


# IN OUR OWN WORDS

BIPOC Perspectives  
in Children's  
Literature







# **IN OUR OWN WORDS**

**Stories from the  
Europe-wide online  
workshop by BIPOC  
illustrators and authors**

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## Creating in community

Warda Ahmed, Jasmina El Bouamraoui  
and Chantal-Fleur Sandjon

We started conceptualizing the DRIN project together with the Goethe-Institut Finland in a participative and process-orientated way in October 2019. Developing a course for upcoming BIPOC children books' writers and illustrators has been part of our vision for this project from the start. As we spoke to different stakeholders, as we researched the status quo of diversity and intersectionality in children's literature within Northern European contexts, as we got in touch with experts and children alike, we

clearly saw the link between the lack of diversity within the children's book industry and the lack within the stories themselves.

**Let's talk multilingualism. Let's tell stories of non-colonial languages. Let's represent realities that have been excluded from children's literature.<sup>1</sup>**

If we want to make space for more inclusive and diverse children's literature that reflects the past, present and future as well as the hopes and visions of many children, not just a few, we need to look at the

<sup>1</sup> Karime, Andrea, <https://www.goethe.de/ins/fi/en/kul/sup/drin/bir.html>

**Children have a lot in common with poets: they love to play with language, to fool around with language, to construct new words.<sup>1</sup>**

structures within the industry and aspire to change them.

Giving upcoming BIPOC writers and illustrators access to knowledge on the craft of writing and illustrating for children is part of this approach. But the course managed to succeed in so much more: It created a community of creators to encourage and support each other.

### Community instead of isolation

To create not in isolation but in community, to meet established BIPOC writers and illustrators, hear

about their struggles and successes and actually work on a story or illustrations hands-on – all this has had a tremendous effect. Not just on the participants but on all of us. It made us see, not in theory but in practice, what a children's book market could look like that makes space for truly diverse and heterogeneous stories and storytellers. This experience has enriched all of us and we hope that the course and its participants will enrich the European children's book market for a long time to come.

<sup>1</sup> Karime, Andrea, <https://www.goethe.de/ins/fi/en/kul/sup/drin/bir.html>

GROUP PICTURE

3

4





# Bijan in Between



STORY 1

Bijan in Between

**Bijan in Between** Shirin Eghtessadi

“Bijan in Between” is about a world in between that is full of play and joy. Bijan inhabits and explores this place in between dreams, reality, cultures and genders. From everyday situations, food and holidays, to poetic word clouds. I love to create stories for queer BIPoC children to JUST BE, without explaining their identities and experiences. There is so much beauty in fully expressing our liveliness just for ourselves and each other.



**ILLUSTRATOR**  
**Harjyot Khalsa**

**AUTHOR**  
**Shirin Eghtessadi**





Bijan in between  
Sleep and waking up, the sweetest  
two more minutes, dad. Josephine,  
the elephant, just squeezed a pomegranate  
for my breakfast





rainbow  
curtain

paper  
carnation  
garlands

wings as  
Bijan's project

MAP

glitter  
jacket

layered  
skirt

fabric  
on mannequin?

sewing  
drawer  
draw open?

blocks  
with  
prints

toy  
cars

Moving inspired by dervishes, Bijan whirls in his space and enjoys the fluidity offered to him by textiles and his favourite room.



Bijan in between  
Caterpillar and butterfly



When it's time to sleep again  
Josephine invites us all back in  
Into a land that's called between  
Some even say it's a world within  
Everyone here is in between  
Earth and Sky  
With roots and wings  
We fly so high and sail along  
We merry-go-round and circle in song

Too big to stay, not ready to fly

# Just Like Fallen Leaves

13

STORY 2

Just Like Fallen Leaves

## **Just Like Fallen Leaves** Sita Magfira

This is a story of Sinau's encounter with stares in a new city. Go for a little walk with her and Mama during autumn. Then experience the feelings of being in our bodies, of sensing nature and our surroundings, the aches and the awes of being out of place, and the growing acceptance and resilience.



**ILLUSTRATOR**  
**Leila Charafeddine**

**AUTHOR**  
**Sita Magfira**



# just life fallen Leaves



Story by Sita Magfira  
Illustrations by Leila Charafeddine





back home,

Sinau liked to shout it out loud whenever she saw all the fruitful mango trees in the neighbours' yards in September.

Then October would come. The time for durian season.

Now is a different story.

No mango trees in Sinau's new city. No spiky durians in fruit stalls too.  
No one even talks about fruit seasons here.

It is September. All Sinau can see are trees with colourful leaves. The  
leaves turn yellowish, orangish, reddish, and brownish before falling.





"Look, Sinau! These leaves match our skins!" said Mama, a bright and cheeky grown-up, while they were strolling in the city. She pointed to the brownish leaves.

"Thank you, love! You know what? When I was a kid, I learned that my skin is sawo matang!"


Sinau, amazed by it, said, "Oh, wow!"

She picked one from the ground and put it side by side with her hand. "Ya, ya, ya, it is almost the same colour!"

She giggled, still a bit amazed by it. "Mam, you are so smart!" she said to Mama.





An illustration of a woman with long, dark, wavy hair and a red beaded bracelet, and a young child with black hair, both looking up with expressions of wonder and excitement. They are surrounded by various tropical fruits, including mangoes, guavas, and a bunch of yellow-orange berries. The background is a warm, golden-yellow color with stylized green leaves and fruit. The text is presented in orange speech bubbles.

"Yes! That sawo!!"

"Me too! Ah, I think it is not sawo season home."

"January! Oh, and, you know, everyone will call Bibi Ninda's as kuning langsung!"

"Haha. You are cute! Yes, love."

"I know! Let's try to find them here during summer!"

"What!? Sawo matang? Like that fruit!?"

"Wow! That's cool! Ugghhh... I want sawo now!"

"Ah, when is it?"

"What? Again, just like that fruit!?" Sinau's eyes were sparkling out of wonder.

"That's awesome! But, ugh, no more talking about fruits, Mam! I want them all now!"





A week after, Sinau and Mama started their first day of school.  
And, yes, they do not go to the same school.

Sinau goes to the kids' school. Mama goes to an adult's school.

At school, most of the kids stared at Sinau.

To be continued...



## Sketches



JUST LIKE  
fallen  
leaves

just like  
fallen  
leaves

JUST  
LIKE  
*fallen*  
Leaves

just like  
fallen  
Leaves



# Za'tar Za'tar

29

STORY 3

Za'atar Za'atar!

**Za'atar Za'atar!** Romy Lynn Attieh

Nour loves to make za'atar mannousheh – a beloved everyday food from the Levant (Al-Mashriq) – with their tata whenever she visits from her other home. Nour decides to share this magical treat with their classmates, who are a little reluctant to try it at first. “Za'atar, Za'atar!” explores themes of diaspora and diversity through family and food, illustrating how your mind grows when you taste something new. The book is bilingual: English/French/German (or any other relevant tongue) and Arabic.



**ILLUSTRATOR**  
**Manvydas Dziaugys**

**AUTHOR**  
**Romy Lynn Attieh**

### **Notes for the illustrator** Romy

- Nour is a name for a girl and boy. The Nour in this story is non-binary conforming: Brown skin, curly hair, curious eyes with a spark of mischief, extroverted.
- Teta embodies warmth and love. She has a really big round stomach that her equally big breasts rest on. She only wears knee-length pencil skirts, is always well-coiffed, and either wears a pearl necklace or simply pearl earrings. She has soft, kind eyes, that look like Nour's.

### **Notes for the illustrator** Romy

- Common items in a Lebanese/Syrian/Palestinian/Jordanian kitchen: ibreek (type of water pitcher), bottle of olive oil, rakweh and chaffe (coffee pot and cups).



My teta is coming!

I Haven't seen her in  
over a year.

I can't wait for all the  
cuddles and kisses!

The cheek squeezing,  
I don't like so much.



My teta smells like flowers and soap.  
She teaches me how to play cards and tawleh,  
and tells me the best stories. Most of all, I love  
when we make mannousheh za'atar together.  
It's my favourite thing!



# Monster Party

33

STORY 4

Monster Party

## Monster Party Cat Aquino

Deep in a mysterious forest, a wandering child stumbles upon many Philippine mythological creatures throwing a whimsical birthday party.



**ILLUSTRATOR**  
Diana Soria Hernández

**AUTHOR**  
Cat Aquino





### Everyone is Invited!

Welcome!  
Our friend Nuno is 111  
years old today.  
Come join us!

Here are some noodles to  
give you a long life.

Kapre cooked enough spa-  
ghetti for everyone so don't  
be shy. Eat as much as you  
like!

