

# Sara

## SARA SAVES HER FRIEND



## **Sara Saves Her Friend**

This is the second of a series of comic books produced by UNICEF in Eastern and Southern Africa on the adventures of Sara, an adolescent girl who is gradually emerging as a role model for girls' empowerment in Africa.

The story addresses the issues of HIV/AIDS, sexual harassment and risky behaviour. It tells how Sara, with the help of her friend, Juma, and her pet monkey, Zingo, uses her critical thinking and decision making Life Skills to rescue her school friend, Amina, from being sexually abused by truck drivers. **Sara Saves Her Friend** is full of fun and adventure but at its heart lie real life problems faced by adolescent girls in Africa today. The story opens the door to community discussion on solutions to such problems.

This comic book is a part of a package of communication materials, including an animated film/video, a poster and users' guide (included at the back of this book). Other materials on different themes are also under development.

**Sara Saves Her Friend** is the product of a large team of artists, writers and researchers from Eastern and Southern Africa who have worked together since October 1994, evolving the characters, setting and stories of the Sara series through active reflection with thousands of villagers and peri-urban dwellers in 11 countries from Eritrea to South Africa. (See credits inside back cover.)

**Sara Saves Her Friend** was produced by the Communication Section, UNICEF-ESARO, with financial support from the Government of Norway and UNICEF Committees in The Netherlands, USA, UK, Germany and Canada and in collaboration with UNICEF country offices in Eastern and Southern Africa.

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United Nations Children's Fund

A wide, dirt road in a peri-urban area of Africa. There are kiosks, a few small shops and a bar. Sara and her friend, Amina, followed by Sara's pet monkey, Zingo, walk down the road from school.





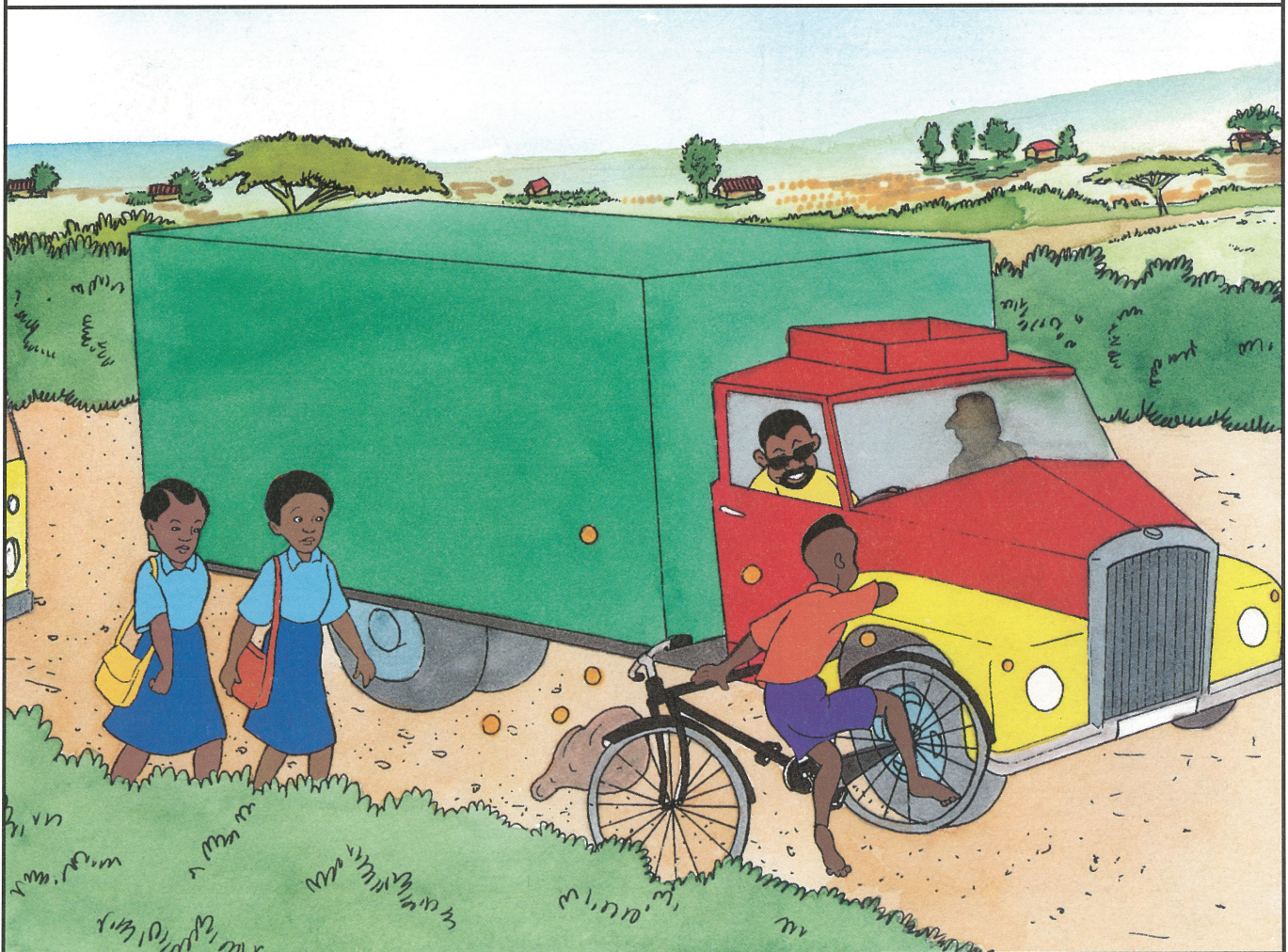




A convoy of trucks speeds up behind Sara and Amina. A boy on a bicycle approaches.

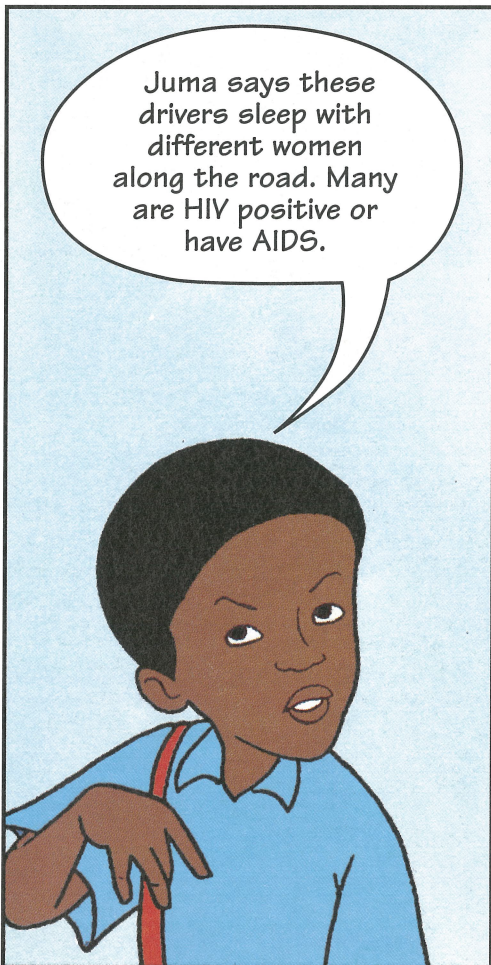


The trucks slow down and almost collide. The boy on the bicycle is nearly run over.





Awful drivers!



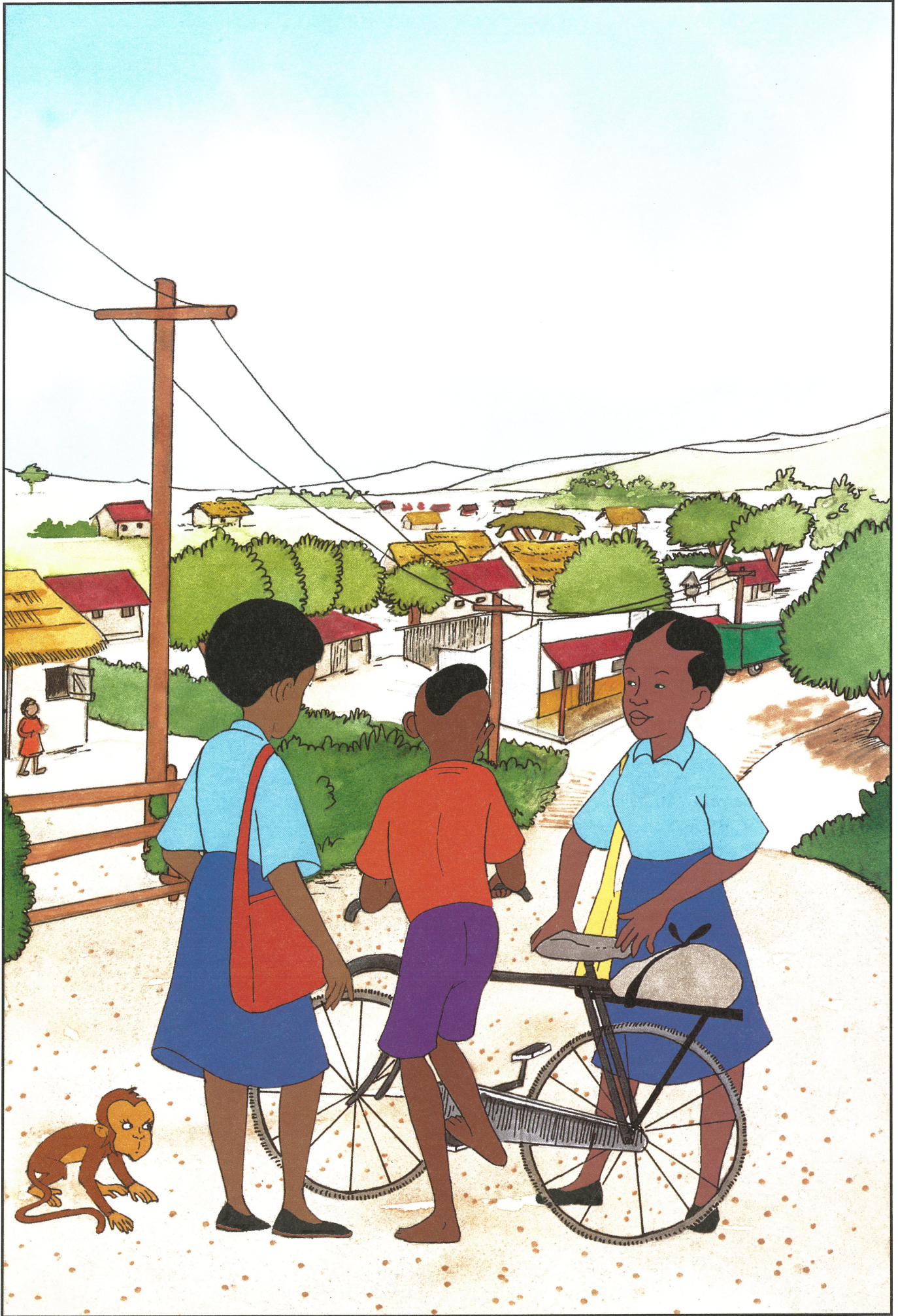
Juma says these drivers sleep with different women along the road. Many are HIV positive or have AIDS.



Sara, you mean you and Juma talk of such things?

Why not? He's a good friend.

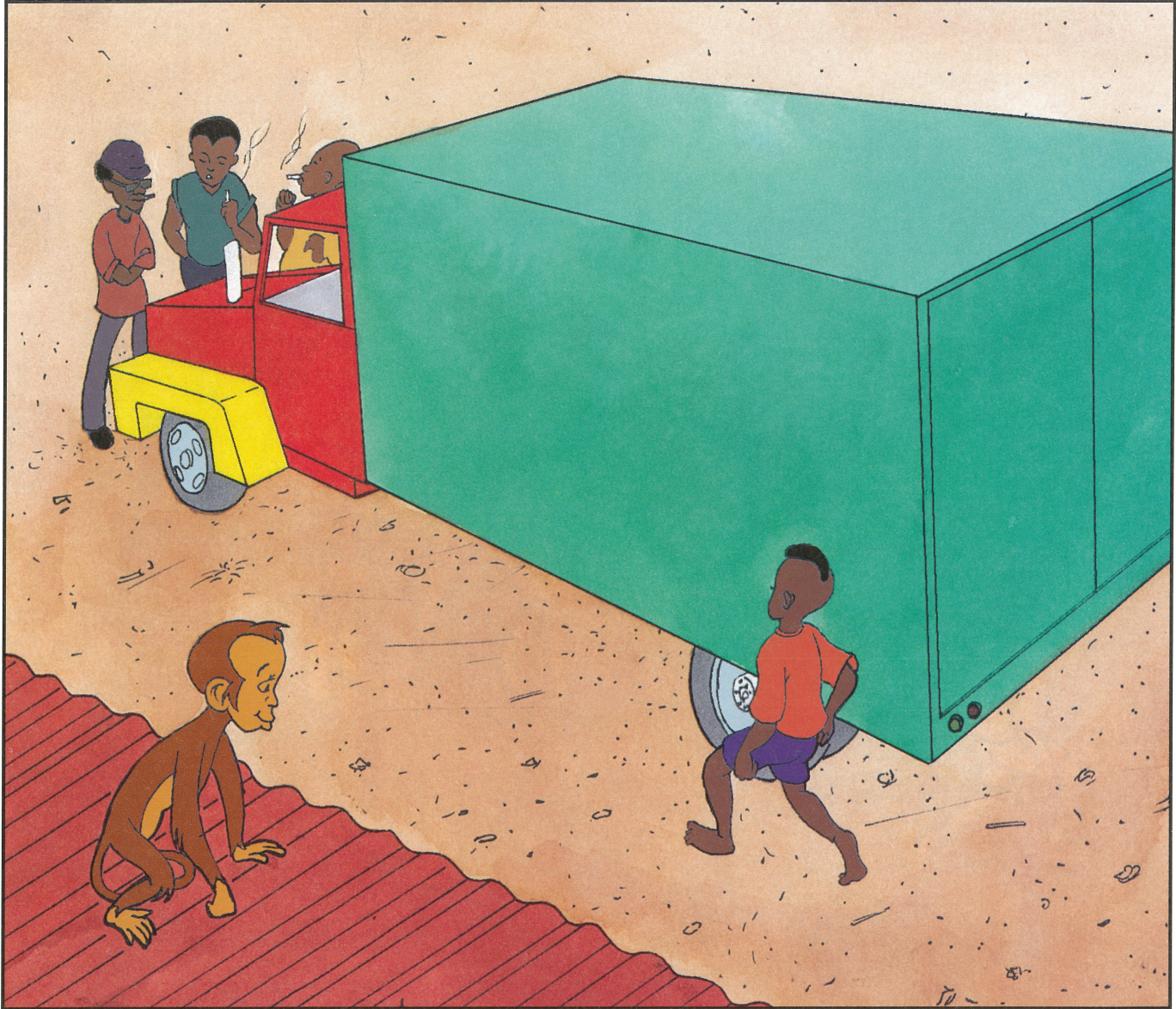




Sara and Amina reach the bar where Amina's sister, Grace, works as a barmaid. The truck drivers enter the bar.



Zingo climbs up on the roof of the bar. She watches as the boy who was knocked off his bicycle creeps around one of the trucks.



The boy presses a large nail against one of the truck's tyre valves. The air escapes and the wheel sinks.



The turnboys hear the sound and come running, chasing the boy away. He runs off leaving the nail on the ground.



The girls enter the bar. The inside of the bar is dark, smoky and grimy. The truck drivers leer when they see Sara and Amina. They pass them quickly and go to Grace.





Amina pretends to be brave.



