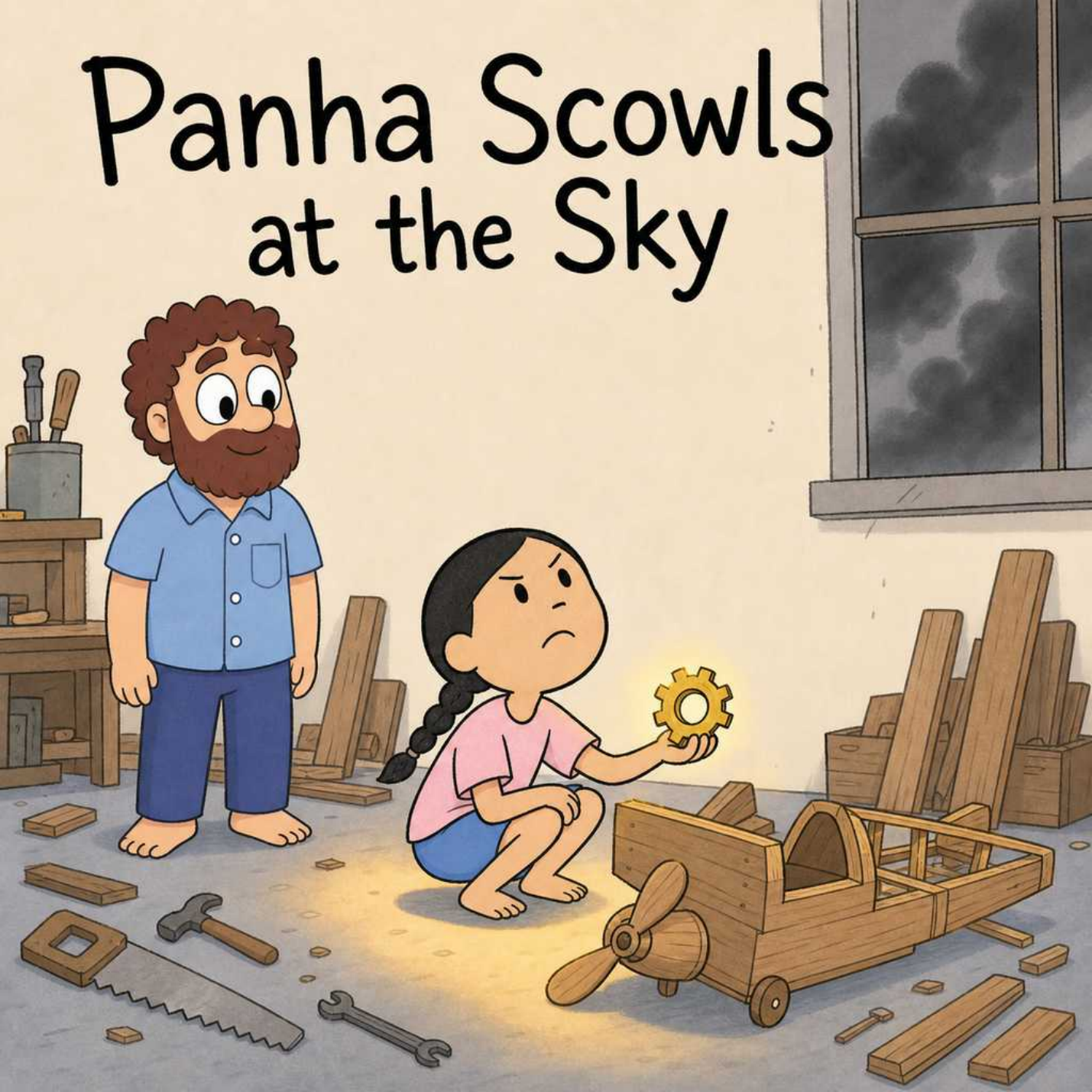
