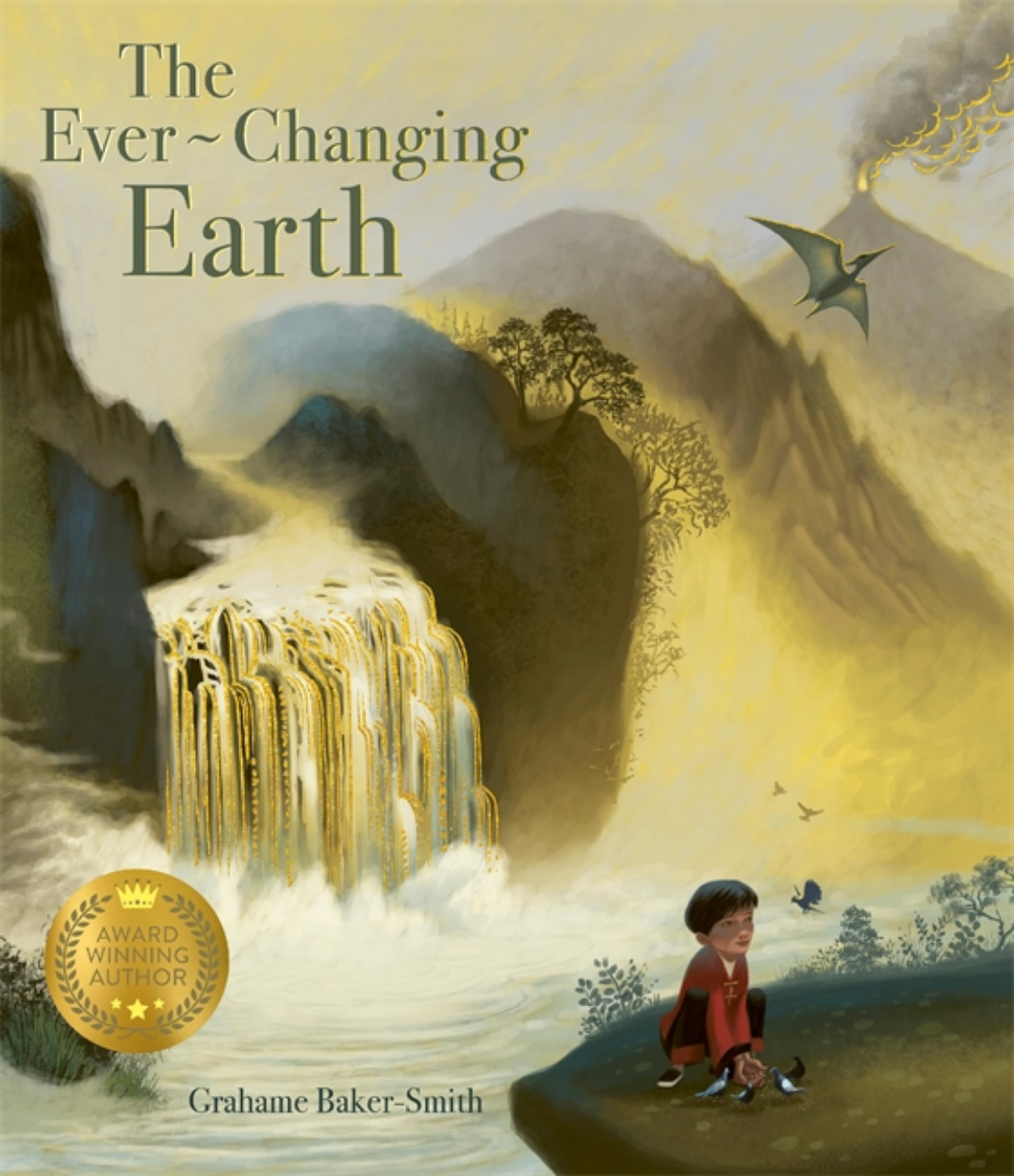


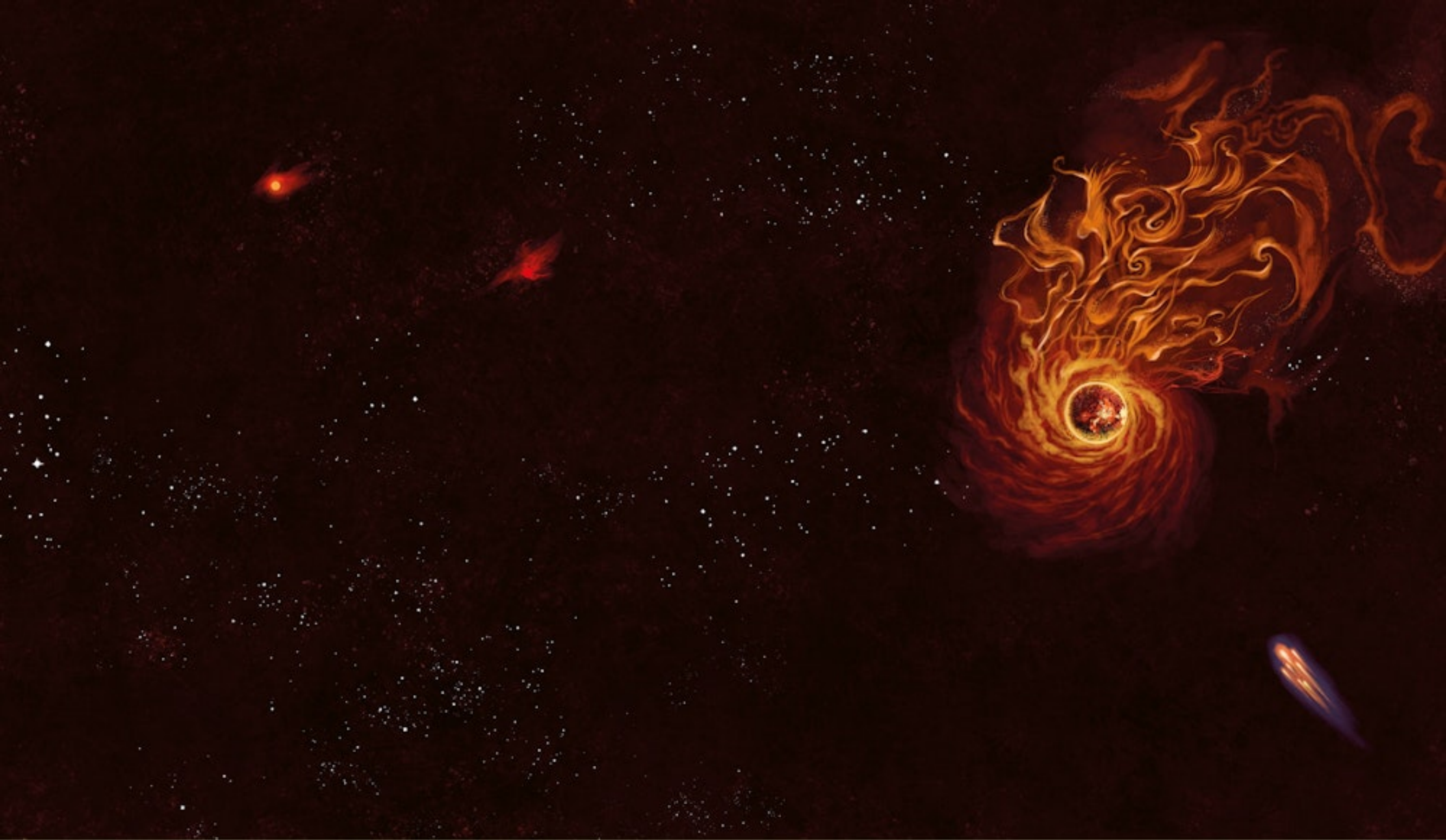
The Ever~Changing Earth



Grahame Baker-Smith



The Ever~Changing Earth



Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished.
Lao Tzu

Words cannot do justice to the majesty and generosity of the world we share with all the extraordinary creations of its vibrant and mysterious nature.
I am grateful for every day I have been, grateful to be a part, as we all are, of its incredible and ancient story.

I dedicate this book with love to my mum and dad, Rachel and Barry.

There are people in the world who are dear to me. Without them this book would not be what it is.
I want to thank my wife and children who are an endless source of love, encouragement and inspiration.
It is also my great good fortune to have had, once more, the creativity, support and unflappable patience of Genevieve, Alison and Sophie.
We all made this book together.

