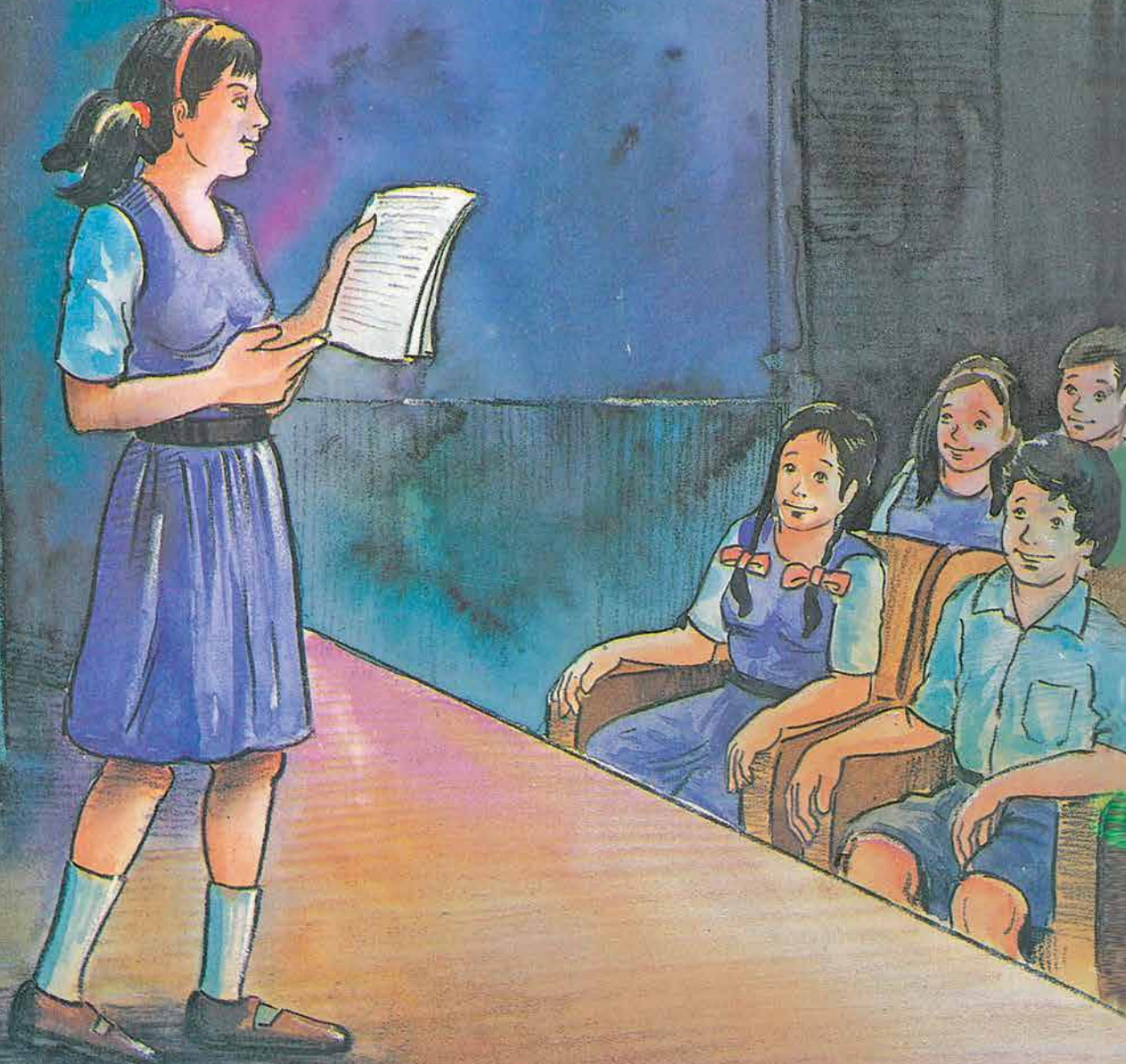


Scandal in School



A series on children's rights

This is a story about school going children just like you and your friends. Those of you who have read "Jolt in Jaipur" the first comic of this series on children's right will recognize Rohan and Saira the two children who lost their parents some years ago and now live with their foster parents Mr. and Mrs. Shekhar Saran and their dearly loved foster sister Seema didi who is a doctor in Delhi.

Rohan and Saira are older now, they are both 13 as are most of their friends. In this story the children, who have sometimes been called the travelling twins do not travel anywhere except back into the past for a school play.

All the children involved with the play are very excited at first. But later strange things happen. Read on to find out!



Practical Saira does well at school. She enjoys movies with Shahrukh Khan, reading and dance music.



Rohan and Saira's foster sister is a doctor so she's full of sensible advice. But she's also full of fun and knows when to give a much needed hug!



Action movies which star Akshay Kumar, music and reading are a few of Rohan's favourite things.

