

# Adrift

**Shamisa Debroey**

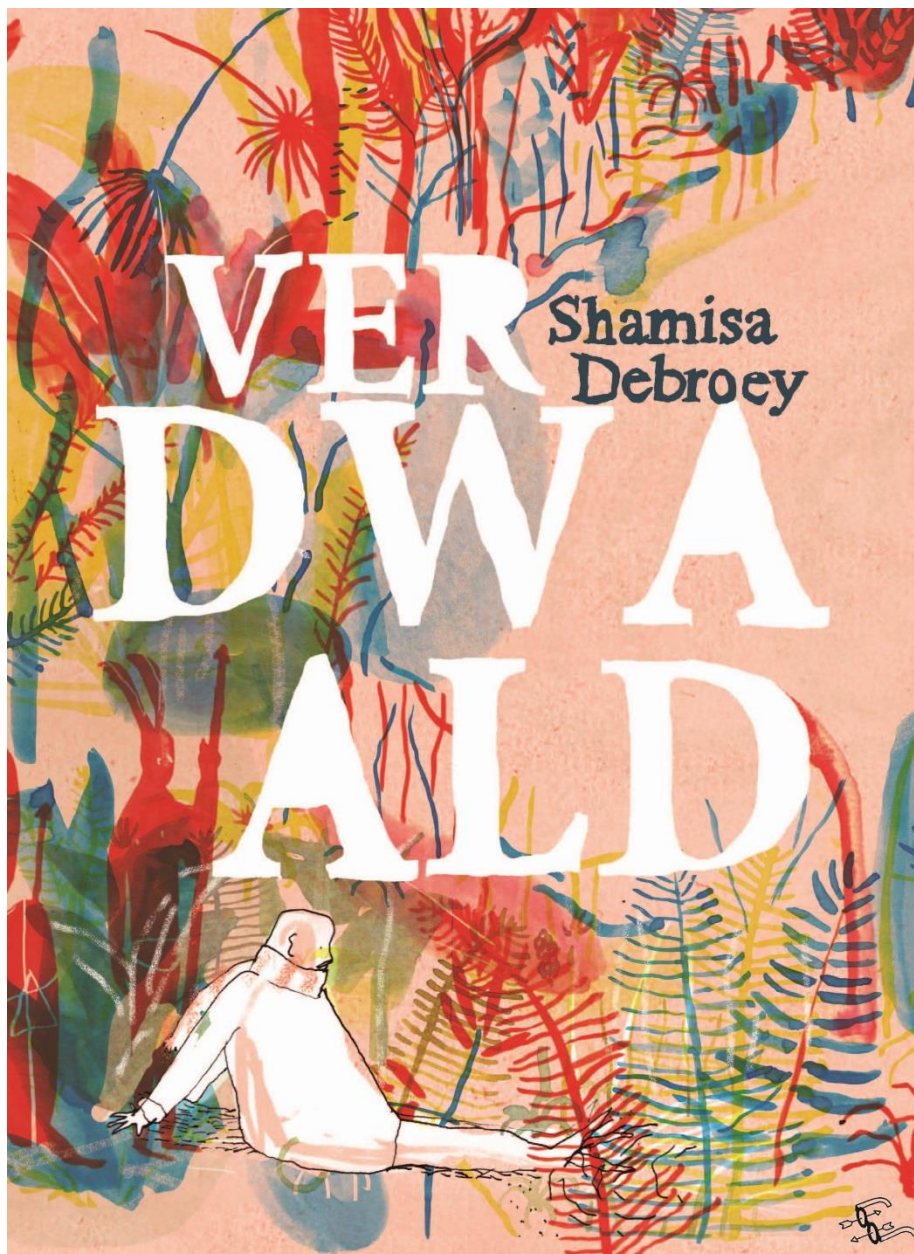
**An extract**

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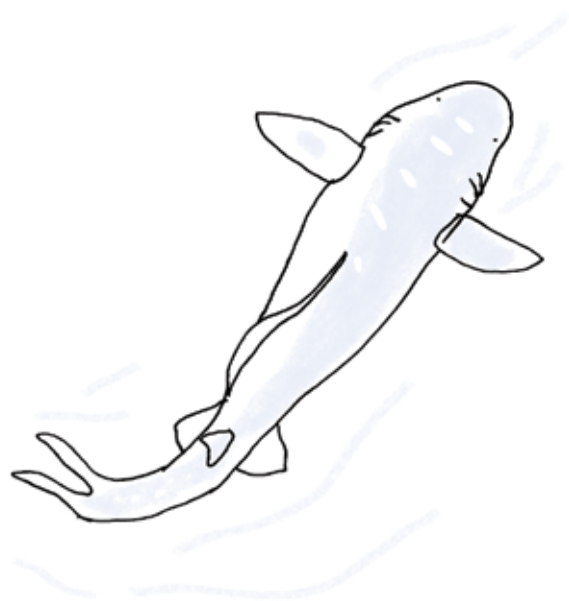
