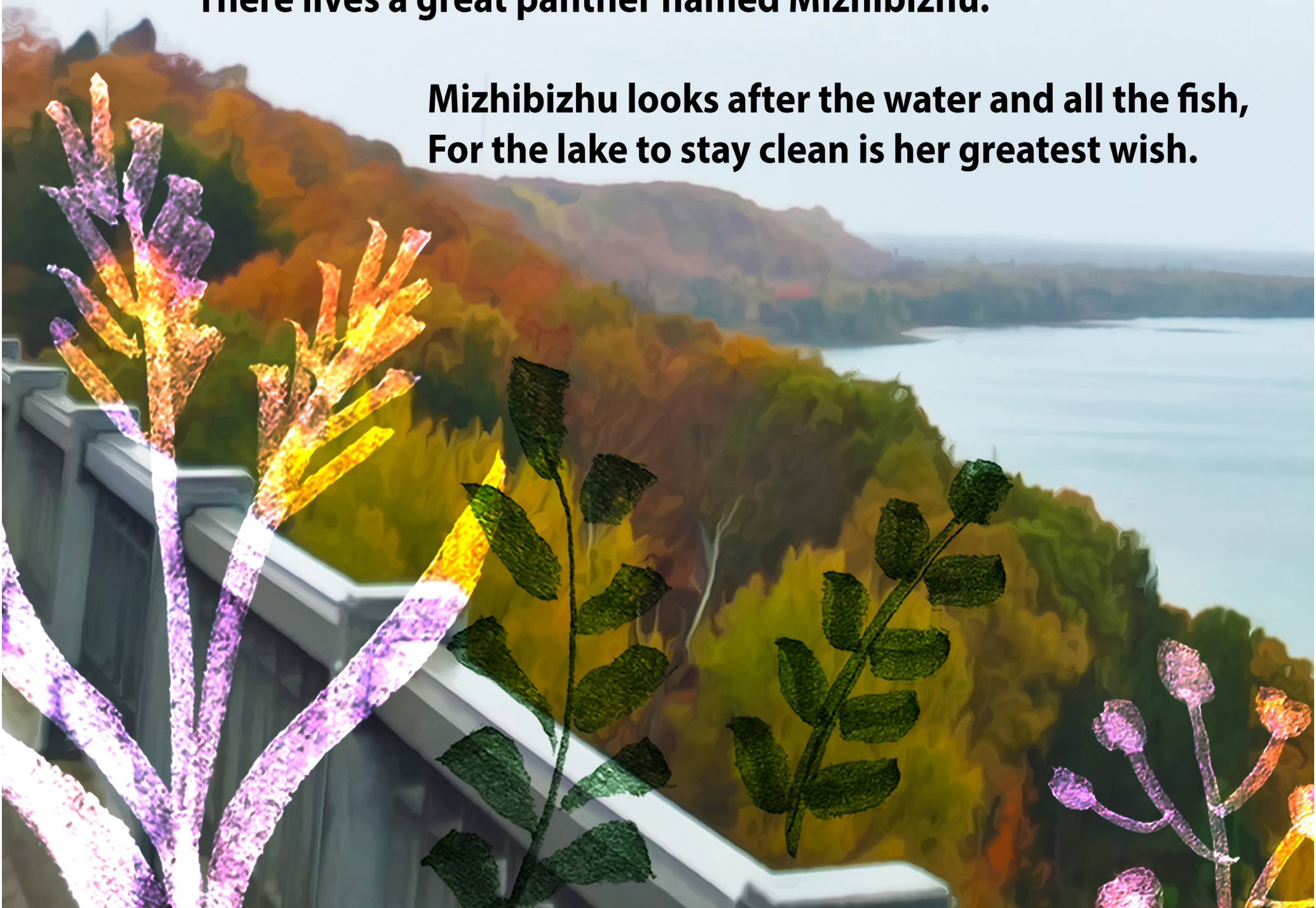
and the Black Snake



Written and Illustrated by Esha Biswas & John Petoskey

**Beyond the sand dunes, in the deep, deep blue,
There lives a great panther named Mizhibizhu.**

**Mizhibizhu looks after the water and all the fish,
For the lake to stay clean is her greatest wish.**






**Mizhibizhu likes to swim, splash, and play.
You can find her at the sunny beach or in the stormy bay!**



**Mizhibizhu is friends with the lake's creatures,
like the fish and the trees.**

**She makes sure to protect them all,
and she protects you and me.**



A winter scene featuring a snowy shoreline, a blue lake, and evergreen trees. A large black snake is slithering across the snow towards the water.

