

# How Do I Grow?

growth & nutrition



Age  
Umri  
7+



One evening Baraka, Koba and their little sister Mwenda were waiting for dinner.

“Are you excited about the basketball trials tomorrow?” Koba asked Baraka.



“You bet! I’m gonna slam dunk like Hasheem Thabeet!” replied Baraka.

“No way,” said Koba.

“You’re too short and skinny.”



Mwenda crawled over and pulled the bottle of soda that Baraka was drinking out of his hand.



She tried to drink the soda and spilled it all over herself.



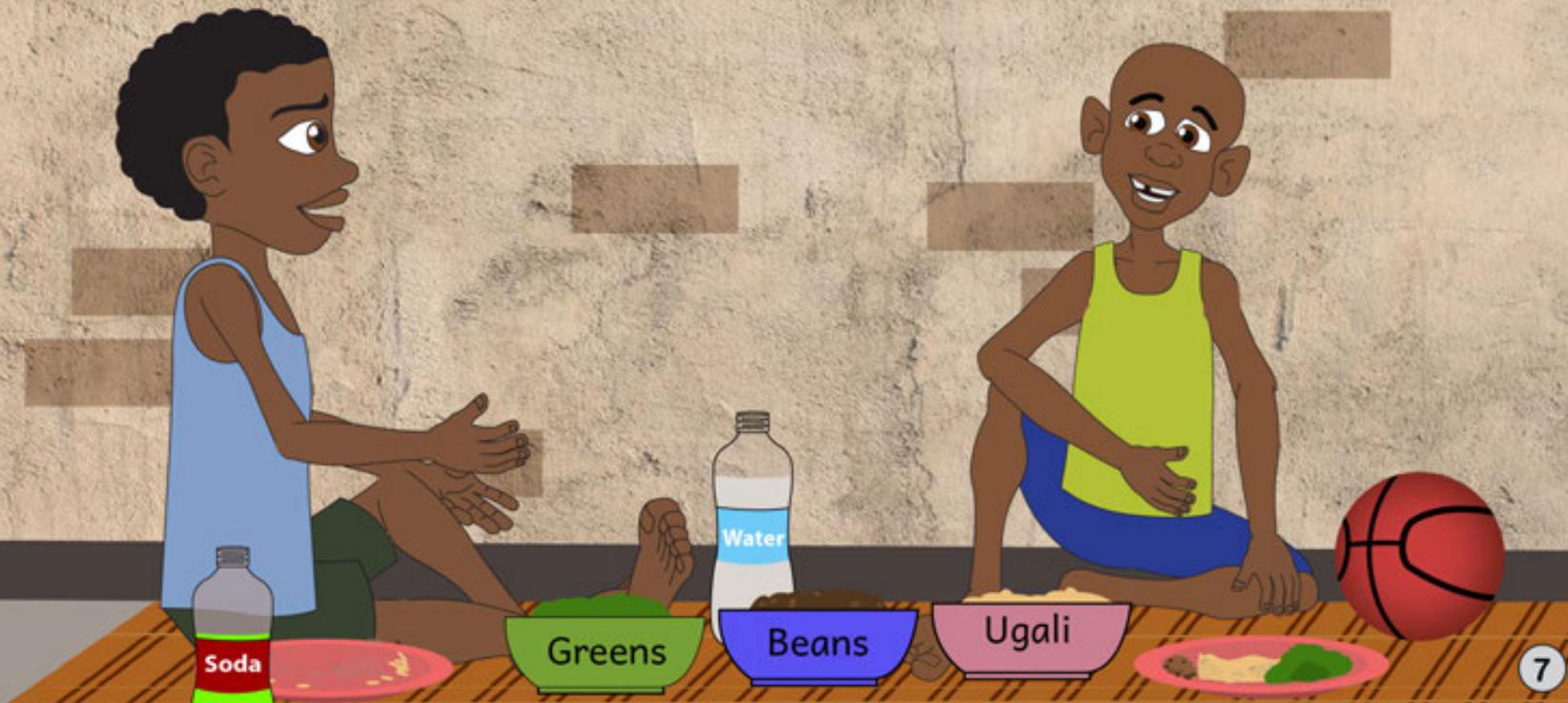
Koba took the bottle away from her and said,  
“No sugary soda for my little sister!  
Drink water, it’s better for you.”



Soon Mama came in with dinner: ugali and a plate of beans and spinach. She told them to eat up so they would have energy for the trials.



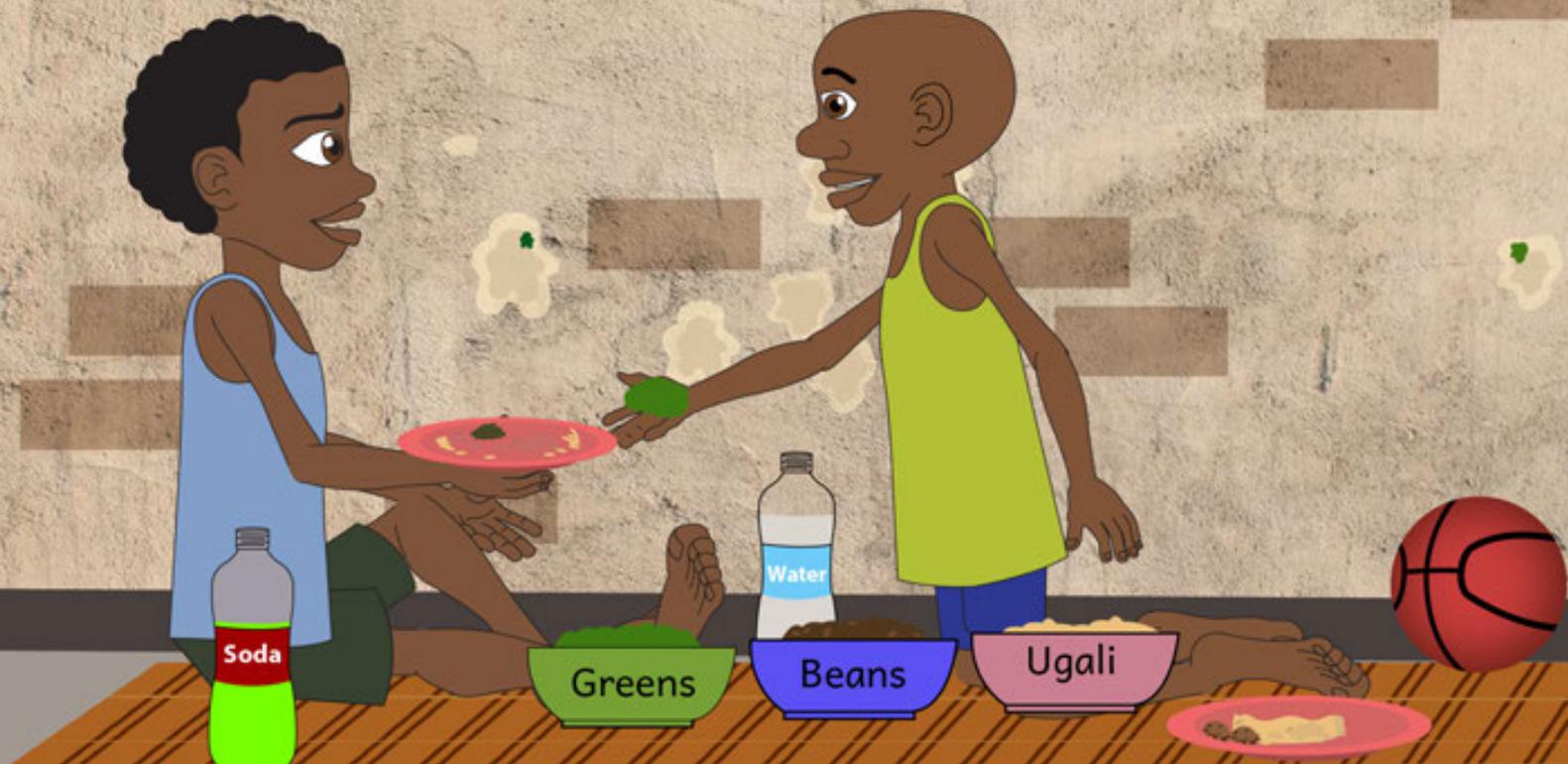
The boys thanked Mama. Koba dug in to all of his food, but Baraka ate only the ugali and didn't eat any greens.



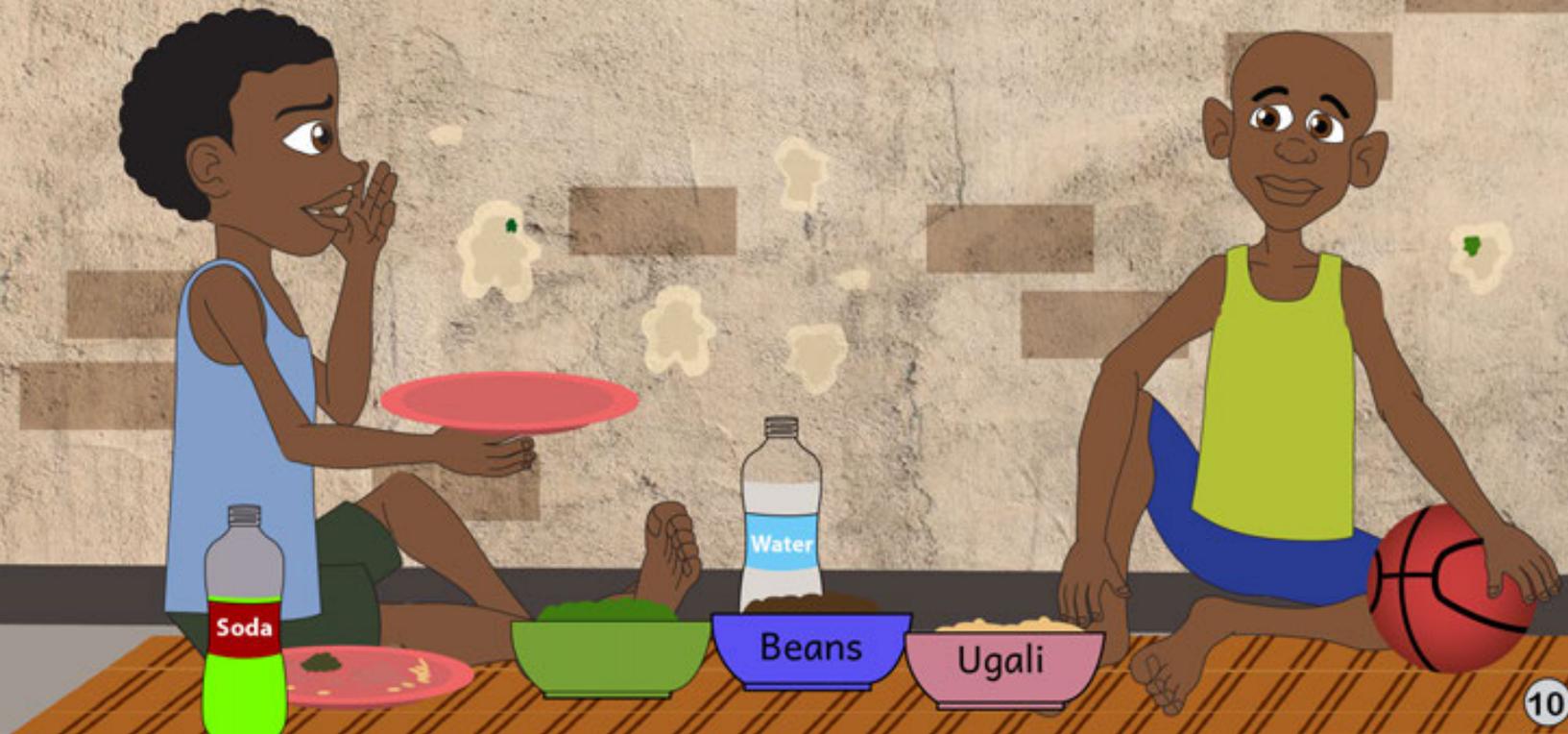
Mama didn't notice because she was busy feeding Mwenda, who kept throwing ugali against the wall.



