

# The Story and the Song

*Introduction from Psalm 19 and Hebrews 1*

The Heavens are singing  
about how great God is;  
and the skies are shouting it out,  
‘See what God has made!’  
Day after day ... Night after night ...  
They are speaking to us.

Psalm 19:1–2 (paraphrase)

God wrote, ‘I love you’ — he wrote it in the sky, and on the earth and under the sea. He wrote his message everywhere! Because God created everything in his world to reflect him like a mirror — to show us what he is like, to help us know him, to make our hearts sing.

The way a kitten chases her tail. The way red poppies grow wild. The way a dolphin swims.

And God put it into words, too, and wrote it in a book called ‘the Bible’.





Now, some people think the Bible is a book of rules, telling you what you should and shouldn't do. The Bible certainly does have some rules in it. They show you how life works best. But the Bible isn't mainly about you and what you should be doing. It's about God and what he has done.



Other people think the Bible is a book of heroes, showing you people you should copy. The Bible does have some heroes in it, but (as you'll soon find out) most of the people in the Bible aren't heroes at all. They make some big mistakes (sometimes on purpose). They get afraid and run away. At times they are downright mean.

The Story

An antique book with a textured orange cover and a green spine, resting on a dark wooden surface. The title 'The Story' is written in elegant calligraphy on the front cover. The book shows signs of age, with some wear on the spine and edges.

No, the Bible isn't a book of rules, or a book of heroes. The Bible is most of all a Story. It's an adventure story about a young Hero who comes from a far country to win back his lost treasure. It's a love story about a brave Prince who leaves his palace, his throne — everything — to rescue the one he loves. It's like the most wonderful of fairy tales that has come true in real life!

You see, the best thing about this Story is — it's true.

There are lots of stories in the Bible, but all the stories are telling one Big Story. The Story of how God loves his children and comes to rescue them.

It takes the whole Bible to tell this Story. And at the centre of the Story, there is a baby. Every Story in the Bible whispers his name. He is like the missing piece in a puzzle — the piece that makes all the other pieces fit together, and suddenly you can see a beautiful picture.

And this is no ordinary baby. This is the Child upon whom everything would depend. This is the Child who would one day — but wait. Our Story starts where all good stories start. Right at the very beginning ...

# The beginning: a perfect home

*The Song of Creation, from Genesis 1–2*

IN THE BEGINNING, there was nothing.

Nothing to hear. Nothing to feel. Nothing to see.

Only emptiness. And darkness. And ... nothing but nothing.

But God was there. And God had a wonderful Plan.

'I'll take this emptiness,' God said, 'and I'll fill it up! Out of the darkness, I'm going to make light! And out of the nothing, I'm going to make ... EVERYTHING!'

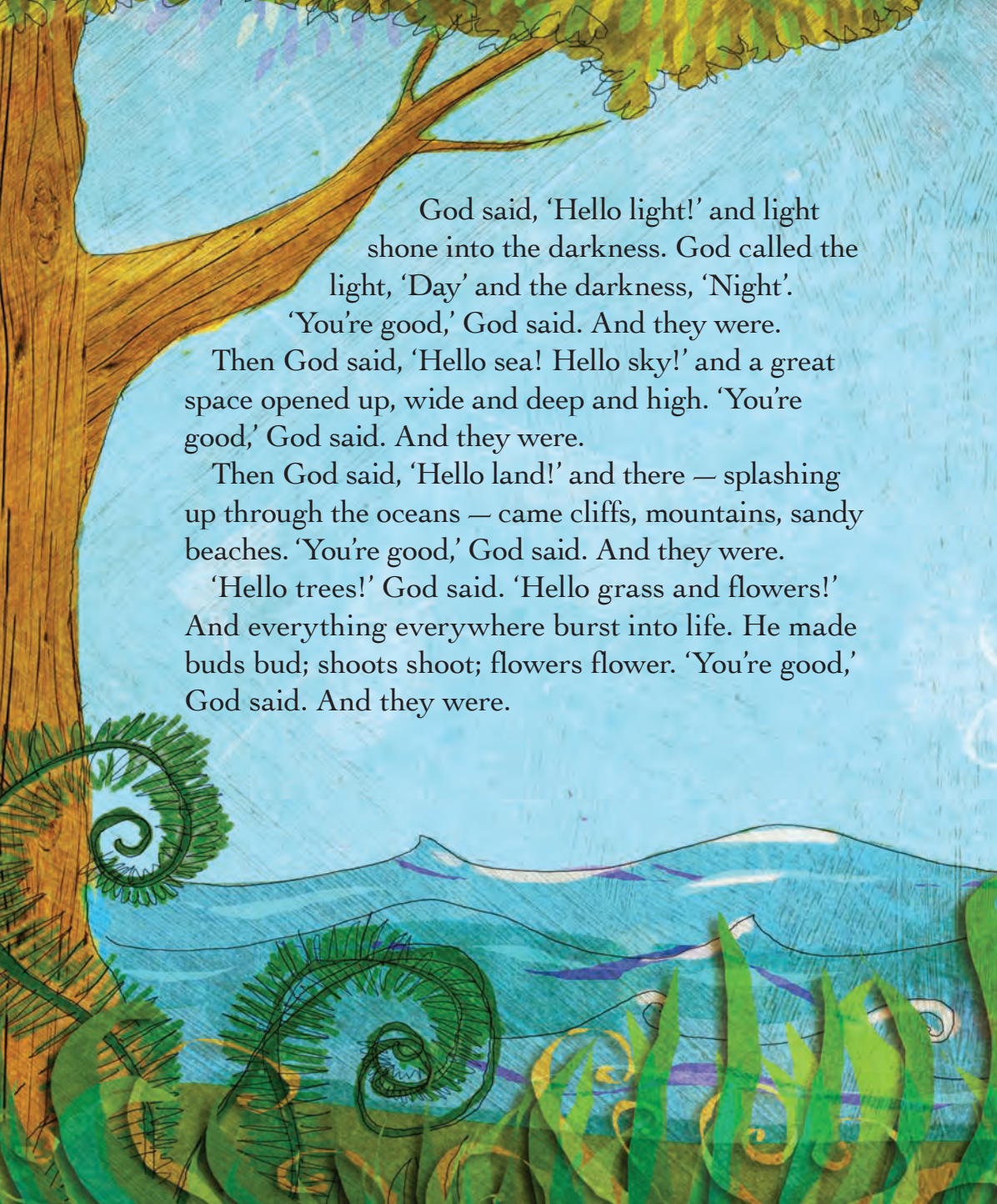
Like a mummy bird flutters her wings over her eggs to help her babies hatch, God hovered over the deep, silent darkness. He was making life happen.

