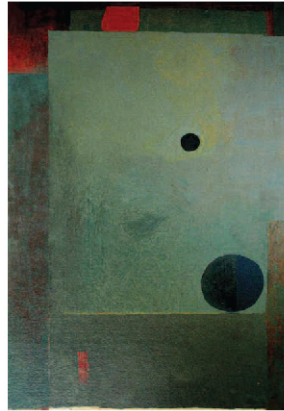


The following story is from the book

*The Central Figures*  
*The Báb*  
*Volume Two*



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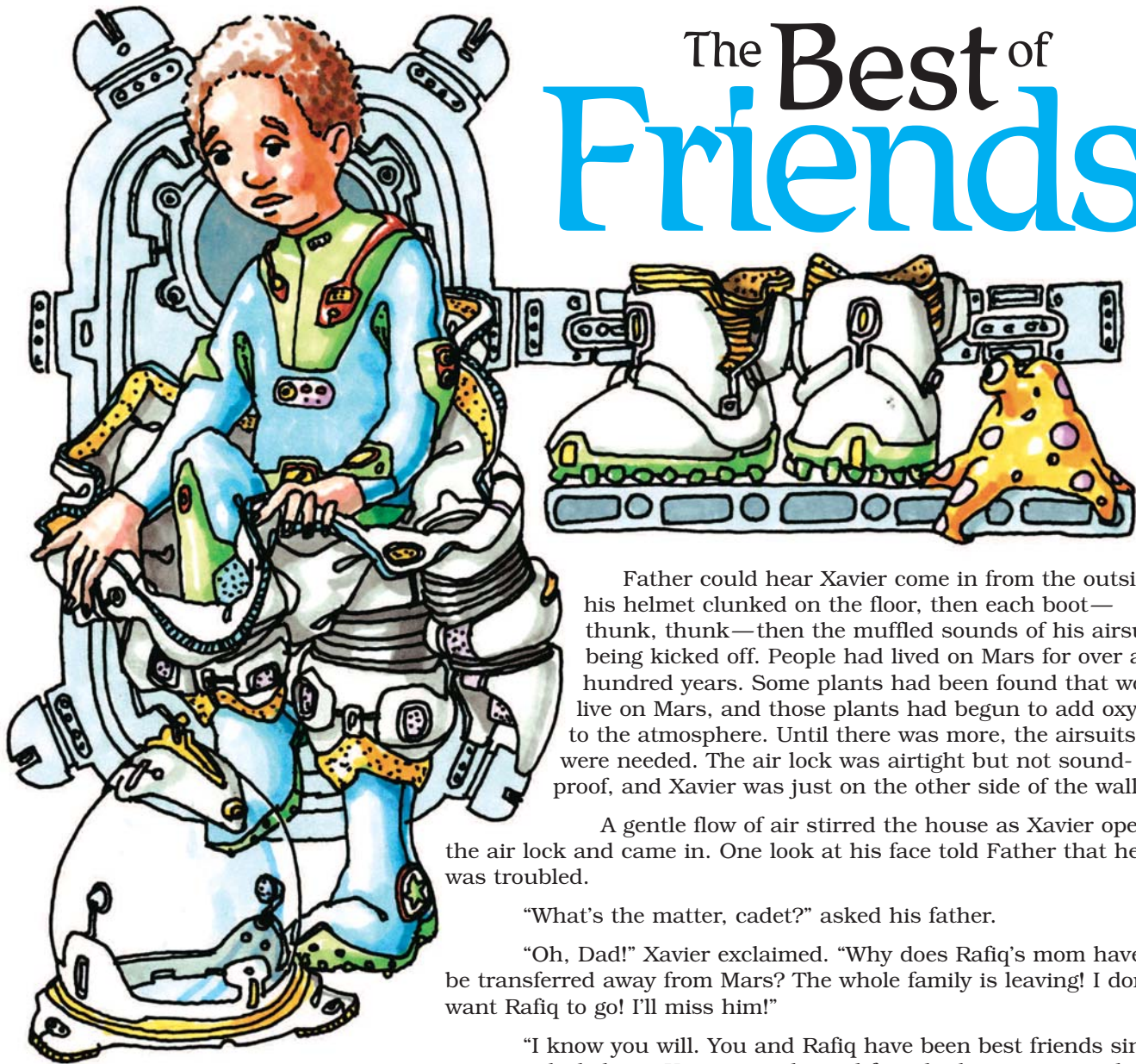
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# The Best of Friends



*Written by Duane L. Herrmann  
Illustrated by Keith Kresge*

Father could hear Xavier come in from the outside: his helmet clunked on the floor, then each boot—think, think—then the muffled sounds of his airtight boots being kicked off. People had lived on Mars for over a hundred years. Some plants had been found that would live on Mars, and those plants had begun to add oxygen to the atmosphere. Until there was more, the airtights were needed. The air lock was airtight but not sound-proof, and Xavier was just on the other side of the wall.

A gentle flow of air stirred the house as Xavier opened the air lock and came in. One look at his face told Father that he was troubled.

“What’s the matter, cadet?” asked his father.