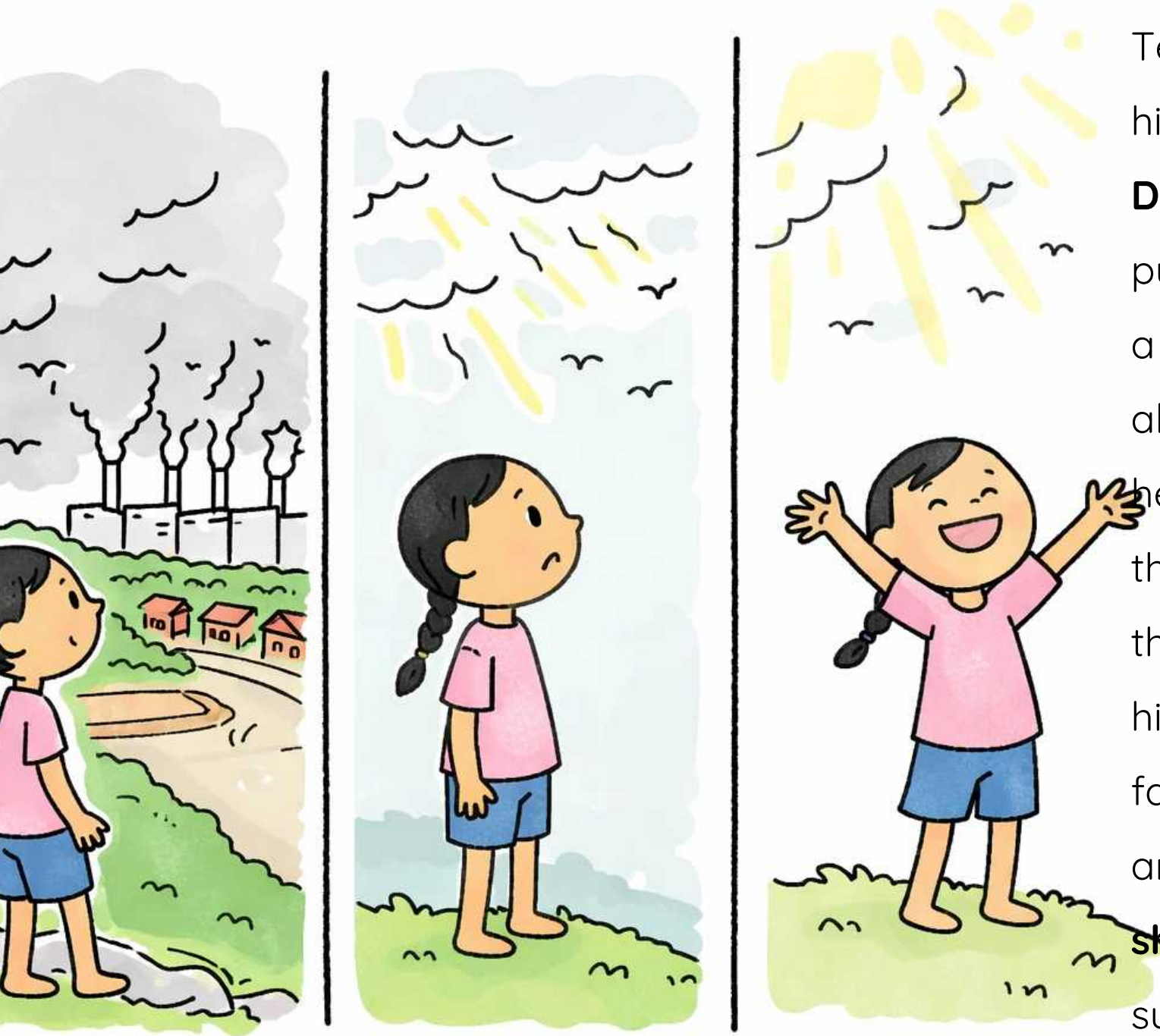
Panha Scowls at the Sky



