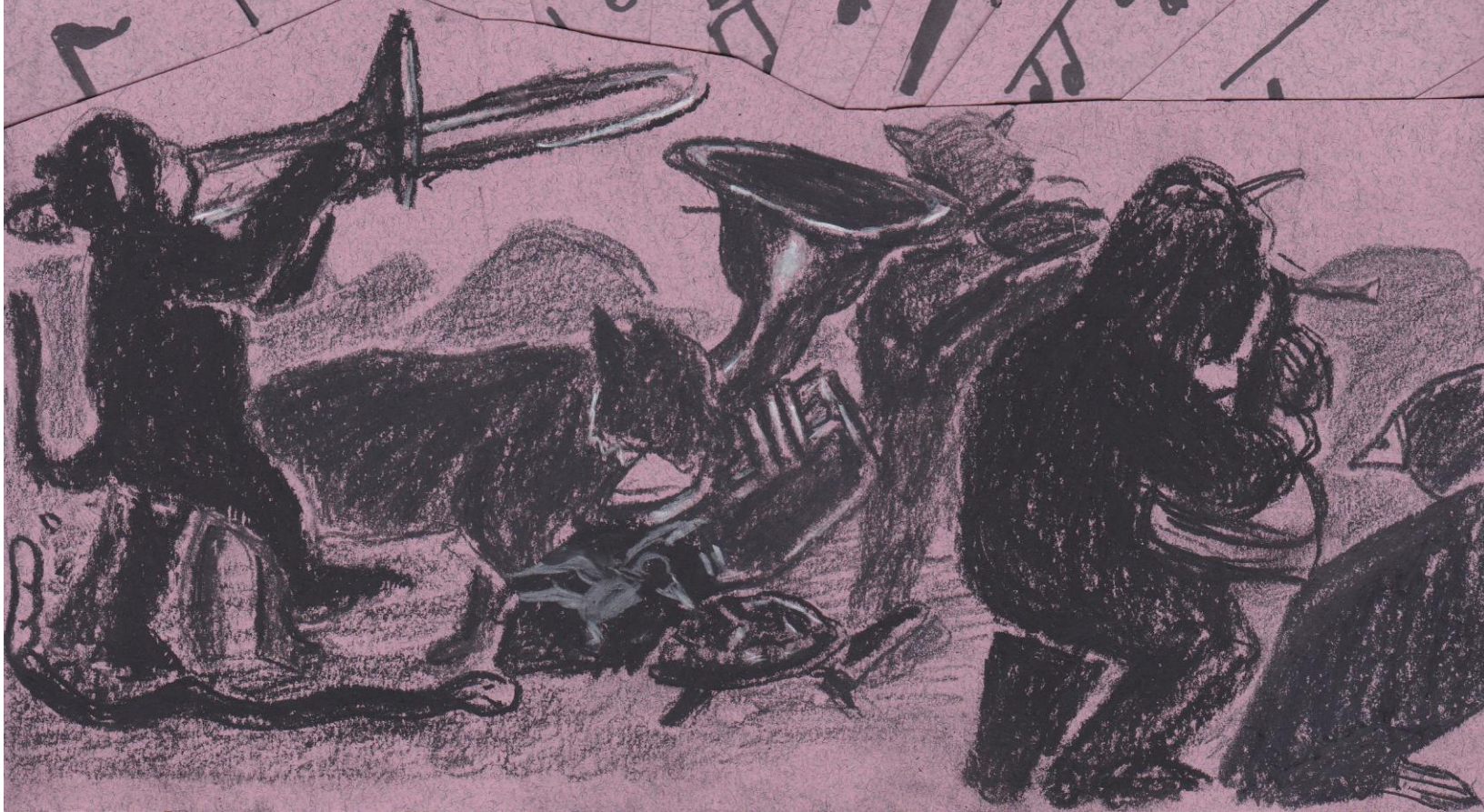
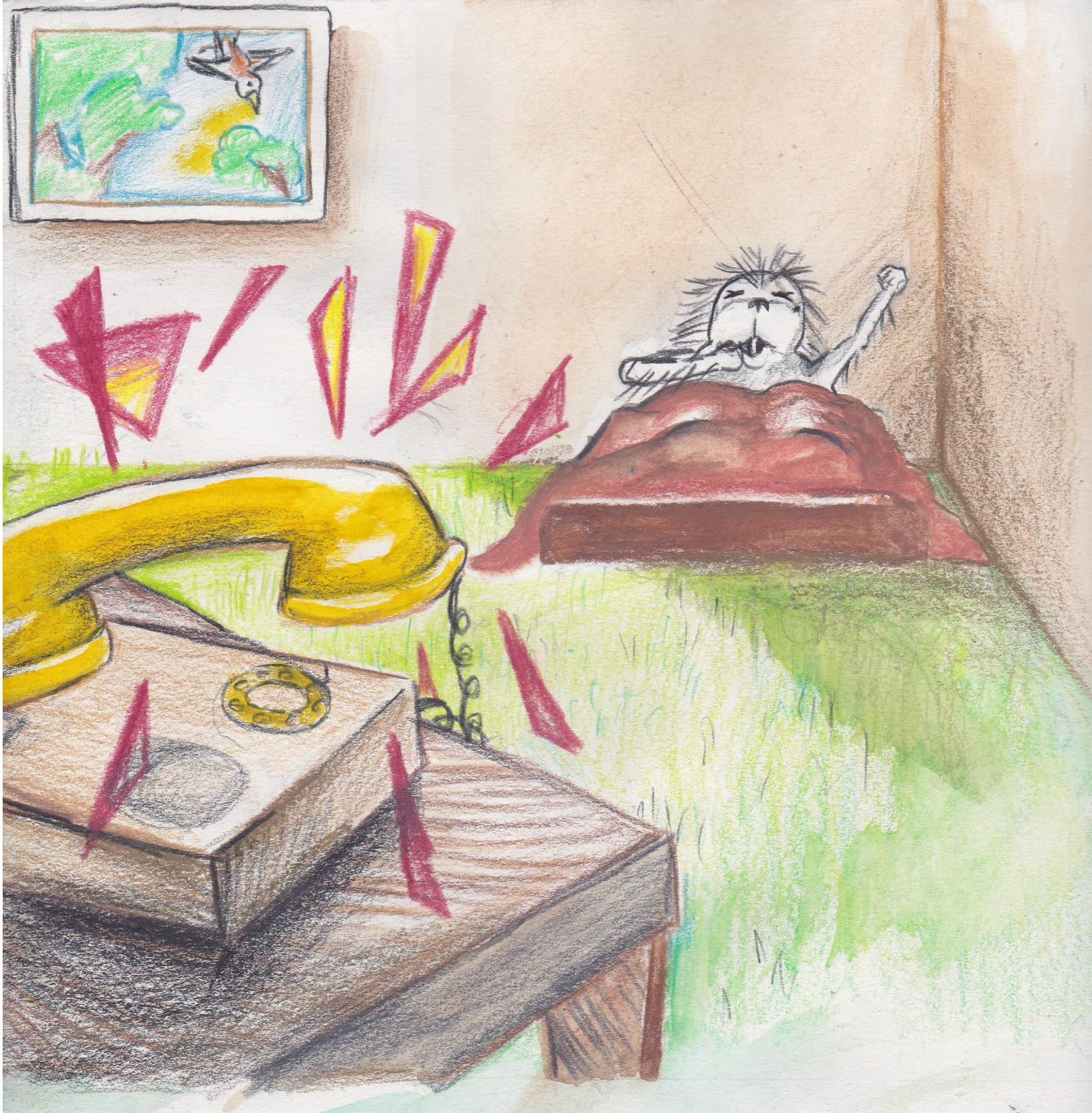