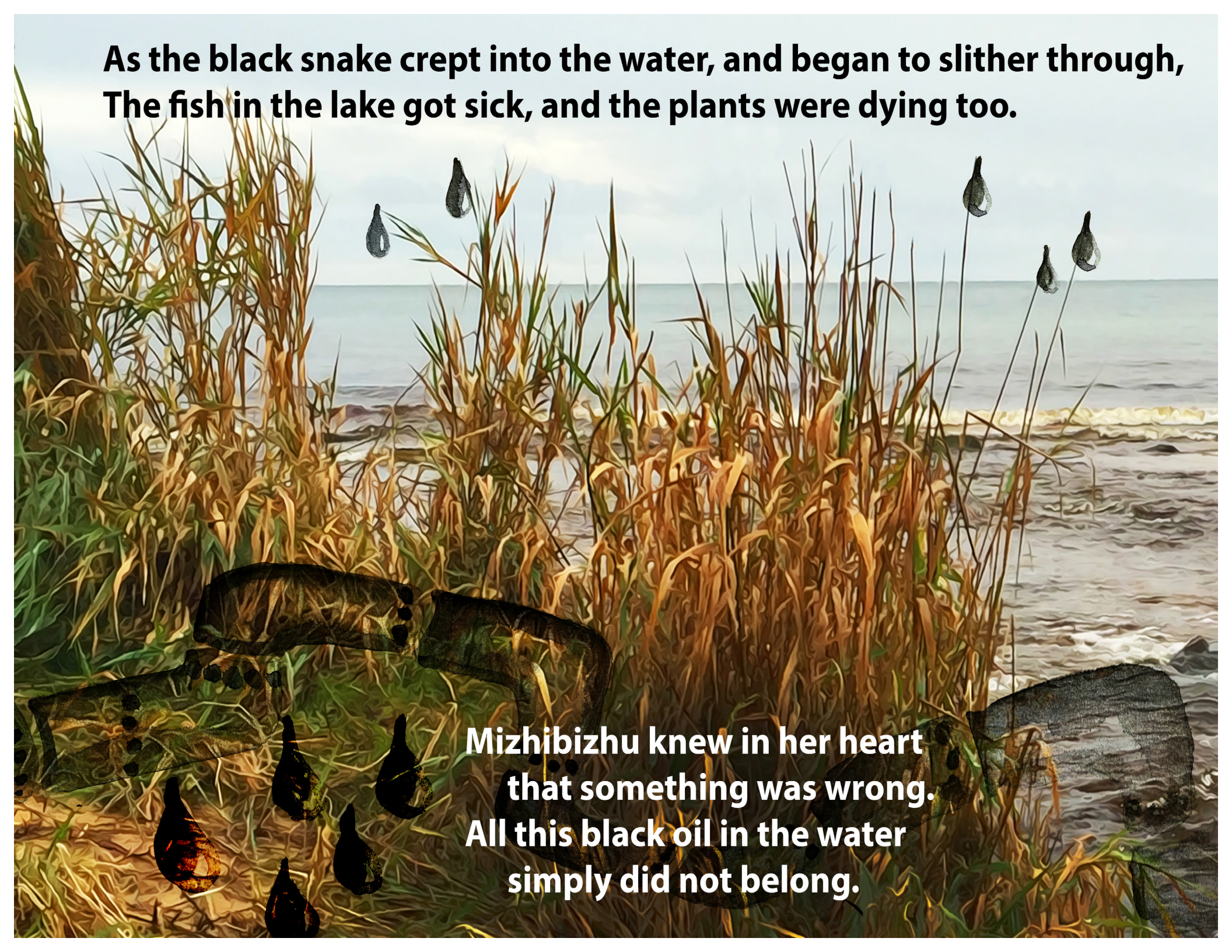
**Near the sandy shores was a big black snake
that slithered its way towards the lake.**



