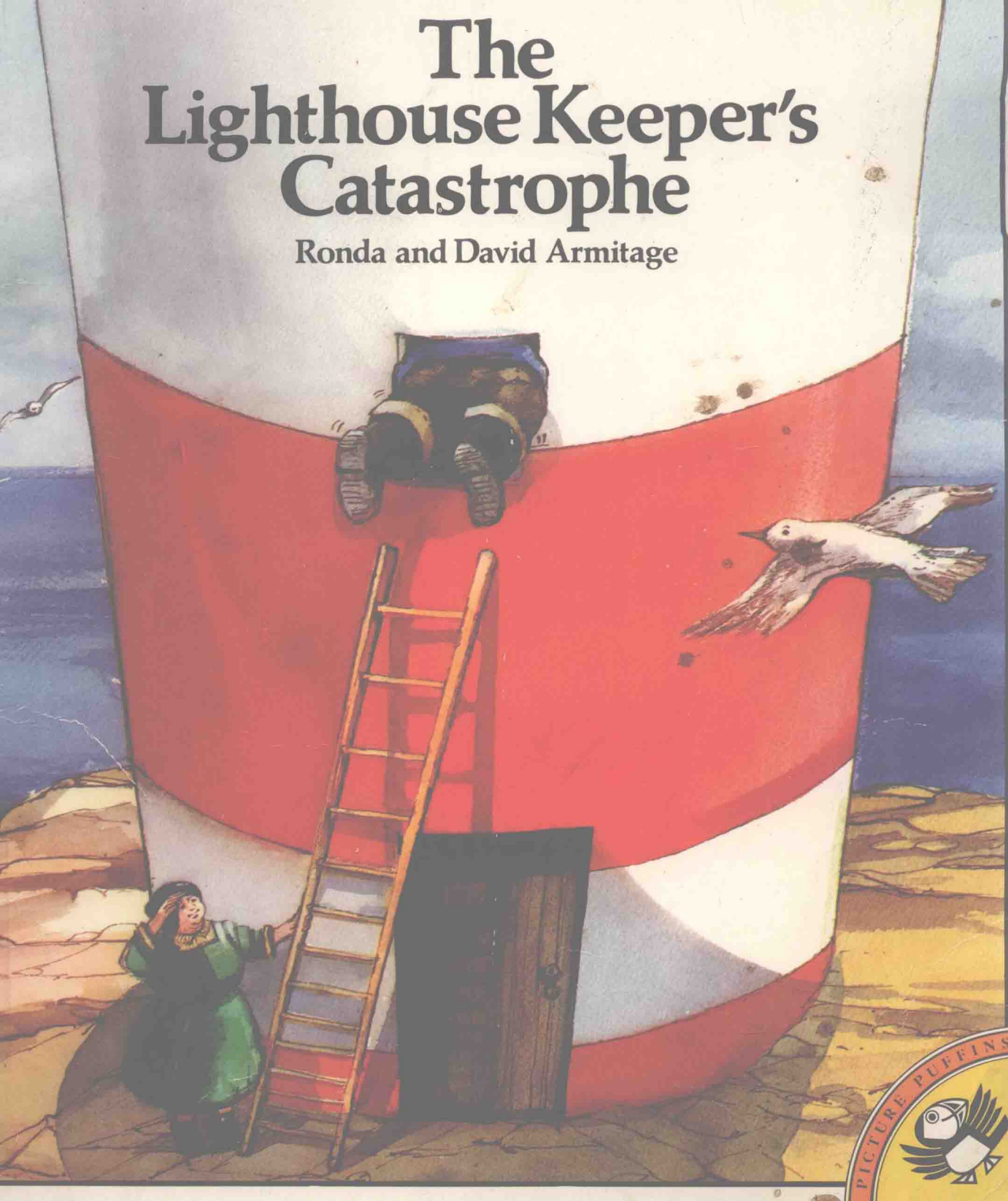


The Lighthouse Keeper's Catastrophe

Ronda and David Armitage



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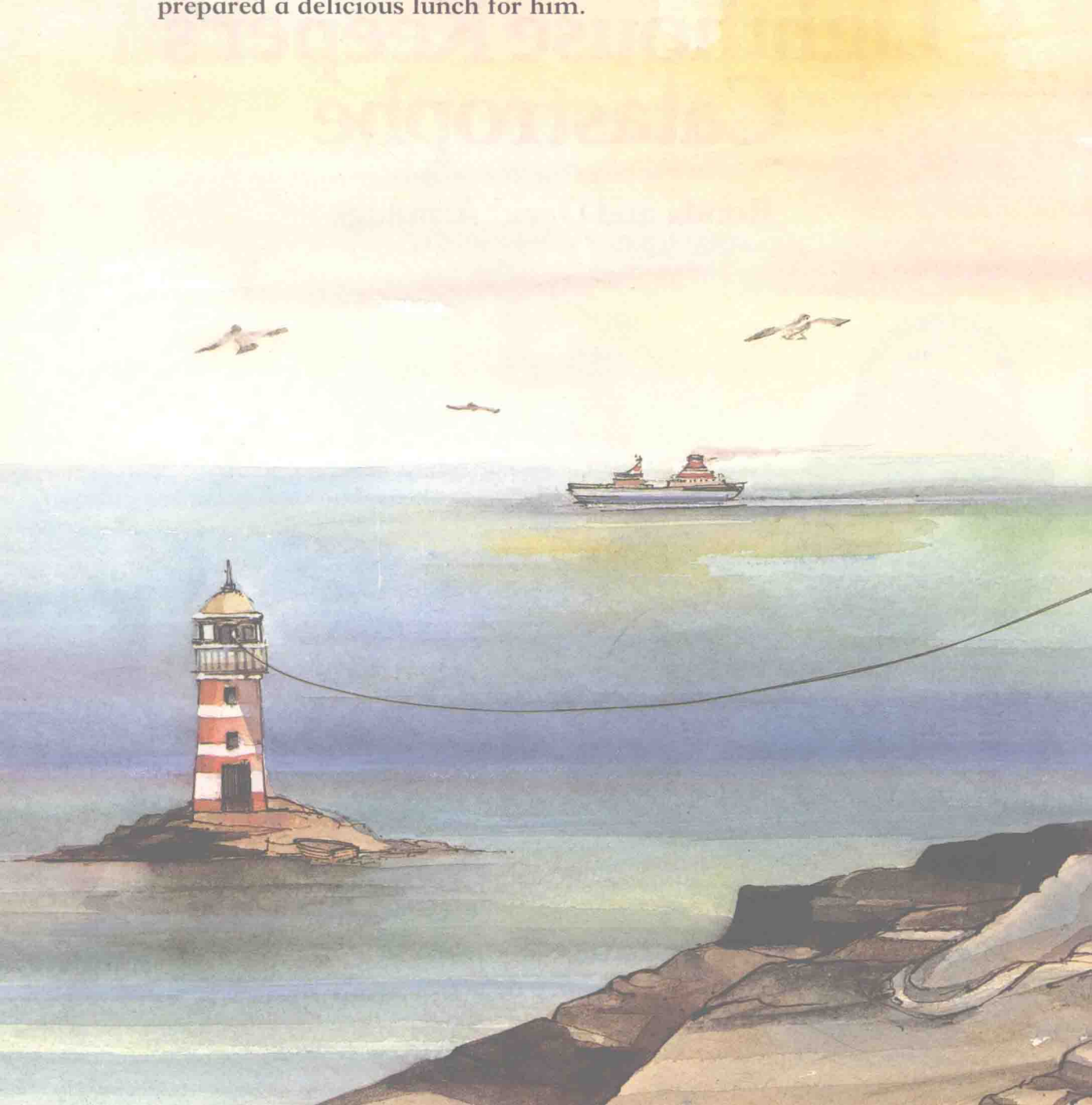
The Lighthouse Keeper's Catastrophe

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PUFFIN BOOKS

