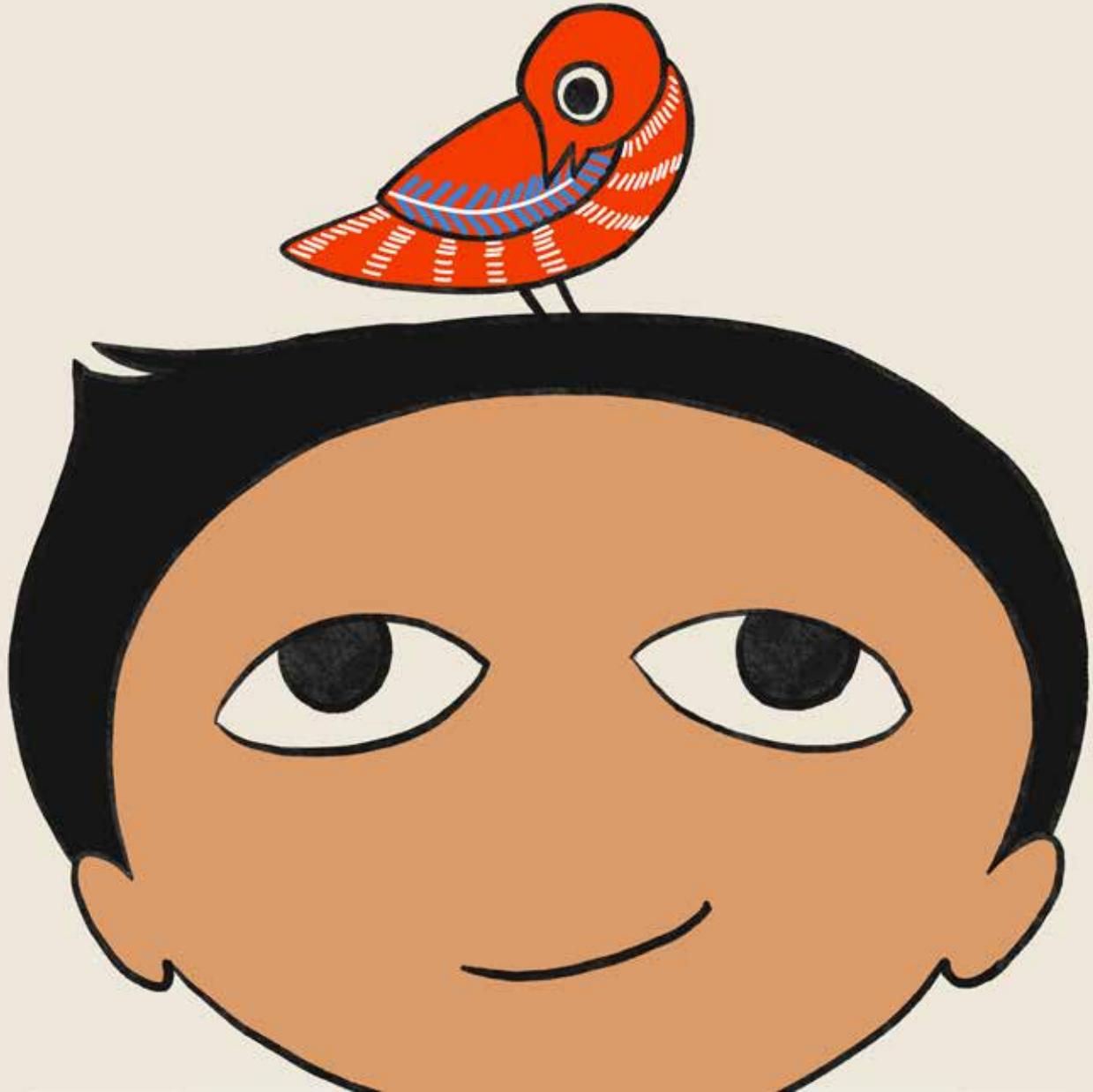


Keeshu & Meethu





# Keeshu & Meethu

A Graphic Narrative  
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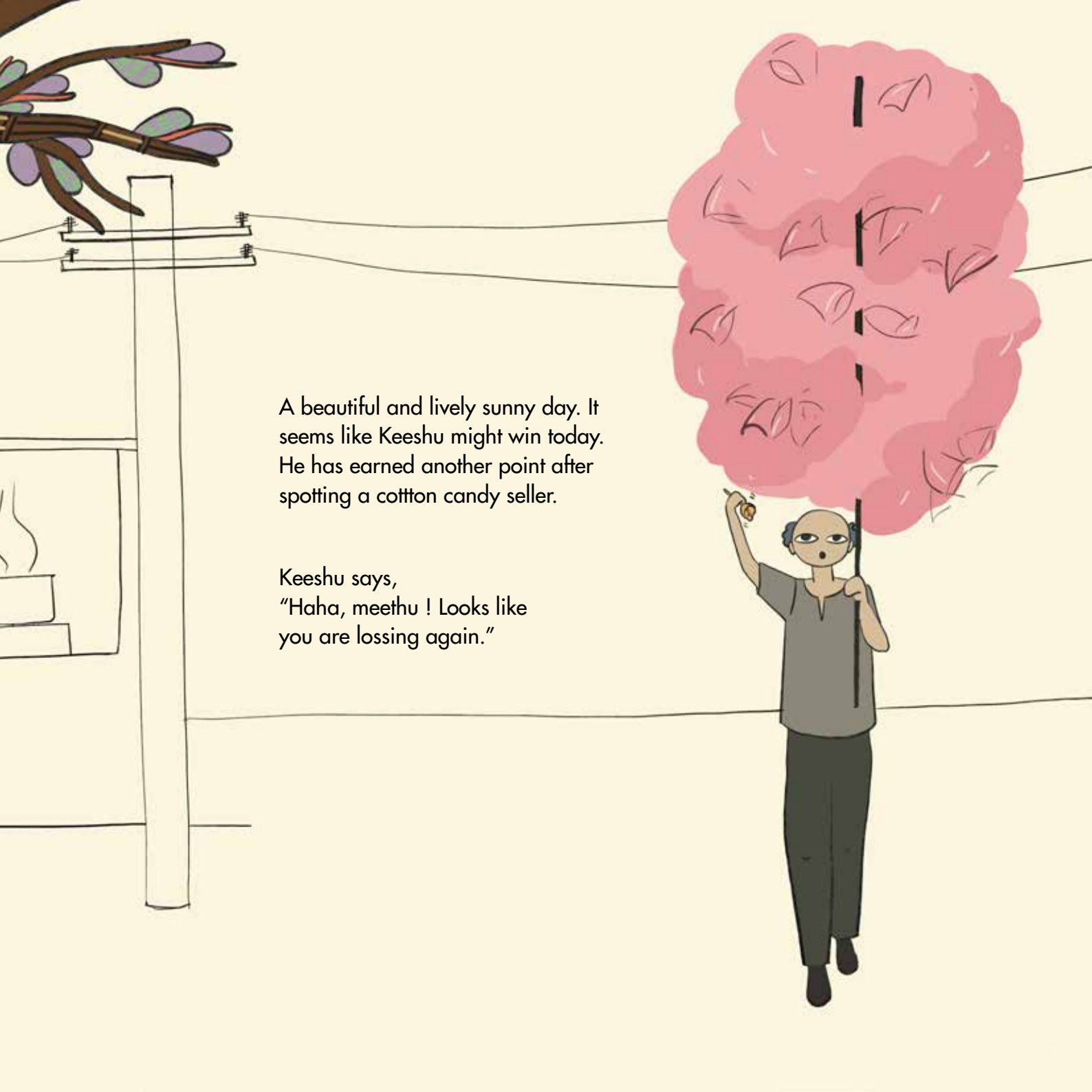




Hi, I am Meethu. Meet my friend Keeshu. We spend most of our time swinging on a big tree situated in a small village in Central India. Our pastimes include looking around the street, observing daily life activities and playing games like counting the number of bicycles passing across the street. Whoever spots one first gets a point, & on five we have a winner.

