

THE GOLDEN DEER



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THE GOLDEN DEER

Adapted from a Jataka tale

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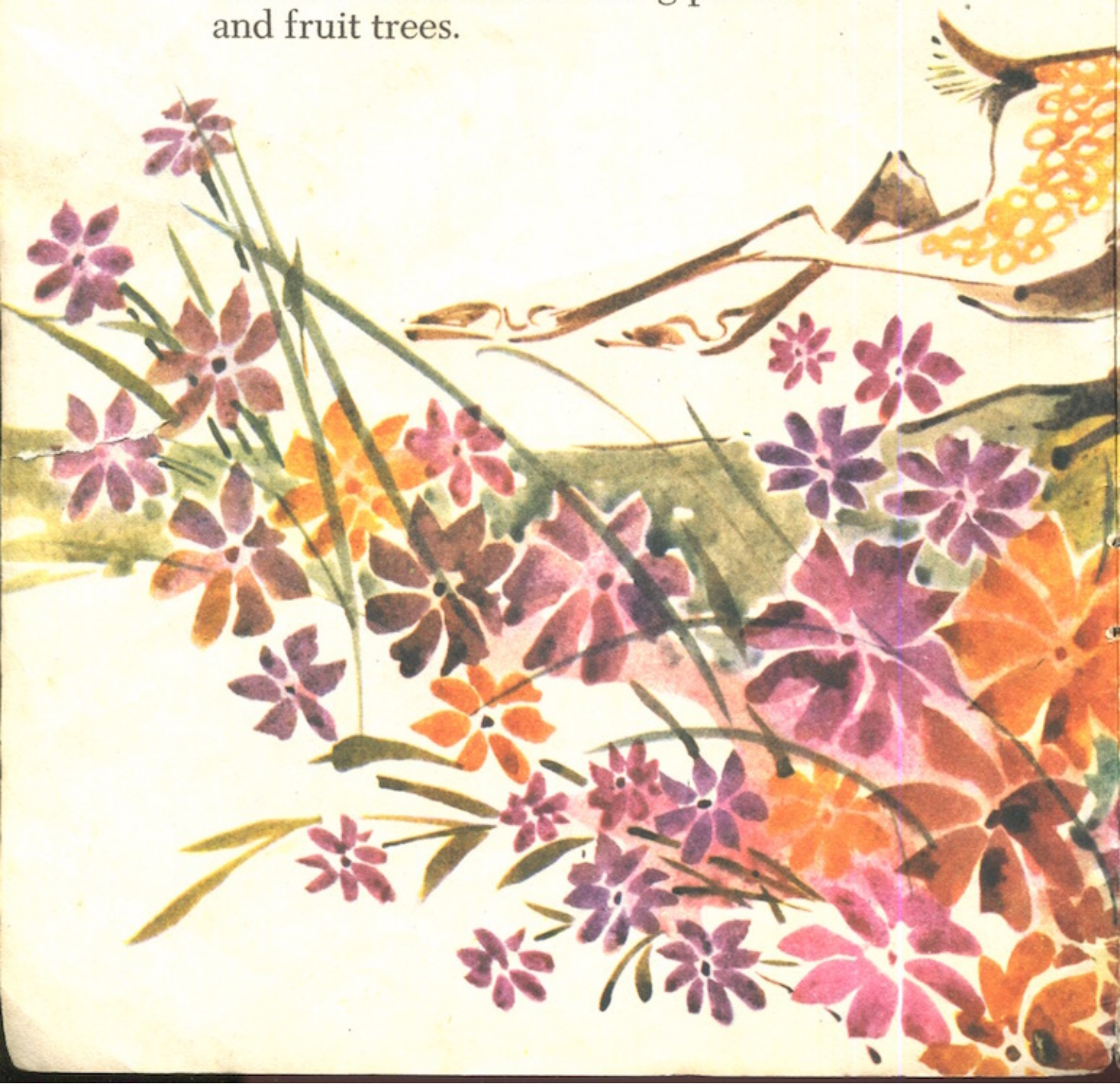


There was once a beautiful deer living in a small jungle on the bank of the River Ganga.

He was tall and majestic. His body was golden in colour. His horns were a silvery spiral, while his legs were shining black.



The deer lived happily in the jungle,
which was full of flowering plants
and fruit trees.

