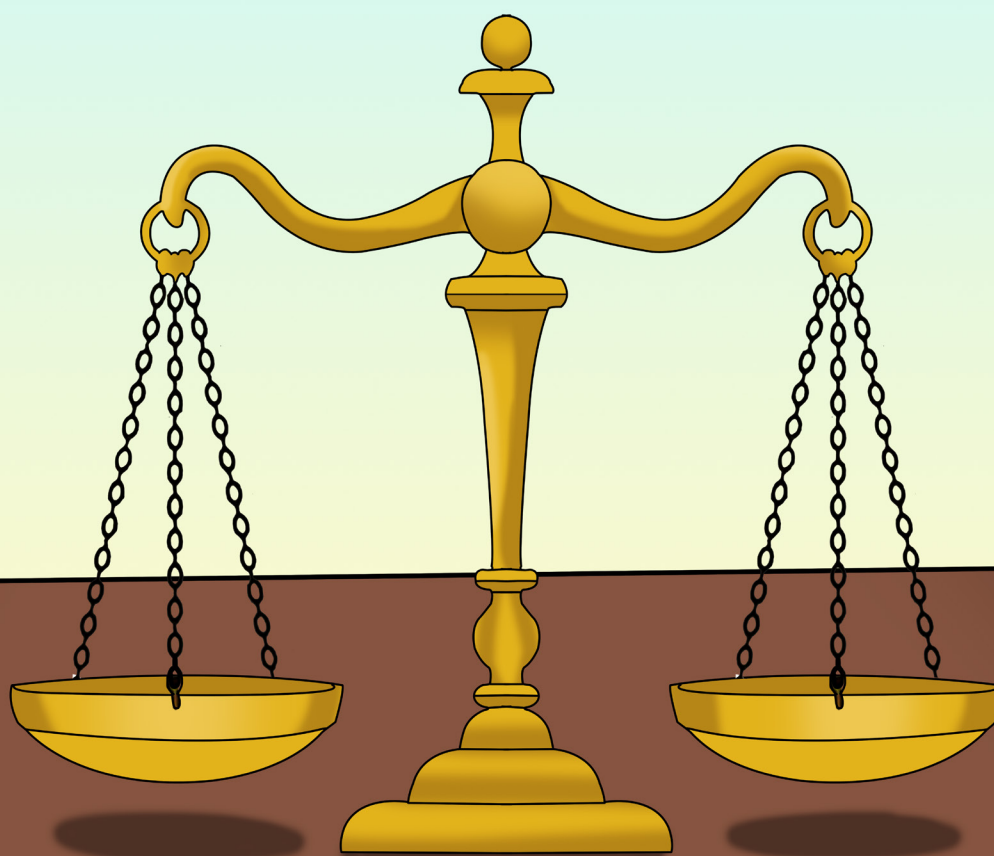


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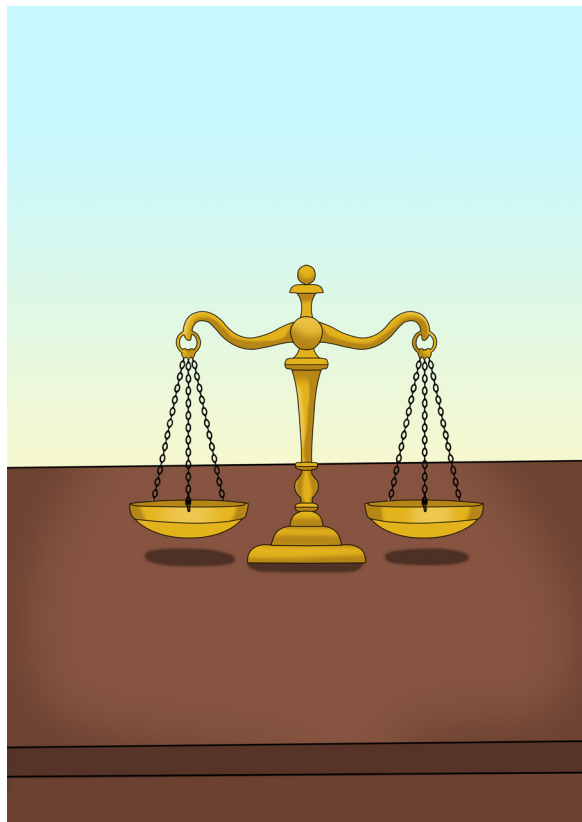


What is Law?



By Daryl Abel and Cathy Hite Sakumalefo
Illustrated by Jovan Carl Segura

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In the vibrant village of Erakor in Vanuatu, 9-year-old Bong, a blind boy with insatiable curiosity, wants to learn about the law. One day, he gathers his friends, Tana and Sita, and says, "I want to know what law is and how it works in our village!"



His friends, always eager to help, guide him through the winding paths of Erakor towards the University of the South Pacific's Emalus Campus.

They arrive at the Community Legal Information Centre, where they meet Mr Febo, the centre's manager.

