GAIA
GODDESS OF EARTH



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For Frieda

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It was Gaia who created the Earth and the universe and the infinite space beyond it. She closed her eyes and the turning Earth came into existence. The salty sea met the rich land and the sky stretched overhead.



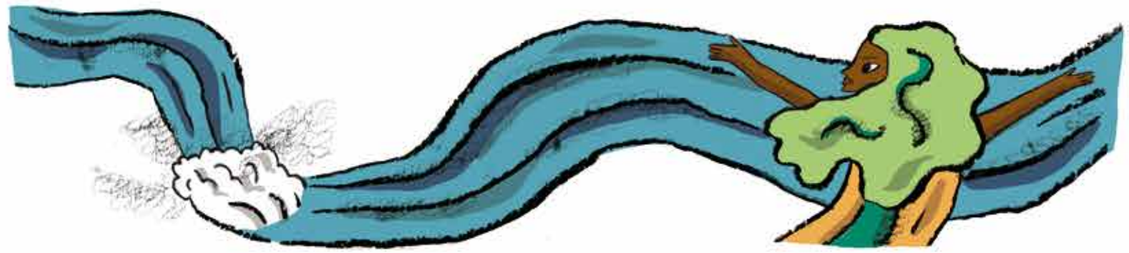
Her husband, Ouranos, was the head of the family — a group of ancient gods who called themselves the Titans. He came to see what Gaia had made.



Gaia travelled through the new land, perfecting it. She called forth the trees and they reached from their roots to the sky.



She summoned waterfalls and sent them tumbling over cliffs. She created the tides that sloshed on the shore.



