



GAMECHANGER GIRLS



DISCLAIMER:

**NAMES OF THE GIRLS HAVE BEEN CHANGED TO PROTECT THEIR
IDENTITY AS PART OF OUR CHILD SAFEGUARDING POLICY (CSP).**

FOREWORD

EVERY CHILD CARRIES WITHIN THEM THE POTENTIAL TO CREATE A BETTER WORLD—NOT JUST FOR THEMSELVES BUT FOR THE COMMUNITIES THEY BELONG TO. YET, FOR COUNTLESS GIRLS IN INDIA, THIS POTENTIAL IS OFTEN DIMMED BY POVERTY, DISCRIMINATION, AND DEEPLY INGRAINED SOCIETAL NORMS.

THROUGH THE PAGES OF THIS COMIC BOOK, YOU WILL MEET BAVISHYA, DEVIKA, GARIMA, PONNILA, AND GATIKA—FIVE EXTRAORDINARY YOUNG GIRLS WHO REFUSED TO LET THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES DEFINE THEM. THEIR JOURNEYS ARE MARKED BY HARDSHIP, RESILIENCE, AND AN UNWAVERING BELIEF IN THE POWER OF EDUCATION. EACH OF THEM FOUGHT BATTLES—AGAINST CHILD MARRIAGE, CHILD LABOUR, AND SOCIETAL PRESSURES—TO CLAIM THEIR RIGHT TO DREAM.

AT CRY, WE BELIEVE THAT EVERY CHILD SHOULD HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN, AND THRIVE. THESE STORIES ARE A TESTAMENT TO WHAT HAPPENS WHEN CHILDREN ARE EMPOWERED WITH THE RIGHT SUPPORT, KNOWLEDGE, AND OPPORTUNITIES. THEY REMIND US THAT CHANGE IS NOT ONLY POSSIBLE BUT INEVITABLE WHEN WE COME TOGETHER TO UPLIFT CHILDREN.

AS YOU TURN THESE PAGES, I HOPE YOU ARE INSPIRED BY THE COURAGE OF THESE YOUNG GIRLS. I HOPE YOU SEE, AS WE DO, THAT INVESTING IN THE FUTURE OF A GIRL IS AN INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE OF OUR NATION. AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, I HOPE YOU CHOOSE TO BE A PART OF THIS JOURNEY—TO WALK ALONGSIDE US IN THEIR FIGHT FOR A BRIGHTER TOMORROW.

WITH GRATITUDE,

PUJA MARWAHA

CEO, CHILD RIGHTS AND YOU (CRY)

**BRAVE
BAVISHYA**

IT WAS THE LAST DAY OF SCHOOL BEFORE THE SUMMER HOLIDAYS STARTED. BAVISHYA WAS VERY EXCITED TO PLAY THE WHOLE DAY WITHOUT HAVING TO WORRY ABOUT STUDY AND HOMEWORK.

SHE BID GOODBYE TO HER FRIENDS AND LIKE EVERY YEAR BEFORE SHE LEFT SCHOOL FOR THE HOLIDAYS, SHE HUGGED THE BANYAN TREE WHICH STOOD IN THE SCHOOL COURTYARD AND WHISPERED 'TAKE CARE'. LIKEWISE SHE ALSO PATTED HER BENCH, BLACK BOARD, THE EMPTY CLASSROOM AND WISHED THEM ALL 'HAPPY HOLIDAYS'.

SCHOOL FELT LIKE HOME TO BAVISHYA, A PLACE SHE LOVED.



IT WAS A DIFFICULT LIFE FOR BAVISHYA, WITH PARENTS WHO WORKED AS DAILY WAGERS AND TWO YOUNGER SISTERS, THE MONEY WAS ALWAYS LESS THAN THE MOUTHS TO FEED. BAVISHYA HOWEVER FIRMLY BELIEVED THAT WITH EDUCATION AND HARD WORK, THE FORTUNES OF HER FAMILY WOULD CHANGE.



BAVISHYA LOVED SCHOOL. SHE WOULD GET A NUTRITIOUS MEAL FOR LUNCH, SHE HAD A LOT OF FRIENDS TO PLAY AND TALK WITH, AND SHE ALSO EXCELLED IN HER STUDIES.





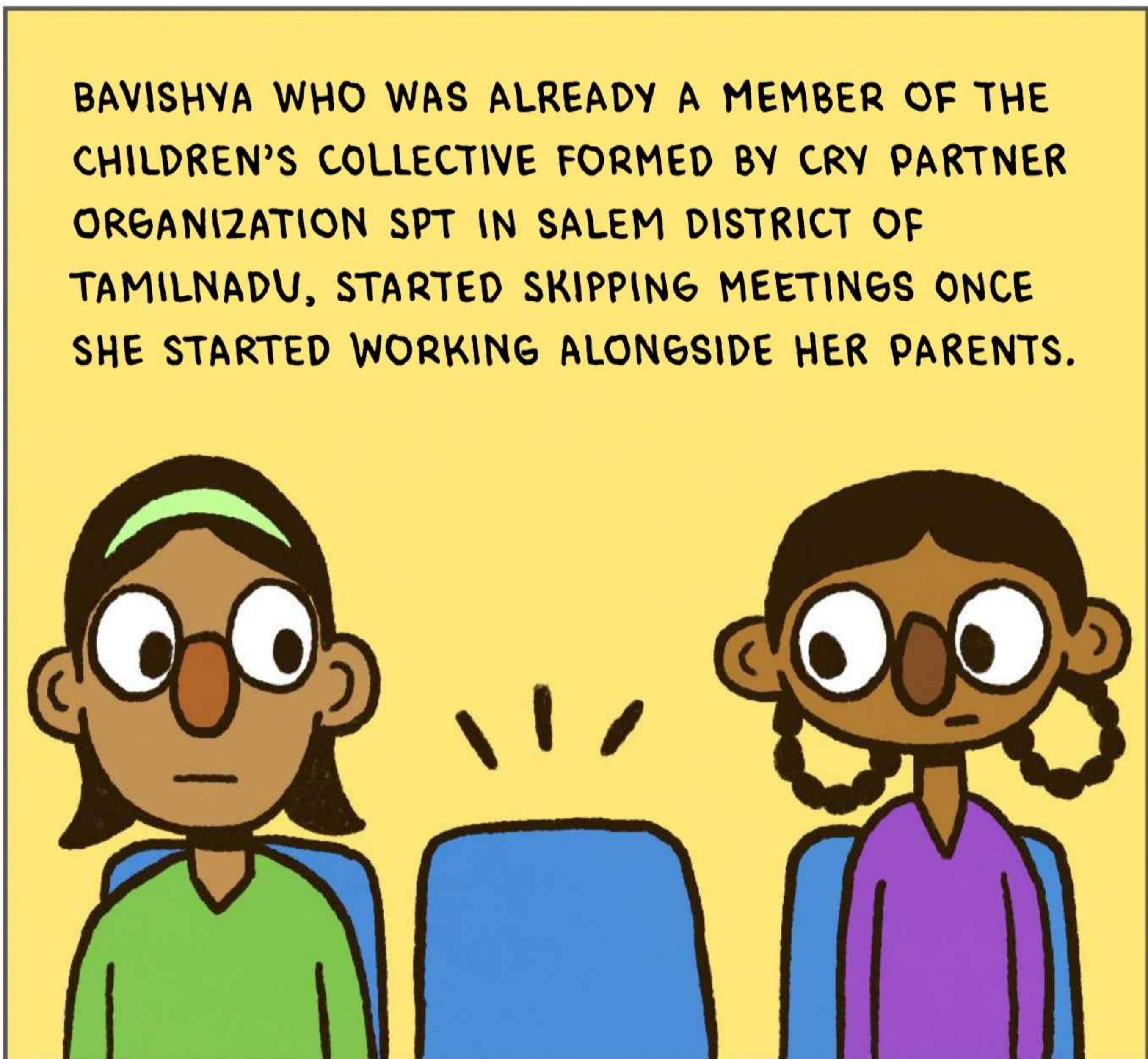
BUT WHEN SHE WAS IN 6TH STANDARD AN UNFORESEEN SITUATION AROSE. HER SCHOOL BUILDING WAS DEMOLISHED TO MAKE WAY FOR THE NATIONAL HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION.



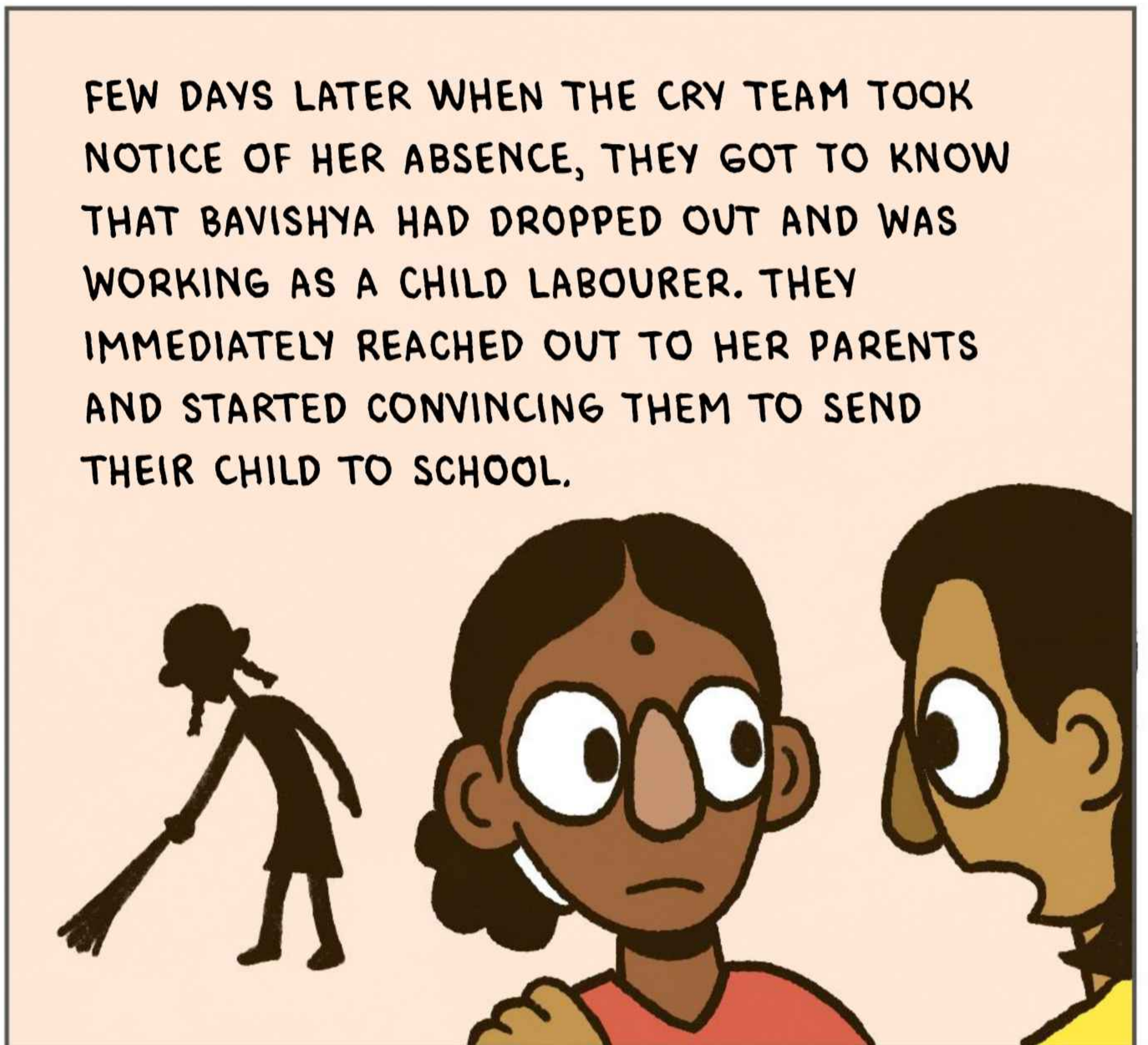
WHILE MAKESHIFT CLASSES WERE ARRANGED FOR THE STUDENTS UNDER A TREE, BAVISHYA'S PARENTS, LIKE MANY OTHERS FELT UNCERTAIN AND STRUCK THEIR CHILDREN'S NAME OFF THE SCHOOL ROLLS.



THEY INSTEAD FELT THAT SINCE THERE WAS NO OPPORTUNITY TO EDUCATE BAVISHYA ANY FURTHER SHE SHOULD JOIN THEM IN THEIR DAILY WAGE WORK AND EARN SOME MUCH NEEDED MONEY FOR THE FAMILY.