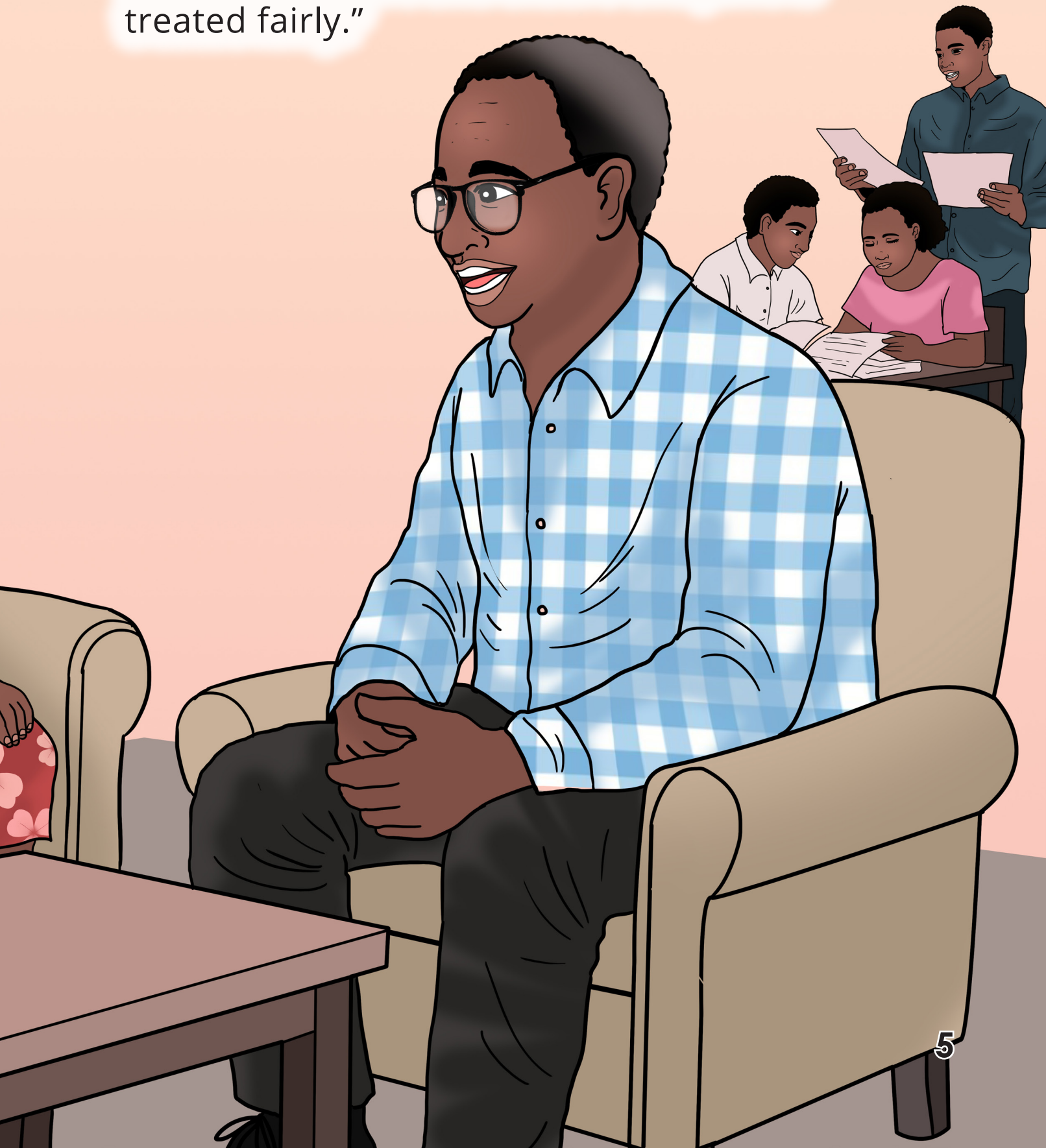


He greets them warmly and invites them into a cosy meeting room filled with books and colourful posters about legal rights. There are some law clinic students working quietly together at a desk.

"What is law?" Bong asks, tilting his head curiously.



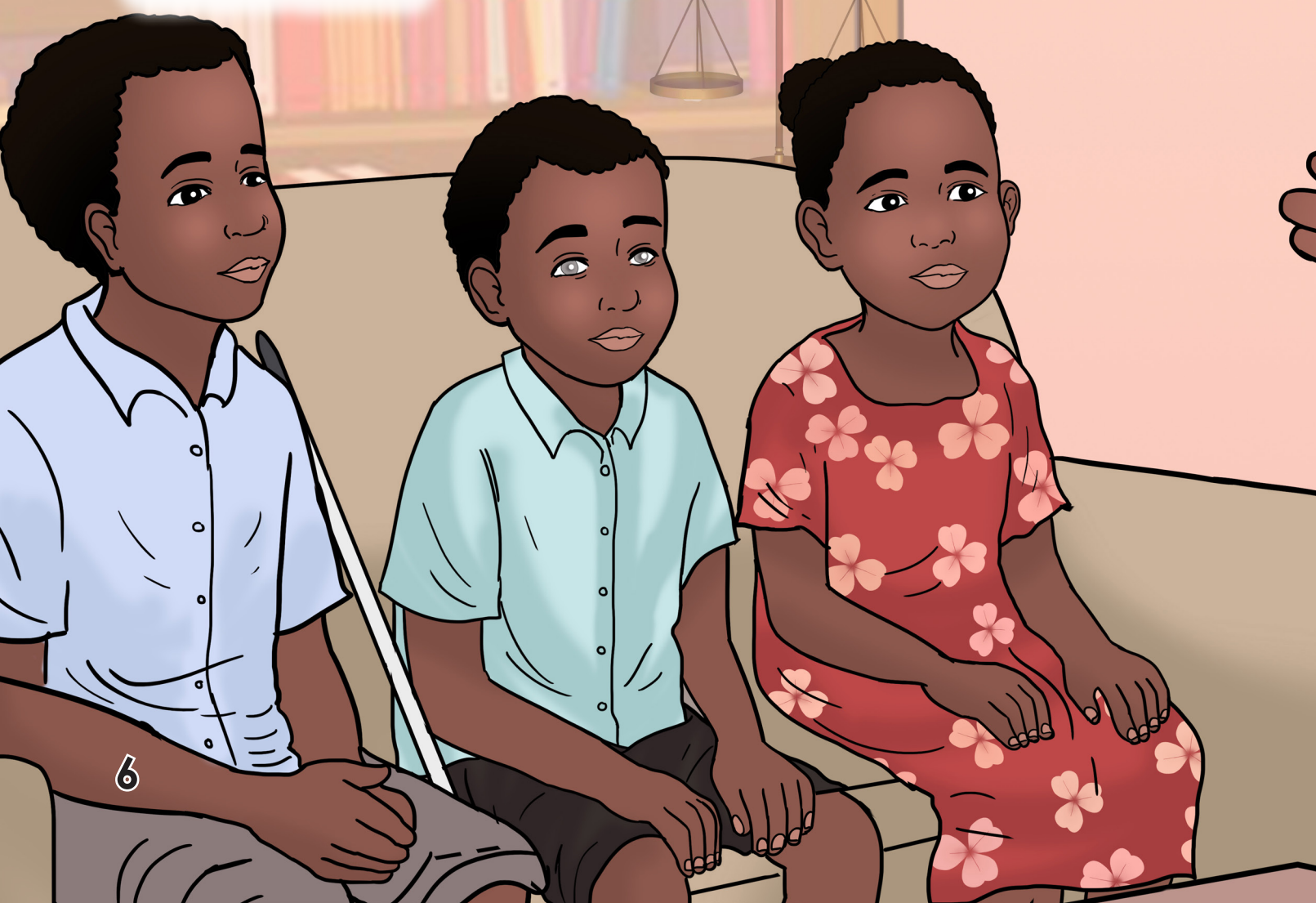
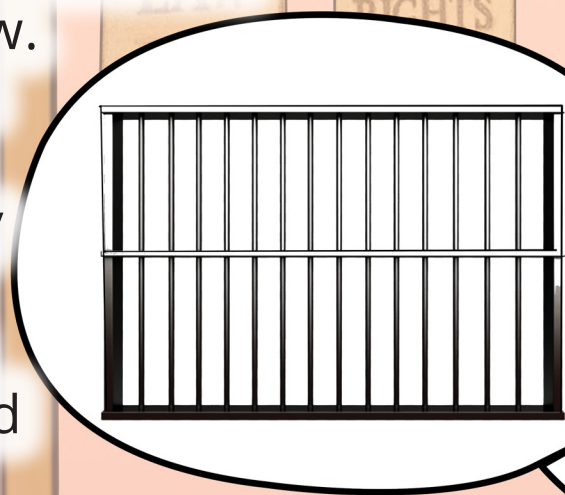
Mr Febo smiles and explains. "Laws are rules that help control and guide how we behave in our society. Just like the rules in netball or football, which help everyone play fairly, laws help us live peacefully together. In Vanuatu, laws keep us safe and ensure everyone is treated fairly."