Baraka kept sneaking the beans and spinach that were on his plate onto Koba's.



Koba ate all of Baraka's beans and greens.  
Koba thought they were delicious.



But Baraka said, “Yuck, I don’t like vegetables!”



Mwenda kept throwing food around the room.  
Finally, Mama carried Mwenda out of the room,  
telling the boys to clean up the mess.



“Make sure you both go to bed early and get plenty of sleep,” said Mama.



The boys washed the dishes and scraped the ugali off the walls.



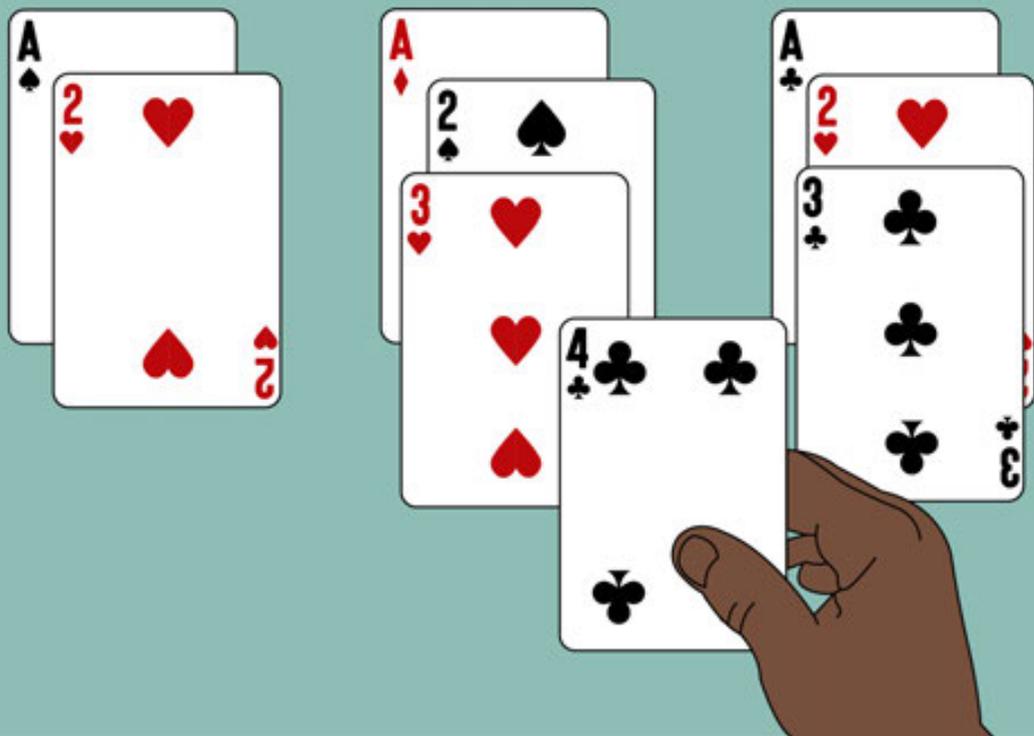
Koba cleaned with energy and efficiency.  
Baraka was useless because he was too tired.  
Then they both headed off to bed.



Koba climbed straight into bed and fell a sleep at once.



But Baraka wasn't sleepy, so he stayed up for hours playing solitaire.



The next morning Koba awoke  
and tried to wake up Baraka.  
Baraka had a hard time getting up.



On the way to the trials,  
Baraka kept yawning.



Koba looked at his watch and realised that they were late. He started jogging, saying, “Hurry up, Baraka. You’re making us late.”



They arrived at the basketball court,  
where many kids were already warming up...



...running suicides...



...doing jumping jacks.

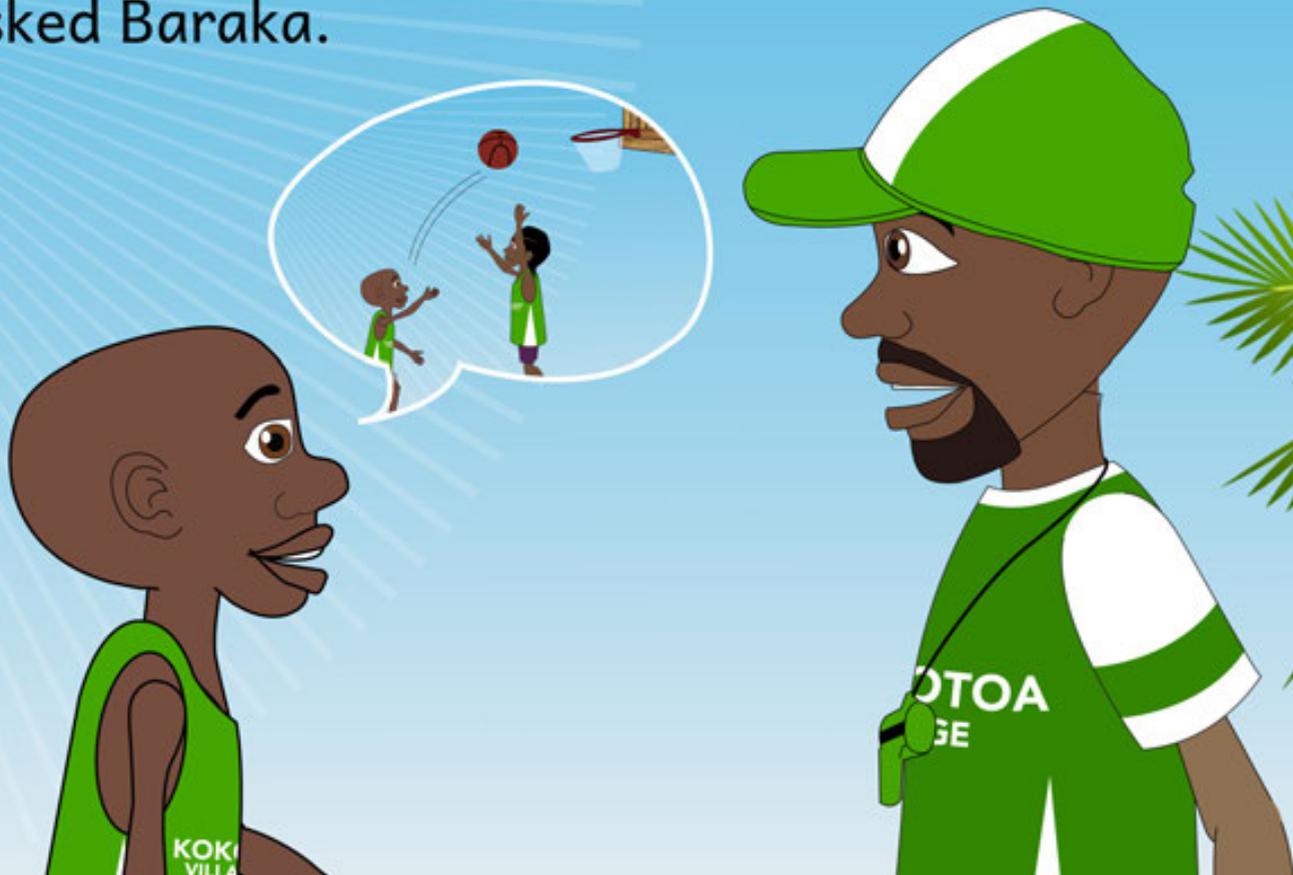
But Baraka was panting hard and couldn't keep up.



When it was time for stretching,  
Baraka lost his balance and fell down.



“Coach Tony, when are we gonna shoot baskets?”  
asked Baraka.



“You won’t get to shoot if you’re not fit and healthy.”



Warming-up and stretching is just as important as shooting!” Coach Tony told him.



Next the kids  
took turns shooting.  
Kiduchu and Kibena  
both scored.



Kibena then turned around to play defence.  
Baraka feebly dribbled up and went to shoot.  
His shot was easily blocked by Kibena.



Then Baraka turned around to play defence. Koba's shot went right over him.



Even jumping with his arms in the air,  
Baraka wasn't tall enough to block any balls.



He was just too short to do much of anything.



Coach Tony blew the whistle and told the kids that everyone had made the team. He would decide later who would play in the game.



As the coach said this, he fixed his eyes on Baraka who immediately jumped up and stretched again.



“I expect hard work from all of you,  
both on and off the basketball court.”



Train hard, eat well, get plenty of sleep and don't forget to drink lots of water!" advised Coach Tony.



All the kids went home,  
but Baraka stayed behind  
to shoot free throws on his own.  
He didn't miss a single one.



Out of nowhere, Uncle T blocked one of Baraka's shots with his nose.



“Blocked ya!” said Uncle T.

“But I didn’t miss a single one before that,”  
said Baraka.

“It’s easy when there’s no one blocking.”



“At the try-out this morning,  
I didn’t get a single one in! I’m too short  
to shoot past the others.



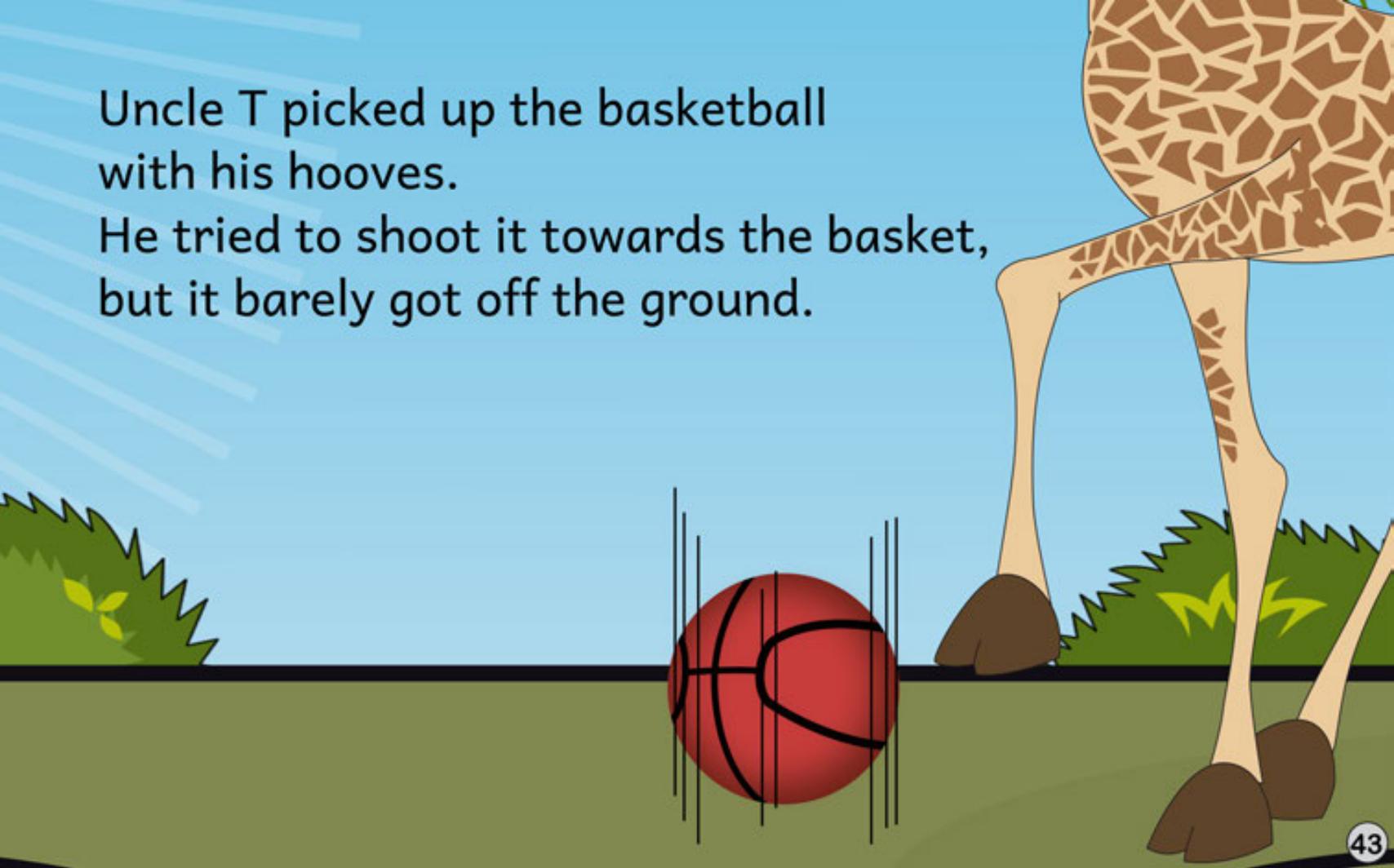
I wish I were as tall as you,” said Baraka.



