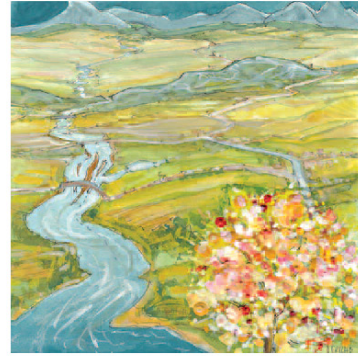


The following story is from the book

*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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Graphic Design by Pepper Peterson Oldziey

Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois 60091-2886  
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Published 2002  
05 04 03 02 4 3 2 1

Printed in the United States of America

Illustrations: cover © 2002 David S. Ruhe; pp. 3–4, 12, 40–44 Courtesy of the Audio Visual Department of the Bahá'í World Center, Haifa, Israel; p. 23 Courtesy of the National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Illinois; pp. 1–3, 7–11, 15–17, 19, 21–22 © 1979 Pepper Oldziey; pp. 4–6, 14, 20 © 1999 Pepper Oldziey; pp. 18, 24 © 2002 Haydar Barnes; pp. 25–28 © 2002 Ed Phillips; pp. 46–49, 51 © 2002 Cam Herth; pp. 45, 52–60 © 2002 Marilyn Lindsley; pp. 61–78 © 2002 Carla Trimble; pp. 79–94 © 2002 Beth Farkas; pp. 113–128 © 2002 Cindy Pacileo; p. 114 © 2002 Carl Cordini; pp. 129–146 © 2002 Winifred Barnum Newman; p. 168 © 2002 Majid Nolley and Omid Nolley; pp. 169–172 © 2002 Leona Hosack. All other illustrations © 2002 National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States.

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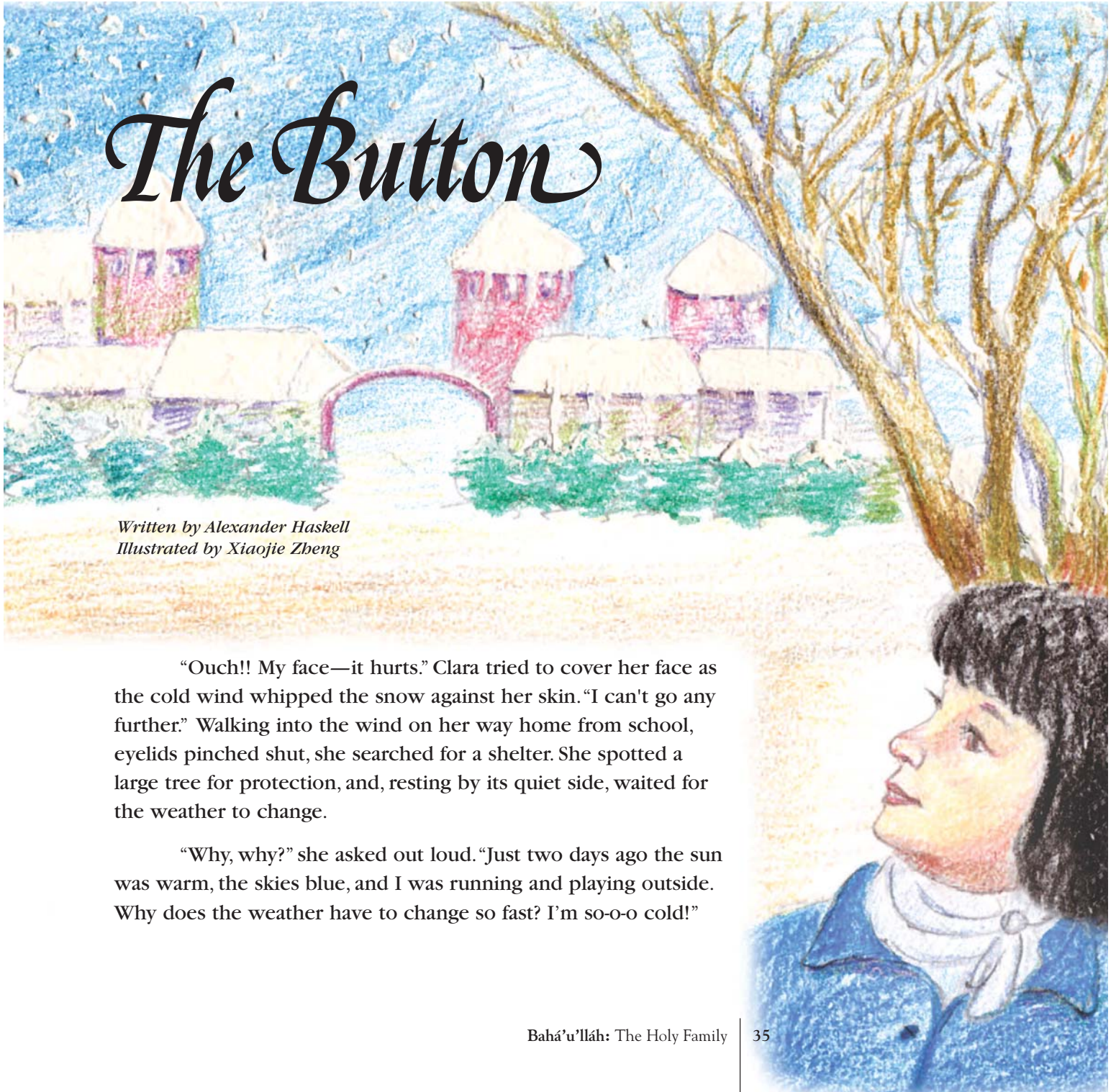
  
