

7 stories about 'Abdu'l-Bahá for children who want to serve the world

MIGHTY



SHIRIN TAHERZADEH
ILLUSTRATED BY ALYSSA DE ASIS



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Dear Children,

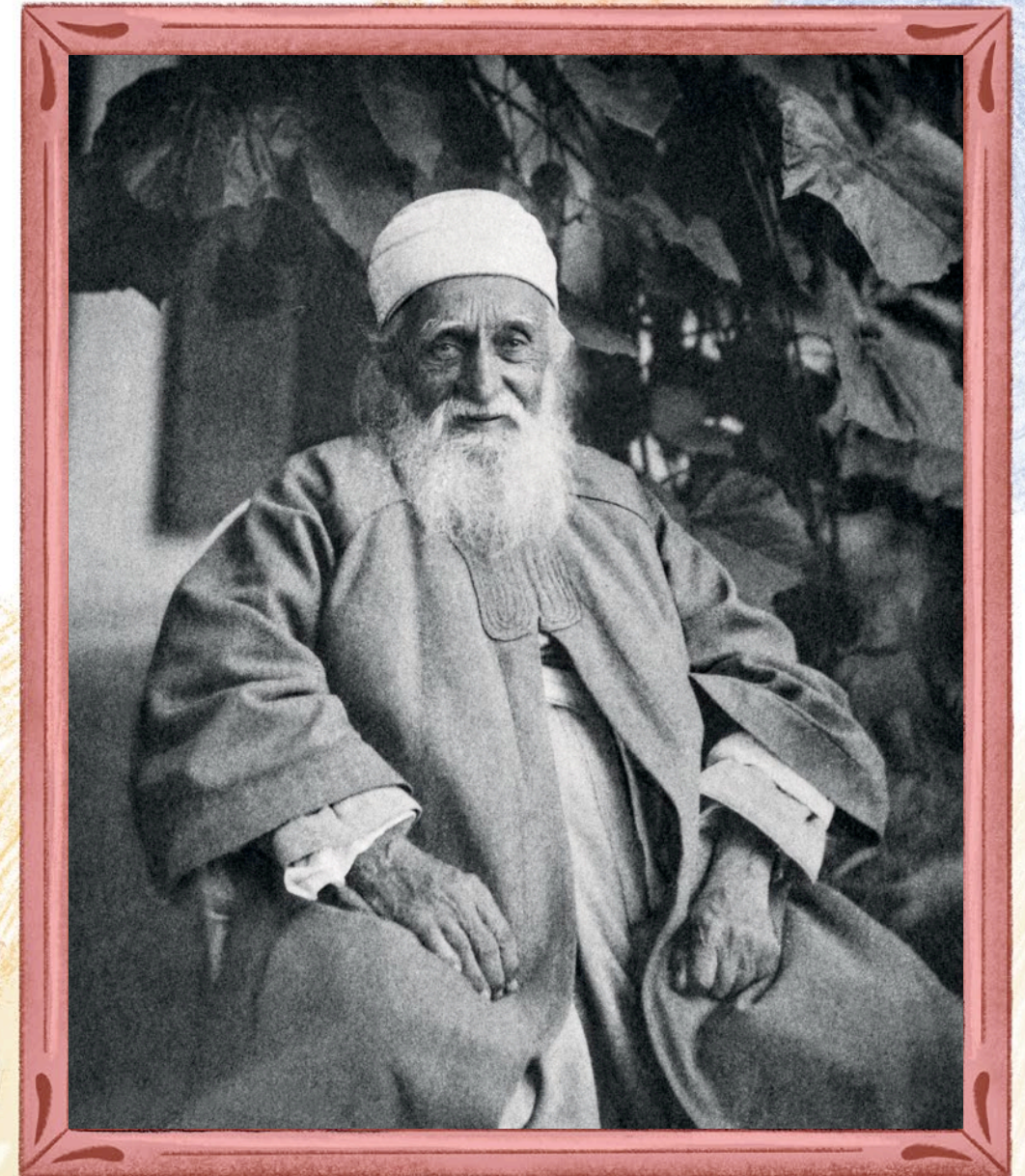
Over one hundred years ago, there lived an extraordinary person whose name was 'Abdu'l-Bahá. His remarkable life has inspired the hearts of millions of children and grown ups around the world.

'Abdu'l-Bahá was given the title, 'the Most Mighty Branch'. Imagine a magnificent tree with many branches. It is the most mighty branch that withstands the winds and storms of time, and offers the greatest shelter and protection. This is how 'Abdu'l-Bahá was. Despite facing many hardships, He was a constant source of love and kindness, and a refuge to all. He dedicated His life to promoting the Bahá'í teachings of unity, justice and peace.

The stories in this book are based on real events. Some of the characters, however, have been imagined by the author and are marked with a little * by their name.

We hope that these stories will inspire you to live a life of service, following the example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Love,
Shirin, Alyssa, Yas, Anjali, and Neysan





The Apple and the Bread

'Ishqábád (today in Turkmenistan) and London (England)
1912

'Hájí Amín!' shouted the young man. 'Sir, please wait!'

Hájí Amín was walking through the busy marketplace and didn't hear his name being called out. The sounds of busy merchants haggling with crowds of customers could be heard on every side. The smells of saffron and cinnamon, roasted almonds and dates, sweet melons and oranges wafted through the air. Bright red, hand-woven rugs hung from every other stall in the market.

'Hájí Amín!' called the young man again, this time louder. Hájí Amín turned around and saw the young man running towards him.

'Good sir,' said the young man, catching his breath. 'I heard that you are leaving 'Ishqábád tonight and travelling to London where you will meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá?'

'Yes, that is true,' answered Hájí Amín, eyeing the young man curiously.

'It's my dream to go and meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá,' said the young man, with a shy smile, 'but I work in the fields and can barely afford the clothes on my back. I know it will always be just a dream.'

