

“Learning about Sorcery Accusation Related Violence”

An illustration of two young Black people, a woman on the left and a man on the right, standing together. The woman has her hair in a bun and is wearing a pink dress with a white collar. The man is wearing a yellow t-shirt with a red collar. They are both looking towards the right with slight smiles. The background is a soft-focus green and blue.

Peter & Grace Make a Difference

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Peter and Grace Go to the Village



Peter and Grace were enjoying their breakfast when their mother said, "Children, we will go to the village next week." Peter and Grace were very happy because Uncle John lived there and he was their favourite uncle. Life in the village was very different from life in the city. There were lots of games to play and even a waterfall!

When they got to the village, however, something was wrong.

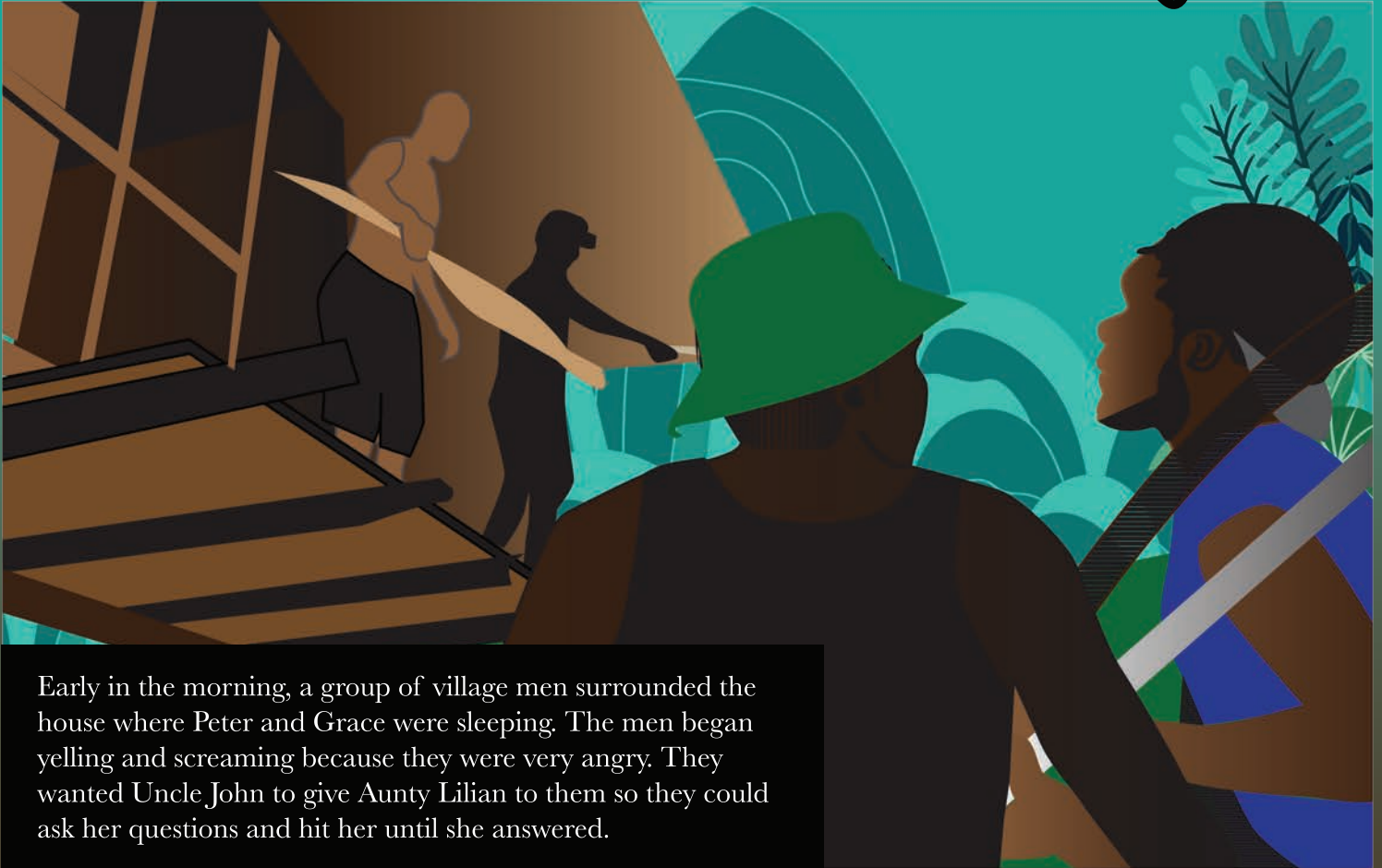


Everyone was unhappy. People were staring at each other. People were whispering nasty things as they sat around the fires at night. Peter and Grace heard the strange word 'sanguma' but they did not know what it meant.



People were saying that their Auntie Lilian was a sanguma woman. They said she had been using her black power to make bad things happen in the village.

Peter and Grace See Something Bad



Early in the morning, a group of village men surrounded the house where Peter and Grace were sleeping. The men began yelling and screaming because they were very angry. They wanted Uncle John to give Aunty Lilian to them so they could ask her questions and hit her until she answered.

Peter and Grace were so frightened. No one knew what to do.



After many hours of talking, Uncle John and his brothers gave the angry men 12 pigs as compensation. Uncle John hoped that when they took the pigs, they would leave his wife alone. Aunty Lilian was hiding in the house. She was afraid to go outside because the angry men might attack her. Peter and Grace were so confused. Aunty Lilian was a good person. Why did they want to hurt her?