Into this world, she let loose the animals —

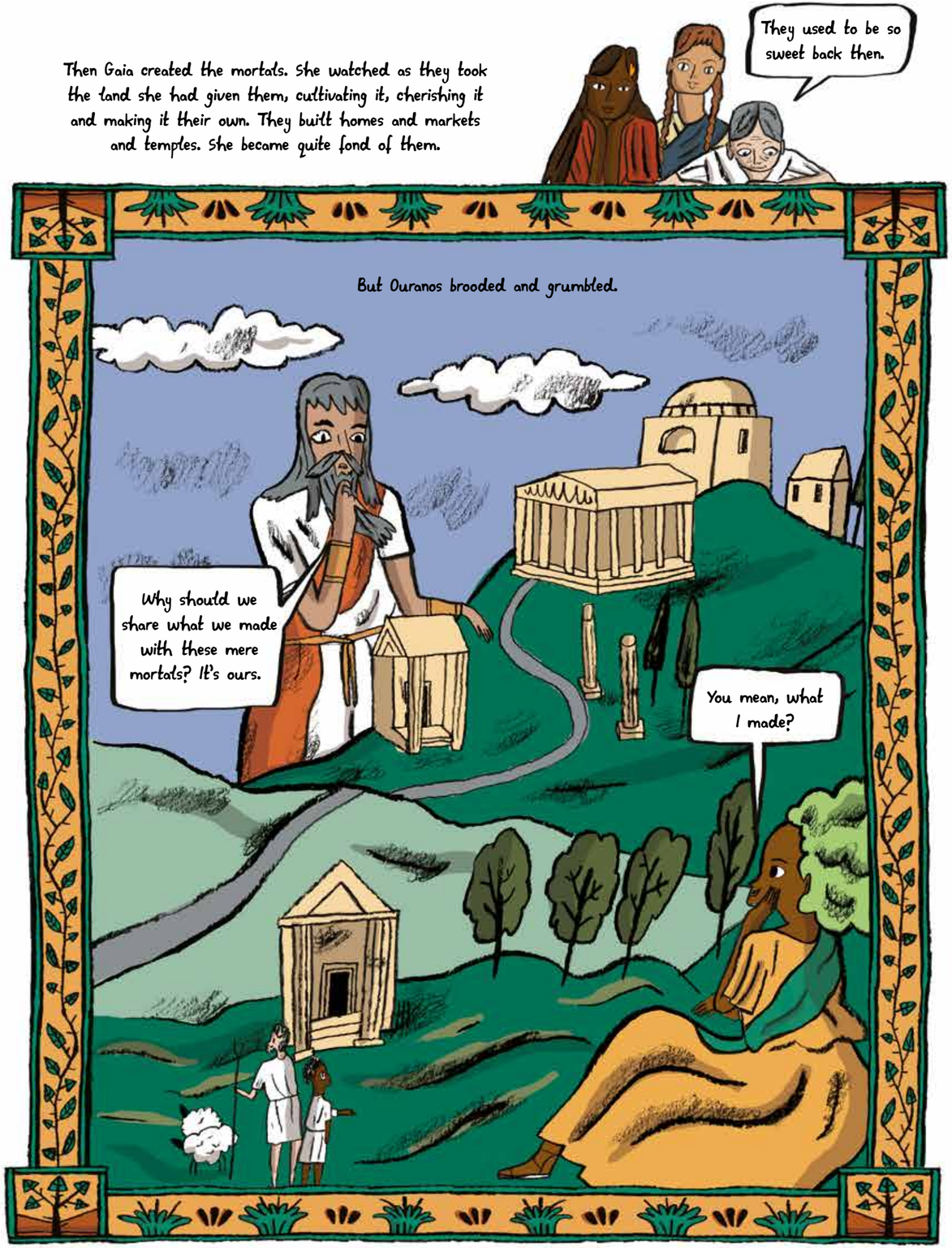


some on two legs, some on four. Some with no legs at all but fluttering wings or slithering spines.

There were creatures so small she could barely see them, and others that roared through the forests or curved over the sea.



Then Gaia created the mortals. She watched as they took the land she had given them, cultivating it, cherishing it and making it their own. They built homes and markets and temples. She became quite fond of them.



Out of the way, Helios.

But soon, Selene and Helios began to squabble. The only person who could keep the peace was their sister, Eos — the dawn — who kept their chariots apart at sunrise and sunset.

Selene, you big moon face, try shining a little brighter why don't you?

Oi, chariots where I can see them!

Siblings, eh? Who'd have them?

Hey!

Gaia taught her children and grandchildren to love her creation, and the whole family offered to help look after it. They helped transform the Earth from night to day and back again.

By night, Gaia's granddaughter, Selene, carried the Moon across the sky in a chariot drawn by two milk-white horses.

By day, Gaia's grandson, Helios, carried the Sun. Not to be outdone by Selene his chariot had four horses and cast a huge shadow as it galloped across the sky from East to West.

It seemed as though Ouranos's mood had seeped into Gaia's world. The peaceful turn of days had become a daily argument as Helios and Selene fought for control. When Helios won, the days were long and exhausting. But other times, Selene dragged the darkness of night on and on.

The mortals were distraught. The animals hid in confusion. The world had always been good to them. Something was wrong. Echoing in the distance, somewhere far away, a drumbeat of chaos started to sound out.

Meanwhile, storms were rising and sending cliff edges tumbling into the sea. Tornadoes tore through fresh crops and the ground rumbled under the little dwellings the mortals had built.

Ouranos, do you know anything about this?

About what?

The trouble on Earth. Something just isn't right.

Oh that. I thought a little fear might do the mortals good. You know, keep everyone on the edge of their seats.

Look, they've started asking us for forgiveness. They've left us offerings at the altar.

Whoa. Things are starting to get pretty wild round here.

Gaia was furious. She had built this world and seen it grow with goodness and with love. If she could only reason with Ouranos, perhaps he would understand. But he wouldn't listen to her. He just didn't care. And the more she argued with him, the more his mood soured, his face twisting in rage. He got angrier and angrier.









In a raging temper, Ouranos turned his power on Gaia. He tied her in bonds of thunder and lightning, trapping her in the strength of her own creations. Gleeful, and in charge at last, he sent floods across the Earth and set the heavens blazing. The other Titan gods bowed down before him, leaving Gaia defenceless.



Gaia was locked in a dark prison, suspended above the heavens, with only the crackle of lightning to see by. She was in pain, and powerless to stop Ouranos. He allowed her no freedom, except visits from her children. But they were too afraid of their father to help her.



