

LONGFIELDS-DAVIDSON HEIGHTS SS



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THE Breadwinner

A graphic novel

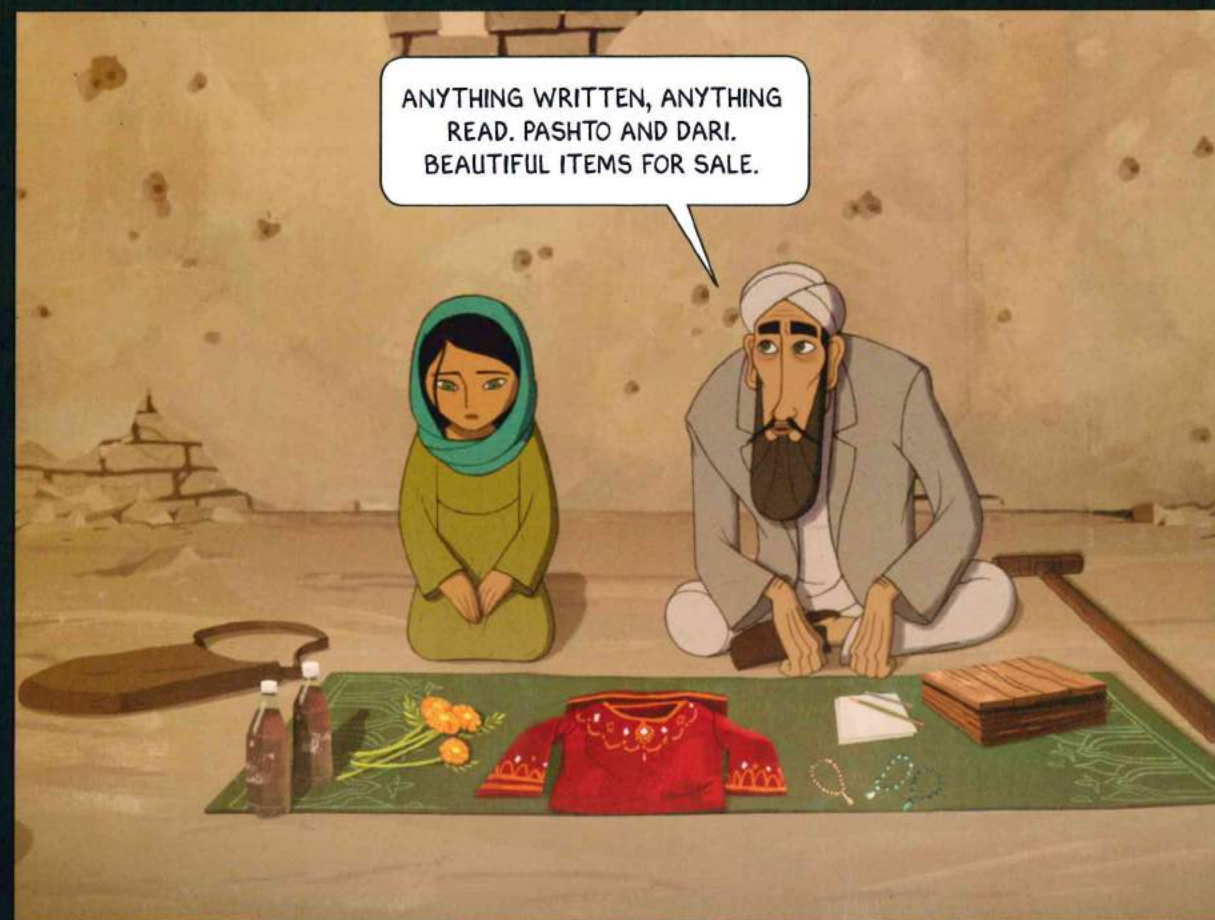


Kabul, Afghanistan,
under Taliban rule,
May 2001



Mandawi Bazaar





ANYTHING WRITTEN, ANYTHING
READ. PASHTO AND DARI.
BEAUTIFUL ITEMS FOR SALE.



I NEVER WORE THIS,
NOT EVEN ONCE.

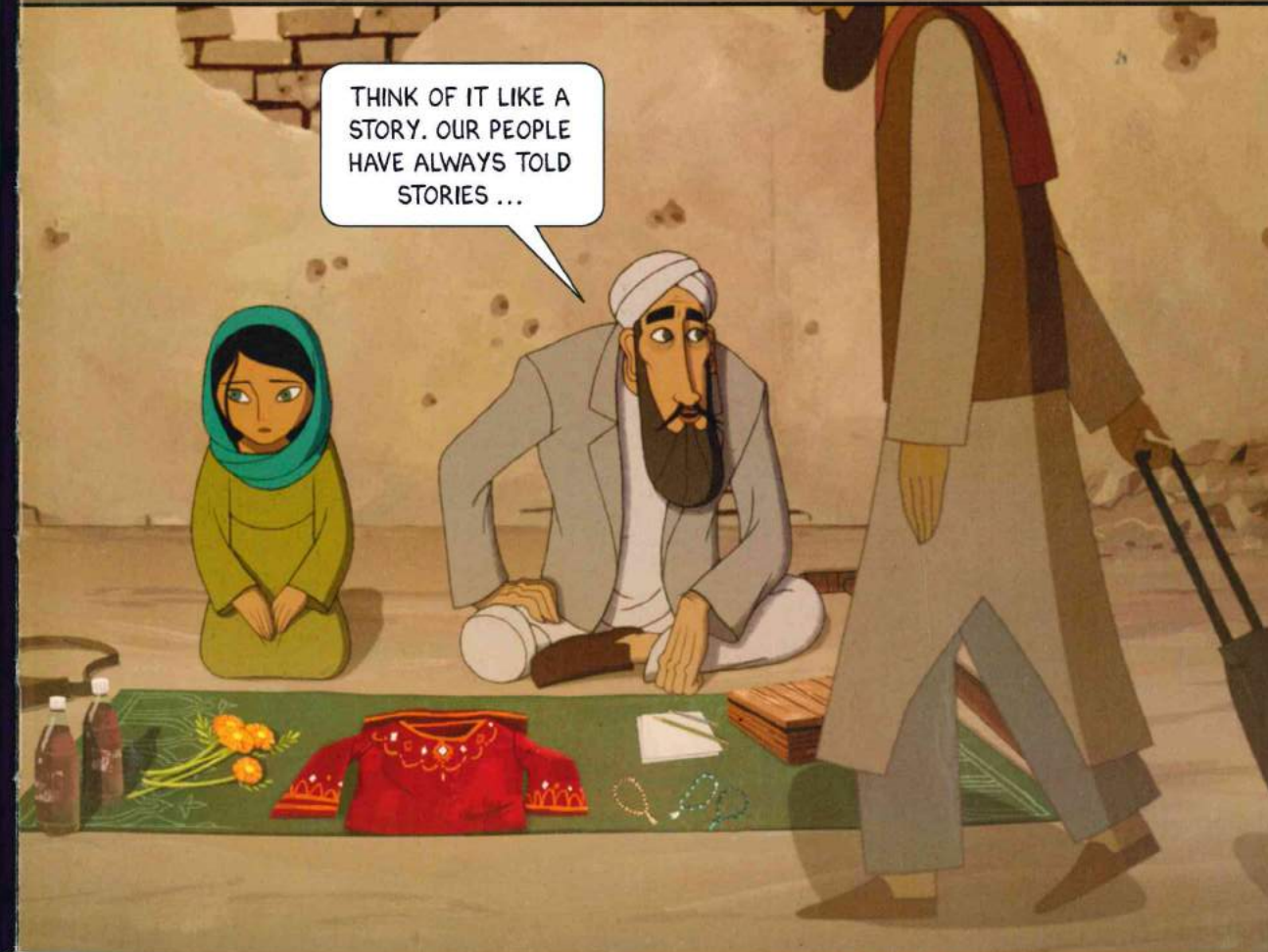
PARVANA, IT'S THE ONLY
THING OF VALUE WE HAVE
LEFT. BESIDES, WHEN
WOULD YOU WEAR IT?



WHY DON'T WE CONTINUE
YOUR STUDIES? WHAT
CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT
THE SILK ROAD?

THE SILK ROAD ...

BABA, I CAN'T
REMEMBER ABOUT
THE SILK ROAD.



THINK OF IT LIKE A
STORY. OUR PEOPLE
HAVE ALWAYS TOLD
STORIES ...

WE WERE A FRACTURED LAND IN THE CLAWS OF THE HINDU KUSH MOUNTAINS, SCORCHED BY THE FIERY EYES OF THE NORTHERN DESERTS.



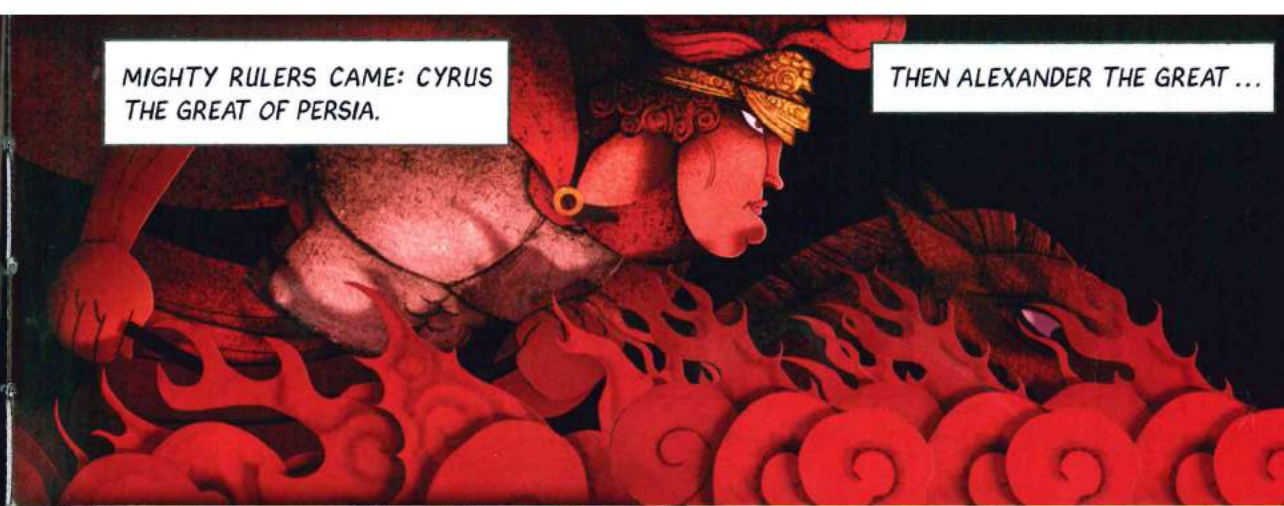
WE WERE A PATHWAY TO EVERYWHERE, CARRYING GOODS FROM EAST TO WEST.



WE WERE A LAND WHOSE PEOPLE WERE ITS GREATEST TREASURE. BUT WE WERE AT THE EDGES OF EMPIRES AT WAR WITH EACH OTHER.



MIGHTY RULERS CAME: CYRUS THE GREAT OF PERSIA.



THEN ALEXANDER THE GREAT ...

GENGHIS KHAN, TAMERLANE, AND SO ON AND SO ON ...



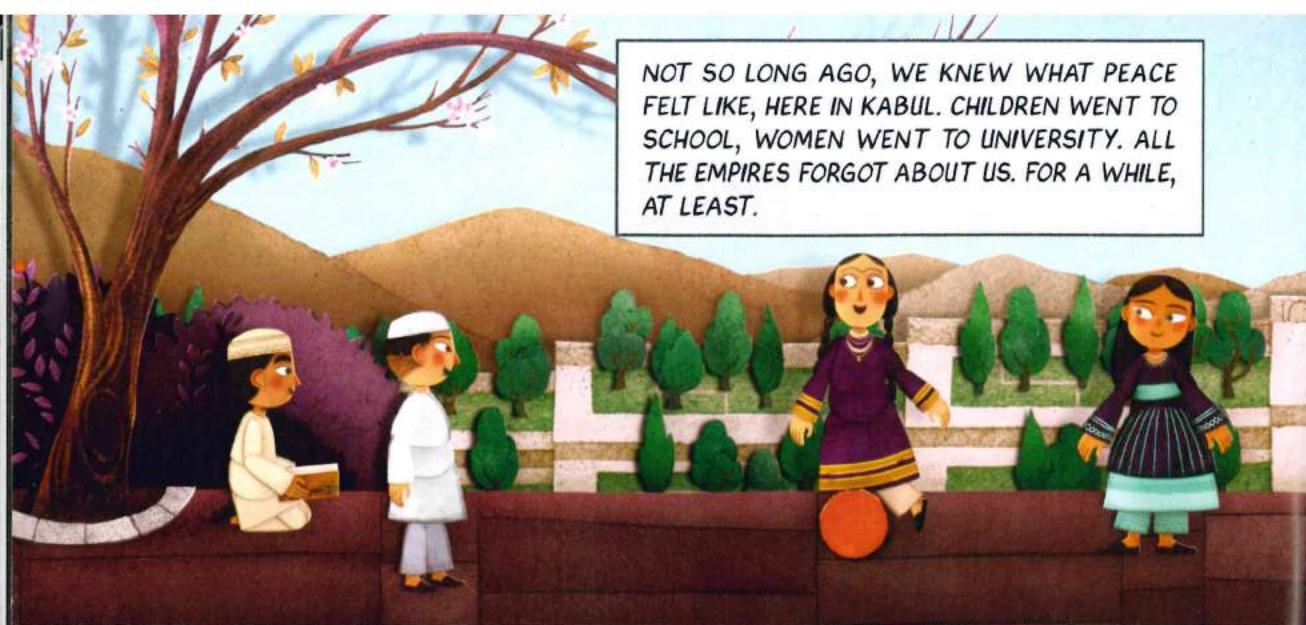
THEN THE BRITISH ...



THE RUSSIANS ...



EACH TIME THERE HAS BEEN BLOODSHED, AND EACH TIME SURVIVORS. AN ENDLESS PATTERN.



NOT SO LONG AGO, WE KNEW WHAT PEACE
FELT LIKE, HERE IN KABUL. CHILDREN WENT TO
SCHOOL, WOMEN WENT TO UNIVERSITY. ALL
THE EMPIRES FORGOT ABOUT US. FOR A WHILE,
AT LEAST.

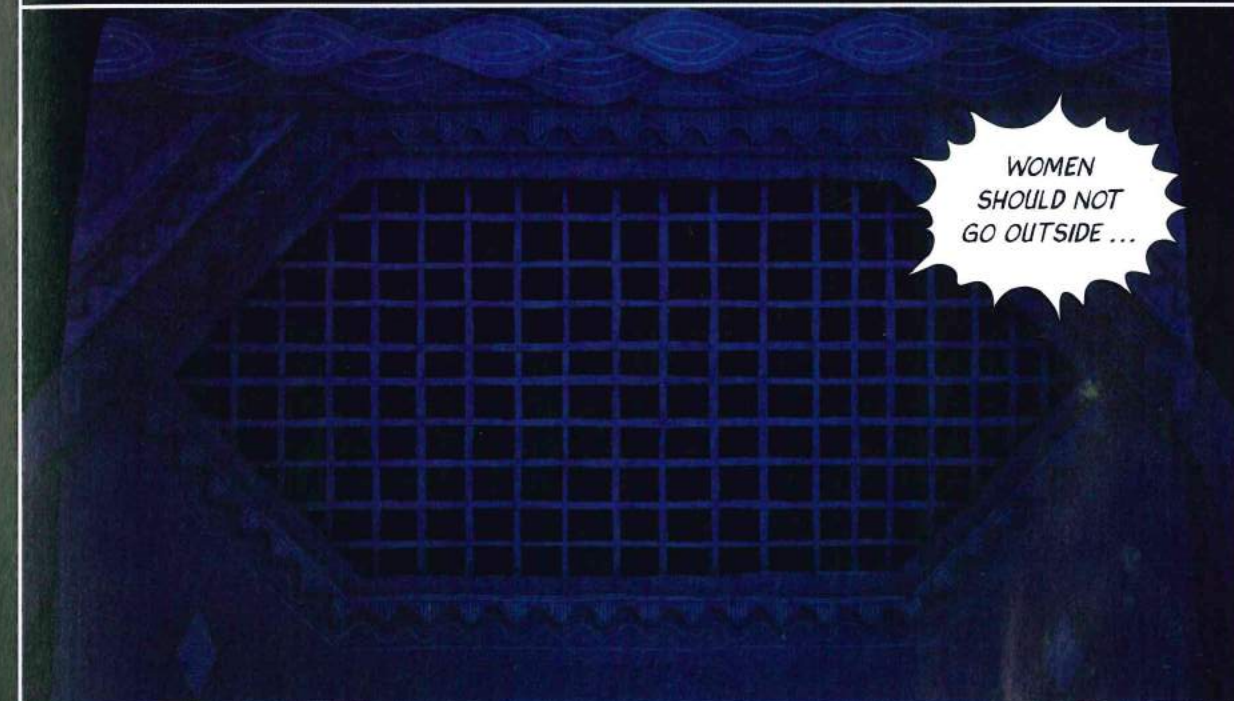
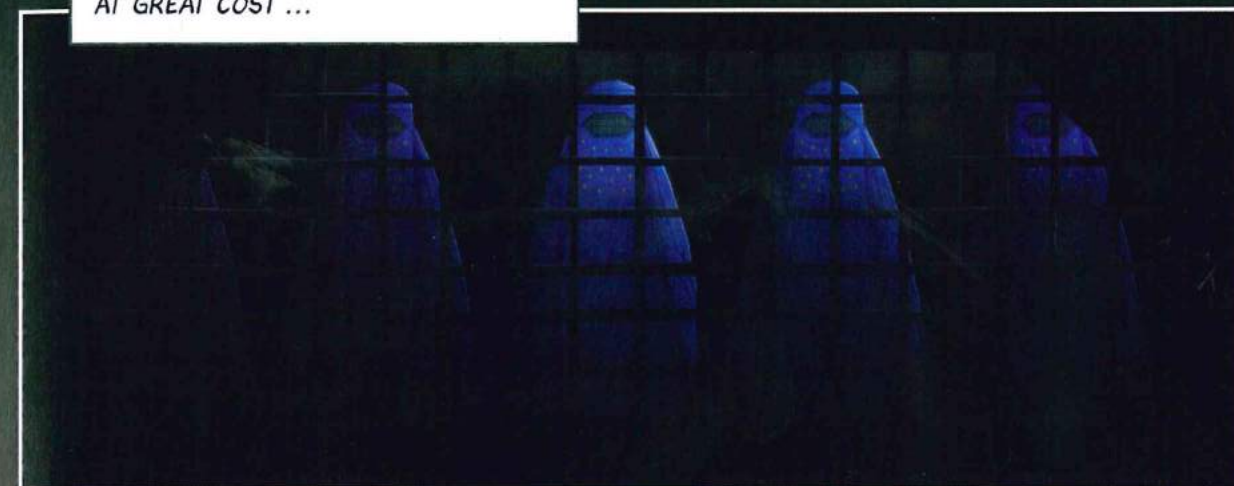


BUT IT DID NOT LAST. FIRST THERE WAS A
COUP D'ÉTAT, THEN AN INVASION,



THEN A CIVIL WAR.

