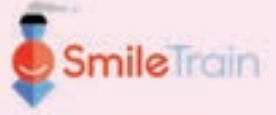


Rehan's Lucky Charm





This book belongs to

.....



What are cleft lips and palates?

Some babies are born with a cleft—a gap in their lip and/or the roof of their mouth (palate). In India, 35,000+ children are born with a cleft every year.

How do clefts affect children?

Without treatment, children with clefts may have problems in eating, breathing, speaking, and hearing. Sometimes other children tease them, and they often live in isolation.

Can it be treated?

Yes! With surgery and associated care, clefts can be treated and children can live healthy and full lives.

For free cleft treatment, please call:
1800 103 8301

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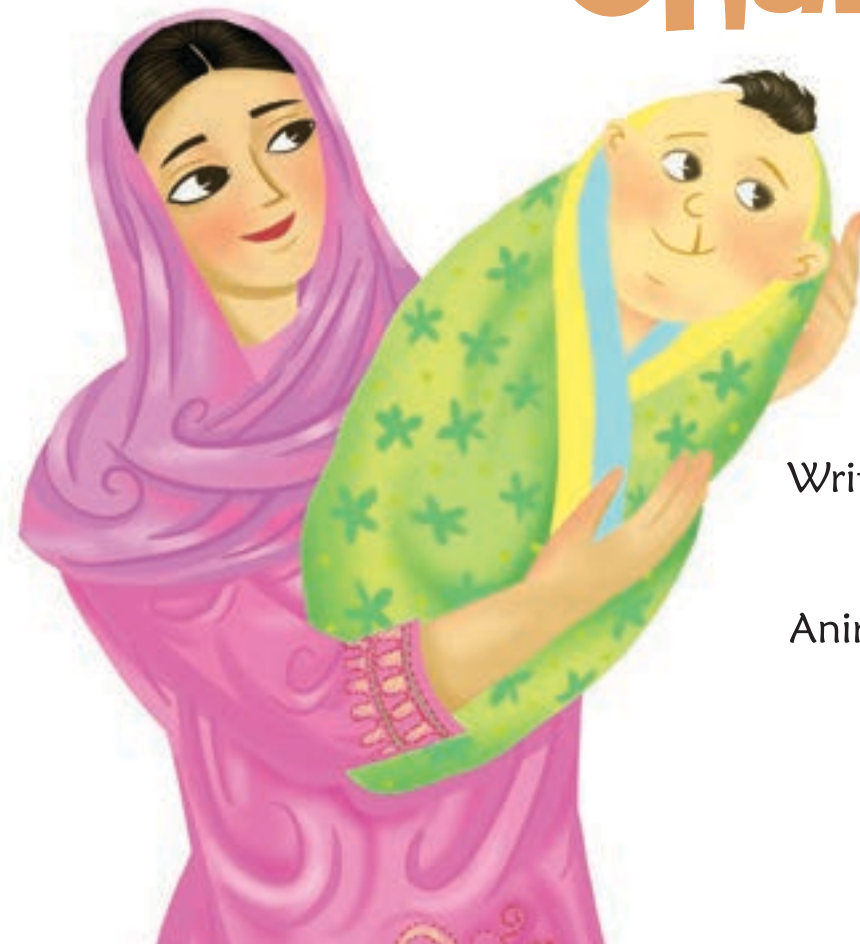
Illustrations by Aniruddha and Charulata

Design & Layout by Vikram Kumar

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Rehan's Lucky Charm



Written by Mamta Nainy

Illustrated by
Aniruddha and Charulata



It was a day unlike any other.

During English class, Rehan's heart raced as he stared at his notebook—20/20 circled in red.

A first for him!

“Lucky day, huh?” Mini Miss said, patting his back.

“It's my baby sister, Miss!”
Rehan beamed. “She was born this morning. She's my lucky charm!”

At lunchtime, Rehan opened his tiffin.

“Parathas and mango pickle!” he grinned.

“My favourite!”

“Lucky you!” said his friend Parth, poking at his plain sandwich.

“It’s because of my baby sister,” Rehan said, popping a piece into his mouth.

“She’s my lucky charm!”