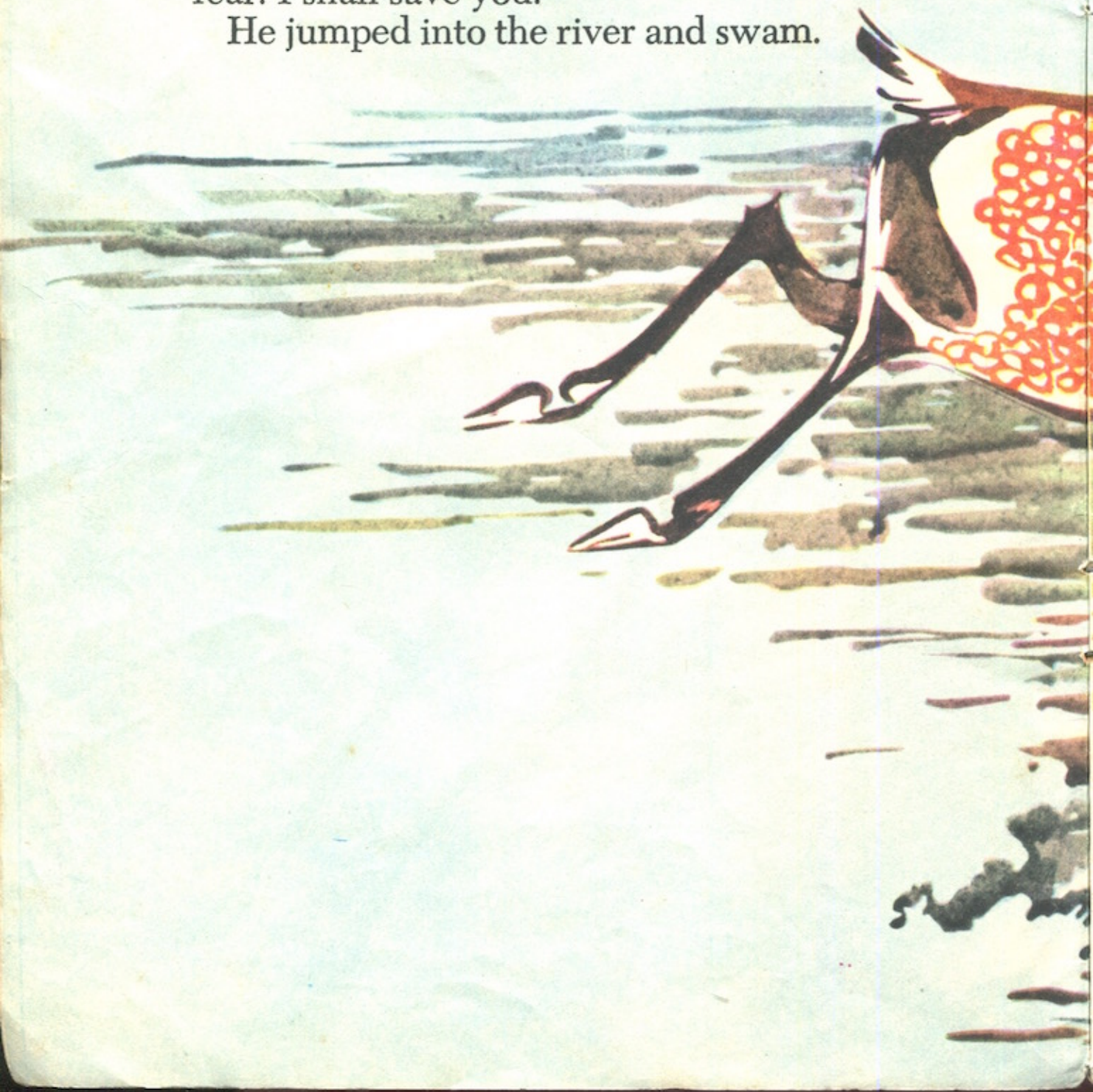


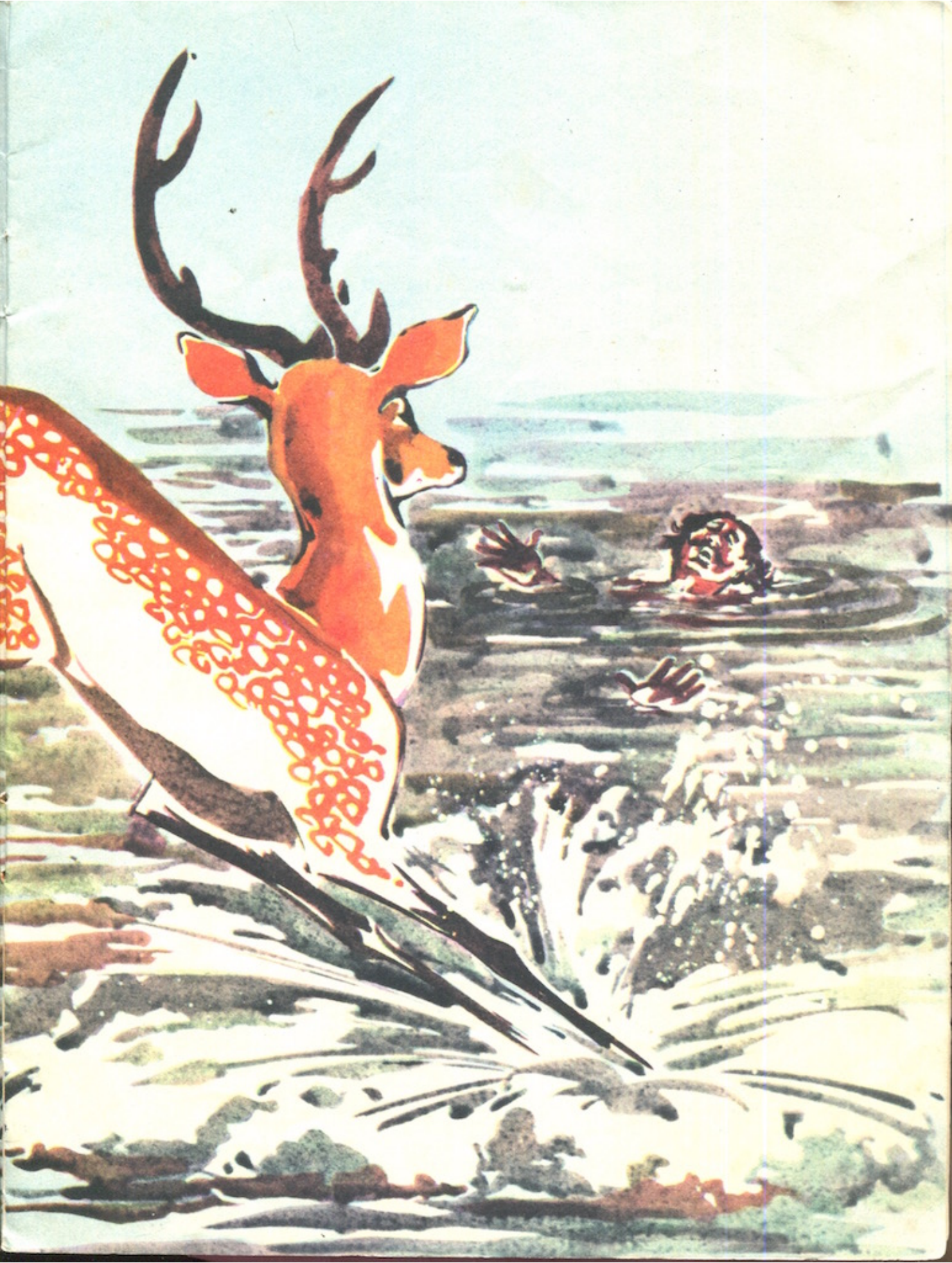


One night he was aroused from sleep by a cry for help. He rushed to the river bank and saw a man drowning.

“Oh, man!” he shouted, “Have no fear. I shall save you.”

He jumped into the river and swam.