Mr Grinling was a lighthouse keeper. He lived with Mrs Grinling in a little white cottage on the cliffs. Every morning he rowed out to his lighthouse to clean and polish the light. Every morning Mrs Grinling prepared a delicious lunch for him.



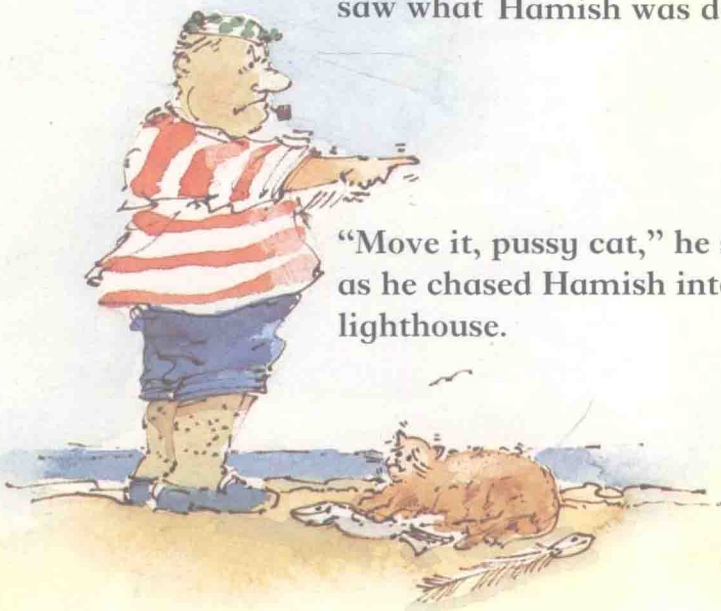
At lunch time Mrs Grinling packed the lunch in a basket and sent it down the wire to the lighthouse.



