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# The Black Bull



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Classics for Kids

# The Black Bull

Story told by  
Shalini Srinivasan

Illustrations & Colour  
Tanvi Choudhury



This book belongs to

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In a tiny mud house by a dry river bed lived a sweet old lady. Her name was Badka Devi but most people called her Badi Amma. One day, a young cowherd and his wife visited her village. "Can we stay with you?" the cowherd asked. "Just for a little while. We'll pay you rent."

"I'd like that," Badka Devi smiled.





The cowherd and his wife stayed with Badka Devi for some months. They swapped songs and stories and became good friends.



One evening, the cowherd said: "Badi Amma, we must return to our own home tomorrow. You've been so good to us, but we have nothing to give you."  
"It's all right," Badka Devi said kindly.  
"I know!" said the cowherd's wife.  
"We'll give you a calf!"



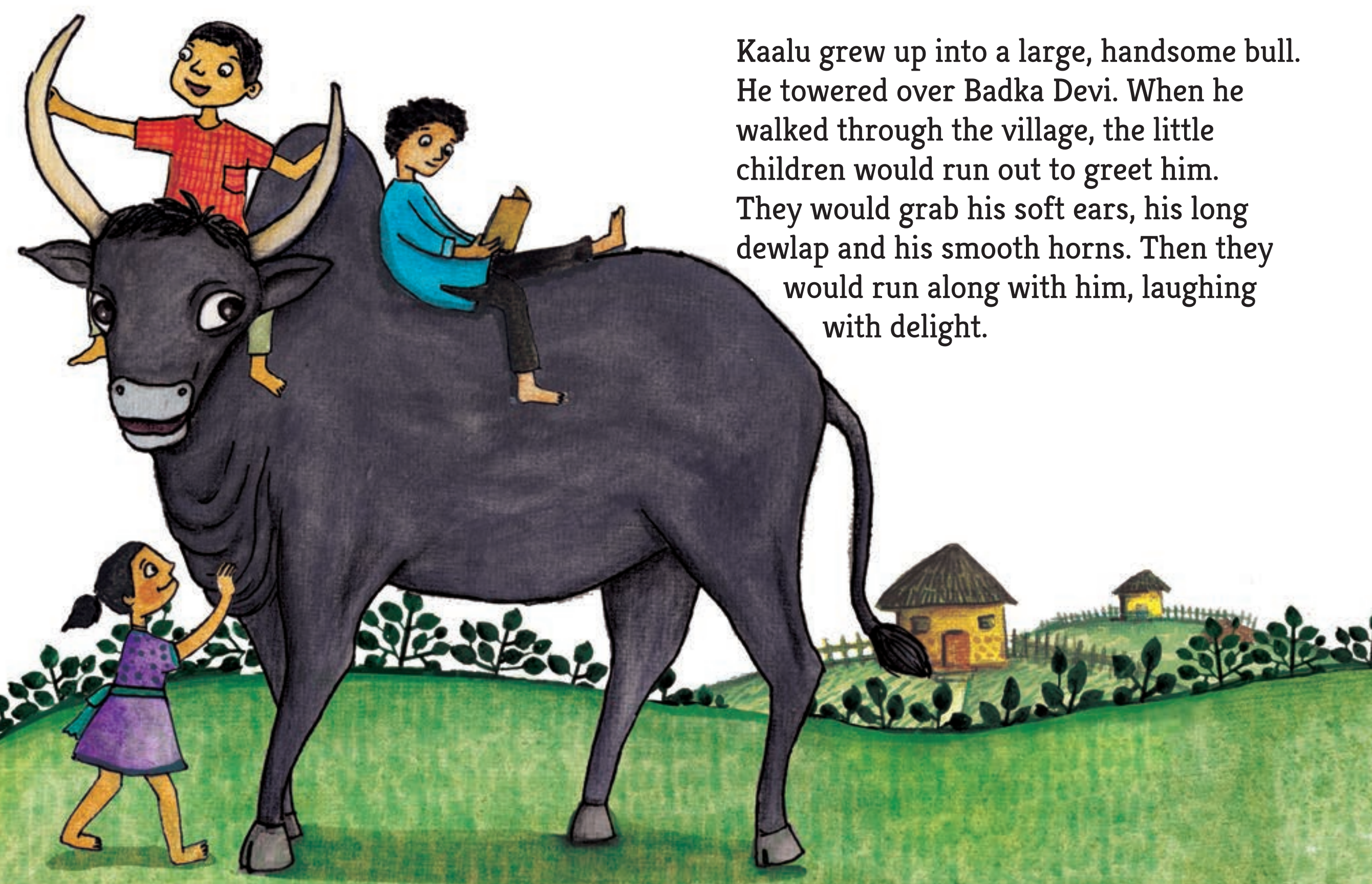


Badka Devi loved the calf as if it were her own child. He was soft black with a glint in his eyes, a spring in his step and the jauntiest tail flick in the entire kingdom!

Badka Devi fed him her own food – fragrant ghee rice and crunchy sugarcane, sweet lumps of jaggery and his favourite, hot gruel. She named him Kaalu, because of his shiny black coat.







