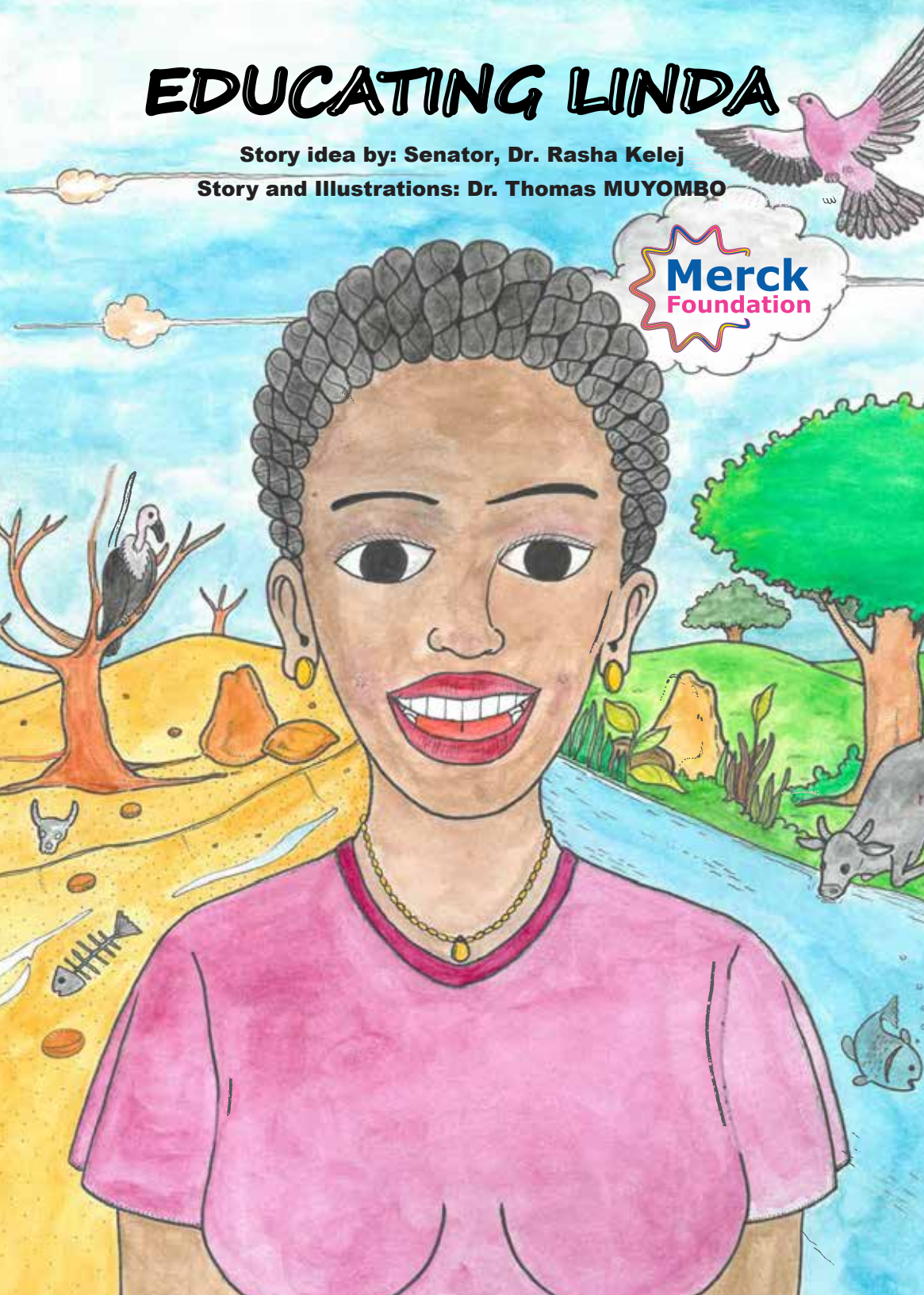
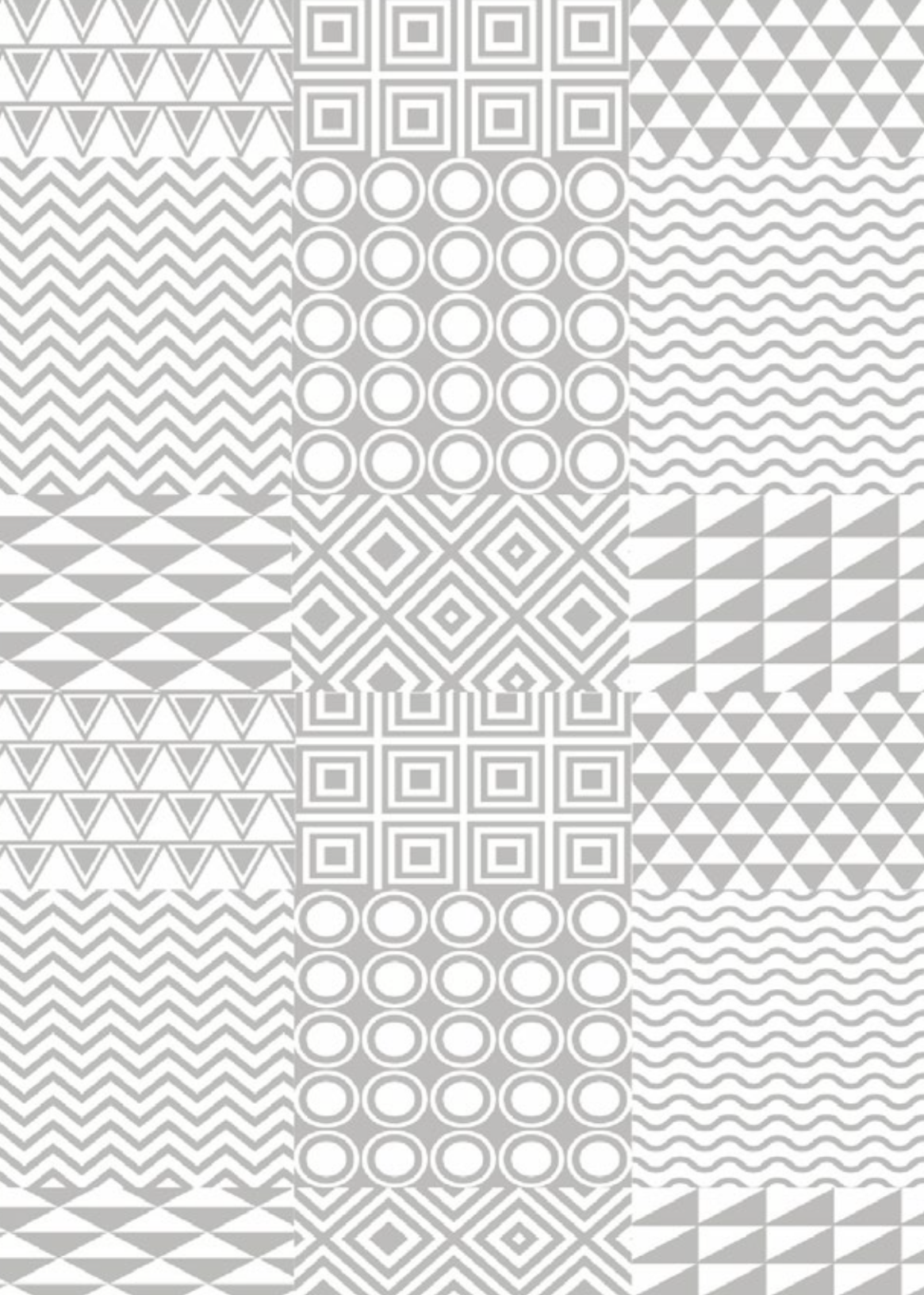
EDUCATING LINDA

Story idea by: Senator, Dr. Rasha Kelej

Story and Illustrations: Dr. Thomas MUYOMBO





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Senator, Dr. Rasha Kelej MESSAGE

As the CEO of Merck Foundation and as an African woman, I am very proud to introduce this story to emphasize the importance of Girl Education. The story of a young girl called Linda.

Linda represents our African girls who struggle for their education every day.
I strongly believe in girl education. When Girls are educated, their countries become more powerful, stronger & prosperous.

Education is the only thing that no one can take away from you. So, for all families out there, support your girl education like what happened in this story. Let's join hands to help them to reach their potential and advance our Africa.

I realize there's need for more support as there are many brilliant girls out there who are struggling financially and socially to meet their educational needs. Therefore, we started "Educating Linda" pan African program which is going to be tailored for each country to contribute to the future of these girls as part of Merck Foundation "More Than a Mother". I strongly believe that empowering women starts with education, to enable them to be healthier, stronger and independent.

I hope this story would inspire every girl to fight for her right of education and encourage our communities to support education of young unprivileged but brilliant girls, so that they can reach their potential and pursue their dreams.

Senator, Dr. Rasha Kelej
CEO of Merck Foundation
President of "More Than a Mother" Campaign

One beautiful morning, in a city so colorful, a young lady named Dr. Linda drove slowly down the road across the quiet street. Everything looked lovely.

Oh! What a lovely morning!

