



Francesca Nicole Chan Torres

# Nadia and the Blue Stars

artworks by Liv Romualdez Vinluan

Translated into Filipino by Rhandee Carlitos





In a time of war, there was a small village. It was hidden in a valley surrounded by steep mountains. Life in the village was like living in another world: a world of laughter, of song, and of joy. Men joked as they worked. Women sang as they did chores. And as for the children, the streets were filled with the sounds of their play, from morning 'til night.

But what made this village very special were the flowers. The blooms grew wild in the fertile soil of the valley, exploding in different colors. There were loud,

red poppies; hardy, pink dog roses; dainty, white lilies; and cheerful, yellow sunflowers. But most of all, there was an endless carpet of large blue flowers. From a distance, they glistened in the grass like stars that had fallen out of the sky.





These flowers had one caretaker. She was a little girl and her name was Nadia.

In the mornings, before the sun was up, she watered them. In the afternoons, she whispered stories to them. And at night, before she went to bed, she wished them sweet dreams.

And so the flowers bloomed, for nothing makes a flower bloom more than love, and Nadia's joy became the joy of the village. And for a long time, everything was as it should be.

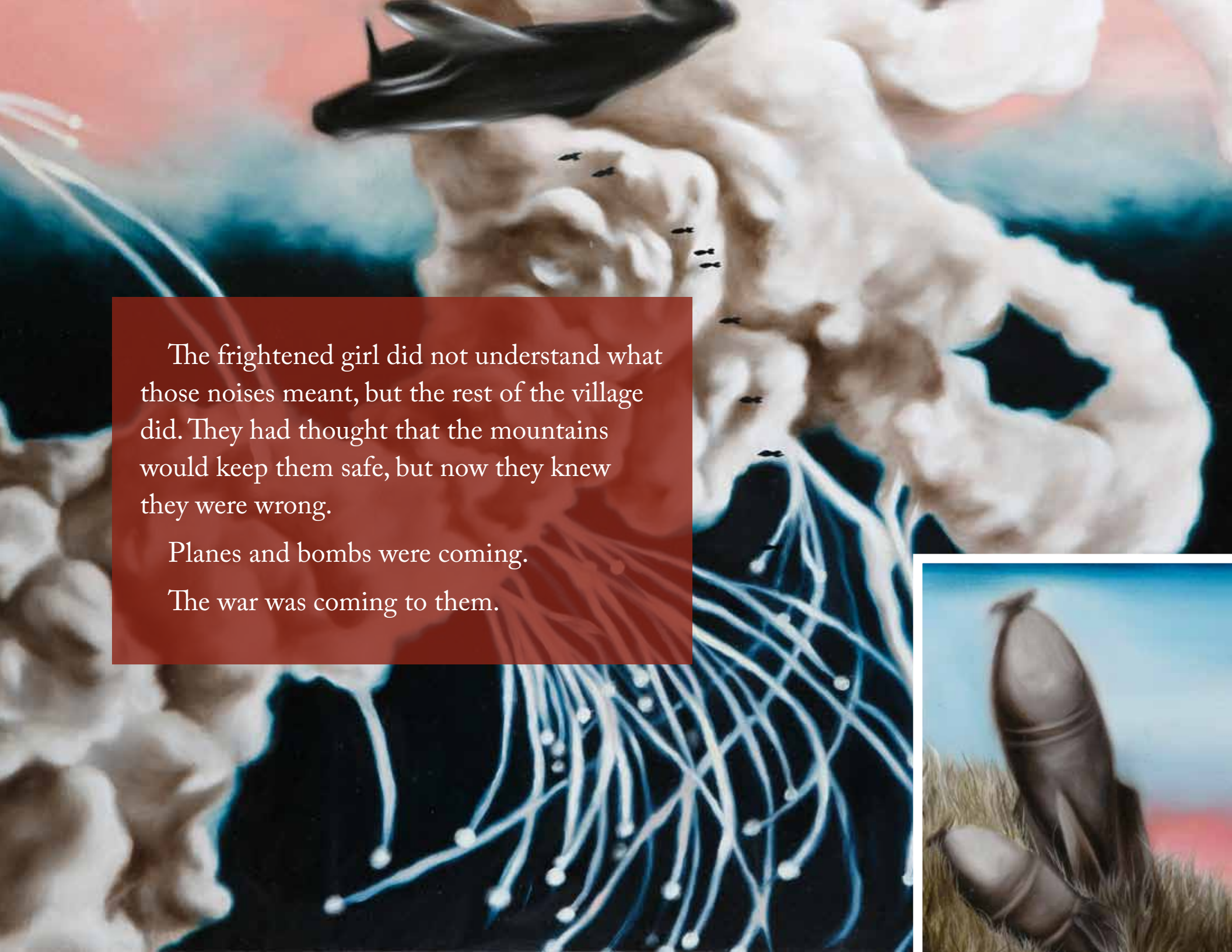
But this was a time of war.

One moonless night, while Nadia was out in the flower fields, she heard it: a low rumbling, like the sound of distant drums. When she turned towards the direction of the noise, she saw, in the distance, the red glow of fire.



Nadia ran. She told her parents, who passed the news on to the rest of the village. From that moment, things started to change.





The frightened girl did not understand what those noises meant, but the rest of the village did. They had thought that the mountains would keep them safe, but now they knew they were wrong.

Planes and bombs were coming.

The war was coming to them.