“But if you were a giraffe, you wouldn’t have hands or fingers, so you wouldn’t be very good at basketball,” said Uncle T.



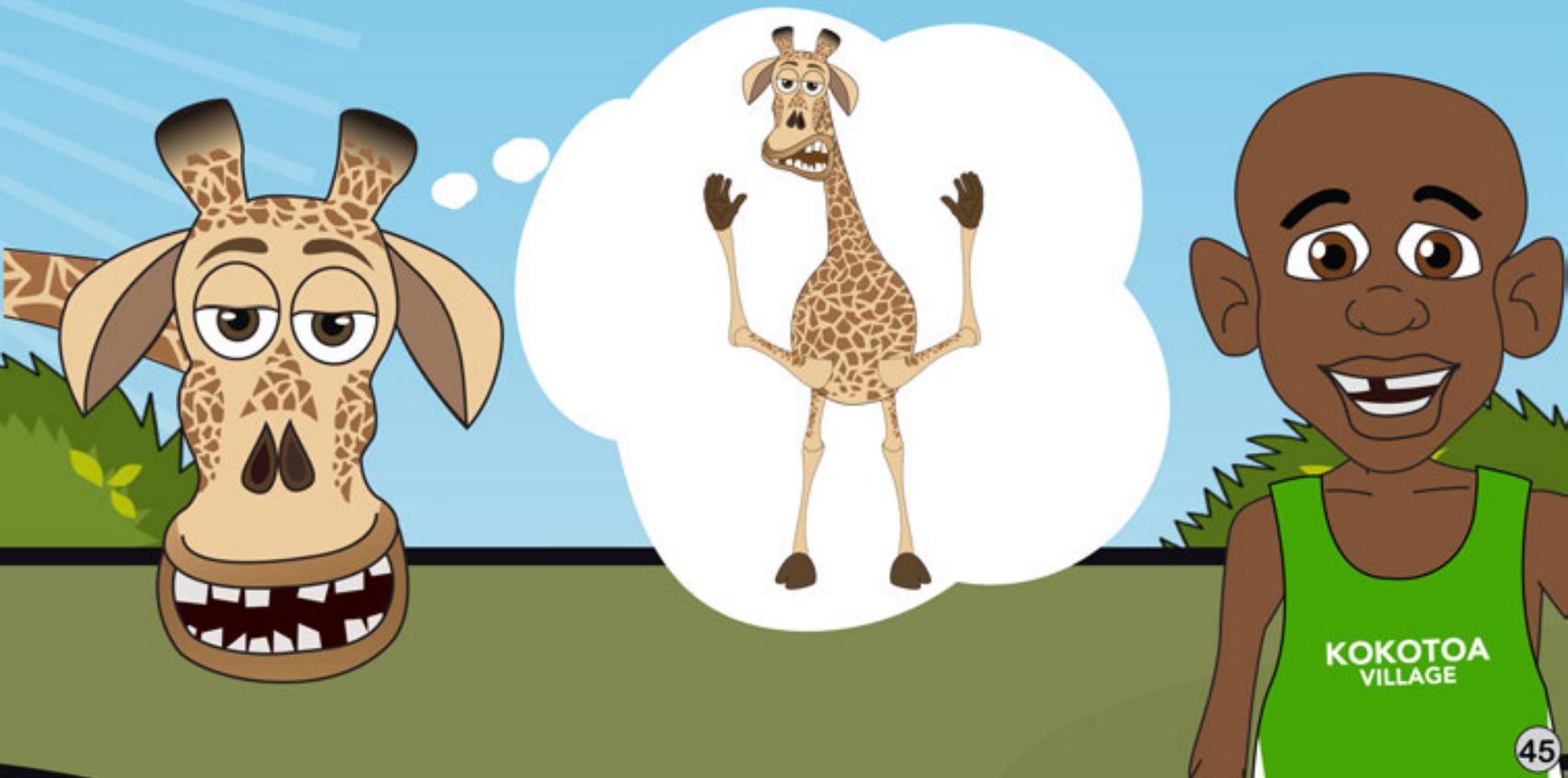
Uncle T picked up the basketball  
with his hooves.  
He tried to shoot it towards the basket,  
but it barely got off the ground.



“I guess we both have things to work on,  
before we can be basketball stars...”



...and you need to grow some fingers!” said Baraka.



Baraka headed towards home, singing to himself,  
“Someday I’ll be taller, someday I’ll be stronger,  
And even my neck will be much longer...



I'll be the world's greatest basketballer.  
Oh when I am taller and when I am stronger..."



He walked up to the trunk of a very tall tree and measured himself against it.

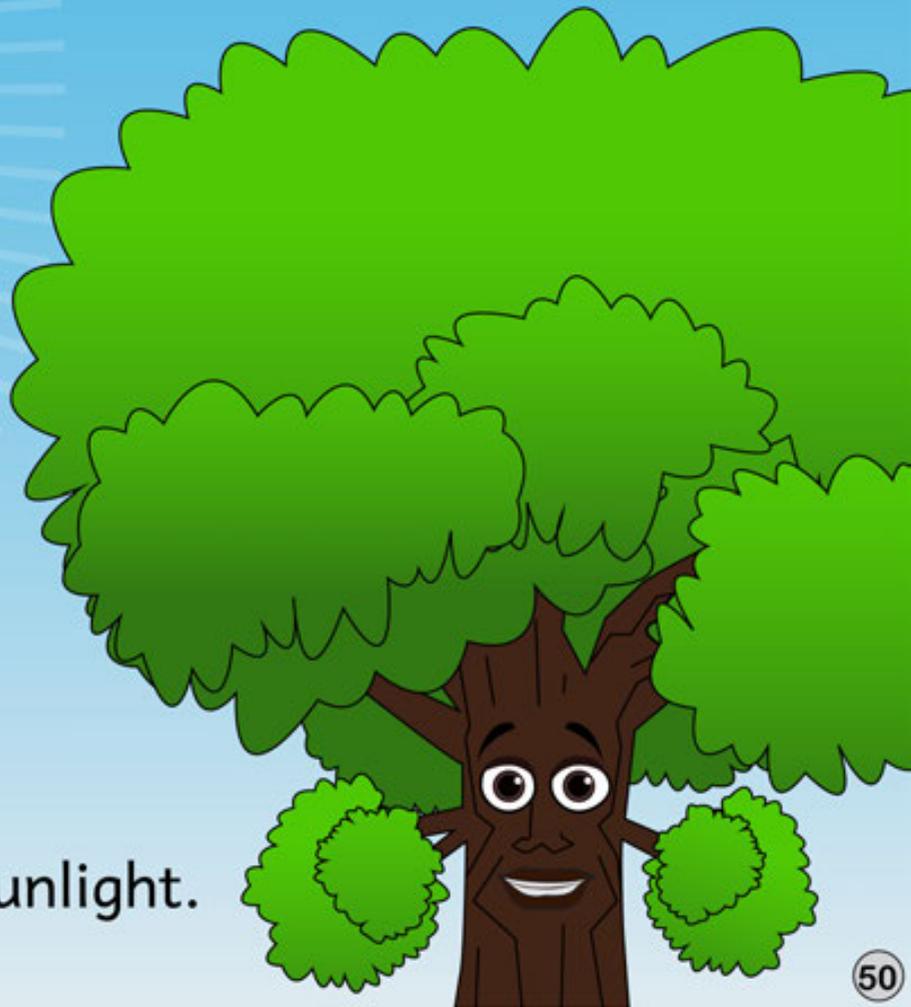
To Baraka's surprise, the tree asked Baraka what he was doing.



“I was trying to see how tall I am compared to you. You’re sooooo tall. What do you do to grow?”



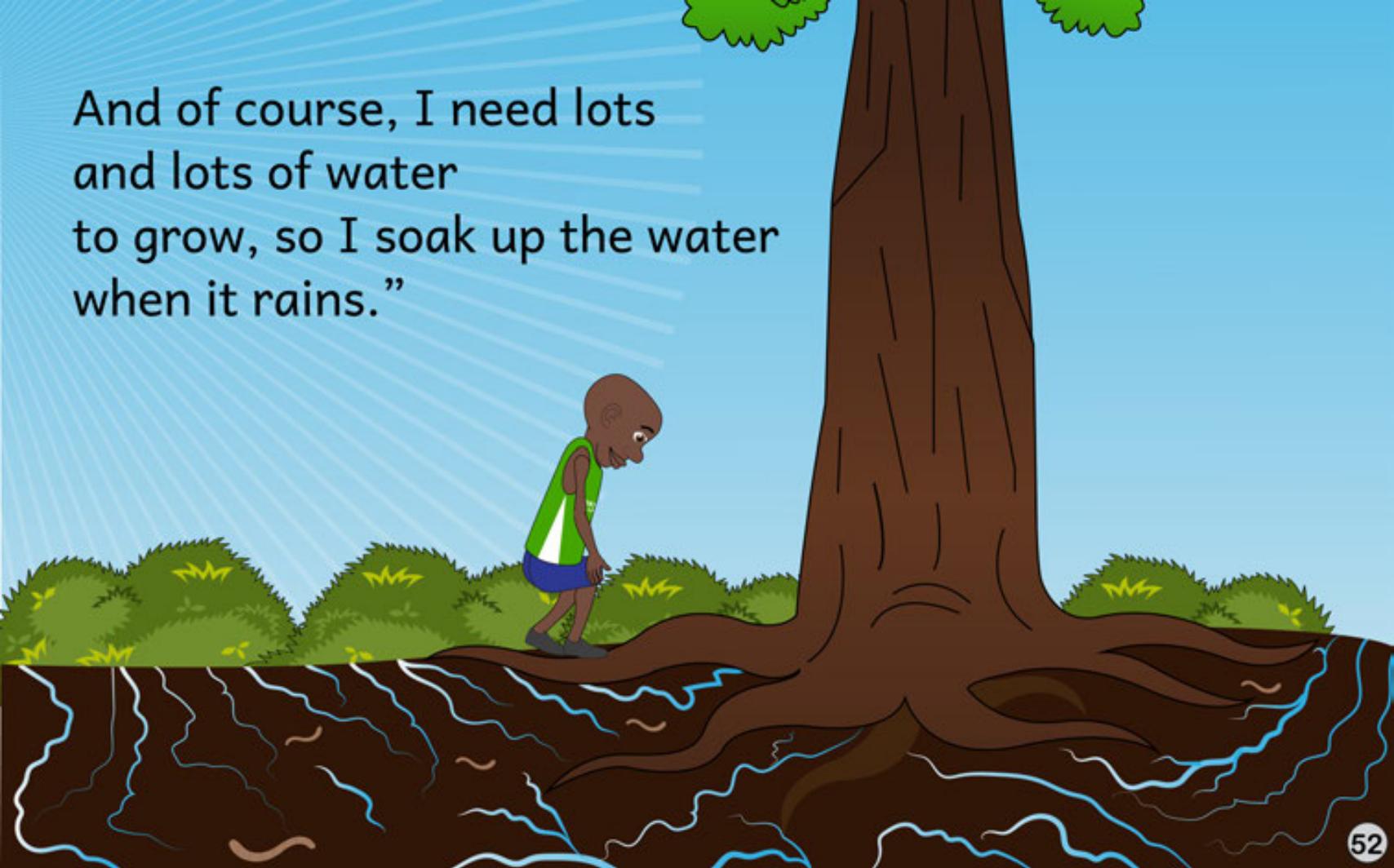
“I stand here in the sun  
and get energy from the sunlight.”



