

# How Akbar and Mewaha Belonged





Once upon a time, there was a boy named Akbar. he lived with his parents in Home. He lived happily, going to school each day and playing with his friends in the neighbourhood, until the crisis happened.



This changed his life. He and his family now heard loud frightening sounds all day and at times, even saw fire in the sky. There were many days when they were too afraid to leave their home and go to school. Also, much to their sadness, many of their friends, who lived near their home left. Their families were too afraid to stay and moved away— some to Delhi, Chandigarh, other parts of Punjab and Himachal Pradesh.



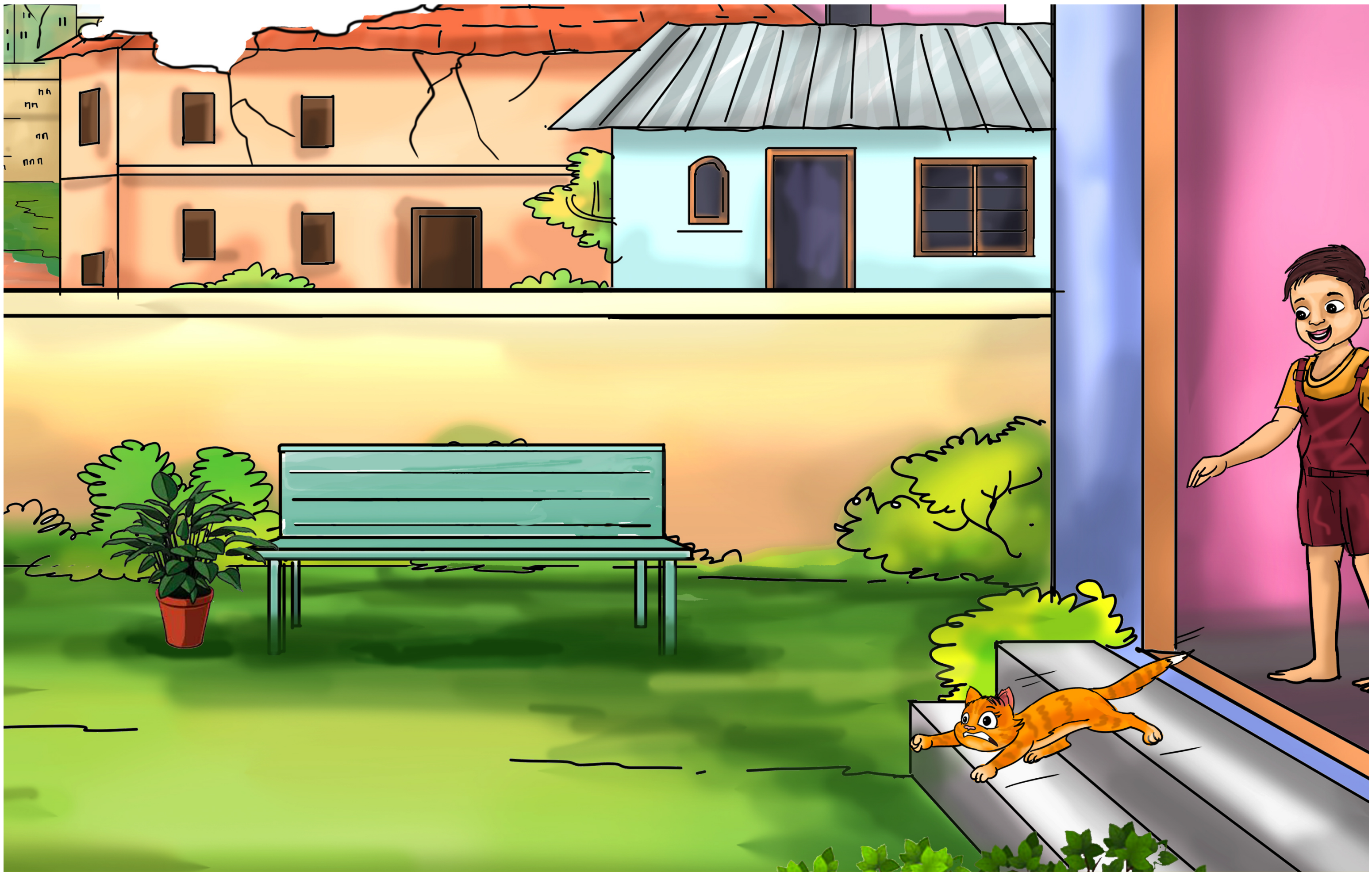
Akbar was often lonely now. He felt anxious about what might happen, whether the loud sounds would hurt them and whether they would have to leave their home too, like other people.



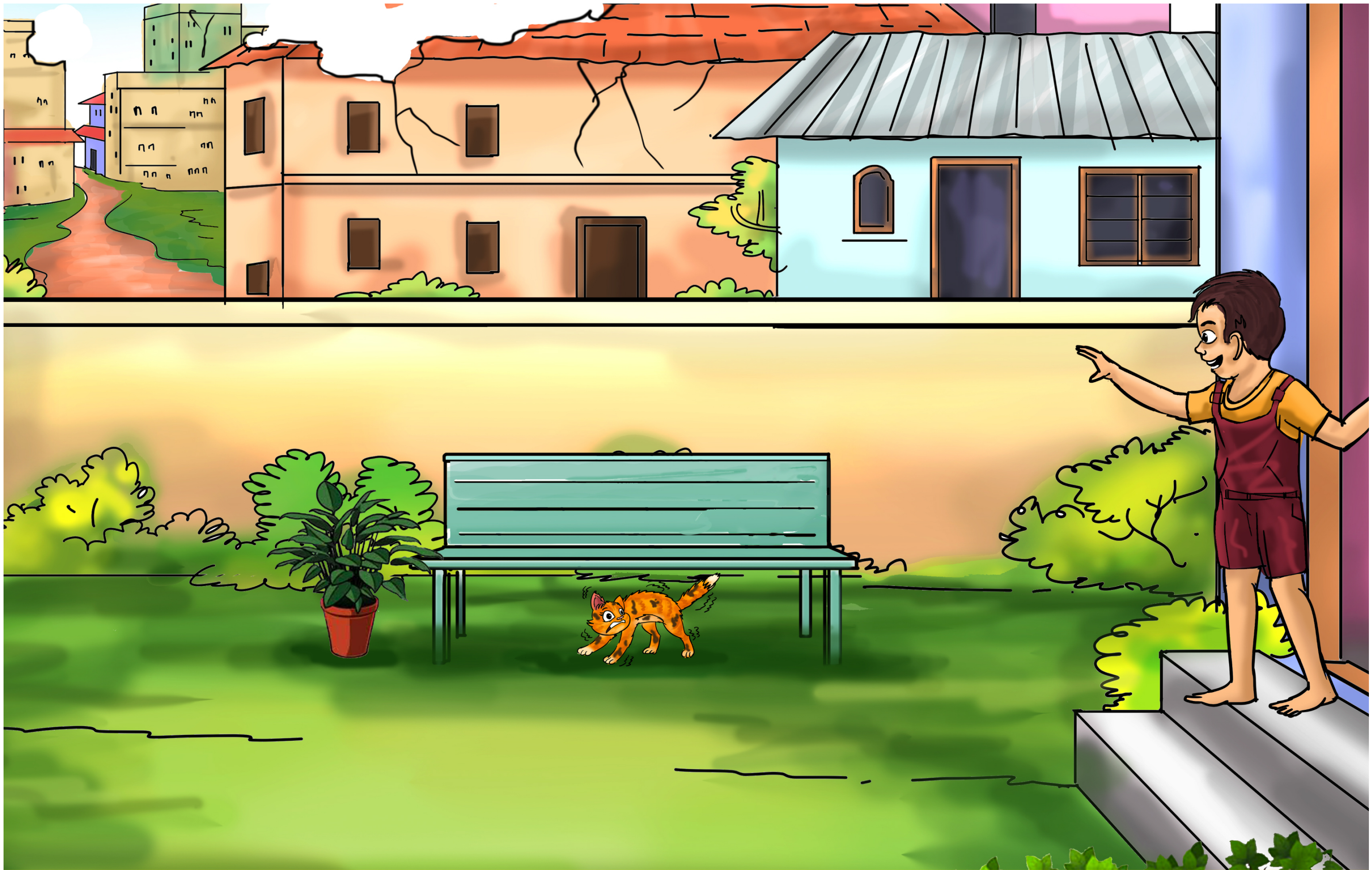
One morning, the sounds of explosions were especially loud and Akbar was really frightened; he crawled under a table and refused to come out.



