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The cyclone

The black clouds over the village of Channua were turning day to night, and the wind was getting stronger by the moment. Bits of paper and palm leaves were blowing through the village. Soon the wind would be strong enough to lift pieces of tin from roofs and send them flying through the air. The sharp edges were dangerous.

Sultana Nahar had seen it too many times before. She knew time was short. She could hear the voice over the loudspeaker telling people to go to the cyclone shelter where they would be safe. She grabbed a bag of dried food and pushed her two children, Khushi and Mohammad, out of the door of their house.

‘Quick, we must go now. There’s no time to get your things.’

‘But Ma,’ said Khushi, ‘what about Baba?’

Mohammad watched his father tying the family’s two cows to a palm tree. ‘Yes, Baba must come.’

‘He will come after,’ Sultana told them.

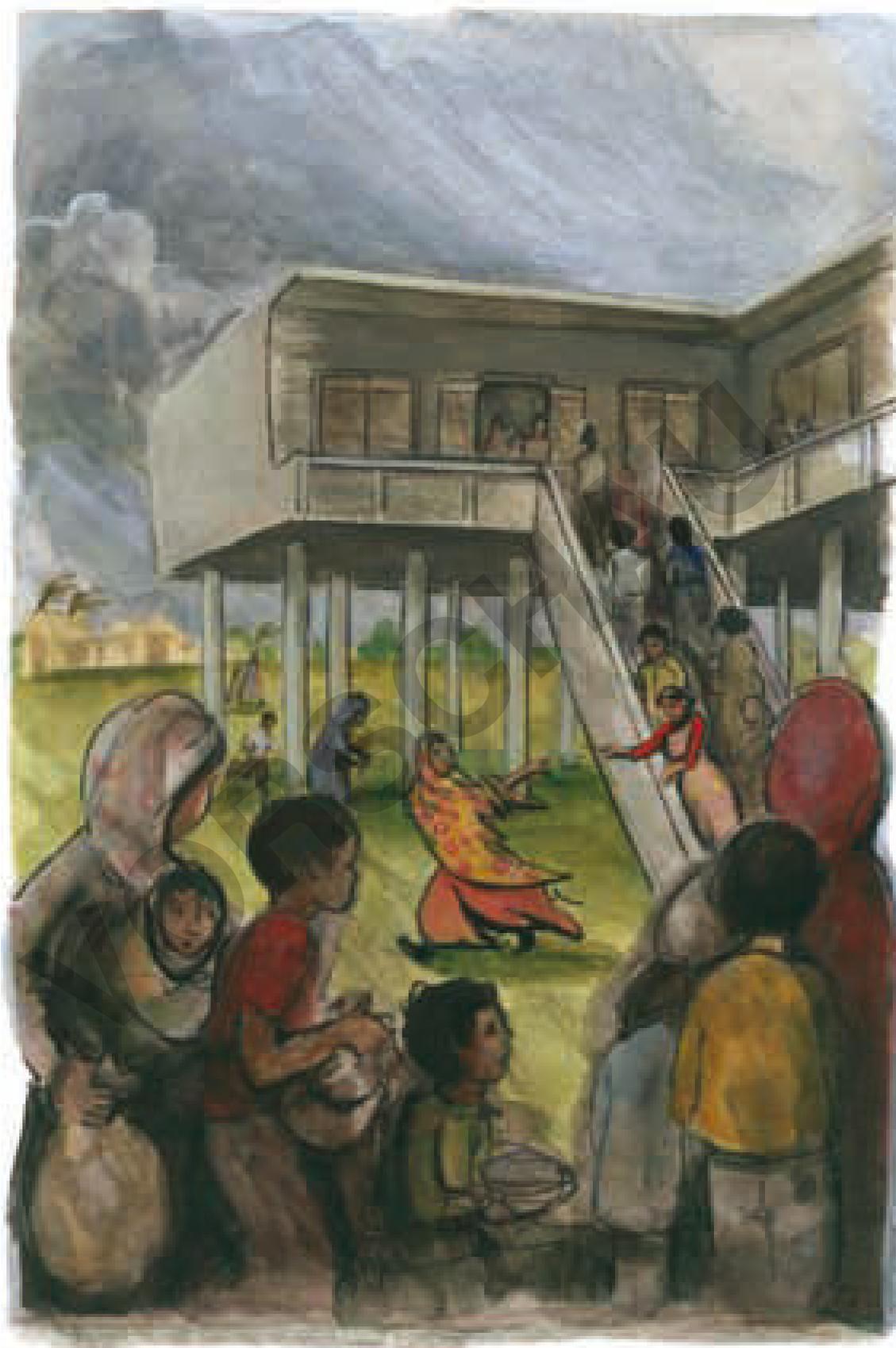
But she knew he wouldn’t come. This time her husband was going to stay with the house. The last time they had gone to the shelter, they had returned to find the house still standing, but everything they owned gone. Everything, including the chickens and cow, had been stolen.

