

A Journey of Peace

Story 9

Merza's Anger

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Merza's Anger

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.

As the family continues its journey to the city, Abdullah discovers that Jameela has brought her kitten from home and has kept it hidden the entire journey. In anger, he takes the kitten from her and throws it in the undergrowth on the side of the road. Jameela is angry with her brother and refuses to acknowledge his existence. It is up to Bibi Jan to find a way for there to be “**Reconciliation**”.

In “**Merza’s Anger**”, Merza’s loss of control over his temper has frightened both Jameela and Ahmed. The emotional upheaval wreaks havoc on both children, and causes them to be short with each other. While hiding, Ahmed overhears his father talking to Bibi Jan about his own insecurity regarding the loss of his leg. When the child is discovered, it becomes an opportunity for bridges to be mended between father and son.

Healing Elements:

Healing images and symbols: hugging, giving, playfulness.

Modeling of peaceful and virtuous interactions: listening, supporting others, cooperation, helpfulness.

Problem Issues: taking anger out on others, the effects of anger on children, fear, loss of self-respect and identity, shame.

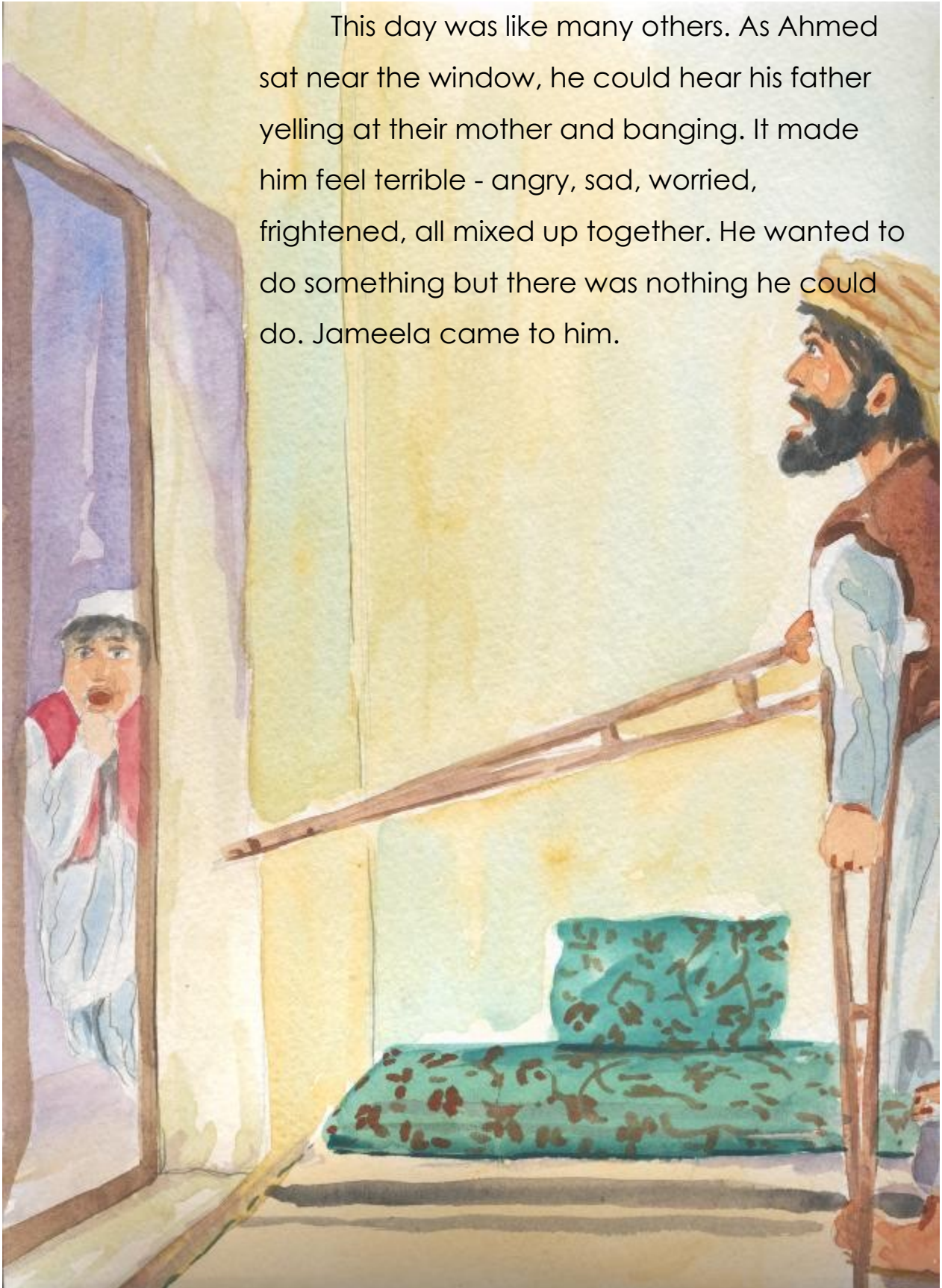
Healing Strategies: talking about anger, exposing assumptions and clarifying misunderstandings, hugging and talking to children about difficulties, making gifts for others.

