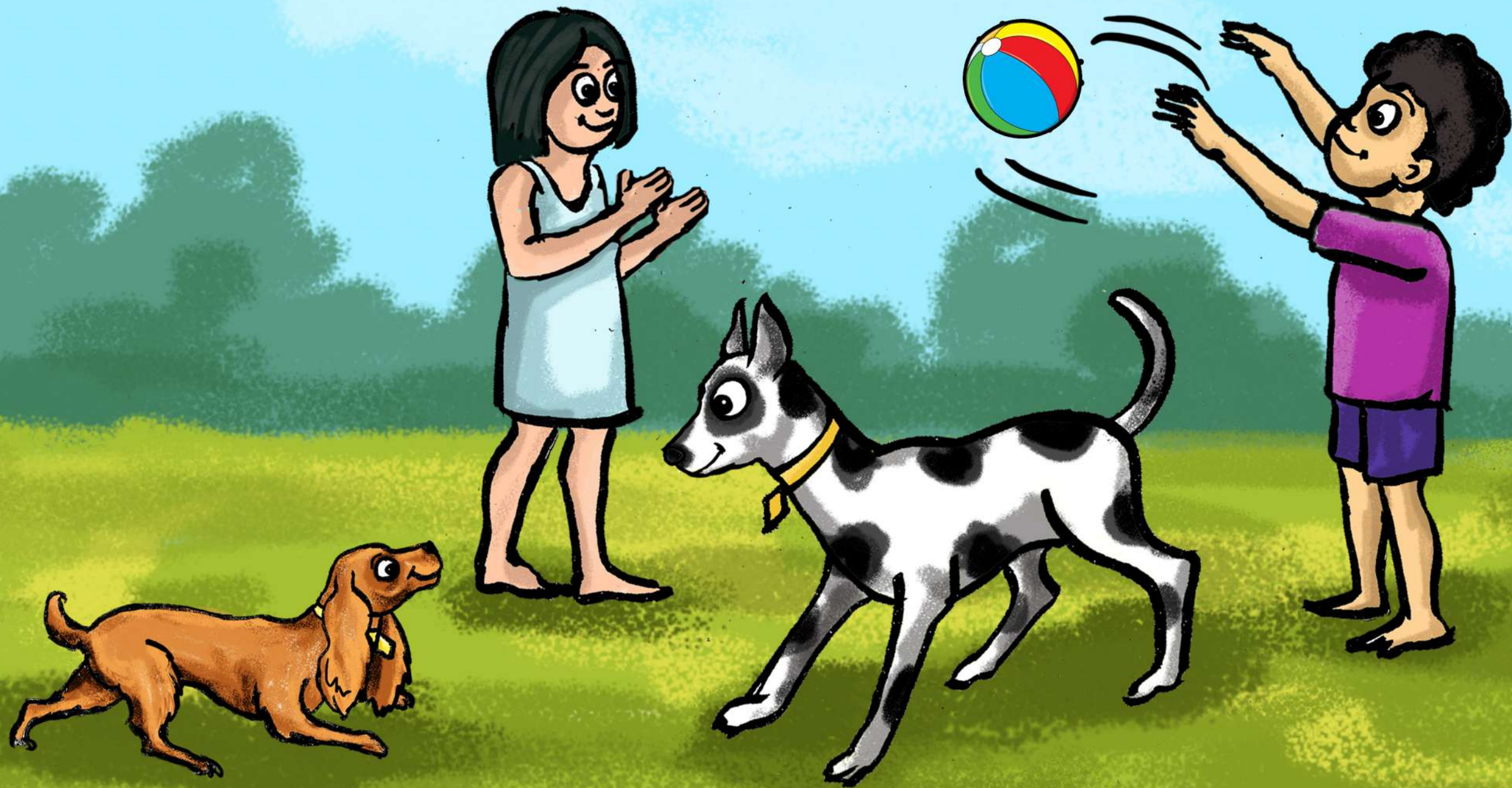