Peter and Grace Go Back to School

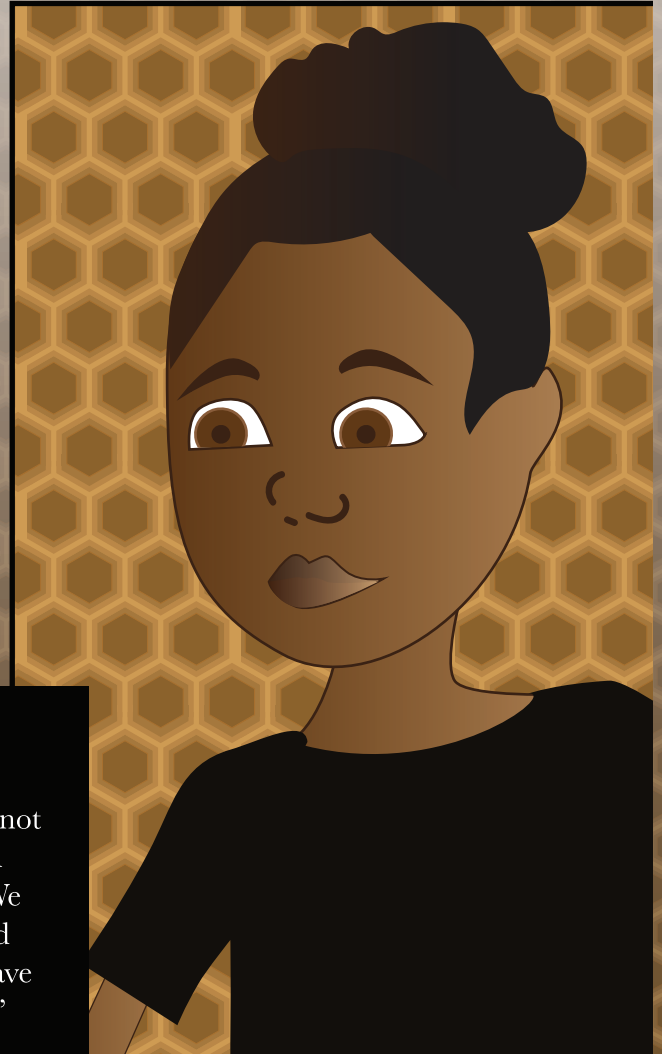


Back in the city, Peter and Grace were glad to go back to school. Their teacher was very intelligent and helped them learn everything in a clear and easy way.

“Good morning children” she said, “Did you enjoy your holiday in the village?”



Peter and Grace told their teacher everything that had happened. Their teacher was not happy. She sat down with the class and said “Children, what happened to Aunty Lilian is not right. During this term in school, I will be helping you learn about why these sanguma beliefs are false and dangerous. We will learn how to tell the difference between what is true and false. Someday, you will be men and women and you will have to choose how to live. You will need to make good choices.”



Peter and Grace Ask Important Questions

Peter and Grace were excited to learn everything they could. They wrote down their questions that night so that they would be ready for class in the morning.

In class, Grace raised her hand. “Teacher, why are women being accused of sanguma?” Grace asked. “Teacher, what about these women’s human rights? Who is going to help my Aunty Lilian?”

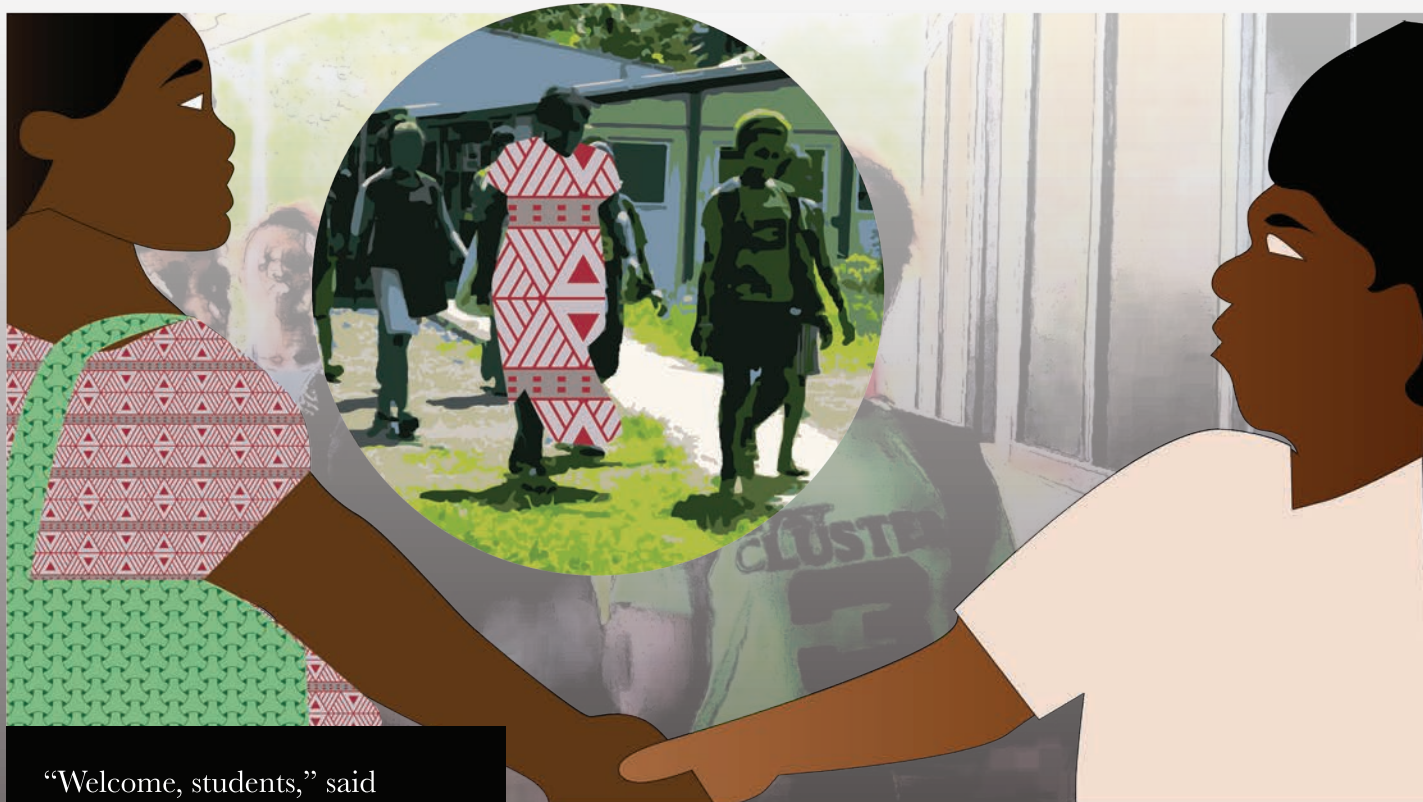


Peter was next. “Teacher, I’ve never heard my pastor talk about this. Why is that? Who is right and who is wrong? What does the law of our country say?”



“Excellent questions, children!” their teacher said. “Thank you for using your minds to think about this. Well done! Tomorrow we will leave the classroom to find the answers!”

