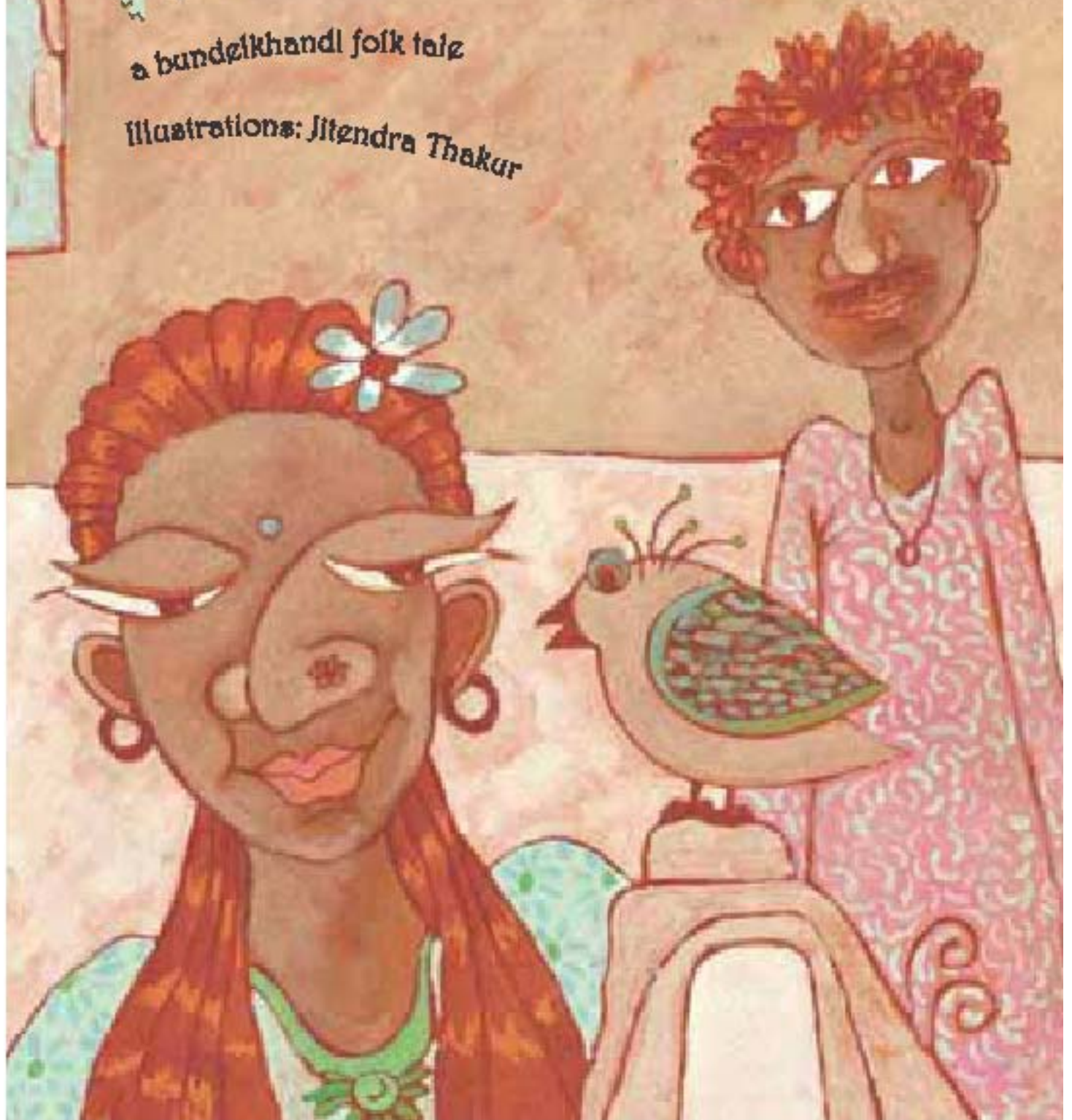


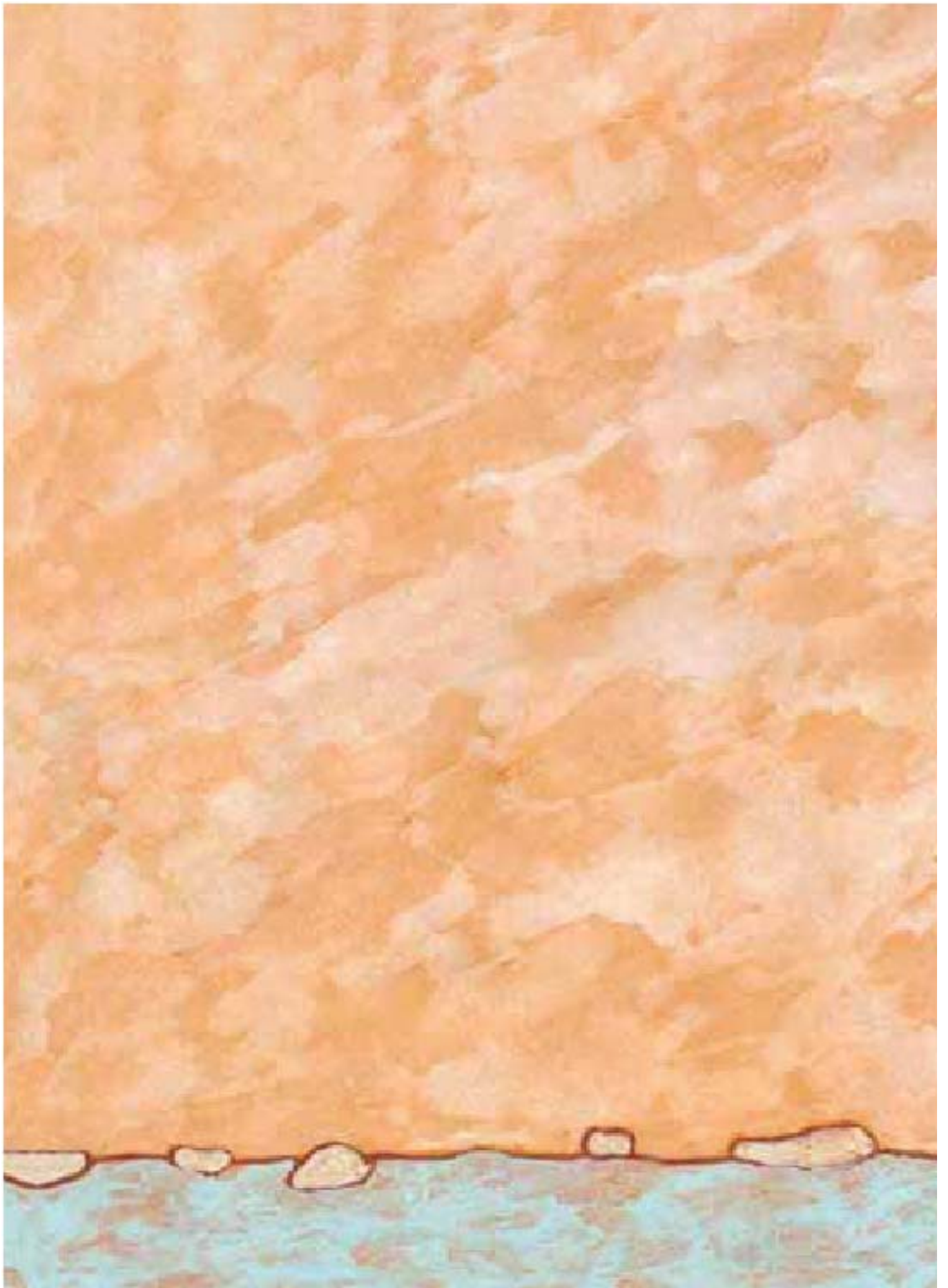
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What a Song!

a bundelkhandi folk tale

Illustrations: Jitendra Thakur





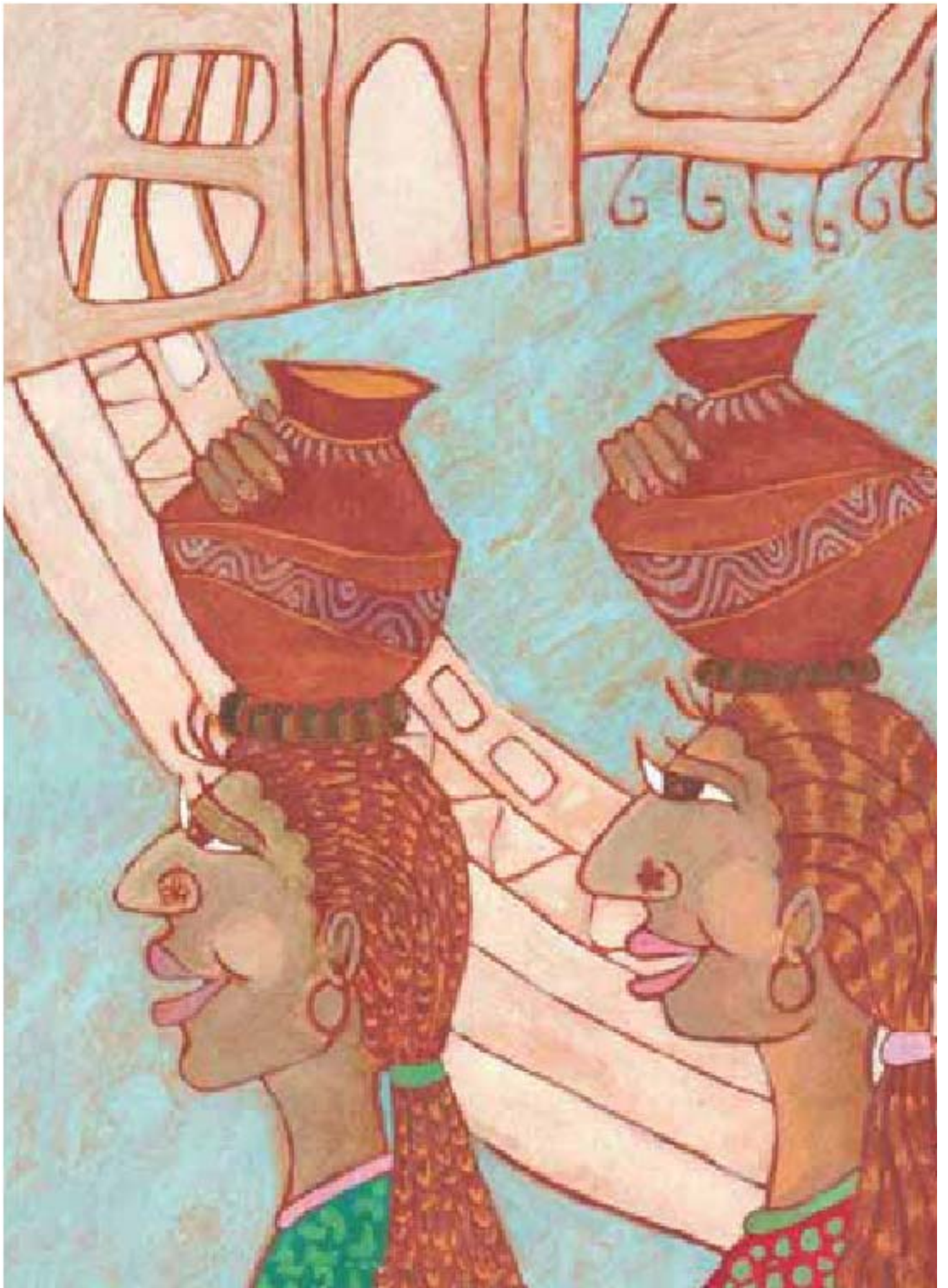
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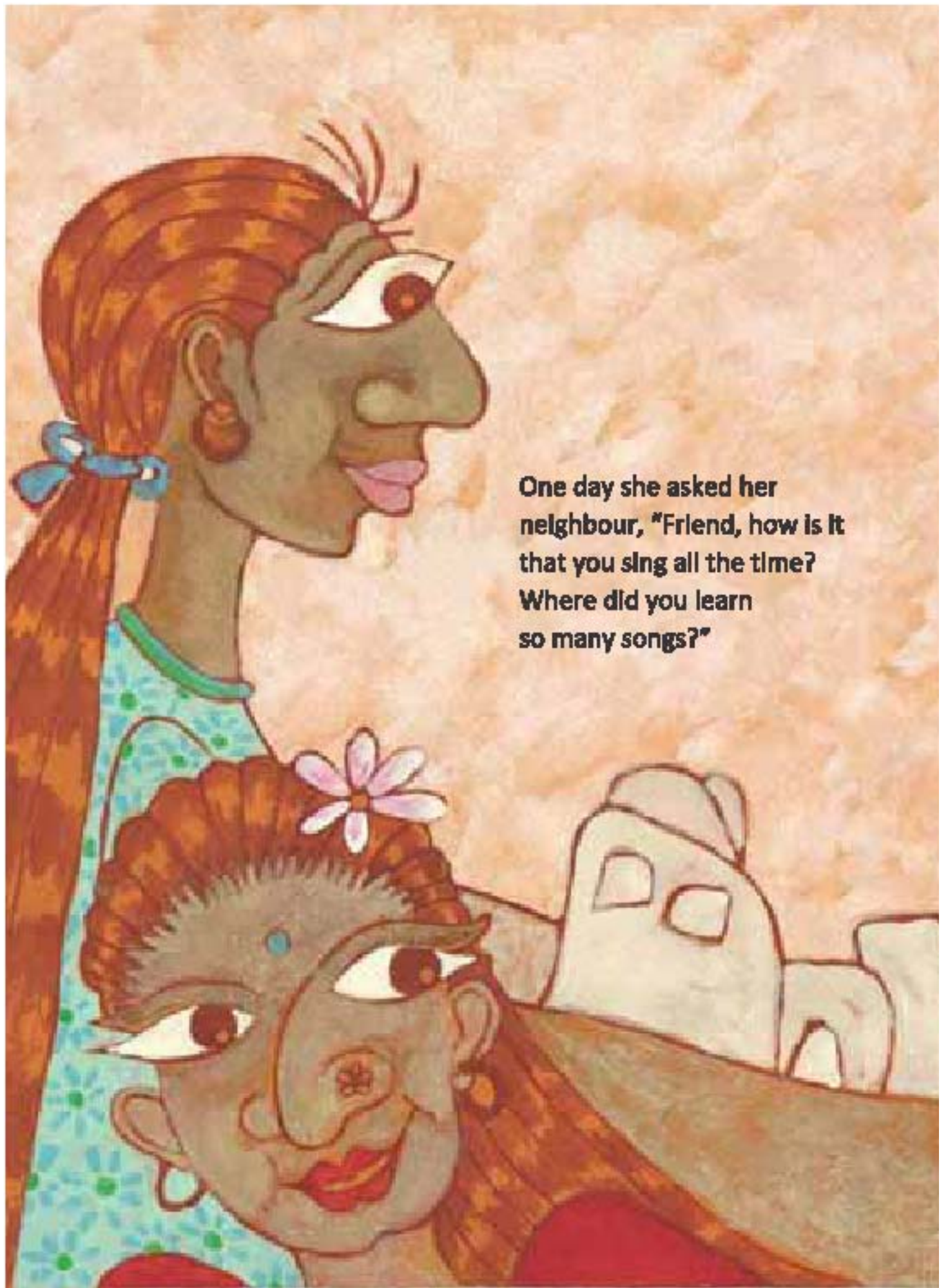


