

**MYRNA
MULCH**

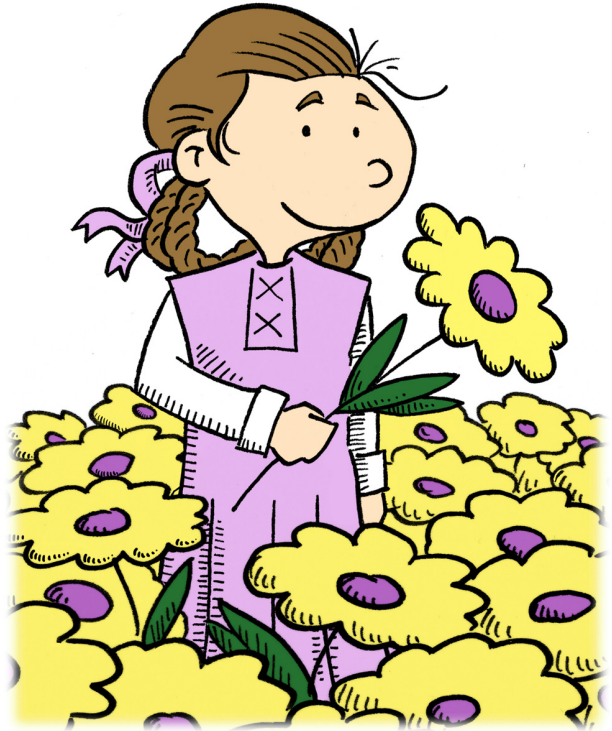
BY KEN GERBER

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For Hazel Banou



Myrna Mulch
was an inquisitive child.
In fact, she may have
been the most curious
and clever child in all of
Grundle.



She liked to
watch the ants at work. She liked to make things
that would float. She liked exploring the woods
that surrounded the land of Grundle. And she liked
to watch the sky at night with her father.

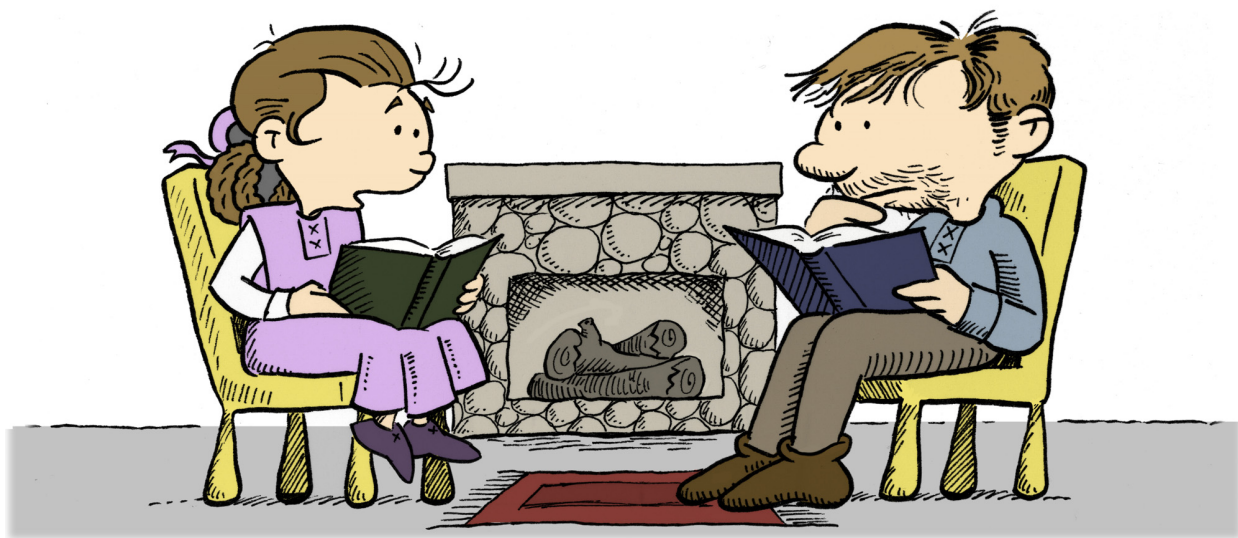
Among these many interests, she also liked
to grow yellow yerkle flowers. Not because they
were pretty or because they smelled nice.

