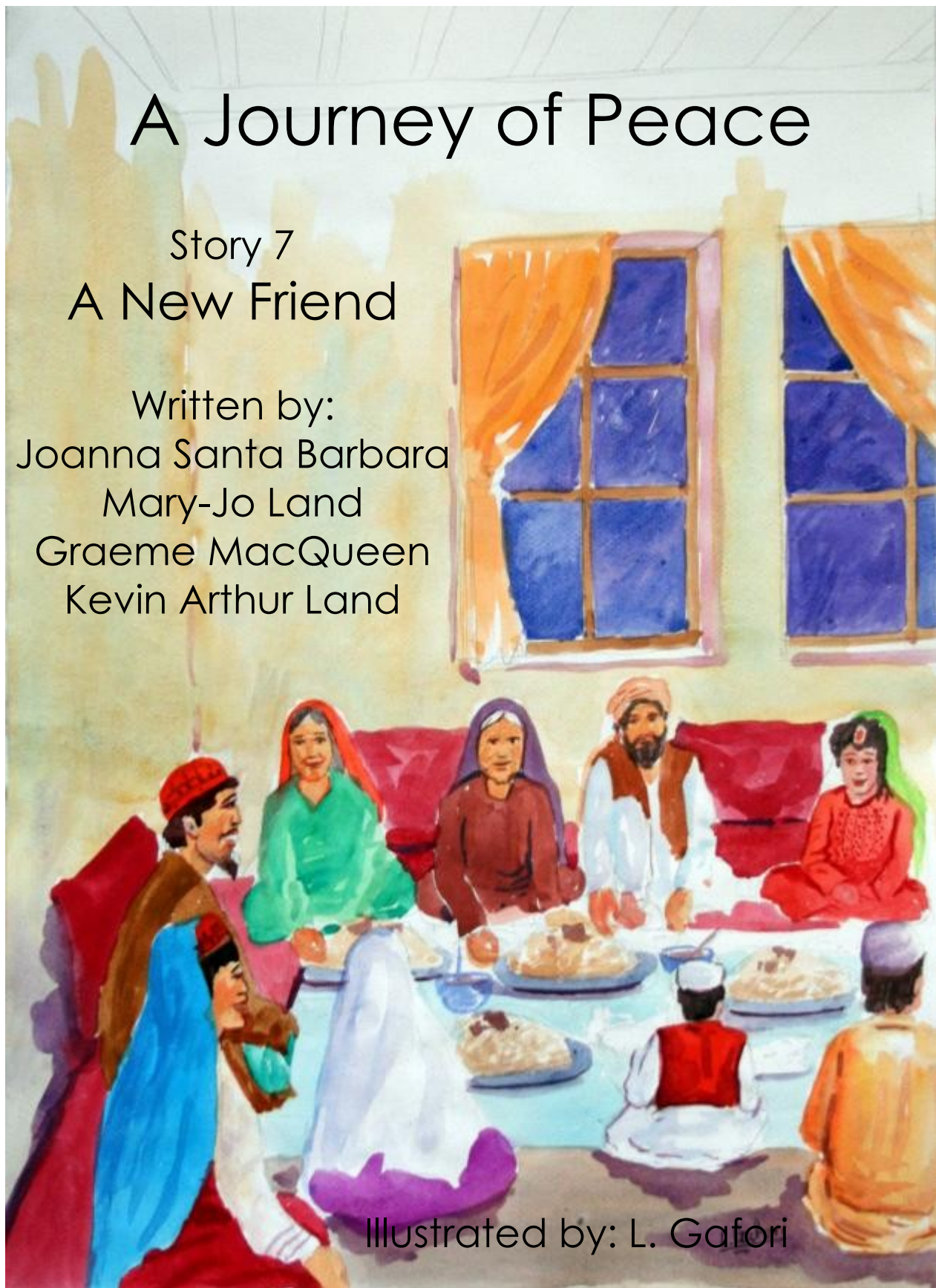


# A Journey of Peace

## Story 7 A New Friend

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Story 7

# A New Friend

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.

In **“A New Friend”**, the family is staying with an old friend of Merza’s while they are on their journey to the safety of his brother’s place in the city. While there, Abdullah learns a valuable lesson about the nature of making judgments about people who are different in either the language that they speak or their beliefs.

**Healing Elements:**

**Healing images and symbols:** laughter, sharing food and shelter with others.

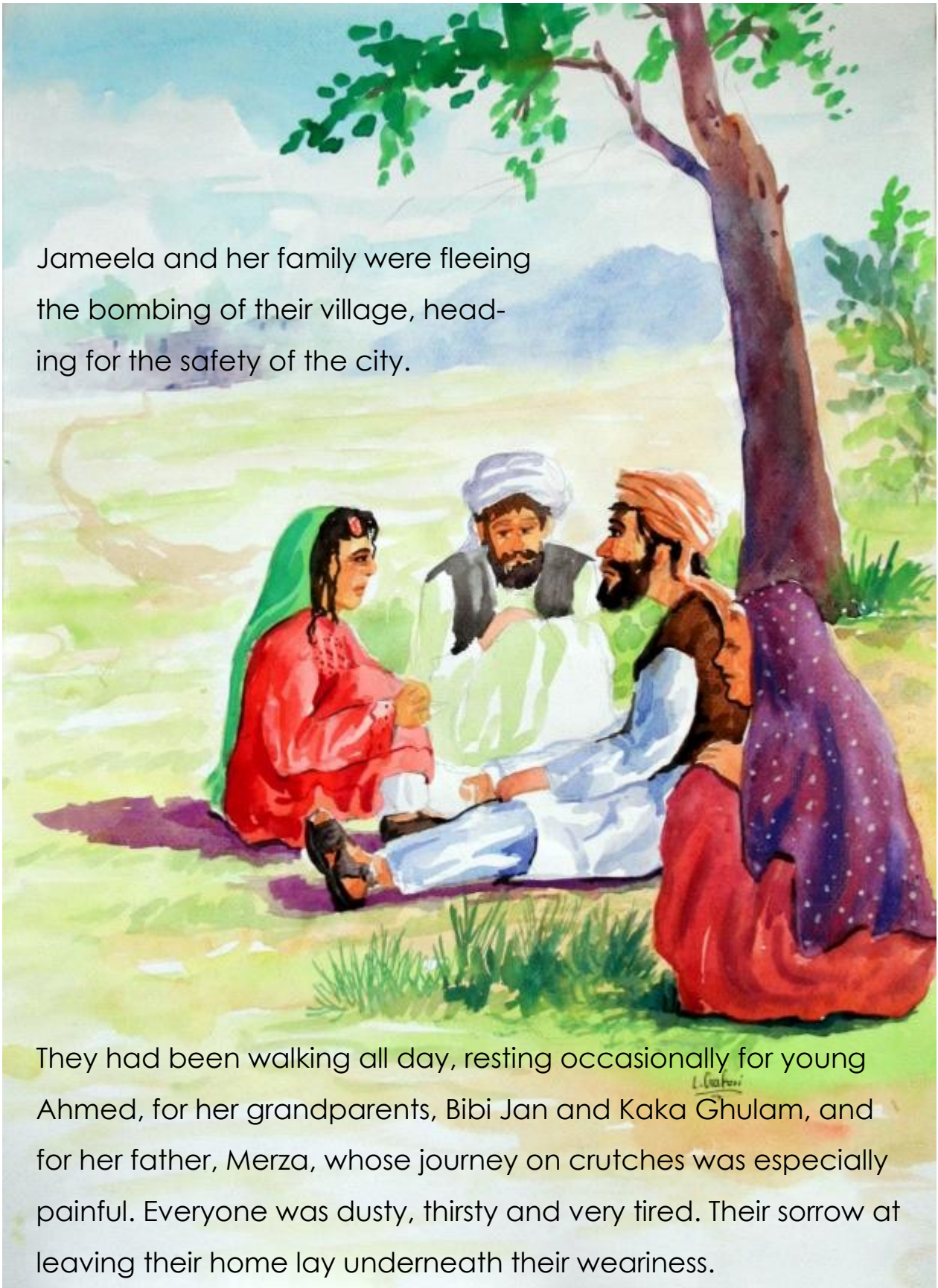
**Modeling of peaceful and virtuous interactions:** hospitality, generosity and kindness to those in need, courage to try a new language, friendship, acceptance, humour.

