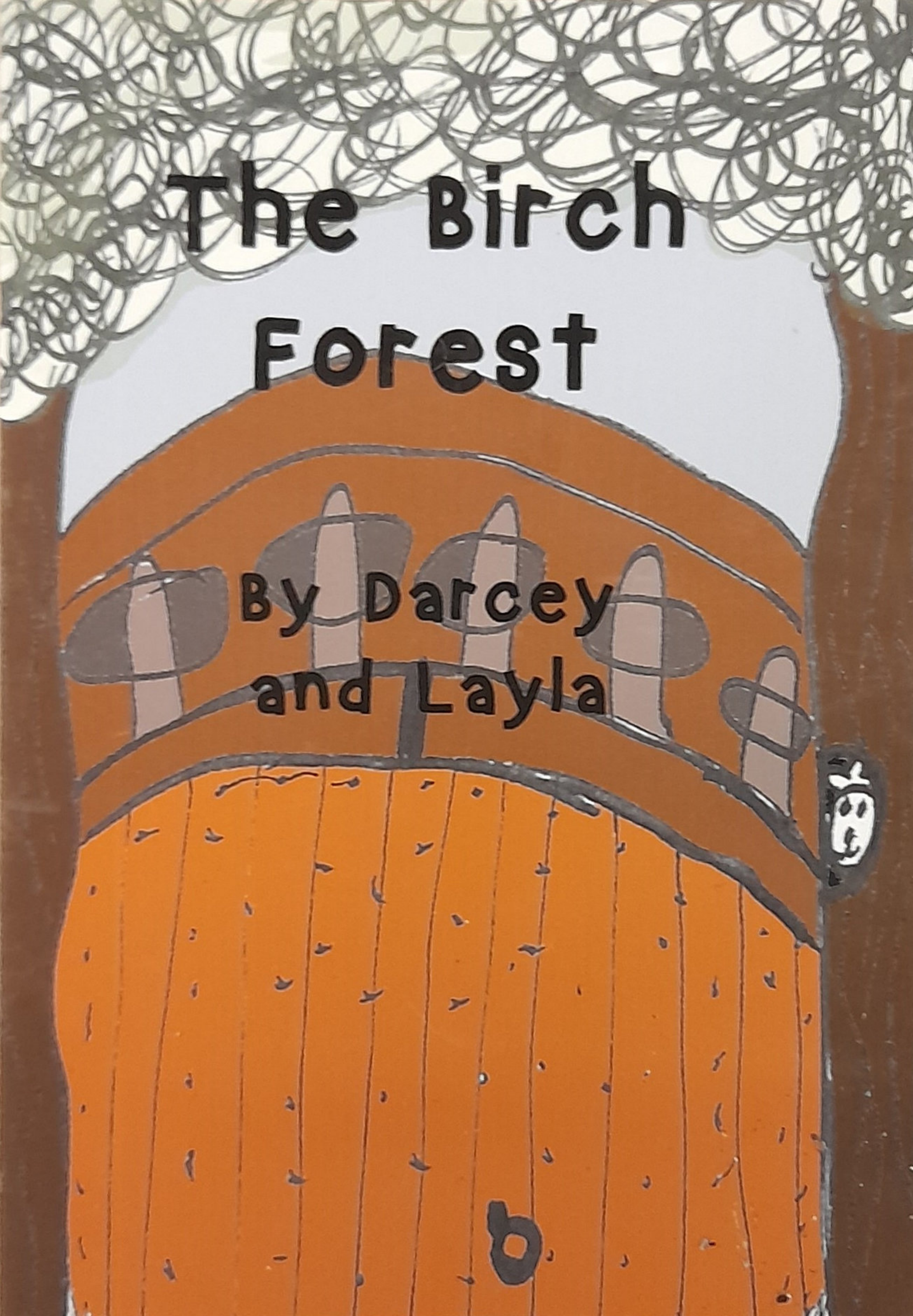


The Birch Forest

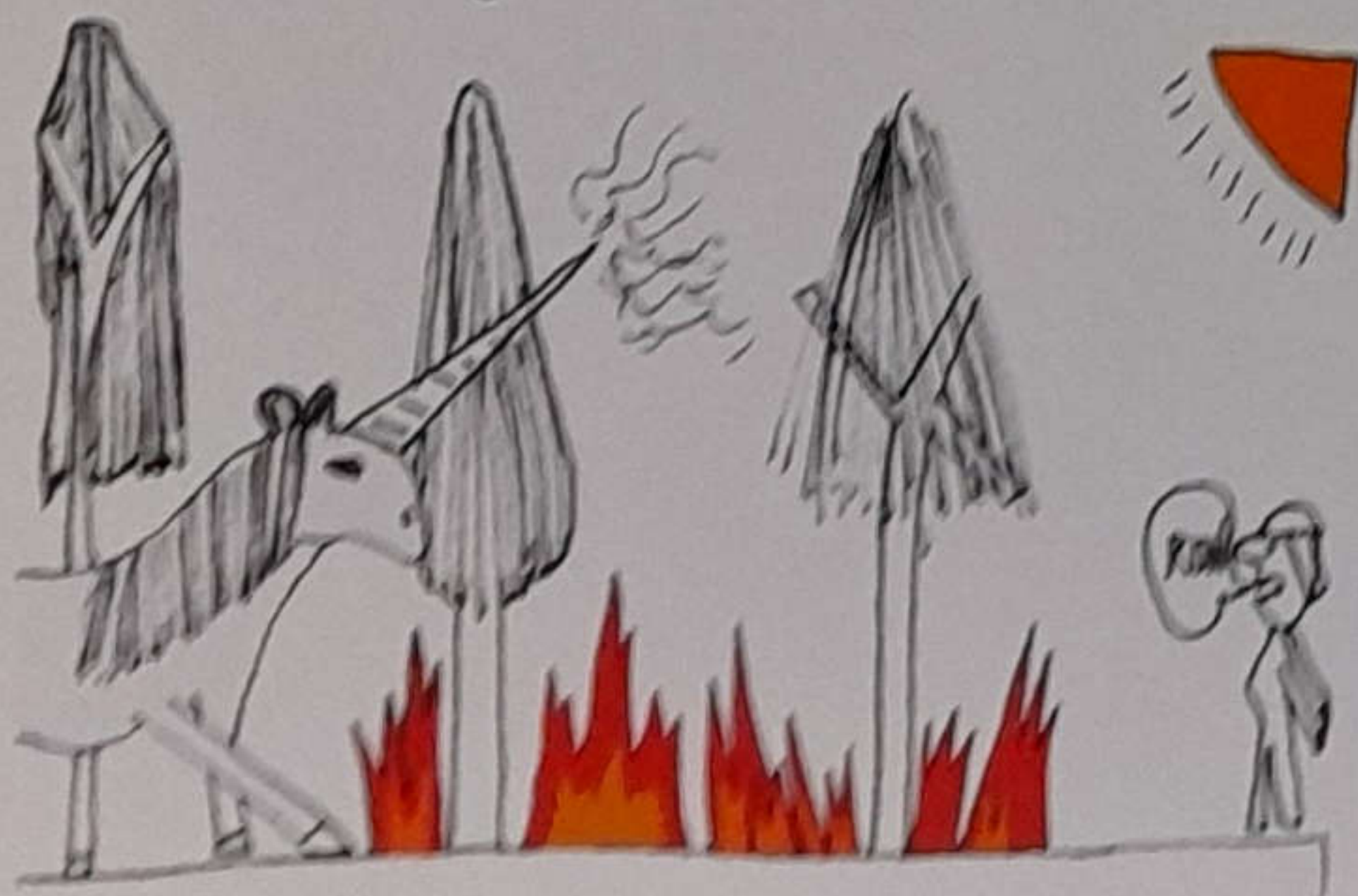
By Darcey
and Layla



Once there was a wonderful birch forest where all the animals lived. One day the last ever unicorn in the world was being hunted down.

