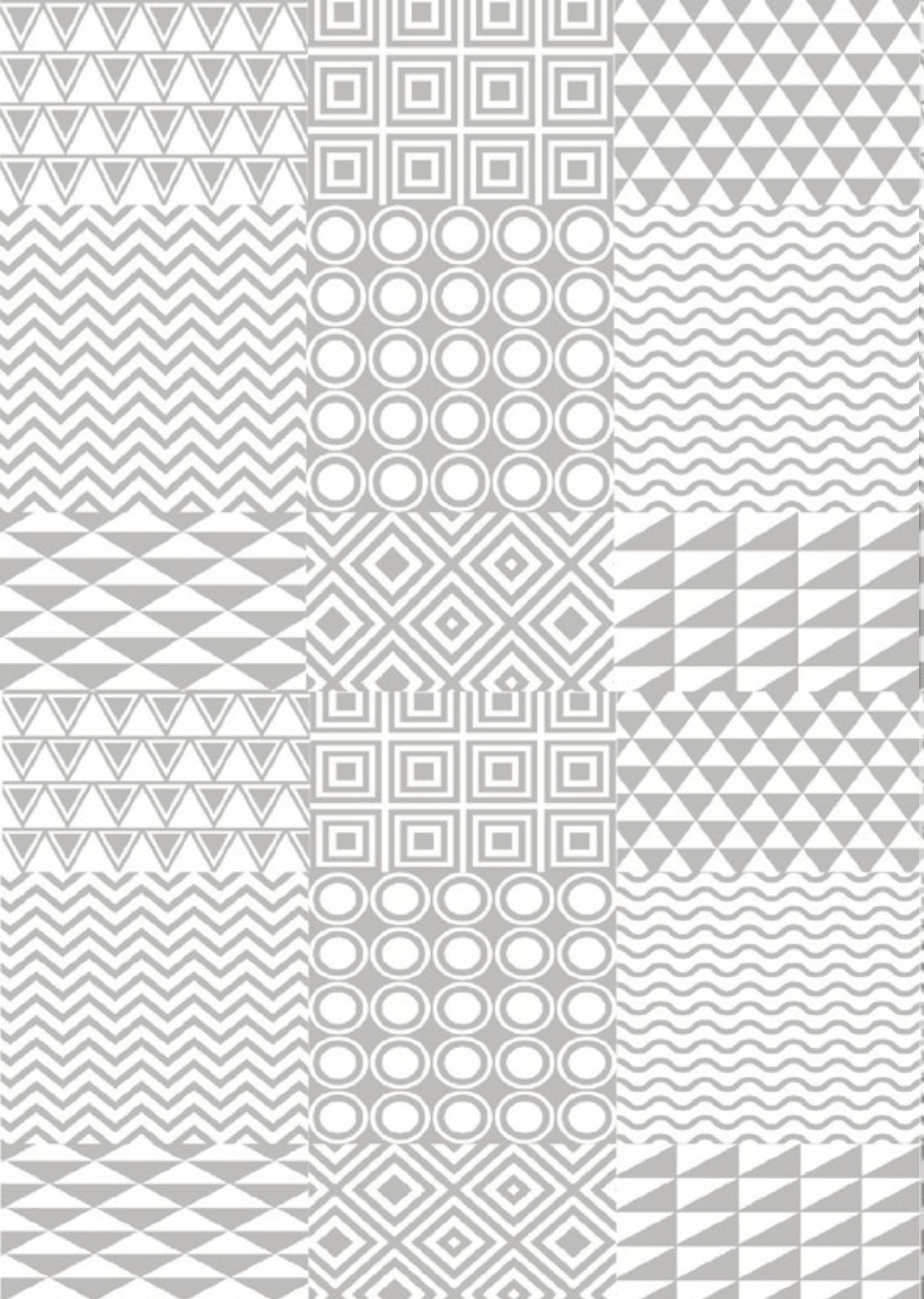


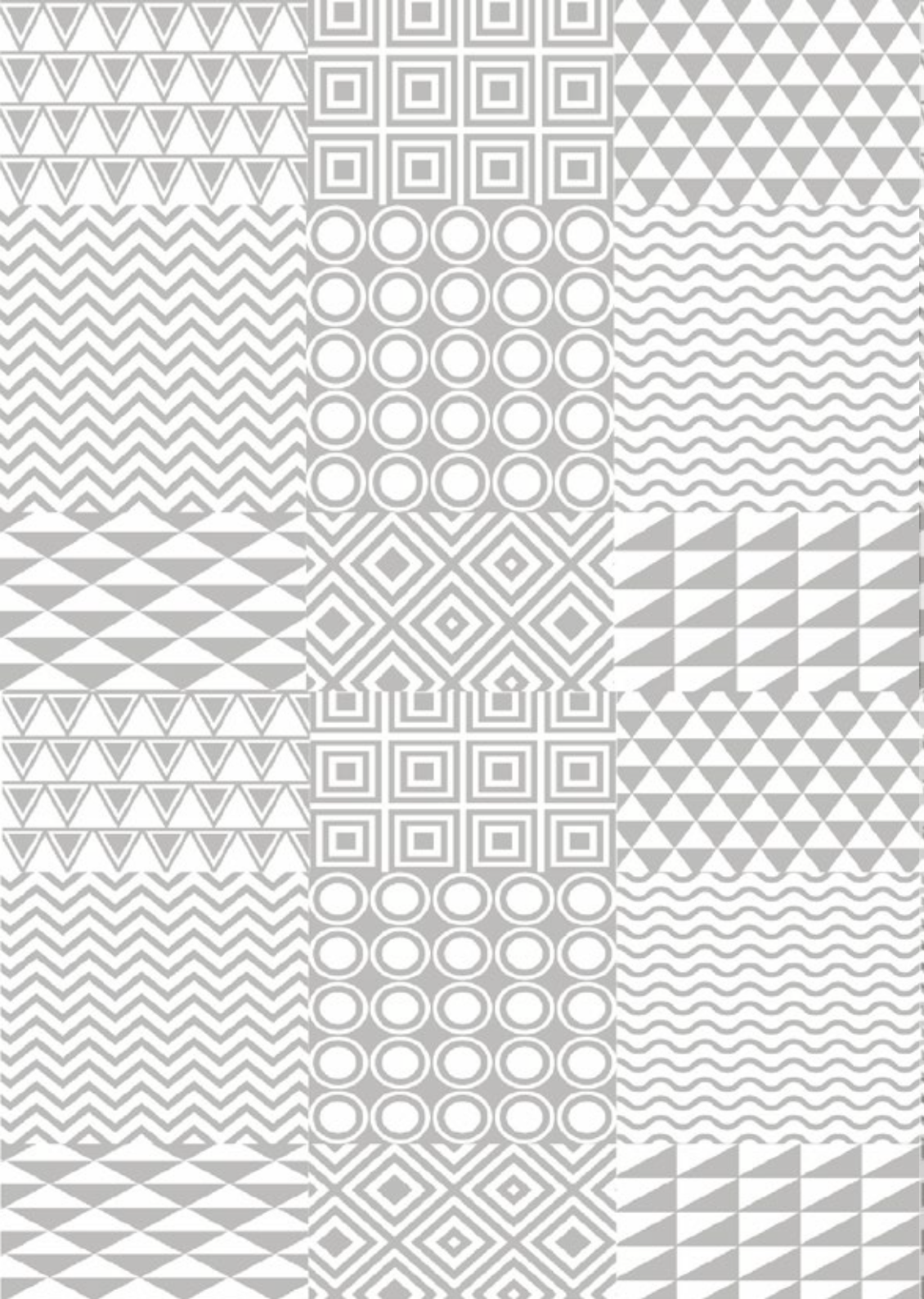
EDUCATING AKU

Story idea by: Dr. Rasha Kelej

Story and Illustrations: Dr. Thomas MUYOMBO







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H.E. Mrs. REBECCA AKUFO-ADDO MESSAGE

I hold the belief that an educated girl, becomes an empowered woman and an agent of change for her family, community and nation. This belief has been proven through time and across the world. Educated girls have the power to change the world for better. An investment in girls' education is an investment for the wellbeing of a nation. To quote Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey, an eminent educationist "If you educate a WOMAN, you educate a whole NATION". We cannot leave about half of Ghana's population behind and hope to improve overall wellbeing and social and economic development for everyone.

This is the reason why I have partnered with MERCK FOUNDATION, to improve access to education for the most vulnerable girls, who are likely to drop out of school because they lack access to basic supplies such as extra school uniforms, books and other writing materials, sanitary pads (feminine hygiene kits) and sometimes an extra meal. We will work together to reach and support vulnerable girls. I am also pleased to have partnered with the UNFPA to reduce the attrition rates for adolescent girls, ensuring that the most vulnerable girls are able to stay on in school till at least after Senior High School. I am indeed proud of this collaboration and the work we are doing, reaching about 15,000 girls in about 19 school in 3 communities and using positive female role models as mentors. Together, these programmes will in the coming weeks, reach many more girls.