“Oh, Dad!” Xavier exclaimed. “Why does Rafiq’s mom have to be transferred away from Mars? The whole family is leaving! I don’t want Rafiq to go! I’ll miss him!”

“I know you will. You and Rafiq have been best friends since you were little boys. You are such good friends that you remind me of Mullá Husayn and Quddús.”

“Really?” asked Xavier in astonishment.

“Yes,” Father answered. “They were such good friends that their friendship has endured for centuries.”

“But they’ve been dead for centuries!”

“That is true, but their friendship was so strong and true that it has not been forgotten. Can you imagine yourself back in ancient Persia, in the first century?” Father asked. “Before spaceflight? Before electricity?”

Xavier nodded.

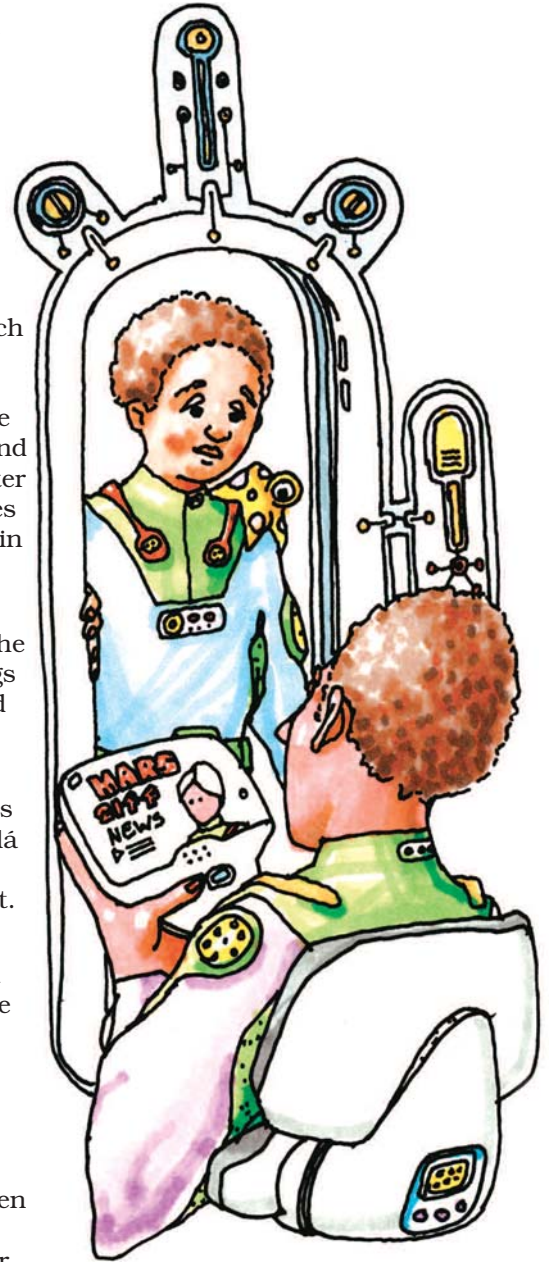
“Persia was desert,” his father began to tell the story, “much like Mars. But Earth deserts had life wherever there was an oasis with water. Imagine . . . Mullá Ḥusayn was hot and tired. He had been walking for days across the dry landscape. He had now come to the city of Bárfurúsh, to the home of Quddús. Mullá Ḥusayn and Quddús had become friends earlier, while they were students. Later both of them became followers of the Báb. They were different ages and came from different backgrounds, but none of that mattered in their love for the Cause of God and each other.

“When the Báb was imprisoned in the fortress of Máh-Kú, Mullá Ḥusayn was able to visit Him and stayed nine days. When he left, the Báb assured him that he would do great and heroic things in the future and find ‘God’s hidden treasure.’ Now he had arrived at the home of Quddús.

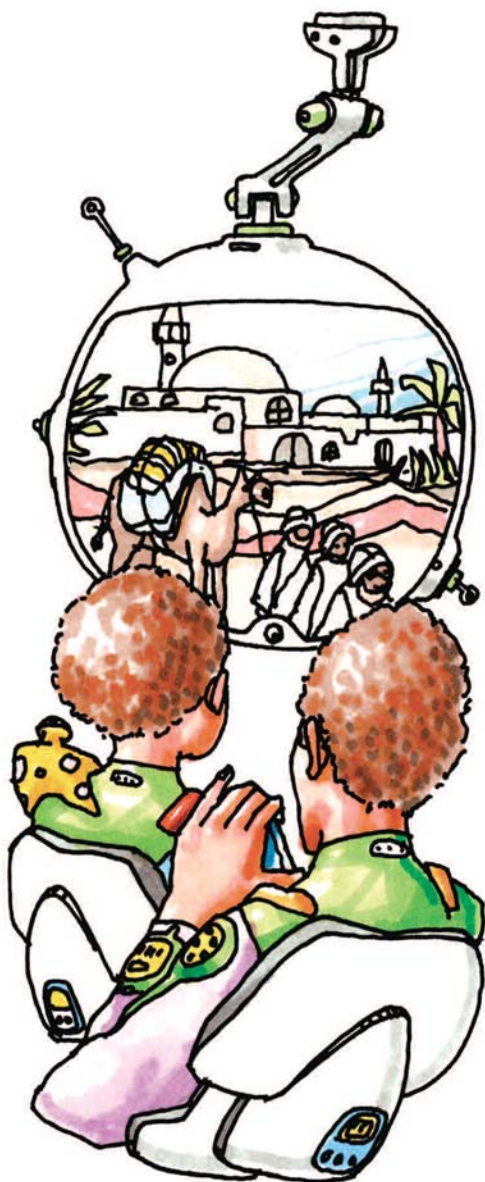
“Quddús was so delighted to see him that he personally waited on Mullá Ḥusayn. Quddús gently cleaned the dust from his clothes and tenderly washed his dirty, blistered feet. He gave Mullá Ḥusayn the seat of honor among the other believers who were his guests for dinner. Quddús served Mullá Ḥusayn the best food first. It was obvious that Mullá Ḥusayn was someone special.