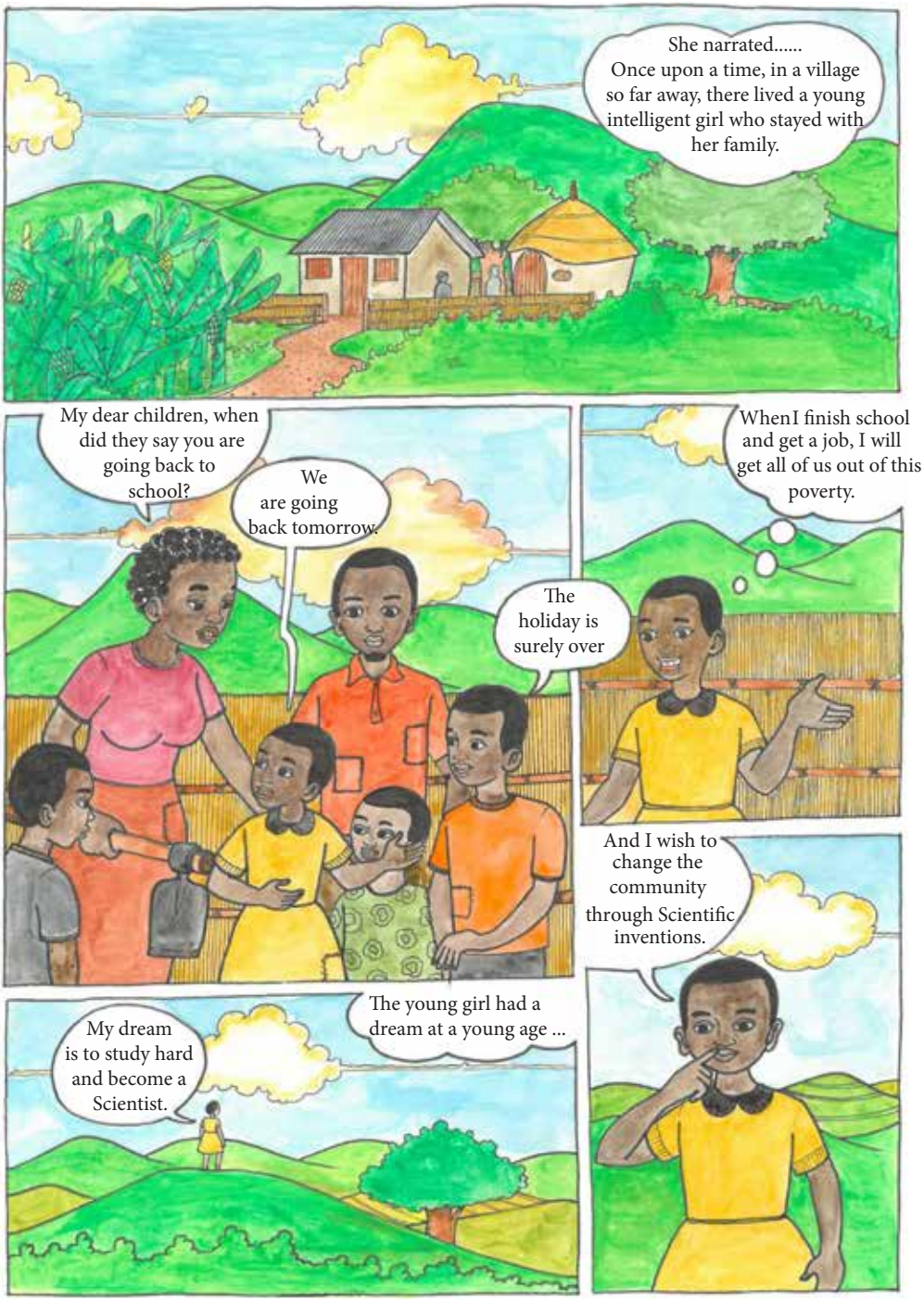
Dr. Linda was heading to a small village, far away from the city.

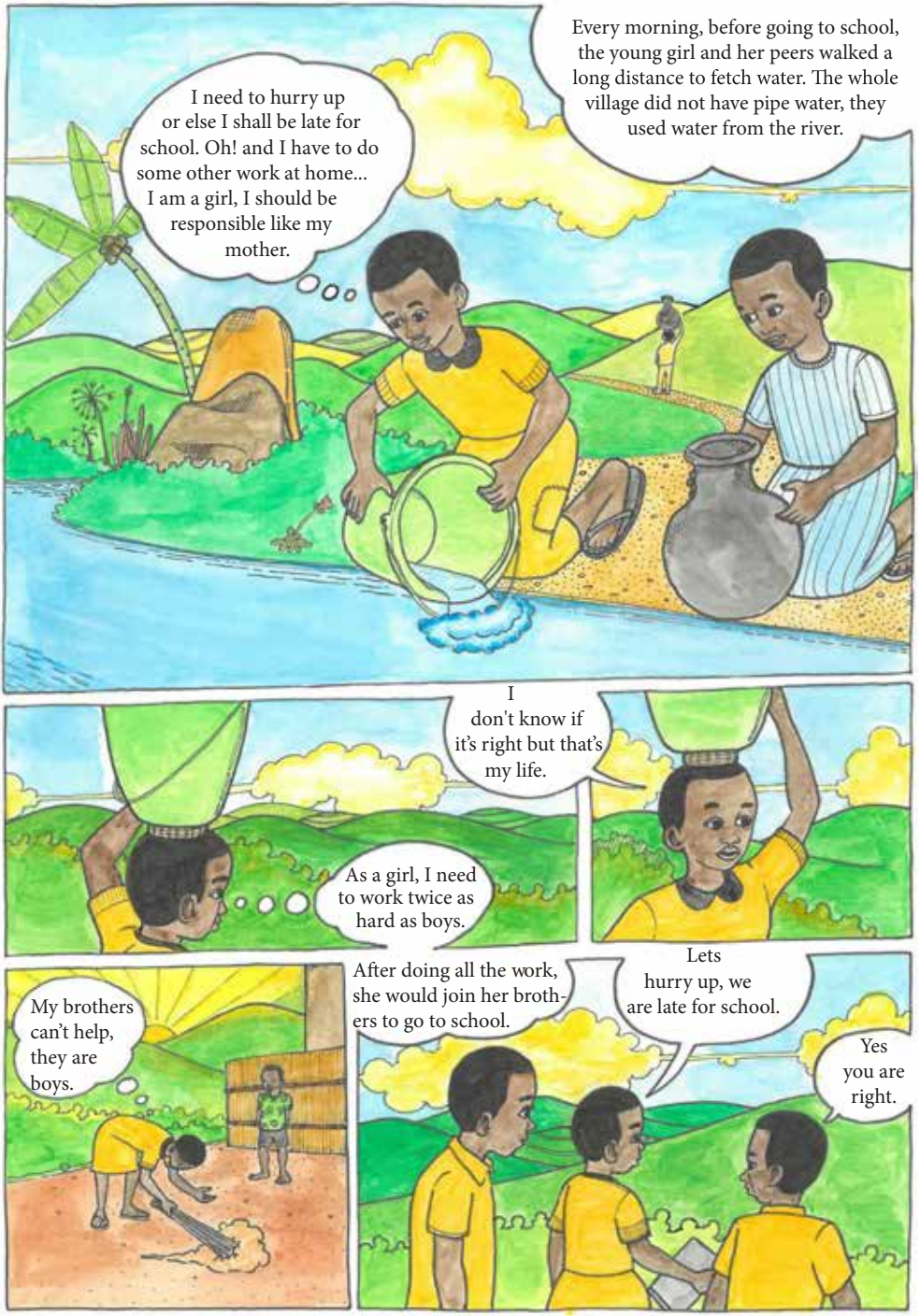
Linda had been invited to give a motivational talk at a school in her village.

Linda has won a Nobel prize in science this year for achievement. She is very happy and proud.

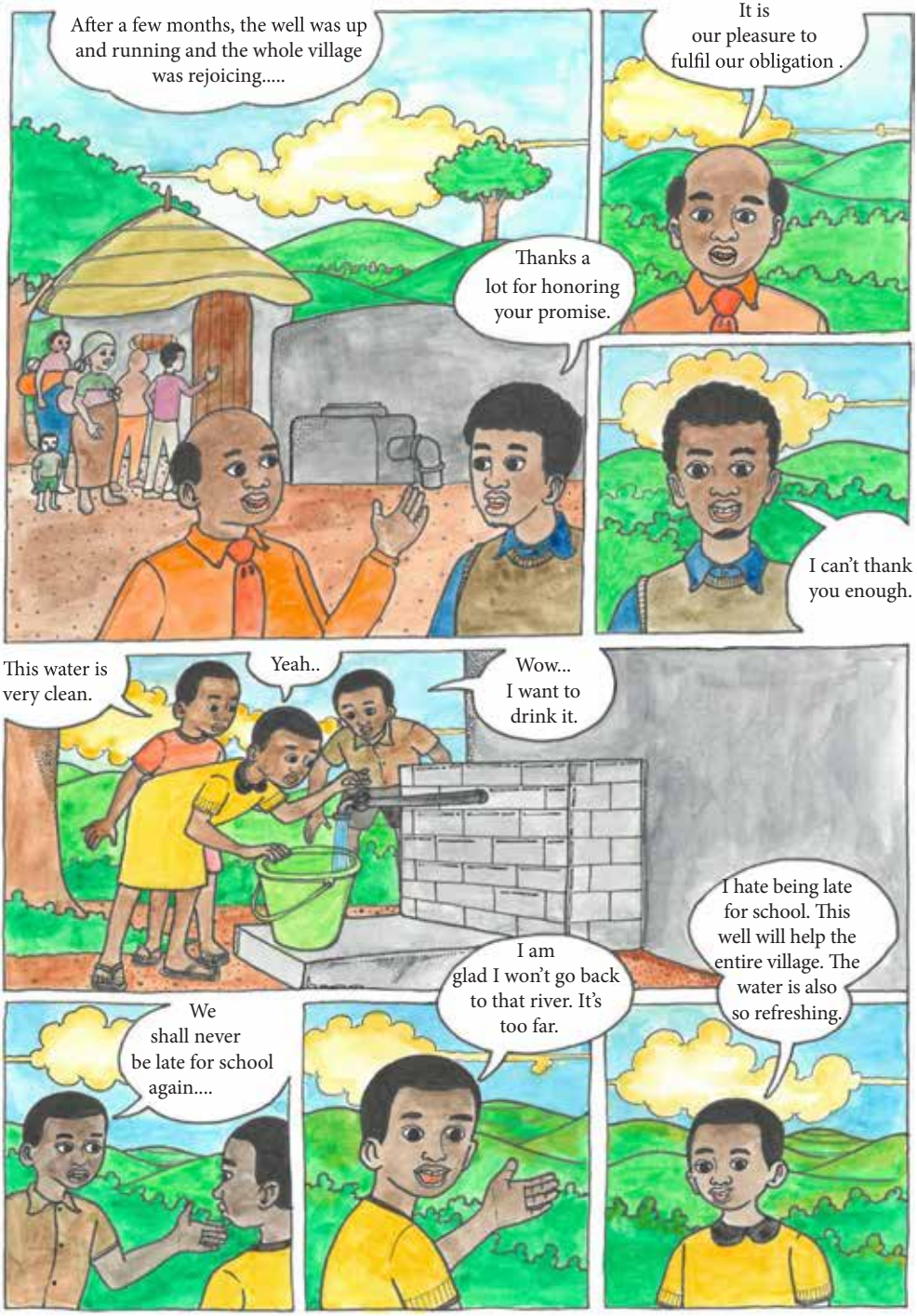
She reached the school in due time. The calmness of the day was wonderful. Everything was good.