Peter and Grace Visit the Hospital



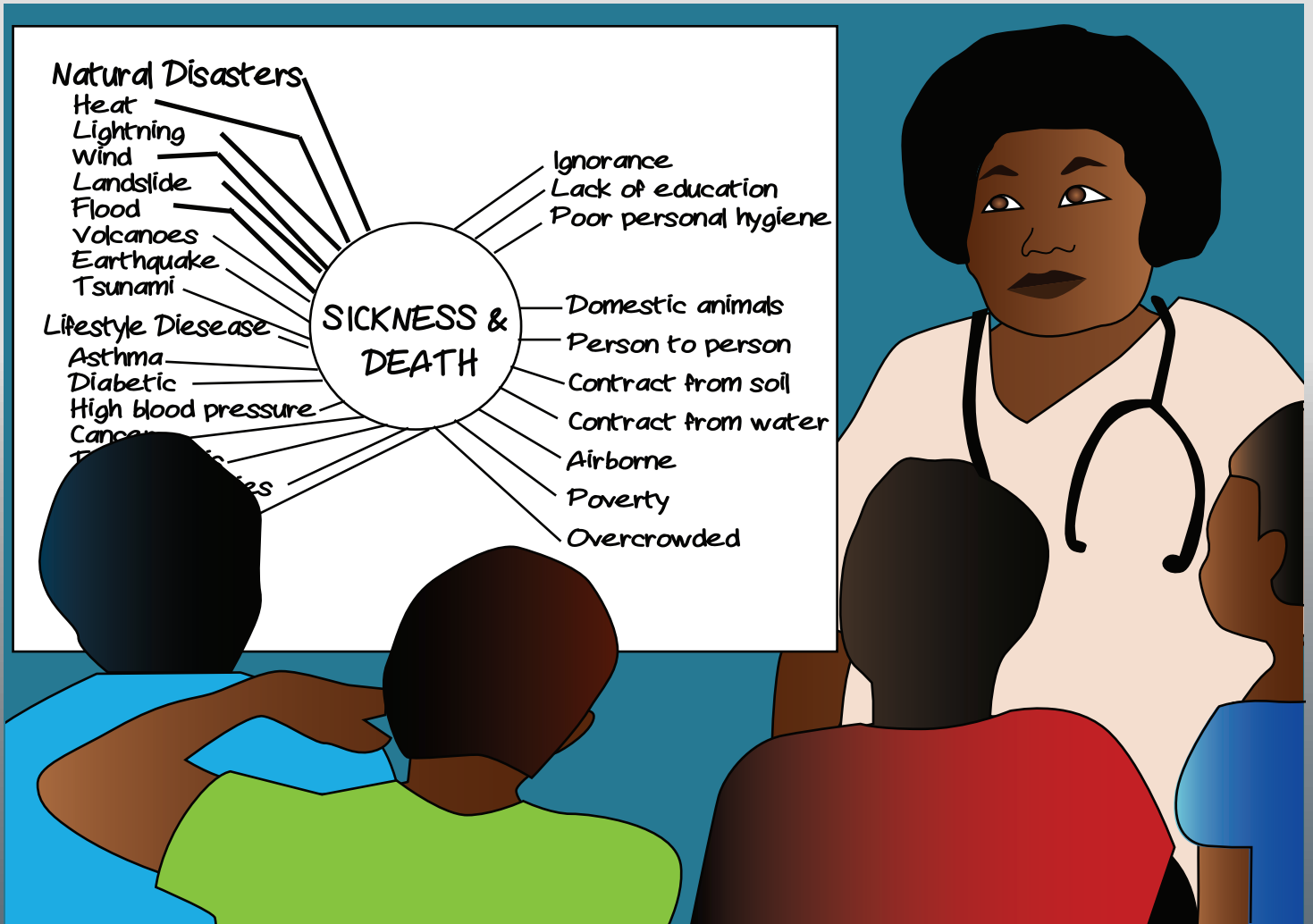
“Welcome, students,” said Doctor Kelly, “I’m glad you have come to learn more.” Doctor Kelly explained to Peter and Grace and their classmates how it is not sanguma that makes people sick but rather germs and bacteria and viruses. She told them how people also got sick from natural causes like cancer, diabetes, heart attacks, accidents, HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis, typhoid, and even mental illness! Sometimes people even die!



Doctor Kelly said, “Children, there are many ways that a person can become sick, but sanguma is never one of them. If they come here to the hospital, we can check them and make sure they get the best treatment possible. You should never trust people on the street who promise a way to get better but have no medical training.”

Peter and Grace were very glad that Doctor Kelly was so smart. If they ever got sick, they would definitely come to see her.

Peter and Grace Visit the Hospital



Peter and Grace Hear a Man Yelling

Outside the hospital, there was a man yelling in the street. He was trying to tell people that he had discovered a way to cure their sickness. Only a few people were listening to him. It looked like he wanted to trick them and get their money!



Peter and Grace looked at each other and laughed. Peter said, "Look, Grace, it's one of the fake jungle doctors that Doctor Kelly warned us about."

Grace replied, "He looks like he's a drug body! We should leave." They quickly ran to catch up with their teacher.



Their teacher said, "You children were right not to listen to that man. He is causing problems by telling people things that are not true."

Peter and Grace Go to Church



The next day, their teacher took Peter, Grace and the other students to the local Christian Church. They met Pastor Frank and the Sunday School teacher Miss Kara.

“All true Christians believe that Jesus has complete authority over Satan and all evil spirits,” Pastor Frank told the children. “Some false Christians have been spreading the false belief that evil spirits can go into women and turn them into sanguma. This is completely false. It is not a Christian belief.” Pastor Frank was very serious.



Miss Kara said, “Yes, children. The Bible tells us that God loves all people and wants his children to show love for one another. Can you name some ways we can do that?”



Peter thought for a minute and then said, “We should help them. We should learn what is true and what is false so that we do not hurt each other.” “Good response, Peter!” said Miss Kara.

Peter and Grace Meet a Missionary



Just then a missionary stopped by. When he heard why the students were visiting Pastor Frank and Miss Kara, he gave them a big smile.

“Children, once upon a time in my country, we also used to believe in witchcraft or sanguma. But then we heard God’s word and believed it and our lives were completely changed,” he said. “Now, I am working with this community to learn the truth. God’s love must shine in the darkness!”



Grace was confused. “Mr” she said, “what do you mean, the darkness?”

Peter spoke up.

“Grace, remember when we went to the village and everyone was angry and we were afraid? That’s the darkness! God’s love should go there too!”



Peter and Grace Challenge Their Friends

On their way back to school, one of Peter's friends said, "Pastor Frank doesn't know anything. I heard a street preacher who told us that evil spirits tell the sanguma women to eat people's hearts!"



Grace looked at Peter. Would Peter say something? Peter looked unhappy.

Grace said, loudly, "How do you know that the street preacher is right and Pastor Frank is wrong? Are you an expert? Maybe that street preacher was just a big fat liar!"

Peter smiled at Grace. He was glad he had such a brave little sister who was not afraid to say what she thought and believed.

