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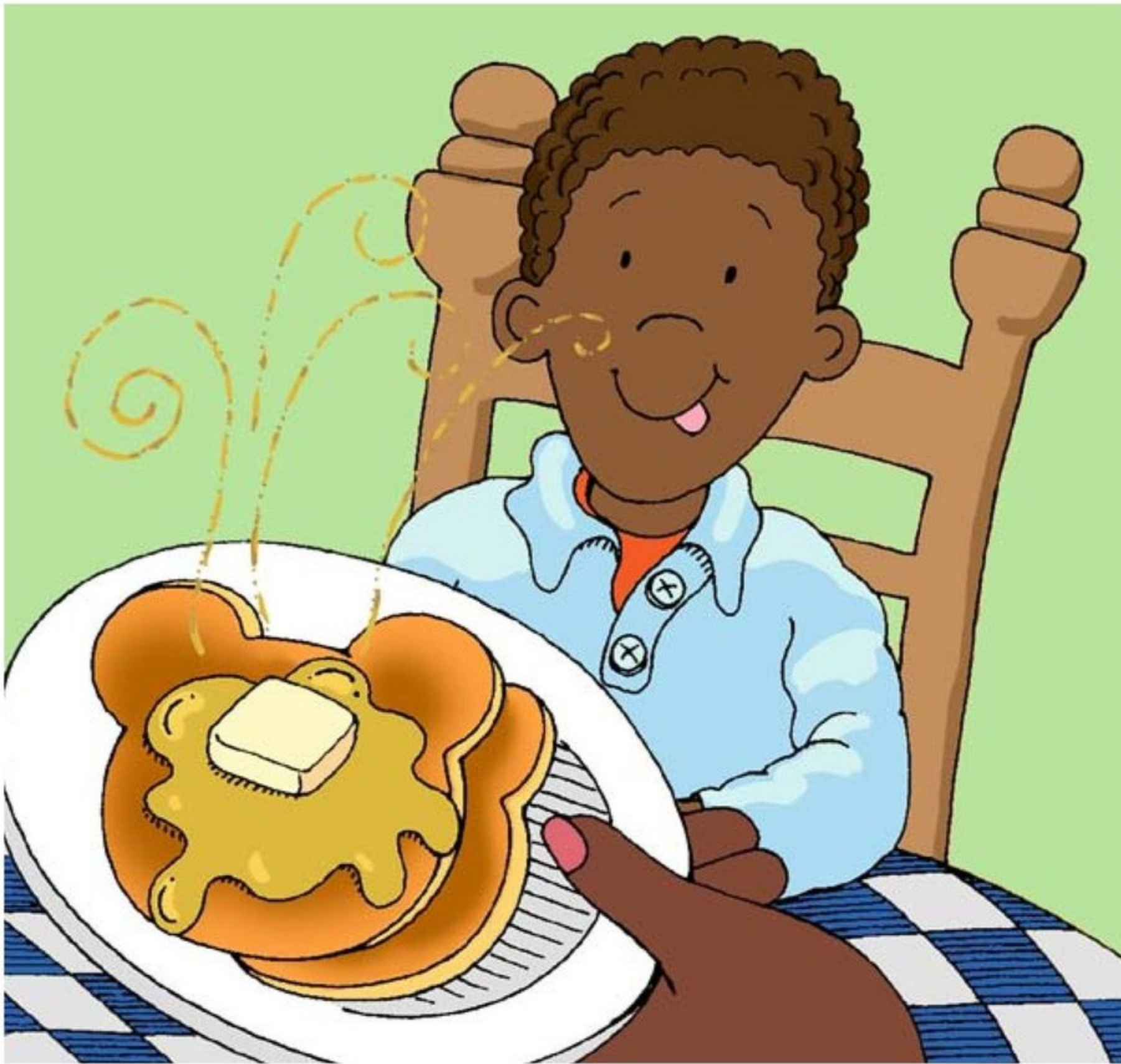
Arthur's Bad-News Day