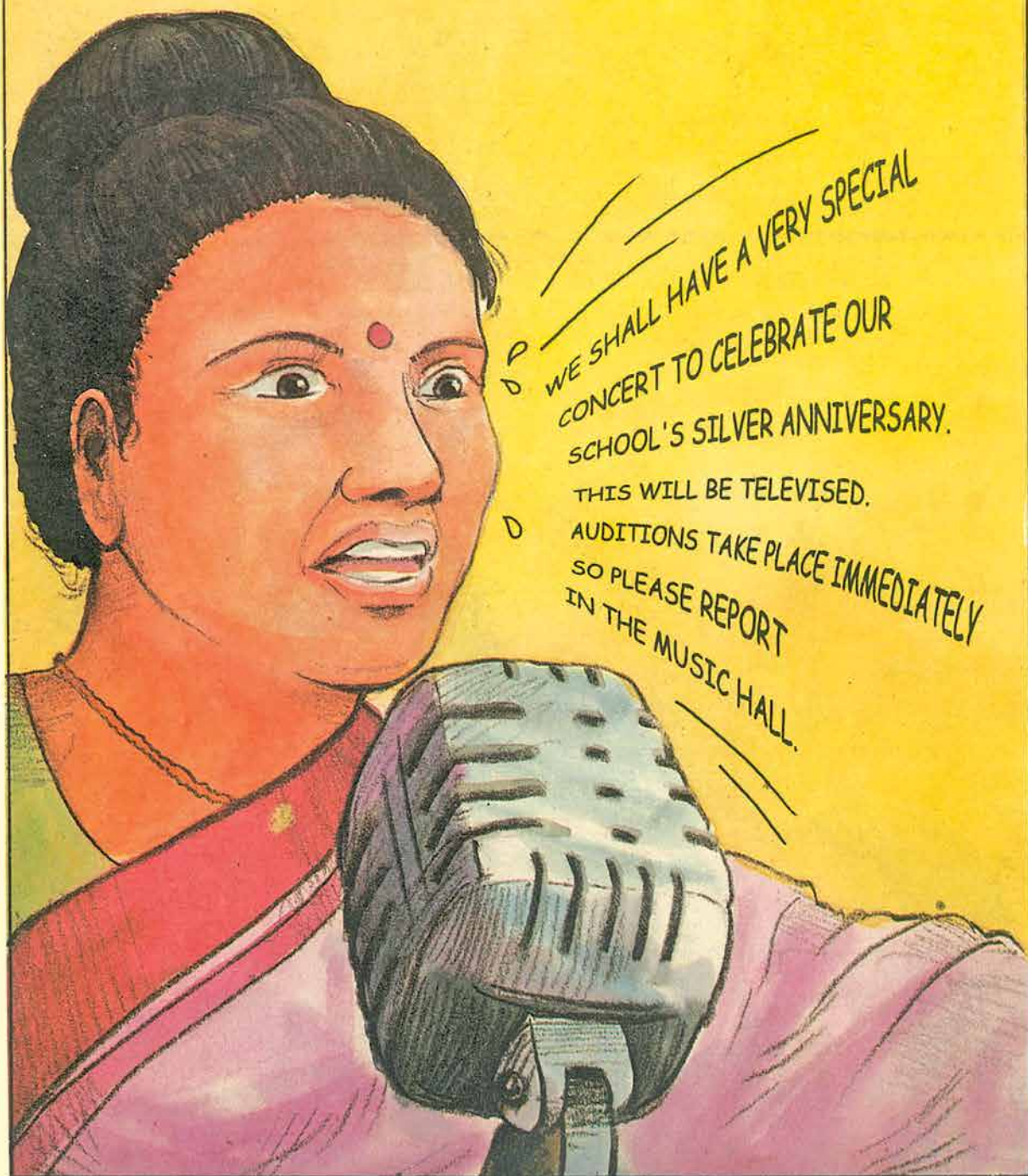


Pizzas and Pop music and plays - these are some of "Playful Pia's" passions. But she manages to do as well as her more studious friends.



Sensitive and shy Neha tends to be absent minded about mundane things. However she's strongly committed to every project she's involved with.

ON A HOT SUMMERS DAY IN APRIL, THE CHILDREN ARE IN THE MIDST OF A ROUTINE ASSEMBLY WHEN SUDDENLY... PRINCIPAL THAKKER MADE A VERY EXCITING ANNOUNCEMENT.



WE SHALL HAVE A VERY SPECIAL
CONCERT TO CELEBRATE OUR
SCHOOL'S SILVER ANNIVERSARY.
THIS WILL BE TELEVISED.
AUDITIONS TAKE PLACE IMMEDIATELY
SO PLEASE REPORT
IN THE MUSIC HALL.

A DEAFENING BUZZ followed the announcement.

I wonder
what the play
will be

I've heard
Chand Singh is
to be the
director

You know
Mr. Singh is
Neha's
neighbour



Tell us about
your neighbour

SINGH UNCLE?

He's like a member of the
family. And he's had a string
of successes lately.

Auditions are held.



Mr. Singh announces



Neha, Pia you're in. Saira and Rohan I'd like you to help backstage. There's only one boy in the play, and that's you Rakesh. So all of you come here at six sharp every evening.

WOW

CONGRATS



I suppose I'll be in the choir

How lucky Neha & Pia Are



The kids walk home and are talking about the play.

I like the play. Its an impossible love story set in Mughal times. But at least we can dress up and look beautiful.

Since I'm going to helping with the sets its going to be a totally new experience.



The kids enact the period drama



Neha and Pia were thrilled.



As the days pass by.....



LIFE IS A
WHIRL
BETWEEN
REHEARSALS
AND SCHOOL.



Two weeks later. At rehearsal:

Psssst.... Neha you enter from there....

Pia, wake up! *these are your lines*

CHAND
SINGH
LOOKS
DISPLEASED.

NEHA AND PIA
ARE DEJECTED.



Rohan you'll have to be *really good* with the prompting, Neha and Pia are muffing all their lines.



After Rehearsal

Can I drop you kids back?
I'm going home today.

Yes, me too. Neha
is helping me with
Maths as well...

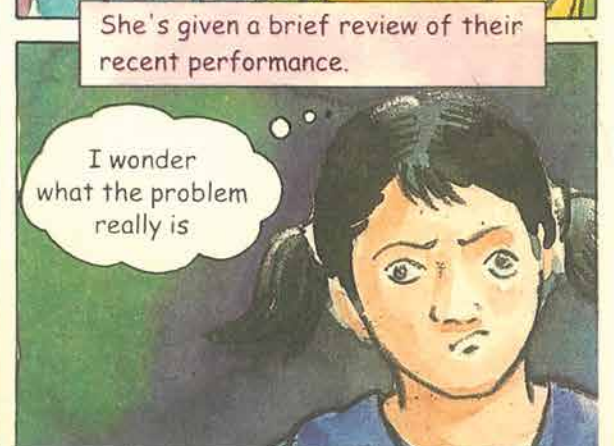
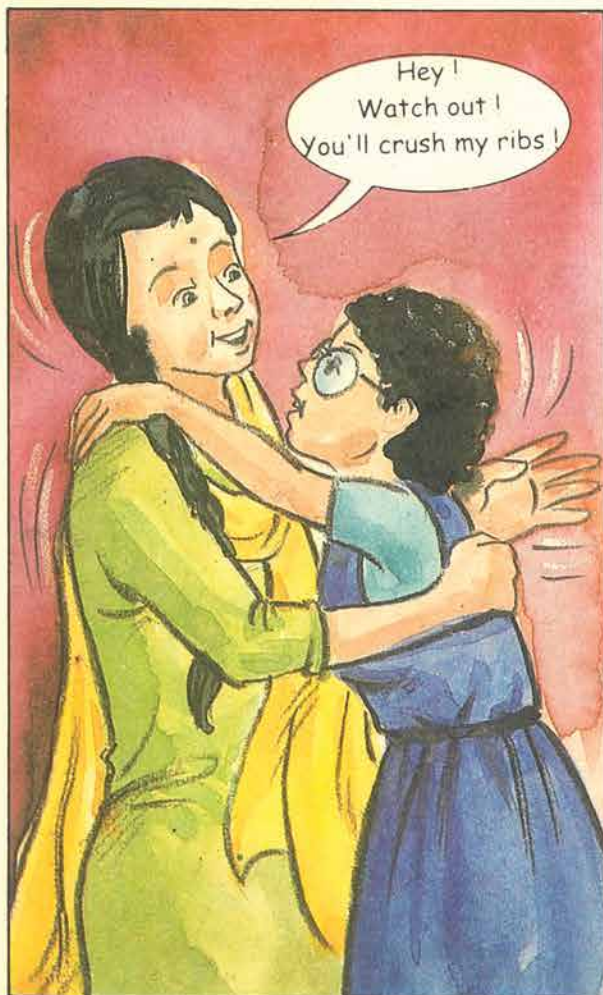
Well Saira and I live just down the road
and Rakesh lives in the next lane so we'll
just walk down, thank you.

And I'm going with them
since I'm helping Saira
with her Maths homework



In
Saira's
room...





School.
Posters of
the play
are being
stuck on.



As the children walk towards rehearsal

Saira, what would
you say if somebody
wanted to drop out
of the play...

Its not important what I would
say is it? Its what old Thakker
would say

And what
old Chand Singh
would do!



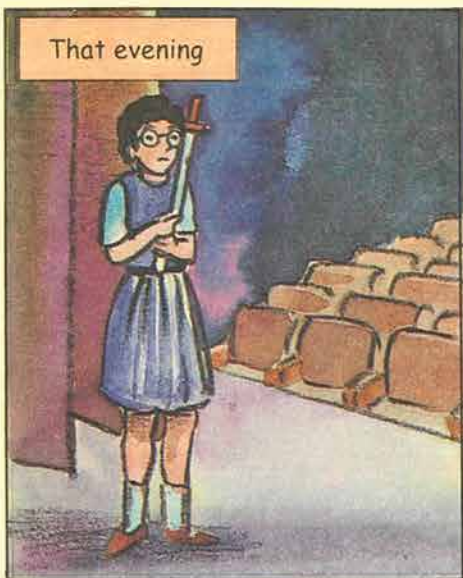
You know even
I'm having second
thoughts. I get no
time for studying
at all.



