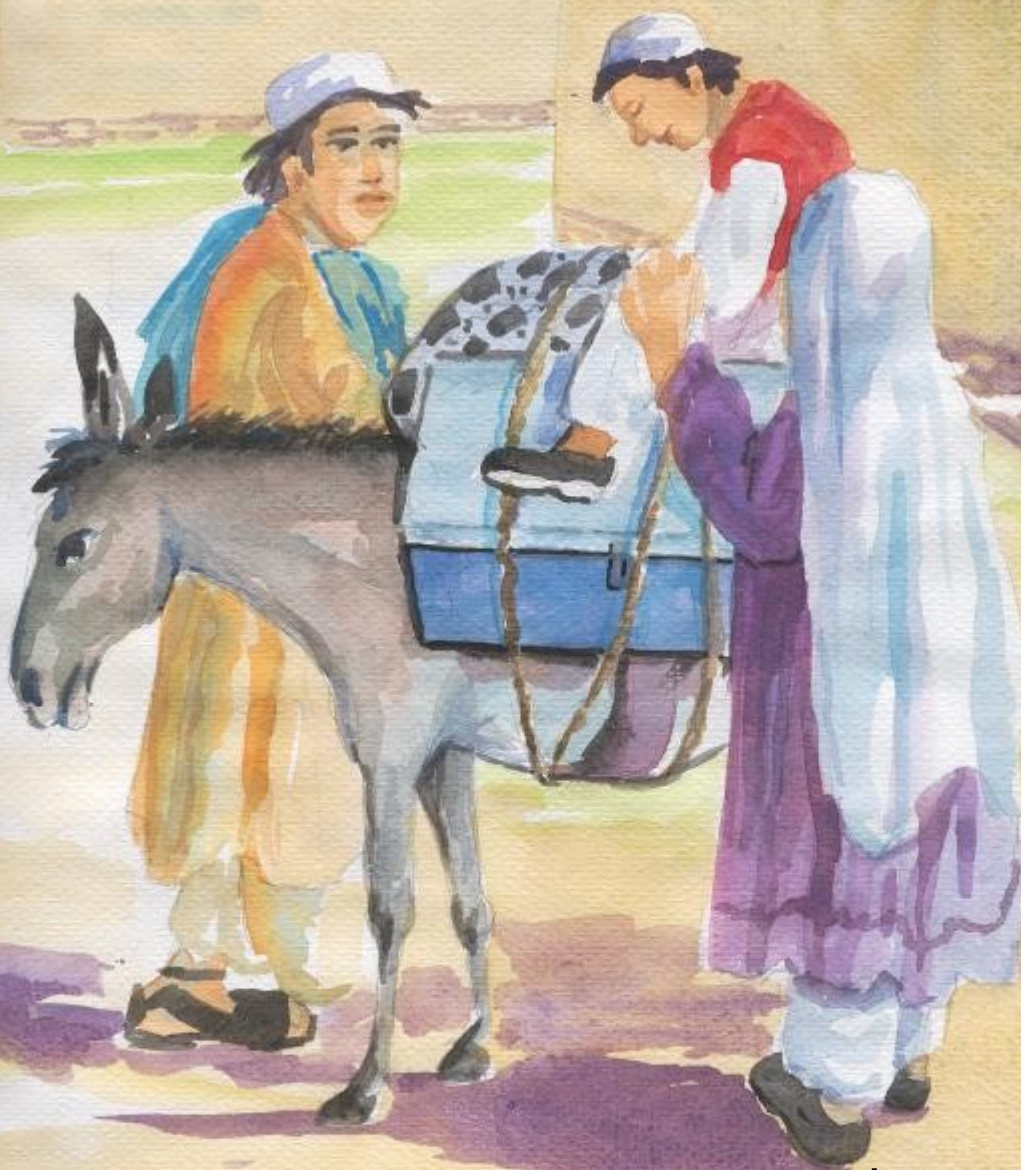


A Journey of Peace



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Leaving
Home

L. Gafori

Story 6

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Leaving Home

Second Edition

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Story Characters:

Jameela: a ten-year-old girl who lives with her family in a rural area of Afghanistan.

Ahmed: Jameela's five-year-old brother.

Abdullah: Jameela's fifteen-year-old brother.

Haleema: The children's mother.

Merza: The children's father.

Bibi Jan: The paternal grandmother.

Kaka Ghulam: The paternal grandfather.

Yunus: The children's uncle who was killed by a landmine at age 20, youngest son of Bibi Jan and Kaka Ghulam.

Fatima: The children's aunt, young widow of Uncle Yunus.

Aly: The children's uncle, who lives in the city.

Aisha: The children's aunt, Aly's wife, who lives in the city.

Story Synopsis:

Jameela lives with her family in a village in Afghanistan. They were already experiencing a great deal of difficulty during the domestic struggles of their homeland when tragedy struck. After coming in contact with a landmine while working in the field, Uncle Yunus was killed and her father Merza, lost his leg.

In “**Jameela’s Garden**”, Jameela and her younger brother Ahmed try to understand the anger and estrangement demonstrated by their older brother Abdullah. With the guidance of their grandmother, Bibi Jan, they learn how they might help him get over the loss of his Uncle Yunus, with whom he was very close.

“**The Wisdom of Bibi Jan**” further demonstrates the grandmother's role as comforter and adviser. Abdullah's concern over the change in personality of a school friend due to the trauma of the war triggers Jameela's revelation that she is having nightmares, and Bibi Jan provides her with a special cure for her fears.

Much more of what is troubling Jameela is presented in “**Making Cookies**”. Her fear of landmines is so strong that, much to Abdullah's annoyance, she is frightened walking along a path that has already been cleared. Bibi Jan uses the opportunity of making cookies to help Jameela come to terms with her father's injury, as well as finding for Fatima a positive means of expression of grief for Yunus.

Jameela is finding it very difficult to fathom the mysteries that are locked up inside “**Merza’s Heart**”. She mourns the loss of the cheerful man she knew before his injury, the one who was full of stories. Her innocent questions bring him to tears, but they also remind him of the man he used to be, and create the yearning in him to be that way again.

The sadness and grief of Fatima, young widow of Yunus, is felt by Jameela and Ahmed, who attempt to cheer her. Bibi Jan notices and suggests ways for the family to come together and celebrate good memories of Yunus, especially by singing **“Yunus’s Song”**.

When their village is shelled through the night, the family faces the grim truth that they must abandon what is most dear to them in **“Leaving Home”**. Each of them deals with this traumatic thought in his or her own way, but ultimately they know it is for the best and put on a brave front as they face the future.

Healing Elements:

Healing images and symbols: hope, safety, humour, love.

