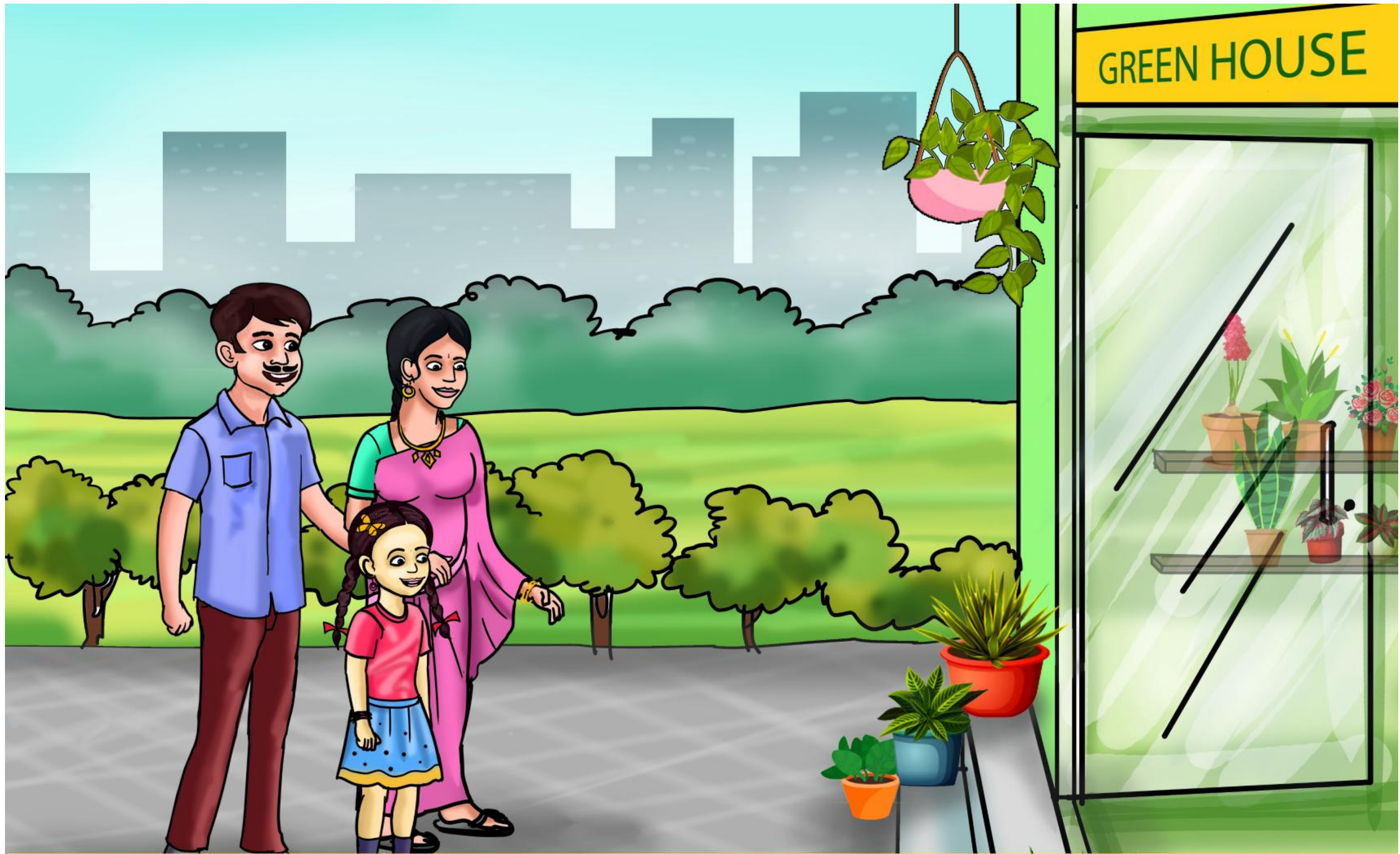


'Leela's Sunflower'





The next Saturday, Leela's parents took her to the nursery nearby—the kind of nursery where plants are grown and sold to people who want them.

Leela was excited, for, the plant nursery was one of her favourite places.

She loved wandering around and looking at the various kinds of plants there, and helping her parents select some to take home.