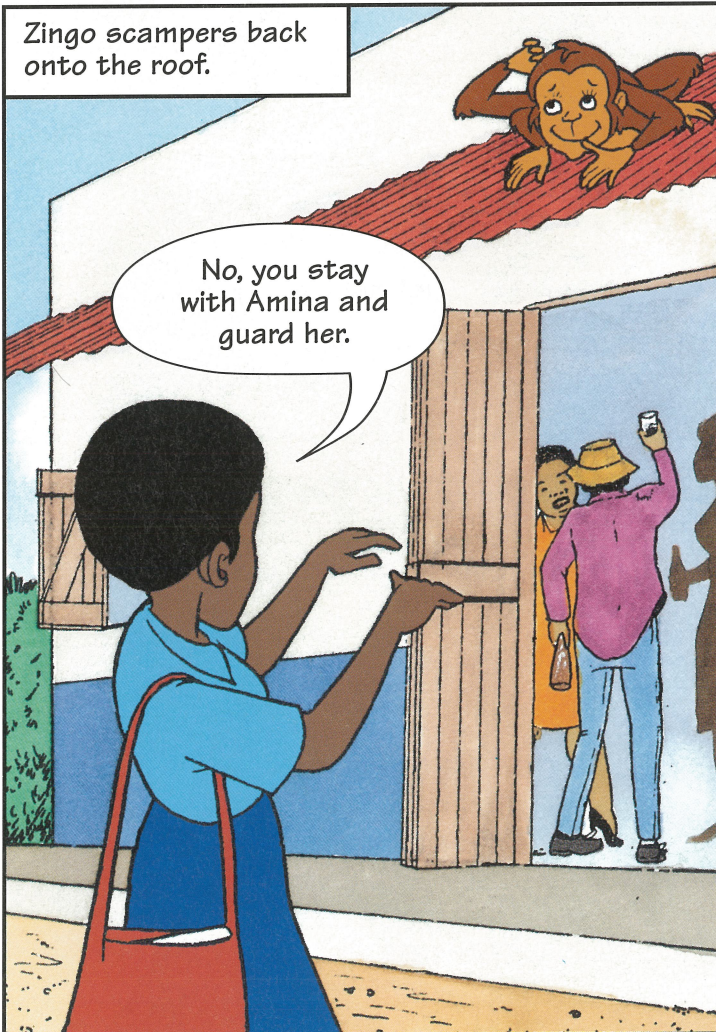
As Sara starts to leave...



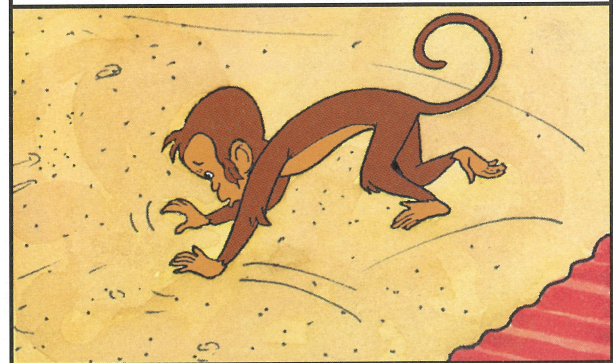
Outside the door, Sara finds Zingo playing with the nail and a truck tyre valve.



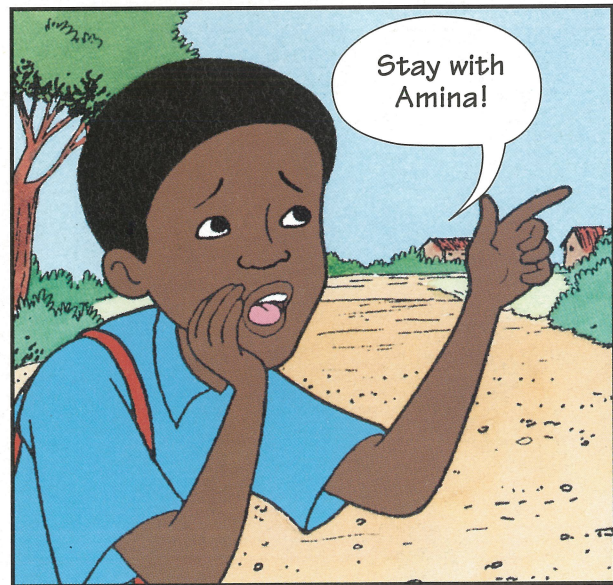
Zingo scampers back onto the roof.



Zingo tries to follow Sara.



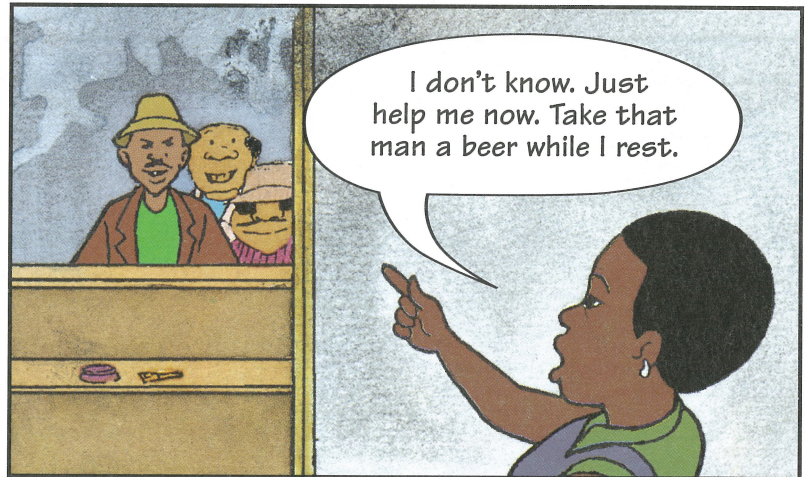
Stay with Amina!



Amongst the beer crates, Grace slouches on a stool, leaning against the wall. She is exhausted.

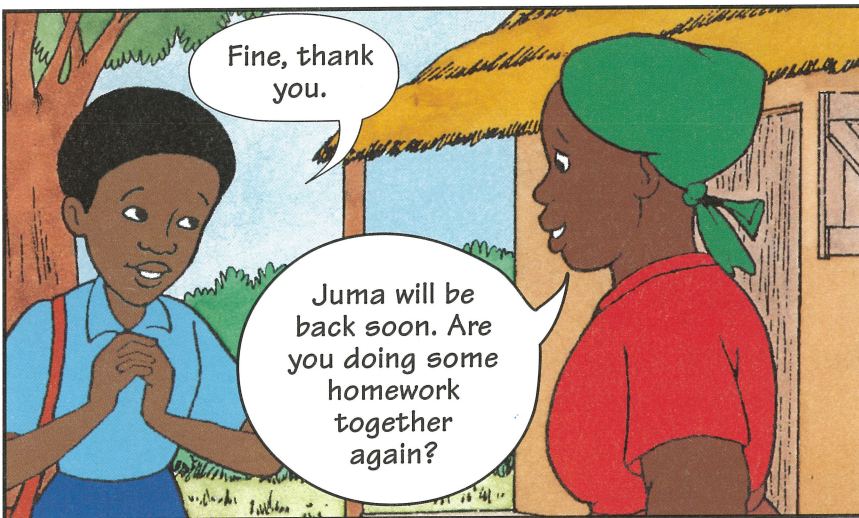


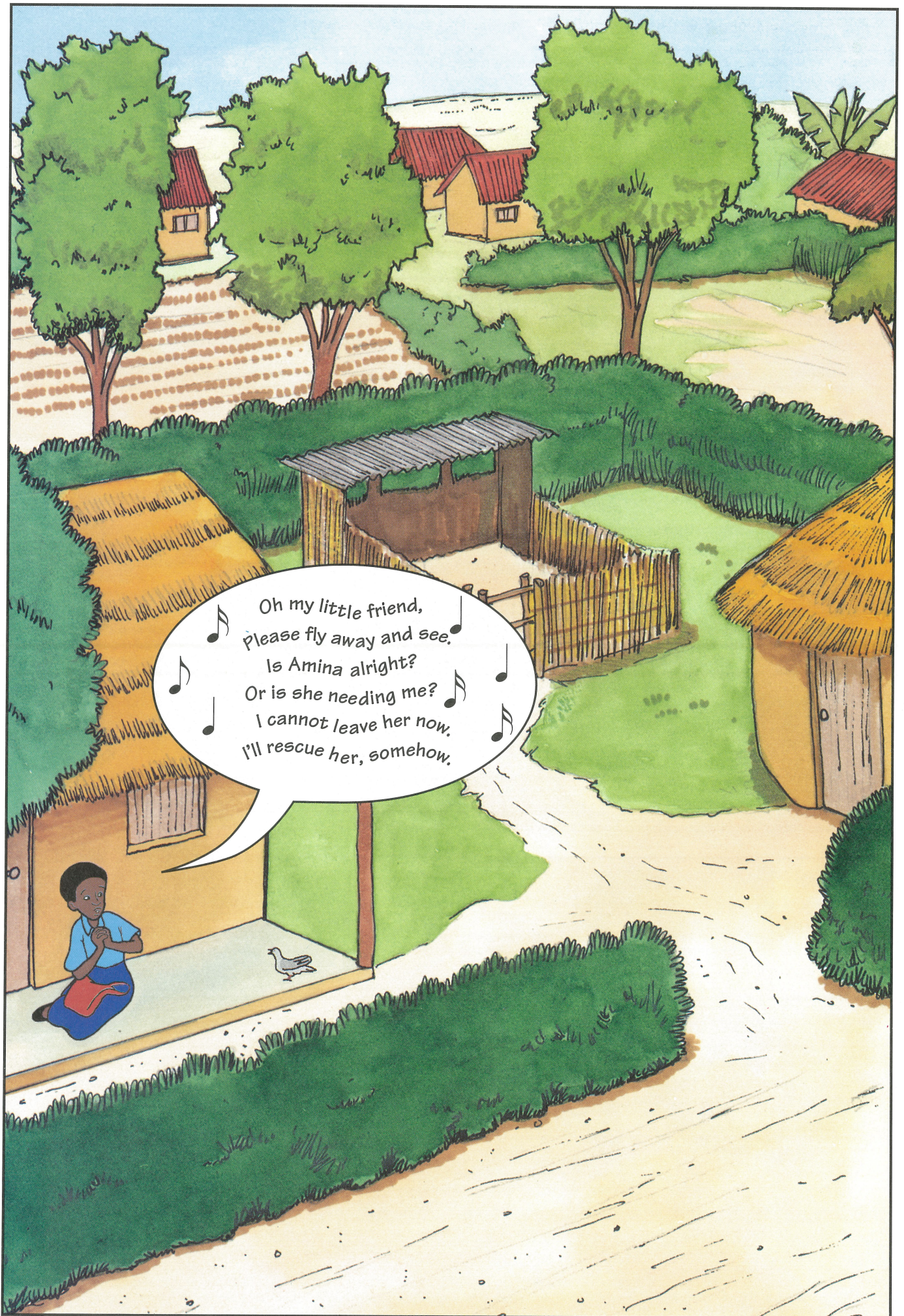
Tears come to Amina's eyes.



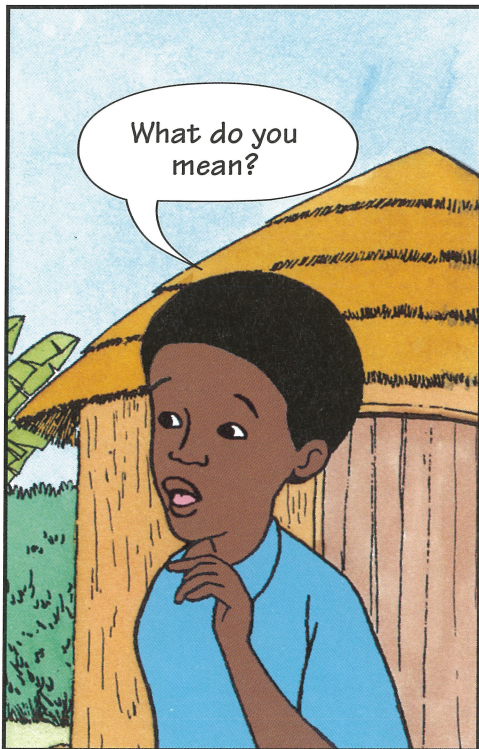
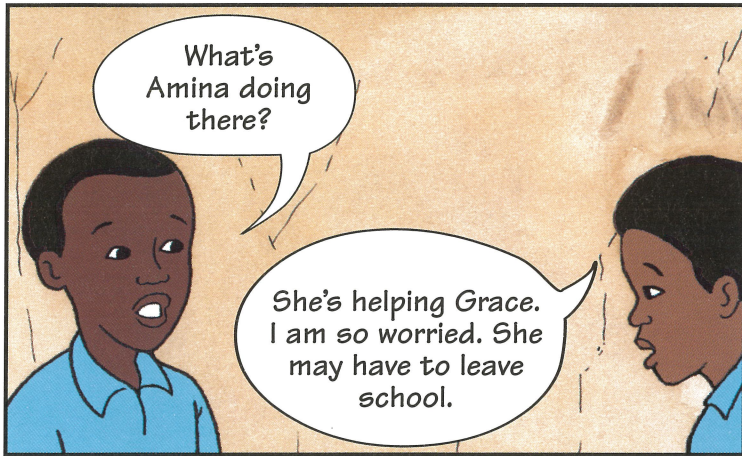


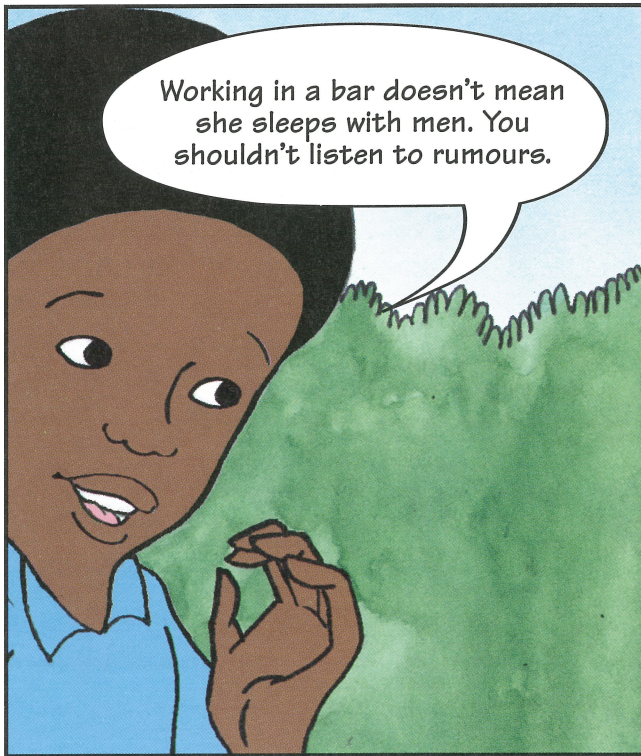
Sara runs to Juma's house and calls his name. His mother emerges from the house.



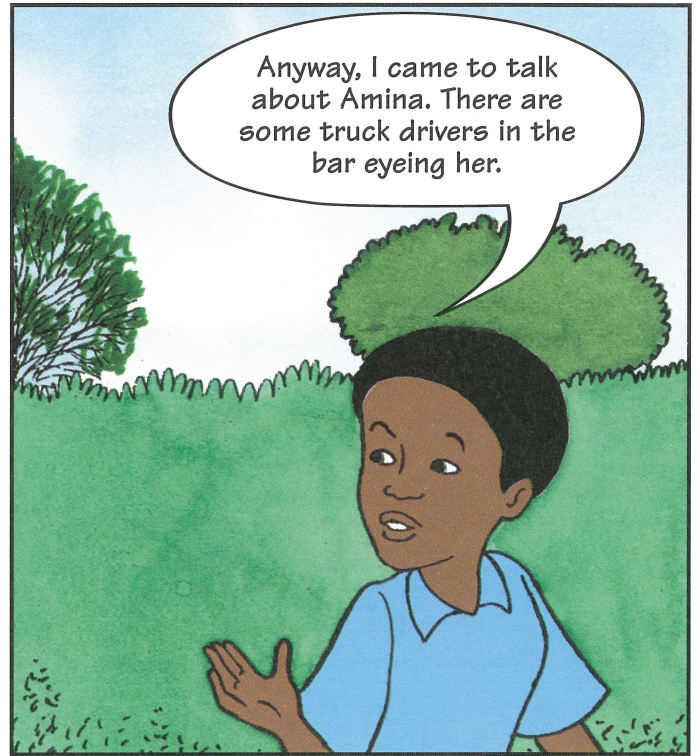


Oh my little friend,  
Please fly away and see,  
Is Amina alright?  
Or is she needing me?  
I cannot leave her now,  
I'll rescue her, somehow.





Working in a bar doesn't mean she sleeps with men. You shouldn't listen to rumours.



Anyway, I came to talk about Amina. There are some truck drivers in the bar eyeing her.



She's so desperate... What can we do?

Maybe we can talk to my brother, Themba.



Oh Juma, I heard he is always messing up things in his business.

