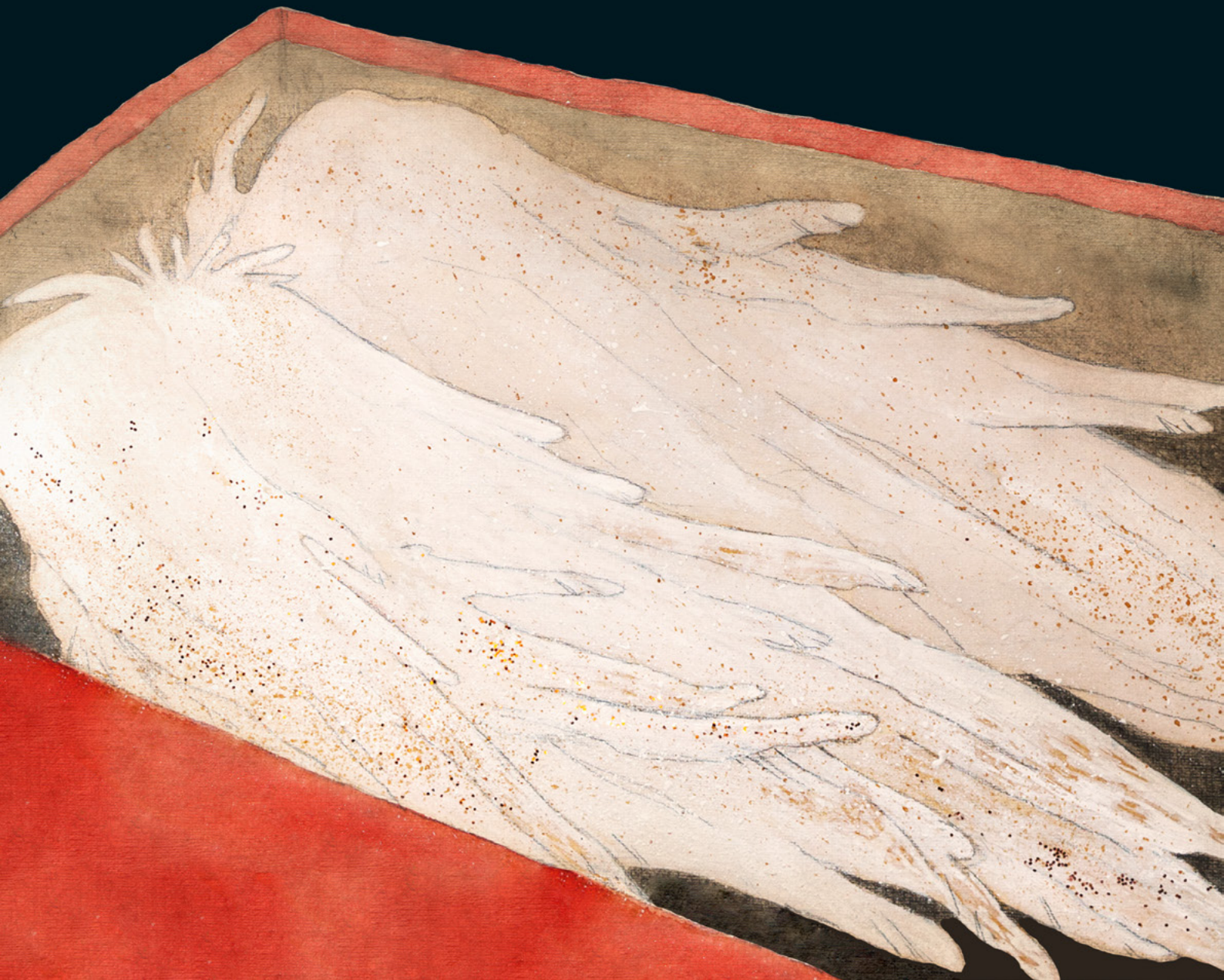


Wings

in the Box

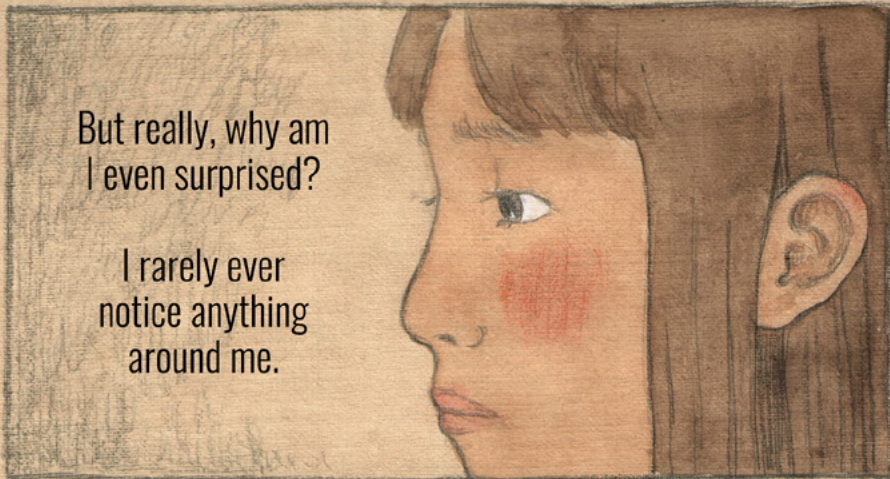
WRITTEN BY LUKA SIBERIA
ILLUSTRATED BY SAKANA



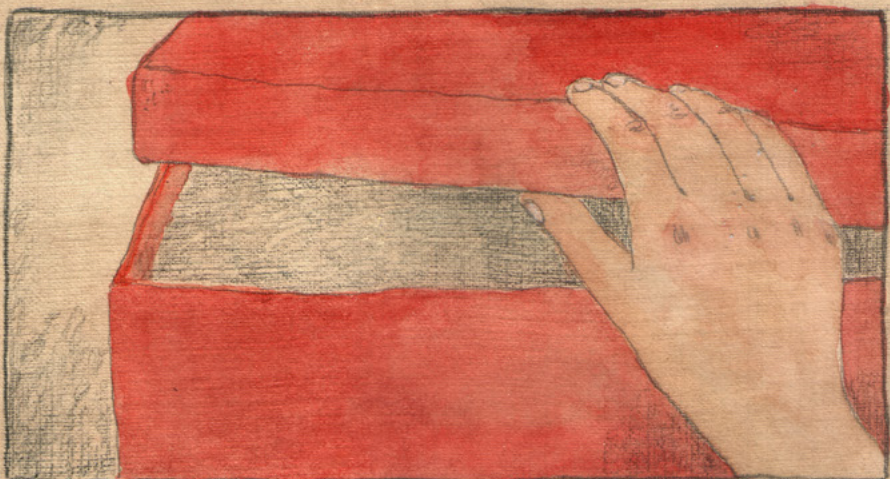


But really, why am
I even surprised?