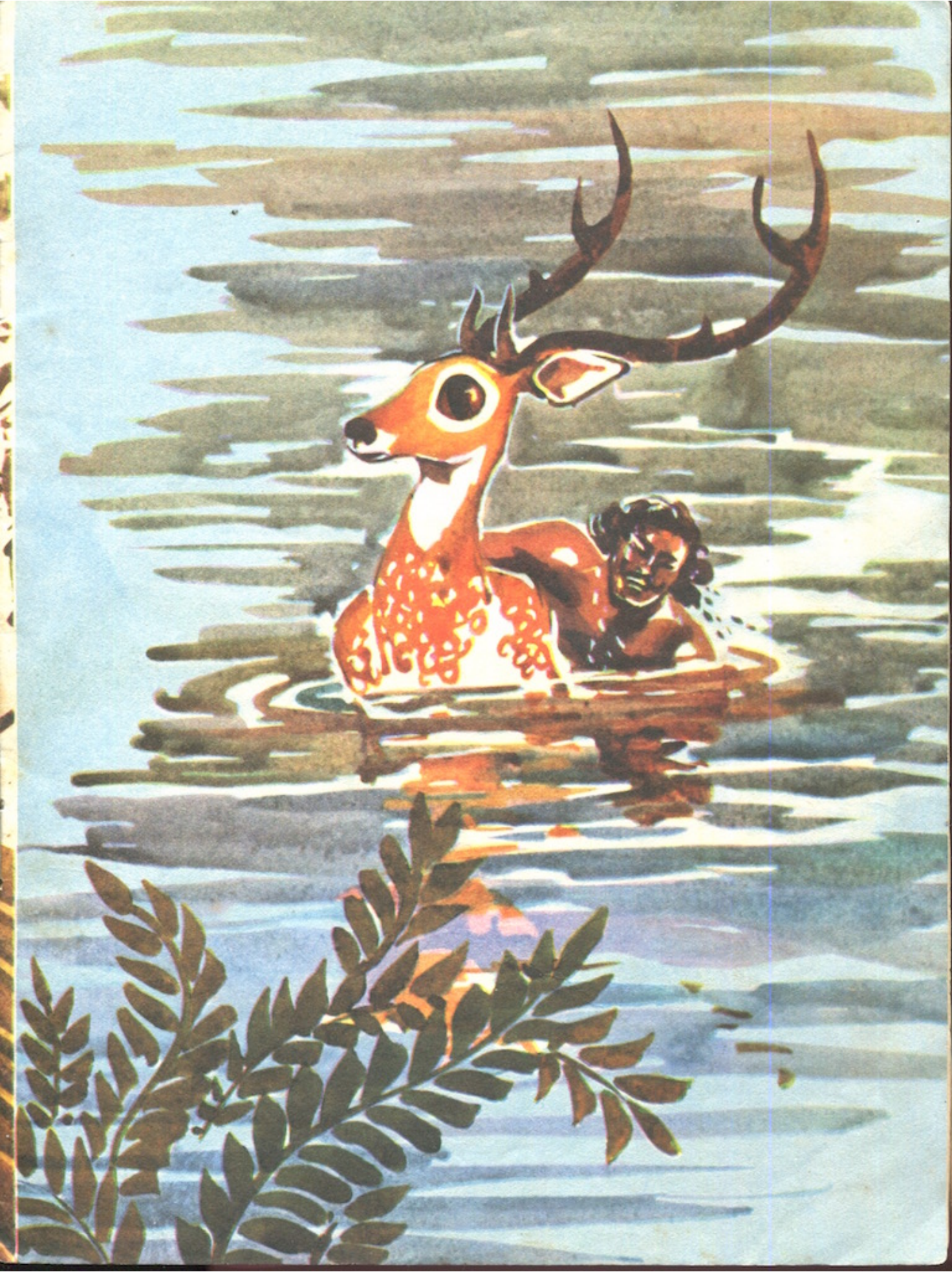




When he reached the man, he said,
“Hold on to me.”

The drowning man put his hands
round the deer and they swam ashore.





The deer took him home and said,
“Stay with me till you get better.”

The man thanked the deer for saving his life. “I’m a merchant. I fell into the river by accident. But for you, I would have drowned.”