Pepper the Porcupine And the Big Parade!

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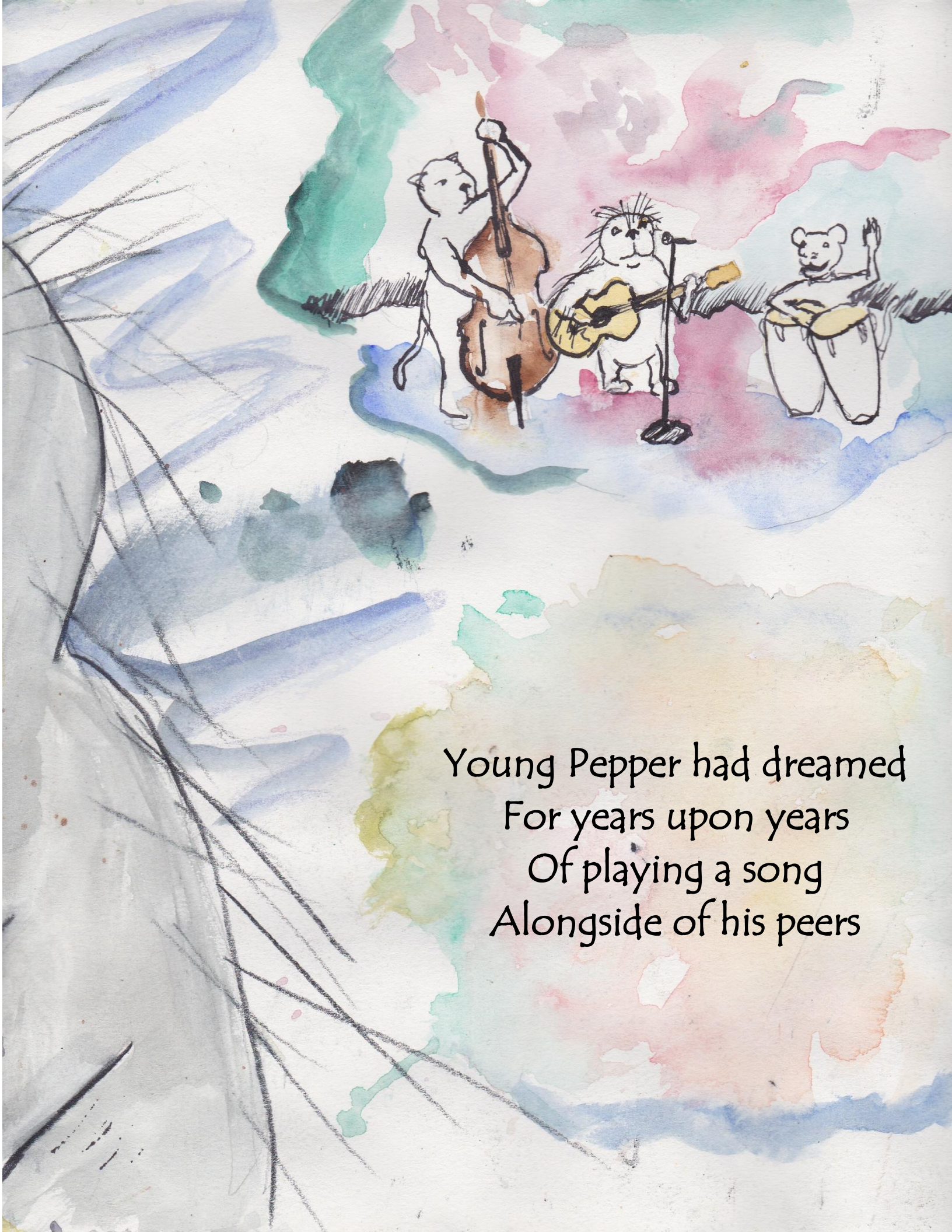
On a sunny spring morning
When the birds were all singing
Young Pepper awoke
To the telephone ringing...

