



Keita is a fisherman, but one day there are no fish!

Keita decides to fish in a forbidden bay where he meets a group of Atlantic humpback dolphins who take him on an adventure and show him the sea needs his help!



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as told by
Ibrahima Sory Camara

Keita and the Dolphins

A traditional fisherman's tale

illustrated by
Howard Gray




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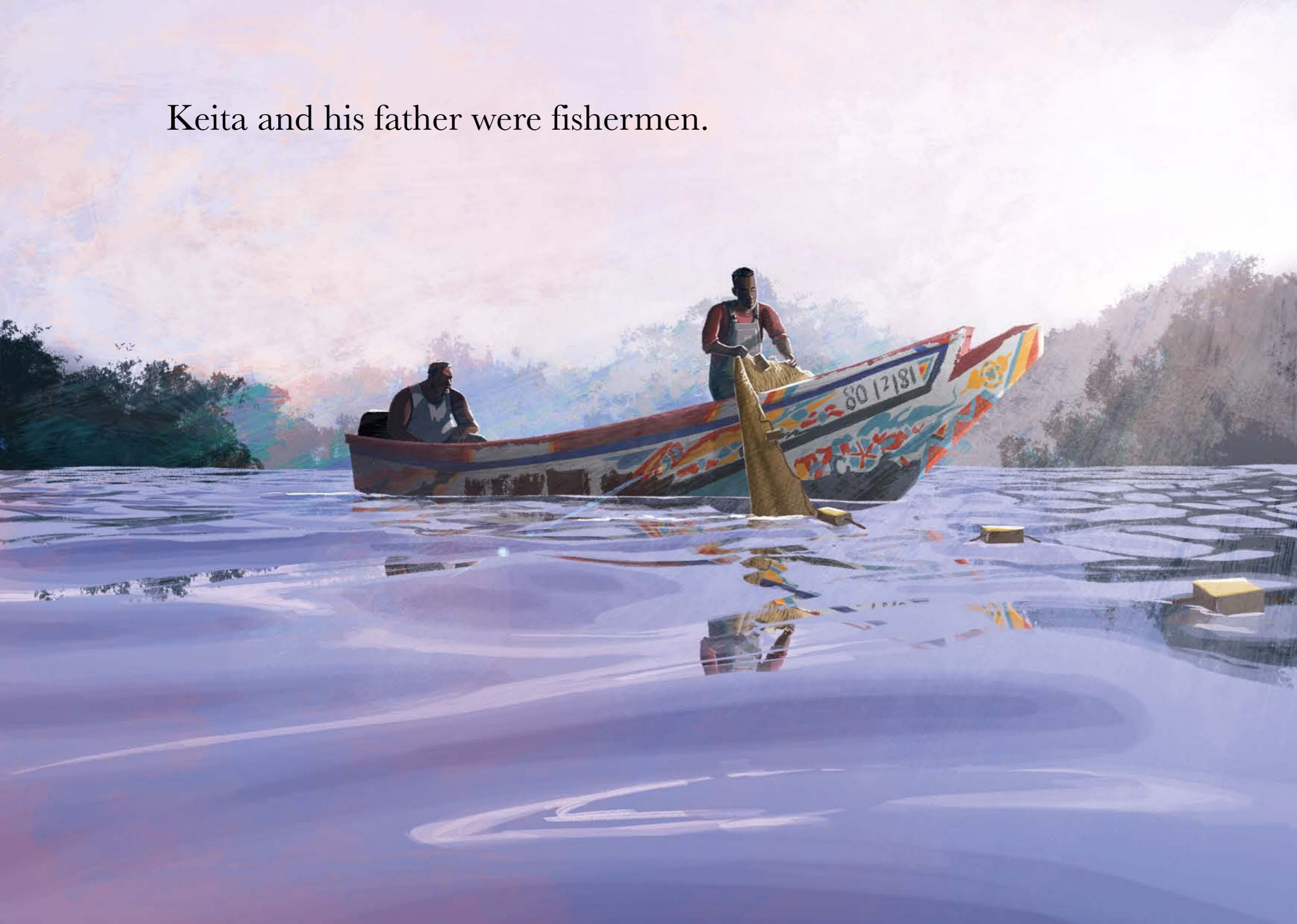
A traditional fisherman's tale

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Keita and his father were fishermen.



One day, there were no fish!
Just a few 'babies' that flapped around the deck.



“This is ridiculous, Baba!” moaned Keita. “What a waste of time.”
Keita’s father worked quietly on the catch.

Puff!

Came a loud noise.

But it wasn’t Keita...



“Look!” shouted Keita. “Dolphins!”
“Where there are dolphins, there are fish.
Let’s take our nets over there!”



“No!” said Keita’s father. “Do you think we can fish anywhere we want? Too many people are casting their nets there, even though it is forbidden!”

“For too long, we have ignored our duty of care to the sea. The only reason we catch what we do is because the sea lets us!”