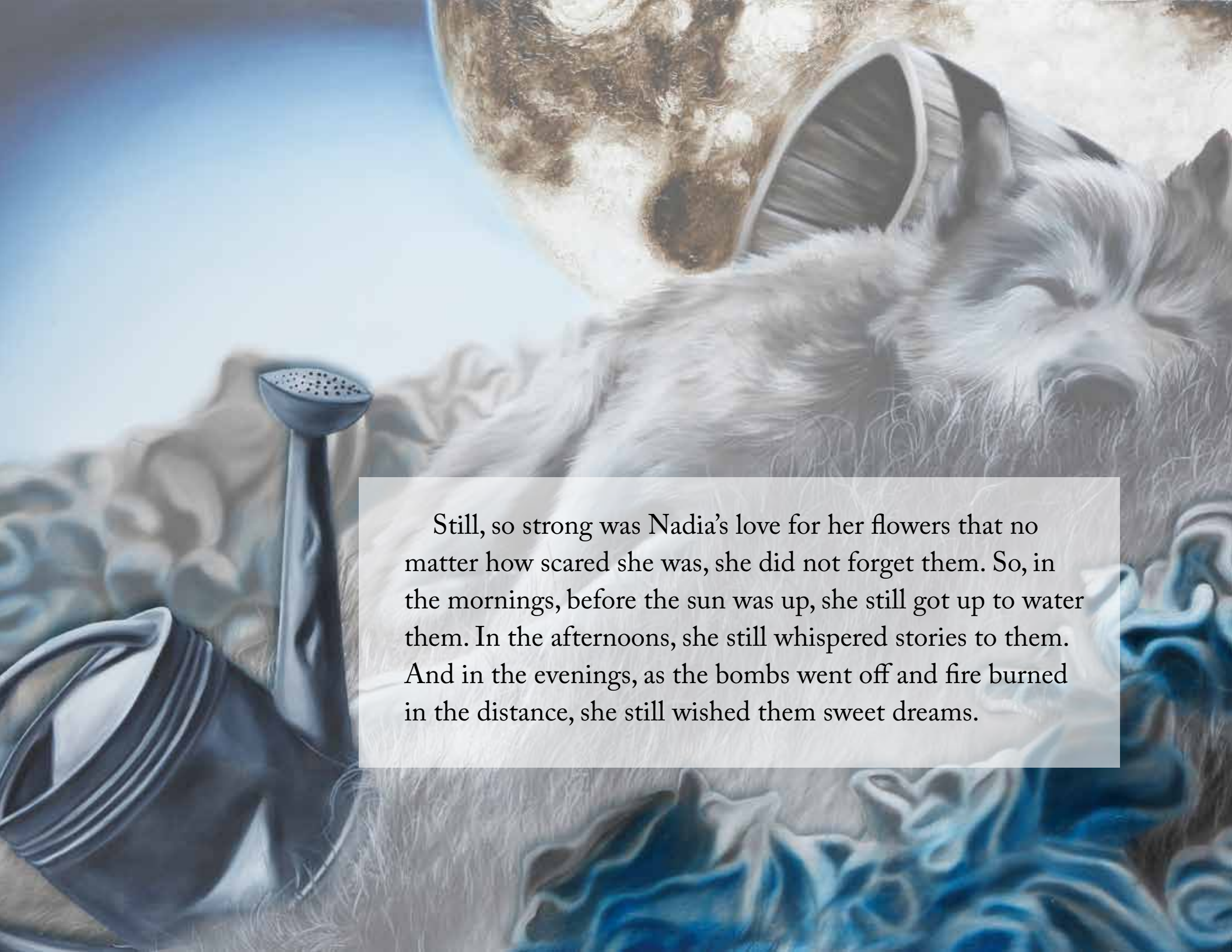
There was no more laughter in the village now, no more time for singing or dancing or playing in the streets.

Villagers rushed here and there, making preparations for their escape. Everyday they gathered supplies and made plans. And every night they watched as the glow from the fires grew closer and closer.