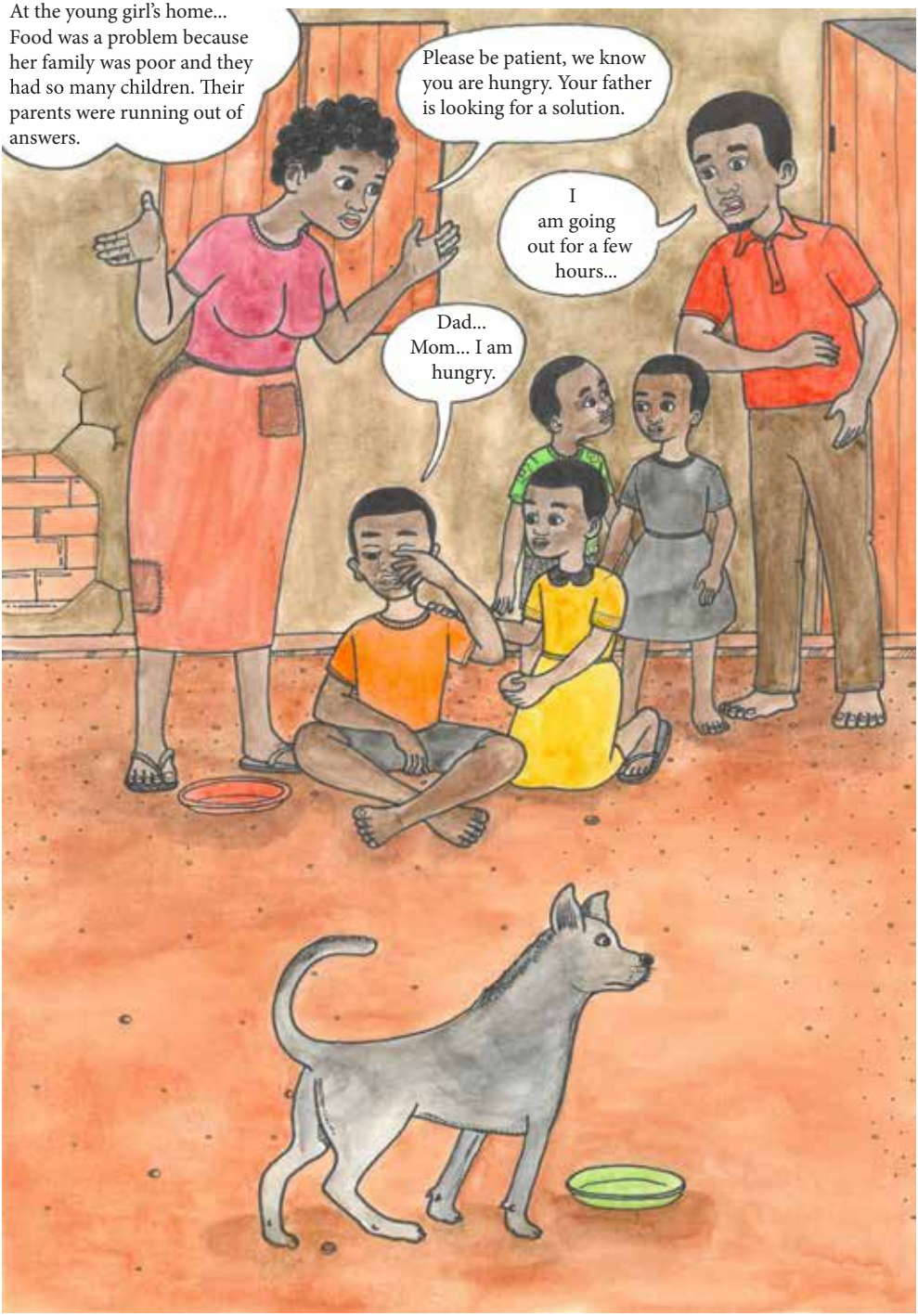
Dr. Linda was greeted by the Headmaster of the school and he assured her that everyone was waiting for her.
Hello Dr. Linda, welcome to our school.
Thank you, Sir, I am glad to be here.
He then took Linda to meet the students.
The Headmaster of the school welcomed everyone in the room.
The moment we have all been waiting for has come.
Let us all join together to welcome Dr. Linda.
Please, you are welcome to inspire all of us.
Thank you, I will be very glad if I can.
After greeting them, Linda proceeded by telling them a story.
Let me tell you a story of a young girl, whose name I will reveal later.
Everyone kept quiet and listened to Dr. Linda as she began the story. All the students really wanted an inspiration.
Please Dr. Linda, tell us anything, we want to be inspired to become like you.


She narrated.....
Once upon a time, in a village so far away, there lived a young intelligent girl who stayed with her family.
My dear children, when did they say you are going back to school?
We are going back tomorrow.
The holiday is surely over
When I finish school and get a job, I will get all of us out of this poverty.
And I wish to change the community through Scientific inventions.
The young girl had a dream at a young age ...
My dream is to study hard and become a Scientist.

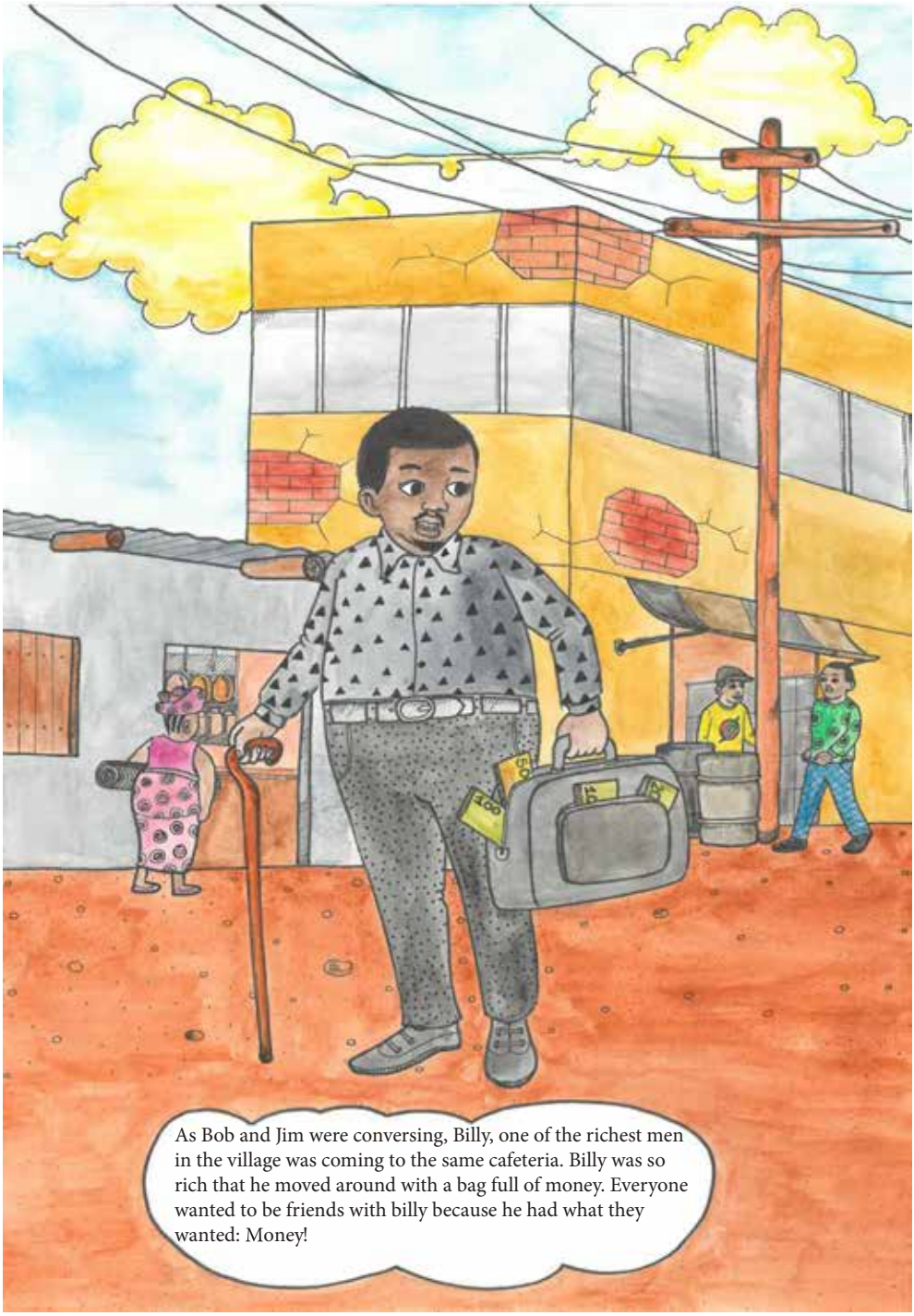

Every morning, before going to school, the young girl and her peers walked a long distance to fetch water. The whole village did not have pipe water, they used water from the river.
I need to hurry up or else I shall be late for school. Oh! and I have to do some other work at home... I am a girl, I should be responsible like my mother.
I don't know if it's right but that's my life.
As a girl, I need to work twice as hard as boys.
My brothers can't help, they are boys.
After doing all the work, she would join her brothers to go to school.
Lets hurry up, we are late for school.
Yes you are right.

