



# The New Bride

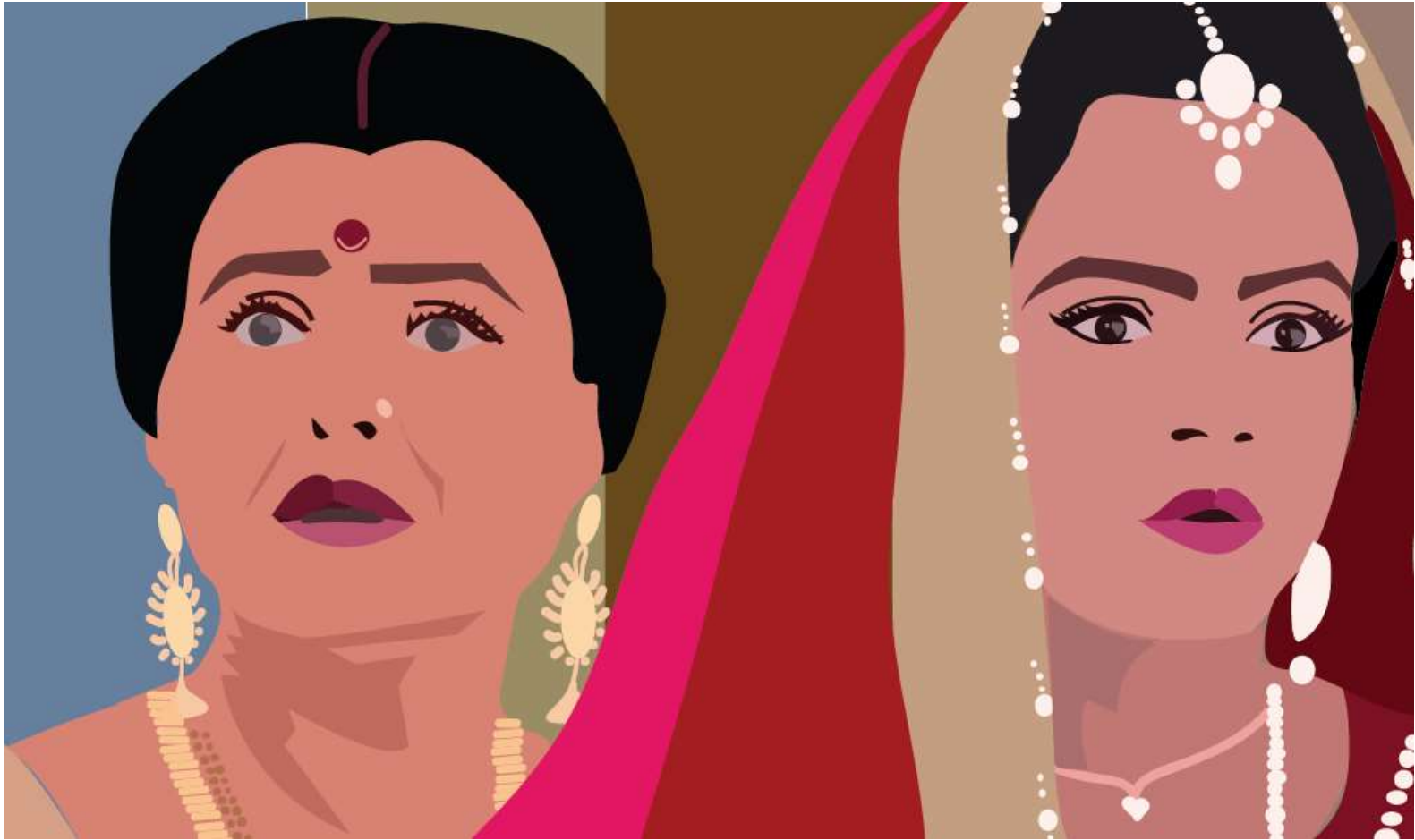
David I. Levine  
Illustrations by Jessica Su




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**MONDAY  
JANUARY**

*Move into  
vijay's  
house!*

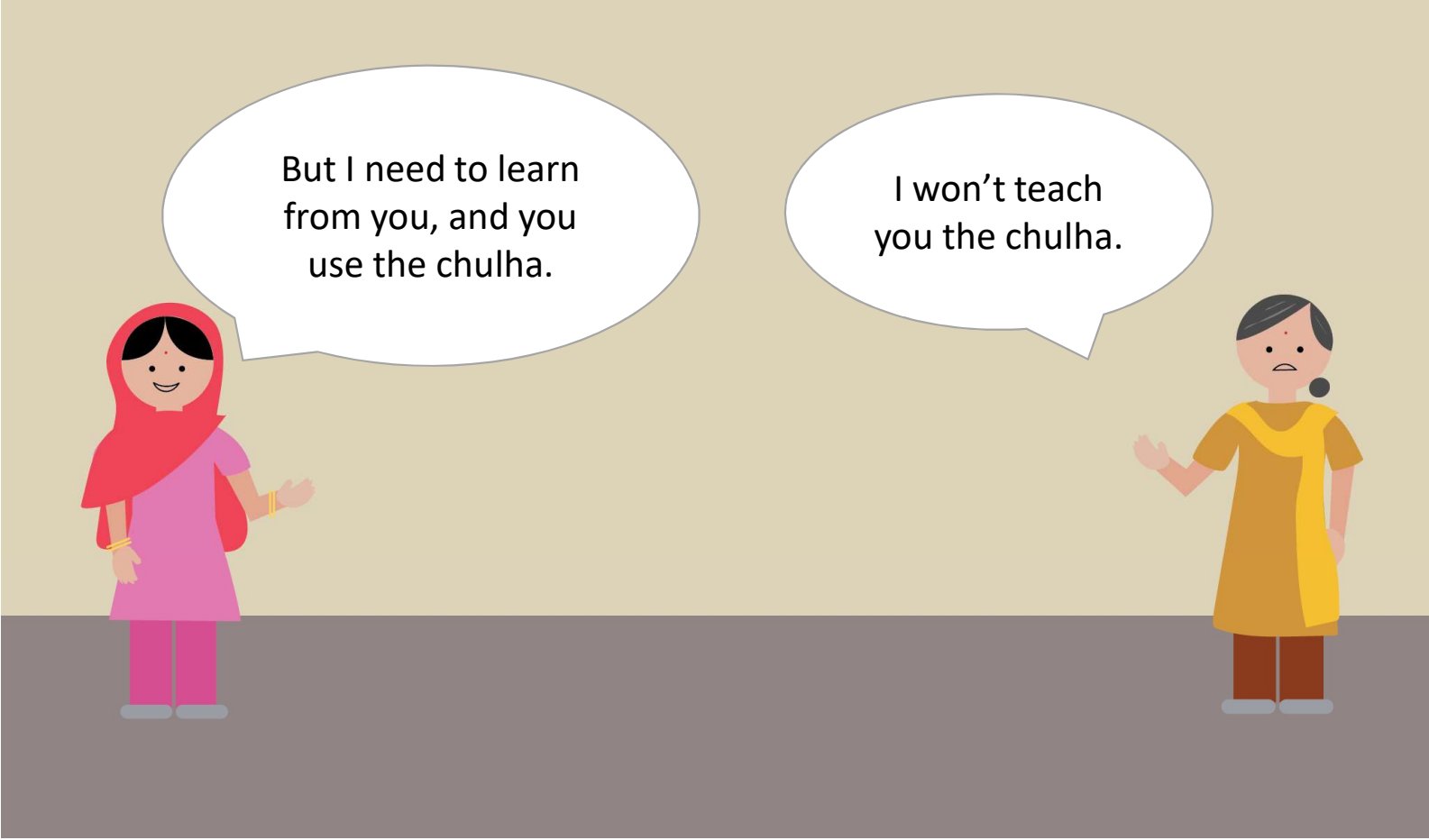


I have been in my husband's house for only a few hours.  
Already, my life was a saas-bahu soap opera.