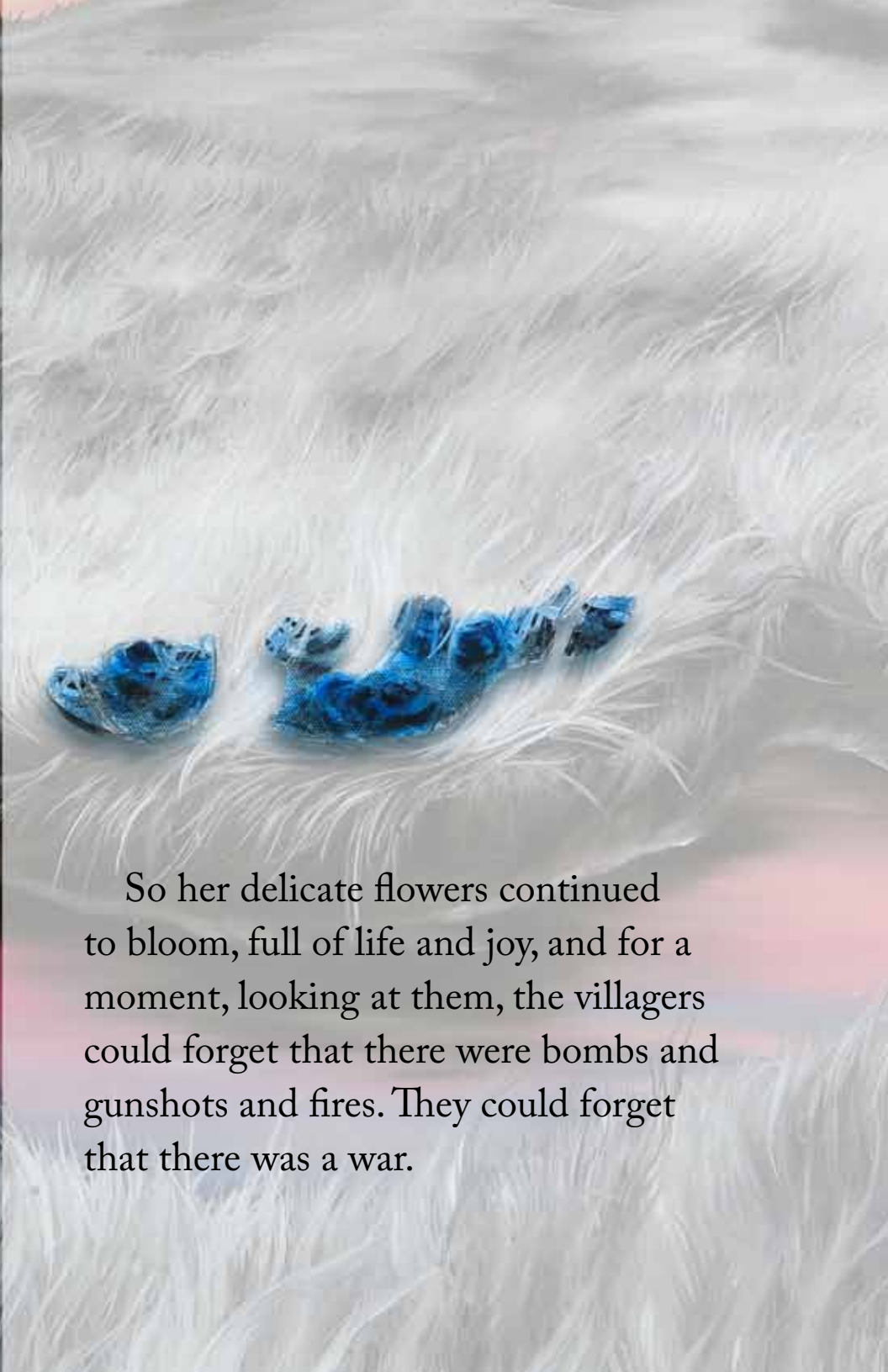








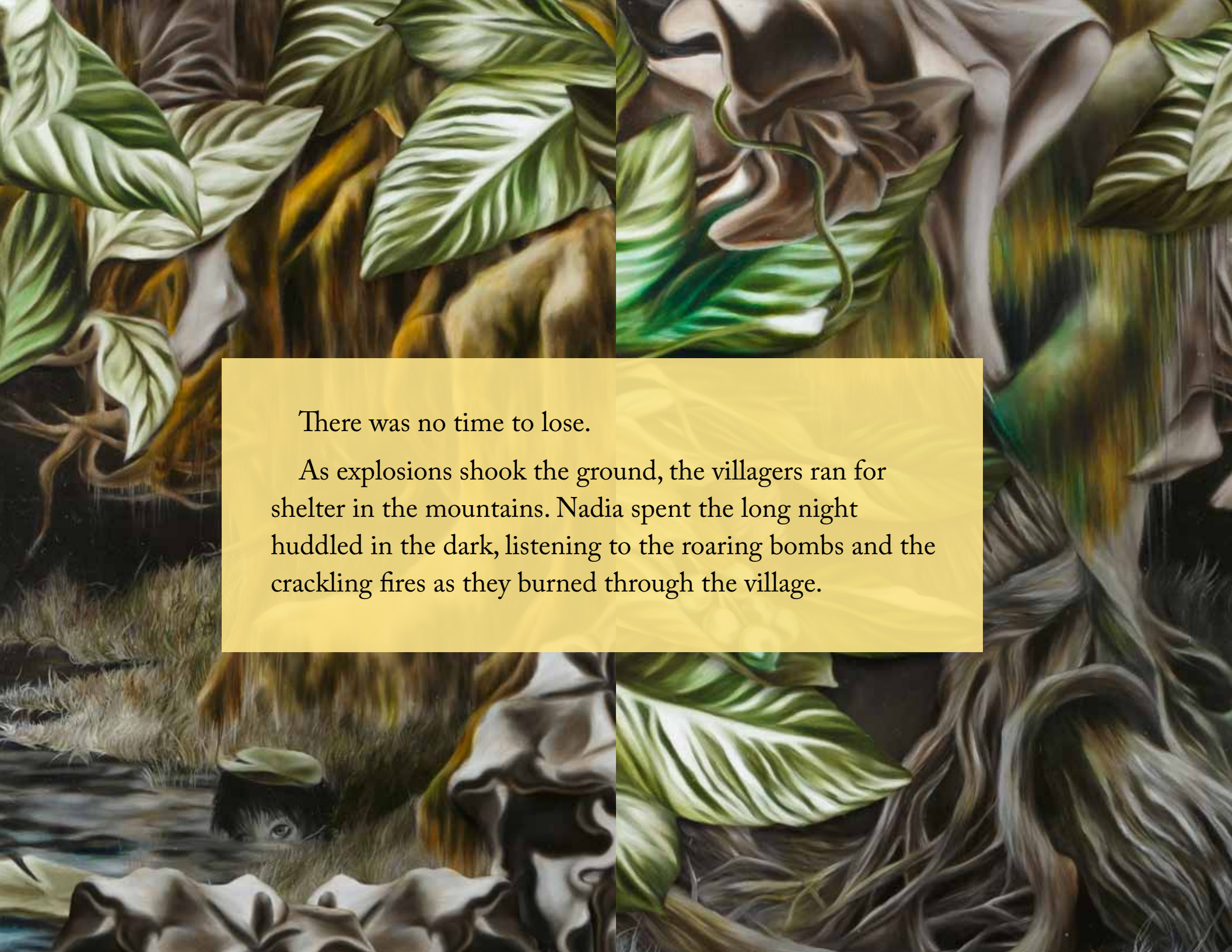
Still, so strong was Nadia's love for her flowers that no matter how scared she was, she did not forget them. So, in the mornings, before the sun was up, she still got up to water them. In the afternoons, she still whispered stories to them. And in the evenings, as the bombs went off and fire burned in the distance, she still wished them sweet dreams.



So her delicate flowers continued to bloom, full of life and joy, and for a moment, looking at them, the villagers could forget that there were bombs and gunshots and fires. They could forget that there was a war.



Then, one night, while Nadia was fast asleep, war finally arrived.