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Written by Lara Henderson Megard
Illustrated by Darcy Tom

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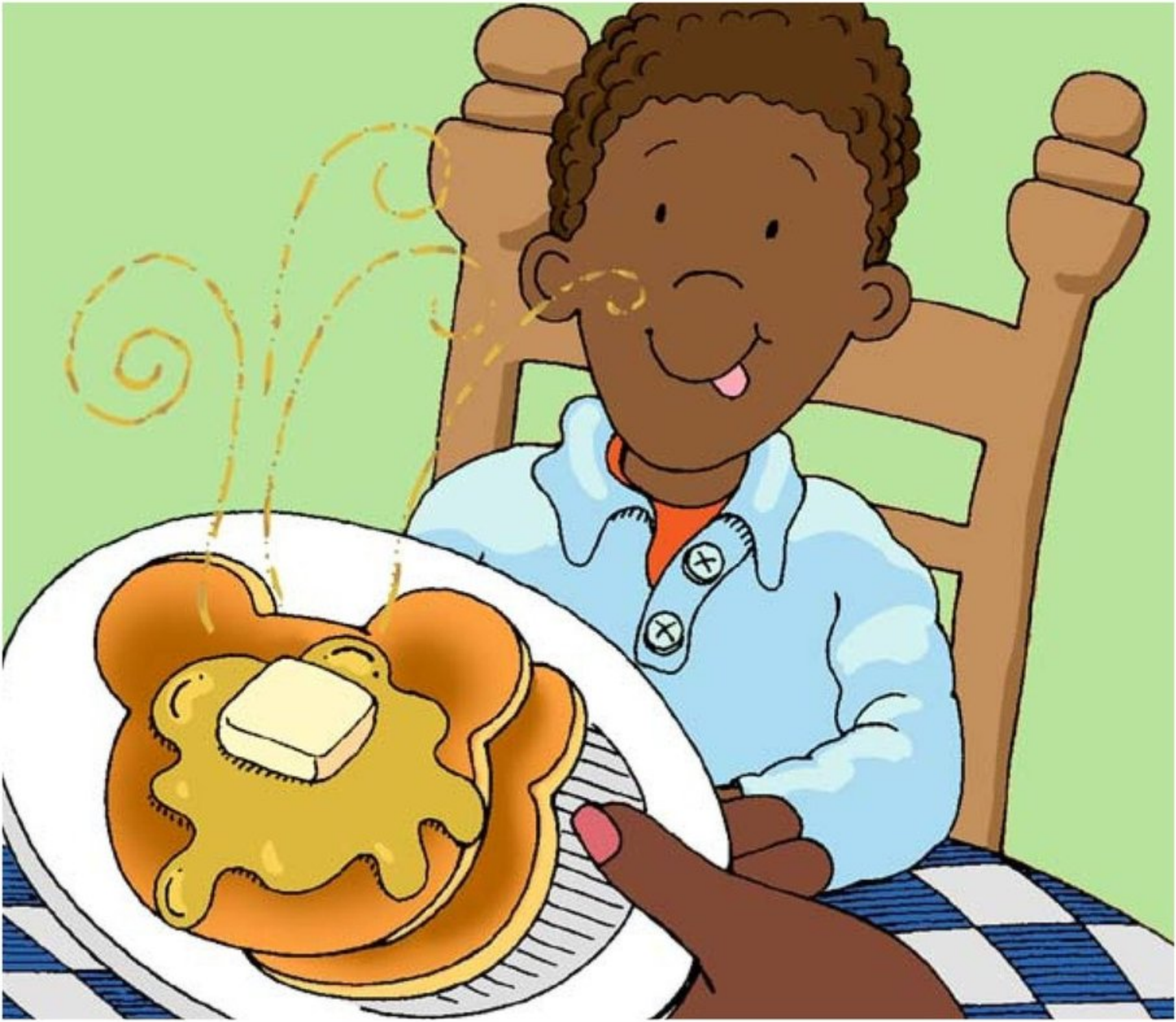
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Hey, take a seat, and I'll tell you a story about some really bad news. My name is Arthur Hankins, and the first eight years of my life were nearly perfect—until my parents told me some disturbing news that would change my life forever. But before I tell you the bad news, let me tell you about a typical perfect day in my life so you can see why I'm so upset about everything changing.