An illustration of two women standing on a grey floor against a tan background. The woman on the left is wearing a pink sari with a red headscarf and has a speech bubble above her. The woman on the right is wearing a yellow sari with a brown border and has a speech bubble above her.

Mummyji, please show me how to cook your family's favorite foods. You are an expert on your chulha!

Daughter, for your wedding, I bought you a gas stove.

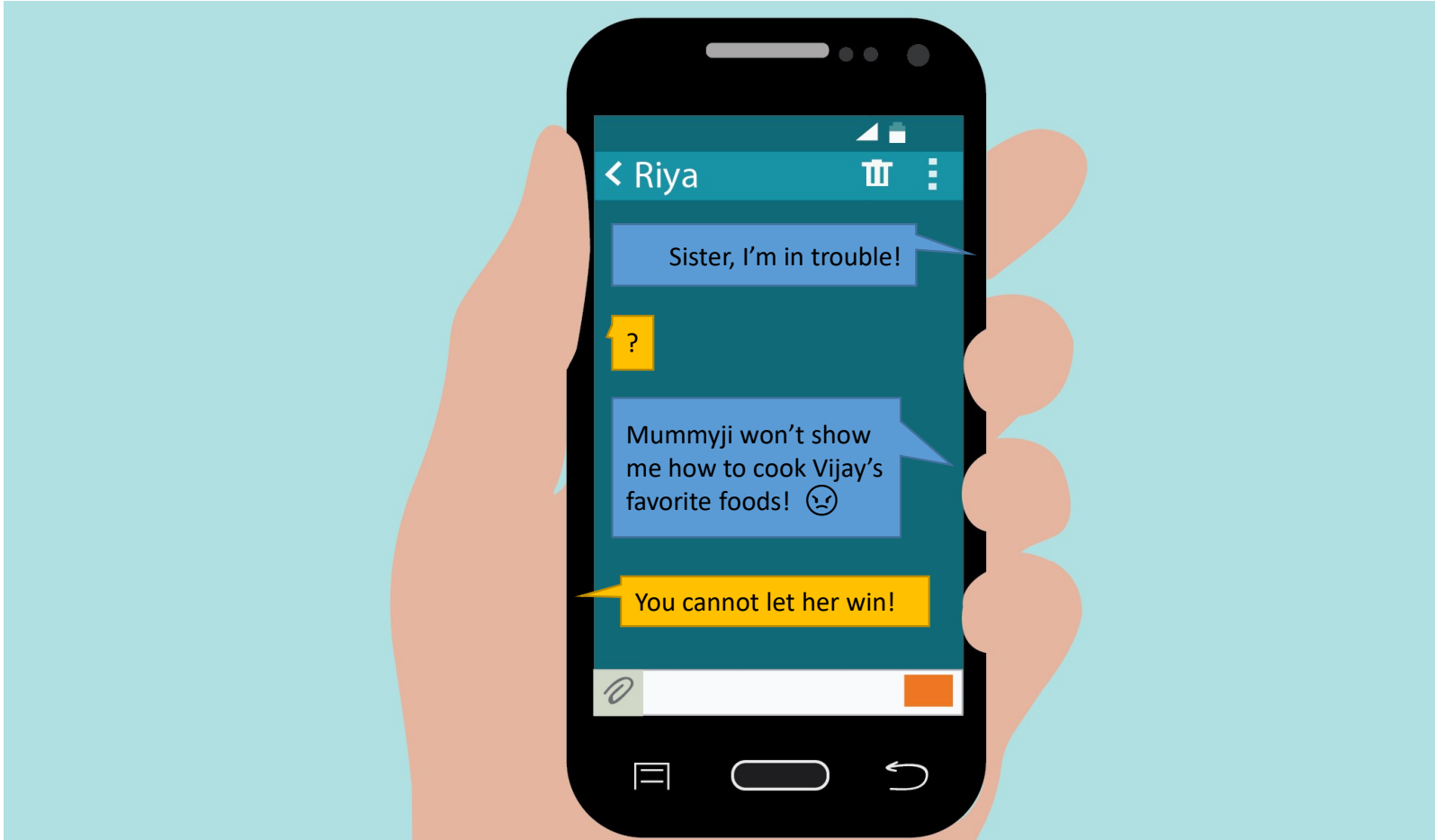
An illustration of two women standing on a grey floor against a tan background. The woman on the left is wearing a pink dress and a red headscarf, smiling. The woman on the right is wearing a brown dress with a yellow shawl, looking serious. Two speech bubbles are positioned between them, containing text.

But I need to learn  
from you, and you  
use the chulha.

I won't teach  
you the chulha.



“Daughter, smoke from the chulha has the same chemical as in rat poison.”