**From the snake's body fell drops of black oil,
Drip, drop, they fell into the soil.**

**This snake is not like the others that Mizhibizhu knows.
This snake leaves an oily mess wherever it goes.**

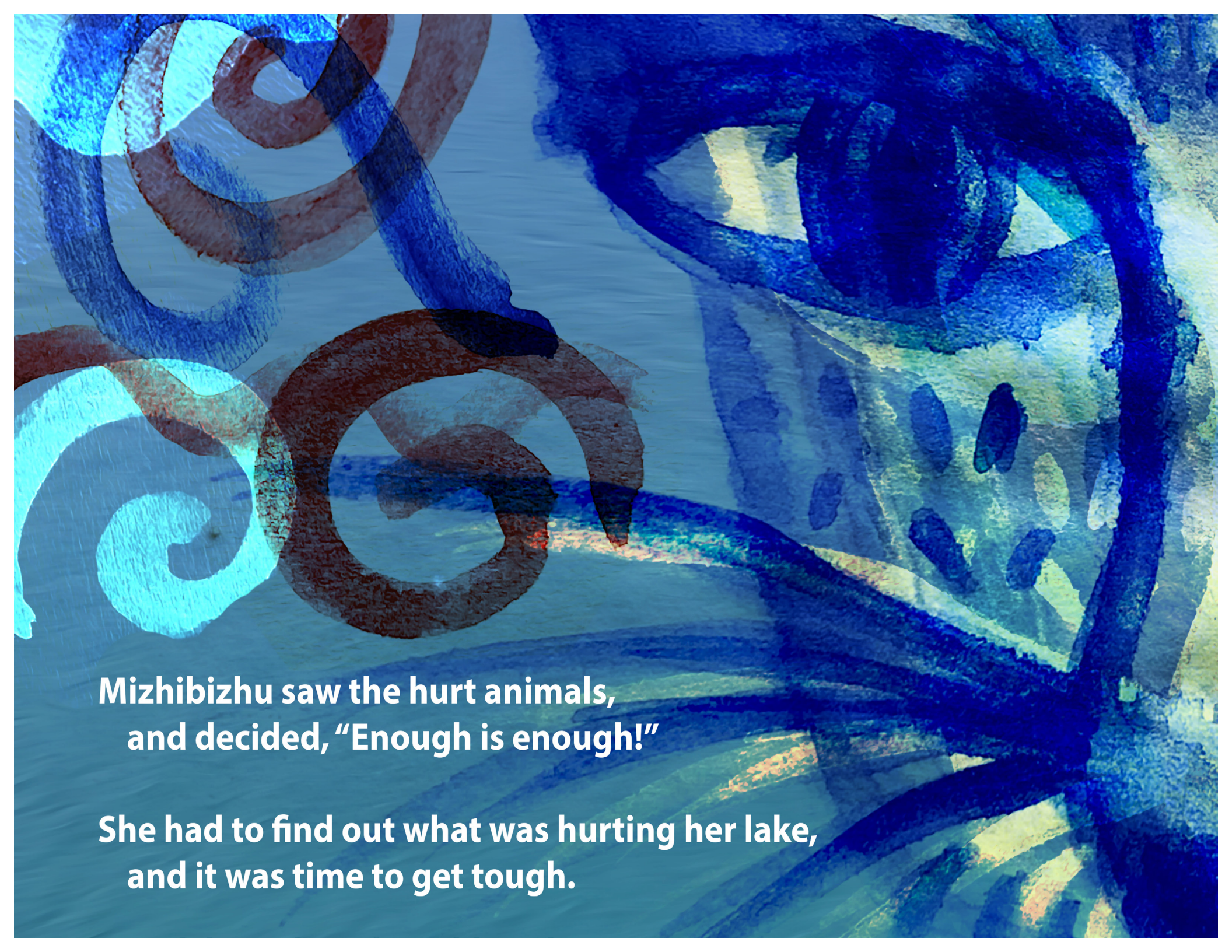
**As the black snake crept into the water, and began to slither through,
The fish in the lake got sick, and the plants were dying too.**