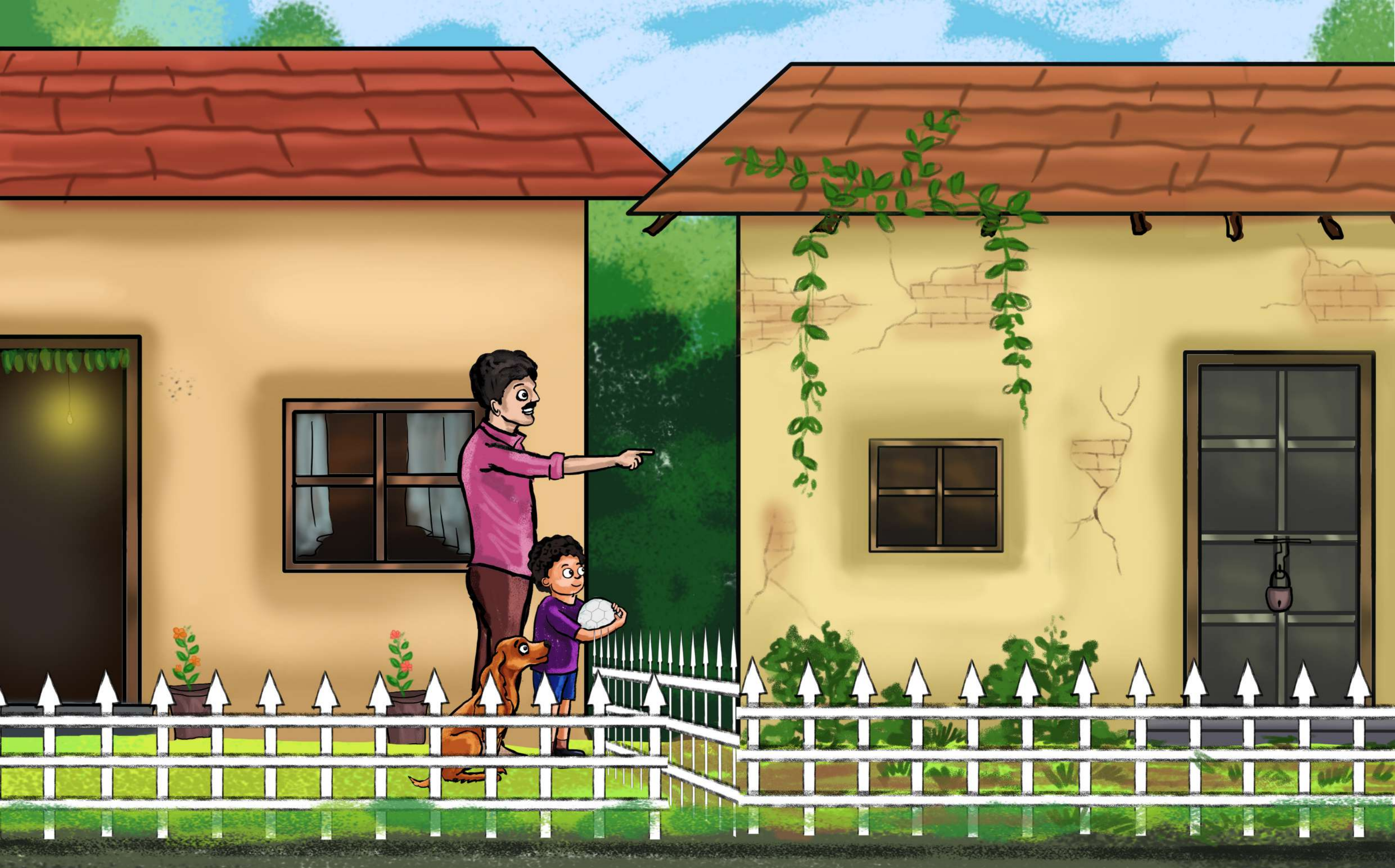
