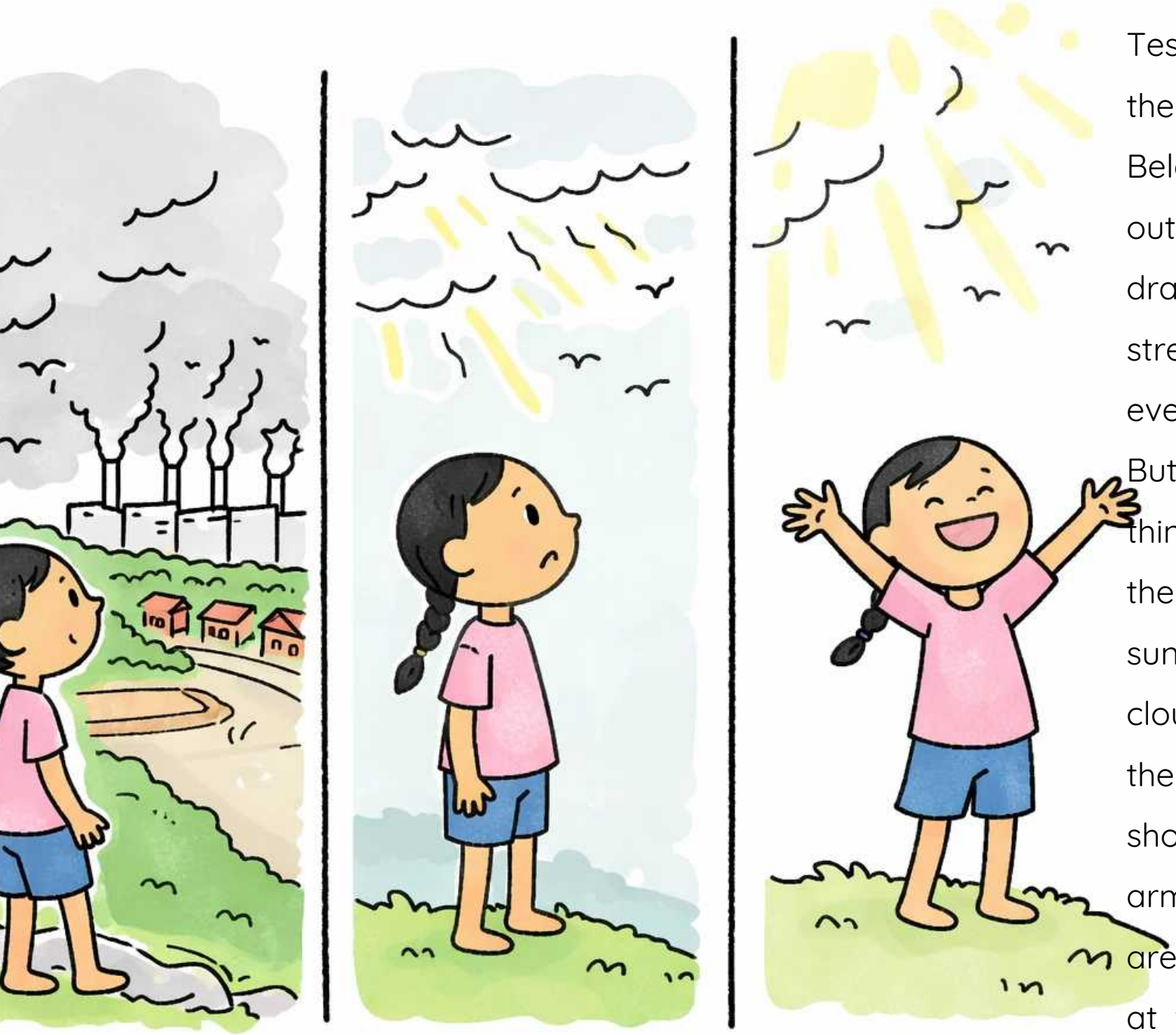
The Sky Stole the Sun

Tess did not like the sky above her town. It was a dull, **uniform** grey, thick with smog, and it smelled like old socks. Smoke from the big factory rolled over the rooftops every morning. Tess squinted up at the haze, looking for a bit of blue. Two dogs trotted past on the dirt road, their noses low.