In a few days the merchant regained his health and wanted to leave.

The deer said, “I shall take you on my back to the road that leads to Banaras. There you’ll meet many other merchants. But, before taking you, I have a request to make.”



“What’s it?” asked the merchant.

“You must not talk about me. Don’t tell anyone that there’s a golden deer.”

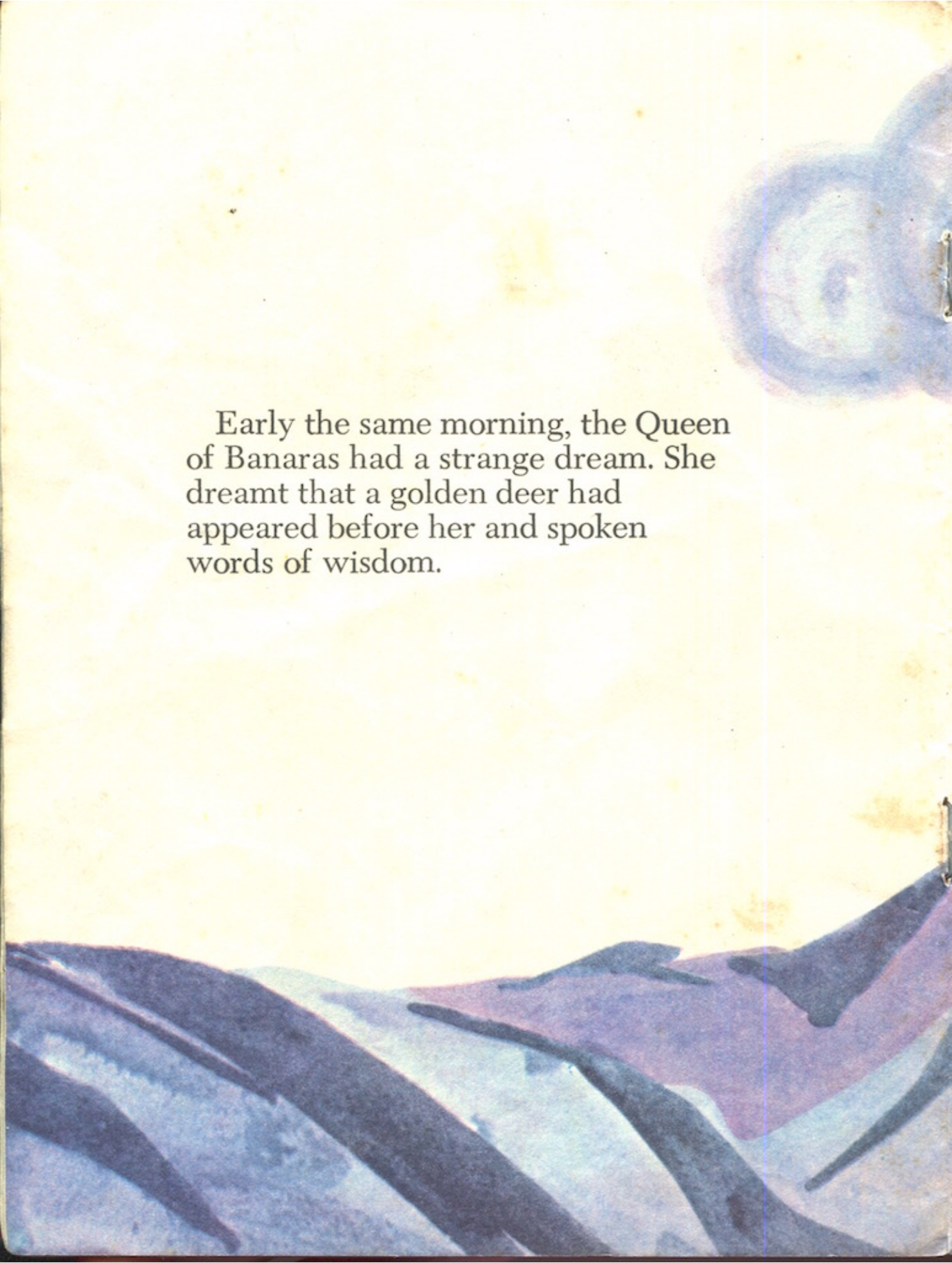
“Anything else?”

