

Welcome to my portfolio

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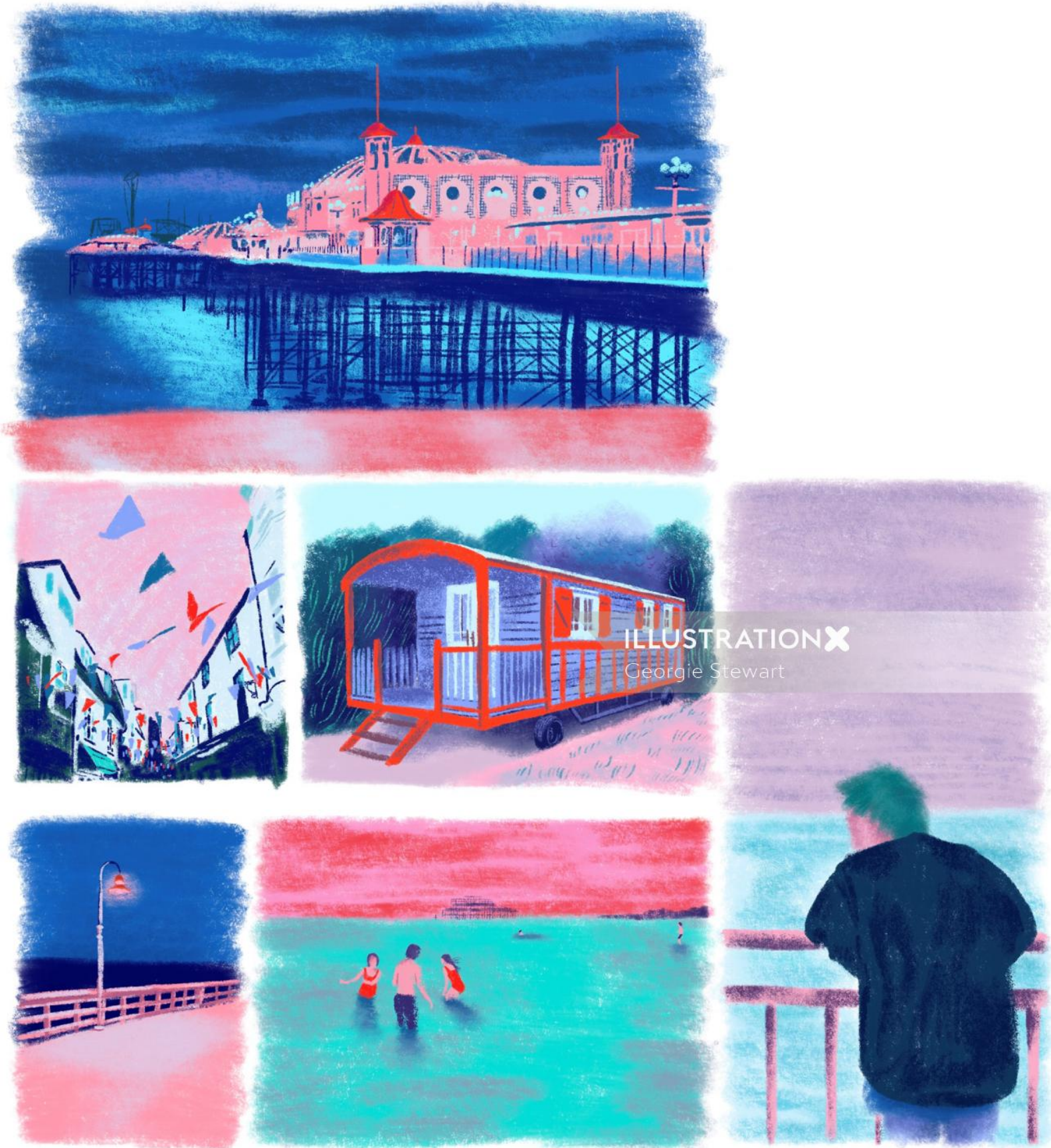
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THE WORLD OF INTERIORS