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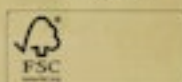
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Kūn loves dinosaurs. They once lived where Kūn now lives. Millions of years ago the sky boomed with the wild beat of Pterosaur wings, and the roar of Tyrannosaurus Rex shook the mountains. In forests cool and ancient, strange birds opened beaks stippled with tiny rows of teeth, filling the branches with the first birdsong.



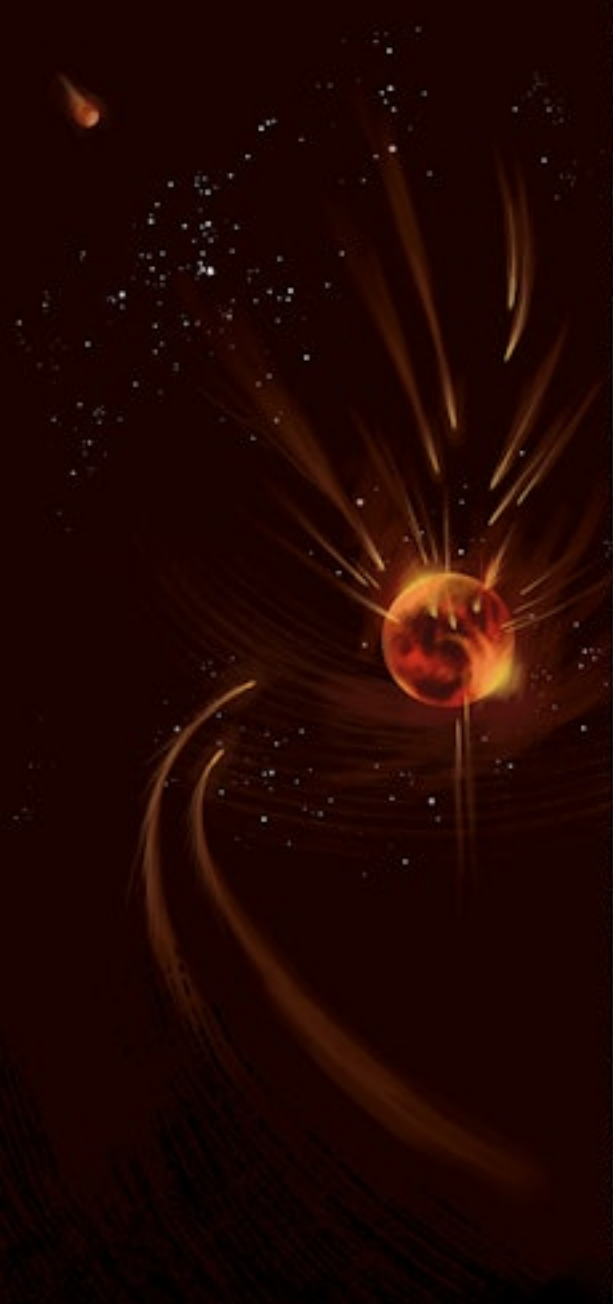
But the Earth has changed and the dinosaurs are long gone.
There is a giant crater beneath the sea, where millions of years ago
an asteroid fell. Huge waves crashed over the Earth,
volcanoes erupted, ash blocked out the sun . . .
the time of the dinosaurs was over.




Yet somehow, those small birds
in the forests cool and ancient;
somehow they survived.




Their descendants have lost their teeth, but they are still with us.
Other creatures also survived, evolved, and flourished.
Life is very different now because of that asteroid.




If Kūn could go back even further
in time to when the world was forming,
he would not recognise the Earth at all.



The young planet was under siege,
pounded by comets and rocks.
It was a world of flames and boiling seas of lava . . .



when it was struck by another planet.



An event that created our Moon.

For twenty million years comets
bombarded the cooling Earth.

They brought something precious inside them.

Tiny crystals of water.

The Earth changed from a world of fire
to a world of oceans. And deep in those first seas,
chemicals and minerals combined to make
something simple but extraordinary ...

The first single-celled life on Earth.

