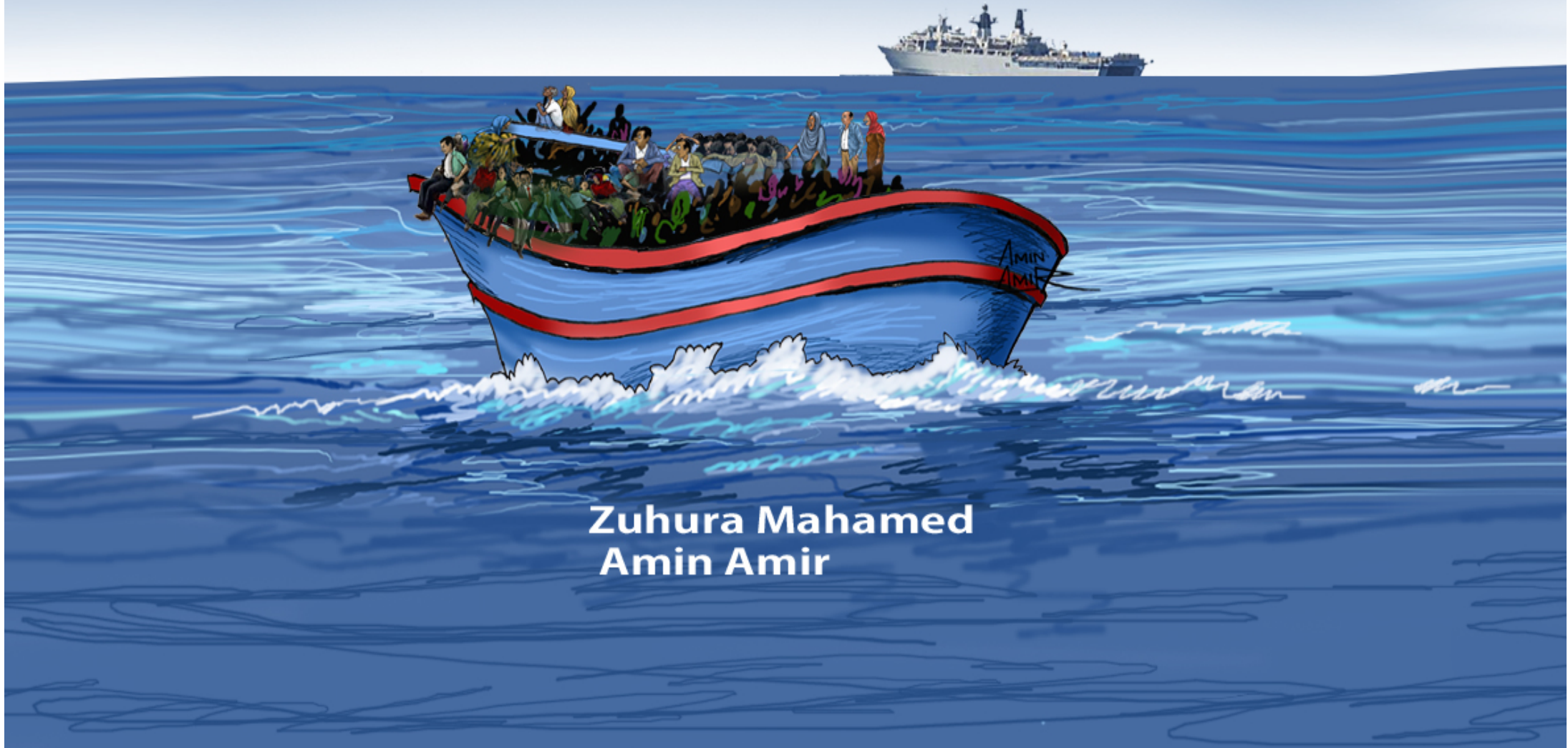


The Journey



Zuhura Mahamed
Amin Amir



Published by UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency in 2016

Text copyright © Zuhura Mahamed 2016

Illustrations copyright © Amin Amir 2016

Edited by Deeka Abdi Said

Printed in Ethiopia

<http://tellingtherealstory.org/>

www.unhcr.org

This book was made possible by Telling the Real Story, a community-based platform that documents and shares the stories of Eritrean and Somali refugees and asylum-seekers, and the journeys they take in hopes of making it to Europe.

