

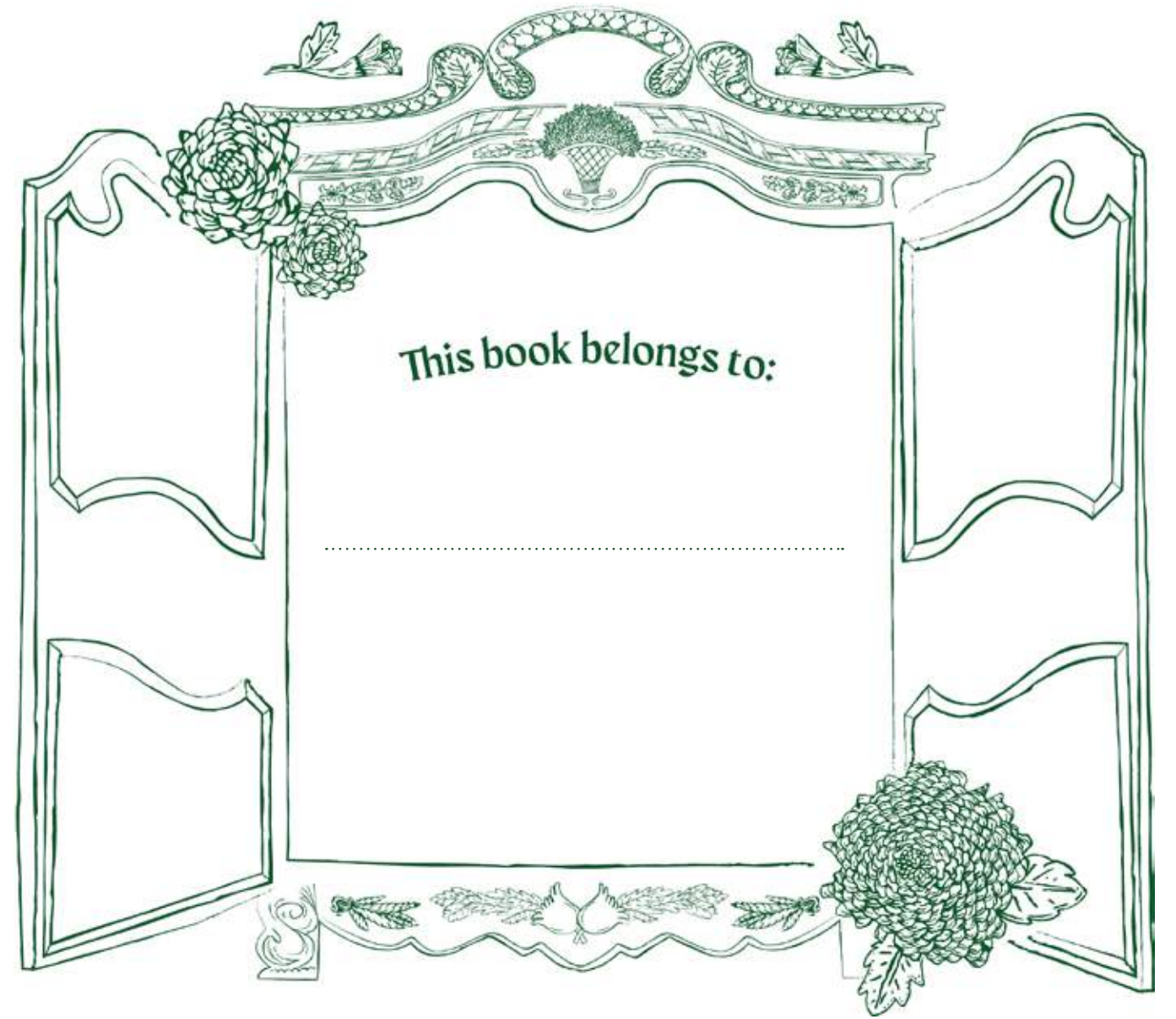
I Like Wearing Rainbows

Winner of
CANVAS'
Romeo Forbes'
Children's
Story Writing
Competition



STORY BY
Agay Llanera

ARTWORKS BY
Lui Manaig





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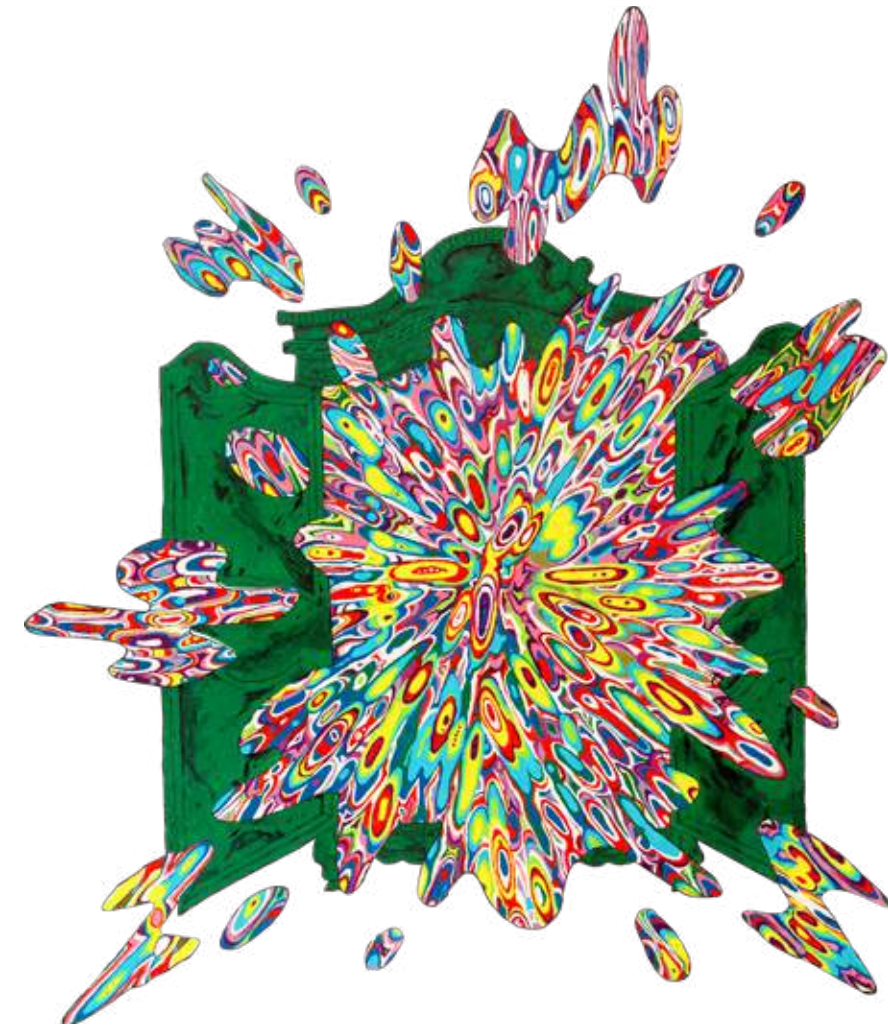
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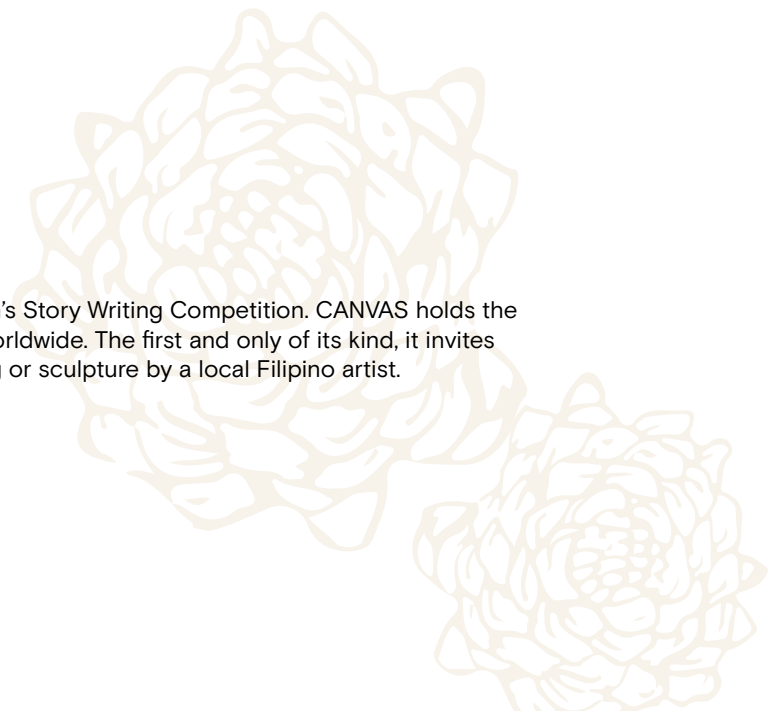
This book is a product of the Romeo Forbes Children's Story Writing Competition. CANVAS holds the competition at least twice a year, open to Filipinos worldwide. The first and only of its kind, it invites writers to pen a children's story inspired by a painting or sculpture by a local Filipino artist.

