

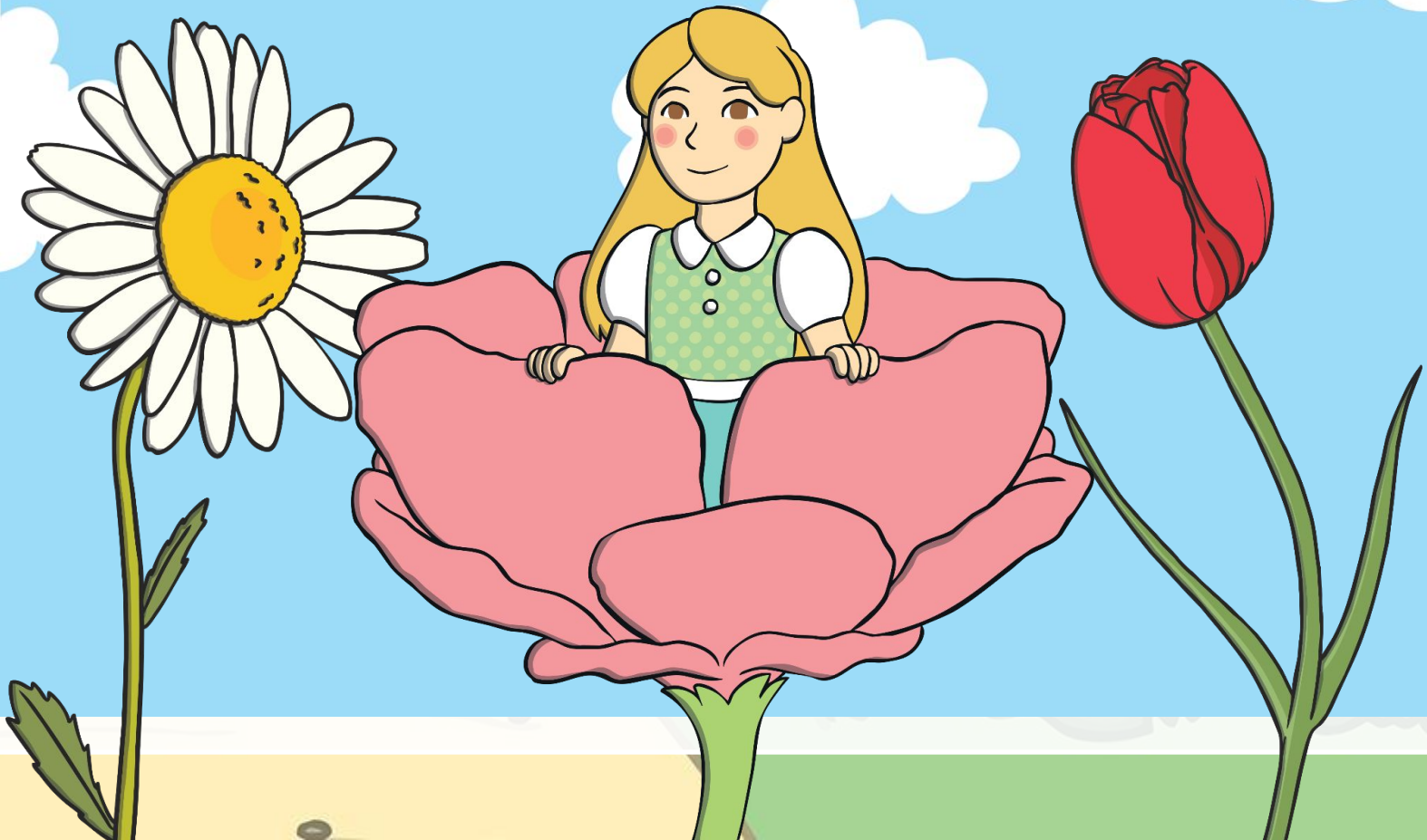
Thumbelina

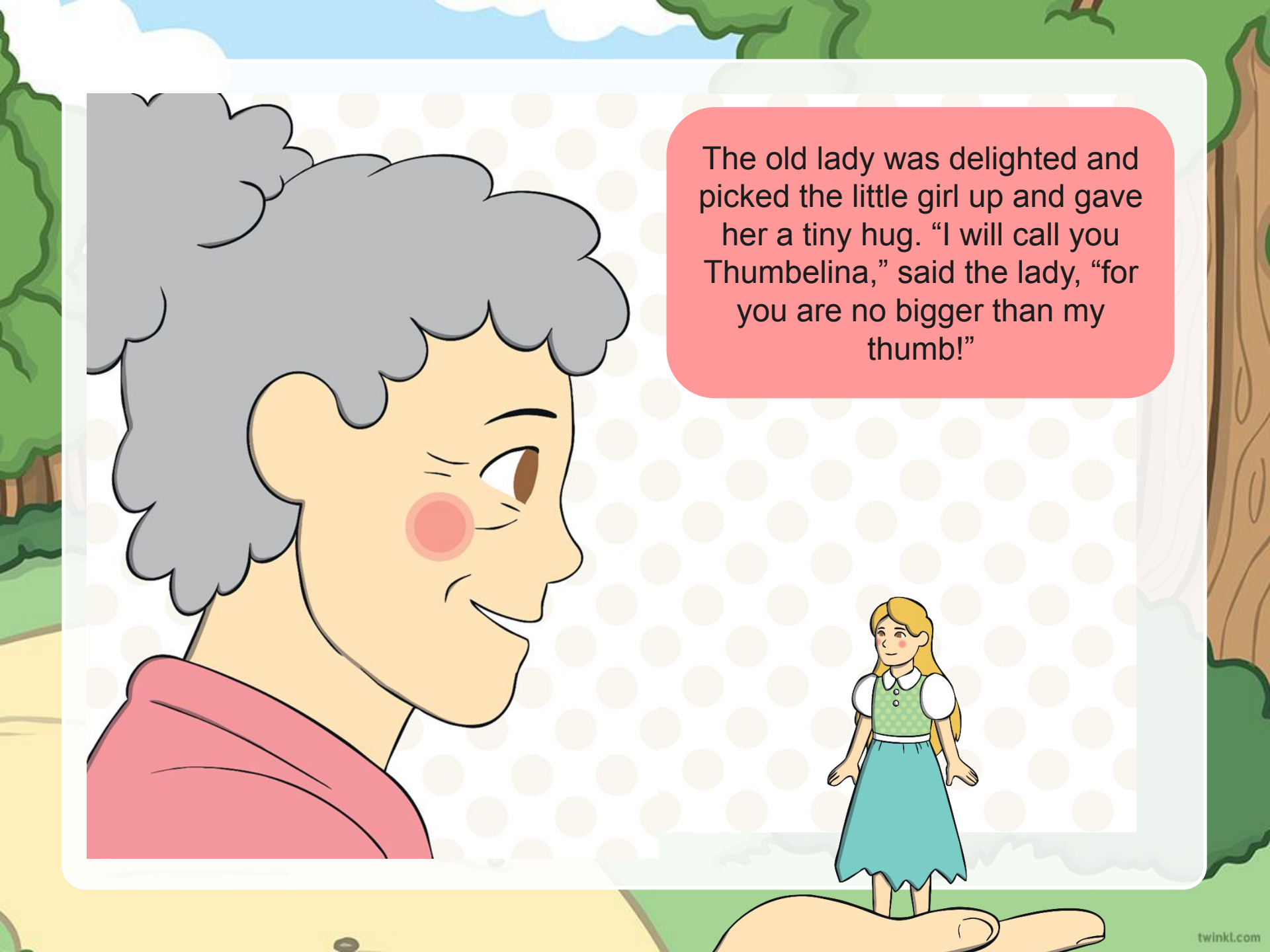


Once upon a time, there lived a lonely old woman who longed for a daughter. The years had gone by and her dream had never come true. One day, sad and desperate, she decided to visit a good witch. The witch took pity on her and gave her a tiny seed. "Plant this in a flower-pot and you will have your wish."



