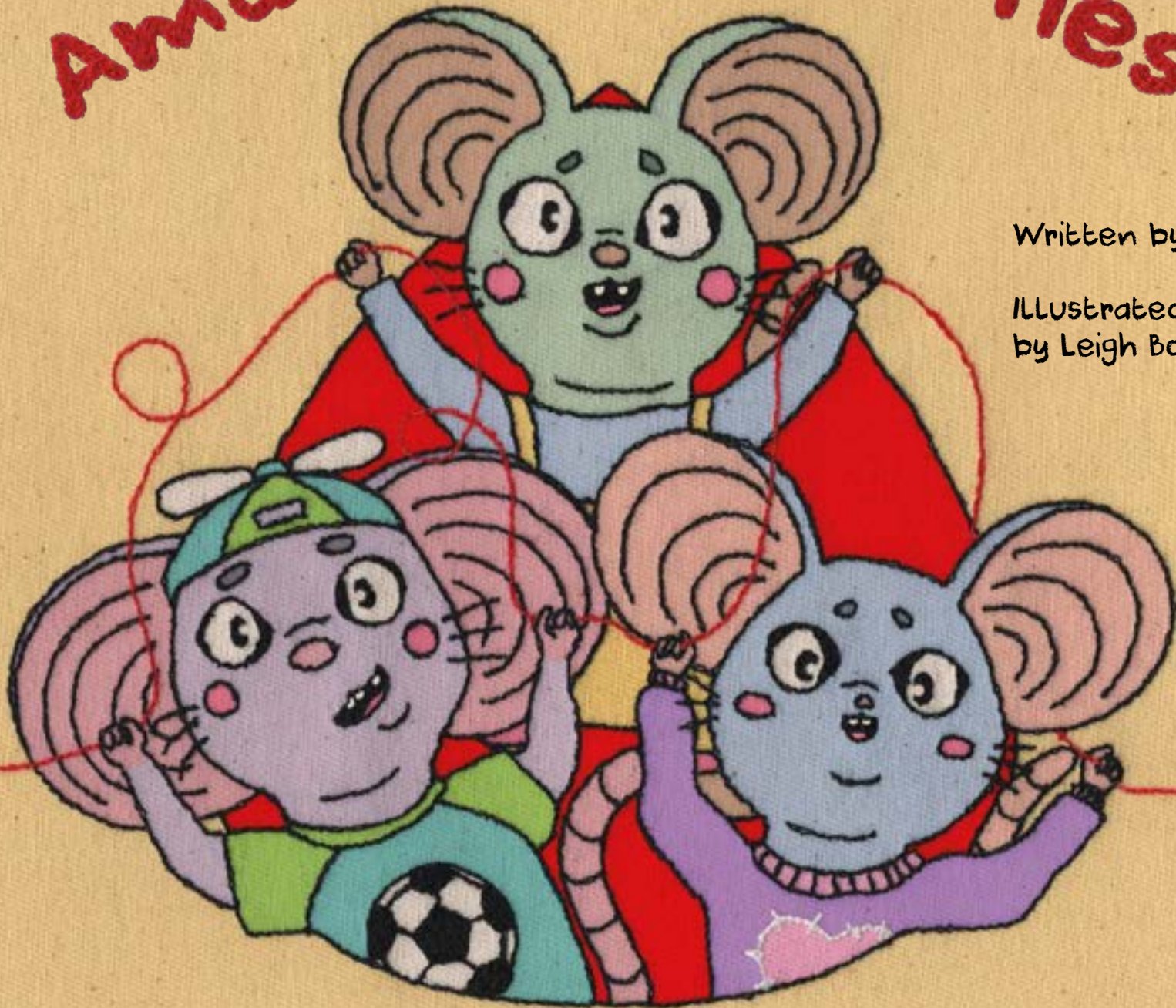
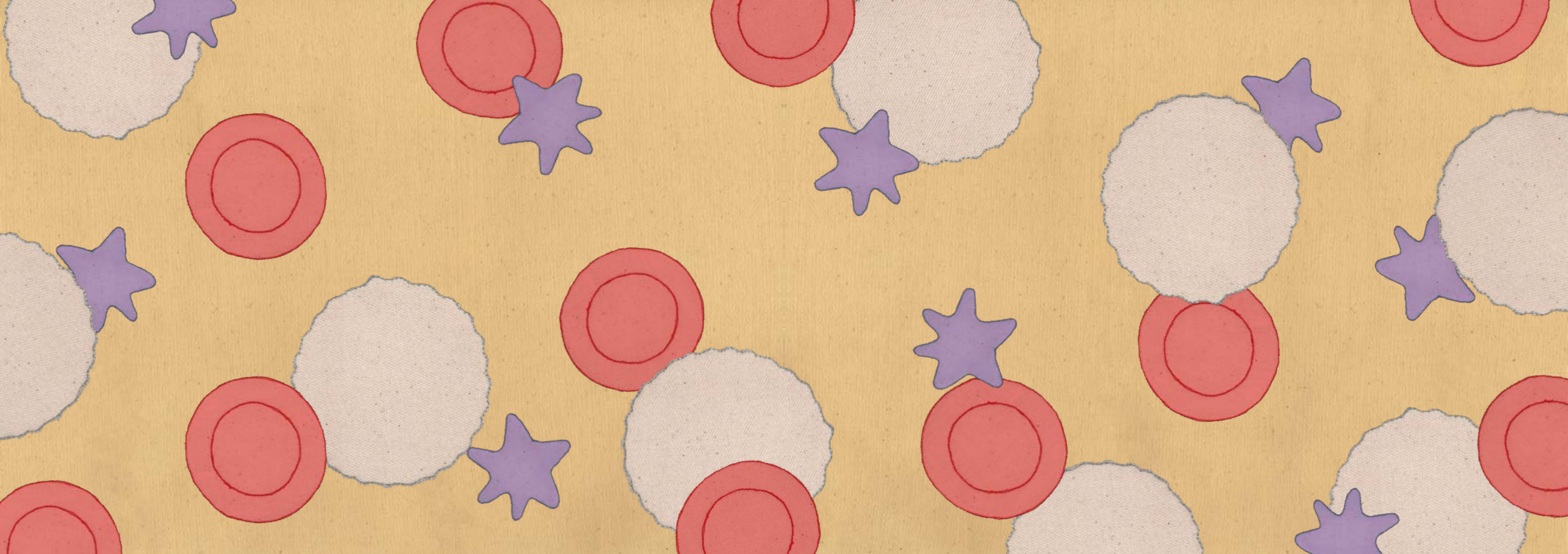


