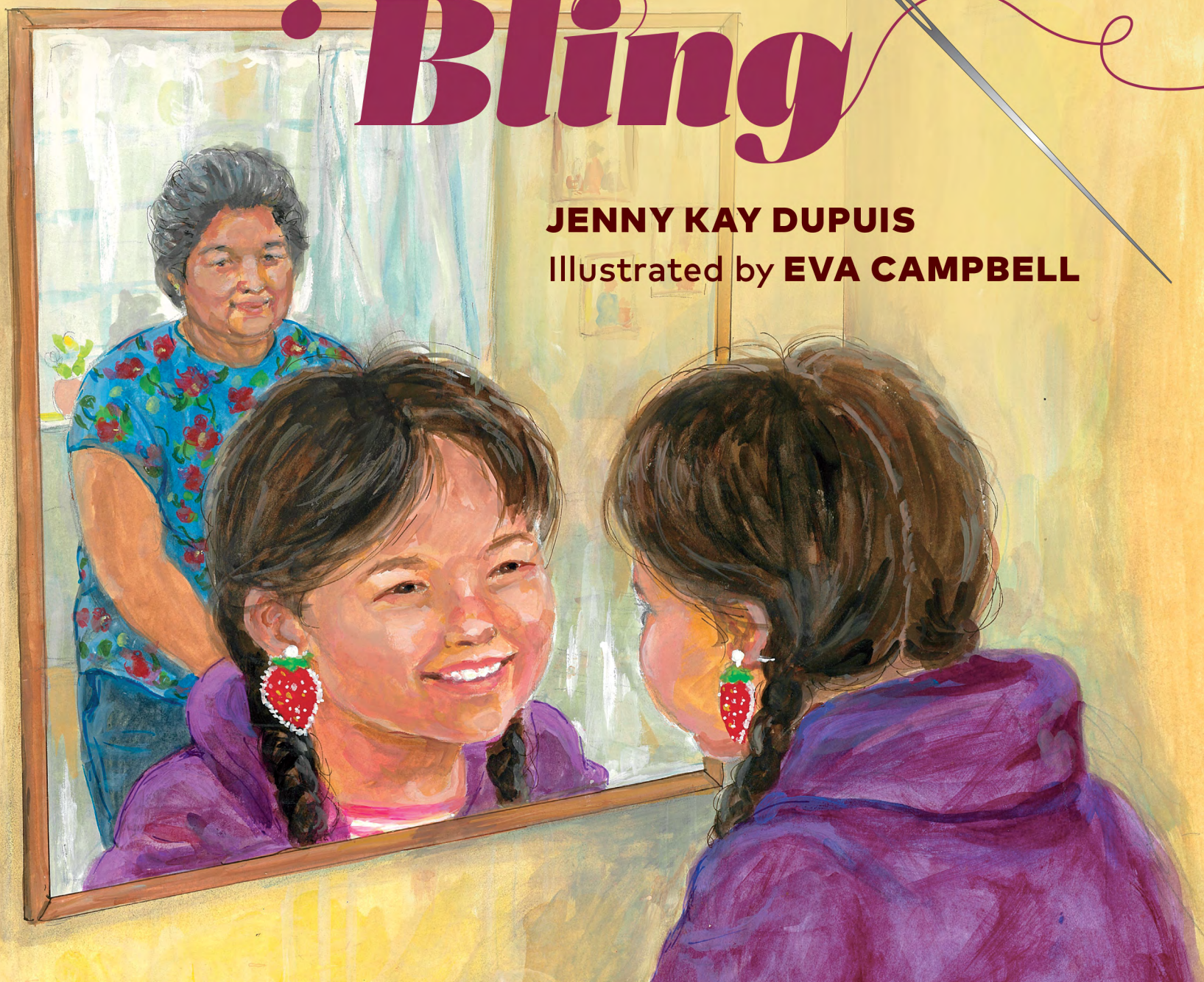


From the bestselling co-author of *I Am Not a Number*

# Heart Berry Bling

**JENNY KAY DUPUIS**

Illustrated by **EVA CAMPBELL**











*For all First Nations women and their descendants who are reclaiming their status and finding their way back home. —JKD*