**Translation** Dutch into English  
**Translator** David Colmer

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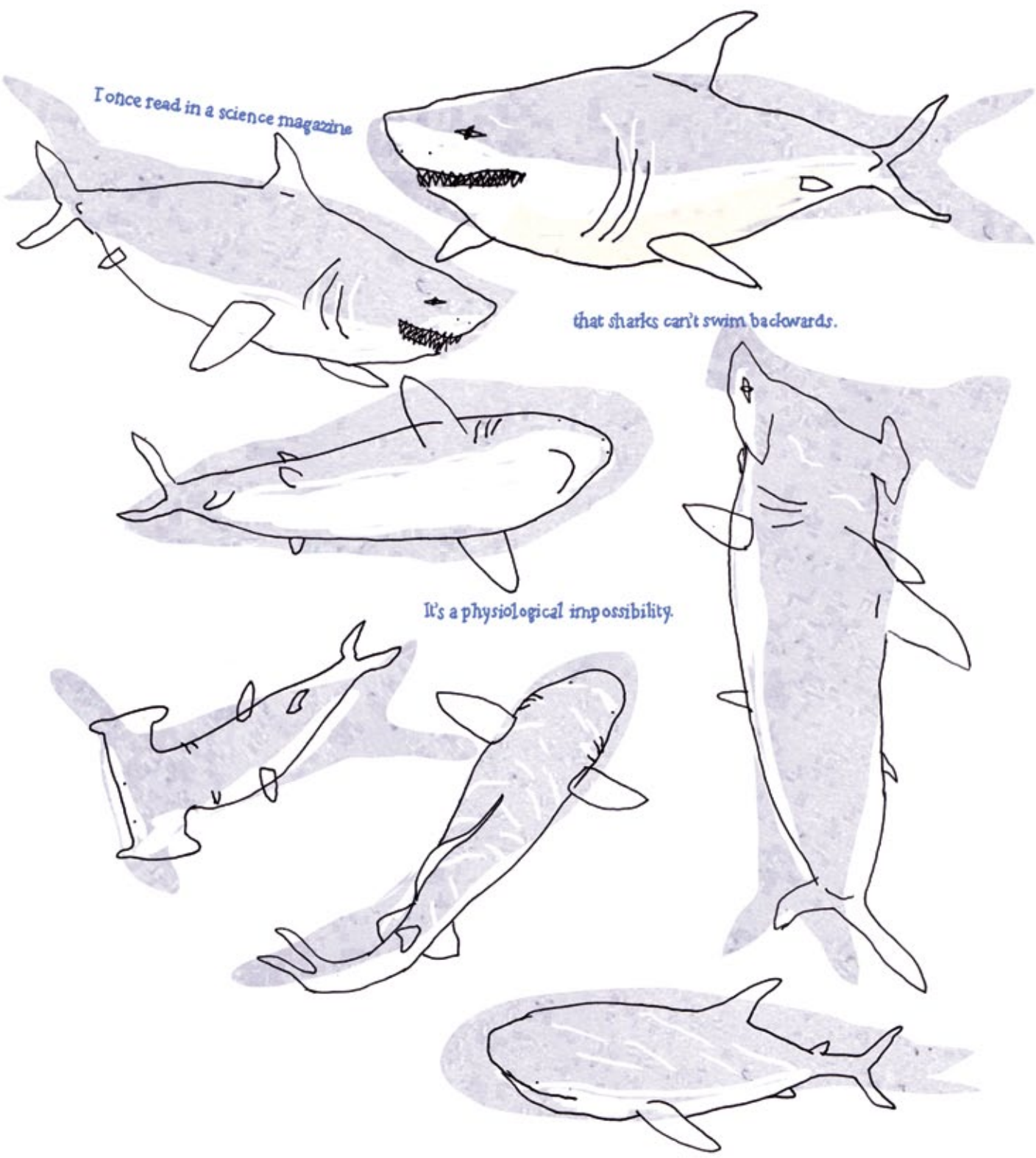
Because I once addressed you with love.