“You must not help anyone to look for me.”

“I promise,” said the man.

The deer took the merchant to the road leading to Banaras and left him there.





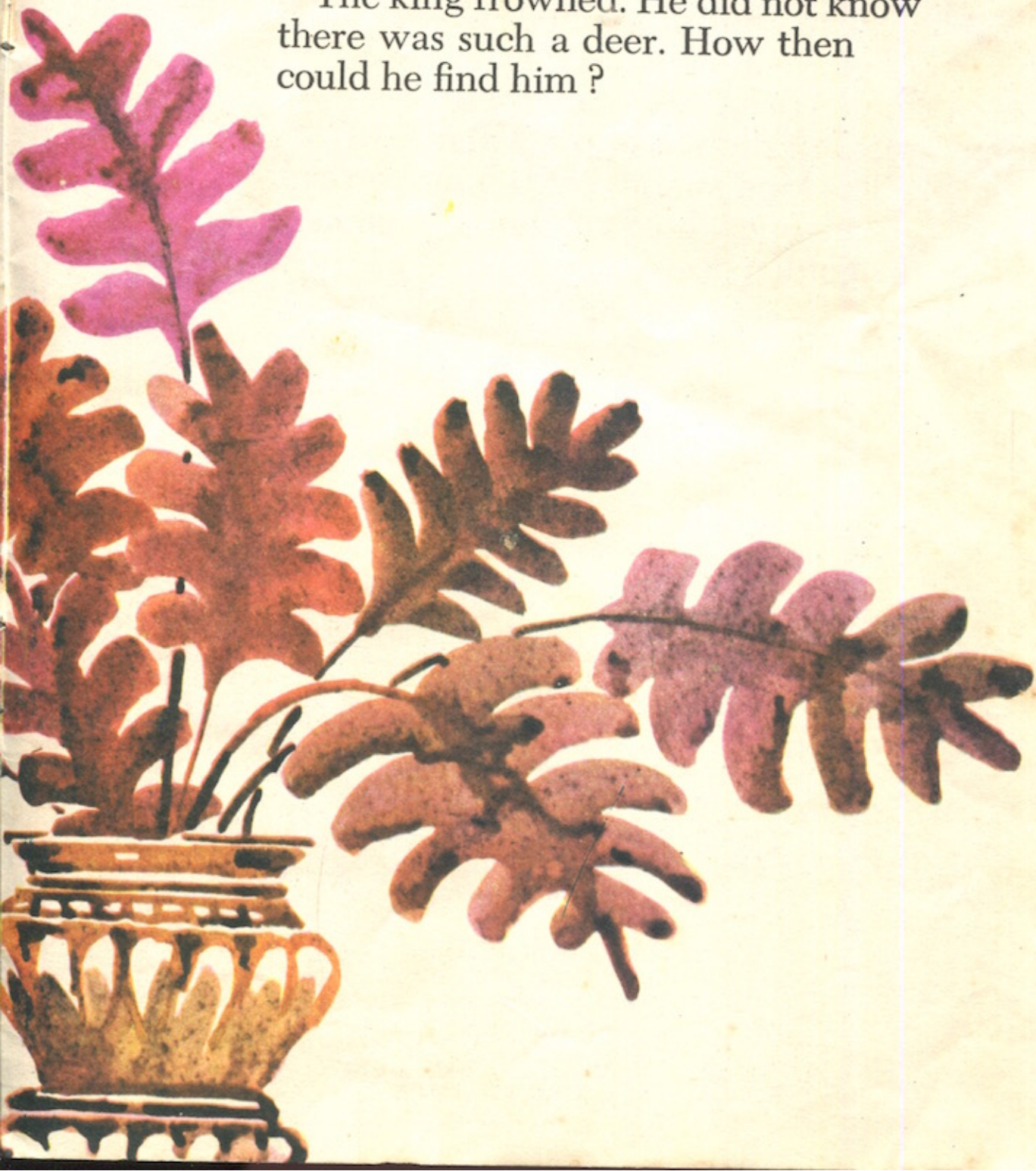
Early the same morning, the Queen of Banaras had a strange dream. She dreamt that a golden deer had appeared before her and spoken words of wisdom.