After two hours of coaxing by his mother, he agreed to go outside and bring the washed clothes in.

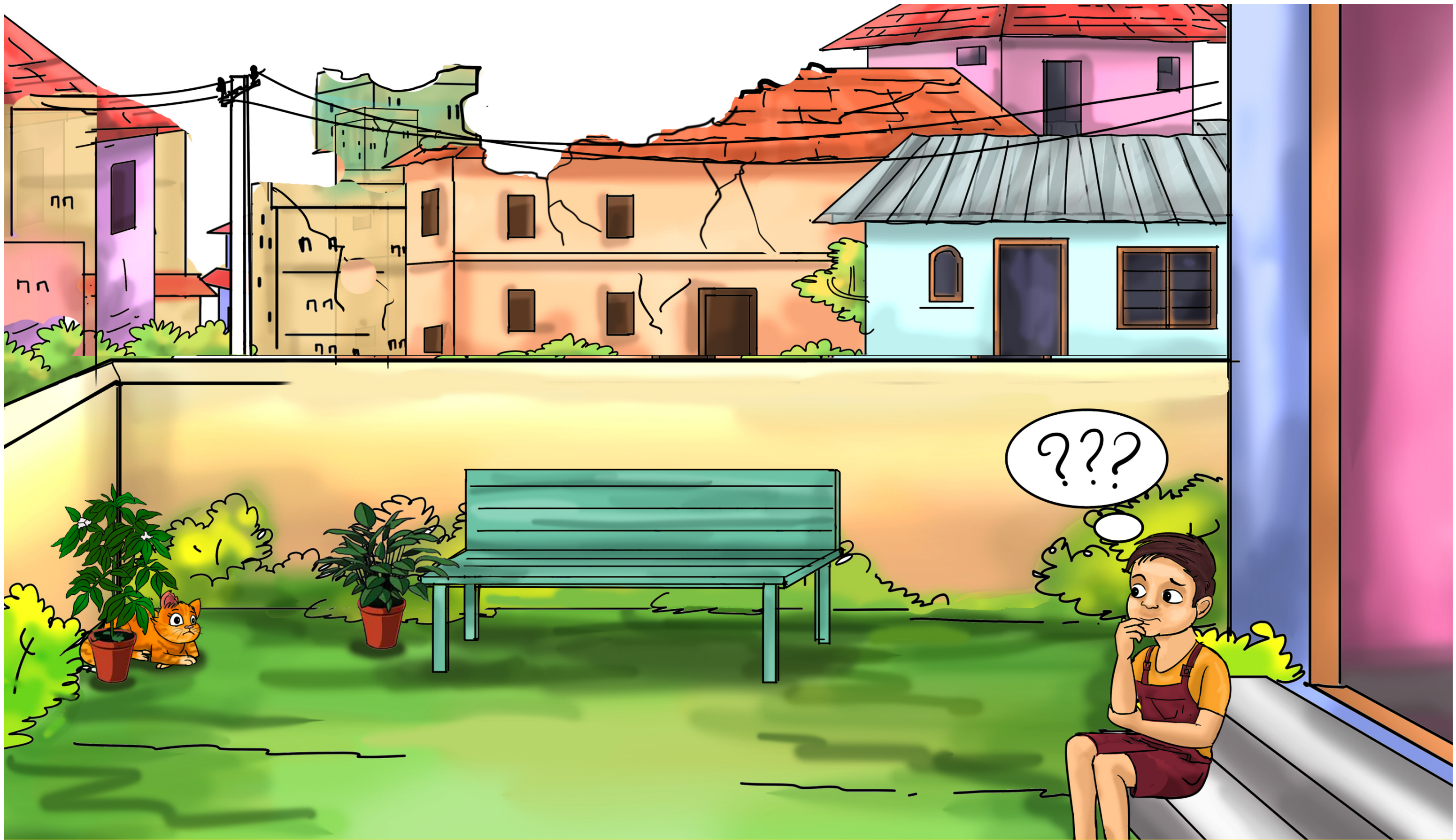


Afraid, he opened the door, he saw a long-haired ginger cat with a big, fat bushy tail, and a little bit of white right at the very tip of her nose. she was sitting silently by the door-step;