The young man reached into his torn pocket and pulled out a small package wrapped in a thin, cotton handkerchief. With both hands, he offered it to Hájí Amín. 'Please can you give this to 'Abdu'l-Bahá?'

Hájí Amín noticed that although the young man's hands were stained from working in the fields, the handkerchief was spotless.

'It's my meal for today,' said the young man. Lowering his eyes, he whispered, 'This is all that I have to offer.'

Hájí Amín graciously accepted the gift with both hands and promised to deliver it to 'Abdu'l-Bahá.



That night, Hájí Amín, together with a few friends, left 'Ishqábád. They travelled for many days and nights on foot and horseback, by train and boat. Finally, after a long and tiring journey, they arrived in the crowded and smog-covered city of London.

The next morning, the travellers received an invitation to join 'Abdu'l-Bahá at a lunch that had been arranged in His honour. Although tired from their long journey, Hájí Amín and his friends eagerly made their way to the house where the lunch was taking place.

When they arrived at the home and saw 'Abdu'l-Bahá, their hearts filled with joy and all feelings of exhaustion vanished.



'Please come and join us for lunch,' said the kind host, as she welcomed everyone into the dining room.

'Abdu'l-Bahá and the guests made their way into the dining room and took their seats at the table. Hájí Amín, however, remained behind. He opened his bag and carefully took out the small package. He had not forgotten his promise to the young man in 'Ishqábád and he was determined to deliver the gift to 'Abdu'l-Bahá as soon as possible.

Hájí Amín entered the dining room and suddenly stopped. Never before had he seen such an extravagant feast! The large dining table was filled with all kinds of delicious-looking and colourful foods.

Hájí Amín then looked at the package in his hands. 'How humble is this gift that I am to give 'Abdu'l-Bahá. That young man's lunch surely cannot compare to the feast on this table.'

Then, remembering the sacrifice of the young man, Hájí Amín slowly made his way to 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

'Dear 'Abdu'l-Bahá,' Hájí Amín whispered, but not softly enough, as everyone hushed to a silence to listen. Hájí Amín continued, 'As I was leaving 'Ishqábád, a young man asked me to give this to you.' He gave the small package to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, adding, 'The young man said that this was all that he had to offer.'

All eyes were now on the package. 'Abdu'l-Bahá gently unwrapped the gift. To the surprise of all the guests, hidden in the handkerchief was a dried up apple and two small and dry loaves of bread.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's face became radiant. Without any hesitation, He broke off a small piece of the bread and ate it. He then joyfully and lovingly passed the bread around the table, saying, 'Eat with me of this gift of humble love.'

The guests each took a small piece of the bread, and then ate of the great feast that was laid out before them. Yet, Hájí Amín could not help but notice that 'Abdu'l-Bahá ate only of the apple and the bread.

'If only that young man could be here today,' thought Hájí Amín, with a smile. 'The sacrifice he has made is truly a gift of love.'

To make a sacrifice is to receive a gift.

'Abdu'l-Bahá





The Veil

'Akká (today in Israel)
Late 1800s/Early 1900s

The young boy* carefully climbed up the stone sea-wall that wrapped around the old city of 'Akká. Steadying himself, he stood on the tips of his toes. He anxiously scanned the crowds of people walking through the narrow streets below. The sunlight danced on the red rooftops, and the blazing heat baked the cobbled streets below. Peering through the crowds, the young boy finally spotted his two visitors! He jumped down from the wall and ran towards them.



'Thank you for coming!' he said, breathlessly, as he reached 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the doctor. 'Please come this way. My uncle is in the building over there.'

The young boy guided them through a narrow alleyway and opened the wooden door of an old brick building. 'He's on the top floor,' he said. With a whisper, he added, 'Thank you again for coming.'

'Abdu'l-Bahá and the doctor entered through the creaking door and made their way up the narrow and dirty stairs. The doctor had never been to this building before, nor did he recognise the little boy. 'Who is the patient that 'Abdu'l-Bahá has asked me to come and visit?' he wondered.

Reaching the top floor, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the doctor entered a small, dark room. Lying in the corner, on a thin and torn mattress, was the patient.

The moment the doctor saw the patient he stopped in his tracks. 'This must be a mistake!' he thought. 'This can't be the man that 'Abdu'l-Bahá has asked me to help? He has always been so unkind to 'Abdu'l-Bahá!'



The doctor remembered how, just last month, in front of a large group of people, this man had spoken rudely about 'Abdu'l-Bahá, shouting, 'Why do you speak to Him? He is a Bahá'í!' This, even though 'Abdu'l-Bahá had shown only love and kindness towards him. 'Abdu'l-Bahá had even given the man's family food and clothes when they were in need.



And now, although this man had shown only unkindness towards 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 'Abdu'l-Bahá again had come to help him, not only with food and money, but with a doctor, too.

The doctor reluctantly made his way to the sick man lying on the bed. He asked the man how he was feeling and then asked to take his pulse. The man stretched out his arm. Then, to the shock of the doctor, with his other hand the man lifted his grey cloak and held it in front of his own face. The doctor could not believe what was happening!

'Not only has this man shut out his heart to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, but now he's covering his face so that he does not even look at 'Abdu'l-Bahá!' thought the doctor, aghast. 'I cannot bear to see such rudeness shown towards 'Abdu'l-Bahá, especially after all that He has done for this man.'

Angry with the man, the doctor abruptly got up to leave. Turning towards the door, the doctor expected that 'Abdu'l-Bahá, too, would leave. However, 'Abdu'l-Bahá did not move. He remained by the man's side.

The doctor paused.

'Abdu'l-Bahá is showing only love,' he realised.

Following 'Abdu'l-Bahá's example, the doctor turned around and slowly made his way back to the man, whose face remained covered by his cloak. The doctor examined him and gave him what was needed to get better. Only then did 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the doctor leave.

The doctor never forgot that day.