Tess **frowns** up at the sky. It is gray and gloomy, and it smells like old socks. The big plant puffs thick smog **down** on the **town** all day, and it never lifts. Up past all that gray there should be blue sky. Tess wants to see it **now.**

'Dad,' Tess says, 'was the sky always this gray?' Dad stops and looks up. His face goes soft. 'When I was a boy, the sun would shine **down** on us all day. It was hot on my cheeks.' 'I want that,' Tess says with a **frown.** 'Me too, kid.' Dad sighs and goes on **down** the path. But Tess does not sigh. Tess makes a plan.



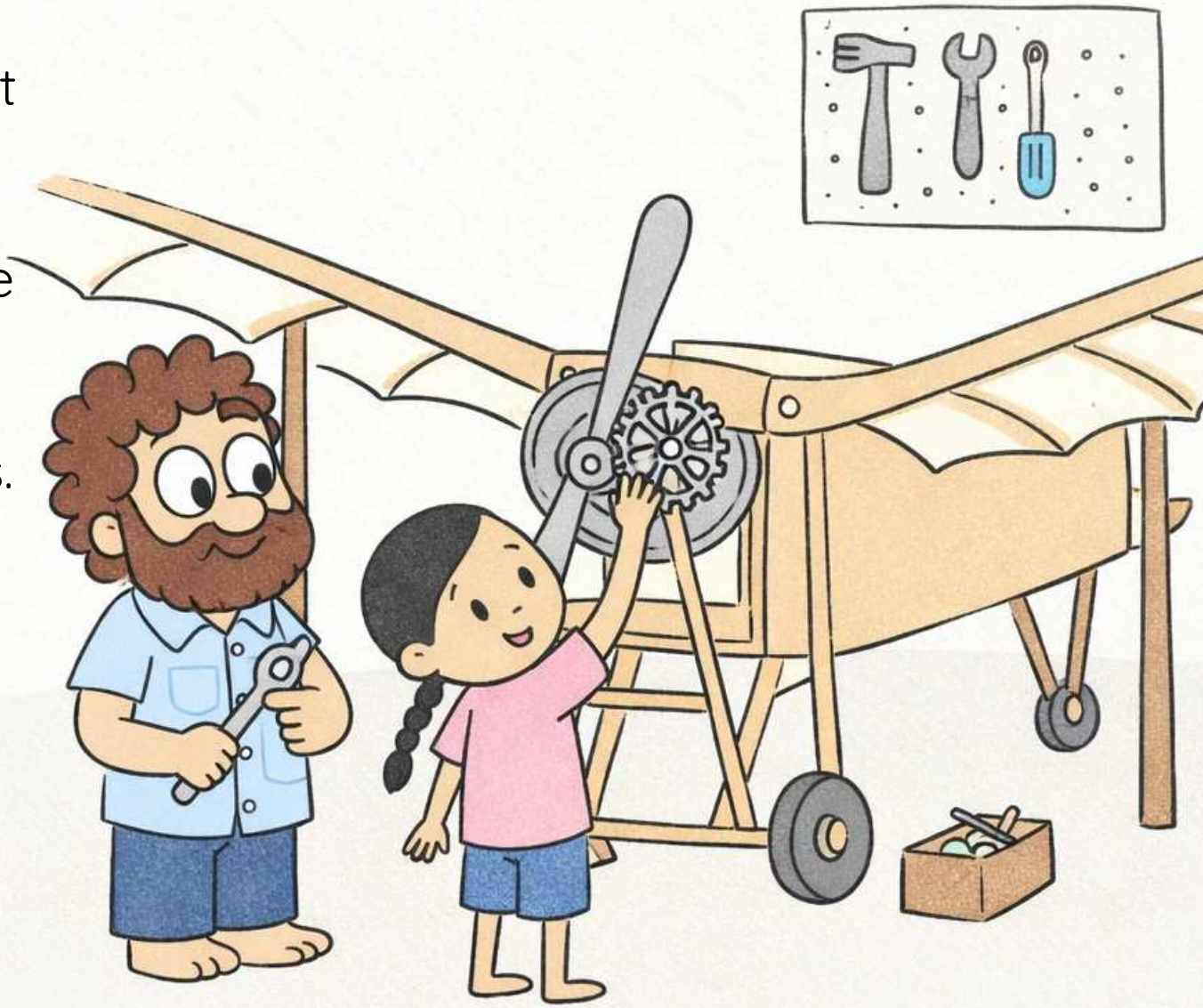
Tess marches up a tall hill **outside town. Down below,** the plant puffs **out** smoke, and a gray **cloud** lies on all the rooftops. But up here, the smog gets thin. And thinner. And then, sunlight! Hot rays hit Tess right in the face. She flings her arms wide. **'Wow!'** she **shouts** at the sky. 'The sun is up there!'

Tess bursts into Dad's shop. Tools hang on all the walls. Cogs and props and planks lie all **around.**