Come join us to find out what's up in the street today.





A beautiful and lively sunny day. It seems like Keeshu might win today. He has earned another point after spotting a cotton candy seller.

Keeshu says,  
"Haha, meethu ! Looks like you are losing again."

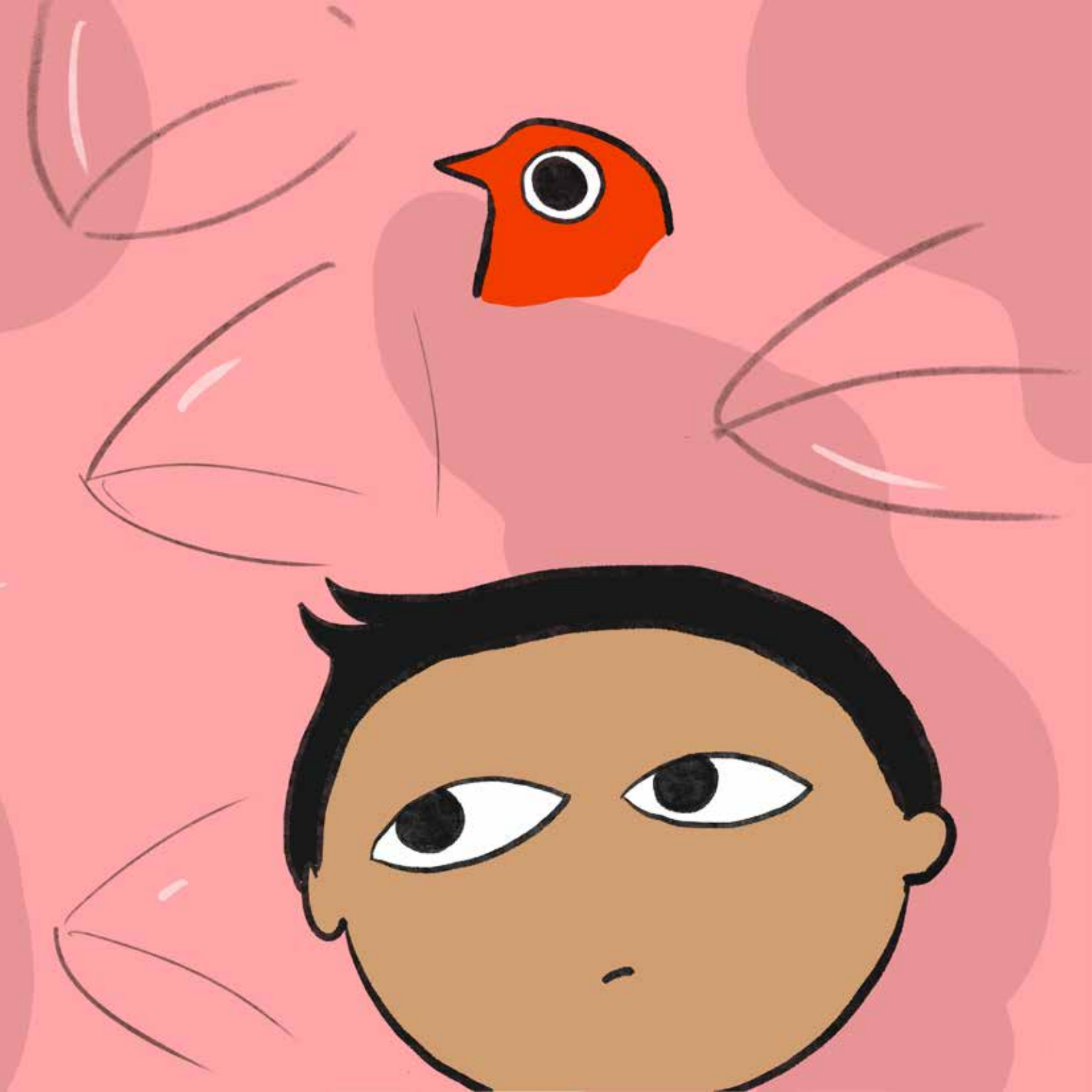


A **gush of wind** comes and along with it fly away all the candy packets.