She hurried to the king and said,
“Your Majesty, I must see that deer
and hear him talk. Otherwise I shall
put an end to my life.”

The king frowned. He did not know
there was such a deer. How then
could he find him ?



So he sent for learned *pandits* and asked them whether they knew of a golden deer. They said there was one, but did not know where.

The king announced a huge reward for anyone who could find out about the golden deer.





The young merchant heard of the reward. He rushed to the king's courtiers and told them that he had seen the golden deer and knew where he lived. They took the merchant to the king.

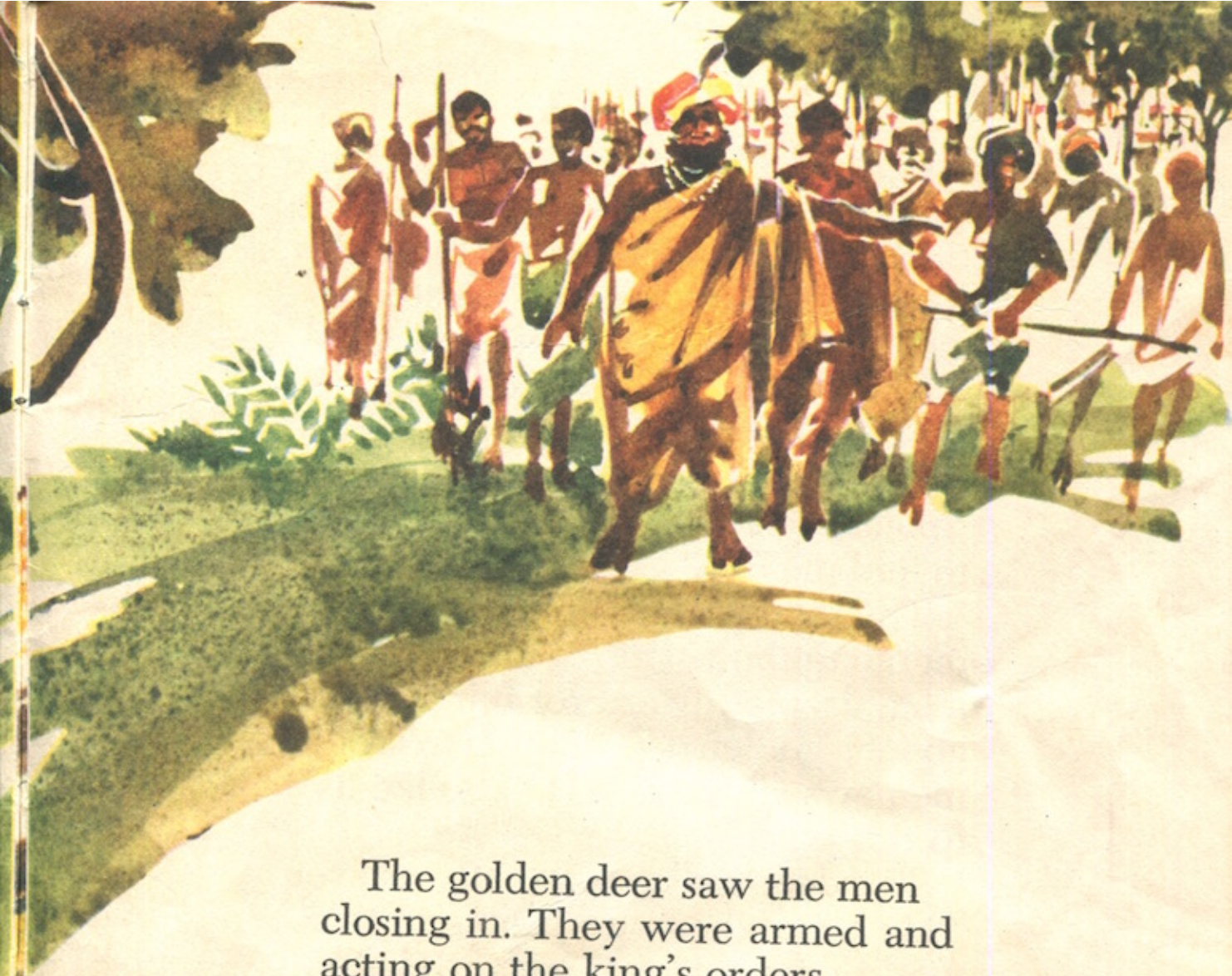
When the king heard of the deer, he was thrilled. He ordered thousands of people to go with him to get the deer. The merchant guided them to the jungle where the deer lived.

