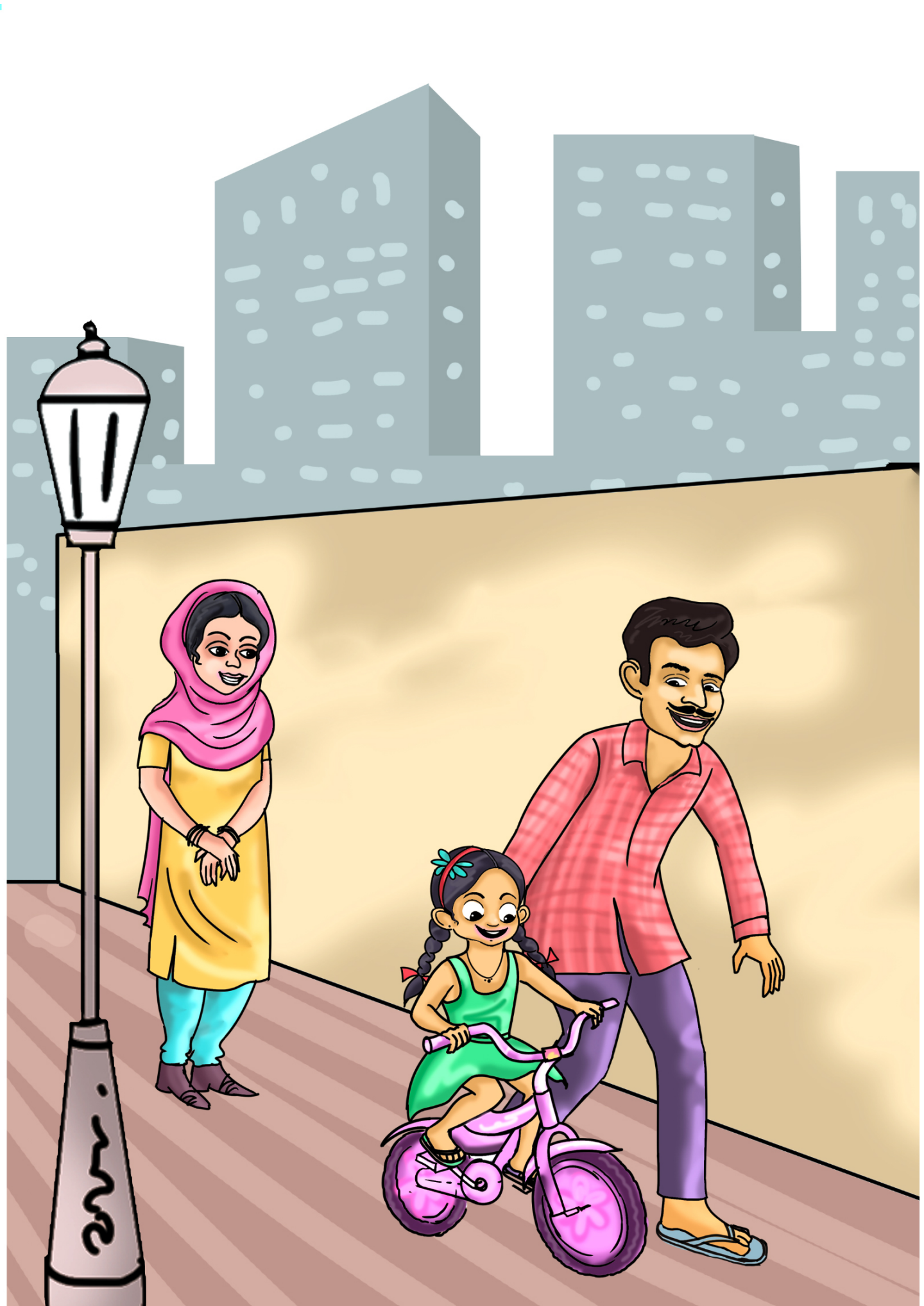


# 'Afsa and Bowwow'

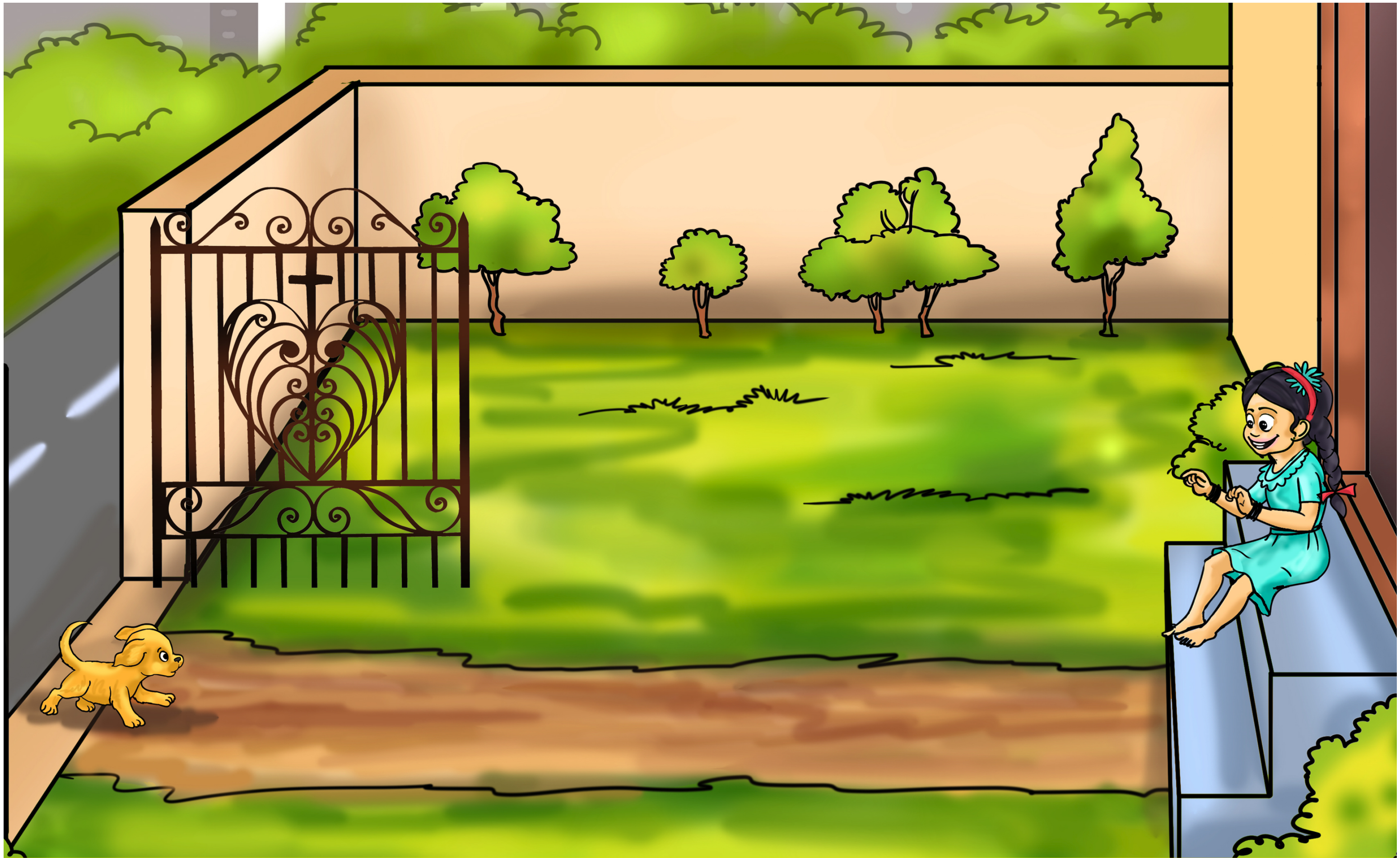




Once upon a time, there was a little girl called Afsa. She lived happily with her parents.



