

The TRIANGLE
MAN and the
FLIGHTLESS
DIWATA

Story by
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Art by
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The day the Triangle Man came was the day that Amparo finally found reprieve. It hadn't been easy as the only diwata unable to fly; it had been worse looking so different from the fairies that darted and whizzed (and fluttered and buzzed) in an explosion of color, along with the soft wisps, sparkling fireflies and shimmering dust flakes.





But when the Spectrum Mirror burped and expelled the 'Triangle Man,' Amparo was suddenly no longer the strangest of all.

"A little strange, a little odd
Isn't he a little flawed?
A triangle head and no wings,
Isn't he an ugly beast?"

The diwatas repeated their cruel rhyme again and again until nightfall. When they had all left, Amparo gathered her courage to approach the stranger.

"Are you all right?" she asked from a distance.

"Leave me alone," the Triangle Man said, sounding very much like a boy.



"I know how it feels," Amparo said. "Just keep quiet and eventually, they'll get bored."


"Will they?"

Amparo didn't have the heart to lie. The only time they had left her alone had been when the Triangle Man had come. So instead, she sadly smiled, then left.

The next day, the diwatas were back taunting him.

"A little strange, a little odd,
Isn't he a little flawed?
Squinty eyes, and big fat feet,
He's the ugliest thing you'll ever meet."





Later that evening, Amparo, feeling a little braver (and a little sadder for him), said, "They used to say something similar to me." Mimicking the diwatas' high-pitched voices, she continued,

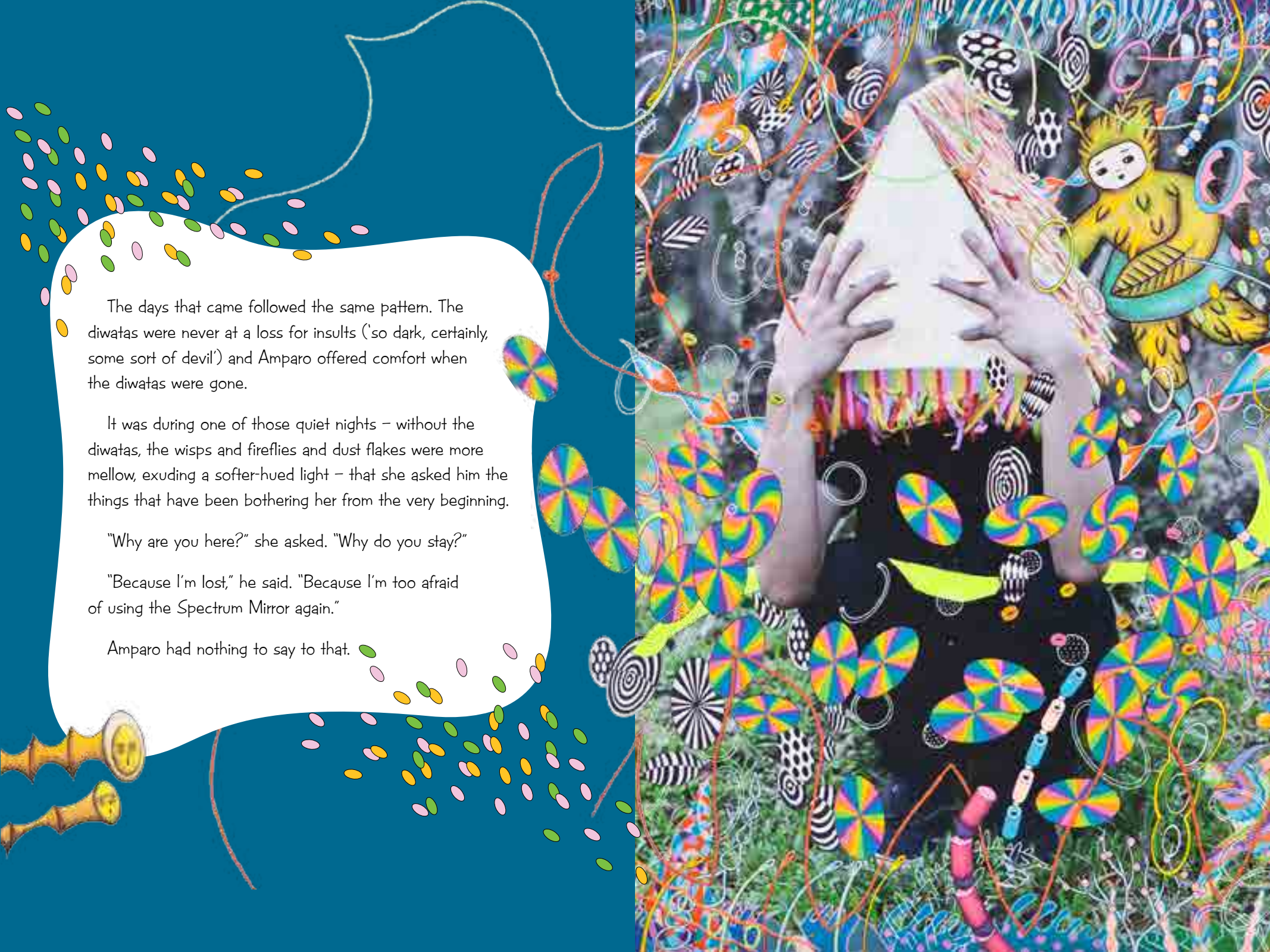
"Clumsy and tall and fat,
A funny nose, the body of a rat.
How can she fly if she's that big?
How can she fly if she eats like a pig?"