"AUDITIONS TODAY!"

The voice proudly exclaimed

**"TO BE IN THE TOWN'S
SPRING MUSIC PARADE."**





Young Pepper had dreamed
For years upon years
Of playing a song
Alongside of his peers

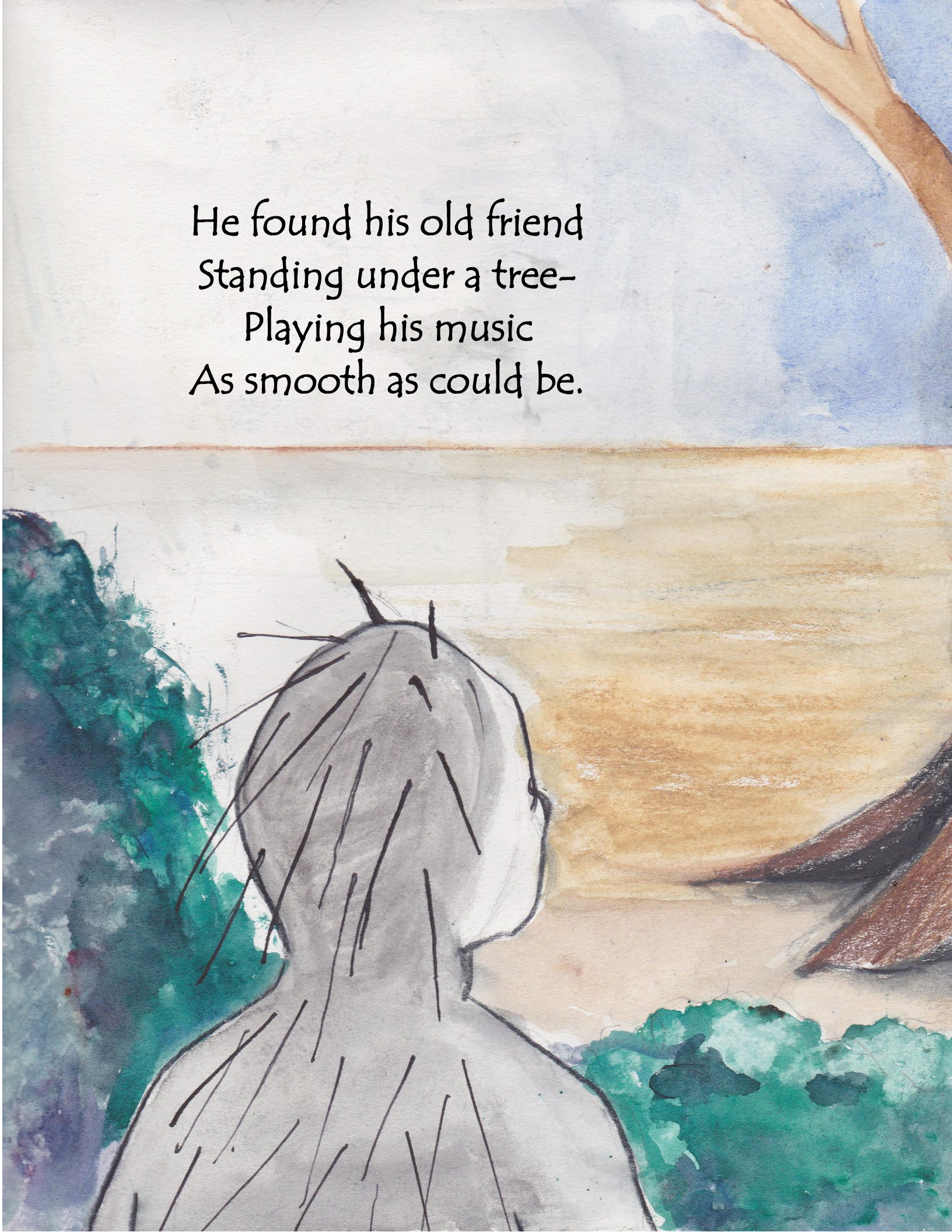
But then Pepper remembered
A fact he'd forgotten:
He was no good at music-
In fact, he was rotten!