The purpose of this book is to give young people, like you, an accurate picture of the journey and what it's really like. We hope the information you find here will help you make a more informed decision, should you ever consider taking the journey yourself.

<http://tellingtherealstory.org/>

Mother



Ali



Hassan



Halimo



Smuggler



The Journey

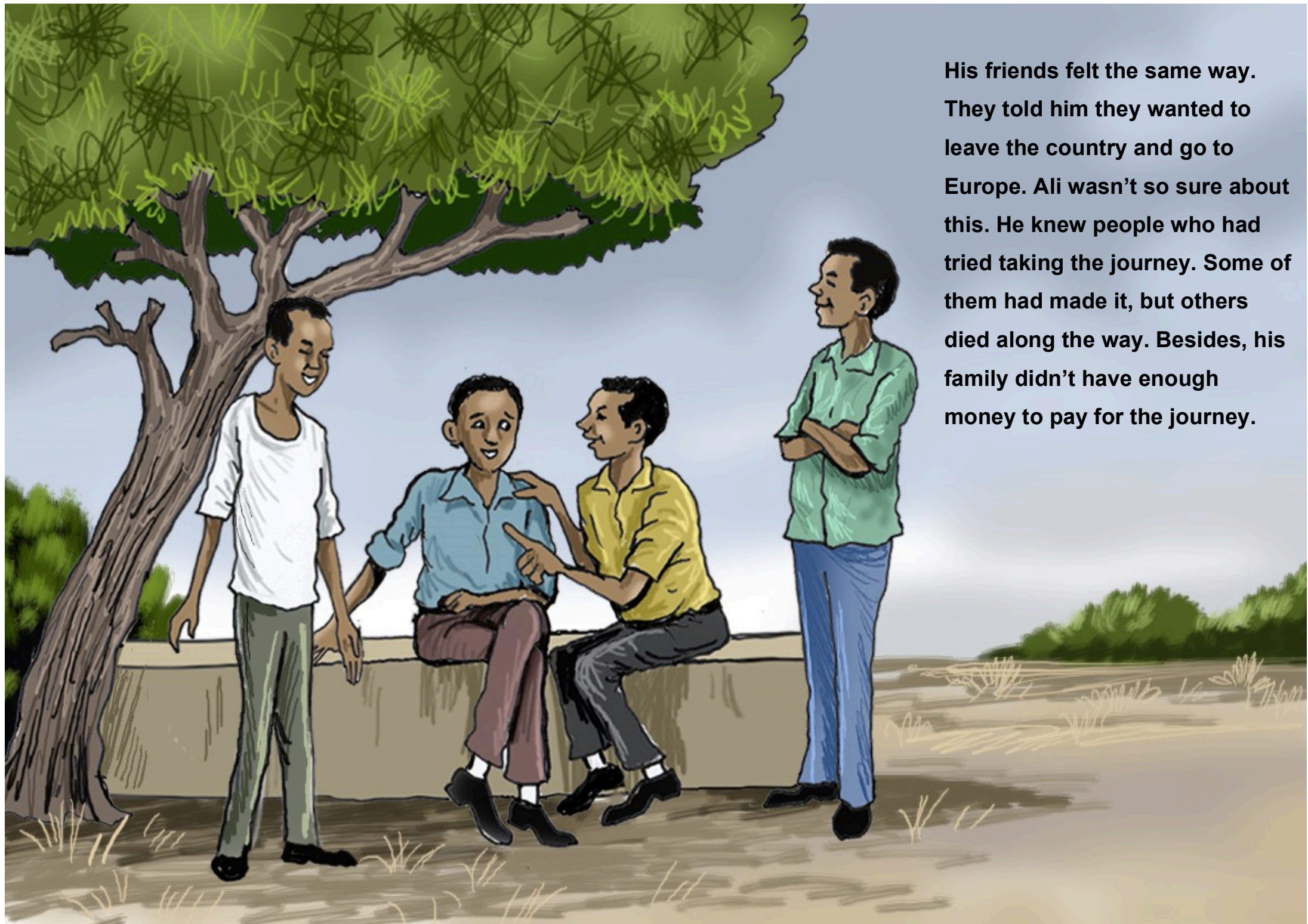


Ali is from Somalia. He grew up there with his mother, two brothers, and four sisters. His father died in the war when he was very young. Ali was now in his final year of high school, and hoped to attend university once he was finished.



