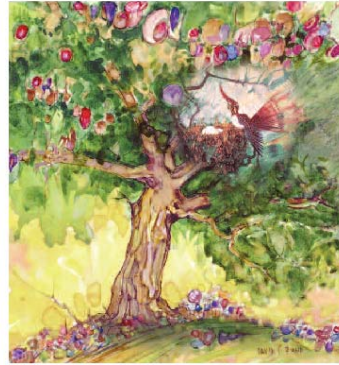


The following story is from the book

The Central Figures

Bahá'u'lláh

Volume One



These stories are lovingly provided to download as a convenience to teachers or communities otherwise unable to acquire the book. Each book in this storybook series also includes an appendix with questions for discussion and reflection, a glossary of words and phrases used in the stories, a bibliography, and an index.

These books may be purchased from the Louhelen Bahá'í School bookstore for \$15.25 each, including shipping in the United States, or \$23.00 to most international locations.

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He that bringeth up his son
or the son of another, it is as though
he hath brought up a son of Mine;
upon him rest My glory,
My loving-kindness, My mercy,
that have compassed the world.

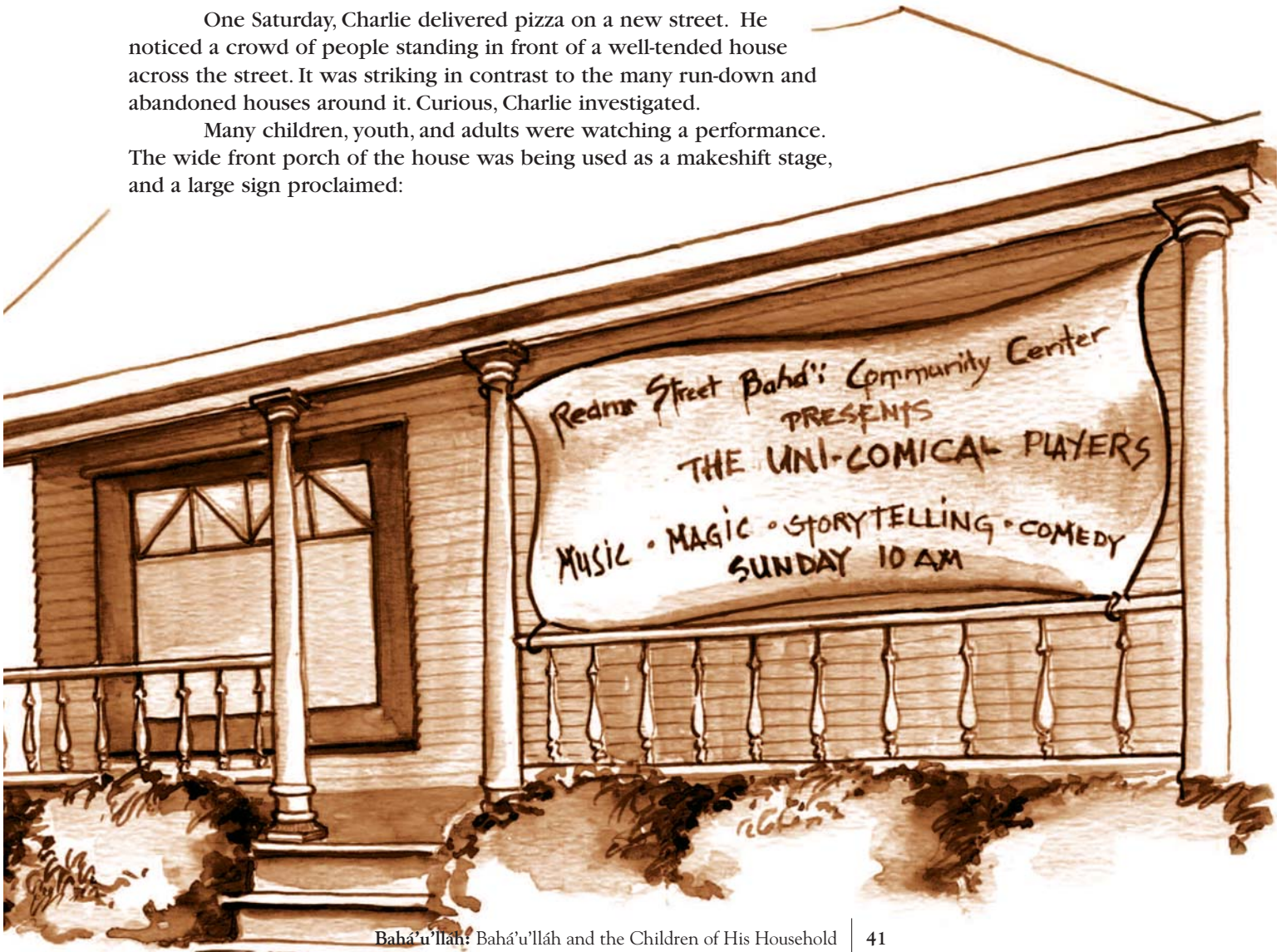
— Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 37