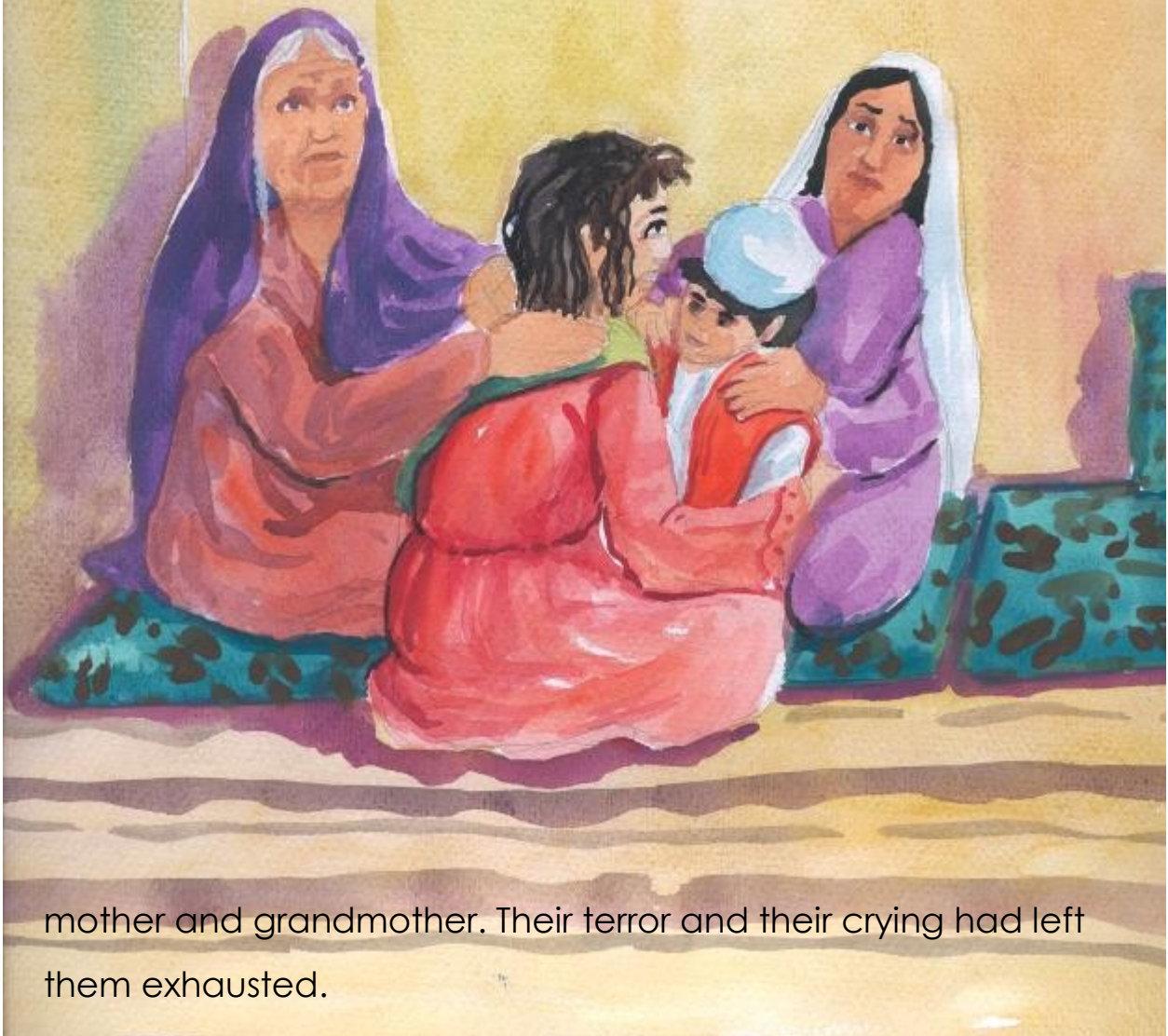
Modeling of peaceful and virtuous interactions: physical comfort, leadership, prayer, cooperation, emotional support, compassion, caring, protectiveness.

Problem Issues: war trauma, fear of injury, fear of death, destruction, sadness, fear of change, loss of home and property, fear of loss of home and heritage, fear of loss of identity, fear of the future, shame.

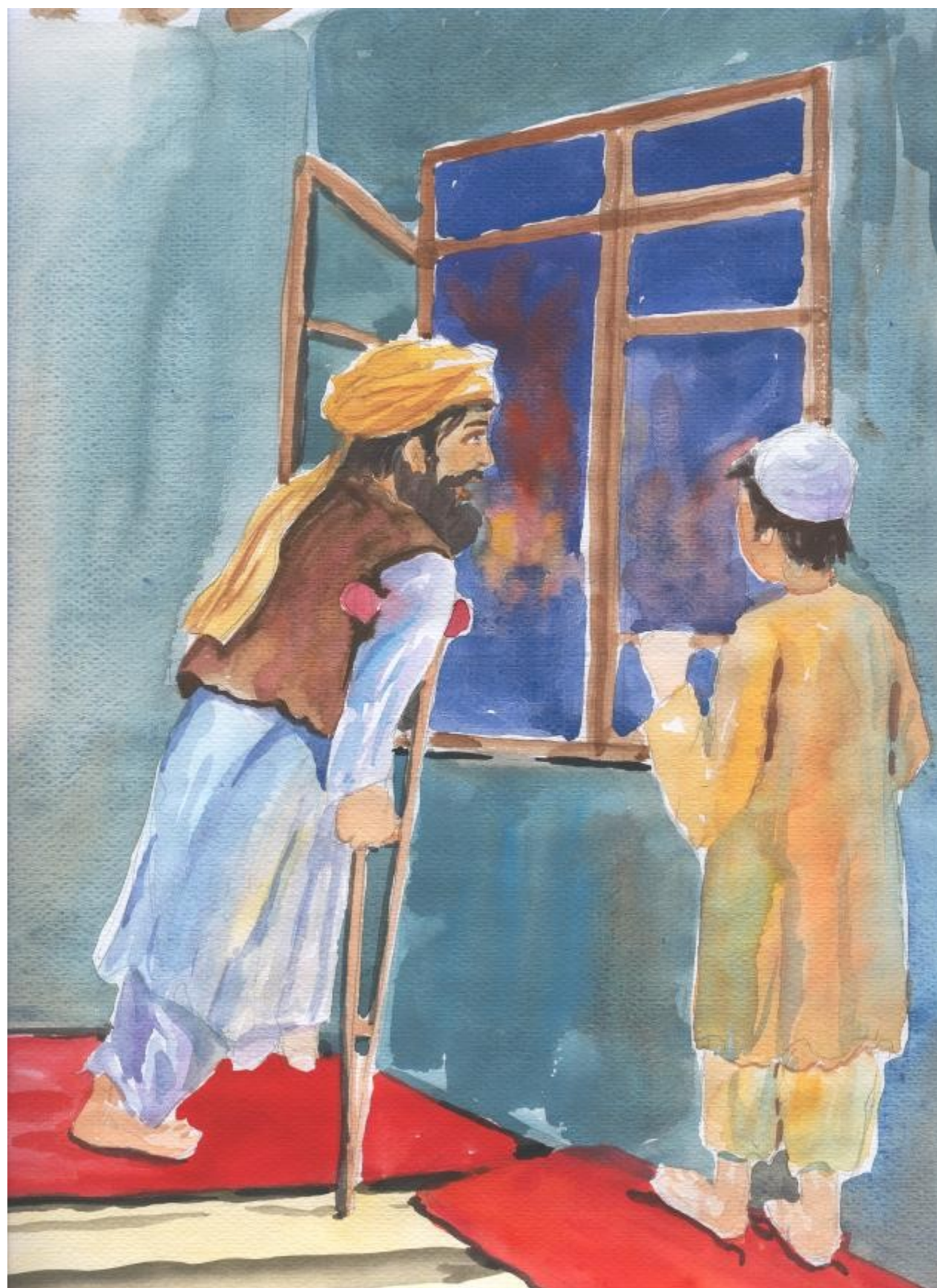
Healing Strategies: leadership, family cohesion, empathic listening, physical comfort and support, reassurance, safe-guarding the past.