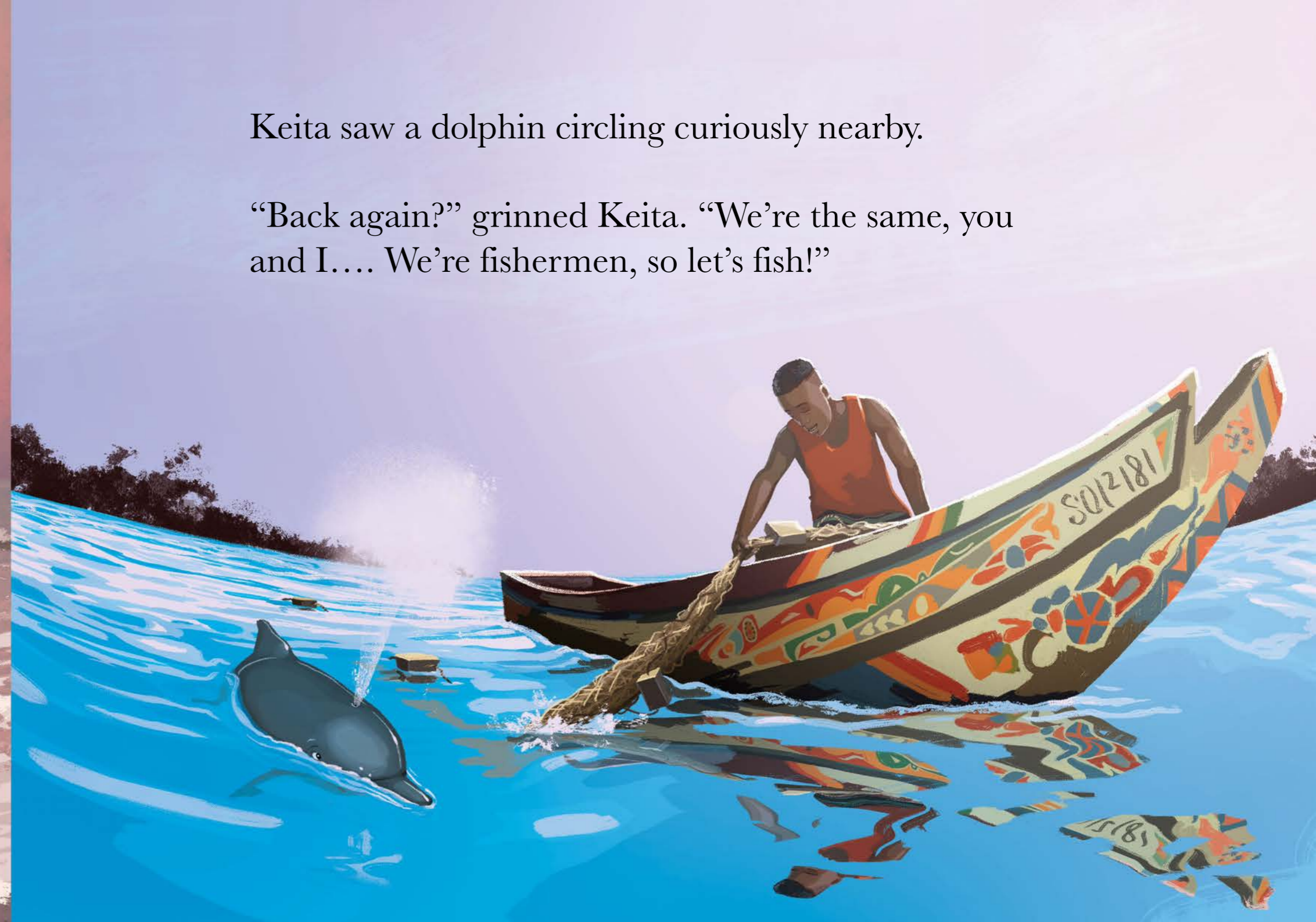
Keita snorted. He wasn't listening.

The next morning, Keita sneaked away to fish in the forbidden bay.



Keita saw a dolphin circling curiously nearby.

“Back again?” grinned Keita. “We’re the same, you and I.... We’re fishermen, so let’s fish!”



Keita laughed as he began to pull the net back into the boat.

With each heave there was a different dazzle of colours and display of patterns. But a violent tug nearly pulled Keita overboard!

