


And The Ocean
Was Our Sky
Patrick Ness
illustrated by Rovina Cai

*And The Ocean ~
~ Was Our Sky*

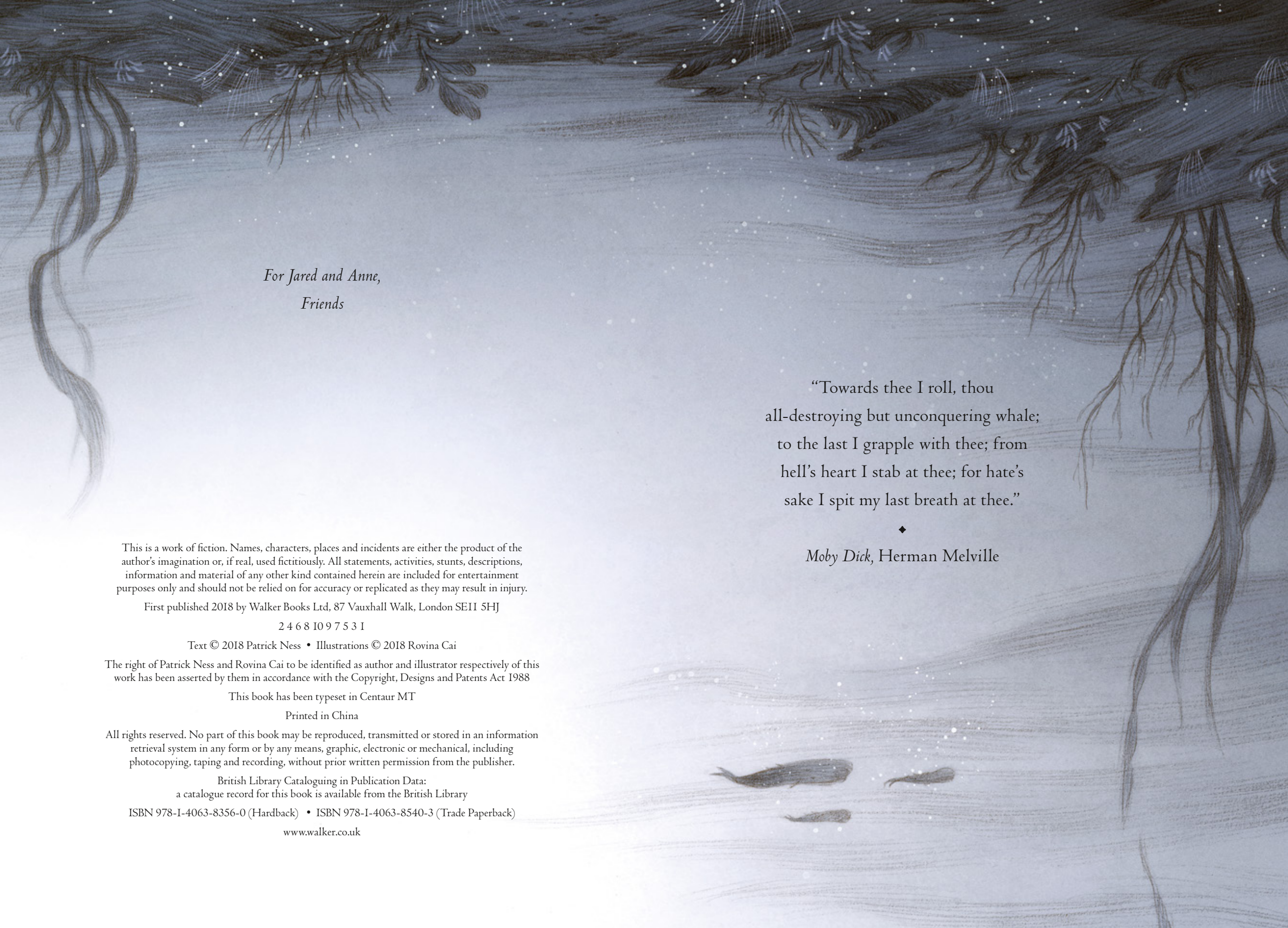


*And
The Ocean
Was Our
Sky*

Patrick Ness

illustrated by Rovina Cai


WALKER
BOOKS



*For Jared and Anne,
Friends*

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or, if real, used fictitiously. All statements, activities, stunts, descriptions, information and material of any other kind contained herein are included for entertainment purposes only and should not be relied on for accuracy or replicated as they may result in injury.

