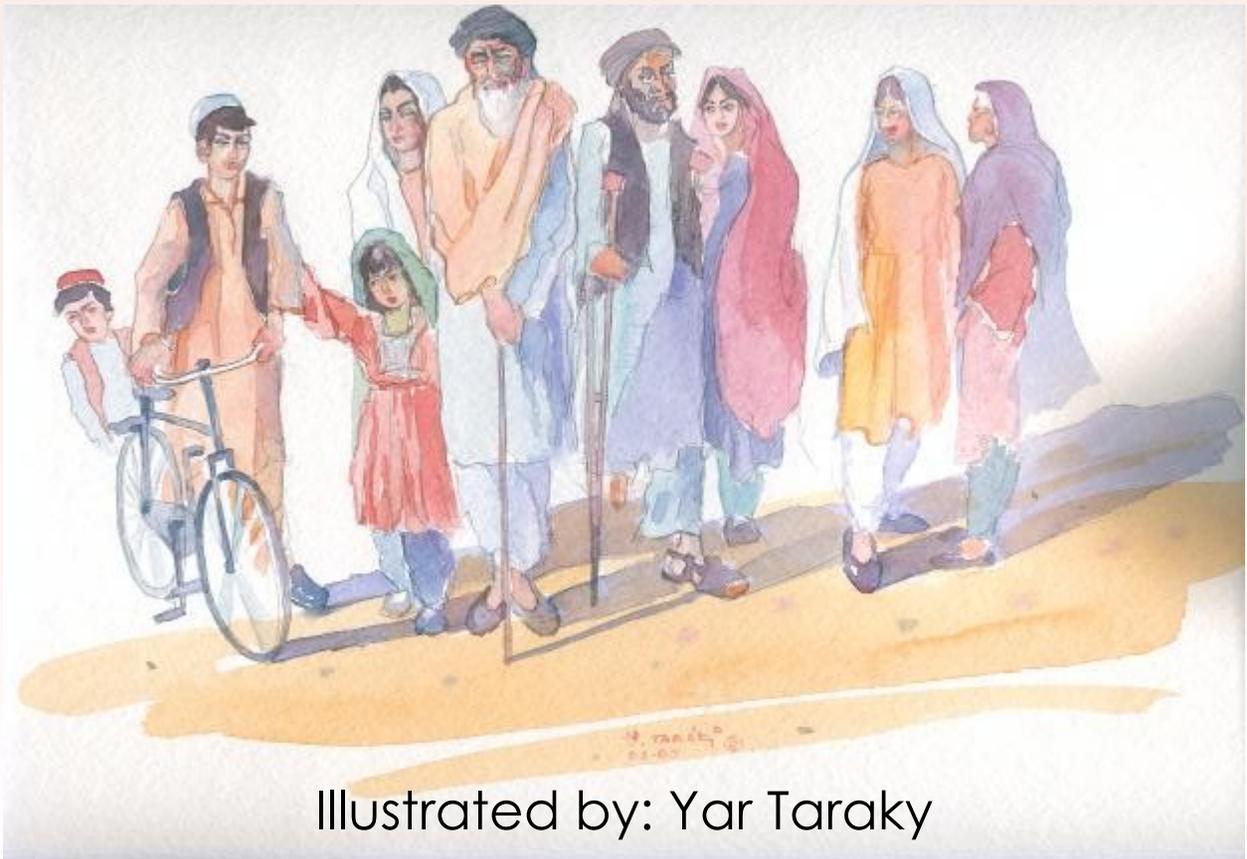


A Journey of Peace

Story 12

A New Life

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Second Edition

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2004, 2008

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, her Uncle Yunus was killed and her father lost a 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 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 frightens 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.

Bibi Jan's diplomatic skills are once again put to the test in "**Making Peace**". While looking for Merza's brother Aly and his wife Aisha in the city, the family is staying at a camp for displaced persons located in an old schoolhouse. While in the cramped quarters where they must make their temporary home, Abdullah gets into a fight with a boy his own age over the intrusion of his bicycle in the others' living space.

