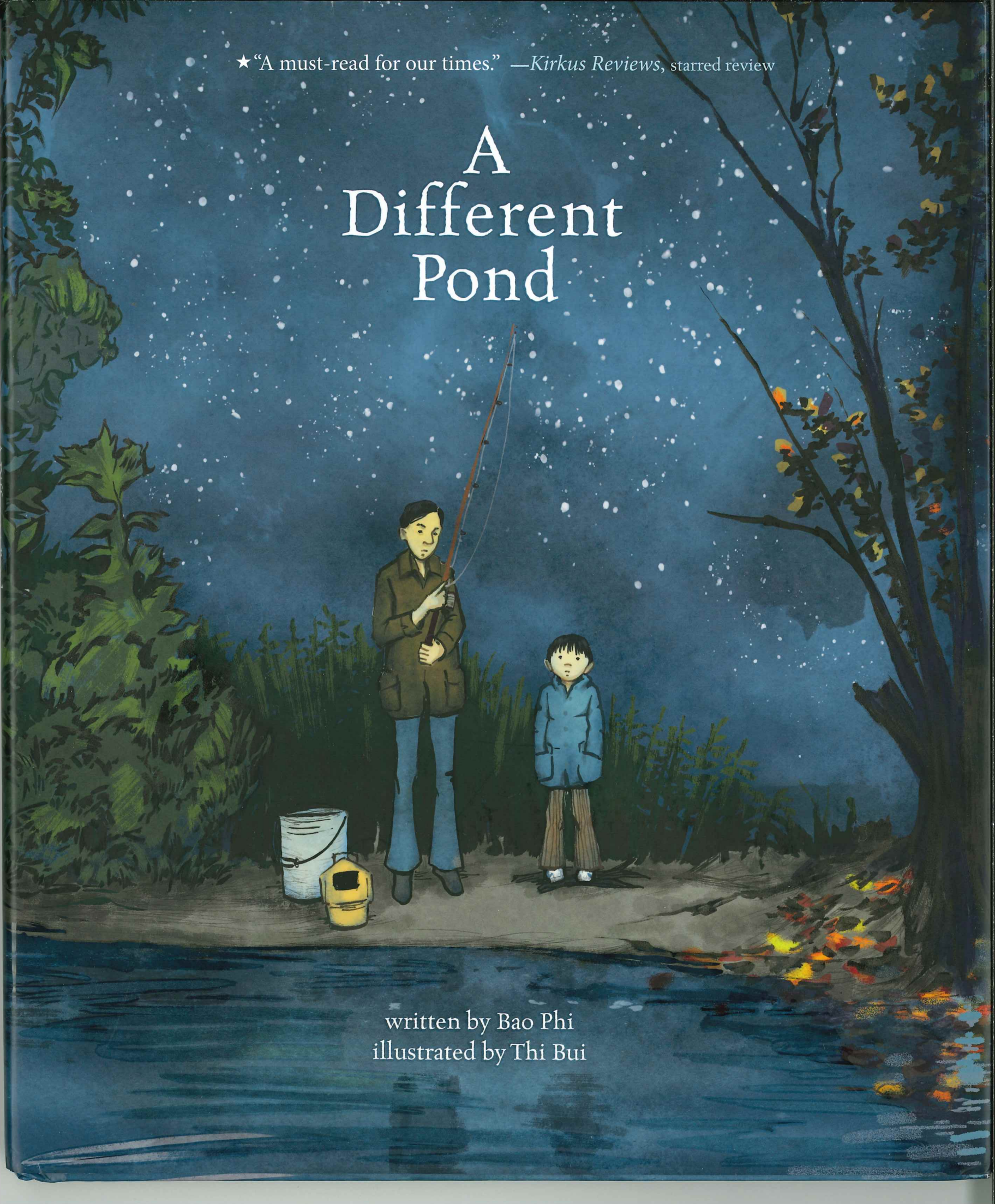


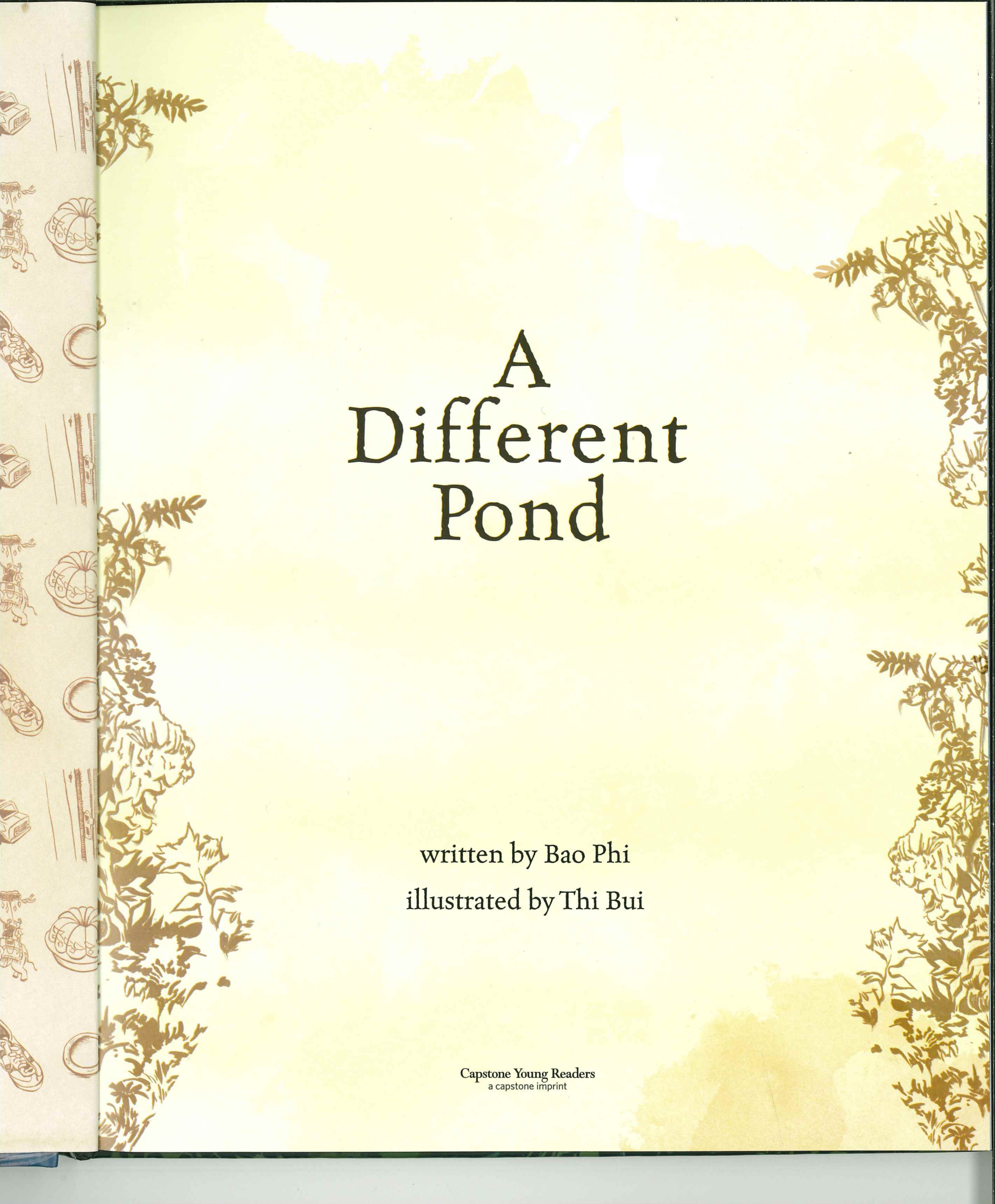
★“A must-read for our times.” —*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

# A Different Pond



written by Bao Phi  
illustrated by Thi Bui





# A Different Pond

written by Bao Phi  
illustrated by Thi Bui

Capstone Young Readers  
a capstone imprint

An unforgettable event — a fishing trip with his dad. Between the two, the father tells his son about a pond in their homeland. On this early morning, the boy learns of a world he's known.