Bahá'í Publishing Trust  
Wilmette, Illinois

# The Button

*Written by Alexander Haskell  
Illustrated by Xiaojie Zheng*

“Ouch!! My face—it hurts.” Clara tried to cover her face as the cold wind whipped the snow against her skin. “I can't go any further.” Walking into the wind on her way home from school, eyelids pinched shut, she searched for a shelter. She spotted a large tree for protection, and, resting by its quiet side, waited for the weather to change.

“Why, why?” she asked out loud. “Just two days ago the sun was warm, the skies blue, and I was running and playing outside. Why does the weather have to change so fast? I'm so-o-o cold!”





Just then, she heard the wind whistling through the branches of the tree. It sounded like crying voices. Now Clara was really shaking, not just from the cold but also from fear.

Clara ran home as fast as she could. She tore through the front door, slammed it behind her, ripped off her jacket, and yelled, “Mother, mother!”

“Yes, Clara?” came the soothing sound of her mother’s voice.

“Mother, mother. It was awful. The snow and, and the cold. My face was freezing, and the tree, and the crying and moaning. It was awful.” Tears began to fill Clara’s eyes and her mother opened her arms and brought her into the safety of a hug.

When Clara had calmed down, her mother noticed the button from her coat on the carpet. Her mother showed it to her. Clara realized that, in her haste, she must have torn it from her coat. “Come, dear,” said her mother. “I have prepared some fresh cookies, and I will sew this button back onto your jacket.”

“Ouch!” her mother muttered. Clara realized that her mother had pricked her finger with the needle, but Clara sensed that the tears from her mother’s eyes were more than “finger-pricking” tears.

“What is it, Mother?”



“Oh, I was just thinking of the buttons from one of Ásíyih Khánúm's dresses.”

“What, Mother? Tell me, please!”

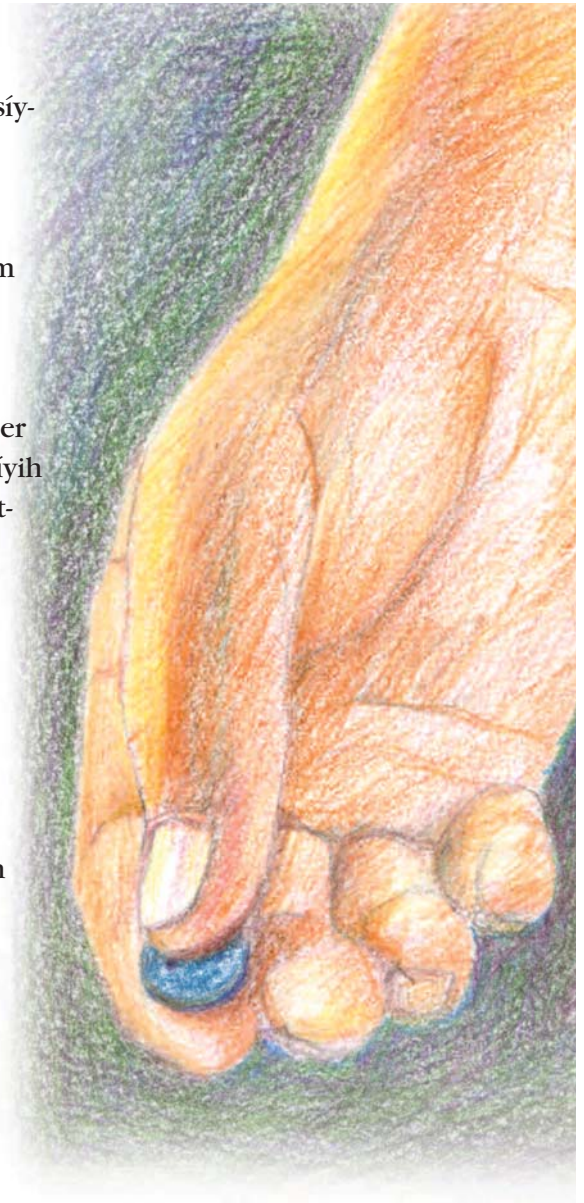
“Well, you know that Bahá'u'lláh married Ásíyih Khánúm when she was very young, and that she was the only daughter of an important government official. So, both her father and Bahá'u'lláh's father possessed great wealth. In preparation for all the lovely festivities centered around their wedding, a jeweler was hired to prepare jewelry, including jeweled buttons for Ásíyih Khánúm's dresses and gowns. Those were not just ordinary buttons like this.” Her mother raised the navy blue plastic button she was sewing onto Clara's winter coat. “No, those buttons were made of gold and precious stones like red rubies and green emeralds.”