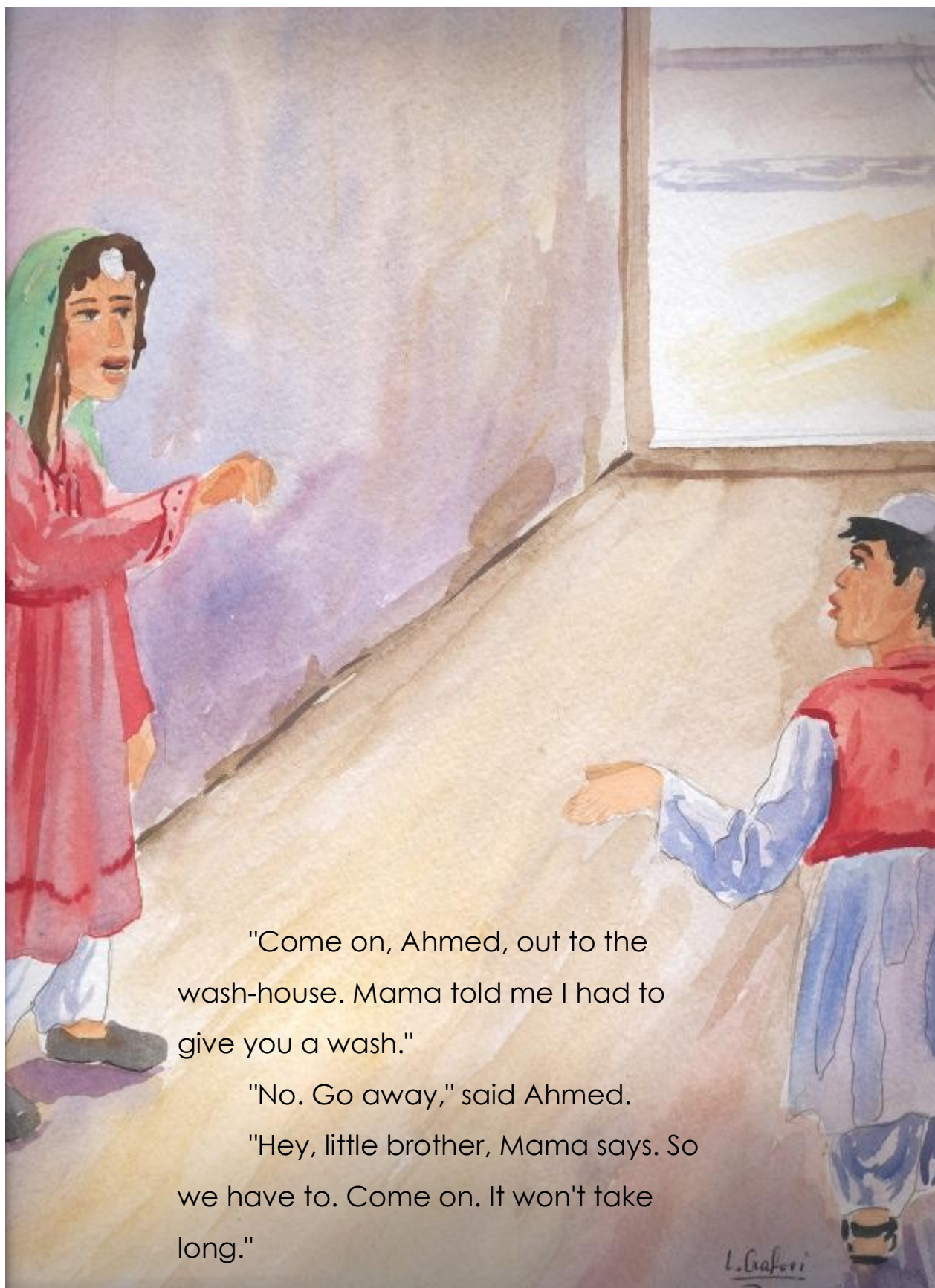
Jameela and Ahmed were becoming afraid of their father. He had always been a kind and gentle man but since losing his leg in the landmine accident, he was different. Now he had to use crutches and it bothered him that he could no longer work as he used to do. Since the family left their village and were in a displaced persons' camp, Merza, had nothing to do. He went to the makeshift mosque to pray or he sat at home, and very often he criticized their mother, Haleema, or the children as they went about their chores in their small family space in the camp. When he shouted at Ahmed, the little boy felt it was all his fault, and that he really was a bad child.

