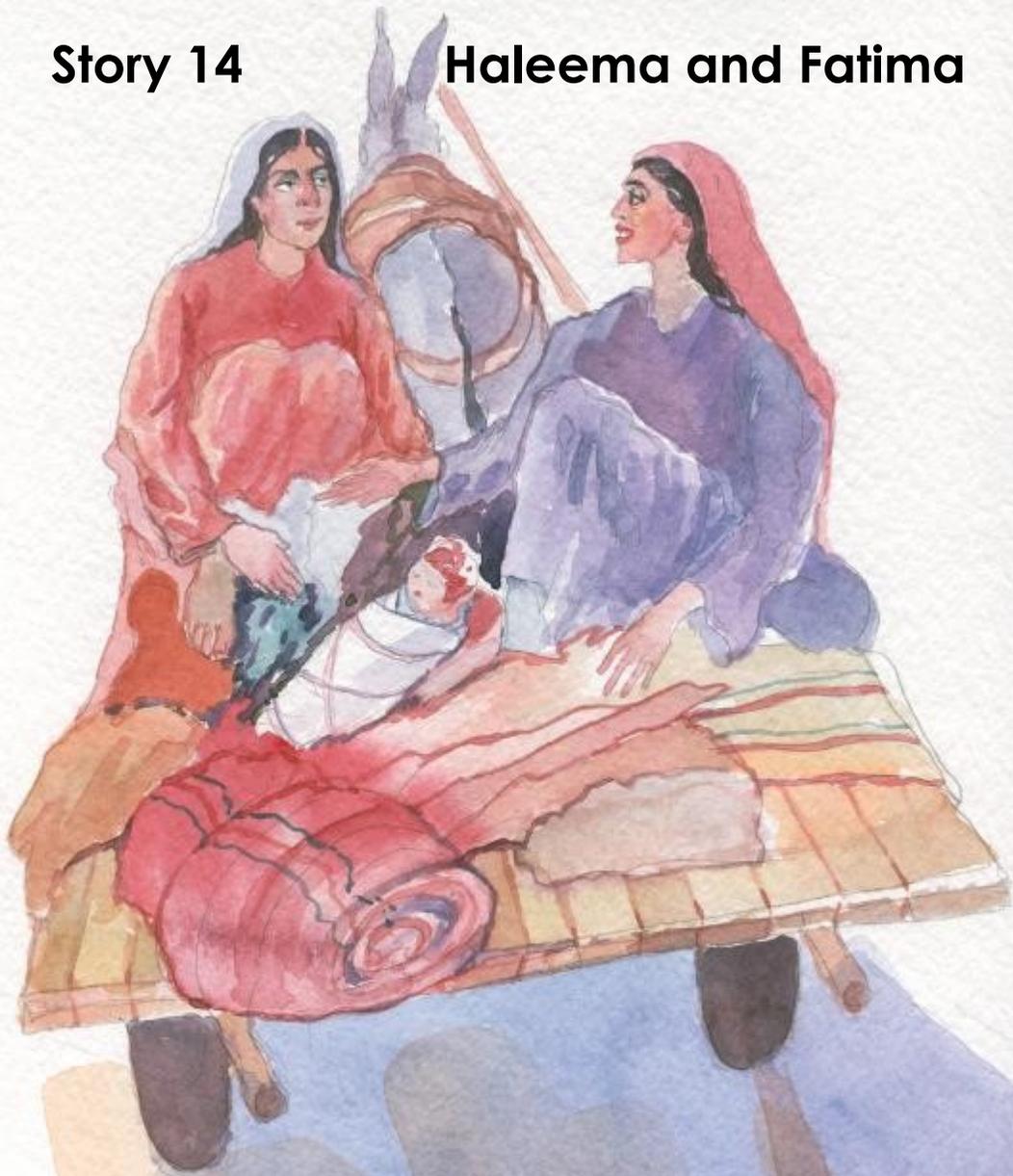


A Journey of Peace

Story 14

Haleema and Fatima



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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, her 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 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.

“**Going Home**” begins with the news that after a year, the family is finally going to make the journey back home. As the family makes their preparations for their return, it is clear that there is still some tension between Haleema and Fatima.

The relationship between the two women is the main theme in “**Haleema and Fatima**”. The family is journeying back to their village, accompanied by Aly and Aisha, who will stay with them for a visit there. Suddenly, Haleema’s baby is born, and Fatima helps her, using her new skills as a midwife. Though there were difficulties, Fatima is able to safeguard their health. This prompts Haleema to reconcile with her sister-in-law.