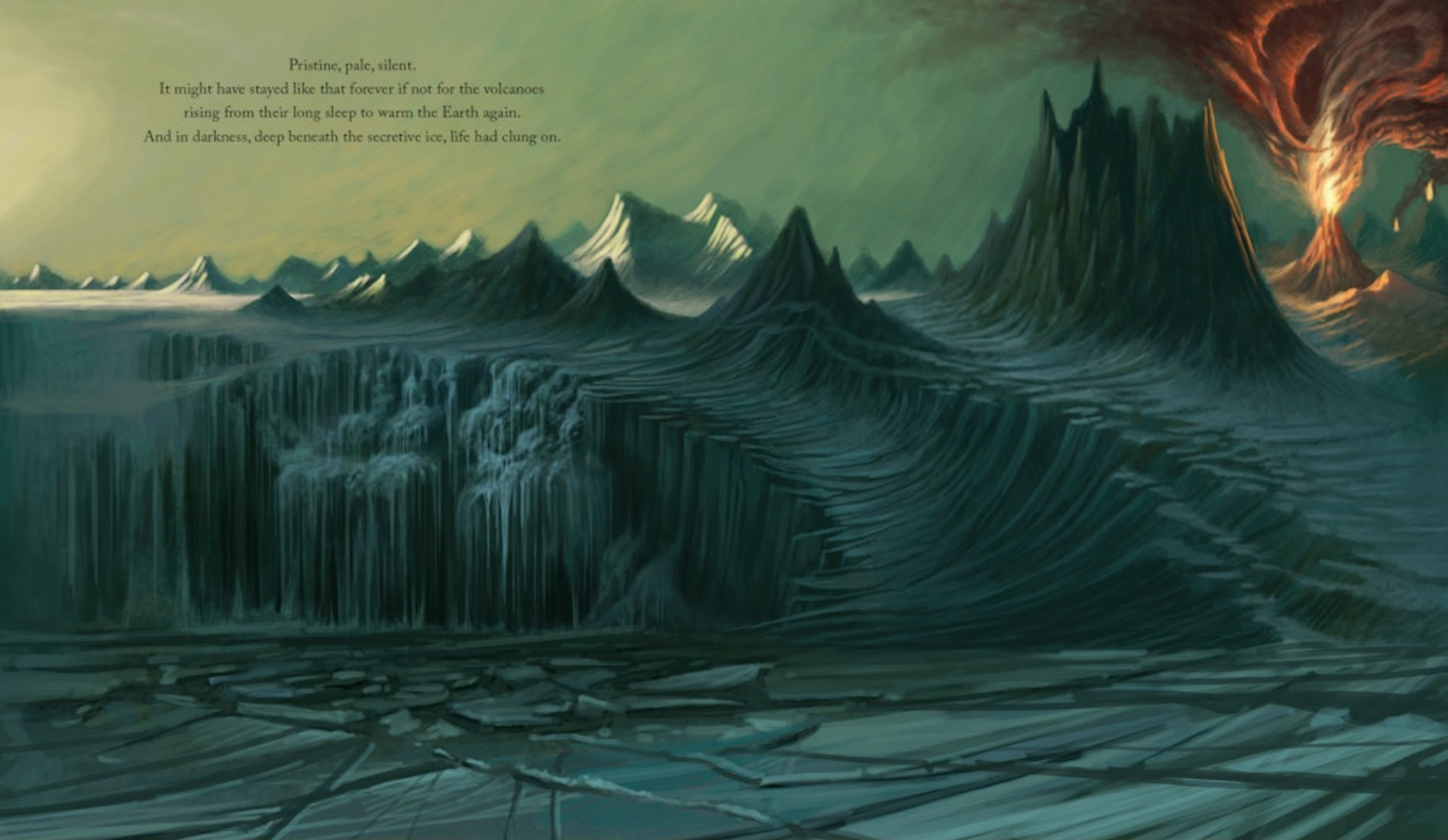
These simple life-forms gathered into colonies.
Towers of bacteria clustered in the warm shallows.
They made 'food' from sunlight, releasing oxygen into the sea.

Each bubble was like a tiny kiss of life for the creatures
that were yet to come.

But life would have to wait.
The temperature dropped. The volcanoes grew quiet.

For a hundred million years Earth was in the grip of an endless winter,
spinning in space like a huge snowball.

Pristine, pale, silent.
It might have stayed like that forever if not for the volcanoes
rising from their long sleep to warm the Earth again.
And in darkness, deep beneath the secretive ice, life had clung on.



As the glaciers slowly retreated
and the oceans warmed, the simple cells evolved.
From this point on the Earth becomes at last,
a world teeming with vibrant,
complex life.