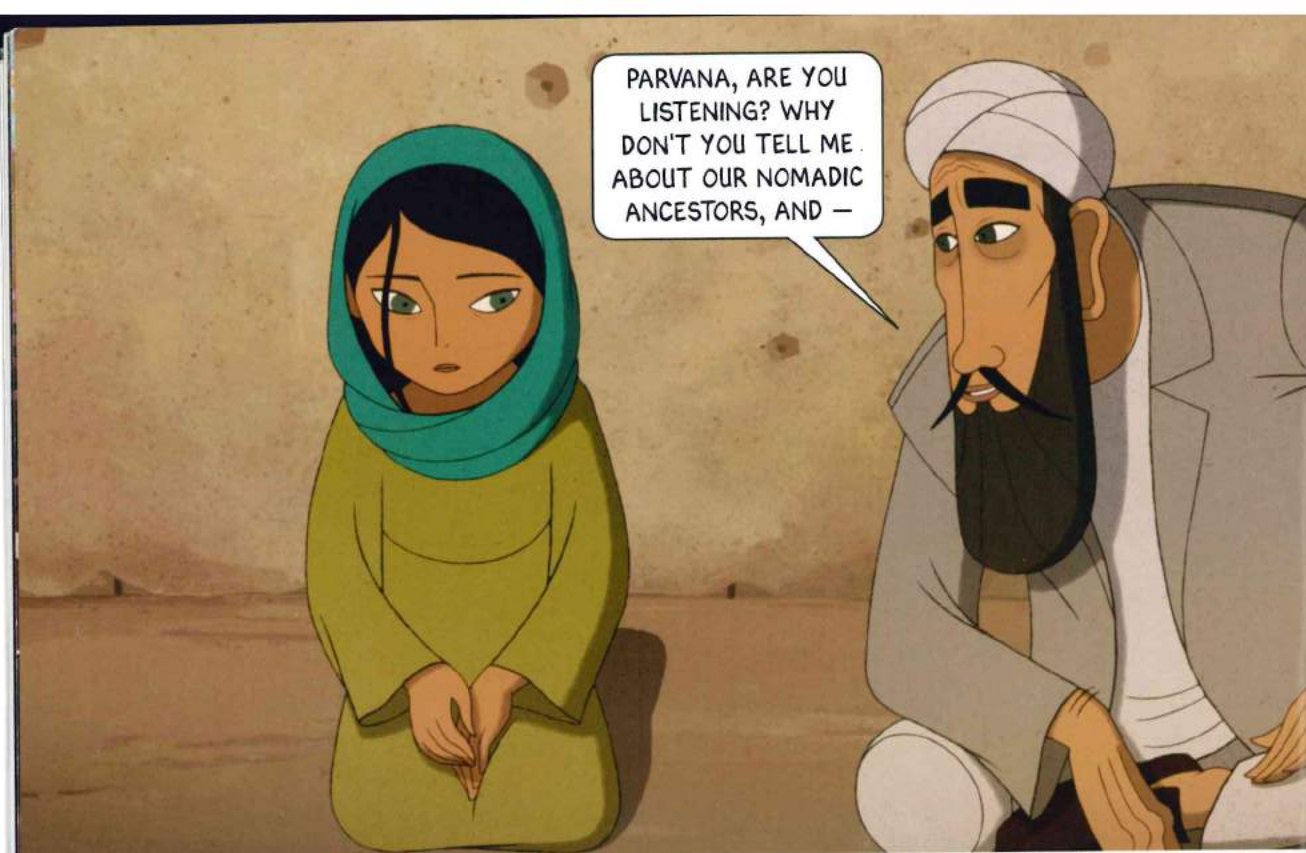
IN THE CHAOS, SOME LOOKED TO THOSE
WHO PROMISED TO RESTORE ORDER. BUT
AT GREAT COST ...



WOMEN
SHOULD NOT
GO OUTSIDE ...



IF A WOMAN
SHOWS HERSELF,
SHE WILL BE
CURSED ...



PARVANA, ARE YOU LISTENING? WHY DON'T YOU TELL ME ABOUT OUR NOMADIC ANCESTORS, AND —



HEY, YOU! WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?



AWAY! KEEP AWAY FROM MY THINGS!



WHY IS THIS GIRL SHOUTING?

SHE IS ONLY A CHILD. SHE MEANT NOTHING BY IT.

SHE SHOULD BE AT HOME, NOT DISPLAYING HERSELF IN THE MARKET.



I HAVE ONLY AN INFANT SON AT HOME. I NEED MY DAUGHTER TO HELP ME.



STAND UP WHEN WE TALK TO YOU!

BUT —



I SAID STAND UP!



I WAS YOUR TEACHER ONCE, IDREES. DO YOU REMEMBER?



YOU WASTED MY TIME. I HAVE JOINED THE TALIBAN AND NOW I FIGHT THE ENEMIES OF ISLAM.



HOW OLD IS THE GIRL? I'LL BE LOOKING FOR A WIFE SOON.

SHE'S ALREADY BEEN PROMISED TO SOMEONE.

MAYBE SHE SHOULD COVER HERSELF PROPERLY.

MAYBE YOU SHOULD STOP LOOKING AT HER.



I CAN HAVE YOU KILLED!

THAT'S ENOUGH, IDREES. LET'S GO.



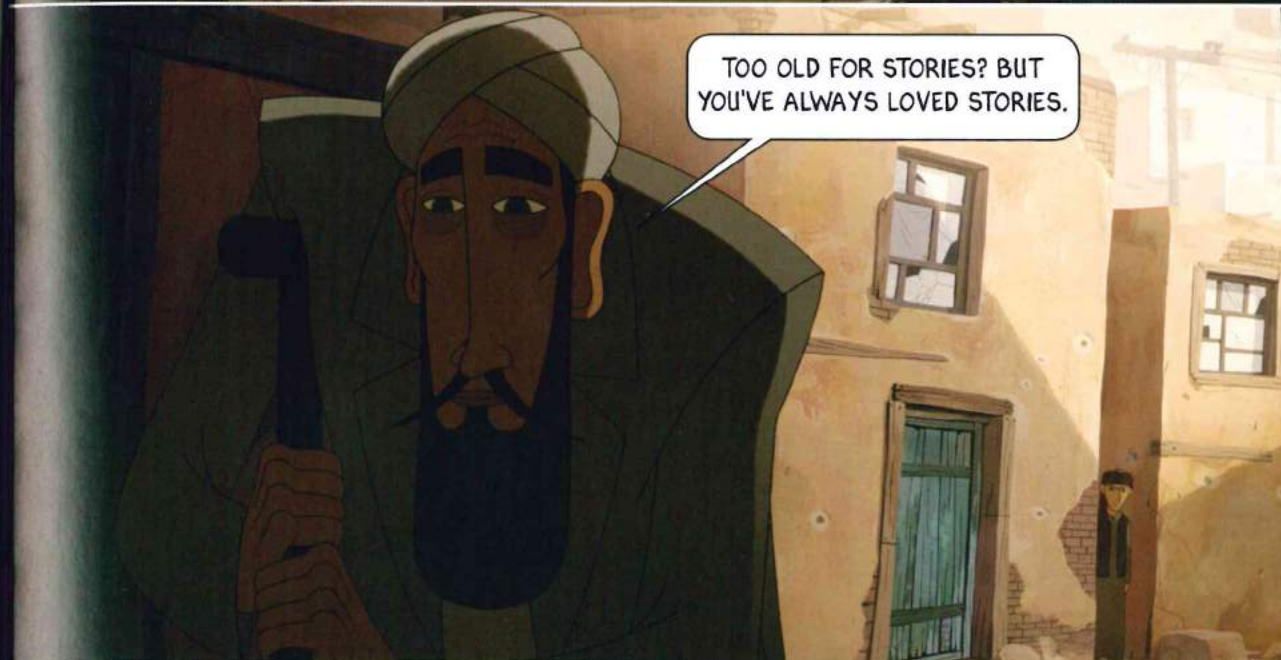
COME, PARVANA. I THINK WE WON'T SELL ANY MORE TODAY. LET'S GO HOME NOW.



BABA, YOU TOLD HIM I WAS PROMISED TO SOMEONE. AM I GETTING MARRIED?

OF COURSE NOT. YOU ARE STILL A CHILD. YOU SHOULD BE PLAYING AND TELLING STORIES.

I'M TOO OLD FOR THAT NOW.



TOO OLD FOR STORIES? BUT YOU'VE ALWAYS LOVED STORIES.





GOOD, YOU ARE HOME AND SAFE.

BABA, COME AND SIT. YOU LOOK TIRED.



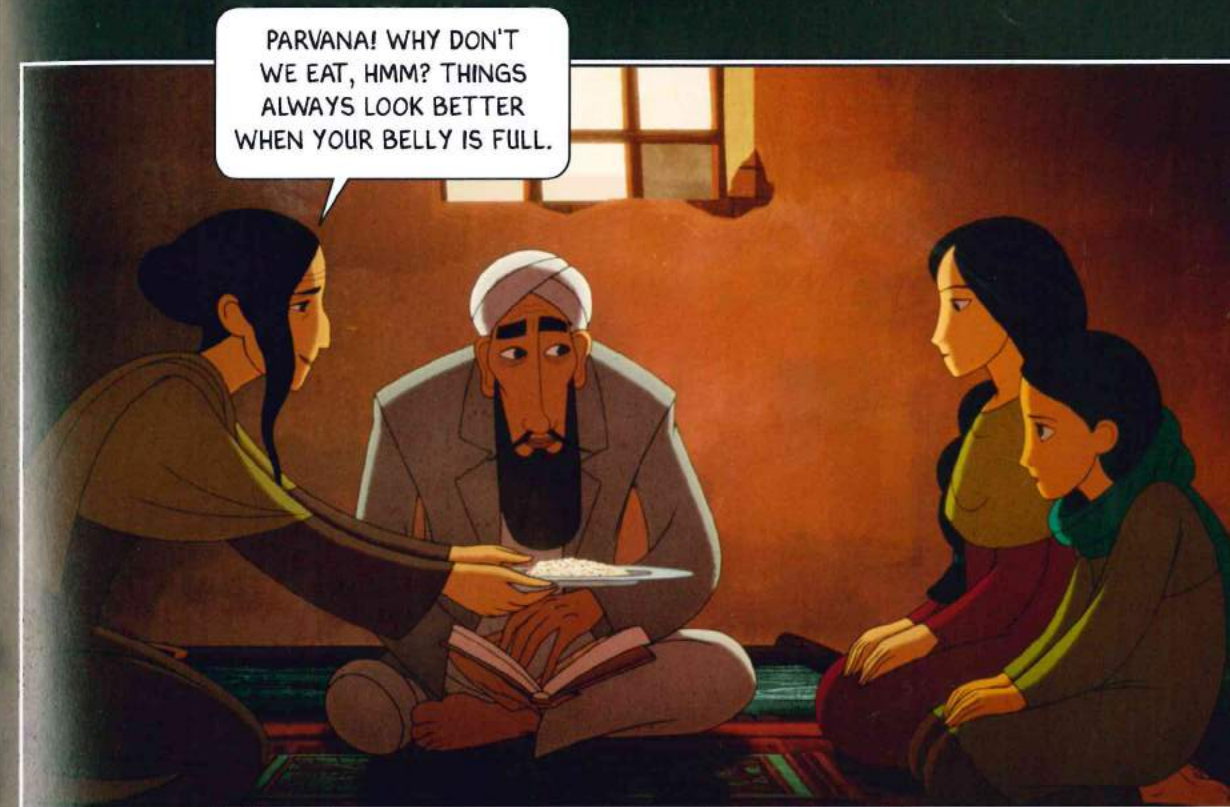
PARVANA, WE'RE OUT OF WATER.

AS YOU CAN SEE FOR YOURSELF, SORAYA, THERE'S A HALF BUCKET BY THE DOOR.

EITHER YOU GO OUT AND GET MORE WATER AFTER DINNER OR YOU CAN WASH ZAKI'S DIRTY DIAPERS.



HEY! MAYBE IF YOU DIDN'T WASH YOUR HAIR SO MUCH, WE WOULDN'T RUN OUT SO QUICKLY!

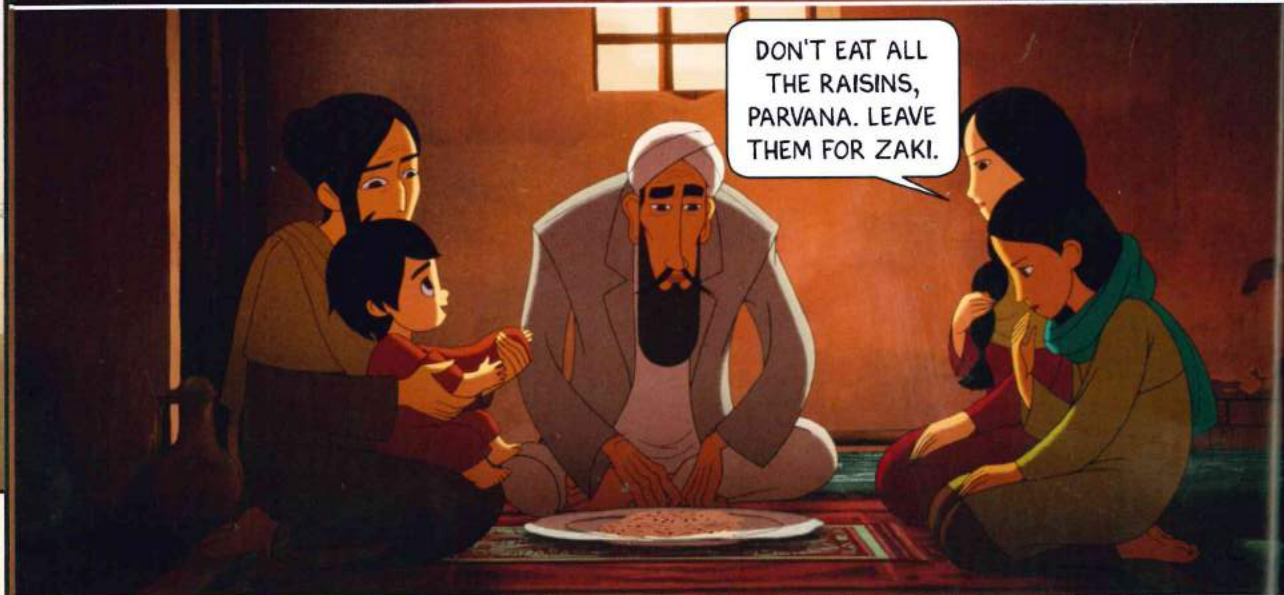


PARVANA! WHY DON'T WE EAT, HMM? THINGS ALWAYS LOOK BETTER WHEN YOUR BELLY IS FULL.



WHAT ABOUT ZAKI?

