

Dhersu and the Drum

written and illustrated by Matt Durham

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Dhersu had been sick for several weeks. His mother and father were worried and asked his grandmother to care for him. Ayana, in addition to being a kind, old woman, was also very wise and known in the village to be a healer.



Ayanastayed several weeks. Dhersu drank her bitter teas and ate her delicious soups and breads. She often told him stories of the magic creatures who lived nearby. He soon was well again, and Luna invited him to visit her cabin in the mountains.

Every morning at the cabin, Dhersu went to the stream to collect water and mint leaves for the breakfast tea. One day, he was looking at his reflection near a waterfall, when a mysterious round object came floating toward him.



It was a drum, made of animal hide and wood. Dhersu picked up the drum and began to tap on it with his fingertips. Right away, a wild horse came crashing through the bush. “Who’s playing my drum?” it asked.



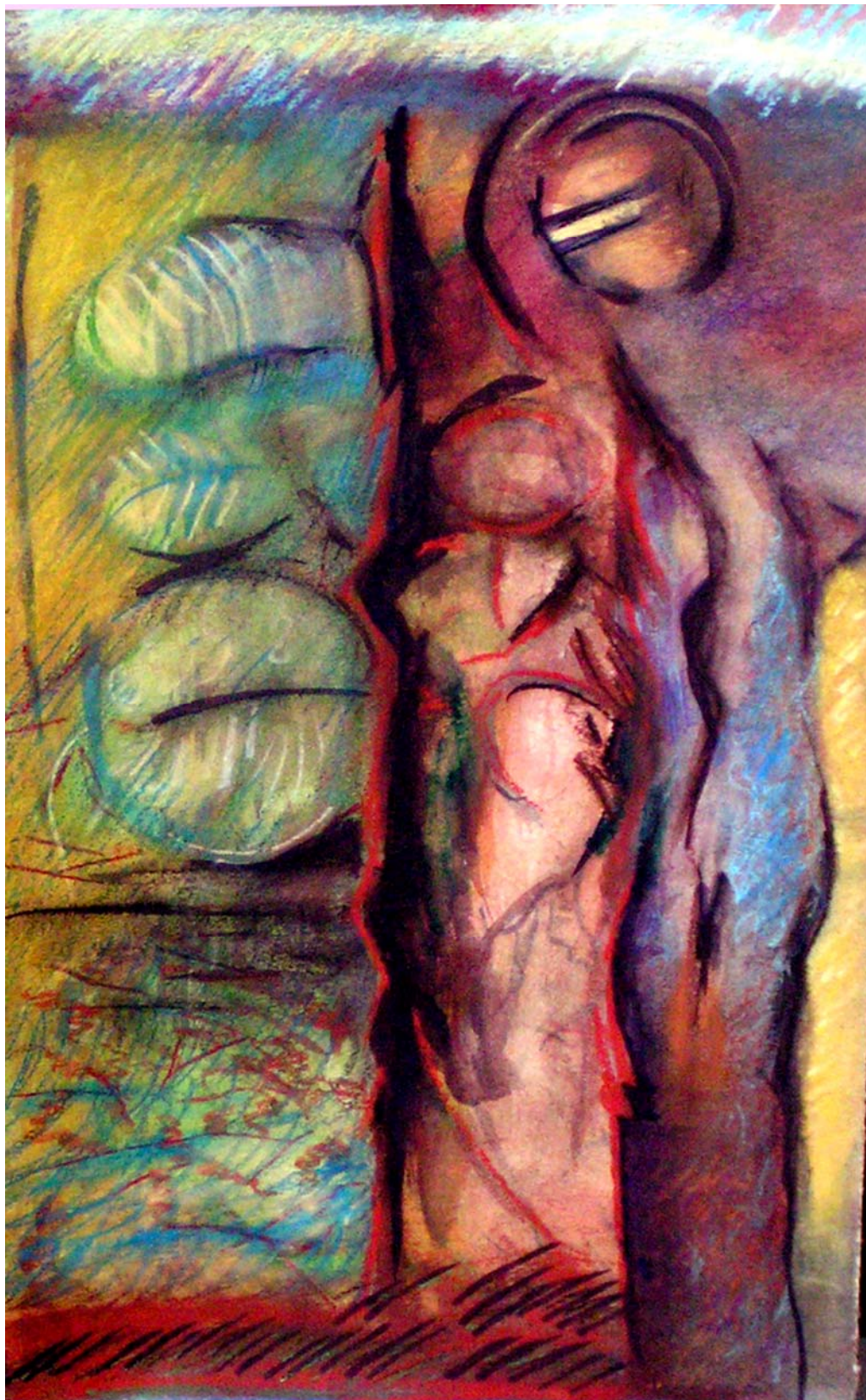
Amazed but curious Dhersu responded, “Is this your drum? It was floating in the stream.”
The horse whinnied, “Yes, but now it has found you. Come with me and I will teach you how it works.”



