



# The Essence of Chameli

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**There was once a girl named Chameli. She was the only daughter of wealthy parents. She was in the third grade.**

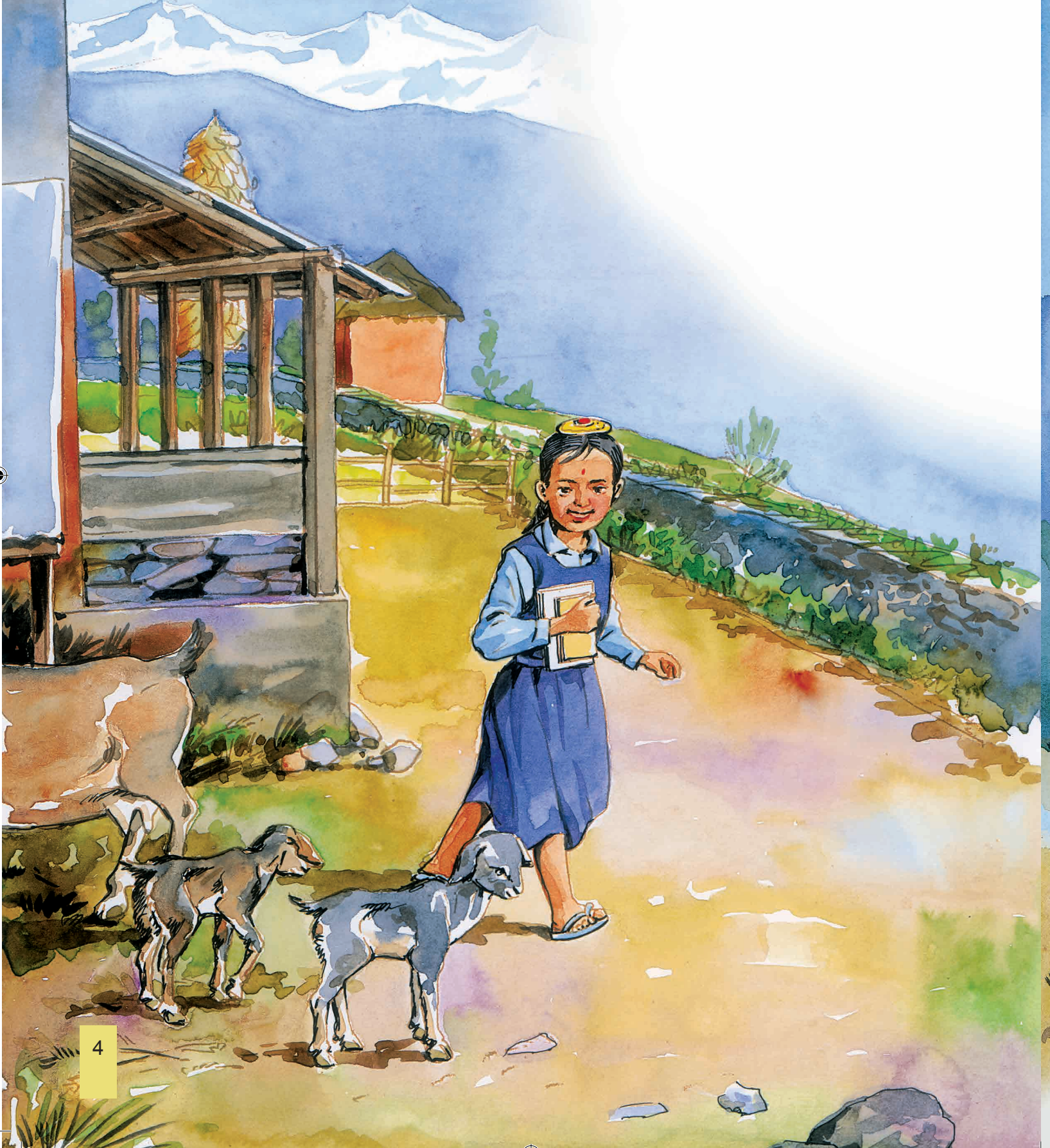




**Chameli's mother had a lot of beautiful jewelry. One day, Chameli's mother showed her all the jewelry and also taught her their names.**



The next day Chameli secretly took her mother's *sirfhula* (a head flower made of gold). With the *sirfhula* on her head, she left for school.