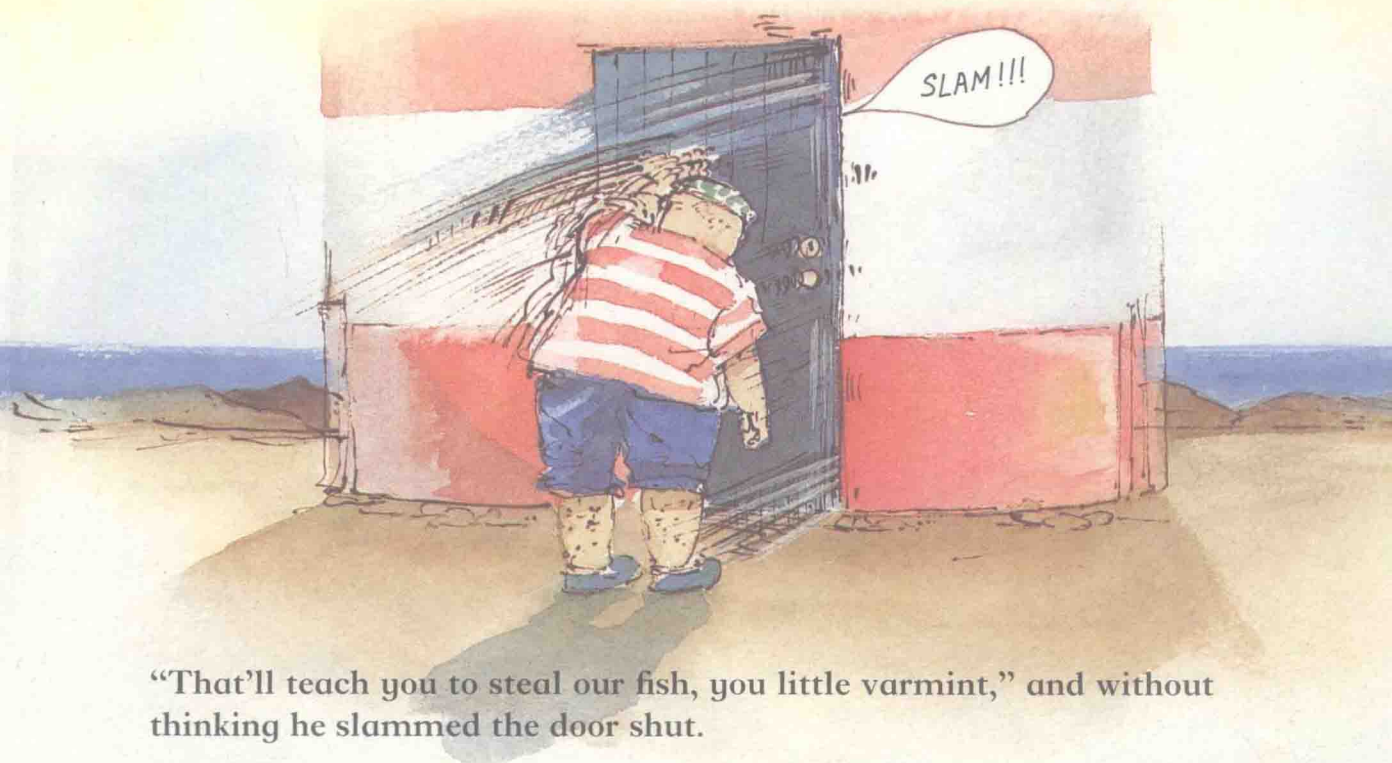
On high days and holidays when the sun shone Mr and Mrs Grinling opened up the lighthouse, hung the key safely on its hook inside and spent many contented hours fishing. Hamish the cat lazed about in the sun. From time to time he roused himself to chase the seagulls. This particular morning chasing seagulls was not what Hamish had in mind. He was much too busy enjoying himself in other ways.



Mr Grinling was not at all pleased when he saw what Hamish was doing.



"Move it, pussy cat," he snarled as he chased Hamish into the lighthouse.



"That'll teach you to steal our fish, you little varmint," and without thinking he slammed the door shut.



Mr and Mrs Grinling continued with their fishing. Soon, Mr Grinling's stomach reminded him that lunch would be very welcome. As he went to let Hamish out he was struck by a terrible thought. The key, where was the lighthouse door key? Of course, it was inside.

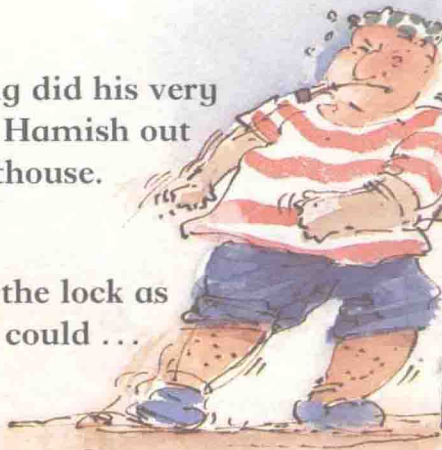




he kicked ...

