



May Searches for the Sea

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My village is covered in
chilly white fog.

*"In my village, there is sand as
black as coal," says my teacher.*





He teaches us the alphabet and
numbers. None of us know
where his village is.

When I
ask, he
simply
says, "I'm
from the
village
near the
sea."



*"Where is it?" I ask.
"Is your village buffalo big?
Is your village pig fat?"*

**"The sea does not have big buffaloes
or fat pigs. The sea has a lot of fish
and warm sunshine."**



How I love the sound of that. A warm sea!
I don't like my village.
It has no sunshine, only fog.
"I want to see the sea!" I tell my teacher.





Teacher says, "The sea is far, far away. You can't see it from here."
"But my mother says if you are standing on something high,
you can see far away!"





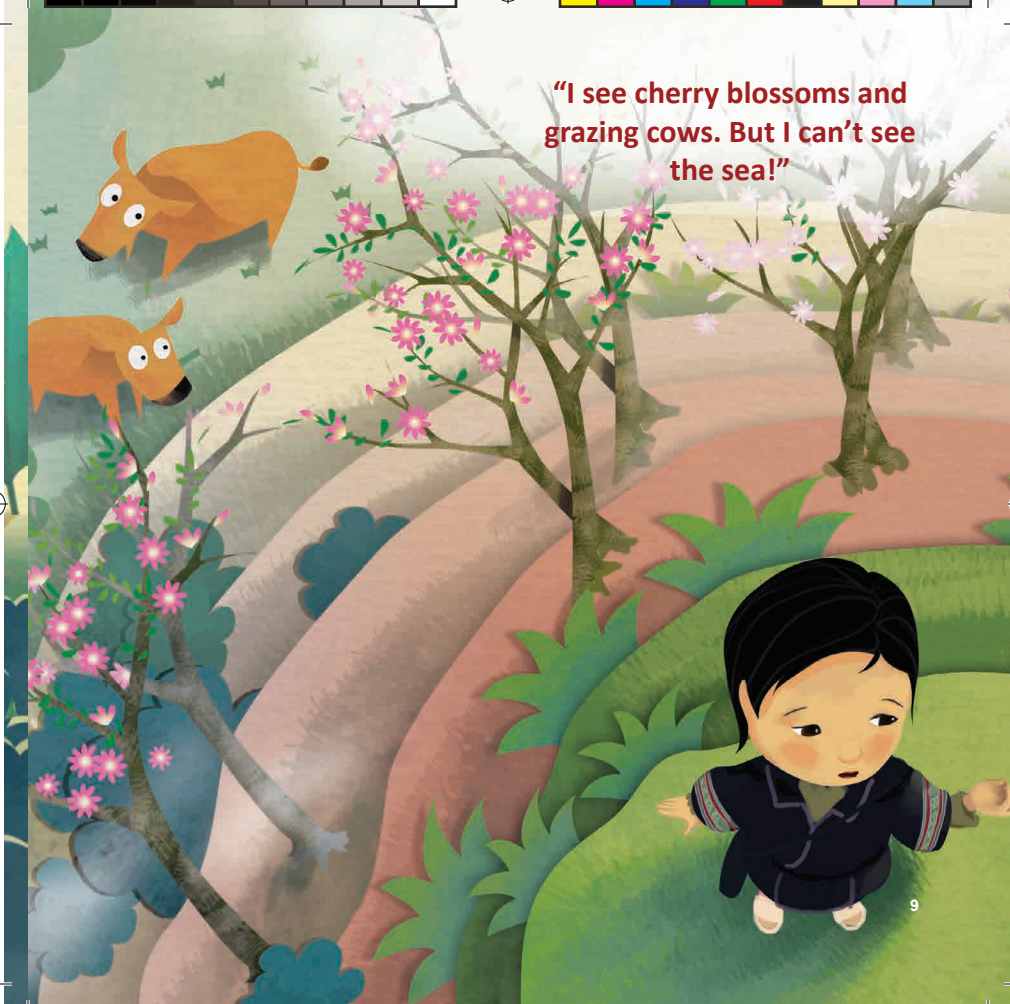
**I run up the hill,
tiptoe to the edge and
look down.**

My teacher asks, "What do you see?"





**"I see cherry blossoms and
grazing cows. But I can't see
the sea!"**





"Then you're not standing high enough."

