

When We Were Alone

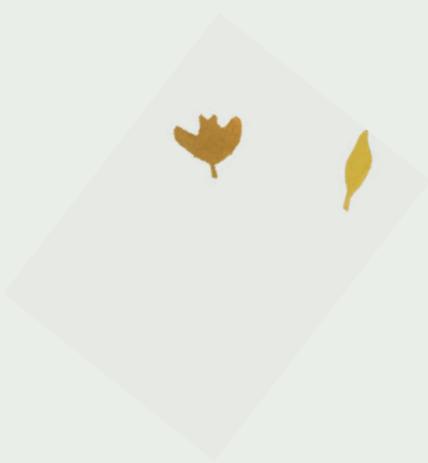


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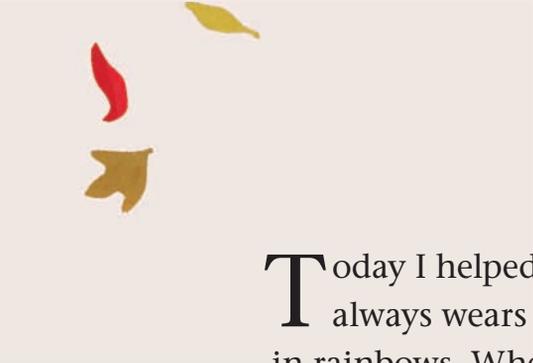


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HIGHWATER
PRESS



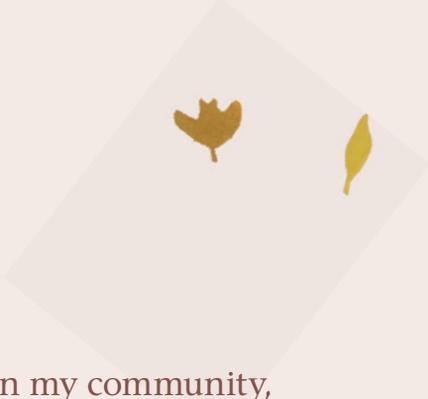
Today I helped my kókom in her flower garden. She always wears colourful clothes. It's like she dresses in rainbows. When she bent down to prune some of the flowers, I couldn't even see her because she blended in with them. She was like a chameleon.

“Nókom, why do you wear so many colours?” I asked.

Nókom said, “Well, Nósisim...”







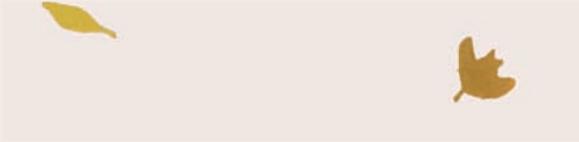
When I was your age, at home in my community, my friends and I wore many different colours. But at the school I went to, far away from home, they gave us different clothes to wear. All the children were dressed the same, and our clothes weren't colourful at all. We all mixed together like storm clouds.

“Why did you have to dress like that?” I asked.

“They didn't like that we wore such beautiful colours,” Nókóm said. “They wanted us to look like everybody else.”







But sometimes in the fall, when we were alone, and the leaves had turned to their warm autumn hues, we would roll around on the ground. We would pile the leaves over the clothes they had given us, and we would be colourful again.

And this made us happy.

“Now,” Nókóm said, “I always wear the most beautiful colours.”





After I helped with the flowers, we went over to the back gate. There were vines covering the gate, and they reached all the way to the ground. When my kókom turned to fix the latch, I saw that her braid hung almost as low as the vines. It was like she had a tail.

“Nókom, why do you wear your hair so long?” I asked.

Nókom said, “Well, Nósisim...”





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