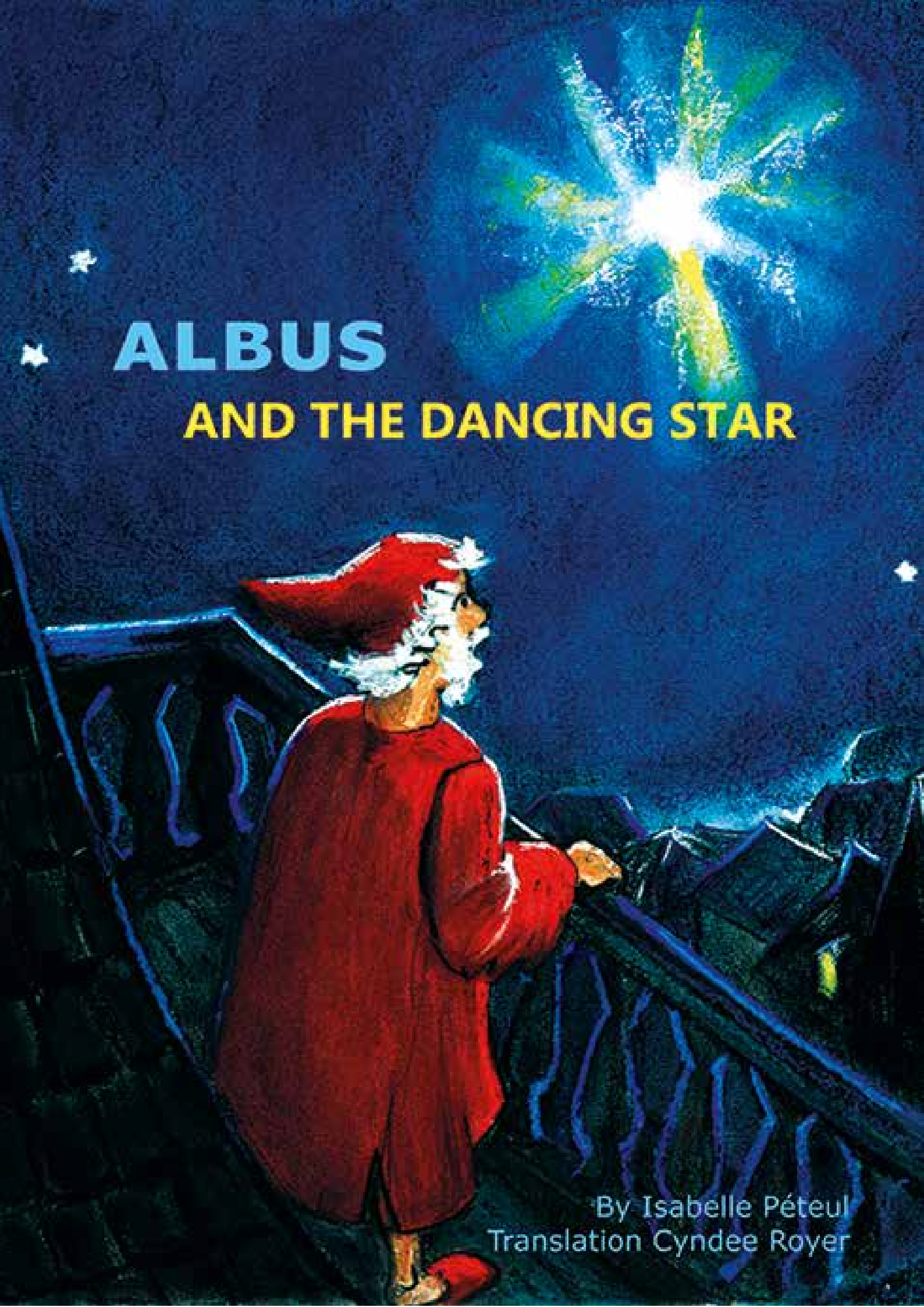
ALBUS
AND THE DANCING STAR
By Isabelle Péteul
Translation Cyndee Royer

ALBUS

AND

THE DANCING STAR

Written by Isabelle Péteul
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It was a very long time ago
in year, one, a star was born in the sky.
It twinkled more than the other stars.
It was whiter, purer and more beautiful.
This star was magnificent.

Unfortunately, not many people even noticed it.
However, among the astronomers and the learned,
this star was making a commotion.

On the night the star was born, far up North,
Albus was just opening up his small observatory when in the middle of an ocean of deep blue, he saw it immediately.

It was as bright as the full moon. It was impossible to miss. It was as if everything around this star had been eclipsed.