**Problem Issues:** sorrow, loss of home and property, respect for diversity.

**Healing Strategies:** understanding and respecting diversity, giving and receiving.



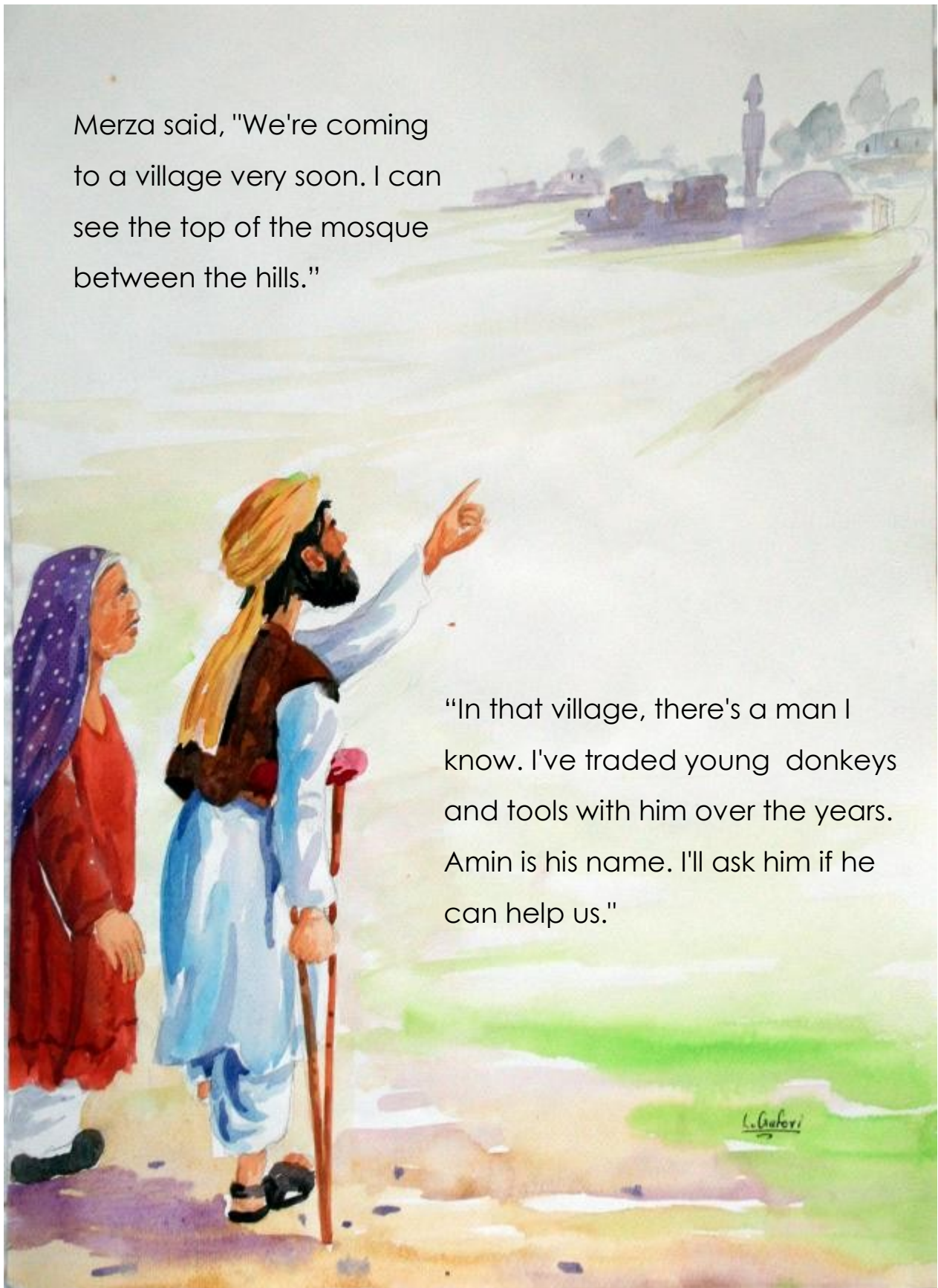
Jameela and her family were fleeing the bombing of their village, heading for the safety of the city.



They had been walking all day, resting occasionally for young Ahmed, for her grandparents, Bibi Jan and Kaka Ghulam, and for her father, Merza, whose journey on crutches was especially painful. Everyone was dusty, thirsty and very tired. Their sorrow at leaving their home lay underneath their weariness.