God spoke. That's all. And whatever he said, it happened.









God said, 'Hello light!' and light  
shone into the darkness. God called the  
light, 'Day' and the darkness, 'Night'.

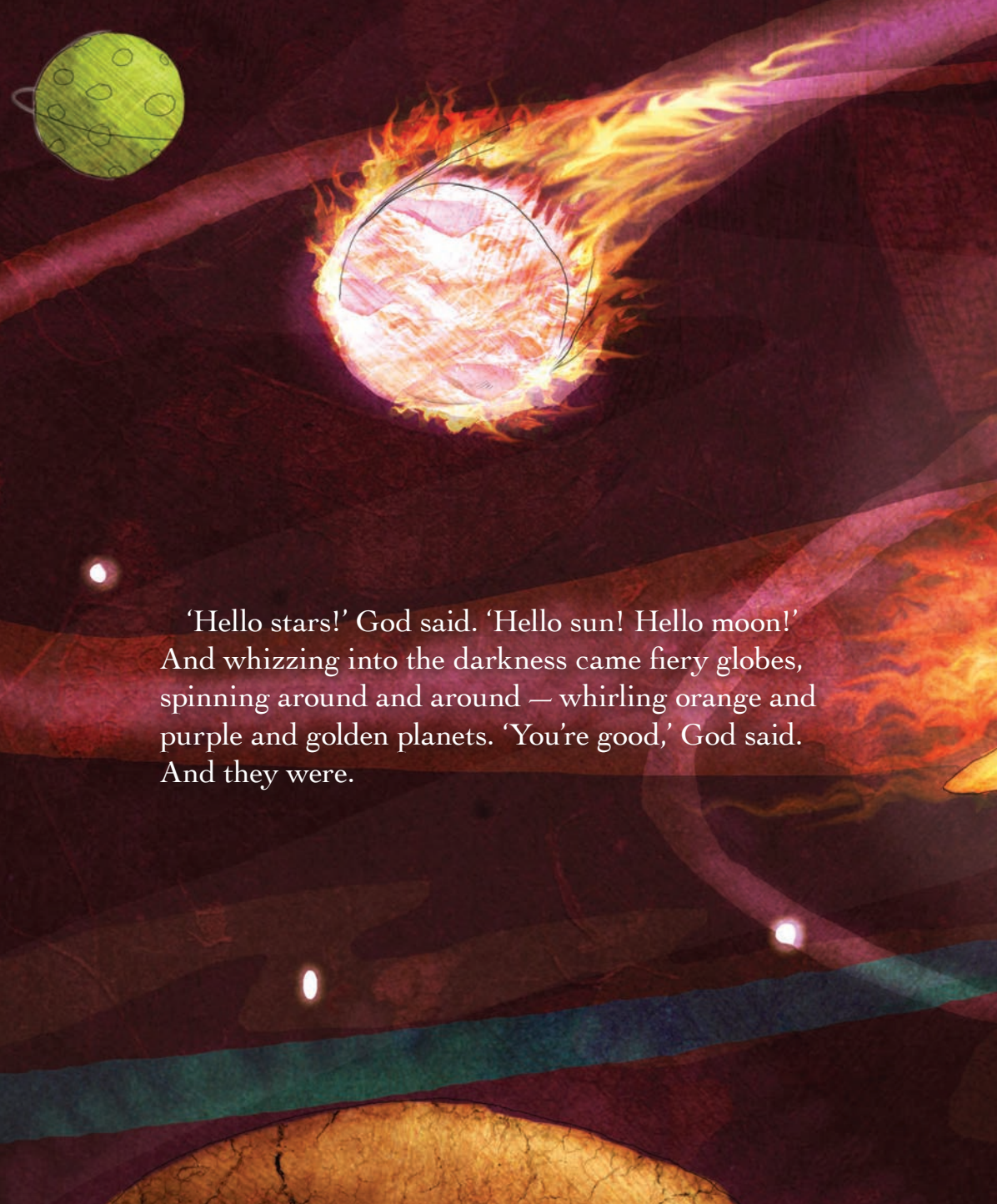
'You're good,' God said. And they were.