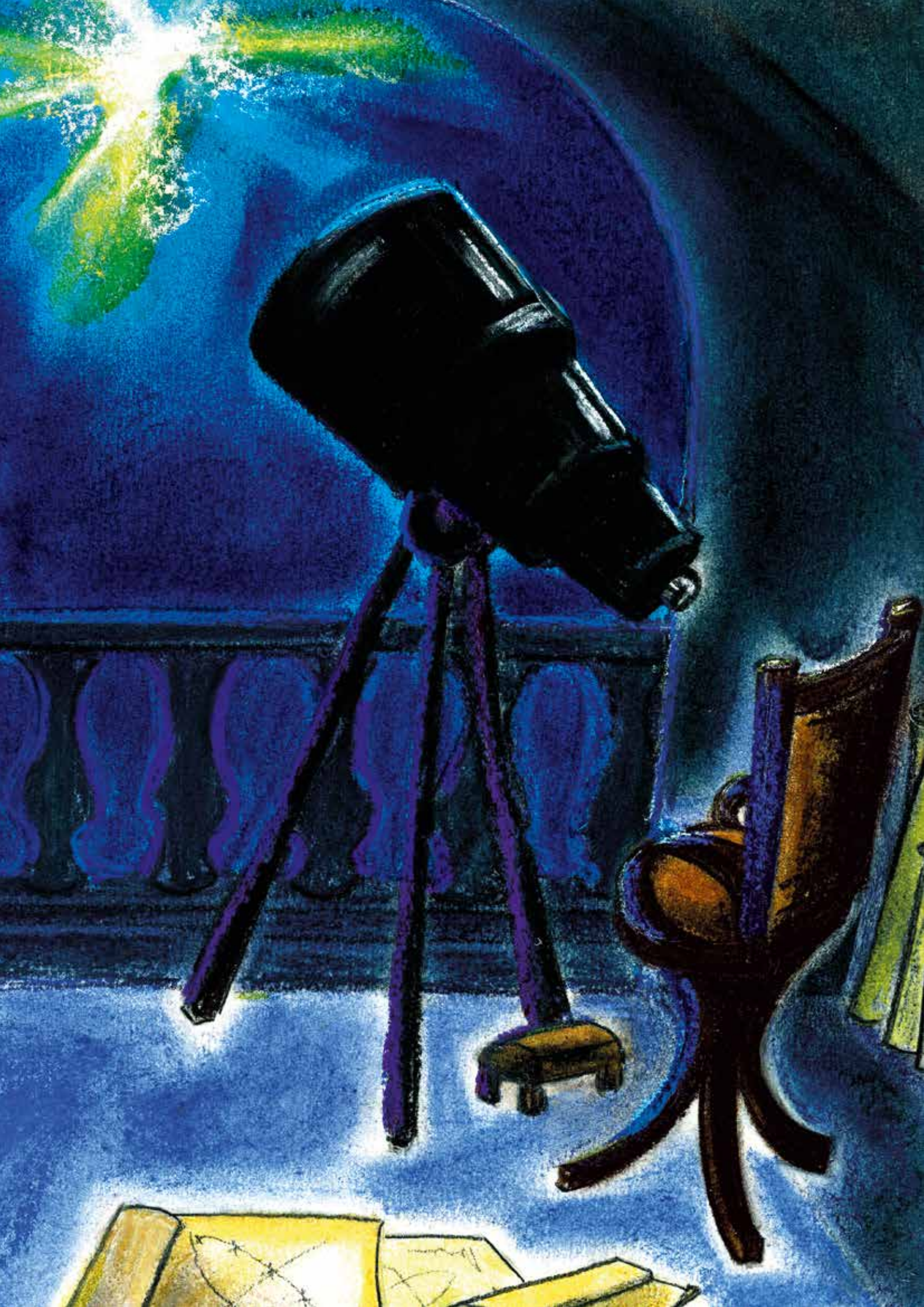
A new star! What a discovery!
He couldn’t close his eyes all night.

He was over excited. The following night, he observed, studied, calculated and re-calculated its position. He drew its trajectories, and sent out a dispatch throughout the entire kingdom.

The next day, the sun couldn't go down fast enough. In his impatience, Albus began to rant and rave until finally the horizon disappeared into a glittering night.

When at last the star showed itself, he fell into contemplation and silence. For a long time, he was absorbed with the star's brightness. What peace he felt in the star's presence.

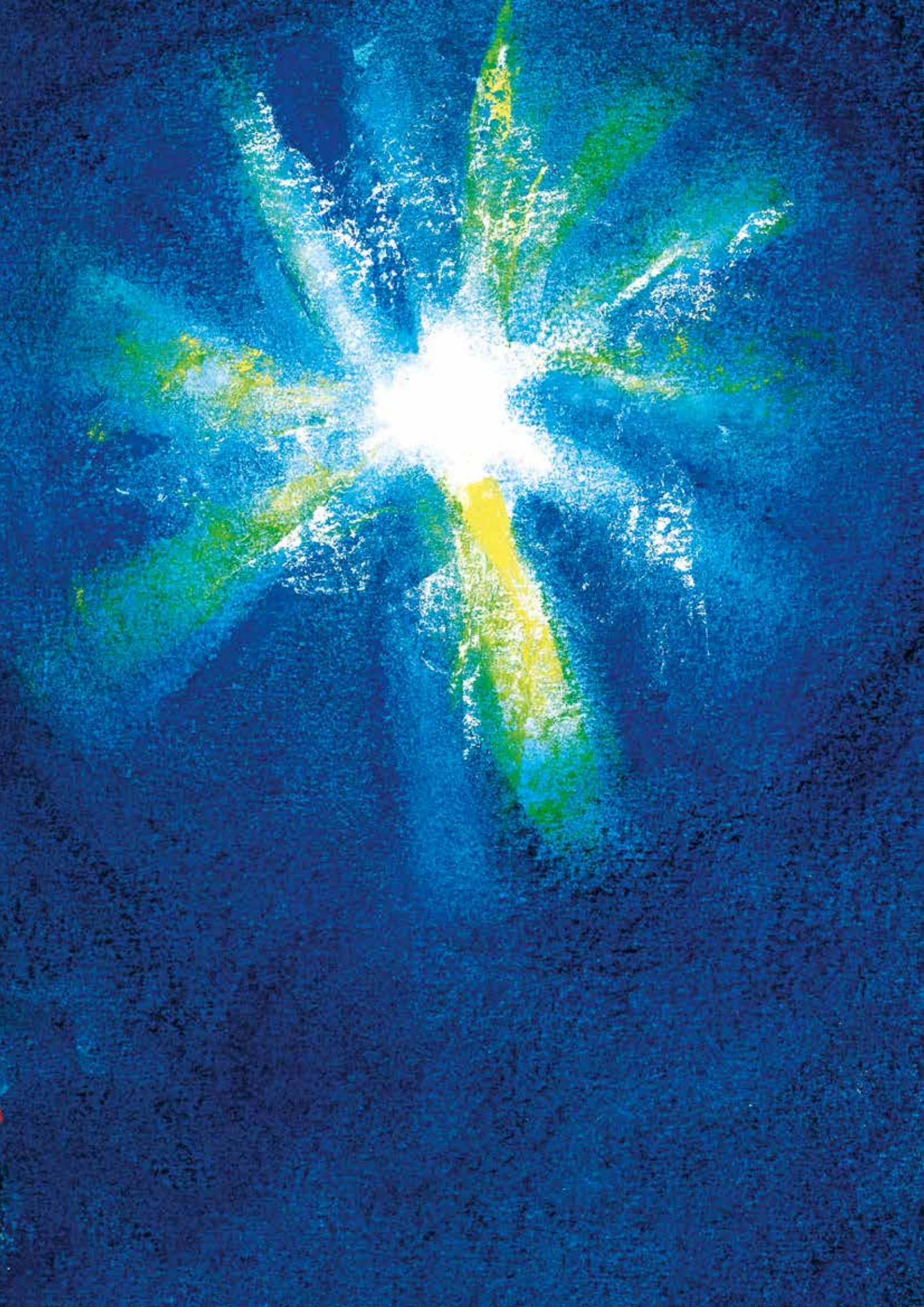
It was so beautiful; he thought to himself that it had to have been born for an extraordinary reason.