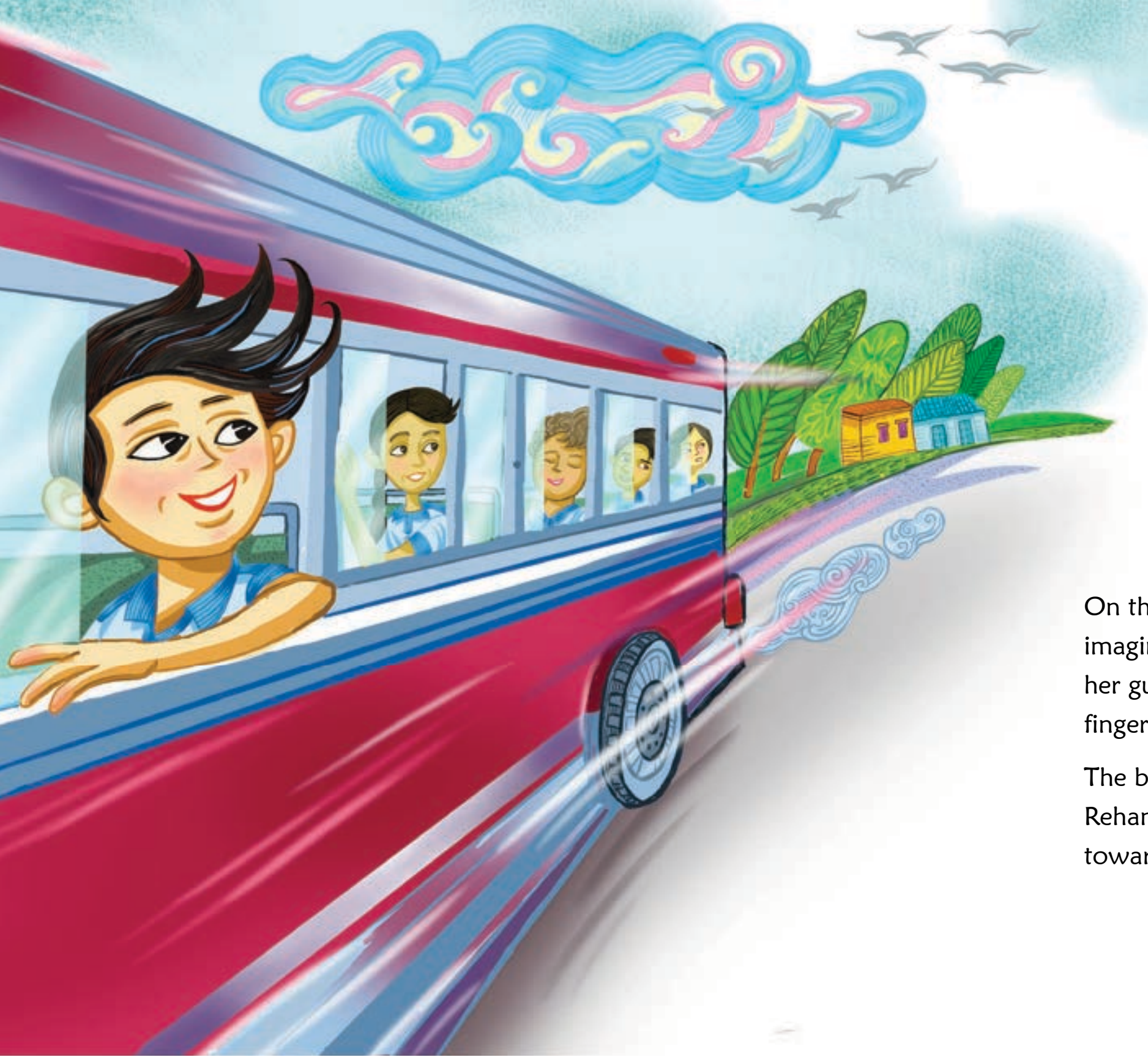
After school, Rehan climbed onto the bus.

His favourite seat by the window was empty. That never happened.

He slid in quickly, feeling the breeze on his face as the bus moved.

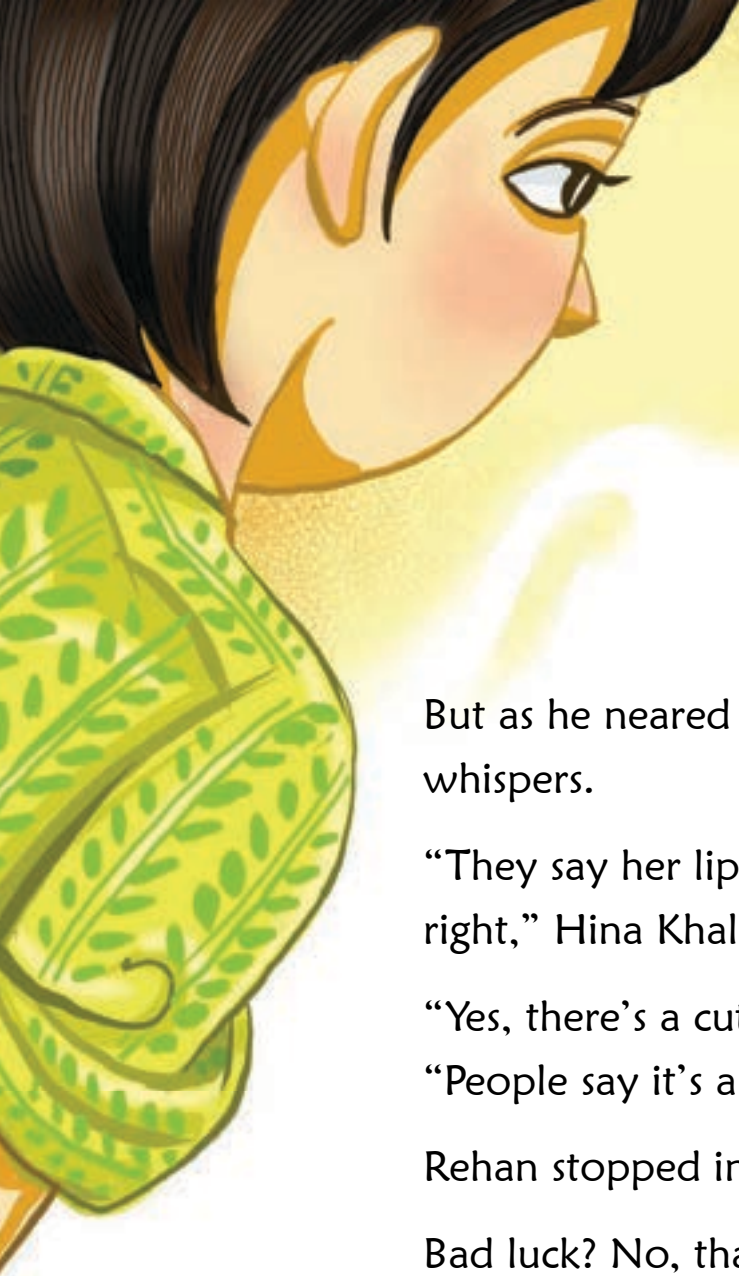
“This is my luckiest day ever!” he whispered.





