



Safe Harbour

written by Patricia Forde
illustrated by Bronagh Lee

This book is dedicated to all children and families who have been bereaved by suicide.

It is recommended that you read *Safe Harbour: A Helpful Guide for Parents and Carers* before reading this storybook with your child.

To access the Safe Harbour guide, podcast, audiobook, worksheets, and other helpful information, scan the QR code or visit:

www.childhoodbereavement.ie/safeharbour



This book has been published by the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP).

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Safe Harbour



By Patricia Forde

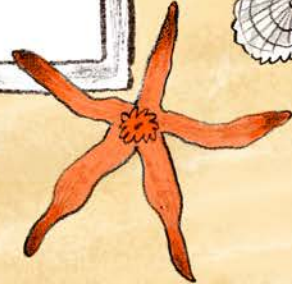
Laureate na nÓg (2023 - 2026)

illustrated by Bronagh Lee

Remembering...



place
photo
here



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Our home was a ship.
And we were the crew.



Mum and Dad
were our captains.

Granny and Granddad
the first mates.



Beside them were
Aunt Eileen and Uncle Bob
and their crew — the cousins
Kate and Dan.

(Who I think might be pirates.
They look like pirates!)



And then there was me
and my sister Lucy.



Together we sailed
our ship
through good days
and bad.



Until one day,
something terrible happened.

Our dad died.

The grown-ups said
that he died by suicide.
But we didn't know what that meant.



Was suicide a **monster**?



Or terrible **weather**?



So I asked Mum and she said
that she didn't have all the answers.

That no one really did.


But for Dad it seems that huge waves
of sad thoughts
got stuck in his head – stuck like
barnacles to rocks.



Everything felt **muddled**

And **tangled**

And **knotted** up inside.




Poor Dad couldn't find a way through.
All of that made him feel like he couldn't live
anymore.

And Mum said that suicide means
that he stopped his own body from working.

He stopped his heart from beating.
He stopped his mind from thinking.

And he can never be alive again.



The bottom right of the page features a stylized illustration of a house. The house has a dark, textured roof with two chimneys. The walls are light-colored with small, dark, irregular shapes representing windows or decorative elements. A single window on the right side is brightly lit from within, showing a person sitting at a desk or table, possibly reading or writing. The house is set against the dark, starry night sky.

Now he won't be here for my
birthday.

He won't be here when we
go on holiday to Granny's
house.

Or splash in puddles
on a rainy day.