First published 2018 by Walker Books Ltd, 87 Vauxhall Walk, London SE11 5HJ

2 4 6 8 I 0 9 7 5 3 I

Text © 2018 Patrick Ness • Illustrations © 2018 Rovina Cai

The right of Patrick Ness and Rovina Cai to be identified as author and illustrator respectively of this work has been asserted by them in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

This book has been typeset in Centaur MT

Printed in China

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, transmitted or stored in an information retrieval system in any form or by any means, graphic, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, taping and recording, without prior written permission from the publisher.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data:
a catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

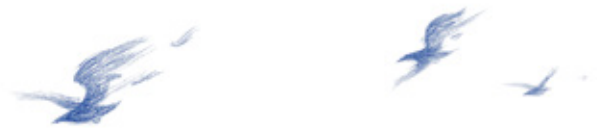
ISBN 978-1-4063-8356-0 (Hardback) • ISBN 978-1-4063-8540-3 (Trade Paperback)

www.walker.co.uk

“Towards thee I roll, thou
all-destroying but unconquering whale;
to the last I grapple with thee; from
hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's
sake I spit my last breath at thee.”



Moby Dick, Herman Melville



And The Ocean Was Our Sky started with a simple question, and then got weirder from there. I was thinking one day, “What if *Moby Dick* was told by the whale?” I’m always fascinated by who tells a story and how that changes it. A good example is a story like *Wicked*, where the Wicked Witch of the West has an entirely different take on Oz. I love that. Imagine if cats got to write all the books about what dogs are like.

But then the idea kept growing. What if whales hunted men like men hunted whales? What if there was a world where they both did that at the same time? What legends would arise? Most interestingly, how strange and compelling to look through the eyes of a main character who, at the start at least, views us as little more than prey.

Which spawned the character of Bathsheba, our narrator. Young, but tough. Moreover, a strikingly different kind of intellect and emotions than a human might have. I’m Scandinavian, and the stereotype about us is our stoicism. I’ve argued for years that stoicism doesn’t mean unemotional; it means privately emotional. And that’s what a whale felt like to me. There are deep, deep feelings

in her, as deep as the sea. What happens when they get close to the surface?