I know that it takes a village to raise a child and I urge all of us, in this global village to take up our responsibilities, as Parents, Teachers, Guardians, Traditional leaders, Religious leaders and Community leaders in ensuring that our girls have the required support to stay on in school and achieve their full potential. When our girls succeed, we will all succeed, because an educated girl is an empowered girl, and will become an empowered woman capable of catalysing positive change in the world.

H.E. Mrs. REBECCA AKUFO-ADDO
First Lady of the Republic of Ghana
Ambassador of Merck More Than a Mother



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 Aku.

Aku 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.

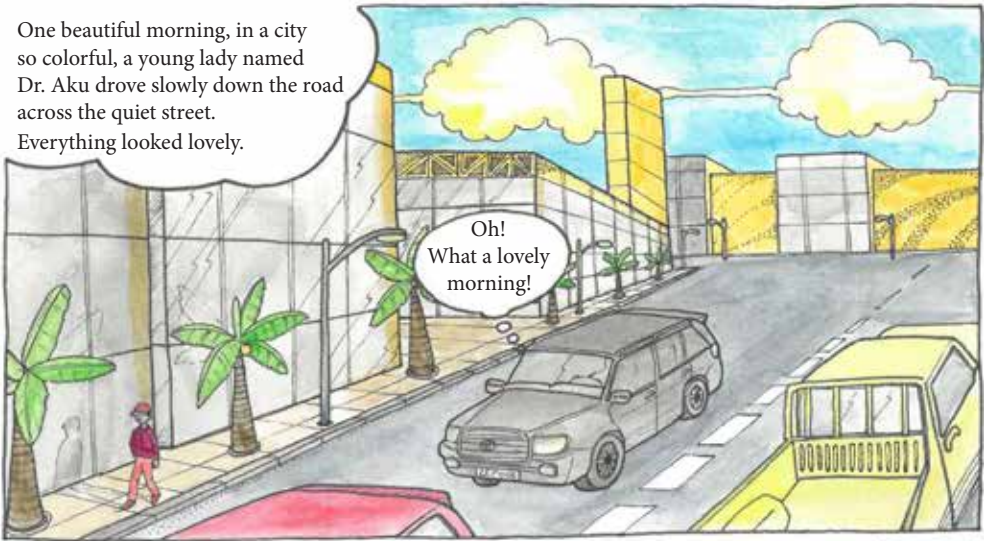
Education is the only thing that no one can take away from you. So, for all families out there, support your girl education like what happened in this story. Let's join hands to help them to reach their potential and advance our Africa.

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 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
Member of the Egyptian Senate (2020-2025)
One of the 100 Most Influential Africans (2019, 2020)
President of Merck More Than a Mother

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



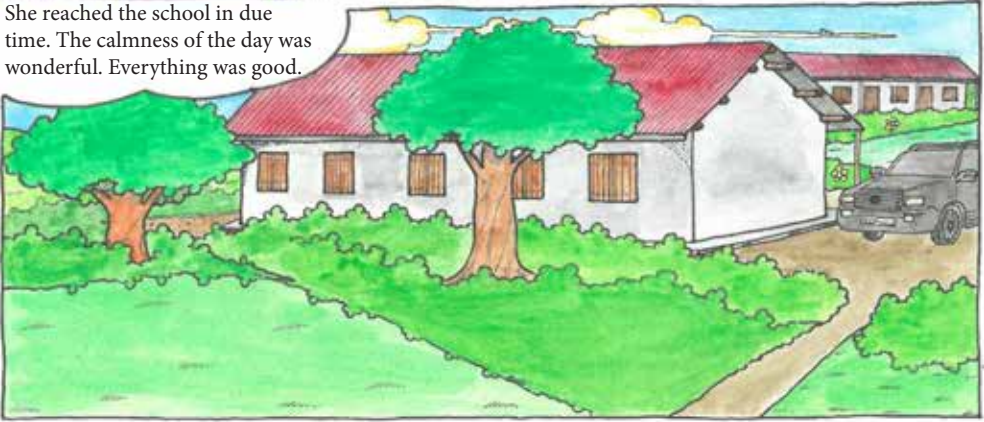
Dr. Aku was heading to a small village, far away from the city.

