

candles,” she said.

Jacob felt a stab of sadness remembering how Grandpa always put one trick candle on his cake. He blew hard. All the candles went out. Then one sputtered and lit up again. Everyone laughed.

“I couldn’t let your birthday pass without playing Grandpa’s silly little trick on you,” Grandma said.

After cake, Grandma gave Jacob a birthday card. “Grandpa wanted me to give this to you.”

Jacob noticed her tears. He took the card. “Could I open it by myself outside?” he asked quietly.

“That would be just fine,” Grandma said.

When Jacob came back inside, his eyes were red, but he smiled and said, “Grandpa said I could have his fishing rod and his good reel.”

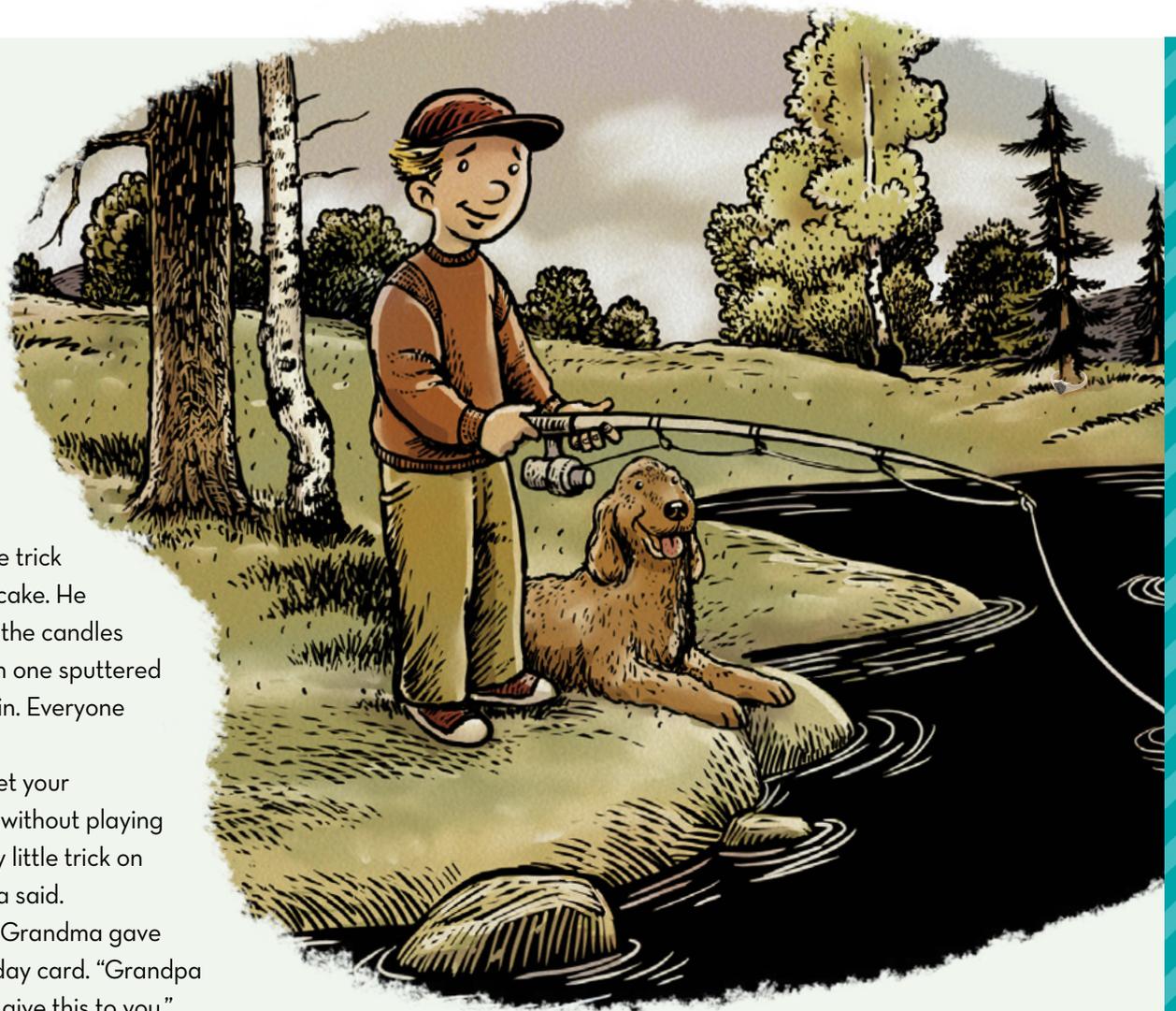
“Yes, I know.” Grandma took the rod off the pole rack and handed it to Jacob. “Grandpa found a new lake last summer. He asked me to take you there for your birthday.”



The next morning Jacob and Grandma loaded their fishing gear in the car. As soon as Big Red saw they were ready to leave, he took one leap and landed in the seat next to Jacob. Grandma’s laughter and happy memories of Grandpa lightened Jacob’s heart as they drove to the lake.

“Hang on,” Grandma said as the car bounced over the road. “We’ll have to hike now,” she said, stopping the car.

After they’d walked for a while, Grandma stopped and pointed ahead. “There’s the lake. You can see it just



through those trees.” She sat down under a big tree with a book. “I’ll stay here and watch. Big Red will go with you, but call out if you need anything.”

Jacob was glad Grandma was letting him go to the shore alone. It made him feel closer to Grandpa.

Two hours later Jacob came trudging back to Grandma with Big Red romping beside him.

“Any luck?” Grandma called.

Jacob frowned and shook his head. But then he pulled his hand out from behind his back. “Ta da!” He held up his line with five beautiful trout dangling from it.

“Native cutthroats!” Grandma said. Those were Grandpa’s favorite trout. “We’ll fry them up for dinner.”

“Grandma, it was great down there,” Jacob said as he sat down beside her. “Next time will you come with me? Maybe we could be fishing buddies.”

“I’d like that,” Grandma said.

Jacob wrapped his arms around Big Red. “I felt like Grandpa was with me.” Tears slowly trickled down his face.