A Different Pond is published by  
Capstone Young Readers, a Capstone imprint  
1710 Roe Crest Drive, North Mankato, Minnesota 56003  
www.mycapstone.com

Text copyright © 2017 Bao Phi  
Illustrations copyright © 2017 Capstone Young Readers

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in whole or in part, or stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission of the publisher.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
Names: Phi, Bao, 1975- author. | Bui, Thi, illustrator.  
Title: A different pond / by Bao Phi; illustrated by Thi Bui.  
Description: North Mankato, Minnesota : Capstone Young Readers, an imprint of Capstone Press, 2017. | Summary: "As a young boy, Bao Phi awoke early, hours before his father's long workday began, to fish on the shores of a small pond in Minneapolis. Unlike many other anglers, Bao and his father fished for food, not recreation. Between hope-filled casts, Bao's father told him about a different pond in their homeland of Vietnam"— Provided by publisher.  
Identifiers: LCCN 2016058060 | ISBN 9781623708030 (paper over board) | ISBN 9781479597468 (library binding) | ISBN 9781515806943 (eBook PDF)  
Subjects: LCSH: Vietnamese Americans—Juvenile fiction. | CYAC: Vietnamese Americans—Fiction. | Immigrants—Fiction. | Fathers and sons—Fiction. | Fishing—Fiction.  
Classification: LCC PZ7.1.P5153 Di 2017 | DDC [E]—dc23  
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2016058060>

Editor: Kristen Mohn  
Designer: Kay Fraser

Printed in Canada.  
10939R

"An important story  
memory, told through  
—Sarah Park Dahle  
MLIS Program at S

"In this beautiful, in  
to be big, to contrib  
the table, we see Ph  
poetry to picture bo  
—Molly Beth Griff  
Hunt

"Through deceptiv  
accomplished and c  
how this Vietname  
struggles are best f  
—Shannon Gibney  
winning author of



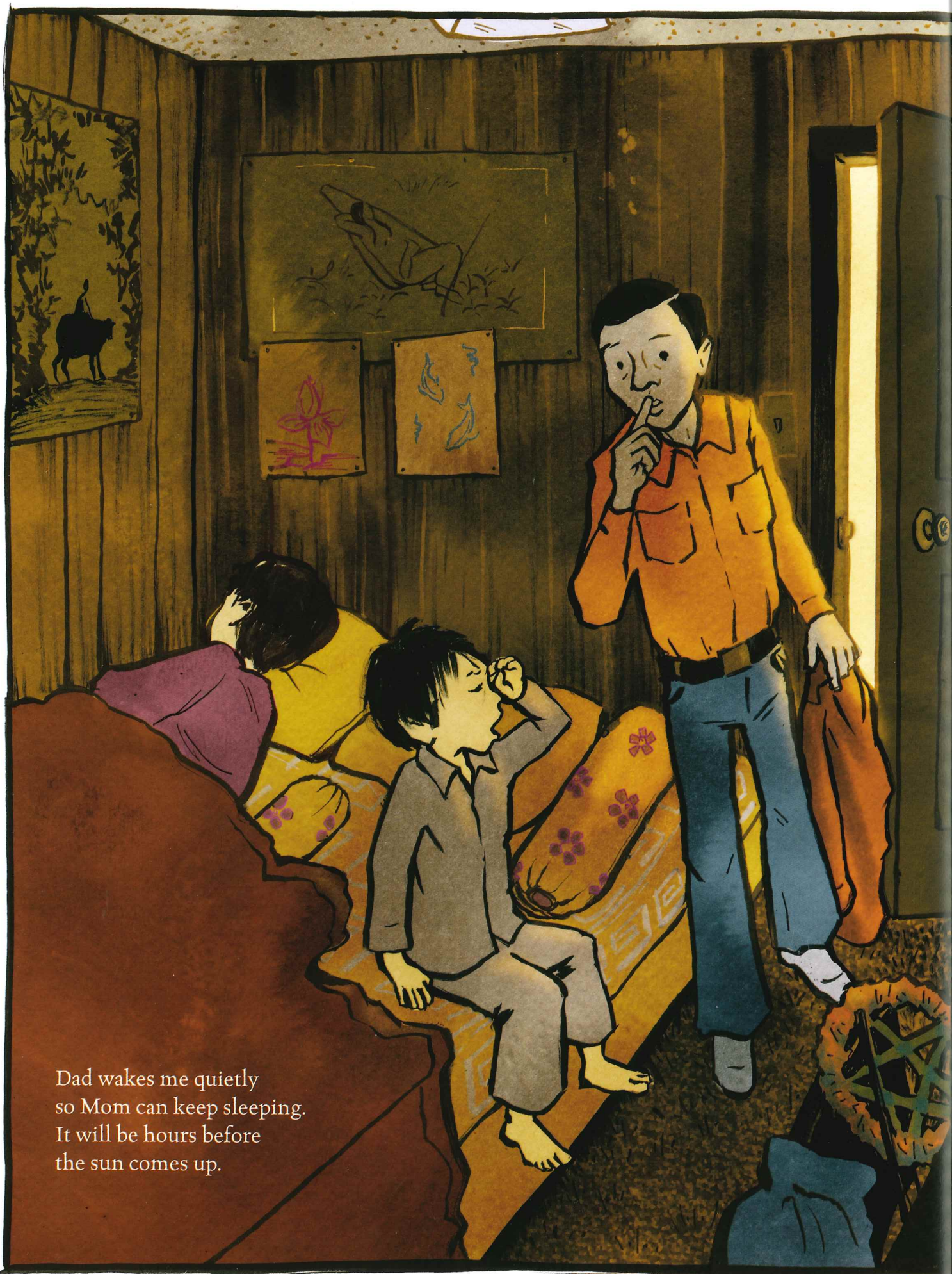
For my family, and for refugees everywhere.

—B.P.

For the working class and all the young dudes.

—T.B.

An unforgettable event — a fishing trip with his dad. Between the two, the father tells his son about a pond in their hometown. On this early morning, the boy learns of a world he's known.



"An important story, a memory, told through the eyes of a child."  
—Sarah Park Dalbey, MLIS Program at

"In this beautiful story, to be big, to come to the table, we see poetry to picture."  
—Molly Beth Calkins, Hunt

Dad wakes me quietly  
so Mom can keep sleeping.  
It will be hours before  
the sun comes up.

"Through decades of accomplished work, how this Vietnam struggles are being told."  
—Shannon Gibler, winning author



In the kitchen the bare bulb is burning. Dad has been up for a while, making sandwiches and packing the car.



