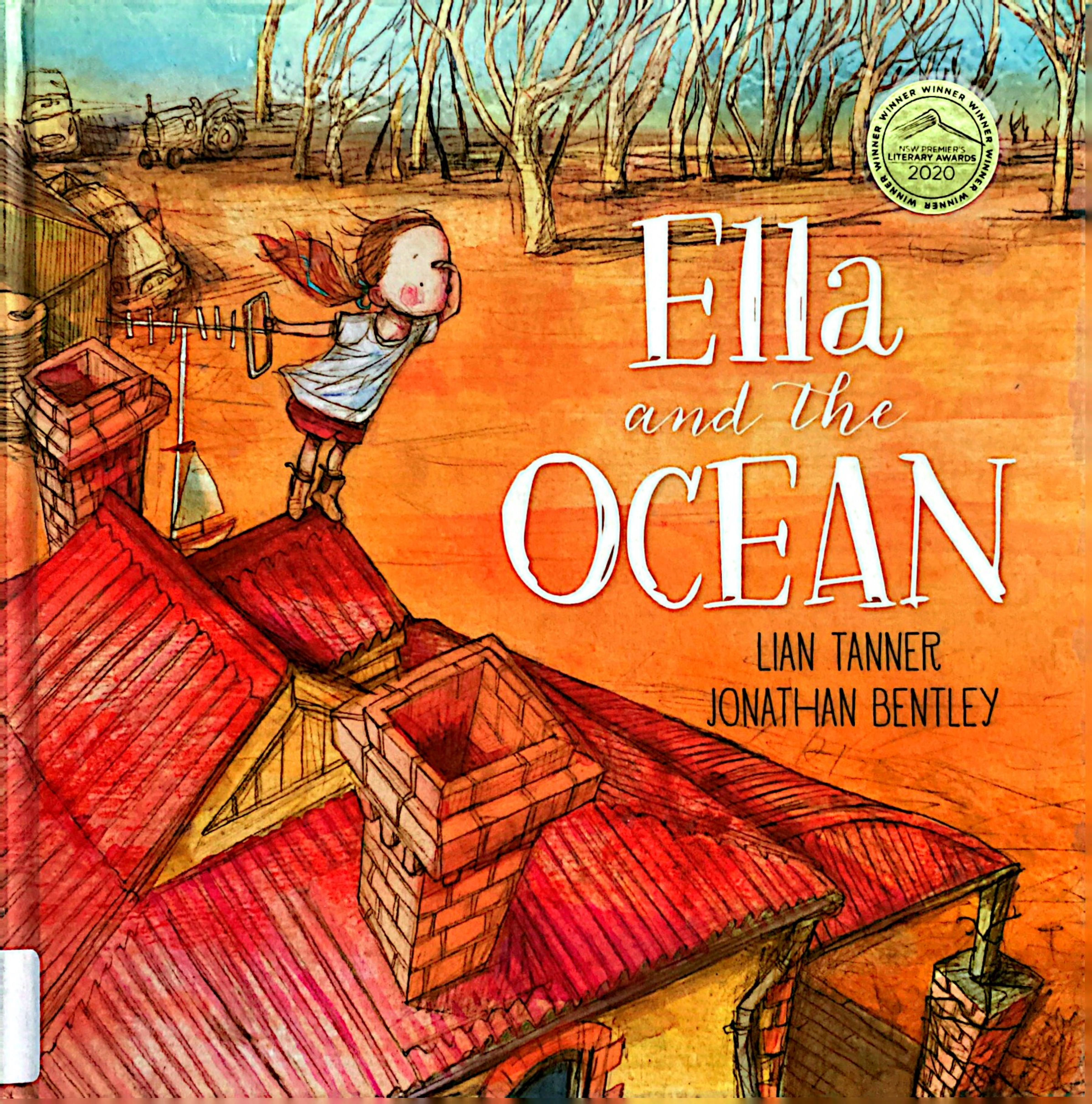




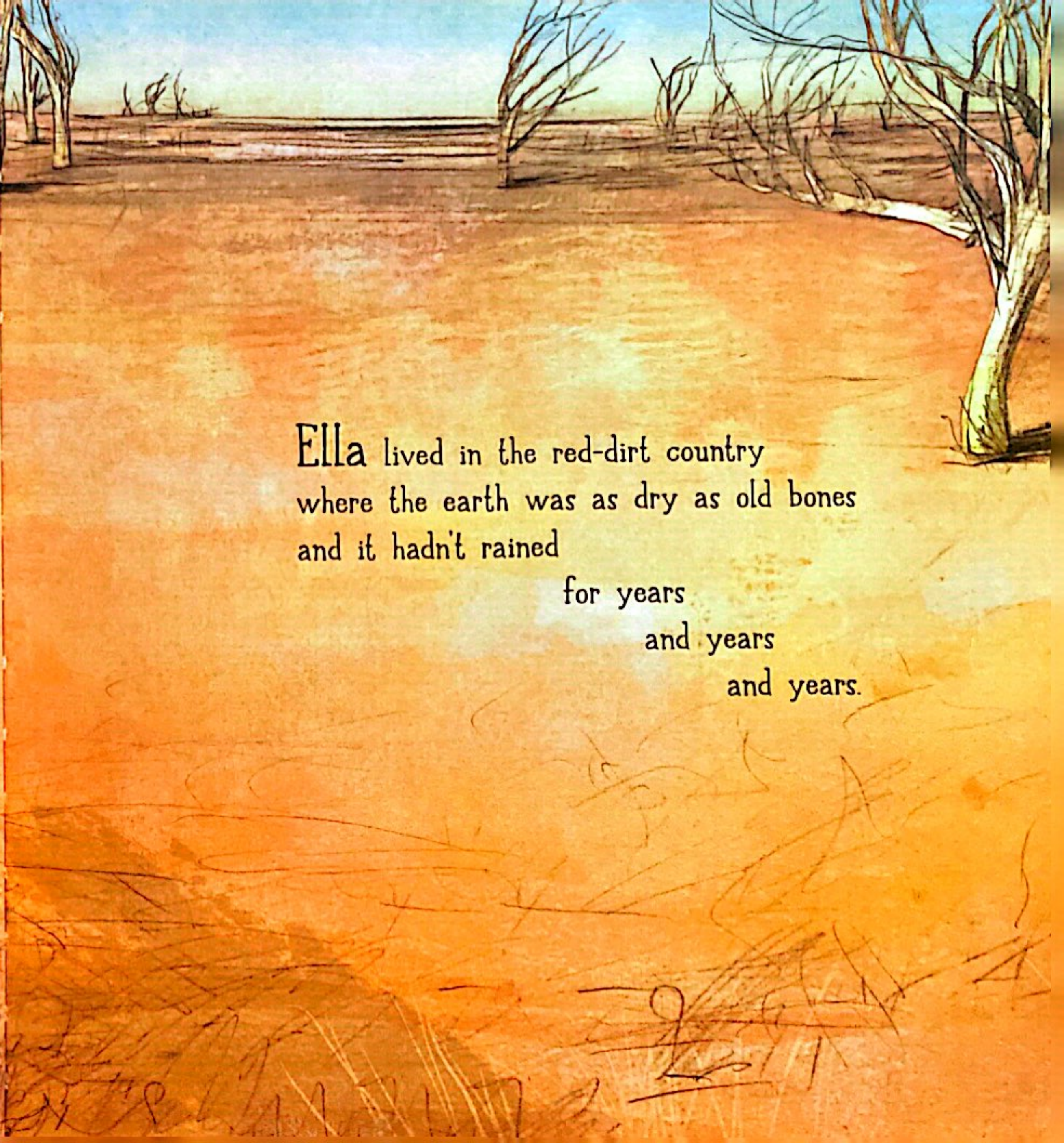
Ella *and The* OCEAN

LIAN TANNER
JONATHAN BENTLEY



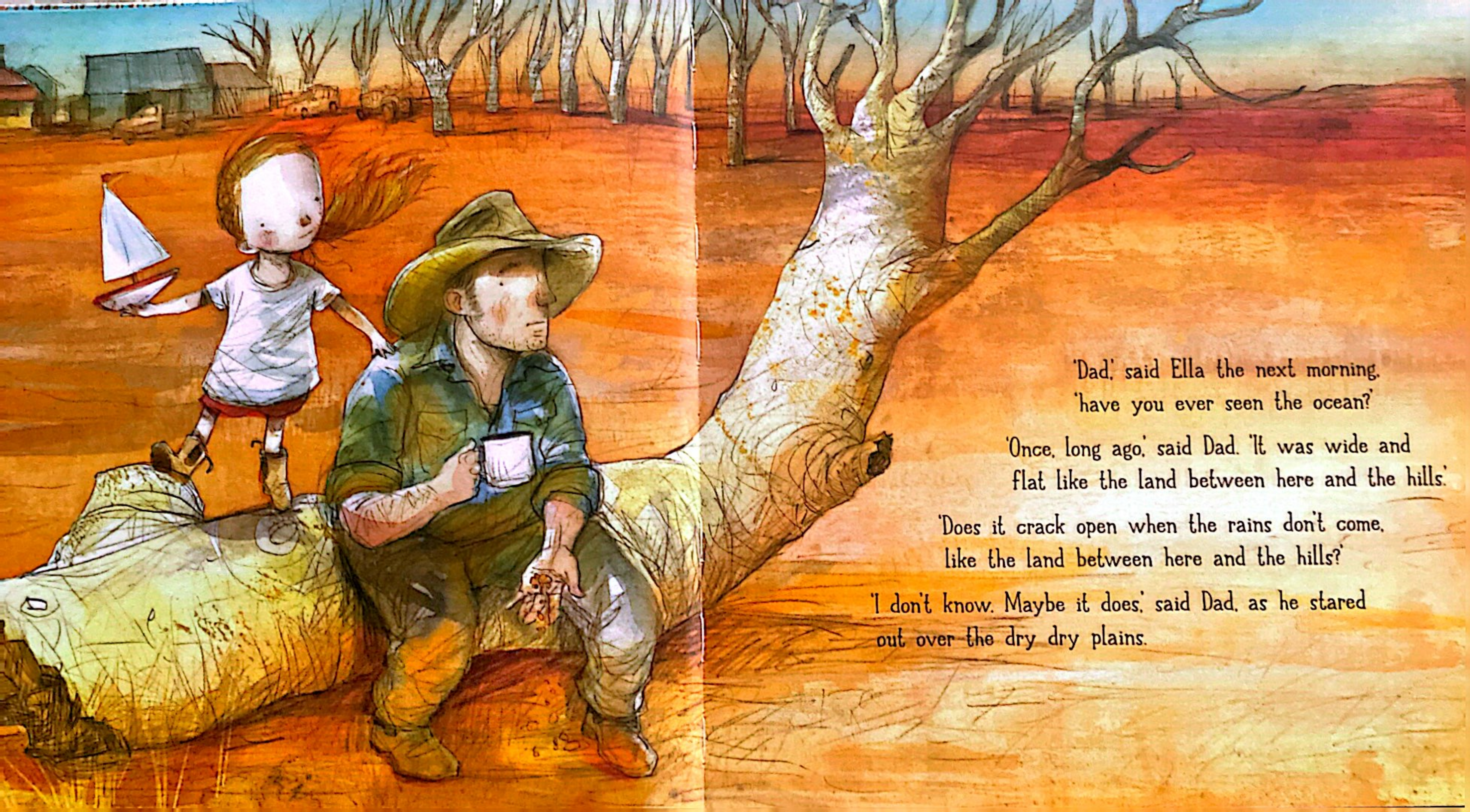


Ella lived in the red-dirt country
where the earth was as dry as old bones
and it hadn't rained
for years