Her parents had always told her stories about their ancestral house, full of cats and dogs, hens and cattle... goats and donkeys...and even a talking parrot! But all that was in the past. Now their home was small. But Afsa had always dreamed of having a pet.



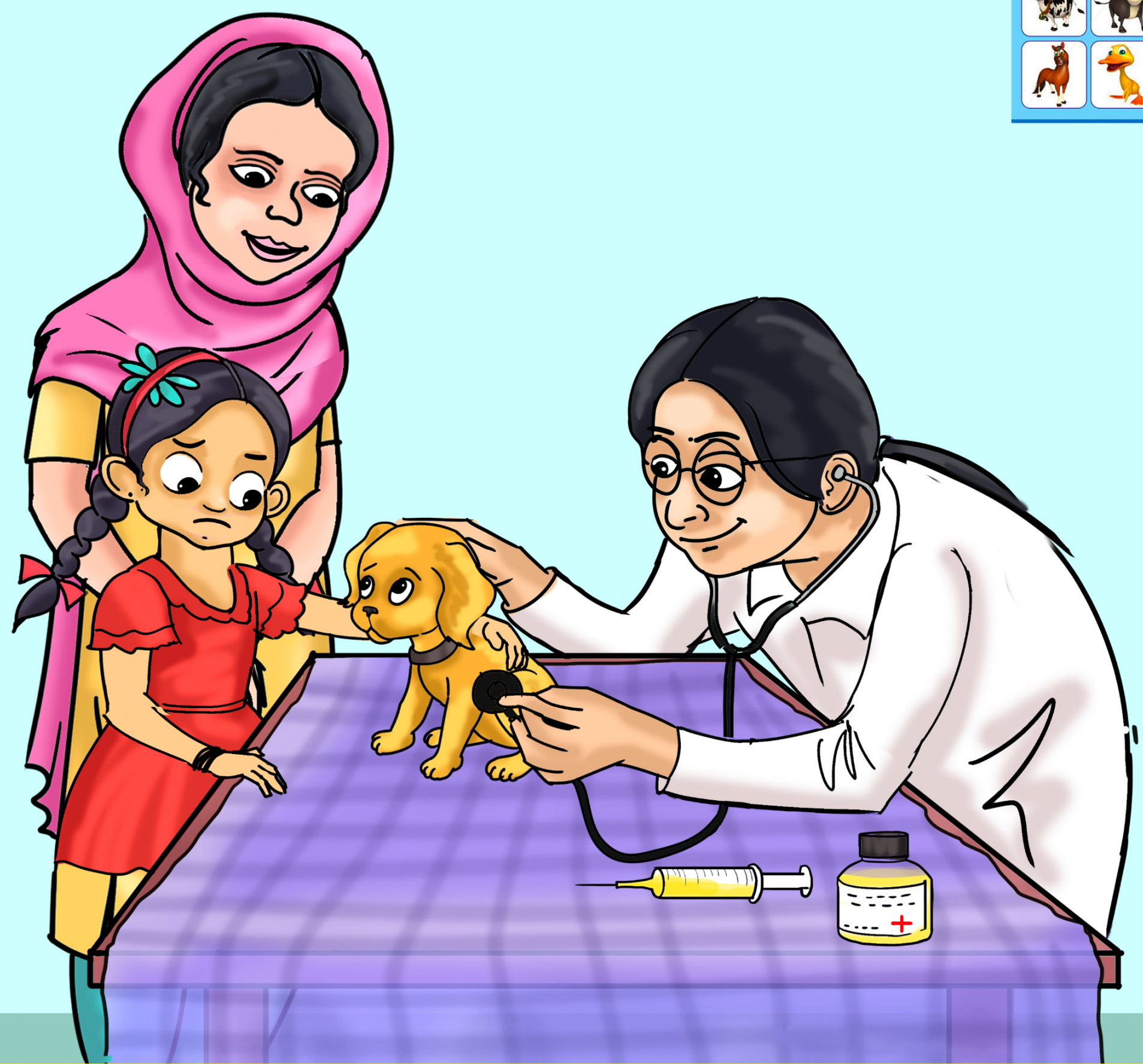
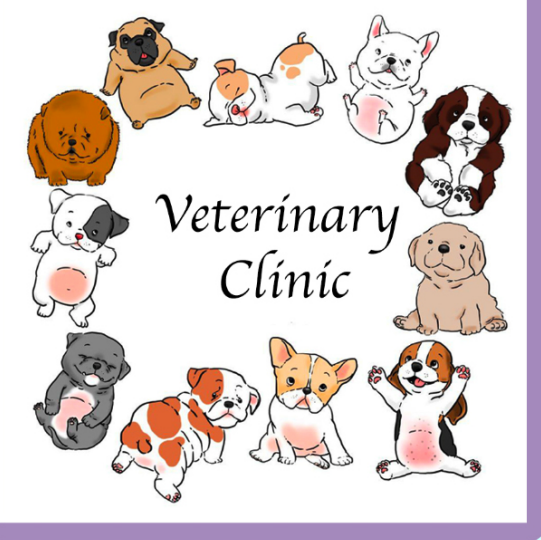
One day a puppy strayed into Afsa's home. She had always seen dogs from afar and liked them. However, she had been too afraid to pet them. But this puppy was a baby—he was fat and chubby with big brown eyes, long droopy ears and a tail that wagged really fast!