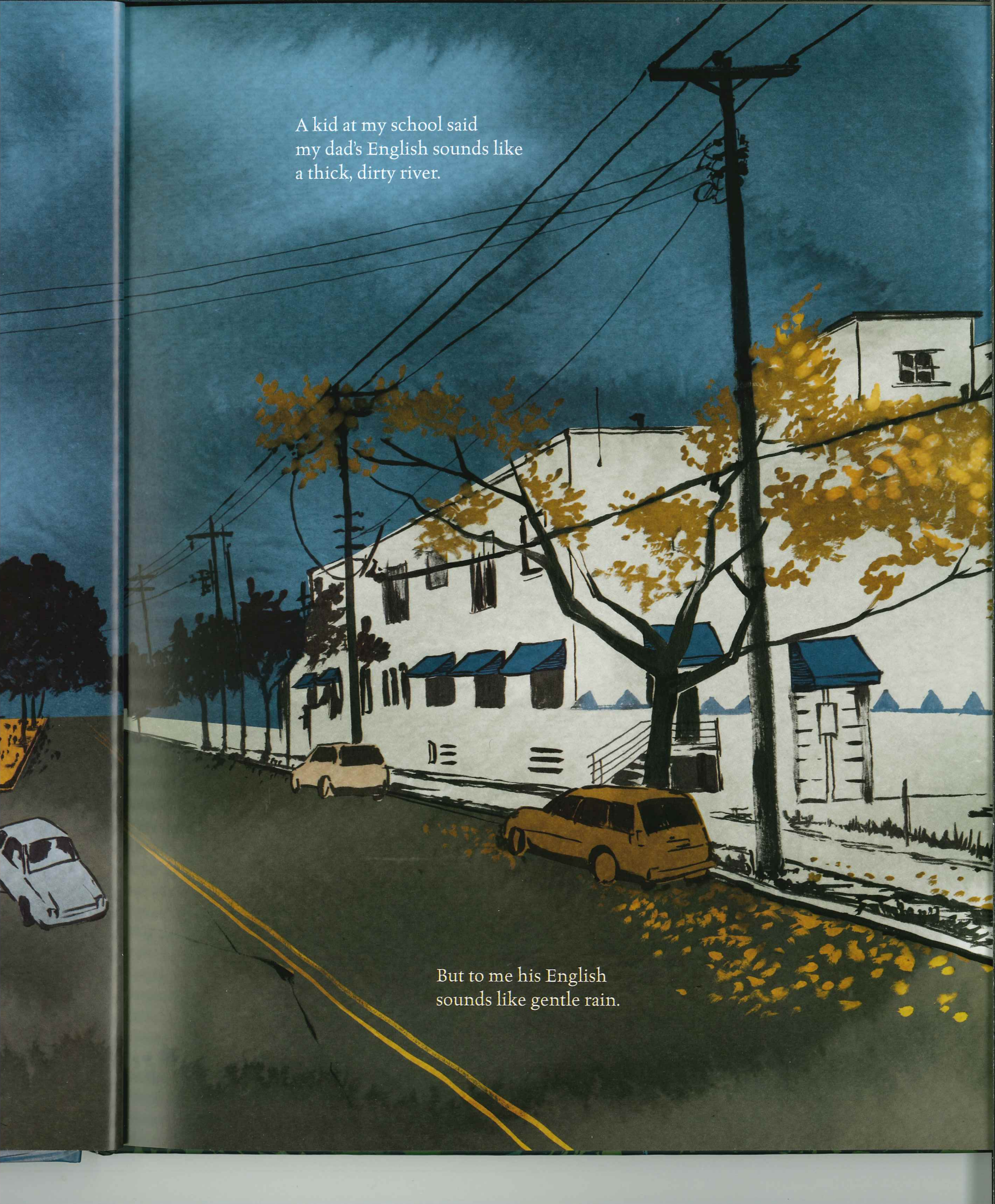
"Can I help?"  
I ask.

"Sure," my dad whispers  
and hands me the tackle box.

The streetlights look brighter  
and the roads aren't so busy  
before the sun comes up.  
Dad turns on the heater  
and tells me stories.



A kid at my school said  
my dad's English sounds like  
a thick, dirty river.



But to me his English  
sounds like gentle rain.



We stop at the bait  
store on Lake Street.  
It always seems  
to be open.

"You're here early today,"  
the bait man says.

"I got a second job," my dad  
explains. "I have to work this  
morning."

"On a Saturday?"  
the bait man asks.

My dad nods.

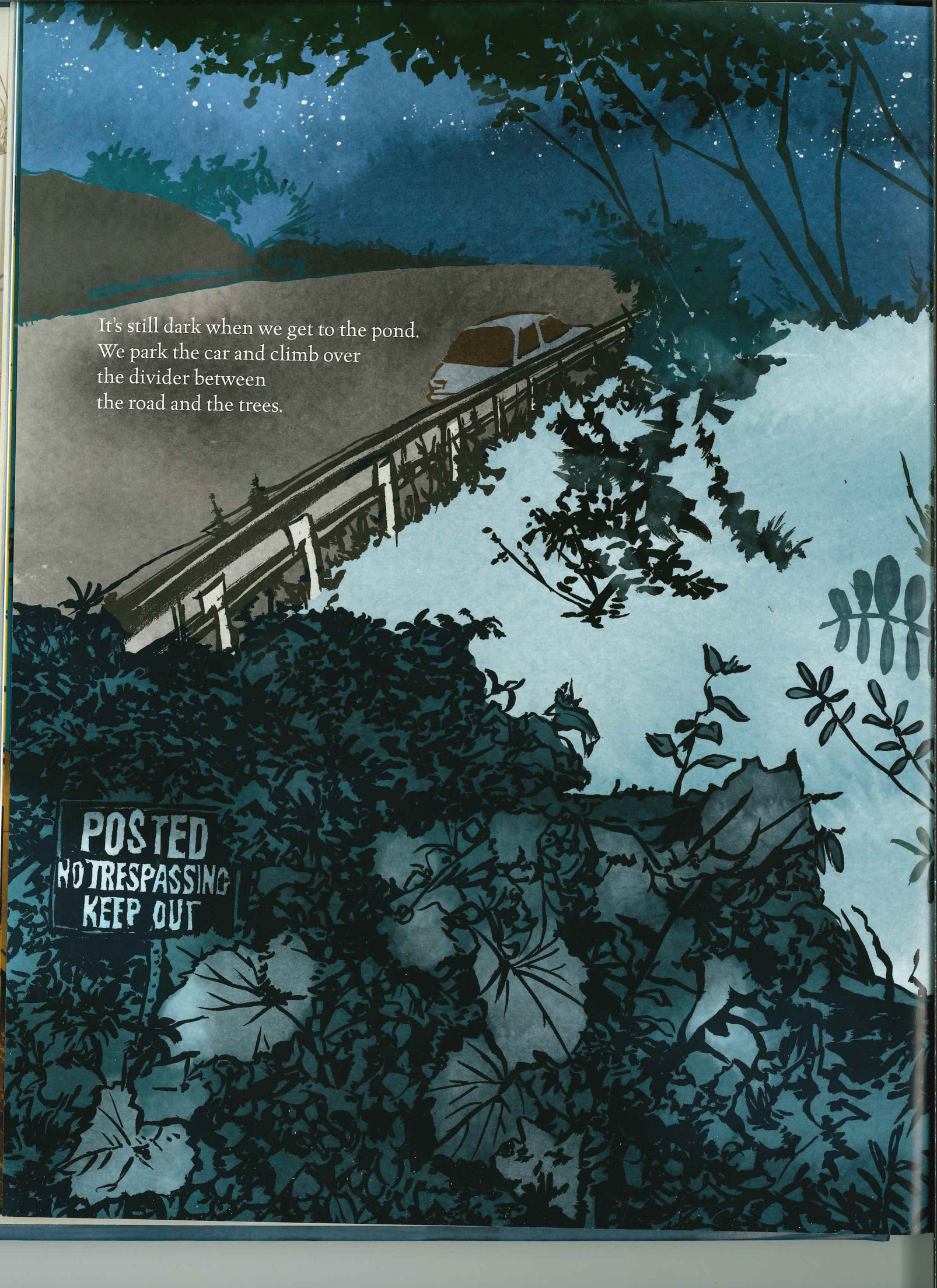



I feel the bag of  
minnows move.  
They swim  
like silver arrows  
in my hands.



