



Only Fools Go to School

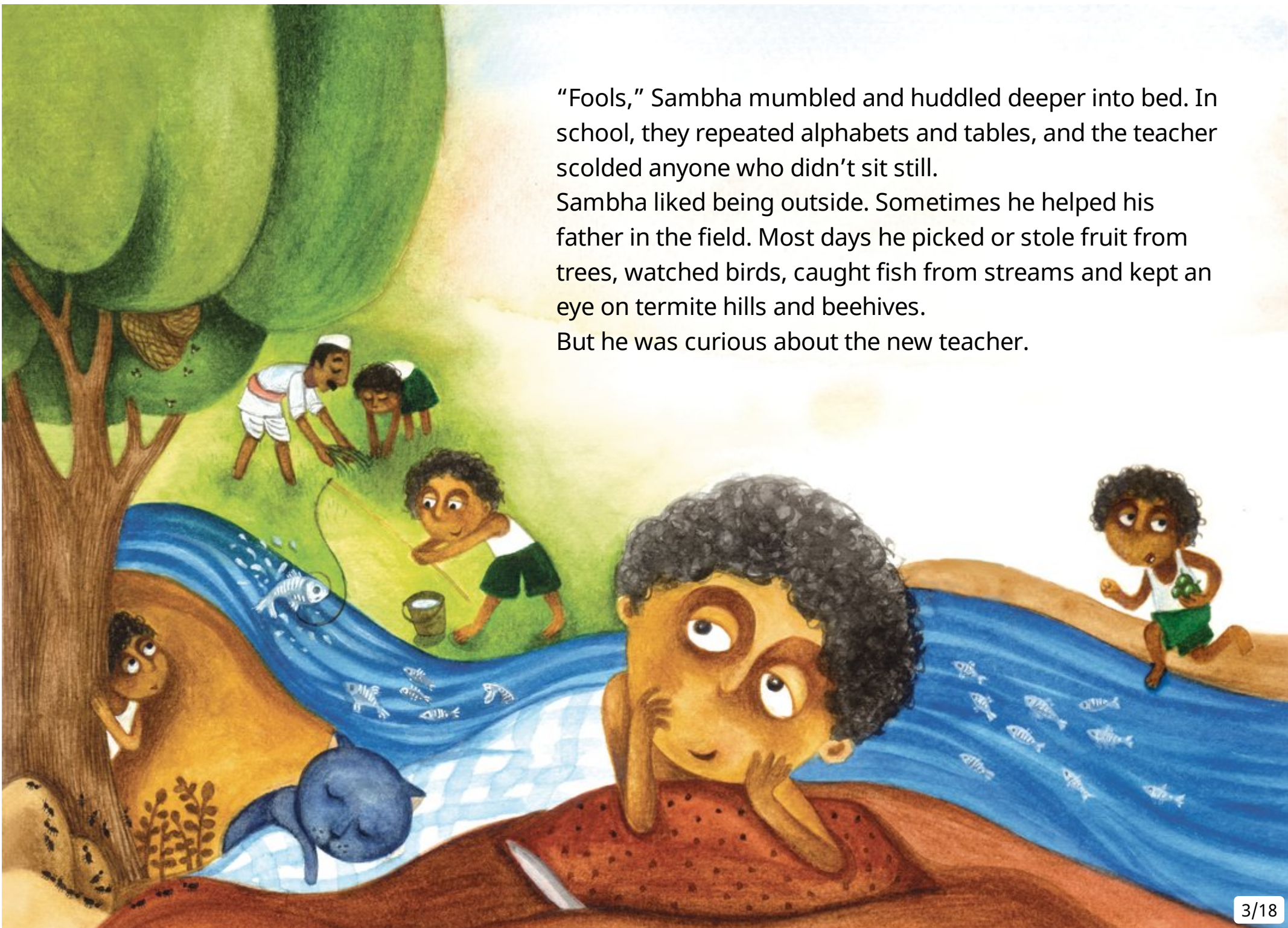