On the way home, Rehan imagined his sister's baby smell, her gummy smile and her tiny fingers curling around his.

The bus screeched to a stop. Rehan jumped off and raced toward his house.



But as he neared home, he heard whispers.

“They say her lip is . . . not quite right,” Hina Khala murmured.

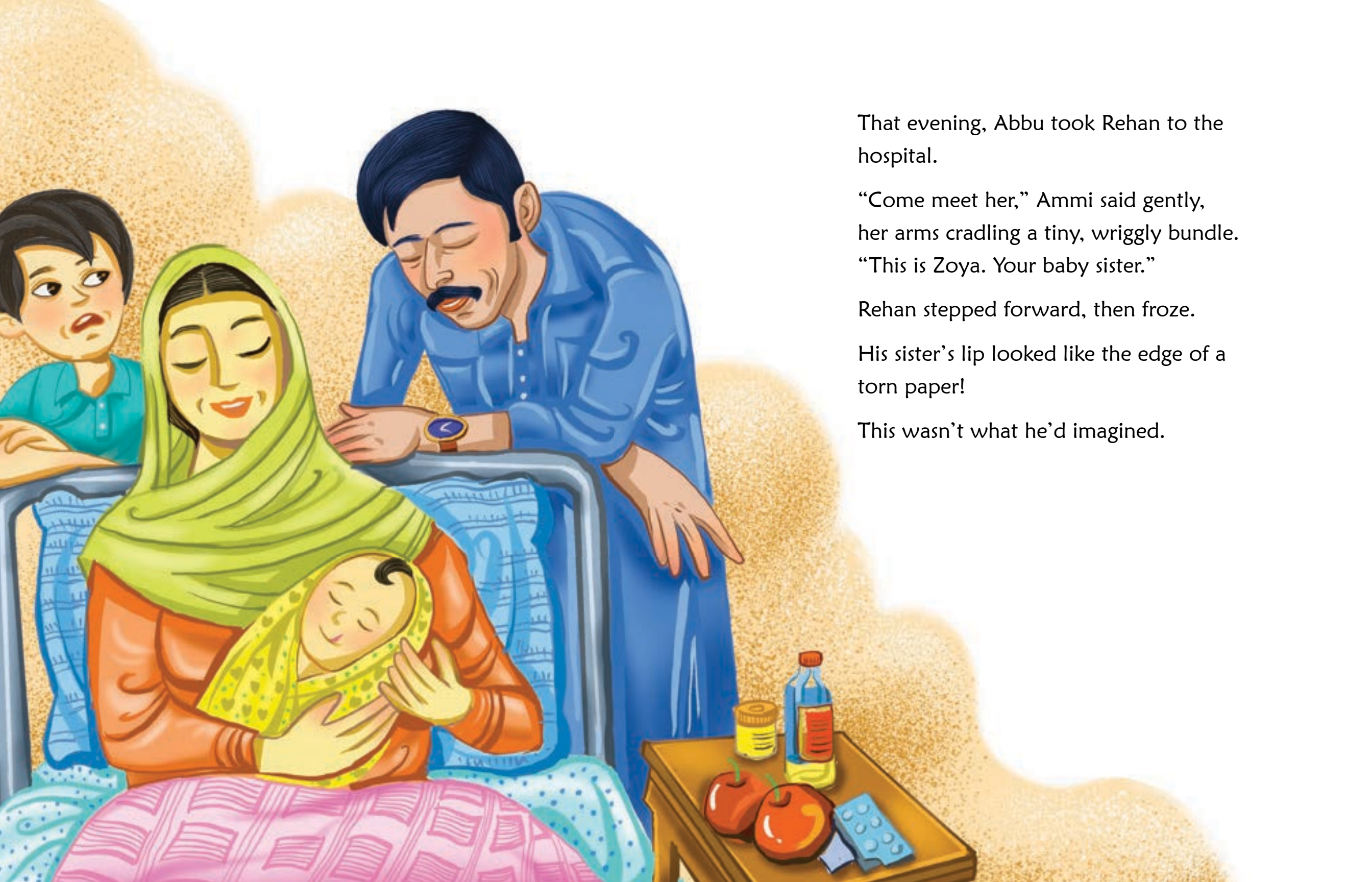
“Yes, there’s a cut,” Saba Aapi added.