and years
and years.





One night, Ella dreamt of the ocean.



'Dad,' said Ella the next morning,
'have you ever seen the ocean?'

'Once, long ago,' said Dad. 'It was wide and
flat like the land between here and the hills.'

'Does it crack open when the rains don't come,
like the land between here and the hills?'

'I don't know. Maybe it does,' said Dad, as he stared
out over the dry dry plains.

'Mum,' said Ella, 'have you
ever seen the ocean?'

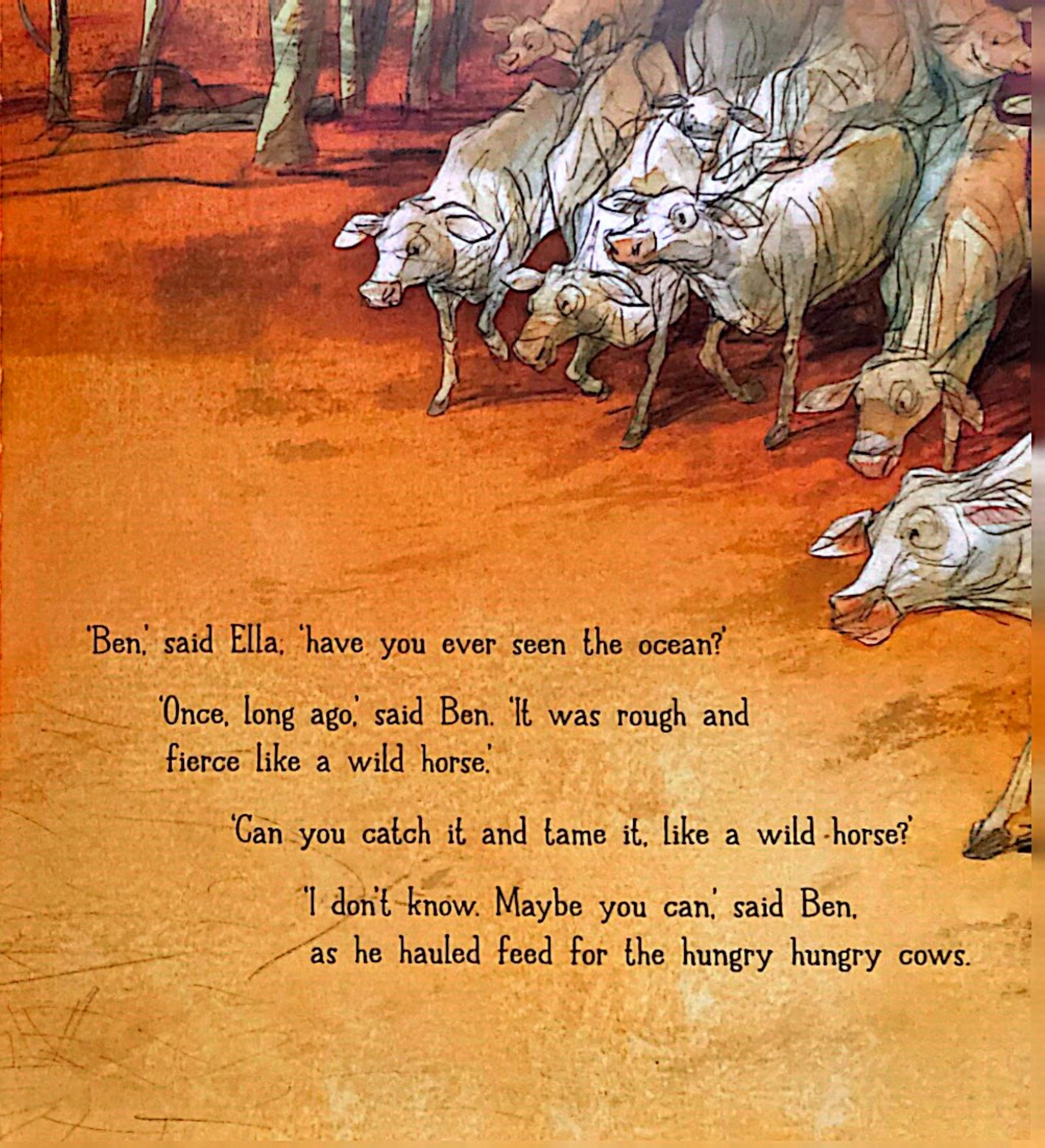


'Once, long ago,' said Mum. 'It was blue
and shiny like your hair ribbon.'