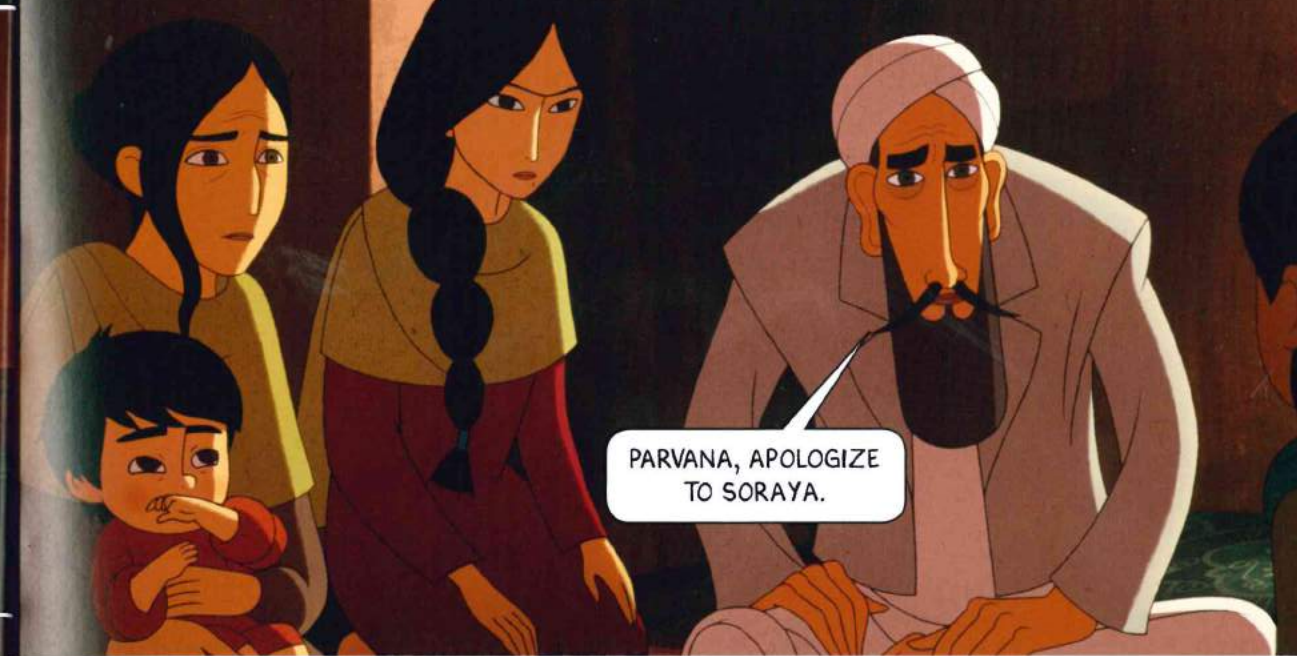
THE SMELL OF THE FOOD WILL WAKE HIM SOON ENOUGH.



DON'T EAT ALL THE RAISINS, PARVANA. LEAVE THEM FOR ZAKI.



WHY DON'T YOU GIVE HIM THAT BIG RAISIN ON YOUR CHIN, SORAYA? OH, BUT IT'S NOT A RAISIN. IT'S A BIG, HAIRY MOLE!



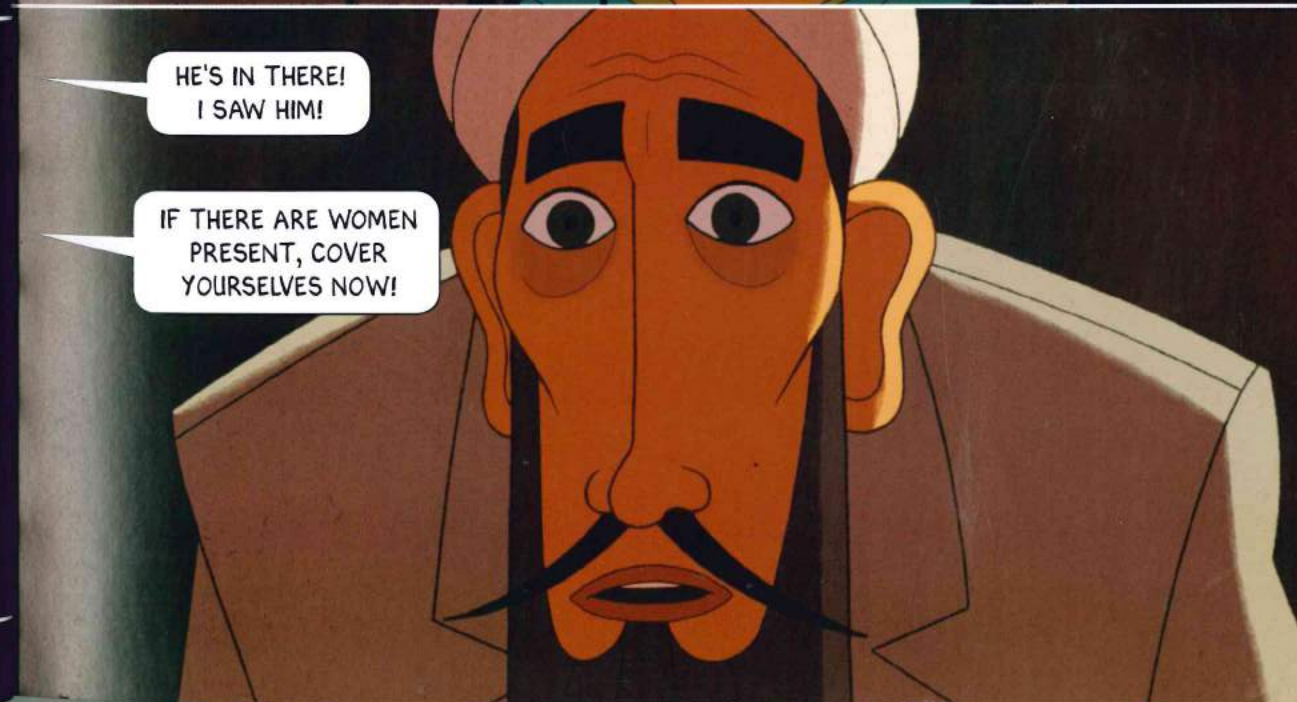
PARVANA, APOLOGIZE TO SORAYA.



PARVANA?

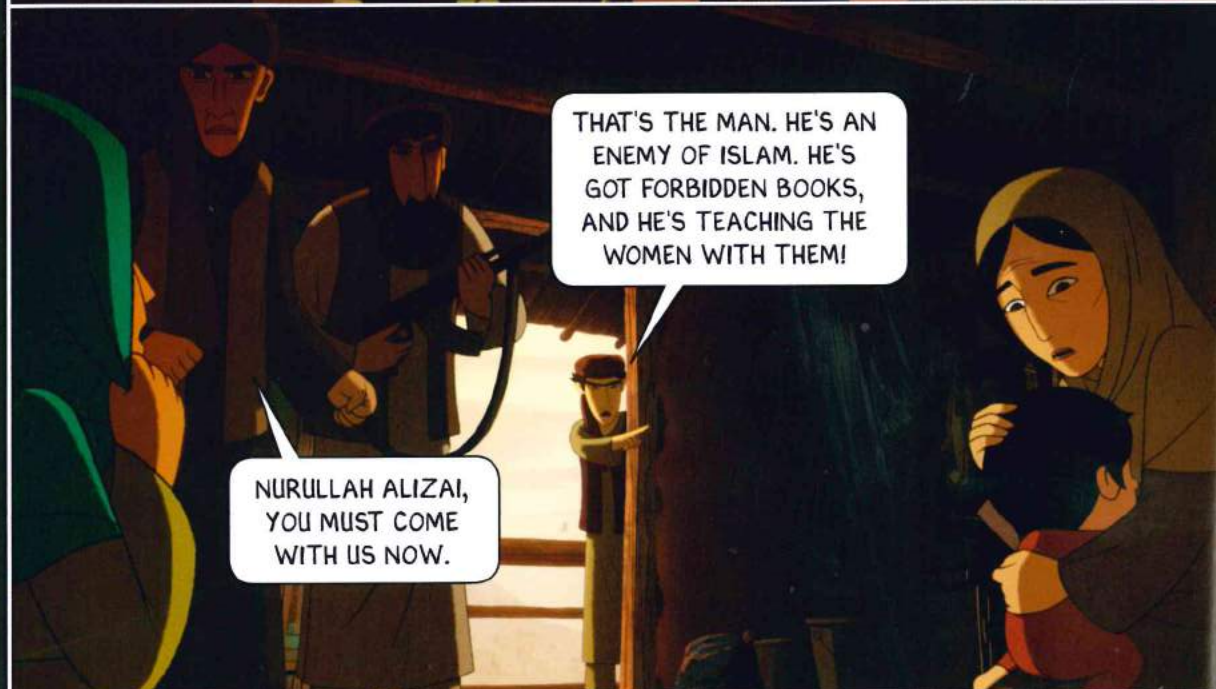
THAT'S ALL RIGHT, BABA. SHE CAN'T HELP IT IF SHE'S —

BANG! BANG!
BANG!



HE'S IN THERE!
I SAW HIM!

IF THERE ARE WOMEN PRESENT, COVER YOURSELVES NOW!



THAT'S THE MAN. HE'S AN
ENEMY OF ISLAM. HE'S
GOT FORBIDDEN BOOKS,
AND HE'S TEACHING THE
WOMEN WITH THEM!

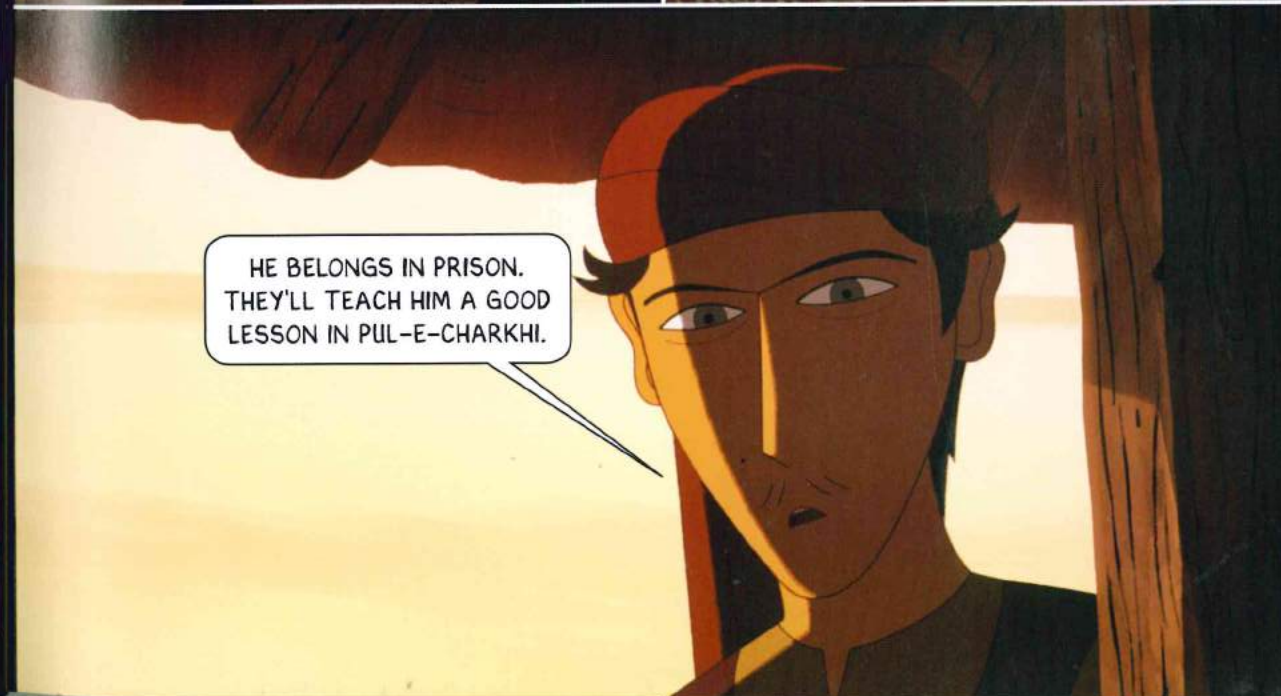
NURULLAH ALIZAI,
YOU MUST COME
WITH US NOW.



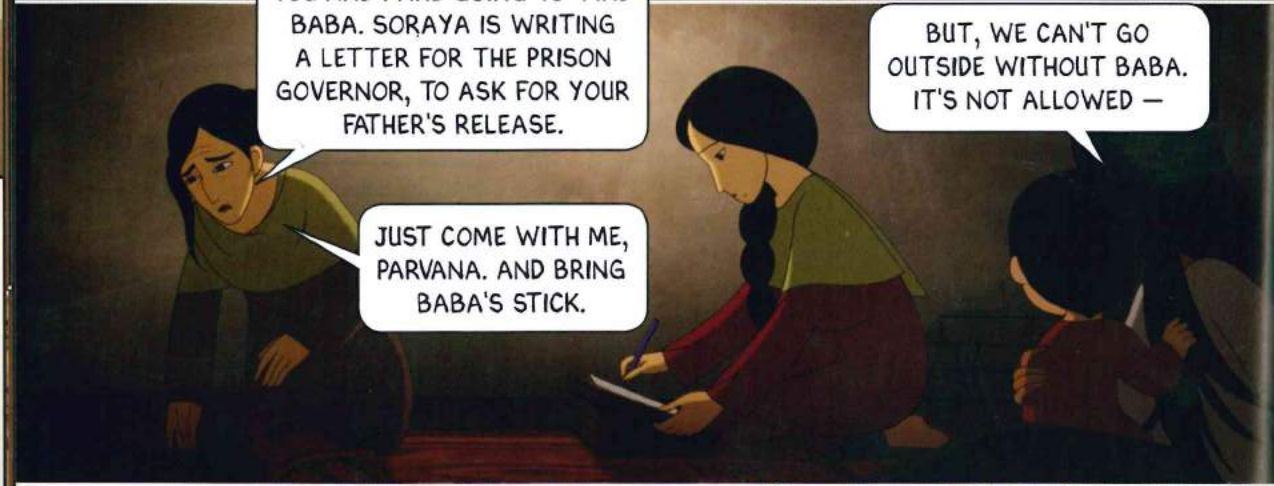
LET GO OF ME! I HAVE DONE
NOTHING WRONG! YOU HAVE
NO AUTHORITY TO DO THIS!

PLEASE, THERE IS
A MISTAKE! YOU
CAN'T TAKE HIM!

BABA!



HE BELONGS IN PRISON.
THEY'LL TEACH HIM A GOOD
LESSON IN PUL-E-CHARKHI.





WHY ARE YOU OUT HERE
BY YOURSELF? WHERE IS
YOUR HUSBAND?



THIS IS MY HUSBAND. HE WAS
ARRESTED. I AM TAKING A
LETTER TO PUL-E-CHARKHI —

PHOTOGRAPHS ARE
FORBIDDEN!

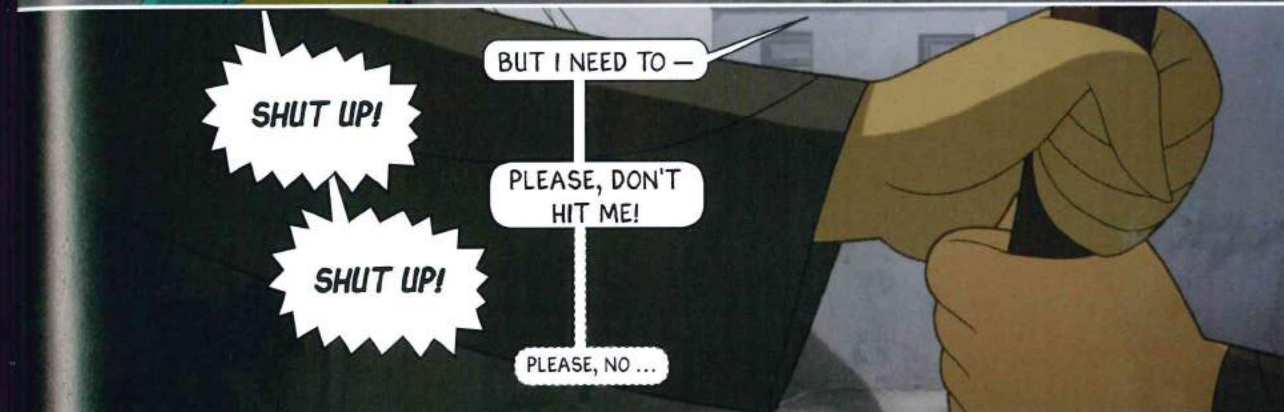
BUT I NEED TO FIND OUT
ABOUT MY HUSBAND.

YOU HAVE NO BUSINESS
OUT HERE! GO HOME!



BUT WE HAVE NO WAY OF
SURVIVING WITHOUT HIM —

SHUT UP!



SHUT UP!

BUT I NEED TO —

PLEASE, DON'T
HIT ME!

SHUT UP!

PLEASE, NO ...