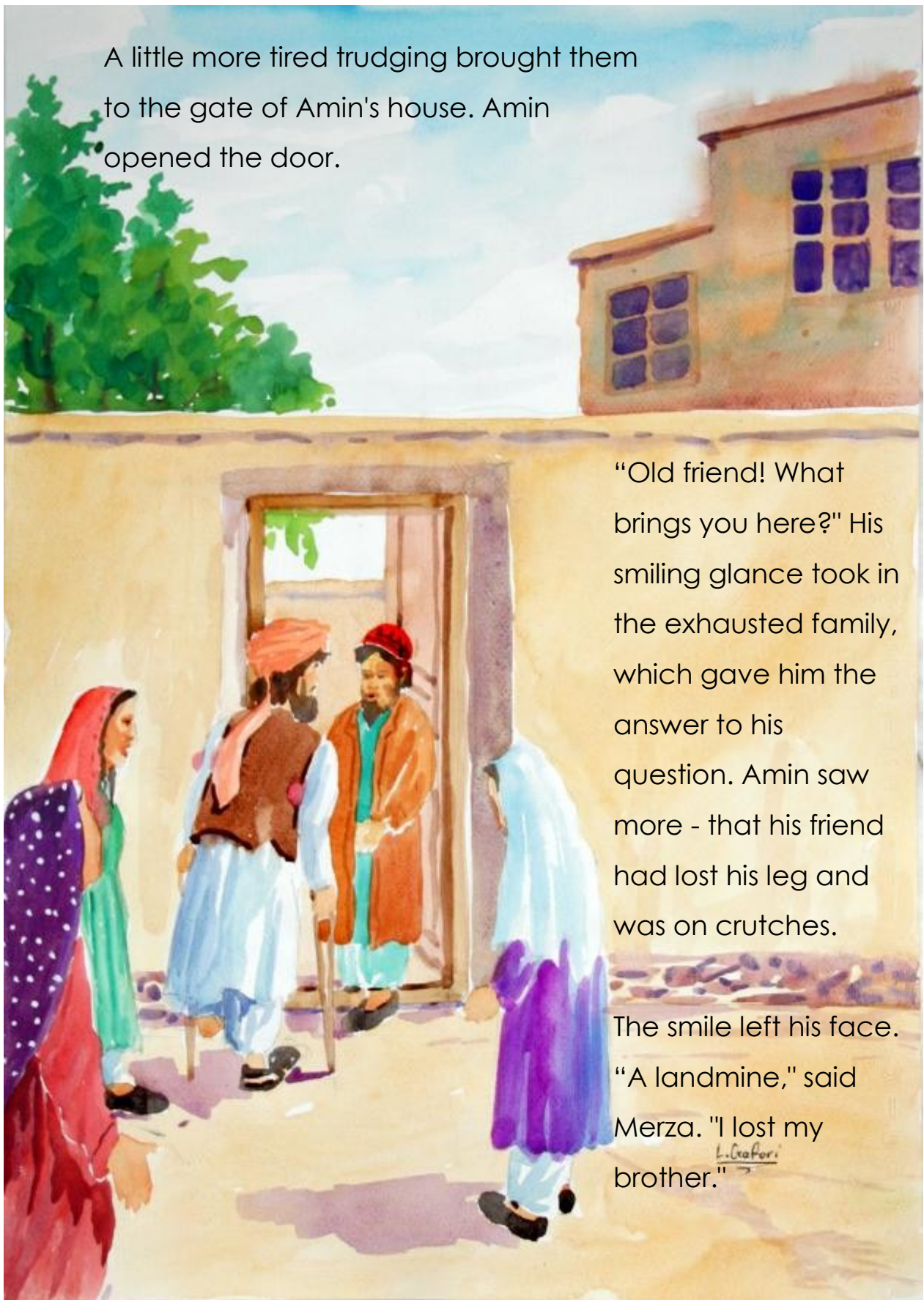
Merza said, "We're coming to a village very soon. I can see the top of the mosque between the hills."

"In that village, there's a man I know. I've traded young donkeys and tools with him over the years. Amin is his name. I'll ask him if he can help us."





A little more tired trudging brought them to the gate of Amin's house. Amin opened the door.



"Old friend! What brings you here?" His smiling glance took in the exhausted family, which gave him the answer to his question. Amin saw more - that his friend had lost his leg and was on crutches.

The smile left his face.

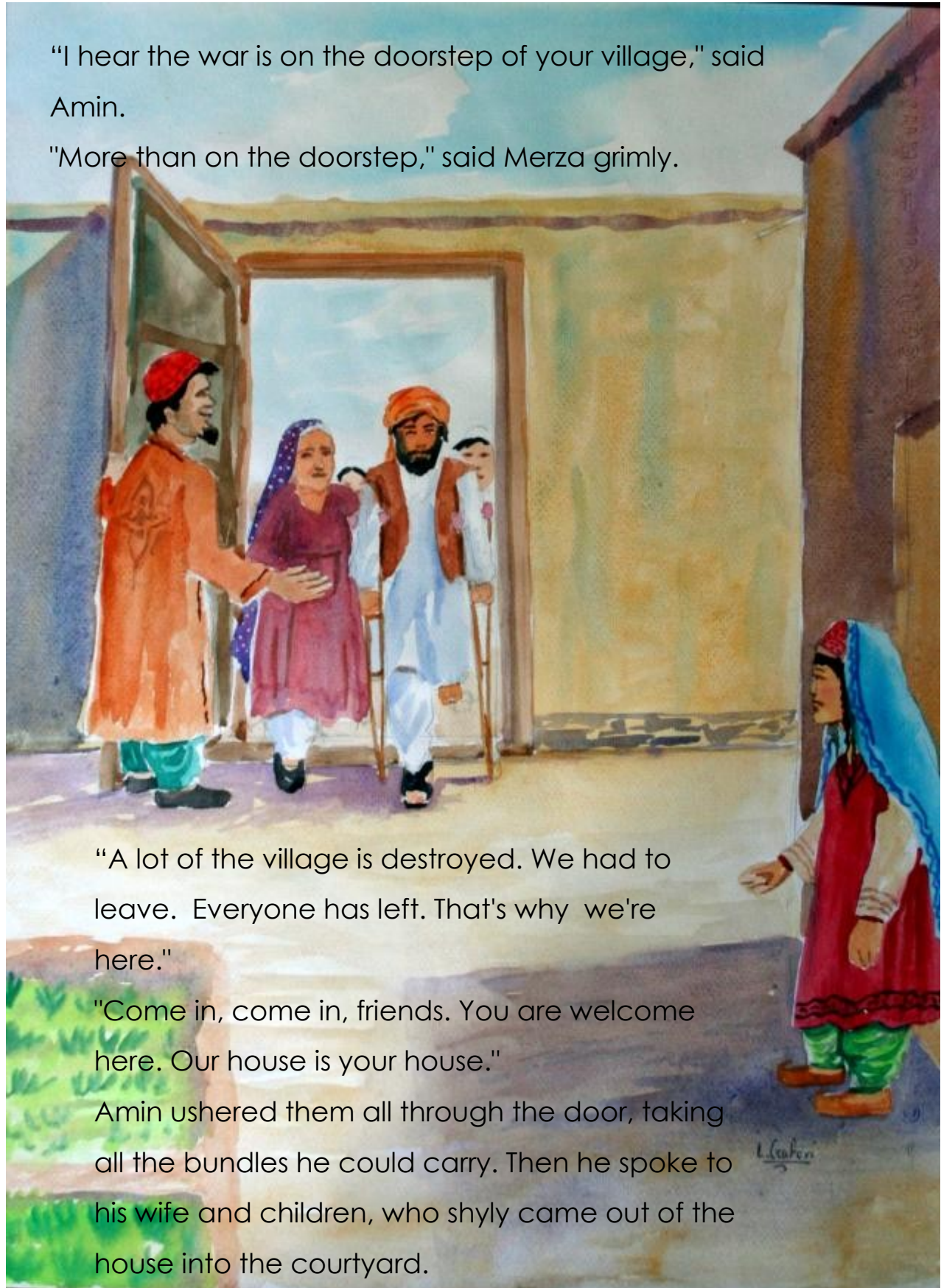
"A landmine," said Merza. "I lost my brother."

*L. G. Afari*



"I hear the war is on the doorstep of your village," said Amin.

"More than on the doorstep," said Merza grimly.