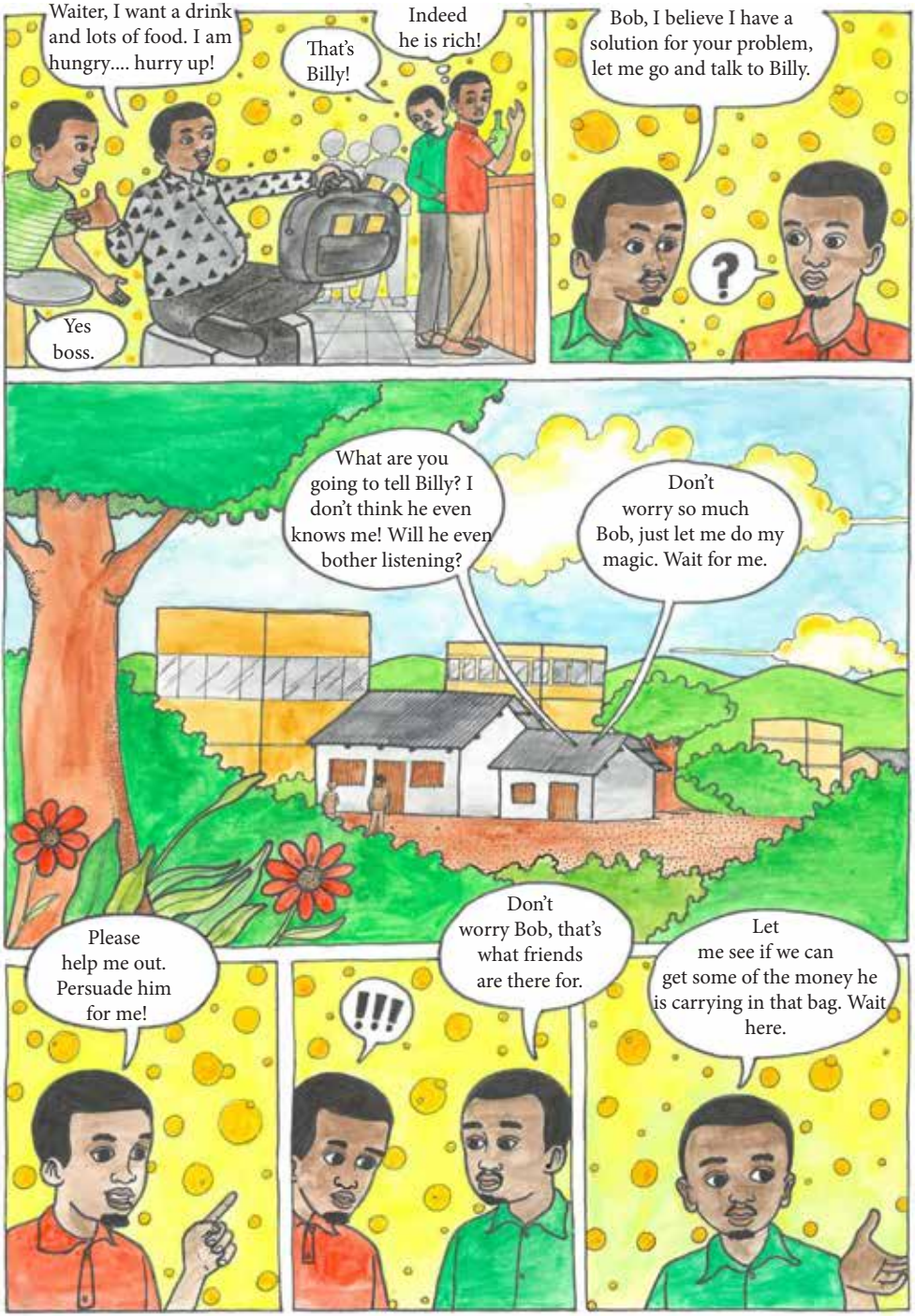
Why are you late for school? You were supposed to come on time and start classes with others. What happened?
We are sorry Teacher, Linda went to fetch water at the river and it is far.
We will not be late again, we promise.
I wish the Teacher forgives us....
The Teacher forgave them for being late, he also thought about a solution.
I think I need to intervene. I need to meet someone who can help bring pipe water to the village.
Next time, I will do the cleaning for you.
The Teacher approached the Leader of a local NGO and convinced him to build a well in the village.
This will change the life of everyone.
Rest assured that we are building the well and everyone will have access to water.

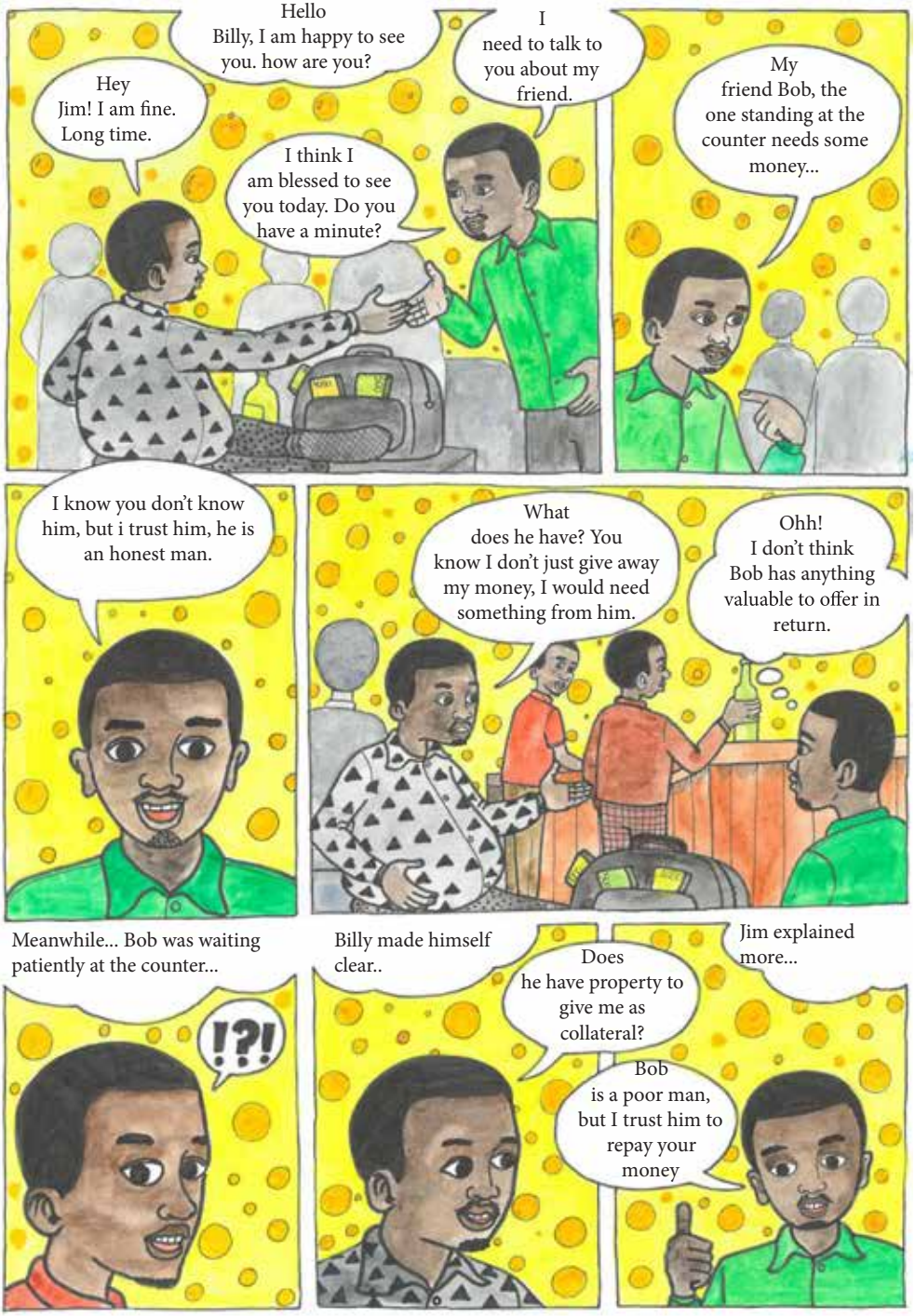

After a few months, the well was up and running and the whole village was rejoicing.....
Thanks a lot for honoring your promise.
It is our pleasure to fulfil our obligation .
I can't thank you enough.
This water is very clean.
Yeah..
Wow... I want to drink it.
I hate being late for school. This well will help the entire village. The water is also so refreshing.
I am glad I won't go back to that river. It's too far.
We shall never be late for school again....