*To the grandmothers who share their knowledge and love with their grandchildren, and to Gabriel. —EC*

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**JENNY KAY DUPUIS**

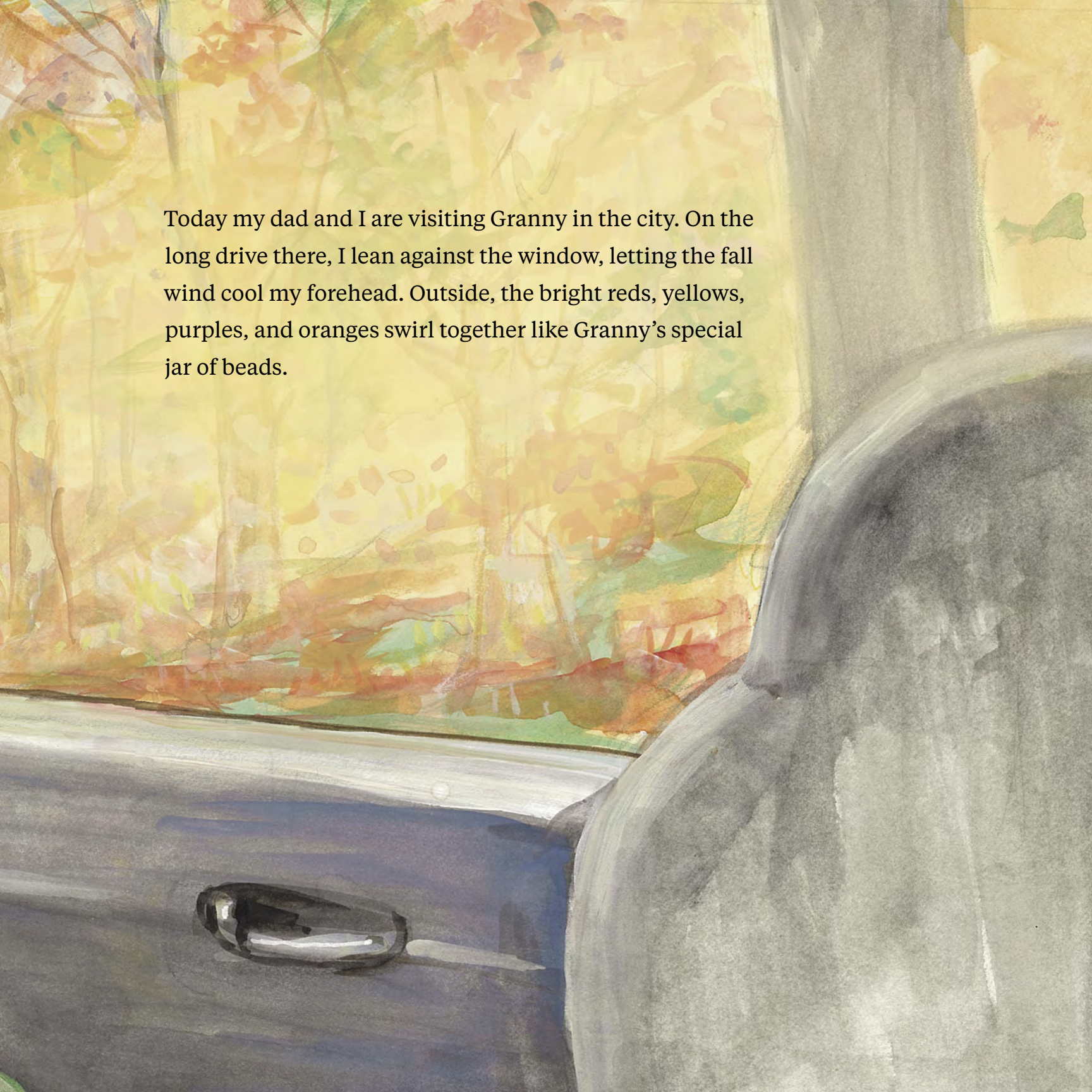
**EVA CAMPBELL**

  
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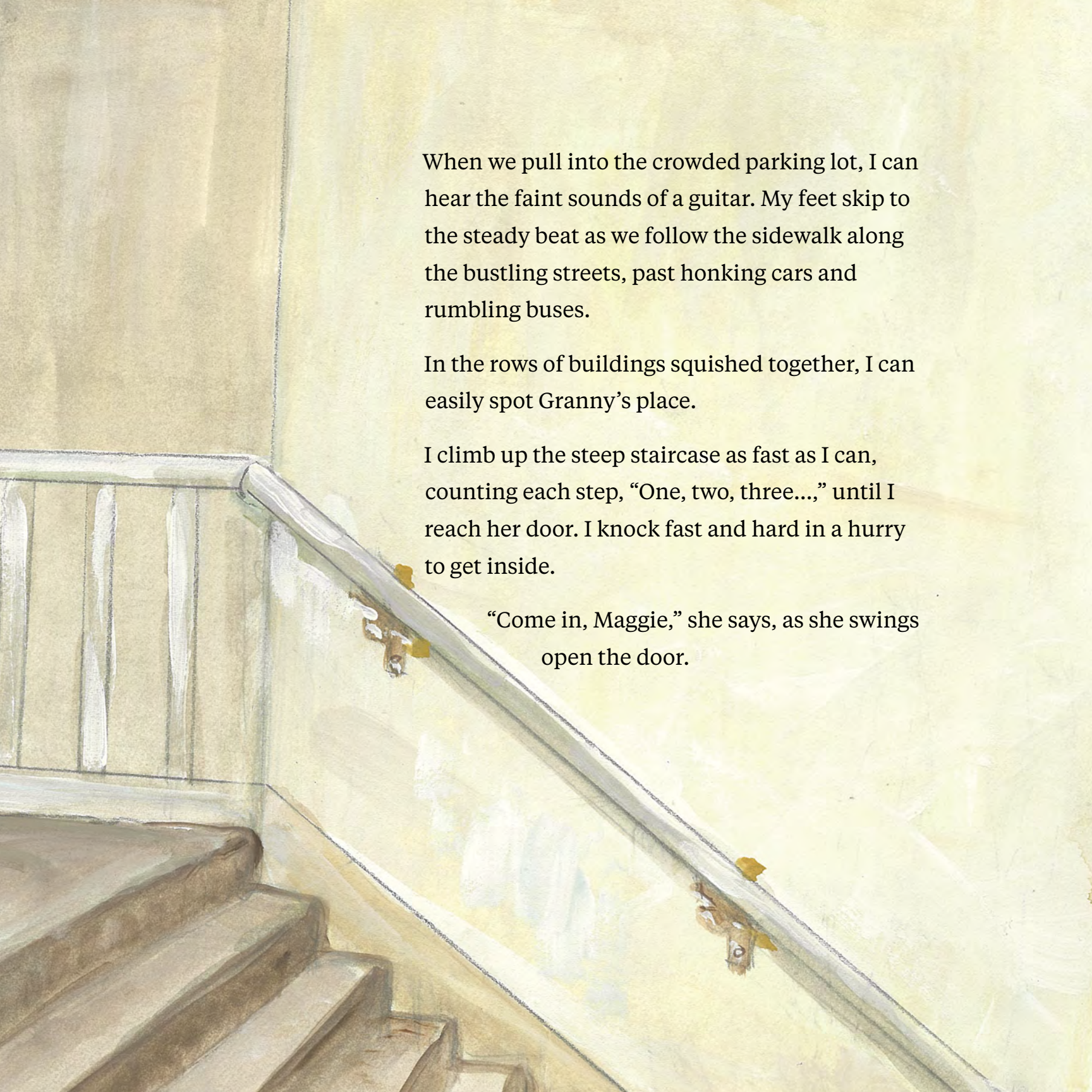


Today my dad and I are visiting Granny in the city. On the long drive there, I lean against the window, letting the fall wind cool my forehead. Outside, the bright reds, yellows, purples, and oranges swirl together like Granny's special jar of beads.







