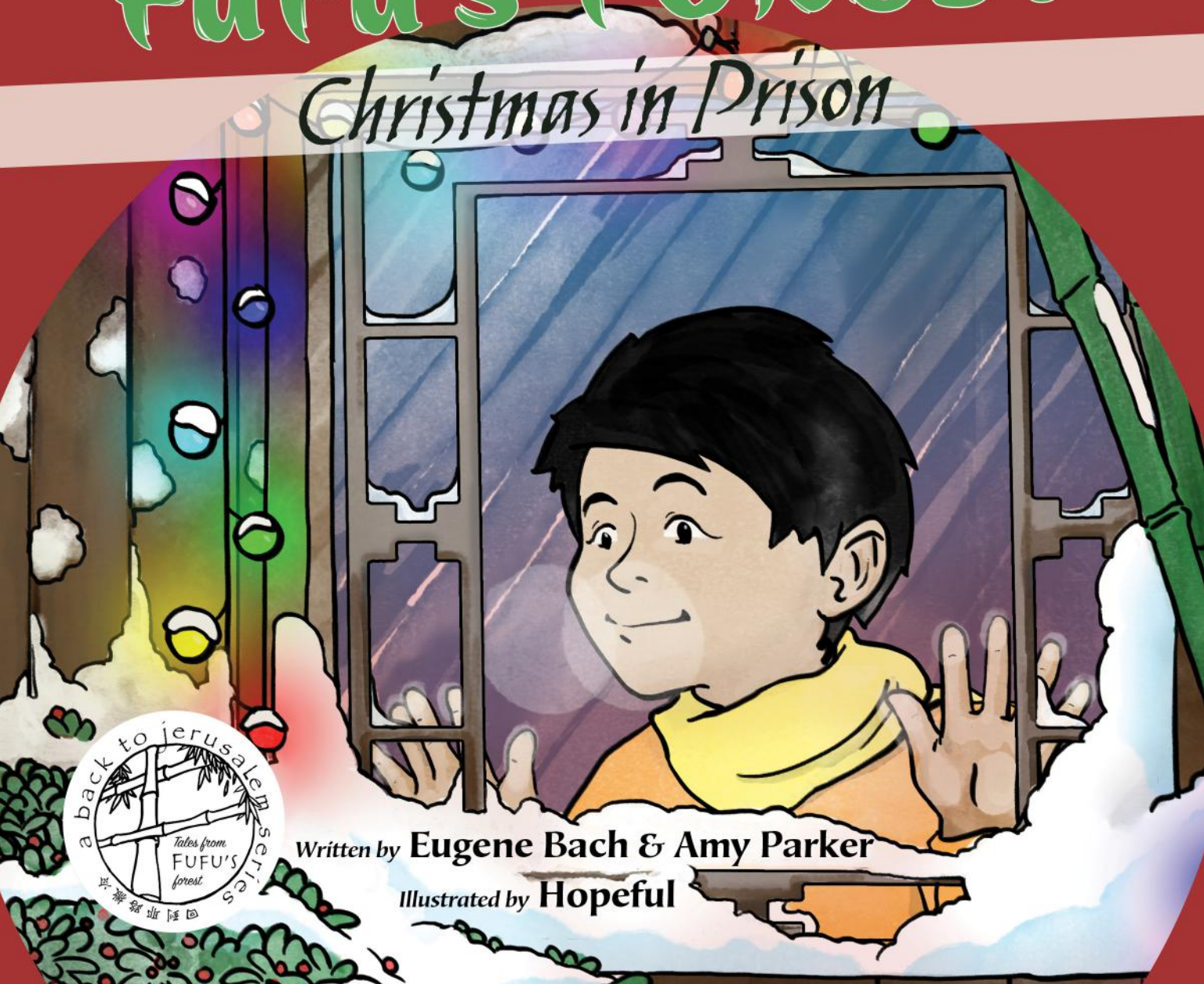
TALES FROM FuFu's FOREST

Christmas in Prison



a back to jerusalem series

Tales from FUFU'S forest

Written by Eugene Bach & Amy Parker

Illustrated by Hopeful

朋友　　雪　　圣诞　　节

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圣诞　　节　　朋友　　雪

节　　朋友　　雪　　圣诞

朋友 **péngyou** (PUNG yo): friend

雪 **xuě** (shiAH): snow

节 **jié** (JEEah): holiday

圣诞 **Shèngdàn** (shONG dan): Christmas

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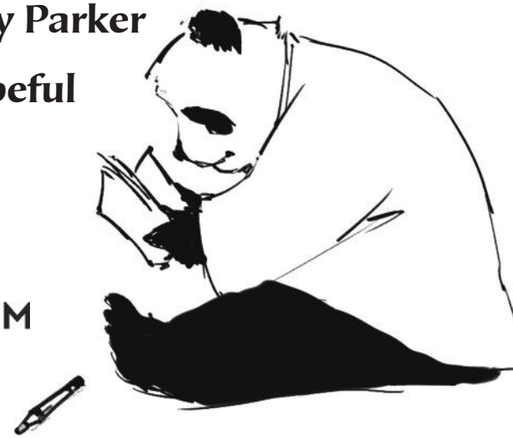


BACK TO 归耶路撒冷 JERUSALEM

Xuě, xuě, xuě . . .

The snow had been falling for days.

It wasn't unusual to see snow in the mountains where Shan lived. But this much snow? Heavy and wet, it piled up around the windows and doors and caused the roof to creak at night. And most dreadfully, it kept Shan cooped up in the house, staring out the window, wishing he were anywhere but there.

"Mom, please?!" he asked yet again. The request needed no explanation.

"Oh, all right." Mom gave in. "But bundle up. And be back in an hour." Before Mom could get the words out of her mouth, a chilly wind swirled into the room as Shan ran out the front door to freedom.

Running became more difficult as Shan climbed the snow-laden hill to the bamboo forest. But once he stepped through the low, snow-covered arch of bamboo, he was quickly welcomed into the warmth of friends.

"Come in! Come in!" FuFu called, as if he had been waiting for Shan all day.

"*Péngyou*," Old Red said with a smile. "We were just settling in for some—"

"Tea?" Shan grinned.

"How did you know?" FuFu asked, bounding back into the room with a fresh pot of tea.

"Sounds wonderful!" Shan exclaimed. "I've been a prisoner in my house for days!"

"Well, even prison isn't so bad," Old Red said with a slight smile.

"Only you could find something good about prison," Shan answered.

"Not me," Old Red answered. "There is a man named Brother Yun. Most people just know him as 'The Heavenly Man.'"