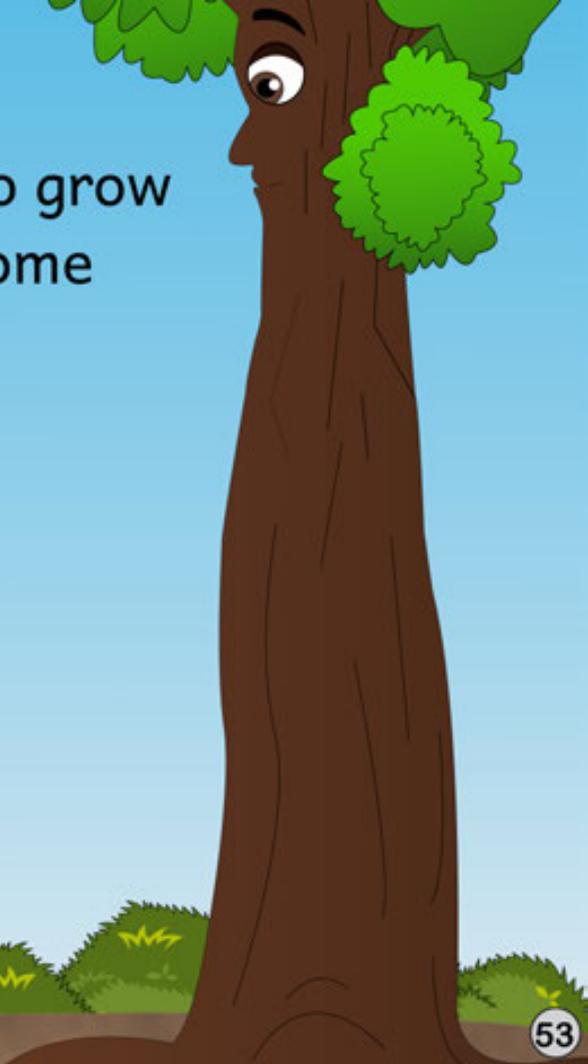
I keep my roots in the soil  
to soak up nutrients  
from the ground.



And of course, I need lots  
and lots of water  
to grow, so I soak up the water  
when it rains.”



Baraka thought that he should try to grow like the tree. He asked the tree to come and help him grow.





“Sorry, I can’t move from this spot...But good luck with the growing.

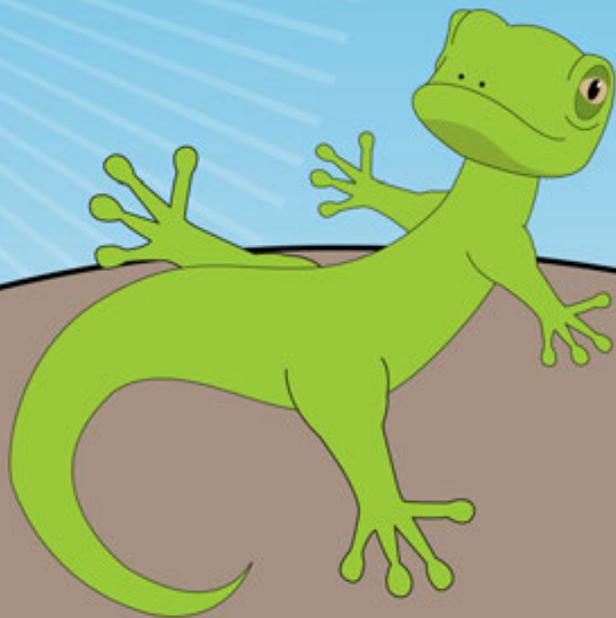
I'll mark this spot as your height,  
so we can see how much you've grown  
when you come back."



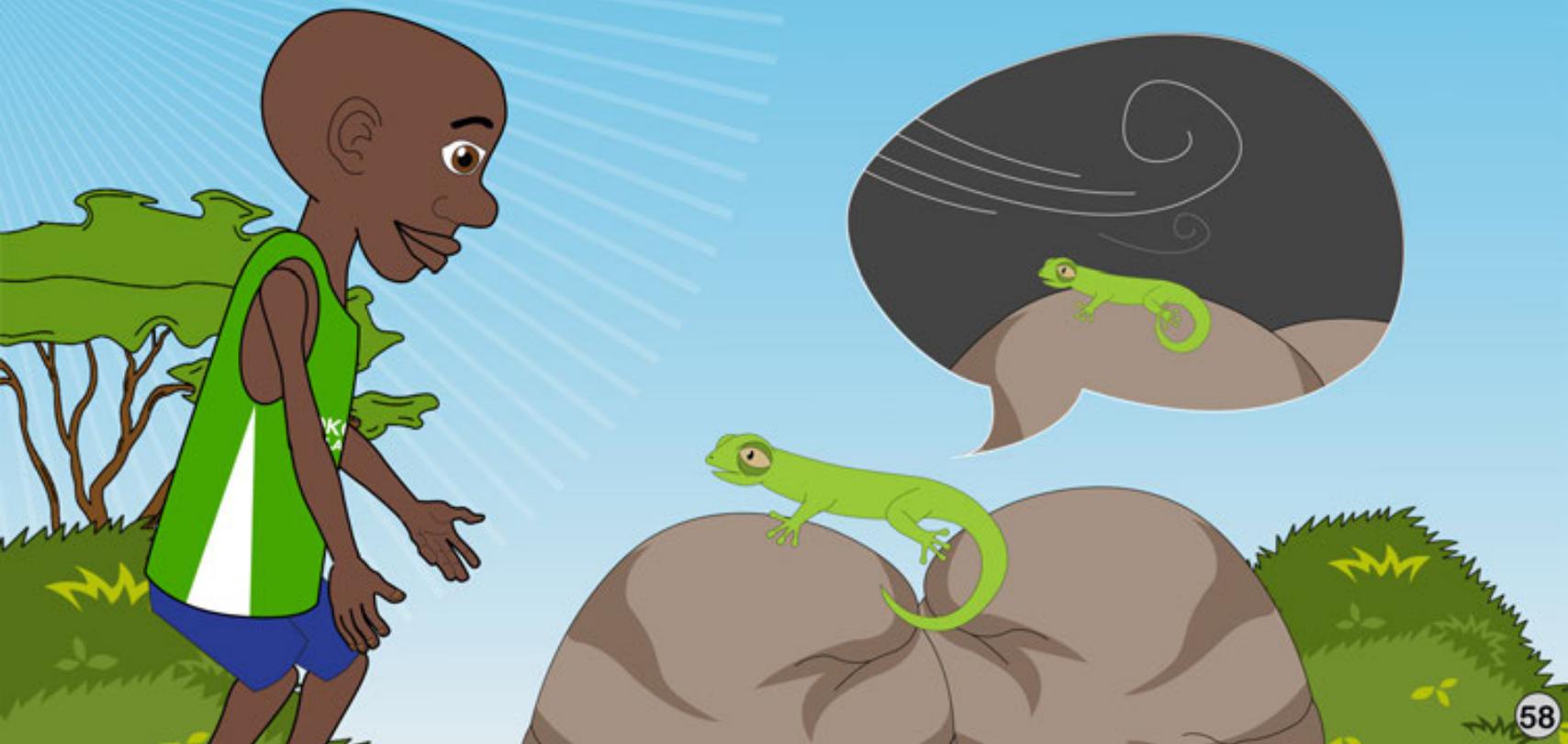
Next Baraka came across a lizard named Mjusi,  
who was sitting on a rock.  
He asked what she was doing.



“I just finished eating a big meal of bugs...  
So I’m now sunning myself so I can grow.”



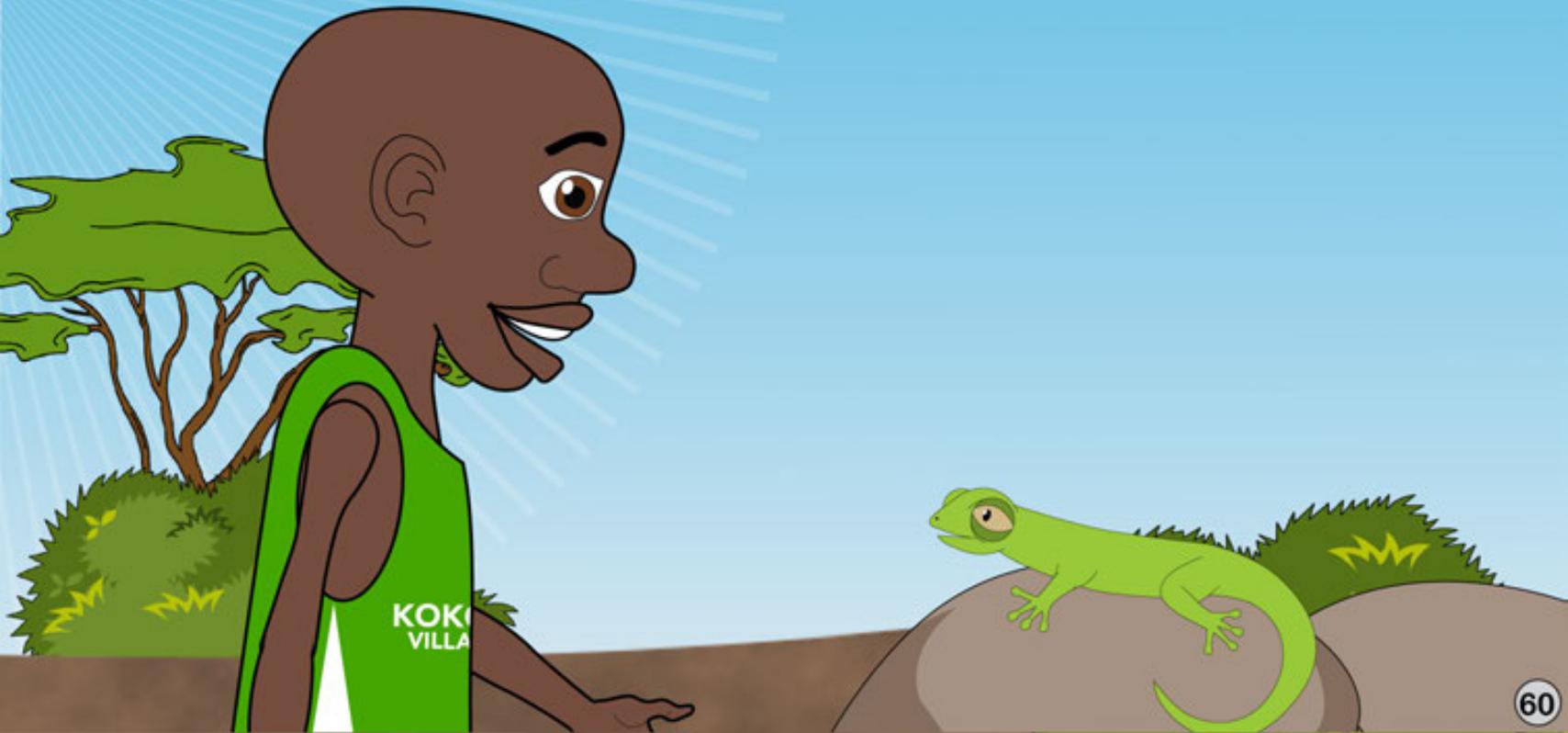
I use the heat from the sun as energy.  
When the weather was cold, I didn't grow at all...