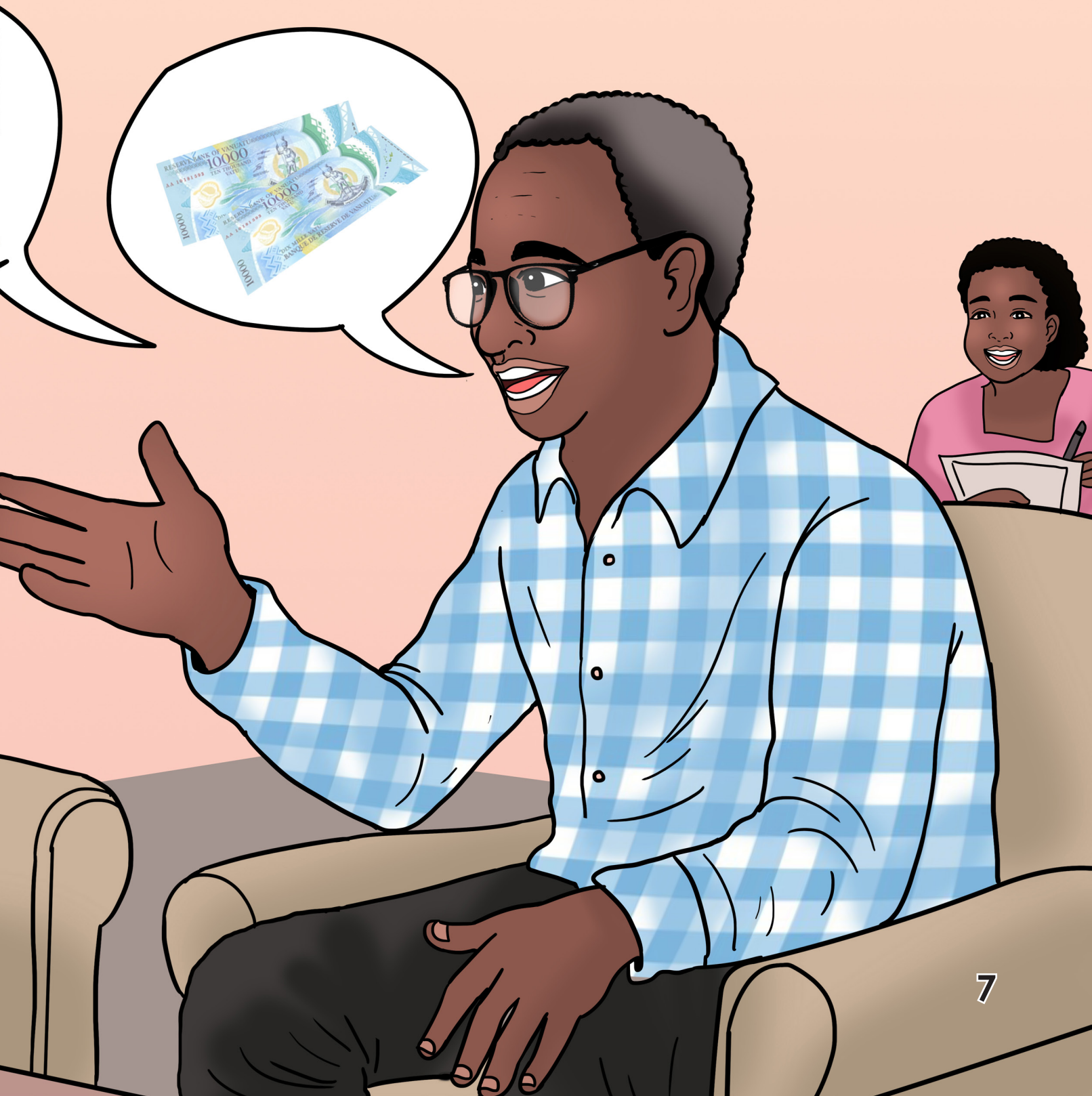
Bong listens intently, imagining how important it is to have rules to follow. "But what happens if someone breaks the law?" he inquires.

Mr Febo and his law clinic students are very pleased with the question.

"Well," Mr Febo says, "we have two different types of laws: civil and criminal law. Hence, the answer will depend on which law the person breaks. If a person breaks a criminal law, they will face consequences such as a fine or imprisonment. If a person breaks civil law, they may be asked to pay compensation or perform certain tasks."



The law clinic students nod and take notes. Mr Febo continues, "Criminal law is all about keeping peace and safety in our society. It's a set of rules that helps protect people and the community from harm. In Vanuatu, certain behaviours are considered crimes, such as theft, assault, and drug possession."



Tana raises his hand. "Can you give us an example?"

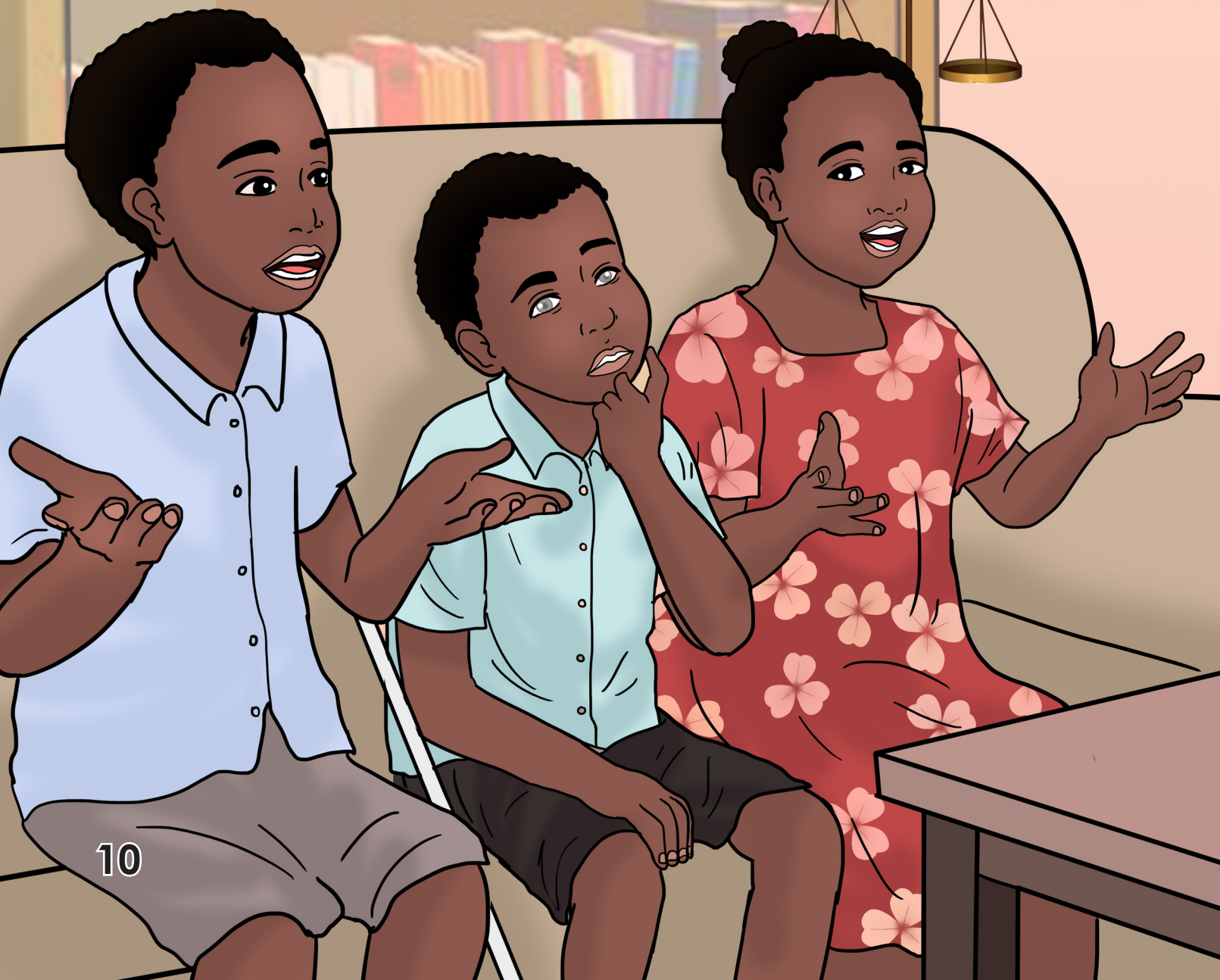
"Of course!" Mr Febo responds with a smile. "Let's say some young people in Erakoro Village decide to have a party. They play loud music from a Bluetooth speaker all night. The noise becomes a public nuisance, disturbing the peace of the neighbourhood. This can lead to complaints from villagers who can't sleep because of the noise. If the noise continues, the police may step in to stop the party and remind the young people about respecting their neighbours."



