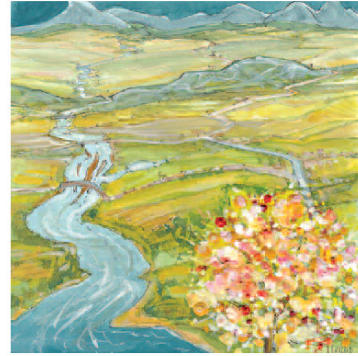


The following story is from the book

The Central Figures

Bahá'u'lláh

Volume Two



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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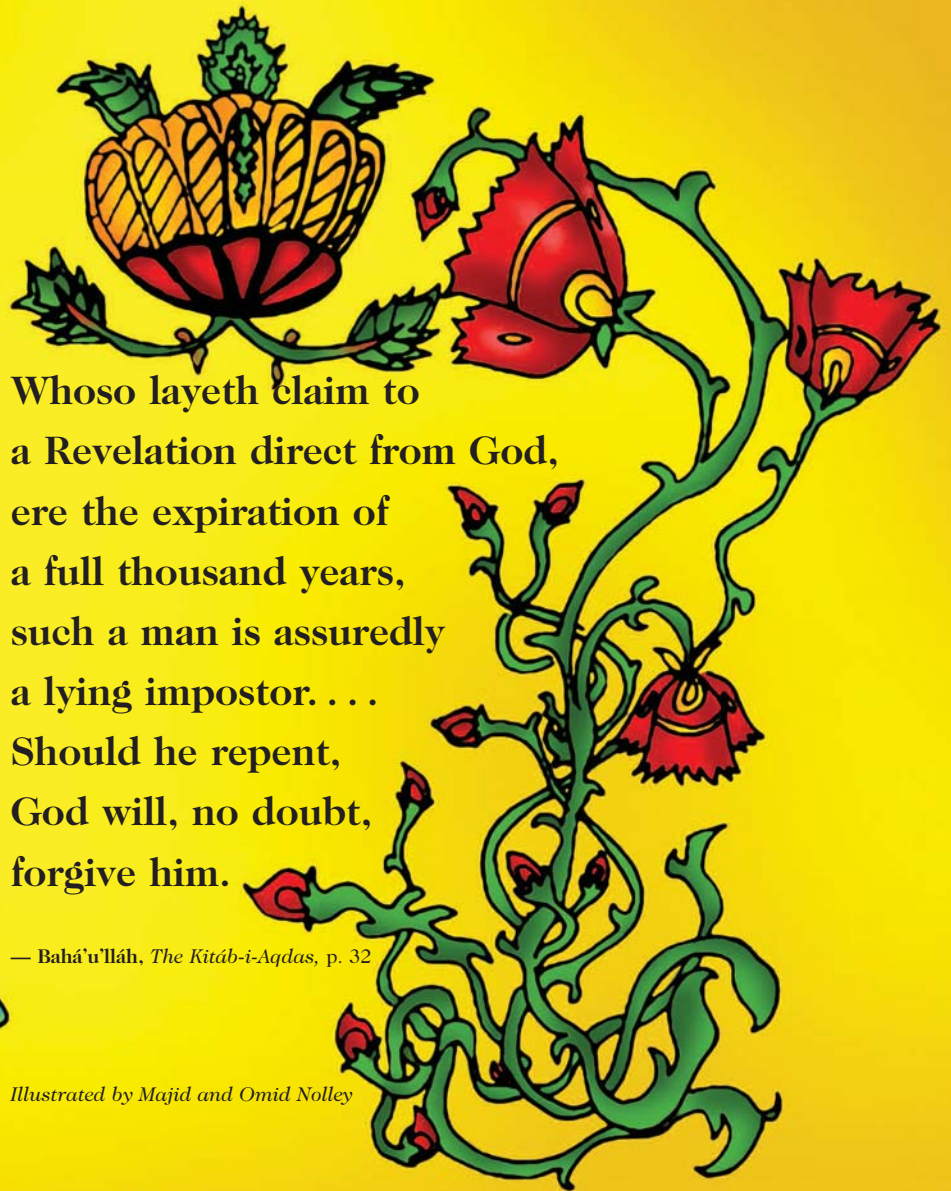
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Whoso layeth claim to
a Revelation direct from God,
ere the expiration of
a full thousand years,
such a man is assuredly
a lying impostor. . . .
Should he repent,
God will, no doubt,
forgive him.

— Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 32

Illustrated by Majid and Omid Nolley

Changing the Heart

*Written by Rick Johnson
Illustrated by Leona Hosack*

Anne felt anxious, yet hopeful, as she hurried to catch the two people ahead of her after school. She was somewhat at odds with herself. It was hard to move into a new town and go to a different high school, and she was upset at the way most kids ignored her. What if she did catch up to these two kids and they didn't even care that she was around?

When the boy and girl stopped to await their bus, Anne got her chance. What would they think of her? They looked so different from her! She was pretty shy. It was a risk . . . suppose she got completely humiliated? But hope urged her on, and she stepped up to where they were standing.

"Hey, guys, uh . . . I've got . . ." Anne began.

Instantly, the boy turned to her, the girl beside him.

"Well, hello there, Anne! What's up?"

Anne was astonished! Most kids didn't pay enough attention to her to even know her name. Anne could feel her heart pounding.

"I'm glad I caught up to you . . . I . . . well, I want to give you back your math book . . . I thought you might need it."

"Anne, this is my sister, Anita—she's a freshman, but don't hold that against her . . .," he said, grinning at Anita.