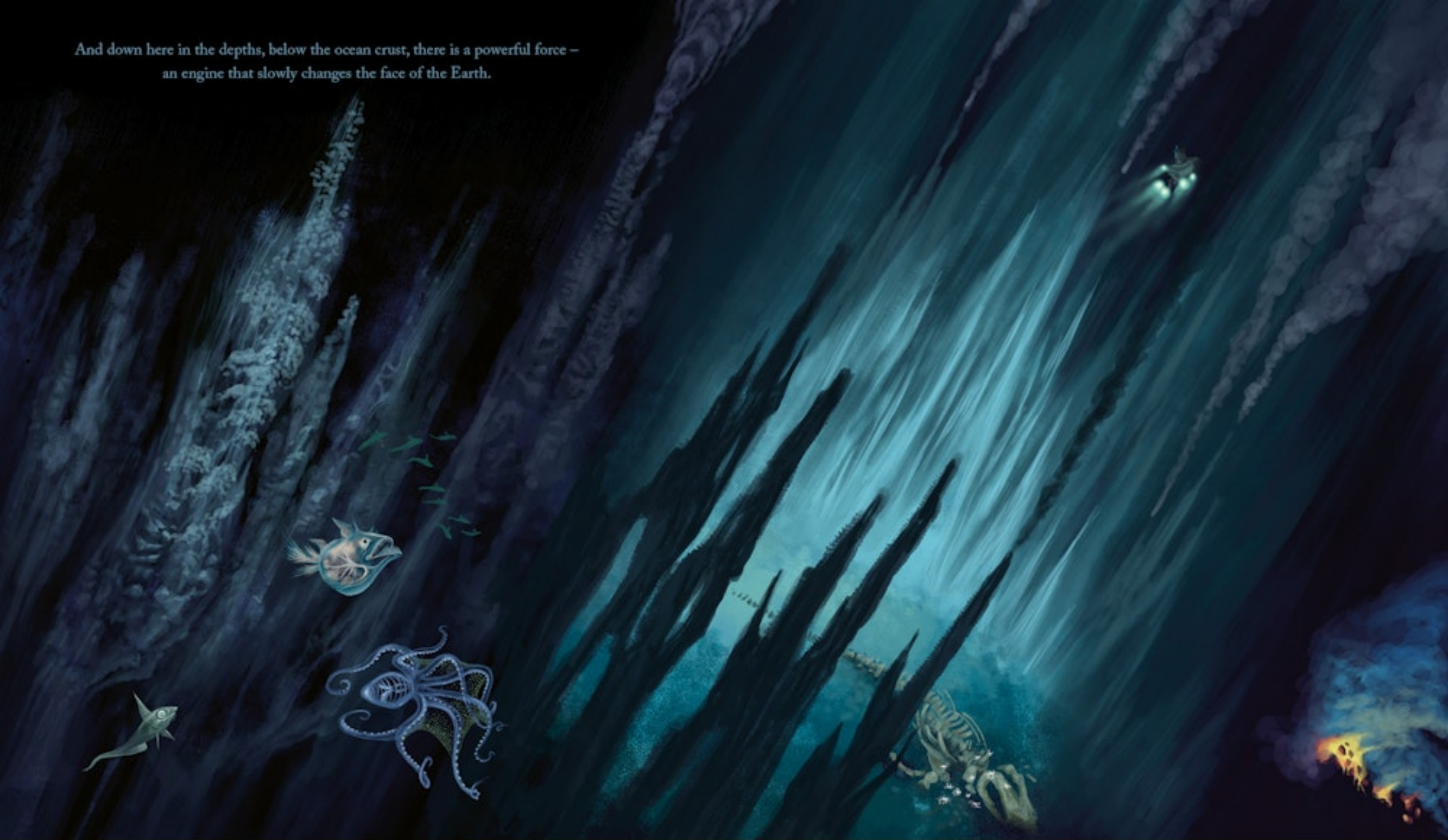


The story of life continues to this day on the ever-changing Earth.
Plants and creatures have come and gone for billions of years.
Evolving, growing, giving way to new forms.

We know this because the rocks remember.
The Earth has kept a diary in stone.
It tells stories of forgotten creatures and buried oceans . . .
Of rock uplifted from the sea bed to become mountains,
their peaks studded with fossil shells.
And of mountains washed away again, grain-by-grain,
back to the sea bed.



And down here in the depths, below the ocean crust, there is a powerful force –
an engine that slowly changes the face of the Earth.



The fires from the formation of our world still burn below the surface.
The Earth's core is hotter than the Sun. The rock around it melts.