Over the coming years, whenever the doctor would see the man, either in the street or in the market, his heart would fill with sadness. Despite 'Abdu'l-Bahá's constant and untiring love, the man continued to shout rude and unkind words towards Him. Whenever the man would see 'Abdu'l-Bahá, even from across the street, he would cover his face with his cloak, so as not to look at 'Abdu'l-Bahá's face.

'How can a heart be so veiled?' the doctor would ask himself, sadly.

Then, one evening, many years later, the veil was finally lifted.

There was a chilly breeze in the air and the winter sun was getting ready to set. The doctor had just seen his last patient for the day and was slowly making his way home. As he walked up the cobbled street, he noticed someone standing in front of the house of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He thought he recognised the man, but his eyesight had worsened over the years and he could not make out who it was, especially in the dark.

Curious, the doctor moved closer and watched as the man knocked on the door. A minute later, the door opened and the street was flooded with light from the house. 'I thought it was him!' said the doctor to himself, this time seeing clearly that it was the patient who had covered his face so many years ago. 'What brings him to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's home?'

Just at that moment, 'Abdu'l-Bahá came to the door. To the doctor's surprise, the man fell to his knees and started to weep. 'Forgive me, Sir!' he cried. 'For twenty-four years I have done evil to you, for twenty-four years you have done good to me. Please forgive me.'

'Abdu'l-Bahá immediately bade the man to rise, showing him the same love and kindness that He had shown him for the last twenty-four years.



The doctor's heart filled with the light of understanding.
'Love,' said the doctor to himself. 'It can only be love that has caused the veil to finally be lifted.'

**The young boy is an imaginary character who observes a true story about 'Abdu'l-Bahá.*

*Love gives life to the lifeless.
Love lights a flame in the heart that is cold.
Love brings hope to the hopeless
and gladdens the hearts of the sorrowful.*
'Abdu'l-Bahá



The Seat of Honour

Washington, DC (USA)
1912

'Today I am most happy.'

A breathless silence filled the hall at Howard University.

The towering arches stretched over the captivated crowd of more than one thousand people who had come to hear 'Abdu'l-Bahá speak.

Addressing them from the stage, 'Abdu'l-Bahá continued, 'I am very happy that white and black have gathered together in this meeting . . . I pray that you be with one another in utmost harmony and love.'

Rose* sat on the edge of her seat and looked around in wonderment. Never before had she seen so many black and white people sitting together in one gathering. As a white American woman living in Washington, DC—a city filled with racism and racial segregation—Rose had lived her entire life in a neighbourhood where only white people lived, had gone to a school with only white children, and had mostly only white friends.

'The world of humanity . . . is like a garden,' said 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 'and humankind are like the many-coloured flowers.'

Rose thought deeply about these words.

“Abdu’l-Bahá is saying that each person is like a flower in a garden. Every flower is unique, and the differences in colour are what makes the garden beautiful. What He says is so true! How boring if all the colours were the same!”

Rose looked around the hall again. She felt as though she was beginning to see the world in a new way. ‘If only everyone would think like this,’ she thought, ‘our city would be a much more just and fair place to live in.’

As ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s talk came to an end, the audience erupted in applause and everyone rose to their feet. They spontaneously



formed two lines, one on each side of the aisle, to make way for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. As He left the hall, many bowed their heads in respect, or waved their hats and handkerchiefs in gratitude.

Rose followed the jubilant crowd out of the hall and started to make her way to the home of Madame and Mr Khan. Madame Khan, Rose’s friend, had invited her to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s talk that morning. To Rose’s delight, the Khans had also invited her to a private lunch at their home in honour of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

After a short journey, Rose arrived at their grand, four-storey home.

'Welcome!' exclaimed Madame Khan joyfully, as Rose entered the reception area of the house. 'We are delighted you could join us.'

Rose looked around with wide eyes. Beautiful curtains of red and blue hung from the windows, and the walls were covered with golden-threaded tapestries.

'Allow me to introduce you to some of our guests,' said Madame Khan. 'Miss Juliet Thompson, Mr Alexander Graham Bell . . .'

'Miss Thompson, the artist!' Rose thought, with excitement. 'And even Mr Bell, the inventor of the telephone, is here!'

Rose could feel the anticipation growing in the room as they waited to meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Once Madame Khan had finished making all the introductions, she turned to Rose and said, 'Our Honoured Guest, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, is meeting with our friend Mr Louis Gregory and will join us in a few minutes.'

Rose had never met Mr Gregory, but she had seen his name in the newspapers a number of times. Mr Gregory was a well-known African American lawyer and promoter of justice and race unity.

'I was so moved by 'Abdu'l-Bahá's talk this morning,' Rose said to one of the guests who was standing next to her. 'His message of race unity is exactly what our city needs!'

At that very moment, the lively chatter in the room came to a sudden stop. 'Abdu'l-Bahá had entered the reception area, with Mr Gregory by His side. Rose's heart flooded with joy.

'Dinner is served!' announced Madame Khan. All the guests followed 'Abdu'l-Bahá into the dining room. All the guests, that is, except for Mr Gregory, who quietly remained behind.

As they entered the dining room, Rose marvelled at the long and elaborate banquet table. Nineteen place settings had been clearly marked and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the guest of honour, was to be seated at the head of the table.

Everyone took their seats.

Suddenly, 'Abdu'l-Bahá stood up and looked around Him. 'Where is Mr Gregory?' He asked. 'Bring Mr Gregory!'

There was a sudden hush in the dining room. Rose looked at 'Abdu'l-Bahá in astonishment. 'Surely 'Abdu'l-Bahá knows that in America white and black people do not eat at the same dinner table?' she thought to herself.



Mr Khan immediately rose from his chair and went to look for Mr Gregory, who had already made his way out of the house.

Rose watched curiously as 'Abdu'l-Bahá began to rearrange the knives, forks, plates, and glasses, to make one extra place setting at the table. A ripple of activity made its way down one side of the table as the guests each moved over to make more space. Just as the twentieth chair was brought to the table, Mr Khan returned to the dining room with Mr Gregory.

