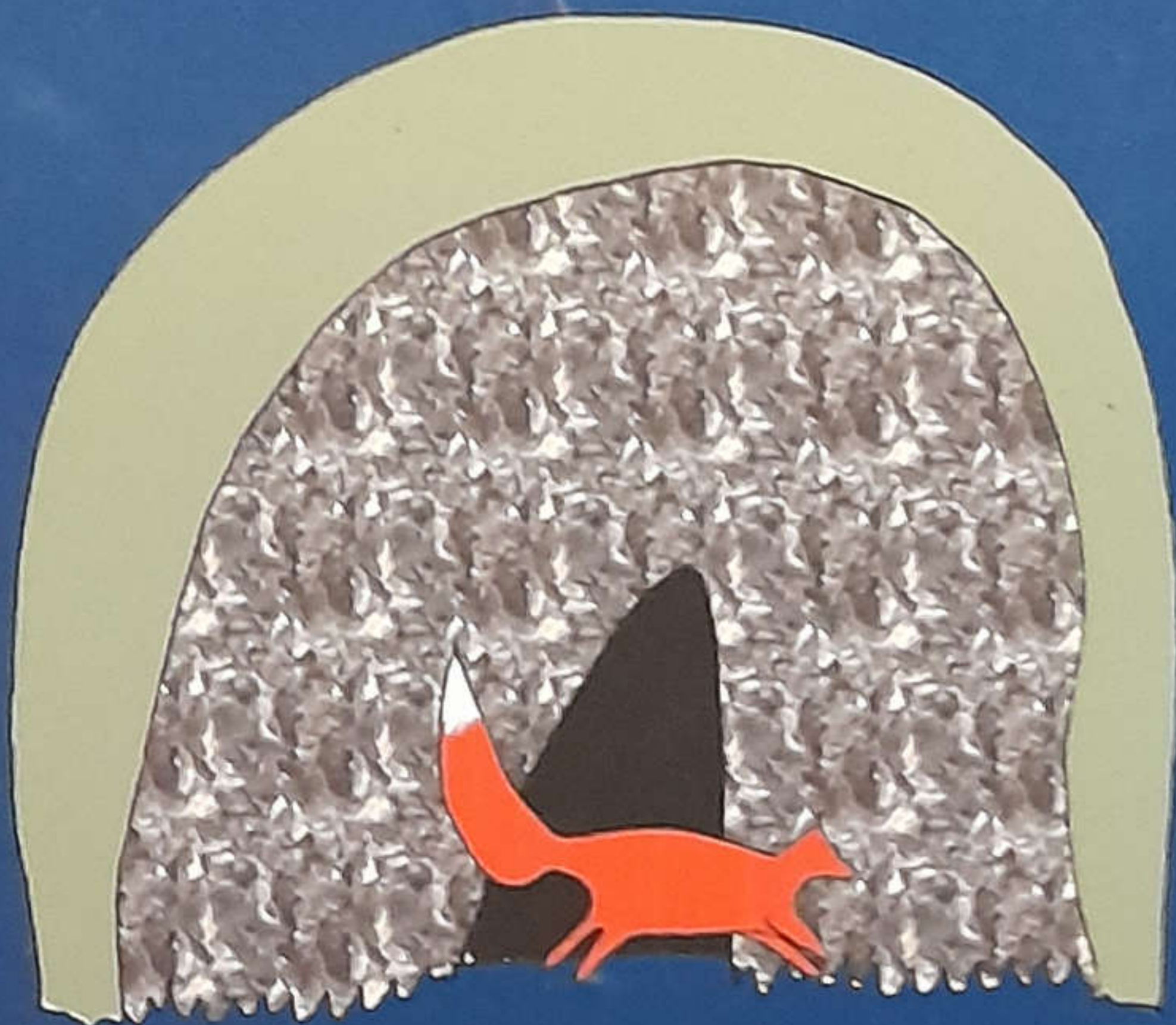


# The Cave

By Leah, Jessie  
and Mary Jane





# The Cave

By Leah and Jessie



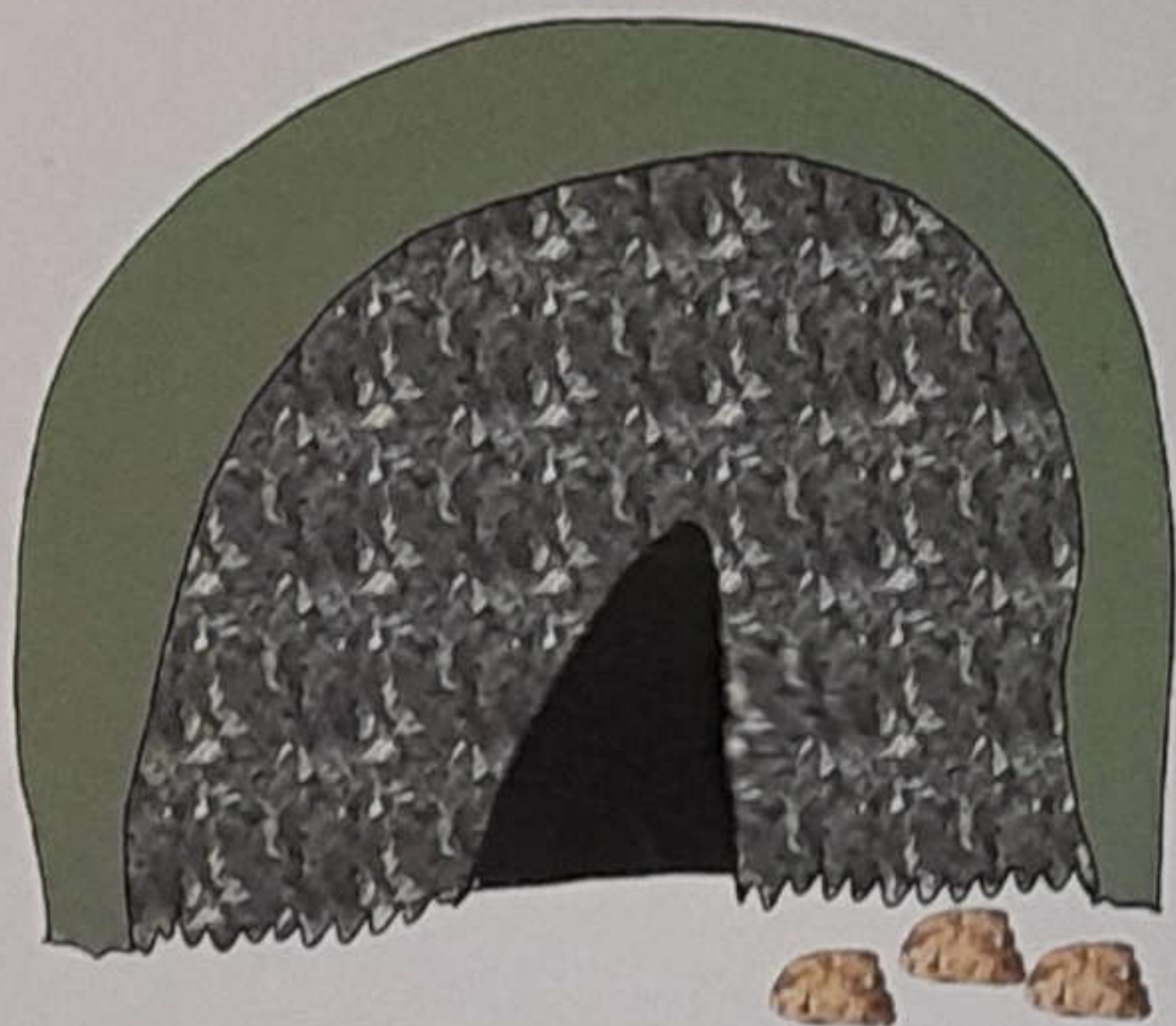
Once there was a cave at the edge of the forest.

One day a young girl went into the cave and came out with a golden nugget. She was very happy when she found the gold as they had always been so very poor.

She went back to her house which was an old ramshackle hut that backed onto the beach. She fetched her father who then followed her back to the cave.