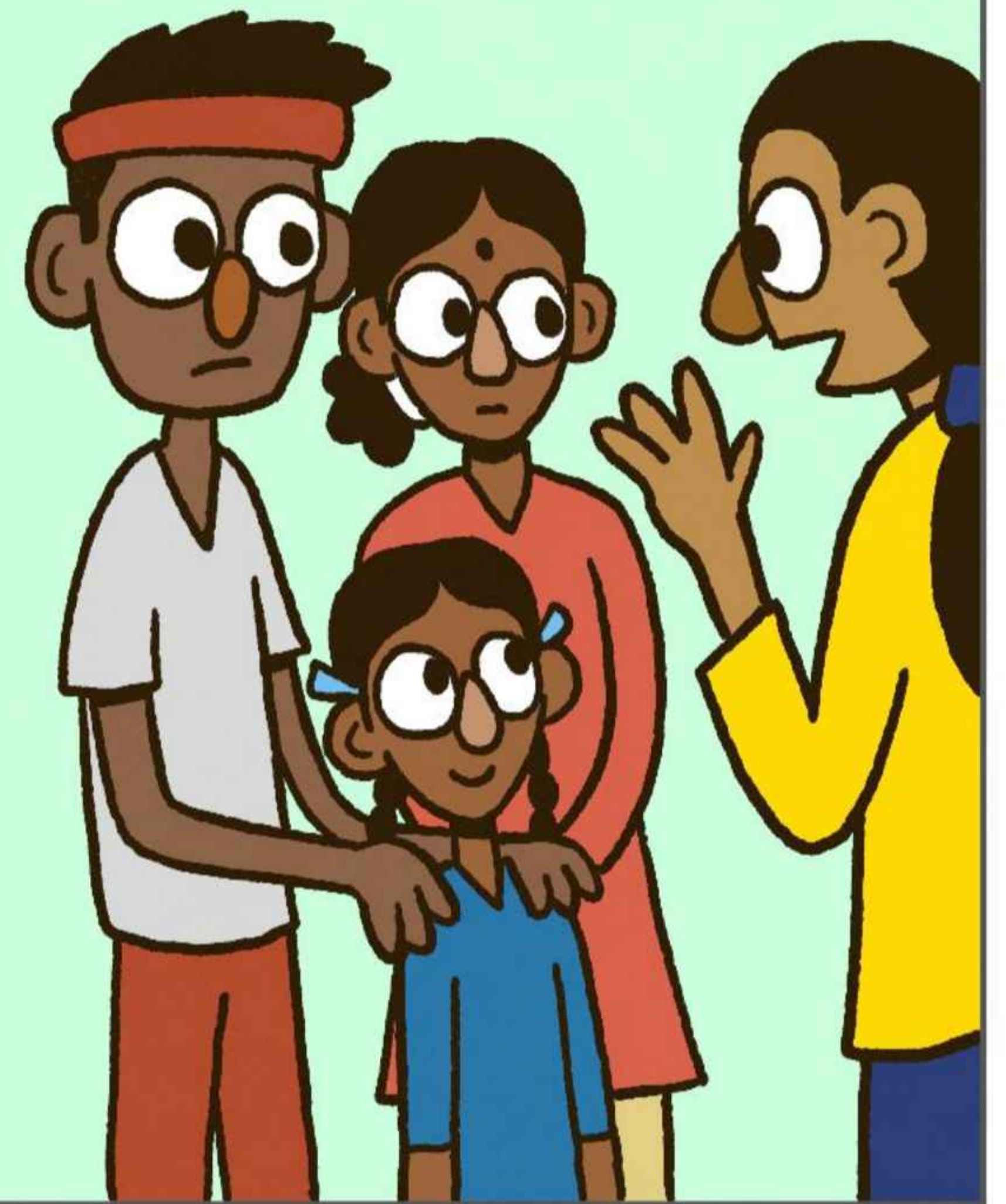
BAVISHYA WHO WAS ALREADY A MEMBER OF THE CHILDREN'S COLLECTIVE FORMED BY CRY PARTNER ORGANIZATION SPT IN SALEM DISTRICT OF TAMILNADU, STARTED SKIPPING MEETINGS ONCE SHE STARTED WORKING ALONGSIDE HER PARENTS.



FEW DAYS LATER WHEN THE CRY TEAM TOOK NOTICE OF HER ABSENCE, THEY GOT TO KNOW THAT BAVISHYA HAD DROPPED OUT AND WAS WORKING AS A CHILD LABOURER. THEY IMMEDIATELY REACHED OUT TO HER PARENTS AND STARTED CONVINCING THEM TO SEND THEIR CHILD TO SCHOOL.

IN AN ATTEMPT TO PROVIDE ECONOMIC SUPPORT, THE CRY TEAM CONNECTED THE FAMILY WITH LIVELIHOOD AND GOVERNMENT SPONSORED WELFARE SCHEMES. FURTHERMORE, THEY ALSO ASSURED THE PARENTS THAT THEY WOULD MAKE EVERY ATTEMPT TO HAVE BAVISHYA AND HER SISTERS BENEFIT FROM SEVERAL SCHEMES SPECIALLY DESIGNED FOR GIRL CHILDREN WHICH WOULD TAKE CARE OF THEIR EDUCATION EXPENSES.

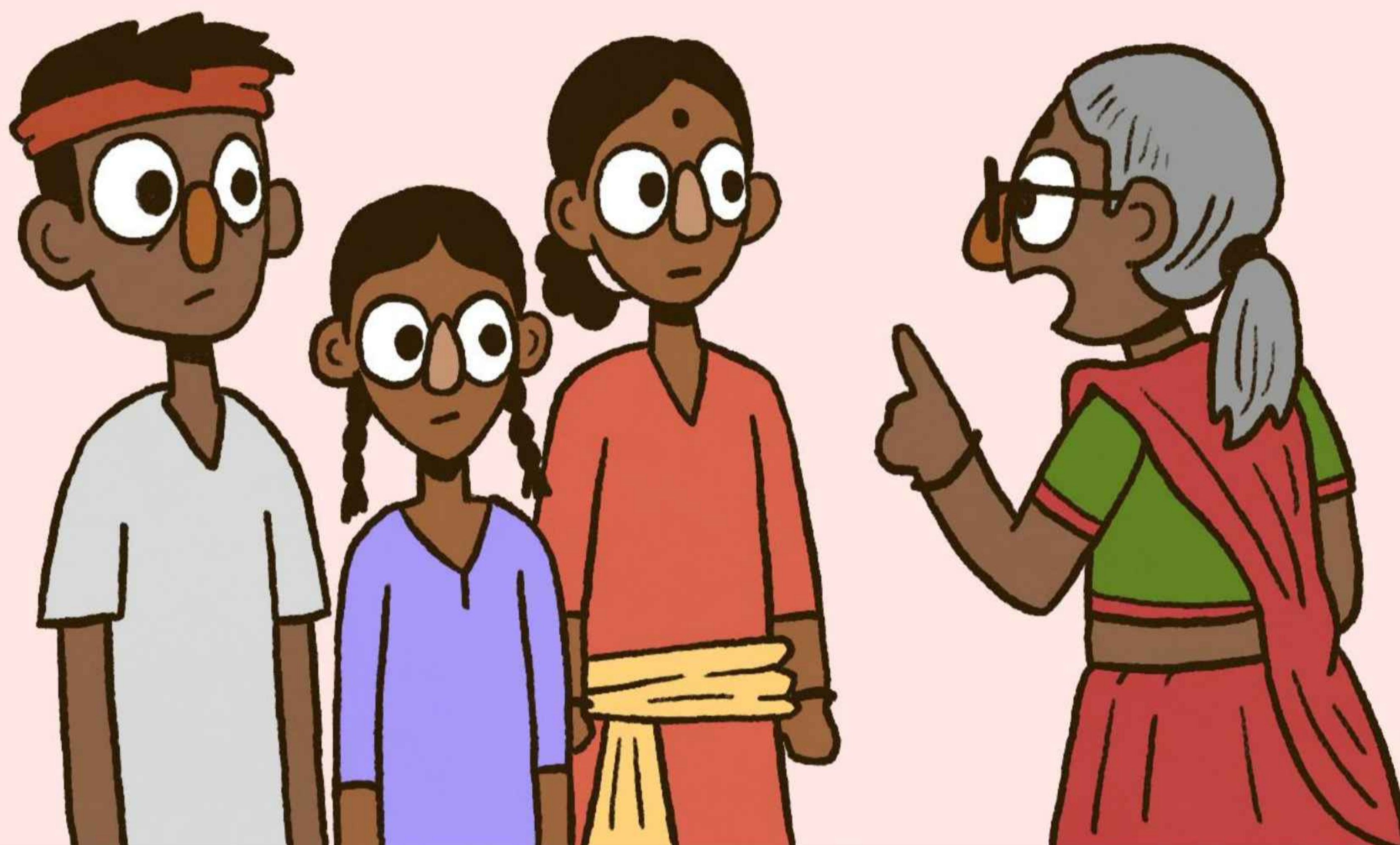
FAMILIARITY, LONG CONVERSATIONS AND RELENTLESS SUPPORT FROM THE CRY TEAM FINALLY WON THE HEARTS OF BAVISHYA'S PARENTS. THEY STARTED SENDING HER TO THE CLASSES HELD BY CRY TEAM AT THE CHILD ACTIVITY CENTRE (CAC) FOR UNDERSERVED CHILDREN.



EVENTUALLY, BAVISHYA'S SCHOOL REOPENED DUE TO THE RELENTLESS EFFORTS OF THE CRY TEAM AND SHE WAS RE- ENROLLED BACK TO SCHOOL.



SIMULTANEOUSLY, HER ADDITIONAL CLASSES AT THE CAC ALSO CONTINUED TILL SHE PASSED HER 12TH STANDARD EXAMS WITH EXCELLENT MARKS.



BUT AS SOON AS BAVISHYA COMPLETED HER 12TH BOARD EXAMS, HER RELATIVES ADVISED HER PARENTS TO GET HER MARRIED OFF AS THEY HAD TWO MORE DAUGHTERS TO WORRY ABOUT AND EVEN IF BAVISHYA EARNED, ALL HER MONEY WOULD GO TO HER IN LAWS ONCE MARRIED.

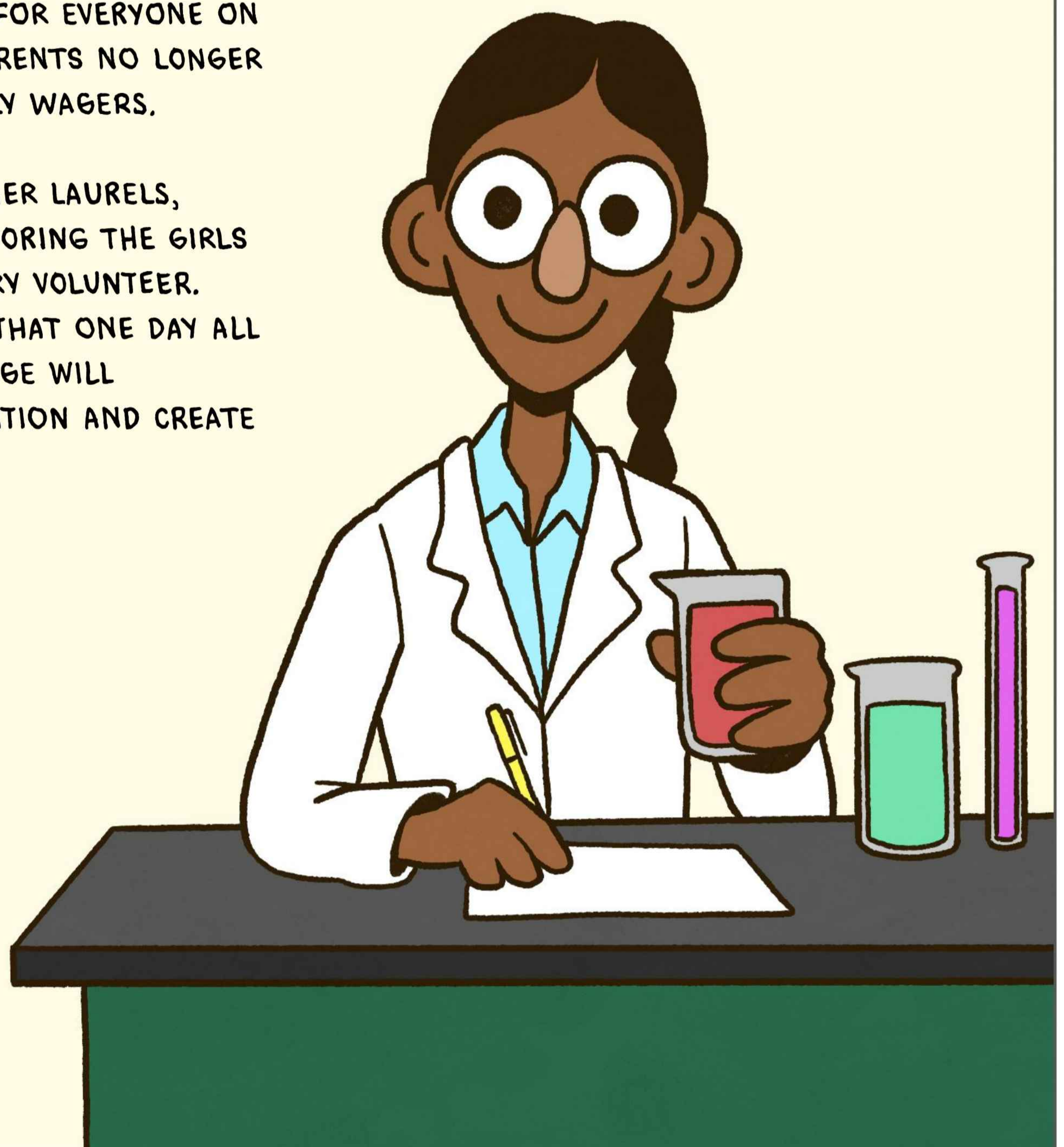


HOWEVER, BAVISHYA'S PARENTS WERE CHANGED PEOPLE BY THEN DUE TO THE AWARENESS MEETINGS HELD BY THE CRY TEAM.

THEY RESPONDED TO THE RELATIVES BY SENDING BAVISHYA TO STUDY B.SC. IN MICROBIOLOGY AT THE NEARBY GOVERNMENT COLLEGE.