**On her way, she met her friends Champa and Sohan.  
They were amazed to see the sirfhula on her head.**





**At school, Chameli was the center of attention. Everyone stared at her, and talked about her. Nayantara sang a silly song, "Look at this girl, who is that? Why, it's Chameli, in her Gorkha Hat!"**





**The teacher noticed the sirfhula on Chameli's head, but said nothing.**





**During class, Alka called to Chameli, “My older sister has lots and lots of jewelry. You have only one piece, and it's not even yours. It's your mom's!”**







**When Chameli got home from school, her mother gasped,  
“Oh my goodness! You are wearing a sirfhula! Wow! It looks  
beautiful on you!”**





**Chameli was pleased by her mother's compliment. She felt so beautiful in the jewelry, she started asking to wear something every day. "Mama, couldn't you please get me my very own ring, anklets, earrings, sirfhula, and nose-stud?"**

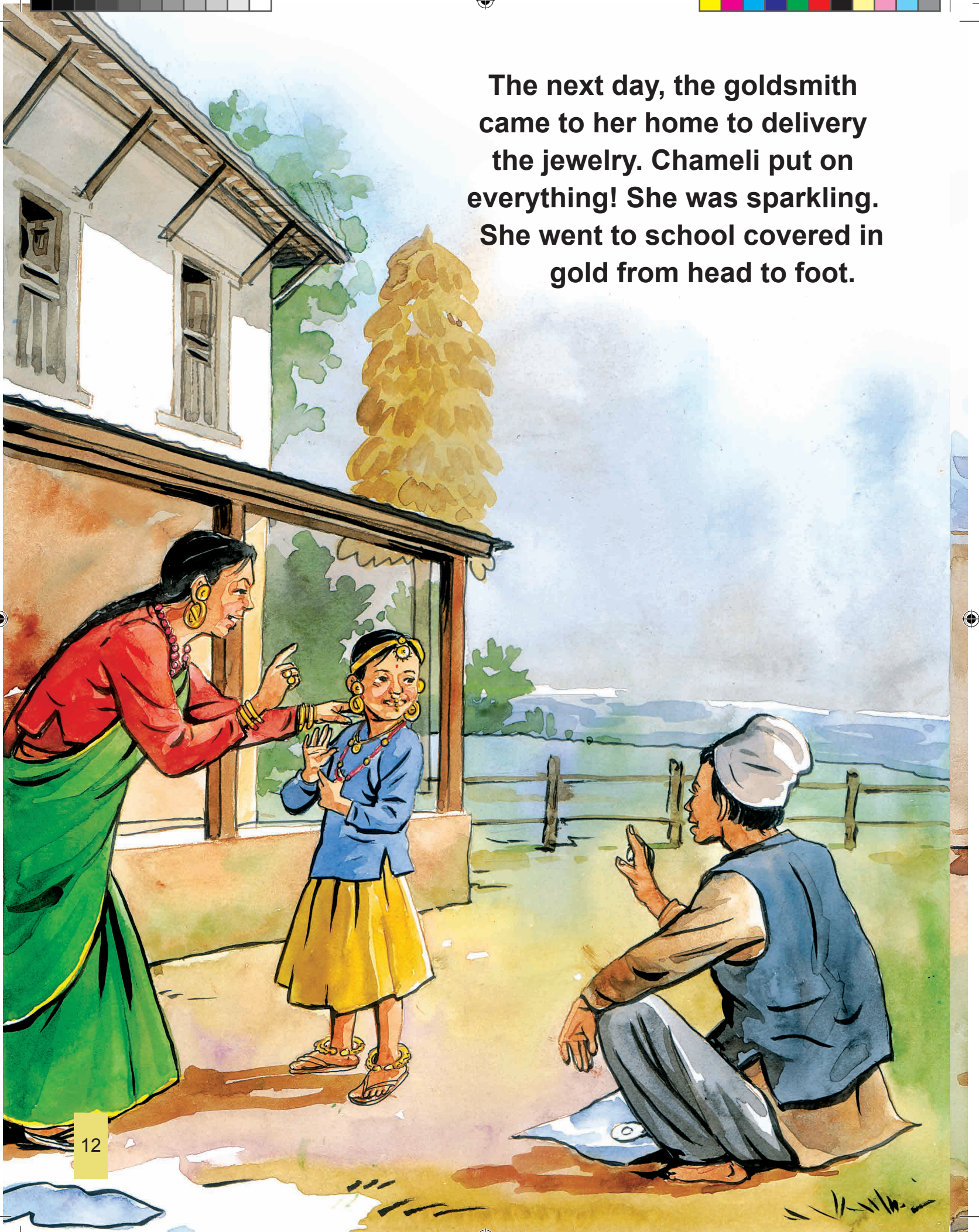




**Chameli's parents wanted to give their daughter everything.  
So her mother took her to the goldsmith's shop.**



The next day, the goldsmith came to her home to delivery the jewelry. Chameli put on everything! She was sparkling. She went to school covered in gold from head to foot.





**During recess, all the students gathered around her. Chameli was thrilled. Her friend Kopila asked her, “Why don’t you dance for us, Chameli?” Everyone clapped and sang and Chameli started dancing.**



