

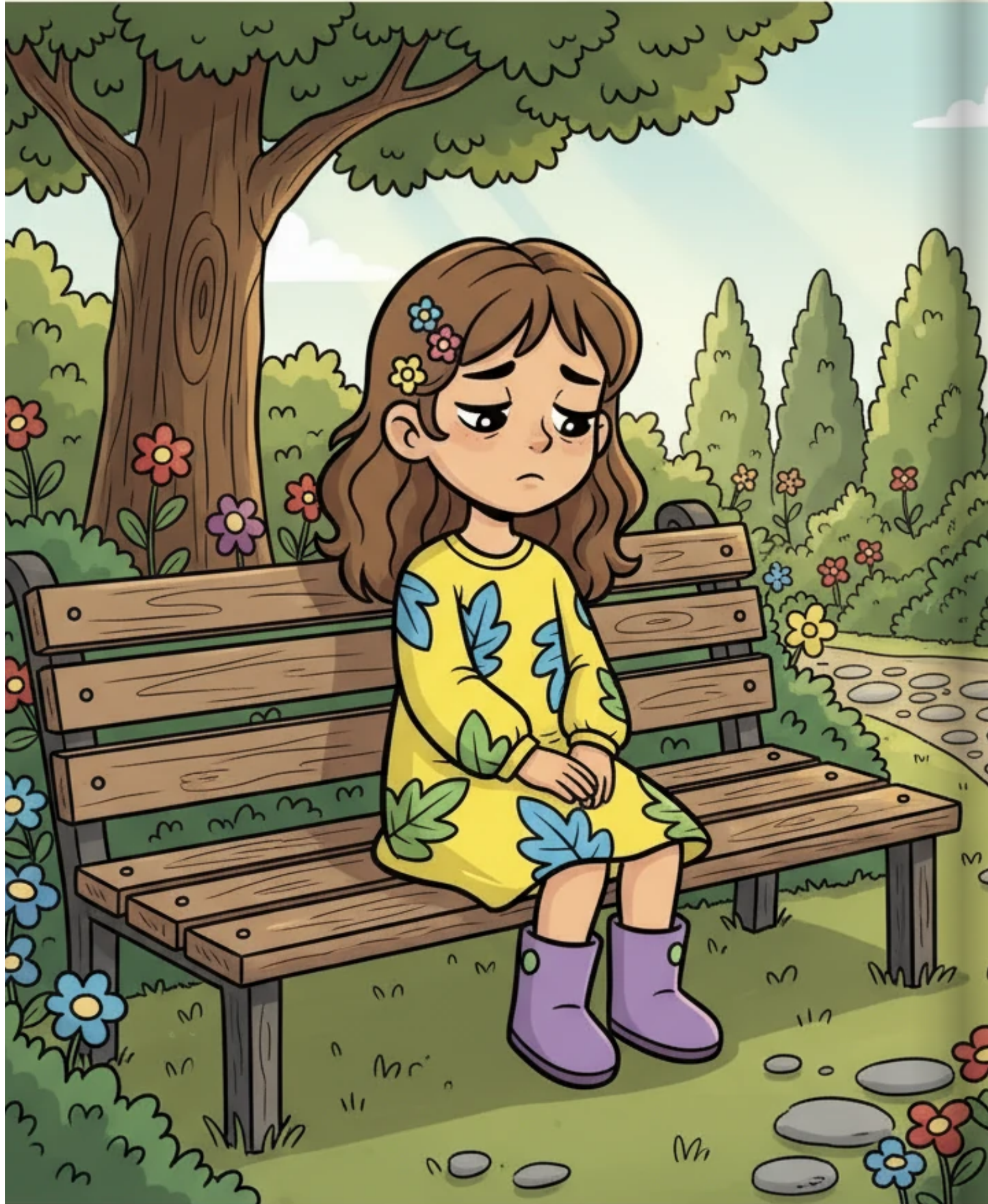


The Invisible Bench

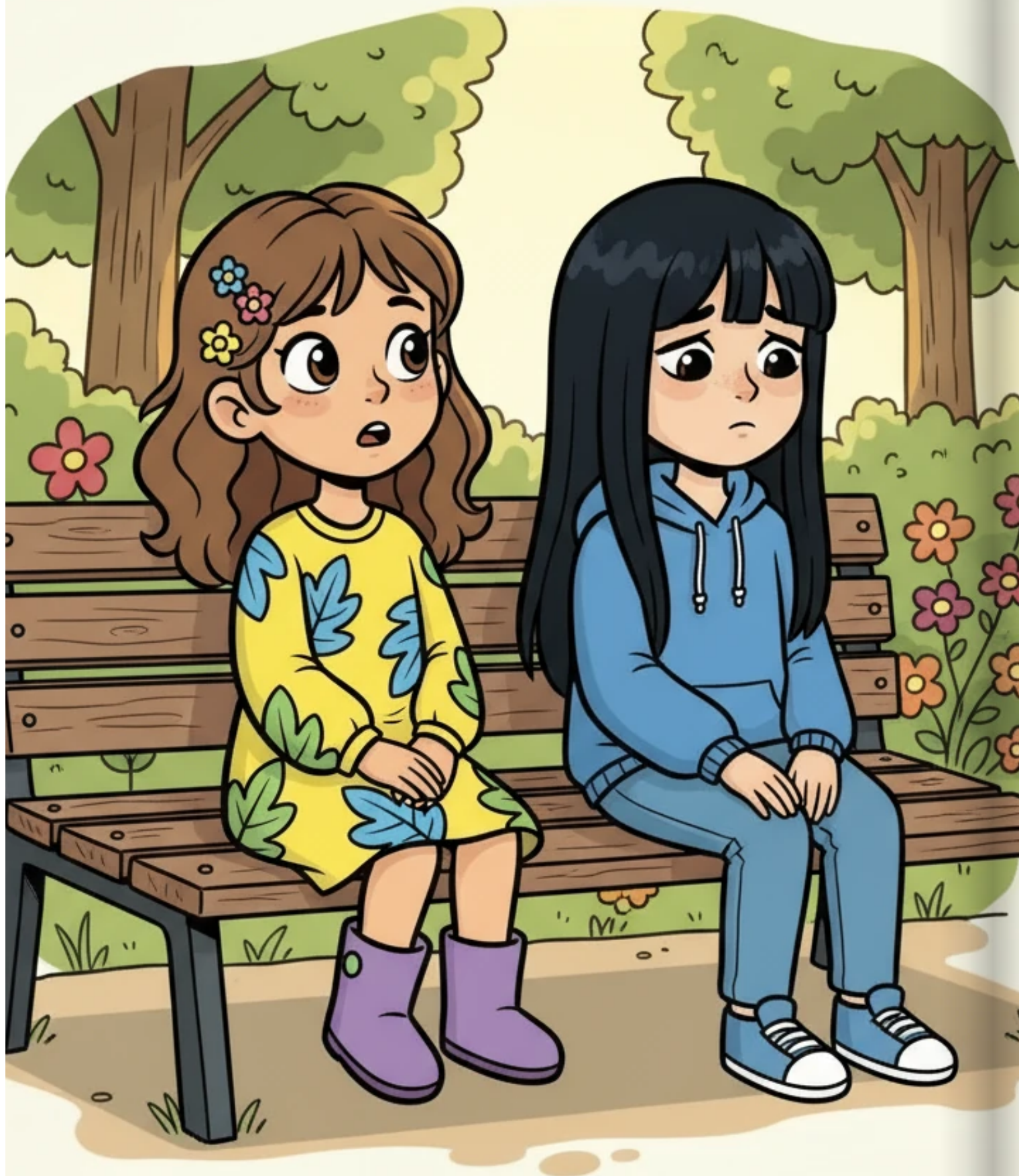
by Tianna-Aroha's Magical World



The classroom erupted in giggles, and Tory felt her cheeks burn. Tears welled up, but she forced a smile, pretending everything was fine. After the bell rang, she rushed to the girls' washroom, the laughter echoing in her ears. Her blue and red checkered uniform was soaked with tears, a reflection of her sadness.



As recess began, Tory, eyes red and puffy, walked slowly towards the school garden. She found an empty bench in a quiet corner, a place where she felt invisible and could share her worries with the silent wood. The bench always seemed to listen, offering a small comfort in her day.



One day, as Tory sat on the bench, lost in her thoughts, she felt a slight tremor. Turning her head, she was astonished to see Amara, the most popular girl in school, sitting beside her. Amara's long, black hair hid her face, but Tory could see the sadness in her eyes.



Amara, usually surrounded by friends, was alone and crying. She confessed her pain, revealing that people only wanted to be near her for her popularity. Tory, surprised, felt a connection with Amara, understanding the hidden struggles behind a seemingly perfect life.



After an awkward silence, Tory and Amara began to talk. Tory shared her secret of confiding in the bench, and Amara, seeking solace, admitted she needed a friend too. Tory offered her advice, and the two girls began to bond, finding strength in their shared vulnerability.



Days turned into weeks, and the garden bloomed with new leaves. Tory and Amara, no longer alone, sat together on the bench, now filled with laughter and friendship. They realized that true friends are those who make you feel light, like a feather, not a burden.