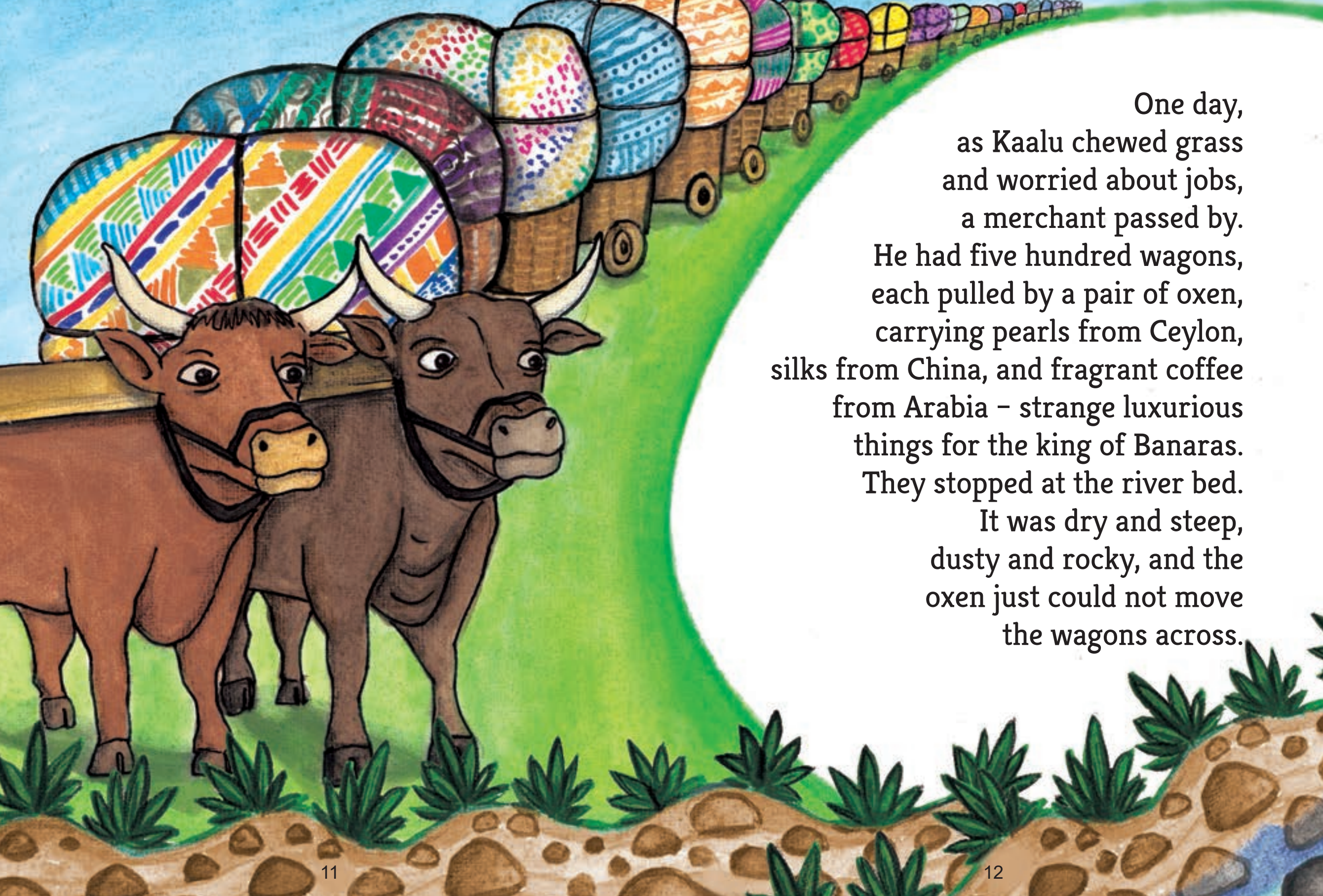
Kaalu grew up into a large, handsome bull. He towered over Badka Devi. When he walked through the village, the little children would run out to greet him. They would grab his soft ears, his long dewlap and his smooth horns. Then they would run along with him, laughing with delight.



Every day, a herdsman came to take Kaalu out with the other cattle. As he grazed on the river bank, Kaalu would worry, "Badi Amma brought me up, and cares for me as if I am her own child. I wish I could earn some money so she can live in comfort." "What I need," he decided, "Is a job. But who will employ a bull?"