**Mizhibizhu knew in her heart
that something was wrong.
All this black oil in the water
simply did not belong.**


**Eagles were getting sick
and ducks were too,
All kinds of creatures
were getting stuck in slimy goo.**



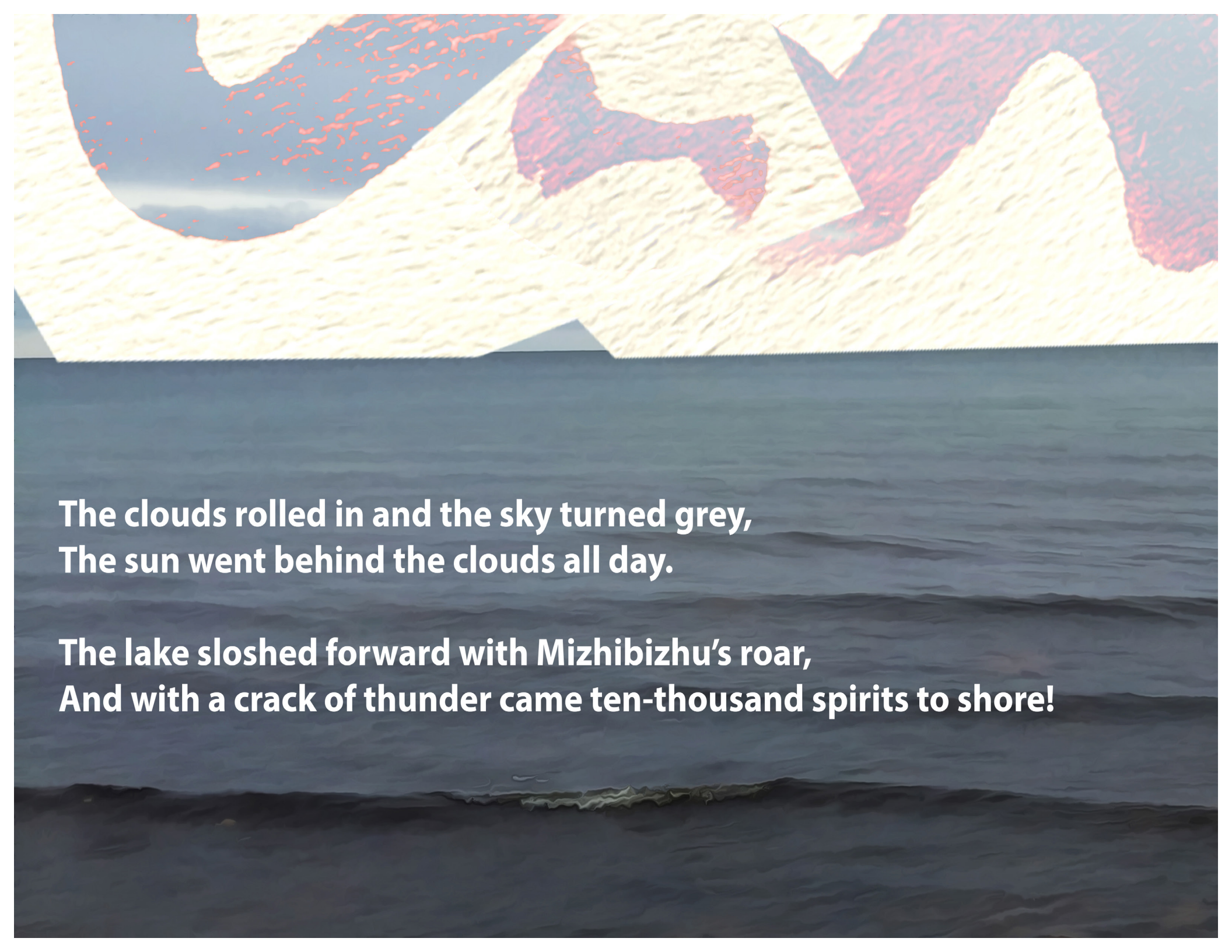


**Mizhibizhu saw the hurt animals,
and decided, "Enough is enough!"**

**She had to find out what was hurting her lake,
and it was time to get tough.**

An abstract artwork featuring a complex composition of swirling, organic shapes in shades of blue, green, and yellow. A central, darker, more defined figure is visible, possibly representing a person or a deity. The overall style is expressive and textured, with visible brushstrokes and a sense of movement. The background is a mix of these colors, creating a rich, layered effect.