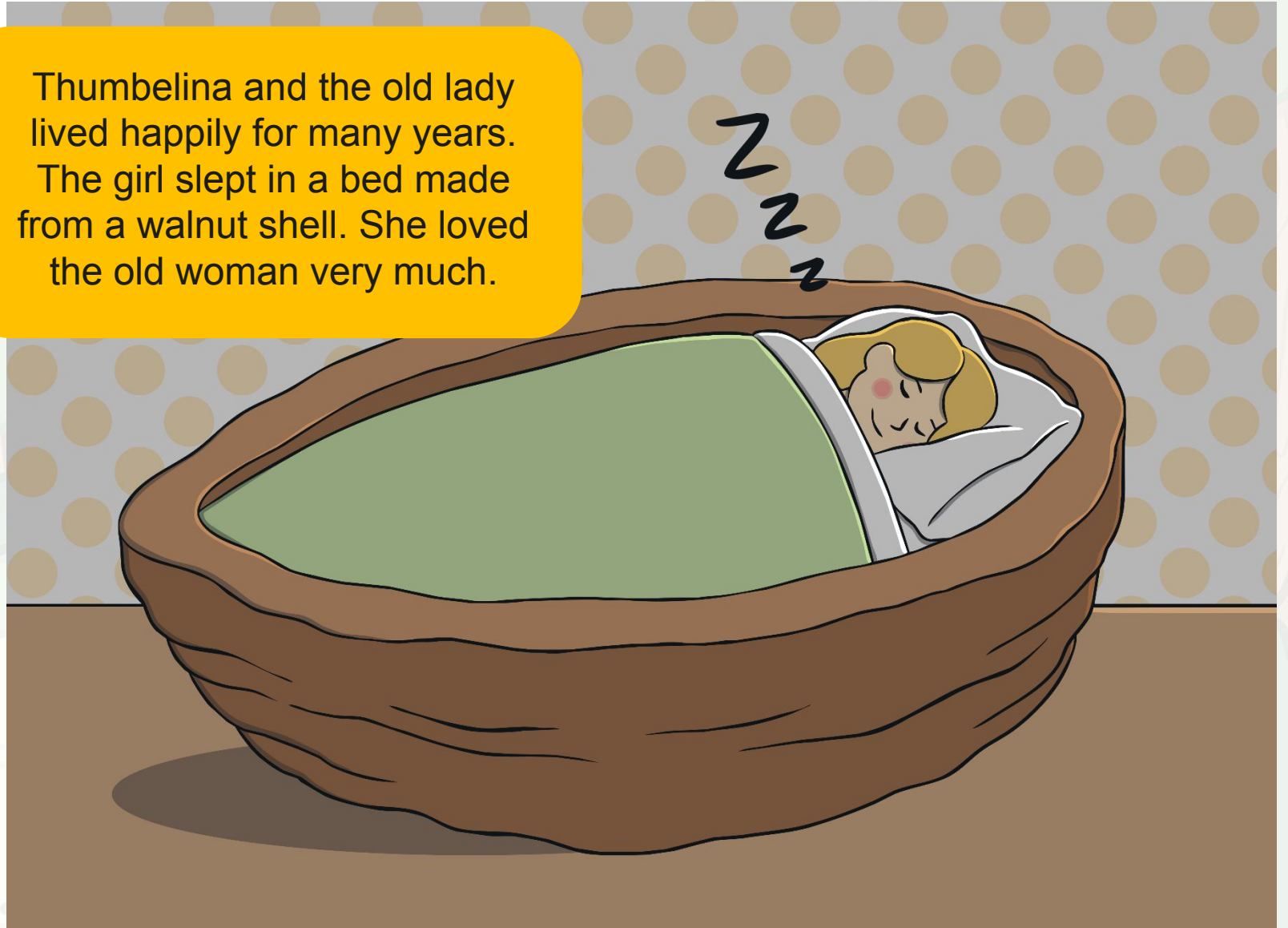
The woman did as she was told, and after one week, a beautiful flower grew. In the centre of the flower was a tiny child with golden hair.



An illustration of an old lady with short, curly grey hair and a large red nose. She is shown in profile, smiling warmly at a tiny girl. The girl has long blonde hair and is wearing a green dress with a white collar and a blue skirt. She is standing on the tip of the old lady's thumb. The background is a light blue sky with white clouds and green foliage. A pink speech bubble contains text.

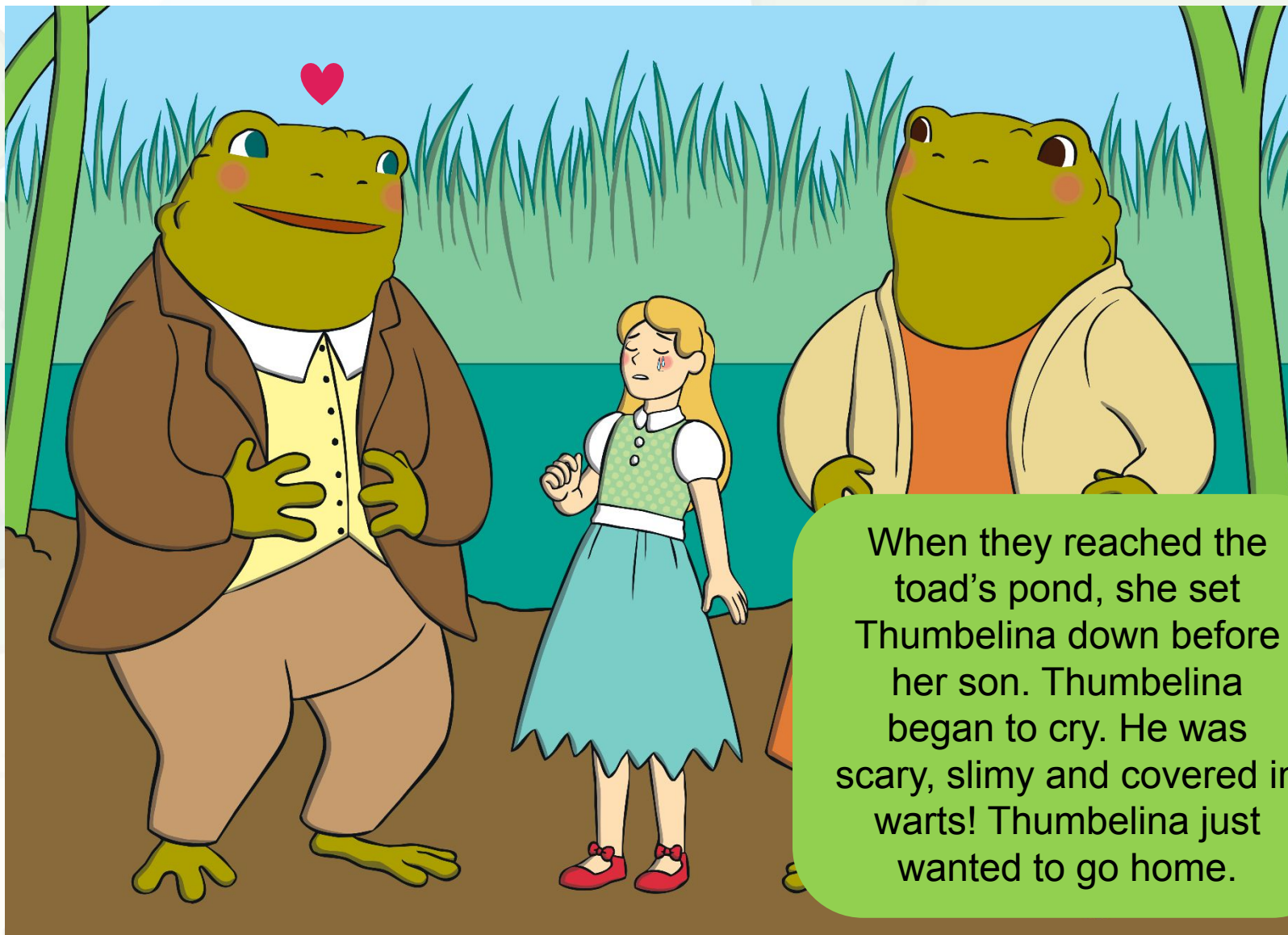
The old lady was delighted and picked the little girl up and gave her a tiny hug. "I will call you Thumbelina," said the lady, "for you are no bigger than my thumb!"

