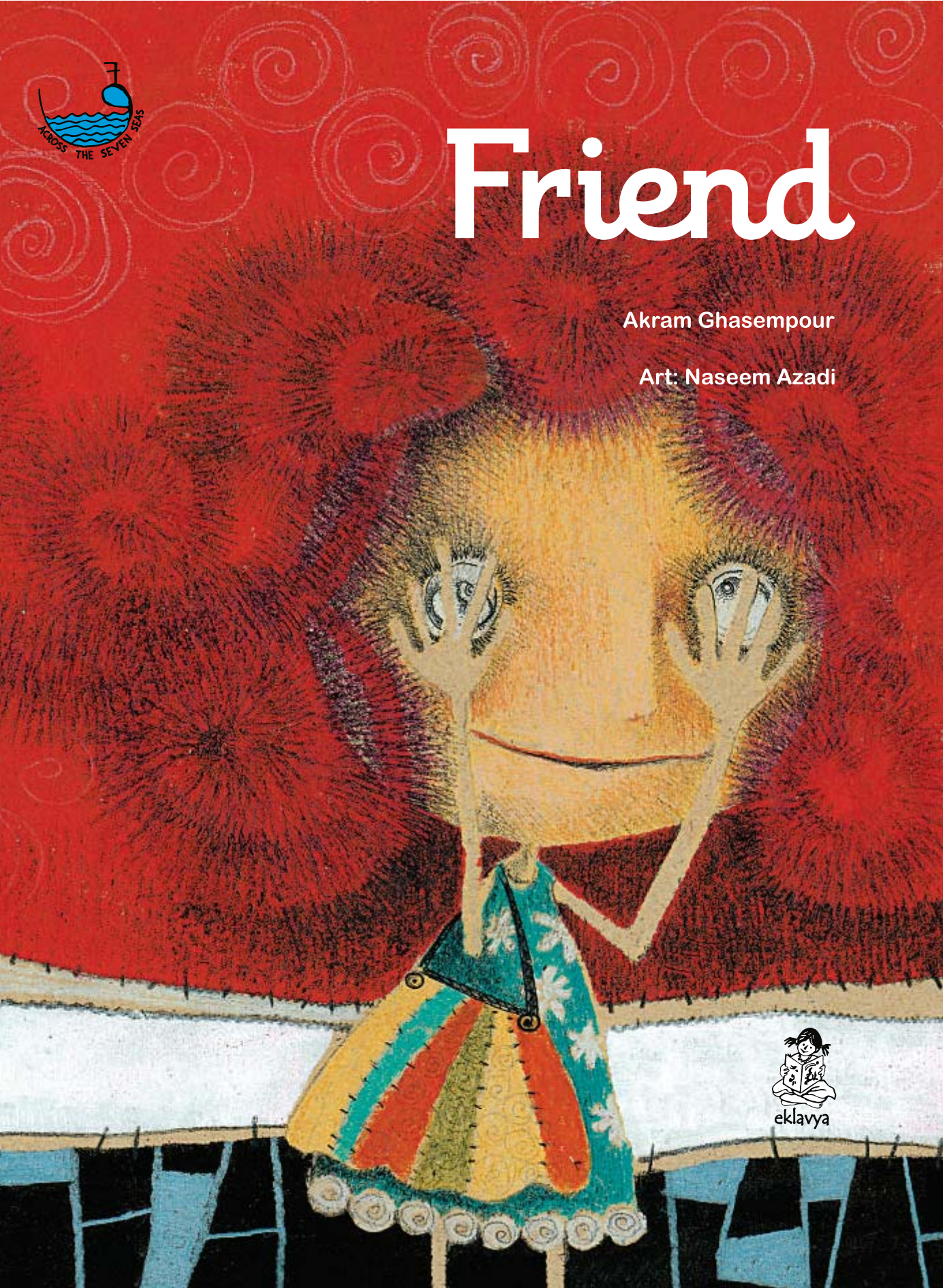




Friend

Akram Ghasempour

Art: Naseem Azadi





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Story: Akram Ghasempour

Art: Naseem Azadi

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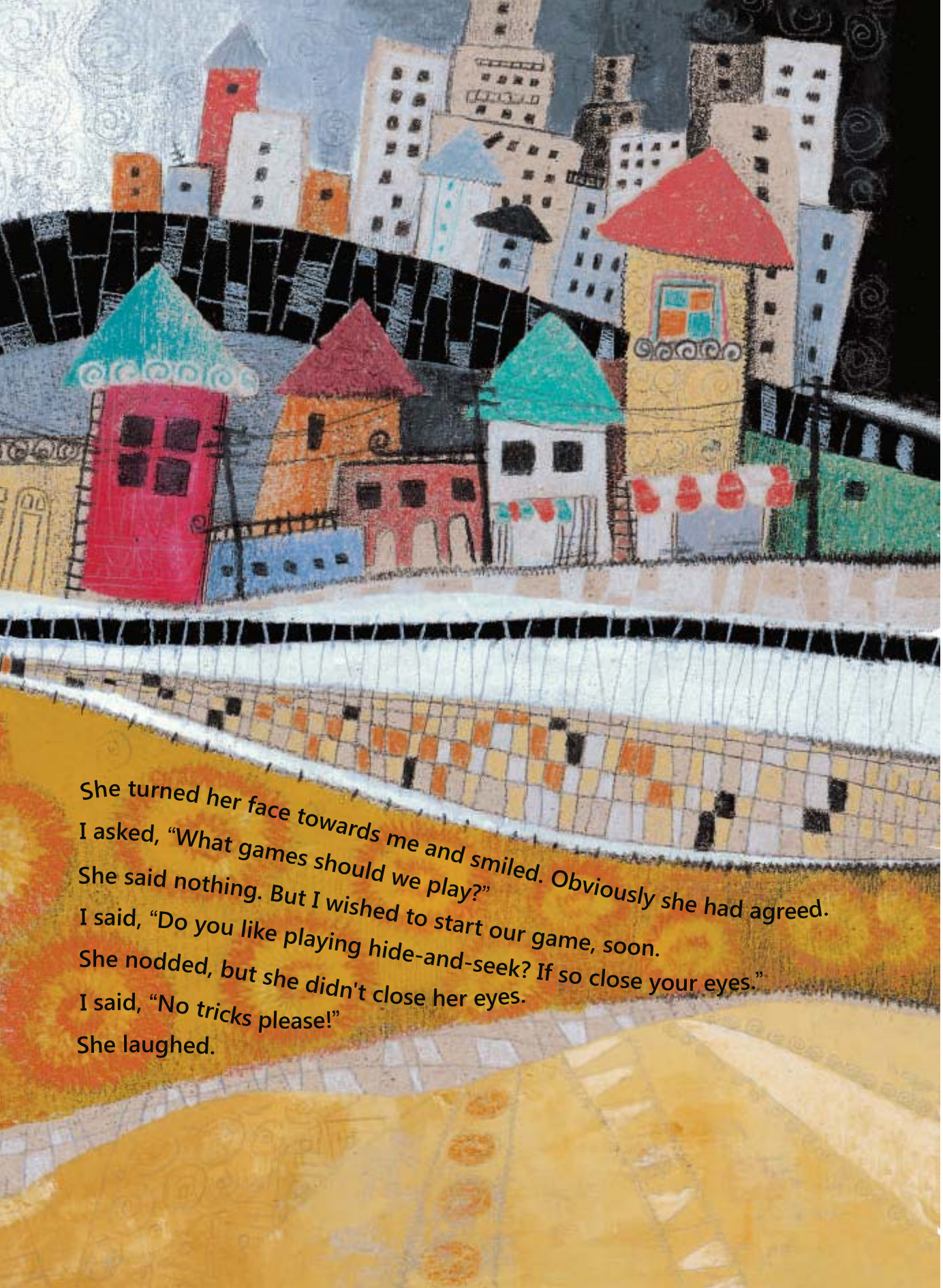
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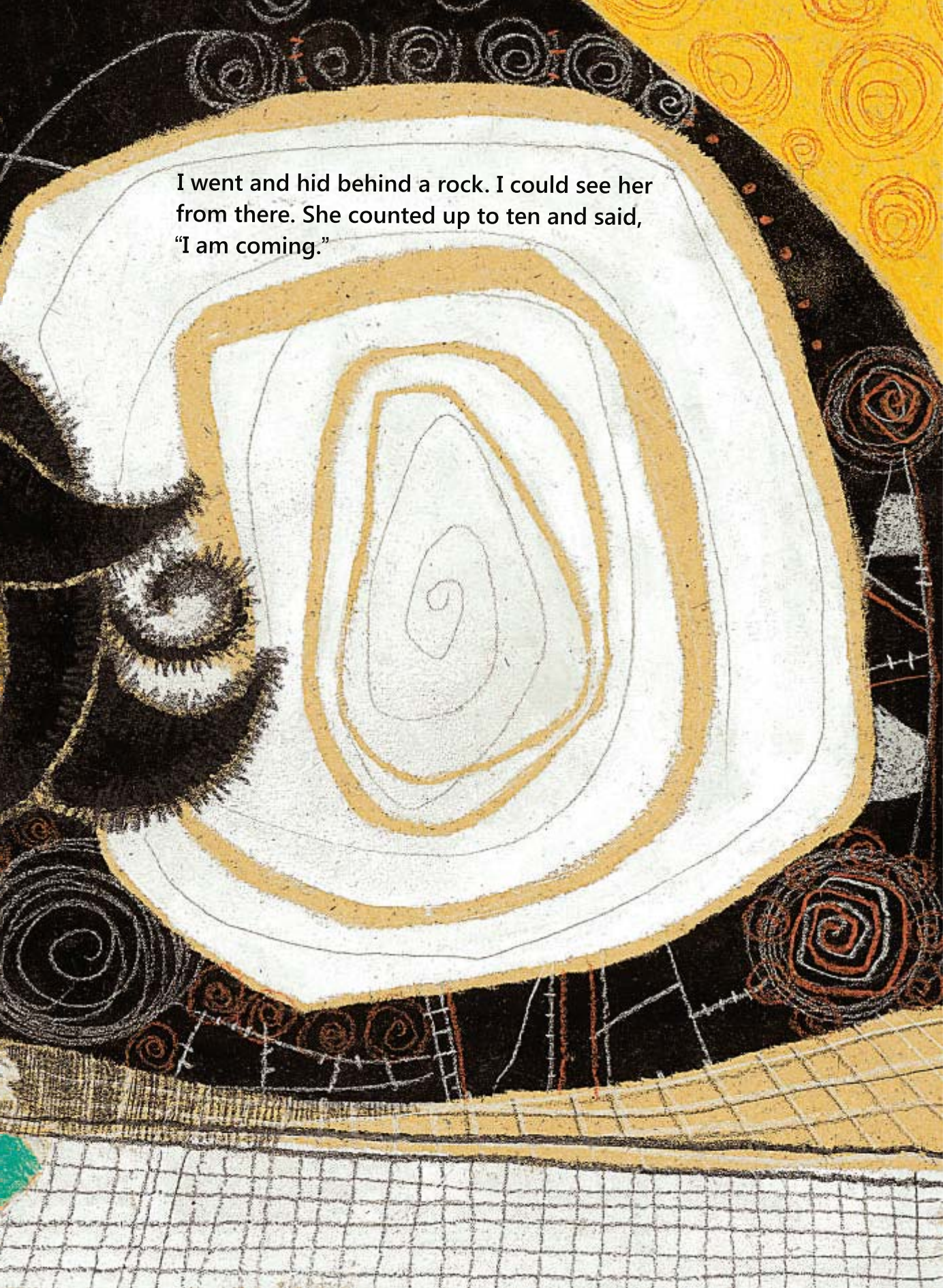
The first time I saw her, she was staring at the sea.
"Would you like to play with me?" I asked.





She turned her face towards me and smiled. Obviously she had agreed.
I asked, "What games should we play?"
She said nothing. But I wished to start our game, soon.
I said, "Do you like playing hide-and-seek? If so close your eyes."
She nodded, but she didn't close her eyes.
I said, "No tricks please!"
She laughed.