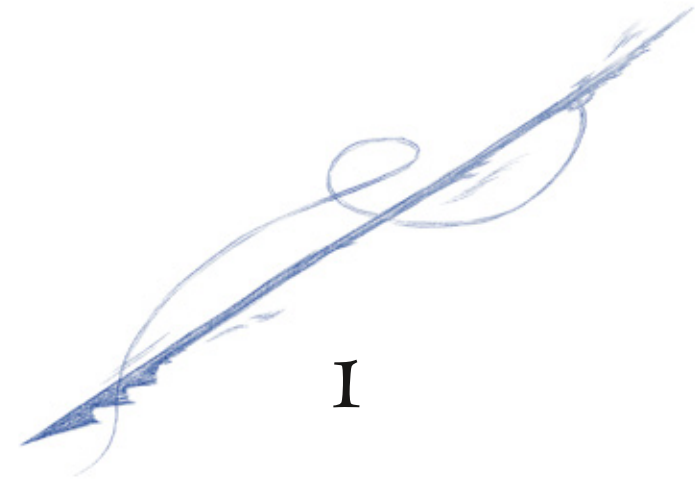
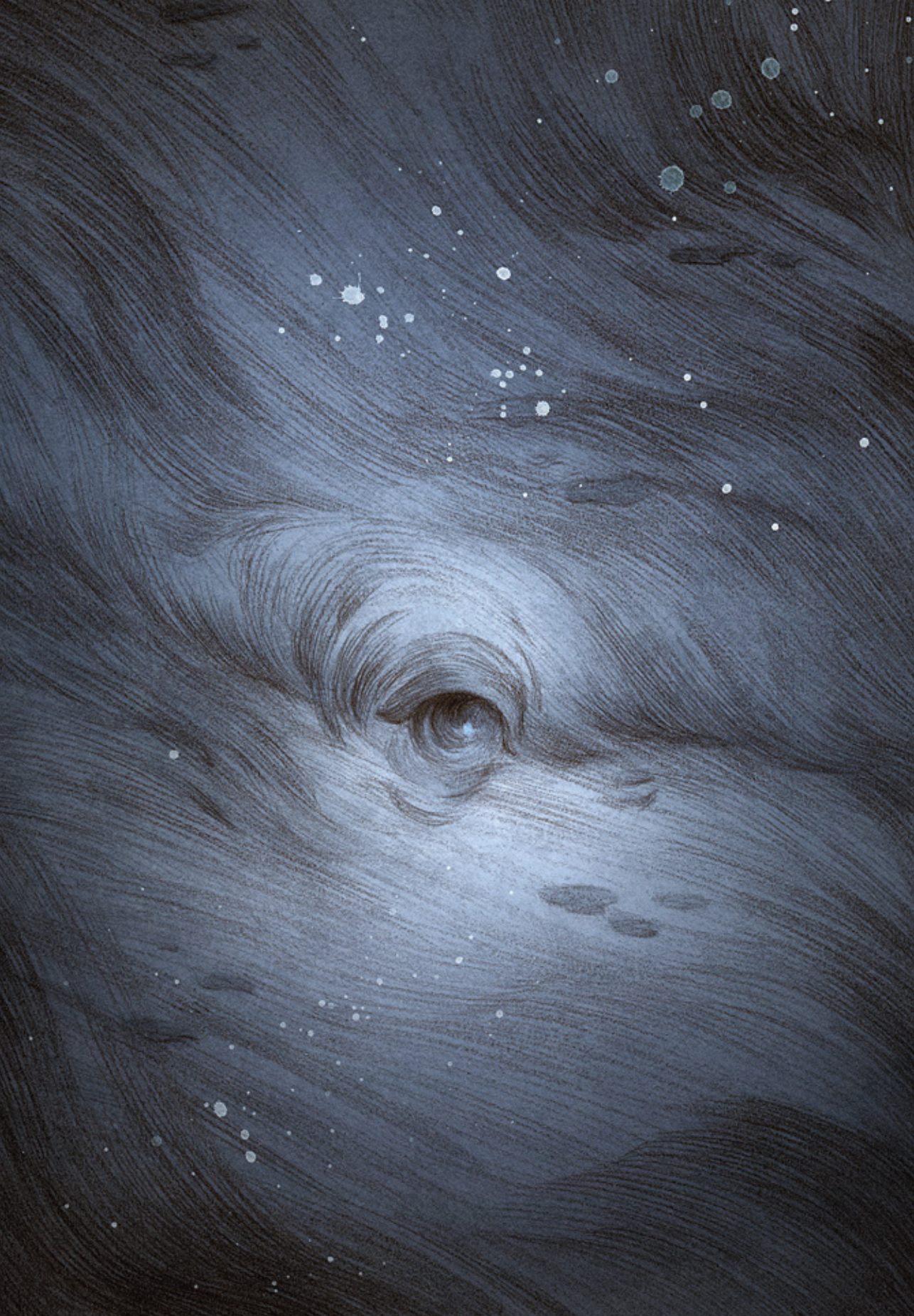
And then the illustrations! Good God. I can barely draw a stick figure, and the beauty and breadth and drama that Rovina Cai has brought to this book – in much the same way the genius Jim Kay did on *A Monster Calls* – are astonishing to me as things I could never have thought of. She took the story to a whole new level. Bathsheba is alive and on the page. Facing her demons.