Mr Grinling did his very best to get Hamish out of the lighthouse.

He rattled the lock as hard as he could ...



he pushed,

... and he cursed

but the door stayed firmly shut.



"Don't worry," soothed Mrs Grinling, "Hamish is quite safe where he is. We have the spare key in the old teapot on the mantelpiece in the kitchen."

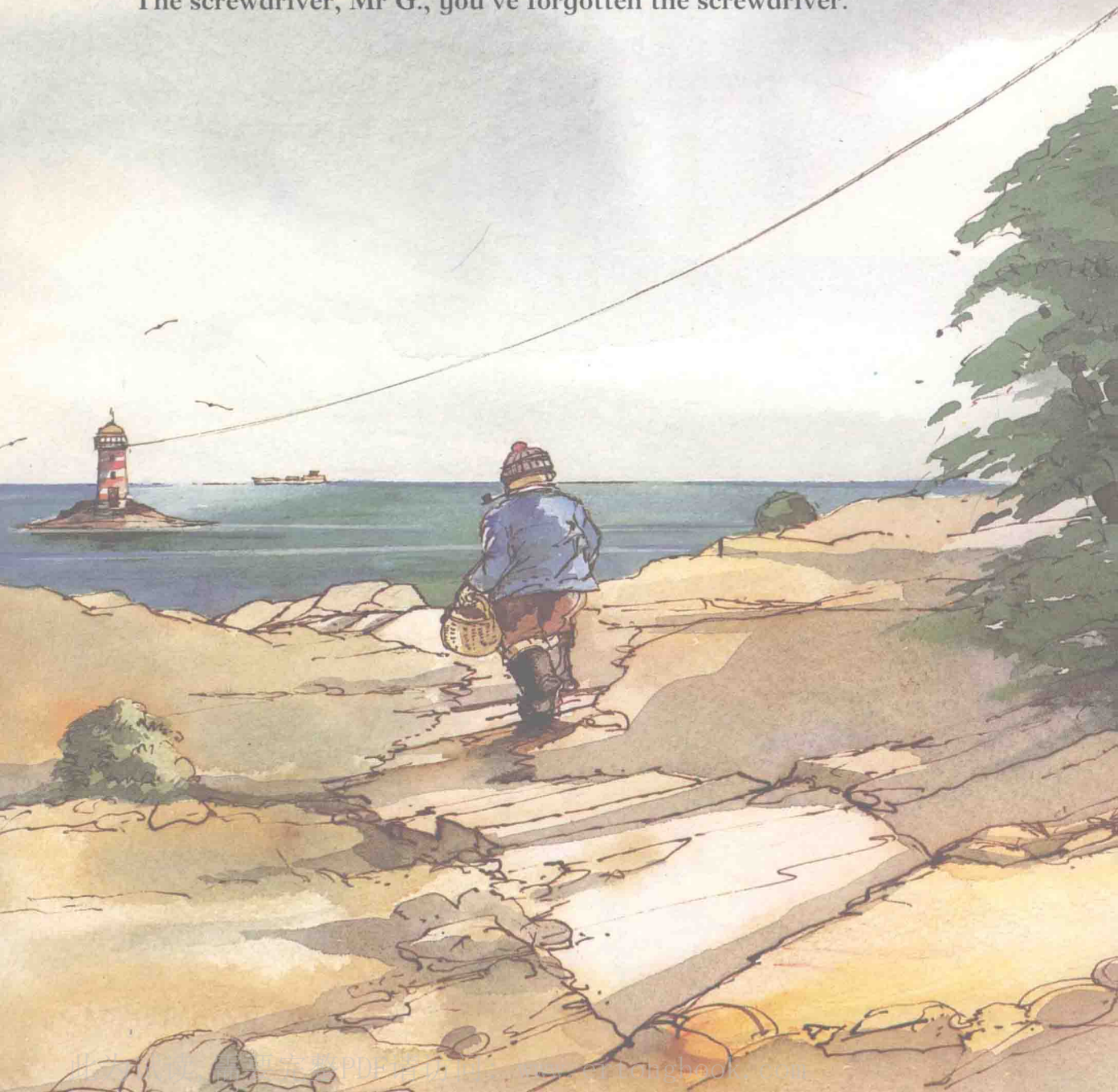




The spare key was exactly where Mrs Grinling said it would be – in the teapot. While she prepared cold chicken sandwiches, a fruit salad with lots of strawberries and a chocolate milkshake for his lunch, Mr Grinling listened to the midday weather forecast. It was perfectly dreadful. Wind and rain with possible thunder and lightning later in the day.