Try challenging Tikbalang to  
a karaoke sing-off, if you're  
brave enough!



But don't mind Mananang-  
gal and the Adarna Bird.  
They're always cheating and  
winning with pabitin. Poor  
Shokoy just can't reach.

It's cake time!  
And 1...2...3...altogether now:

Maligayang bati,  
maligayang bati,  
Maligayang,  
maligayang,  
maligayang bati.

What a wonderful gift. You  
made Nuno's day!

Thank you for being an in-  
credible friend and for com-  
ing and celebrating with us.

Remember that you're al-  
ways welcome here in the  
woods, any time.





Welcome!

Our friend Nuno is  
111 years old today.

Come join us!



And 1...2...3...altogether now:

Maligayang bati,  
maligayang bati,  
Maligayang,  
maligayang,  
maligayang bati

It's cake time!



# In Another World



STORY 5

In Another World

## In Another World Ivonne Carlos

In another world is a story based on a girl's memories about her paternal grandmother, who she grew up with. Grandma was always the family's heart and soul. Grandma's nickname was "gorda" because she was chubby and big. Because of this, the girl always thought of fatness as a synonym for love and tenderness. The girl was always sure that her grandmother's fatness was directly proportional to the love that was in her.



ILLUSTRATOR  
Irem Kurt



AUTHOR  
Ivonne Carlos





1



2

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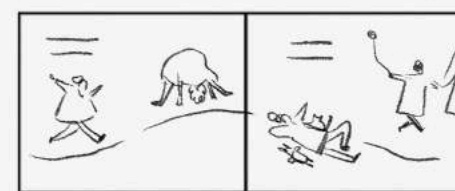
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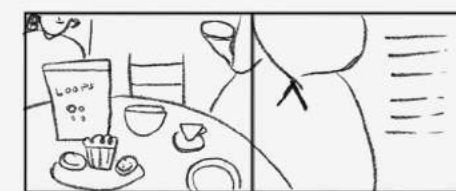
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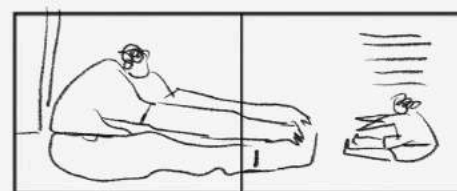
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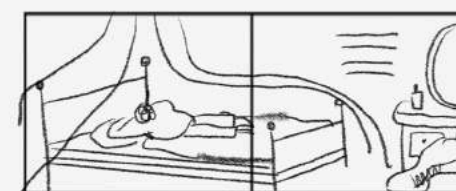
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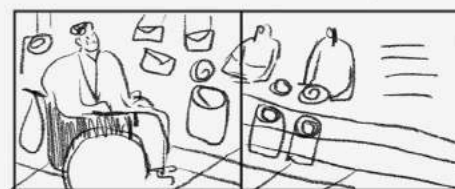
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22 23



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28 29



30 31



32



My grandma was a big beautiful fat women,  
she used to hug me with her enormous arms  
with absolute joy,

Mi abuela era una mujer grande, hermosa  
y gorda, me abrazaba con sus enormes  
brazos con absoluta alegría,







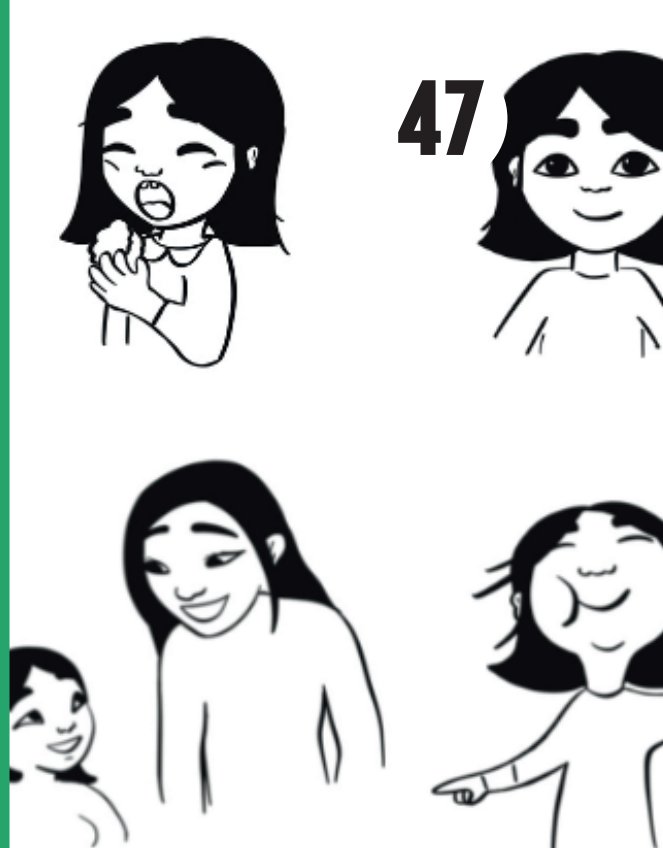
She was proud when, for days  
in a row, I used the dress that  
she bought for me.



Se sentía orgullosa cuando yo  
usaba por varios días, el vestido  
que ella me había comprado.



# Mooncake Love & Ma 媽



STORY 6

Mooncake Love & Ma 媽

## Mooncake Love & Ma 媽 Arlene Tucker 杜慧琳

When you are living in a home away from home, food can be the warm blanket that makes you feel safe, seen, and that keeps your memories alive. Arlene and her mom are celebrating Mid-Autumn Festival in the USA. As they make party plans, they stumble across challenges of recreating this festival as well as feel energized by seamlessly telling anecdotes and expressing wishes for tastes, smells and home culture. The dialogue between mother and daughter bounces between Mandarin, English and Taiwanese. As families move from place to place, our knowledge of languages and different ways of being, celebrating and eating grow with us. “Mooncake Love & Ma 媽” is at its core about multiculturalism, multilingualism and embracing who we are in the moment.



ILLUSTRATOR  
Mariela Georg

AUTHOR  
Arlene Tucker 杜慧琳

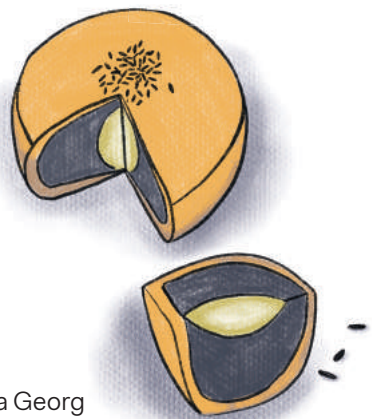




The process of writing and illustrating the  
short children's story

# Mooncake Love & 媽媽

Written by Arlene Tucker 杜慧琳  
Illustrated by Mariela Georg



The following pages are designed by Mariela Georg



# Background Information

When you are living in a home away from home, food can be the warm blanket that makes you feel safe, seen, and that keeps your memories alive. Arlene and her mom are celebrating Mid-Autumn Festival in the USA. As they make party plans, they stumble across challenges of recreating this festival as well as feel energized by seamlessly telling anecdotes and expressing wishes for tastes, smells and home culture. The dialogue between mother and daughter bounces between Mandarin, English and Taiwanese. As families move from place to place, our knowledge for languages and different ways of being, celebrating and eating grow with us. Mooncake Love & Ma媽 is at its core about multiculturalism, multilingualism and embracing all of our colourful identities.

– Arlene 小琳

## Empowerment

is a survival strategy. A necessity for Black, Indigenous & People of Colour (BIPOC) to thrive despite (multiple) experiences of discrimination and marginalization. Many methods, tools and experiences can lead to self-empowerment. For me there is no limit. On my own empowerment path, I have used movement, exercise, meditation, mindfulness, stress management, illustration and art. Participating in the DRIN project is a great opportunity for me to combine empowerment with illustration and improve my skills at the same time. Illustrating Arlene's story was fun and educational for me as I had to learn from a very different world than mine. We're not showing the story itself here, but rather the process behind the illustration of the story.