For a few moments, Triangle Man was quiet. And then, he said, "I don't think you're fat."

"And I don't think you're odd," she replied.

And then they both smiled. Amparo felt less alone.



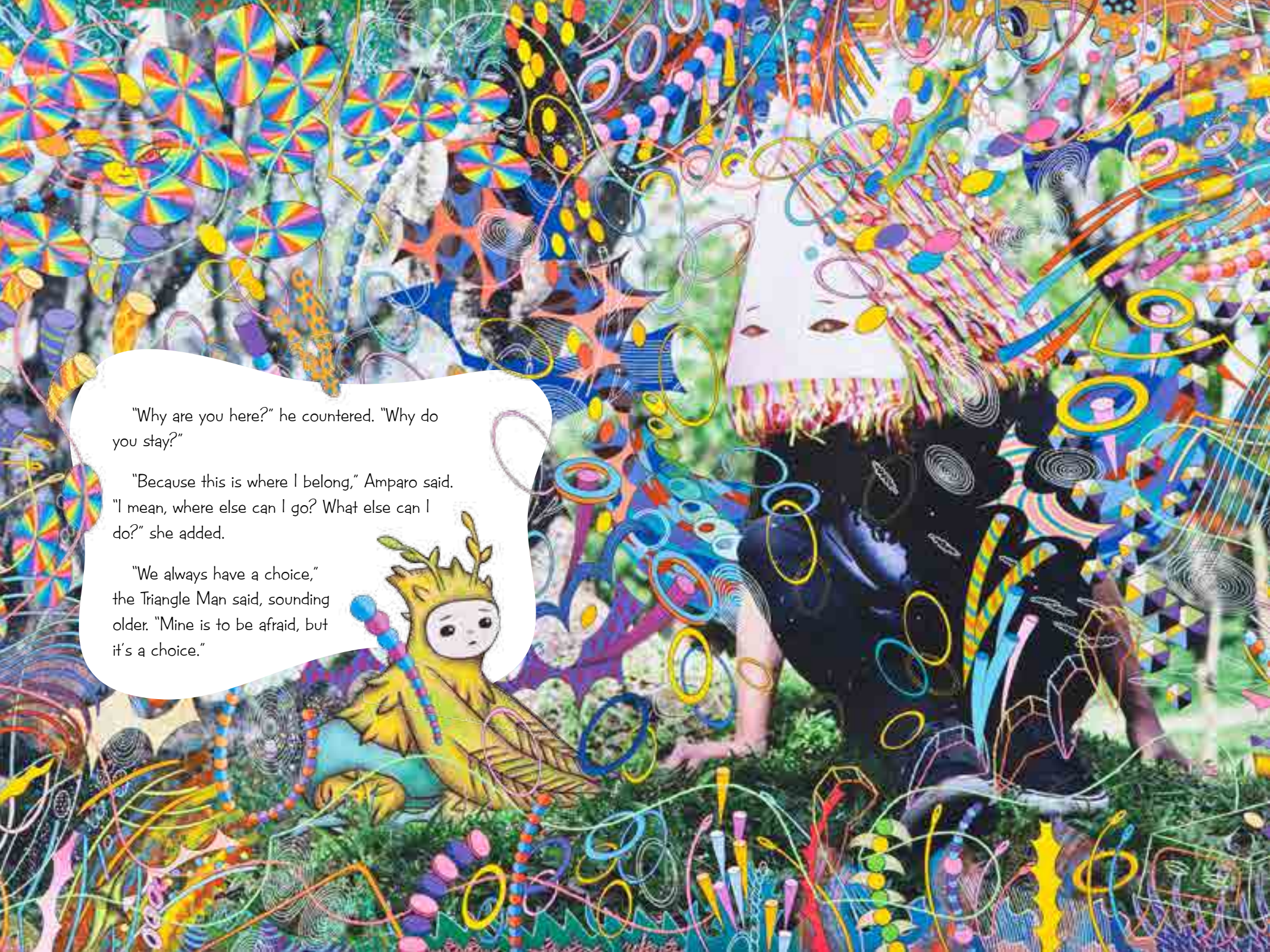
The days that came followed the same pattern. The diwatas were never at a loss for insults ('so dark, certainly, some sort of devil') and Amparo offered comfort when the diwatas were gone.