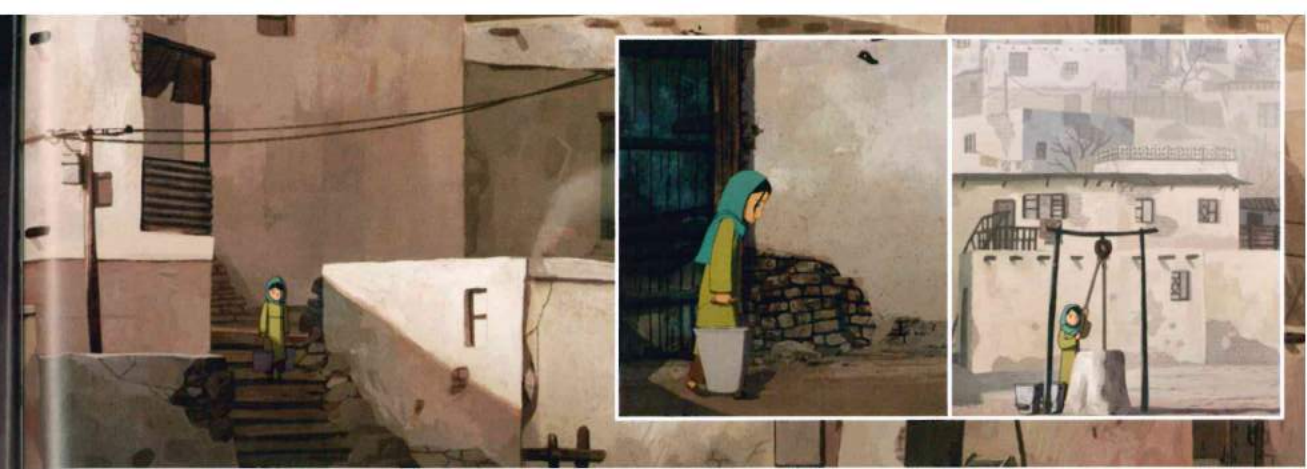
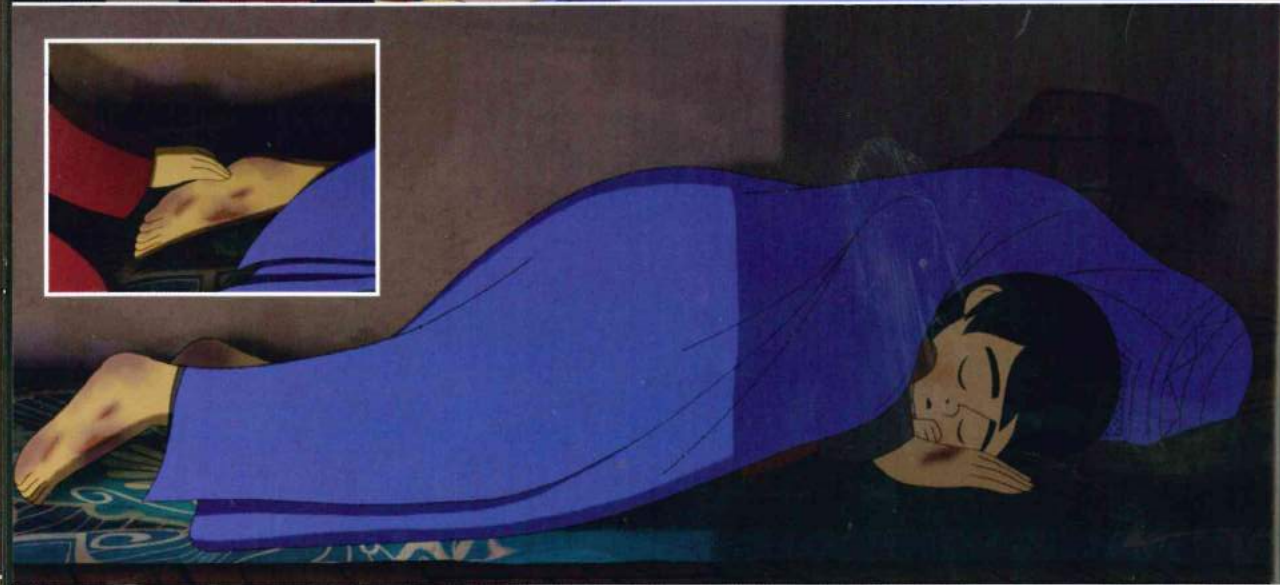


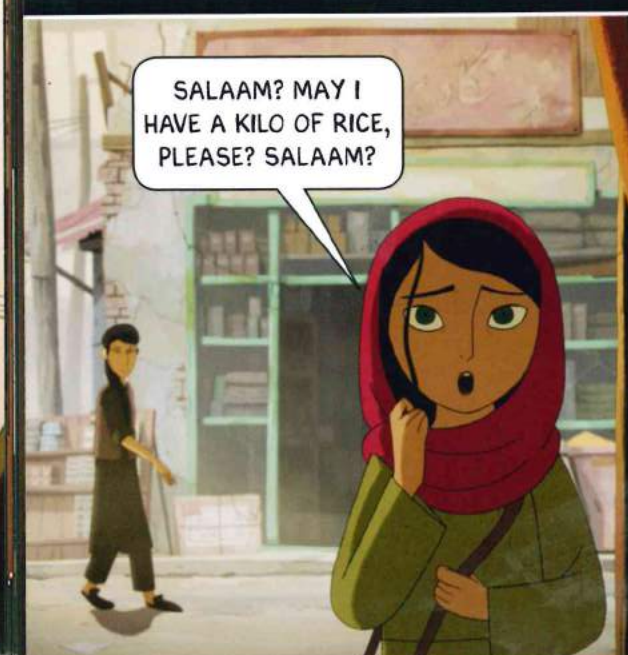
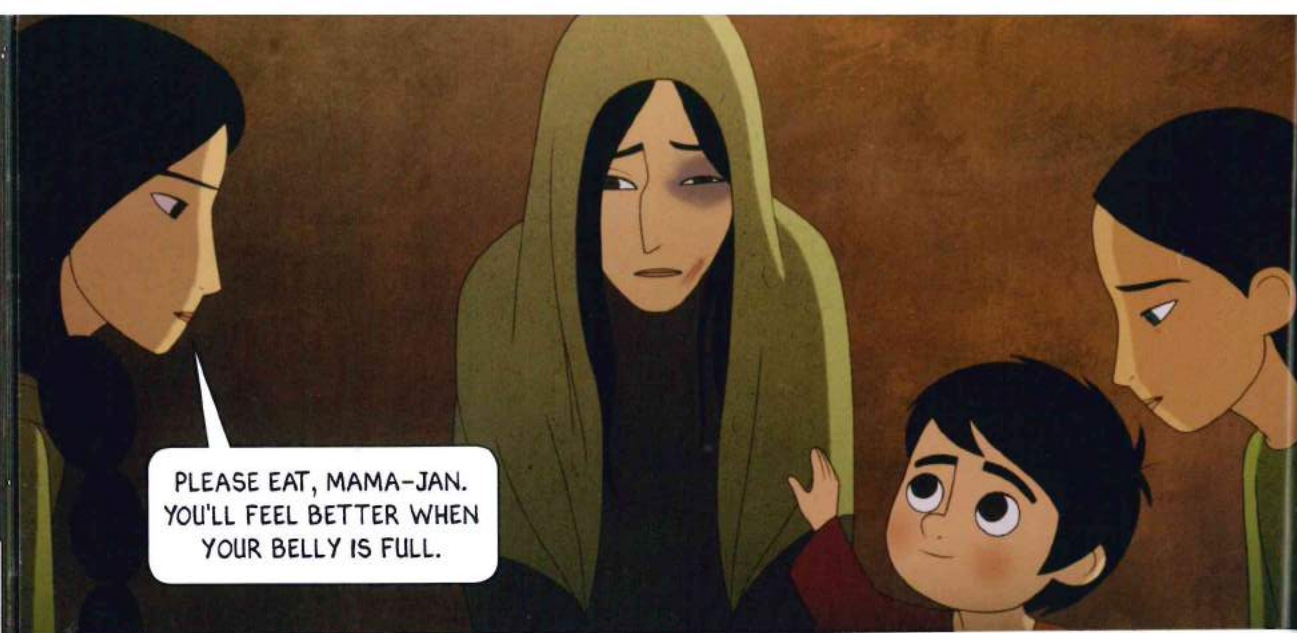
GOING TO THE PRISON WILL
CHANGE NOTHING. IF YOU MAKE
TROUBLE LIKE THIS, YOUR
HUSBAND IS THE ONE WHO WILL
BE PUNISHED. NOW GO.



MAMA-JAN?

TAKE ... ME ...
HOME ...









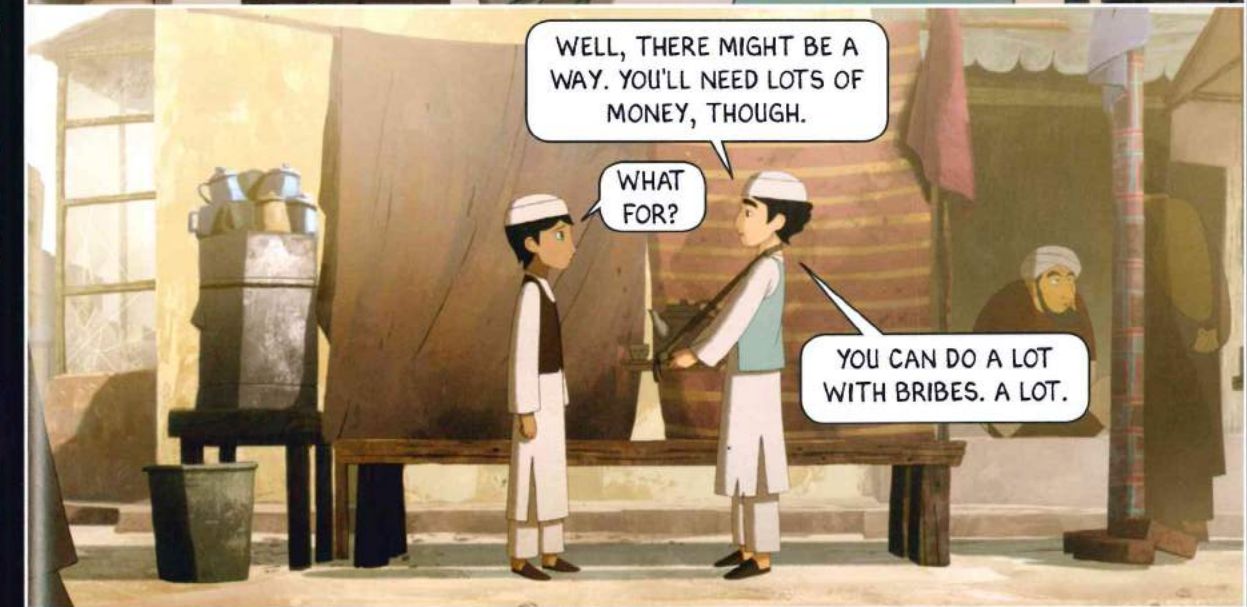


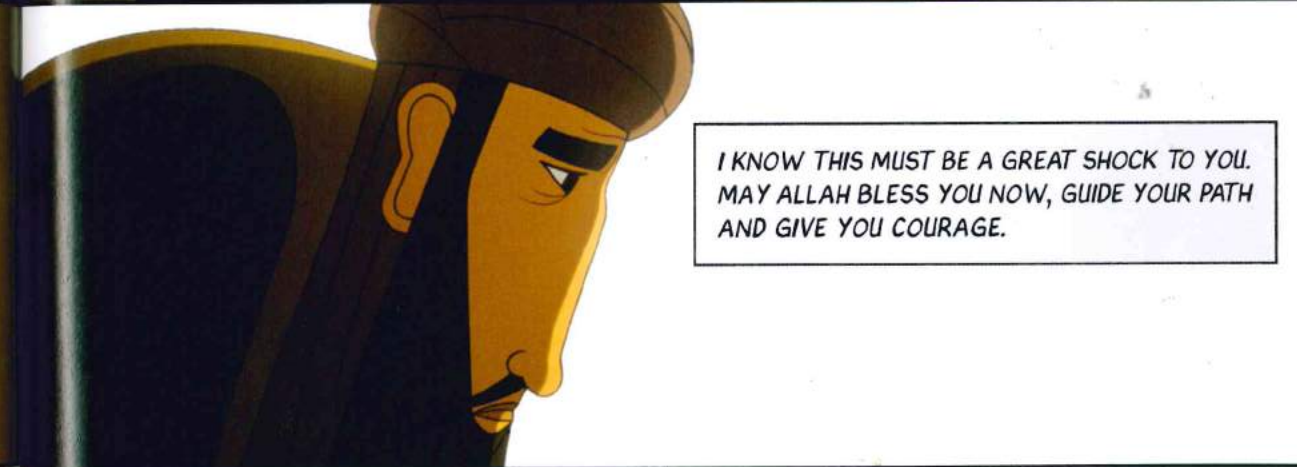
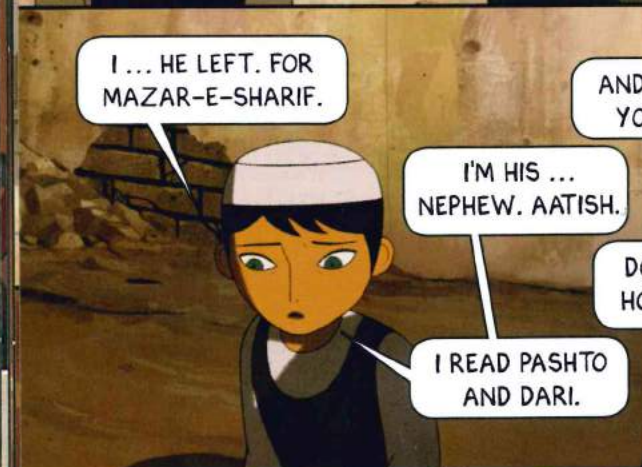
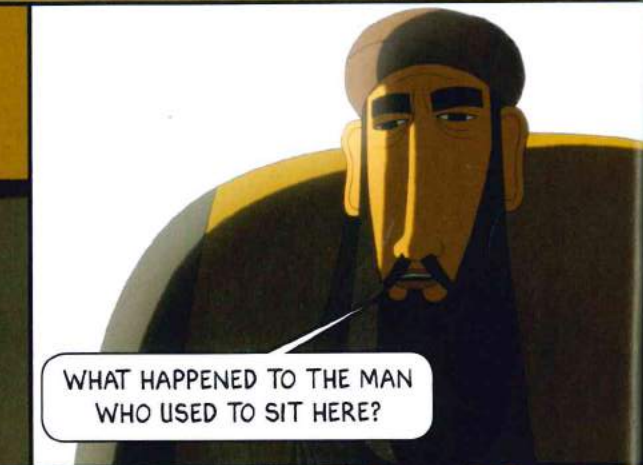
SALAAM, SALAAM. COME INSIDE, BOY! I'M NOT GOING TO DELIVER, AM I?



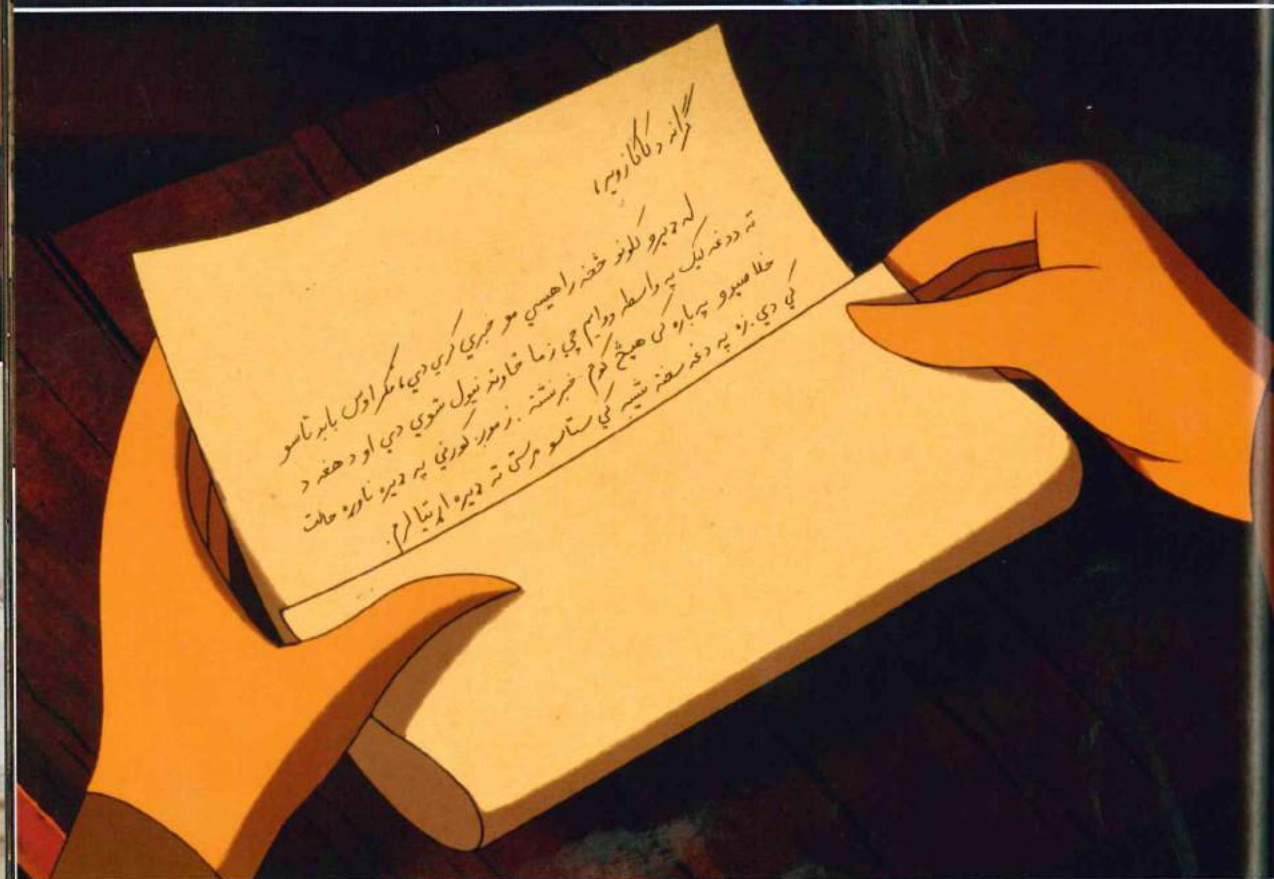
I'M DELIWAR NOW. IT MEANS BRAVE. YOU NEED TO GET A BOY'S NAME SO YOU DON'T HESITATE NEXT TIME SOMEONE ASKS YOU.