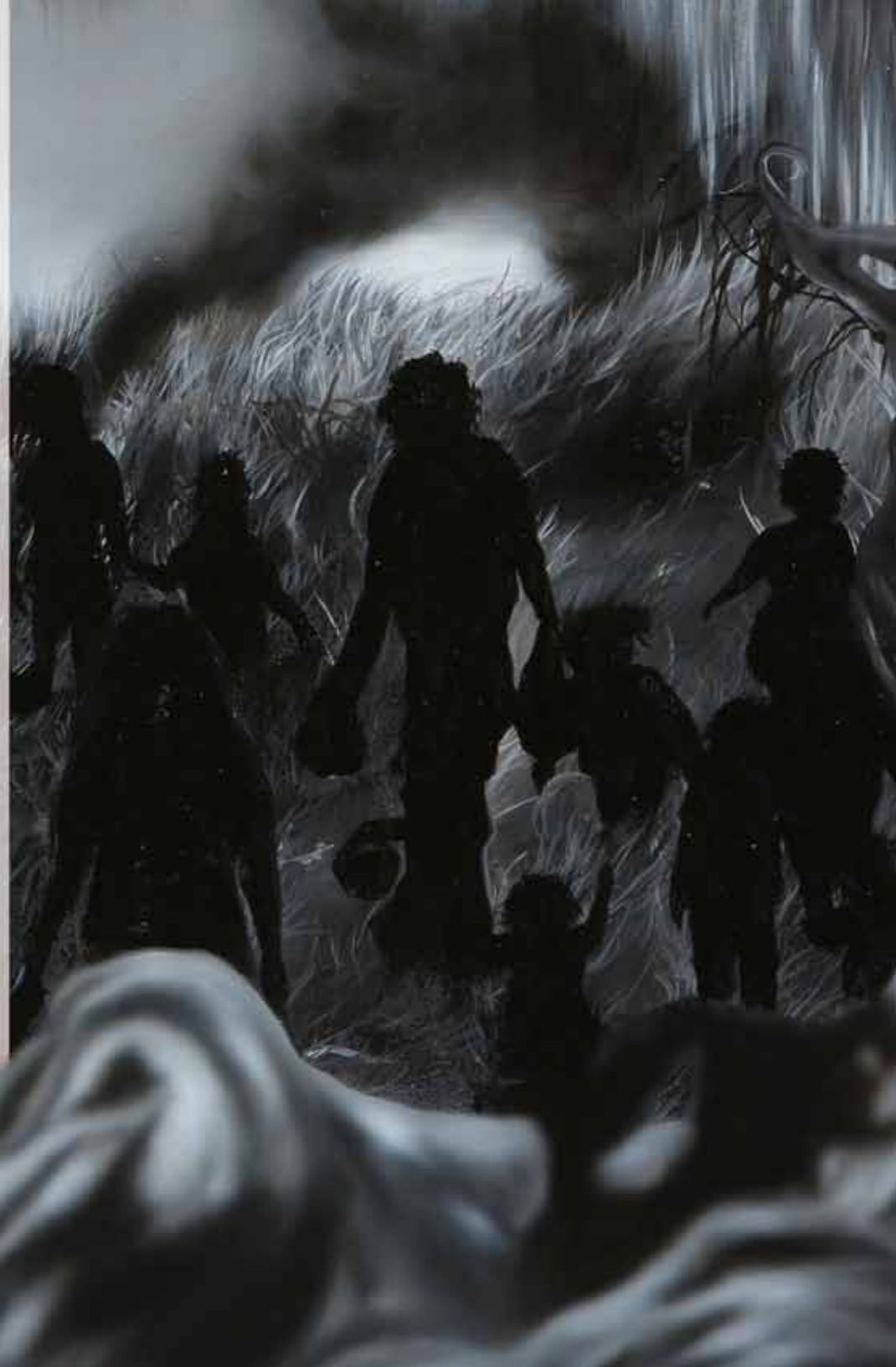
There was no time to lose.

As explosions shook the ground, the villagers ran for shelter in the mountains. Nadia spent the long night huddled in the dark, listening to the roaring bombs and the crackling fires as they burned through the village.

Just before dawn, the bombing stopped and all was quiet. Slowly, the villagers made their way back. They walked through the ruins in silence.

Finally they reached the fields. The poppies were ashes, the dog-roses cinders, the lilies and sunflowers burnt to a crisp.

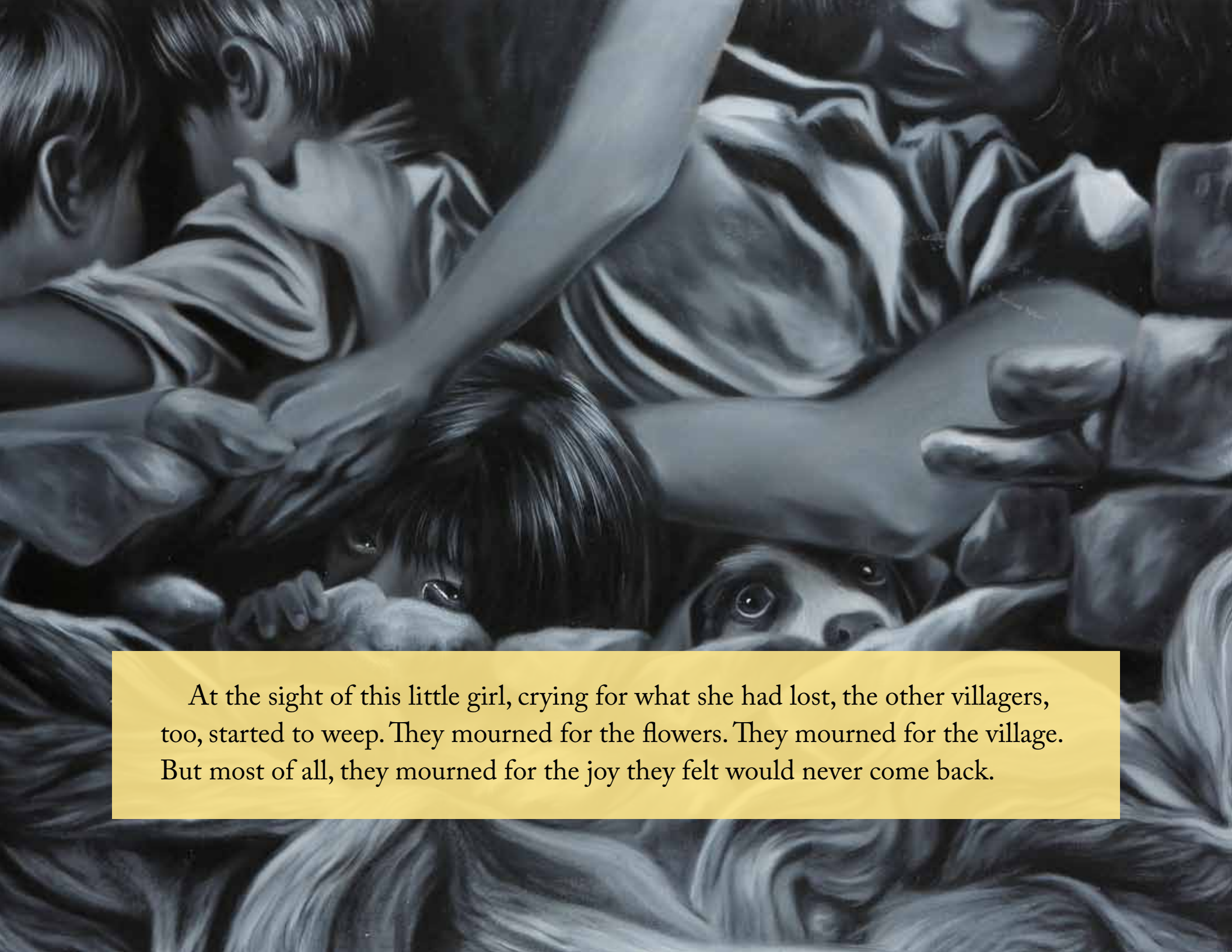
And worst of all...