It's still dark when we get to the pond.  
We park the car and climb over  
the divider between  
the road and the trees.

**POSTED**  
**NO TRESPASSING**  
**KEEP OUT**



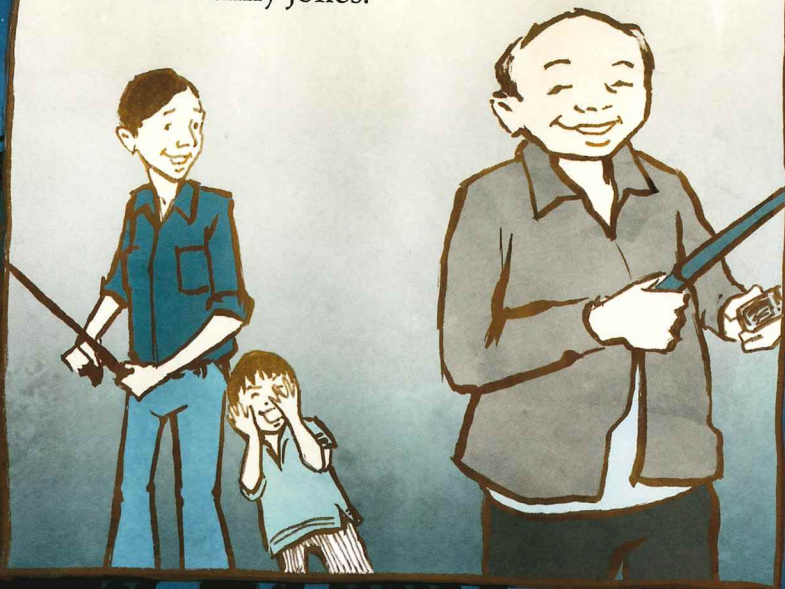


My dad holds my hand and walks  
ahead through the tangle and scrub.  
“Step where I step,” he says.

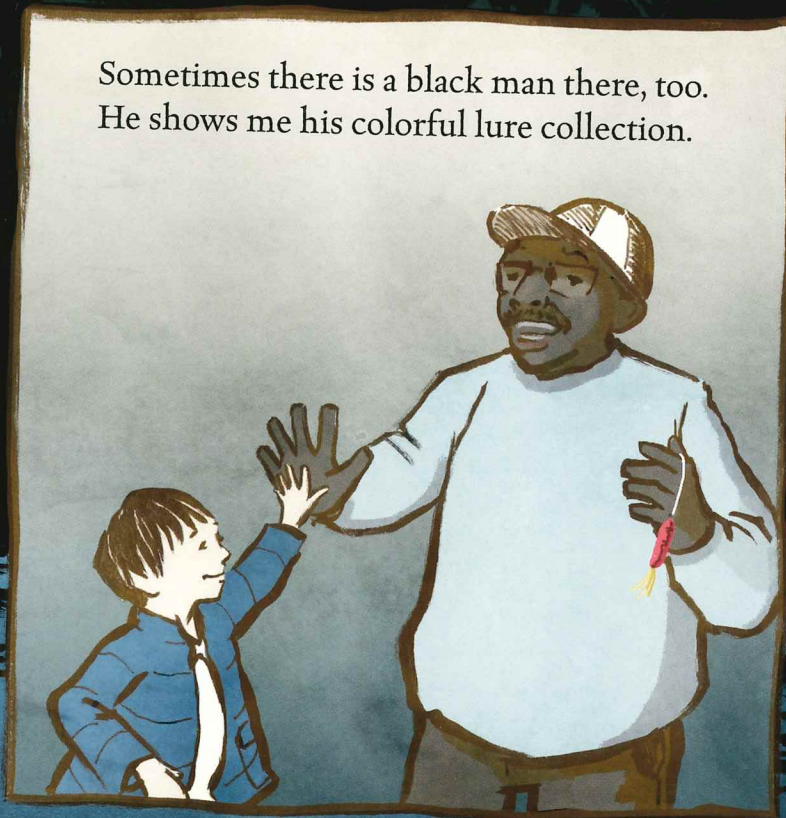
I am thinking about what Dad told the  
bait man. “If you got another job, why  
do we still have to fish for food?” I ask.


“Everything in America costs a lot of  
money,” he explains. I feel callouses  
on his hand when he squeezes mine.

Sometimes a Hmong man is at the pond.  
He speaks English like my dad and likes  
to tell funny jokes.



Sometimes there is a black man there, too.  
He shows me his colorful lure collection.