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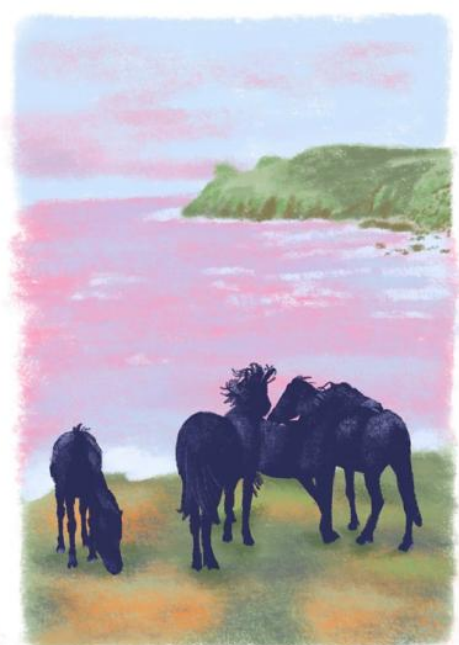
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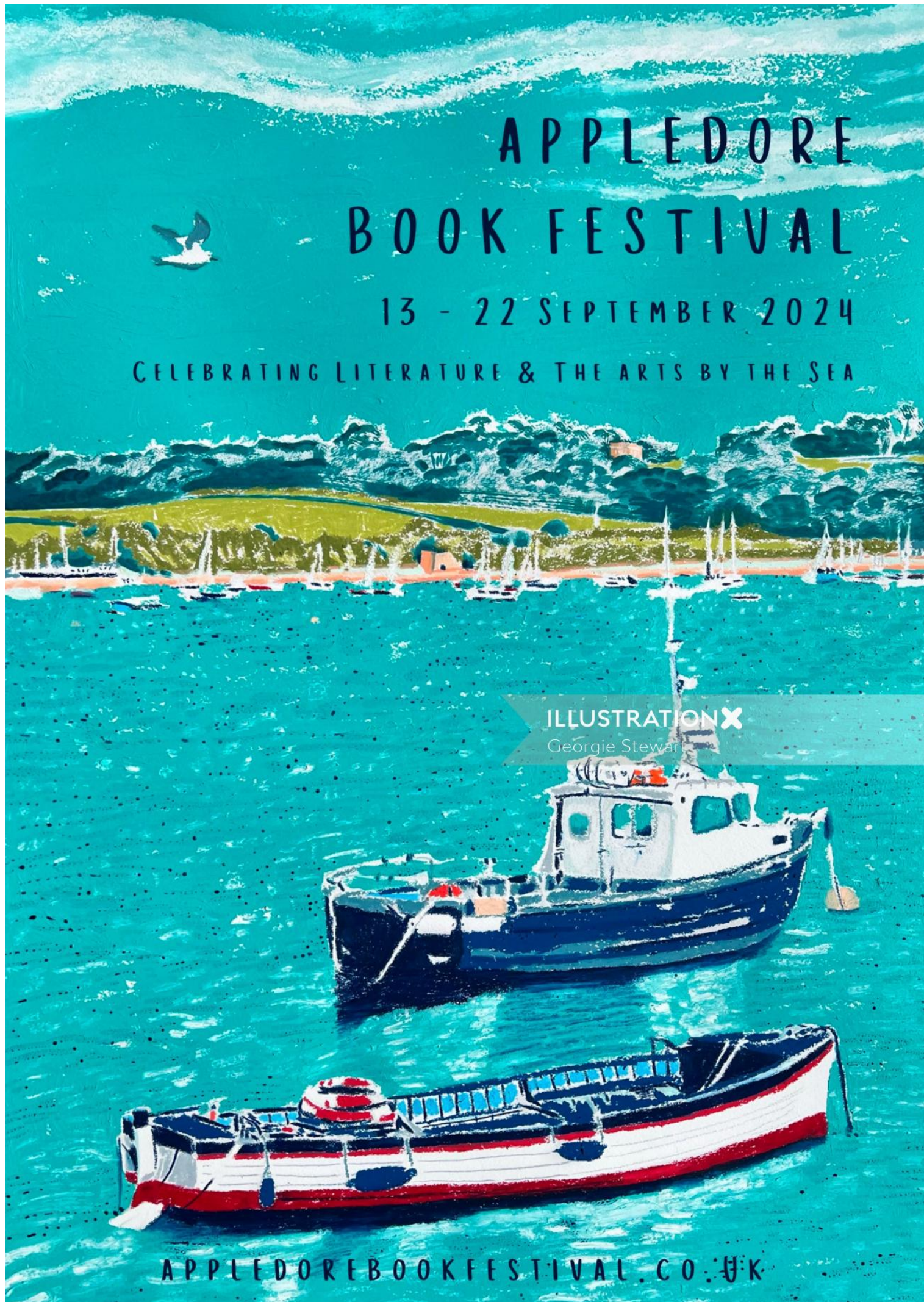
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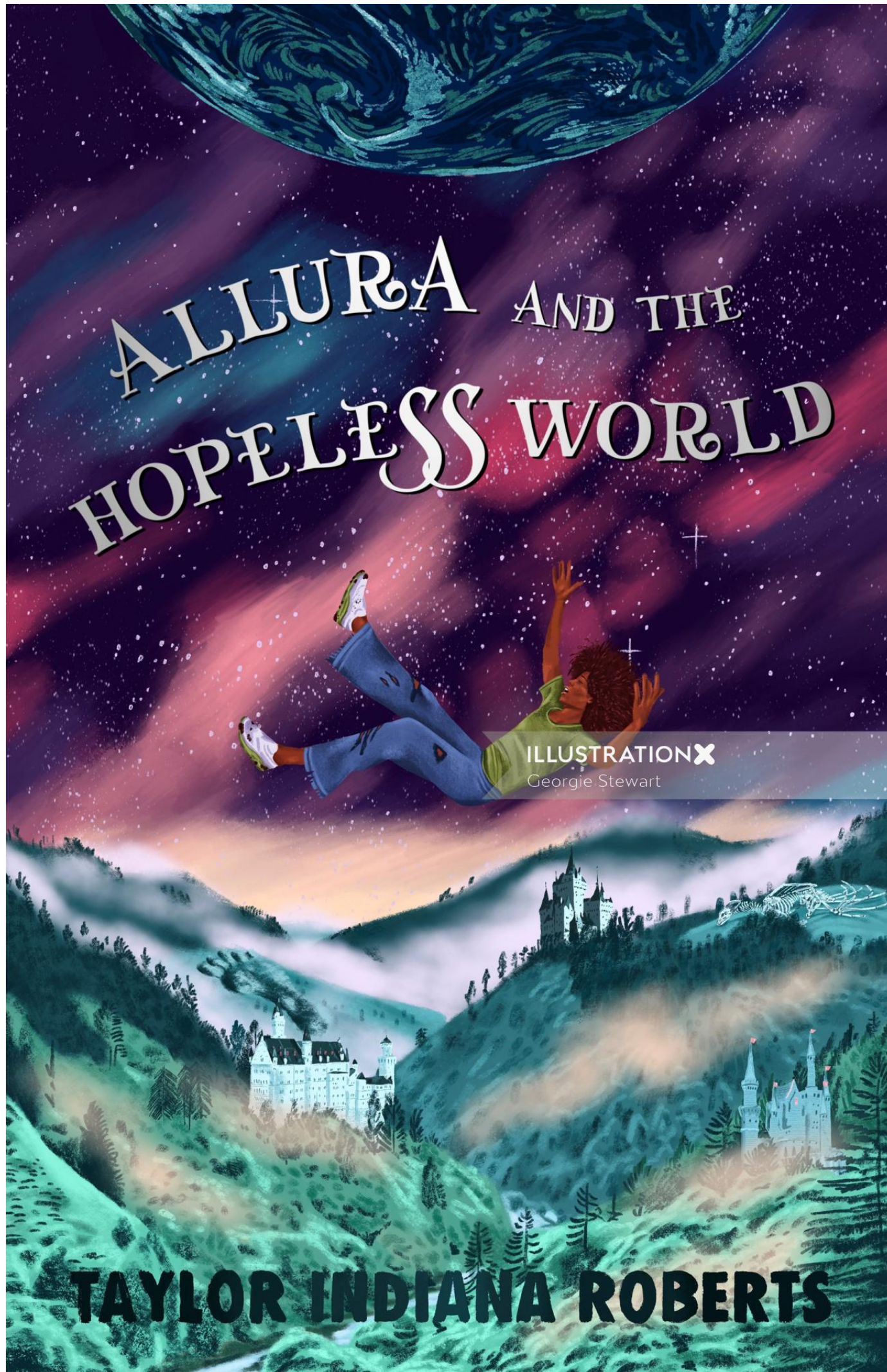