'Dad,' Tess said. 'Was the sky always this ugly?' Dad stopped walking and looked up. His face went soft. 'When I was a boy, the sky was a **uniform** blue. I could feel the sun on my face every single day.' 'I want that,' Tess said. 'Me too, kid.' He sighed and kept walking. But Tess did not sigh. Tess made a plan.

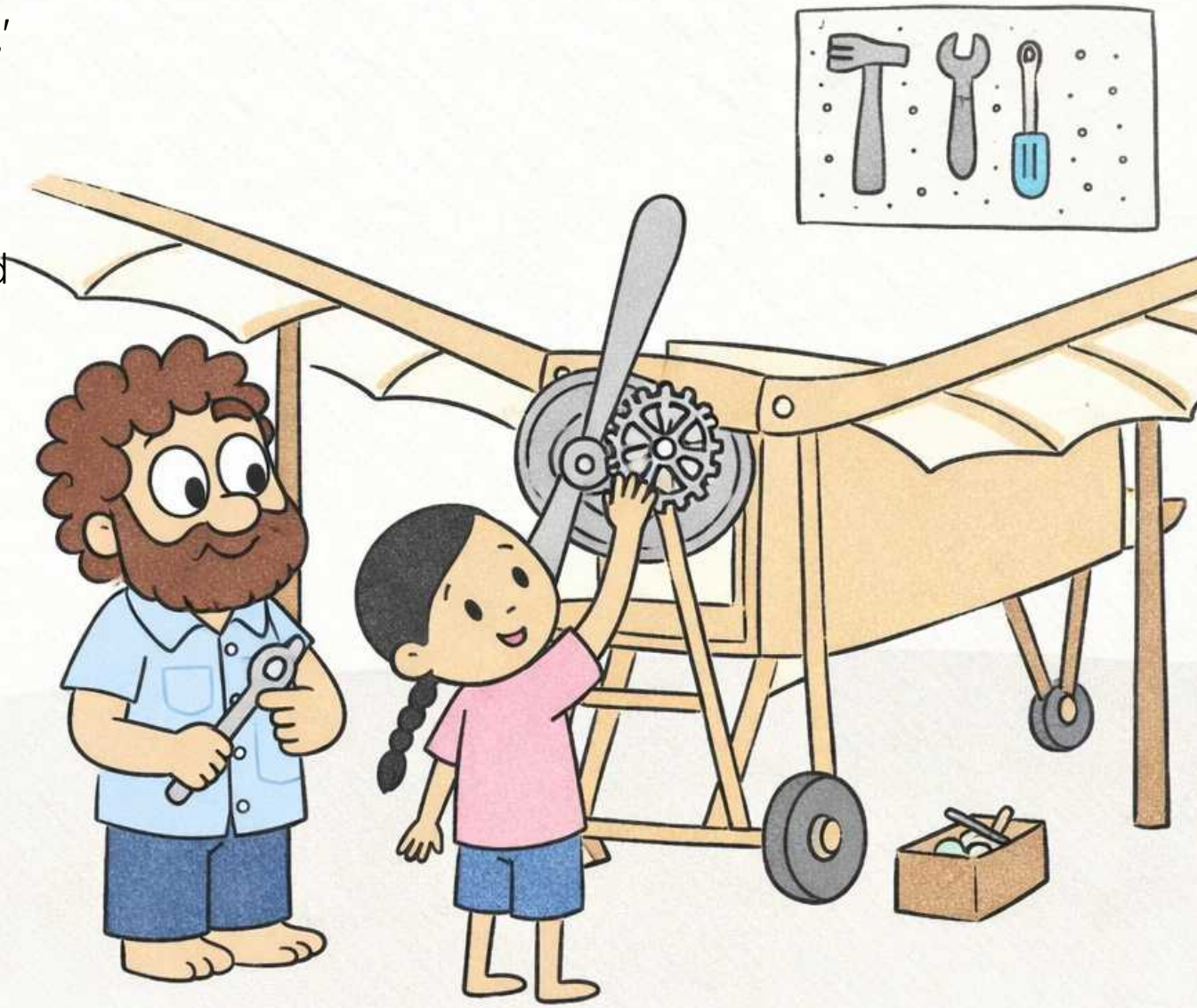


Tess marched to the top of the tallest hill outside town. Below, the factories puffed out smoke like grumpy old dragons. The grey smog stretched over every house, every street, every garden. But up high, the smog got thinner. And thinner. And then… Sunlight. Real, bright