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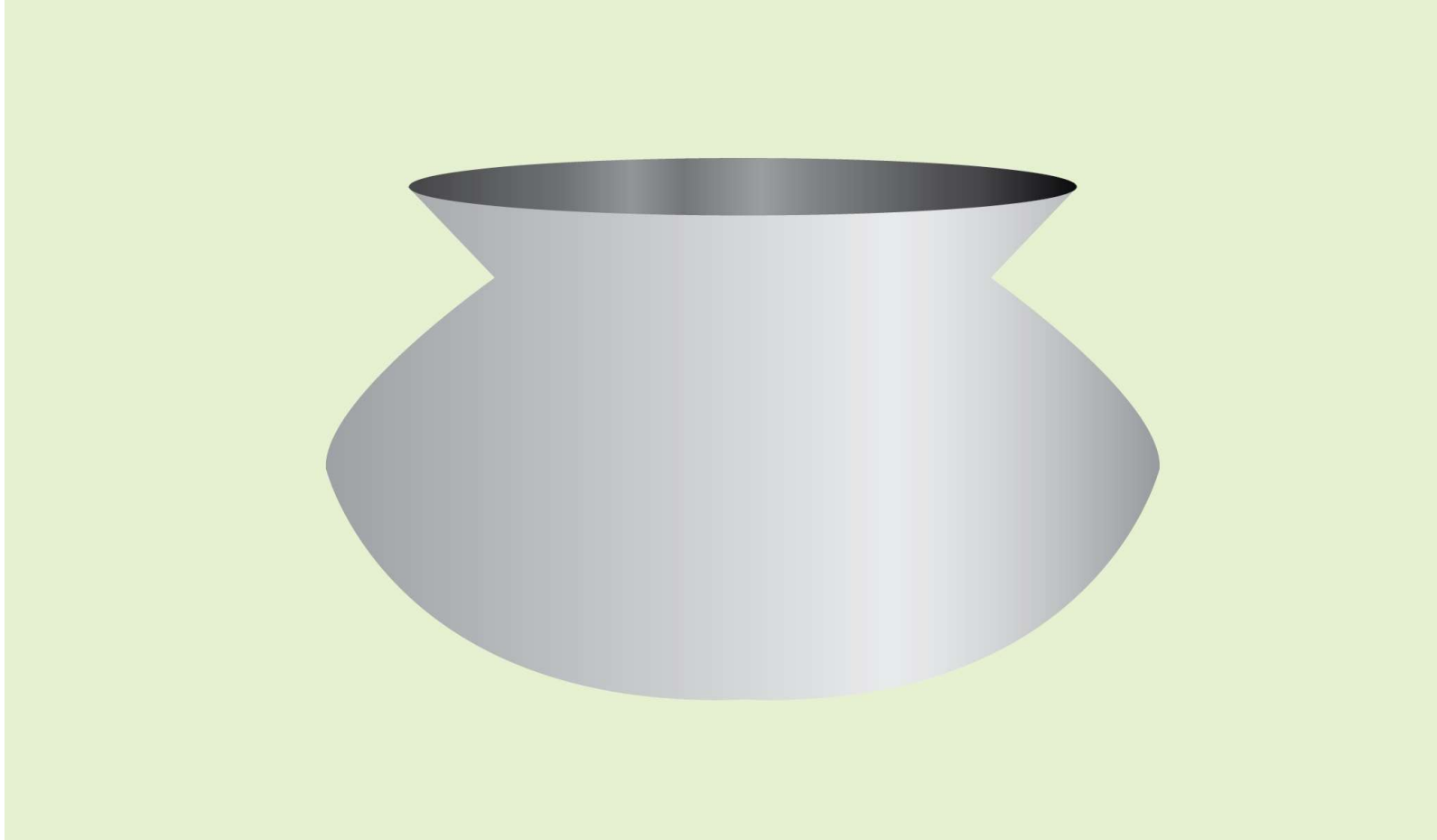
**TUESDAY  
JANUARY**

*TRY #2*

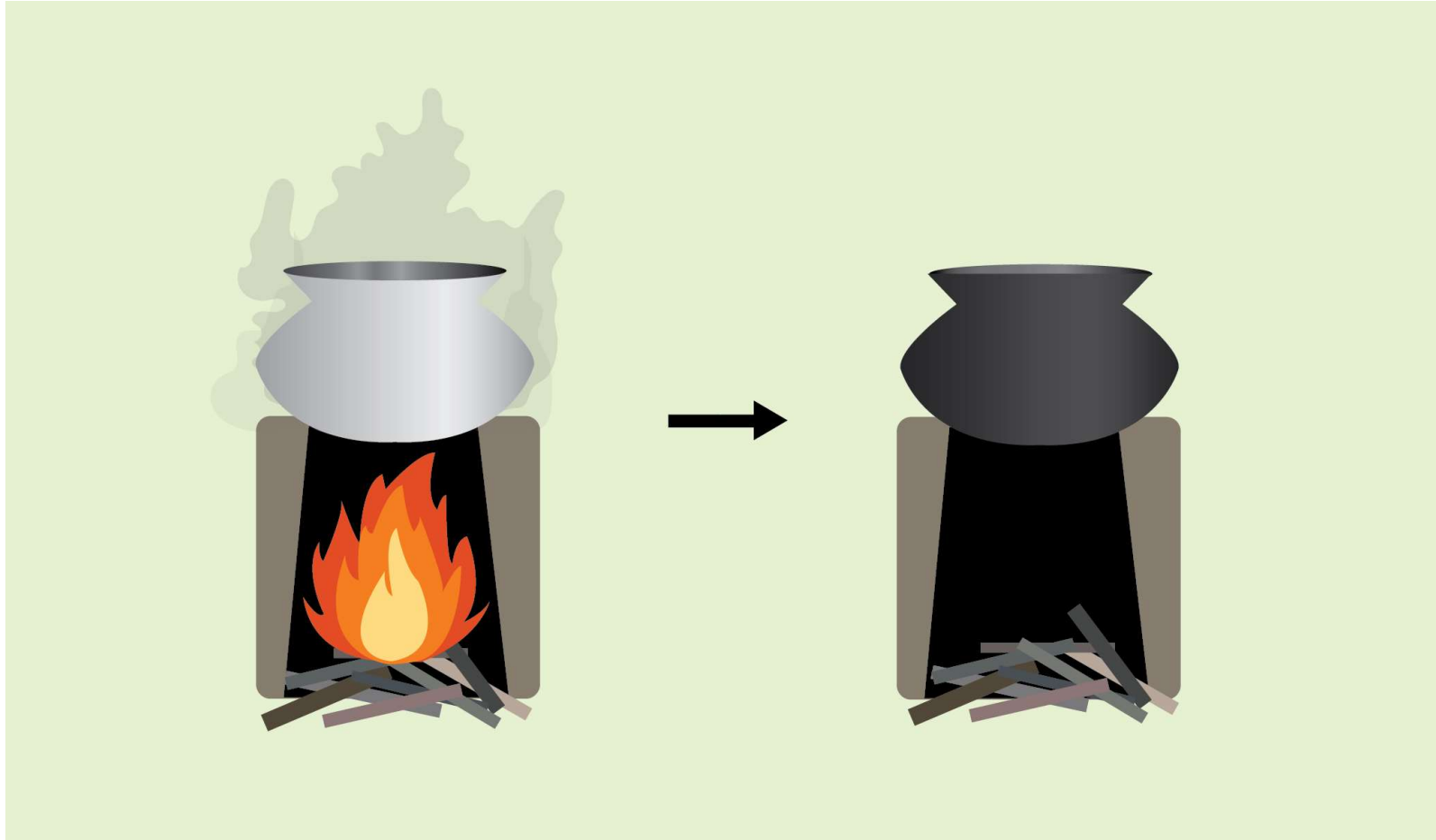




Mummyji, you cook what Vijay likes on the chulha. Please show me how.

