Tiny Hands, Big World

21 Stories for Little Changemakers

ESI

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Meerkat Mbali's Bug Bash

Authors:
Danielle de Villiers &
Darshana Morar-Leather

Mbali loves her home.
She loves her family.
Yet... there is one thing
she cannot agree with...

The food her family ate!
Bugs for breakfast.
Bugs for lunch.
Bugs for dinner.
Bugs. Bugs. Bugs.
BUGS!
Mbali knew in her heart
that the bugs had
feelings too.

The next morning, it was Mbali's birthday!
"Good morning sweetheart and happy birthday!"
Mbali's mom greeted her as the morning sun danced through her open curtains.

"Go on, make a wish," Mother smiled.
"It's your special day."
"Hmm... I wish... I wish..."
Mbali spent a long while thinking of
the best birthday wish ever.
Finally, she decided...
A party with all the bugs in the
garden!

Mbali spent the whole morning making the prettiest invitations. When she finished the last one, she slipped on her sturdy yellow boots to protect her paws in the tall grass. Now she was ready to begin her mission: to make friends with every bug in the garden.

Mbali raced through her garden, the breeze tickling her fur. But soon...

"Oh no!" Mbali cried out before she hit the ground, closing her eyes on impact.

She was in such a rush that she tripped over a log!

Suddenly, when Mbali opened her eyes, she spotted the beetle she had set free just the other day.
"Hi, Meerkat," said Mr Beetle.
"Are these invitations for a party? Please, can I come too?"
"Sure!" Mbali said with glee.
"I want to invite all the bugs in the garden."

"I can help you with that!" Mr Beetle offered, leading Mbali deeper into the garden. There Mbali saw the meeting place for all the bugs.

"Hello everyone!" Mbali greeted.
"Please don't be afraid. I have come to make friends. It is my birthday."
Mbali and the bugs spent the afternoon sharing stories and learning about each other.

Mbali didn't notice that not all bugs are the same.
Some bugs help gardens grow, while others can be dangerous.
Nearby, a small tick was crawling closer and closer...

So close that, while the buzz of the party was in full swing, the tiny tick crept into Mbali's fur. Ticks like warm, hidden places. The tick found a soft spot behind Mbali's ear and bit her.

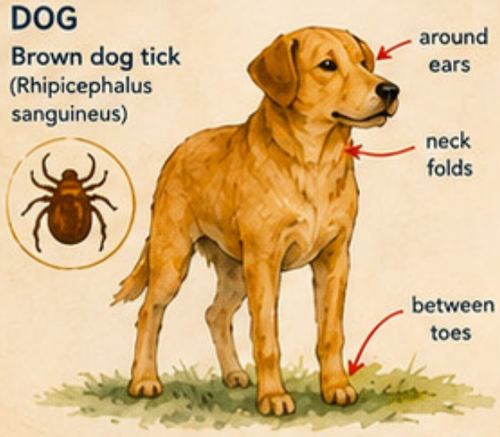
Mbali did not even feel the tick biting. Ticks have special saliva that allows them to numb the skin and eat, letting them stay hidden for a long time. "Goodbye, friends," Mbali said. "I need to go home now. I don't want my mommy to worry."

Ticks on Animals

Ticks are small arachnids.
They have 8 legs and live on many animals.

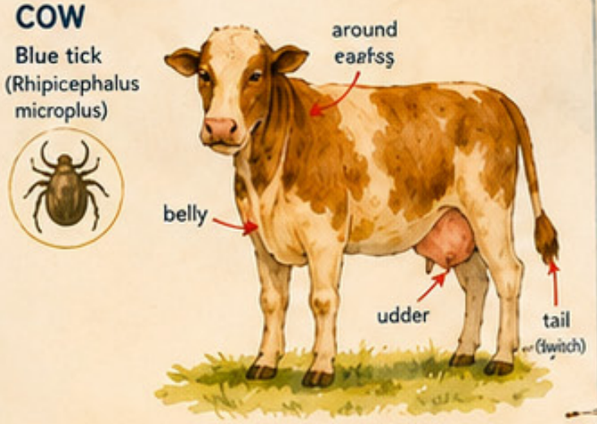
DOG

Brown dog tick
(Rhipicephalus sanguineus)



COW

Blue tick
(Rhipicephalus microplus)

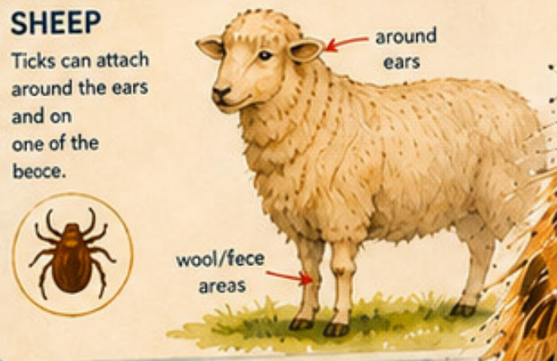


HORSE

Ticks can attach under the mane or on the front between front hind legs

SHEEP

Ticks can attach around the ears and on one of the beoce.



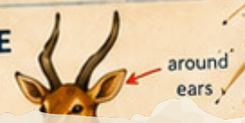
CAT

Ticks are often found on the head and neck

haircoat

WILD ANTELOPE

Ticks can attach around the ears and on the groin area.

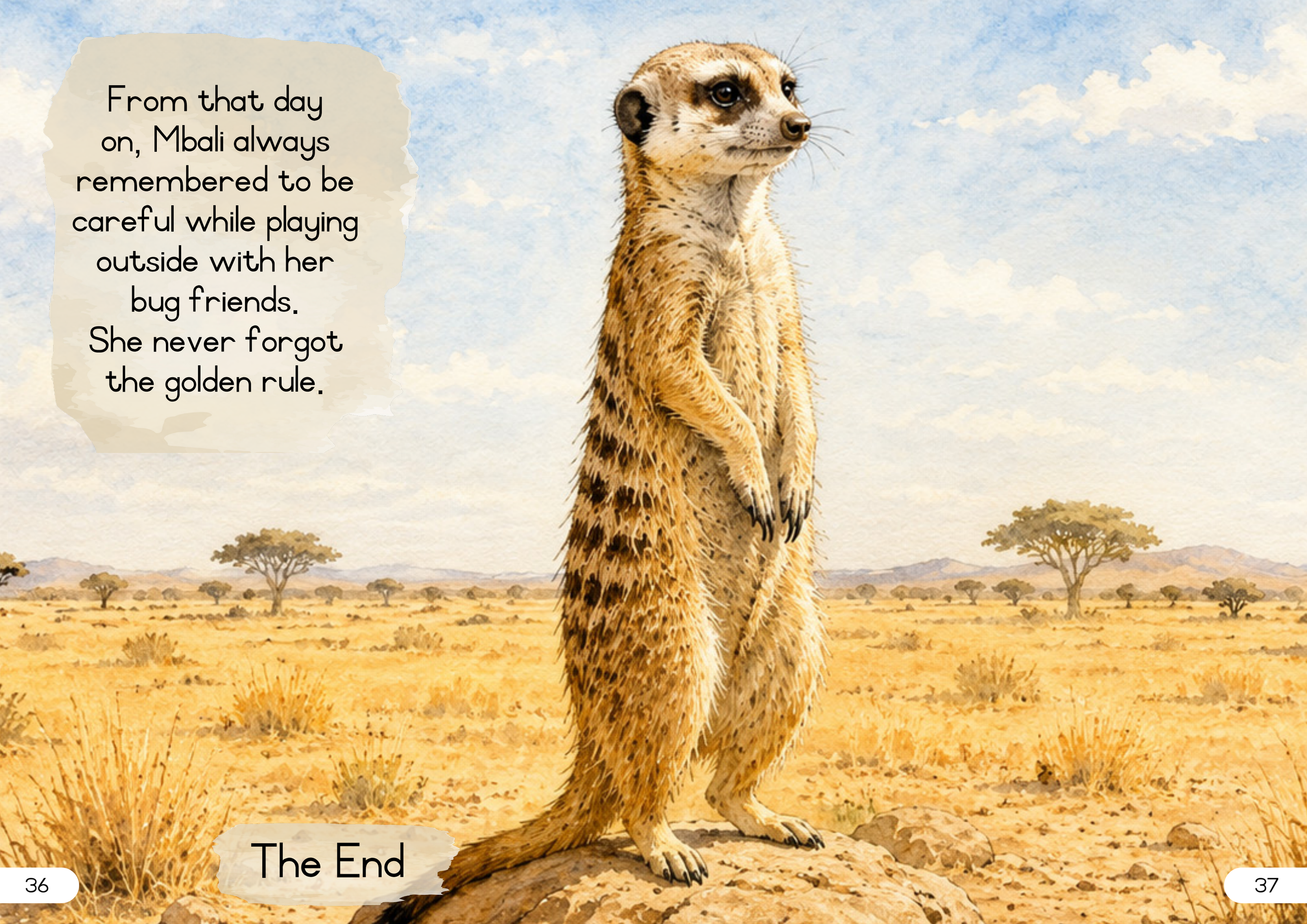


After ten days, Mbali started to feel unwell. She had a high fever, and her body felt sore. Her mother took her to the veterinarian, a special doctor who knows how to help animals. There, they found out that Mbali had Tick Bite Fever, an illness caused by pathogens—teeny tiny germs that the tick had been carrying. The veterinarian used special tweezers to pull the tick straight out without twisting it. Mbali received medicine to fight the germs, and soon she began to heal.

Once Mbali was well again,
Mommy hugged her close.
She was so happy that Mbali was healthy again.
Mommy had something very important to share.
"The one behind this was a tick," her mother explained.
"Ticks attach to both animals and people and feed on blood."
"They are very small, but they can make you very sick."

"If you ever notice a tick on yourself or someone else, always tell a trusted adult," Mommy said.
"The golden rule is this: Be quick like lightning to spot the ticks, and steady like a rock when they are being removed."

From that day
on, Mbali always
remembered to be
careful while playing
outside with her
bug friends.
She never forgot
the golden rule.

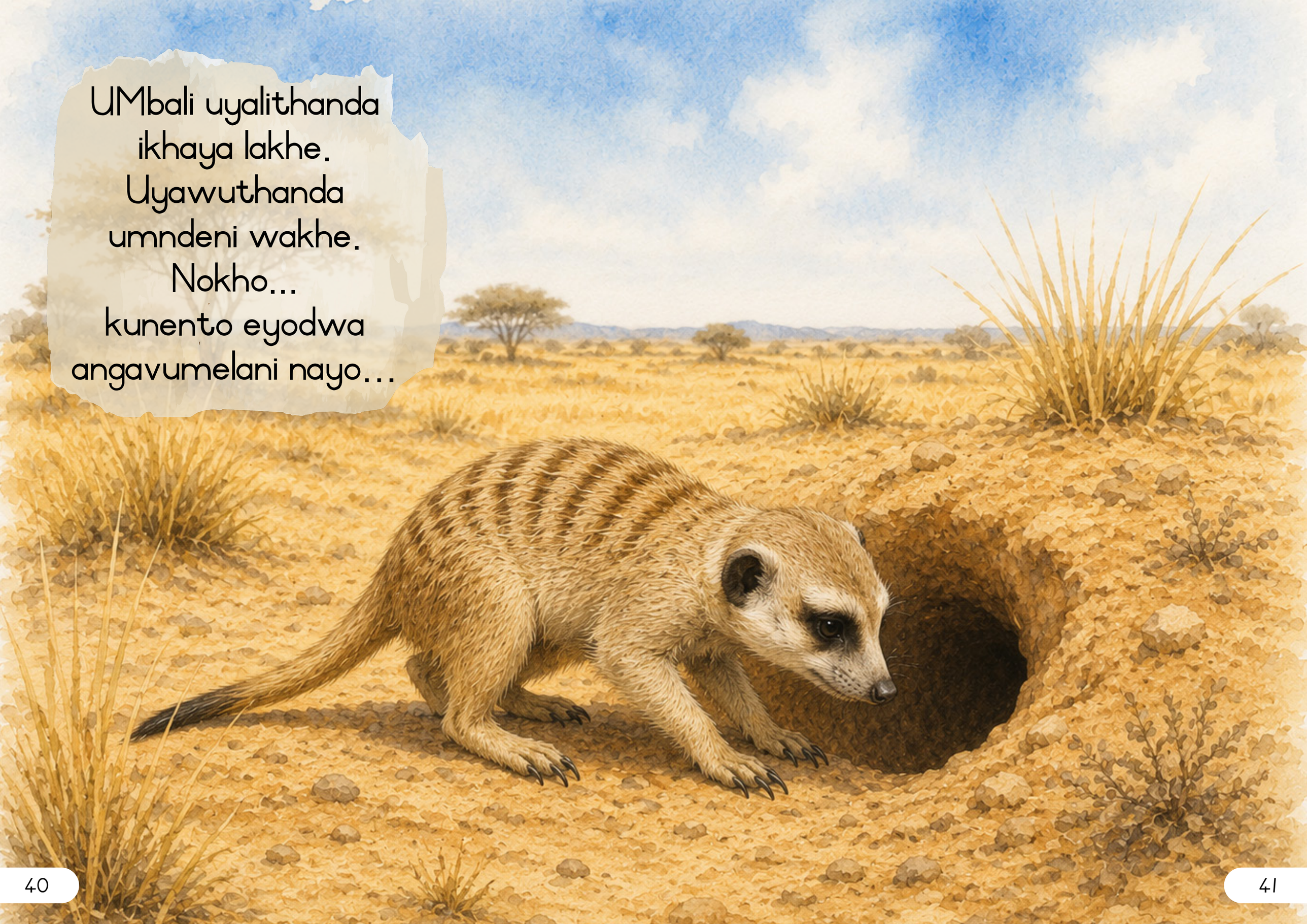


The End

Idili lezinambuzane likaMeerkat Mbali

Ababhali:
Danielle de Villiers &
Darshana Morar-Leather

UMbali uyalithanda
ikhaya lakhe.
Uyawuthanda
umndeni wakhe.
Nokho...
kunento eyodwa
angavumelani nayo...



Ukudla umndeni wakubo owawuwudla!
Izinambuzane njengesidlo sasekuseni.
Izinambuzane njengesidlo sasemini.
Izinambuzane njengesidlo sakusihlwa.
Izinambuzane. Izinambuzane.
Izinambuzane. IZINAMBUZANE!
Enhliziyweni yakhe uMbali wayeyazi
ukuthi nezinambuzane nazo
zinemizwa.

Ngakusasa ekuseni, kwakuwusuku lokuzalwa lukaMbali!
“Sawubona, sithandwa sami, futhi ngikufisela usuku oluhle lokuzalwa!”
Umama kaMbali wamubingelela, labe ilanga lasekuseni lidanisa phakathi kwamakhethini akhe avuliwe.

“Qhubeka, yenza isifiso.” Umama wamomotheka.
“Lolu usuku lwakho olubalulekile.”
“Hmm... ngifisa... ngifisa...”
UMbali wachitha isikhathi eside ecabanga ngesifiso esihle kakhulu sosuku lwakhe lokuzalwa.
Ekugcineni, wathatha isinqumo...
Idili elinazo zonke izinambuzane engadini!

UMbali wachitha ikuseni
lonke esenza izimemo
ezinhle kakhulu.
Waggoka amabhuzu akhe
ukuze aqale umsebenzi
wakhe wokwakha
ubungane nazo zonke
izinambuzane zasengadini.

UMbali wayegijima engadini yakhe, umoya uvunguza uboya bakhe. Kodwa ngokushesha...

Hayi cha! UMbali wamemeza ngaphambi kokuba awe phansi.

Wayeshesha kakhulu kangangokuba wakhubeka esihlahleni!

Ngokungazelelwe, lapho uMbali evula amehlo akhe, wabona ibhungane awayelisizile ngayizolo.

“Sawubona, Meerkat”, kusho uMnumzane uBhungane.
“Ingabe lezi izimemo zomcimbi? Ngicela ukuza nami?”

“Impela!” Kusho uMbali ngenjabulo.
“Ngifuna ukumema zonke izinambuzane engadini.”

“Ngingakusiza ngalokho!”
UMnumzane uBhungane
wazinikela, eholela
uMbali ekujuleni engadini.
Eveza...
Indawo yokuhlangana
eyimfihlo yazo zonke
izinambuzane.

“Sanibonani nonke!” UMbali
wababingelela.
“Ngicela ningesabi. Ngize
ukuzokwakha ubungane.
Usuku lwami lokuzalwa.”
UMbali nezinambuzane
bachitha intambama bexoxa
izindaba futhi besazana.

UMbali akazange aqaphele ukuthi akuzona zonke izinambuzane ezifanayo. Ezinye izinambuzane zisiza izingadi zikhule, kuyilapho ezinye zingaba yingozi.
Eduze, kwakunomkhaza omncane owawulokho usondela...

Wawuseduze kakhulu kangangokuthi, lapho umhlangano usugcwele umsindo, umkhaza omncane wangena ngaphansi koboya bukaMbali.
Imikhaza ithanda izindawo ezifudumele nezifihlekile. Umkhaza wathola indawo ethambile ngemva kwendlebe kaMbali futhi wamluma.

UMbali akazange akuzwe ngisho nokulunywa umkhaza.
Imikhaza inamathe akhethekile angenza isikhumba sibe ndikindiki, ekuwavumela ukuthi ahlale efihlekile isikhathi eside.
“Nisale kahle, bangani”, kusho uMbali.
“Kumele ngiye ekhaya manje. Angifuni umama wami akhathazeke.”

Ngemva kwezinsuku eziyishumi,
uMbali waqala ukungazizwa kahle.
Wayenomkhuhlane ophakeme, futhi
umzimba wakhe wawubuhlungu.
Umama wakhe wamyisa kudokotela wezilwane,
udokotela okhethekile owazi ukusiza izilwane.
Lapho, bathola ukuthi uMbali
wayenomkhuhlane wemikhaza
isifo esibangelwa amagciwane; amagciwane amancane
umkhaza owawuwaphethe. Udokotela wezilwane
wasebenzisa izidlawu ezikhethekile ukuze adonse
umkhaza ngaphandle kokuwusonta.
UMbali wathola umuthi wokulwa namagciwane, waze
ngokushesha waqala ukuzizwa kangcono.

Lapho uMbali eseluleme ngokuphelele, umama wamgona. Wayejabule kakhulu ukuthi uMbali wayesempilweni futhi. Umama wayenokuthile okubalulekile awayefuna ukukusho. “Lokho okwakungemuva kwalokhu kwakuwumkhaza,” kuchaza unina. “Imikhaza inamathela ezilwanyaneni nakubantu futhi idla igazi.
“Zincane kakhulu, kodwa zingakugulisa kakhulu.”

“Uma kwenzeka uzithola unomkhaza kuwe noma komunye umuntu, tshela umuntu omdala omethembayo ngaso sonke isikhathi,” kusho umama. “Umthetho wegolide uthi: Shesha ukuzibona njengombani futhi uqine njengedwala lapho zisuswa, ngoba akumele neze sisonte noma sikhame umakhaza.

Ukusukela ngalolo suku, uMbali wayehlale ekhumbula ukuba aqaphele lapho edlala ngaphandle nabangane bakhe abayizinambuzane. Akazange awukhohlwe umthetho wegolide.

Isiphetho

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."

“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.”

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.

"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 said. "But I'm proud of you for being careful."

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

UTumi usehlakaniphile ngemikhaza

Ababhali:
Kayla Willemse &
Darshana Morar-Leather

UTumi wayehlala eduze kwamathafa.
Umngane wakhe omkhulu
kwakunguSimba, inja ensundu
eyayithanda ukugingqa otshanini obude
ngemuva kwegceke labo.

Ngelinye ilanga, uTumi wayephonsa
ibhola letenisi kuSimba. Njengoba
ayesenwaya intamo yakhe, iminwe
yakhe yazwa okuthile okuncane
nokuqinile.
“Ag, yisinambuzane siphi lesi?”
wakhononda.

Waqhelisa uboya
bakhe waze wabona
isinambuzane
esincane esinsundu
esasinamathele
esikhunjeni sakhe,
sinemilenze egwegwile.

“Mamaaa!” UTumi
wamemeza. “Kukhona
okuthile kuSimba!”

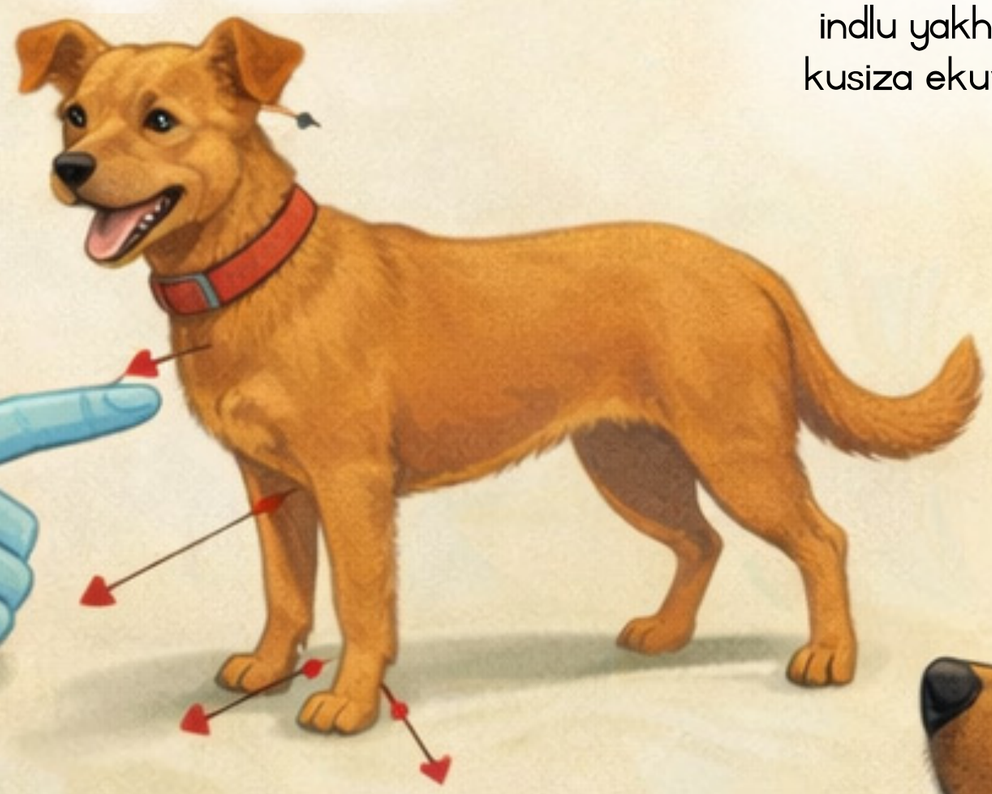
Umama weza egijima ephuma
ekhishini, esula izandla zakhe
ngendwangu yakhe.

“Sho, ntombazane yami, lokho
umkhaza” washo. “ Hayi
nje noma yimuphi umkhaza,
umkhaza wenja. Uluma futhi
uphuze igazi. Ngezinye izikhathi
imikhaza ithwala amagciwane
angenza izinja nabantu bagule.”

“Njengesicabucabu?”
UTumi wabuza.
“Cishe”, uMama
wamomotheka.
“Imikhaza inemilenze
eyisishiyagalombili
njengezicabucabu,
kodwa azakhi ulwembu.
Izicabucabu zona
zinemilenze emide kakhulu,
futhi imikhaza ithanda
ukucasha lapho kufudumele
khona.”

Bathatha uSimba
Bamusa kudokotela
wezilwane
wendawo ngetekisi.

Udokotela wezilwane,
uDkt. Darshana, wagqoka
amagilavu.
“Wenze kahle, Tumi,” washo
ngomusa.
Wabonisa uTumi ishadi lenja.
UDkt. Darshana wathi,
“Imikhaza icasha ezindaweni
ezifudumele”, “ngaphakathi
ezindlebeni, ngaphansi
kwekholi, ngaphansi
kwemilenze, naphakathi
kwezinzwane. Yingakho
kufanele uhlole uSimba
ngemva kokuba esehlathini.”



Ngesidlawu, uDkt. Darshana
wawukhipha ngobumnene
umkhaza.

“Ngikutholile! Siwudonsa
siqondise ngaphandle, ungasonti,
futhi asiwucindezeli umkhaza.”

Wawufaka esitsheni esincane
wasivala. “Uma kwenzeka
uthola umkhaza, biza umuntu
omdala.”

UDkt Darshana wageza leyo
ndawo. “Ekhaya, kufanele
ugeze uSimba njalo ngemithi
esusa imikhaza, futhi ugcine
indlu yakhe ihlanzekile. Lokho
kusiza ekuvimbeleni imikhaza.”

Endleleni ebuyayo, uTumi wabuka emathafeni.
“Mama, kuthiwani ngami? Ingabe imikhaza ingaluma nezingane?

“Yebo,” kusho uMama.
“Zingakwazi! Imikhaza ithanda ukucasha ezinweleni zethu, ngemuva kwezindlebe zethu, ngaphansi kwezingalo zethu nangemuva kwamadolo ethu.

Uma kwenzeka ulunywa, bheka indawo ebomvu noma emnyama, ukuqubuka, imfiva, noma uzizwe ukhathele kakhulu. Khumbula njalo ukutshela umuntu omdala.”

Ngaleyo ntambama,
uThabo no-Aliya beza
bezodlala.

“Masihambe siyodlala
endle!” UThabo
washo.

“Mana”, kusho uTumi, izandla zisezinqeni.

“Okokuqala, imithetho ngemikhaza. Uma kungenzeka futhi kungashisi kakhulu, sigqoka izingubo ezinde otshanini obude, futhi lapho sibuya, sihlola imizimba yethu noSimba.”

“Futhi uma sibona umkhaza,” kwengeza uTumi, “asizikhiphi ngokwethu. Sibiza umuntu omdala. Akukho ukucindezela. Akukho ukusonteka.”

Ngemva kohambo lwabo olunemincili, bonke bema emgqeni ngesikhathi uMama ebabheka, ehleka njengoba ezinyakazisa izinwele.

“Ayikho imikhaza namuhla”, kusho uMama. “Kodwa ngiyaziqhenya ngani ngokuthi niqaphile.”

Ngalobo busuku, uTumi wahlala eduze kwendlu kaSimba. Inyanga yayikhanya phezu kwegceke, nezintethwa zazikhala.

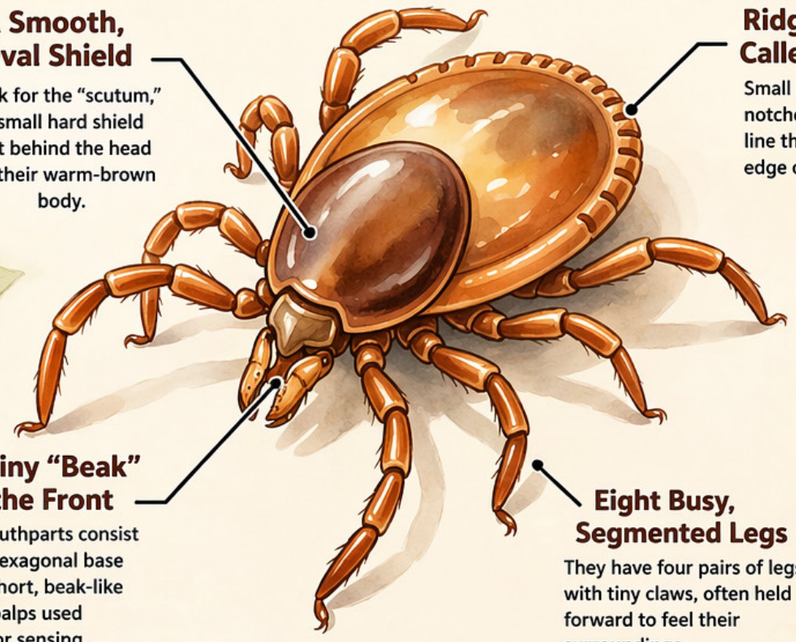
“Imikhaza mincane”, washo ngezwi eliphansi, “kodwa thina sihlakaniphe kakhulu. Siyahlola, sigcine izinto zihlanzekile, futhi sitshele abantu abadala.”

USimba wanyakazisa umsila wakhe futhi wakhotha isandla sakhe. UTumi wamomotheka. Wayezizwa enjengeqhawe, hhayi ngekhephu, kodwa ngensipho nangolwazi.

“Ukusukela manje” uqhubeke, washo ngezwi eliphansi, “leli gceke lingelethu, hhayi lemikhaza.”

Meet the Brown Dog Tick!

A tiny bug with big facts!



A Smooth, Oval Shield
Look for the "scutum," a small hard shield just behind the head on their warm-brown body.