It was during one of those quiet nights – without the diwatas, the wisps and fireflies and dust flakes were more mellow, exuding a softer-hued light – that she asked him the things that have been bothering her from the very beginning.

"Why are you here?" she asked. "Why do you stay?"

"Because I'm lost," he said. "Because I'm too afraid of using the Spectrum Mirror again."


Amparo had nothing to say to that.



"Why are you here?" he countered. "Why do you stay?"

"Because this is where I belong," Amparo said. "I mean, where else can I go? What else can I do?" she added.

"We always have a choice," the Triangle Man said, sounding older. "Mine is to be afraid, but it's a choice."



In the following weeks, the diwatas became increasingly brazen. They began taking dust flakes and throwing them at Triangle Man. And then, they started throwing bigger things, like petals and leaves. It wasn't until they began throwing colorful sap from buckets that the Triangle Man finally surrendered to his tears.

"Please, stop! It hurts!"
the Triangle man said, his face splotchy with colors and tears. **"Please stop!"**



But the diwatas were jubilant. This was the first time they were able to make him cry. They called on their friends, and their friends' friends, and when they had exhausted everyone they knew, they called on Amparo.

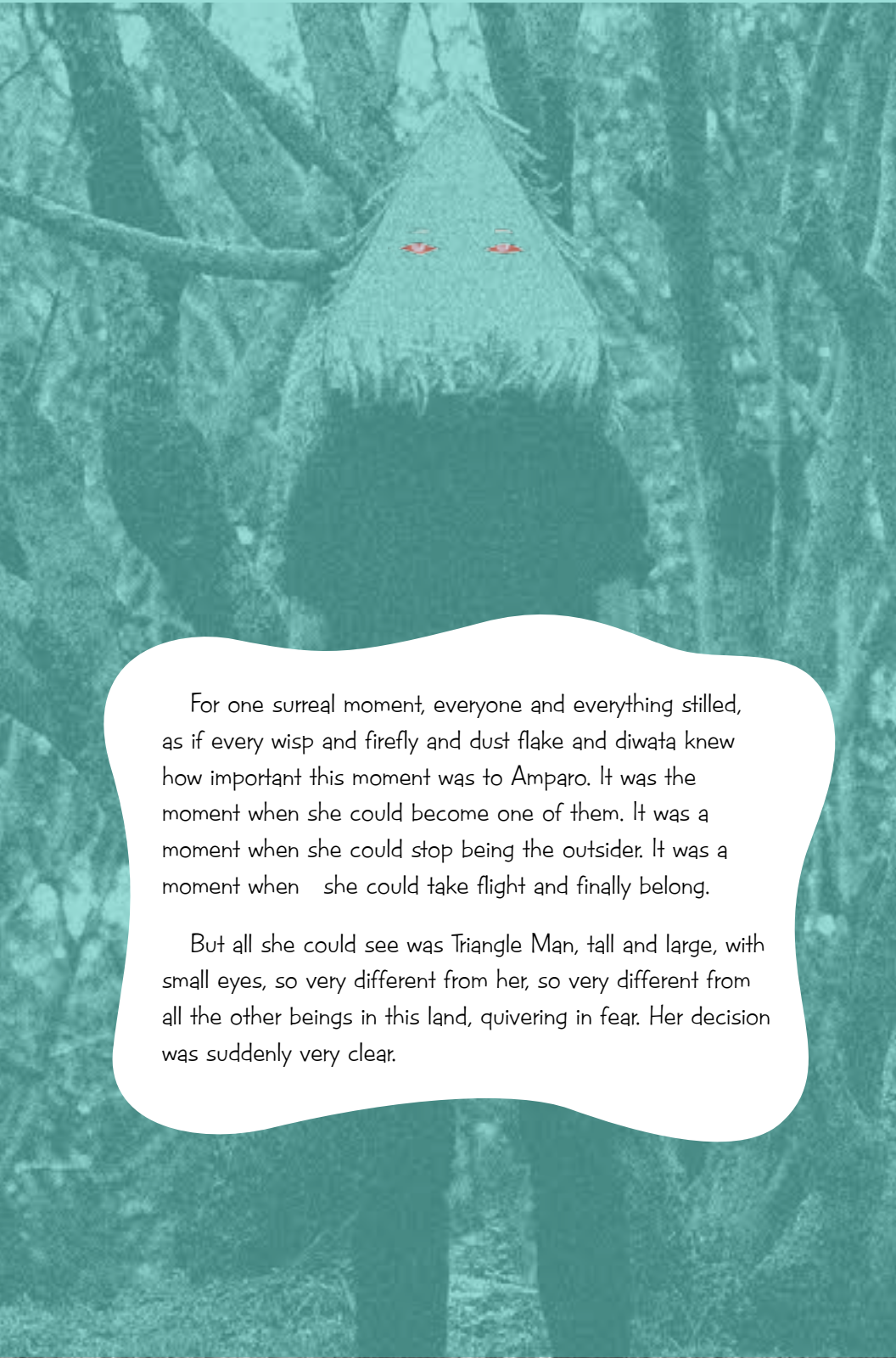
"Clumsy and tall and fat,
A funny nose, the body of a rat.
Come and join us, make him weep,
Banish this beast, make him leave."





A bucket of sickly yellow sap was thrust into Amparo's hands. Pushed and nudged (and urged and pulled), the diwatas brought her nearer, and nearer, and nearer until she was right in front of the Triangle Man.

He didn't stop crying. He didn't ask her to stop. Instead, he simply put his hands in front of his face.




For one surreal moment, everyone and everything stilled, as if every wisp and firefly and dust flake and diwata knew how important this moment was to Amparo. It was the moment when she could become one of them. It was a moment when she could stop being the outsider. It was a moment when she could take flight and finally belong.

But all she could see was Triangle Man, tall and large, with small eyes, so very different from her, so very different from all the other beings in this land, quivering in fear. Her decision was suddenly very clear.