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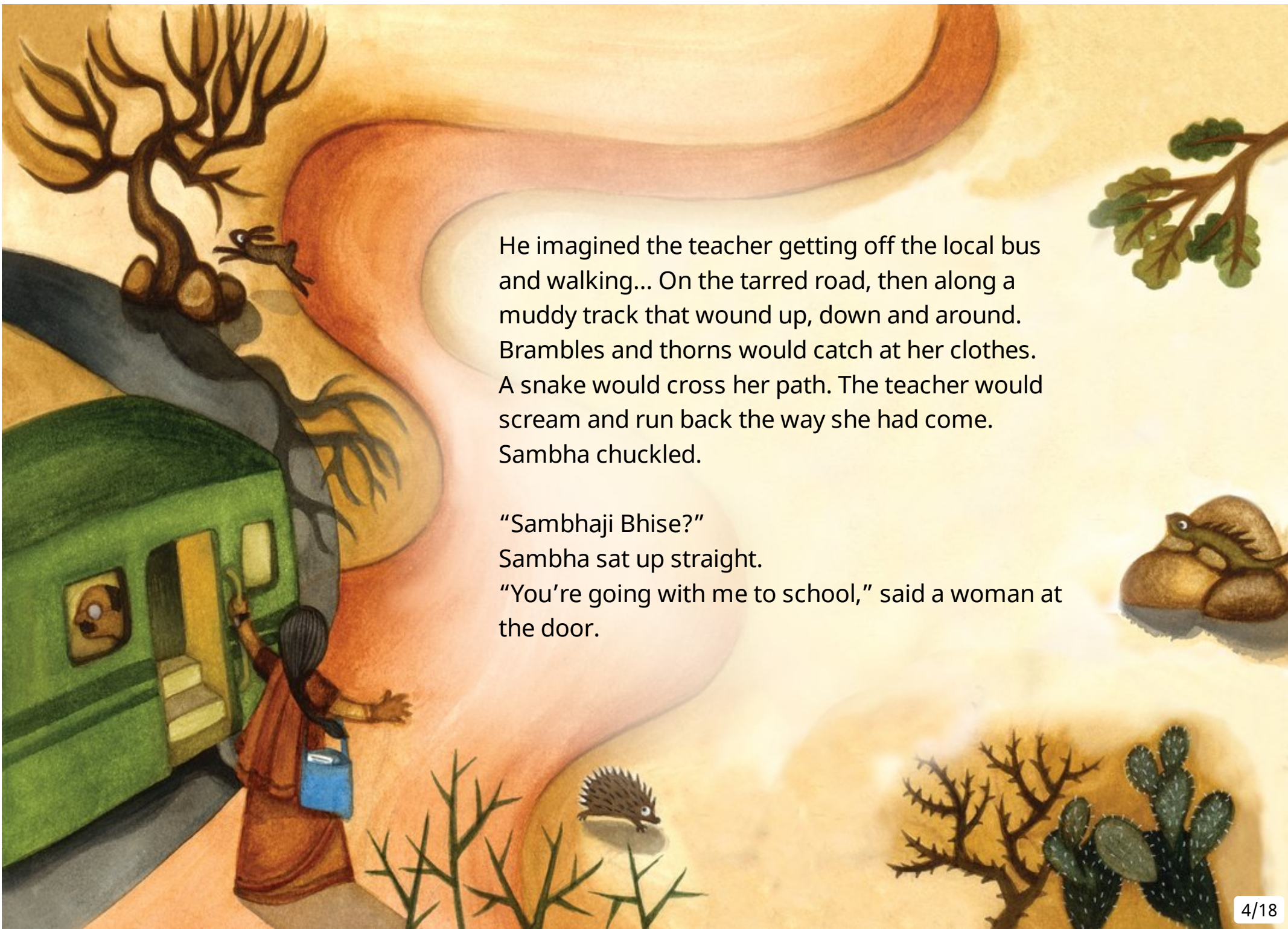
Level 4