...But since it's been warm and I've been sunning, I've grown to twice the size I was before!" she told him.



“I’m going to find a rock and sun myself from now on.  
Thanks! Bye!” said Baraka.



The next day, Baraka lugged a bucket of water out into the field. He took off his shoes...



...Buried his feet in the dirt  
and dumped the water  
on himself.  
He stood very still  
like the tree.



After a while he called out to Koba and asked him to dump some water on him, because he had dried out.



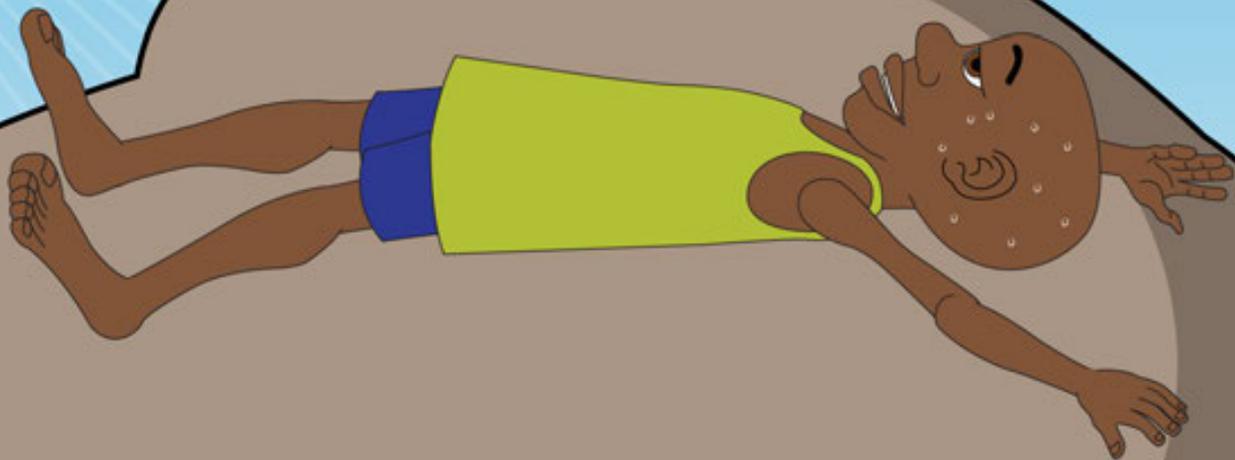
Koba thought Baraka was crazy!  
But he dumped a full bucket  
of water over Baraka,  
who stood like the tree every day  
for a whole week.



Baraka also climbed up on a rock  
like the lizard,  
but he kept sliding off.



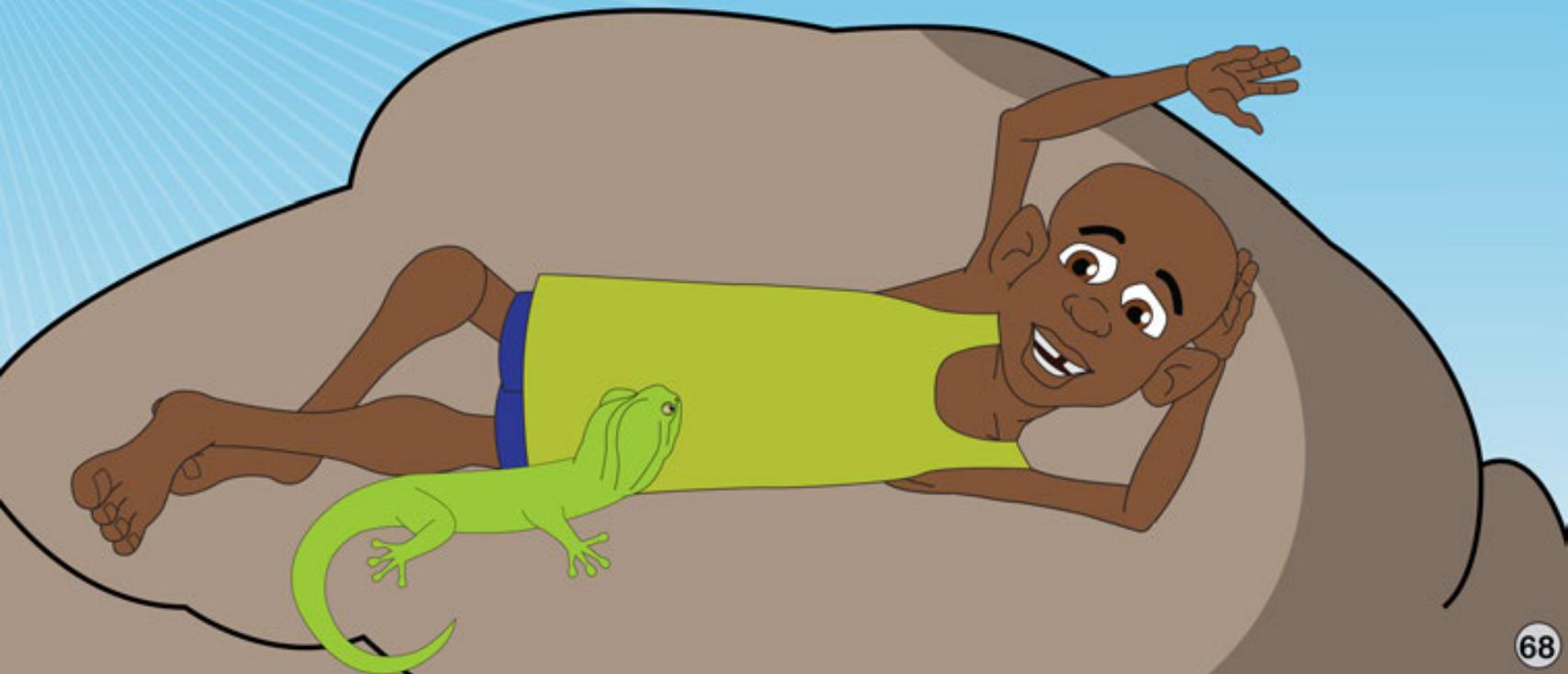
He lay on his back and  
sunned himself  
until he started sweating.



The sun beat down hard and  
Baraka sweated even more.  
He did this every day for a week.



One afternoon Mjusi came by and Baraka asked her, “Have I grown any? It’s been a week.

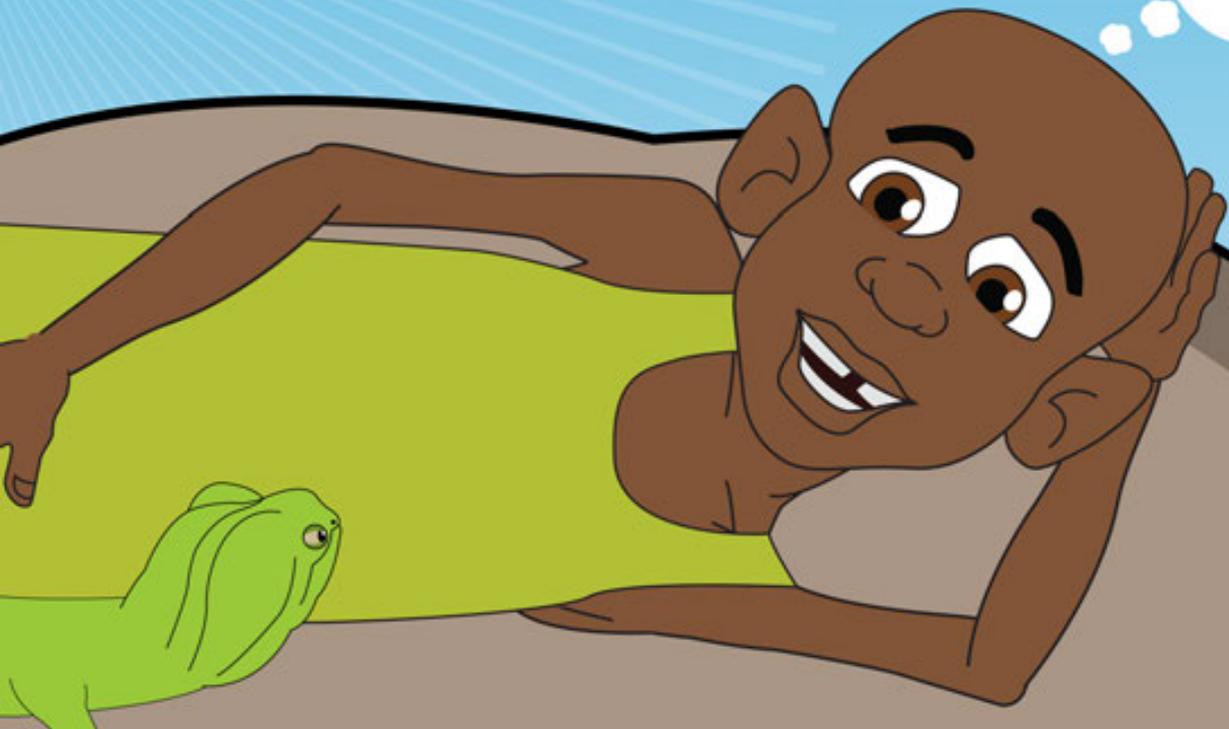


I must have grown at least  
a few inches.