"Today, we have a special reason for coming to the nursery," said Leela's mother.

"What is that?" asked Leela, curiously.

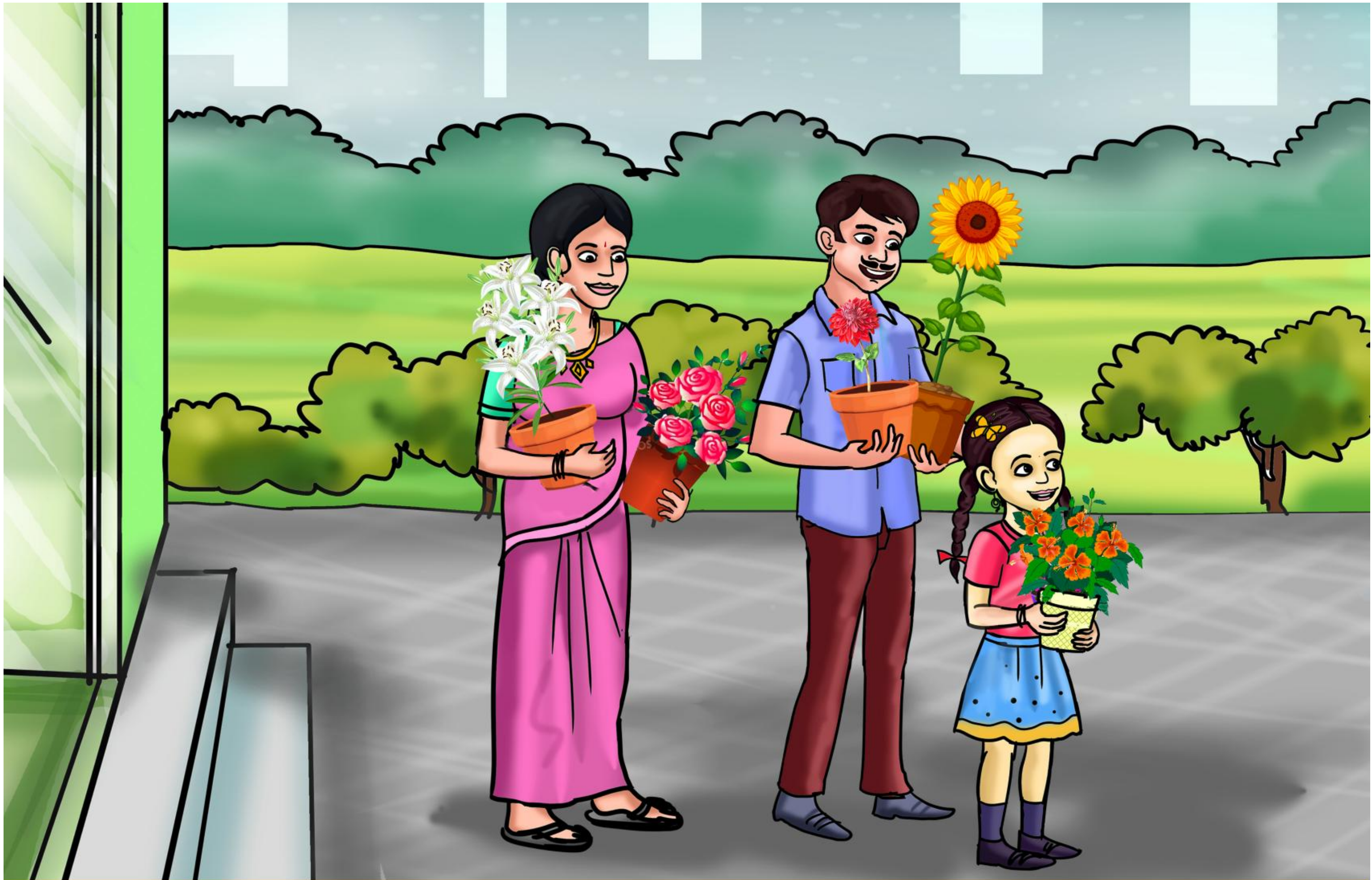
"Pappa and I thought it might be fun for you to have your own patch in the garden—where you get to grow and look after some plants entirely on your own," said her mother.



"So, we are here today for you to select some special plants—ones you really love and want to care for," said Pappa.