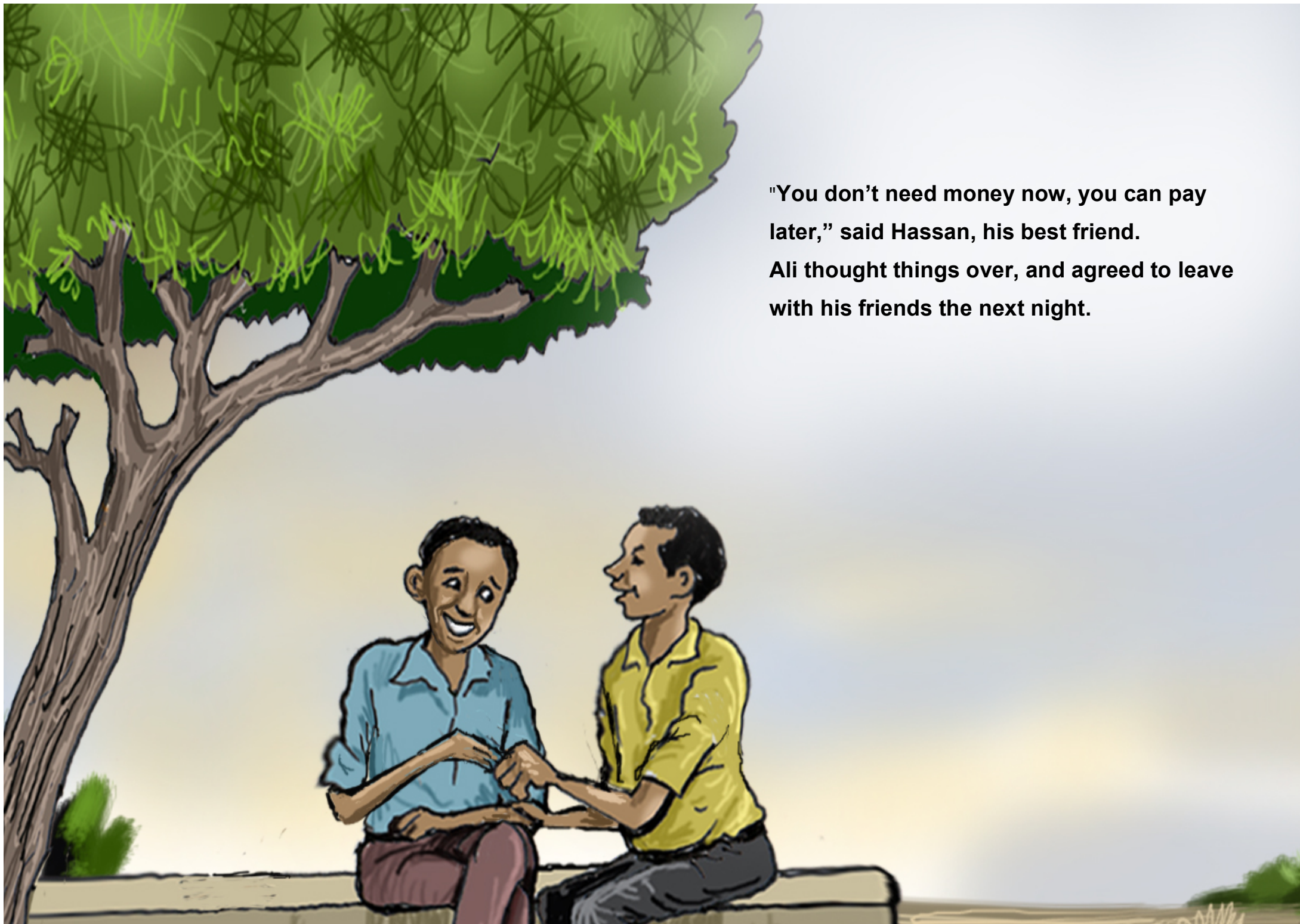
Life became difficult in Ali's town. There was often fighting and explosions. He didn't feel safe, and he could no longer see a future for himself there.





