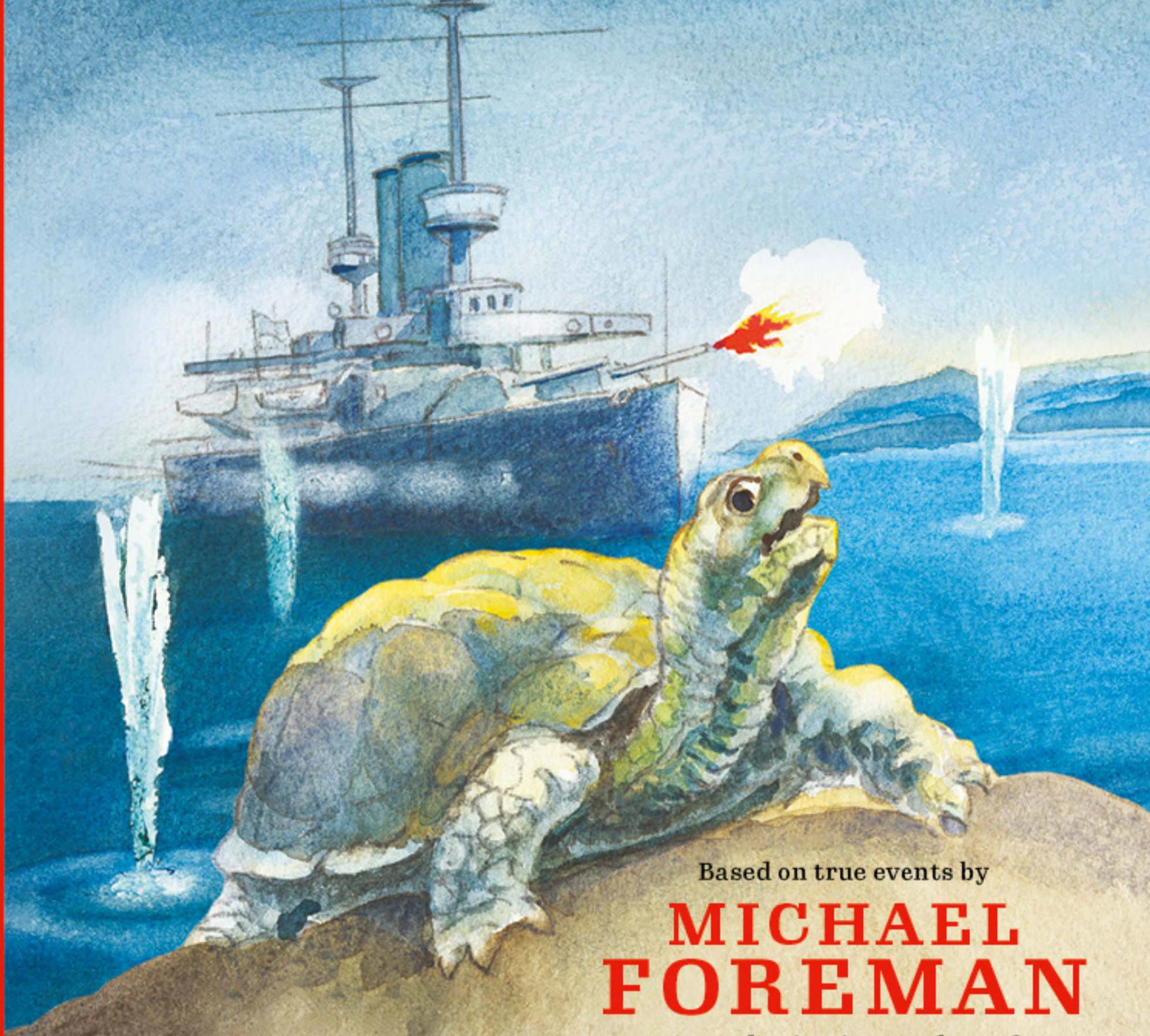


A First World War story of courage and friendship

The Amazing Tale of

ALI PASHA



Based on true events by

**MICHAEL
FOREMAN**

Award-winning author of
War Game and *War Boy*



It was Corton where Mr Henry Friston (59) lived, in a pair of restored railway carriages, with his family and his tortoise, Ali Pasha (68-ish).

Mr Friston was digging in his garden when I wobbled up the lane.

“Aha!” he said, catching sight of me and my pocketful of pencils. “The *Journal*, is it? Well, you’re bang on time;

Ali Pasha woke up this weekend just gone.” Henry pointed to a small wooden box sitting in a pool of sunshine, next to a water butt.

“He’s not living outside yet,” the old man continued. “It’s still a bit too cold at night. But he does like a spot of sunshine.”

I propped up my ancient bike and squatted down next



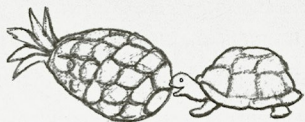
night-time raids on enemy territory? The sailors must have been itching to see some action after doing the same thing day after day after day - I was certainly itching to read about it!

I was ready to make a polite excuse to leave, but as

I gently laid the diary on the bench beside me, a sudden gust of wind caught the thin pages and flipped them to the entry for the thirteenth of March 1915. I knew instantly that something had changed.

It said just two words: "To Gallipoli!"





22ND SEPTEMBER 1915

It's been a tough month, September has. It was Ma's birthday a couple of weeks ago; how I wish I could have been there to give her a birthday hug. I'd trade anything to sit at Ma's kitchen table even just for an hour, cuppa in hand and a slab of her famous fruitcake on a plate in front of me. I know I was desperate to see the world and all that, but I always thought I'd be able to choose when to come home. And I never imagined how much I'd miss it.

Anyway, I reckon someone, somewhere, must have known how I've been feeling and taken pity on me, as the most wonderful thing happened this afternoon. I was down at the gun with Ali, telling him all about Ma's cooking and the glorious smells that used to waft through the kitchen on

baking day, when Long John came rushing in to find me. Sixty British trawlers had just arrived in port to help ferry troops and supplies, and they were tied up right by our ship. Going out on deck, I was astonished to recognise a couple of my fishing mates from Corton - lads I'd drunk with in the local pub and played cricket with on the village green! The sight of familiar faces hundreds of miles from home was just the tonic I needed to lift my spirits. When I yelled "On the ball, Corton!" from the deck of Implacable, I hope it transported them back to our sunny village green, even just for a moment.

Us gunners found them some crates of beer and lowered them down to the decks of the trawlers - it was almost like we were back in the White Horse pub again, laughing and drinking together without a care in the world.

A little bit of Suffolk came to Italy today, and mighty happy it made me, too.