They both started digging  
for gold. They weren't  
greedy – they just took a  
little to help them through  
the winter and kept the  
secret of the cave to  
themselves.





The next day she came across a holly tree that had golden sparkling dust coming out of it. She stood and looked at it in amazement.

Then, suddenly, out fell a starling from the tree. This was followed quickly by a little nisse who came out to help it. The girl watched as the nisse fussed over the starling and helped it back on its feet. They never strayed far from the holly tree though.







The girl watched from a distance trying not to alarm the nisse or the bird. She fetched water and food for them both (porridge for the nisse, seeds and fruit for the starling).

The golden dust from the holly tree reminded her of the cave.

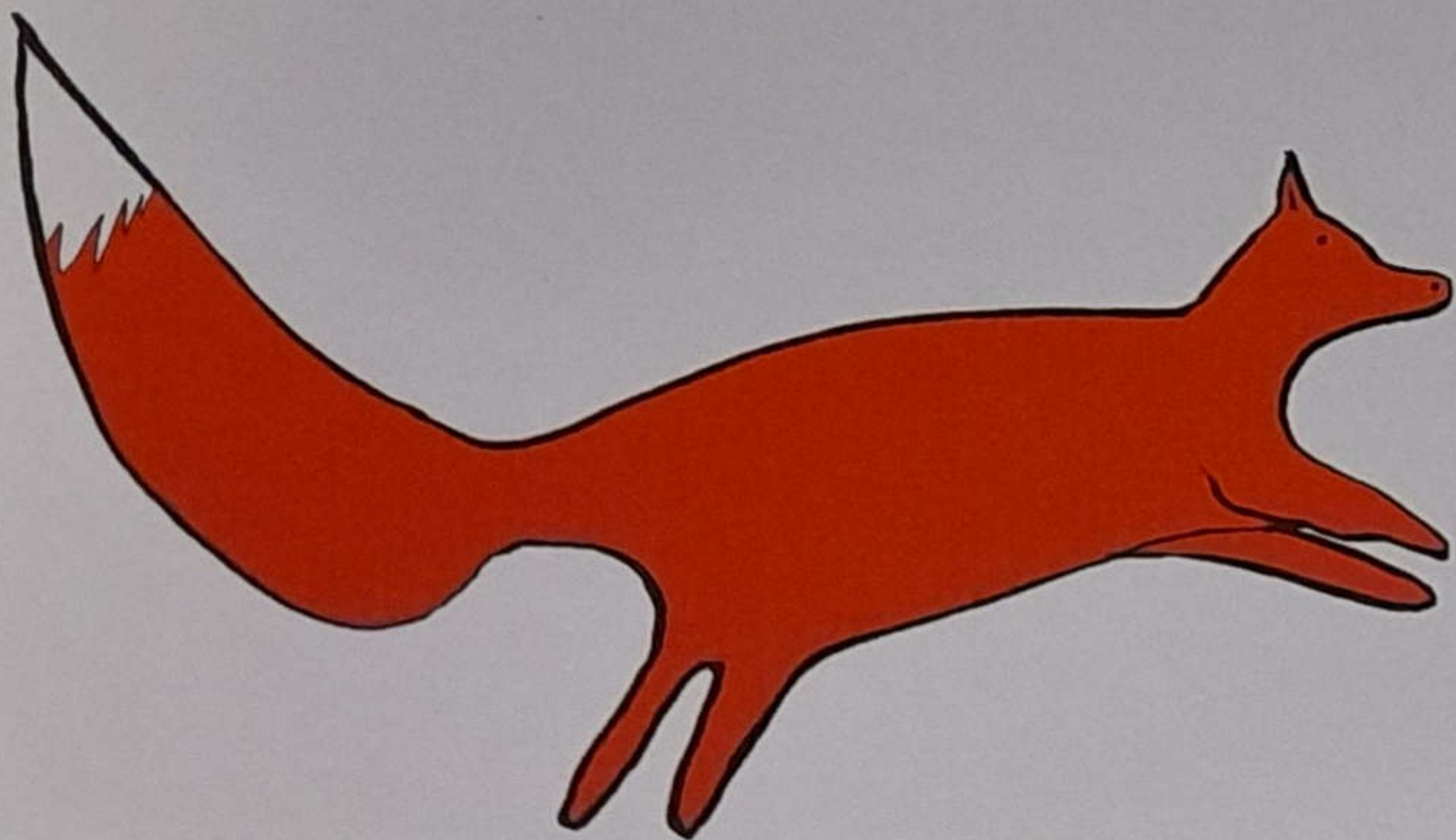
She began feeling worried about the gold in case it fell into the wrong hands.



