



# J. ANG

Illustrated and written by Denzel J. Avila






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At the age of **seventeen**, I got sponsored by my mother who lived in Canada. At the time, I didn't know what that meant.

My mother explained over the phone, "Joy, you will move to Canada and live with me".

I was **scared**. This meant I had to start my life over, build new relationships, and leave all that I had done back in the Philippines, all the memories.

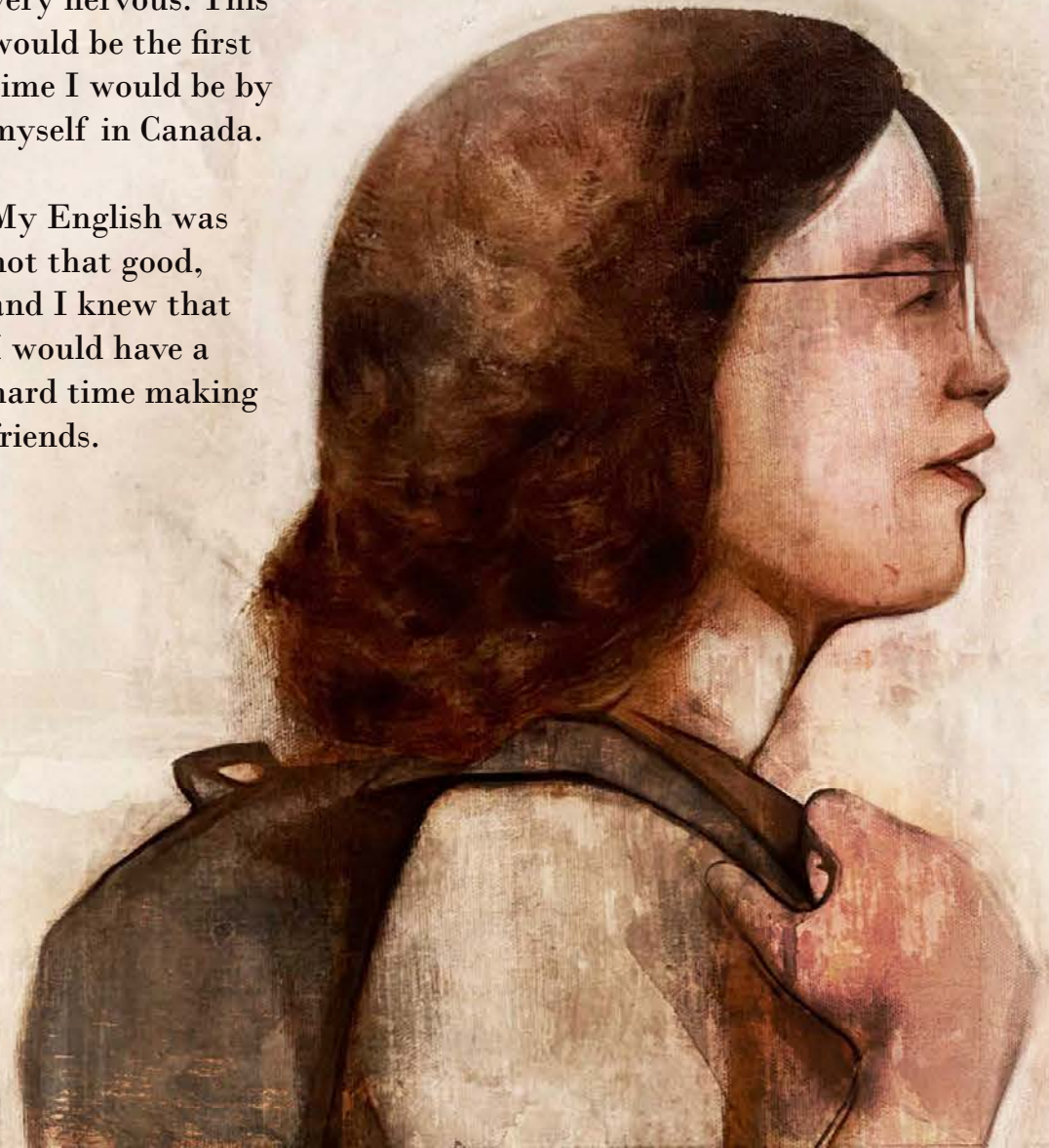
The Philippines was my home and it felt like I was forced to leave that past behind.

When I moved to Canada it was very hard for me to adjust. I've never seen buildings that went past the clouds or even experienced snow. It felt like I had traveled to a different planet. My mother told me that I would have a better life here, so I listened and called Canada my new home.