Dhersu climbed on the horse's back, and together they began to trot along a path through the forest. "My name is Windhorse," said the beautiful beast. "Let me tell you a story. When you beat the drum I will begin."



The boy gently slapped the drum with his palm, “Pah, pah, pah.” Windhorse trotted along the path.
“Long ago, the animal people lived in this land...”



The horse proceeded to tell the story of how Dhersu's people had come to be. The boy became excited and beat the drum more quickly. Windhorse started to run. Faster and faster the drum beat, faster and faster the horse galloped. Soon they were moving so quickly that the forest became a dark blur. Even the path was invisible.



“Now stop, “ said the horse. Dhersu stopped playing the drum. Slowly it began to get lighter until he could see they were travelling through the air. Below were endless stretches of forest, crystal lakes, and ancient mountains. Above, the immense blue sky.



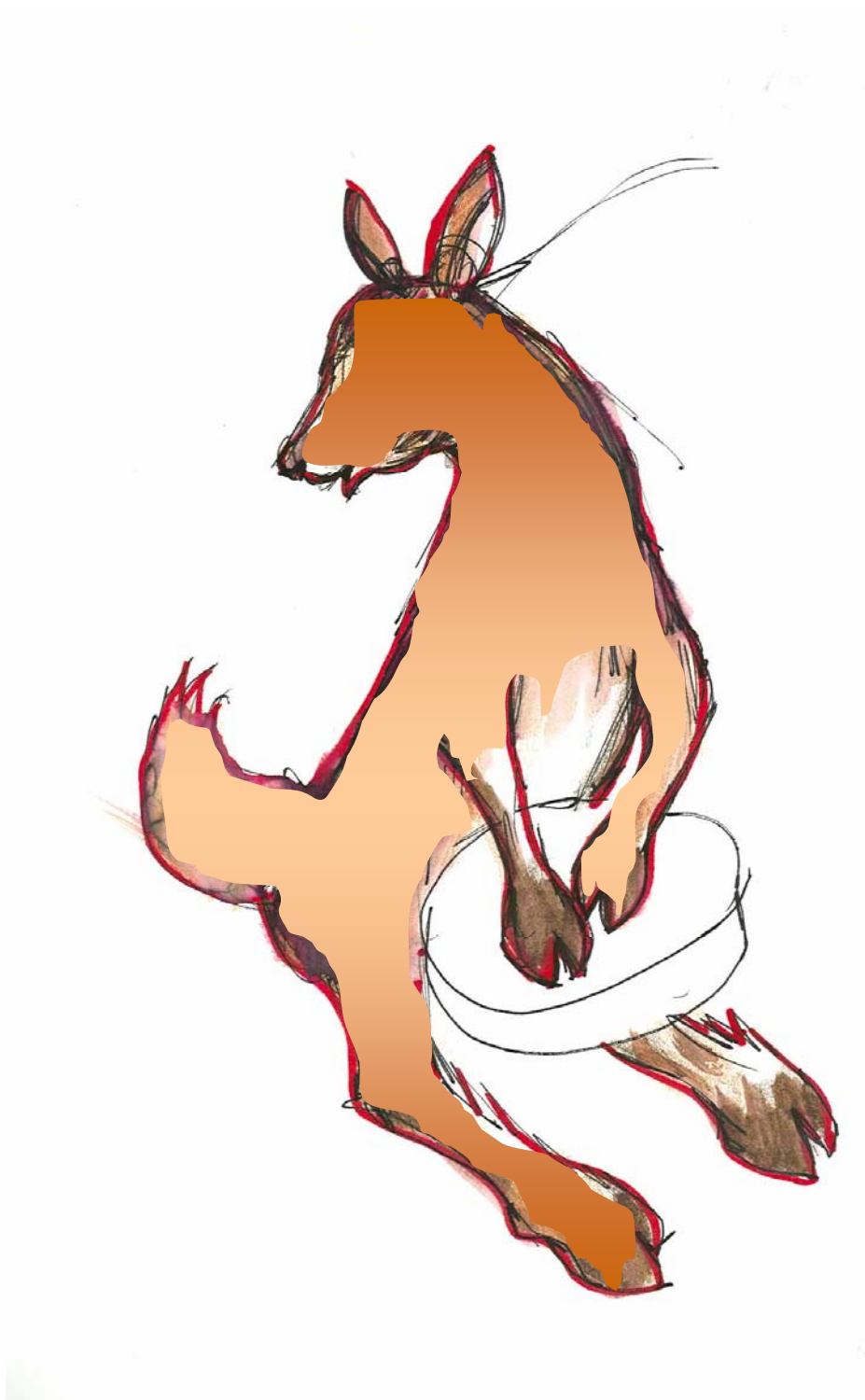
Windhorse slowly descended down into a patch of thick forest at the edge of a shimmering lake. Dheru slid off of Windhorse and together they walked into a clearing.