All was quiet. The red glow of the dawn crept across the eastern sky. Swirling mists, red and acrid, pushed aside the darkness of the long night. The stillness, the quiet, hung heavily, as if the countryside was holding its breath. On this morning, there were no birds singing, no early morning sounds of a village preparing for a new day. The bombing and gunfire had continued most of the night.

Jameela's arms were wrapped around her little brother, Ahmed. Both children were lying huddled together with their



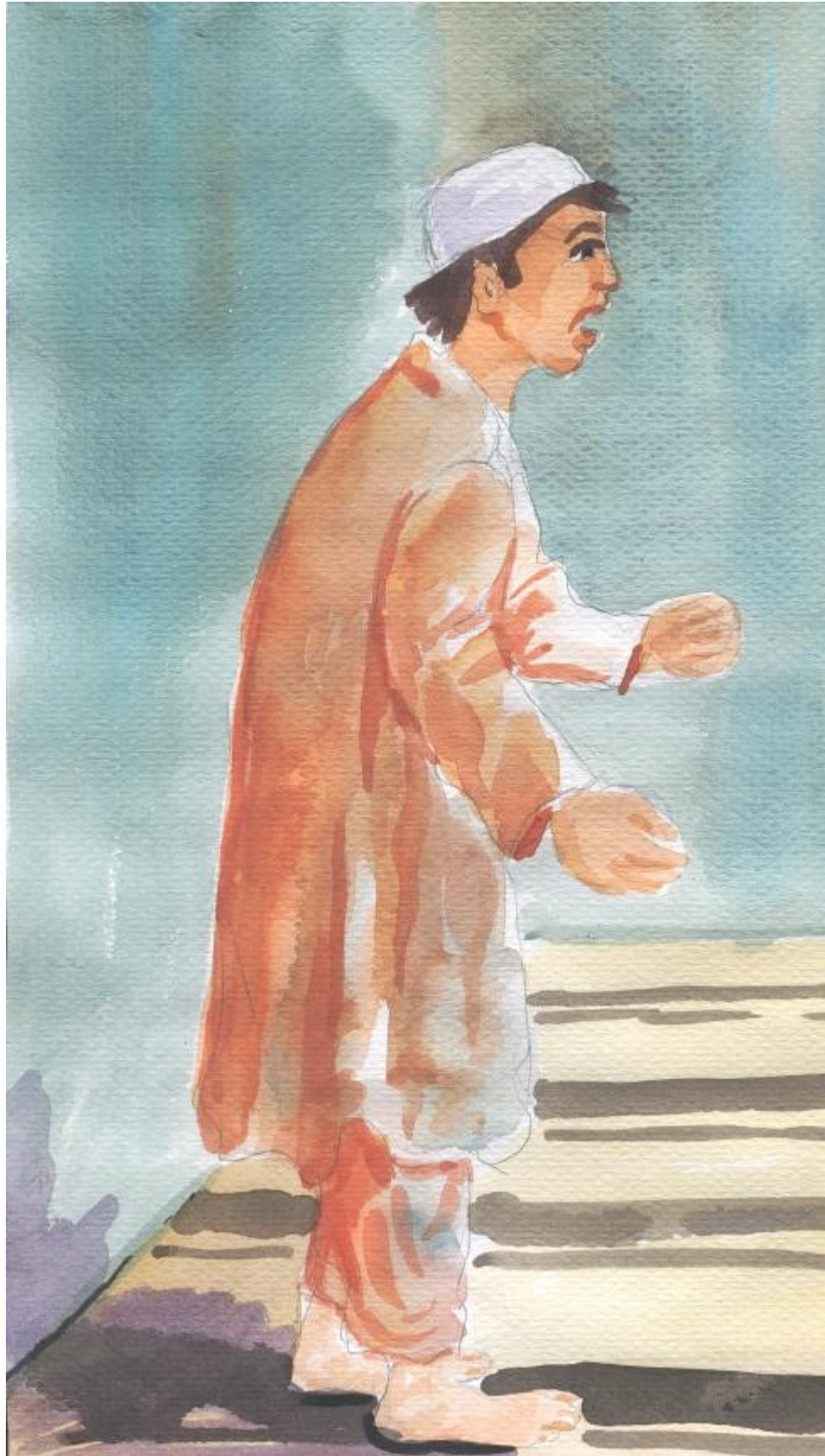
mother and grandmother. Their terror and their crying had left them exhausted.



Merza, their father looked out the window.

"Abdullah, I want you to go out and check our buildings. Go out into the yard and look over the fence. Check our neighbours but stay low and keep quiet. Go. Quickly." Merza grabbed his son's shoulders and looked deeply at him. "Be careful."

Abdullah slipped out of the door. Everyone listened to the silence. Kaka Ghulam's beads clattered noisily in the stillness. His prayers were comforting while they awaited Abdullah's return.



When he did, Abdullah's face said more than his words could tell. He looked at his younger sister and brother and said what little he could that would not frighten them further. "Our home wasn't hit. We lost the wall on the south side but the animals are still safe."

"And the rest of the village?" asked Haleema, her eyes wide with fear.

"I'm sorry, Mother, there's so much smoke, I can't see much," he said, sadly.