On the fourth night, the star had a surprise saved up for Albus. The star twinkled brighter, and then, all of a sudden, it began to DANCE.

Albus rubbed his eyes. Was he dreaming? He pinched himself. Ouch! Then, he plunged his head into a bucket of freezing water . . . where he quickly came out choking and dripping wet. But when he raised his eyes again, the star continued its light, bouncy choreography.

Albus wasn't dreaming. He was wide awake. He ran to his neighbor's house. When he had awakened him, Albus asked if he seemed a little crazy. The neighbor slammed the door in his face. It was too late for foolishness.



Each night, Albus discovered one surprise after another. Beginning on the fifth night and each following night, the star began to move its location.

"Has it put up its sails now?" he said. "It's incredible!"

As an astronomer, he was at a loss as to how to explain this phenomenon. Yes, stars can move in the sky, but they move altogether in a predictable, precise, repeatable order. As a scholar, he had never studied about a star that could act in the manner as this star. This star had a purpose of its own. Had Albus lost his mind?

"One would think that the star was alive. Does it want to draw attention to itself? Should I follow it? Maybe it has a specific path. I'm crazy!" he said wringing his hand tightly together.

"Although you're completely right!" whispered a small voice. "Oops!"

Albus hadn’t realized that he was thinking aloud, nor that someone had been spying on him!

When he looked around, he noticed a piece of fabric sticking out from behind a chest. Albus seized it, and pulled firmly to reveal the intruder. To his amazement, he had caught an angel by the seat of his pants.

A very little angel. Not bigger than a five year old child. Lighter than a feather, but who was at present, squirming as swiftly as a little demon! Out of surprise, Albus dropped the angel on the hard floor.

“Ouch! That hurt!”

“I’m so sorry!”

The little luminous being had a kind, sincere and inquisitive face.

When he saw the old man's confused facial expression, he couldn't contain his laughter.

"My dear Albus", he said affectionately, "if only you could see your face!"

"It's just that I have been seeing dancing stars and now angels. Am I sick?"

"Yes, the most marvelous sickness that there could be" he responded gaily. "Don't you realize that you are seeing the Star of Noël ? The one which will announce the most important event in the history of mankind!"

"What are you talking about?"

"It's God's star! The one that has appeared to celebrate the birth of his Son: the Messiah. He has come to save the world - to save you - to save everyone!"

"God ? But from what do we need to be saved? Wait . . . I don't understand anything. Can you start from the beginning? Who are YOU ? "

"Roméo, your guardian angel." He said making a curtsy.

"You're saying, I have a guardian angel? But, you're so young, and very short!"

"Technically, I'm a couple of million years OLDER than you", said the angel condescendingly. Pretending that he would leave, he said, "Anyway, you are not really supposed to see me. Now if the star doesn't interest you . . . "

"Yes, you know it does. Albus insisted. Stay. I want to know more about the star." Albus didn't want this little angel to leave him. He who knew so much for such a long time.

"How long have you been watching over me?"

"From your existence. I saw you even in the womb of your mother. Oh, God made you so beautiful. God sends an angel to watch over every human. Didn't you know that? Each one of you have an angel who loves, protects and tries to encourage you into goodness."

"I didn't know that. God sent you to take care of me? Well then, does that mean He is interested in my life?"

"Well yes! You can't even imagine how happy He would be if you showed interest in Him. I am always by your side. You can count on me in both your difficulties and in your joys!"

"Hmm . . . Okay, the star. What is its mystery?"

"It is showing you the path to follow in order to see this extraordinary birth. The star in itself is not important, but the reason for its existence is. It is the sign shown to men of good will. That is to say, men who turn their souls in pursuit of good."

"Only to men of good will? And what about the others?"

"My dear friend, God, in all of His love, has called everyone to be men of good will. And those who really search for the good, they know how to see, marvel and understand with the eyes of God. Therefore, there are some who know that the star is a sign because their souls are just and they recognize the truth.

“How do you know that?”
Albus asked
“Because I’m an angel.” Roméo replied, raising his shoulders with a wink in his eye.
The star danced on as if to confirm what the little angel had just said.
“But?”
“Are you going to get dressed? We are going to end up being late!” stated the angel, without giving Albus much time to think about it.
In a wing’s beat, he had hitched up the sleigh, and was holding out Albus’ boots and coat.

“Why not? A great adventure never hurt anybody!”
Abandoning his observatory, Albus jumped into his clothes. Taking his things from Roméo, he jumped into the sleigh and was off in an instant. Whoever should come after this star must be equally or greater in wonder.

Their voyage lasted a long time. A very long time.