'Abdu'l-Bahá called to Mr Gregory and invited him to sit next to Him, at His right-hand side.

'He has given Mr Gregory the seat of honour!' thought Rose, in awe.

'Abdu'l-Bahá then turned to the guests and told them how very pleased He was that Mr Gregory had joined them. Then, 'Abdu'l-Bahá began to speak about the need for justice, and that we are members of one human family, whatever the colour of our skin.

Rose watched and listened in wonder. 'By inviting Mr Gregory to the table,' she thought to herself, "'Abdu'l-Bahá has shown us what we need to do to bring about unity and justice. Talking about race unity is not enough! I too need to put my beliefs into action!'

**Rose is an imaginary character who observes a true story about 'Abdu'l-Bahá.*

*Let deeds, not words, be your adorning.
Bahá'u'lláh*





The Roses

New York City (USA)
1912

‘Read all about it! Read all about it!’

The distant shouts of the newspaper seller carried up into the apartment above where Howard Colby Ives sat. Howard fidgeted his feet impatiently. He adjusted his tie and looked up at the clock on the wall: twenty minutes past three. Howard let out a long sigh.

‘It’s been twenty minutes since the interview started,’ thought Howard, wearily. ‘When is the interviewer going to give ‘Abdu’l-Bahá a chance to speak?’

Howard, together with a few other guests, had come to an interview that was taking place with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The interviewer, a gentleman with round glasses, was writing an article about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and had asked to meet with Him. But, since the start of the interview, only the interviewer had spoken! His questions were long, one after the other without pause, and he didn’t give ‘Abdu’l-Bahá any opportunity to answer!

Restless, Howard looked around the room. The man to his right kept tapping his pen on his knee. The woman to his left kept opening and closing her fan. Howard looked up at the clock again: twenty-six minutes past three. The interviewer was *still* talking.

Howard's eyes strayed towards the door. He noticed the enormous bunch of pink roses that had been given to 'Abdu'l-Bahá as a gift that morning. The bunch of roses was so large and the stems so long, no vase big enough had been found to put them in.

'What *did* they put the roses in?' Howard wondered. He leaned sideways and chuckled softly at what he saw. Someone had placed the roses in the umbrella stand! 'How creative!' he thought.

The voice of the interviewer pulled his attention back into the room. The interviewer was *still* talking!





'Someone must stop the interview!' Howard thought, impatiently. He looked around the room to see who might put an end to this uncomfortable situation. Suddenly he had a thought: 'Perhaps 'Abdu'l-Bahá will just end the interview Himself!'

Howard looked to 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

To Howard's surprise, however, 'Abdu'l-Bahá sat perfectly relaxed. His brilliant blue eyes shone brightly and His face was radiant. He did not seem impatient or upset. In fact, He seemed to be listening with great interest to every word that the interviewer had to say! 'Abdu'l-Bahá's expression seemed to show infinite love, patience and understanding.

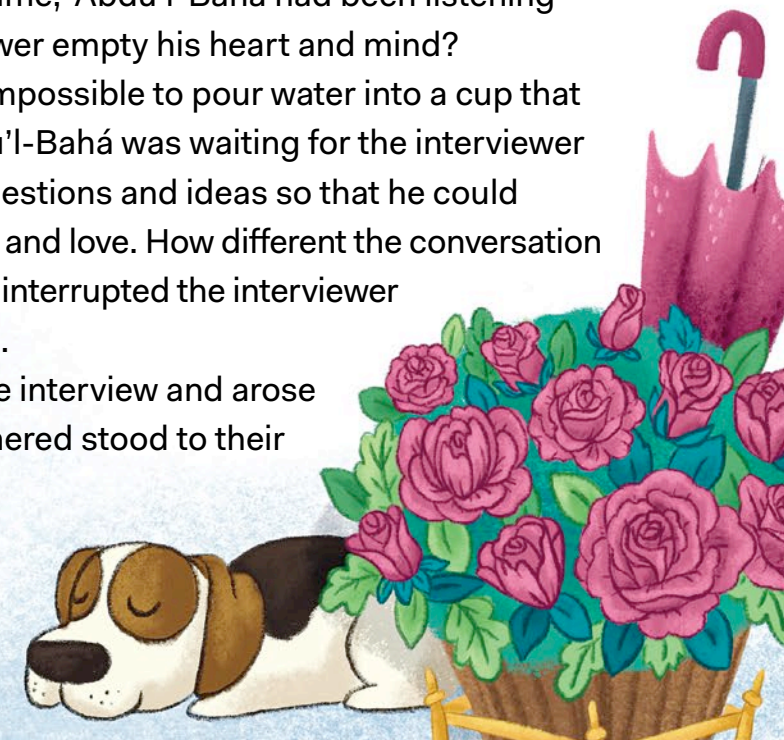
Finally, the interviewer paused. Howard held his breath as silence filled the room. Then, ever so gently, the silence was broken by the soft voice of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The humility and majesty in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's every word and expression captivated Howard's heart.

Howard looked at the interviewer and was surprised by what he saw. Something within the gentleman had changed. He was now listening eagerly to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and his face was luminous. His whole being seemed to show humility.

Could it be that, all this time, 'Abdu'l-Bahá had been listening patiently, letting the interviewer empty his heart and mind?

The same way that it is impossible to pour water into a cup that is already full, perhaps 'Abdu'l-Bahá was waiting for the interviewer to empty himself of all his questions and ideas so that he could receive 'Abdu'l-Bahá's words and love. How different the conversation might have been had anyone interrupted the interviewer before he was ready to listen.

'Abdu'l-Bahá finished the interview and arose from His chair. All those gathered stood to their



feet. 'Abdu'l-Bahá warmly embraced the interviewer and walked with him towards the front door.