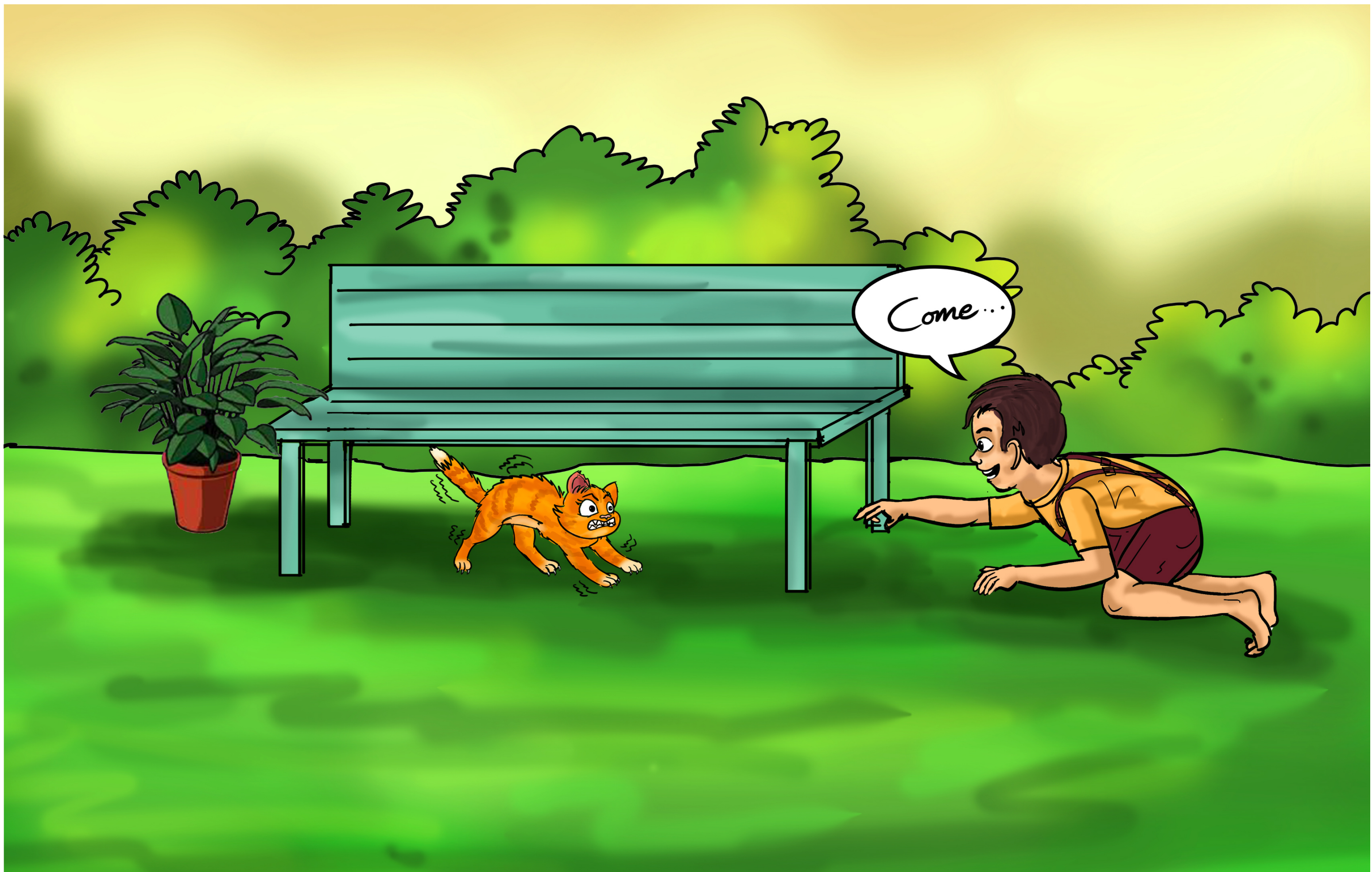
But as soon as she saw Akbar, she ran away. For the next few days, she continued to run away each time Akbar came outside.



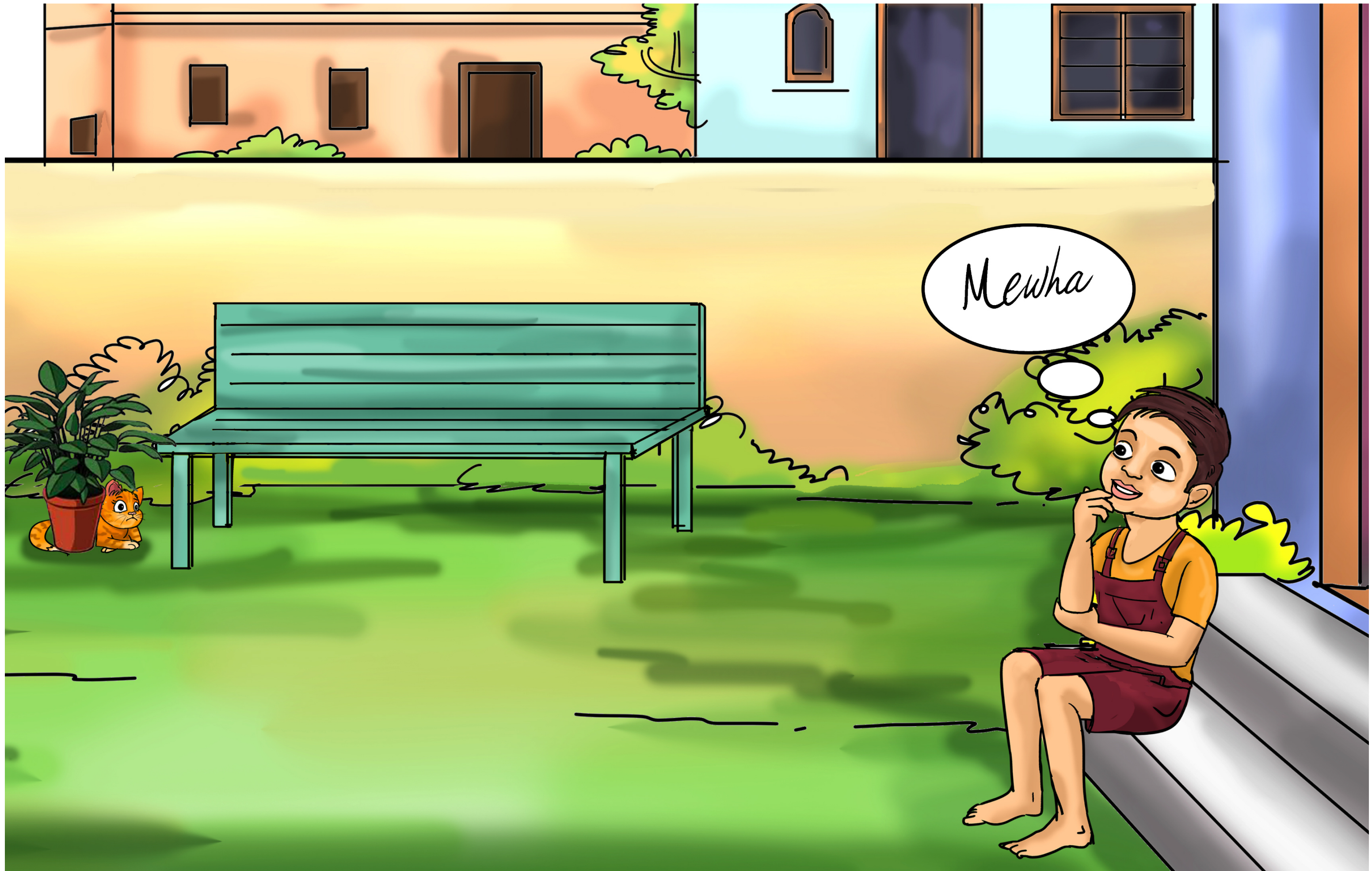


But she was always there. Akbar also noticed that she looked dirty and scruffy. Under all that cat fur, Akbar guessed that she was skinny and must be hungry, though she never meowed for food. I wonder why she keeps running away, thought Akbar...and why she keeps coming back.