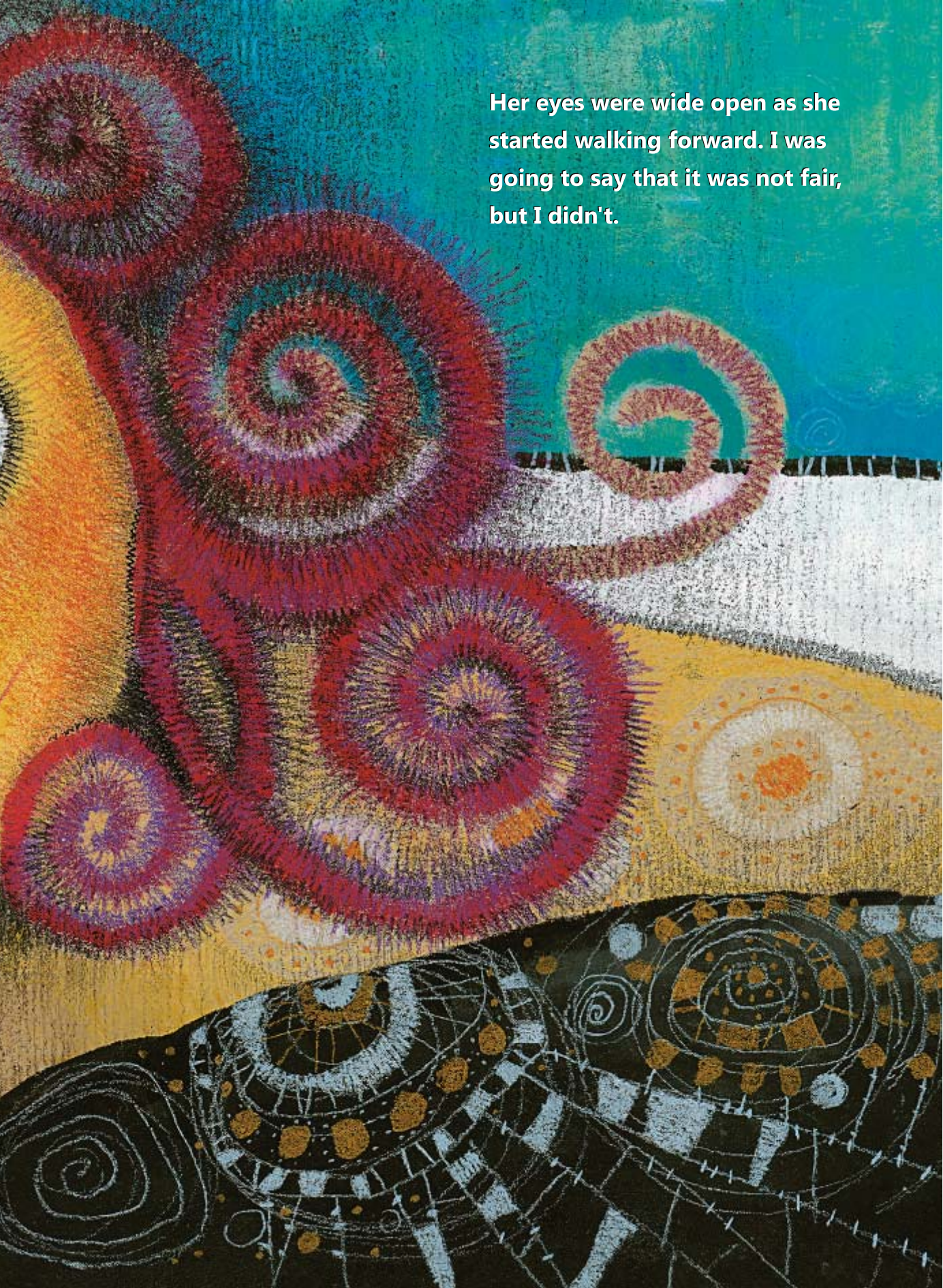




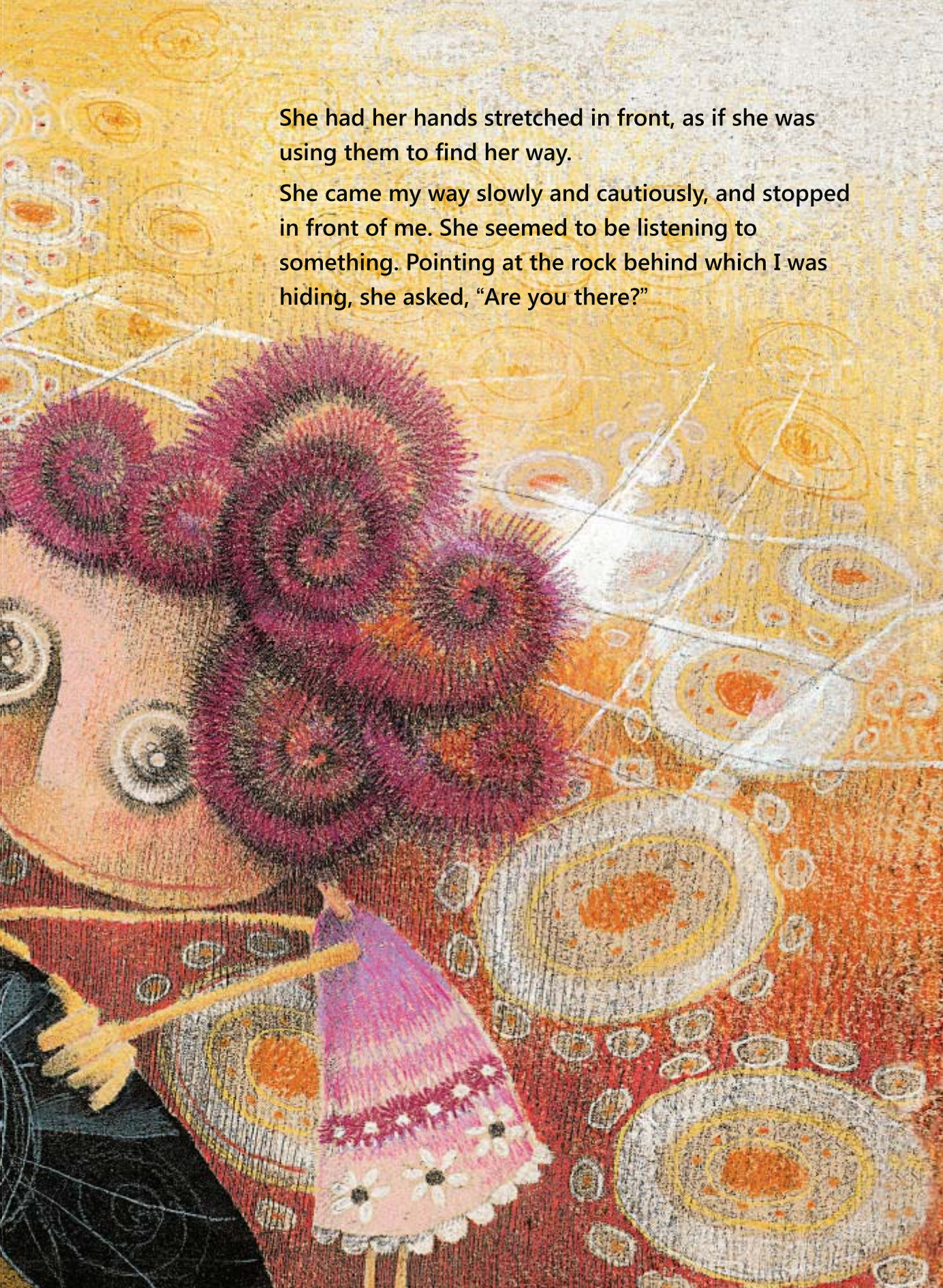
I went and hid behind a rock. I could see her
from there. She counted up to ten and said,
“I am coming.”



Her eyes were wide open as she started walking forward. I was going to say that it was not fair, but I didn't.