“Oh look! Ahh poor man all his packets flew away. Wouldn't it be nice if someone helped him?”









Keeshu helps the old man and gets a packet of **cotton candy** as a token of gratitude.



On their way back to the swing they spot something.

“ Oh look! That boy seems to be looking for something to **eat**. I wonder how long he has been out in the sun, **must be hungry**. Wouldn't it be nice if he had something to eat ? ”

"Hi! My name is Keeshu. What is your name?"

"Hello Keeshu. I am Maru."

"Are you from this place? I've never seen you before."

"No, I live in a village nearby. I came here today to look for work."

"Oh, So you don't go to school?"

"No, I used to, though, till fifth grade. But now I work. But I miss school, we used to play a lot of games there. "

"Oh hey! Would you like to play a game with me right now?"

" Yeah sure that will be fun. "



Keeshu approaches the boy and offers him a share of his candy.



They rest under the tree enjoying the candy taking a break from their daily routines, Keeshu from his **play** and Maru from his **work**.

On second day, they play marbles.



Third day, Nani had sent some homemade besan ladoos.



On forth day, Maru wins in **hopscotch**.



Fifth day, Keshu gets a **handmade toy** from Maru.



Slowly & gradually, Maru was becoming part of Keshu's daily summer routine. They would meet up daily & play together.



The next day too, Keshu was waiting for his friend to come but Maru **doesn't show up**.

Meethu says, "Maybe he is occupied with something else." Next day followed but still there is no sign of Maru.

A week passed by. " **I miss him,** I wonder when he will come " says Keshu.



On the eighth day, while swinging on the tyre, Keeshu spotted Maru from a distance.

Meethu says "Oh look! That's Maru. Doesn't he look different today?"

"Yeah I think he is a little sick."



Excited to see his friend, he gets off the swing & runs towards Maru. But while on his way, he notices something. Maru is holding a plastic bag in his hand & has placed it near his mouth.

Meethu says, " It looks as if Maru is trying to sniff something from a plastic bag. "

**He is looking different today.** Something feels strange. He is walking in a different manner as well.



On spotting Keeshu, Maru instantly put **the plastic bag** back into his pocket.



"Hey is everything okay?"

"Will you not join me to the tree today?"

"Yes. In fact I'm feeling very good today."

"Will you not join me to the tree today?"

"No, I have to go somewhere. I'll see you tomorrow."

Meethu says, "Oh look! This is the same plastic bag that Maru was sniffing from. I think he **dropped** it by mistake."