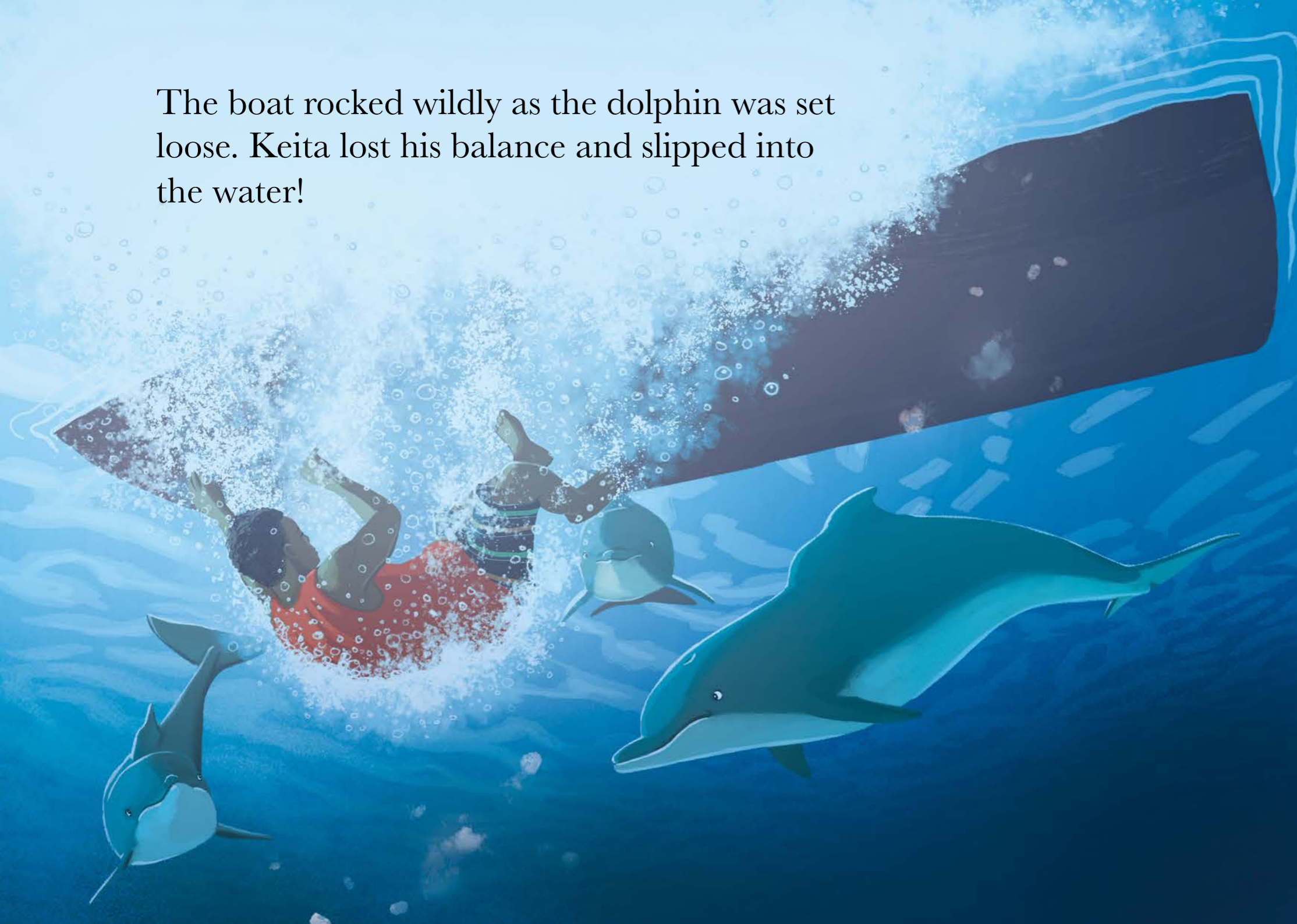


To Keita's surprise, a dolphin was tangled in his net. Clouds of salty spray billowed around him as worried dolphins circled the boat.

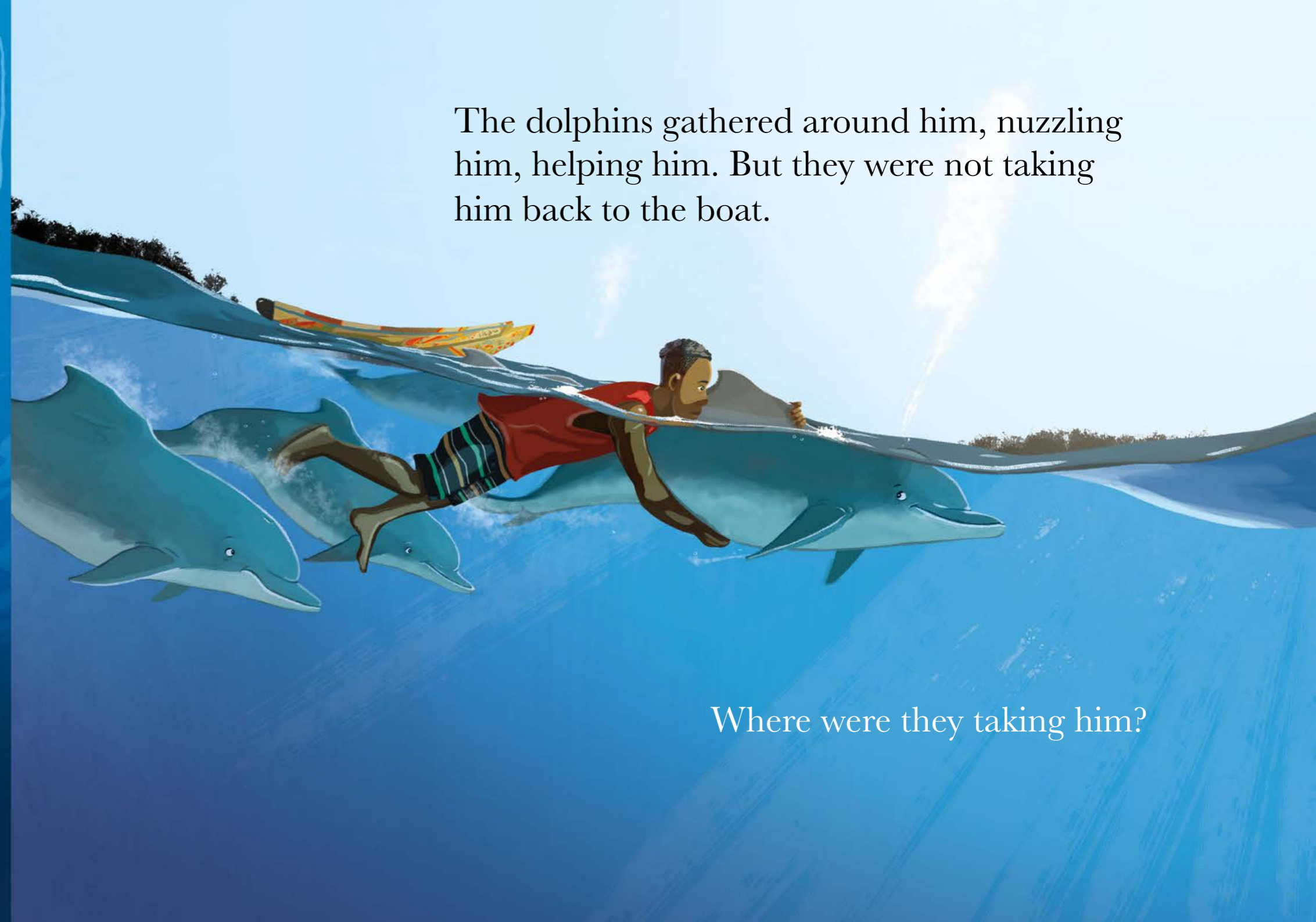
Working quickly, Keita cut the dolphin free.