Bong nods, understanding how important it is for everyone to have rest with minimum disturbances.



Mr Febo continues. "Now, let's talk about another example: arson. In Vanuatu, if you wilfully set fire to and burn another person's house or property, you can be charged with the crime of arson. Consequently, you may be sent to prison for about ten years."



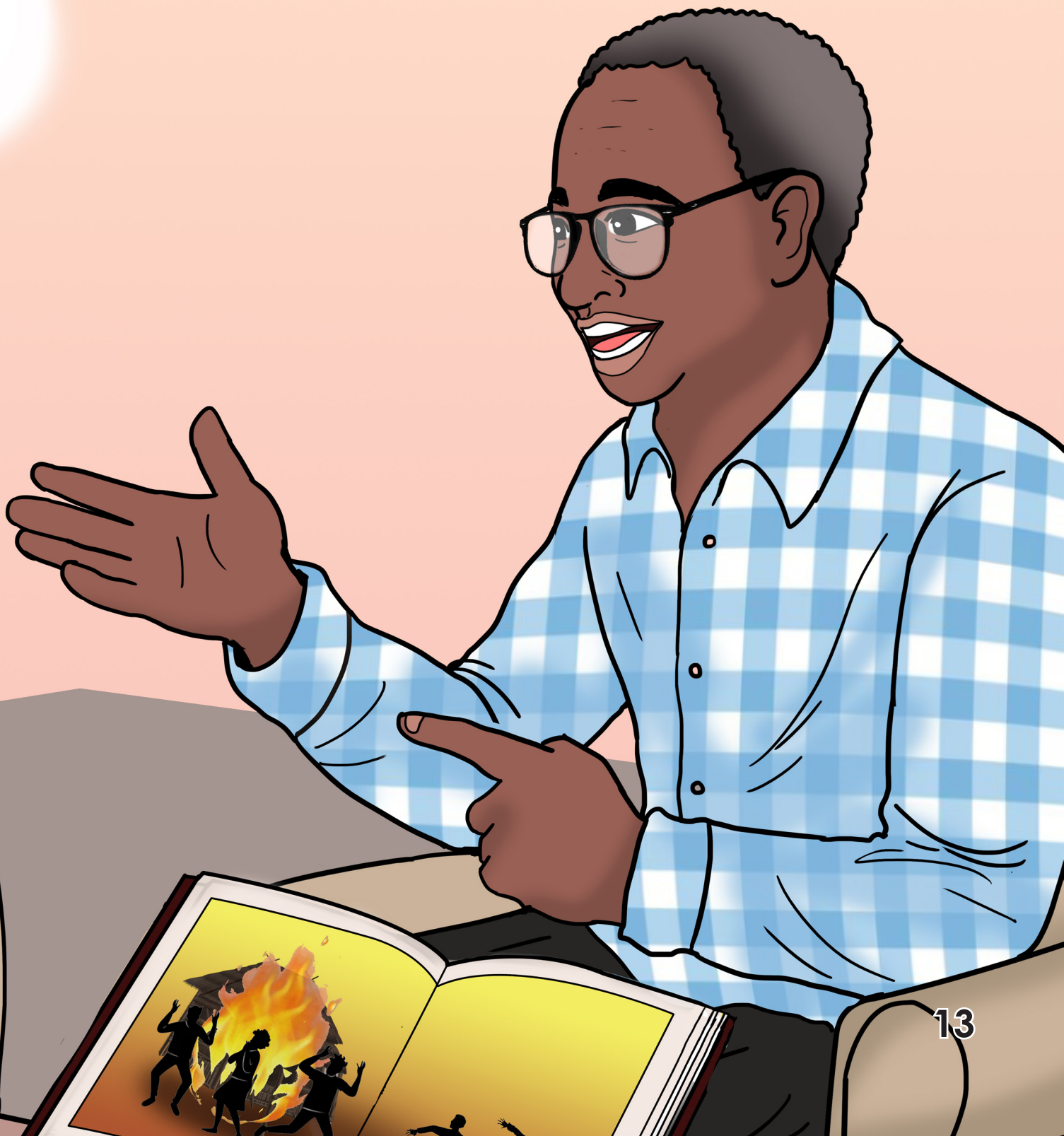
Sita, who knows about a recent incident in their village, shares, "Yes! Last month, two tribes had land dispute issues and some young men from one of the aggrieved tribes burned down three houses from the other tribe. The police had to take them away, and everyone talked about how it affected our community."