"Oooo, how exciting, I would really like that", exclaimed Leela.

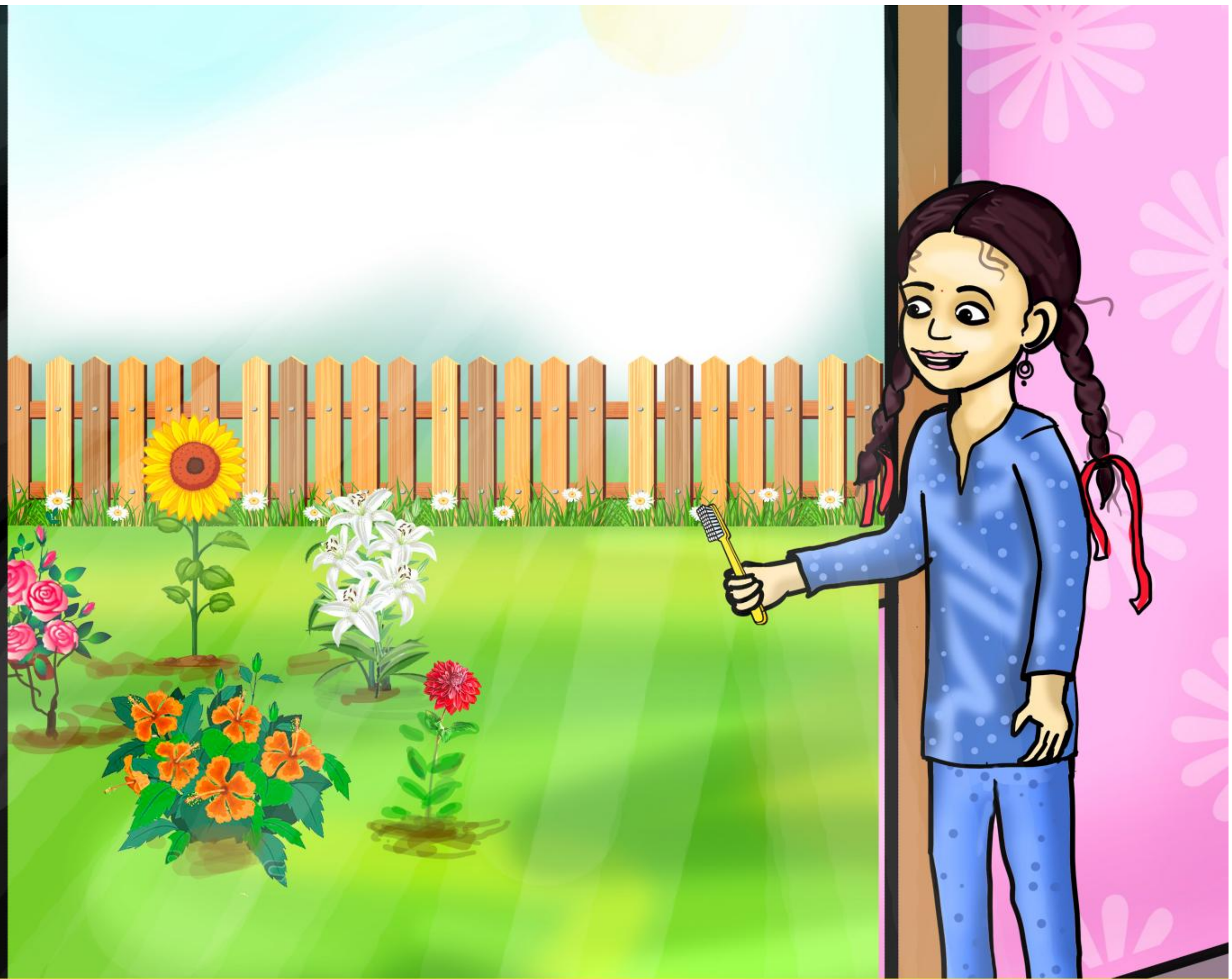
"But remember, these plants are exclusively in your care...they are yours for you to love and look after. So, you will water them, do the weeding, make sure they are safe from insects and pests...mamma and I will be there to help you with suggestions, of course."



And so, a happy Leela went home with five plants: a pink rose, a white lily, an orange hibiscus, a red dhalia, and a yellow sunflower.