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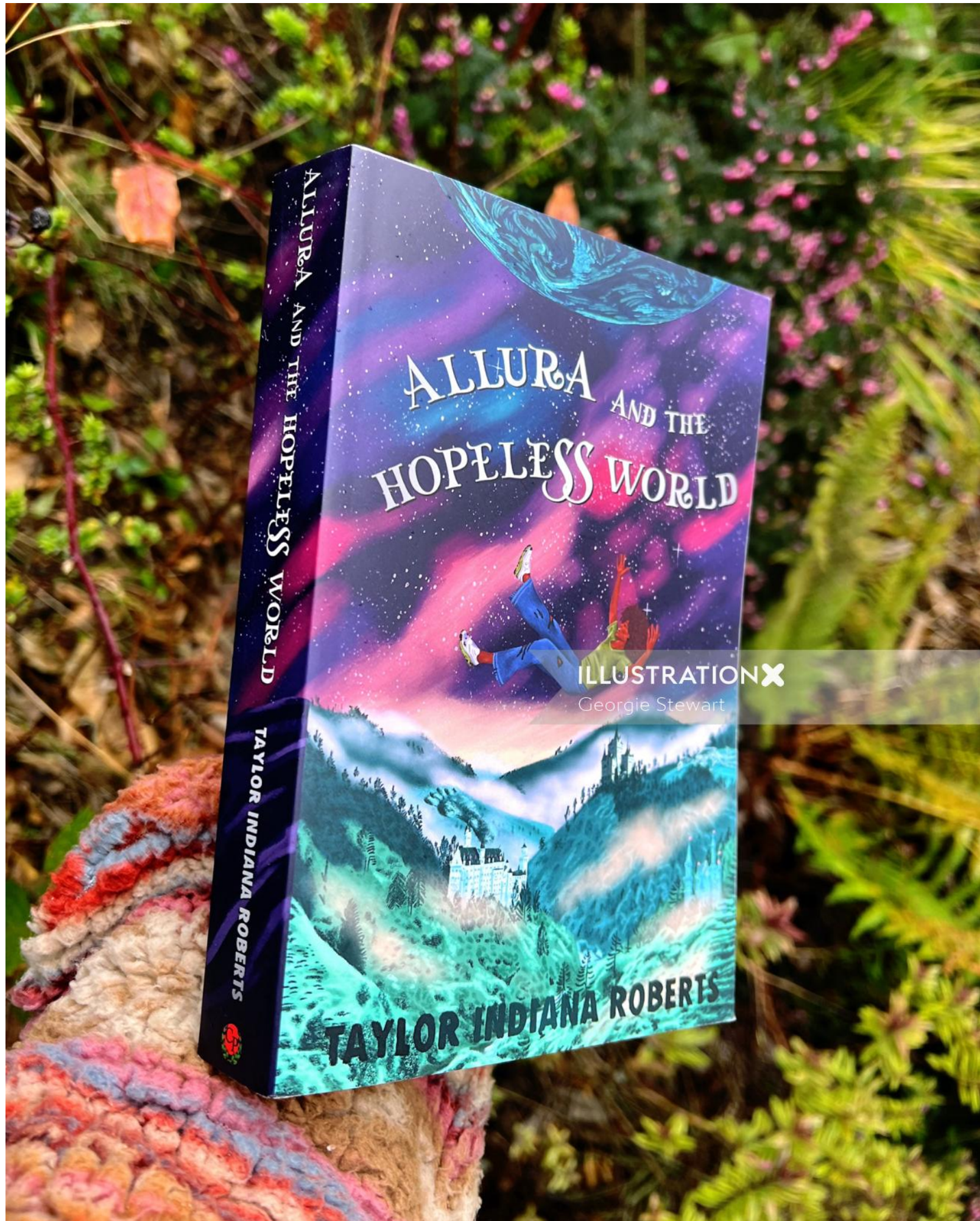
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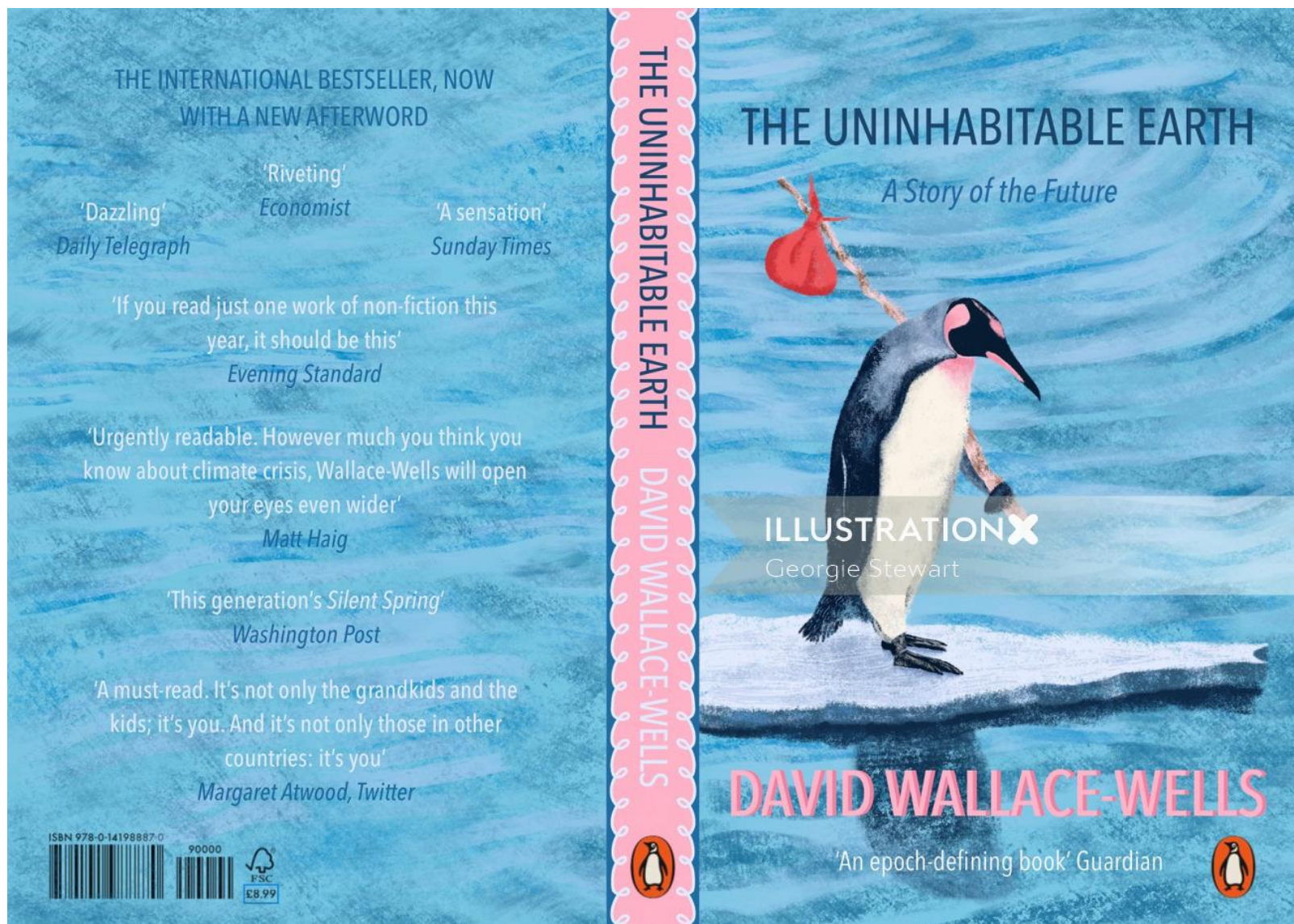
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ESSAY