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

Aku has won a Nobel prize in Science this year for her 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. Aku was greeted by the Headmaster of the school and he assured her that everyone was waiting for her.

Hello Dr. Aku, welcome to our school.

Thank you, Sir, I am glad to be here.

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. Aku.

Please, you are welcome to inspire all of us.

Thank you, I will be very glad if I can.

After greeting them, Aku proceeded by telling them a story.

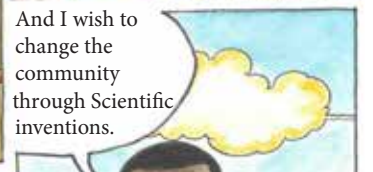
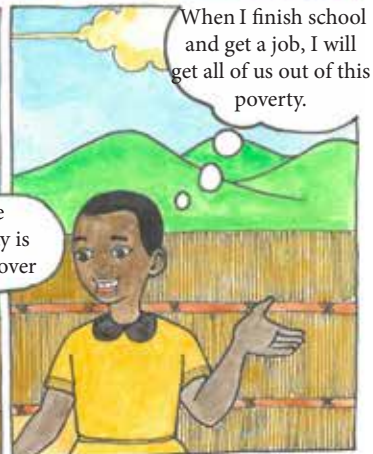
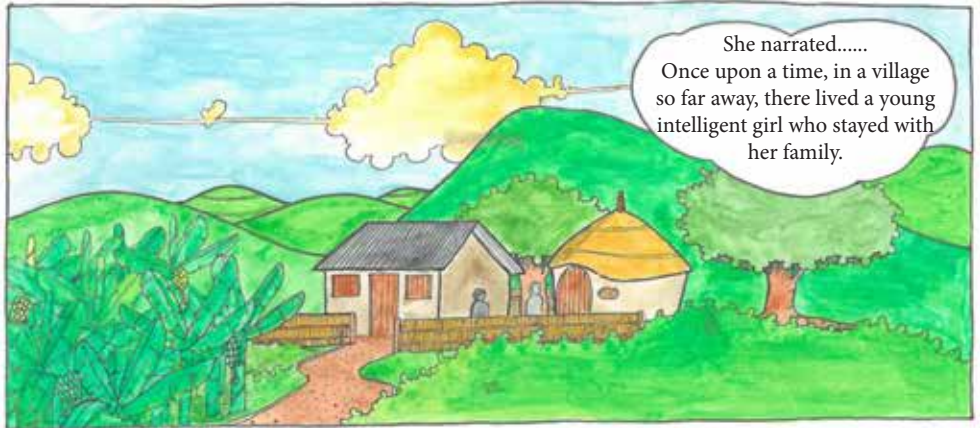
Let me tell you a story of a young girl, whose name I will reveal later.

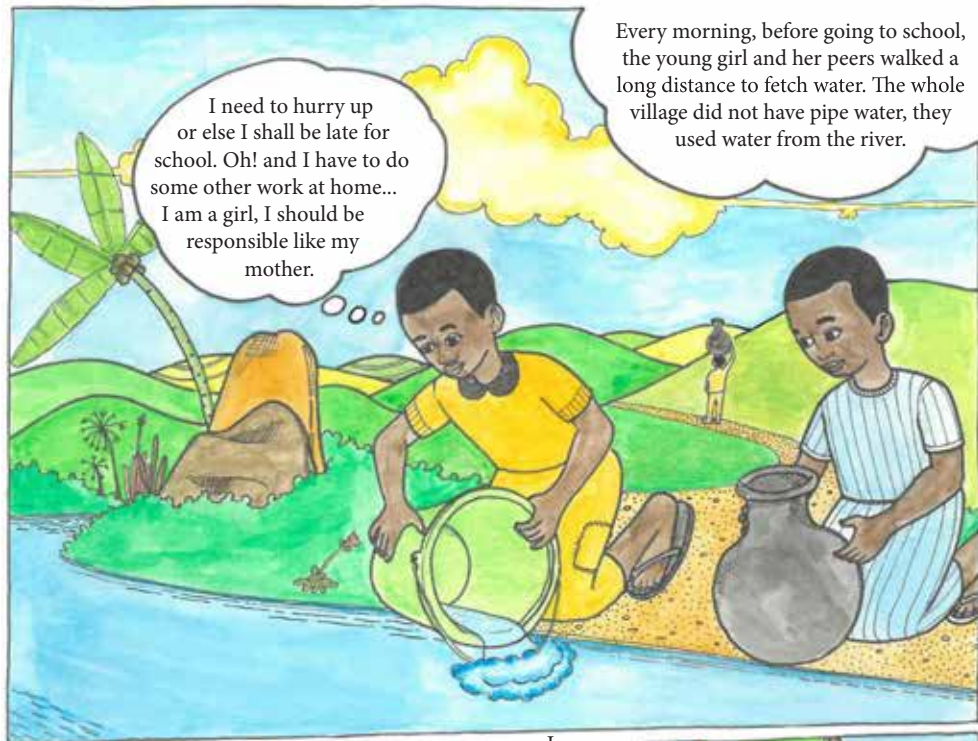
Everyone kept quite and listened to Dr. Aku as she began the story. All the students really wanted an inspiration.

Please Dr. Aku, tell us anything, we want to be inspired to become like you.

He then took Aku to meet the students.