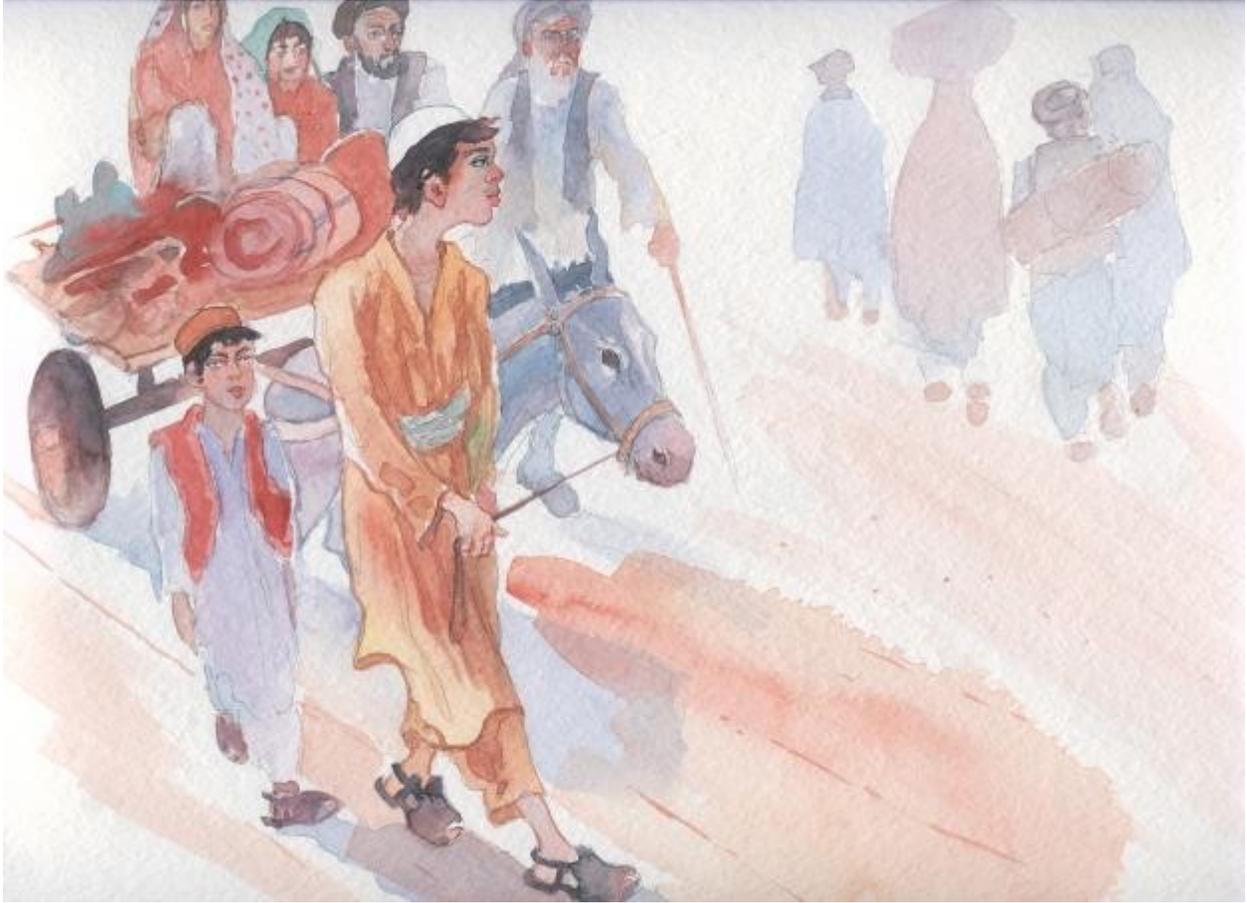
Healing Elements:

Healing images and symbols: hope, birth.

Modeling of peaceful and virtuous interactions: determination, service to others, thankfulness, loving, caring, giving, relationship repair and reconciliation.

Problem Issues: fear of the unknown, grief.

Healing Strategies: storytelling, cooperation, hospitality and generosity to others, finding a new purpose in life, asking for and granting forgiveness.

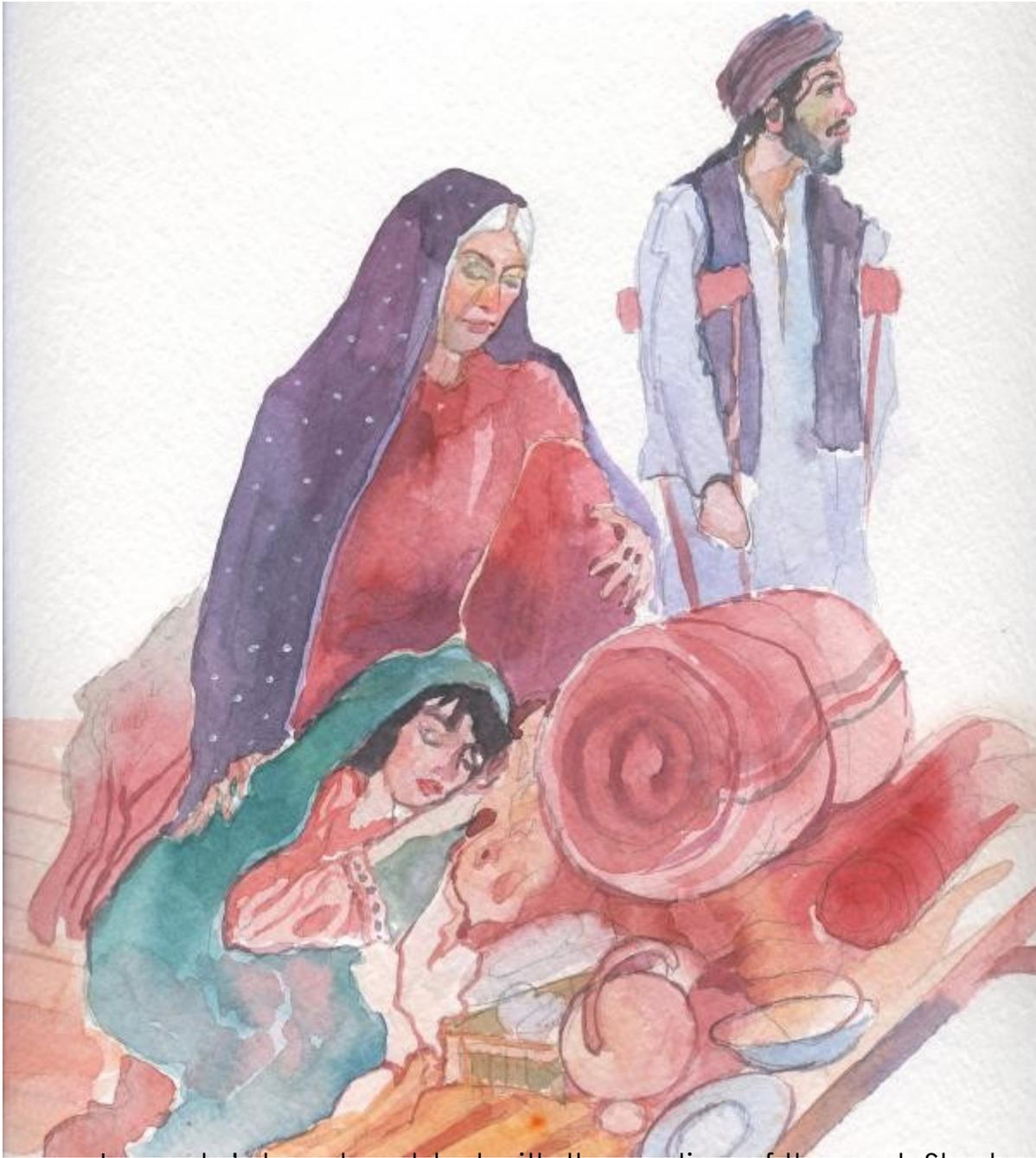


They had been walking for what seemed like days but it had only been a few hours. Early that morning they had set out full of hope and expectancy, but with every hour, they met more and more families, tired and hungry, cold and hopeless, seeking better fortune in the city.