She went back to the cave.  
At the entrance of the cave  
she found a fox waiting.

It snarled at her.

This really scared her and  
she ran all the way back  
home.





A few days later she  
visited the holly tree again.  
There was no sign of the  
starling or the nisse but  
she put out more food and  
porridge for them.

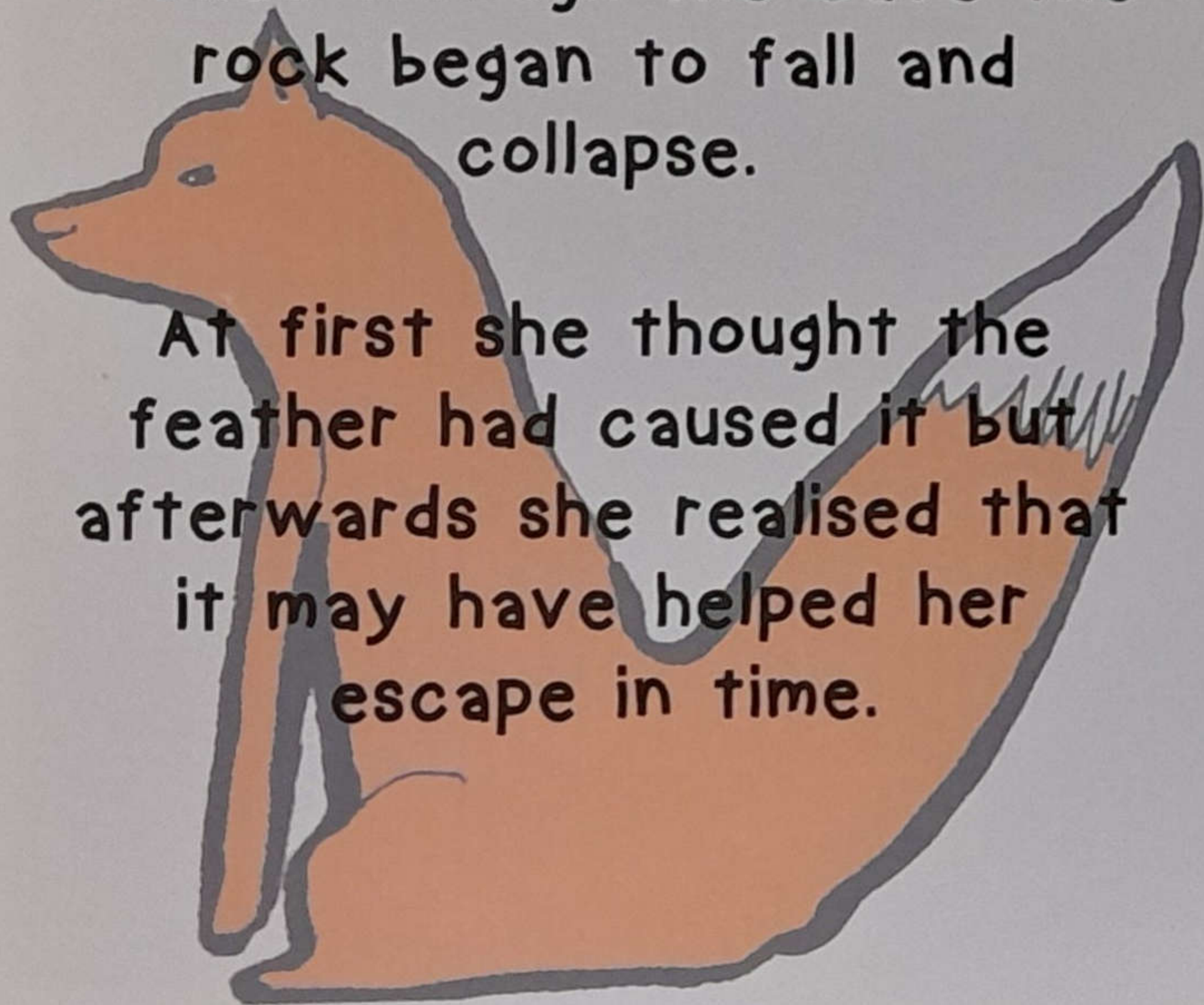
Before she turned to leave  
she caught sight of an  
enchanted feather on the  
ground. It sparkled and  
glistened





