

IT IS BEAUTIFUL, BUT WHY?



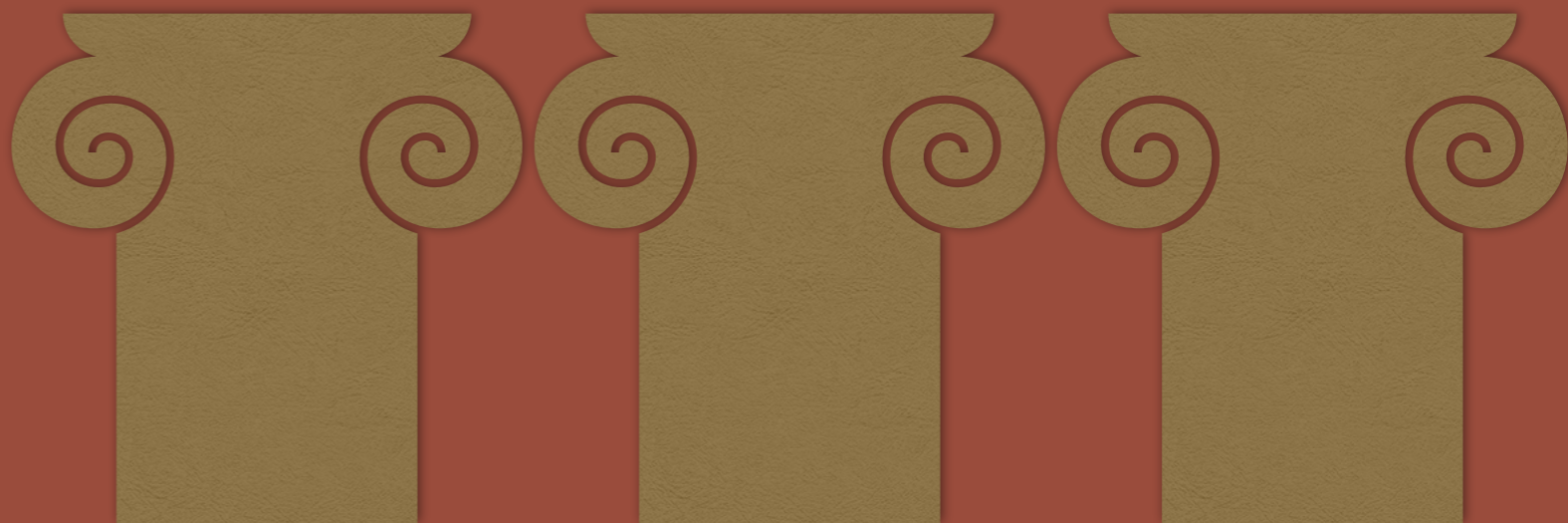