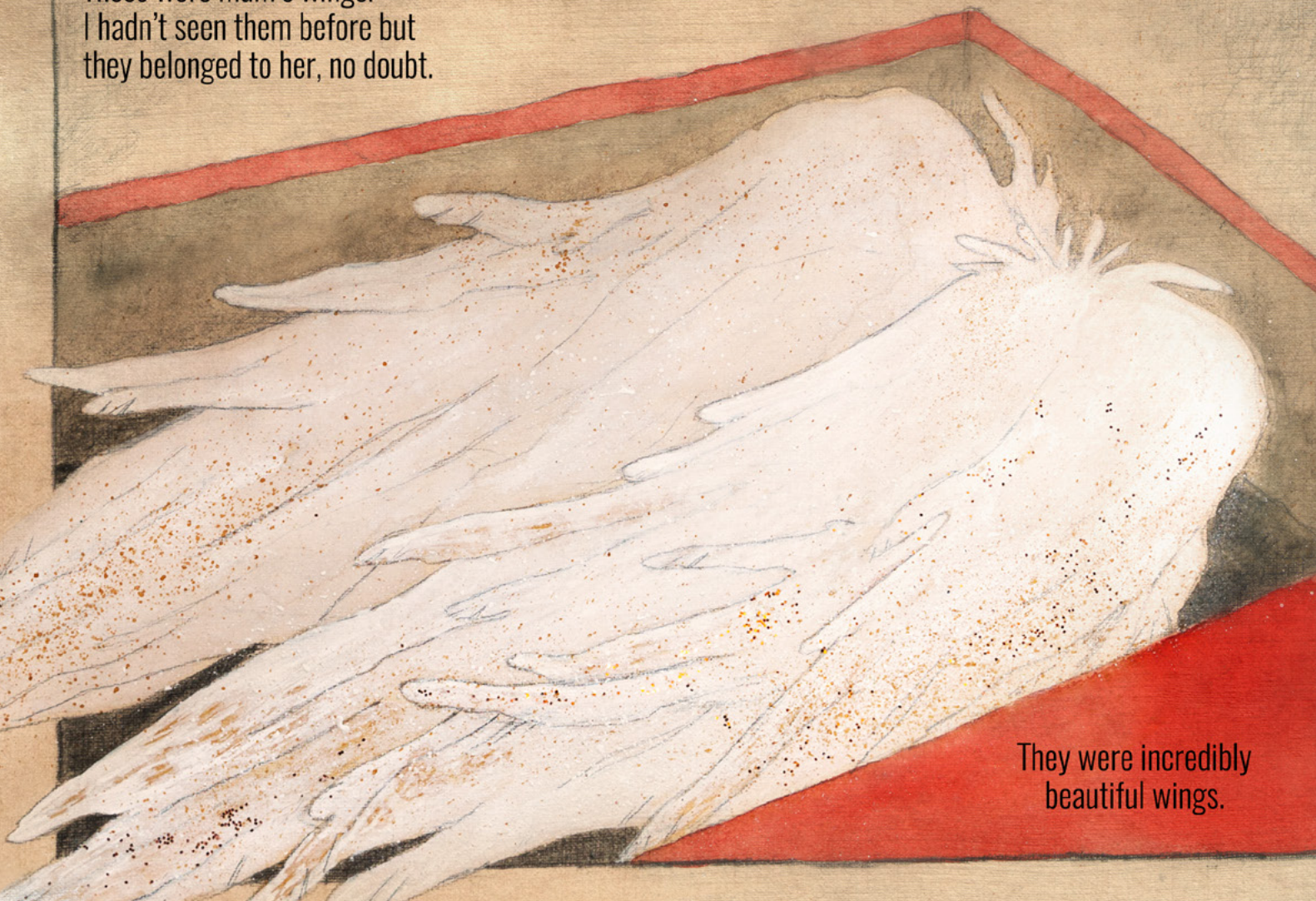
I rarely ever
notice anything
around me.