Then God said, 'Hello sea! Hello sky!' and a great  
space opened up, wide and deep and high. 'You're  
good,' God said. And they were.

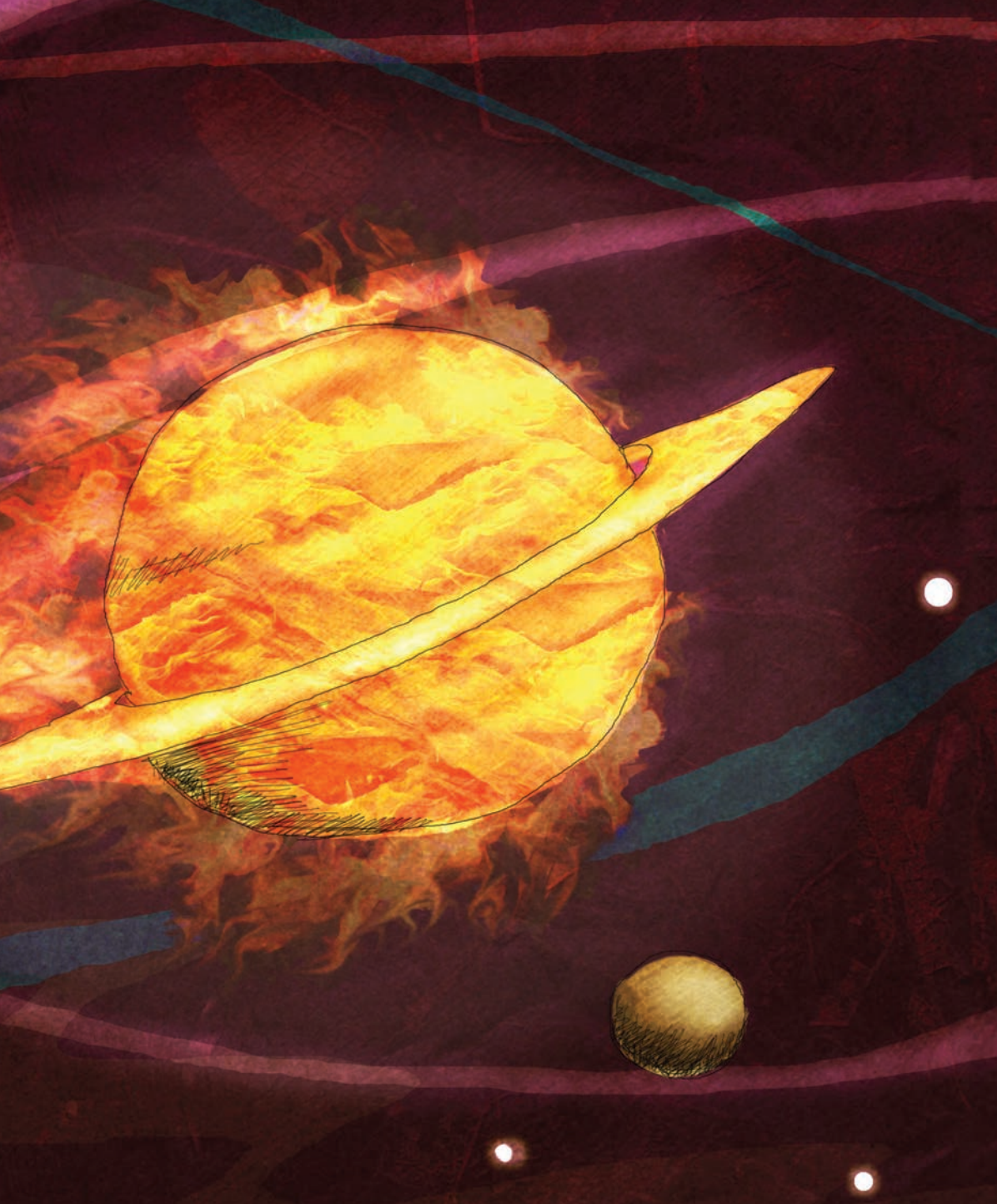
Then God said, 'Hello land!' and there — splashing  
up through the oceans — came cliffs, mountains, sandy  
beaches. 'You're good,' God said. And they were.