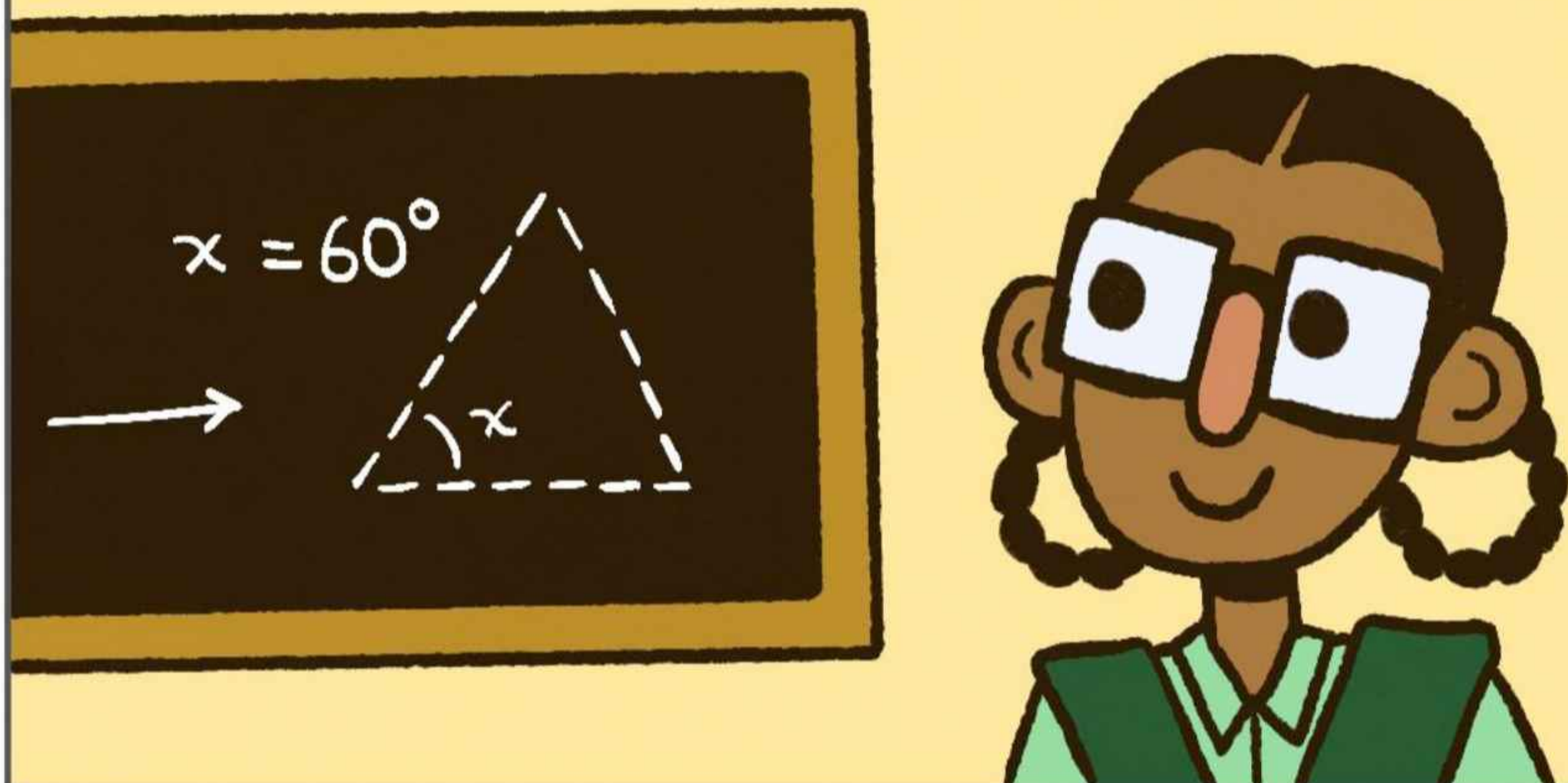
TODAY BAVISHYA IS WORKING AS A LAB TECHNICIAN. HER INCOME IS NOW ENOUGH TO PUT FOOD FOR EVERYONE ON THE TABLE AND HER PARENTS NO LONGER NEED TO WORK AS DAILY WAGERS.

NOT ONE TO REST ON HER LAURELS, BAVISHYA IS BUSY MENTORING THE GIRLS IN HER VILLAGE AS A CRY VOLUNTEER. HER DREAM IS TO SEE THAT ONE DAY ALL THE GIRLS IN HER VILLAGE WILL COMPLETE THEIR EDUCATION AND CREATE THEIR OWN DESTINIES.



**DARING
DEVIKA**

DEVIKA ALWAYS SCORED A PERFECT 100 OUT OF 100 IN HER MATHEMATICS EXAMS. SHE LOVED THE SUBJECT BECAUSE IN THE WORLD OF MATHEMATICS, EVERYTHING WAS SOLVABLE, SOMETHING SHE WANTED TO REPLICATE IN HER LIFE AS WELL.



DEVIKA WAS BORN TO A POOR FAMILY OF DAILY WAGERS IN ANNAMAYYA DISTRICT OF ANDHRA PRADESH. HER PARENTS, SURESH AND LAKSHMI, BELIEVED THAT GIRLS WERE A BURDEN TO THE FAMILY.



AS SOON AS DEVIKA'S ELDER SISTER TURNED 17, SHE WAS MARRIED OFF BY HER PARENTS WITHOUT ANY REMORSE.



HER BROTHER'S LIFE WAS STARKLY DIFFERENT. HE WAS THE APPLE OF THEIR EYE - THE ONLY ONE WHO GOT TO DRINK MILK AND EAT AN EGG EVERYDAY, AND PERMITTED TO STAY OUT AS LONG AS HE WISHED...



AND MOST IMPORTANTLY ASSURED BY THE PARENTS THAT THEY WOULD FINANCE HIS EDUCATION WITH ALL THEIR RESOURCES. FOR SURESH AND LAKSHMI THOUGHT THAT A SON WAS THEIR ONLY GATEWAY TO A FULFILLING LIFE AWAY FROM PENURY AND MISERY.



THIS DISCRIMINATION LEFT AN INDELIBLE MARK ON DEVIKA. WITH HER BRIGHT MIND AND EDUCATION, SHE WANTED TO PROVE TO HER PARENTS THAT GIRLS ARE AS WORTHY AND CAPABLE AS BOYS, THEY TOO DESERVE EQUAL LOVE.



DEVIKA'S RESOLVE STRENGTHENED FURTHER WHEN SHE BECAME PART OF THE CHILDREN'S COLLECTIVE FORMED BY CRY PARTNER ORGANIZATION PORD. BESIDES LEARNING ABOUT CHILD RIGHTS AND DUTIES, SHE ALSO BECAME AWARE ABOUT THE STORIES OF WOMEN TRAILBLAZERS WHO FOUGHT GENDER DISCRIMINATION AND CREATED SPACE FOR THEMSELVES IN THE WORLD, INSPIRING HER TO DO THE SAME.



HOWEVER, WHEN DEVIKA TURNED 16, HER PARENTS FIXED HER MARRIAGE. THEY WANTED TO DISCHARGE THEIR DUTIES TOWARDS HER ONCE AND FOR ALL AND FOCUS ON THEIR SON.

DEVIKA THOUGH TOOK A STAND AND REFUSED TO BE A CHILD BRIDE, SHE TOLD HER PARENTS ABOUT THE LEGAL RAMIFICATIONS OF ENABLING CHILD MARRIAGE.



FURTHERMORE, THE TEAM FROM CRY ALSO SPENT A LOT OF TIME COUNSELLING HER PARENTS.



EVENTUALLY WHEN DEVIKA PROMISED HER PARENTS THAT THEY WOULD NOT HAVE TO SPEND A PENNY ON HER EDUCATION AS SHE WOULD MANAGE THE COST THROUGH SCHOLARSHIPS AND BY TAKING TUITION CLASSES, THEY FINALLY RELENTED.



THEREAFTER, IT WAS ALL ABOUT RISING AND SHINING FOR DEVIKA. SHE COMPLETED HER B.COM IN COMPUTER APPLICATIONS WITH FLYING COLOURS.



SOON THEREAFTER, SHE CONFIDENTLY APPLIED FOR THE JOB OF MAHILA POLICE AT THE VILLAGE SECRETARIAT AND BY VIRTUE OF HER BRILLIANT PERFORMANCE GOT SELECTED.



DEVIKA IS NOW A ROLE MODEL FOR THE GIRLS IN HER VILLAGE. SHE IS STILL VERY MUCH A PART OF THE CHILDREN'S COLLECTIVE WORKING TIRELESSLY ON THE ISSUE OF GENDER EQUALITY.

HER PARENTS WHO ONCE CONSIDERED HER A BURDEN, NOW REGRET THEIR IGNORANCE AND TELL EVERYONE THAT DEVIKA IS INDEED THEIR BLESSING. THEY TOO NOW HAVE BECOME HER ALLIES IN ADVOCATING FOR THE EDUCATION OF GIRL CHILD.

DEVIKA'S STORY IS ONE OF BRAVERY, OF ACTION THAT HAS POTENTIAL TO CHANGE THE WORLD.



GALLANT
GARIMA

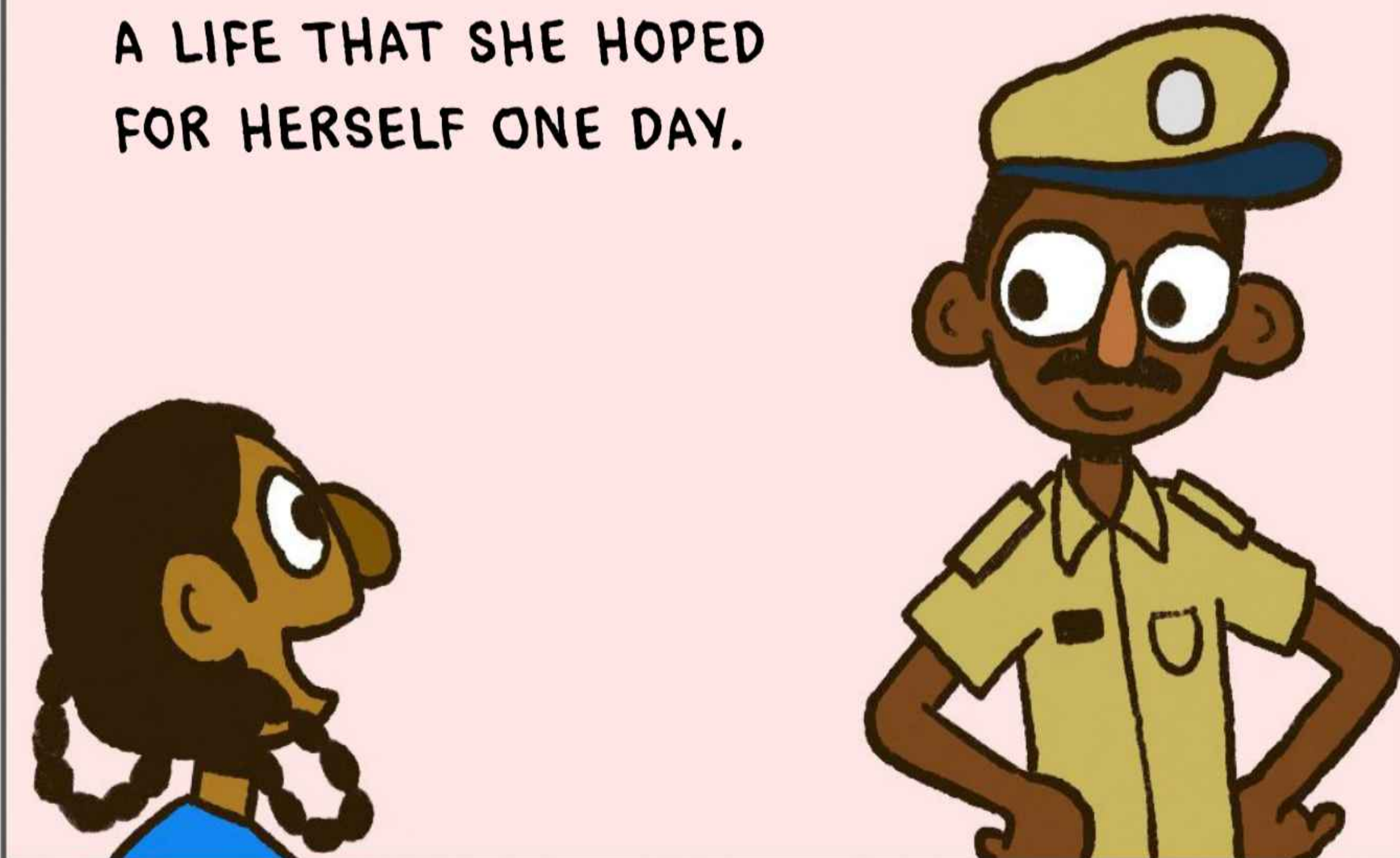
MOST DAYS ONE WOULD FIND GARIMA SITTING BY THE WINDOW WITH A BOOK IN HER HAND. BOOKS OPENED BEFORE HER A WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES AND SHE WOULD WANDER OFF ON IMAGINARY ADVENTURES.



HER GRANDMOTHER'S YELLING JOLTED HER OUT OF DAY DREAMS; SHE WARNED HER TO SPEND MORE TIME IN THE KITCHEN INSTEAD, LEARNING HOUSEHOLD CHORES SO THAT SHE COULD BE A GOOD BRIDE.



GARIMA HOWEVER, ASPIRED TO BE A POLICE OFFICER MUCH LIKE HER COUSIN BROTHER WHO WAS RESPECTED BY ONE AND ALL IN THE VILLAGE. A LIFE THAT SHE HOPED FOR HERSELF ONE DAY.



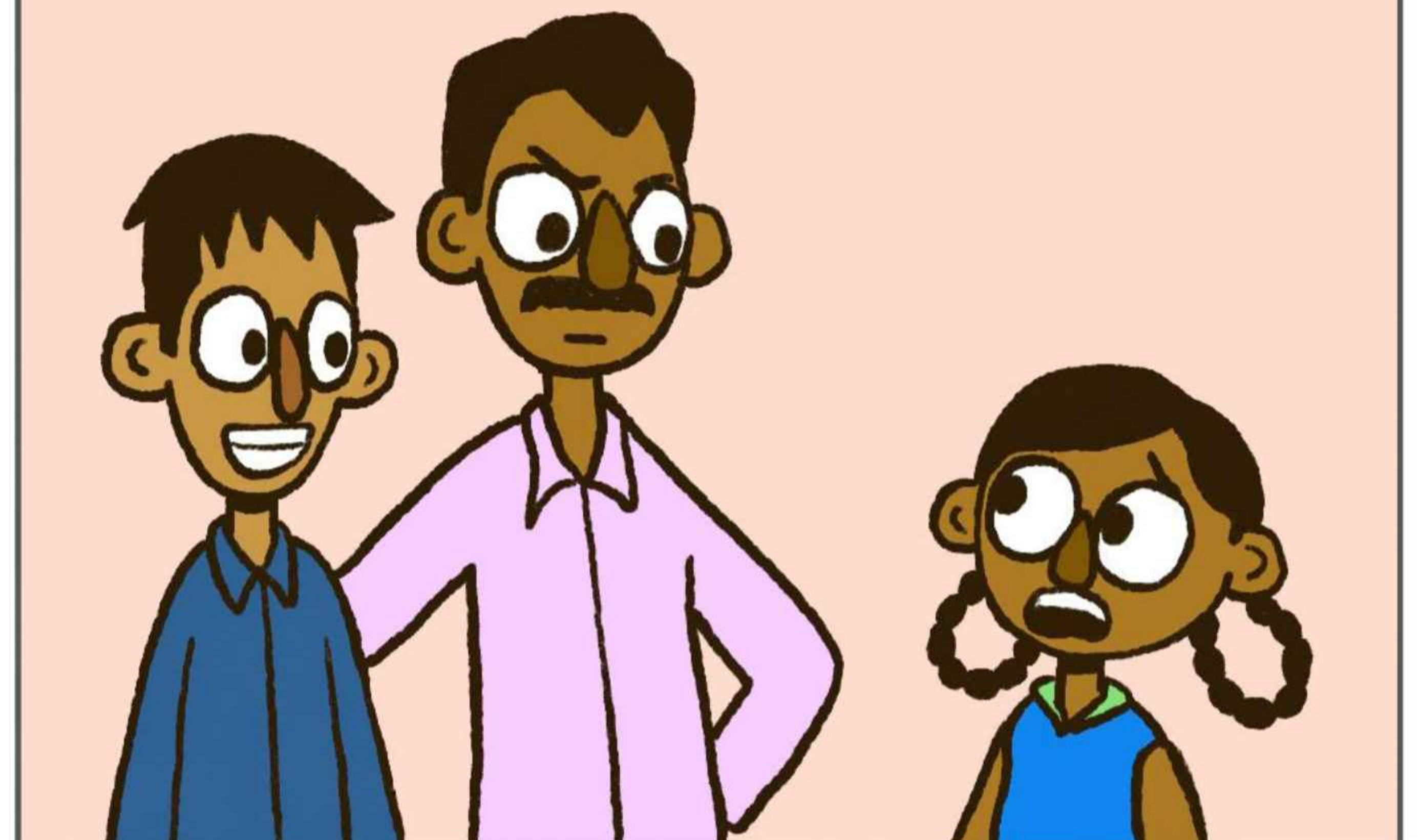
GARIMA'S PARENTS VEHEMENTLY OPPOSED HER DREAMS. AS SUGARCANE CUTTERS THEMSELVES, THEY ONLY WORRIED ABOUT PUTTING FOOD ON THE TABLE ON A DAY TO DAY BASIS.



