

E-BOOK

SASSY SASSAFRAS

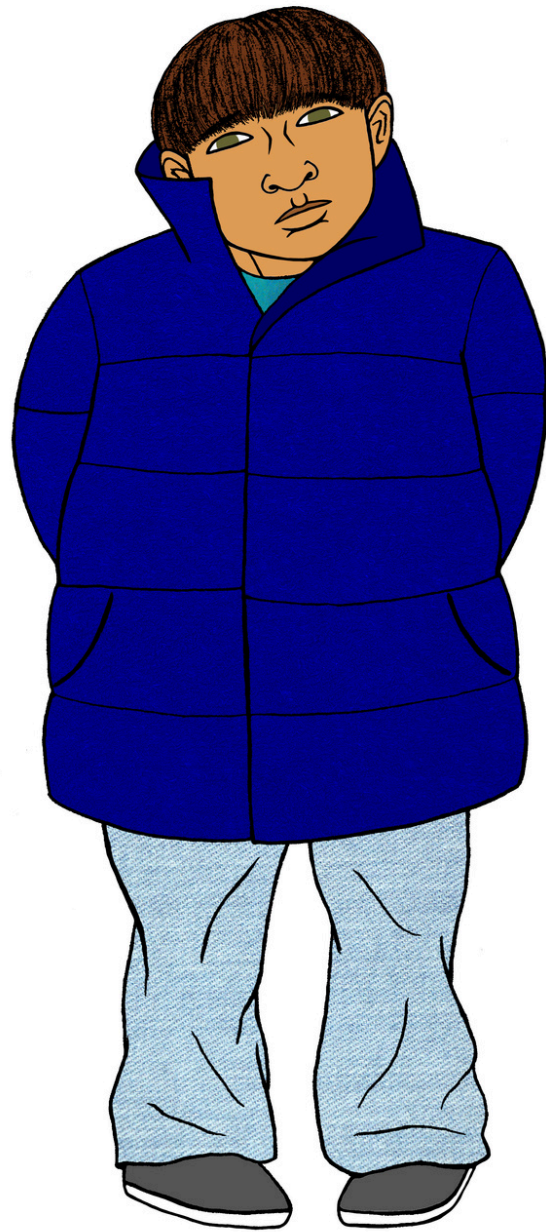
A TWO SPIRIT STORY



**By Victoria Persinger Ferguson
& Itai Jeffries**

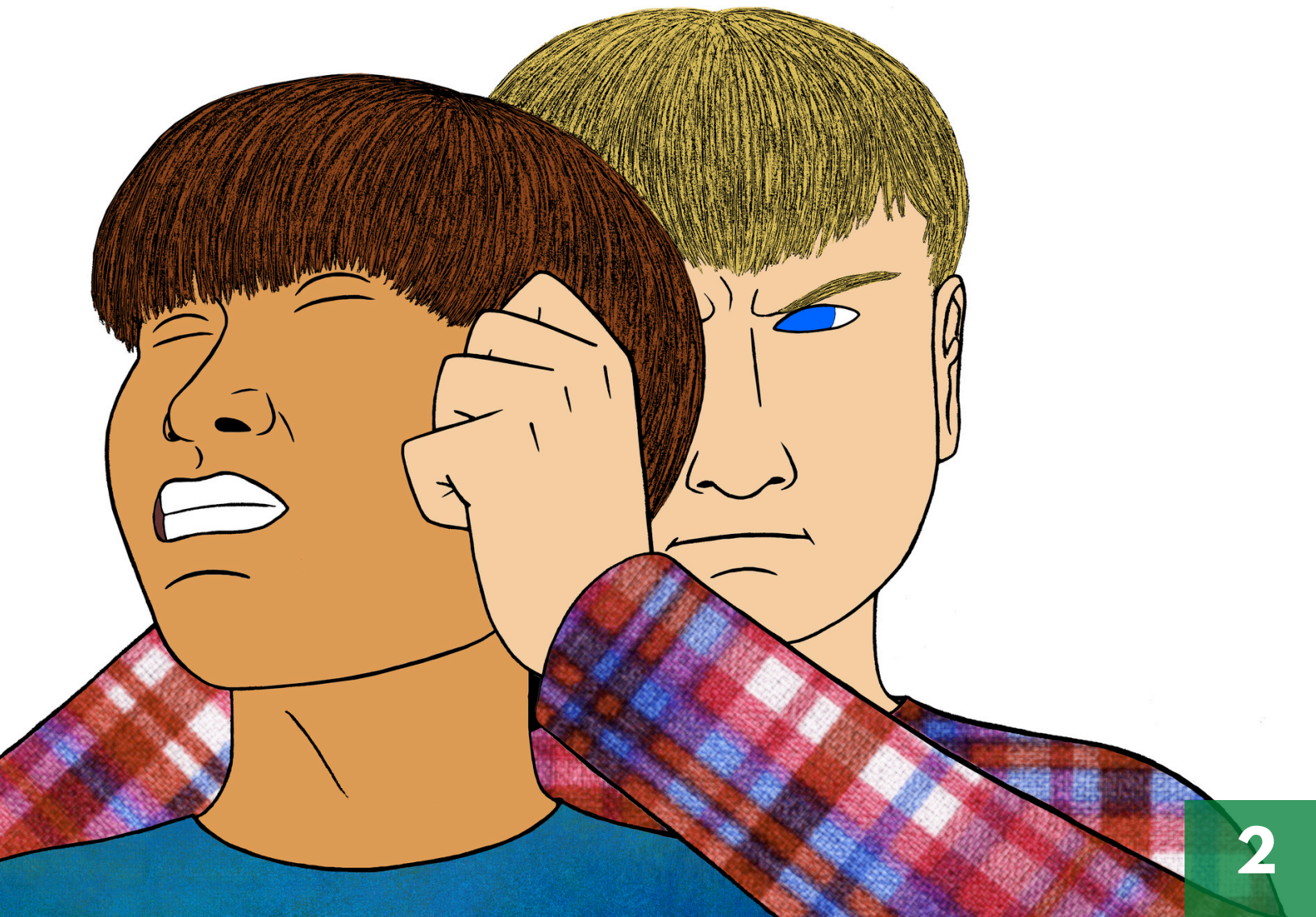
Illustrated by Trae Middlebrooks

In memory of
'Builds the Home' Jeffries
1964-2020



**Sam was very shy, and
didn't have a lot of friends.**

Sam also had bullies. Harry used to pick Sam up by their ears in PE class. It hurt, but Sam did not tell their parents. The PE teacher knew but didn't say anything to Harry.



Sam loved being at home with their mom, dad, sister, and grandma.



Sam's Dad used to show them how to find Sassafras medicine, the one Grandma liked. Sam thought the magical leaf looked like a dinosaur foot. Together Sam and dad would also find sweetgum twigs to brush their teeth in the old way. Sam loved this.



When Sam wasn't in the woods, they felt a little out of sorts. Everyone believed Sam was a boy. Sam was supposed to dress like a boy and act like a boy. It always felt awkward for Sam.



Kids at school picked on Sam for being “too sweet” or “sissy.” Sam didn’t know how to be any other way.

The girls would laugh and point at Sam saying, “He’s got a little sugar in the tank.”

Sam was confused and wanted to cry because of this attention.





At home, in the mirror of the hallway bathroom, Sam would pull their tight t-shirt over their head until it looked like long flowy hair. They would wave this hair side to side. Sometimes they would secretly borrow their mom's lipstick.

**For a brief
time, Sam
felt more
like a
Samantha,
and they
were free
and happy.**



Sam continued to struggle for years, and told nobody about their feelings.



But one day Sam was with Miss Mary, a tribal elder.

She saw that Sam was special.



Miss Mary asked Sam if they knew about Sassafras medicine.

Sam got excited. “Yes Miss Mary. I always loved to find the Sassafras! It is my grandma’s favorite and I always looked for it with my Dad!”

“Good, good, child. That Sassafras already knows you. She is wise.”

Sam smiled.