Ridged Edges Called Festoons
Small rectangular notches or "festoons" line the very back edge of their body.

Small as a Sesame Seed
These ticks are incredibly tiny, often the same size as a seed or a small leaf tip.

The Tiny "Beak" at the Front
The mouthparts consist of a hexagonal base and short, beak-like palps used for sensing.

Eight Busy, Segmented Legs
They have four pairs of legs with tiny claws, often held forward to feel their surroundings.

Quick Facts

Size: About the size of a sesame seed (2–3 mm).

Habitat: Lives on dogs and in warm, grassy places.

Hosts: Mostly dogs, but can also bite people and other animals.

Why it matters: Can spread germs that make people and pets sick.

Did You Know?

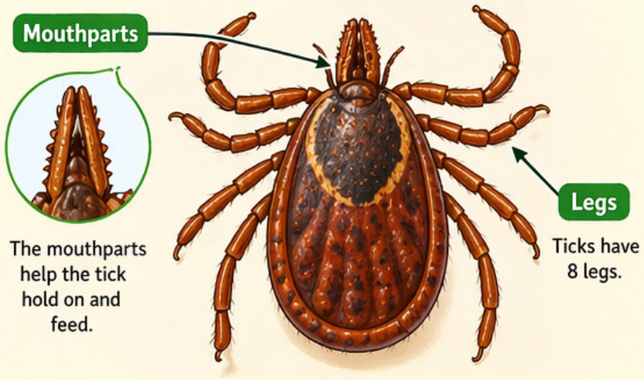
Brown dog ticks are active in warm weather. Always check yourself and your pets after being outside!

How You Can Help Stay Tick-Safe!

1. Wear long sleeves and tuck pants into socks in grassy areas.
2. Use adult-approved tick repellent on skin/clothes (ask an adult).
3. Check your skin and clothes after playing outside; check your pet too.
4. Remove ticks quickly with tweezers and ask an adult for help.
5. Keep grass short and clear leaf piles where pets play.

Learn more. Be aware. Stay safe!

THE TICK



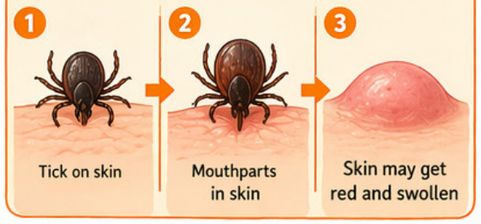
The mouthparts help the tick hold on and feed.

Ticks have 8 legs.

What is a tick?

A tick is a tiny spider-like bug that can bite people and animals and sometimes spread germs.

TICK BITE (CLOSE-UP)



WHERE TICKS LIVE

VETERINARIAN

Veterinarian: A doctor for animals who helps keep pets healthy.

Ask a vet about tick prevention.

REMOVING A TICK

Ask an adult or a vet to help.

SYMPTOMS OF AFRICAN TICK BITE FEVER

See a doctor if you feel sick after a tick bite.

WAYS TO STAY SAFE FROM TICKS

1. Wear long sleeves and tuck pants into socks in grassy areas.
2. Use adult-approved tick repellent on skin/clothes (ask an adult).
3. Check your skin and clothes after playing outside; check your pet too.
4. Remove ticks quickly with tweezers and ask an adult for help.
5. Keep grass short and clear leaf piles where pets play.

Be smart, be safe, and enjoy the outdoors!

Mari the Marigold and the Garden Trouble Club

Author: Joyce West

Behind a small house in a South African township, Lebo and her Gogo had a little vegetable garden. They grew spinach, beans, tomatoes, and carrots to help the family eat healthy food. One day, Lebo planted a tiny seed near the vegetables.

Inside the soil, the seed whispered to an earthworm nearby, named Wiggle, “My name is Mari the Marigold, I am going to be amazing”. Wiggle the Earthworm helped keep the soil healthy by making small little tunnels for air and water. Mari waited in the dark soil. She needed water, warmth, and air to start growing. Lebo and her Gogo watered the soil gently, only enough to make it damp, not muddy.

Soon, Mari's seed coat softened. Then a little root grew downward to drink some water to help her grow. After that, a small shoot pushed up toward the sun to get some warmth. Mari popped out of the soil. "Hello, world!"
Not everyone was happy. Under a leaf, the Garden Trouble Club was meeting.

There was Aphi the Aphid, Wormie the Cabbage Worm, Cutter the Cutworm, and Sir Slime-a-Lot the Snail. They wanted to ruin the garden. "We will eat little plants for breakfast, lunch and supper!" they bragged. "Then no vegetables will grow!"

But Mari had friends. Bongi the Bee flew in first noticing that Mari will need some help. She helped the garden by carrying pollen, a special yellow powder, so plants could make vegetables.

Then Lindi the Ladybug arrived. Ladybugs love to eat aphids to keep them from eating the vegetables. Some butterflies came fluttering over the garden too as soon as they noticed the Garden Trouble Club was looking for trouble.

That evening, the Trouble Club attacked. Aphids climbed onto spinach leaves. Wormie nibbled on small seedlings. Cutter tried to bite through a stem. Sir Slime-a-Lot slid toward Mari, leaving a shiny slimy trail. The garden looked like it was losing the battle.

Then Lebo and Gogo came outside. Gogo stayed calm. She checked the plants carefully. She picked off the worms and snails and moved them away. Then she covered the smallest seedlings with a light net. Lebo placed a soft "blanket" of dry leaves on the soil. "That's mulch," Gogo said. "It helps keep water in the soil, so we don't waste water."

The next morning, the Trouble Club returned, but the garden was ready. The net blocked the pests from the baby plants. Ladybugs chased the aphids away. The snail slipped on the mulch and got stuck behind a stick, grumbling. The pests argued, bumped into each other, and finally crawled away.

Days passed, and the garden grew stronger. The spinach became big and green. The beans climbed higher. The tomatoes grew round and shiny. And Mari bloomed into a bright orange flower, smiling proudly in the sun. Mari stood tall beside the vegetables. She was not just pretty, she was part of the team. Her smell welcomed helpful insects like bees and ladybugs and repelled insects that only want to harm the vegetable garden.

Lebo clapped her hands. "We did it!" Gogo nodded. "When we do smart farming, care for the soil, use water wisely, and protect helpful insects, we can grow good and healthy food ourselves."

Growing food takes patience and care. When people and nature work together, we look one another.

The End

Garden Facts We Learned

Seeds need water, warmth, and air to start growing.

First a root grows down, then a shoot grows up.

Earthworms help keep soil healthy.

Growing food takes patience and care. When people and nature work together, we look one another.

Glossary

Aphid
A tiny bug that sucks juice from leaves and can make plants weak.

Cabbage worm
A small caterpillar that chews holes in leaves (especially leafy vegetables).

Companion planting
Planting "friend plants" close together so they can help each other.

Compost
Old leaves and food scraps that turn into "plant food" for the soil.

Cutworm
A sneaky caterpillar that chews through the stems of small plants near the soil.

Germination
When a seed wakes up and starts to grow into a plant.

Marigold
A bright flower that is easy to grow. It protects a vegetable garden from pests and attracts helptful insects like bees.

Mulch
A blanket on top of the soil (like dry leaves) that helps keep water in.

Pollination
When bees move pollen from one flower to another so plants can make fruits & seeds.

Seedling
A young plant that has just sprouted from a seed.

Snails
Slow, slimy garden visitors that nibble leaves and seedlings.

Stem
The green stalk of a plant that supports the leaves and nutrients

Activity 1

1) Seed Sprout Detective (Germination in a Bag)

Purpose: See how a seed grows: root down, shoot up.

You will need:

1–2 bean seeds (or sunflower seeds)

Paper towel

Clear zip bag (or clear plastic cup)

Water

Marker

Tape (optional)

Steps

Fold a paper towel to fit inside the bag.

Wet the paper towel so it's damp (not dripping).

Place the seeds between the towel and the clear side of the bag so you can see them.

Seal the bag and label it with the child's name and+ date.

Tape the bag to a window or bright wall (warm spot, not direct hot sun).

Check daily: open briefly if needed and add a few drops of water if it dries out.

Observe and draw:

Day 1–2: seed swells

Day 2–4: root appears (down)

Day 4–7: shoot appears (up)

After the root is a few cm long, plant it gently in a small pot of soil and water lightly.

Extension (quick): Ask children to point with their finger: "Which way is the root going? Which way is the shoot going?"

Activity 2

Garden Helpers vs Garden Trouble Club (Sorting + Mini Role-Play)

Purpose: Understand “helpers” (bee, ladybug, earthworm) vs “trouble” (aphid, snail, worms).

You will need

Two paper plates (or two circles drawn on paper)

Picture cards (draw or print): bee, ladybug, butterfly, earthworm, marigold, aphid, snail, cabbage worm, cutworm

Crayons/markers

Optional: small toy insects or plastic bugs

Steps

Title one plate: “Garden Helpers” and the other: “Garden Trouble Club.”

Spread the insect cards out on the floor/table.

One by one, let children pick a card and decide where it belongs.

After placing each card, ask a simple reason:

“How does it help?” (bee helps plants make food; ladybug eats aphids; worm helps soil)

“How does it harm?” (aphids suck plant juice; snails nibble leaves; worms chew)

Add Mari the Marigold card in the middle and say: “Mari invites helpers and makes trouble bugs want to go away.”

Mini role-play (2–3 minutes):

Choose two kids to be “helpers,” one to two to be “trouble bugs,” one child to be “Mari,” and one child to be “Lebo.”

“Trouble bugs” try to reach “seedlings” (paper leaves).

“Lebo” protects seedlings using pretend netting (a scarf/mesh cloth) and pretend mulch (brown paper pieces).

End by asking: “What smart farming helped the garden?”

Extension: Children draw one helper and one trouble bug and label them.

The Secret Life of Goldie the Goldfish

Author: Natanya Brown

There was a boy named Hank,
and he owned a beautiful
fishtank,
and inside this tank lived a
goldfish named Goldie.
Goldie was bright in colour and
had a crazy imagination,
that when Hank said goodbye
and went about his day,
Goldie dreamed up adventures
in the most magical way.

Diving down deep into the sea,
she wore a wonderful coral crown
because she was the Queen.
She planned a wonderful ocean ball
and invited fishes big and small.

Next a dolphin jumped
through a hoop
and the crabs all danced in
a group.
She was at the ocean
circus - oh how fun,
but the fun had only just
begun.

She became an
astronaut in space,
flying around, zooming all
over the place.
Past the moon and past
the stars.
Past beautiful planets
just like Mars.

She came back from
space and landed her
rocket
right on a great big pile
of chocolate.
She squealed and she
shouted,
her heart filled with joy,
because all this chocolate
was for her to enjoy.

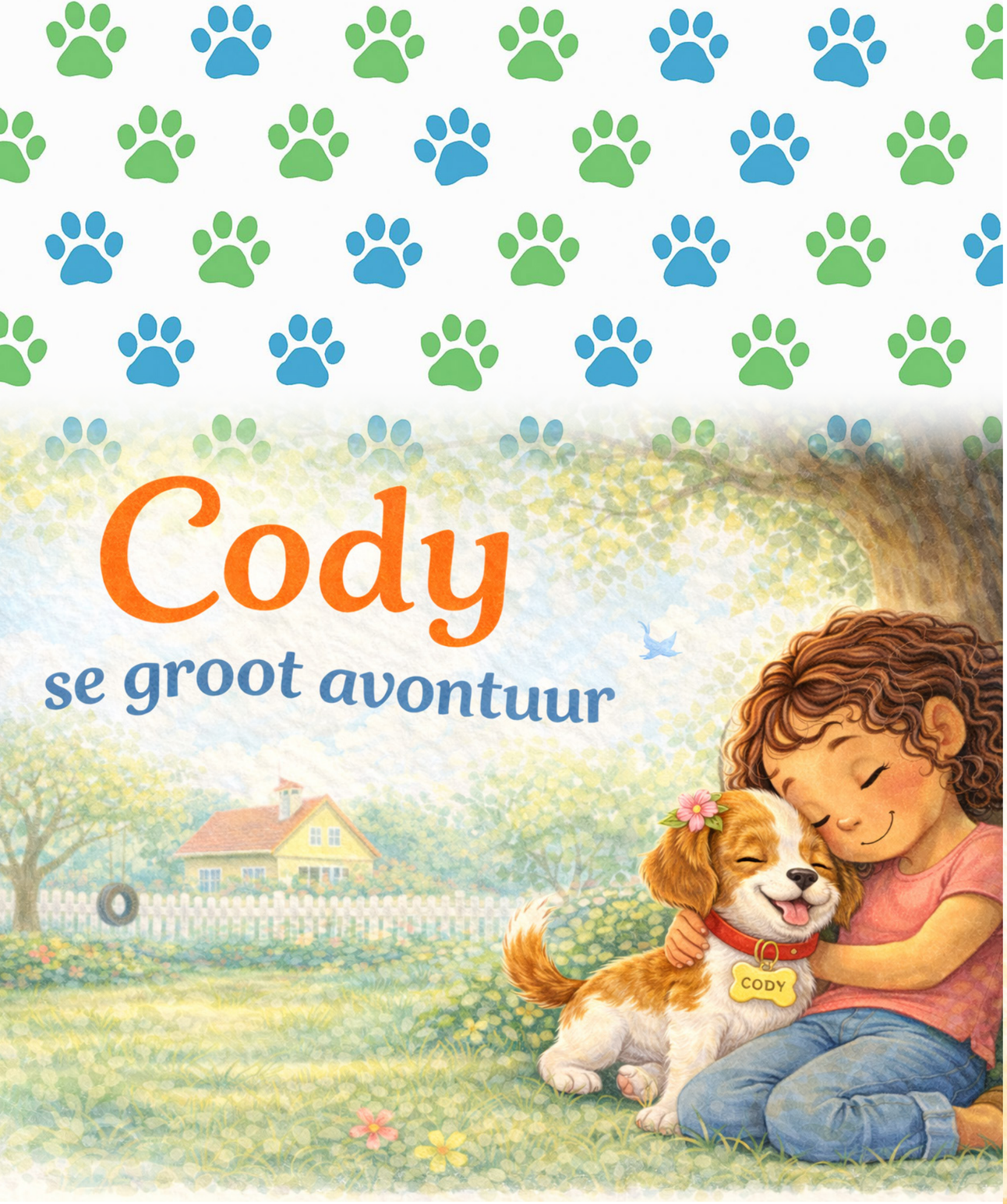
She scooped up the sweet
treats, so yummy and neat,
and made the finest baked
goods for all to eat.
A seaweed cake, some
crunchy coral pie,
with frosting that
shimmered like stars in the
sky.

A bubble came by, and she
floated so high,
up out of the water and into
the sky.
She soared with the birds till
her bubble went POP!
Then down she fell with a
great big PLOP.

But through all the ocean, the chocolate, the circus and space, nothing could make her happier than seeing Hank's face.
Without him she would not have food.
Without him she would always be in a foul mood.

Hank cared for his goldfish with
love every day.
He's the reason she dreamed in the
most magical way.
And if Goldie could grant every fish
a small wish,
it would be for all of them to be as
lucky as this.

The End



Skrywer: Gizelle Styger

Op n sonnige Saterdagoggend
gaan Lisa en haar ma na die
troeteldierwinkel vir ‘n baie spesiale
rede. So lank soos sy kan onthou, wou
Lisa ‘n beste maatjie hê.
Sy sien toe die klein wit en bruin
hondjie
met groot nuuskierige ogies!
Dadelik weet Lisa sy het haar beste
maatjie
gevind en sy naam is Cody.

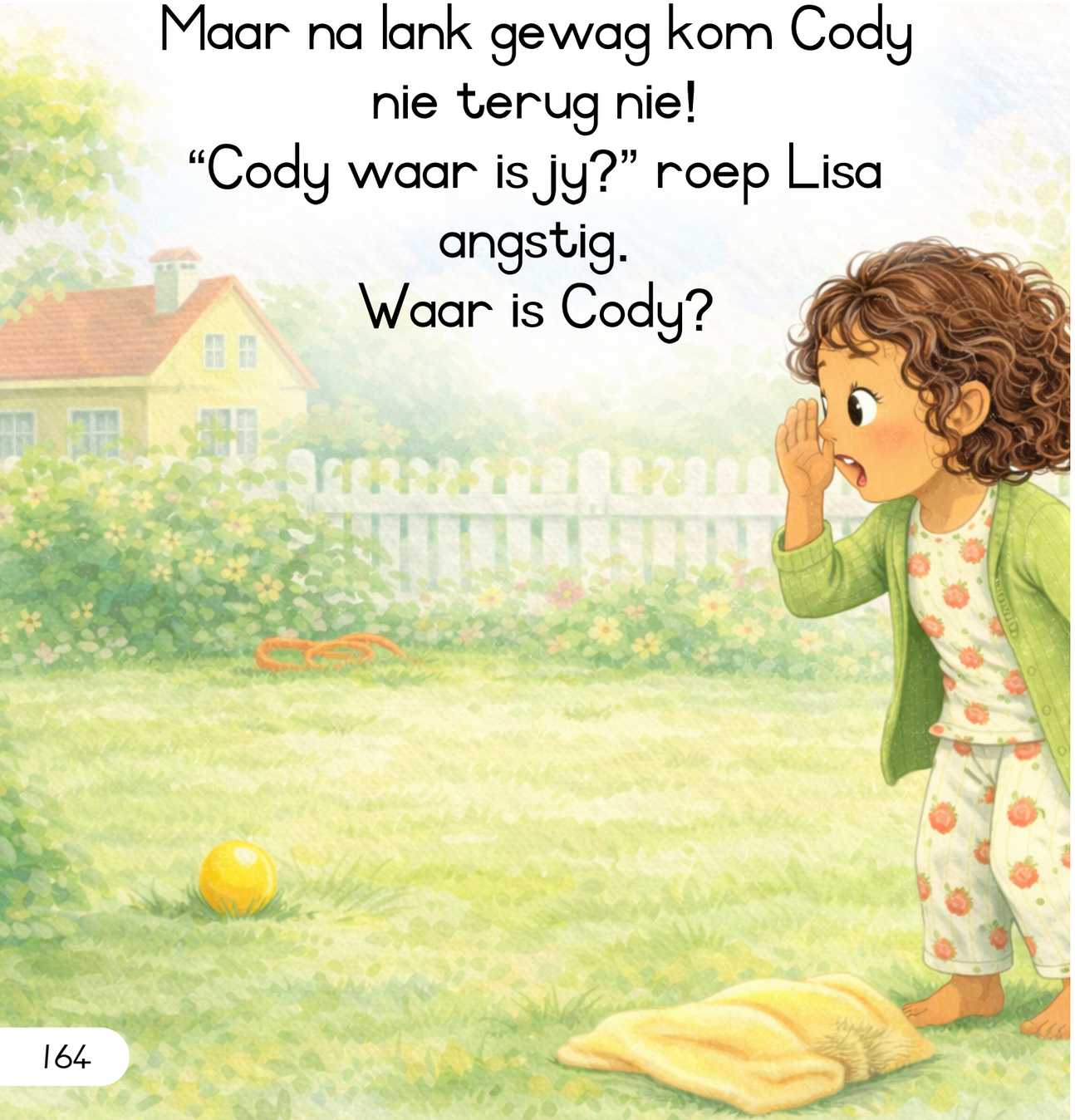
By die huis snuffel Cody orals rond.
In die tuin.
Onder die bank.
En selfs in die wasmandjie!
Lisa wys Cody sy nuwe mandjie en sy sagte
kombersie en gee vir 'n hom skoon bak water.
Maar nie eers oomblik later nie...
plons, daar val Cody in sy bak water!
"Cody jou snaakse hondjie," sê Lisa terwyl sy
laggend Cody droog maak.

Vroeg in die oggend word Lisa deur Cody
se opgewonde soene wakker gemaak.
Watter geluid was dit?
Is dit Cody se maag wat so grom?
Lisa kry dadelik Cody se gunsteling
hondekos en skoon bak water.
"Cody jy het elke dag gesonde kos en
vars water nodig," sê Lisa terwyl sy
Cody se bak water neer sit.

Cody is ‘n besige hondjie wat al te lekker heeldag in die tuin speel.
Hy speel met sy bal, hardloop in die hele tuin rond en probeer selfs sy eie stert vang!
Maar soms kry sy besige maniere hom in die moeilikheid.
“Cody! Nee!” Roep Lisa toe sy die groot gat in die tuin vind, maar sy kan net vir ‘n paar sekondes kwaad bly vir Cody.

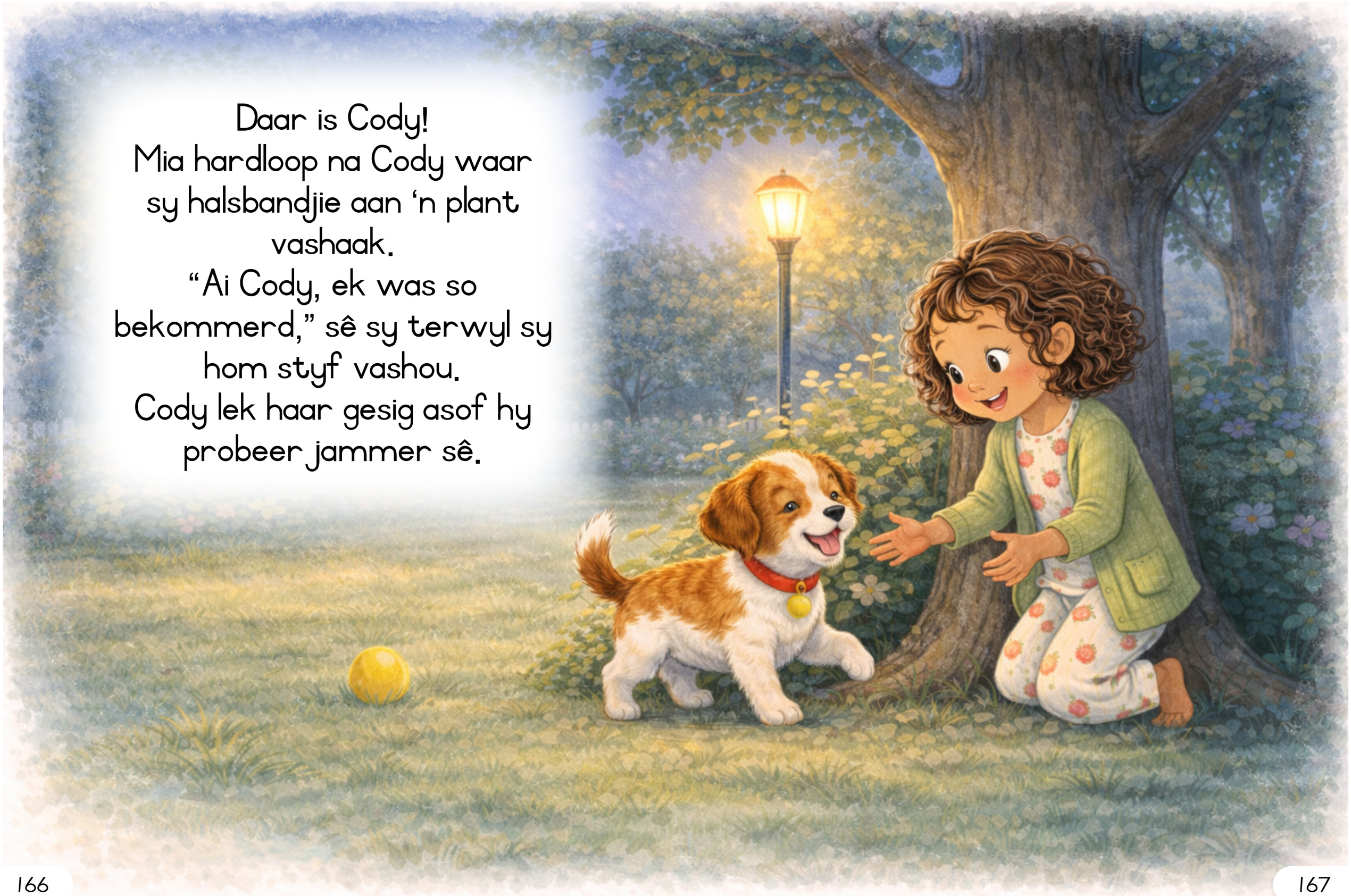
In die middag na Cody se lang opwindende speeltyd word hy uitgeborsel en skoon gemaak.
Nou is Cody se pels weer blink en skoon.
Sy pote, tande en ore word ook mooi skoon gemaak en nou lyk hy pragtig!
“Cody jy lyk en ruik nou soos ‘n blom!” sê Lisa vir Cody spottend.

Later die middag speel Cody en
Lisa op die gras.
Lisa gooi die bal en Cody
hardloop blitsvinnig agterna.
Maar na lank gewag kom Cody
nie terug nie!
“Cody waar is jy?” roep Lisa
angstig.
Waar is Cody?



Mia soek om elke hoek en draai
vir Cody -
agter die bome,
tussen die plante
en selfs onder die motor.
Maar daar is geen teken van
Cody nie!
Die straatligte begin skyn en Lisa
se oë is al bloedrooi en vol trane.
Lisa wonder of sy ooit weer haar
geliefde Cody gaan sien.
Net toe hoor sy ‘n geluid agter ‘n
groot boom.

Daar is Cody!
Mia hardloop na Cody waar
sy halsbandjie aan ‘n plant
vashaak.
“Ai Cody, ek was so
bekommerd,” sê sy terwyl sy
hom styf vashou.
Cody lek haar gesig asof hy
probeer jammer sê.



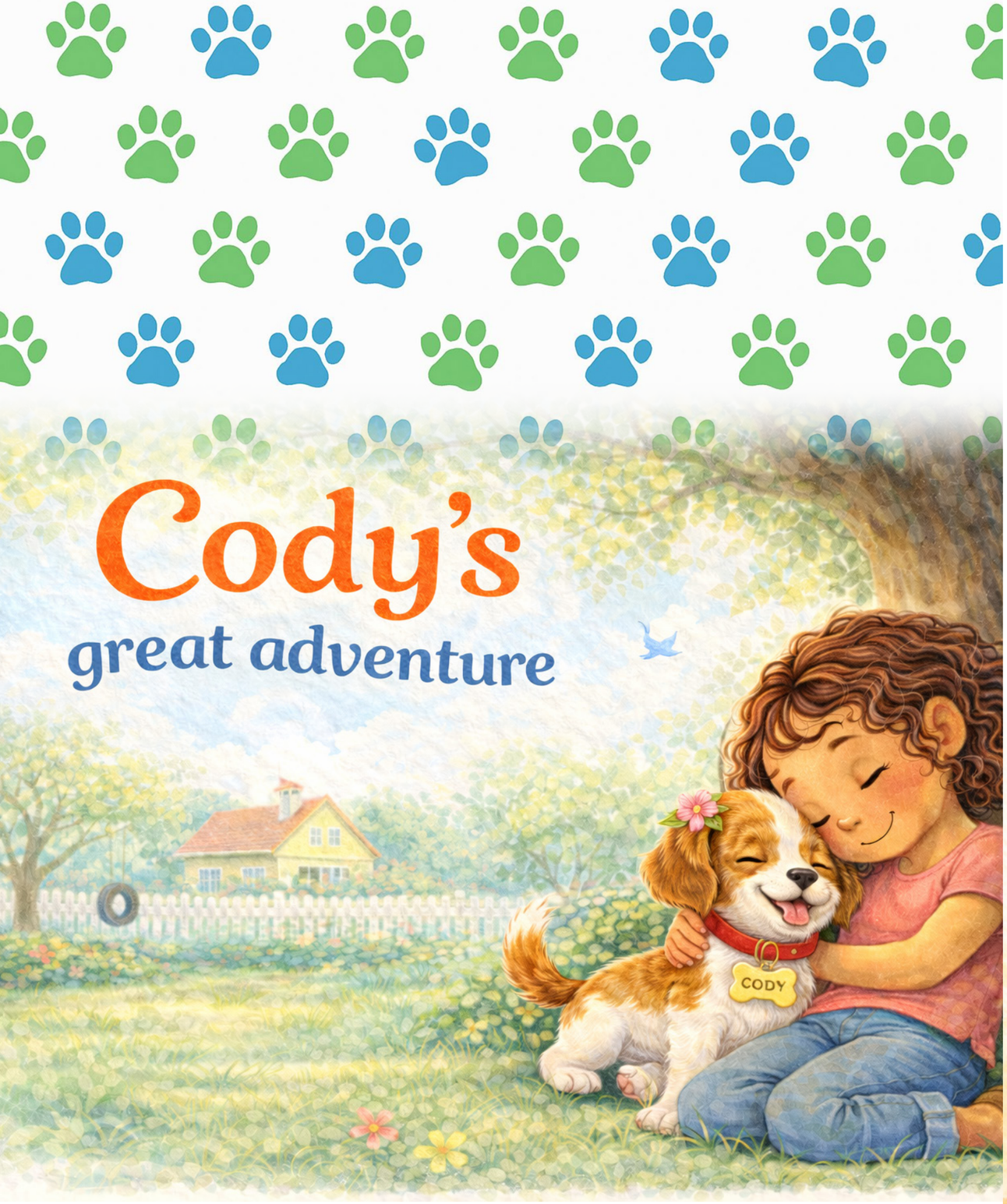
Daardie aand maak Lisa Cody se halsbandjie reg en sit ‘n naamplaatjie aan die band. “Nou weet almal wie jy is as jy weer op avonture wil gaan,” sê sy met ‘n glimlag.