As "**Abdullah and the Ten-foot Man**" opens, Abdullah, now living with his family at his uncle's house for a week, comes down with a fever. He recalls his childhood dreams about wanting to grow up to be a soldier before he falls asleep. He dreams about meeting a giant soldier in the market who teaches him a lesson about the reality of war.

In "**A New Life**", Jameela expresses her joy at being able to meet Aly and Aisha as helping to offset being away from her home. However, when Haleema tells her that she will soon have a baby sister or brother, Jameela's anxiety over the instability of their lives takes over. Her mother helps her to understand why this is a blessing for them all.

Healing Elements:

Healing images and symbols: new life, joy, motherhood, laughter, restored self-esteem, hope for the future, love.

Modeling of peaceful and virtuous interactions: listening, teaching, supporting each other, affection.

Problem Issues: the burden on a child when acting as a parent, fear of change, homesickness.

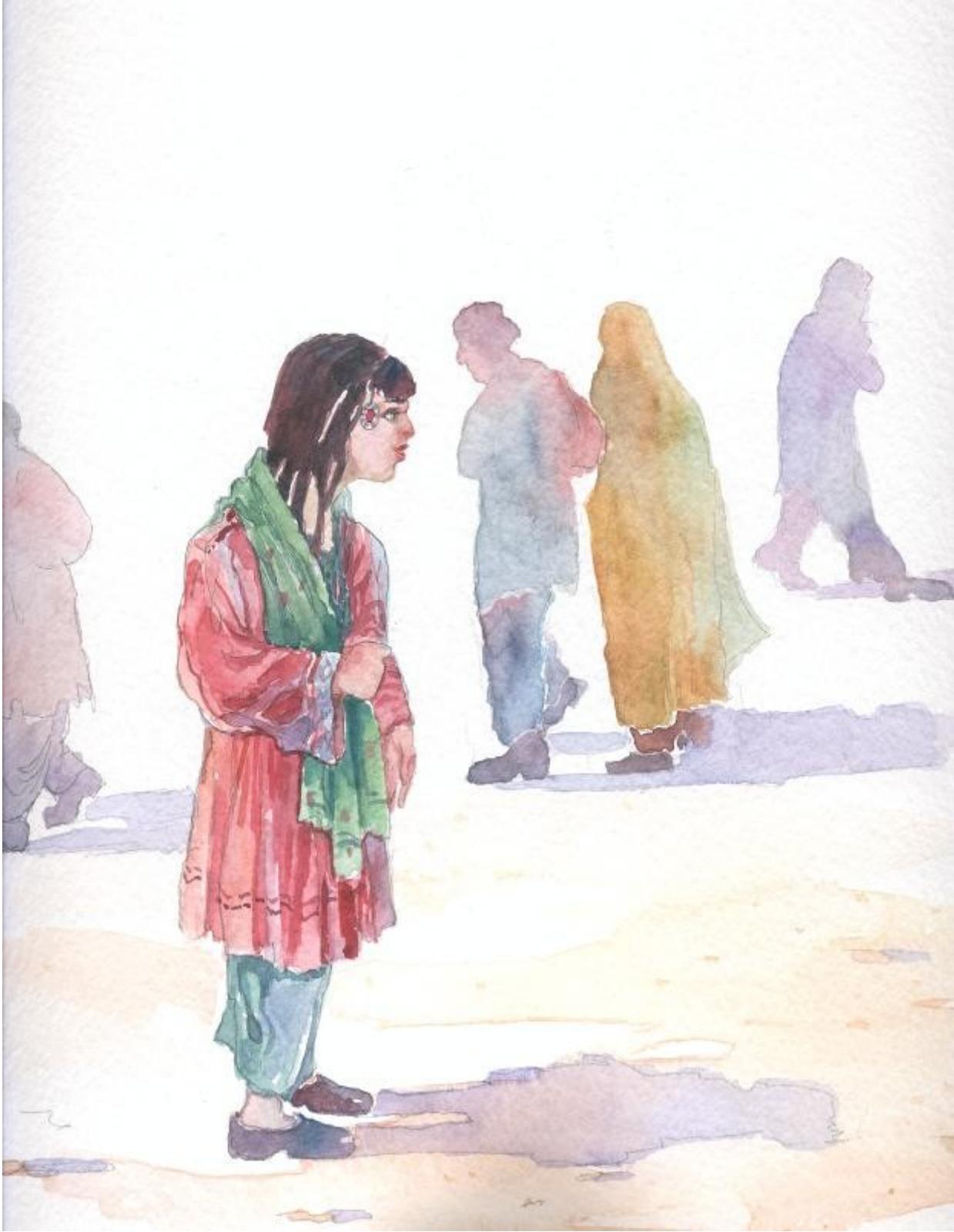
Healing Strategies: reframing of trauma, physical comforting and nurturing, expression of fears, restoring kindness and gentleness in relationships.