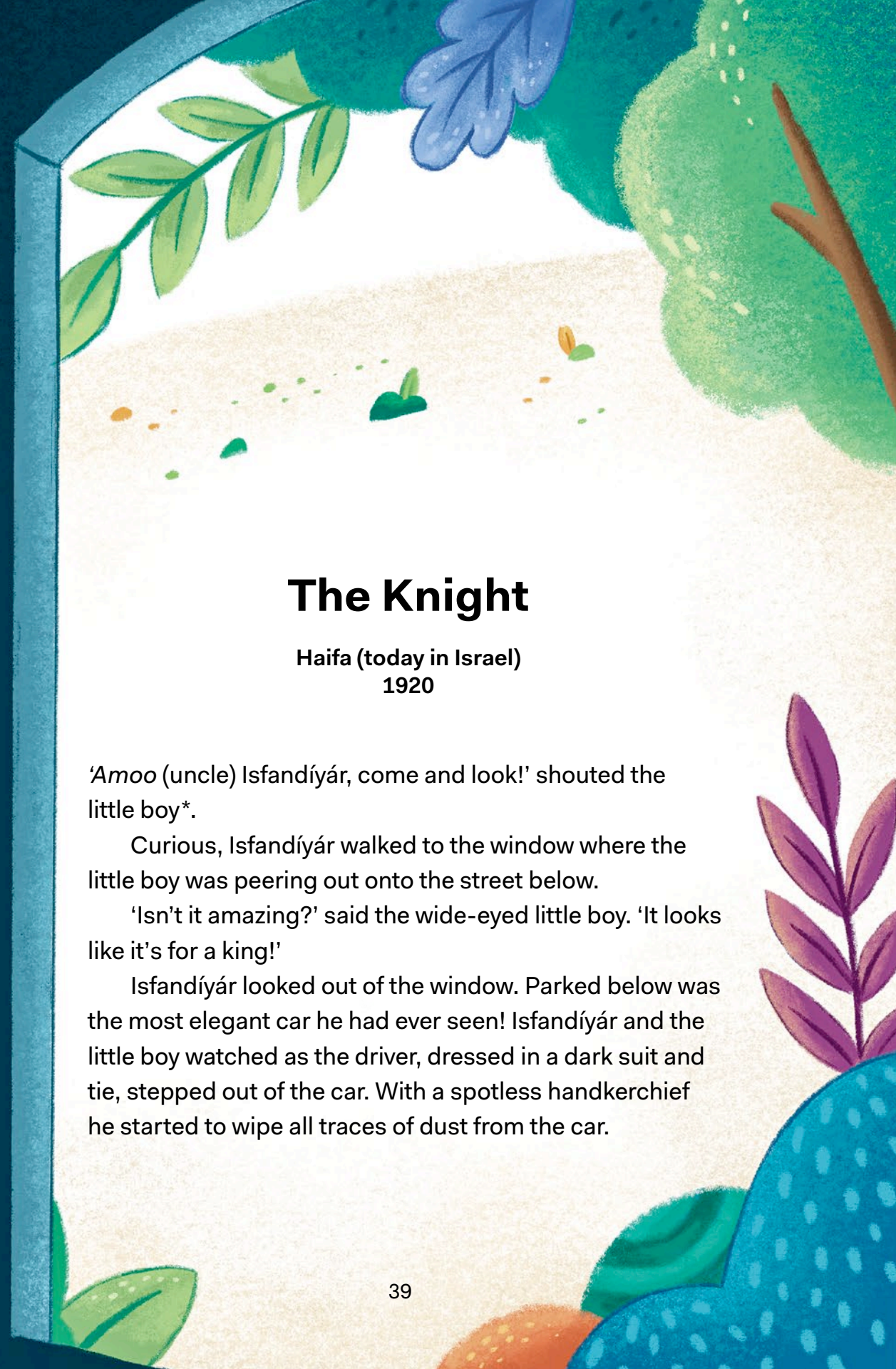
Suddenly 'Abdu'l-Bahá paused. Seeing the enormous bunch of roses in the umbrella stand, He let out a joyful laugh, filling the room with laughter and delight. He then gathered the magnificent bunch of roses in His arms and placed them in the arms of the interviewer. Surprised, the interviewer beamed with happiness. He looked so radiant, so humble, and so transformed.

Howard's face broke into a wide smile. He knew that he would never forget this experience. He had learned from 'Abdu'l-Bahá what it means to truly listen.

The wise are they that speak not unless they obtain a hearing . . .

Bahá'u'lláh





The Knight

Haifa (today in Israel)
1920

'Amoo (uncle) Isfandíyár, come and look!' shouted the little boy*.

Curious, Isfandíyár walked to the window where the little boy was peering out onto the street below.

'Isn't it amazing?' said the wide-eyed little boy. 'It looks like it's for a king!'

Isfandíyár looked out of the window. Parked below was the most elegant car he had ever seen! Isfandíyár and the little boy watched as the driver, dressed in a dark suit and tie, stepped out of the car. With a spotless handkerchief he started to wipe all traces of dust from the car.

'Amoo Isfandíyár,' the little boy turned to Isfandíyár, 'what's that fancy car doing here?'

'That car has come to take 'Abdu'l-Bahá to a very special ceremony,' Isfandíyár explained. 'Abdu'l-Bahá is going to be knighted today.'

'Wow! He's going to become a knight!' exclaimed the little boy. 'But, why?'

'On behalf of the King of England, the British Governor is thanking 'Abdu'l-Bahá for all that He did for the people of Haifa and 'Akká during the war,' said Isfandíyár.

The little boy looked confused.

'Let me explain,' said Isfandíyár, patiently. 'Before the war started, 'Abdu'l-Bahá asked the Bahá'ís near the Sea of Galilee to grow plenty of wheat and corn. But, rather than sell the grain they harvested, 'Abdu'l-Bahá asked them to store it instead.'

'But why would they store all the grain? Why not just sell it at the market?' asked the little boy.

'That's what the Bahá'ís thought too,' said Isfandíyár. 'They couldn't understand why all this grain should be stored. But then the war started. Haifa and 'Akká were cut off from most of the world and people were worried that there wouldn't be enough food for everyone.'