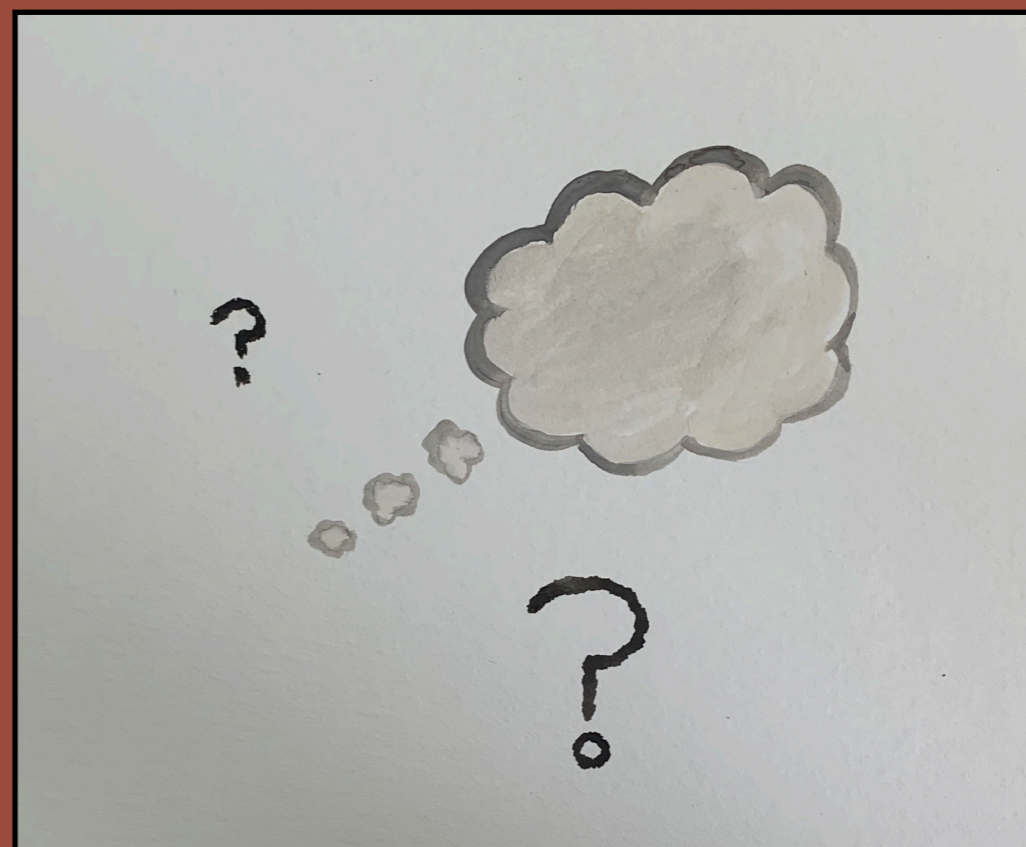
WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY ALLI REESER