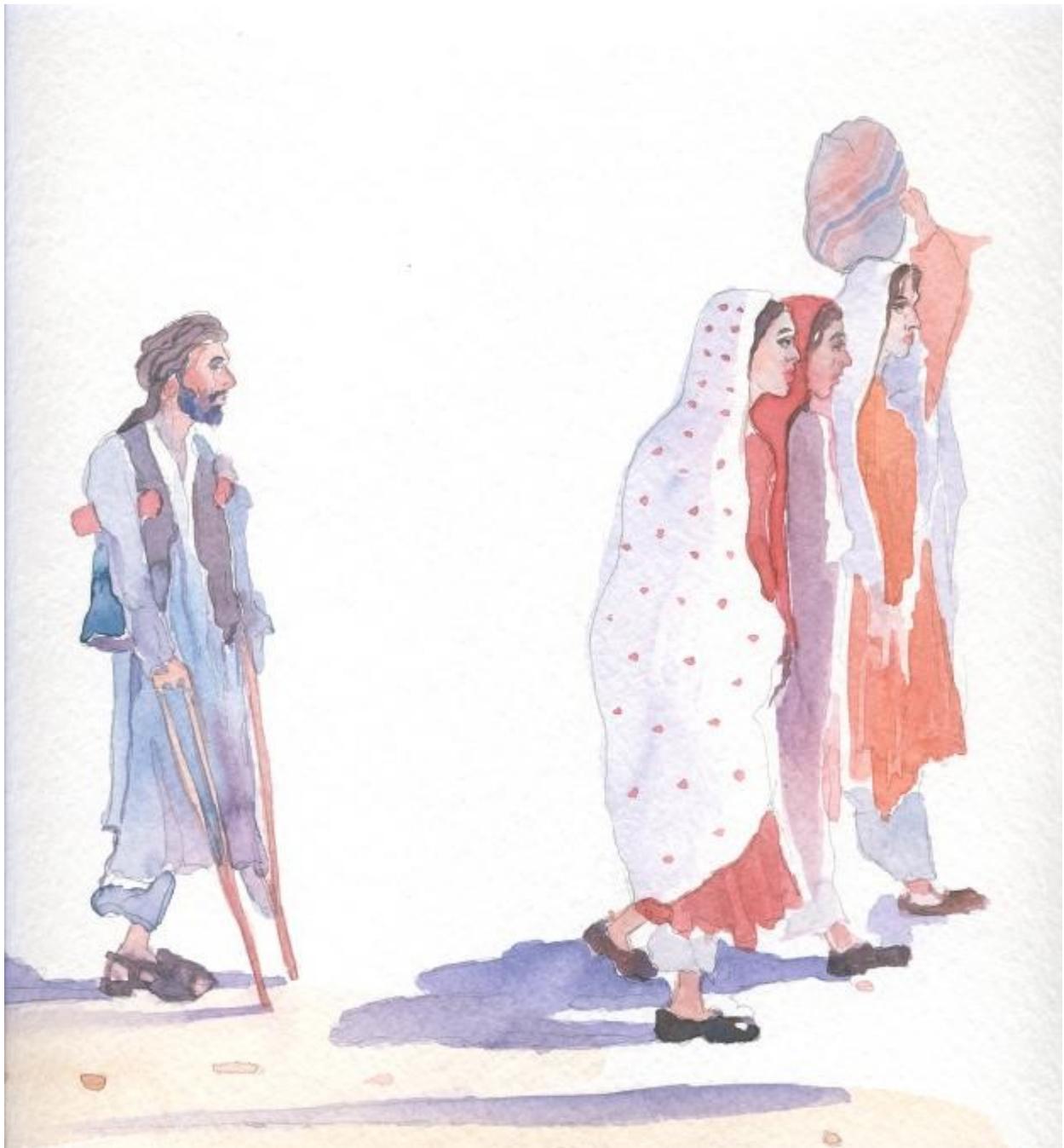
Jameela watched the long line of travelers.

“Why is everyone going to the city? Why are they leaving the country and we are going back to the country?” asked the young girl of her grandmother.

