

# THE LONG VOYAGE

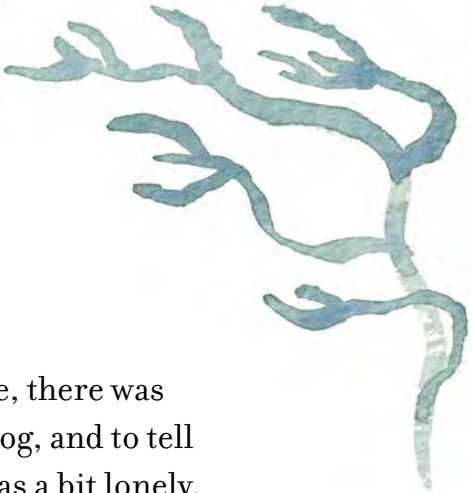
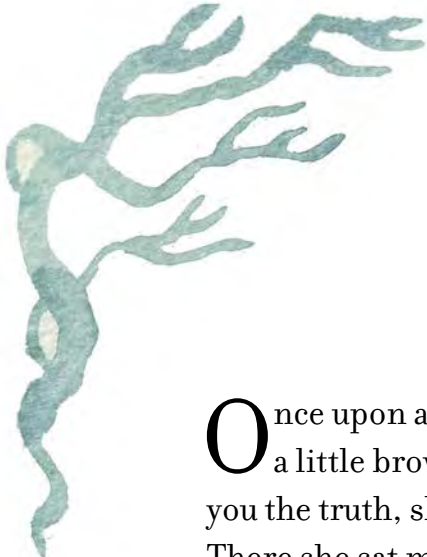
Amanda Vigor









For my Dad.



Once upon a time, there was  
a little brown dog, and to tell  
you the truth, she was a bit lonely.  
There she sat most days, all by  
herself – a beautiful little thing,  
though this drawing couldn't  
quite capture her true charm.







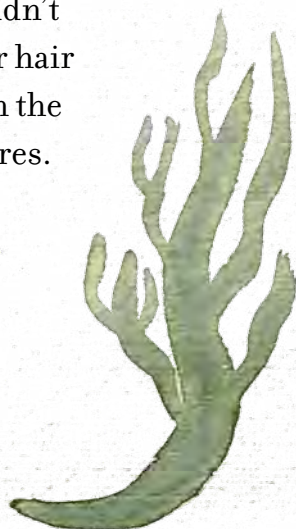
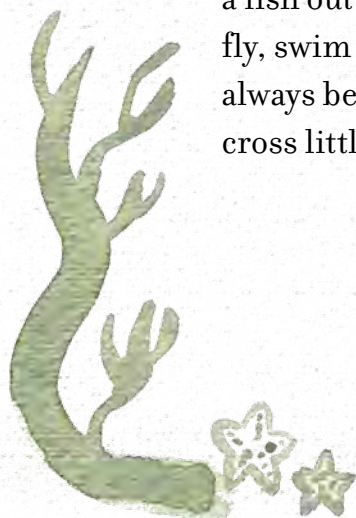







Being small and charming doesn't automatically make you friends. The little brown dog tried to fit in; she attempted to fly with the birds, dive with the fish, swim with the seals, and play with the snappy creatures in the rock pools.

While the animals didn't shoo her away, she couldn't help but feel like a fish out of water. She couldn't fly, swim gracefully and her hair always became tangled with the cross little sideways creatures.



A watercolor illustration of a bay scene. The background is a light, textured blue. In the corners, there are watercolor drawings of coral and seaweed in shades of red, orange, and green. A small, five-pointed starfish with a white center and orange outline is located in the bottom right corner, near the seaweed.

Meanwhile, across the bay,  
Ma fisherman went about his  
usual business but this time with a  
pair of twinkly brown eyes watching  
him from afar. The little brown  
dog followed him everywhere.













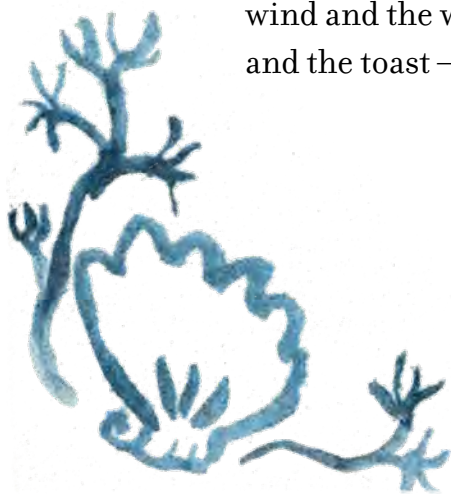
By the end of the day,  
when the fisherman left  
a delicious mackerel on a plate  
by the open door of his cottage,  
she knew she was home. "Come  
on little one, these nets won't fold  
themselves," said the fisherman.