At last, he thought: perhaps she is lonely and wants to belong to someone, to have someone to play with and care for her. But then, how come she never made any friendly cat noises - no meowing, no purring?



Sometimes she just hissed at him and looked angrily. Not a good way to start to be friendly or belong to someone, right? Although puzzled, Akbar decided not to give up. How do you make someone feel like they belong?

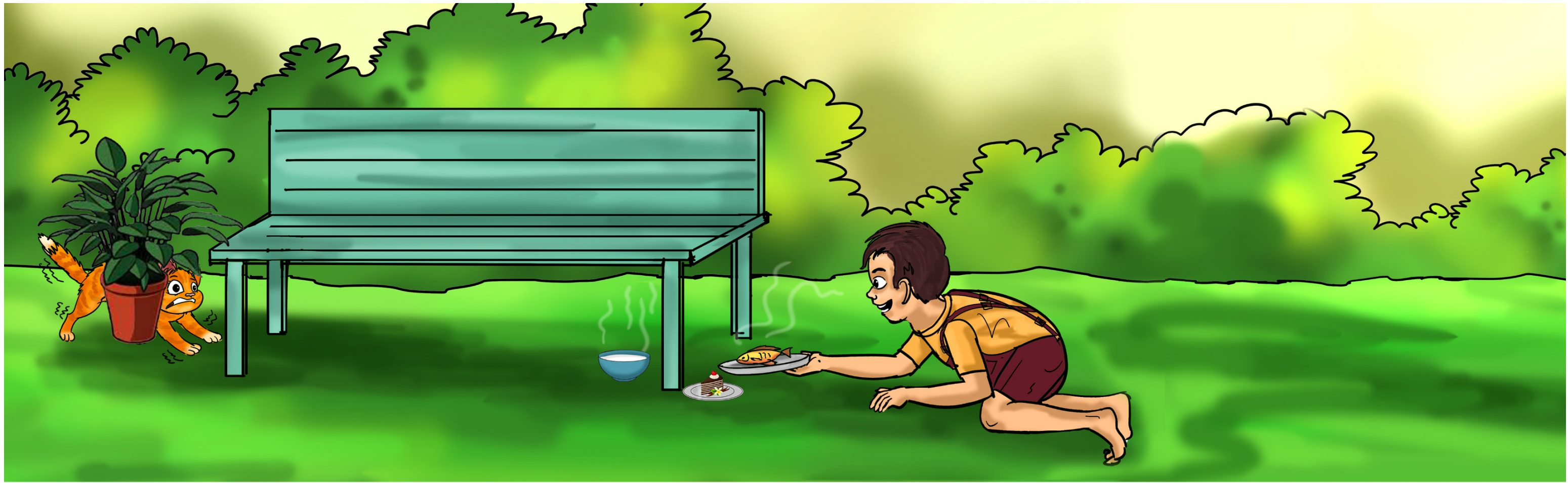


He thought and thought. Of course, the first thing one must do is to give her a name! Else, how would she know who she is? So he decided to call him Mewaha.

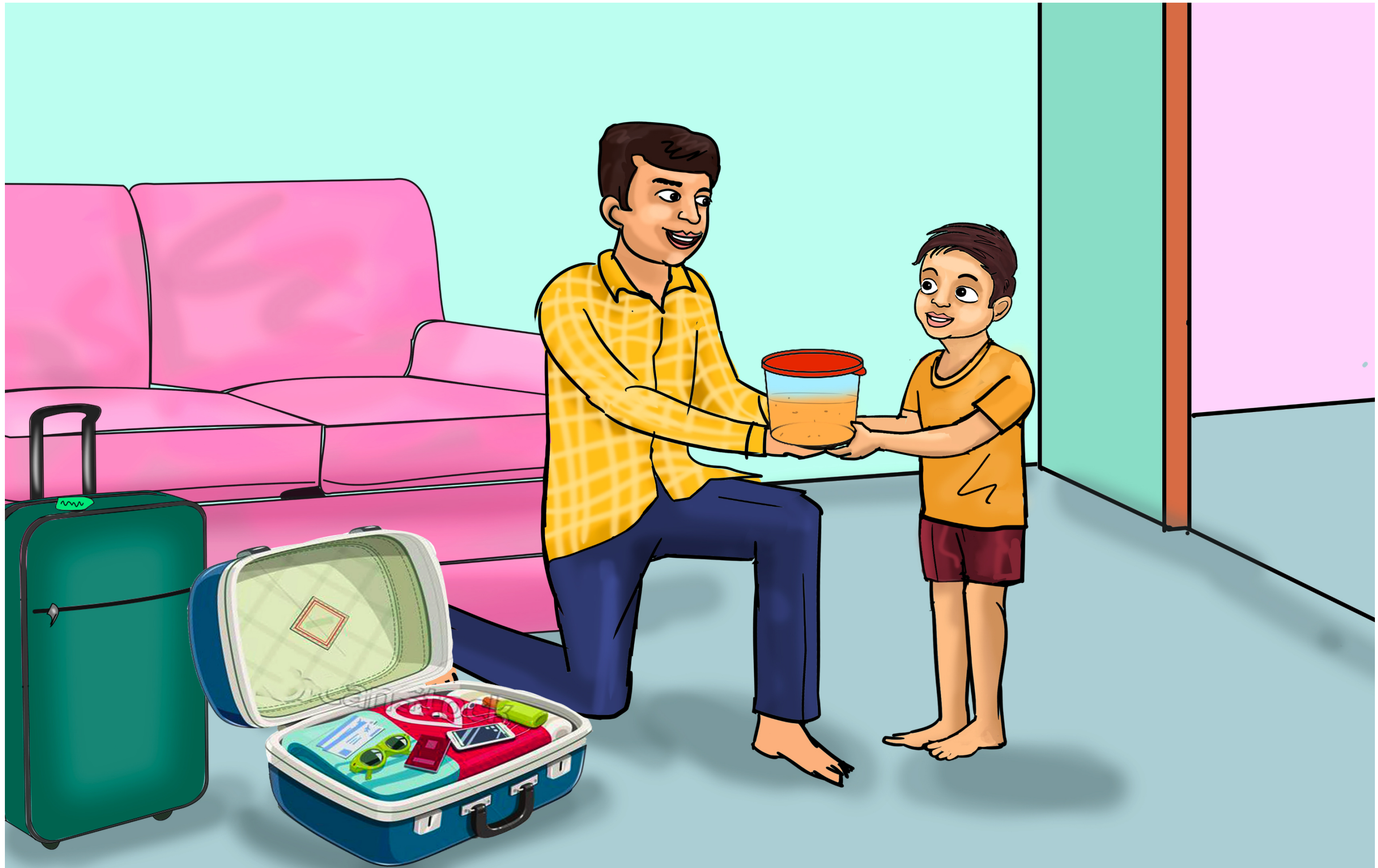


But, worried Akbar thought" people usually feel they belong if they are made to feel special in some way. Maybe there was something special that Mewaha might like...now, what might that be and how to find out?