I once read in a science magazine

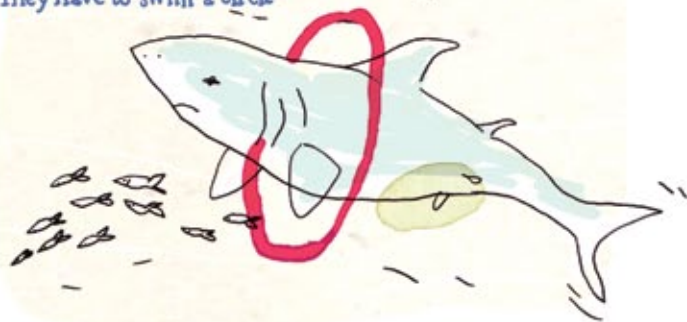
that sharks can't swim backwards.

It's a physiological impossibility.





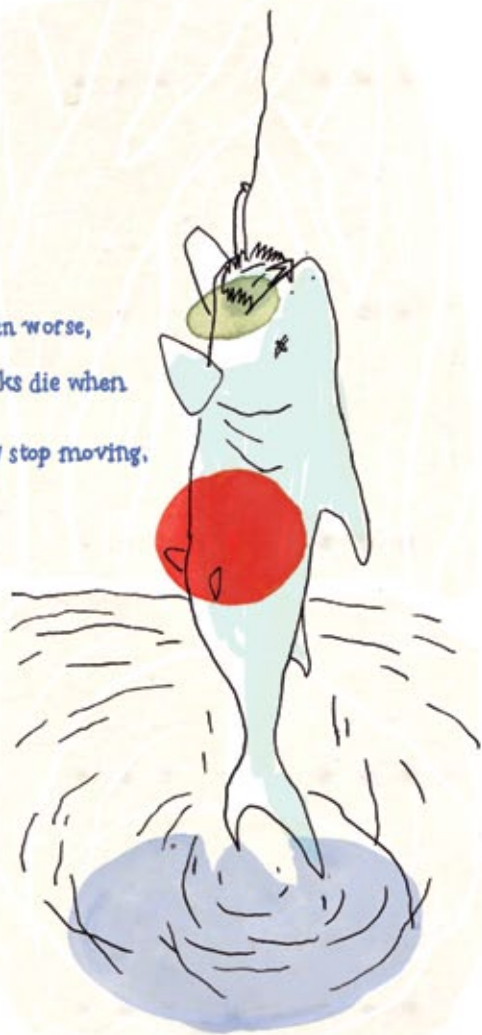
Sharks only swim forwards.  
They have to swim a circle



to get back to where they were before.



Even worse,  
sharks die when  
they stop moving.



they stop breathing.