Thumbelina and the old lady lived happily for many years. The girl slept in a bed made from a walnut shell. She loved the old woman very much.



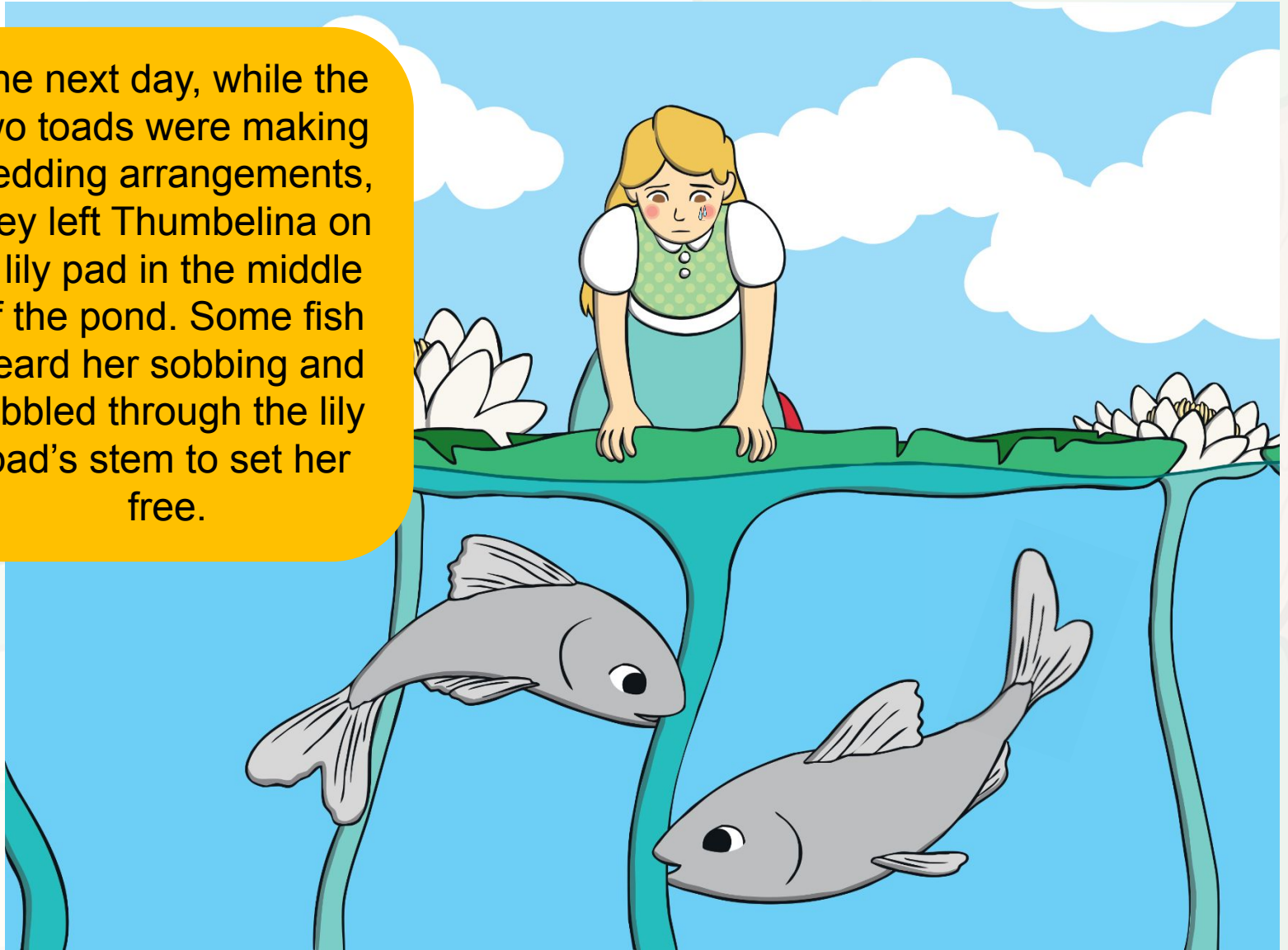
One night, when the old lady was asleep, a giant toad hopped through an open window and kidnapped Thumbelina. "You are a pretty little creature" said the toad, "you will make the perfect bride for my handsome son!"

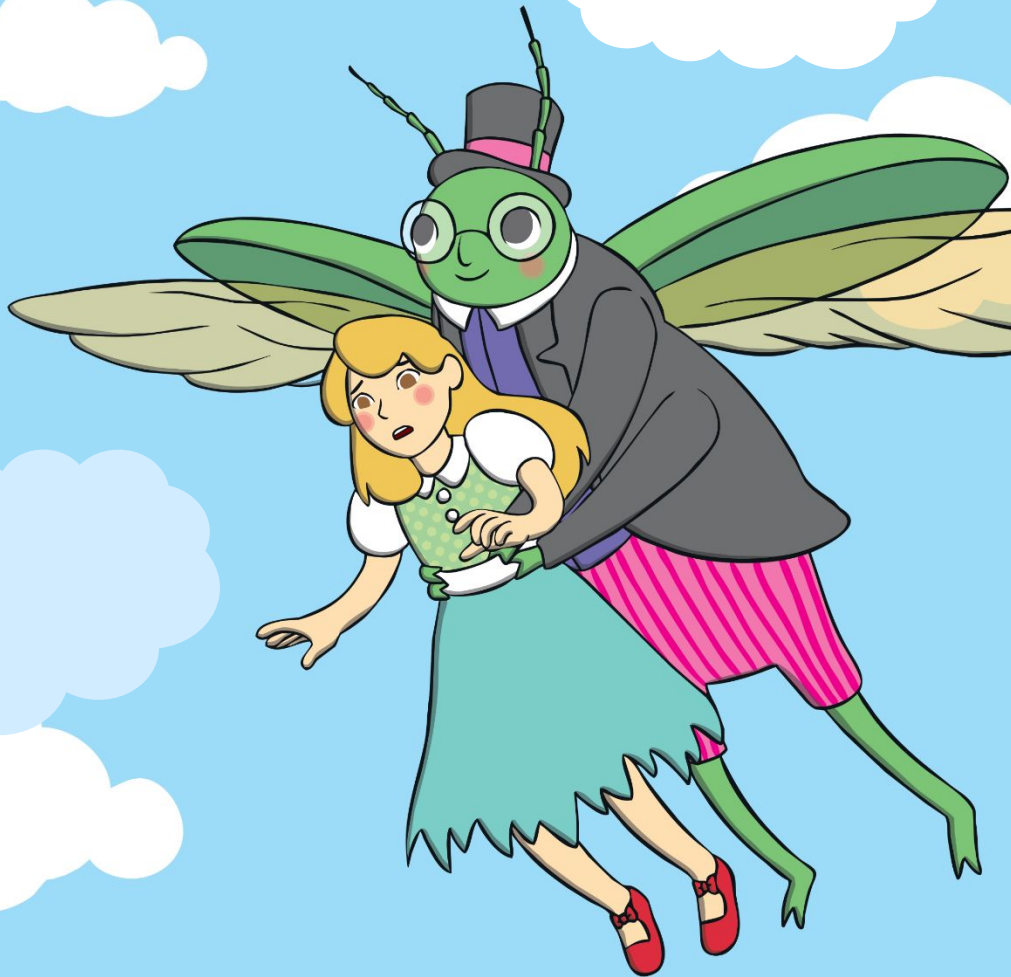




When they reached the toad's pond, she set Thumbelina down before her son. Thumbelina began to cry. He was scary, slimy and covered in warts! Thumbelina just wanted to go home.