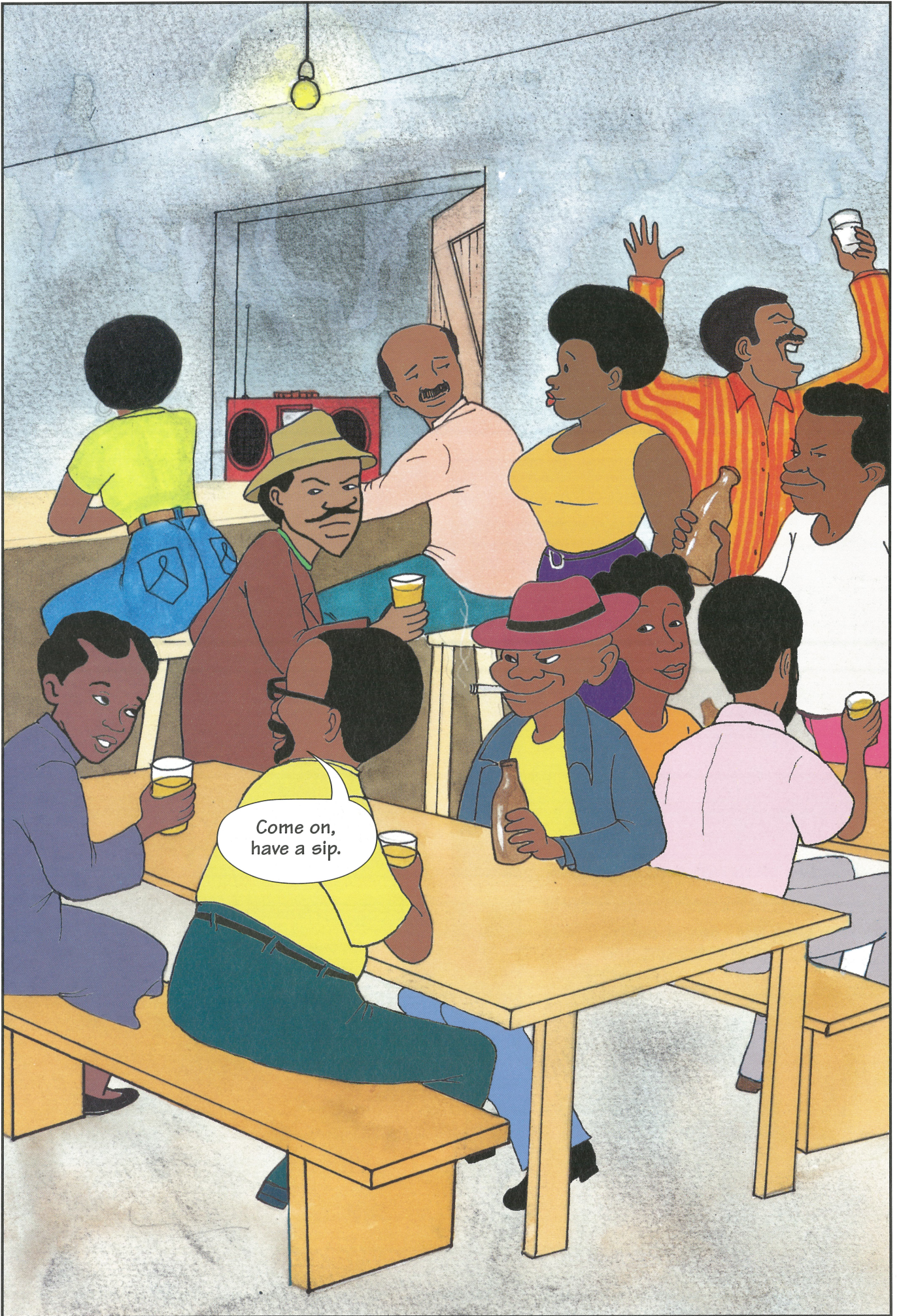


Now who is listening to rumours?

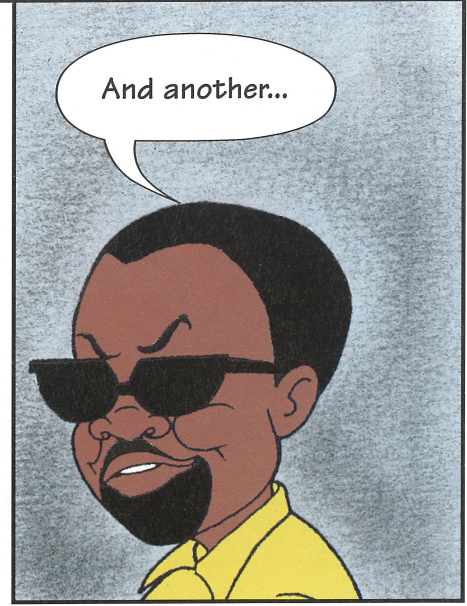
Okay, you win... I don't have a better idea. Let's go!

Meanwhile, back at the bar, Grace has fallen asleep amidst the crates of beer. Amina is serving bottles of beer to the men.





Amina doesn't know that it is a strong drink mixed with soda. She takes a little sip but obviously hates the taste.



One of the drivers looks at the address on the letter. The alcohol starts to have an effect on Amina.



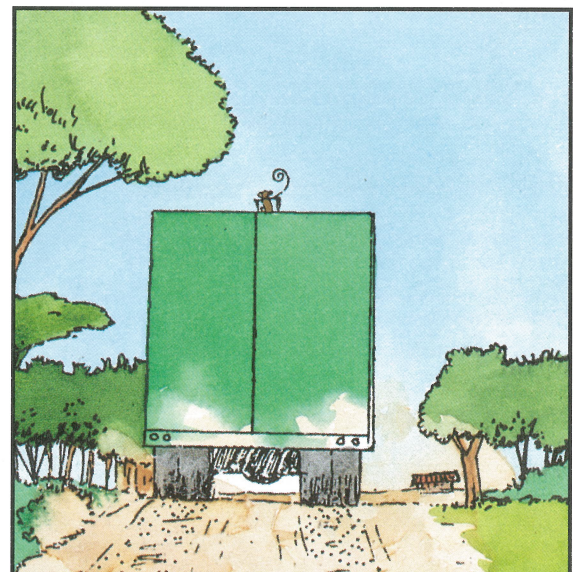
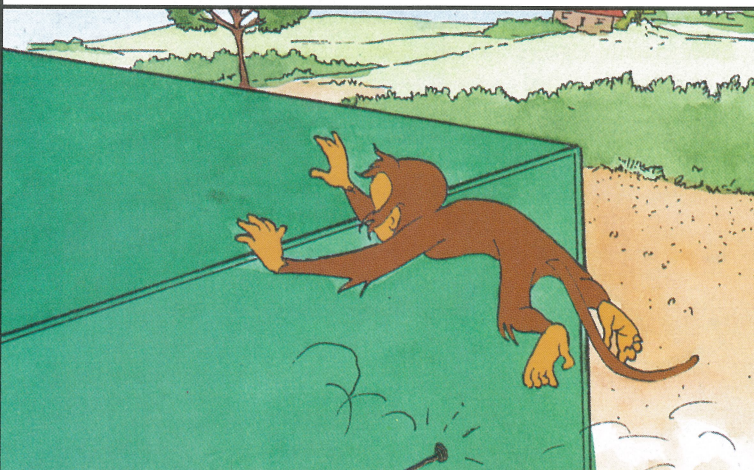
She hesitates but finally decides to go. She is tipsy and staggers.



It is late afternoon when the truck drivers leave the bar with Amina. Zingo crouches on the roof top, watching them. Amina sits between the driver and the turnboy.

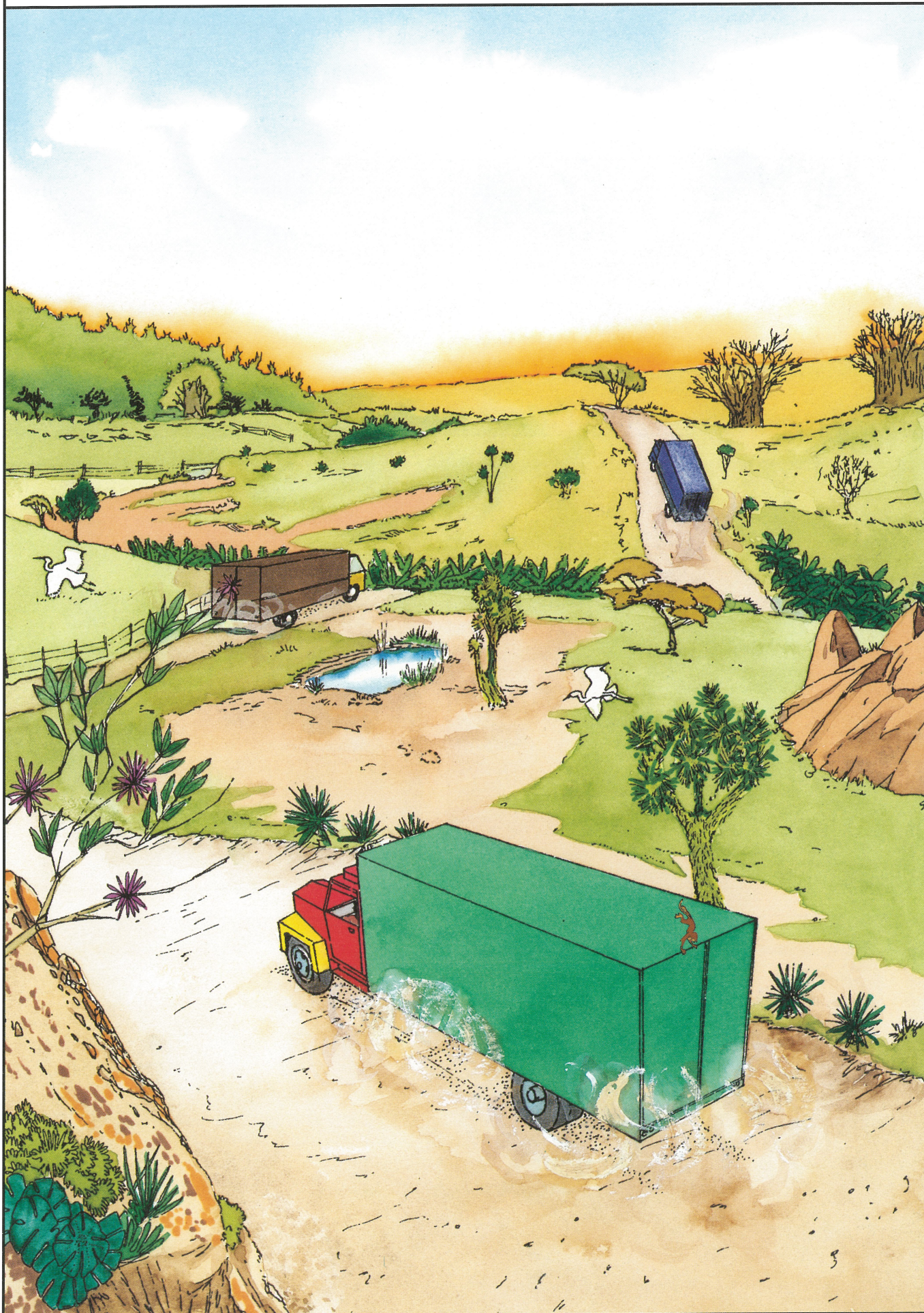


Zingo dashes down onto the roof of the truck, dropping the nail as she jumps.

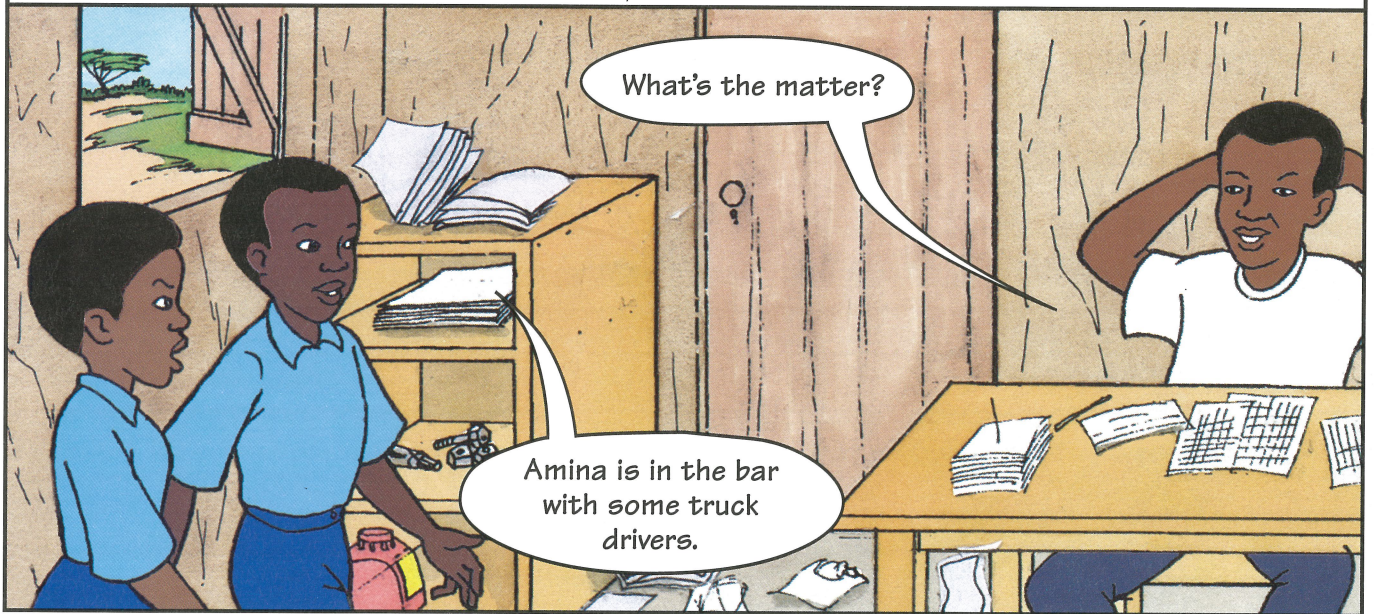




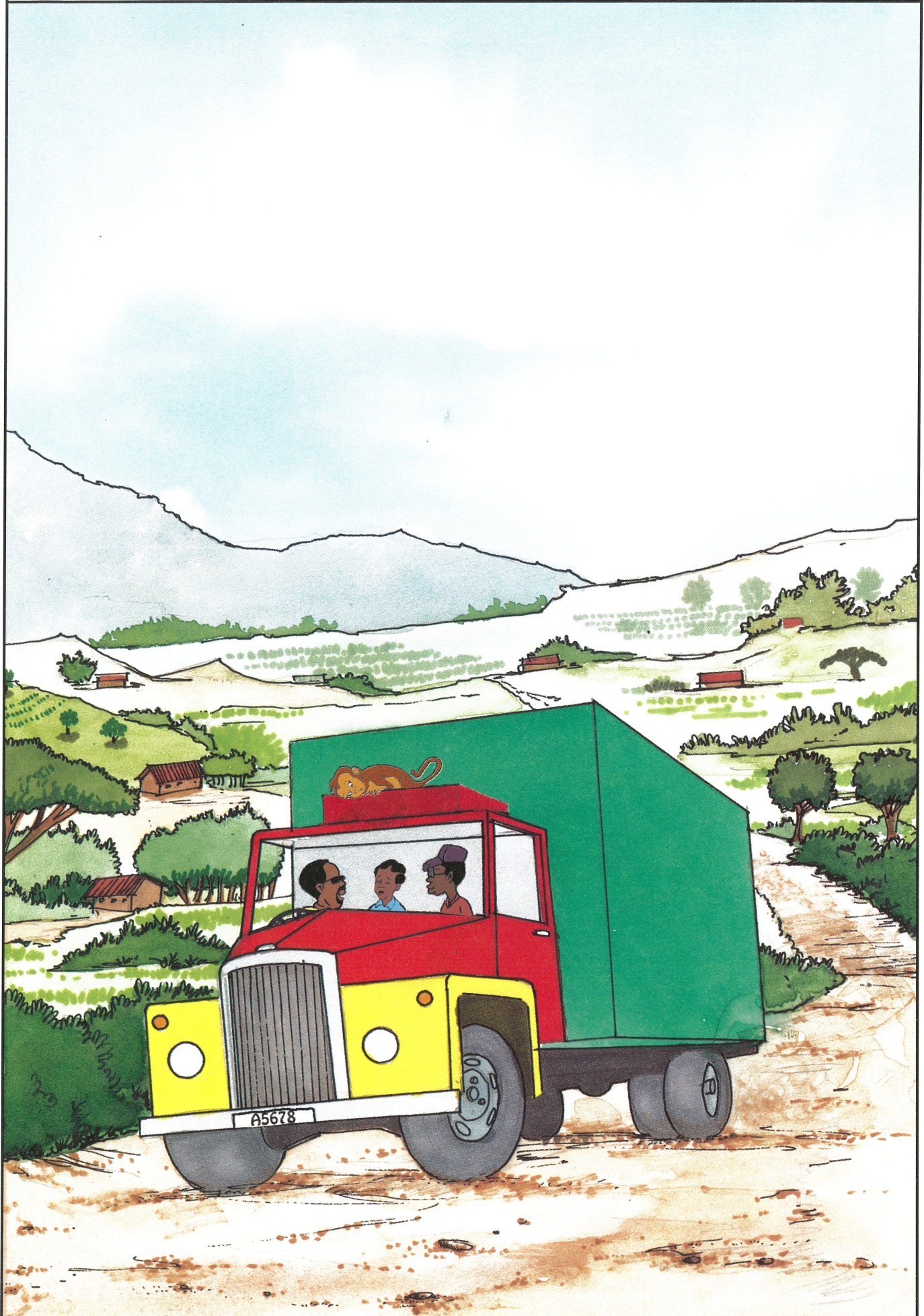
The sun is low on the horizon. The trucks roar across the African plain, carrying Amina towards an unknown destiny.