“People say it’s a sign of bad luck.”

Rehan stopped in his tracks.

Bad luck? No, that couldn’t be. His sister was his lucky charm. Wasn’t she?





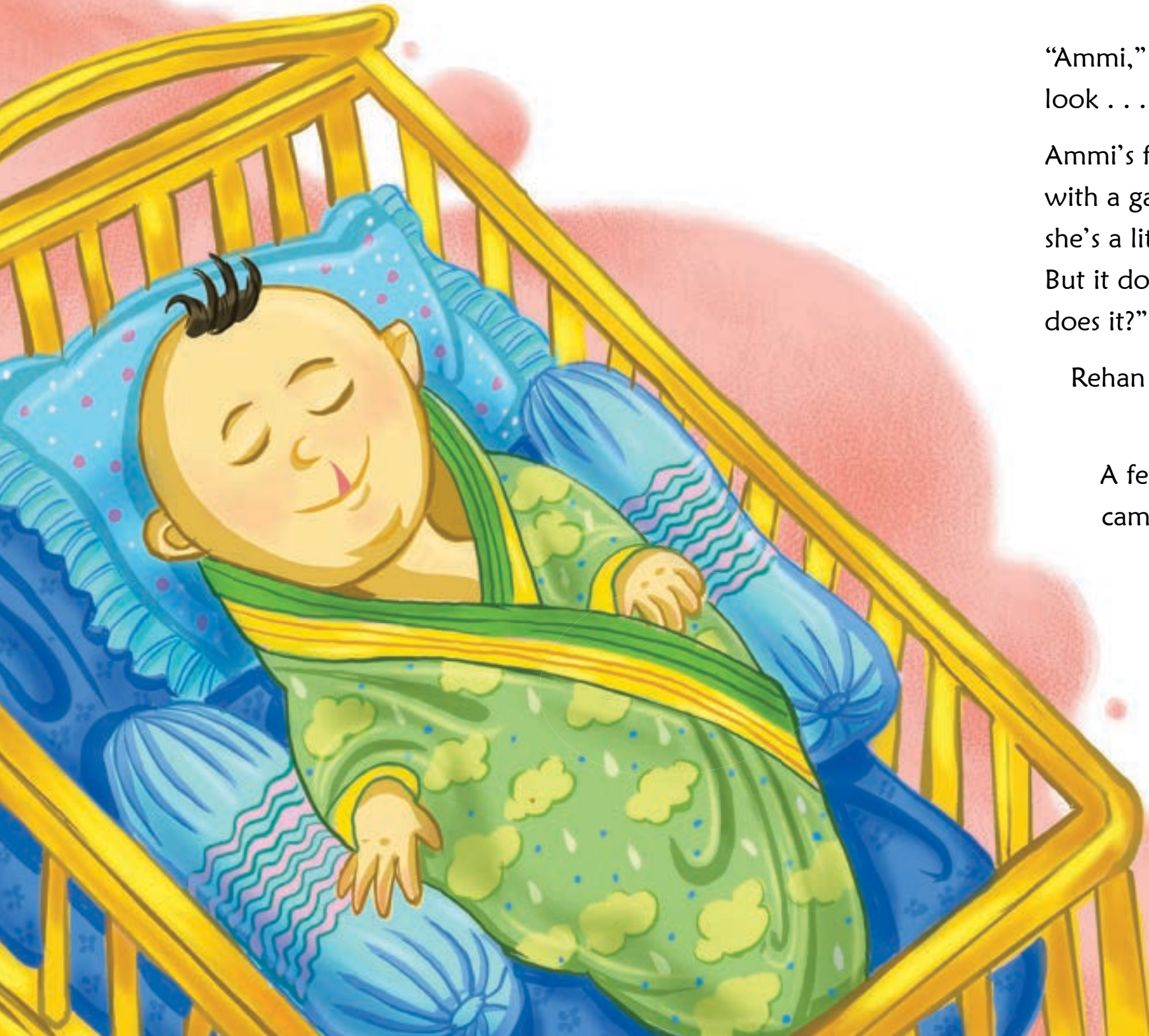
That evening, Abbu took Rehan to the hospital.

