

Never Left

Stephy Hsu

Merad is a six years old little girl who just lost her father. She can not and does not know how to face the feelings of bereavement. By herself and supported by her mother, she starts her journey searching and finding her Daddy. She then realizes that even though Daddy is not physically with her, but the memories of Daddy are still with her. In the end, she is able to find her way to memorialize her Daddy with her Mommy as a way to cope.

The book is targeted toward five to eight years old children who might experience the loss of their loved one. The book also implies the metaphor behind Zhuangzi and his butterfly dream.

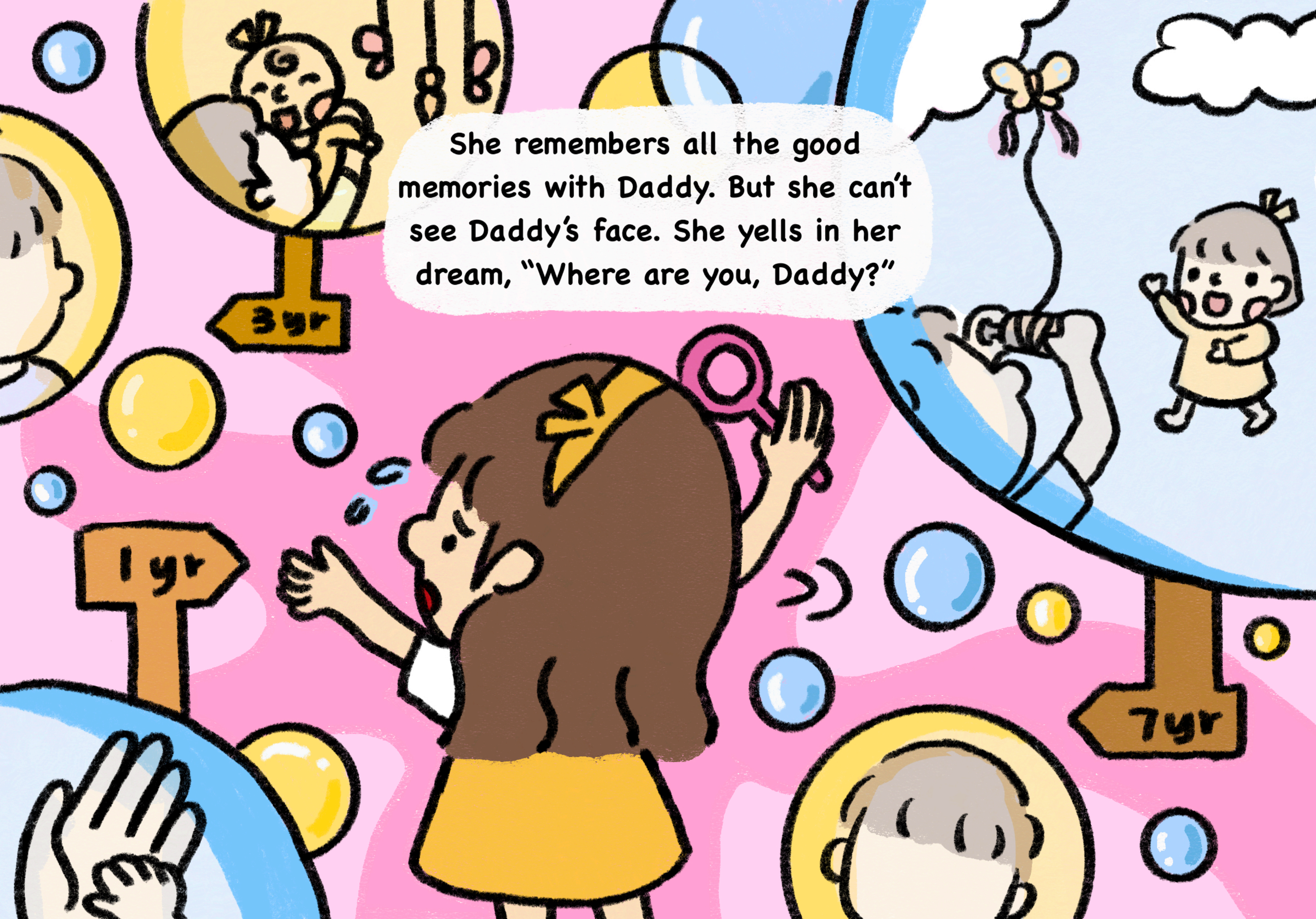
This story was written and illustrated by a first-year master's student studying Art Therapy at New York University.





