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Charlie's Balloons

A Story of
Big Emotions

Written by
Sarah Degonse

Illustrated by
Élodie Duhaméau

Translated by
Arielle Aaronson



SARAH DEGONSE was born in France and lives in Montreal. She loves notebooks of all kinds, newly sharpened pencils, and the innocence of youth and books. She splits her time between working in children's publishing and producing collaborations for literature and parenting blogs. She published the fantasy trilogy *Åniå* with Éditions Fides. *Charlie's Balloons* is her first children's book.

ÉLODIE DUHAMEAU was born in France and lives in Montreal. She studied graphic arts in Paris and began her career as a graphic designer and art director, first in France and then in Quebec. Several years after moving to Montreal, she was introduced to the world of children's publishing where she discovered her talents as an illustrator for both books and marketing materials. Illustration is a magical playground! Today, she is both an author and illustrator.

ARIELLE AARONSON is a French-to-English translator of novels, films, and more. Her translation of Marie-Renée Lavoie's *Autopsy of a Boring Wife* was longlisted for the 2021 Canada Reads book of the year. Arielle lives in Montreal, Quebec, with her family.

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Second Story Press

In my mind and in my body, all my emotions fight to take up as much space as they can.

Hi! I'm Charlie.



There are so many!
How can they all fit?

I like to picture my feelings
as balloons. Feelings and
balloons have a lot in
common!

Some feelings are so light
they just float away...



...other times, they're so heavy it's
like they're filled with water.