DEAR COUSIN: I AM WRITING TO TELL YOU THAT MY HUSBAND, NURULLAH, HAS BEEN ARRESTED. MY FAMILY IS IN A DESPERATE SITUATION AND I NEED YOUR HELP. MY ELDEST DAUGHTER, SORAYA, IS NOW OF AGE AND I AM ASKING THAT YOU CONSIDER HER AS A BRIDE FOR YOUR SON AJMAL ...

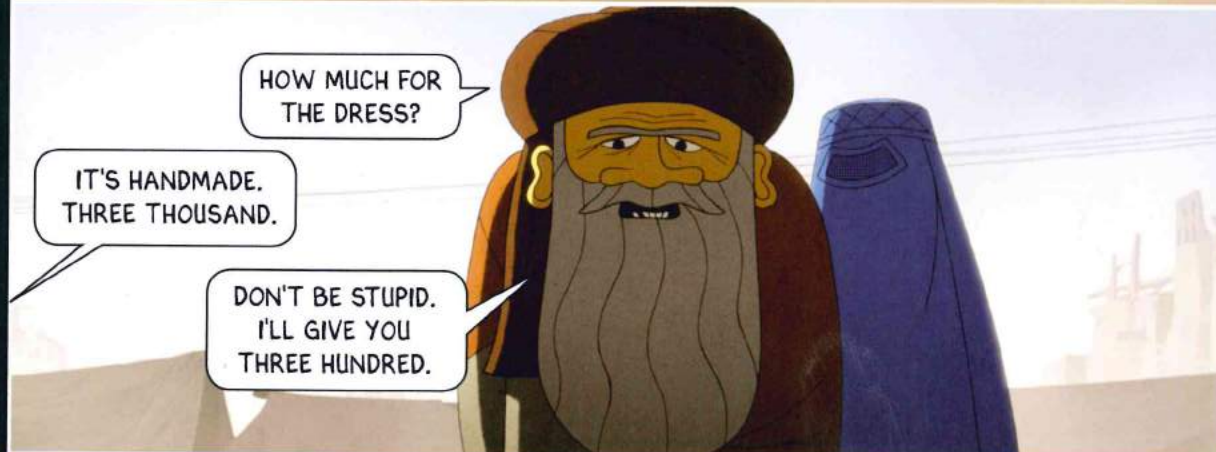


PLEASE TAKE US OUT OF KABUL SO THAT WE MAY HAVE A CHANCE OF SURVIVAL. WE NEED LITTLE IN THE WAY OF MEANS. MAY THE BLESSINGS OF ALLAH BE UPON YOU ...





ANYTHING WRITTEN,
ANYTHING READ! BEAUTIFUL
ITEMS FOR SALE!



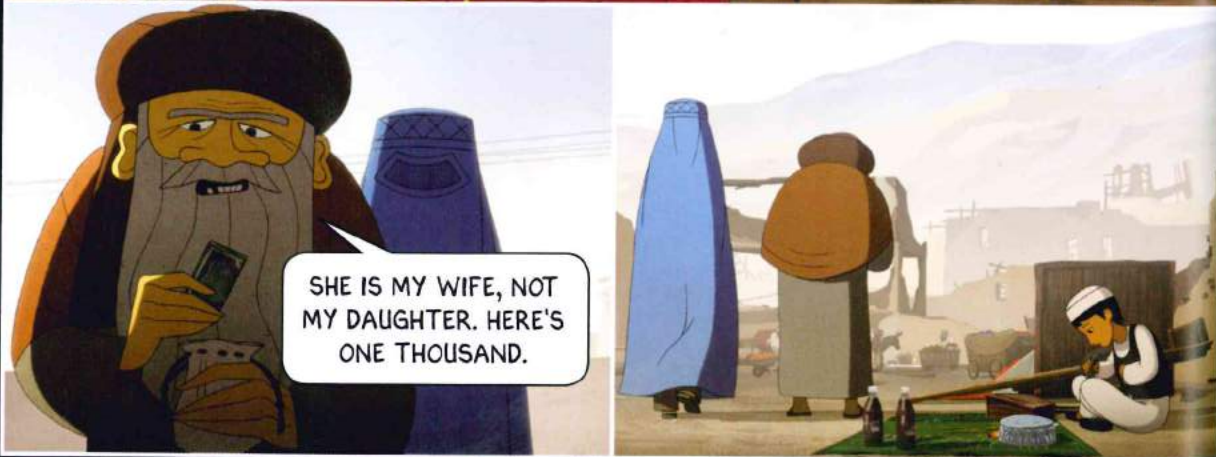
HOW MUCH FOR
THE DRESS?

IT'S HANDMADE.
THREE THOUSAND.

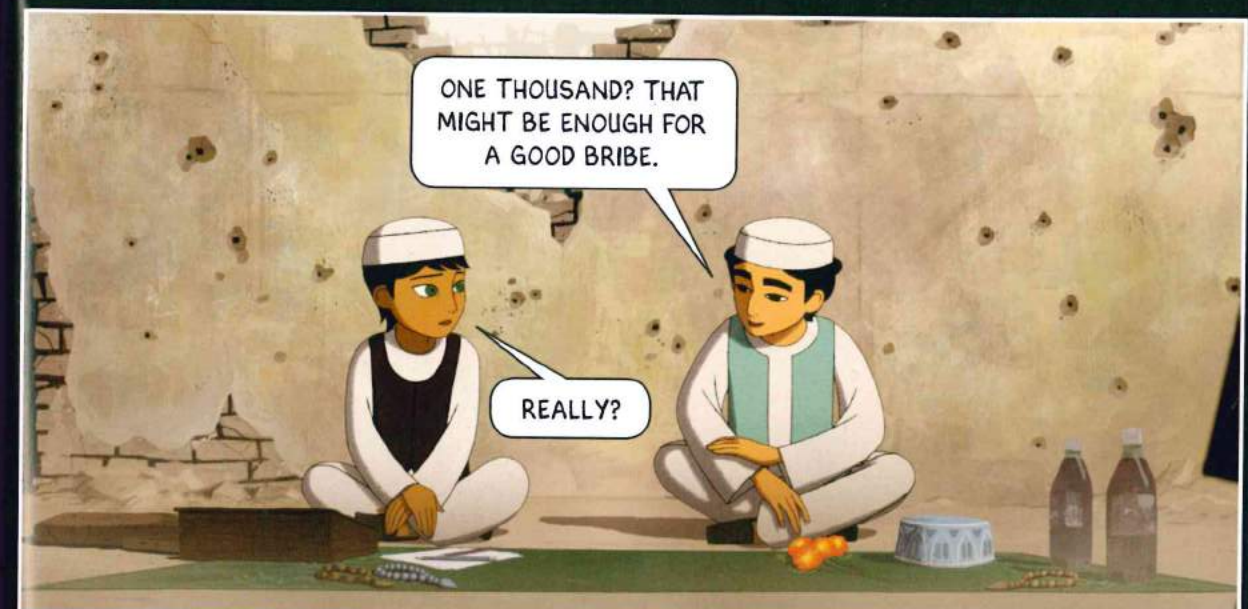
DON'T BE STUPID.
I'LL GIVE YOU
THREE HUNDRED.



TWO THOUSAND. YOUR
DAUGHTER WILL BE VERY HAPPY
TO WEAR SUCH A BEAUTIFUL
DRESS. LOOK AT THE DETAILED
EMBROIDERY, THE GOLD —

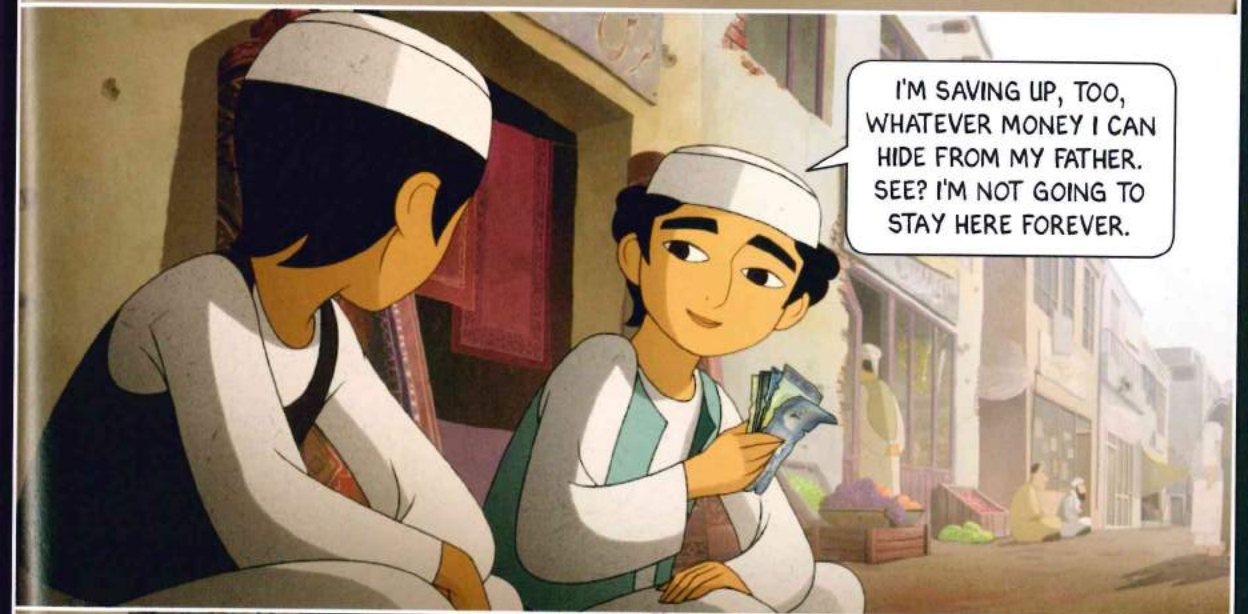


SHE IS MY WIFE, NOT
MY DAUGHTER. HERE'S
ONE THOUSAND.



ONE THOUSAND? THAT
MIGHT BE ENOUGH FOR
A GOOD BRIBE.

REALLY?




I'M SAVING UP, TOO,
WHATEVER MONEY I CAN
HIDE FROM MY FATHER.
SEE? I'M NOT GOING TO
STAY HERE FOREVER.



BUT DOESN'T
YOUR FATHER
DEPEND ON YOU?

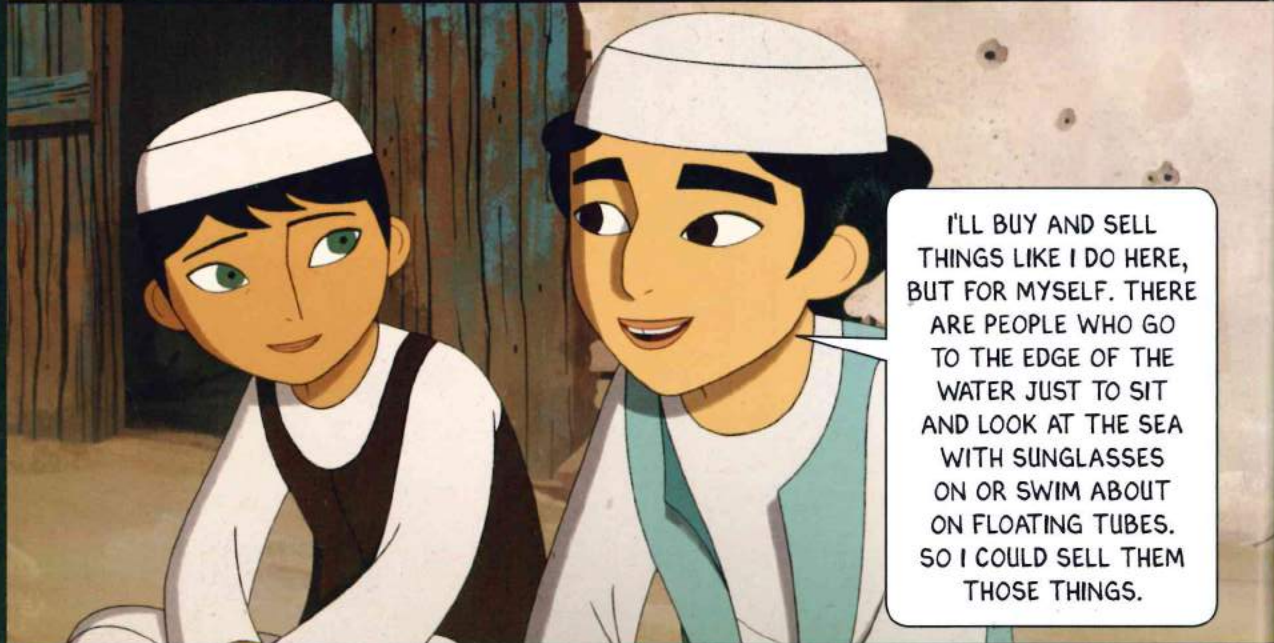
WHERE WILL
YOU GO?

I AM A GOOD SON.
BUT HE IS NOT A
GOOD FATHER.




HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TO THE SEA? I'VE HEARD THAT THE MOON PULLS THE WATER ONTO THE SHORE AND THEN BACK OUT AGAIN. I WANT TO SEE THAT.

WHAT WILL YOU DO THERE?



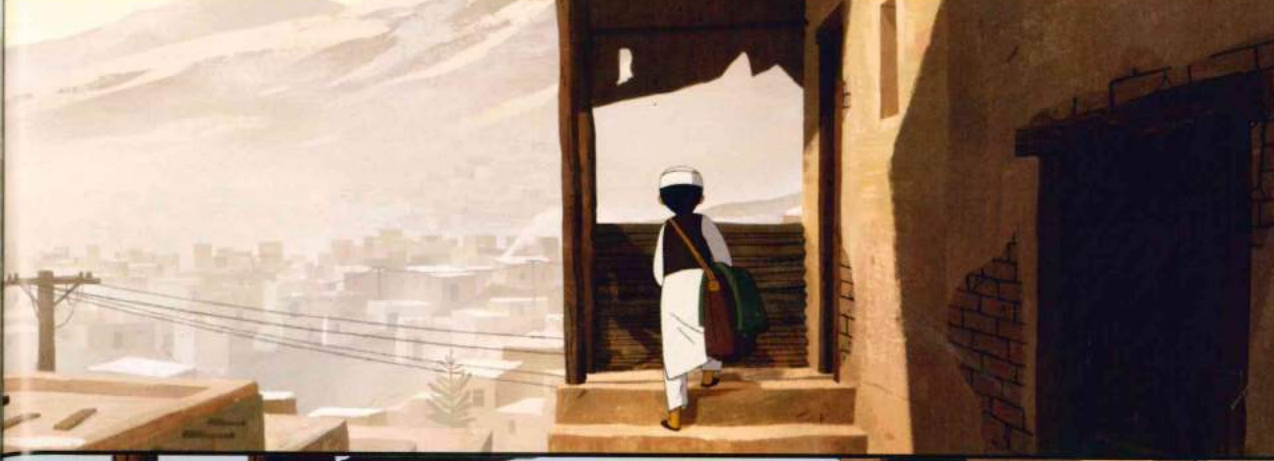
I'LL BUY AND SELL THINGS LIKE I DO HERE, BUT FOR MYSELF. THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO GO TO THE EDGE OF THE WATER JUST TO SIT AND LOOK AT THE SEA WITH SUNGLASSES ON OR SWIM ABOUT ON FLOATING TUBES. SO I COULD SELL THEM THOSE THINGS.




THAT SOUNDS NICE, DELIWAR. MAYBE I'LL JOIN YOU. BUT FIRST ...

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

WISH ME LUCK.




WHY ARE YOU BACK SO EARLY, PARVANA?




I'M GOING TO FIND BABA.

NO, YOU'RE NOT. YOU WON'T MAKE IT HOME BEFORE CURFEW. MAMA-JAN HAS BEEN THROUGH ENOUGH WITHOUT YOU DOING SOMETHING SO STUPID.