– Mariela

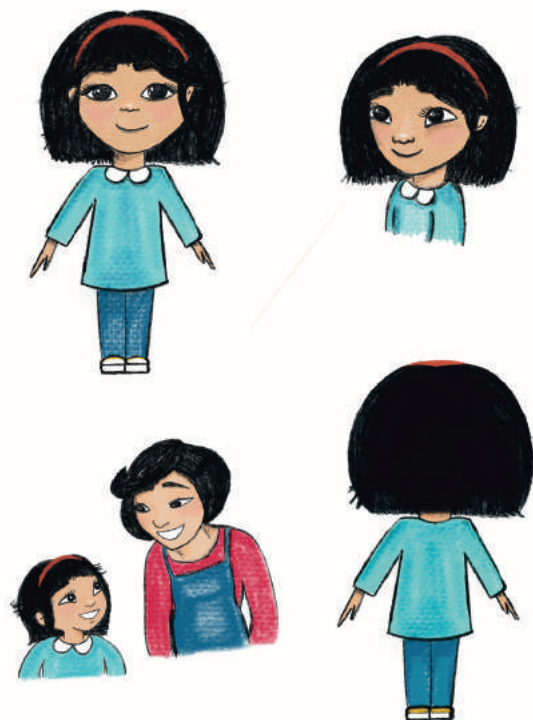
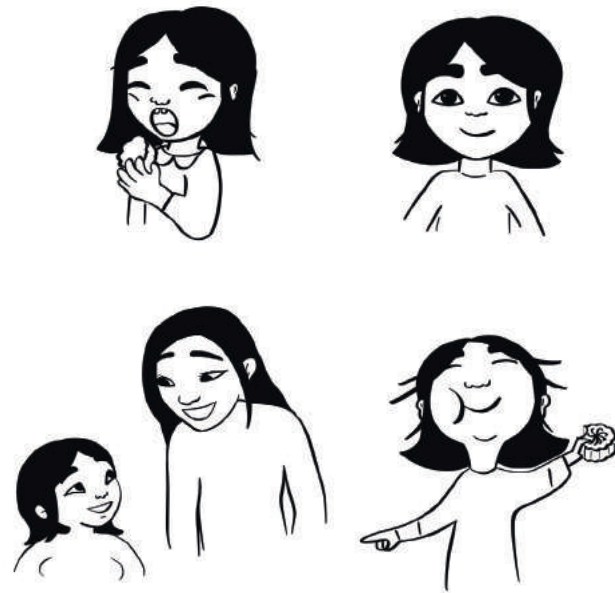




# Character Design

First I read the story that Arlene sent me. I loved it and at the same time I thought of it as challenging, since it is very short and almost like a conversation between mother and daughter about mooncakes, tastes, smells and (family) traditions surrounding the Mid-Autumn Festival.

I researched about the festival and I tried designing both main characters, Arlene and her mother (see pictures on the right).



Then Arlene sent me pictures of her, her Ma and life at home around the dinner table. It was then clear to me that some changes had to be made and that's how the characters came to life as illustrations (look on the left). Ms had to have a blue apron and short hair, Arlene had to have a fringe and a red headband.

# Setting



Arlene suggested showing more outdoor scenes and to make the time of year and location more clear through nature and trees. She suggested depicting pine, oak, willow trees and other foliage, which are more likely to be found in North America and Europe rather than in Taiwan. Of course I wanted to please my writer so I studied some of the foliage I'm familiar with here in Germany. I included some trees in the cover picture (oak and maple trees) and some foliage decoration in an indoor scene you saw on a page before.

My first impulse was to portray Arlene and her mother walking around town, with their apartment or house in the background, the lanterns could be seen through the window. In the last scene, the readers could look through the apartment window and get a small impression of the family tradition. When I sent a very rough draft to Arlene (look on the left), she and her mother thought that the illustration captured Arlene's Ma's enthusiasm and joy. As the story is focused on embracing our various identities and cultures, Arlene wanted to leave out the homes and buildings to avoid making associations with a specific geographical location as well as socio-economic status. Having the reader in mind, it was important to find ways to connect and to give them every possibility to see themselves in the story.







# Key Elements

As an illustrator it was clear to me that some aspects of the story are key elements that had to be depicted.

I started by researching about mooncakes and trying to illustrate some of them (look on the right side).

Especially a mooncake with egg filling couldn't be missing since the story mentions this specifically.



Because the story is basically a dialogue between daughter and mother, there is a danger of simply illustrating some dialogue scenes. But that would have been boring in my opinion. I considered depicting different perspectives of the scene so it wouldn't just be a juxtaposition of talking characters. So I drew one of the scenes from a bird's eye view (see left). This is a scene where Arlene suggests that they cut the mooncakes so they both can taste them all.

Another key element is enjoyment and mooncake love. So I included some illustrations in which Arlene is really enjoying her mooncakes. The joy should be immediately recognizable to every reader. See example on the right.





The key elements also include the typical lanterns of the Mid-Autumn Festival. From what Arlene told me, I knew that she and her family used to make lanterns to decorate their home. Colourful lanterns are therefore not missing, as you can see on the next page.

The story isn't called "Mooncake Love & Ma媽" for nothing. Mooncake love, love itself and Ma therefore play a central role. As can be seen in the cover and in the scene on the next page, it was clear that the mother-child bond is central. Creating a loving, cosy and familiar atmosphere was therefore one of my main goals. When we presented our illustrations to the entire DRIN group and I was allowed to present my illustrations, the feedback came exactly like this: "Love is in the air" and "autumny". Then I knew I had reached my goal.

Overall, this experience was educational and interesting for both Arlene and me. We appreciate the opportunity to learn more about both writing and illustration. Writing and illustrating children's books is a lot more complex than many people think. The cooperation between authors and illustrators is not always easy either, because ideas can diverge. We are all the more pleased that we were able to bring our ideas together and find compromises for the depiction of the story. We would like to thank the Goethe-Institut Finnland and our teachers in this project for this opportunity and for their support.





# Himmel blau

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STORY 7

Himmelblau

**Himmelblau** Titilayo Farukuoye

Himmelblau ist Halimas Lieblingsfarbe, aber nicht nur das. In der Bilderbuchgeschichte Himmelblau lernt Halima Mamas neuen Freund kennen, und gewinnt dabei vielleicht sogar eine Schwester. Himmelblau ist eine spielerische Geschichte, die sich um große Themen, wie sich neu kennenlernen, Patchworkfamilien, Geschwister und natürlich viel Liebe dreht. (AUT)

Sky blue is Halima's favourite colour and this is a story about siblings, new family constellations, getting to know each other and a lot of love and joy. (EN)



**ILLUSTRATOR**  
Jeff Hollweg

**AUTHOR**  
Titilayo Farukuoye





Halima ist traurig, weil Papa heute nicht kommt, in der Früh war alles wie immer:

Müsli und Kinderkaffee –  
Zähneputzen – anziehen  
und los.



Aber jetzt fühlt sich Halima mulmig, in einer Stunde kommt nicht Papa sondern Manmeet - der ist so groß und lang und er weiß nicht, dass Halimas Lieblingsfarben lila und grün sind.

Aber sogar die Tante Mitzi im Waldviertel weiß das!

Halima versteckt sich in der Kuschelecke, sie will lieber hier, bei Karli, Azra und den anderen Kuscheltieren bleiben.





Nah, wie schauts aus bei euch? – Ruft Mama schon von der anderen Straßenseite, Paul winkt schläfrig aus dem Kindersitz auf Mamas Fahrrad.

„Ich hatte Himmelblau! Himmelblau! Zwei Kugeln!“, – ruft Halima.

Zwei Kugeln?, wiederholt Mama, und schaut Manmeet streng an. Aber Manmeet lacht laut auf, so stark, dass sein kleiner runder Kugelbauch wild zittert, und Halima lacht auch und bald stimmen Mama und Paul mit ein. Auf dem Weg nachhause erzählt Halima von ihrem Tag, so wie früher, bevor Manmeet dabei war.