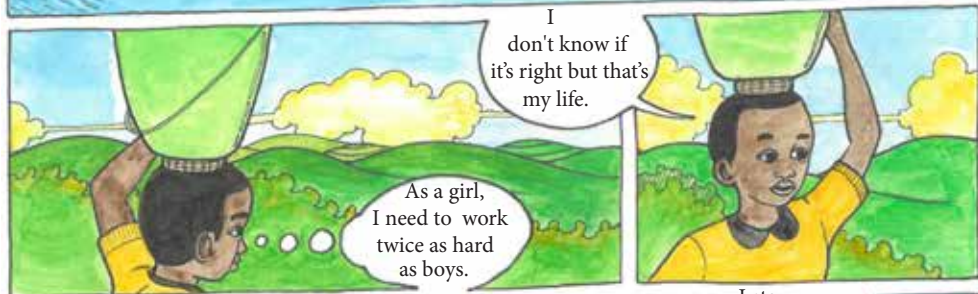






I need to hurry up or else I shall be late for school. Oh! and I have to do some other work at home... I am a girl, I should be responsible like my mother.

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 don't know if it's right but that's my life.

As a girl, I need to work twice as hard as boys.



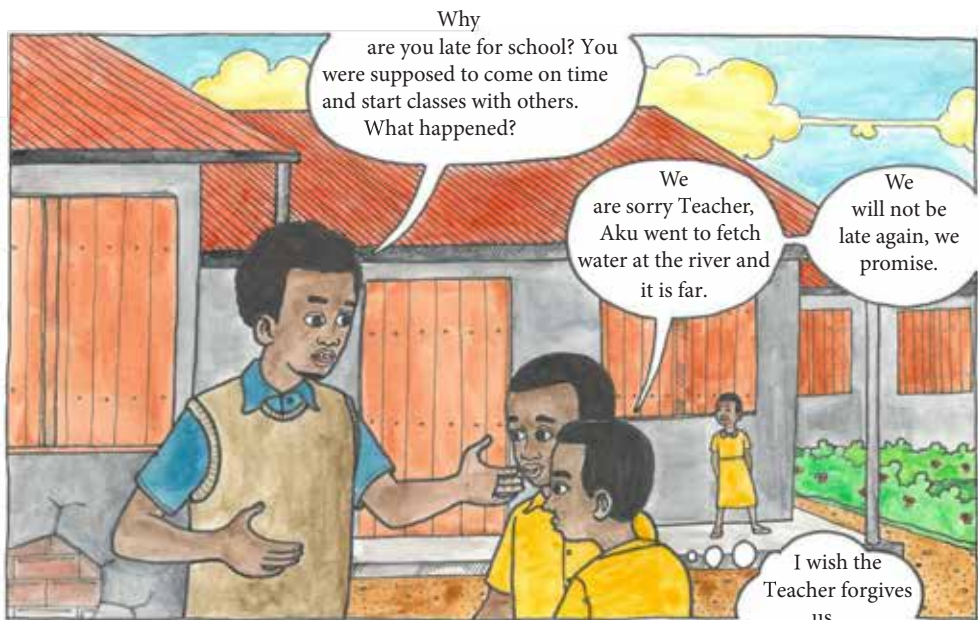
My brothers can't help, they are boys.

After doing all the work, she would join her brothers to go to school.

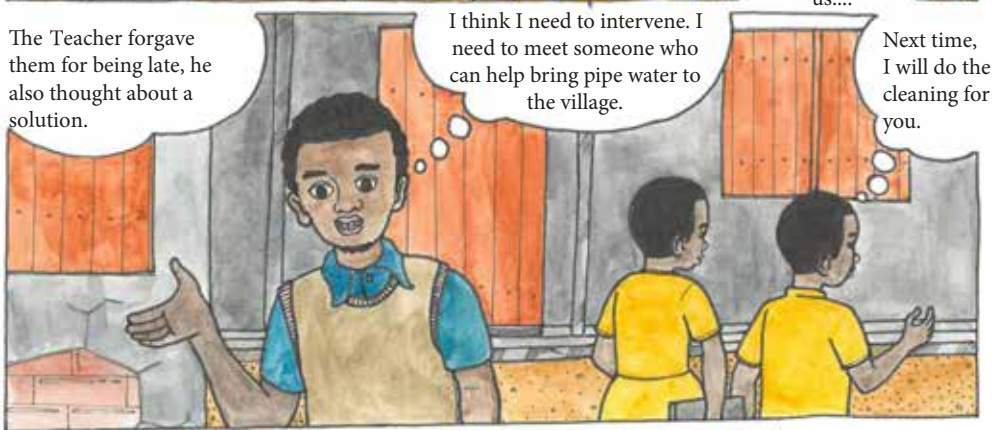


Lets hurry up, we are late for school.

Yes you are right.

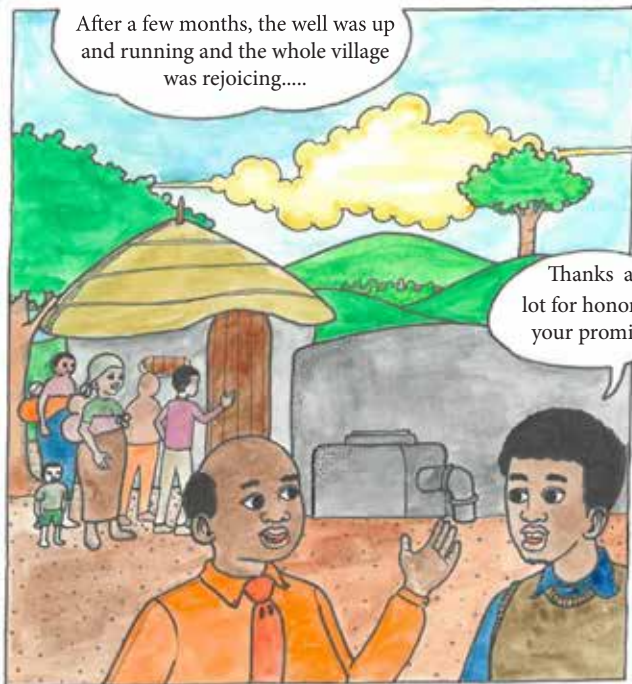


The Teacher forgave them for being late, he also thought about a solution.



The Teacher approached the Leader of a local NGO and convinced him to build a well in the village.