The little brown dog watched how slowly and carefully the fisherman folded his nets, and she helped as best she could – even if she made more knots than were originally there – the kind fisherman patiently let her learn. There was no hurry, really.

From then on, they became the best of friends. Like the sea and the sand, the wind and the waves, the tea and the toast – life was good.







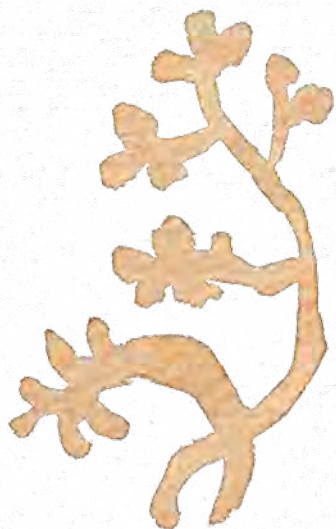
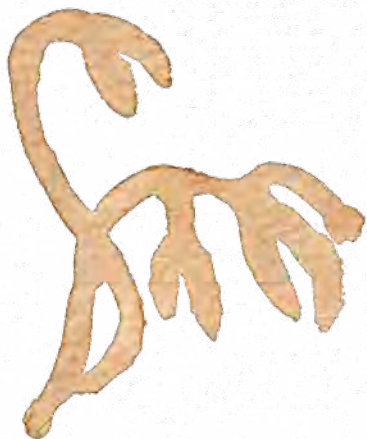


