



A Journey of Peace

Story 1

Jameela's Gifts

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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 a leg.

In “**Jameela’s Gifts**”, 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.

Healing Elements:

Healing images and symbols: singing, growing, nurturing, beauty, humour, playfulness, laughter, love, friendship, happy memories, joy.

Modeling of peaceful and virtuous interactions: cooperation, religious devotion, affection, industry, giving, forgiveness, empathy, appreciation of virtuous acts, listening, reflection of and acceptance of feelings, caring, understanding, teaching.

Problem Issues: loneliness, longing for education, parental discord, sadness, physical and psychological trauma, anger, grief, loss, physical disability, feelings of worthlessness.

Healing Strategies: gardening, singing, playing, praying, giving, appreciation of beauty, service to others, empathy, consulting, honouring the dead, refocusing on happy memories.



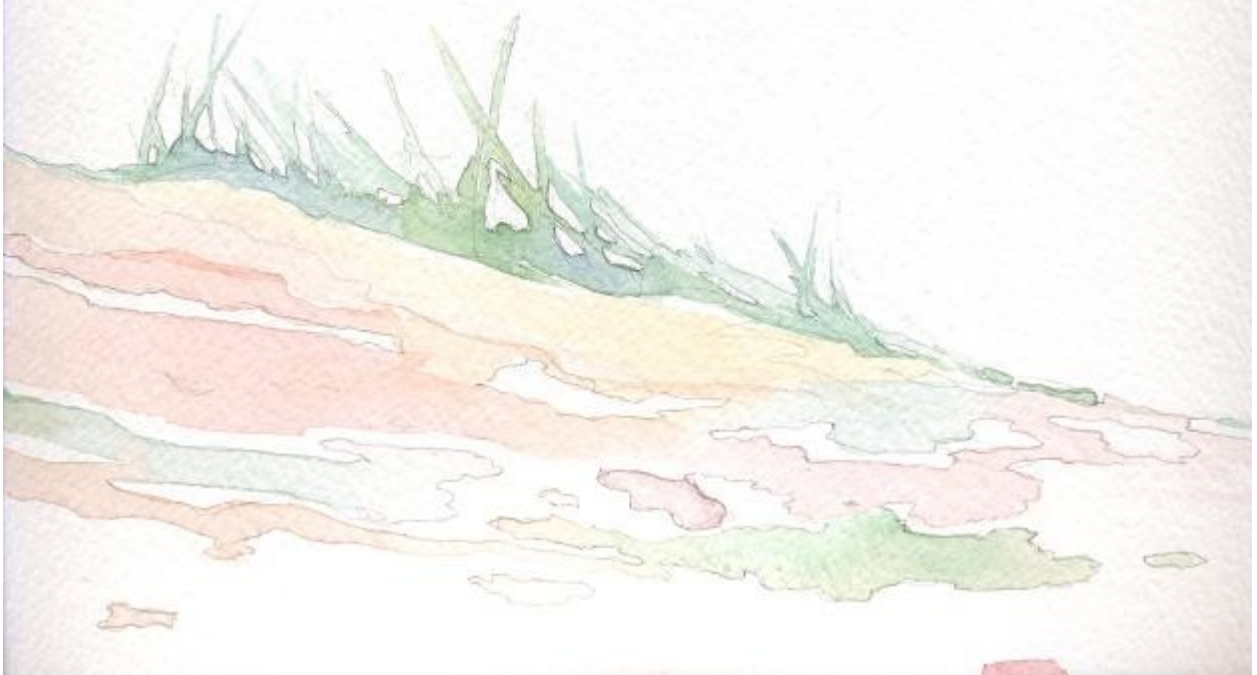
Jameela sat in the garden, singing. She loved to sit near the flowers and the vegetables and sing to them sweet songs about growing strong and beautiful. Jameela was waiting for her little brother, Ahmed, to return from the mosque so that they could water the garden together. Then she would ask him about what he learned. Jameela missed going to school and was lonely when Ahmed was gone.

