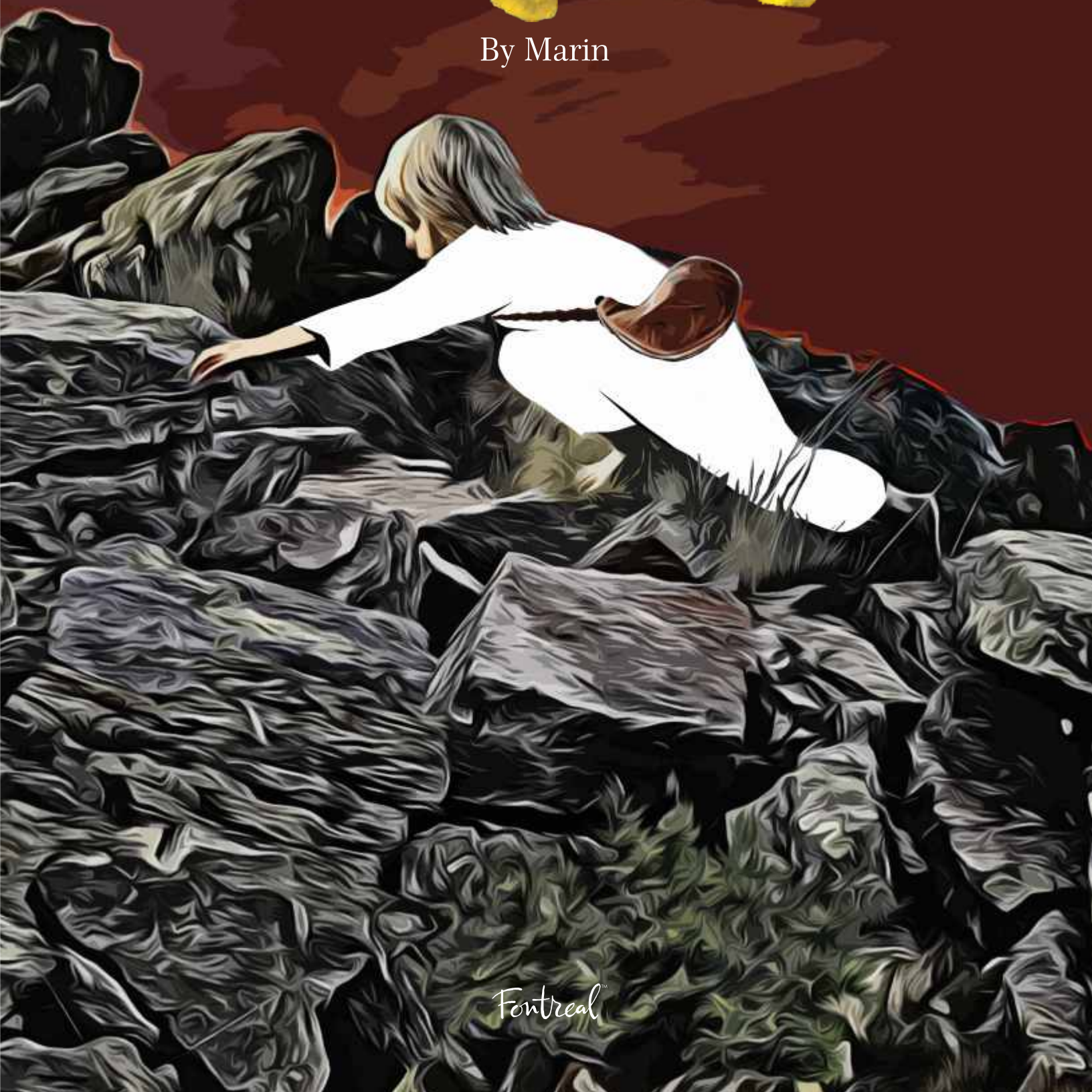


Al's Journey

By Marin



Fontreal™

Al's Journey

*To my Grandpa, my role model
who never stopped creating.
M.D.*

Al's Journey

*A story about a young boy,
an old shaman, and their gold-digging tribe*

By Marin



Publisher's Cataloging-in-Publication

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Once upon a time there was a tribe living in a village at the foot of a mountain. The villagers loved gold and they mined the slopes day and night.

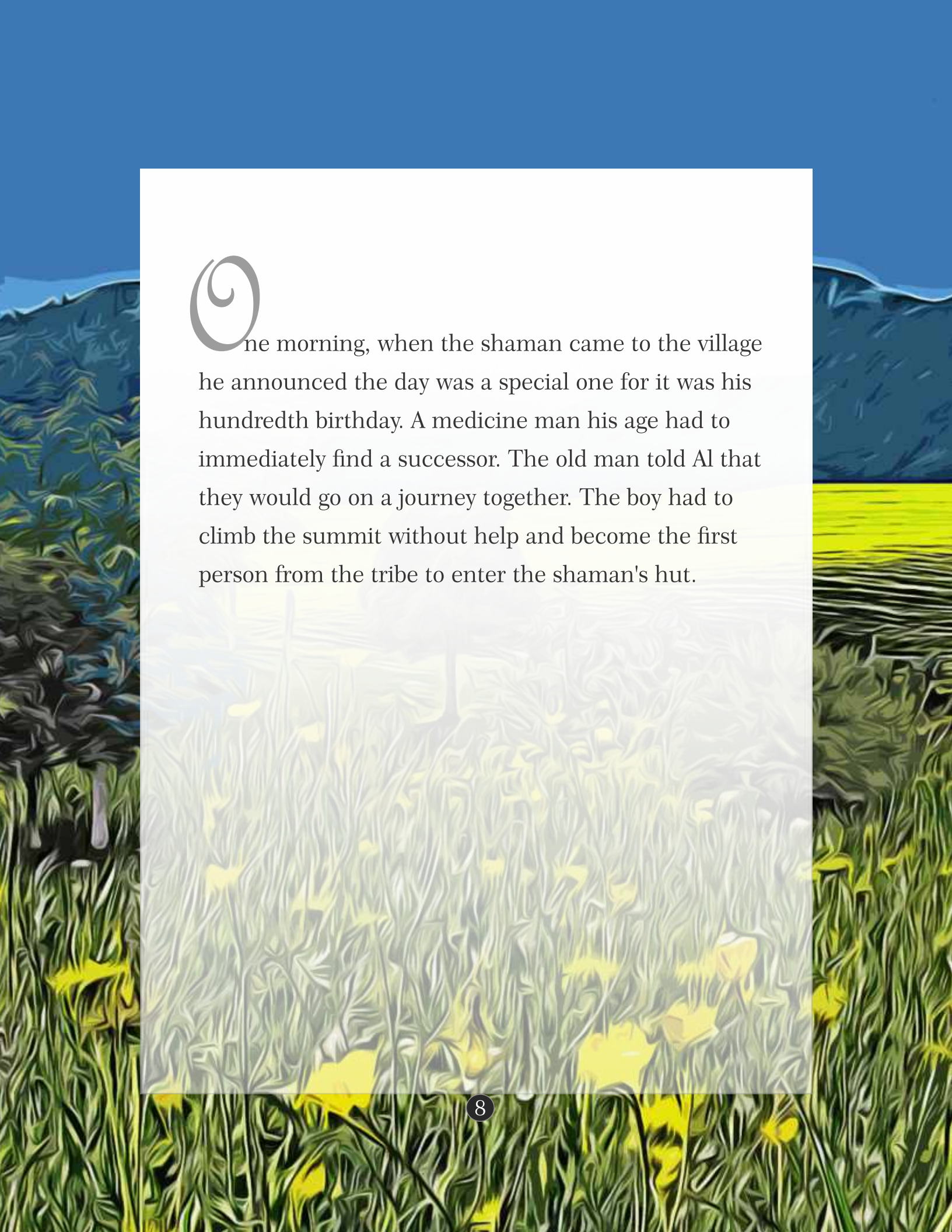
They often forgot to eat and rest while they dug, looking for more and more of the gold they loved so much. They even engaged their children in the ever-increasing hunt for the shiny yellow metal.