'Oh! So, 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave them the grain!' exclaimed the little boy.

'That's right!' smiled Isfandíyár. 'Because of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's wisdom and generosity, thousands of families, whatever their religion or nationality, had enough food to eat. And that is why the king wants to honour 'Abdu'l-Bahá with a knighthood.'



The little boy's eyes sparkled as he imagined 'Abdu'l-Bahá being knighted!

But then his smile disappeared. 'But, *Amoo* Isfandíyár,' he said with a whisper, 'why aren't you taking 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the ceremony? You always drive Him everywhere with your carriage.'

Isfandíyár let out a gentle sigh. 'Today's occasion demands something grander; more luxurious and comfortable.'

The little boy could see that Isfandíyár was feeling a little sad. He wondered if Isfandíyár wished that he could drive 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the ceremony.

Then, as though Isfandíyár knew what the boy was thinking, he turned to him, smiling. 'As you know,' he said, 'worldly honors and fancy ceremonies mean little to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He has accepted the

knighthood as someone would accept a gift. Even still, surely for this occasion, a beautiful and comfortable car is more fitting than a slow and humble carriage.'

The little boy was quiet as he thought about Isfandíyár's words. He then gave his *Amoo* a wave and ran down the stairs to play. As he reached downstairs he heard a commotion of activity.

'Where is 'Abdu'l-Bahá?' the members of the household were asking, worriedly. 'The car is waiting for Him and He's nowhere to be seen!'

'I wonder where He is?' thought the little boy, as he headed towards the orange tree at the back of the garden. He spotted the biggest, brightest fruit and carefully climbed up the trunk to the highest branch. 'Delicious!' he thought, as he picked the juicy orange.

Suddenly he heard footsteps under the tree. It was 'Abdu'l-Bahá! He was walking towards Isfandíyár, who had come to the stables to tend to the horses. The little boy saw Isfandíyár's eyes light up with joy.

'Abdu'l-Bahá wants Isfandíyár to take Him to the ceremony!' realised the little boy, his face beaming. 'He doesn't want to travel in that fancy car! 'Abdu'l-Bahá has never wished for comfort for Himself. Nor has He ever wanted to come across as being better or more important than anyone else.'





Without a word, Isfandíyár prepared the carriage. Within a few minutes, he was driving 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the Governor's house.

The little boy stuffed the orange in his pocket. His heart beating with excitement, he clambered down the tree and ran out onto the street. Taking a shortcut through the old city, he ran through the small alleyways and winding streets, until, at last, he arrived at the house of the British Governor.

Pausing to catch his breath, the little boy looked up at the high wall surrounding the house. He spotted an old olive tree with branches that drooped over into the Governor's garden. His love for oranges had made him a good climber and so he quickly climbed up to the very top of the tree!

Peering down into the garden below, the little boy saw a large crowd of guests. There were Muslim, Christian and Jewish leaders, and important people from all over the city. A large tent had been pitched in the garden and British soldiers stood in line, waiting for the arrival of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's car. A military musical band stood ready

at the gate to announce 'Abdu'l-Bahá's entrance. But where was 'Abdu'l-Bahá?

The little boy watched as 'Abdu'l-Bahá, quietly yet majestically, walked in through the side entrance of the garden, on time and without any pomp, and with Isfandíyár by His side. What a surprise to the guests who had been expecting Him to arrive through the



main entrance, and in the fancy car! The band began to play in celebration and the ceremony began.

From the top of the tree, the little boy looked across at 'Abdu'l-Bahá and smiled widely. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was truly the most humble Knight there ever was!

**The little boy is an imaginary character who observes a true story about 'Abdu'l-Bahá.*

Be . . . a fruit upon the tree of humility.
Bahá'u'lláh

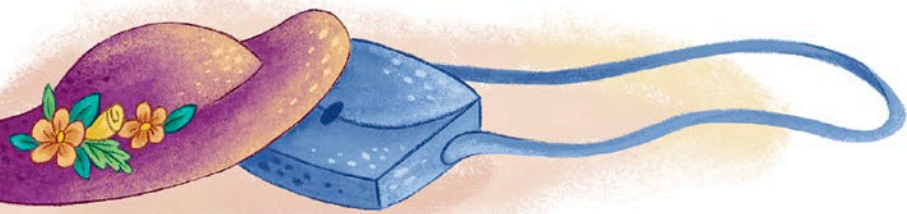


The Gift

Dublin (USA)
1912

Madeline* took all her dresses out of the cupboard and piled them on top of the bed. She then emptied the drawers, taking out her hats and scarves and shoes. Finally, she placed two large suitcases at the foot of the bed.

Madeline looked at the tower of clothes and sighed. 'Oh, Maddie,' she thought to herself, 'how on earth are you ever going to fit all these clothes into just two suitcases?'



Only two weeks ago, Maddie had packed these same suitcases and left her home to come to New Hampshire for a holiday. Maddie lived in a large and beautiful house, and although she owned so many things and had everything she needed, she felt as though something was missing in her life, and her heart was sad. She had thought that maybe a holiday would cheer her spirits.

Now, after having spent two weeks away, Maddie prepared to return home. But, even though her suitcases were overflowing with brand new things, her heart still felt sad and empty. 'You should never have done so much shopping on this trip!' she scolded herself. 'Now you'll have to go out and buy an extra suitcase!'

Suddenly she heard talking outside the guest house she was staying in. Curious, she made her way to the window and looked outside.

Close to the entrance of the guest house she saw two figures standing together. 'That's 'Abdu'l-Bahá!' exclaimed Maddie eagerly. 'And that must be His secretary.'

Just yesterday, Maddie had seen 'Abdu'l-Bahá for the first time. Returning to the guest house from her afternoon walk, she had noticed a group of guests crowded in the reception area. Scanning the crowd, Maddie's eyes had immediately fallen upon a majestic figure standing among them. He was wearing a long tan-coloured robe, with a snow-white turban on His silvery flowing hair. Maddie's heart had filled with awe. She felt as though she were standing in the presence of a King! But it wasn't His clothes that made her feel this.