The boat rocked wildly as the dolphin was set loose. Keita lost his balance and slipped into the water!



The dolphins gathered around him, nuzzling him, helping him. But they were not taking him back to the boat.



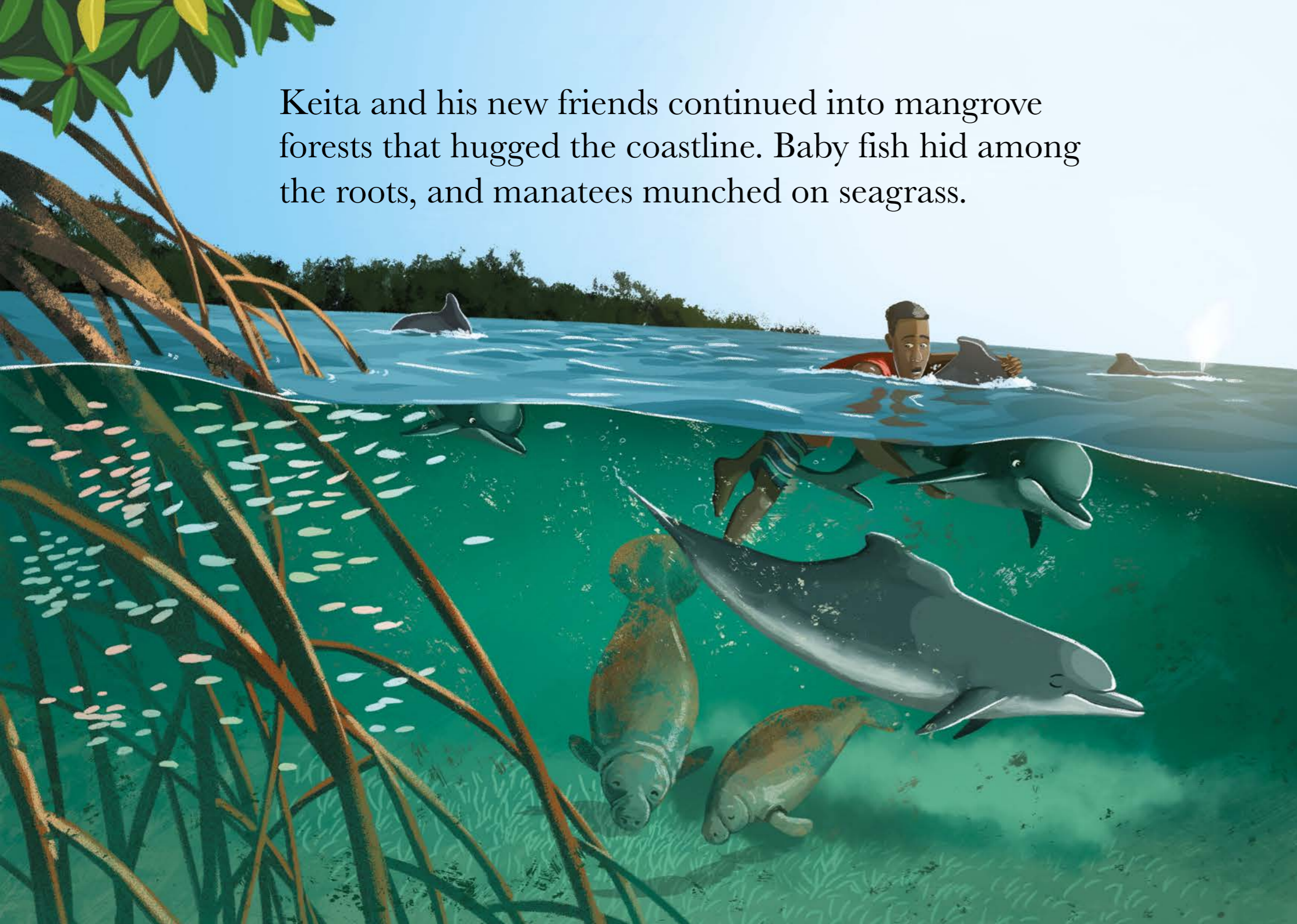
Where were they taking him?

The dolphins gently nudged him along.
Keita saw beautiful corals and fireworks of fish below
him. Enormous rays brushed his feet and curious sea
turtles followed nearby.

