

fishing *the* stars

by Mariam El Jabiri

Illustrated by Sarah Rosenberg





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There was once, in a fishing village by the Arabian sea, a boy named Hakim, who was lonely as could be.

“That boy has his head in the clouds” all the villagers would say.

But they were all wrong.






His head was in the stars.

Every night, Hakim gazed up at them.

The stars reminded him of Jedo, his grandfather, who one day had gone to the sea with his nets in his tiny boat, leaving Hakim with nothing but a handwritten note:



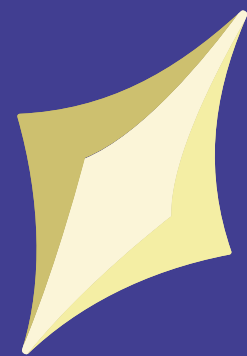
“Whenever you miss me, look to the stars.
Remember that I will be looking up at them,
too, following them home.”

But simply staring at them was not enough
for Hakim. He was becoming too lonely.

So, one night, when all the other children were lying in their beds, he took out a ladder and one of Jedo's old fishing nets. He climbed the ladder and swung his net as high as he could.



Swoosh!



When he pulled down his net, inside was a gleaming, glimmering star.

That night, as the star sat by his window like a warm honey cookie, Hakim slept with a big smile on his face. Surely Jedo would see the star and follow it to Hakim.



But in the morning, Jedo still had not returned.



Hakim waited for the sun to set and ran outside with the ladder and the fishing net. This time, he swung the net over and over.



Swoosh! Swoosh!

In his net shimmered ten stars.



“Now,” Hakim said to himself, “now Jedo will surely come back!”



But the next morning, Jedo still had not returned. And Hakim was terribly lonely.



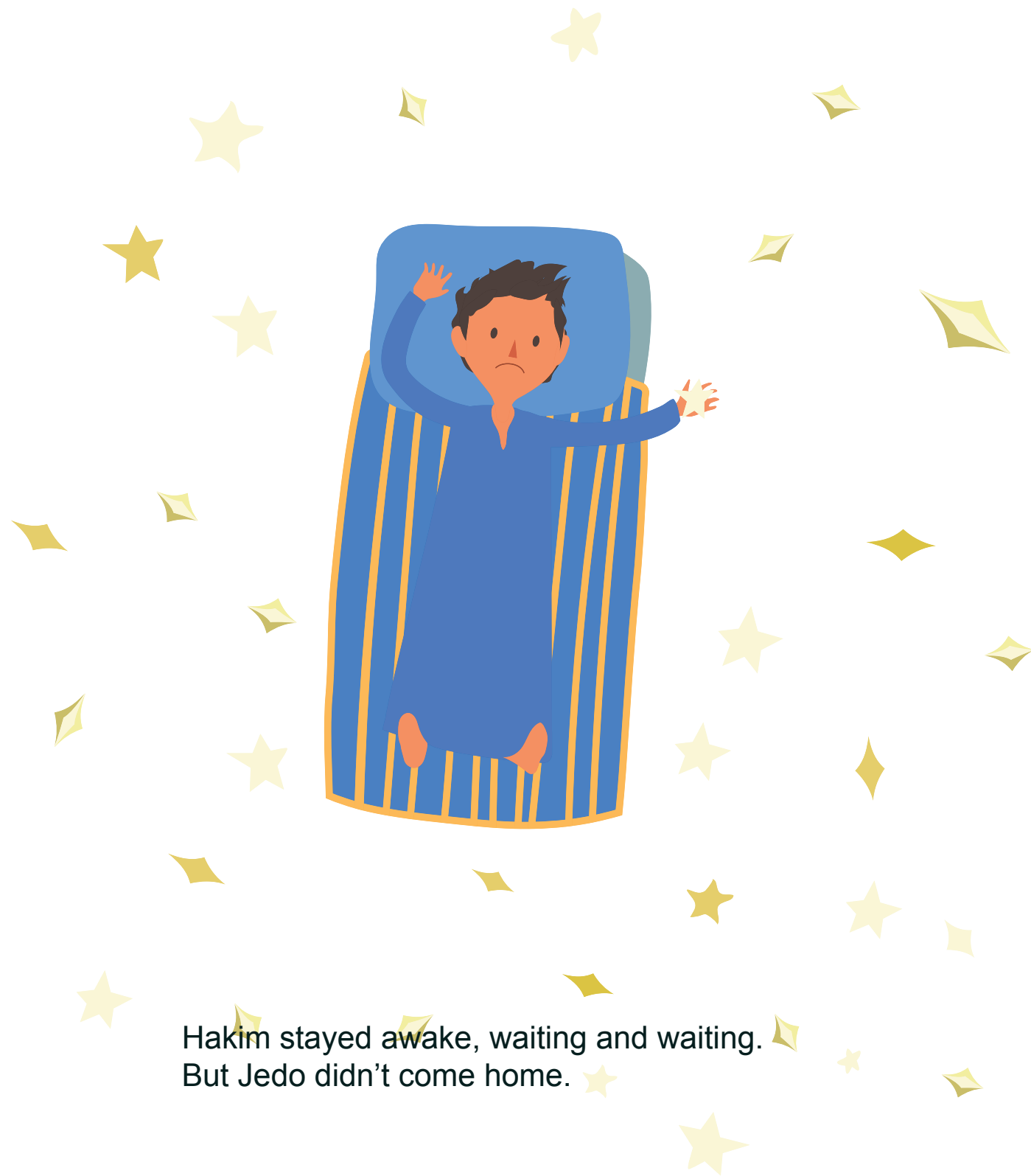
He couldn't wait any longer. After all the village was in bed, Hakim climbed up his ladder and swung his fishing net across the entire sky.