The next day, while the two toads were making wedding arrangements, they left Thumbelina on a lily pad in the middle of the pond. Some fish heard her sobbing and nibbled through the lily pad's stem to set her free.





Thumbelina floated down the stream for a long time, past woods and fields of flowers. She was happy to be free of the toads but she was scared she would never find her way back home.

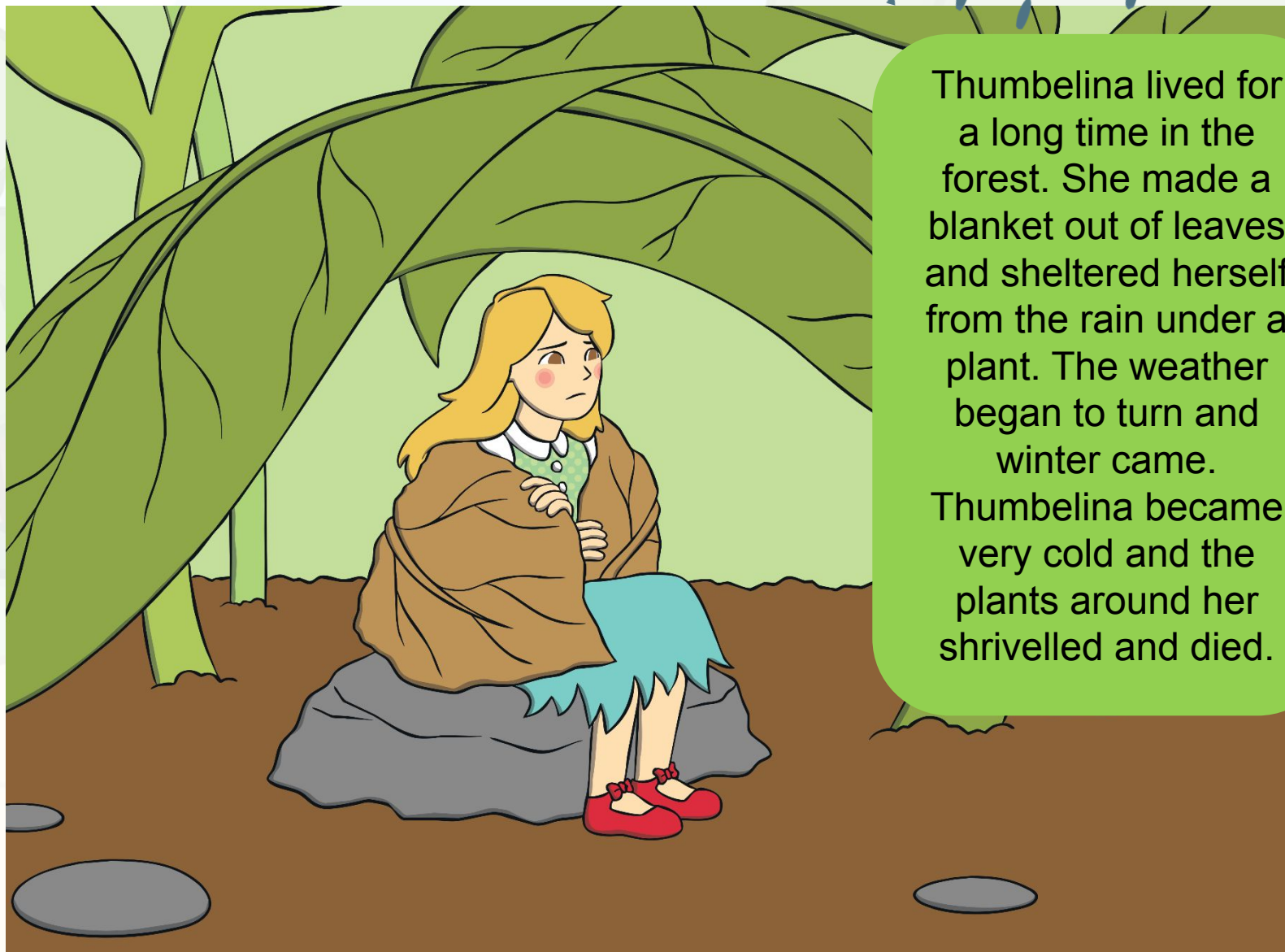
Suddenly a beetle swooped down and grabbed Thumbelina by the waist. He flew her into a tree, saying “You don’t look much like a beetle but you are very pretty!”

The beetle's friends came to see Thumbelina but they weren't very pleased with her. "Look how ugly she is!" they said. "She only has two legs and where are her feelers?"