I Like Wearing Rainbows



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Lola was like the sky, calm and comforting.

When I entered her room in our big, quiet house, she would give me smiles as warm as the sun. On her lap, I liked to climb, receiving a shower of sniff-kisses.



Parang langit si Lola, payapa at mapagkalinga.

Kapag nasa silid niya ako sa malaki at tahimik naming bahay, kasing-init ng araw ang mga ngiti niya. Kapag kumakandong naman ako, mga pasinghot na halik ang handog niya.





In her room, my favorite was her closet, green like grass. When I pulled open its rickety doors, rainbows greeted me, their colors piled high like buildings.

These were her old clothes, Lola told me. Clothes she wore when Tatay was still a little boy.

I'd put my hand into the folded piles and pull out a surprise.

Sa silid ni Lola, paborito ko ang aparador niyang luntian tulad ng damo. Kapag binubuksan ko ang uuga-uuga nitong mga pinto, binabati ako ng tore-toreng bahaghari.

Kuwento ni Lola, mga damit niya ito noong bata pa si Tatay.

Isisiksik ko ang mga kamay ko sa patong-patong na damit at huhugot ako ng sorpresa.

A yellow skirt. A pink top with shimmering beads. A purple dress with ruffles around the neck. One by one, I'd try them on.

Lola would laugh at the way her clothes hung loose around my body, covering my feet and pooling on the floor like melted ice cream.

Dilaw na palda. Rosas na blusa. Lilang bestida na may pakulot. Isa-isa ko silang isinusuot.

Anong lakas ng tawa ni Lola kapag nakikita niyang maluwag ang mga damit niya sa akin—lumalaylay sa katawan ko, lampas-talampakan, umaapaw sa sahig na parang natunaw na sorbetes.



I'd hold up the hems and jump, run, and twirl, watching the skirts swishing around my legs. Lola would clap her hands and sing while I danced.

When I pulled out an orange scarf, I put it over my head so it would flow like a waterfall down to my waist.

Hawak ang laylayan ng bestida, lumulundag, tumatakbo, at nagpapaikot-ikot ako, pinapanood ang pag-alon ng tela. Kasabay ng pagsayaw ko, pumapalakpak naman si Lola.

Nakahugot ako ng kahel na balabal, ipinatong ko ito sa ulo ko para maging talon itong dumadaloy hanggang baywang ko.





Once, I went to the kitchen after playing in Lola's room. I stretched my arms to the sides to show the sleeves of Lola's top, which hung from my arms like giant bells.

Nanay looked up from the pot on the stove. Tatay looked up from his plate. He stared at me, his face frozen like ice.



Minsan, pumunta ako sa kusina pagkatapos kong maglaro sa silid ni Lola. Nag-inat ako para ipakita ang mga manggas ng blusa ni Lola na tila mga dambuhalang kampanang nakasabit sa mga braso ko.