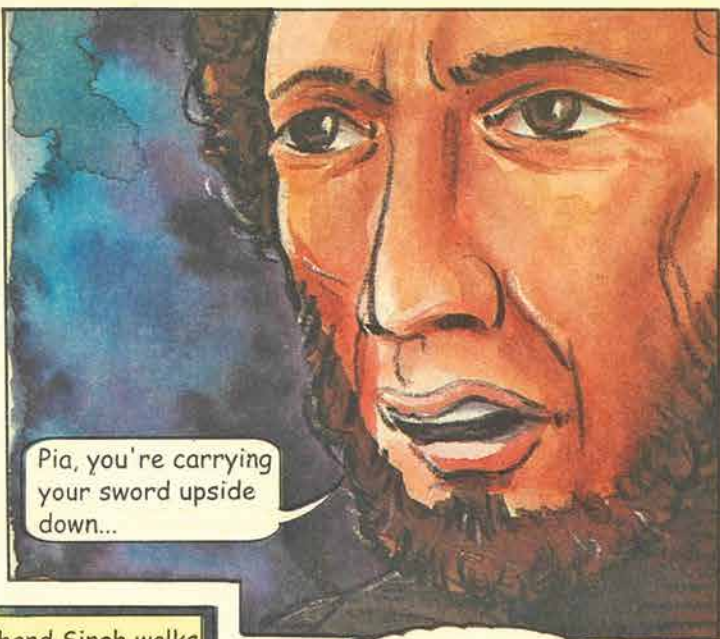
Pia,
Playful Pia misses
studies. this was getting
queerer and queerer



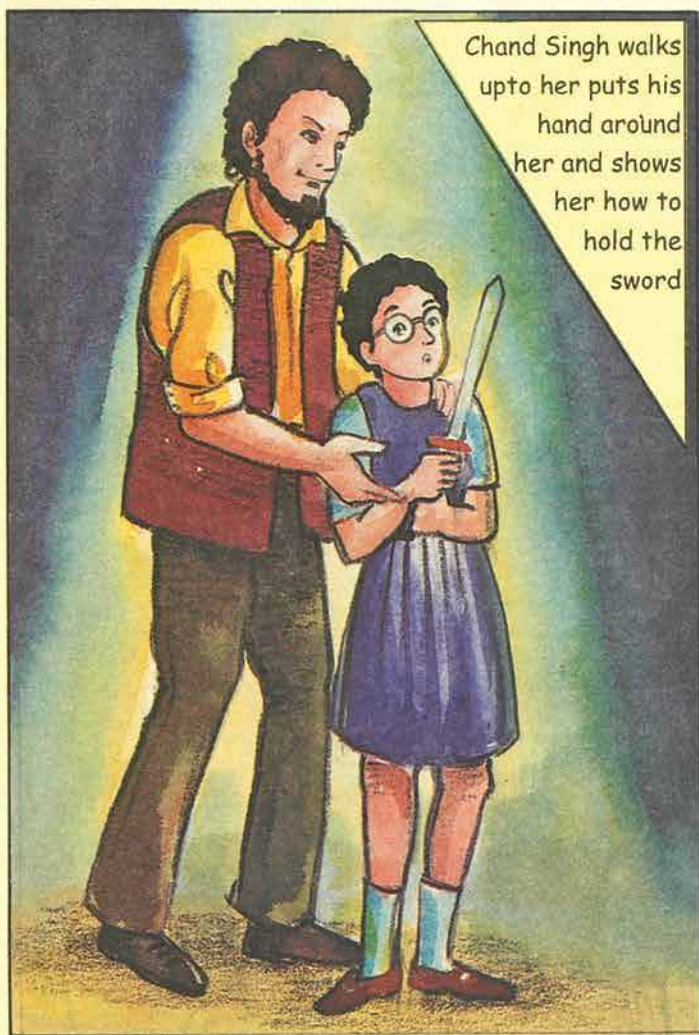
That evening



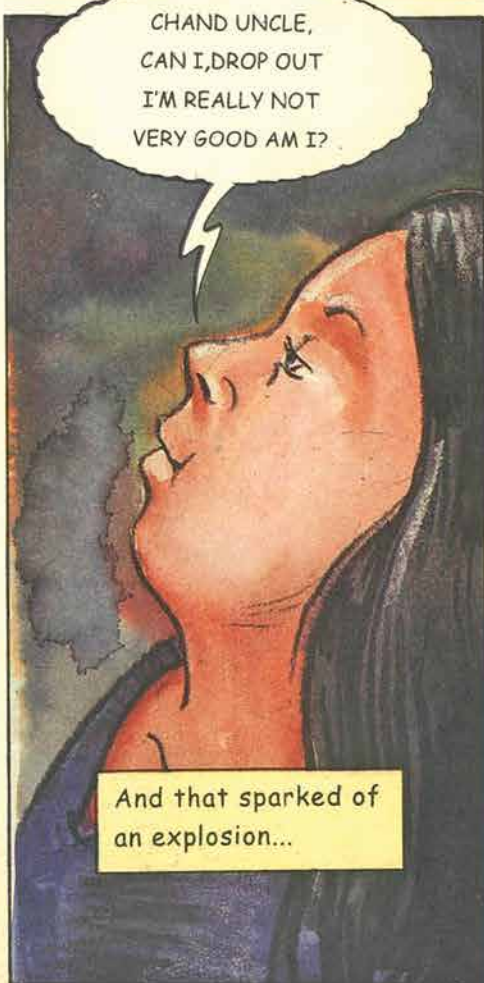
Pia, you're carrying your sword upside down...