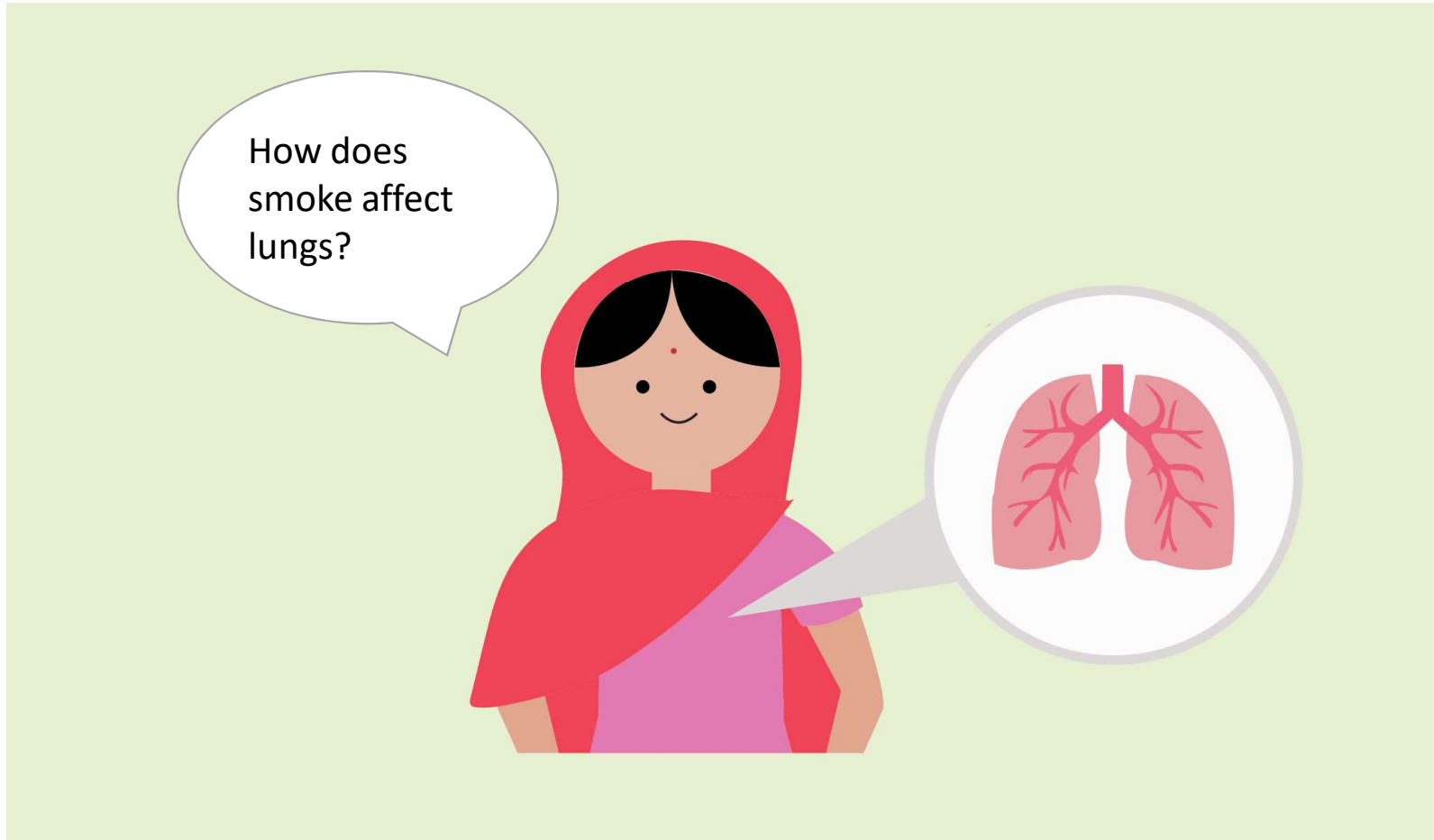


“Daughter, what will happen to your shiny wedding gifts after you cook on the chulha?”

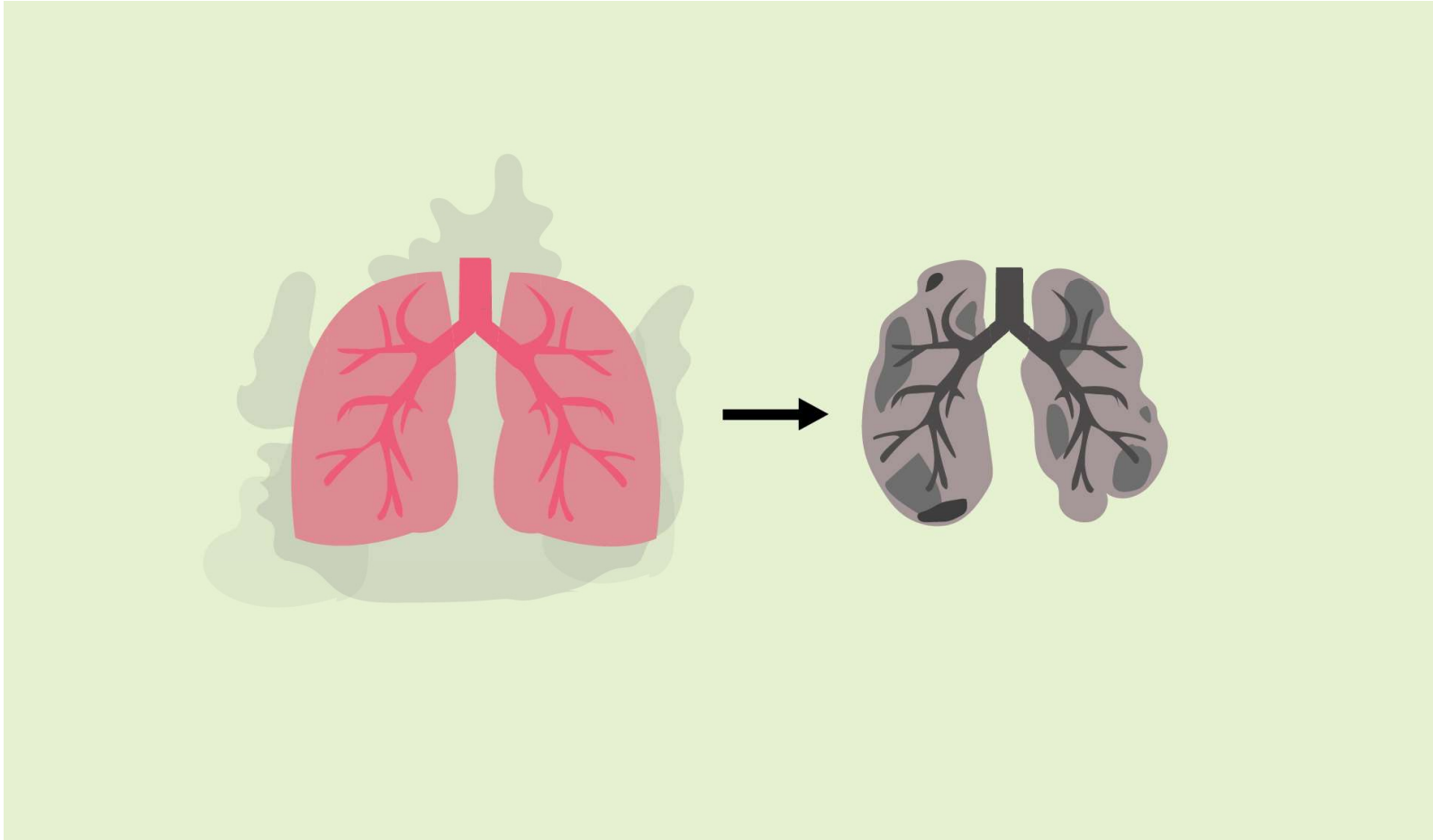


“They will turn black, like your pots.”

“Daughter, the same thing happens to lungs.”



I was surprised that Mummyij knew we used lungs to breathe.



“Daughter, smoke turns your lungs black and shriveled.”



But nobody  
sees my lungs.



“Daughter, smoke gives you serious lung diseases.”