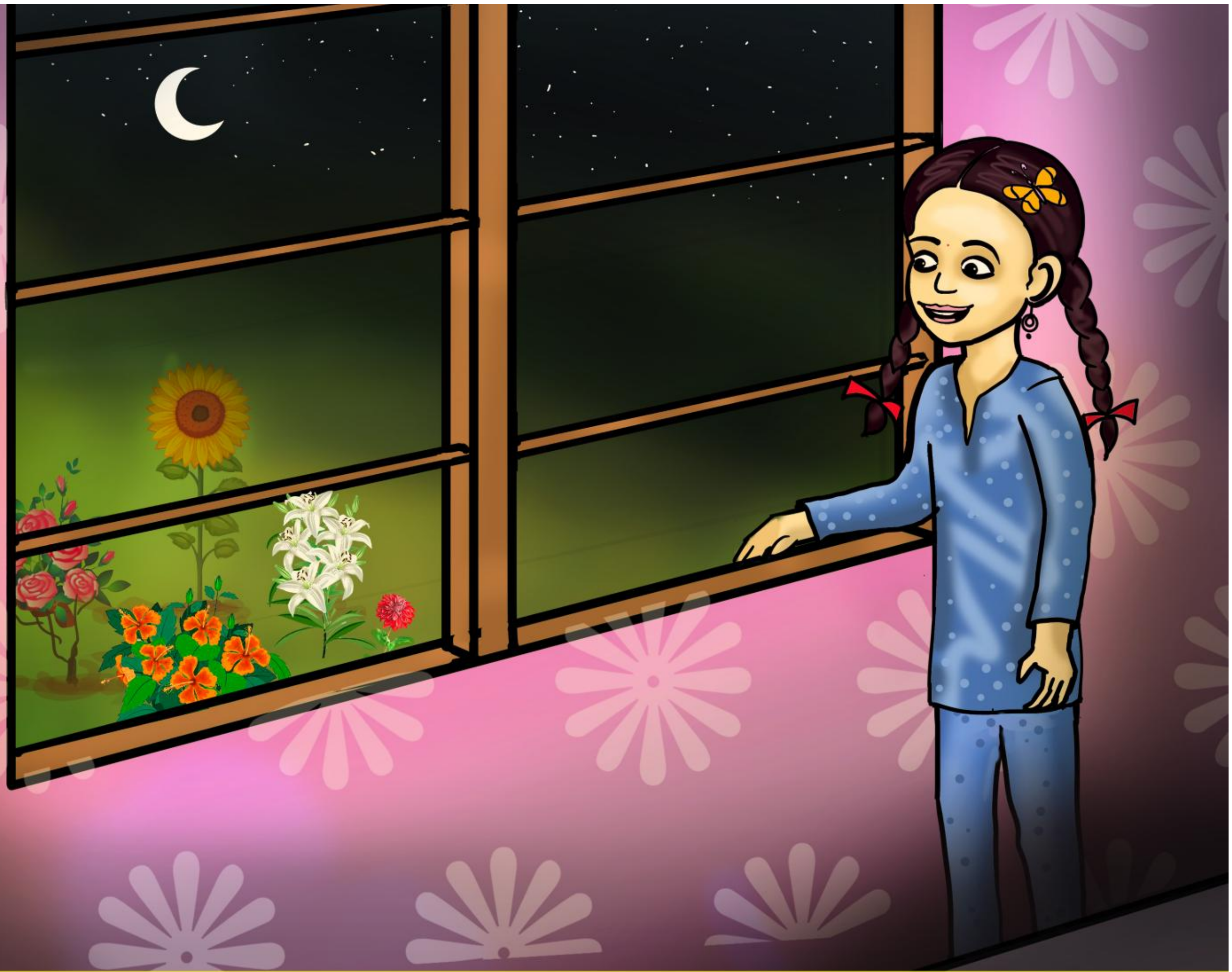
She spent many hours , along with her father, making the new home-comers comfortable.
She prepared flower beds and re-planted them, ensuring that the mix of soil was just right and that they had enough water.



Leela took much care of her plants.
Every morning, as soon as she woke up, the first thing Leela did was to run outside to see how her plants were doing.