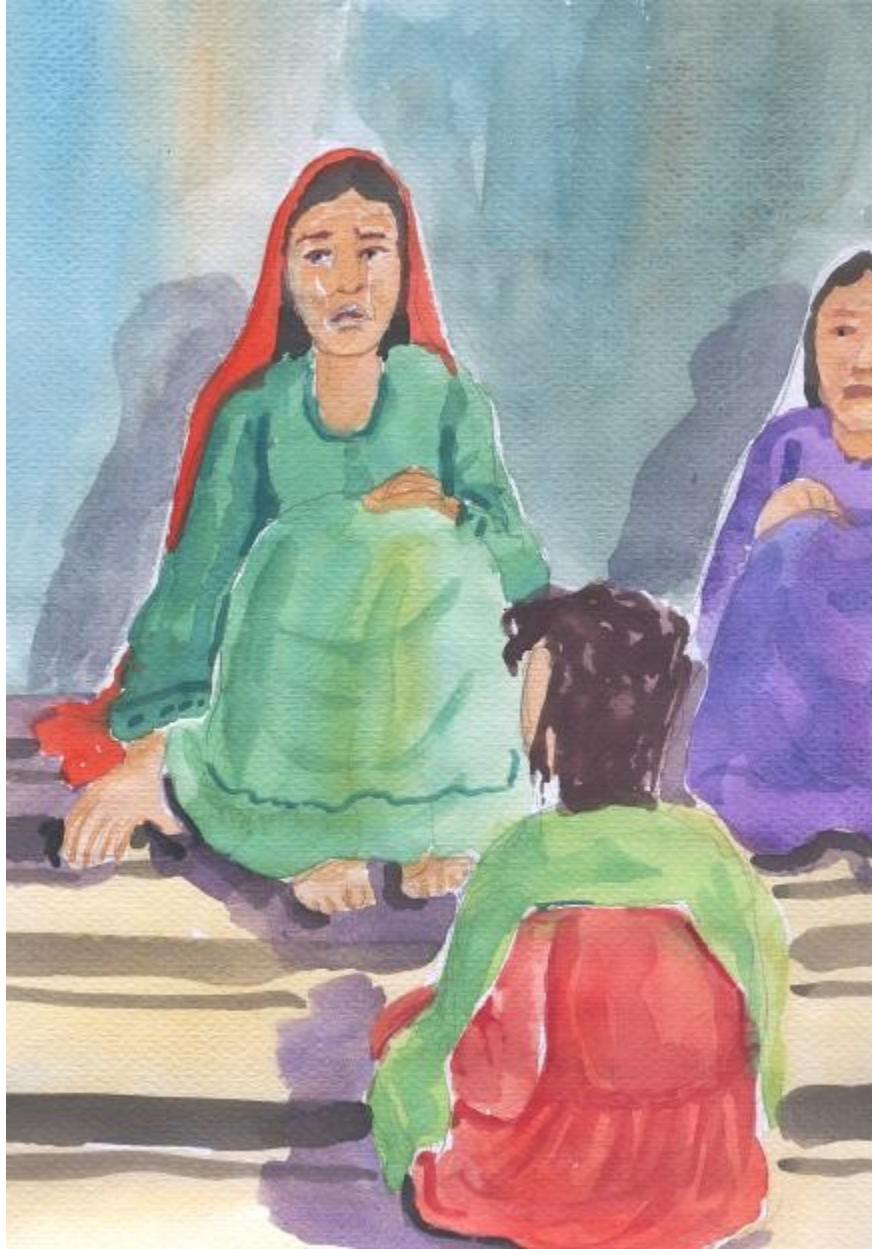
“We must leave,” stated Merza. “We must go today, now. Tonight we might not be so lucky.”

Jameela jumped to her feet. “No! I don’t want to go! I won’t go! Please let us stay here, Daddy, please! We will be safe here. They will fight somewhere else tonight. Please Daddy!”

“Jameela, stop! Listen to your father.” Haleema hugged her daughter. “He’s right. We could go to Uncle Ali and Auntie Aisha in the city. We’ll be safe there.” Jameela cried in her mother’s arms.

“That is true, Haleema,” added Kaka Ghulam. “Merza, the family must leave today. There is no time to waste.” Kaka Ghulam nodded sadly. “For nearly sixty years I have lived here. I have prayed and prayed that through all the wars, we would be safe here. We are blessed to be alive this morning. There must be a reason that we were spared. We must follow the path and opportunity offered to us. Fatima,” he said, turning to his young daughter-in-law, “please, prepare food for the journey.”





Fatima sat silently, not moving.

"Fatima!" shouted Haleema, "Get the food ready!"

"I can't go. I can't leave," wailed Fatima. "This home has all my memories of Yunus. It is where he lived and where he died. If I leave, I am afraid that I'll forget him." Fatima collapsed on the floor, sobbing.