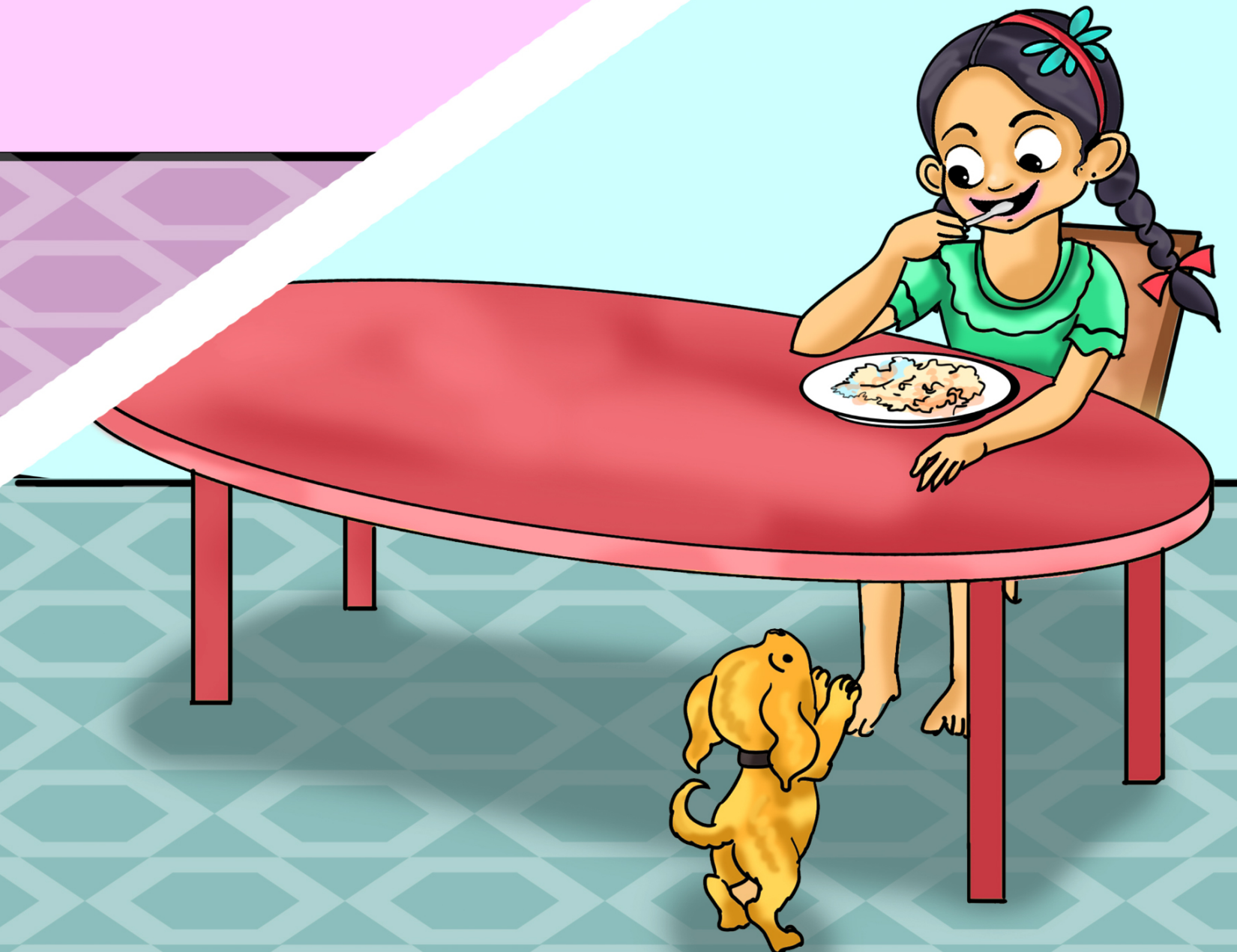
Afisa was very excited and loved him as soon as she saw him! She did not feel afraid at all—especially as he looked up at her with his lovely trusting eyes and placed his soft paws on her feet.



She begged her parents to allow her to keep him.  
Seeing how she loved him already, her parents agreed to let her keep him.  
Afsa named her new pet Bowow.

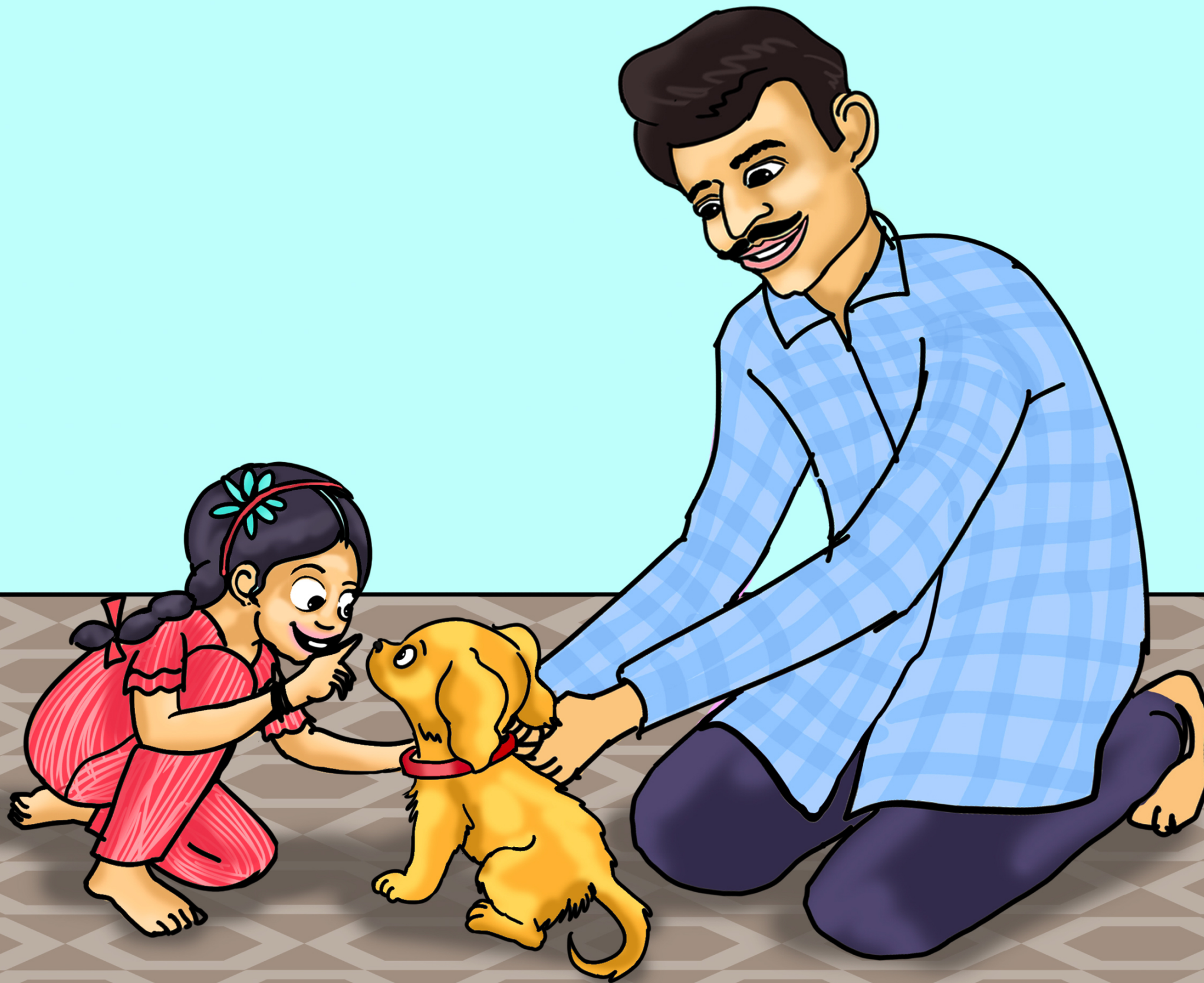


But we must have him vaccinated, so that he remains healthy," said Afsa's mother firmly. So the next day, they went to the doctor for animals and made sure that Bowow got his shots.



Afsa loved Bowow dearly.  
She liked to feed him bread and milk for breakfast everyday;  
He always sat under the table while she ate her food, eagerly awaiting the bones and bits of meat from her meal.