Lisa besef daardie aand om ‘n hond te hê is nie net speletjies nie, maar dit beteken ook dat jy hom veilig, skoon en gesond moet hou. Dit is ‘n groot verantwoordelikheid. Sy belowe om altyd mooi na Cody om te sien.

Lisa moet elke dag vir Cody
hondekos voer,
skoon water gee, hom
uitborsel en skoon maak. Sy
moet ook aan hom aandag
gee en saam met hom speel.
Hulle is beste maats!
Na die groot skrik bly Cody
altyd naby Lisa wat hom
veilig te hou.

Op ‘n sonnige dag lê Lisa en
Cody rustig onder ‘n
groot boom.
“Cody jy het my regtig
geleer wat liefde en sorg
beteken,” glimlag sy.
Cody se stert waai woes en
hy maak sy oë toe, gelukkig
in sy huis vol liefde en omgee.

Die Einde



Author: Gizelle Styger

On a sunny Saturday morning, Lisa and her mom went to the pet store for a very special reason. For as long as she could remember, Lisa had wanted a best friend.
Inside the store, she spotted a small brown-and-white puppy with big curious eyes.
Right away, Lisa knew she had found her best buddy. His name was Cody.

When they got home, Cody explored everything! He sniffed in the garden... Crawled under the couch... And even climbed into the laundry basket!
Lisa showed Cody his cozy basket and soft blanket and gave him a clean bowl of water.
But not even a moment later— SPLASH! Cody toppled right into his water bowl!
"Cody, you silly puppy!" Lisa laughed as she dried him off.

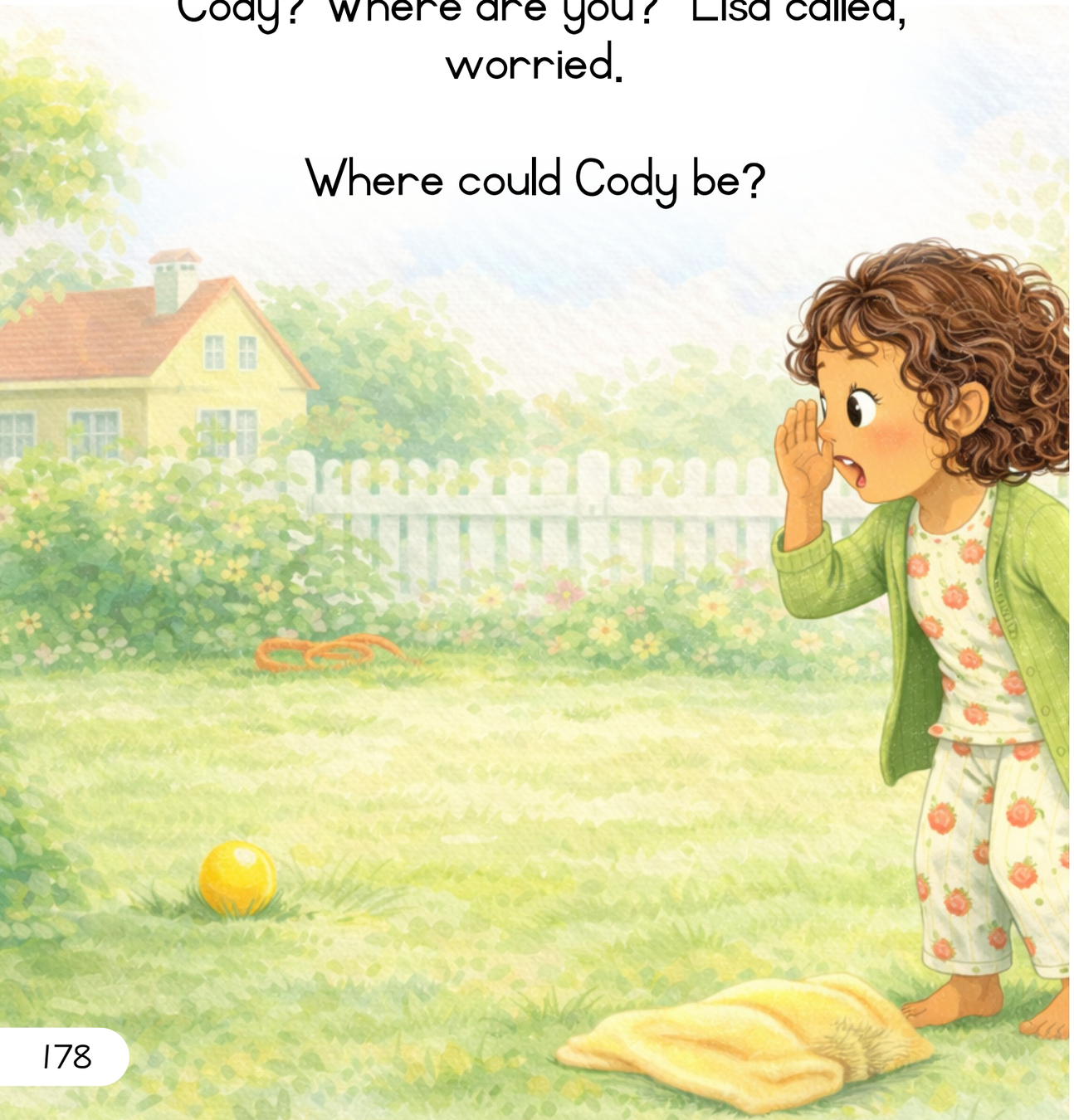
Early the next morning, Lisa woke to Cody's excited puppy kisses.
What was that sound?
Was Cody's tummy growling?
Lisa hurried to get his favorite dog food and a fresh bowl of water.
"Cody, you need healthy food and fresh water every day," she said as he happily gobbled up his breakfast.

Cody was a busy little puppy who loved playing outside.
He chased his ball, raced around the garden, and even tried to catch his own tail!
But sometimes his adventures got him into trouble.
"Cody! No!" Lisa shouted when she found a big hole in the garden. But she could only stay upset for a moment — Cody was just too cute.

After a long afternoon of playing, it was bath time.
Lisa brushed Cody's fur until it was shiny and clean. She washed his paws and wiped his ears.
"Cody, you look and smell like a flower!" giggled Lisa.

Later that day, Lisa tossed the ball across the yard.
Cody sprinted after it... but he didn't come back.
"Cody? Where are you?" Lisa called, worried.

Where could Cody be?



Lisa searched behind the trees...
Between the plants... And even under the car.
But Cody was nowhere to be found.
The streetlights flickered on, and tears filled Lisa's eyes. She thought she might never see her beloved Cody again.
Just then, she heard a little rustle behind a big tree.

There he was!
His collar had gotten stuck on
a branch.
"Oh, Cody! I was so worried!"
Lisa cried as she scooped him
up. Cody licked her face as if
to say, "I'm sorry!"

That evening, Lisa fixed
Cody's collar and added a
shiny new name tag.
"Now everyone will know
who you are if you ever go
exploring again," she smiled.

That night, Lisa realized
that having a dog is not just
about playing — it also means
keeping him:
Safe, Clean, and Healthy.
She promised to take good
care of Cody always.

Every day, Lisa:
Fed him dog food, Gave him fresh water, Brushed his fur, And played with him!
They became the best of friends. After that scary adventure, Cody always stayed close to Lisa.

One sunny afternoon, Lisa and Cody lay together beneath a big shady tree.
Lisa smiled. "Cody, you've really shown me what love and care can mean."
Cody wagged his tail and closed his eyes, happy in his home full of love and kindness.

Die Einde

Chloe and Xolani's Adventure

Author: Rachel Kramer

On a bright and warm morning, Chloe and Xolani went on a delightful adventure. They were off to the Dinokeng Game Reserve, bubbling with excitement to discover all the wonderful animals that awaited them!

The game ranger led Chloe and Xolani down a dusty, red path toward the walking trails. Chloe's eyes sparkled with excitement. "I wonder what animal we'll see first!" she whispered in Xolani's ear.

"Look, Chloe! One big elephant is splashing around!" Whoosh, whoosh! The elephant's trunk swung as it sprayed cool water into the air.

They walked a little further through the tall, whispering grass. Two big lions lay nearby, watching them stroll past. The lions lifted their heads and roared mightily, a deep rumble that shook them to their core!

Then Chloe pointed to the trees, where three tall necks stretched in the gentle breeze. “Look, Xolani! Three giraffes nibbling the leaves.”

Clip-clop, clip-clop,
along the sandy floor,
Chloe and Xolani
counted one, two,
three, four. They
adore stripy zebras!

The water went swoosh!
As they turned to see,
five playful hippos floated
as peacefully as can be.
Chloe giggled, "They look
so cute."

Xolani whispered, “I
spy with my little eye,
six cheeky monkeys
sitting in the trees!”
Swinging and jumping,
doing as they please.

Seven pink flamingos
stepped softly into
the pond below.
Chloe and Xolani
counted them one
by one.
"Let's see how high
we can go!"

As the sun began to set, they found a sight they'd never forget. Far away, but clear to see, eight big rhinos wandering free.

Nine bright birds flew high in the sky. Their colourful feathers shimmered in the light, painting the heavens with pure delight.

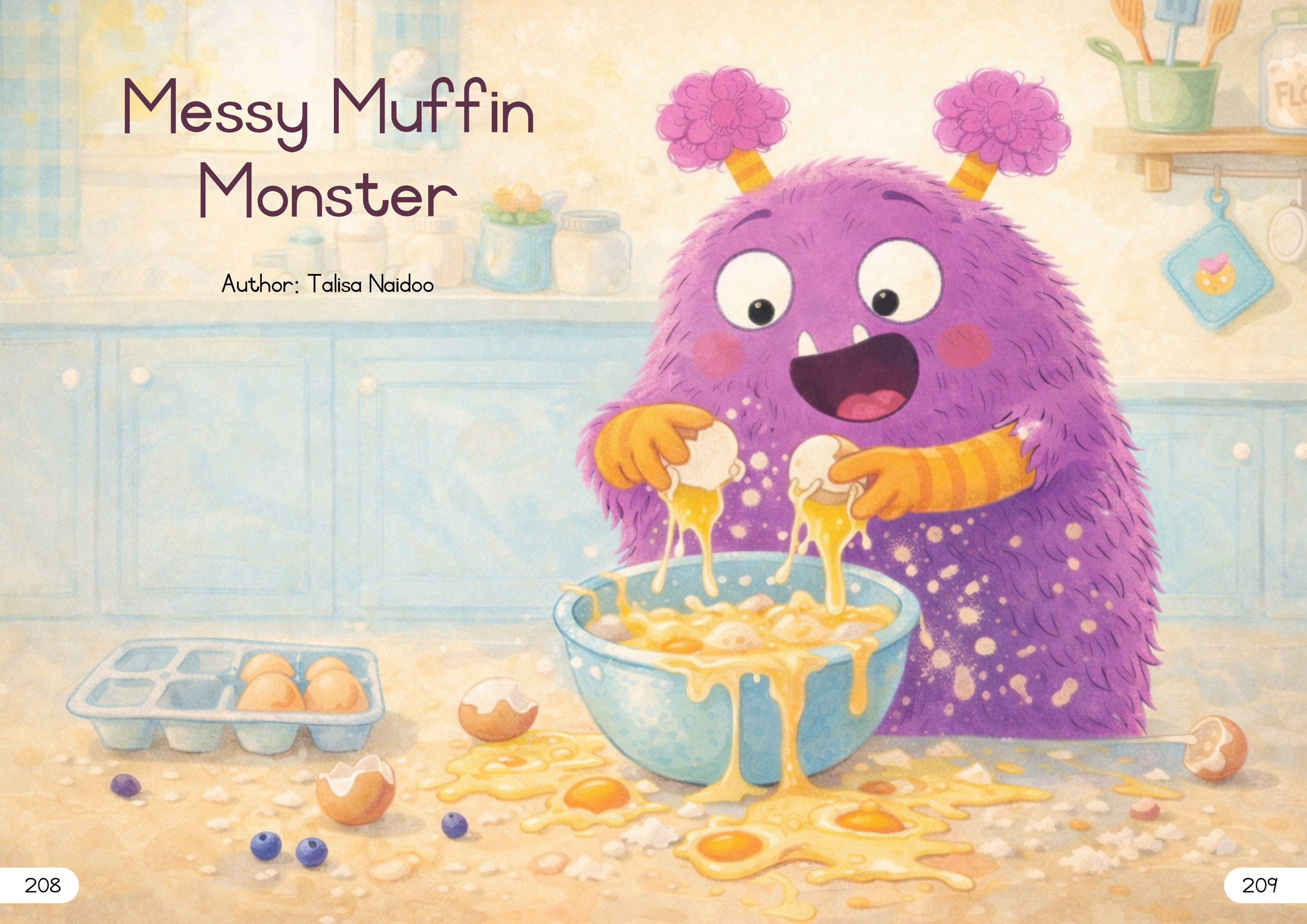
As they reached the game vehicle, ten beautiful butterflies fluttered all around in a soft, gentle goodbye. Above them, the stars began to peek in the sleepy evening sky.

When the night cuddled the world up tight, Chloe and Xolani whispered, “Goodnight.” All the animals snuggled down deep as they drifted to sleep beneath the moon that was all so bright.

The End

Messy Muffin Monster

Author: Talisa Naidoo



In a kitchen bright
and sunny,
lived a monster,
sweet and funny.
She loved to bake -
oh, what a treat!
Especially muffins,
soft and sweet.

But Muffin Monster, full of haste,
mixed too quickly and made some waste.
Flour puffed up, sugar spilled -
still, she rushed; her bowl was filled.

She cracked the eggs -
crack, crash, splat.
Some hit the bowl; some
hit the mat.

She didn't stop to sweep or clean,
too excited for muffins she
hadn't yet seen.

Blueberries bounced;
they rolled away.
"Who cares?" she laughed.
"I want to play!"

"The oven's hot,
the muffins rise,
they'll be
the best! An
awesome
surprise!"

She tapped her paws,
she licked her lips,
dreaming of blueberry muffin bits.
She didn't see the messy trail,
spills and crumbs from the floor
to the rail.

Ding! Went the oven, muffins done.
She dashed so fast, she tripped on one!
The milk went SPLASH; the chair went BUMP
the monster landed with a... THUMP!

Muffins flew - what a
disaster!
Haste had made it
happen faster.
Crumbs and goo and
sticky mash,
Monster sat among the
crash.

She sighed and said,
"This isn't fun...if only
I had slowed my speed,
I'd have the tasty
treats I need."

So out came a rag and a sponge too.
Monster knew just what to do.
She scrubbed and swept, she wiped and
dried, working neatly on every side.

At last, the kitchen gleamed so
bright...
Monster grinned, "Cleaning up feels
good to me!"
This time slower, step by step,
flour stayed where it was kept.

She cracked the eggs
with gentle care
and wiped up spills here
and there.
Soon the muffins rose
so tall,
golden and fluffy - the
best of all!

Monster cheered, “I’ve learned today
that slow and steady is the way.”
So, when you bake, or paint, or play…
Make a mess, but put everything away.

The End

The Squishy Squashy Giant

Author: Babalwa Michelle Sanqela

Michelle and her mom bake together in their shiny, bright kitchen. The air smells like sweet chocolate cookies, warm and ready to be eaten. Michelle always dreams of baking her very own chocolate cake.

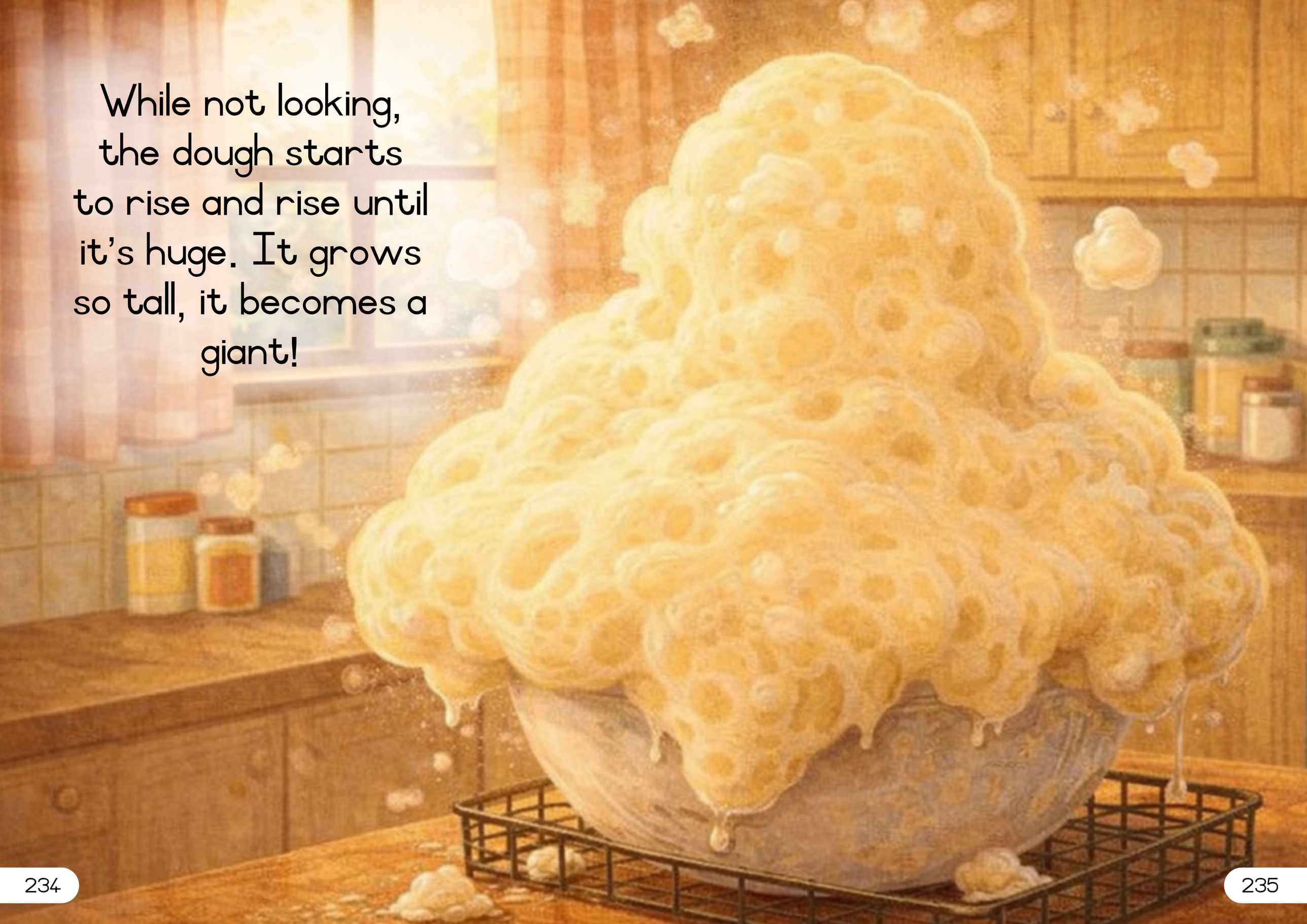
One day, while her mom is in the bath, Michelle decides this is her chance to bake her dream cake all by herself.

She sneaks into the kitchen and grabs a bowl. She pours in flour, cracks in eggs, and adds sugar and butter. Then she drops in a spoon of cocoa, and the chocolatey smell makes her eyes sparkle.

Michelle mixes the ingredients together, but remembers that she forgot to add the baking powder. She quickly grabs the baking powder, but pours too much.

Trying not to panic, Michelle keeps mixing. She turns around to wash her hands at the sink.

While not looking,
the dough starts
to rise and rise until
it's huge. It grows
so tall, it becomes a
giant!



The dough spreads across the floor, climbs up the cupboards, and stretches over the windows until it fills the whole kitchen.

Michelle feels something sneaking up behind her. She turns around, and there it is: the GIANT dough.

She tries to run, but her feet stick to the floor. She wobbles and wiggles, but she cannot get free. The giant dough has trapped her, and Michelle starts to cry.

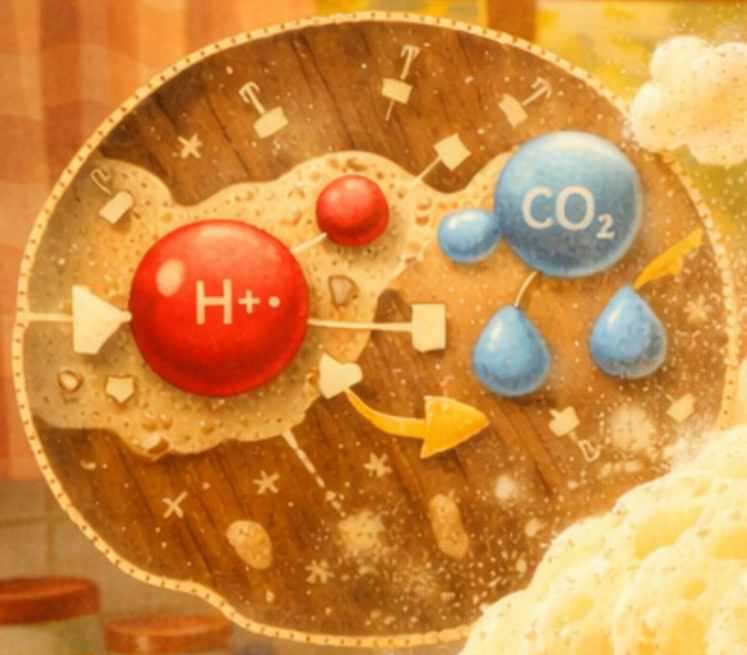
Then she hears a funny squishy-squashy sound. A gentle giggle tickles her ears. Before she knows it, the giant dough gives her a soft, warm, squishy teddy bear hug.

The dough reaches for more flour, but WHOOPS! Its squishy arms knock the bag over. POOF! Flour bursts into the air and sprinkles all over Michelle's head. She looks like a snowman, and they both laugh so hard their bellies hurt.

After all the laughing, Michelle and the dough fall asleep. Michelle snuggles into the dough, and the dough wraps its soft, squishy arms around her.

Mom comes into the kitchen and finds her little girl fast asleep, cuddled by the dough. She giggles softly and leaves them to dream of more kitchen adventures together.

The End

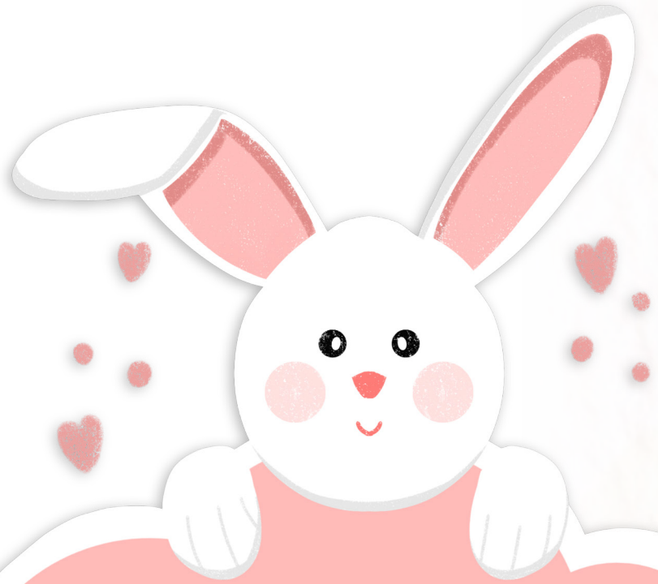


Scientific explanation:

When Michelle added the baking powder, something magical happened inside the dough. Baking powder is like tiny sleepy bubbles hiding in the flour. When it's mixed with wet ingredients and heated, the bubbles wake up and start to fizz. They make lots of little air pockets inside the dough, just like blowing up lots of tiny balloons.

As more and more bubbles fill up with air, the dough gets puffier and bigger. That is why the dough rises and grows taller instead of staying flat. This is called **chemical leavening** or an **acid-base** reaction. Michelle added a little too much baking powder, so the bubbles went extra wild and made the dough grow into a giant.

That is how baking powder helps cakes and bread become soft, fluffy, and delicious.

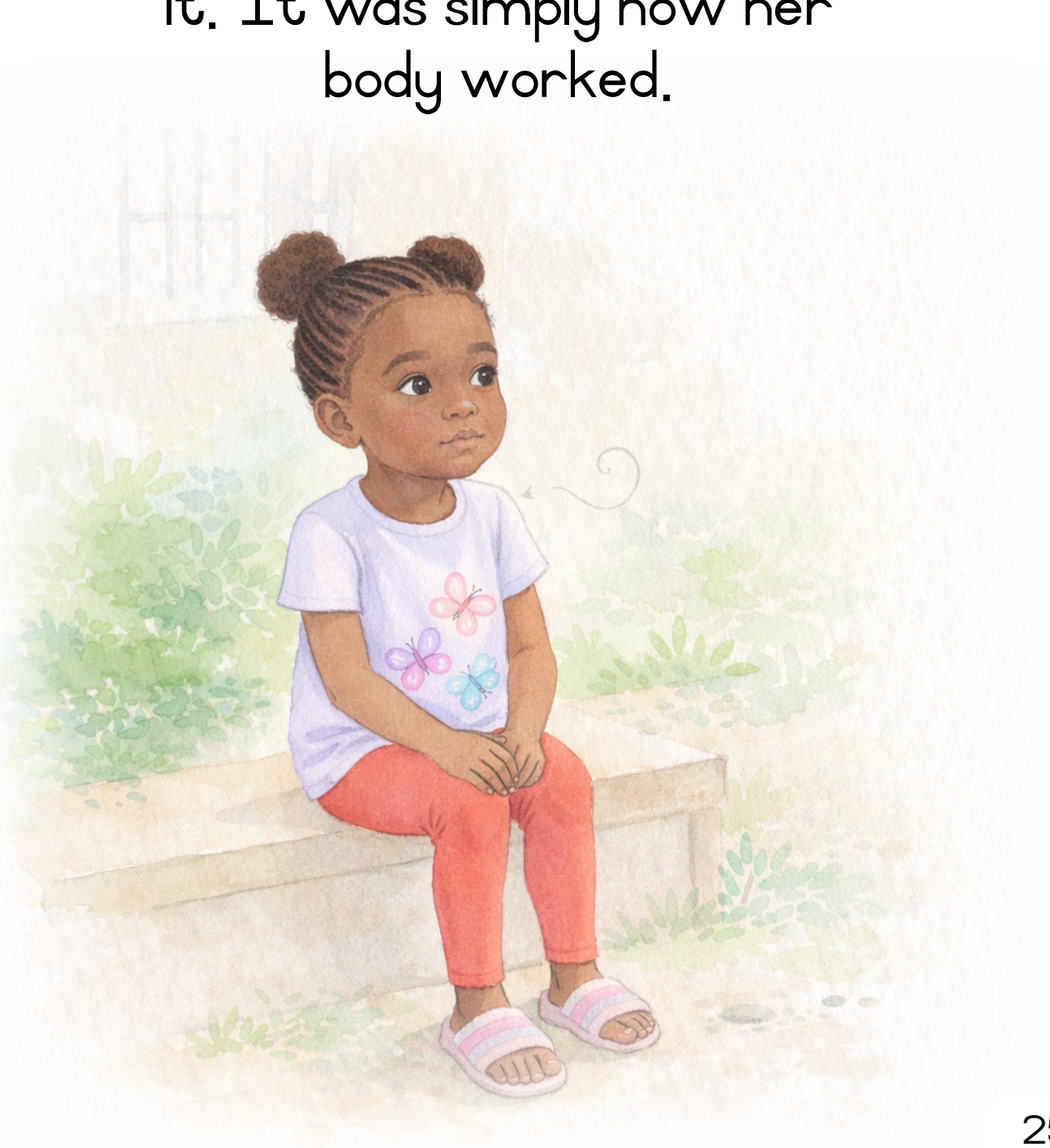


Tina and the Bunny Adventure

Author: Thembi Patricia Tshabalala

Tina
was a kind girl with a big smile. She loved being outside. She loved looking at plants, listening to birds, and watching little animals move in the grass.