Napahinto si Nanay sa pagluluto. Napatigil si Tatay sa pagkain. Tinitigan ako ni Tatay. Sinlamig ng yelo ang titig niya sa akin.



Tatay's face became as red as my dress.
He took giant steps toward me to yank it off of me.

"Boys don't wear dresses," he thundered before leaving.

Namula si Tatay, singpula ng bestida ko. Lumapit siya at hinila ito.

"Hindi nagbebestida ang mga lalaki,"
ang dumadagundong niyang sigaw bago umalis.

I burst into tears and Nanay hurried over to scoop me up.

Since that day, I only wore the dresses in Lola's room.

Napaiyak ako. Dali-dali naman akong niyakap ni Nanay.

Simula noon, sa silid ni Lola na lang ako nagbebestida.





One day, Lola got sick—with a fever that kept her bundled in a blanket, and a cough I could hear through the wall.

Nanay told me to let Lola rest. I waited patiently for the day I could play in her room again.

But Lola didn't get better.



Isang araw, nagkalagnat si Lola—lagnat na ikinulong siyang nakabalot sa kumot. Ang mga ubo niya, tumatagos sa dingding.

Sabi ni Nanay, hayaan ko munang magpahinga si Lola. Kaya matiyaga akong naghintay sa araw na makapaglalaro uli ako sa silid niya.

Pero hindi gumaling si Lola.



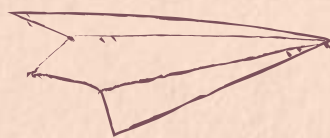
After Tatay brought her to the hospital,
I never saw her again.

Lola had gone to heaven, Nanay said. Heaven?
I gazed at the wide blue sky, but it didn't look
as comforting as it did when Lola was still here
beside me.

*Pagkatapos nilang pumunta ni Tatay sa ospital,
hindi ko na siya nakita.*

*Nagpunta raw sa langit si Lola, sabi ni Nanay.
Langit? Tunitig ako sa malawak at asul na langit
pero wala na ang kalingang dala nito noong
narito pa si Lola sa tabi ko.*





Our big, quiet house felt even bigger and quieter.

I watched cartoons until I could see them in my sleep. I played in the garden until the first star appeared in the sky. The days dragged on and on like the back of Lola's old wedding dress mopping the floor clean but empty.

Ang malaki at tahimik naming bahay, mas lumaki at tumahimik pa.

Nanood ako ng cartoons hanggang sa mapanaginipan ko ang mga ito. Naglaro ako sa hardin hanggang lumabas ang unang bituin. Tulad ng paglampaso ng pangkasal na bestida ni Lola sa sahig, gapang-pagong ang mga araw na walang laman.



One day, when the quiet was too much to bear, I went into Lola's room.

Everything looked the same. Her bed, pushed against the wall. Her table, messy with hairpins and pencils and papers and bottles. Her tall, green closet standing as still as a soldier.

Isang araw, sa gitna ng mabigat na katahimikan, pumasok ako sa silid ni Lola.