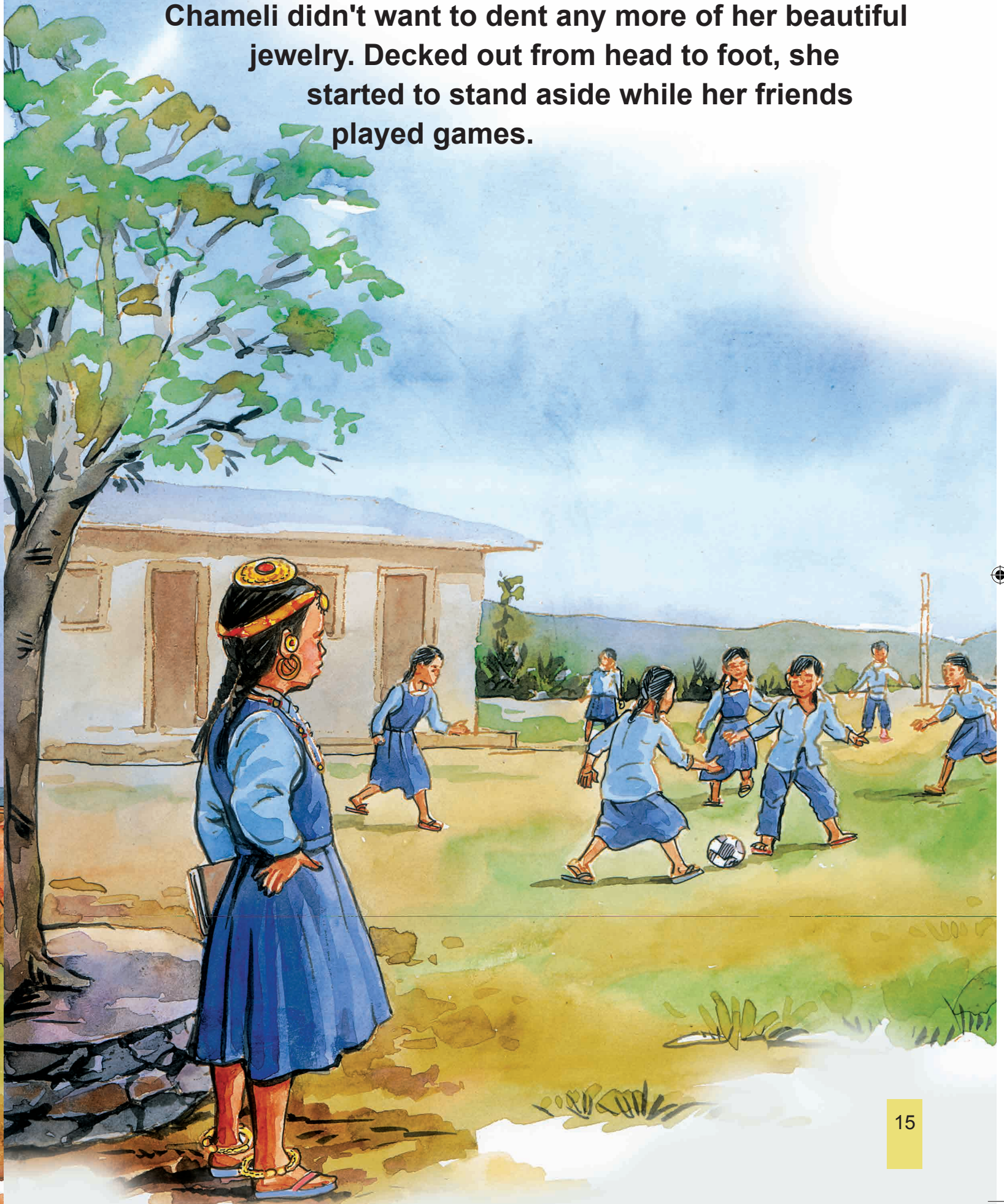


It started raining while Chameli, Tilaja and Alka were walking home after school. The red mud on the path was slippery. Chameli slipped, fell down, and dented her beautiful sirfhula! "Why did you push me, Tilja?" she demanded. But Tilja had not even touched Chameli.