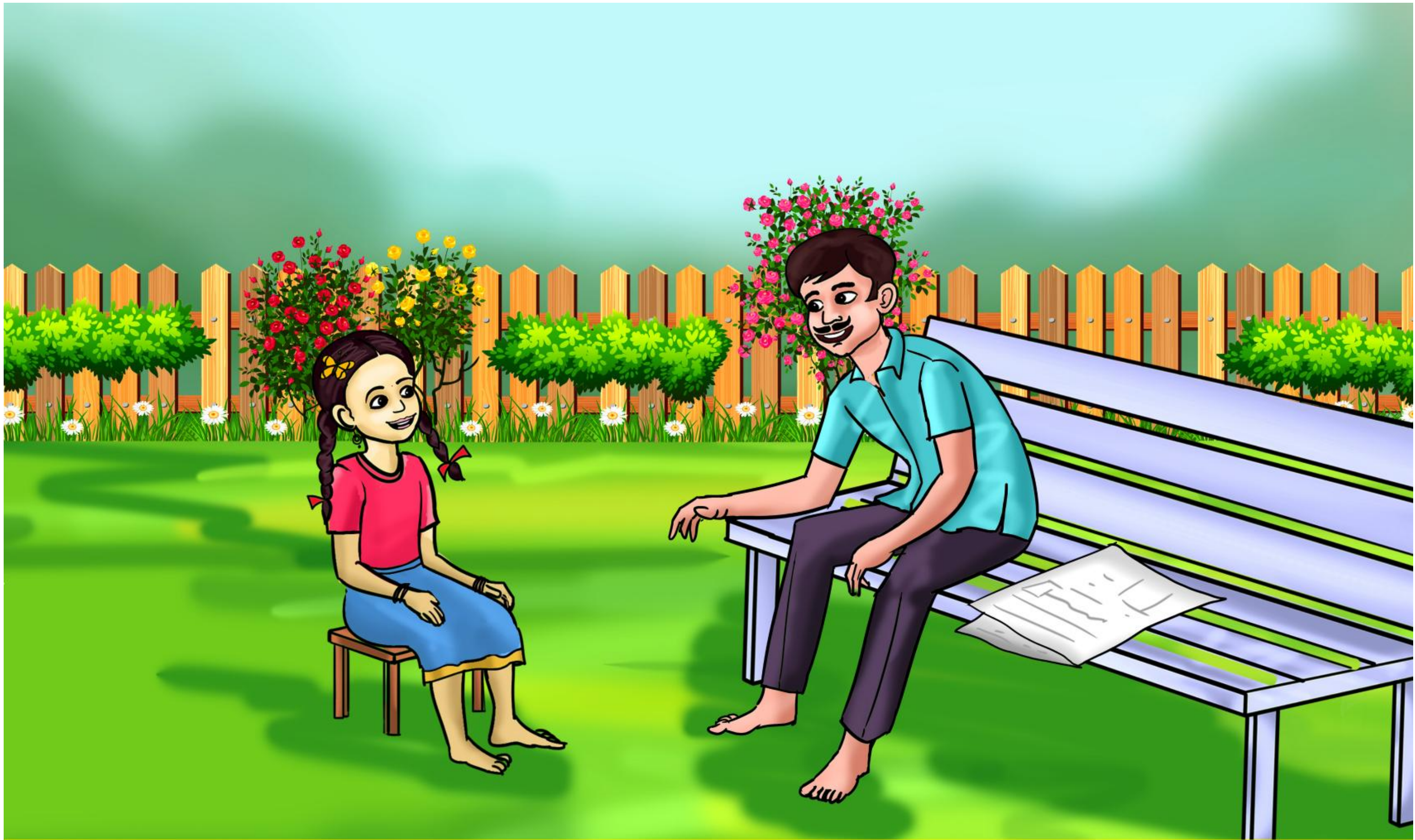
She watered them every day before she left for school.
When she returned from school, she said hello to them first and checked how they were doing, before she went inside her house.



And, each night, she stuck her head out of the window to say 'good-night'.



While she loved all the five plants, one of them was extra special to Leela--the sunflower. She loved it's large bright yellow head.