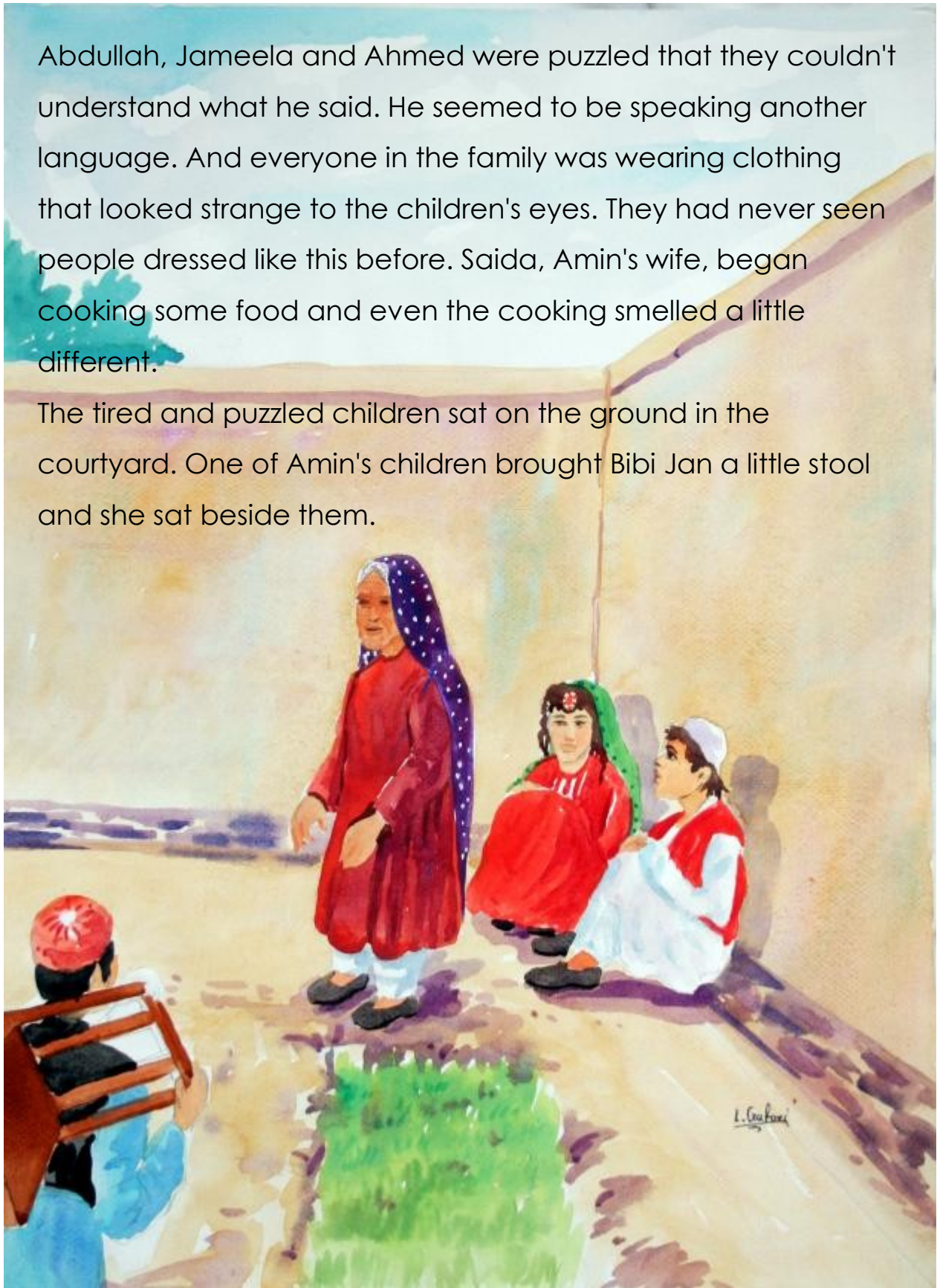
"A lot of the village is destroyed. We had to leave. Everyone has left. That's why we're here."

"Come in, come in, friends. You are welcome here. Our house is your house."

Amin ushered them all through the door, taking all the bundles he could carry. Then he spoke to his wife and children, who shyly came out of the house into the courtyard.

Abdullah, Jameela and Ahmed were puzzled that they couldn't understand what he said. He seemed to be speaking another language. And everyone in the family was wearing clothing that looked strange to the children's eyes. They had never seen people dressed like this before. Saida, Amin's wife, began cooking some food and even the cooking smelled a little different.

The tired and puzzled children sat on the ground in the courtyard. One of Amin's children brought Bibi Jan a little stool and she sat beside them.







"Children, Amin's family and this whole village speak a different language from ours. Afghanistan has people with several languages. Ours isn't the only one. Amin and Saida are very good, kind people. We look different to them too, you know." The children smiled at that thought. To themselves they looked and sounded completely ordinary, the way they thought everyone was, until today. But if they thought of how they looked in the eyes of Amin's family, they appeared strange and unusual. It was a weird thought. Perhaps that was why Amin's children were staring at them, wide-eyed, from the shadows. Bibi Jan spoke again. "Even though we seem different from them, they know so well that we feel tired and hungry and thirsty and sad, the way any person does who has to go on such a sad journey. They've brought us water and they're cooking us food. This is what it is to be a good citizen - always hospitable to others, no matter if they have different clothes or language or religion."

"Are there different religions, Bibi?" asked Jameela.

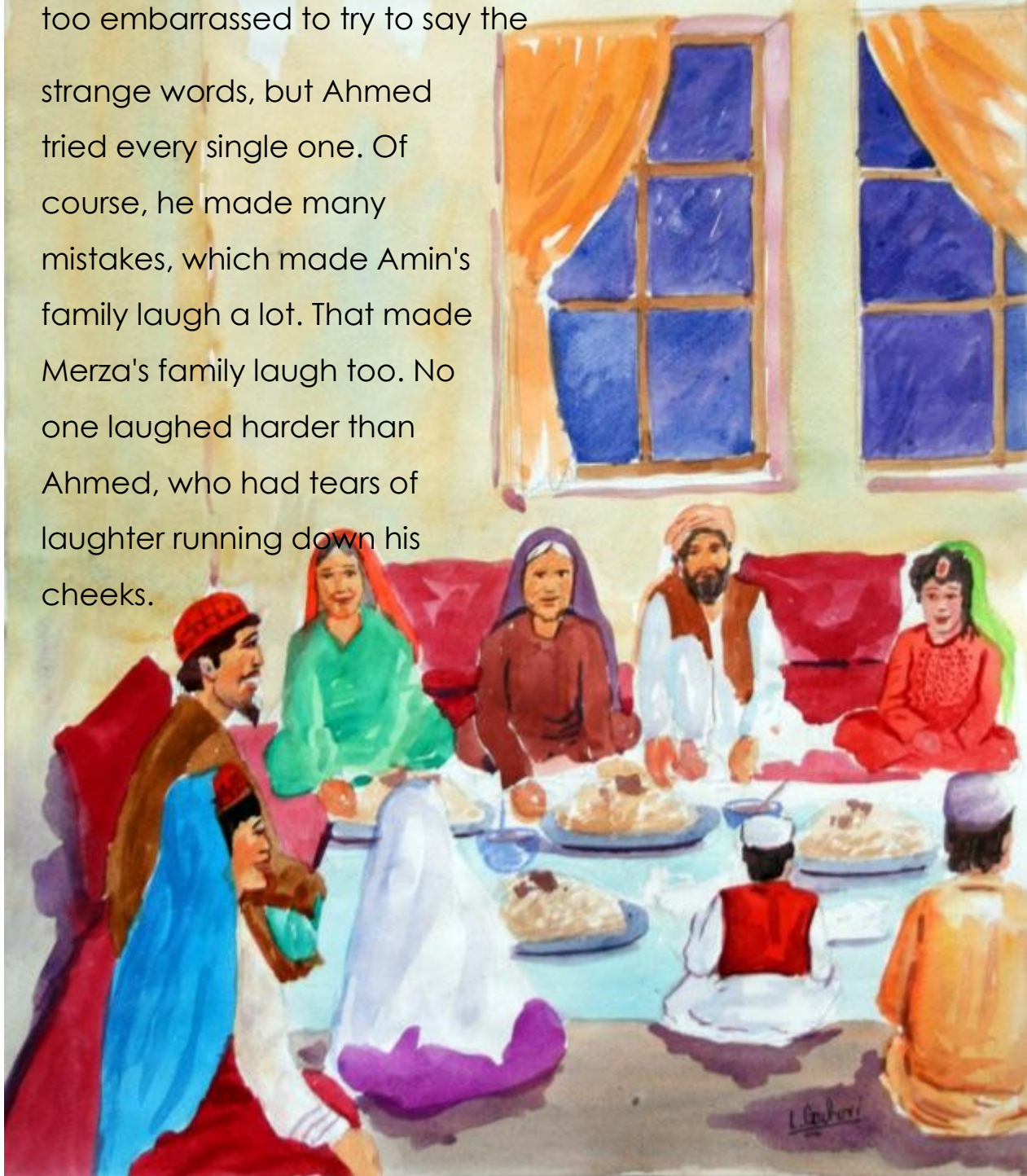
"Yes, dear, and the Prophet told us that we must be hospitable and good to people of other religions too. Every human being can feel tired, hungry and sad. Everyone has the same feelings in their heart."