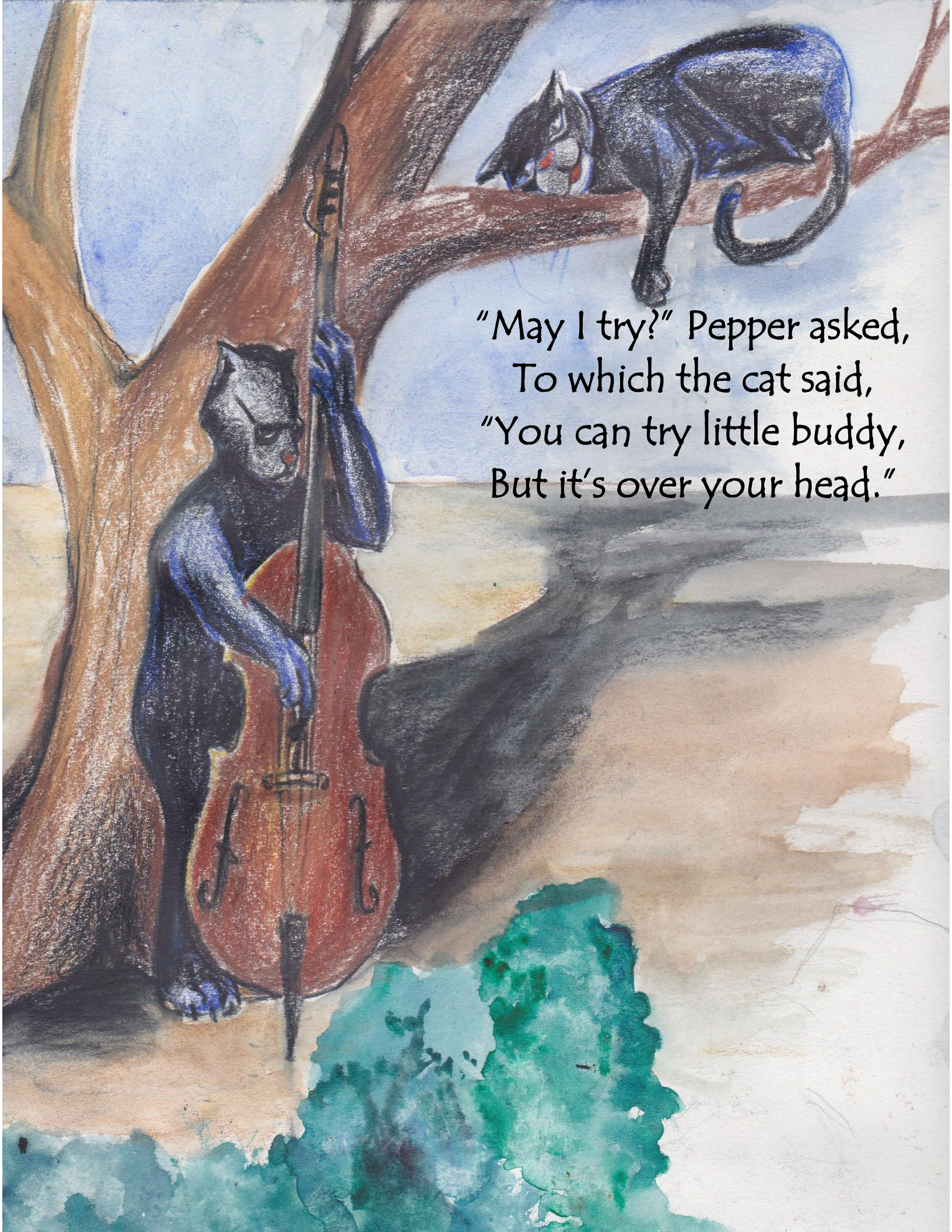


So he decided right then
To ask his friend Blake,
The kindly old bobcat
To teach him the bass



He found his old friend
Standing under a tree-
Playing his music
As smooth as could be.





"May I try?" Pepper asked,
To which the cat said,
"You can try little buddy,
But it's over your head."

A watercolor illustration of a large, dark, bear-like creature with a blue mask and a red double bass. The creature is standing and holding the neck of the double bass with its right hand. The background is a light blue sky with some darker blue clouds. The creature's body is dark grey/black, and its mask is blue with a red nose. The double bass is red with a black neck and a black bridge. The text is written in white, sans-serif font over the creature's body.

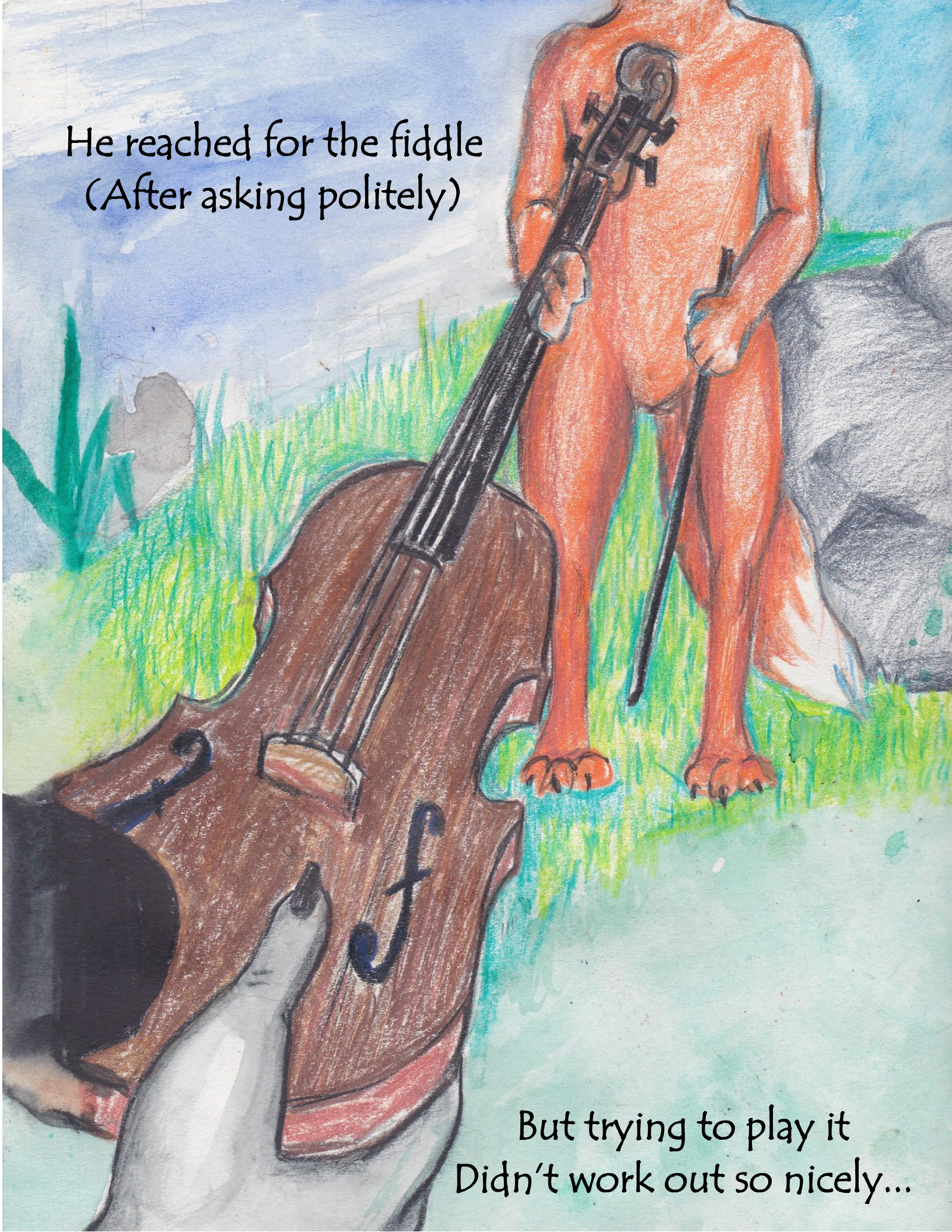
Then Pepper looked up
And saw Blake was right,
He'd need to find something
That suited his height.