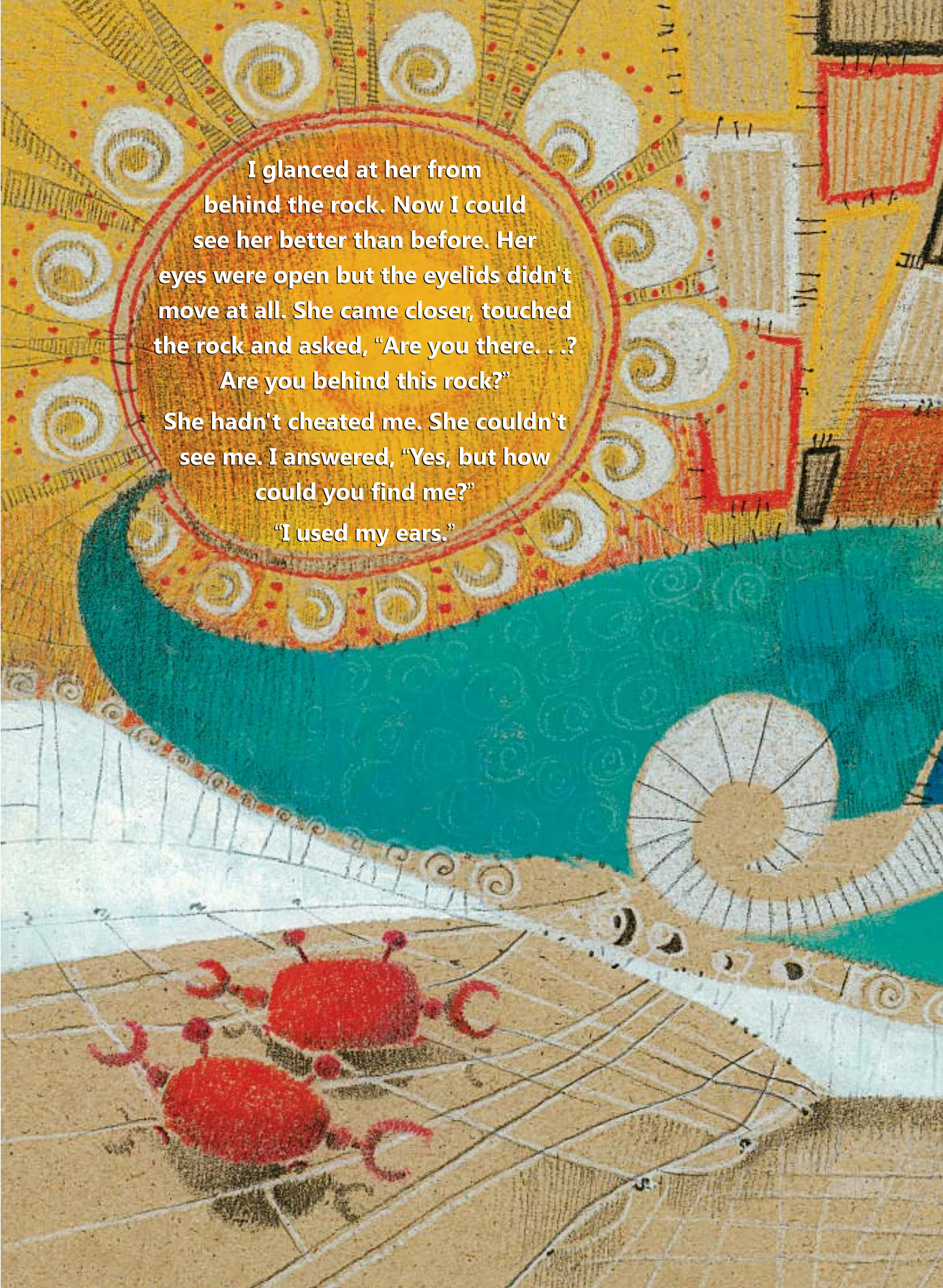






She had her hands stretched in front, as if she was using them to find her way.

She came my way slowly and cautiously, and stopped in front of me. She seemed to be listening to something. Pointing at the rock behind which I was hiding, she asked, "Are you there?"



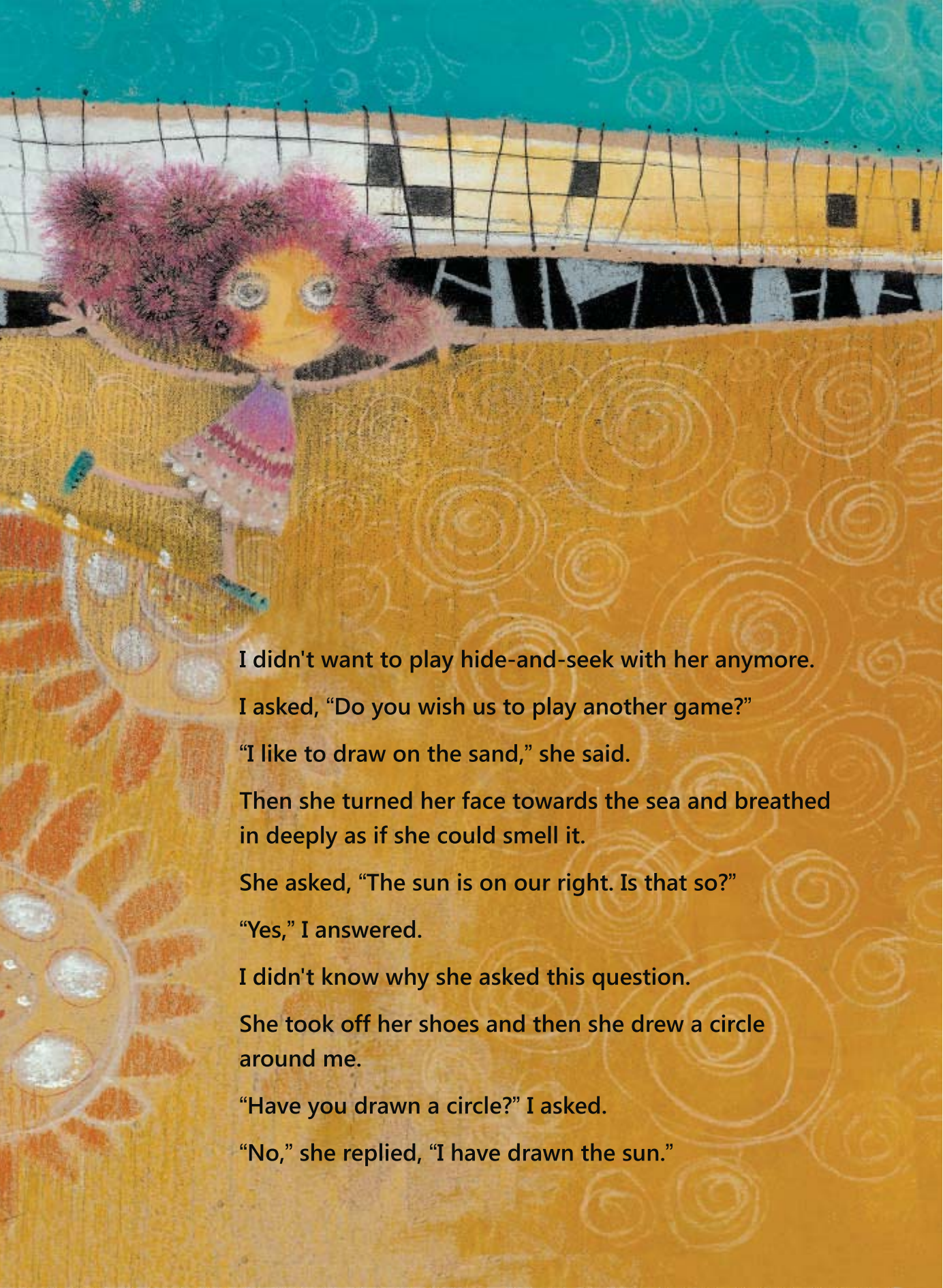
I glanced at her from
behind the rock. Now I could
see her better than before. Her
eyes were open but the eyelids didn't
move at all. She came closer, touched
the rock and asked, "Are you there. . .?
Are you behind this rock?"