"Bibi," said Jameela, "I think Saida has the food ready."



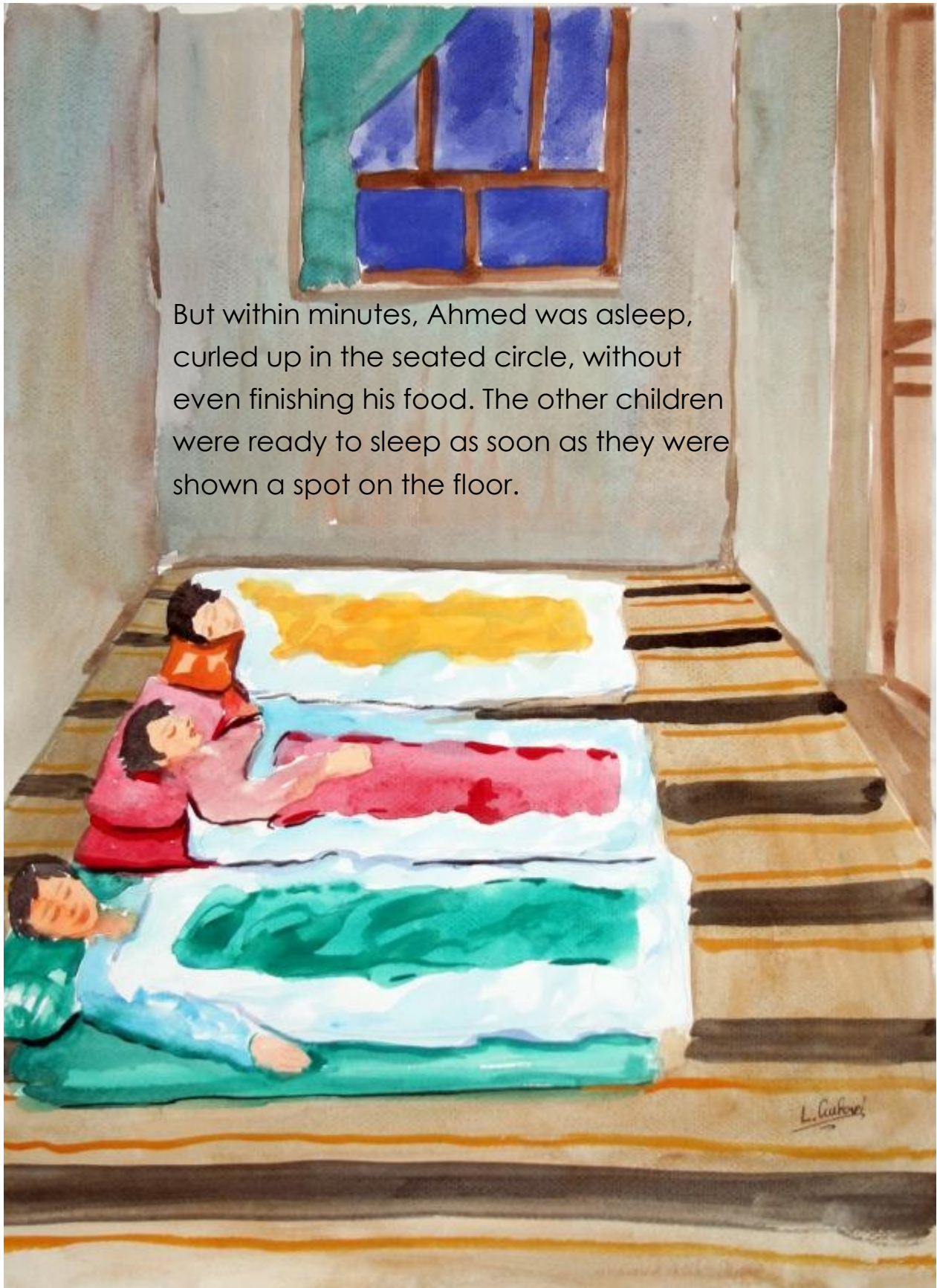
Everyone in the two families sat around the food, but only the visitors ate. As the meal was served, one of Amin's older daughters, with a big smile, pointed to the different foods and said the name in her language. Abdullah and Jameela were too embarrassed to try to say the

strange words, but Ahmed tried every single one. Of course, he made many mistakes, which made Amin's family laugh a lot. That made Merza's family laugh too. No one laughed harder than Ahmed, who had tears of laughter running down his cheeks.