Sara and Juma rush into Themba's office. It is messy with papers all over the place. Themba is buried behind them, obviously trying to sort out things.



Meanwhile, Amina's danger increases.





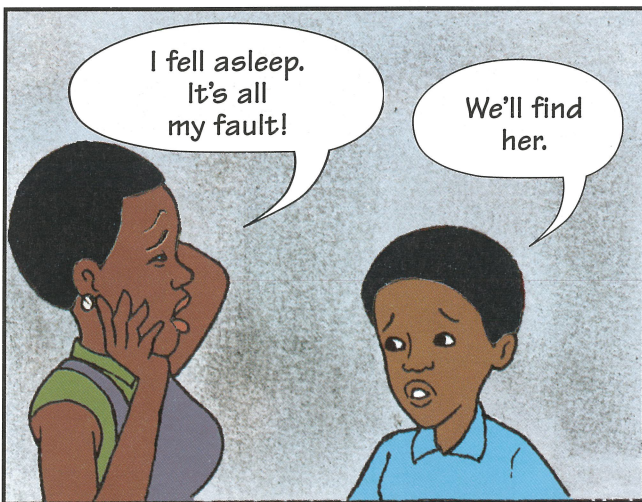
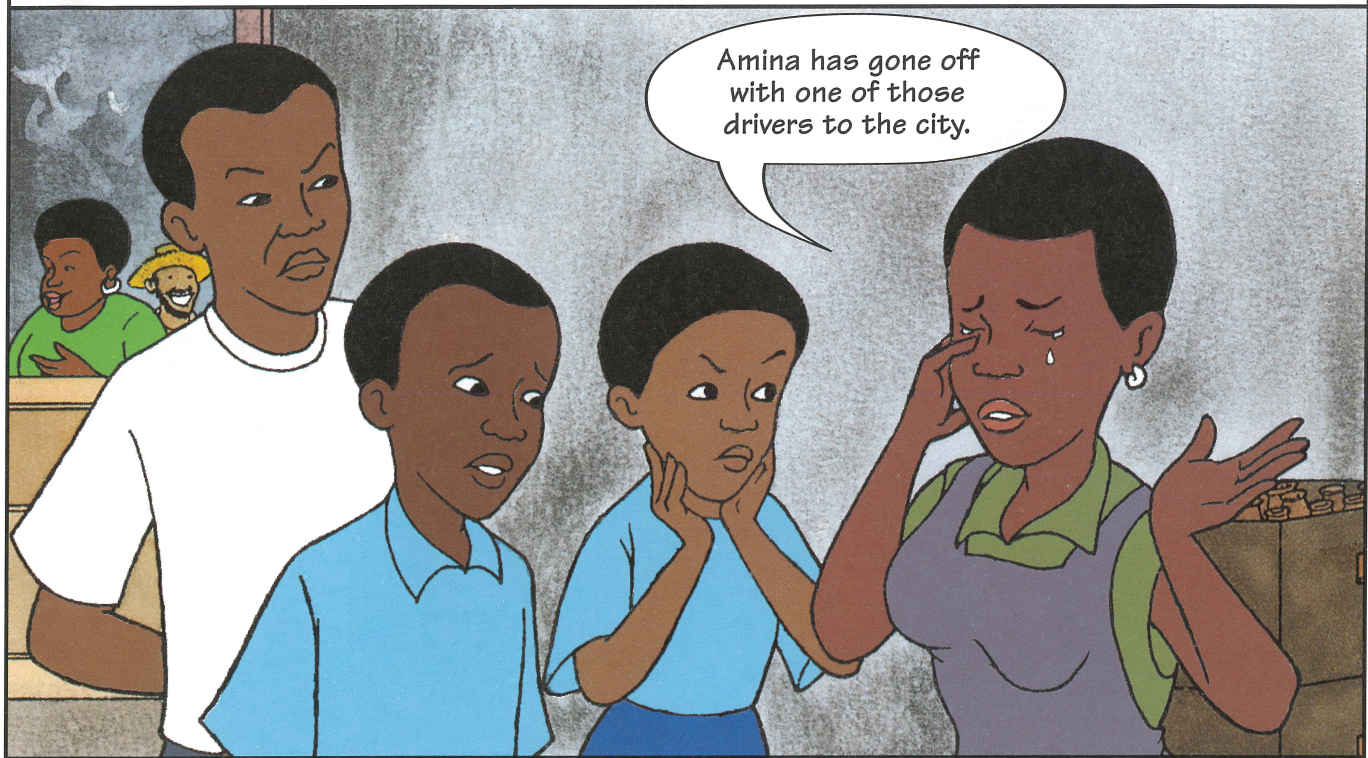
Themba, Juma and Sara reach the bar.



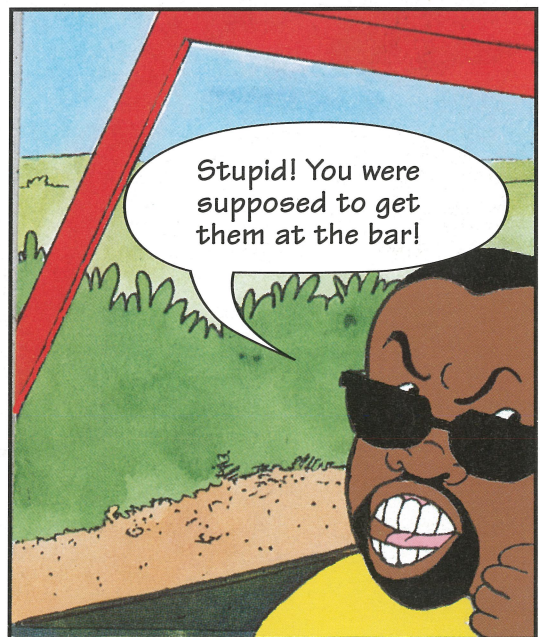
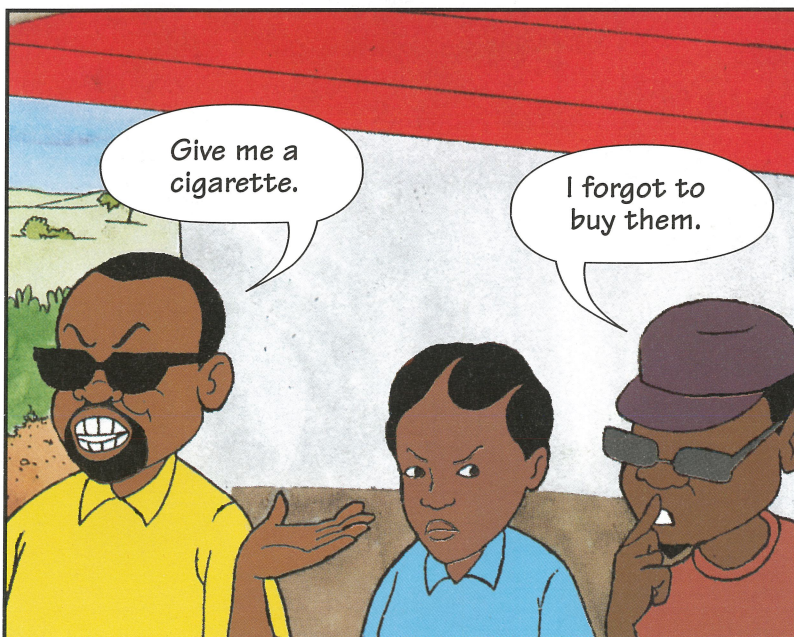
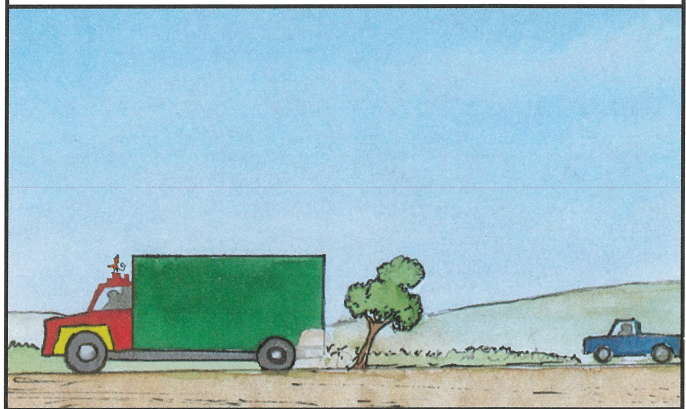
Zingo is nowhere to be found but Sara finds the nail.



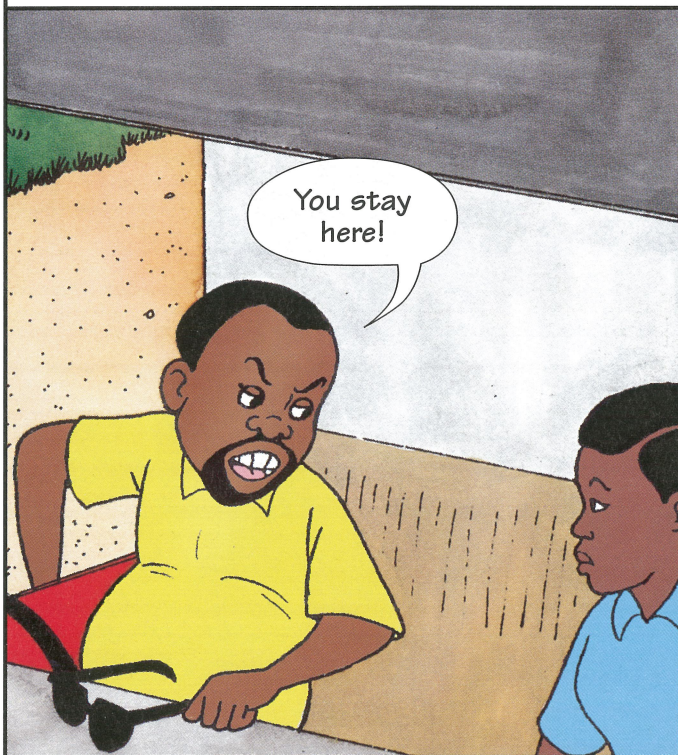
They enter the bar. They find Grace in the back room.



The truck is speeding down the road with Amina. The pick-up with Sara, Themba and Juma follows.



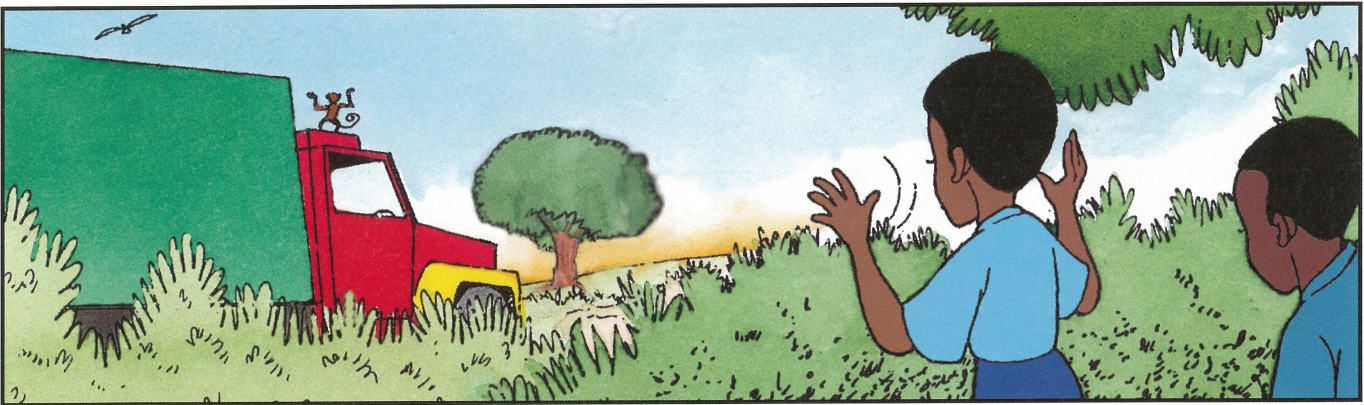
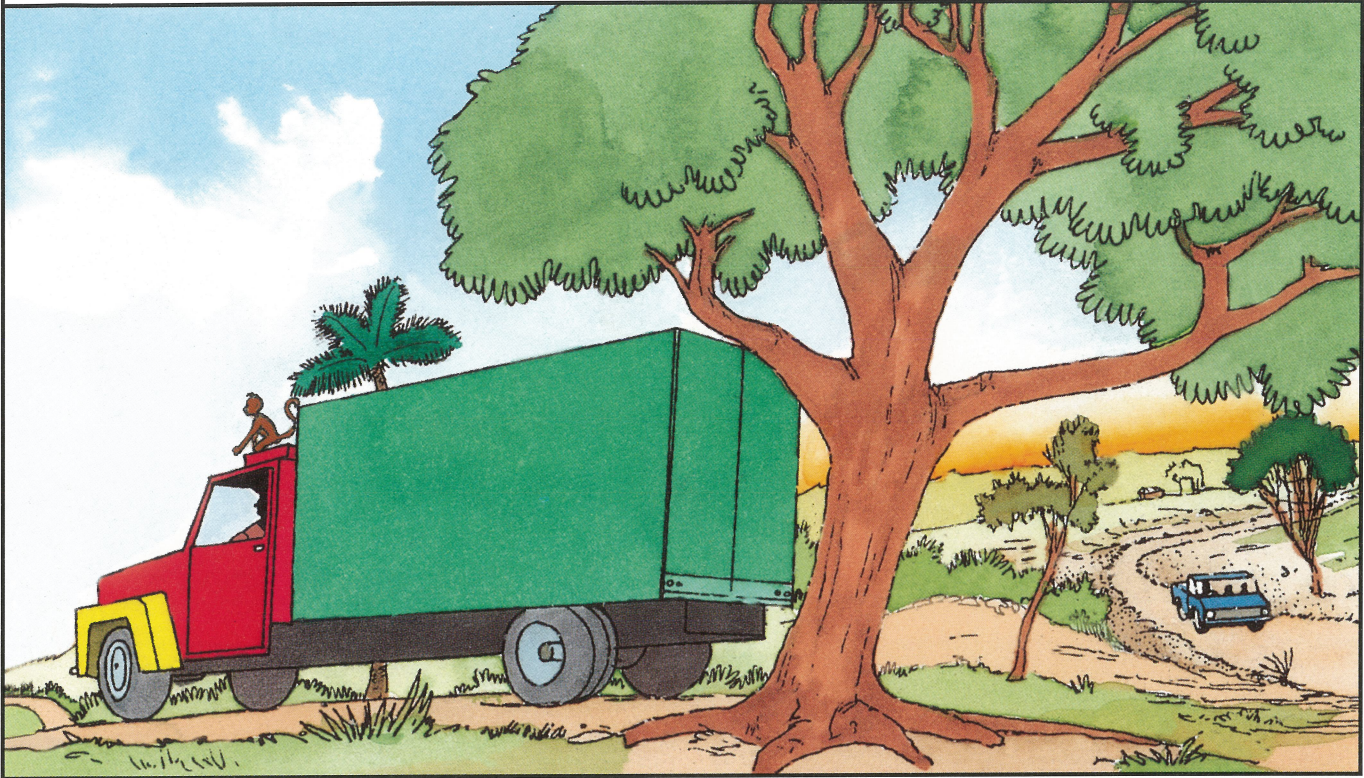
They pull over to a roadside kiosk.



