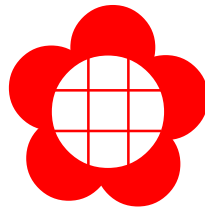


It's Amma's Birthday Tomorrow



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**This book is dedicated to
my beloved Amma**

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It's Amma's birthday, tomorrow

Nikini was a little girl. She lived with her mother and father, in a house near the woods. She was very friendly with the animals in the woods. One evening, Nikini's father came home with a big gift box.

"What's that, Thatha?" Nikini asked her father.

"It's your mother's birthday tomorrow," her father said.

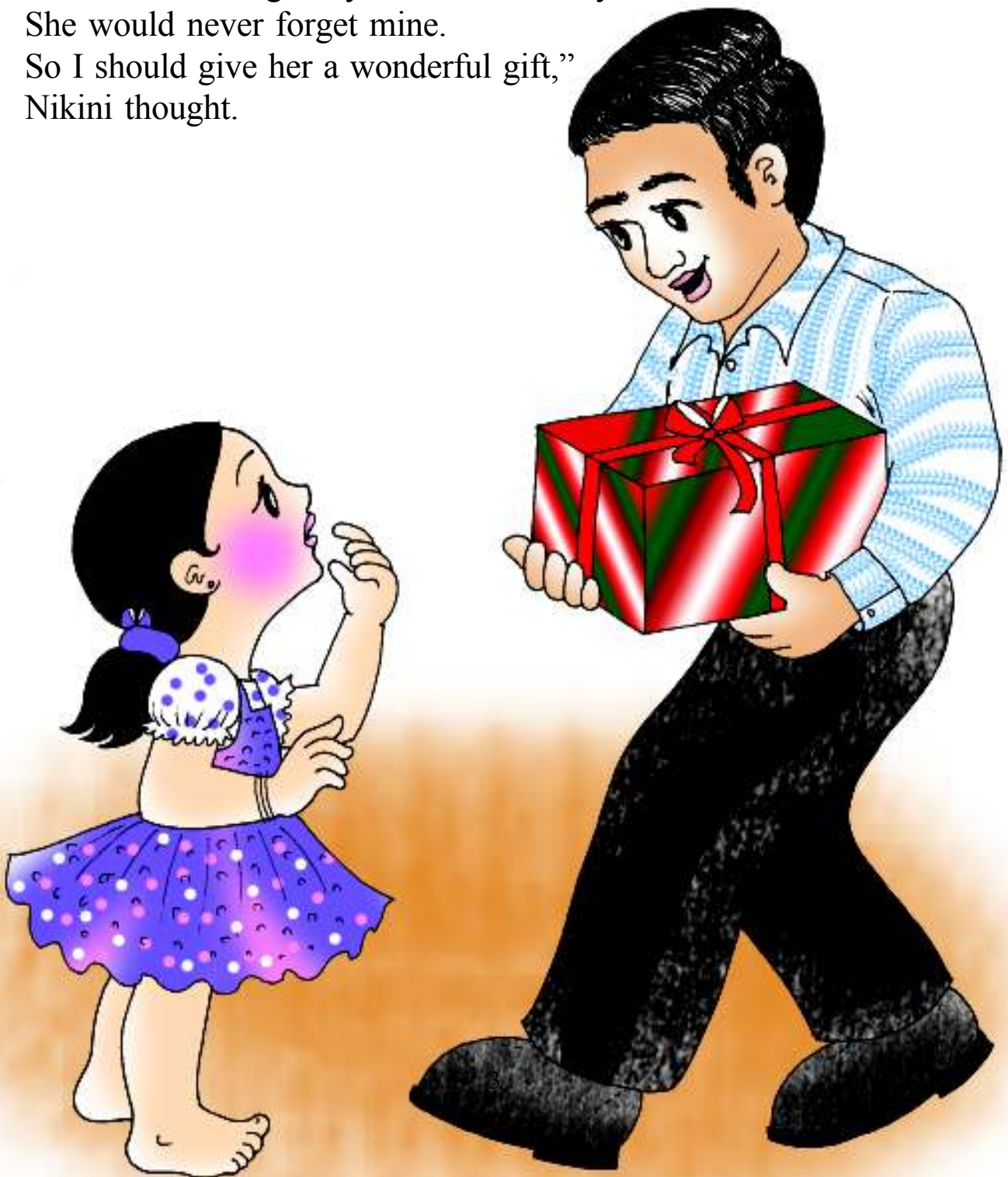
"Oh!" Nikini was very upset.

"How could I forget my Amma's birthday?

She would never forget mine.

