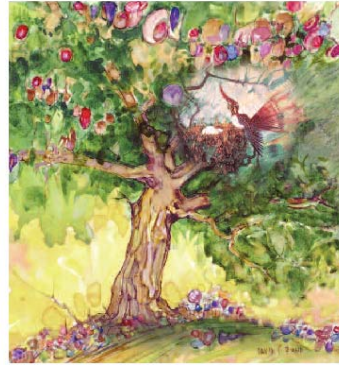


The following story is from the book

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.

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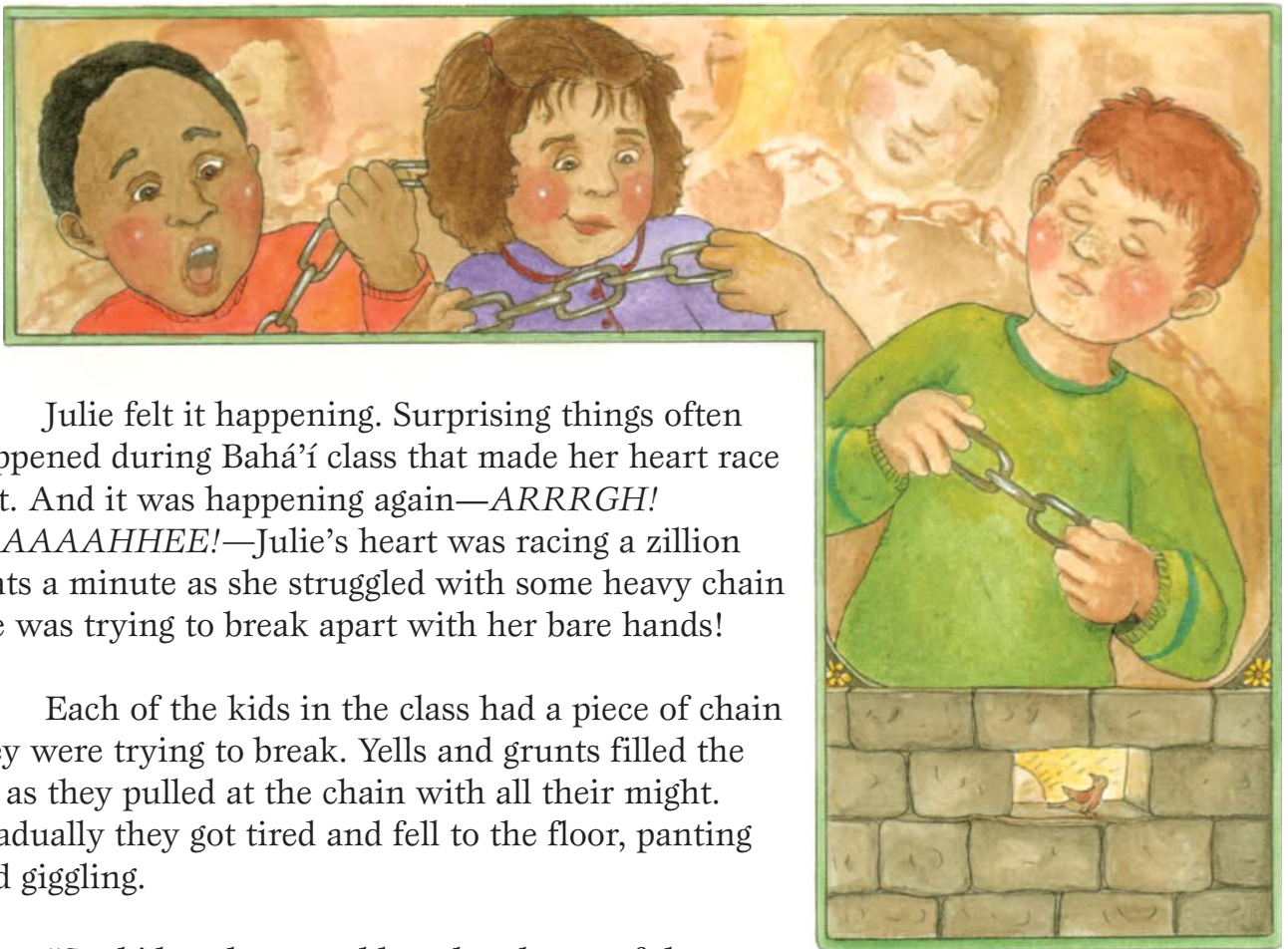
*Verily, ye are the proofs of Bahá'u'lláh.
Verily, Bahá'u'lláh is the True One,
for He has trained such souls as these,
each one of which is a proof in himself.*