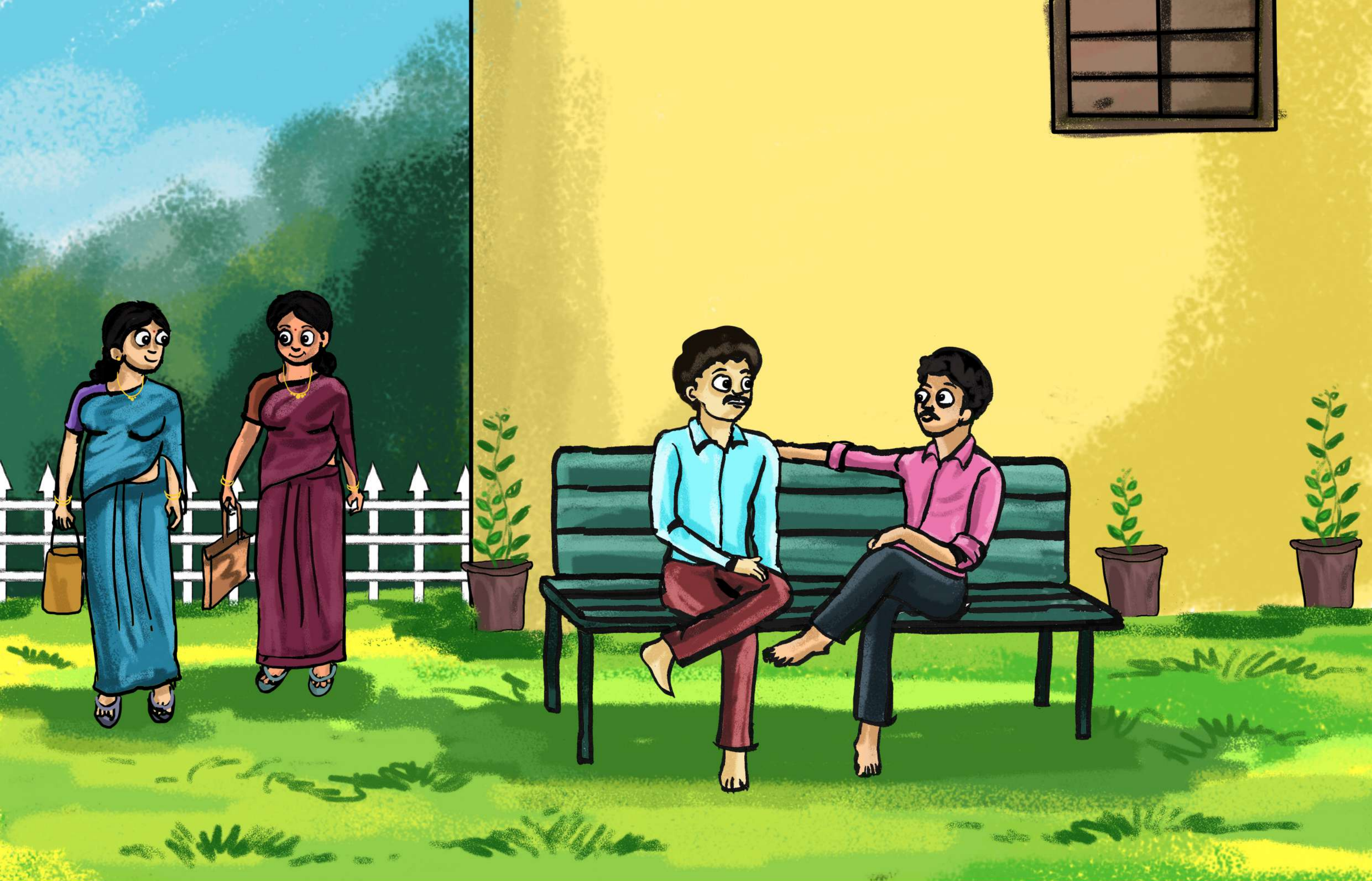