She hadn't cheated me. She couldn't
see me. I answered, "Yes, but how
could you find me?"

"I used my ears."







I didn't want to play hide-and-seek with her anymore.

I asked, "Do you wish us to play another game?"

"I like to draw on the sand," she said.

Then she turned her face towards the sea and breathed in deeply as if she could smell it.

She asked, "The sun is on our right. Is that so?"

"Yes," I answered.

I didn't know why she asked this question.

She took off her shoes and then she drew a circle around me.

"Have you drawn a circle?" I asked.

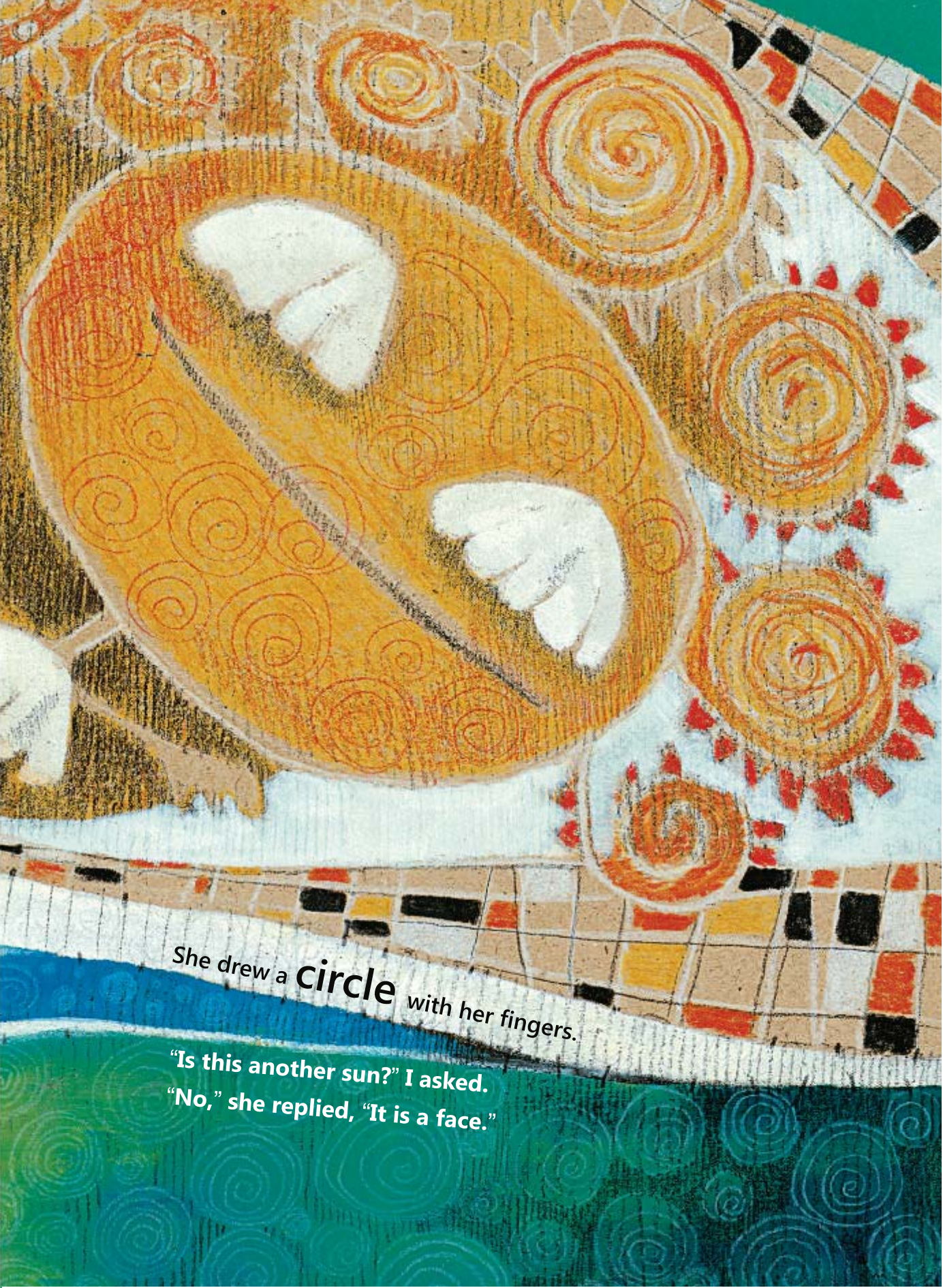
"No," she replied, "I have drawn the sun."



We sat inside the sun she drew. She was still playing with the sand gently.
I was curious to know what she would draw now.