She picked it up and took it to the cave with her. Again, the fox appeared at the cave and followed her inside - he seemed unhappy that she was back again. As she walked through the cave the rock began to fall and collapse.

At first she thought the feather had caused it but afterwards she realised that it may have helped her escape in time.





When the girl got home she told her father that the cave had collapsed. Her father was deeply disappointed and didn't quite know what to say.

That was clearly the end of their gold stock. He went away for a while.

Away he went in his boat out to sea.





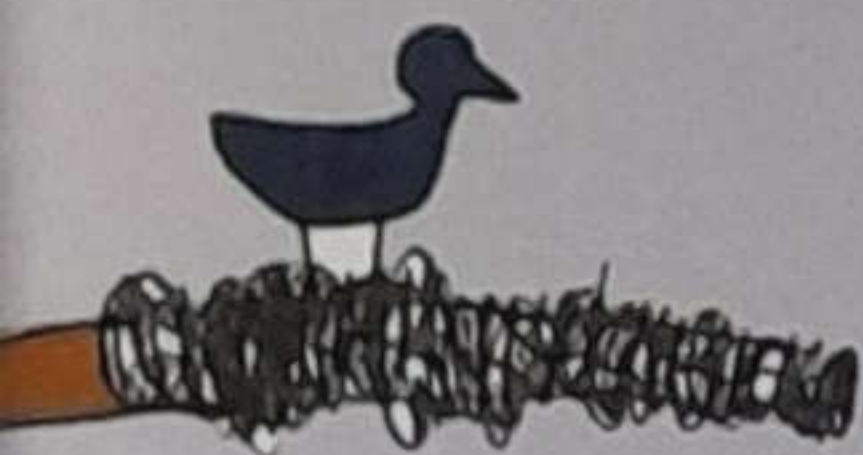


Moments later there was a strange knock at the door.

When the girl went to investigate she found the fox, the nisse and the starling on the doorstep.

The girl screamed with joy that they were back and safe. Her father wondered what all the commotion was but he didn't care – his thoughts were still lost in the cave and their lost fortune.







After spending time with her new friends she found out that the holly tree protected the animals and people from the bad things in life. That was why they always stayed near the holly tree.

Fox had just been trying to protect the girl from going into the cave rather than just scaring her away. This hadn't worked so they all had to put the enchanted feather under the holly tree in the hope that the girl would take it with her that day.



She explained this to her father who was now beginning to recover a bit from his disappointment about losing the cave. They decided that the knowledge of there being the possibility of more gold in the cave could only bring misfortune and danger to the forest and its animals. They went in search of holly seeds to plant around the cave. They also planted oak trees for shelter.

After their work was done the girl and her father hurried back to bed because it was dark and getting late.



In the spring the fox had eight little cubs and the starling also got a family. The nisse stayed with the girl and her father and together they made sure all the holly trees were kept safe and healthy.

For the rest of their lifetime, whenever there was a huge storm they let the animals shelter amongst the trees and the garden to keep them safe.





