

RASHMI SIRDESHPANDE RUCHI MHASANE

# DADAJI'S PAINTBRUSH









In loving memory of my grandfather,  
Shri Laxmikant Desai – R.S.

To Aaji-Abba and Aaji-Anna,  
with whom I wish I had more time – R.M.



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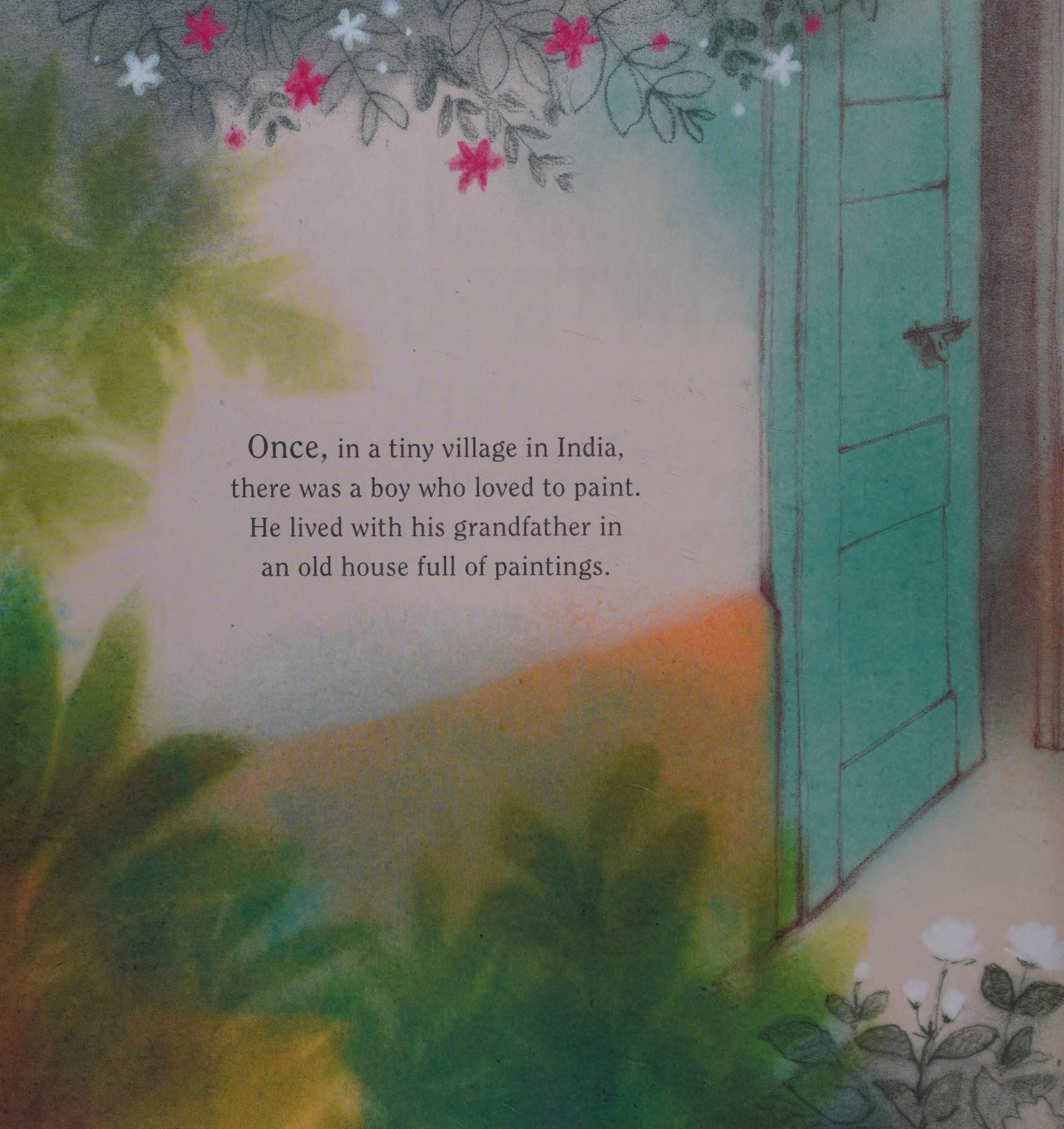
# DADAJI'S PAINTBRUSH

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RUCHI MHASANE



ANDERSEN PRESS

A watercolor illustration of a room. On the right, a green door with a brass handle is partially open. The wall is light pink. At the top, there are green leaves and red and white flowers. At the bottom right, there are white flowers. The background is a soft, abstract wash of green and yellow.