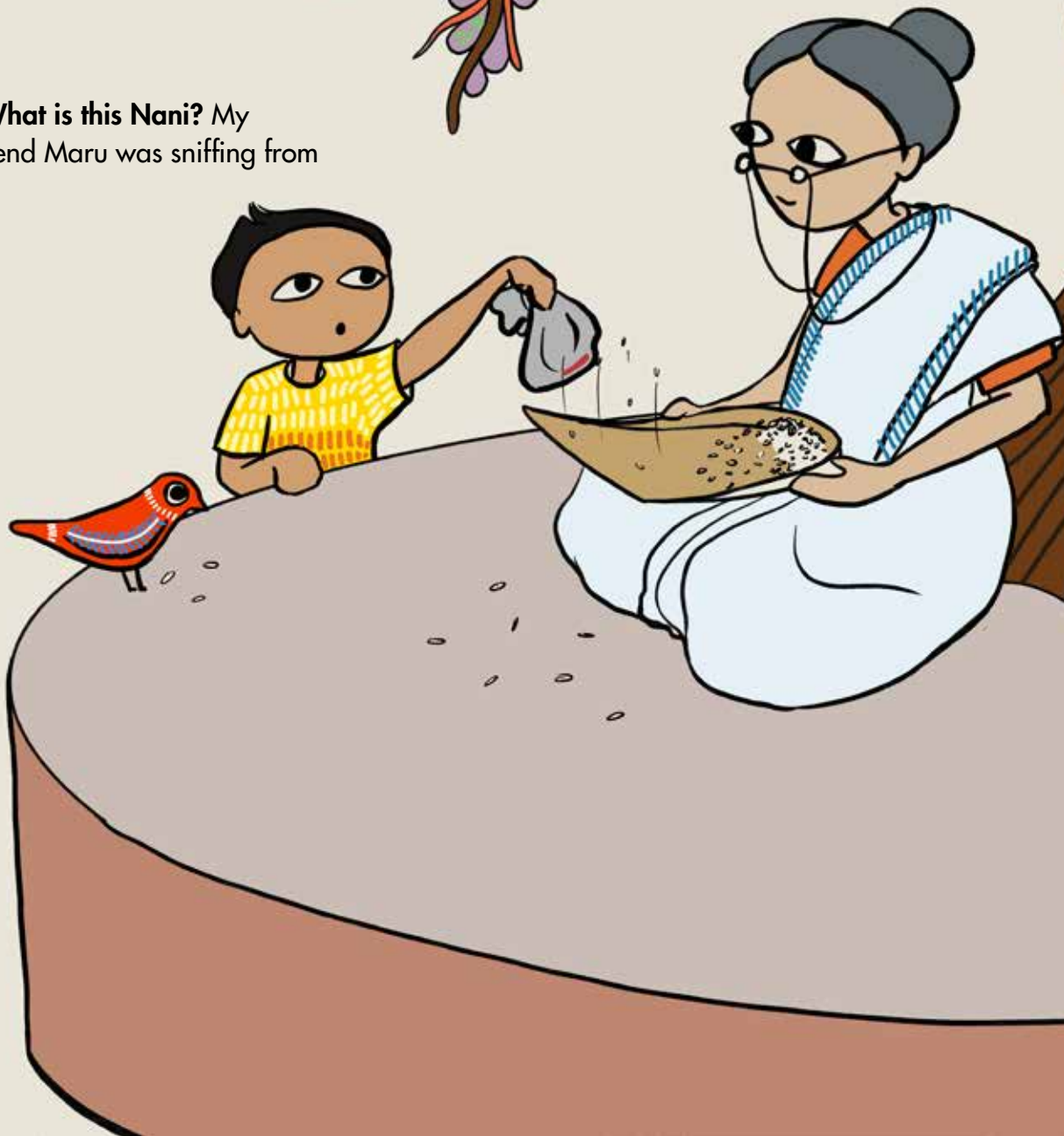
"Yeah. What is it though ?  
But we can collect it & then  
return it to him tomorrow."



Keeshu is carrying the plastic bag back with him to the swing. Meethu spots Nani sitting under the tree from a distance.

Meethu says, "Oh look! Nani is there. **Wouldn't it be better to ask her?**"

**"What is this Nani? My friend Maru was sniffing from it."**





Nani takes a while to examine it & then asks, "Keeshu beta, did you also sniff it?"



"No Nani. We shouldn't use other people's belongings without their permission right? But what is this"

"Yes, good beta."



"Now tell me, how do you feel about the smell that comes from the soil, once it has rained, after a long hot day?"