That made me

SAD

and

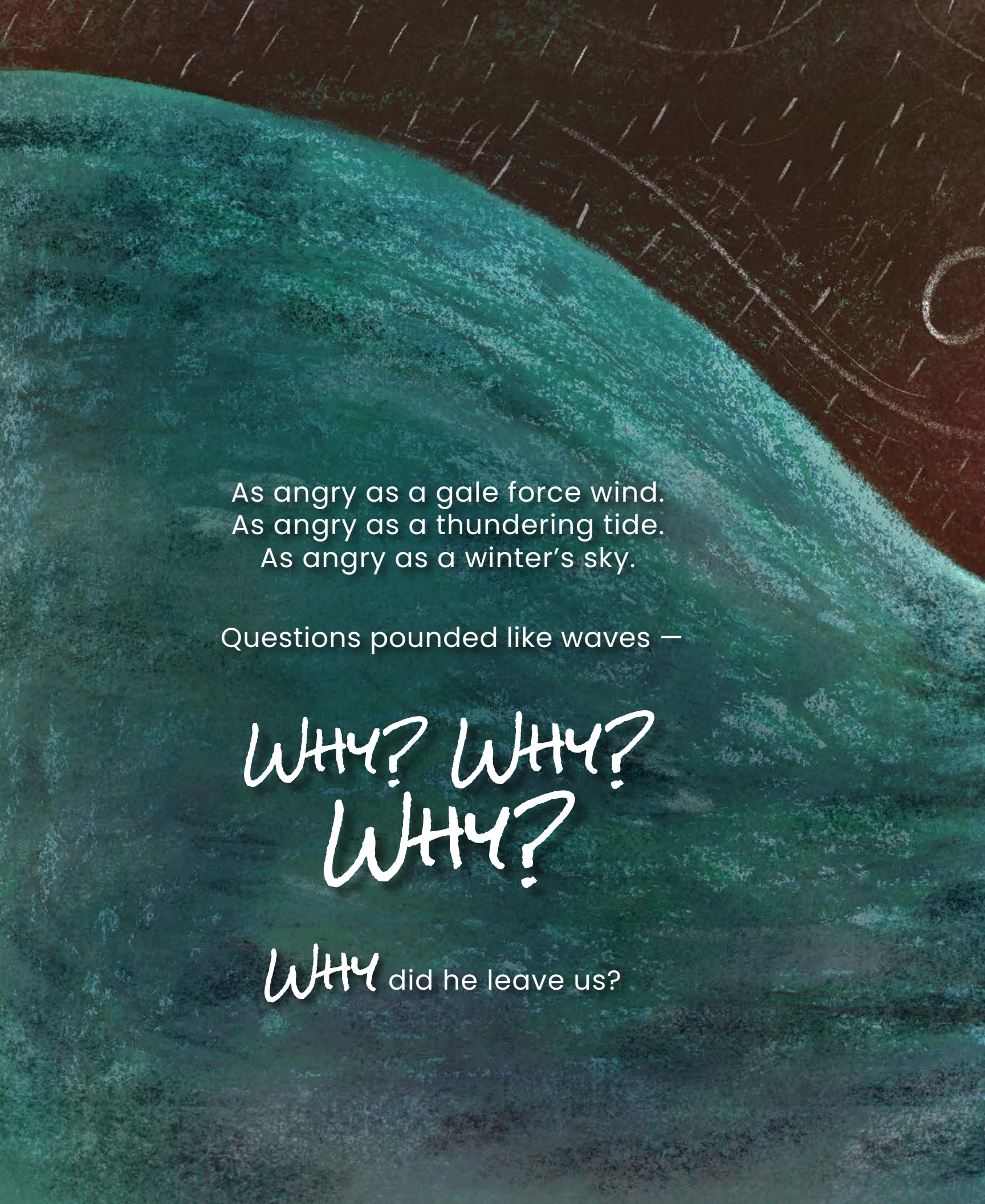
LONELY



and

ANGRY





As angry as a gale force wind.
As angry as a thundering tide.
As angry as a winter's sky.

Questions pounded like waves —

WHY? WHY?
WHY?

WHY did he leave us?




Maybe it was
my **fault?**

Maybe Dad isn't here anymore because
I don't always do what I'm told —
and I never tidy my room.



Dad used to say it looked
like the beach after a stormy night.

A child wearing a blue hat and a red patterned cape is holding a dog. They are looking out a window at a lighthouse on a cliff during a storm. The lighthouse is white with a red roof and a yellow light. The sea is dark blue with white waves. The sky is dark with a yellow lightning bolt. The window has purple curtains.

But Gran said **NO**.
Gran said it was no one's fault.

Dad was confused.
The fog got in his head.
He didn't ask for help,
or send an **SOS**.