So on Pepper went
To find something little,
And came across Franny Fox
Playing her fiddle.

"How perfect!" he thought,
For Franny was small,
"I won't have to worry
About not being tall!"



He reached for the fiddle
(After asking politely)



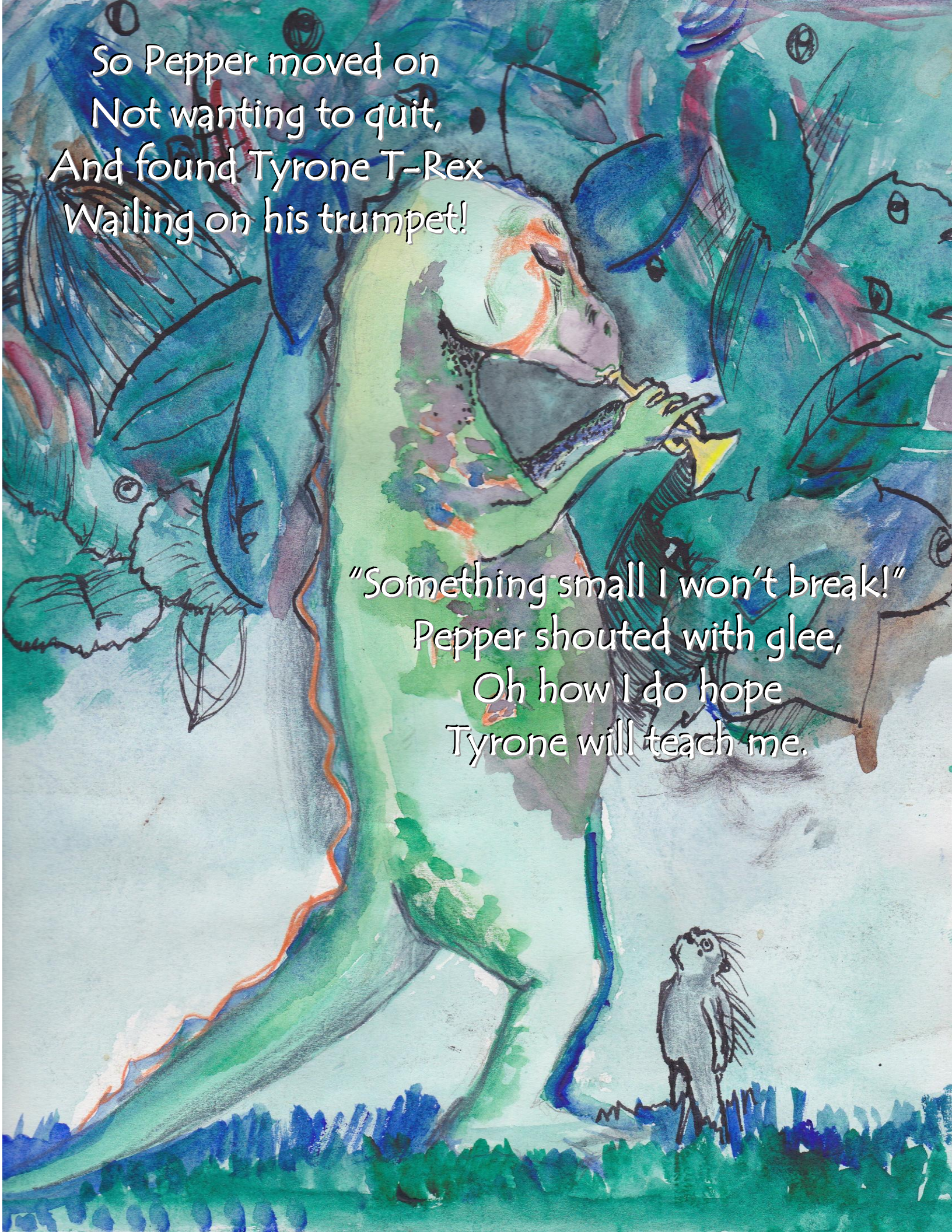
But trying to play it
Didn't work out so nicely...



The quills on his coat
Made it harder to play,
When he reached for the notes
All the strings broke away.

"I'm so sorry" cried Pepper
(His head hanging low)
"I don't think I'll ever
Fit in with the show"





So Pepper moved on
Not wanting to quit,
And found Tyrone T-Rex
Wailing on his trumpet!

"Something small I won't break!"
Pepper shouted with glee,
Oh how I do hope
Tyrone will teach me.

So Pepper approached
His dinosaur friend,
Who then gladly agreed
To lend Pepper a hand

Tyrone then told Pepper
The thing he should do:
Just blow in the mouthpiece
And let music play through!