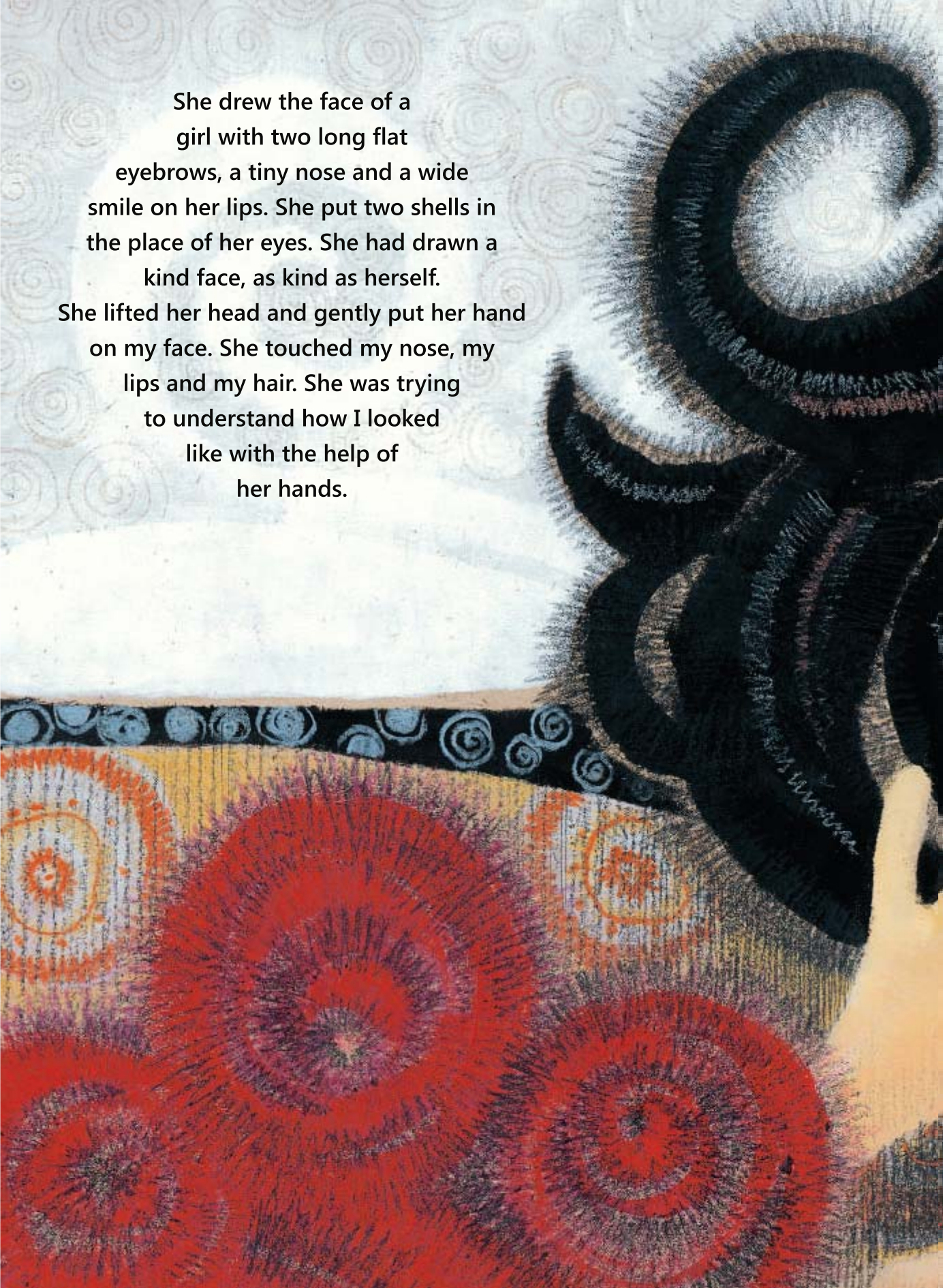


She drew a **circle** with her fingers.

"Is this another sun?" I asked.

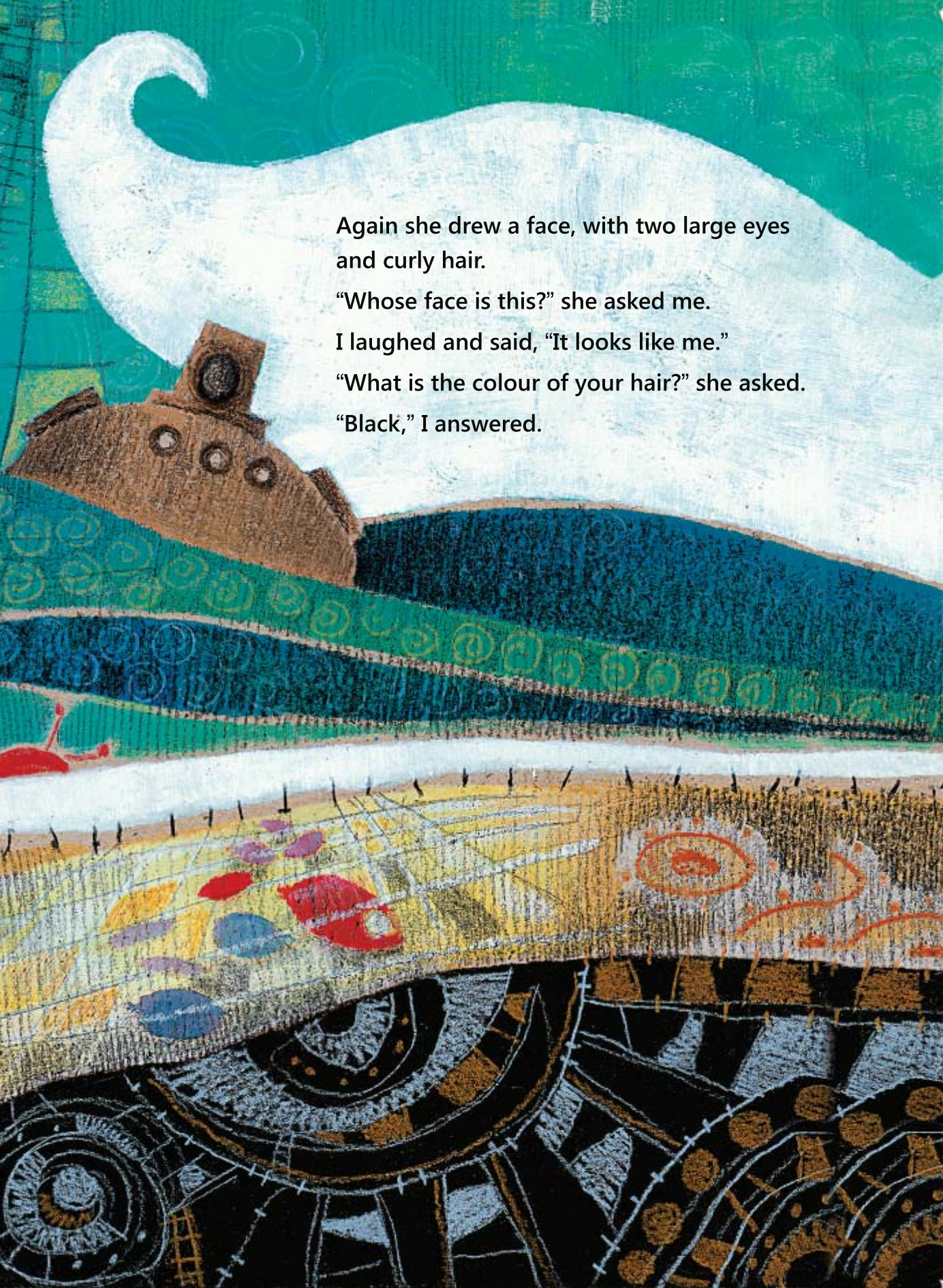
"No," she replied, "It is a face."