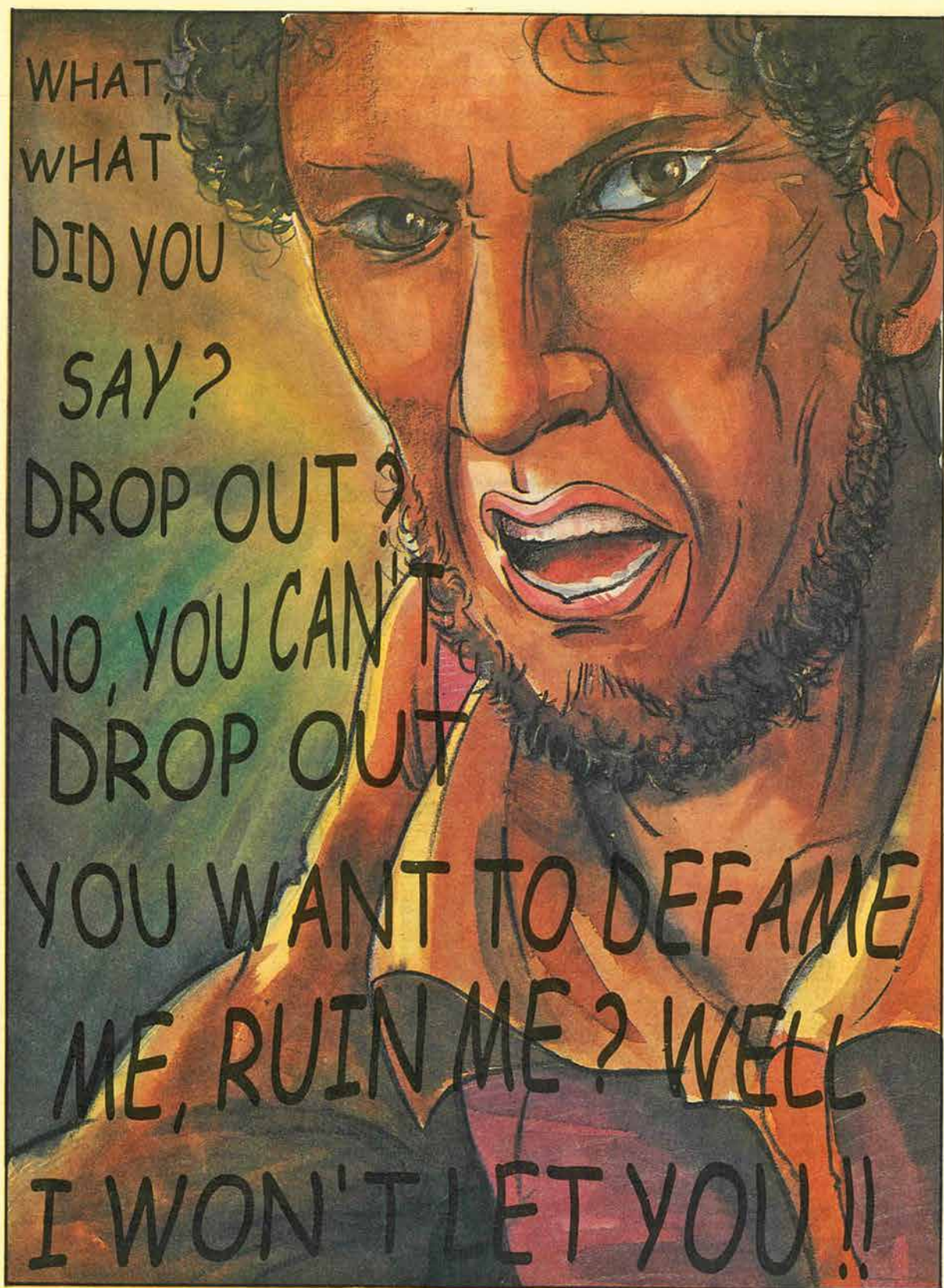
Chand Singh walks upto her puts his hand around her and shows her how to hold the sword



CHAND UNCLE,
CAN I,DROP OUT
I'M REALLY NOT
VERY GOOD AM I?



And that sparked of an explosion...



WHAT,
WHAT
DID YOU
SAY?

DROP OUT?

NO, YOU CAN'T
DROP OUT

YOU WANT TO DEFAME
ME, RUIN ME? WELL
I WON'T LET YOU !!



Chand Singh walks up and down fuming. Neha and Pia return.

The kids pack up and walk back in silence.

At home Saira tells Seema Didi that she feels something is bothering Neha and Pia.

Why don't you call them over.

Let's see
I'll ring
them up.



Pia said she'd talk later but Neha agreed to come over and spend the night as her parents were going to a late night party.

That night:

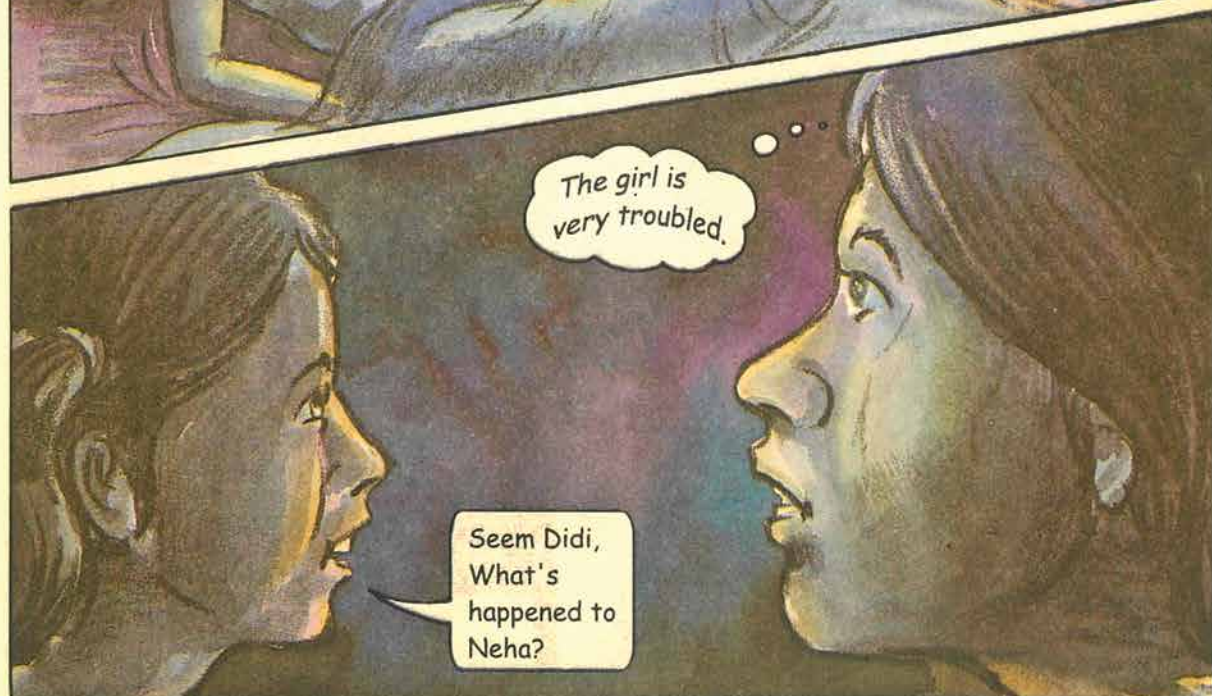
Neha didn't say
a word.



But if Saira was expecting a heart to heart chat she was disappointed. Neha went off to sleep immediately.



Neha is having a nightmare.



The next day was the Maths Test. Everyone is writing busily. But Pia and Neha look distressed.

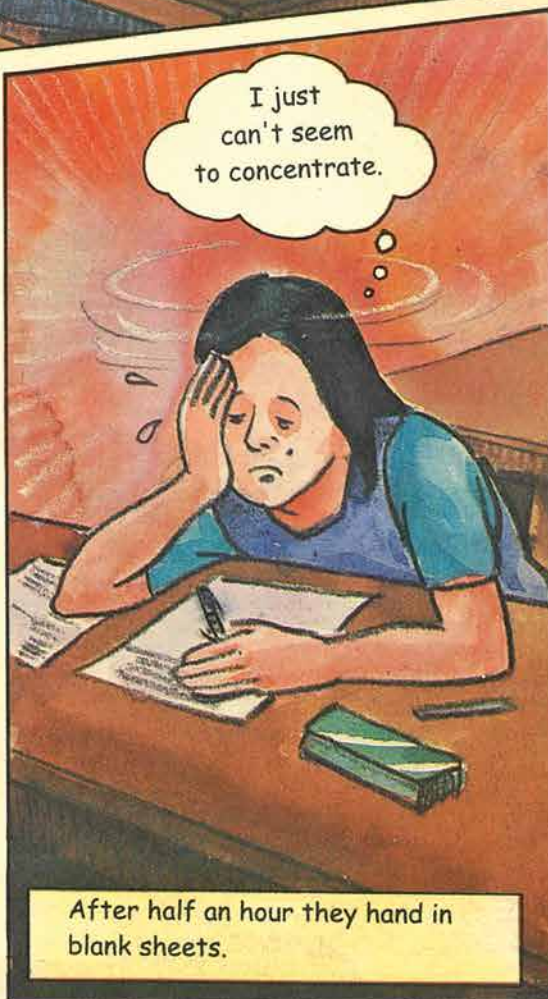
Neha, Pia what's the matter?