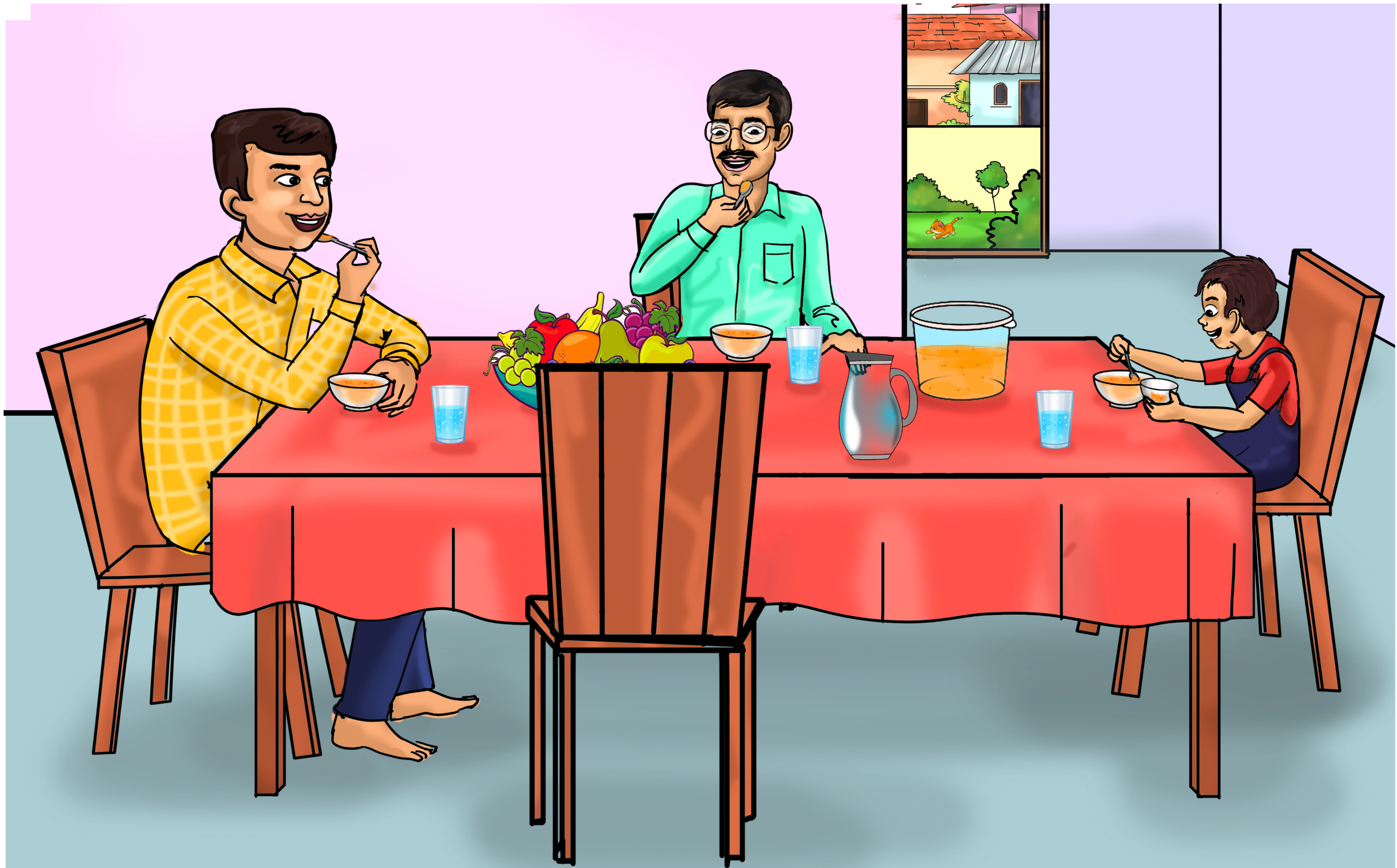
So, in addition to milk and fish, Akbar decided to try giving her different types of food each day: roti, lentil soup, chicken, cake.....but she tasted each of these and hissed crossly.