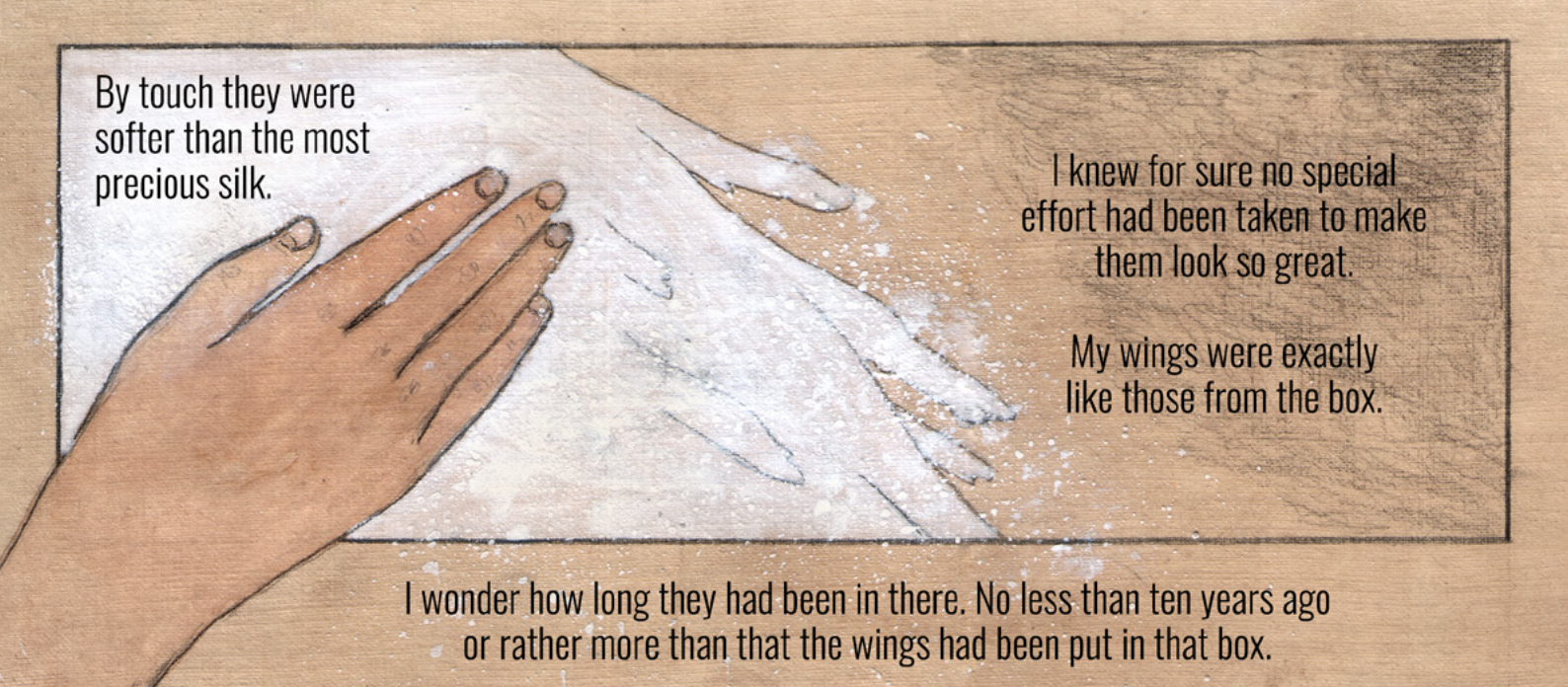
Strange I had never
noticed it before.