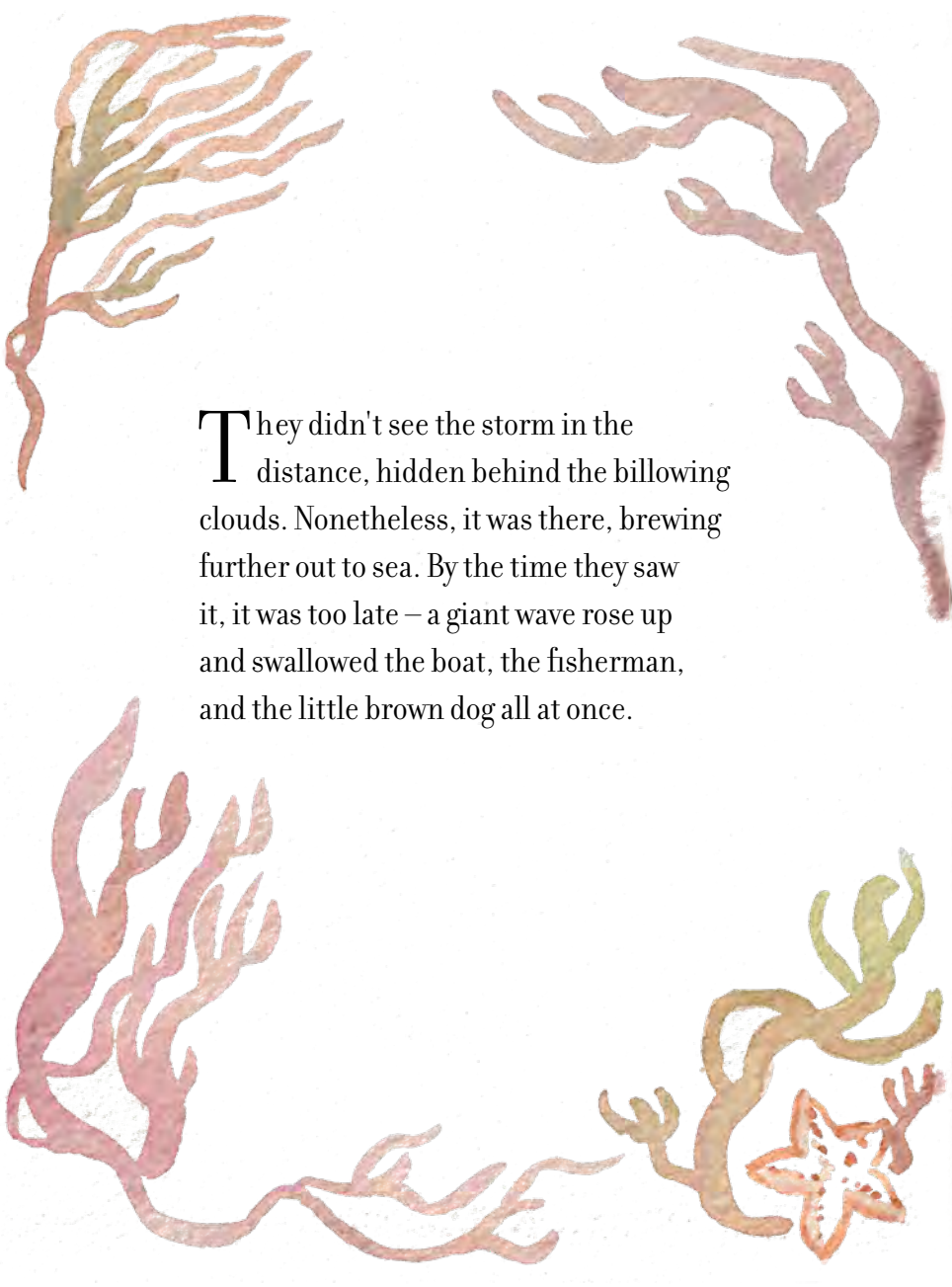






The day started off like any other day: breakfast and a sniff about outside before they set off to go fishing. "Come on little one, this boat won't sail itself," said the fisherman. He said it every time, but the little brown dog's tail wagged with excitement, as if it were a brand new adventure.



A watercolor illustration of coral and seaweed in shades of red, orange, and green, framing the central text. The coral is located in the top-left, top-right, and bottom-left corners, while the seaweed is in the bottom-right corner. A small starfish is also visible in the bottom-right corner.

They didn't see the storm in the distance, hidden behind the billowing clouds. Nonetheless, it was there, brewing further out to sea. By the time they saw it, it was too late – a giant wave rose up and swallowed the boat, the fisherman, and the little brown dog all at once.

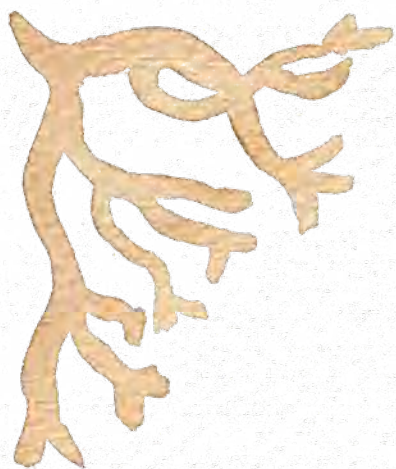




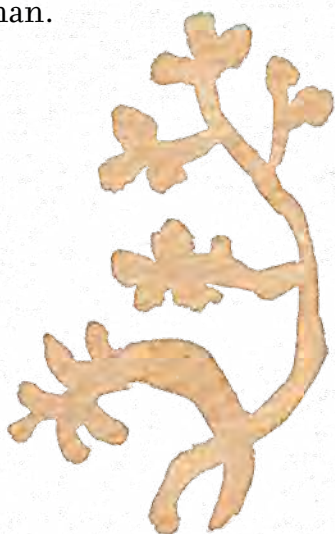




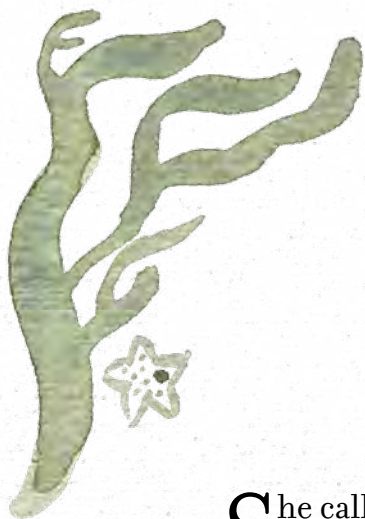




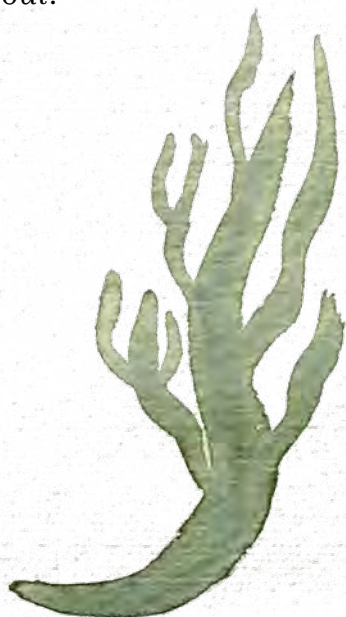
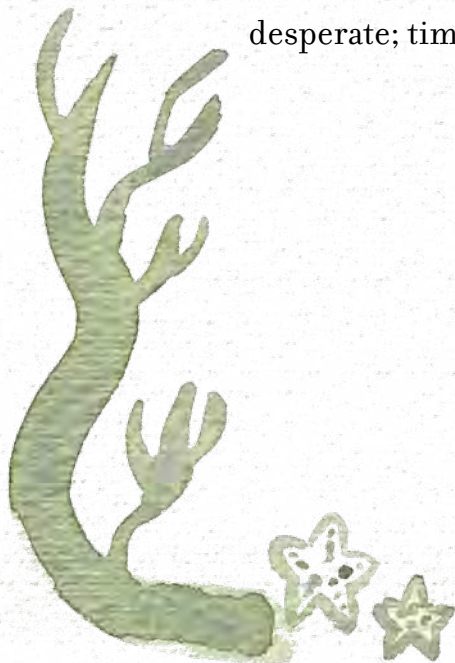
Some might panic in such a situation, but have you ever seen a dog fall in the water? They just know how to swim; it's amazing. The little dog, though not as graceful as the fish or the seals, was quick and strong for such a little thing. She swam and swam, searching for the fisherman.