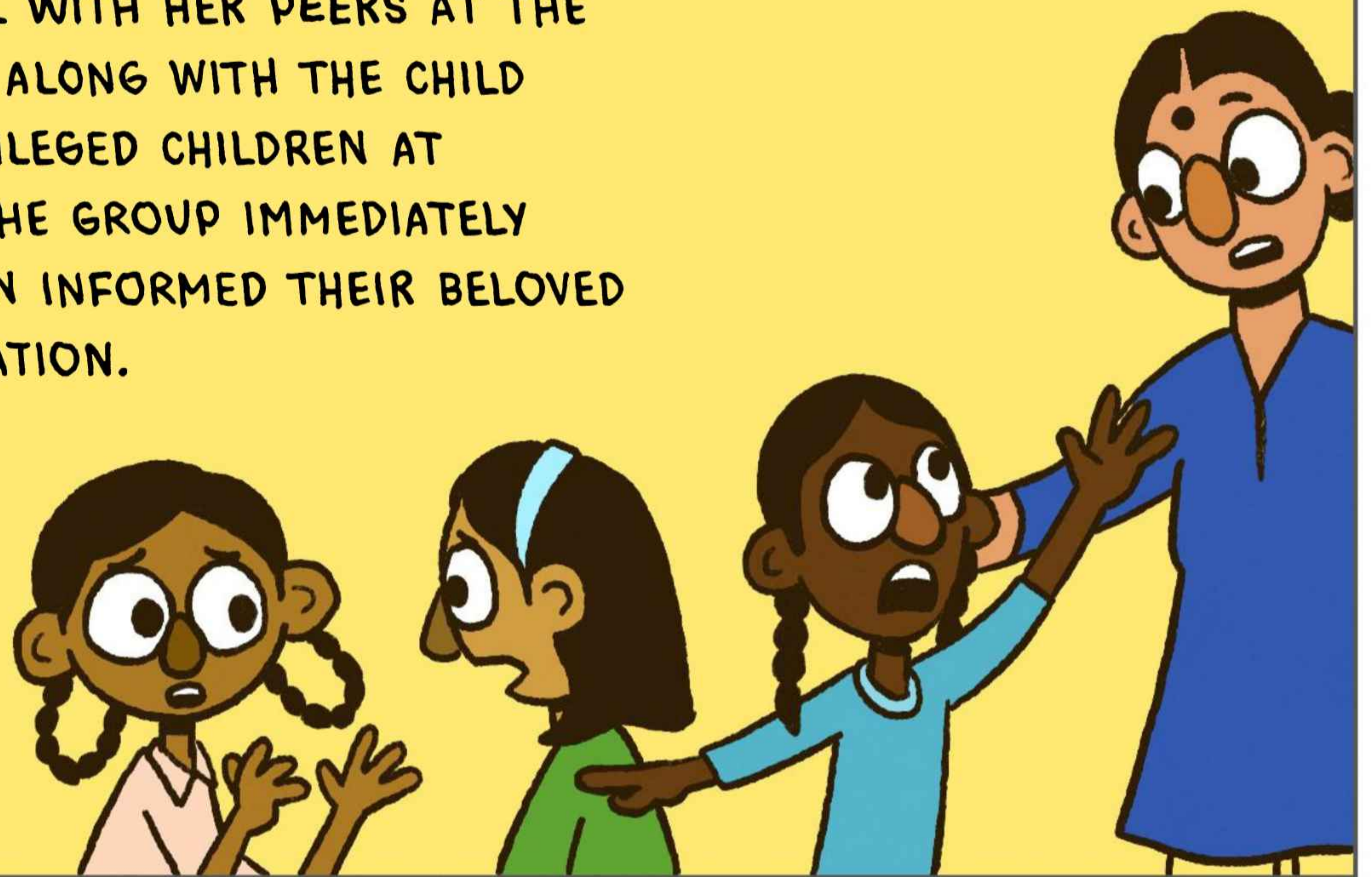
POVERTY ALSO SNATCHED THE CHILDHOOD OF ALL HER THREE SISTERS, AS THEY WERE ALL MARRIED OFF BEFORE TURNING 18.



GARIMA WANTED TO PURSUE HER EDUCATION AND DID NOT WISH TO BE A CHILD BRIDE. BUT AS SOON AS SHE HIT PUBERTY, HER FATHER FIXED HER MARRIAGE.



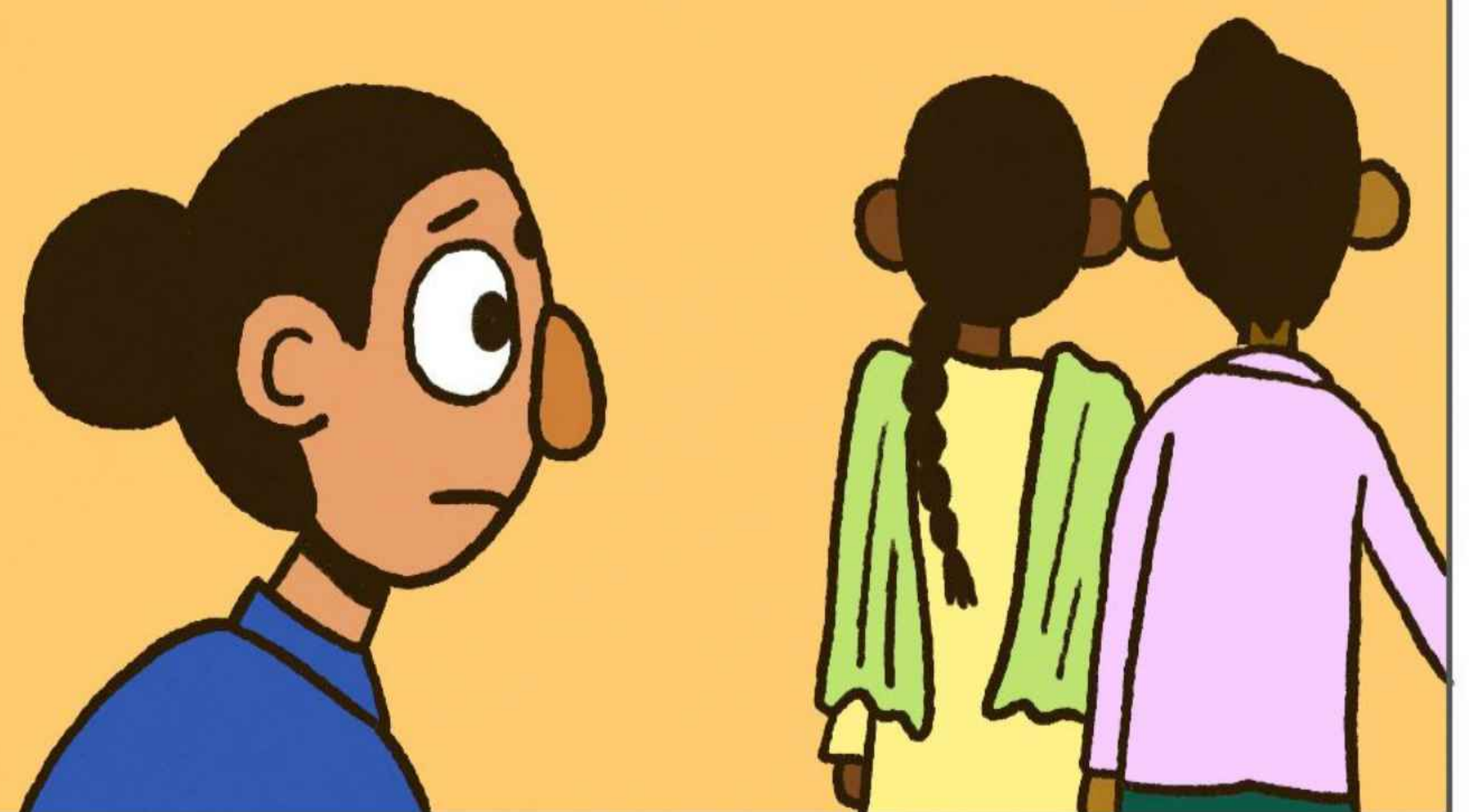
A DEFIANT GARIMA SHARED HER ORDEAL WITH HER PEERS AT THE CHILDREN'S COLLECTIVE FORMED BY CRY ALONG WITH THE CHILD ACTIVITY CENTRE (CAC) FOR UNDERPRIVILEGED CHILDREN AT DHARMAPURI DISTRICT IN TAMILNADU. THE GROUP IMMEDIATELY SPRANG INTO ACTION AND THE CHILDREN INFORMED THEIR BELOVED KARPAGAM AKKA ABOUT GARIMA'S SITUATION.



KARPAGAM, A TEACHER AT THE CAC TRIED HER BEST TO CONVINCE GARIMA'S PARENTS ABOUT THEIR DAUGHTER'S POTENTIAL AND THE POSSIBILITY OF A REMARKABLE FUTURE GIVEN A CHANCE TO CONTINUE HER EDUCATION.



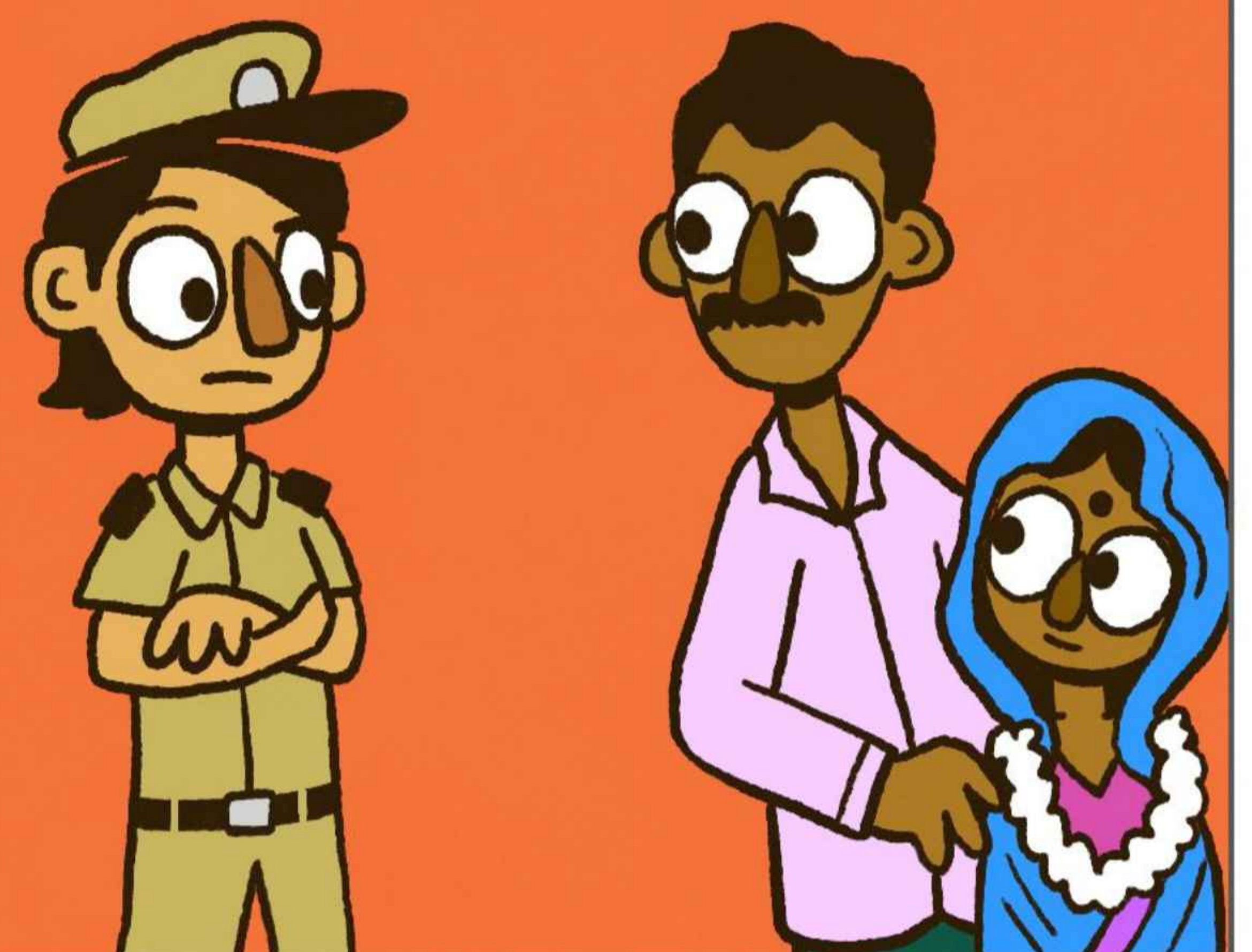
HOWEVER, IT WAS ALL IN VAIN AS THEY WENT AHEAD WITH THE MARRIAGE PREPARATIONS SINCE THEY BELIEVED THAT EDUCATION WILL RUIN GARIMA'S CHANCES OF GETTING A GOOD HUSBAND.