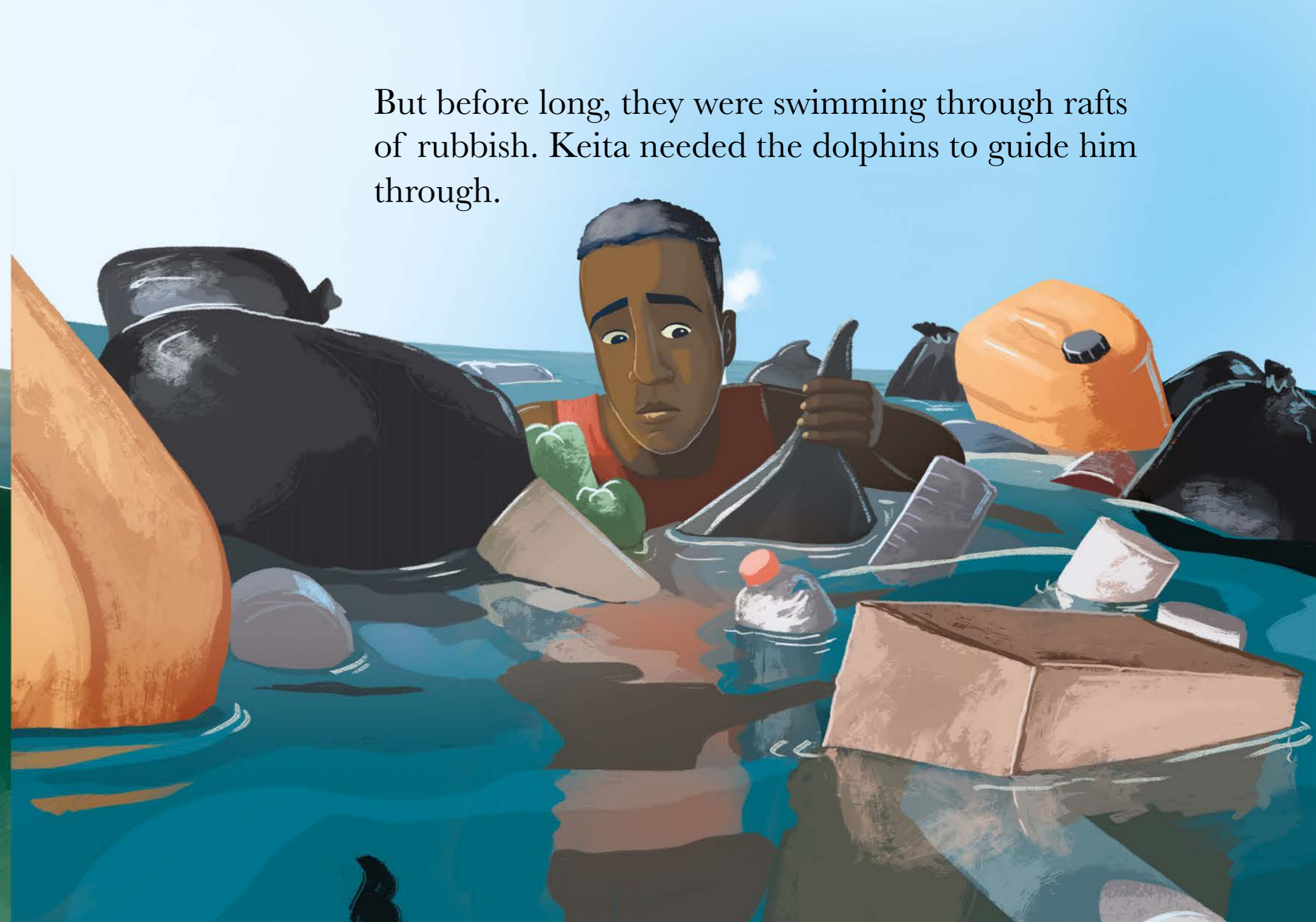
But then, Keita's heart saddened to see
abandoned nets draped over broken corals.



Keita and his new friends continued into mangrove forests that hugged the coastline. Baby fish hid among the roots, and manatees munched on seagrass.



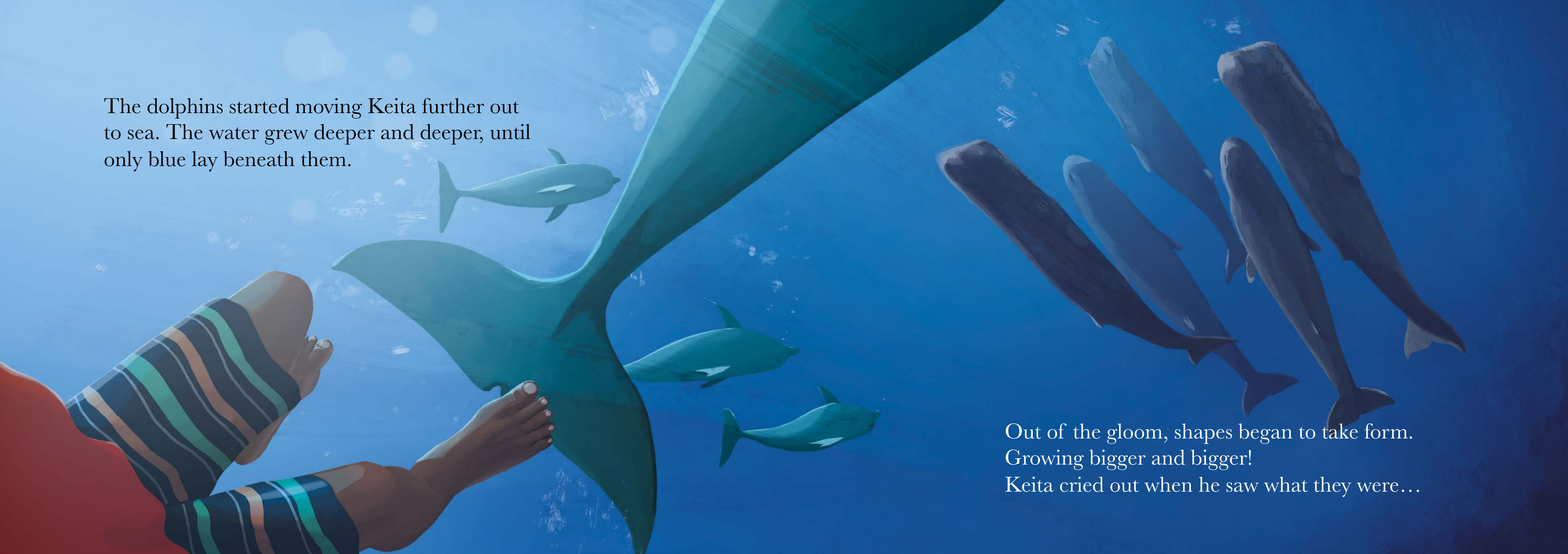
But before long, they were swimming through rafts of rubbish. Keita needed the dolphins to guide him through.