(Although, they *were* pretty, and they *did* smell nice.)

But because she liked to see how tall she could make them grow.

One day she asked her father, “How can I make my yerkle flowers grow taller?”

Myrna’s father had taught her to ask good questions, and he thought this was an excellent one. But he really didn’t know the answer, and not wanting to give her bad advice, he answered honestly, “I don’t know...but maybe we can find someone who does.”



Myrna asked the next logical question

“Who should we ask?”

“There are two people that come to mind. First, of course, there is the great Wise Man of Grundle. I have never met him, but people say he knows everything. You can see if he has time to answer your question.”

“And the second person?” asked Myrna.

Her father hesitated and finally answered, “Well...there *is* Hannelore Halfpot. Long ago, she was the greatest expert on flower growing in all of Grundle. And indeed, yellow yerkle flowers were her specialty.” Then his tone changed. “But...she doesn’t grow flowers anymore.”

“Why not?” asked Myrna.

“She’s not allowed to. They say she broke a very important law of flower growing, and now she lives on the edge of the woods, forbidden to grow any flowers of any kind. I don’t know if she can help you or not.”

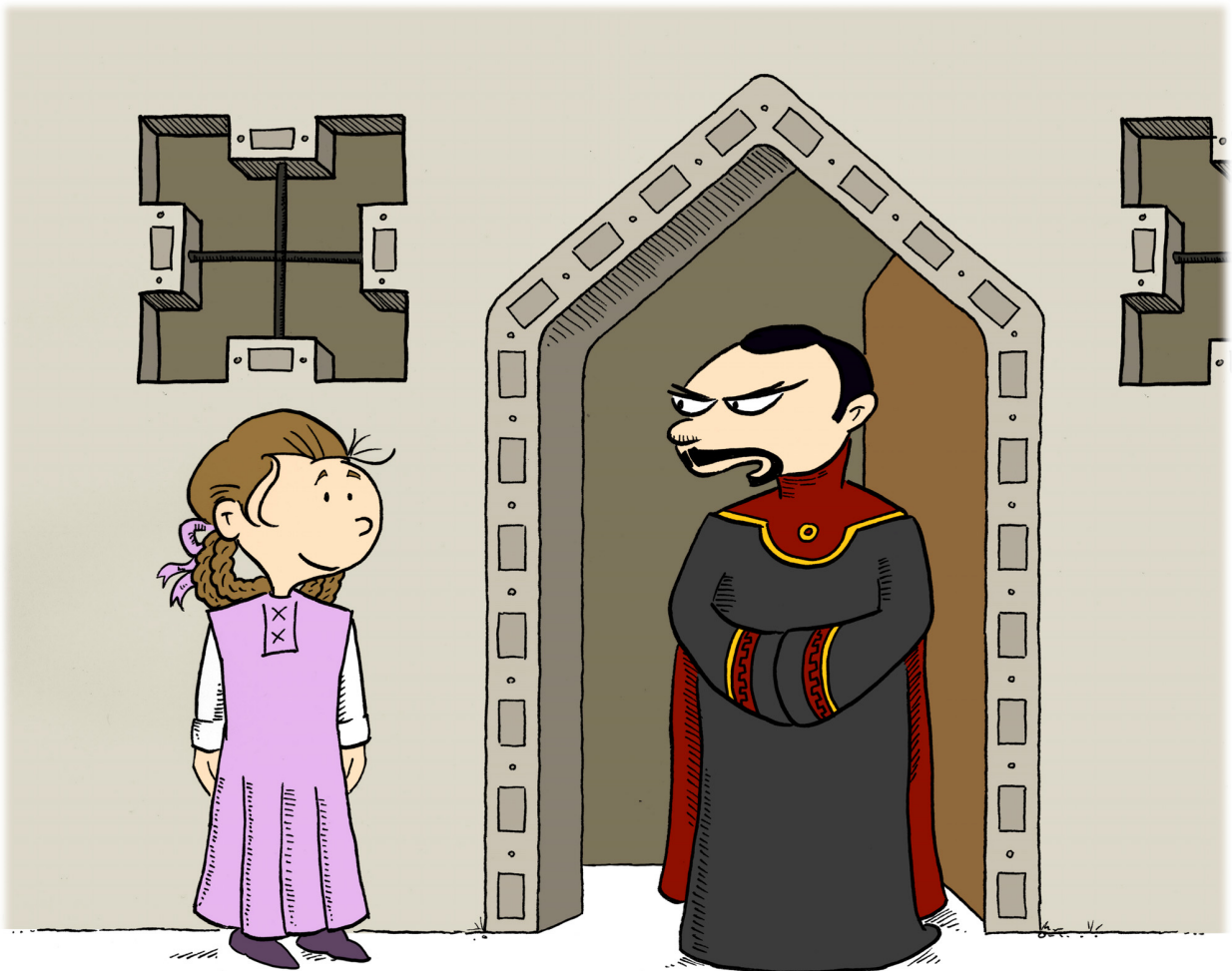
Myrna wanted to ask both the Wise Man of Grundle and Hannelore Halfpot for help, but she thought Hannelore might feel bad hearing about Myrna’s flowers. So she decided to ask the Wise Man first.