sunlight broke through the clouds and hit Tess right in the face. A **trio** of birds shot past. She threw her arms wide and laughed. 'You are up there!' she shouted at the sky. 'I knew it!'

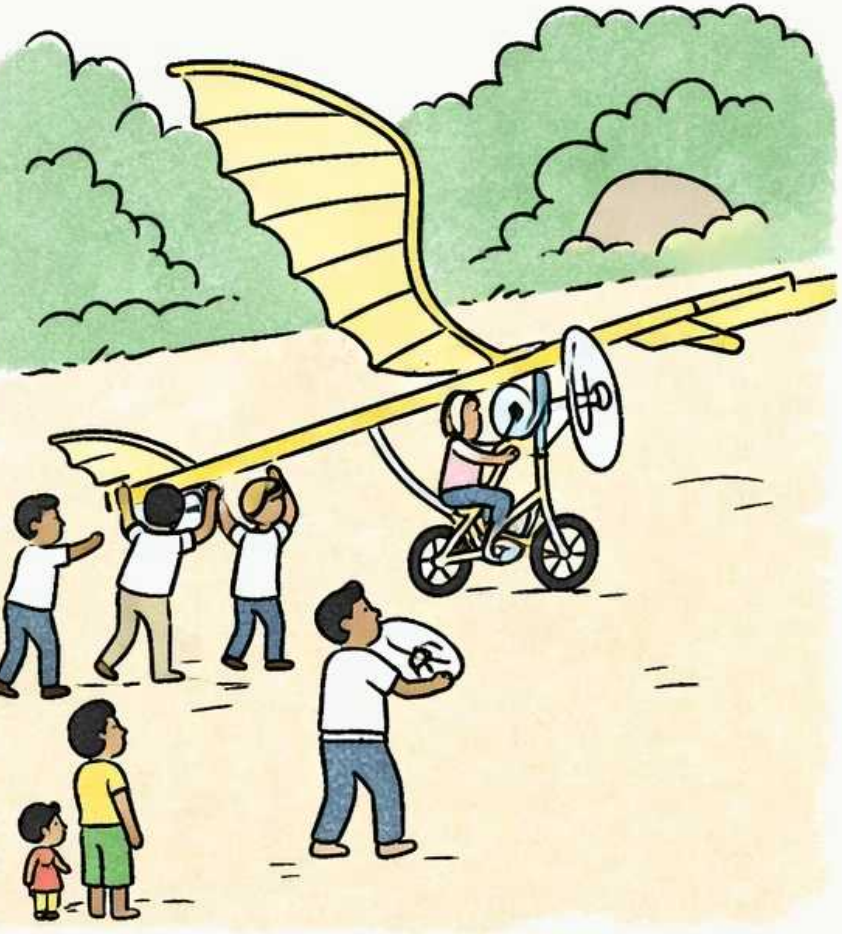
Tess burst into Dad's shop. Tools hung on every wall. Gears, propellers, and planks of wood lined the floor. It was a grand mess. 'I need to get above the smog,' Tess said, grabbing a handful of gears. 'So I am going to build a **biplane.'** She jammed the first gear into a wooden frame. Then another. Then five more. Tess had never built a **biplane** before. But how hard could it be?