Rather, it was His loving presence and the radiance of His blue-grey eyes that had spoken to her heart, reflecting compassion, wisdom and strength. For a moment, Maddie's heart had felt full.

As the guests were making their way into the dining room, Maddie had turned to one of the guests and whispered, 'Who is that man?'

'That is 'Abdu'l-Bahá!' the guest had replied. 'The newspapers say He is an "Apostle of Peace". He was made a prisoner for 40 years for teaching justice and unity. Now that He is free, He's travelled all the way to America to help us understand how to live together in peace.'

Now, as Maddie stood by the window looking out at 'Abdu'l-Bahá, she wished that He could help her find peace in her own heart.





Her thoughts were interrupted by the sight of an old man slowly making his way up the quiet street. His jacket looked dirty and his trousers were torn and full of holes. 'How cold he must feel in his ragged clothing,' Maddie thought.

All of a sudden, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's secretary called out to the man. The old man stopped and then walked towards 'Abdu'l-Bahá. 'What could 'Abdu'l-Bahá want from that man?' thought Maddie.

Her eyes then widened in disbelief. Not only did 'Abdu'l-Bahá smile and greet the man as though he were a dear friend, but He took the old man's hand into His own! Maddie watched 'Abdu'l-Bahá say a few words, let go of the man's hand and then step behind the guesthouse.

'Where has 'Abdu'l-Bahá gone?' thought Maddie, perplexed. She tried to peer through the corner of the window but she couldn't see anything. She opened her window, but all she could see was the secretary and the old man, both of whom looked as if they were waiting.

Maddie, too, waited.

A few minutes later, 'Abdu'l-Bahá reappeared. Maddie noticed that He had wrapped His long coat around Himself and was holding something in His hand. 'What is He carrying?' she wondered.

Maddie watched as 'Abdu'l-Bahá lovingly handed a small bundle to the man. The old man held out the item in front of him and his face broke into a wide smile. Maddie let out a small gasp. 'Abdu'l-Bahá had given His own trousers to the man!

Maddie watched, her eyes shining with tears as she saw the joy on the old man's face. She noticed that 'Abdu'l-Bahá, too, looked happy. One would think that He was the one who had just received a gift! Maddie couldn't help but feel happiness in her own heart.

'May God go with you,' she heard 'Abdu'l-Bahá say to the man. The man thanked 'Abdu'l-Bahá and happily continued on his way.

Maddie looked at the enormous pile of clothes on her bed and thought of the great emptiness and unrest that she had been feeling. Turning her gaze back to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, she thought of how 'Abdu'l-Bahá had sacrificed His own comfort to help someone else. Maddie realised that a life of giving to others was what would fill her own heart with joy and peace.

**Madeline is an imaginary character who observes a true story about 'Abdu'l-Bahá.*

Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity.

*Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbor,
and look upon him with a bright and friendly face.*

Bahá'u'lláh





The Visitor

'Akká and Haifa (today in Israel)
Late 1800s, and 1921

Sitting in the corner of the courtyard, shaded from the heat of the midday sun, eight-year-old Samira* giggled with delight as she watched the orangey-brown kitten chase its shadow playfully around the courtyard.

The kitchen door swung open and the kitten went scurrying up the wall and over to the neighbour's house. Samira's mother came out of the kitchen into the courtyard, holding a tray of food.

'Samira,' called her mother, 'please open the door to the bedrooms'.

'Yes, Mama,' said Samira. She jumped up and opened the door.

Samira watched as her mother wearily made her way to the bedroom at the very back. Her mother's hands were shaking as she placed the tray at the foot of the door. Taking a deep breath, Samira's mother knocked, pushed the door open and placed the tray on the floor inside the room. Samira could hear coughing from inside. Samira's mother said a few words, then, just as quickly as she had opened the door, she pulled the door closed and made her way back to the courtyard.

Just two days ago, Samira's younger brother, Salim, had gotten into trouble for playing outside that bedroom door. Mama had scolded Salim, telling him that it was not safe, and that he needed to stay away from that door!

'But why?' Salim had asked her.

'Because I don't want you to get sick,' Mama had replied sternly. Then, more gently, she had added, 'Like your uncle, who is very sick.'

Samira and Salim loved their uncle very much. For the past few weeks, he had been unwell and now spent all of his days resting in bed. One by one the neighbours had stopped visiting. Samira and Salim felt as if an invisible wall of fear had been built around their home, keeping everyone away.

Back in the courtyard, Samira watched as her mother made her way to the kitchen. Her brow was furrowed into a frown and she looked worried.





With the kitchen door left open, Samira could see her grandmother sitting at the kitchen table, shelling peas. 'How is he?' she asked anxiously, as Samira's mother walked in.

'Not well,' said Samira's mother, shaking her head. 'He is so weak and constantly coughing. And he hasn't bathed in days! But I dare not go close to him otherwise I'll catch it too and then we'll all get sick!'

Samira's grandmother's eyes filled with tears. 'We can't just leave him like this!'

'I know,' said Samira's mother, her voice trembling, 'but there is nothing we can do.'

Samira felt her stomach tighten into a heavy knot. She had never seen her grandmother cry. Samira, too, wanted to cry.

That night Samira went to bed with a heavy heart and a prayer for her uncle on her lips.

The next morning, as the first rays of the sun peeked through the cracked and dusty window, Samira awoke to the sound of talking in the courtyard.

'Thank you!' she heard her mother say. 'We are so grateful!'

'Who is Mama talking to?' thought Samira, curiously. 'No one dares to come here anymore.'

Rubbing sleep from her eyes, Samira peered through the small window, but only in time to see her mother close the courtyard door to the street. The visitor had left.

'Mama!' called Samira, as she opened the little window. 'Who was that?'