At the top of the mountain lived a wise, old shaman. Every morning the medicine man climbed down from the peak to cure the villagers and to train his orphaned grandson, Al, to be the next tribe's healer. Every day the old shaman would keep his grandson with him as he healed the people. And every evening he would tuck Al into bed, and then go back to his hut by himself, where he gathered herbs from the mountaintop and—people say—he talked to God.





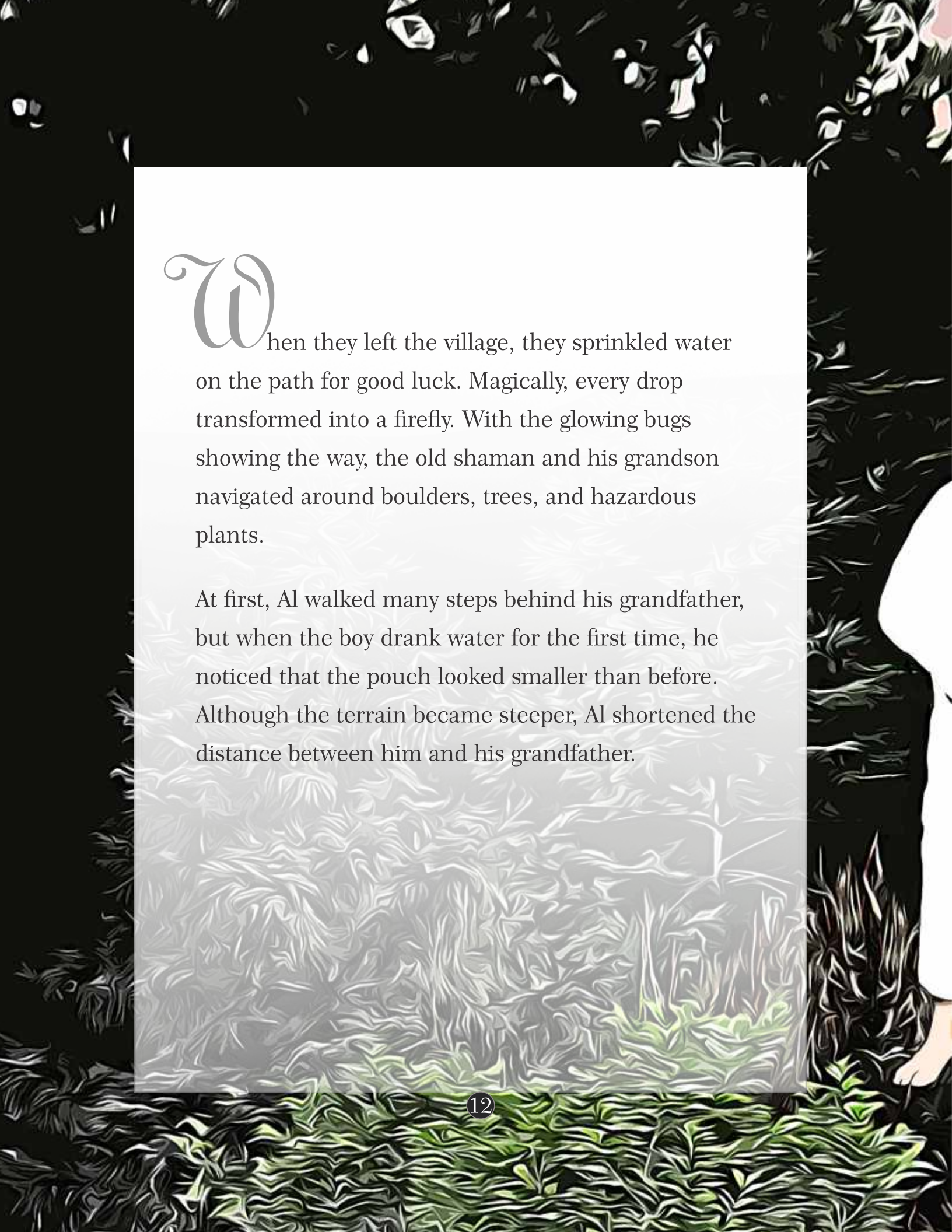
One morning, when the shaman came to the village he announced the day was a special one for it was his hundredth birthday. A medicine man his age had to immediately find a successor. The old man told Al that they would go on a journey together. The boy had to climb the summit without help and become the first person from the tribe to enter the shaman's hut.



In the evening, the healer attached a pouch with magic water to his grandson's long tunic. He told Al that at the summit he could ask God the same number of questions as the sips of water he would drink during the journey. And the shaman would be allowed to give Al the same number of practical suggestions.