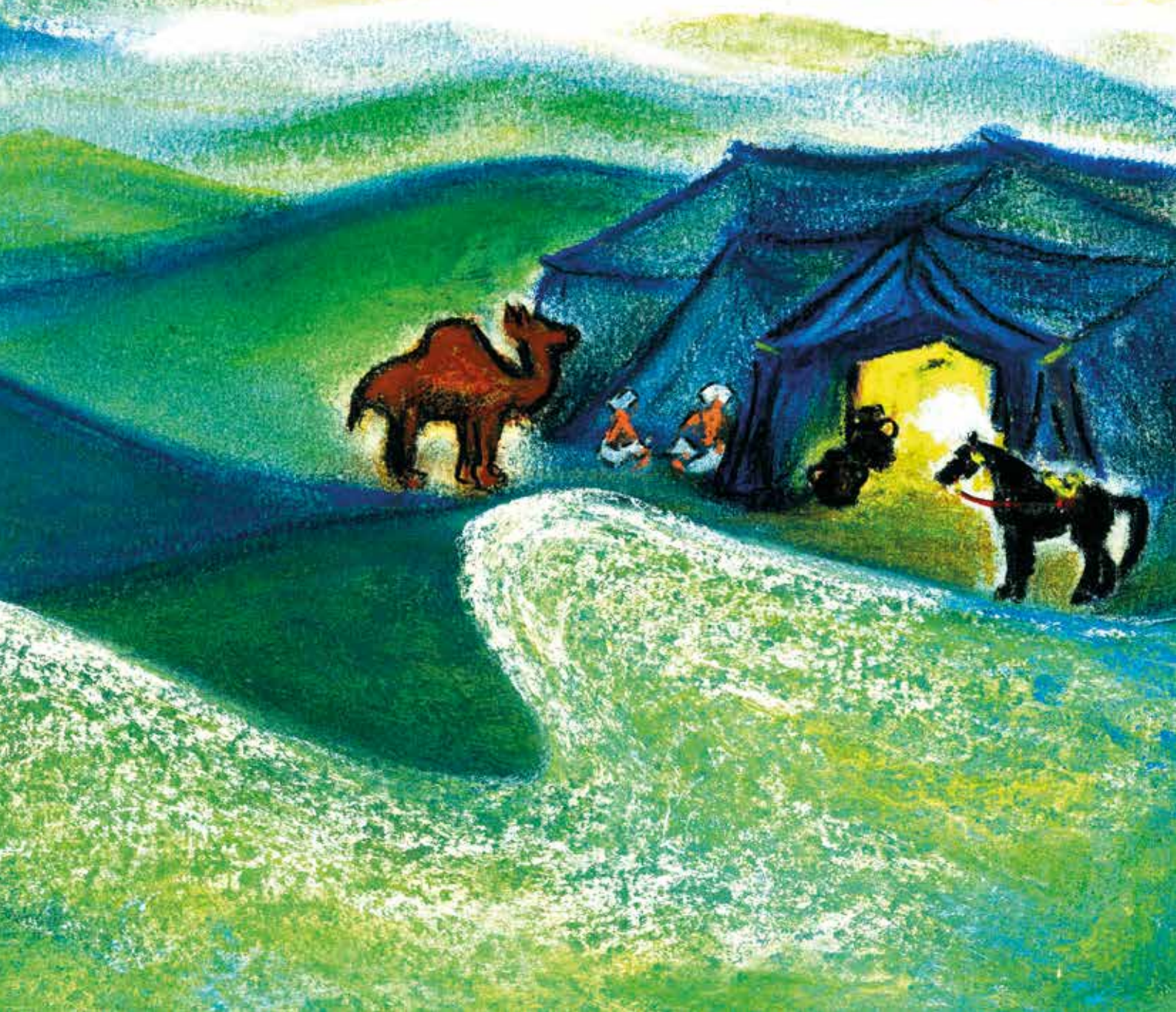
During the trip, Roméo explained to Albus why this child was coming to Earth. It is the Son of God. Nothing more than that. In choosing bad rather than good, men had distanced themselves from God who Himself is only good and kind. But He loves man. He loves them as a father would a son. So Jesus, His son, has come to Earth as a tiny, penniless little baby to reach the hearts of men. To help them convert, and help then to understand how much each of them are loved. The Creator has been waiting for them with his arms opened wide.

Roméo told him: "You know, It's like each of your names were written in the palm of His hand long before your birth, since the beginning of time. God loves you so much. Just like a mother could never forget her child, well, even more so your Father in heaven could never forget you. He stands with his arms opened wide towards you and says in all tenderness: "Little ones of my love."

Albus really liked the idea of a God with endless love. He was surprised at himself because he found a great desire to talk to this Creator. At the same time, he found the idea rather dubious. Roméo explained what prayer was: talking. Talking to Him with our hearts. Nothing complicated.

Finally, they were at the last leg of their journey. They had arrived in the Roman territory in a region called Judah. There, they were told that Wise Men from the East had also come being led by a star.

At sunrise, Albus and Roméo, full of curiosity, tiptoed to the wise men's campsite to have a peak. From afar, they could see a long line of caravans, magnificent black steeds, camels carrying daises with golden embroidery, servants with turbans on their heads, jars and amphorae in the chariots.



Albus was astonished. If these people of great influence and importance had left everything behind to follow a star, maybe he wasn’t as crazy as he had imagined. This thought reassured him.

Back in his tent, after he had dressed for the night, someone approached the door flap.

It was one of the servants that he had seen. Dressed in all white and a turban on his head. The wise men had heard some talk of a crazy adventurer coming from the North. They requested his company. Albus was enchanted. He didn’t have to be invited twice!

The wise men were called Gaspard, Melchior and Balthasar. They were very polite, and Albus was touched by their simplicity and warm welcome.

They talked as equals. They shared their knowledge and they asked him a million questions about his work. Having the latest information about the star, the wise men explained to Albus that it had stopped on top of the village of Bethlehem.

Bethlehem was just a little farther south and they could be there the next day. Some had said that shepherds had already seen angels just a little shortly after the star's appearance. They had announced the birth of: The Savior of the World. The child was called Jesus. They decided together to meet at Bethlehem.