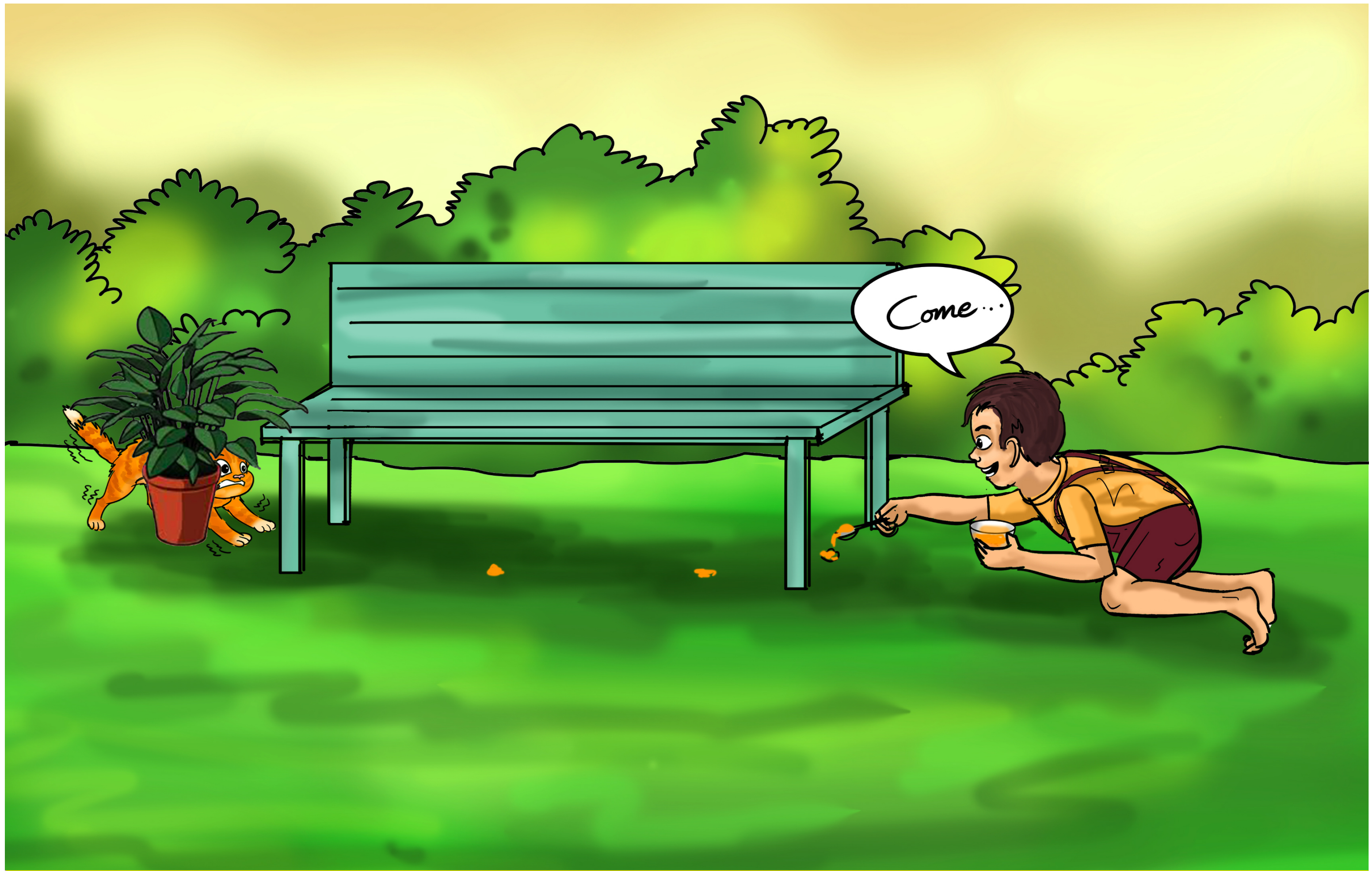
The next thing was figuring out what she liked...Akbar knew that cats liked milk and fish. he gave her some and she darted out of nowhere everyday and hungrily ate up all the food he placed before her.



Then, one day Akbar's uncle visited them for Eid and brought them some kheer. This was Akbar's favourite sweet. he loved the soft creaminess of it.



Akbar decided to share his portion of kheer with Mewaha. But this time, he decided that he would only give it to her if she wanted to be friends and didn't shy away from him.

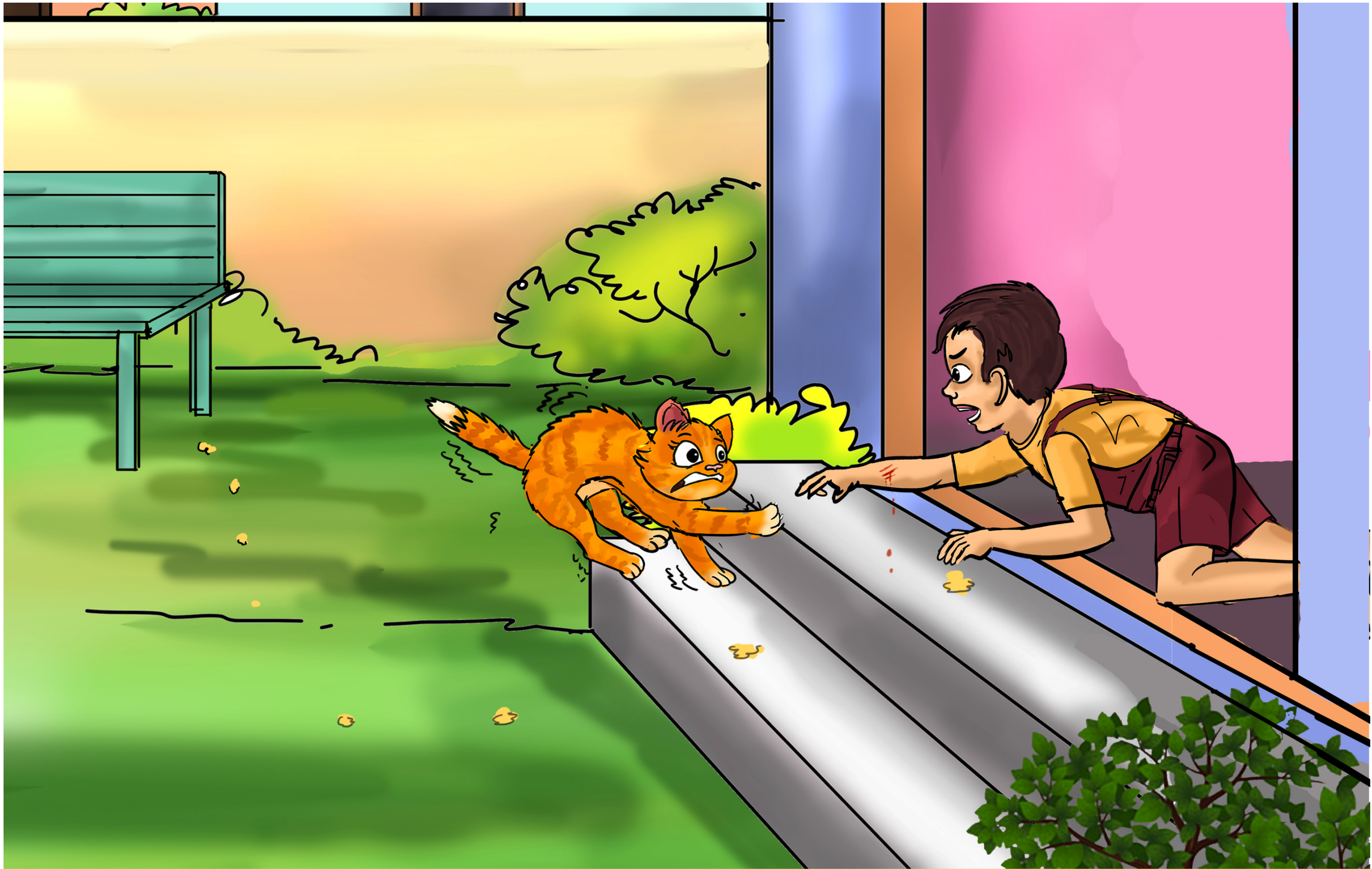


But knowing she would not come near, he broke the sweet into little bits and laid it out in a long line, starting from the corner of the compound where she usually sat, leading up to his door-step. he then went back to the door-step and stood there quietly.