Amazing Blood Ties!

Written by Jieun Kim

Illustrated and stitched
by Leigh Bowser





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Text © 2025 Jieun Kim
Illustrations © 2025 Leigh Bowser
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www.leighalovesyou.com

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This book is a work of fiction inspired by research and interviews conducted mainly in Japan and South Korea, with additional consultation in the United Kingdom. While based on real practices and experiences, some details may differ from actual blood donation or transfusion procedures. The book is for educational purposes only and not a substitute for medical advice. Children should read it with a responsible adult, and readers should always follow guidance from qualified healthcare professionals.



Amazing Blood Ties!



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Mina

Meet Mina, who learns about blood donation for the first time. Her mum wants to give blood to help others, but Mina isn't sure what it means. Join her to find out why people may need blood and why giving blood isn't as scary as it sounds!

Jun

Meet Jun, a football fan, who discovers a surprising fact about his blood. Follow him on his hospital journey as he receives help to get back on the field with his friends.



Yumi

Meet Yumi, who dreams of becoming a nurse like her older sister, Yujin. Come with her to find out what nurses do at the blood donation centre.

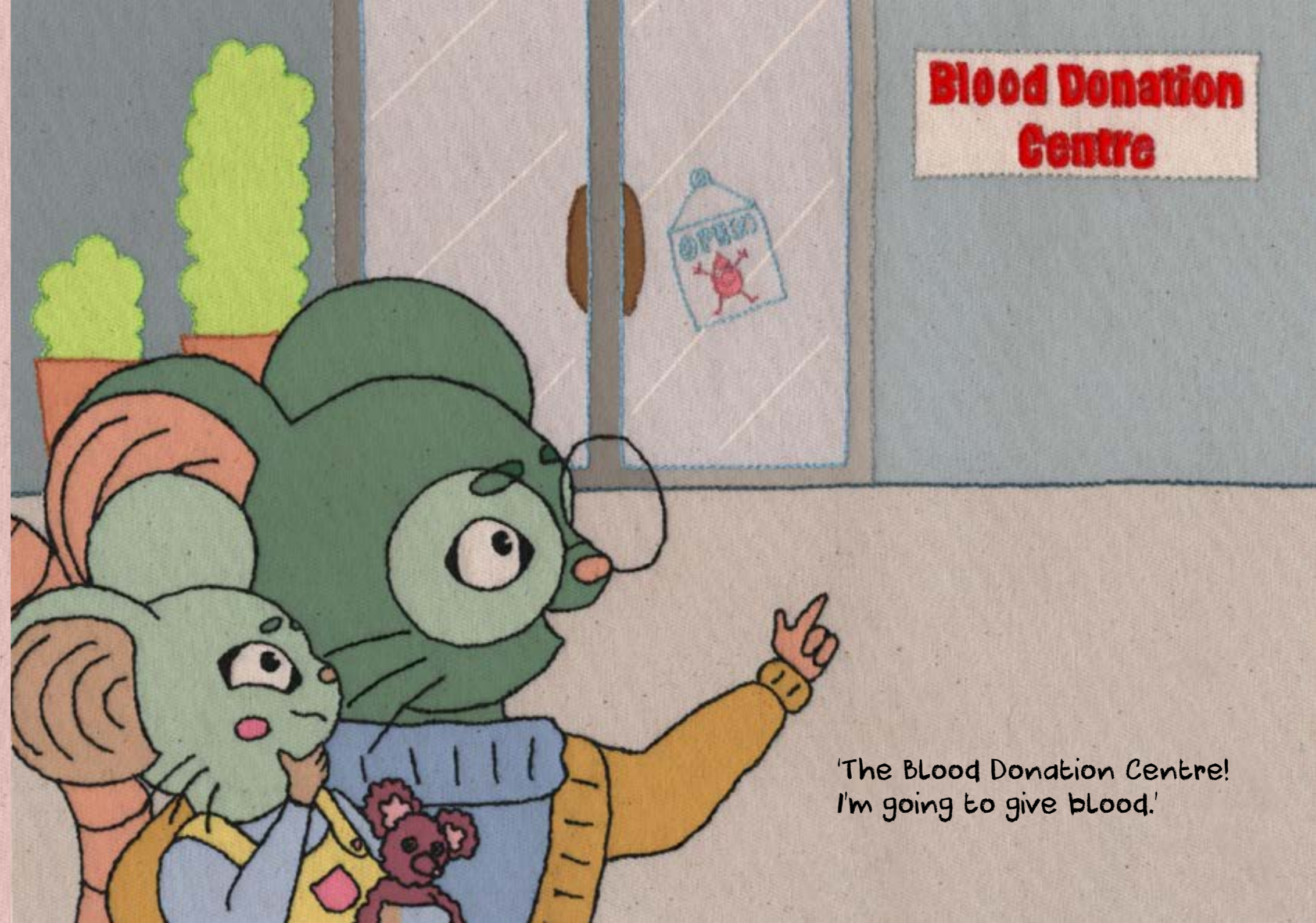


Welcome!