“Come meet her,” Ammi said gently, her arms cradling a tiny, wriggly bundle. “This is Zoya. Your baby sister.”

Rehan stepped forward, then froze.

His sister’s lip looked like the edge of a torn paper!

This wasn’t what he’d imagined.



“Ammi,” Rehan whispered, “why does she look . . . like that?”

Ammi’s face softened. “Some babies are born with a gap in their lip. It’s called a cleft. When she’s a little older, a surgery will heal her cleft. But it doesn’t stop her from being beautiful, does it?”

Rehan didn’t answer. He just looked away.

A few days later, Ammi and the baby came home.

But Rehan wished they could send the baby back.

His sister didn’t feel lucky anymore.

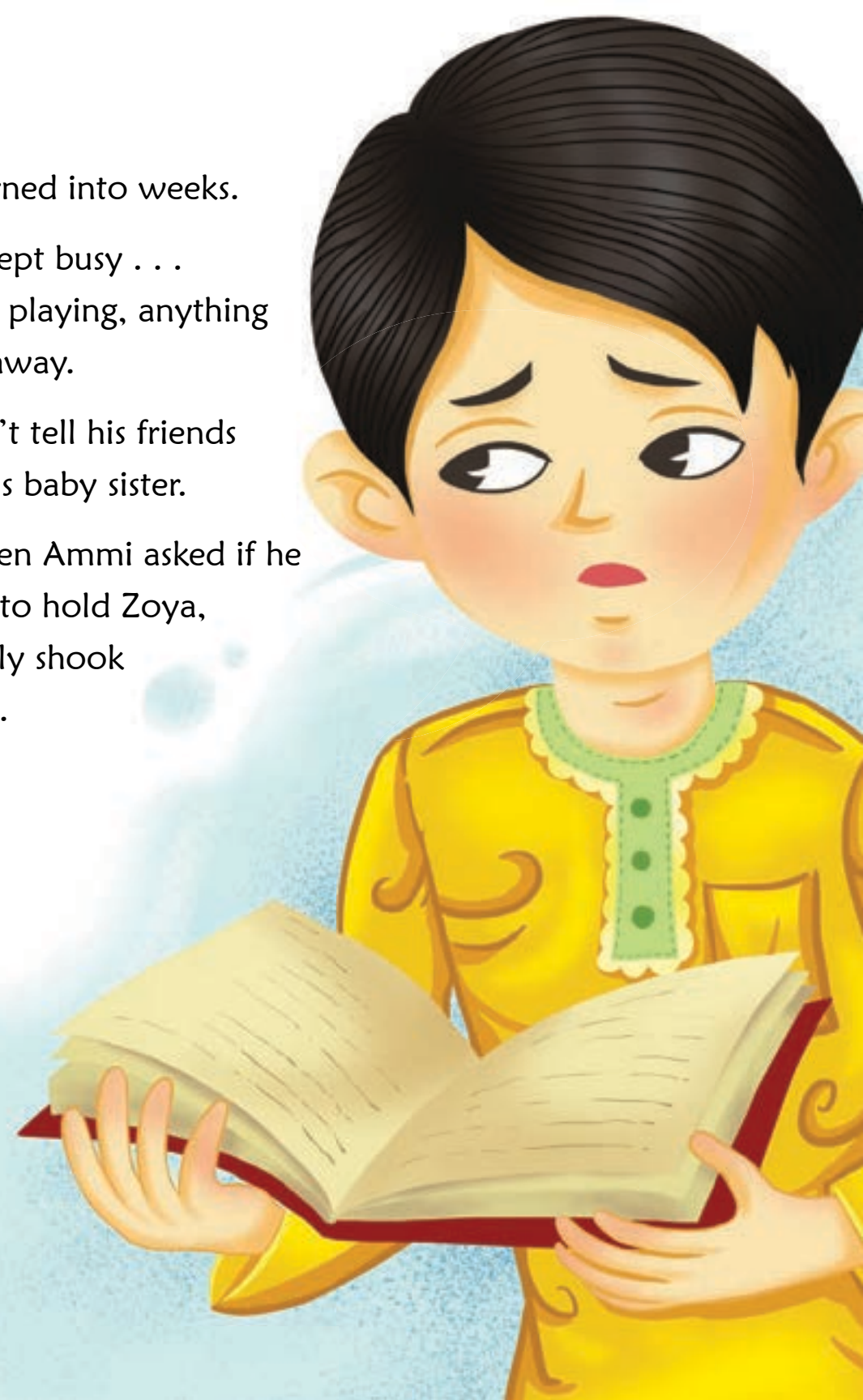


Days turned into weeks.

Rehan kept busy . . .
reading, playing, anything
to stay away.

He didn't tell his friends
about his baby sister.

And when Ammi asked if he
wanted to hold Zoya,
he quietly shook
his head.



