



Tumi Got Tick-Smart

Authors:
Kayla Willemse &
Darshana Morar-Leather

Tumi lived near the veld. Her best friend was Simba, a brown dog who loved rolling in the long grass behind their yard.

One day, Tumi was throwing a tennis ball for Simba. As she scratched his neck, her fingers felt something small and hard.

“Ag, what gogga is this?” she muttered.





She pushed his fur aside and saw a tiny brown bug stuck to his skin, legs wriggling.

“Mammaaa!” Tumi shouted. “There’s something on Simba!”



Mamma came running from the kitchen, wiping her hands on her doek.

“Sho, my girl, that’s a tick,” she said. “Not just any gogga, a dog tick. It bites and drinks blood. Sometimes ticks carry germs that can make dogs and people sick.”

An illustration of a woman and a young girl in a garden. The woman, on the left, has her hair wrapped in an orange headwrap and wears a white t-shirt. She is pointing her finger towards a brown dog. The girl, on the right, has her hair in braids adorned with colorful beads and wears a light blue t-shirt. She is petting the dog's head. The dog is a fluffy brown breed with a red collar. In the background, there is a large spiderweb on a tree branch with a spider on it, and a lush green garden under a blue sky with clouds.

“Like a spider?” Tumi asked.

“Almost,” Mamma smiled. “Ticks have eight legs like spiders, but they don’t make webs. Spiders also have longer legs, and ticks like to hide where it’s warm.”

An illustration of a woman and a young girl sitting in the back of a taxi. The woman, on the left, has a warm complexion and is wearing a white short-sleeved shirt and a vibrant orange headwrap. She is looking towards the right with a gentle smile. The girl, on the right, has a similar complexion and is wearing a light blue t-shirt. Her hair is styled in small braids adorned with colorful beads. She is holding a medium-sized, shaggy brown dog with a red collar. The dog is looking up at the girl with its tongue out, appearing happy. The background shows the interior of the taxi with blue seats and windows looking out onto a bright, sunny day with green trees. The text "They took Simba to the local vet in a taxi." is overlaid on the lower left of the illustration.

They took Simba
to the local vet in a
taxi.

The veterinarian, Dr Darshana, put on gloves. "Well spotted, Tumi," she said kindly. She showed Tumi a chart of a dog.

"Ticks hide in warm places," Dr Darshana said, "inside the ears, under the collar, under the legs, and between the toes. That's why you must check Simba after he's been in the veld."

With tweezers, Dr Darshana gently pulled the tick straight out.

"Got it! We pull straight out, no twisting, and we don't squeeze the tick."

She dropped it into a small container and sealed it shut. "If you ever find a tick, call an adult."

Dr Darshana washed the area. "At home, you have to bathe Simba regularly with medicine that removes ticks, and keep his kennel clean. That helps to keep the ticks away."



On the way back, Tumi looked at the veld.

“Mamma, what about me? Can ticks bite children, too?”

“Yebo,” Mamma said. “They can! Ticks like hiding in our hair, behind our ears, under our arms and behind our knees.