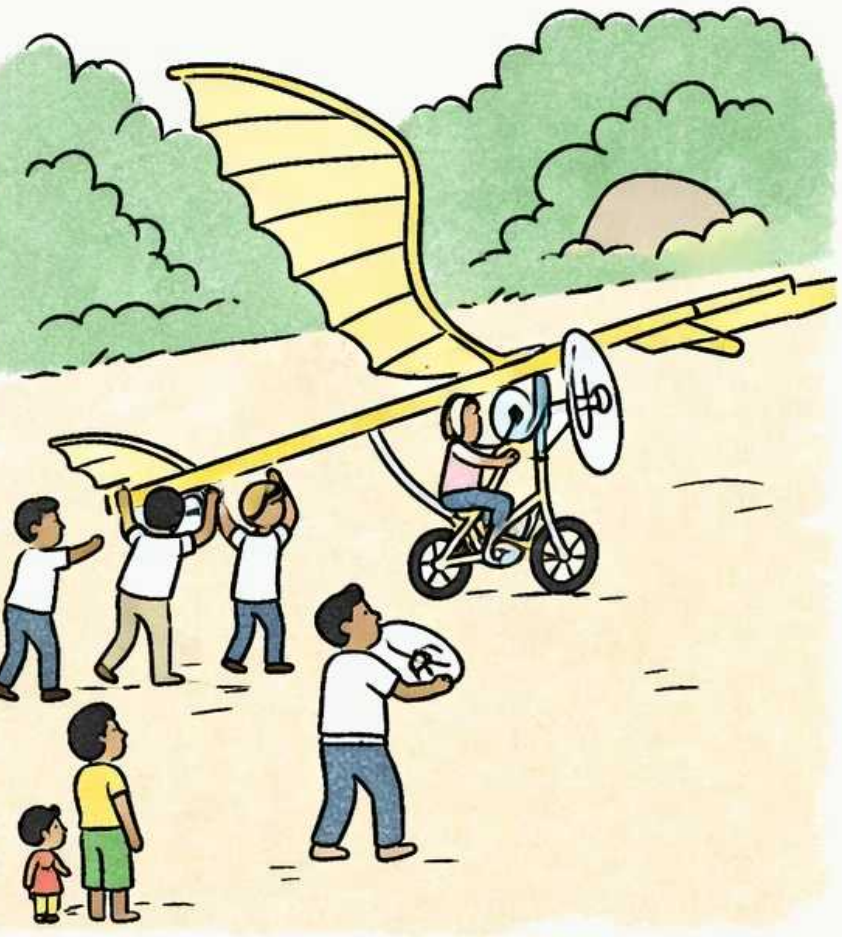
'I have to get up past the smog,' Tess says. 'So I am going to make a plane.' She fits a cog into a wood frame. Then one more. Then five more. Tess has never made a plane before, but **how** hard can it be?

Very hard, it turns **out.** The plane zooms up off the hilltop. For a bit, Tess is flying! Then the left wing tilts. Then the right wing tilts. Then the plane splits, and planks fly off. Tess lands in a tall tree. She hangs there with a cog stuck in her hair. 'So plane one was bad,' she says, and she **scowls.** 'Plane two won't be.'

This time, Dad helps. 'Wide wings,' he says, and bolts on two strong wings. 'Tight cogs,' Tess says, and fits each one in tight. **Now** the prop spins fast and smooth. No tilts. No bangs. They step back and gaze at the plane. It is big, and it is strong. 'Can it fly?' Dad asks. Tess grins. 'We can test it right **now.'**