All except Cronus, her youngest. He was bold, like his father. Cronus wasn't just fearless — he was cunning too. Together, he and Gaia hatched a plan.

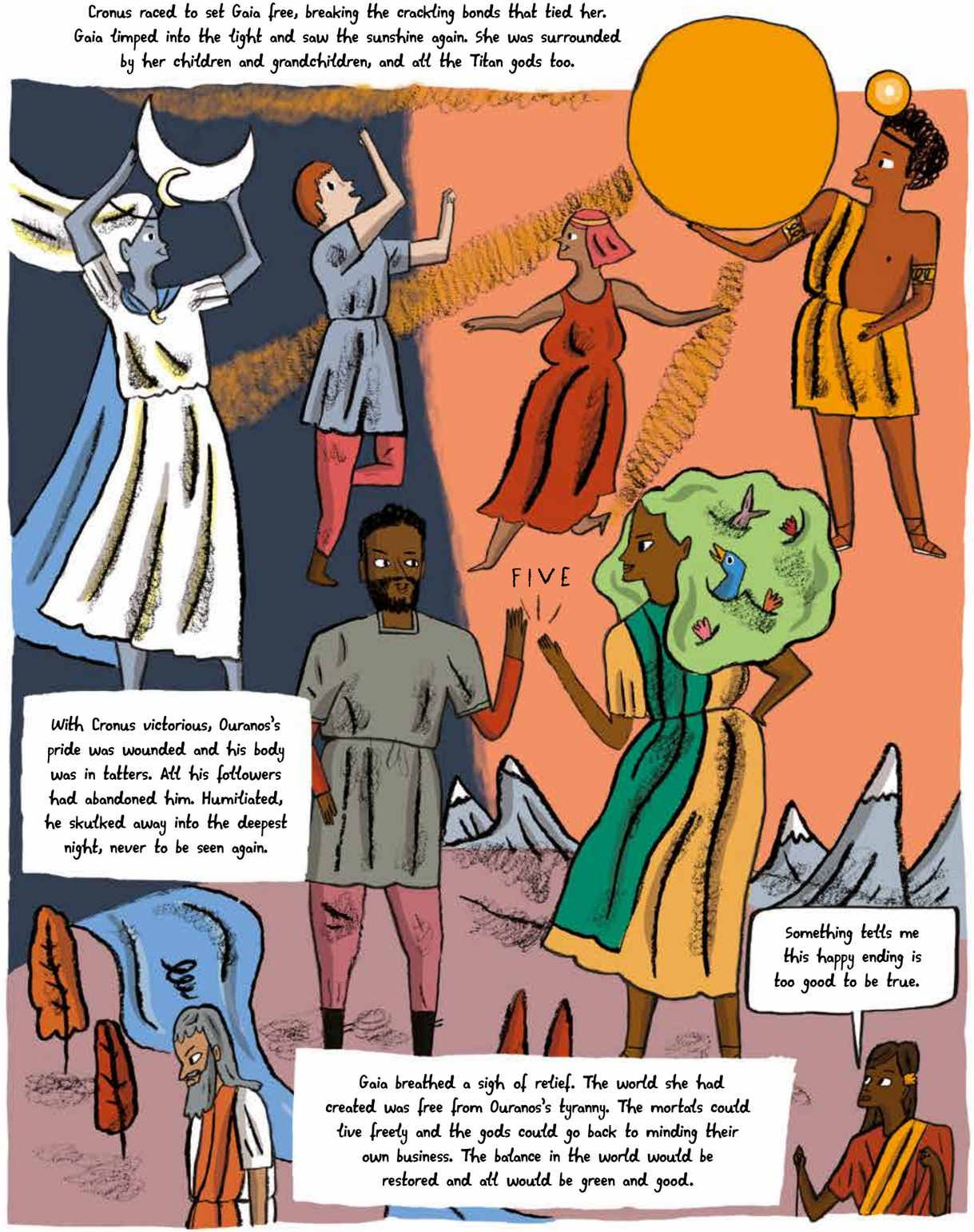


So, Cronus lay in wait for his father. Ouranos came to see Gaia in the darkest hour of the night. In the gloom, Cronus snuck up on his father and struck Ouranos down with the sickle.