“My flowers... they’re gone!”  
Nadia cried. She ran through the burnt grass, looking for one petal, one shrub, one sign of life, one star... but there was none. No trace remained of the magnificent blue flowers she had showered with love and care.

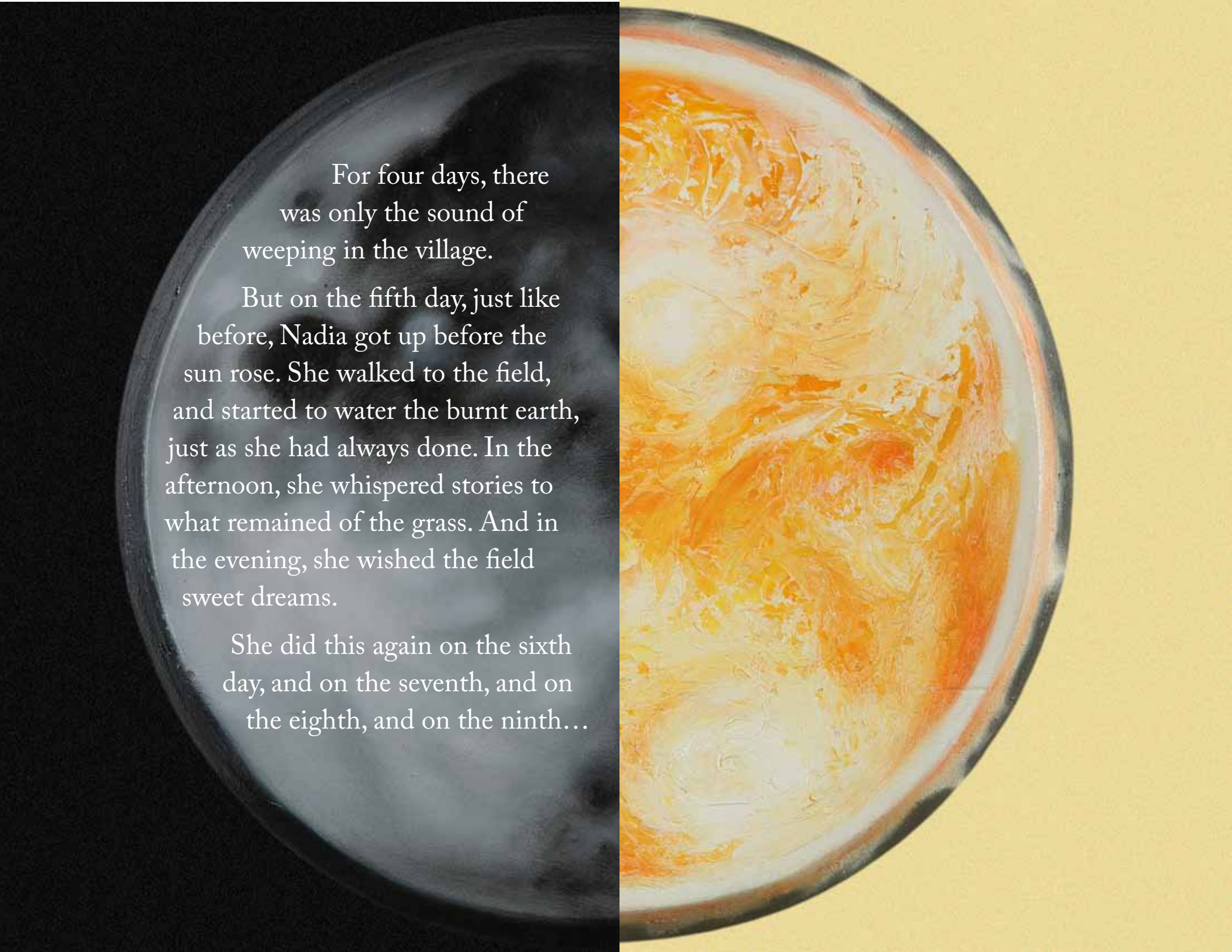
Nadia fell to the ground and began to cry.





At the sight of this little girl, crying for what she had lost, the other villagers, too, started to weep. They mourned for the flowers. They mourned for the village. But most of all, they mourned for the joy they felt would never come back.