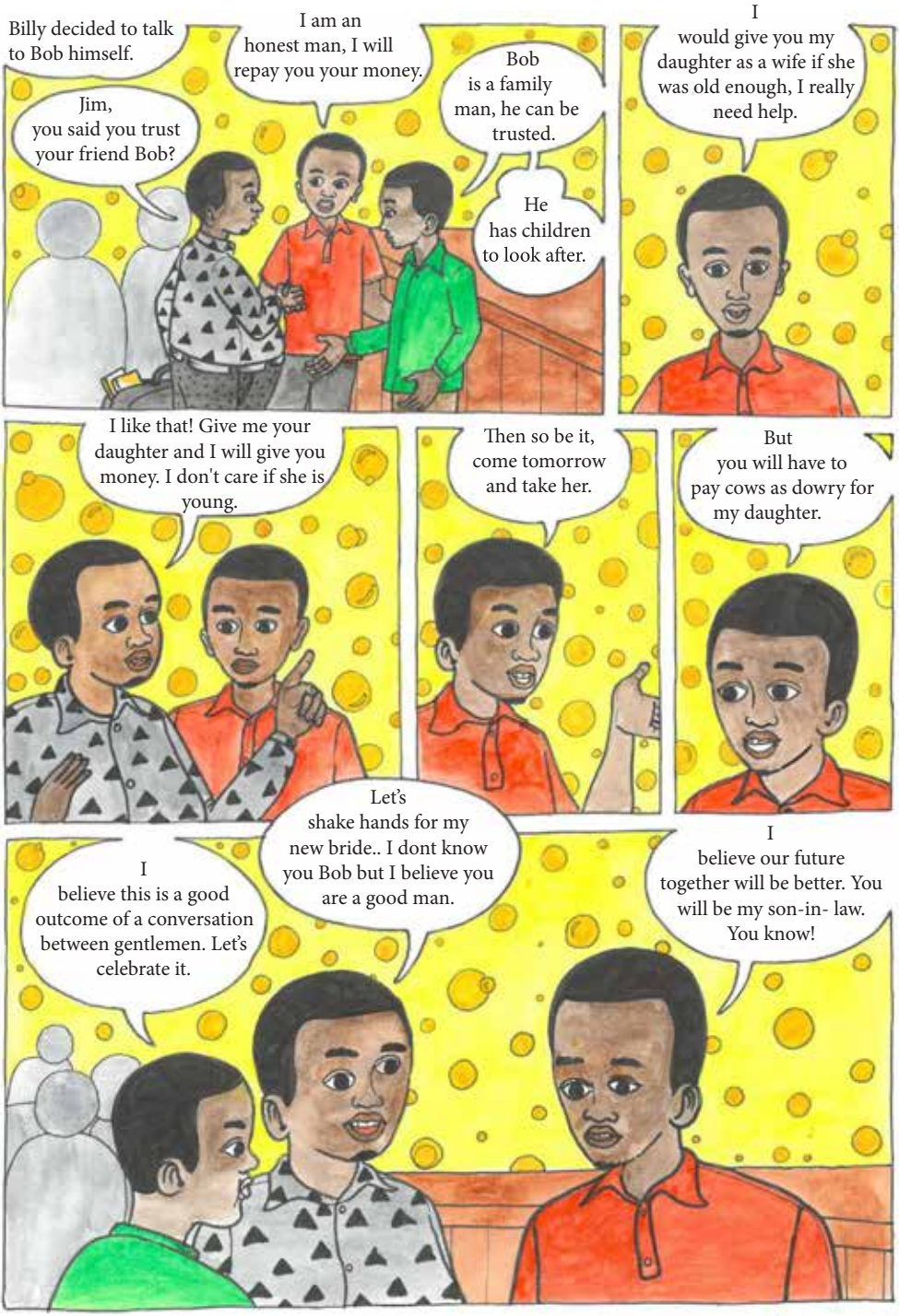

At the young girl's home... Food was a problem because her family was poor and they had so many children. Their parents were running out of answers.
Please be patient, we know you are hungry. Your father is looking for a solution.
I am going out for a few hours...
Dad... Mom... I am hungry.

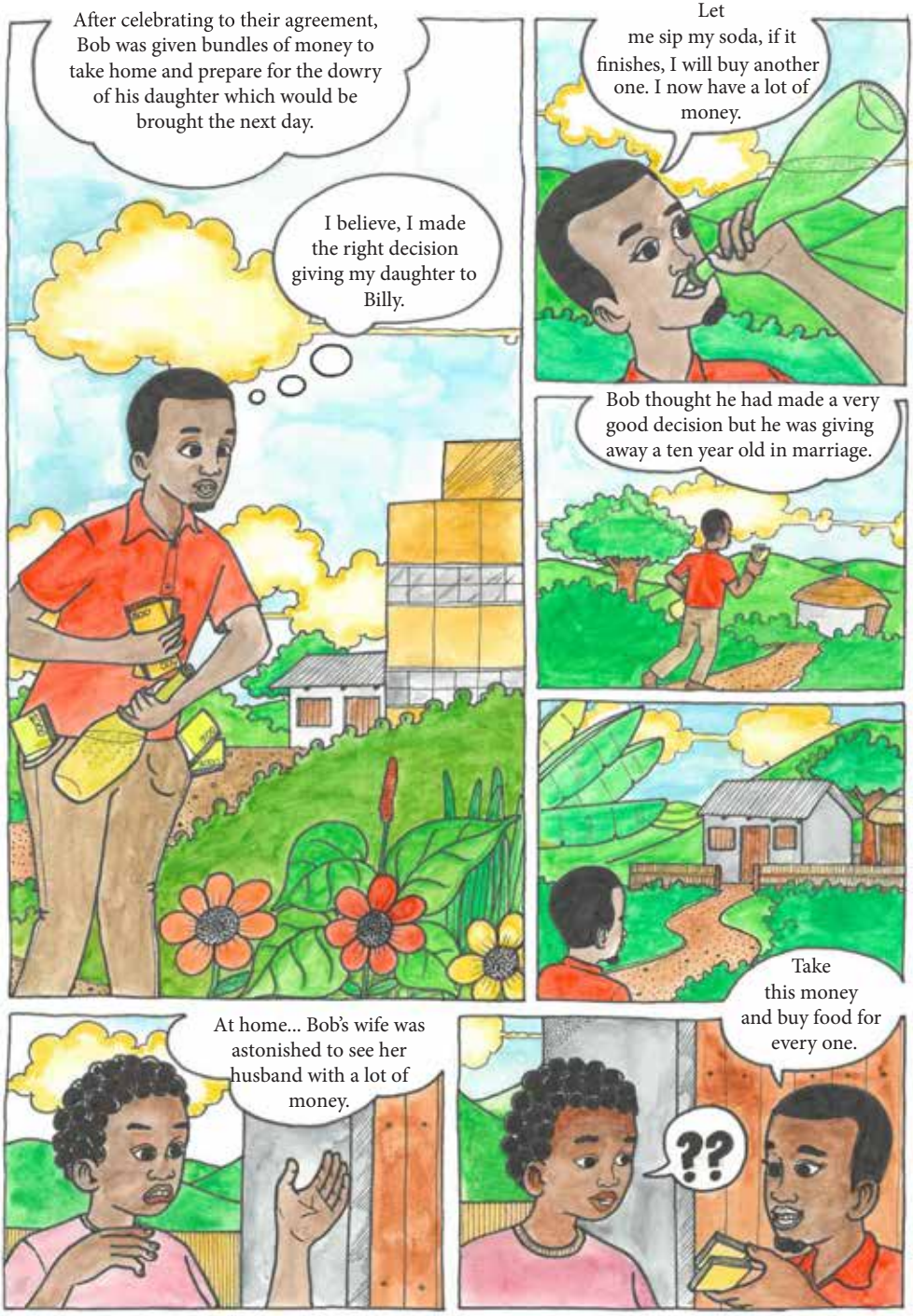
Let's patiently wait for your father. He will come back with something.
Let me see if I can get something...
But mom, when shall we get out of this poverty?
I am also hungry. I want food.
Just wait for me, I will be back as soon as I get something.
Their father went to a cafeteria to meet a friend.
Hello Jim, can I talk to you for a minute?
Hello Bob! No worries at all, what do you want to tell me..
Jim, I need to borrow some money from you.
Oh! I don't think I will be of any help. I don't have any money.


As Bob and Jim were conversing, Billy, one of the richest men in the village was coming to the same cafeteria. Billy was so rich that he moved around with a bag full of money. Everyone wanted to be friends with billy because he had what they wanted: Money!