This book is to help you learn and feel supported. Read it with a grown-up you trust. It is not a guide for medical advice. Always ask doctors or nurses if you have questions about your health.

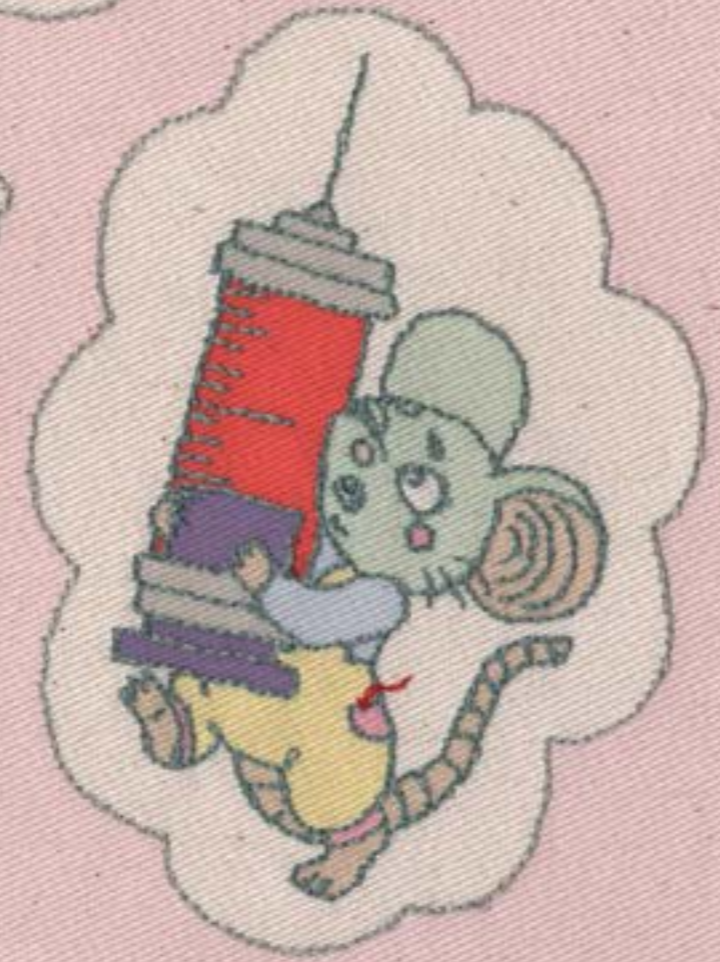
Now, let's discover how Mina, Jun, and Yumi are connected...

Today's the big day! Mummy is taking Mina to the movies, and she can't wait. 'But first, we have a quick stop to make', Mummy says. 'Where?' Mina asks.



'The Blood Donation Centre!
I'm going to give blood.'

What?!
Give blood?!
I wonder how
that works?



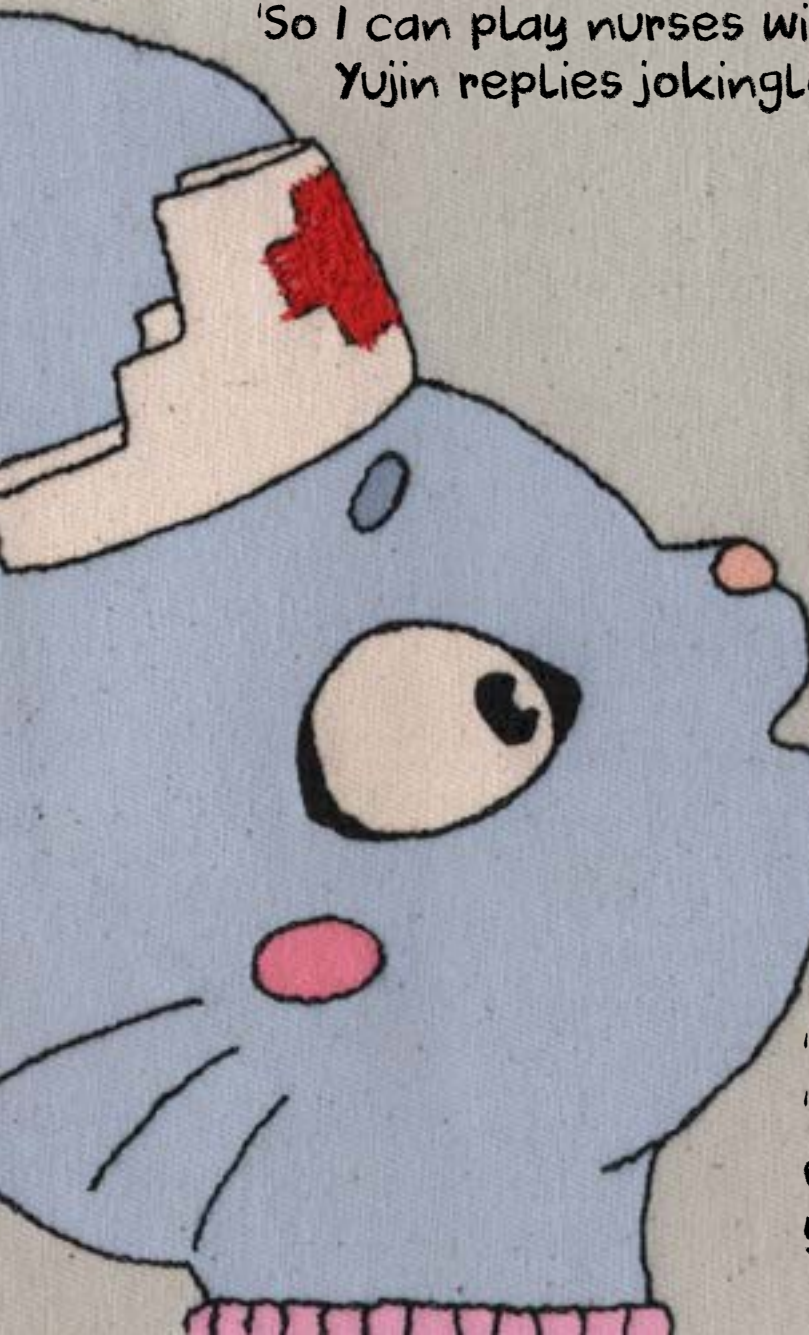
'Just wait here for a little bit, darling. I'll be done by the time you finish this book', says Mummy before going in.