His friends felt the same way. They told him they wanted to leave the country and go to Europe. Ali wasn't so sure about this. He knew people who had tried taking the journey. Some of them had made it, but others died along the way. Besides, his family didn't have enough money to pay for the journey.

"You don't need money now, you can pay later," said Hassan, his best friend. Ali thought things over, and agreed to leave with his friends the next night.



Hassan knew someone who could help them get out of the country. As they began traveling, Ali grew worried. He had heard horrible stories about the journey from his mother and others. He didn't want something bad to happen to him. He just wanted to get to Europe so he could go to university and find work to help his family.



Along the way, they met other Somalis like them. A lot of people were taking the journey to Europe. There were men, women, and children—even some who looked very young. Ali and Hassan recognized a girl named Halimo from their town. She was on her own, so they invited her to travel with them. They were all bundled packed onto the back of a truck.



The truck sped across the Sahara Desert. Some people were unable to hold on and fell off the back. The driver did not stop for them. Ali was scared and held on even tighter.



The truck stopped in the middle of the desert, and they were ordered to get off and walk the rest of the way. “You were supposed to take us the entire way,” said one man. But no one responded to him. Everyone got off the truck and started walking.



The desert was very hot and Ali didn't have enough water to drink. They walked for four days and four nights. Some people died, and others got left behind because they were too slow. Ali, Hassan, and Halimo struggled to keep up, but eventually they made it. They were very tired, thirsty, and hungry.



When they got to the next country they were handed over to another smuggler. He ordered them to call their families and tell them to send a lot of money, threatening to kill them and sell their organs if they didn't.



**Ali called his mother, even though he knew she didn't have any money.
His mother was so happy to hear from him, and to know he was alive.**





Ali's mother didn't know how she could possibly raise so much money. She said she would try to find the money but that he would have to wait.

Ali waited. With each passing day, he was mistreated by his captors. He was given very little food and saw a lot of bad things. His friend Halimo became ill and he could not do anything to help her.



Ali was very sad and regretted leaving his home. Now he was in a horrible place and had caused his mother so much grief. He had to make it to Europe or else all this would have been for nothing.



Months after being held captive, Ali's mother finally sent the money. She had borrowed it from her cousins. Ali was told he would be able to get on a boat leaving for Europe the following week. Ali was happy for himself, but he was sad for his friend Hassan. Hassan's family hadn't sent any money. Ali would have to leave him behind.



Two days before it was time for Ali to leave on the boat, Hassan's family sent him the money. His mother had sold her home and land to raise it. Hassan and Ali were so happy they wouldn't be separated. They were very nervous about getting on the boat because neither of them knew how to swim, and they knew of many who had died at sea. They prayed to God to get them across safely.