In the morning, the wise men came to the door of the small family. A man named Joseph opened the door, and they could see at the back of the room Mary, the mother of the child, holding a baby in her arms. She invited them in.

Albus disappeared. Roméo called and looked for him everywhere.

He finally found Albus hiding next to a dripping fountain.

“Why didn’t you enter?”
“I don’t know. I couldn’t. I’m not very presentable, you know.”
“But this is THE CHILD that the star announced! You followed it, and now, you won’t even go and see?”

Albus didn’t answer. The angel extracted him from his hiding place and pushed him towards the porch of the family. Leaning against the doorframe, the old man glued himself firmly in place. He would not move another step. Roméo pushed and pulled. Nothing happened. Albus would not budge.

"Stop, Roméo. I can't, that's all. Anyway, IF it is really the Son of God, who am I to go an have a look around like it's a zoo. I need to at least offer him a gift. Those wise men came with : gold, incense and myrrh. The shepherds came with milk, cheese and wool."

"But what could you offer him? He only wants your heart!"

"Well then," scratching his head, "maybe a toy? At his age, children love to play. I will make him one. You'll see, it will be pretty. I have a talent for that. We'll come back tomorrow. It will be better like that."

Albus worked all night. In the early hours of the morning, Roméo found him snoring loudly. In his arms, was a beautiful little reindeer and sleigh, sculpted in wood. It was much like the one which had brought them to Bethlehem.

Awakened from his sleep, Albus had Roméo admire the work of art.

“That’s it!” he said finishing his toy. The last touch, he intricately attached a small bell around the neck of the reindeer.

In the morning, whilst the air was still cool and the light dim, the two joyful companions headed off to the village.

At the entrance of the small house, they could see that something wasn’t right. The door was slightly ajar, and they could see that the house was empty. From all appearances, it had been left in haste.

The two became quite worried. While asking themselves what could have happened, suddenly they heard loud noises coming from horses and the clashing of iron.

King Herod’s soldiers invaded the village and were searching the houses. They were looking for the small child who the wise men had called “a child-king.” Was Herod the king really scared of being dethroned by that little Jesus? Thankfully, he was no longer there.

As soon as possible, Albus and Roméo fled as quickly as they had come.

Feeling sorry for himself, Albus sat on a box.

"I have really messed things up. If only I had of listened. It's as if I refused to see Him. The Son of God! Don't you understand? I am such a nobody that I couldn't come empty handed. And now, because of my stupid pride, it's too late. He who made Himself humble and small, perhaps, just perhaps He could have accepted me even if I am a nobody."

"Pride? Yes, maybe, but not only. You felt small in front of Him? that's normal. Wanting to offer Him something was kind.
All the time and effort that you gave to make that toy. It was a part of your heart. You showed Him that He is important to you. This is the Son of God. He knows everything, and I assure you that He knows that!"

Albus would not be comforted. He had been so happy in the preparation of his gift that now his sadness and disappointment were all the greater.

It was at that moment, whilst Albus lamented the failure of his mission, that Roméo began to think. There had to be a solution. If he had been sent so that Albus followed the star, God had to be able to turn things around and inspire another idea -a solution.

All of a sudden, the light came on in his head.

"What if you could still offer a gift to Jesus? Would you do it?"

"Of course I would! Just tell me how!" Albus said jumping straight up with joy.

"This is your task. How would you like to make Noël an exceptional day in all the Earth?"

"A day that symbolizes peace and love. It would be a day when families can come together, forgive and reunite. A day where hearts open up and become generous. A day where men rediscover the joy of being kind one to another."

"That would be great! High five! To give joy – that would be spectacular! It is not me who will give a gift to Jesus, but Him who gives one to me! But, how am I suppose to do it?"

"Let's see . . . Well . . . You could make toys for every child in the world and give it to them the night of Noël. Jesus will say one day: 'Whenever you have done for one of the least of these, you have done it for me.' By making them happy, you are making Him happy too. Maybe, you will inspire them to do likewise."

“Roméo, you are great. Hmm . . . That will take a lot of time to make all those toys.” Albus stated with a frown.

“We won’t be making them in just one night of the year. We will have 364 days to prepare all those packages.”

“We. You’re coming? And how will they all be delivered?”

“If I come, I could guide the reindeer. You will be able to go three times around the Earth in one night. Look!”

Roméo flattened the animal’s ears; he grabbed his bridle and pulled while flying up. The reindeer jumped; then, trotted around feeling quite proud of his accomplishment.
Albus was joyous. He wanted to start the project immediately. He plunged into his affairs to find the sleigh that was so tenderly made for Jesus. His heart began to beat fast. Running through the streets, he searched for one of the “least” to whom he could give it.

FABLES
CHRONIQUE
FÉERIE
NORD
PERLES
COLLIERS

That is how Albus became Father Christmas.

Certainly, his little enterprise has grown in the past two thousand years. Today, there are many more men on Earth since the time of Jesus. That is why, well hidden in his small chalet, he has had to employ an army of joyous little elves? and his manufacturing of toys has taken off.