Because to my surprise, this became in the end a story of the devils we chase, the devils we hunt, the devils we perhaps create. And our need for constant vigilance over those very devils who would seek power over all of us. It became a very contemporary story of the power of rumour, the power that words have to change and sometimes even make reality. And not always in a good way.

And so here are the first couple of chapters of the story of my brave and powerful Bathsheba, coming to understand the scope of the world, hoping that she’s not too late...

All best,

March 2018



I

CALL ME BATHSHEBA.

It is not my name, but the name I use for this story. A name, I hoped, that would be free of prophecy, free of the burden of a future placed upon it, free of any destiny that would tear it from my hands and destroy worlds.

You think I overstate. You are wrong.

We are a people of prophecy, and when I was a child and still a stupid calf, ignorant of all beyond the reaches of our own stretch of sea, my grandmother had said, simply, “You will hunt.”

It carried the weight of prophecy.

“But we are not hunters,” my mother had replied with the fearful bafflement that was her regular face to my grandmother. “We do not hunt. We have never hunted.” Her voice took on a hopeful and hopeless tone, the one that used to irritate me into fury but the memory of which now breaks my heart quite in half. “Unless you mean the small hunts,” my mother said, hopelessly

hopeful, “the ones that every family must—”

“I do not,” said my grandmother.

She did not.

And everything I might have been, the different futures I might have taken, all my different lives and deaths that existed in their endless possibilities were extinguished in a single repetition of her three words. “You will hunt.”

Was it prediction? Had she had a proper vision? Or was it a command, as it so often feels in the case of the prophetic? When you predict the future, when you do so strongly and you cling to it, how much of that future do you then cause to happen?

These are questions that haunt me.

At the time, though, they weren’t allowed to matter, for into training I immediately went – my mother never strong enough to overrule my grandmother – into the schools and the vocationals, into a new way of life until, at sixteen, the age of Apprenticeship, there I was, where this story begins: harpoons strapped to my back, swimming along the decks of the great hunting ship *Alexandra*, our sails catching the currents, the Abyss below us, the ocean our sky.

And all that might have been was long, long gone.

For I, a lowly but eager Third Apprentice, was about to

begin the final hunt that ever was. The hunt for a legend, a myth, a devil.

Pray for our souls.

Because this is the story of how we found him. ♦



“LOOK SHARP,” SAID CAPTAIN ALEXANDRA. As is traditional, our ship bore her name, much like her body bore most of the *ship*, the ropes from the bow tied to her fins, broad as any three of my young shipmates. The Captain pulls her ship, as is right, as is proper.

We sailed silently over the Abyss. I was Watch Left, swimming above and to the side of our Captain, matched further out front by First Apprentice Treasure and to the side by Second Apprentice Wilhelmina, “Willem”, Watch Right. We scanned the surface of the Abyss below us, its sun shining from underneath, like sailing across boiling light.

Behind us, on the *Alexandra*, our sailors made ready. The Captain was sure we were close to a prize. She could smell it, she said, and though this seemed improbable, we had learned in the months of this voyage not to doubt her.

Never to doubt her. Captain Alexandra was both famous and infamous, little of it for good reason past her success at the hunt. Everyone knew about the short, rusted end of a man's harpoon still sticking from her great head. She was the Captain who'd survived, the Captain who even though the harpoon must, on some level, impede her echolocation, nevertheless persisted, thrived, became the one thing that everyone, *everyone*, was sure about Captain Alexandra: she was the best hunter in the sea.

"Something approaches," she said, eyes forward, great tail increasing its kick. "Something rises."