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There once lived a woman who never sang. The other women in her village would sing while grinding or going to the well but she remained quiet. She wanted to sing but just didn't know any songs.

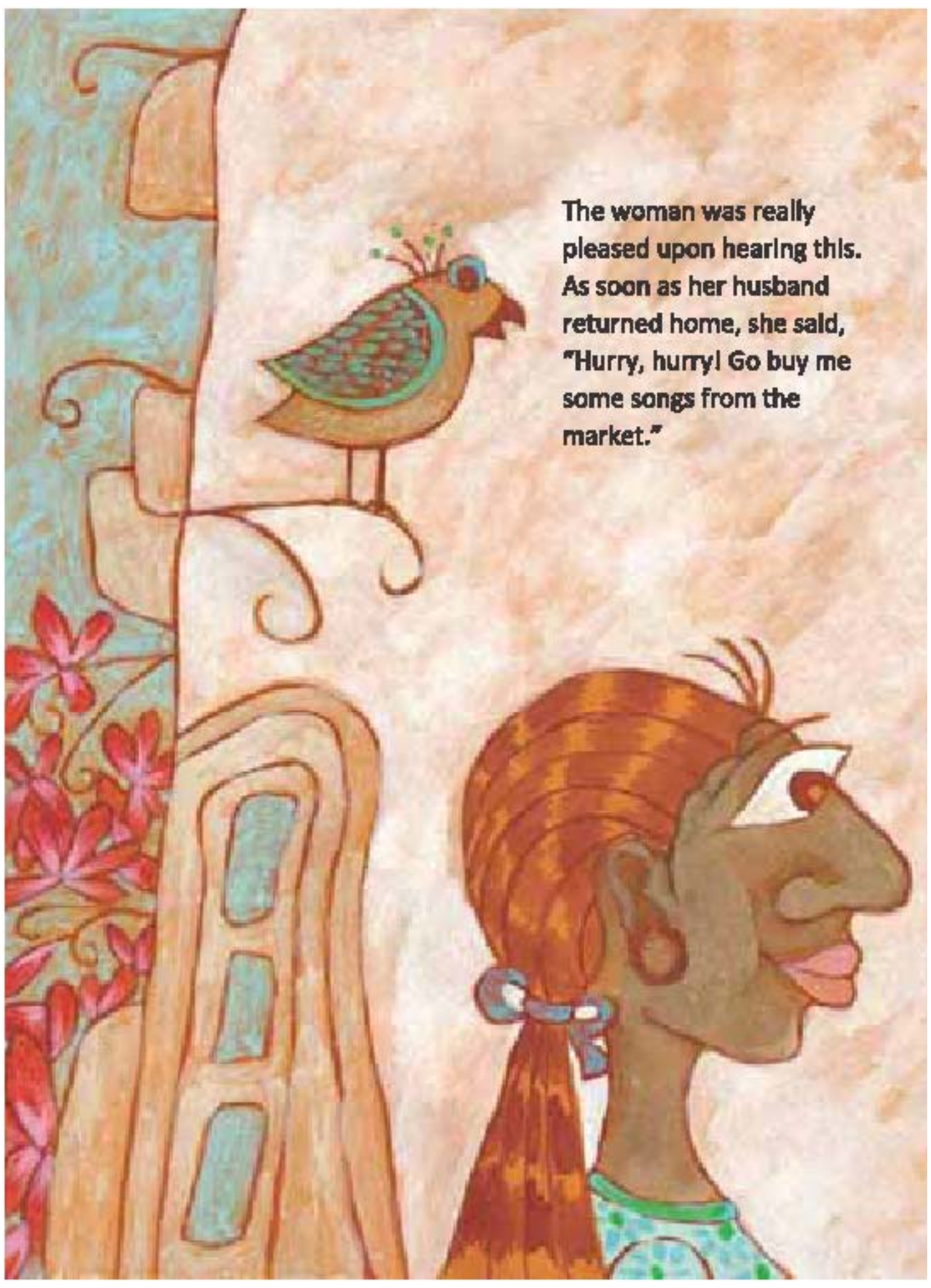




One day she asked her neighbour, "Friend, how is it that you sing all the time? Where did you learn so many songs?"

**“Oh dear,” her neighbour teased her,
“it’s so easy. Songs are sold in the market,
ready to use. I buy them all the time.
Just go and get some.”**

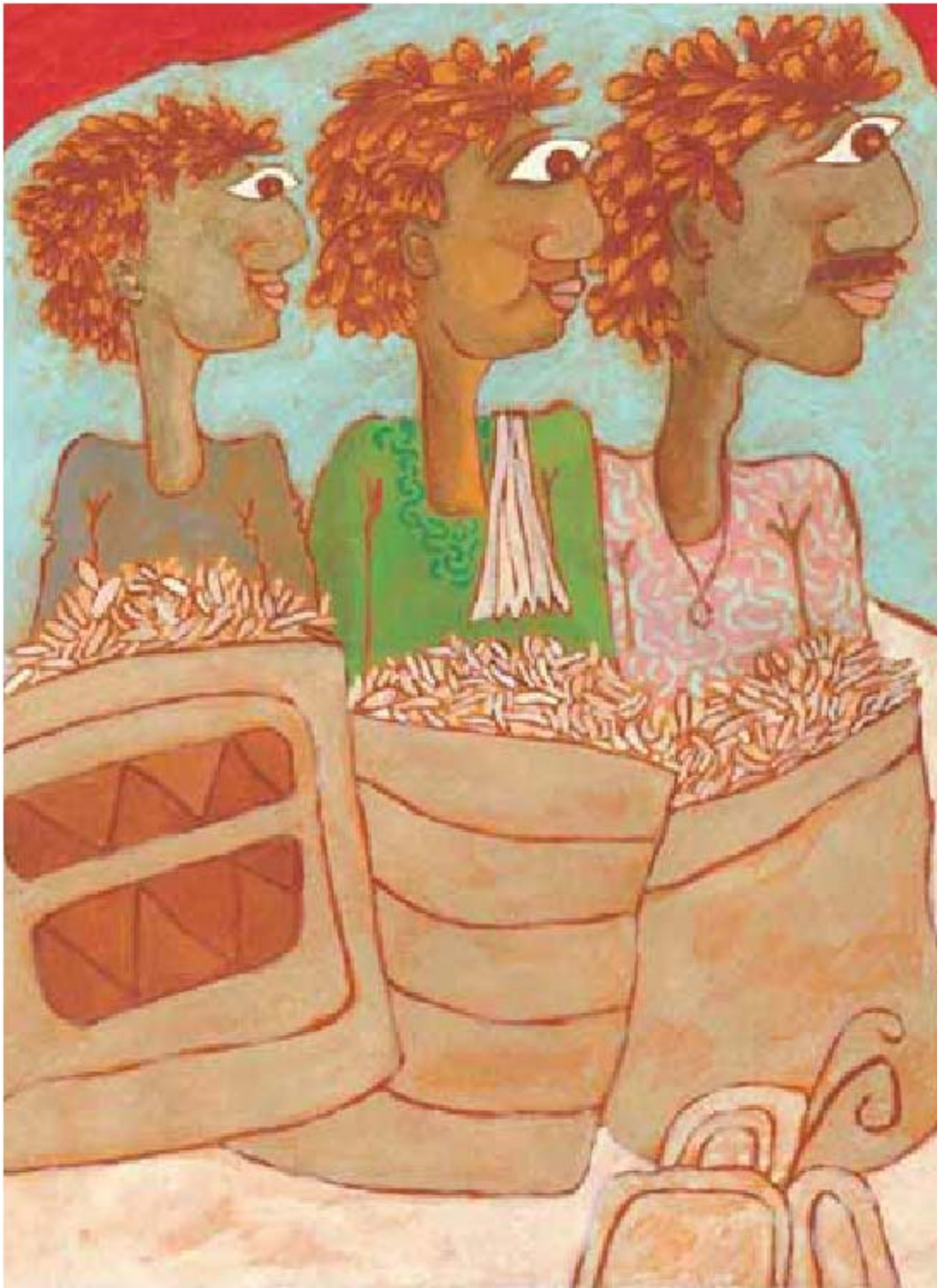


An illustration in a folk-art style. On the left, a woman with dark skin is shown in profile, facing right. She has her hair styled in a bun with a blue ribbon. She is wearing a blue and green patterned top. Above her, a small brown bird with a blue eye and a beak is perched on a decorative, swirling branch. The background is a textured, light brown color. On the far left, there are red flowers and a wooden structure with three rectangular openings.

The woman was really pleased upon hearing this. As soon as her husband returned home, she said, "Hurry, hurry! Go buy me some songs from the market."

"I've never seen songs being sold there," he said in amazement. "But I'll go, look. Give me five rupees and I'll get you a fine one."