Little things could send their father into a rage. He shouted at them. He banged his crutch on the floor or on the table. It was very frightening.



This day was like many others. As Ahmed sat near the window, he could hear his father yelling at their mother and banging. It made him feel terrible - angry, sad, worried, frightened, all mixed up together. He wanted to do something but there was nothing he could do. Jameela came to him.





"Come on, Ahmed, out to the wash-house. Mama told me I had to give you a wash."

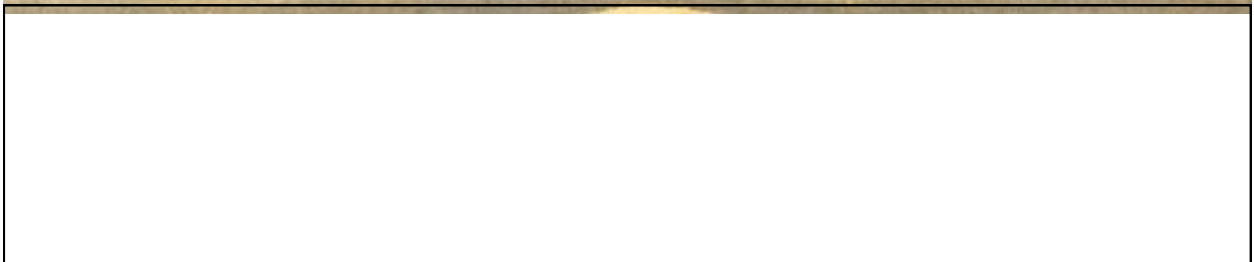
"No. Go away," said Ahmed.