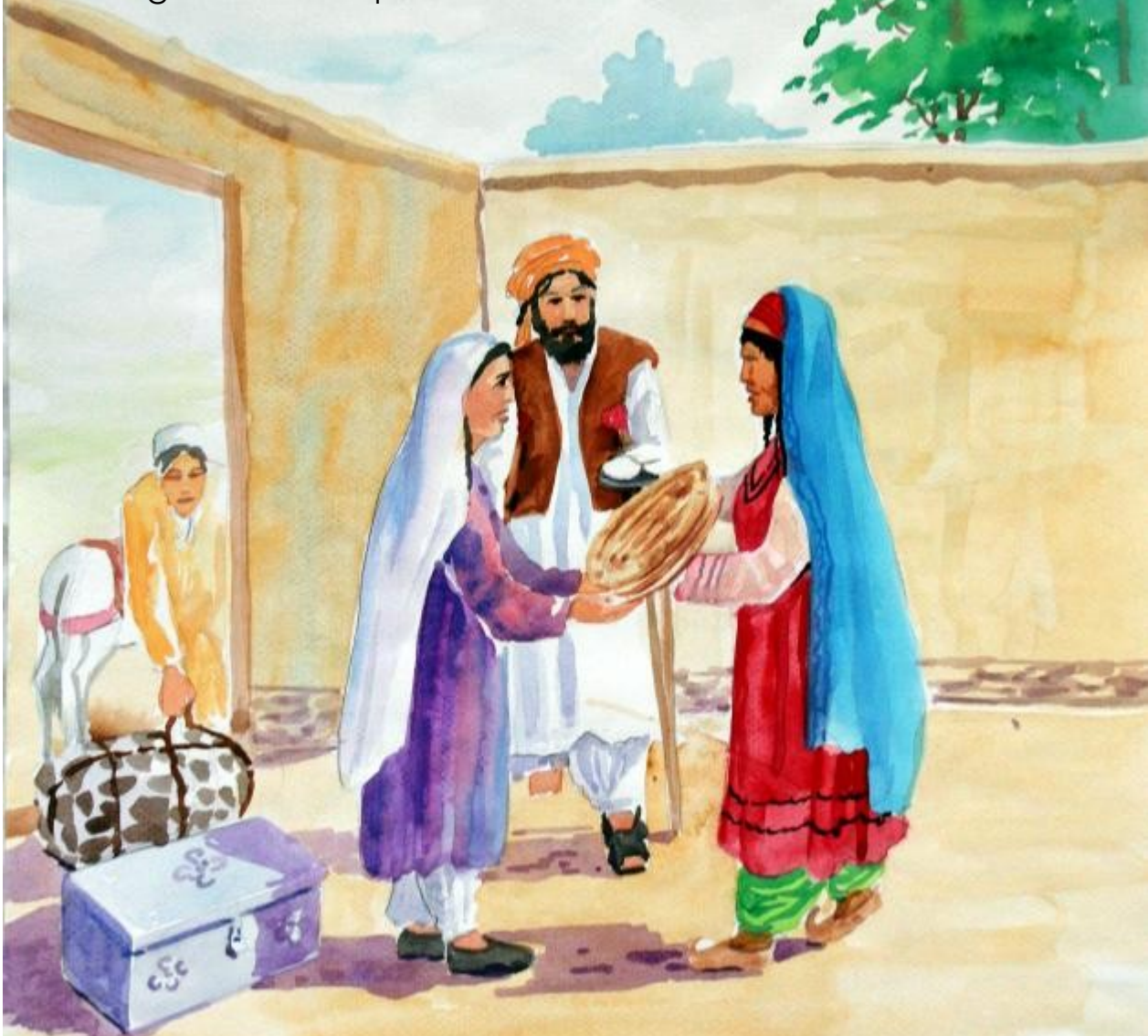
But within minutes, Ahmed was asleep, curled up in the seated circle, without even finishing his food. The other children were ready to sleep as soon as they were shown a spot on the floor.



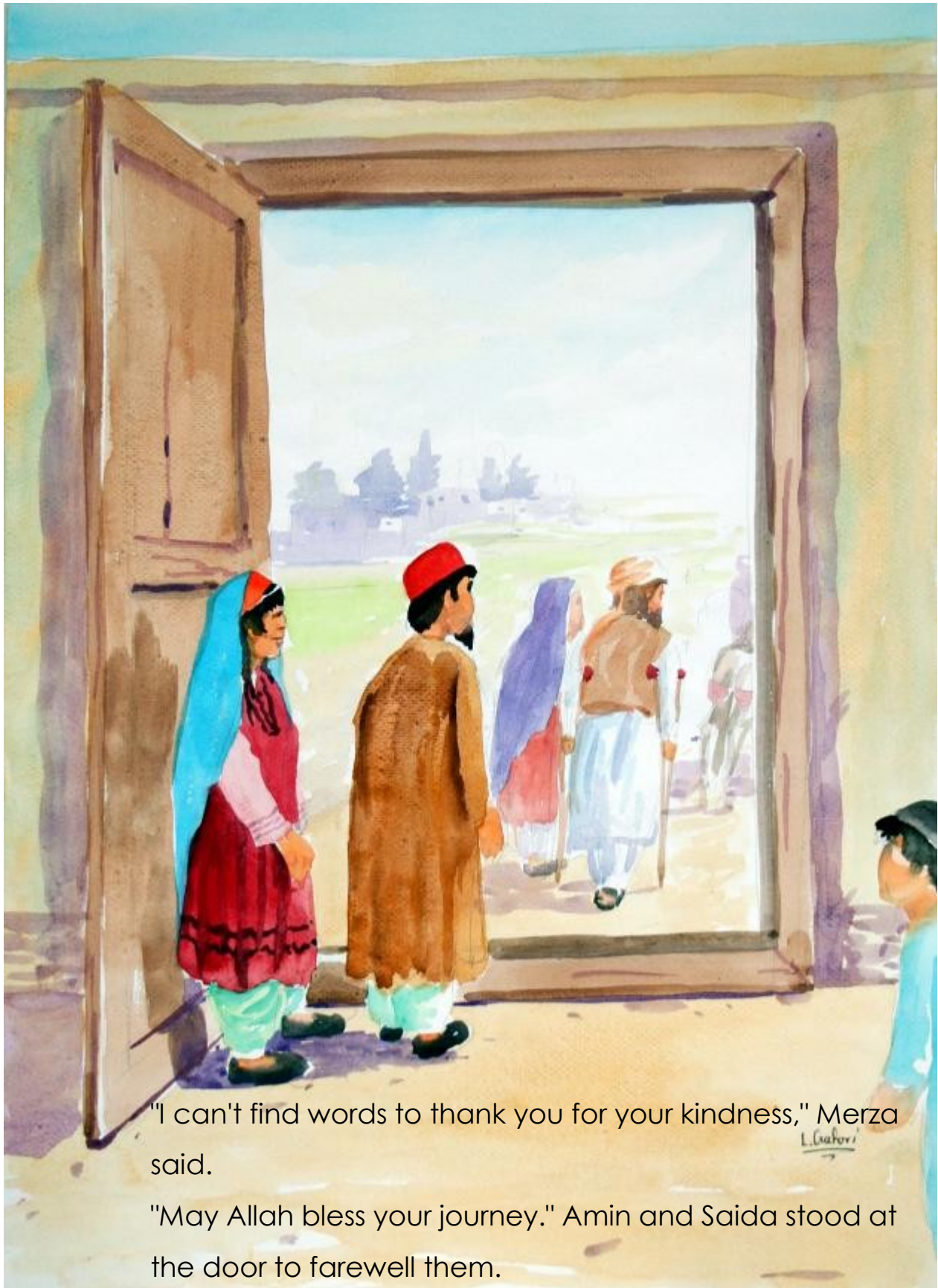


In the morning, Merza's family bundled their things together again and got ready to leave.

"Here is some food for your journey," said Saida, handing them some parcels of bread and cheese.



Merza bowed in gratitude. He knew Amin and Saida had little to live on themselves. Then they brought out two pairs of shoes for Jameela and Ahmed, and some sheep's wool to make Merza's crutches more comfortable.