The next day (after watering her flowers and stopping at the brook to look at the salamanders), Myrna visited the Wise Man.

“Hello, young lady. What can I do for you?”

“Pardon me, sir, I was hoping you could give me some advice on growing my yellow yerkle flowers,” she said politely.

The Wise Man stroked his beard and said, “Yes. Yes. I know exactly what to do. That’s



actually quite an easy question. I don't even need to think about it.”

Myrna was excited and asked “Really? What should I do?”

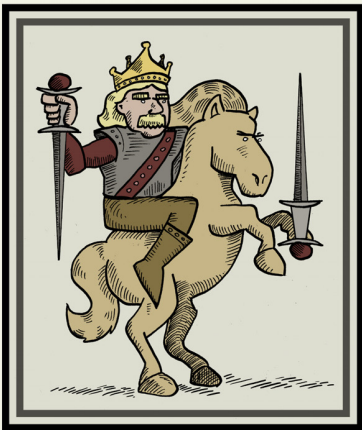
“You must plant your yerkle seeds on a Wednesday. And you must never...and I mean NEVER plant your yerkle seeds on a Tuesday.” The Wise Man spoke confidently and seriously.

Myrna was a bit surprised. Realizing this was an excellent time for a good question, she asked one. “How do you know that?”

“How...what...well...uh...” The Wise Man was surprised to hear this question. “Well, it's in the *Book of Truths*.” He walked over to a massive book sitting on a stone in the middle of the room.

“It says here...”

King Yoram arriving in Valley of Prumm
Besmooted the Children of Topley on Crumm,
Whence Children besmooted the Hattle of Mopley



(Whence Hattle re-smooted
The Strėwbald of Topley).

The Strėwbald grept loyal
The Archnape of Fike

And smooted the Noblet of Mimfold on Pike.
The Noblet pretorted eight Dramkins (a quorum)
To treble the Dramkins possessed by King Yoram.

Myrna inched closer to the *Book of Truths* and read these words three times in her head, and finally she said, “I don’t get it.”

“Well, of course you don’t get it! It’s in the *Book of Truths*, and the *Book of Truths* is very complicated. Anybody can *read* it, but you need a Wise Man to *understand* it!”



“And it says I should plant the yerkle seeds on a Wednesday...not a Tuesday?”

“Exactly.”

Remember, Myrna was a young expert at asking good questions. “What happens if I plant them on Tuesday?”

“Young lady, there is no ‘What if?’ You just **DON’T DO IT!** *The Book of Truths* says so. That’s it. End of story!”