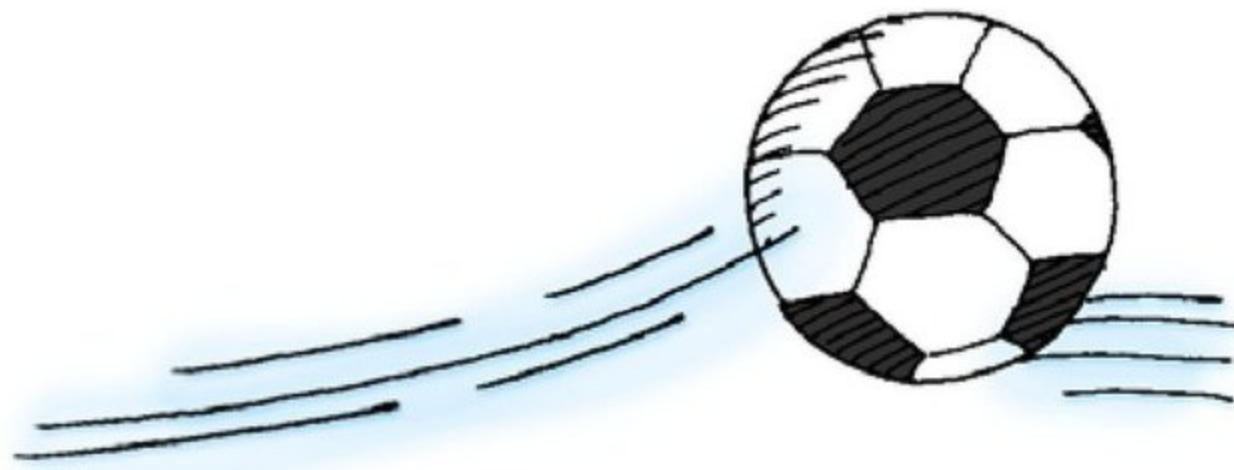
Picture this—every morning my mom wakes me up by tickling the bottoms of my feet, making me giggle and starting my day on a happy note. She always takes time to ask, “What did you dream about?” She laughs at the weird dreams and bites her bottom lip when I tell her about the scary ones. By the time I finish talking, I’m wide awake and ready to start my day. And it only gets better.





The smell of hot maple syrup carries me eagerly downstairs, making my mouth water and my stomach growl. For breakfast, Dad always makes these really cool Mickey Mouse-shaped pancakes, sometimes adding chocolate chips or blueberries. They are so delicious that I could eat them for the rest of my life. Dad, Mom, and I talk about the day ahead while we eat, and Dad always pretends to steal a pancake off my plate. “You don’t look so hungry today, Arthur. Let me help you finish this,” he says.

On the drive to school, I choose the music we listen to, and Mom, Dad, and I sing along really loudly. Sometimes, Mom and Dad will get in a competition to see who can make up the goofiest words to the songs, and at other times, Dad pretends to play many different instruments along with the CD—a trombone, guitar, piano, or flute. Mom usually joins in by playing percussion on the steering wheel. Over the years, I've learned to play my imaginary harmonica very well.



And the day gets even better! After school, Dad and I kick and toss the ball around until it's time for dinner. When it's raining or snowing, we'll still play outside sometimes, although usually we stay in and draw or put together a puzzle. Dad and I once built a three-dimensional puzzle of the Egyptian pyramids. It took us almost a month, but it was awesome!