Tina was also special in another way. Her body was very sensitive. This meant some things could make her feel sick or itchy. Tina did not choose it. It was simply how her body worked.



Some trees made Tina sneeze. Feathers made her eyes water. Dust made her nose tickle. Even fish could make her feel unwell. Sometimes Tina felt sad, because she wanted to do everything like other children.

One day, Tina was walking in the garden when she saw something hop near a bush. She stopped and looked carefully. It was a bunny! It was small, fluffy, and very cute. Its nose wiggled, and its ears twitched.

Tina felt excited. She wanted to hold the bunny and keep it as a pet. She imagined giving it food, making it a cosy home, and playing with it every day. Tina took a small step closer.

Then Tina remembered her sensitive body. If she touched the bunny, she might start itching and scratching. Tina did not want to feel sore and uncomfortable. So she kept her hands close to her body and watched the bunny from a safe distance.

Later that day, Tina's skin started to itch again. She scratched, but it did not help. Tina felt upset. Her mom sat with her and helped her calm down. Tina washed her hands, used her cream, and rested for a while. Soon her body felt better.

A few days later, it was Tina's birthday. Tina saw a big yellow box on the table with a red ribbon on top. Tina felt curious and happy. She slowly opened the box.

Inside was a bunny with soft ears and bright eyes. Tina's mouth fell open. She loved bunnies. But she also felt worried, because real pets could make her itchy.

Tina's mom smiled and said the bunny was not a real bunny. It was a robot bunny. The robot bunny was made to be safe for Tina. Tina could hold it, play with it, and not get sick.

Tina gently touched the bunny's ear. Nothing itchy happened. Tina touched it again and smiled. Tina hugged the bunny and gave it a name: Fifi. Tina felt proud and happy.

Tina's mom explained that technology can help people. Phones help people talk. Some tools help people hear better. And Fifi helped Tina have a bunny friend. From that day on, Tina and Fifi had many happy adventures together.

The End

Rody's Safari Surprise

Authors: Kutloano Taje & Kayla Willemse

Haa-haa-haa-de-dah

Rody the robot rolled through the tall, golden grass of the Kruger National Park. The sun was warm, the sky was big and blue, and a hadeda shouted, “Haa-haa-haa-de-dah”!

Rody loved the bushveld, but today his metal heart felt lonely.

“Everyone has a herd or a troop,” he sighed. “I want friends too.”

Along the sandy track he
saw elephants splashing at a
waterhole, zebras trotting
together and giraffes nibbling
leaves.
"Maybe I can join one of them, "
Rody decided.

He rolled to the waterhole.
"Dumela, elephants! Can I play with you?" he asked.
The elephants lifted their trunks kindly. "Tooo-oot!"
Rody copied, "Tooo-oot! Tooo-oot!"
They sprayed muddy water and stomped in the pool.
It looked so lekker.
Rody edged closer, then stopped.
"If I get wet, I will be damaged," he whispered.
He watched them splash, feeling left out, then
turned away, leaving a lonely line in the sand.

Rooooooaaaar!

On a rocky koppie, a pride of lions lay in the sun.
"They look strong and brave, " he thought.
"Maybe the lions will be my friends."
"Sawubona, lions! Can I join your pride?"
"You may walk with us," said the lioness.
Rody tried his best roar. "Rooooooaaaar!"
He felt proud - until the lions ran off after a springbok, dust flying.
Rody stopped.
"I cannot hunt or eat raw meat," he thought.
Quietly, he rolled back down the koppie.

Under an acacia tree, vervet monkeys chased each other and swung from branches. "They look so playful. Maybe the monkeys will be my friends," he said.

"Hallo, monkeys! Can I play too?"

"Ooh-ooh! Ah-ah!" they squealed, patting a branch and inviting him up.

Rody grabbed the branch and pulled.

Creak... SNAP!

BANG!

He tumbled down and landed with a loud BANG!

Dust puffed up. The monkeys gasped... then giggled.

"Eish, " Rody sighed. "My body is not made for swinging in trees."

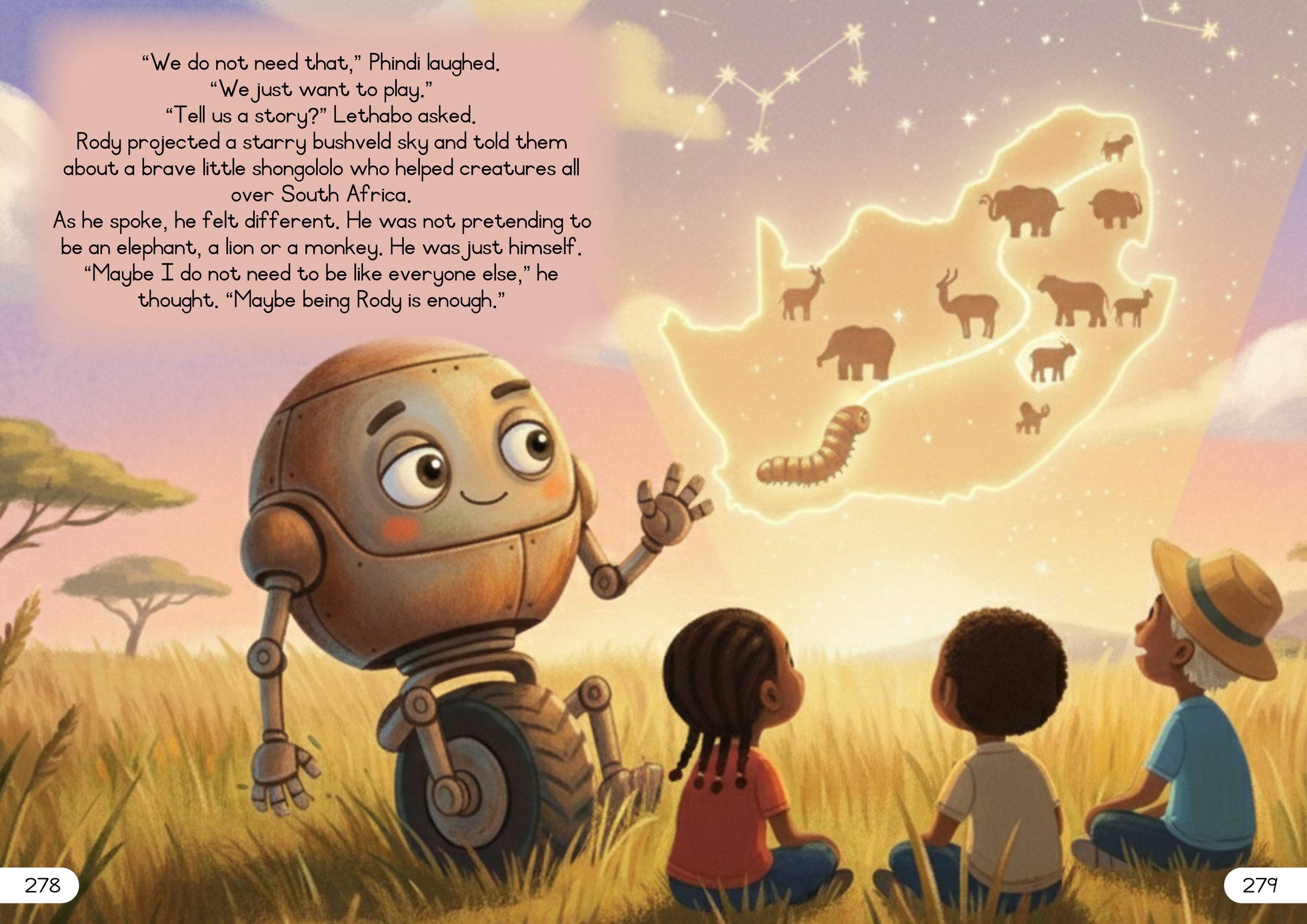
He stopped under a marula tree. A squirrel scurried past; a hornbill hopped nearby. "Too breakable for water, too gentle for hunting, too heavy for trees," he said sadly. "What kind of friend can I be?" He looked at the clouds and gave a long, lonely beep.

Then he heard something new. Laughter.

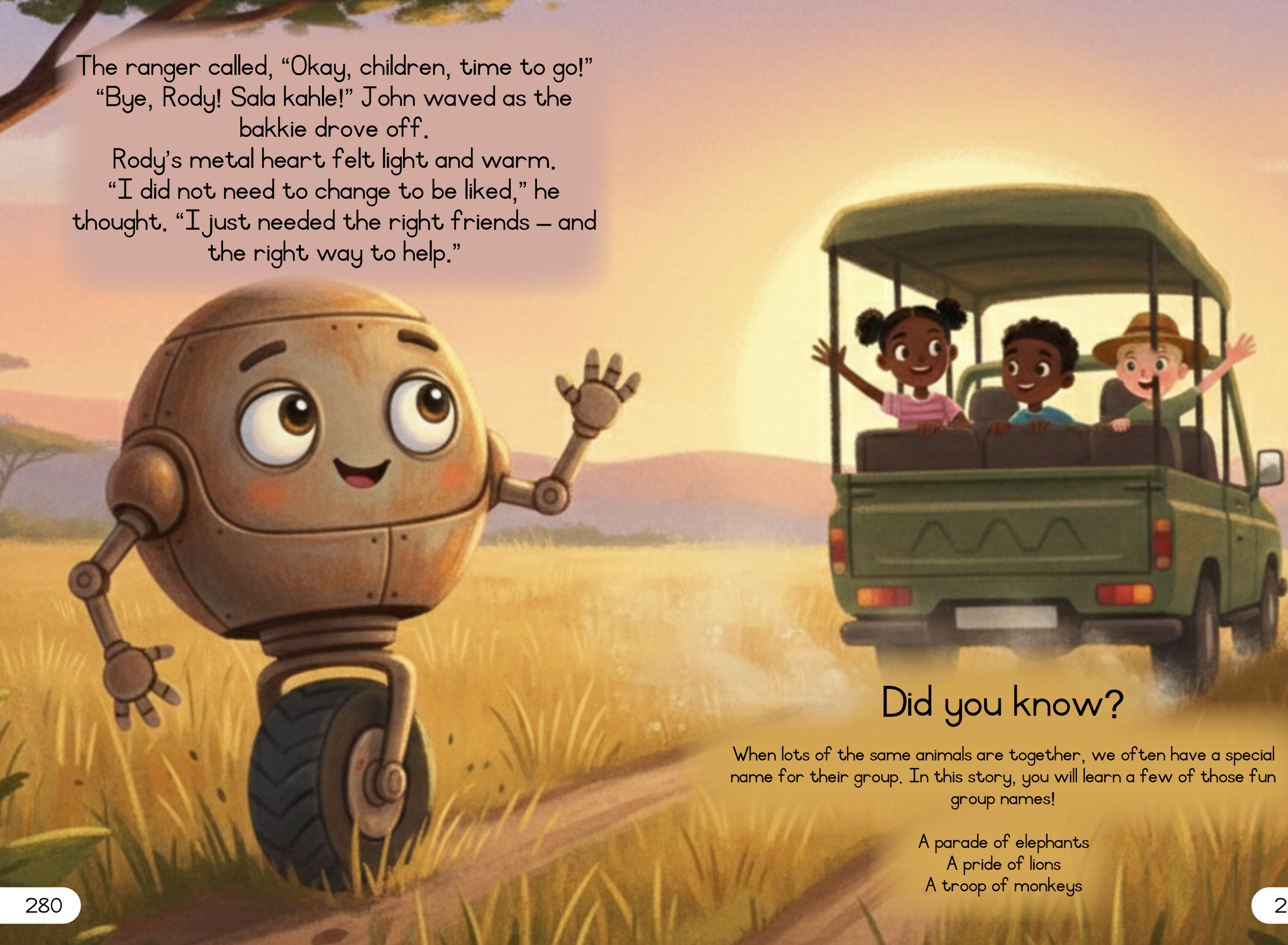
A game-viewing bakkie stopped nearby, full of children on a school trip. "Yoh! Look, a robot!" shouted a boy. Three children climbed down: John, Phindi and Lethabo.

"Hi, I am John. What's your name?"
"I am Rody," the robot said shyly.
"I am Phindi, and this is Lethabo. Do you want to play with us, Rody?"
"I would love to," he beeped, "but I cannot splash like elephants, or hunt like lions, or swing like monkeys."

"We do not need that," Phindi laughed.
"We just want to play."
"Tell us a story?" Lethabo asked.
Rody projected a starry bushveld sky and told them about a brave little shongololo who helped creatures all over South Africa.
As he spoke, he felt different. He was not pretending to be an elephant, a lion or a monkey. He was just himself.
"Maybe I do not need to be like everyone else," he thought. "Maybe being Rody is enough."



The ranger called, “Okay, children, time to go!”
“Bye, Rody! Sala kahle!” John waved as the bakkie drove off.
Rody’s metal heart felt light and warm.
“I did not need to change to be liked,” he thought. “I just needed the right friends – and the right way to help.”



Did you know?

When lots of the same animals are together, we often have a special name for their group. In this story, you will learn a few of those fun group names!

A parade of elephants
A pride of lions
A troop of monkeys

Vonkie: Van Fone tot Vrolikheid

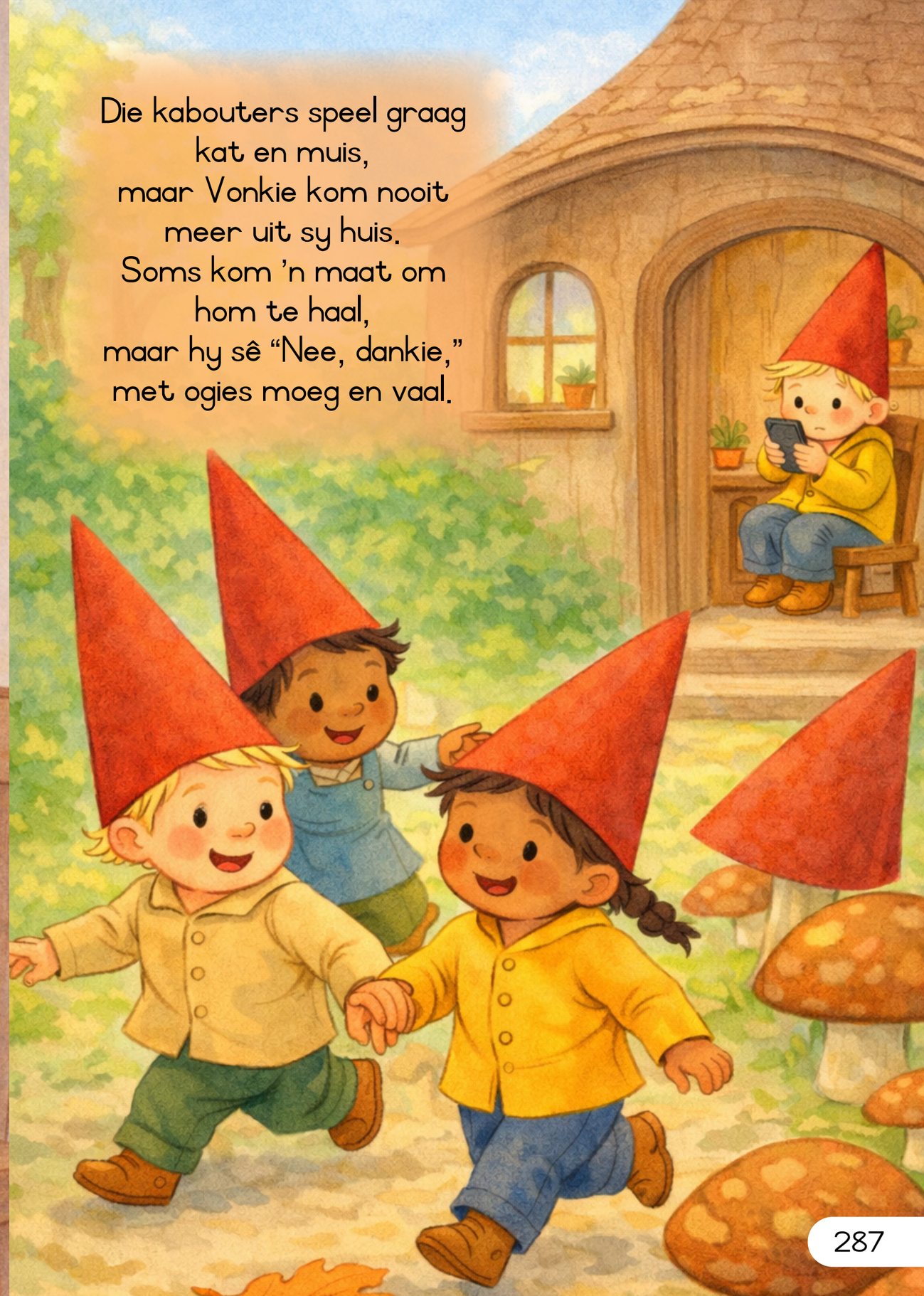
Skrywer: Emma Steynberg

In Kabouterland waar die son helder skyn,
speel Vonkie elke dag in die kaboutertuin.
In sy kop was daar altyd 'n plannetjie,
hy was die slimste kaboutermannetjie.

Sy ouers het gesê: "Ons Vonkie is slim,
in sy ogies is daar sterre wat altyd glim.
Hulle koop toe vir hom 'n selfoon blink,
en 'n rekenaar met liggies wat vrolik wink.

Maar toe sit Vonkie heeldag met
sy selfoon in die hand
en speel rekenaarspeletjies tot
dit donker word in die land.
Hy speel met geen maat
en dit maak sy maats baie kwaad.
Maar vir Vonkie het dit min gepla,
want die selfoon en rekenaar het
nooit gekla.

Die kabouters speel graag
kat en muis,
maar Vonkie kom nooit
meer uit sy huis.
Soms kom 'n maat om
hom te haal,
maar hy sê "Nee, dankie,"
met ogies moeg en vaal.



Op 'n dag pak daar donker
wolke saam,
die weer dreun hard en die
glas ratel in elke raam.
Weerlig flits oor
Kabouterland,
en reën vul die straat van
kant tot kant.
Die wind waai hard oor
veld en bos
en ruk die sonpanele van
die sonplaas los.

Die krag was weg en geen
liggie het geskyn,
Vonkie se selfoonbattery het
gou gekwyn.
Vonkie sug in hul donker huis -
stil is sy rekenaar se sagte
gedruis.
Dae en dae sal die kabouters
moet swoeg en sweet
om panele weer reg te maak
het Vonkie geweet.

Verveeld sit Vonkie nou op
sy bed
en luister na vrolike klanke
van kabouterpret.
Een swaai hoog met die
skoppelmaai,
terwyl ander op die
rondomtalie draai.
Sy maatjies het seker al
van hom vergeet,
dink hy met 'n hart vol
stille leed.

Toe dink hy: “Nee kyk, genoeg is genoeg!
Vir verveeld wees is ek nou regtig moeg.”
Hy spring vinnig van sy bed af op,
en sit sy kabouterhoed op sy kop.
Buite roep sy maatjies sy naam:
“Vonkie, Vonkie, kom speel tog saam!”

In die kabouterresies het hy ver agtergebly
want goeie oefening het hy lanklaas gekry.
Die blou bal het hy mis geskop
want daar was net rekenaarspeletjies in sy kop.

Van al die vars lug, klouter en klim
was Vonkie gou weer 'n knapie met planne slim.
Sy ogies het geblink en sy wange was rooi,
want saans was hy sommer vroeg in die kooi.
Sy maats roep: "Lank was jy 'n luie donkie,
maar nou is jy weer ons liewe Vonkie!"

Toe die sonpanele weer in die
sonplaas blink,
het Vonkie min aan die
rekenaar en selfoon gedink.
Met sy maats wou hy nou
eerder speel,
om in die huis te sit sou hom
nou erg verveel.
Kabouterland se geliefde
kabouterkind
was weer vrolik en vry net
soos die wind!

Toe sê sy pa: “Vonkie jy is net een keer kind,
daarin moet jy groot vreugde vind.
Maak maatjies wat altyd jou vriende sal wees,
en bly fiks en so sterk soos ’n bees!”

Die Einde

Spark: From Phones to Joy

Author: Emma Steynberg

In Gnomewood Grove where the
sunshine would glow,
Spark played each day where the
daisies would grow.
Inside his head were ideas that ran,
he was the cleverest little gnome-man.

His parents would say, “Our Spark is so bright,
there are twinkling stars in
his eyes every night.”
They bought him a cellphone, shiny and new,
and a computer that blinked and went
“beep-beep” too.

But then Spark sat all day with
his phone in his hand,
and played computer games till
night crossed the land.
He played all alone, day after day,
and his friends felt sad when he
stayed away.
But Spark didn't notice, he
stayed in his seat,
because screens never said,
"Come on, let's meet!"

The gnomes loved to play
games like cat-and-mouse,
but Spark wouldn't come
outside of his house.
Sometimes a friend came
to call at his door,
but Spark said, "No,
thanks," and played even
more.

One day, dark clouds came
rolling in tight,
the thunder roared loud,
and the windows shook
with fright.
Lightning flashed so bright
at night,
and rain poured down with
all its might.
The wind blew hard
through field and tree,
and pulled the solar panels
loose and free.

The power went off - not a
light could shine,
and Spark's cellphone battery
ran down in no time.
Spark sighed in the dark in
the house where he lay;
even his computer went
quiet that day.
"For days and days we will
work and we will sweat
to fix those panels," Spark
thought with regret.

Bored on his bed, Spark
heard a playful sound,
gnomes were running and
giggling all around.
One swung up high on the
playground swing,
while others spun round in
a dizzying ring.
“Perhaps they have
forgotten me,” Spark
thought with a sigh,
with a little tear that sat
in his eye.

Then Spark said, “No, I have had enough!
Being bored all day is really tough!”
He jumped from his bed with a quick little hop,
and popped his gnome hat right on top.
Outside, his friends called out his name:
“Spark! Spark! Come join our game!”

In the race, Spark fell behind
because exercise had not been on his mind.
He tried to kick the blue ball, but it rolled away,
because screen-time thoughts had
come to stay.

But with fresh air, climbing and running with glee,
Spark soon felt as quick could be.
His eyes shone bright, and his cheeks turned red,
and at night, he was sleepy and went
straight to bed.
His friends all laughed, “For long you were slow -
But now you are our Spark again, ready to go!”

When the solar panels shone
in the sun once more,
Spark thought less of
screens than he did before.
He'd rather play outside
with friends all day,
because sitting indoors just
got in the way.
Soon Spark was happy
again, like before,
laughing and playing more
and more.

Then his dad said, “Spark, you’re only a child,
so live your days happy, playful, and wild.
Make good friends who will stay close to you,
and keep your body strong in all you do!”

The End

Thandi and the Tooth Fairy

Author: Caitlyn Magwa

Thandi's tooth popped
out with a wriggle.
She gave a great, big,
gapped-tooth giggle.

But under her pillow, it
did not go,
For she had a sweet plan
for the fairy to know.

Children had whispered near and far,
Of a fairy so sneaky, strange and bizarre.

"Trick her once, and she'll leave you more,
Outsmart her, and you will win for sure!"

So Thandi tucked a
riddling note in place,
And waited patiently, a
smile on her face.

She closed her eyes, but
not to sleep,
She'd follow that fairy,
without a peep.

Down came the fairy in glittery flutter,
Looking around and starting to mutter,

"Yebo yes, this is the right address,
Tonight's going to be a big success!"

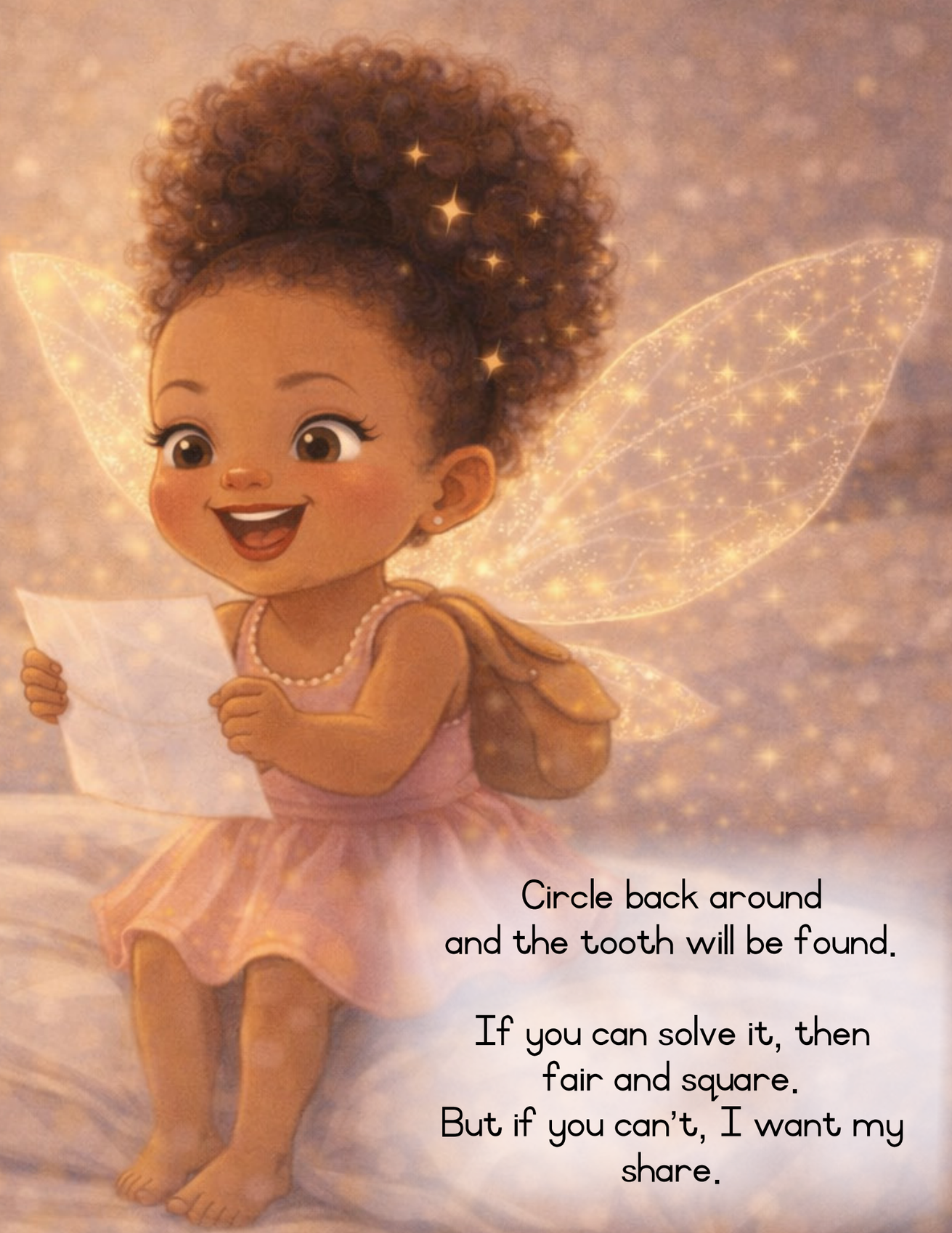
Off to Thandi's room she flew,
rushing wildly, her afro askew.

She peeked under Thandi's pillow, indeed.
But uh-oh, no tooth, just a riddle to read.

Gold marks the spot, but
don't be too quick,
that tooth is quite
tricky, not the right pick.

Metal twinkles so shiny
and bright,
try if you dare but it
won't budge tonight.

Try to search where
Gogo lay
and you'll have a soggy
price to pay.



Circle back around
and the tooth will be found.

If you can solve it, then
fair and square.
But if you can't, I want my
share.

Off zipped the fairy to
Mum and Dad,
A gold tooth shining made
her glad.

She grabbed with a
shout, “Aha! My prize!”
Then drool poured out -
yoh, what a surprise.

Her face turned red, “Haibo! No ways!”
So off she sped through midnight haze.

Big brother Xolani’s braces gleamed
silver-bright,
“Metal!” she cheered. “This must be
right!”

One hand on a tooth and
one on a brace,
One foot slipping, afro in
her face.

One tug, two tugs, three
tugs, four,
Until the Tooth Fairy
couldn’t tug anymore.

Next, Tooth Fairy tiptoed to Gogo's bed
finding a full set of dentures ahead.

She thought, "This must indeed be the prize!"
but she was in for a nasty surprise.

"Sies! Look at this great big mess.
Aikona! It's gotten all over my dress."