"Where?" whispered Willem to my right, desperately searching the white froth below us.

"Quiet," Treasure said back. She was senior Apprentice. How often do you suppose she let us forget that?

The water filled with the clicks of our echolocations. The Captain left us to it, trusting her sense of smell, her eyes, her clairvoyance, for all I knew.

"Less than a league," Treasure said. "Centre right."

"Look sharp," the Captain said again.

"Yes," Willem answered. "Yes, I've located it."

"And our Bathsheba?" the Captain asked, not looking back.

For I had remained silent. I had not located it yet.

I furiously sent out my clicks, waiting for the responses to echo off the great ball of waxy liquid in my forehead. I heard nothing from the centre right, from where Treasure and Willem were claiming such certainty. I clicked again, and nothing. All I sensed there was empty ocean. I was the newest Apprentice, barely a year into our hunt, but I was not incompetent. And though my anxiety was growing, I also began to suspect Treasure and Willem were lying to impress their Captain, perhaps falling into one of the traps that even I knew she occasionally set for unwary Apprentices.

"Bathsheba?" the Captain asked again, her voice somehow both playful and menacing, as if I were prey kept alive only at the whim of its predator.

I clicked. Again, and nothing. Again, and—

I turned sharply left. "Not centre right," I said, surprised even at myself. I clicked once more. I was nervous. But I was sure. "Third of a league. Left and left again."

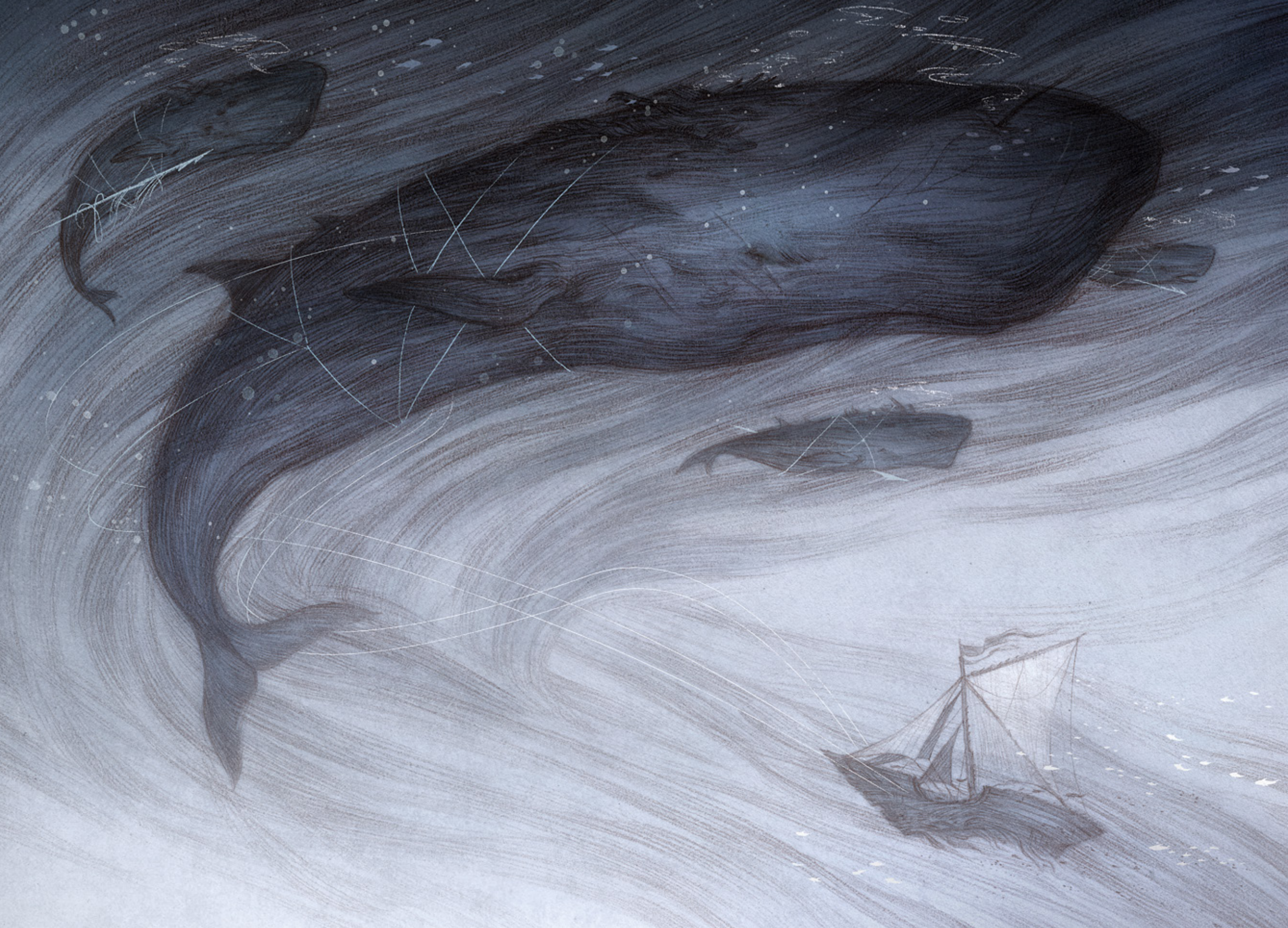
"No—" started Treasure.