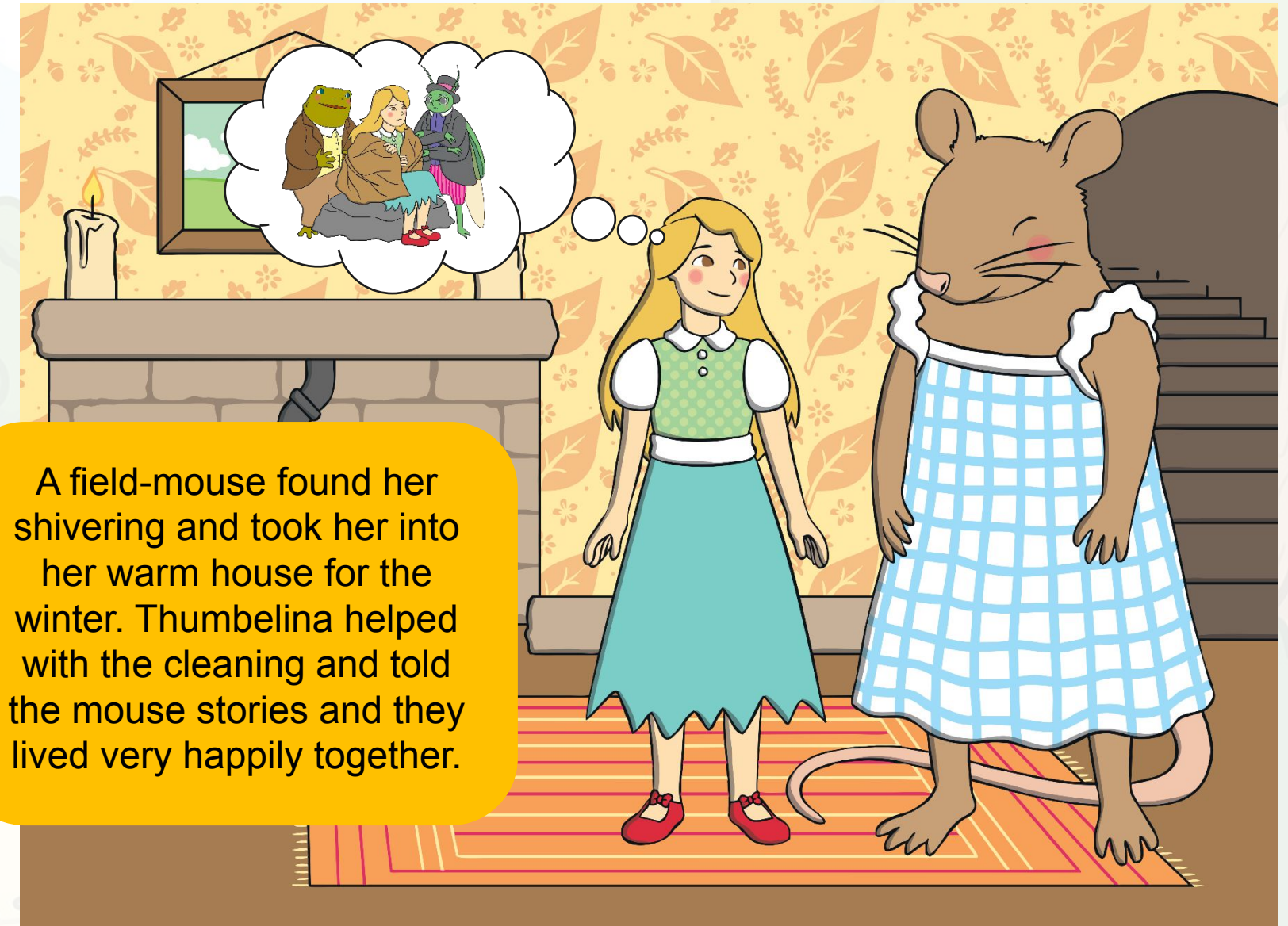


The beetle did not want to be seen with her after this so he placed Thumbelina on a daisy in the forest and left her there. Thumbelina wept for hours, “I am so ugly, not even the beetle wants me!” she thought.



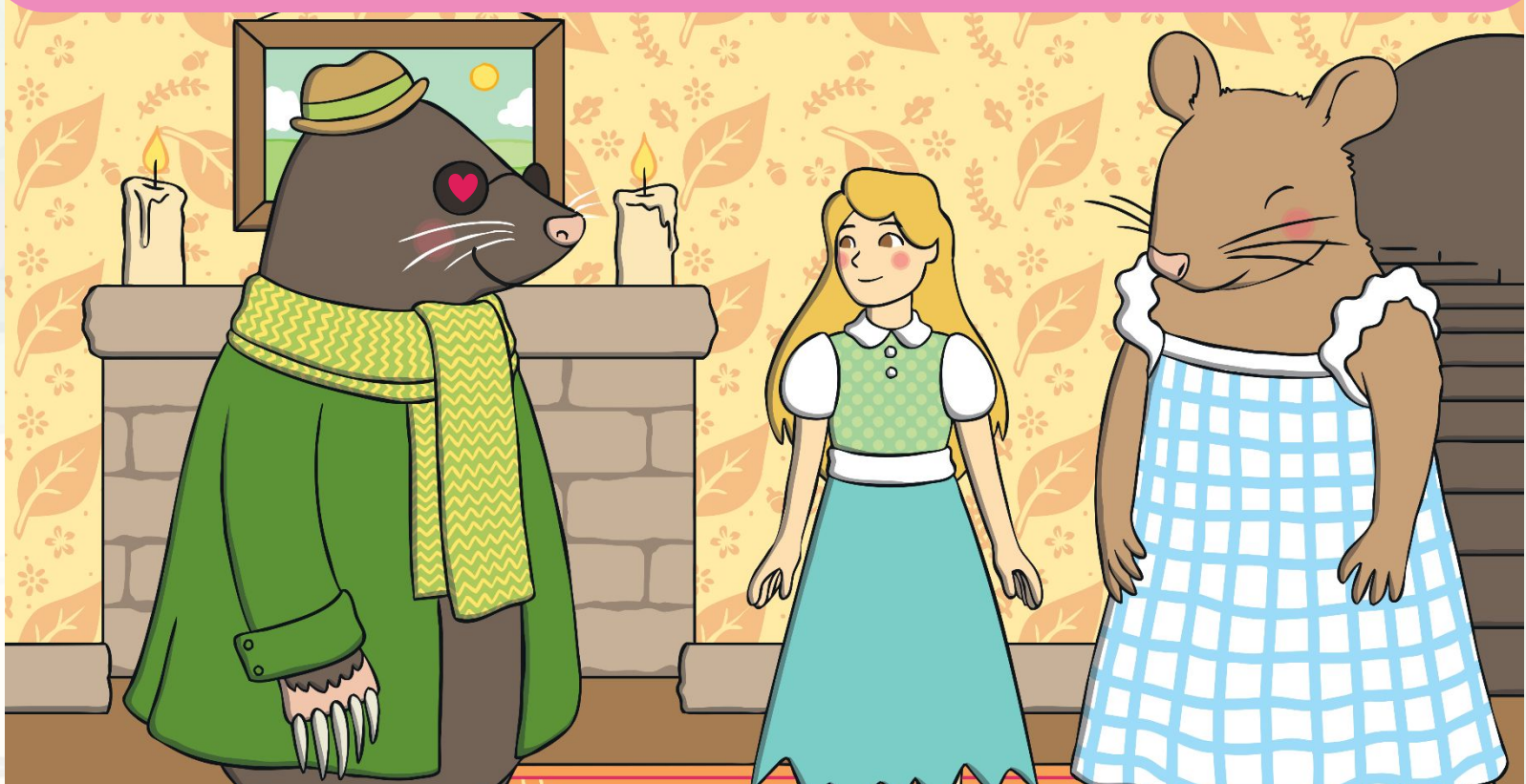


Thumbelina lived for a long time in the forest. She made a blanket out of leaves and sheltered herself from the rain under a plant. The weather began to turn and winter came. Thumbelina became very cold and the plants around her shrivelled and died.

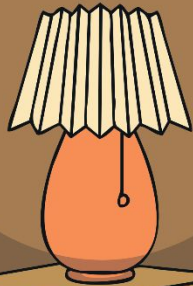
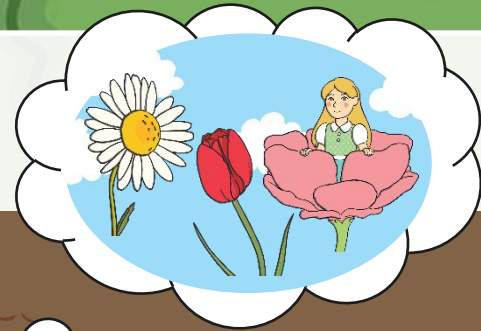


A field-mouse found her shivering and took her into her warm house for the winter. Thumbelina helped with the cleaning and told the mouse stories and they lived very happily together.

One day the field-mouse told Thumbelina she was expecting a visit from her neighbour, the mole. "He is very rich and has a much larger house than mine. If he will take you for his wife you would be very well looked after." When the mole visited, he could not see Thumbelina as he was blind but he was enchanted by the sound of her beautiful voice.

