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opening extract from

I Believe in Unicorns

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I BELIEVE IN UNICORNS

Michael Morpurgo

Illustrated by Gary Blythe

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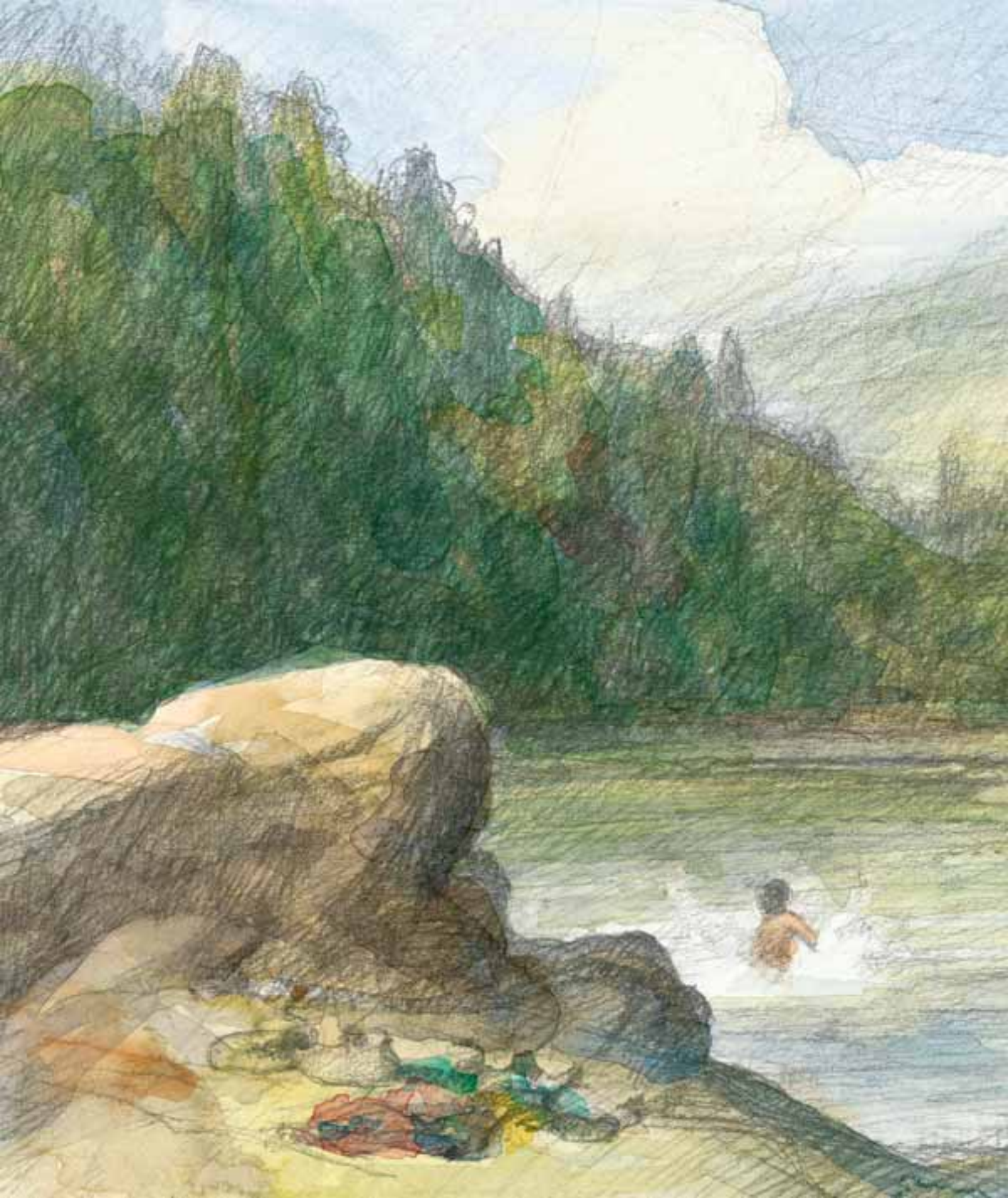
My name is Tomas Porec. I was just eight years old when I first saw the unicorn, and that was twenty long years ago.

I grew up and live to this day in a mountain village that we like to think is just about big enough to call itself a small town. Hidden away in a remote valley it might seem to travellers passing through that it is far too sleepy for

anything of any significance ever to have happened here. Not so, for something very significant did happen, something both dreadful and wonderful at the same time.

For me as a child this place was my whole world, a place full of familiar wonders. Being an only child I spent a lot of time wandering about on my own. I knew every cobbled alleyway, every lamppost. I knew all the houses, and I knew everyone who lived in them too – and their dogs. And they knew me. From my bedroom window in the farmhouse where we lived on the edge of town, I could look out over the rooftops to the church tower. I loved to watch

the swifts screaming around it in swooping squadrons on summer evenings. I loved the deep dong of the church bell that lingered long in the air. But as for going to church, that

was a different matter. If ever I could get out of it I most certainly would. I'd far rather go fishing with Father. He didn't like church any more than I did. Mother and Grandma always went, religiously.

But church or not, Sunday was always the best day of the week. In the cold of winter Father and I would go tobogganing on the hillside. In the heat of the summer we'd swim in the lakes and stand there under the freezing