Meanwhile, Yumi begs her big sister, Yujin, to play just one more game.
'Yumi, I'm going to be late for work!
Just one more? PLeeeeeease?
'Alright, but this is the last one, okay?'
'Okay, I promise!'


Yujin clears her throat.
'All right, Nurse Yumi, we need to prepare the blood bags. Can you attach these labels?'
'Yes, madam!'

While attaching labels with the letters A, B, AB, and O, Yumi has a funny thought.
'I'm going to put 'O' on every bag, because I'm O type!'
'Oh that would be absolutely unacceptable, Nurse Yumi, we need all blood types!'






As Yumi sorts the drawings by blood type, a question pops into her mind.
'Why did you become a nurse?'
'So I can play nurses with you?'
Yujin replies jokingly.



'No, but really?'
'Ummm, it's difficult to explain... but I can tell you my favourite thing!'



Yujin picks up one of the drawings and gently presses it against Yumi's heart.

'What I love most is meeting first-time donors. When they finish, I hand them their blood bag. They're always surprised by how warm it is.'

"That's life", I tell them.
"You're sharing your life."

On the other side of town, Jun is busy playing football.
Today is the first match between his neighbourhood teams.



Jun wants to do his best, but he's been feeling tired lately.
I need to catch the ball, but it hurts... Argh...
'I need to take a break', Jun barely whispers before collapsing.



Jun is lying in the hospital bed, but all he wants is to go back home and play football with his friends. 'When can I go home?' he asks. 'The doctors and nurses are doing their best. Let's just be a little patient', replies his dad.



The doctor tells Jun's parents that he has a serious illness called Leukaemia. 'It means Jun's body can't make enough healthy blood cells to carry oxygen. But we have treatments that have helped many children get better. Jun will need to stay strong, and he'll need your support.'



Back at the donation centre, Mina starts to get a little worried.
Will Mummy get hurt? What if Mummy gets sick?
A frightening image of her Mummy in the hospital suddenly flashes
through Mina's mind.



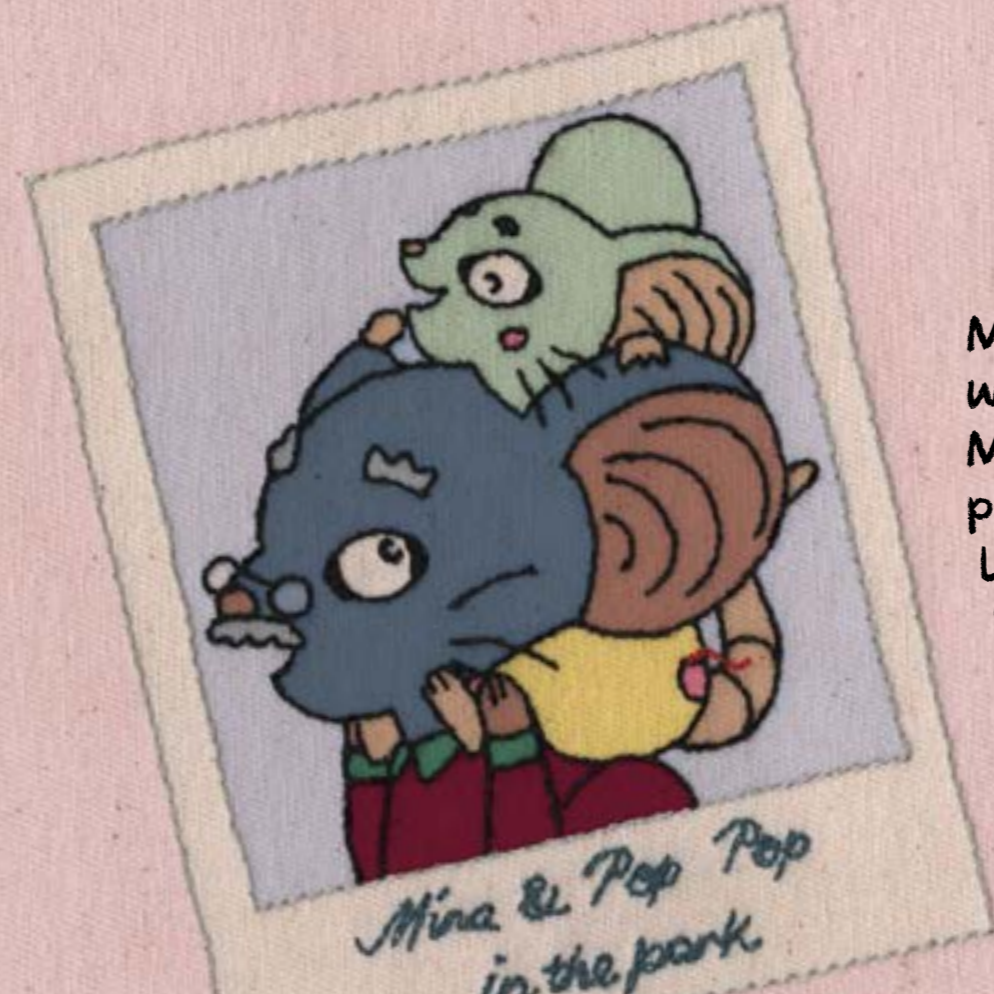
When Mummy comes out to the waiting area, Mina runs to her for a big hug.
'What's the matter, Mina?'