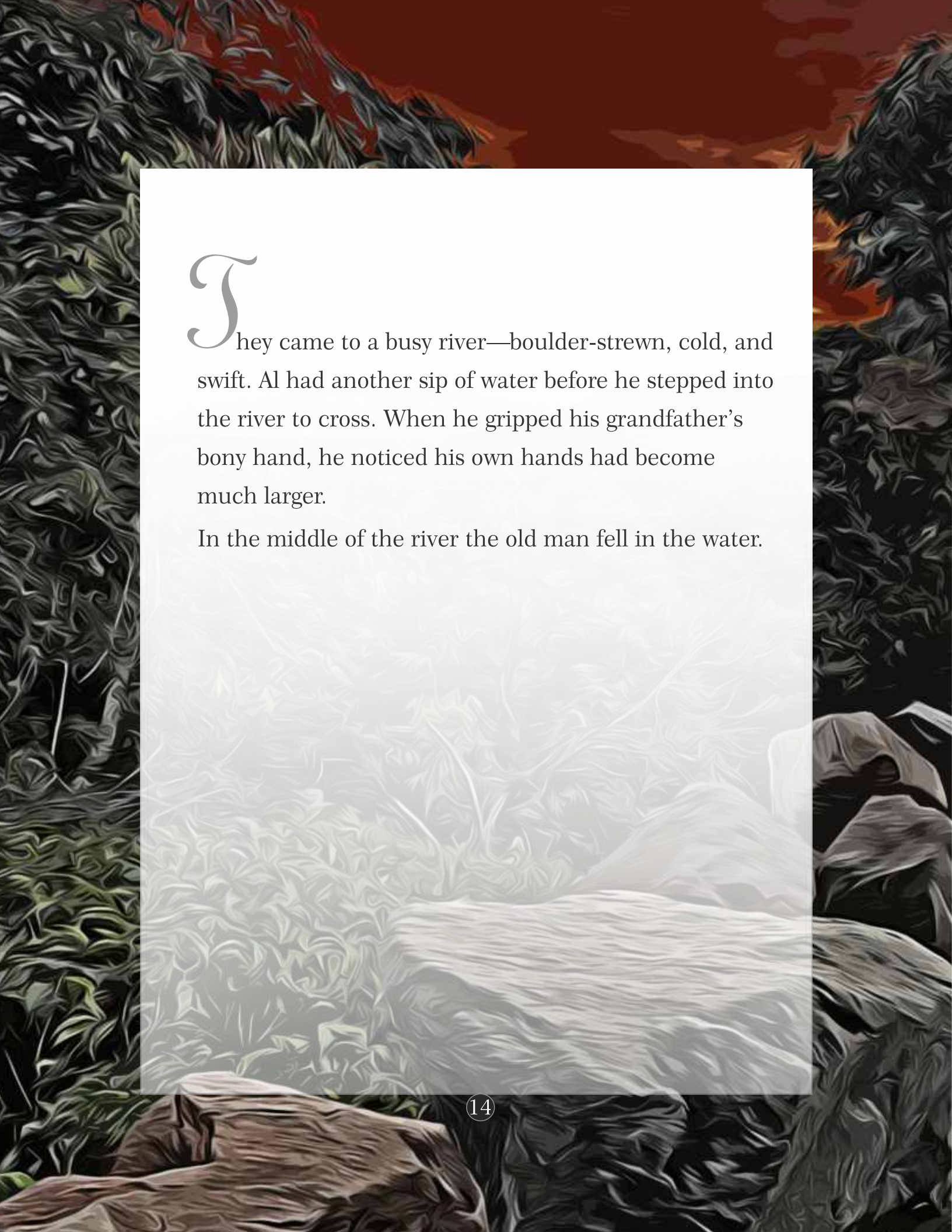




When they left the village, they sprinkled water on the path for good luck. Magically, every drop transformed into a firefly. With the glowing bugs showing the way, the old shaman and his grandson navigated around boulders, trees, and hazardous plants.

At first, Al walked many steps behind his grandfather, but when the boy drank water for the first time, he noticed that the pouch looked smaller than before. Although the terrain became steeper, Al shortened the distance between him and his grandfather.