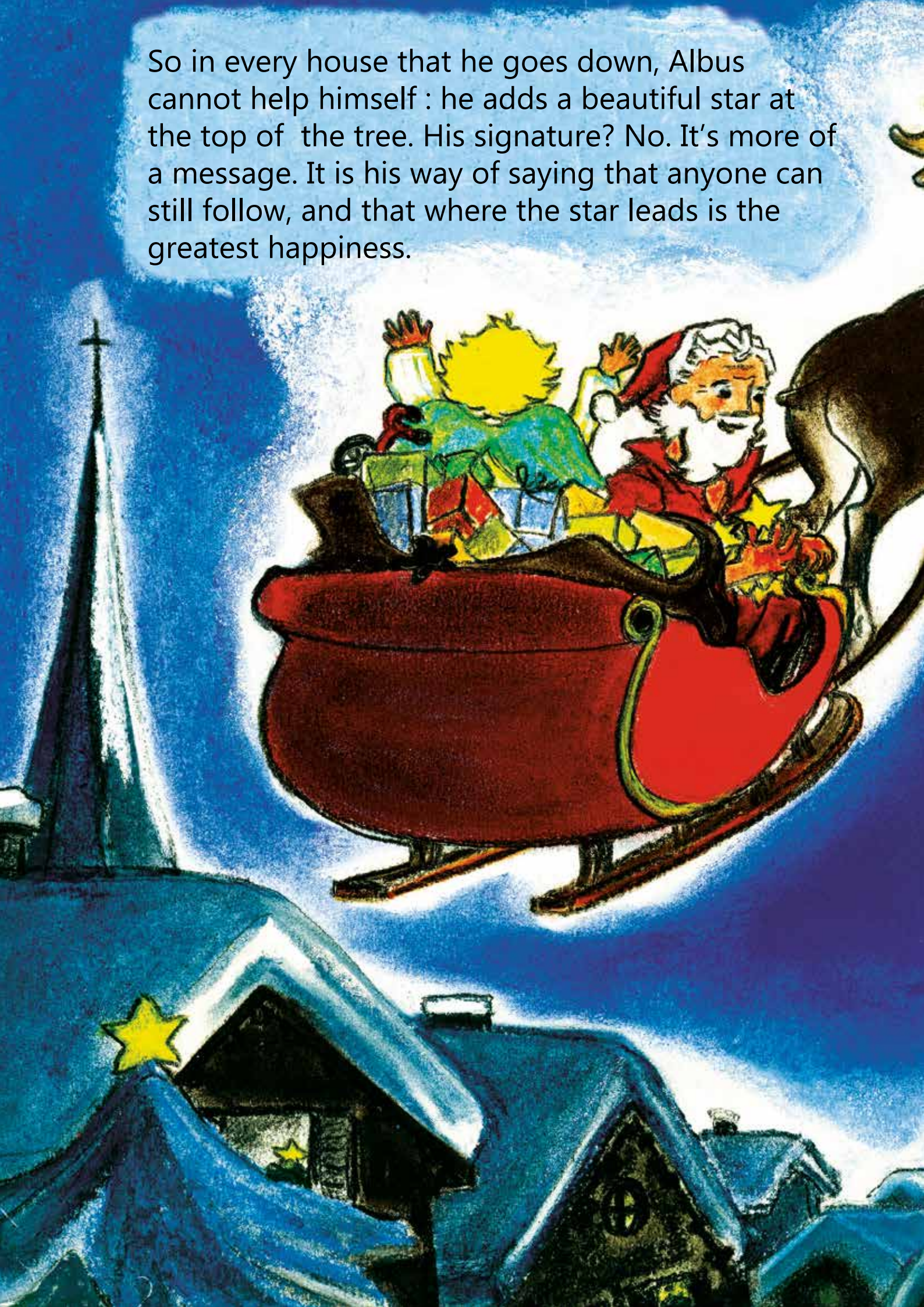
In the North, Albus has remained just Albus, an old man who some call the man of stars. And no one knows anything about his secret.

Although, every year, he is more impatient for Christmas than anyone else. He awaits the first frosts, the first garland of lights in the streets, the first white decorated trees in the windows, and he laughs through his white beard. If he weren't so old, he would jump up and dance for joy!

When the time finally arrives, he unfolds his big red coat that smells of clean wool and climbs into his sleigh in order to crisscross the sky.

Every year, he feels the same joy, a bit silly, when he feels the engine take off. Every time, the same joyous partnership that began with Roméo, the same feeling of happiness to imagine all of those amazed children. And also, the emotion each time he remembers . . .

So in every house that he goes down, Albus cannot help himself : he adds a beautiful star at the top of the tree. His signature? No. It's more of a message. It is his way of saying that anyone can still follow, and that where the star leads is the greatest happiness.



For older children and parents

1/ Characters from the text

Angels: Angels are uniquely spiritual creatures which means that they do not occupy a physical body. However, they have an intelligence and a will of their own. The word "angel" means messenger in Latin which corresponds to the role that they have in various religions. They also are generally believed to be protectors and guides.
According to Judaism, Christian and Islamic traditions: Angles are servants of God who perpetually contemplate Him. Certain angels called "guardians" are designated to protect man throughout his life.

Herod: King Herod the Great ruled from 37 BC - 4 BC. The Roman Senate crowned him king of Judea. He eliminated the existing Hasmonean dynasty by killing the king-priest Antigonus. His rule is remembered by crimes committed to consolidate his power including: the execution of some of his own children, strong repression. His unwavering relationship with Rome did not help his popularity amongst his citizens. He admired the Greek architect, and as such, had many buildings constructed: fortresses, temples and a royal palace. Politically clever , he reconstructed the temple of Jerusalem to obtain favor from the priests and people. At his death, his kingdom was divided among his three sons and sister: Archelaus, Herod Antipas, Philip, and Salome I.
According to Christian tradition: (The Bible Matthew 2:1-23) The Jewish scribes and High Priests had prophesied that Bethlehem would be the birthplace of

the "king of the Jews". Harold the Great ordered the death of every male child age two or younger from Bethlehem, hoping that this "king" would be eradicated. However, the child's family had fled to Egypt. Joseph, the adoptive father, had been warned by a dream of the danger against the child.