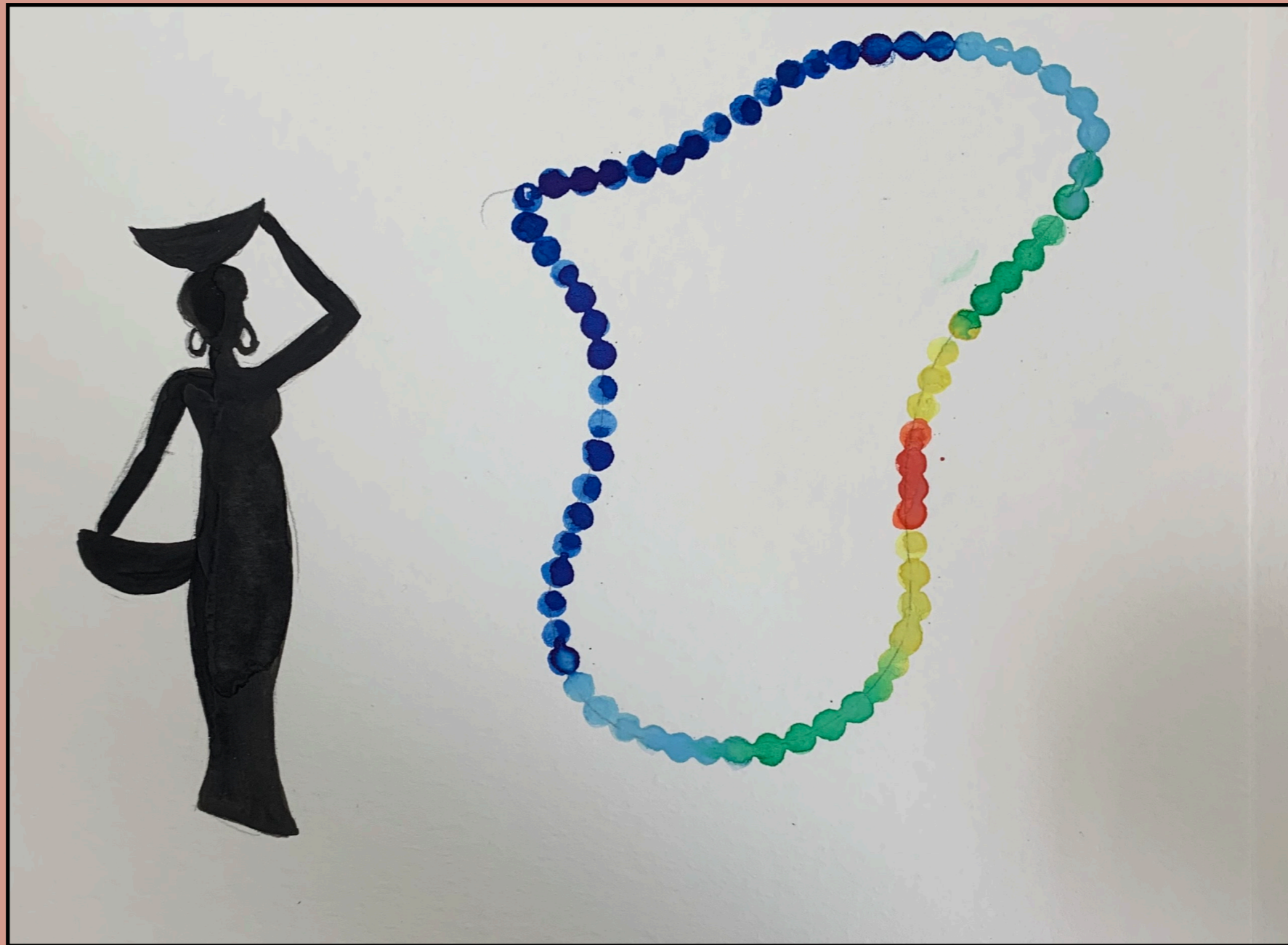




On a hot day in May, Amahle and her mother were going on a walk through the village center. It was warm, but Amahle had taken a bath that morning so she was refreshed and ready to go. She was a bright girl, only 9, and she loved to color.

As they were walking, Amahle's mind started to wonder. She looked up at her mother and wondered why her grandmother always says, "Amahle, you look exactly like your mother." Then she remembered that her friend told her, "you and your mom look alike!" But when is she *really* going to look like her mother?





Amahle glanced up at her mother, inspecting her looks. She was tall and had long hair wrapped up in a dhuku. Her dress fell down to her shin. She had big rings in her ears and a nose piercing, then around her neck was a long blue beaded necklace.

She had never thought about why her mother had the accessories on her body, but they were always there. She started looking at the other people in the village. Did they have the same jewelry as Momma?