# Tommy's New Neighbour





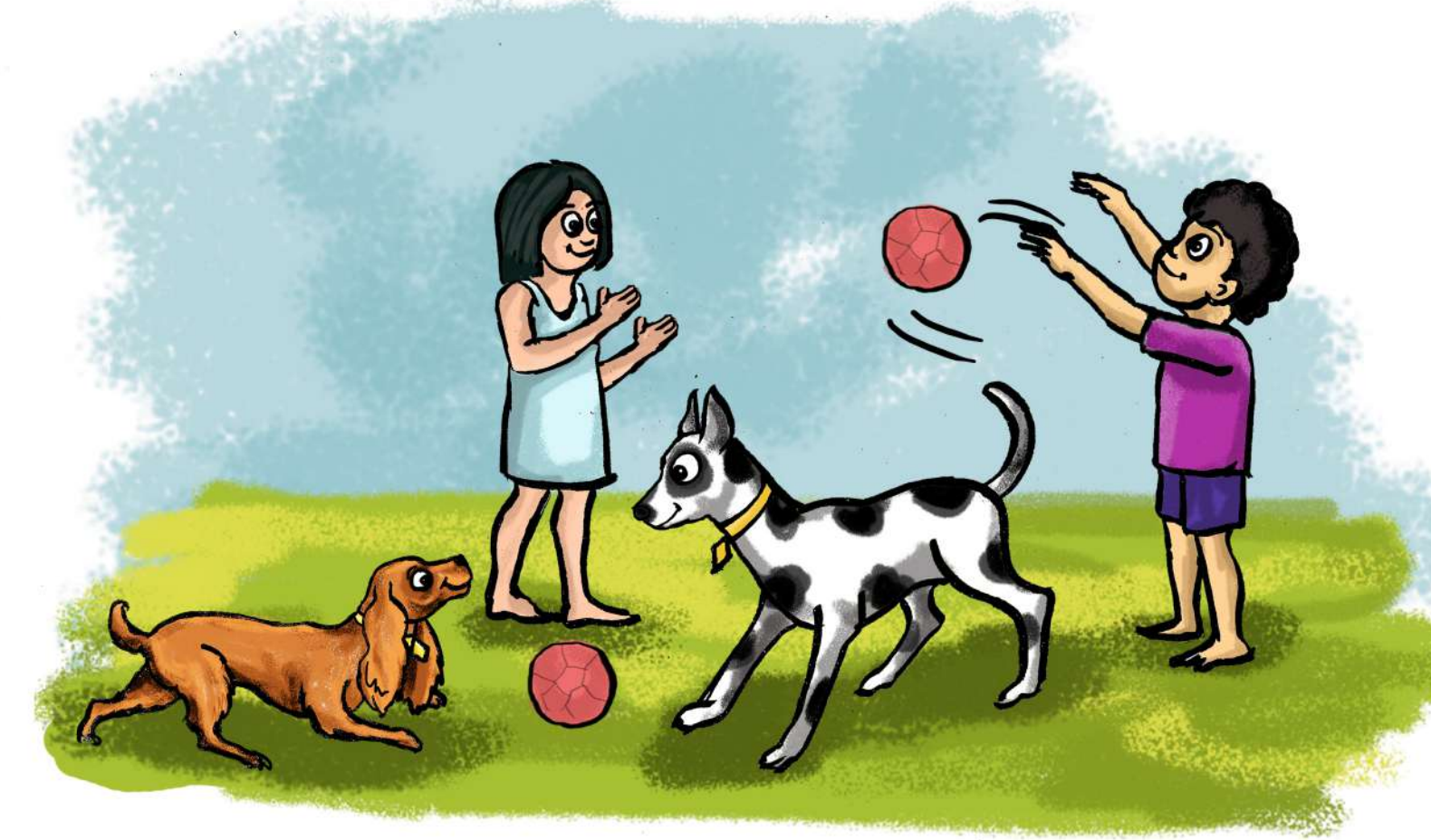
The house next door to Somu's house had been empty for a long time. "I wish someone nice would move in there, so I could have someone to play with," Somu would keep saying. One day, Somu's father came home and called out to him: "Hey Somu, I have news for you...a family has moved into the house next door! They have a girl who is your age—her name is Leela-- so you have someone to play with...and guess what! They even have a dog...so Tommy can have a new friend too!"



Somu's parents and Leela's parents became good friends. Their fathers would meet and talk about gardening sometimes, their mothers would go shopping together.



Somu and Leela also became very good friends: they went to the same school and played hide-and-seek in the park or watched cartoons together at home. So, everyone was happy...except for Tommy.



The next door dog, Bozo was bigger and stronger than Tommy. At first, he seemed very friendly—he would wag his tail when Tommy went over with Somu. He and Tommy would both play ball and hide and seek with Somu and Leela. In fact, Tommy thought Bozo was a kind and friendly dog and liked him very much.