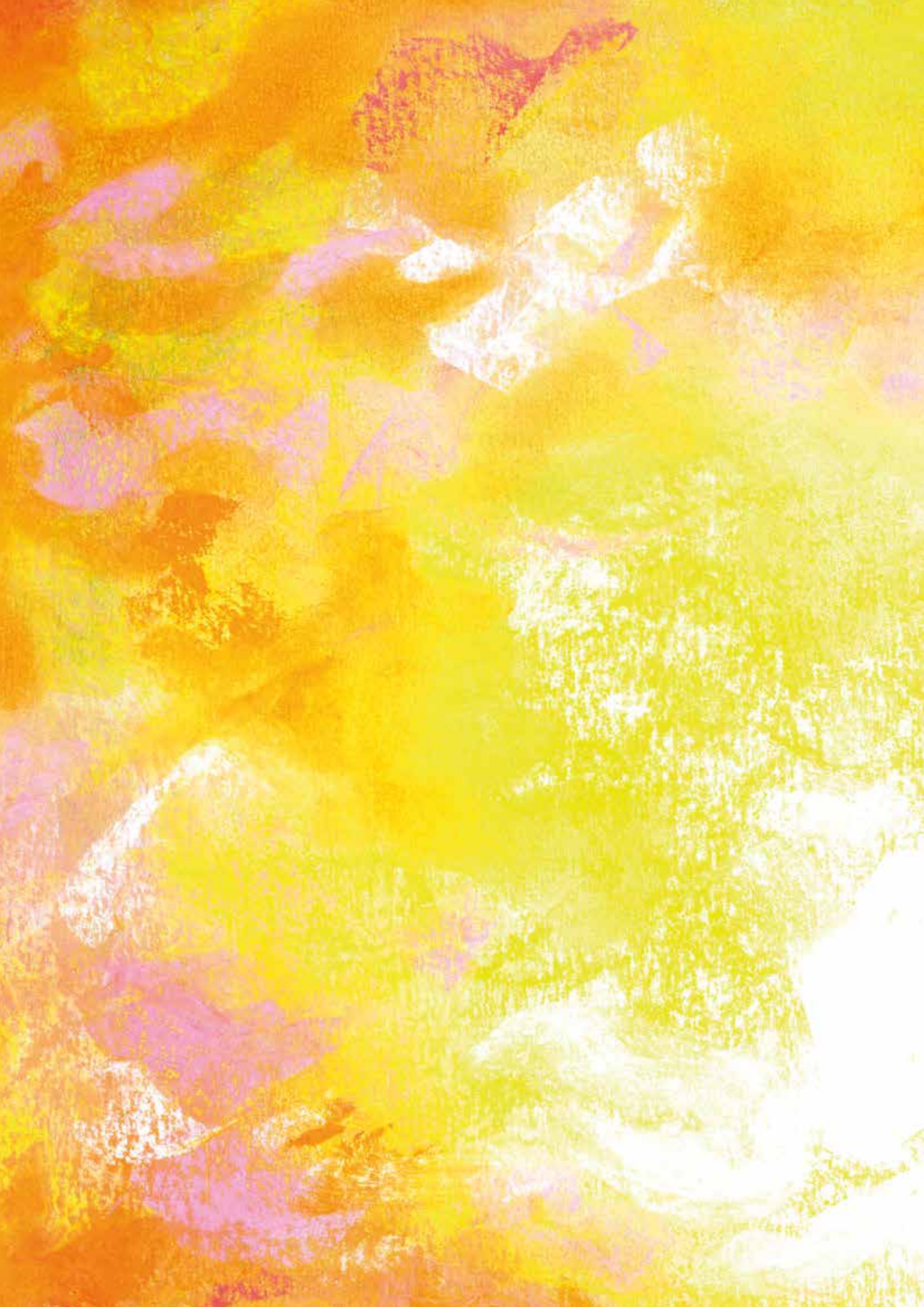
Jesus: Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ or Messiah, was a Jew from Galilee who lived during the first century. Around the age of thirty, for two or three years, he traveled throughout his country preaching and healing. He aroused enthusiasm and fervor, but he also attracted the mistrust of the religious and political authorities. He was arrested, condemned and crucified around 30 AD in Jerusalem during the Jewish festival of Passover. These acts were under the political rule of the emperor Tiberius and the prefect of the Roman province of Judaea Pontius Pilate. Jesus' existence has been confirmed. Many historians from the first and second century have mentioned him or indirectly made reference to him. Josephus, (Antiquities of the Jews Book XVIII chapter 3 paragraph 3, and book XX chapter 9, paragraph 1), Tacitus, (The Annals XV, 44), Pliny the Younger (Epistulae X letter 96). Finally, Suetonius (The Twelve Caesars : The life of Claudius XXV, 11 and The life of Nero XVI 3). The Babylonian Talmud completed at the end of the fourth century speaks of Jesus as well.
According to Christian tradition: Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah, as announced in the Old Testament (first half of the Bible). He was sent to man as a Savior. He taught the love of God and neighbor. Put to death on a cross, he offered up his life as a sacrifice for mankind. On the third day after his death, he resurrected. He sent out his apostles throughout the world to testify of the love of God. His history and doctrine have been transcribed in four gospels in the Bible. (The Bible contains 73 books.) Christmas is the celebration of his birth and Easter is the celebration of his resurrection. Jesus taught his disciples to address God as a father and it is he who is the author of the most well known prayer for Christians, "The Lord's prayer" or "The Our Father."
According to Islamic tradition: Jesus of Nazareth, known as Îsâ ibn Maryam in Arabic - Jesus son of Mary, is considered as a great prophet.

Joseph: *According to Christian tradition: A man who is just or righteous. From the lineage of the Jewish king David. He was a carpenter. He married Mary even though he knew that she was already pregnant. He became the father and protector of Jesus; that is why he is called the "adoptive father" of Christ.*

Mary: *According to Christian tradition: While she was betrothed to a man named Joseph, the angel Gabriel came to her and asked her on God's behalf if she would be willing to be the mother of the much waited for Savior. Her willing response was "let it be done to me according to your word". The Christ was conceived in her by the action of the Holy Spirit which is why she is called the "Virgin Mary". The mother of Jesus, Son*

Our Father
who art in heaven,
holy be thy name.
Thy kingdom
come. Thy will be done, on earth
as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trepass
against us; and lead us, not into
temptation.
But deliver us from evil.
Amen.



of God. Before Jesus died on the cross, he asked John, one of his followers, to love her as his own mother. Symbolically, by this act, the human race has been given to her motherly care. She is therefore addressed by both titles: Mother of God and of man. There are many places of pilgrimage dedicated to her. The most famous are Lourdes, in the south West of France, and Fatima in Portugal.
According to Islamic tradition: Mary, Maryam is the mother of the prophet Ïsâ(Jesus) in Arabic conceived in her by the action of the Holy Spirit of God; therefore, her virginity is protected. Cited 34 times in the Koran, "Mary" or Surat Maryam is the nineteenth chapter dedicated to her. Also titled, Sayyidunâ -Our Lady, is the model of piousness and purity. She is venerated at the sanctuary of Our Lady of Lebanon, which is also a pilgrimage for Christians.