So I should give her a wonderful gift,"

Nikini thought.

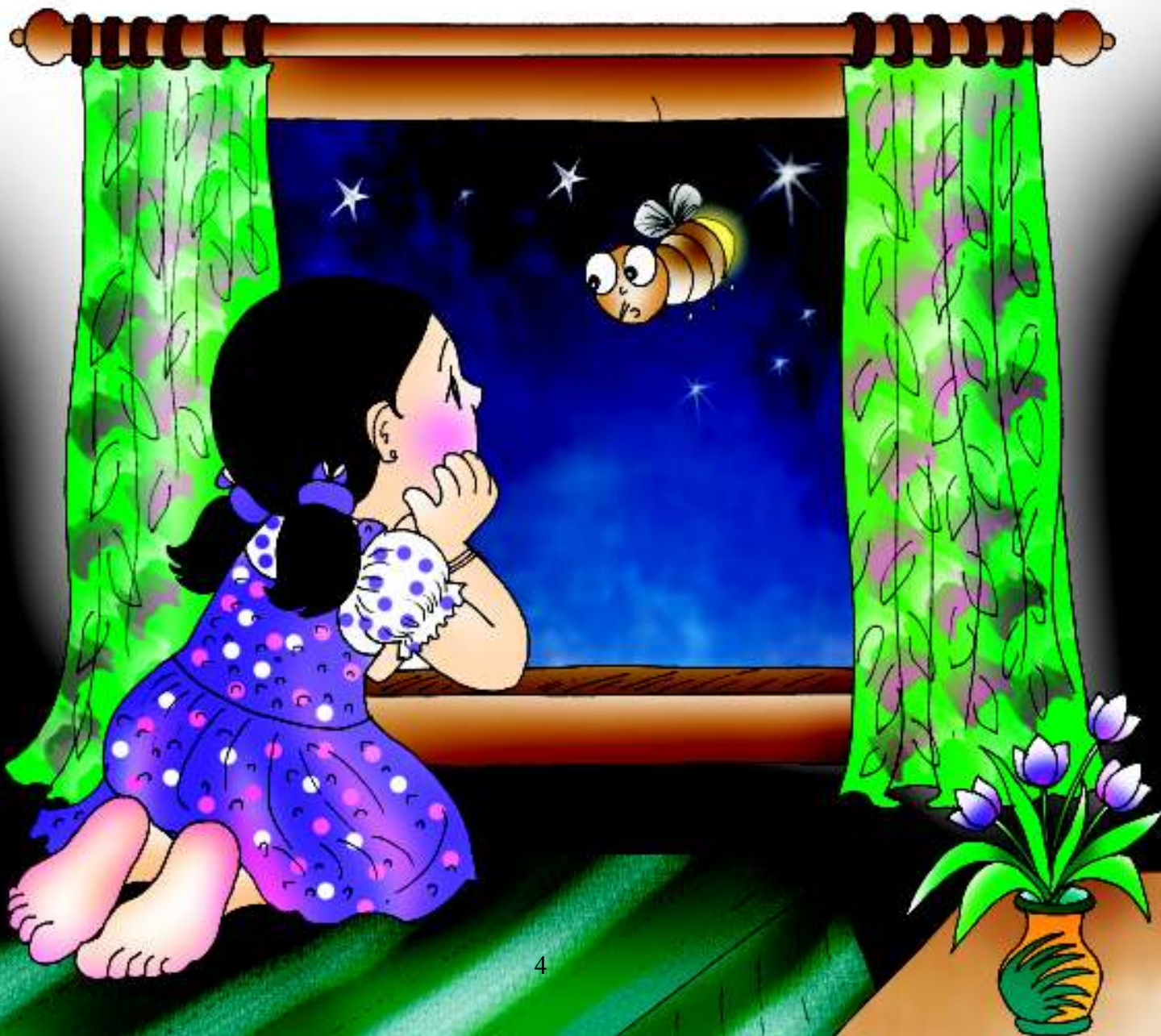


“But what shall I give her?” She went into her bedroom and thought. She loved her mother so much that she couldn’t think of anything good enough for a gift for her. She thought and thought until nightfall, but she couldn’t think of anything.

Then a firefly, seeing Nikini by the window, flew to her.

“Nikini, what are you doing in the dark?” the firefly asked.

“Firefly, it’s my Amma’s birthday tomorrow. She loves me very much. She makes me very happy on my birthdays. So I want to make her happy on her birthday. I want to give her the ‘greatest’ gift of all. But I can’t think of anything as great as my Amma,” said Nikini, sadly.