"Sunflowers are very special. There are some interesting things about them." said Pappa. "Did you know that they are so adaptable that they can grow in a variety of climates and soil types, even in really dry places? They have thick strong stems that allow them to hold water for use during dry times."

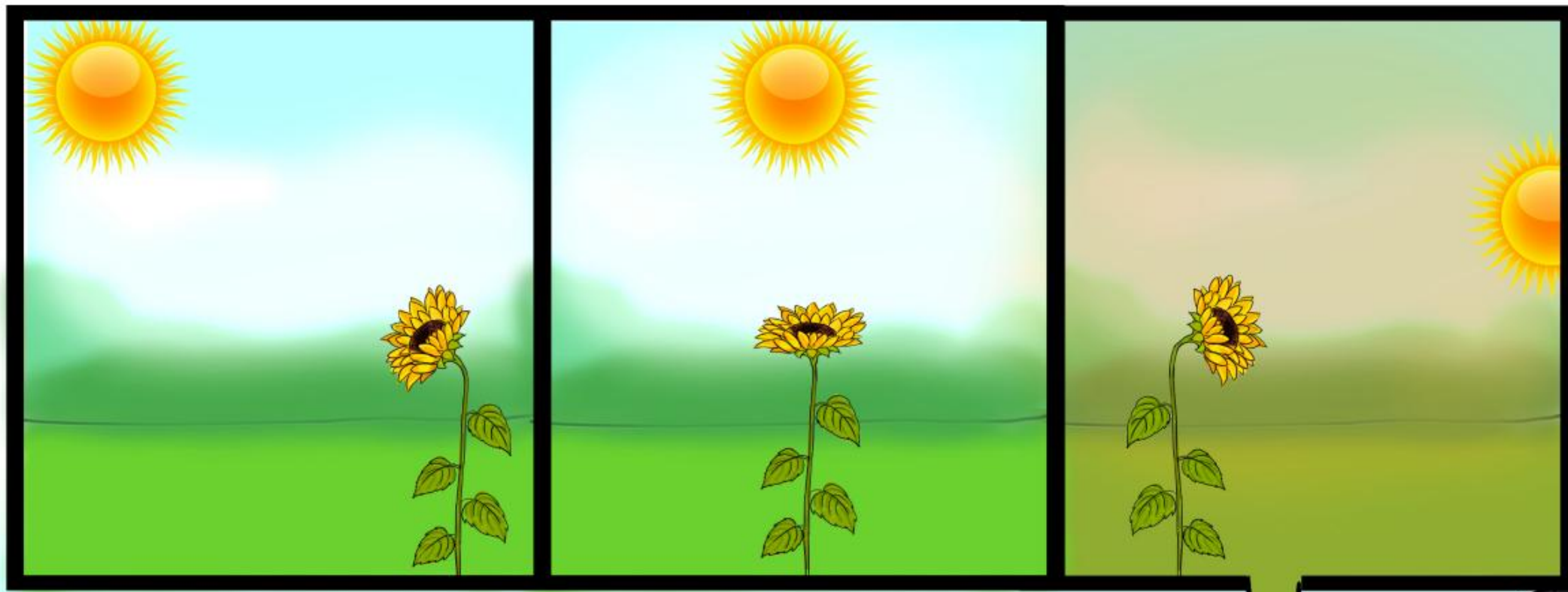
"So you mean they are really strong flowers?" asked Leela, surprised. "I didn't know that flowers could be so tough."



"They are strong because they are clever enough to be flexible and adapt to changes", explained Pappa. "Take your sunflower for example: it had to move from the nursery where it originally grew up to our home; in the nursery, it had different soil and a different care-taker...and now the soil in our garden is different from the nursery...it also has a different caretaker here--you".