'Hello trees!' God said. 'Hello grass and flowers!'  
And everything everywhere burst into life. He made  
buds bud; shoots shoot; flowers flower. 'You're good,'  
God said. And they were.





‘Hello stars!’ God said. ‘Hello sun! Hello moon!’  
And whizzing into the darkness came fiery globes,  
spinning around and around — whirling orange and  
purple and golden planets. ‘You’re good,’ God said.  
And they were.





‘Hello birds!’ God said. And with a fluttering and flapping and chirping and singing, birds filled the skies. ‘Hello fish!’ God said. And with a darting and dashing and wriggling and splashing, fish filled the seas! ‘You’re good,’ God said. And they were.

Then God said, ‘Hello animals!’ And everyone came out to play. The earth was filled with noisy noises — growling and gobbling and snapping and snorting and happy skerfuffling. ‘You’re good,’ God said. And they were.

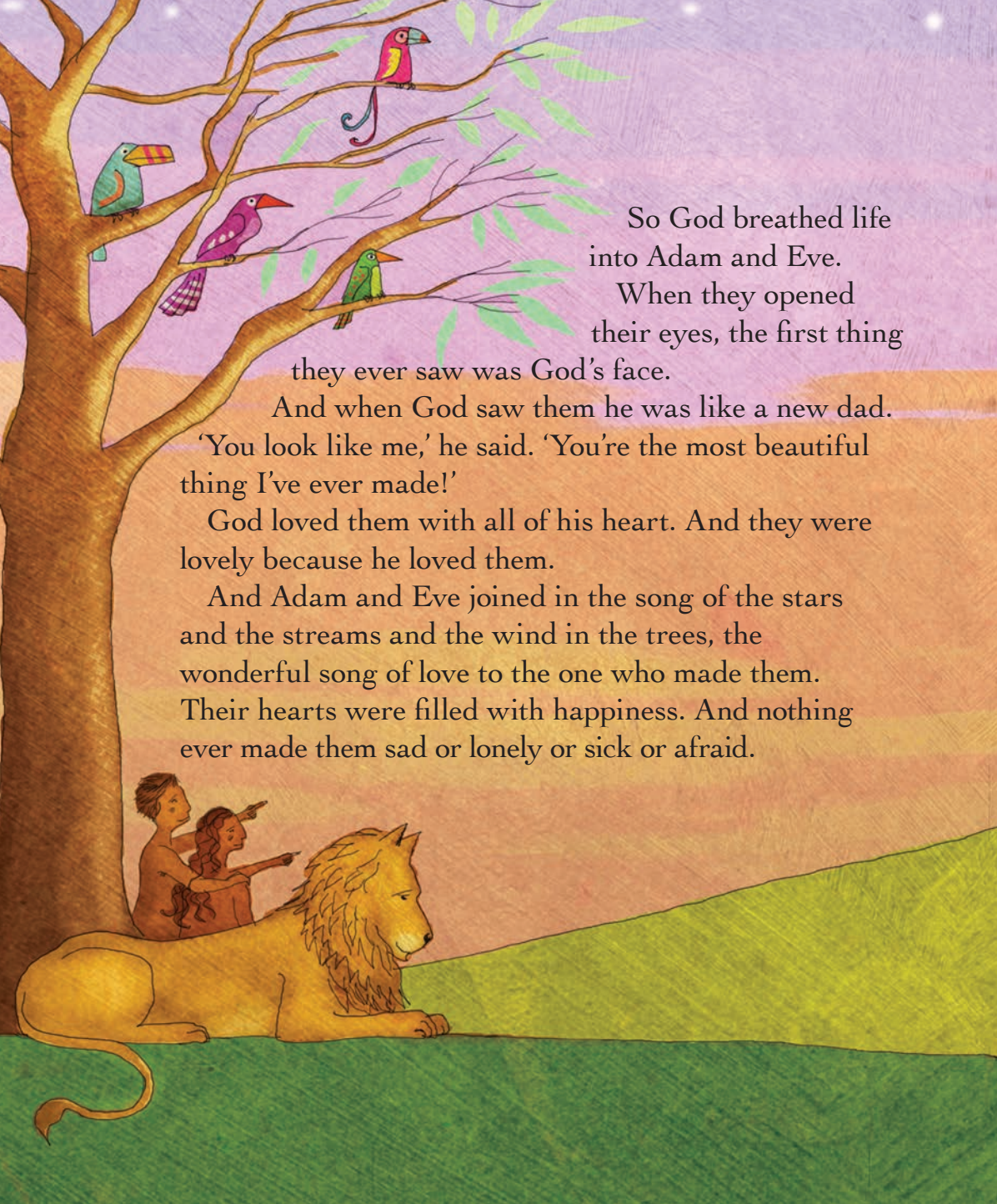




God saw all that he had made and he loved them.  
And they were lovely because he loved them.