Al Qal'ah I never had dinner at home. I later learned that this was ingrained in their DNA: the Bedouin law of the desert.

On what was to become an almost weekly ritual, Dan Peters showed up at my apartment on Thursday night, the eve of our day off, having walked the 10-odd miles from his village. (We'd later be issued Italian Moto Guzzi motorcycles.) Dan carried an empty backpack since his tiny village offered no canned goods, no meat, no vegetables, not even bread, forcing him to stock up in Al Qal'ah. Sporting thick glasses and an even thicker mustache, he struck me as a rough-hewn, overly serious farm boy from Wisconsin. I thought we'd have little in common.

It turned out Dan had lived in India, was a sophisticated world traveler, and was tough as nails. On two occasions in walking to my place, he was attacked by hyenas and fought them off with rocks. Over many Fridays, we rode hundreds of miles on our motorcycles to visit dozens of villages. For our vacation in January, we traveled all over Tunisia and to historic places in Algeria. We were highly compatible traveling mates and became fast friends.

ONE AFTERNOON between classes in Umm az Zarsān, a grizzled old man named Ahmed approached me. He said he'd fought in Libya during World War II with Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery's Eighth Army. He told me that the British Army had promised him three medals for his heroism in battle, yet here he was 25 years later with no medals. He asked for my help.

In desperation, I addressed a letter to British Army Headquarters, London, UK. Over the next few months, I got replies referring me to various places across Great Britain. Then, on 25 January 1969, I received Ahmed's three medals. I rushed over to Umm az Zarsān and, as his eyes welled up

with tears, I pinned the medals to Ahmed's chest. The word swept through the village, and soon everyone was clapping and cheering as he marched about Umm az Zarsān, his head held high with pride. I felt touched by history.

Later that year, I experienced history firsthand. On 1 September 1969, Moammar Gadhafi ousted King Idris I and took over Libya. We were soon thrown into massive confusion, then thrown out of the country. During the previous year, following intense letter-writing, I'd been able to meet with Jeanne just

three times. We'd hoped to travel to France together on the way back to the States, but erratic flight schedules got in the way. My hopes were dashed.