— 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 461

The Prisoner with Power

Written by Rick Johnson

Illustrated by Winifred Barnum-Newman



Julie felt it happening. Surprising things often happened during Bahá'í class that made her heart race fast. And it was happening again—*ARRRGH!* *YAAAAAHHEE!*—Julie's heart was racing a zillion beats a minute as she struggled with some heavy chain she was trying to break apart with her bare hands!

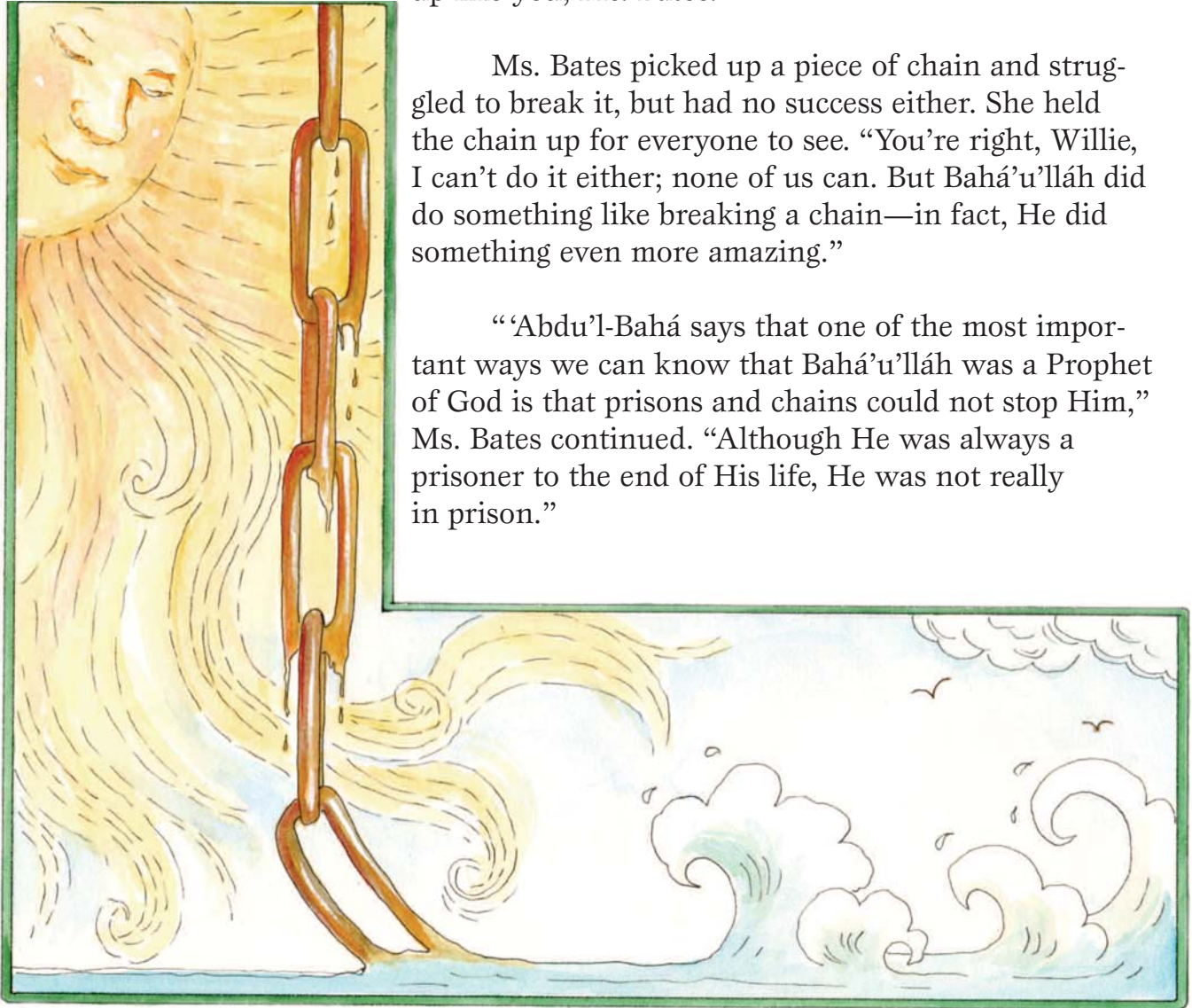
Each of the kids in the class had a piece of chain they were trying to break. Yells and grunts filled the air as they pulled at the chain with all their might. Gradually they got tired and fell to the floor, panting and giggling.