After three months of staying in Canada, it was finally time to go to school. I was very nervous. This would be the first time I would be by myself in Canada.

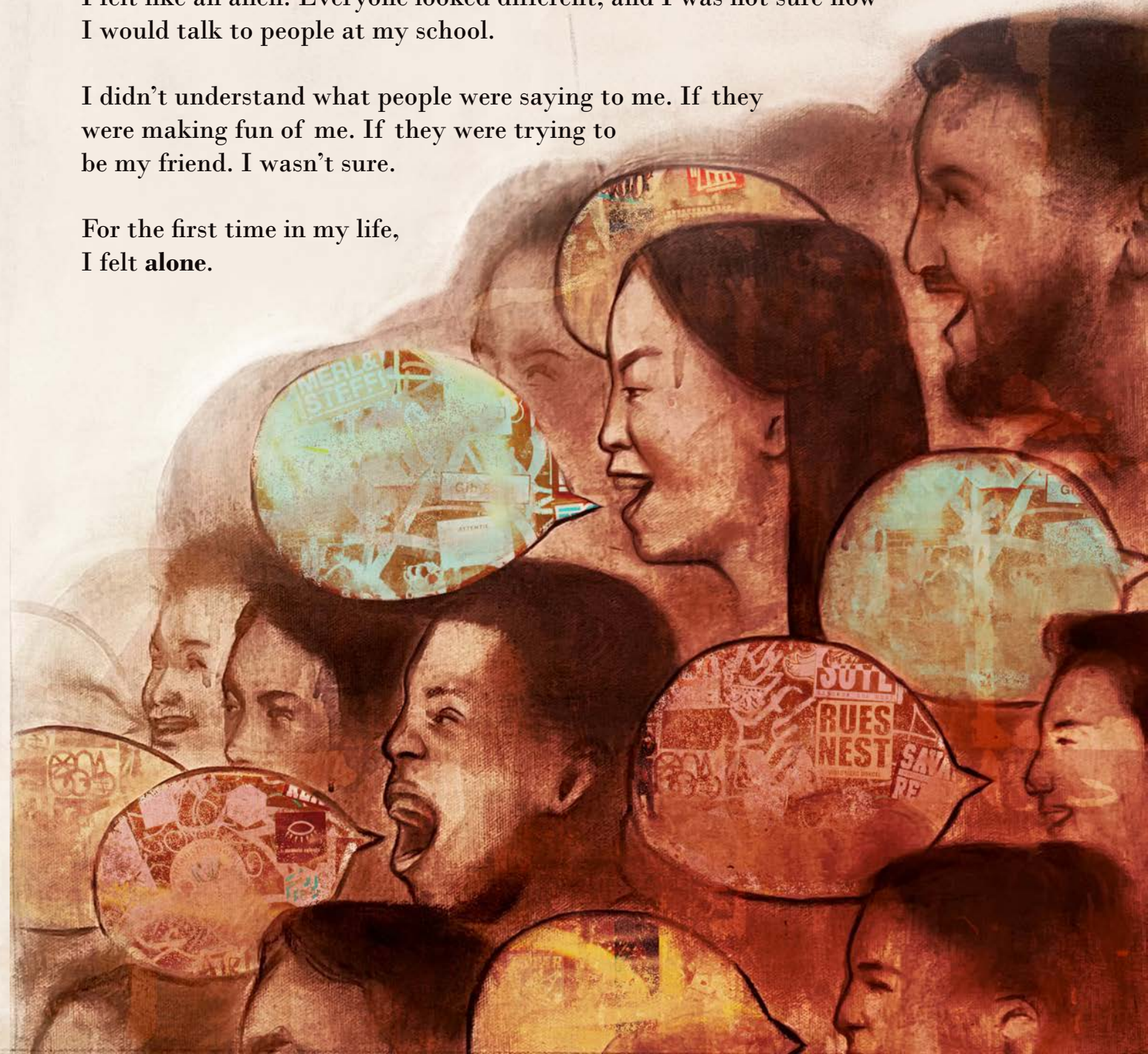
My English was not that good, and I knew that I would have a hard time making friends.



I felt like an alien. Everyone looked different, and I was not sure how I would talk to people at my school.