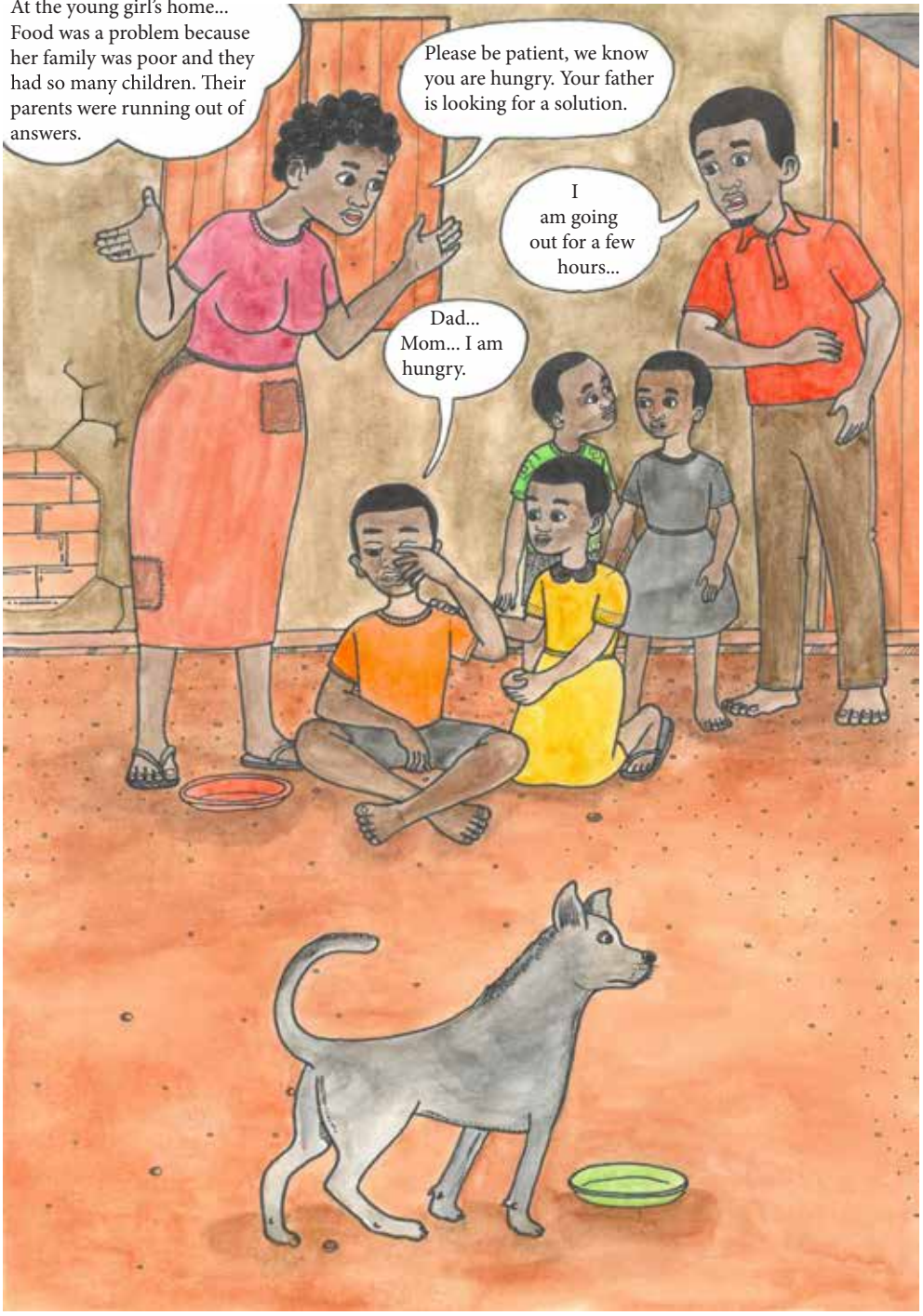


At the young girl's home...
Food was a problem because
her family was poor and they
had so many children. Their
parents were running out of
answers.

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.



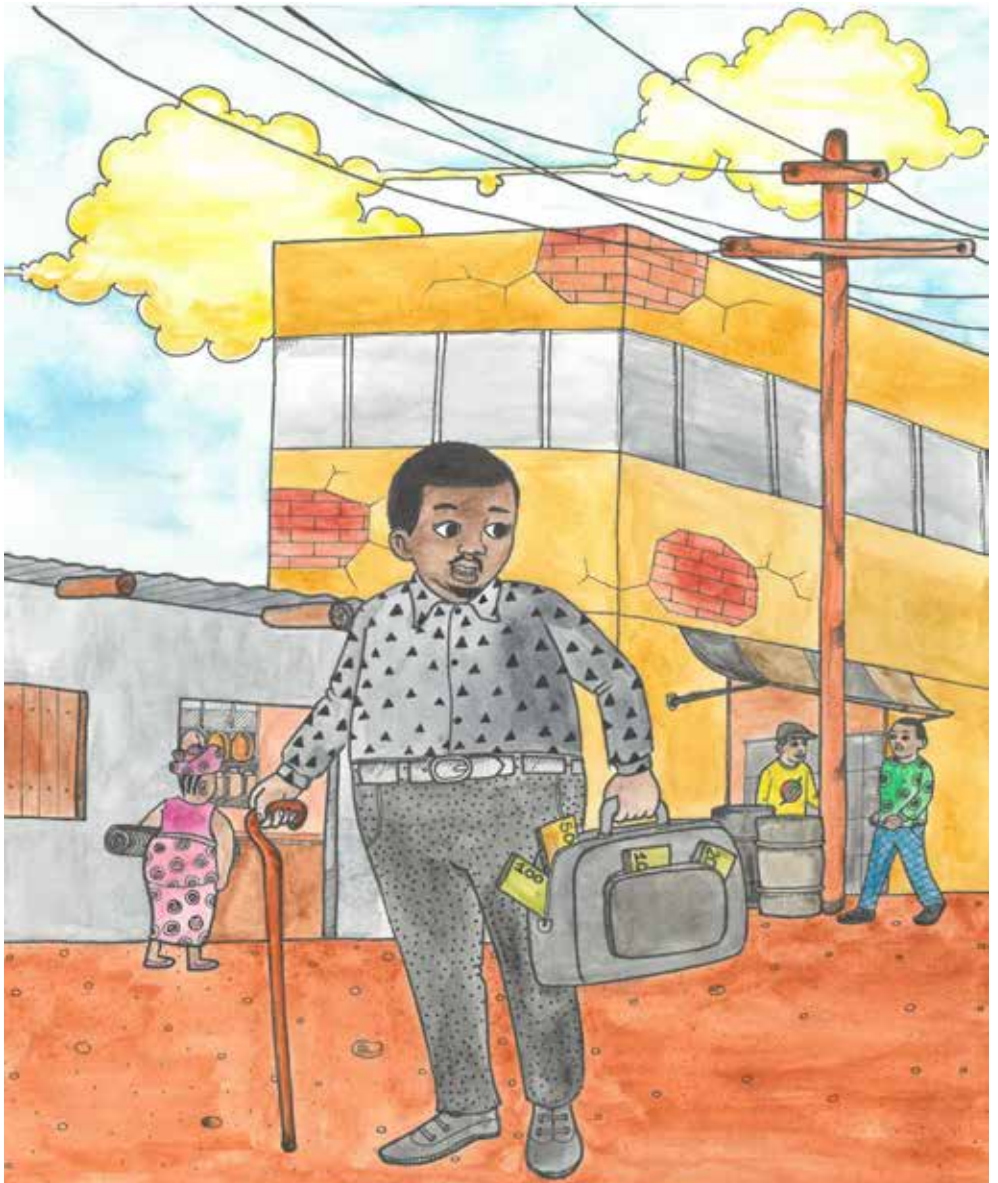
Hello Bortey, can I talk to you for a minute?