Her wings were wet, she couldn't fly.
But no, it wasn't yet time to say
goodbye, for Tooth Fairy still had one
more try.

Up ahead, the family
dog slept tight,
Soft little snores in
the quiet night.

"I must be brave and
have no fear,
That sneaky tooth is
hiding near!"

But little did Fairy know
the wind would blow,
As Fluffy rolled over, slow
and low.

He puffed out a toot - so
mighty, so loud
It launched her away in a
big, smelly cloud!

Tumbling and turning all over the place,
The little tooth fairy spun through space.

She cried out once, then once more too.
“Haibo! This is not what fairies do!”
The fairy landed on Thandi’s bed feeling blue,
But she was so close to the clue that was true.

She shook her head, “This riddle is tough…”
Then Thandi sat up and giggled, “Enough!”

Thandi chuckled, her eyes all bright,
"The tooth was in my teddy all night!"

The fairy grinned, "Fair enough, my dear -
Chommie, stay smart because I'll see you next year!"

The End

Ben en Bella Spaar

Skrywer: Lúnelle Niebuhr

Ben en Bella is boetie en sussie.
Eendag gee Mamma vir hulle elkeen ‘n spaarvark,
om te spaar vir die volgende kersmark.
Bella sê: “Ek gaan my geldjies veilig hou”.”
Ben sê: “My varkie eet muntstukke gou”.”

Bella gooi haar eerste
munt in die varkie.
Klink klonk!
Ben koop dadelik ‘n
roomys. Slurp slonk!

Bella het gou baie meer
geldjies as Ben, dit moet
julle weet,
maar Ben sê met trots:
“Ek het so lekker geëet”.

Eendag in die winkel toe besef
Bella sy het genoeg gespaar en
nou word al haar drome waar.
“Kan ek die beertjie kry,
asseblief” vra sy.
Toe besef Ben, hy kan niks
hier kry.

Ben se hartjie is
swaar want al sy
geldjies is klaar.

Bella sê toe “Jy kan ook met my beertjie speel, of ons kan hom deel”.

Ben antwoord haar: “Dankie Sussie, maar ek moet leer om nie my geld so vining te spandeer”.

“Volgende keer spaar ek saam met jou. Spaar is slim, dit weet ek nou!”

Die Einde

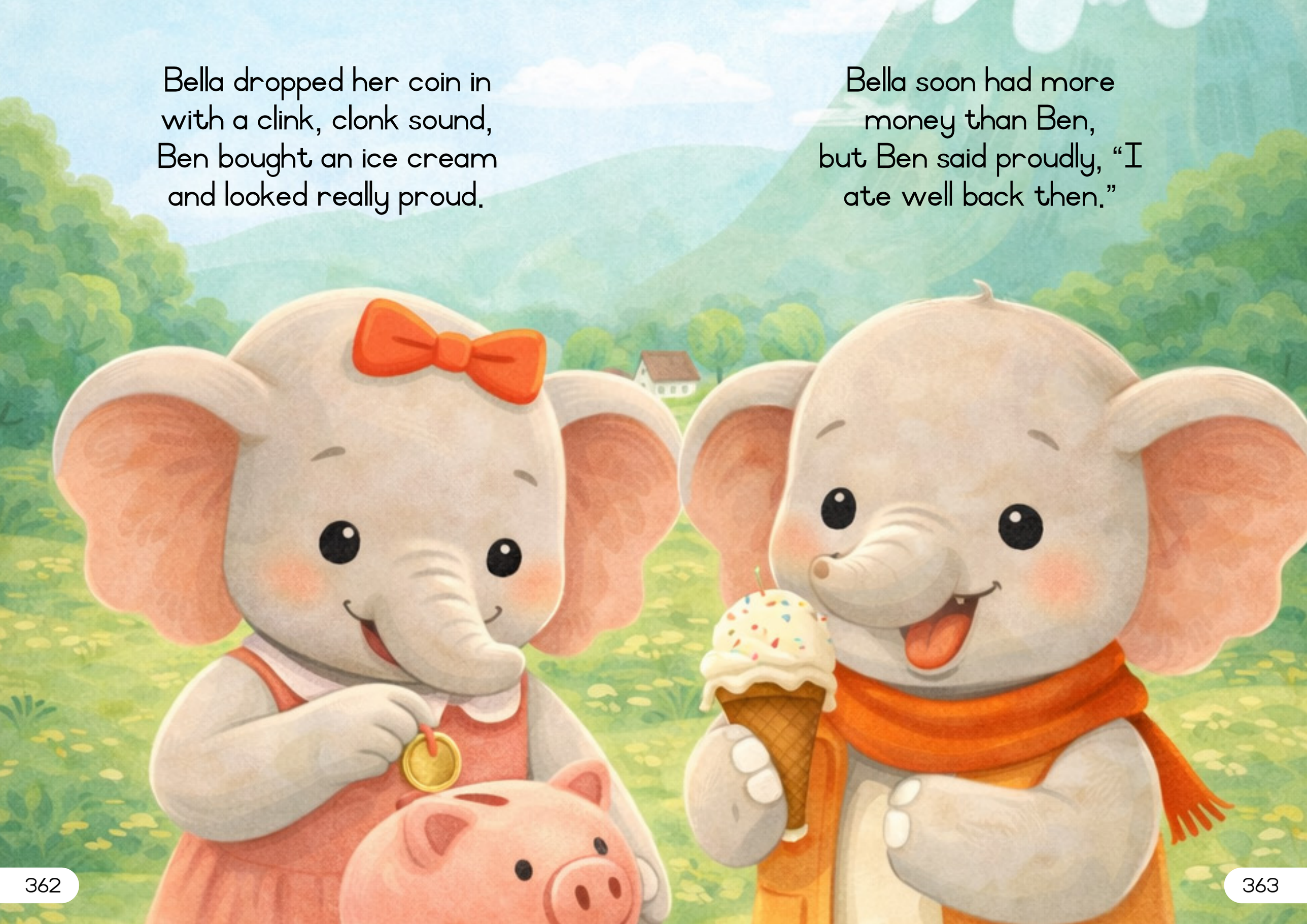
Ben and Bella Save

Author: Lúnelle Niebuhr

Ben and Bella are brother
and sister.
One day, their mom gave
them each a gift,
a piggy bank to help their
savings lift.
Bella said, “I will keep my
money tucked away.”
Ben said, “My piggy eats
coins right away.”

Bella dropped her coin in
with a clink, clonk sound,
Ben bought an ice cream
and looked really proud.

Bella soon had more
money than Ben,
but Ben said proudly, “I
ate well back then.”



One day at the shop, Bella
smiled wide,
she had saved enough and felt
proud inside.
"May I have that teddy bear,
please?" she said,
Ben looked down sadly and
shook his head.

His little heart felt
heavy and sore,
all his money was gone,
there was no more.

Bella said, "You can
play with my bear,
or we can share it
if you care."

Ben replied, "Thank you,
Sister, now I know,
saving is smart, I must
go slow."

"Next time, I will save my
coins each day.
Saving is smart, that is the
best way."

The End

Gawie se Geldavontuur

Skrywer: Lané Grové

Gawie is ‘n sesjarige seuntjie
wat baie slim is.
Gawie het ‘n beursie met ‘n
klinkel-klank.
In die beursie is drie goue
muntstukke,
geld wat hy kan spaar of
spandeer.

“Spandeer nou vir die lekker
of spaar vir iets wat lank
hou, my skat.”
sê Gawie se mamma.
“Die keuse is joune!”

In die winkel sien Gawie
'n blou bonsbal.
Hy wil dit só graag hê.
Dit kos net een goue
muntstuk.
Hy het genoeg geld daarvoor.
Wat sal hy doen?

'n Pragtige blink speel renmotor
vang sy oog.
Dadelik wil Gawie dié renmotor hê,
Maar, dit kos vyf goue
muntstukke.
Hy sal baie lank daarvoor moet
spaar.

“Ek sal spaar!” roep Gawie uit.
Hy bêre sy muntstukke in sy beursie.
Dit val met ‘n klinkel.
Hy gaan spaar vir daardie renmotor, dit is beslis.

Gawie help met al die huistake.
Hy help sokkies opvou, plante natmaak en vloere vee.
Hy verdien net meer en meer sakgeld!

Die muntstukke begin meer word
en sy spaarvarkie raak vol.
Maar eweskielik steek ‘n
haelstorm op.
Gawie sien iets wat deur die
haelkorrels getref word.

‘n Bewende, honger babakatjie,
alleen, verlore en maer.
Die katjie kyk met hartseer ogies
na Gawie en ‘n sagte “miaau” geluid
kom uit sy bek.

Die katjie het dadelik kos
en ‘n veearts se hulp nodig.
Gawie kyk na sy propvol
spaarvarkie en weet hy sal moet
help.

Hy gooi sy muntstukke uit.
“Enigiets vir die katjie,”
sê Gawie
Sy renmotor-droom het
verdwyn, maar hy kan gelukkig
die katjie help.

Die katjie, met die naam
Piesang,
is nou veilig en gesond.
Hy maak 'n gelukkige spin-geluid
en weet hy is geliefd.

"Gawie!" roep Mamma "Ek het vir jou 'n verrassing."
Mamma hou 'n groot boks toegedraai in geskenkpapier na hom toe uit.
"Vir jou vriendelikheid en omgee," sê sy.
Dit is dié renmotor wat hy so graag wou hê.
Sy droom het waar geword.
Soos Mamma altyd sê:
"Goeie dade word beloon."

Die Einde

Gawie's Money Adventure

Author: Lané Grové

Gawie is a six-year-old boy
who is very clever.
Gawie has a little purse that
makes a jingling sound.
Inside the purse are three
gold coins, money that he
can save or spend.

"Spend now for a little
treat,
or save for something that
will last, my darling," Gawie's
mother said.
"The choice is yours!"

In the shop, Gawie sees a blue bouncy ball.
He wants it very much.
It costs only one gold coin.
He has enough money to buy it.
What will he do?

A beautiful, shiny toy racing car catches his eye.
Straight away, Gawie wants that racing car.
But it costs five gold coins.
He will have to save for a long time.

"I will save!" Gawie exclaims.
He puts his coins back into his purse.
They fall with a cheerful jingle.
He is going to save for that racing car – that is certain.

Gawie helps with all the household chores.
He helps to fold socks, water the plants, and sweep the floors.
He earns more and more pocket money!

The coins begin to add up,
and his piggy bank starts to fill up.
But suddenly, a hailstorm
breaks out.
Gawie sees something being struck
by the hailstones.

A trembling, hungry kitten, alone,
lost, and thin.
The kitten looks at Gawie with
sad little eyes, and a soft "meow"
sound comes from its mouth.

The kitten immediately needs food
and help from a vet.
Gawie looks at his full piggy bank
and knows that he will have to
help.

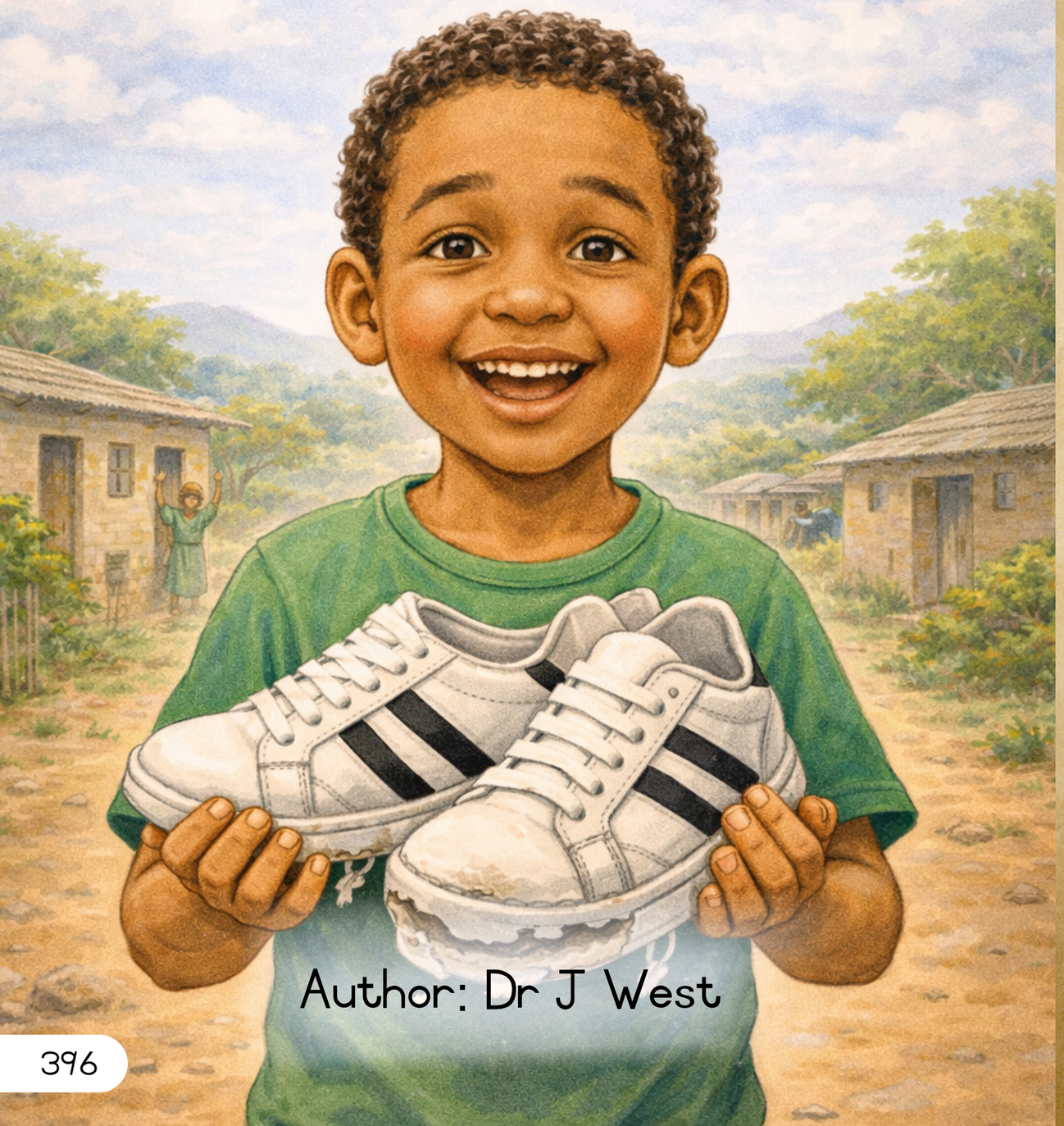
He empties out his coins.
"Anything for the kitten,"
says Gawie.
His dream of a racing car
fades away,
but he is happy that he could
help the kitten.

The kitten, named Banana,
is now safe and healthy.
He makes a happy purring sound
and knows that he is loved.

"Gawie!" Mum calls. "I have a surprise for you."
Mum holds out a big box wrapped in gift paper.
"For your kindness and care," she says.
Inside is the racing car he wanted so much.
His dream has come true.
Just as Mum always says:
"Good deeds are rewarded."

The End

Turbo Thabo
and the Adi-Flop



Author: Dr J West

In the heart of Mzansi, where taxis hoot and vuvuzelas blare, where chickens cross the dusty road like they don't even care, lived Turbo Thabo, a kid with lightning in his legs.

Thabo lived in a buzzing kasi where the spaza shops line the street. He loved only three things more than his gogo's stew: Running, rhythm, and a fresh pair of shoes that flew.

Rhyming jingle:
In the streets of
Mzansi, under Jozi-
blue sky,
Turbo Thabo ran
so fast the taxis
blinked an eye.
“Yoh, that laaitie’s
quick,” the
neighbours used to
say,
“One day he’ll be on
TV, winning gold on
race day!”

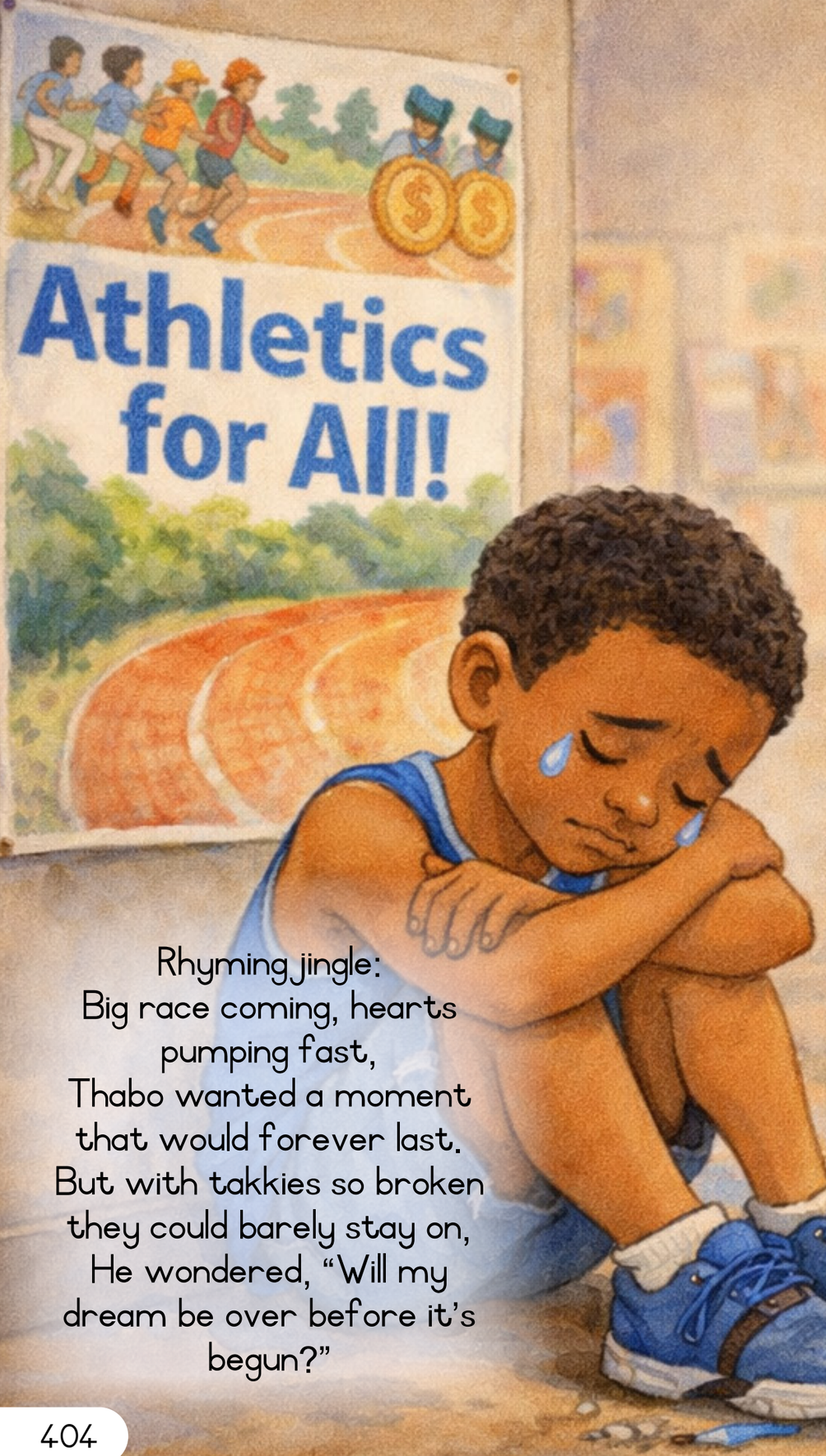
There was just one problem
with our future star.
His takkies were finished,
they had gone too far. The
sole was peeling, the laces
were torn, one shoe had a
hole big enough to see the
lawn.

On the school field, Coach
Naidoo frowned.
“Eish, Thabo, your shoes have
seen too much ground.
You’ve got talent, my boy,
like proper Olympic stock,
But your takkies look like
they survived a taxi rank
rock.”

At home, Gogo sighed as she
washed in a tin basin,
"My child, life is tough, but keep on
pacing.
When there's money, we'll buy
new shoes, you'll see.
For now, run barefoot... like we
did, shame, back in my history."

Thabo nodded, but his heart felt
sore,
He wanted "proper brands" like he
saw in the store.
He dreamed of shiny stripes and
cushioning air,
Of shoes that whispered, "Bru,
we'll take you anywhere."

Rhyming jingle:
Old shoes, tired shoes, flapping on
the ground,
Every stride that Thabo took
made a slapping sound.
"One day," he whispered, "I'll have
stripes so fine,
Real adidas on my feet, and a
world-record time."



Rhyming jingle:
Big race coming, hearts
pumping fast,
Thabo wanted a moment
that would forever last.
But with takkies so broken
they could barely stay on,
He wondered, "Will my
dream be over before it's
begun?"

Posters went up on the school corridor wall.
"The Great Gauteng Inter-Schools Athletics for All!" The stadium in town, proper tartan track, medals, TV cameras, snacks at the tuck shop shack.

Trials were set for the very next week,
Thabo didn't sleep; he was too hyped to speak. He kept picturing himself in the 100 metre dash, crowd shouting "Turbo! Turbo!" as he finished in a flash.

But in the middle of his dream, his old shoe tore again, the sole folded under and he nearly landed in the drain. He looked down sadly at the ragged, flapping mess, "How can I be a champion when my shoes are such a stress?"

On Saturday morning,
the kasi buzzed with
sound,
Music from taxis, kids
running around.
Thabo walked past Bra
Zama's spaza, trying not
to stare,
But something in the
window went sparkle-
sparkle there.
There they were –
shiny, white, and bright,
Shoes with three black
stripes just catching the
light.
A crooked sign said,
"SPECIAL! REAL
ADIDAS – CHEAP-
CHEAP!"
And Thabo's heart did a
hopeful leap.

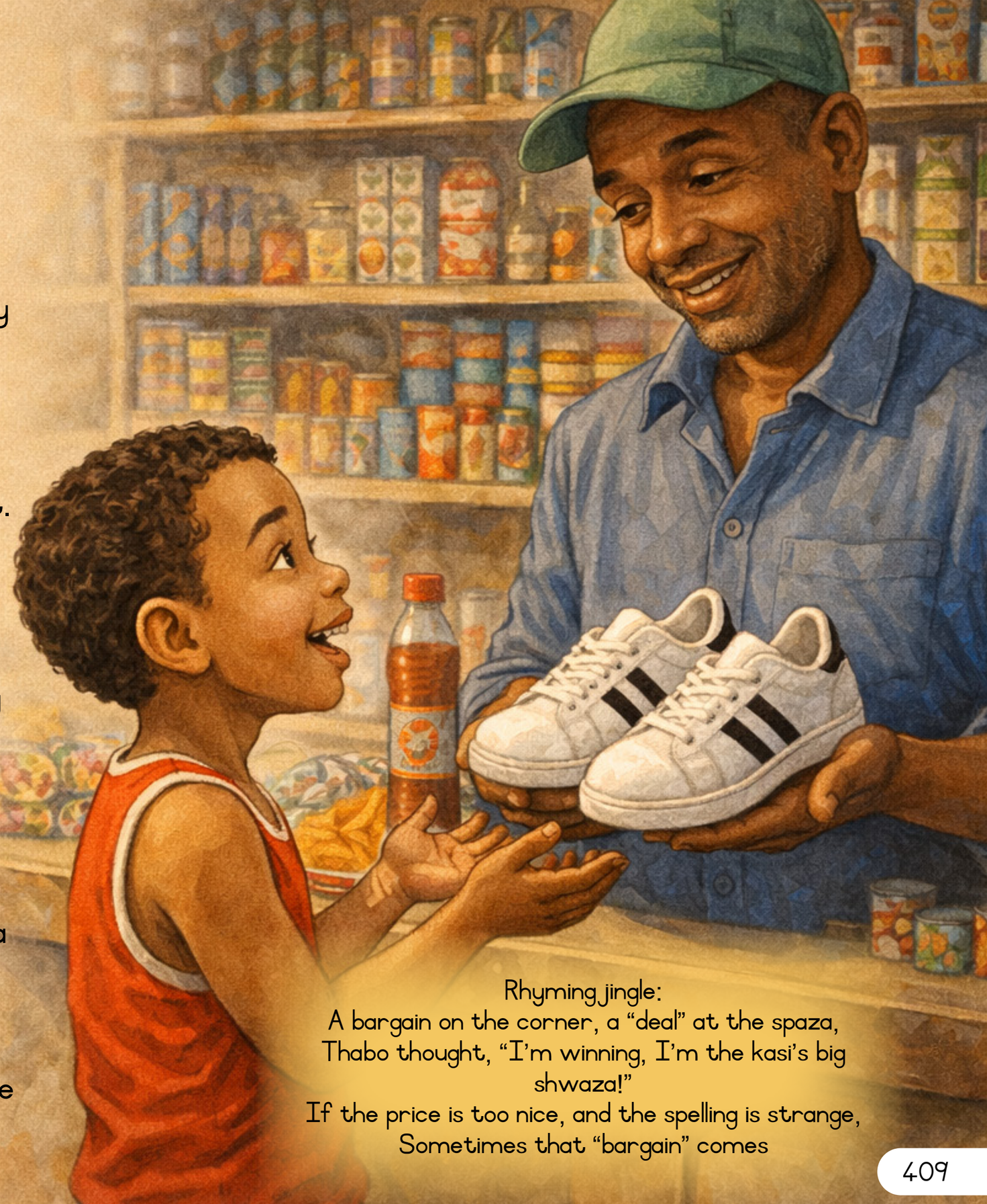
"Eish, bra, where did you get those?" Thabo asked, eyes wide. Bra Zama shrugged, wiping crumbs from his side.

"From my cousin in town – they fell off a truck…Don't ask too many questions, just buy it!"

The logo looked… almost right but not quite. Was that an extra "i" hiding in the light? The box said "Adibas – Just Seet It" in skew print. But Thabo's brain pushed away the suspicious hint. Thabo checked his pockets, coins clinked low, money from helping Gogo and sweeping next door. He counted again, then looked at the price, it was way too cheap, but oh, they looked nice.

"Are you sure they're real, Bra Zama? Like, real-real?" Thabo asked, stomach doing a nervous wheel. "Of course, my boy," the shopkeeper grinned. He handed over coins; Bra Zama sealed the deal, packed them in a box that didn't quite feel real.

But Thabo hugged the box like his dreams came true. with a painful exchange.



Rhyming jingle:
A bargain on the corner, a "deal" at the spaza,
Thabo thought, "I'm winning, I'm the kasi's big shwaza!"
If the price is too nice, and the spelling is strange,
Sometimes that "bargain" comes

At home, Thabo crept in like a secret spy,
Hiding the box whenever Gogo walked by.
But Gogo's eyes were sharp as an eagle
on patrol, "You're acting funny, my child.
What's going on with you?"

He showed her the shoes with a proud
little dance, "Look, Gogo! Real adidas! I got
them by chance." Gogo squinted at the
logo, leaned in close, her eyebrows climbed
higher than the tip of his nose.

"My boy," she frowned, "this thing is not
right. These stripes look suspicious in
the light and this spelling – Adibas? What
nonsense is that? I can tell you that is
fake right off the bat.

But Thabo just laughed, "Ag Gogo,
you're old-school. These are new
style, you know, township-cool. As
long as I can run, that's all that
matters, I'll show them flames
when the starter gun chatters."

Monday's sun rose like a big golden grin, perfect for training, for medals to win. Thabo laced up his "Adibas" with flair, feeling like a superstar with brand-new air.

At the field, Lebo whistled, "Shoo, bru, those are lit!" Even Coach Naidoo said, "Eish, you're looking legit." But when Thabo jogged, a pinch bit his heel. Like a crab on the beach refusing to let feel.

He tried to ignore the scratching inside, maybe they just needed a longer test-ride. He sprinted one lap, then another, then more, but each step felt worse than the step before.

By the time training ended, his socks were red, blisters like tiny balloons spread on his tread. He limped home slowly, trying really hard not to cry, as his fake-Adi dream started to quietly die.

After practice, Coach called Thabo aside, “Why are you limping, my boy? Did you twist your stride?” Thabo shrugged, “It’s nothing, Coach, just need to be tough.”

But Coach knelt down and said, “No, this looks rough.”

He checked the shoe, pressed the thin sole, the stitching was crooked, the inside had a hole. “Thabo,” he said gently, “I don’t think these are real. They’re counterfeit — fakes. Do you know the deal?”

“Counter… what?” Thabo frowned in confusion. “Counterfeit, my boy. It’s like a brand illusion. They copy the logo, they copy the style, but the quality is trash, it won’t last a mile.”

He explained how fake goods aren’t checked for safety or strength,
How they break under pressure, don’t last any length.
“They can hurt your feet, your body, your health,
and they’re also illegal – they mess with the country’s wealth.”

