

# Dear Diary, it's me, Stella

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by Krista Keough  
Illustrated by Gina Stavrou

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For Apollo and Stella.

My favourite boy and my favourite girl.



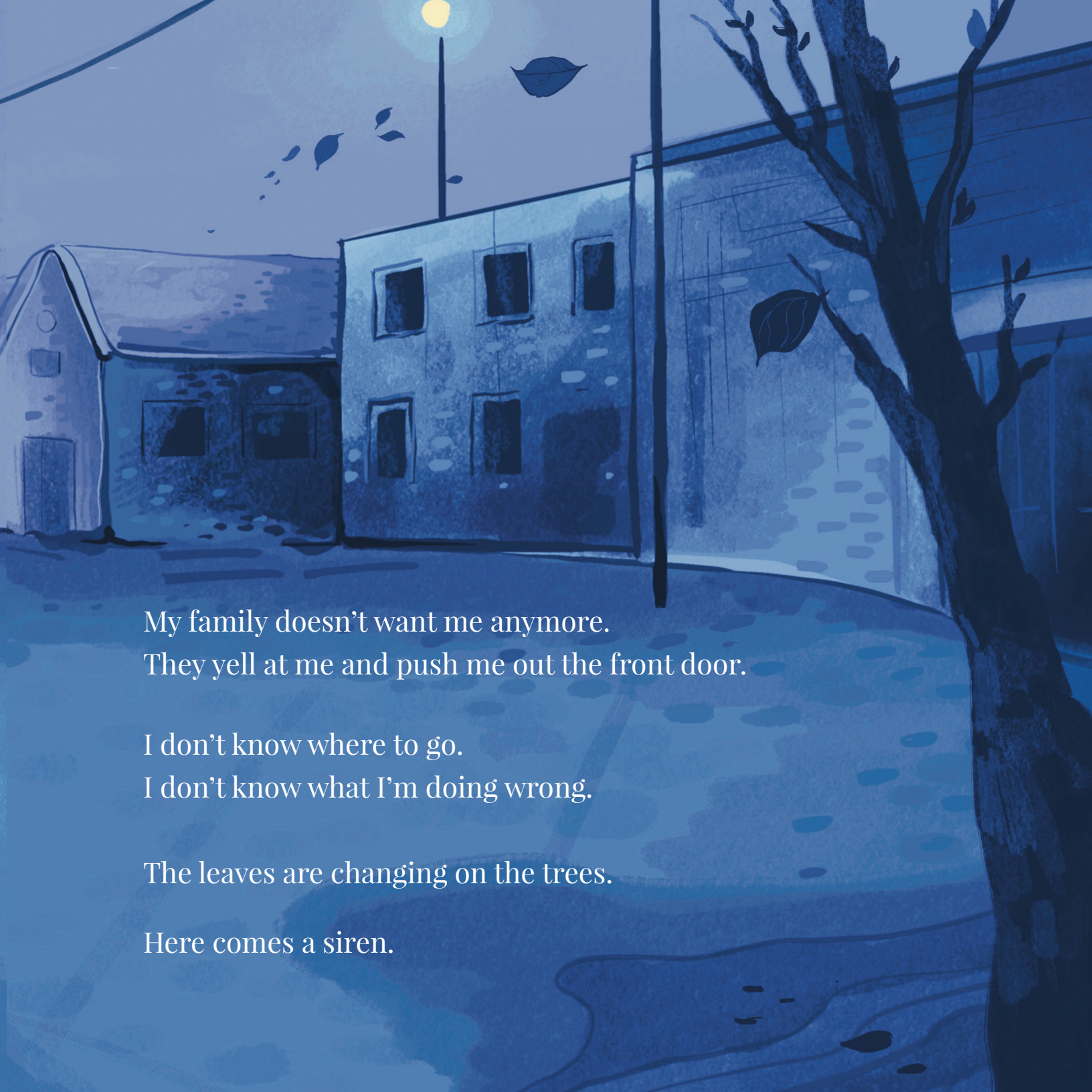


It's dark inside the house tonight.  
Everyone's in bed.

I hear loud noises, dogs  
barking, and cars driving by.

I'm too scared to run,  
but I'm too afraid to stay.





My family doesn't want me anymore.  
They yell at me and push me out the front door.

I don't know where to go.  
I don't know what I'm doing wrong.

The leaves are changing on the trees.

Here comes a siren.