The driver gets out to buy cigarettes.  
The turnboy also gets out after him and stands on the roadside nearby.  
Zingo looks through the window at Amina.



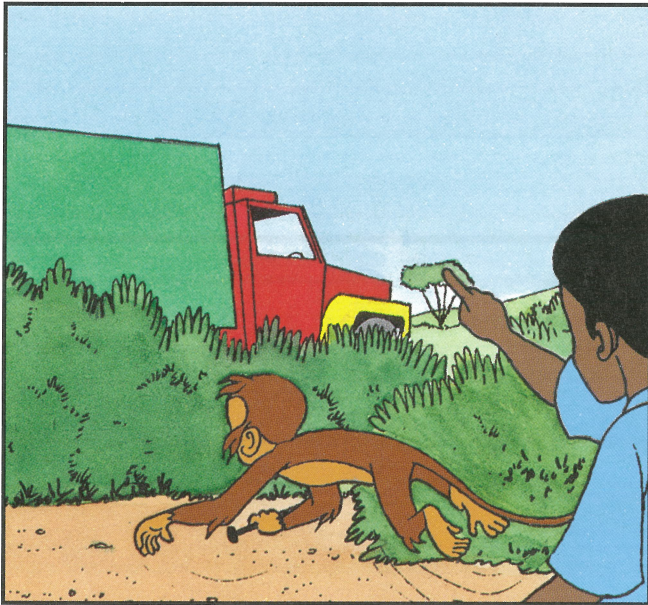
The pick-up approaches and stops at a safe distance.



Zingo comes running into Sara's arms.



Sara gives Zingo the nail she has saved.



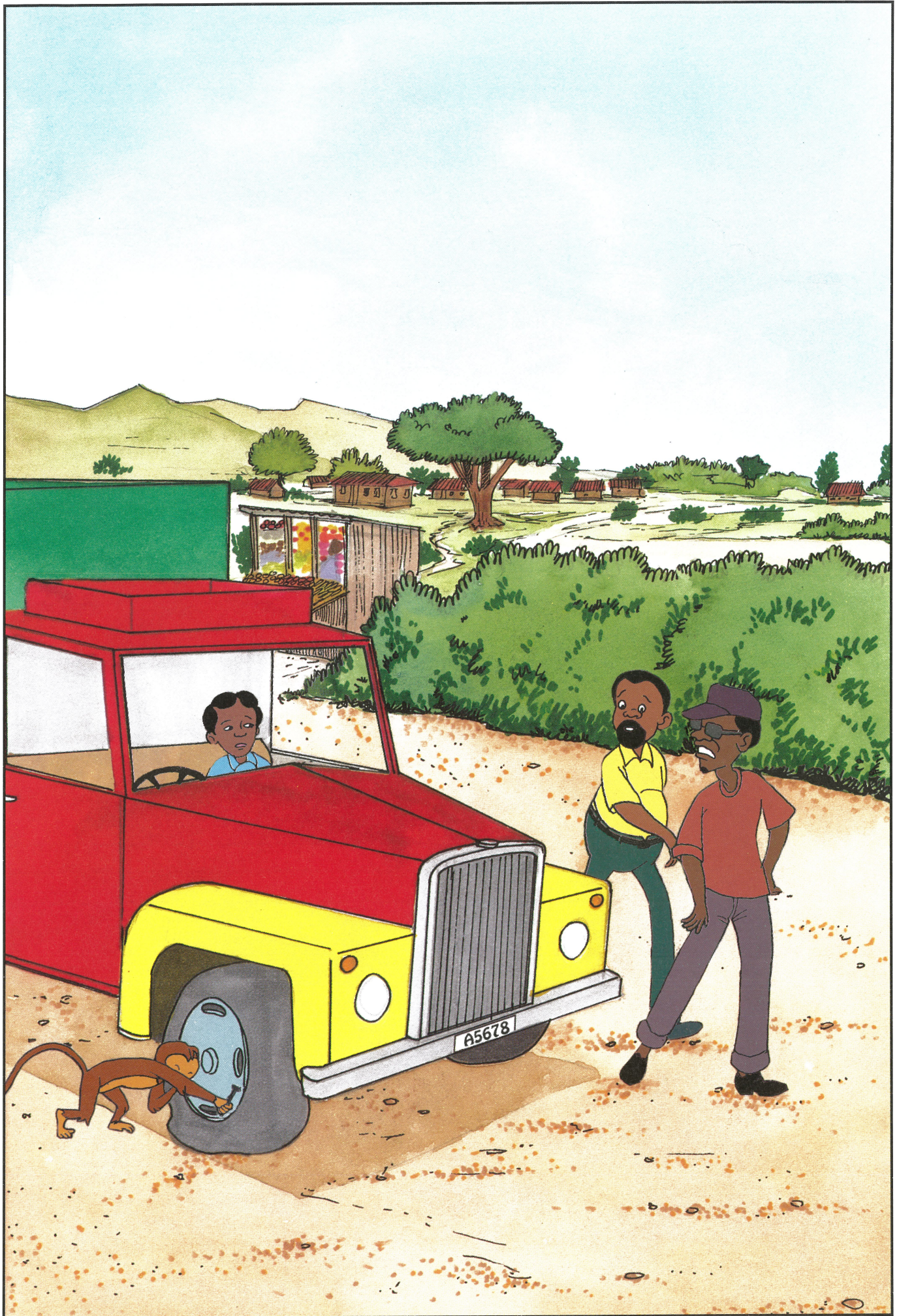
Meanwhile, the driver and the turnboy are smoking by the kiosk.



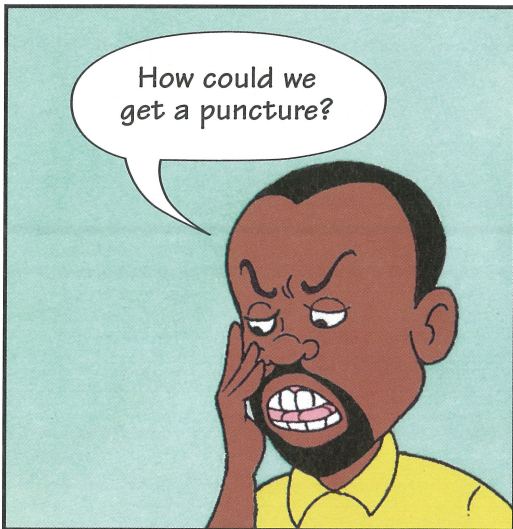
Amina hears the sound of escaping air.







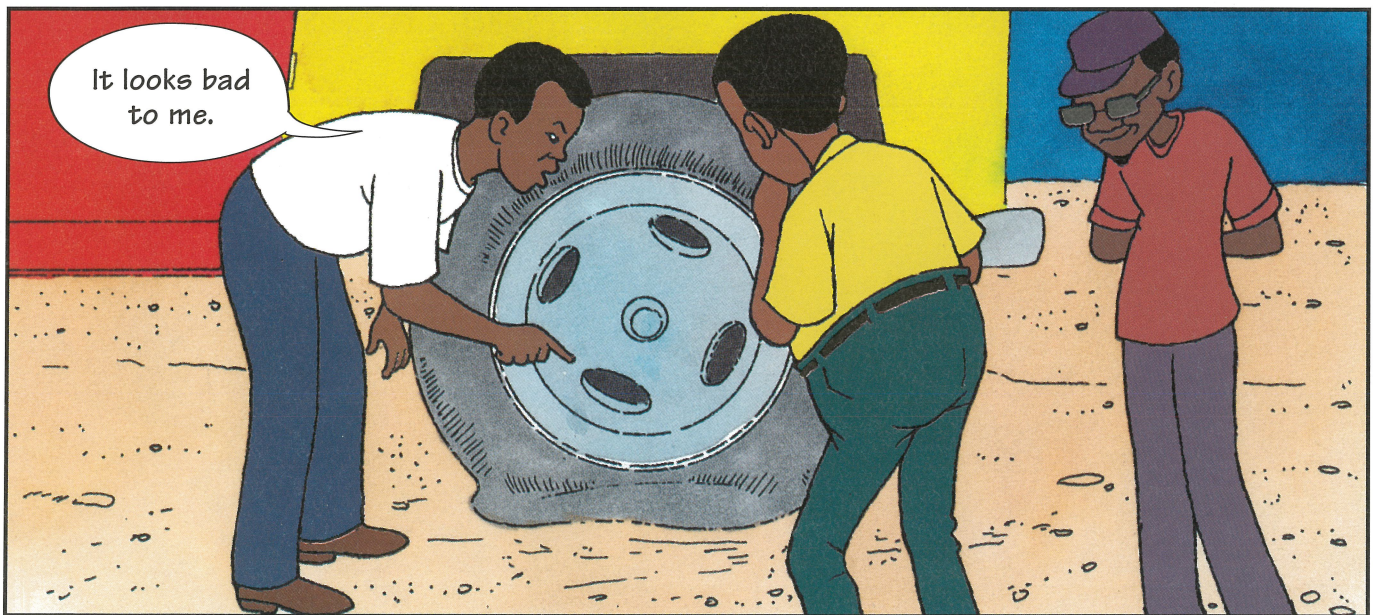
Zingo scampers back onto the roof of the truck as the turnboy approaches. He notices the tyre.



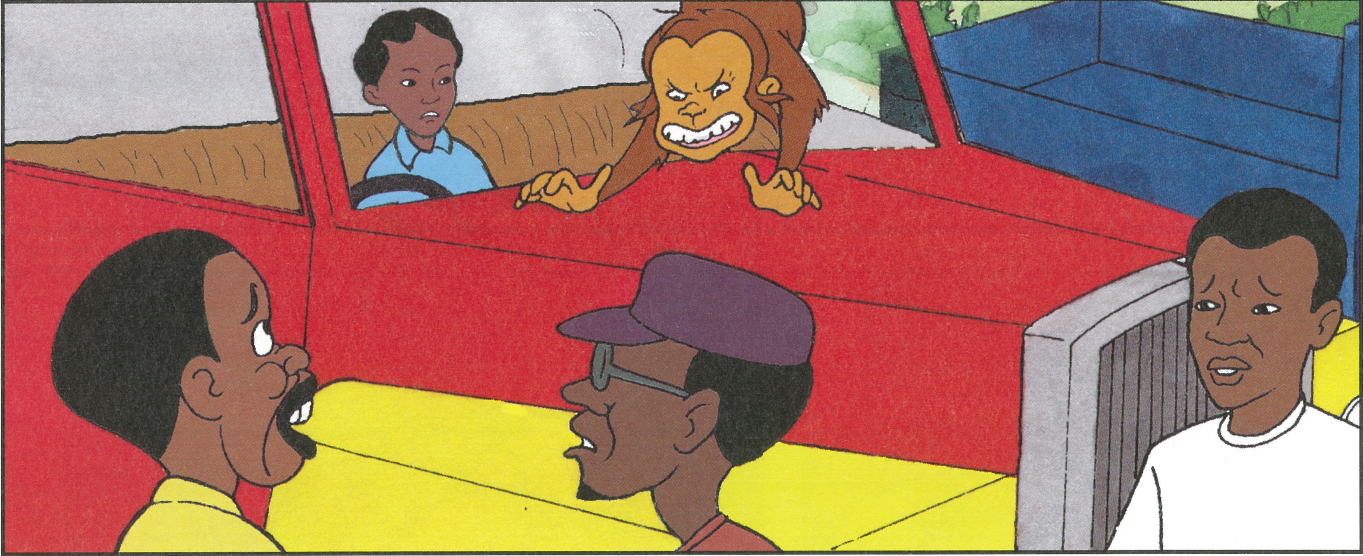
Amina has been listening from inside.



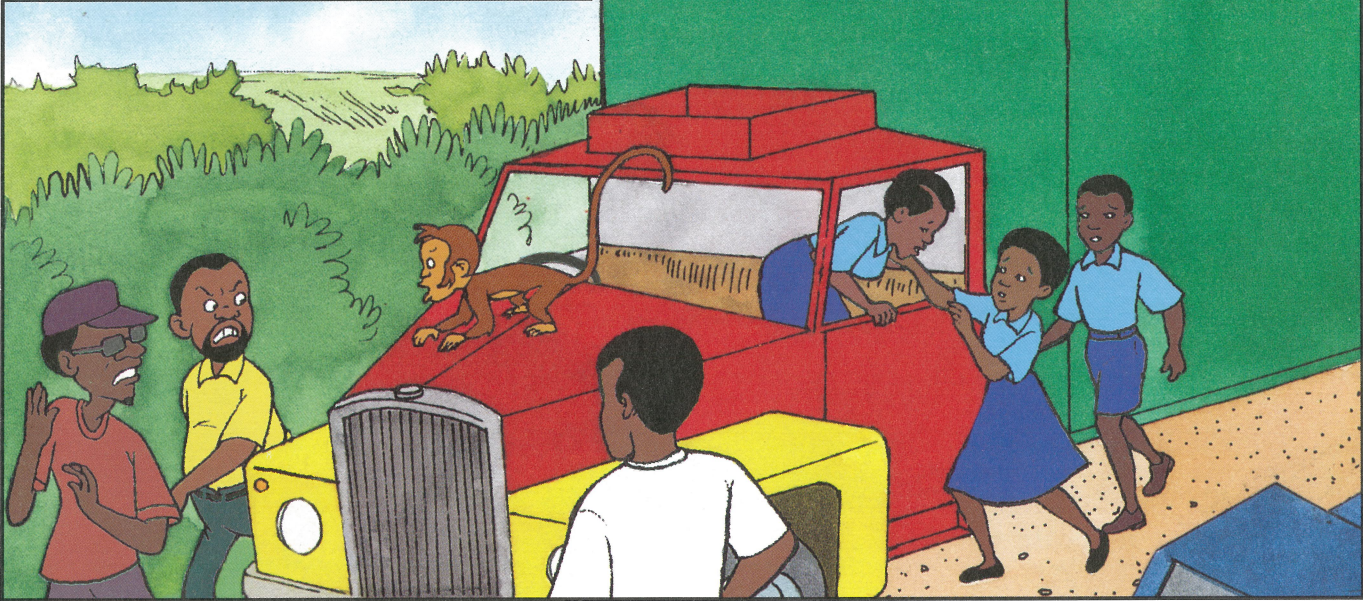
Just then the pick-up pulls up alongside the truck. Juma and Themba are visible only. Sara stays hidden.



