

in the name of God

Grandmother's Gene

By: Ahmad Ghavidel

Illustrator: Marzieh Taheri

Translate to English: Ali Tababtabaei



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Cyrus had been laid to rest on the bed. Pain was evident in his face. His grandfather sat next to his bed and anxiously looked at his daughter, who was putting an icepack wrapped in a cloth on his son's swollen knee. Cyrus looked around the room and his look crossed that of his grandfather's. He tried very hard to deliver a smile but the pain was so much that just "not crying" took up all his energy. His grandfathers smiled, stroke his hair and tried to sympathize: "You'll be OK, you've been naughty again".

Although he preferred to focus on the pain and the icepack and getting energy from his mothers care to stop the bleeding in his knee which felt like it was going to explode soon, yet he couldn't stop himself from rebutting: "I wasn't naughty. I just played football. Falling is part of the game."

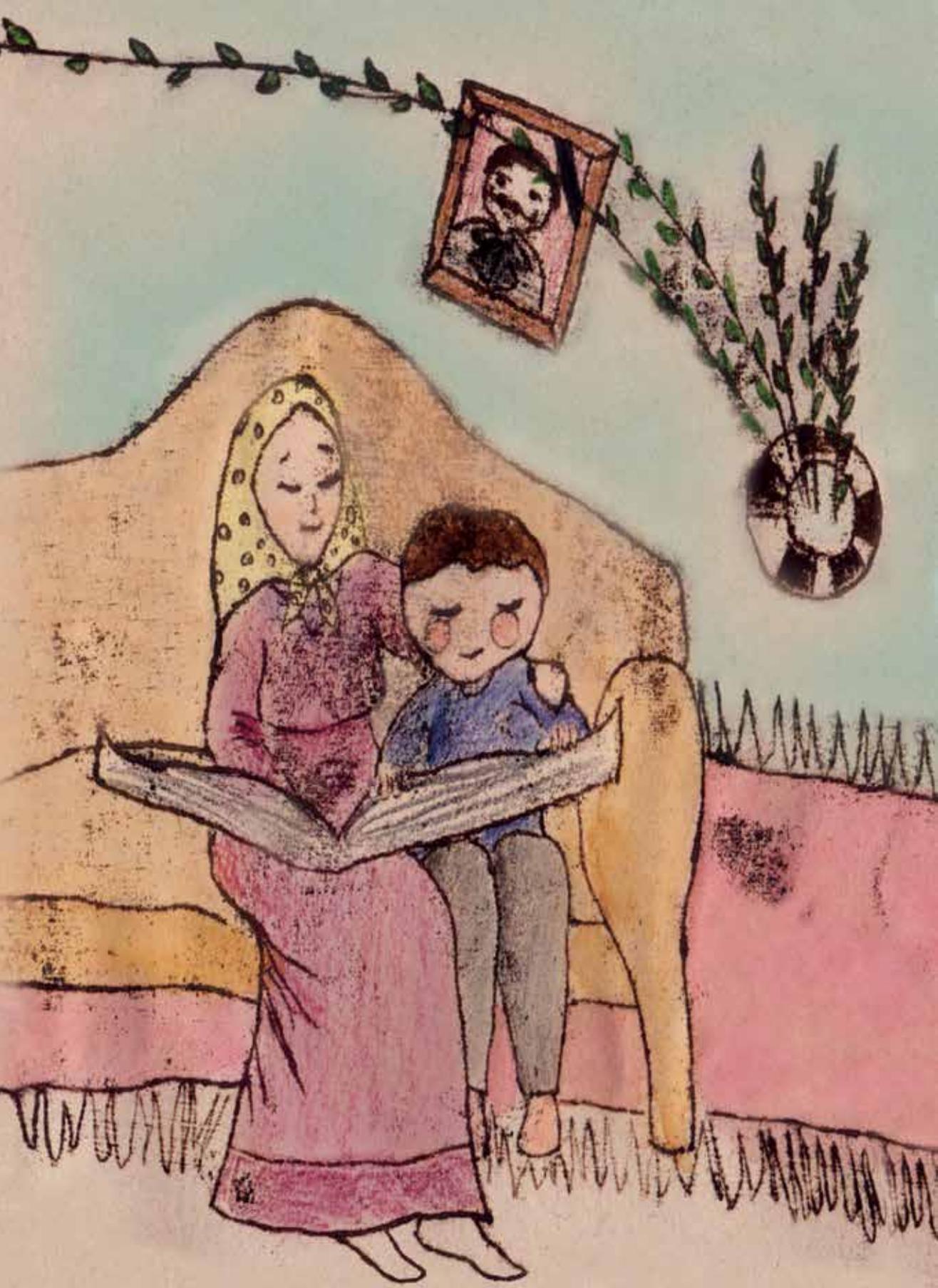
His grandfather shook his head: "with hemophilia, playing football is being naughty. You said it yourself, falling is part of the game. Now you must suffer the pain and your mother the sorrow. Kiddo, your blood doesn't clot; you got to be more careful".