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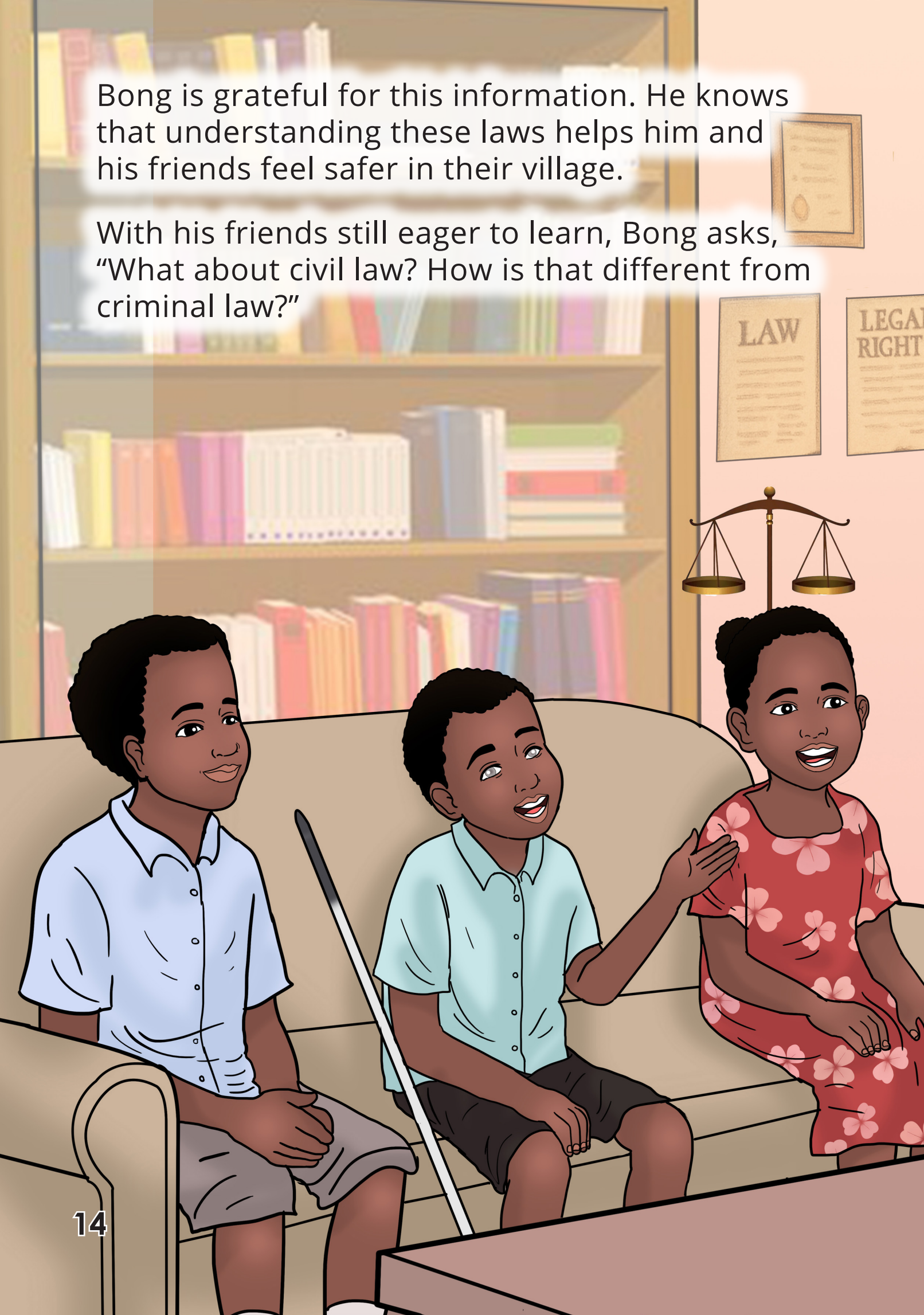


“Exactly,” Mr Febo replies. “Criminal law is important because it helps keep everyone safe and ensures that people follow the rules. When someone breaks these laws, like making too much noise or burning houses and property, they can face consequences such as fines or even time in jail.”

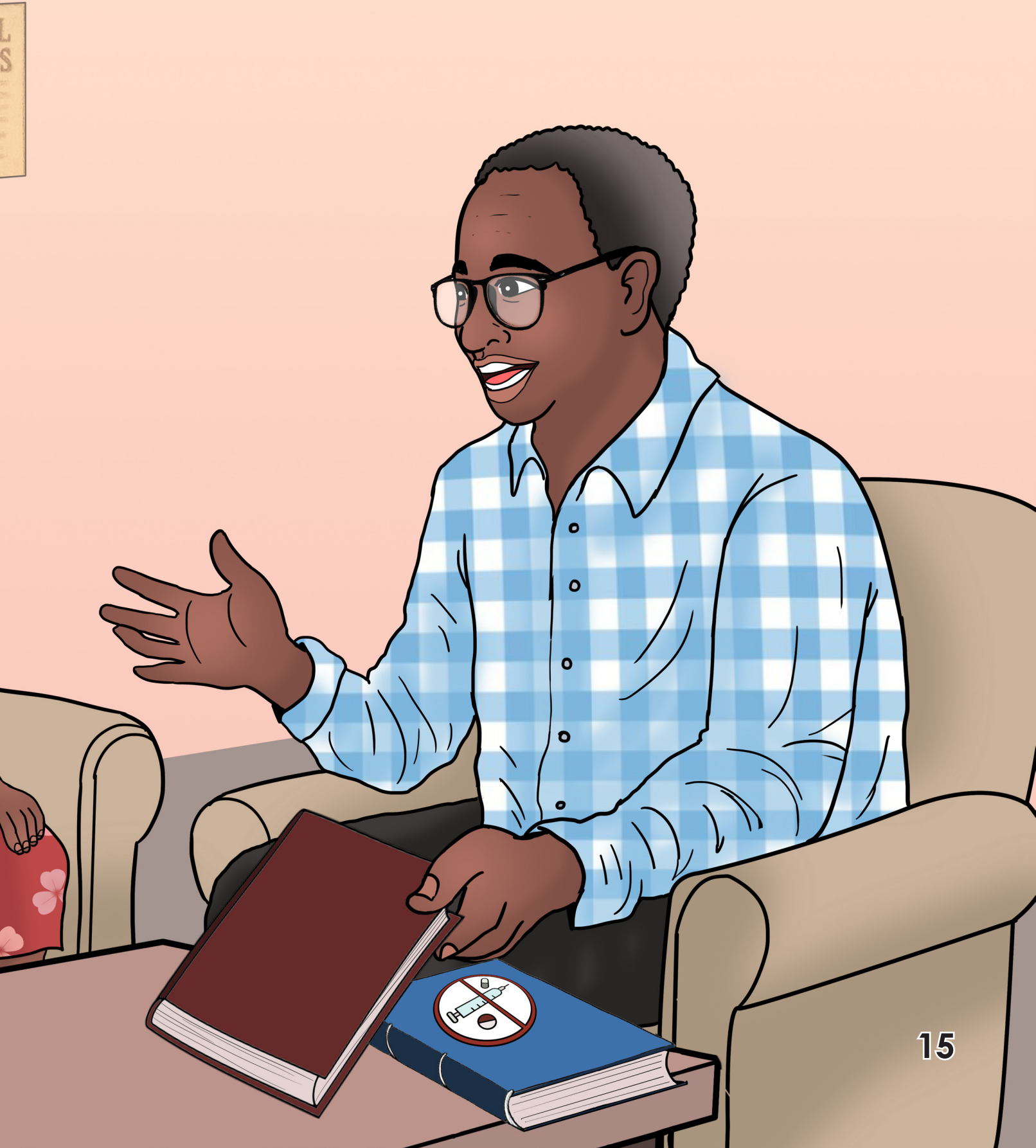


Bong is grateful for this information. He knows that understanding these laws helps him and his friends feel safer in their village.