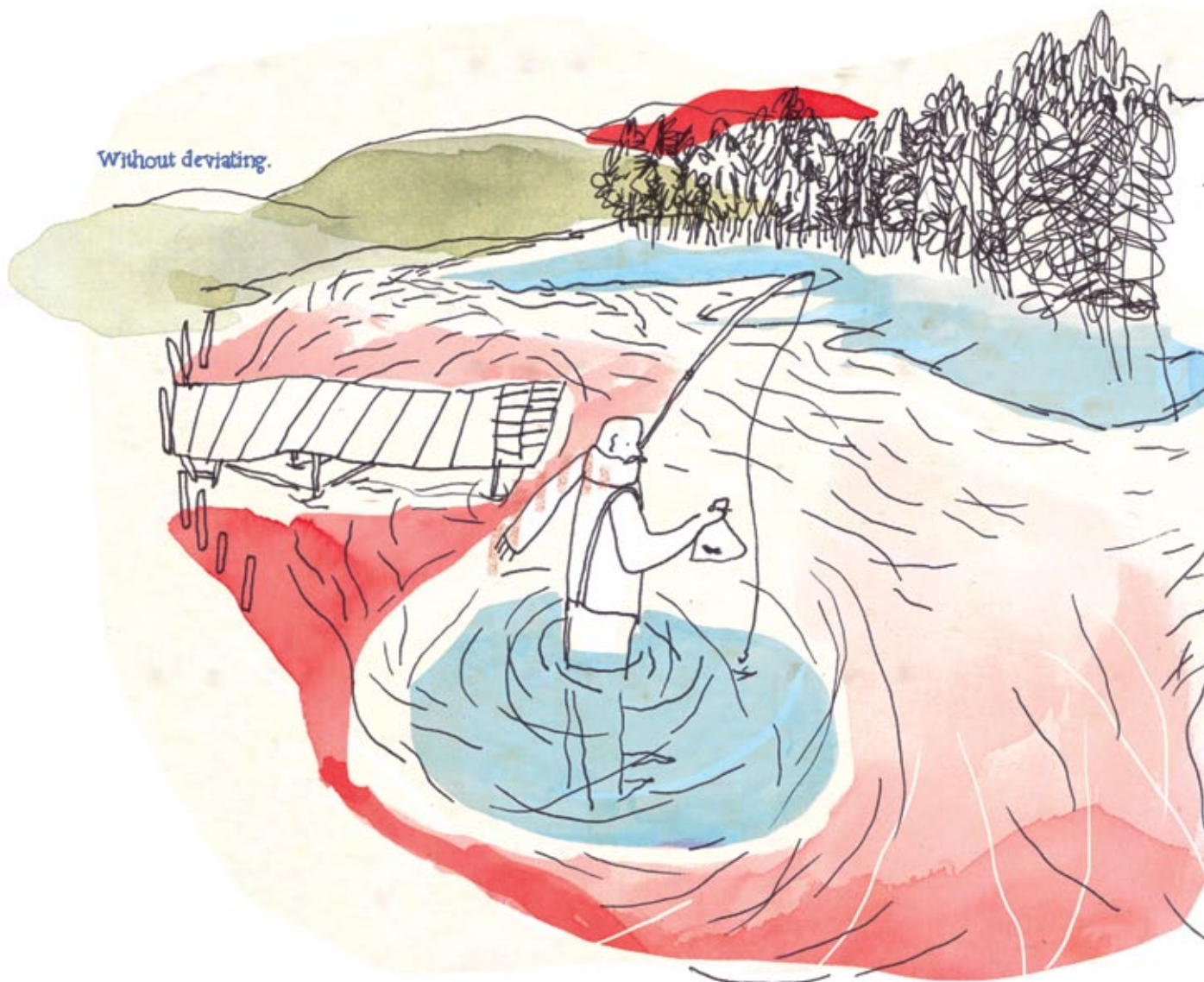
If only people were more like sharks.