This time, Sultana had tried to persuade him to come to the shelter, screaming, ‘Don’t be a fool. You are going to die here.’

But he had replied, ‘If I come back to nothing again, I might as well be dead.’

And so she had decided to save the children and herself.

Sultana and the two children ran towards the shelter. Everywhere, villagers were tying down their houses as best they could. They tied the roofs and outsides of their houses to



trees. They took anything they could carry – pots, clothes, bags of rice.

The cyclone shelter was a concrete building that stood five metres off the ground on pillars. It was strong enough to withstand 200 kilometre-per-hour winds and large enough for hundreds of people.

Sultana paused at the bottom of the steps. She could hear the voice through the loudspeaker telling people to go to safety. But she couldn't leave her husband to face the winds. This was the man she had married at fifteen, the man she had grown to love and could not live without.

'You two go up,' she said to the children. 'I'm going back to get your father.'

'Ma, Ma!' Khushi shouted.

Sultana quickly held her two children in her arms, then said, 'Go! I'll be back.'

In the shelter, Mohammad and Khushi held each other and listened to the roar of wind and rain. They could see the fear on the faces of the other people, all crowded together.

'Where's Ma, where's Baba?' Khushi shouted.

'They're coming,' replied Mohammad.

All night the wind roared. Halfway through the night a huge body of seawater hit the side of the shelter. The shelter shook and people screamed. 'Allah, save us!' someone shouted.

By sunrise, the winds had died down, but it was still raining lightly. When Mohammad and Khushi looked outside they saw a sea of brown water. The whole village was flooded. There were bits of wood, pots and dead animals floating in the water. Then they saw the human bodies.

Khushi turned to her brother and started crying in loud sobs that took her breath away.

'Don't look,' said Mohammad.

'Ma,' cried Khushi, 'Baba.'

The fisher boy

Khushi woke to the sound of water being pumped from the pump in the courtyard. It was like the sound of a donkey. She went outside where Auntie was filling a pot with water. Auntie looked across at Khushi standing in the doorway.

‘Are you hungry?’

With a movement of her head to one side Khushi indicated that she was.

‘Your sister is still sleeping?’

‘Yes.’

Auntie went to the kitchen and came back with a plate of food – a roti, a fried egg that was still soft and vegetables.

Khushi tore off a piece of roti with her right hand and put it in the soft egg yolk. She used the roti to scoop up some of the vegetables. Mobirun came and joined them. Auntie went away and returned with a second plate of food.

‘So where is your village?’ Auntie asked.