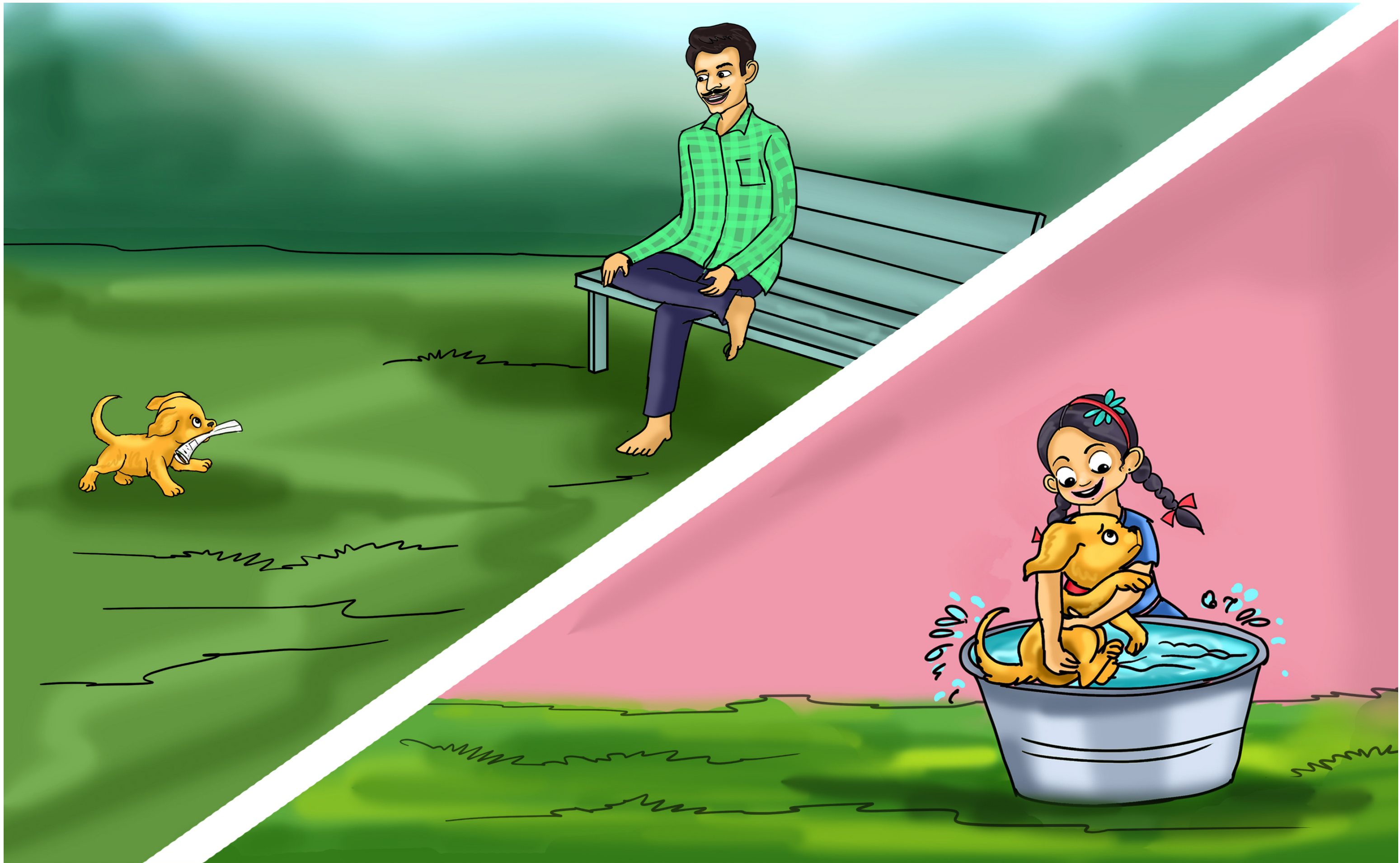
She and her father bought him a beautiful red collar to wear—and Bowow wore it proudly all the time.



Bowow also adored Afsa.  
He waited by the door for her each afternoon, to greet her with licks and friendly barks, as she returned from school.  
She talked to him and read him stories.



In the evenings, he went out with her, to play with the other children in the neighbourhood.  
At night, he slept on her bed, keeping her feet warm.  
He was a loyal friend and never left her side.



She taught him to fetch the newspaper for her father each morning. He really was quite clever! She also loved to bathe him--and Bowow loved splashing in the water. And so the days passed by happily--Bowow grew up as the friendship between them grew.



One day, there was a terrible storm.  
Then the rain came thundering down.  
In a short while, the streets were full of water and the water started flooding Afsa's home and the neighbouring houses.



Everyone was very frightened and people began to hurriedly pack their belongings and move out of the neighbourhood. In the chaos that followed, Afsa's parents also quickly packed a few bags and left. Afsa found herself, still sleepy, in her father's arms, being carried somewhere.



When she awoke, she found herself in a large building where there were many other people, just like them...holding bags and bundles and looking lost and frightened and tired. And that's when Afsa suddenly realized, with shock, that Bowow was not with them. She began to cry, telling her father that they had to go back home now to fetch Bowow.