For the first time ever, the sky was starless. That night, nobody in the village was able to sleep.






Hakim stayed awake, waiting and waiting.
But Jedo didn't come home.

At last, Hakim ran to the sea, clutching a
lantern. The night had never been so dark.






Then, far, far out on the water, he heard
someone crying out his name.

“Hakim!
Hakim!
Hakim!”

“Jedo!” shouted Hakim. He leaped onto
his own small raft and desperately
paddled out to sea.



When he finally reached the voice, he saw that it belonged to Jedo, who was all wet and shivering.

“I couldn’t find my way back,” said his grandfather. “I looked to the stars to guide me home. But every night more stars went missing.”




Hakim’s cheeks turned red.
He hugged Jedo.

“I’m so sorry, grandpa!” Hakim exclaimed.

“For what?” Jedo asked.

“I have something to show you,” Hakim said.



As they approached the beach, Jedo began to stare in awe.


“The stars!” Jedo exclaimed.

“I thought if I had them all, you would have to come home,” Hakim said.




Jedo laughed.

“Stars are a map in the sky. That is how they guide me,” He explained.

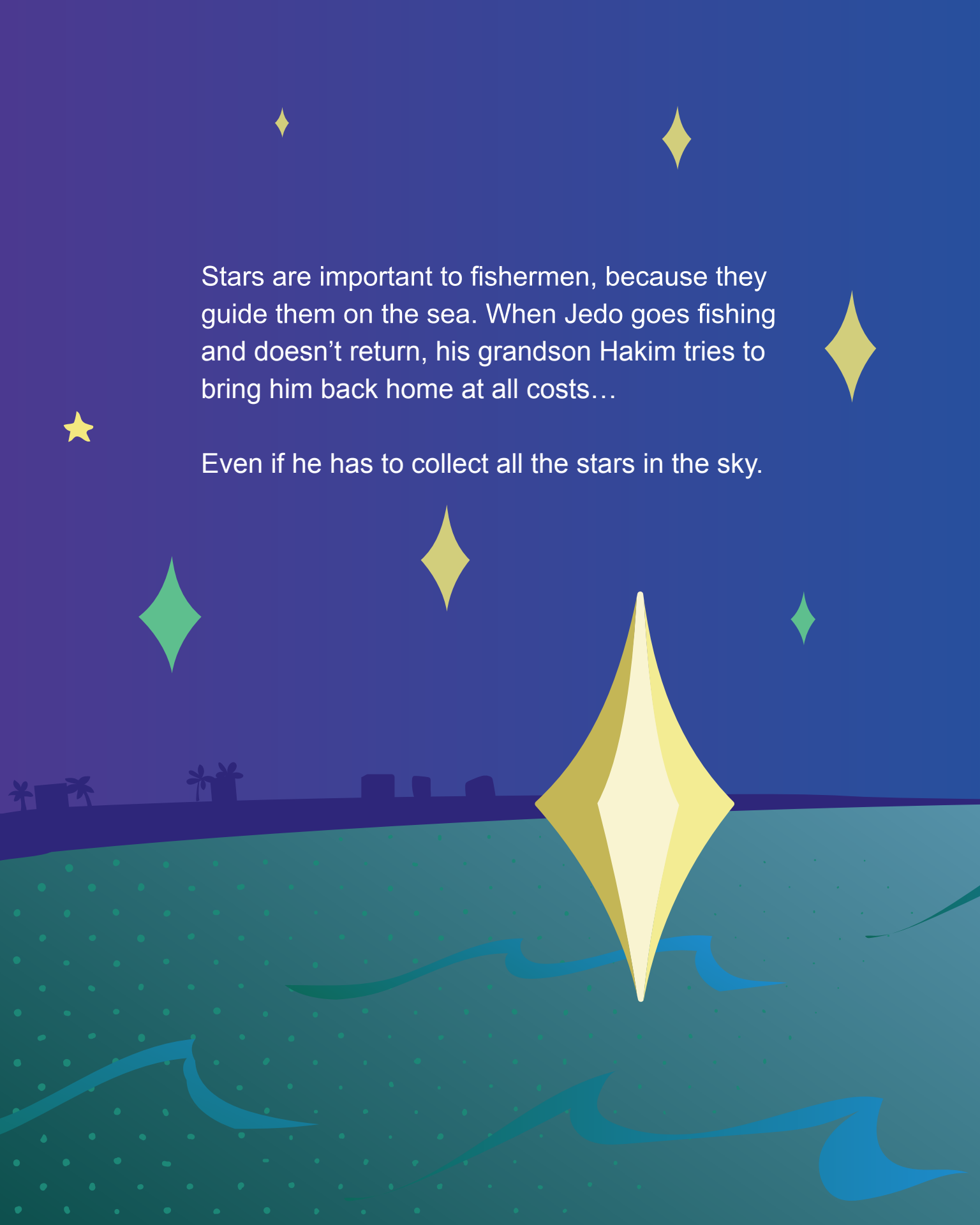
An illustration of a boy and his grandpa on a hill at night. The boy, wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and pants, is standing on the left with his arms raised, looking up at a yellow star in the dark sky. The grandpa, wearing a light blue long-sleeved shirt and pants, is standing on the right, also looking up and reaching towards the sky. He is holding a small yellow star in his hand. The background is a dark blue night sky with a few yellow stars. Two large, stylized green trees are on either side of the characters. The ground is a light purple color. A small orange cat is visible at the bottom right, near the grandpa's feet.

The boy and his grandpa walked up a hill in the dark, dark night, side by side, and released the stars back into the sky, tossing them higher than anyone could ever reach.

An illustration of a night sky with a full moon and many stars. The sky is a deep blue. The moon is a light blue circle in the upper right. There are many small yellow stars of different sizes scattered across the sky. The stars are more concentrated in the upper half of the image.

And ever since that day, the stars have stood so high that no human can ever catch them again.

Not even with a fishing net.



Stars are important to fishermen, because they guide them on the sea. When Jedo goes fishing and doesn't return, his grandson Hakim tries to bring him back home at all costs...

Even if he has to collect all the stars in the sky.