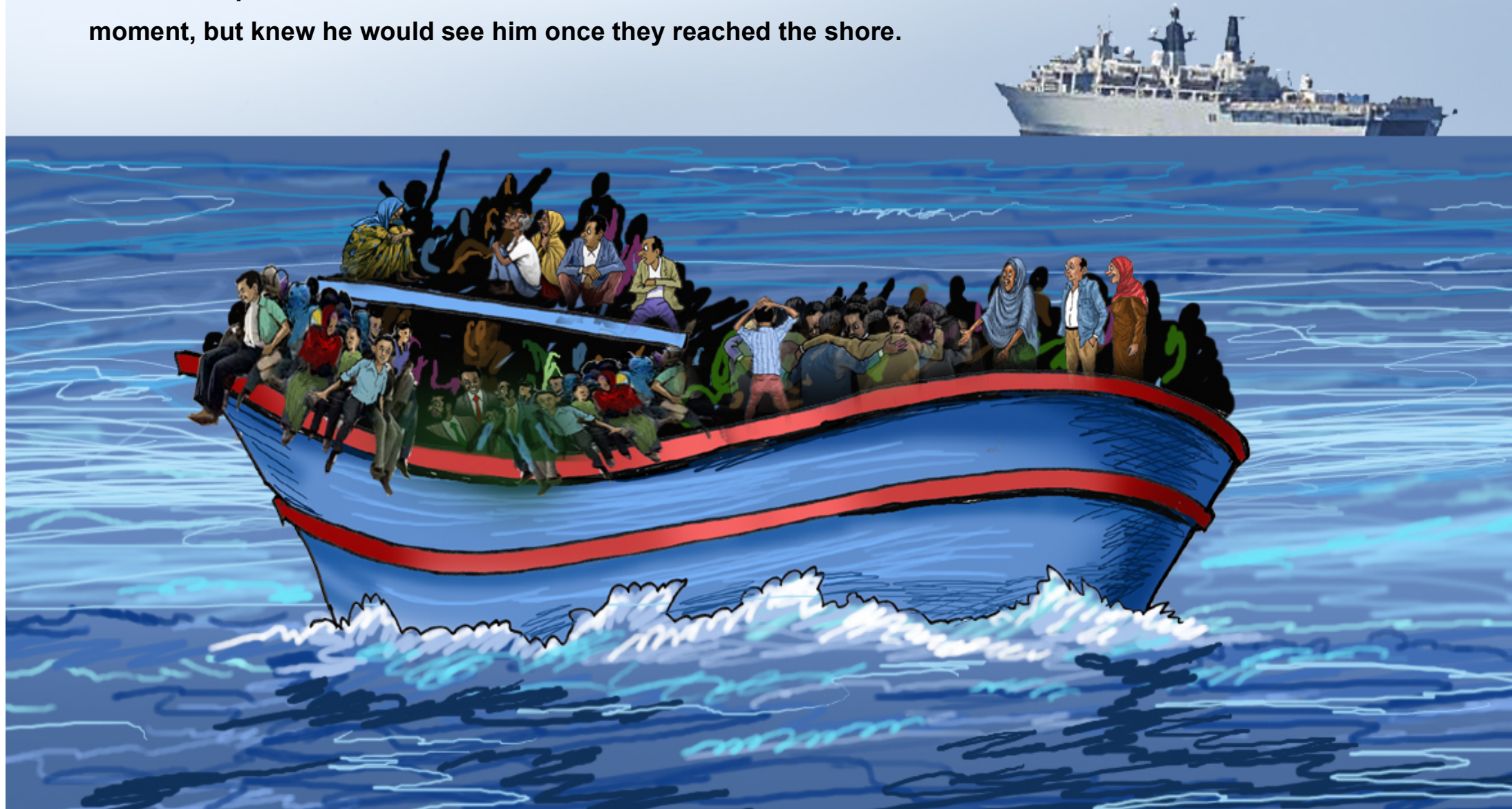
When it was time to board the boat, Ali and Hassan were separated. Hassan was forced to sit on the lower level, while Ali had to sit on the top deck.



The sea journey was rough and the boat was not in good shape. Their only hope of making it was getting rescued.



Their boat was at sea for nine days. Everyone had given up hope of being rescued or making it to shore when suddenly, out of nowhere, someone spotted a ship. Everyone was so happy. They had made it. The hardship was over. Ali wished he was with Hassan to share the moment, but knew he would see him once they reached the shore.