“But why does it make you sad, to think of all the nice things that Bahá'u'lláh's wife had? If I had jewels for buttons, I think I would be the happiest girl in my school.”

“Clara, in their earlier days the Blessed Family had much to be grateful for. They had servants, fresh food from their gardens, and two homes filled with beautiful furnishings. Ásíyih Khánúm was not only graceful, beautiful, and wise, but gentle and full of consideration for others. Together, the Holy Family spent little time with others of wealth. They chose to occupy themselves in caring for the poor and troubled. They offered consolation and hospitality to everyone.”

“You mean like when you have your friends over for coffee and tea?”

“Well, it's a little like that. I do my best, but their lives were dedicated to helping others almost every day.”



“But what about their own children? Did they have time for their own children?”

“Yes, they did spend time with their children, but it was different then. They didn’t have all the conveniences we have now, and life was more difficult. They also had a house in the country where the children— ‘Abbás, the eldest son; Bahíyyih, their daughter; and Mírzá Mihdí, the youngest son—would spend hours and hours playing in the beautiful gardens filled with fruits and flowering trees.”

“It sounds so wonderful.” Then Clara saw her mother swallow deeply and tears returned to her mother’s eyes.

“What, mother? What happened?”

“Well, everything suddenly changed for that Family. You see, Bahá’u’lláh believed that a Man by the name of the Báb was a Messenger from God, and Bahá’u’lláh wanted to do anything He could for this Man Who spoke the truth. Then another follower of the Báb did a very bad thing. He tried to hurt the leader of their country, and because of this, many other followers, including Bahá’u’lláh, were punished. Suddenly, Bahá’u’lláh was arrested and beaten, thrown into a dark and filthy prison, and secured by chains.”

“Oh, Mother. That is very sad—to have your father taken away like that.”

“Yes, but that was only the beginning. Almost all of their possessions were taken from them, even their properties, and they had to move into two small rooms in the home of a relative. Each day the Family waited to see if Bahá’u’lláh was still alive, and their days were spent in great torment and anxiety. So, you see how suddenly their lives turned from relative ease into great discomfort.”



“It was like today,” Clara said, “this sudden change from warm weather to cold, and the pain of the cold snow against my face, and the howling and crying I heard in the tree's branches. But Mother, why did you start to cry when you were sewing on my button?”

Her mother continued: “After four months of Bahá'u'lláh being in that filthy prison, they released Him on the condition that He leave Persia and go to the city of Baghdád, in Iraq. The trip was on foot and by wagon during the snowy month of December. Ásíyih Khánum was pregnant, and it was a difficult four-week trip. Luckily, when Ásíyih Khánum had fled their home when Bahá'u'lláh was imprisoned, she had rescued some of her beautiful dresses. It was during this time, on this trip from Tíhrán to Baghdád, that she was able to snip off one jeweled button at a time to exchange for bread in order to get her family something to eat.”

“Mother, we are so lucky. I was complaining of the cold today, but this short walk from my school was nothing. I feel so sad for the Family. I wish I could do something.”

“That's just the point. We can do something—small acts of kindness, of helping others in some way, of serving food to others.”

“Like you served to me?”

“Yes dear. Like serving you. I love doing things for you.”

“I love you, Mother. Thanks for fixing my button. I think I'm going to go outside now and walk around in the snow. And this time, I don't think I'll complain so much about the cold.” ★