I chose to finish my term of service in the Teacher Corps in New Jersey. Dan went back to Wisconsin to teach. He became engaged to his childhood sweetheart. Four months later, following a meeting with their pastor, Dan and his fiancée were killed in an automobile accident. I was devastated. Dan, my best Peace Corps buddy, had become a casualty of peace. ■

Randolph W. Hobler is the author of *101 Arabian Tales: How We All Persevered in Peace Corps Libya*, from which this essay is adapted.

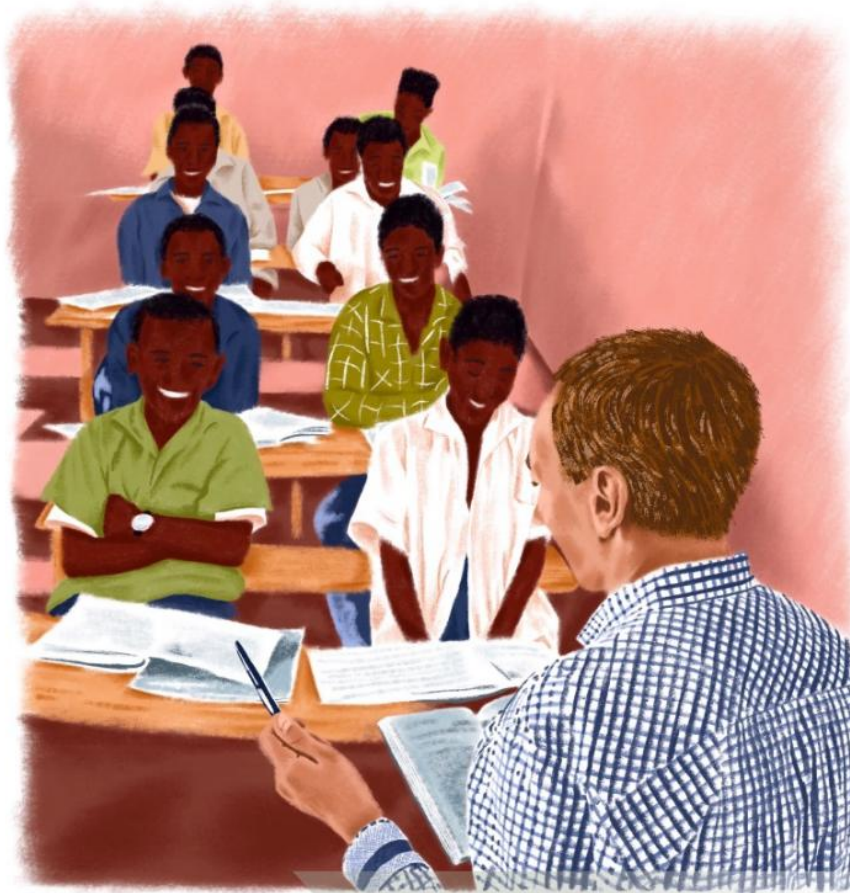


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Partnering for Peace sponsors the second annual Rotary-Peace Corps Week 19-23 September. Learn more at partneringforpeace.org.