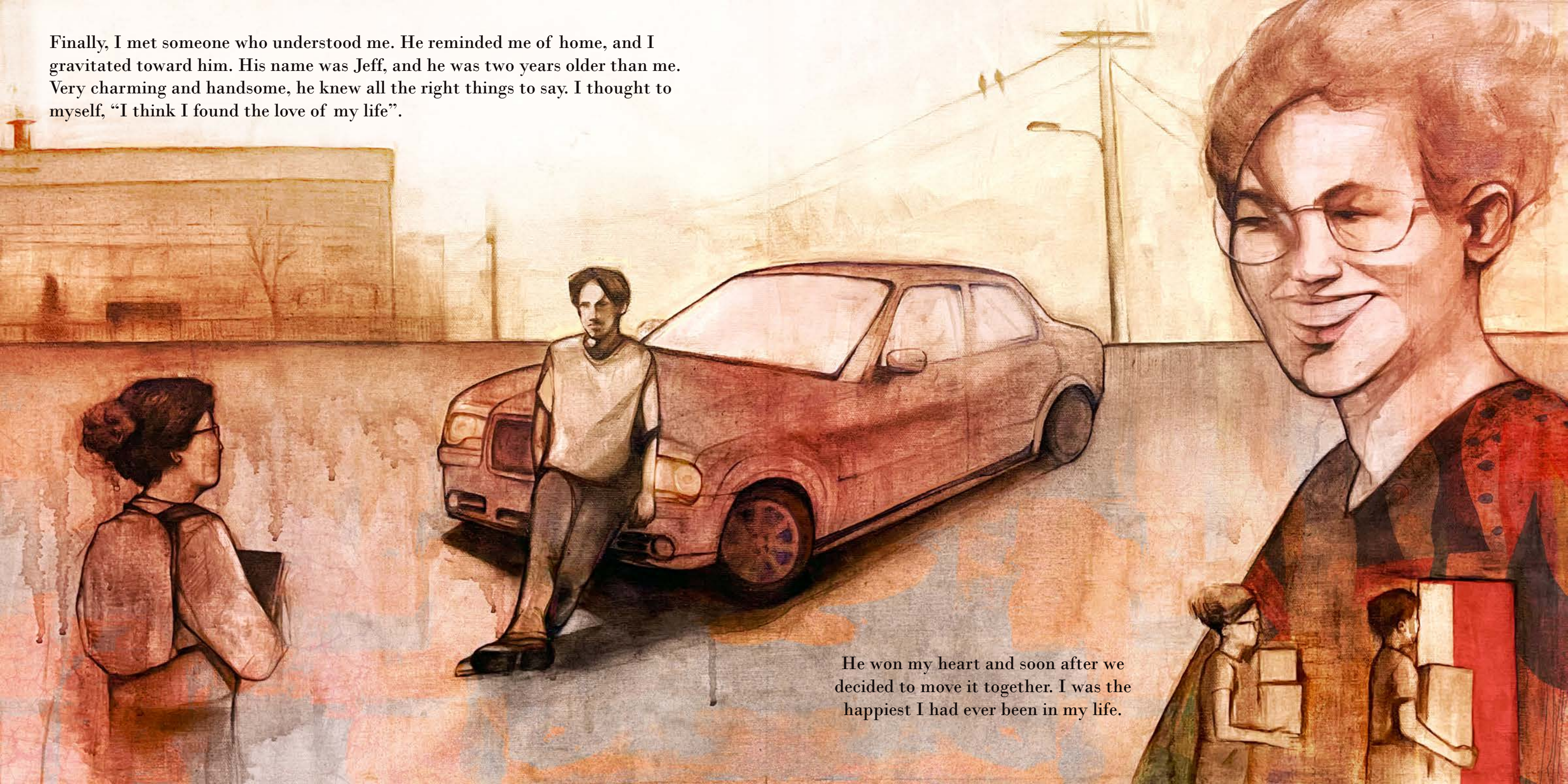
I didn't understand what people were saying to me. If they were making fun of me. If they were trying to be my friend. I wasn't sure.

For the first time in my life, I felt **alone**.





Finally, I met someone who understood me. He reminded me of home, and I gravitated toward him. His name was Jeff, and he was two years older than me. Very charming and handsome, he knew all the right things to say. I thought to myself, "I think I found the love of my life".



He won my heart and soon after we decided to move it together. I was the happiest I had ever been in my life.