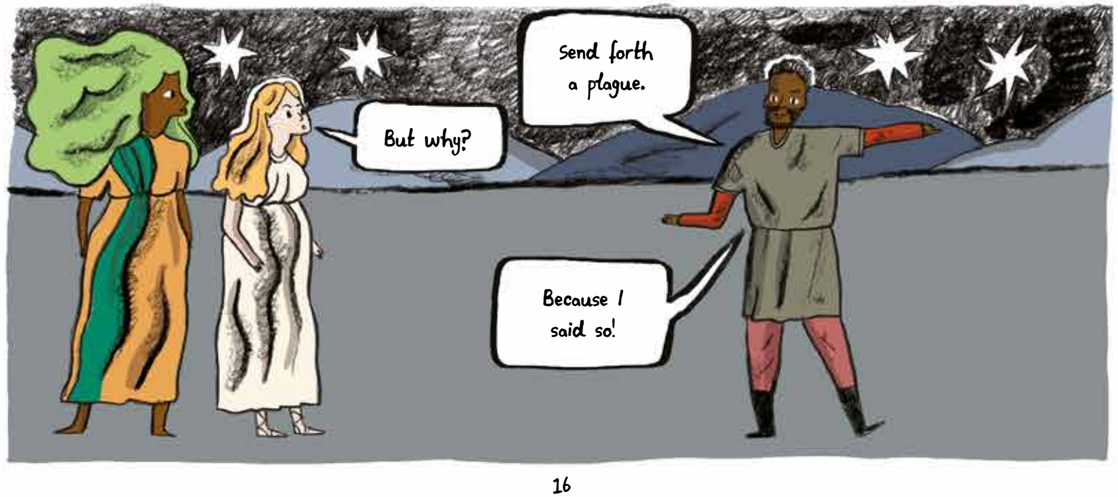
Cronus raced to set Gaia free, breaking the crackling bonds that tied her. Gaia limped into the light and saw the sunshine again. She was surrounded by her children and grandchildren, and all the Titan gods too.



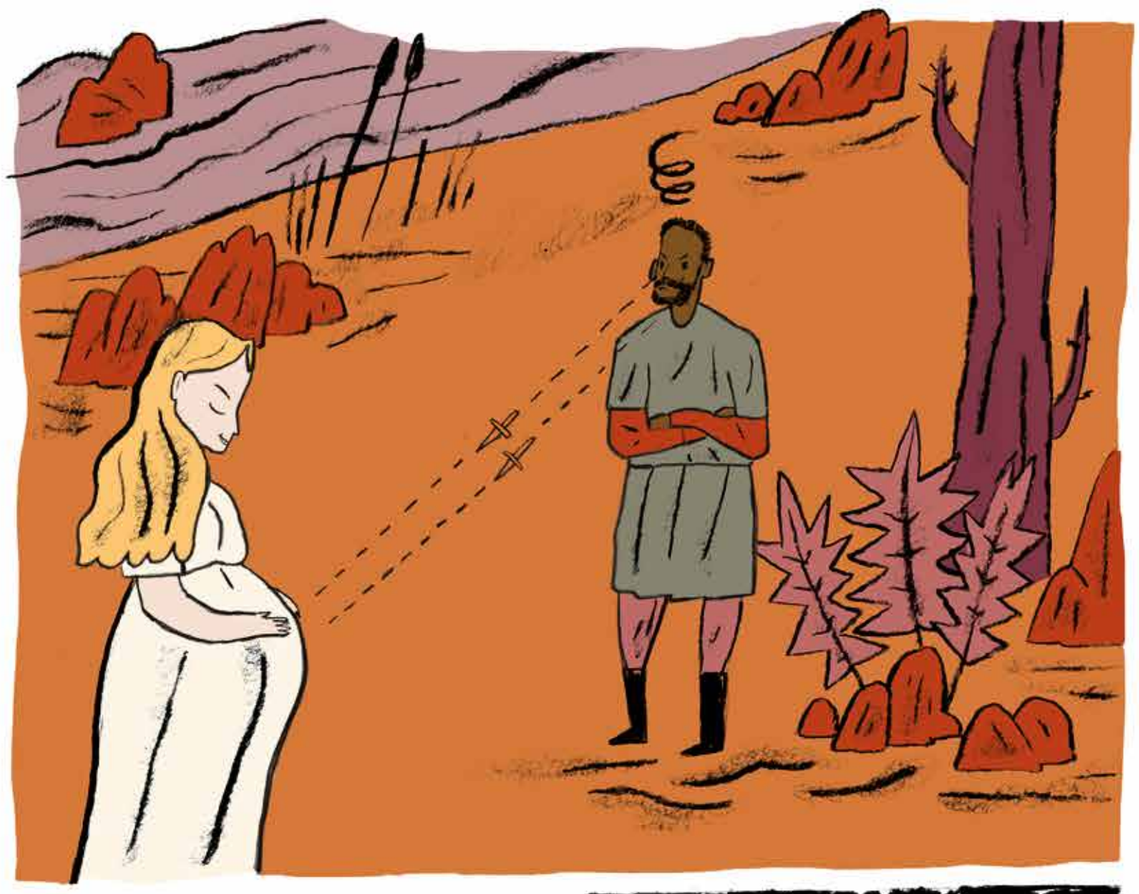
Everyone applauded Cronus for what he had done and he puffed up with pride. But Gaia saw the glint in his eye and she knew that something had changed in him. The story was not over.