The Power of Love

Written by Rick Johnson
Illustrated by Nina Scott

One Saturday, Charlie delivered pizza on a new street. He noticed a crowd of people standing in front of a well-tended house across the street. It was striking in contrast to the many run-down and abandoned houses around it. Curious, Charlie investigated.

Many children, youth, and adults were watching a performance. The wide front porch of the house was being used as a makeshift stage, and a large sign proclaimed:





Charlie's attention was drawn to one of the actors in a very comical costume awaiting his turn to perform—Gomez, one of his classmates, in a red clown nose! What was he doing?

Gomez greeted him. "Hey there, Charlie—Great to see you!"

"Gomez! What's going on?" Charlie exclaimed.

"I'm a Bahá'í—that's my religion—and every Saturday we do this Uni-Comical Players thing here at the community center. You want to watch?"

"I'd like to stay, Gomez, but I'm working. I had no idea you lived around here."

"That's my mom," Gomez replied, "over there in the dog costume. Her name's Marian." He pointed to a performer in a large spotted dog costume on stage who was juggling several toasters!

"Marian's an amazing lady, Charlie," Gomez continued. "She and Pablo raised me after my parents died."

Charlie's head was spinning. "I've really gotta go, Gomez. I've got more deliveries."

Gomez smiled. "Come back when you get off. I'd really like you to meet my mom. We'll be tutoring here at the center 'til 6:00."

Charlie looked at the dog juggling on stage. "I'll be here by 3:30," Charlie grinned. As he completed his deliveries, he was full of new thoughts . . . and questions.

That afternoon, returning to the center, Charlie found Gomez sitting on the floor surrounded by children. He was telling a story.

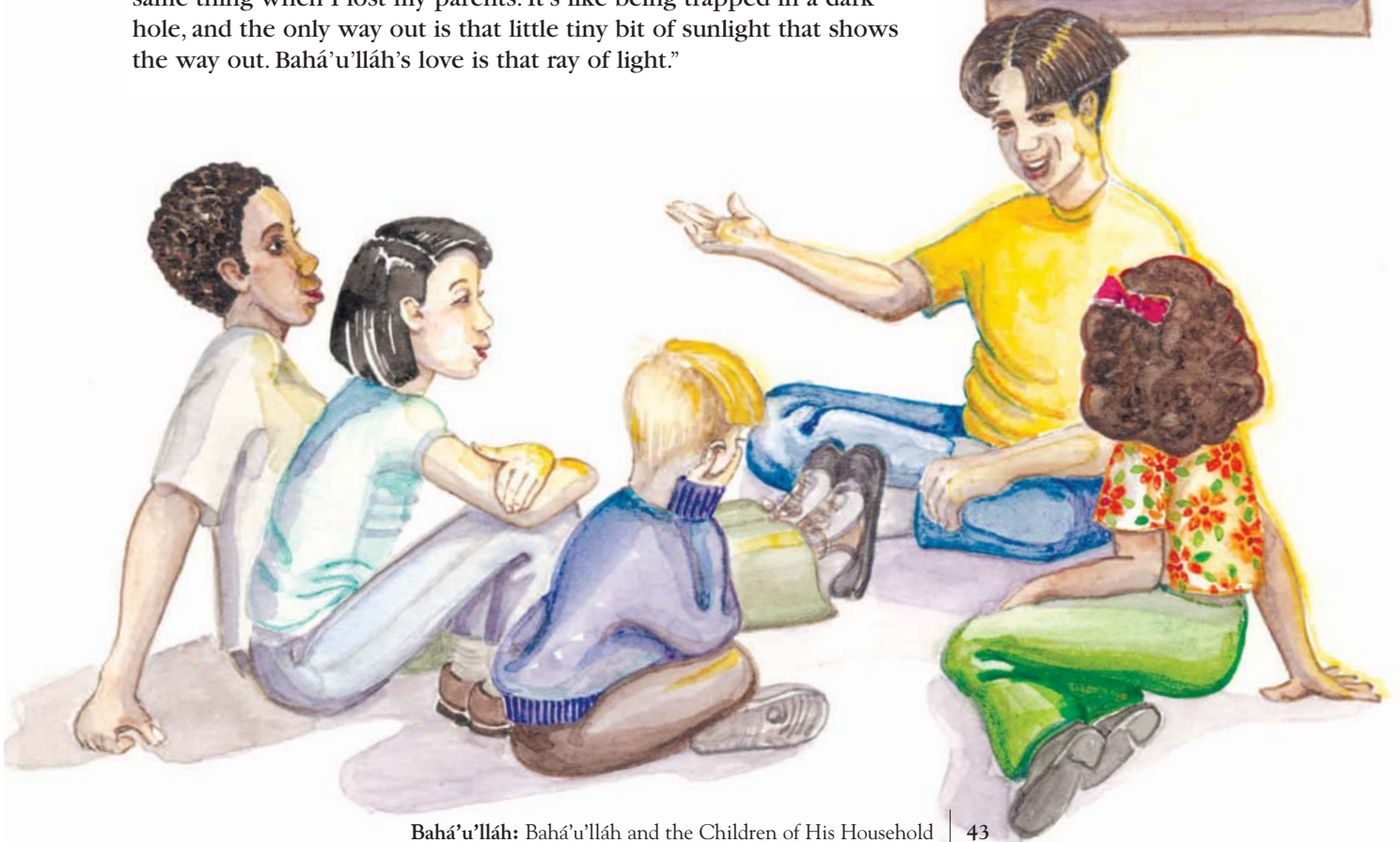
"Hey, Charlie!" Gomez said. "Sit down, and I'll be done in a few minutes."