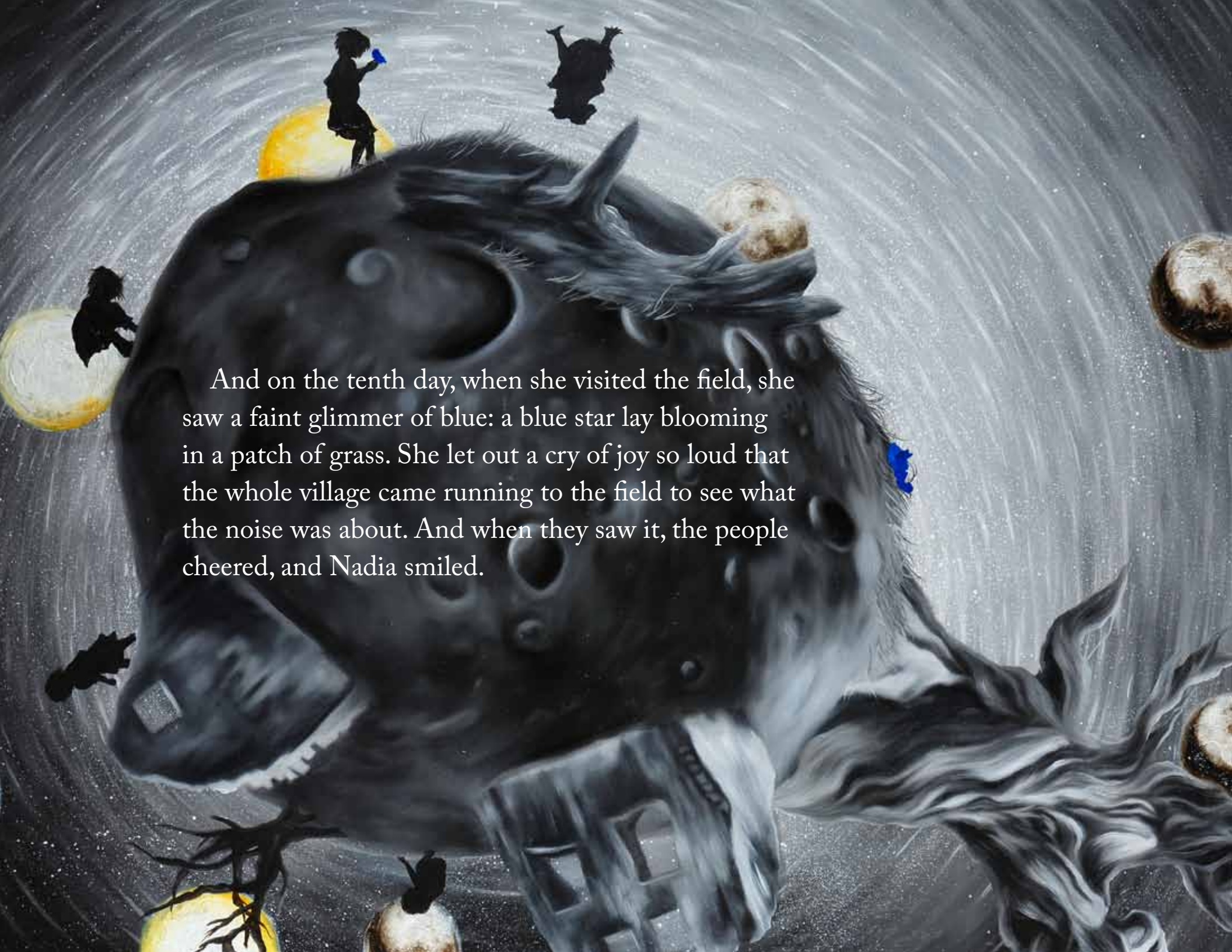




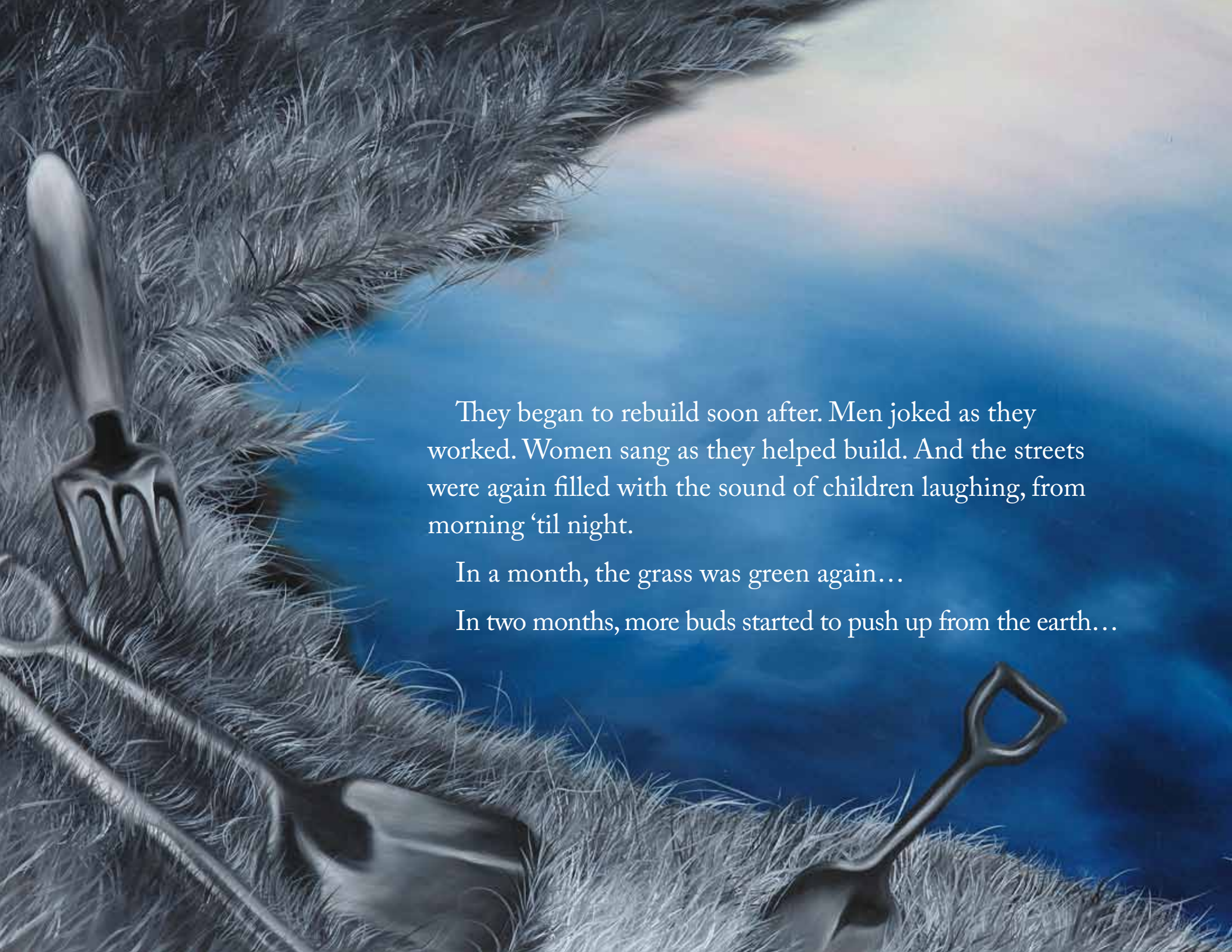
For four days, there  
was only the sound of  
weeping in the village.