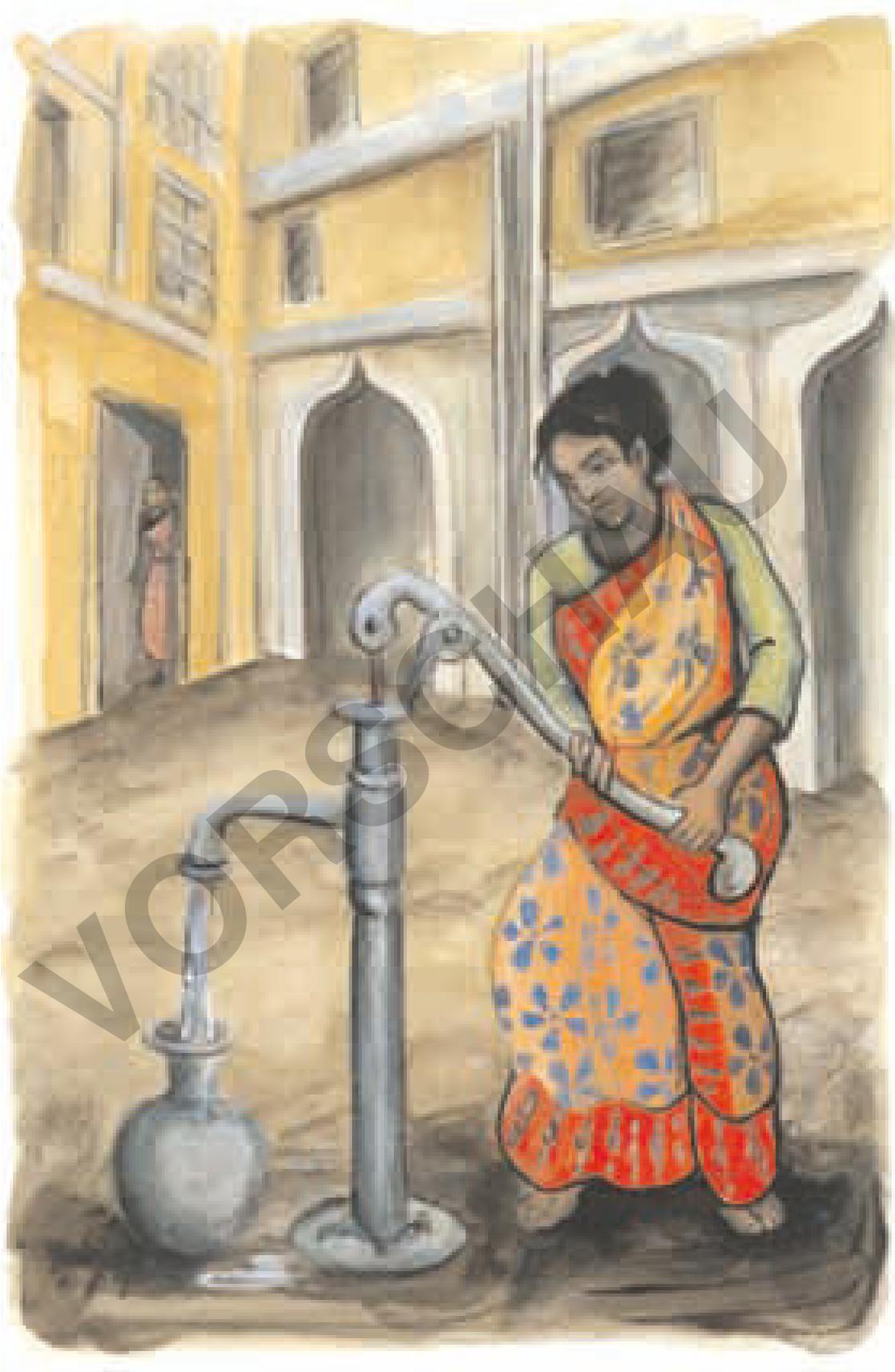
The two girls told their stories – first Mobirun and then Khushi.

‘Who knows why Allah makes these things happen?’ Auntie said. ‘I have spoken with my husband. You can stay here. But you’ll have to find work.’

The two girls smiled at each other. This was somewhere. They had nowhere else to go.