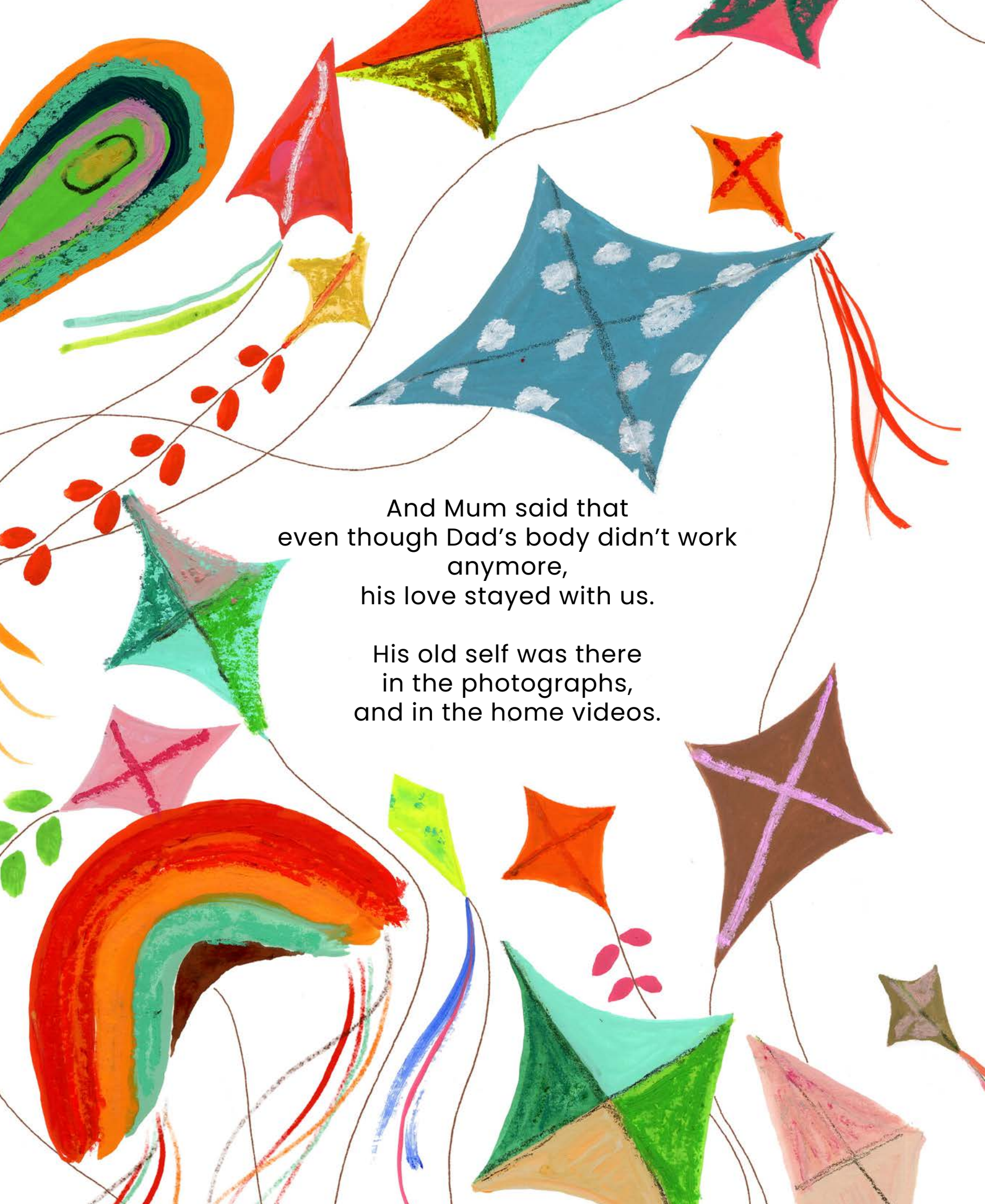


He didn't know that there
were people there all the time,
ready to help him.

Ready to launch the lifeboat to
bring him to safety.


And Granddad said
that Mum was our captain now and
she would do her best
to steer the boat and bring us to a
safe harbour.





And Mum said that
even though Dad's body didn't work
anymore,
his love stayed with us.