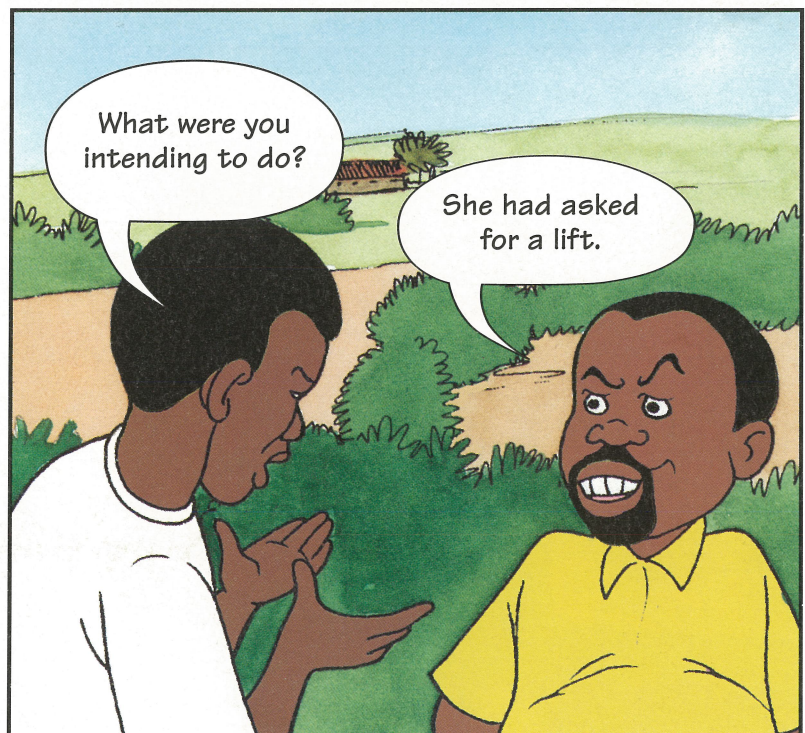
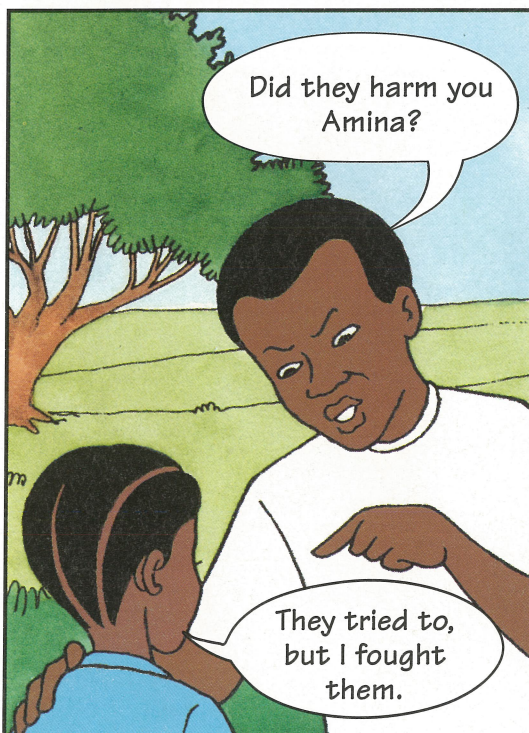
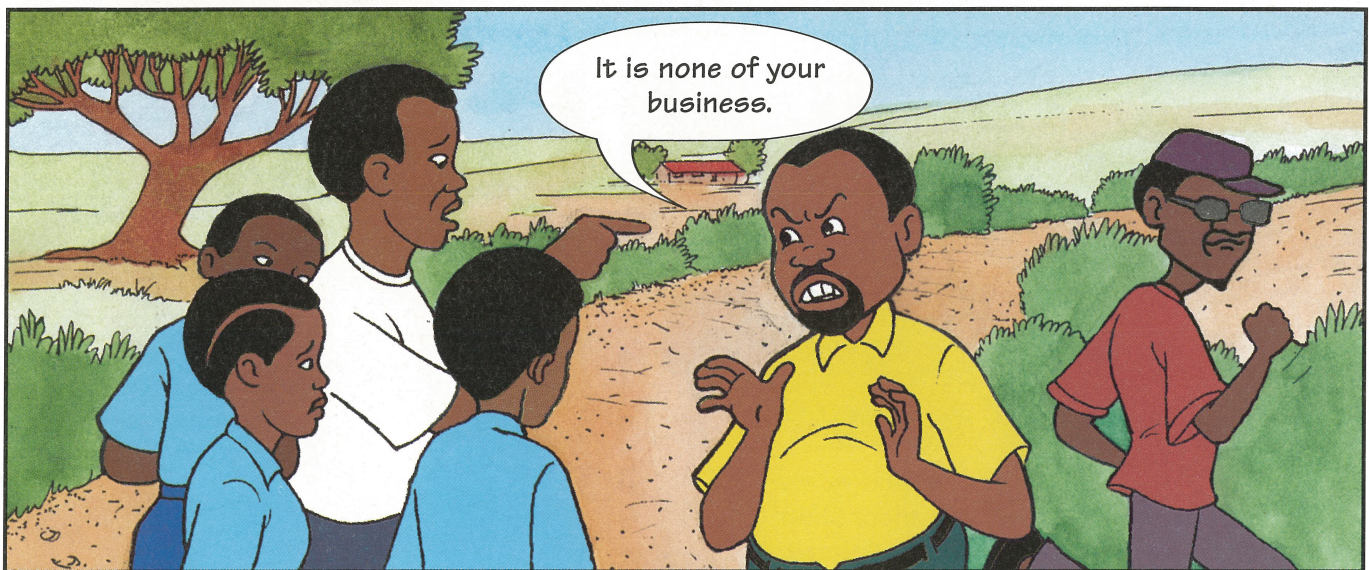
The driver looks up and sees Zingo on the roof of the truck.

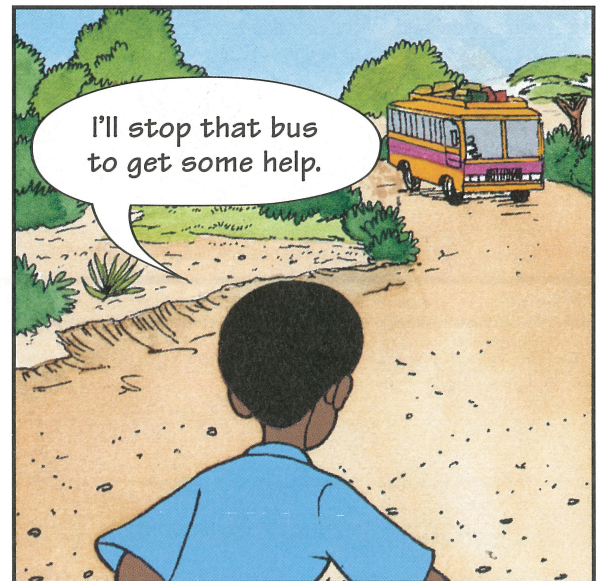
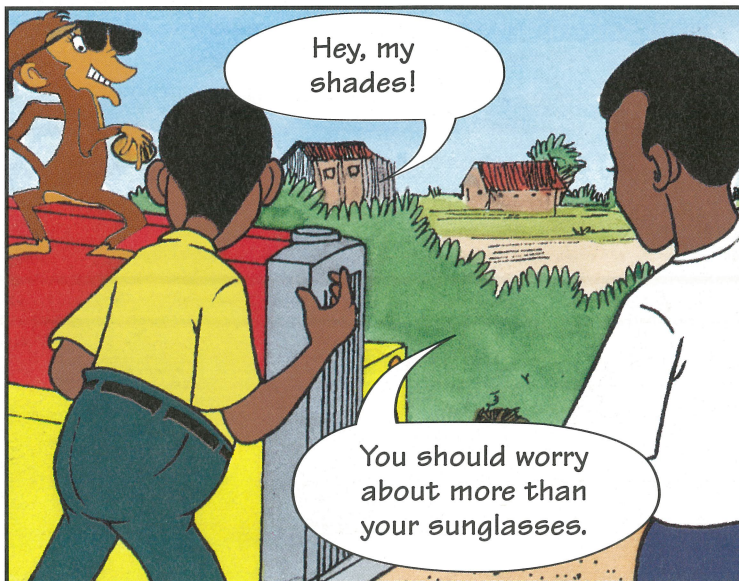
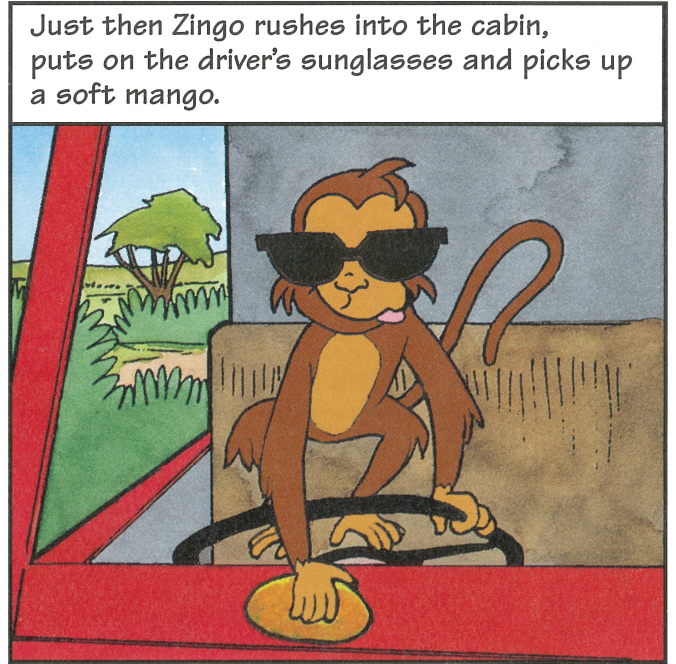


Meanwhile, Amina escapes...

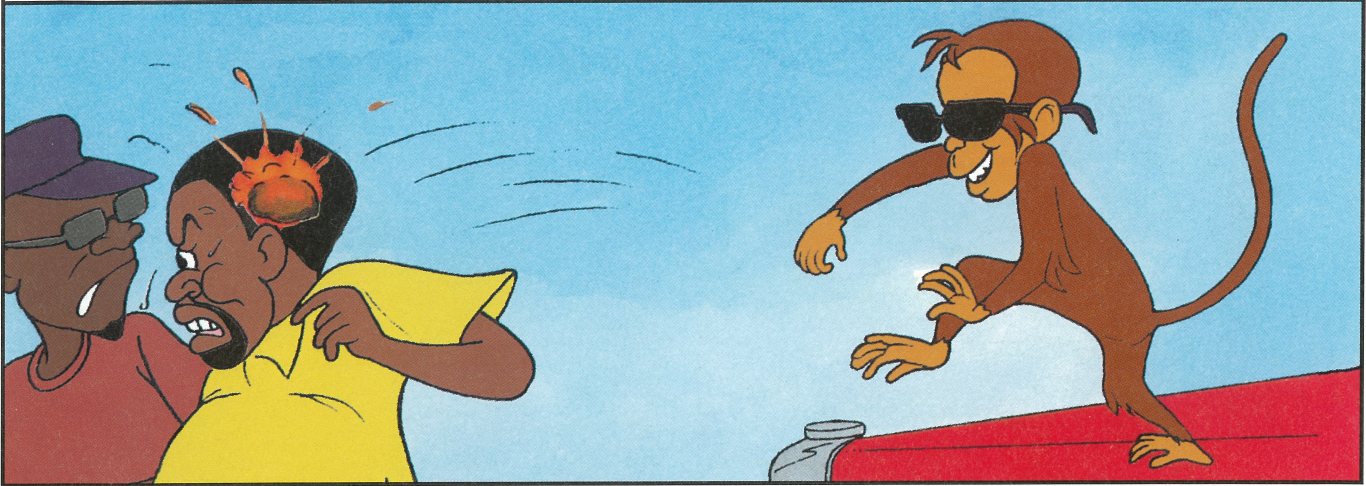


The three friends now walk directly towards the driver and the turnboy, who are visibly shaken when they see Amina free.

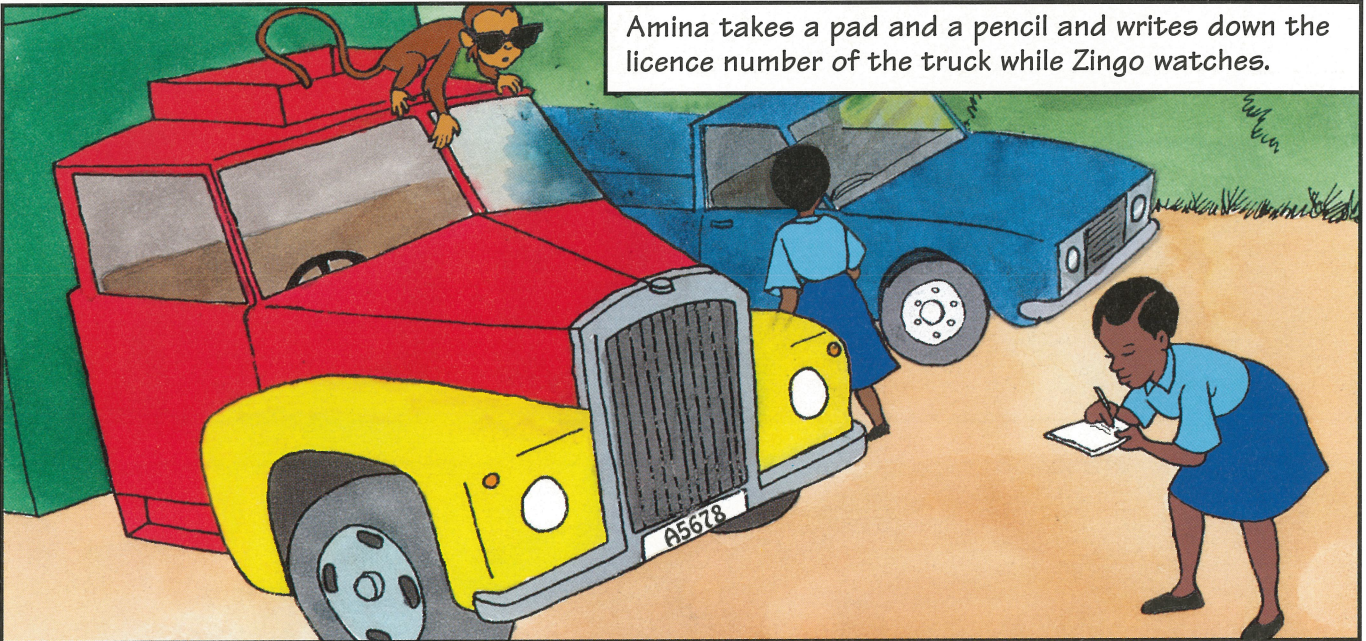




Zingo throws the mango at the driver.



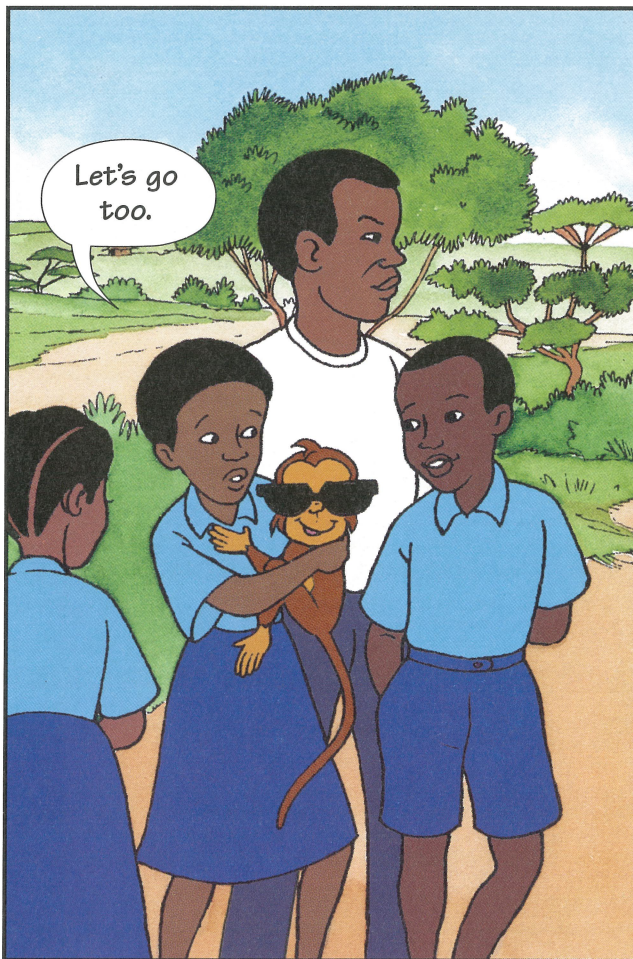
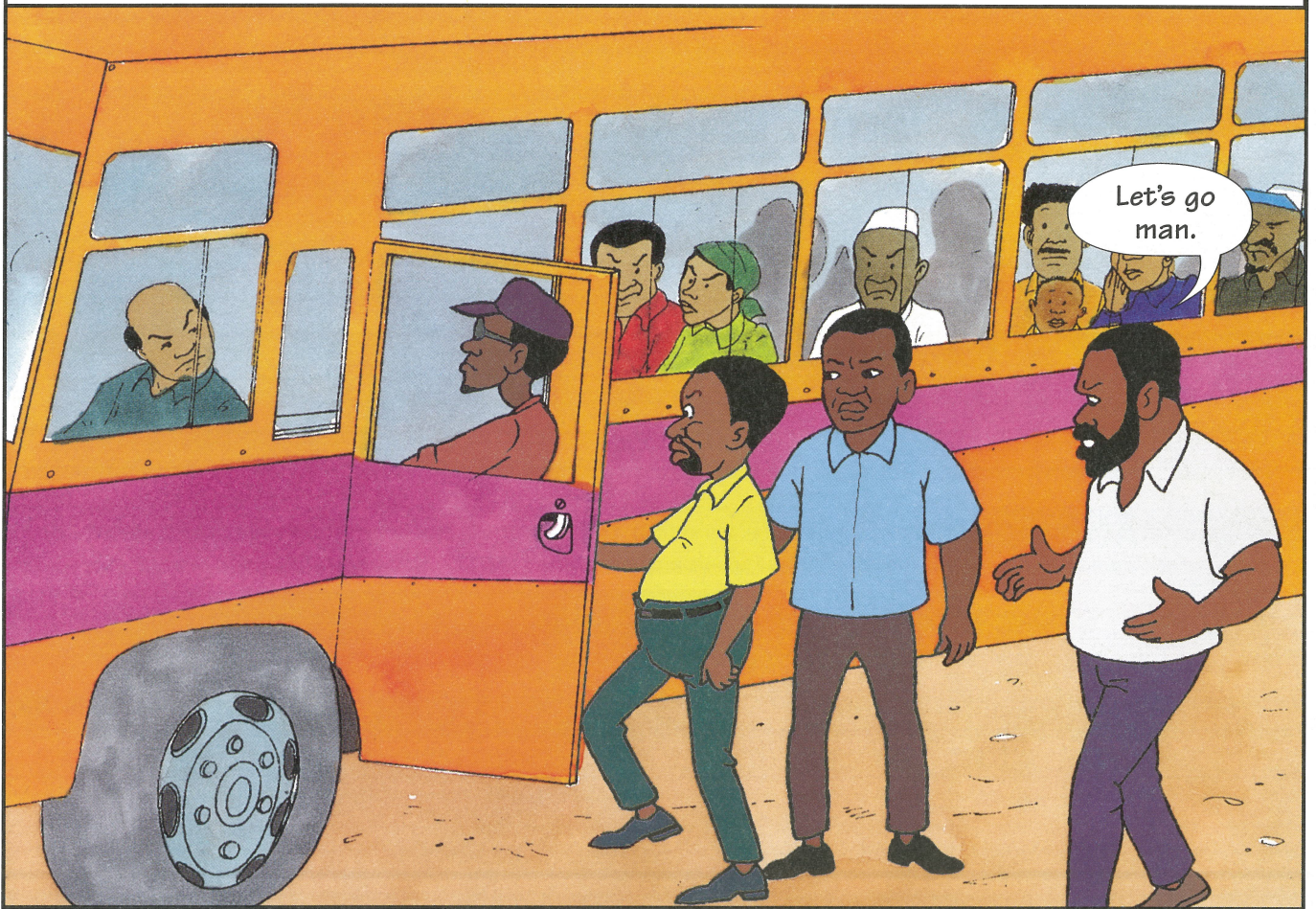
Amina takes a pad and a pencil and writes down the licence number of the truck while Zingo watches.



