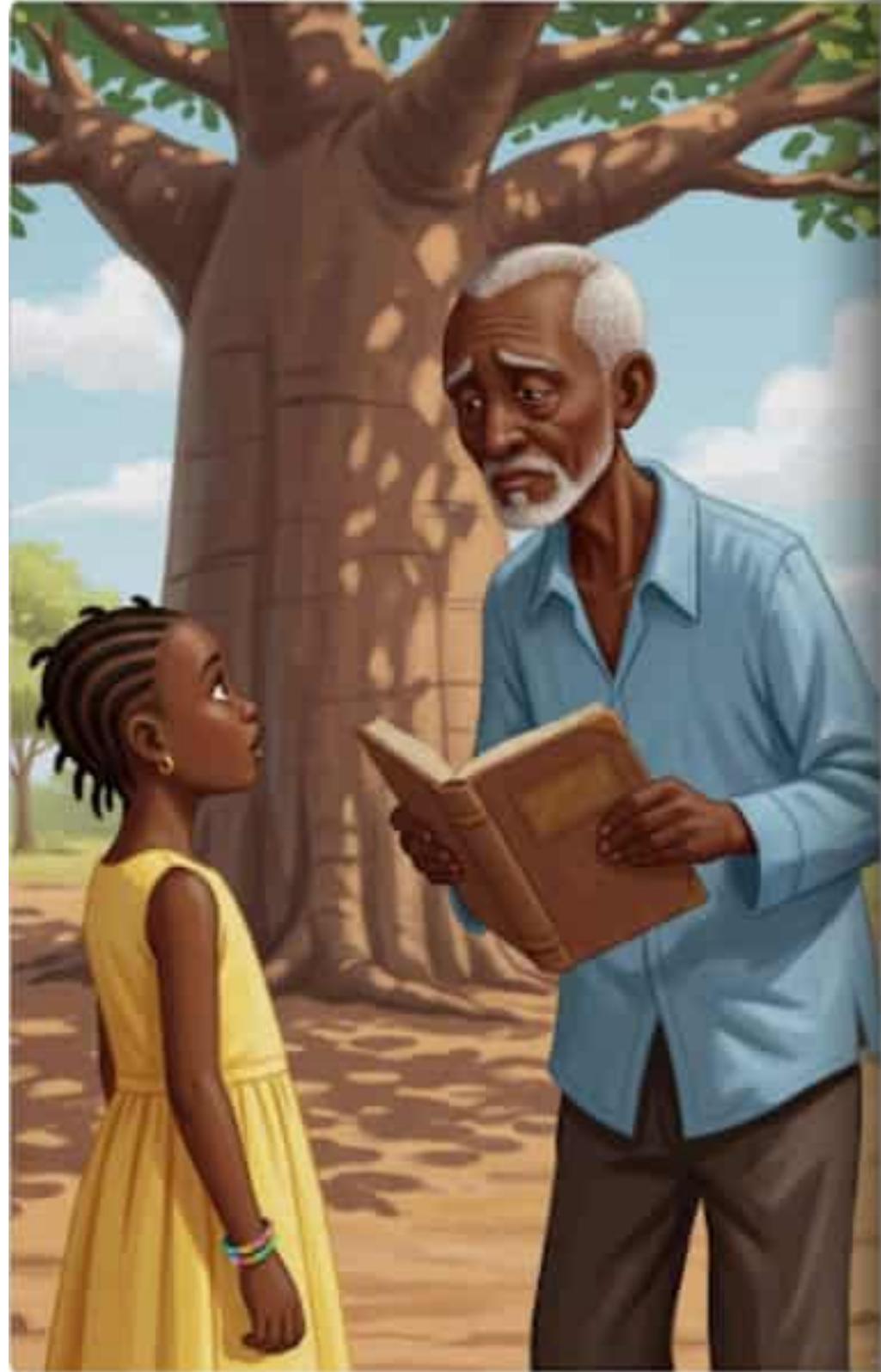


## Noela and the Story Dragons

By Liezl Coetzee



In a sunny village in Malawi, lived a girl named Noela. Her village had a very important book, the Book of Names. Gogo, the village elder, was reading the book to prepare for the Mango Festival. "Everyone in this book gets a basket of sweet mangoes!" he declared.



Noela frowned. "Gogo, what about my new friend, Leo? He just moved here. Is his name in the book?" Gogo shook his head sadly. "The book is very old, little one. If a name isn't in the book, it doesn't get counted. I'm sorry."



That night, Noela felt sad for Leo. As she looked at the twinkling stars, a tiny, shimmering light zipped down from the sky. It was a dragon, small and sparkly like starlight. "I am Bokosi," it whispered in a voice like rustling leaves. "I hold the stories that are not yet written."