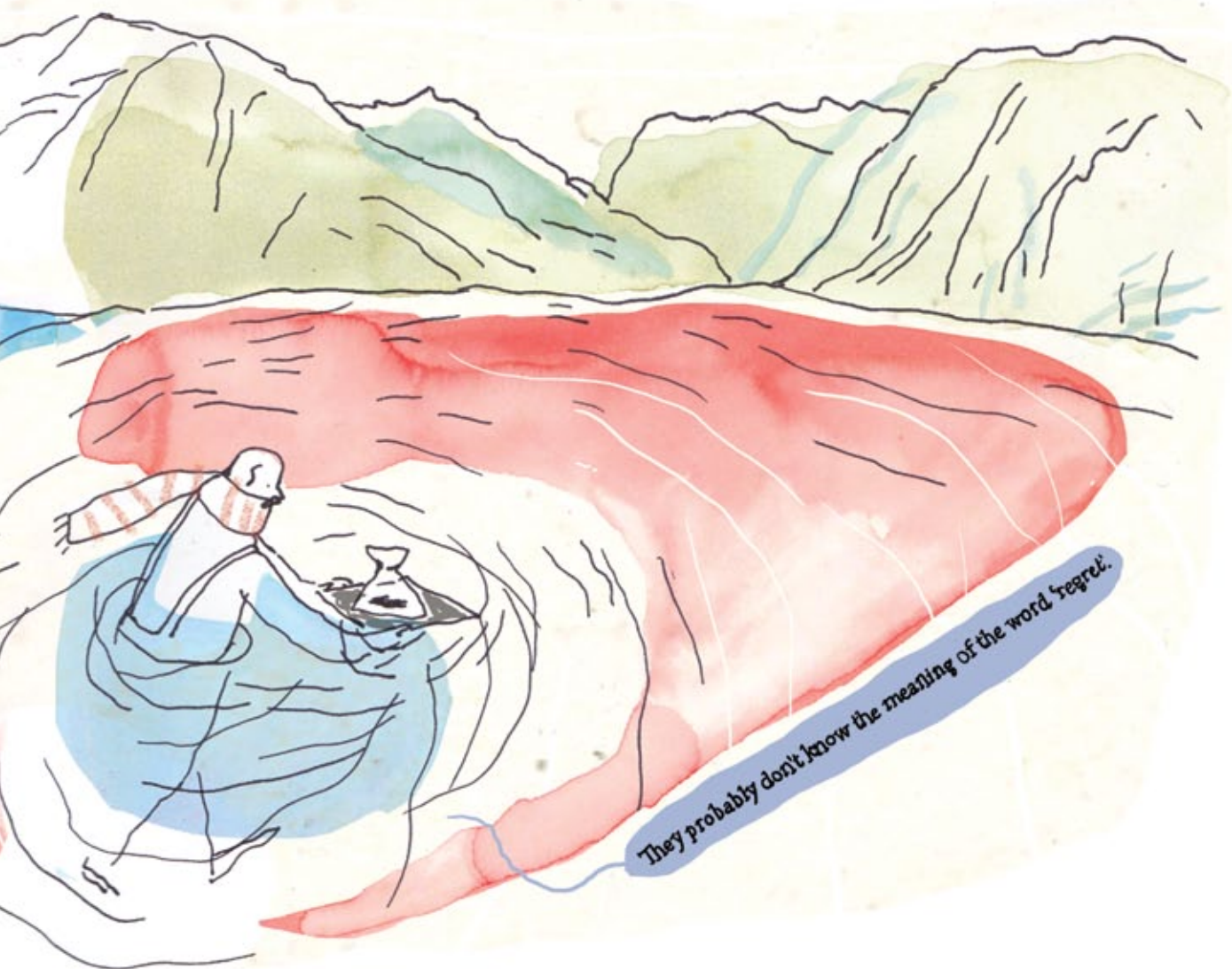
We'd go straight at our goals.



Without deviating.