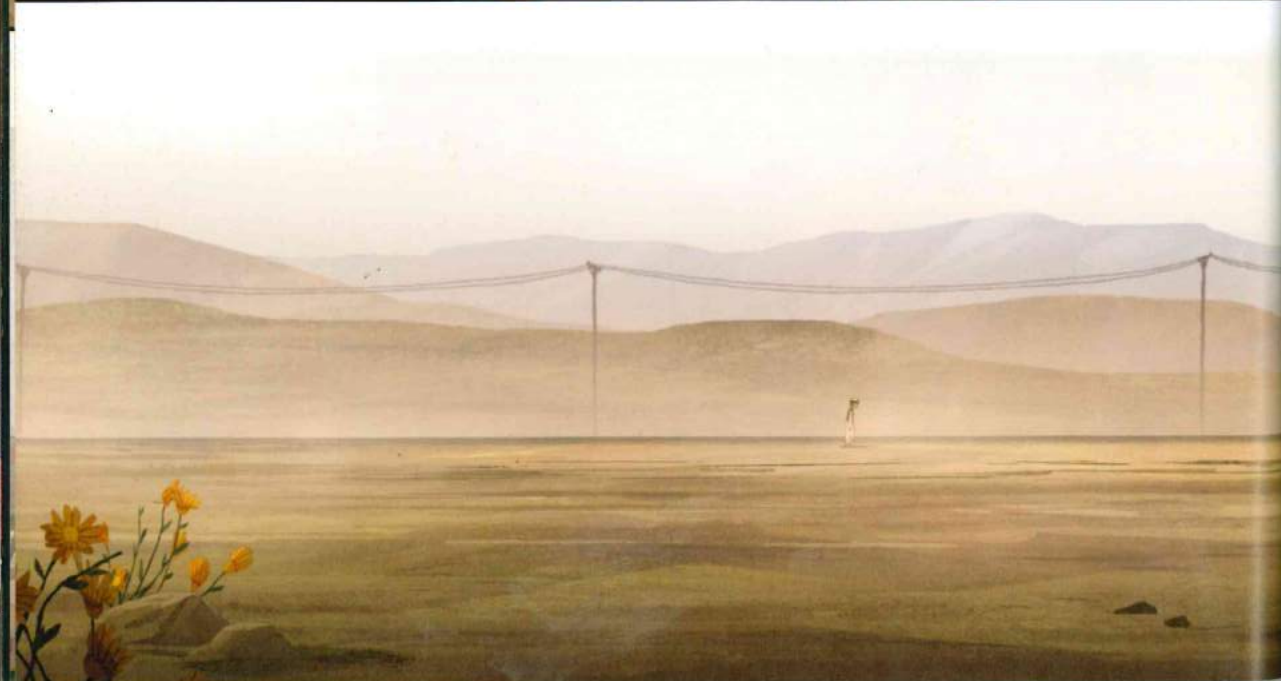


I HAVE TO FIND HIM. YOU CAN'T STOP ME.

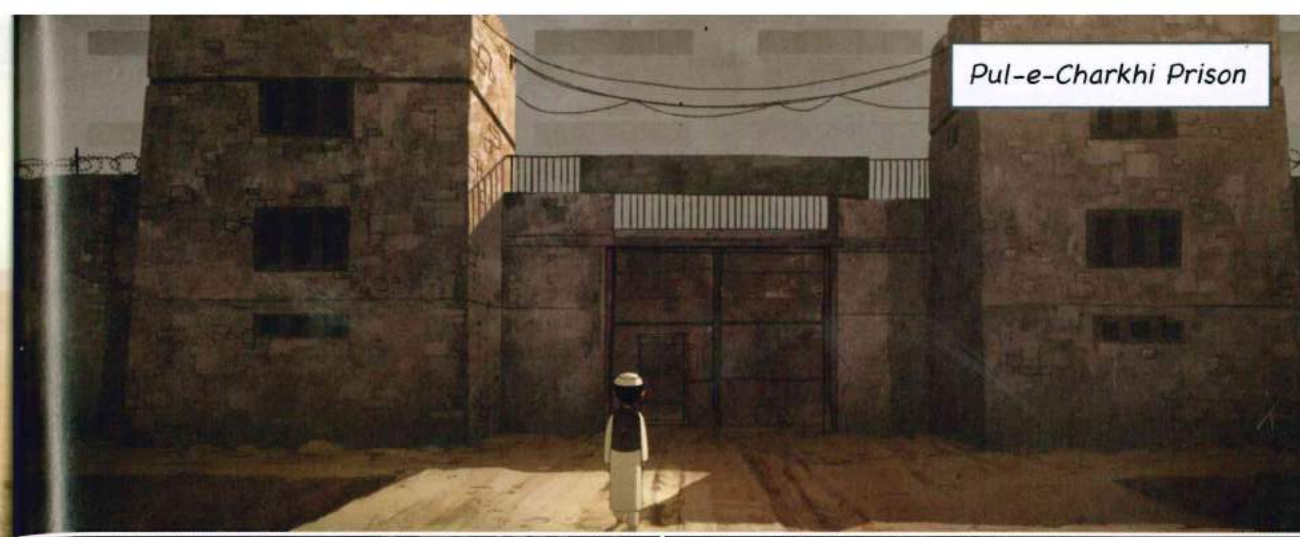


PARVANA! PARVANA!

Kabul—Jalalabad Highway



Pul-e-Charkhi Prison



HELLO? EXCUSE ME? SALAAM?



WHAT DO YOU WANT?!

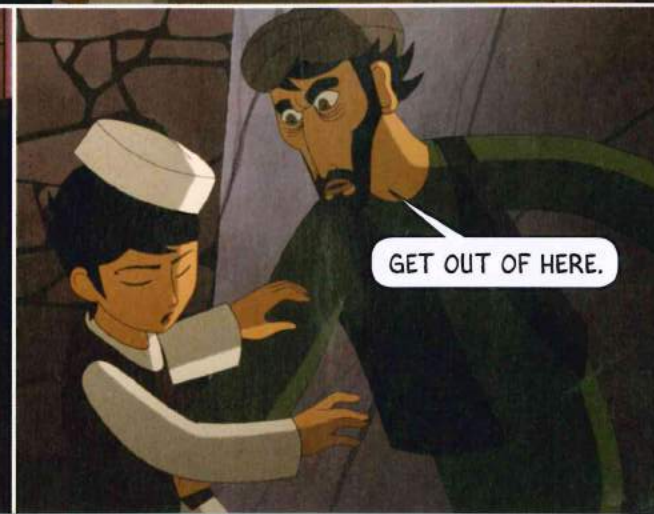


I ... I WANT TO SEE MY FATHER. NURULLAH ALIZAI. I HAVE MONEY. ONE THOUSAND AFGHANI IF —

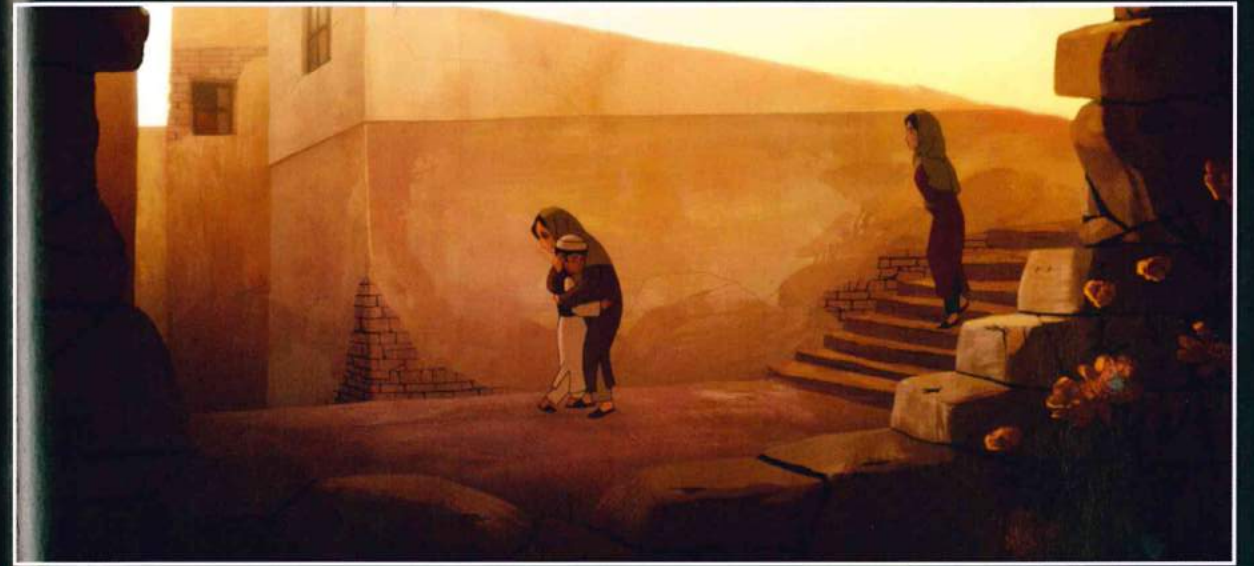


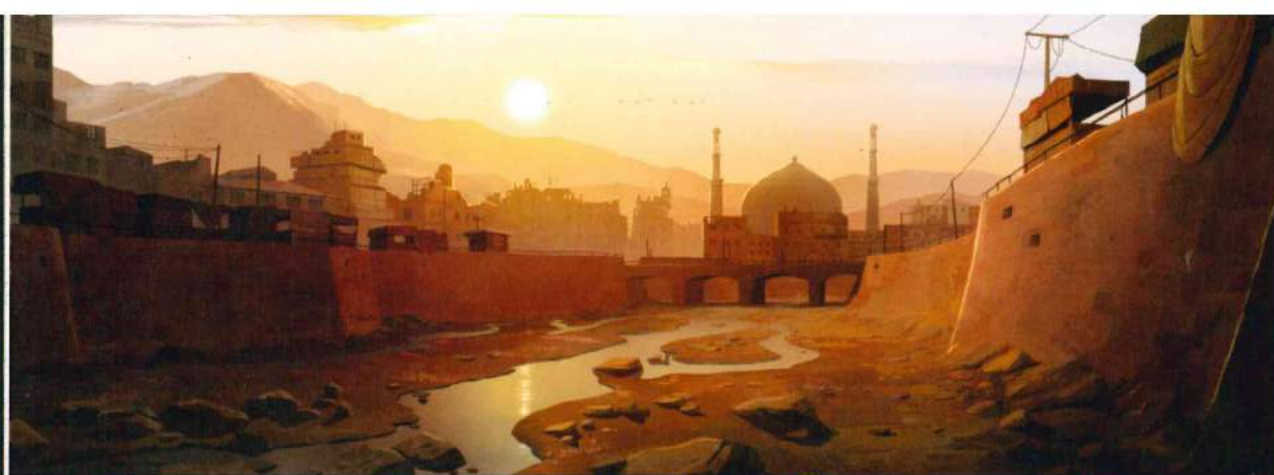
GET OUT OF HERE.

PLEASE, I HAVE TO SEE MY FATHER —

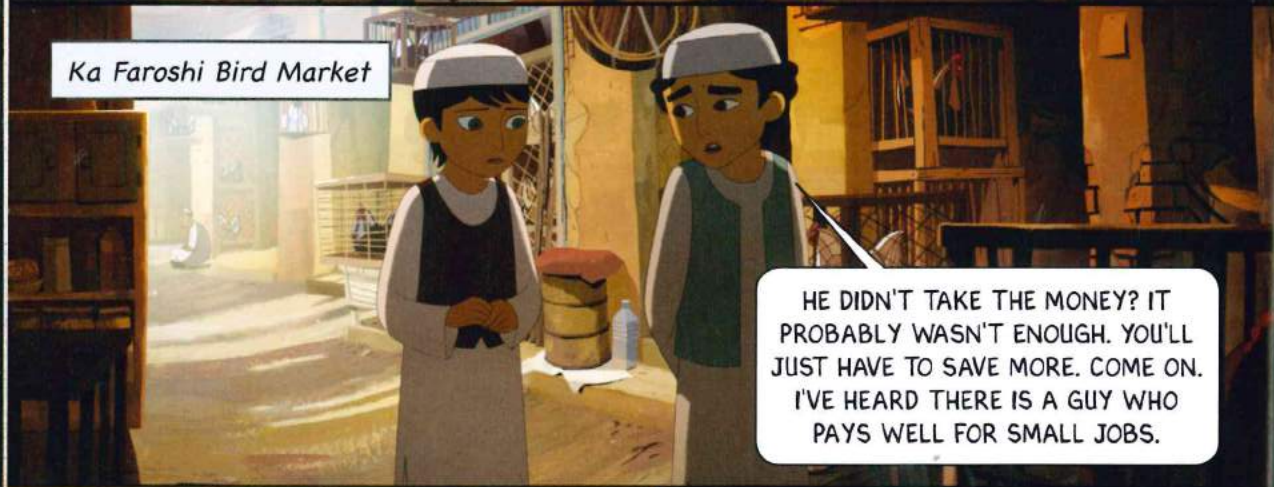


GET OUT OF HERE.





Ka Faroshi Bird Market



HE DIDN'T TAKE THE MONEY? IT PROBABLY WASN'T ENOUGH. YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO SAVE MORE. COME ON. I'VE HEARD THERE IS A GUY WHO PAYS WELL FOR SMALL JOBS.



Outskirts of Kabul

THAT'S THE LAST ONE, I THINK.

WHERE ARE WE, ANYWAY?

DON'T WORRY. HE SAID HE WOULD DRIVE US BACK.



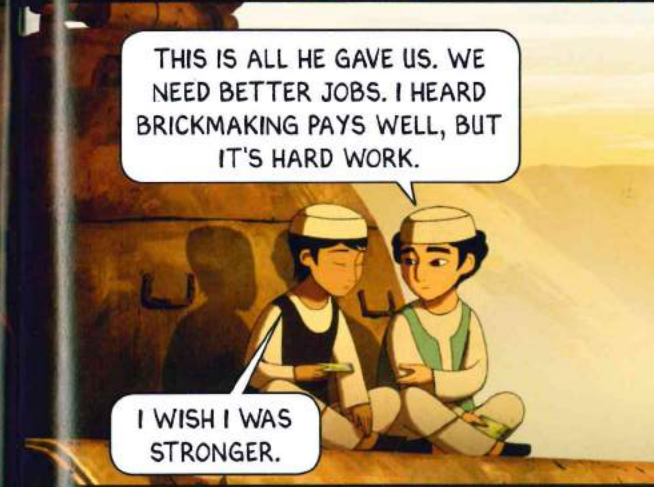
WAIT! WE DID EVERYTHING YOU ASKED.

I'M NOT A TAXI. MAKE YOUR OWN WAY HOME!



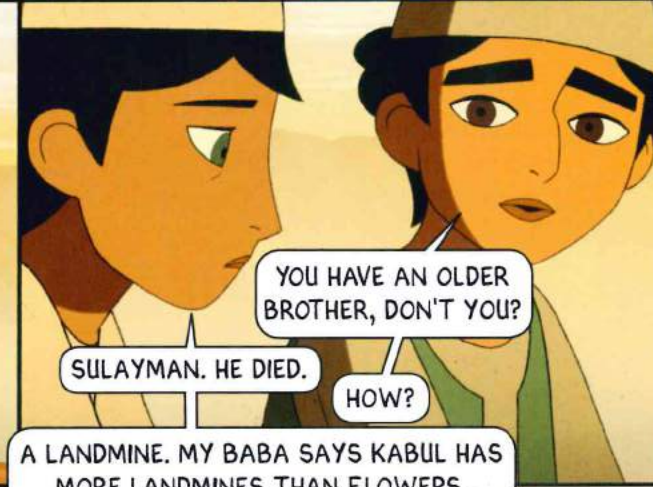
I NEED TO REST A MOMENT.

STAY ON THE PATH. THERE MAY BE LANDMINES.



THIS IS ALL HE GAVE US. WE NEED BETTER JOBS. I HEARD BRICKMAKING PAYS WELL, BUT IT'S HARD WORK.

I WISH I WAS STRONGER.

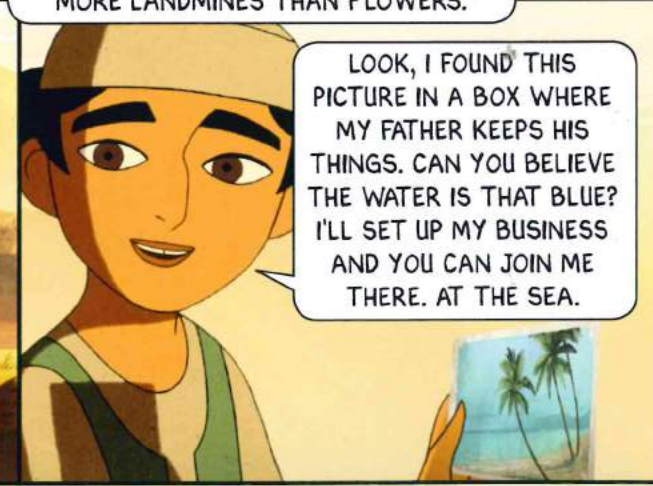


YOU HAVE AN OLDER BROTHER, DON'T YOU?

SULAYMAN. HE DIED.

HOW?

A LANDMINE. MY BABA SAYS KABUL HAS MORE LANDMINES THAN FLOWERS.



LOOK, I FOUND THIS PICTURE IN A BOX WHERE MY FATHER KEEPS HIS THINGS. CAN YOU BELIEVE THE WATER IS THAT BLUE? I'LL SET UP MY BUSINESS AND YOU CAN JOIN ME THERE. AT THE SEA.



ONCE I FIND BABA.

YES, ONCE YOU FIND YOUR BABA.