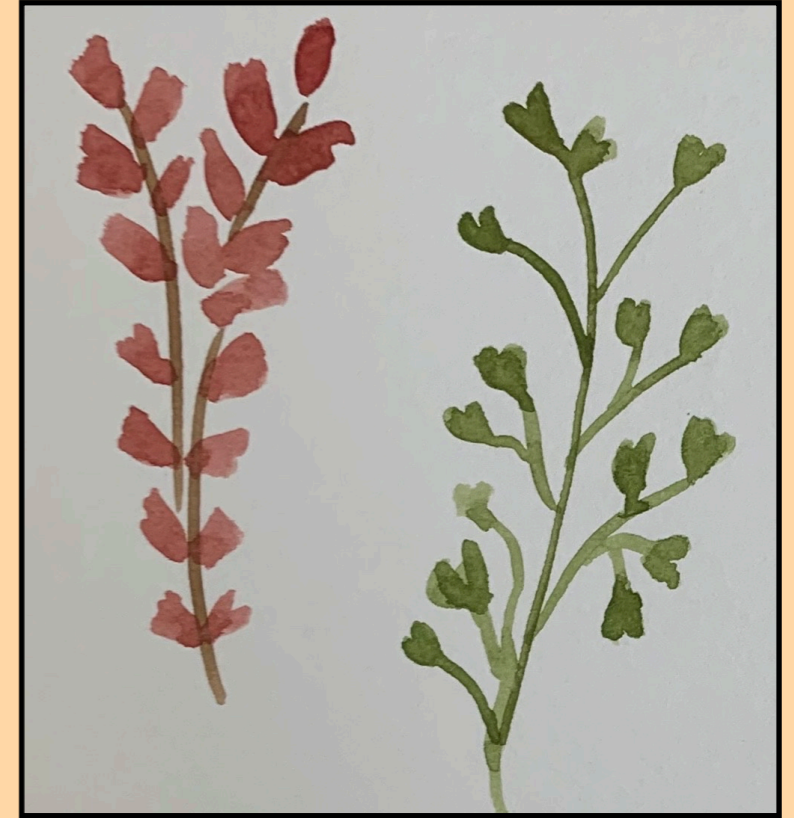
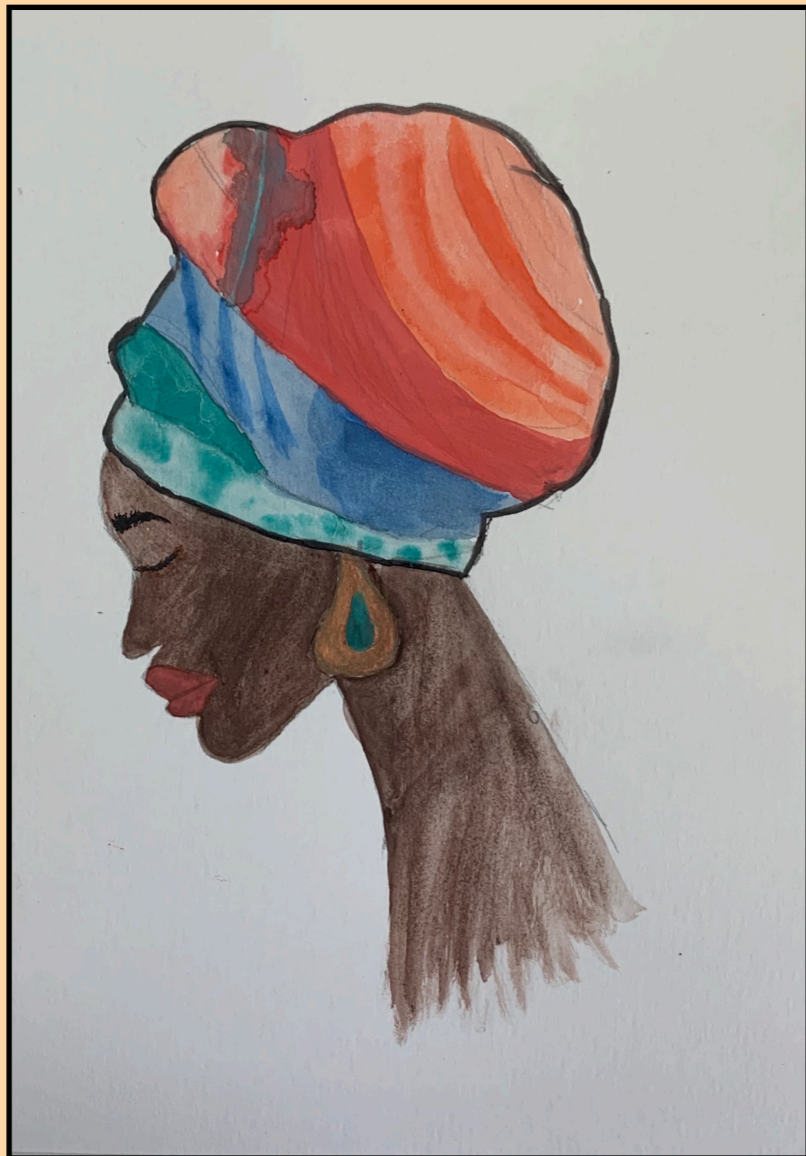


“Momma, why do you have so much jewelry on? Can I have some too?” Amahle exclaimed. “Amahle, the jewelry we wear has meaning behind it. When you grow up you will have the same jewelry as me.” she replied.



That wasn't the answer Amahle was hoping for. She wanted to look exactly like her mother. She was still curious so she asked, “But why do I have to wait? Does everyone else have to wait?”