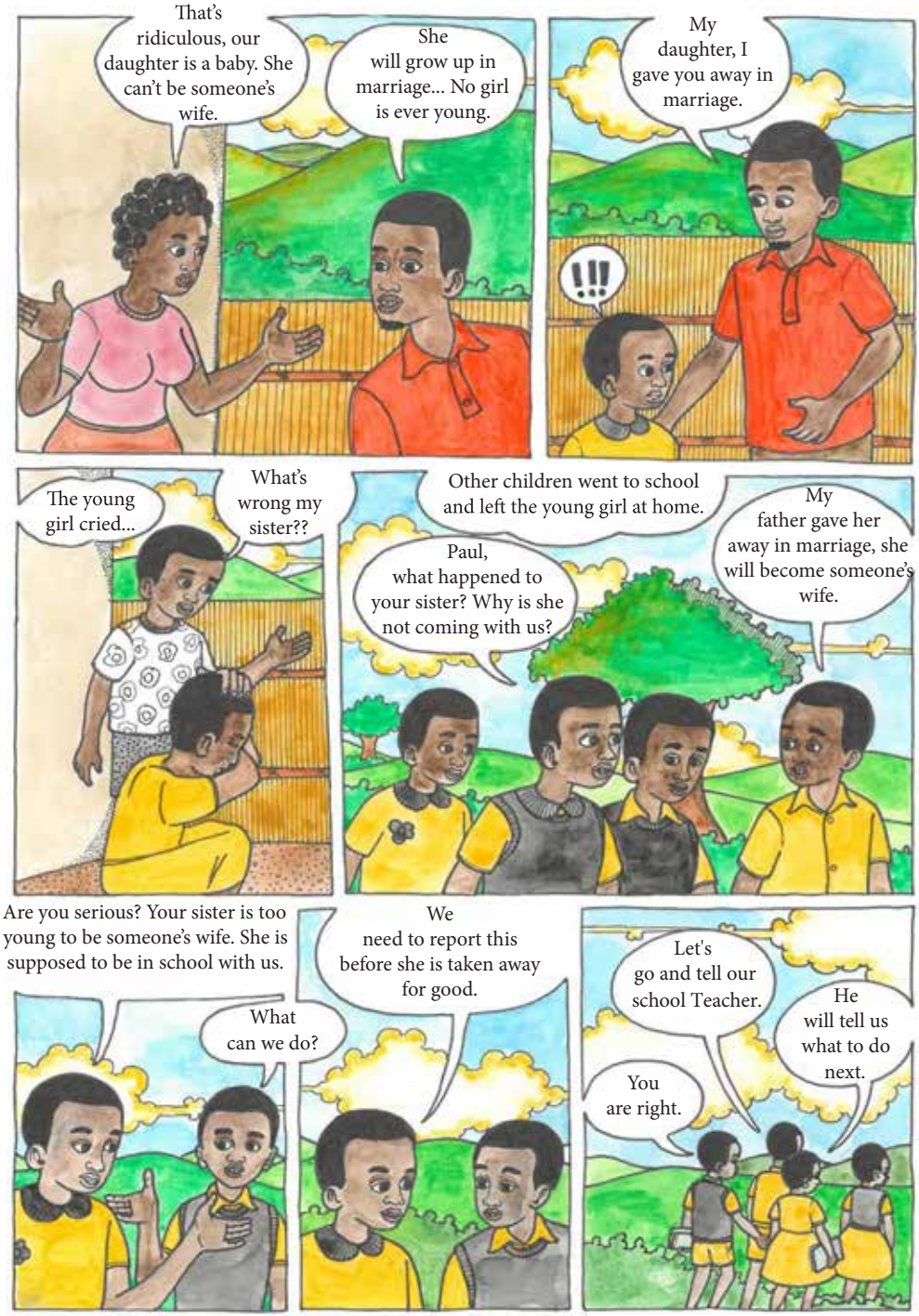

Waiter, I want a drink and lots of food. I am hungry.... hurry up!
Yes boss.
That's Billy!
Indeed he is rich!
Bob, I believe I have a solution for your problem, let me go and talk to Billy.
?
What are you going to tell Billy? I don't think he even knows me! Will he even bother listening?
Don't worry so much Bob, just let me do my magic. Wait for me.
Please help me out. Persuade him for me!
!!!
Don't worry Bob, that's what friends are there for.
Let me see if we can get some of the money he is carrying in that bag. Wait here.

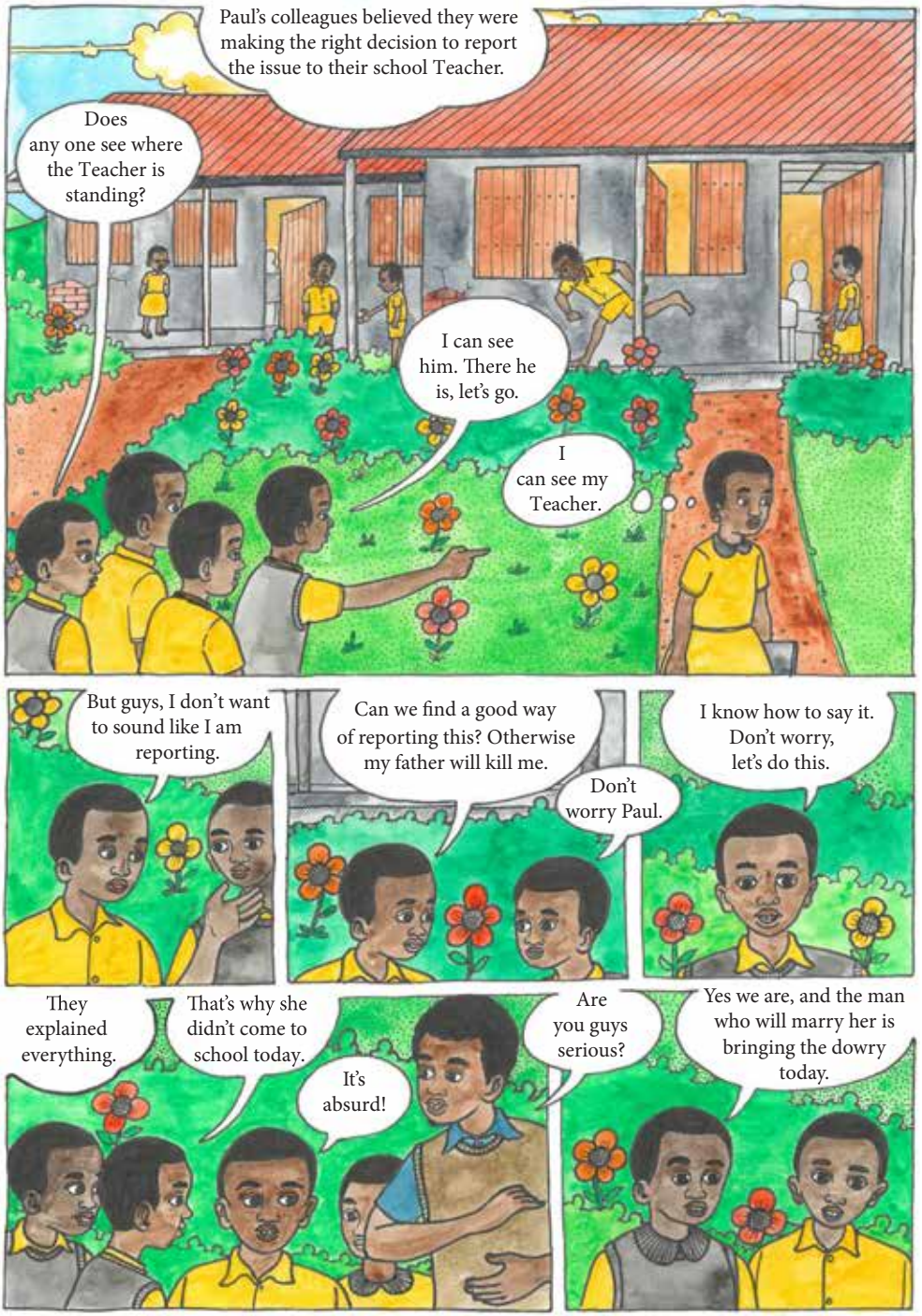

Hello Billy, I am happy to see you. how are you?
Hey Jim! I am fine. Long time.
I think I am blessed to see you today. Do you have a minute?
I need to talk to you about my friend.
My friend Bob, the one standing at the counter needs some money...
I know you don't know him, but i trust him, he is an honest man.
What does he have? You know I don't just give away my money, I would need something from him.
Ohh! I don't think Bob has anything valuable to offer in return.
Meanwhile... Bob was waiting patiently at the counter...
!?!
Billy made himself clear..
Does he have property to give me as collateral?
Jim explained more...
Bob is a poor man, but I trust him to repay your money