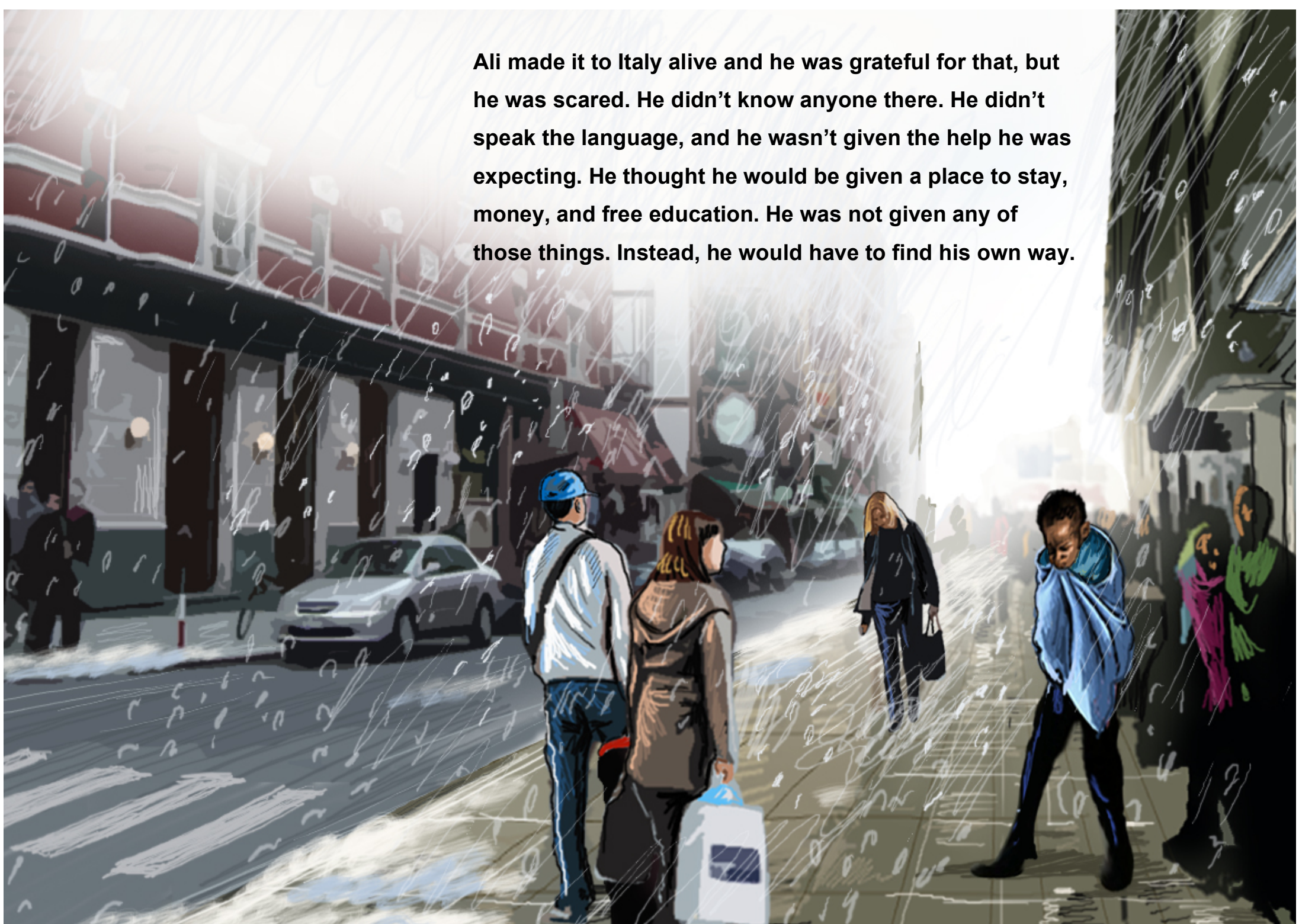
As people were being moved from the smuggler's boat to the Italian coastguard's ship, the passengers on the bottom level were all found dead. They had suffocated to death because there were too many people in there.



Hassan was dead. Ali was heartbroken. He had lost his best friend and would have to face Europe alone. What would he tell Hassan's mother?



Ali made it to Italy alive and he was grateful for that, but he was scared. He didn't know anyone there. He didn't speak the language, and he wasn't given the help he was expecting. He thought he would be given a place to stay, money, and free education. He was not given any of those things. Instead, he would have to find his own way.