Hello Kweku! No worries at all, what do you want to tell me..

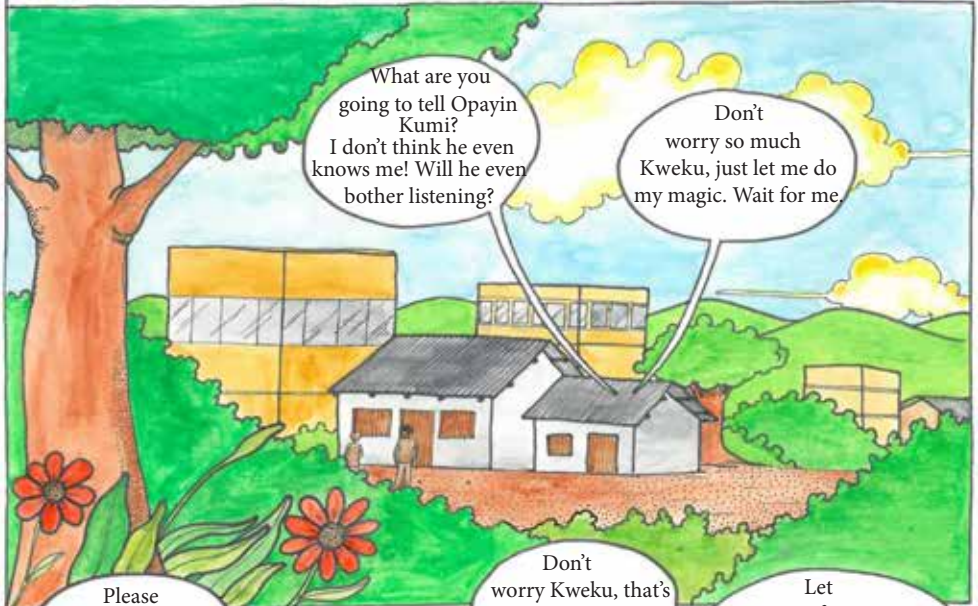


Bortey, I need to borrow some money from you.

Oh! I don't think I will be of any help. I don't have any money.



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





Meanwhile... Kweku was waiting patiently at the counter...

Opayin Kumi made himself clear..

Bortey explained more...



Opayin Kumi decided to talk to Kweku himself.

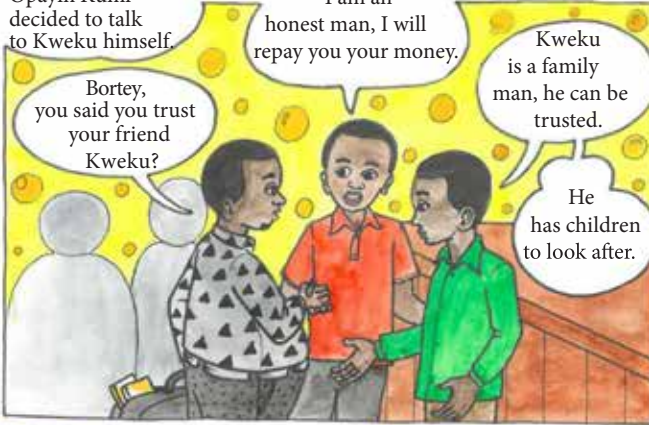
I am an honest man, I will repay you your money.

Bortey, you said you trust your friend Kweku?

Kweku is a family man, he can be trusted.

He has children to look after.

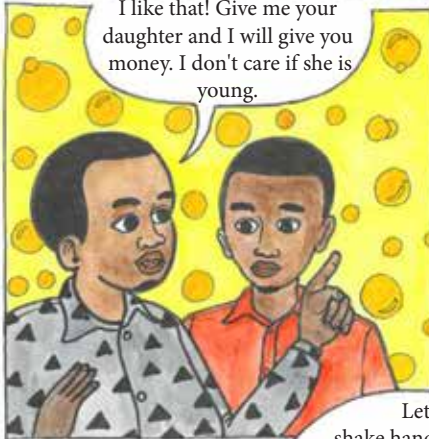
I would give you my daughter as a wife if she was old enough, I really need help.



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.



Let's shake hands for my new bride.. I don't know you Kweku but I believe you are a good man.

I believe this is a good outcome of a conversation between gentlemen. Let's celebrate it.

I believe our future together will be better. You will be my son-in-law. You know!



After celebrating to their agreement, Kweku 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 Opayin Kumi .

Let me sip my soda, if it finishes, I will buy another one. I now have a lot of money.

Kweku 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... Kweku's wife was astonished to see her husband with a lot of money.