Those were mum's wings.
I hadn't seen them before but
they belonged to her, no doubt.



They were incredibly
beautiful wings.

A close-up illustration of a human hand with a light skin tone reaching out and touching a large, white, feathery wing. The wing has a soft, downy texture. The background is a textured, light brown color.

By touch they were
softer than the most
precious silk.

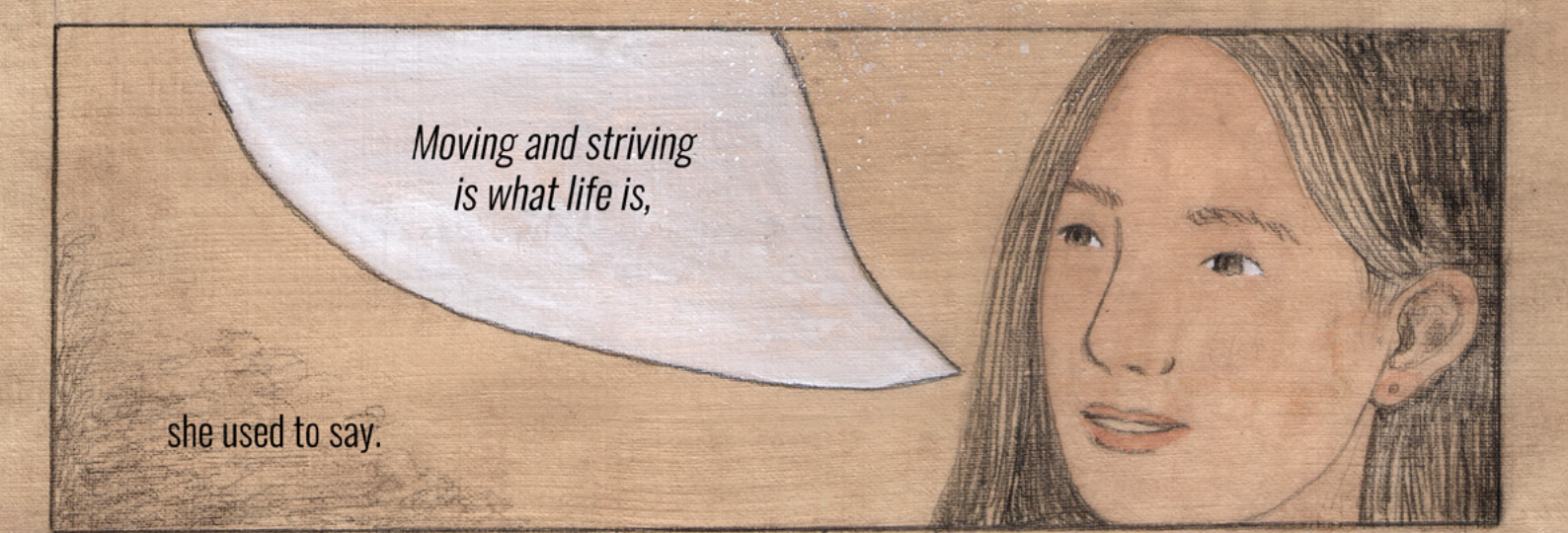
I knew for sure no special
effort had been taken to make
them look so great.