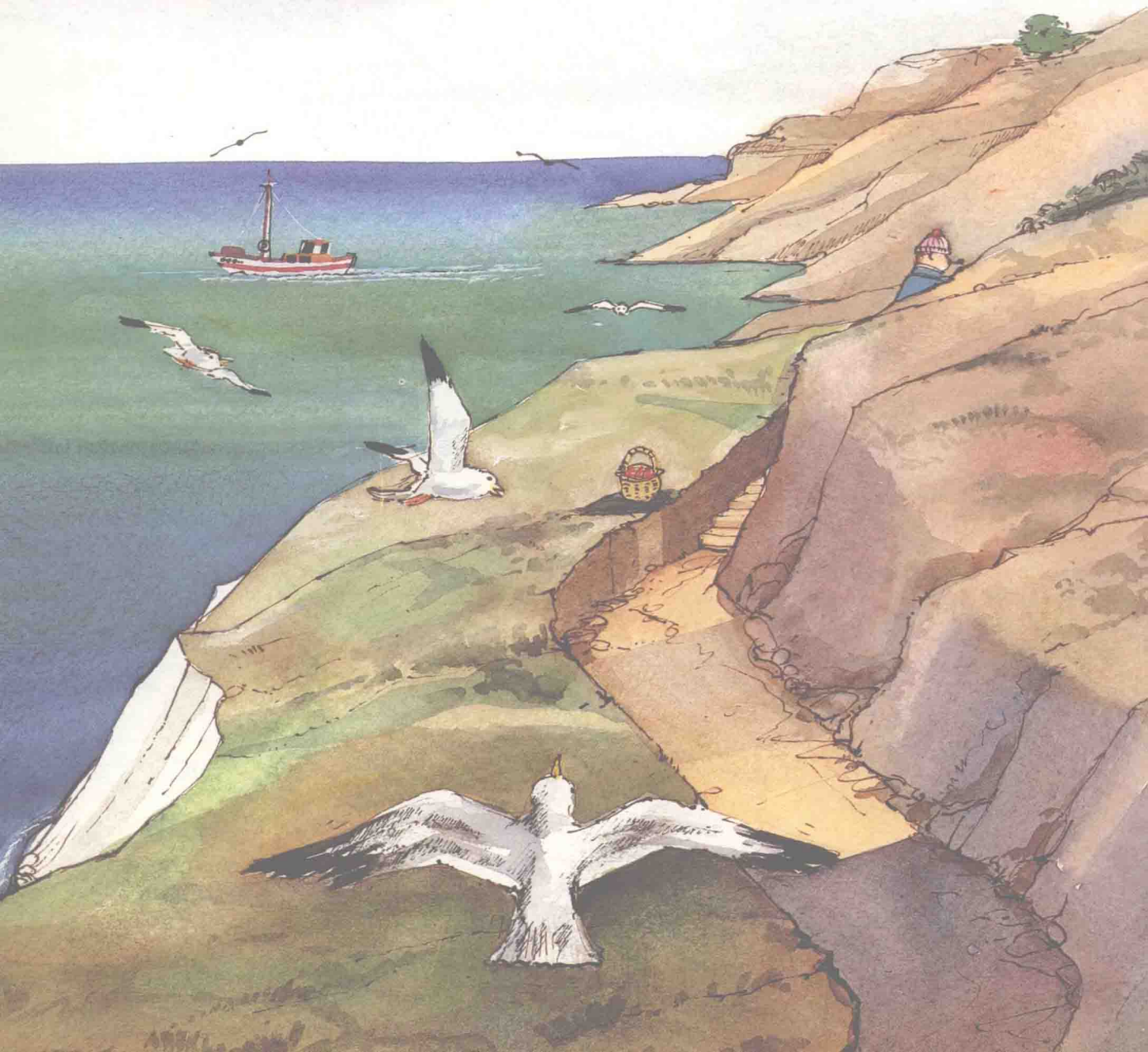
"I don't like the sound of that weather, Mrs G.," said Mr Grinling. "The sooner I get back to the lighthouse, rescue Hamish and switch on the light, the happier I shall be. If you could pack the lunch in the basket I'll take it with me. Remind me to take a screwdriver, Mrs G., I have some repair work to do."

So Mr Grinling set off down the steep, winding path with his lunch and the key in the lunch basket. It was not until he was halfway down the hill that he heard Mrs Grinling calling from the little white cottage. "The screwdriver, Mr G., you've forgotten the screwdriver."



"Botheration," he muttered. Climbing cliff paths for a plump lighthouse keeper was rather hard work. He put the lunch basket on the bank and stomped back towards the house.

Oh, what a silly man, he really ought to have known better. Already the seagulls were beginning to gather. As he turned the corner ...