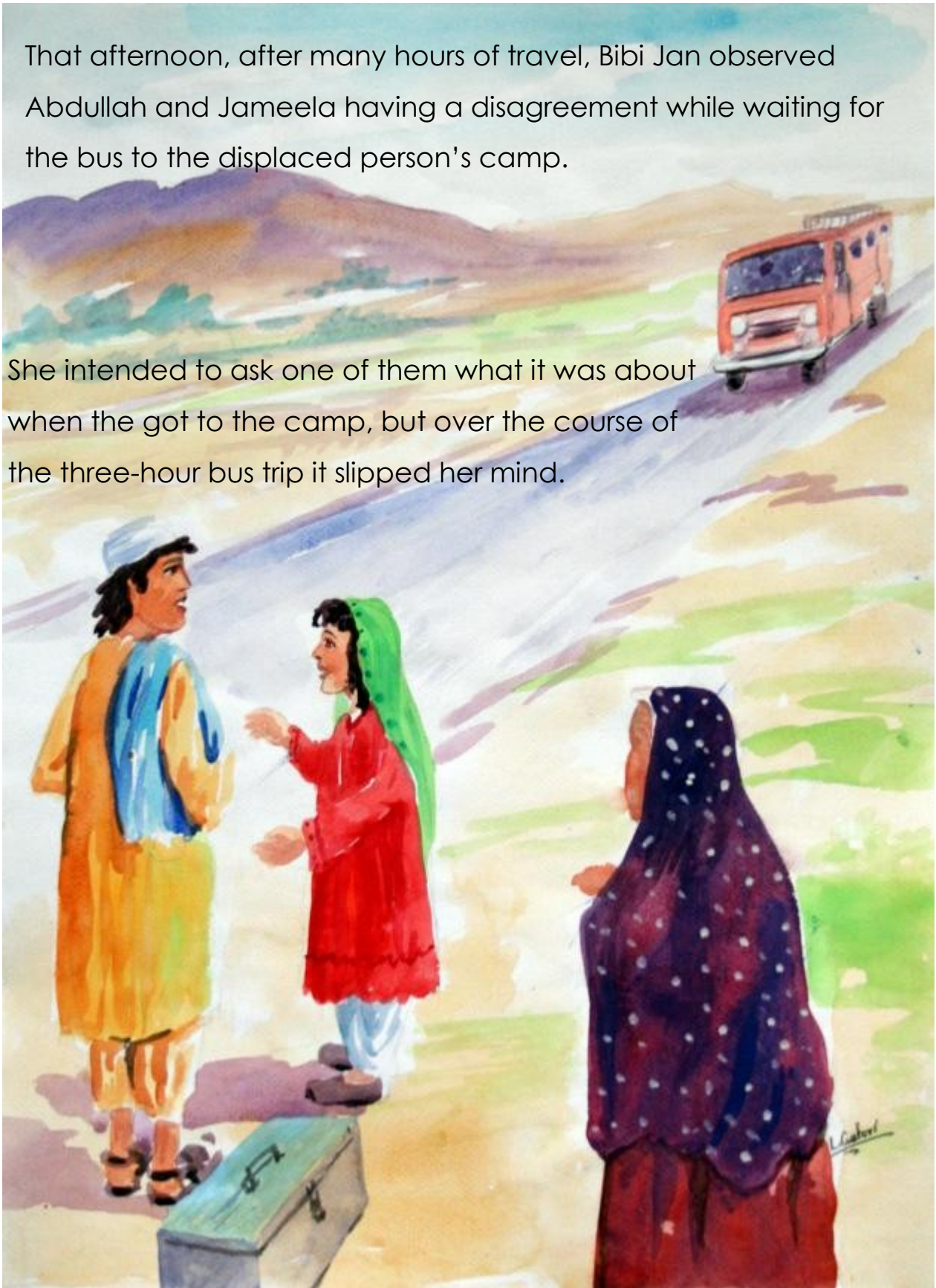
"I can't find words to thank you for your kindness," Merza said.

"May Allah bless your journey." Amin and Saida stood at the door to farewell them.

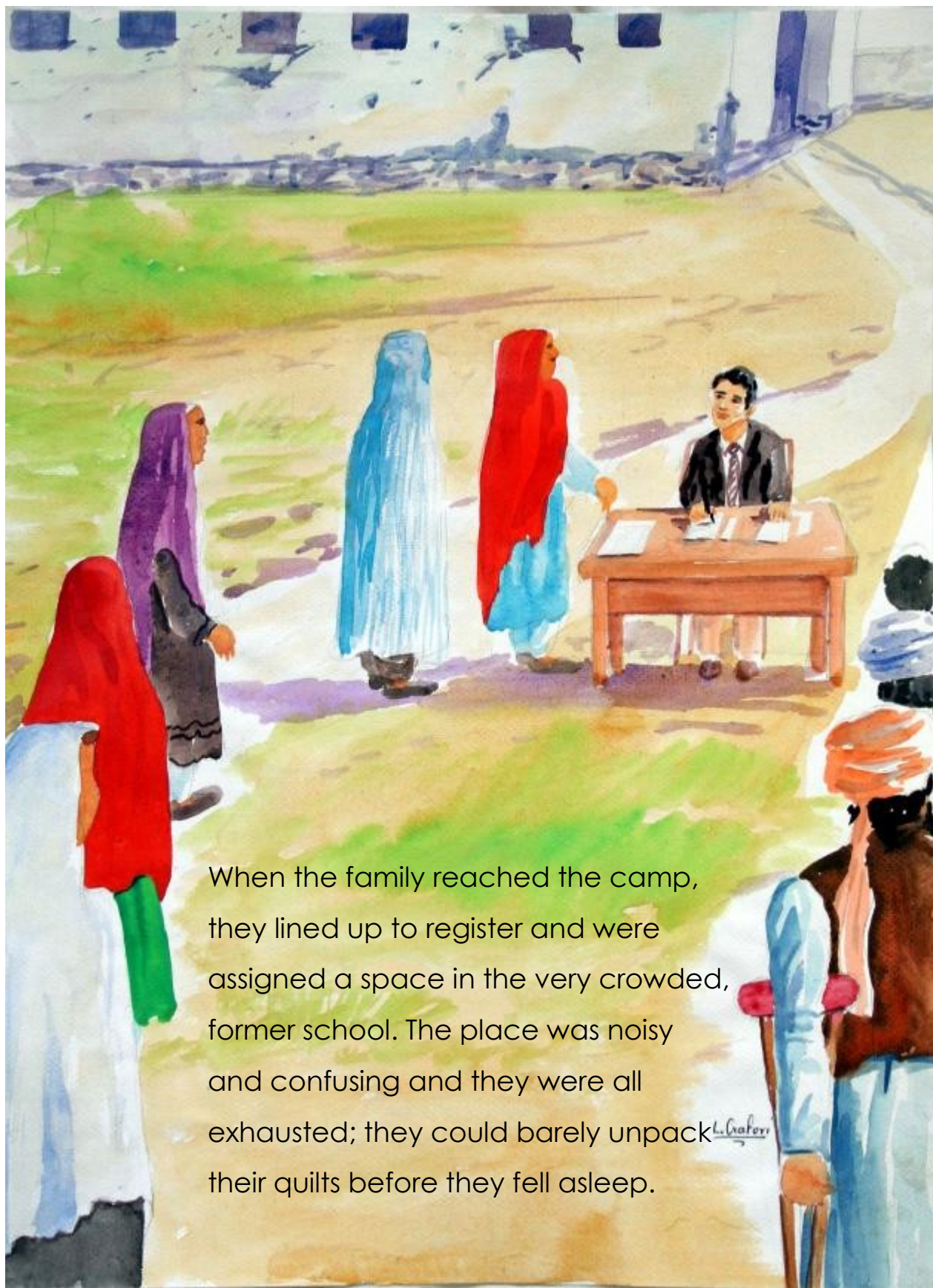


That afternoon, after many hours of travel, Bibi Jan observed Abdullah and Jameela having a disagreement while waiting for the bus to the displaced person's camp.