'Does it get tangled when the wind
blows, like my hair ribbon?'

'I don't know. Maybe it does,'
said Mum, as she tried to close
the door on the red red dust.





'Ben,' said Ella, 'have you ever seen the ocean?'

'Once, long ago,' said Ben. 'It was rough and fierce like a wild horse.'

'Can you catch it and tame it, like a wild horse?'

'I don't know. Maybe you can,' said Ben, as he hauled feed for the hungry hungry cows.

That night, Ella dreamt of the ocean again.



'Gran,' said Ella the next morning,
'have you ever seen the ocean?'



'Never in all my life,' said Gran.
'But I dreamt about it once.
It picked me up and carried me from
one side of sleep to the other and
I have never forgotten it.'

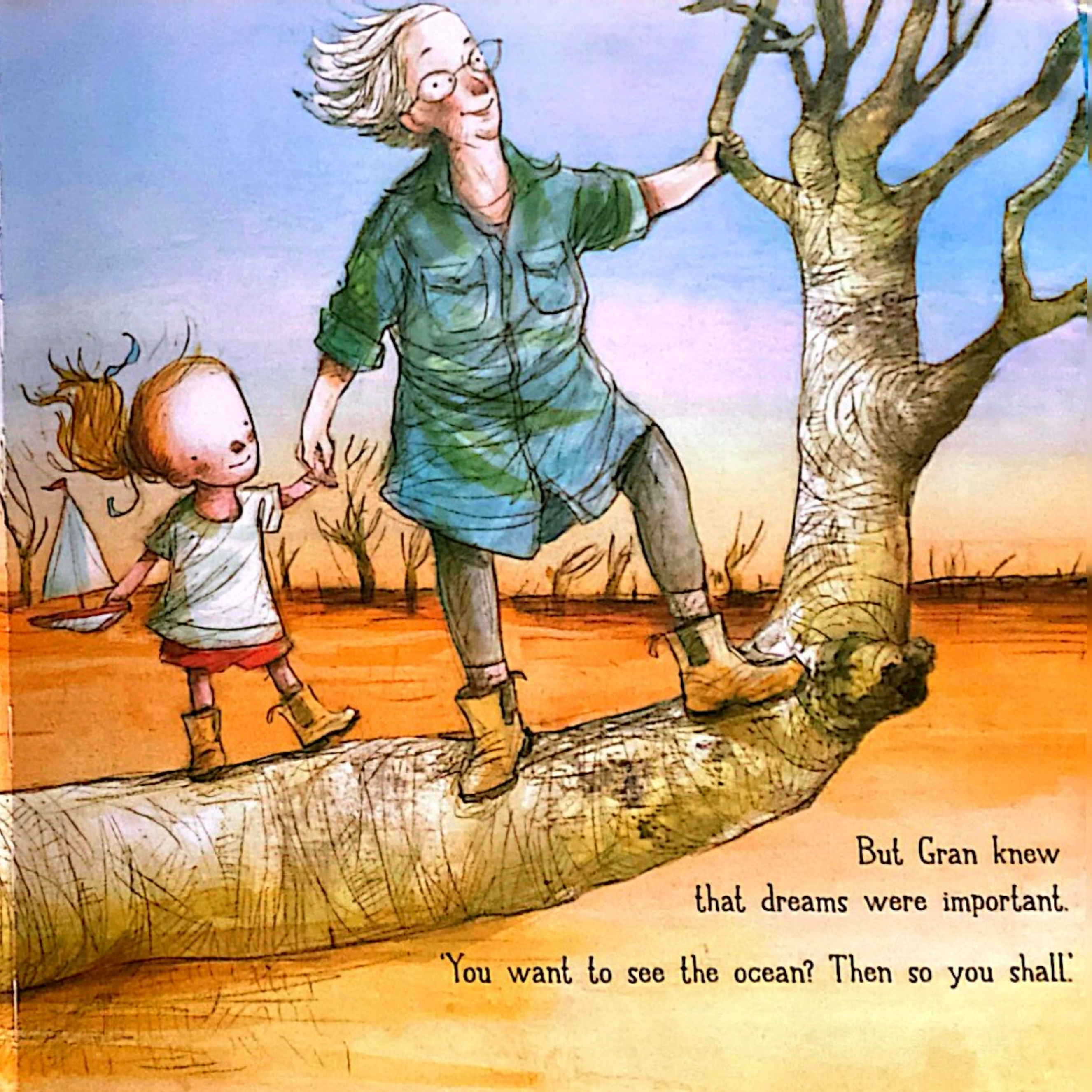
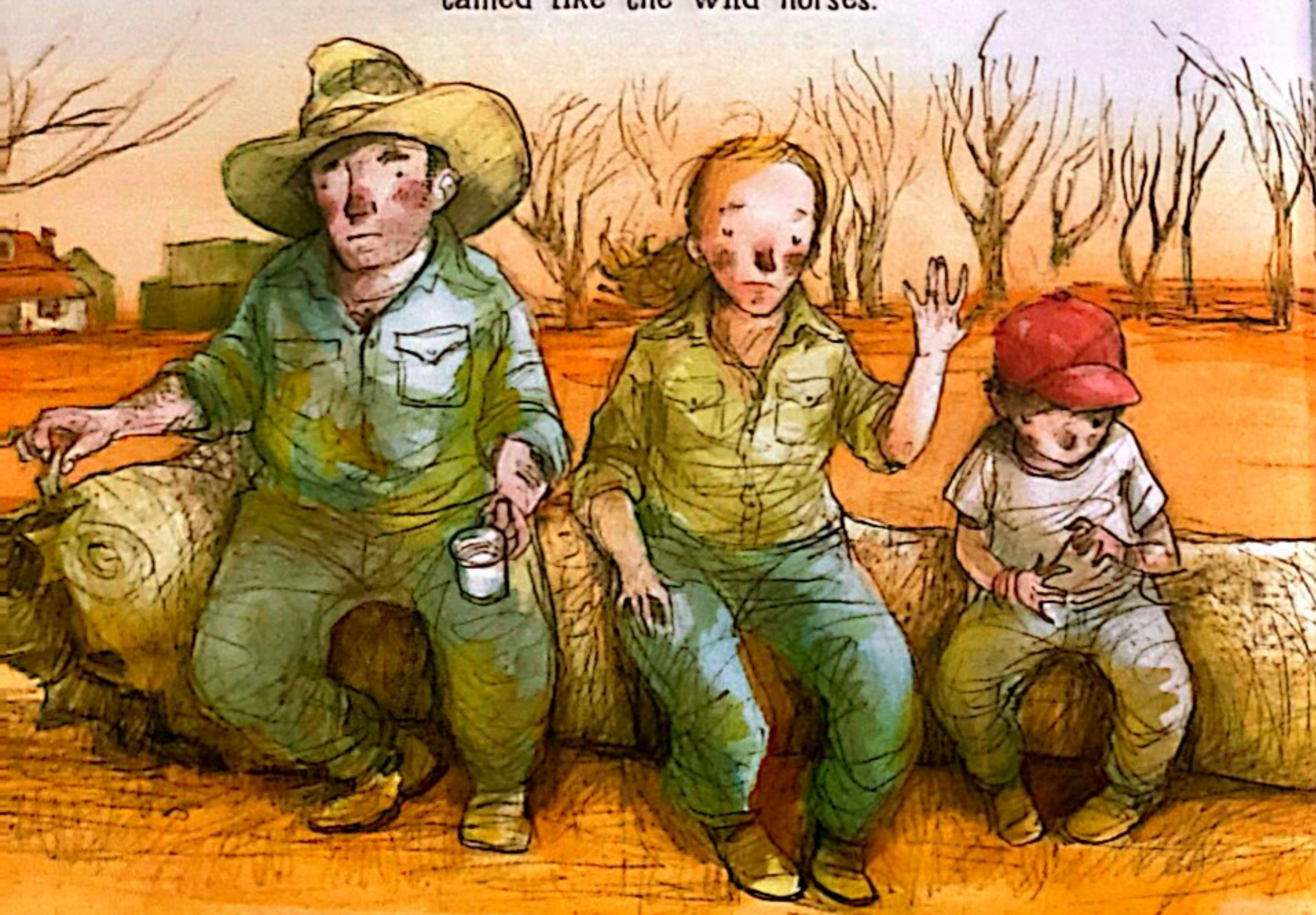
'I've dreamt about the ocean twice,'
said Ella. 'Now I want to see it.'