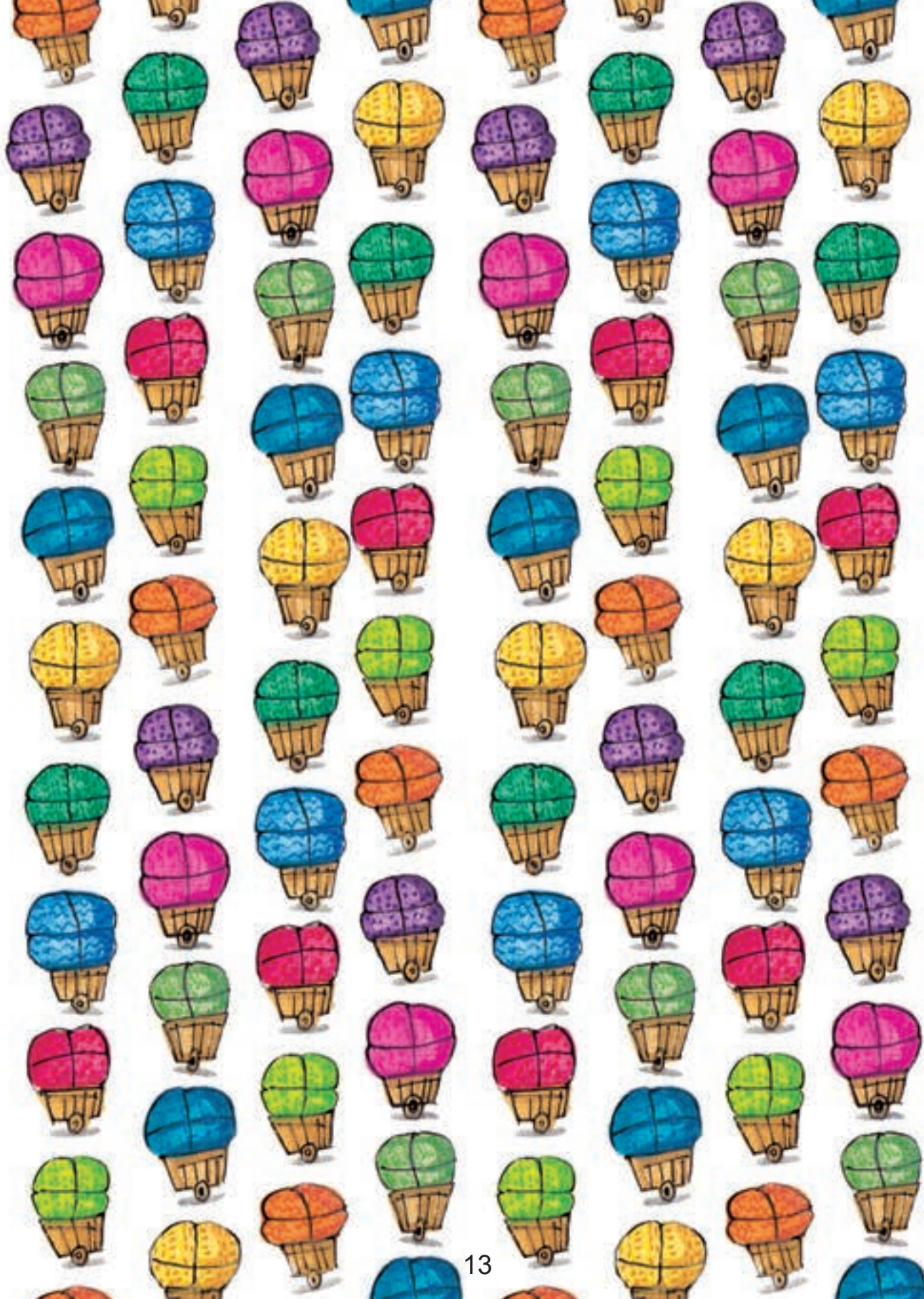




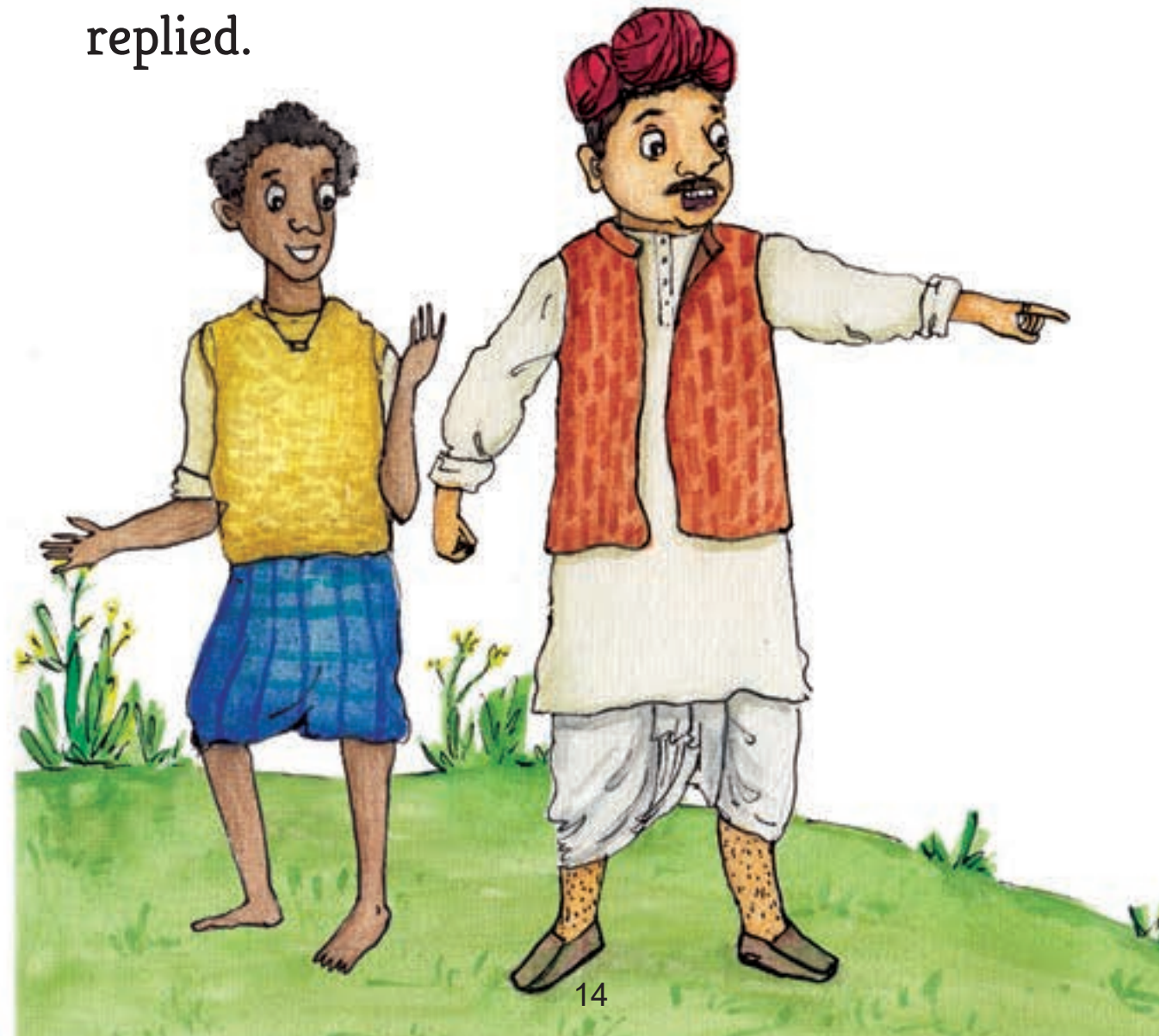
One day,  
as Kaalu chewed grass  
and worried about jobs,  
a merchant passed by.  
He had five hundred wagons,  
each pulled by a pair of oxen,  
carrying pearls from Ceylon,  
silks from China, and fragrant coffee  
from Arabia – strange luxurious  
things for the king of Banaras.  
They stopped at the river bed.