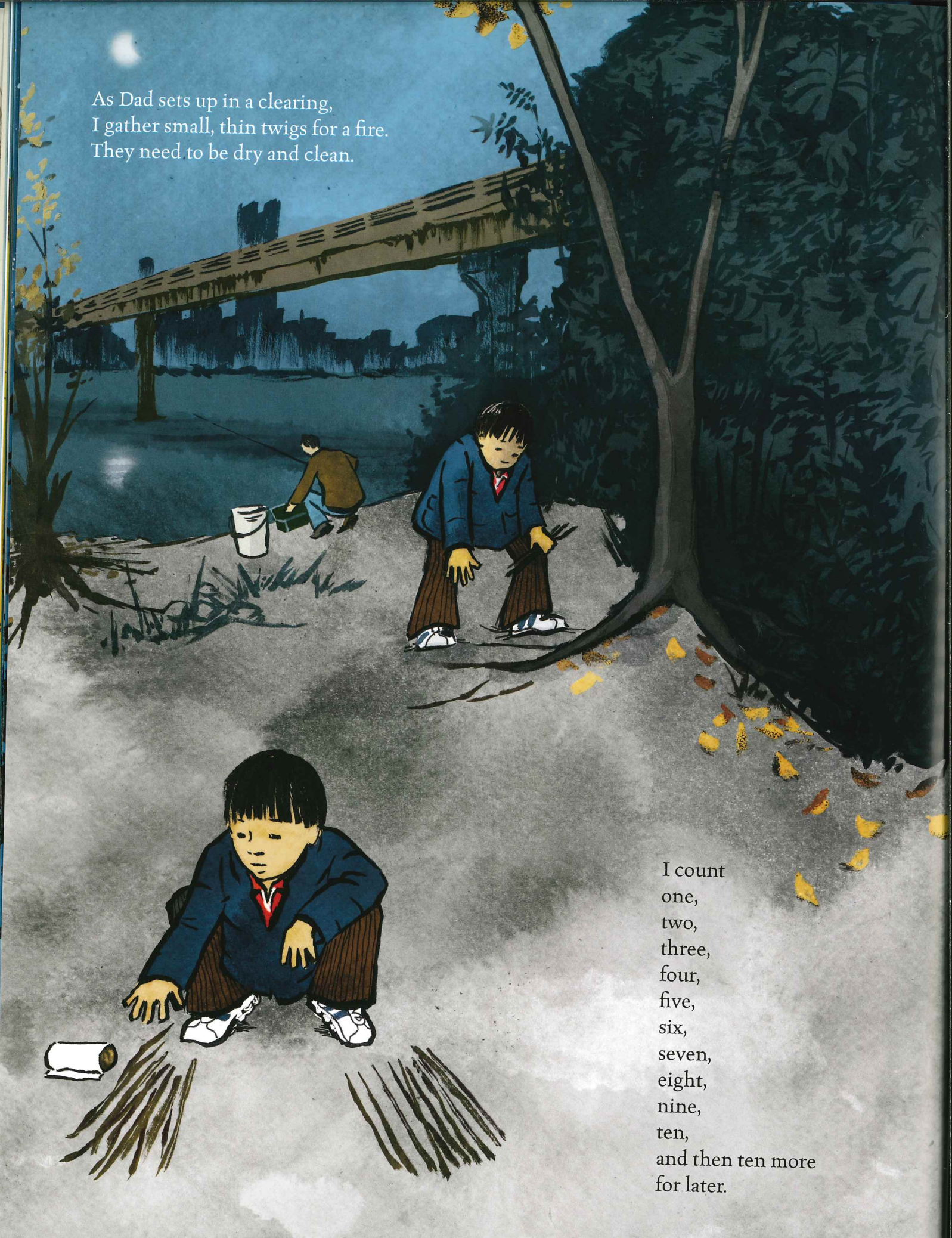


A night scene of a man and a child fishing by a pond. The man, wearing a brown jacket and blue pants, stands in the center holding a fishing rod. To his right, a young child in a blue jacket and striped pants stands looking up. On the ground between them are a white bucket and a yellow lantern. The background is a dark blue night sky filled with many small white stars. The foreground shows the dark water of the pond with some reflections. The scene is framed by dark silhouettes of trees and bushes on the left and right sides.

This time it is just  
me and my dad.

It is a little bit cold. I rub my hands together,  
yawn, and look up to see faint stars like freckles.

As Dad sets up in a clearing,  
I gather small, thin twigs for a fire.  
They need to be dry and clean.



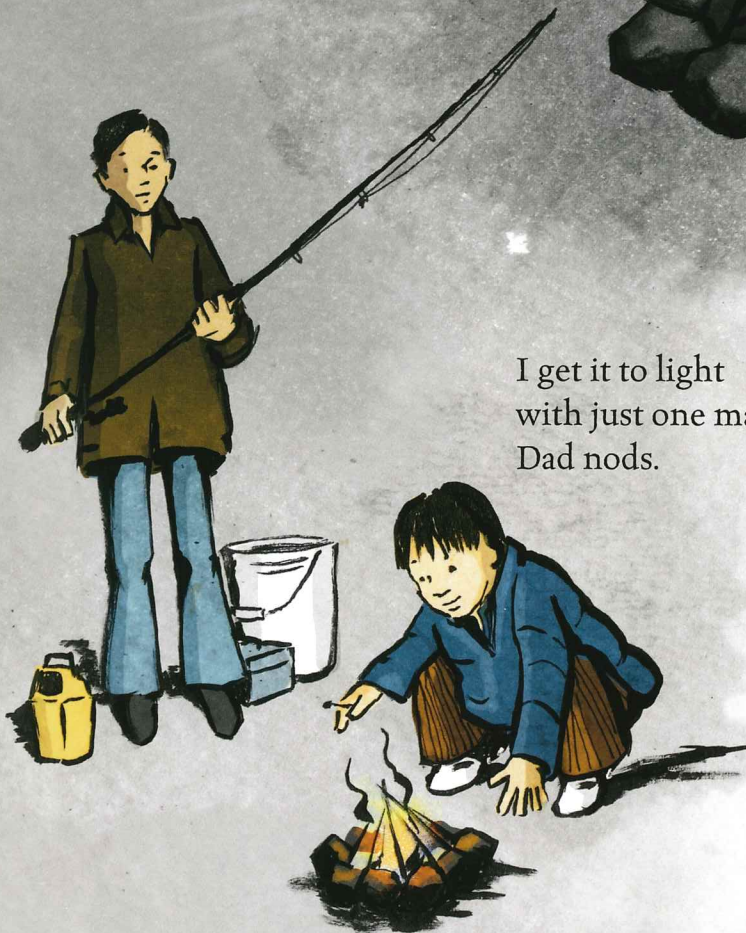
I count  
one,  
two,  
three,  
four,  
five,  
six,  
seven,  
eight,  
nine,  
ten,  
and then ten more  
for later.





I put some rocks in a circle  
and set up the twigs.  
"Like a volcano,"  
Dad reminds me.

I set one end of each twig  
down, the other up, leaning them in  
so they rest against each other  
and hold each other up.



I get it to light  
with just one match.  
Dad nods.




"You want to put a minnow  
on the hook?" Dad asks.



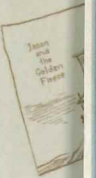
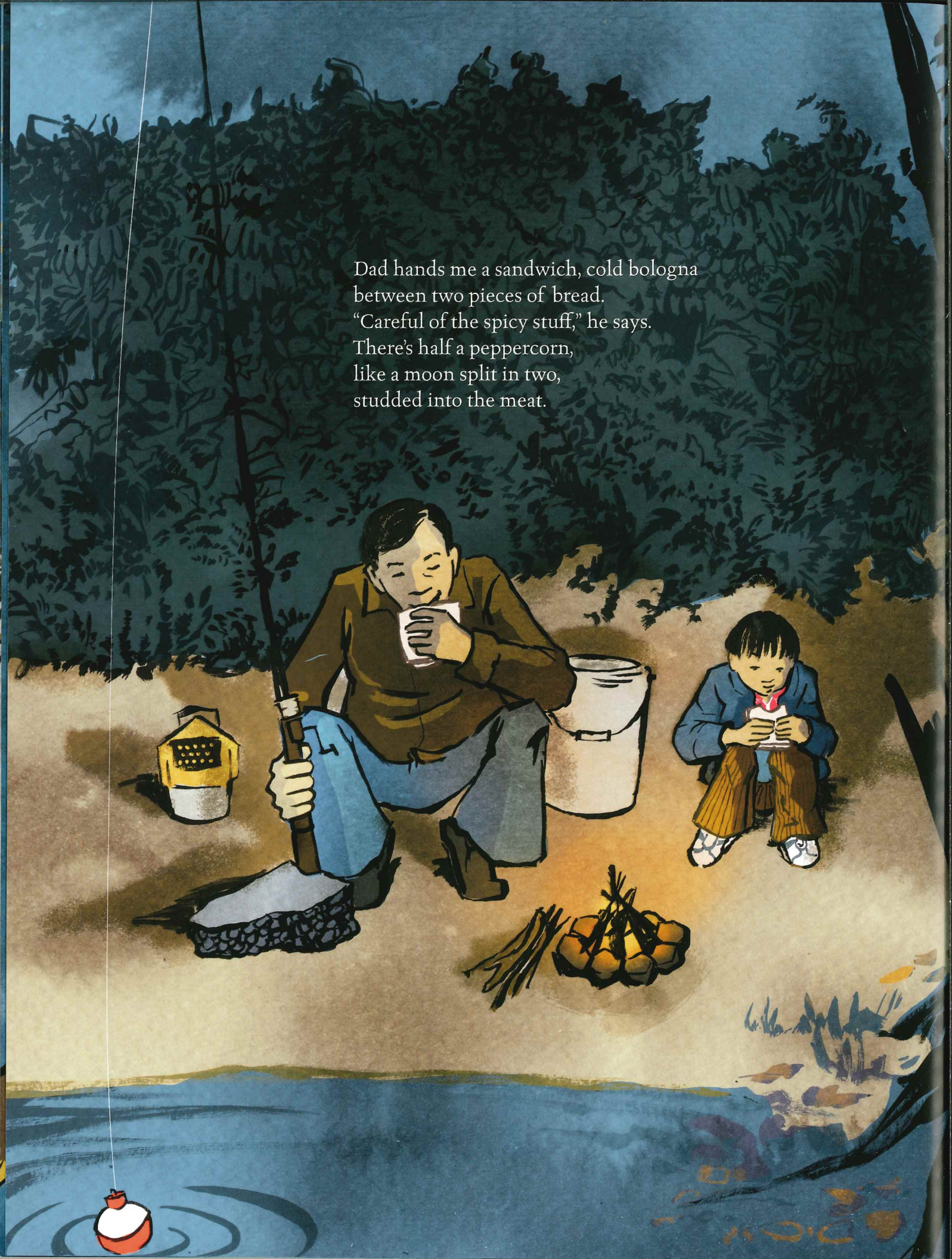
I want to help, but I shake my head no.  
I don't want to hurt that little fish,  
even if I know it's about to be eaten  
by a bigger one.