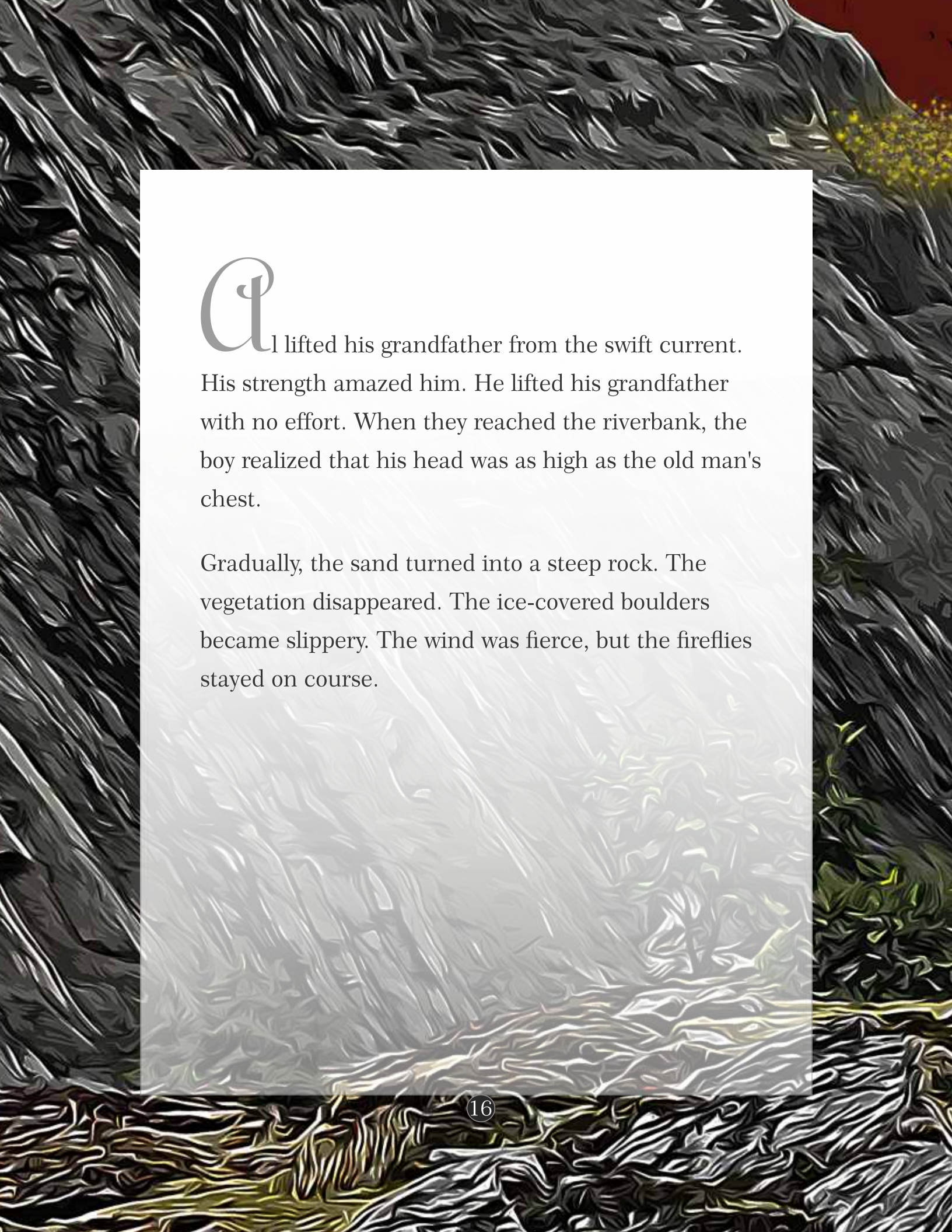




They came to a busy river—boulder-strewn, cold, and swift. Al had another sip of water before he stepped into the river to cross. When he gripped his grandfather's bony hand, he noticed his own hands had become much larger.

In the middle of the river the old man fell in the water.

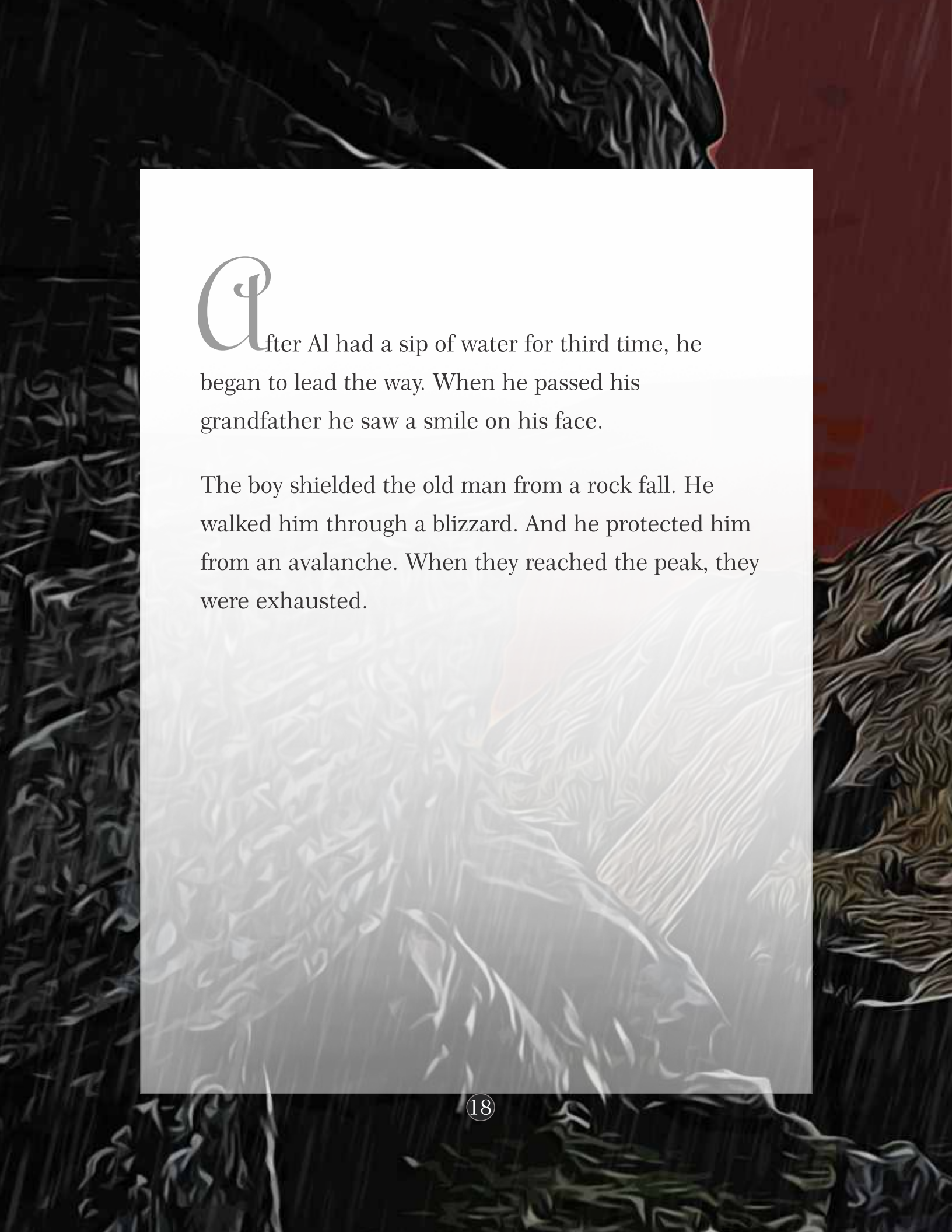




Cl lifted his grandfather from the swift current. His strength amazed him. He lifted his grandfather with no effort. When they reached the riverbank, the boy realized that his head was as high as the old man's chest.

Gradually, the sand turned into a steep rock. The vegetation disappeared. The ice-covered boulders became slippery. The wind was fierce, but the fireflies stayed on course.