Charlie sat down and listened as Gomez continued, "So, the story about Áqá 'Abdu's-Şálih, even though he lived a long way from here, inspires me because he had to deal with stuff similar to what I have to. He was an orphan, just like me. He had bullies bothering him, just like me in the school I go to. He had a really tough life and could have ended up beaten down and depressed like a lot of folks I know. But while he was still young, he decided to give his life to love rather than to anger. That turned him around. We can try to walk that path, too. Now, take your homework over to Marian—she's ready for you."

Gomez turned to Charlie. “Glad you made it, Charlie. I’m doing stories this afternoon. Mom says that the biggest problem with homework is getting the kids to believe it matters. These are smart kids, but sometimes they don’t believe in themselves enough to do it. We use stories to help inspire them to do homework.”

Charlie sighed. “Do you think it really works? Sometimes I wonder myself if homework matters. I’ll probably be delivering pizzas the rest of my life! How is what you’re doing going to change that? I’ve got nothing!”

“What if you have something wonderful inside, Charlie? Wouldn’t that be something?” Gomez asked. “It’s like with the story I just told—Áqá ‘Abdu’s-Şálih, as a youth, came to love Bahá’u’lláh—Whom Bahá’ís believe is a great Teacher sent by God—and Bahá’u’lláh’s love convinced him he could overcome his problems. I learned the same thing when I lost my parents. It’s like being trapped in a dark hole, and the only way out is that little tiny bit of sunlight that shows the way out. Bahá’u’lláh’s love is that ray of light.”



A gray-haired woman, about fifty, joined them. “Charlie, meet my mom, Mrs. Delgado—but folks call her Marian.” Gomez smiled. “She keeps things moving here.”

“Not so, Charlie,” Marian laughed, “Love is the power that drives this place. Love can do many things that can’t be done any other way.”