She drew the face of a
girl with two long flat
eyebrows, a tiny nose and a wide
smile on her lips. She put two shells in
the place of her eyes. She had drawn a
kind face, as kind as herself.
She lifted her head and gently put her hand
on my face. She touched my nose, my
lips and my hair. She was trying
to understand how I looked
like with the help of
her hands.









Again she drew a face, with two large eyes
and curly hair.

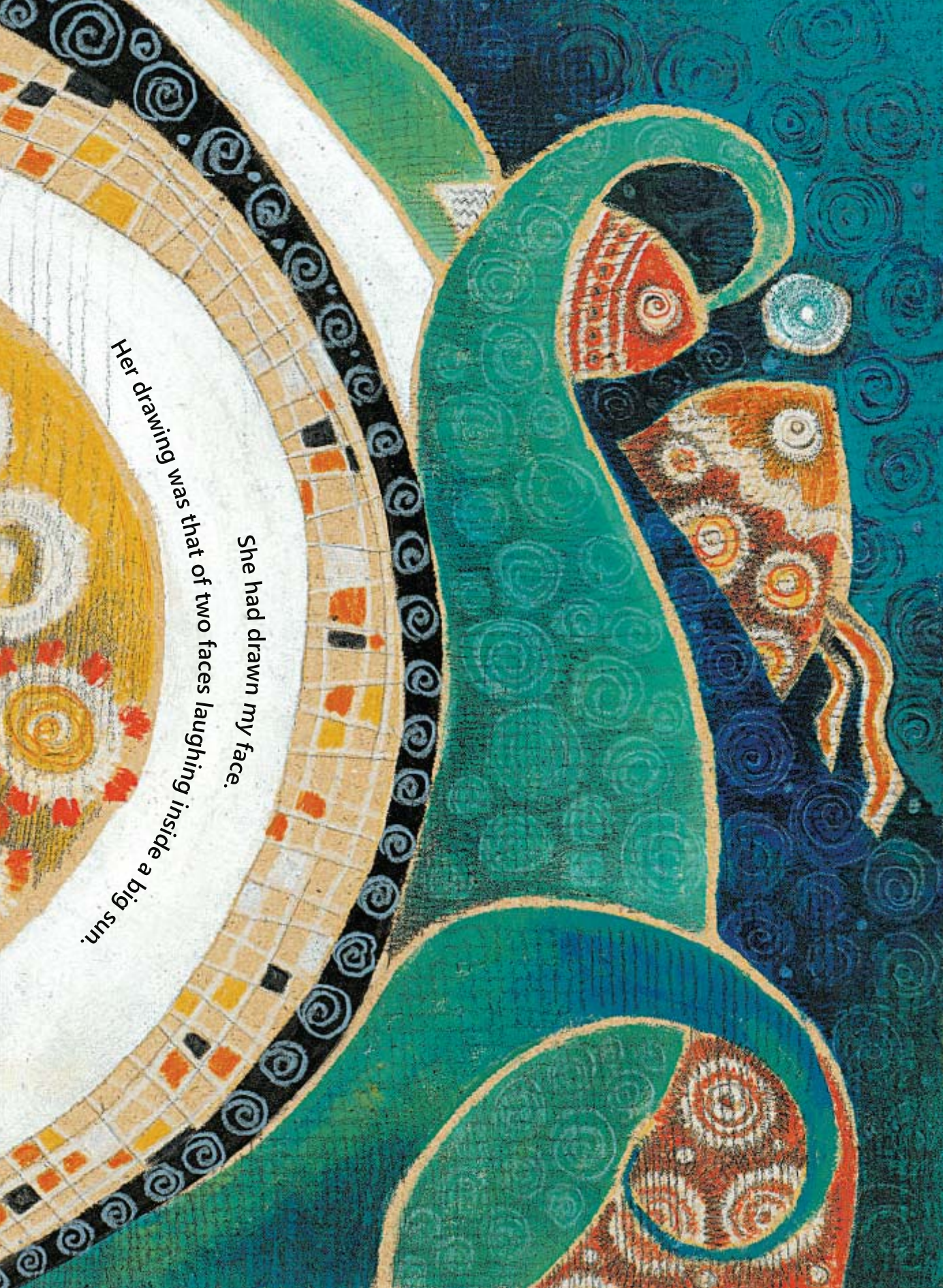
“Whose face is this?” she asked me.

I laughed and said, “It looks like me.”

“What is the colour of your hair?” she asked.