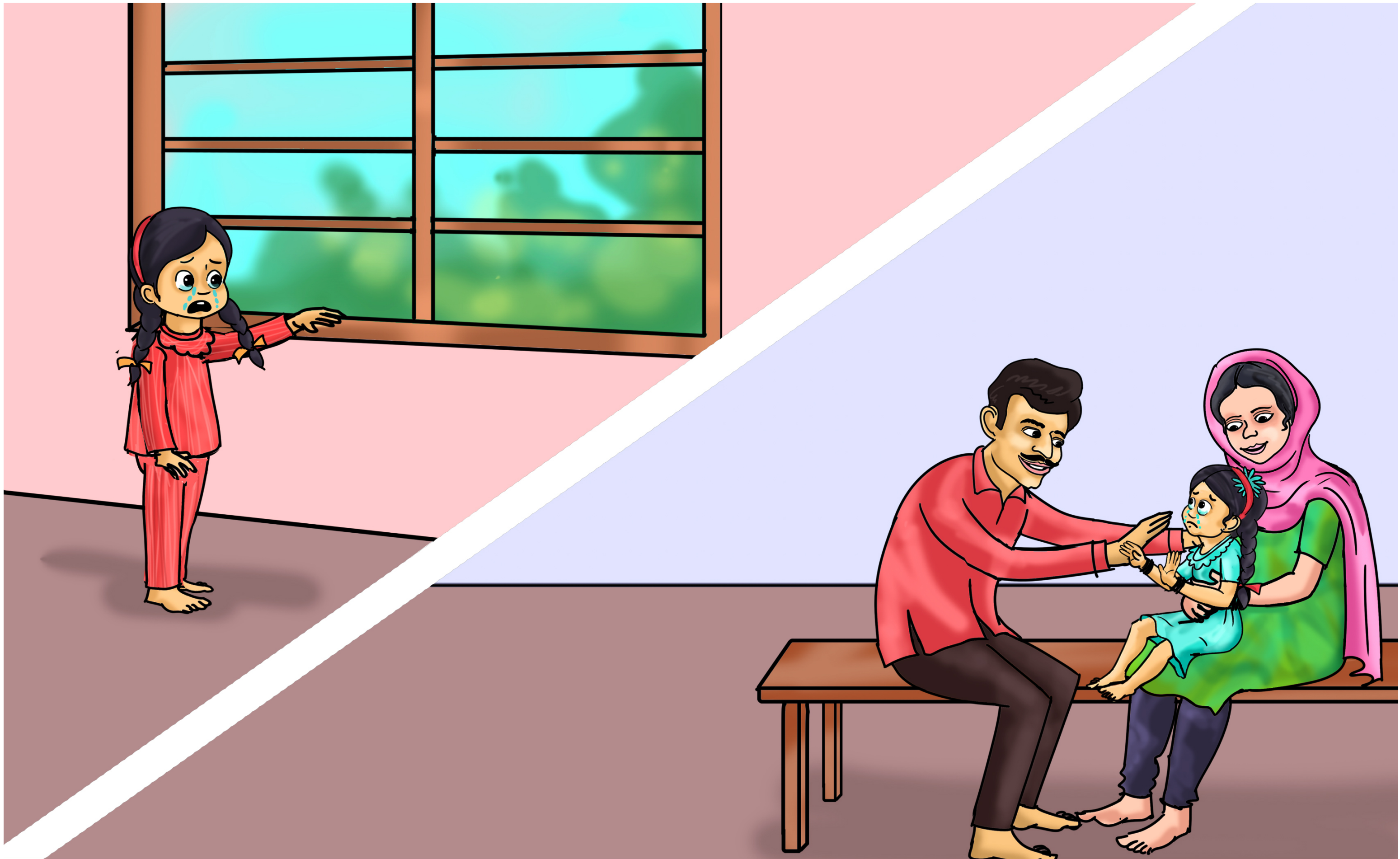


However, her parents said that it was not possible to return home as it was not safe. From now on, they were going to stay in this large building with several other people, whom Afsa did not know. Afsa felt afraid in this new place. It was dirty and crowded and not at all like her home. She disliked all the new people around her and often felt fearful of them.

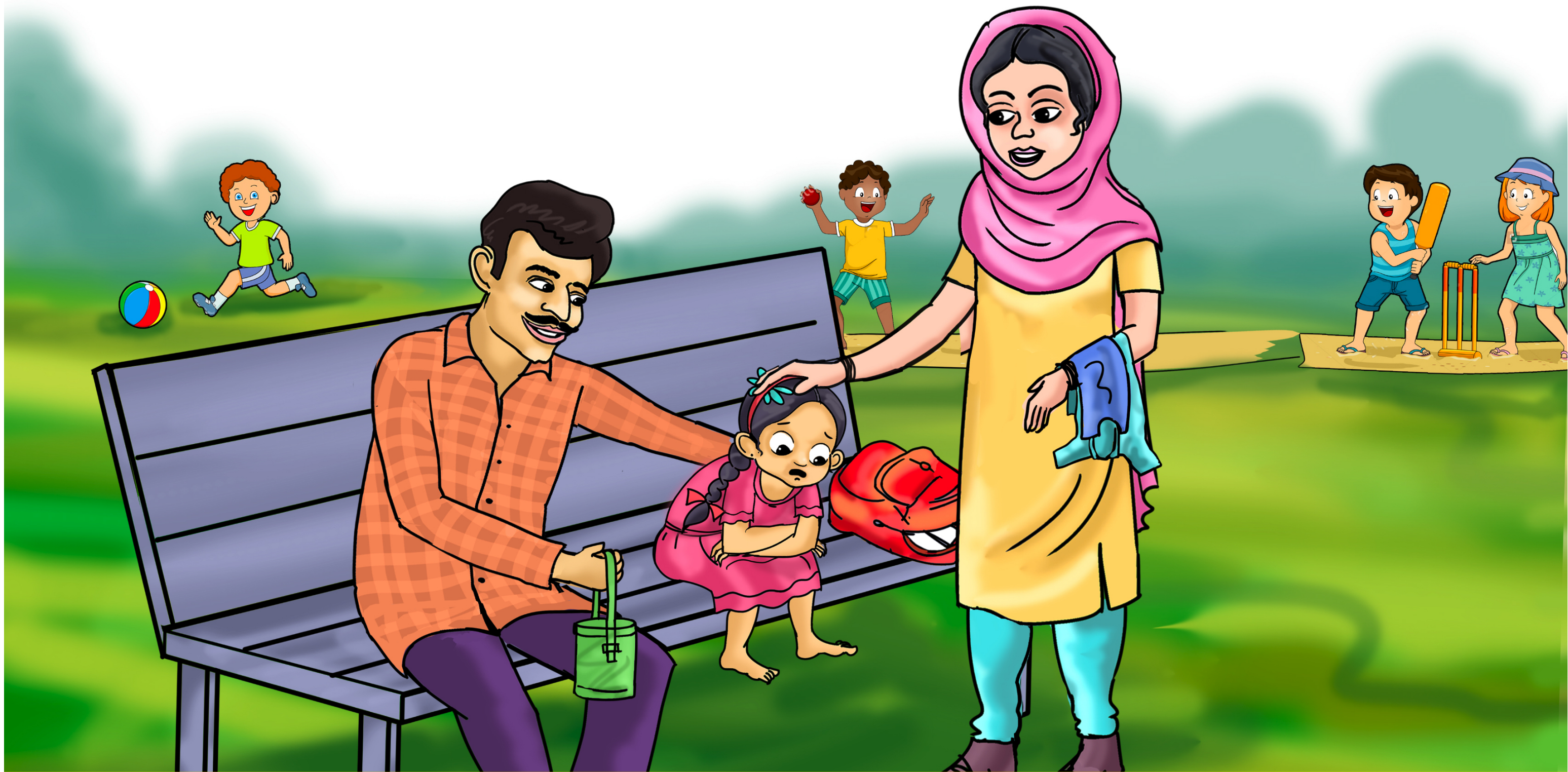




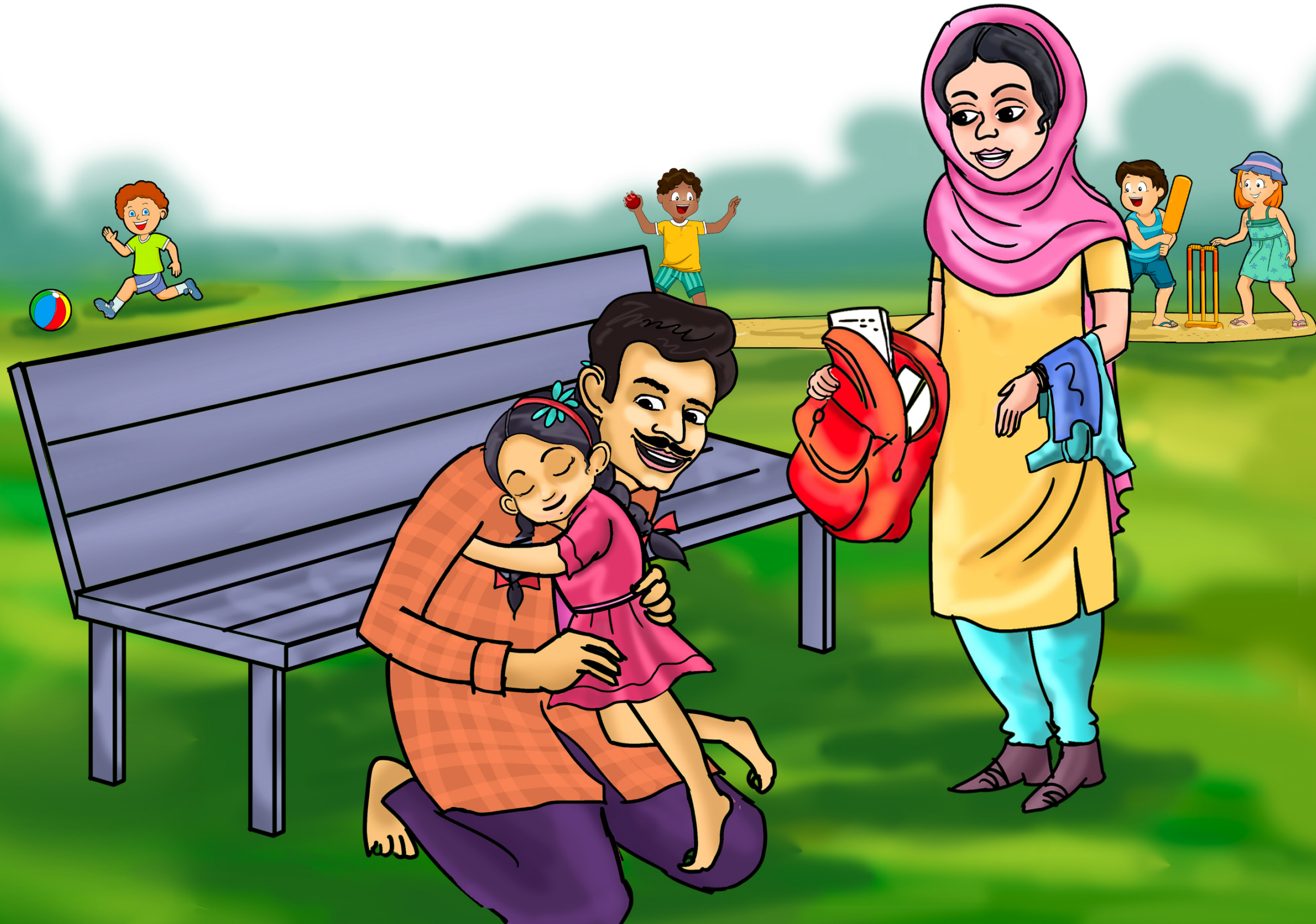
After some weeks, Afsa and her parents found a new house, in a another town. Although it was better than the crowded building they had been in, Afsa was still sad. She missed Bowow. She cried for him every day and was sad all the time. What had happened to him? Where did he go? Was he safe? Her best friend was gone.