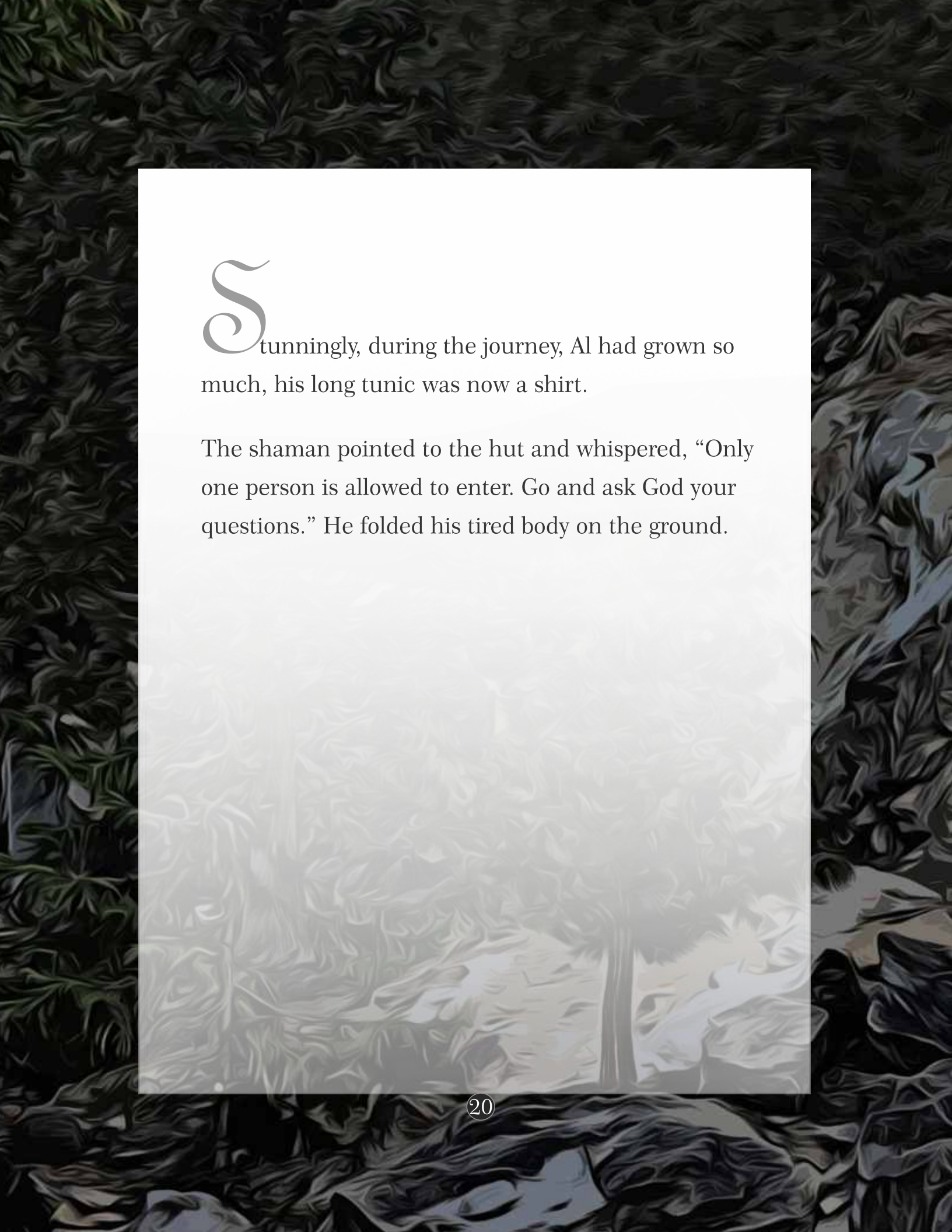




After Al had a sip of water for third time, he began to lead the way. When he passed his grandfather he saw a smile on his face.

The boy shielded the old man from a rock fall. He walked him through a blizzard. And he protected him from an avalanche. When they reached the peak, they were exhausted.

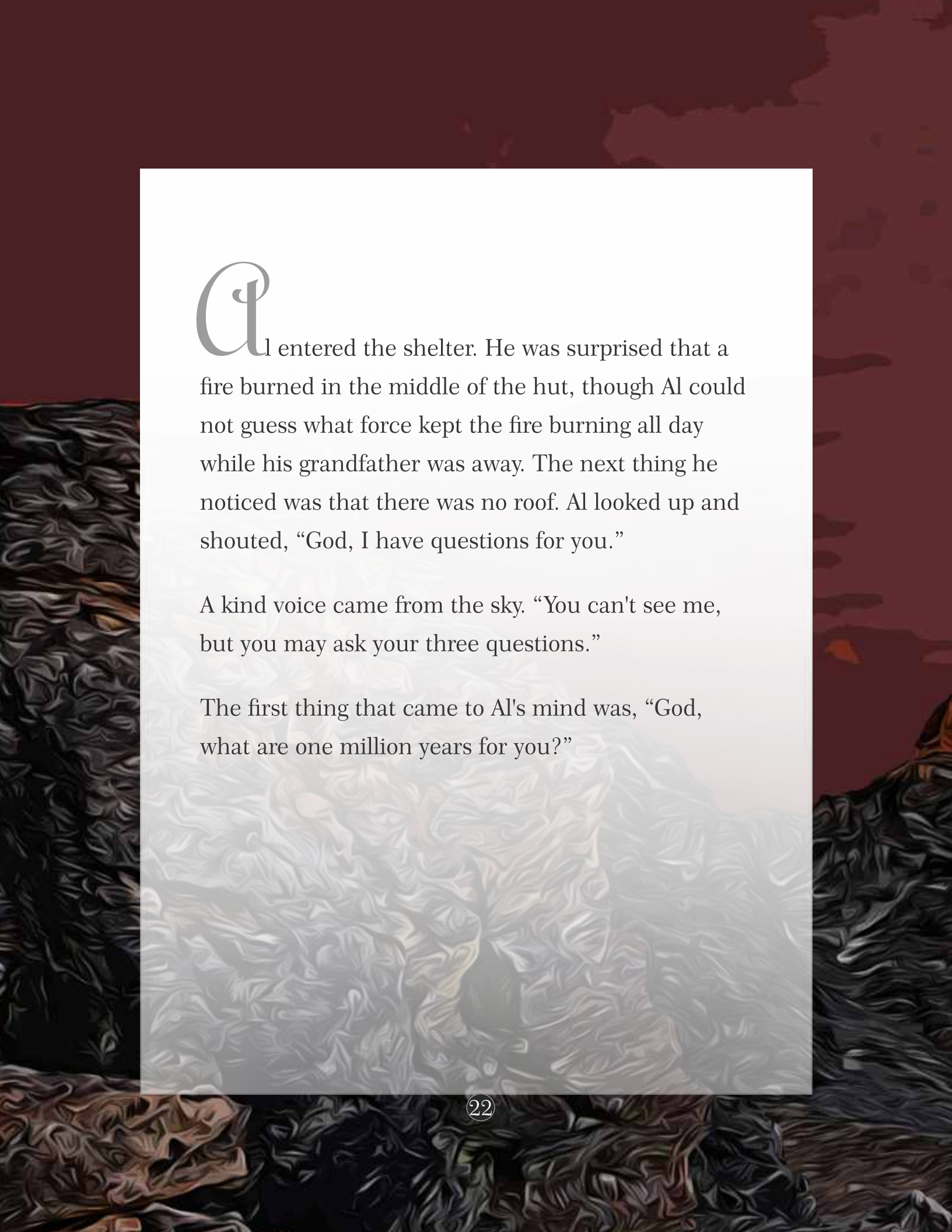




Stunningly, during the journey, Al had grown so much, his long tunic was now a shirt.