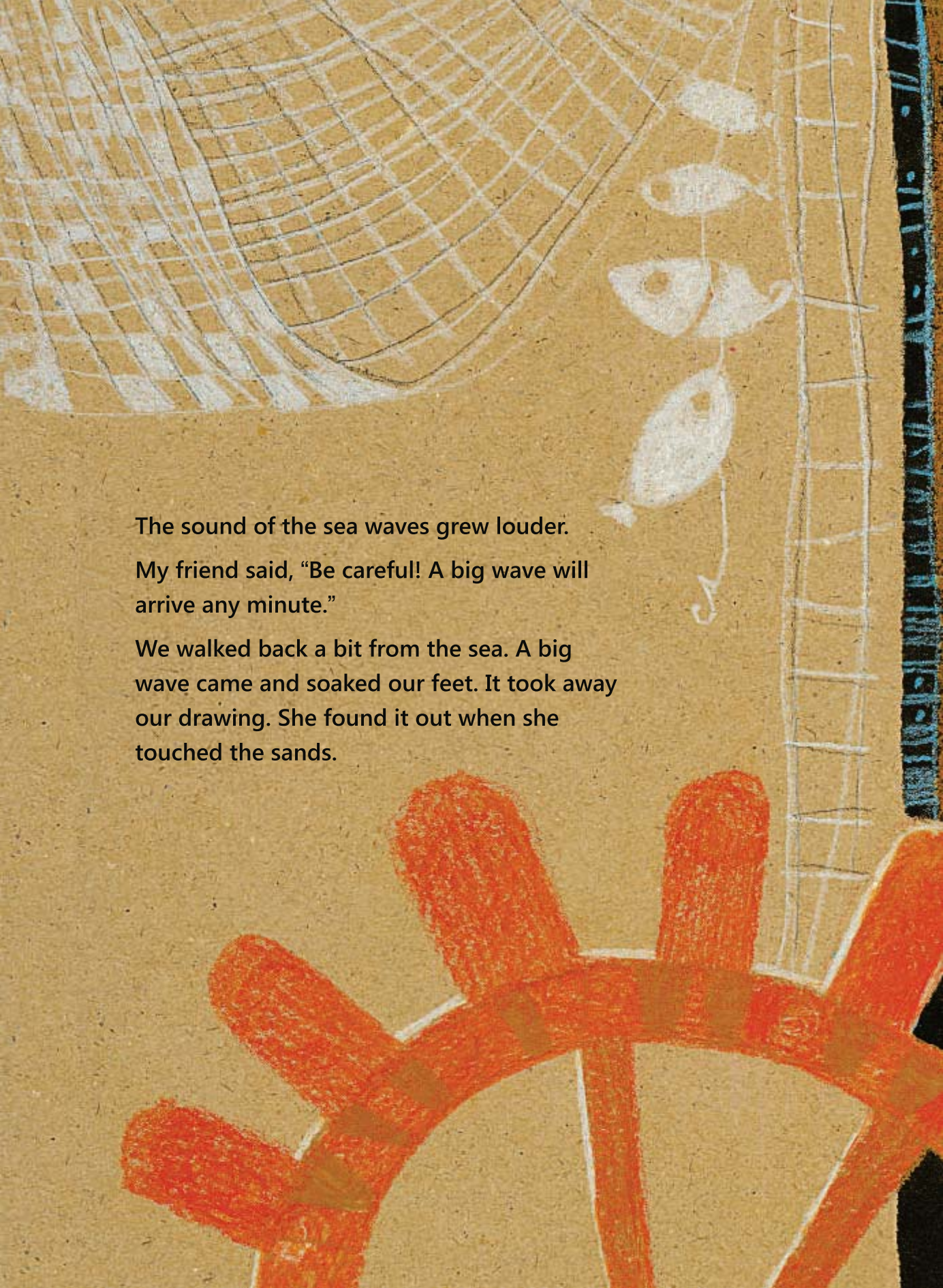
“Black,” I answered.





Her drawing was that of two faces laughing inside a big sun.

She had drawn my face.




The sound of the sea waves grew louder.

My friend said, "Be careful! A big wave will arrive any minute."

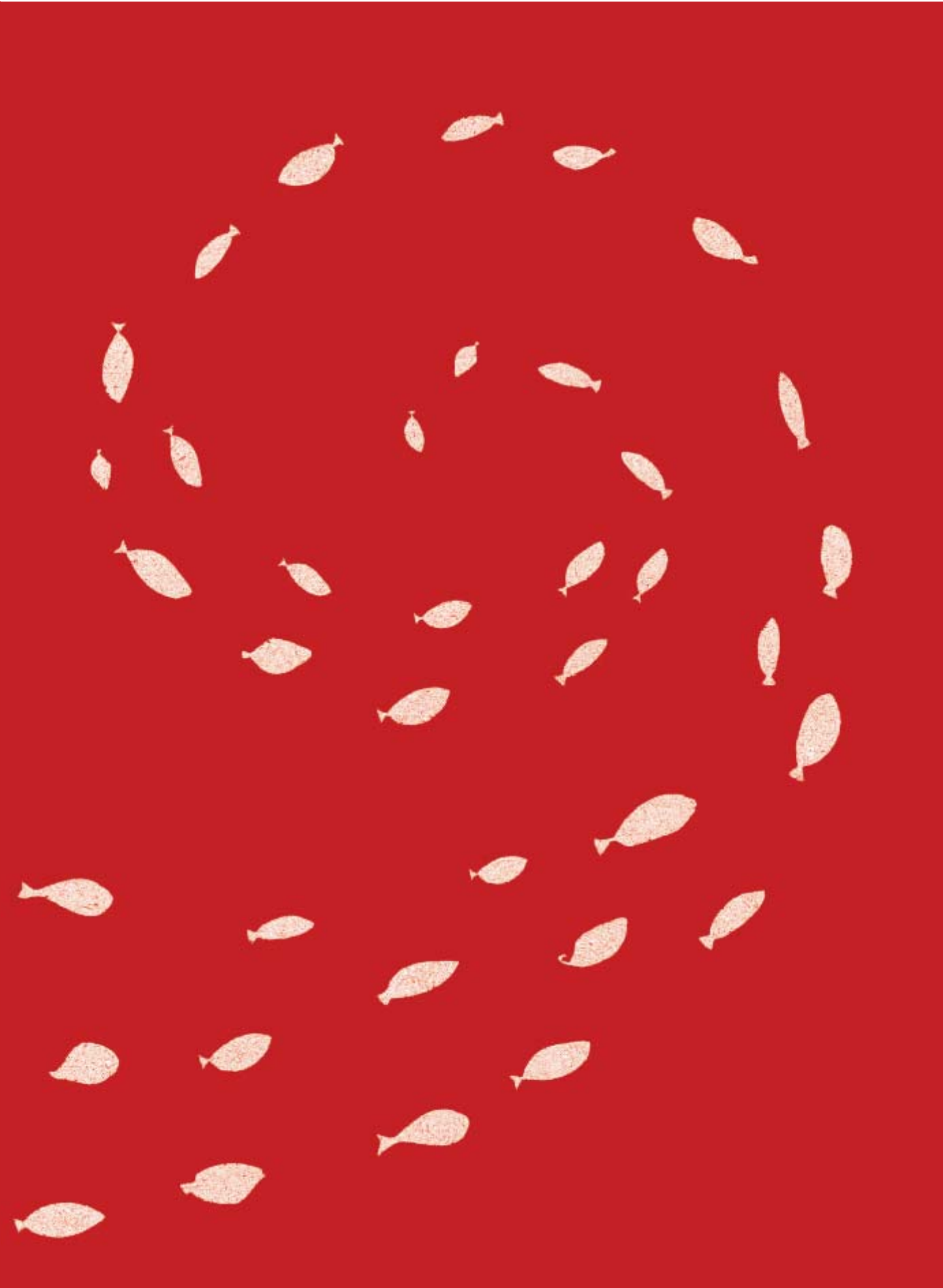
We walked back a bit from the sea. A big wave came and soaked our feet. It took away our drawing. She found it out when she touched the sands.





We were walking
on the sand.

I felt glad because
I had found a
friend who could
see and draw
better than me.





**She agreed to play hide-and-seek with me.
But why wouldn't she close her eyes?**

**Then she painted circles on the sand – two
smaller ones inside a bigger one.
What were they?**

**Was she a painter? Then why did she want to
know the colour of my hair?**

Or was she my new friend?



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