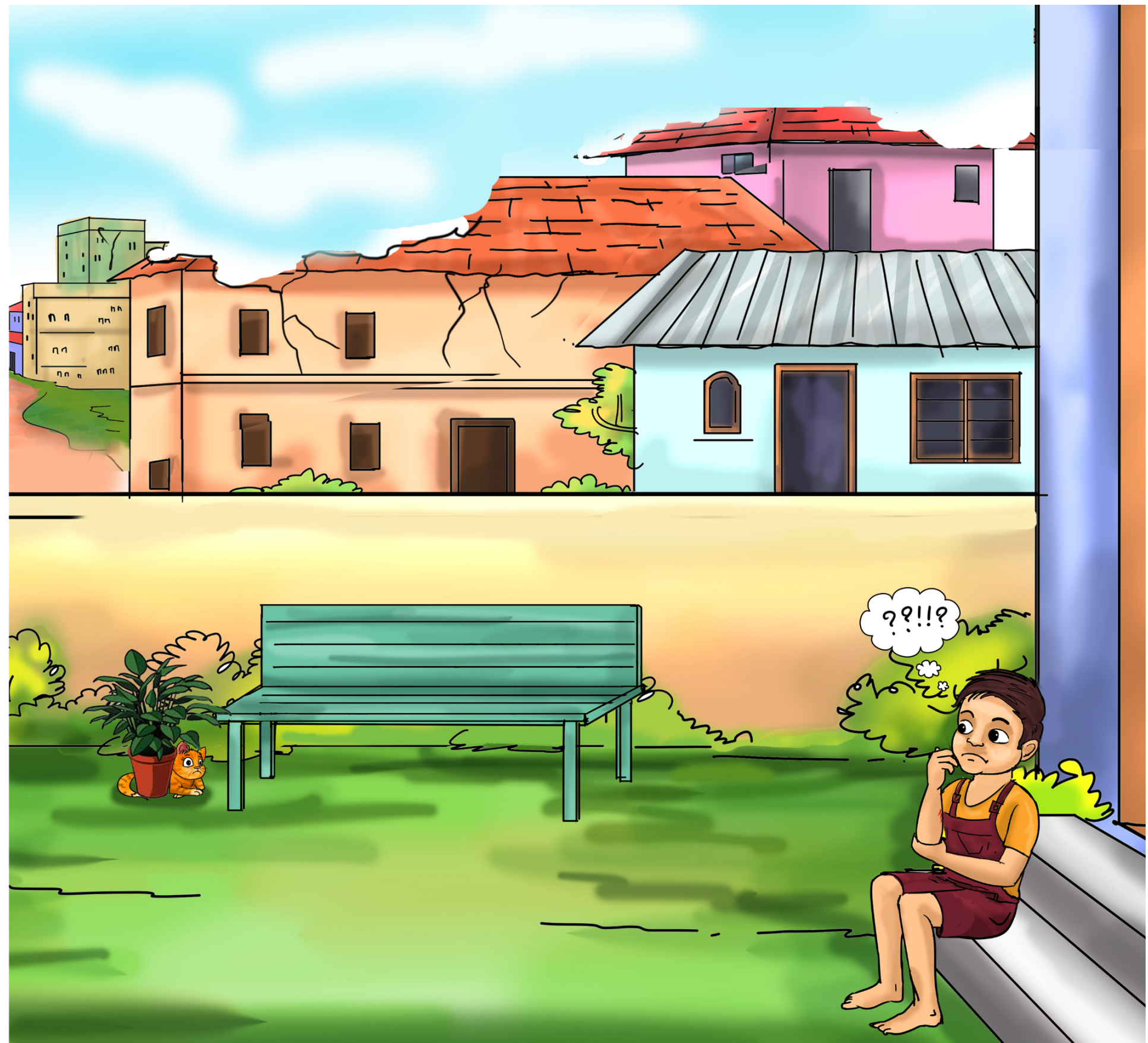




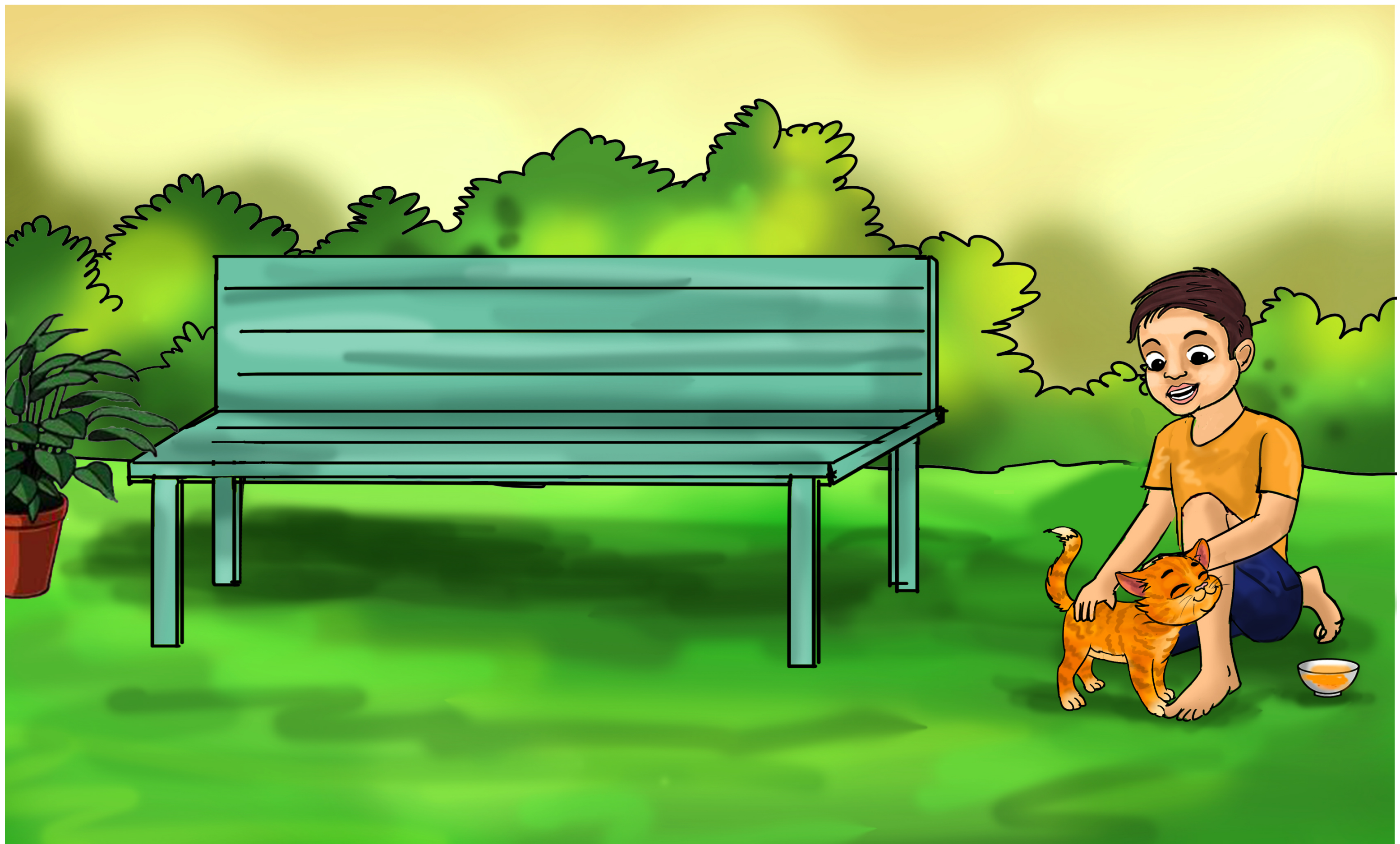
Mewaha came as usual, and sniffed at the bits of kheer. And then, to Akbar's excitement, she started to eat the pieces, slowly at first and then faster and faster. So, this is that special thing she likes, he thought, and same as what I like!