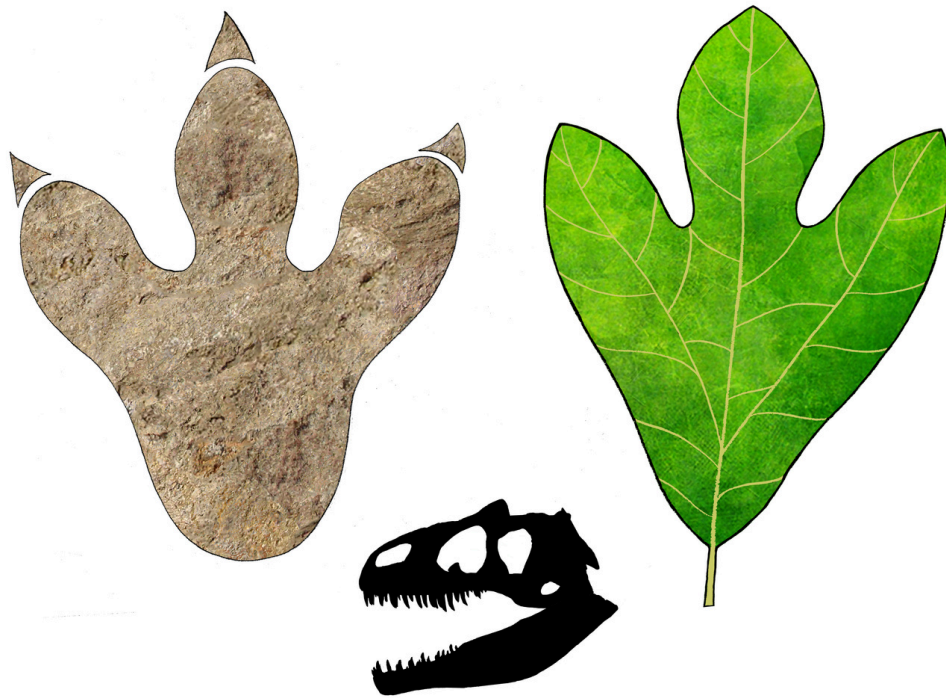
**“Do you know her story?” asked
Miss Mary.**



“She has a story?!” Sam asked enthusiastically.

“All the medicines have a story,” said Miss Mary. “All of them are important, but Sassafras teaches me that you are important.”





“What do you mean?” asked Sam.

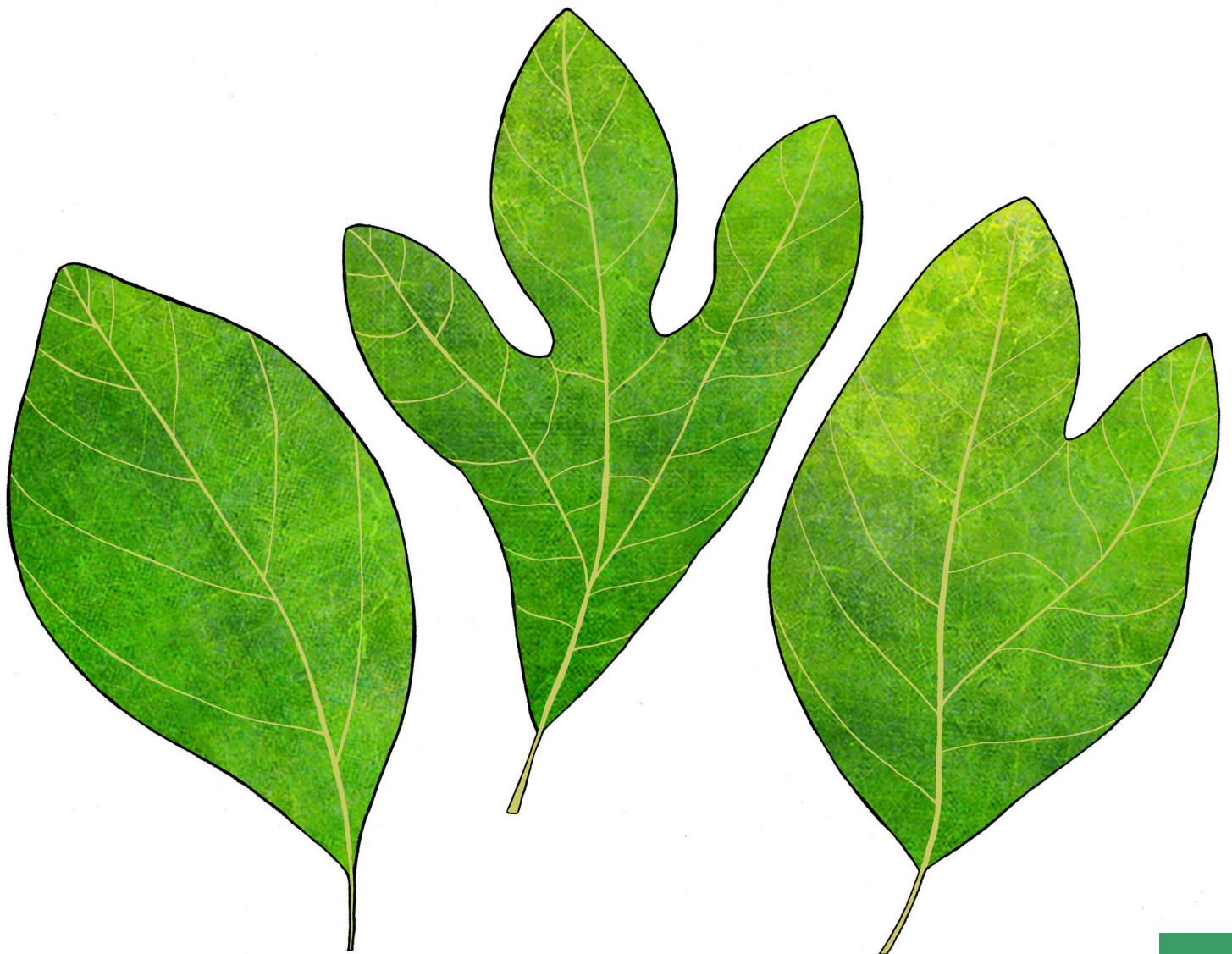
**“How did you find the Sassafras?”
asked Miss Mary.**