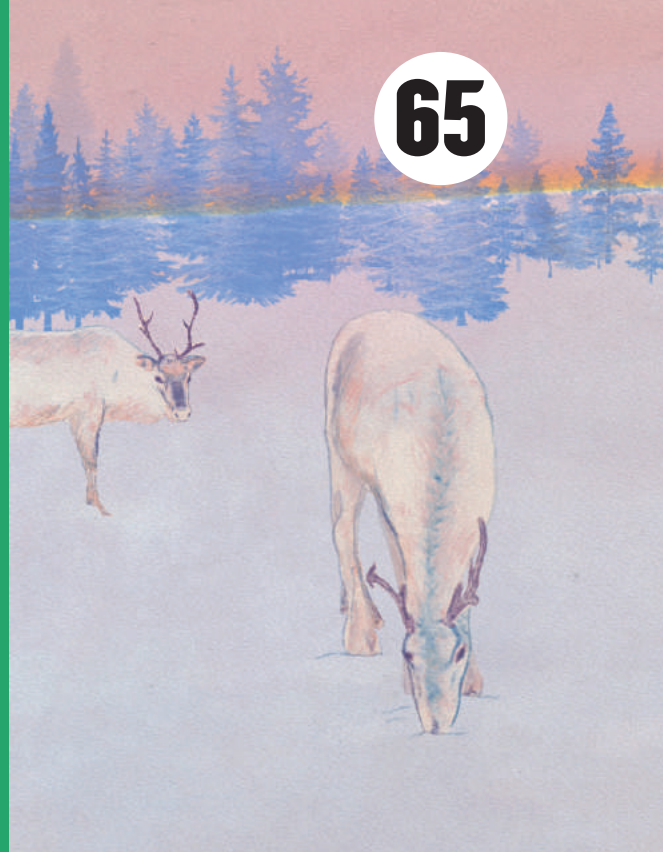


# Afro Fairy Mother

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STORY 8

Afro Fairy Mother



## Afro Fairy Mother Wende Luvinga

A young girl named Tausi and her mother moved to the Kingdom of Lapland. They came from a faraway land of green hills and great lakes. On the first day of school, Tausi noted that nobody looked like her, or had hair like hers. She felt out of place. That very day the students had to go skating. The teacher tried to fit the helmet onto Tausi's big afro but every time she brushed the hair it grew bigger and puffy. One student made a mean joke about her hair and everybody laughed at her. Tausi was very hurt. Sobbing that night, she wished for the magic moon to make her hair disappear. Instead of that, the afro fairy mother appeared and took Tausi on the journey back to the land of green hills and lakes where she saw girls who looked like her with different types of braids, decorated in cowrie shells and beads dancing gracefully. She joined the dance and even got a cowrie shell put in her hair to represent beauty and courage. Through this magic trip, Tausi learned about her hair. The next morning she woke up in the Kingdom of Lapland. She went to school feeling proud of who she is.

**ILLUSTRATOR**  
**Kemê**

**AUTHOR**  
**Wende Luvinga**



## About the illustration process Kemê

I was glad to be paired with Wende as we could meet in person. During our meeting, we could connect on a more personal level and go through the thousands of questions I had in my mind. I wanted to know what feelings and details of her story were more important to convey and in which form. What level of accuracy was she aiming for when representing the different hairstyles, jewellery, clothing, etc? What parts of her story could still be re-interpreted with my art? Where was the inspiration coming from? How was she picturing the characters in her heart?

I presented my first illustration (The Afro Fairy Mother), and she asked me for changes, which I did. She also suggested using African prints in the fabrics, which in turn, was a fantastic addition to the illustrations.

Overall, I am grateful for Wende's patience because she let me work on my own rhythm, and I had the time to finalize two more illustrations, three in total, which, coming from the writing side, was quite more time-consuming than I had planned. One of the most interesting things for me in this process has been the research work. I believe that if you are not portraying something you are really familiar with, you must commit to investigating and asking until you can honour the story you are transmitting. Learning is a willingness issue.





# Two Queens

69

STORY 9

Two Queens

**Two Queens** Kemê

Our differences season our families; sometimes, you can find them in the tiniest things, other times in big matters like deciding who rules. This little story is a treat filled with love, togetherness and chunks of humour. Warning: It may contain traces of cat hairs.



**ILLUSTRATOR**  
Vijay Patel



Photo: Marta Anna Løvberg

**AUTHOR**  
Kemê



### About the story Kemê

"Light and full of expression!"

"I had a grin on my face for most of this story!"

"Haha! I laughed out loud."

"Such an interesting generational take."

"Light, fun, full of movement and wonderful family dynamics!"

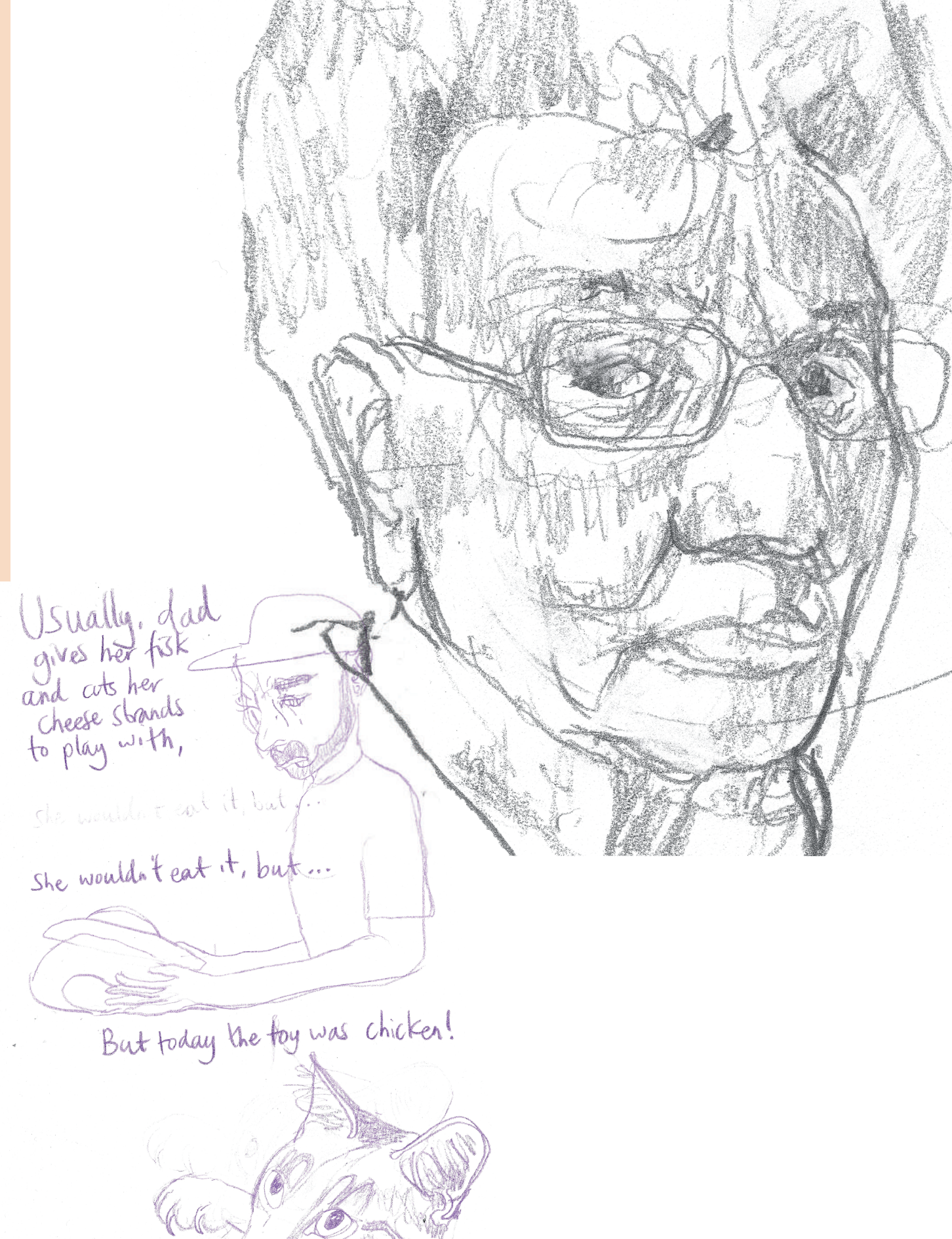
They have a point, right?

If this story were a book already, it could include fantastic reviews at the back. As it is a work in progress, I leave you with the comments of my peers and facilitators, which are equally versed or more than any influencer.

I wrote about a family that could be or not be mine; in the middle, there is a grandma and a cat. They could be my mum and my cat, or yours, even those you don't have now but will have while reading. At least, that is what I am aiming for.

About the process of working together:

Based on the sketch I saw and our conversation, I wanted to work with Vijay. I wanted to give them space to explore, and their use of colours, composition, and surrealism or dream-like approach made the result a unique experimental cocktail. We have similar interests and, most importantly, could enrich each other.





# This is Taiwo



73

STORY 10

This is Taiwo

**This is Taiwo** Titilayo Farukuoye

This is Taiwo is a story rooted in Yoruba family tradition, love and multilingualism. The story is particularly interesting for people who want to cherish and celebrate their genderqueer children and families.



**ILLUSTRATOR**  
Sanata Nacro



**AUTHOR**  
Titilayo Farukuoye



**About the illustration process** Sanata

For the illustrations of “This is Taiwo!” my main focus was to convey the love, the warmth and the close connection that Taiwo and their grandmother seem to have with each other. I decided to show this closeness and trust mainly through touch and body language. This was easy for me, since touching is also part of my love language. Then I asked myself the question: What does an environment have to look like that enables a child to confidently reject the very powerful gender attribution? In the process of illustrating Taiwo, I tried to imagine Taiwo’s environment in the kindergarten, Taiwo’s clothing choices, the way they wear their hair, in order to convey their gender non-conformity. Illustrating “This is Taiwo” touched me deeply and was great fun. Thank you Titilayo for this wonderful story!