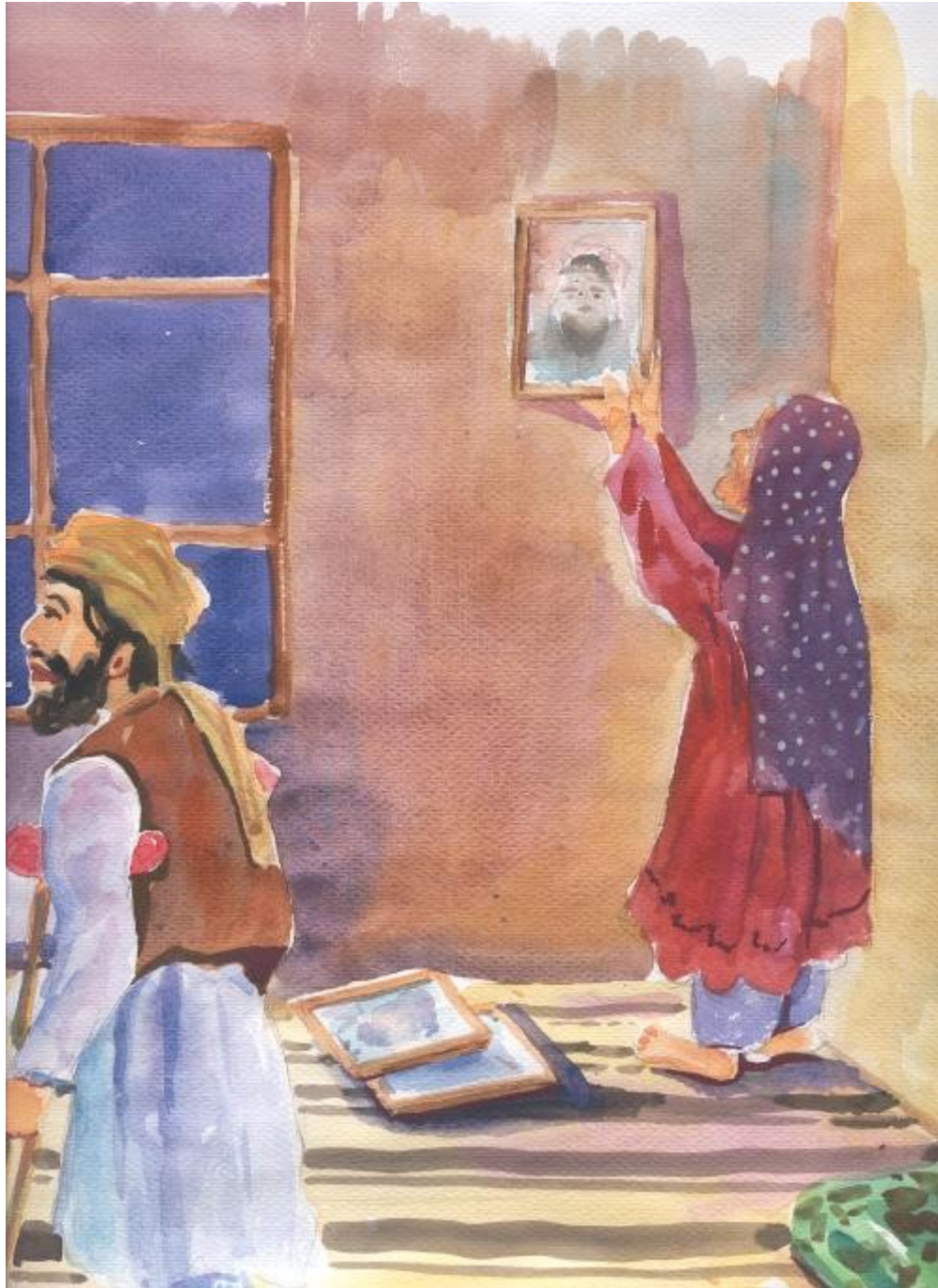
“Everyone, stop your crying!” shouted Abdullah. “Most of the houses in the village are destroyed. Do you want to stay and die or leave here and live? I’m leaving!” Abdullah gathered his blanket and clothes.



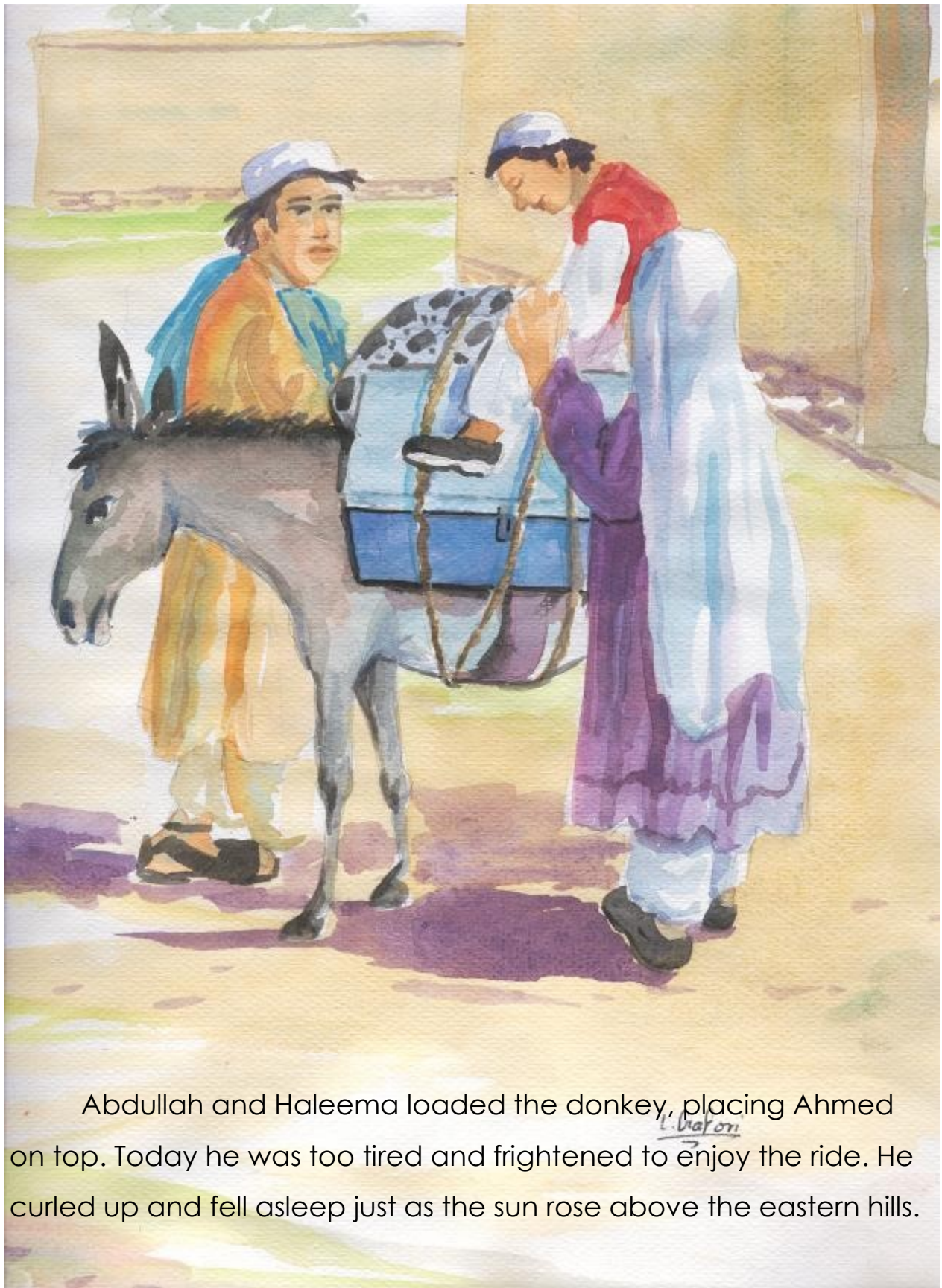
"Fatima, you will go. Get the food ready,"
said Haleema as she quickly gathered
necessities for the journey .

"Abdullah, get the donkey" ordered
Merza.