**With her magic and strength
that made the Earth shake,
Mizhibizhu summoned
the power of the lake.**



**The clouds rolled in and the sky turned grey,
The sun went behind the clouds all day.**

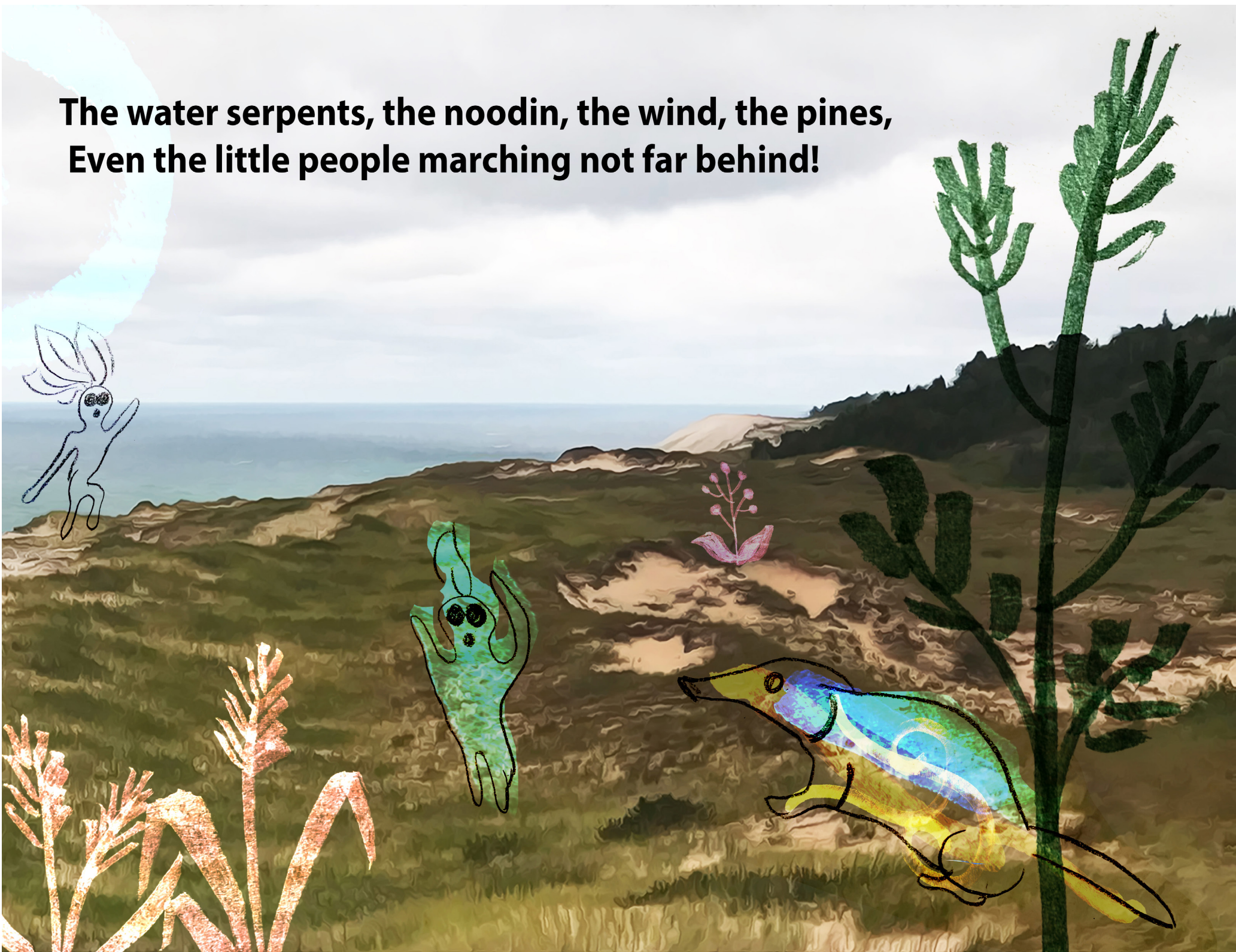
**The lake sloshed forward with Mizhibizhu's roar,
And with a crack of thunder came ten-thousand spirits to shore!**



**The pike, the turtle, the white fish,
The birds, beaver, and shrew,
The great thunder beings,
And lightning spirits too...**