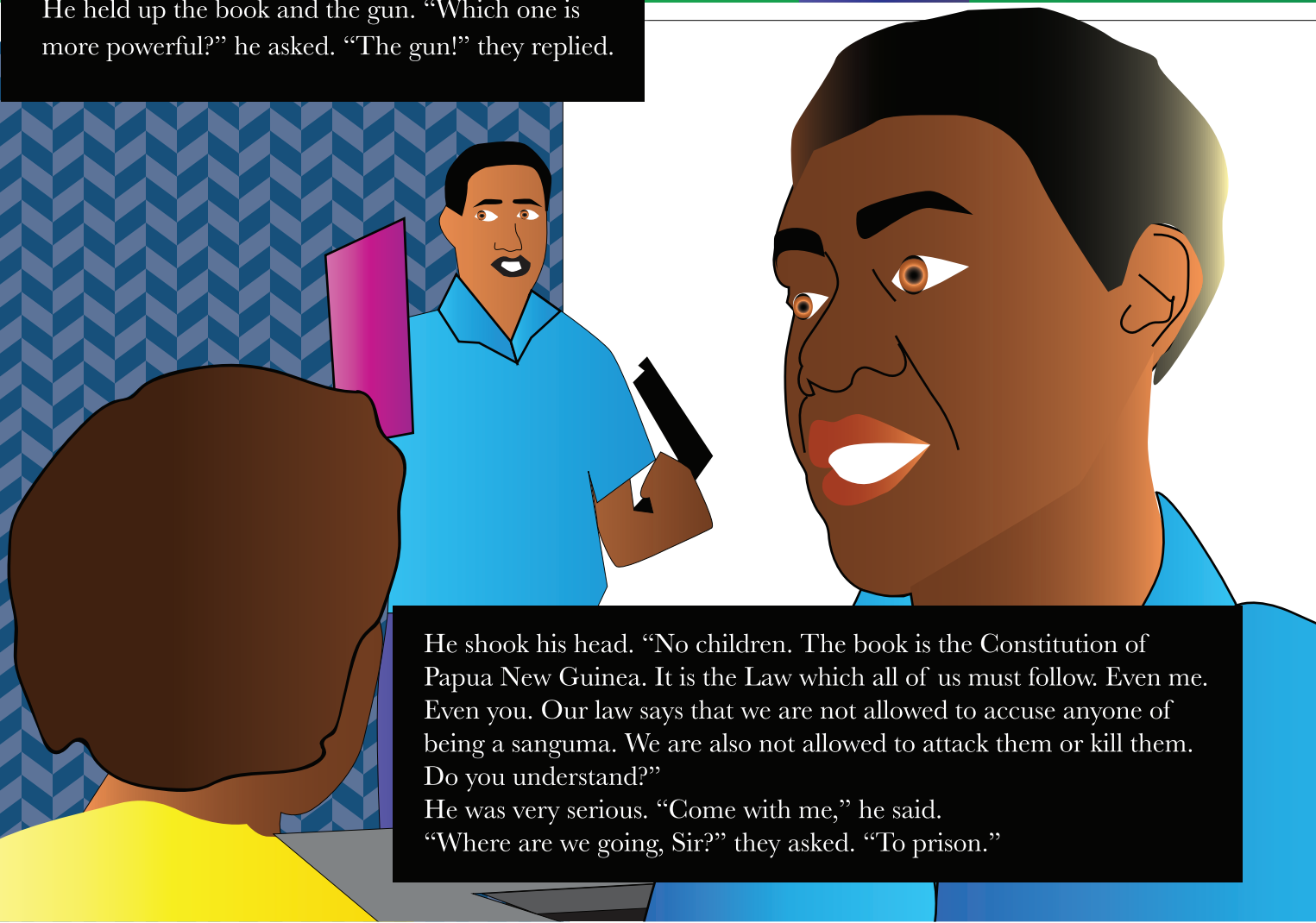
Peter's friend was going to say something to Grace, but he saw Peter standing close, so he kept his mouth shut and thought again about what he had said.

Peter and Grace Meet a Policeman

The next day, a policeman came to visit the class. He carried a big gun and a small book. "Good morning class," he said. "Good morning SIR!" they replied.



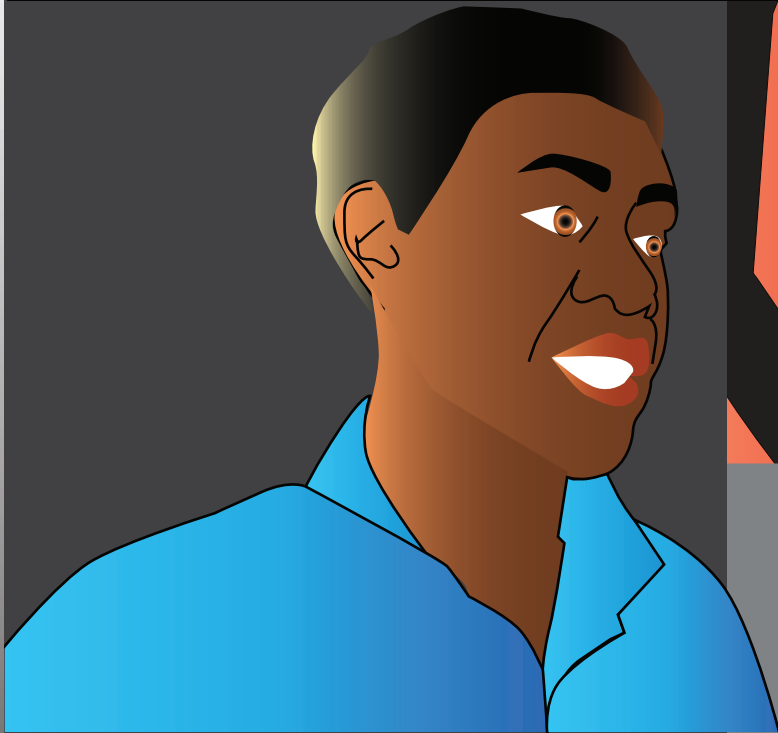
He held up the book and the gun. "Which one is more powerful?" he asked. "The gun!" they replied.



He shook his head. "No children. The book is the Constitution of Papua New Guinea. It is the Law which all of us must follow. Even me. Even you. Our law says that we are not allowed to accuse anyone of being a sanguma. We are also not allowed to attack them or kill them. Do you understand?" He was very serious. "Come with me," he said. "Where are we going, Sir?" they asked. "To prison."

Peter and Grace Go to Prison

The students were very frightened. The prison was full of criminals and bad people. It was dark and crowded and everyone looked hungry and very unhappy.



The policeman showed them a cell.
“Students, does this look like a good place?
Do you want to live here for the rest of your
life?”
One boy asked, “Sir, what if you don’t catch
me?”