"Yes yes I like it a lot Nani! **It is so refreshing.** It makes us feel so good"

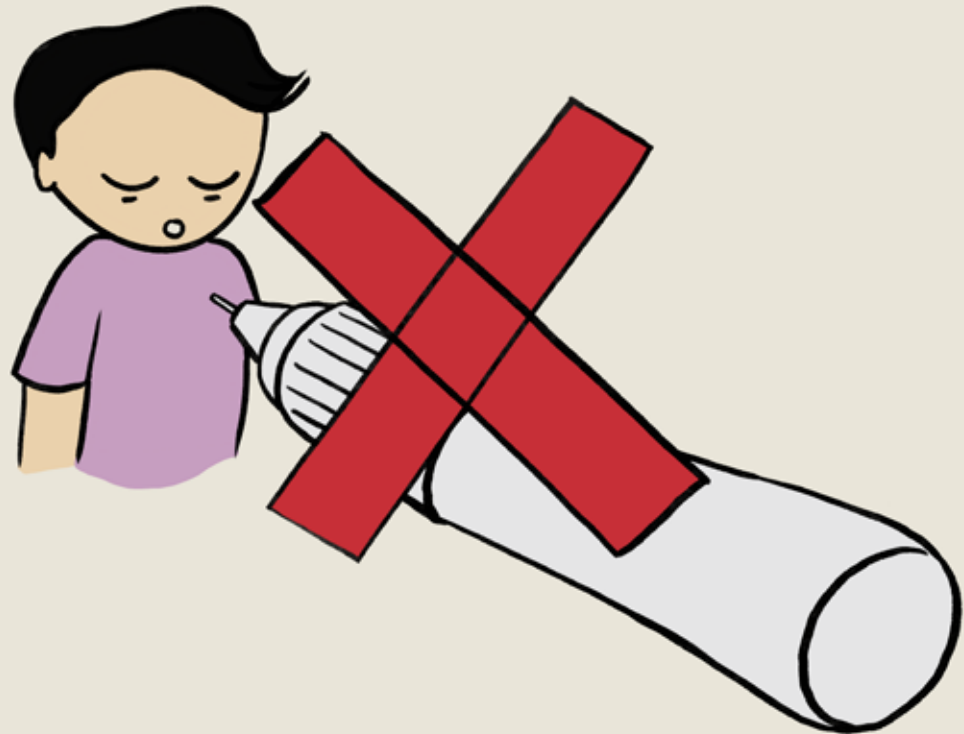


"Yes, I like it too! Similarly there are other things which also give a strong smell, & might also make you feel good temporarily but they are actually very harmful for your health."

"Oh! Like what nani?"

"Your teachers don't allow you to use whiteners right? It is because they are very harmful if inhaled."

"Oh! So we shouldn't inhale whitener?"



“Yes beta. Besides whitener, there are other substances too.

These substances are called **‘drugs’**. There are good drugs and there are bad drugs.

Good drugs include the medicines that our doctor gives us when we get sick. They help our bodies get better – but only if we take the right amount at the right time.

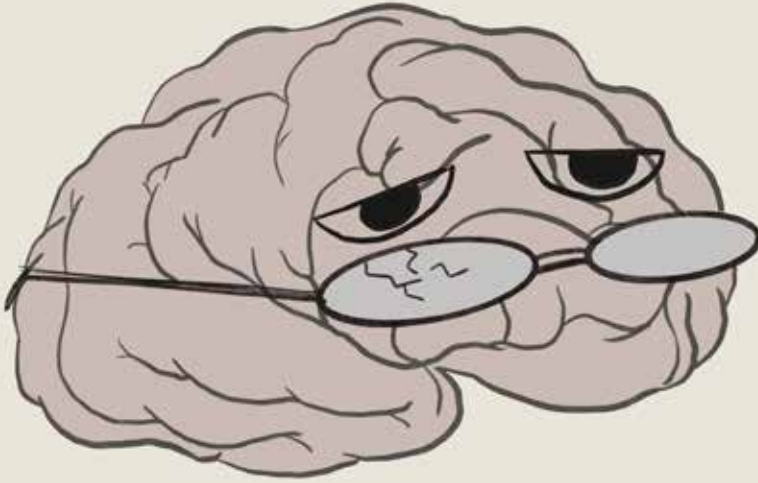
Bad drugs are ones we should never take. They make our bodies sick and can even kill people who take them.”