“There’s a new teacher in school,”
Sonu called through the open door.
“Are you coming today?”
“Na,” Sambha grunted from his cot.
He had no plans to go to school, ever.

“Fools,” Sambha mumbled and huddled deeper into bed. In school, they repeated alphabets and tables, and the teacher scolded anyone who didn’t sit still. Sambha liked being outside. Sometimes he helped his father in the field. Most days he picked or stole fruit from trees, watched birds, caught fish from streams and kept an eye on termite hills and beehives. But he was curious about the new teacher.





He imagined the teacher getting off the local bus and walking... On the tarred road, then along a muddy track that wound up, down and around. Brambles and thorns would catch at her clothes. A snake would cross her path. The teacher would scream and run back the way she had come. Sambha chuckled.

“Sambhaji Bhise?”

Sambha sat up straight.

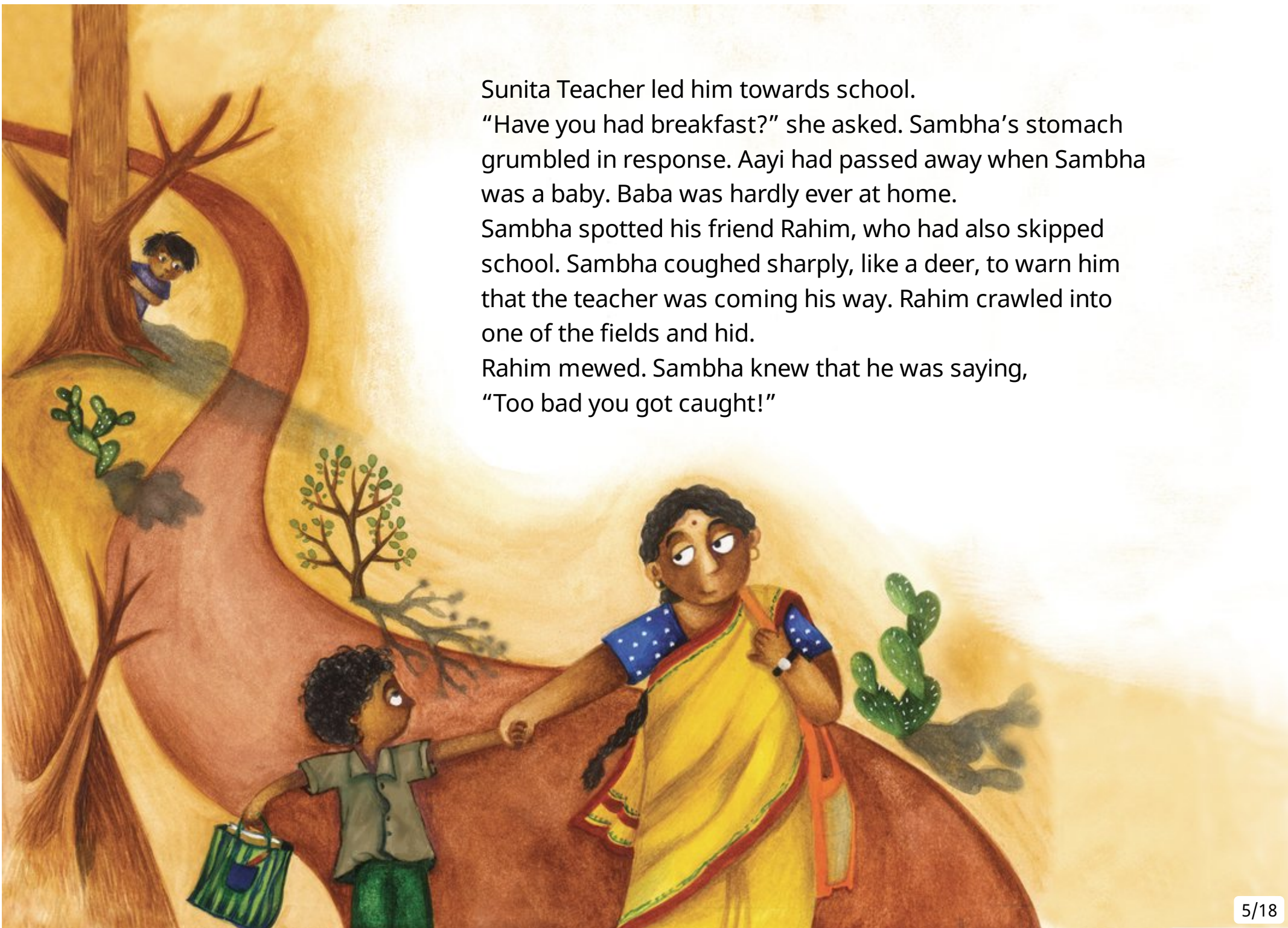
“You’re going with me to school,” said a woman at the door.