"Well, look who's talking!" Anita protested, good-naturedly. "This is the brilliant senior who never knows where his homework is, loses his books, and can't get up in the morning, even with two alarm clocks! If it weren't for me, he'd never graduate!"





“Well,” said Anne, hesitantly, “that’s kind of why I’m here . . . you left your book on my desk this morning after the group work. I didn’t notice it then.”

“Way to go, Ted—saved by another angel of mercy,” Anita chuckled. “We should put an electronic monitoring device on your books, your homework, your coat . . . I think sometimes you don’t even know where you are.”

Ted looked sheepishly at his sister, “Well, maybe so, but you never have trouble finding me when you need help with homework!” Anita and Anne laughed like old friends.

“Well, here’s your book . . .,” Anne said. “But can I ask a question?”

“Sure,” Ted laughed, “but I hope you don’t need notes from class . . . I’ve lost them!”

“Well, somehow, Bahá’u’lláh always seems to watch over you, Ted—but it sure must keep Him busy!” laughed Anita.

Anne’s ears pricked up with interest—what was that name? Was that the word she’d read a little while ago?

“Well, the notes are stuck inside your book,” Anne said slowly. “I used them in study hall a while ago . . . hope you don’t mind . . . they were really helpful.”

“No, problem,” Ted grinned, “and, thanks, I’ll need them—man, those equations Mr. Zeller gave us glaze my eyes over!”

“Mine, too,” Anne said. “But I found something else with your notes that I’m curious about. There was a story I want to ask you about.” Anne felt nervous again, but Ted’s smile encouraged her.

“I’m not sure I understand the story,” Anne said, “but it really sounds like my brother, Joe.” Anne opened the book and pulled out a well-worn paper.

“I don’t even know who this guy is,” Anne began, “and the setting seems foreign or something, but I just couldn’t get Joe out of my mind as I read it . . . Joe says he’s going to quit school, and he’s running with a really bad crowd. I feel like he’s just inches away from jail, or getting killed, or I don’t

know what . . . I'm really worried." Anne's face tightened. "I don't know what to do, but somehow this story makes me wonder if there is something I can do for him."

Ted looked at Anita and smiled. "It's the story of 'Abdu'lláh Baghdádí. I carry it with me for inspiration. When things get difficult, I read it—if he could change himself so completely and overcome such issues in his life, it makes me feel like I can overcome anything, too!"

"Everybody thought 'Abdu'lláh Baghdádí was a completely lost cause," Anita explained. "He was a young guy who did nothing but party, get drunk, and look for fun any way he could get it. Everyone thought he was beyond help—that he would waste his life partying."

"That's why the story made me curious," Anne said. "The story is mostly about how astonished people were at the way he changed. That's what caught my attention . . . could Joe do it . . . before . . . I'm really afraid I'll lose him." Anne grew silent and looked away.

Anita put her arm around her shoulders. "Anne, I think I know how you feel. Ted and I have friends like Joe . . . we worry about them, too, but we know worrying won't save them. Something powerful has got to change inside them."

"I can't preach at him," Anne sighed. "He just tunes me out. I'd do anything to help him, but what can I do?"

"I think we're here talking because something in the story gave you hope. What was it?" Anita asked.

"It was the fact that everyone had given up on the guy and joked about his wasted life," replied Anne. "And yet, even that guy had a heart with human feelings and a mind that could see what was wrong. It gives me hope to think like that."

"'Abdu'lláh Baghdádí only changed because he learned about a way of life that Anita and I believe can make every person happy," Ted commented, "even those who seem lost like Joe does right now. Bahá'u'lláh—the Man who taught this way of life—never thought a person was lost or wasted. He was sent by God to bring out the good inside each of us, even Joe."





“I know Joe has got good things inside him,” Anne said, “and I hope he can see it, too.”

“Anne, don’t hope about it—show him,” Anita urged. “Don’t tell him he’s important to you, show him.”

Anne brightened. “Okay, I can do that—at least I’ll try.”

“I’ve got a suggestion,” Ted offered. “Anita and I are going out tonight with some friends who think like we’ve been talking just now. We’re Bahá’ís—that’s our religion—and there are other Bahá’í teens around. We’re going to the movies and then there’s a no-alcohol party at our house. Why don’t you and Joe come?”

“Oh, I’m not sure I’m into religion right now,” Anne said, “and I know that Joe isn’t interested in religion, for sure!”

“Whoa, Anne, hold on just a minute,” Anita protested, “I thought you stopped us just now partially because you read the story of ‘Abdu’lláh Baghdádí and were inspired by it? Isn’t that right?”

“Yes,” Anne replied, “that’s true, but . . .”

“. . . but you’re not into holier-than-thou preachers, right?” Anita finished Anne’s sentence. “‘Abdu’lláh Baghdádí straightened out his life because he was touched by the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh, and checked it out—not because he suddenly became some holier-than-thou guru. That’s not what we’re about. We’re just people trying to straighten out our lives and find a happy way to live.”

“Anyway, you and Joe can join us tonight if you want,” Ted invited. “Here’s our number, if you want a ride . . . We’ve gotta go now, or we’ll miss our bus.”

Anne smiled, “Thanks. I’ll come. And I’ll ask Joe to come, too. Maybe he will and maybe he won’t. I can’t control that. But I need to straighten out some things in my life, too . . . and it can’t hurt to check it out. Besides you’ve done something no one has done here—talked to me. That’s enough hope for me to start from.”

“Great!” Anita and Ted exclaimed. “Quick, write down your phone number too, and we’ll call to make sure you have a ride—see you tonight.” ★