Once, in a tiny village in India,  
there was a boy who loved to paint.  
He lived with his grandfather in  
an old house full of paintings.



First, the boy painted with his fingers. He printed with marigolds, betel leaves and coconut shells.



As he got bigger, he painted with brushes made of sticks with strips of cloth, reeds or jasmine flowers wrapped around the ends.



The village children would peep through the windows to watch them paint.



Sometimes, the boy's grandfather  
would invite them to join in.





The boy and his grandfather did everything together. <sup>44</sup>  
They grew bananas, pineapples and jackfruit and  
sold them in the local market...

shared sticky, juicy mangoes with  
the village children...



and made paper boats for them to float down the street in the  
monsoon rain. They read books and picked out what they'd  
paint the next day.



When the rains had gone, every night, they lay on their rooftop beds and watched the stars until they fell asleep.

They didn't have much but they had each other.





“Don’t ever leave me,” the boy would say.  
“I won’t,” his grandfather would reply, holding  
the boy so tight that his bones would hurt...



...but one day, he did.



All that was left of him was the old house full of paintings. The boy stood at his grandfather's desk.

He noticed a little box wrapped in string with a note that read: "From Dadaji, with love."


Inside was his grandfather's best paintbrush.



At first, the boy didn't touch it. He couldn't.  
He wouldn't. When he tried to look at it,  
his chest ached.

Then, one day, he put it up on a shelf so  
high he had to get up on his toes to reach it.



A young boy with dark hair, wearing a blue and white striped polo shirt and blue shorts, is walking barefoot. He is carrying a large, light-colored rectangular box filled with mangoes. The background shows a simple drawing of a tree with large, pointed leaves.

Days and months passed by.  
Seasons changed.  
The boy forgot all about the box.  
At least, he tried to.

Mangoes didn't taste the  
same anymore.  
At night, the stars didn't  
sparkle the way they used to.  
And when the rains arrived  
again, there was no one to  
make paper boats with.



The village children didn't visit anymore. The house felt empty. Like the hole in the boy's heart where his grandfather used to be. Where all the colours used to be.



The boy took all the paintings and locked them away. In time, the paints dried up and the box and the paintings gathered dust.

Then, one day, a  
small girl turned  
up at the boy's  
door. She held a  
stick with reeds  
wrapped around  
the end.





“Please teach me how  
to paint,” she said.  
“Like your dadaji  
taught my mummy.”

The boy shook his head but the girl  
wouldn't leave. “Oh please,” she said.

So he mixed up some  
paints and found her a  
fresh sheet of paper.



The girl plunged her brush  
into the paints and dotted  
the page with bright blue  
and green splodges.  
Then she stopped and  
frowned.  
“It’s no good,” she said.  
“This was a bad idea. I  
can’t do it...”



She was about to give up when the boy said, "Wait..."  
There was always a way.



He looked closely at the page. Then he remembered.  
Then he smiled.

The boy unlocked  
the door at the back  
of the house and  
showed the girl  
his grandfather's  
paintings.



If they looked closely, in the background of every painting, they could see little splodges of paint. Sometimes made with fingers, sometimes with brushes made of sticks, reeds and flowers. Together, the boy and his grandfather had turned every one of them into something wonderful.

All it took was time and attention.





And so the boy reached for the box, took out his grandfather's paintbrush and started to paint.