She called to the seals to help,  
they came, but couldn't find  
him. She called to the birds, they  
flew to help, searching the top  
of the sea, but found nothing.  
She called the fish to search, but  
all to no avail. The little dog was  
desperate; time was running out.





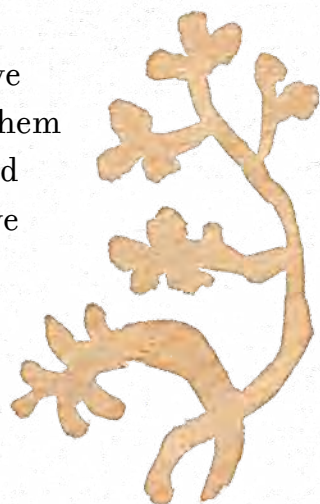




Then, in the deep distance,  
the little dog heard an eerie call.

The sea went still. The call came  
closer, and then more stillness.  
Silence enveloped the ocean.  
The little dog held her breath,  
well, she was underwater after  
all. A blackness slowly shrouded  
her, and she wouldn't mind you  
knowing she was a bit terrified.  
Then, in the darkness, an eye  
appeared from the black velvet  
depths. The eye glinted and very  
slowly closed, then opened again.

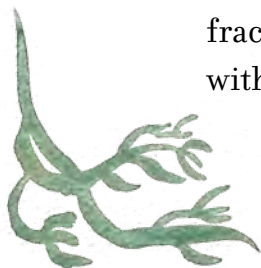
Whales are highly intelligent  
creatures, mammals in fact,  
just like us, but wiser. They live  
very long lives, which allows them  
to gather lots of knowledge and  
wisdom over the years. They've  
seen it all before, if you like.





The little dog looked to the wise old whale for help and guidance, the inkiness looming around her from every angle. "Help me find him," the little dog pleaded. The whale was silent. "Please help me", the little dog pleaded again, slowly getting used to the fact that her whole body was roughly the same size as the whale's eye.

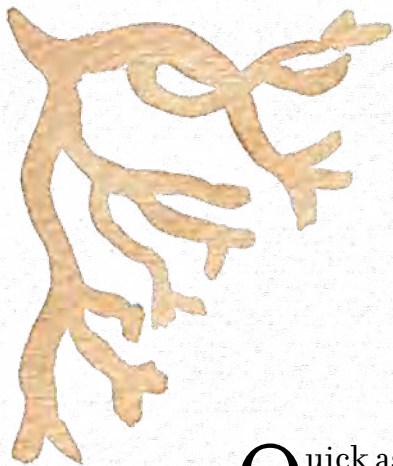
The whale had been silent for a while now. The little brown dog all at once realised the whale's silence was teaching her; he was telling her that she had the answer all along. The whale's eye closed again. "You think I can find him all by myself?" The whale remained still and silent. The little brown dog tried to read his mind. "I'm good at sniffing!" She thought. The whale's eye opened fractionally. "That's it! I can find him with my nose!" The eye closed again.















Quick as a flash, the little brown dog set off. To this day, she swears the wise old whale told her how to save the fisherman. But actually, some whales aren't that clever after all and can, in fact, sleep with their eyes open. Dogs' noses, on the other hand, are very clever and can smell things up to 12 miles away. The little brown dog closed her eyes and turned off everything but her sense of smell.







She concentrated on one thing only: her nose. There it was — his scent! It came and went, but the little dog persevered until it grew stronger. The birds and fish followed for support. Stronger and stronger the scent got until, at last, after such a long voyage, she found her fisherman washed up on the rocks, not too far from where they had set off. Her relief was immense.







The little brown dog licked the fisherman's face with such affection that he awoke. They were both so happy to be reunited. He wasn't feeling his best, truth be told, but he was never one to complain. They set off for home. "Come on, little one," he said, gathering up some soft, sea-worn driftwood. "The fire won't light itself." They both pictured themselves drying their tired feet in front of the crackling flames of the wood stove back at their cottage, smiles growing on their weary faces.









And in the distance, a beautiful flock of birds pulled the little fishing boat all the way back home.

The End.