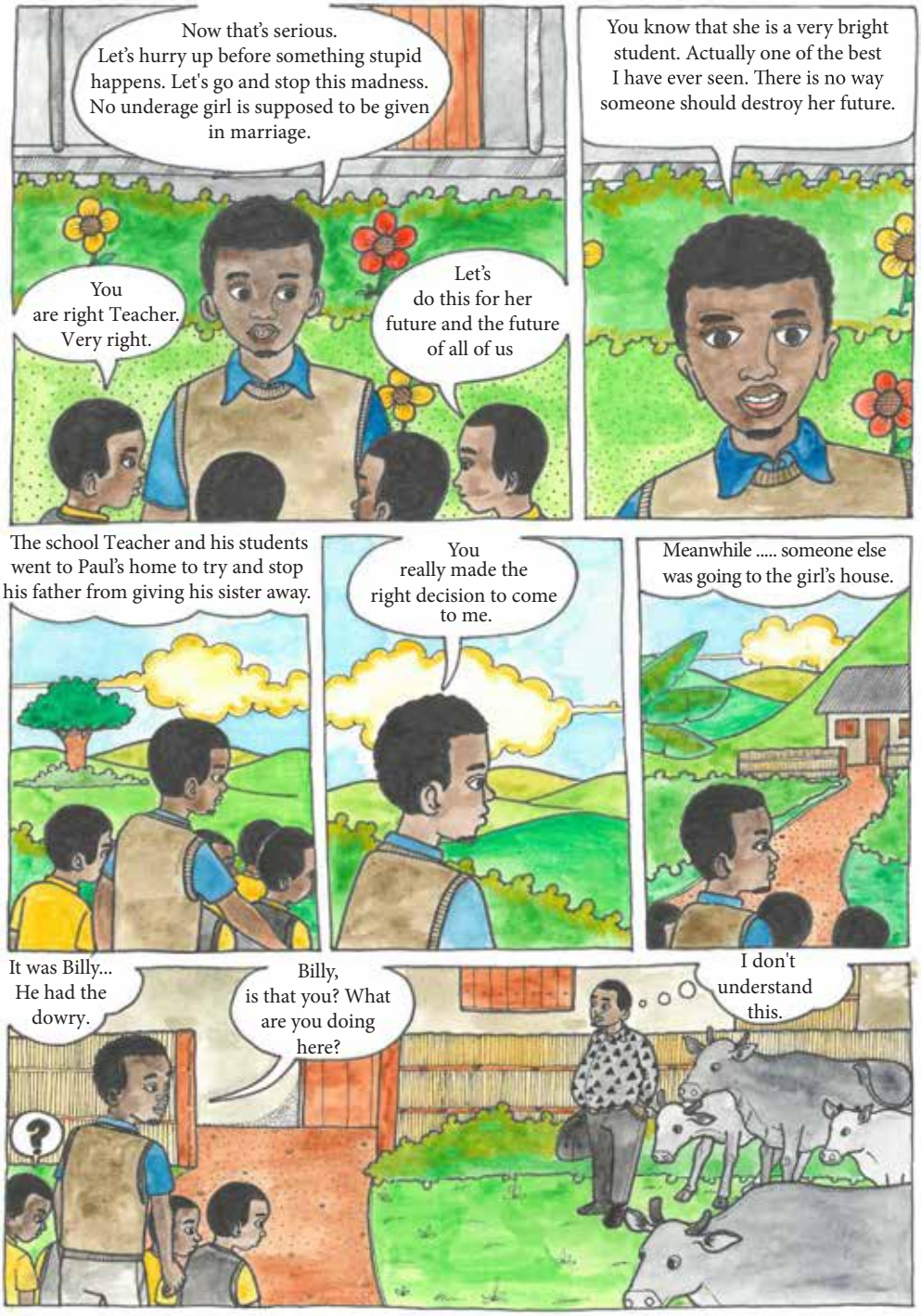

Billy decided to talk to Bob himself.
Jim, you said you trust your friend Bob?
I am an honest man, I will repay you your money.
Bob is a family man, he can be trusted.
He has children to look after.
I would give you my daughter as a wife if she was old enough, I really need help.
I like that! Give me your daughter and I will give you money. I don't care if she is young.
Then so be it, come tomorrow and take her.
But you will have to pay cows as dowry for my daughter.
I believe this is a good outcome of a conversation between gentlemen. Let's celebrate it.
Let's shake hands for my new bride.. I dont know you Bob but I believe you are a good man.
I believe our future together will be better. You will be my son-in- law. You know!


After celebrating to their agreement, Bob was given bundles of money to take home and prepare for the dowry of his daughter which would be brought the next day.
I believe, I made the right decision giving my daughter to Billy.
Let me sip my soda, if it finishes, I will buy another one. I now have a lot of money.
Bob thought he had made a very good decision but he was giving away a ten year old in marriage.
Take this money and buy food for every one.
At home... Bob's wife was astonished to see her husband with a lot of money.
??

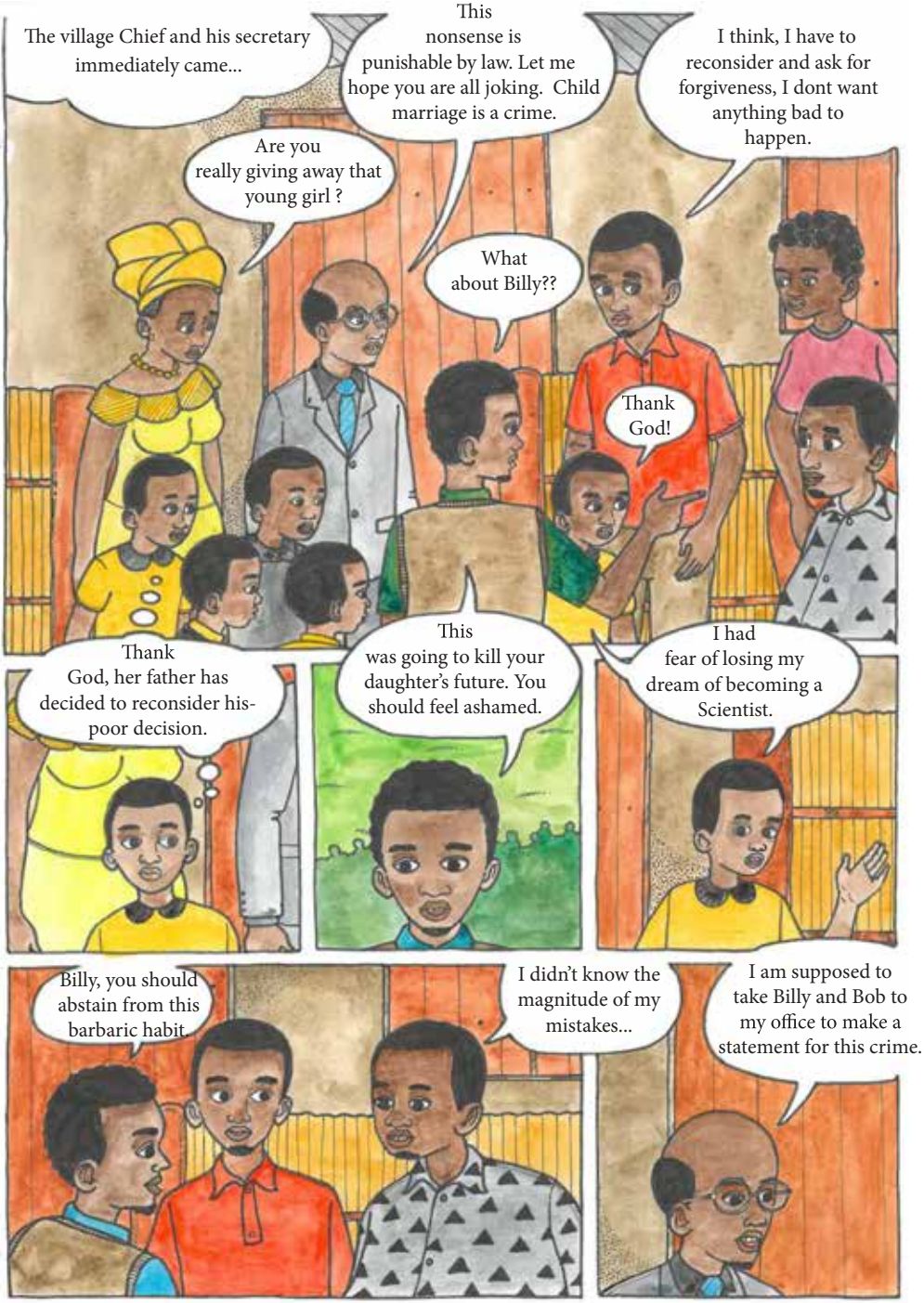
We are now very rich...
Did you rob a bank? Where did you get all this money??
They bought food and everyone ate what they could.
The young girl didn't know that her father had betrayed her rights; her future.
I was so hungry.. I like this food.
Bob! where did you get the money from?
I gave my daughter away in marriage..
Which daughter did you give in marriage?? Do you have another daughter somewhere?
The following morning...
Now that you can talk, where did you get the money?
I told you already, I gave away our daughter.


That's ridiculous, our daughter is a baby. She can't be someone's wife.
She will grow up in marriage... No girl is ever young.
My daughter, I gave you away in marriage.
!!!
The young girl cried...
What's wrong my sister??
Other children went to school and left the young girl at home.
Paul, what happened to your sister? Why is she not coming with us?
My father gave her away in marriage, she will become someone's wife.
Are you serious? Your sister is too young to be someone's wife. She is supposed to be in school with us.
What can we do?
We need to report this before she is taken away for good.
Let's go and tell our school Teacher.
He will tell us what to do next.
You are right.


Paul's colleagues believed they were making the right decision to report the issue to their school Teacher.
Does any one see where the Teacher is standing?
I can see him. There he is, let's go.
I can see my Teacher.
But guys, I don't want to sound like I am reporting.
Can we find a good way of reporting this? Otherwise my father will kill me.
Don't worry Paul.
I know how to say it. Don't worry, let's do this.
They explained everything.
That's why she didn't come to school today.
It's absurd!
Are you guys serious?
Yes we are, and the man who will marry her is bringing the dowry today.


Now that's serious. Let's hurry up before something stupid happens. Let's go and stop this madness. No underage girl is supposed to be given in marriage.
You are right Teacher. Very right.
Let's do this for her future and the future of all of us
You know that she is a very bright student. Actually one of the best I have ever seen. There is no way someone should destroy her future.
The school Teacher and his students went to Paul's home to try and stop his father from giving his sister away.
You really made the right decision to come to me.
Meanwhile ..... someone else was going to the girl's house.
It was Billy... He had the dowry.
Billy, is that you? What are you doing here?
?
I don't understand this.

What have you come to do with those students? Aren't you supposed to be at school?
But Billy, what are doing here?
I have brought dowry for my bride.
And then...
Please Dina, go ! run quickly and call the village Chief.
Yes teacher... let me go.
Bob immediately came out, he brought his daughter.
What's happening here? Why have students come here?
Please tell them to go back to school. They are not supposed to be here at this time.
We came to ask why the young girl is not at school.
But I already told you, I brought dowry for her. She is now my wife.
Who gave you permission to come to my home and start asking questions ?