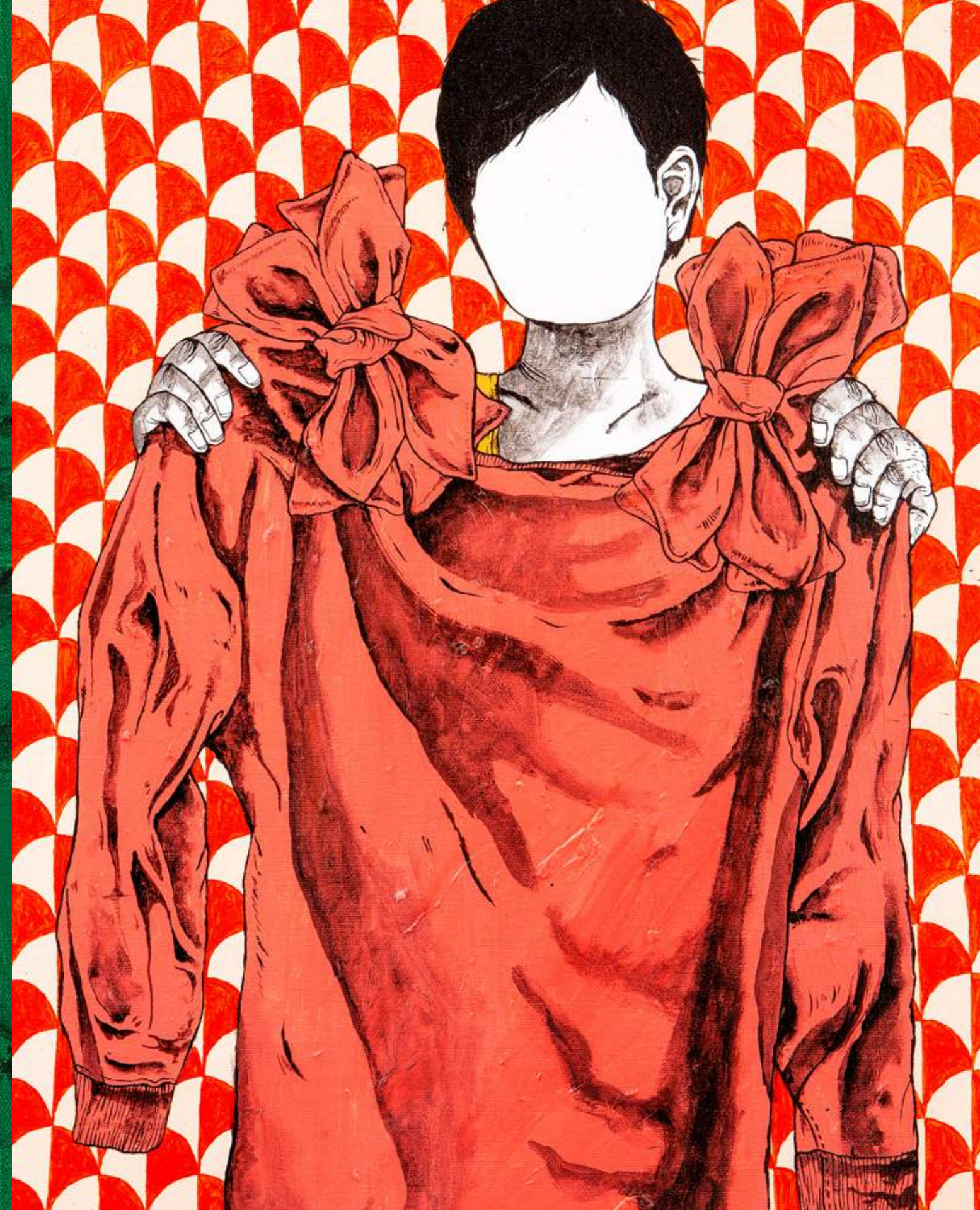
Ganoon pa rin ang lahat. Ang kama niya, nasa tabi pa rin ng dingding. Ang mesa, puno pa rin ng mga pang-ipit at lapis at papel at bote. At ang matangkad na luntiang aparador, buong tikas pa ring nakatayo.



I crept toward her closet and opened its rickety doors. The rainbows greeted me, their colors piled high like buildings. I put my hand into a folded pile and pulled out a peach top with big bows on the sleeves.



Dahan-dahan kong nilapitan ang aparador niya. Binuksan ko ang uuga-ugang mga pinto. Sinalubong uli ako ng tore-toreng bahaghari. Siniksik ko ang kamay ko sa nakatuping mga damit at nakakuha ng blusang kulay makopa na may mga laso sa manggas.





The top was loose around my body, but it was the right length for a dress, swishing around my legs as I skipped and ran and danced.

I grabbed the pink scarf draped across Lola's chair and placed it on my head, the ends coming down to my waist like a waterfall.



Maluwag ang blusa sa akin, pero sapat ang haba nito para maging bestida. Habang lumulundag, tumatakbo, at sumasayaw ako, wumawagayway sa hangin ang laylayan nito.

Kinuha ko ang rosas na balabal sa upuan ni Lola. Ipinatong ko ito sa ulo at pinaagos hanggang baywang.