She looked out of the window all the time, hoping he would stray in again, just like he had the first time she met him. Her parents tried to console her with the promise of another pet but she did not want one—'Thank you but it won't be Bowow...he was my special friend.'



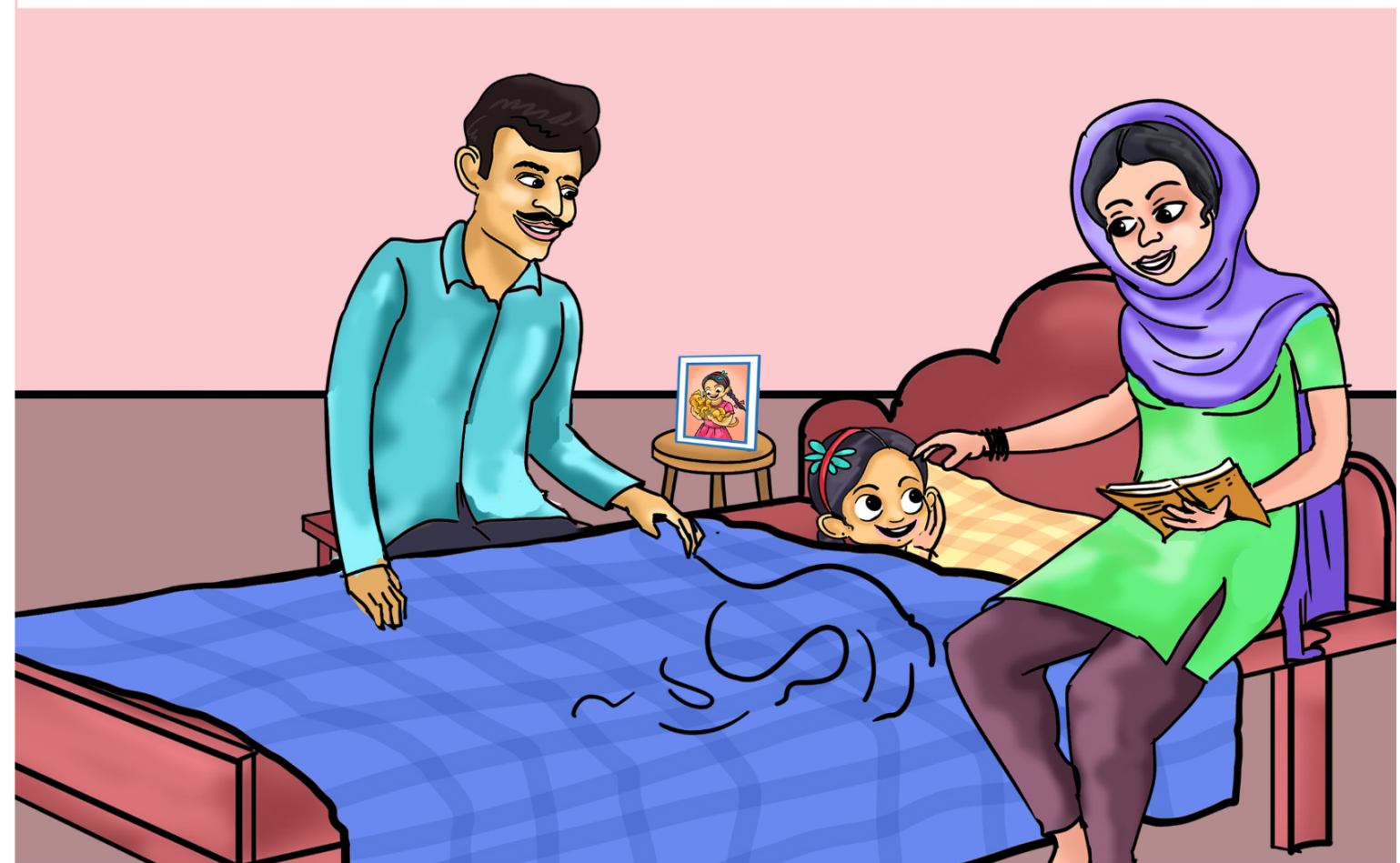
She refused to go to school with the others, not wanting to leave her parents. She refused to play with other children—no matter how hard they coaxed her, she stayed indoors, clinging to her mother. "Did Bowow get lost or go away?" Asfa asked her parents. And then, very fearfully, she asked: "Will you get lost and go away too? What would happen to me then?" So, as she worried about these things, she became more clingy and tearful. Asfa's parents understood how sad she was and how afraid.



"No, I am right here for you...like always. I am not going anywhere and neither is Dad", said her mother. "We know how sad you are about Bowow and how much you miss him...we miss him too".

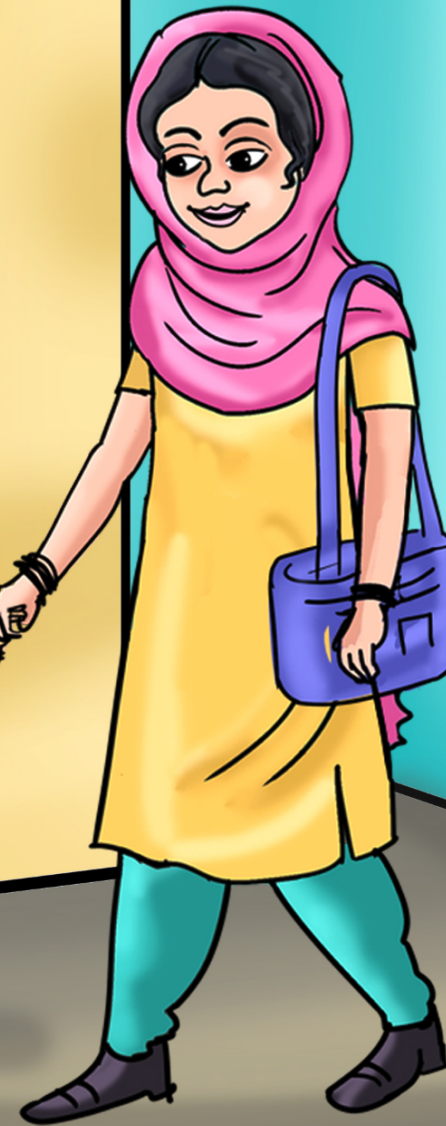
"It was because of the flood that we had to leave home in a hurry...we could not find Bowow at the time..." said Dad. "But just like we made it to safety, perhaps Bowow did too--let us hope that he did."