With his friends still eager to learn, Bong asks, "What about civil law? How is that different from criminal law?"

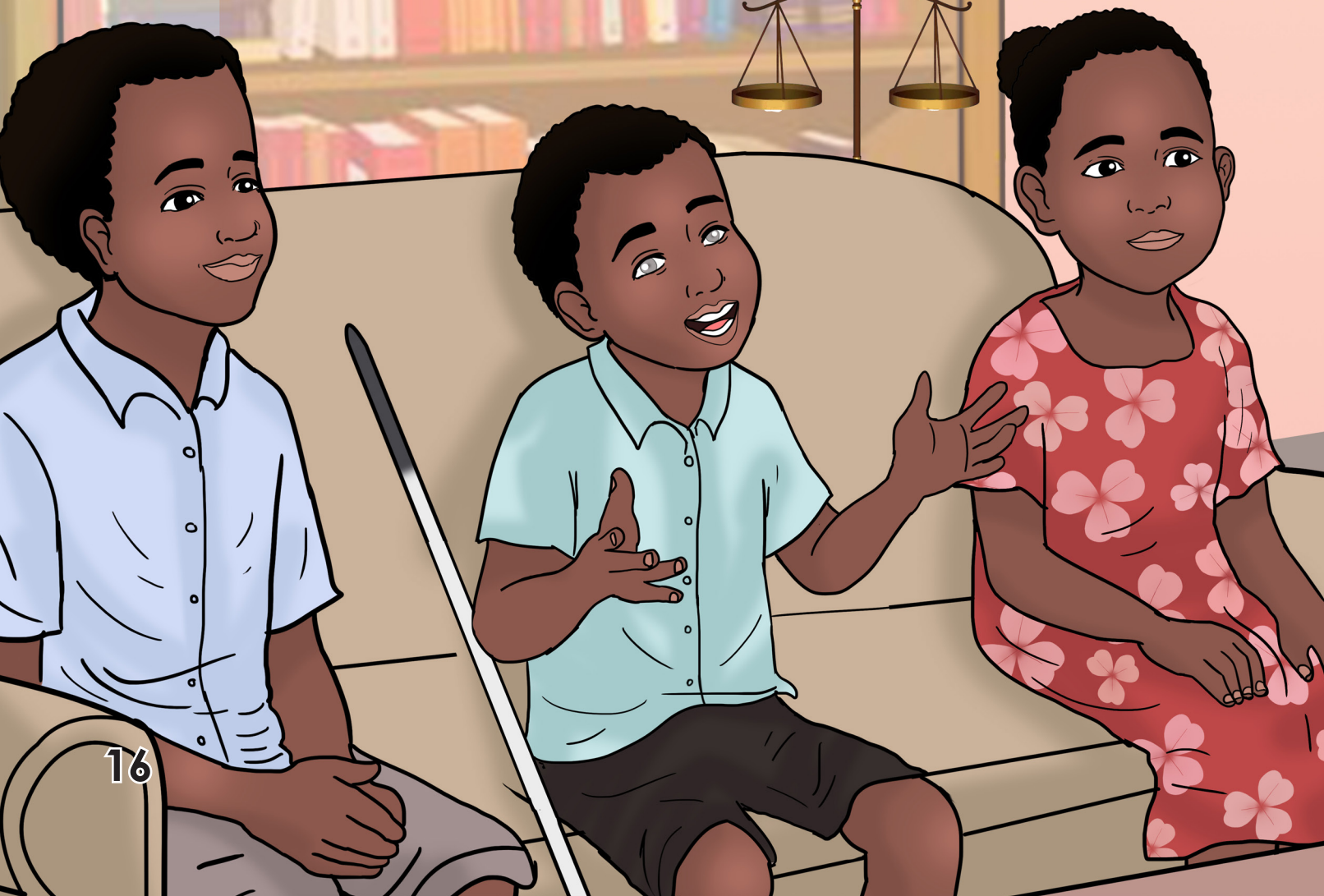


Mr Febo smiles and explains, "Civil law deals with disputes between individuals or organisations. It helps resolve issues like contracts, property disputes, family matters, and business dealings."



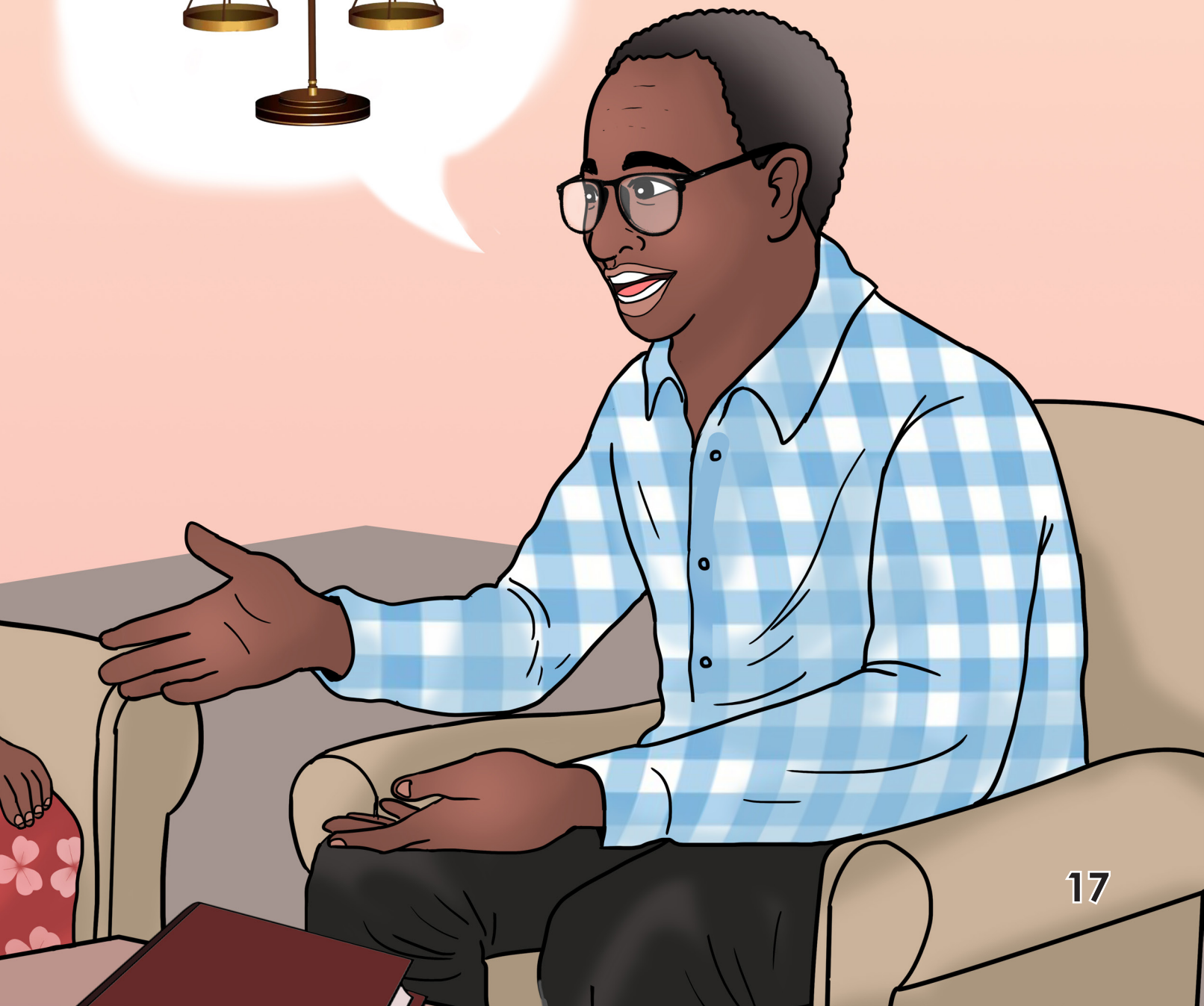
Bong listens carefully as Mr Febo continues.