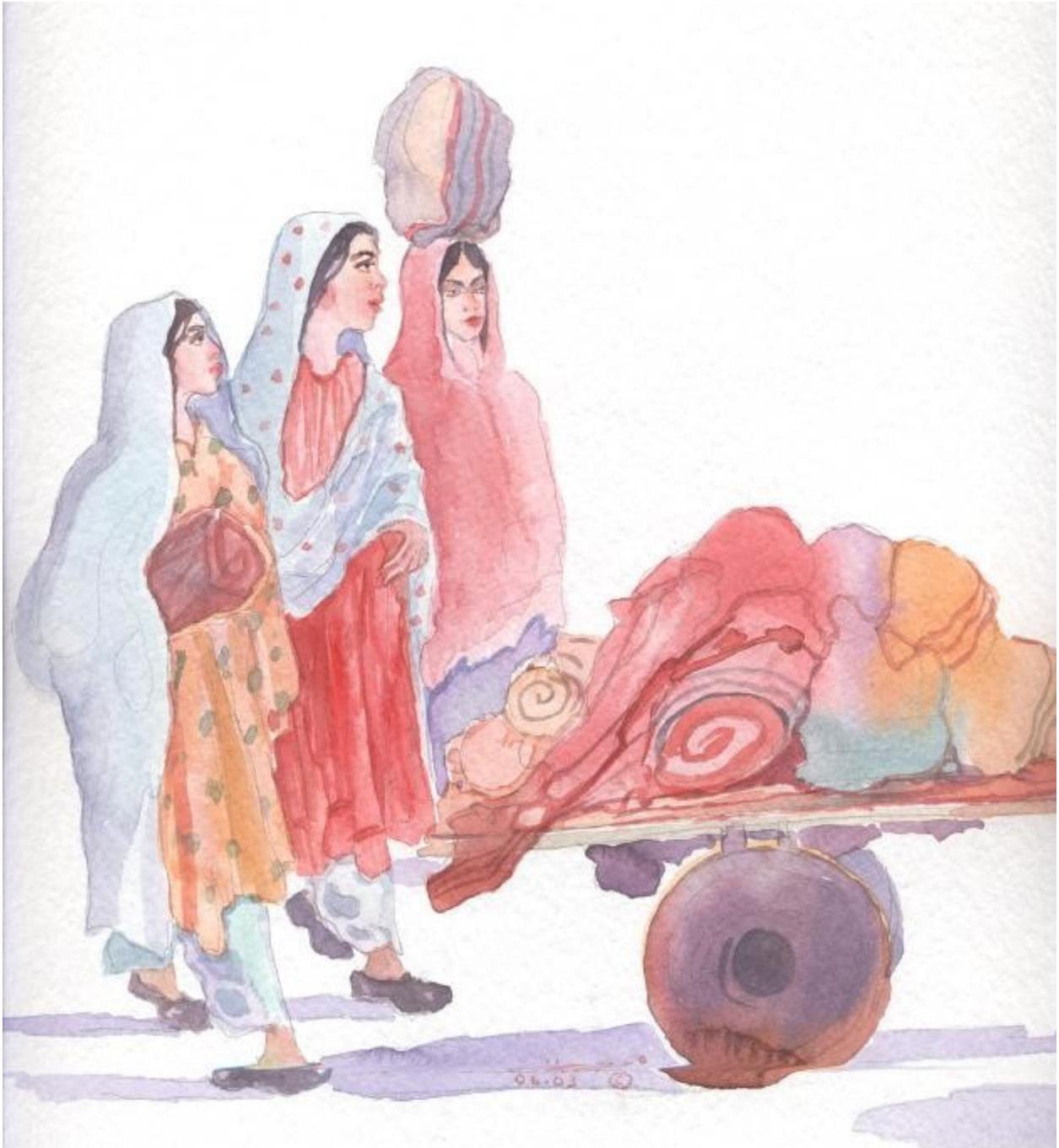
Bibi Jan sighed. “In different parts of the country there is very little water so it is difficult to grow any crops. In our region, the water is scarce but there is enough. Don’t worry, Jameela. Remember when we left home, you said — you promised— that everything was going to be all right? Well, it was. The city was good for all of us. Your father learned to make carpets and now he can support his family. We will get by even if there is very little water for crops. Your brother learned to be a Landmine Educator and will be very helpful to our village and the whole region. He will save many lives by helping children to avoid the mines. Auntie Fatima has also learned a great deal about helping other people.” Bibi Jan stroked her granddaughter’s hair as they huddled together under the shawl. The donkey plodded steadily forward. “What a blessing this cart is; I am so thankful to Abdullah for trading his bicycle.”



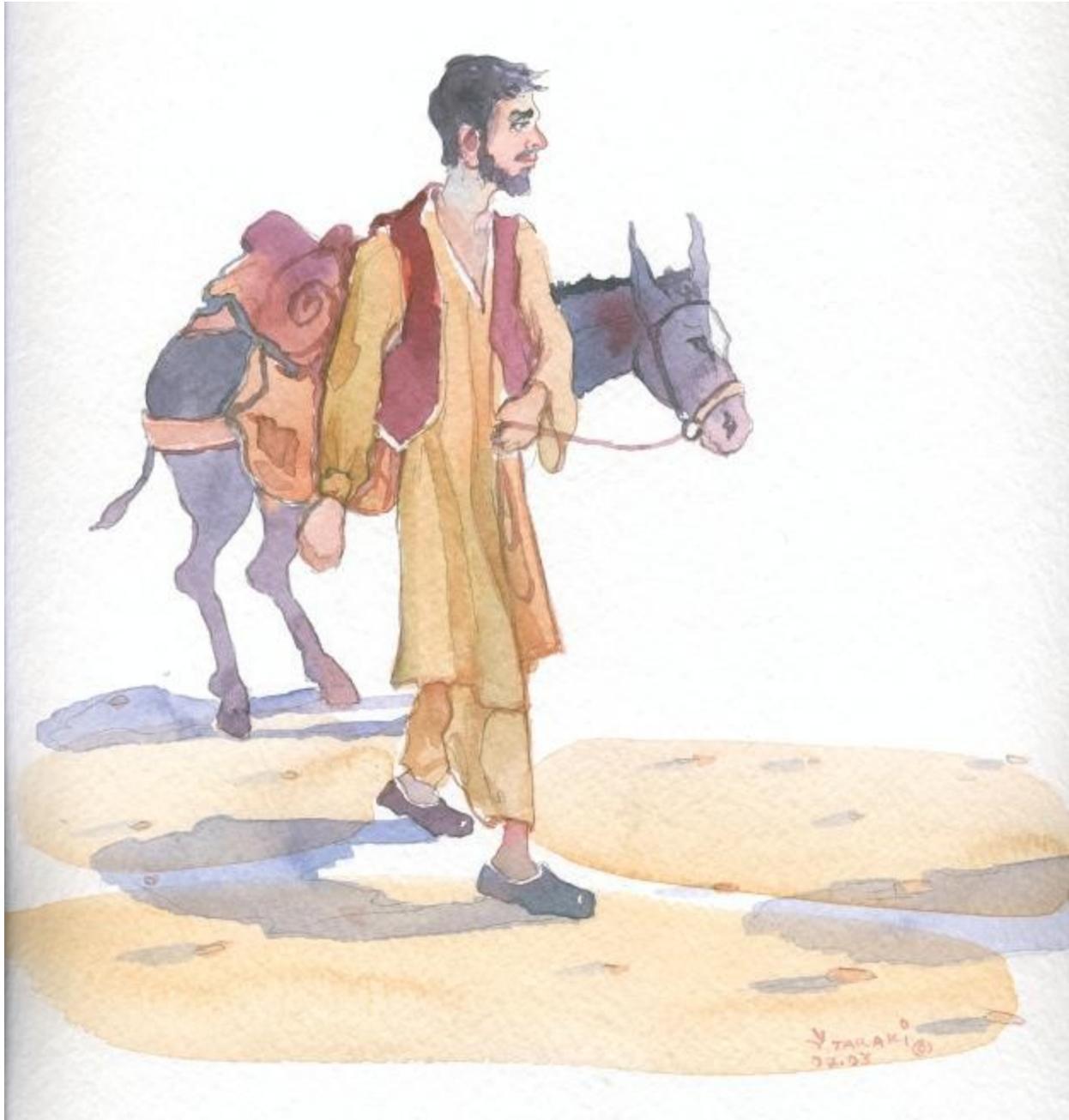
Jameela's head nodded with the motion of the cart. She had fallen asleep. Bibi Jan tucked the shawl around her and looked at her family. Her husband, Kaka Ghulam, walked slowly leaning on the donkey. In his other hand, he held the hand of his little grandson. She could hear that he was telling Ahmed a story about the old days to keep his thoughts from his fatigue.