Merad enjoys her time with Mommy and Daddy

She remembers all the good memories with Daddy. But she can't see Daddy's face. She yells in her dream, "Where are you, Daddy?"





Merad wakes up in the morning
feeling sad.

" Oh...was it a dream?"

She finds her pillow wet.





Mommy asks Merad if she is feeling okay? Merad is not sure how she feels, and the world feels odd to her. "I don't know, Mommy..."

Merad looks out the window.



"The school bus is here. Get ready for school Merad! Have a nice day!" says Mommy.

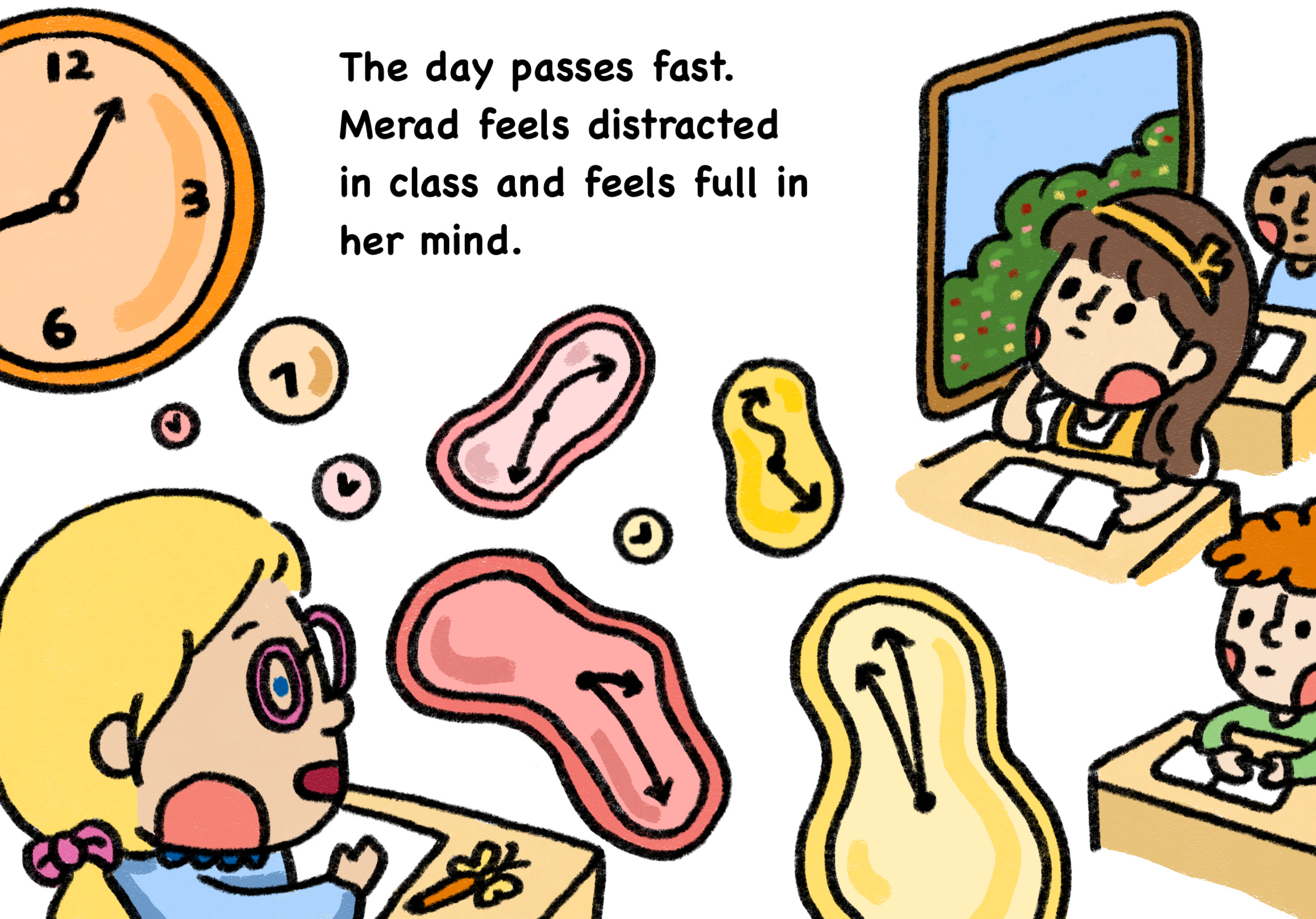
The bus driver greets Merad " Hey honey, are you ready for school?" Merad is not sure about leaving her mom. She mumbles, " I think so..."