Sunita Teacher led him towards school.

“Have you had breakfast?” she asked. Sambha’s stomach grumbled in response. Aayi had passed away when Sambha was a baby. Baba was hardly ever at home.

Sambha spotted his friend Rahim, who had also skipped school. Sambha coughed sharply, like a deer, to warn him that the teacher was coming his way. Rahim crawled into one of the fields and hid.

Rahim mewed. Sambha knew that he was saying, “Too bad you got caught!”



At school, Sambha took a quick bath at the pump and then Sunita Teacher gave him a new uniform. She handed him roti and usal from her tiffin box.

He spotted Sonu in class and went and sat next to her. Maths class began. The children formed groups of four. The teacher took out packs of playing cards from the cupboard.

“Is it the same game as yesterday, Teacher?”
the children asked.







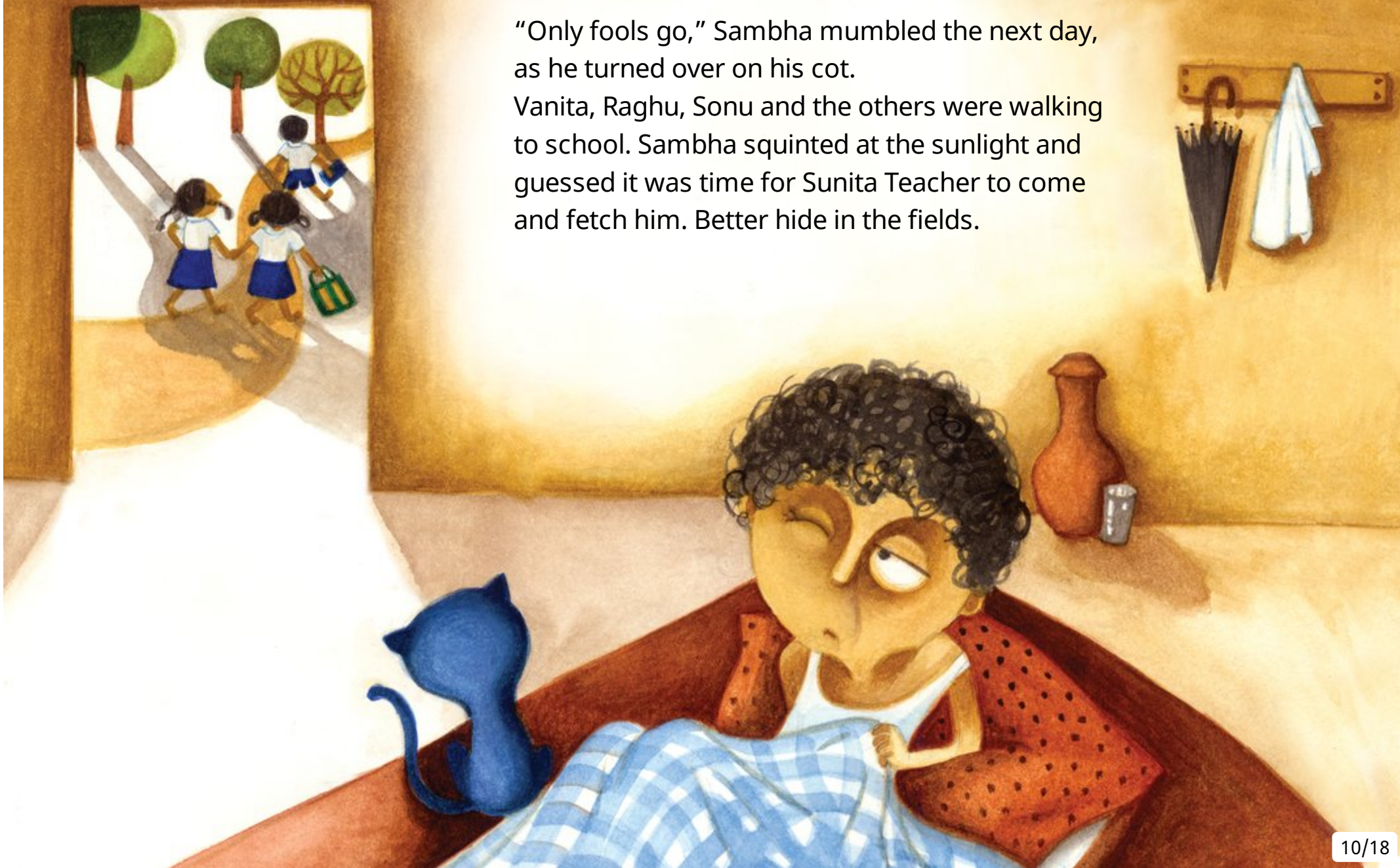
“Yes,” she replied.