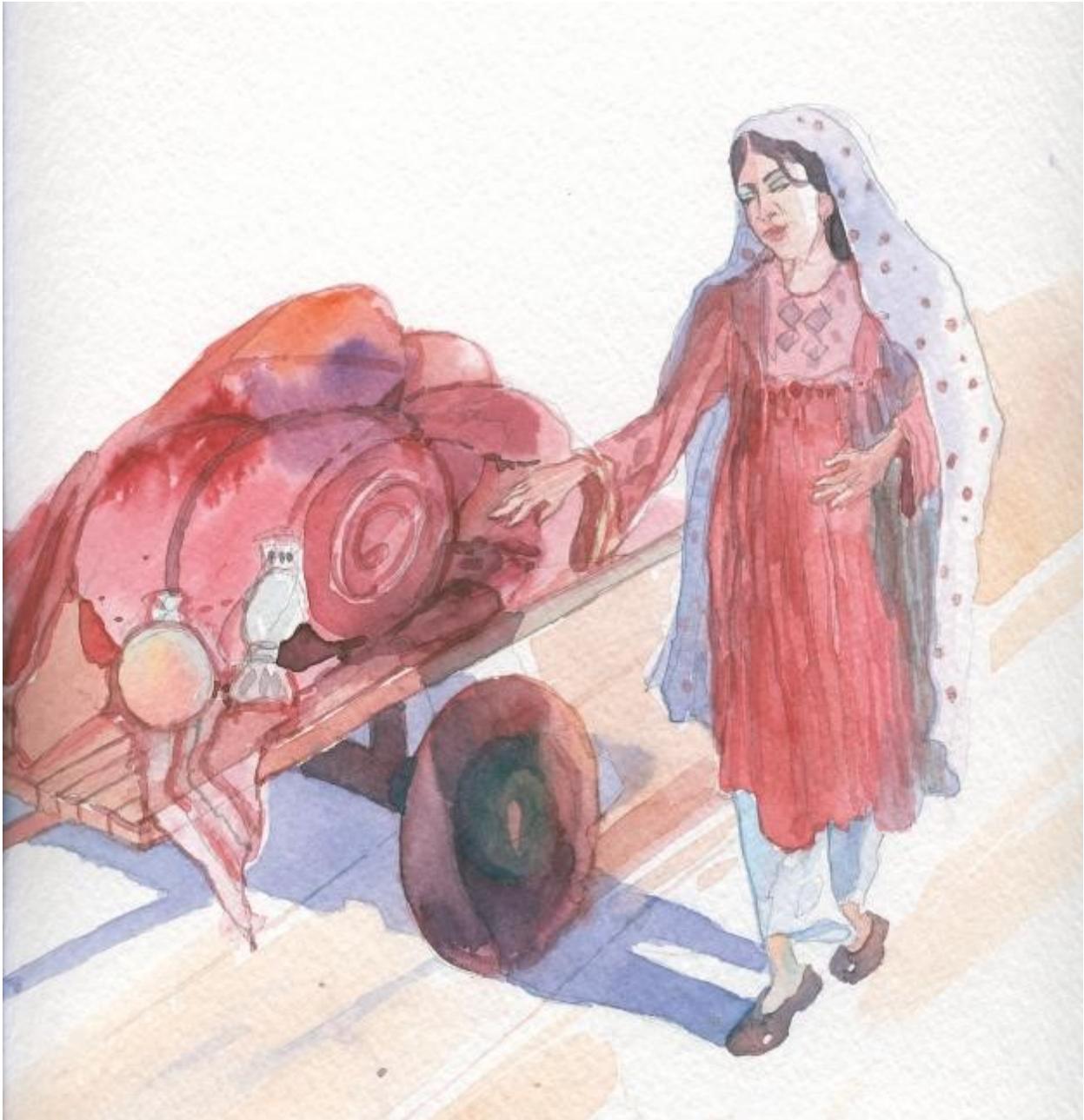
Merza, her son, valiantly hobbled along on his crutches. Bibi Jan cringed to think of the pain and exhaustion he must feel. As soon as Jameela has some sleep, they would let him rest in the cart. Abdullah, now so tall, held his father's arm, lending him his strength.



Bibi Jan turned and looked behind her. Her three daughters-in-law walked together talking quietly. In the middle was Haleema who would soon have Bibi Jan's fourth grandchild. Haleema looked tired. Fatima and Aisha each held an arm. Her pace was slowing.



Aly followed, leading the second donkey, which was loaded with all of their belongings. How happy she was that her second son was coming home again. Somehow it took the sting out her longing for her youngest son Yunus, who was killed by the landmine that cost Merza his leg. Now they would be together until the farm was repaired and operational again.