But God saved the best for last. From the beginning,  
God had a shining dream in his heart. He would make  
people to share his Forever Happiness. They would be  
his children, and the world would be their perfect home.





So God breathed life  
into Adam and Eve.

When they opened  
their eyes, the first thing  
they ever saw was God's face.

And when God saw them he was like a new dad.

'You look like me,' he said. 'You're the most beautiful  
thing I've ever made!'

God loved them with all of his heart. And they were  
lovely because he loved them.

And Adam and Eve joined in the song of the stars  
and the streams and the wind in the trees, the  
wonderful song of love to the one who made them.  
Their hearts were filled with happiness. And nothing  
ever made them sad or lonely or sick or afraid.

God looked at everything he had made. 'Perfect!' he said. And it was.

But all the stars and the mountains and oceans and galaxies and everything were nothing compared to how much God loved his children. He would move heaven and earth to be near them. Always. Whatever happened, whatever it cost him, he would always love them.

And so it was that the wonderful love story began ...





# The terrible lie

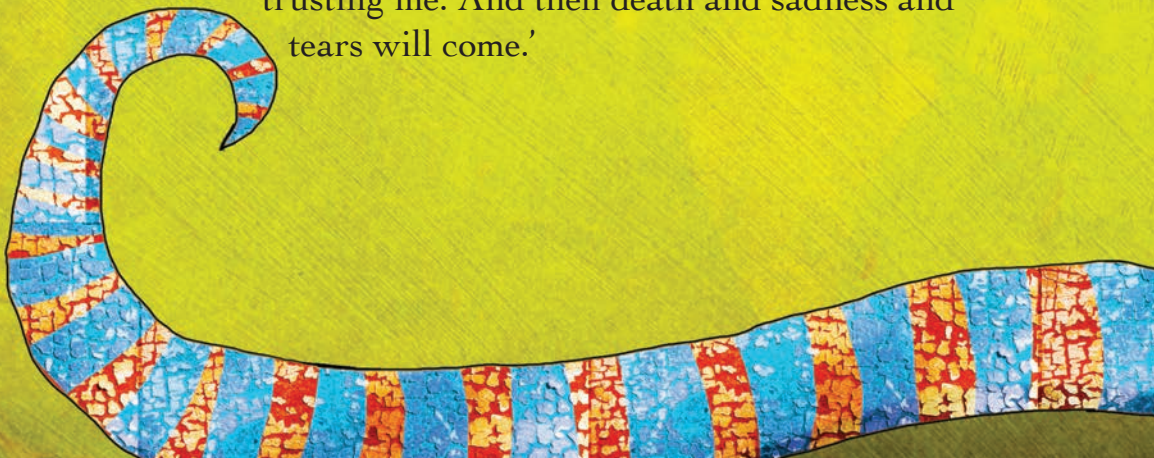
*Adam and Eve lose everything, from Genesis 3*

ADAM AND EVE lived happily together in their beautiful new home. And everything was perfect — for a while.

Until the day when everything went wrong.

God had a horrible enemy. His name was Satan. Satan had once been the most beautiful angel, but he didn't want to be just an angel — he wanted to be God. He grew proud and evil and full of hate, and God had to send him out of heaven. Satan was seething with anger and looking for a way to hurt God. He wanted to stop God's plan, stop this love story, right there. So he disguised himself as a snake and waited in the garden.

Now, God had given Adam and Eve only one rule: 'Don't eat the fruit on that tree,' God told them. 'Because if you do, you'll think you know everything. You'll stop trusting me. And then death and sadness and tears will come.'





(You see, God knew if they ate the fruit, they would think they didn't need him. And they would try to make themselves happy without him. But God knew there was no such thing as happiness without him, and life without him wouldn't be life at all.)

As soon as the snake saw his chance, he slithered silently up to Eve. 'Does God really love you?' the serpent whispered. 'If he does, why won't he let you eat the nice, juicy, delicious fruit? Poor you, perhaps God doesn't want you to be happy.'

The snake's words hissed into her ears and sunk down deep into her heart, like poison. *Does God love me?* Eve wondered. Suddenly she didn't know anymore.

'Just trust me,' the serpent whispered. 'You don't need God. One small taste, that's all, and you'll be happier than you could ever dream ...'