Very hard, it turned out. Tess's **biplane** took off from the hilltop like a rocket. For three thrilling seconds, she was flying. Then the left wing wobbled. Then the right wing wobbled. Then the plane fell apart like a sneeze. Tess crashed into the tallest tree on the hill. She hung from a branch with leaves and a gear stuck in her hair. 'Well,' she said, climbing down one branch at a time. 'The first **biplane** was bad. The next one will not be.'

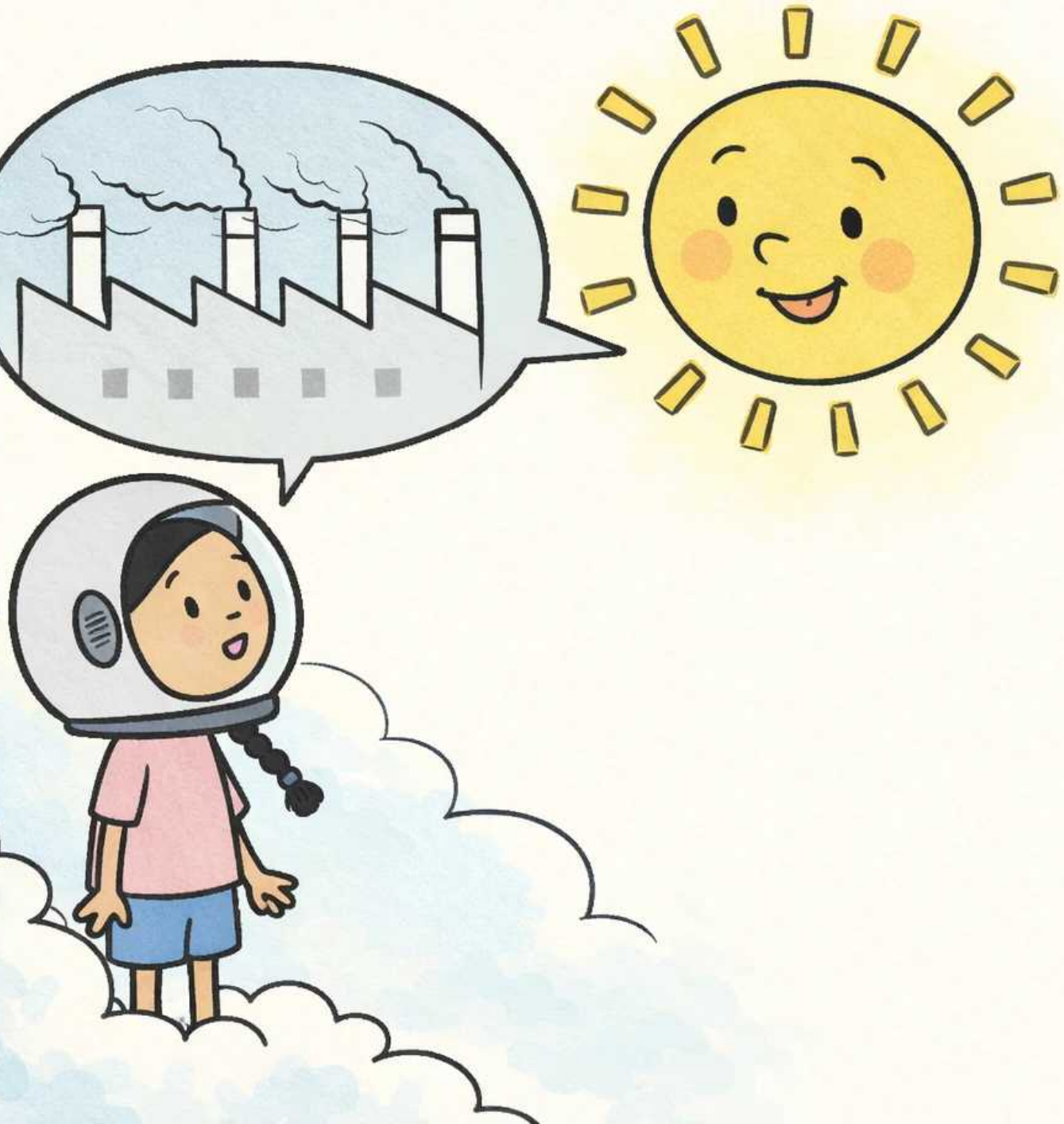
This time, Dad helped. 'Bigger wings,' he said, bolting on two wide, strong ones. 'Tighter gears,' Tess said, fitting each one until the propeller spun smooth and fast. No wobbles. No rattles. Dad even fixed a **bicycle** frame underneath so Tess could pedal the propeller into a spin. They stepped back and looked. The new **biplane** was twice as big as the first and ten times as tough. 'Think it will fly?' Dad asked. Tess grinned. 'Only one way to find out.'