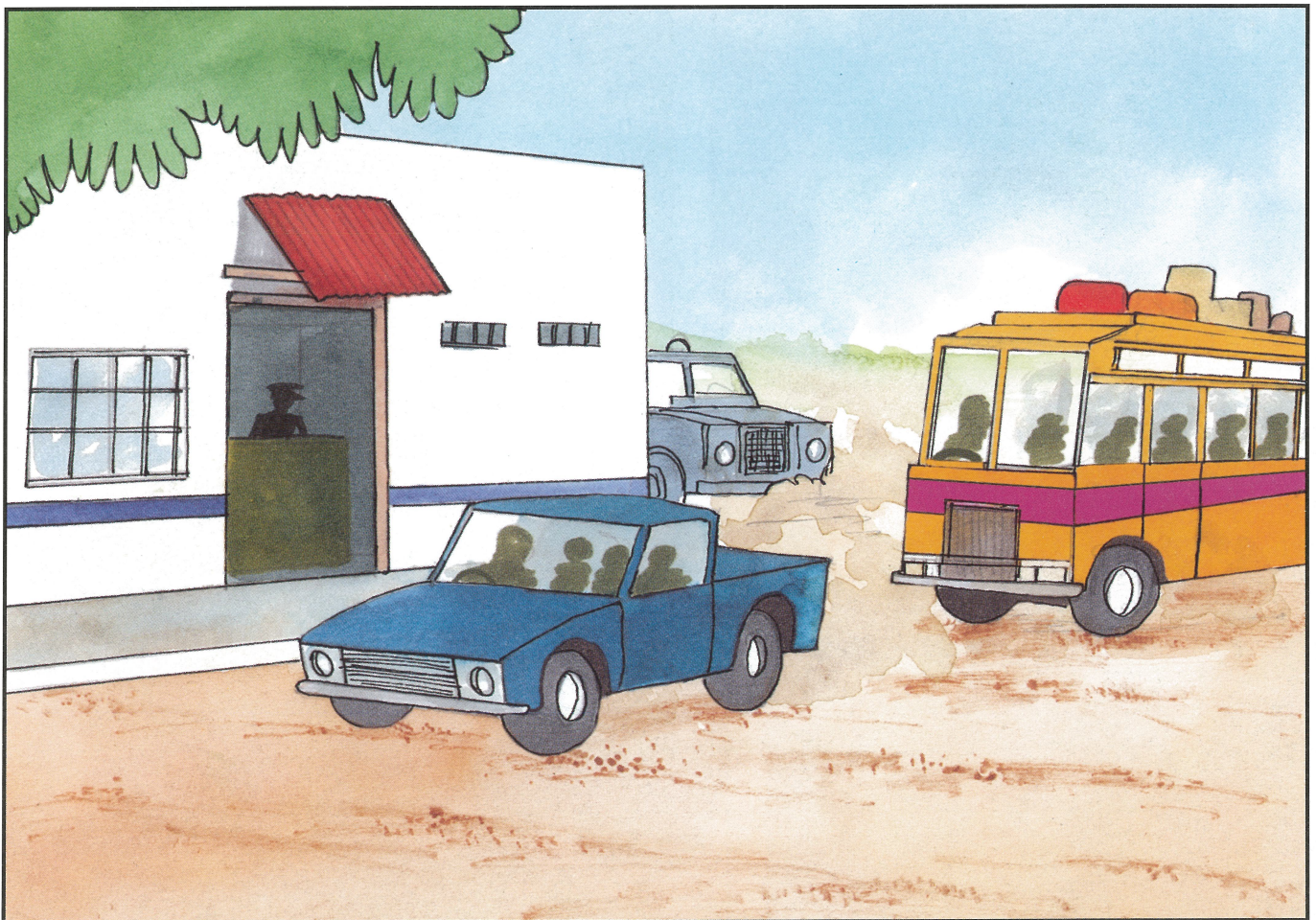
Sara talks to the bus driver.



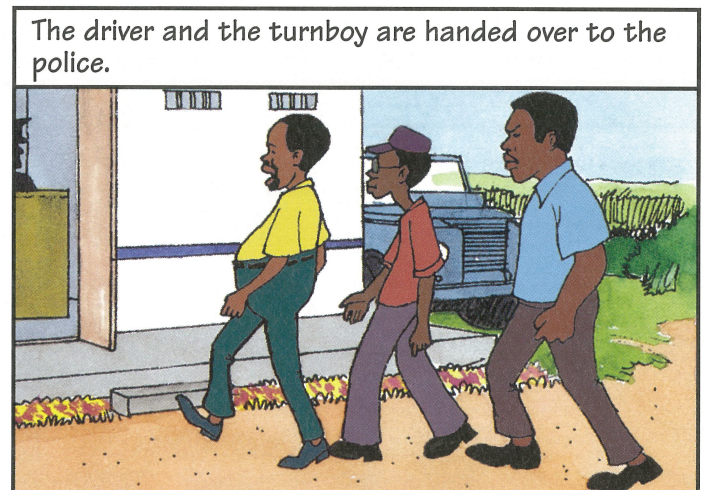
Two strong men come out of the bus and take the driver and the turnboy onto it.



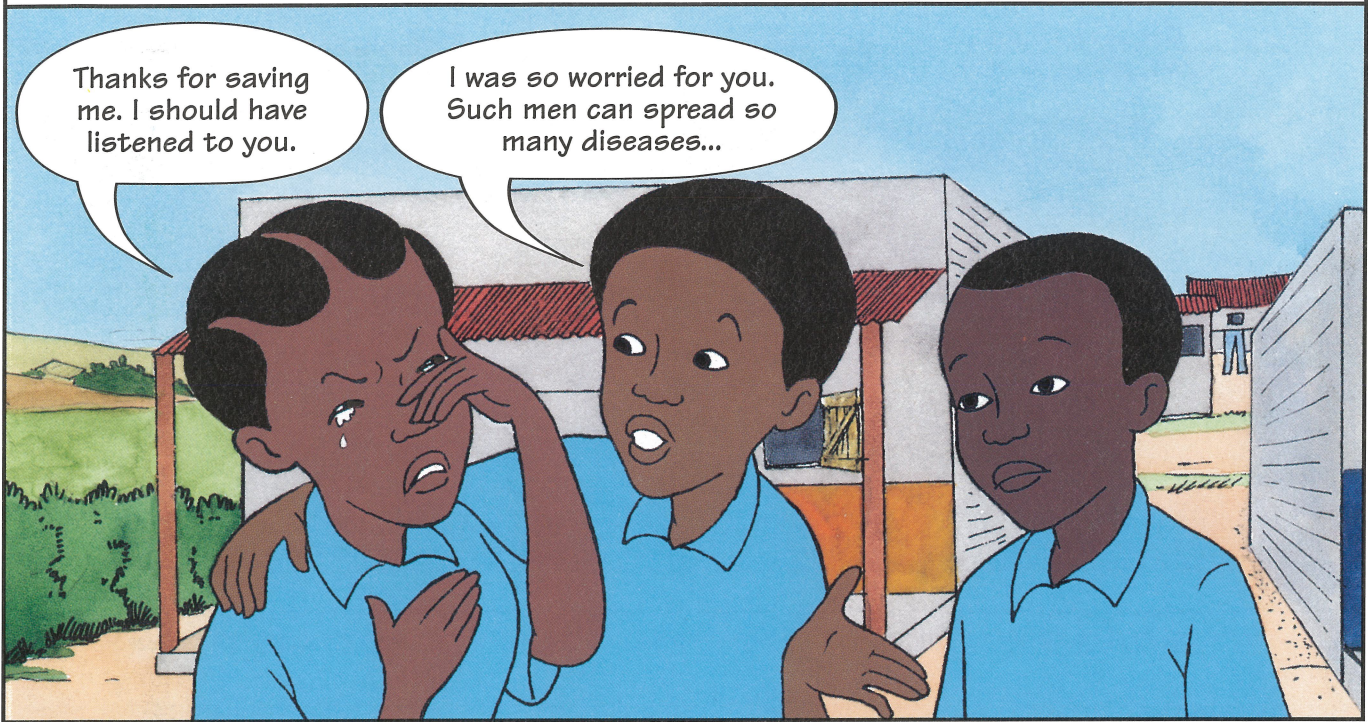


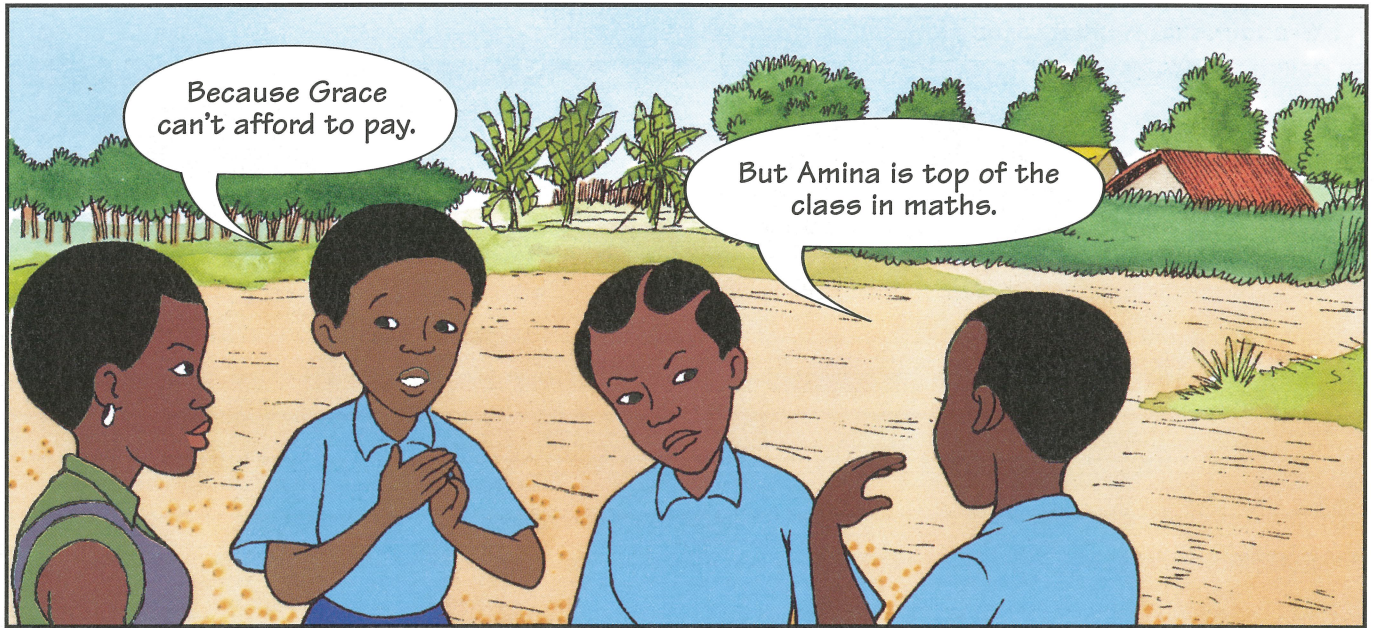


The pick-up returns to the village, close to the police station. A large group of people has gathered, including Grace, Sara's entire family and Juma's mother.



Tears come to Amina's eyes.





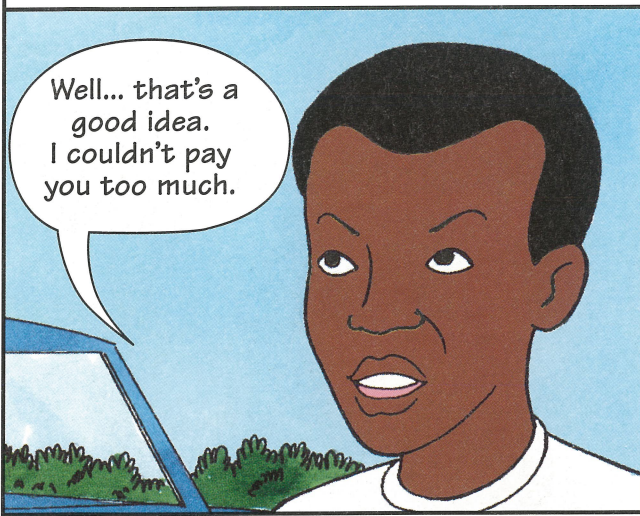
Zingo is busy trying to write with the pad and the pencil Amina had used to copy the licence number.



Sara examines the pad closely.



Themba pauses and is thoughtful.



The villagers cheer and ululate at the Chief's suggestion.



# Sara

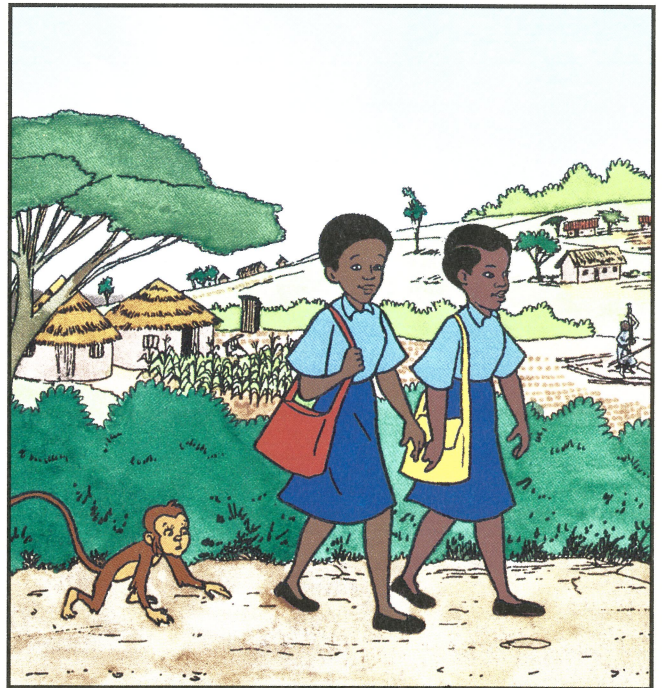
Communication Initiative

## USERS' GUIDE TO "SARA SAVES HER FRIEND"

### INTRODUCTION

HIV/AIDS has become a major concern in Africa today. Gender gaps, misconceptions and ignorance, lack of societal responsibility, and lack of proper Life Skills are exposing youth to risky behaviour, ultimately leading to its spread. Because of societal patterns and practices, women and girls are in a more vulnerable position. In addition, growing disparity between girls and boys in educational attainment in some countries also poses a great barrier to the overall development and empowerment of girls and prevents them from the acquisition of appropriate Life Skills, such as negotiation and critical thinking.