After a week of looking for work, Mobirun found a job in a clothing factory on the other side of the city. It was a long rickshaw ride to the factory.

Khushi could have worked in the factory too, if it weren’t for the nights. When she put her head on the pillow and closed her eyes, she imagined dead bodies floating in the water. She



saw the burning factory and people rushing from the flames. Every night these images tormented her and made sleep almost impossible. She was too tired to work. She was too tired to do anything. Khushi never wanted to go into a clothes factory again.

And so Khushi spent her days helping Auntie with duties around the house – washing dishes and clothes, sweeping her house, cooking lunch, cleaning up and looking after Auntie's two small children, Khaleda and Parveen. In the afternoons when the rains came she sat inside listening to the sound of the rain on the tin roof as she practised her sewing. She loved repairing torn clothes or making new ones for the children from bits of material Auntie had in the house. It helped her to forget about everything.

Khushi hardly left the house at the back of the Paris Café. When she did, it was to look at the river. It was so wide and so busy. There were always things happening on the river. There were so many different types of boats – small fishing boats, ferries carrying cars across the river, huge boats transporting wood, sand and other building materials. Children jumped off the wharves where the boats were tied up and into the water. Close to the side of the river, boys hung from bamboo poles sticking out of the water. They held onto the pole with their legs and one hand and held a fishing line in the other.

One day after breakfast, Khushi left the café and crossed the road. She had had a bad night and needed the sight of the river to calm her down. Usually she only walked a short way along the river, up to where the boys sat fishing on the bamboo poles. But on this occasion she continued walking towards the Old City.

Khushi came to a row of fishing boats. Under the bamboo roof of one of the boats a boy was taking fish from a net and putting them into a bucket. As she passed him, he looked up and smiled at her.

Chapter 13

Home

Mohammad went with Ma Rahman to Banani, one of the wealthiest suburbs in Dhaka. Ma Rahman knew of businesses that exported jewellery. They visited several shops before they accepted an offer of ten thousand dollars.

‘You’re a wealthy young man,’ Ma Rahman said as they stood outside the shop.

Mohammad looked at the envelope of money in his hand. He had never seen such a large amount of money. It was beyond his imagination. Before coming to the city, he had seen himself living in the village with a small amount of land to grow rice and vegetables. That’s what a village boy could hope for. Now he could make his dream bigger. The city offered more opportunities than the village now that he had money. But opportunities to do what? All he really wanted was a place to live and for Khushi to finish her education. He didn’t want her to work in a factory. He wanted her to get a good job working in a government office one day.

He liked the idea of having a business. But he didn’t know what sort of business.

He gave the envelope to Ma Rahman. ‘Have I got enough to buy a clothing factory?’ he asked.

He’d liked working in the factory. And he liked the idea of being able to make clothes and sell them overseas. Khushi and Mobirun could help run the business.

‘No, you haven’t got that much,’ Ma Rahman replied. ‘But you could start a smaller business.’

In the days that followed Mohammad got lots of advice. Uncle tried to persuade him to open the restaurant. Ma Rahman suggested he open a shop exporting electronic goods. Mobirun wanted to use the money to open Sweet Jeans.

Activities

Chapters 1, 2 and 3

Before you read

A. Look at the picture on page 9 and circle the correct answers.

1. What are the women in this picture wearing?
a. overcoats b. jeans c. saris
2. What are they using the machines for?
a. sewing b. typing c. digging

B. Find these words in your dictionary. Use them in the sentences.

wiped earn fire alarm waist

1. We smelt smoke, then we heard the _____.
2. The belt was too short to go around Betty's _____.
3. We _____ our feet on the mat before going inside.
4. I _____ some money each week for doing the cleaning.