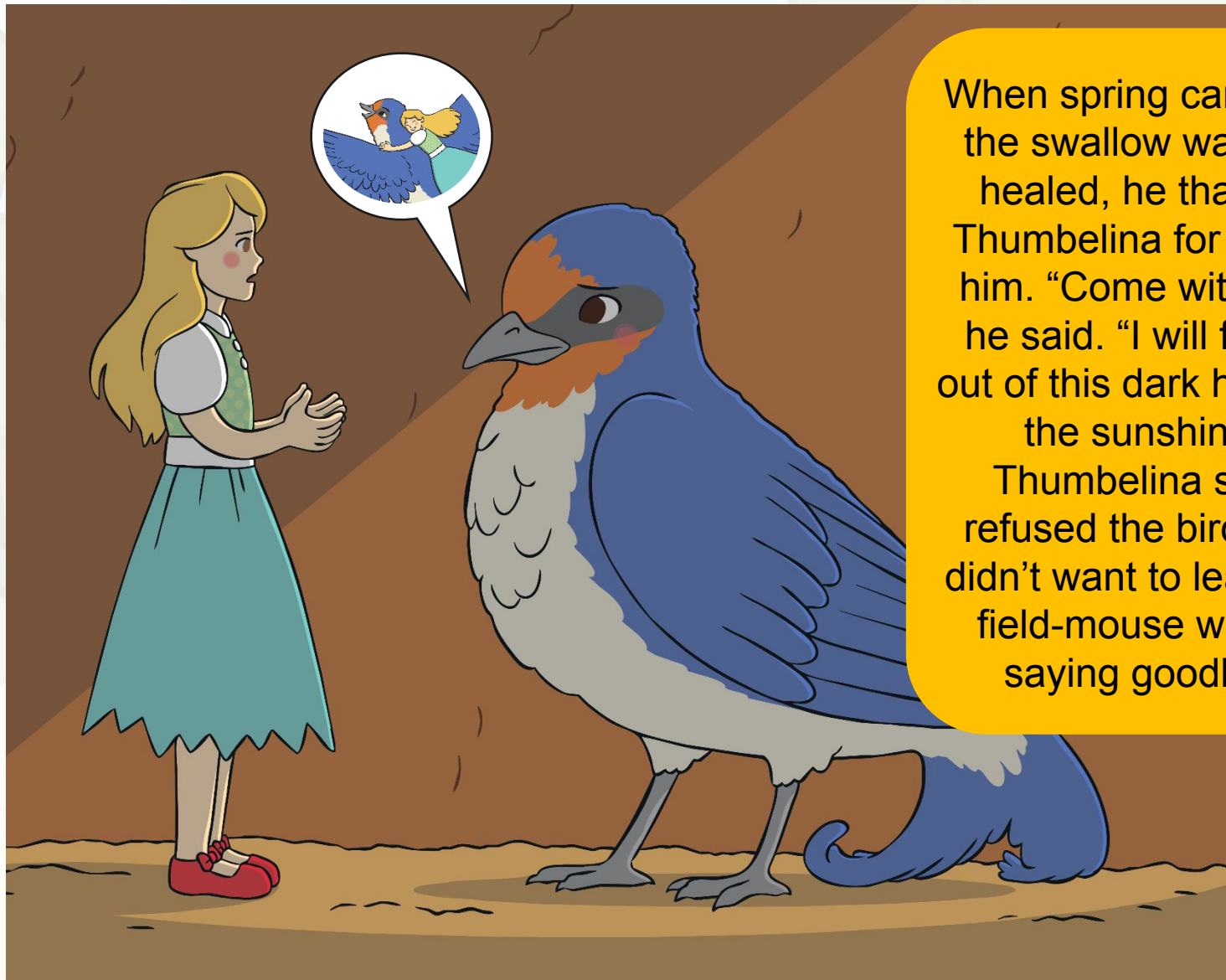


For many weeks Thumbelina visited the mole in his tunnel to keep him company. She told him stories of the flowers and the sun, but he did not like the outside world. He liked to be in his dark damp tunnels underground.



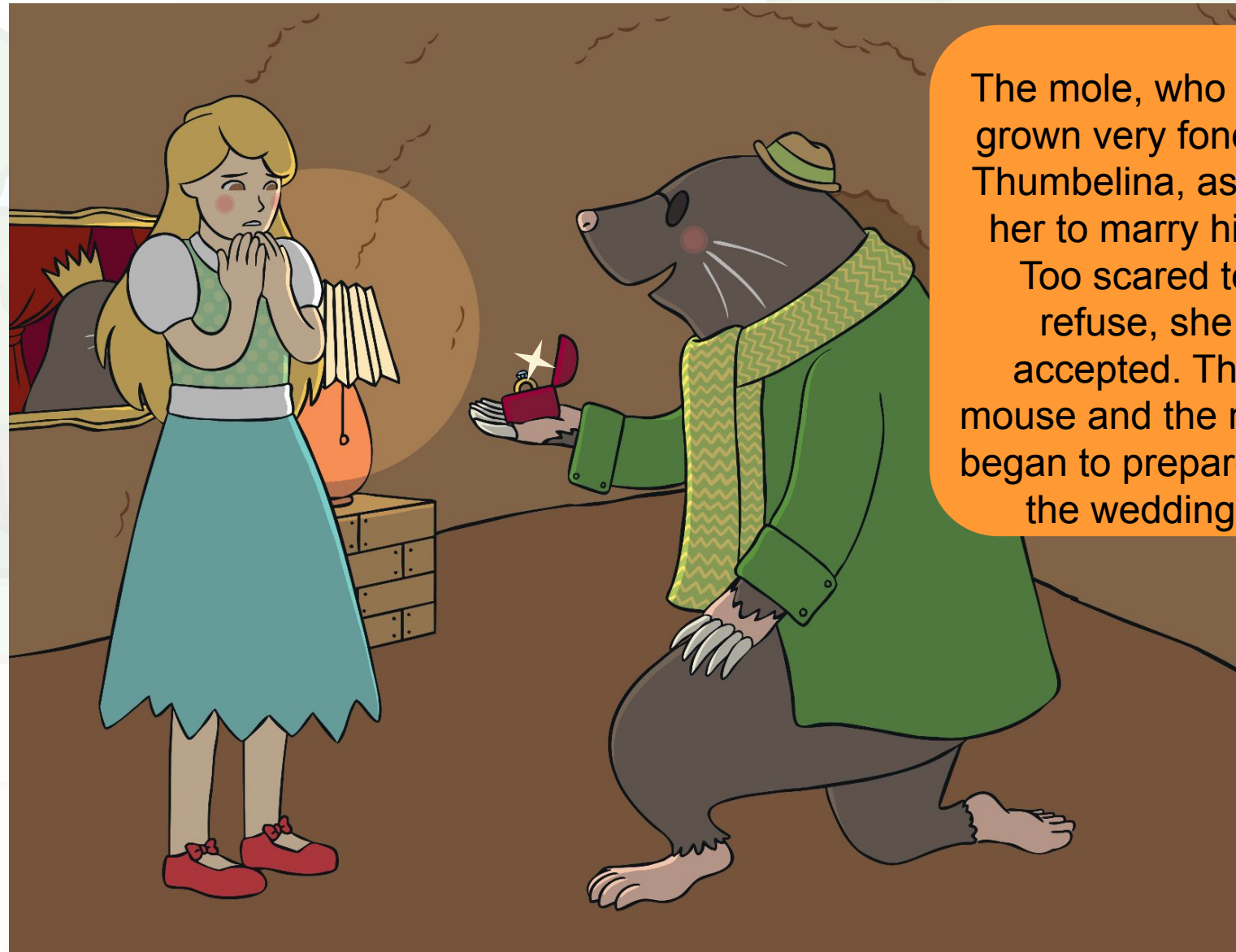
One day when they were walking, they came across a bird who had fallen freezing through the ground into the tunnel. Thumbelina was sad for the bird and nursed it back to health. The bird was a beautiful swallow.