My wings were exactly
like those from the box.

I wonder how long they had been in there. No less than ten years ago
or rather more than that the wings had been put in that box.

An illustration of a young girl with long, wavy brown hair looking up at a pair of large, white, feathery wings. The wings are resting on a surface. To the right, there is a red box containing more of the same white, feathery material. The background is a textured, light brown color.

I was surprised.
Mum was not a sentimental
person who had ever kept
memories from the past.

An illustration of a young girl's face on the right side, looking towards the left. On the left side, there is a large, white, feathery wing. The background is a textured, light brown color.

*Moving and striving
is what life is,*

she used to say.



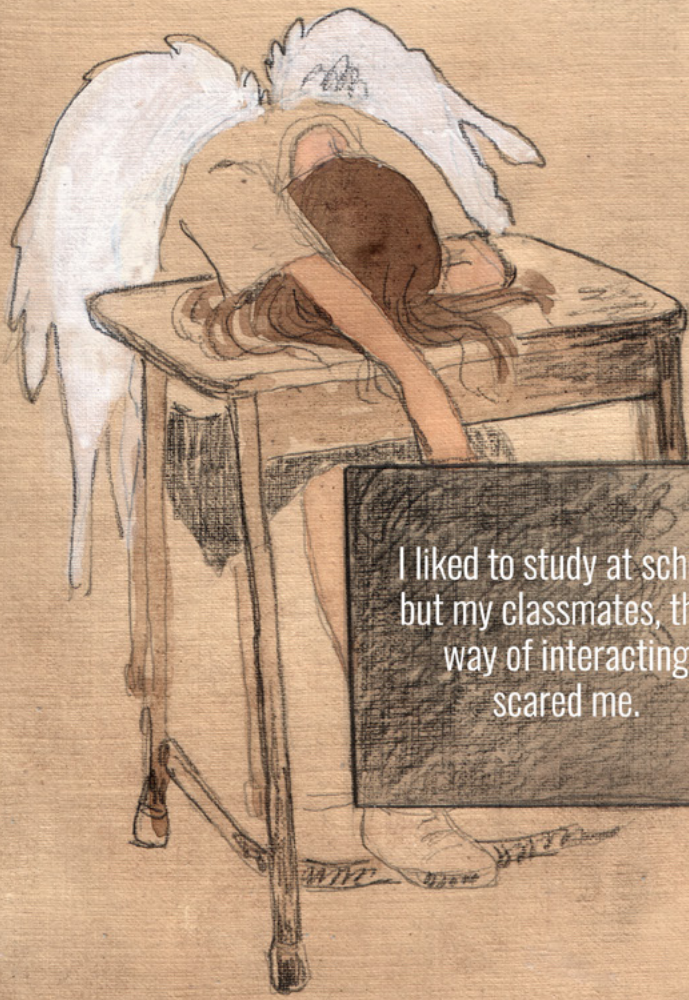
Being in that golden-white cocoon,



...breathing that
softly-softly scent of the
feathers, hearing nothing at
all was such a great
pleasure.



NOT A SINGLE
SOUND.



I had often wished to wrap up in the wings when at school, especially during the recesses when it started to get noisy.

I liked to study at school, but my classmates, their way of interacting scared me.



At primary school, I had many friends and acquaintances.

People were always willing to examine my wings.

I might endlessly deny that and behave affectedly, but I must admit my wings were really beautiful.

In fact, the wings were the only worthy things about me.





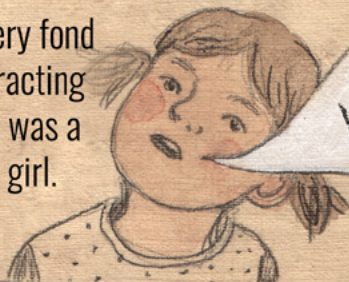
I liked compliments.

Accepting kind words with a smile, returning the warmth are great skills.



I used to possess them when I was little, but I forgot how to smile as I grew up.