6 Her mother responded, “Yes Amahle. The jewelry we bear as Maasai people has meaning. Different tribes and different places have meaning behind what they wear. Do you see the necklace that I wear? Your great grandmother made this for me.”



“But what meaning does it have and why can’t you make me one?” said Amahle.

“These beaded necklaces have our tribal colors on it, along with blue beads.

On my wedding day, I was given this necklace to show that I am married.” Momma explained, “Every Maasai woman wears this when the time comes. This necklace is called a Nborro and someday you will have one too.”

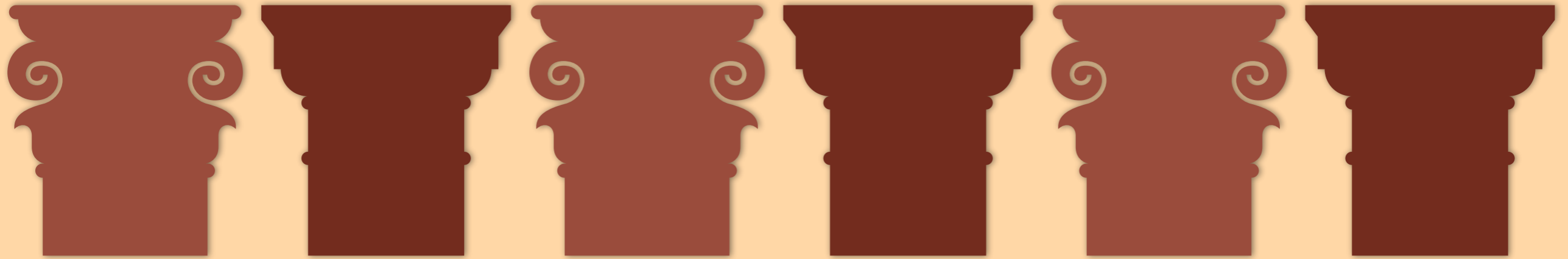


“What about the hole in your ear?”
Amahle asked, “Does that have
meaning too?”



Momma looked down at
Amahle, “Of course it does. It
shows citizenship. You will have
one too when you come of age.”

Although Momma had answered her questions, she was still curious. She wanted to know why it was so important and when she will get hers.



After a few moments another thought popped into Amahles head. “When I finally get my jewelry can I pick my favorite color?”

“Well every color has a meaning. We wear the colors to remember what we stand for.” Momma replied.