But on the fifth day, just like  
before, Nadia got up before the  
sun rose. She walked to the field,  
and started to water the burnt earth,  
just as she had always done. In the  
afternoon, she whispered stories to  
what remained of the grass. And in  
the evening, she wished the field  
sweet dreams.

She did this again on the sixth  
day, and on the seventh, and on  
the eighth, and on the ninth...

A surreal illustration featuring a large, grey, textured unicorn head as the central focus. The unicorn has a blue flower tucked into its mane. The background is a swirling, grey, circular pattern with a starry texture. Several silhouettes of people are scattered around the unicorn: one is sitting on a glowing yellow sphere, another is standing on a similar sphere, and others are in various poses. There are also several glowing yellow and white spheres floating in the scene. The overall mood is dreamlike and magical.

And on the tenth day, when she visited the field, she saw a faint glimmer of blue: a blue star lay blooming in a patch of grass. She let out a cry of joy so loud that the whole village came running to the field to see what the noise was about. And when they saw it, the people cheered, and Nadia smiled.



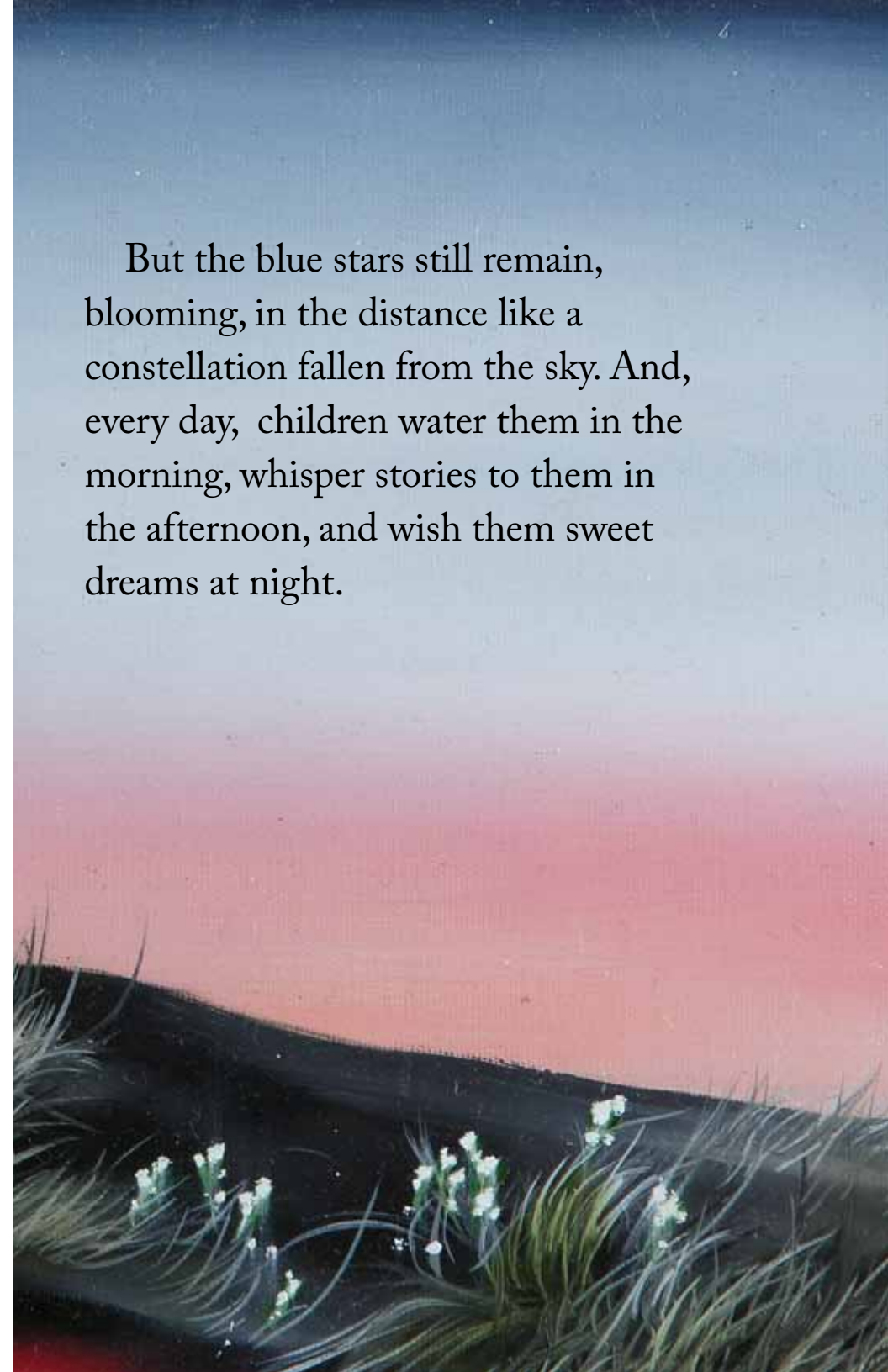
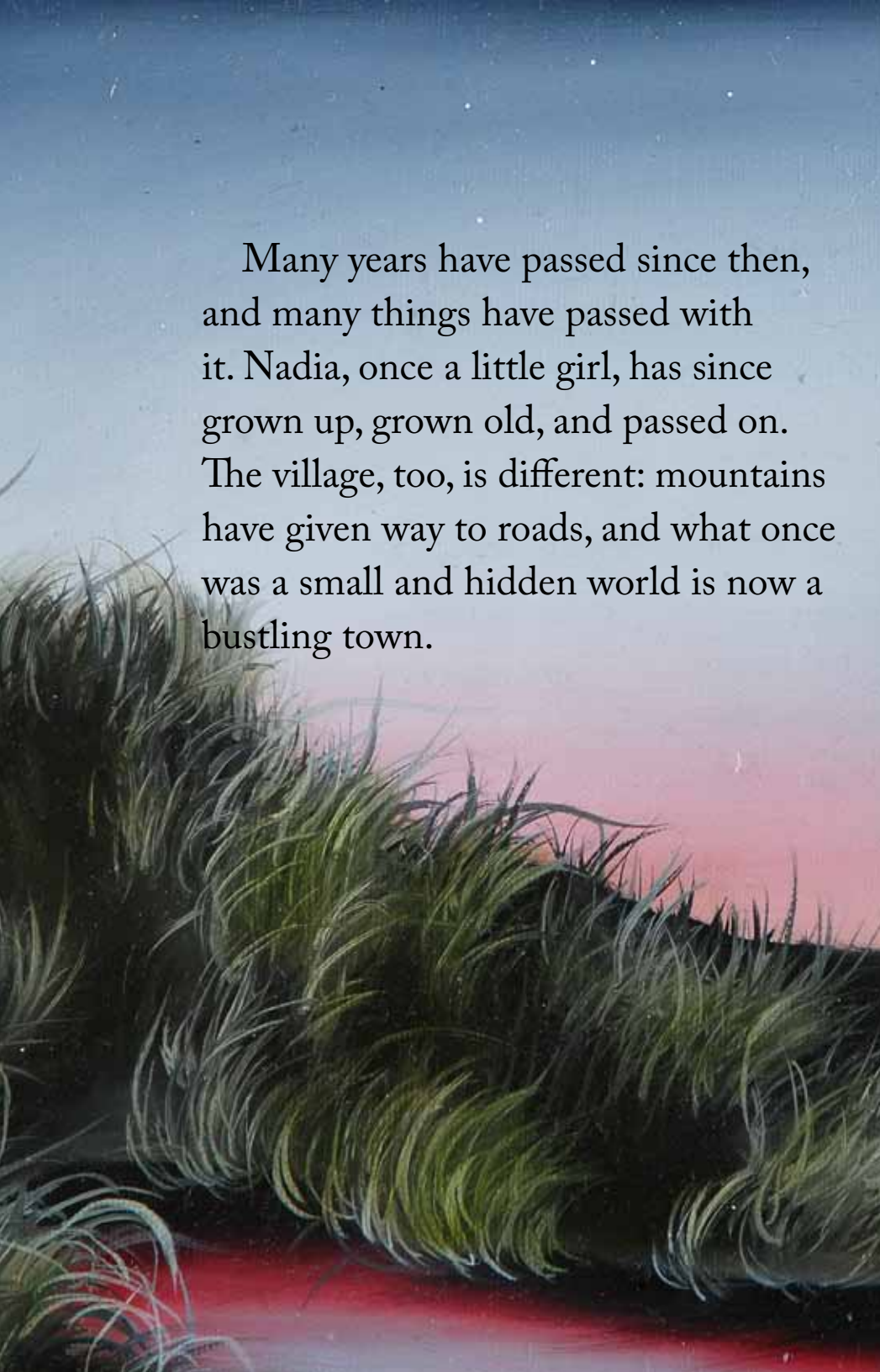
They began to rebuild soon after. Men joked as they worked. Women sang as they helped build. And the streets were again filled with the sound of children laughing, from morning 'til night.

In a month, the grass was green again...

In two months, more buds started to push up from the earth...

