

CHAPTER FIVE

The Second Night



I spent the day singing and praying. There still had been no waking dream or vision and my Spirit Helper had not come to me. The sun was merciless and my thirst soon made me greedily devour the last of my water. It was not forbidden to refill my supply, but up here so high on the mountain, there were no streams. This was a serious problem. I could go without food, but I must have water.

I should not have drunk so much on the journey up the mountain. I'd been foolish. This could end my Vision Quest.

I decided to light a smudge and pray for help. It took a long time striking the steel and flint, but finally I coaxed a tiny flame in the dry sage. I was just adding a thin strand of sweetgrass when the old dog came leaping into the clearing. It stopped and shook, sending water flying into the air. The wet drops landed on my small fire, extinguishing it.



“Look what you’ve done!” I shouted.
“You mangy dog!”

It was then that I recognised what I’d seen. The dog was dripping wet! “Where did you find water, Worthless One? Show me!” I commanded.

The dog barked once, then flopped down onto the grass. I decided to wait until it left again and then follow. Perhaps it would go back to the water hole it had found and I could refill my supply.

The afternoon dragged on and the dog showed no sign of returning to wherever it had found the water. My anger flared, but it did no good. I would have to be patient and wait.

Finally the dog stood, shook vigorously, and trotted into the bush. Grabbing the empty water bag, I followed.

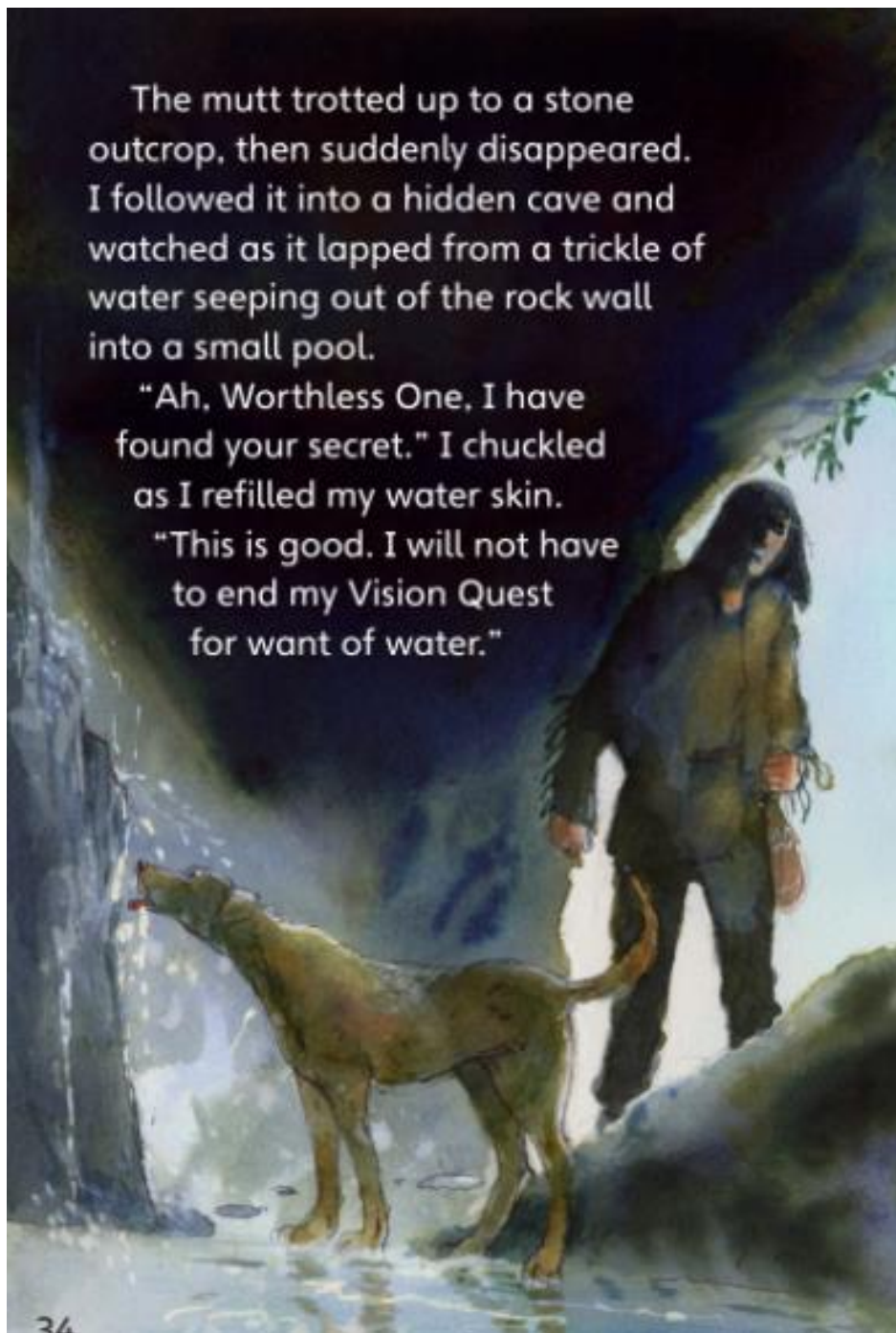
The silly animal took me on a twisted route as it sniffed every tree, bush and boulder in the forest. I’d learned that shouting was futile, so I stealthily stayed at a distance, not interfering as the dog enjoyed its leisurely stroll.