One evening, Rehan sat building a block tower.
He carefully placed the last block, holding his breath.
CRASH! It toppled over!
Rehan sighed, his shoulders slumping . . .
Until a tiny sound made him look up.
His sister Zoya was watching him.
She let out a soft coo, her arms wiggling
like little waves.



“You think that’s funny?” he asked.

She cooed again, her
eyes shining.

For the first time in days,
Rehan felt a flicker
of warmth towards
his sister.





A storm raged outside one night.

Rehan pulled his blanket tight.

From her crib, Zoya let out a tiny whimper.

He got up slowly, stood by her side and
whispered, “It’s okay. I’m here.”

Zoya quieted. He stayed beside her,
just listening to her soft breaths.

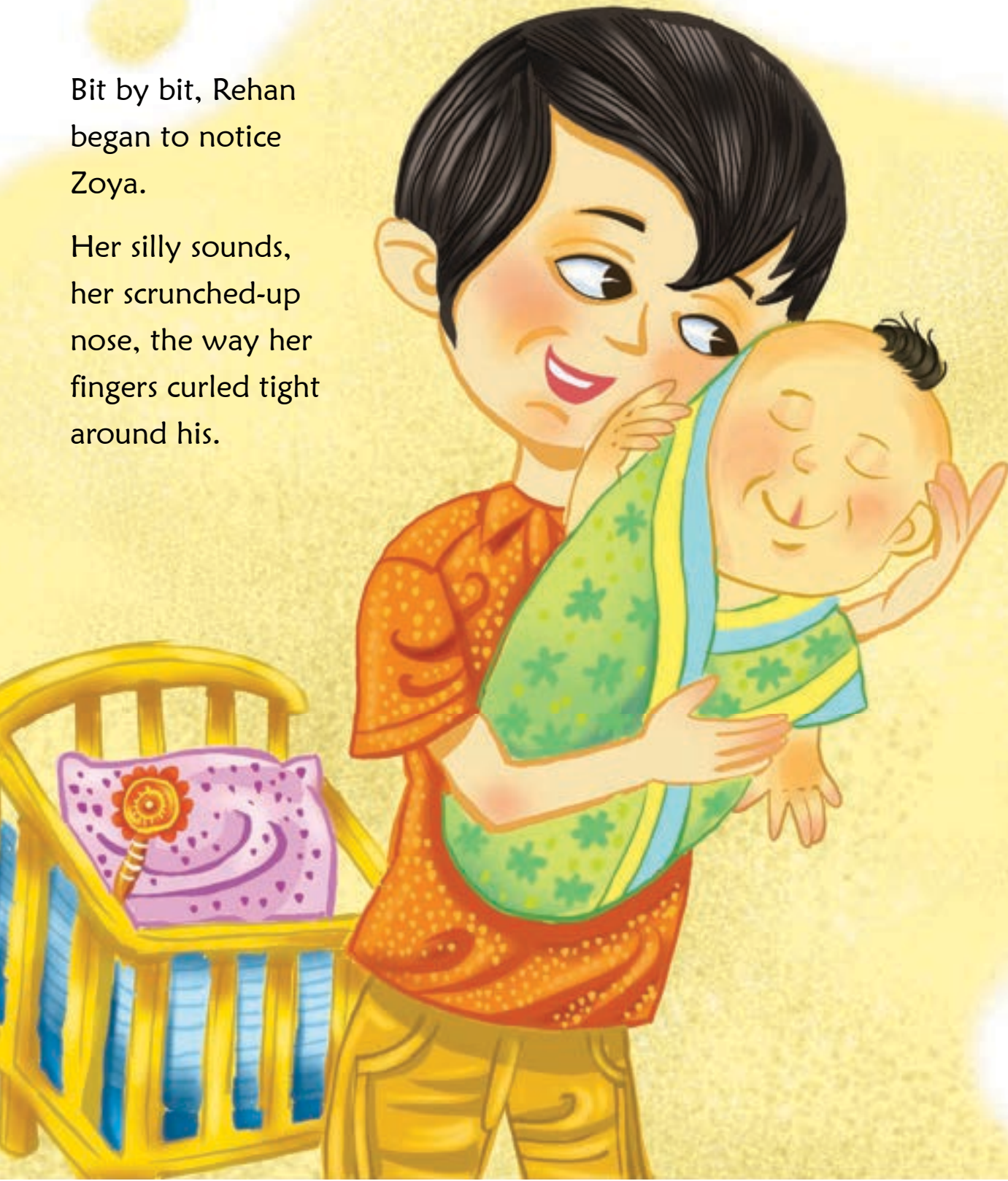
And then, one afternoon, Rehan
trudged home after a fight with his
best friend.

Zoya gurgled and made a funny face.

Rehan couldn’t help it—he
laughed.

Bit by bit, Rehan began to notice Zoya.

Her silly sounds, her scrunched-up nose, the way her fingers curled tight around his.



The more Rehan watched Zoya, the more he realized that his sister didn't bring him good things. She was the good thing!

It was a day unlike any other.