"No," Amparo said as she turned to face the crowd of fairies. "He's different, yes, but he's not odd. He's taller, yes, but he's not a beast. He has a triangle for a head, yes, but he's not ugly." She dropped the bucket. "I'm different, too. And maybe that's not a bad thing."



Everything started moving again. The diwatas, one, then two, then many more began throwing buckets of colorful sap in Amparo and the Triangle Man's direction. Amparo didn't know who started it, but once it began, it could not be stopped. Everyone was doing what they thought everyone else was doing. Her words didn't matter.



Amparo turned to Triangle Man, who was still crying. He was still trying to crumple inward to make himself smaller.

"Let's go," she said as she pointed to the Spectrum Mirror. "Let's leave this place."

"But we don't have any place to go to!"

"Someone told me everything is a choice. Let's make ours. Let's choose to be brave. Let's do this together." Amparo held out her hand.



Trembling, Triangle Man took it.
Together, splattered with color, they
walked into the mirror to find a place
where they could truly belong.



About this Book

CANVAS' flagship activity, the Romeo Forbes Children's Story Writing Competition, as far as we know, is the only one of its kind anywhere on the planet.

We commission an artist to come up with an artwork, and Filipino writers are encouraged and invited to join a storywriting contest based on its image. The same artist, then, will bring the story to life through a series of new works.

This book is the latest product of this unique process.

In 2013, we asked Dex Fernandez for a contest piece (shown below). His mixed media piece inspired over seventy stories from all over the world from which Kate Osias' "The Triangle Man and The Flightless Diwata" emerged victorious.

In the coming months and years, we will then donate tens of thousands of copies of this book directly to children in poor and disadvantaged communities throughout the Philippines. Our hope is that by doing this, we are helping to create a generation not only of readers, but of lovers of books.

Your purchase of this book supports our mission, and we are truly grateful. Thank you!



About the AUTHOR

Kate Osias occasionally ventures out into the real world to hoard chocolate and shop for shoes. She has won four Don Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature, the Gig Book Contest, CANVAS' 3-Sentence Storywriting Contest and the 10th Romeo Forbes Children's Storywriting Competition. She has earned a citation in the international Year's Best Fantasy and Horror for her story "The Riverstone Heart of Maria dela Rosa" (Serendipity, 2007).

Her works appear in LONTAR: Journal of Southeast Asian Speculative Fiction #1, in various volumes of the Philippine Speculative Fiction, Horror: Filipino Fiction for Young Adults, Maximum Volume and the WFC Unconventional Fantasy (2014). As of this writing, her stories will be coming out in The Sea is Ours: Tales of Steampunk Southeast Asia, LONTAR #4, and Science Fiction: Filipino Fiction for Young Adults. She co-edited the sixth and seventh volumes of Philippine Speculative Fiction, the latter with her husband and fellow writer Alex Osias. Find her and her updated bibliography on Facebook.



About the ARTIST

Dex is an interdisciplinary artist whose work ranges from paintings and drawings, to murals and mixed media works that draw inspiration from street art, found footage, and thrift shop posters. By layering tattoo patterns on portraits, religious iconography on pop imagery, and almost psychedelic patterns and colors on vintage posters or photographs, Dex opens a dialogue between high and "low" culture.

Dex graduated from the Technical University of the Philippines with a BFA, major in Advertising and is based in Caloocan City. The Triangle Man and the Flightless Diwata is his first children's book.





CANVAS' 1 Million Books for One Million Filipino Children Campaign aims to inspire in children a love for reading by donating its award-winning books to public schools, hospitals, and disadvantaged communities throughout the country.

A child that reads is a creative, empowered, and imaginative child who will learn independently, envision a brighter future, and ultimately lead a productive and meaningful life.

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CANVAS, a non-profit organization, works with the creative community to promote children's literacy, explore national identity, and broaden public awareness of Philippine art, culture, and the environment.