A watercolor illustration of a father and son fishing by a river at night. The father, wearing a brown jacket and blue pants, stands with his hand on the son's shoulder. The son, in a blue jacket and brown pants, holds a fishing rod. They are on a bank with a large tree on the right. In the background, a city skyline is visible under a dark blue sky with a full moon. A bridge with a lattice railing spans the river above them.

My dad smiles.  
He isn't upset with me.

Dad hands me a sandwich, cold bologna  
between two pieces of bread.  
“Careful of the spicy stuff,” he says.  
There’s half a peppercorn,  
like a moon split in two,  
studded into the meat.




An illustration in a dark, moody style. A man with dark hair, wearing a brown jacket, is shown in profile, looking towards the right. A young boy with dark hair, wearing a blue jacket and a red tie, is standing next to him, looking towards the man. The background consists of dark, silhouetted trees against a dark blue sky. The overall tone is somber and reflective.

“I used to fish by a pond like this  
one when I was a boy in Vietnam,”  
Dad says, biting into his sandwich.

“With your brother?” I ask.  
He nods, then looks away.

Dad tells me about the  
war, but only sometimes.  
He and his brother fought  
side by side. One day, his  
brother didn't come home.

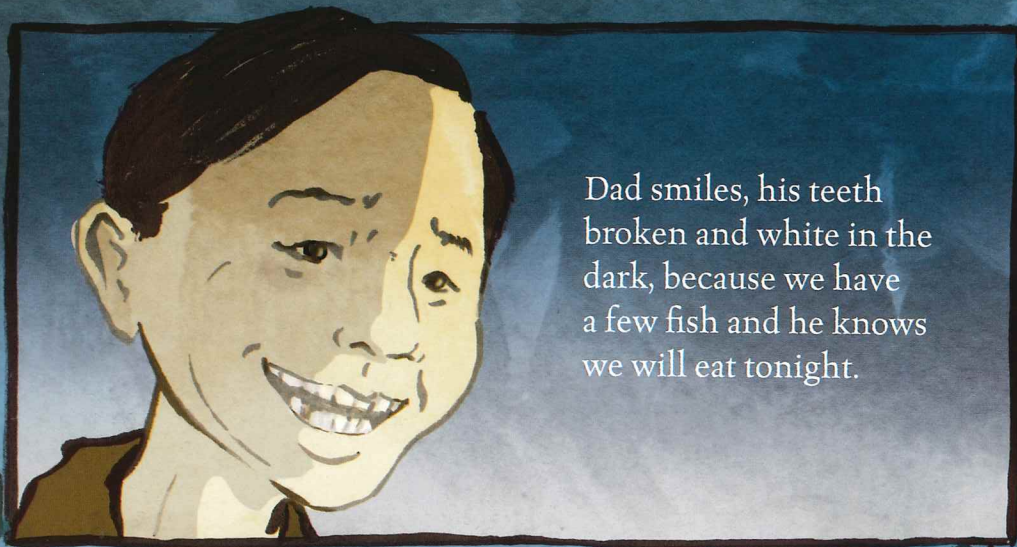


The bobber dips in the dark and Dad pulls.  
"Got one!" he says, almost shouting.

A crappie!  
And soon another.  
"Can I help?" I ask.

He nods and I use two hands to help guide the fish into the bucket. The fish feels slimy and rough at the same time. Dad laughs at the funny face I make.






Dad smiles, his teeth broken and white in the dark, because we have a few fish and he knows we will eat tonight.

Time to go home. Dad must get ready for work. He washes his hands with a small nub of green and white soap. Then I do the same.



A young boy with short black hair, wearing a blue jacket over a red shirt and dark pants, stands in a forest. He is looking towards the left, where a dense thicket of trees and bushes is visible. To his right, the arm and hand of an adult in a brown jacket are visible, holding a white bucket. The scene is set in a wooded area with a path leading away. The lighting is soft, suggesting a quiet time of day.

I look at the trees as we walk back to the car. I wonder what the trees look like at that other pond, in the country my dad comes from.



By the time we get home, the sunlight coming through the windows is just a faint tint, blue and gray instead of gold.

At home Mom looks tired, but she smiles  
at the fish in the big white bucket.



My dad changes his clothes and gets ready to go to work.



He pats me on the back and says to Mom, "Our boy did a good job with the fire today."

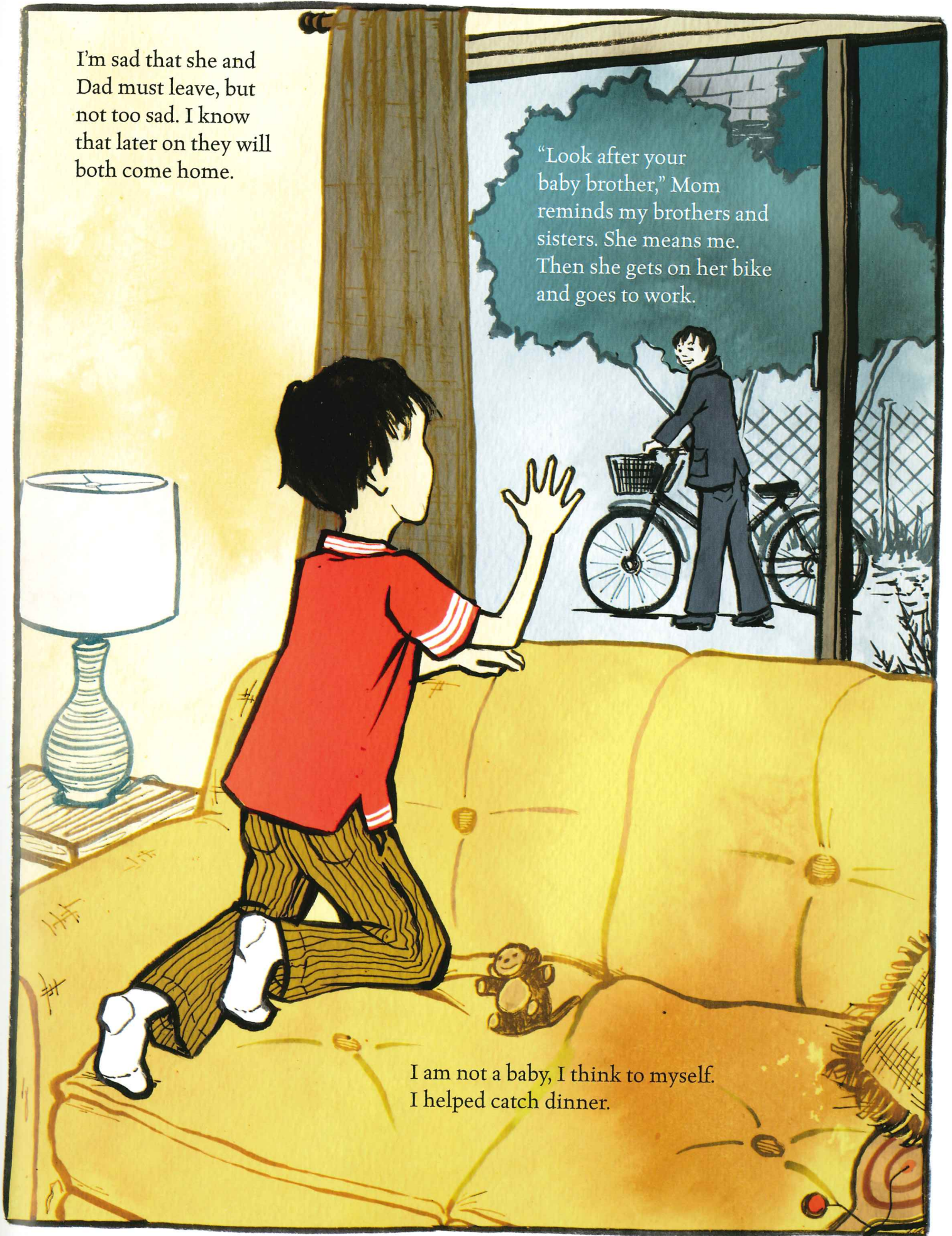
"You learn so quickly!" Mom says. Then she asks me to help with the fish before she has to go to work, too.