Mina replies in a sulky voice,
'I don't want you to give blood!'
'Oh darling, did you get scared?
Come here, sit on my lap.'
Wiping away Mina's tears, Mummy
starts stroking her hair.
'Do you know when I
decided to donate?'

'It was the day you were born, sweetie.
My doctor told me I might need a transfusion.'
'Transfu... what's that?'
'A transfusion is when a doctor gives you extra
blood to save your life.
In the end, I didn't need it, but it made me
want to help others who might.'
Mina is a bit calmer now.



*Mina & Pop Pop
in the park.*



*Welcome to the World
Baby Mina*

Mummy continues, 'Do you remember
when Grandpa got really sick?'
Mina replies, 'Yes, he had cancer',
pronouncing the word she had learnt
last year.
'That's right. Do you know how he got
better?' Mina shakes her head.
'He had many treatments to fight the
cancer and needed transfusions too.'
Mina is lost in thought.

Meanwhile, Jun is in the hospital bed, getting medicine from a nurse.
How many times do I have to do this? I'm sick of medicine! I'm sick of the tests.
At night, Jun stares at the ceiling, wishing he could break it open to see the sky.



But there are also things that Jun likes, such as playing football games on his tablet.
I wish I could play games all day long everyday, hee hee!
The tablet was a gift from his parents, as Jun cannot have visitors in his hospital room.



In the doctor's office, Jun's parents receive alarming news.
'Jun has a rare blood type, and we haven't found a match yet.'



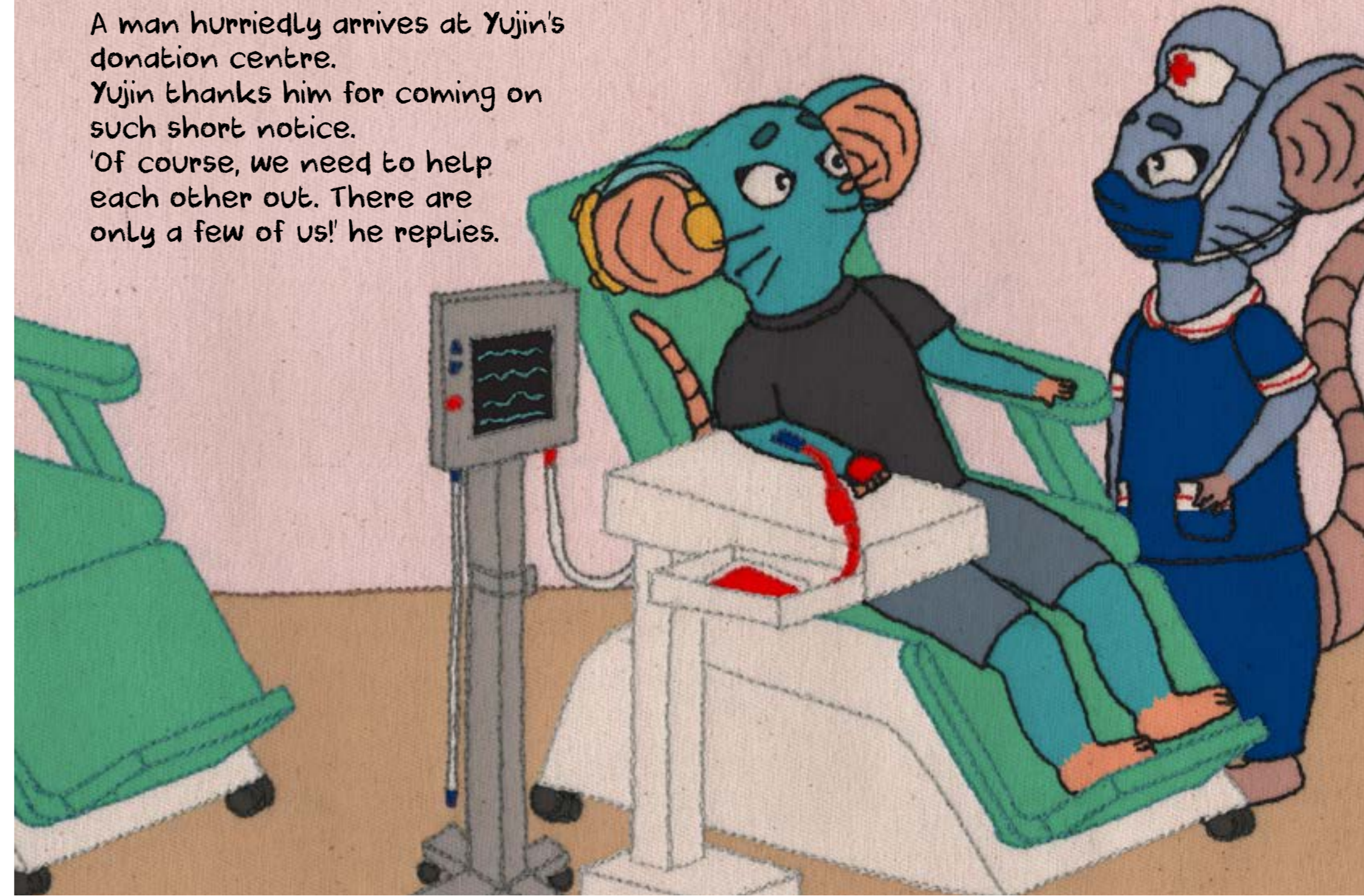
Jun's parents decide to make an appeal on the internet, asking people with Jun's blood type to donate.