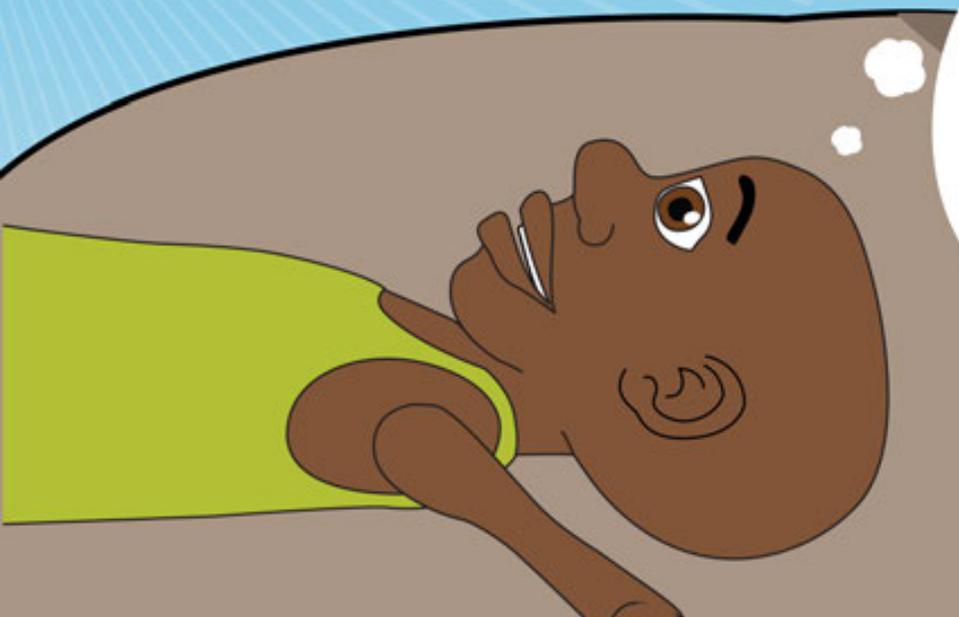


last week

this week



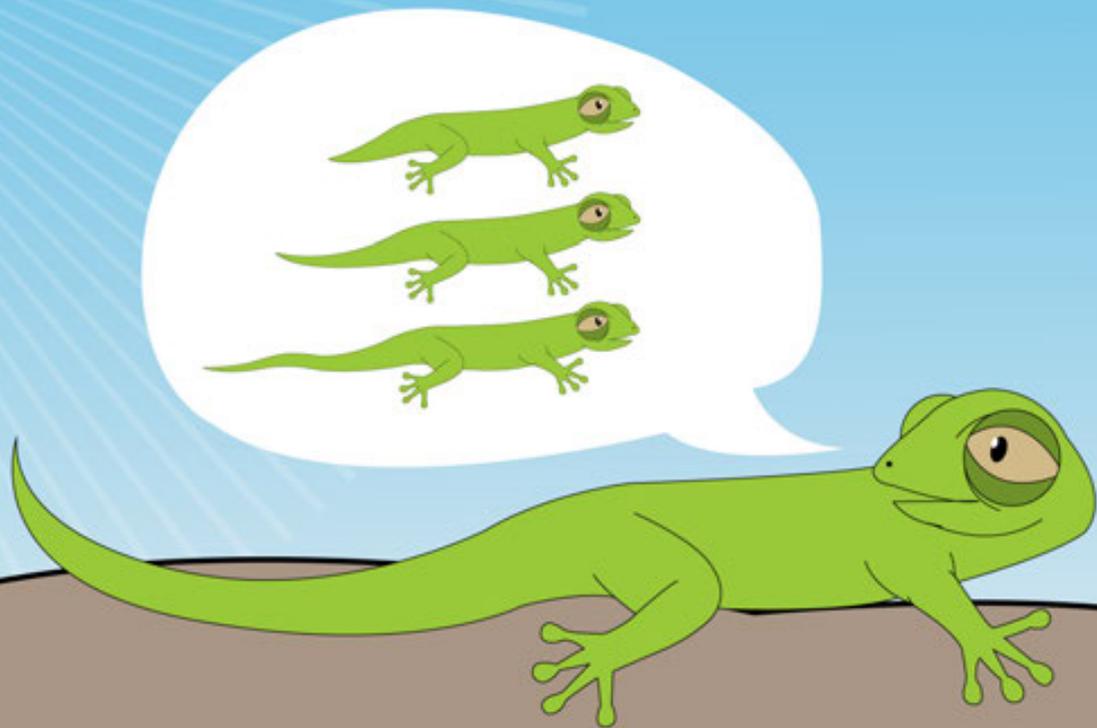
I've eaten soooo many bugs and spent DAYS soaking up the sun's heat."



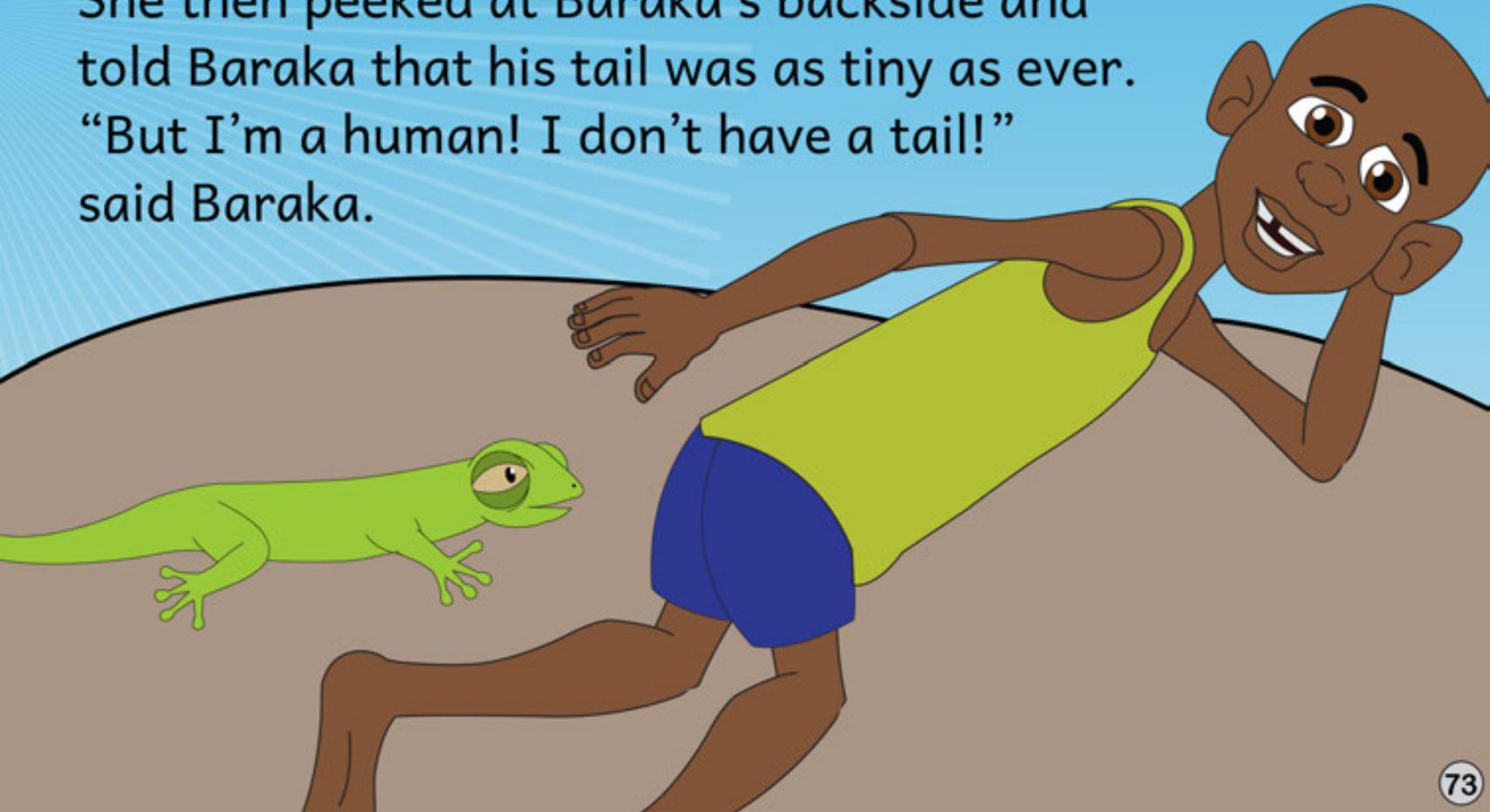
“I can’t tell.  
All you humans look huge to me,”  
replied Mjusi.



“But you’ve gotta give it some time.  
My tail has grown, but pretty slowly.”



She then peeked at Baraka's backside and told Baraka that his tail was as tiny as ever. "But I'm a human! I don't have a tail!" said Baraka.



Baraka then decided that they should go back to the tree to measure if he had grown taller.



“I want to see how much taller I’ve grown. I’ve been standing with my feet in the soil...”



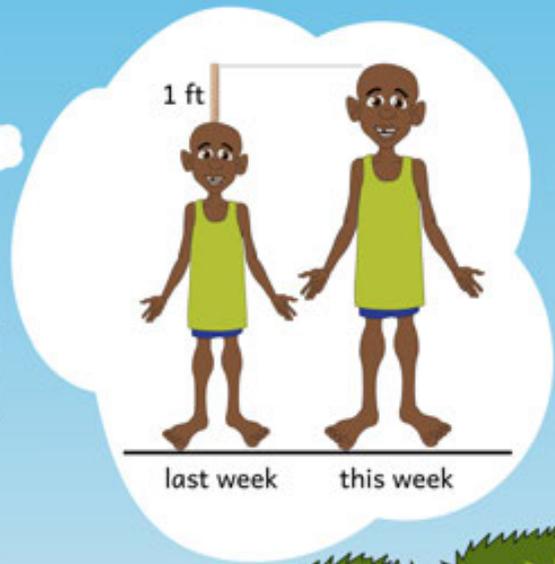
...reaching my arms up to the sun,  
and pouring buckets of water on myself  
all week long!” Baraka told the tree.



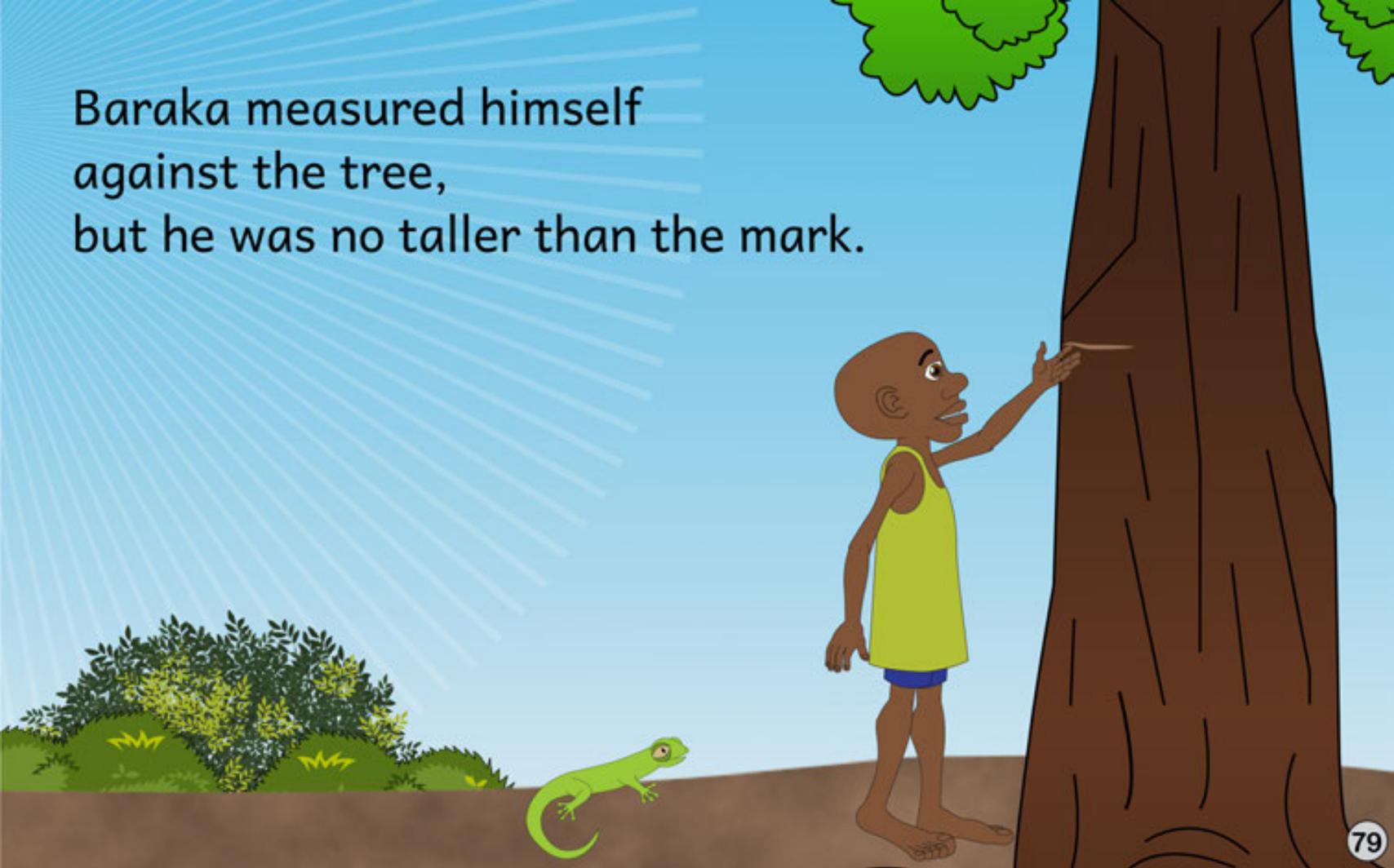
“I’ve also been lying in the sun and eating bugs with Mjusi all week!”



I must have grown at least a foot by now!”



Baraka measured himself  
against the tree,  
but he was no taller than the mark.