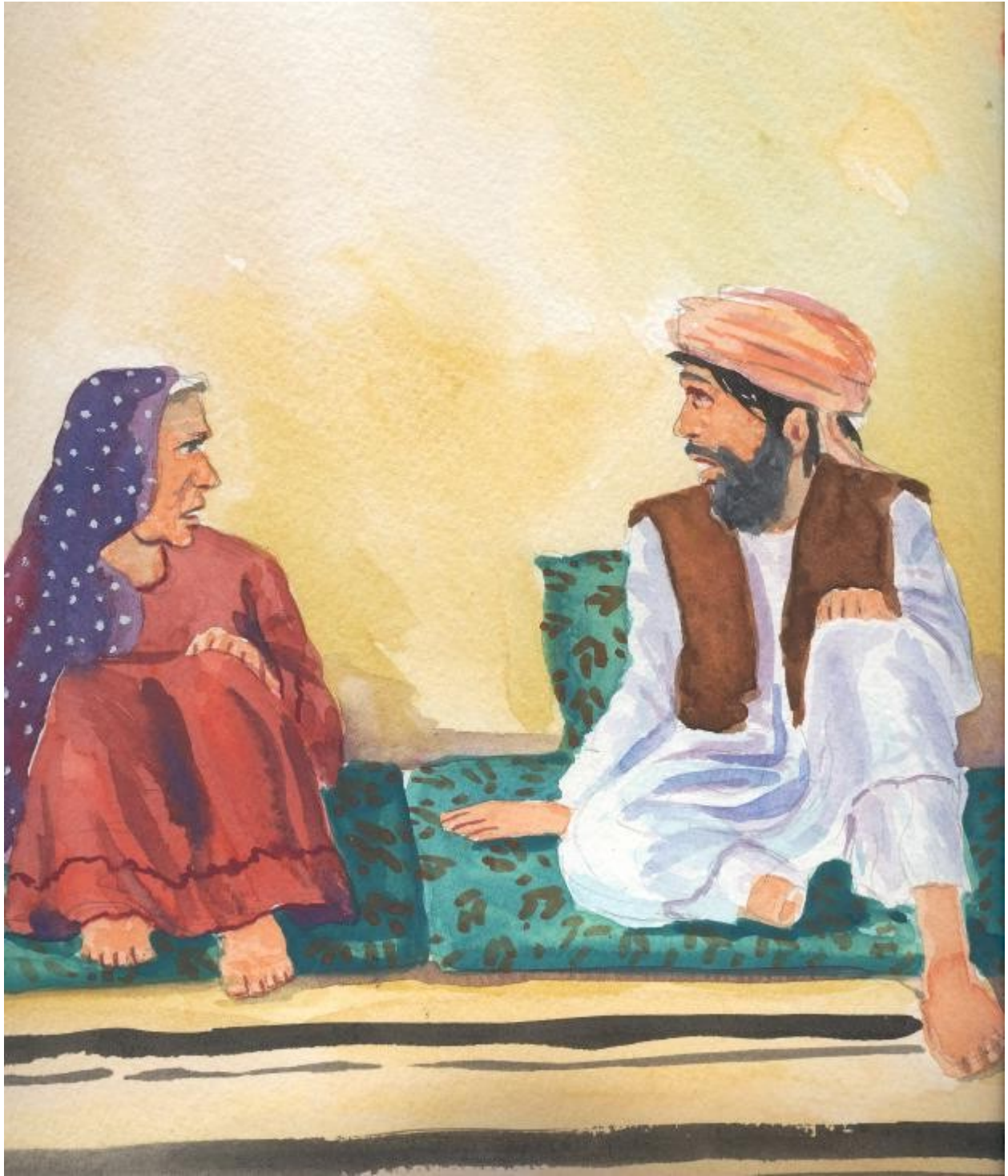
"Hey, little brother, Mama says. So we have to. Come on. It won't take long."

L. Graferi

Ahmed yelled and kicked a trunk. "Go away, go away, go away, stupid sister!" He moved away from Jameela. She reached out to grab him. He hit her and ran away, out of the building. While she was searching for him outside, he slipped back in and hid behind some boxes in their family's corner of the room.

Bibi Jan and their father came in. Ahmed held himself still and quiet as a little mouse.





"Merza, I asked you to come in here because I wanted to talk to you privately."

"What is it, Mother?"



"I know you're suffering terribly. I wish I could take away the trials that have come upon you and the family. Sometimes I see you beginning to rise above your sadness and sometimes you're sinking under again. But I see you taking it out on Haleema and the children, and that is adding to their suffering. I notice the children are frightened of you. They try to keep out of your way."

"Oh Mother, I thought it was because they don't respect me any more - a one-legged father."

"Merza, respect isn't about how many legs you have. I think they're missing the gentle father they used to have... who, after all, is still there beneath the anger."

"Mother, you can't imagine how angry I feel sometimes. Why me? Why my children? How am I going to take care of them now?"

"Can I not imagine it?" said Bibi Jan, with a piercing look at her son. "As for your questions, there are no answers. Who knows how or why Allah disposes His trials? It is for us to submit, accept and move on with life. We'll find a way to take care of the children. First, you must take care of your anger and sadness. To help the children, we must heal the father."

Merza gave a glimmer of a smile. "How did such a wise mother get such a foolish son?"

"Merza, Merza," Bibi Jan embraced him. "You are a wonderful son, and I think soon you'll remember that the world still has joy in it."



Ahmed was feeling cramped behind the boxes. He wriggled a little, knocking over a cooking pot. His father and grandmother looked behind the boxes and saw him curled up.

"Ahmed! What are you doing?"

"Hiding from Jameela."



"You heard what we said?"

Ahmed nodded.

His father beckoned him to come and sit on his knee. "Ahmed, you know Papa has been pretty bad-tempered recently?"

Ahmed nodded.

"Well, it's because I was so sad and angry and worried about all the bad things that have happened."