I can't remember any of this...



I just can't seem to concentrate.



After half an hour they hand in blank sheets.

Next day, just before the bell rings in class, a chit comes from the Principal summoning Pia and Neha to her office.

I am very *disappointed* with both of you. You were star students but you have *let me down completely*.

You have been *cutting classes*, handing in *blank sheets* at tests and even at play rehearsals you have been behaving *irresponsibly*.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?
I'm waiting for your answer.



I'M *SICK* OF PLAY
PRACTICE OF TESTS
AND THE *STUPID*
SCHOOL.



I'd just like to be
excused. Can I go
home now.



Yes if you behave like this and
REFUSE to tell me what the
problem is I'll have no option
but to send you home.

SUCH BEHAVIOUR CANNOT BE
TOLERATED. Breaking school rules with
no explanation at all merits *suspension*.



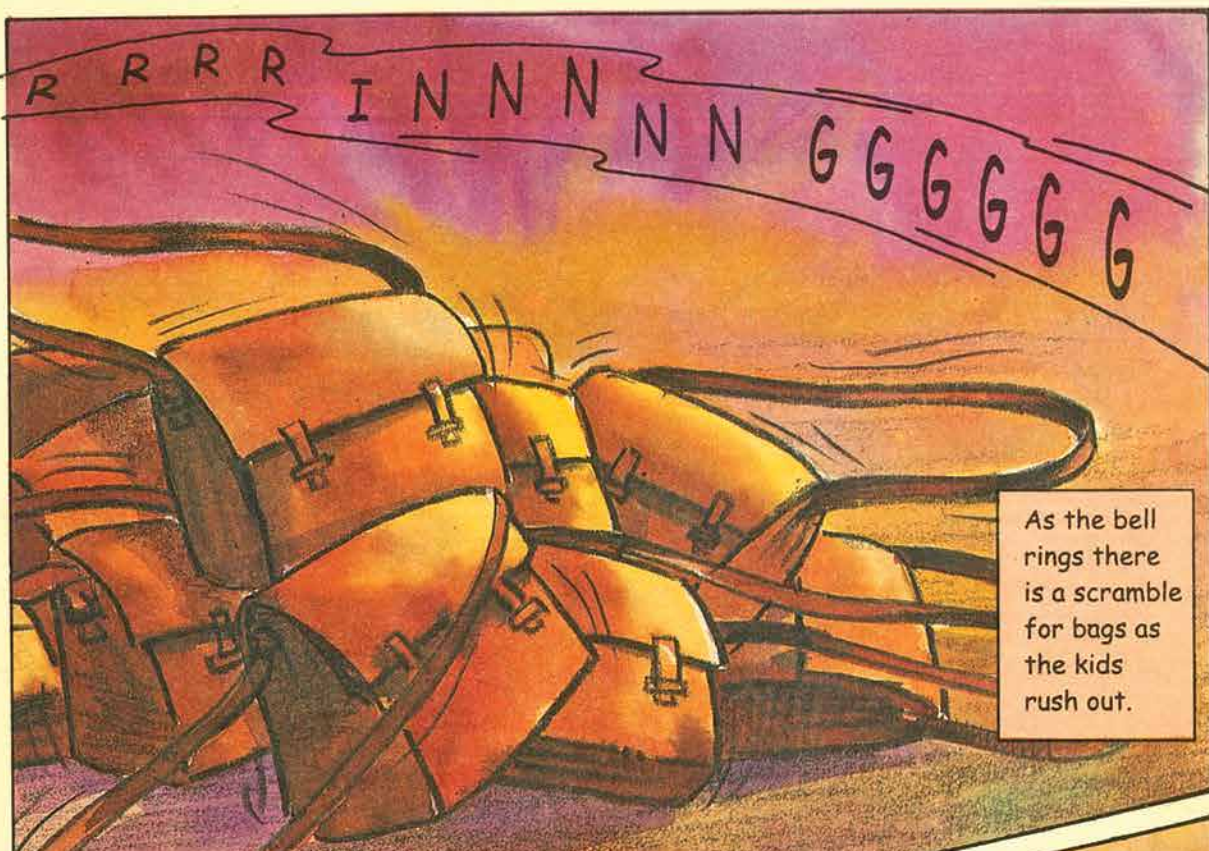
SUSPENDED

THE SCHOOL IS STUNNED.

PIA AND NEHA WERE AMONGST THE
SCHOOLS BEST STUDENTS.

AND NOW THEY WERE IN DISGRACE!

SHOCK WAS INEVITABLE.



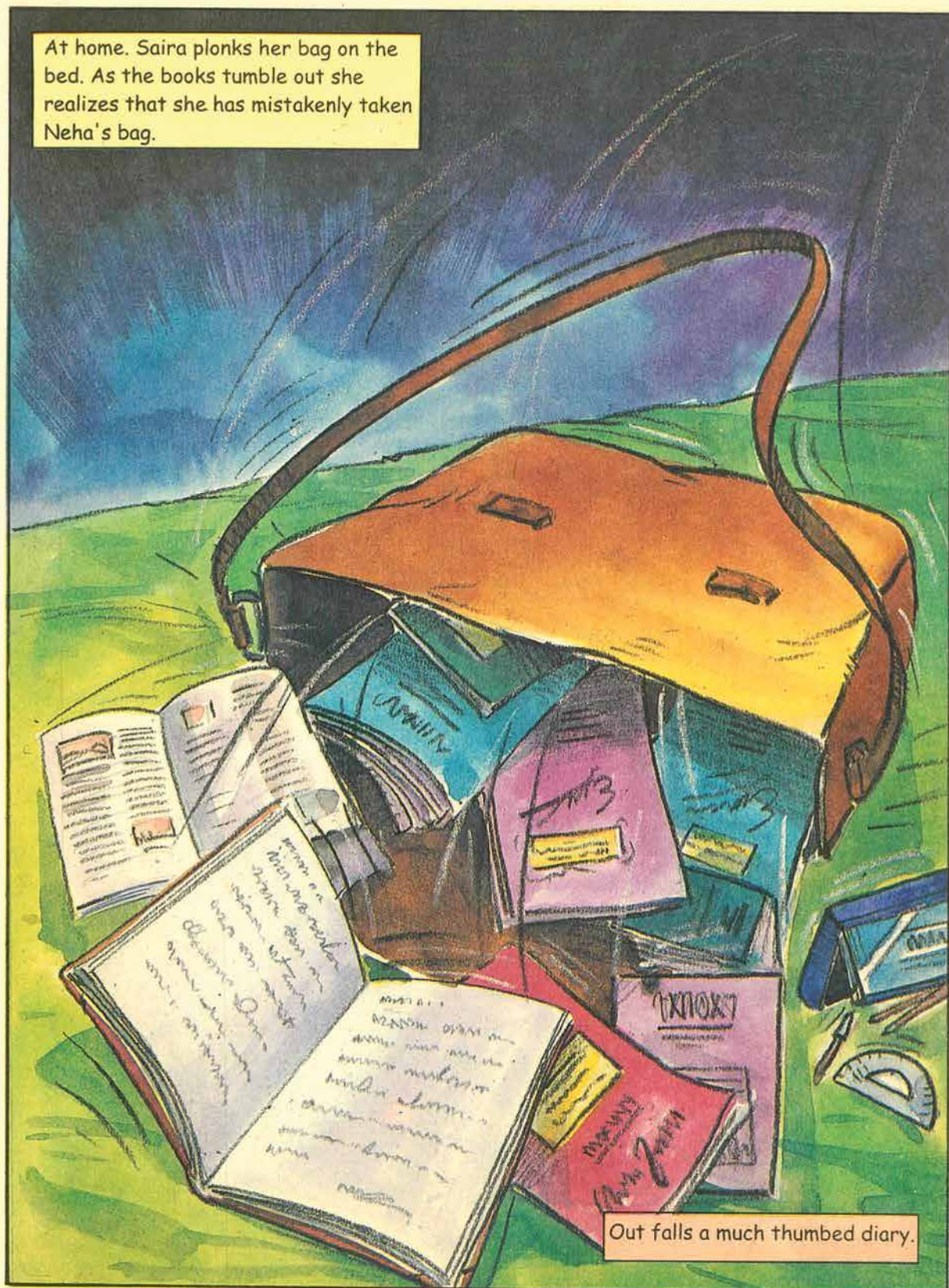
As the bell rings there is a scramble for bags as the kids rush out.