Meanwhile, Yujin is making phone calls to everyone on a list of registered donors with Jun's blood type.
'Can you come to donate as soon as possible? Your help is needed urgently!'



A man hurriedly arrives at Yujin's donation centre.
Yujin thanks him for coming on such short notice.
'Of course, we need to help each other out. There are only a few of us!' he replies.





Yumi hears all about Yujin's day. Yumi takes out a drawing from the pile she's been playing with all day. She asks Yujin what rare blood type she was looking for and writes it down. 'We found your match!' Yumi exclaims, handing it to Yujin.

When Yujin returns home, Yumi runs out to greet her. 'Did you help save lives today?' 'I don't know, I tried my best.'

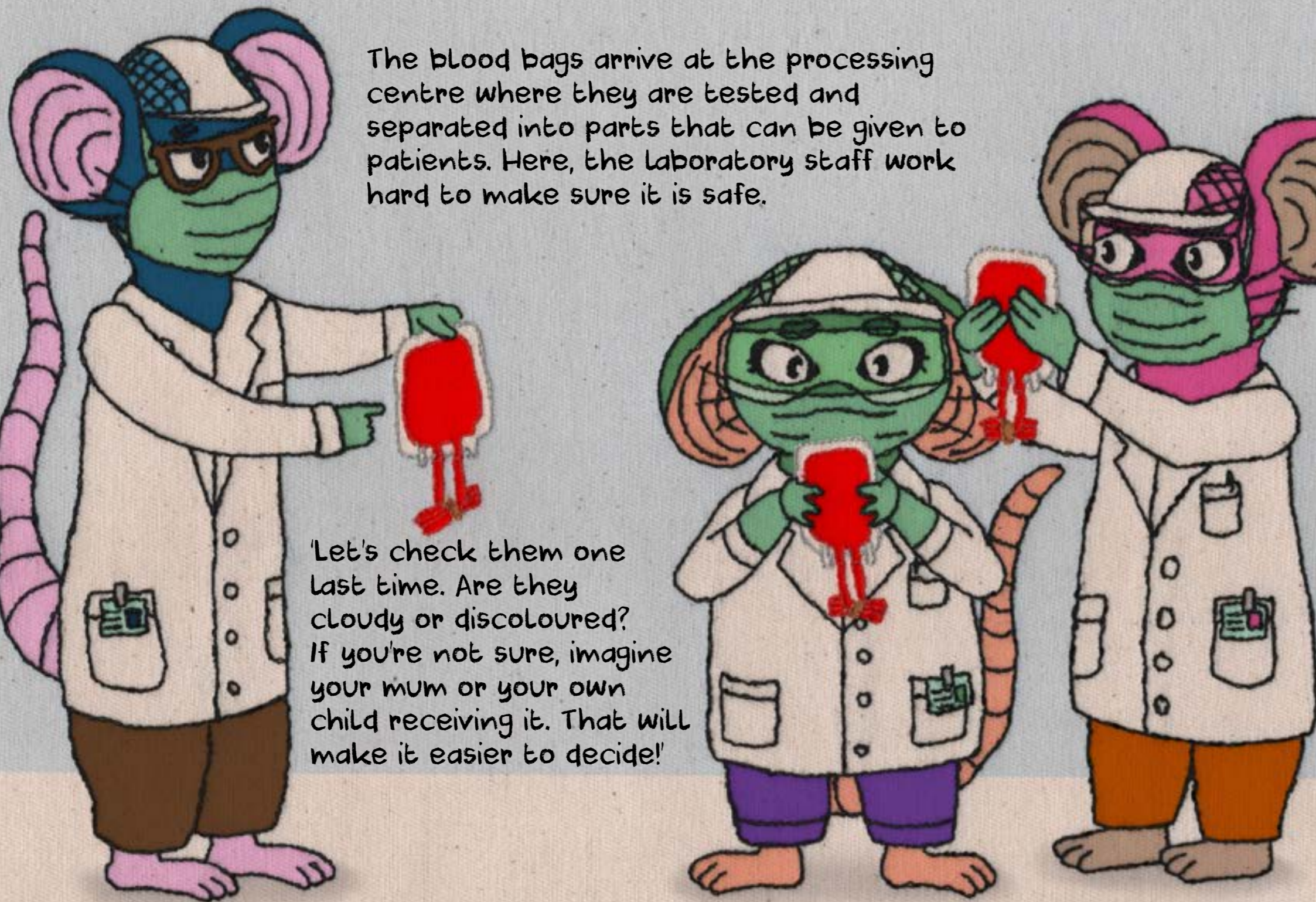
As Mina Leaves the donation centre, she continues to ask questions.
'But why do YOU have to donate? Everybody has blood, other people can do it.'

Mummy replies with a smile, 'Because it makes ME happy. You'll understand one day.
Oh, Look, Mina, over there! Where do you think they are taking them?'




The blood bags arrive at the processing centre where they are tested and separated into parts that can be given to patients. Here, the laboratory staff work hard to make sure it is safe.

'Let's check them one last time. Are they cloudy or discoloured? If you're not sure, imagine your mum or your own child receiving it. That will make it easier to decide!'



Among the donations that arrive at Jun's hospital is the blood collected by Yujin. A biomedical scientist carefully crossmatches it with Jun's blood. 'It's a match!' she screams with delight.



Three cartoon mice are shown weaving red thread. The mouse at the top is green with large ears and a red cape. The mouse at the bottom left is purple with a green cap and a soccer ball on its chest. The mouse at the bottom right is blue with a purple top. They are all holding red threads that form a complex, tangled pattern in the background.

'Do you want
to weave in too?'