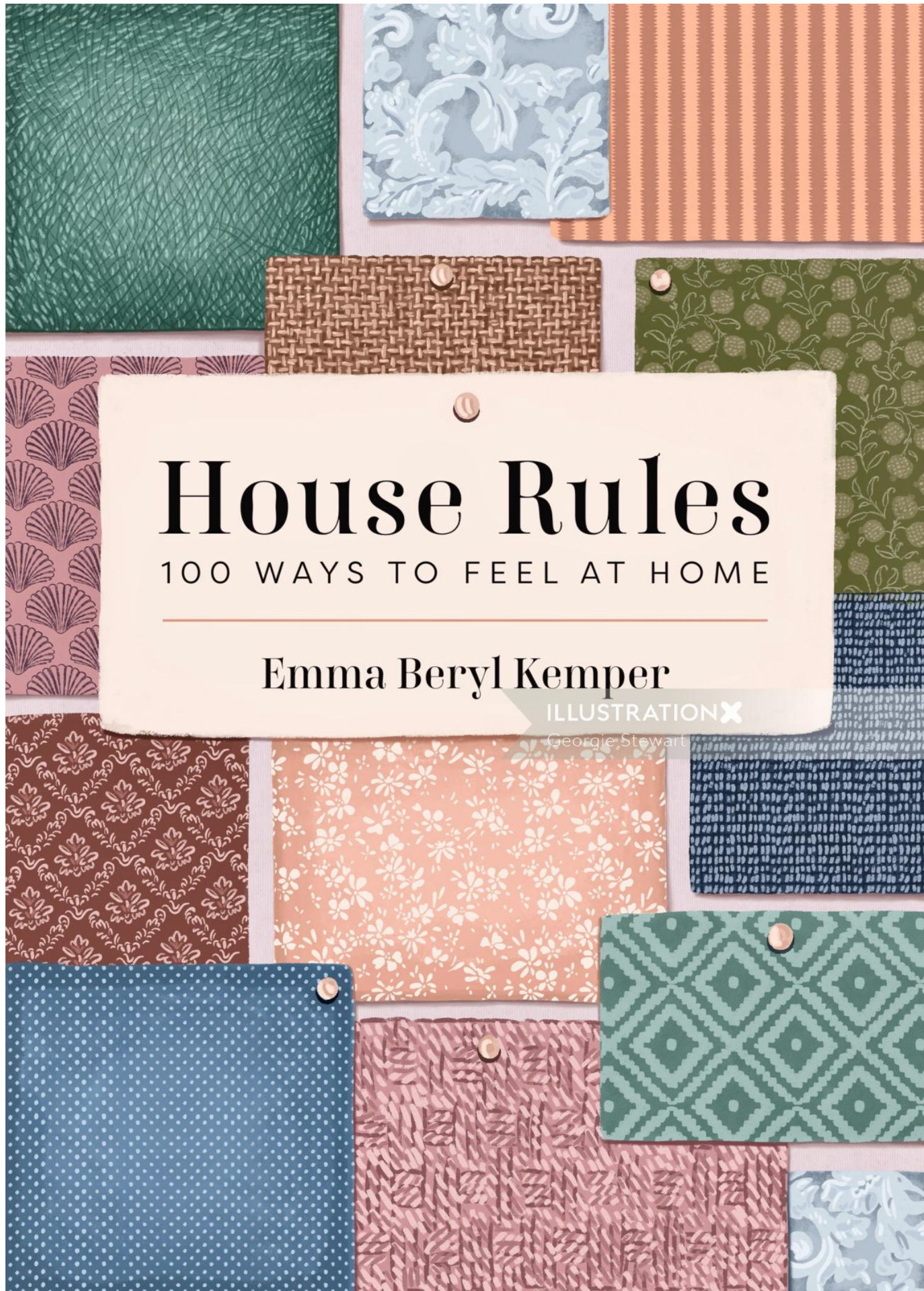
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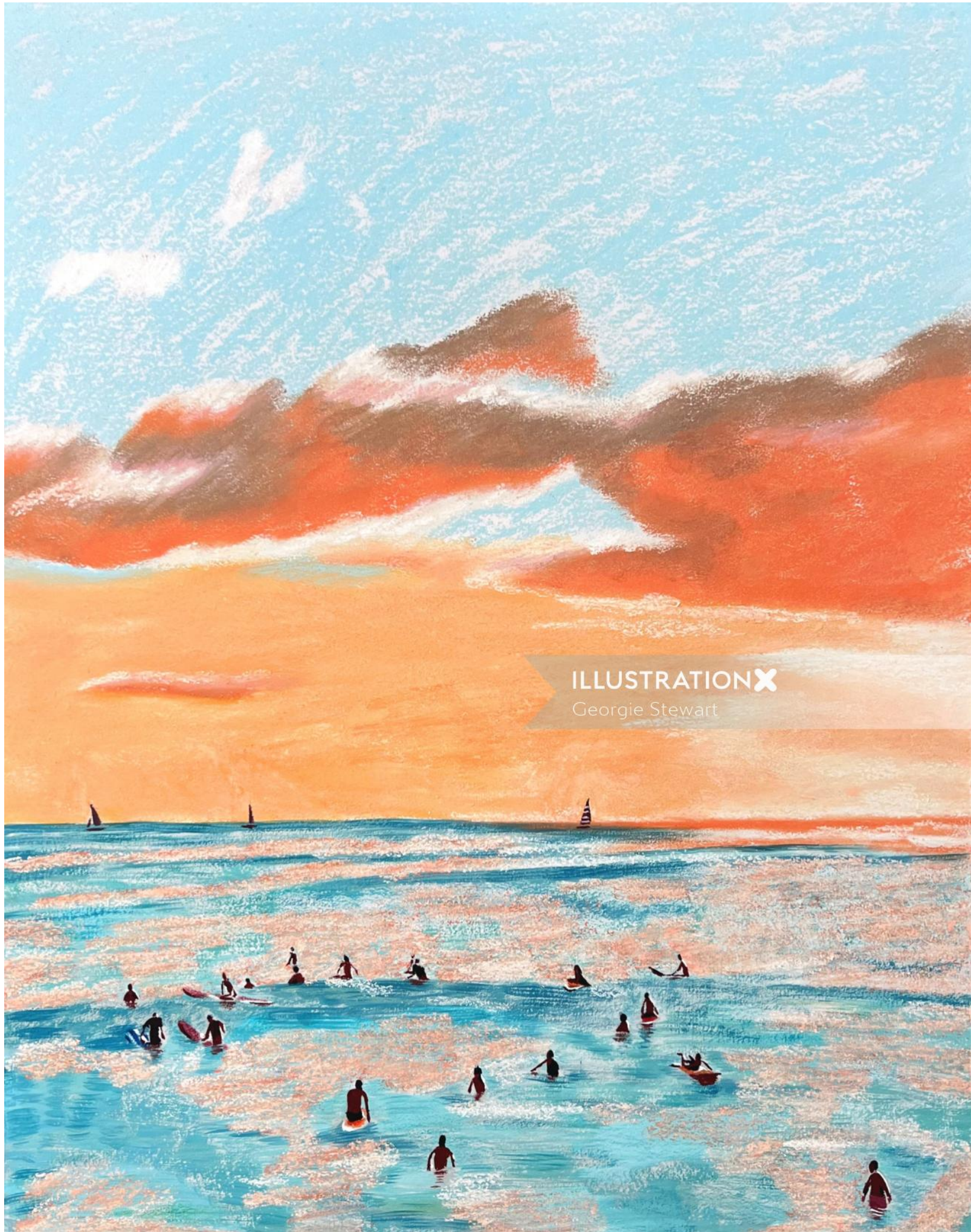