Samira's mother looked at Samira and smiled. It was the first time in weeks that Samira had seen her mother smile. 'That was 'Abdu'l-Bahá,' she said. 'He came to help care for your uncle.'

Samira had seen 'Abdu'l-Bahá many times, but she had never met Him before. Samira and Salim would often walk up the cobbled street to where 'Abdu'l-Bahá lived, just to catch a glimpse of Him. And when they would see Him, He was almost always surrounded by a crowd of people. Sometimes there would be up to one hundred women, men and children who would come to seek His love, His gentle words of comfort, and His wisdom. He never turned anyone away.

And now, when no one else dared to help care for her uncle, it was 'Abdu'l-Bahá who had come.



Samira's heart felt lighter. There was a joyful skip in her step as she ran out to play with the kitten.

'Abdu'l-Bahá returned the next morning, and every day after that for many days, selflessly caring for Samira's uncle. Sometimes, He would come with fruits and sweets. Other times, He would bring books to read to Samira's uncle. Each time, Samira would watch in awe as 'Abdu'l-Bahá would put aside any fear for His own health and would lovingly take care of her uncle. The day that Samira's uncle took his last breath, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was there, sitting by his side.

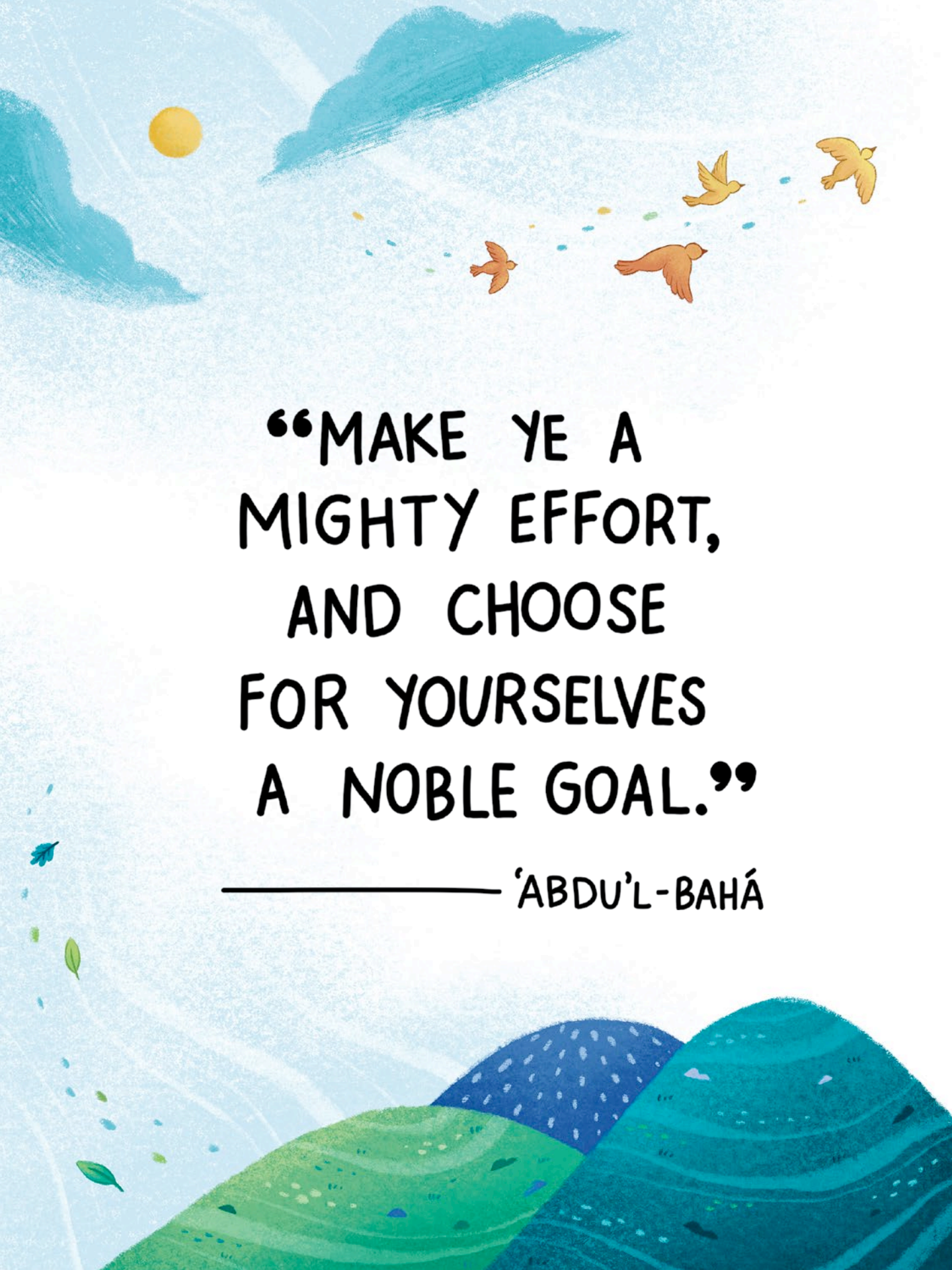
Many years later, when Samira was a young woman, she heard of the sudden and unexpected passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Heartbroken, Samira, together with Salim, went to His funeral. That day, there was not a cloud in the sky. More than ten thousand women, men and children of every religion and background, rich and poor, had come to show their love for 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

As she looked at the grieving faces around her, Samira felt overwhelmed seeing how many hearts 'Abdu'l-Bahá had touched. She knew that the heart of each person gathered there, like her own heart, had been illumined by the light of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's love and selflessness.

**Samira is an imaginary character who observes a true story about 'Abdu'l-Bahá.*

*Tend the sick . . .
care for the poor and needy . . .
comfort the sorrowful
and love the world of humanity
with all your hearts.
'Abdu'l-Bahá*





**“MAKE YE A
MIGHTY EFFORT,
AND CHOOSE
FOR YOURSELVES
A NOBLE GOAL.”**

————— **‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ**

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Heartfelt gratitude to all the children
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