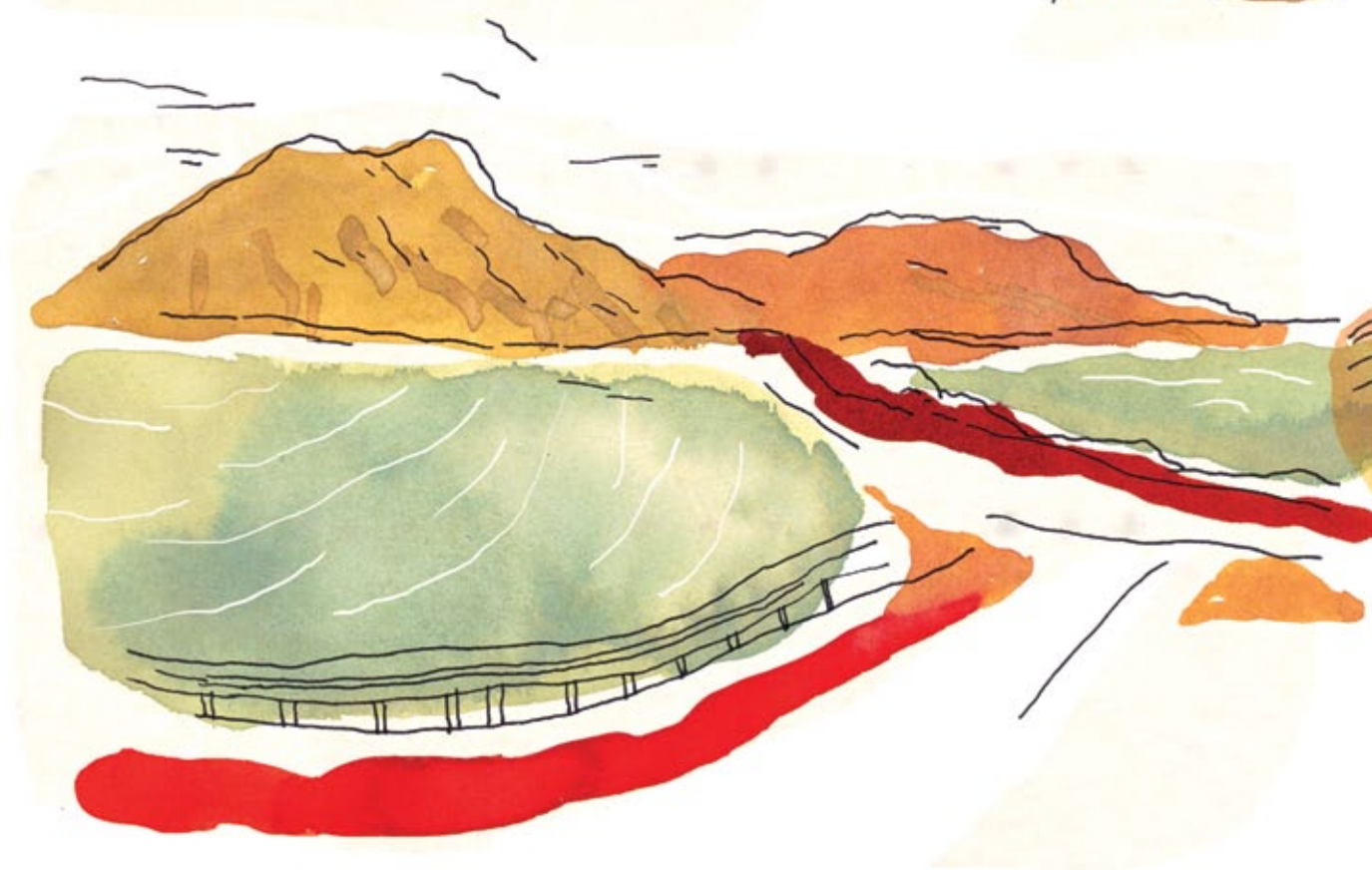
Thinking about it now, my father must have known a lot about sharks.

Living like a shark... It was his second nature.















Always looking ahead, never looking back.







Compared to him, I live life like a fish in a pond.  
Revolving around routine and filling empty moments.

When I was a child my grandmother called me for dinner  
every afternoon at four o'clock on the dot.











Her diabetes ruled her life.  
Along with mine, my brother's and my grandfather's.





My grandmother's kitchen was small, but felt like home.



My mother couldn't cook. She wasn't a housewife and she was away most of the time anyway.



But my grandparents,

they could cook!





My mother became a mystery to me.



What did she do? Where was she? Who with, and why?







My brother was too young to wrestle with questions like that.



But I waited for answers.



And waited.





And waited.





I felt my parents' absence most in moments of complete silence. Day after day, year after year, I resigned myself to it. And became the perfect, patient child.