When the hunters were hunting it the unicorn got scared and tried to make a spell to protect itself.

However, in so doing it accidentally set fire to the forest. The fire burned and burned and after a few days the fire reached the baby badger's burrow.

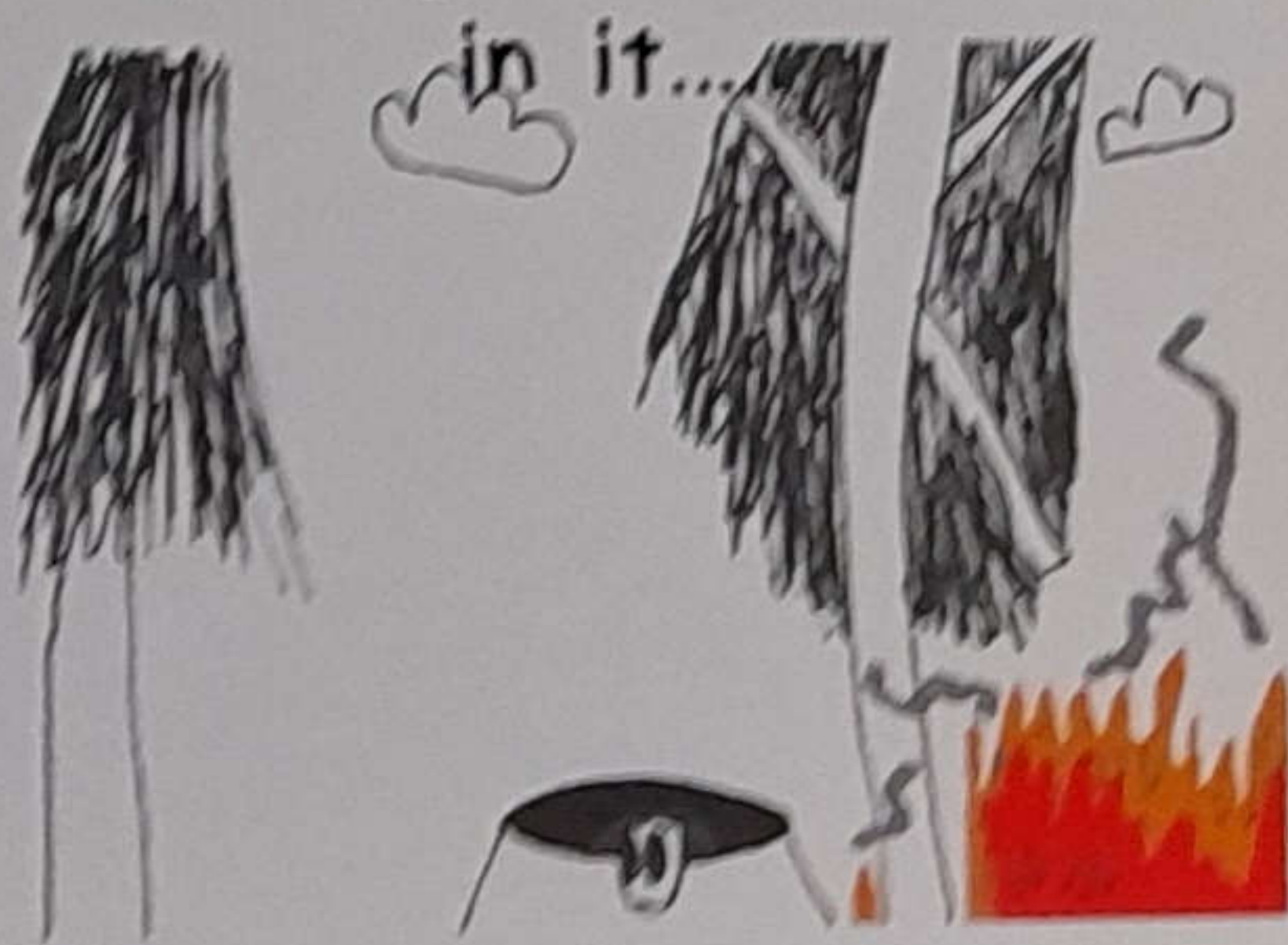


The Sparrowhawk saw how terrified the badger was and flew down to help it.