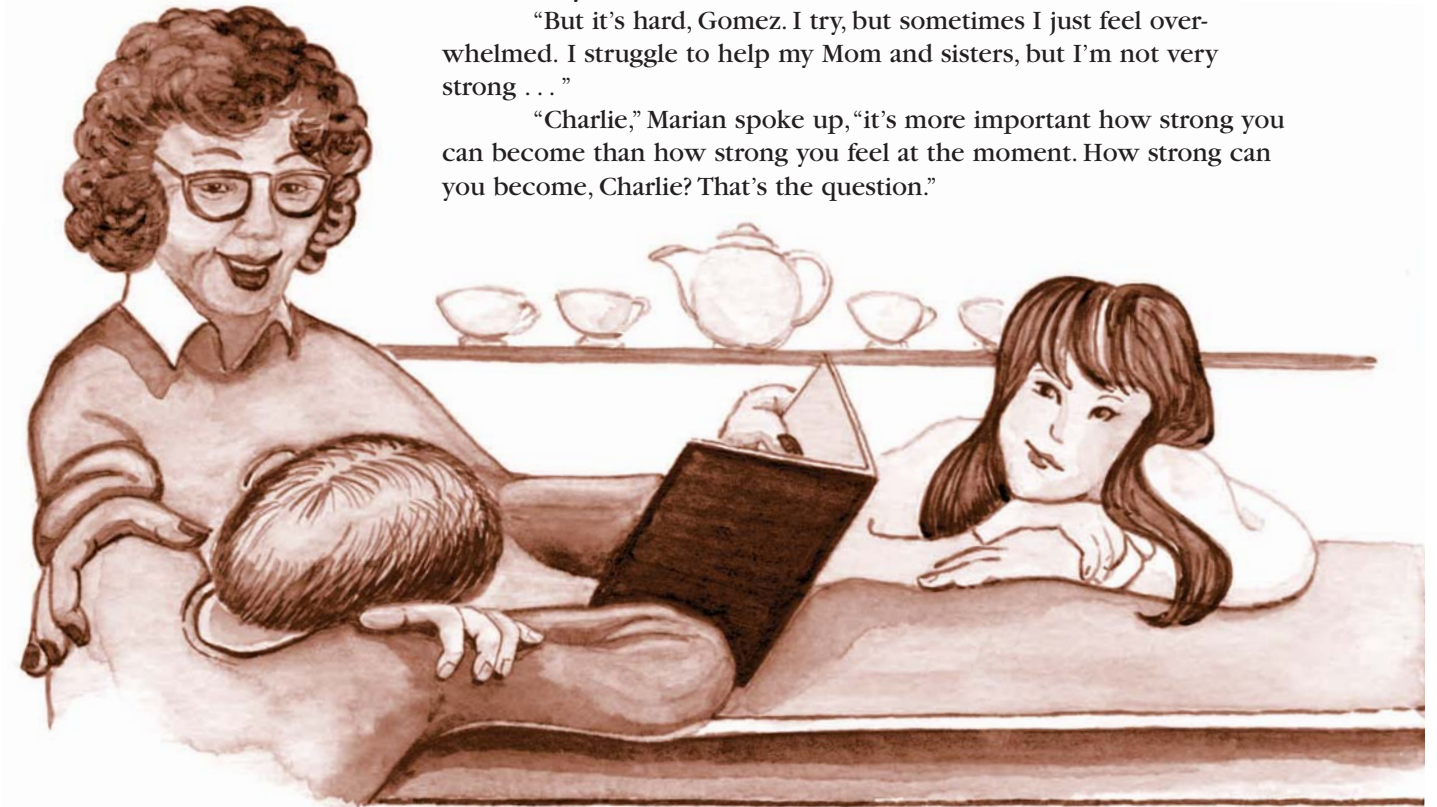
“That’s really the only reason I get anything done!” Gomez agreed. “Especially homework. As long as I can remember, we sat around as a family doing homework or reading, and that feeling of love and unity got me through. Some of these same stories were my favorites then.”

“I guess that’s why you do well in school?” Charlie asked curiously.

“Marian and Pablo gave me love, Charlie, and showed me that God is the source of that love. They inspired and encouraged me. They made me believe that I could do anything . . . so, that’s pretty much what we try to do here at the center for the other kids.”

“But it’s hard, Gomez. I try, but sometimes I just feel overwhelmed. I struggle to help my Mom and sisters, but I’m not very strong . . .”

“Charlie,” Marian spoke up, “it’s more important how strong you can become than how strong you feel at the moment. How strong can you become, Charlie? That’s the question.”



“Come on, see how it works,” Gomez invited.

Charlie went with Gomez as he began working with another group. “Everybody does a story station and ends with prayers, but they choose the homework or art stations they want.”