Rehan woke to Zoya's gurgles.

She looked up at him, her smile as wide as the sky.

Rehan scooped her into his arms.

"You're not what I imagined," he whispered.
"YOU'RE EVEN BETTER."

Five Myths About Clefts

(That Aren't True!)

Myth 1: Clefts are caused by parents.

Truth: No one knows exactly why clefts happen. Most experts agree that they could be a result of many things. There could be a genetic component as well as environmental factors.

Myth 2: Clefts are only about looks.

Truth: A cleft can make it hard to eat, speak, breathe, or hear. It's more than just how someone looks.

Myth 3: Clefts are contagious.

Truth: You can't 'catch' a cleft. Children with clefts can play and go to school like everyone else!

Myth 4: Clefts are caused by magic or curses.

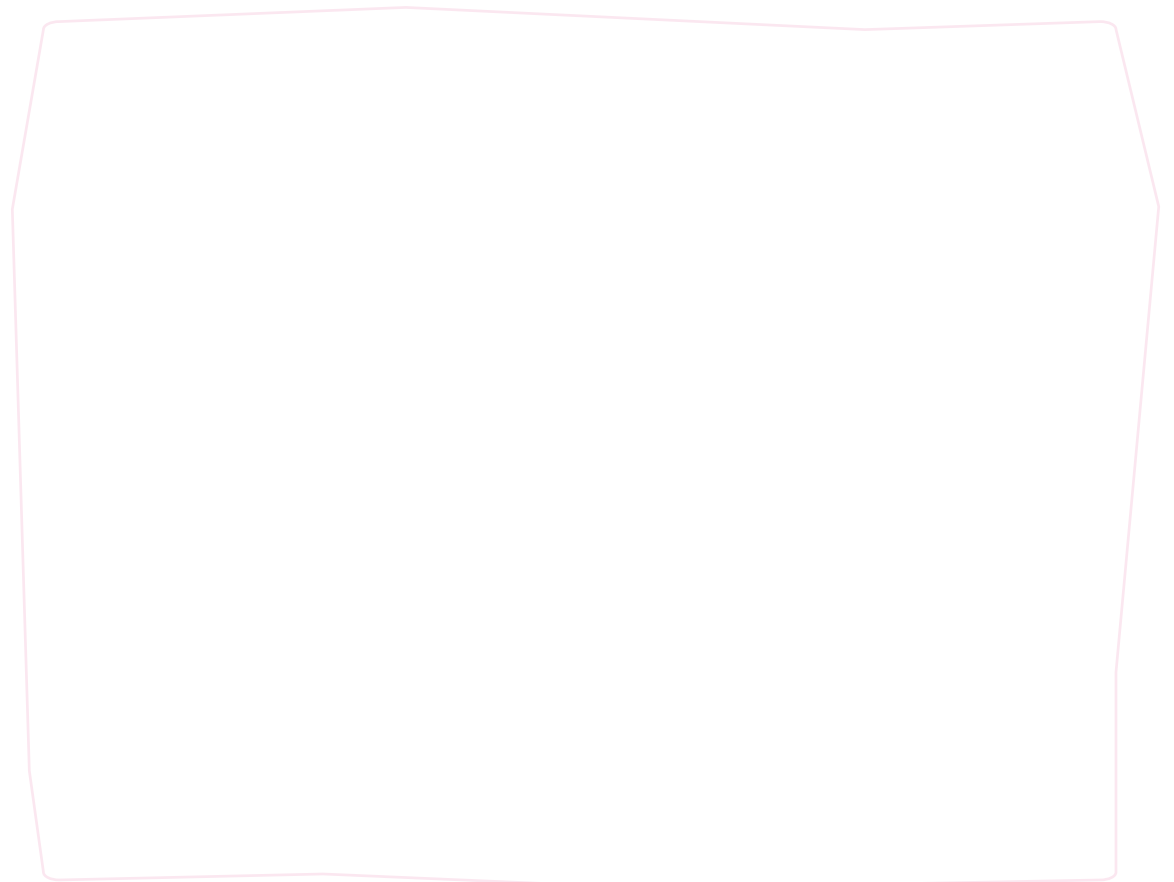
Truth: Clefts are not a curse. Doctors can treat them and help is available!

Myth 5: Only people get clefts.

Truth: Some animals, like puppies and kittens, can also be born with clefts.

Emotions Map

Rehan feels many different emotions in the story—excited, confused, sad and then, full of love. Can you think of a time you felt like that? Draw faces to show those feelings . . . your excited face, your confused face, your sad face and your happy face. You can also add little speech bubbles or thoughts if you'd like!