“So, kids, who was able to break one of the chains?” asked Ms. Bates, their teacher.

The class laughed, because no one had been able to do it. “It’s really hard,” Willie said to the teacher. “I don’t think anyone could do it, not even a grown up like you, Ms. Bates.”

Ms. Bates picked up a piece of chain and struggled to break it, but had no success either. She held the chain up for everyone to see. “You’re right, Willie, I can’t do it either; none of us can. But Bahá’u’lláh did do something like breaking a chain—in fact, He did something even more amazing.”

“‘Abdu’l-Bahá says that one of the most important ways we can know that Bahá’u’lláh was a Prophet of God is that prisons and chains could not stop Him,” Ms. Bates continued. “Although He was always a prisoner to the end of His life, He was not really in prison.”



Now Julie’s heart was really racing. It was like a riddle—How could you be a prisoner and yet not in prison? Julie thought, “What is Ms. Bates talking about?”

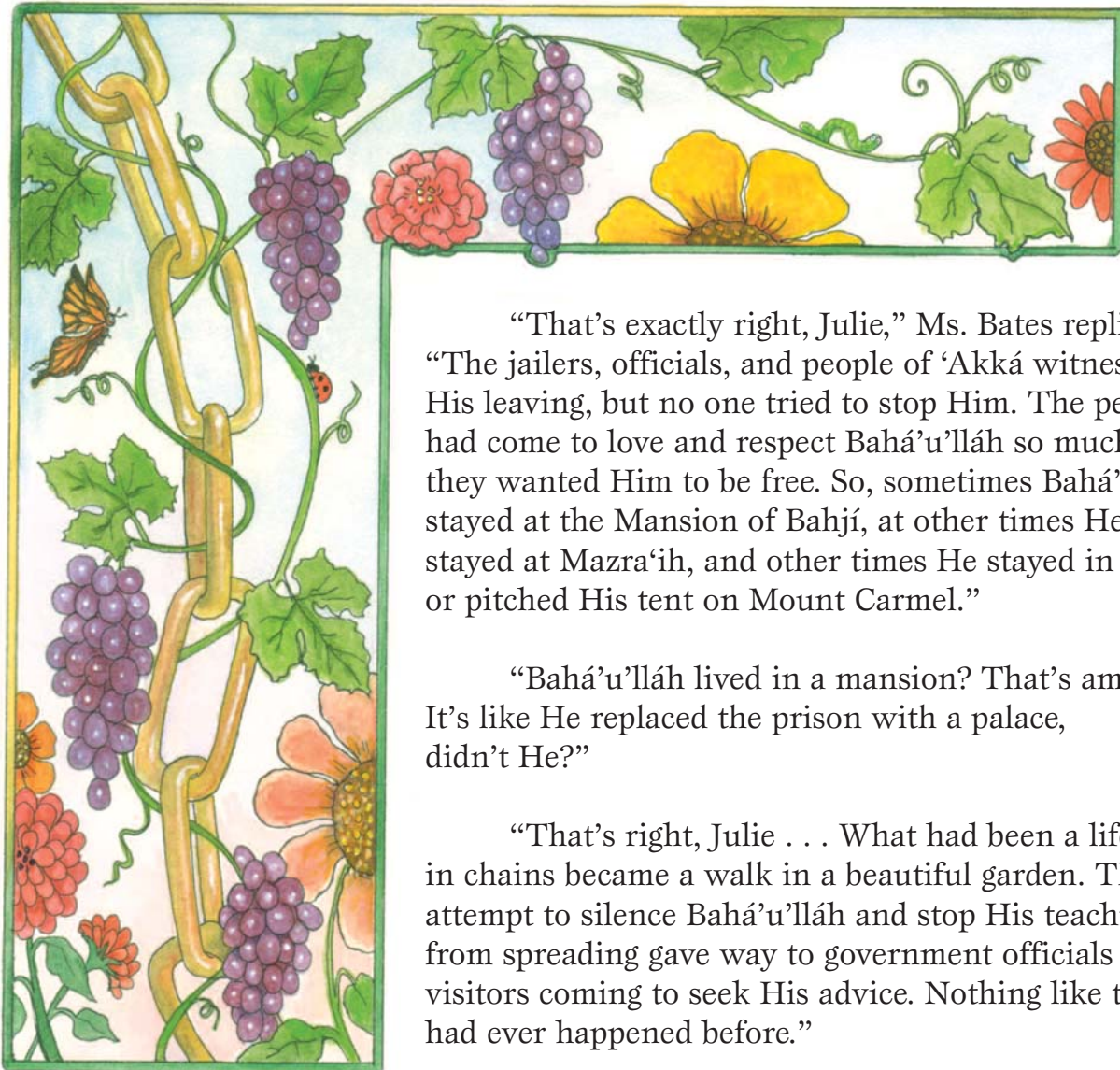
“Although not always in chains, Bahá’u’lláh was a prisoner for most of His adult life,” Ms. Bates said. “In fact, the cruel king who sent Bahá’u’lláh to prison never wanted Bahá’u’lláh to go free. The king wanted Bahá’u’lláh to be kept in prison forever, always with a guard near Him and never having visitors. The king’s plan was for Bahá’u’lláh to be so locked up that everyone would forget about Him. He thought that prison and chains could stop people from loving Bahá’u’lláh and wanting to learn from Him.”

“But the king made a mistake, didn’t he, Ms. Bates?” Stuart said, dropping his chain with a loud *clunk*.