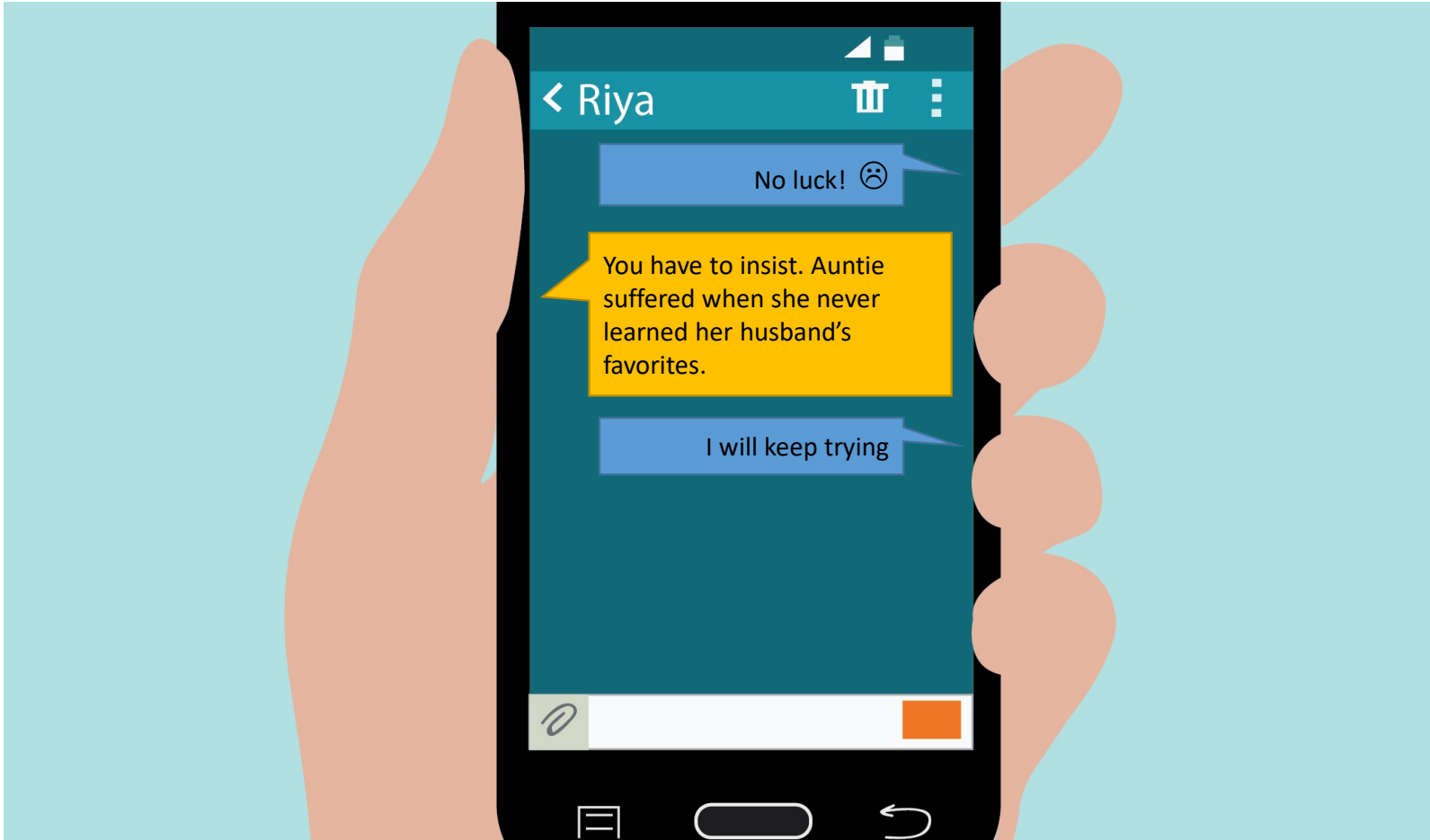
I am strong  
enough to  
take it







“But it is not just you. Smoke is also bad for the baby.”



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**WEDNESDAY  
JANUARY**

*Mummyj  
won't  
defeat  
me!*



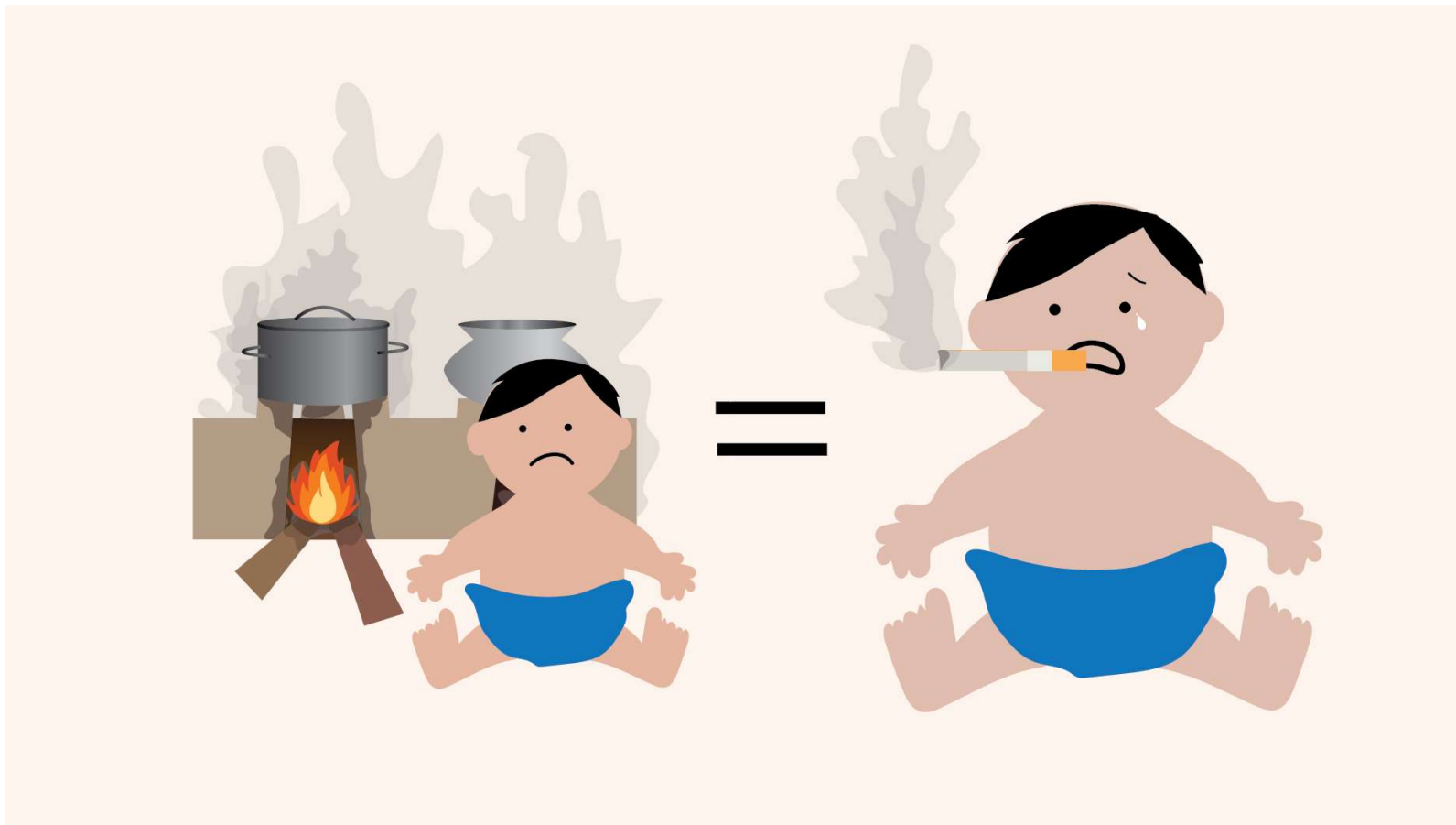
Mummyji, there is no baby yet. Teach me now...