The king told his followers, "We're to bring the golden deer back alive."

A huge army entered the small jungle. As they moved in from all sides, the king ordered, "Make sure the deer does not escape."







The golden deer saw the men closing in. They were armed and acting on the king's orders.

He looked round and saw the king and ran towards him.

The king saw the deer coming. 'He's as strong as an elephant,' he said to himself. 'Let me put an arrow to the bow, just in case he turns violent. If he tries to run away, I shall shoot and maim him.'

The deer halted before the king and said in a human voice, "O great

king, here I have come to you. Don't shoot me."

The king was surprised to hear the deer talk so sweetly. He stood gazing at the beautiful animal.

The king's men dropped their arms and watched them.

"Your Majesty," said the deer, "please tell me who told you where to find me."

The king pointed to the young merchant and said, "I had offered a handsome reward for information about a golden deer. This man brought me news about you. He also led us to this place."

The deer spoke as sweetly as ever. "My Lord, there are people in this world who betray those who help them. Once this merchant was drowning in the deep waters of the Ganga. I saved him. Now my life is in danger because of him."

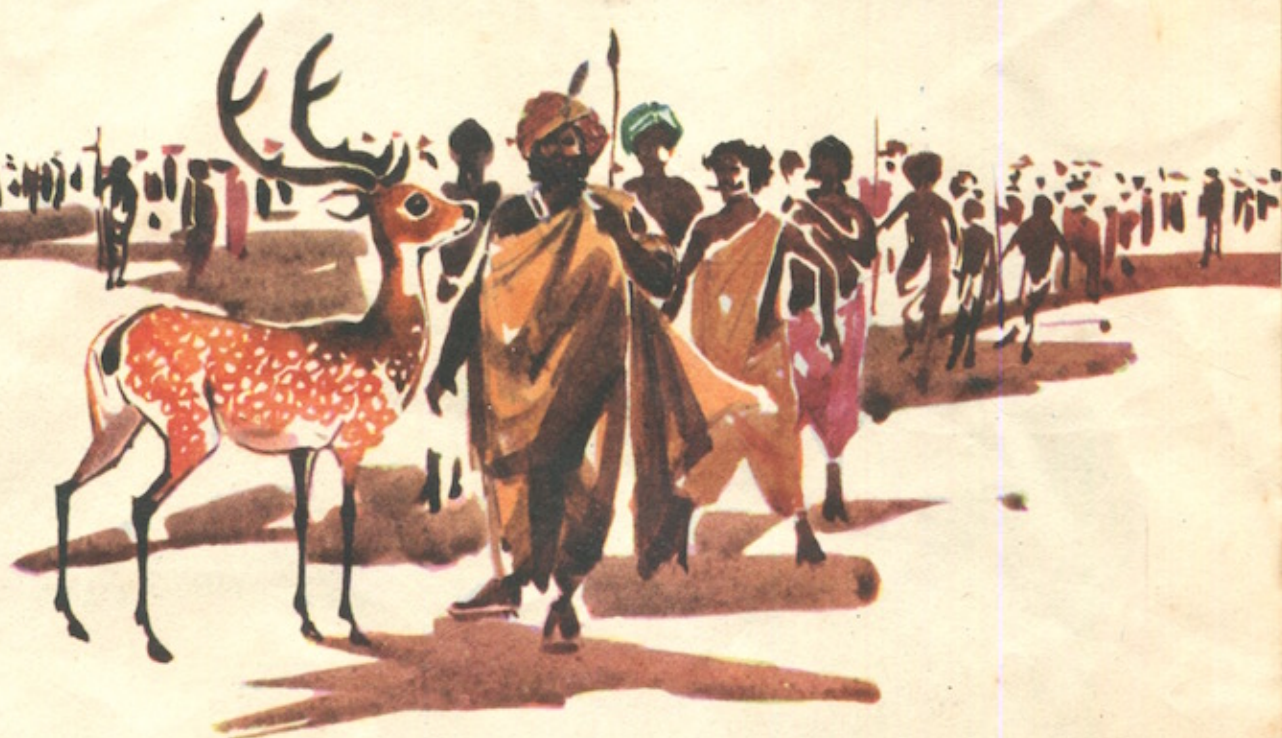
On hearing how ungrateful the merchant was, the king was furious.