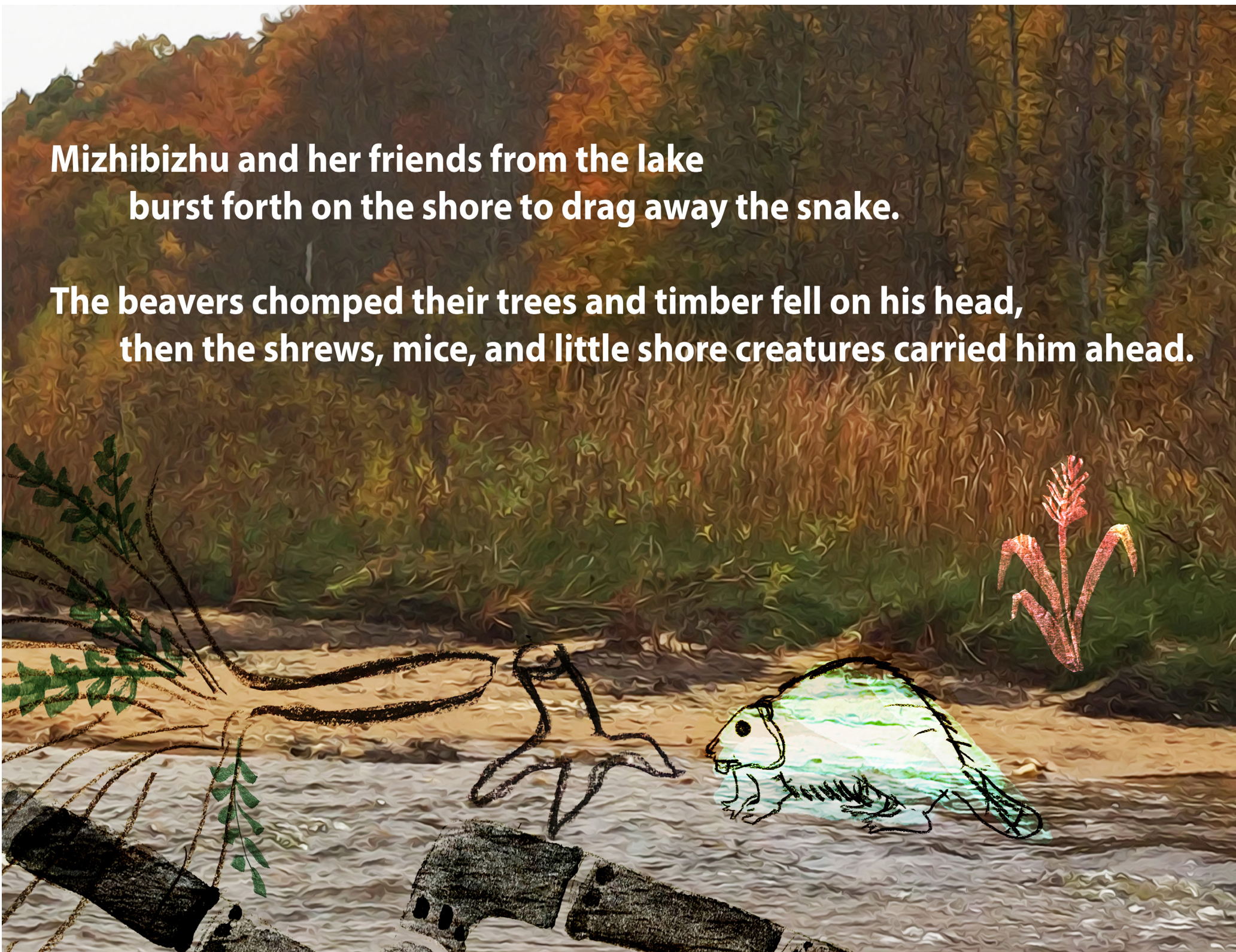
**The water serpents, the noodin, the wind, the pines,
Even the little people marching not far behind!**





**Mizhibizhu and her friends from the lake
burst forth on the shore to drag away the snake.**

**The beavers chomped their trees and timber fell on his head,
then the shrews, mice, and little shore creatures carried him ahead.**





