



Educational stories for children

THE FRIENDS



By

Omar Elsayy

Translated by
Jennifer Peterson

Illustrations by
Fayza Nawwar

Abekkan
Abekkan



Thikra is playing ball in the school courtyard with her friends Mariam, Reem, and Maha. Thikra is so, so happy; she's leaping with joy. All the girls are happy.



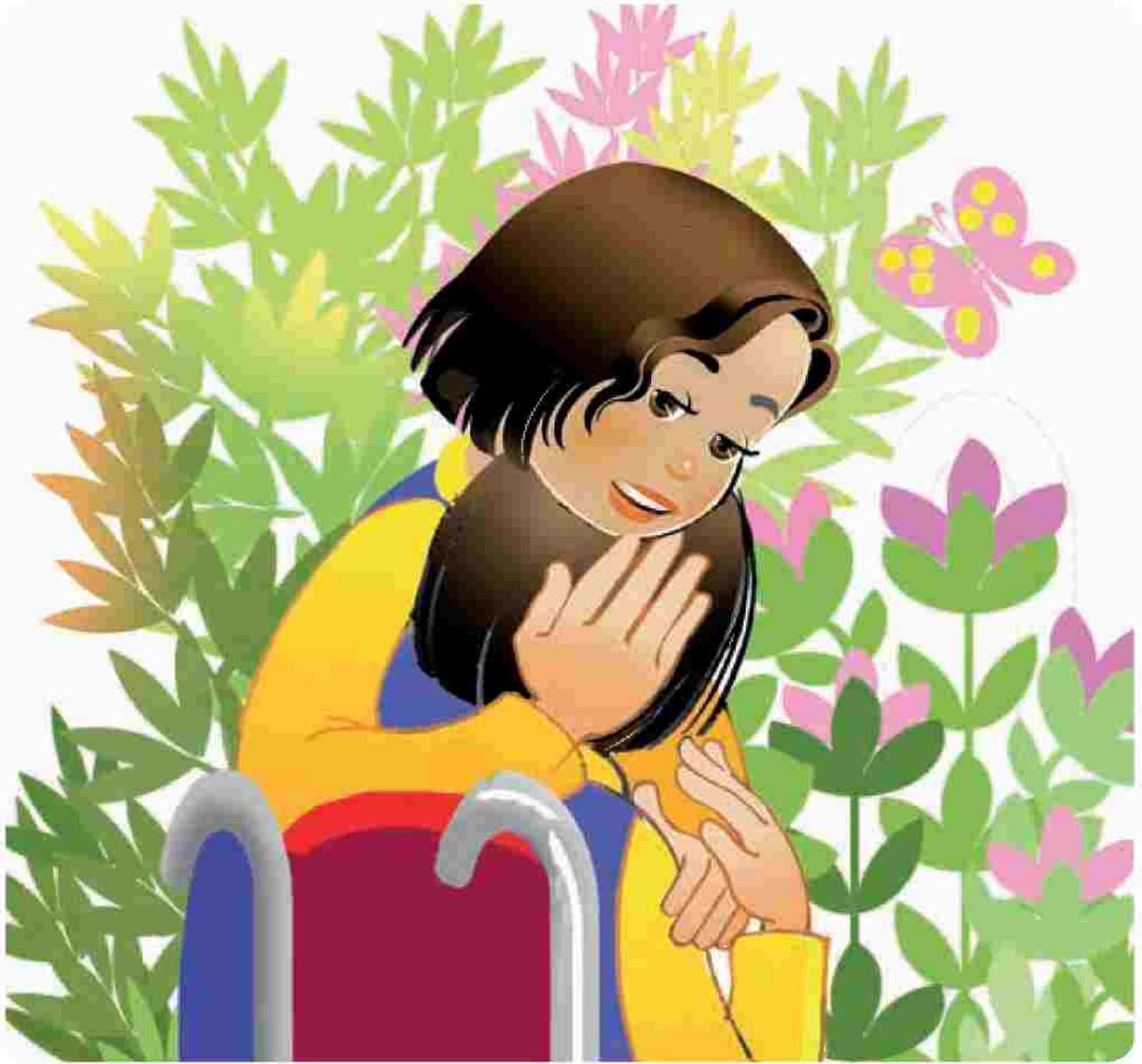
As for Laila, she's seated in a wheelchair because she can't stand on her legs. Laila wheels over to the four friends and tells them, "I want to play with you."



The friends look at Laila in astonishment. Maha gestures to her crippled legs and says in disbelief, “How?! You aren’t capable of playing like us.”



Laila is embarrassed. In a sad voice she says, “What can I do? I’m just like you and I want to play.” She starts crying, the tears pouring down her cheeks.



Thikra is sorrowed and feels sympathy for Laila. She tenderly hugs her and kisses her, and says, “Don’t be sad, my friend, don’t be sad.”



Thikra tenderly pats Laila's shoulder and says, "Don't you worry, I'll play with you!" Thikra gets a ball and gently throws it to Laila to encourage her.



Laila calms down and dries her tears with a tissue. Sorrow fades from her expression and is replaced with a dainty smile. She begins to put effort into playing with Thikra.



In the beginning, Laila can't catch the ball. But she keeps on trying again and again, and Thikra encourages her and claps for her. "Well done, Laila, try again. Good job!" Thikra tells her.



With time, Laila grows skilled. She moves rapidly with her wheelchair in all directions and catches the ball with her hands and throws it to Thikra. Thikra catches the ball and throws it back to Laila.



When Laila drops the ball, Thikra runs after it, saying, "I'll get it for you, Laila, I'll get it!"



Thikra plays with Laila and encourages her until Laila is just as good at playing ball as the rest of the girls. She laughs and claps her hands in joy.



As for the girls, they stand still in shock, all looking at Laila in admiration. They feel embarrassed for having caused her sorrow and not having helped her or encouraged her like Thikra.



Maha approaches her and says, "I'm sorry, Laila, that I caused you pain and didn't play with you." Reem approaches her and says, "I, too, apologize, Laila."



Mariam approaches Laila and kisses her. She says, “Your smile is beautiful, Laila. Don’t ever frown and waste this marvelous smile.”



Thikra claps her hands and bounces in joy and says, “We’re all friends; we’re all sisters; we’re all buddies. Come on, let’s play!”