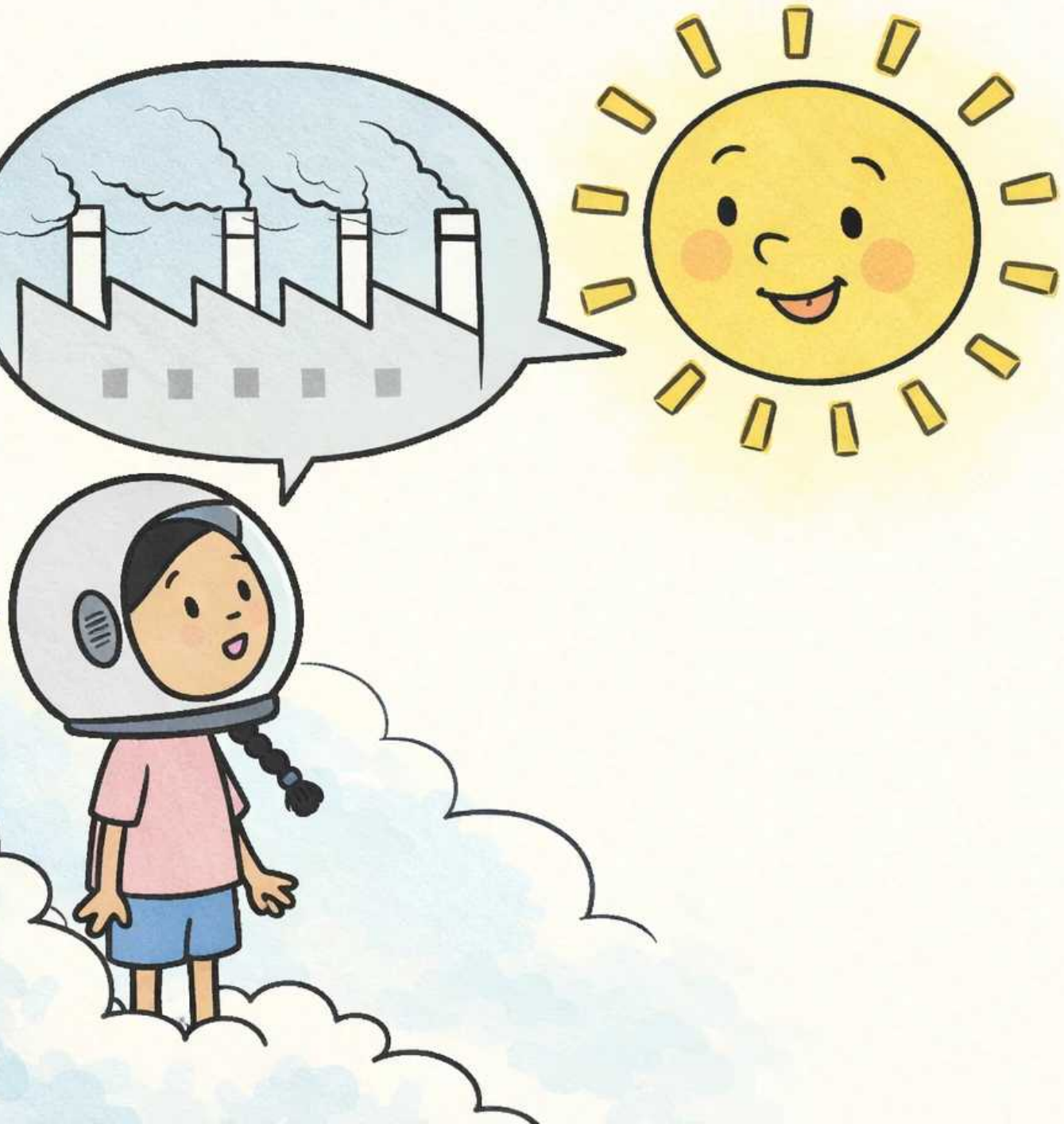


Word gets **out** fast. A **crowd** comes up the dirt path to see the new plane. 'That kid crashed last time,' a man says in a **low** voice. Tess just grins. She sits in the seat and grips the frame. Dad holds **out** a flight hat. 'Come back with the sun,' he says. Tess puts the hat on. 'I won't come **down** before I get to the sun.'



The prop hums **loud. Pow!** The wheels bump off the cliff edge, and then there is just air. Tess is flying! No trees this time!

She waves **down** at the **crowd** on the cliff. Dad jumps up and **down.** All the **town shouts** for her. Tess aims the nose up and rises. Up past the gray. Up past the stink. Up past the thick smog, and then...