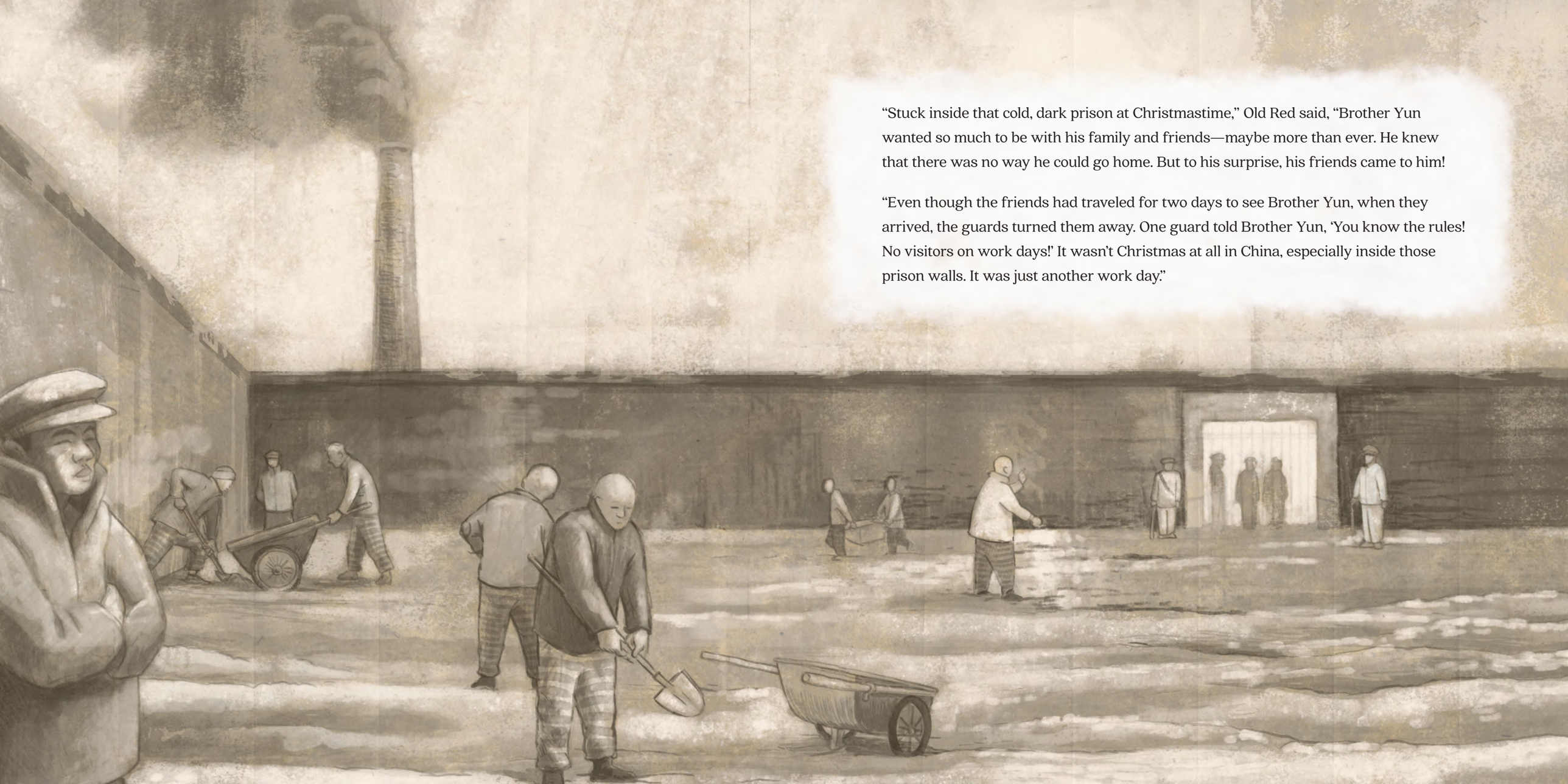
"The Heavenly Man?" Shan asked.

"Yes." Old Red chuckled. "People started calling him that because once, the police asked Brother Yun's name and home address. He just told them that he was a 'heavenly man,' that his home was in heaven! And the name stuck with him."

Shan grinned.

"But his time on earth has been anything but heavenly," Old Red continued, shaking his head. "One Christmas, he was in prison for preaching the Gospel. Even though Christmas really isn't a holiday in China, Chinese Christians honor *Shèngdàn jié* by telling others about Jesus."

Shan thought about that for a moment. His family had never really celebrated the holiday.



"Stuck inside that cold, dark prison at Christmastime," Old Red said, "Brother Yun wanted so much to be with his family and friends—maybe more than ever. He knew that there was no way he could go home. But to his surprise, his friends came to him!

"Even though the friends had traveled for two days to see Brother Yun, when they arrived, the guards turned them away. One guard told Brother Yun, 'You know the rules! No visitors on work days!' It wasn't Christmas at all in China, especially inside those prison walls. It was just another work day."