She leans next to the window.
"No one picked up the mail today..."



The day passes fast.
Merad feels distracted
in class and feels full
in her mind.





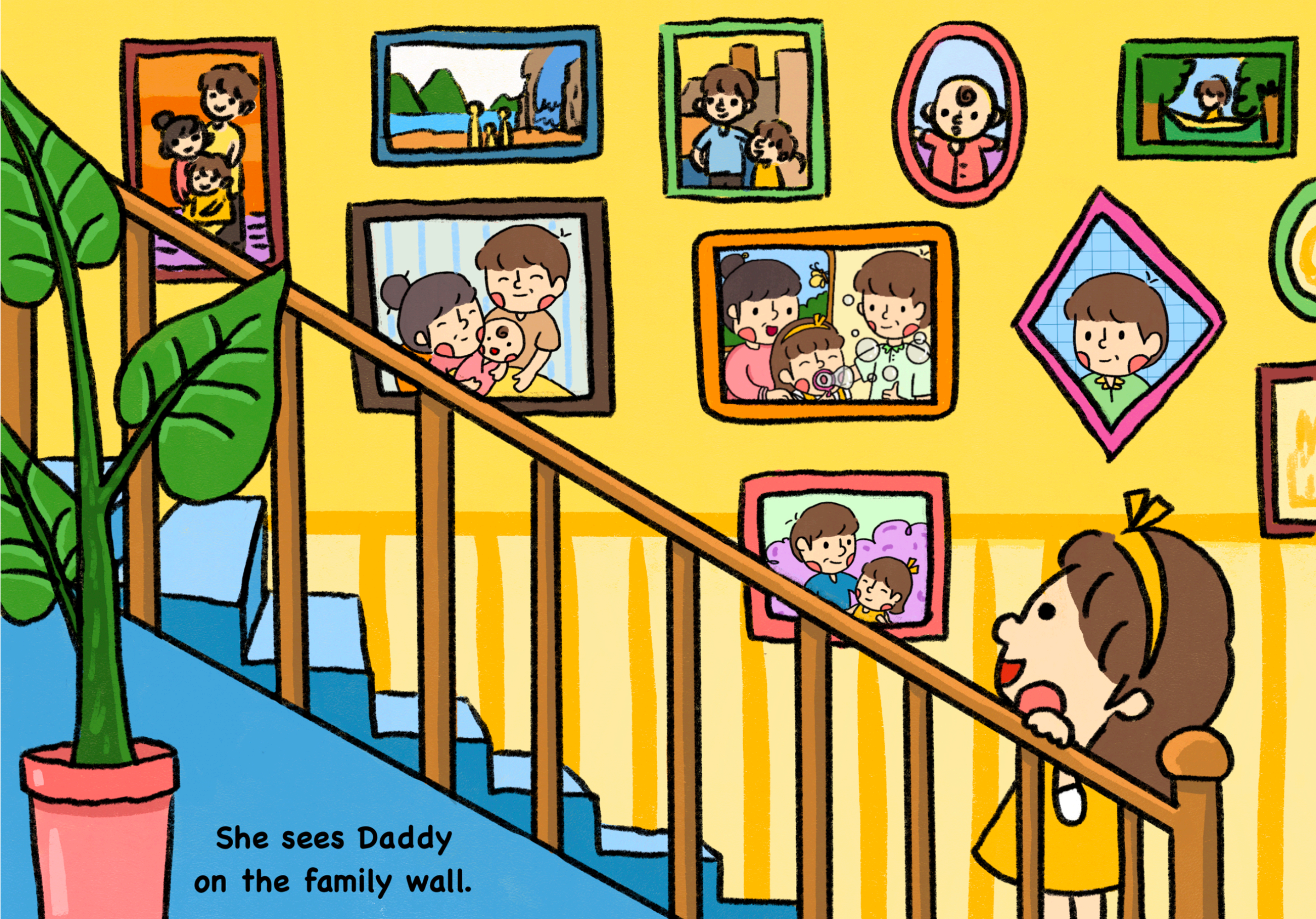
After school,
Merad searches
and waits for
Daddy.

Merad decides to find Daddy.



She finds Daddy in
Mommy's thoughts.