The fire continued to burn and later that day it started to get closer to the Sparrowhawk's nest. So, the hawk took the baby badger to find a new home and nest.

Whilst they were flying through the forest amidst the smoke and flames they stumbled upon a secret door.

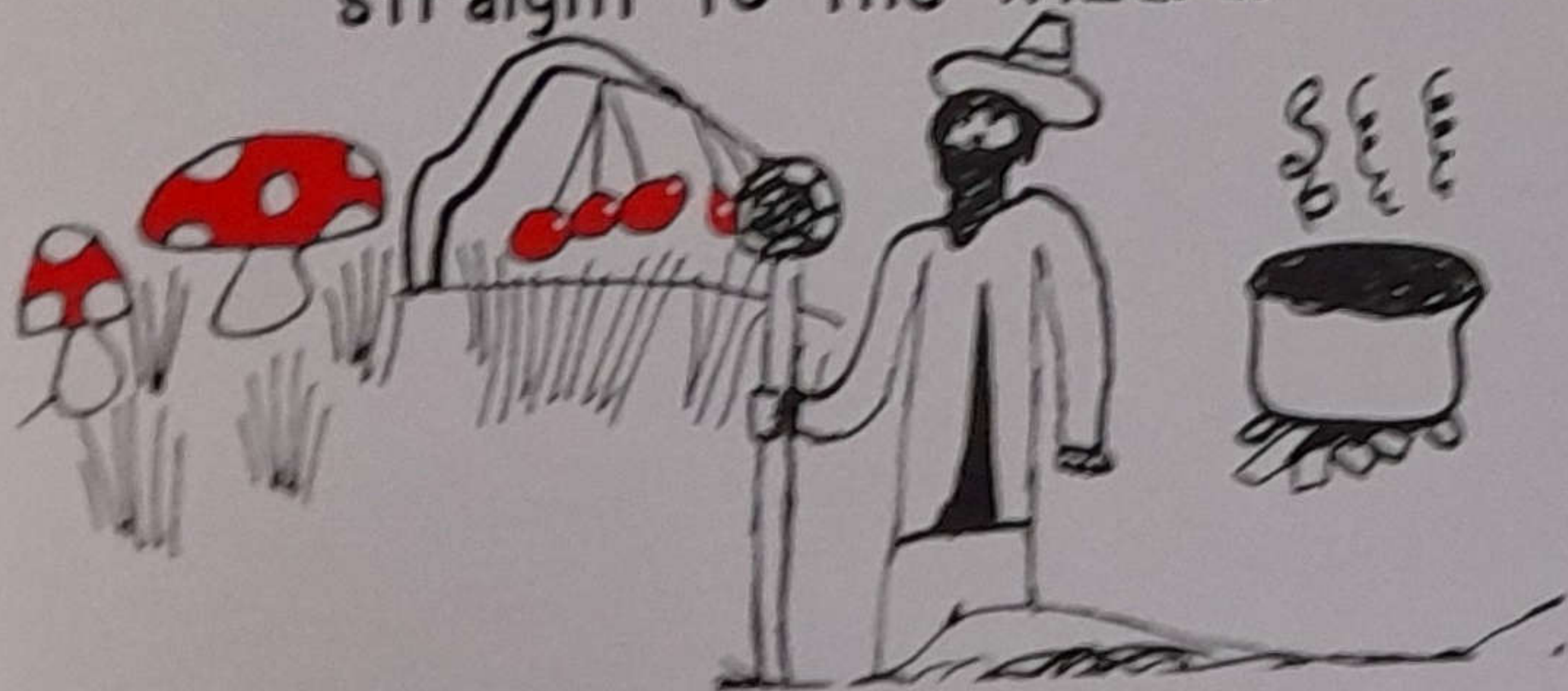
Of course, they couldn't resist going



Once inside they saw the wizard. He looked like the kind of person that could help them about the fire. They asked him if he could help them, but the wizard said he would only agree if they gave him berries and mushrooms.