...and I will quit using  
the chulha once a  
grandchild arrives.



“Daughter, smoke harms the baby before it is born.”



“Being near a chulha is like letting your baby smoke cigarettes.”

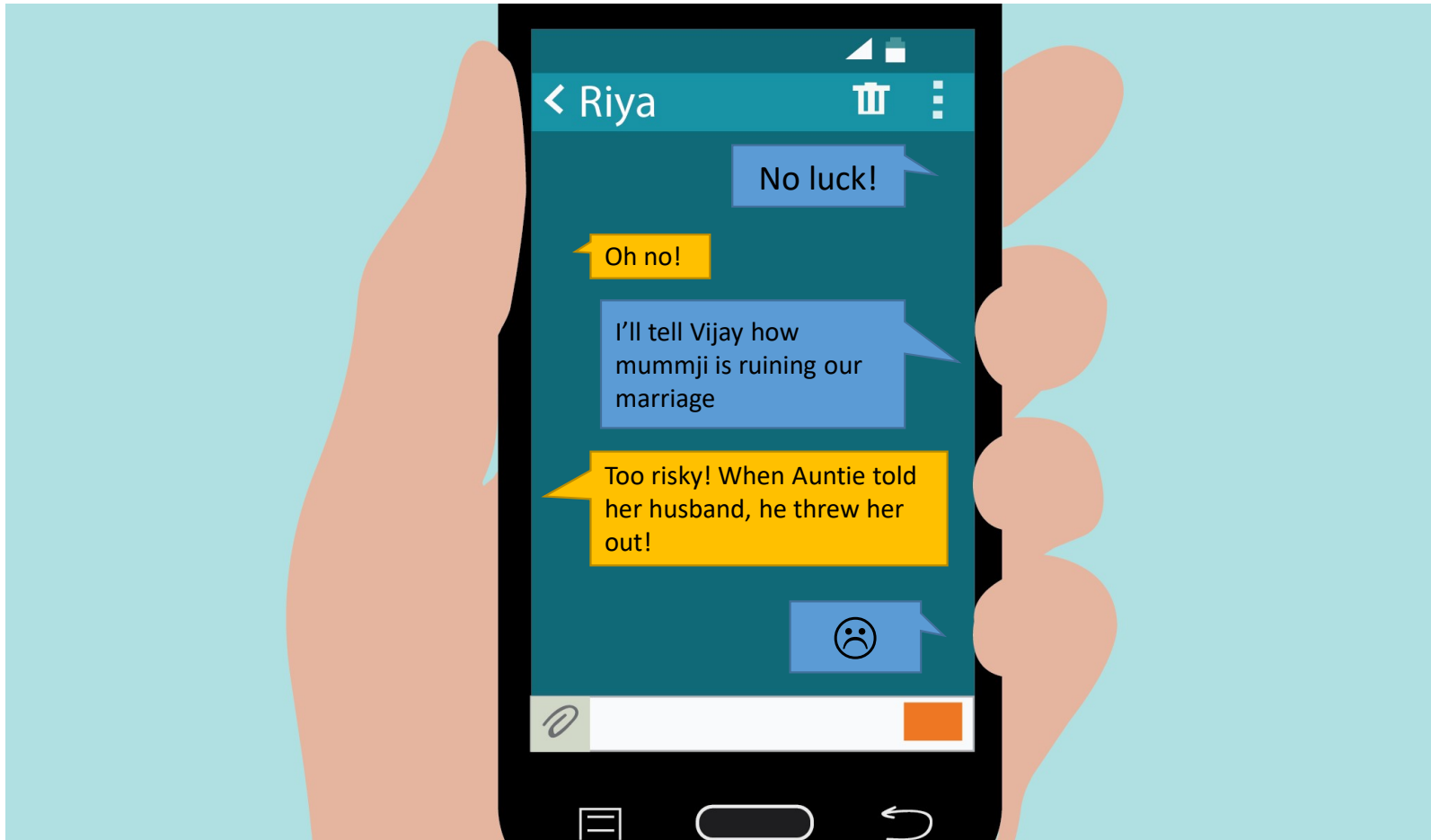


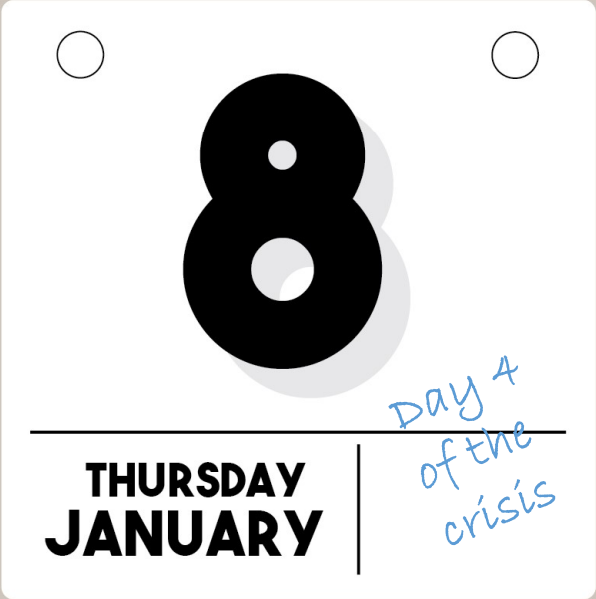
If smoke is so bad, why do you use the chulha?

I was saving up to buy the gas stove for you.

Mummyji was tricky!