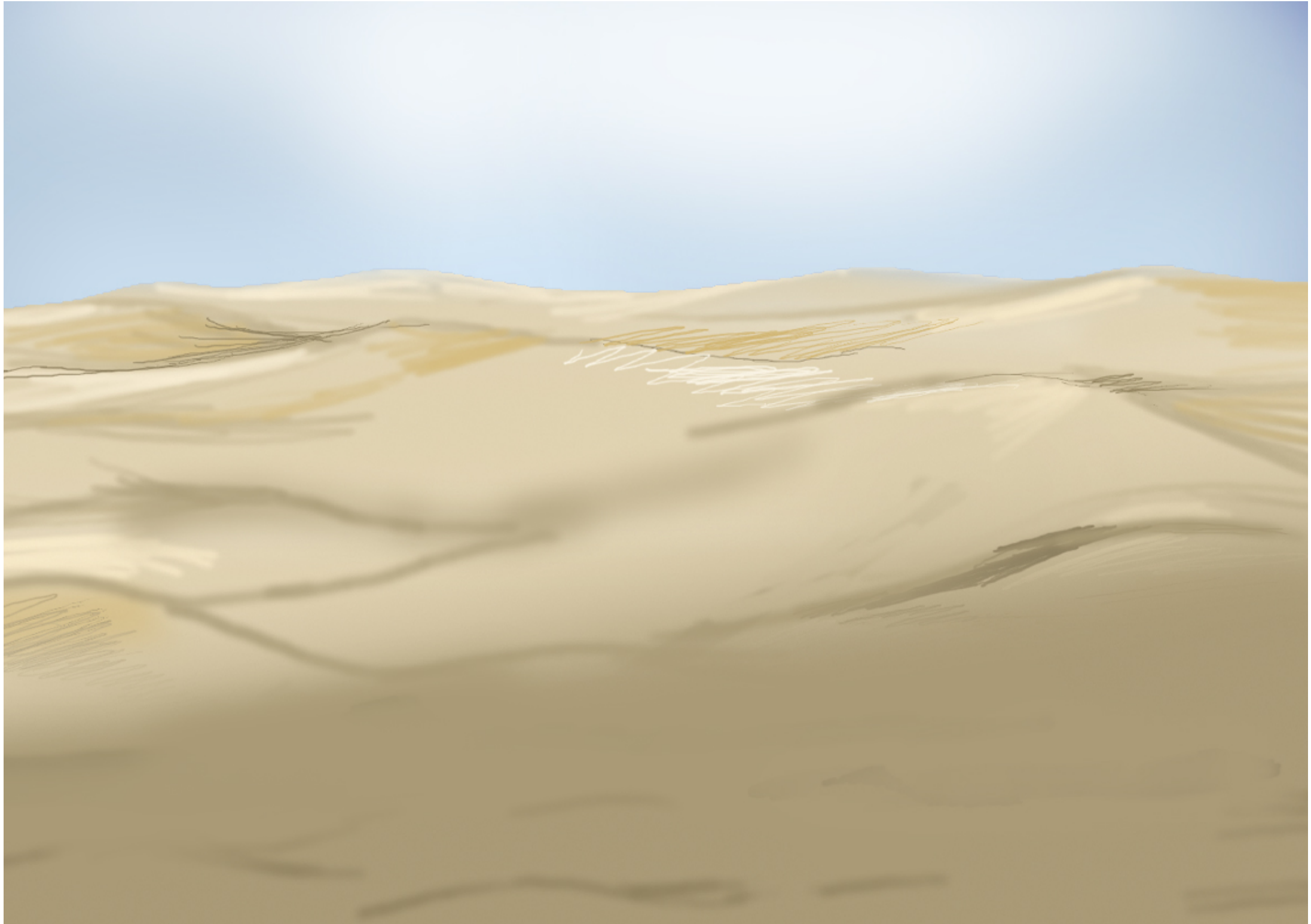
Ali missed his family and his friend Hassan very much. It was very difficult calling Hassan's mother to tell her Hassan had died. Ali found it hard being alone in Italy. He found it hard trying to build a new life. He often remembered the horrible journey he'd taken to get to where he was and wondered if it had all been worth it.