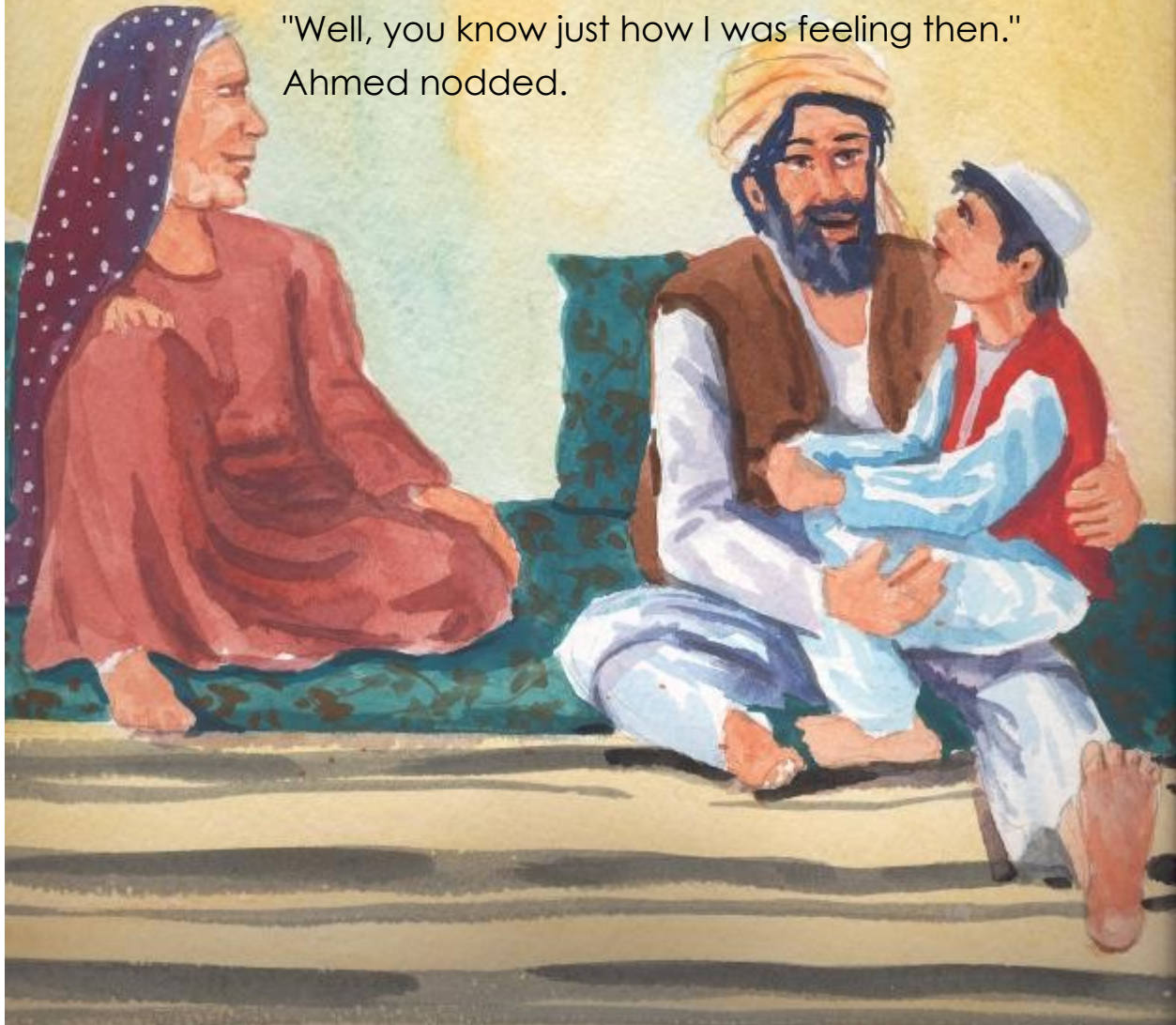
"Me too, Papa."