Word got out fast. Most of the town came to watch Tess wheel her **biplane** up the hill. 'She crashed last time!' one of them called. 'She will crash again!' said another. Tess did not care. Dad held out a flight helmet. 'Do not come back without the sun,' he said. Tess put it on. 'I won't come back until I find it.'



The propeller roared. The biplane's wheels bumped over the cliff edge. And then, nothing but air. Tess was flying. Really flying, no trees this time! Tess whooped and waved down at the tiny crowd below. Dad stood waving up at her. The crowd cheered. She aimed the nose straight up and climbed. Through the grey. Through the stink. Through the thick, heavy smog, higher and higher, until...

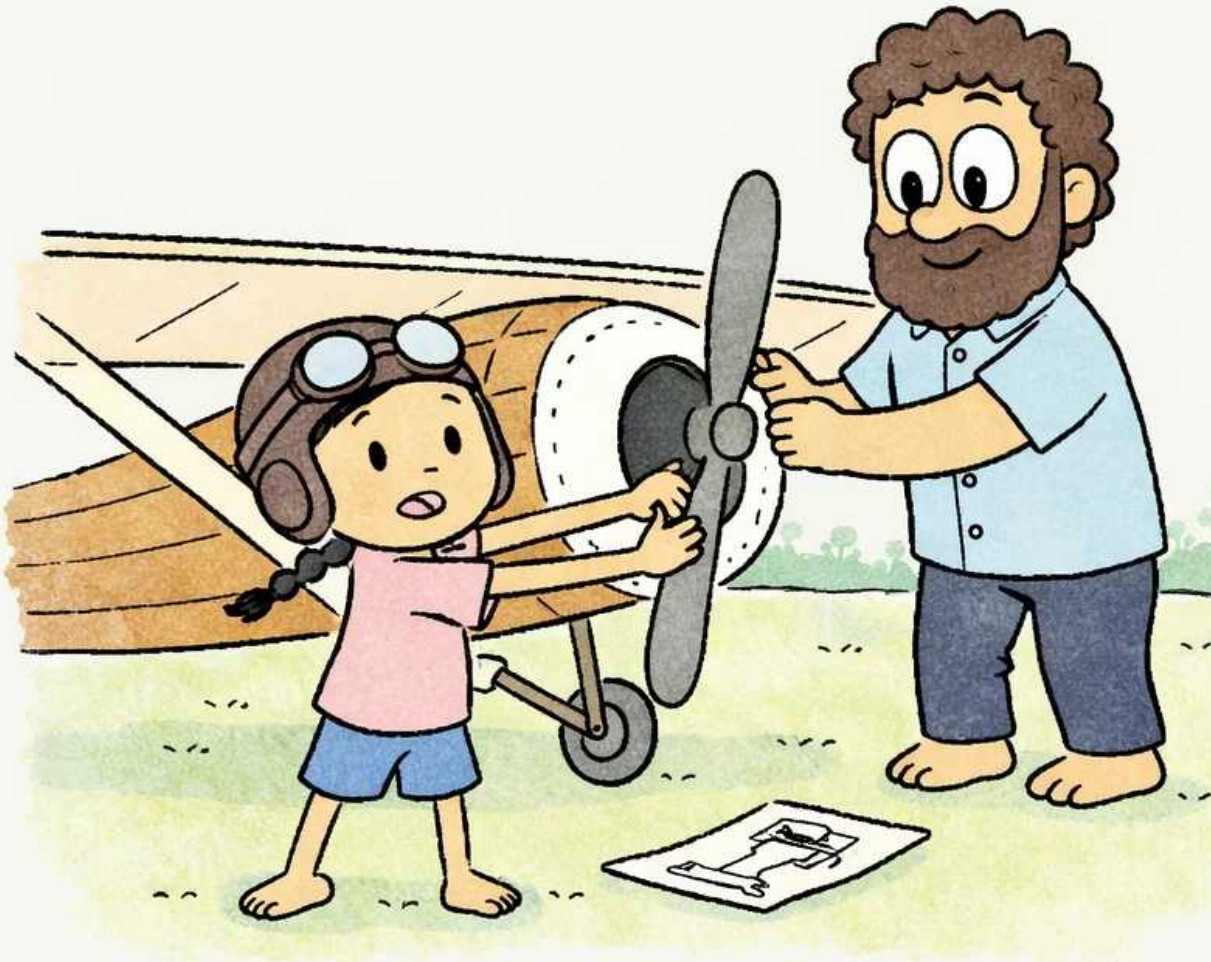


Tess burst through the top of the clouds into a **universe** of golden light. And there was Sun. Not just sunlight. Sun. A big, round, glowing face, looking right at her. 'Finally!' Sun shouted. 'I have been stuck up in the sky for years! I shout and shout, but nobody can hear me through all that smoke!' Tess blinked. 'You can talk?' 'I can talk!' Sun said. 'But that factory smoke is blocking everything. Shut the factory down, kid, or my rays will never reach the town again.'

Tess flew home so fast the propeller screamed. She landed in the middle of town, and people rushed out to see. Tess climbed on top of her plane and cupped her hands around her mouth. 'I met Sun!' she yelled. 'Sun says the smoke is blocking everything! We need to **unite** and fix this! All of us. Right now.' For one second, nobody moved. Then one of them picked up a spade. Then another. Then all of them. They planted trees along the river and cleaned the water, side by side, until the smog began to thin.