A watercolor illustration of a staircase. The stairs are made of light brown wood and lead upwards from the bottom left. A wooden railing with vertical balusters runs along the left side of the stairs. The wall is a pale yellow color with soft, painterly textures. The text is centered on the right side of the page.

When we pull into the crowded parking lot, I can hear the faint sounds of a guitar. My feet skip to the steady beat as we follow the sidewalk along the bustling streets, past honking cars and rumbling buses.

In the rows of buildings squished together, I can easily spot Granny's place.

I climb up the steep staircase as fast as I can, counting each step, "One, two, three..." until I reach her door. I knock fast and hard in a hurry to get inside.

"Come in, Maggie," she says, as she swings open the door.



Like always, Granny's on the phone chatting to her sister. I can never understand what they're talking about in Anishinaabemowin. I don't speak it. Neither does my dad. It stopped at my granny. I still try to understand. "Baamaapii," Granny says, hanging up the phone.





The smell of freshly made fry bread fills the kitchen. I run the tips of my fingers through the magnificent rainbow of beads scattered over the table. Lime green, sky blue, sparkling grape, canary yellow. “Oh, I just love these red ones,” I whisper.

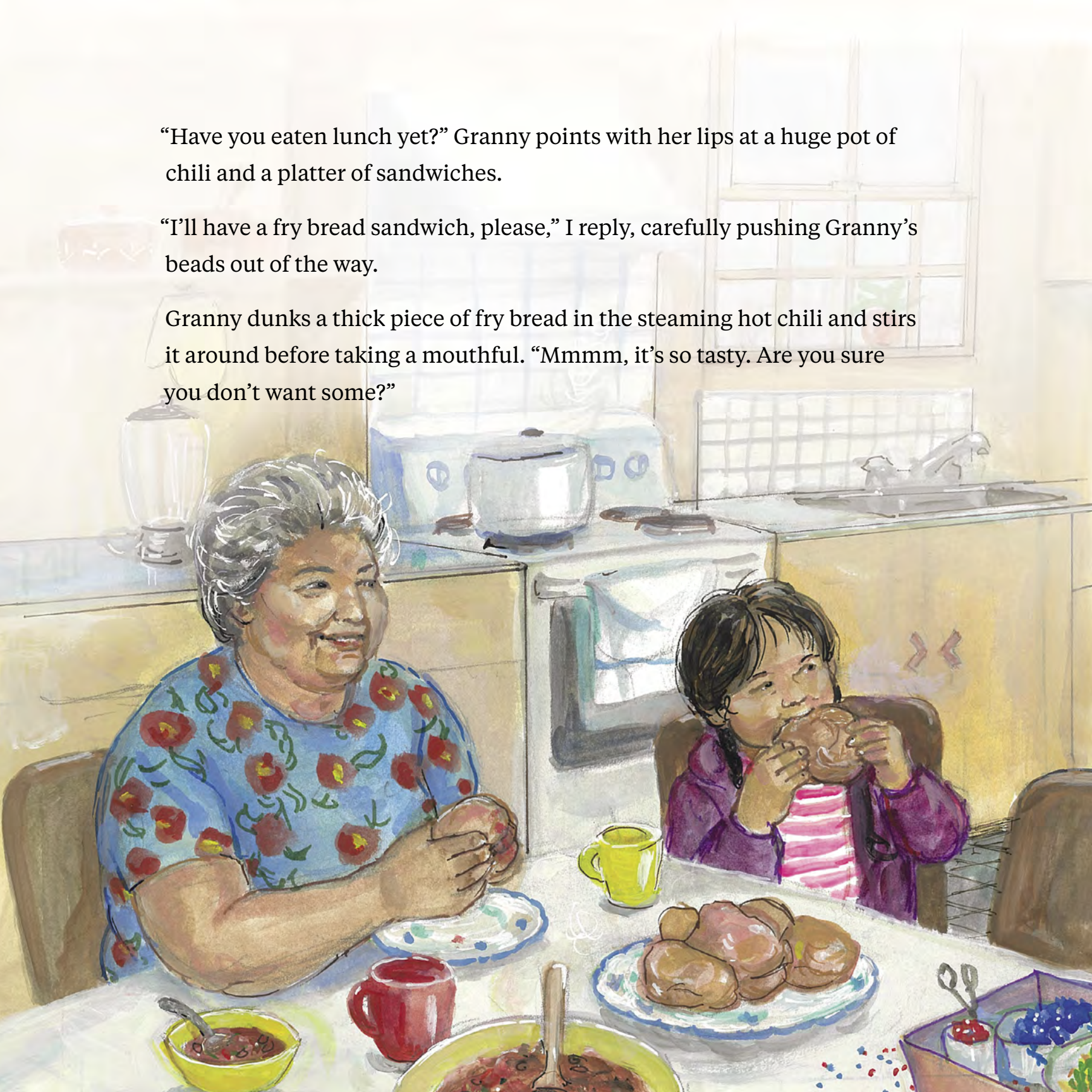




“Have you eaten lunch yet?” Granny points with her lips at a huge pot of chili and a platter of sandwiches.

“I’ll have a fry bread sandwich, please,” I reply, carefully pushing Granny’s beads out of the way.

Granny dunks a thick piece of fry bread in the steaming hot chili and stirs it around before taking a mouthful. “Mmmm, it’s so tasty. Are you sure you don’t want some?”







“I’m sure it’s good. But I just want a sandwich.” I gently press the warm pieces of fluffy bread together and take a huge bite. Delicious smooth, creamy peanut butter with mashed ripe bananas and crispy bacon—sweet and salty all at once. It’s the best!

Dad grabs a sandwich, wraps it in a napkin, and dashes out the door to run some city errands. When the door clicks shut, the room fills with silence.







Wiggling around in my chair, I pick up a long strand of bright-red beads, dangling it in front of the window to catch the sunlight.

“Be careful!” Granny gasps as the tiny glass droplets slip off the strand and bounce onto the floor.

“Oh no!” I scramble to pick up the rolling beads getting trapped in the cuts and cracks of the vinyl tiles.