So, off they both went to look for berries and mushrooms. However, there weren't many things left in the forest because it was all either burnt or still burning.

Somehow though, they managed to stumble across a small patch of mushrooms. They took the mushrooms straight to the wizard.



"Well done - now go get the berries so we can fix this mess," said the wizard.

"Ok, we'll be back" replied the badger and the hawk and off they went in search of berries. Luckily, after much searching they found a tiny little area that hadn't been touched by the fire. They picked the berries and again took them back to the wizard. "Oops!" said the Wizard "we actually need some birch leaves too - good luck finding them"

Badger and Hawk looked at the wizard in disbelief - "WHAT? HOW ON EARTH WILL WE FIND THEM?"

"I don't know", replied the Wizard "Just find them!" and then he disappeared.





The Sparrowhawk and the badger both looked for the birch leaves. They couldn't find a single birch leaf but they kept on looking. A few hours later they gave up looking and just went back to the Wizard.

The wizard knew they would come back empty handed so he said "maybe you should look in a different forest". Then he left.

They set off in search of a new forest, but then they found they were getting shot at by humans!!!

They managed to escape the crossfire and hid amongst the trees. When it was safe to come out again a few hours later they found a new forest on the other side of the mountain. Luckily it had birch leaves so they took some and left.

When they got back to the secret door again they gave the leaves to the wizard and threw in the leaves with the other ingredients to make the potion.

Something happened at that point which sent them all back in time, long before the fire had started. Long before the unicorn was hunted and to a time when the forest was still intact.

The badger and the hawk had no recollection of each other or what had happened and both scurried around the forest as they both once did before the great fire.

Then, one day as they both came
across a patch of berries and
mushrooms, their memories were
triggered and they stopped and
stared at each other across the
forest.

They had found each other again.





**The Birch is a pioneer tree -
the tree of new beginnings**

Years ago traditional folk tales were an important part of entertainment and could sometimes be quite gruesome or scary, but they could also be used as a warning to young children to keep them from wondering too far away or to encourage respect for nature.

The unicorn represented strength, courage and purity. According to legend, its horn had the ability to neutralise poison.

Kings and Queens used to exchange chests of gold for its horns.

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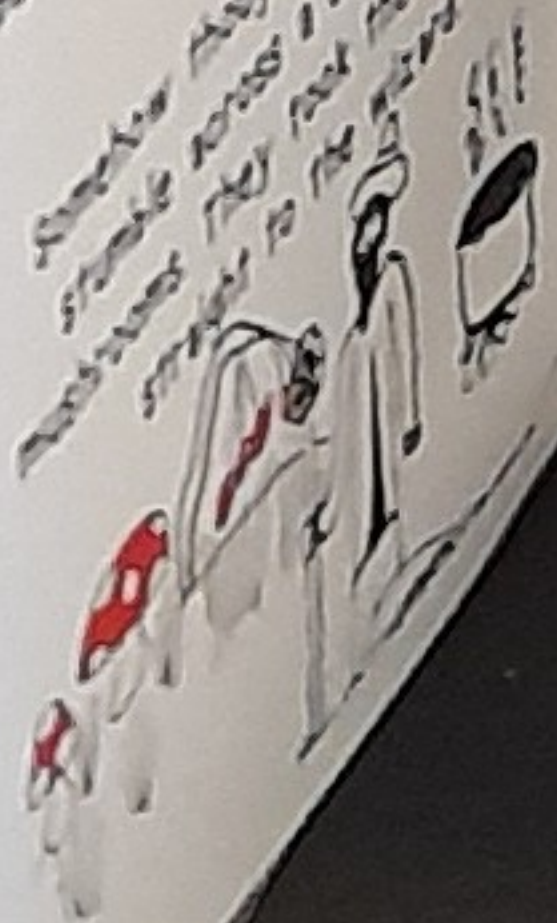
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