And then, one morning, Sun broke through. Not a little peek. The full sun, beaming down with the biggest, silliest grin Tess had ever seen. 'There you are!' Sun shouted from the sky. 'I missed all of you!' Bright light swept the town. Kids ran to the beach and splashed into the water. A **trio** of birds sang from a rooftop. Tess stood on the sand with Dad and watched the crowd laugh and swim. Dad put a hand on her arm. 'You brought it back.'

'Dad,' Tess said the very next morning. She stood next to a brand new **biplane,** helmet already on, a rolled-up plan at her feet. 'There are other towns with grey skies. I checked.' Dad smiled. He put both hands on the nose of the **biplane** and leaned in. 'Then go and tell them, Tess.' Tess grabbed the propeller and grinned. She had a sun to deliver.



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Tess hates the grey, smoggy sky over her town. When sunlight breaks through on a hilltop, she decides to build a plane and fly straight to its source. Her first attempt falls apart in midair. Can Tess build something strong enough to reach the sun for good? Created to align with the UFLI Foundations scope and sequence (Lesson 127: uni-, bi-, tri), this book practises words like 'biplane', 'trio', 'uniform', 'bicycle', 'unite'.

Phonics Focus: uni-, bi-, tri

bicycle, biplane, trio, uniform, unite, universe

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