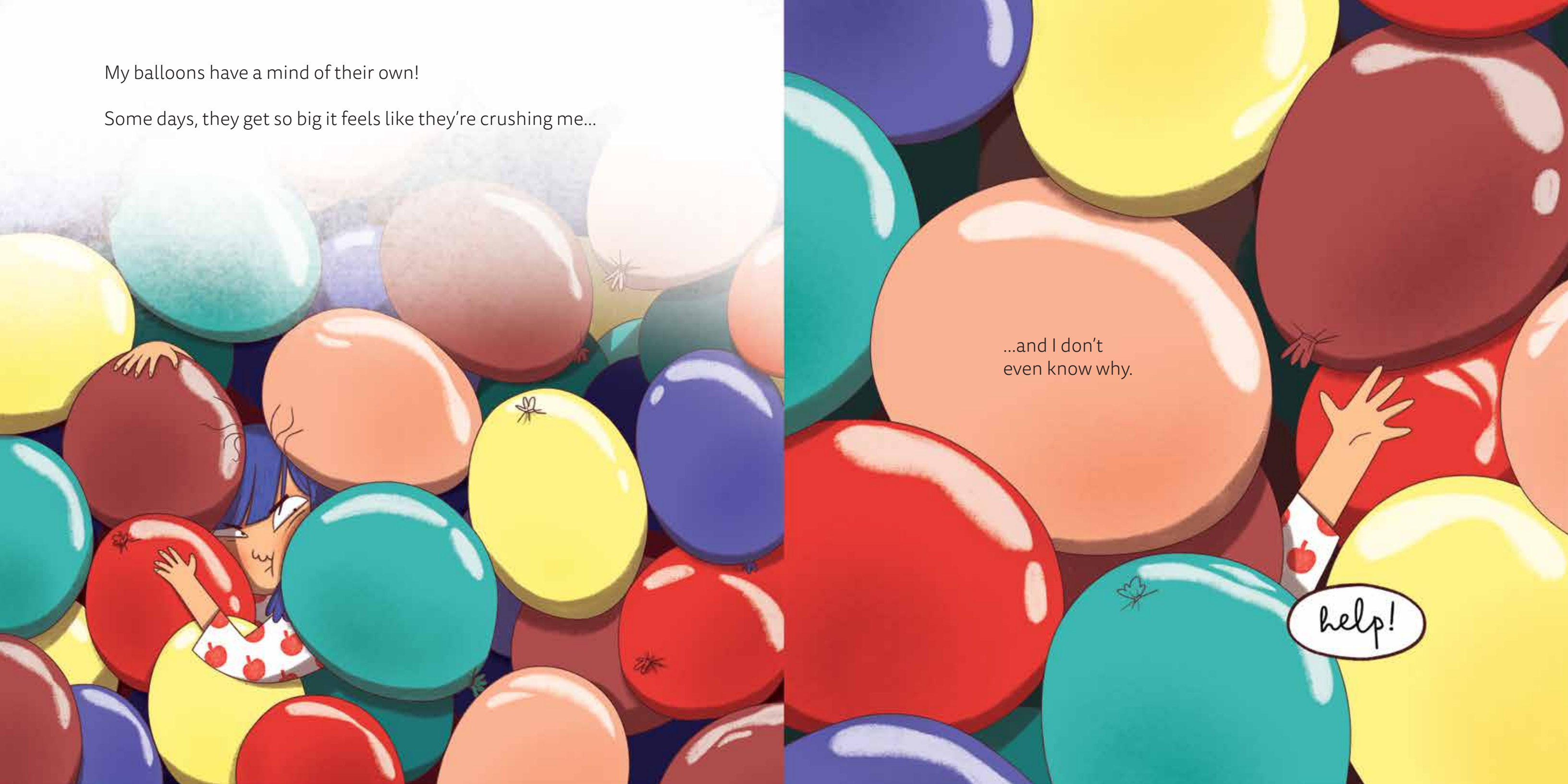


My balloons have a mind of their own!

Some days, they get so big it feels like they're crushing me...

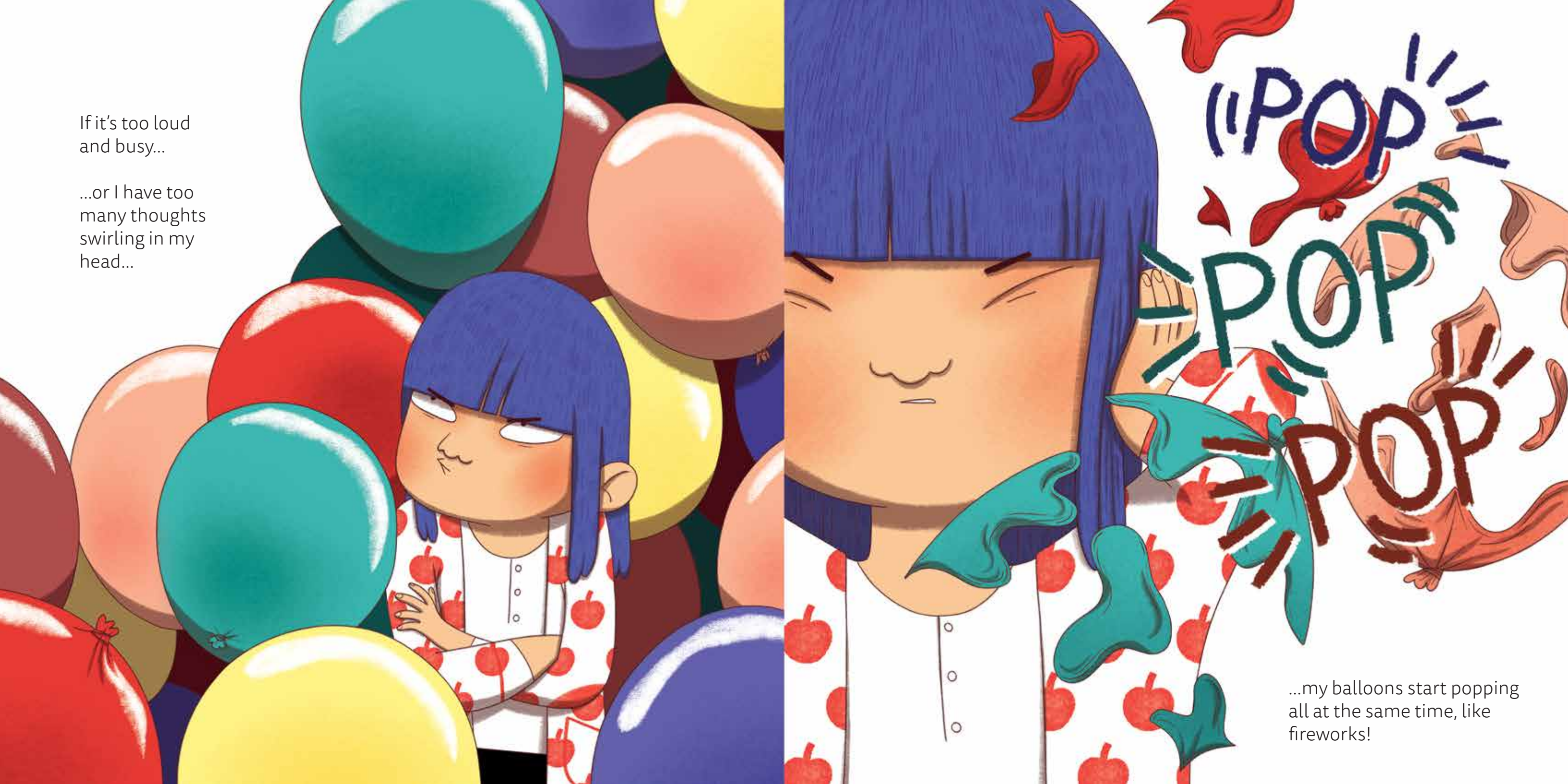
...and I don't
even know why.