The crust is broken into several giant puzzle pieces
that float on top of this liquid rock.



750 million years ago



280 million years ago



66 million years ago



Present day

Because of this the continents move, changing the face of the Earth.
But you would need a million lifetimes to notice.
The core also creates something magical in the skies of the Earth . . .

In the northern sea lies a small island
where Solveig floats in a pool warmed by the heat
at the centre of the Earth.

Her island rests on two different puzzle pieces,
slowly moving apart.

But Solveig is gazing in wonder at the sky.





Particles streaming from the Sun collide
with the magnetic field generated by the core.
The result: nature's own majestic fireworks.

Solveig's island is far, far away from where Kûn lives.

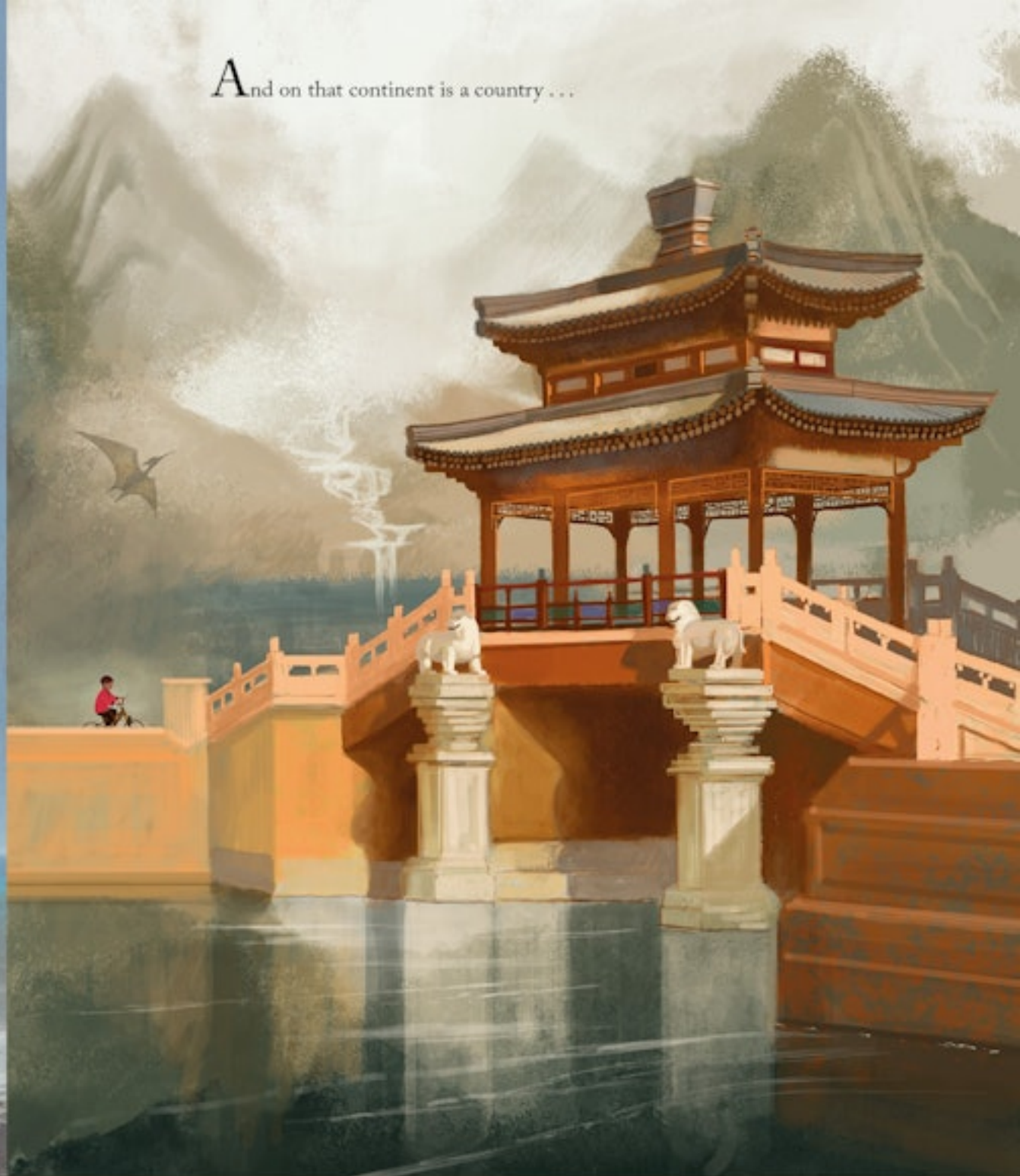
Yet they are connected.