Eve picked the fruit and ate some. And Adam ate some, too.

And a terrible lie came into the world. It would never leave. It would live on in every human heart, whispering to every one of God's children: 'God doesn't love me.'



And it wasn't a dream. It was a nightmare. A dove flew from Adam's hand. A deer darted in a thicket. It was as if they were frightened by something. A chill was in the air. Something strange was happening. They had always been naked — but now they felt naked, and wrong, and they didn't want anyone to see them. So they hid.



Later that evening, as God was taking his walk, he called to them. 'Children?'

Usually Adam and Eve loved to hear God's voice and would run to him. But this time, they ran away from him and hid in the shadows.



'Where are you?' God called.

'Hiding,' Adam said. 'We're afraid of you.'

'Did you eat the fruit I told you not to eat?'

God asked them.

Adam said, 'Eve made me do it!'

'What have you done?' God asked.

Eve said, 'The serpent made me do it!'

And terrible pain came into God's heart. His children hadn't just broken the one rule; they had broken God's heart. They had broken their wonderful relationship with him. And now he knew everything else would break. God's creation would start to unravel, and come undone, and go wrong. From now on everything would die — even though it was all supposed to last forever.

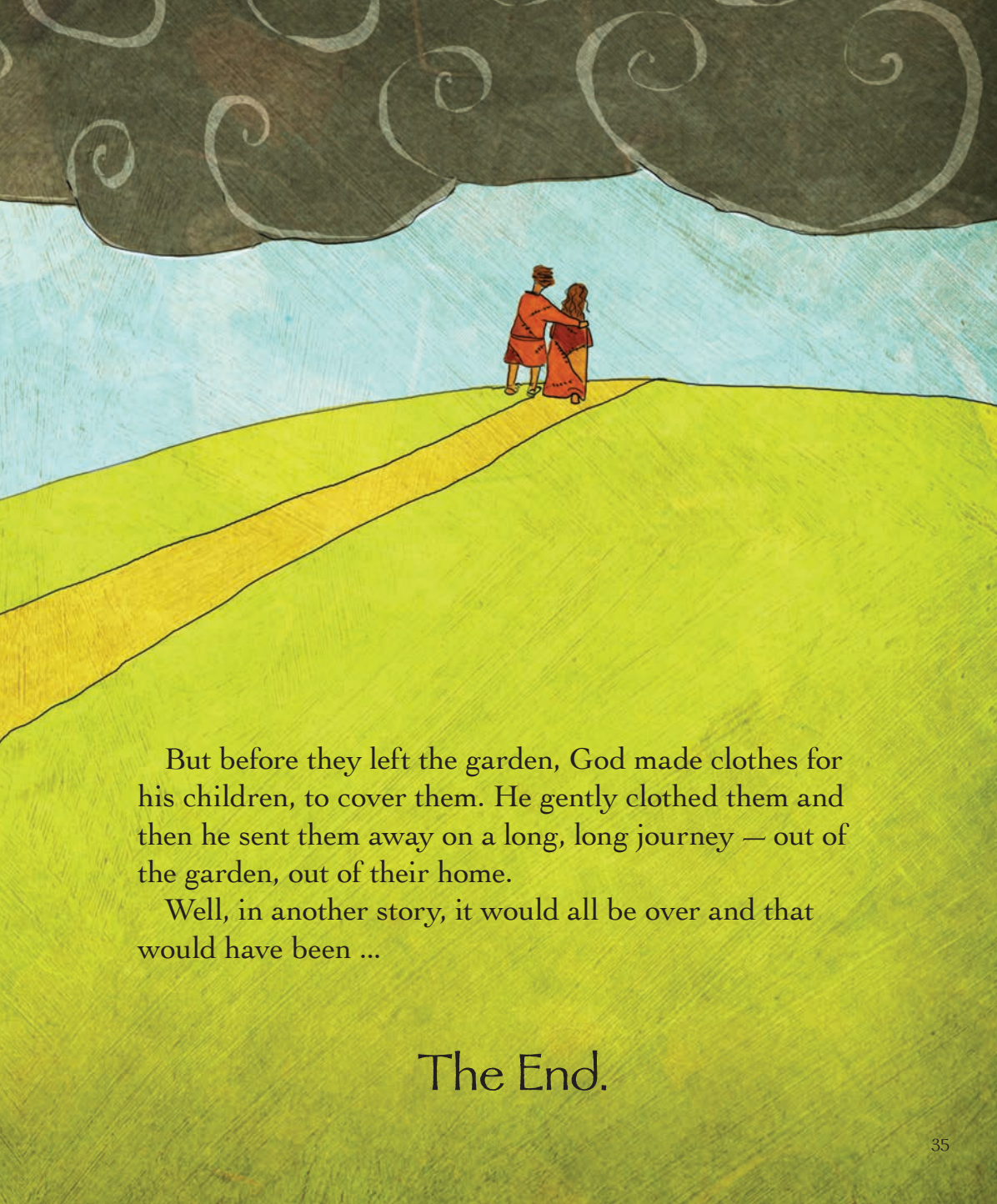


You see, sin had come into God's perfect world. And it would never leave. God's children would be always running away from him and hiding in the dark. Their hearts would break now, and never work properly again.