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**THURSDAY  
JANUARY**

*Day 4  
of the  
crisis*

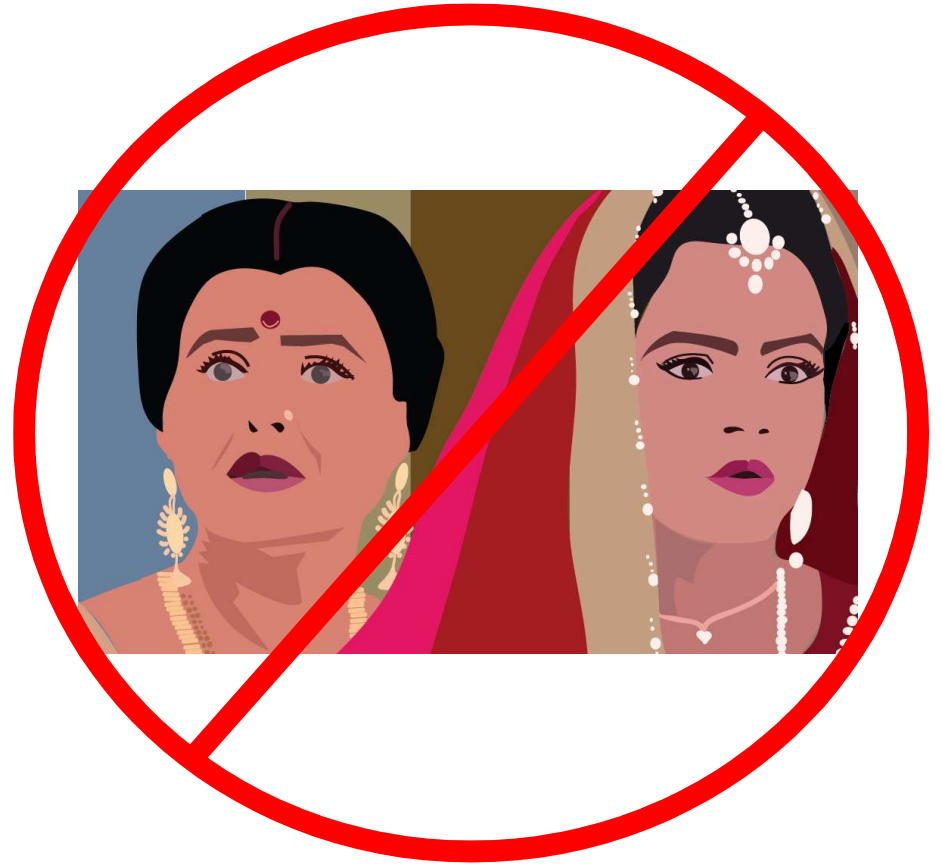


Mummyji, you cannot trick me. I will learn by watching you cook.



Mummyji started crying.

“I am so sad, my daughter, that you are afraid of me. This is not a soap opera!”





“Daughter, Vijjay is not my first son. Beautiful Bharat was always near me and my smoky stove. Then Bharat got the cough that killed him. Only after did the doctor tell me how smoke poisoned his lungs.”



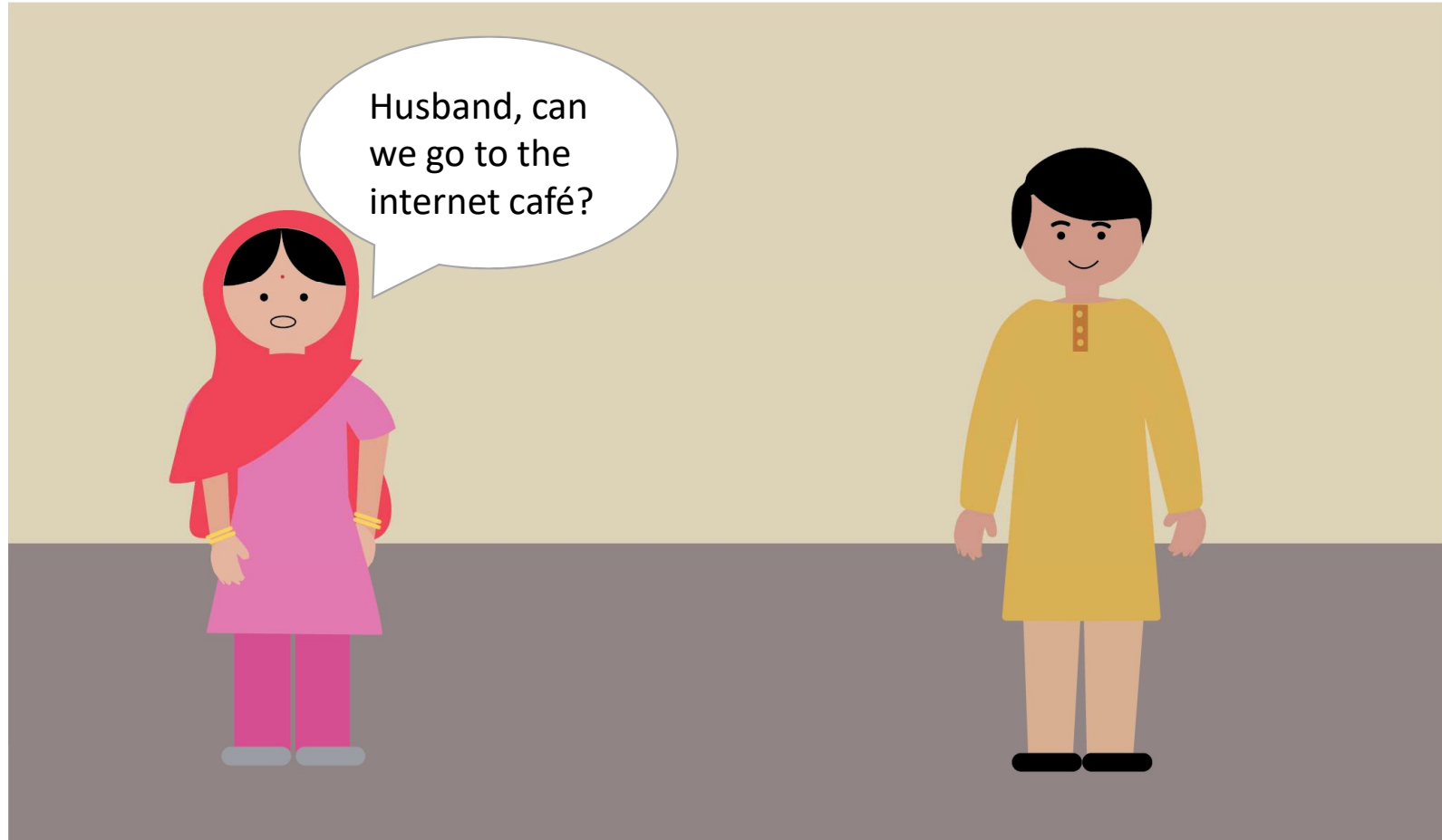
“I won’t let you use the chulha, daughter,  
because no ma should suffer as I did.”

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**FRIDAY  
JANUARY**

*Risking  
it all!*

My aunt lost her home when she challenged *her* mummyji.  
Would Vijay also throw me out? I was shaking...