Neha, Pia, sure you don't want to come home with me?

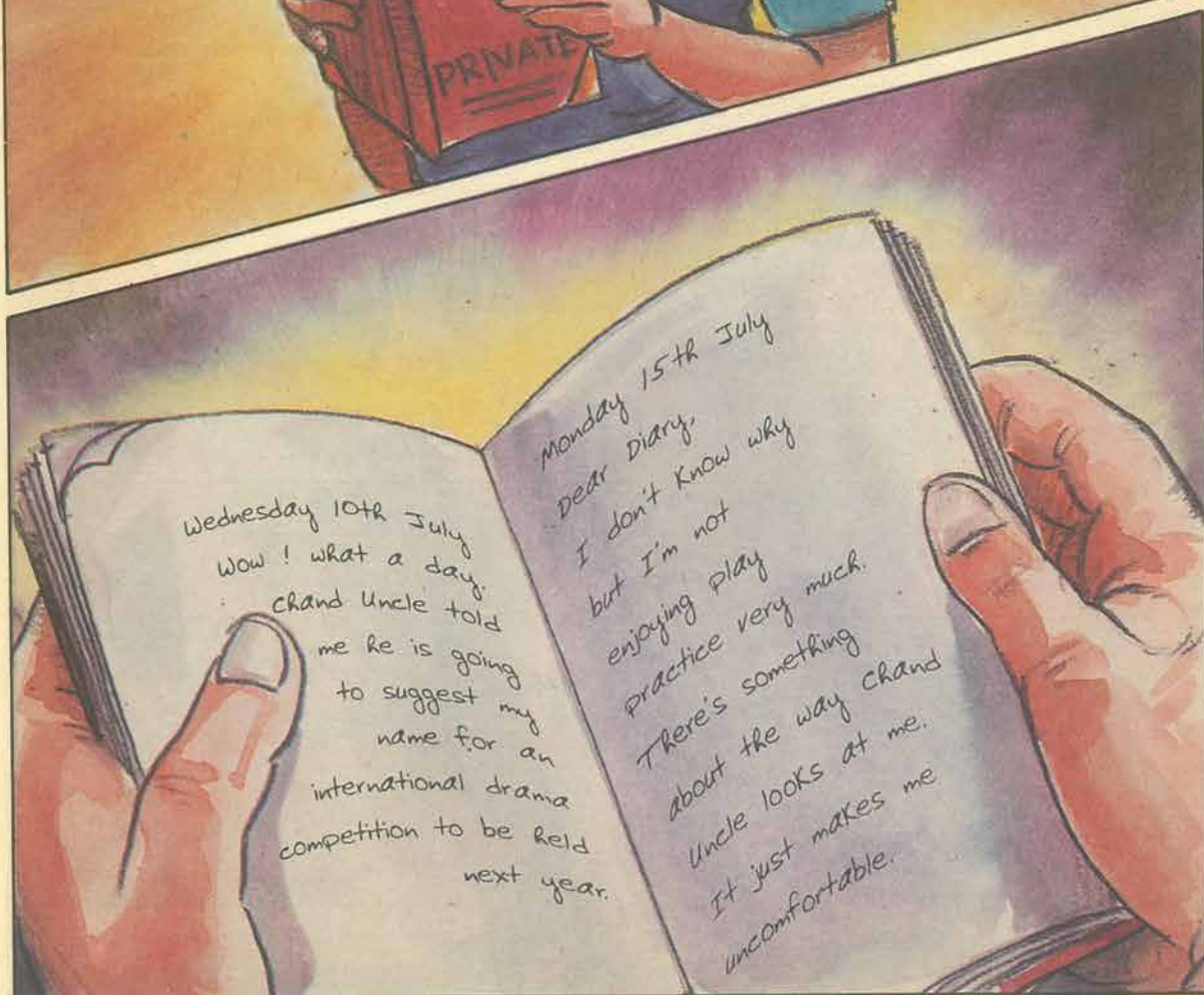
No thanks Saira. But we might as well go straight home to break the bad news.

At home. Saira plonks her bag on the bed. As the books tumble out she realizes that she has mistakenly taken Neha's bag.



Out falls a much thumbed diary.

Saira picks it up and begins to read....



Thursday 18th July.

I thought being in a play
that would be shown on TV
would be the highlight of
this years school calendar.
Instead it is turning
out to be a nightmare.
I hate Uncle's constant
touching. He always
puts his arms around me.
And today I'm sure he

deliberately touched
my breasts. Also I
noticed the way Pia
cooked up that excuse for
not going in his car I'm
sure he's doing it to her.
But I can't possible bring
it up. I feel GUILTY...
ASHAMED... HORRIBLE...

Tuesday 24th July.

Today Mummy insisted
that I come home with
Chand Uncle because she's
worried about my coming
home alone. In the car he
forcibly kissed me. "This is
our SPECIAL SECRET" he
said. Then he turned nasty.
"If you tell anyone you'll regret
it. I am a dangerous man."