Santa Clause or Father Christmas : During the second half of the nineteenth century in the United States, Santa Clause became popular. New York migrants from North of Europe brought with them their traditions, stories and legends. In particular, the legend of Saint Nicholas of Myra (Bishop 270-343, who had allegedly saved three children). His feast day is widely celebrated in the Flanders' region of Belgium which goes back to the dark ages. His American name "Santa Clause" was derived from the Sinterklaas which comes from the Netherlands. The publication of two poems: "Old Santa Clause" in 1821 and "A Visit from St. Nicholas" in 1823, largely contributed to the elaboration of the character of Santa Clause who distributes gifts and who rides in a sleigh pulled by reindeer through the sky. Traditionally, Santa Clause has not always been outfitted in red. At the end of the XIX century, an image of Father Christmas could be seen in a coat of green or blue. The definitive color was adopted a little before 1914, and it wasn't until 1927 that the Finnish set his residence in Lapland. In 1931, the first Coca-Cola Santa Clause was created in a commercial in *The Saturday Evening Post*. Afterwards, this Coca-Cola Santa Clause could be seen everywhere until 1964. In 1946, the French song, "Petit Papa Noël", was written for the orphans of WWII and has been widely popular since.

The Wise men: *According to Christian tradition: popularly known as the three Kings, they were wise men, philosophers and astronomers. Led by the star which appeared at the birth of Christ and which guided them to Jerusalem and afterwards to Bethlehem. They found the child and prostrated before him giving him royal gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Afterwards, they returned to their home lands. From the VI century on, they have been recognized as Gaspard, Melchior and Balthazar. Since the dark ages and mainly in Catholic countries, it is traditional to eat the King's Cake on Epiphany, January 6 which is their feast day. The cake is served with a small porcelain or plastic figurine hidden inside, and the one who finds it becomes the king of the day.*

2/ Places and Dates:

Year 1: In 532, the church associated year 1 with the beginning of the life of Christ. It was the proposition of a monk Dionysius Exiguus or {"Dionysius the Humble"}. Before his invention of AD, the Roman tradition was to count the years starting from the foundation of Rome. Ab Urbe Condita Libri, by Titus Livius dates the beginning of Rome at 753 BC. The Christian use of year 1 was generalized in the 8th century. From year 1000, this "Christian" calendar would be the only one used for official acts. The date of the birth of Jesus calculated by Dionysius the Humble has since been rejected. Historians today, hold year 6 BC as the more likely date. The margin of error placed between 9 BC and 2 BC.

Bethlehem: A small village in historic Judea. Its name in Hebrew means "House of Bread". It is located on the West Bank, a Palestine region and is about 10 km south of Jerusalem. Its population around 25,000, Bethlehem has a Muslim majority, but also a substantial Palestinian Christian community.

According to Judaism: Bethlehem is the place of the birth and of the crowning of King David of Israel. It is also called Efrata. The prophets announced that Bethlehem would be the birthplace of the Messiah (Savior) for humanity. Torah Micah 5:1-4: And you, Bethlehem Ephrathah ... from you [he] shall emerge for Me, to be a ruler over Israel; ... And he shall stand and lead with the might of the Lord, with the pride of the Lord, his God: and they shall return, for now he shall become great to the ends of the earth. And this shall be peace.

According to Christian tradition: Bethlehem is the place of the birth of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

Judea: The name Judea is historically and biblically a region arid and mountainous. Its border to the north, Samaria, to the south, Negev, to the west, by the coastal plain and to the east, the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea. Today, it is located on the West Bank and the South of Israel. Jerusalem is its most famous city. Its name comes from Judah, a tribe of Hebrew people which lived during the Iron Age. From 63 BC to the time of this book, the city was dominated by the Romans.

World Population: According to the publications of the French National Institute of Demographic Studies, it is estimated in Year 1, that there were about 250 million people alive and 7.59 billion in January 2018.

Mediterranean Sea
Nazareth
Jerusalem
Bethlehem
Dead
Sea

3/ Anachronism

The astronomical telescope: In year 1, this instrument did not exist and the illustration of this book only puts it in the scene page 11 and 14, in order to make the work of Albus easily understood. In fact, the first telescopes were just a little better than the naked eye, and were created in the 16th century in Italy and the Netherlands. In 1609, Galileo established them as true instruments of astronomical observation by his study of the celestial vault and carrying their capacity of magnification from three to thirty. Previously, this science was practiced with the naked eye and the first traces of this activity go back 5000 years.

Camera: The illustration of this book puts it in the scene page 22. Obviously, cameras did not exist in year 1. In 1780, the Frenchman Jacques Charles inventor of the aerostat managed to freeze a vague silhouette on paper soaked in silver chloride; thanks to the process of the black room. In 1826-27, Joseph Nicéphore Niépce obtained medium quality images on tin plates. Joseph Nicéphore Niépce died in 1833. Later, Louis Daguerre developed the photographic process, and François Arago, a deputy and scholar, presented it in January 1839 at the French Science Academy. The first color camera was realized by the Englishman Thomas Sutton in 1861.

The end

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FABLES
POLICE
FEES
NOEL
PERLES
COLLIERS

JEUX DE SOCIÉTÉ

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