“When two people or parties disagree, civil law provides a way for them to resolve their issues in court. Unlike criminal law, where the state prosecutes someone for breaking the law, civil law is usually about one person suing another for compensation or to seek justice.”



Sita raises her hand and asks, "Can you give us some examples of civil law?"

Mr Febo nods enthusiastically and begins to explain.



“One common example is a breach of contract or agreement. Let’s say Tom and Betty have a verbal agreement for Tom to lend money to Betty, and Betty to repay Tom’s money within two months. If Betty fails to repay Tom’s money within that time, then Betty has breached the contract or agreement. Therefore, Tom can sue Betty in court for breach of contract. The court can order Betty to repay Tom’s money.”



Tana looks intrigued. "What if someone says something untrue about another person? Is that civil law too?"

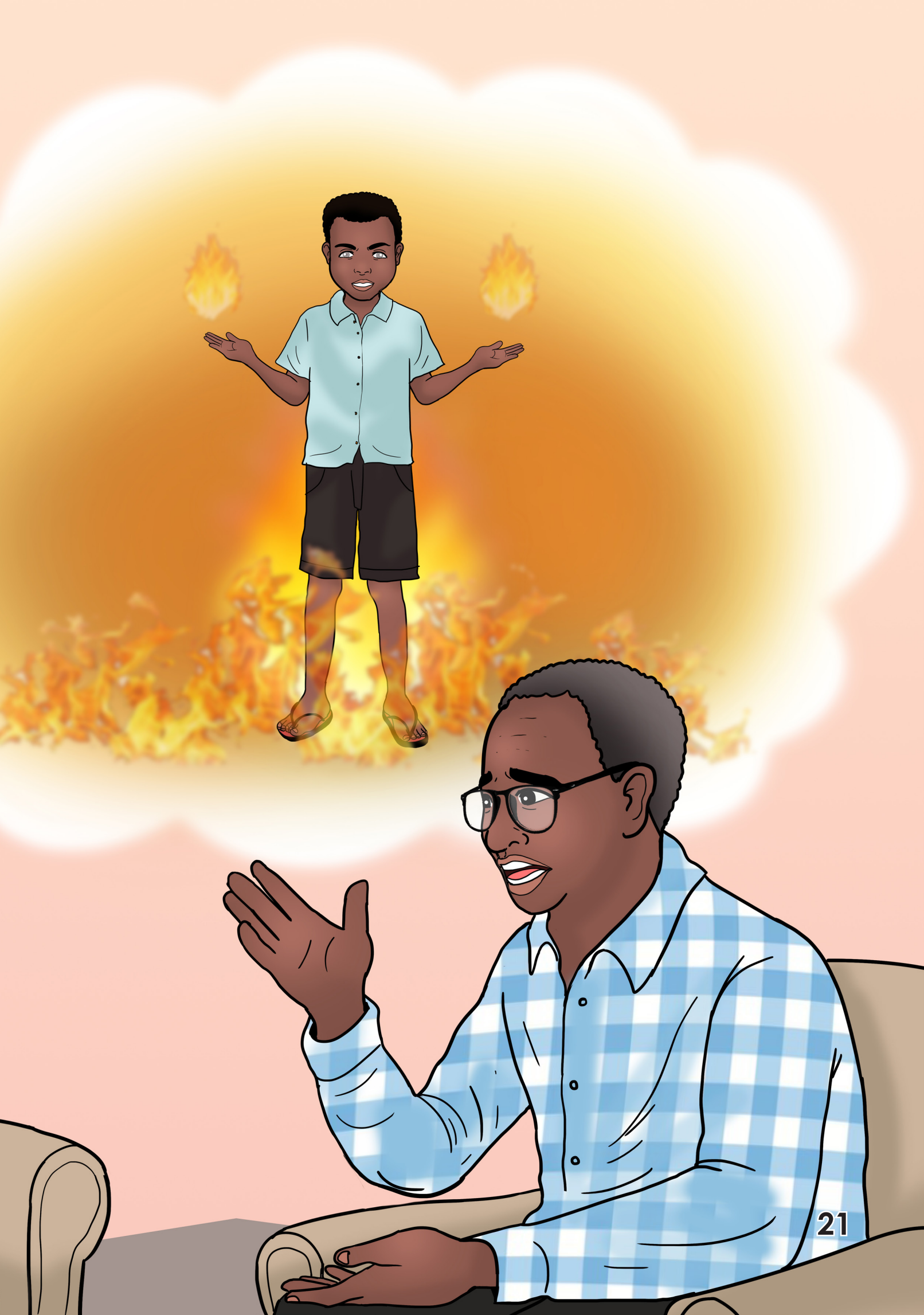
"Great question!" says Mr Febo.



“That situation is called defamation. If someone spreads false information about another person that harms their reputation, the harmed person can file a civil lawsuit for defamation. For example, imagine if someone in Erakoro spreads a rumour that Bong is a bad man who has used black magic to kill someone. In reality, the person who died had a serious illness, like cancer. Because of these false rumours, Bong’s reputation is damaged, and he loses his job and friends.”

Bong’s face shows a mix of concern and understanding as he realises the impact of such falsehoods.