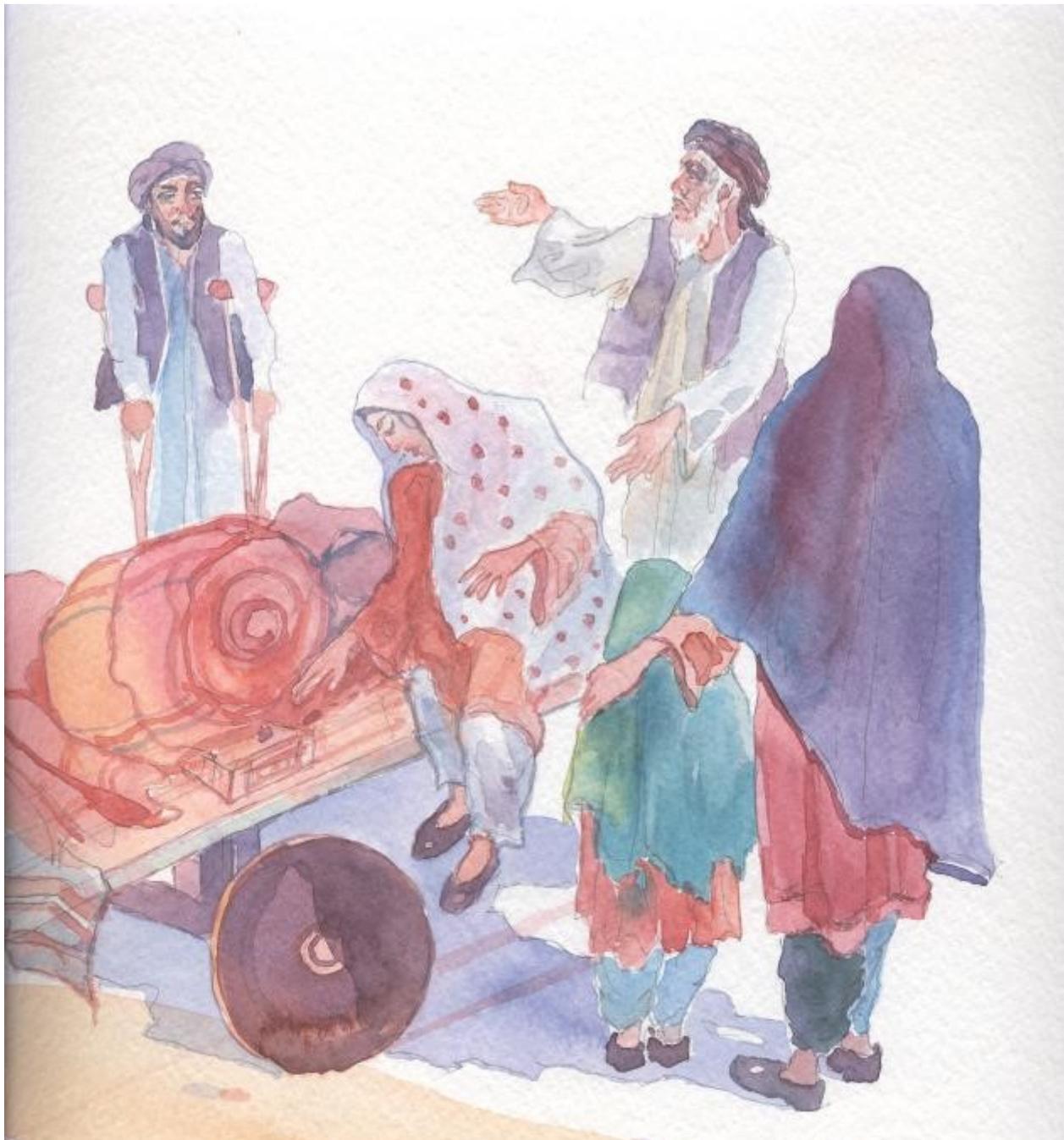


Jameela stirred. "Jameela, we must let your mother and father rest. It is time to walk again."

"Yes, Bibi Jan, I'll walk," replied the girl sleepily.

"Kaka Ghulam, let Merza and Haleema ride now please."

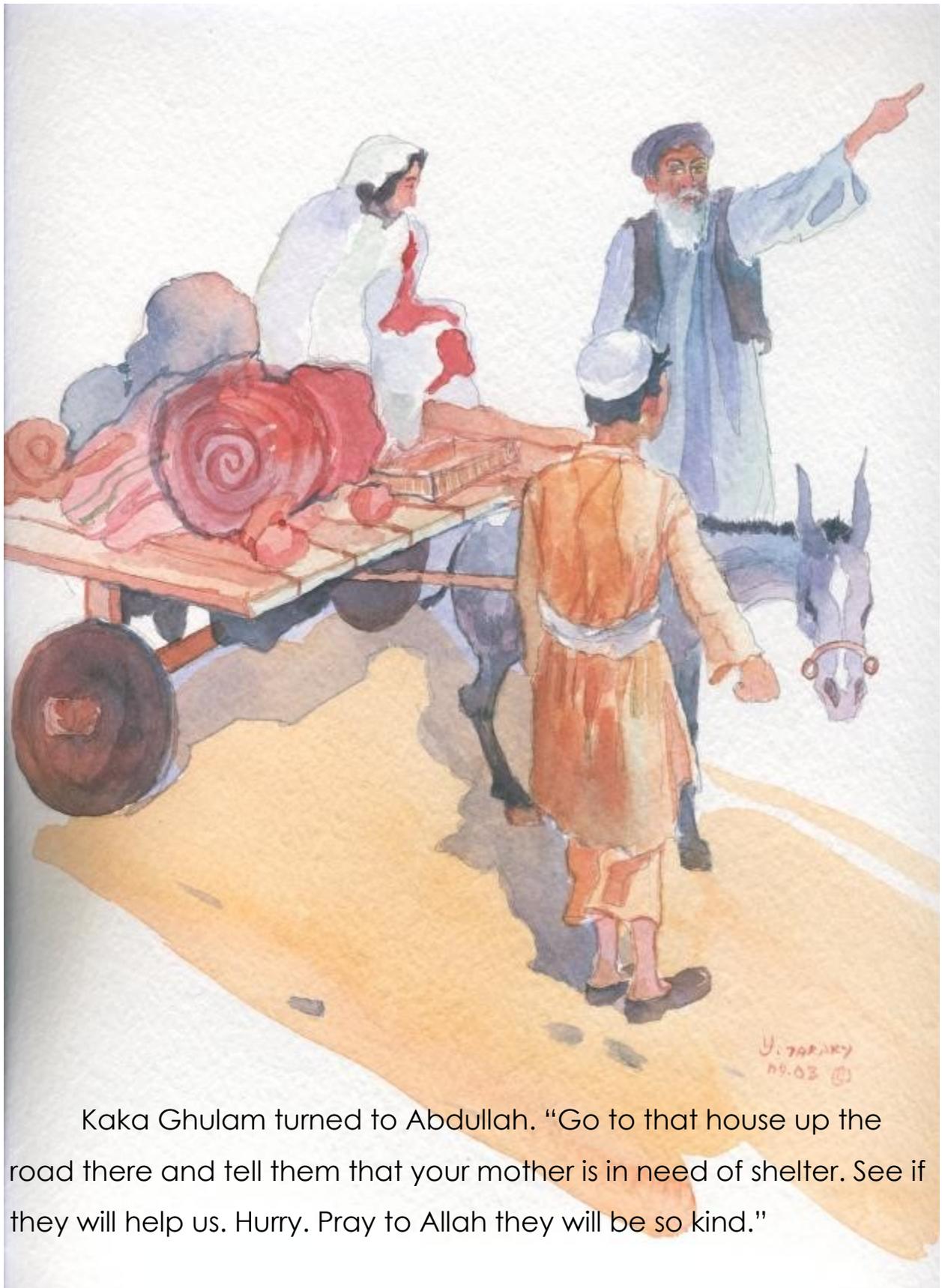
"Haleema, you must ride now, you look very tired," said Bibi Jan.