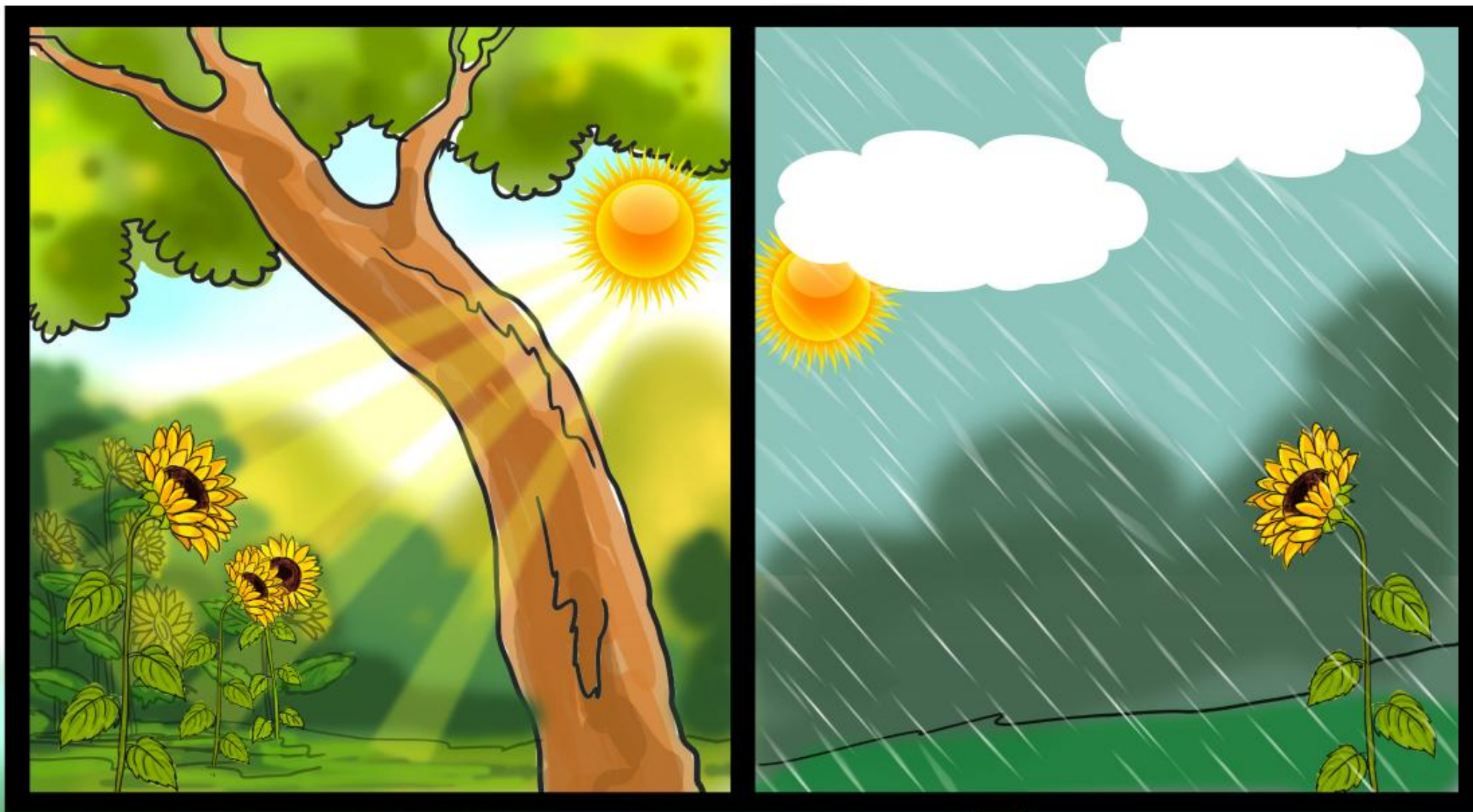
"I guess some of these changes would have been difficult for my sunflower" said Leela, thoughtfully.

"Yes, of course it must have been...but it is strong and knows that to grow well and be happy, it needs to accept certain changes, so it did. Also, the sunflower knows that it is very special to you, that you really love it and take care of it—that also helps it to be happy", said Pappa.