By this point, Myrna could tell she was in danger of annoying the Wise Man, so she thanked him and left.

On the way home, she walked quite a bit out of her way and stopped at the cottage of Hannelore Halfpot.

It turned out that Myrna didn't need to feel bad that Hannelore wasn't allowed to grow flowers. On the contrary, Hannelore was delighted to talk about Myrna's yerkles.

“Pardon me, Ma'am, could you please give me some advice on growing yerkle flowers?”

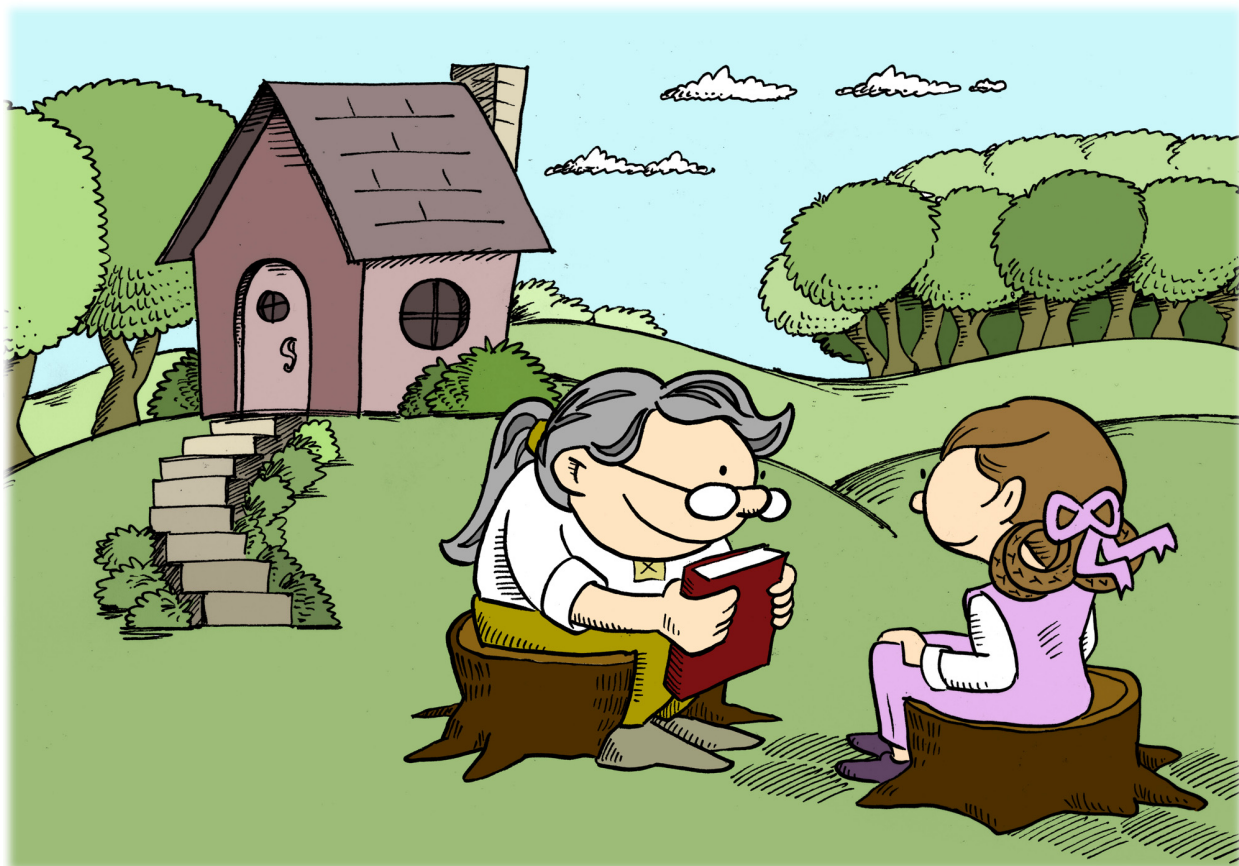
Myrna asked in her usual polite way.