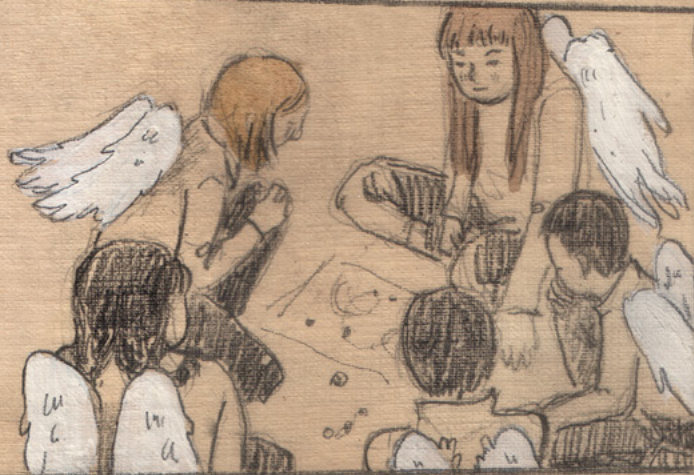
I was very fond of interacting when I was a little girl.



Hello!

Almost every weekend my grandma would take me for friends' visits. A whole bunch of kids would gather there.

And I was always the eldest among them. So when the adults sent us to another room for a play, I was always made responsible for the whole team.



Back then I used to think that being an adult meant being responsible.



Everyone being a child dreamt of the life of a grown-up.

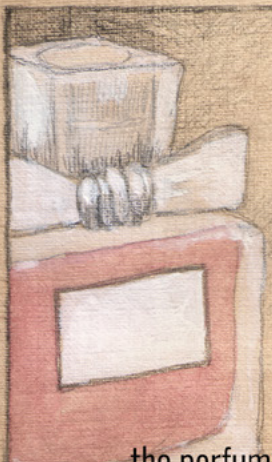
It was hard to imagine they would one day become part of it.

It all happens unexpectedly, spontaneously, in curious circumstances.



Once, it was
announced to me that
I was a grown-up.

Somehow ...



I also started to fear
responsibility.



When the responsibility started
to grow fast I got scared.
Just in time, I remembered
about my wings.

...the perfume that
I had used for several years
became 'the adornment
of an adult lady'

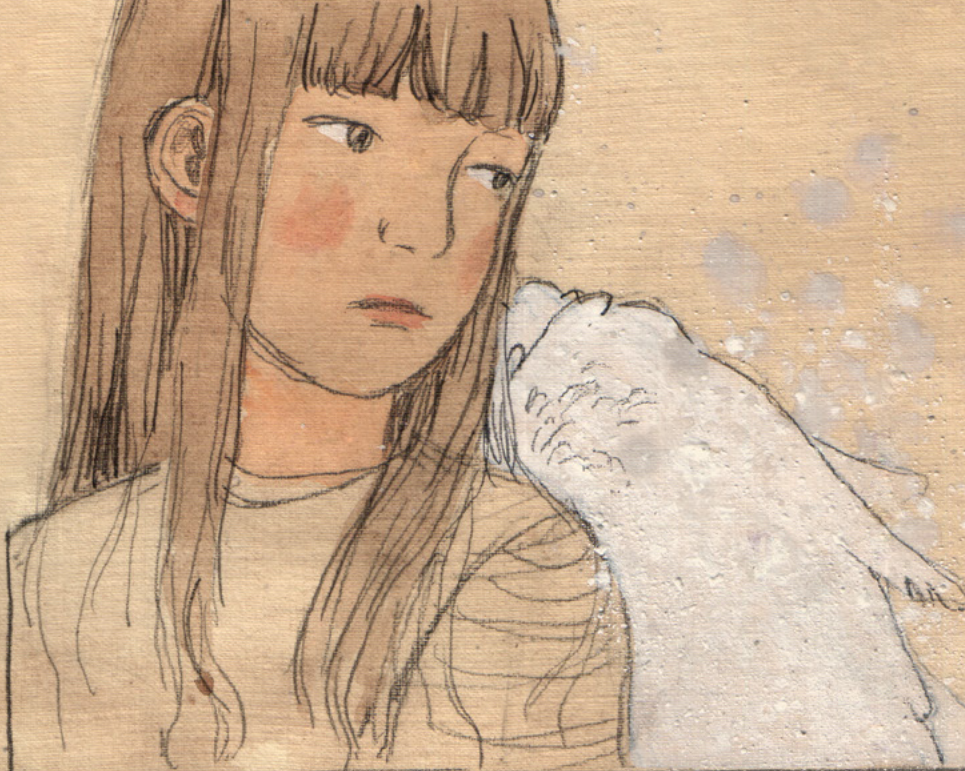
My affection for
cartoons had turned
into 'cute eccentricity'.

That avalanche crashed
on the wings and even bent
them quite significantly.
But I was safe.

The wings have been
always protecting me.