In my head, I saw Lola clapping her hands and singing.

I twirled faster and faster until the room was a dizzying spin of colors making me laugh.

Pakiramdam ko, nakita ko uli si Lola na kumakanta at pumapalakpak.

Umikot ako. Mabilis na mabilis na pag-ikot. Hanggang umikot na rin pati ang paningin ko sa mga kulay ng silid. Napatawa ako.

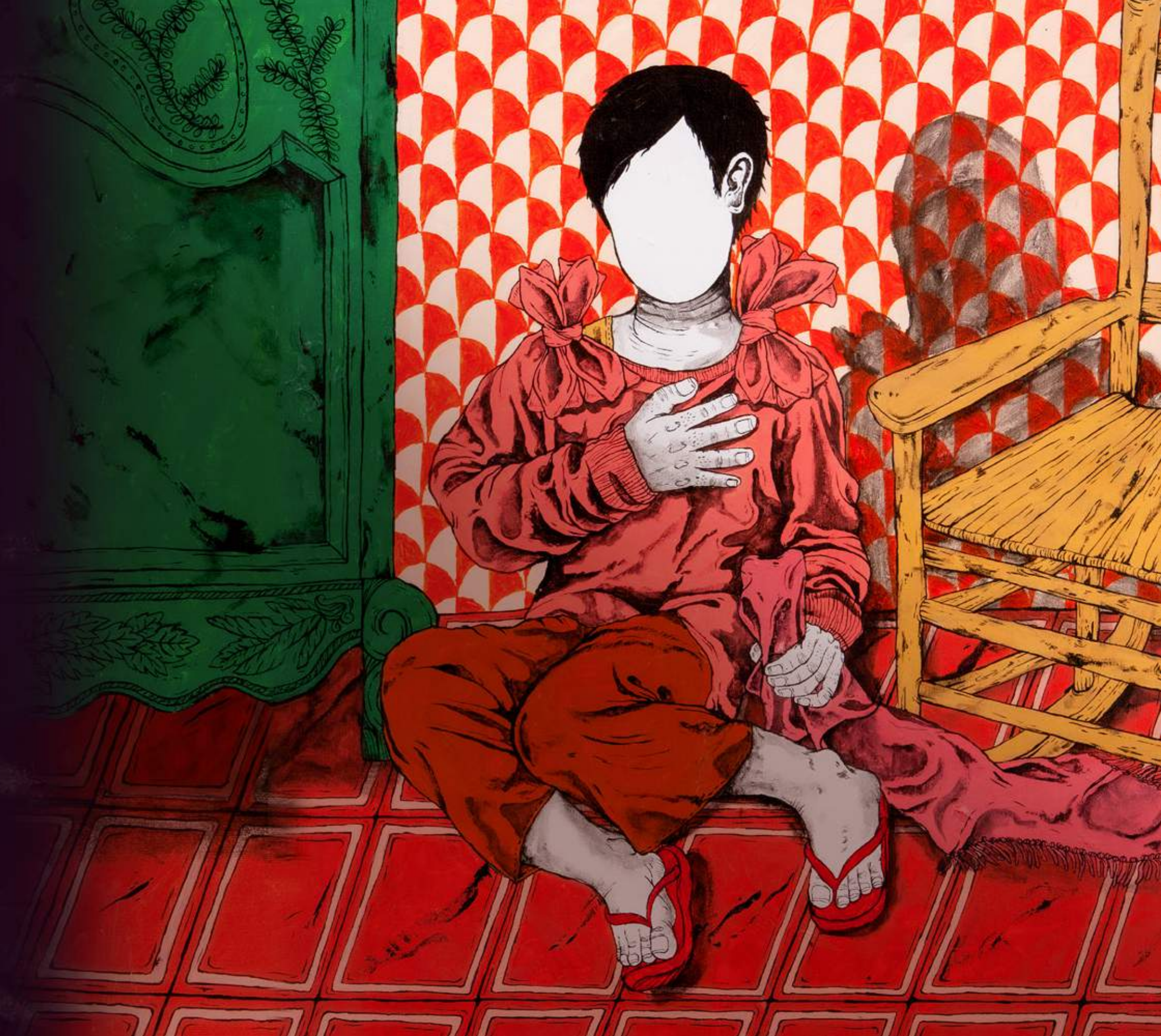


Lola's door creaked open and I stopped laughing, stumbling to the floor.