# This is Taiwo!

words by Titilayo Farukuoye

pictures by Sanata Nacro





My name is Taiwo – this is a story  
about my family. This is about me  
and my grandma!

Ich bin Taiwo, ich mag von  
Zuhause erzählen, besonders  
über meine grandma!







She isn't tall but much taller than me! She makes urrre lecker red stew and okra! She can make the tiniest braids on your head without even looking! And she sometimes thinks I am a boy, even though I am not! Today we are going to see grandma nach dem Kindergarten. I can't wait to braid my hair!

Am liebsten kocht sie Red Stew und Okra für uns, und sie kann ganz kleine Zöpfe flechten – ohne hinzuschauen! Manchmal glaubt die Oma ich bin ein Bub, bin ich aber gar nicht! Nach dem Kindergarten gehen wir zur Oma nachhause, zum Zöpfe machen!





Granma sucks air through her teeth – the sharp noise slashes through the living room, our sister stomps her feet and disappears back into the kitchen to help Mama stir the bubbling okra.

“Granny, are you mad I am not a boy?” I ask.



# Tap! Tap! Together Let's Pop the Confetti

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STORY 11

**Tap! Tap! Together  
Let's Pop the Confetti**

**Tap! Tap! Together Let's Pop the Confetti** Sara AlHomsy

Naomi is eager to tell her classmates about the Eid ul-Fitr holiday, so she grabs the microphone and begins delivering stories about Eidi money, delicious candies, and mosque gatherings. Then she becomes curious about others' holidays, passing the microphone to her classmates Li, Grace, and, inevitably, Bhanu. It becomes more exciting when they individually share their favourite holidays' memories of Chūnjié, Christmas and Deepavali! By using rhyme and fun, this book provides a unique experience each time it is read aloud in a group setting. The story encourages children to be a part of a bigger celebration community and to share their holiday experiences.



**ILLUSTRATOR**  
**Saliha Soylu**

**AUTHOR**  
**Sara AlHomsy**



### How the story and ideas progressed Sara AlHomsy

The story's concept was shorter at first. The first draft was about Naomi's monologue in which she expresses her excitement for Eid ul-Fitr and New Year's Eve. Then, at the end of the story, she invites the reader to interactively share their favourite holidays with everyone. However, the second draft was expanded after suggestions and discussions with the writers in the DRIN project and my illustrator partner. I expanded the plot to include three additional characters, each with their own favourite holiday. Each of the four characters enthusiastically shares their love and excitement about their favourite holiday, such as Eid ul-Fitr, Chūnjié, Christmas and Deepavali.



But when I am with you, I say "we".  
Me is not we, but ...







Think about when we're together indeed,  
At the end of Ramadan, ...





Running in the mosque to greet uncles and aunties,  
They offer us shiny dates and sugar candies.

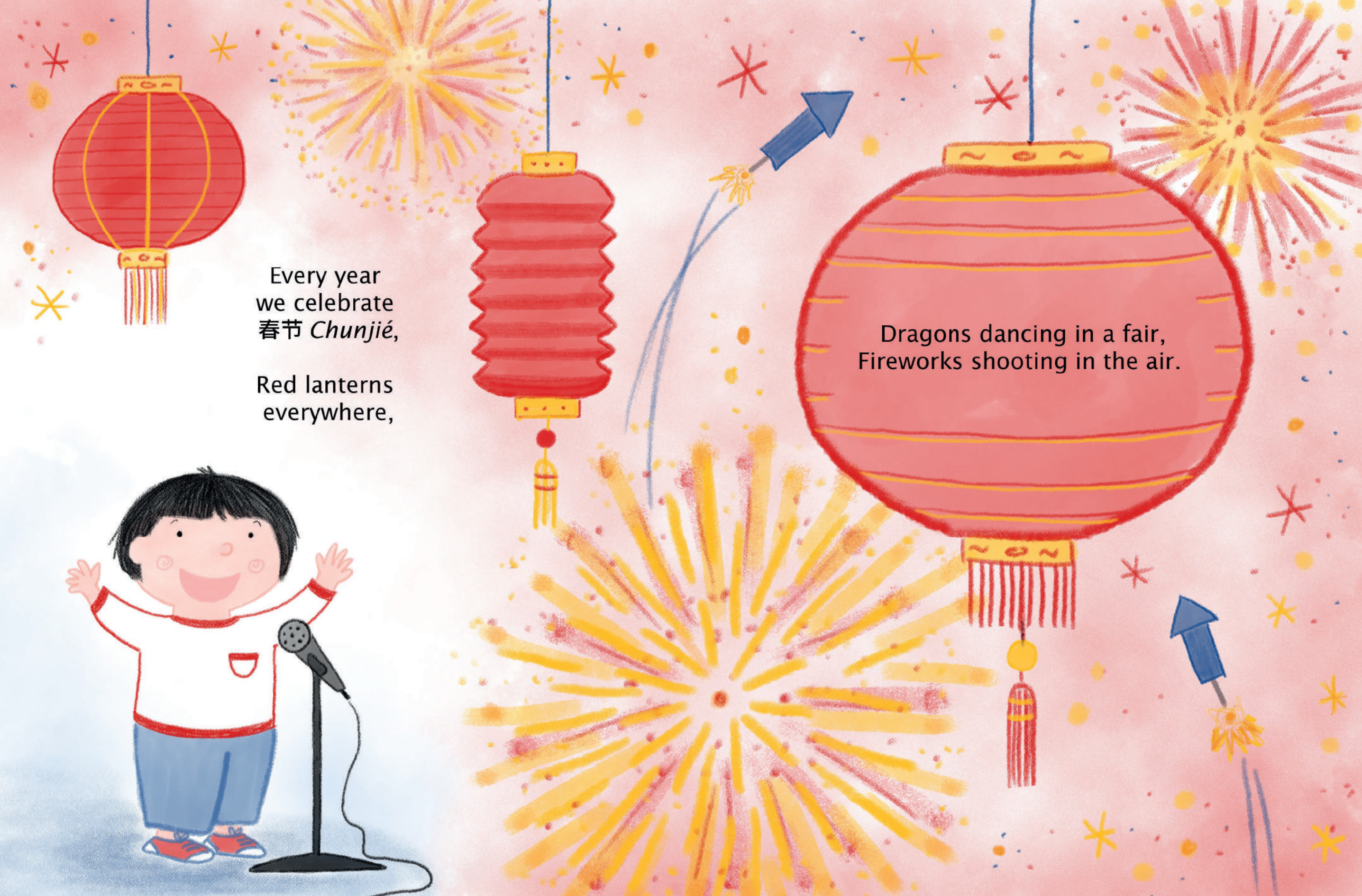
Receiving envelopes with Eidi money,  
Wearing new dresses, gathering with the family.



Do you get Eidi like me?  
Tell us more about you, Li!







Every year  
we celebrate  
春节 *Chunjié*,

Red lanterns  
everywhere,

Dragons dancing in a fair,  
Fireworks shooting in the air.



# Christ mas

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STORY 12

Christmas



**AUTHOR**  
**Agitha Anandarajah**

## **Christmas** Agitha Anandarajah

Jaeli lives in a small village in the north of Sri Lanka and belongs to the Tamil minority. This ethnic minority consists mostly of Hindus. But Jaeli's family is special because, as a Tamil minority, the family also belongs to the religious Christian minority. She experiences that she and her cousin are the only children who celebrate different festivals than the other children in her school.

This story is influenced by memories of my grandparents as well as the surroundings and the festival itself. With this story I want to show how a Christmas feast is celebrated in a family in a village in Sri Lanka.

I have written the story in German and translated it into English. The story is for children aged 2 and over.



## Christmas

Jaeli runs barefoot down the small path behind the house through the garden, through the dense bushes and hedges. She runs towards the clearing and can already see the wide fields stretching out in front of her. And at the back is the magical river, its waters just covering her feet. "After all, it's not a diversion to Ammappa at all if I go into the river first." She walks very slowly with her feet in the water until she reaches the middle and looks around her. Jaeli is fascinated, watching the world around her change in seconds from this vantage point. She could stand here all day and just look around her. But she has to hurry, because today is a very special day, because today they all celebrate Christmas together.

(Illustration: Little girl running towards a clearing towards a river that barely holds water.)

She gets out of the river and keeps running. Way back there, barely visible, she already sees grandpa ploughing the field. She calls out, "Ammappa, dinner's ready." But grandpa doesn't hear her. She runs to him and slowly he looks up and waves at her. "Ammappa, come dinner is ready! And we have to get ready for church!" repeats Jaeli, bouncing up and down with excitement.