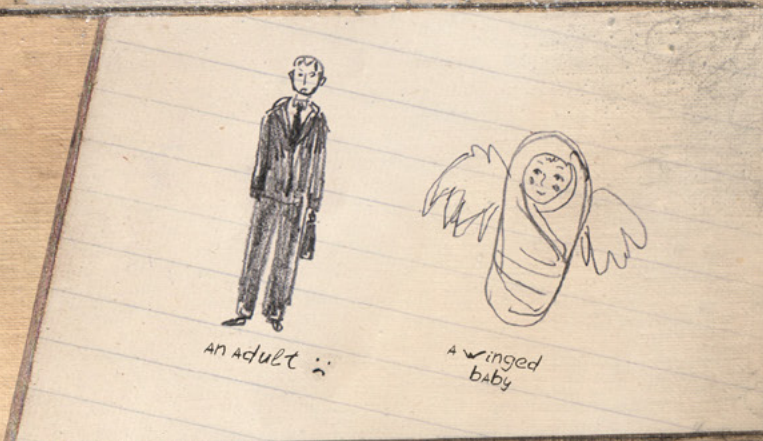


They grew
on my back to save me
from the big scary world
which was nothing like
the one I had read about
in the fiction.



Adults
have no wings.

Mum explained to me that
some are lucky to be born a
child and thus have the right to
use the wings the way they
like; others are born big and
boring grown-ups.



I was pretty
satisfied with
that version.

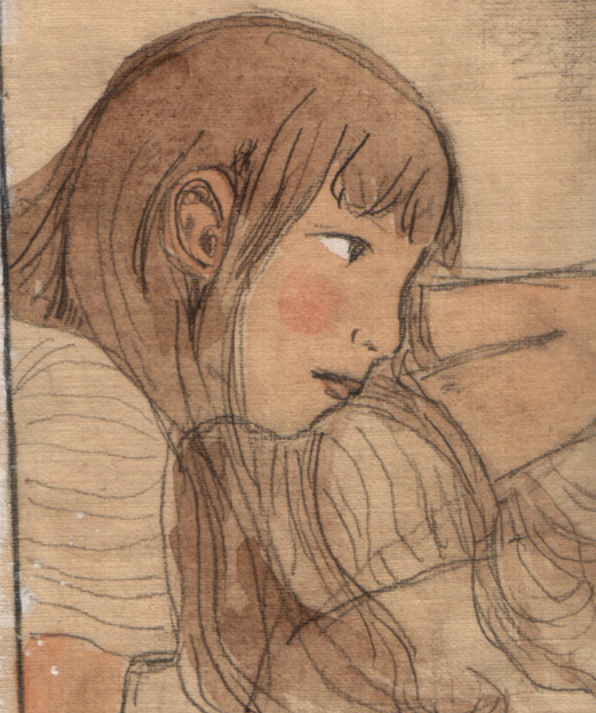
*'They prevent you
from doing
proper things,'
they told me.*

I still don't understand what
'proper things' they were talking
about; and how wings can prevent
you from doing them is just a
whole other question.



Sadly I learnt
the truth.

I learnt that once
fliers become
grown-ups, they
take off their
wings.



When I was
in the seventh form,
a classmate came to
school wearing
no wings.



Everyone approached
the girl, asking her
how, why, and what
had happened.



She would
answer tiredly:

*'I had simply
entered a new
stage of my
life'*



Nobody really
understood the
meaning of these
words; it sounded
obscure—so it was
the right thing.



Within six months,
almost half of the class have
moved onto a 'new stage'.

My friends and I
were not in a rush.

We didn't care about
somebody else's opinion
for the time being.



Suddenly the time
came, and my
friends one by one
started to take off
their wings

They seemed
happy, free, and
tense at the
same time.



I knew that in my absence
they talked about the
wings as a burden.





I'm often looked
at askance in the
street because
I wear wings.

Adults look me over like
they're judges and mumble
something about 'those
immature millennials'



Once parents turn
away, kids point
fingers and call
me names.

Still there are adults
who wear wings.

Tapping with their wings on
their backs these confident
sirs and ma'am's peacefully
observe the world, looking at
the golden niche built at the
clouds heights and fly to it.

Every person
wearing wings
tries to reach
the clouds

But only few remember
that the white zephyr
vapours may turn into furious
thunderclouds which care
less about the fliers.

They fall, break,
smash their wings, and then heal
their wounds to try to fly up again.