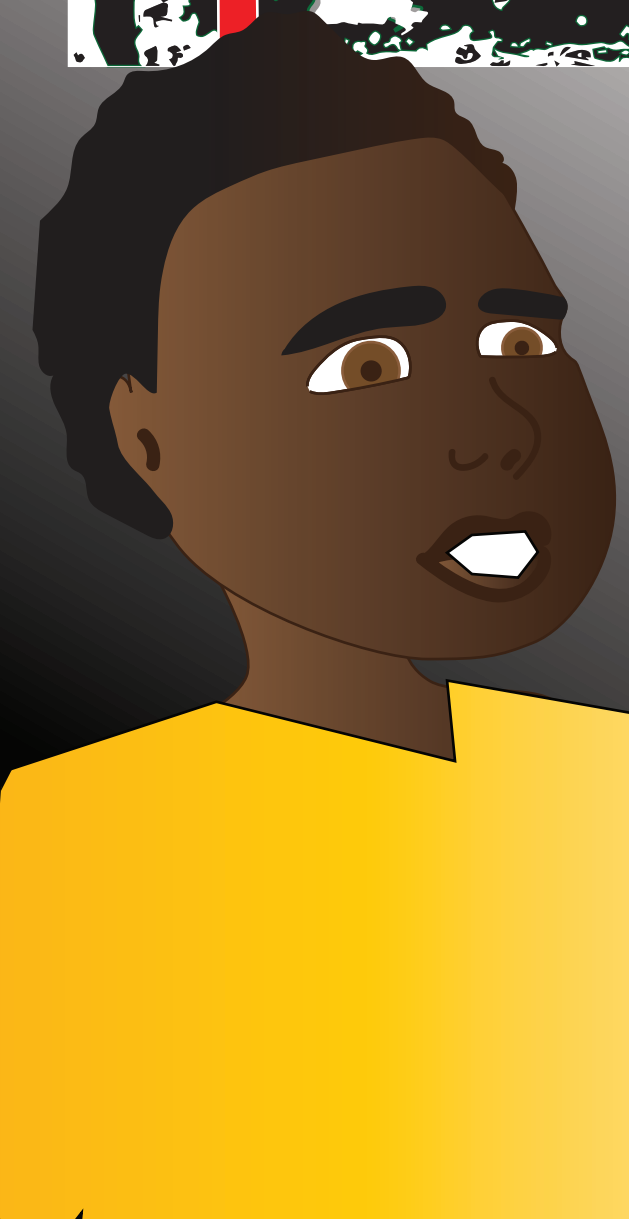


The policeman laughed, then his face became very serious. “I will never stop looking for criminals. You will never be safe. The only way to be safe is to follow the law. Do you understand, children?”

Grace and Peter were so glad to leave the prison. They promised to always follow the law.

Peter and Grace Visit a Graveyard

The next day, Peter and Grace went with their teacher to a graveyard, a place where dead people are buried. Their teacher gathered them into a circle.



She said,
“Children, our time in this world is very short. We will all end up in a grave just like these men and women and children who have already died. Think about it. In the time we have, how do you think we should live?”



Peter looked at the big blue sky and the white clouds. Then he looked at the grass growing on the graves of the dead people. He said, “We should say sorry and help each other. We should try to live as good people. We should love God and show God’s love to other people.”

Grace smiled. She was very proud of her big brother.



Peter and Grace Learn Something Important

Now that they were back in class, Grace and Peter were excited to learn more. Their teacher gave them each a book about the different ancient beliefs of other places around the world.



Grace was amazed. “Look, Peter,” she said, “A long time ago in South America they believed that dancing in a circle could make the rain come down! Didn’t they know that rain is part of the weather cycle?”

Peter laughed and showed her his book. “What about these people in Africa who used to pray to a carving to make sickness go away? Why didn’t they just go to the hospital?”

Their teacher said, “Before we had science, everyone used to have strange and even silly beliefs. Luckily, you children can go to school and learn the difference between fact and superstition. It’s time to use your own minds, children.”

Peter and Grace Do Research



The next three weeks were very interesting as Peter and Grace and their class looked at all of these ideas and thought about what was true and what was false.

Grace loved looking through the Encyclopedia and learning about how other people see the world. No matter how far she looked, however, she could not find anyone else in the whole world who believed that evil spirits went into women like Auntie Lilian and made them do bad things.



She went to ask the teacher. “Excuse me, Miss, why do the men in my father’s village believe in sanguma when there is no evidence?”

The teacher replied, “Maybe someone has told them lies. What do you think?”

Grace felt her eyes open wide. “The Glasman!” she whispered.

Peter and Grace Talk to Mother and Father



After dinner, Peter and Grace asked their mother and father if they could talk with them. They all sat down together. Peter asked his parents when Uncle John and Aunty Lilian would come to visit them in the city.

Father replied, "I don't think they will be coming. Remember what happened? The village men accused Aunty Lilian of being a sanguma. She is afraid to leave the house. They might attack her again!"

Grace was sad. She said, "That's not fair! They have no evidence!"

"Who started that false rumour?" Peter asked. He was very angry.

Mother and Father looked surprised. "Well, now that you mention it, it was Cousin Lika who told everyone he saw Aunty Lilian being a sanguma in a dream. We thought it must be true!"

Peter and Grace Discover the Glasman



“Cousin Lika?!” Peter shouted, “He’s a drug body who dropped out of grade one and has no money! Why should anyone listen to him? He’s not a glasman. There’s no such thing as a glasman. It’s a silly belief and I won’t believe it anymore.”

Grace was very proud of her brother. And, she agreed with him.

Grace said, “Mother, Father, in school we have learned about sanguma and how it is a false belief that is being spread by false pastors, drug bodies and liars like Cousin Lika. They pretend to know something, but actually they are just trying to get people to break the law and do what God says is wrong.”

Mother and Father looked concerned. Father said, “Everyone has been saying sanguma is real... that’s why I assumed it must be true as well. I will go now to ask your teacher and find out more.”

Father and Mother went out into the darkness to find the teacher.

Peter and Grace Make a Decision



That night, Peter and Grace stayed up late so that they could talk. Mother and Father had not yet returned from Teacher's house.

Peter said, "Grace, I don't want anything bad to happen to you or Mother or Aunty Lilian. I want everyone to see that Cousin Lika is a great liar and that his stories about sanguma are totally false. Then people in the village won't listen to him anymore and maybe he will stop spreading lies.

Grace said, "Thank you for being a good brother, Peter. I know you will always defend our rights and try to help us. I want to help you. We should make a plan."

It was very late when Father and Mother returned home. Peter and Grace could hear them quietly discussing everything their teacher had said.

Eventually, the whole family fell asleep.