Keeshu says,

**“Oh! So we should not inhale drugs ?”**



“Yes Keeshu. Like whitener, petrol, paint, glue etc etc



“Besides inhaling also, there are other ways in which people consume drugs.

Some drugs are smoked, like cigarettes. They can hurt your lungs, which helps you to breathe.

Some drugs are in such a form that people can consume them by eating or drinking. Some drugs come in the form of pills, and also there are some which they inject using needle.

Over time, your body can get addicted to them. Even drugs that aren't addictive can still hurt you because they have chemicals in them that damage your brain and make you do and think stupid or scary things or have terrible nightmares.”

Kesshu says, "Oh! But what does it mean when you say that people can get addicted to it?"

"Beta, addiction means you want something so much that you can't stop taking it, even if you know that it's hurting you.

For example, you know that eating too many chocolates would hurt your teeth & might even give you a tummy ache, but sometimes you still eat it. It is a bit the same way with drugs and alcohol.

Sometimes we make really good choices and sometimes, even when we know better, we don't make the best choice.

People who are drug addicts stop eating and don't take care of their bodies. They become sick, spend all their money on drugs, and eventually they may die from their addiction."



“Oh! But if drugs are so harmful & addictive, then why do people consume them?”



“There might be different reasons for that. Since they make you feel good for a very short period of time, people might take them, thinking that it will solve all their problems. But that is a trap. Sometimes, your friends might ask you to try them. But it is very important to think, make the correct choice & say no to them.”



"Our bodies & brains are such wonderful gifts from nature. They allow us to do so many good things. Your healthy limbs enable you to climb up on the tree, your eyes allow you to play that game, your tongue allows you to taste the sweet mango. Your kind heart helps you to help others. With a healthy brain, you're able to solve all those tricky puzzles. Hence it is very important to take care of our body, to nurture it with healthy food & exercise, & to follow a good lifestyle."

"Yes nani. That is true. I am very grateful for my body too."



Keeshu says, "But Maru is my friend. Is there no way we can help him come out of addiction? He is a really good person. Will he always remain sick?"



No beta, he can surely come out of it, if given proper help by doctors. Just like when you have a tummy ache, the doctor gives you medicine & gradually you become better right. Similarly, there are special doctors to treat addiction too. They help your body & brain to become healthy again, if you have a strong will power to put efforts to regain your health.



It always helps to share these thoughts, about you or your friend with an adult, whom you trust. It is good that you told me about this. Now we can help your friend to get proper treatment."