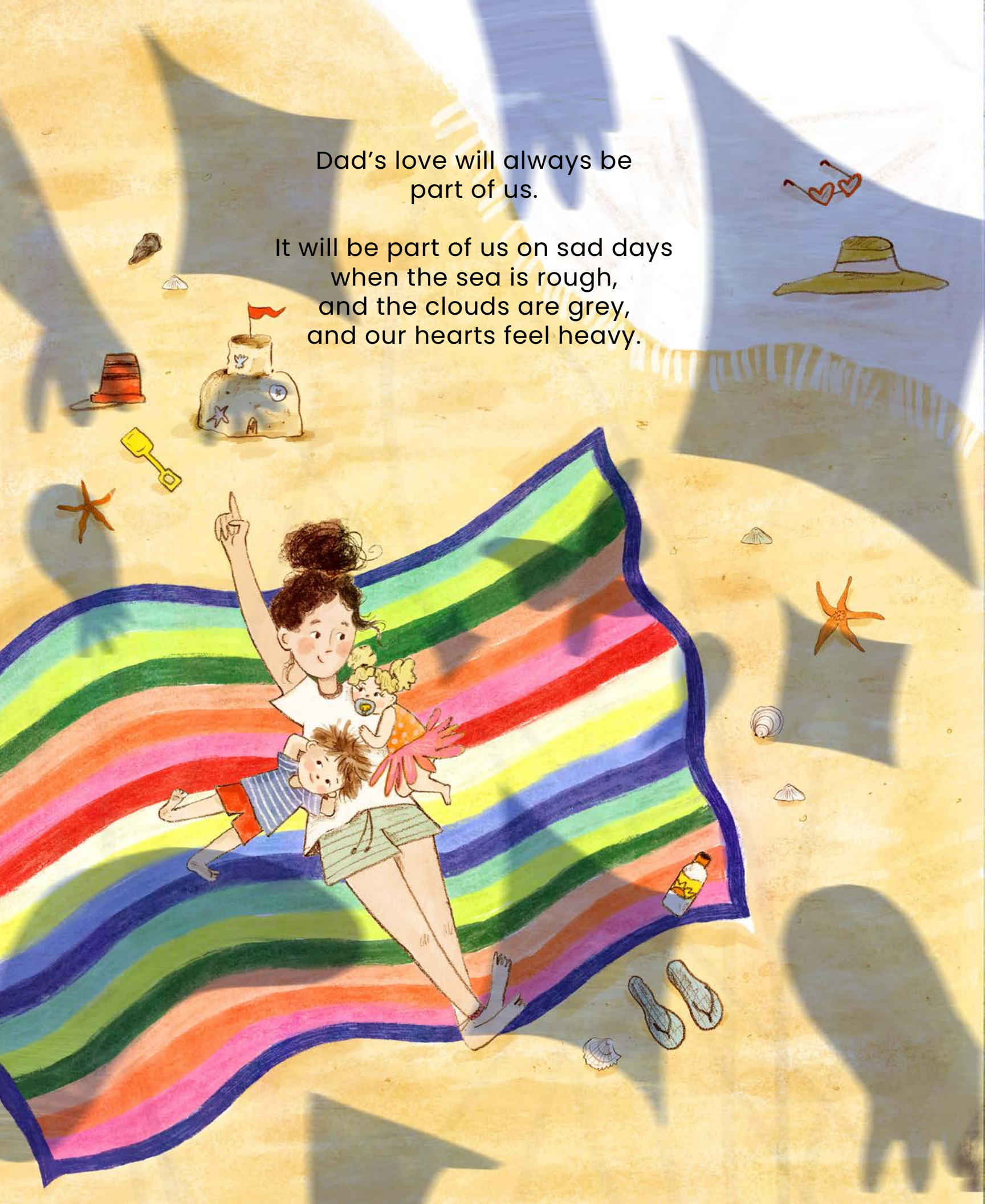
His old self was there
in the photographs,
and in the home videos.



He's there when
we kick a ball
or fly a kite.
Or say his name
in the quiet of the night.

Dad's love will always be
part of us.

It will be part of us on sad days
when the sea is rough,
and the clouds are grey,
and our hearts feel heavy.





She said that we'll think
of him
on happy days too,
when we can smile
and have a good time.



And at those times when
we need to take a
breath.