Jameela didn't hear Ahmed quietly sneaking up behind her.

"Boo!" shouted Ahmed, making Jameela jump.

"Ahmed, don't do that! You scared me!" Jameela cried.

"Oh, Jameela, its fun to make you jump!" Ahmed replied, playfully tugging at her shawl.





Jameela tussled his hair. "Let's water the garden. I've been waiting for you. It's more fun to do it together. What did you learn at the mosque today?"

"Why do you *always* ask me that, Jameela?" asked Ahmed impatiently.

"I miss my school since it closed. I don't get to see my friends very much anymore," Jameela said while she filled the watering bucket.

"Yes, but you stay home and tend the garden and sing songs. I'll tell you what I did at the Mosque if you sing a song for me," bargained Ahmed with a grin.





"First we water. Then we play." Jameela and Ahmed poured the water bucket into the trough together and watched the little river run toward the garden.

Suddenly, their father's raised voice startled them. He was yelling at their mother. Ahmed and Jameela stopped watering to listen. They looked at each other sadly.



“Jameela, Daddy is yelling a lot,” Ahmed said quietly. “Do you think his leg is hurting?”

“Daddy’s always angry and upset since that bad day. Bibi Jan says that it will take a long time for him to be happy again,” replied Jameela. “She says that we shouldn’t be angry with Daddy when he yells. We should remember that he’s sad because Uncle Yunus died. And he has to use those crutches now. I think that makes him angry, too. Bibi Jan says that Daddy misses doing his farming. She says he has too much time and not enough work. I wish Daddy could work again. I think he would be happy then.”

“I miss Daddy telling me stories. Everyday on the way to mosque, he used to tell me stories about the prophet Mohammed and all his companions.” Ahmed said longingly.



“Maybe we could ask Daddy to tell us stories while we are watering in the garden,” suggested Jameela. The children continued to water, and there was silence from the house.

“Let’s find the most beautiful tomato and bring it to Mama for tonight’s dinner.” Jameela always felt happy when she gave gifts from the garden to her



As they looked through the garden, their older brother Abdullah returned from the fields. He walked with his head down, preoccupied, and did not notice the children.

“Abdullah! Abdullah!” yelled Ahmed, happily jumping up from the middle of the garden. “Look at the beautiful tomato we picked for Mama! I helped grow it! Do you like it?”

“Ahmed, I wish you wouldn’t jump up and scare people like that. It makes me very angry. And I don’t care about your stupid tomato,” stormed Abdullah as he walked past. “Sometimes, you’re such a brat.”

Tears stung in Ahmed’s eyes. “Sorry, Abdullah, I didn’t mean to scare you,” said Ahmed ruefully.

“Don’t worry, Ahmed. Abdullah is being very mean,” consoled Jameela. “Abdullah, you don’t have to make him cry just because you’re in a bad mood.”

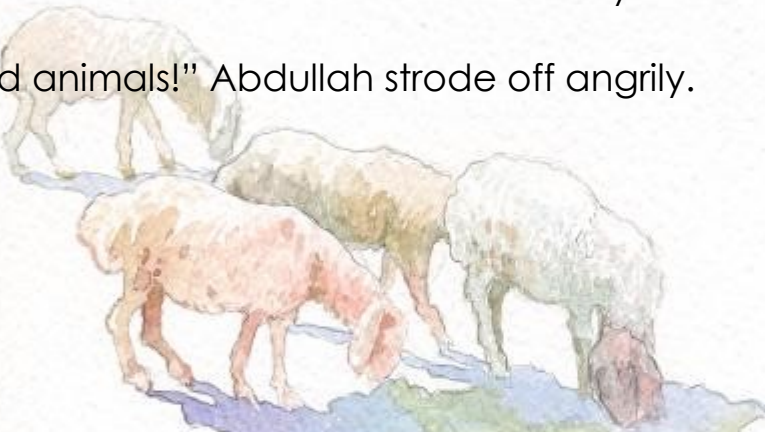
“I’ve got more important things to worry about than tomatoes, Jameela,” admonished Abdullah, striding away.