The background of the right page is a light yellow fabric with several decorative elements: purple five-pointed stars, white circular patches with irregular, torn edges, and red circular patches with concentric circles inside.

Safety Note for Children

Blood donation is safe when done by trained doctors and nurses. In the UK, you need to be at least 17 years old to give blood. For more information, you can visit the NHS Blood and Transplant website: blood.co.uk

BLOOD BRAID ACTIVITY:

Make a bracelet, hair braid or key chain!



You will need:
 6 strands of thread in different colours
 Letter beads: A, B, AB and O
 4 pony beads: red, white, yellow and purple
 A piece of tape

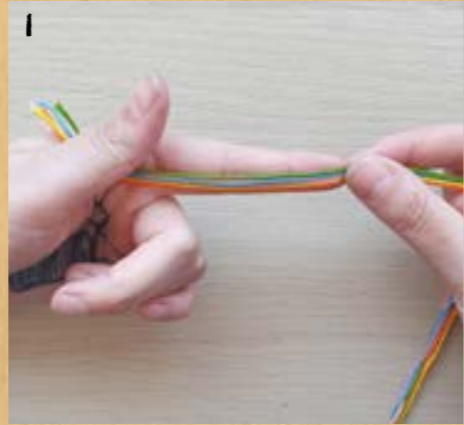


The threads represent some of the different people involved in blood donation:

1. Blood donors
2. Nurses
3. Blood delivery team
4. Biomedical scientists
5. Doctors
6. Patients

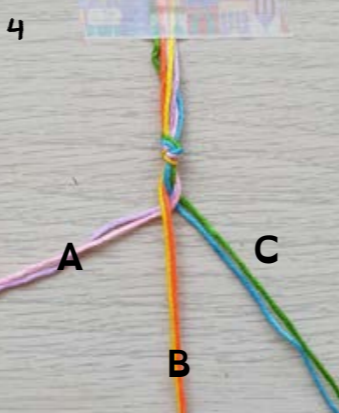
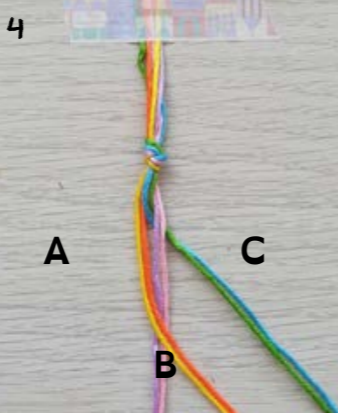
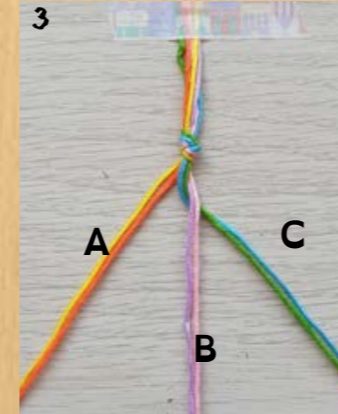
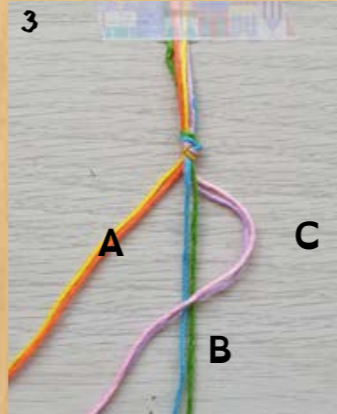
The Letter beads are for the different blood types: A, B, AB, and O. The pony beads show the different parts of blood: red blood cells, white blood cells, plasma, and platelets.

Step 1: Match up the ends of your threads and hold them together under your thumb. Measure along your finger and tie a knot.

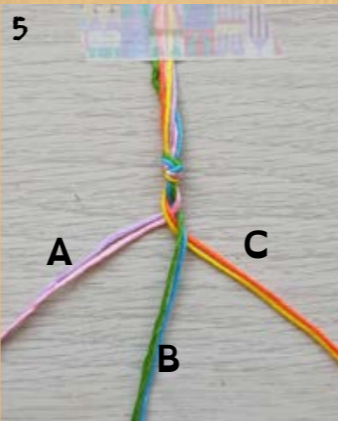


Step 2: Tape this 'tail' to the table. Separate your 6 strands into 3 sets of 2.

Step 3: Take your threads at point 'C' and swap places with your threads at point 'B'. Make sure 'C' goes over the top of 'B'.

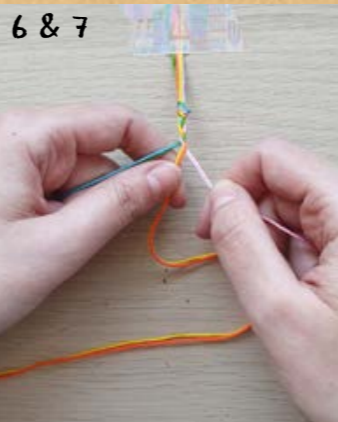


Step 4: Take your threads at point 'A' and swap places with your threads at point 'B'. Make sure 'A' goes over the top of 'B'.



Step 5: Now we're back to step 3 again. Take your threads at point 'C' and swap places with your threads at point 'B'. Make sure 'C' goes over the top of 'B'.

Step 6: It's step 4 again! Take your threads at point 'A' and swap places with your 'B' threads. Make sure 'A' goes over the top of 'B'.



Step 7: Do these steps 2 more times!



Step 8: Now we're going to add the first bead - choose any colour you like. Which part of the blood is it?

Step 9: Go back to step 3 and 4, swapping over your threads 5 times. Now you're ready to add your first Letter bead. What blood type is it?



Step 10: It's time to braid again, just like steps 3 & 4. Swap your threads 5 times.