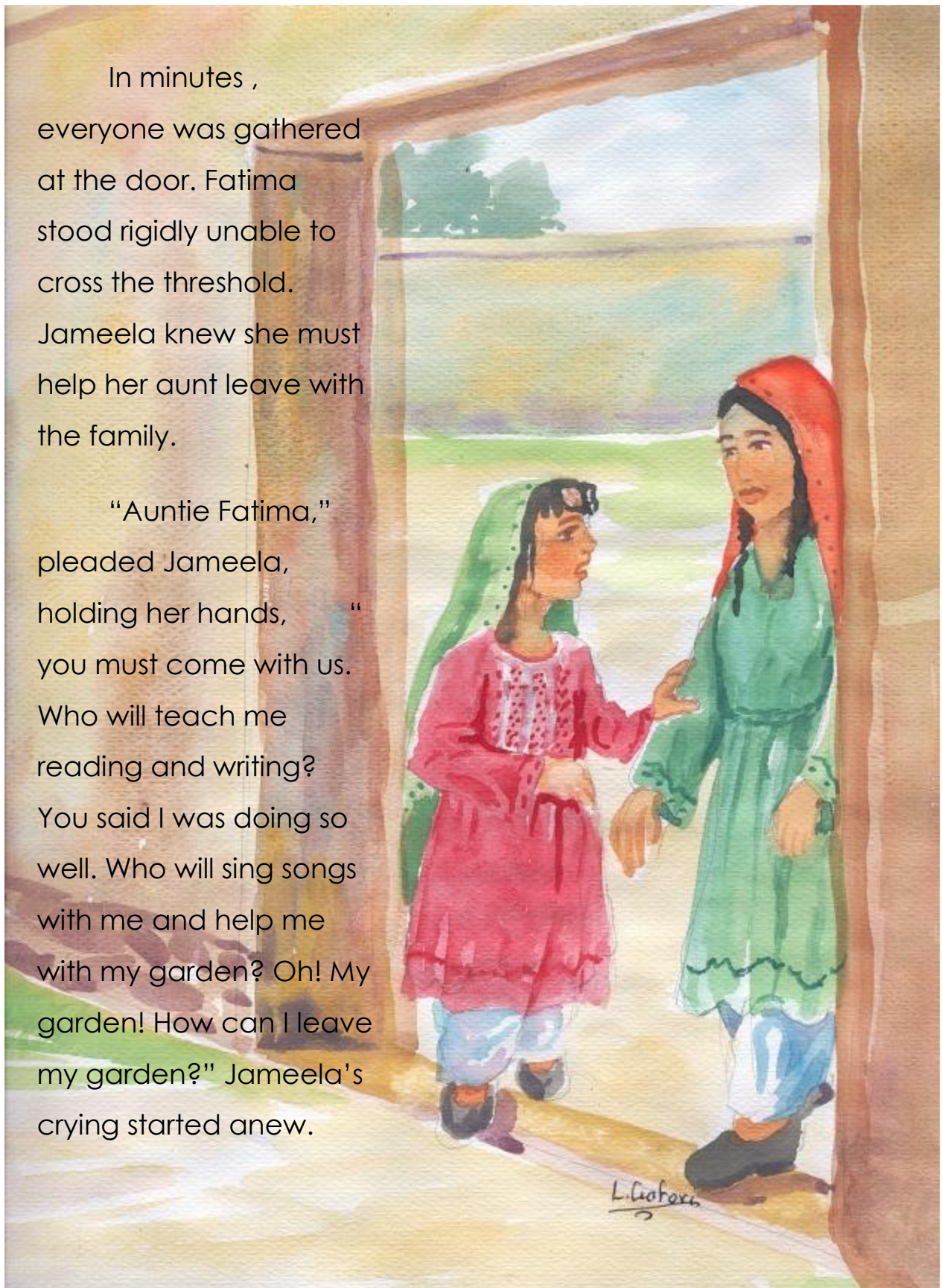
Haleema helped Jameela and Ahmed by grabbing what she could. Merza and Kaka Ghulam discussed the safest route to take. Bibi Jan gathered the photographs from the walls and placed them in a row on the floor. She sat down and quietly wept. Everyone was too busy to notice her weeping.