Sitting around a crackling fire were Blue Wolf, Red Deer, Silver Loon, Golden Tiger, Green Turtle, and Black Bear.



Dhersu handed the drum to Red Deer who began to play a beautiful rhythm. The others opened into hum and drone, purr and growl.



After a time, Red Deer returned the drum to Dhersu. The boy beat the drum, thrum pedum petupi tum, whereupon the animal spirits danced wildly about.



Golden Tiger walked up to Dhersu and softly spoke, "I'll take you back." The boy tucked the drum under his arm and climbed on the tiger's back. Golden Tiger leapt in great bounds through the trees, over boulders and creeks.



He came to a cliff overlooking the emerald lake. "Here we go," he said, and dived straight in with the boy hanging on to his neck.



They swam through the cold water to the bottom of the lake, and into a deep, dark cave. Inside the cave there was air to breathe, and in the back of it there was a flashing light and roaring sound.



Golden Tiger walked into the rushing light, which was cool and seemed to pour down from the sky. On the other side was a clear, azure pool and surrounding forest.

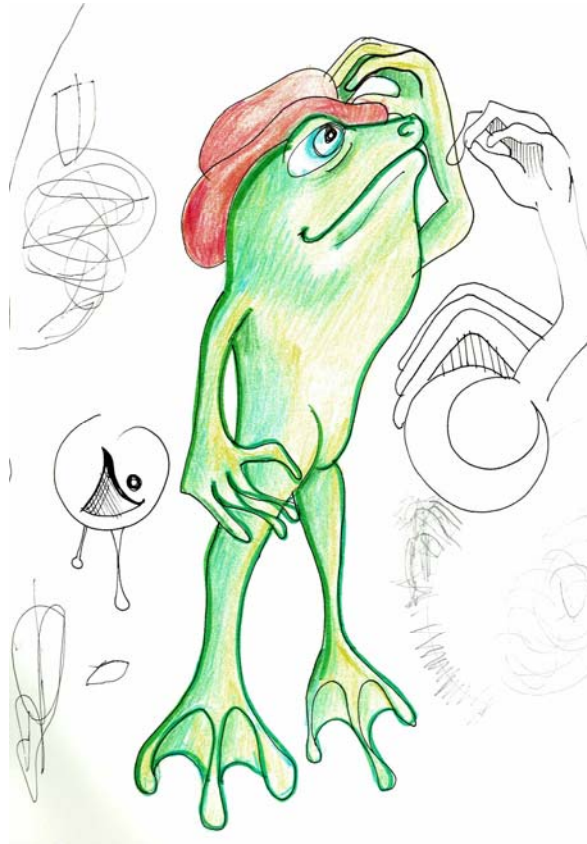


The boy stood upon Golden Tiger, and dived into the pool. “Keep the drum, Dheresu, so that you can call to us,” said Golden Tiger. And with that, he stepped back into the waterfall.

Dheresu returned to where his grandmother was gathering plants. “I see you have found something,” she said with a sparkle in her eye. “Yes,” said Dheresu. “It is was a gift from the forest.”



The Potter Frog



The potter frog from Humboldt County lived inside a tin roof shanty.

Surrounding him were fields and brambles, Redwood trees, and old barn shambles.

Every day he hopped downstairs to knead his clay and make his wares.

He kiln was built of bay slough mud, gathered after winter's flood.

He stacked glazed bisqueware higher and higher and with a match he lit the fire.

It glowed all day, despite the showers. He checked it often, once an hour.

Finally when it was done he took a break and had some fun.