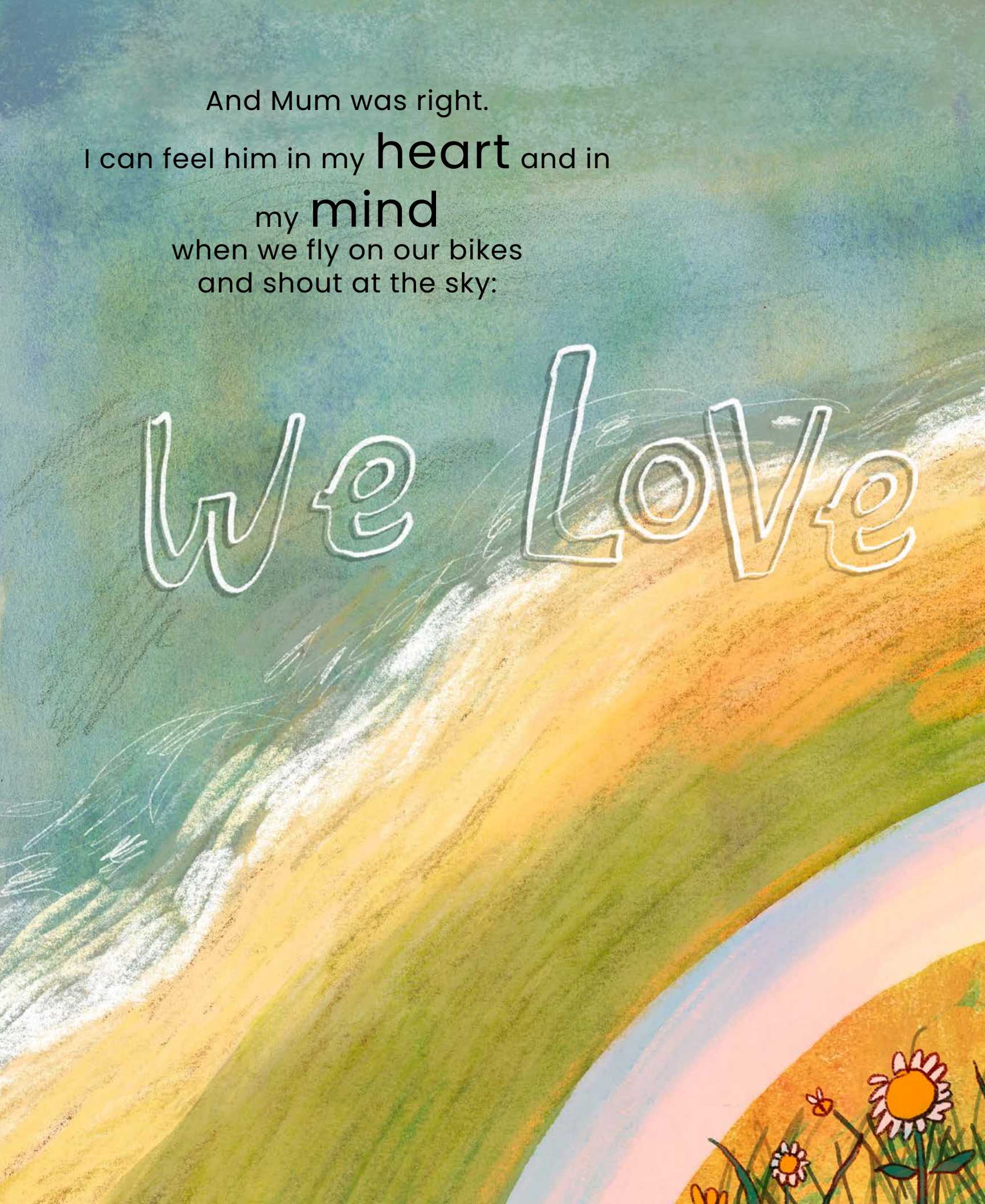


And Mum was right.

I can feel him in my **heart** and in

my **mind**
when we fly on our bikes
and shout at the sky:

We Love





YOU Dad!

And deep inside,
I know he loves us too.

And though we cry
and hurt
and wish it hadn't happened —
we'll keep on going.