There in the doorway stood Tatay, his face frozen like ice. I stood up, yanking the scarf off of my head. Tatay stared at me, and I stared back, my heart feeling like a hammer against my chest.

Umingit ang pinto. Napatigil akong tumawa at napaupo sa sahi.

Nasa pintuan si Tatay. Kasinglamig uli ng yelo ang titig niya. Tumayo ako, dali-daling tinanggal ang balabal habang kumakabog ang dibdib ko.





I held my breath as Tatay took giant steps toward me. When he was right in front of me, he kneeled and picked up the scarf.



Pigil na pigil ang paghinga ko habang papalapit siya sa akin. Lumuhod siya sa harap ko at pinulot ang nahulog na balabal.

Gently, as if he were carrying a baby, Tatay placed it back on my head. Even more gently, he smoothed the scarf down to my waist.

“Nanay made meryenda,” he said softly.

“Are you hungry?”

He didn’t look or sound angry. But he looked sad. I nodded as I touched his face, my thumb catching a drop of rain from the corner of his eye.

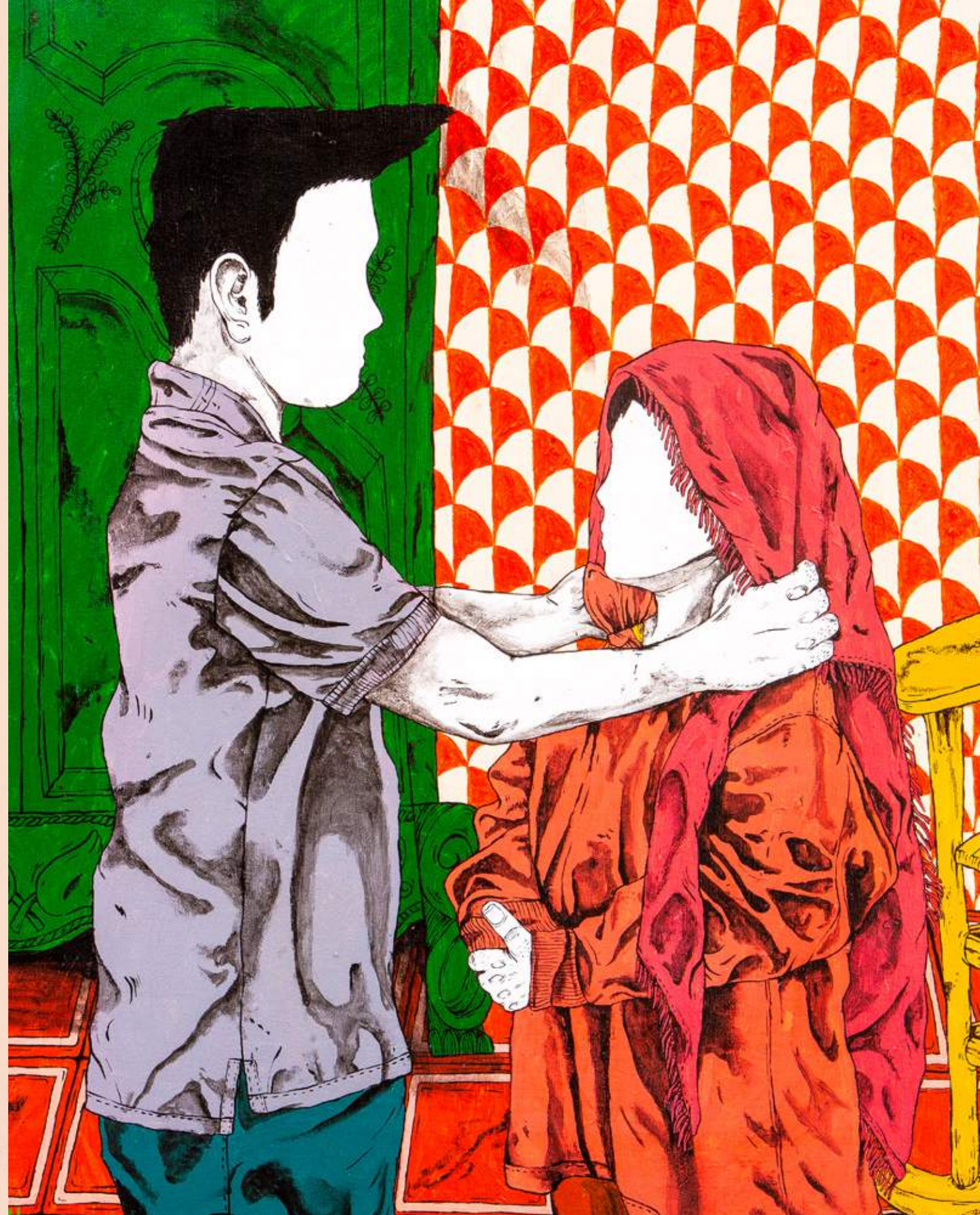


Ingat na ingat, parang sanggol ang hawak, ibinalik niya sa ulo ko ang balabal. Mas maingat pa, itinuwid niya ang lapat nito hanggang baywang ko.

“Nagluto si Nanay ng meryenda,” ibinulong niya.

“Gutom ka ba?”

Walang galit sa tono niya, pero may lungkot sa mukha. Tumango ako. Hinaplos ko ang pisngi niya at sinalo ang namumuong patak ng luha sa kaniyang mata.





He stood up and took my hand.

We left the room, the peach dress brushing against my legs, its bows perched like birds on my shoulders.



Tumayo siya at inabot ang kamay ko.

Lumabas kami ng silid habang wumawagayway ang suot kong bestidang kulay makopa. Ang mga laso nito, parang mga ibong nakadapo sa aking balikat.