Today, I was left inside the fence  
to make my own fun.





I dug holes, chased the kids on bikes,  
and I barked and barked and barked.





It started to get dark and I was hungry,  
but nobody came to give me dinner.



A stylized illustration of a night scene. The sky is a deep blue, filled with a large, bright full moon that has a yellowish-orange glow. Several small, white stars are scattered across the sky. In the foreground, a chain-link fence runs diagonally from the bottom left towards the center. To the left of the fence, there are some dark, rectangular shapes that look like buildings or structures. The ground is a mix of dark blue and teal, with some lighter patches that could be grass or snow. The overall mood is quiet and contemplative.

It's a full moon.

I wonder where they are now.

I can see my breath at night.  
I can't sleep and my belly hurts.

The neighbour gives me food  
sometimes. She gives me cuddles,  
too, but she can't take me inside.

I give her lots of kisses.





I keep running home  
to check on my family.

I can see them in  
the window. They  
don't see me.

I guess I'll wait here.

I don't like to be alone.









I've been captured!

Two tall men grabbed me in the  
street and put me in a cage.



I'm inside a big, white truck.

It's rattling all around.





Please, send help!

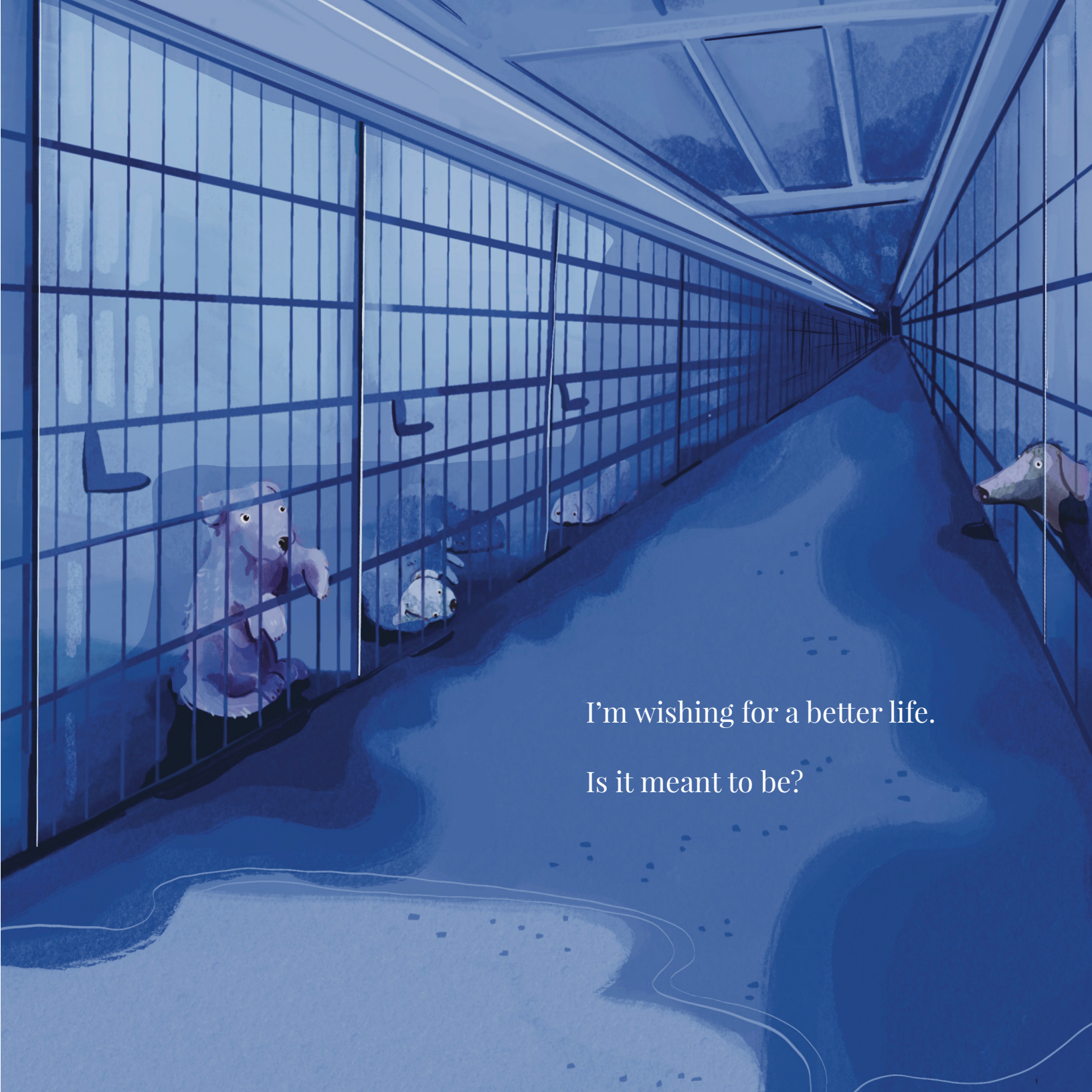


I've been here for many days.