While Gaia had been locked away, Ouranos had brought Cronus up. He'd taught his son to be just like him. So, Cronus looked on the Earth just as Ouranos had, with greed and disdain. He believed he had earned the right to rule over the Titans, and why stop there? Why not the Earth and the mortals too? The drumbeat of chaos sounded out once again. And Cronus became just as much of a tyrant as his father before him. His wife, Rhea, stood nervously by his side.



As time passed, Cronus became distrustful, doubting everyone around him. If he had overthrown his father, what was to stop his own children from doing the same to him? So he decided to do something unthinkably wicked.

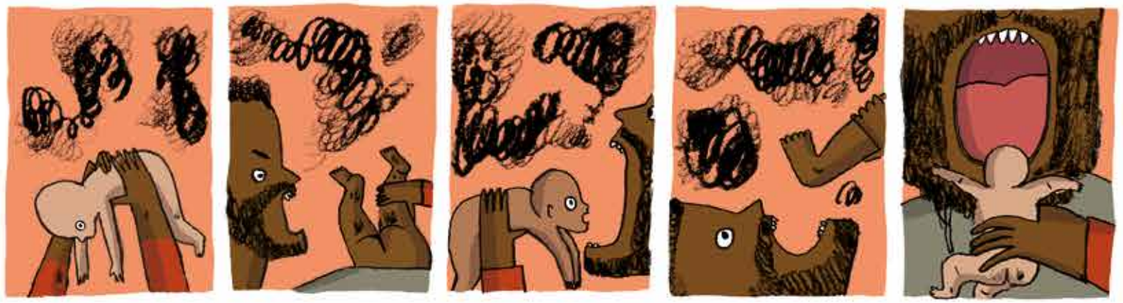


When Rhea gave birth to their first child, he swallowed it whole.





Rhea lost five children to Cronus's appetites, one after another.



When she was pregnant for a sixth time, Rhea asked Gaia for help. She couldn't bear to lose another child.



When the sixth baby was born, Gaia swaddled up two little bundles. The first contained the happy little boy and he was snuck quickly out of the room. The second contained a lump of hard rock. When Cronus stormed into the room, he looked down on what he thought was his child.







And he swallowed the rock whole.







At the top of Mount Olympus, the highest peak in Greece, Cronus had a stomach ache that tasted fifteen long years.



He punished the world with plague, famine and flooding.



But it made no difference, his stomach still twisted and turned, trying to expel Gaia's rock.