“I think you should give her the ‘biggest’ gift. Something like the sky, or the ocean,” said the firefly.

Nikini thought for a moment. “Dear firefly, the biggest thing in the world is my Amma’s love. So, I would like to find a gift as big as her love. But how can I find it?” said Nikini.

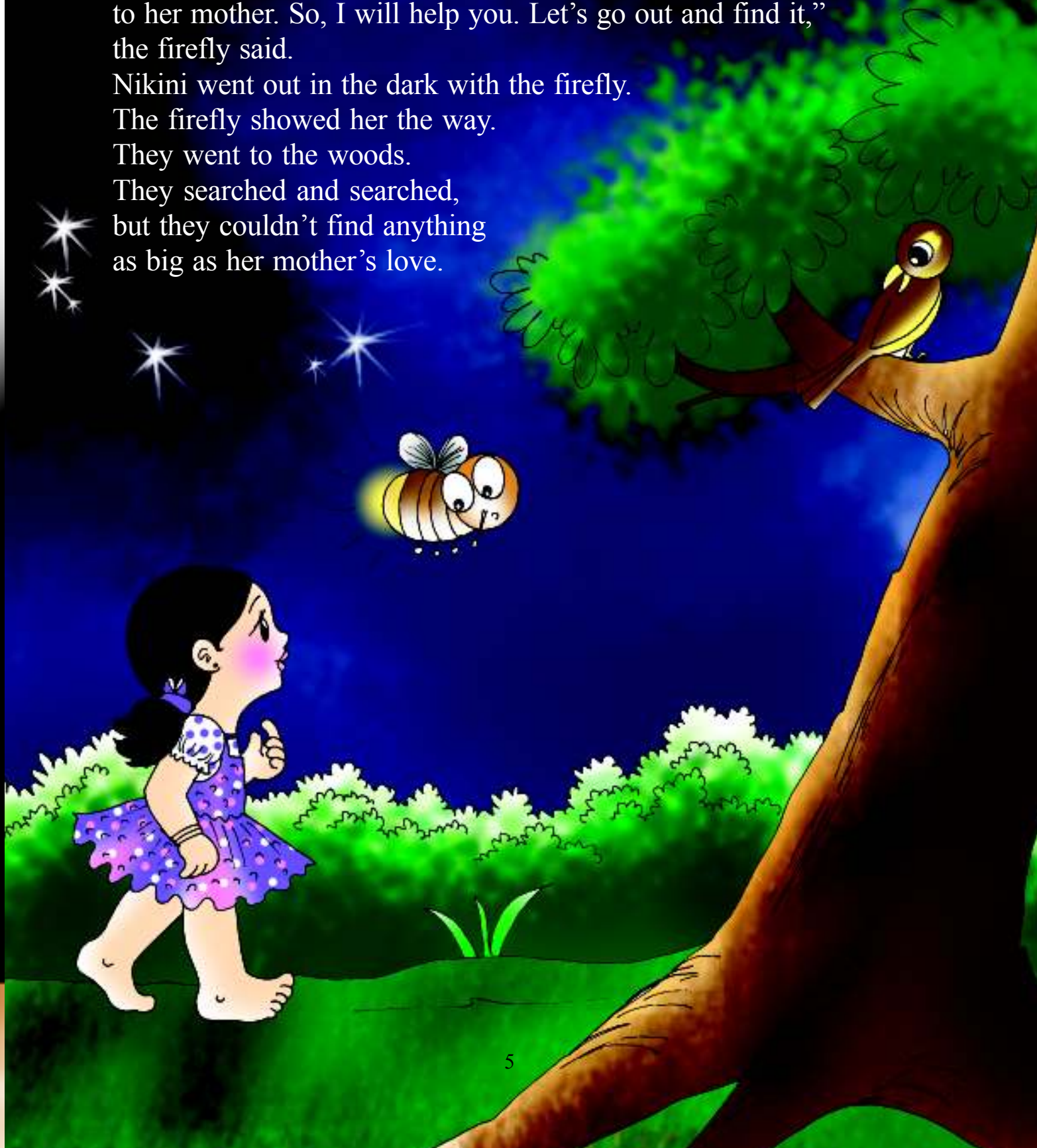
“You are a very good daughter who tries to give the biggest gift to her mother. So, I will help you. Let’s go out and find it,” the firefly said.

Nikini went out in the dark with the firefly.