"Yes, I'm afraid that I can't walk further." As Haleema started to climb into the cart, she cried out in pain.

"Mother, what's wrong? Are you all right?" Jameela was frightened by the pain she could see in her mother's face.

"I think," moaned Haleema, "we must find some shelter."



Kaka Ghulam turned to Abdullah. "Go to that house up the road there and tell them that your mother is in need of shelter. See if they will help us. Hurry. Pray to Allah they will be so kind."



The next morning, Jameela stared at her new sister cradled in Bibi Jan's arms. She was amazed at the perfection of each tiny finger. Gently, she kissed the little hand.

Bibi Jan looked at Fatima. “ Fatima you were very helpful and so very skilled. Thank you for bringing this new life into the world. Haleema and the baby might not be alive had you not been able to nurse them through the difficulties. This baby is very tiny and born too early. I am very proud of you.” Bibi Jan smiled at her young daughter-in-law.

“Thank you, Fatima,” said Haleema. “I am so grateful to you. You saved her life.”

“Just rest now, Haleema,” soothed Fatima, turning to take Jameela’s hand. “Let’s go and let your mother rest.”

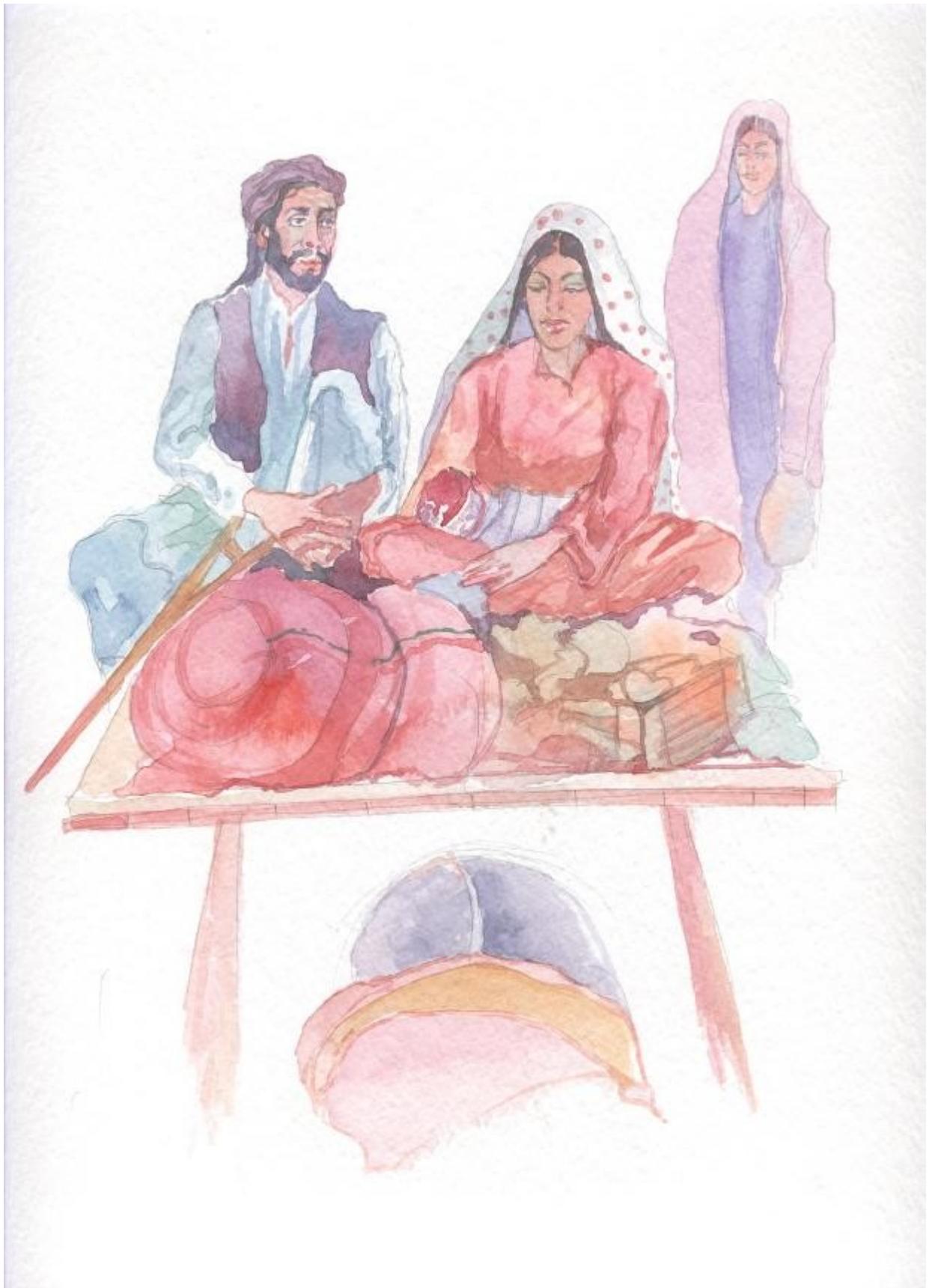
Fatima and Jameela walked through the doorway of the room. Looking up at them were many faces, some of them strangers whose language was unknown to them.