It was dry and steep,  
dusty and rocky, and the  
oxen just could not move  
the wagons across.





The merchant yoked all one thousand oxen to one wagon but it still would not move. "Try harder," he shouted impatiently. "Hurry!" The merchant noticed Kaalu. "Can I borrow that strong-looking bull?" he asked the herdsman. "I'll pay very well." "You can take him for free," the herdsman replied.



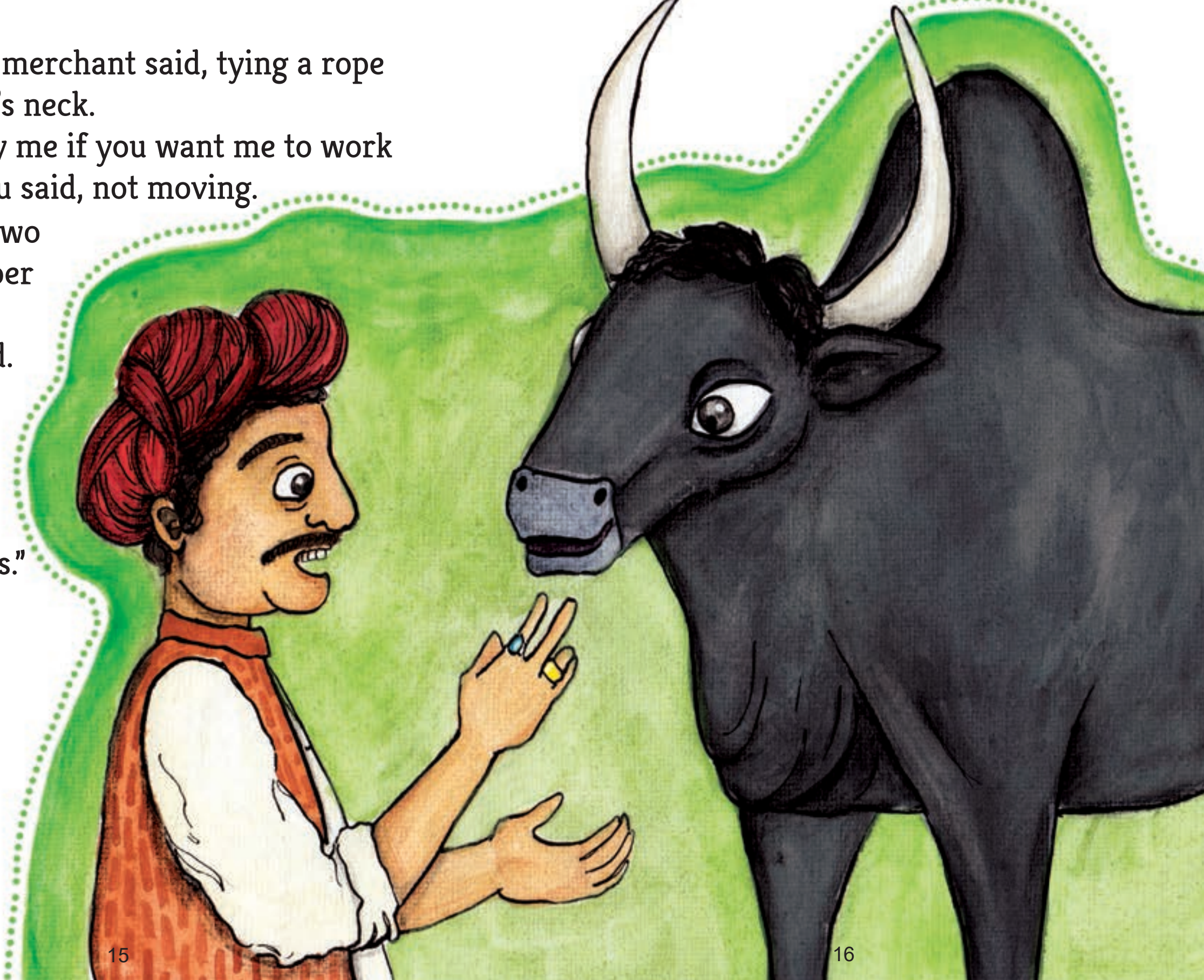


“Let’s go,” the merchant said, tying a rope around Kaalu’s neck.

