

The Unexpected Friendship



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Abdullah was afraid. He was going to a new school. The new school was much different than the school he had attended before. As a matter of fact, his old school was in Iraq, a whole different country.



At his new school Abdullah met a boy named John. John could see Abdullah was nervous, but John liked to make new friends.

“What is your name?” John asked.

Abdullah replied, “Marhaba, my name is Abdullah.”

John looked puzzled, “What does Marhaba mean, Abdullah?”

Abdullah smiled and said, “I speak Arabic. Marhaba means ‘Hi’.”



John was interested, “Where are you from?”

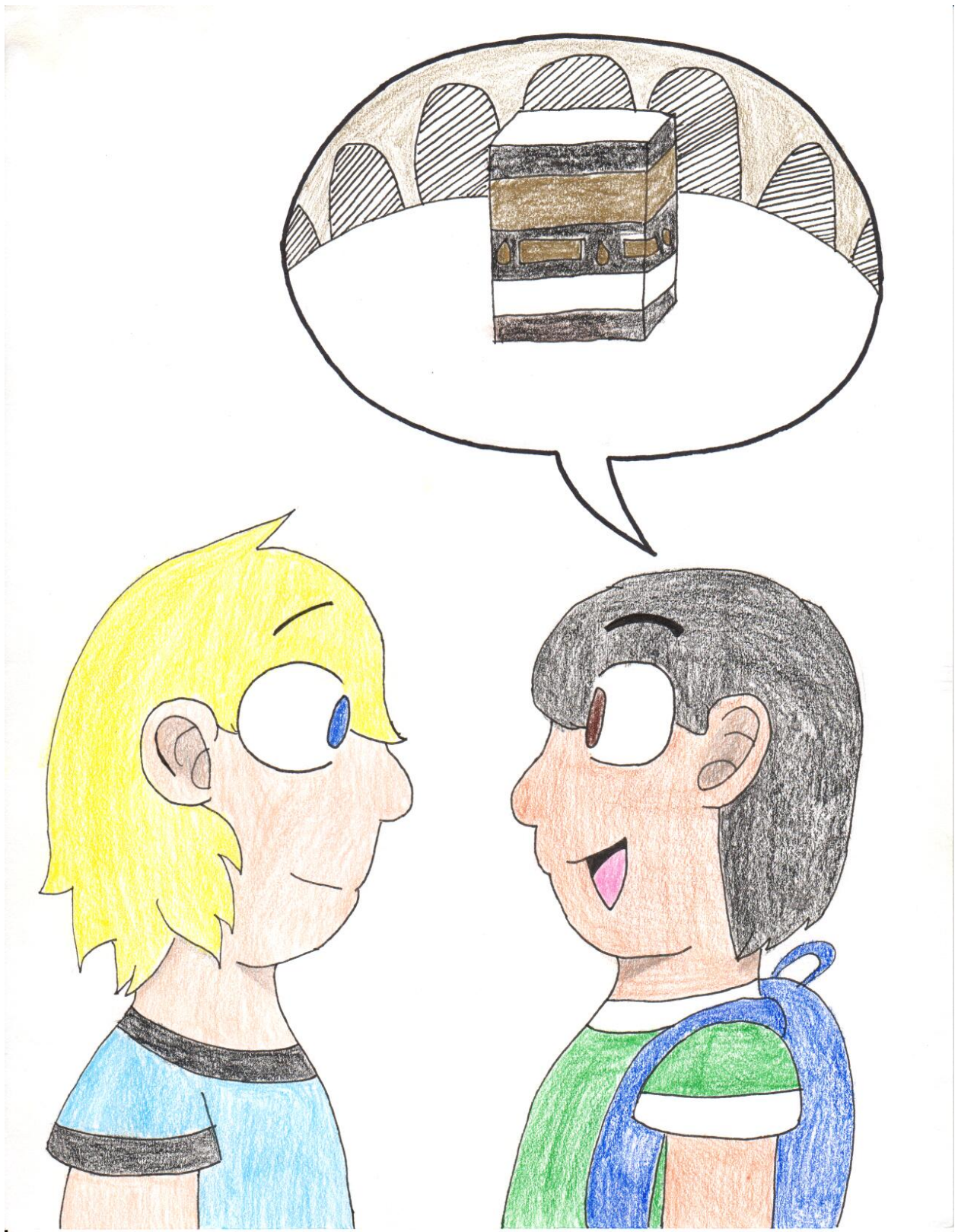
Abdullah answered, “I am from Iraq.”

John excitedly said, “I am from America!” John's curiosity grew bigger inside of him.

“Tell me about your country, Abdullah.”

Abdullah answered, “In my country we have different languages, but our main language, Arabic, unites us as people.”

John exclaimed, “Wow! In the United States we have different languages too, but our main language is English!”