Jaeli walks hand in hand with grandpa back home, where everyone has already prepared dinner. There is rice and lots of different curries: lentil curry, aubergine curry and because today is a special day, chicken curry.

(Illustration: Family sits on the floor and eats with their bare hands. Jaeli being fed with the hand by her grandpa.)



After the meal, Jaeli and her cousins are washed at the well. Jaeli stands with the other children far away from the well, they are not allowed near it. She is already looking forward to when she is bigger and can look into the well. They get dressed in their nicest clothes. Jaeli gets to wear her red dress with dots and her grandma puts a necklace around her neck. The rest of the family gets dressed up too. They are about to go to church. Mum, dad, grandma, grandpa, aunts, uncles and all the cousins break up and go to church. The church is already full of people sitting on the floor waiting for it to start. The women's colourful saris rustle everywhere. There is a lot of singing and clapping in the church.

(Illustration: People sit on the floor, women in colourful saris sing and clap.)

After the service, everyone wishes each other "Merry Christmas". Jaeli is excited and happy that everyone is there and celebrating together. She admires the women's colourful saris and necklaces and can't get enough of them. On the way home there is a big surprise: Every child gets a small bag of sweets from the kiosk. "Ammappa, can you carry me home?" Her grandpa smiles and picks her up. In his arms she can now eat her sweets quite comfortably. For her, every day can be Christmas. At home, she falls asleep happily on her mat.

(Illustration: Falling asleep with a big smile with some sweets in her hand on her mat. Maybe on a page without words.)



# Jackfruit

101

STORY 13

Jackfruit



## **Jackfruit** Dayanah Nanjobe

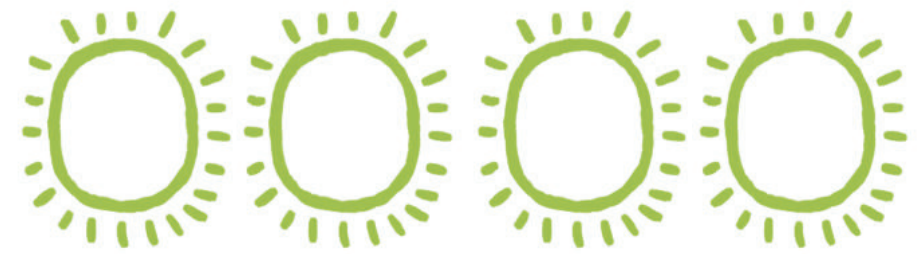
Love did not have a name in my family – it felt like they took it for granted. It became entangled with caregiving, day-to-day routines and responsibilities, grownups' worries and numerous ways of trying to control outcomes. I felt my grandfather was the first person who saw and loved me truly. When I think of love, I think of him. The links between generations have a special place in me. With this story, I celebrate our effortless love as I take my child and the reader back to my childhood. The story starts with my child asking for a bedtime tale – a story based on my grandfather.



**ILLUSTRATOR**  
**Chioma Opara**

**AUTHOR**  
**Dayanah Nanjobe**





# Jackfruit



Written by Dayanah Nanjobe  
Illustrated by Chioma Opara







Tonight, for my bedtime story, I chose our family album.

I picked it for two reasons.

One, this is my favourite time of the day when I get to cuddle with my parents. And two, because it was the thickest book I could find. Everybody is in here, and it will take a while to read.

This is my favourite picture.

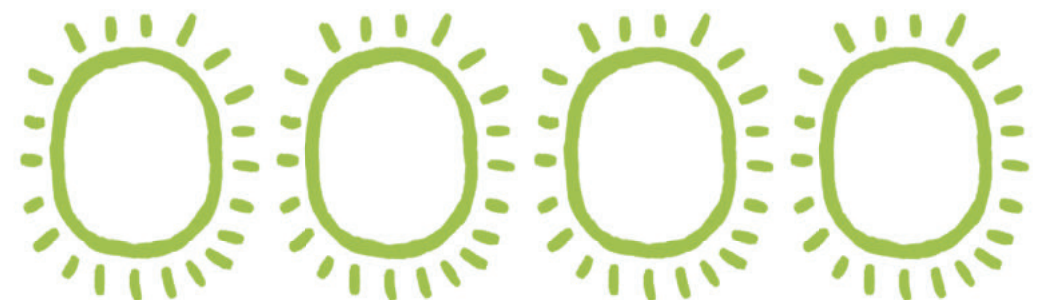
It's from when my parents told everyone that I was coming.

Maama's belly is enormous, and taata is holding her, happy faces everywhere.

My jajja mukyala is in front of them, with one fist in the air and an even bigger smile.



From left to right ; Sanyu (Dembe's Jajja mukyala & Mirembe's mum), David (Dembe's taata), Mirembe (Dembe's maama) and Asoni (Dembe's Jajja mwami & Mirembe's dad)





I love my jajja mukyala. She gives the best hugs.  
When she braids my hair, it's in different styles every time.

I love her food.

Her chapatis are the best! I always get some to take home when I see her.

"Where is your jajja?" I ask.

"Here he is," taata answers.

"What was he like?" I ask.

"He was strong, kind, tall, and extremely funny."

Taata takes a picture from the album, closes it, and pulls me closer.

"Dembe, this is my jajja mwami," he says.

"We were like peas in a pod.

With us, words were never needed, we would just look at each other, and that was that.

He was the kindest giant I ever knew.

He knew all our favourite stories by heart and would tell them with his whole body. Watching him and his funny movements was better than anything on tv."

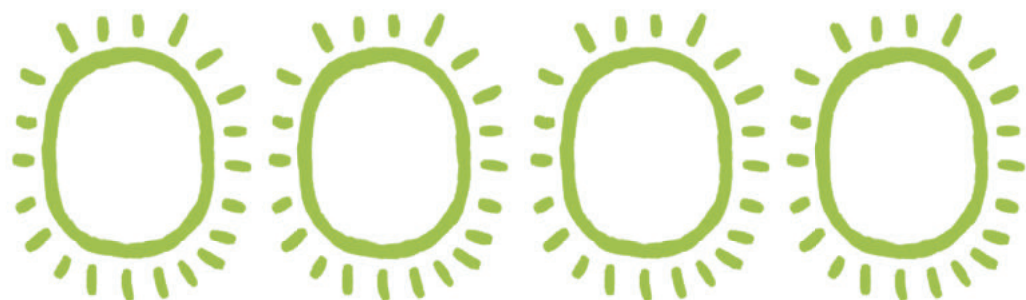
"Did he like playing games?" I ask.

"Playing tag was my favourite game because Jajja mwami would let us run ahead. I ran as fast as possible while he counted one, two, three. But somehow, he would still catch up and lift me in the air. Swinging in the air was the best part!



Whenever he sat down, that meant swing time."

"I like that too! I can see the whole world when you pick me up!" I say.





"Your giggles are my best part, Dembe," taata says.  
"What else, taata? Tell me more about him!"

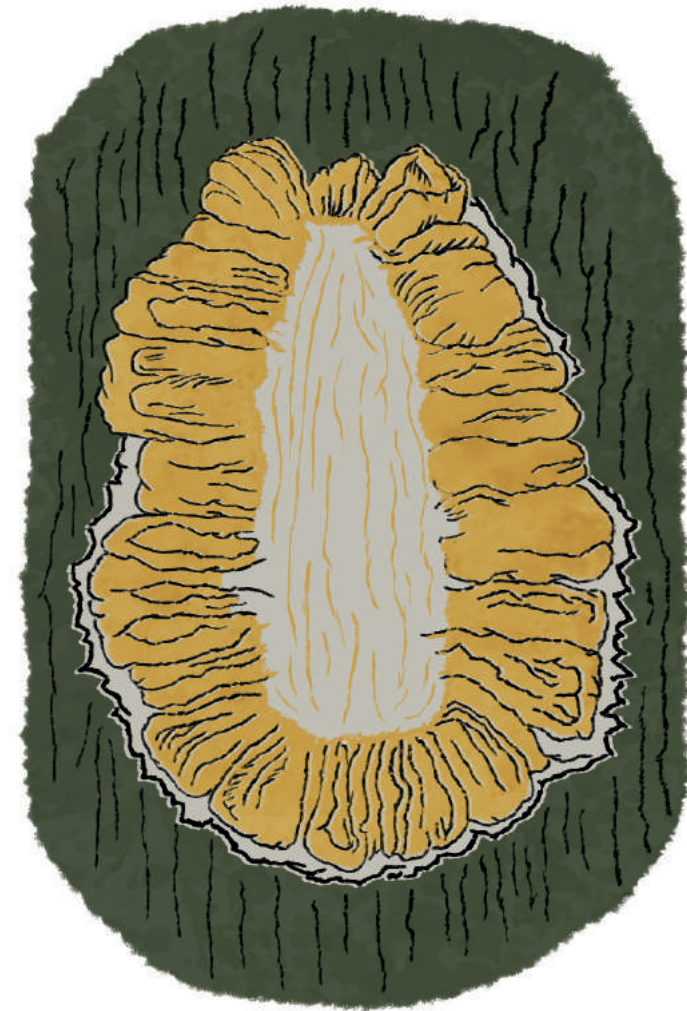
"One day, I was sitting in the shade because the sun was too high.  
I saw him. And he saw me.  
He had a cheeky smile on his face. I thought he was coming to sit next to me. But he walked past me instead.  
He disappeared into the trees and was gone for the longest time.  
I wondered where he had gone..."