Jameela found the streets to be very noisy and dirty. Everyone seemed to be in such a hurry and not very friendly. She missed the gentle quiet, and sweet smells of their farmland and the caring ways of the people of her village. Jameela and Auntie Aisha were doing the daily shopping for fresh vegetables and meat. Every time Jameela picked out tomatoes from the market, she felt proud of the tomatoes she used to grow in her vegetable garden. Her tomatoes were much more delicious looking. Jameela wondered when her family might be able to go back to the village, when she might get back to her vegetable garden.

“Auntie Aisha, do you think that we will ever get to go home again?” Jameela had to speak loudly over the many sounds in the market.

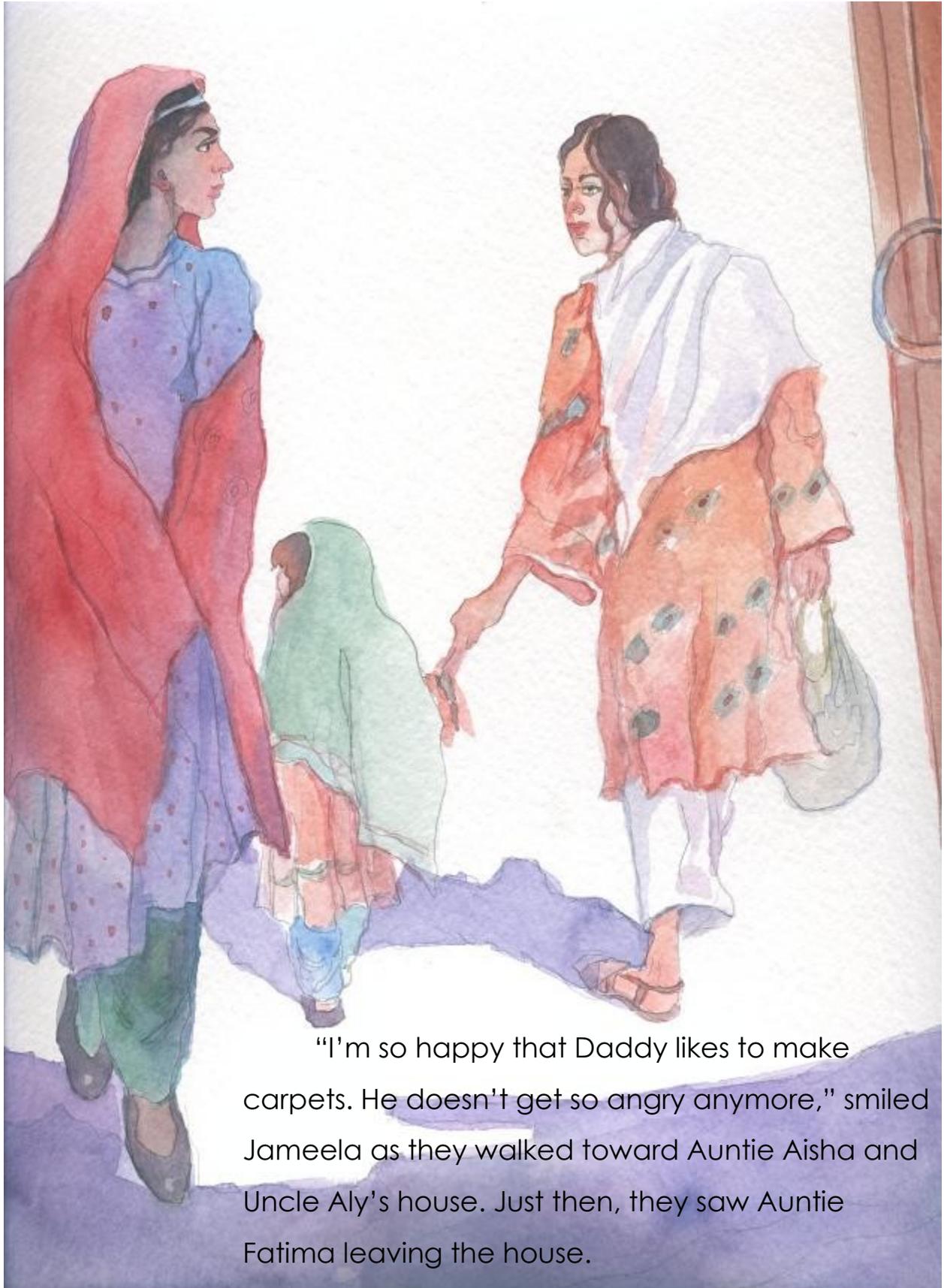
“We’ll have to wait to see if the fighting has stopped around your village,” replied Auntie Aisha. “It seems that you miss your home. If you go back to the farm, I’ll miss you very much. You are such a wonderful little girl. Someday, I hope to have a little girl like you.”