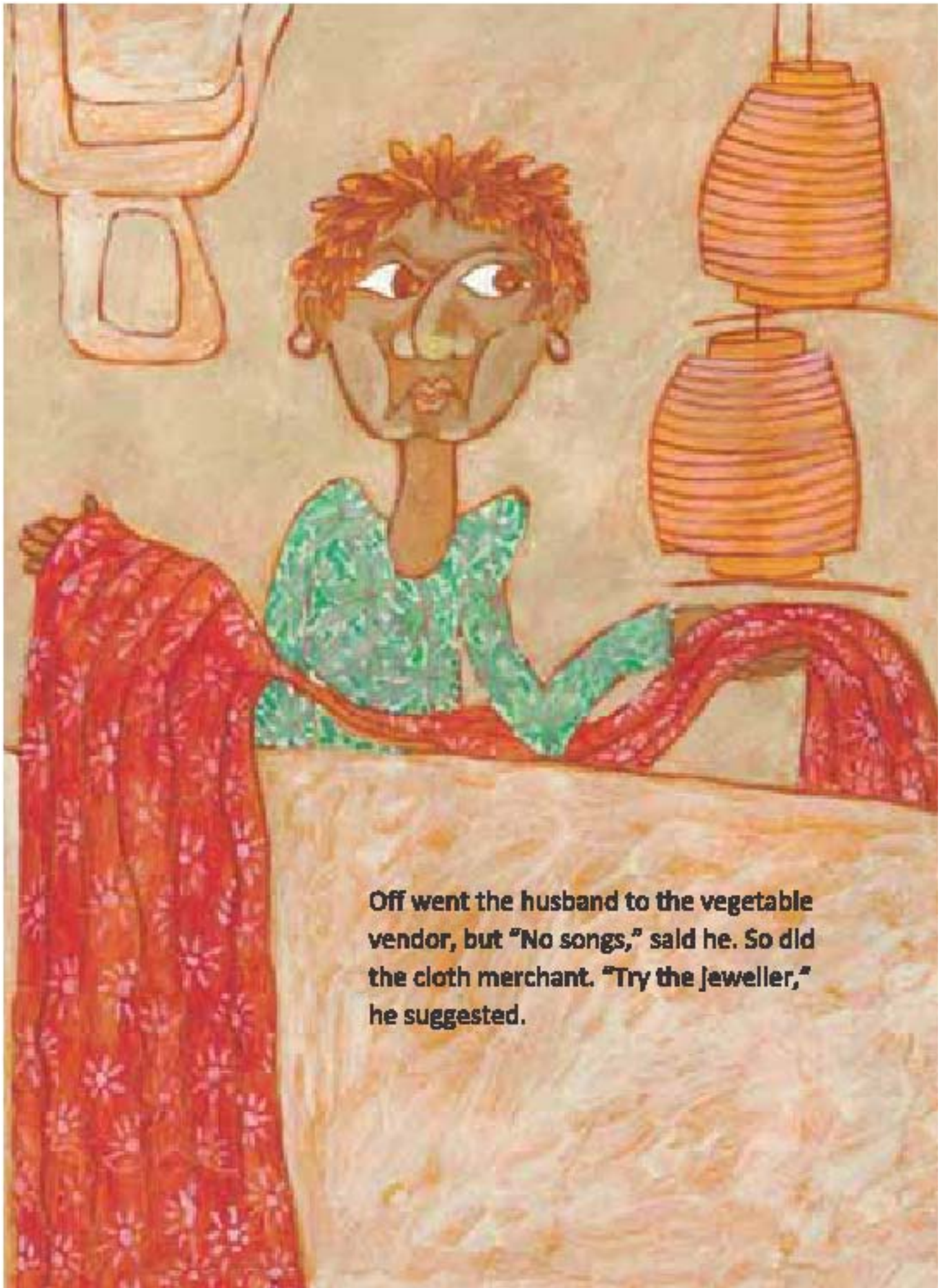






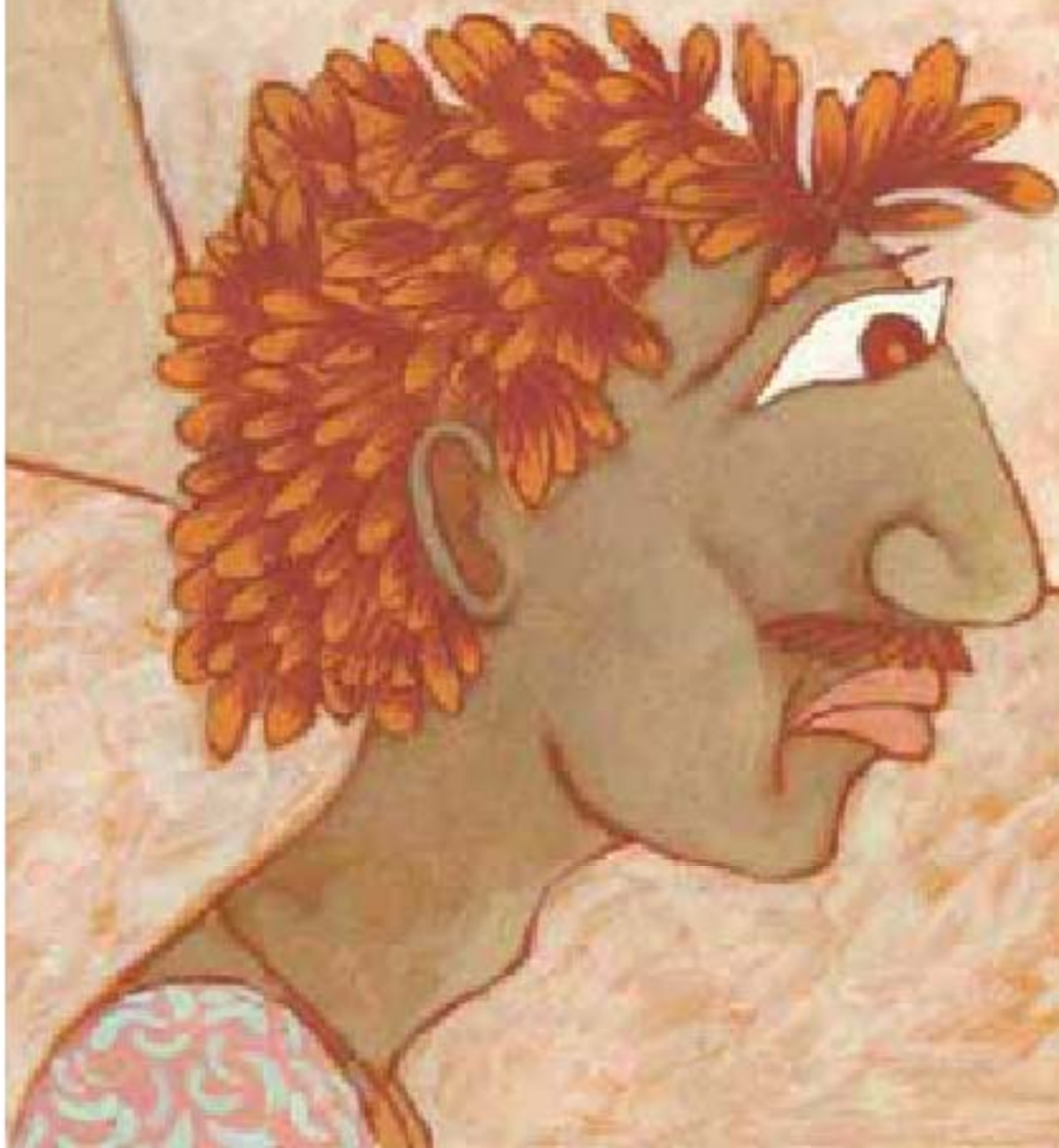
He walked to the market and went up to the first shopkeeper who sold grain. He held out the money and said, "I'd like to buy your best song."

The shopkeeper winked at his son and replied, "Sorry, I'm all sold out. Why don't you try the vegetable shop."



Off went the husband to the vegetable vendor, but “No songs,” said he. So did the cloth merchant. “Try the jeweller,” he suggested.

And so the poor chap went from one shop to another all afternoon but couldn't buy even one song. At last, he started for home sadly.



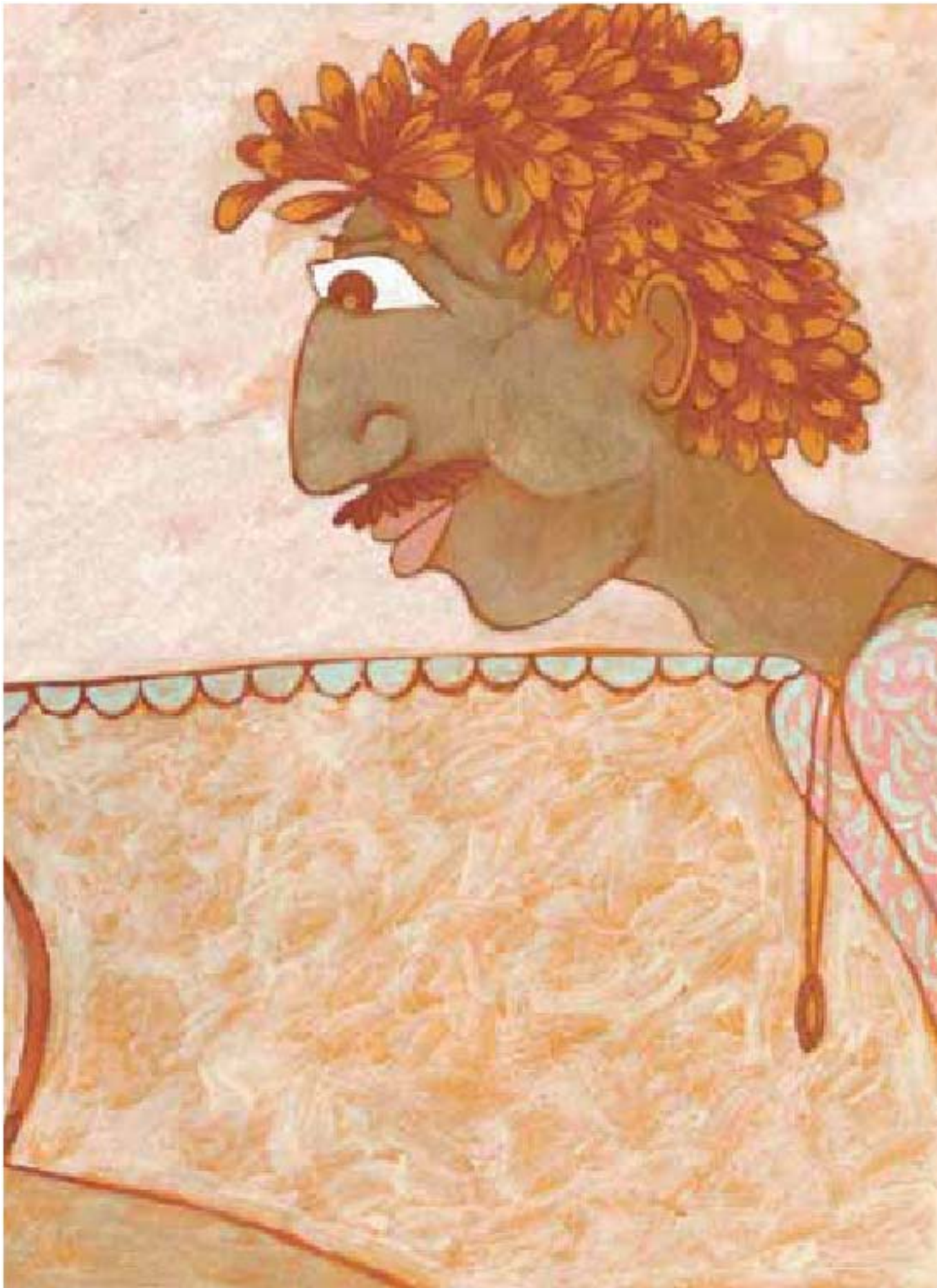
On his way back he saw a rat burrowing a hole and that gave him an idea. "I'll make a song with the rat in it," he thought and began at once:

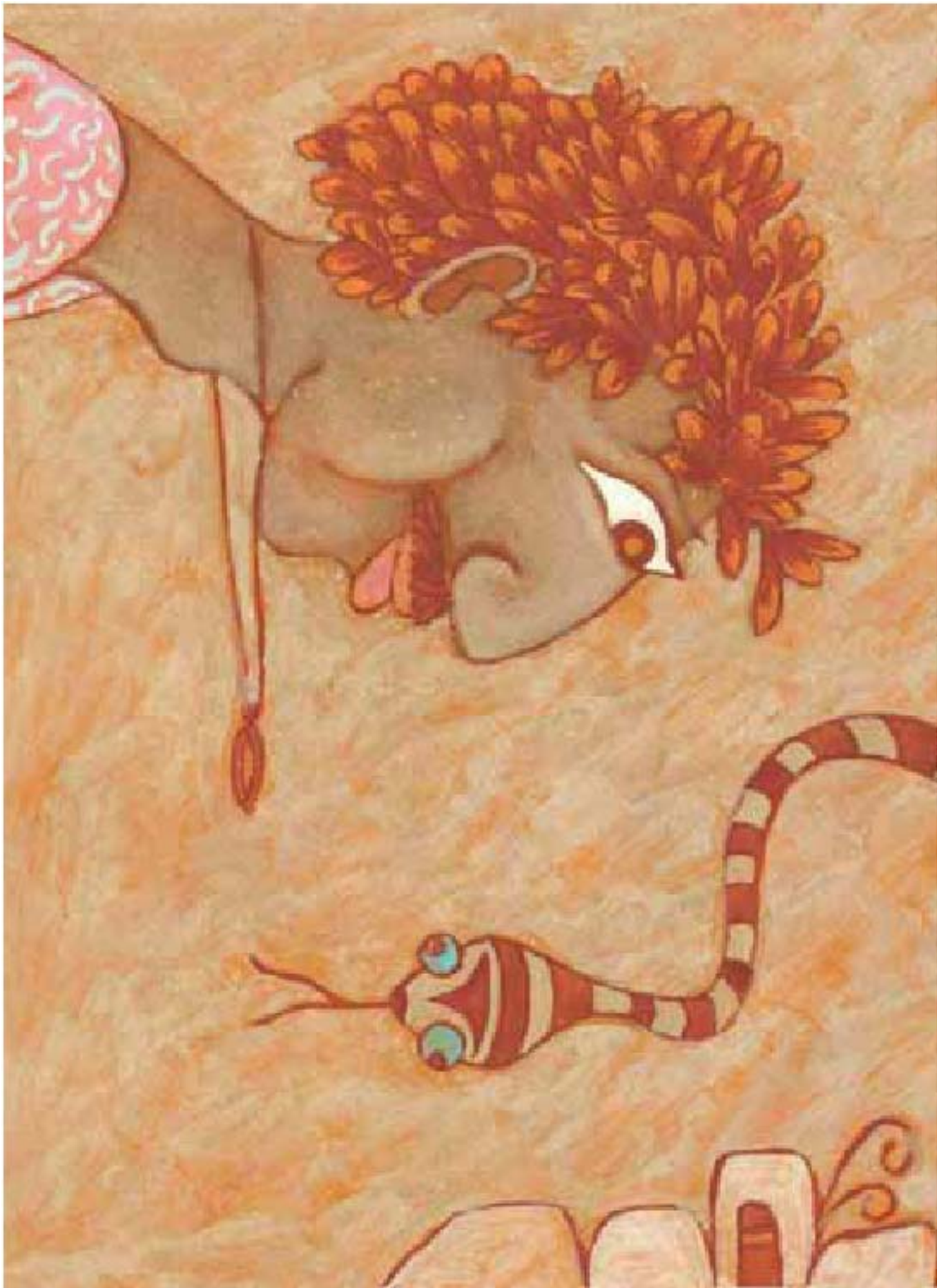
Khode kharar kharar
(It digs *kharar kharar*)

Pleased with his wit, he walked along singing:

Khode kharar kharar
Khode kharar kharar







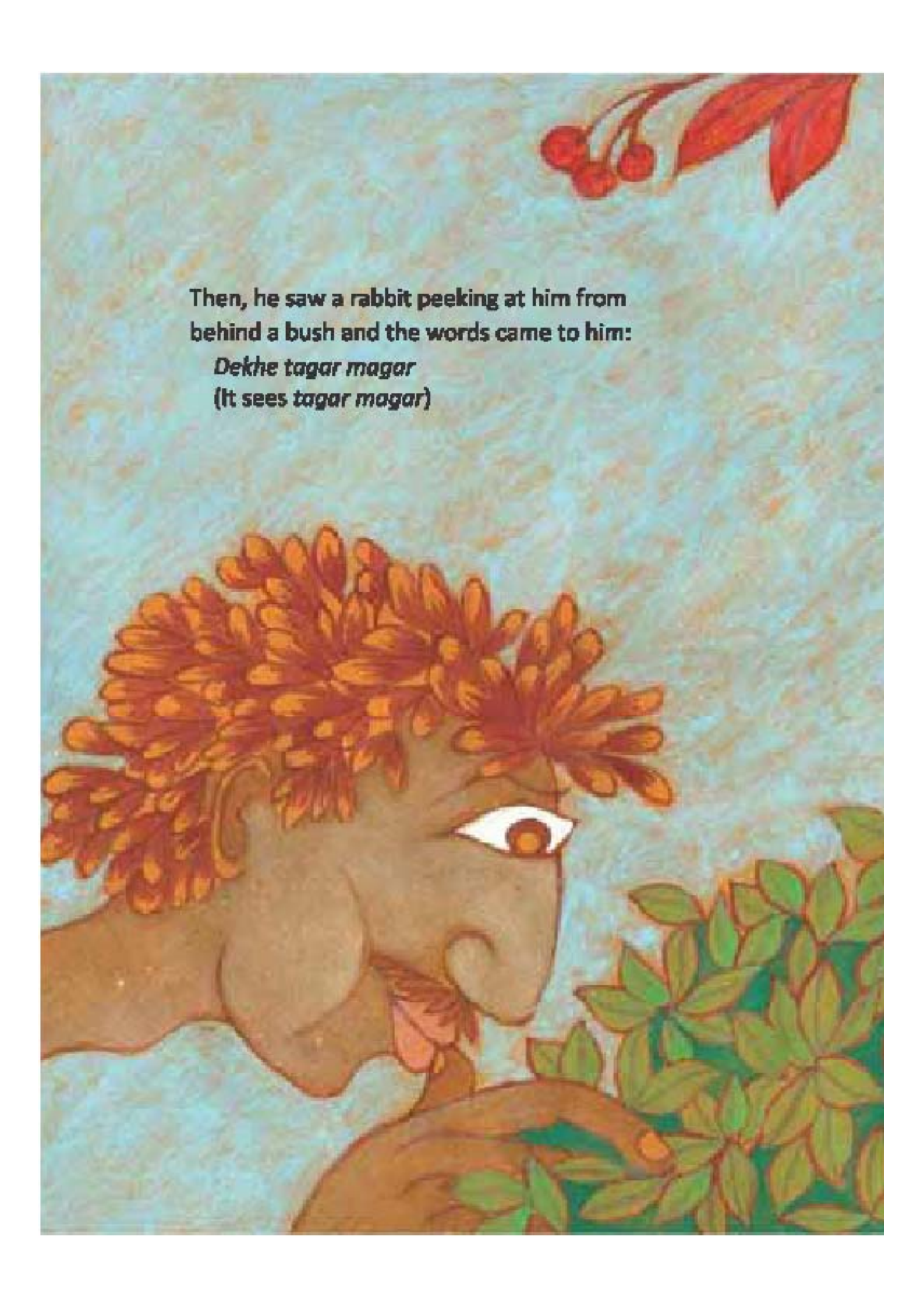
A little later he saw a snake creeping along
and added more words:

Sarke sarar sarar
(It creeps *sarar sarar*)

Proudly, he went along singing:

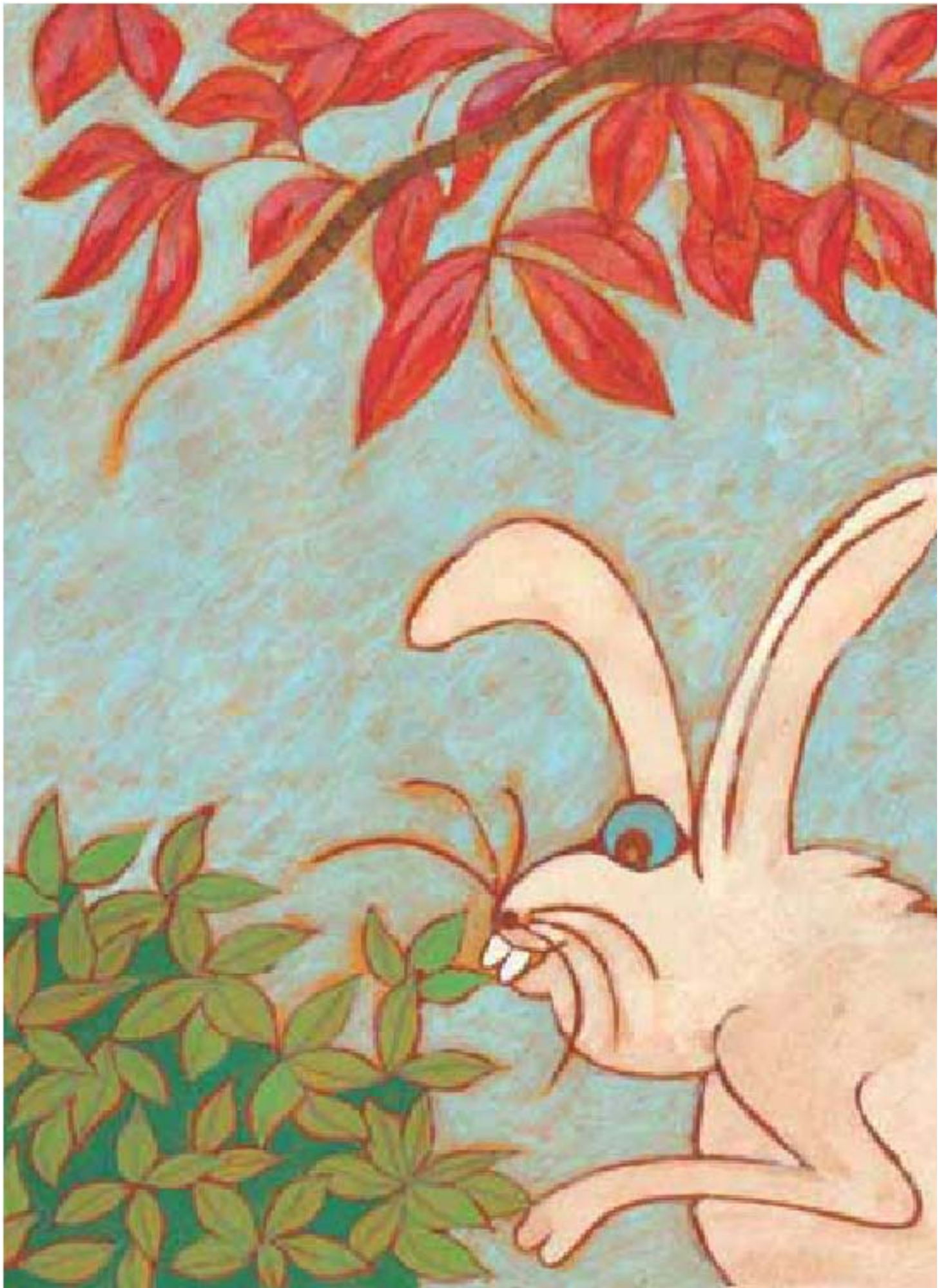
Khode kharar kharar
Sarke sarar sarar

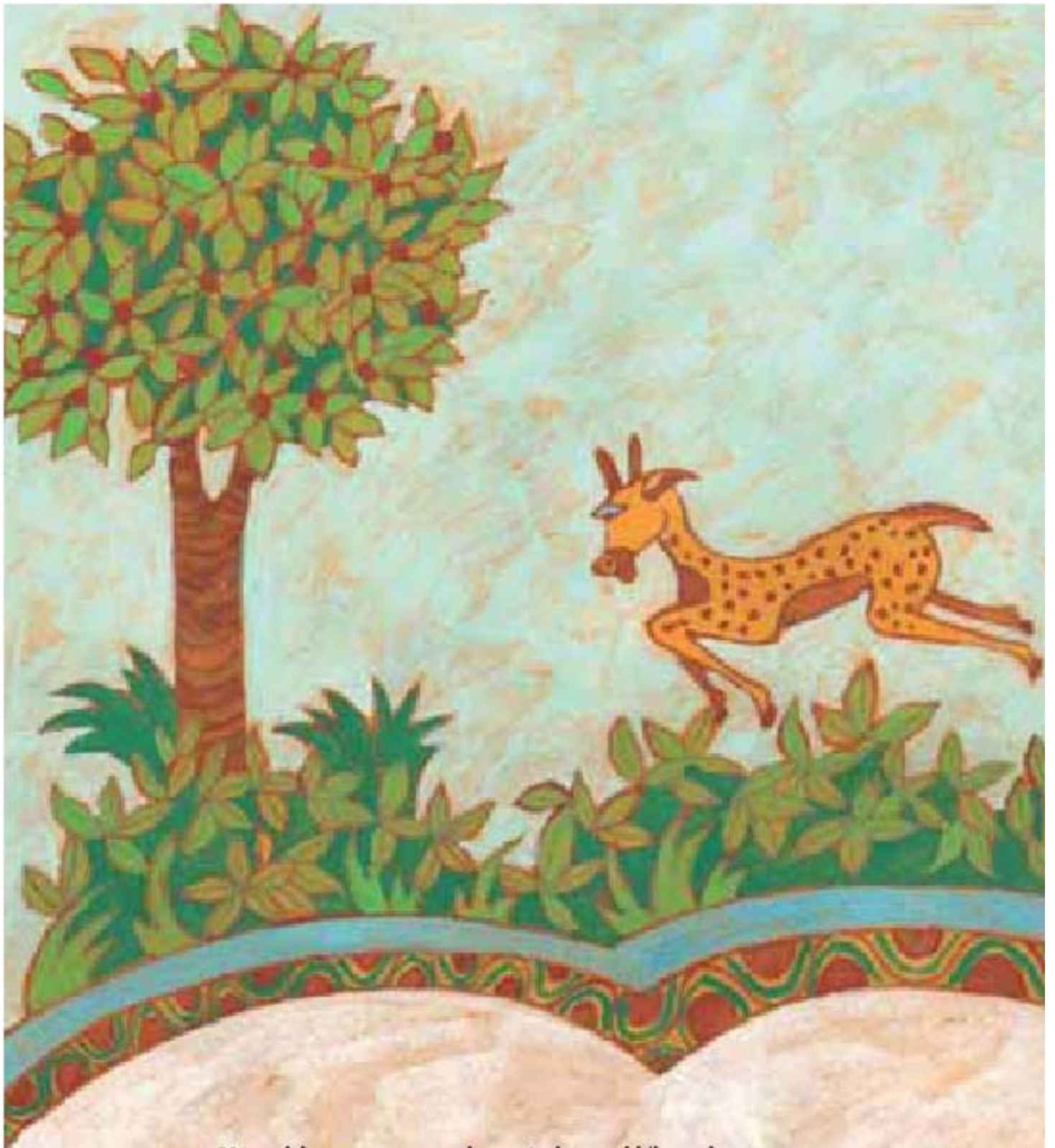


An illustration of a man with a large, vibrant crown of orange and red flowers. He has a large, expressive white eye with a brown pupil and is looking towards the right. In the bottom right corner, there is a bush of green leaves. In the top right corner, there are red leaves and berries. The background is a textured, light blue color.

Then, he saw a rabbit peeking at him from
behind a bush and the words came to him:

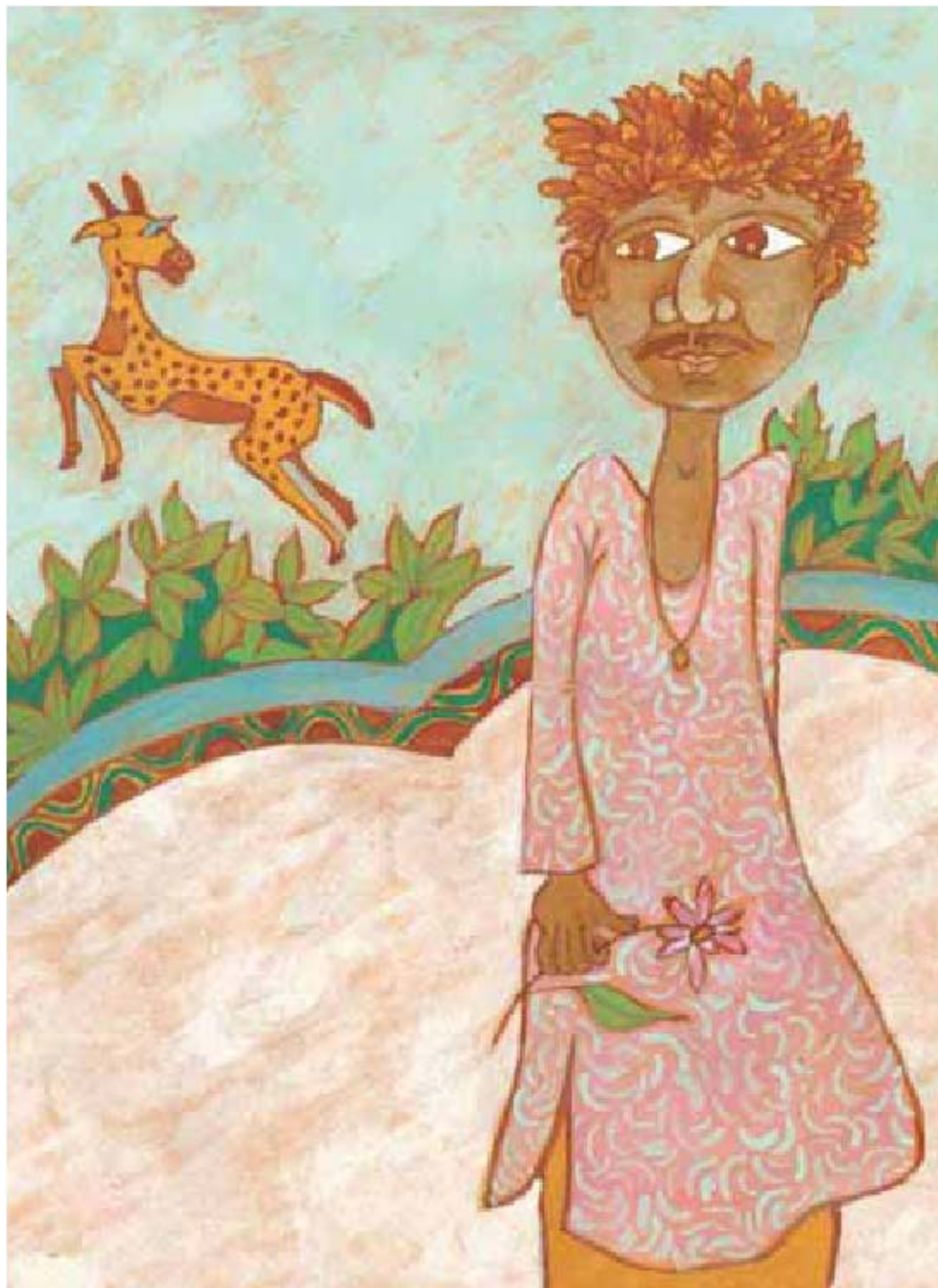
Dekhe tagar magar
(It sees *tagar magar*)





**Now his song was almost done. When he saw
some deer leaping in the grass it struck him:**

Koode dagar dagar
(They jump dagar dagar)





Here was the song, complete at last.
Happily, he walked home singing:

Khode kharar kharar

Sarke sarar sarar

Dekhe tagar magar

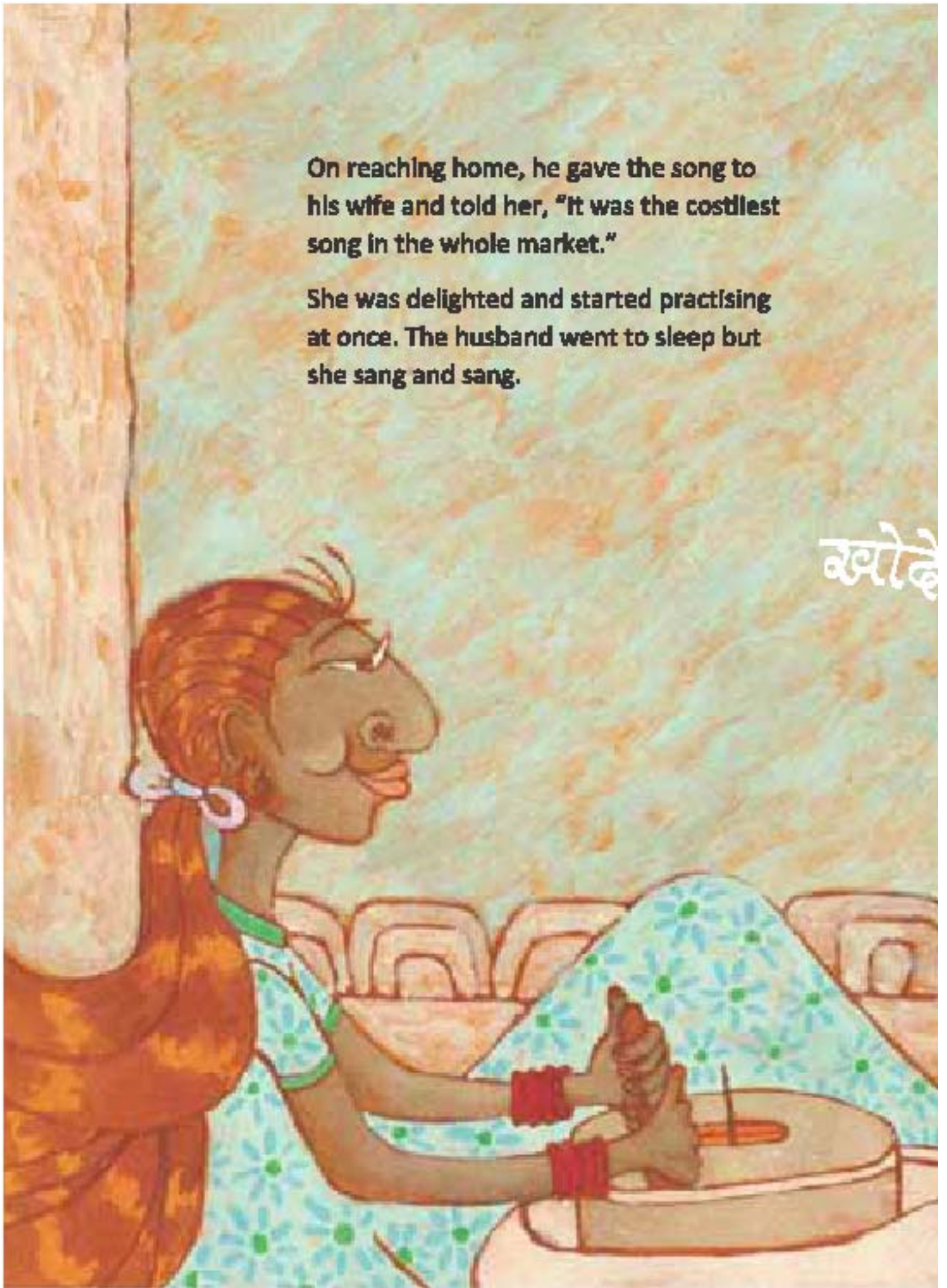
Koode dagar dagar



On reaching home, he gave the song to his wife and told her, "It was the costliest song in the whole market."