“You must pay me if you want me to work for you,” Kaalu said, not moving.

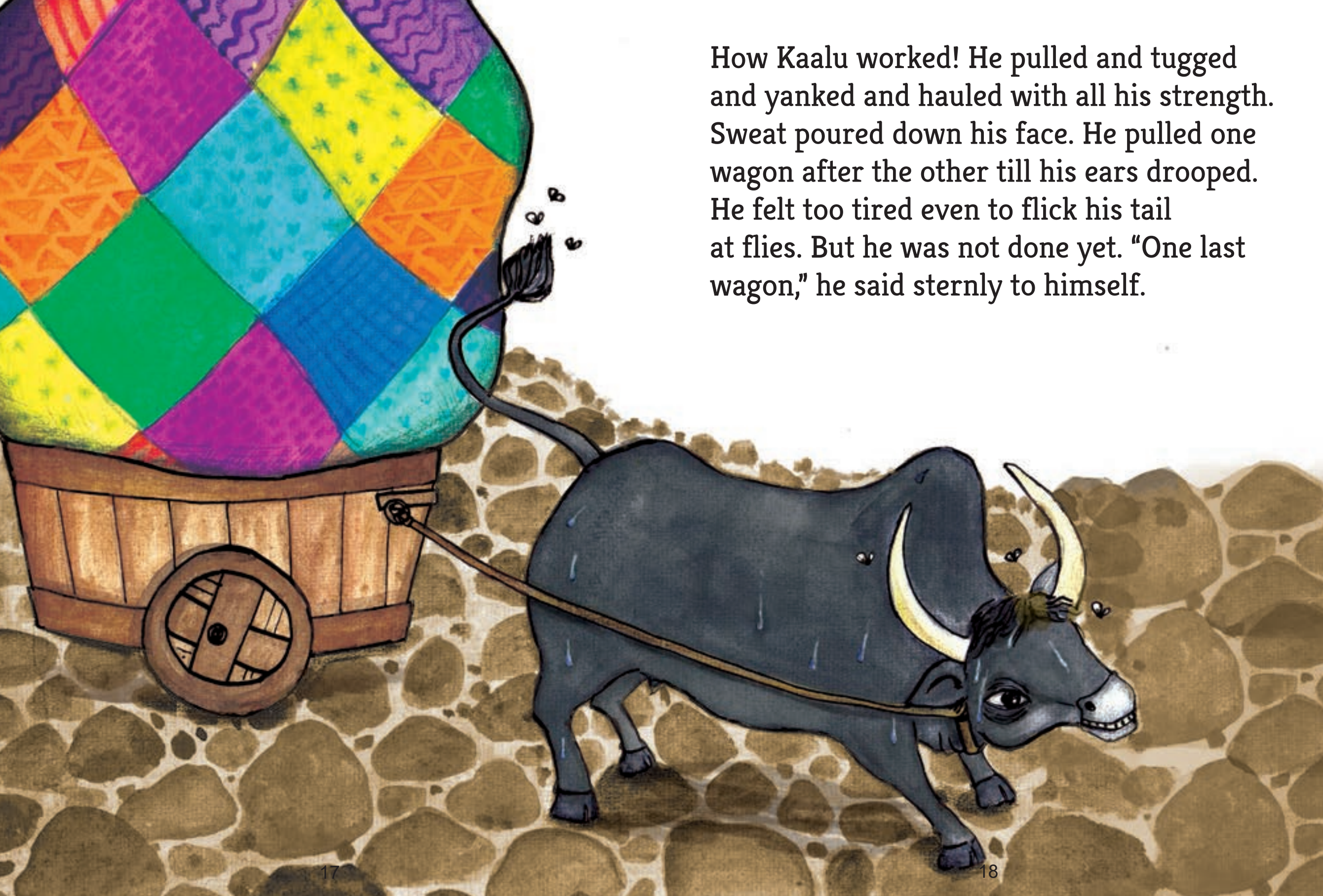
“I’ll give you two silver pieces per wagon,” the merchant said.

“That’s a thousand coins if you get all my wagons across.” Kaalu nodded his head in agreement.





How Kaalu worked! He pulled and tugged and yanked and hauled with all his strength. Sweat poured down his face. He pulled one wagon after the other till his ears drooped. He felt too tired even to flick his tail at flies. But he was not done yet. "One last wagon," he said sternly to himself.







At last, Kaalu stopped. He had moved all five hundred wagons across the river bed. The merchant counted out five hundred silver pieces. He put them in a small bag, and tied it around Kaalu's neck. "He's only an animal," the merchant thought. "He'll never know how much I've paid him." But Kaalu could count perfectly well. He was not going to be cheated.







Kaalu stood in front of the wagons, blocking their way. "Move that bull," the merchant hollered. His five hundred servants pushed Kaalu and shoved him. "Please move," they begged but Kaalu would not budge. "Maybe the bull knows I cheated him," the merchant worried. He put another five hundred coins in Kaalu's pouch. "That's a thousand silver pieces," he said loudly.