Rhyming jingle:
“A fake is a fake, even if it looks cool,”
Coach said softly, “Don’t let a logo make you the fool.
Real things cost more ‘cause they’re tested and strong,
Fakes fall apart when the race gets long.”

That night, Thabo soaked his feet in warm salt water, while Gogo fussed over him. “See now?” she said, gently patting his knee, “I told you, my child, some bargains are not free.” He stared at the shoes lying quiet on the floor,
They looked so perfect from far, but up close, even more. He saw loose threads, a glue stain on the side, and the inside label that said “Made by Adibas Pride.”

His tummy twisted like a washing machine spin,
“Maybe tomorrow I’ll still win,” he whispered thin.
“I’ll just push through the pain, I’ll run like a flame,
I can’t tell Lebo and them – it’s too much shame.”

As he dozed off, he dreamed of the race, but the track turned into a giant shoelace. The crowd shouted, “Check the label!” from far, and his shoes melted like cheap chocolate in the car.

Rhyming jingle:
Night before the race, worries in his head,
Thabo tossed and turned in his creaky little bed.
“If I pretend they’re real, maybe they’ll behave,”
He hoped that courage alone could make his ankles brave.

The next day, Thabo lined up with the other boys in his heat, blisters already burning on both his feet. The starter shouted, “ON YOUR MARKS!” strong and clear,
Thabo breathed deep, trying to swallow his fear.

“GET SET!” he bent low, fingers gripping the track, right then his left shoe made a worrying crack. “GO!” shouted the starter, the others sprang out, but Thabo stumbled forward with a strangled shout.

The sole peeled away like a banana skin. His ankle twisted sharply, pain shooting in. He crashed to his knees, the world spinning loud, while the other runners bolted ahead, chasing the crowd.

Rhyming jingle:
At the bang of the gun, the dream fell flat. His fake shoes betrayed him and that was that.
The crowd went silent as Thabo hit the floor,
those “bargain” takkies couldn’t carry him anymore.

Paramedics hurried with a small first-aid kit, helped him up gently, made him slowly sit. Lebo ran over, eyes big and wet, “Yoh, broer, are you okay? That was hectic, hey.”

The coach came too, his face kind and grave, “This is not your fault, my boy, you’re still brave. Sometimes we learn lessons the harder way, but your talent is still here – it didn’t run away.”

Thabo’s ankle was sprained, his race day was done, his fake-Adi “dream shoes” had completely won...
At destroying his chance, his confidence, his pride, all for a cheap logo on the side.

He watched the finals from a plastic chair,
Ice on his ankle, heart full of despair.
The loudspeaker shouted names of kids
who took the lead, but none of them knew
about his hurt and his need.

The next week at school, Miss Dlamini walked in,
holding a box of random things with a grin.
"Today's LO lesson," she said, "is a bit of a surprise.
We're talking about fake goods and being
street-wise."

She held up two T-shirts – both bright and bold,
one bought in the mall, the other parked in the cold.
"Which one is real? Which one is fake? What clues do
you see? What's at stake?"

They spotted spelling errors, crooked tags inside, loose
threads dangling, colours that didn't quite abide. Then
she explained how fakes can be dangerous too. Not
just shoes that split, but food and chargers and glue.
"Some fake products can even make you sick," she
said, "Cheap chemicals, bad wiring – they don't care
who's dead.
And all this illegal stuff hurts our economy as well, so
that cheap bargain might be more trouble than you
can tell."

Rhyming jingle:
Fake shoes, fake phones, fake creams for your face,
May seem like a bargain but can put you in a bad place.
Being smart as a shopper is part of being strong,
Think before you buy – is this right or wrong?

When the lesson was done, Miss Dlamini softly said,
“Does anyone have a story about fake goods in their head?”
The class went quiet; eyes slid to the floor, until
Thabo slowly raised his hand from the back door.

He told them about the spaza, the “Adibas” shine,
the too-low price that felt almost divine. He showed them the blisters, talked about the race, about the shame and the pain and the fall on his face.

“Yoh,” whispered someone, “I bought a fake watch too.
It stopped after three days and turned my arm blue.”
Another said, “My cousin’s charger nearly blew a plug,
The plastic melted, left a smoky hug.”

Miss Dlamini nodded, “Thank you for being brave.
Stories like this help others to be safe. We’re not here to laugh; we’re here to learn.
Real awareness is the best prize you can earn.”

Rhyming jingle:
Telling the truth can feel heavy and sore, but it opens a window, it unlocks a door. Thabo’s story echoed through the classroom air,
Turning private pain into something they could share.

Later that week, Coach and Gogo had a plan, they walked to the spaza with Thabo holding Gogo's hand. Bra Zama looked nervous when he saw them come in.

"Eh, my people," he said, "what brings you here today?"
Gogo folded her arms in that no-nonsense way.
"These fake takkies hurt my child, we need to talk about what you sell in this spaza, please."

Coach explained calmly about counterfeit goods and the law,
About safety standards and the quality flaw.

Bra Zama sighed, rubbing his forehead deep,
"I just wanted stock what was cheap-cheap-cheap.
"I didn't know they were so bad, I swear, I bought them from a guy at the taxi rank there. Next time I'll check, I'll ask for papers too, I don't want to hurt the kids who come to my queue."

Rhyming jingle:

Some sellers also get tricked by the fake,
Thinking it's just business and profit to make.
But when people talk openly and share what they know,
The whole community can help each other grow.

Thabo still dreamed of proper stripes
on his feet, no shady deals, no spelling
mistakes, no knock-offs hiding in
cardboard fakes.

He started washing cars on Saturdays
in the sun, helping neighbours carry
groceries when shopping was done. Soon
the coins in his jar became notes in a roll,
slowly climbing closer to his real-shoe goal.
Instead of buying cooldrinks and chips
every week, he saved and saved, even
when temptation would speak.

Rhyming jingle:
Saving is slow, like a tortoise in a race,
But it reaches the finish at a steady
pace.
Thabo learned that patience, not
shortcuts and fakes,
Builds dreams on a foundation that never
breaks.

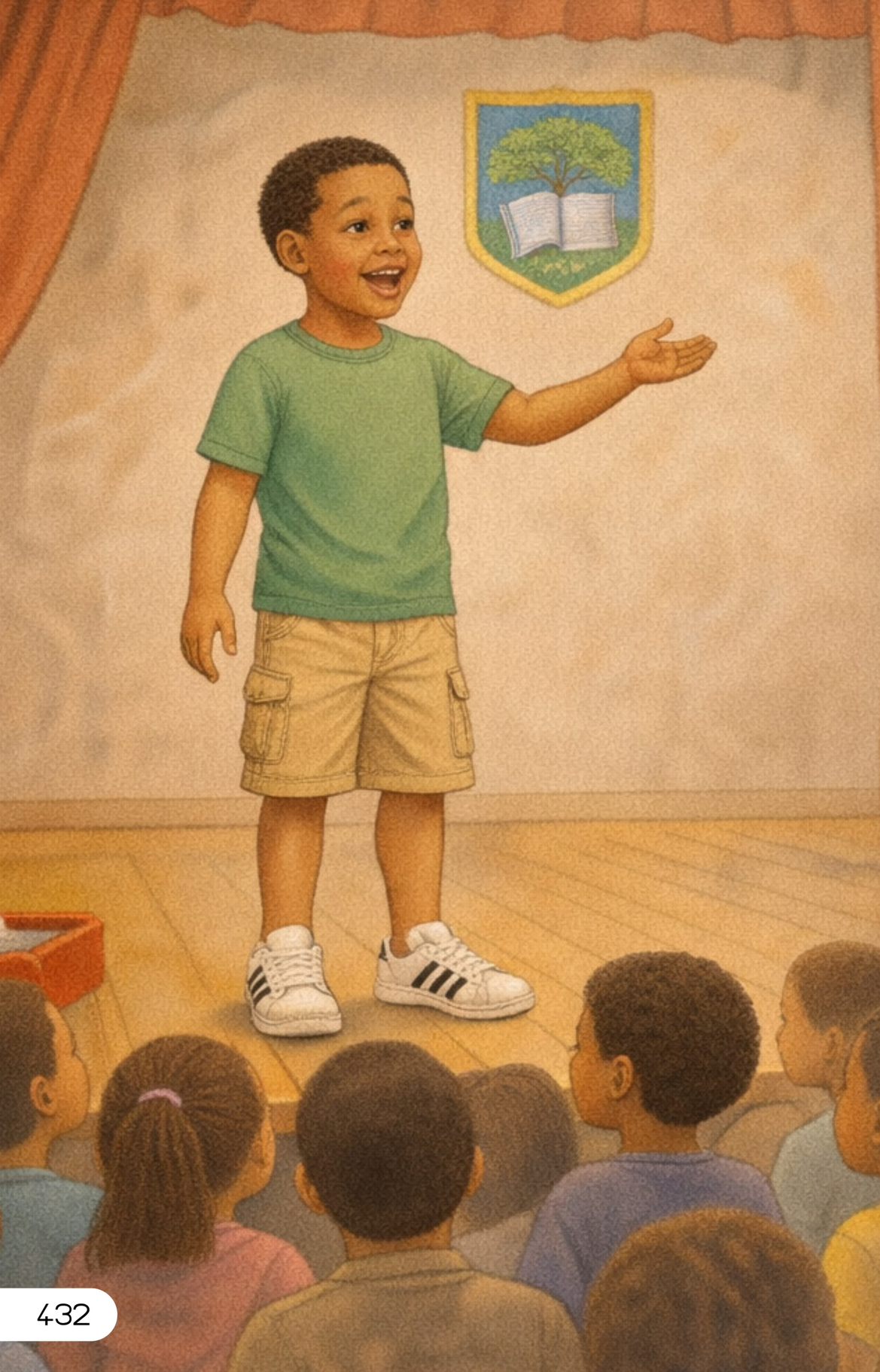
Finally, one bright Friday after school, Thabo walked into the sports shop, trying to act cool. There on the shelf, under proper light, real adidas shoes sparkled clean and bright.

He checked the logo, the stitching, the tag, no crooked letters, no glue that would drag. He looked at the box, solid and strong, with a barcode and warranty, it all felt “right”, not “wrong”.

He paid with shaking hands, heart doing flips, Gogo smiled proudly and said “Now these have passed all the tests, they’re made to protect your feet, to give you your best.”

When he put them on, they hugged his feet tight, not pinching, just holding, feeling exactly right. He jogged around the shop, light as air, like his ankles were wrapped in cushioned care.

Rhyming jingle:
Real stripes, real strength, real comfort inside,
no hidden danger, nowhere to hide.
A true pair of takkies may cost a bit more,
But they’ll carry your dreams from the start to the score.



At the next school assembly, Thabo took the mic, sharing his journey from fake to real.
He ended his talk with a grin and a clap,
Dropping a slogan like a proper rap:
"If the price is too nice and the logo's skew,
Don't let that 'bargain' break you in two.
Your feet, your health, your dreams, your vibe,
are worth more than any counterfeit bribe."

The hall exploded in laughter and cheer,
They chanted, "No more fakes!" loud and clear.
Miss Dlamini nodded, Coach wiped a tear, Gogo waved from the back with quiet pride and cheer.

And from that day on, in that South African town, kids looked at "specials" with a careful frown. They asked more questions, they read each tag, they refused to let counterfeits steal their swag.

Final rhyming jingle:
So remember this story when you're keen to buy, and a "too-good" deal is winking at your eye.
Check the facts, check the label, ask, "Is this legit?" 'Cause your safety and your future are the real perfect fit.

The End

Zola's Terracotta Treasure

Author: Tiffany Themm

In a small village, dusty and bright, lived a young girl named Zola, full of light.

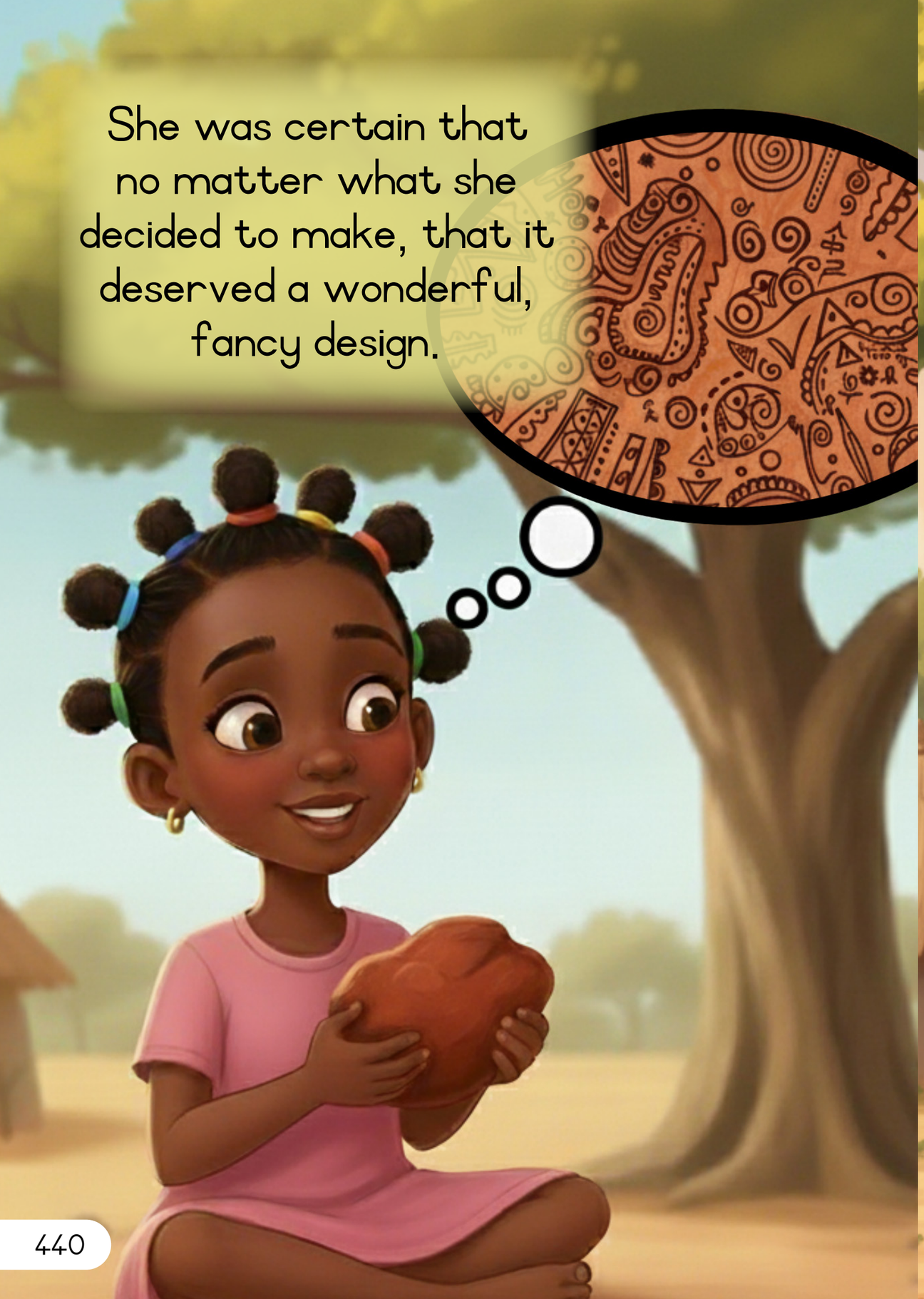
Zola loved the earth, not just the soft dust that tickled her toes, but the rich, red soil where the big Mopane tree stood.

Zola had a secret wish deep down inside her heart

Her wish was to mould the rich, red earth into something beautiful, something that would make Gogo beam with the happiest smile.

"What can I make for Gogo?" Zola wondered, as she held the rich, red clay in her hands, her greatest treasure.

She was certain that no matter what she decided to make, that it deserved a wonderful, fancy design.



Zola tried to sculpt the clay into a tiny, perfect bird... But the beak bent and the tail fell off!

Oh no! It collapsed into a soft, sad heap. Zola sighed.

Next, she tried a tall, thin flower vase to match Gogo's height. She rolled the clay up, up, up!

But, that height stood no chance against gravity! The clay swayed and shook, then wilted and sank into a damp heap.

Zola looked up at the
Mopane tree, its roots
holding the earth
tightly. She realised
that the best creations
are simple and strong.

Zola didn't need a bird
or a tall vase.
She would make a
simple, strong creation,
just like the roots
that held the earth
together.

With fresh patience, Zola began shaping the clay. She used her thumb to press a wide, steady dent right in the middle of it.

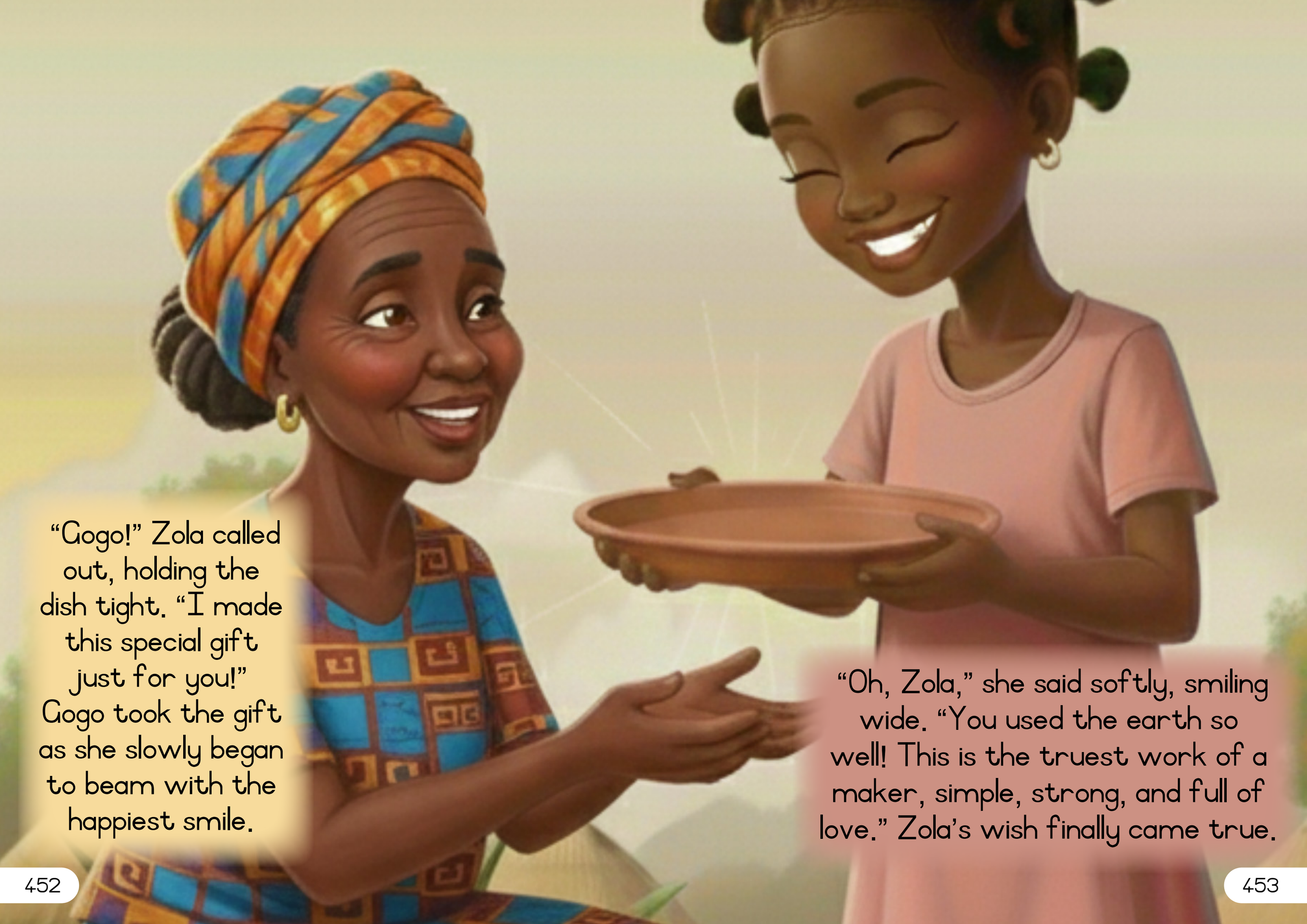
She moulded the clay into a big, round dish that was perfect for holding Gogo's little treasures.

Zola polished it gently with a wet cloth before placing it next to a large aloe plant in the hottest spot of the yard.

Her handiwork was done, but now she had to let the sun work its slow magic and bake the clay.

Finally, Gogo's special gift was ready. Zola carefully lifted her creation. It was no longer soft red clay.

It was a rich, warm terracotta, as hard as stone and ringing with a clear sound when she tapped it. The earth had become a perfect gift!



"Gogo!" Zola called out, holding the dish tight. "I made this special gift just for you!" Gogo took the gift as she slowly began to beam with the happiest smile.

"Oh, Zola," she said softly, smiling wide. "You used the earth so well! This is the truest work of a maker, simple, strong, and full of love." Zola's wish finally came true.

Zola smiled a proud,
happy smile...

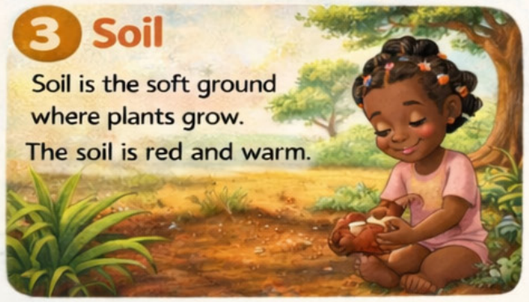
She had learned
the best part of
creating was the
patience, care,
and love poured
into making
something.

Preschool Glossary:
Zola's Terracotta Treasure

1 Village
A village is a small place where people live and grow vegetables.

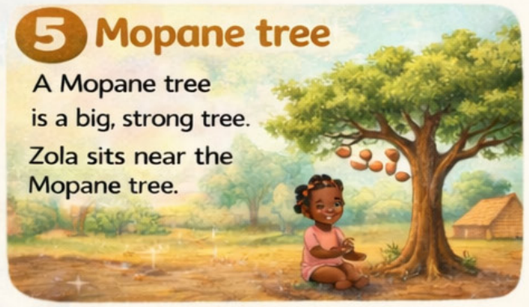
2 Earth
Earth is the ground we walk on.

3 Soil
Soil is the soft ground where plants grow.
The soil is red and warm.



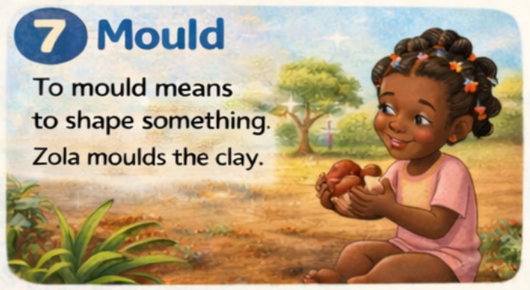
4 Clay
Clay is soft earth we can shape with our hands.
Zola holds clay in her hands.

5 Mopane tree
A Mopane tree is a big, strong tree.
Zola sits near the Mopane tree.

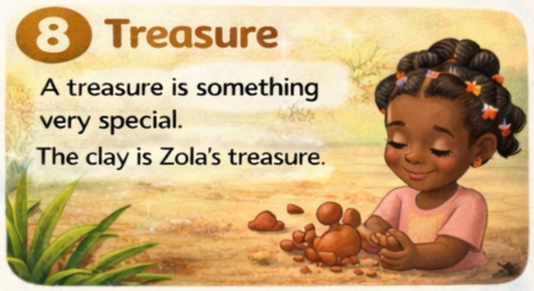


6 Wish
A wish is something you hope for.
Zola has a special wish.

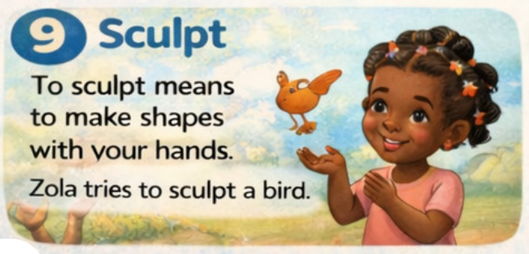
7 Mould
To mould means to shape something.
Zola moulds the clay.



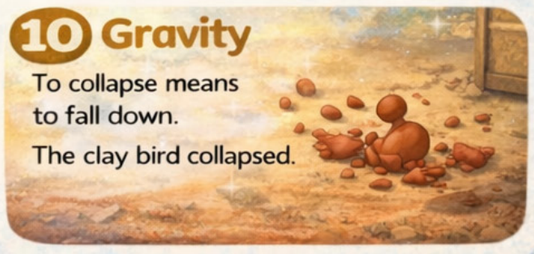
8 Treasure
A treasure is something very special.
The clay is Zola's treasure.



9 Sculpt
To sculpt means to make shapes with your hands.
Zola tries to sculpt a bird.

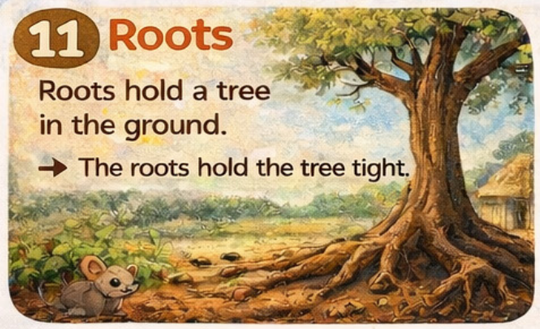


10 Gravity
To collapse means to fall down.
The clay bird collapsed.

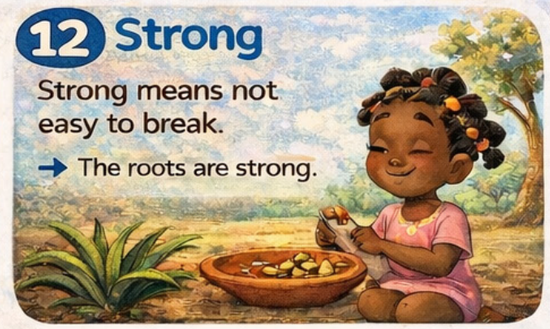


Preschool Glossary:
Zola's Terracotta Treasure

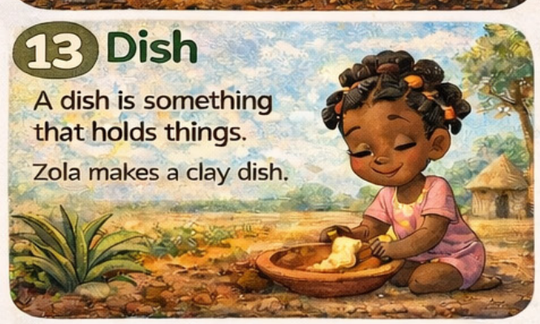
11 Roots
Roots hold a tree in the ground.
→ The roots hold the tree tight.



12 Strong
Strong means not easy to break.
→ The roots are strong.

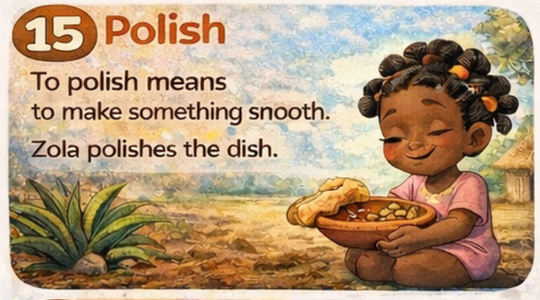


13 Dish
A dish is something that holds things.
Zola makes a clay dish.

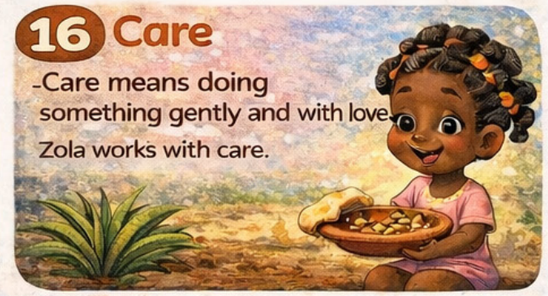


14 Patience
Patience means waiting calmly.
Zola uses patience.

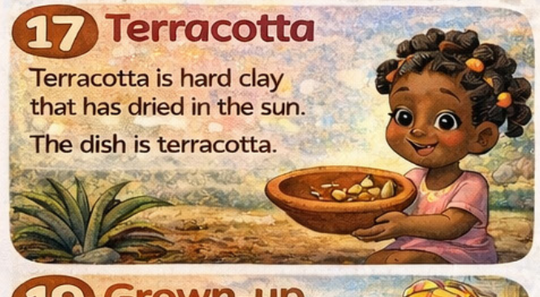
15 Polish
To polish means to make something snooth.
Zola polishes the dish.