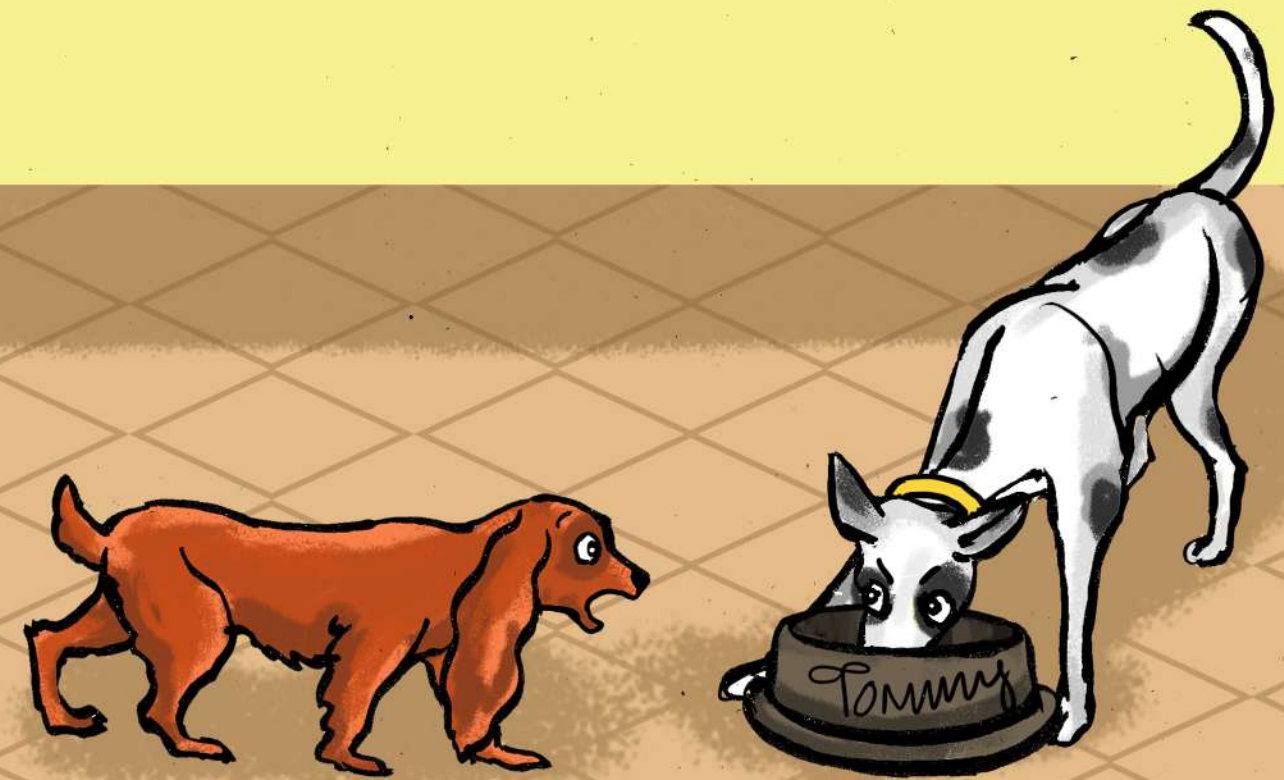
But after a while, Tommy began to wonder whether Bozo was really as friendly and nice as he seemed. Once he ate up Somu's biscuit when he was not looking and Somu scolded Tommy for it, thinking it was his dog who had done it.



When they played ball, Bozo who had been gentle and playful before began to push Tommy in a rough and hurtful way, especially when Somu was not looking. Tommy felt sad and confused. "Doesn't Bozo like me? Why does he hurt me like this?" thought Tommy.