My chest felt like it was filled with rainbows from Lola's closet.

Upside-down rainbows, all curved up like a hundred tiny smiles as comforting as the sky, as warm as the sun.

Punong-puno ang puso ko ng mga bahaghari mula sa aparador ni Lola.

Mga baligtad at nakangiting bahaghari. Daan-daang mumunting ngiti. Kasingpayapa ng langit, kasing-init ng araw.



About the Author

Agay Llanera is a freelance writer for television and the web. She enjoys writing romance, and stories for children and young adults.



About the Artist

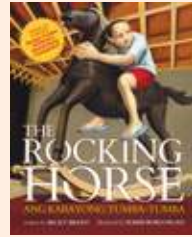


Lui Manaig (b. 1992) is a contemporary visual artist. He graduated with a degree in Fine Arts major in Advertising from the Technological University of the Philippines - Manila. Manaig shares a bit of himself in his works. His visual investigations are autobiographical and mirror social concerns—from gender identity, notions of diversity and equality, to acts of self-representation. His works are unique in the way they show movement, placement, color blocking, and distinct patterns. In 2012 and 2015, he became a semi-finalist for Metrobank Art & Design Excellence (MADE). He also participated in ArtFair Tokyo and ArtFair Philippines as an exhibiting artist for Nunu Fine Arts, Taiwan.

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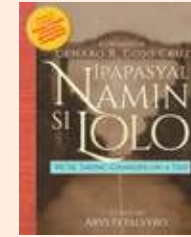
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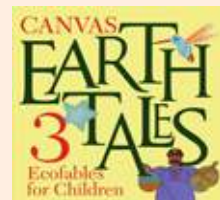
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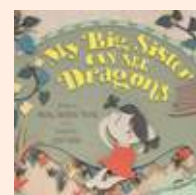
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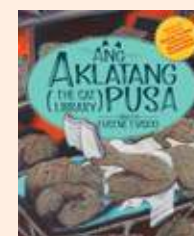
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