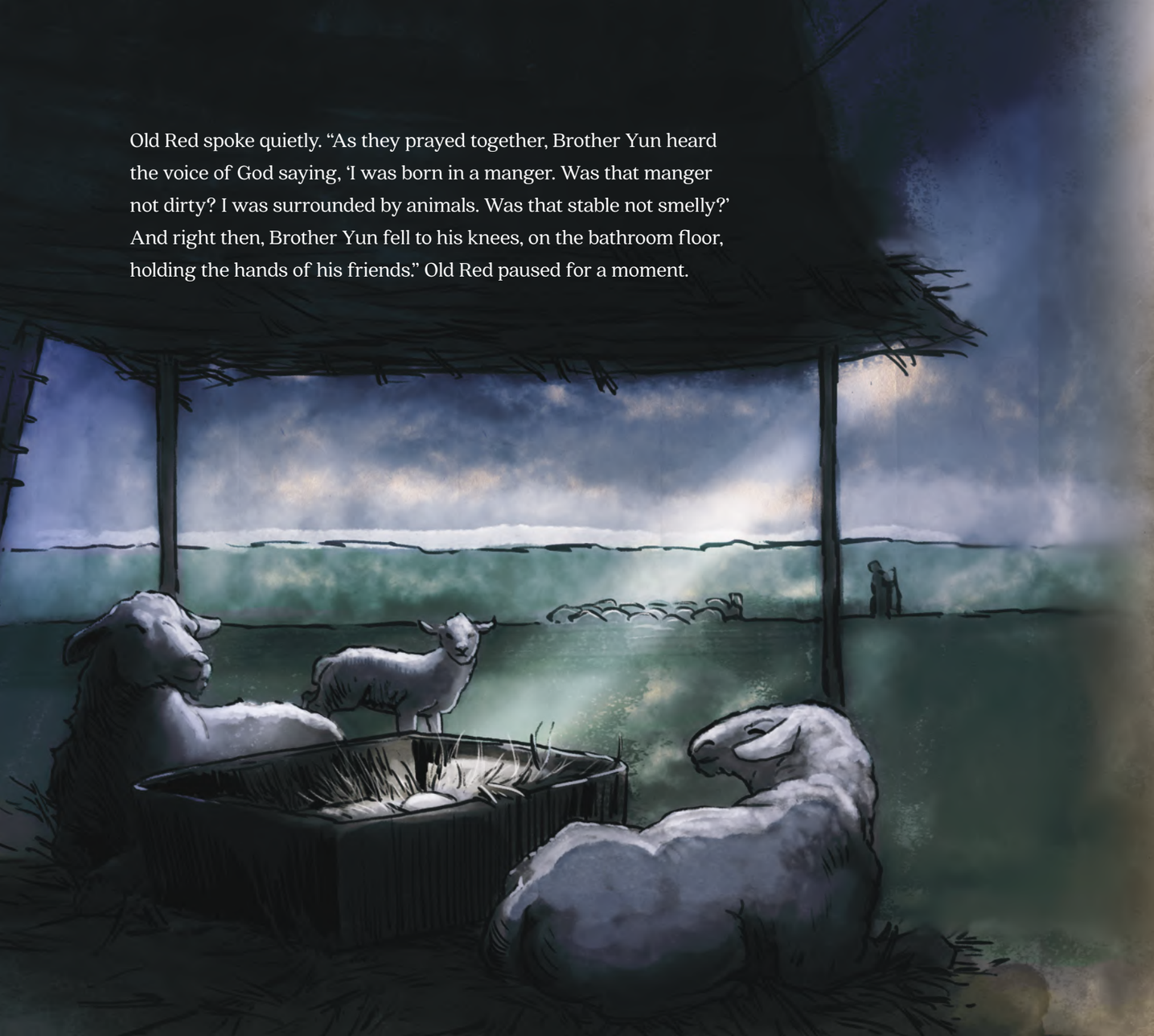
"But Brother Yun wouldn't give up that easily. 'Please,' he asked the guard, 'they've traveled so far. Could I just walk them to the restroom on their way out?' The guard thought a moment and waved Brother Yun away with a nod.

"You must know, Master Shan, the bathrooms in a Chinese prison . . ." Old Red searched for the words.

"Shoooo-weeeeeee!" FuFu chimed in.

