

Baha'u'llah and the Homeless Stranger

BY SUNITA PANT BANSAL



THE STORY SO FAR:

YOU'VE MET BAHÁ'U'LLÁH. HE IS WEALTHY AND THE MOST GENEROUS MAN IN TEHRAN...

One evening, Baha'u'llah and his family sat in their living room around a glowing brazier.

The children were telling stories they had heard at school, interrupting each other with wild gestures.

"...and then the donkey fell into the ditch..."

"No, no, it was the merchant who fell..."

"But the donkey pushed him!"

Baha'u'llah laughed, closing his eyes just to enjoy the sound of their chatter. His wife, Asiyih Khanum, smiled too, though she gently reminded the children not to squash each other's toes in their excitement.

And outside, the wind kept howling.

Suddenly, amid that wind, there was a soft knock. So soft that at first nobody heard it.

Then it came again... a tiny, tired knock.

The servant frowned. "Who knocks on such a night?" he mut-

tered. "Even dogs are indoors!" He hurried to the entryway, opened the outer gate a crack, and then gasped.

There stood a man who looked like winter itself had chased him all the way from the mountains. His torn clothes were so thin they fluttered in the wind like rags on a line. His beard was covered with frost. His hands were blue and shaking. His feet had no shoes, just bits of cloth wrapped around them.

The servant's first instinct was to close the gate quickly, before the cold wind entered along with the stranger. But there was a rule about strangers such as these in this household, so he went to Baha'u'llah.

"My lord," he said, returning inside with uncertain steps, "there is a man outside who looks... well... he looks barely alive."

Baha'u'llah rose immediately. "Bring him in!" he commanded.

The servant hesitated. "Sir, perhaps we can give him bread at the gate? He is... very dirty."

Baha'u'llah shook his head. "Winter does not choose whom it freezes. A warm heart shouldn't choose whom it welcomes."

Then he walked past the servant and went to the gate himself.

The stranger looked up, surprised to see a nobleman standing before him.

"Sir," he whispered, barely audible through the chattering of his teeth, "forgive me. I seek only a corner... only a place to survive the night..."

"You will surely survive the night," Baha'u'llah said firmly. "Come in. You are a guest in this house."

He placed a steadying hand on the stranger's arm, slow and gentle, as if touching a wounded bird, and helped him inside.

The warmth of the house seemed to surprise the stranger even more than the kindness. He blinked rapidly, unused to seeing such comfort for many, many days.

Asiyih was already moving towards them with a bowl of warm broth. The children hovered near her like curious birds.

"Eat, slowly," she told the man, placing the bowl in his trembling hands. "Let the warmth return."

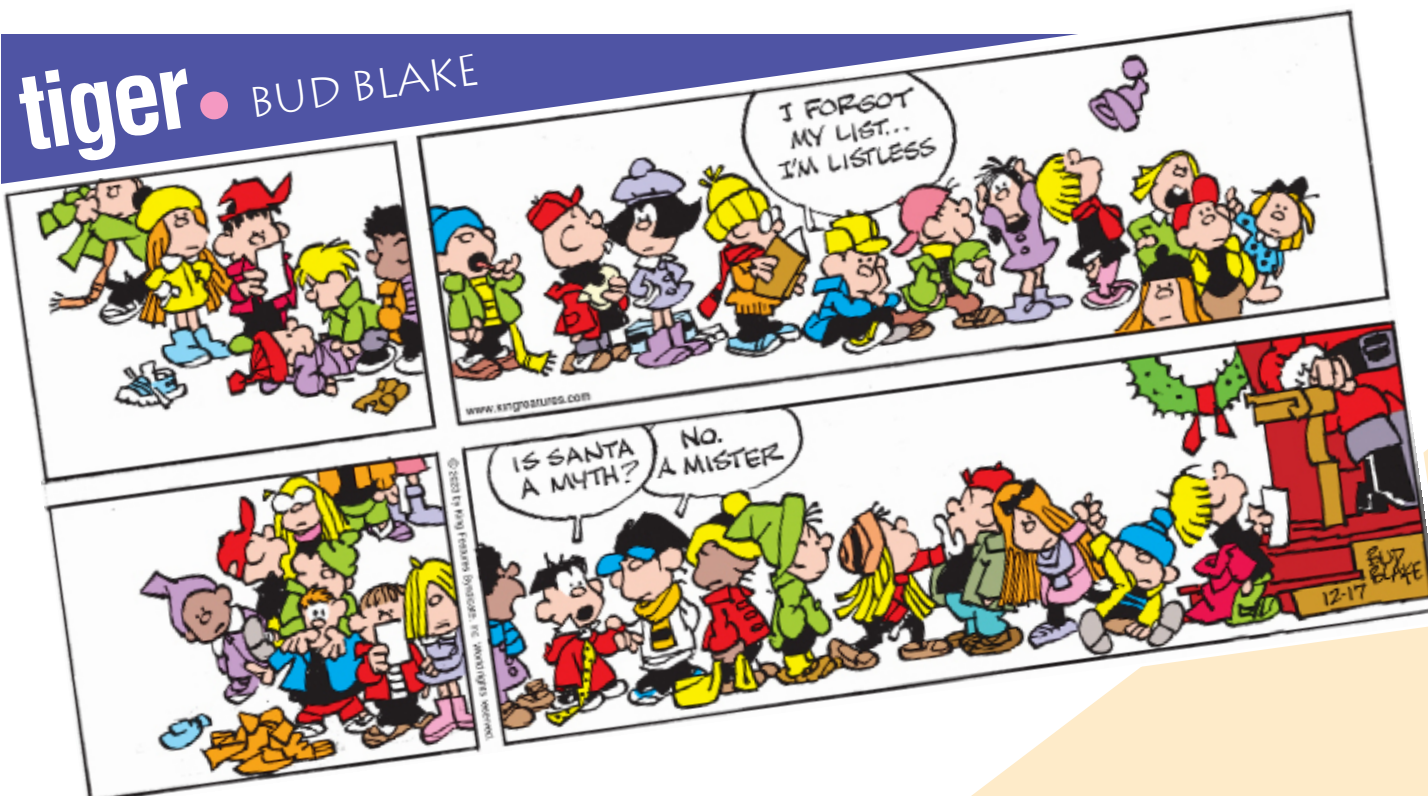
The stranger sipped, then took larger gulps. Tears blurred his eyes as he tried to speak. "I walked... for days... I thought I would freeze..."

► **The end**

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Bookwatch



● Avi, a curious eight-year-old boy, introduces his "know-it-all" robot friend Kia to the complex world of human feelings and emotions. Each story takes you on a journey that ultimately becomes a lesson in kindness and empathy. The book teaches young readers how to process their emotions and express them with confidence and care.

THE FEELOSOPHY OF AVI & KIA

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