Peter and Grace Have Support



The next morning, Father said “Peter, and Grace, I am very proud of both of you. You are thinking for yourselves and using your minds to think carefully about what you see and hear. I see that both of you desire to love God and follow the law.”



Mother added, “Yes, I learned many new things last night, and I still have many questions. But I want you both to know that I support you and that I love you. Your Father and I are very proud of you and support you 100 percent.”

Peter and Grace looked at each other and smiled. They were so happy that Mother and Father wanted to help them fight against the false beliefs in the village.



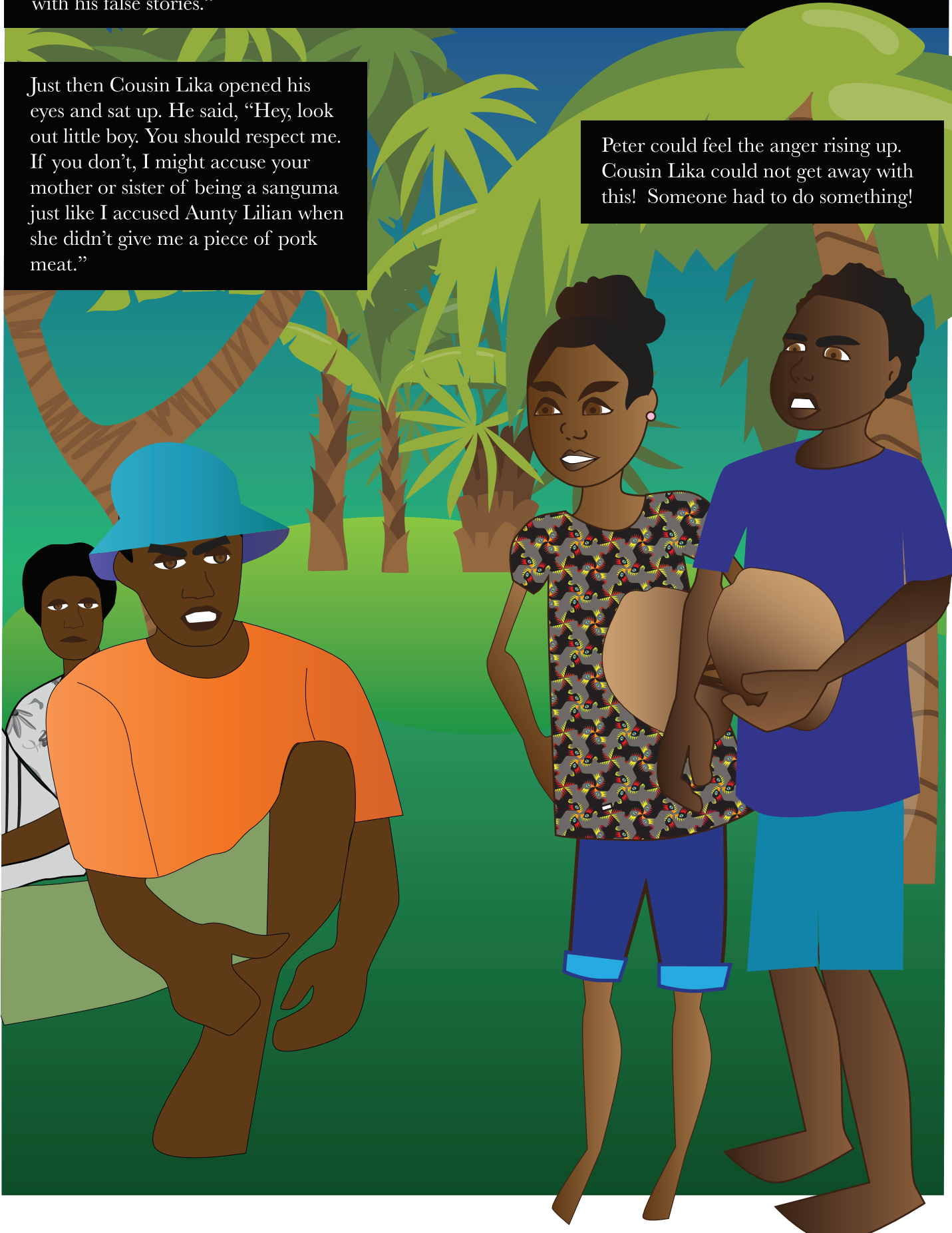
Peter and Grace Return to the Village

At last, the school term was over and it was time for the holidays. Peter and Grace were excited to go back to the village with Mother and Father. When they arrived, they saw Cousin Lika sleeping under the pandanus tree.

Peter pointed to him. "Look at that trouble-maker," he said. "He's so lazy and causes so many problems with his false stories."

Just then Cousin Lika opened his eyes and sat up. He said, "Hey, look out little boy. You should respect me. If you don't, I might accuse your mother or sister of being a sanguma just like I accused Aunty Lilian when she didn't give me a piece of pork meat."

Peter could feel the anger rising up. Cousin Lika could not get away with this! Someone had to do something!



Peter and Grace Speak Out



When they got to the house, Peter and Grace got out their volleyball and went to play with their village friends. As they played, they began to share everything they had learned from the last four weeks at school.

The other children were very curious and wanted to learn more. Most of them had never met a real Doctor, or a real Missionary. Most of them could not read or write either. Peter and Grace were glad to be able to teach them what they had learned from the Doctor, the Pastor, the Policeman, the Missionary, the Graveyard and especially from their Teacher.

Grace said, "I wish all of you could be in our class at school. Our Teacher is so wise and teaches us so that we will become good men and women in the future."

Peter and Grace Take a Stand



Once again, early in the morning Cousin Lika came to the house with four other local ‘trouble-makers’. They yelled at Uncle John and Father. They said, “Aunty Lilian has been using her sanguma to make our heads hurt. We want to torture her. If not, give us ten pigs.”

The whole village gathered around. It looked like they were going to agree with Cousin Lika! Would anyone stand up for what was right? Aunty Lilian began crying softly. She felt helpless.

