

Grandma, how long have you had
that cough?

She smiles.
I like this cough.
This cough reminds me that
it's time.

And why stay?
Here, in America, you forget
about your elders.

We're held shapelessly
and moved laboriously
from place to place
like sand.

We're muted
with an imposed
obsolescence.

But not where I'm from.

Take me home
where the muddy shores of the lake
are as red as
mornings.

Where the meat of mangos
are as thick as
children's songs,

where the jackfruit
are as sticky as
the local news

and where the potholes that
choke the roads are as big as
deep breaths.

Take me home.

For a moment, my grandmother
speaks to me in Luganda.
It's beautiful, but I don't know
what it means.

With a breath,
I watch her lean from one wise foot
supported by a cane
to the other,

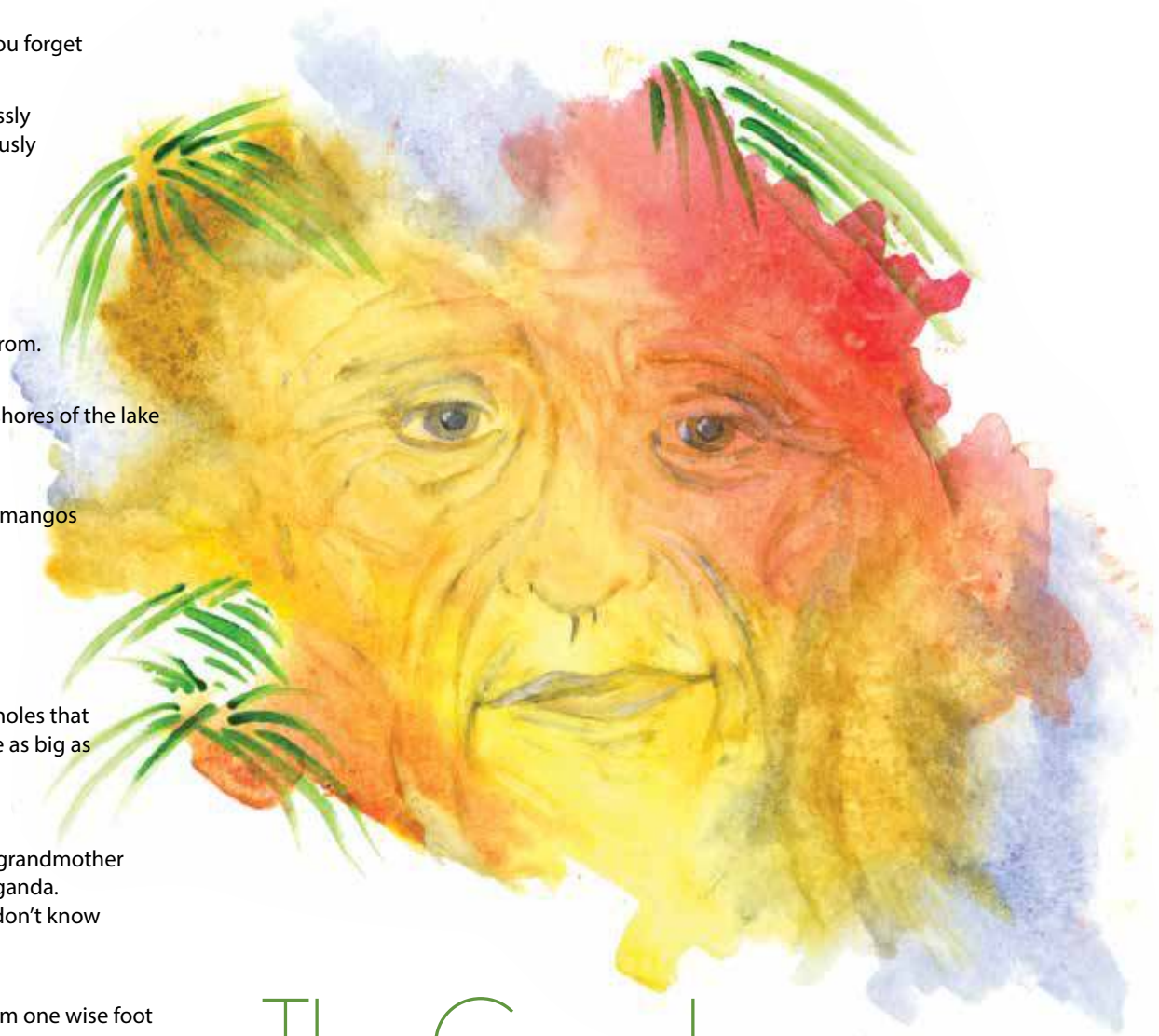
small and planted firmly
in the soft earth of
childhood.

In that moment,
we share a pause

A diastole—
her heart's great sigh.

And I watch her
with love,
so much love,

leave.



The Cough

Tendo Kironde