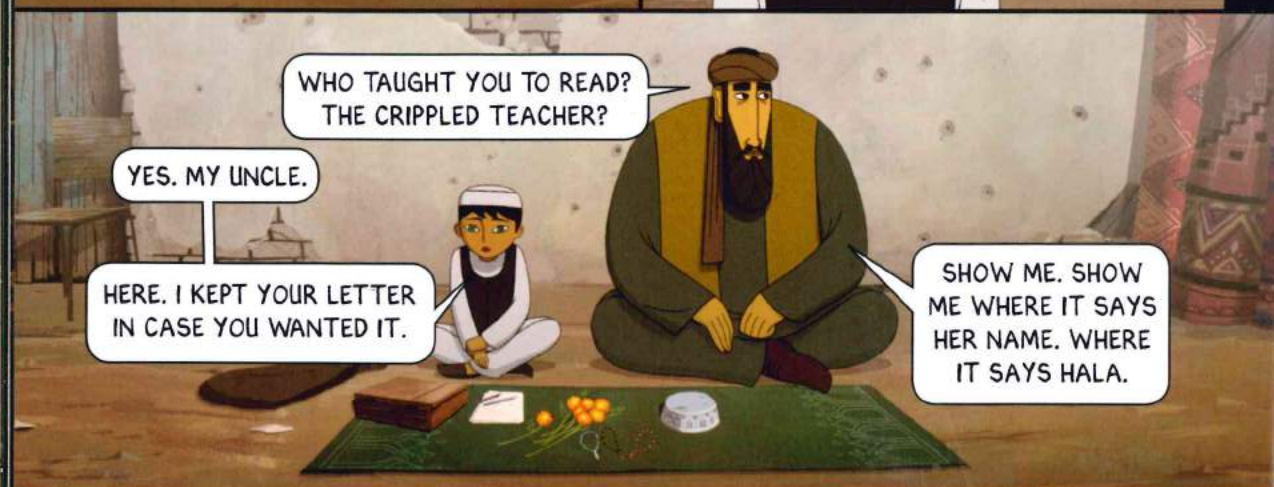


ANYTHING WRITTEN, ANYTHING READ! BEAUTIFUL ITEMS FOR —

I DIDN'T PAY YOU LAST TIME. HOW MUCH DO I OWE?

THAT'S ... IT'S ALL RIGHT, I —

WHAT, YOU DON'T CHARGE FOR BAD NEWS?

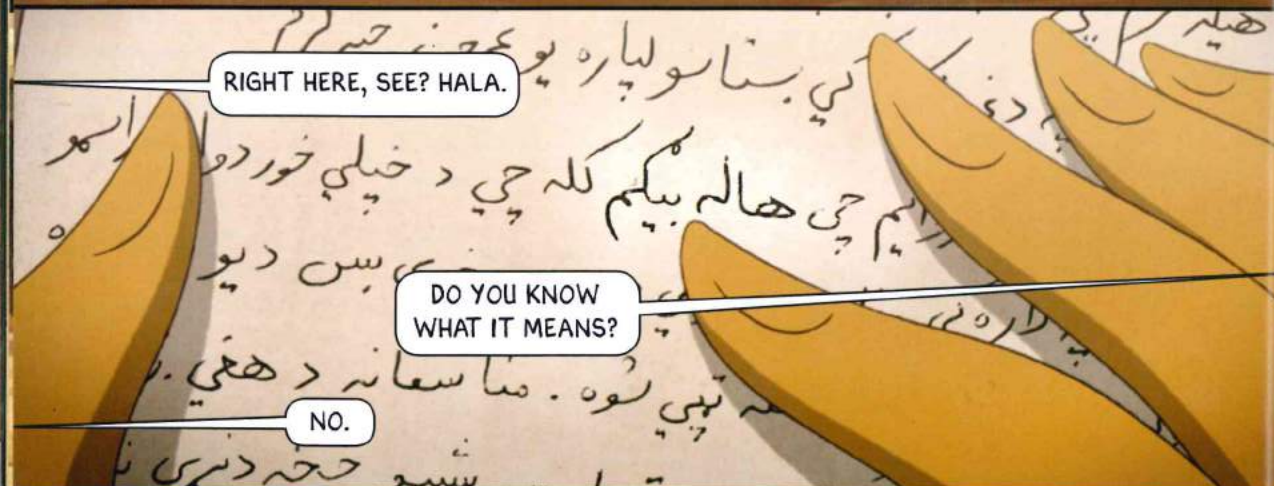


WHO TAUGHT YOU TO READ? THE CRIPPLED TEACHER?

YES. MY UNCLE.

HERE. I KEPT YOUR LETTER IN CASE YOU WANTED IT.

SHOW ME. SHOW ME WHERE IT SAYS HER NAME. WHERE IT SAYS HALA.



RIGHT HERE, SEE? HALA.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT MEANS?

NO.



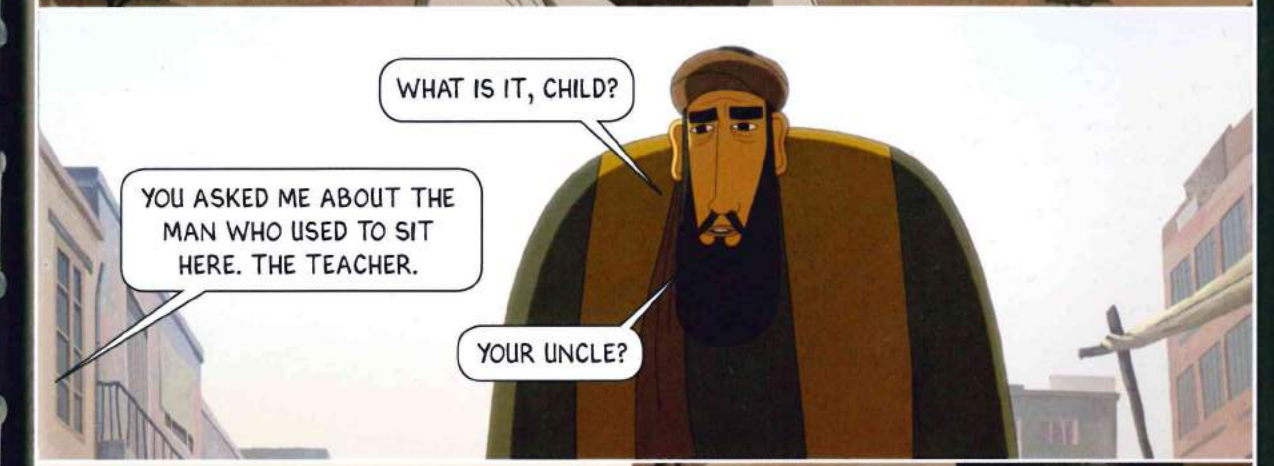
HERE. YOUR PAYMENT.

SOMETIMES, ON A CLEAR NIGHT WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE MOON, YOU CAN SEE A BRIGHT OUTLINE AROUND IT. THAT OUTLINE IS CALLED HALA. MY WIFE WAS NAMED FOR THAT LIGHT.



THIS IS TOO MUCH.

WAIT! WAIT A MOMENT!



WHAT IS IT, CHILD?

YOU ASKED ME ABOUT THE MAN WHO USED TO SIT HERE. THE TEACHER.

YOUR UNCLE?



HE DIDN'T GO TO MAZAR-E-SHARIF. HE WAS TAKEN TO PRISON. BUT HE DID NOTHING WRONG.

WHICH PRISON?



PUL-E-CHARKHI. IT HAS BEEN WEEKS NOW AND WE HAVE HEARD NOTHING.

GO TO THE PRISON ON WEDNESDAY. ASK FOR ROSHAN. HE IS MY COUSIN. TELL HIM I SENT YOU.

Kiln Field outside Kabul

WITH WORK LIKE THIS, I'LL BE AN OLD WOMAN BY THE TIME I GET TO THE SEA. OR AN OLD MA —

GET A MOVE ON, YOU LAZY KIDS!

SO THESE ARE THE NEW WORKERS?

WHERE ARE YOUR TONGUES? ARE YOU STUPID?

IDREES SUGGESTED WE HAVE A LITTLE ARM-WRESTLING MATCH. TO SEE IF YOU'RE STRONG ENOUGH TO WORK FOR ME. IDREES, MAKE US SOME TEA.

DELIWAR!

I SAW YOU TWO TAKING A BREAK OVER THERE INSTEAD OF WORKING. LET ME SEE JUST HOW FEEBLE YOU ARE. HA, HA, HA. HE CAN'T EVEN LIFT HIS HAND. GET UP AND MAKE US TEA.

ENOUGH, IDREES, LEAVE THE POOR KIDS ALONE.

YOU SIT AND REST FOR A MOMENT AND I'LL TELL YOU A STORY.

YES. EVERYONE LOVES STORIES. I'LL TELL YOU THE STORY OF OUR NOMADIC ANCESTORS, WHEN OUR COUNTRY WAS A FRACTURED LAND IN THE CLAWS OF THE HINDU KUSH MOUNTAINS ...

A STORY?

HEY, YOU TWO! COME HERE!

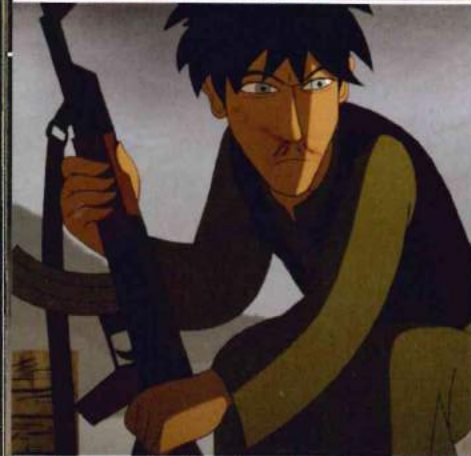
THEY ARE A LITTLE UNDERCOOKED.

WAIT ... I KNOW YOU. YOU'RE THE TEACHER'S —

AGGH!!

I KNOW THAT BOY.

WE'D BETTER DO WHAT HE SAYS.



IDREES! BRING
THE GUN BACK!



COME OUT NOW!

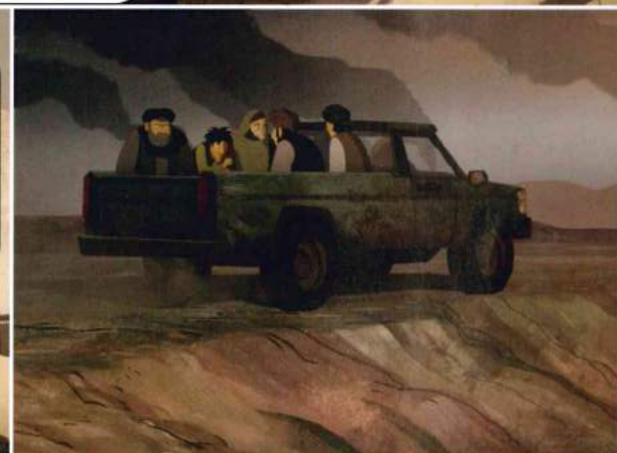


IDREES, IT HAS
BEGIN. WE
HAVE ORDERS.
WE MUST GO
IMMEDIATELY!

I KNOW
WHO YOU
ARE! DO YOU
HEAR ME?!



IDREES! YOU
COWARD! YOU
WANT TO FIGHT
LIKE A MAN —
NOW'S YOUR
CHANCE!



HE'S GONE.

HE WON'T.

WHAT IF HE
COMES BACK?

FROM NOW ON, YOU'RE STAYING INSIDE. IT'S MUCH TOO DANGEROUS.

WHAT?

WE'VE ARRANGED A MARRIAGE FOR YOUR SISTER IN MAZAR. SOMEONE WILL COME FOR US THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW TO TAKE US AWAY. YOU DON'T NEED TO DO THIS ANYMORE.

WHY NOT? I CAN PROVIDE FOR US!

IT'S NOT THE JOB OF A CHILD. EVERY DAY YOU COME HOME WITH CUTS AND BRUISES. EVERY DAY YOU GO OUT THERE AND I DON'T KNOW IF I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN. I CAN'T LOSE YOU, TOO.

I'M NOT GOING. BABA COULD COME BACK AND NO ONE WILL BE HERE WAITING FOR HIM.

HOW LONG SHOULD WE WAIT? UNTIL YOU'RE FOUND OUT AND TAKEN? UNTIL I MUST SEND ZAKI OUT TO EARN OUR KEEP?

LET ME GO AND SEE HIM BEFORE WE LEAVE. LET ME TELL HIM WHERE WE ARE GOING. I'LL TAKE HIM HIS WALKING STICK. THEN I WILL GO WITH YOU. I PROMISE.

LET HER GO, MAMA-JAN. LET PARVANA GO.





DELIWAR! I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU EVERYWHERE.

DO YOU WANT TO WORK AT THE CHAI SHOP WITH ME THIS MORNING?



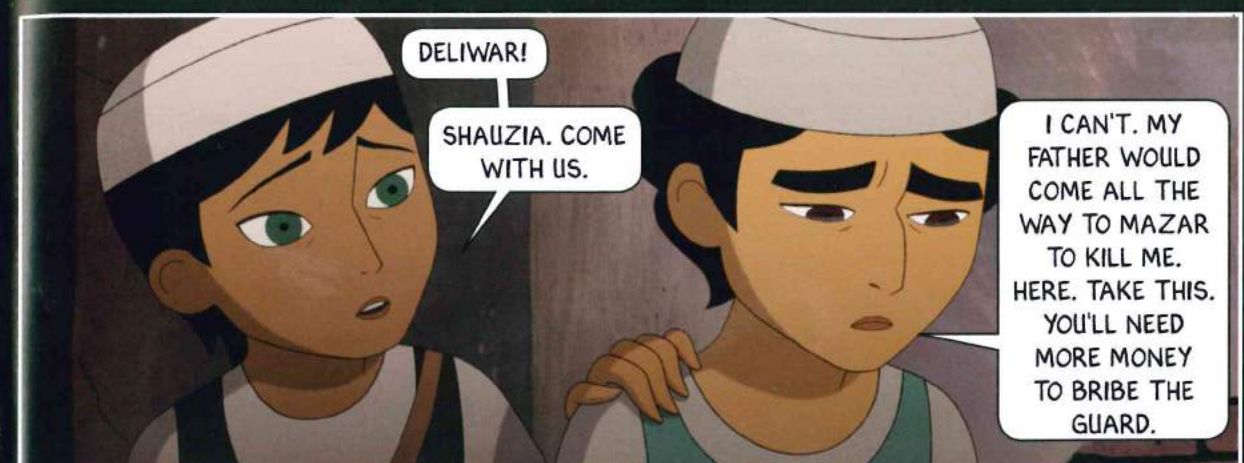
WE ARE LEAVING KABUL TOMORROW.

YOU ARE LEAVING ME?



MY SISTER IS GETTING MARRIED IN MAZAR-E-SHARIF. THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO. BUT I'M GOING TO THE PRISON FIRST. I FOUND SOMEONE WHO CAN HELP ME.

YOU'LL JUST GET ANOTHER PUNCH IN THE GUTS. IT'S A STUPID IDEA. YOU GO AHEAD AND RUN AWAY TO MAZAR AND HAVE A NICE WEDDING PARTY. MAYBE THEY'LL FIND A HUSBAND FOR YOU, TOO.



DELIWAR!

SHAUZIA. COME WITH US.

I CAN'T. MY FATHER WOULD COME ALL THE WAY TO MAZAR TO KILL ME. HERE. TAKE THIS. YOU'LL NEED MORE MONEY TO BRIBE THE GUARD.



I CAN'T TAKE YOUR MONEY.

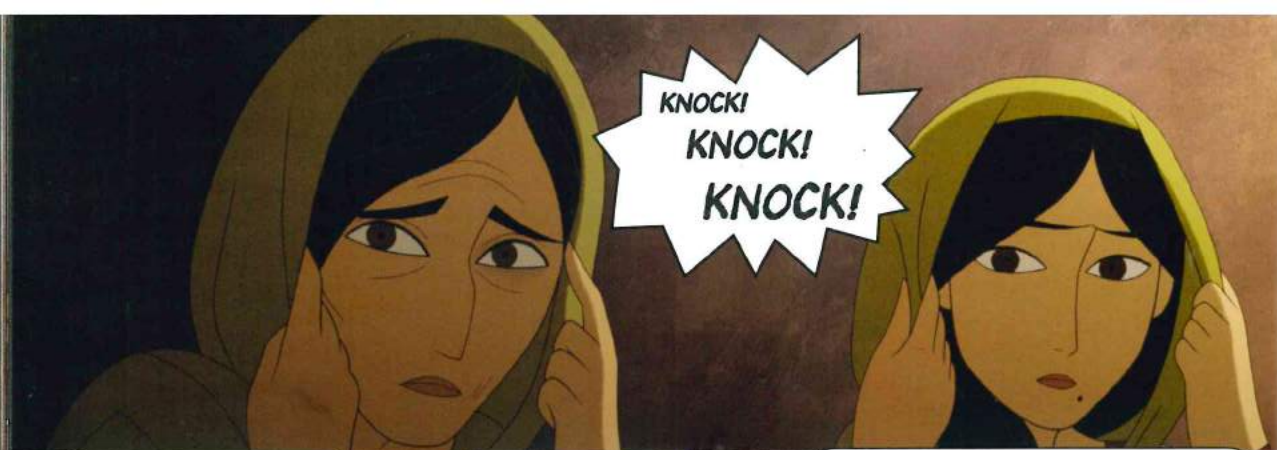
PLEASE TAKE IT. GO AND SEE YOUR BABA.



UNTIL NEXT TIME, THEN.

HEY, DELIWAR! THAT BEACH? WHERE THE MOON PULLS THE WATER? I'LL MEET YOU THERE. IN TWENTY YEARS. TWENTY YEARS FROM TODAY.





KNOCK!
KNOCK!
KNOCK!

PEACE BE UPON YOU.
ARE YOU FATTEMA?

YES, I
AM —

I AM YOUR
SECOND COUSIN.
MOHAMAD ABDUL
SENT ME FROM
MAZAR. GATHER
YOUR FAMILY.
WE MUST LEAVE
IMMEDIATELY.

BUT YOU WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO
COME TODAY. MY SON IS AWAY. WE
MUST WAIT FOR HIM TO RETURN.