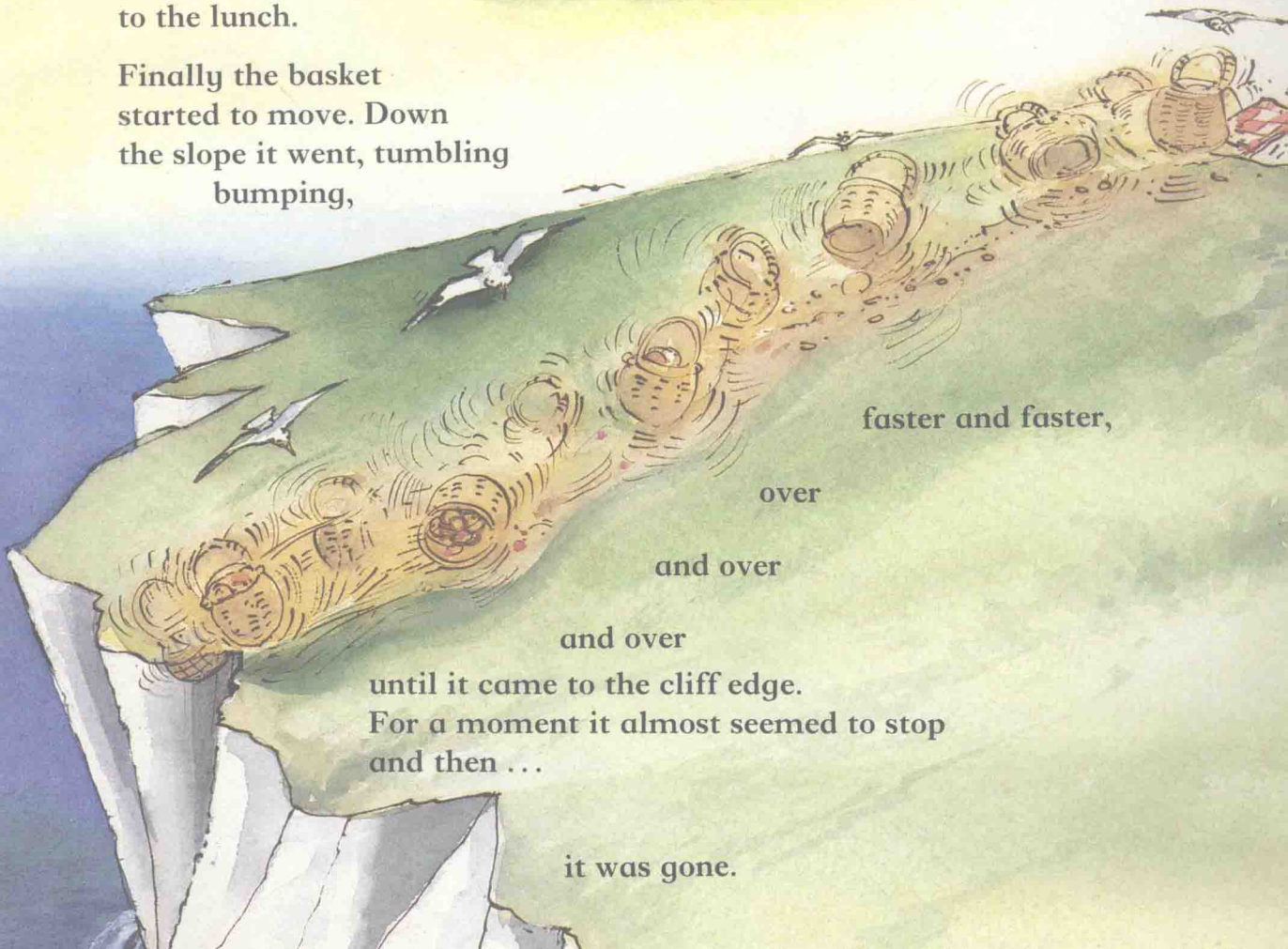
down
they
swooped.

Such greedy creatures.
They squabbled
and flapped
and squawked
and tugged,
trying to get
to the lunch.