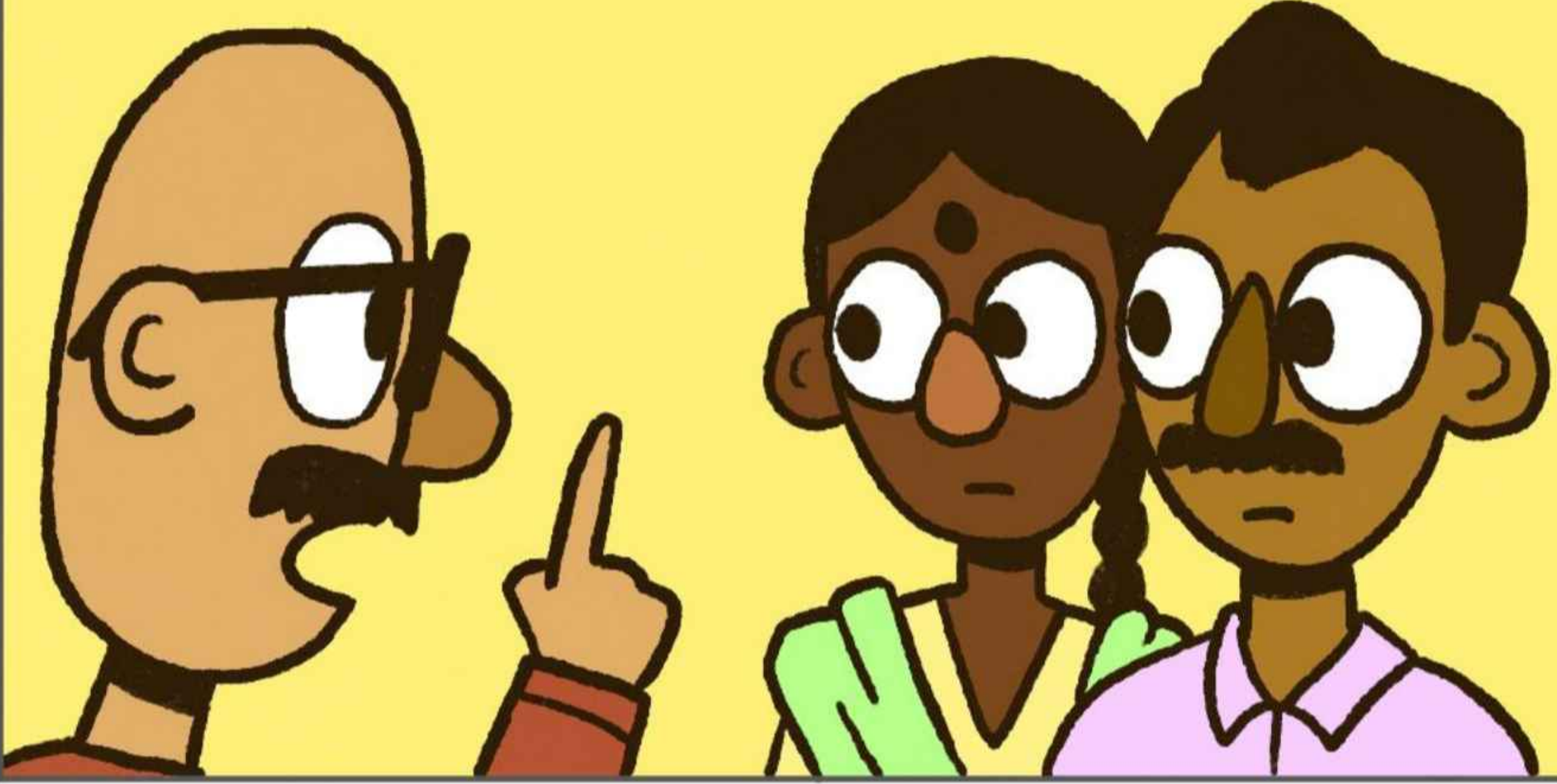
NOT ONE TO GIVE UP, GARIMA SENT AN SOS MESSAGE TO HER KARPAGAM AKKA WHO IMMEDIATELY REACHED OUT TO THE AUTHORITIES THROUGH CHILD HELPLINE NUMBER 1098.



AND GARIMA'S MARRIAGE WAS STOPPED JUST IN TIME BY POLICE AND THE OFFICERS OF SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT.



THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY RIGOROUS COUNSELLING SESSIONS OF GARIMA'S PARENTS AND THEY WERE ALSO INFORMED ABOUT THE STRICT LAWS PROHIBITING CHILD MARRIAGE AND THE HARSH PUNISHMENT METED TO THE VIOLATORS.

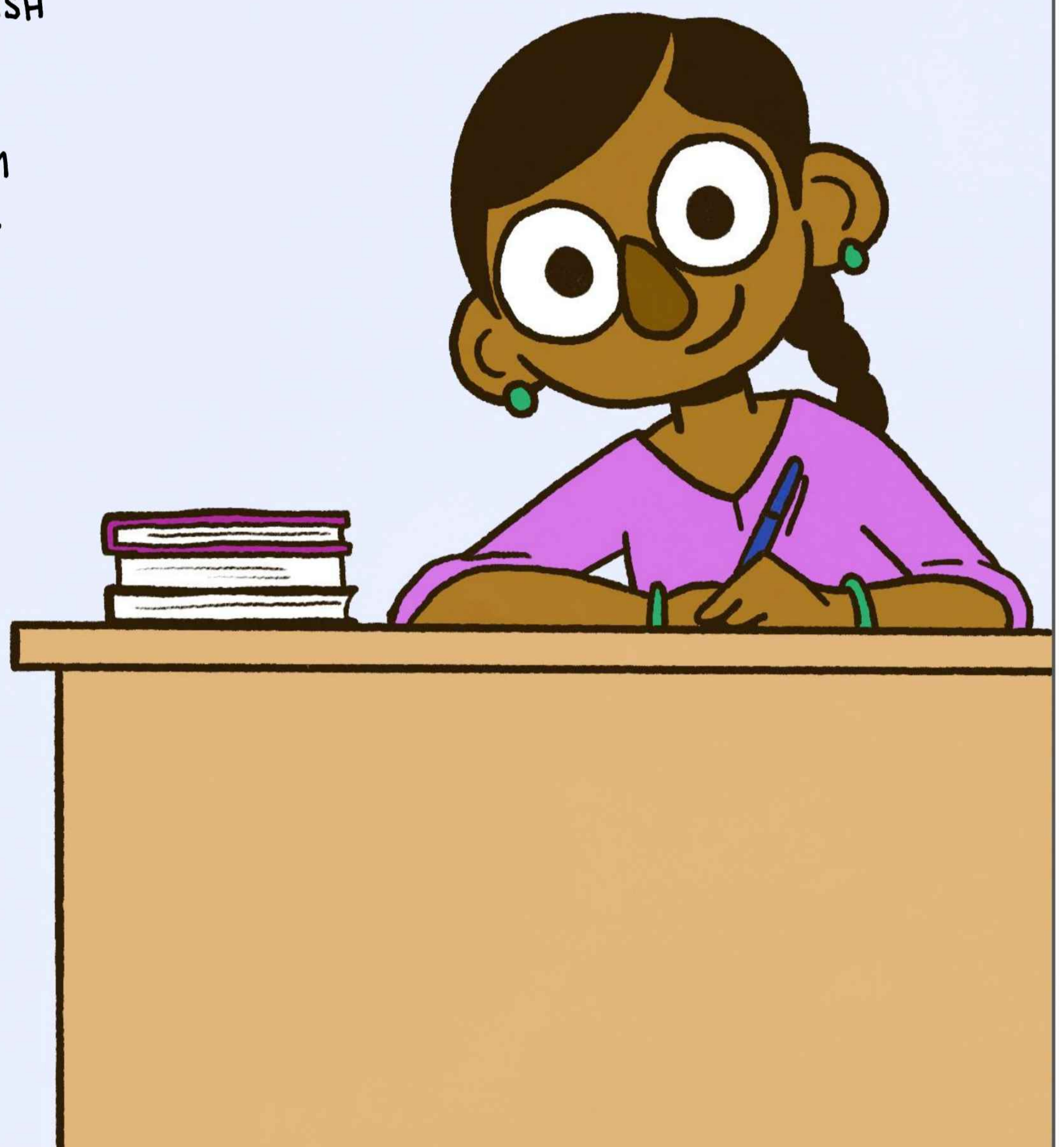


WHAT TRULY SPARKED THE CHANGE WAS THE SEED OF HOPE PLANTED IN THE HEART OF GARIMA'S PARENTS THAT ONE DAY THEIR DAUGHTER'S EDUCATION MAY LIFT THEIR FAMILY OUT OF POVERTY AND THEY WILL NEVER HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT FOOD.



GARIMA HAS NOW BECOME ONE OF THE THREE GIRLS IN HER VILLAGE TO FINALLY REACH COLLEGE.

SHE IS PRESENTLY PURSUING HER BACHELOR'S DEGREE WITH ENGLISH (HONOURS), LIVING NEW ADVENTURES AND WORKING DILIGENTLY TOWARDS HER DREAM OF BECOMING A POLICE OFFICER.



POWERFUL
PONNILA

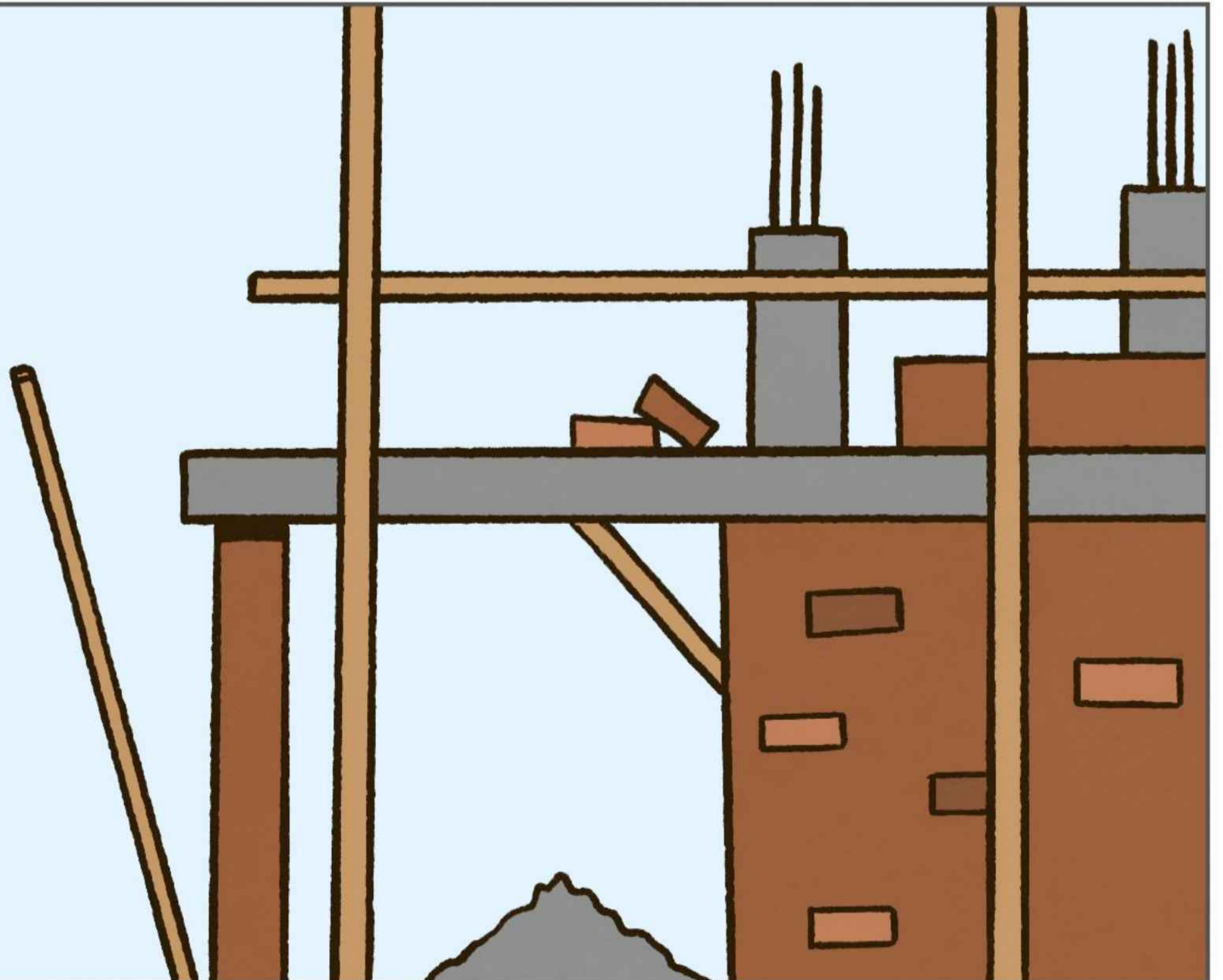
PONNILA LONGED FOR SCHOOL HOLIDAYS MUCH LIKE ALL THE CHILDREN IN HER NEIGHBOURHOOD. HOWEVER, WHILE HER FRIENDS LOOKED FORWARD TO GAMES OF HIDE & SEEK AND HOPSCOTCH...



PONNILA WOULD SECRETLY RUN AWAY TO THE CONSTRUCTION SITE WHERE HER APPA (FATHER) AND AMMA (MOTHER) WORKED AS DAILY WAGE LABOURERS.



IT WAS A WORLD OF WONDER FOR PONNILA. SHE WAS AMAZED TO SEE HOW BIT BY BIT, DOORS, WINDOWS AND EVENTUALLY A WHOLE HOUSE WOULD GET CREATED MAGICALLY FROM A MERE PIECE OF LAND. PONNILA TOO ASPIRED TO BE AN ENGINEER AND BUILD HOUSES ONE DAY.