Her father drew her on to his knee and hugged her. "Mummy and I are here for you...we are not going anywhere," he assured her.



And so, the days went by, with daddy spending lots of time with Afsa, to comfort her and make her feel safe. He and her mummy played board games with her. Mummy read her stories and daddy cooked her favourite foods.

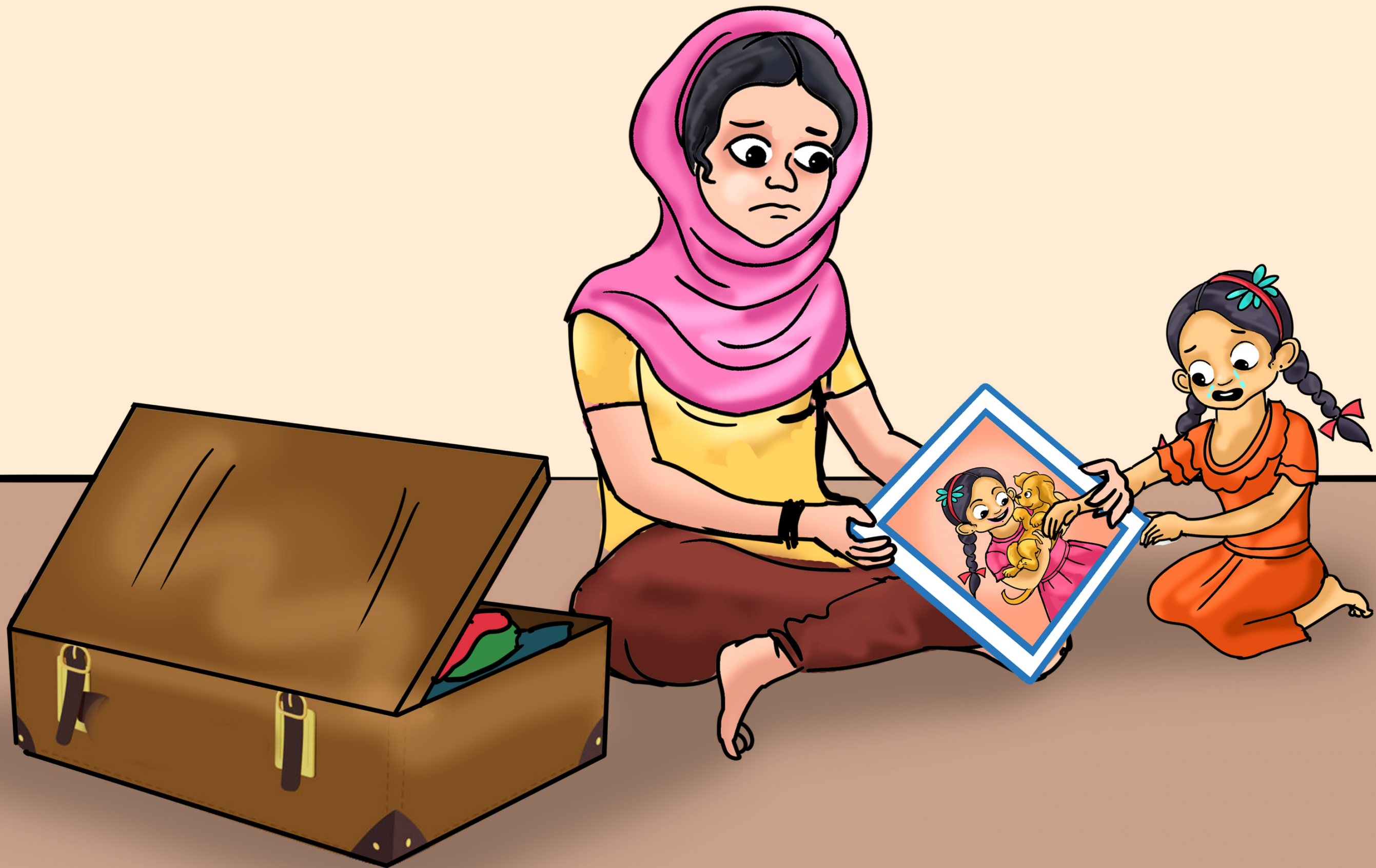
# Megha Shop



# Ice cream shop



Mummy took Afsa to see the shops in their new neighbourhood. Afsa felt cheered when she got some balloons to play with.



One day, Afsa's mother found a photograph of Asfa and Bowow. She showed it to Afsa, who began to cry.



"I know that you miss Bowow. But as daddy said, let us hope that Bowow is safe and well. Perhaps someone else is feeding and looking after him. You know what a friendly dog he is...maybe another family found him and decided to keep him, just like we did."  
"I hope he has found some other child who loves him as much as I did..." said Afsa.