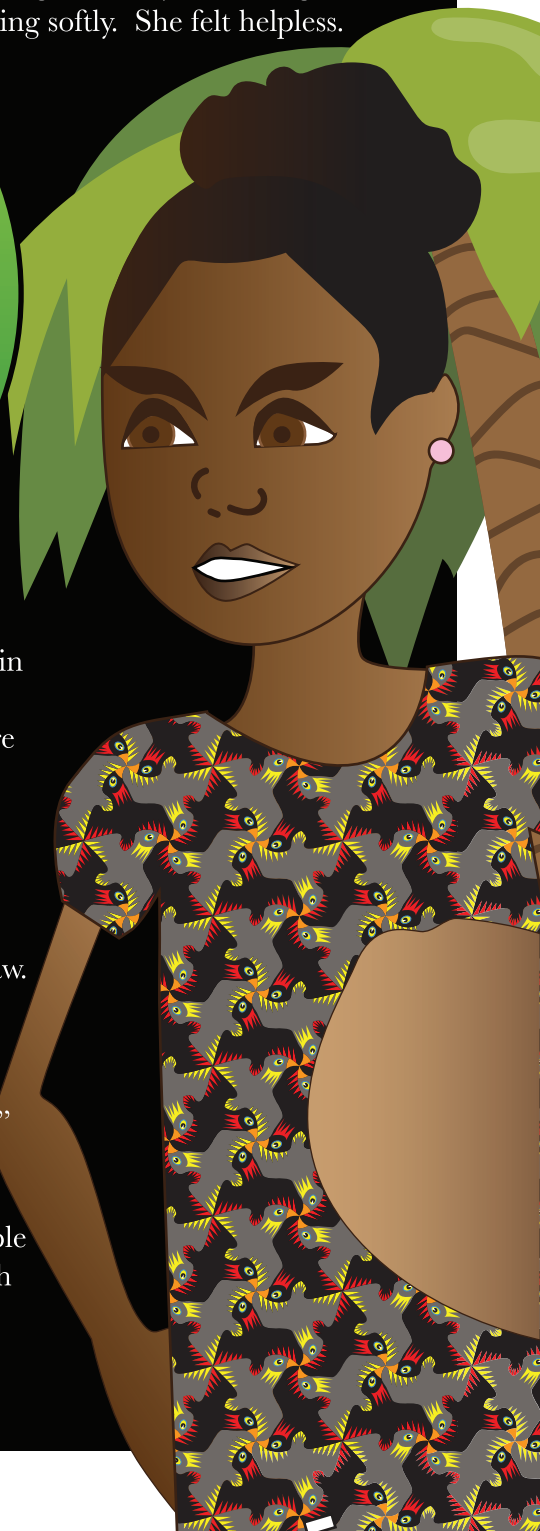


Peter was very angry. He ran out to face Cousin Lika. The other young people in the village were coming to see what was happening as well.

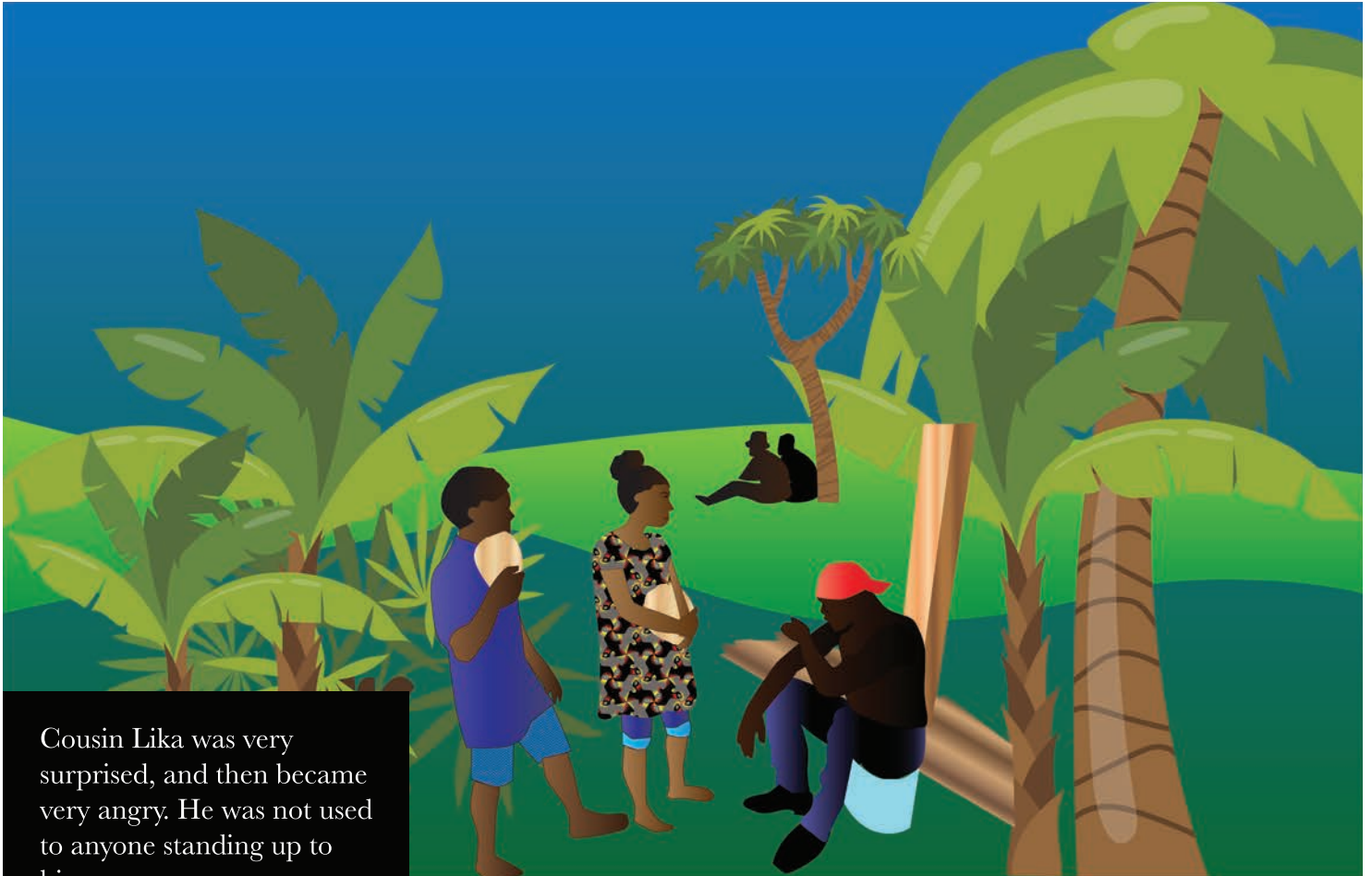
“You are a great liar, Lika,” Peter shouted. “You are breaking the law. You are hurting our family because you are greedy and lazy. I will report you to the police.”

Grace could see that many of the young people in the village agreed with what Peter said.

Change was happening!