I can't carry on....
much as I love my
school, I have to drop
out of the play. Hate
to disappoint everyone



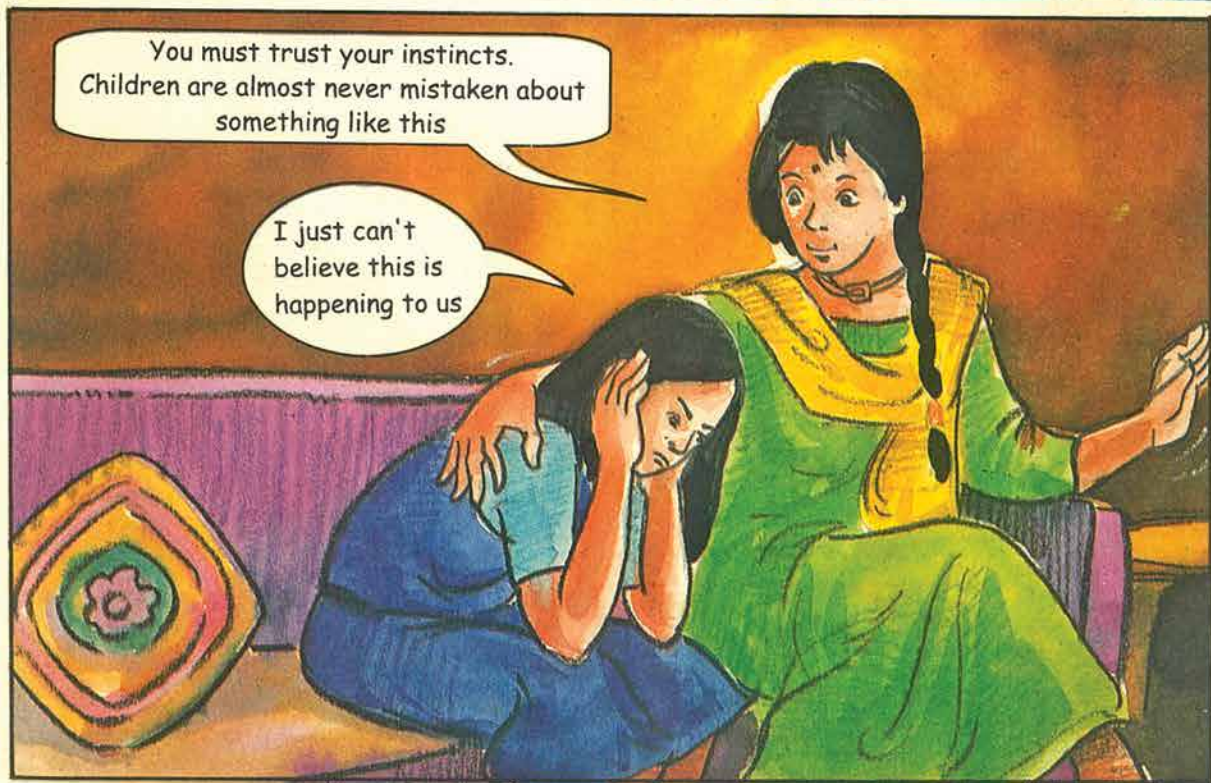
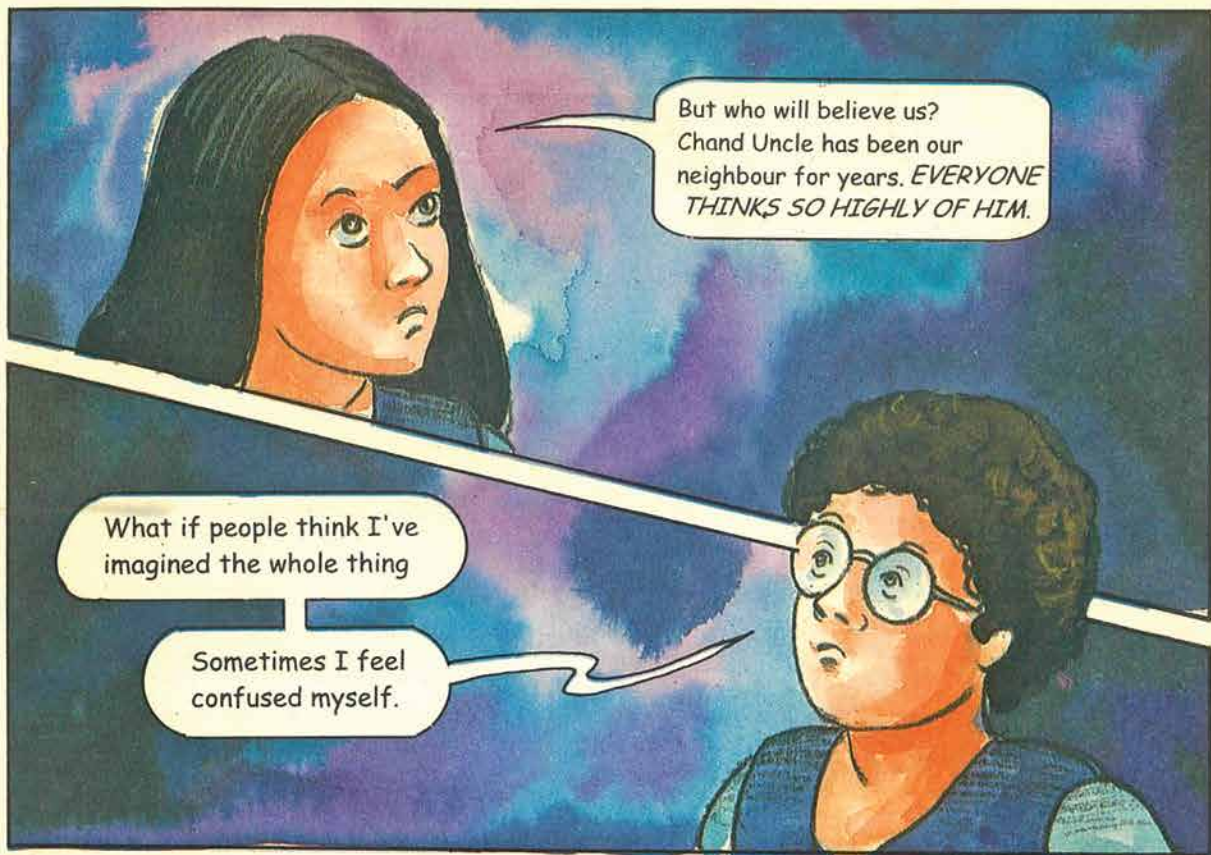




At Seema Didi's place:

Neha and Pia, I want you to understand that you have done *nothing wrong*. You must speak up so that we can help you.







Can such things really happen in our society.

Child abuse is common, about 50% of girls experience it at some time or the other. Infact boys too may me sexually abused. And quite often the offender is someone known. The offenders get away with it because this is one crime where the victim is reluctant to speak- *most children don't dare to tell...*



What's really hard to understand is that Mr. Singh did it to Neha. Why, she's his NEIGHBOUR !

Pia, the offender maybe a family member, a child's own father, uncle or brother or someone the child *trusts* and *respects*.



Firsty you must never put up with it. Remember you have a right to say no. If you're not feeling comfortable about something, a touch, a caress, a look, then *trust your instincts*. Find a responsible adult you can confide in. You can't handle this on your own.

I just want to tell you that both of you are really plucky kids. So smile. And remember *Seema Didi* next time there is a problem !

Pia and Neha,
giving her a hug.

You're
a
darling !

This is such
a relief.

In the Principal's office: Seema talks to the parents and the principal and explains exactly what has happened to the girls.