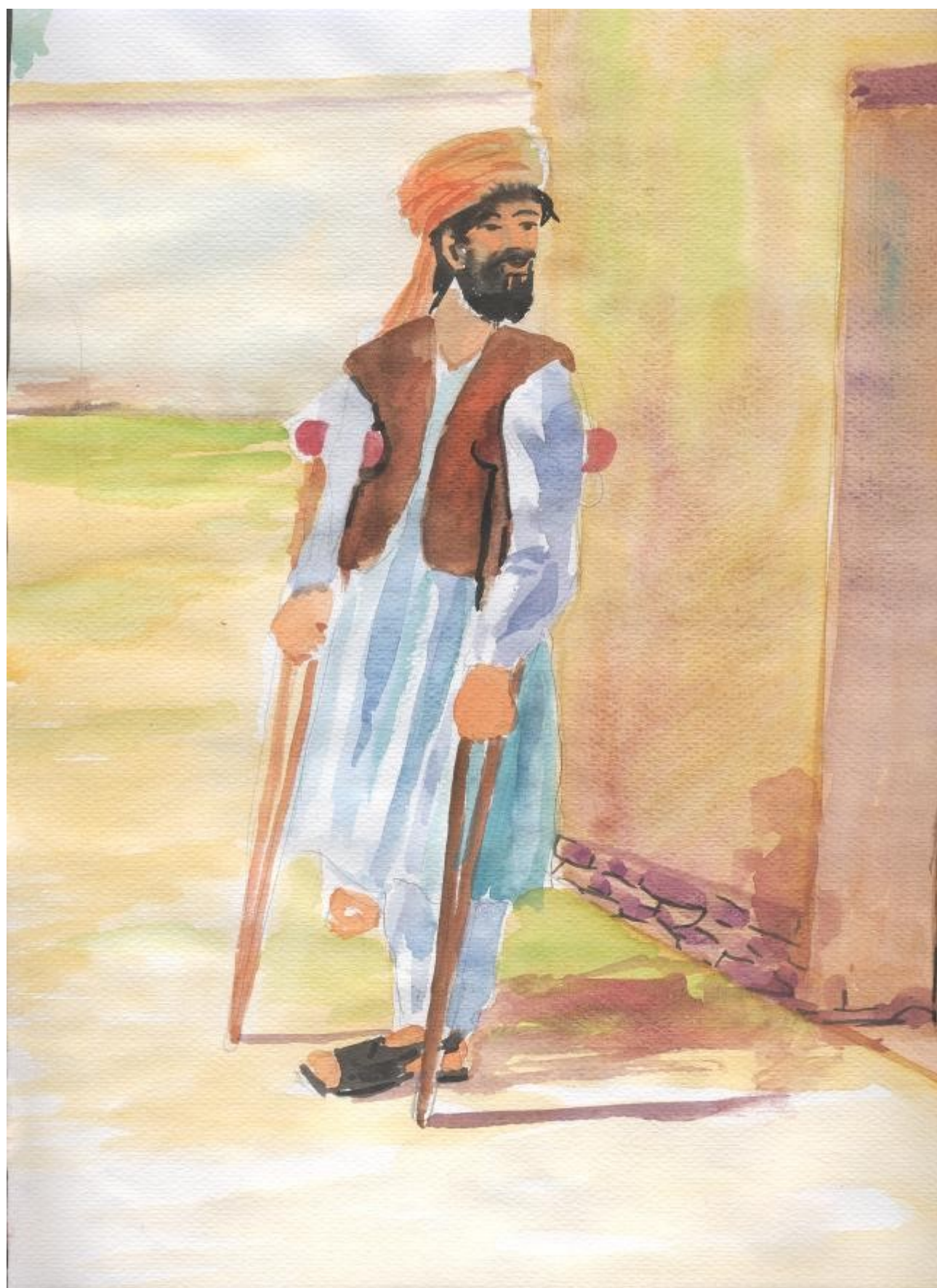


Abdullah and Haleema loaded the donkey, placing Ahmed on top. Today he was too tired and frightened to enjoy the ride. He curled up and fell asleep just as the sun rose above the eastern hills.

In minutes ,
everyone was gathered
at the door. Fatima
stood rigidly unable to
cross the threshold.
Jameela knew she must
help her aunt leave with
the family.

"Auntie Fatima,"
pleaded Jameela,
holding her hands, " "
you must come with us.
Who will teach me
reading and writing?
You said I was doing so
well. Who will sing songs
with me and help me
with my garden? Oh! My
garden! How can I leave
my garden?" Jameela's
crying started anew.

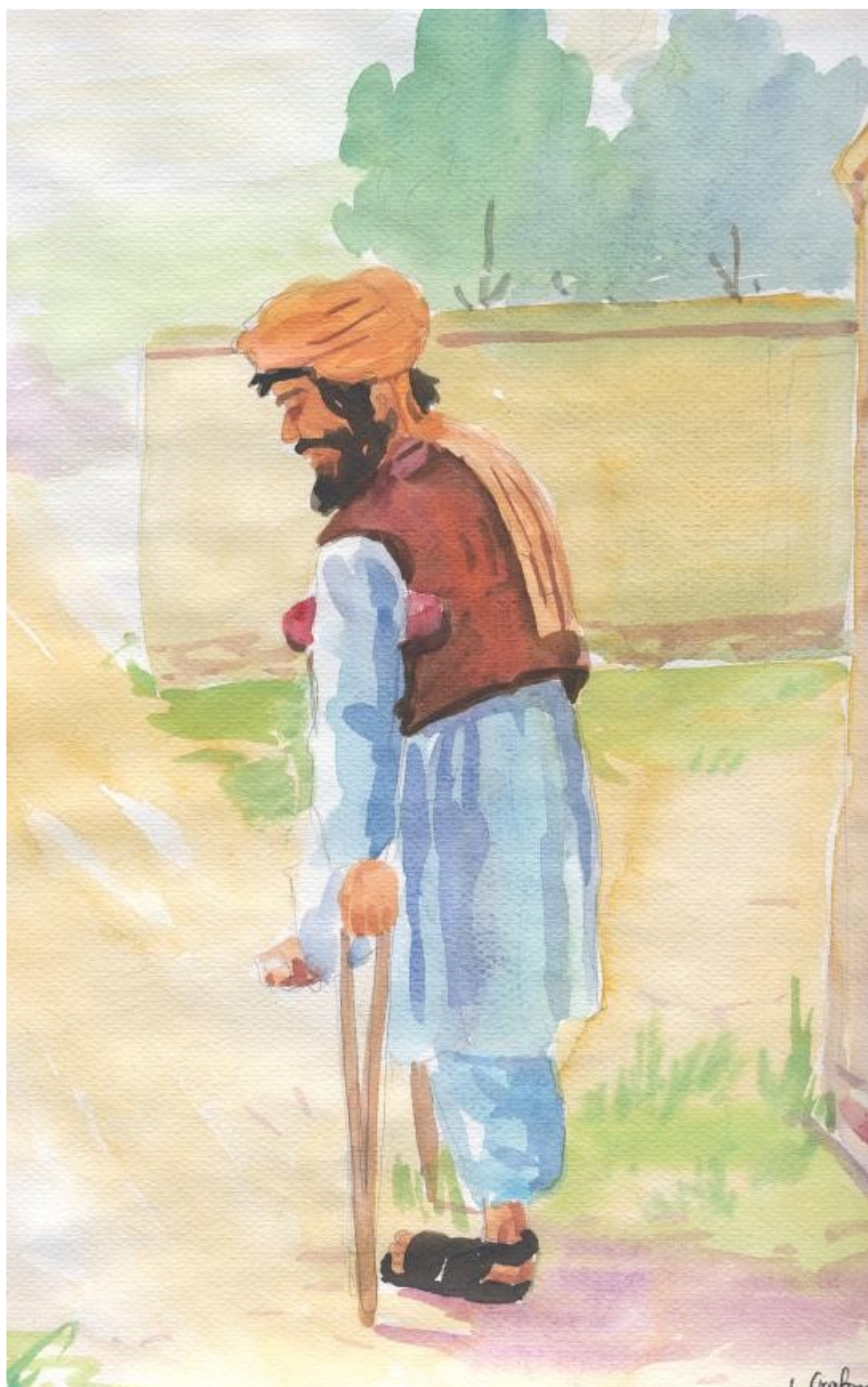






Fatima hugged the little girl. "It seems that we all must leave behind things that we care for and love. At least, I can take my memories with me. I promise to find you some new seeds in the city so that when we return we can grow a wonderful new garden." Jameela and Fatima hugged each other through their tears.

"We have no time for this!" shouted Merza. "We need to travel far from here before nightfall. We may not be able to take the main roads. We may have to travel cross-country. I won't be able to keep up very well on these crutches- so let's get moving!"



Merza looked at his leg and then to his son sleeping on the donkey. "I may need to ride sometimes so we can move faster," he said ashamedly, shaking his head.

"Ahmed will run along beside us once he has slept," said Haleema, reassuring her husband. "Now, let's go! Quickly! Wait! Where is Bibi Jan?"



The family ran back inside to find Bibi Jan still weeping on the floor surrounded by photographs. They were shocked to see their strong and wise Bibi crying on the floor.

“Bibi Jan,” said Kaka Ghulam gently, “we must go now.”

“I can’t leave my home,” sobbed Bibi Jan. “I have lived here for fifty years. I’ve given birth to all my children here in this house.” She picked up a picture of Yunus. “And I have buried my son here. I can’t go and leave my home unprotected from strangers and looters.” She hugged the photo.