Peter and Grace Make a Difference



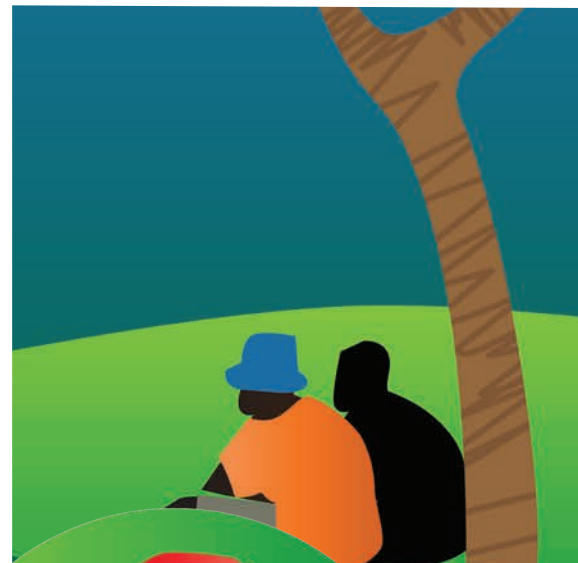
Cousin Lika was very surprised, and then became very angry. He was not used to anyone standing up to him.

He thought everyone would just believe his lies forever. He tried to say something, “You’re just a small child...,” he began.

But, Uncle John interrupted him. “Cousin Lika,” he yelled, “You are a great troublemaker! You lie to everyone and pretend you are a glsman, you have accused my wife for no reason! You owe us 12 pigs, plus extra for compensation!”

Cousin Lika looked guilty.

Father joined in, “If it wasn’t for the teacher, we might have all continued believing your lies!”



We need to build a school here and learn the difference between what is true and what is false, and you, Cousin Lika, you will be stuck in grade one until you learn something!”

Cousin Lika was shamed in front of the whole village. The children laughed at him.

He ran away from the village and went to live in the city.



Peter and Grace Don't Give Up

Soon everyone heard about Cousin Lika's lies and realised that his stories about sanguma were not true. Life in the village returned to normal. Auntie Lilian and Uncle John were free!

Peter and Grace went back to the city with Mother and Father.

Grace looked at her brother. "You were very strong, Peter," she said, "Thank you."



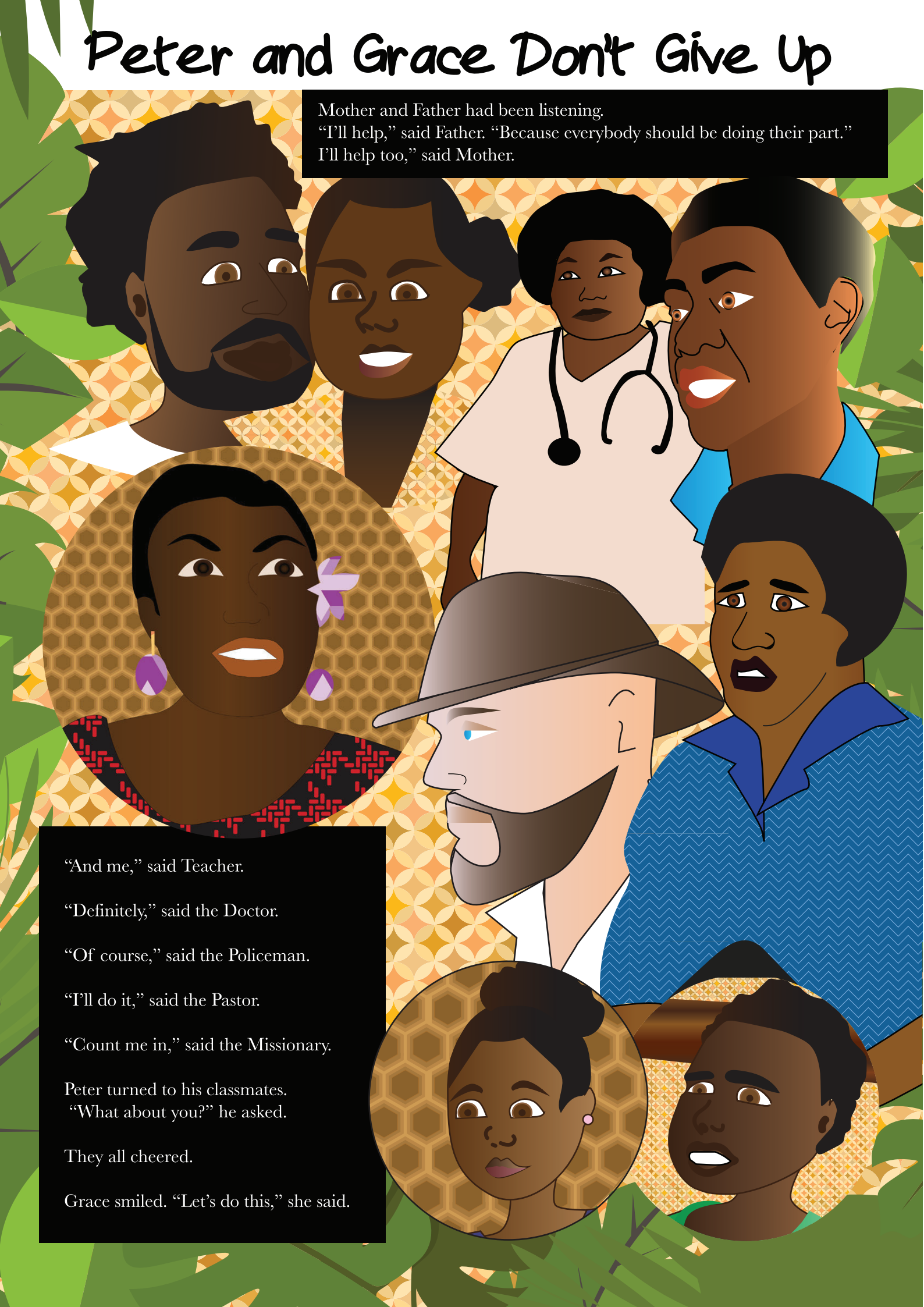
Peter replied, "I think that was just the beginning.

Cousin Lika and other troublemakers will continue causing problems for mothers and families all over this country.

Someone needs to do something."

Grace was very serious. "Then we're going to need more help," she said.

Peter and Grace Don't Give Up



Mother and Father had been listening.
“I’ll help,” said Father. “Because everybody should be doing their part.”
I’ll help too,” said Mother.

“And me,” said Teacher.

“Definitely,” said the Doctor.

“Of course,” said the Policeman.

“I’ll do it,” said the Pastor.

“Count me in,” said the Missionary.

Peter turned to his classmates.

“What about you?” he asked.

They all cheered.

Grace smiled. “Let’s do this,” she said.

The Adventure Continues!



And then the even bigger adventure began - changing attitudes and beliefs about sanguma across all of Papua New Guinea! What do you think about that as a challenge? Can you think about ways to be part of that journey too?