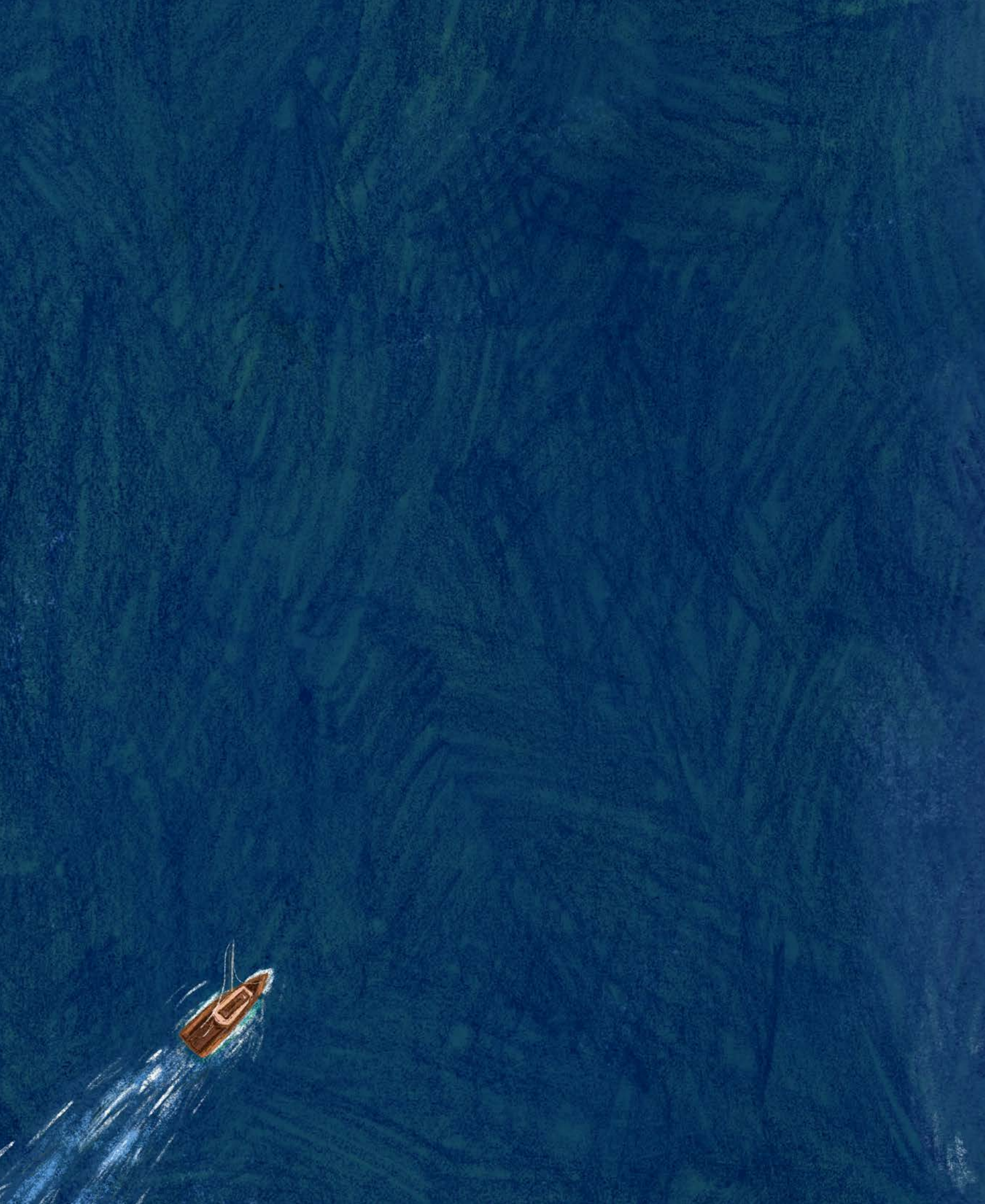


Some days travelling through
quiet seas,
and sometimes through
stormy weather.

Sailing in our ship
with Mum at the helm
and her crew all around.

Sailing towards a **safe harbour.**







DAD
MAM
LUCY
+ ME
4EVER

Safe Harbour is an illustrated storybook for children who have been bereaved by suicide.

It has been developed by bereavement experts (professionals and people with lived experience) to help a child with their grief by encouraging conversations, and developing their understanding of death and suicide.

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