“We’ll hide all the photos and anything else that we want saved in the animals’ stall, under the hay. No one will look there. Here, Bibi Jan, put them in this trunk. They will be safe,” said Haleema. “Fatima, do you want to put your wedding photos in here, too?” Fatima and Bibi Jan quietly placed all they could fit into the old blue wooden box. Abdullah then hid it under the house.



“We will come back soon, as soon as the fighting is over,” Kaka Ghulam consoled. “But you must come with the family. You can’t stay here alone. Everyone else is leaving the village.”

“Bibi, please, please don’t stay here, we need you. I need you,” begged Jameela.

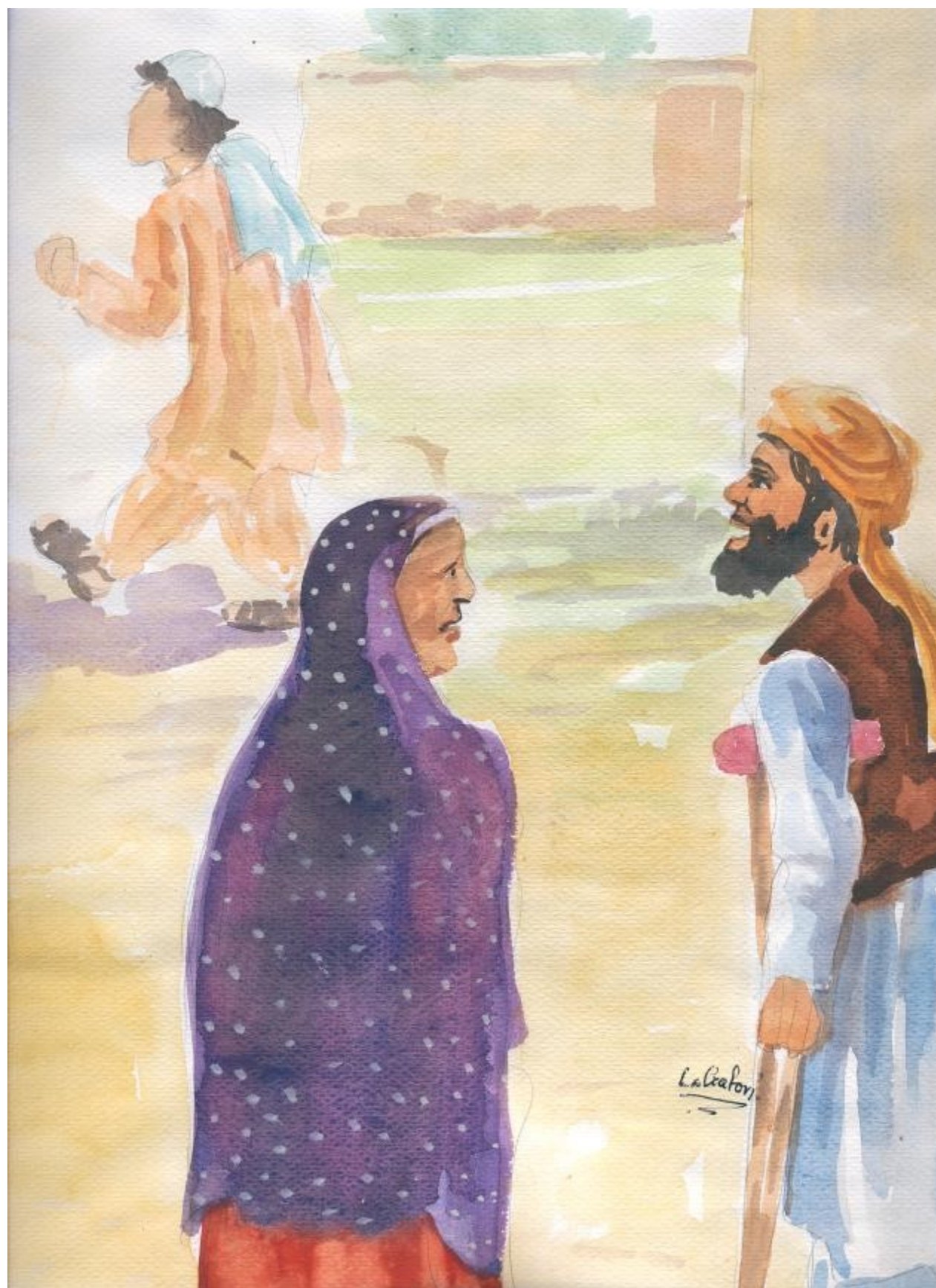
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"Mother, you will come, and come now. We can't argue. We're wasting time." Merza took his mother's arm and urged her toward the door.

"No! I won't go! I won't leave my home!" Bibi Jan stood strongly in the door, holding the frame. Her face showed her fear. "I'm afraid of what will happen. You'll travel faster without me. My legs are weak."

Haleema took Bibi Jan's other arm. "We need your strong heart and we will help your weak legs. You can ride on the donkey when Merza walks." Haleema looked around. "Where *is* the donkey?" asked Haleema. "It has Ahmed!"

The family turned to see the donkey, trotting off down the road, with Ahmed still sound asleep on top. Abdullah, Fatima and Haleema ran to catch up with them.



“You see, Bibi, even the donkey, who never takes a step when you want him to, has the good sense to get away from here,” smiled Merza.

Jameela pulled gently at her grandmother’s hand. “Remember you said that I could hold your hand whenever I have a nightmare, and you will tell me that you love me and that everything will be all right? How can you keep this promise to me if you stay here? Bibi Jan, I love you. Everything is going to be all right.”

As she spoke, Bibi Jan slowly stepped out of the house and walked with her husband and son toward the gate.

Jameela gently tugged her hand.
“Everything’s going to be all right.”

Story 6 Leaving Home

Things to Talk About:

1. In the story, everyone is frightened. Does this frighten you? Can you talk about your feelings?
2. When you are frightened, what can you do?
3. How did everyone in the family help everyone else? Perhaps you can try some of these ways of helping.
4. Have you ever had to move to leave your home and go to a new home? Can you talk about all the things that you miss? In your new home, are there new things that you are happy to have?
5. How would you feel if you were a fighter who was ordered to shell a village? Would you think about the people in the village?

Things to Do:

1. Make a list of all the things you could do when you are frightened that would help you to feel safe and secure. Keep the list in a safe place so you can find it when you need it.
2. Share your list with someone you love and trust.
3. If you had to move and you are sad about leaving behind neighbours, friends and possessions, draw pictures of what you miss and hang them on your walls to help you remember the good things in the past.