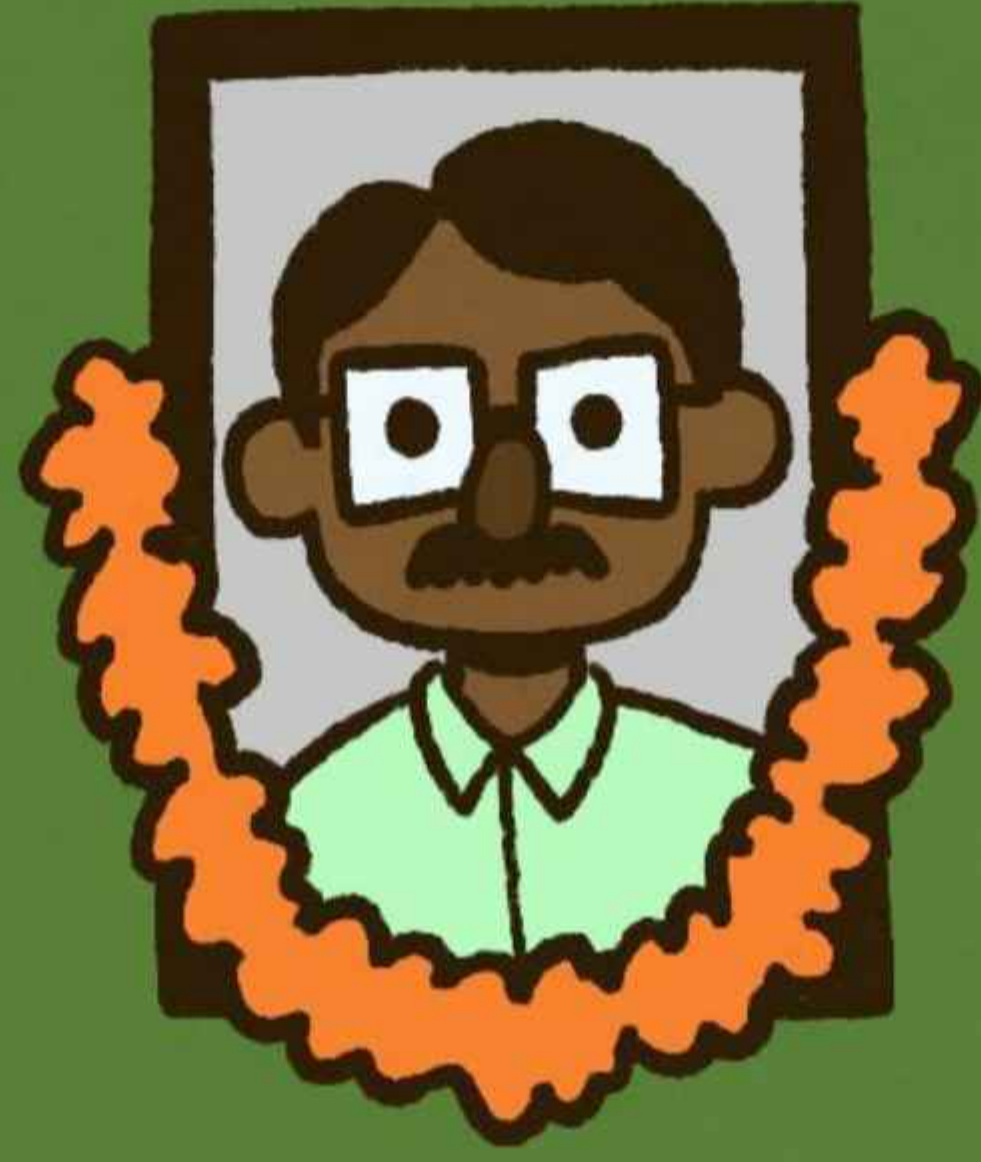
THERE WAS NO LOOKING BACK FROM THERE AS PONNILA PUT ALL HER HEART IN STUDIES. THOUGH SHE HAILED FROM A POOR FAMILY AND HER PARENTS WERE BOTH ILLITERATE BUT PONNILA FOUND SUPPORT IN THE CHILD ACTIVITY CENTRE (CAC) RUN BY CRY AT MEDCHAL DISTRICT IN TELANGANA.



HER TEACHERS AT THE CAC HELPED PONNILA WITH STUDIES AND SHE NEVER DISAPPOINTED THEM. THE BRIGHT STUDENT THAT SHE IS, PONNILA PASSED HER 10TH STANDARD EXAMS WITH FLYING COLOURS SECURING 9.3 CGPA AND STOOD SECOND IN HER ENTIRE SCHOOL.



JUST WHEN LIFE SEEMED JOYOUS AND THE ROAD AHEAD FILLED WITH PROMISES, FATE STRUCK A HARSH BLOW AS PONNILA'S BELOVED APPA PASSED AWAY SUDDENLY.



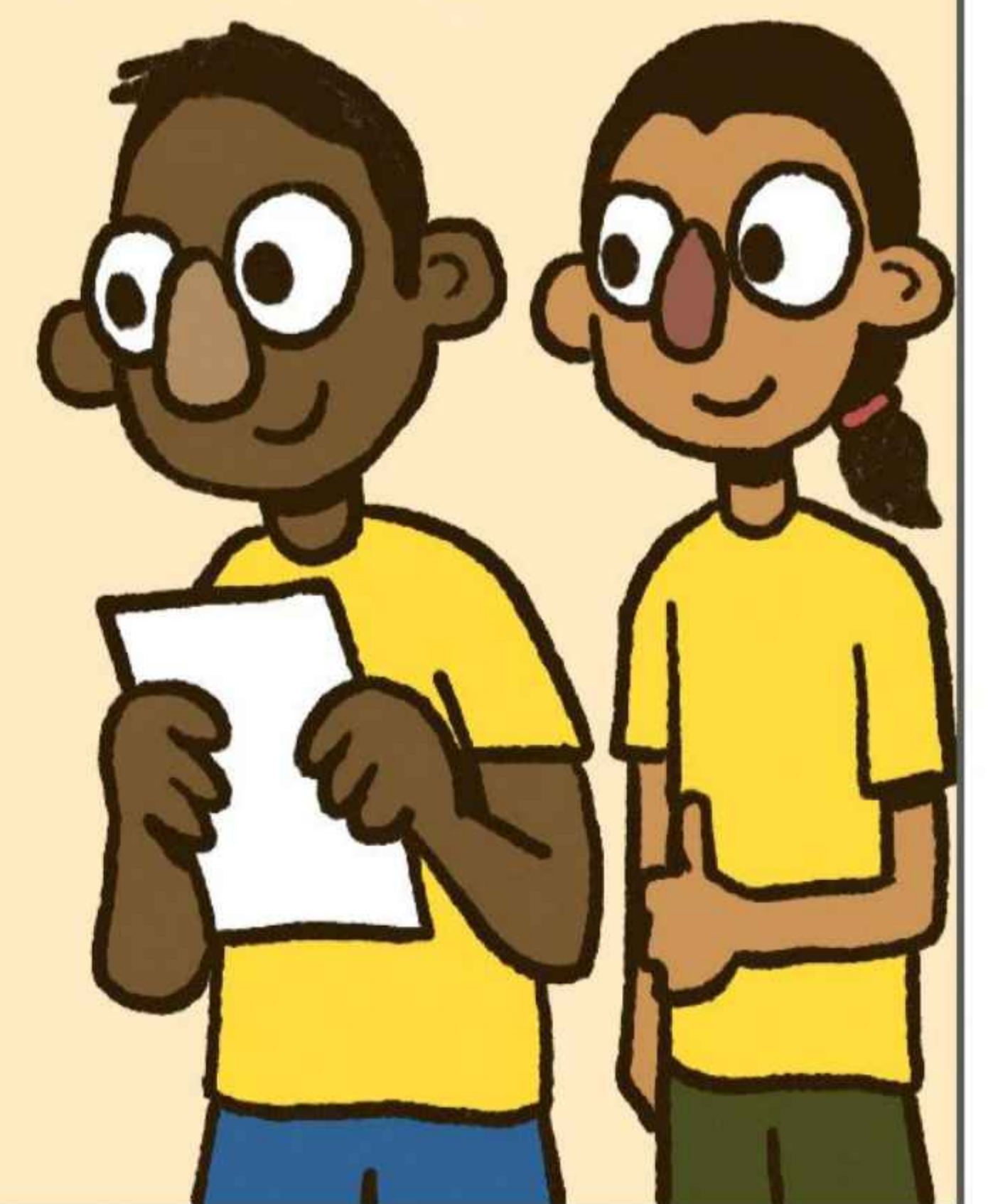
THE TRAGEDY NOT ONLY EMOTIONALLY BROKE THE FAMILY BUT FINANCIALLY ALSO THEY WERE PUSHED DEEPER INTO POVERTY.



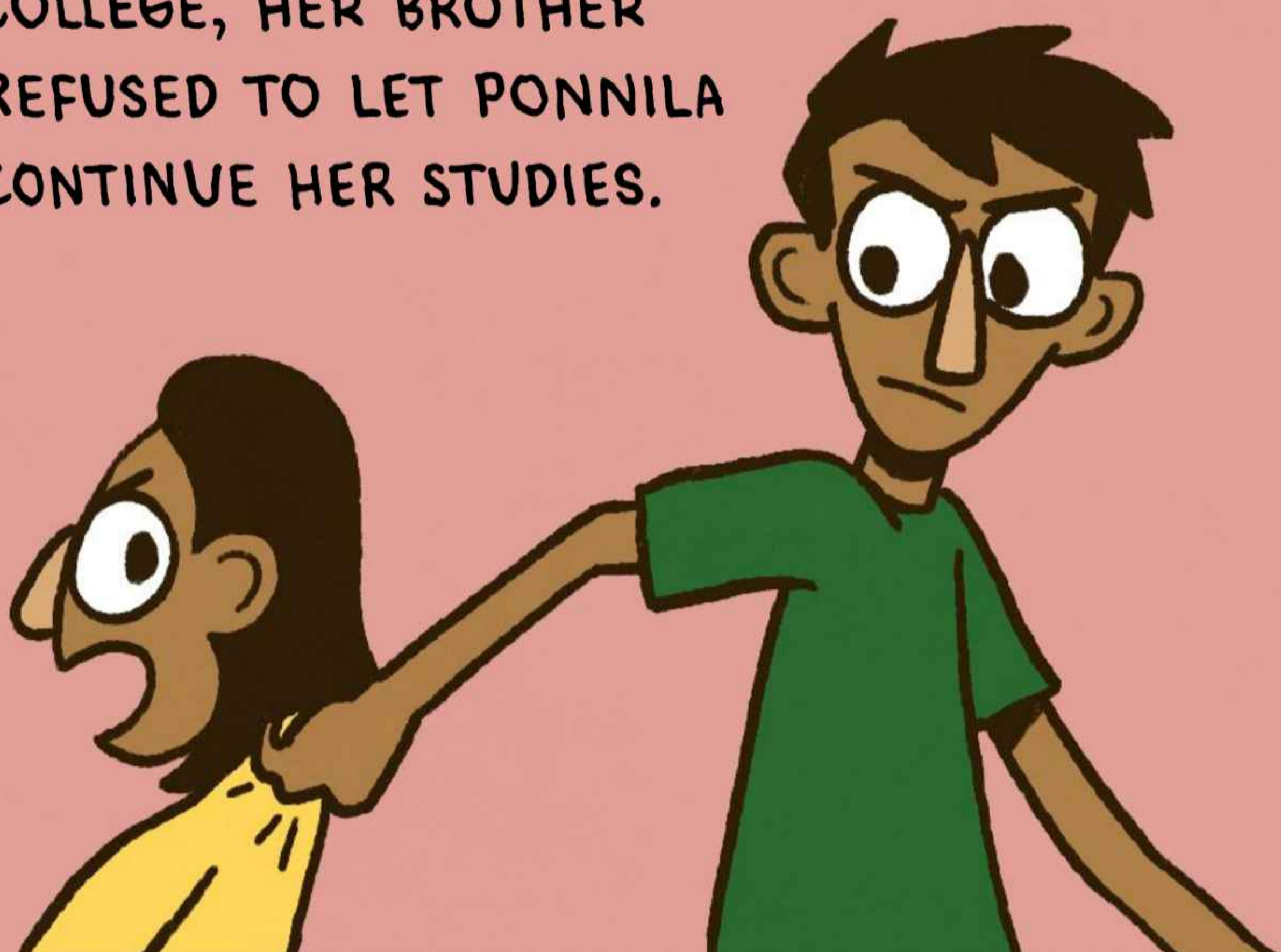
THEIR SITUATION BECAME SO MISERABLE THAT EVEN THOUGH PONNILA SUCCESSFULLY CLEARED HER POLYTECHNIC ENTRANCE EXAMS, AFFORDING RS. 9000 COLLEGE FEE SEEMED A DAUNTING ASK. PONNILA FELT THAT HER DREAM OF BECOMING AN ENGINEER WAS ALL BUT OVER, AND MUCH LIKE HER ELDER BROTHER AND SISTER - SHE TOO WAS DESTINED TO BE A DROPOUT.



ONCE AGAIN CRY TEAM CAME TO HER AID, AND MOBILIZED SUPPORT FOR PONNILA WHICH LED TO HER ENROLMENT AT SAMSKRUTI COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY IN GHATKESAR.



HOWEVER, A NEW PROBLEM AROSE IN PONNILA'S LIFE. AS IT WAS A CO-EDUCATIONAL COLLEGE, HER BROTHER REFUSED TO LET PONNILA CONTINUE HER STUDIES.



HE WOULD OFTEN LOCK HER INSIDE THE HOUSE AND THREATENED TO BEAT PONNILA.





HER DEAREST TEACHERS AGAIN
CAME TO HELP PONNILA AS THEY
SPENT DAYS COUNSELLING HER
BROTHER, MAKING HIM PART OF
GENDER AWARENESS SESSIONS
WHICH EVENTUALLY NOT ONLY
OPENED HIS MIND BUT ALSO THE
DOORS OF COLLEGE FOR PONNILA.



NOW IN HER FINAL YEAR OF
POLYTECHNIC, PONNILA IS
PREPARING FOR HER EXAMS
AND ASPIRES TO PURSUE B.TECH
DEGREE TO FULFIL HER DREAM
OF LEADING HER FAMILY OUT
OF POVERTY AND BECOMING A
CEO ONE DAY MUCH LIKE HER
ICON NARAYANA MURTHY.