Once you take off
the wings, life becomes
much easier.

Sometimes, you look
up at the sky to see
how the fliers are
doing: some reach the
clouds; others just
keep on trying.

And you are
quite happy to be
on earth.

Some fear to take off their wings.



Others show off their
wings, holding forth
on their uniqueness.

Their wings are
plucked, tiny, and
totally useless.



And some
hide in them.



Sometimes, when the
air around becomes
dead, the noise grows,
and words are sharper
than the edges of thin
paper sheets,

one can spread
their wings and hug
oneself tightly
with them.

And I...
they are better
of not taking
wings off.

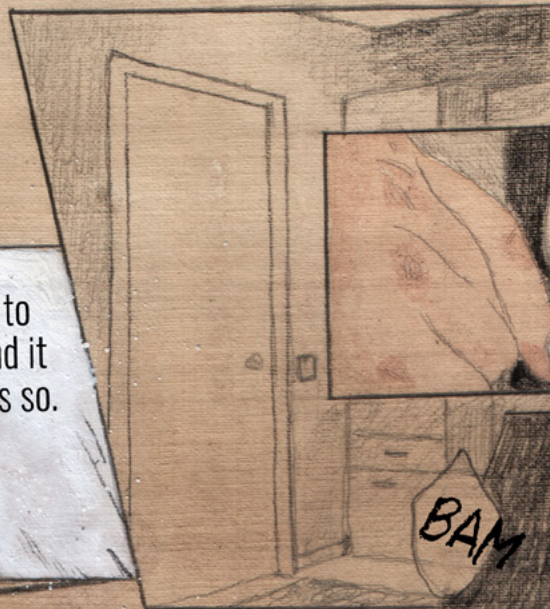
Why would you
fly if you may hurt
your wings?



People think that
when I get cocooned
in my wings I don't
hear anything.



I like to
pretend it
really is so.



click
clack

klink

BAM



Mum called me
loudly several times.



Ah, there
you are.



I had no wish to
speak, to listen to,
to see or to think.



Come out,
you little
mousey.



SLAP



Don't
be rude.

I looked at mum.

Mum always
seemed so relaxed
and undisturbed.

...I knew how much
effort it took her to
look like that.



I thought I forgot about them.

And now it seems I thought about them all the time.

I was waiting for a story, shocking and educative, full of mystery and breath-taking discoveries.

I found out that mum also used to be a faint-hearted dreamer.

I found out how fond she was of her wings-y world.

It was fun daydreaming and building air castles. It was scary to act.

Once I realized it, I took off the wings and put them into the box left over from my senior prom dress.

After that I just went with the flow.

I don't want the same happen to you.

And the dress was eaten through by the moths in the wardrobe.

There are things that are hundreds of times better than wings. Those are the things that are created by the fliers.

But I couldn't afford hiding under the wings,

all the more hiding you under the wings was not possible at all.

When we were left alone together, you and I, it was hard.





We sat in the kitchen.

Mum made tea,
and I cut an apricot pie.



We laughed and felt sad a bit, chatted and kept silent, gossiped, but there was little of that.



Mum didn't
think of work at
the moment and
I smiled a lot.

The wings
behind my
back joyfully
fluttered.

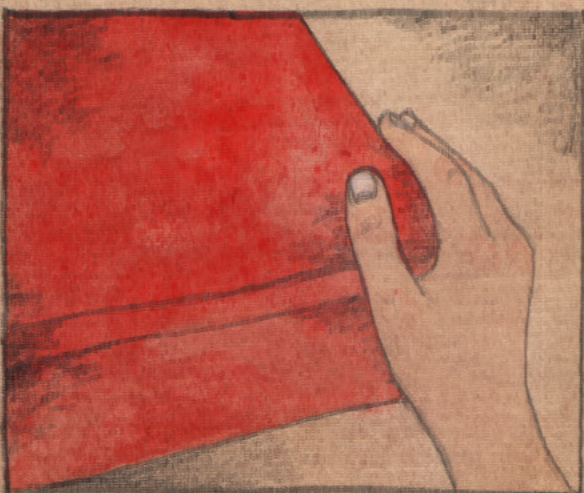


*What's the most
important thing
about flights?
You gotta catch the
wind and just keep
flying your way.*

Mum's wings
were incredibly
beautiful.

My wings were
not a little
worse.

I realized how important it was to notice things around me and decided to start with the simplest task.



I closed the box
with wings.