“That night, after the others had left, Quddús asked Mullá Ḥusayn about the Báb. Mullá Ḥusayn told Quddús about the time he had just spent with the Báb in prison. He repeated the Báb’s statement that he would find a ‘hidden treasure,’ and after that, Mullá Ḥusayn would know what to do.

“At the end of the conversation, Quddús brought out a manuscript and asked Mullá Ḥusayn to read it. After reading one page, Mullá Ḥusayn looked up in surprise and astonishment. When he asked who had written it, Quddús remained silent. He did not claim credit, but Mullá Ḥusayn knew that Quddús was the author. Then his heart was illumined, and he realized that Quddús was







'God's hidden treasure.' Mullá Ḥusayn was overcome with thanks and gratitude.

"Earlier Quddús had spent a year with the Báb. During that time, the Báb had told Quddús many special things. Now Quddús shared this information with Mullá Ḥusayn. Mullá Ḥusayn recognized that the Báb had given Quddús a special station above the other believers, and he was willing to follow Quddús' guidance and instructions.

"The next day, when the believers returned, they were surprised to see the honor and reverence which Mullá Ḥusayn now showed Quddús. It was the opposite of the evening before!

"Mullá Ḥusayn now brought food to Quddús and paid attention only to him. He served his every need and spoke to him most respectfully. He did not seem to be aware that others were even in the room. Mullá Ḥusayn listened carefully to everything Quddús had to say.

"Quddús told Mullá Ḥusayn that he should leave and go to Mashhad. There he should build a house, and Quddús would join him.

"In Mashhad everyone saw that they were kind and considerate, spoke respectfully, and were always doing things for each other. They taught the Faith as a team, working together in perfect unity. The power of their example was enormous. The city soon had a large community of believers. It was a joyful time of success and victory. But things changed. The believers began to be attacked by people who were jealous or fearful. Soon they began to need to defend themselves.

"Mullá Ḥusayn and Quddús found themselves together again at Ṭabarsí, a small building outside the city where a holy man had been buried. The Bábís fortified it when they found themselves surrounded by the army that had come to attack and destroy them. The fighting was intense, and Mullá Ḥusayn was shot. He was carried unconscious into a room with Quddús, who told the others to leave. A short time later the others heard Quddús and Mullá Ḥusayn talking. Quddús said he was sad Mullá Ḥusayn was dying so soon, and he would miss him. But Quddús also said that he knew he would soon join Mullá Ḥusayn. When Quddús called the others in, Mullá Ḥusayn had died. He appeared to be peacefully sleeping with a gentle smile on his face."

“They sure were the best of friends,” said Xavier.

“Yes, they were,” his father agreed. “Just before he was buried, Quddús tenderly kissed the eyes and forehead of Mullá Ḥusayn and said, ‘I pray God to grant that no division ever be caused between you and me.’ Watching this affection, the others in the room wept.

“Mullá Ḥusayn had been the first to recognize the Báb. He realized that Bahá’u’lláh was the Beloved to Whom the Báb had written. He had also recognized the great station of Quddús as being second only to the Báb Himself<sup>1</sup>—and now he was gone.”

“Oh,” said Xavier, understanding the great loss.

“Later Quddús was also killed. The Báb and Bahá’u’lláh both wrote highly of Mullá Ḥusayn and Quddús. Their service to the Cause of God was praised, and their courage in the face of the enemy was extolled. They are together in Paradise, best friends forever. So you see,” said Xavier’s father ending the story, “their friendship is no small thing. And neither is yours with Rafiq.”

“They were separated . . .” said Xavier thoughtfully. “But later they worked together again to serve the Cause of God, and now they are together forever.”

“Exactly,” agreed his father. “Even though we do not enjoy being separated from those we love, the separation is not forever. What lasts forever are the services we give.”

“Rafiq and I will work together again some day, just like Mullá Ḥusayn and Quddús did,” proclaimed Xavier. “I’m sure of it!” ★

<sup>1</sup> The Báb and Bahá’u’lláh are Manifestations of God. Quddús is the foremost follower of the Báb.