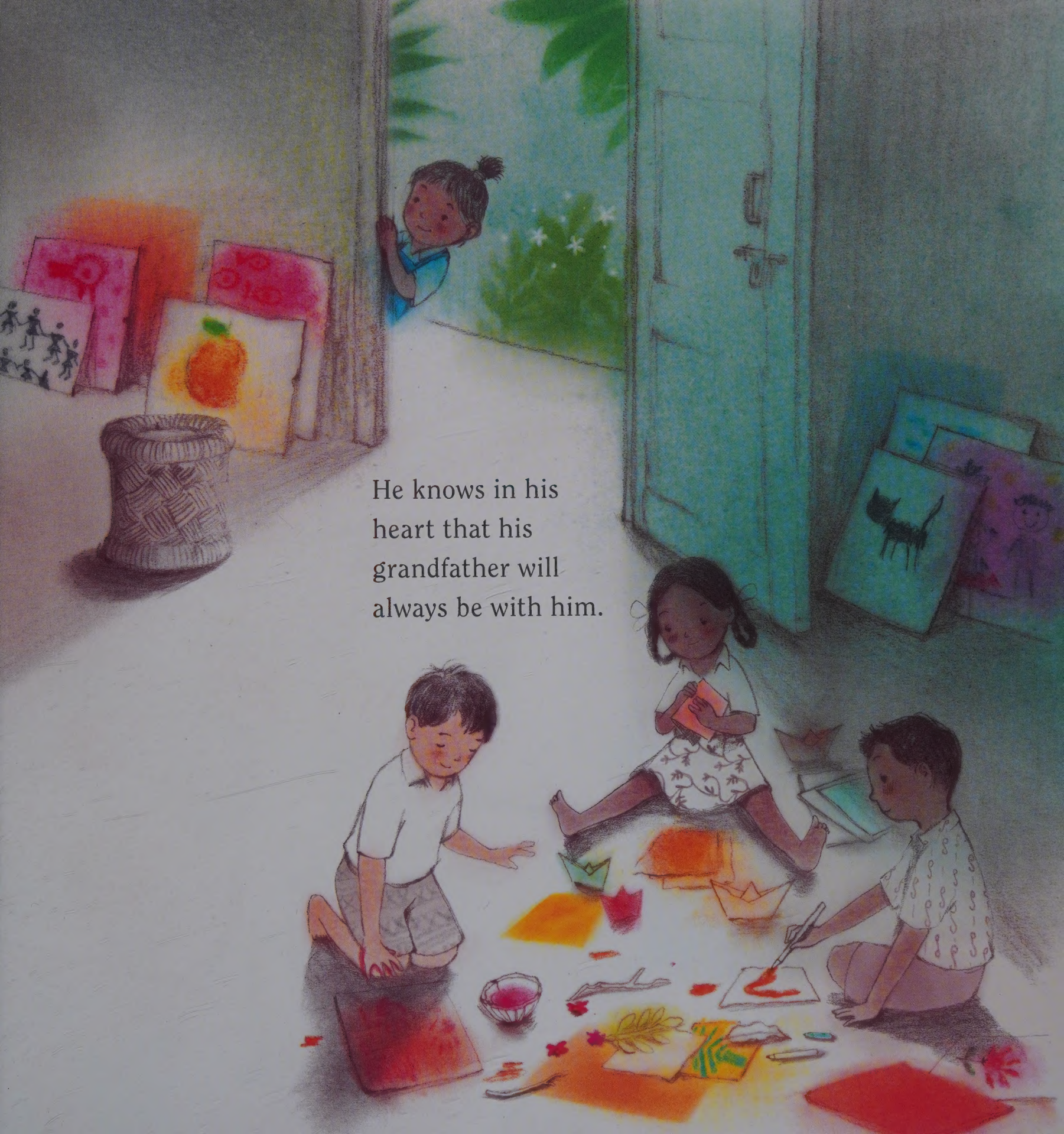
The girl watched and copied. They painted together every day and, as time passed by, the house was filled with colour again.

The boy has been painting ever since.





Sometimes, the village children peep through the window to watch. Sometimes they paint, they laugh, and the boy makes paper boats for them to float away down the street in the monsoon rain.



He knows in his  
heart that his  
grandfather will  
always be with him.







Once, in a tiny village in India,  
a boy lived with his grandfather.  
They filled the house with paintings and  
invited the village children to join in.

They didn't have much but they had  
each other and a loving bond that would  
always keep them together...



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