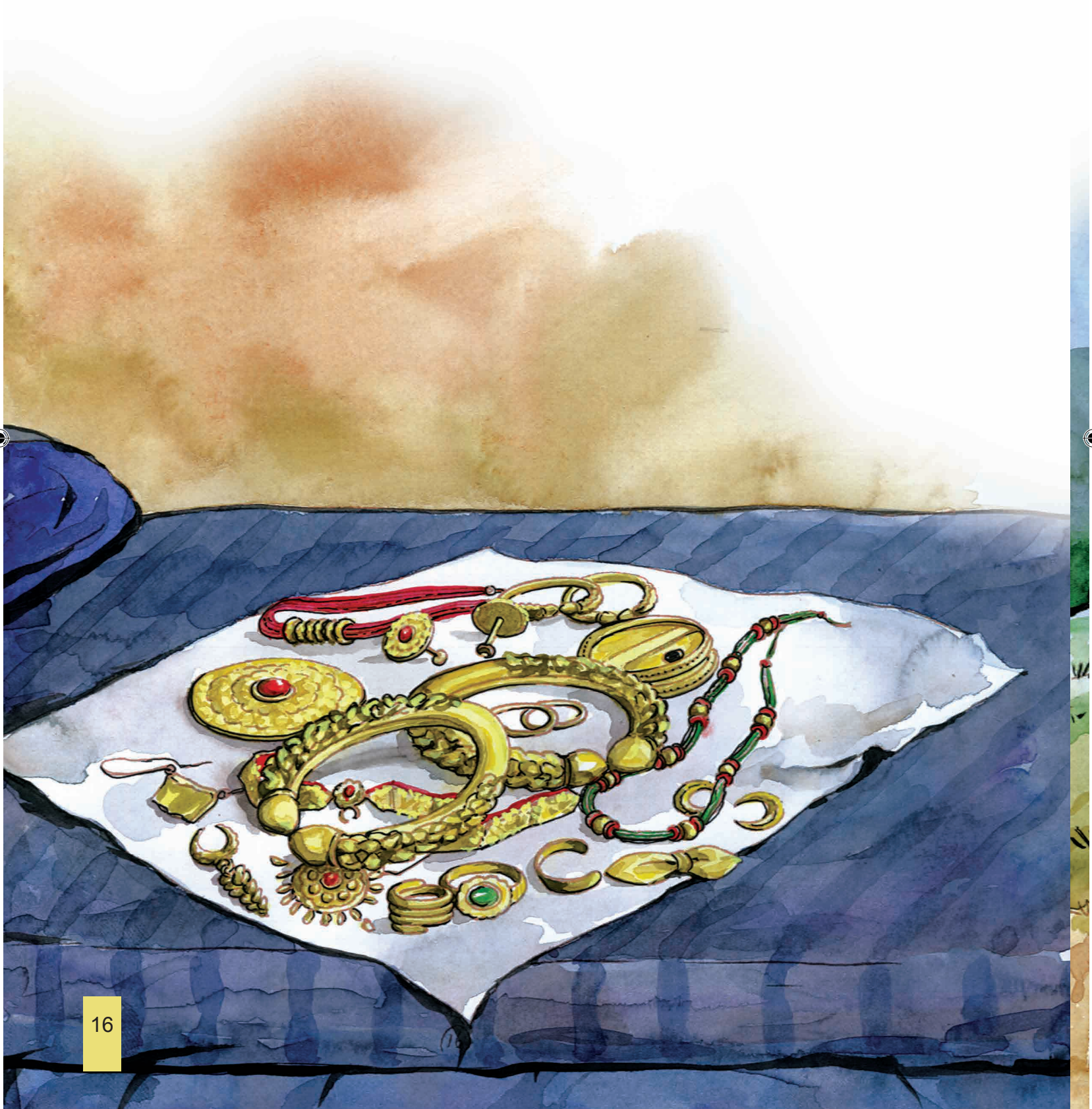


**Chameli didn't want to dent any more of her beautiful jewelry. Deckerd out from head to foot, she started to stand aside while her friends played games.**





**One day, Chameli took off her jewelry to take a shower. She piled all of the jewelry together. The weight of the anklet broke the sirfhula!**







**Chameli noticed the broken sirfhula after she was finished showering. “How dare someone break by sirfhula?” That day, she did not go to school. She went to the goldsmith to get her sirfhula fixed instead.**





The next day, she an earring. Chameli suspected one of her friends had taken it. The teacher asked every student in the class if he or she had found it.





The day after, her nose stud was broken.  
Chameli went to the goldsmith to get it fixed.  
She missed school again.





**One day, teacher asked everyone in the class to draw a picture of Chameli. Chameli was thrilled! Exactly like a model, she took her seat in a chair.**

**The students drew her picture very quickly and hung their drawings on the board. The pictures were very different from one another!**





In the picture drawn by Tilja, Chameli looked handcuffed with a gold chain of bangles.





Her friend, Sukbahadur, drew a picture where Chameli's anklets chained her together.





**Chameli was so angry! That was not how her jewelry looked at all. "Tilja and Sukahadur," the teacher said. "These are nice pictures. They show a lot of imagination."**





Day by day, Chameli's friends stopped spending time with her. This made Chameli very sad and lonely. In class, she sat all by herself in the back row.







During recess, she sat alone on the *chautari* and ate her *tiffin*. Gazing at the beautiful birds in the sky, she said to herself, “The birds are lonely like me.”





**In class, the teacher announced everyone's test scores. Although she was usually a bright student, Chameli failed in two subjects. Chameli began to cry.**





The next day, the principal asked her to come to his office. “Chameli, you used to do well in school and in sports. You have a bright spirit. But you have been distracted by the beauty of gold. You should know that gold does not have a spirit, my child.”





**"Gold has no spirit." Chameli could not stop thinking about what the principal had said. At home, she threw off her jewelry angrily.**





The next day, she took her jewelry to the goldsmith. “Will you please melt them and turn it into a ball so that I can give it to my mother to keep for now?”

When all the gold was melted, the goldsmith handed it over to Chameli. Chameli gave the gold ball to her mother.