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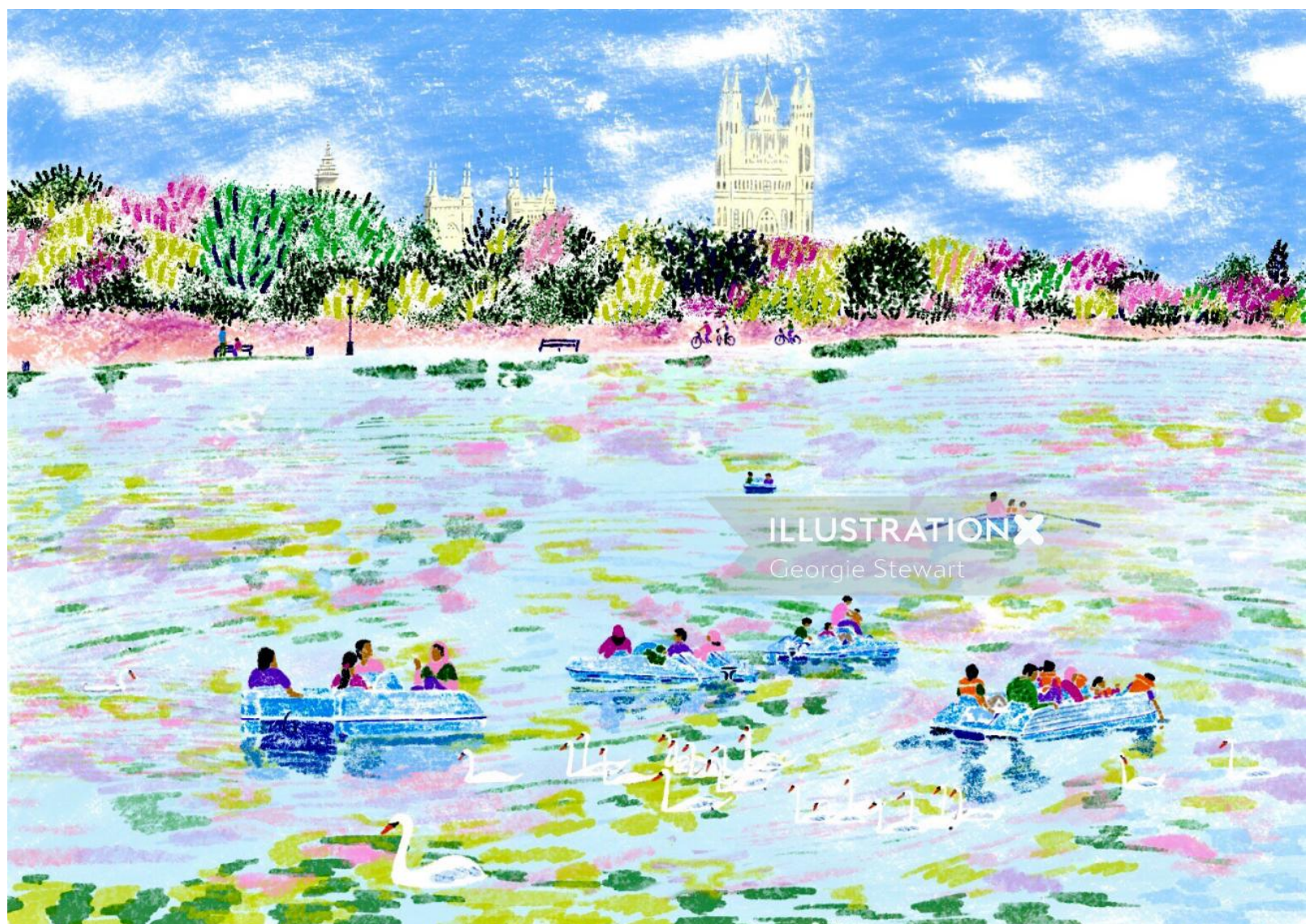
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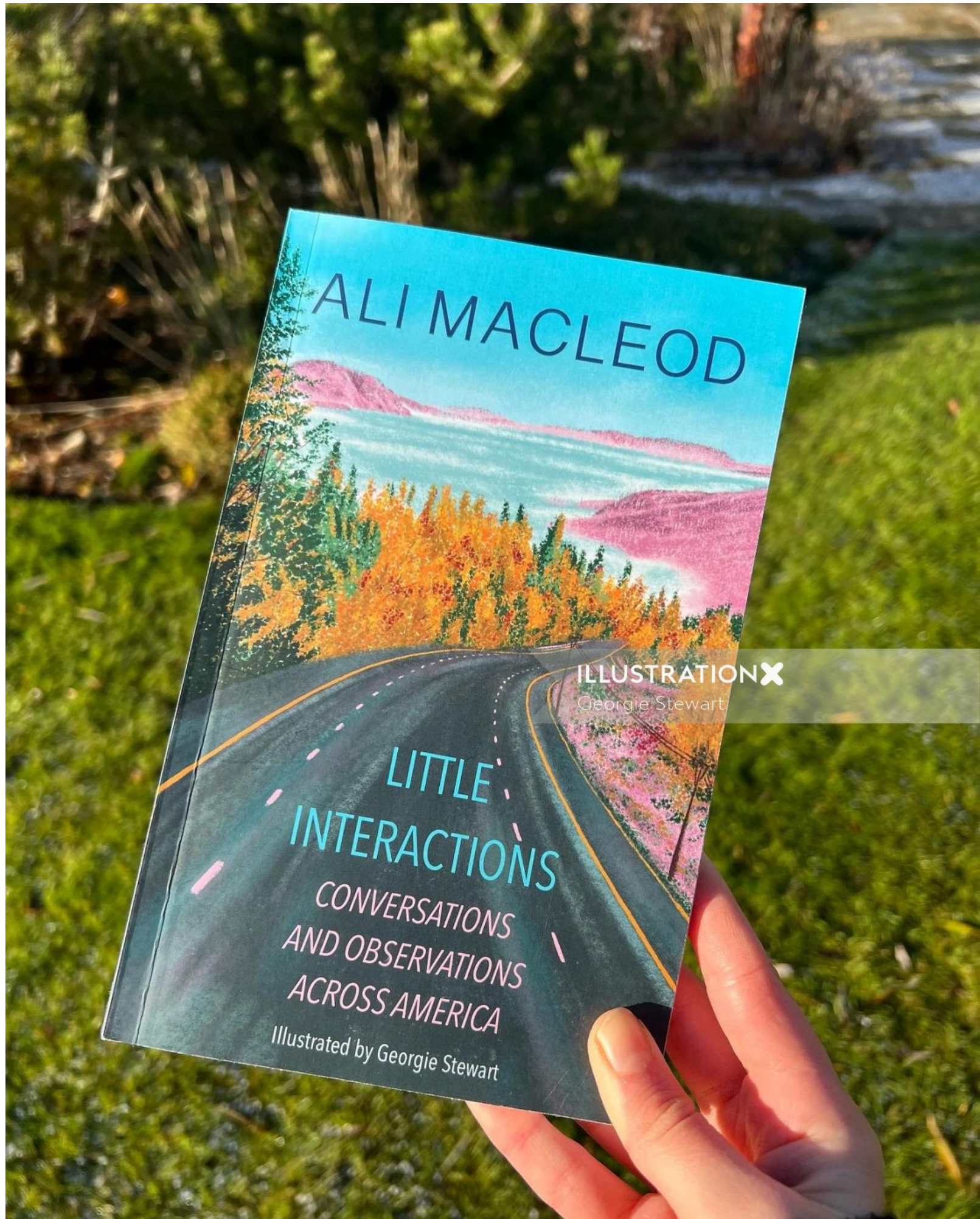