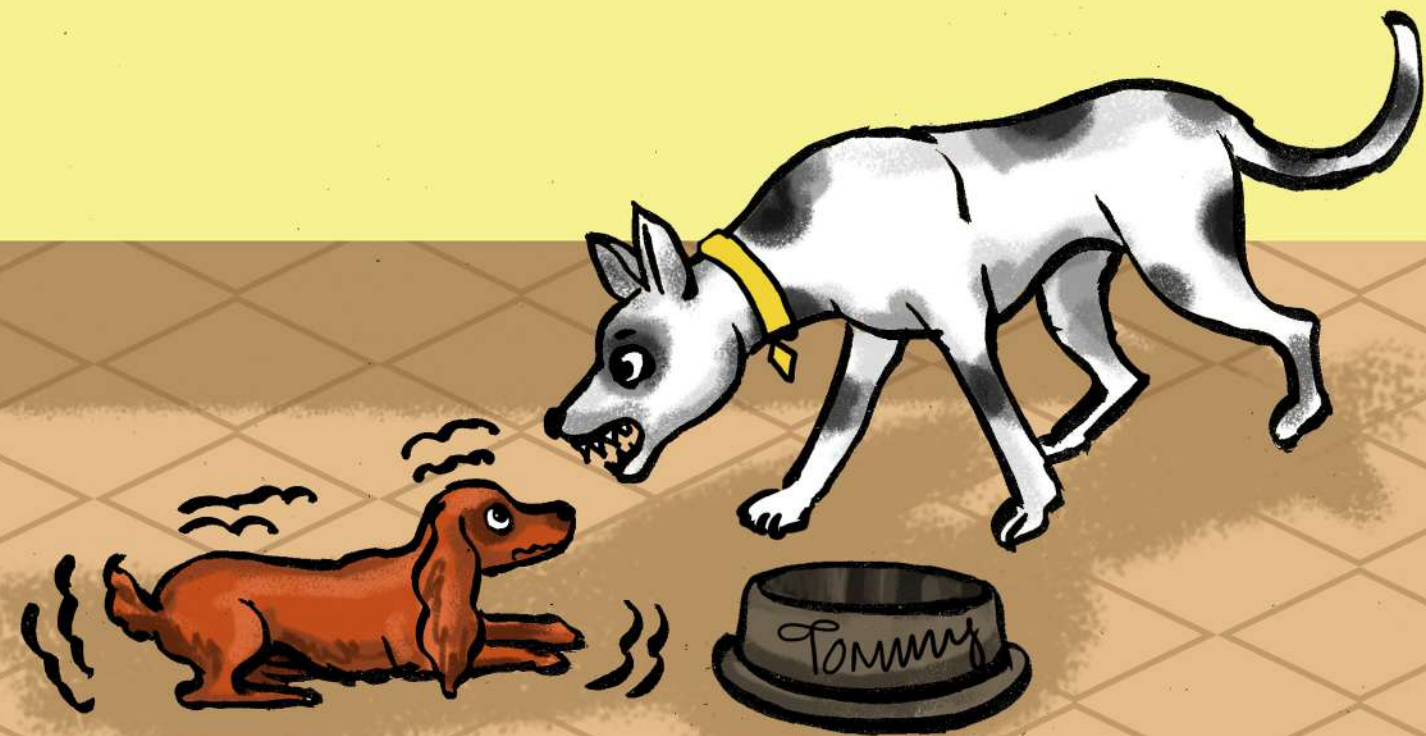
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One day, Tommy went to eat his breakfast and found his food bowl empty. He was very surprised as he knew he had not yet eaten his porridge and could not imagine how it had disappeared. Somu and his parents would never have forgotten to fill his bowl. This continued to happen—each morning, his porridge would be missing and poor Tommy would be hungry. Since Tommy got little to eat these days, he grew thinner and more tired and Somu could not understand why.

Then, one morning, when Tommy went to eat his breakfast, he was just in time to see Bozo eating up the last of his porridge. "So it is you who has been eating my breakfast everyday! How could you do that? I thought you were my friend!" said Tommy. "I am no friend of your's...you thought wrong," laughed Bozo, showing his big white teeth. "And if you let Somu know that I eat your breakfast, I will fight you...and you know I am bigger and stronger than you...so, be careful! And Somu will never believe you if you tell him—he likes me!"