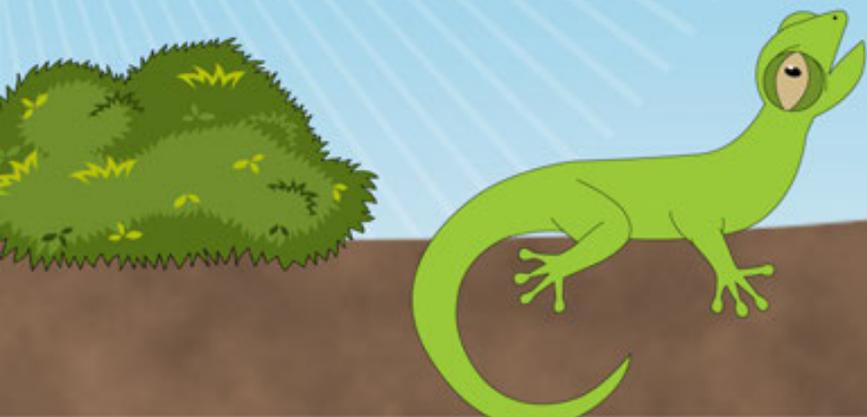
“Why haven’t I grown?  
I did everything you told me,”  
asked Baraka.



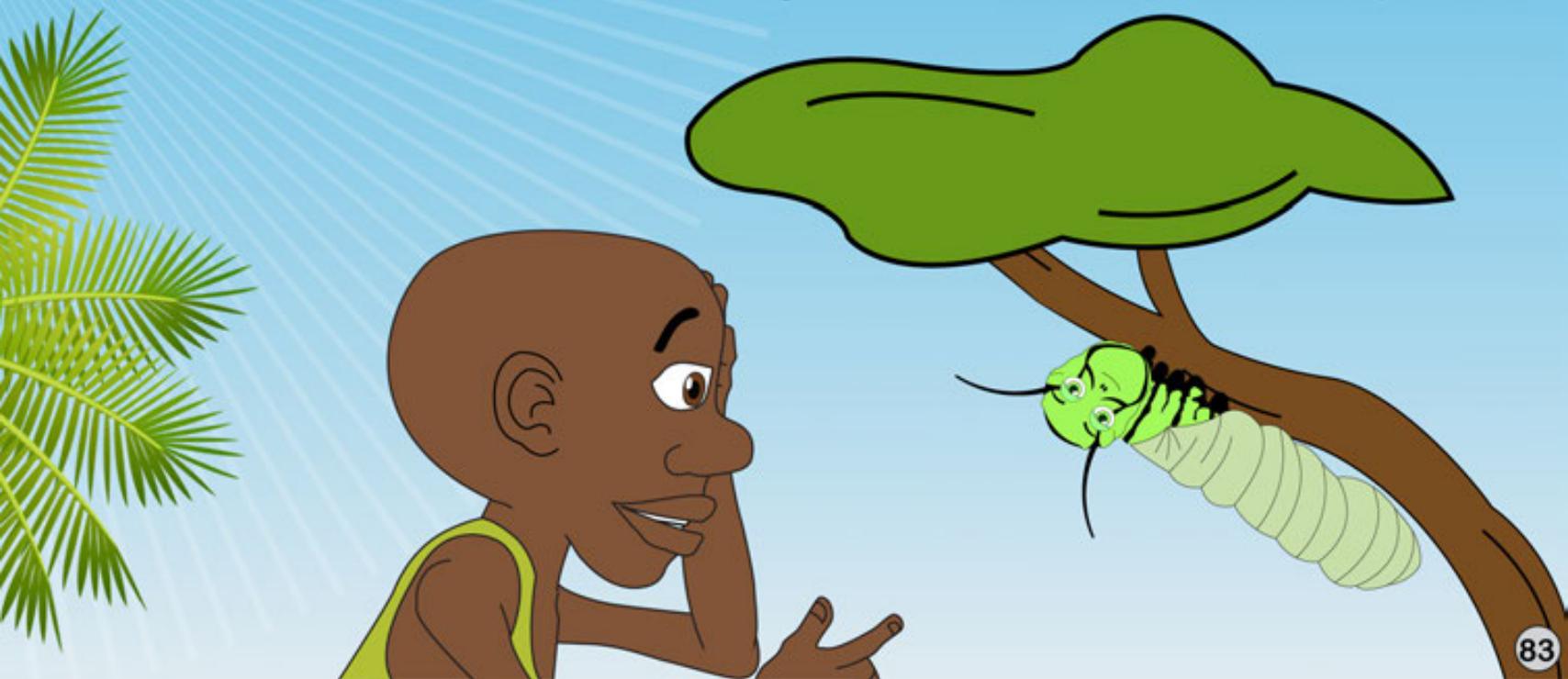


“Well, it may be that trees  
and little boys need different things  
to grow,” replied the tree.

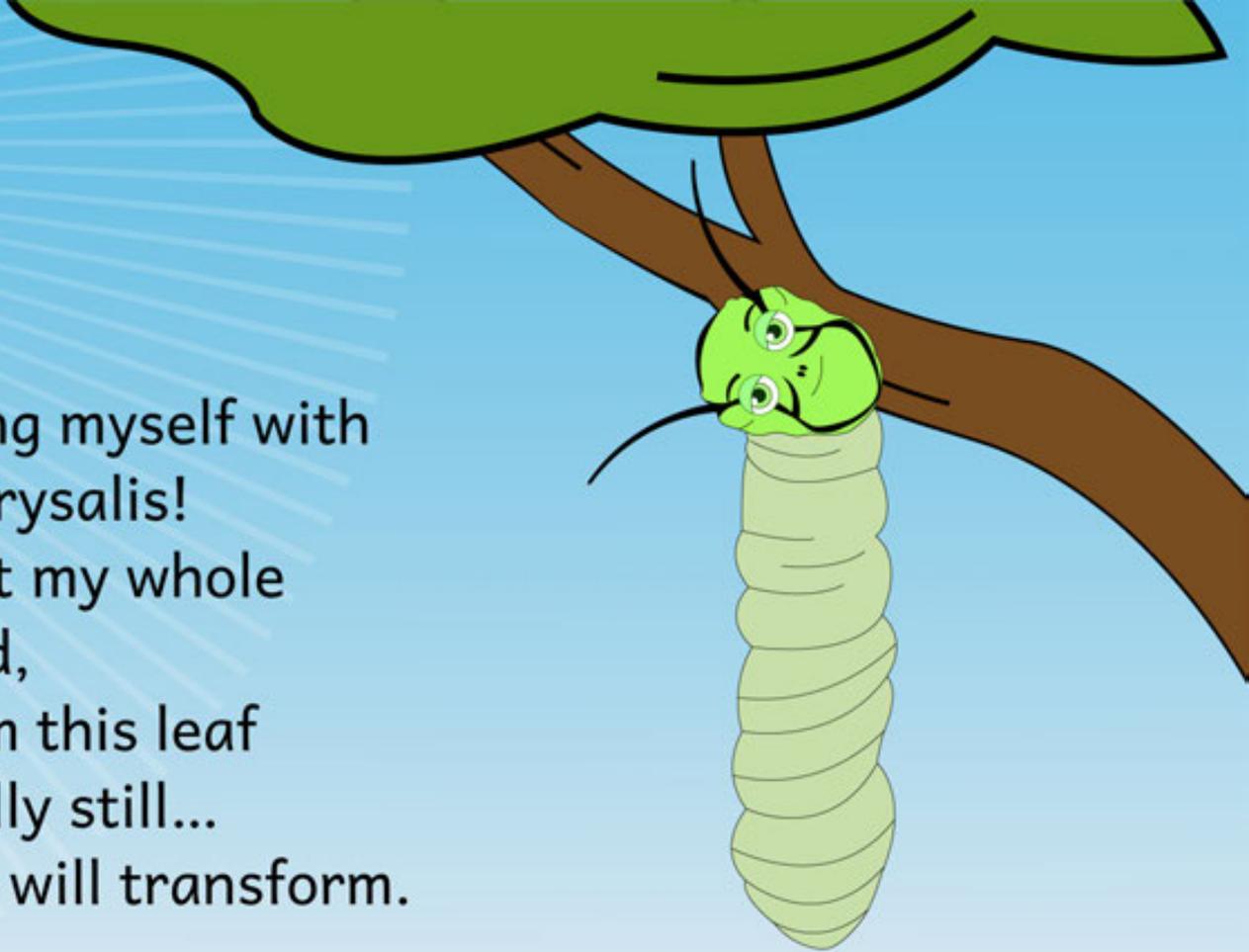
“Yeah, lizards and human kids must need different things to grow as well. For me it’s bugs and sunlight. For you, it must be something else. You should ask a human,” said Mjusi.



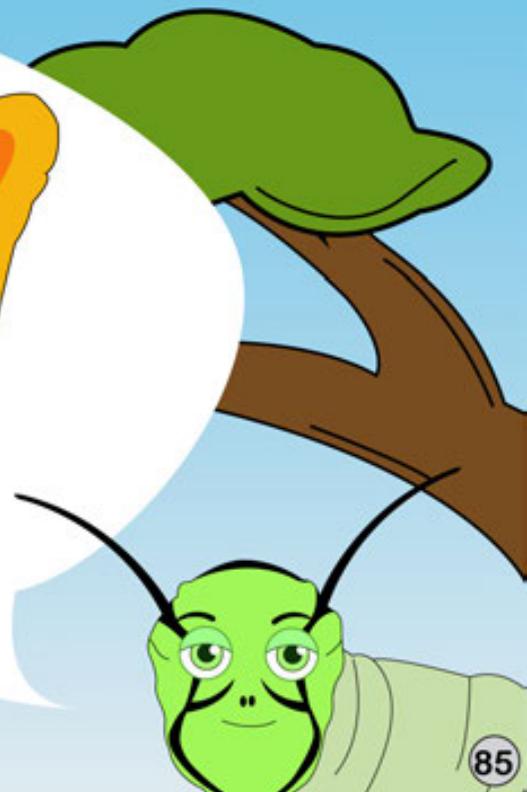
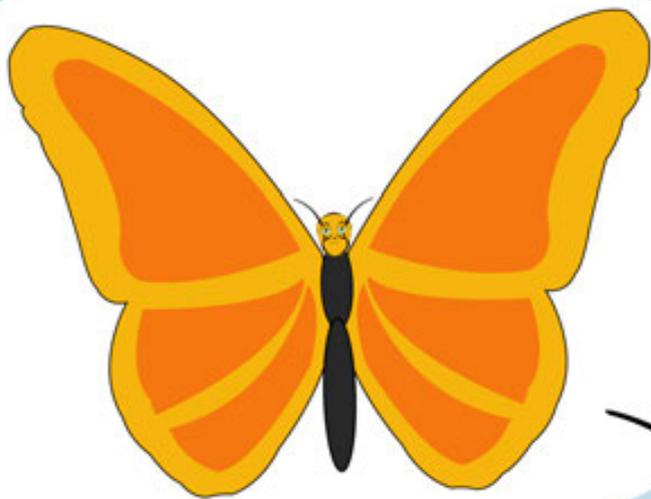
Next Baraka came across a little caterpillar, who was wrapping himself up in a cocoon. Baraka asked the caterpillar what he was doing.



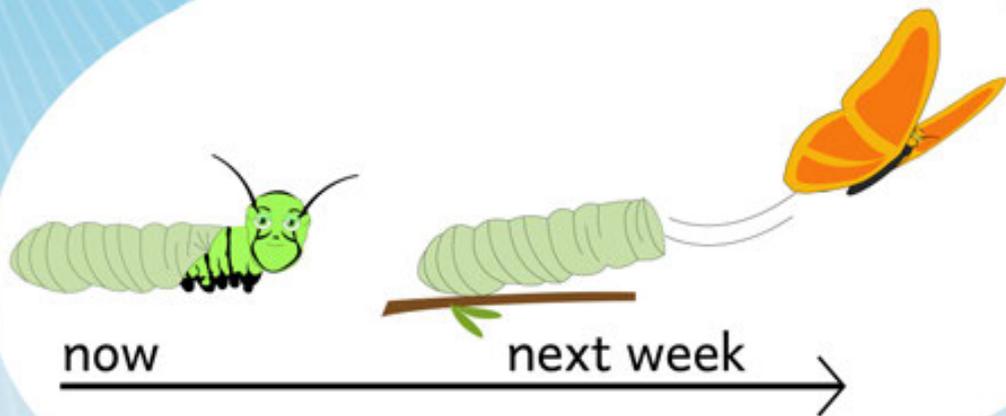
“I’m wrapping myself with  
silk into a chrysalis!  
Once I’ve got my whole  
body covered,  
I’ll hang from this leaf  
and stay really still...  
and my body will transform.