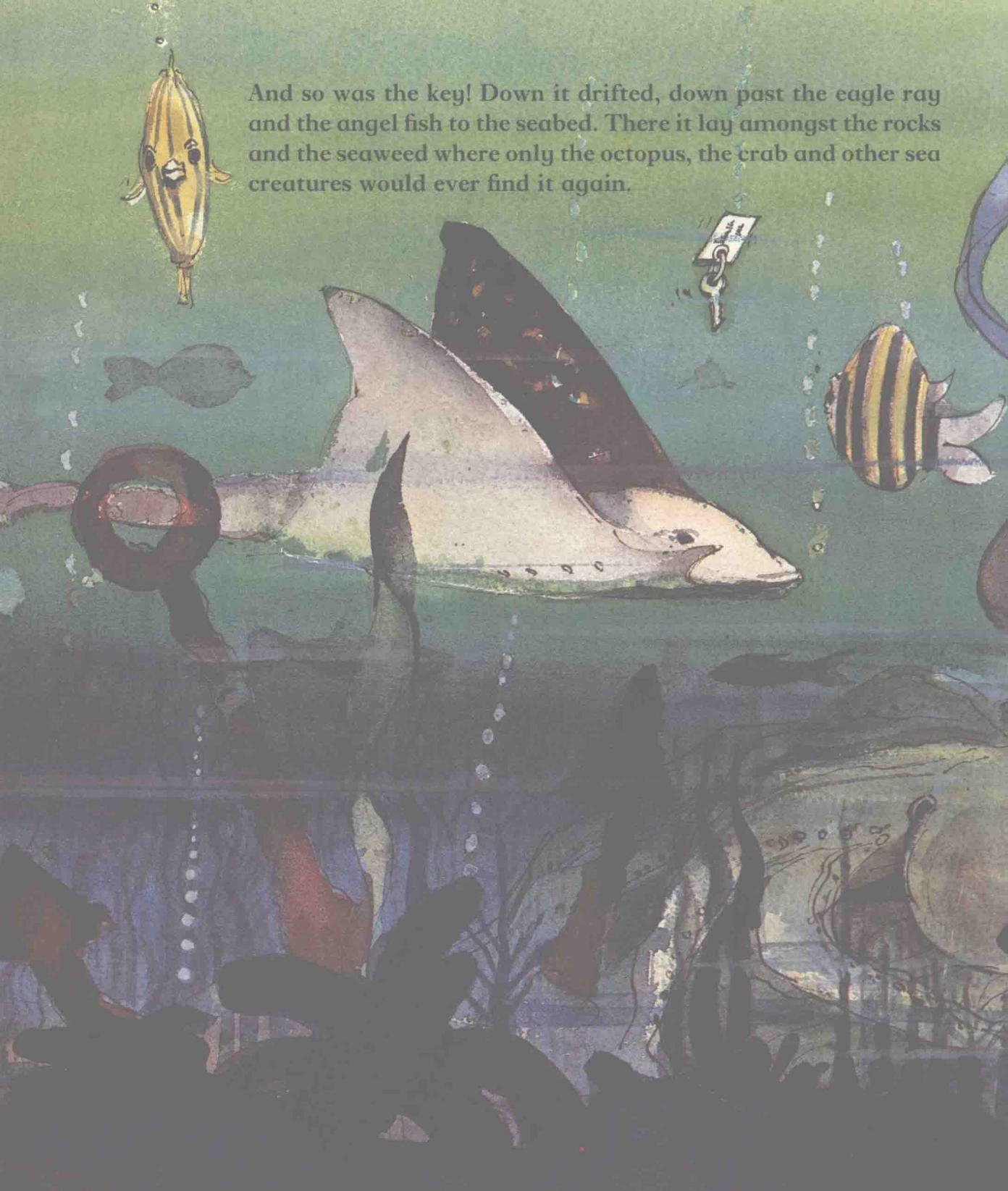
Finally the basket
started to move. Down
the slope it went, tumbling
bumping,

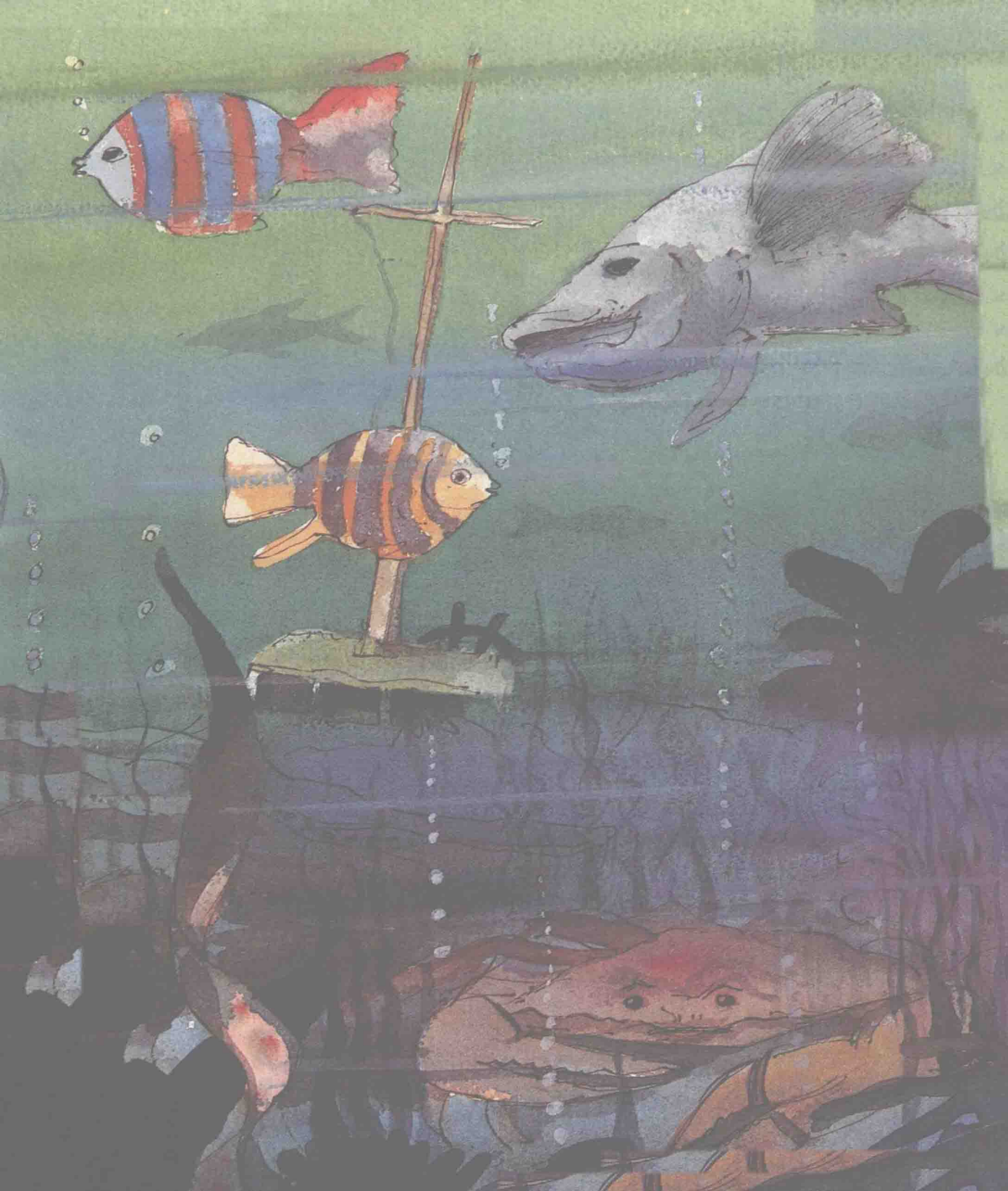
faster and faster,
over
and over
and over
until it came to the cliff edge.
For a moment it almost seemed to stop
and then ...