She sees Daddy
on the family wall.

She hears Daddy voice from the bunny that he bought.



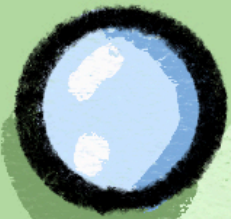
Her face looks so much like Daddy.

She smells Daddy
from his clothes.



She finds Daddy in
her memories.

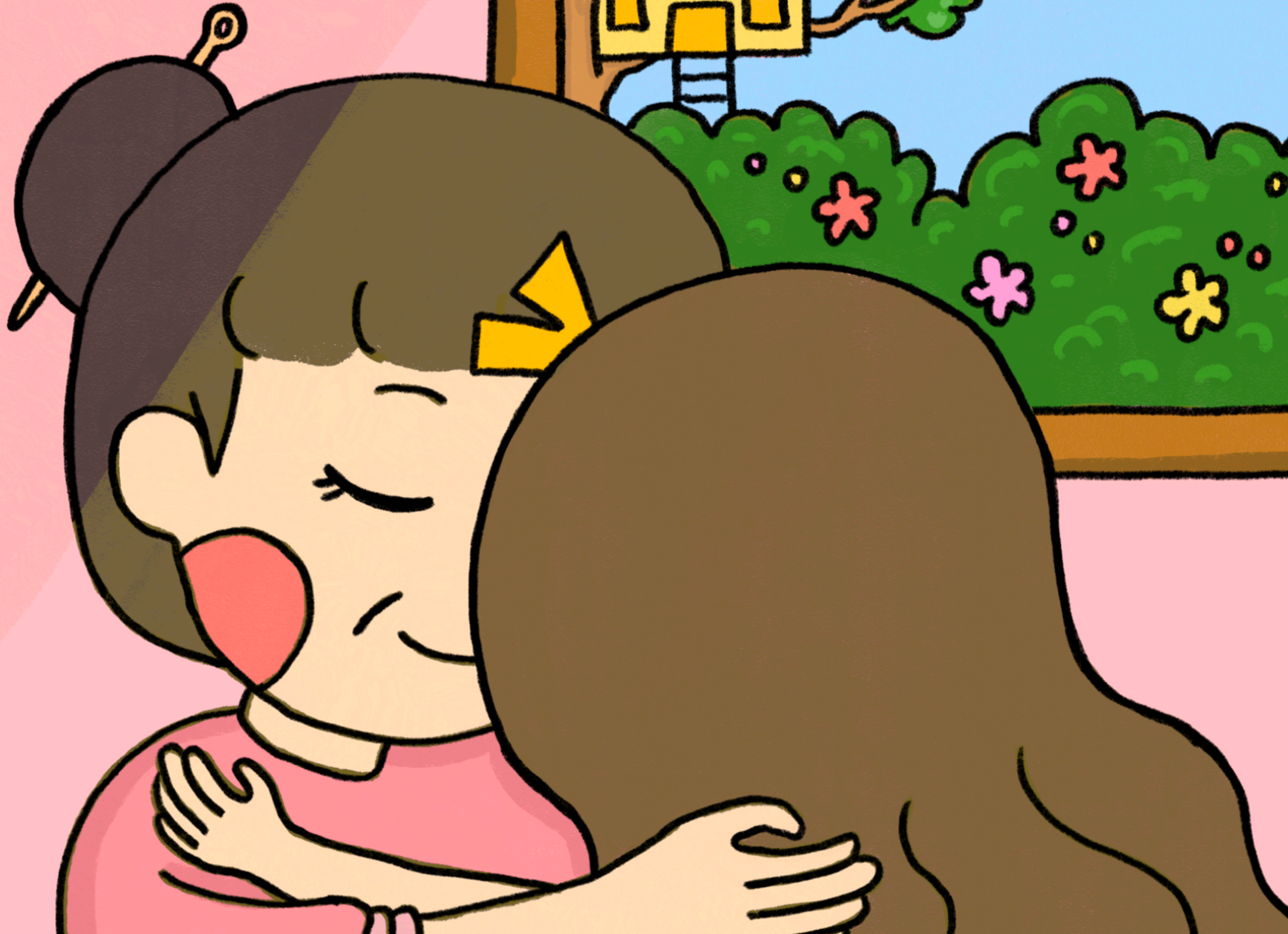


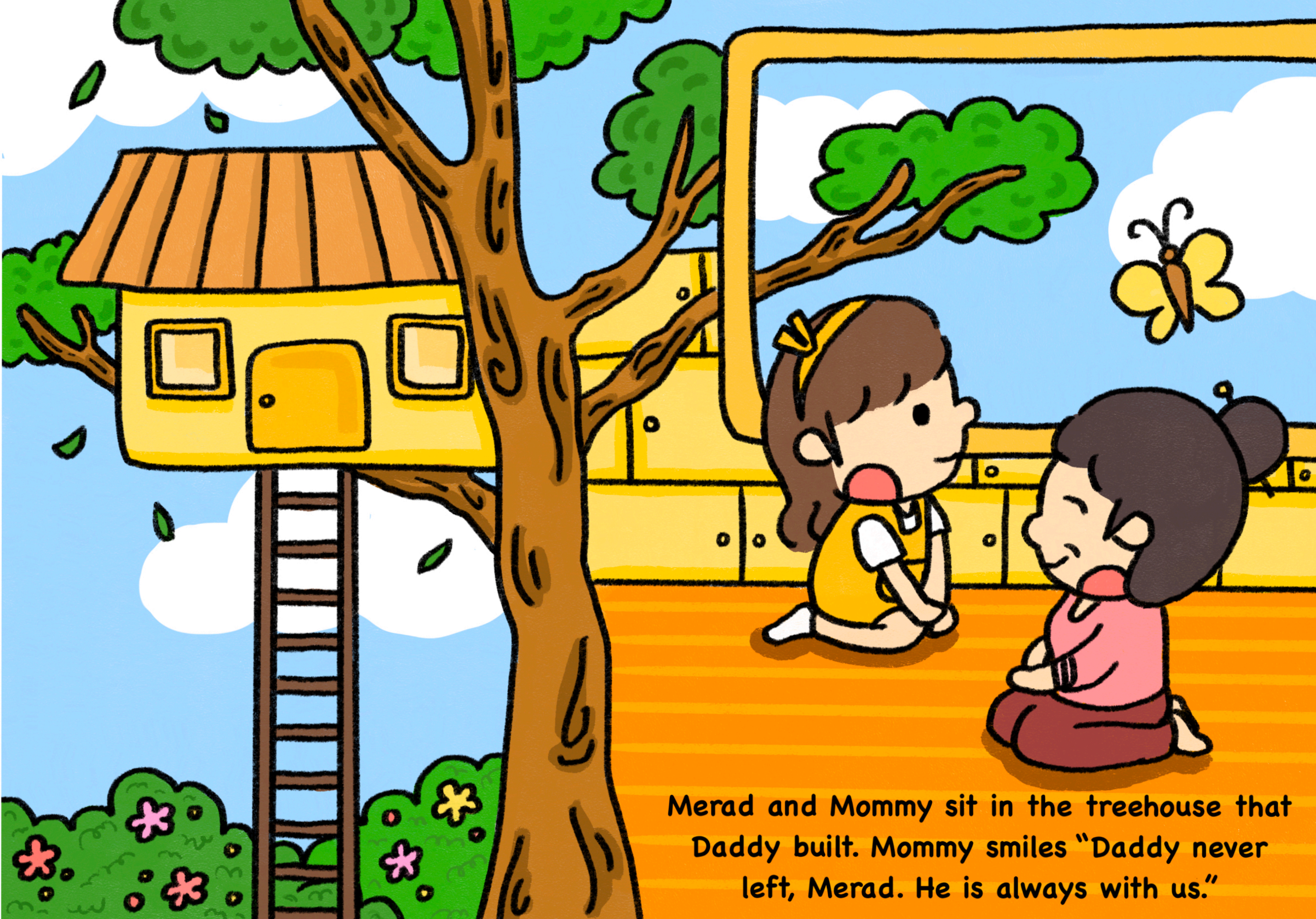


And she meets Daddy
in her dreams...



"Mommy, Daddy is gone. I miss him..." cries Merad
" I miss Daddy, too."





Merad and Mommy sit in the treehouse that Daddy built. Mommy smiles "Daddy never left, Merad. He is always with us."



Merad and Mommy decided to decorate the treehouse that Daddy built. Merad draws Daddy and Mommy on the wall. They make curtains out of Daddy's clothes. She writes a letter to Daddy while singing his favorite song.



Merad feels better and happier. She is ready for a new day.



"Death is an illusion, life is a dream and you are the creator of your own imagination."

- LJ Vanier