Meanwhile, in a little town down in the mortal lands, Gaia and Rhea were hidden away with the child whom they had named Zeus. The bundle grew into a toddler, then a boy, and soon he was nearly a man.

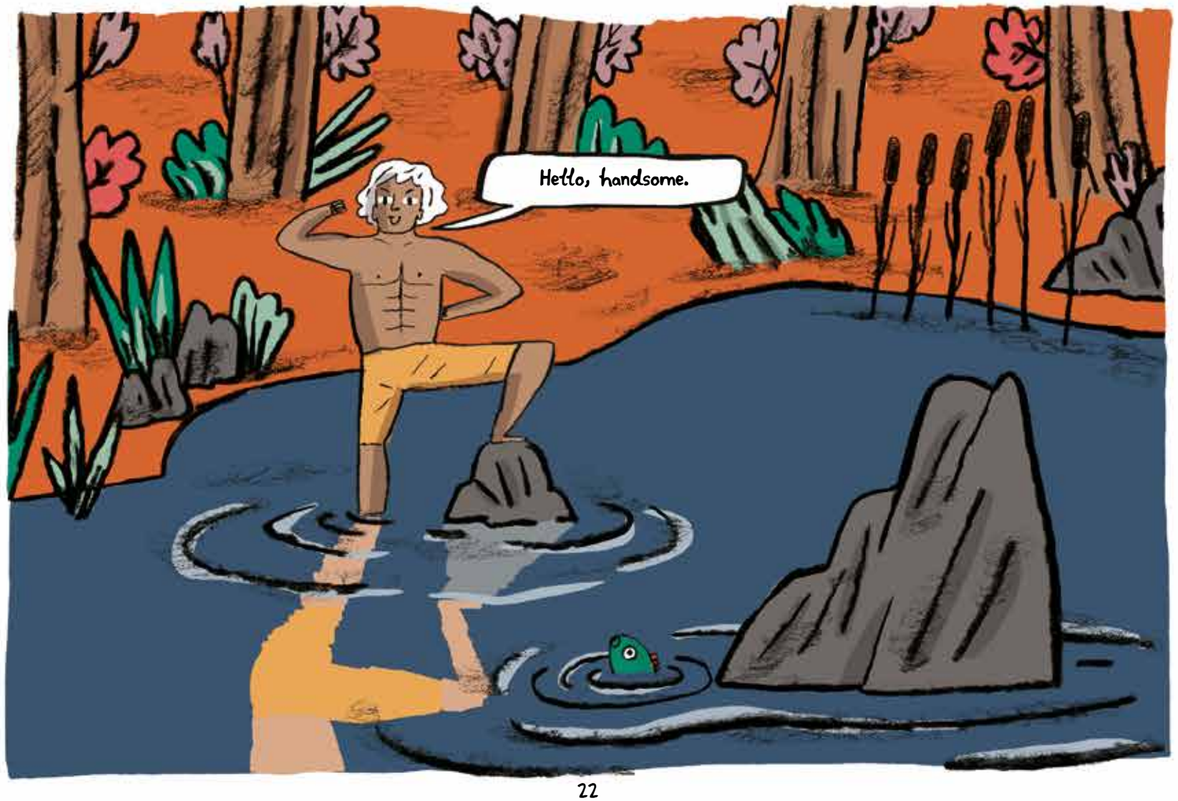


Zeus was raised on fruit and honey and the goodness of the Earth. For years, he was mild tempered and he did exactly as his mother and grandmother asked of him.

But when Zeus turned fifteen, something changed. He had always been uncommonly fast and had beaten every child in the town races, but now he laughed in their faces when he won.

He was lightning quick at his sums but now he boasted he could calculate anything.

He became more and more convinced of his own brilliance. When Zeus discovered his reflection in the still waters of the river, he went back day after day to admire himself. He was restless and wouldn't do as he was told.



Gaia watched the boy closely. She recognised the glint in his eye and the way he tapped his fingers on the table impatiently. It had been years since she'd heard that sound, but she recognised the rhythm – the drumbeat of chaos.