*"I will stand on this big rock, then!"
My teacher helps me climb up.*

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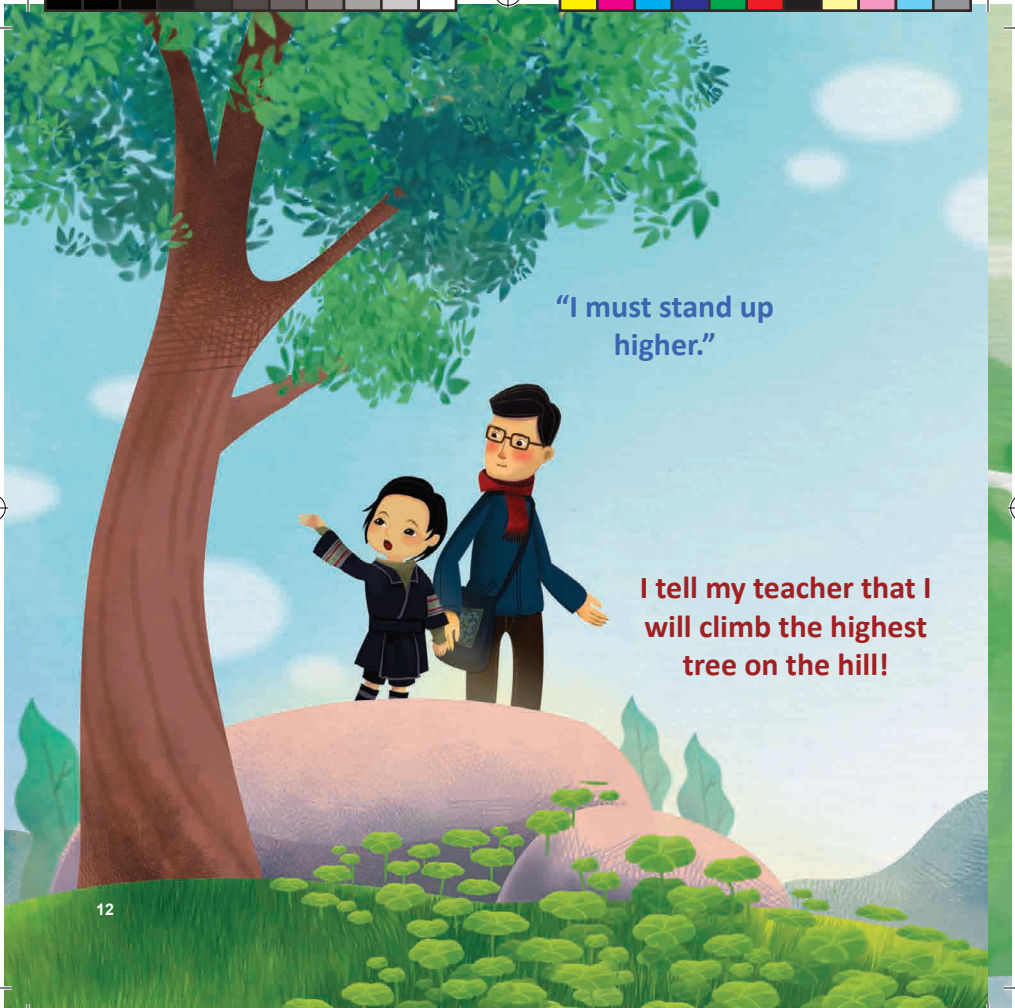
“Can you see the sea now?” he asks.

“Not yet! I see only terraces,” I sigh.

**“And I see Thái people with black
skirts carrying logs.**

**And H’mông people with red skirts
carrying cloth to the market.”**





**"I must stand up
higher."**

**I tell my teacher that I
will climb the highest
tree on the hill!**






**“What do you see now?”
he asks.**

**“I see our waterfall and the
sparkling stream.”**

**I am quiet while I think. Then I say,
“Oh! So my village has its own beauty.**

**But I still want to see
your sea, teacher.”**



“Climb down, May,” my teacher says. “The sea is very far away. You will have to wait until you learn the alphabet, until your legs are as hard as rock, and you can walk all the way there. But I have an idea in the meantime.”



**“Here!” says my teacher.
“Look at this. It’s a book. Inside this book, you can
see the sea and other new and magical things.”**





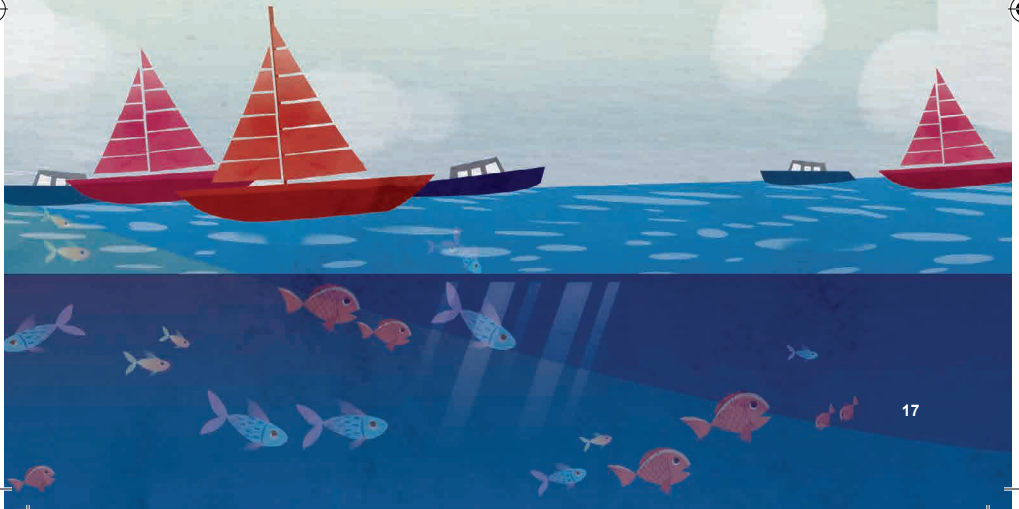
**I see blue, blue, blue.
“What is this, teacher?” I ask.**

**“This is the sea’s surface. The sea is
formed by hundreds of rivers. The river is
formed by hundreds of streams.”**



**“What about this?” I point to
a strange shape. “What is this
wooden piece with cloth?”**

**“That wooden piece is a boat. That cloth
is the sail. This is a fishing boat, May. The
sea has fish as big as houses!”**





**I am quiet while I think. If the fish are as
big as houses, then the sea must be enormous.
I smile at my teacher. "I thought the sea was too far away
for me. But it's right here, in this little book!"**





COMMENTARY KEY WORDS:

- Mother: How to call mother of some ethnic minorities in the North of Vietnam.
- Village: A village in an ethnic minority area in the North of Vietnam.
- Terraced fields: The fields are flattened into many steps such as terraces in hillside areas, mountain slopes,
- Call (of): Dumpling made of rattan and bamboo, used in some mountainous localities to carry the Dou reading on the back.
- Fairs: Markets meet on a certain day of the year, in a month.
- H'mong and Thai people: Names of two ethnic minorities in Vietnam.