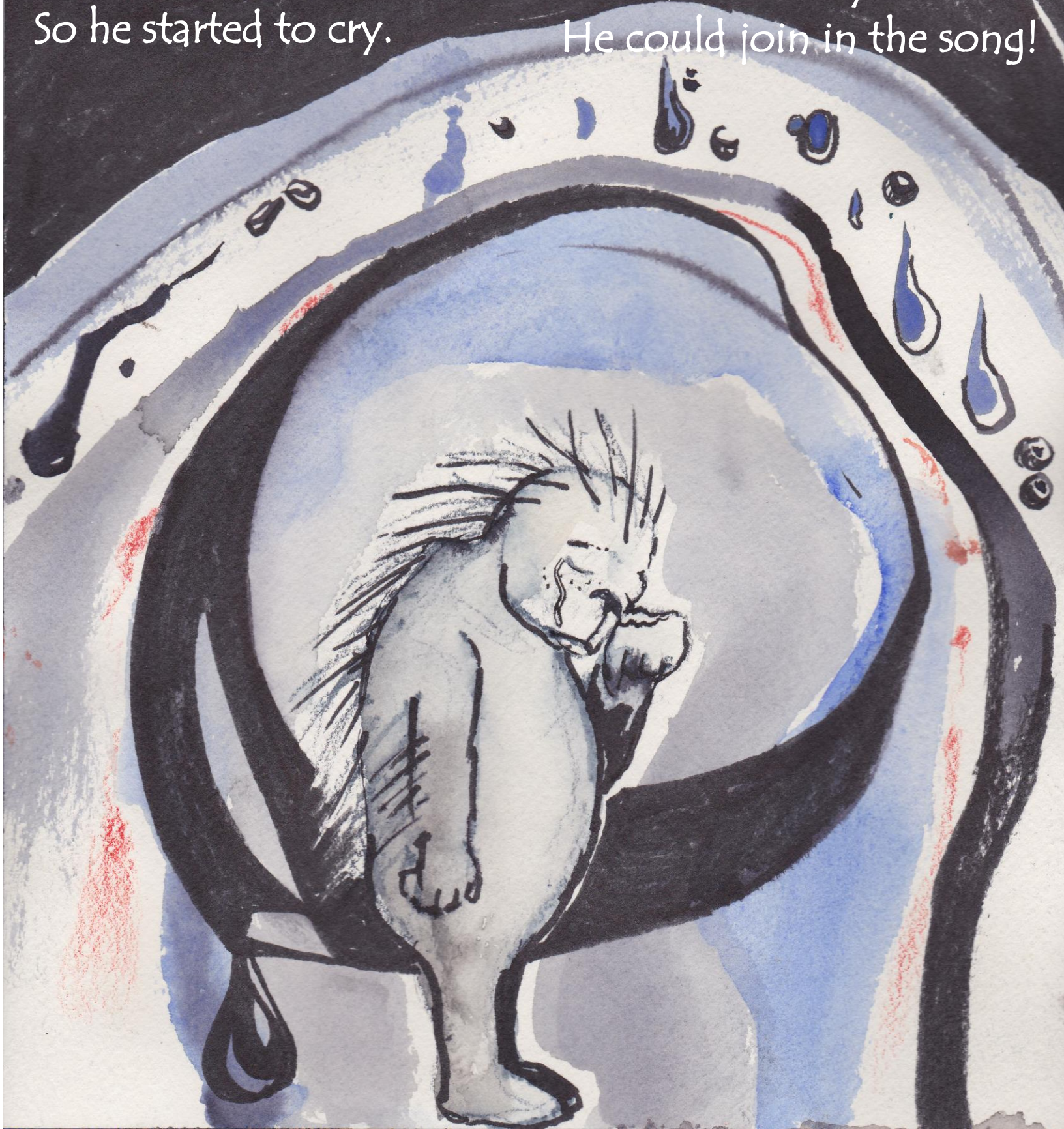
So Pepper blew out
As much air as he could,
But the sound didn't come out
The way that it should!

It squawked and it squeaked,
(It sounded quite bad)
Pepper failed once again
And it made him feel sad...