As they continued, Keita noticed a ghostly
stillness fall over the dolphins.
They became quiet...
Subdued...
Silent.



The sea, once full of life, was emptier than empty. There was
nothingness. Keita shuddered as they gazed sadly into the void.
City buildings lurked on the shoreline nearby.

An illustration of a child's hands reaching out towards a large, light blue dolphin swimming in the ocean. The child is wearing a red shirt and striped shorts. The water is a deep blue, and there are several other dolphins of various sizes swimming around. The scene is set in a deep, open sea.

The dolphins started moving Keita further out to sea. The water grew deeper and deeper, until only blue lay beneath them.

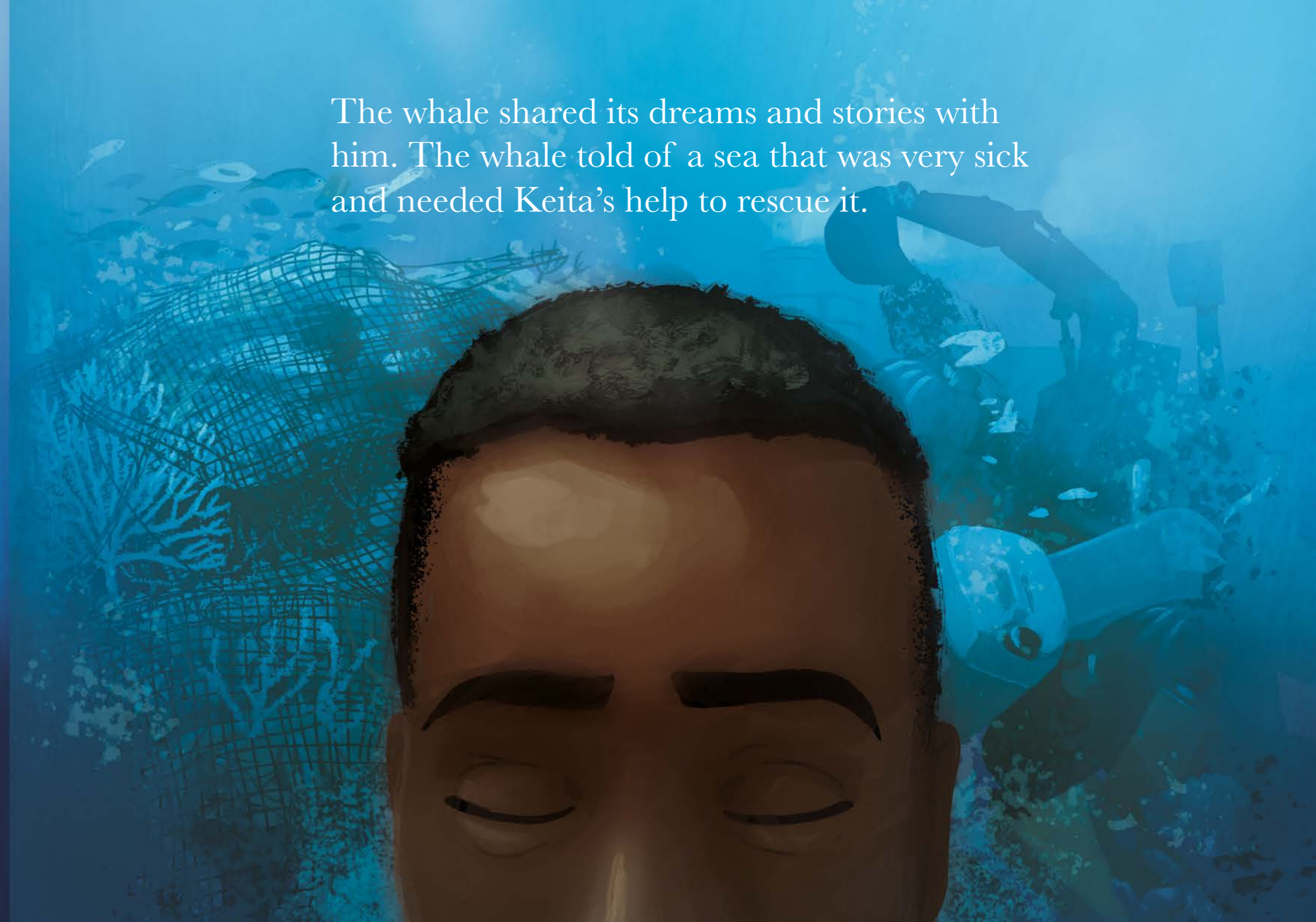
Out of the gloom, shapes began to take form.
Growing bigger and bigger!
Keita cried out when he saw what they were...