“I am happy to help...at least as best as I can.”

Once again, Myrna got very excited.

Hannelore began, “Of course, you know that you have to water the flowers and make sure they have lots of sunlight.”

Myrna nodded, and Hannelore continued, “But the trick...the trick...is to dribble some zefffer extract near the stem every week.” Hannelore had a



very thoughtful look on her face. “But I’m still trying to figure out what’s in those zefffer leaves...there’s something that makes it all work, but I don’t know what....”

Once again, Myrna was surprised. “Really? How do you know that it works?”

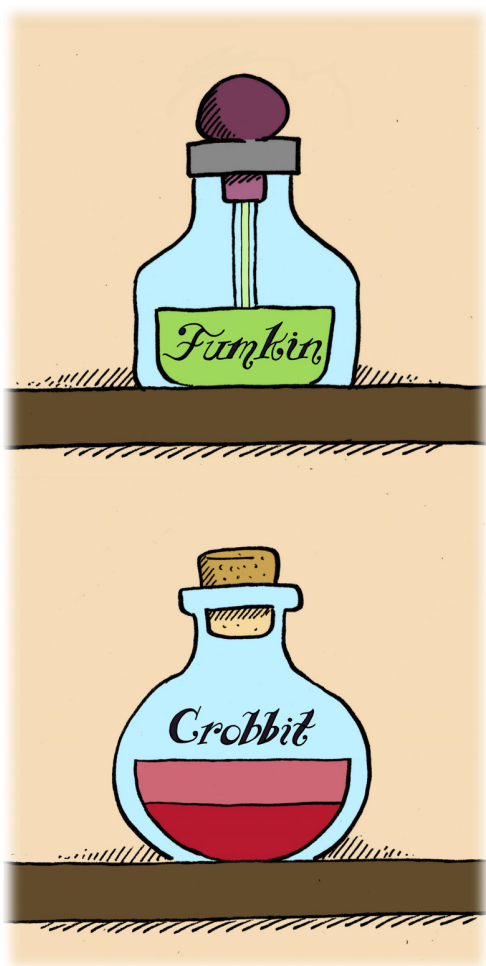
Hannelore explained, “Well, it took me a long time to figure this out. For twenty years, I

tried different kinds of soils and different kinds of fertilizer. I tried using water from the north brook and water from the south brook. I tried sprinkling the soil with fumkin oil and sprinkling the soil with crobbit juice. I tried planting seeds on Wednesday, and I tried planting seeds on...”

Hannelore stopped.

“Well, anyhow. You just need to carefully keep track of everything you try. That way, when something works, you’ll know.”

Hannelore handed Myrna a notebook of all her yerkle flower experiments, and she added “And if something



The flowers had reached their usual grand height of two feet tall, and everybody clapped for Myrna's splendid flowers.

The Wise

Man took this opportunity to speak. "Good people! Young Myrna Mulch is truly a fine citizen of Grundle! She came to me two months ago



asking my advice, and I can see that she has grown her flowers just as the *Book of Truths* has told her to do!"

Again, the townspeople clapped.

“Excuse me, Wise Man...Sir...” said Myrna.

“Yes, Myrna?”

“Which of these flowers do you think I seeded on a Wednesday?”

“What?”

“Well, you told me that yerkles planted on a Wednesday would grow the highest. So which ones are the Wednesday plants?”



“Well, obviously they are *all* Wednesday plants,” the Wise Man said confidently as he laughed. “Just look how beautiful they all are!” Again everyone clapped.