I usually help Mom and Dad make dinner, and twice a week I get to choose what we make, such as spaghetti or homemade pizza with extra cheese. Then we eat and tell stories about our day. I never realize how interesting my day really was until I'm telling Mom and Dad about it. I'm a famous geologist telling them about the rocks I found during recess, or I'm a world-renowned artist describing my use of color in art class. After dinner, Mom never forgets about my favorite dessert—a giant chocolate chip cookie with milk, which I drink from a special glass I got when we visited Disneyland. It reminds me of the best vacation ever!



After I finish my homework, we play board games, watch a movie, or do whatever I feel like until it's time for bed. I usually read myself to sleep, although sometimes Mom and Dad snuggle up with me and read to me, which always makes me have good dreams that I can tell Mom about the next morning.

Well, it's about time I tell you about the bad news. It's horrible. My perfect life will never be the same. Take my word for it, you don't ever, ever want this happening to you.



Okay, here goes: a few months ago, my parents told me that soon I'm going to have a little sister. Ugh! Now can you see why I'm so upset? This is going to ruin everything!

For eight years, I have been the center of attention. I haven't had to share my parents with anybody, not even a pet, and we've always had so much fun together. I don't understand why they want to change things. One more person will make our house too crowded, and I know I'm not going to like it.



My friend Jeff got a baby sister last year. His dad and mom never have time to play with him. They are always busy holding and playing with the baby and changing her smelly diapers. Yuck! That is so gross. He said they don't ever make him help with the diapers, but they do ask him to help out more around the house and to get them things when they are busy with the baby. He says he got used to it, but I don't think I'll ever get used to having to do more work. I mean, what is she going to have to do?



I haven't even told you the worst, most outrageous part of the story. I will have to share my bedroom with the baby. Yep, you heard me right. No more peace and quiet when I read at night or while I play on weekends, and Mom will probably tickle *her* feet in the morning instead of mine. I know Mom won't have time to listen to my dreams anymore. My baby sister had better not even think about using my Disneyland glass. No way.

I told Mom, “I don’t want a baby sister—I’m happy with the way things are,” but that didn’t seem to matter. “You’ll love her, honey, and you’ll get used to sharing your room,” Mom told me. “You might even like the company.” But I doubt it. Mom and Dad started moving my furniture around to make room for her crib, and I had to put some of my toys under my bed to make room for her diapers and lotions and all this other baby stuff. It doesn’t even look like my room anymore.





Today, Mom and Dad are coming home from the hospital with my new sister, and I've decided to tell them they should just take her back. I don't want to share my mom and dad, to say nothing of sharing my room. Even Grandma can't cheer me up. She's waiting with me while Dad goes to pick up Mom and the baby from the hospital. I had cold cereal for breakfast this morning, and when Dad rushed out, he didn't even say goodbye. I guess having a baby sister makes me invisible.

Well, here they are. Dad is carrying a bundle of pink blankets. Is the baby inside there? Could she be so tiny?