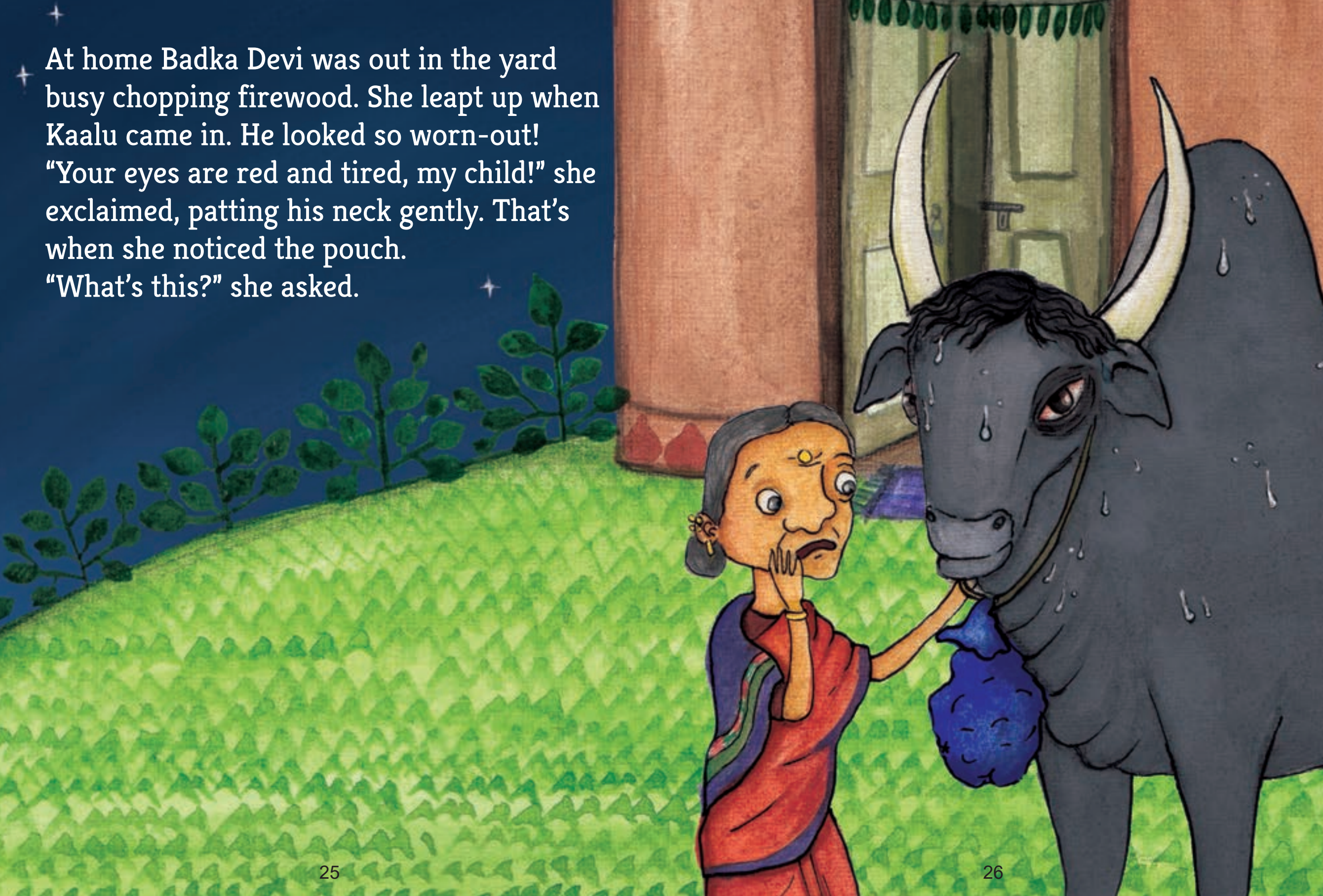
Kaalu flicked his tail up in joy and ran!  
The village children came out to see him.  
“Look at Badi Amma’s Kaalu,” they shouted  
to each other. “See how he races!”

“What’s around your neck, Kaalu?” a little  
girl called. But Kaalu ran on. He just wanted  
to get home.





At home Badka Devi was out in the yard busy chopping firewood. She leapt up when Kaalu came in. He looked so worn-out! "Your eyes are red and tired, my child!" she exclaimed, patting his neck gently. That's when she noticed the pouch. "What's this?" she asked.