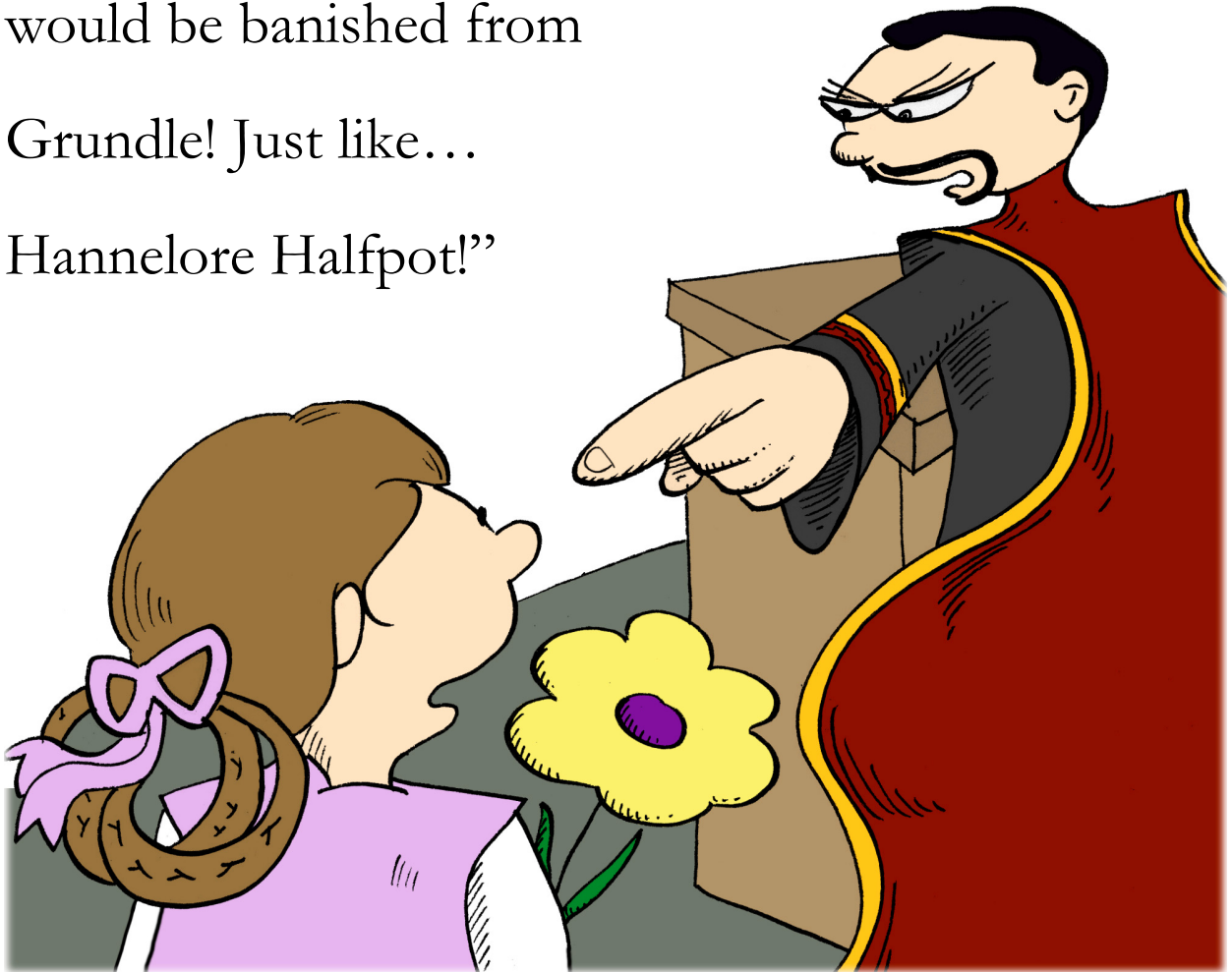
Knowing that she was causing just a wee bit of trouble, Myrna said, “Actually, I planted one hundred flowers on each day of the week. Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and ...”

The Wise Man gasped with horror, “No, you didn’t...”

Myrna finished, “...and Tuesday.”

The Wise Man grew angry, and his voice boomed like thunder. “Myrna Mulch has brought grave danger to the land of Grundle!” And turning

to Myrna he said, “If you weren’t a child, you would be banished from Grundle! Just like... Hannelore Halfpot!”