help!



If it's too loud
and busy...

...or I have too
many thoughts
swirling in my
head...



...my balloons start popping
all at the same time, like
fireworks!

My anxious balloon appears every time I start to doubt myself.

At school, when I don't know the answer to a question Ms. Marie asks...

what if she calls on me and i say the wrong thing?



At home, when I'm about to leave for Grandma and Grandpa's and I can't find Max, my favorite stuffed animal...

what if we're late and it's all my fault?



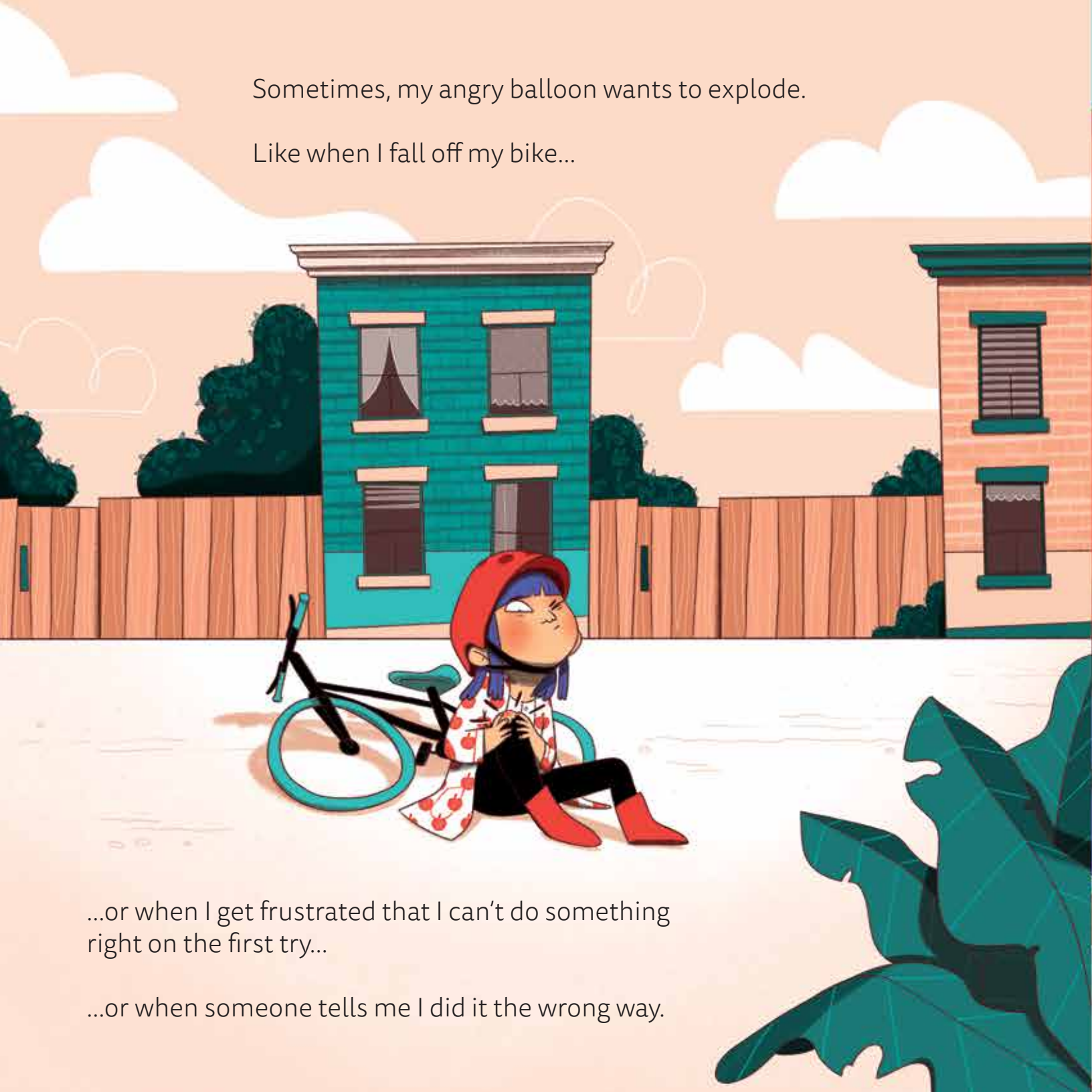
Even in drama class, when it's my line...