The village Chief and his secretary immediately came...
This nonsense is punishable by law. Let me hope you are all joking. Child marriage is a crime.
I think, I have to reconsider and ask for forgiveness, I dont want anything bad to happen.
Are you really giving away that young girl ?
What about Billy??
Thank God!
Thank God, her father has decided to reconsider his-poor decision.
This was going to kill your daughter's future. You should feel ashamed.
I had fear of losing my dream of becoming a Scientist.
Billy, you should abstain from this barbaric habit.
I didn't know the magnitude of my mistakes...
I am supposed to take Billy and Bob to my office to make a statement for this crime.

They should be punished to serve as an example to other parents who would do the same.

Let's go... I am not leaving you here. You are supposed to pay for this crime.

I am really sorry, forgive me.

Please forgive me, I now understand the seriousness of my crime. I will never repeat it, believe me.

Take your money back. This is all I have left. You can come back when she is old enough.

Keep it, I know you needed it. I will take this as a lifetime lesson. Never take an underage for a wife. It is a crime.

Guys, thank you for saving my life. I will never forget this for the rest of my life.

Wow! We did it.

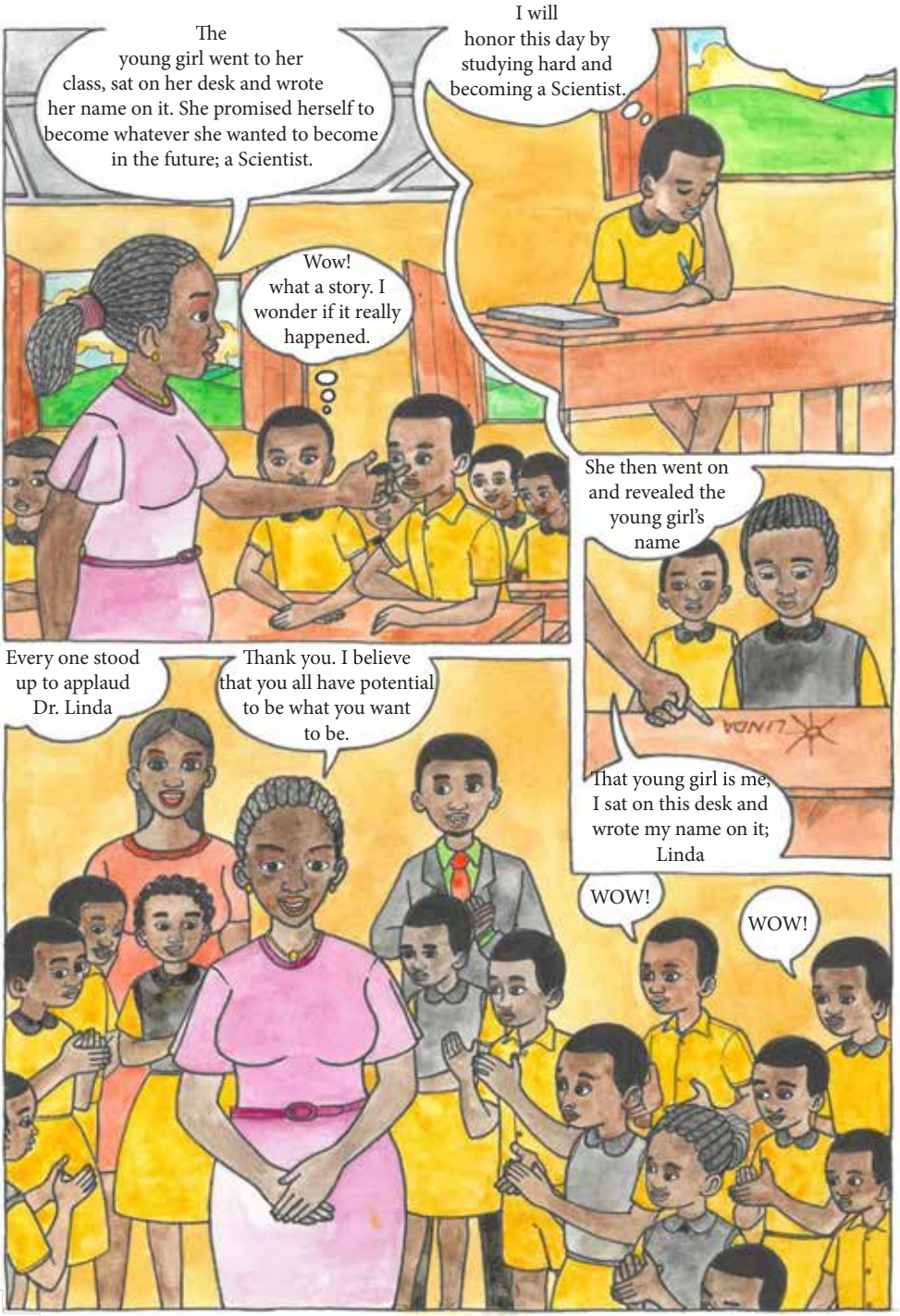
You're welcome.

They all went back to school together. They were very happy.

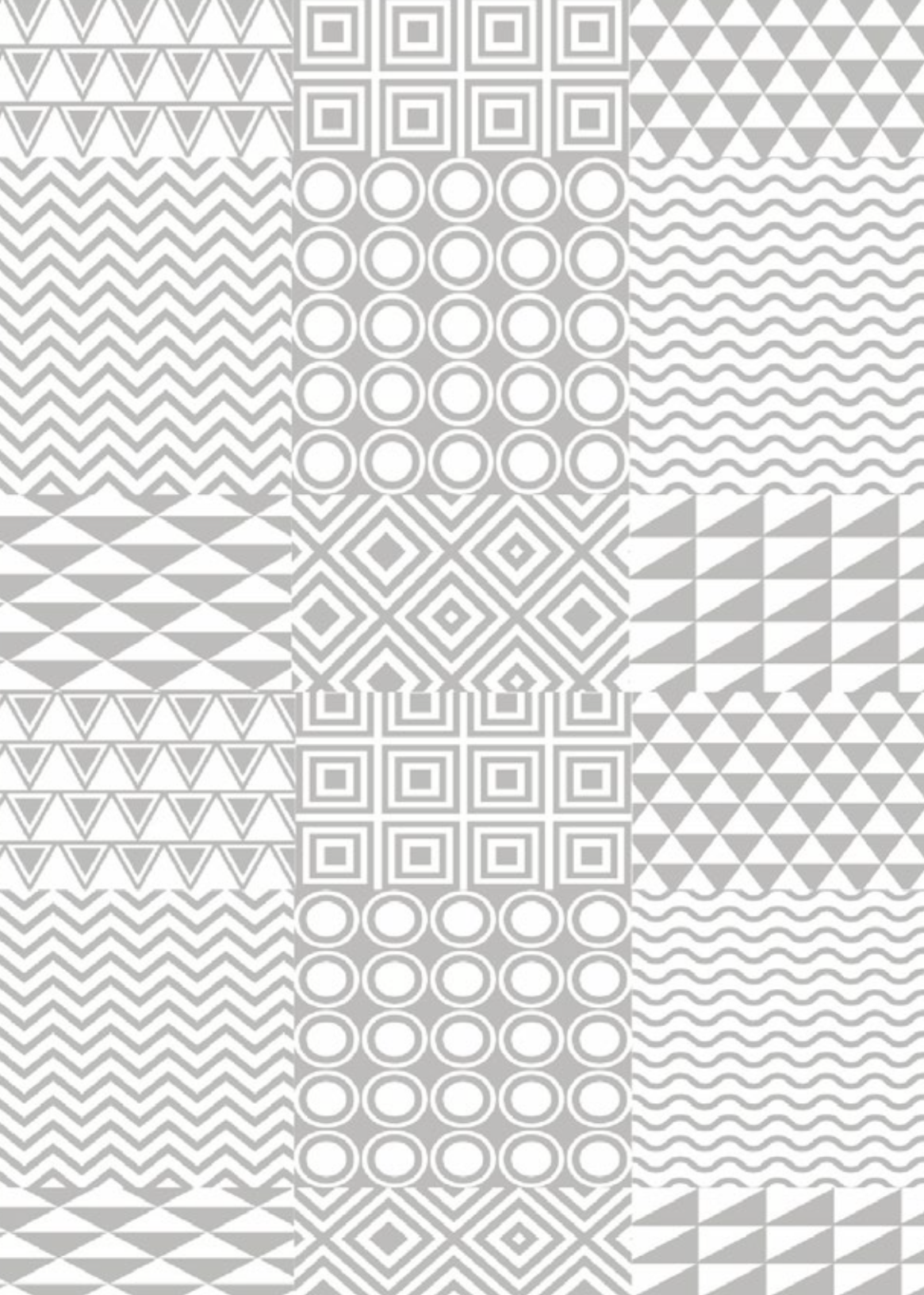
Go to class and study, no one should destroy your future, not even your parents.

Let's go and study, lets pursue our future.

What we did today will change the way some parents treat their children especially girls.


The young girl went to her class, sat on her desk and wrote her name on it. She promised herself to become whatever she wanted to become in the future; a Scientist.
I will honor this day by studying hard and becoming a Scientist.
Wow! what a story. I wonder if it really happened.
She then went on and revealed the young girl's name
LINDA
That young girl is me, I sat on this desk and wrote my name on it; Linda
Every one stood up to applaud Dr. Linda
Thank you. I believe that you all have potential to be what you want to be.
WOW!
WOW!

THE END



EDUCATING LINDA

Linda, a young girl, born in a remote village nearly lost her right to education and her nation nearly lost an award winning Scientist. Read the book for the full story.

The Author

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