“I am so glad that we came to the city for just one reason,” smiled Jameela. “I was able to meet you, Auntie Aisha. When we go home again, do you think that you could come to visit me and Ahmed and Abdullah?”



“Jameela, please, don’t get too hopeful about going back home. You don’t know what you’ll find there. Many things might be destroyed by the fighting,” cautioned Auntie Aisha. “Also, Jameela, your father now has his new job carpet weaving.”





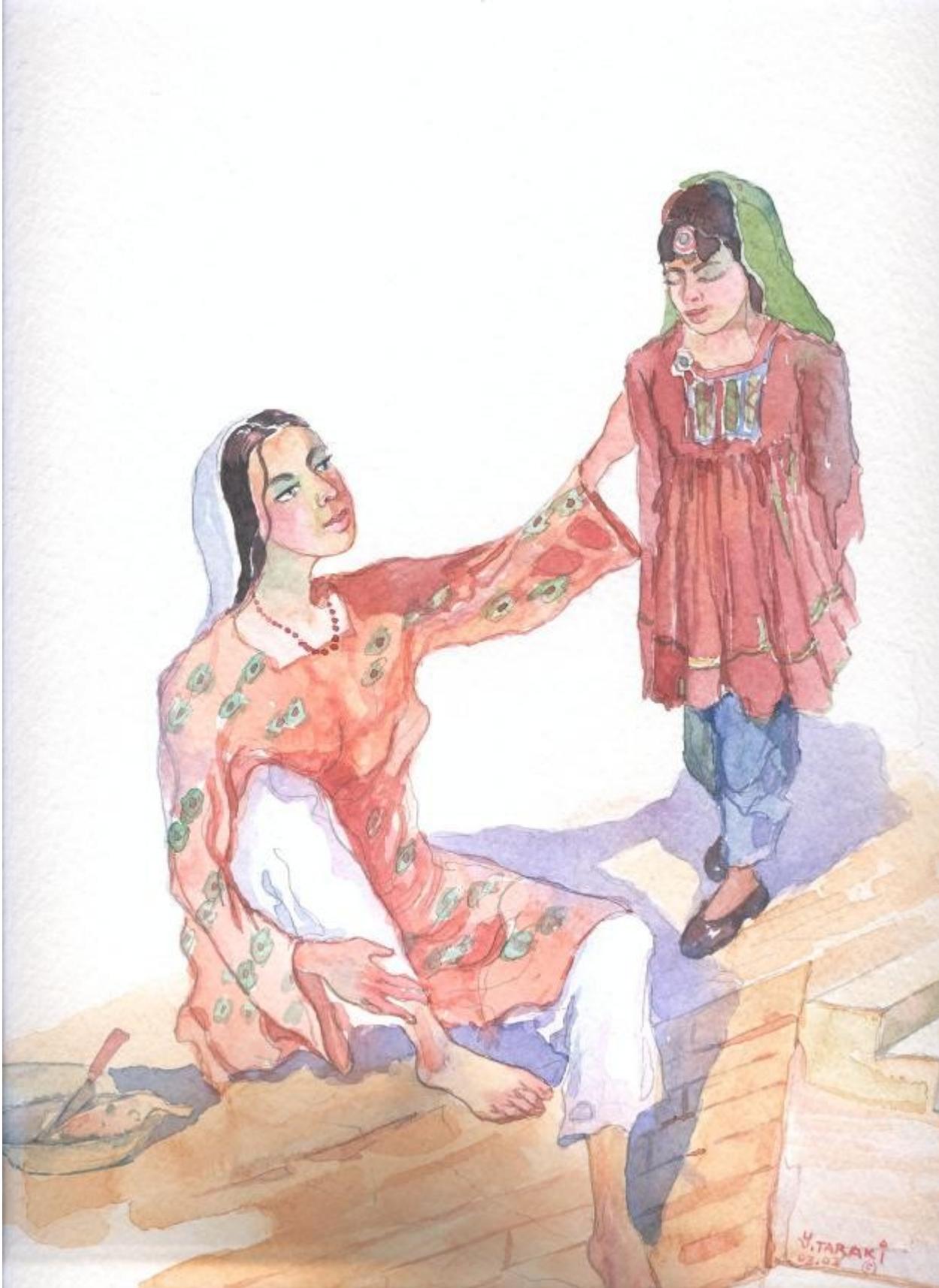
"I'm so happy that Daddy likes to make carpets. He doesn't get so angry anymore," smiled Jameela as they walked toward Auntie Aisha and Uncle Aly's house. Just then, they saw Auntie Fatima leaving the house.

"I wonder where Auntie Fatima is going? She's always going out and I don't have anyone to teach me my reading lessons. Auntie Aisha, could you teach me? I see that you read magazines, could you teach me to read them, too?" pleaded Jameela as they entered the small compound of their home. Many of the family's belongings were stacked in the yard. There was no room for these things in the house.

"Jameela, I would like very much to teach you to read but now I have to cook the meals for Bibi Jan, Kaka Ghulam, Uncle Aly, your father and brothers. Your mother is very tired after the journey from the farm and she didn't rest well in the displaced persons' camp. Auntie Fatima has gone out again so she can't help with the cooking," sighed Auntie Aisha. She was getting tired, too. It was very difficult to try to feed all of her husband's family with the same money that she used to feed just her own. "Please find Ahmed and make sure that he is not bothering your mother."

"Why is Mama so tired? Why does she need to rest all the time? Is she sick?" worried Jameela.

"No, no, Jameela," laughed Auntie Aisha as she began preparing the meal. "Go and ask her yourself."



With that Jameela turned and tiptoed quietly into the room where her mother lay sleeping. Ahmed was asleep beside her. Jameela touched her mother's hair and thought how peaceful she looked. Haleema opened her eyes and smiled.