The shaman pointed to the hut and whispered, “Only one person is allowed to enter. Go and ask God your questions.” He folded his tired body on the ground.



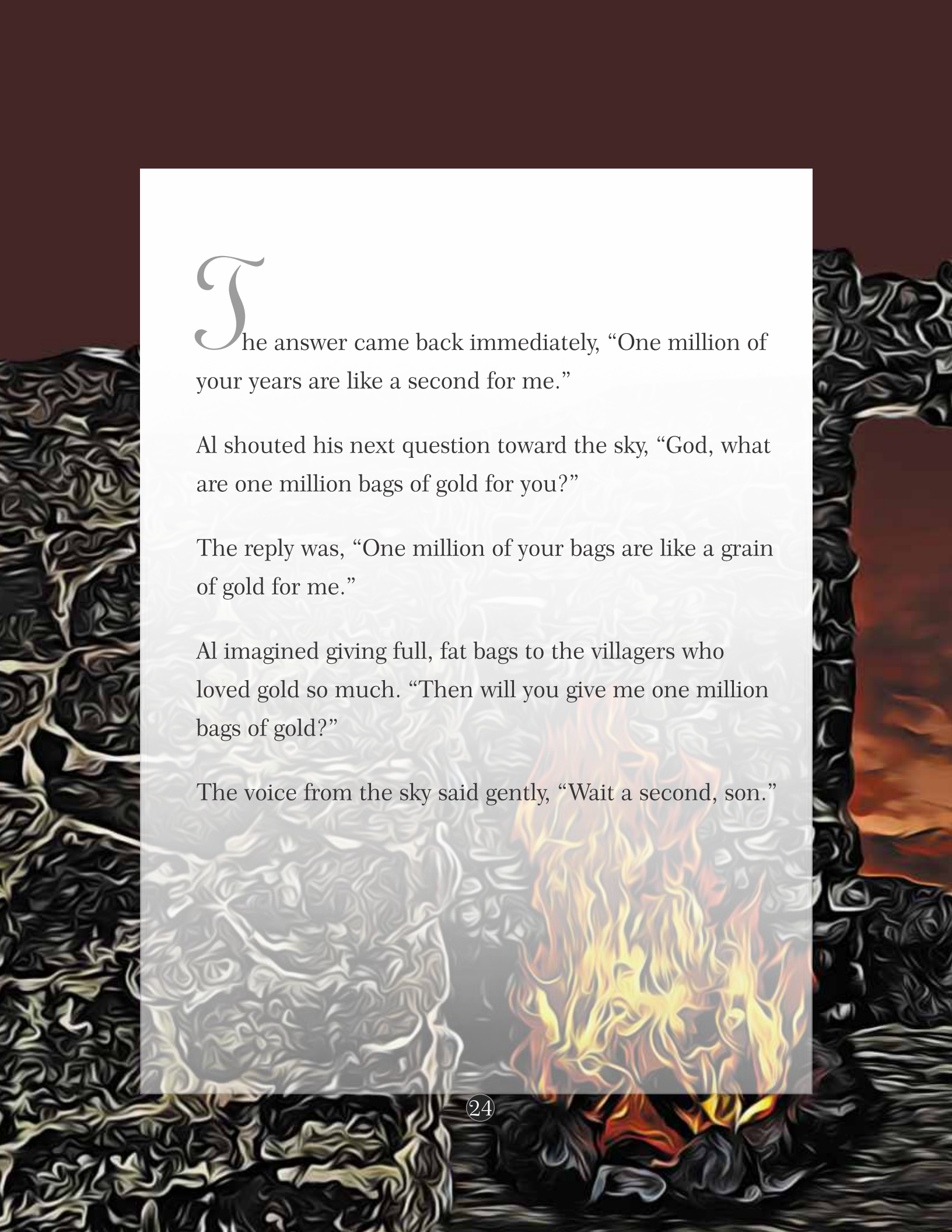
The background of the page is a dark, textured landscape with a reddish-brown sky. A white rectangular box is centered on the page, containing the text. The text is in a serif font, with the first letter of the first paragraph being a large, decorative capital 'A'.

A entered the shelter. He was surprised that a fire burned in the middle of the hut, though Al could not guess what force kept the fire burning all day while his grandfather was away. The next thing he noticed was that there was no roof. Al looked up and shouted, “God, I have questions for you.”

A kind voice came from the sky. “You can't see me, but you may ask your three questions.”

The first thing that came to Al's mind was, “God, what are one million years for you?”





The answer came back immediately, “One million of your years are like a second for me.”