"When I finally saw him again, he held my favourite fruit in the whole world.  
Jackfruit!  
How he did that, I don't know. It wasn't even jackfruit season yet!  
He knew I loved jackfruits, so he must have looked through the forest until he found one."

"What does a jackfruit look like? How does it taste, taata?" I ask.



"Jackfruits are green on the outside, banana yellow, and extra sweet on the inside. Imagine if strawberries were as big as basketballs but with bumpy green skin."



Being green in colour instead of red but just as sweet. And just like strawberries, you can taste the sweetness with your nose."

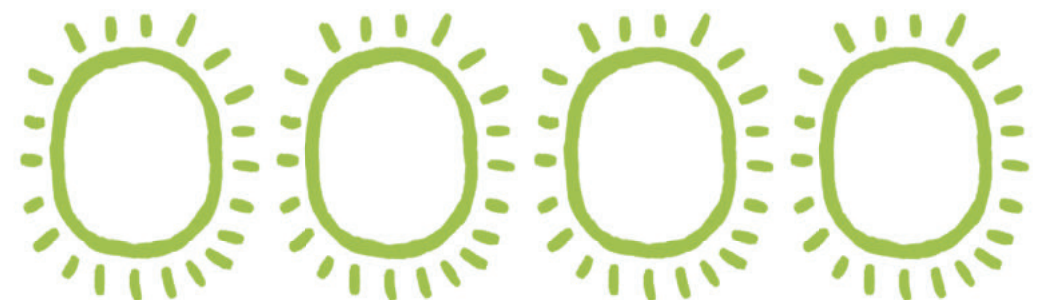
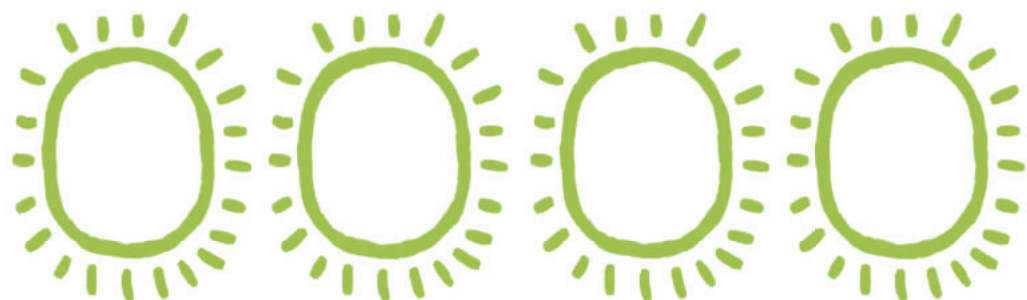
"Sometimes they fall off the tree by themselves before they are ripe. My jaija mwami had his way of checking if the jackfruit was ready to be eaten."



He would drum on it, and if the sound was round and soft, the jackfruit was ripe. He would then cut it into smaller pieces with a knife."

"Maybe its sweetness traveled with the wind, or perhaps one of my cousins saw him because suddenly all my cousins came running as jajja mwami was cutting. We all loved jackfruit, especially when it wasn't in season. And no matter the size, jajja always made sure everyone got a piece.

That was my jajja mwami.  
The kindest giant I ever knew."

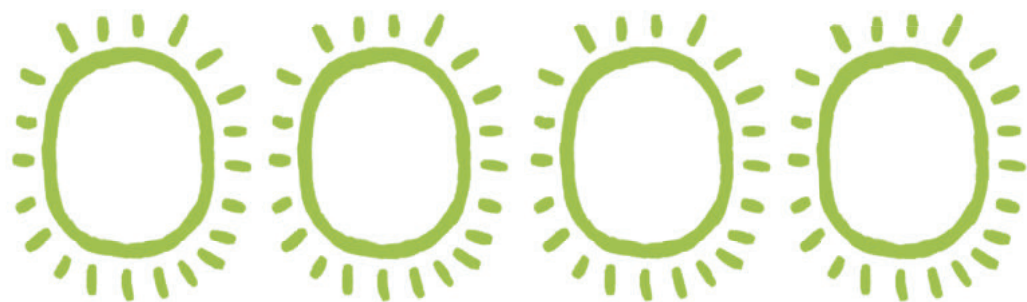




"I see that your eyelids are becoming heavy, my love."

"Taata, you are my best giant," I say while I fall asleep.

"Lucky me," he replies. (He kisses my forehead.)





# How to Prepare Your Parents for Kindergarten



STORY 14

How to Prepare Your  
Parents for Kindergarten

**How to Prepare Your Parents for Kindergarten** Kemê  
(working title) Are babies worried about starting nursery school and leaving us, adults, all by ourselves? For whom is it a bigger step? What would an older sibling say to help us cope with the transition? This guide is meant for all concerned kids and parents taking themselves too seriously.



Photo: Marta Anna Lovberg

**ILLUSTRATOR**  
Trilce García

**AUTHOR**  
Kemê



### **The beginning of the story** Kemê

“How to Prepare Your Parents for Kindergarten” is a reverse role story full of humour and affection:

As I was writing it, I couldn’t stop imagining my toddler and my baby in the (not-so-far) future, talking behind my back and supporting each other; I almost choked laughing. Belonging to the times of “super-prepared” parents/caregivers is exhausting; there are one hundred apps, one thousand gadgets, countless social media groups, articles and never-ending books to read. I bet our kids are exhausted too!

### **About the illustration process** Trilce

When discussing with Kemê the direction of the style of the illustrations, I was clear that one of the main premises of the story is humour and playfulness for this upside down world. Hence, I knew that the illustrations had to reflect the fun tone of the narrative, so I chose bright colours in the composition of the pages to give more importance to the children’s characters. Since one of the pillars of DRIN is the representation of diversities and we understand it as all kinds of diversities and identities, Kemê suggested that one of the children have a hearing aid. It also occurred to me at some point that the children could be from different ethnicities to connote a multicultural family. Still, it is something I would like to discuss in more detail with Kemê when we have more time to continue with this beautiful project.

### **About the writing process** Kemê

I was delighted to have the chance to work with Trilce García. I saw a bit of her work and was immediately attracted to it. In our first conversation, we discussed our experiences as artists and parents, at which point our paths are and how to negotiate space for keeping (both) our voices present in the story. It started with our likes and preferences; we even shared some of the books our kids like the most, or maybe we, how we see the characters in the way we do and in what areas we would like to experiment. Because DRIN is a project for us to use, not a gig, we needed to have clear expectations and be humble about what we could do in this minimal time.

We are eager to continue this collaboration and bring this book to the library shelves!



And they get so excited  
when they pick you up!



The questions will be endless.  
Giving them short answers will  
help to calm them down.



DRIN co-creators

Warda Ahmed

- wardaahmed.net
- @wanzech

is a Finnish–Somali comic artist, teacher, and illustrator who lives and works in the Helsinki metropolitan area. As an anti-racist feminist, she takes part in the public discourse on structures that make our societies more unequal. Recently, she has worked in the Comics and Migration project, funded by Kone Foundation. With the working group Sisaret 1918 (Sisters 1918) she won the Finlandia prize for comics in 2019.

Jasmina El Bouamraoui

- elboum.com
- @el.boum

is a German and Moroccan illustrator based in Berlin. Their work is both play- and thoughtful. Inspired by queer aesthetics and the city’s unconventional spirit they create characters and urban settings in bold colours and distinctive shapes. Not drawn to the usual, they invite viewers to question stereotypes of all sorts, using illustration as the main tool to envision a world without stereotypes.