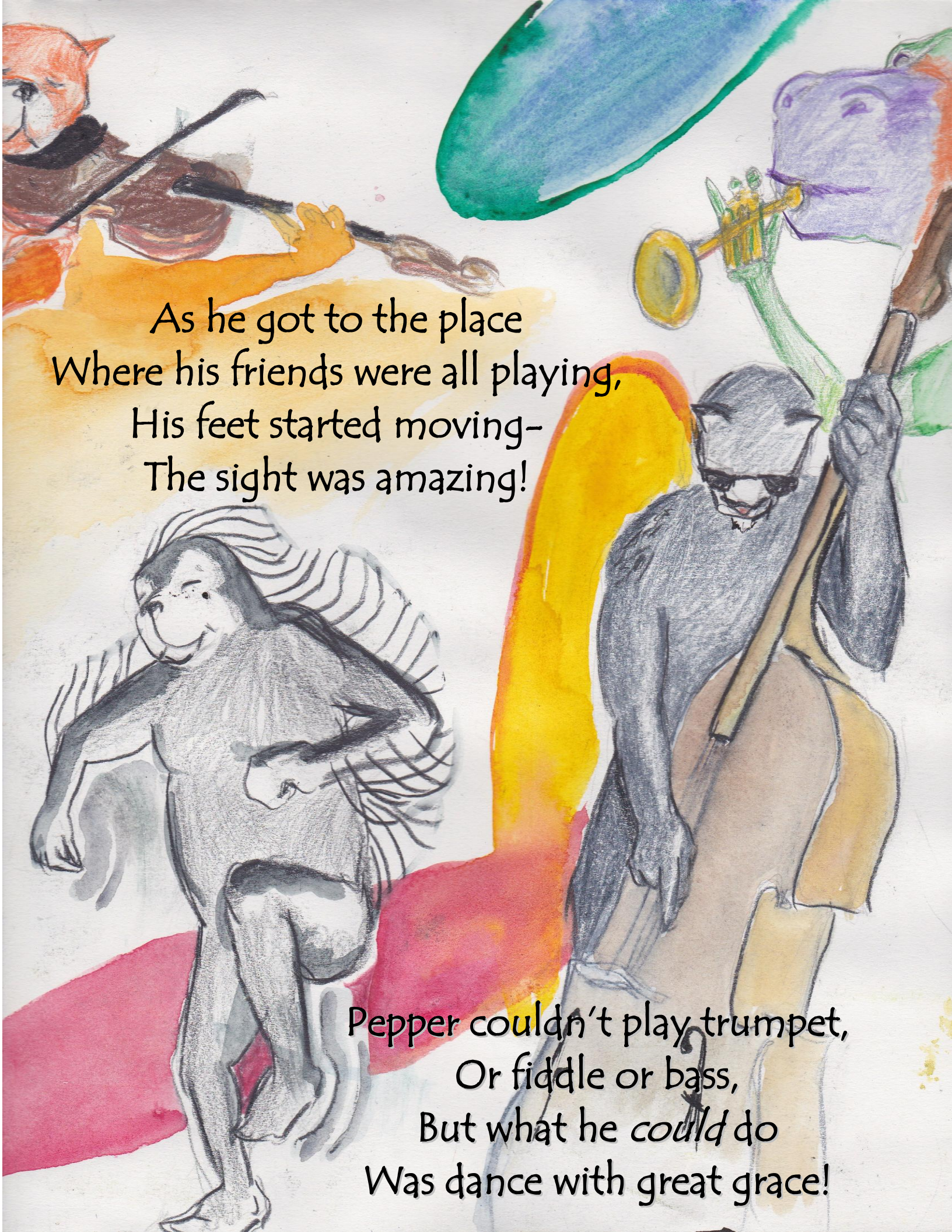
At home Pepper wondered
What else he could try,
He had no ideas
So he started to cry.

He was short, he was sharp,
He was everything wrong-
There would be no way on Earth
He could join in the song!



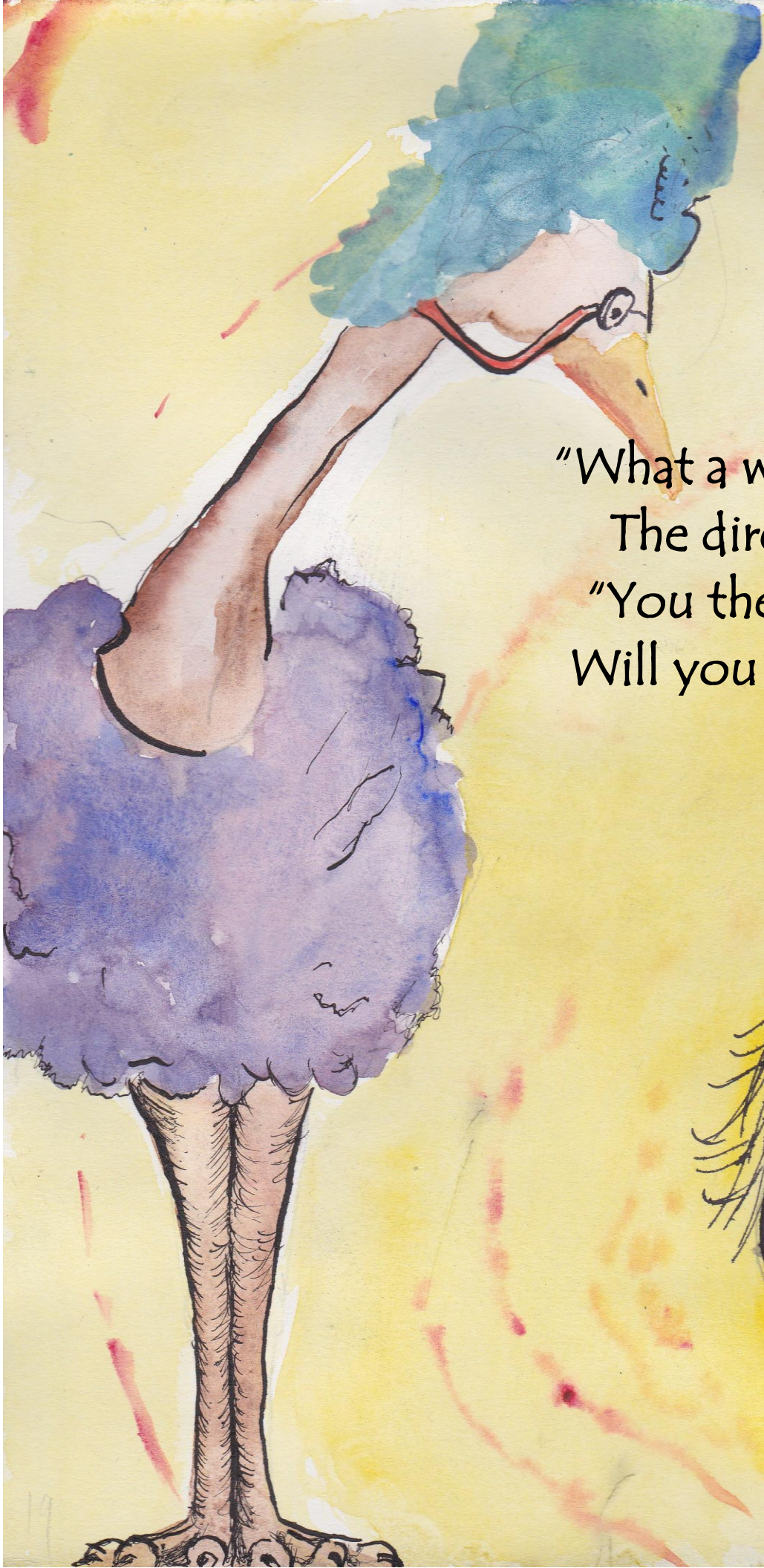
"I guess I could watch"
Pepper thought with a sigh,
And set out to see
The parade passing by





As he got to the place
Where his friends were all playing,
His feet started moving—
The sight was amazing!