She continued,

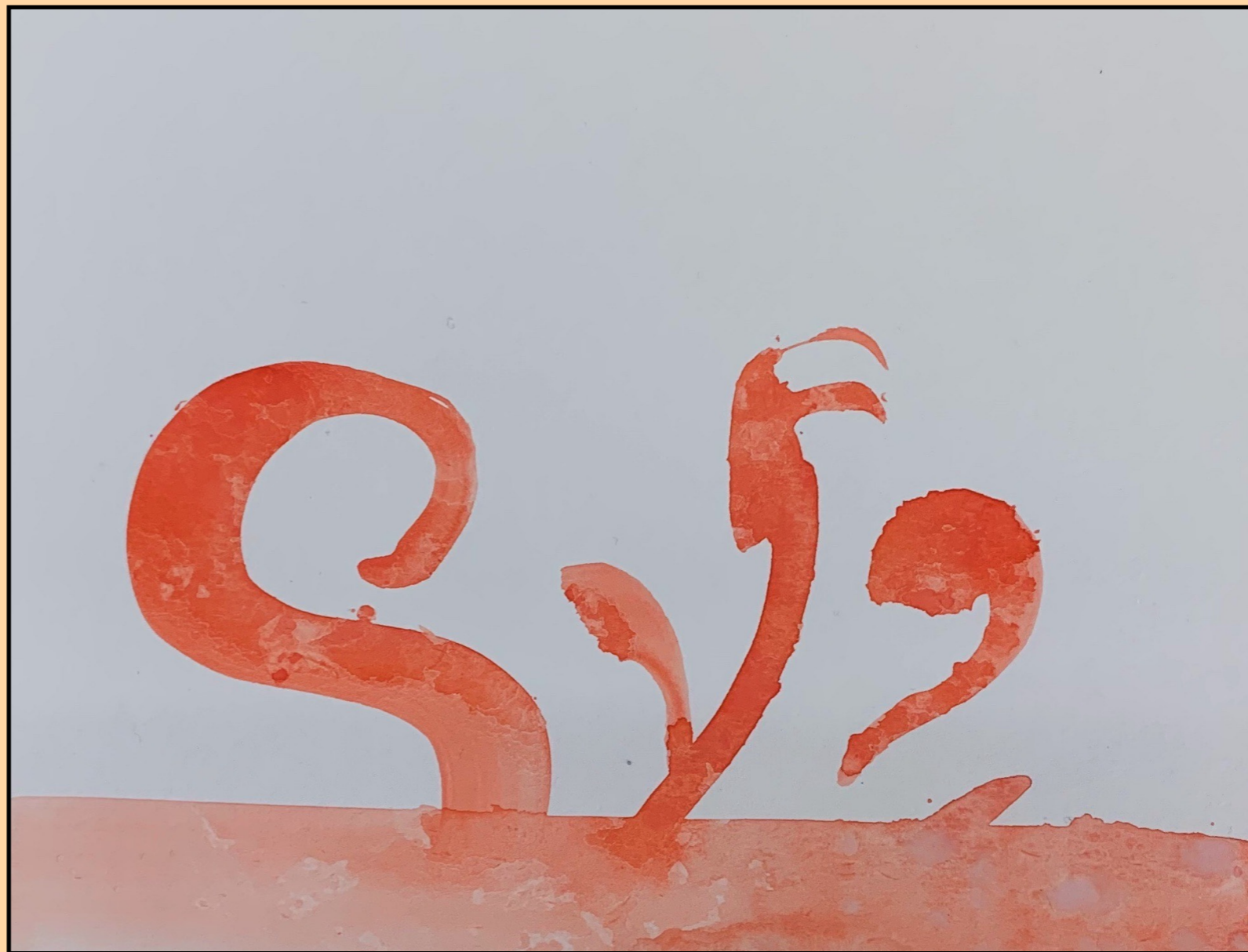
“Red is the color of bravery, unity and blood.

When we sacrifice a cow with our people, it shows until and brings us together. Red is an important color.”



“What do the other colors mean?” Amahle said.

“Well, all colors have a meaning.” Momma explained, “Orange stands for hospitality. It is important we take care of our people, for they are our family. No matter what, no one is left behind.”



“Yellow also stands for hospitality.” She continued, “The color of the beds our guests sleep in are yellow to show they are welcome here.”