"I'll leave it at that," Old Red said. "And yet, Brother Yun was so excited just for the chance to walk to the bathroom with his friends. But they knew they didn't have much time. And there, in the filth and the smells of that bathroom, the spirit of God surrounded them."

Old Red spoke quietly. “As they prayed together, Brother Yun heard the voice of God saying, ‘I was born in a manger. Was that manger not dirty? I was surrounded by animals. Was that stable not smelly?’ And right then, Brother Yun fell to his knees, on the bathroom floor, holding the hands of his friends.” Old Red paused for a moment.



“They prayed for their country. They prayed for their people. But most of all they prayed that everyone would know the true message of *Shèngdàn jié*: that

Jesus in heaven made Himself poor, a lowly child, so that we all could be saved.”

Smiling, FuFu leaned back and sighed.

"They were so lost in their prayers," Old Red continued, "that they were completely startled when the guard busted through the door. He stared at them, disgusted at the sight of these people kneeling on the bathroom floor. And praying?! He was yelling, threatening, and charging toward Brother Yun."

"What did he do?!" Shan interrupted.

"Brother Yun simply remembered the words of the angel on the night of Jesus's birth: 'do not be afraid.'"

FuFu stood up and recited, "'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.' Luke 2:10!"

"Exactly," Old Red said. "And unafraid, Brother Yun stood and shouted at the guard, 'In the name of Jesus, stop! Stop and kneel before Jesus, the King who was born to save you from your sins!'"

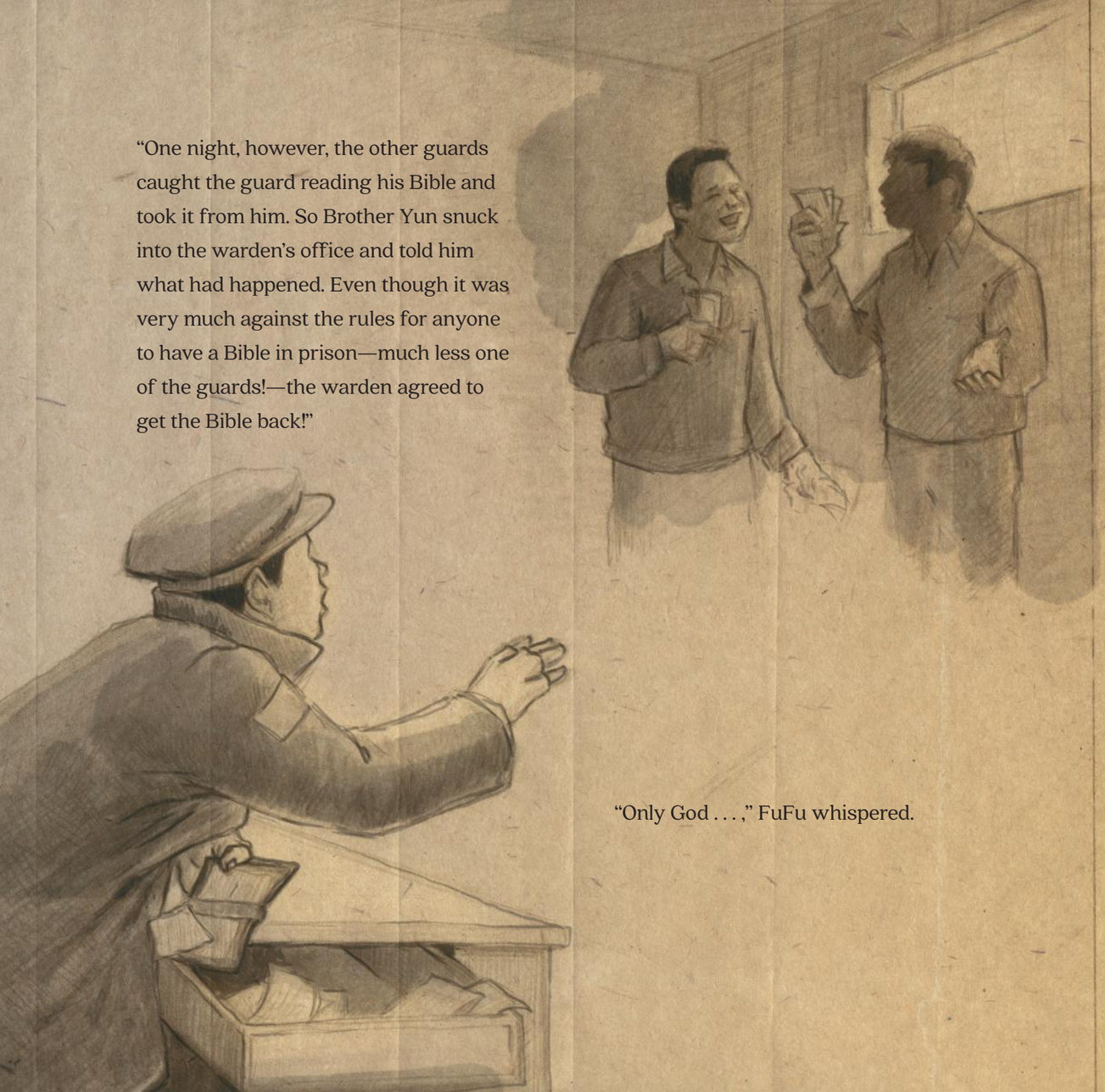
Shan clapped a hand over his mouth.