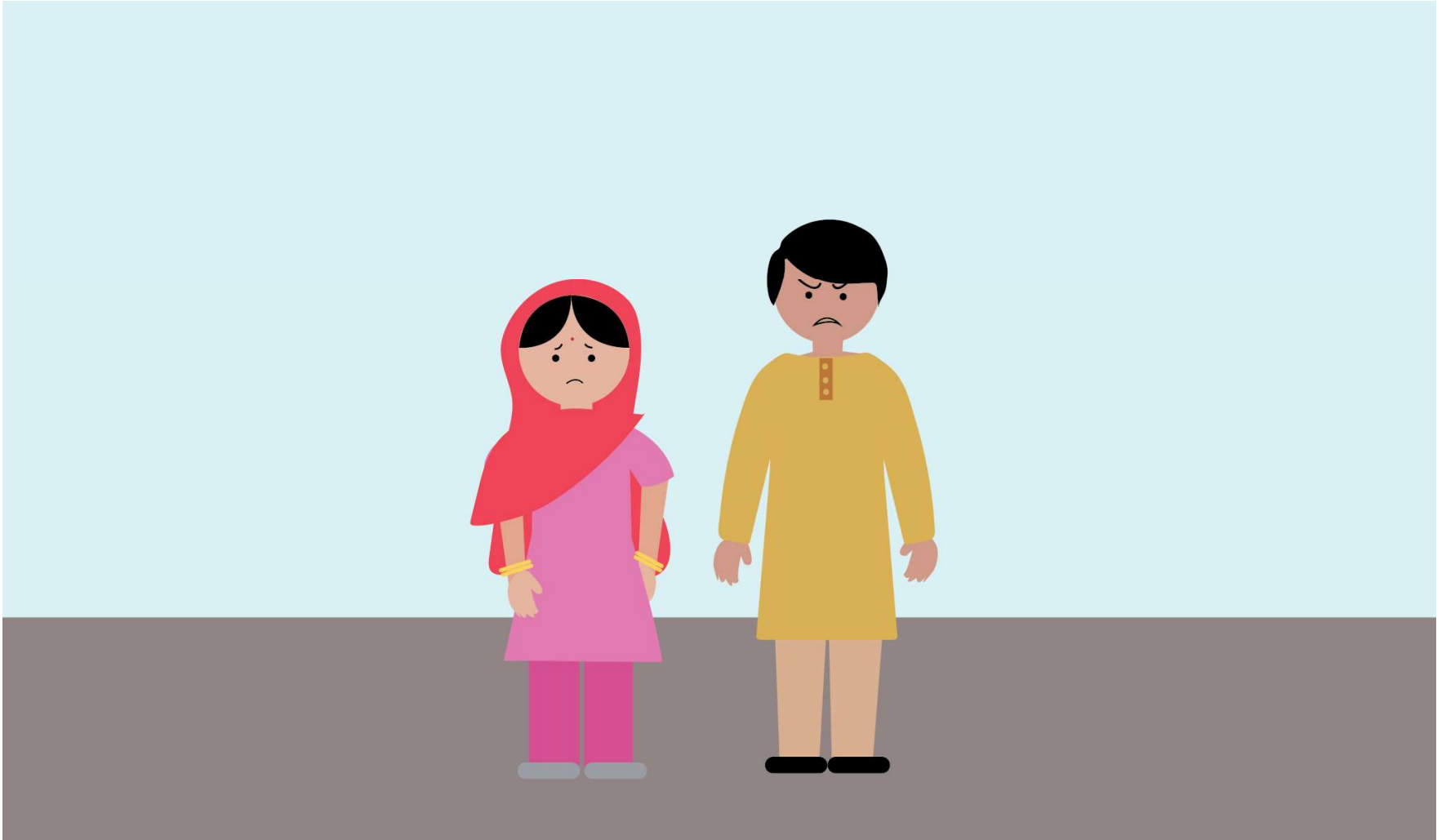




We Googled together.



Mummyji was right! Chulhas kill millions of people. Their poison smoke is terrible for cooks. It is even worse for children. Babies have more health problems. And they grow up less healthy. The smoke also harms the brain, so they learn less in school



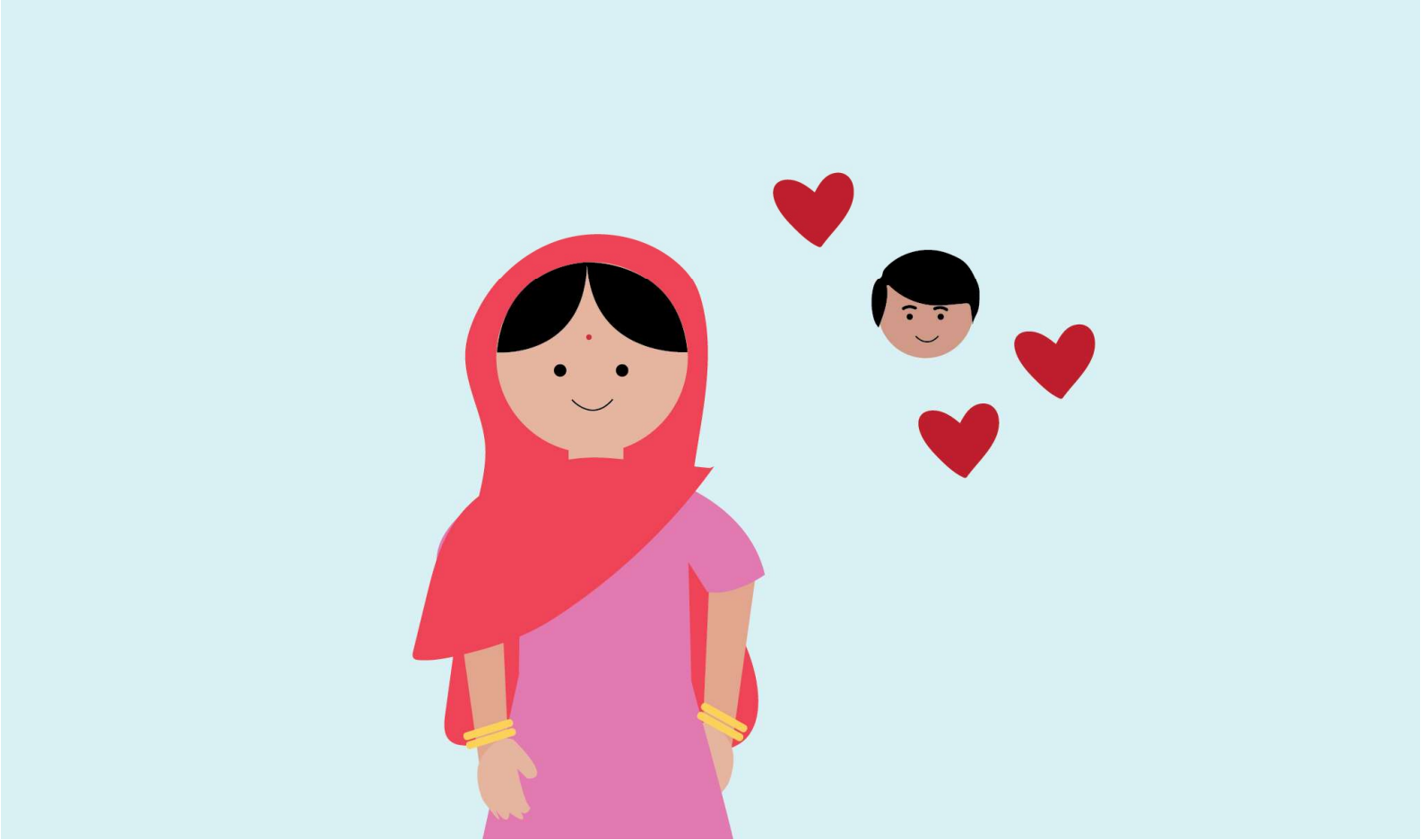
Vijay was so angry! What had I done?

I am so sad my  
mother cooks in a  
smoky kitchen.



And I never want  
you in such a  
dangerous place!





My heart filled with love.



We rushed home to break the chulha.  
Mummyji took the first swing!



The rest of the day Mummyji taught me on the gas stove.  
“Mummyji, why didn’t you show me earlier?”



I did not know how to use the gas stove. Once you showed me, it was fun cooking with you.

Mummyji, you are the best Mummyji ever!

*And we cooked happily ever after...*