Chantal - Fleur Sandjon

- cfsandjon.de
- @ cfsandjon

Chantal–Fleur Sandjon is an Afro-German writer and editor. She has already published numerous books, including a children’s non-fiction book and a novel for young people. She is interested in decolonizing language and narratives. Her YA novel-in-verse „Die Sonne, so strahlend und Schwarz“ (The Sun, so Bright and so Black) has been published to great acclaim in 2022.

Publication contributors

Sara AlHomsî

While reading to children as a former preschool teacher and clinical psychologist, Sara became interested in children’s picture books. This inspired me her try writing for children, especially those from diverse cultural experiences. As a result, she would like to experiment with writing uplifting multicultural and therapy-related stories.

Agitha Anandarajah

Agitha Anandarajah studied German literature in Mainz (Germany). She lives in Berlin.

Cat Aquino

- cataquino.net

Cat Aquino is a Filipino author and graphic novelist represented by Paloma Hernando of Einstein Literary Management. Though born and raised in Manila, she currently lives in Barcelona, where she is pursuing an Erasmus Mundus International Master degree in Children’s Literature, Media, and Culture and tells stories about strange kids and teens, magic, monsters, ghosts, or history.



Publication contributors

Romy Lynn Attieh

Romy Lynn Attieh is a text worker currently living between Beirut and a hard place. Her background in anthropology along with a developed practice in dance (and budding interest in drawing), are inseparable from her writing. The DRIN project marks her foray into the enchanted world of children's books.

Ivonne Carlos

Ivonne Carlos is a literature researcher, reading mediator and writer based in Finland. She has been doing community projects for over 15 years. She currently collaborates with Kulttuurikeskus Ninko ry and works at the Vaasa City Library.

Leila Charafeddine

▪ @leila.charafeddine

Leila Charafeddine is Lebanese/Spanish living in Barcelona. She is a UI/UX designer and have been also working on different illustration and animation projects for the past few years. She joined the workshop to keep learning and growing in the illustration field hoping that someday she will be able to be part of more illustration projects.

Publication contributors

Manvydas Džiaugys

Manvydas Džiaugys is a graphic/motion video designer currently based in Lithuania. He holds BA degrees in film, TV and theatre design as well as political science and philosophy.

Shirin Eghtessadi

Shirin Eghtessadi is a coach and facilitates workshops about mental health, mindfulness and empowerment. Their focus is on the potential of the invisible, creative expression and storytelling as a way to healing.

Titilayo Farukuoye

Titilayo Farukuoye is an Austrian–Nigerian writer, educator and organizer based in Glasgow. They work across genres and disciplines including sound and poetry. They recently fell in love with creating picture books. In all of their work, Titilayo seeks to bring social justice and community care to the heart of all that they do.



Publication contributors

Trilce  
García

▪ @trilcegarcia

Trilce García Cosavalente is a Peruvian comic artist and visual communicator. She is passionate about raising awareness of social issues through comics. She was chosen by the Goethe-Institut Indonesien to create the comic WARMIMASIY on Quechua women. She also produces webcomics, graphic medicines and children’s illustrations.

Mariela  
Georg

▪ @empower.mentalista

Mariela Georg identifies as Afro–Latina–German. She was born in 1987 in Cochabamba, Bolivia. Since 2007 she has been living (again) in Germany. She works full-time in anti- discrimination work and part-time as an empowerment trainer, author and illustrator. She is the mother of a four-year-old child and published her first children’s book „Es ist Platz für mich da!“ (There’s room for me there!) in March 2022.

Diana Soria  
Hernández

▪ dianasoria.net

Diana Soria Hernández (México–Finland) is a visual artist focused on counteracting hegemonic structures through her human scale. Her art practice embraces mainly performance art, live installations, ceramics and drawing.

Publication contributors

Jeff  
Hollweg

▪ @jkkh\_draws

You can find Jeff dreaming at the crossroads of the multiverses. Observing, collecting thoughts, ideas, stories, movements... everything fluid that time can contain, into the archive of collective floating narratives. Creative Director at the Deutsches Institute for AfroShops [D.I.A.S].

Kemê

Kemê Pellice is a visual artist, poet and DEIB (diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging) specialist/ educator based in Finland. Her artistic practice is currently focused on a crossroad project between identity, art, community, intersectional feminism and the quality of tales and myths as an open source. Kemê is also a proud mama to a cat, humans and plants. And ultimately a relentless learner.

Harjyot  
Khalsa

▪ @whirlwnd

Harjyot Khalsa is a young visual communicator with a dream to create her own graphic novel someday. She enjoys spending time in nature and learning new skills. Her adventures find direction through conversations which are then translated to beautiful drawings that she loves to share.



Publication contributors

Irem Kurt

- iremkurt.com
- @meri\_tru

Irem Kurt is a German–Turkish Illustrator and cat mum based in Berlin. When she is not drawing, she is designing creative projects with her collective ousa, with the aim to challenge prevailing narratives.

Wende Luvinga

Wende Luvinga is an international development professional and a children’s author. She is enthusiastic about promoting reading culture for children and advocating for diversity in children’s literature. Her stories are inspired by the African storytelling tradition and folktales which promotes social values. In addition, Wende is a founder of the reading group Swahili for Kids and has visited schools and libraries to read to children as a way to celebrate diversity.

Sita Magfira

- @slightestcut

Sita Magfira is an aspiring story-teller. Currently, she is exploring fiction writing as her means of making sense of everyday life – particularly related to her childhood and migration experience.

Publication contributors

Sanata Nacro

- @sanataillustriert

Sanata draws, paints, loves all kinds of picture books and daydreams... about making picture books. People, branches growing out of ears and random daily situations are her favourite things to draw.

Dayanah Nanjobe

Dayanah Nanjobe was born in the pearl of Africa, Uganda, and moved to Sweden when she was 10. Dayanah considers her love for culture, communication and children’s development the red thread of all her endeavours. If she isn’t spending time with her family and friends, you can almost always find her writing, singing, or dancing. Jackfruit is Dayanah’s first children’s book.

Chioma Opara

- helaneus.com

I’m Chioma (he/she/they) – you can call them Chi or Chi-Chi too. I’m a proud Nigerian-British illustrator, storyboard artist and facilitator. Widely known as a professional geek, Chi is passionate about spreading joy, amplifying underrepresented stories and accessibility.



Publication contributors

Vijay Patel

Vijay Patel (they/them) is a mixed-media artist who – when drawing – loves sketching textures, surfaces and details such as earlobes, especially those of their cat Fifinha. They have combined QTIPOC storytelling with performative practices and fashion design when delivering children’s workshops. They are currently on the move; migrating from Porto to London.

Saliha Soylu

▪ @salihasoyluillustration

Saliha Soylu is an illustrator specialized in the field of diversity and empowerment. She strives to create images that encourage people to love themselves just as they are. She has worked for several NGOs, public institutions, and independent magazines in Germany, e.g. and the cities of Ludwigsburg and Münster, the anti-discrimination offices in Stuttgart and Karlsruhe, the magazine Literarische Diverse, or the Magazine Of Color. She is currently based in Ludwigsburg, Germany.

Arlene Tucker

杜慧琳 Arlene Tucker’s socially engaged work utilizes translation studies, semiotics, and feminist practices. Her vibrant multicultural and multilingual background are an inspiration for her to share her story as well as listen to others. With heritage in Taiwan and the USA, and having been rooted and uprooted many times over, Tucker has been based in Finland since 2011.



What were the most valuable parts of the course for you?

The network, the support from experienced writers, it was just so brilliant. I never considered writing picture books before this and now this is all (almost) I ever want to do..! WOW you have changed my life!

The session with Chantal on revising the manuscript contains lots of wisdom that I will use all the time.

The simultaneous drafting process, the invaluable feedback moral support from fellow writers, Emily Joof’s talk, and the deep discussions on diversity and what it means to be BIPOC in Europe (as children and adults).

The support, feedback and art direction from Jasmina and Warda, that was very generous and dedicated!!!



What did you enjoy or appreciate overall regarding the course?

The diversity of the participants chosen to be part of it. The community felt inviting, nice and understanding. We were at different levels but all very nicely chosen.

The group was diverse and people had different experiences and views and lots of talent.

Made connections that will last beyond the workshop.



Other comments

**Thank you so much! This was one of the best things I have ever been a part of, working across art spaces, getting to know illustrators and their craft and very tightly bonding with the writers on the group, was incredible, I don't want this workshop to end...**

**We appreciate that you organized this. This workshop is really needed to encourage and support more BIPOC authors and illustrators. I was very impressed with the illustrators group, there were lots of talents. We are missing connection and opportunity.**



# IMPRINT


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All the rights to the stories and illustrations  
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Kuvittajat ry-Illustratörerna i Finland rf (The Finnish Illustration Association)  
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