GAMECHANGER GATIKA

GATIKA WOKE UP HAPPY - IT WAS GOING TO BE HER FIRST DAY IN THE 6TH STANDARD - SHE WAS NOW IN MIDDLE SCHOOL!



IT WAS A LOVELY MORNING IN HER VILLAGE - AT TIRUPATI DISTRICT IN ANDHRA PRADESH. OVERNIGHT RAINS HAD WASHED AWAY THE DIRT, THE TREES LOOKED GREENER, THE SUN SHONE BRIGHT AND THE BLUE SKIES ABOVE SEEMED TO ECHO HER OPTIMISM.

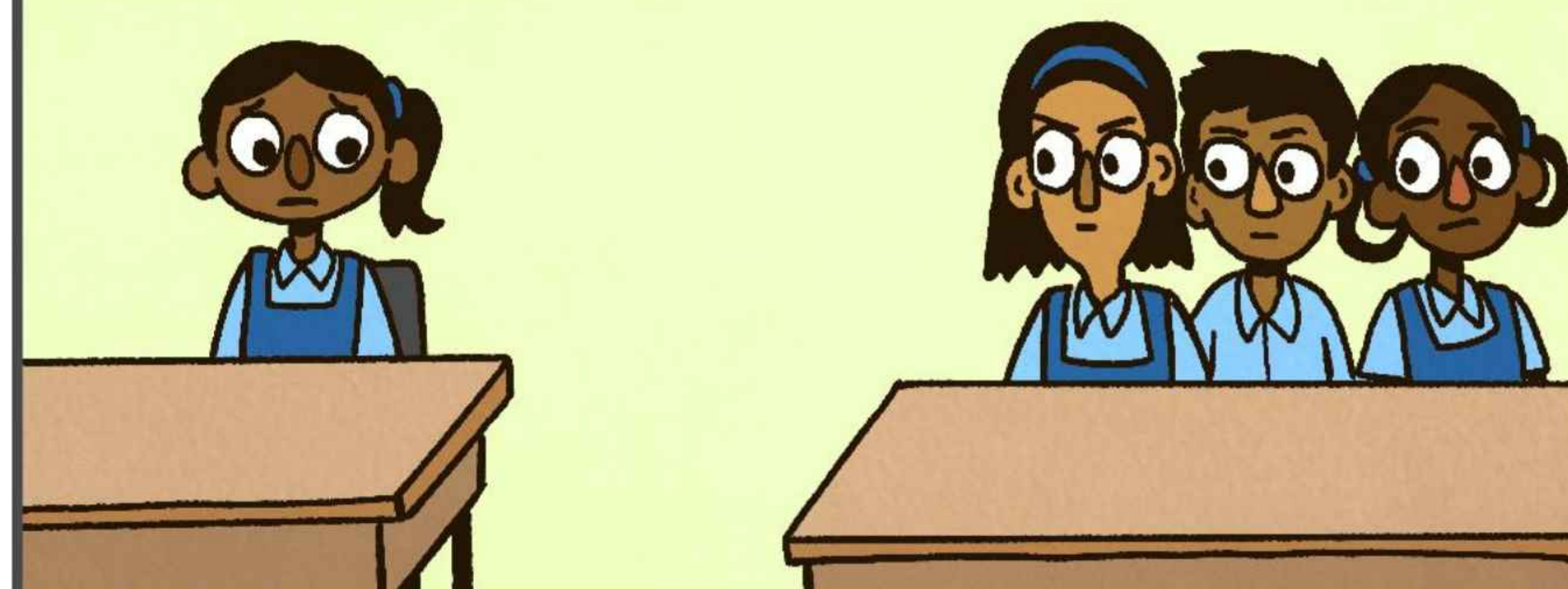
DRESSED IN HER FRESHLY IRONED SCHOOL UNIFORM, HER HAIR NEATLY BRAIDED AND IMPATIENT WITH EXCITEMENT, GATIKA MADE HER WAY TO SCHOOL.



HOWEVER, HER DAY WAS SOON MARRED BY AN UNPLEASANT EXPERIENCE.



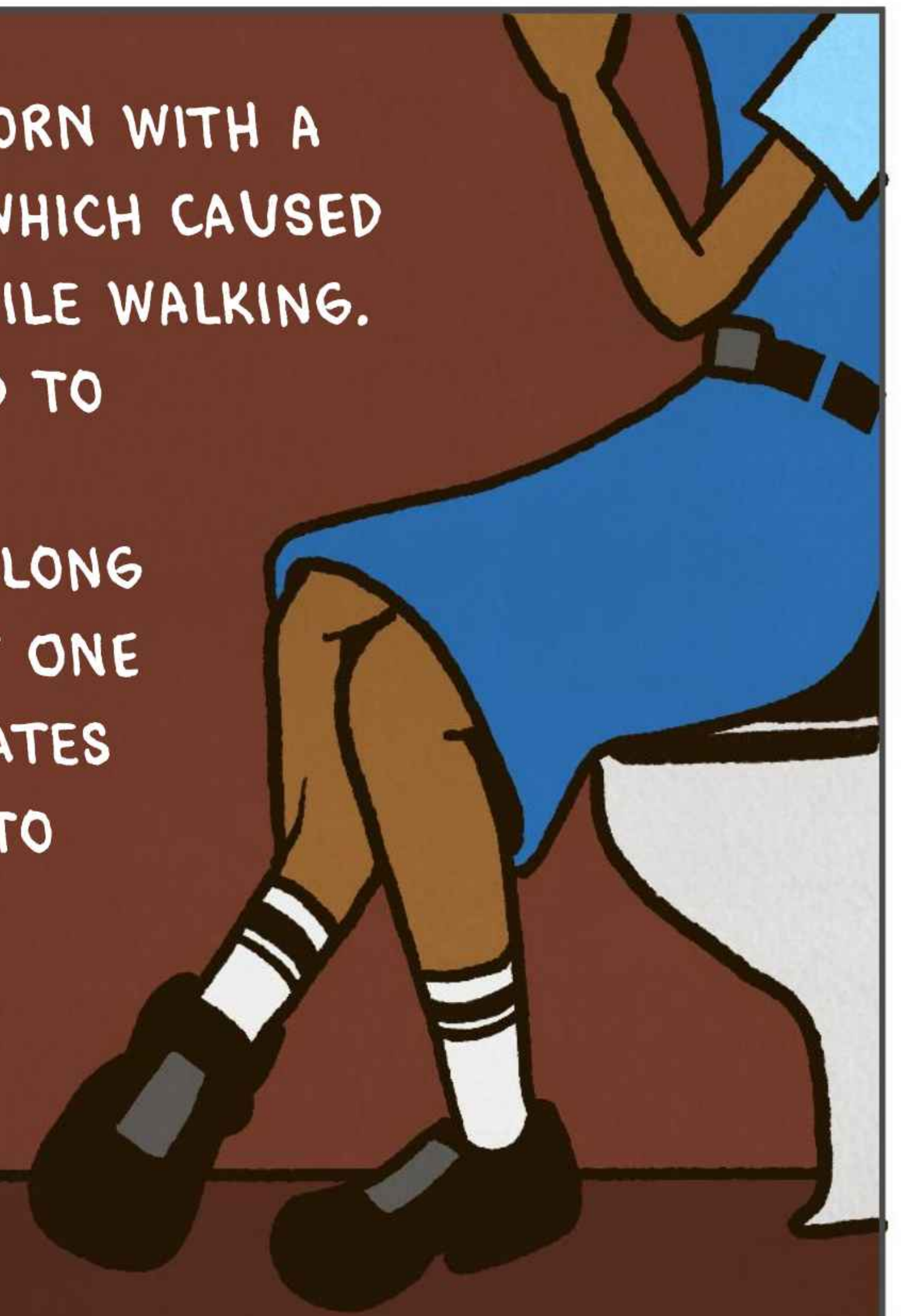
MOLLU, RAJI AND PRIYA, THREE OF HER CLASSMATES REFUSED TO SIT NEXT TO HER. THEY SAID THAT GATIKA WAS NOT "LIKE THEM" AND THEY WERE SCARED OF BECOMING LIKE HER BY ASSOCIATING WITH HER.



GATIKA WAS VERY HURT AND CRIED IN THE SCHOOL TOILETS. THERE WAS NOTHING SHE COULD DO ABOUT BEING DIFFERENT



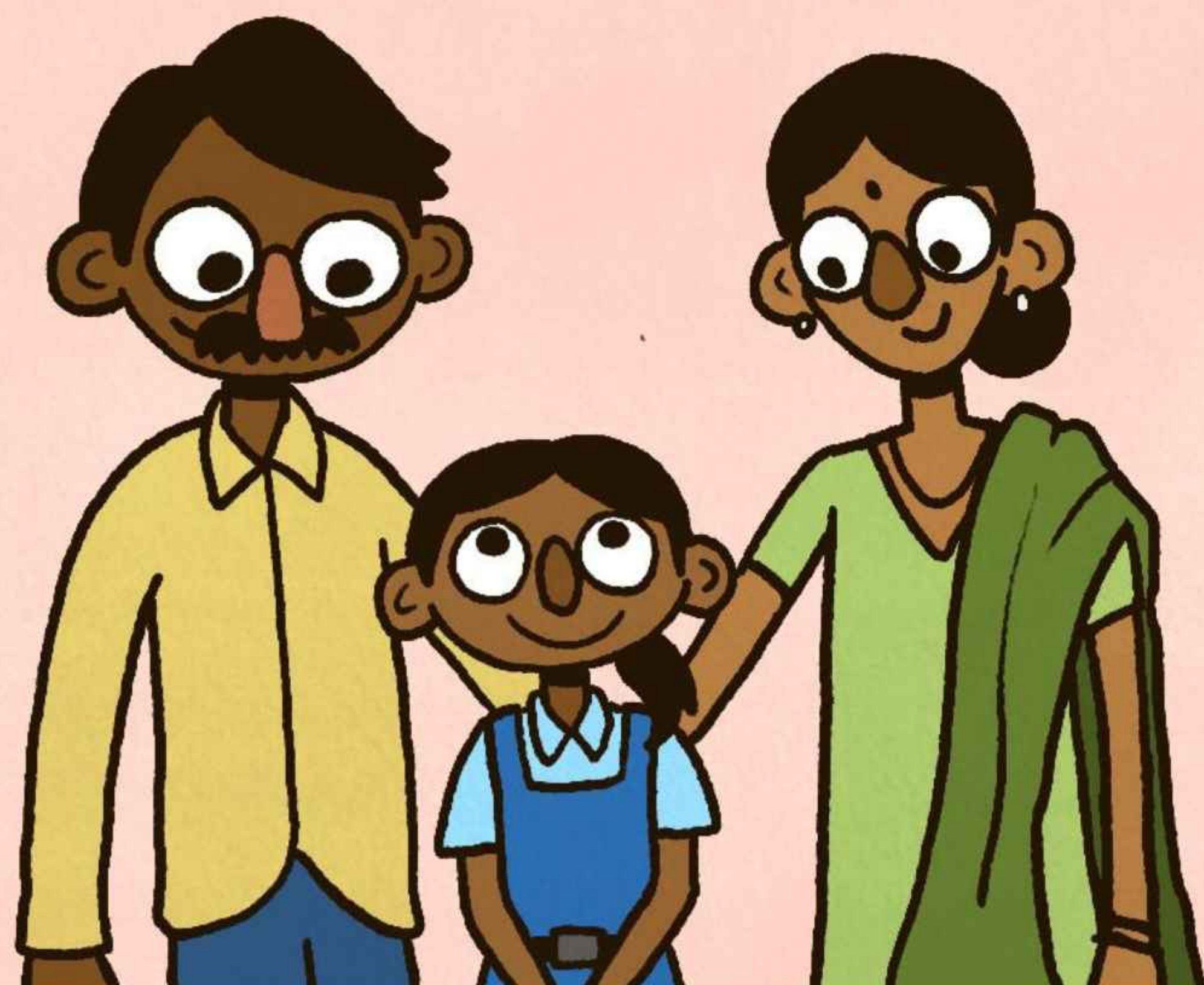
SHE HAD BEEN BORN WITH A LEG DEFORMITY WHICH CAUSED HER TO LIMP WHILE WALKING. BUT SHE REFUSED TO LET THE SADNESS FETER FOR TOO LONG AND HOPED THAT ONE DAY HER CLASSMATES WOULD BE ABLE TO SEE BEYOND HER DISABILITY.



THE SCHOOL YEAR UNFOLDED AS IT HAD BEGUN - THOUGH GATIKA WAS A BRIGHT STUDENT AND LOVED GOING TO SCHOOL - SHE WAS EXTREMELY LONELY AS NO ONE WANTED TO BEFRIEND HER. SHE DROWNED HERSELF IN BOOKS AND MOSTLY SPENT HER TIME IN THE SCIENCE LAB.



WHAT MADE UP IN SOME PART FOR THE CASUAL CRUELTY OF HER CLASSMATES, WAS HOW THOROUGHLY NORMAL HER FAMILY MADE HER FEEL.



EVEN THOUGH IT WAS A HARD LIFE FOR THEM AS BOTH HER MOTHER AND FATHER WORKED AS COOLIES, THEY ALWAYS SUPPORTED GATIKA AND HER EDUCATION DREAMS.



THEY WANTED HER TO ACHIEVE SOMETHING BIG AND BECOME SOMEONE OF REPUTE IN LIFE.

AS GATIKA'S SCHOOL WAS 8KM AWAY FROM THEIR VILLAGE AND SHE HAD TO CHANGE SEVERAL BUSES TO REACH HER DESTINATION AND WITH HER LIMP MAKING TRAVELLING ALL THE MORE TOUGH, HER PARENTS DECIDED TO PUT HER IN A SCHOOL HOSTEL SO THAT SHE COULD STUDY MORE COMFORTABLY.



A NEW ORDEAL OF SUFFERING BEGAN IN THE HOSTEL. HER ROOMMATES CONSTANTLY BULLIED HER, NO ONE SPOKE TO HER OR EVEN ATE OR SLEPT IN THE BED NEXT TO HER.



THEY REFUSED TO PLAY WITH HER AND EVEN MOCKED HER INABILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN ANY SPORTS.



GATIKA WAS TORMENTED EVERY DAY AND HER SPIRIT WAS GRADUALLY BREAKING.



THE SITUATION TOOK A TURN FOR THE WORSE WHEN IN A FIT OF RAGE, A TEACHER SLAPPED GATIKA AS SHE TOOK TIME TO REACH THE TABLE TO SUBMIT HER PAPERS.