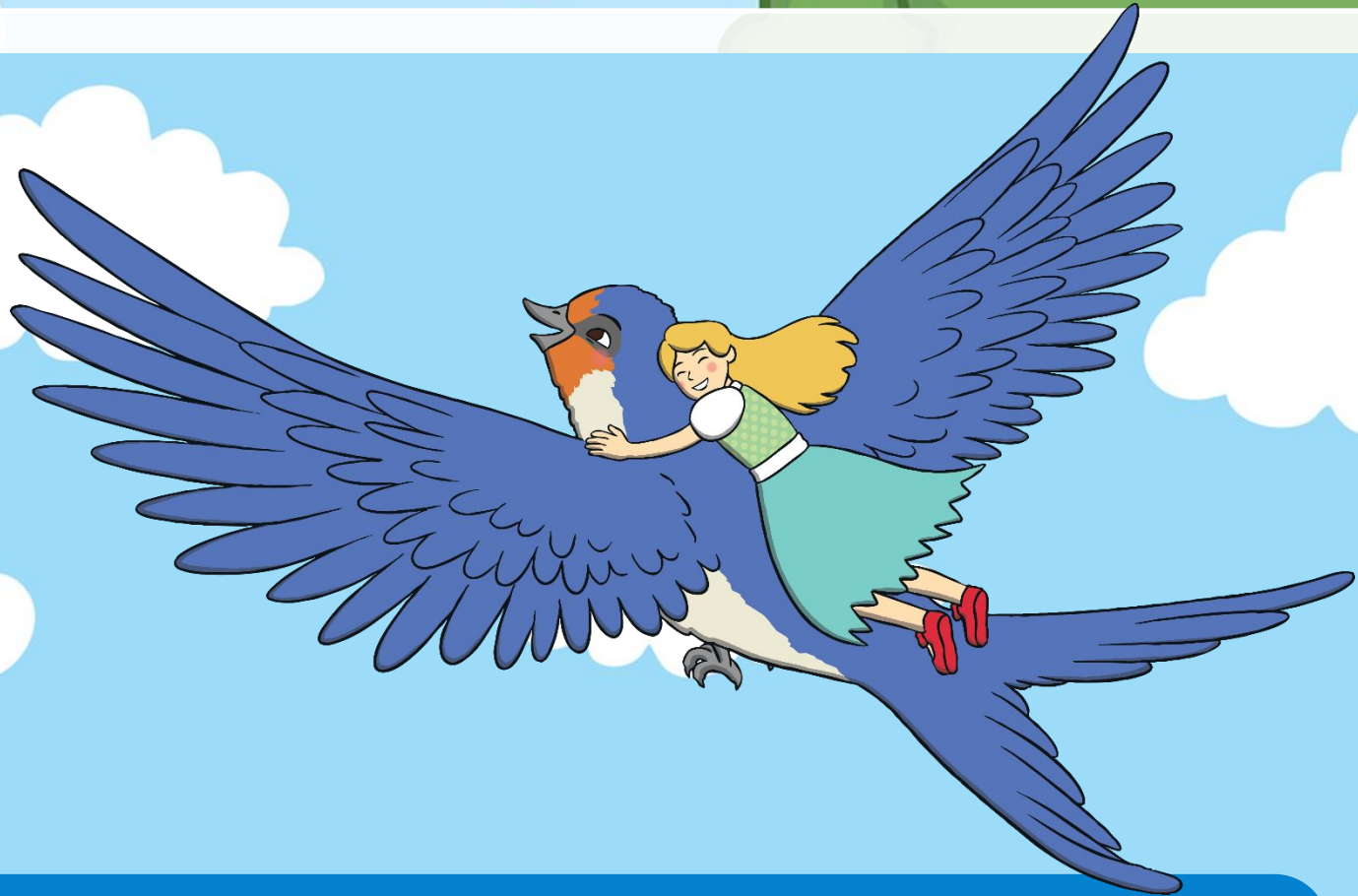


When spring came and the swallow was fully healed, he thanked Thumbelina for saving him. "Come with me!" he said. "I will fly you out of this dark hole into the sunshine."

Thumbelina sadly refused the bird. She didn't want to leave the field-mouse without saying goodbye.



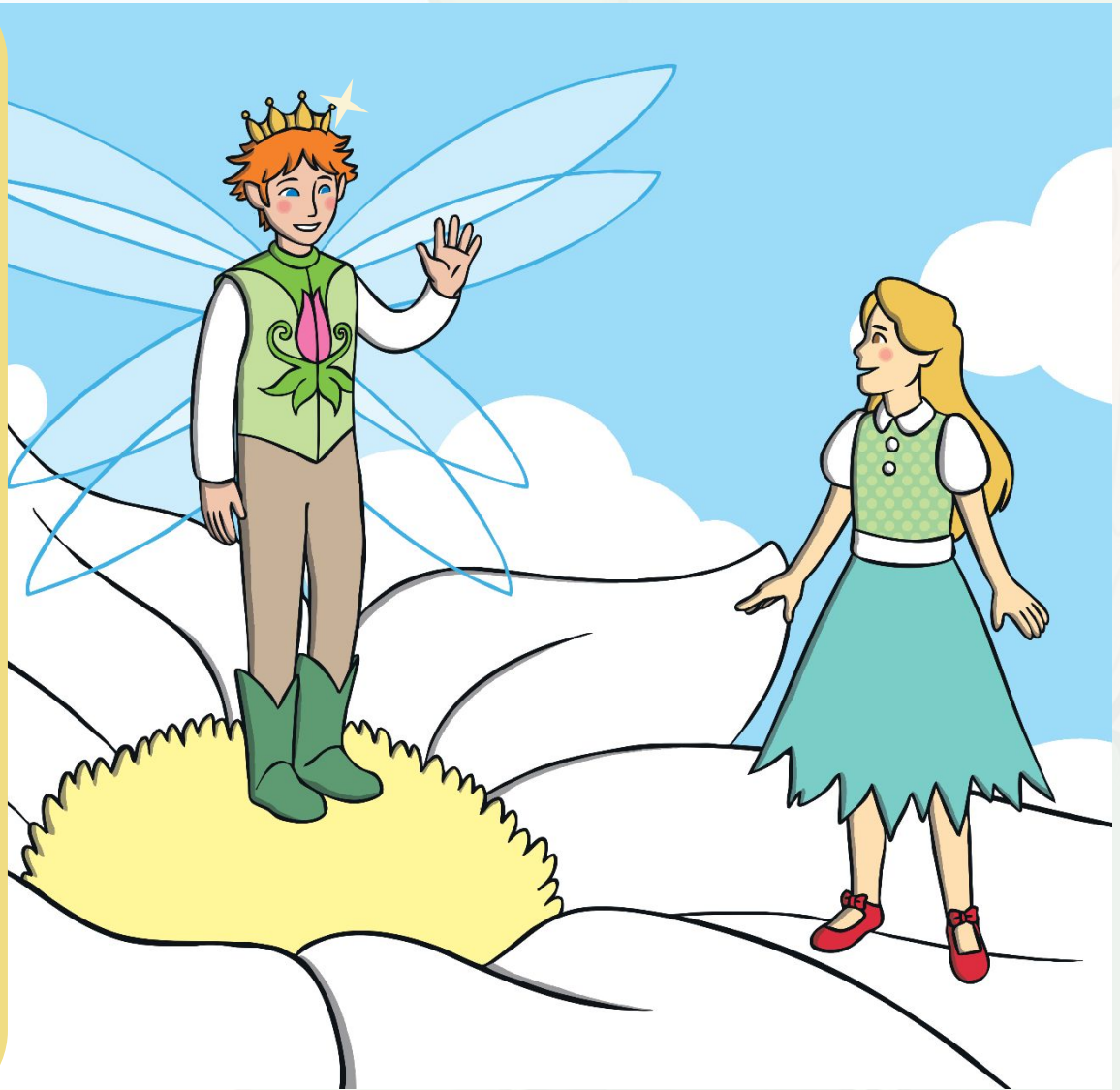
The mole, who had grown very fond of Thumbelina, asked her to marry him. Too scared to refuse, she accepted. The mouse and the mole began to prepare for the wedding.