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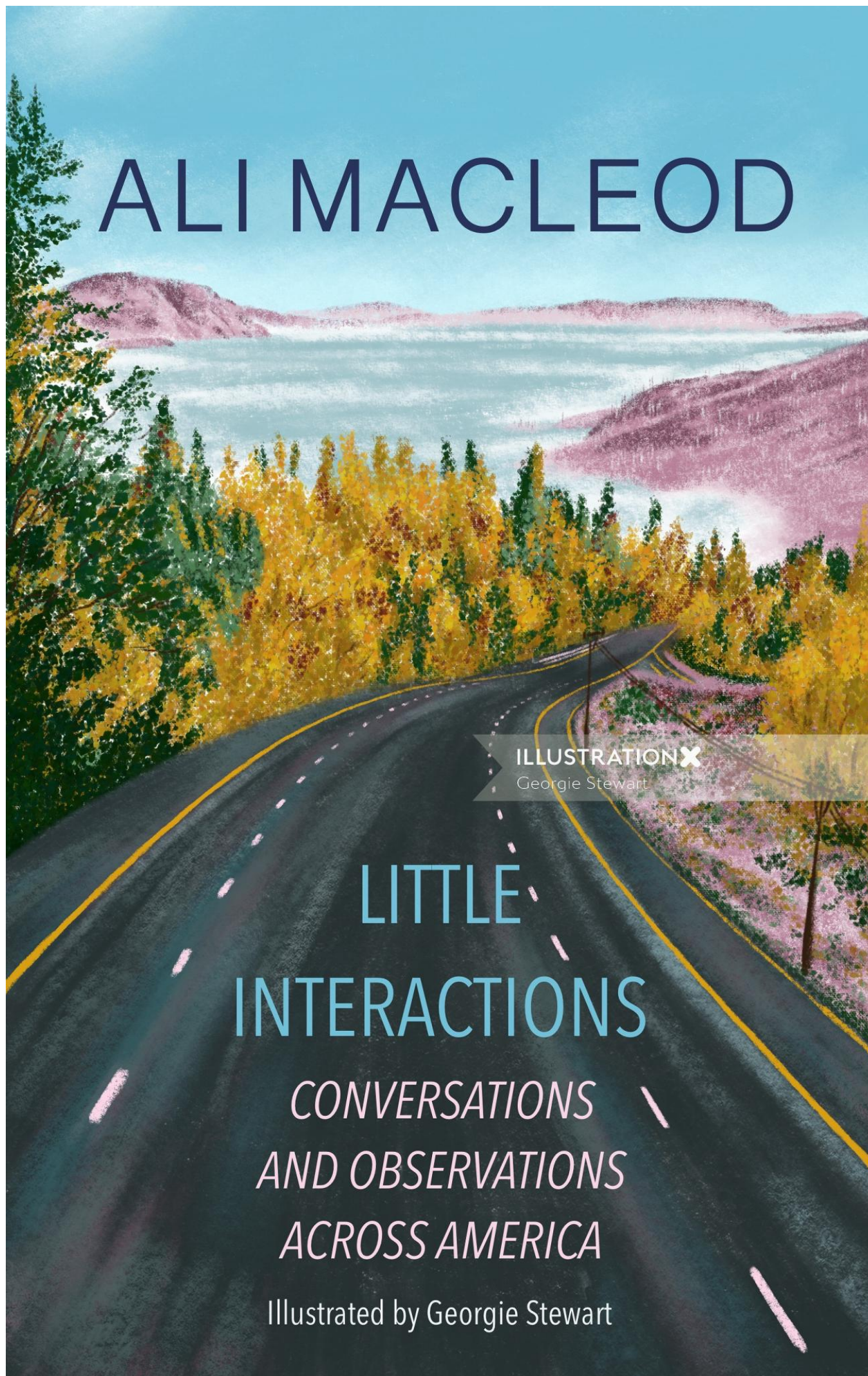
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