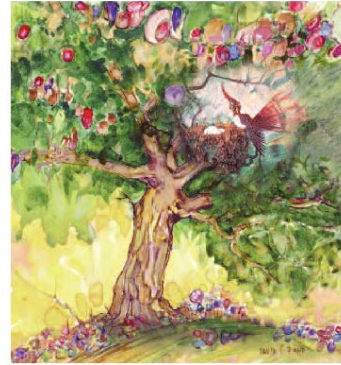


The following story is from the book

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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The tabernacle of unity
hath been raised;
regard ye not one another as strangers.
Ye are the fruits of one tree,
and the leaves of one branch.

— Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 218

Illustrated by Carrie Kneisler



Isfandíyár

Written by Patricia R. Tomarelli
Illustrated by Keith Kresge

In 1912, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave a talk in Washington, D.C. In those days in North America, it was unusual for people of African descent and people of European descent to gather together in the same meeting. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said that He was very happy that day, because Bahá’u’lláh teaches that we are all one human family. He declared, “In the sight of God there is no distinction between whites and blacks; all are as one. Anyone whose heart is pure is dear to God—whether white or black, red or yellow.”

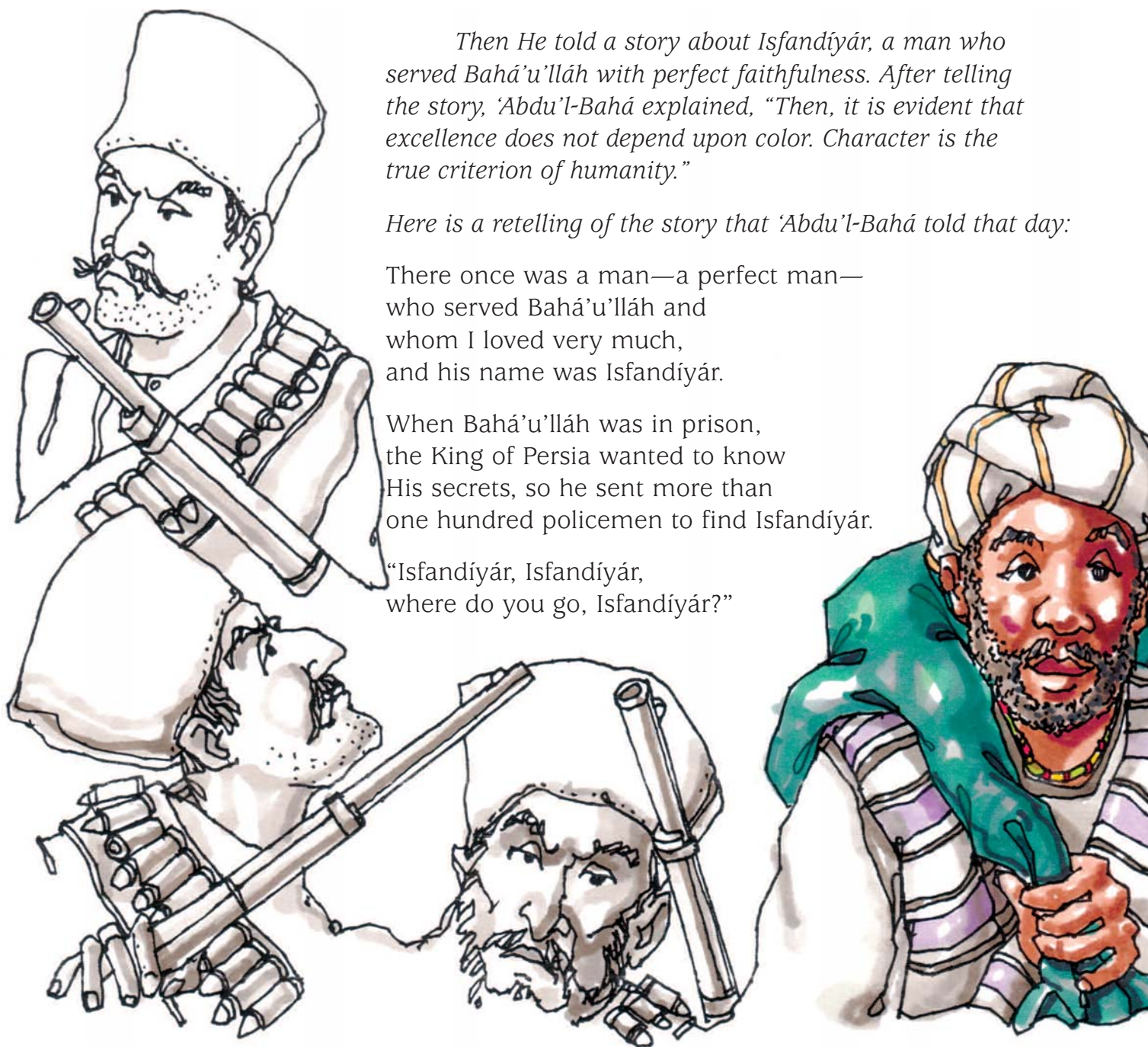
Then He told a story about Isfandiyár, a man who served Bahá'u'lláh with perfect faithfulness. After telling the story, 'Abdu'l-Bahá explained, "Then, it is evident that excellence does not depend upon color. Character is the true criterion of humanity."

Here is a retelling of the story that 'Abdu'l-Bahá told that day:

There once was a man—a perfect man—who served Bahá'u'lláh and whom I loved very much, and his name was Isfandiyár.