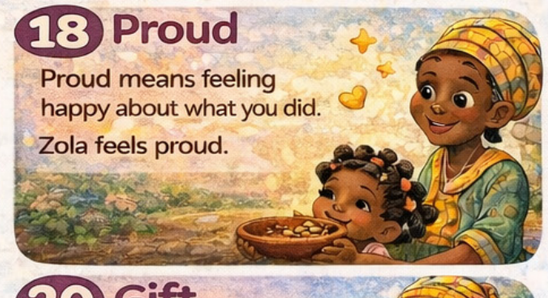
16 Care
-Care means doing something gently and with love.
Zola works with care.



17 Terracotta
Terracotta is hard clay that has dried in the sun.
The dish is terracotta.



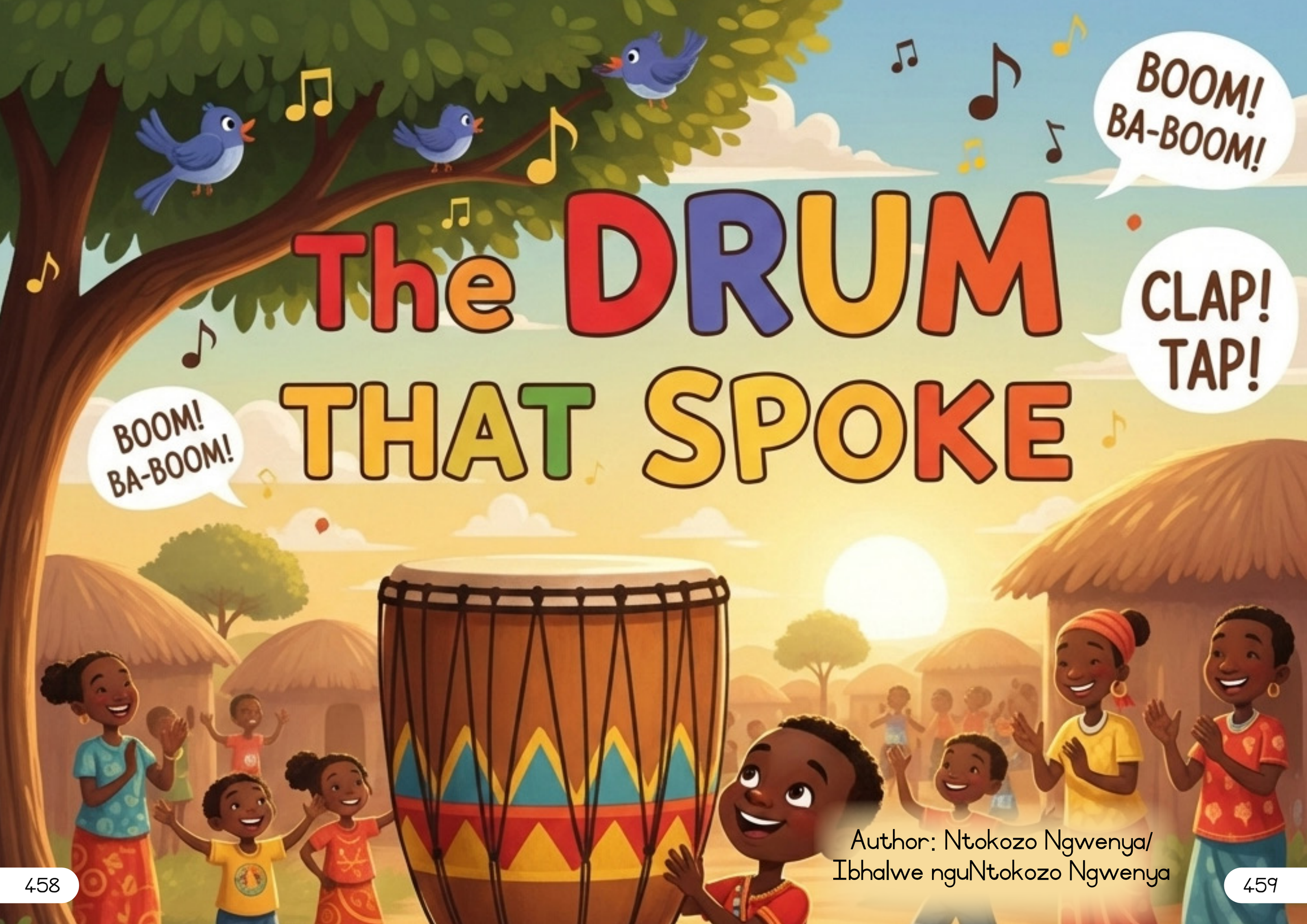
18 Proud
Proud means feeling happy about what you did.
Zola feels proud.



19 Grown-up
A grown-up is an older person who can help us.
Zola asks a grown-up for help.

20 Gift
A gift is something you give to show love.
Zola makes a gift for Gogo.

The DRUM THAT SPOKE



Author: Ntokozo Ngwenya/
Ibhalwe nguNtokozo Ngwenya

In the lively village of Emthonjeni, everyone loved music. Every evening, children played, birds sang, and the sound of drums filled the air.

The biggest and oldest drum in the village was called Ngoma, and it belonged to Uncle Mzi, the village music teacher.

One day, the chief announced a Cultural Day Celebration. Each child had to perform something special: a song, a dance, or a musical piece that showed love for their culture.

Little Sipho, who
was only six years old,
wanted to play Ngoma.
But everyone laughed.
"You're too small," they
said. "That drum is
bigger than you!"

Sipho felt sad, but Uncle Mzi placed a gentle hand on his shoulder.
"It's not about size, Sipho," he said. "It's about heart. When you play with love, the drum will speak for you."

Every day after school, Sipho practiced quietly. He listened to the rhythm of the rain, the whisper of the wind, and even the beat of his own heartbeat. Shhh-shhh!

Soon, Ngoma began to make warm, deep sounds. Boom, boom, ba-boom!

On the day of the celebration, everyone gathered under the big tree.

Sipho sat in front of Ngoma. His hands trembled at first, but then he remembered Uncle Mzi's words. He took a deep breath and began to play.

The drum spoke softly at first, then louder, stronger, and full of life! The sound made people dance, clap, and sing along. Even the birds joined in. CLAP, CLAP, WOO!

When Sipho finished, the crowd cheered. The chief smiled and said, "Today, Ngoma spoke through Sipho. He reminded us that our music is our story, and our rhythm is our pride." Sipho smiled proudly.

From that day on, he was known as Sipho, the Drummer Who Spoke with His Heart.

You are never too small to create something big. Music and art connect us all through love, courage, and tradition.

The DRUM THAT SPOKE

BOOM! BA-BOOM!

CLAP! TAP!

BOOM! BA-BOOM!

Author: Ntokozo Ngwenya/
Ibhalwe nguNtokozo Ngwenya

Emphakathini ophuphumayo waseMthonjeni, wonke umuntu wayethanda umculo. Njalo kusihlwa, izingane zazidlala, izinyoni zicula, kanti nomsindo wezigubhu wawugcwala umoya.

Isigubhu esikhulu
nesidala kunazo zonke
esigodini sasibizwa
ngokuthi uNgoma, futhi
sasingesikaMalume uMzi,
uthisha womculo.

Ngolunye usuku, inkosi
yamemezela uMkhosi
woSuku lweSiko.
Ingane ngayinye
kwakufanele yenze
okuthile okukhethekile.
Kungaba yiculo, umdanso,
noma ucezu lomculo
olukhombisa uthando
lwesiko labo.

USipho omnane, owayeneminyaka eyisithupha kuphela, wayefuna ukushaya uNgoma. Kodwa wonke umuntu wahleka. “Umncane kakhulu,” kusho bona. “Lesisigubhu sikhulu kunawe!”

USipho wazizwa ephatheke kabi, kodwa uMalume uMzi wabeka isandla sakhe esithambile emahlombe akhe. “Akukho mayelana nobukhulu, Sipho,” kusho yena. “Kumayelana nenhliziyo. Uma udlala ngothando, isigubhu sizokhuluma kuwe.”

Zonke izinsuku ngemuva kwesikole, uSipho wayezilolonga ngokuthula. Wafunda isigqi semvula, umsindo womoya, nokushaya kwenhliziyo yakhe uqobo.

Masinyane, uNgoma
waqala ukwenza
imisindo efudumele,
ejulile.Bhu, bhu, ba-bhu!

Ngosuku lomkhosi,
wonke umuntu
wahlangana ngaphansi
kwesihlahla esikhulu.

USipho wahlala phambi kukaNgoma.
Izandla zakhe zaqhaqhazela ekuqaleni,
kodwa emva kwalokho wakhumbula
amazwi kaMalume uMzi. Wadonsa
umoya ojulile wase edlala.

Isigubhu sakhuluma kancane ekuqaleni, wase siba phezulu, siba namandla, futhi sigcwala ukuphila! Umsindo wenza abantu badansa, bashaya ihlombe, baphinde bacula kanye naye. Ngisho nezinyoni zahlanganyela!

Lapho uSipho eqeda, isixuku samshaya ihlombe sijabule. Inkosi yamamatheka yathi, “Namuhla, uNgoma ukhulume ngoSipho. Usikhumbuzile ukuthi umculo wethu uyindaba yethu, kanti nesigqi sethu ukuzigqaja kwethu.” USipho wamamatheka ngokuziqhenya.

Kusukela ngalolo suku, waziwa ngokuthi uSipho uMshayi weSigubhu Owakhuluma ngenhliziyo yakhe.

Awusoze waba mncane kakhulu ukuthi ungenza into enkulu. Umculo nobuciko kusihlanganisa sonke ngothando, isibindi, kanye nesiko.

Mia's Two Dads

Author: Dr Renisha Singh

The bell rang loudly at Little Oaks Primary School.
Children burst out of their classrooms, with bags bouncing and shoes squeaking on the tiles. Outside, the sun was warm and golden. The swings creaked back and forth, the grass smelled fresh, and the aftercare field sparkled with tiny yellow flowers and busy little ladybugs. This was Mia's favourite place.

Every afternoon, the three girls rushed to aftercare together. “The last one in the field is a sleepy snail!” Mia would shout. They played their favourite game, Paddle Pop, while running through the grass, finding flowers, counting ladybugs, and pretending the field was a magical forest. Mia laughed the loudest. Mia’s family looked a little different, too. Mia was adopted, and she always said she was the luckiest girl in the world.

Usually, Mia was picked up late, so she got extra time to play. But on Monday, something special happened. While the girls were still chasing ladybugs, Mia suddenly gasped. “My dad’s here!”

By the gate stood a tall man with glasses and a gentle smile, waving excitedly. “Bye!” Mia called, hugging her friends quickly. Thuli and Arya pouted. “Aww, we didn’t even finish Paddle Pop,” Arya said. “We’ll play tomorrow!” Mia promised, skipping off happily with her dad.

On Tuesday, the girls were ready for a long afternoon of playing and more new adventures in the garden. But before they even reached the swings, a different man came to the gate. He had a curly beard and a bright red scar. Mia's face lit up again. "My dad's here!"

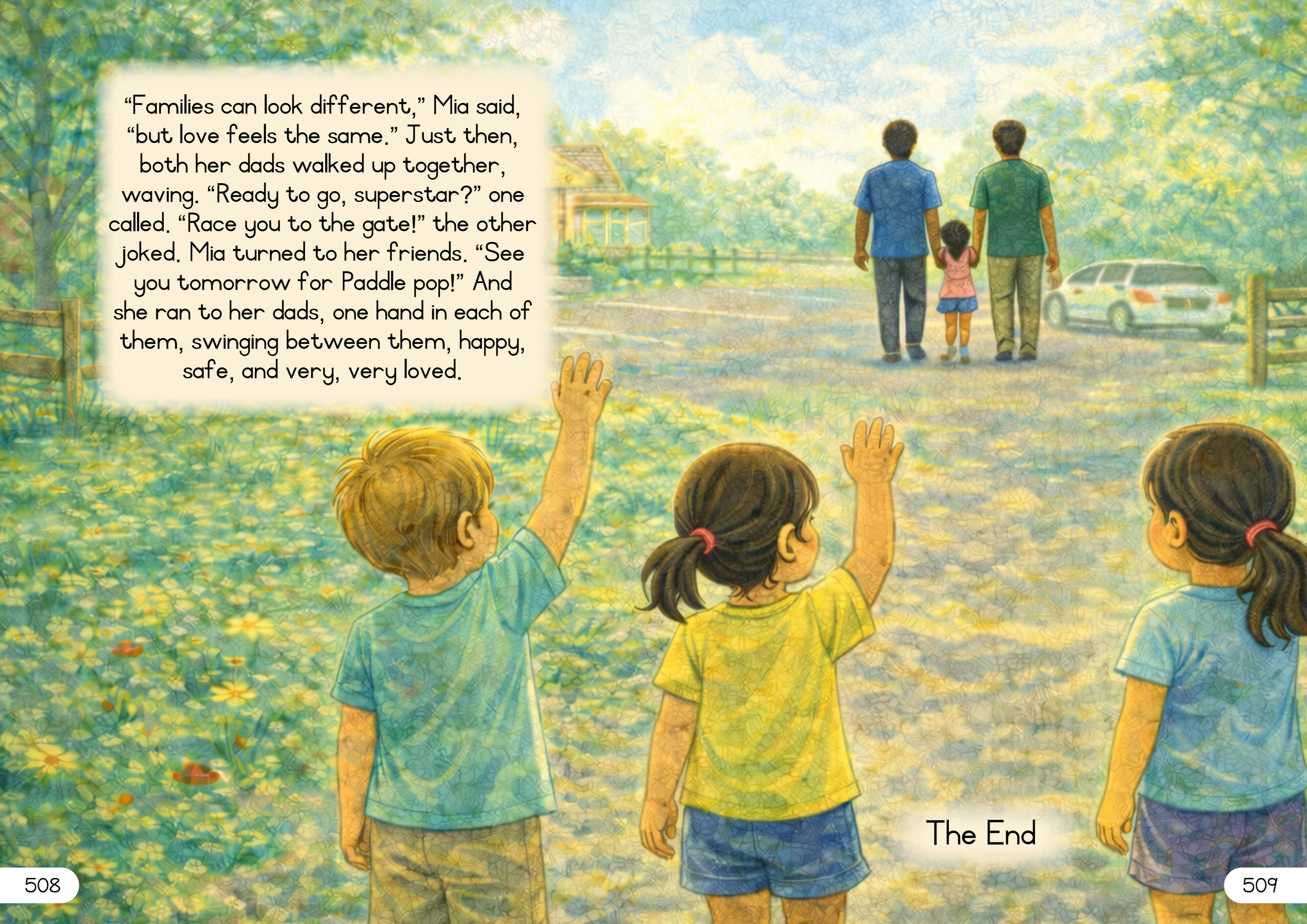
Thuli froze with fear. Arya whispered, "Wait... that's not yesterday's dad. "They had just learned about stranger dangers in class. "What if that man was trying to steal Mia?" Thuli started.

Their teacher knelt beside them gently. “It’s okay,” she said. “Mia is safe. That’s also her dad. Mia has two dads,” Ohhh,” Arya said slowly. They watched Mia run up and give the man the biggest hug.

On Wednesday, Leo, who noticed her two dads, finally asked. “Mia,” he said, “how come you have two dads? I only have one.” Mia sat on the swing and kicked her feet, thinking. “Well,” she said softly, “I didn’t grow in my dad’s tummy. I grew in their hearts.” Leo blinked. “They both chose you?”

“Yep,” Mia grinned. “I get two good-night hugs, two silly songs, and double the love. And double the snacks, too. “Leo laughed. “That’s pretty cool.”

"Families can look different," Mia said, "but love feels the same." Just then, both her dads walked up together, waving. "Ready to go, superstar?" one called. "Race you to the gate!" the other joked. Mia turned to her friends. "See you tomorrow for Paddle pop!" And she ran to her dads, one hand in each of them, swinging between them, happy, safe, and very, very loved.



The End

THE HAIR PARADE

Author: Masedi Dube

There are so many friends in the line. Some have straight hair, some have tight curls, some have braids, and some have wavy hair. Every single one is cool!

Lebone has a brilliant idea! She touches her hair, which is full of colourful beads.
"Let's show off our wonderful hair!" she cheers.

Ribbons, bows, and bright accessories come out. Friends help each other twist and decorate their hair. Getting ready for the parade is the best part.

And off they go. Step, step, step! Their hair bounce and sway as they march down the street. The Hair Parade has officially started!

Little birds and bright butterflies fly down to join the fun. They love resting near the colourful ribbons and the soft curls.

Then, Lebone stops. She sees her reflection and feel a little worried. “Is my hair too much?” she thinks sadly.

Her friends quickly gather close.
"No, Lebone!" they shout with
love. "Your hairstyle is amazing!
Our hair is all different, and that
makes us super cool!"

Lebone smiles a big, proud smile.
She realises her hair is just right.
They all cheer for their friends
and for every kind of hair in the
world!

The End

KLOUKIE EN DIE SKULPIE AVONTUUR

Skrywer:
Beandri Claassens

In ‘n koraalrif gevul met kleure en klank, in die diepste uithoek van die see, is daar ‘n klein rooi krappie, met glinsterende swart ogies en ‘n huisie tussen die rotse.

Hy woon daar saam met sy pappa, wat al te mooi na hom kyk, maar nou en dan glip die krappie weg om sy kennis te verryk.

Hierdie krappie se naam is Kloukie, hy is vreeslik nuuskierig en parmant, en is altyd op soek na ‘n nuwe avontuur, na iets interessant.

Pappa krap reël nou en dan ‘n speelafspraak vir Kloukie. Dan dans en draai hy en Santjie seekat tot hulle magies pyn van die lag. Maar as die speelafspraak verby is en Pappa krap na Kloukie roep, het hy lankal vertrek en na sy volgende avontuur gaan soek.

Eendag besluit Kloukie om ‘n nuwe koers in te slaan, maar hy het nie ver gekom nie, toe het iets hom doodstil laat staan. “Wowwww!” sê Kloukie. “Wat kan dit tog wees?”

"'n Krap?" wonder Kloukie, en dit is hy beslis, maar hierdie is nie net enige krap nie... Hierdie krap dra 'n skulp op sy rug, bedek met die mooiste patroon. Kloukie het al van sulke soort krappe gehoor, maar hy het nog nooit een van naby gesien nie. "Wat het pappa hulle nou weer genoem?", Kloukie dink diep en hard. "O ja!" roep hy uit, "'n Kluisenaarskrap!"

Kloukie loop nader en voor hy kan keer, kry sy nuuskierigheid die oorhand. "Hallo daar!" sê hy. "My naam is Kloukie. Wat is jou naam?" Die Kluisenaarskrap lag saggies en dan antwoord hy, "Goeiedag klein Kloukie, my naam is Klaas."

"Waar kan ek so skulp soos joune kry, Klaas? Ek wou nog altyd een gehad het!"
"Wel Kloukie, jy kan nie. My skulp beskerm my, want my maag is sag, maar jy het 'n harde dop om jou. Jy het nie nog beskerming nodig nie."

Die trane dam op in Kloukie se oë en rol dan oor sy wange soos hy weg stap van die Kluisenaarskrap af.
"Hoekom kan ek nie soos Klaas wees nie?" dink Kloukie. "Ons albei is dan krappies..."

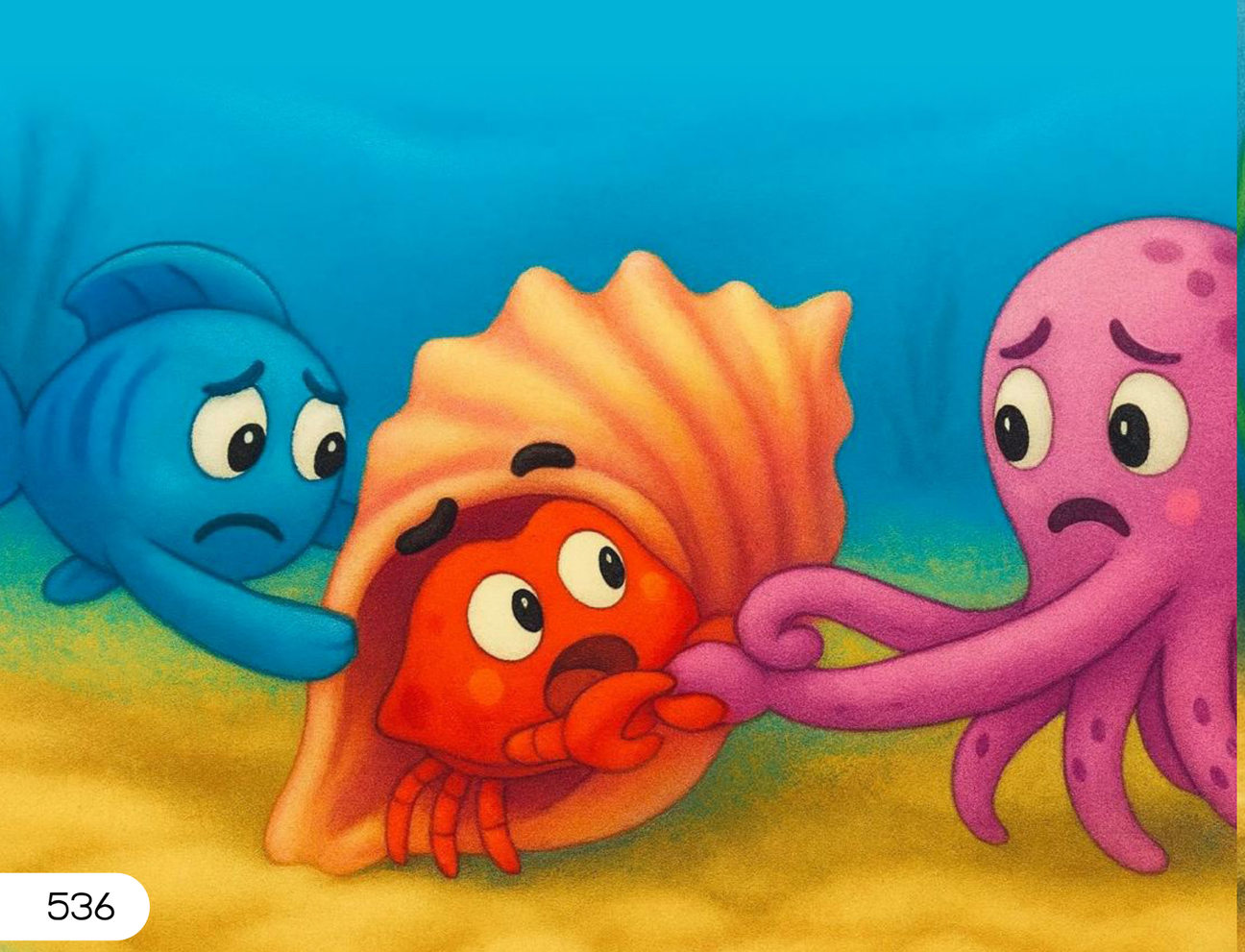
Soos hy stap, droog sy trane mettertyd op en net toe hy besluit om terug te draai na die koraalrif toe, sien Kloukie 'n pragtige skulp in die sand.

Hy laat nie op hom wag nie. Hy hardloop so vinnig as wat sy beentjies hom kan dra, en toe hy by die skulp kom, klim hy sommer dadelik in.

Maar Kloukie se opgewondenheid is van korte duur, want dis nie lank nie of sy stemmetjie ego deur die water, “Help! Ek sit vas!”

Gelukkig het Kloukie nie te ver afgedwaal nie en sy stemmetjie kan saggies in die rif gehoor word. Sy maatjies daag sommer vinnig daar op, bleek van bekommernis. “Wat gaan ons doen?, vra Santjie mismoedig.

"Wag! Ek weet!" skree Santjie kort daarna, "Flippie hou die skulp vas. Ek gaan met my tentakels aan Kloukie se dop vas suig, dan trek jy links en ek trek regs."
"Een, twee, drie!"



"Dankie Santjie, jy het my gered!" "Dis net 'n plesier ou Kloukie, maar moet liewers nie weer by sulke klein plekkies probeer in-klim nie." "Kom ons gaan nou huis toe, ek is seker jou pappa is al baie bekommerd."

Kloukie is terug na die koraalrif en besef dat hy klaar alles het wat hy nodig het, net daar in die rif. ‘n Liefdevolle pappa, hulpvaardige vriende en ‘n harde dop om sy lyfie.

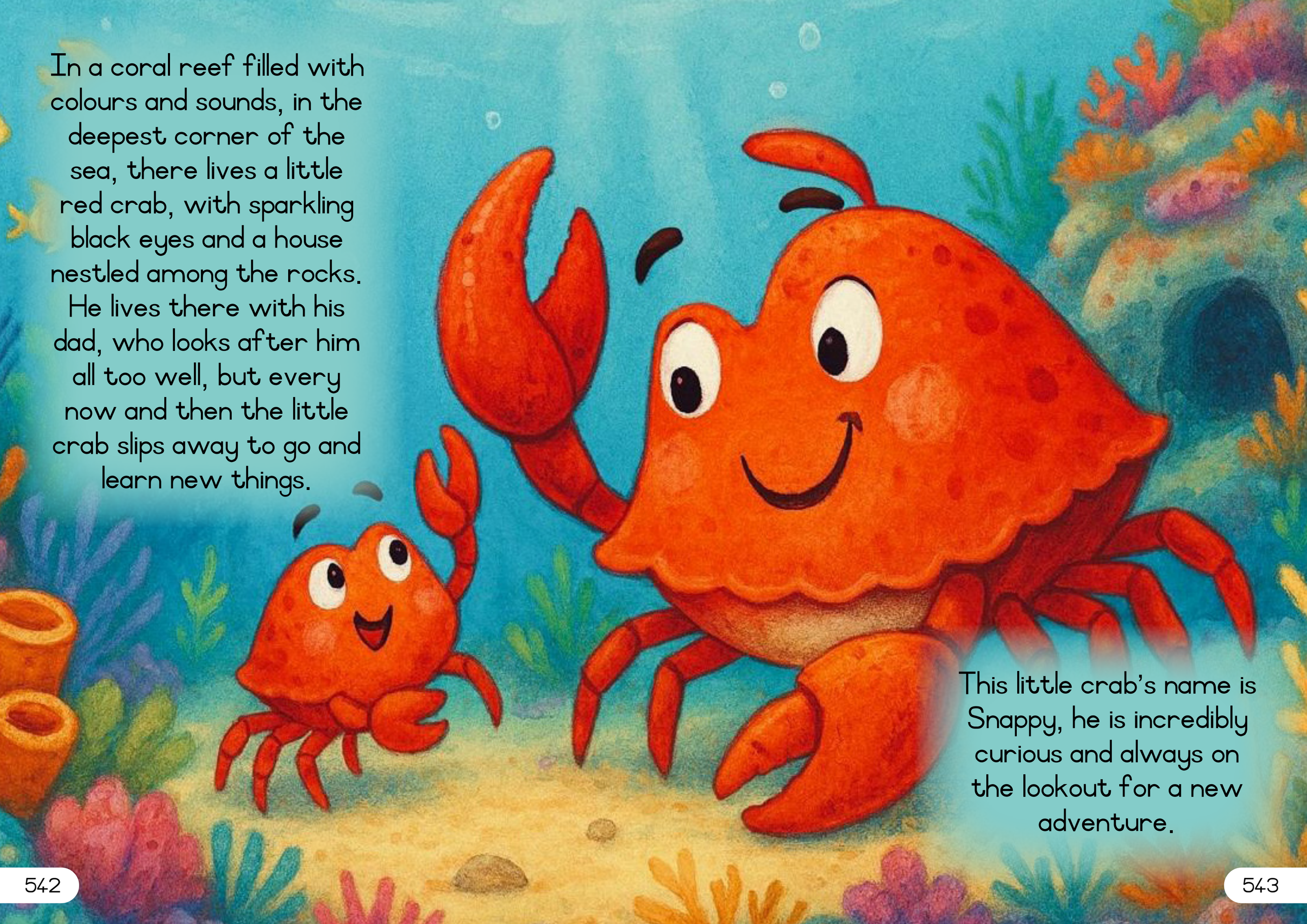
“Ek is uniek. Ek het nie ‘n skulp nodig nie.”