Research in some countries has shown that out-of-school girls are at much higher risk with regard to HIV/AIDS and other health risks. Experience so far has proven that information alone is not enough to ensure behaviours necessary to stop the spread of the epidemic. Extra effort is now required to "get ahead of



the virus," by equipping people, especially adolescents, with Life Skills which they need to decide upon and maintain healthy and safe life styles and practice responsible behaviour.

"Sara Saves Her Friend," produced by UNICEF-ESARO's Communication Section, is designed to support and accelerate the existing programmes on prevention of HIV/AIDS. It is a well-researched package that can be used as an educational tool by organizations, programmers and service providers working for children's survival, protection, development, empowerment and overall rights, with special focus on prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs).

### ABOUT THE STORY

"Sara Saves Her Friend" is an animated film, supported by a comic book, about the adventures of Sara, a girl who lives with her family somewhere in peri-urban Africa. Her school friend, Amina, has been orphaned and now faces serious financial problems. Amina feels guilty about her sister having to work as a barmaid to support the family and is seriously considering leaving school to look for a job. So, she decides to help her sister with her work at the bar.

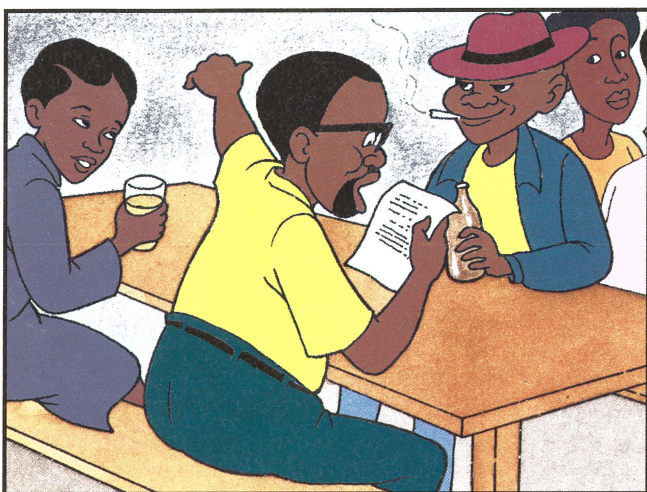
At the bar, Amina is tricked into drinking by some truck drivers. They promise her a job in the city and in her semi-drunken state, Amina agrees to go with the drivers, whose main aim is to exploit her sexually. Sara, with the help of Zingo, her pet monkey, and her best friend, Juma, together with his older brother, Themba, exposes the truck drivers' immoral intentions and hands them over to the police after a dramatic and exciting chase in Themba's pick-up truck.



## OBJECTIVES

The story, as it is, has enough entertainment value to be used with different groups of people. Research has shown that it can effectively be used to:

- Initiate discussions on HIV/AIDS and sexual exploitation of young girls by older boys and men.
- Initiate discussions between girls and boys about the importance of the development of Life Skills to protect themselves against HIV/AIDS and sexual harassment.
- Create an understanding of the effects of risky behaviour that adolescents sometimes engage in.
- Encourage positive girl-boy relationships.



- Help the community to recognize the potential of young people, especially girls, in developing skills such as critical thinking and decision making.
- Focus on the participation of young people in problem solving and community development.

## THE STORY IS AVAILABLE IN:

- VHS video (all signal systems)
- U-Matic or Betacam (broadcast quality)
- 16 mm film versions (on special order)
- Comic book format

## BEFORE YOU START

It is best for facilitators using this story in video or film format, to consider the following:

- Why do you want to show the video?
- Who is your audience (gender, age, profession, etc.)?
- Where do you want to show the video (office, school, seminar, community, etc.)?

- What facilities are available for showing the video (power supply, seating space, chairs, etc.)?

### Note:

Make sure that you have the right video cassette for your playback system. Facilitators using generator power should ensure that the generator is placed at a reasonable distance from the group to minimize noise level. Ensure that there is enough cable wire for this.

Once you are satisfied that the preparation is okay, explain to the group that the story is about girls' Life Skills development and the issue of HIV/AIDS and sexual exploitation of girls. Inform them that there will be a discussion on the film afterwards. This will help them to stay focused on the story.

After showing the video/film or reading out the story, you may initiate the discussion by asking general questions.

### Note:

These questions should be used only as guidelines for facilitating the group discussion. They are not meant and should not be used as a rigid questionnaire.

Allow the discussion to be as spontaneous as possible, ensuring maximum participation from everybody in the group.

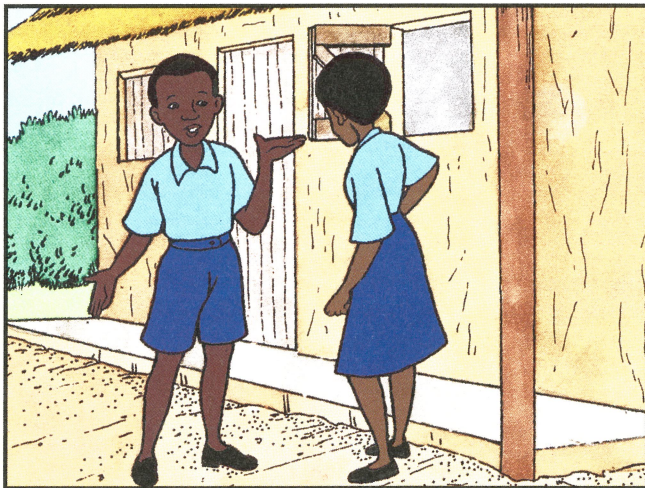
## BEGIN WITH:

- Did you like the story?
- Can someone tell us briefly what the story is about?
- Who are the characters in the story?
- Who do you think is the main character of the story?
- Why do you think so?
- Which characters did you like best in the story?
- Which ones didn't you like? Why?
- Do such things happen in your community?

You may want to ask some specific questions on the comprehension of the story:

- What were Sara and Amina discussing at the beginning of the story?
- Why did Amina want to leave school?
- Why did Amina want to go to the bar?
- Why was Sara against the idea of going to the bar?
- What happened on the way to the bar?

- What did the boy with the bicycle do? Why?
- What happened to Amina and Sara at the bar?
- How did Sara decide to help Amina at the bar?
- Why did she tell Zingo to stay behind?
- Whose help did Sara seek to assist Amina?
- How did the truck drivers trick Amina?
- How did Sara and her friends save Amina?
- Where did Zingo get the idea of deflating the tyres?
- What happened to the driver and the turnboy who had abducted Amina?
- Why did they abduct her?
- What was Sara's uncle's reaction when he found out about Amina's adventure?
- Was Amina's behaviour appropriate? Why?
- How was Amina's school fee problem solved?
- Do you think it was a good solution? Why/Why not?
- What did the Chief say about Amina's problems?



#### QUESTION GUIDES FOR SPECIFIC GROUPS:

##### GIRLS

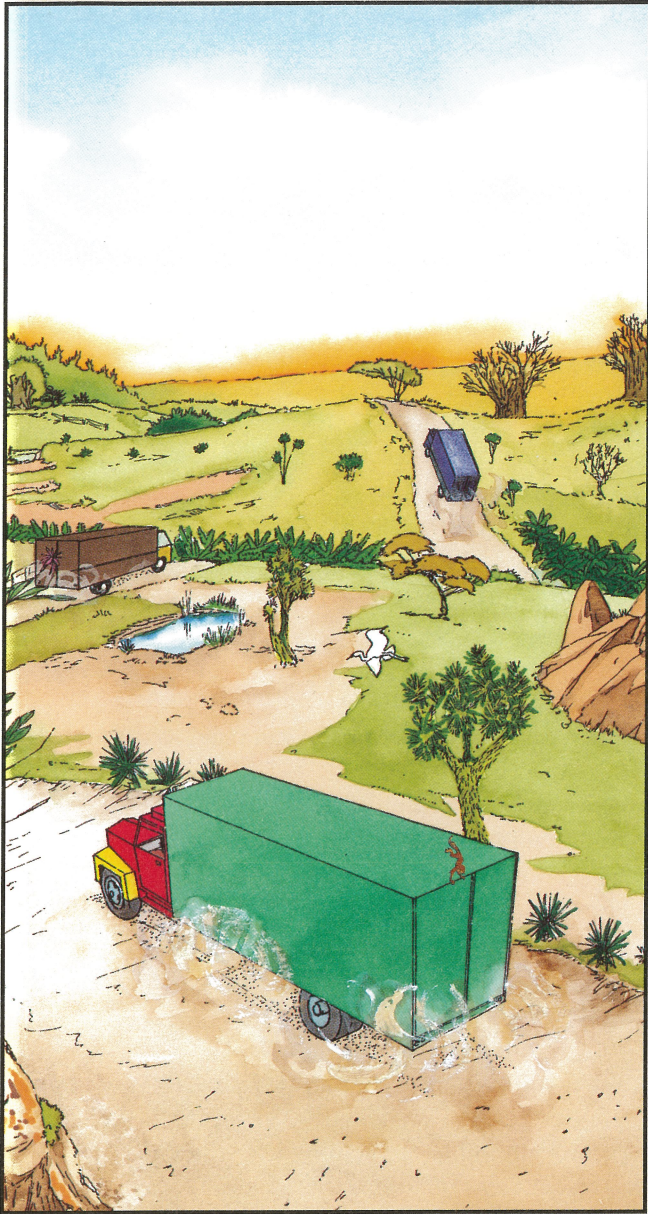
- Do you like Sara? Why/Why not?
- What do you think of Amina?
- What would you have done if you were in Amina's situation?
- If Amina was your friend, how would you have helped her?
- Do you think Sara did the right thing by going after the truck drivers?

- Do you know of someone among your friends who could have done so?
- How would people react to such behaviour?
- Do you think girls can take decisions on such important issues?
- What do you think could have happened to Amina if she was not rescued in time?
- Have you heard of such things happening to girls in your community?
- Why do you think it happens?
- Are there older people who sexually exploit girls in your community? Who are they?
- What do you think of such men? What should be done about them?
- What do you think can be the consequences of such behaviour?
- Are there girls who would willingly associate with such men? Why/Why not?
- What could girls do to stop such men?
- How would you advise girls who associate with such men?
- Do you think such behaviour can spread HIV/AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)? Why?
- How does your community treat girls who get infected with HIV/AIDS and STIs?
- Do you think it is different from how they treat boys? Why/Why not?
- How can girls avoid getting infected?
- How can the community help girls to avoid such risks?
- Is there anything new you have learnt from this story?

##### BOYS

- Do you think girls can do what Sara did in this story?
- Would you like your sister to do such a thing? Why/Why not?
- What do you think of Amina?
- What do you think of the truck drivers?
- What do you think of the relationship between Sara and Juma?
- If you were Juma, would you have a friend like Sara? Why/Why not?





- How would you have helped Amina if she were your sister or friend?
- What do you think of older men making sexual advances towards young girls?
- Do such things happen in your community?
- How do people in your community react to such things?
- Do you think such behaviour can cause any diseases?
- Are there some other behaviours in your community that you think can cause HIV/AIDS and STIs? Which ones and why?
- As boys, how can you stop such behaviour in your community?
- What did you learn from this story?
- Can you apply some of the lessons in your real life? Explain.

## PARENTS

- What do you think of the situation of Amina?
- Are there girls facing similar problems in your community?
- What are the causes of these problems?
- Do you know of incidences of girls being sexually abused in your community?
- Why do you think such things happen?
- As parents, what could you do to help girls to face up to such behaviour?
- Do you believe that such behaviour can lead to the spread of HIV/AIDS and STIs? Give reasons.
- How can we check the spread of the disease?
- What are the responsibilities of adolescents?

## FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

The following are suggestions for activities which will improve understanding of the Sara story and how this relates to existing situations of girls in their own communities. The activities will help to motivate the group to find ways to support more girls in building their Life Skills and staying in school. These are some possible ideas which can lead to the generation of more ideas.

The activities can focus on the issue of girls developing Life Skills, like critical thinking, resisting peer pressure, assertiveness, negotiation/communication skills, etc., and how the community can create an enabling environment to support such growth.

Encourage the group members to participate fully in planning and carrying out these activities.

### A. Group Discussions

Let the group discuss the story among themselves. One member can lead the discussion. This can be done in groups of two, three or more.

### B. Drawings

The group members could draw pictures of their favourite parts of the story. Discuss why they enjoyed that part, what lessons could be learnt from it, etc.

### C. Survey

Ask the group to conduct a small survey in their community to find out if there are incidences of sexual harassment of young girls by older men. How do people react to such men? Find out if people are aware of STIs and HIV/AIDS; whether they know about the causes of the spread of these diseases; if they know of

anyone suffering or who has suffered from these diseases; who are more at risk regarding sexual exploitation: girls pushed out of schools or girls who are attending school? Find out what interventions are in place within the community to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS/STIs and how successful they are.

#### **D. Drama or role play**

Create a drama or role play on some of the themes of how young girls fall victim to sexual advances of older men, how the men allure the girls to enter into sexual relationships with them by buying expensive gifts, promising them lucrative jobs, marriage, etc., any myths/misconceptions associated with the idea that it is safe to have sex with young girls/children, etc.

#### **Ask questions:**



How did you feel when you acted as a girl/boy/adult? How did you feel about the situation in which you found yourself in the play? Ask other members to react to the play.

#### **E. Brainstorming**

Brainstorm on a list of actions which could be undertaken by the community to support youths, especially girls, to develop proper Life Skills, empower adolescents to make correct decisions on issues like sex and encourage the practice of healthy life styles, avoid risky behaviour and also to check sexual exploitation of girls and prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and other STIs.

#### **F. Community involvement**

The group could share the ideas of Sara's story with their community through some of the following activities. The group can perform these in public, with friends, women's groups, churches and other religious or community venues:

- A drama or skit with alternative endings and discussions.

- Story telling with alternative endings and discussions.
- Debates on the issues in the stories.
- Puppet shows with Sara characters.
- Create songs, dances, poems and games on the themes of the story.

Some of the activities can be undertaken on open stage, on public holidays, so that more people can watch and participate in discussions.

You may want to form a club, committee or a forum for girls, themselves, to discuss various issues of young people related to healthy life styles. Such groups can serve as a sort of resource centre where young people could share and exchange their experiences.

#### **G. Discussing Results**

After a few weeks, the group can meet to discuss:

- What they have done at home and in the community.
- How did people react?
- What activities were successful? What problems arose?
- What can they do to reinforce their efforts to support young people, especially girls, to avoid risky behaviour and adopt healthy life styles?

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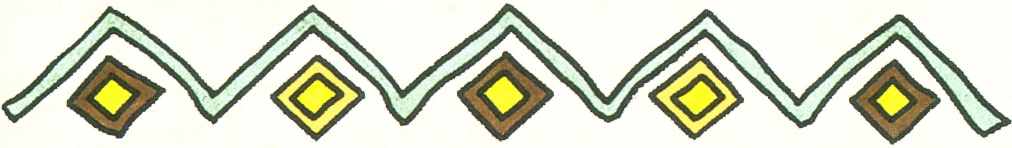
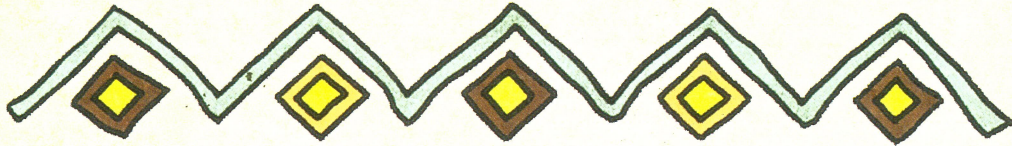
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