**The fish then held him with their fins flipping fast,
and swam to the bottom of this lake, so vast.**

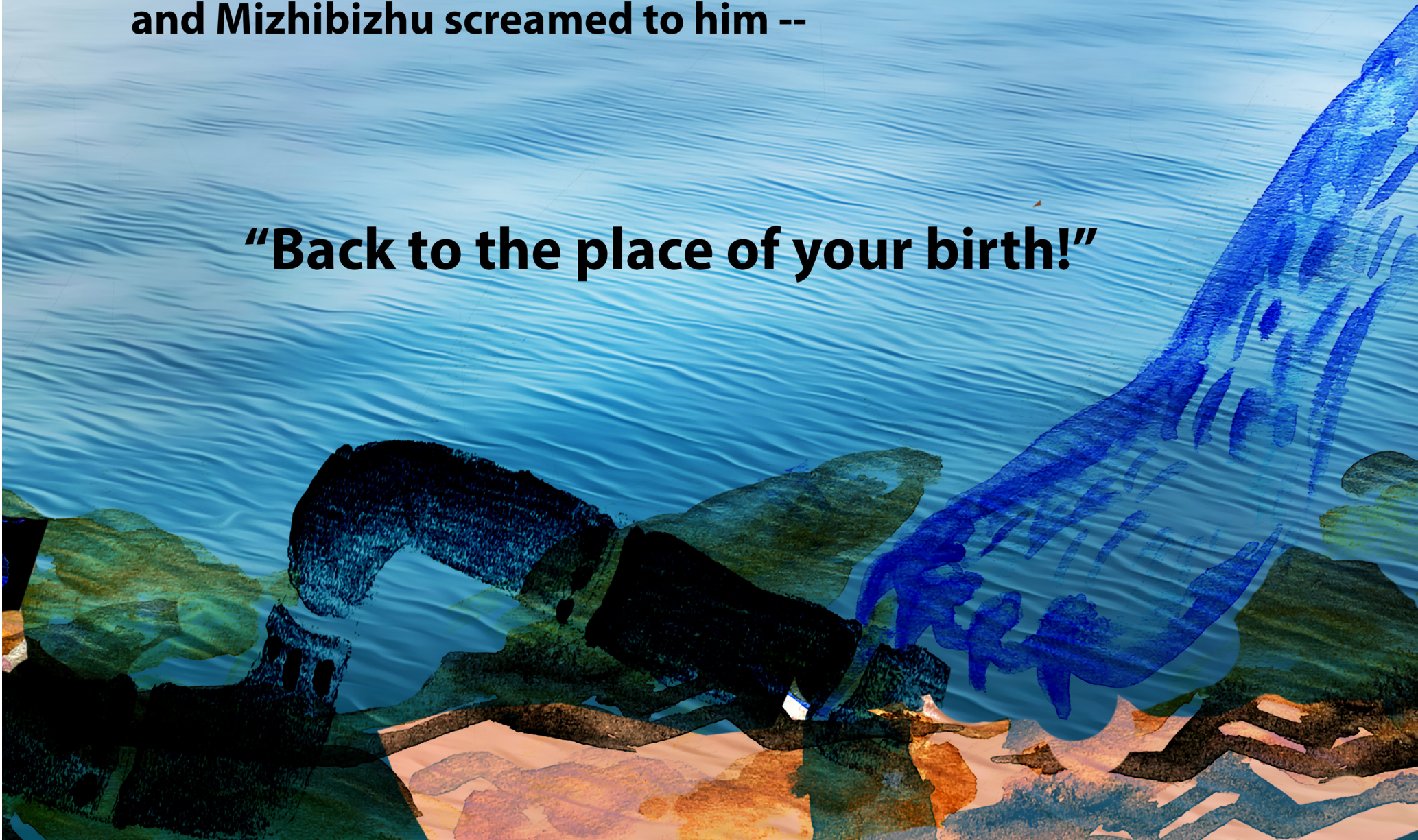
The background is a deep blue with subtle, wavy horizontal lines, suggesting water. Scattered throughout are numerous abstract, organic shapes in various colors including white, yellow, green, cyan, blue, and dark purple. These shapes have irregular, flowing edges, some resembling fish, jellyfish, or other marine life. A faint, light blue circular glow is visible in the upper center of the image.

**The thunder beings then opened the sky,
and lightning struck down through the bedrock of lime.**



**For Mizhibizhu then took hold,
and the snake by the tail was thrown into a fold
of rock and stone, deep in the earth,
and Mizhibizhu screamed to him --**

“Back to the place of your birth!”