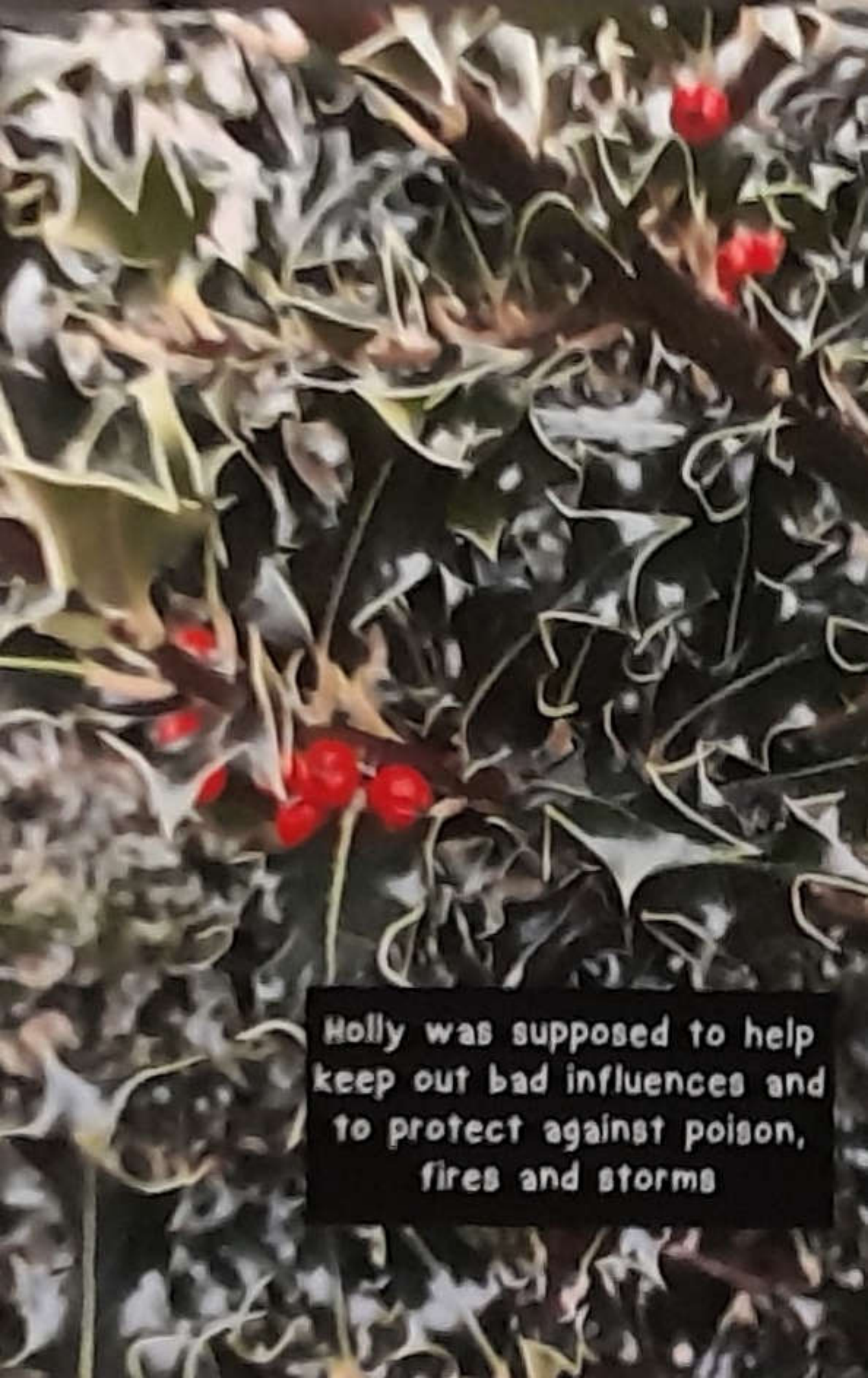




The enchanted feather  
was put in a jar for safe  
keeping and was hidden in  
a very special spot at the  
beach house.







Holly was supposed to help  
keep out bad influences and  
to protect against poison,  
fires and storms







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 Nisse helped protect the family and animals on crofts from evil and misfortune. They also helped with some of the chores and farm work.

However, they are can be short tempered, especially when offended!

It was wise to leave a bowl of porridge out for them to keep them in good humour.



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