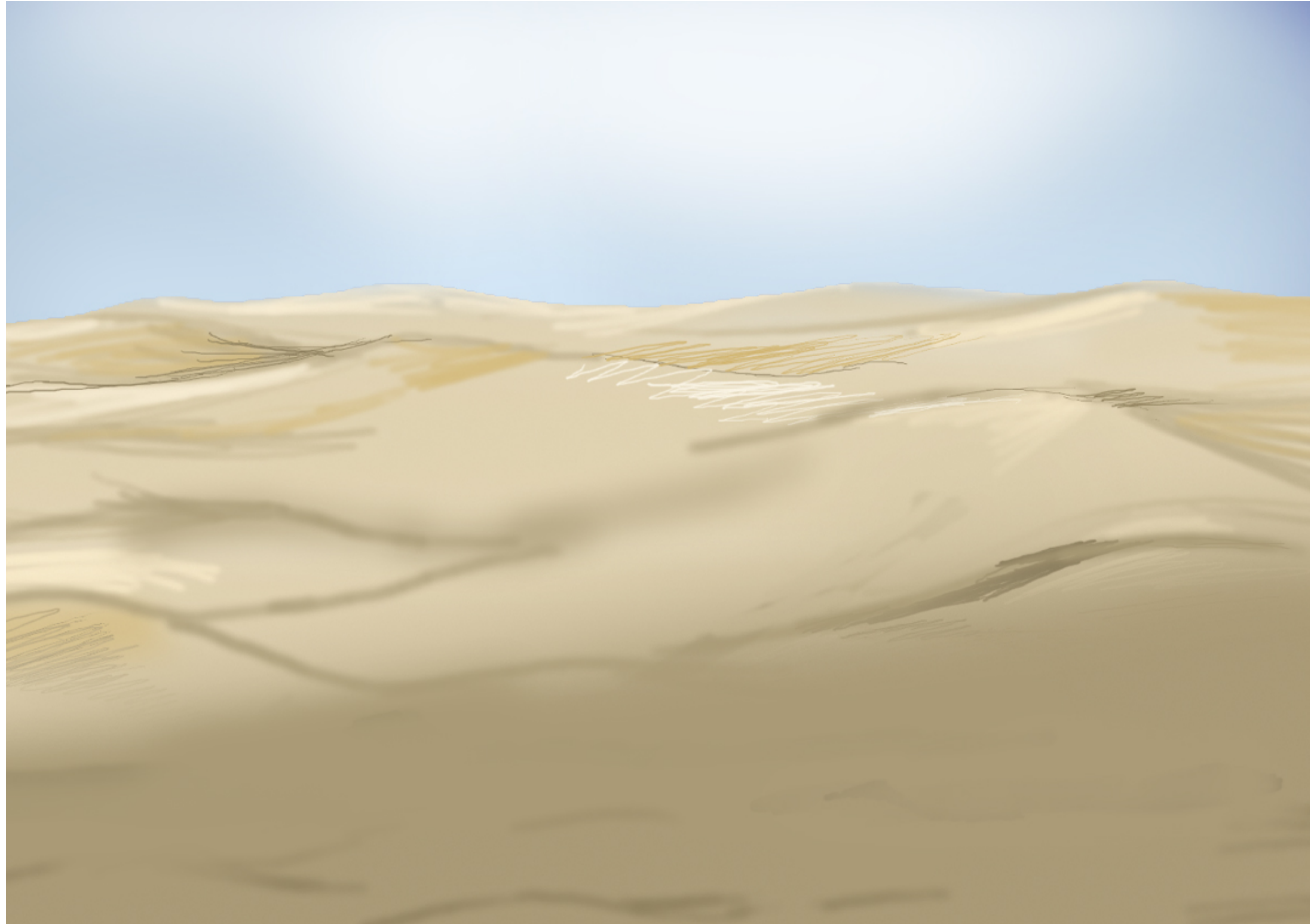


Now he was in Europe and happy to be alive. He decided to try his best to make a better life for himself.



THE END





The Journey

Ali lives in Somalia with his family, but can no longer see a future for himself there. After talking with his friend Hassan, they decide to take the journey to Europe together. Along the way, they endure many difficulties and losses. Do they make it? Read to find out.

Published by UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency in 2016

Text copyright © Zuhura Mahamed 2016

Illustrations copyright © Amin Amir 2016

Edited by Deeka Said

Printed in Ethiopia



TELLING
THE
REAL
STORY