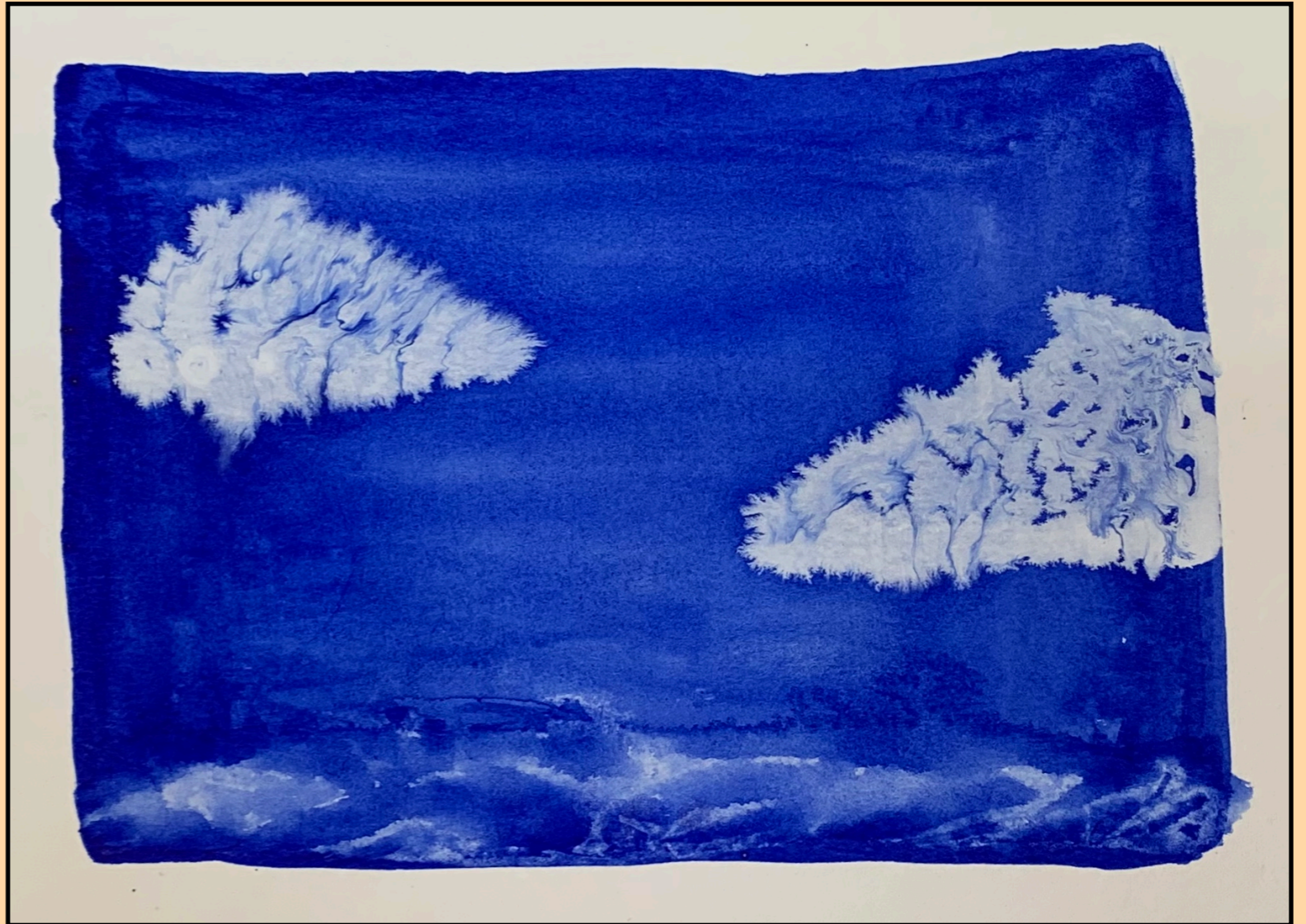
“The color green is for our land and health. The cattle we raise eat the green grass that grows on our land.”



At this point, Amahle was very intrigued. She had always seen the colors that everyone wore, but she had no idea that there was meaning behind the rainbow.



“Blue stands for energy and our sky above.” Her mother went on, “The rain that falls from the blue sky gives us water. Then we have white. It stands for purity, health, peace and love. The white milk we drink gives us the strength to grow.”



“Lastly, we have black. This color is very important because its meaning is not like the others. Black stands for our people and the struggles we will face. Life isn’t perfect but we will always be proud of who we are and what our ancestors went through.

The jewelry we wear every day reminds us of life and how lucky we are to be proud Maasai people.

This is why you

must earn your jewelry. First you need to understand what our culture means to you, Amahle.” her mother said.



For the rest of the walk, Amahle was silent. She now understood why she had to wait to get her jewelry. Before, she thought it was an accessory to make everyone look beautiful and handsome, but after today Amahle didn't forget what she stood for.



The End

GLOSSARY

- ❖ Amahle: This is a popular, authentic African name. It means “beautiful”.
- ❖ Dhuku: A head wrap that African women wrap their hair in. Commonly used in all of Africa.
- ❖ Maasai: The name of a tribe in Kenya, East Africa. They have a population of about 900,000 people and have been around for more than 620 years.
- ❖ Nborro: A beaded necklace that a woman in the Maasai tribe receives when she gets married. They are usually blue with tribal colors surrounding. (See pictures in page 4 and 8).