what if everyone laughs at me?



Sometimes, my angry balloon wants to explode.

Like when I fall off my bike...



...or when I get frustrated that I can't do something right on the first try...

...or when someone tells me I did it the wrong way.



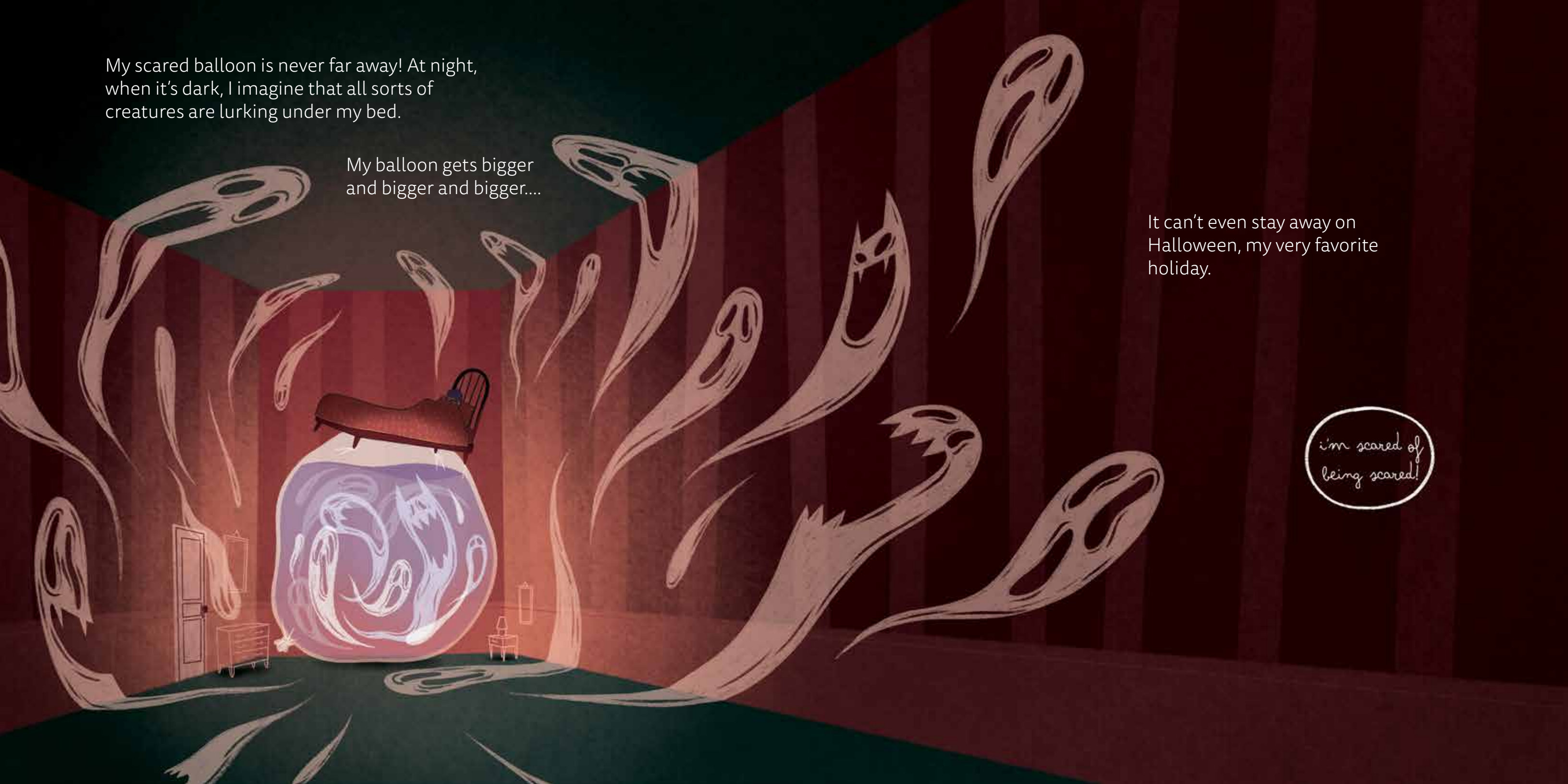
It makes me so mad I turn as red as a tomato.