Whales!

The largest whale gently touched Keita's forehead, sending a pulse through his entire body.



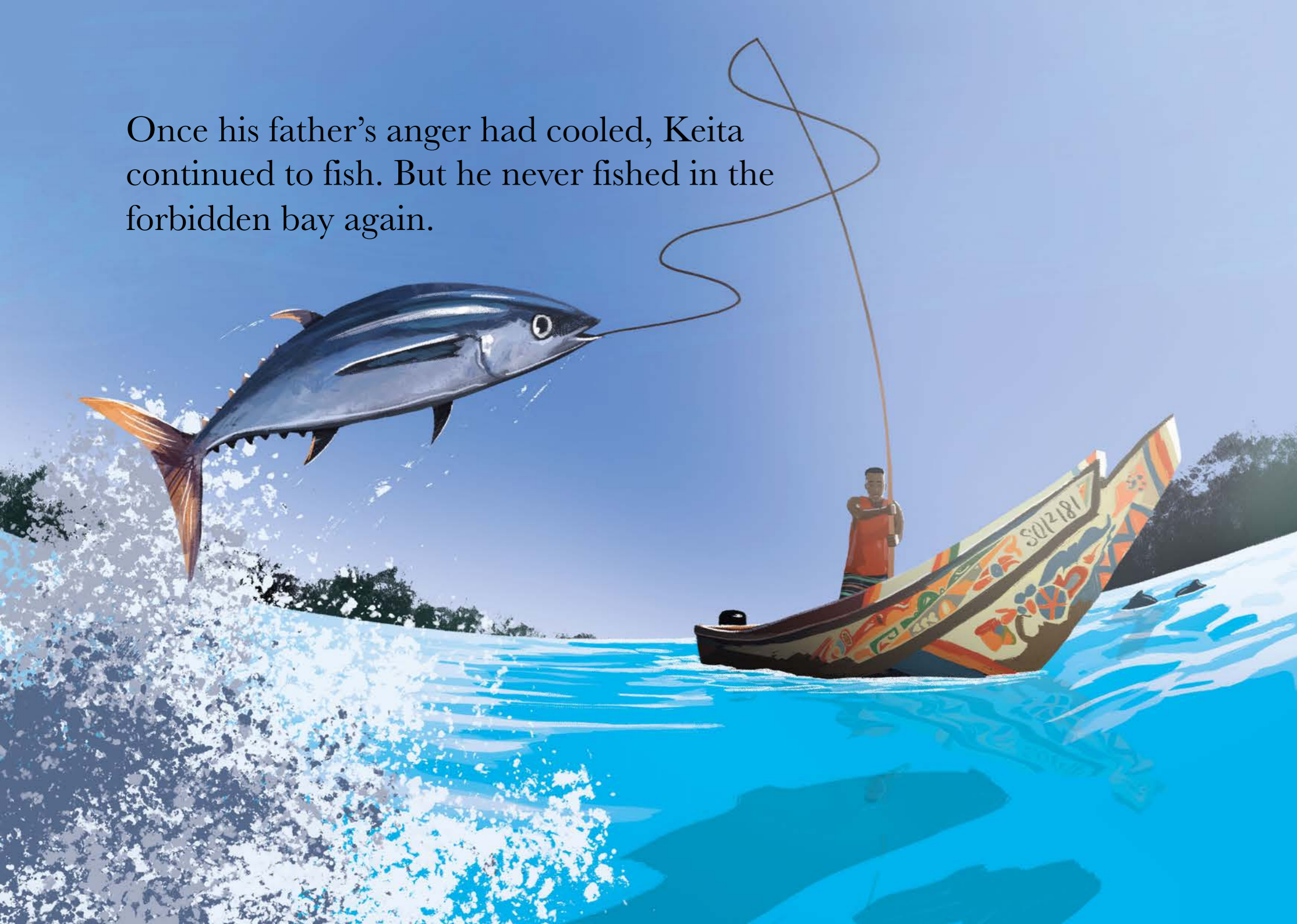
The whale shared its dreams and stories with him. The whale told of a sea that was very sick and needed Keita's help to rescue it.



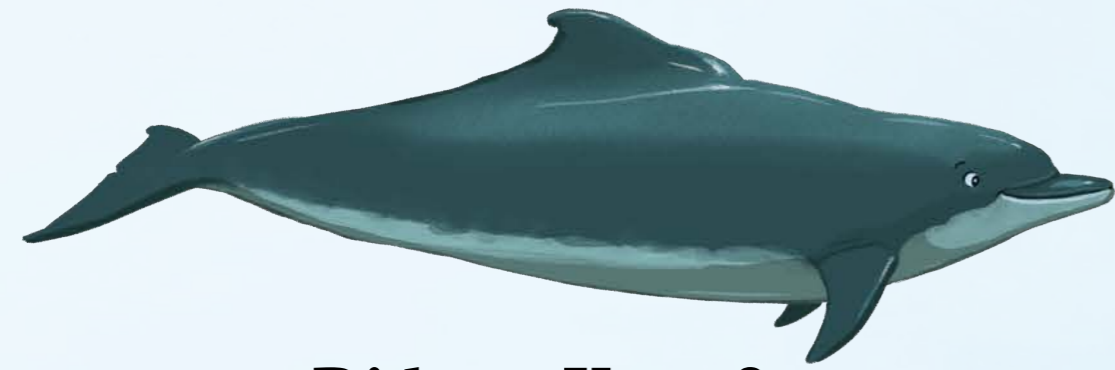
Keita woke as the waves broke around him on the beach near his home. Circling beyond the surf, Keita saw the dolphins and smiled.