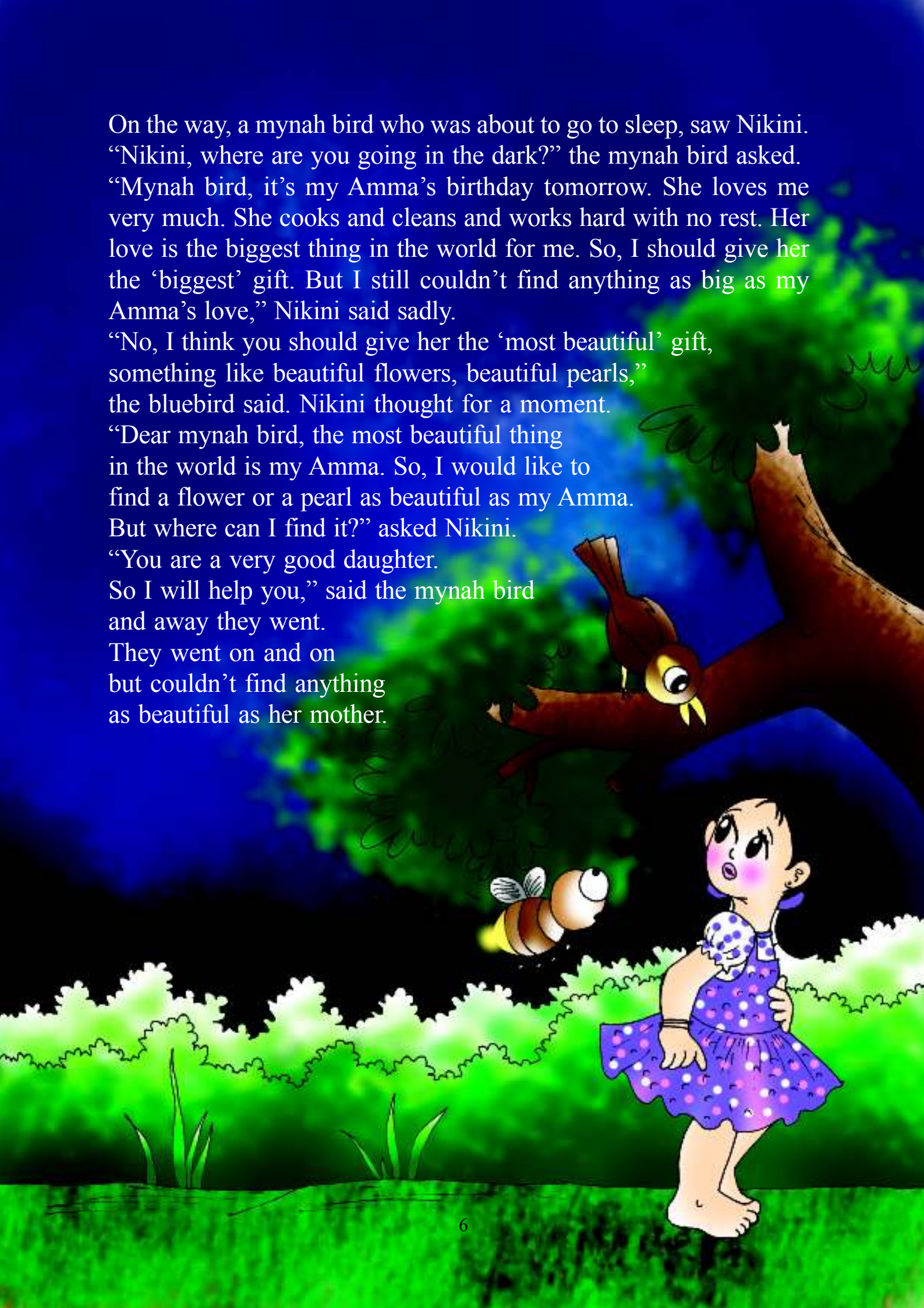
The firefly showed her the way.

They went to the woods.

They searched and searched,
but they couldn’t find anything
as big as her mother’s love.



On the way, a mynah bird who was about to go to sleep, saw Nikini. “Nikini, where are you going in the dark?” the mynah bird asked. “Mynah bird, it’s my Amma’s birthday tomorrow. She loves me very much. She cooks and cleans and works hard with no rest. Her love is the biggest thing in the world for me. So, I should give her the ‘biggest’ gift. But I still couldn’t find anything as big as my Amma’s love,” Nikini said sadly. “No, I think you should give her the ‘most beautiful’ gift, something like beautiful flowers, beautiful pearls,” the bluebird said. Nikini thought for a moment. “Dear mynah bird, the most beautiful thing in the world is my Amma. So, I would like to find a flower or a pearl as beautiful as my Amma. But where can I find it?” asked Nikini. “You are a very good daughter. So I will help you,” said the mynah bird and away they went. They went on and on but couldn’t find anything as beautiful as her mother.