My scared balloon is never far away! At night, when it's dark, I imagine that all sorts of creatures are lurking under my bed.

My balloon gets bigger and bigger and bigger....

It can't even stay away on Halloween, my very favorite holiday.

*i'm scared of
being scared!*





My empathetic balloon turns up whenever I see that one of my friends is sad.

It's like an elephant is sitting on my heart.

I can almost feel their pain, and I rush to comfort them.



My happy balloon fills up the most.



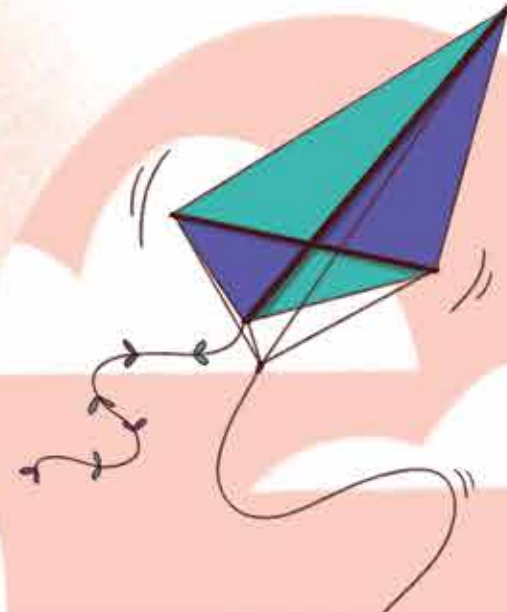
When Ms. Marie lets me sit next to my friend Julia...