“We need another round of practice.” Sambha’s mouth fell open. Was this a maths lesson? The teacher gave each group a pack of cards and pieces of chalk. Sambha shuffled the cards deftly. He grinned. Then Sunita Teacher took the pack from him and placed it in the middle of the group.

“Each of you will pick a card and write the number you see on the floor. Then pick the next card and add that number to the previous one. Whoever reaches the sum of 200 first is the winner. But as each of you adds, the rest must check if the sum is correct. No cheating!” Sambha made mistakes. But he was good at catching others’ mistakes... he even caught clever Vanita cheating!

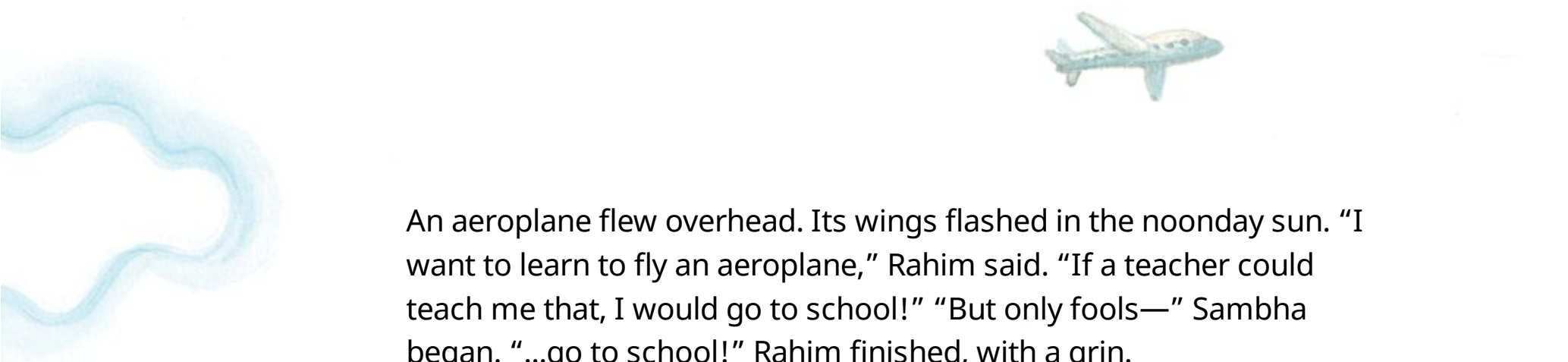


“Only fools go,” Sambha mumbled the next day, as he turned over on his cot. Vanita, Raghu, Sonu and the others were walking to school. Sambha squinted at the sunlight and guessed it was time for Sunita Teacher to come and fetch him. Better hide in the fields.





Under the jamun tree, the long-drawn whistle of a thrush made him look up. It was Rahim. Sambha climbed up and sat on a branch next to his. "I need to watch out for that teacher," he told Rahim. He kept watching the school yard and couldn't help wondering what they might be doing in class.