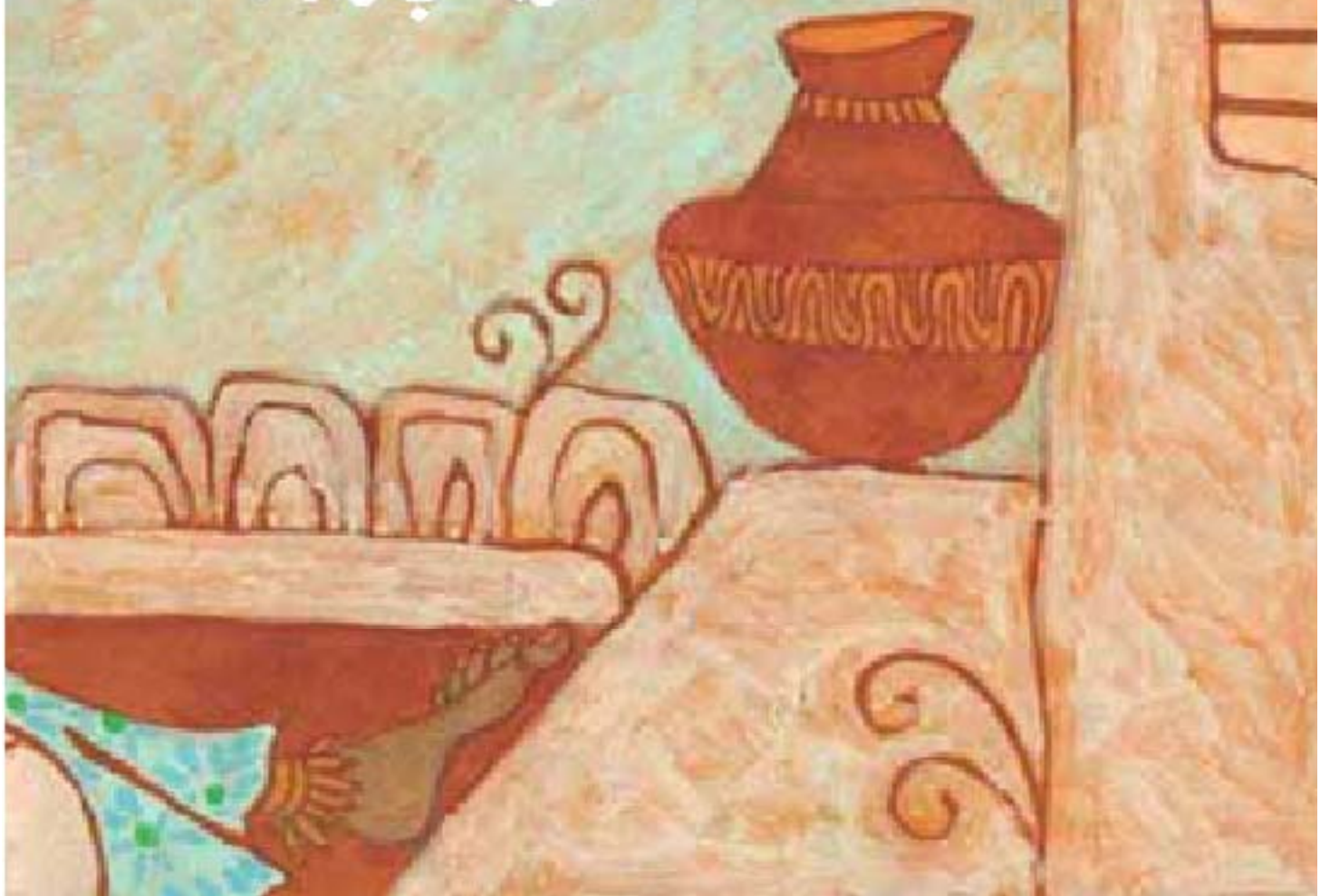
She was delighted and started practising at once. The husband went to sleep but she sang and sang.

बयोद्वे



She was too excited to do any work or even close her eyes. Finally, around midnight, she began to grind corn. As she did, she kept practising the song.

ਕਲਕੜ-ਕਲਕੜ ਕਲੋਢੇ ਕਲਕੜ-ਕਲਕੜ





खोदे खरर ड-खरर ड खोदे

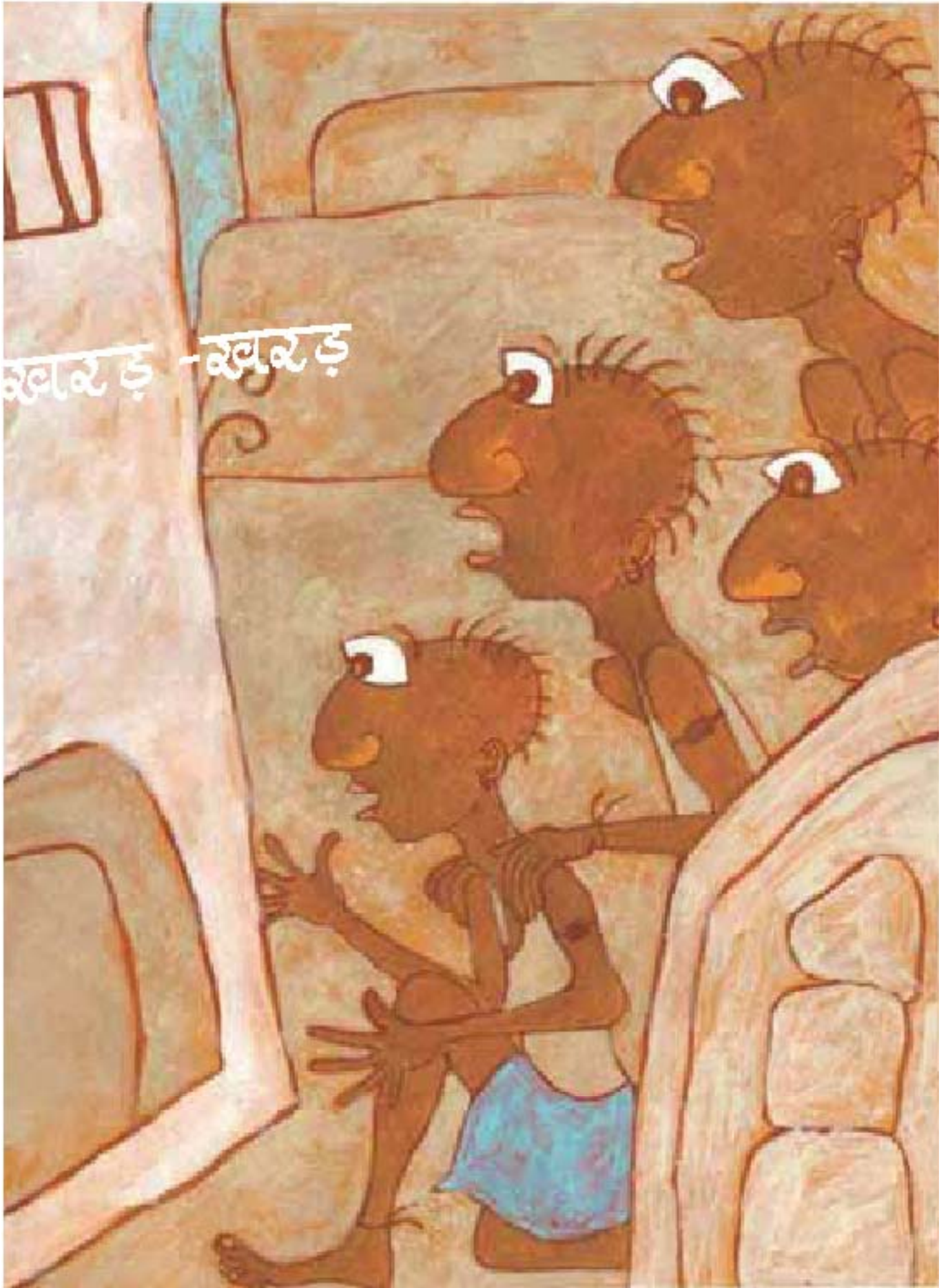
At the same time, four thieves were quietly digging a hole in the wall of the house. They heard her sing:

Khode kharar kharar

Khode kharar kharar

They were startled.

ଝୁଲୁଇ ଡ଼ - ଝୁଲୁଇ ଡ଼



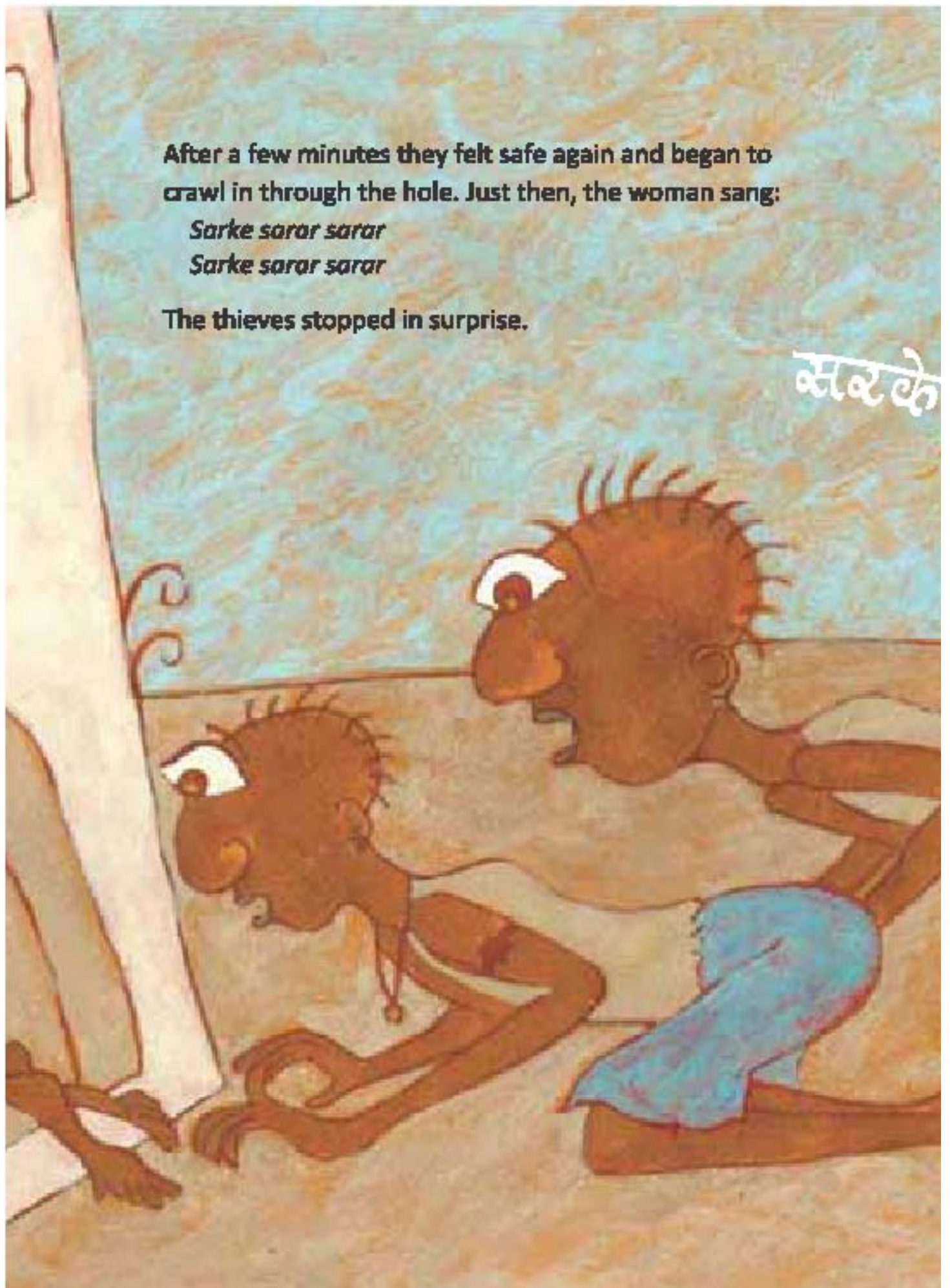
After a few minutes they felt safe again and began to crawl in through the hole. Just then, the woman sang:

Sarke sarar sarar

Sarke sarar sarar

The thieves stopped in surprise.