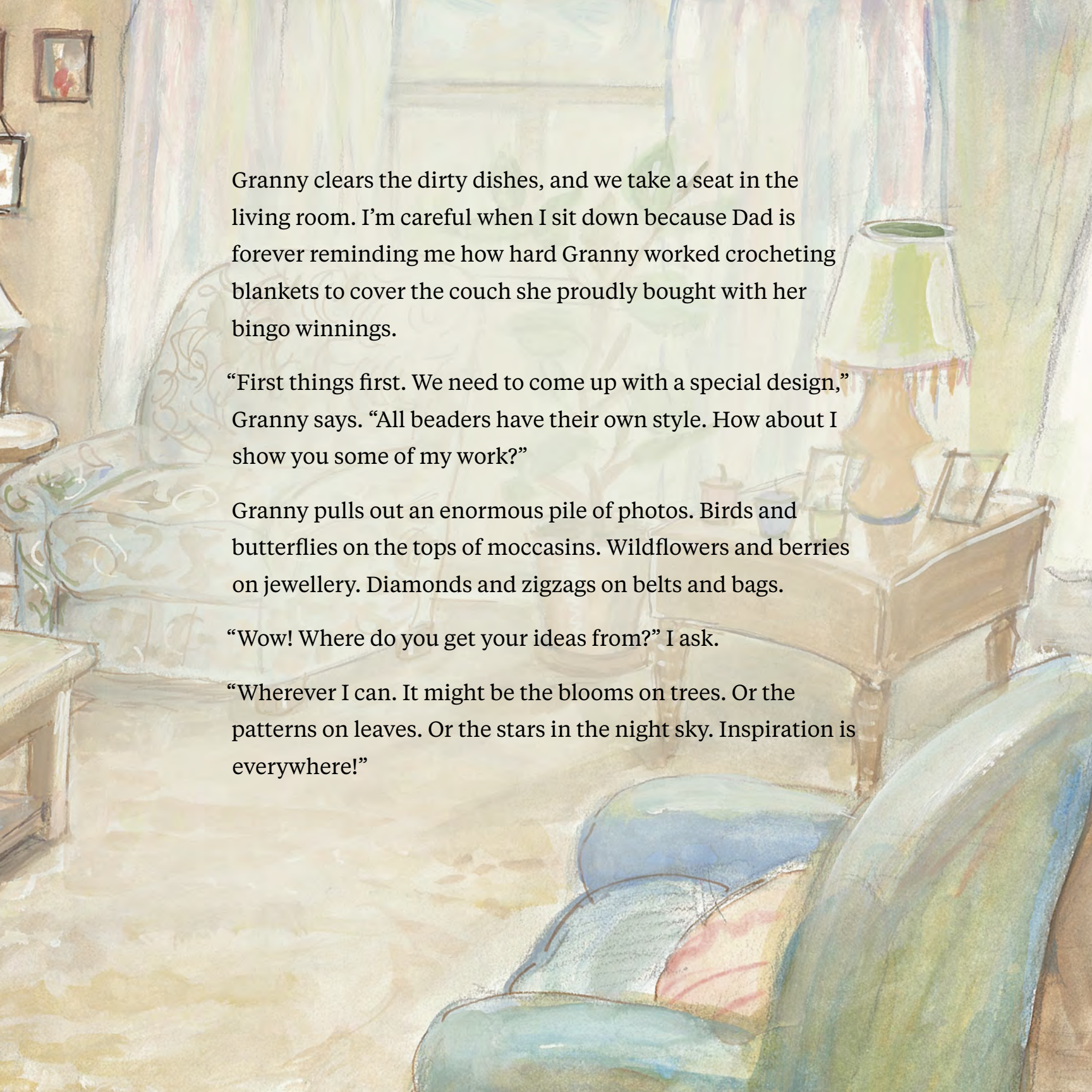
Granny sweeps up the scattered beads and pours them into a glass jam jar labelled “Bead Soup.”

“Is it time to bead, Maggie?” she says with a wink.









Granny clears the dirty dishes, and we take a seat in the living room. I'm careful when I sit down because Dad is forever reminding me how hard Granny worked crocheting blankets to cover the couch she proudly bought with her bingo winnings.

“First things first. We need to come up with a special design,” Granny says. “All beaders have their own style. How about I show you some of my work?”

Granny pulls out an enormous pile of photos. Birds and butterflies on the tops of moccasins. Wildflowers and berries on jewellery. Diamonds and zigzags on belts and bags.

“Wow! Where do you get your ideas from?” I ask.

“Wherever I can. It might be the blooms on trees. Or the patterns on leaves. Or the stars in the night sky. Inspiration is everywhere!”







I notice an old photo buried in the stack. “Who’s this?” I ask.

“That’s me. Back when I lived on the reserve.”

Granny never talked about living anywhere but the city.

“I married your grandpa,” she explains. “He wasn’t First Nations. So, back then, under the law, I was stripped of my Indian status and had to leave the community. Women like me lost their status when they married someone who wasn’t First Nations, even though men didn’t.”

“Wait. So, you weren’t First Nations anymore?”