Everywhere on Earth is connected to everywhere else.

The land beneath Solveig's feet is part of a vast continent
thousands of miles away.



And on that continent is a country . . .



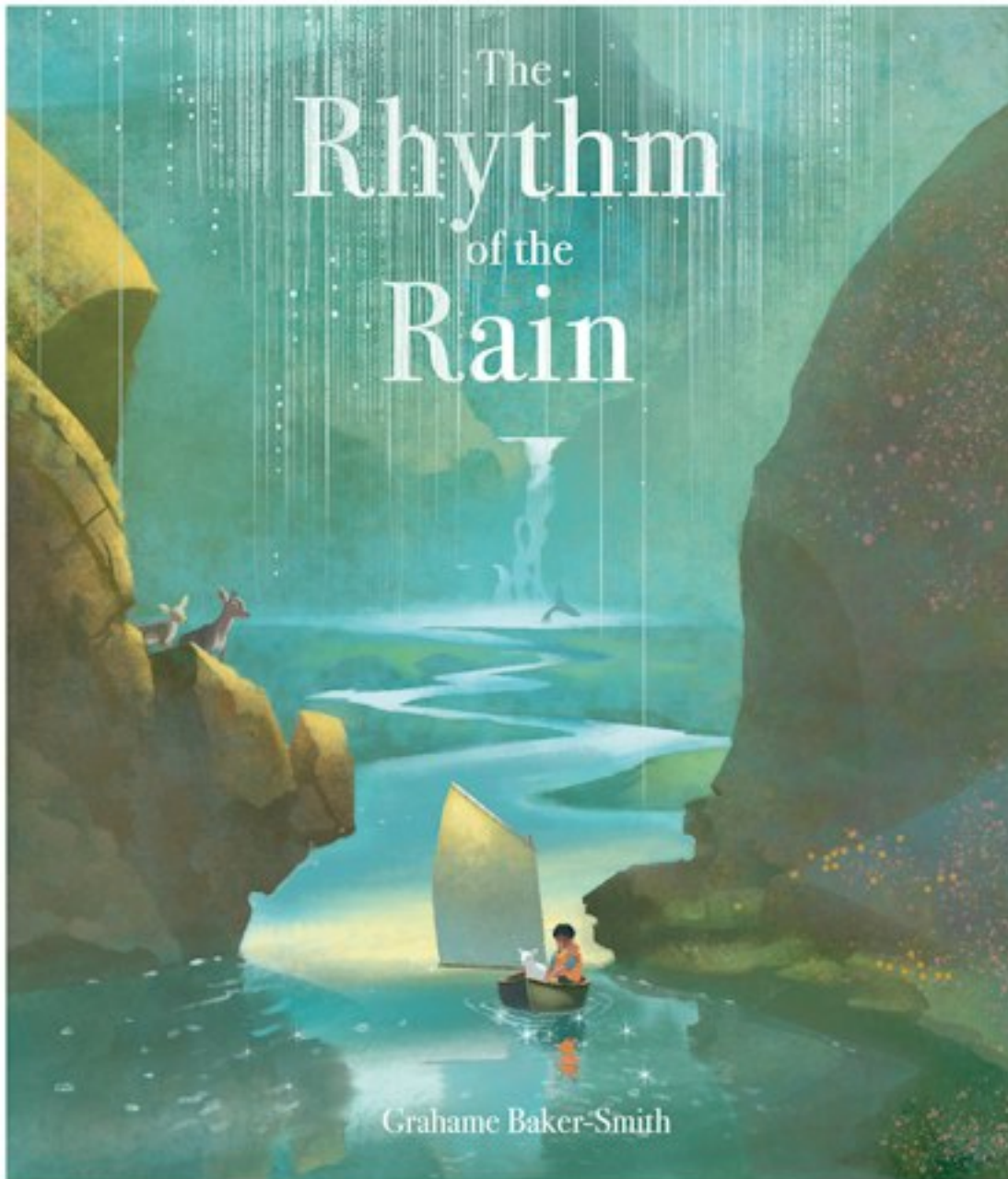
where a young boy who loves dinosaurs
is in his garden . . .