She intended to ask one of them what it was about when they got to the camp, but over the course of the three-hour bus trip it slipped her mind.







When the family reached the camp, they lined up to register and were assigned a space in the very crowded, former school. The place was noisy and confusing and they were all exhausted; they could barely unpack <sup>L. Grafer</sup> their quilts before they fell asleep.

Kaka Ghulam found that the camp had a classroom for boys. Merza told Abdullah that he should go. Most of the boys in the class were from villages in Abdullah's area and spoke the same language as Abdullah. But a few were different. The other boys were teasing them and even pushing them when they tried to take their place on the classroom benches. Abdullah watched this, but did nothing. That night, as the family ate together, he told them about his day in the classroom.

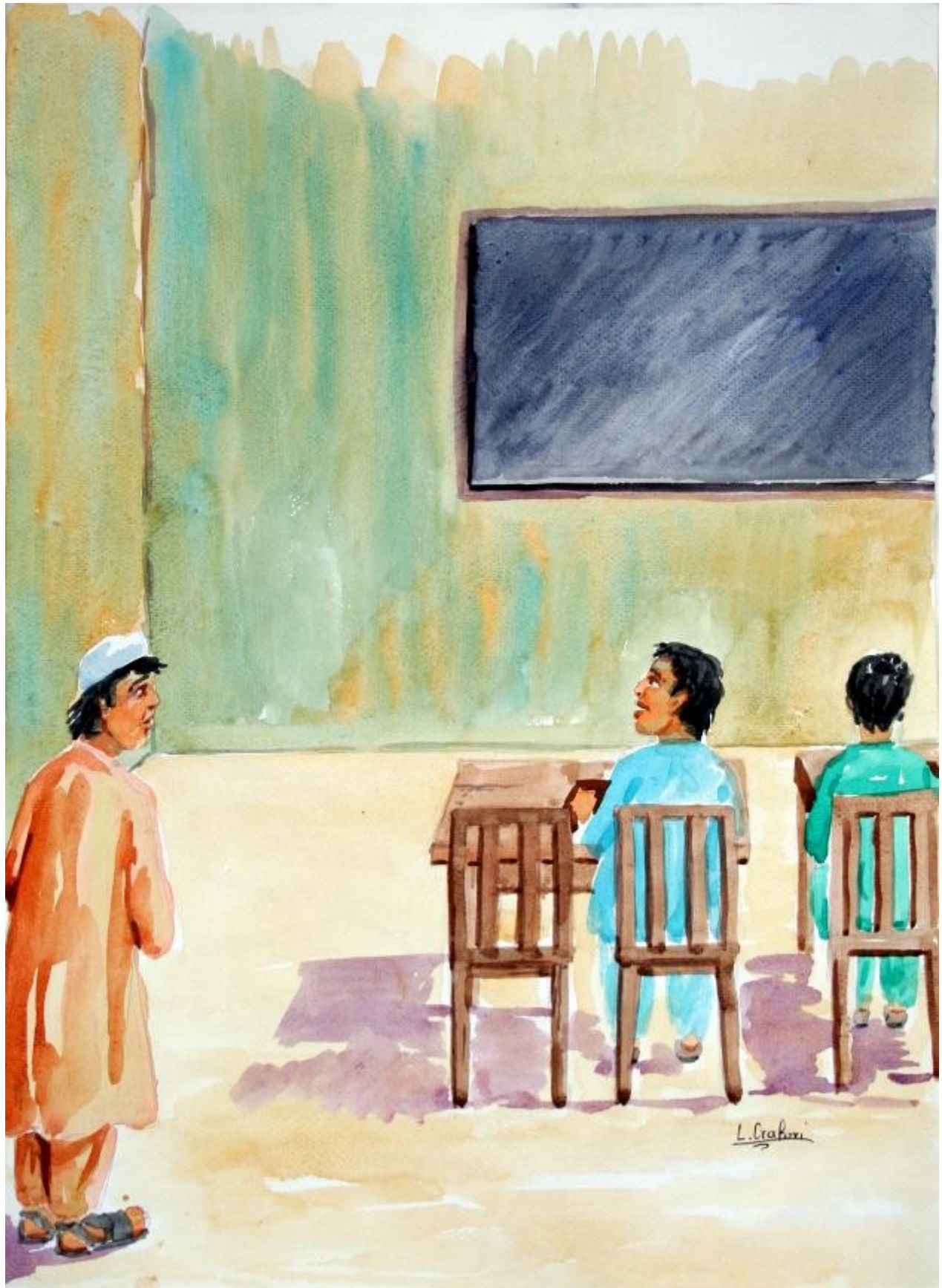
"Some of the kids have really weird clothes. Their hats are like mushrooms. Boy, do they ever look like dopes."

Merza spoke sharply to his son. "Abdullah, people in this family, even when things are very difficult, do not look down on others. It isn't important that they are wearing different clothes. They have the same human heart under the clothes. I never want to hear that you are making life harder for someone who is different."

Bibi Jan said, "Let's remember the kindness of Amin and Saida. In their eyes, we were the ones who looked different. Yet they treated us like brothers and sisters." As Abdullah remembered the kind family in the village that had passed through, he realized that the few different boys at school probably came from the same language group as they did.

Kaka Ghulam's deep voice boomed out, "... be moderate in your pace, and lower your voice; for the harshest of sounds without doubt is the braying of the ass."





The next day at school, Abdullah smiled at the different boys and sat next to one of them in class. When they went to get a drink of water, Abdullah remembered a word that Saida was trying to teach Ahmed. He said to him what he hoped was the word for water in the other language, praying that he wasn't making all Ahmed's funny mistakes. The other boy's face lit up and he spoke back to him in that language.

Abdullah laughed and shook his head. "That's all I have, just that one word. I'm lost after that," he said.

"That's OK," said the other boy. "I can speak your language fine. I just didn't want to because the others were making fun of my accent."

The two boys became friends. Abdullah began to learn the other language from his new friend. His parents were pleased about this. "It's very good to know several languages," they said. "It will always help you in your life. It just goes to show us that even out of very bad circumstances, some good things can grow."

## Story 7 A New Friend

### Things to Do

1. There might be students in your class or school from another religious or ethnic group or nationality. Share your experiences and knowledge about your own language, culture, food, stories and customs with those students. Ask about their religion, customs and culture.
2. Make some food that is new to you that might be a favourite in another culture.
3. Ask your family elders about your family's history. Are there interesting stories about your family's customs and practices?