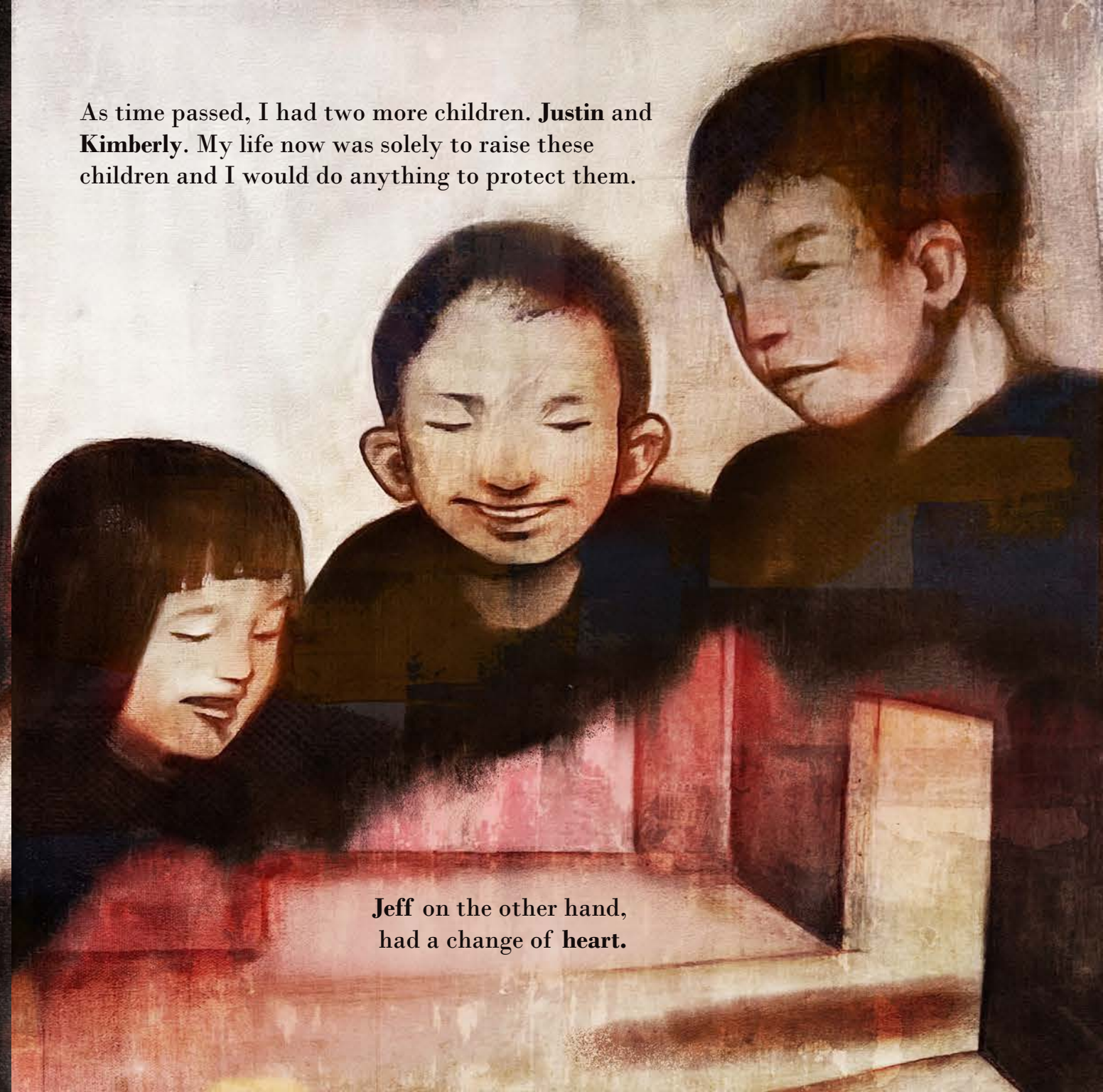


Soon after the move, I found out I was pregnant with my first child. I was overjoyed but also scared. I always knew I wanted a family, and I was glad it was with Jeff, but I was still young, and I doubted whether I would be a good mother.




I named my first son **Kevin**.

As time passed, I had two more children. **Justin** and **Kimberly**. My life now was solely to raise these children and I would do anything to protect them.



**Jeff** on the other hand, had a change of heart.





Over the years of living with him,  
I was physically and emotionally  
abused. I had pushed it aside because I  
was blinded by love. I wanted a perfect  
family, and I did not want my children  
to grow up without their parents the  
way that I had.

I told myself over and over to **be strong**  
for the family.

But one night, I took one too many  
punches.

Jeff was arrested and had been taken to **jail**.

I did not know what to do after that. I had lost the home I had built with  
Jeff and was too ashamed to move back in with my mother. Not knowing  
where to stay, the police had sent my children and me to a shelter.



**WELCOME**

**TRANSITIONAL  
LIVING  
SHELTER**

Living in the shelters almost felt like I was starting my life over again. All the people that I had known were gone again.