'What's the point?' said Dad. 'It'll be dried up and cracked
like the land between here and the hills.'

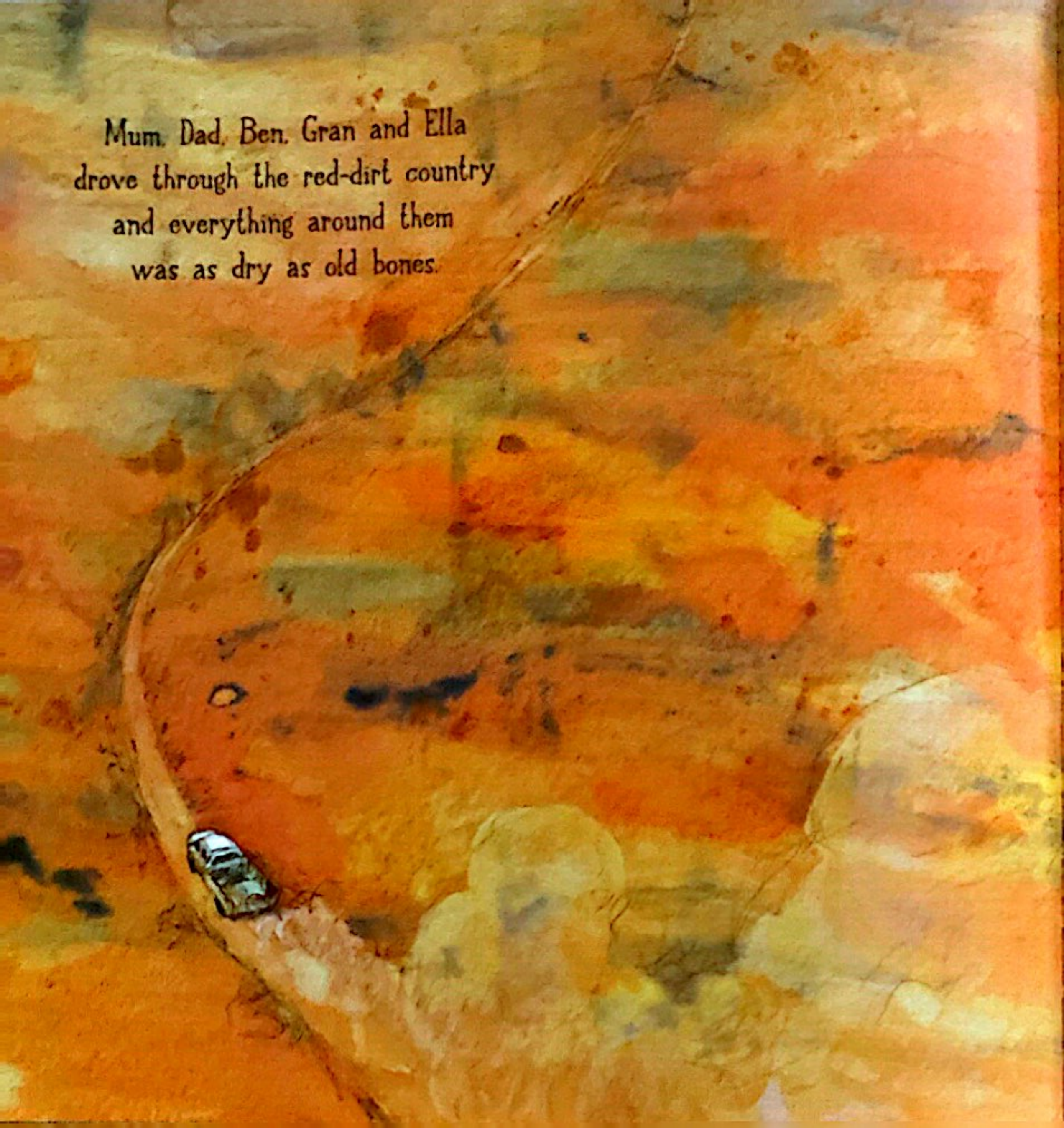
'Why bother?' said Mum. 'It'll be tangled and knotted
like your blue hair ribbon.'

'Waste of time,' said Ben. 'It'll be tied up and
tamed like the wild horses.'




But Gran knew
that dreams were important.


'You want to see the ocean? Then so you shall.'

A watercolor illustration of a dry, red-dirt landscape. A small, dark-colored car is driving on a winding dirt road that curves from the bottom left towards the center. The ground is rendered in various shades of orange, red, and yellow, with some darker, almost black, spots suggesting shadows or rocks. The overall texture is soft and painterly.

Mum, Dad, Ben, Gran and Ella
drove through the red-dirt country
and everything around them
was as dry as old bones.

A watercolor illustration of a red-dirt landscape. A dark bird is shown in flight, its wings spread, against a background of orange and red washes. The ground below is depicted with similar warm tones and some darker, shadowed areas, suggesting a rugged terrain. The style is consistent with the first page, using soft watercolor textures.

They flew over the red-dirt country
and everything below them
was as harsh as broken dreams.



Then they came to the ocean.

'I'd forgotten how big it was,' whispered Mum.