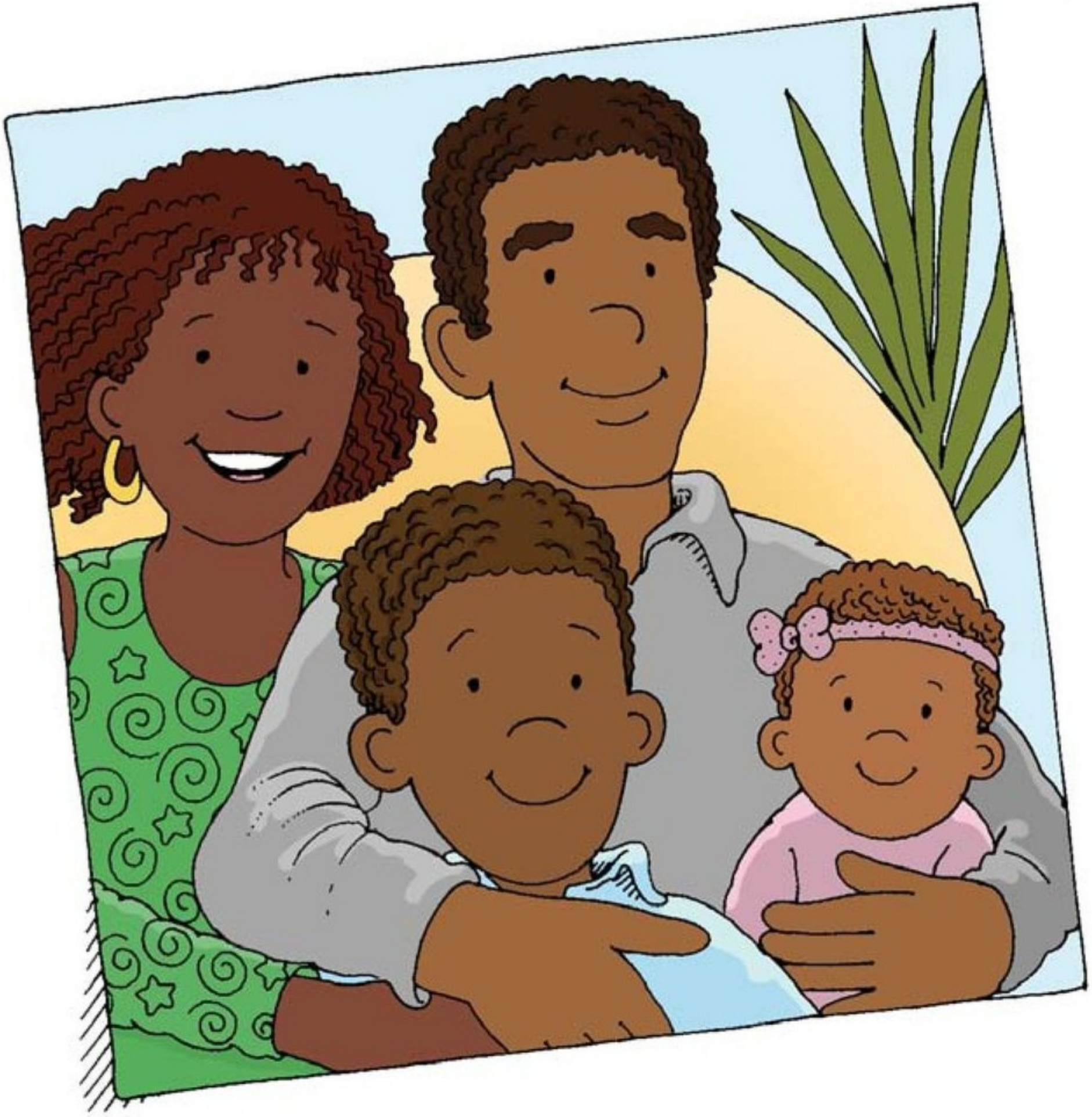


Mom is right behind Dad, and she looks tired but she won't stop smiling, like the time she got up really early on my birthday to put together my bike as a surprise.

Okay, now Grandma is rushing outside. She hugs Mom and then pokes her head inside the pink blankets. "Oh, she's beautiful!" Grandma tells Dad. I'm not going out there. I'm going to sit right here. The baby's getting enough attention without getting mine, too.



Suddenly, Mom is hugging me tight and kissing the top of my head, and before I know it, Dad is putting the baby in my lap. And then the most amazing thing happens. My baby sister reaches out and grabs my finger—and she won't let go! I think she realizes that I'm her big brother, and she likes me already.



Hey, maybe having a little sister won't be so bad. She is kind of cute. I guess we can keep her. Besides, I'm beginning to realize that Mom and Dad have enough love to share with both me and my sister.



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Level Q Leveled Book
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