"This man deserves to be shot dead and I shall see to it that he is," he cried.

"But, Your Majesty," said the kindly

deer, "I don't want him to be killed or even harmed on my account. Let him be. You must also pay him the reward you had promised him."

The king was astounded.



"O King of Deers," he said in admiration, "you're great and noble. Ask for whatever you want and I shall give it to you, even if it means losing my kingdom."

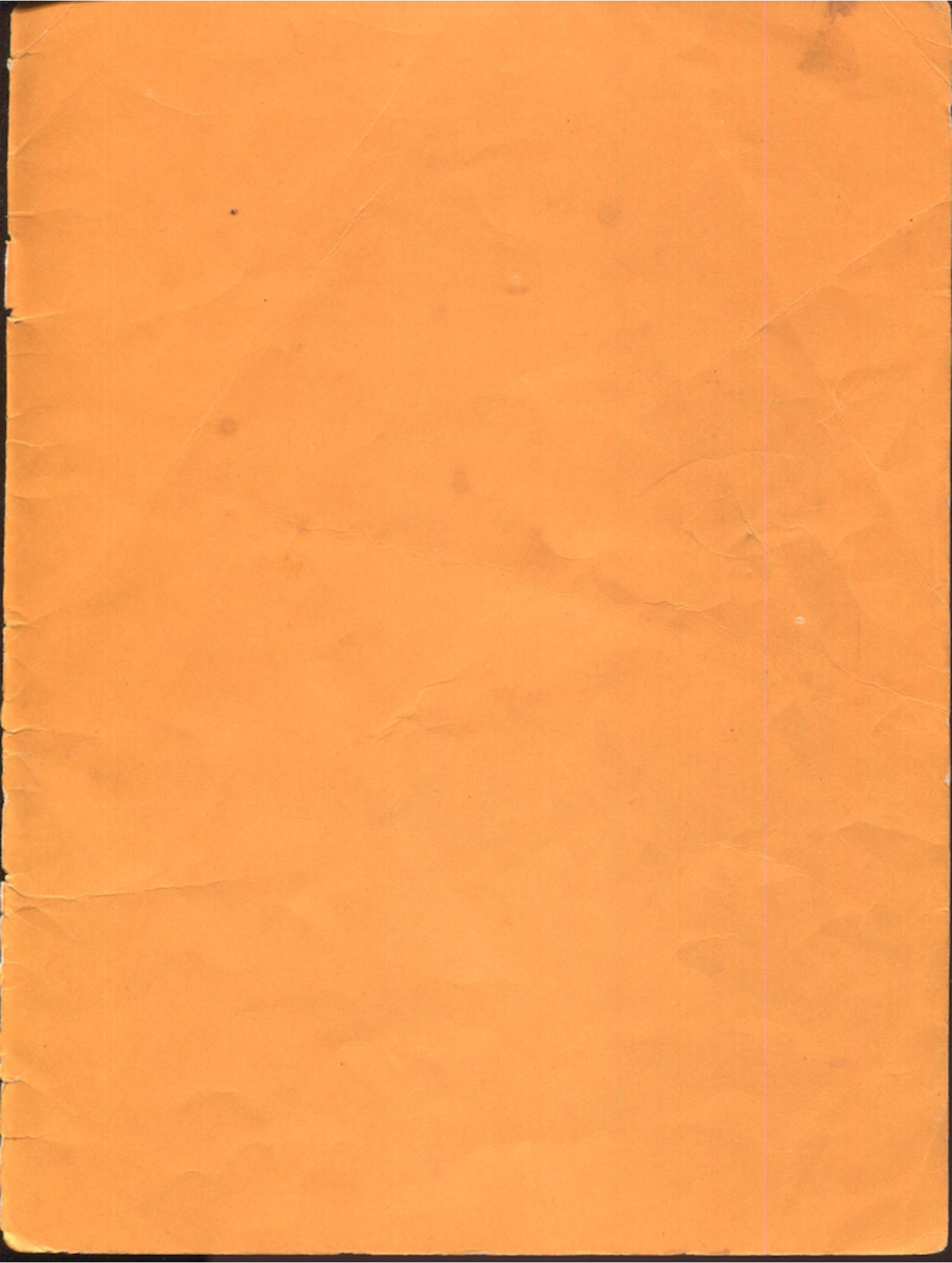
"Your Majesty," replied the deer, "all I want you to do is to proclaim that no man in your kingdom should harm any living creature."

"With all my heart," agreed the king.



Together they went to the queen.
She was overjoyed to see the golden
deer of her dream.

The deer spoke to her for long.
They were words of wisdom.





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