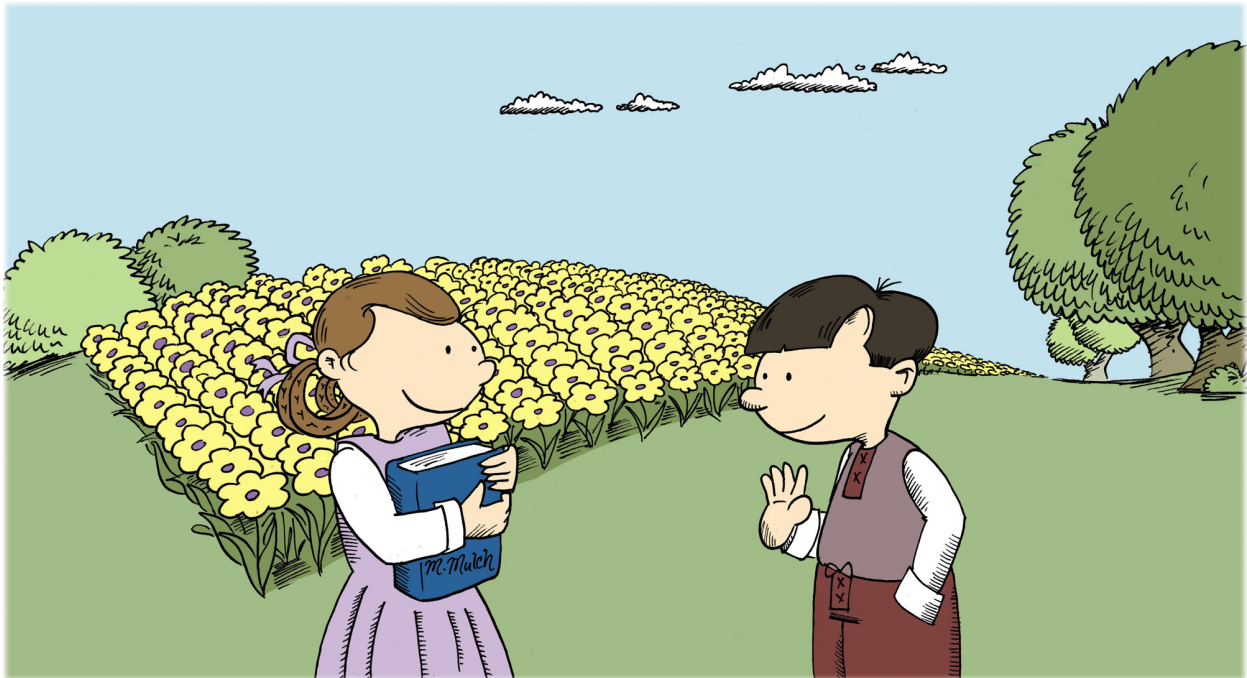
Soon the Wise Man had gotten the whole town upset. Pointing at Myrna, he yelled, “If any trouble comes to this town, it will be young Myrna’s fault! And if not...then we’ll know that

Myrna *lied* about planting seeds on Tuesday. Either way, she's done a terrible thing!"

The townspeople muttered mean things, and then they all left.

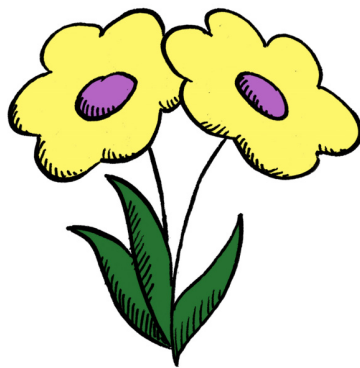
Except for one boy, named Emil, whose mother had also taught him to ask good questions.

"Myrna, did you really plant some of these seeds on Tuesday?" He asked. "Do you know which ones?"



Myrna nodded, looked carefully at her notes, and pointed to the rows that were planted on Tuesday.

Emil said, “Well, they all look great to me. Can you show me how you did it?” And Myrna smiled.



THE END