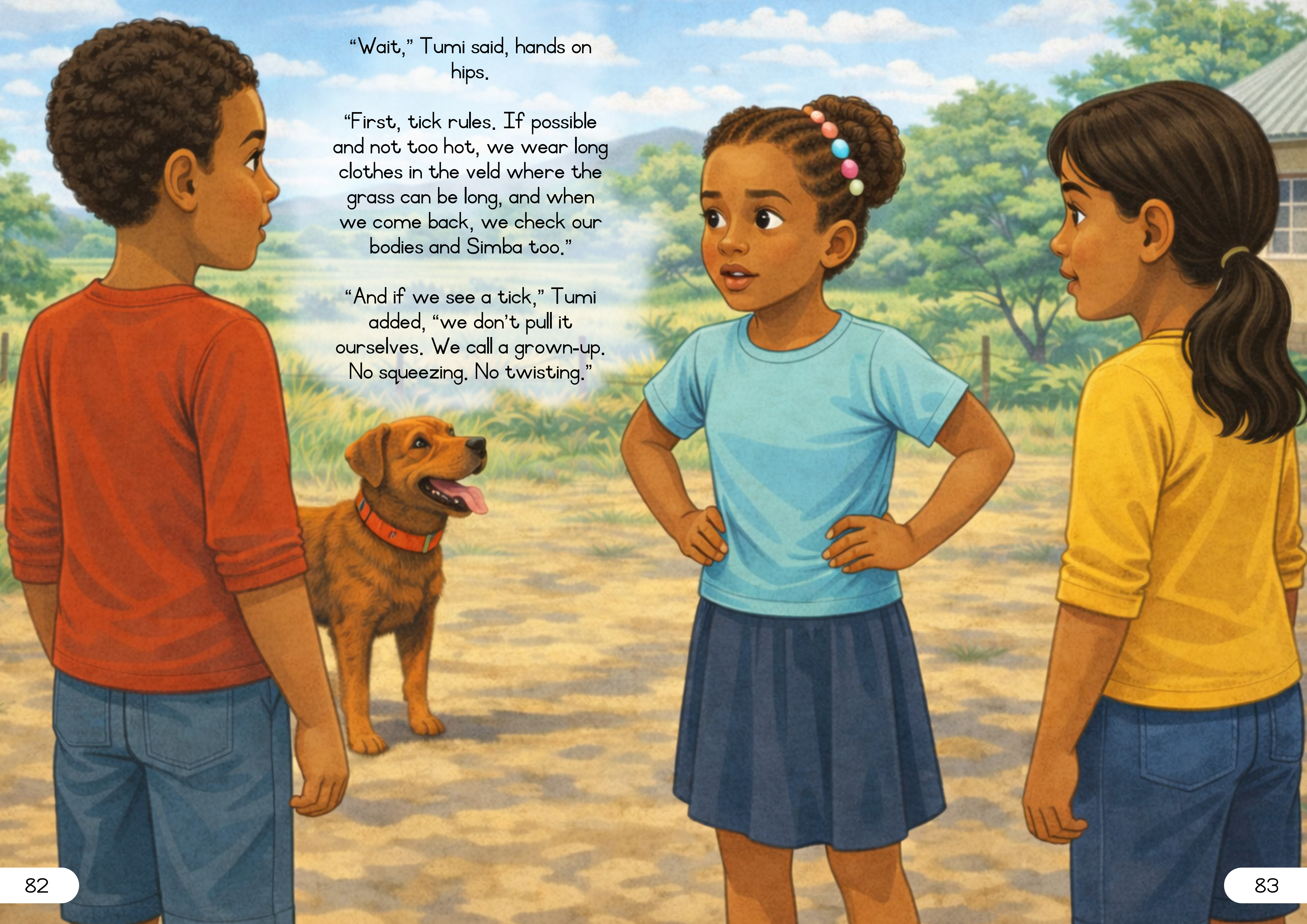
If you ever get a bite, look for a red or dark spot, a rash, fever, or feeling very tired. Remember to always tell an adult.”





That
afternoon,
Thabo and
Aliya came
to play.

“Let’s go play
in the veld!”
Thabo said.

An illustration of three children and a dog in a savanna setting. On the left, a boy with curly hair, wearing an orange long-sleeved shirt and blue shorts, stands with his back to the viewer, looking towards the center. In the center, a girl with braided hair adorned with colorful beads, wearing a light blue t-shirt and a dark blue skirt, stands with her hands on her hips, looking towards the right. On the right, a girl with long dark hair in a ponytail, wearing a yellow long-sleeved shirt and blue shorts, stands looking towards the center. A brown dog with a red collar and its tongue out stands between the boy and the girl in the center. The background features a savanna landscape with green trees, a fence, and a building with a corrugated metal roof under a blue sky with white clouds.

“Wait,” Tumi said, hands on hips.

“First, tick rules. If possible and not too hot, we wear long clothes in the veld where the grass can be long, and when we come back, we check our bodies and Simba too.”

“And if we see a tick,” Tumi added, “we don’t pull it ourselves. We call a grown-up. No squeezing. No twisting.”



After their adventure,
they all stood in a row
while Mamma checked
them, giggling as she shook
out their hair.

“No ticks today,” Mamma
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That night, Tumi sat next to Simba's kennel. The moon shone over the veld, and crickets chirped.

"Ticks are tiny," she whispered, "but we're smarter. We check, we keep things clean, and we tell grown-ups."

Simba wagged his tail and licked her hand. Tumi smiled. She felt like a hero, not with a cape, but with soap and knowledge.

"From now on," she said softly, "this yard belongs to us, not to ticks."



The End