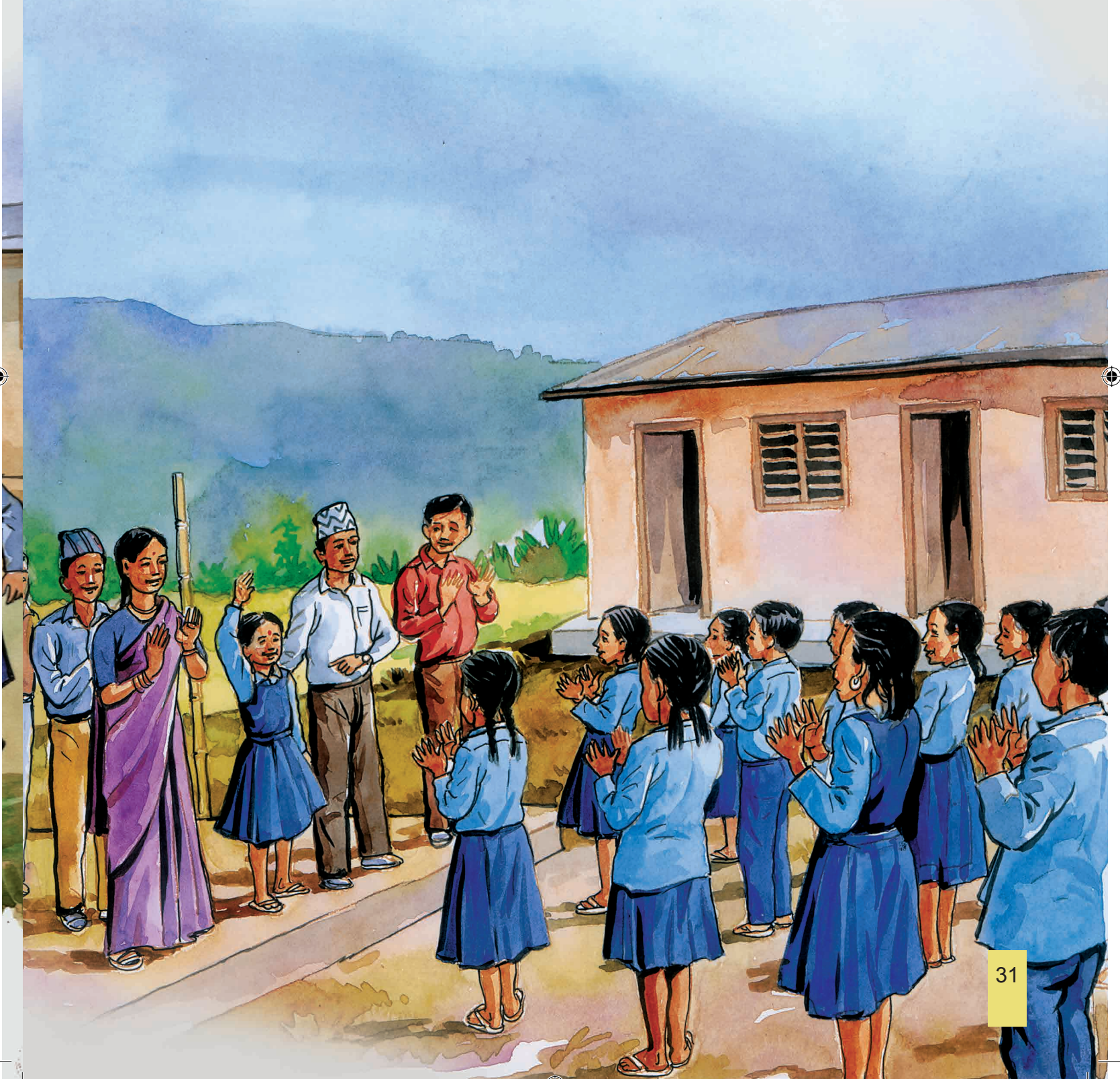


**Chameli went to school that day with no jewelry on at all. Then she joined in a game with her friends. They all gave her hugs, but Chameli hugged Tilja for the longest time of all.**



When the teacher noticed her, she called her out of line and said, "Chameli is in her true self today. She is showing her bright spirit again."

That made Chameli smile. She was glad to have her friends back. They all clapped to see Chameli find her true spirit again.



In the classroom, Chameli wrote something on a sheet of paper and hung it on the board for everyone to see:

*Friends, please listen to what I say  
Drowning in gold is not the way  
Family and friends know your spirit  
You must listen inside to hear it.*

And it was Tilja who added,  
*Chameli spirit's sparkles  
brighter than gold!*