"Well, do you think you could help us with our lessons later, Abdullah? I need some help with my writing," asked Jameela hopefully.

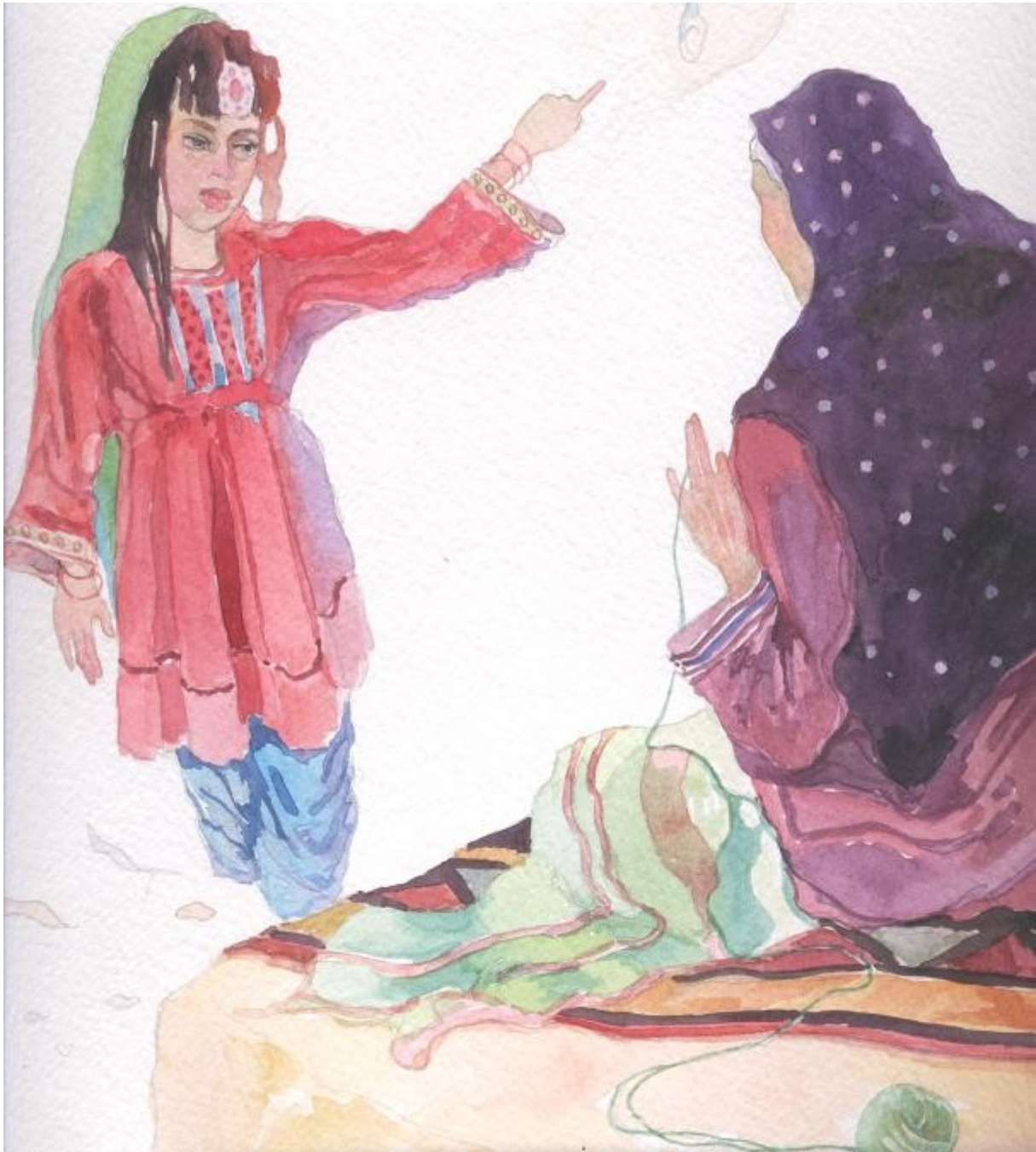
"Jameela, I haven't got time for your lessons. I don't have enough time for my own. I have to do all the farm work that Dad and Uncle Yunus used to do and do my own chores. I hate those stupid animals!" Abdullah strode off angrily.