**Sam quickly answered, “I searched
for the leaf that looks like a dinosaur
foot.”**

**“Yes, child. That is an important
leaf,” replied Miss Mary.**

“Have you ever noticed that the Sassafras tree has three different leaves, Sam?” asked Miss Mary.

“Yes...?” Sam answered.



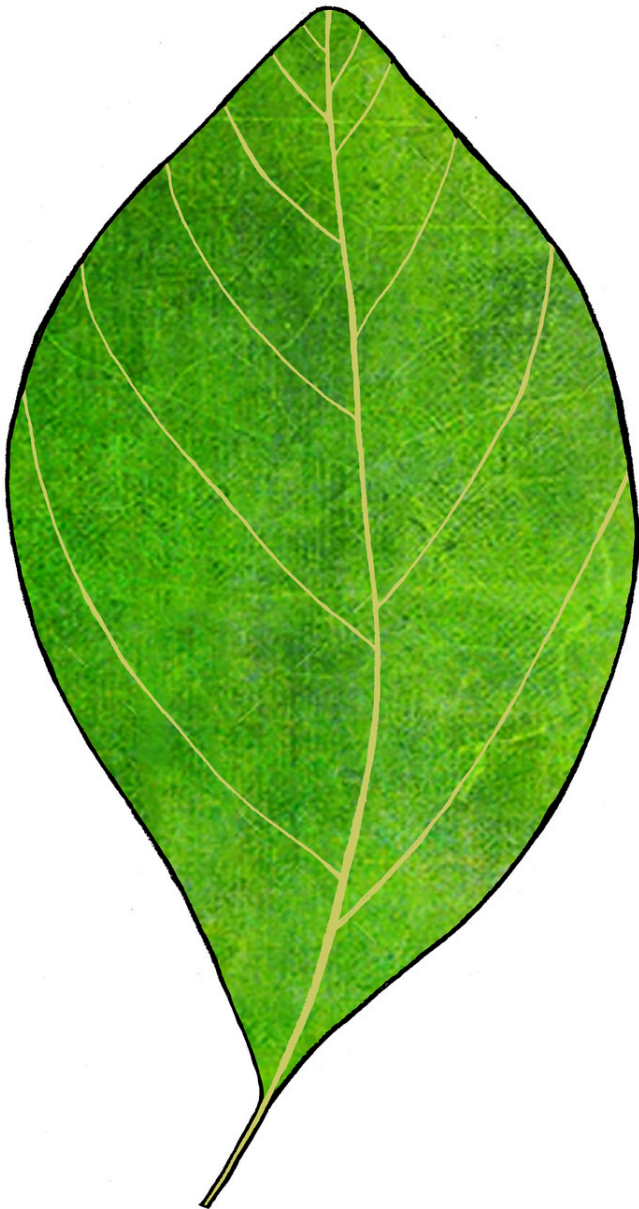
“Do you know why that is?” she asked.