John didn't know about Iraq or Arabic people. He wanted to know more so he asked Abdullah, "Tell me more!"

"We also have several **traditions** like Eid-al Adha ('i:dʊl, fi:tə) and Eid-al Fitr ('i:dʊl, a:də)."

"What is Eid Al-Fitr?"

"Muslim religious **pilgrims** go on long walks around a **sacred** place called **Mecca** to worship 'Allah' or God. By the end of the walk each Muslim person **slaughters** a lamb and eats a feast, to celebrate this **annual** event. We kids have the most fun."

"Why is that?" John asked.

"Because we get clothes and money from our family and relatives," Abdullah answered.



Then John said, “It sounds like Christmas. My parents get a Christmas tree and Santa comes to our house to give me presents and sometimes clothes. Do you play sports in Iraq?”

Abdullah grinned and said, “Yes. We mostly like to play soccer.”

“I like to play soccer too!” John responded.

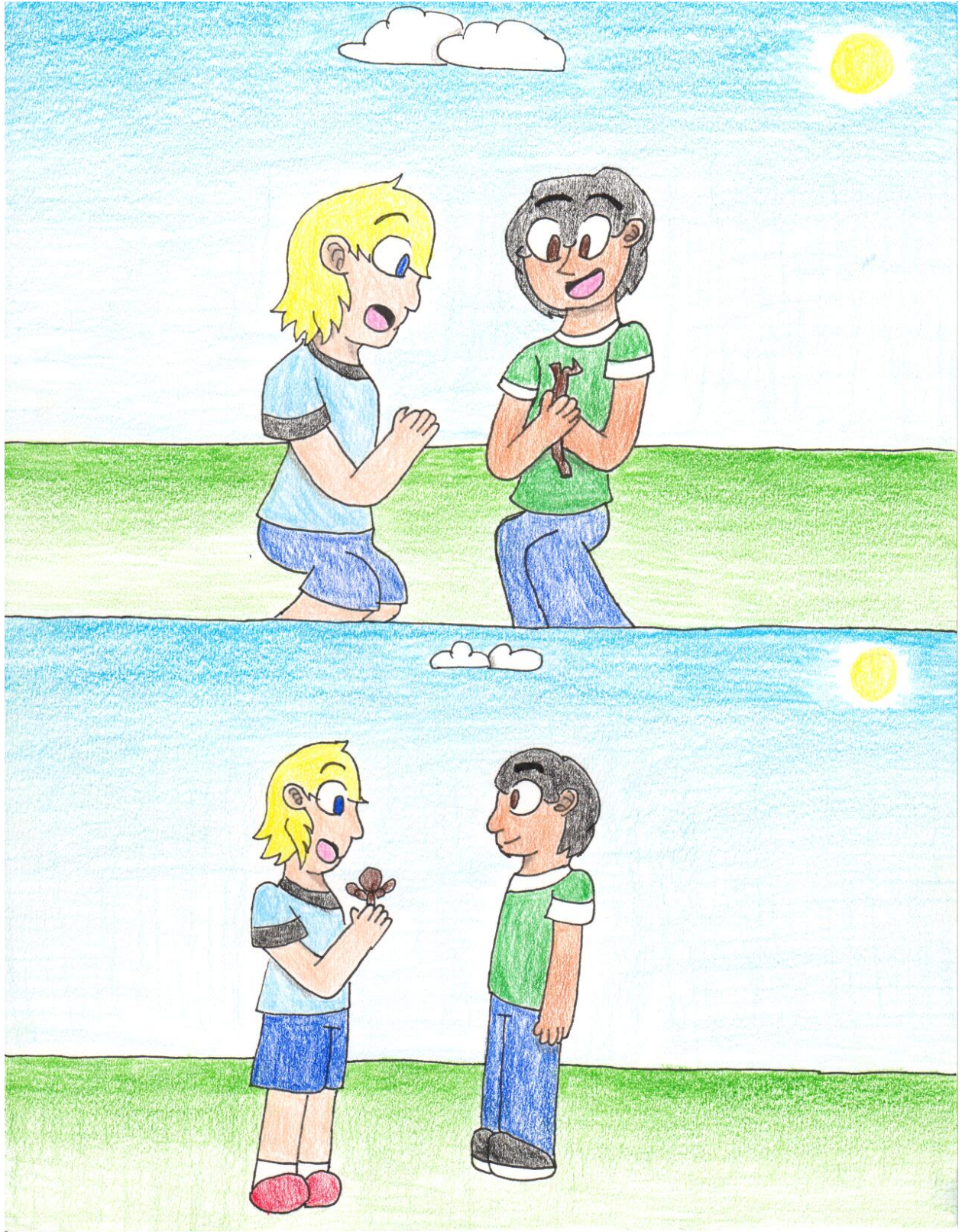
Abdullah said, “We also like to play with hand-made toys.”