I made new friends, some  
from faraway places.

Places that are warm  
and sunny.





I'm wishing for a better life.

Is it meant to be?






I'm inside a big, white truck.  
My friends are with me this time.





We're each in a cage  
with a blanket and a toy.




An artistic illustration of a woman with long brown hair, wearing a blue hoodie and blue pants, running away from the viewer on a sandy beach. Her hair is blowing in the wind. In the background, a black and white dog is running towards the water. The sky is a deep blue with soft, white clouds. The beach is a mix of light and dark sand, with some footprints visible. The overall style is painterly and evocative.

I close my eyes and dream  
of faraway places.

Places that are warm  
and sunny.



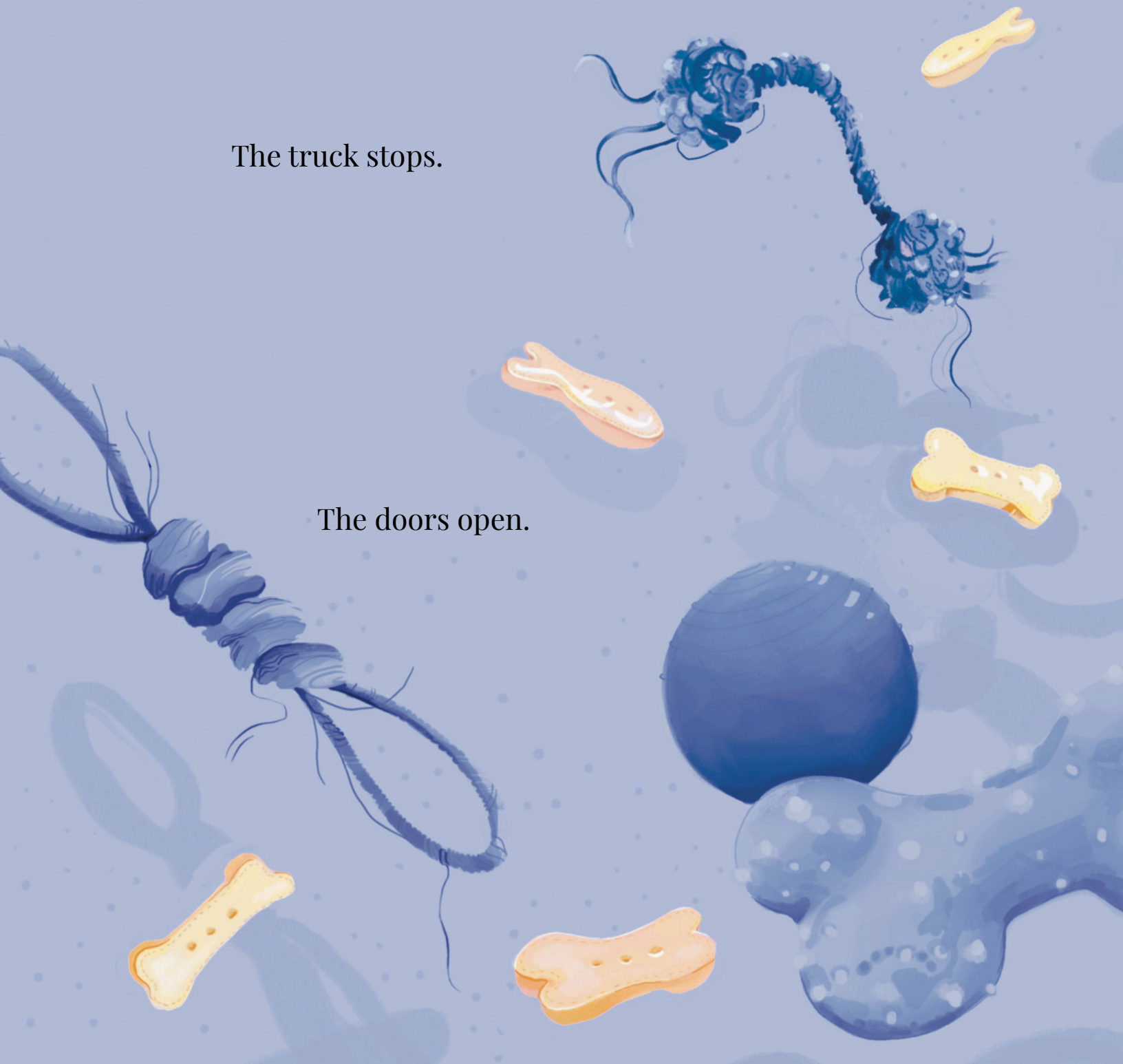


I'm running on a beach with my new family.

I believe I'm destined for great things.

The truck stops.

The doors open.





We're leaving our cages and meeting new people.

There are so many smells, and things to see and do.



I have a rope tied around my neck.

It follows me everywhere.



There's food and water and treats for us all.

Everyone's smiling. I wag my tail.







One by one, my friends say goodbye.

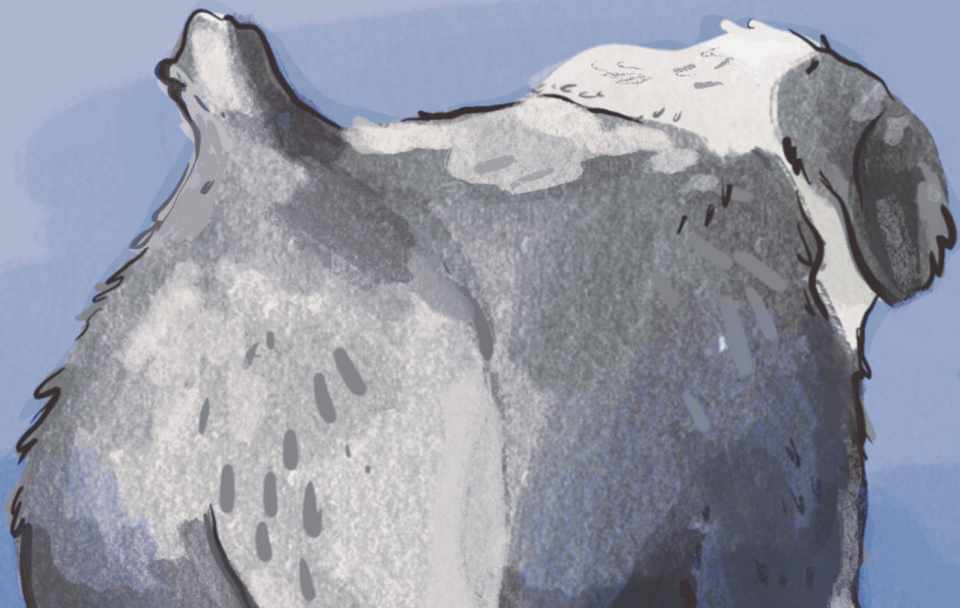
I guess I'll wait here.

I don't like to be alone.



I see a blue car.

There's a girl inside.





She looks happy to see me.

Her arms open wide.



She bends down to hold me. Her body is warm.

I can feel her heart beating.

I can tell she's been dreaming of me, too.







Krista Keough is a dynamic and versatile contributor to Atlantic Canada's creative industries. Over the past 20 years, she has woven her expertise through various roles as a writer in business, the arts, and education. She lives in Canada with her two dogs, Apollo and Stella. Read more of her writing at [kristakeough.com](http://kristakeough.com). Photo by Bernard Mills.



Gina Stavrou, aka mindofbean, is a queer British illustrator based in the United States. Her work uses vibrant colour combinations and intricate details to portray magical worlds with whimsical characters. See more of her creations at [mindofbean.com](http://mindofbean.com). Photo by Gina Stavrou.



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*Dear Diary, It's Me, Stella* follows the captivating journey of a courageous dog in search of a place to call home.

Through moments of despair and dreams of a better life, Stella's heartfelt diary entries reflect her fears, hopes, and unbreakable spirit. Whimsical illustrations bring her words to life with only the colours that dogs can see.

A compelling and compassionate story, readers will be eager to uncover the destiny that awaits Stella in a world where dreams can come true.

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