. . . feeding the birds.



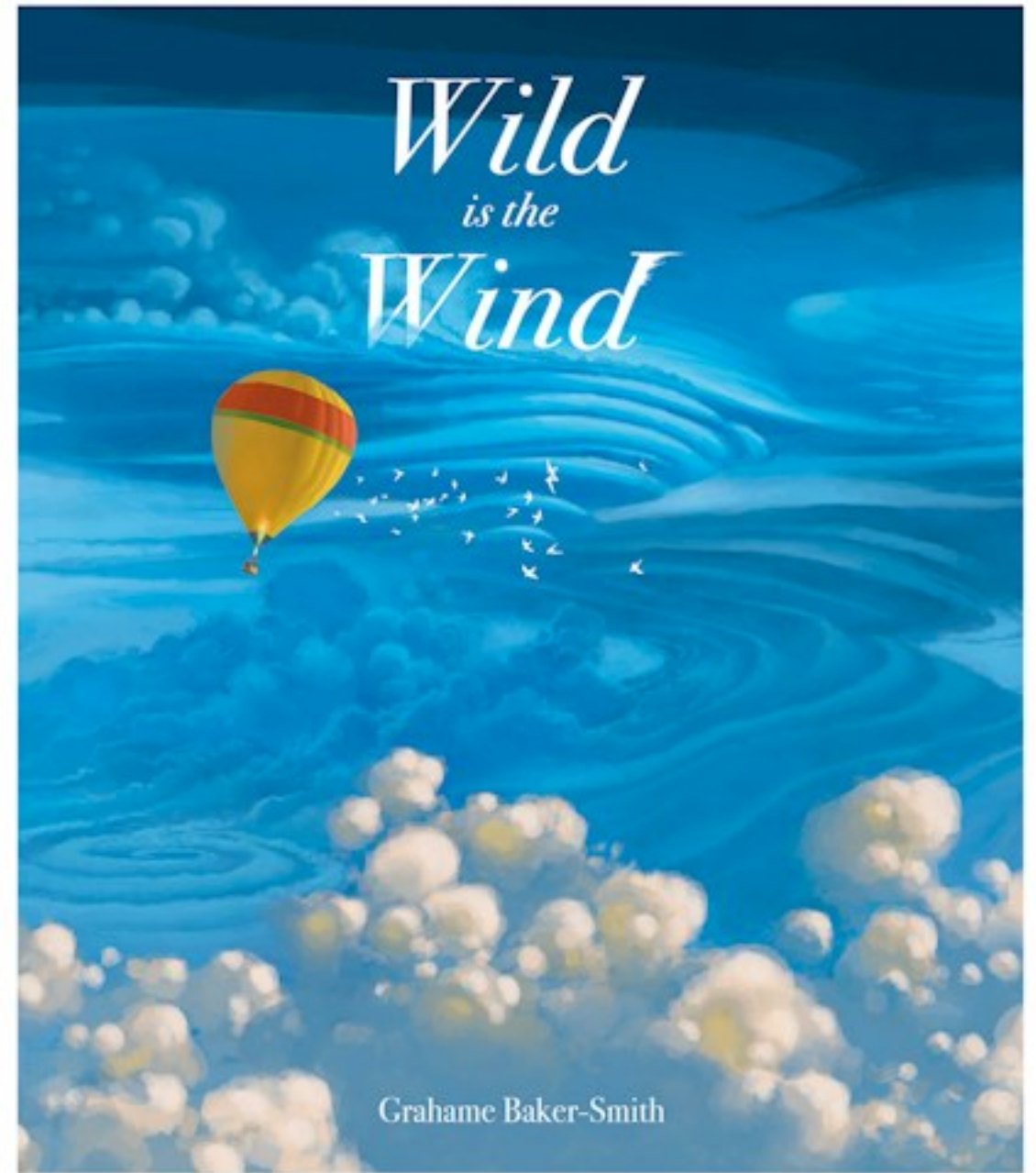


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Down the mountain the river runs.
Where it goes the Earth turns green.
Elephants and giraffe, flamingoes,
and zebra celebrate the return of the rain.
On and on the river runs . . .



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In the desert where a million years ago
an ocean glittered, the wind sculpts echoes
in sand of those long-vanished waves.
For the wind is the ceaseless shaper
of the Earth . . .