it was gone.



And so was the key! Down it drifted, down past the eagle ray and the angel fish to the seabed. There it lay amongst the rocks and the seaweed where only the octopus, the crab and other sea creatures would ever find it again.





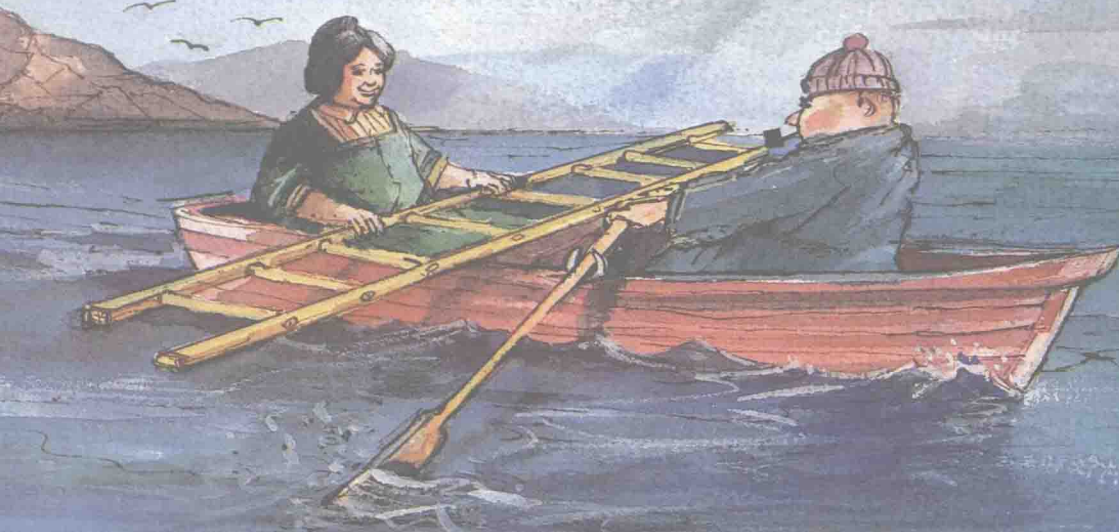


Mr Grinling was very puzzled upon his return. It was not until Mrs Grinling came to help him search that she found the bits of cold chicken and the odd strawberry. But no lighthouse key – not on the slope – not anywhere. “Oh you are a foolish man, Mr G.,” she exclaimed. “All your life you’ve lived amongst seagulls and still you leave your lunch for them to eat.”

Mr Grinling smiled rather foolishly. “I’m sure we have a third key somewhere.”

Mrs Grinling shook her head. “I don’t think so,” she said. “Don’t you remember, one dropped through the hole in your trousers last year.”

Already the sky was beginning to fill with clouds. “Well there’s nothing for it, Mr G.,” said Mrs Grinling. “You’ll just have to climb in.” So they collected the ladder and rowed back to the lighthouse.



While Mrs Grinling held the ladder Mr Grinling climbed very slowly to the top. "I don't like this, Mrs G.," he called, "you know I get dizzy when I climb up high."

"Don't look down," she replied, "think of Hamish, think of the light, think of all those poor ships that might be wrecked unless that light shines tonight." But in the end it was not dizziness that stopped Mr Grinling.



Oh, dearie me, no. It was all those scrumptious lunches he had eaten. In through the window he climbed and there he stuck fast. Neither backwards nor forwards could he go – he was just too fat.