IT WAS THE BREAKING POINT FOR GATIKA. UNABLE TO BEAR THE CRUELTY ANY FURTHER SHE SHARED EVERYTHING WITH HER PARENTS.



HER PARENTS IMMEDIATELY STRUCK HER NAME OFF FROM THE SCHOOL ROLLS AND TOOK HER HOME.



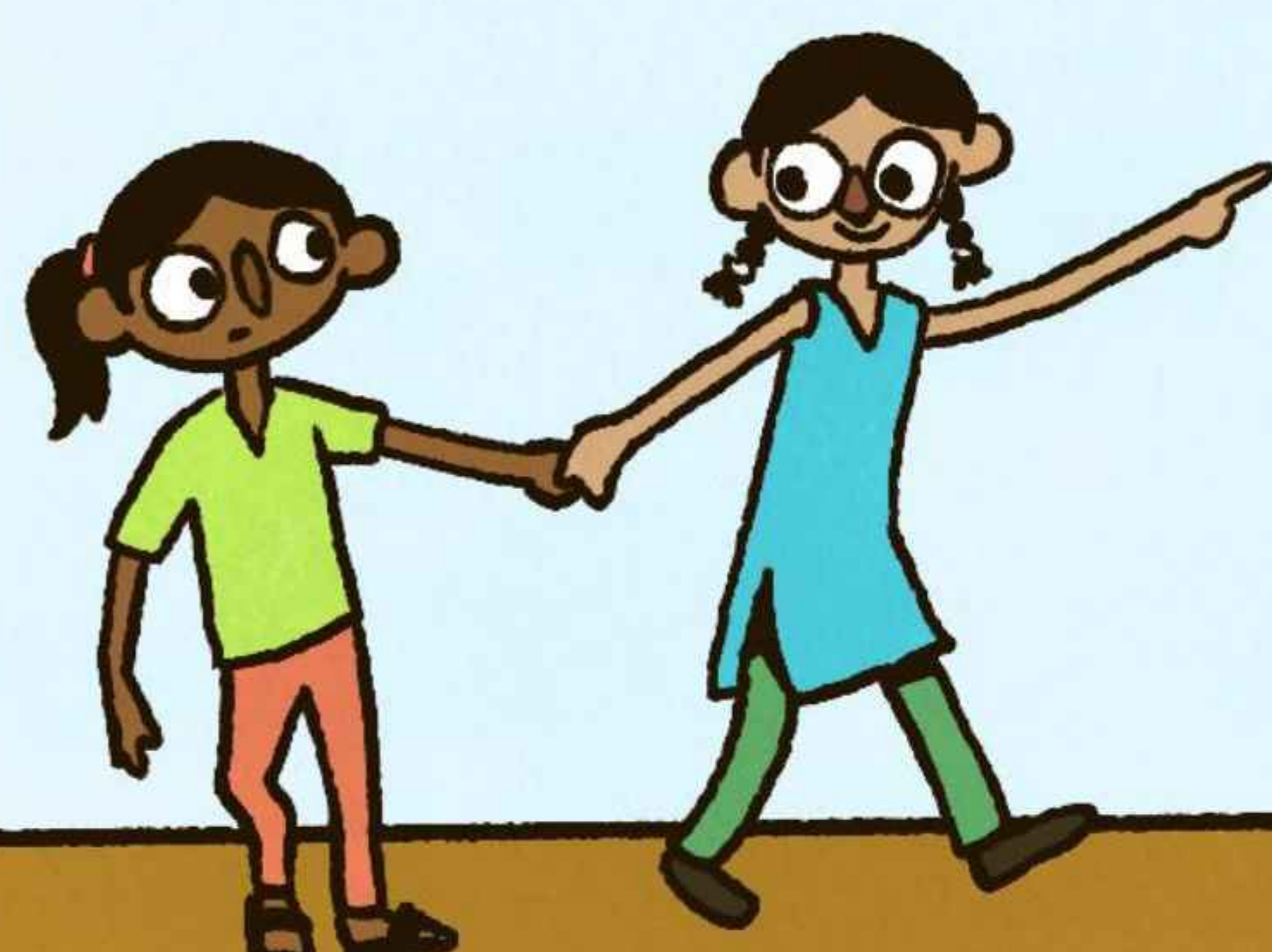
GATIKA'S PARENTS DECIDED THAT SCHOOL WAS NOT MEANT FOR THEIR CHILD. THEY FELT THAT SHE BETTER BE AT HOME, SAFE AND HAPPY WITH THEM.



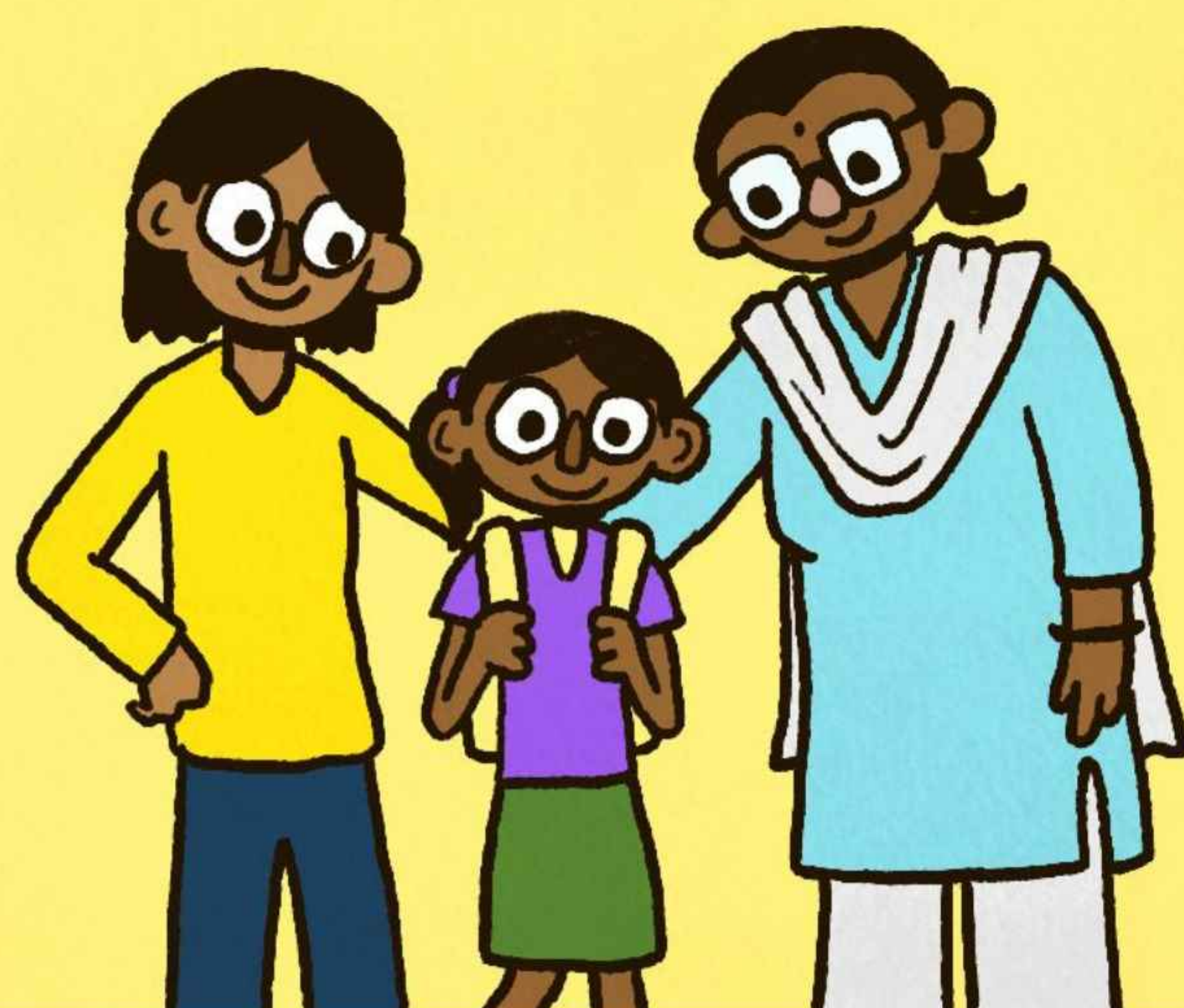
A YEAR PASSED BY AND GATIKA STARTED MISSING HER BOOKS. SHE FEARED THAT SITTING AT HOME, SHE WOULD FORGET HOW TO USE HER BRAIN AND SHARED THESE FEARS WITH HER FRIEND REVATHI.



SO WHEN REVATHI GOT TO KNOW ABOUT THE CHILD ACTIVITY CENTRE (CAC) OPENED BY CRY IN THEIR VILLAGE FOR UNDERSERVED CHILDREN LIKE THEM, SHE IMMEDIATELY TOOK GATIKA THERE. THE CAC TURNED OUT TO BE A BEACON OF HOPE FOR GATIKA. THE TEACHERS IN THE CENTRE NOT ONLY EMBRACED HER WITH KINDNESS, THEY ALSO INVESTED TIME IN UNDERSTANDING HER UNIQUE CONTEXT.



THEY HELPED HER NAVIGATE THROUGH HER OWN FEELINGS ABOUT HER DISABILITY AND PEOPLE'S REACTIONS TO IT, THROUGH PSYCHO SOCIAL CLASSES.



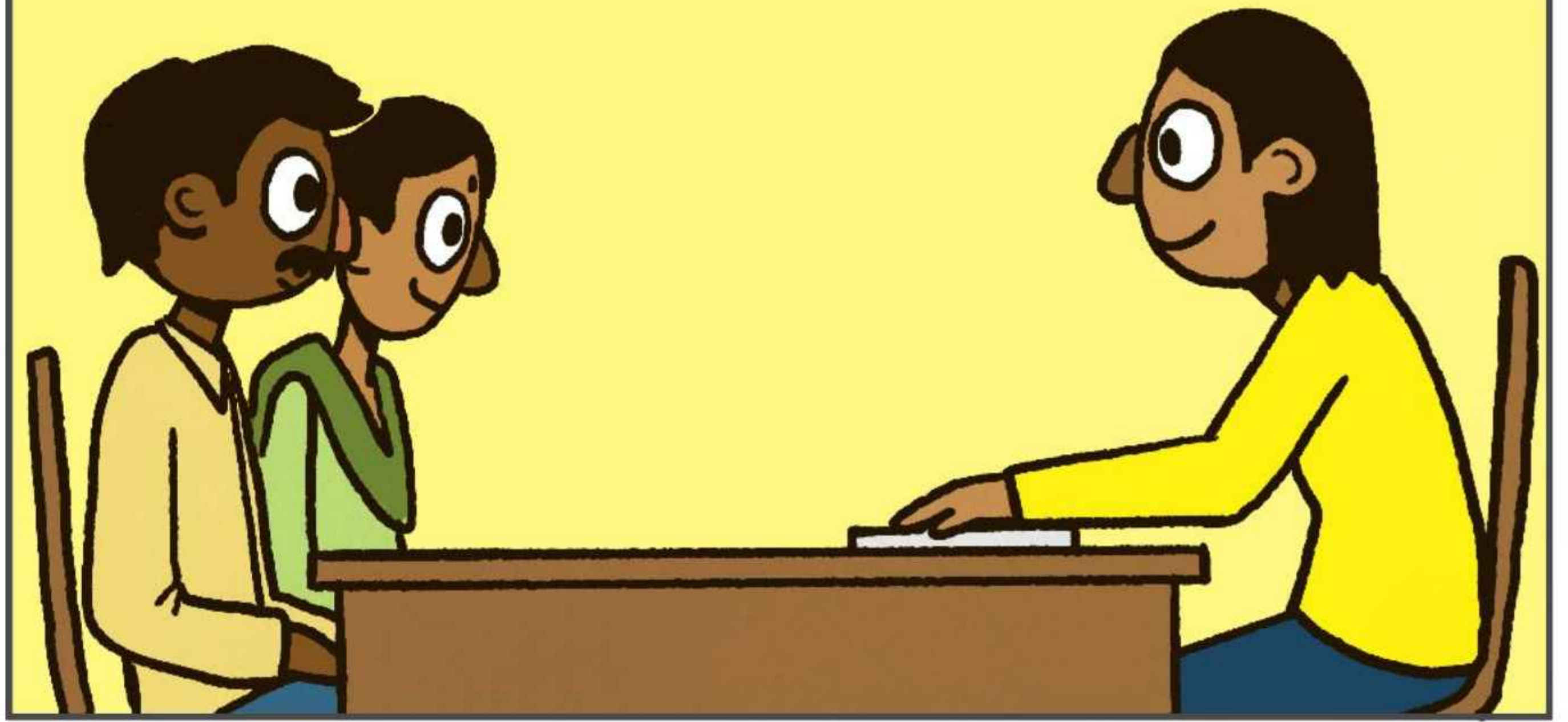
INSPIRING STORIES ABOUT FAMOUS PEOPLE RISING AGAINST ALL ODDS HELPED IN INSTILLING COURAGE IN HER AND LIFTED HER SPIRITS. EXPOSURE THROUGH CHILDREN'S COLLECTIVE MADE HER AWARE ABOUT HER RIGHTS, DUTIES AND ALSO GAVE HER A SENSE OF BELONGING & ACCEPTANCE.



SINCE GATIKA WAS AN EXTREMELY BRIGHT STUDENT, SHE STARTED HELPING HER PEERS WHICH EARNED HER LOVE AND RESPECT AND SOON SHE MADE A LOT OF FRIENDS.



THE TEACHERS IN THE CAC ALSO COUNSELLED GATIKA'S PARENTS AND SHE WAS RE-ENROLLED IN ANOTHER SCHOOL IN THE NEARBY TOWN.



TODAY GATIKA IS IN HER FIRST YEAR, STUDYING B.SC BIOTECHNOLOGY.

EDUCATION HAS BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN BOOSTING HER SELF-ESTEEM, BREAKING THE CYCLE OF OSTRACIZATION AND HAS MADE HER BELIEVE THAT SHE CAN CREATE HER OWN PATHWAY AND BE SELF-SUFFICIENT.

GATIKA NOW ASPIRES TO BE A TEACHER AND BE A GAME CHANGER FOR OTHER GIRLS LIKE HER.



DESIGNED BY
UDAY SOMANI



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