m,  
day.”

I'm sad that she and  
Dad must leave, but  
not too sad. I know  
that later on they will  
both come home.

“Look after your  
baby brother,” Mom  
reminds my brothers and  
sisters. She means me.  
Then she gets on her bike  
and goes to work.

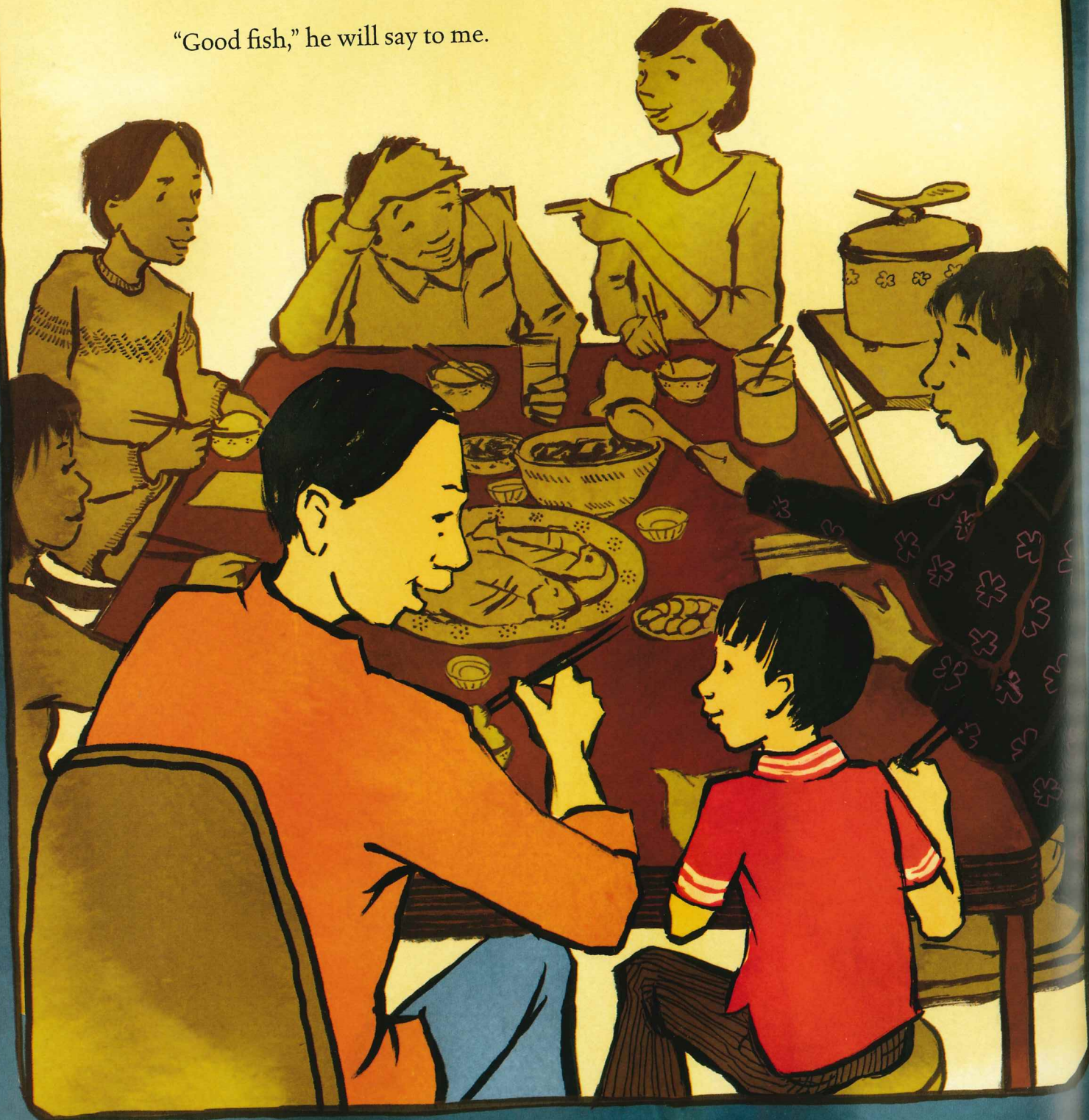


I am not a baby, I think to myself.  
I helped catch dinner.

Tonight, when we are all home, Dad will put rice in the cooker,  
and Mom will fry the fish on both sides until they are crispy.  
I will bring out the jar of fish sauce that has flecks of  
chili pepper and carrots floating on top.

At the table, my brothers and sisters will tell funny stories.  
Mom will ask about their homework. Dad will nod and smile  
and eat with his eyes half closed.

“Good fish,” he will say to me.





And I will smile and nod,  
and later, when we sleep,  
we will dream of fish  
in faraway ponds.



photo credit: Anna Min

photo courtesy of Bao Phi



Bao and his father

Bao Phi was born in Vietnam and raised in the Phillips neighborhood of South Minneapolis. He is an author, a poet, a community organizer, and a father.

## Note from Bao Phi

My family came to Minnesota from Vietnam as refugees from war in 1975. I was just a baby when we fled, the youngest of six. My father was a soldier, but not a high-ranking officer, and my mom had worked at the snack shop at a school in Saigon. We lived in the Phillips neighborhood of South Minneapolis, and we didn't have much of anything. Both my parents worked multiple jobs to survive and support us in a country whose people did not understand why we were here at best, and blamed us for the aftermath of the war at worst. My father would sometimes take us fishing

with him, before the sun came up — but for food, not for sport. I was much less appreciative of this experience than the little boy in this story, but now that I am a father myself, I wanted to honor the struggle of my parents. I also want to acknowledge that they sometimes told me difficult stories about the war and where we came from, including death and violence. My parents shared these stories with me, not to scare or harm me, but because these traumas were a part of our lives, and they wanted me to understand. I pass along a version of our story with those same intentions.

h Vietnam  
Phillips  
outh  
an  
community  
ther.



photo credit: Gabe Clark



photo courtesy of Thi Bui

Thi and her brother

Thi Bui was born in Vietnam and grew up in California and New York. Now all these places are a part of her. She draws and writes and teaches. Her graphic novel, *The Best We Could Do* (Abrams, 2017), is about her mother and father.