सर्के



झरझर झरके झर-झर



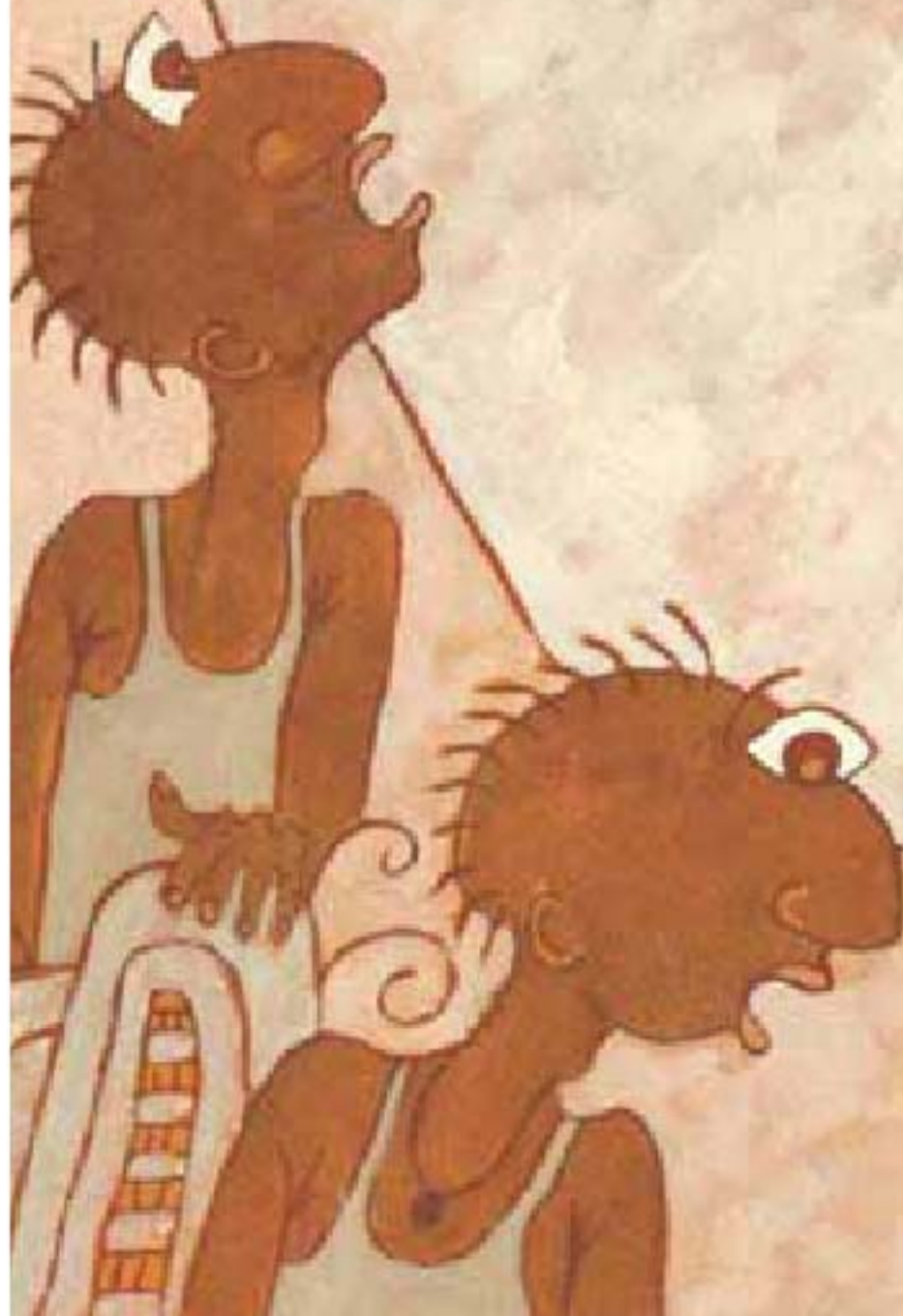
"How did the woman know?" they looked around in alarm. Lost in her singing, the woman went on:

***Dekhe tagar magar
Dekhe tagar magar***

देखे टगर-मगर



देखो टगर-मगर



“Oh no! She must have seen us,” the thieves panicked, “we better quit.”

Frantically, they pushed and jostled. As they jumped away, the woman sang the final line:

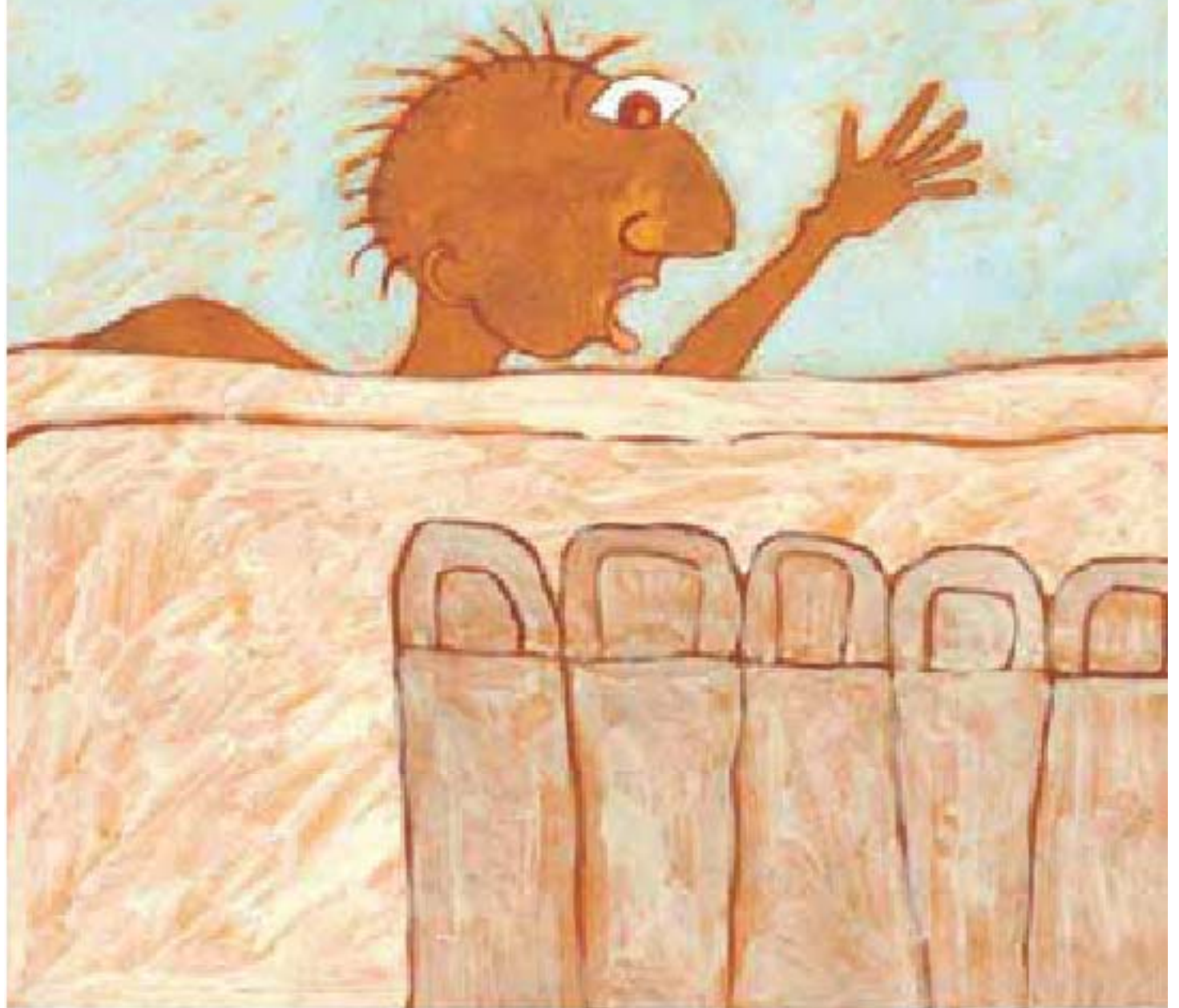
*Koode dagar-dagar
Koode dagar-dagar*

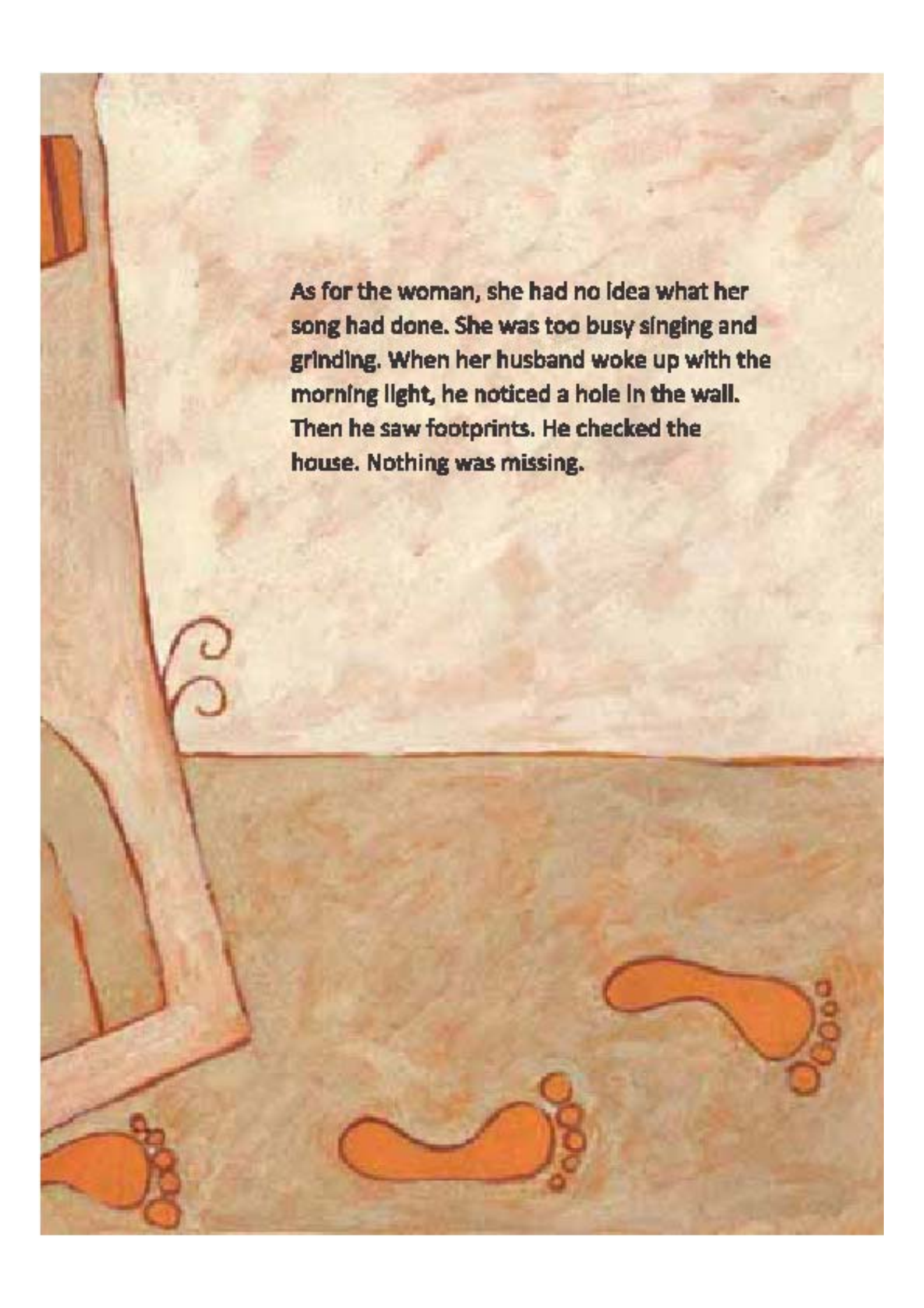
ਕੂਦੇ ਤਗਰ-ਤਗਰ ਕੂਦੇ ਤਗਰ-ਤਗਰ



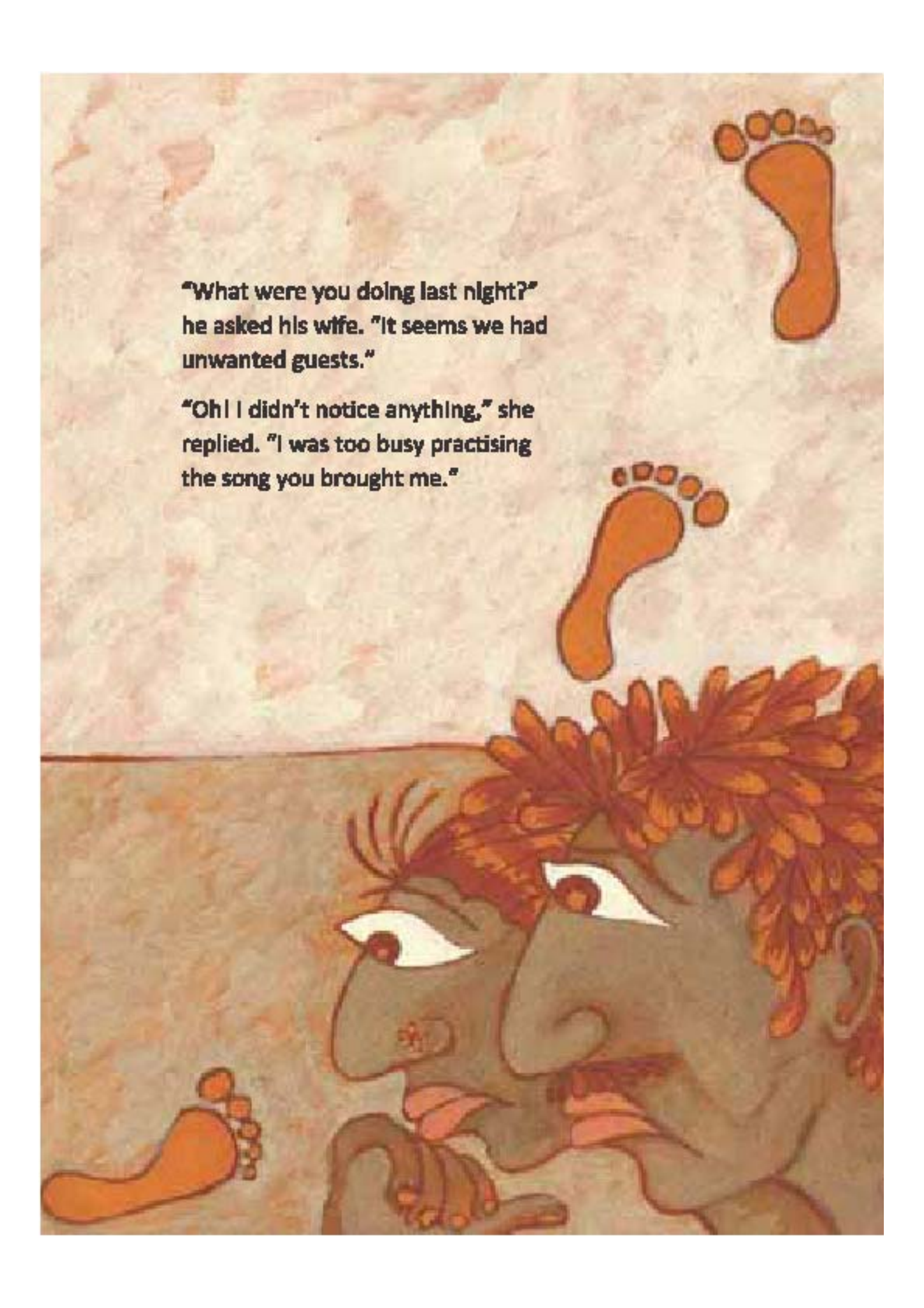
Hearing these words, the thieves ran for their lives.
They vowed never to rob that house again.

झुंके डगल-डगल



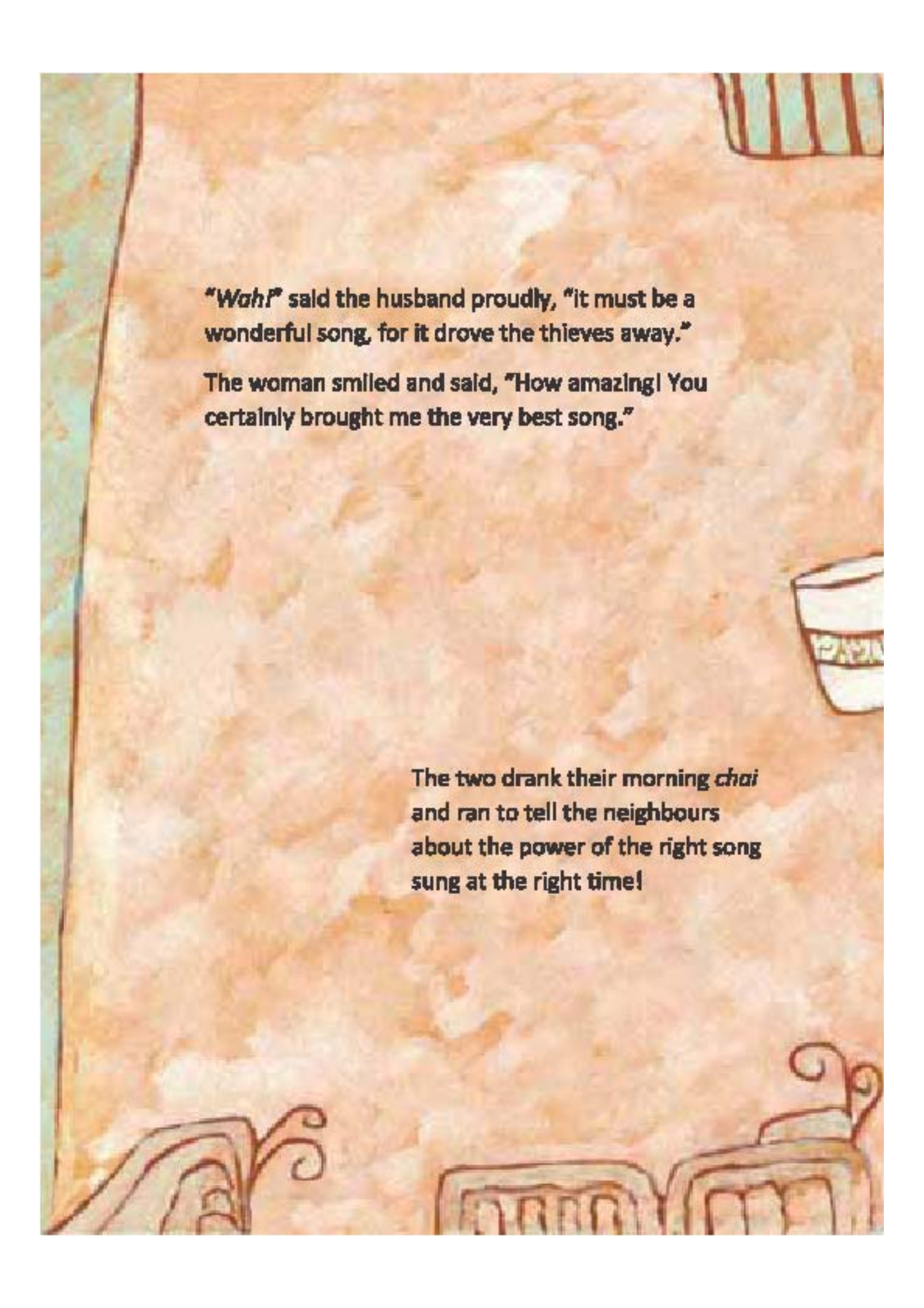


As for the woman, she had no idea what her song had done. She was too busy singing and grinding. When her husband woke up with the morning light, he noticed a hole in the wall. Then he saw footprints. He checked the house. Nothing was missing.



**“What were you doing last night?”
he asked his wife. “It seems we had
unwanted guests.”**

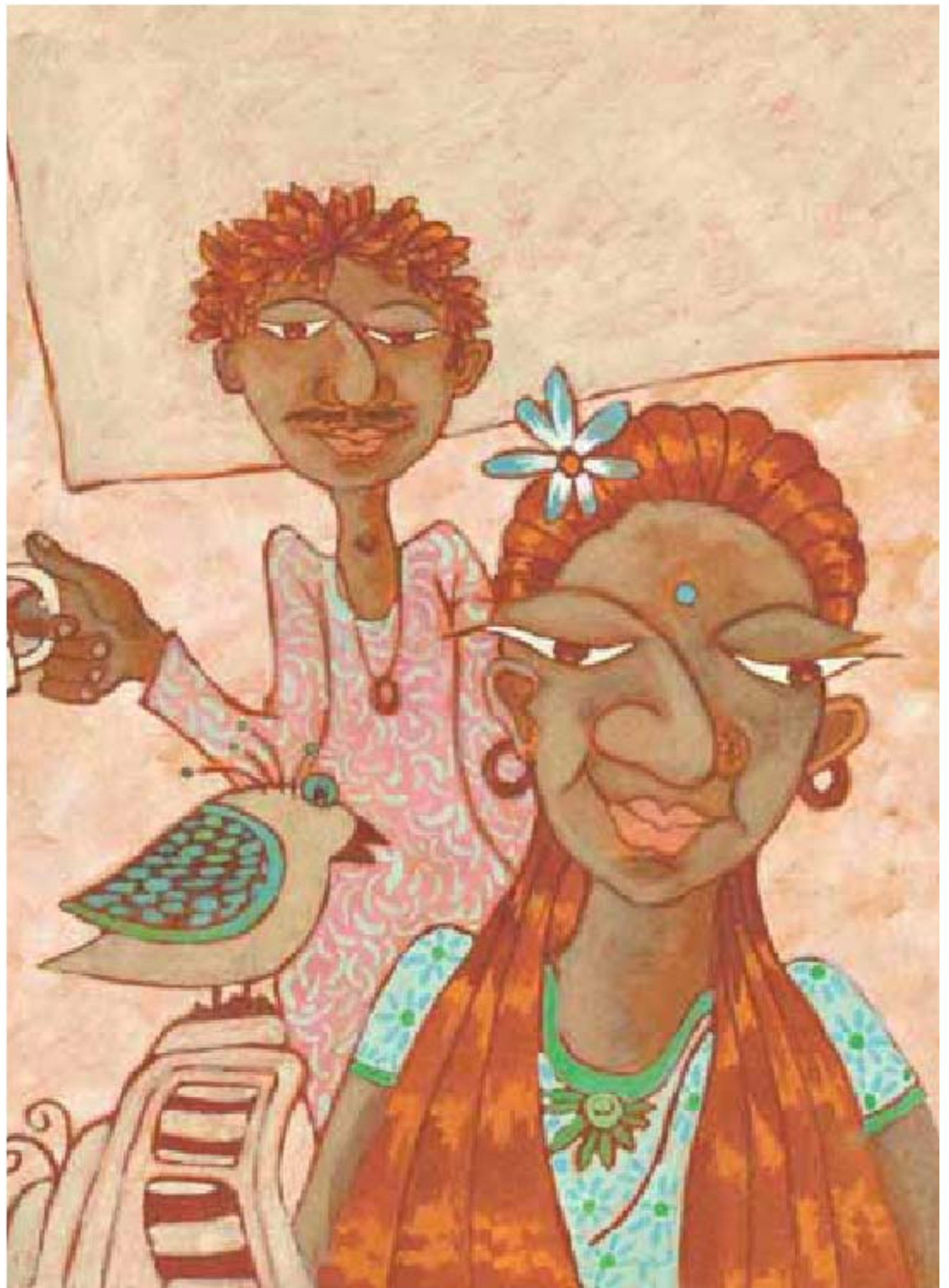
**“Oh! I didn’t notice anything,” she
replied. “I was too busy practising
the song you brought me.”**



"Wah!" said the husband proudly, "it must be a wonderful song, for it drove the thieves away."

The woman smiled and said, "How amazing! You certainly brought me the very best song."

The two drank their morning *chai* and ran to tell the neighbours about the power of the right song sung at the right time!



क्योंके खरड़-खरड़ क्योंके खरड़-खरड़ सब के सब खरड़-खरड़ खरड़

What's going?

a board book for toddlers

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Rendra Thakur is a young artist working with Eklavya and loves to paint for children. His love for nature inspires him to enjoy its beauty through colours.

Eklavya is a non-governmental registered society working in the fields of education and people's science since its inception in 1982. Its main aim is to develop educational practices and materials that are related to a child's environment, and are based on play, activities and creative learning.

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