"My beautiful Jameela. I hope that my next daughter will be as kind and gentle as you." Haleema stroked Jameela's hair and held her hand.

"What do you mean 'next daughter'?" asked Jameela. "You have only one daughter and that's me!"

"Jameela, in a few months, you will have a new baby brother or sister," whispered Haleema.

"A baby! Oh, no!" sobbed Jameela. She turned away to gaze out the window.

"Jameela! What's wrong?" Haleema gently pulled Jameela back to her. "I thought that you'd be excited to hear about the new baby," coaxed Haleema, as she rubbed Jameela's shaking back.

"How can we have a new baby? We have no home! We have no money! We have barely any food! Everyone is either angry all the time or sad all the time! I try to keep Ahmed safe but I can't keep a baby safe, too!" cried Jameela. Tears of fear streamed down her face.

"You don't have to keep me safe," yawned Ahmed. "But it sure would be nice if you kept quiet while I'm sleeping." And with that, Ahmed crawled away to continue his nap on a pile of blankets in the corner.



“My darling Jameela. I’m so sorry. I didn’t know that you felt so frightened. I didn’t see that you felt that you needed to keep Ahmed safe. I’ve been so sad and worried about my problems that I didn’t see that you’ve been worried too.”

Jameela turned and cried in her mother’s arms.

“And yes, I’ve been angry about many things. And frightened about the fighting. I’m so tired of all the fighting,” Haleema looked at her sobbing child.

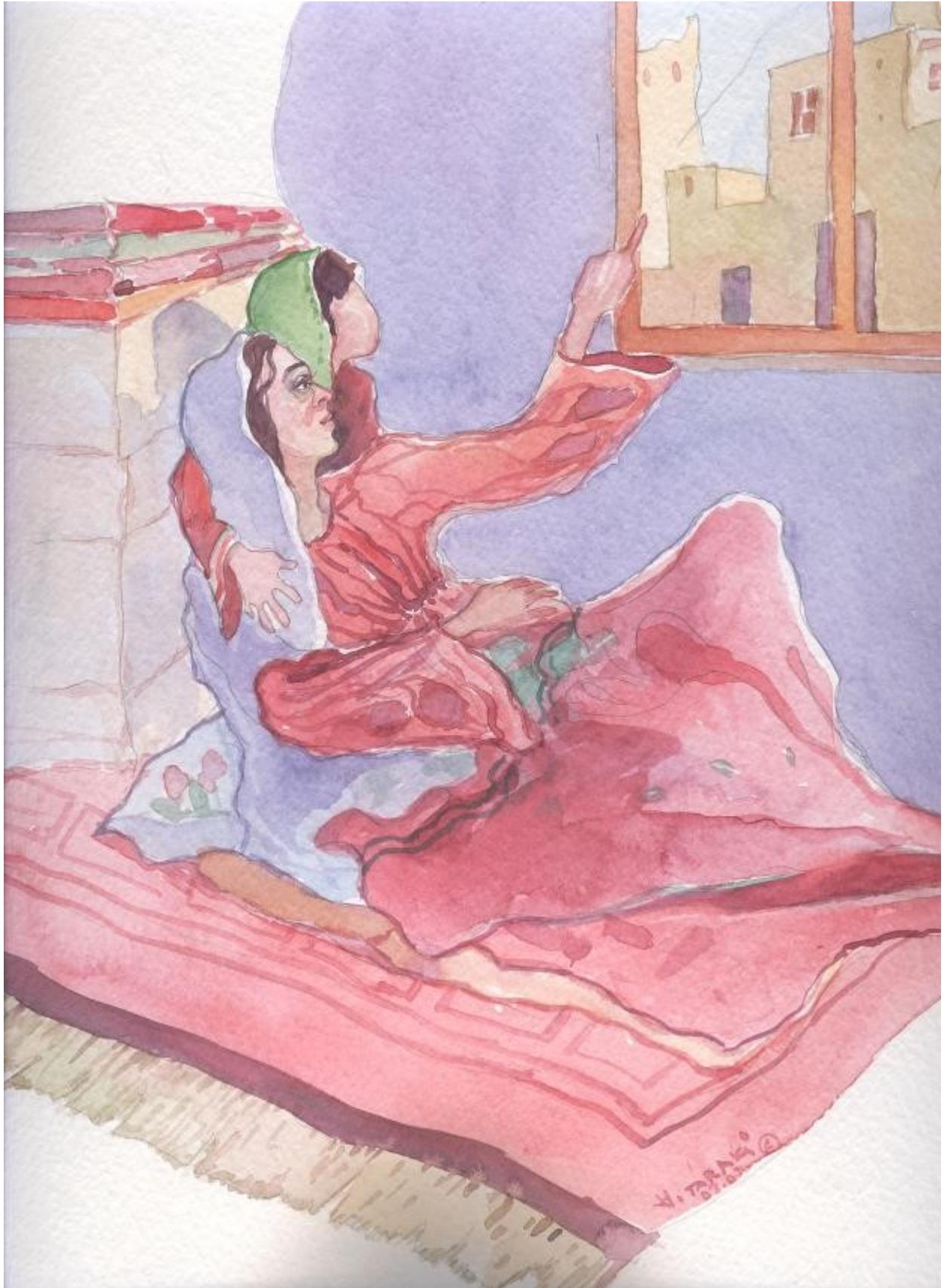
“When I was a little girl like you, Jameela, I was so happy. I had so many friends and then I married Daddy. He was so kind.”