## Note from Thi Bui

I must have read *In the Night Kitchen*, the picture book classic by Maurice Sendak, to my son hundreds of times. I always loved the detailed renderings of the kitchen knick-knacks, but it wasn't until illustrating this book that I REALLY saw them. I learned that Sendak collected memorabilia that reminded him of his childhood, and filled his illustrations with them. It made me feel a little sad that I don't have much memorabilia to collect from my childhood. But looking around on the internet, I've found that there ARE others who remember the same odd details that mark an Asian American, and more specifically Vietnamese American, immigrant household. The cookie tin that might contain Danish butter cookies, or Mom's sewing needles and thread. The

free calendar from the Asian grocery store. The gỏi ôm, or hugging pillow, that my mom sewed for our beds. None of these things exactly represents my Vietnamese heritage; it's more that they add up to hold something of what it was like to be me, and alive, in a specific time and place. I would have liked to put more of these objects in my illustrations, but the irony is that not having a lot of money meant not having a lot of possessions. So the empty spaces hold meaning, too. I want to thank Bao for sharing his treasured photographs and memories of childhood, and for trusting me with them. I hope that we've managed to capture the little slice of life that we experienced, and mirror some of what our readers might have lived.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the Loft staff past and present, especially former Executive Director Jocey Hale, who encouraged me to try my hand at writing a children's book; former Marketing Manager Lindsey Giaquinto, whose request for me to write a review of a Capstone book my daughter and I were enamored with inadvertently led to this book getting published; and Online Education Manager Kurtis Scaletta, a writer of children's and young adult books himself, who offered advice and encouragement over coffee. I would also like to thank the supportive children's lit community in the Twin Cities, especially Molly Beth Griffin, longtime friend and children's book author, who offered constant advice, edits, and support, and Shannon Gibney, for all she does for our community and

for the wonderful blurb. Special thanks also to Dr. Sarah Park Dahlen for her work championing diversity in children's lit and edits to this book. And thank you to the wonderful folks at Capstone, especially my editor Krissy Mohn, who advocated for my book and worked so hard to make it better. And of course, my gratitude to phenomenal visual artist Thi Bui, whose illustrations caused seismic emotional waves to careen through me through this entire process. Last but not least, I want to thank my parents, my family, my friend and co-parent Dr. Juliana Hu Pegues, and my daughter, Sông Phi-Hu, and all of Sông's teachers, aunts, uncles, and little friends.

—Bao Phi



photos courtesy of Bao Phi



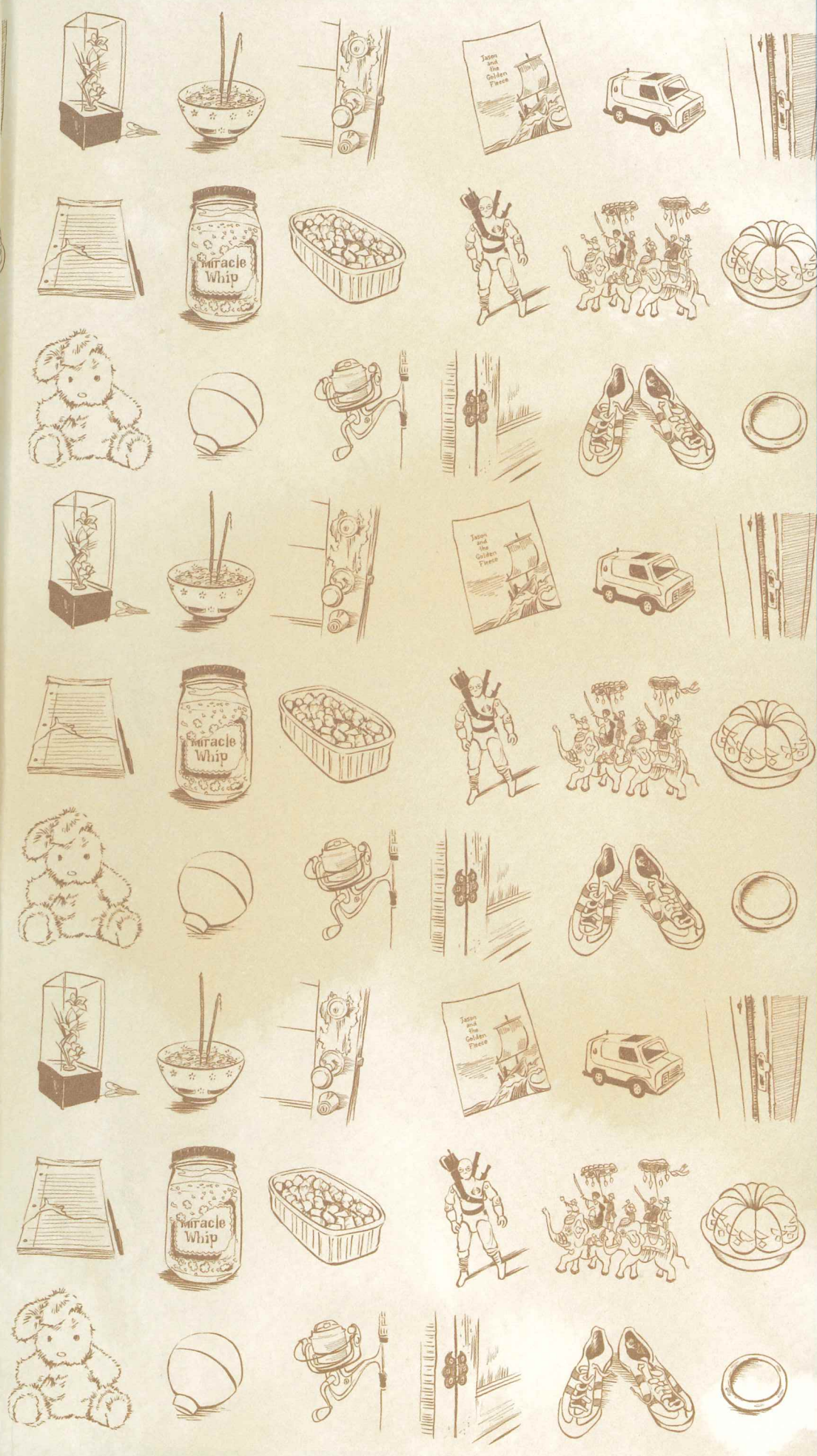


Photo credit: Anna Min



**Bao Phi** was born in Vietnam and raised in the Phillips neighborhood of South Minneapolis. He is an author, a poet, a community organizer, and a father.

Photo credit: Gabe Clark



**Thi Bui** was born in Vietnam and grew up in California and New York. Now all these places are a part of her. She draws and writes and teaches. Her graphic novel, *The Best We Could Do* (Abrams, 2017), is about her mother and father.

# Family. Tradition. Hope.

Sometimes a fishing trip is about more than catching fish . . .

★“This gentle coming-of-age story is filled with loving, important aspects of the immigrant experience . . .” —*School Library Journal*, starred review

★“Powerfully understated picture book, which shifts the focus of the refugee narrative from the harrowing journey to the reality awaiting the family members once they reach their destination . . .” —*Horn Book*, starred review

★“Phi celebrates an unexpected superhero: a father who endures a strange new culture . . . and draws no attention to the sacrifices he’s made.”  
—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

★“This wistful, beautifully illustrated story will resonate not only with immigrant families but any family that has faced struggle.” —*Booklist*, starred review



Price: \$15.95 U.S. / \$19.95 CAN

ISBN 978-1-62370-803-0



5 1 5 9 5

capstone  
www.mycapstone.com