“Hand-made toys?” John looked confused.



“Yes. In Iraq kids get to make their own toys using materials found around our houses, playgrounds, or even school. I made a wooden stick figure man using small-chopped wood from the school yard and an unused jump rope I found on my neighborhood street. I used the rope to join the stick figure parts together. After I finished my friends and I played with the toy all day.”

John said, “Wow. That is brilliant. I wish I could make my own toys, too. But here in America we buy our toys in toy stores. We don’t make them like you.”



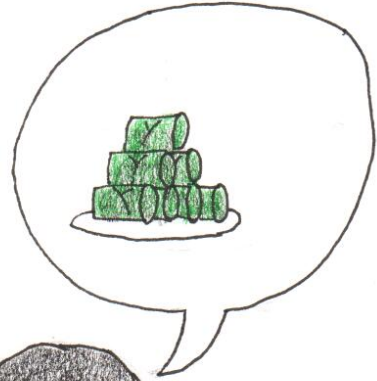
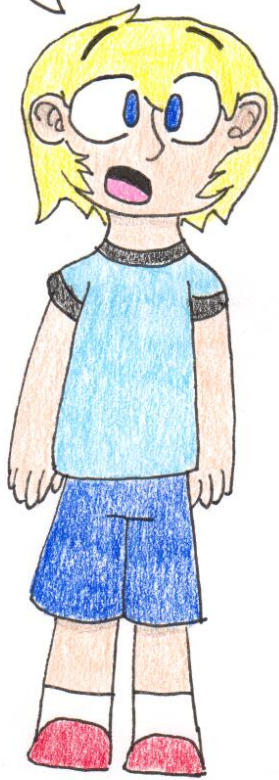
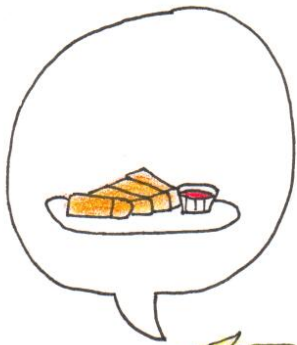
“Let me show you how to make one now!” Abdullah suddenly said.

“What?! Really?” John responded surprised.

Abdullah laughed, “Of course, it is not too hard. You take a couple small tree branches and anything similar to a rope. Then you wrap the rope around the branch parts and you have a stick figure man!”

John exclaimed, “This is cool! Now I can make my own toy. Thank you so much, Abdullah!”

Abdullah smiled.



John asked Abdullah again, “What food do you eat in Iraq, Abdullah?”

“We love to eat ‘Dolma’, which is a mixture of rice and beef or vegetables. It is wrapped in grape leaves. Everything is spiced and oiled. We are also known for broiled fish.” Abdullah added.

John said, “Dolma sounds weird to me. We also eat fish in America. Mommy makes fish sticks for us!”



Abdullah giggled and before he could respond the school bell rang for lunch. John invited Abdullah to sit beside him on a lunch bench near a big tree. Abdullah accepted and sat beside John. John offered Abdullah a piece of his peanut butter sandwich. Abdullah took a part of the sandwich and said, “Shokrun.”

John gazed at Abdullah confusedly. Abdullah laughed, “It means ‘thank you’ in Arabic!”

Later John and Abdullah giggled together until the bell rang for their next class.

Glossary

Traditions: The process handing down culture, customs, and beliefs from one generation to another.

-Example: *It is a **tradition** in our family to open presents on Christmas.*

Pilgrims: Someone who takes a trip to a holy place for a religious purpose.

-Example: ***Pilgrims** go on long walks around a place called Mecca.*

Sacred: Someone or something greatly respected.

-Example: *Mecca is a **sacred** place for Muslim people.*

Mecca: The religious capital in Saudi Arabia of the Muslim world.

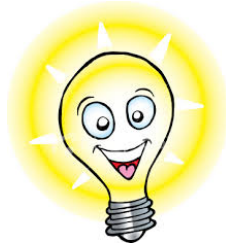
-Example: *Each year Muslims visit **Mecca** in Saudi Arabia.*

Slaughter: The killing and butchering of an animal for food or sacrifice.

-Example: *Muslim people **slaughter** lambs to eat at a feast.*

Annual: Something that happens each year.

-Example: *My family and I go on trip to London **annually**.*



Reading Guide:

1. Research about Iraq and its geographical position. This will give a background of the country before reading the book.
2. Use glossary to look up the bolded words.
3. Pay close attention to illustrations of the scenes. Are they what you imagine when you read the words? How would you draw the pictures?
4. After finishing the story, think about the following questions:
 - Where did Abdullah and John meet?
 - How were John and Abdullah different?
 - How were John and Abdullah similar?
 - How are you different than one of your friends?
 - How are you the same as one of your friends?