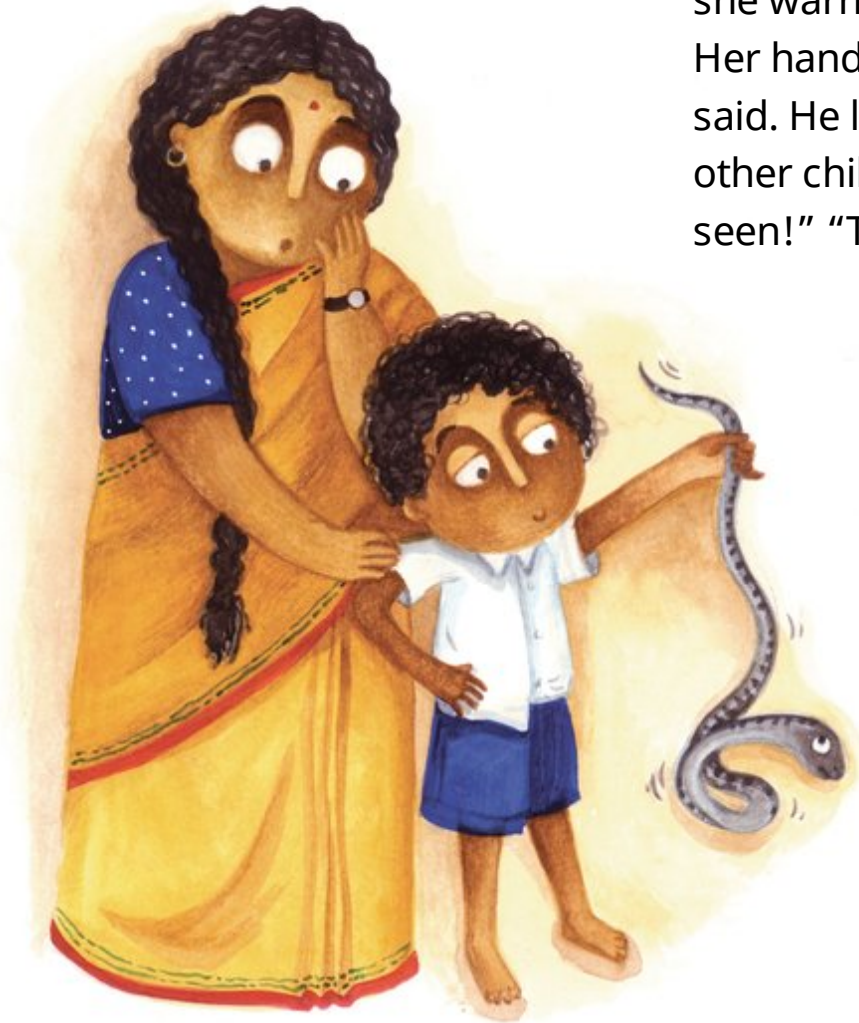


An aeroplane flew overhead. Its wings flashed in the noonday sun. "I want to learn to fly an aeroplane," Rahim said. "If a teacher could teach me that, I would go to school!" "But only fools—" Sambha began. "...go to school!" Rahim finished, with a grin.





The next day Sambha found himself at the school gate. He lined up for lunch with the others. After lunch, everyone played catch and hide-and-seek in the yard. Suddenly, from the far end someone cried, "Snake, snake!" Sambha got there first. "Naneti," he said, naming it. A striped keelback.



Sunita Teacher pushed her way through the crowd. “Careful,” she warned, her eyes never leaving the snake. Her hands trembled a little. “It is not venomous,” Sambha said. He lifted the snake off the stem and held it easily. The other children crowded close. “It’s the longest naneti I’ve ever seen!” “Tch, it’s only half a foot long!”