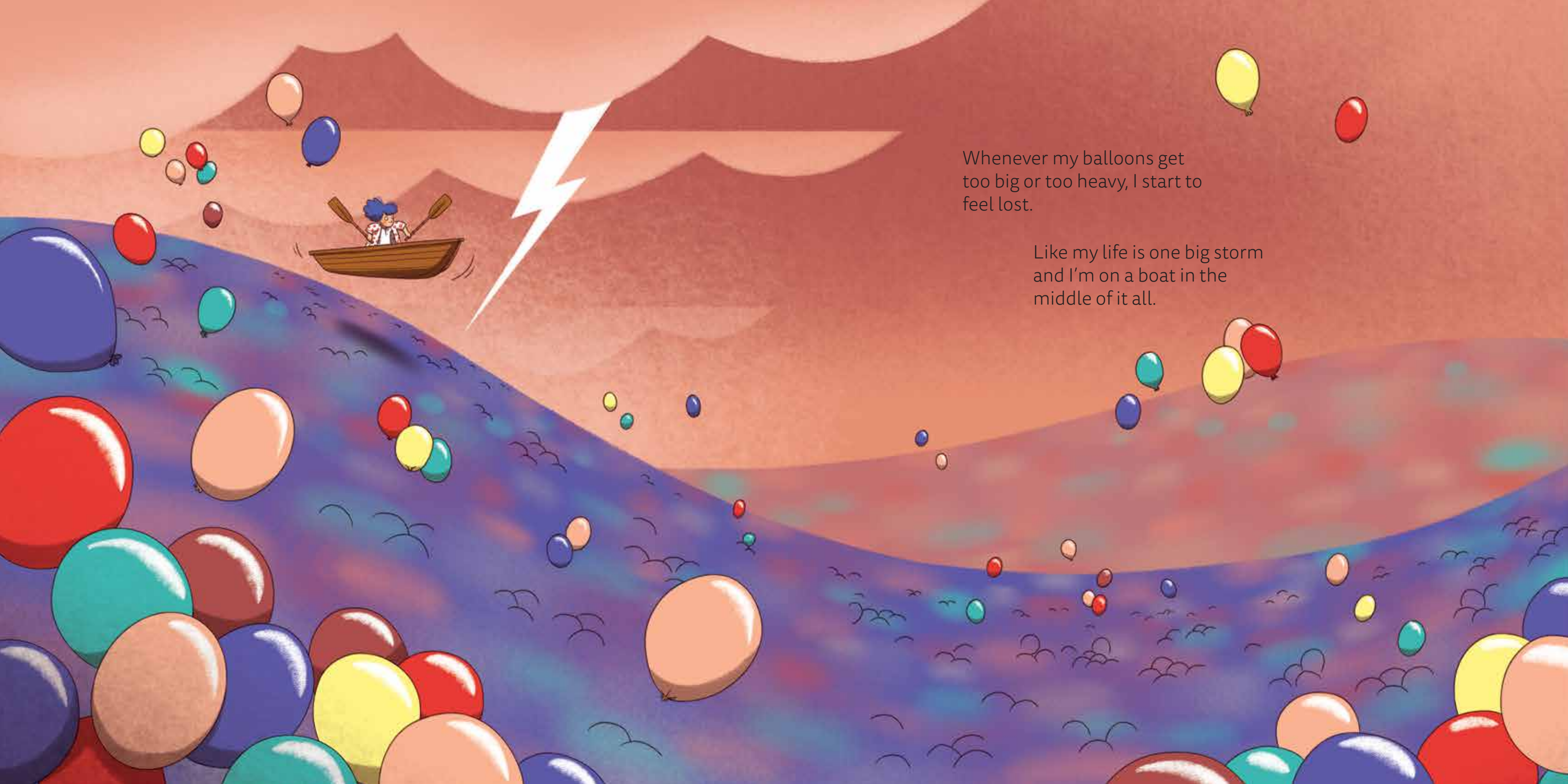
...when my little sister Louise gives me a hug...



...or when I'm playing at the park with my friends...



...all my balloons fly away, and I feel like shouting, "Life is wonderful!"



Whenever my balloons get too big or too heavy, I start to feel lost.

Like my life is one big storm and I'm on a boat in the middle of it all.

People around me don't always understand what's going on in my head.



you're being silly!

They have no idea that my balloons take up so much space.

that's no reason to cry!

My eyes fill with water, just like my balloons...

calm down!