“No. Why, Miss Mary?” replied Sam.

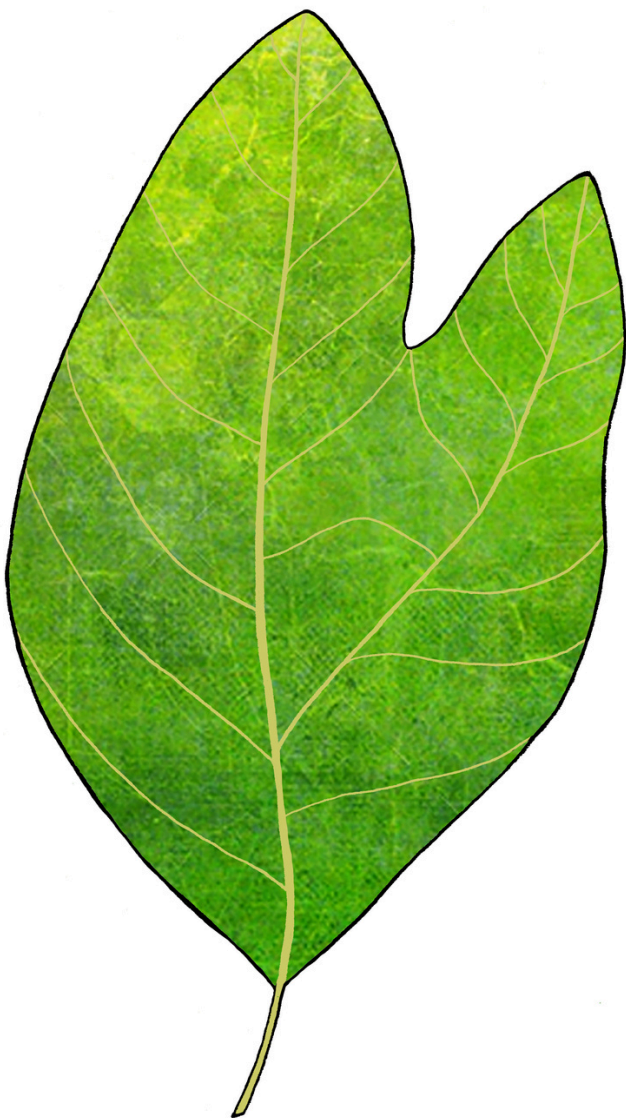


Miss Mary explained, “The Old Ones used to say that the Sassafras tree is like our village, Sam.”