Many years have passed since then, and many things have passed with it. Nadia, once a little girl, has since grown up, grown old, and passed on. The village, too, is different: mountains have given way to roads, and what once was a small and hidden world is now a bustling town.

But the blue stars still remain, blooming, in the distance like a constellation fallen from the sky. And, every day, children water them in the morning, whisper stories to them in the afternoon, and wish them sweet dreams at night.








## THE AUTHOR

Frankie Torres loves telling stories. Her full name is **Francesca Nicole Chan Torres**, which is French, but when said backwards sounds like German. (“Frankie” backwards is pronounced “icknarf.”) A believer in fairy tales, she has learned never to underestimate the power of little girls (or of kids in general), and that hope is stronger than any magic. When she’s not *trying* to be a responsible student, Frankie can be found performing in theater, singing, or scribbling in one of her vast collection of notebooks. “Nadia and the Blue Stars” is her first book, but rumor has it she’s keeping a novel locked up in a trunk somewhere...

## THE ARTIST

**Liv Romualdez Vinluan** was born in the city of Manila in the late 1980’s. Since graduating cum laude from UP Diliman, she has exhibited all over Southeast Asia and Switzerland. When not occupied by painting, Liv studies French, cooks spaghetti, collects books, and sews. Juan Luna’s “Spoliarium” is her most favorite painting, and she hopes to someday create a worthy tribute to it. “Nadia and the Blue Stars” is her first children’s storybook.



We enjoy hearing from our readers.

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