Die Einde

Snappy's Shell Adventure

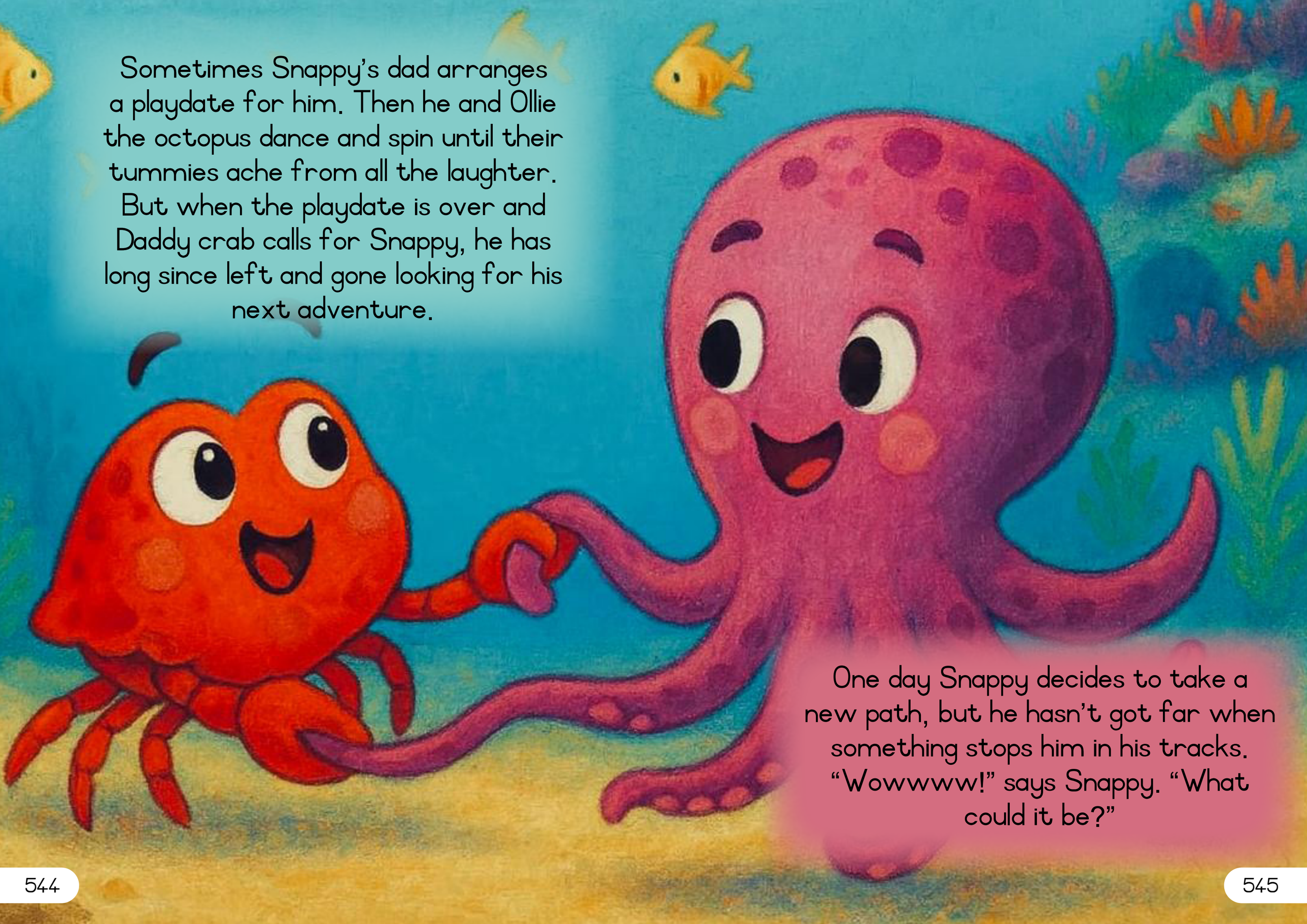
Author:
Beandri Claassens

In a coral reef filled with colours and sounds, in the deepest corner of the sea, there lives a little red crab, with sparkling black eyes and a house nestled among the rocks. He lives there with his dad, who looks after him all too well, but every now and then the little crab slips away to go and learn new things.



This little crab's name is Snappy, he is incredibly curious and always on the lookout for a new adventure.

Sometimes Snappy's dad arranges a playdate for him. Then he and Ollie the octopus dance and spin until their tummies ache from all the laughter. But when the playdate is over and Daddy crab calls for Snappy, he has long since left and gone looking for his next adventure.



One day Snappy decides to take a new path, but he hasn't got far when something stops him in his tracks. "Wowwww!" says Snappy. "What could it be?"

"A crab?" Snappy wonders, and that he is, but this is not just any crab... This crab carries a shell on its back, covered with the most beautiful patterns. Snappy has heard of such crabs, but he has never seen one up close before. "What did daddy call them again?", Snappy thinks deep and hard. "Oh yes!" he exclaims, "A hermit crab!"

Snappy walks over and before he knows it, his curiosity gets the best of him. "Hello there!" he says. "My name is Snappy. What is your name?" The Hermit Crab laughs softly and then he replies, "Good day little Snappy, my name is Harvey."

"Where can I get a shell like yours Harvey? I have always wanted one!""Well, Snappy, you can't. My shell protects me, because my belly is soft, but you are surrounded by a hard shell. You don't need any more protection."

Tears well up in Snappy's eyes and then roll down his cheeks as he walks away from the Hermit Crab.
"Why can't I be like Harvey?" Snappy wonders. "We're both crabs..."

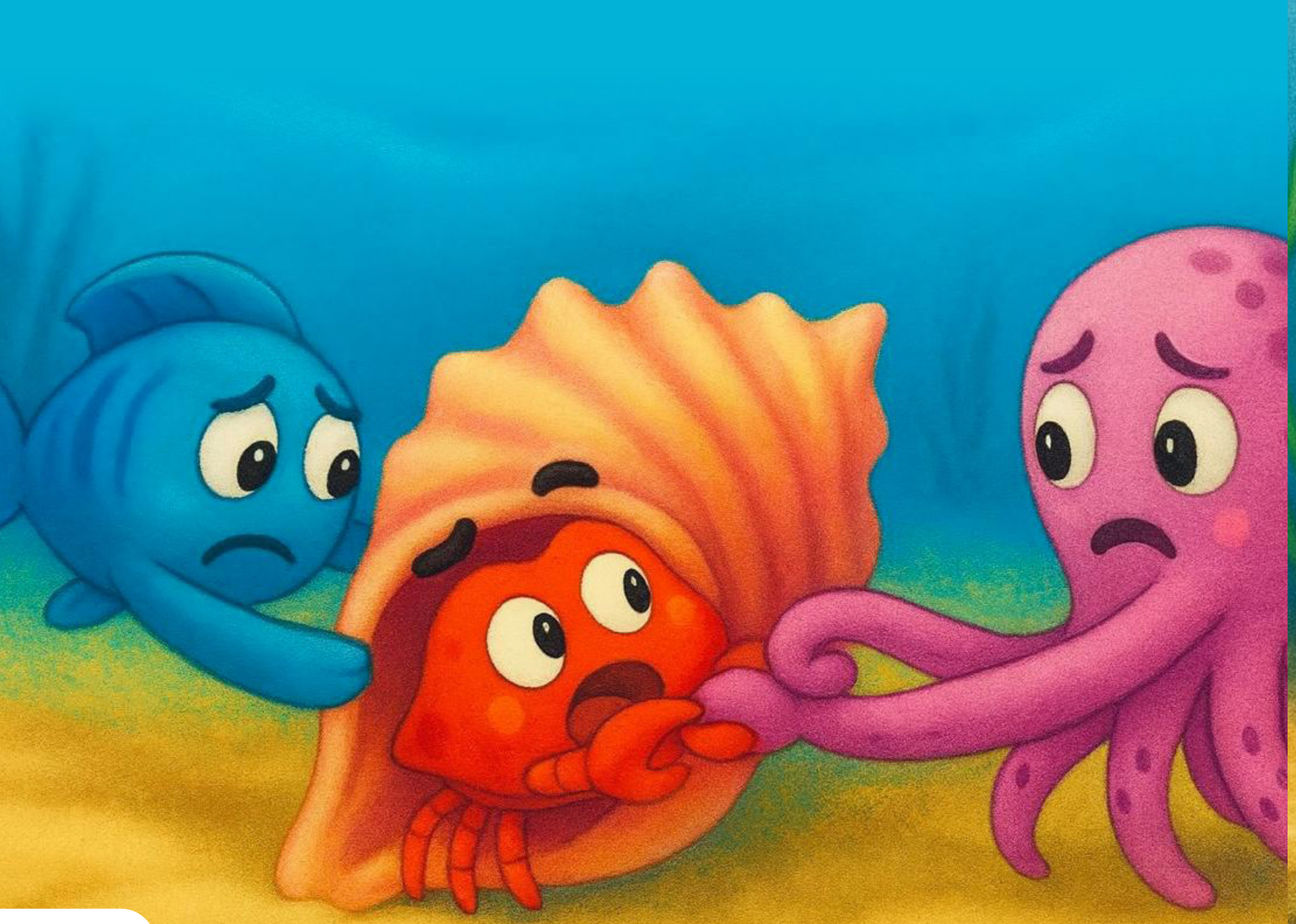
As he walks, his tears dry and just as he decides to turn back to the coral reef, Snappy sees a beautiful shell in the sand.

He doesn't miss a beat. He runs as fast as his little legs can carry him, and when he gets to the shell, he climbs in right away.

But Snappy's excitement is short-lived, because it's not long before his little voice echoes through the water, "Help! I'm stuck!"

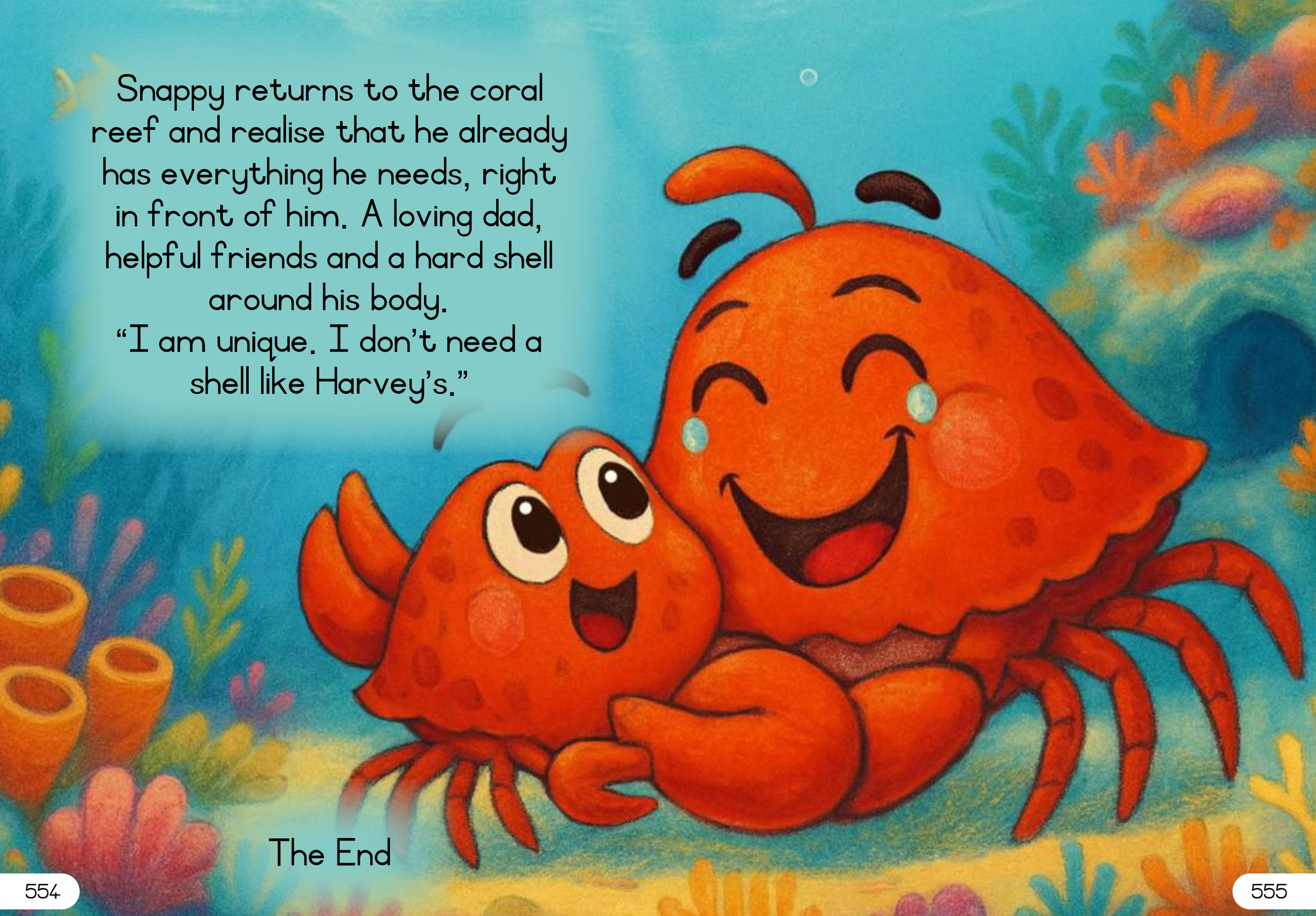
Fortunately, Snappy hasn't strayed too far and his soft cries for help can be heard in the reef. His friends quickly arrive, pale with worry. "What are we going to do?" Ollie asks discouraged.

"Wait! I know!" Ollie soon shouts. "Flyn, you hold the shell. I'm going to use my tentacles to grab onto Snappy, then you pull left and I'll pull right."
"One, two, three!"



"Thank you, Ollie, you saved me!"
"It's my pleasure Snappy, but please don't climb into such small places again."
"Let's go home now, I'm sure your dad is very worried."

Snappy returns to the coral reef and realise that he already has everything he needs, right in front of him. A loving dad, helpful friends and a hard shell around his body.
"I am unique. I don't need a shell like Harvey's."



The End

Lulu and the lost shoes

Author:
Nozimbali Khumalo

Lulu the rabbit had a pair of bright red shoes.

She loved to hop and skip in them every day.

One morning, Lulu looked under her bed.

"Oh no! My shoes are gone!" she cried.

Lulu hopped to the pond.
"Frog, Frog! Have you seen my red shoes?"

Frog shook his head.
"No, I have not."

Lulu hopped to the field.
"Cow, Cow!
Have you seen my red shoes?"

Cow mooed,
"No, I have not."

Lulu hopped to the lake.
"Duck, Duck! Have you seen my shoes?"

Duck quacked "No, I have not."

Lulu hopped back to
the field.
“Goat, Goat, Have you
seen my shoes?”

Goat bleated “ No I
have not.”

Just then, her friend
Squirrel came running.

Look, Lulu! I found
these by the river!"
"My shoes!" shouted
Lulu.

She put them on and
hopped for joy.

"Thank you, Squirrel,"
said Lulu.

Now Lulu never forgets to keep her shoes safe.

Since putting her shoes in a safe place, she finds them easily when she wants to play.
The End

I Look After My Things
1 I check before I go home.
2 I put my shoes in the same place.
3 I keep my bag with me.
4 I keep my bag with me.
5 I put my things in my cubby.
6 I keep special toys at home.
7 I ask a grown-up for help.
8 I am gentle with my things.
9 I ask a grown-up if something is missing.

Contributors

Joyce West

Is an early childhood education scholar at the University of Pretoria, whose work sits at the intersection of language, literacy, teacher education, and educational technology. Her research focuses on how young children learn to read and write in multilingual contexts, with particular attention to African language literacy development, orthographic features, readability, and the implications of linguistic complexity for equitable early-grade instruction. She works across mixed-methods and design-oriented approaches to generate evidence that is both theoretically robust and usable for classroom practice, including tools and resources that support teacher decision-making and inclusive learning. A central thread in her scholarship is the question of how pedagogical innovation, especially technology-mediated learning, can expand access to high-quality early literacy experiences while remaining ethically grounded and context-responsive. This includes interests in learning analytics, human–machine teaching, and the careful integration of generative AI into teacher education and curriculum design. Dr West collaborates with practitioners and partners to translate research into professional learning and classroom-ready materials, with a strong emphasis on multilingual pedagogy, translanguaging-informed practices, and equity-driven assessment.

As a co-editor of this volume, she is committed to exploring how AI-generated children's literature can serve as a catalyst for responsive citizenship and sustainability education—supporting children's ecological literacy, empathy, agency, and sense of shared responsibility in ways that align with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Kayla Willemse

Is a lecturer in the Department of Early Childhood Education at the University of Pretoria, with research interests that span educational technology, coding and robotics, and broader digital innovation. Her work sits at the intersection of early childhood development, human-centred design, and educational technology. A central thread in her scholarship is how emerging technologies can be used in ethical, playful, and context-sensitive ways to strengthen learning, creativity, and meaningful participation in everyday life. She also engages with digital design and examines how artificial intelligence can influence the quality, efficiency, and ethics of work across contexts.

Dr Willemse is a Fellow of the African Institute for Data Science and Artificial Intelligence (AfriDSAI), is actively involved in diverse research projects, serves on editorial teams, and has contributed as a consultant to a range of interdisciplinary initiatives. As a co-editor of this volume, she is committed to exploring how AI-generated children's literature can serve as a catalyst for responsive citizenship and sustainability education, supporting children's ecological literacy, empathy, agency, and a sense of shared responsibility in ways that align with the Sustainable Development Goals. Guided by a commitment to exciting, innovative practice, she is passionate about creating meaningful experiences that connect people, technology, and real-world needs.

Darshana Morar-Leather

Darshana is a scientist and teacher based at the University of Pretoria's Faculty of Veterinary Science, where she studies tiny creatures called ticks and their impact on animal health. Her work explores how ticks live, interact with animals, and spread pathogens that can make animals sick, helping people better protect livestock and wildlife. As part of a specialised research team, she investigates the smallest details using tools such as microscopes and shares the findings with other scientists and students. She teaches students training to become veterinary nurses and veterinarians, is passionate about teaching and discovery, and believes that even the smallest creatures play an important role in understanding and protecting the natural world.

Jean-Marie Koch

Is a dedicated and creative Afrikaans lecturer at SANTS Private Higher Education, a position she has held since 2022. She completed her BEd degree in Intermediate Phase Education at the University of Pretoria in 2017. She continued her studies at the University of Pretoria, completing both her BEd Honours degree in Quality Education (2019) and her MEd in Arts Education (2023). She is currently pursuing her PhD at the University of Pretoria and takes pride in her willingness to develop her skills daily.

As a strong organiser and natural leader, her skills are evident in the way she guides her community engagement committee. She advocates for collaborative work styles and continuous professional development. Her approach to the Afrikaans language is described as purposeful, empathetic, and dynamic. She is committed to her team and takes pride in the development of Afrikaans at SANTS. Through her work, she strives to view language not merely as an object of study, but as an instrument of empowerment. In addition to her commitment to Afrikaans as language, she has committed her time to understanding creativity, especially in education. She is deeply focused on finding a deeper understanding of Creativity, especially in the midst of the flourishing Artificial Intelligence (AI) landscape. She hopes to find a way for human creativity to flourish while co-existing with AI, focusing on possibilities instead of perceived incapability.

Jarred West

Is a partner that specialises in anti-counterfeiting and intellectual property law. He has expertise in dealing with enforcement against counterfeit goods with a specific focus on marketplace enforcement, raid procedures, customs actions, DTI, and SAPS actions.

He has also presented numerous seminars on the topic of anti-counterfeiting and brand protection to officials of the Department of Customs and Excise and members of the South African Police Service.

Elsamarie Kersop

Is an experienced Foundation Phase educator, academic lecturer, and researcher with a strong focus on literacy, learner support, and teacher development. She is currently appointed at Emeris as well as other tertiary institutions, where she is responsible for lecturing, curriculum development, moderation, supervision of postgraduate students, and work-integrated learning assessment. She is currently pursuing a Doctorate in Linguistics and holds a Master of Education in Learner Support, and has published peer-reviewed research on teachers' perceptions of EGRA implementation. Elsamarie is actively involved in research, community outreach, and academic leadership, and is committed to advancing inclusive, evidence-based practices in early literacy and teacher education.

Shine Aung

My name is Shine Aung, I have a PhD in Curriculum and Instructional Design and Development, from the University of Pretoria. For the past 7 years, I have worked with children, specifically those within township contexts. Here I assist learners who struggle with reading, in English as a second additional language, through the promotion of innovative pedagogical practices. My master and PhD studies focused on the area of language and literacy in Education.

I also work for the University of Pretoria, where I lecture modules based on classroom literacies, the methodology of English, assessment and curriculum design in Education, along with postgraduate research supervision. I have written teacher training guides and presented teacher workshops in areas such as translanguaging and multilingual pedagogies.

M Ellis

Is a PhD candidate in Educational Psychology and a lecturer in psychology and literacy practices. Her research interests focus on teacher efficacy and data-driven decision-making in reading assessments to better inform instruction and early intervention. Mariska is passionate about teacher education and wants to equip future teachers with the knowledge and skills to use evidence-based tools in the classroom to support young learners' literacy development and fostering a love for reading.

Nadia Swanepoel

Is a lecturer in the Department of Early Childhood Education at the University of Pretoria. Her research focuses on foundation phase mathematics, with particular emphasis on making mathematics in early childhood education accessible, meaningful, and engaging for both in-service and pre-service teachers. She is an active researcher and supervises postgraduate students across diverse areas of foundation phase mathematics education. As a recipient of two Teaching and Learning Awards, Dr. Swanepoel is deeply committed to integrating community engagement with teaching and learning, and she takes pride in supporting pre-service teachers as agents of change for sustainable and transformative education.

Ruan Christiaan Willemse

Is a Senior Financial Planner and Investment Specialist, and an equity shareholder, with over a decade of experience in financial planning, wealth management, and investment strategy. He is known for an approach grounded in ethics, strategic insight, and unwavering client focus, with a strong commitment to transparency, reliability, and long-term relationship building. His aim is to design sustainable financial strategies tailored to each client's unique goals and circumstances, ensuring advice is objective, clear, and consistently aligned with clients' best interests.

His expertise includes risk planning, retirement planning, investment portfolio management, business insurance, medical and gap cover, and fiduciary services. Staying current with an evolving financial landscape and regulatory change, he provides forward-thinking guidance to both individuals and businesses, and is valued for his ability to simplify complex financial concepts and bring clarity to important decisions. His professional excellence has been recognised through three International Quality Awards presented by LIMRA, as well as Sanlam Eagle Status as an Iron Eagle, reflecting consistent performance, ethical practice, and client satisfaction. He is also a proud member of the Concept Lynnwood 100's club.

Outside of work, he is passionate about travel and prioritises exploring new destinations, cultures, cuisines, and landscapes, which continually refreshes his perspective. He also enjoys technology and computers, gardening, reading widely across topics that challenge conventional thinking, and music, which helps him maintain a balanced and creative mindset.

Tanner Mark Fox

A Senior Financial Advisor and Investment Generalist, I specialise in serving qualified professionals. With more than a decade of experience in the financial sector, I am adept at delivering comprehensive wealth and financial solutions tailored to my clients' uniqueneeds.

My expertise spans customer service, insurance, sales, and strategic investment planning.

I offer a full suite of services, including billing, auditing and tax support, short-term insurance (both personal and commercial), risk cover assessments and proposals, localand offshore investment options, and thorough estate planning.

My goal is to provide holistic, reliable guidance to help clients achieve financial security and success.

Okuhle Natasha Sekujika

Okuhle Natasha Sekujika is a young lady who started her learning journey just like you. She went to school every day, loved asking questions, and wanted to learn more. Her favorite subjects were Biology (the study of living things) and Math. When she was 21, she continued her journey and graduated with degrees in Biological Sciences and in Genetics and Developmental Biology from the University of the Witwatersrand. She then completed a two-year internship at the University of Pretoria's Faculty of Veterinary Science, in the Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases, where she expanded her knowledge and got to see and work with all kinds of interesting animals. She built great relationships with her coworkers and the role she took reinforced the importance of working with a team in her research environment. Currently, she is a full-time second-year MSc student doing research in Veterinary Science.

Andeliza Frederik

Dr Andeliza Frederik is a scientist who loves learning about insects and arachnids that live in nature. She studies ticks and their pathogens. Even though ticks are tiny, they can spread pathogens to animals and sometimes people which can make them very sick, so her work is very important. She works at the University of Pretoria in the Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases, where she teaches students and helps them become scientists too. Andeliza also spends time outdoors collecting ticks from animals and the environment. She uses special tools and experiments in the lab to understand how pathogens spread and how to stop them.

Luis Neves

Meet Professor Luis Neves, a real-life science explorer!

Born in the sunny country of Mozambique, Prof Luis has spent nearly 30 years working as a veterinarian, which is a special doctor who takes care of all kinds of animals. He is a Professor of Veterinary Parasitology at the University of Pretoria, where he teaches students all about parasites — the tiny, uninvited guests like ticks that sometimes hitch a ride on animals.

Prof Luis is a world-class expert on ticks and the teeny-tiny germs they carry. He has traveled to many places, including the University of Liverpool in England, to study how these little bugs work and how to keep our animal friends healthy and happy. He has even written over 80 scientific stories (called publications) about his discoveries! When he isn't busy teaching or studying ticks, he helps lead big science projects to solve mysteries about animal health.

Ludovica Ingletto

Ludovica Ingletto is an Italian PhD student who studies tiny organisms called ticks and the pathogens they can transmit. She has always been curious about the world and loves traveling and discovering new places. When she was 17, Ludovica won a scholarship that allowed her to spend part of her high school in Brazil. It was there, for the first time, that she learned that some germs, which cause diseases, can be transmitted from small organisms such as insects and ticks to humans. This discovery fascinated her and raised many questions: how do these diseases spread? Can we prevent them? From that moment, she understood that to truly protect people, it is important to take care of the environment and the animals around us. With these ideas, Ludovica studied Evolutionary Biology and is now a PhD student in infectious diseases of animals at the University of Bologna, Italy, where she studies pathogens (tiny organisms that can cause diseases) and how they move between animals, the environment, and humans, adopting a One Health approach, which means recognising that the health of humans, animals, and the environment is closely interconnected. Currently, Ludovica is a visiting PhD student at the Tick Research Group, Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases, University of Pretoria, South Africa, where she studies ticks and the pathogens they can transmit, learning from local researchers and exploring different parts of the world. She is particularly interested in how climate change is allowing tropical tick species to spread in Europe.

Glossary

Adult: The final stage of a tick's life where it is fully grown.

Arachnid: A group of animals that includes ticks, spiders, and scorpions; they have eight legs and no antennae.

Blood Meal: This is when a tick attaches to an animal or person and drinks their blood so it can grow to its next life stage.

Capitulum: The name for a tick's "head" area, which includes its mouthparts. Ticks have a false head - it is not a real head.

Festoons: Small rectangular notches or bumps that look like a pattern along the back edge of some ticks' bodies.

Germs: Teeny-tiny organisms that some ticks carry in their bodies which can make people or animals sick.

Gogga: A common South African word for a bug or insect.

Host: The person or animal (like a dog, cow, or meerkat) that a tick hitches a ride on to get a blood meal.

Hypostome: A part of the tick's mouth that looks like a tiny, jagged needle; it has hooks to help the tick stay stuck to the skin while it eats.

Larva: A "baby" tick that has hatched from an egg; at this stage, it only has six legs.

Life Cycle: The journey a tick goes through from an egg to a larva, then a nymph, and finally an adult.

Molt (Moult): When a tick sheds its outer "skin" to grow into its next life stage after eating.

Nymph: A "teenage" tick that has eight legs but is not yet a full adult.

Palps: Two parts on the tick's mouth that help it feel its surroundings and find a good spot to bite.

Questing: A behavior where a tick climbs to the top of a blade of grass and stretches out its front legs, waiting to grab onto a passing animal or person.

Scutum: A hard, shield-like plate on the back of a tick's body that protects it.

Tick Bite Fever: A sickness caused by a bacterium, spread by a tick bite; it can cause a high fever and a sore body.

Tweezers: A tool with thin tips used by adults to safely pull a tick straight out of the skin.

Vector: A scientific name for a bug (like a tick) that carries and spreads pathogens to people and other animals.

Veld: Open, grassy or bushy land where ticks often live and wait for hosts.

Veterinarian: A special doctor who takes care of animals and helps keep pets safe from ticks.

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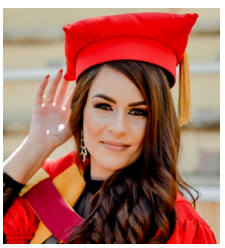
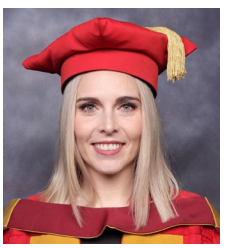


Joyce West



Kayla Willemse

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