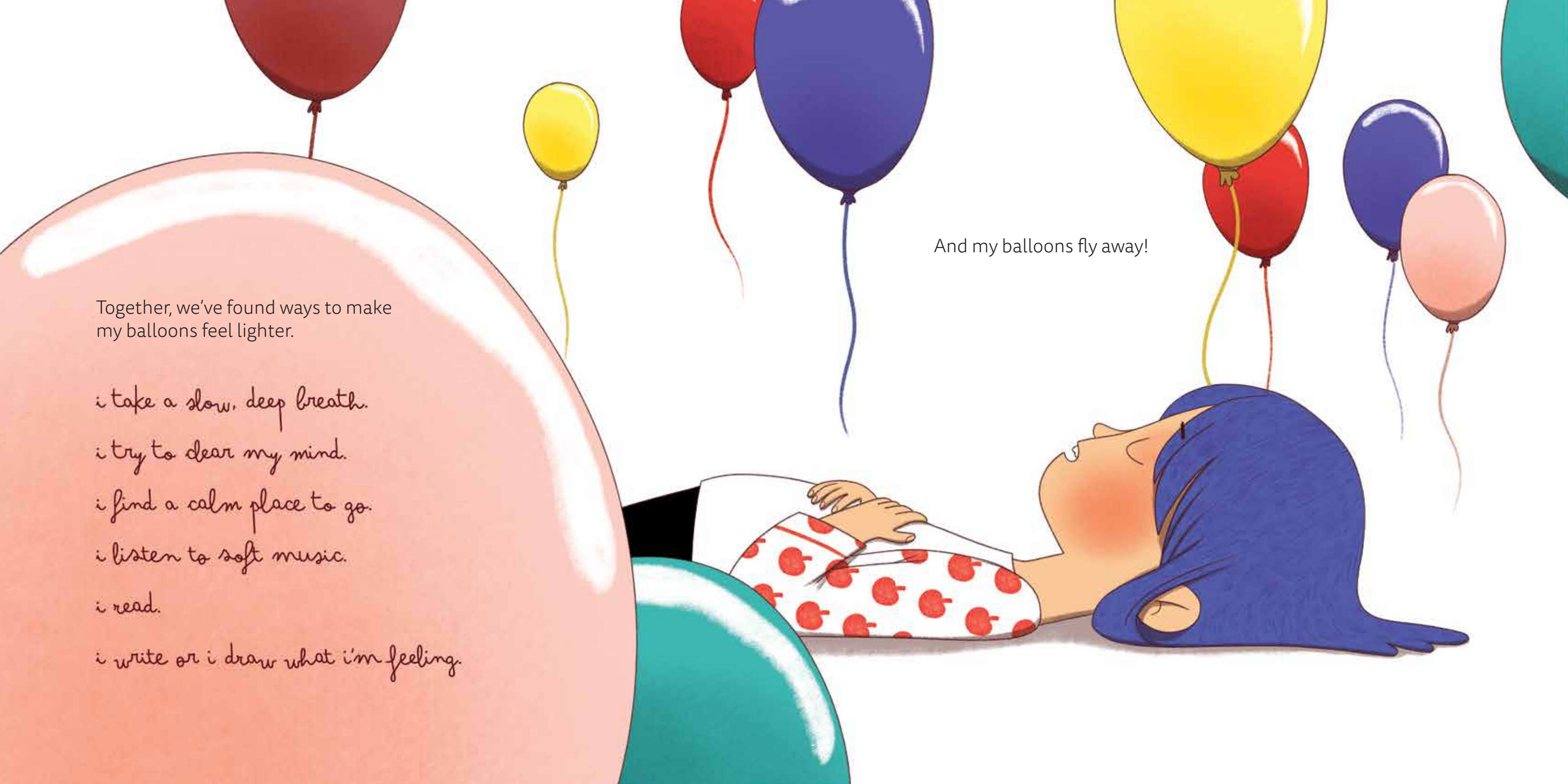
you're acting like a baby!





If I start to feel overwhelmed by all these feelings, I run to find my mom or my dad.

Being in their arms makes me feel calm again.

A woman with long, wavy blue hair is lying on her back on a light-colored surface. She is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt with a red polka-dot pattern and a black top underneath. Her eyes are closed, and she has a peaceful expression. Several colorful balloons (red, blue, yellow, pink, and teal) are floating around her. A large, light pink balloon is on the left side of the frame. The background is plain white.

Together, we've found ways to make
my balloons feel lighter.

i take a slow, deep breath.

i try to clear my mind.

i find a calm place to go.

i listen to soft music.

i read.

i write or i draw what i'm feeling.

And my balloons fly away!



I was told that being highly sensitive just means you experience emotions more intensely.

Now, I understand.



Being highly sensitive is kind of like having a superpower.

Thanks to my balloons, I am...

...lots of other things too!



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For Charlie. Your emotions are your greatest strength; cherish them, and don't ever stop looking at the world with love.

To any child, highly sensitive or not, who has ever felt overwhelmed by their feelings.

S.D.



I didn't figure out that I was highly sensitive until I was an adult. Once I did, so many things started to make sense. I wrote this story for my daughter, who is highly sensitive like me. I want her to love that part of herself and never feel like she has to hide it.

This isn't a reference book or an instruction manual. It's based on my own experience, as well as my daughter's. It shows one perspective on being highly sensitive, but everyone's reality is different.

I hope this book can reassure anyone who ever feels like they're on a boat in the middle of a storm. I hope it paints a compassionate picture of this personality trait that makes us unique...and could also become our greatest strength.

Sarah





Hi! I'm Charlie.

In my mind and in my body, all my emotions
fight to take up as much space as they can.
I like to picture my feelings as balloons.
Sometimes they're so light they float away.
Other times, they're so heavy it's like they're
filled with water...

For highly sensitive kids who feel BIG feelings!



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