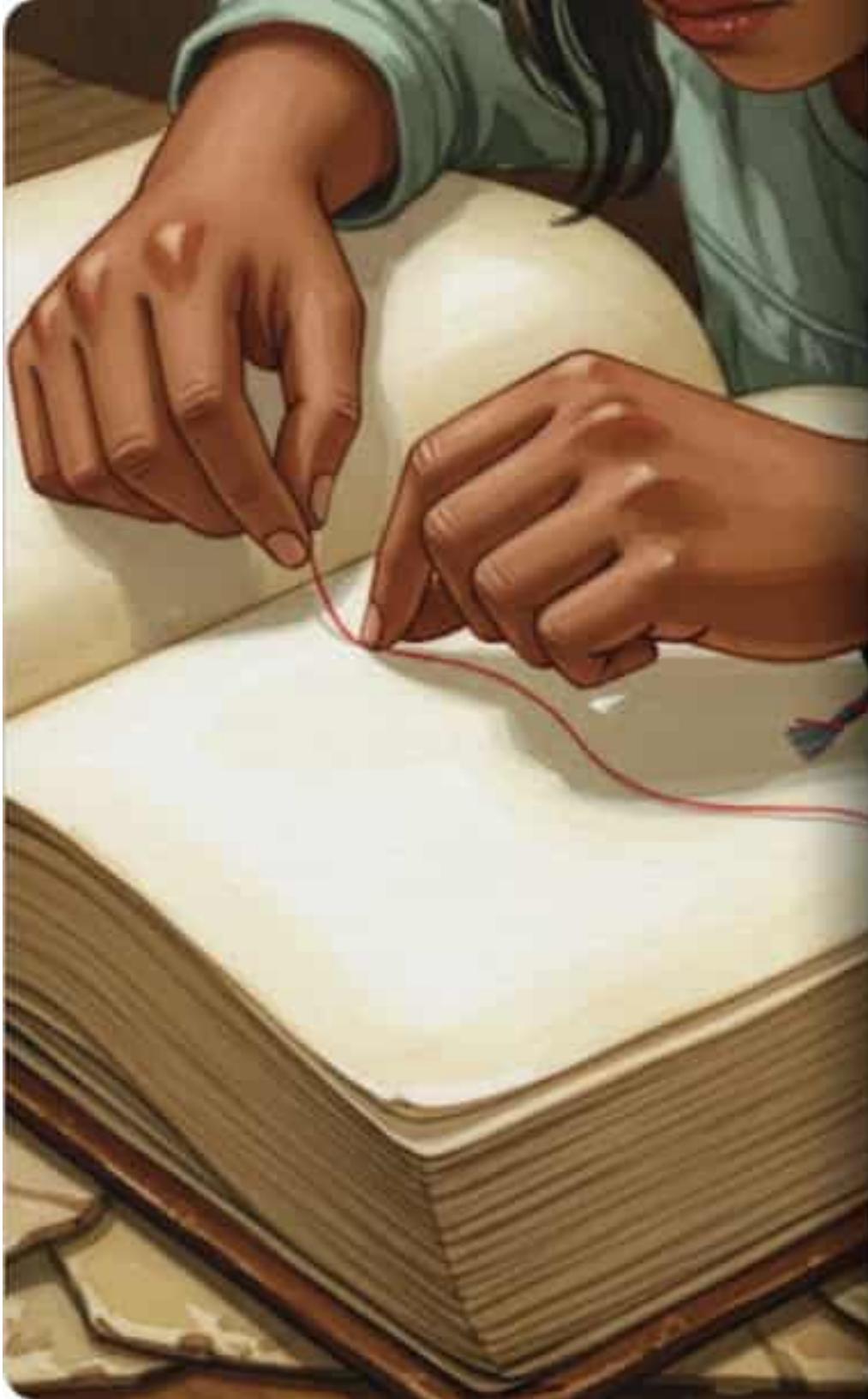
Bokosi led Noela back to the village book. When Noela placed her hand on its cover, the book began to glow. A second, much larger dragon appeared, swirling out of the light. Its scales were a rainbow of colours, like a beautiful patchwork quilt.



"I am Zokonda," the rainbow dragon rumbled gently. "I weave the threads that connect everyone." It touched Noela's name in the book, and a glowing thread of light appeared, connecting her name to her mother's name, and her mother's to her Gogo's.



"Can you find Leo?" Noela asked.  
Zokonda searched the glowing  
pages, but no thread led to a Leo.  
Bokosi, the whisper dragon,  
reappeared. "A new story needs a  
new thread," it chirped. "The book  
can't see what it hasn't been told."



Noela knew just what to do! She took a bright red thread from the friendship bracelet on her wrist. She laid it carefully on a blank page in the book. "This is for Leo," she said. "He is my friend. He is kind, and he gives the best hugs!"



The moment Noela shared her story, the red thread began to glow! Zokonda gently took the thread and wove it into the book's pages. The glowing red thread connected to Noela's thread, and on the page, a new name magically appeared: LEO.



The next morning, Noela showed Gogo the book. He gasped! There was Leo's name, shining brightly, woven into the village story. "You are right, Noela," Gogo said, his eyes twinkling. "Our book must always have space for new stories and new friends."



At the Mango Festival, everyone cheered as Leo received his very own basket of sweet, juicy mangoes. Noela shared her mango with him, and high up in the big mango tree, she saw a shimmer of starlight and a flash of rainbow colours. The story dragons were smiling, too.