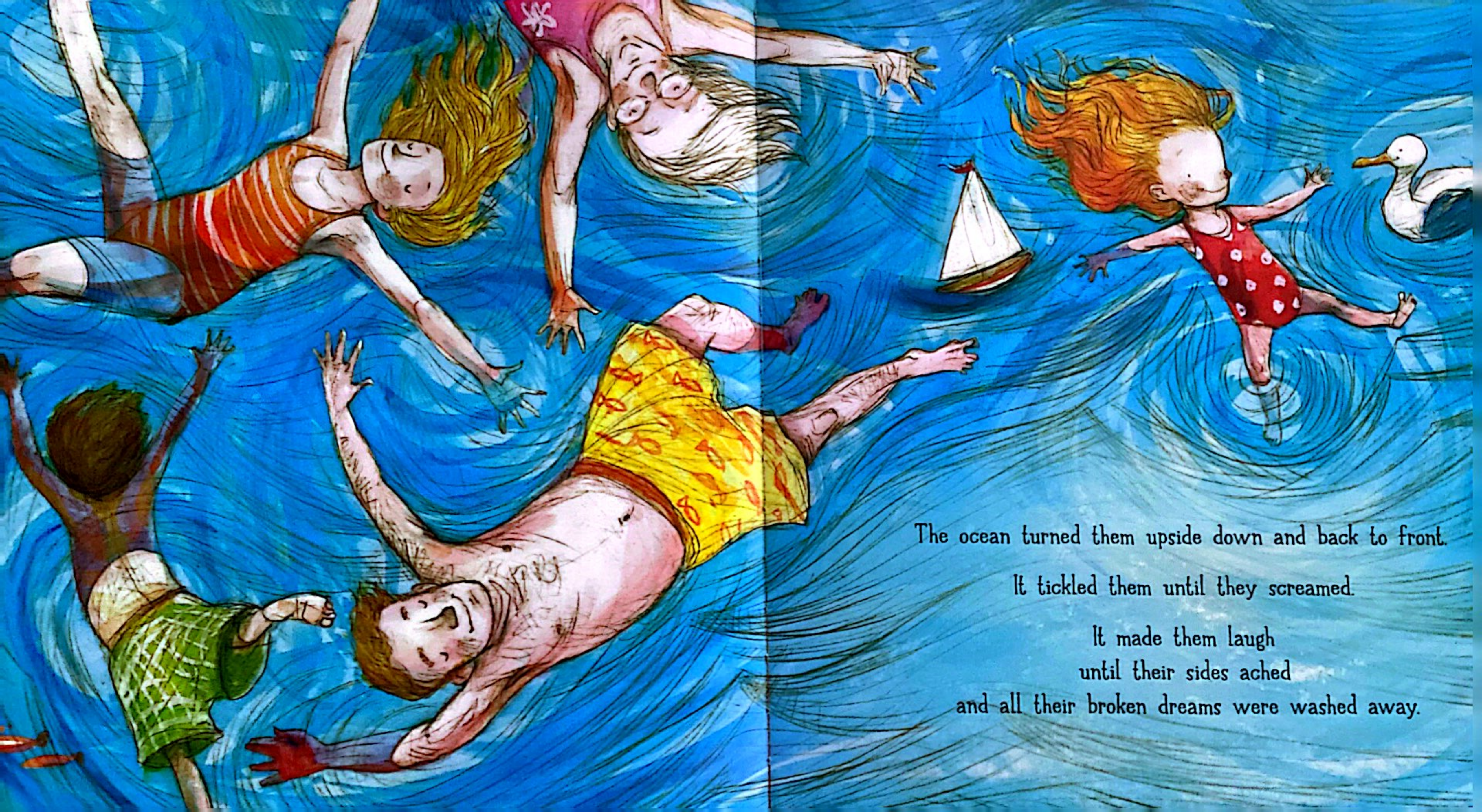
'I'd forgotten how blue it was,' murmured Dad.

'I'd forgotten how beautiful it was,' said Ben.

But Gran hadn't forgotten a thing.



'Come on, Mum,' shouted Ella.
'Hurry up, Dad. What are you waiting for, Ben?'



The ocean turned them upside down and back to front.

It tickled them until they screamed.

It made them laugh
until their sides ached
and all their broken dreams were washed away.

Mum, Dad, Ben, Gran and Ella
flew back over the red-dirt country
with memories swirling around them.



They drove back through
the red-dirt country with
new dreams growing inside them.



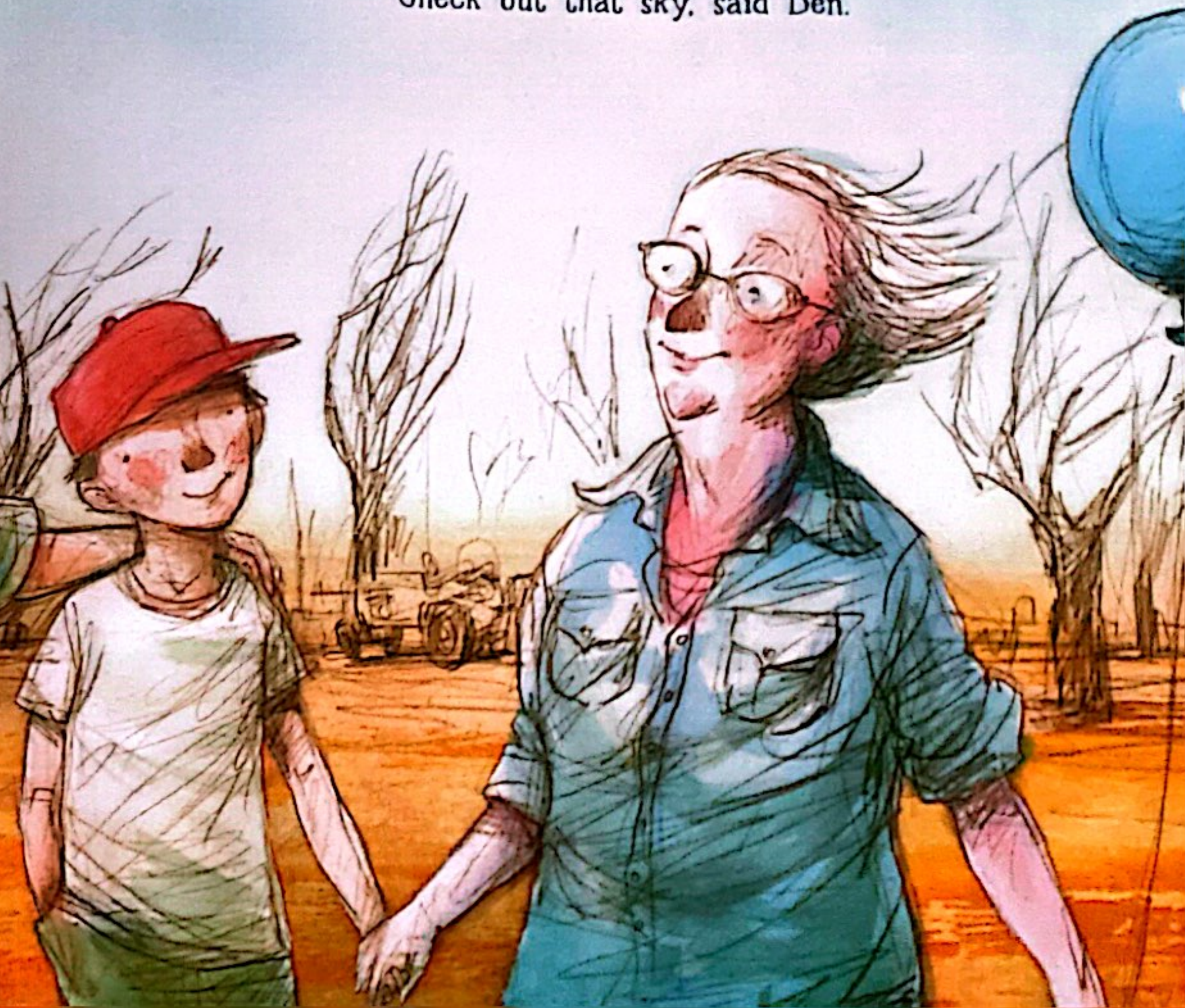
At home, everything was the same
but different.