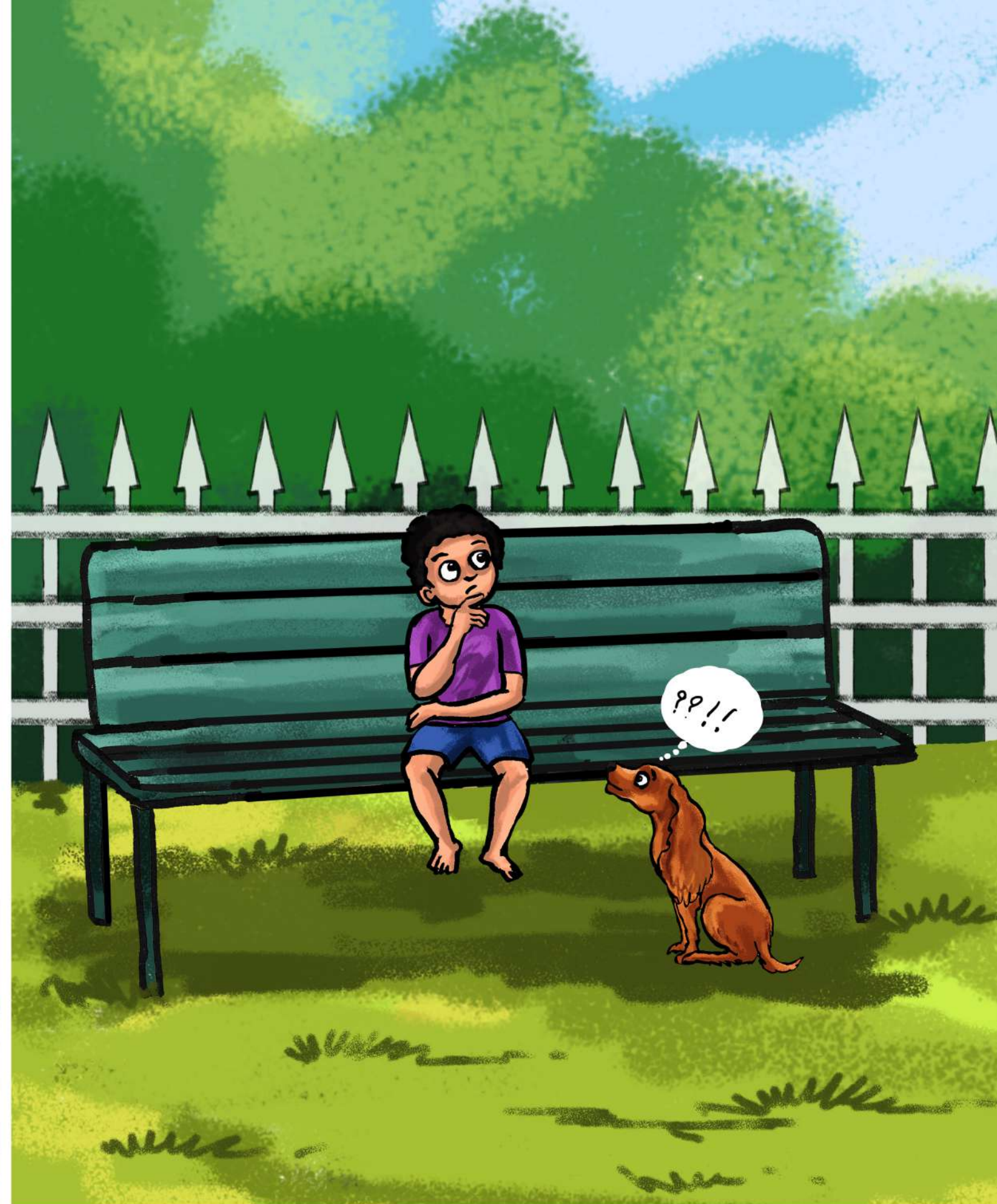
Tommy retreated in a hurry and sat under Somu's bed all day, for fear that Bozo would hurt him. Somu could not understand why Tommy no longer came out to play with him or went to the park or followed him to school. He saw that Tommy looked sad and scared these days. "What's the matter, Tommy? Something seems to be wrong..." said Somu.



The next day, Tommy decided that Somu must know the truth. So, knowing when Bozo would come to eat his breakfast, Tommy pulled at Somu's shoelace until Somu got up from the breakfast table and followed him outside. And there was Bozo, eating Tommy's porridge. "Bad dog," said Somu to Bozo. "So, that is why Tommy seems thin and hungry and sad all the time!"