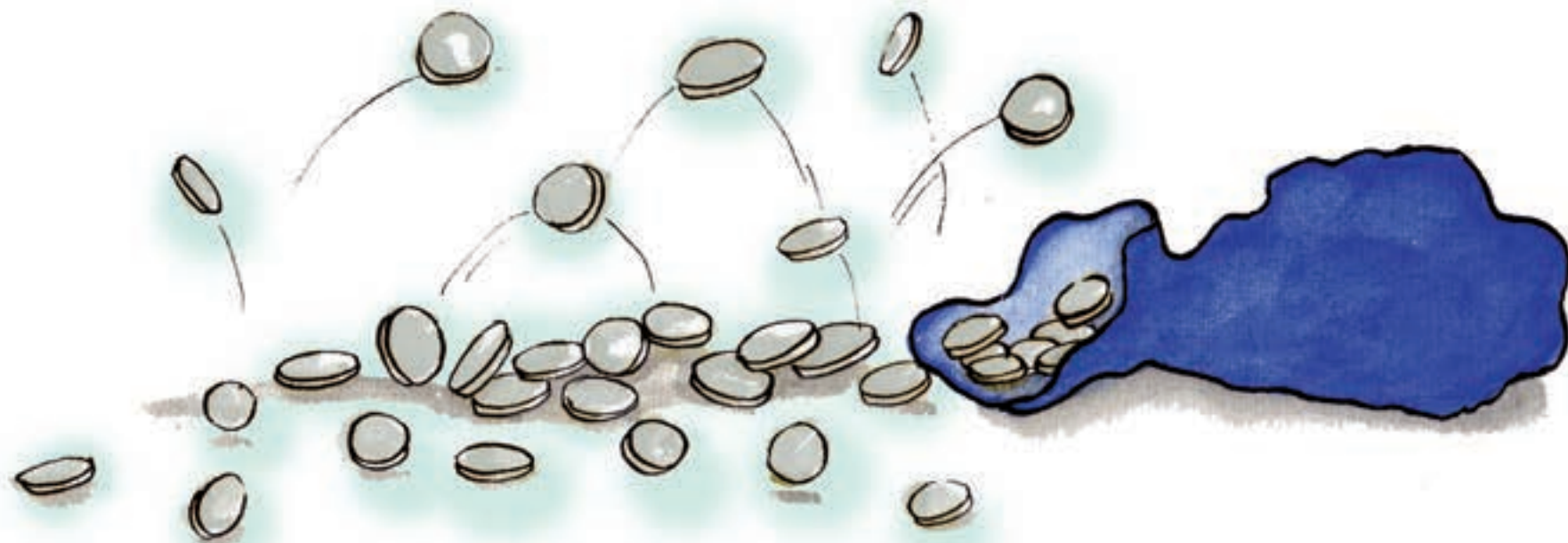


Badka Devi untied the pouch from Kaalu's neck and emptied it on the floor. A stream of silver fell sparkling to the ground.

"Where is this from, Kaalu?" she exclaimed.

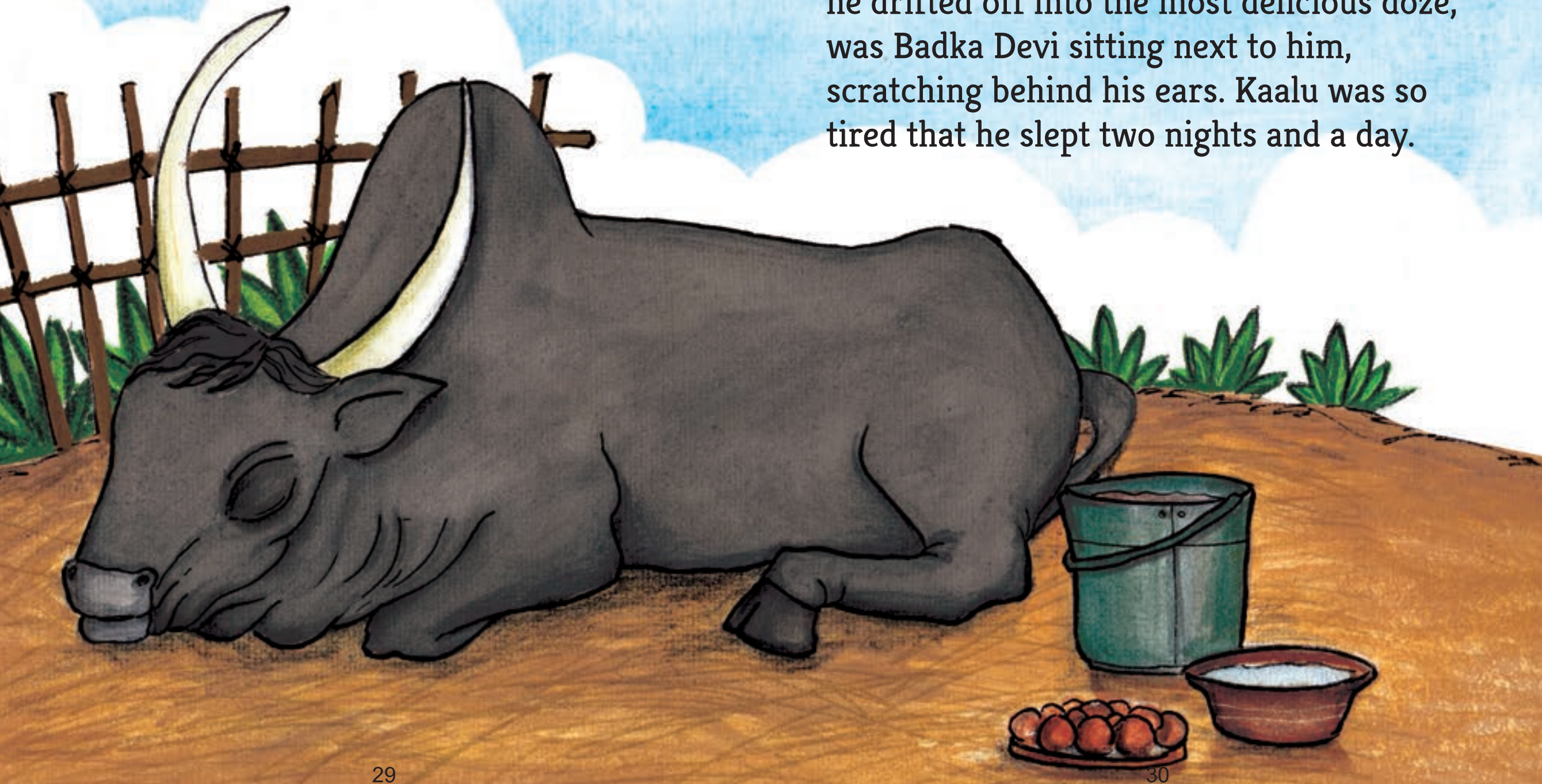
"Kaalum earned it," the herdsman said, walking up to Badka Devi.