C. Listen to Track 3 on the CD and answer these questions.

1. When had the winds died down?
a. by sunrise b. by sunset
2. When they looked outside, what did Mohammad and Khushi see?
a. a field of green grass b. a sea of brown water
3. How high was the water when some people decided to leave?
a. chest-high b. ankle-high

After you read

COMPREHENSION

A. Circle the correct answers.

1. What did Khushi and Mohammad call their father?
a. Sultana b. Baba c. Ma
2. How many people could the cyclone shelter hold?
a. almost a hundred b. hundreds of people
c. thousands of people
3. Who was Mr Islam?
a. the supervisor b. a policeman c. a waiter
4. Khushi called Mobirun 'Apa'. What did this mean?
a. mother b. aunt c. sister

B. Circle T for true or F for false for these sentences.

1. For four years the factory had been Mobirun's world. T / F
2. Mohammad was younger than Khushi. T / F
3. Mostafa had been collecting rubbish for two years. T / F
4. Auntie had two small children. T / F

C. Complete these sentences.

1. The café owner's wife told the girls to call her _____.
2. To escape from the burning building, Mohammad had climbed down a metal _____.
3. The boys sold their rubbish to Mr Alam, the _____.
4. Khushi hardly left the house at the back of the _____.

D. Write short answers to these questions.

1. What did Khushi pull over her head to protect herself from the stares of the men at the café?

2. Who took Mohammad to Ma Rahman's place after the fire?

3. What was the name of the boy Khushi met by the river?

4. Who told Khushi that women have more freedom in the city?

LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES

A. Match these verbs to the objects they go with in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

- | | |
|------------|---------------|
| 1. ride | a. the rules |
| 2. break | b. rubbish |
| 3. eat | c. a rickshaw |
| 4. collect | d. rice |

B. Write the missing vowels to make words from Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| 1. m _ t _ l | 3. p _ p _ r |
| 2. pl _ st _ c | 4. gl _ ss |

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Listen to Chapters 4, 5 and 6 on the CD. Do you think Khushi should accept Abdul's offer to go for a ride in his boat? Why or why not?

hesitate /'hezi,tet/ v.	zögern
hip /hɪp/ n.	Hüfte
horn /hɔ:n/ n.	Hupe
image /'ɪmɪdʒ/ n.	Bild
intention /ɪn'tenʃn/ n.	Absicht
jewellery /'dʒu:əlri/ n.	Schmuck
lipstick /'lɪp,stɪk/ n.	Lippenstift
loudspeaker /,laʊd'spi:kə/ n.	Lautsprecher
lungi /'lʊŋgi:/ n.	Lungi (<i>traditionelles Kleidungsstück für Männer im südasiatischen Raum</i>)
material /mə'tɪəriəl/ n.	Stoff, Material
messenger /'mesndʒə/ n.	Gesandter
monsoon /mɒn'su:n/ n.	Monsun
mosque /mɒsk/ n.	Moschee
necklace /'nekləs/ n.	Halskette
oar /ɔ:/ n.	Ruder
pillar /'pɪlə/ n.	Säule, Pfosten
powdered milk /'paʊdəd mɪlk/ n.	Milchpulver
puddle /'pʌdl/ n.	Pfütze
replace /rɪ'pleɪs/ v.	ersetzen
rickshaw wallah /'rɪk,ʃɔ: 'wɒlə/ n.	Rikschafahrer
roti /'rəʊti/ n.	Roti (<i>südasiatisches Fladenbrot</i>)
routine /ru:'ti:n/ n.	Routine
sack /sæk/ n.	Sack
sari /'sɑ:ri/ n.	Sari (<i>indisches Kleidungsstück für Frauen</i>)
scoop up /sku:p ʌp/ v.	aufschaukeln
sew /səʊ/ v.	nähen
sewer /'su:ə/ n.	Näher, -in
singlet /'sɪŋglət/ n.	(ärmelloses) Unterhemd
stare /steə/ n.	starrender Blick
sticky tape /'stɪki teɪp/ n.	Klebeband
suffering /'sʌfərɪŋ/ n.	Leid