"Is it?" said Willem.

"Quite so, our Bathsheba," said the Captain, surging forward, pulling the great ship behind us to the left and a notch left again.

"I've found it!" Treasure said, too loud because too late.

"It rises," said the Captain. And the hunt was on. ♦



Patrick Ness is the award-winning and bestselling author of the Chaos Walking trilogy, *A Monster Calls*, *More Than This*, *The Rest of Us Just Live Here* and *Release*. He has won every major prize in children's fiction, including the Carnegie Medal twice. He has also written the screenplay for the film of *A Monster Calls* and *Class*, the BBC Doctor Who drama. The first Chaos Walking film is slated for release in 2019. He lives in London.

 @patricknessbooks



Rovina Cai draws in a studio in a nineteenth-century convent. Her work has been recognized by the Society of Illustrators, Spectrum Fantastic Art and the Children's Book Council of Australia. She has illustrated the picture book *Tintinnabula*. She lives in Melbourne, Australia.

  @rovinacai

“Mind-bendingly brilliant and fearlessly strange.
We are swallowed by the ocean, in all its menace and majesty.”

Frances Hardinge



Call me Bathsheba

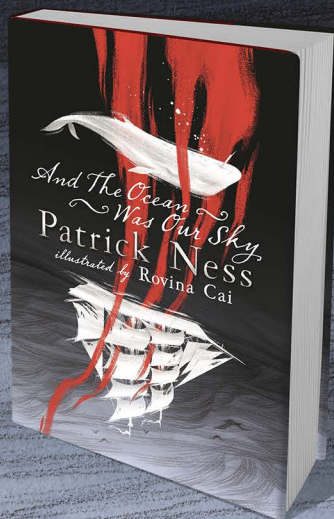
The whales of Bathsheba’s pod live for the hunt. Led by the formidable Captain Alexandra, they fight a never-ending war against men.

So it has been, so it shall always be.

Then the whales attack a man ship, and instead of easy prey they find the trail of a myth, a monster, perhaps the devil himself...


With their relentless Captain leading the chase, they embark on the final hunt, one that will forever change the worlds of whales and men.

From the multi-award-winning author of A Monster Calls and the Chaos Walking trilogy comes a haunting tale of power and obsession that turns the story of Moby Dick upside down.



OUT 6 SEPTEMBER 2018

#AndTheOceanWasOurSky • patrickness.com

 @patricknessbooks @rovinacai