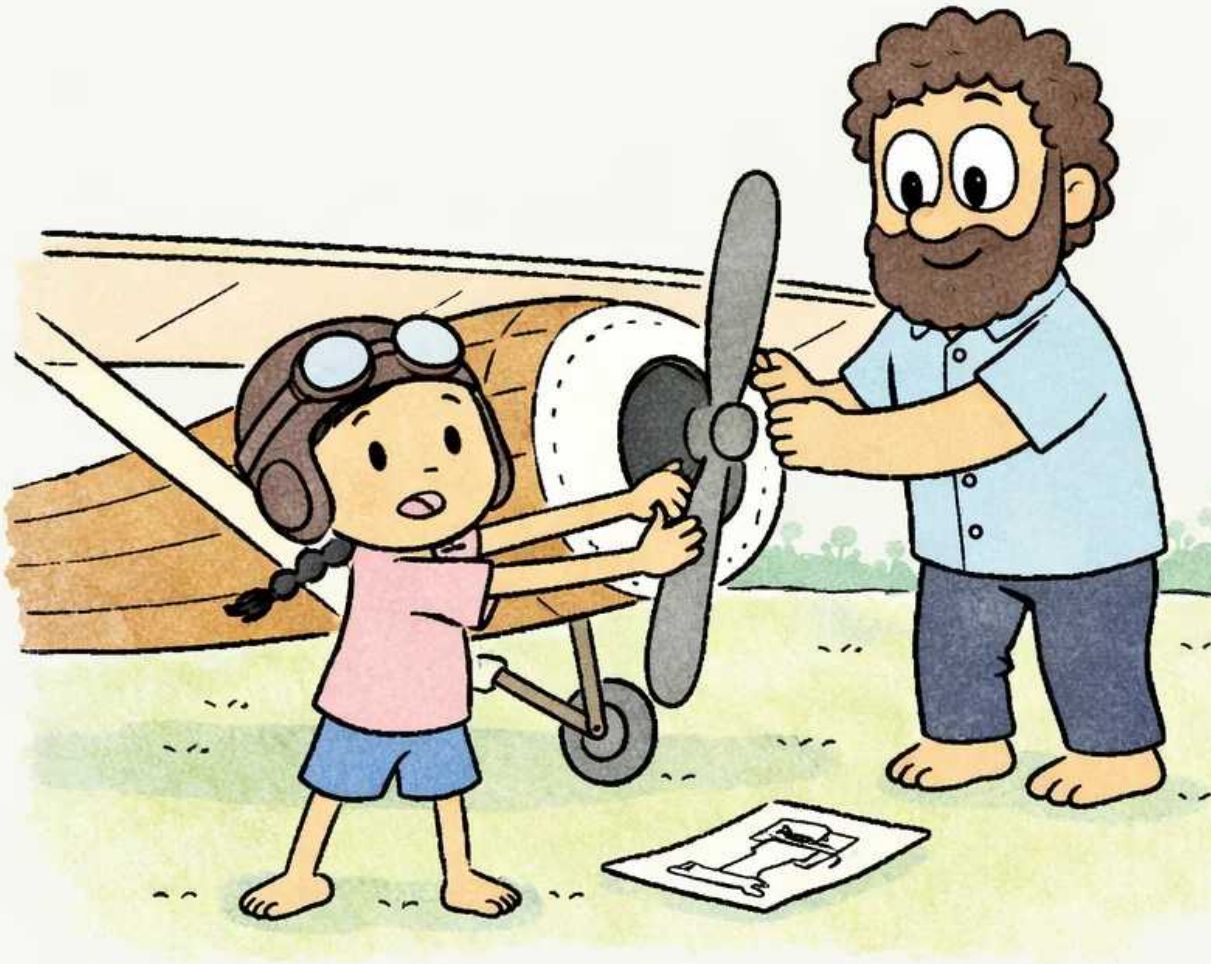


Tess bursts **out** on top of the **clouds,** into hot gold light. And there is Sun. A big **round** face, gazing right at her. 'At last!' Sun bellows. 'I **shout** and **shout,** but the smoke blocks my voice!' Tess squints. 'You can speak?' 'I can speak, but my rays can not get **down.** The smoke blocks them. Shut that plant **down,** kid, or my light can never reach the **town.'**

Tess flies home so fast the prop screams. She lands in **town,** gets on top of the plane, and cups her hands **round** her **mouth.** 'I met the sun!' she **shouts aloud.** 'The smoke blocks its rays! We can fix this, all of us, right **now!'** At first, the **crowd** just stands still. Then one man grabs a tool. Then more. The **town** plants trees, cleans the river, digs and sweeps, and the smog starts to thin.

Then one morning, Sun bursts **out.** Not just a wee peep. All the sun is **out,** with a big silly grin. 'There is my **town!'** Sun **shouts. 'How** I miss my **town!'** Hot light beams **down.** Kids dash to the sea and splash in. Tess stands on the sand with Dad and sees the **town** smile. Dad puts a hand on her arm. 'You made the sun come back **down,** Tess.'

'Dad,' Tess says the next morning. She stands by a big new plane, flight hat on, prop spinning. A plan lies at her feet. 'More **towns** have gray skies. I can see them from up there.' Dad smiles. He leans on the plane's nose. 'Then go tell them, Tess.' Tess grabs the prop and grins. She has a sun to hand **out.**



MIXED

Panha Scowls at the Sky

A gray, smoggy sky hangs over Panha's town, and she's never even seen blue. When her dad says the sun used to shine every day, Panha decides she won't stop until she finds it herself. Can a girl with a homemade plane climb high enough to bring the sun back down? Written for Jolly Phonics classrooms (Step 3, Unit 9: /ou/ mixed), this book practices words like 'shout', 'crowd', 'round', 'frown', 'loud'.

Phonics Focus: <mixed>

aloud, around, bellow, below, cloud, clouds, crowd, down, frown, frowns, how, loud, low, mouth, now, out, outside, pow, round, scowls, shout, shouts, town, towns, wow

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