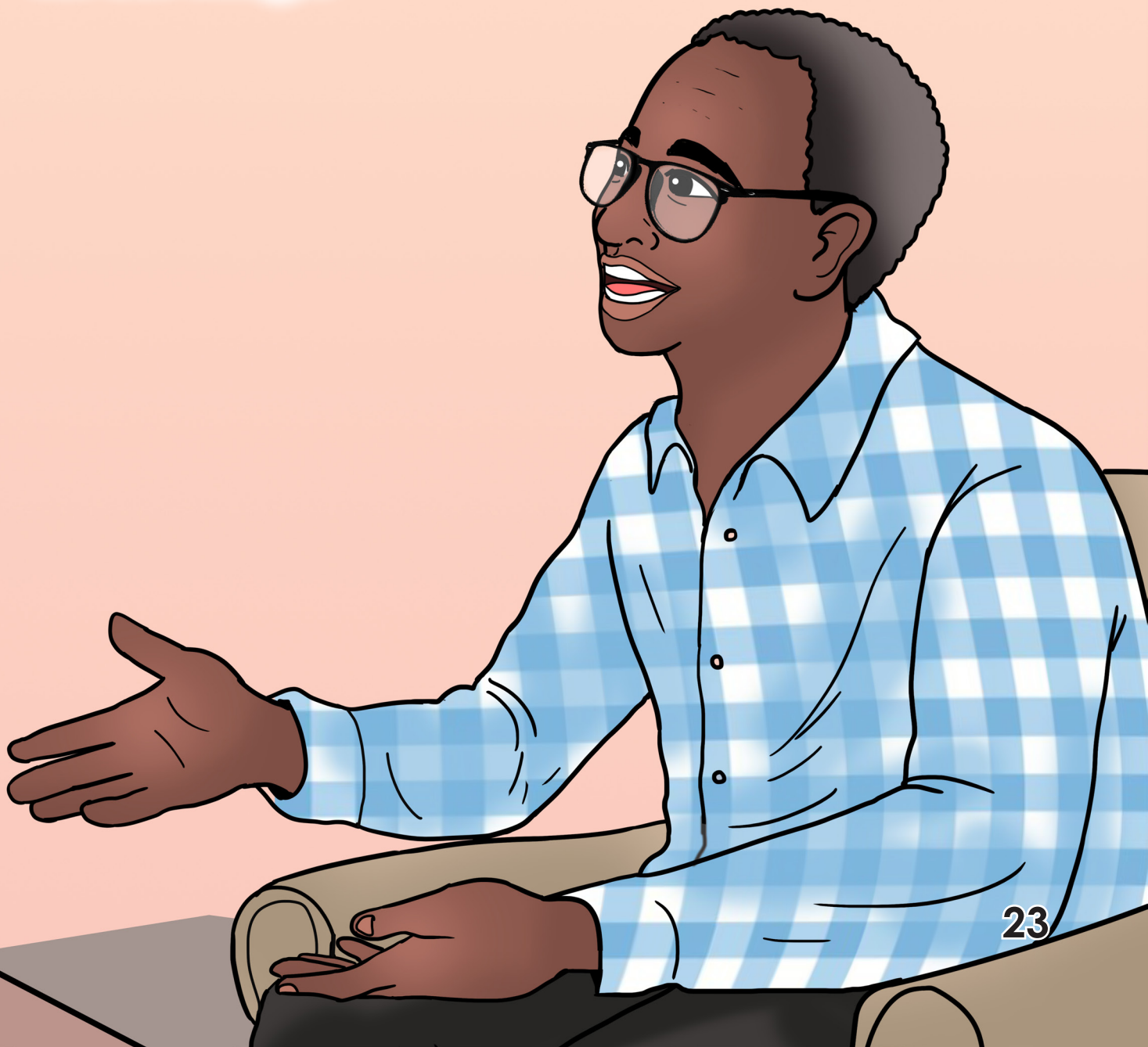




“So, if I wanted to, I could take that person to court for spreading lies about me?” asks Bong.

“Exactly!” Mr Febo replies. “In this case, you could sue for defamation. The court might require the person to apologise and pay you compensation for the harm caused to your reputation and the losses you’ve suffered.”

Bong nods, feeling empowered by this knowledge. “I can’t wait to share all this with my family! Understanding civil law is so important for our village.”



With their heads full of knowledge, Bong, Tana, and Sita thank Mr Febo for his wisdom. They feel empowered to share what they learned about laws, both criminal and civil, and the importance of fairness and justice in their beloved Vanuatu.

And so, the children return to Erakoro Village, excited to tell their families and friends about the adventure they had and the valuable lessons they learned about law and justice.





Glossary

- **Laws:** Rules that help people live together peacefully and know what is considered right and wrong where they live.
- **Criminal Law:** An aspect of law that focuses on keeping people safe and punishing those who break the rules, like stealing or hurting others.
- **Civil Law:** An aspect of law that deals with disagreements between people or groups, helping them resolve issues fairly, such as contracts or family matters.
- **Public Nuisance:** A situation where someone's actions disturb the peace of the community, like playing loud music at night.
- **Arson:** When a person wilfully and unlawfully sets fire to, or damages with any flame or explosive, any building or other property whatsoever.
- **Defamation:** When someone tells lies about another person that hurt their reputation.
- **Breach of Contract:** When one person does not follow an agreement made with another person, which can lead to legal action to fix the problem.

- Consequences: The results of breaking a law, which can include fines or going to jail.
- Justice: The concept of legal retribution for an illegal act, as well as being fair and ensuring everyone is treated equally under the law.
- State: The group of people or government in charge of running the country and making sure everyone follows the rules.
- Prosecute: The formal conducting of legal proceedings against someone who broke the law.
- Compensation: Money or something valuable given to someone to make up for a loss or harm they experienced.
- Sue: When a person asks a court to solve a problem with someone else, like when they want money back or justice for being wronged.

**You can use these questions
to talk about this book with
your family, friends and
teachers.**



**What did Bong want to learn about at the
Community Legal Information Centre?**



**How was the loud house party breaking
the rules?**



**How does knowing the law help Bong's
community?**

**Can you think of an issue in your
community that benefits from the law?**



**Try asking some of the adults you know
about the most well-known criminal and
civil laws in your area!**

About the author

Daryl Abel is from Tanna Island in Vanuatu, while Cathy Hite Sakumalefo is from Malaita in the Solomon Islands. Both Daryl and Cathy share a passion for empowering young minds through storytelling, inspiring them to write stories to educate and uplift the children of today, tomorrow's leaders of Vanuatu. One of the things they enjoy most in their friendship is discussing the challenges facing their countries, and asking themselves: "What can we do?" or "How can we help?" This collaborative spirit not only fuels their creativity but also reflects their commitment to fostering a positive impact on their communities through literature.



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Abel, Daryl and Sakumalefo, Cathy Hite

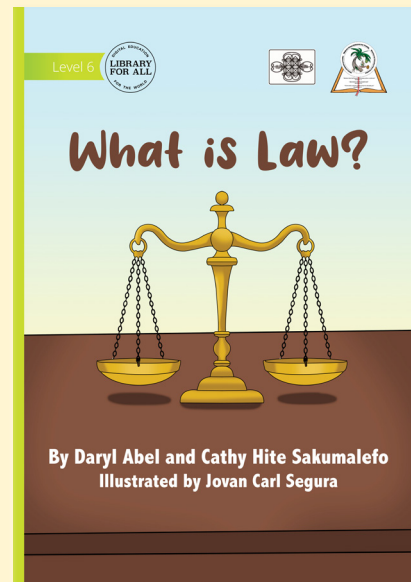
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Bong, Tana, and Sita are some curious kids from Erakoro Village that want to learn more about the law. They're introduced to Mr Febo at the Community Legal Information Centre, who answers all their questions.



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