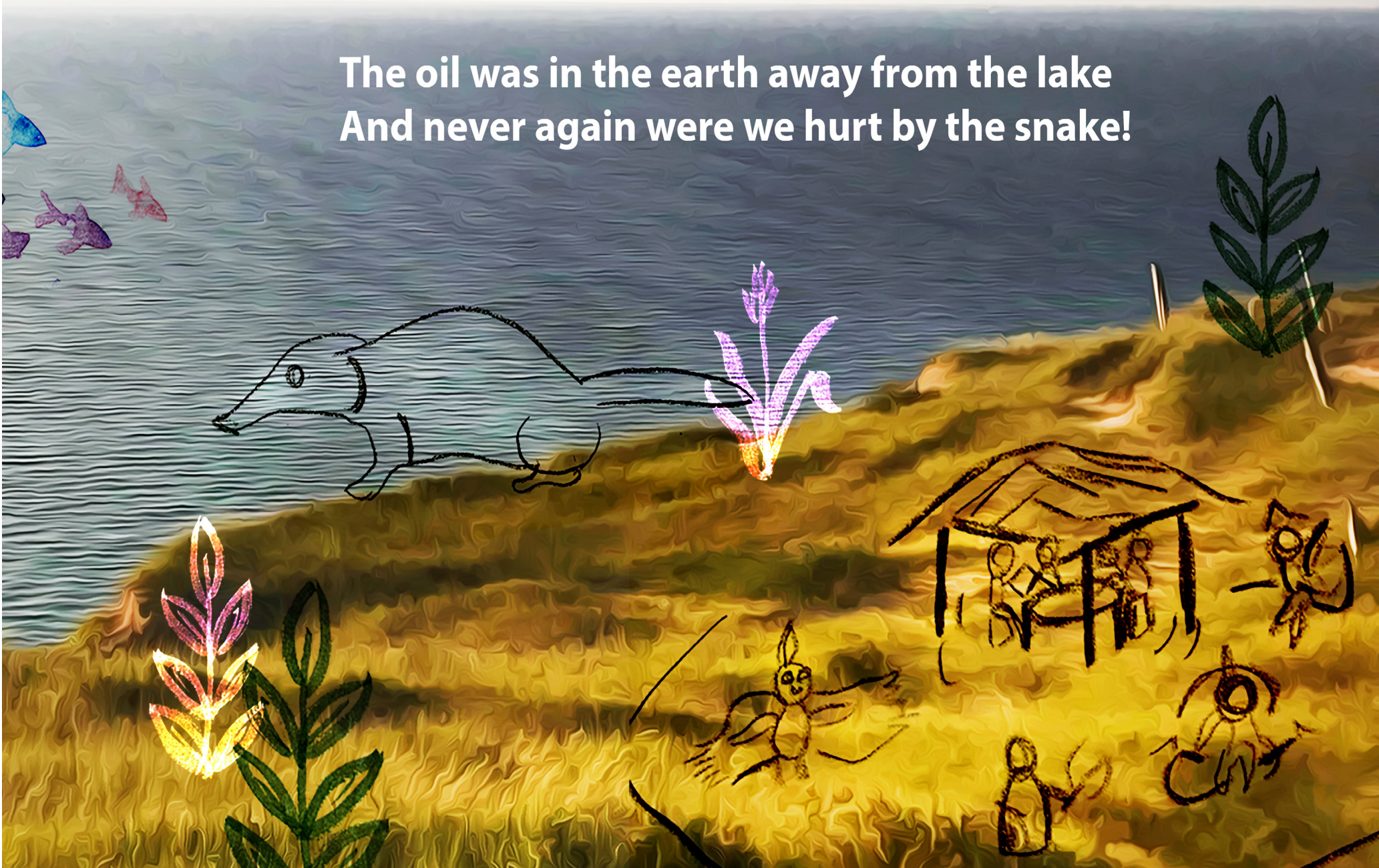
**With her feline power and magnificent might,
She sealed away the snake, and swam to the light.**

**On the shore, the sun came back.
The lake was calm and the creatures cheered the cat.**



**The little people danced, the fish jumped with finesse
The spirits across the land rejoiced in happiness.**

**The oil was in the earth away from the lake
And never again were we hurt by the snake!**





Mizhibizhu is a creature revered by the Anishinaabe. Mizhibizhu is a protector of the lake, a fierce monster, and powerful spirit. It is said that Mizhibizhu guards a mountain of copper on the bottomlands. Mizhibizhu sits opposite of the thunderbirds; together and in tandem they cooperate to keep the forces of water and sky in harmony.



The Black Snake in this book is meant to represent Enbridge Line 5 which lays at the bottom of Lake Michigan. The pipeline is old and deteriorating. Currently, the company is seeking to build a new tunnel beneath the Great Lakes to house the pipeline, a plan all Michigan tribes are opposed to. The pipeline is a great risk to the ecosystem of the Great Lakes and to the livelihoods of Anishinaabe people. This book depicts the power of nature and the Anishinaabe spirit triumphing over "The Black Snake," a term used to describe pipelines by the Standing Rock movement.



The Little People are the "Memegwesi," small and mischievous forest spirits revered by the Anishinaabe people. The Memegwesi are neither good nor evil, but are a force to be reckoned with when provoked. This book has included them to show that even the smallest of spirits can bring with them great power.

About the Authors

Esha Biswas is an MS student studying Conservation Ecology at the University of Michigan School for Environment and Sustainability. She aspires to infuse the arts and traditional ecological knowledge into the realms of environmental education and conservation.



John Petoskey, J.D. M.S., is a citizen of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, and grew up in Peshawbestown, Michigan on the Grand Traverse reservation. John is serving as a Legal Fellow at the Environmental Law and Policy Center in Chicago, Illinois.



**Written and Illustrated by Esha Biswas and John Petoskey
As the capstone project for the course:
“Nature, Culture, and Landscape” taught by Dr. Sara Adlerstein-Gonzalez
School for Environment and Sustainability
University of Michigan
May 2020**

Students were instructed to create a children’s book relating to the Great Lakes. With this book, we hope to provide representation and visibility of Anishinaabe people and folklore while bringing awareness to the interconnected and pressing issue of Enbridge Line 5.