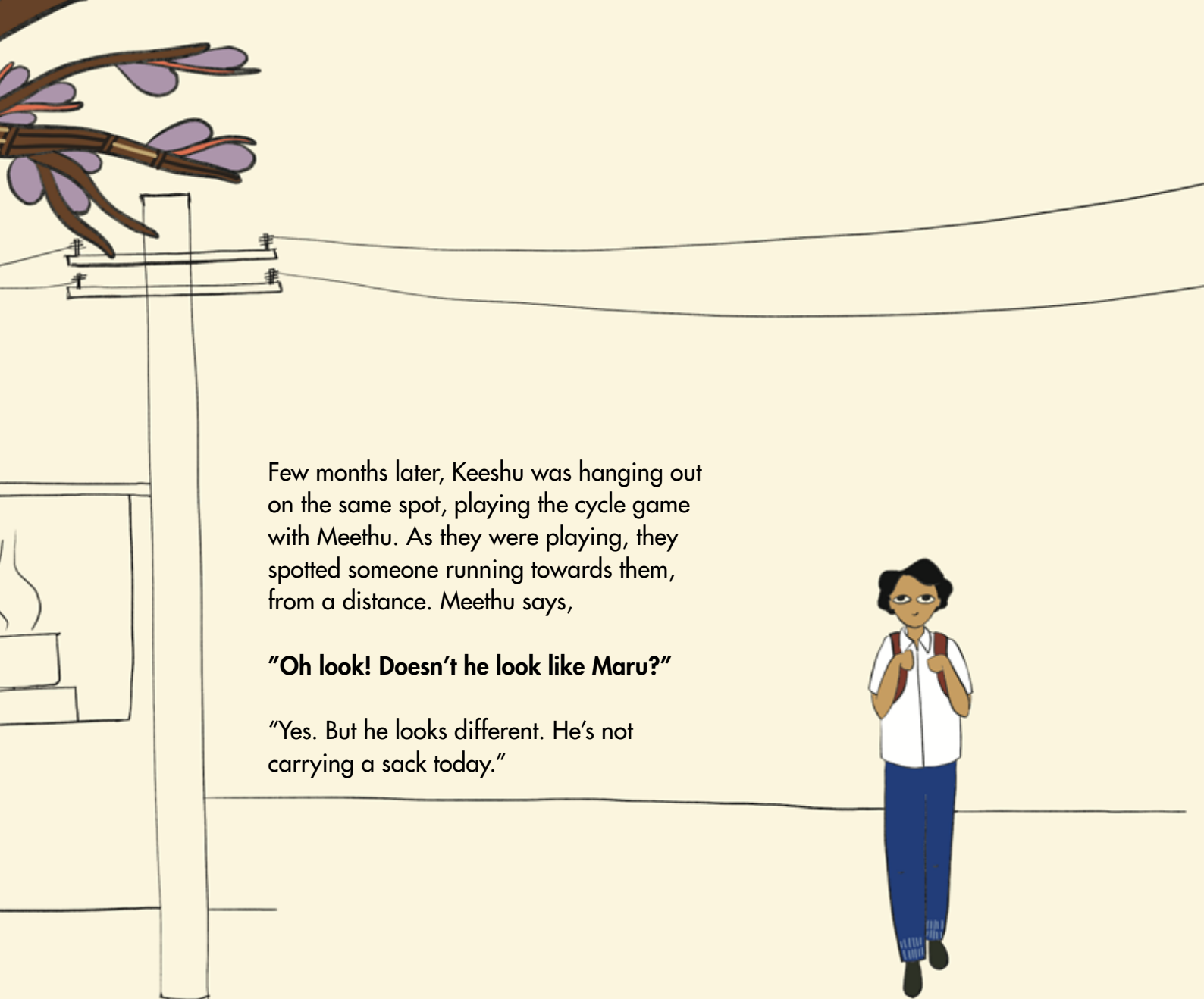
Keeshu says, "So we'll take him to a doctor?"

"No beta we can help him reach out to my friend who runs an NGO for young kids who have fallen to addiction. They help those kids come out of it & also teach them how they can take care of their bodies & brains in a better way, so that they can lead a healthy life."



Nani & her friend go help Maru. He is given proper treatment in the **NGO**.



A utility pole stands on the left side of the page. A tree branch with purple leaves is attached to the top of the pole. Two power lines run horizontally across the top of the page, supported by the pole. The background is a plain, light yellow color.

Few months later, Keeshu was hanging out on the same spot, playing the cycle game with Meethu. As they were playing, they spotted someone running towards them, from a distance. Meethu says,

**“Oh look! Doesn’t he look like Maru?”**

“Yes. But he looks different. He’s not carrying a sack today.”



Maru reaches the tree & hugs Keeshu.  
"Hi Keeshu! It's good to see you after so long.  
How are you?"



"Hello Maru! I missed you so much. I'm well. How are you. & why are you in this uniform today?"



"This is my school uniform. I started going to the NGO school, and we had a competition today. I got second place in that."  
Maru places the medal around Keeshu's neck.  
"Wow, congratulations!"



Maru says "Thank you. I wanted to give you what I made, as a gift.

Maru takes out **the truck robot that he made** from his bag.

"This is so nice. Thank you so much.

Come, do you wanna play with me?"

"Yes, let's get you up on that."