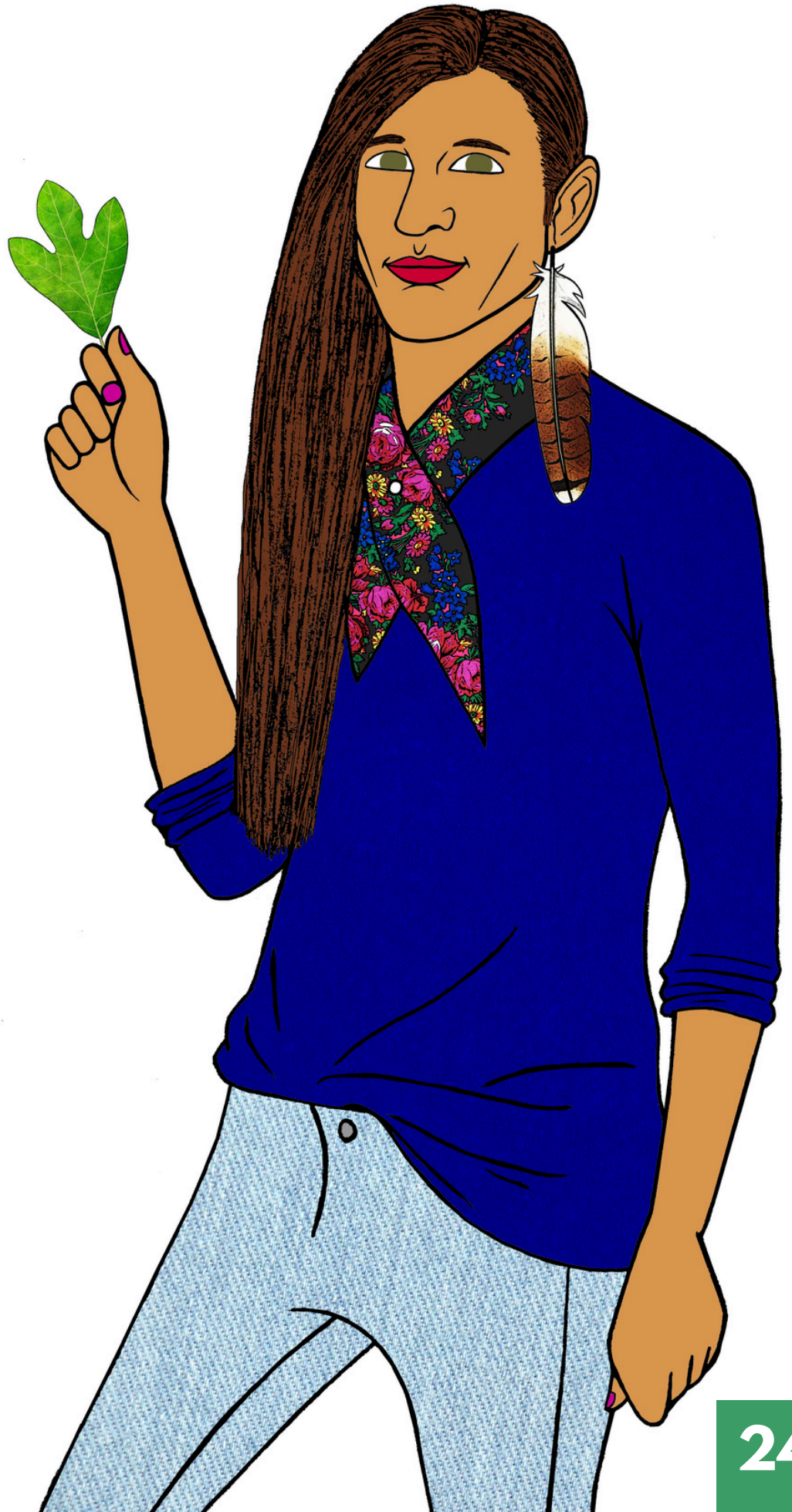
“In our village we have the women. They bring life to our People. The single lobed leaf represents our women.”



“There are also men in our village. They protect our People. The two lobed leaf represents our men. It looks like a mitten.”