The mutt trotted up to a stone outcrop, then suddenly disappeared. I followed it into a hidden cave and watched as it lapped from a trickle of water seeping out of the rock wall into a small pool.

"Ah, Worthless One, I have found your secret." I chuckled as I refilled my water skin.

"This is good. I will not have to end my Vision Quest for want of water."



Returning to camp, I happily prepared for my second night.

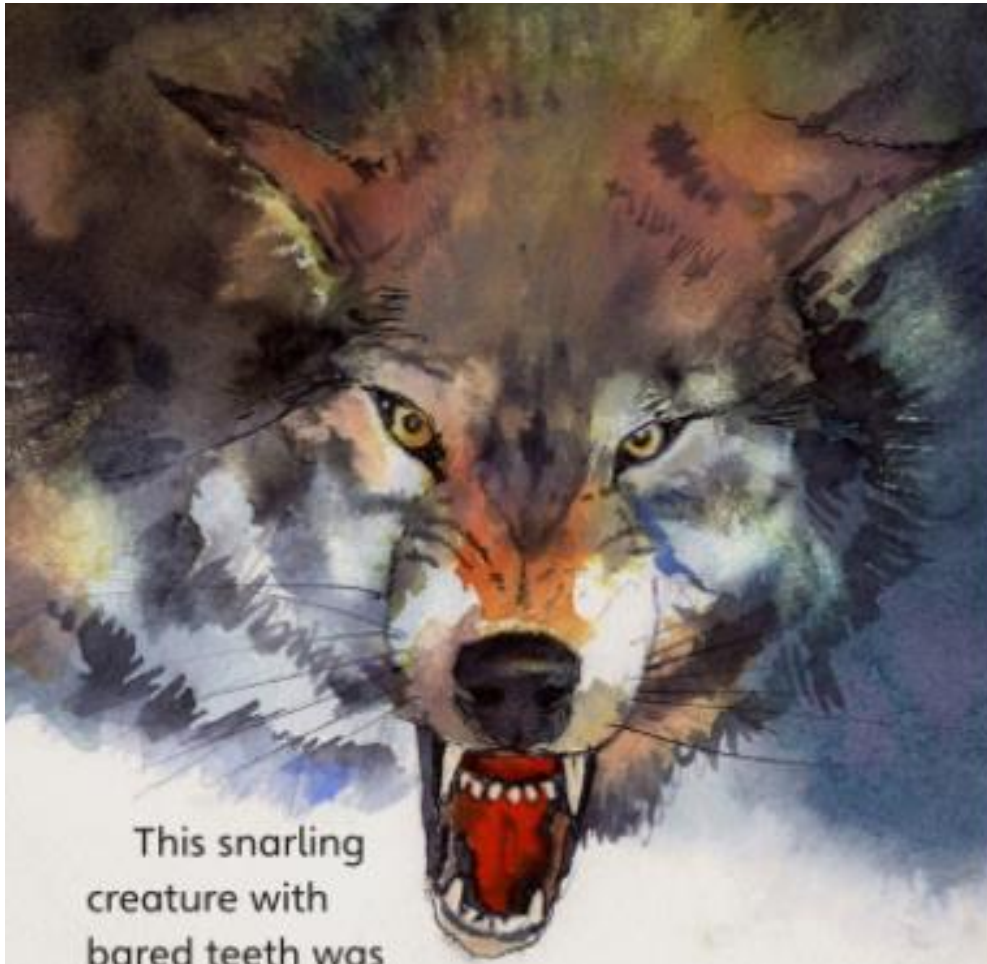
At midnight, the clouds rolled in and the heavens opened. The drenching rain was cold and I felt miserable. I'd had no visions, nor did my Spirit Helper come. The words of the Elder came back to me – Creator would send a Spirit Helper *if* he thought I deserved one. What if I didn't deserve a totem animal? What if I were doomed to walk my life's path alone?

Out of the corner of my eye, a shape appeared in the darkness.

I froze.

It was a wolf.





This snarling creature with bared teeth was not my Spirit Helper. It was hunting and knew I was easy prey. Again, my Vision Quest was threatened.

Behind me, I smelled a familiar odour. As I watched, the old dog padded up to the circle, raised its hackles, and began to howl. The wolf's yellow eyes flicked to the dog and it took a step back, hesitating.

I remembered hunting with my father and he'd told me how animals made themselves appear larger to scare away predators.

Stripping off my wet deerskin shirt, I stood. Being careful not to step outside the circle, I waved the shirt, threw back my head, and howled as loudly as I could. With the old dog accompanying me, our blood-chilling cries split the night.

The wolf flattened its ears and shrunk down. Turning, it fled into the woods.

"You are a coward indeed!" I laughed at the wolf, and then the old dog trotted into my circle and I ruffled the scruff of its neck. "Did you see that? I scared away a hungry wolf with no spear or knife. *I did that!*"

For the rest of the night, I sang my power song and this time I felt different, as though I deserved it.

