



## CHAPTER 1

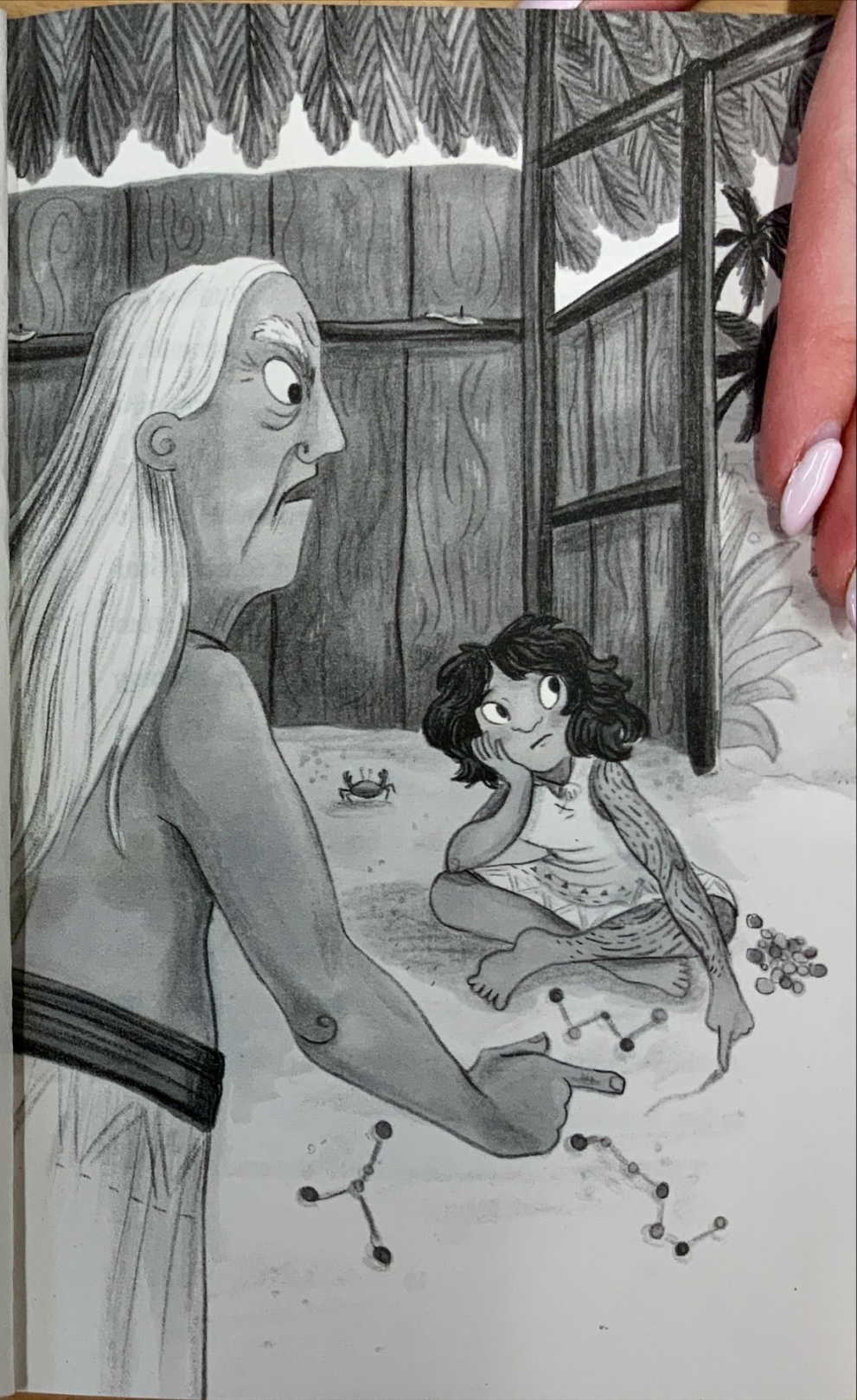
It was a beautiful day on Turtle Island. The late afternoon sun slanted golden through the treetops, and the breeze made the palm leaves shimmer and dance. There was no sign of the big storms that sometimes came at this season, just a few, well-behaved little clouds dawdling along the horizon, promising a nice cooling shower before morning. The sea glowed the perfect shade of deep turquoise – Ariki's favourite colour. How she longed to be out on that delicious blueness! She would paddle her canoe from the little cove called the Turtle's Neck;

she could almost hear the soft slapping sound of the waves against its wooden side...

"Are you paying attention?" the stern voice of her guardian Arohaka brought her back to reality. "Paying attention is the first and most important skill of the Star Walker. You will never learn to be a Master Navigator without it."

Ariki sighed. She wanted to learn, she really did – she'd even cut off her long hair so it wouldn't get in the way. But being an apprentice Star Walker was not quite what she had expected it to be. She had imagined going on long sea voyages and steering a course by new stars, visiting islands that spouted fire and finding the place, far, far away, from where she had come ... not sitting in the gloom of the Gathering Hut, staring at stones.

"We have covered three new constellations today," said Arohaka, pointing to the pebbles on the sandy floor that represented the patterns of stars in



the sky. "I expect you to know those by tomorrow. Now we will move on to wave patterns."

The old man knelt beside a large bowl of water on the ground, and began to poke its surface with a twig. "Observe the ripples," he said. "This is how you will learn about the behaviour of waves."

Ariki knelt beside him, staring in disbelief at the bowl. Was he, Master Navigator and famous Star Walker, suggesting she learned about the ocean from a *dish*, when the real ocean was right there, peeping at her between the coconut palms? She gazed out at it; she could almost feel it calling to her.

Arohaka snapped his long fingers in front of her nose. "Stop daydreaming, Ariki."

She knew she must try harder. She had swum with a giant shark to prove herself worthy to be Arohaka's apprentice and she wanted him to believe in her. But this was so hard.

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"I just want to be on the ocean," she said.

The old man sighed, and laid a hand lightly on her head. "I know, I know. But this knowledge might save your life one day. So *concentrate!*"

Arohaka placed a round pebble at one end of the shallow, water-filled bowl, then jiggled the twig at the other end to make a series of little waves that bounced back and bent round the pebble.