Once his father's anger had cooled, Keita continued to fish. But he never fished in the forbidden bay again.

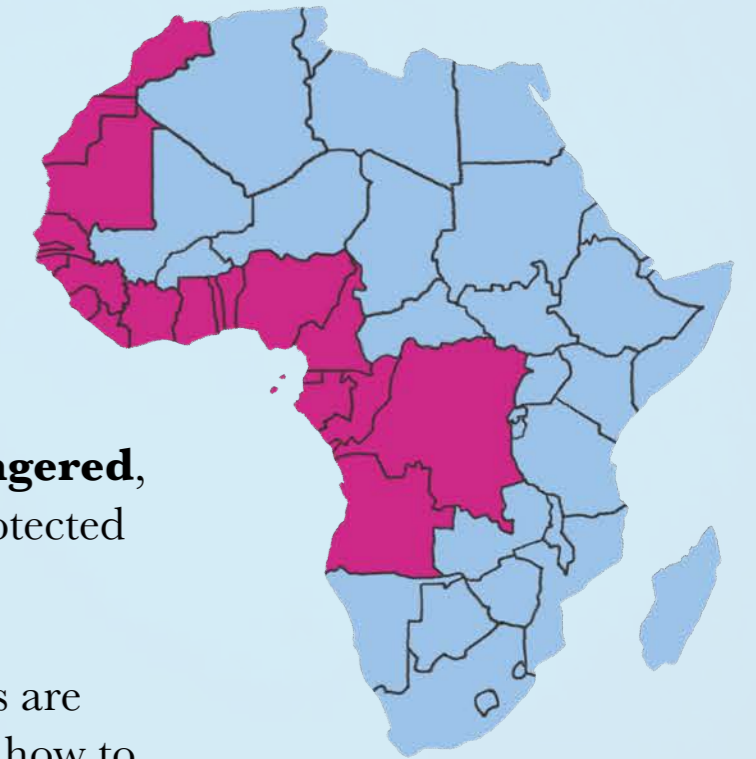


Keita shared his story with everyone, and, in time, many joined his cause to rescue the sea. Abandoned nets disappeared, rubbish vanished, and there was enough fish for everyone who respected the sea and their duty of care to it.



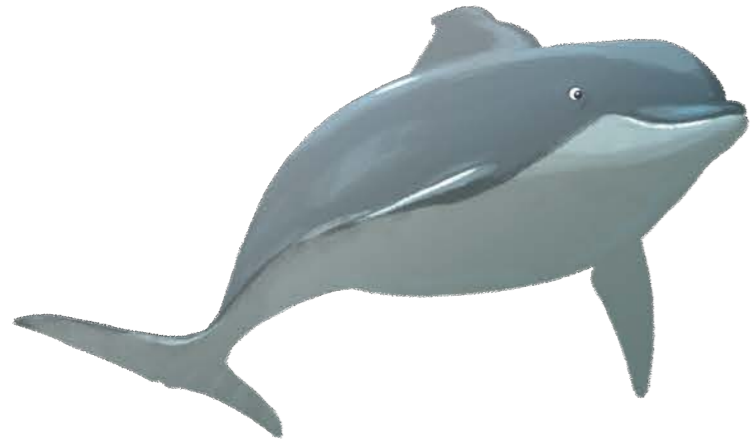
Did you Know?

- Atlantic humpback dolphins are found **ONLY** on the west coast of Africa between **Angola and Morocco**.
- These dolphins are found in waters **less than 20m deep**. This means that they are finding food and taking care of their young close to shore in areas where humans are fishing, transporting people or food or supplies by boats, or building new structures like ports.
- Many Atlantic humpback dolphins are **tangled in fishing nets** every year, and most of them drown before they can be rescued like the dolphin in this story was.
- Scientists believe that there are **fewer than 3000** Atlantic humpback dolphins left in the whole world. This may sound like a big number, but they are spread out over **7000km** of Africa's coastline, in small populations of tens to hundreds of individuals.



- Atlantic humpback dolphins are **Critically Endangered**, meaning that they may disappear if they are not protected from fishing and other threats.
- A group of scientists and conservation organizations are working hard to learn more about the dolphins and how to protect them. They are working with fishers, coastal communities and decision makers to protect the areas that are most important for the dolphins and develop safer ways to fish and share the ocean with these amazing creatures.
- Learn more about their work on sousateuszii.org or by scanning this QR Code.





The story of *Keita and the Dolphins* was adapted from a tale shared by a storyteller in a fishing community in the Republic of Guinea, Ibrahima Sory Camara. Stories of dolphins helping fishermen to find fish, and of dolphins rescuing humans who fall into the sea are common throughout the countries where Atlantic humpback dolphins occur. Many coastal communities in Central and Western Africa also have ancient traditions of respecting dolphins as ‘totem’ animals or protecting certain places from fishing or hunting. We can learn from these traditions to help protect dolphins in our modern world.

Howard Gray is a dolphin biologist as well as a children’s illustrator. He completed a PhD, studying dolphin genetics, at Durham University, UK, but since 2017 he has been devoted to illustrating children’s books with a focus on wildlife and natural history.