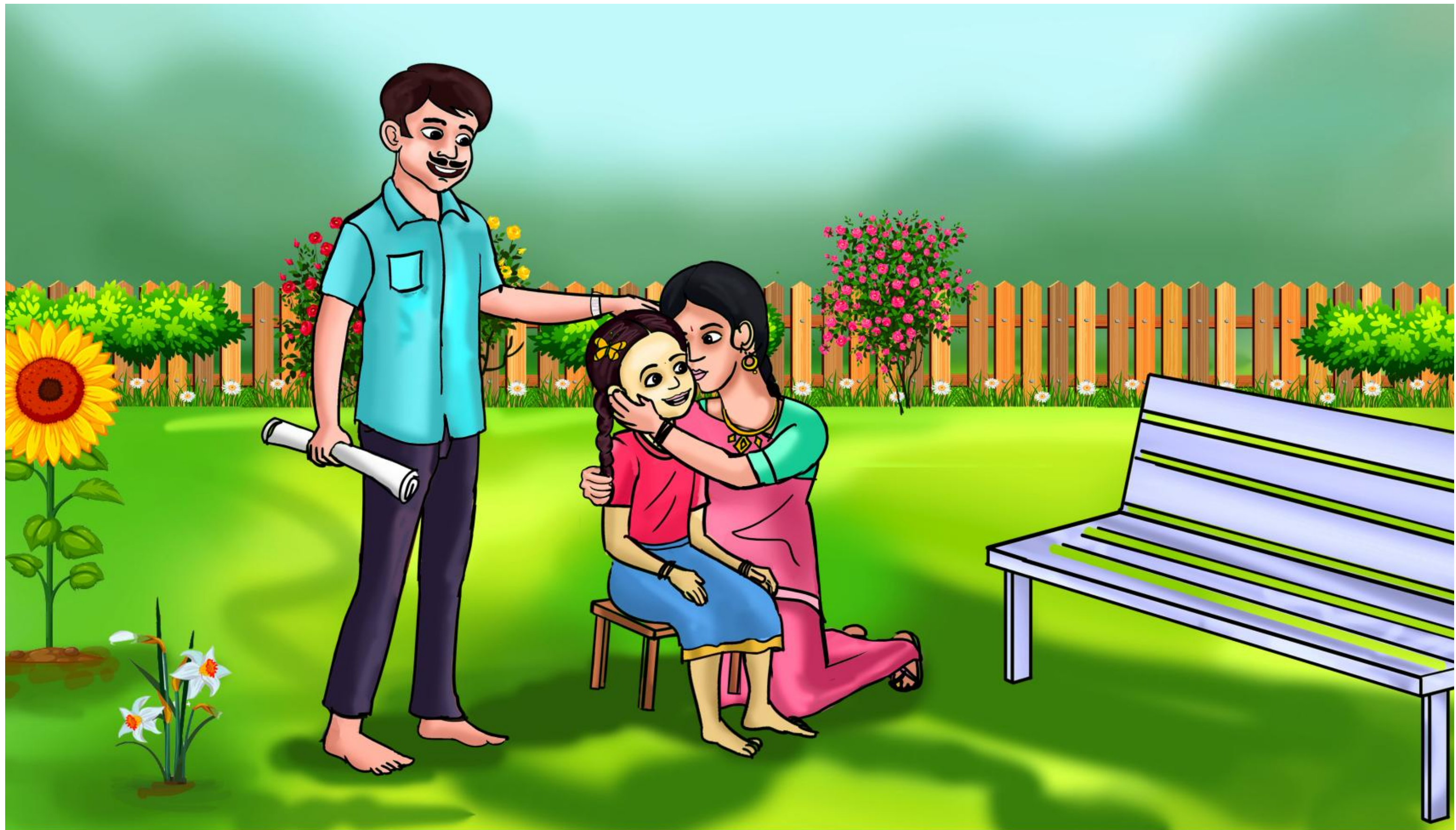
"There is another really special thing about sunflowers," said Mummy. " Young sunflowers are special because unlike any other flower, their lovely yellow heads move to follow the sun through the day...as the sun changes east to west, the sunflower turns its head to look towards it."

"Wow", said Leela, amazed. "I didn't know that!"



"How can the sunflower know to turn its head that way?" asked Leela, curiously.

"The sunflower has complete faith in the sun. It knows that each day, the sun will rise and set; it knows that through both cloudy and rainy days, the sun's rays will still shine through and nurture the flower, because the sun is an infinite source of energy and growth", explained Pappa.



"Just like you and the sun love and take care of your sunflower everyday and always, your parents are an infinite source of energy and growth...through rain clouds and cold days, we will always love and look after you" said Mummy.

"So you mean that wherever I came from, whatever I do, my 'sunny' parents will always 'rise' to love and nurture me, like I do to my sunflower?" asked Leela.

"Yes, that is exactly what I mean", said mummy, kissing Leela.

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