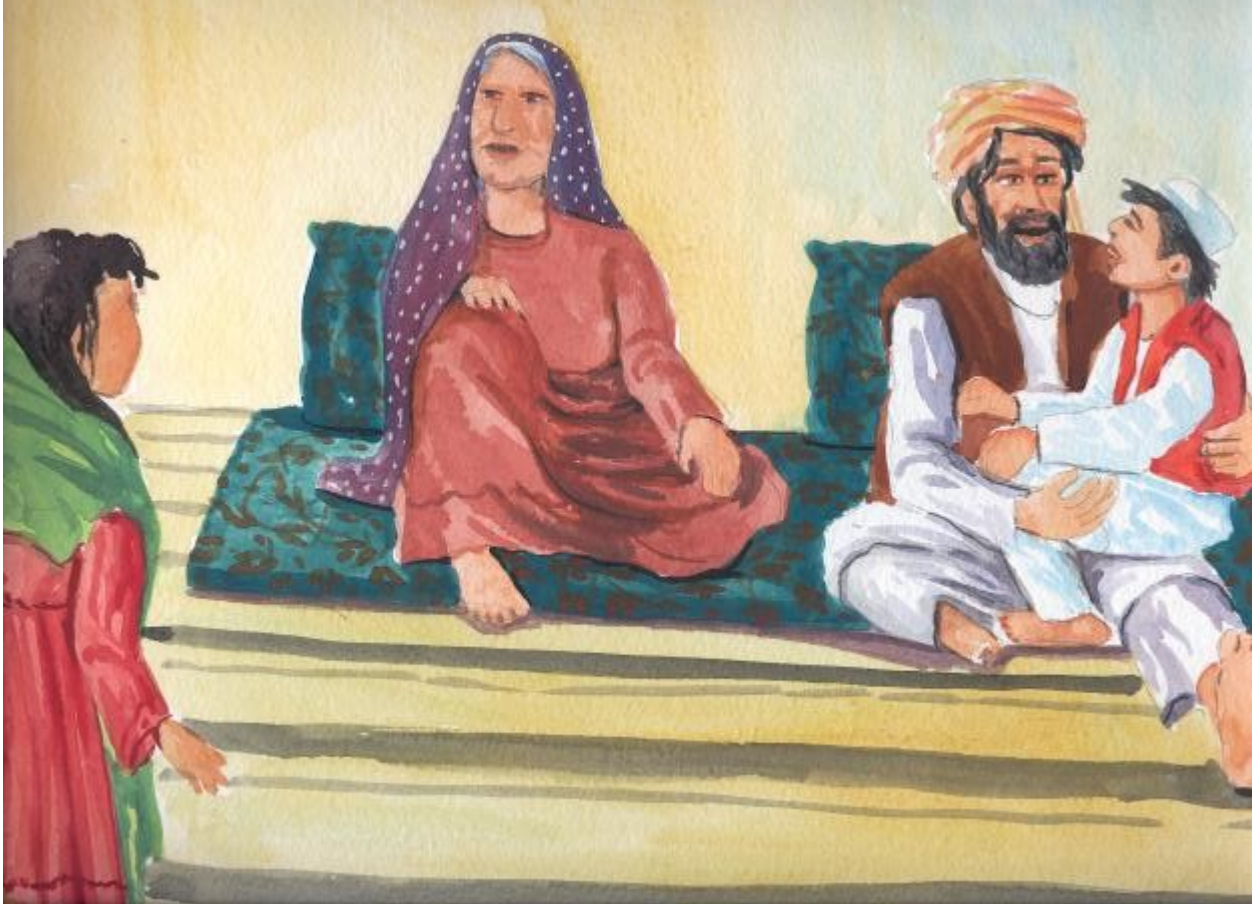
"You too?"

Ahmed nodded.

"Well, you know just how I was feeling then."

Ahmed nodded.





"And when I yelled at Mama and you children, it wasn't because you were bad, but just that I've been feeling so bad."

"Me too, Papa."

"I think we understand each other, Ahmed, you and I." Ahmed felt warm and relaxed, safe in his father's arms. "So! No more bad temper then, not from me and not from you, eh?"

"I love you, Papa."