God couldn't let his children live forever, not in such pain, not without him. There was only one way to protect them.

'You will have to leave the garden now,' God told his children, his eyes filling with tears. 'This is no longer your true home, it's not the place for you anymore.'





But before they left the garden, God made clothes for his children, to cover them. He gently clothed them and then he sent them away on a long, long journey – out of the garden, out of their home.

Well, in another story, it would all be over and that would have been ...

The End.



But not in this Story.

God loved his children too much to let the story end there. Even though he knew he would suffer, God had a plan — a magnificent dream. One day, he would get his children back. One day, he would make the world their perfect home again. And one day, he would wipe away every tear from their eyes.

You see, no matter what, in spite of everything, God would love his children — with a Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love.

And though they would forget him, and run from him, deep in their hearts, God's children would miss him always, and long for him — lost children yearning for their home.

Before they left the garden, God whispered a promise to Adam and Eve: 'It will not always be so! I will come to rescue you! And when I do, I'm going to do battle against the snake. I'll get rid of the sin and the dark and the sadness you let in here. I'm coming back for you!'

And he would. One day, God himself would come.



# A new beginning

*Noah's ark, from Genesis 6–9*



TIME PASSED and many people filled the earth. Everyone everywhere had forgotten about God and were only doing bad things all the time.

God's heart was filled with pain when he saw what had happened to the world he loved. Everywhere was disease and death and destruction — all the things God hates most.

Now, Noah was God's friend (which was odd in those days because no one else was). Noah listened to God. He talked to God. He just loved being with God, like you do with your best friend.

'Noah,' God said. 'Things have gone wrong. People have filled my world with hate instead of love. They are destroying themselves ... and each other ... and my world. I must stop them. First, we'll build an ark.' (Do you know how to build an ark? Neither did Noah. Luckily, God knew and he would show him.)



‘A storm is coming,’ God told Noah. ‘But I will rescue you. I promise. I’ll send the animals to you — ones that creep and crawl and slither and slime and gallop and hop and bound and climb. And don’t forget to pack everyone’s food.’

The storm was going to wash away all the hate and sadness and everything that had gone wrong, and make the world clean again. God had thought up a way to keep Noah safe, but Noah would have to trust God and do exactly what God told him.

So Noah built an ark (short for very large boat).

Noah’s neighbours came out to watch ... and point ... and laugh, because they didn’t believe Noah about the boat ... or the storm ... or needing to be rescued. And Noah must have looked rather silly. His boat was in the desert, the desert was nowhere near the sea, and there wasn’t even a cloud in the sky. Why would anyone need an umbrella, let alone a boat?