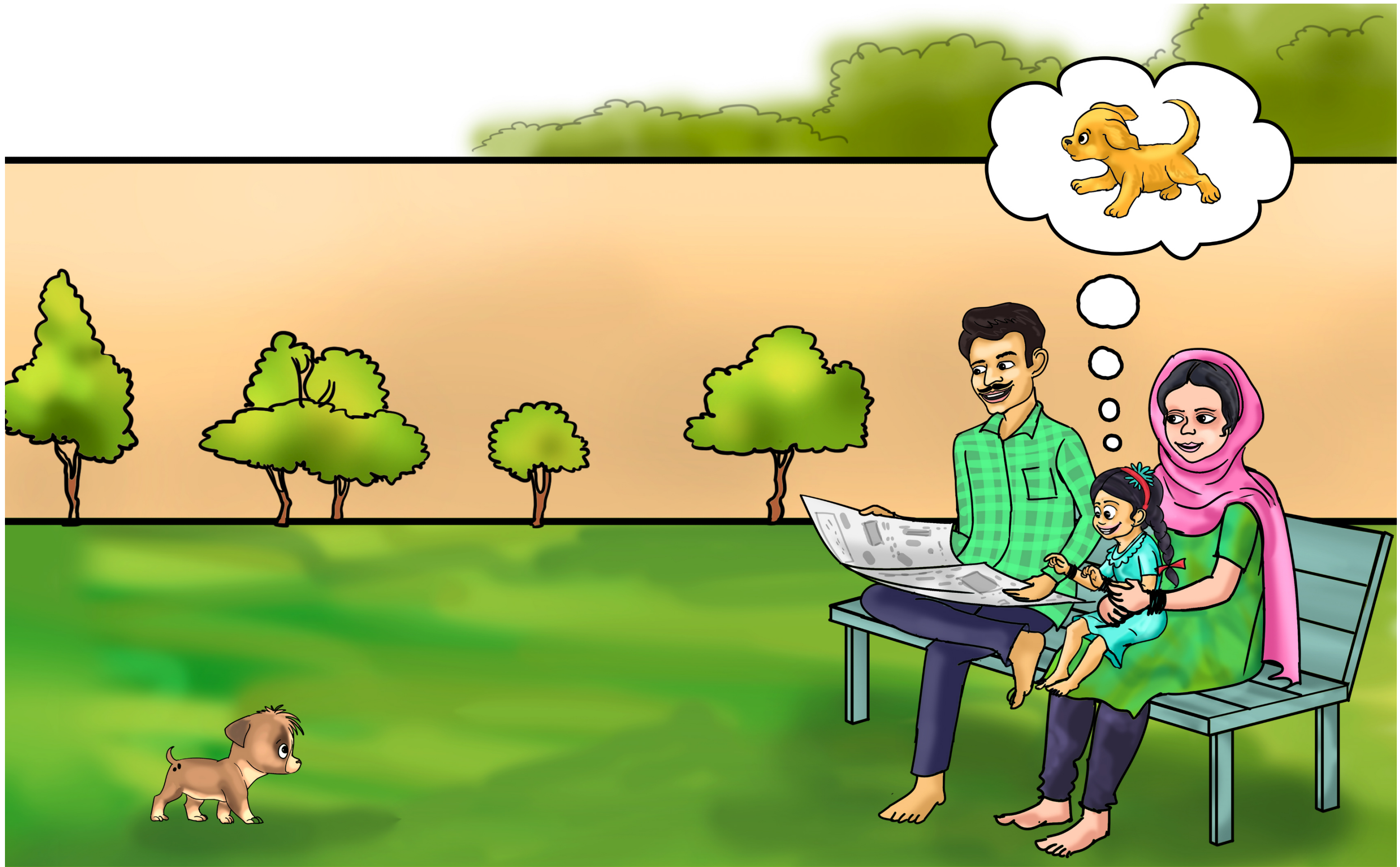




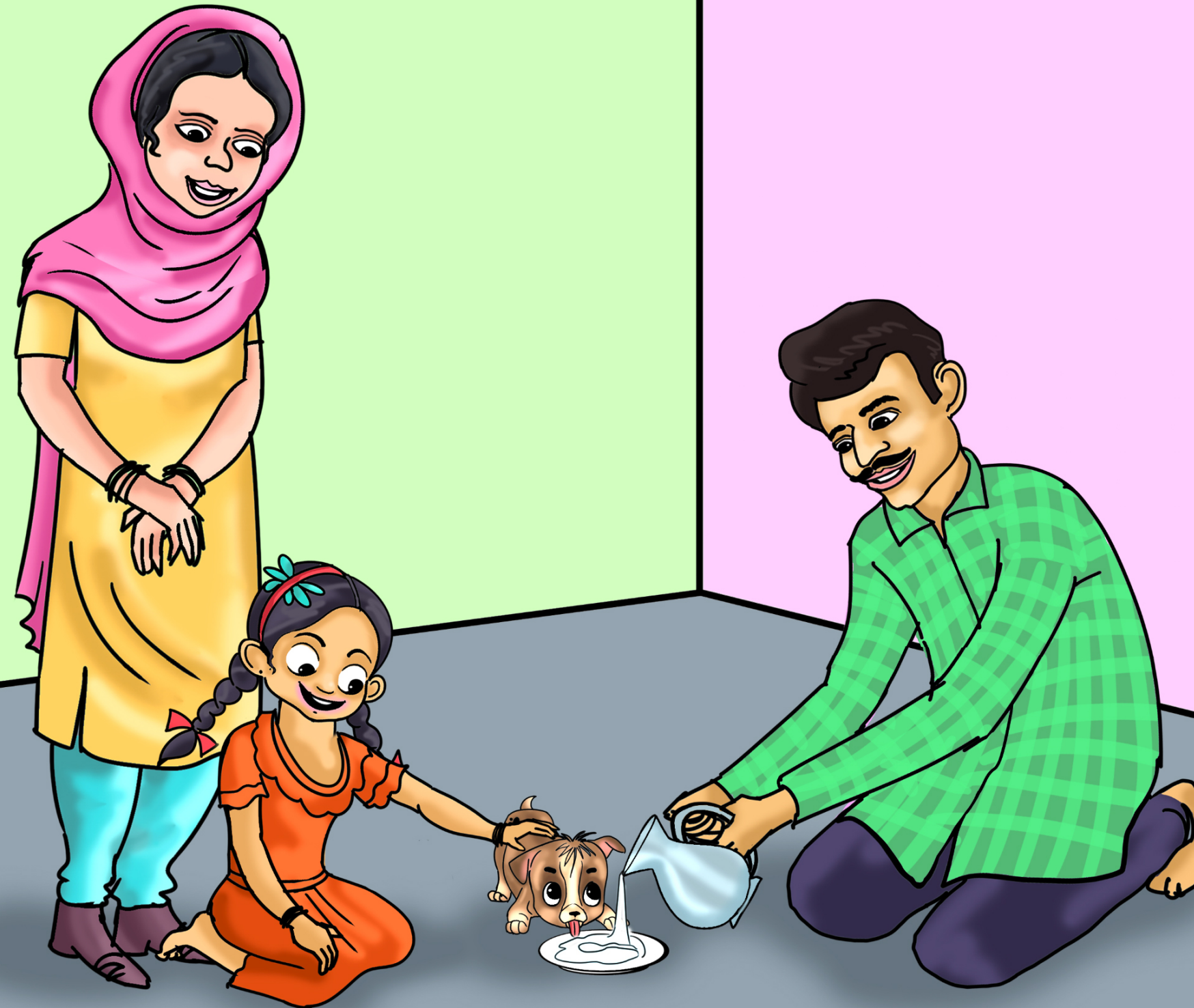
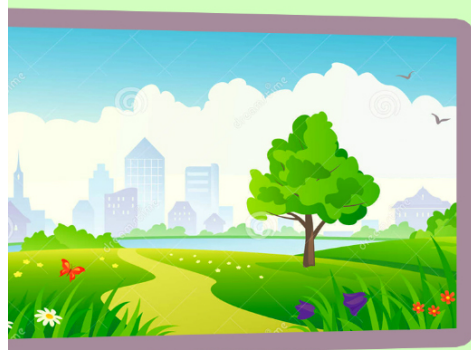
And so, Afsa gradually felt better and less worried about losing her parents. Slowly, she started to make new friends and play again with other children as she used to; she also started going to school again. She felt safe, knowing that her mother was right there at home, waiting for her. She knew that her father would return home each evening to play and put her to sleep.



Although she still missed him, she believed that Bowow might be well and happy somewhere. When she looked at the photograph of the two of them, she remembered all the good times she had with him. She hoped that he was safe and loved, by some family, just like she was by her family.



And one day, you will never believe what happened!  
Another puppy, just like Bowow, strayed into Afsa's house!  
"Look mummy, daddy...he is just as big as Bowow was! He looks different of course...but may be we can keep him?" said Afsa excitedly.



And so, Afssa found a new pet...another dog to love and to look after. "You know", said Afssa to her parents, "if we had not had Bowow, I would not have known how lovely it is to have a dog and how to look after a pet. I am glad we had Bowow and now I am happy we have...O what shall we name this one?" she exclaimed.

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