They went on until Nikini stumbled upon a rabbit who was fast asleep. “Oh, Nikini, where are you going in the dark?” asked the rabbit, rubbing his eyes.

“Rabbit, it’s my Amma’s birthday tomorrow. She loves me very much. She feeds me, cuddles me and holds me close until I fall asleep. She is the most beautiful thing in the world. So I should give her the ‘most beautiful’ gift. But I still couldn’t find anything as beautiful as my Amma,” said Nikini sadly.

“No, I think you should give her the ‘most precious’ gift in the world, something as precious as the moon and the stars,” said the rabbit.





Nikini thought for a moment. “Dear rabbit, the most precious thing in the world is my Amma. Even if I hang the moon on a necklace, even if I make stars into earrings, they are not as precious as she is. I want to find something as precious as my Amma. But how can I find it?” asked Nikini sadly.

“You are a very good daughter. I will help you find it.” The rabbit went along with the firefly, the mynah bird and Nikini. They went on and on, but they couldn’t find anything as precious as her mother.

On their way, she got entangled in a huge cobweb. Then the spider, who was having a sweet dream in the middle of the night, got up. “Oh, Nikini, where are you going in the dark?” the spider asked. “Spider, it’s my Amma’s birthday tomorrow. She loves me very much. When I am sick she cries and looks after me without sleep until I get well. She is the most precious thing in the world for me. So I should give her the ‘most precious’ gift. But I can’t find anything as precious as my Amma,” Nikini said sadly.



“No, I think you should give her the gift that would make her ‘the happiest’,” said the spider.

“Oh, what would make her happiest?” Nikini thought and thought. “Something like a delicious cake, a lovely birthday card, a nice pair of shoes, a colorful dress...?” Nikini thought for a while.

“Oh, a beautiful sari!! I think she would like a beautiful sari most. I want to give her the most beautiful sari in the world. I want to find the most beautiful sari for her. And I want to give it to her as she wakes up in the morning and say, “Happy birthday!” But how can I find it? There’s only a little time left, until morning,” Nikini said, impatiently.

“Nikini, you are a great daughter who thinks so much about her mother. Some children don’t even care about their mother’s birthday. They remember about their own birthdays and gifts only. So I will weave a very beautiful sari for you,” said the spider and she started weaving a beautiful sari.

Nikini was very tired after walking all over the woods and not sleeping the whole night. But she was so happy that she didn’t feel sleepy at all. She helped the spider weave the most beautiful sari for her mother.

The firefly flew far away and brought back beautiful flowers to decorate it. The rabbit ran around the woods and brought beautiful colors from flowers, to paint the sari with. The mynah bird shook the branches of trees and they shed dewdrops on it.





Finally, they had made the most beautiful sari in the world. The flowers looked lovely on it, the colors were the prettiest shades, and the dewdrops glittered like gems and pearls. “This is very beautiful...the most beautiful sari I have ever seen. Amma would surely love this,” Nikini yelled with excitement. They were all happy. “Let’s go...let’s give this to Amma and wish her a happy birthday,” said Nikini. She hurried towards home with her friends.





As they got halfway, a strong wind blew across the woods and it started to rain heavily. They tried their best to protect the sari from the rain and the wind. But they failed. The sari was torn into pieces.

“Oh, nooooooooo!” Nikini screamed. She was so sad that she cried and cried, while getting soaked in the rain.



The dawn arrived, and the sun rose. She heard a voice calling out. “Nikini...Nikini!” someone was shouting.

It was Nikini’s mother, who was searching for her missing daughter. Just then, she saw Nikini crying under a tree. She came running to Nikini.

“Oh, my darling, where have you been? Why are you crying?” she asked.

“Amma, I went searching for a birthday gift for you. I searched for the greatest gift for you, but I couldn’t find it. I searched for the biggest gift for you, but I couldn’t find it. I searched for the most beautiful gift for you, but I couldn’t find it. I searched for the most precious gift for you, but I couldn’t find it. So finally, my friends made me a gift which you would like most. It was a very beautiful sari. But it got caught by the wind and was torn into pieces. I’m so sad that I couldn’t give it to you and make you happy,” Nikini said, still sobbing.



“My darling, do you know what is the most beautiful, most precious and the greatest thing to me? That is my little daughter. What I like most is her love. The love I felt from you today is the greatest, biggest, most precious and the most beautiful gift I’ve ever had in my life,” said her mother and she hugged her.

Nikini was very happy and so were her friends.
All of them went home with her, to celebrate the birthday.





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