Step 11: Add your next coloured bead.

Step 12: Braid again. Swap your threads 5 times.

Step 13: Add your next Letter bead.

Keep doing this until you have no beads left. Braid your threads 5 more times.

Step 14: Add a knot in the end of your new blood braid!



Keychain or hair braid:

Step 1: Separate the threads into 2 sets of 3 colours.

Step 2: Make a loose loop - don't tighten all the way to the end.

Step 3: Tie again to make a firm knot, keeping the loop in place.

Step 4: Add it to a key chain or hair tie.



Adjustable bracelet:

Step 1: Choose 2 threads from one end of the braid and thread a bead onto them.

Step 2: Choose 2 threads from the other end of the braid and thread it through the bead in the opposite direction.

Step 3: Tie a knot in the end of each pair of threads and trim.



Jieun Kim



Jieun Kim (PhD), or Jini, is a researcher at the University of Leeds and the author of 'Amazing Blood Ties'. She is a medical anthropologist who practices 'ethnographic fieldwork'. This means she is interested in how people look after their own health, take care of each other, and find meaning in doing so. Jini is especially fascinated by people's relationships with blood donation and how they can differ in the UK, Japan, and South Korea.

You can learn more about Jini's research at: hematopolitics.org or [@hematopolitics.bsky.social](https://twitter.com/hematopolitics)

What is 'Ethnographic Fieldwork'?

Ethnographic fieldwork is a type of research where you talk to people to learn about their lives and how they see the world. To do this, Jini spent time with people involved in blood donation. This allowed her to share in their experiences of donating, testing, and receiving blood.



HEMATOPOLITICS

Jini then drew on these stories as part of her research findings to write this book!



Leigh Bowser

Leigh is a textile artist who illustrated and stitched this book.

They use craft to encourage more people to donate blood. She does this through 'The Blood Bag Project'. Leigh likes to use textiles because they are soft and feel nice! Their softness can make things that are hard to talk about feel less scary.

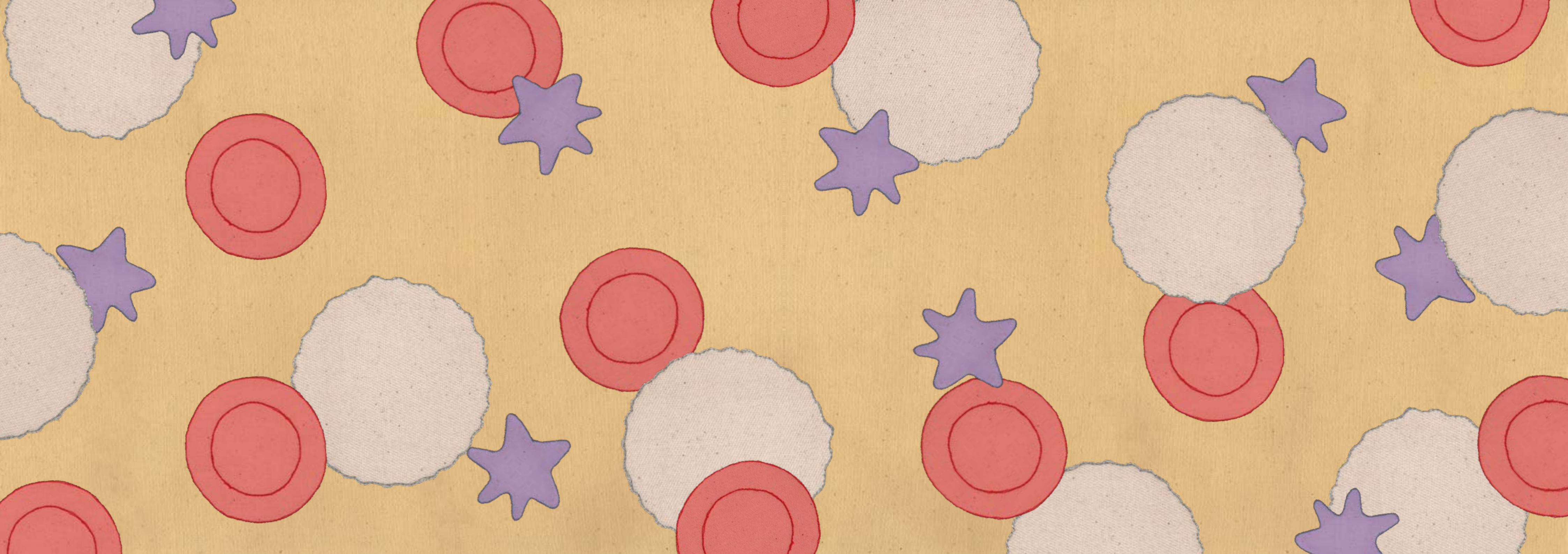
You can find Leigh at:
TheBloodBagProject.com
LeighLaLovesYou.com
[@LeighLaLovesyou](https://twitter.com/LeighLaLovesyou)

What is 'The Blood Bag Project'?

Leigh's niece was born with a rare blood condition called Diamond Blackfan Anaemia. DBA means her bone marrow could not make its own red blood cells, so she had blood transfusions every month to survive. When she was eleven, she had a stem cell transplant and now her body can make its own red blood cells!

In 2012, Leigh started 'The Blood Bag Project', a craft project that asks people to make their own 'blood bags' from textiles to remind others about how important blood donation is. So far, over 1000 people all over the world have joined in!





FOLLOW Mina, Jun, and Yumi to discover the journey of blood!

Mina's mum wants to give blood to help others, but Mina isn't sure what it means. Jun discovers a surprising fact about his blood. Yumi would love to become a nurse like her older sister who works at a blood donation centre. Come along and discover how they are connected!



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