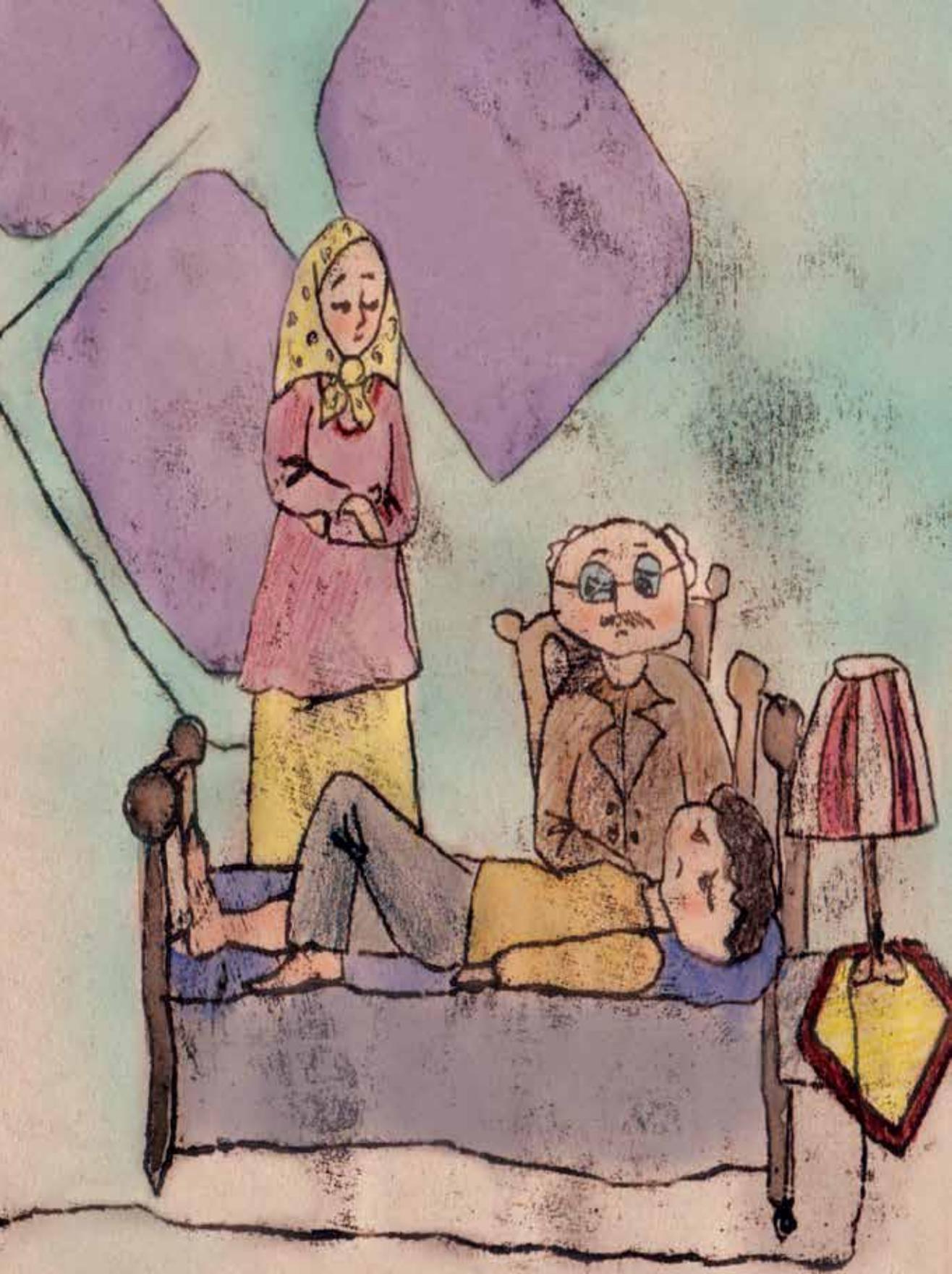
A week had passed from Cyrus's ninth birthday. Only a week ago he had received a football from his dad's friend as a gift. One thing led to another and a week later he was lying on a hospital bed in pain. Cyrus had never met his dad. His mother told him that his dad was killed in a motorcycle accident just before Cyrus was born. Yet his dad had let Cyrus a huge framed picture which hanged in the living room. He had a bushy mustache and his name was Rostam. There was also a smaller photo album which he reviewed with his mother when he was younger. The album began with wedding photos and lasted through the three years his parents had lived together. Cyrus loved one of the pictures. His mom always pointed to the picture and said "in this picture you're inside my belly". It was always exciting to see that picture. It was almost three years since he last went through that album.

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Cyrus had been a hemophiliac from the first day of his life but he hadn't been diagnosed until he was three years old.



He was circumcised when he was just a few days old. He had bled for 20 days after that but still the doctors had not diagnosed him. His mother tirelessly told the story of the hard days when the doctors did not know what was wrong with him, every time they went to the hospital. He felt this was a respectful and an unofficial way to educate doctors and nurses. Cyrus memorized the story like a tape cassette recorder. His mother always recollected: "it was a month before he turned three. He fell out of his carrier and his head swelled up to the size of a melon and still no one knew what was wrong with him" she slapped the back of her hand and agitatedly went on "the things they did to him! They even gave him aspirin. The bleeding just got worse". Cyrus had heard this story so many times that he literally feared aspirin.



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He liked his grandfather to leave the room so he could cry a little. But he was sitting there unshakably, and based on their deal Cyrus couldn't cry because he was man. He summoned up the courage to tell his grandfather that today in the hemophilia clinic he had seen a grown man with a mustache bushier than his father's, not only crying from a knee ache but also yelling and screaming, but decided not to. He kept reminding himself: "I'll be fine". But this bleed wasn't like previous times. It had started yesterday and he had received four doses of treatment but it was still just as bad. It had been several hours since he last received treatment and his mother had been icepacking his knee for the last hour. His leg sat on a pillow. His grandfather turned to his mother: "Just leave the pack on his knee. He is not going to move".

"The doctor said you have to leave it on for ten minutes and then remove it for another ten" she explained. At this time Cyrus's grandmother entered the room with a tray of food and made her way to the side of the bed. His grandfather got up in a stir, looked at his wife, and as he headed out the door declared: "All our pain is due to your heirloom for these kids. What a gene you passed down to them."