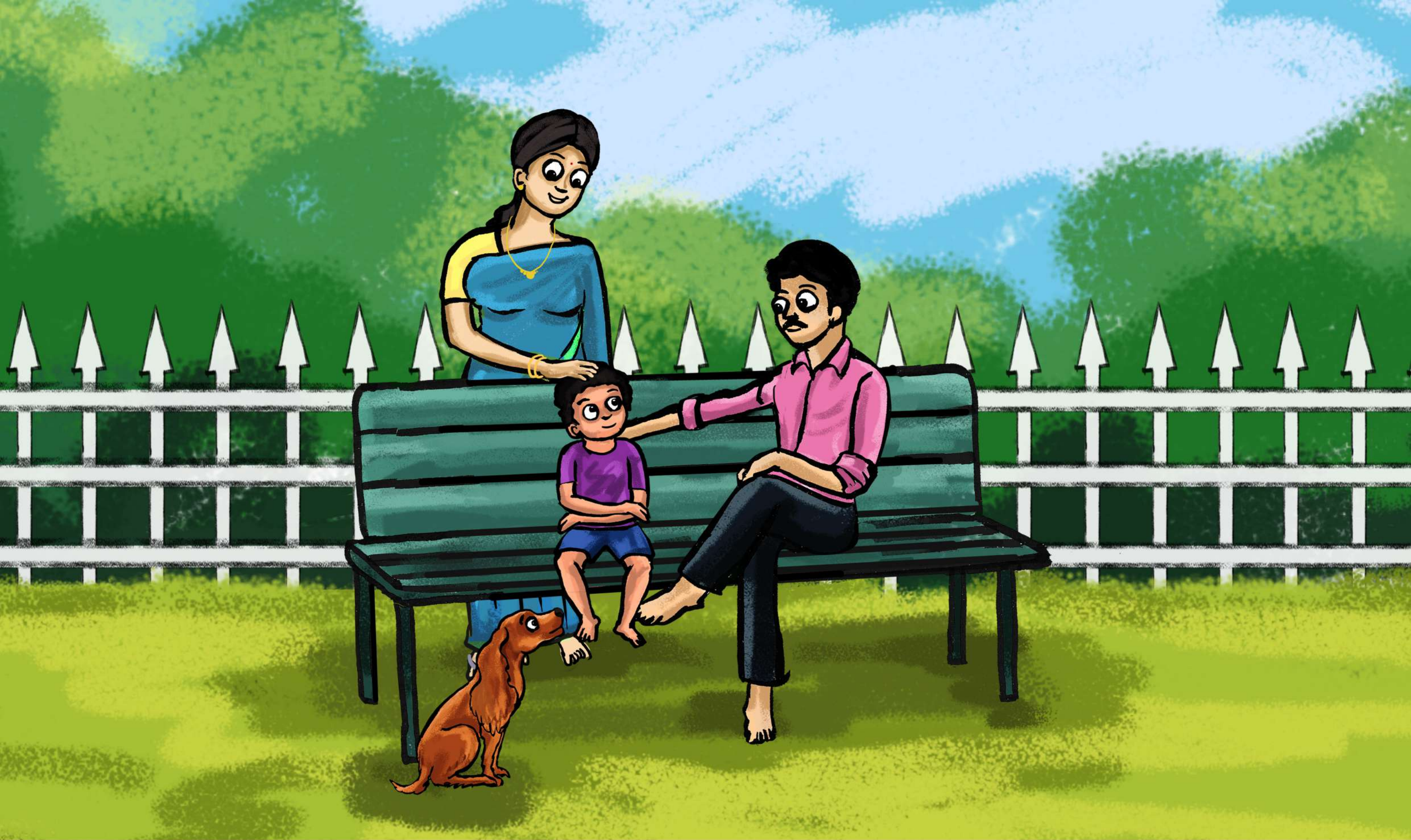


Somu told Leela about Bozo's being mean and nasty to Tommy. Leela was also angry with her dog and punished him—Bozo was not allowed outside to play for several days and all his favourite foods were taken away from him.



"And to think that we thought Bozo was a good, friendly dog!" said Somu. "Sometimes even people we think we know and believe to be nice can be hurtful and unsafe. Am so glad that Tommy told me about Bozo—else, we would never have known how mean he was being to Tommy. But how do we know then who to trust and whom not to trust?"





"When people we know start to do mean or hurtful things...things that make us feel sad or confused or upset, we know then that they are not good people...and cannot be trusted", said Somu's mother. "Sometimes they may seem friendly and nice but do things that are hurtful—just like Bozo did when Tommy thought he was friendly and nice. But most people we know are nice—it's just some people who might be like that. "

"Now I have learnt that even people I know can be unsafe," thought Tommy. "But as Somu's mother said, that's not everyone...and I know now how to be safe, so I need not worry. And am glad I told Somu...if I had not told him, he would not have known Bozo was hurting me." And so, safe and happy now, Tommy fell asleep at Somu's feet.

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