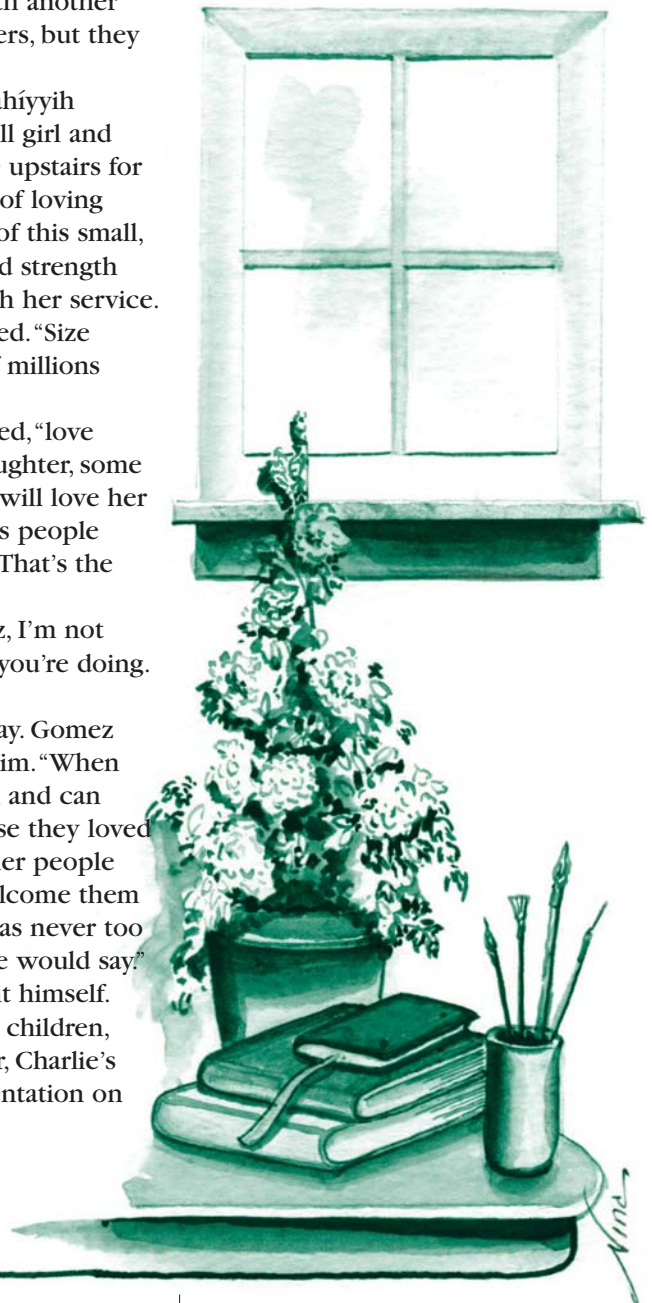
Gomez told a story about Bahá’u’lláh’s daughter, Bahíyyih Khánúm. The story related how once, when she was a small girl and not very strong, she was asked to carry a heavy tea service upstairs for some visitors. “She performed this work with such a spirit of loving service that one of the visiting ladies said that the service of this small, weak girl was a proof of her religion. So, Bahíyyih’s size and strength did not limit her ability to make a profound impact through her service. Even Bahá’u’lláh Himself wasn’t big or strong,” Gomez added. “Size wasn’t a limit on Him at all—He has changed the hearts of millions of people in spite of His size.”

“Even if we feel weak and limited,” Gomez continued, “love can make us strong. When Bahá’u’lláh had a new granddaughter, some people wished she had been a boy, but Bahá’u’lláh said, ‘I will love her more than the rest.’ His love didn’t look at what limitations people thought they had themselves or wanted to put on others. That’s the power of love.”

Later, as Charlie got ready to leave, he said, “Gomez, I’m not really sure what to think about all this, but I can see what you’re doing. That gives me something to think about.”

Charlie returned to the tutoring session the next day. Gomez waved at Charlie but kept talking to the children around him. “When we truly respect someone, we are never too busy for them and can always find time to show them we care. Sometimes, because they loved Him so, the children wanted to go to Bahá’u’lláh when other people thought He should not be disturbed. Bahá’u’lláh would welcome them anyway with love and sometimes give them sweets! He was never too busy for the little ones—‘Let the dear children come in,’ He would say.”

Charlie began to see the process and began to try it himself. Gomez gradually helped him to begin telling stories to the children, and Marian taught him to juggle a little. Several weeks later, Charlie’s mother and sisters came to the Uni-Comical Players’ presentation on Saturday morning.



After doing a comical juggling routine with Marian, Charlie stood proudly in front of the crowd, smiling at Gomez. “Bahá’u’lláh . . .,” he began, “. . . the Prophet-Founder of the Bahá’í Faith, emphasized education. No matter how limited the means or difficult the circumstances, He always saw to the education of the children—both boys and girls. Although His family was homeless, hungry, and oppressed, He used the meager means He had to educate the children. This emphasis on education was so deeply ingrained in the family that later His Son ‘Abdu’l-Bahá established schools where there were none.”

Charlie continued, “Anyone is invited to the tutoring and homework sessions we have here at the center every day at 3:00. When you come, you get help with homework and . . . something else: You get love and respect. Love can do many things. I’ve learned that here.” ★