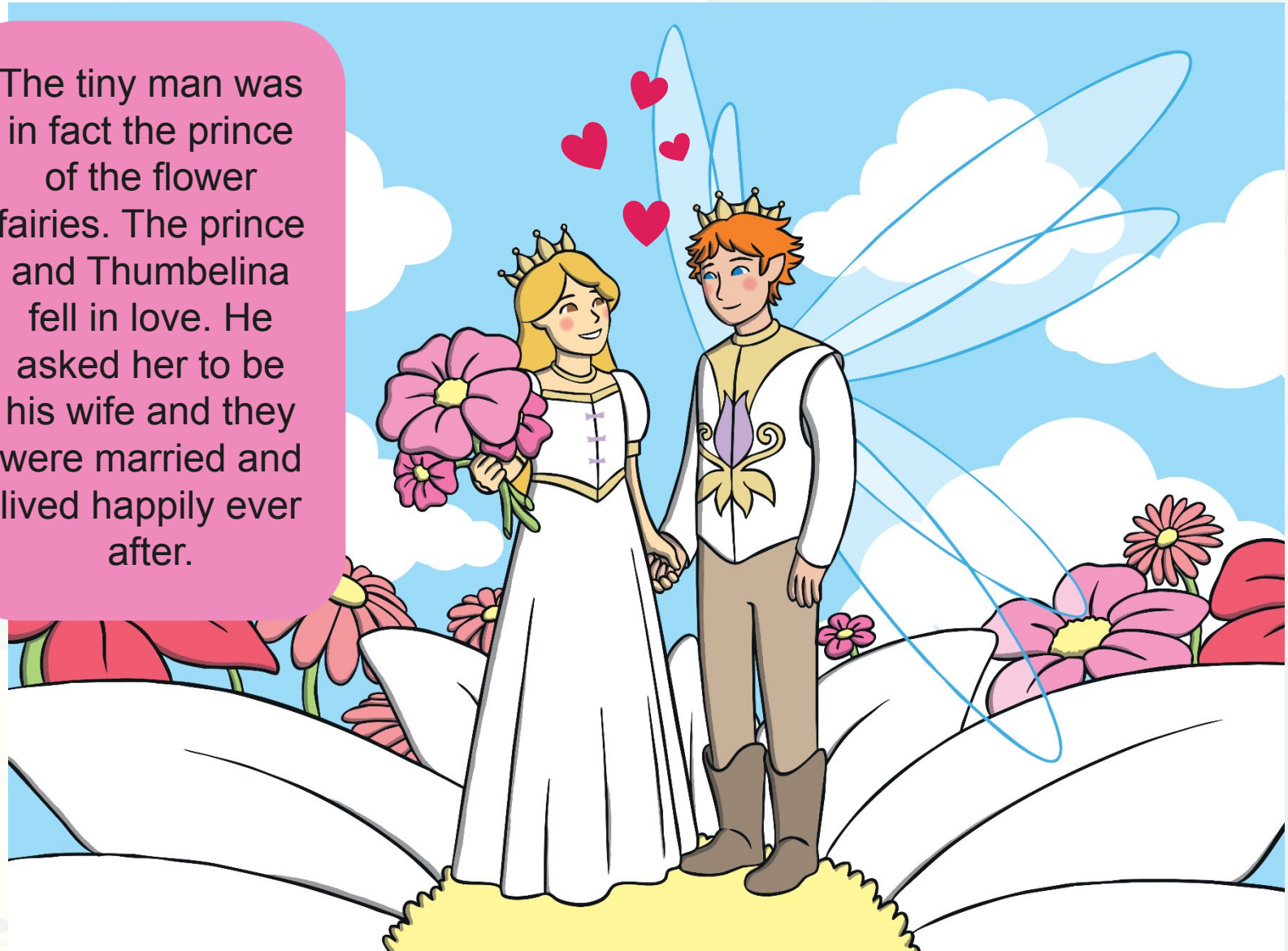
On the eve of her wedding, Thumbelina went outside one last time to say goodbye to the outside world. She was sat sobbing when she heard a “tweet, tweet” from above. It was the swallow and he had come to fly her away!

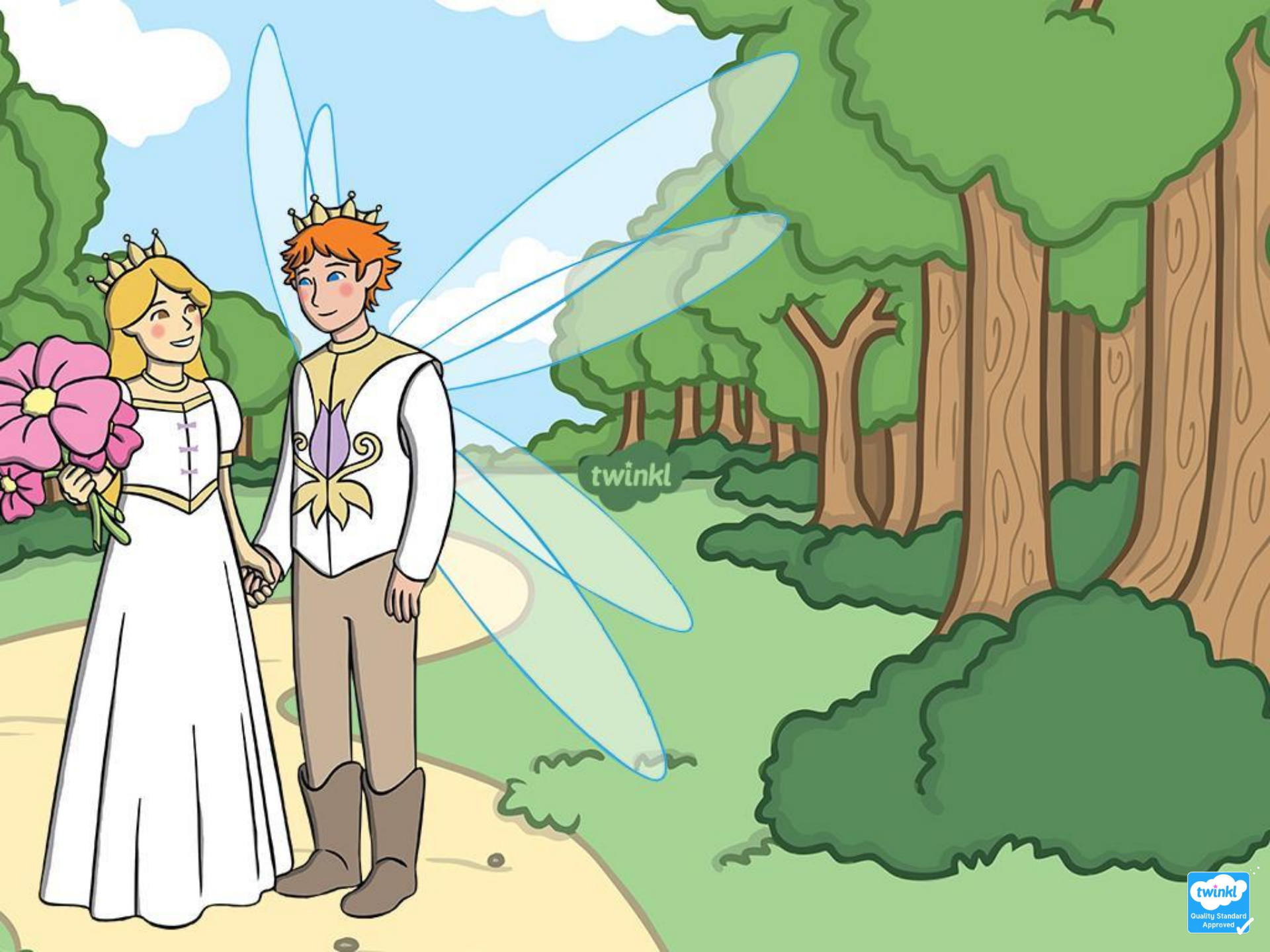
The bird carried her far away to a beautiful meadow. Thumbelina asked to be placed on a lovely white flower. The bird flew her down and placed her on one of the flower's large white petals.

Thumbelina gasped. There in the middle of the flower there stood a handsome young man, the same size as her!



The tiny man was in fact the prince of the flower fairies. The prince and Thumbelina fell in love. He asked her to be his wife and they were married and lived happily ever after.





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