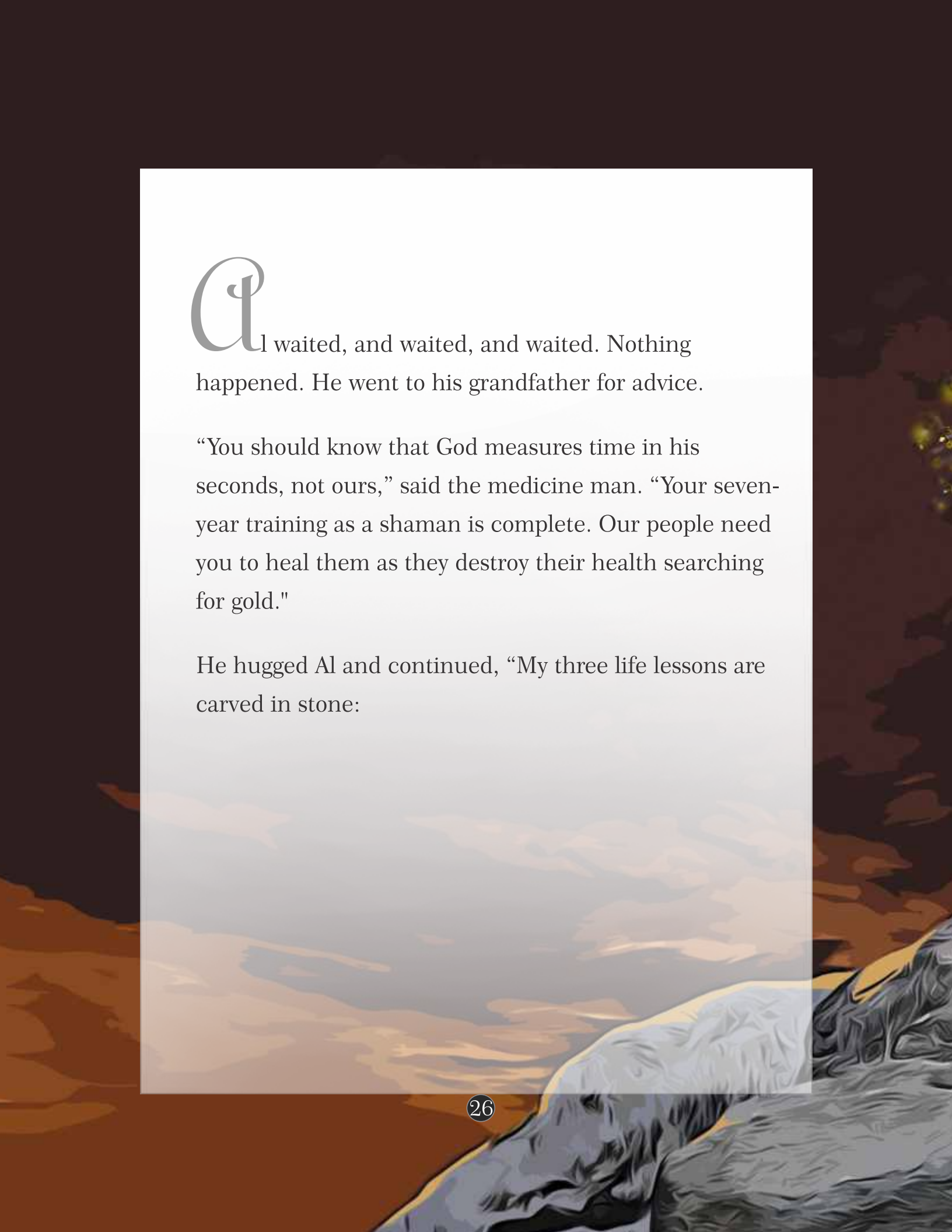
Al shouted his next question toward the sky, “God, what are one million bags of gold for you?”

The reply was, “One million of your bags are like a grain of gold for me.”

Al imagined giving full, fat bags to the villagers who loved gold so much. “Then will you give me one million bags of gold?”

The voice from the sky said gently, “Wait a second, son.”