As Mewaha drew near the door-step, Akbar knelt down with his hand held out as if to pet him. Mewaha ate the kheer but shied away from Akbar's hand and ran away. Akbar was sad and disappointed. Doesn't she trust me? Doesn't she want to belong?



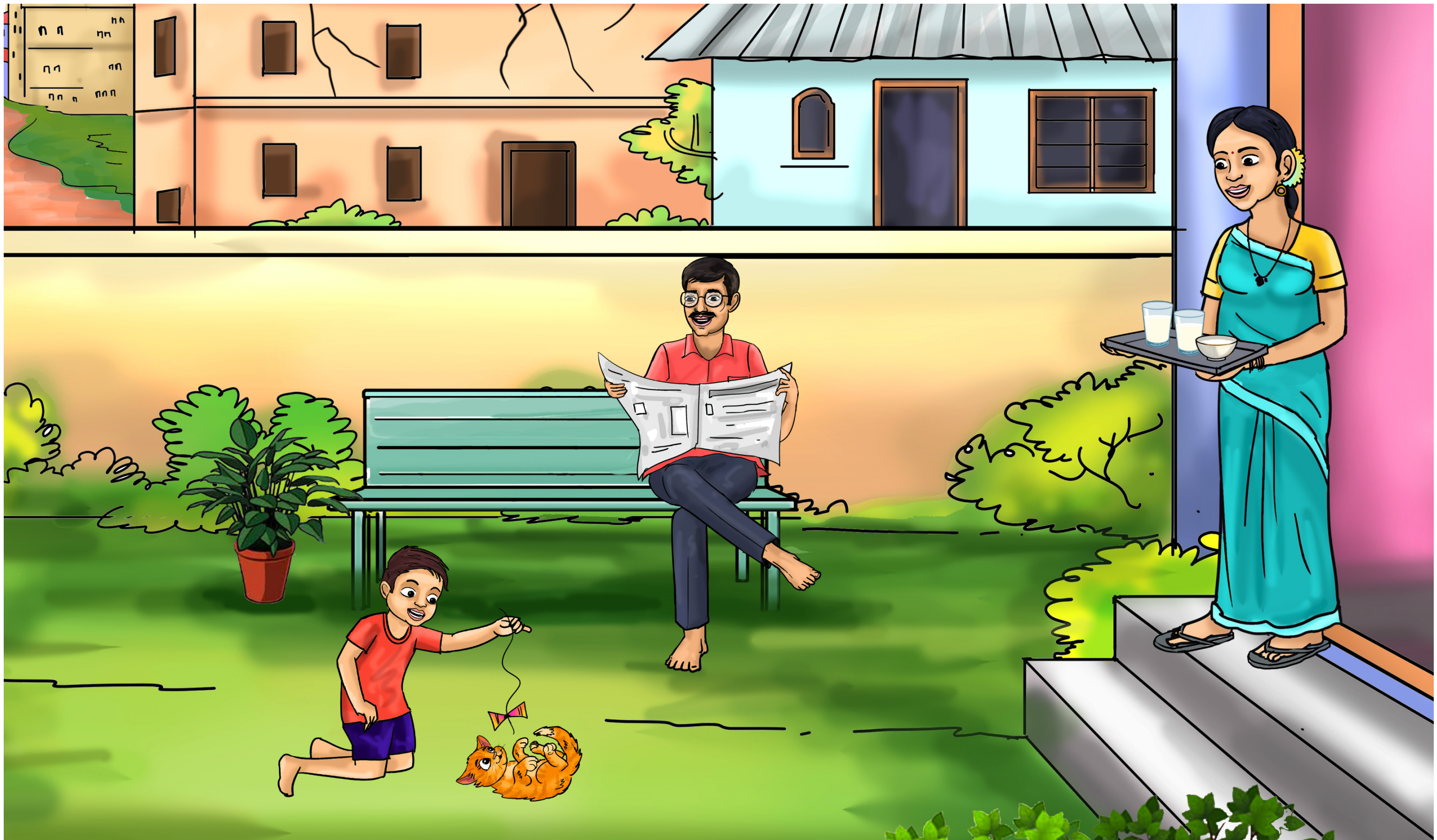
But Akbar decided to persist—his uncle had brought them a large supply of kheer. Each day, Mewaha would eat the sweets and came closer to Akbar's patient hand. The first time she bumped into Akbar's hand, Mewaha was frightened and scratched him and ran away. she didn't know how to put her claws in like most cats. For a moment, Akbar was was hurt and angry and almost wanted to hit back but he didn't. he thought to himself: I am big and have lots of feelings of belonging. After a few times of this happening, Akbar noticed that the scratches were not quite so deep nor did they hurt so much.



One day, at last, Mewaha allowed Akbar to stroke her head. Akbar was delighted: Mewaha was starting to belong...her to me and me to her, he thought! Gradually, he allowed her to pet and tickle her for longer and didn't run away in fright when he spoke to her. But the greatest surprise was that on the sixth day, Mewaha meowed—softly at first...and loudly. What a lovely sound, thought Akbar—she is ready to talk now.



And so the days went by, with Mewaha allowing Akbar to pet her more and more, until one day she jumped into his lap and lay there purring contentedly.



Akbar was no longer lonely and afraid when he heard the sounds of explosions. After all, he had Mewaha; they became best friends. So, what was it that helped Mewaha belong, wondered Akbar...was it the kheer? Was it his hand held out ready to pet him? Was it Mewaha learning that she could scratch me and I would still hold out my hand? Was it Mewaha deciding to trust me and keeping her claws in? May be Akbar will never really know. But what does know is that Mewaha belongs to him and he to her—and what he learnt was that belonging takes time and patience.

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