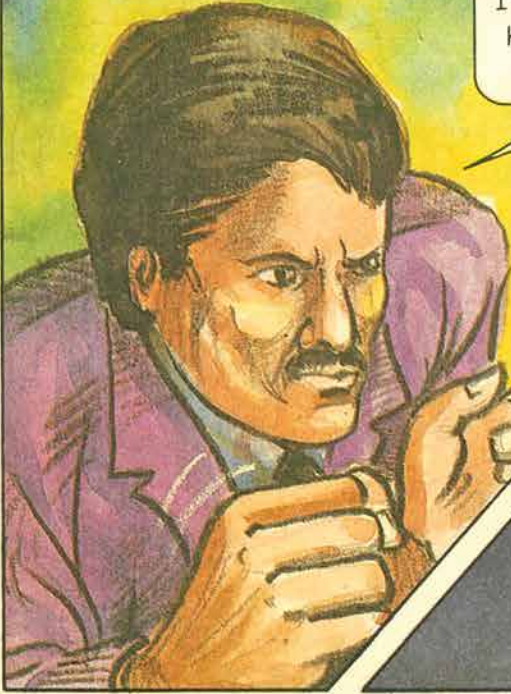
Yes, we must handle this correctly. We mustn't do anything to *further* upset the girls.

Difficult as this is for us, we must accept facts. We'll be guided by you.


We must ensure they do not feel guilty or ashamed.

It's very important that Pia and Neha are given support. I feel responsible for not having seen the signs earlier. We must ensure something like this never happens again. I'll speak to the teachers. And proper action must be taken against Chand Singh.

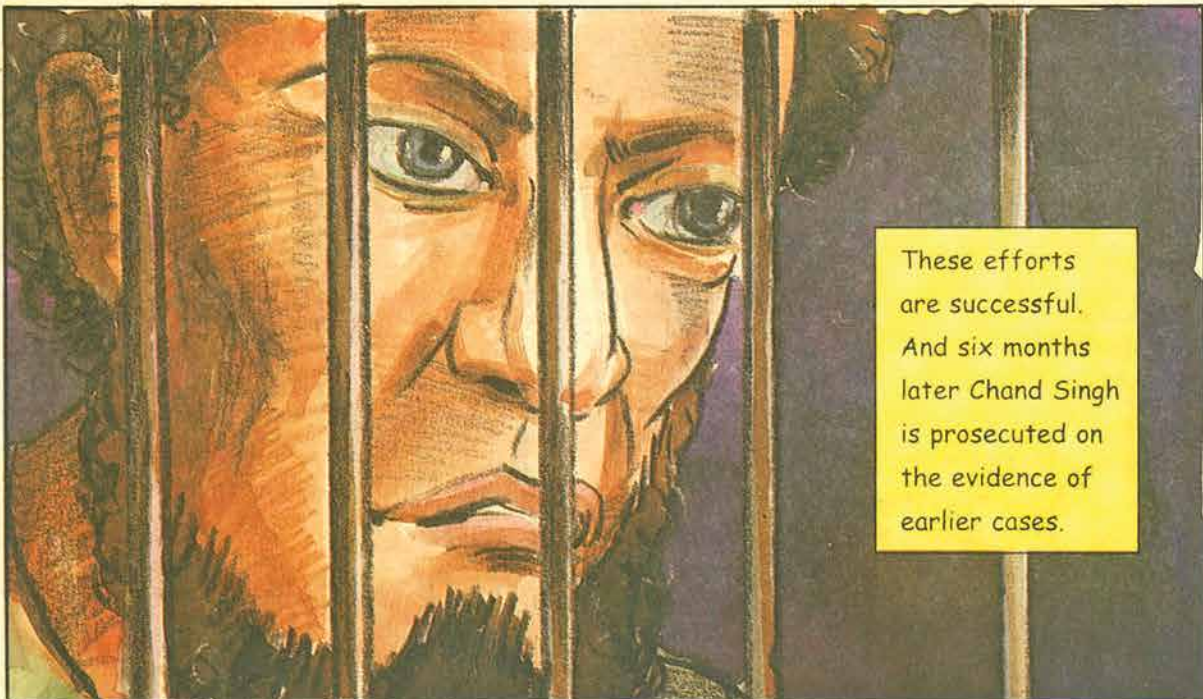
Pia's father and Principal Thakker vowed...



I'm a Lawyer
I'll see to it that
he's put behind
bars



I too will
not rest until
the man is
punished.



These efforts
are successful.
And six months
later Chand Singh
is prosecuted on
the evidence of
earlier cases.

School resumes and Pia and Neha are back in the play which is now being directed by the school's drama teacher.



Children in play, smiling.



The End

For Kids

- Remember - you have a right to say no. You must not tolerate any unwanted look or touch or violation.
- You must find somebody (a responsible adult) to confide in.
- It is never your fault. You are not to blame. It is entirely the fault of the abusing adult.

For Parents

How to protect your child

- Try to establish a comfortable and free atmosphere at home. Encourage your child to talk to you on all issues. Tell her/him that it is wrong for an older person to ask her/him to keep a secret about sexual touching or exposure, even if that person is a family friend or relative.
- Teach your child how to say "no" to an older person if he/she touches her in a way that makes him/her feel uncomfortable, or if an adult wants to have his private parts touched.
- Make the child comfortable with his/her body and do not attach any feelings of shame to it.
- Believe what your child tells you and be alert to small changes in his/her behaviour.
- Know where your child is at all times. Be familiar with your child's friends and their daily activities.
- Beware of adults who pay an unusual amount of attention to your child giving them inappropriate or expensive gifts.
- Give your child emergency numbers where they can call if they sense danger.

NGO PROFILE

RAHI

A SUPPORT CENTRE FOR WOMEN SURVIVORS

An organisation you can reach out to for help or if you need more information on the subject, Contact RAHI

M-79, Greater Kailash-II, 2nd Floor, New Delhi-110048

Ph/Fax : 011-6238466, 6419849 E-mail : rahisupp@del2.vsnl.net.in

Timings : 9.30 - 5.30, Monday to Friday

At RAHI we believe that incest or childhood sexual abuse within the family, is a profound violation not only of the child's body, but of the trust implicit in a care giving relationship. This violation has an equally profound impact on how the child as a victim and later as an adult survivor sees and experiences the world.

For all of us at RAHI recovery is a journey to the deepest core of our being. And women who come to us are 'rahi's' or travellers taking this journey. During its course, we help them experience a healing process which enables them to regain control of their lives and realise their true potential.

We make it possible for women to grow from victim to survivor, to thriver, and finally to contributor. Together we can move on to celebrating the life we deserve.



OUR SERVICES

INFORMATION

RAHI makes available information on incest and related issues. There are brochures, books, articles, news-letters, journals, audio and video cassettes for survivors and for all those interested in the subject. Part of this reference library contains materials specifically for mental health professionals on concerns related to treatment with survivors.

REFERRAL

RAHI has an established network of mental health professionals that includes psychologists, psychoanalysts, psychiatrists and counsellors. We help survivors get in touch with the appropriate person as and when required.

Our services are free & confidential

Supported by : The John D. and Catherine T. Mac Arthur Foundation



About Butterflies.....

Butterflies is a registered voluntary organisation working with the most vulnerable groups of children, especially street and street connected children since 1989. With a rights based, non-institutional approach the organisation endeavours to educate and impart life skills to vulnerable children so that they become self reliant and exit the generational cycle of illiteracy and poverty.



Protecting and empowering children since 1989

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