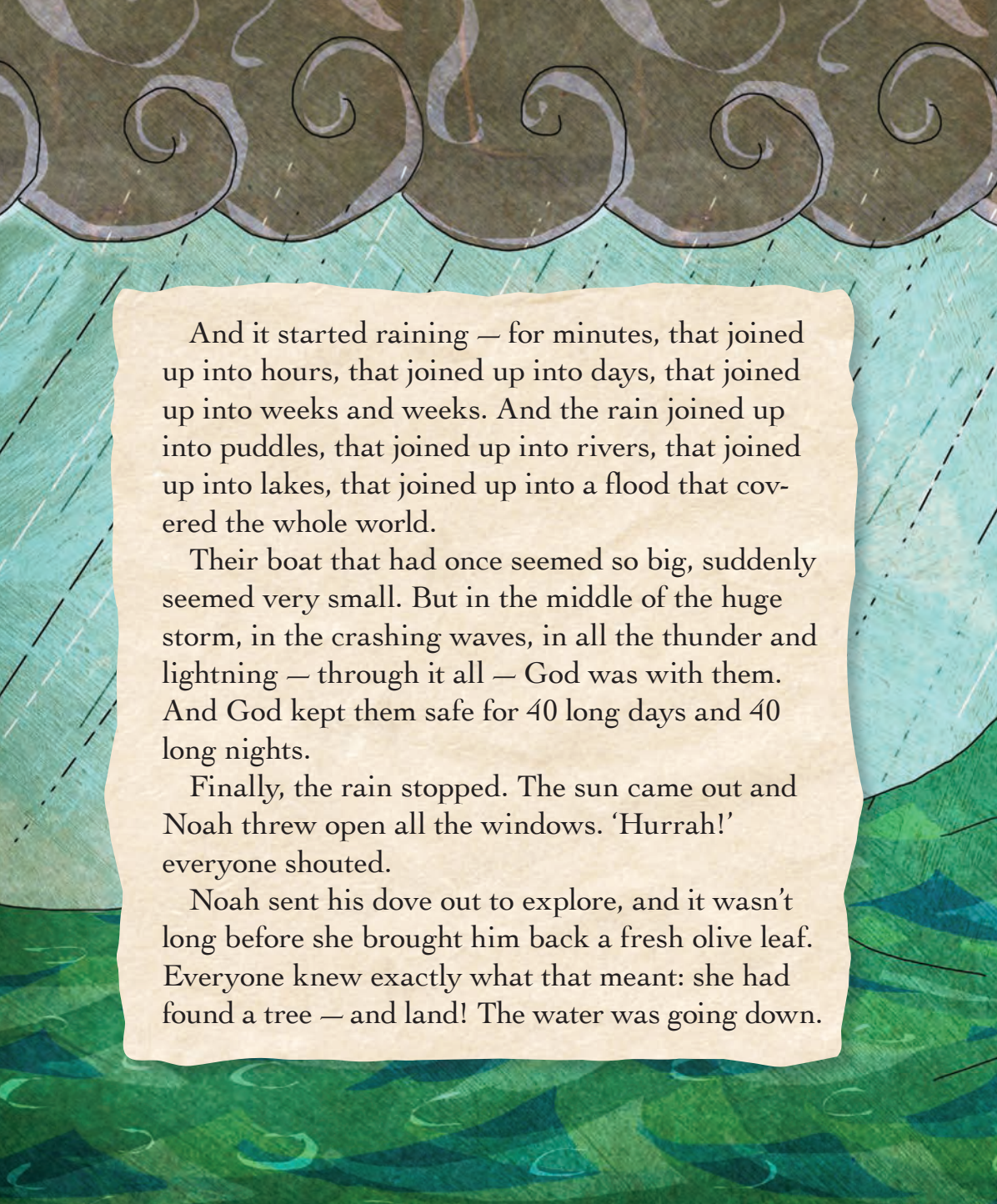


But Noah didn't mind so much what other people thought, he minded what God thought. So he just did what God told him to do.

When the ark was ready, God said, 'All aboard!' and Noah's family and all the animals climbed inside.

Then God shut the door.





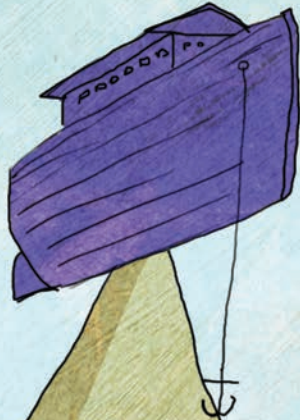
And it started raining — for minutes, that joined up into hours, that joined up into days, that joined up into weeks and weeks. And the rain joined up into puddles, that joined up into rivers, that joined up into lakes, that joined up into a flood that covered the whole world.

Their boat that had once seemed so big, suddenly seemed very small. But in the middle of the huge storm, in the crashing waves, in all the thunder and lightning — through it all — God was with them. And God kept them safe for 40 long days and 40 long nights.

Finally, the rain stopped. The sun came out and Noah threw open all the windows. ‘Hurrah!’ everyone shouted.

Noah sent his dove out to explore, and it wasn’t long before she brought him back a fresh olive leaf. Everyone knew exactly what that meant: she had found a tree — and land! The water was going down.




A purple boat with a white interior and a small cabin is suspended by a rope from a hook on the side of a tall, yellowish-brown mountain peak. The background is a light blue sky with a white crescent moon in the upper right corner.

At last, the boat landed quite suddenly on top of a great mountain. As soon as it was safe, God said, 'Out you come!' And so they did — everyone skipping and dancing onto dry land.

The first thing Noah did was to thank God for rescuing them, just as he had promised.

And the first thing God did was make another promise. 'I won't ever destroy the world again.' And like a warrior who puts away his bow and arrow at the end of a great battle, God said, 'See, I have hung up my bow in the clouds.'

A line of animals and people is walking down the side of the mountain. From top to bottom, there is a yellow goat, a person in a blue tunic, a pink pig, a yellow giraffe with brown spots, and a brown deer with antlers.



And there, in the clouds — just where the storm meets the sun — was a beautiful bow made of light.

It was a new beginning in God's world.

It wasn't long before everything went wrong again but God wasn't surprised, he knew this would happen. That's why, before the beginning of time, he had another plan — a better plan. A plan not to destroy the world, but to rescue it — a plan to one day send his own Son, the Rescuer.

God's strong anger against hate and sadness and death would come down once more — but not on his people, or his world. No, God's war bow was not pointing down at his people.

It was pointing up, into the heart of Heaven.