'Look at the colour of those hills,' said Dad.

'Listen to those birds,' said Mum.

'Check out that sky,' said Ben.

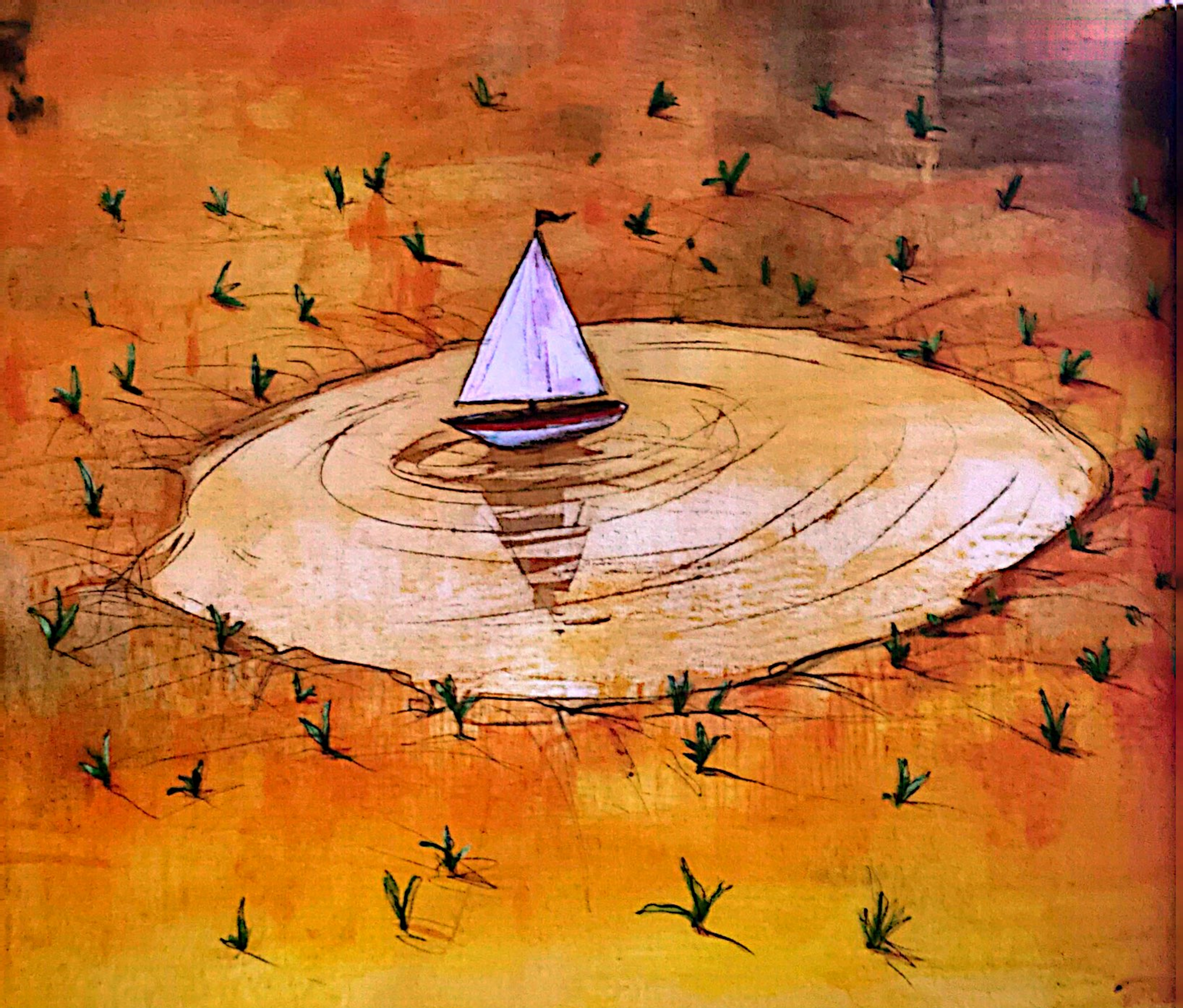




Gran and Ella gazed out over the wide wide plains.

'It has to rain some time,' said Gran.

'And we can keep going till then,' said Ella.



And they did.