Jameela and Ahmed watched their brother sadly.

"He used to teach me reading and writing every day," said Jameela.

"And he used to play ball with me and Uncle Yunus" Ahmed sighed. "Maybe Bibi Jan knows why Abdullah doesn't like us anymore."



“Ahmed, Abdullah still loves us. But maybe Bibi Jan knows why he has changed. He’s not the same since the landmine.” Jameela and Ahmed ran to find Bibi Jan who was sitting in the shade knitting a sweater for Jameela.

"Bibi, is my sweater almost finished?" Jameela asked excitedly, forgetting for the moment why she had come to see Bibi Jan.



"Yes, my love, soon you'll be wearing it." Bibi Jan's voice was low and sweet and gentle. She was known throughout the village for her wise and kind words.

"That's a most ripe and red tomato. It must enjoy your singing, Jameela, to grow into such a fine tomato. And Ahmed, I noticed that you've been helping with the watering. You help the whole family when you help in the garden."

“Bibi Jan, we came to ask you why Abdullah won’t help us with our lessons anymore. He’s always mad at us and doesn’t spend any time with us,” said Jameela.

“Yes, and he won’t play ball with me,” pouted Ahmed.

Bibi Jan placed her knitting on the carpet. She looked into the faces of her grandchildren. “I see that you’re both sad that you haven’t been able to learn and play with your big brother these last few months. This tells me that you both love him very much and that you miss the happier times we all enjoyed before. We must try to understand the sadness of others and help them to find joy again. What could you do that might help Abdullah be joyful again?”

“How did he lose his joy? When I lose my ball, I find it under the bushes or in the garden. Do you think that is where Abdullah’s joy is?” Ahmed asked, puzzled.



Bibi Jan laughed her rich, deep laugh. " Ahmed, you might be right! Jameela, a flower from the garden placed beside Abdullah's books will help him to remember your love of him and the beauty of Allah's creations.

You and Abdullah can take a bouquet of flowers to Yunus' grave together and say a prayer.

And Ahmed, if you throw the ball to Abdullah, he will catch it and throw it back. Maybe he will find that it feels good to play even for just a short time, and he will begin to play ball with you again."



"I am going to choose the most colourful and delicate flower for Abdullah right now and ask him if he wants to visit the grave with me!" Jameela ran excitedly back to the garden.

Ahmed looked sad. He rolled his ball around on the ground.



"You feel as if you have lost your friend," suggested Bibi Jan. Ahmed nodded. "Abdullah lost his friend, too."

"He didn't lose me. I'm still here!" exclaimed Ahmed.

“He no longer has Uncle Yunus’ friendship. When Abdullah was little, Yunus and Abdullah used to ride together on the old bicycle to school. They used to laugh and play jokes on each other. They played ball and worked in the fields together. Now Abdullah is very sad that Uncle Yunus is dead. He feels very angry that the landmine killed his friend.”

“I know how he can feel better about Uncle Yunus!” Ahmed shouted, jumping up excitedly. “You told me that if I miss Uncle Yunus, I can remember his voice and remember all the happy times together and I can dream good dreams about him. And Bibi, I do! Every night, I think of the time we lay under the tree by the garden, just me and Uncle Yunus and Abdullah and we told stories and jokes and laughed. I am going to tell Abdullah to remember that time too!!”

“Yes Ahmed, you’ll help him find joy again,” Bibi Jan told her grandson as he skipped off toward the house. She turned to see Jameela singing in the garden, and watched as she carefully selected a flower for Abdullah. Then Bibi Jan smiled to herself and returned to her knitting.