Notes for Teachers and Parents

How to Explain a Cleft Lip and Cleft Palate to Children

1. **Start with Simple Terms:** Use easy language to explain a cleft lip and palate. For example: “Some babies are born with a cleft lip and/or a cleft palate. A cleft is a gap in the upper lip and/or the roof of the mouth.”
2. **Use Visual Aids:** Show pictures and diagrams of different types of clefts to help illustrate what you’re explaining.
3. **Explain the Challenges:** Describe the challenges children with clefts might face, such as difficulty eating, breathing, and speaking.
4. **Explain Surgery:** Describe how doctors can heal clefts with surgery. For example: “A cleft can be treated with surgery, which helps a person speak and eat more easily.”
5. **Emphasize Differences:** Help children understand everyone is unique. For example: “Some people wear glasses, some are tall, and some have clefts, but we are all special in our own ways!”
6. **Encourage Kindness:** Teach students to be supportive. For example: “If someone with a cleft has trouble speaking or eating, be patient and kind.”
7. **Interactive Discussion:** Let children ask questions such as, “Will the gap come back?” or “How do they treat it?” and answer them with reassurance.
8. **Promote Inclusivity:** Show that having a cleft doesn’t stop people from doing different activities. For example: “People with clefts can play, learn, and have fun just like everyone else!”
9. **Storytelling:** Inspire confidence by sharing stories of successful people with clefts or other differences.

Encourage kindness, respect, and understanding toward everyone, regardless of appearance.

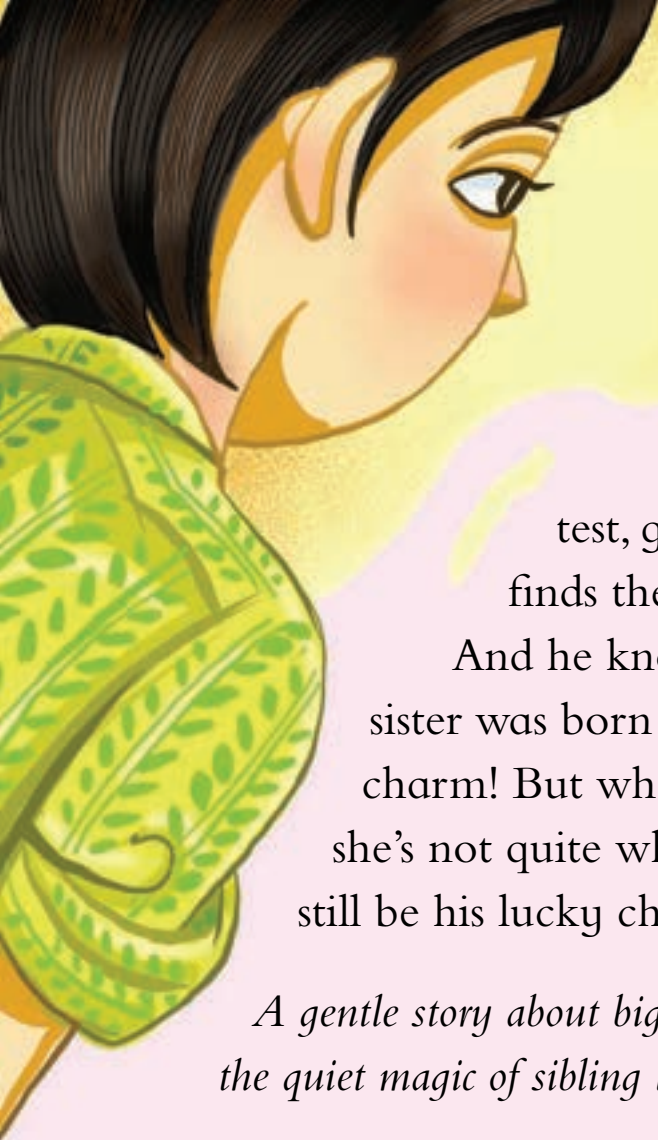
Mamta Nainy is a writer based in New Delhi. She has authored over thirty-five books for children, many of which have gone on to win national and international awards, including the Valley of Words Awards 2022, FICCI Publishing Awards 2022, Publishing Next Award 2022, The Hindu Young World-Goodbooks Award 2019 and Peek-a-Book Children’s Choice Award 2019. Mamta is inspired by the unfettered imagination of children and is passionate about stories that are inclusive and empowering.

An MFA from Delhi School of Art, **Aniruddha Mukherjee** doodles non-stop, photographs riversides and can usually be spotted next to a pile of children’s books. He has illustrated a number of books for children. **Charulata Mukherjee** is an artist based in New Delhi. She loves illustrating for children, especially because she believes that children can see in her art what most adults can’t.



About Smile Train

Smile Train is the largest cleft charity in the world. Since 2000, they have been helping doctors and hospitals in India provide free cleft treatment to children in need. Smile Train works with more than 120 hospitals and has supported 750,000+ surgeries across India, helping children live healthy and full lives.



It's the day Rehan scores his first perfect test, gets his favourite lunch and finds the best seat on the school bus. And he knows exactly why—his baby sister was born that morning. She's his lucky charm! But when Rehan finally meets her, she's not quite what he imagined. Can she still be his lucky charm?

A gentle story about big feelings, new beginnings, and the quiet magic of sibling love.