Jameela’s crying quieted. She had never heard her mother speak of the days before the war. She could not imagine her mother a young girl, happy and playing with friends.

“We were married when we were quite young but we worked hard on the farm and tried to make a good life. Everything changed when the war began.” Haleema’s voice faded away. She was remembering the years of fear and sadness.

“I wish there was no war,” said Jameela sadly. She put her head in her mother’s lap. Haleema stroked her hair.

“Yes, Jameela, so do I. But for every beginning there is an ending and for every ending there is a beginning. Our life on the farm has ended for now and our life in the city has begun. I believe that this new baby can help us see that there are always new beginnings.” Haleema smiled.





She looked up to see her husband coming into the room.

Merza saw his wife and daughter together and paused to admire their closeness. It seemed that it had been a long time since he had seen his wife so peaceful. He waved his crutch and stepped out of the house.

“You see, Jameela, there’s another new beginning. Your father has found a job that makes him proud again. He is going to be a very fine carpet maker,” said Haleema. “Your brother, Abdullah, has decided to learn to be a landmine educator. And so, if we should ever be able to go back to the farm, Daddy and Abdullah will be able to go to work and we will hire labour for the farm work. Your grandparents would be very happy to go home again.”

Jameela sat up and looked into her mother’s face, wiping away the tears.

“Leaving our farm was an ending but coming to the city was a beginning! And Daddy’s new job and Abdullah’s new job, those are beginnings too! If we didn’t come to the city, they would never have learned these new jobs. And I finally met Auntie Aisha! I wouldn’t have met her if we had stayed in the village. That’s a new beginning too!”

Jameela jumped to her feet and helped her mother to stand.

“And we are going to have a new baby!” Jameela and Haleema hugged each other and laughed. “That really is a new beginning!”



Things to Talk About:

1. What things have ended in your life? How do you feel about this?
2. What new beginnings have there been and how do you feel about these?
3. Is it hard to make changes? If so, why is it difficult and how can you make it easier?
4. What changes do you hope for in the future for yourself, your family, your town and your country? Are there any ways you can help to make these things happen?

Things To Do:

1. Draw a picture or write a story representing a change you'd like to see.
2. Tell or write a story about your past, your present and your future. You might think of this as the journey of your life.