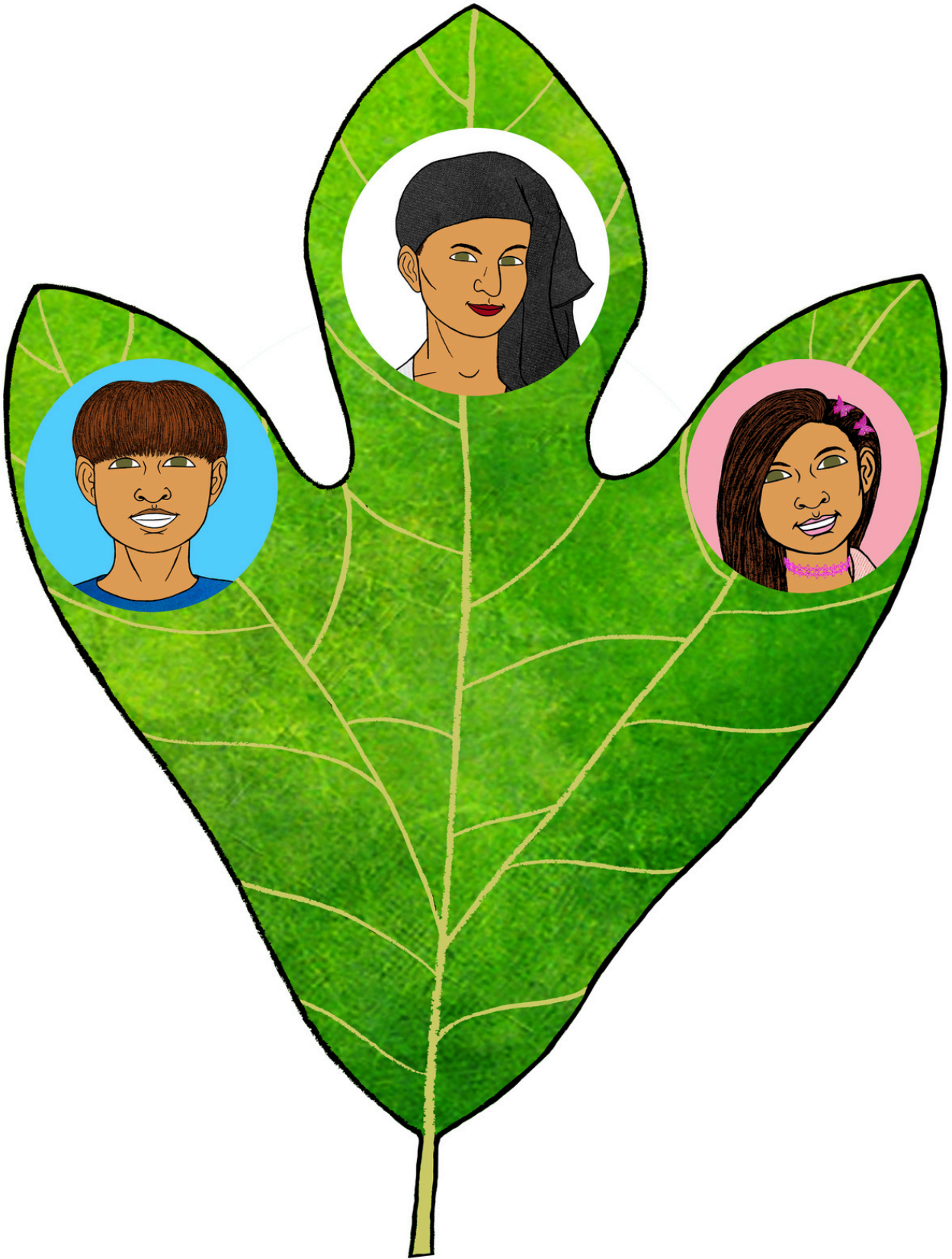


“The third leaf is you, Sam. You belong in the village,” said Miss Mary.



“What do you mean?” asked Sam.

Miss Mary explained, “We have always had three genders, and all are important in our village. The third gender is not female or male, but has both inside them. They are represented by the three lobed leaf, the same one you loved to find as a small child, Sam.”



Sam began to cry.

“See Sam, the Sassafras knew you all along,” said Miss Mary.

“Thank you, Miss Mary,” said Sam. “I wish I knew that story a long time ago.”

“Remember that you belong here. You have a role to play in our village. Always remember that. People have forgotten that story and they might try to tell you that you don’t belong, but you being here is medicine for the People. They will see that if you let them. Just like we find the Sassafras by looking for that leaf, we will find medicine by looking for you.”



“I love you Miss Mary,” said Sam.

“I love you too, child.”





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Fernando Sandoval Hernández (elle) nació en la Ciudad de Puebla, México, el 23 de junio de 1992, estudio Ciencias Políticas y Administración Pública en la Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, se graduó con la Tesis "Campañas Electorales y la transición política. A los 25 años se mudó a la Ciudad de México, sin embargo durante la pandemia reside en Puerto Vallarta. Es abiertamente homosexual y se considera defensor de los derechos de la comunidad LGBTQ+. Laboralmente se desempeña como analista en agencias de medios de comunicación y como tutor de español, por este último trabajo desempeñado, es que se le asignó la tarea de traducir este libro.