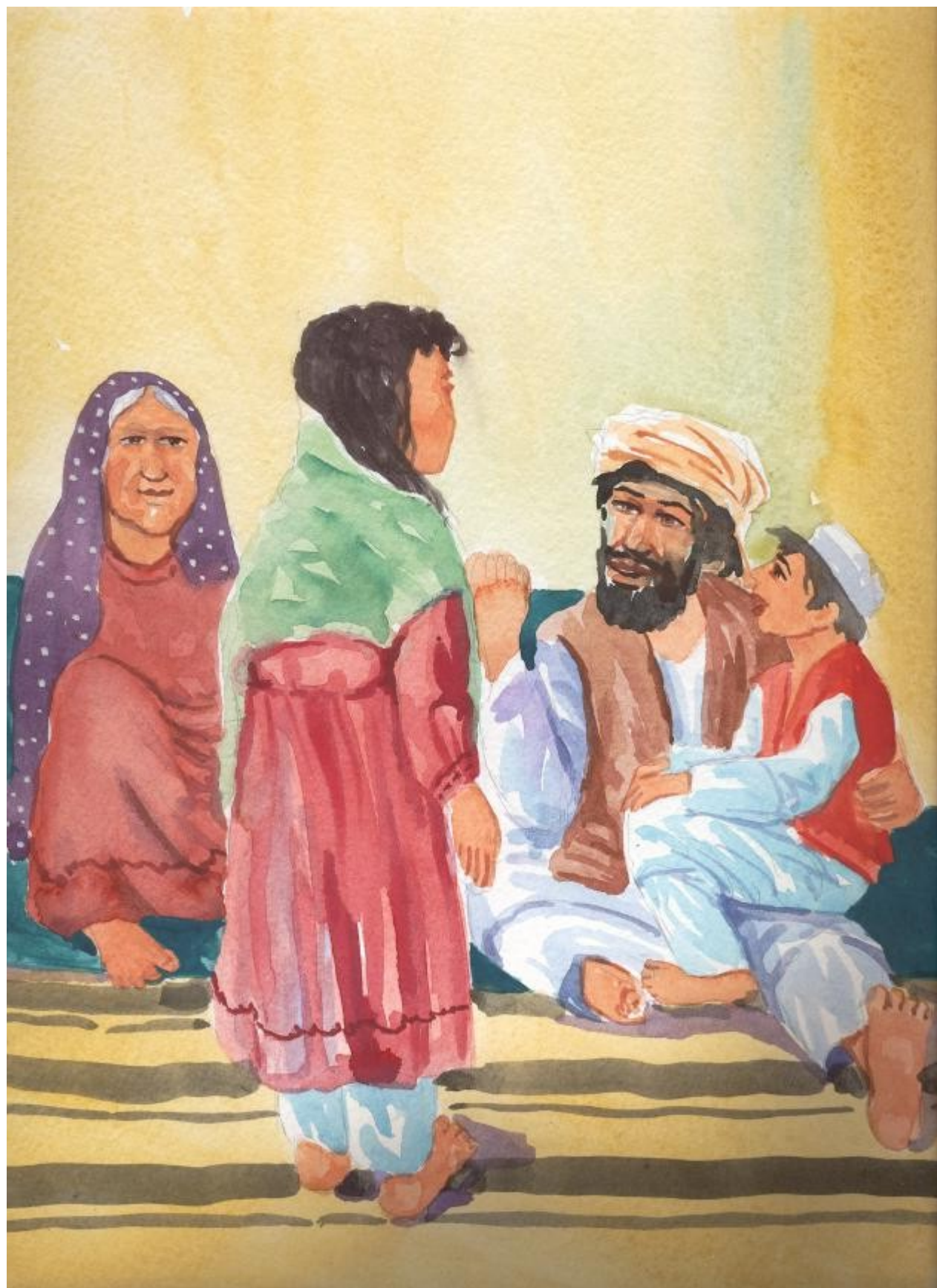
Jameela ran in, looking worried. "Oh Ahmed, I've been looking for you everywhere." She stopped, startled to see Ahmed on her father's lap.



Her father put out one arm to enclose her too. Jameela giggled at the close father-Ahmed-Jameela hug.

"Papa, I'm supposed to be washing him. Mama told me. Please, Ahmed."

Ahmed couldn't imagine why he had made such a fuss with his sister before. He really enjoyed her washing him. Usually they played and she got wet too.





Merza wanted to do something for his children. He remembered a wooden dancing man on a string he had had as a child. He had his tools with him, and he found a small piece of wood. He cut it to make the man's head, body and arms. There was just enough for one leg only.

"Ah well," thought Merza. "We will have a one-legged dancing man."

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Things to Talk About:

1. Ahmed gets angry with Jameela and hits her because he feels badly that his father is getting angry with him. The anger seems to get bigger and spread through the family. As a sickness can spread through a family, so can anger. We need to heal the suffering of sickness and we need to heal the suffering of anger. How have you experienced anger in your family? Your school? Your community? How can we heal the anger?
2. Has it ever happened to you that someone got angry with you when they were upset about something entirely different? How could you handle this?

Things to Do:

1. Make a list of ways to help someone who suffers from anger.
2. Make some healing gifts for that person—a poem, a flower, a special meal, a drawing....