WARNING

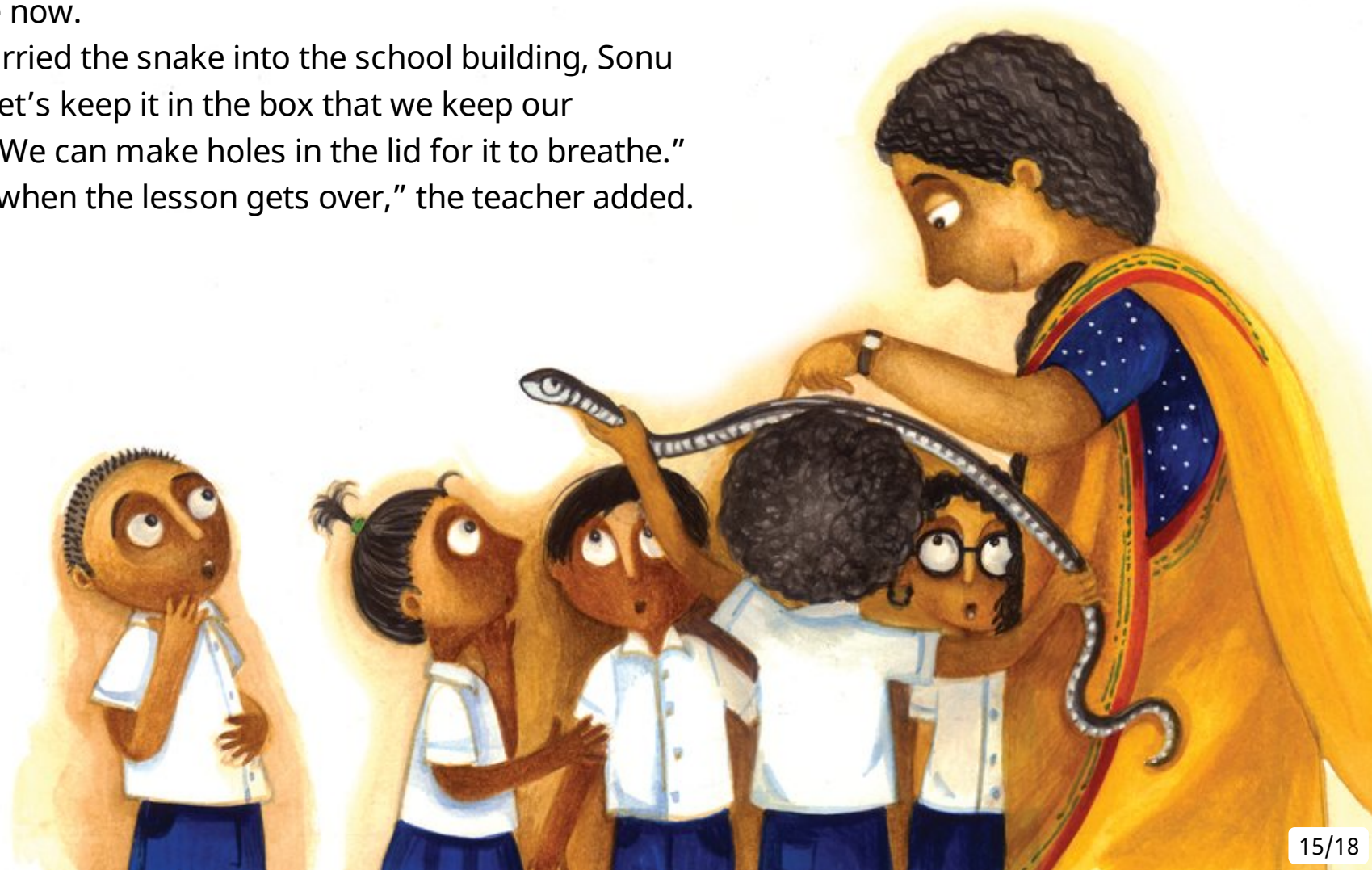
Catching snakes could be dangerous, unless you are trained for it.

“Can we measure it in maths class?” Sambha asked.

“If you’re certain it is safe...” Sunita Teacher said. He held the snake’s head away from her. She put a finger very carefully on its back. She trusted Sambha.

“We will hold a thread or a rope along its length,” she said, her voice sure now.

As Sambha carried the snake into the school building, Sonu suggested, “Let’s keep it in the box that we keep our flashcards in. We can make holes in the lid for it to breathe.” “And let it go when the lesson gets over,” the teacher added.



“Can we also measure a ghorpad?” Sambha asked. He knew where monitor lizards sunned themselves. “Can’t we just measure Ramu’s tail?” Raghu asked with a sigh. The school pet had come to see why everyone was excited over a box.



“We will measure anything that isn’t dangerous to us,”
Sunita Teacher said.

“How about a grasshopper?”

“A calf?”





Then Sambha remembered.
“Teacher! Rahim knows all about animals, but
not about how to measure them.
He should come to school...”

So that he could someday fly an aeroplane.
“Rahim will never come,” Vanita scoffed.
“He says that only fools go to school!”

“Go bring your friend,” the teacher said.
His eyes shining, Sambha ran off to
find Rahim.



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Only Fools Go to School

(English)

Sambha doesn't want to go to school, ever. He thinks school is for fools. One day, the teacher takes him to school. He secretly enjoys himself, but will he want to return the next day?

This is a Level 4 book for children who can read fluently and with confidence.



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