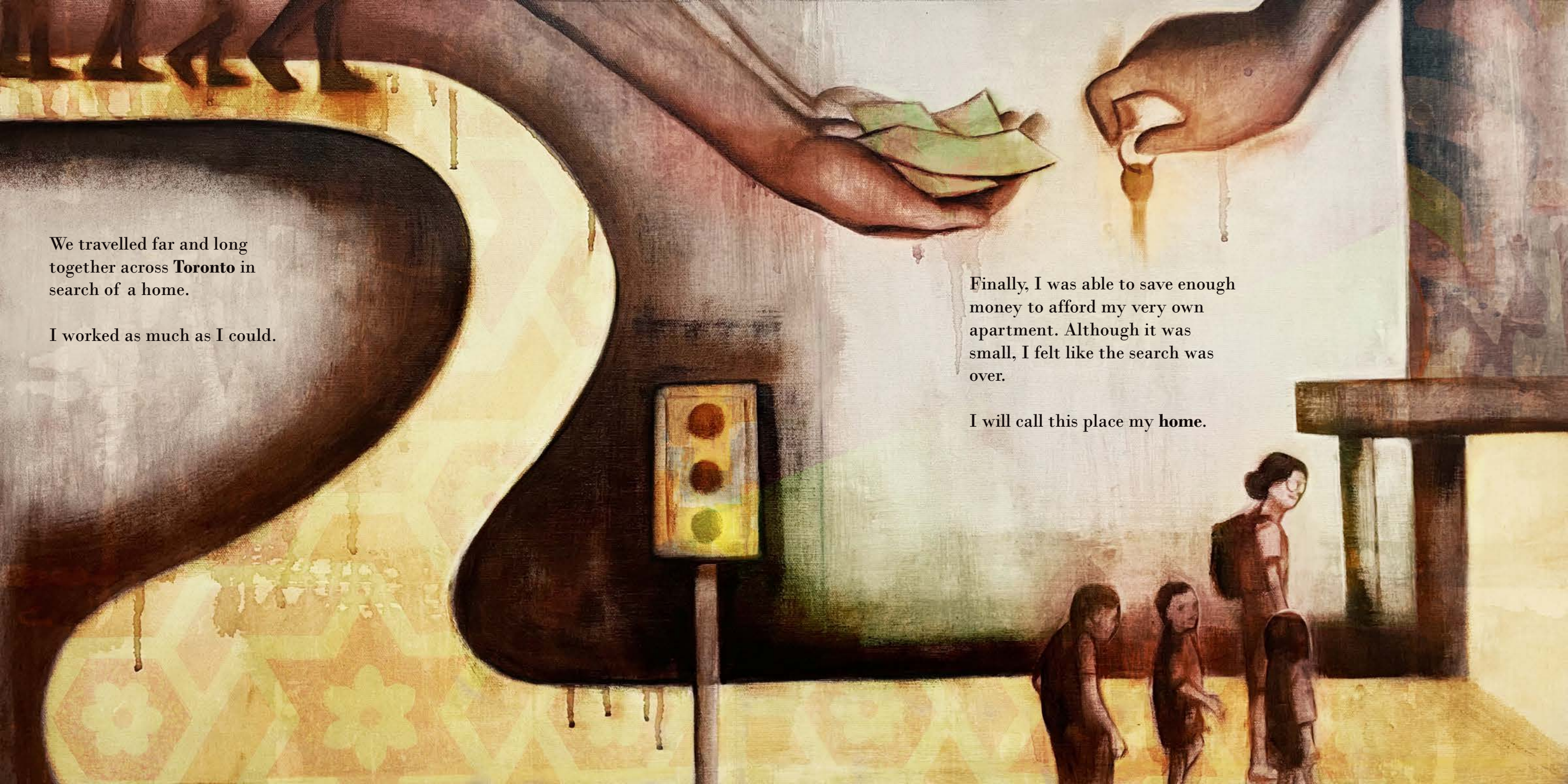
The only difference was I had my three children with me and that gave me comfort and motivation to keep going. I was determined to find my home again.

Since we could only stay at a shelter for a certain amount of time, we traveled to different shelters across Toronto. We visited many food banks.

I did everything I could to provide for my children.







We travelled far and long  
together across **Toronto** in  
search of a home.

I worked as much as I could.

Finally, I was able to save enough  
money to afford my very own  
apartment. Although it was  
small, I felt like the search was  
over.

I will call this place my **home**.





For the first time in my life, I truly felt like I had found my home. My home was with my children.

I am so happy with my decisions and I wouldn't change a thing. I became the person that I dreamed to be, a **strong** and **independent** woman.

Life is full of surprises and you never know where it will lead you.



**J.**Ang explores a young woman's immigration to Canada. Facing the hardships of becoming a young mother while experiencing homelessness and domestic violence, Ang's journey is a story of overcoming challenges in search of a place to call home.