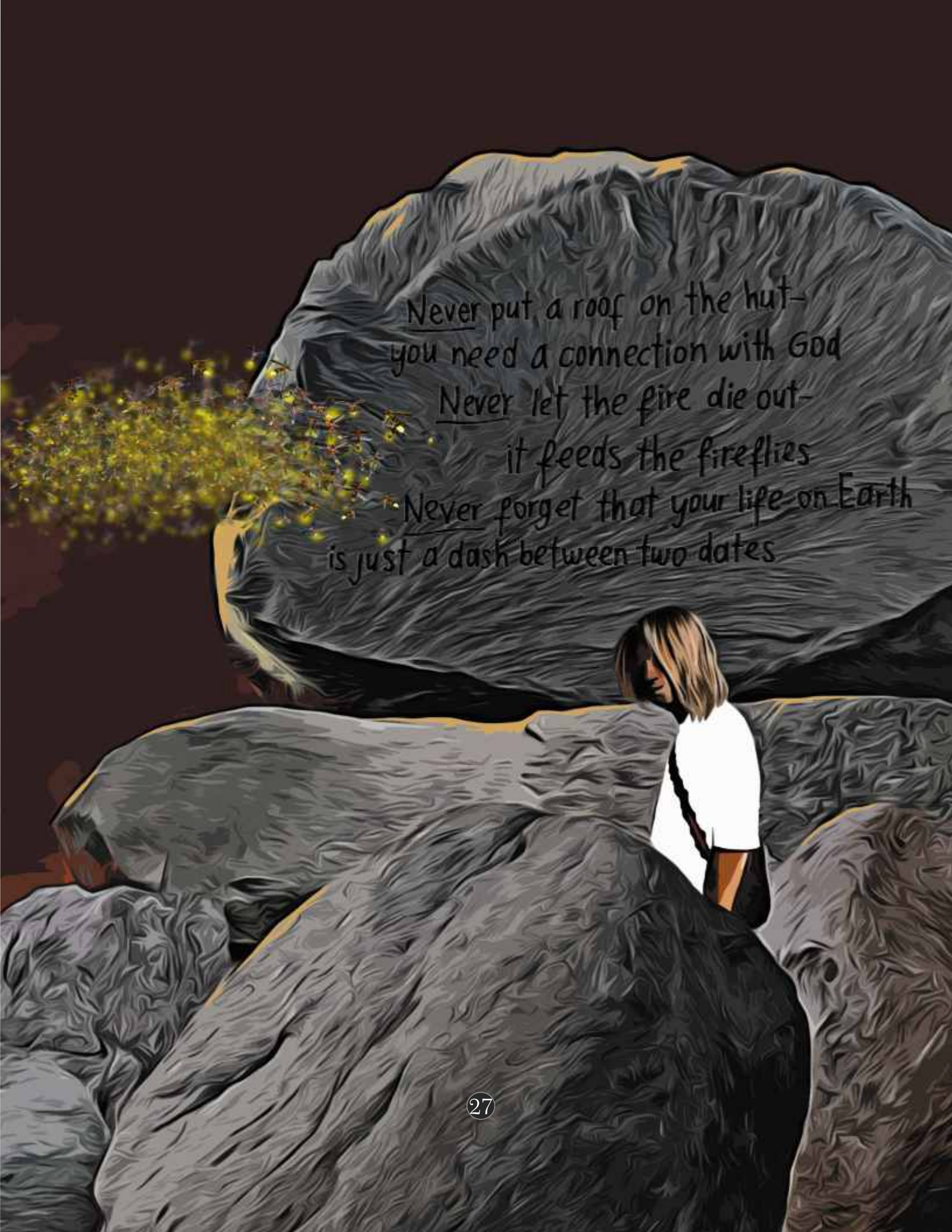




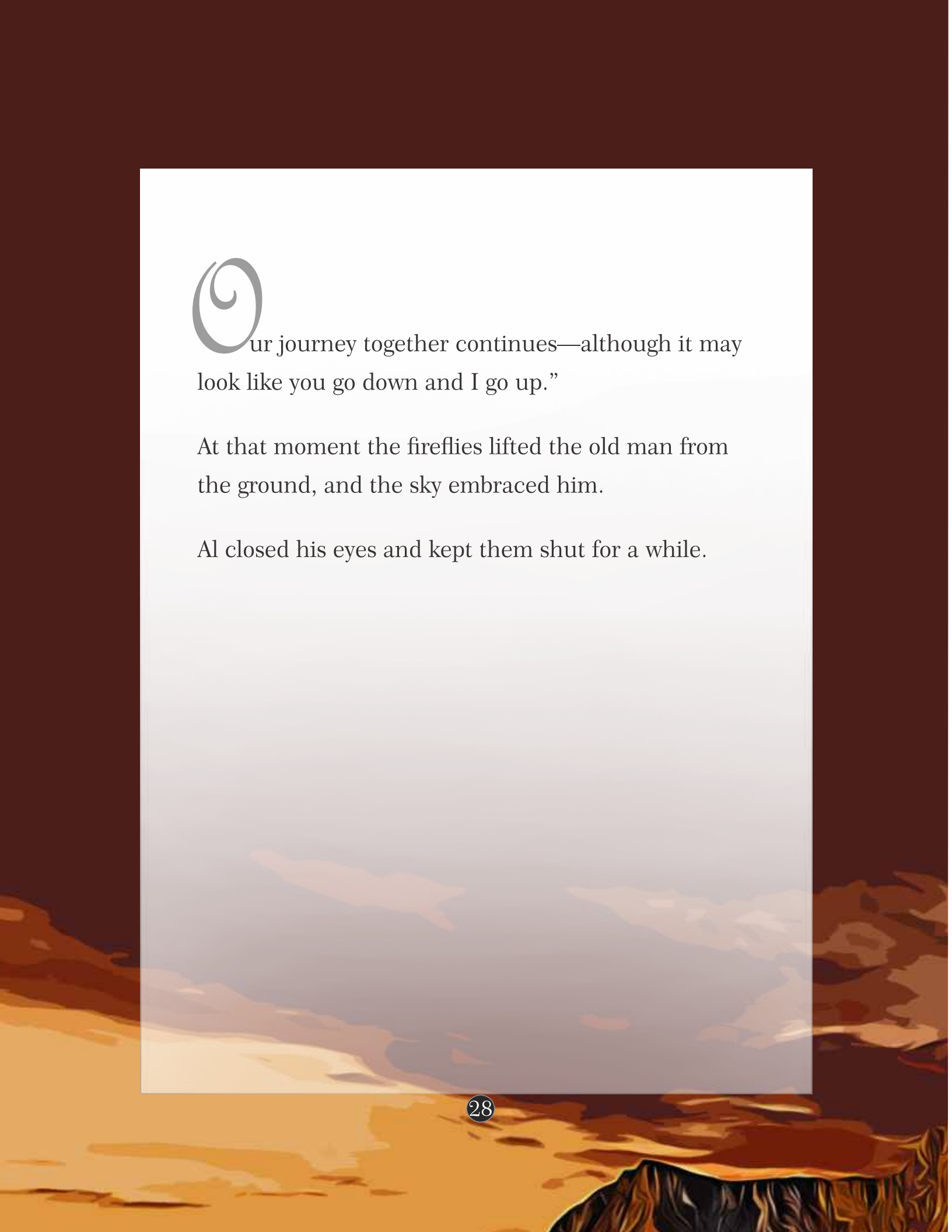
Al waited, and waited, and waited. Nothing happened. He went to his grandfather for advice.

“You should know that God measures time in his seconds, not ours,” said the medicine man. “Your seven-year training as a shaman is complete. Our people need you to heal them as they destroy their health searching for gold.”

He hugged Al and continued, “My three life lessons are carved in stone:

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a white t-shirt and a black bag, stands on a dark, rocky shore at night. She is looking towards a large, dark rock in the background. The rock has text written on it in a white, handwritten font. To the left of the rock, there is a cluster of small, glowing yellow lights, possibly fireflies or a small fire. The background is dark, suggesting a night sky.

Never put a roof on the hut-
you need a connection with God
Never let the fire die out-
it feeds the fireflies
Never forget that your life on Earth
is just a dash between two dates



Our journey together continues—although it may look like you go down and I go up.”

At that moment the fireflies lifted the old man from the ground, and the sky embraced him.

Al closed his eyes and kept them shut for a while.



When he opened them, the darkness was gone.

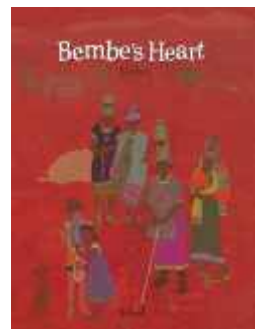
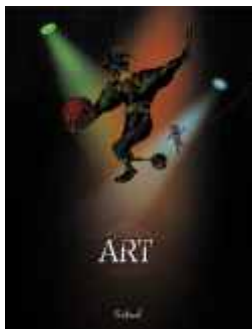
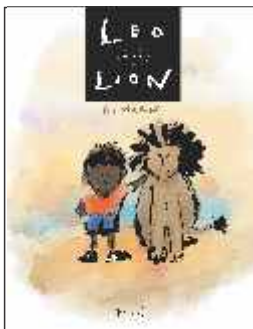
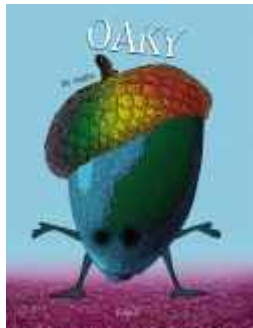
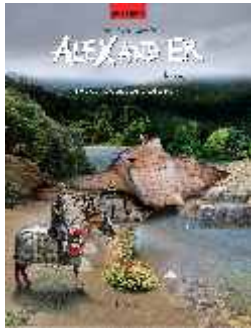
It was early morning. The young shaman started walking down the steep mountain slope toward his village.

And the path looked somewhat familiar...



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Marin Darmonkow
lives with his family in St. John's, NL, Canada.
Marin has written, illustrated, designed and
published more than a dozen
children's picture books.
His titles have won numerous
prestigious book awards.

The author is all ears. Tree leaves
whisper stories all the time and he will share
some of them with you in his future publications.



Can a child grow up in one night?

"Al's Journey" is a magical tale about a young boy destined to become a healer, and his wise grandfather, the village shaman. On his 100th birthday, the shaman announces to Al that it's time for him to begin his own life journey. The boy must climb the mountain alone to reach his grandfather's sacred hut, where he can ask God three important questions. As Al makes his way up the mountain, he grows stronger, facing challenges that test his courage. When he finally reaches the summit, Al asks God profound questions about the true meaning of life.

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or any other platform of your choice.
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Marin