Pepper couldn't play trumpet,
Or fiddle or bass,
But what he *could* do
Was dance with great grace!



"What a wonderful dancer!"
The director exclaimed
"You there, young man—
Will you lead our parade?"



Pepper couldn't believe
What he heard to be true,
"But I can't play an instrument
I don't fit in with you"

"I'm too different to be
In the parade with my friends,
They all have such talent-
I couldn't lead them."



The director just smiled
At Pepper and then
Said the most wonderful words
That have ever been said:

"It's not wrong to be different—
In fact look around—
All these creatures are special
No duplicates found!

"We have trumpets and fiddles,
And oboes and flutes,
But what we need most
Is you leading our group.

"Your rhythm and style
Could never be beat
You do what you're best at
While moving your feet.

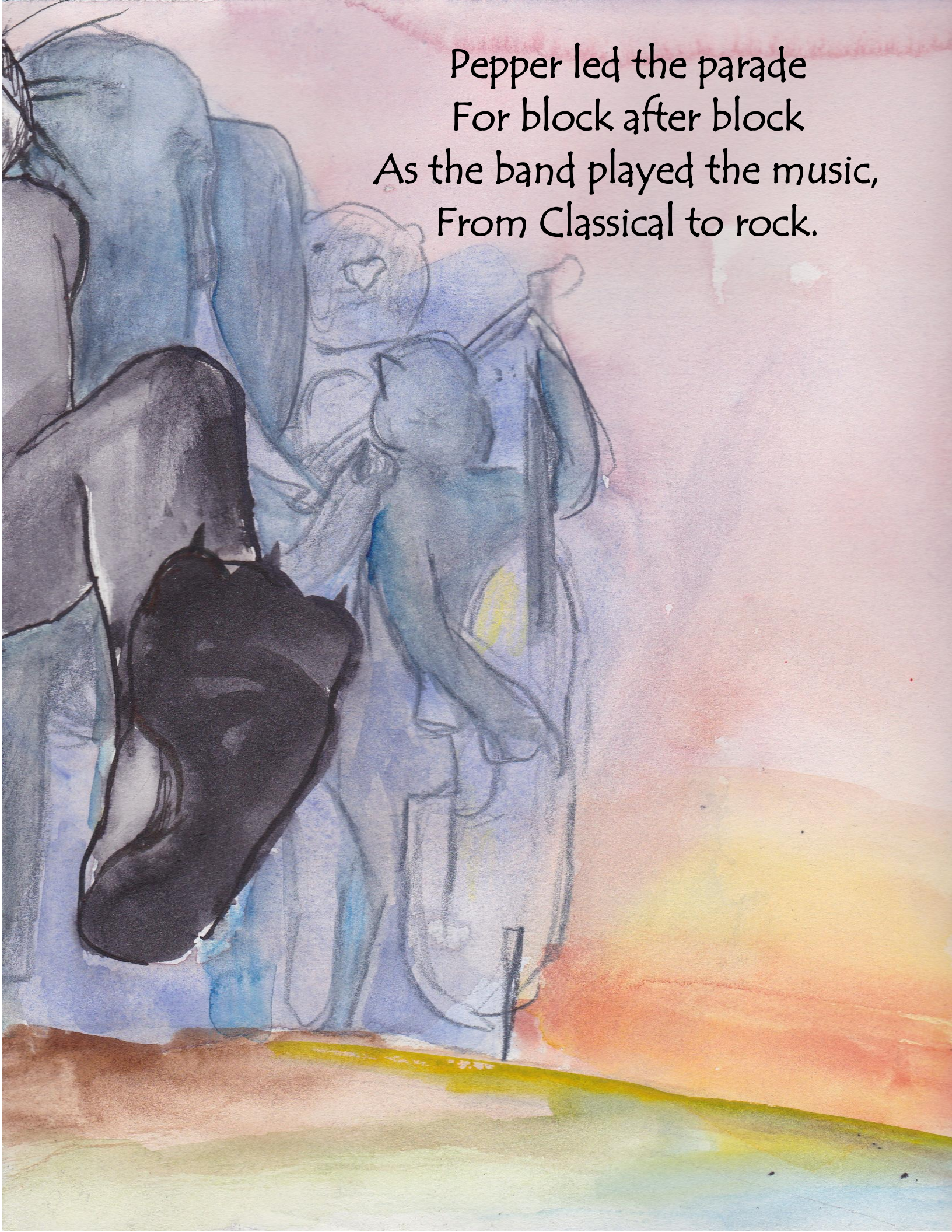
"And without a conductor
Our band falls apart
So what do you say, boy?
The parade's about to start!"



Pepper smiled excitedly
Then took the baton
And with a deep breath,
Started dancing along.



Pepper led the parade
For block after block
As the band played the music,
From Classical to rock.



When the band was all done,
Creatures cheered and they clapped,
For never before
Had the parade gone like that
It was the best it had been
In the history of the land
Thanks to Pepper the Porcupine
Leading the band.