You won't even recognize me when I come out  
I'll have wings, and I'll be able to fly!" explained  
the caterpillar.



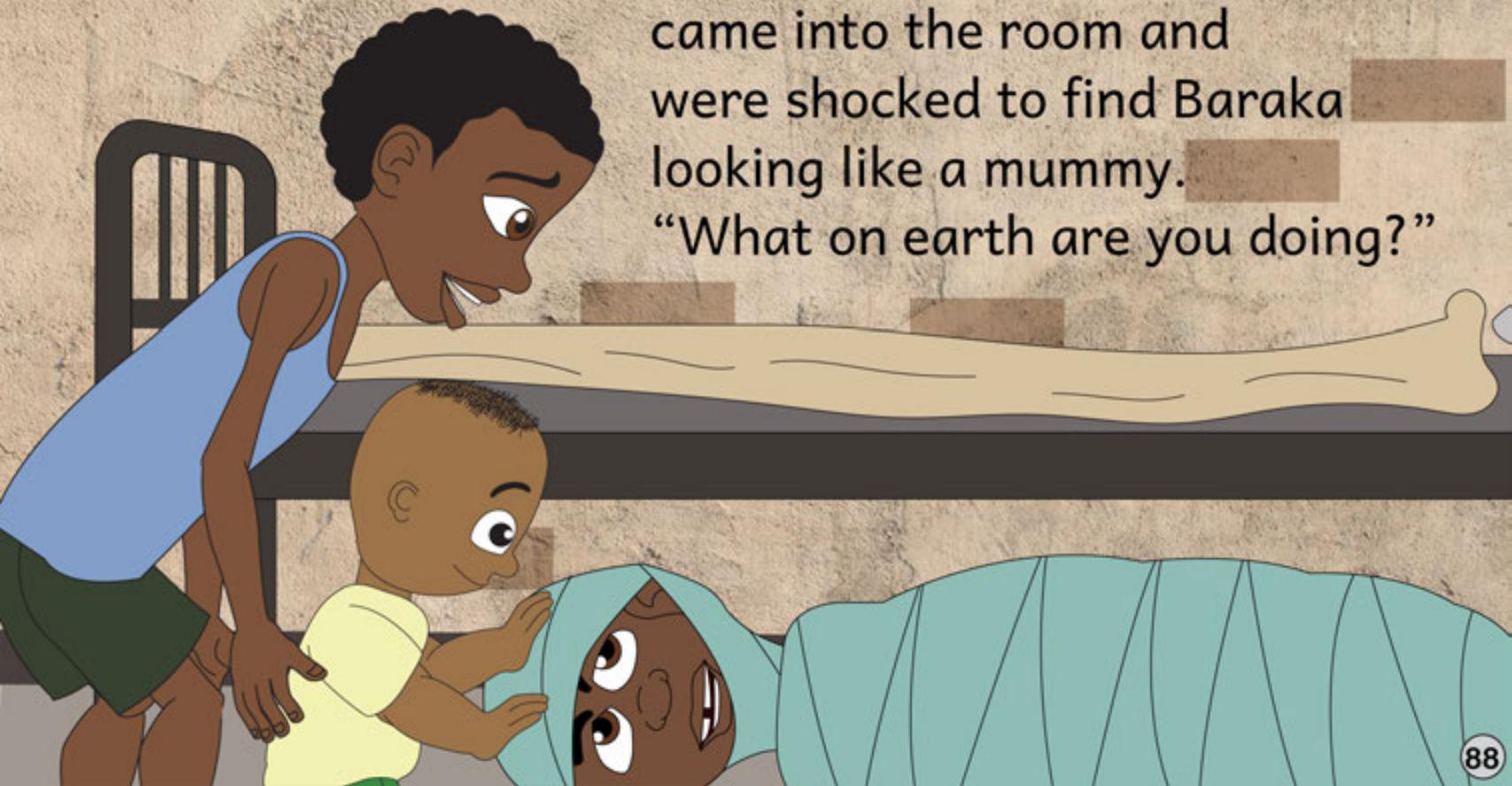
“It’s called metamorphosis...The great transformation!  
You see me now with my stumpy little legs  
and yucky green skin?  
Come back in a week and I’ll be a whole new me,”  
he promised.



Baraka hurried home and wrapped himself up with a sheet. He sat still like the caterpillar until he had to go to the bathroom. He called out for help as he fell over.



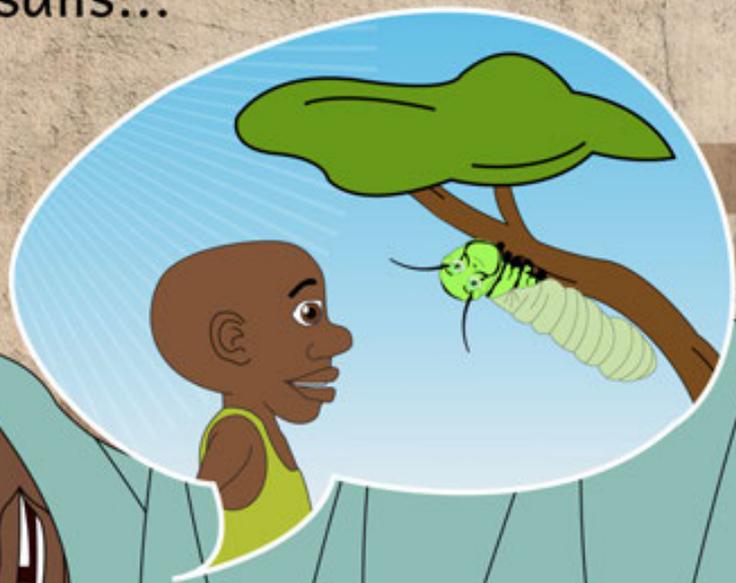
Koba and Mwenda  
came into the room and  
were shocked to find Baraka  
looking like a mummy.  
“What on earth are you doing?”



“I wanna be the best basketball player ever, but that will never happen if I stay short. You guys just throw the ball over my head!” Baraka explained.



“I tried to grow like a tree...then like a lizard.  
Neither way worked. But then I met this cool  
caterpillar who said that, after he's wrapped himself  
in a chrysalis...



...he'll change and grow wings and be able to fly.  
So I am trying that now because being able to fly  
would be sweet for basketball!”



“Baraka, it’s not going to work,” Koba told him.

“You’re a human, not a caterpillar, or a lizard or a tree! If you want to grow, you need to do what humans do to grow.



Eat a healthy diet...lots of beans and spinach.  
Get plenty of sleep, and drink lots of water. You need  
to stop staying up all night. And you need to exercise!”  
Koba said.



“While you’ve been pretending to be a tree, a lizard and a caterpillar, Kibena, Kiduchu and I have been doing extra training. Why don’t you join us tomorrow?” Koba suggested.



“Okay, tonight I’m going to eat my veggies,  
then I’m going straight to sleep...And I’ll train with  
you guys tomorrow.



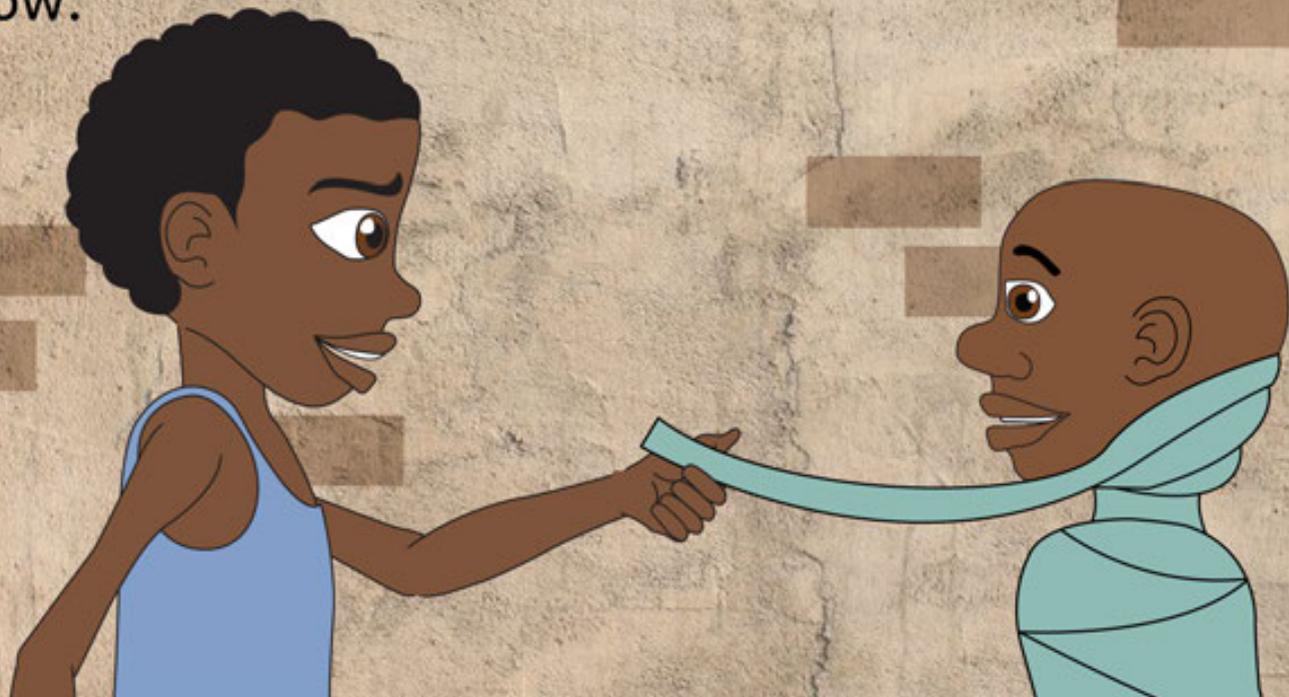
Then I'll go check with the tree to see how much I've grown. Then I'll know if you're telling the truth," Baraka said.



“Baraka, it won’t happen over night,” his brother told him. “You need to have healthy habits, and make sure you live a healthy life.”



Then over time you'll grow well. But don't worry, we've got a whole month left until our first game. So let's get started on Baraka's growth bootcamp now."



For the next month  
Baraka devoured  
spinach and beans.



He brushed his teeth  
and washed his hands.  
He did lots of exercise  
and stretching!



After a month, Coach Tony told the kids that their first match would be that Saturday.



At practice Baraka played well as a team player.  
He dribbled and passed.



Though he was still short,  
he managed to jump up  
and shoot over people.



He faked them out  
and ran past them.  
He even ran under  
a tall boy's legs!



“Baraka, you’re on fire! Where’s all that energy come from?” asked Coach Tony.



“Good food. Good sleep. Washing my hands. Brushing my teeth. And lots and lots of exercise and basketball,” replied Baraka.



As Baraka walked home,  
he met a beautiful butterfly,  
who asked if he remembered him.  
Baraka said that  
he didn't know who she was.



“We met a few weeks ago, but back then I was a caterpillar,” said the butterfly.

“No way! You really did grow wings! That is soooo coool!” said Baraka.



The butterfly asked if Baraka had grown any.



“I’m going to check now,”  
said Baraka.

A while later they arrived at the tree,  
who immediately saw that  
Baraka looked different.



Baraka stood with his back to the tree. He had grown just the tiniest tiniest bit.



“But hey, he’s grown!”  
said his animal friends  
as they jumped up and  
down excitedly.





# The End

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