“Yes, Stuart, the king was wrong,” Ms. Bates said, smiling. “‘Abdu’l-Bahá said that although the king never changed his mind about Bahá’u’lláh and always insisted that He remain a prisoner, after nine years in prison at ‘Akká, Bahá’u’lláh walked out of the prison and took up residence in a mansion in the countryside.”

“You mean He just walked out of prison and no one stopped Him?” Julie could not believe her ears!





“That’s exactly right, Julie,” Ms. Bates replied. “The jailers, officials, and people of ‘Akká witnessed His leaving, but no one tried to stop Him. The people had come to love and respect Bahá’u’lláh so much that they wanted Him to be free. So, sometimes Bahá’u’lláh stayed at the Mansion of Bahjí, at other times He stayed at Mazra‘ih, and other times He stayed in Haifa or pitched His tent on Mount Carmel.”

“Bahá’u’lláh lived in a mansion? That’s amazing! It’s like He replaced the prison with a palace, didn’t He?”

“That’s right, Julie . . . What had been a life in chains became a walk in a beautiful garden. The attempt to silence Bahá’u’lláh and stop His teachings from spreading gave way to government officials and visitors coming to seek His advice. Nothing like this had ever happened before.”



“Ms. Bates,” Julie asked, “do you know what I think?”

“No, Julie, what?”

“That if Bahá’u’lláh can defeat a king while He’s still a prisoner, He probably can do just about anything!”

“Yes, and we can ask Bahá’u’lláh to help us with our troubles, too, Julie,” Ms. Bates added.

And that really made Julie’s heart beat fast. ★