THERE IS
WAR COMING.
HAVE YOU NOT
HEARD? WE
HAVE TO LEAVE
NOW BEFORE
THEY BLOCK
THE ROADS.



GIVE ME MY BABY!

IF YOU WANT THE
BABY, COME WITH ME!



I AM BEGGING YOU! MY
DAUGHTER IS OUT THERE!

THEN YOU ARE A
FOOL FOR SENDING
HER OUT ALONE.
GET IN THE CAR OR
SHE WON'T BE THE
ONLY CHILD YOU'LL
LOSE TODAY!



I MUST WAIT UNTIL SHE COMES. WE
MUST WAIT FOR MY DAUGHTER!

SON,
DAUGHTER,
WHICH IS IT?
GATHER YOUR
THINGS, WE
MUST LEAVE
NOW!



GIVE ME MY BABY!

THEN KEEP HIM QUIET!



COUNT YOURSELF
LUCKY I'M TAKING
YOU AT ALL, OLD
WOMAN. THE GIRL
AND THE BABY ARE
OF MORE WORTH.
AND I DIDN'T COME
ALL THIS WAY FOR
NOTHING. IF WE
DON'T GO NOW, WE
WON'T GET OUT OF
HERE AT ALL.

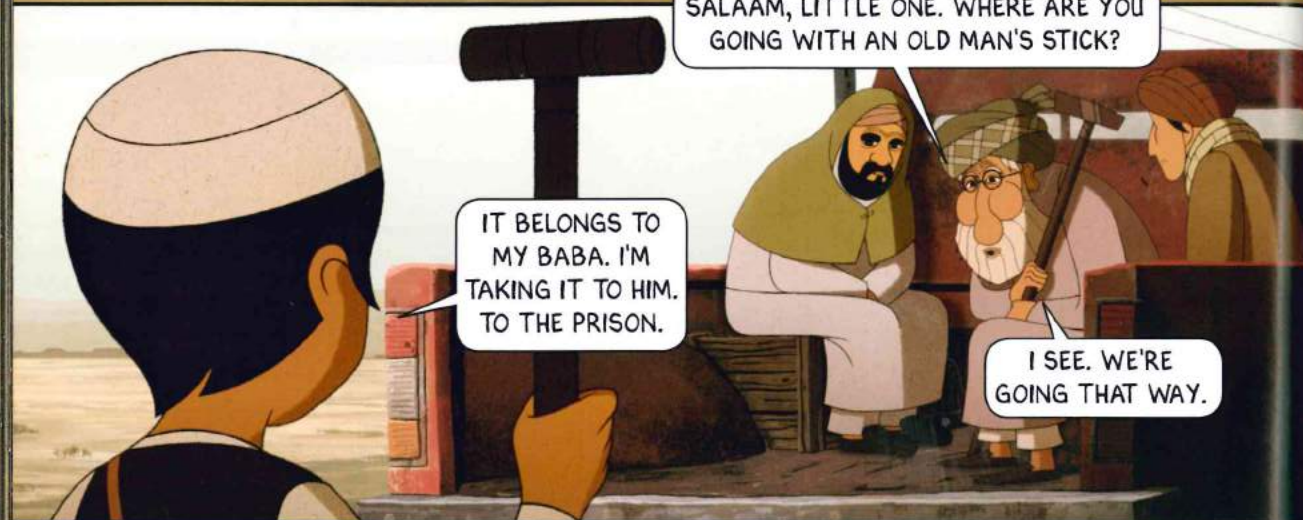
WHAT ARE YOU DOING? GIVE ME
MY BABY! GIVE HIM TO ME!

ZAKI!



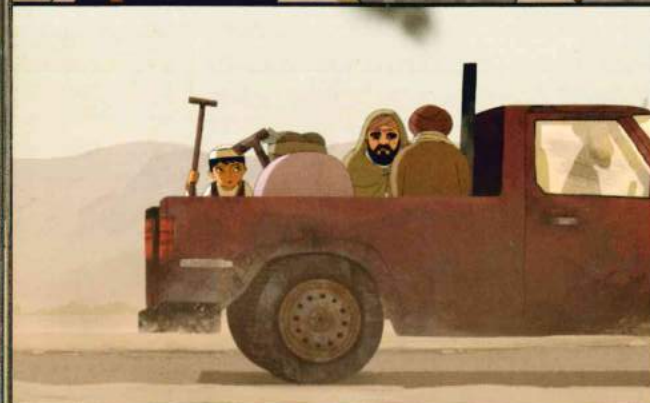


SALAAM, LITTLE ONE. WHERE ARE YOU GOING WITH AN OLD MAN'S STICK?



IT BELONGS TO MY BABA. I'M TAKING IT TO HIM. TO THE PRISON.

I SEE. WE'RE GOING THAT WAY.



I AM LOOKING FOR ROSHAN.



IT'S ALL RIGHT! IT IS MY SON.

THAT BOY NEEDS SOME DISCIPLINE.

THAT'S MY BUSINESS.

GET AWAY FROM THE DOOR, YOU STUPID KID! GET AWAY —



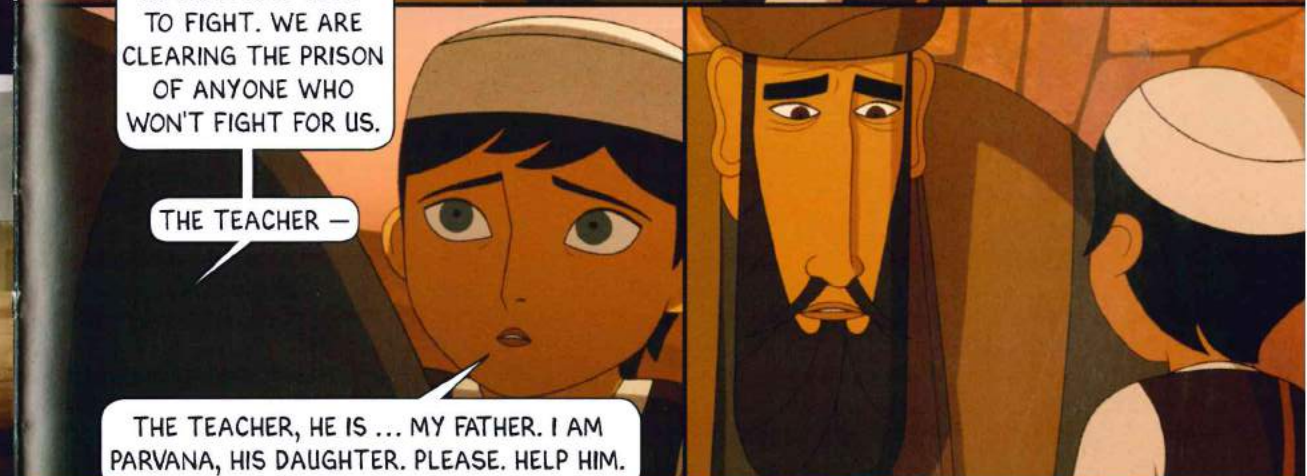
WHAT IN THE NAME OF THE MERCIFUL ARE YOU DOING HERE!?

IT'S WEDNESDAY! I'VE COME TO MEET YOUR COUSIN ROSHAN.

A WAR HAS STARTED. ROSHAN HAS GONE TO FIGHT. WE ARE CLEARING THE PRISON OF ANYONE WHO WON'T FIGHT FOR US.

THE TEACHER —

THE TEACHER, HE IS ... MY FATHER. I AM PARVANA, HIS DAUGHTER. PLEASE. HELP HIM.



IF I AM NOT BACK BEFORE THE SUN HAS GONE DOWN, YOU RUN. RUN AS FAR AWAY AS YOU CAN AND KEEP ON RUNNING. YOU CAN'T STAY HERE AFTER SUNSET. YOU MUST HIDE YOURSELF UNTIL THEN. DO YOU UNDERSTAND?

YES.



AGGGH!
STUPID CAR!

COME, SORAYA.
WE MUST
START A FIRE.



COME ON! THE CAR
IS FIXED. GET IN!



WE'RE NOT GOING
WITH YOU. WE
HAVE TO GO BACK
FOR MY DAUGHTER.
JUST DRIVE AWAY
FROM US.

MAMA-JAN?



WHAT? GET IN THE
CAR! NOW!



MAMA-JAN ...

RUN, SORAYA! TAKE
ZAKI AND RUN NOW!



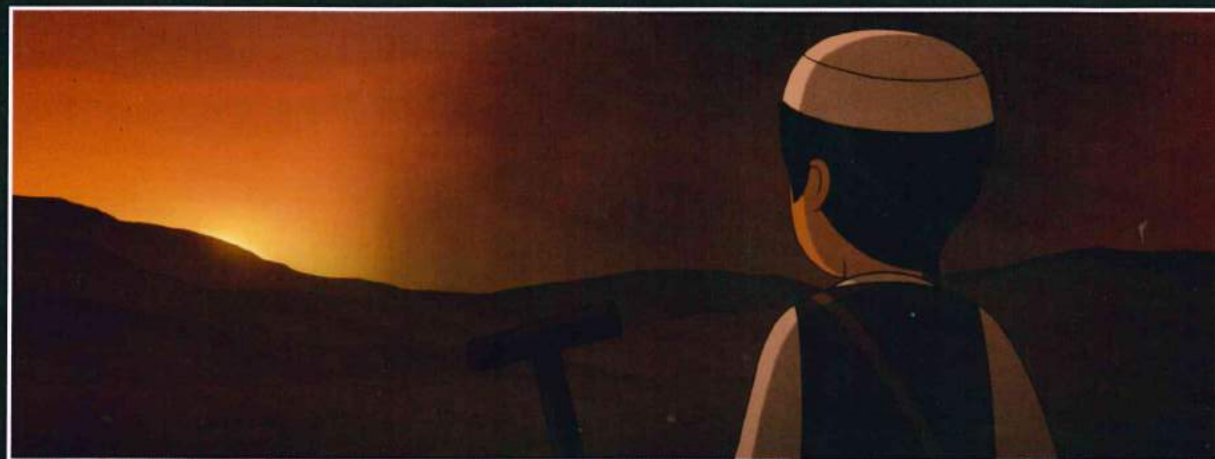
GET IN THE
CAR! NOW!



DRIVE AWAY. GO, UNLESS
YOU'RE GOING TO KILL ME.
AND I WILL SCREAM AND
CURSE YOU UNTIL THE LAST
BREATH LEAVES MY BODY. GO.

YOU'RE CRAZY. CRAZY.
YOU CAN DIE OUT HERE
FOR ALL I CARE. DIE.





RAZAQ? I AM STILL HERE.



RAZAQ? I HAVE COME FOR MY BABA.



WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH THAT?

HE'S DEAD. I'M PUTTING HIM WITH THE OTHERS. OPEN THE DOOR. LET ME THROUGH.



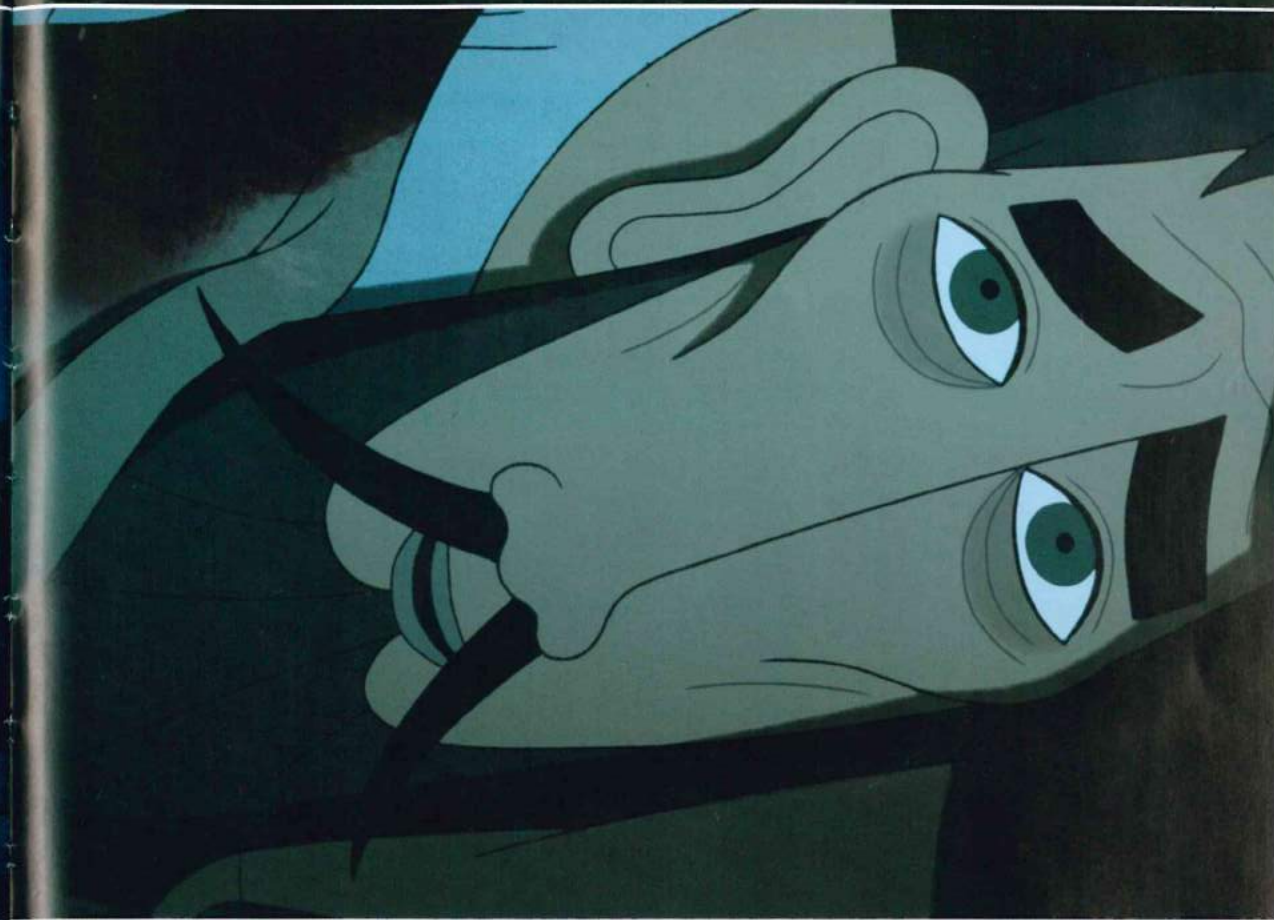
STOP! PUT HIM DOWN! WHERE ARE YOU TAKING HIM? WHO'S OUT THERE?



I SAID PUT HIM DOWN!

DO YOU SEE WHAT IS HAPPENING? LOOK AWAY, CAN'T YOU? IT IS JUST ONE MAN. WHAT DOES IT MATTER?





RAISE YOUR WORDS, NOT YOUR VOICE.
IT IS RAIN THAT MAKES THE FLOWERS
GROW, NOT THUNDER. — RUMI



Historical Note



Afghanistan is a small country that acts as a bridge between Central Asia and South Asia. It has been invaded by Alexander the Great, the Mongol Empire, the British and the Soviet Union.

The Soviets invaded in 1979 when American-backed fighters rose up against the Soviet-supported government. The invasion kicked off a decade of brutality. Many of the military groups who opposed the Soviets were backed by the United States and other Western nations, even though these groups were not at all interested in achieving basic human rights for the Afghan people. The fighting was fierce, cruel and prolonged.

After the Soviets were defeated in 1989, a civil war erupted, as the many armed groups fought for control of the country. Millions of Afghans became refugees, moving into huge, impoverished refugee camps in Pakistan, Iran and Russia. Many Afghans were killed, maimed, blinded or orphaned. Many lost their minds from grief and terror.

The Taliban militia, one of the groups that the US and Pakistan once funded, trained and armed, took control of the capital city of Kabul in September 1996. They imposed extremely restrictive laws, especially on girls and women. Schools for girls were closed down, women were no longer allowed to work outside the home, and strict dress codes were enforced. Books were burned, televisions smashed and music was forbidden.

In the fall of 2001, al-Qaeda, a terrorist group that trained in Afghanistan (although largely made up of men from other countries), launched attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center in New York City. In response, the United States led a coalition of nations into bombing Afghanistan and drove the Taliban from power. Over the next years, thousands of troops from

many countries lost their lives in Afghanistan, fighting the Taliban. Thousands of Afghan civilians were also killed, injured and driven from their homes by the fighting.

National elections were held, and a new constitution was written. Schools for girls and boys have opened, and women are now back in the workforce. The country still struggles to rise up out of decades of destruction.

Afghanistan is far from being a nation at peace. Although the laws have changed, many men still cling to the notion of women as their property, and rates of forced child marriages and abuse against women are high. Girls may have the right to go to school under the law, but a shortage of trained female teachers (many families will not send their daughters to a male teacher), difficulties in finding safe transportation, the belief among many that girls are primarily for marriage and childbearing, and a shortage of actual school buildings, books and supplies, mean that education is still an unattainable dream for most. Girls' schools have been burned down and women activists have been assassinated.

Afghans know war. They know oppression, and they know too well the experience of one brutality coming to an end only to be replaced by another. Yet there are so many people in that country who get out of bed each morning and spend their days trying to make things a little better for their family, their community and their country. This everyday kindness takes tremendous courage, and we can join them by doing what we can, where we can and when we can to make the world a kinder place for everyone.

— Deborah Ellis