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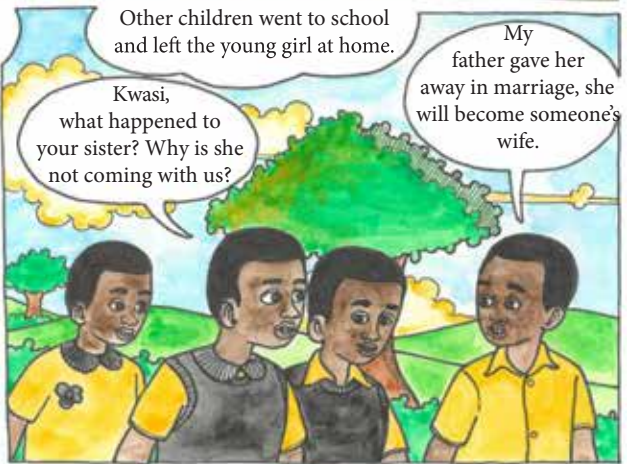


The young girl didn't know that her father had betrayed her rights; her future.



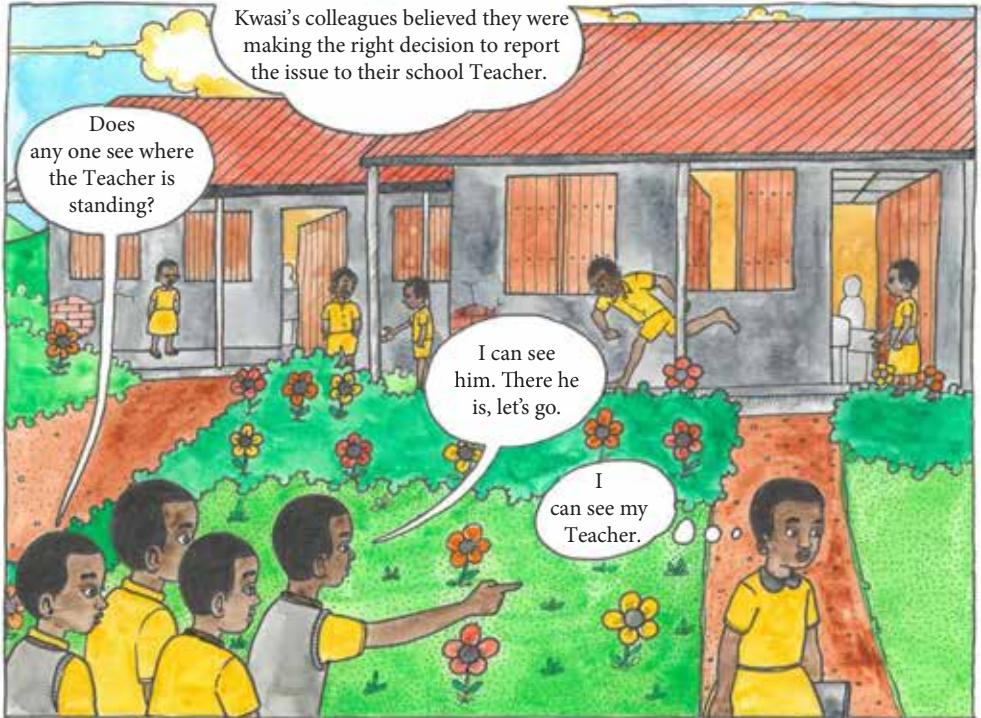
The following morning...





Are you serious? Your sister is too young to be someone's wife. She is supposed to be in school with us.





Kwasi's colleagues believed they were making the right decision to report the issue to their school Teacher.

Does anyone 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 Kwasi.



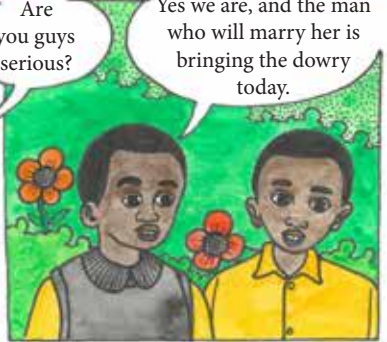
I know how to say it. Don't worry, let's do this.



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.

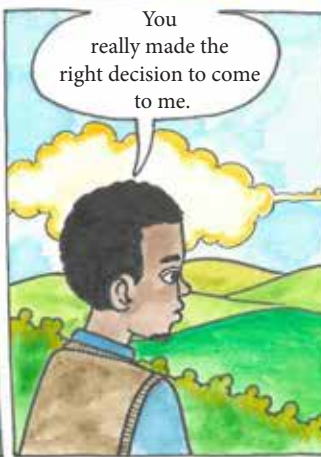
You are right Teacher. Very right.

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 Kwasi'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.



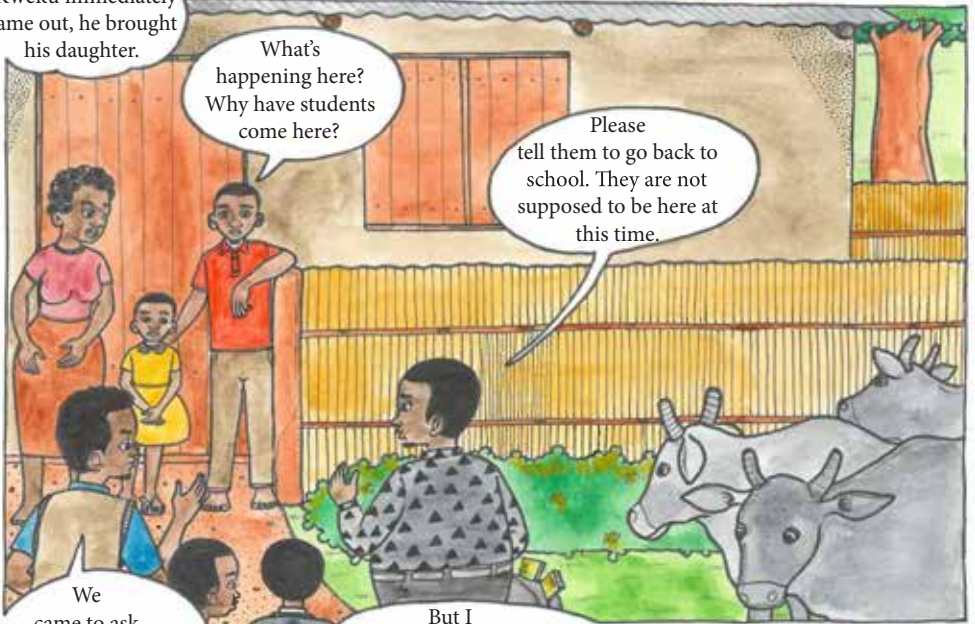
It was Opayin Kumi .. He had the dowry.