He told her the story. "You shouldn't have laboured so hard for my sake, Kaalu," Badka Devi said softly.



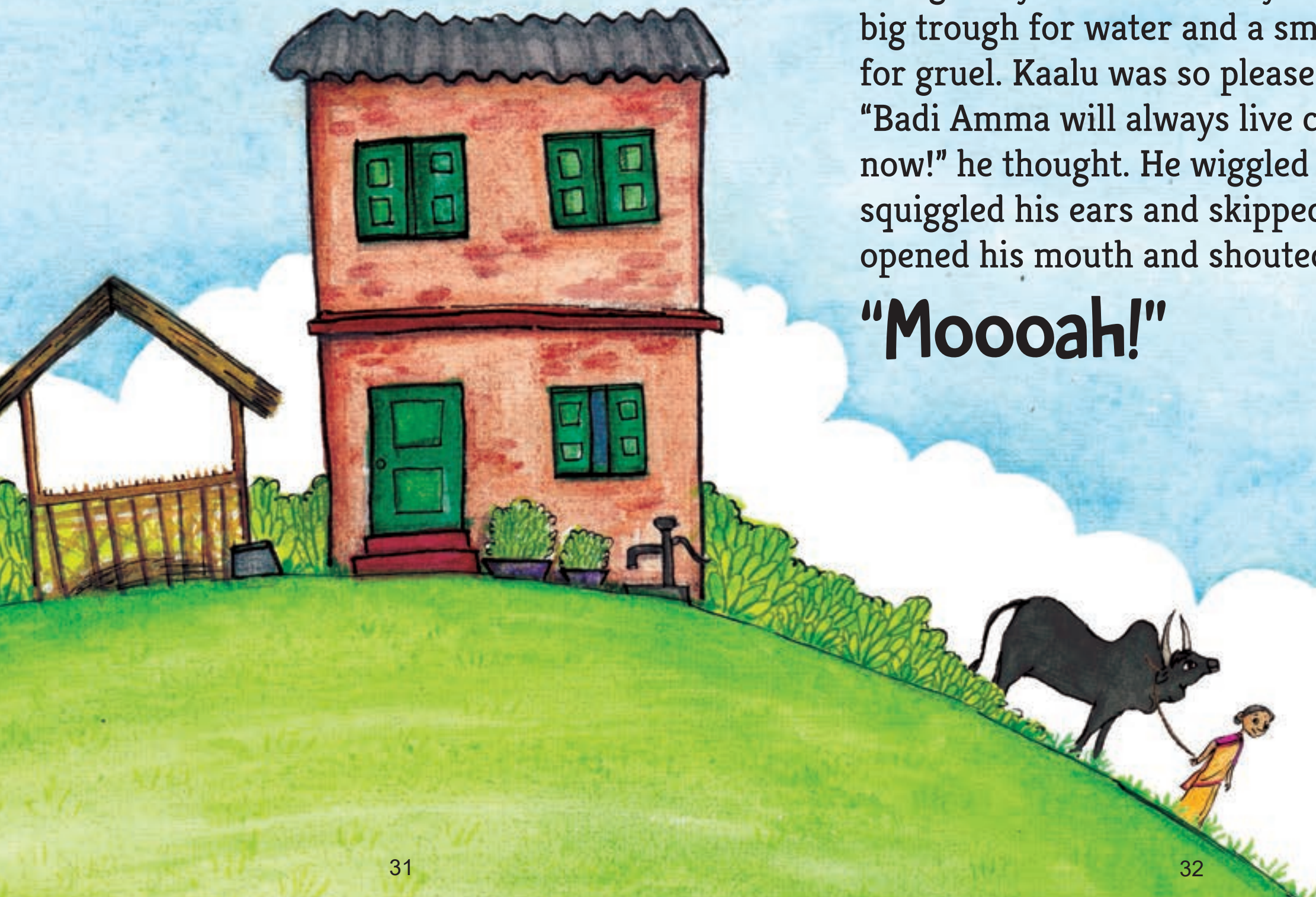


Badka Devi bathed Kaalu gently, in warm water. She rubbed his body with oil and made his favourite dinner, warm gruel. The last thing Kaalu remembered, before he drifted off into the most delicious doze, was Badka Devi sitting next to him, scratching behind his ears. Kaalu was so tired that he slept two nights and a day.





Badka Devi bought a new brick house with some of Kaalu's money. Kaalu had a large airy shed full of hay. He had a big trough for water and a small one for gruel. Kaalu was so pleased! "Badi Amma will always live comfortably now!" he thought. He wiggled his tail and squiggled his ears and skipped. Then he opened his mouth and shouted in joy, **"Moooah!"**





# Learning

# Ladder

Swapped

Exchanged

Glint

Sparkle

Fragrant

Sweet-smelling

Ceylon

Former name for Sri Lanka

Banaras

Former name for Varanasi

Yoked

To fasten together

Haul, Tug, Yank

Pull

Holler

Shout

Labour

To Work hard

Trough

A big container







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# AFTER THE STORY...

Indian cows, the kind with humps, are also called Zebu.

The dewlap is the loose piece of skin that hangs under the neck of some cows and bulls.

A cow's stomach has four parts.

Cattle are colour blind.

Male elephants, camels, and even hippos are called bulls.

In Himalayan regions like Tibet and Ladakh, people keep large long-haired cow-like animals called yaks.