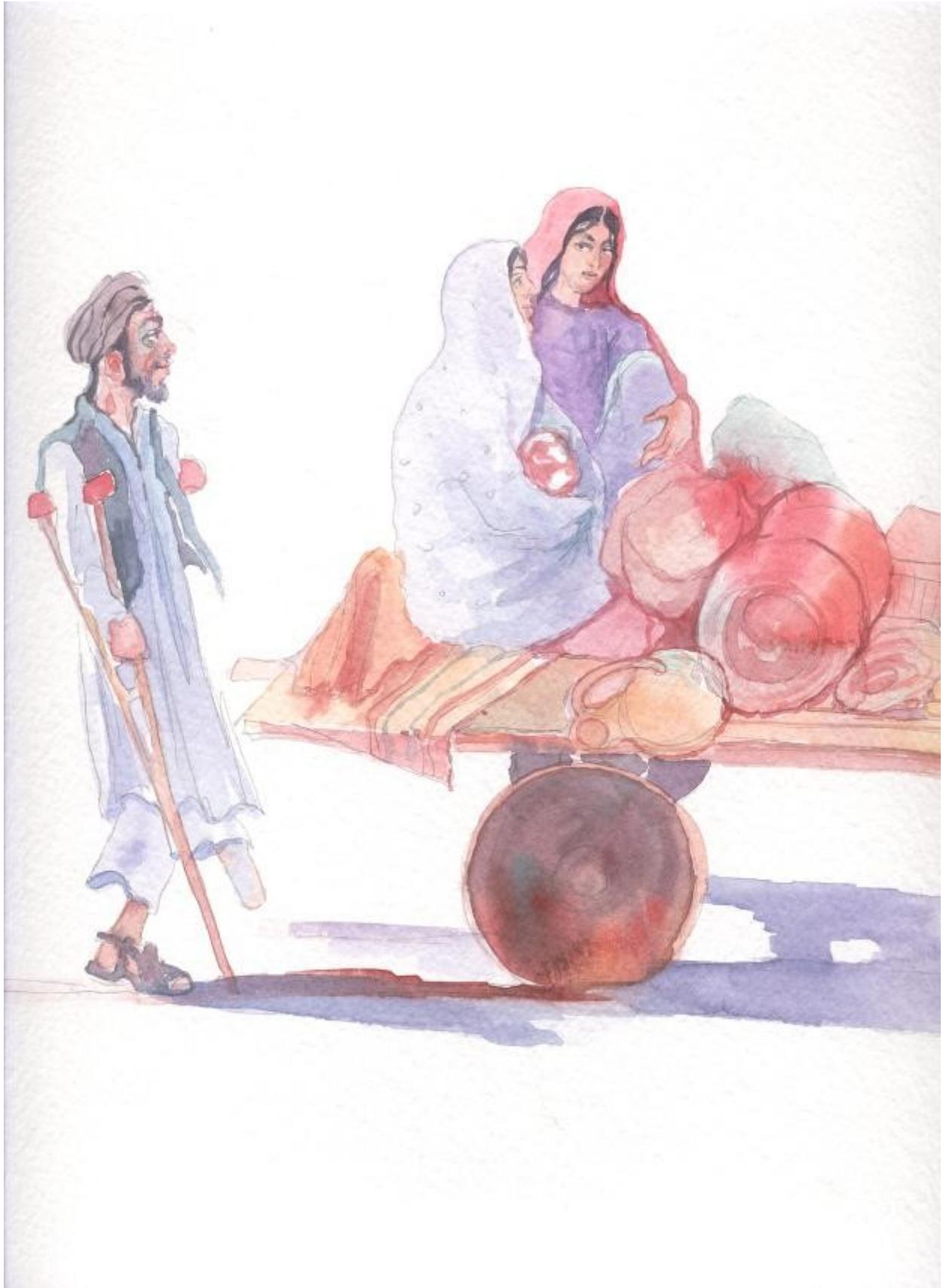
“The baby is a girl and she is healthy. Haleema is resting. Everything is all right.” Fatima looked to their hosts and smiled her thanks for their generosity.

“Jameela, please go tell the men our good news.”

“Yes, Auntie Fatima.” Jameela ran outside to tell the others.

As the sun rose the following morning, Haleema, the baby and Merza climbed into the cart. The sun warmed their backs. Their hosts had been very kind and generous. Gifts were exchanged, as were promises to visit in the future. The new baby had raised everyone’s hopes for the family’s return to the farm.





“Merza, I am very proud of Fatima,” admitted Haleema. “She has worked very hard even though she has been so sad. I hope that her new role as midwife to our village will help her find purpose in her life without Yunus. She is so young to be a widow.”

“Fatima has suffered a great deal. Perhaps we have overlooked her suffering because of our own,” said Merza.

“I am sorry that I have been unkind to her,” said Haleema sadly.

“Haleema, it is Fatima who needs to hear these words.” And with that, Merza stopped the cart, grabbing his crutches. “I will ask her to come.”

Fatima climbed up and looked carefully at Haleema.

“How do you feel?” she inquired.

“I feel very well, thanks to you,” smiled Haleema.

Fatima looked at the baby swaddled in blankets. “I’m sorry that I was not very helpful at Aly’s house but I had to take the midwife course to keep myself from thinking about Yunus all the time. I try to think of his life but all I see is his death. I thought that perhaps seeing new life coming into the world would help me to remember his life. I had hoped that your baby would be a boy so that he could be named Yunus.”

Haleema held Fatima's hand. " We would like to name her Fatima. Without you, she might not be alive. I hope that you can forgive my unkind words and allow us to show our gratitude," said Haleema.

Fatima wiped away her tears. "I would be honoured if you would name her Fatima."

The two women embraced each other. Each could feel the soft bundle of the new baby sleeping peacefully between them. Warm, pink rays of the rising sun glowed on the road as they headed for home.



Story 14 Haleema and Fatima

Things to Talk About:

1. Is it possible for the unhappiness of a family member not to be noticed? What can you do?
2. What things make you feel hopeful about your future?
3. What causes you to worry about your future?
4. In the story, the family has been very determined to work together to get what they all want. In your life, have you worked with others to achieve a common goal?

Things To Do:

1. Is there anyone you have been unkind to who might be very glad to be good friends again? Can you reconcile?
2. Try to focus more on the things that help you feel hopeful about your future. You will have less time to spend on the things that cause you to worry!