When Bahá'u'lláh was in prison, the King of Persia wanted to know His secrets, so he sent more than one hundred policemen to find Isfandiyár.

"Isfandiyár, Isfandiyár, where do you go, Isfandiyár?"



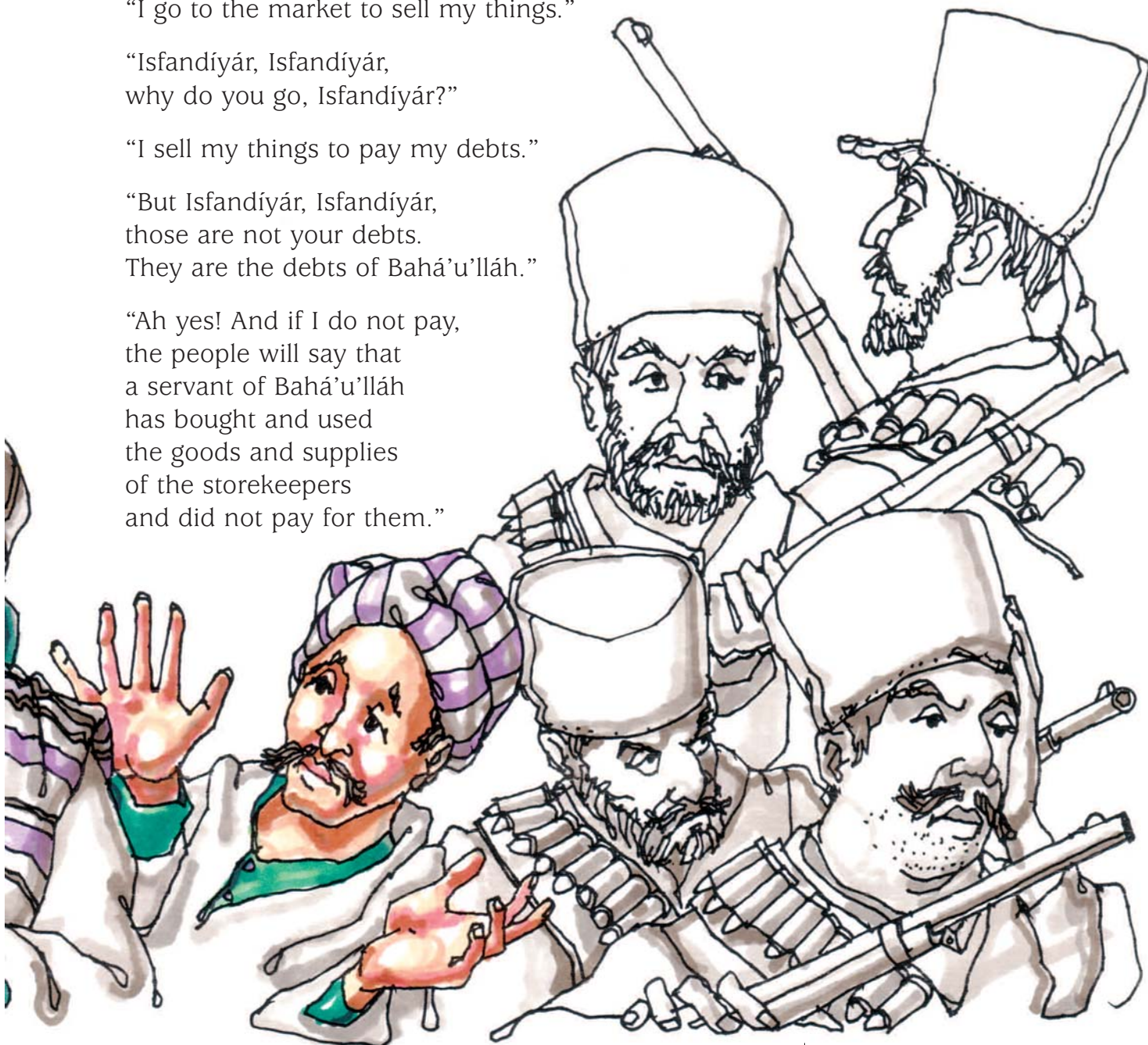
“I go to the market to sell my things.”

“Isfandíyár, Isfandíyár,
why do you go, Isfandíyár?”

“I sell my things to pay my debts.”

“But Isfandíyár, Isfandíyár,
those are not your debts.
They are the debts of Bahá’u’lláh.”

“Ah yes! And if I do not pay,
the people will say that
a servant of Bahá’u’lláh
has bought and used
the goods and supplies
of the storekeepers
and did not pay for them.”



“Oh Isfandíyár, Isfandíyár,
for you I am afraid.”

“I am not.”

“There are over one hundred
policemen looking for you.”

“I must do this.”

“If they catch you,
with fire they will torture you.”

“I must do this.”

“They will cut off your fingers.”

“I must do this.”

“They will cut off your ears.”

“I must do this.”

“They will put out your eyes
so you will tell the secrets
of Bahá’u’lláh.”

“I must do this.”

“Go away.”

“No.”

“Do not remain.”

“No.”





“Oh, Isfandíyár,
I am so afraid.”

“I am not.
If they take me, never mind.”

“If they punish me,
there is no harm.”

“I must remain until I pay
all that is owed.
Then I will go.”

“Oh, Isfandíyár, Isfandíyár,
where are you now?”

“I am with my Beloved.”

“Isfandíyár, Isfandíyár,
how are you now, Isfandíyár?”

“I am a point of light.
I am the essence of love.
I am the faithful servant of Bahá’u’lláh.” ★



Retold from a talk by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 425–26