Opayin Kumi, is that you? What are you doing here?

I don't understand this.

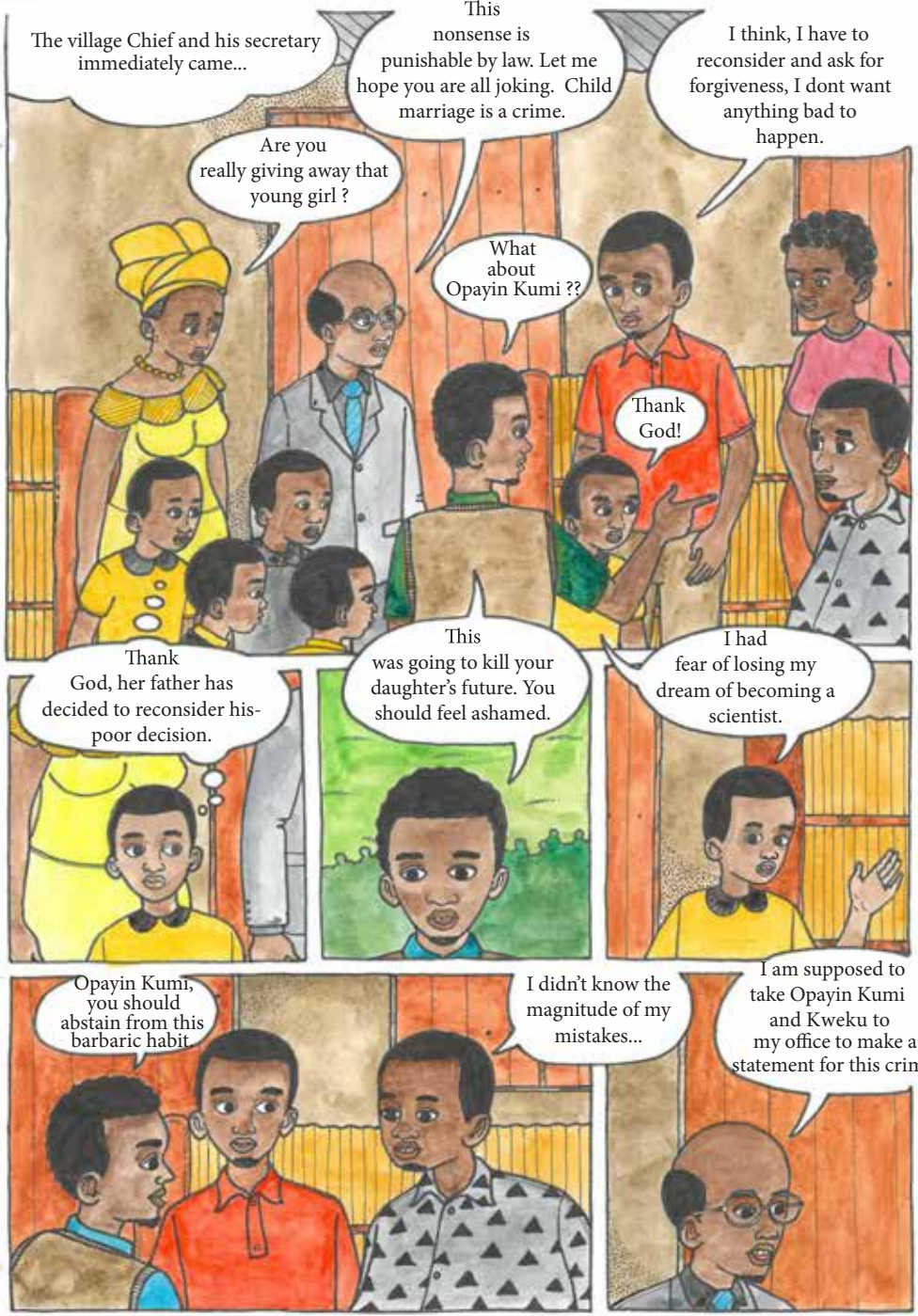


Kweku immediately came out, he brought his daughter.



We came to ask why the young girl is not at school.





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 Opayin Kumi ??

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.

Opayin Kumi, you should abstain from this barbaric habit

I didn't know the magnitude of my mistakes...

I am supposed to take Opayin Kumi and Kweku 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.

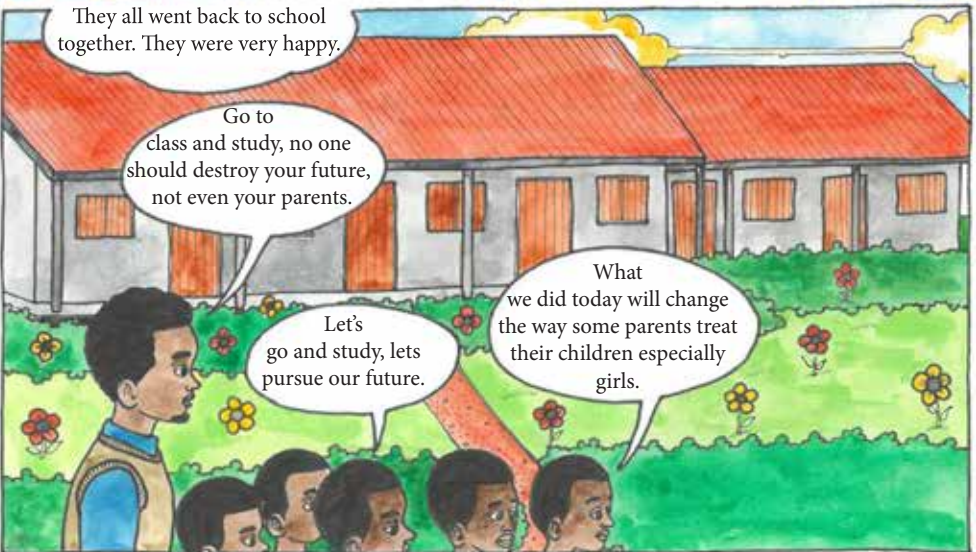


They all went back to school together. They were very happy.

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

Let's go and study, let's 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 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

Every one stood up to applaud Dr. Aku

Thank you. I believe that you all have potential to be what you want to be.

That young girl is me, I sat on this desk and wrote my name on it; Aku

WOW!

WOW!

THE END

EDUCATING AKU

Aku, 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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