"And right then, the guard fell to his knees. Brother Yun and his friends prayed with him. And he gave his heart to Jesus. From that moment on, he was changed."

"Of course, after that guard became a Christian, he wanted a Bible to read. So Brother Yun and his friends started sneaking pages of the Bible in to him."

"Sort of a late Christmas gift," FuFu said with a smile.

Old Red nodded. "And because in Chinese prisons, most of your food came from friends and family, Brother Yun's friends had many opportunities to bring food—and pieces of the Bible. They hid a few pages under fresh vegetables. They rolled up some pages and put them inside steamed buns. And soon, they were able to get the entire Bible to the guard, piece by piece by piece."



"One night, however, the other guards caught the guard reading his Bible and took it from him. So Brother Yun snuck into the warden's office and told him what had happened. Even though it was very much against the rules for anyone to have a Bible in prison—much less one of the guards!—the warden agreed to get the Bible back!"

"Only God . . . ," FuFu whispered.

Old Red leaned in. "Then, the warden himself started wondering about that Bible, wondering why Brother Yun and even one of his guards would risk everything for an old, torn-up book. So he began to read it himself. Of course, Brother Yun had been praying that this very thing would happen with the warden. And when the warden called Brother Yun in with questions about the Bible, Brother Yun was ready. Right there in his office, in prison, the warden became a Christian."

Old Red stood up and stretched. "All of this," he said, "because one man was willing to share the true gift of Christmas, the gift of Jesus, no matter what."

Shan stood beside Old Red. "Christmas . . . ," he said, almost as a question. "No matter what."

"I very much appreciate the tea," Old Red said to FuFu as he headed toward the door.

"Yes, thank you!" Shan said, nodding to each of them. "For the tea, for the stories, for being my friend."

FuFu bowed, and Old Red wrapped an arm around Shan as, together, they stepped out into the snow.

As they neared the bamboo arch, Old Red turned and wrapped both of his hands around Shan's. "Merry Christmas, *péngyou*."

"Merry Christmas." Shan bowed and then made his way home through the lightly falling snow.

He planted a big kiss on his mom's forehead and handed her a little bamboo wreath that he had twisted together on the walk home. Then she watched with a curious smile as he grabbed the dishes and set the table.

Shan pushed the front door closed and stomped his boots on the rug. The chill melted away, as the room wrapped him in warmth and the rosy glow of dusk bounced off the silvery snow and streamed through the windows.

Maybe being cooped up in this place isn't so bad, Shan thought. *I'm with the people I love. And even here, there is much work to be done.*

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Christmas in Prison

After Shan is snowed in for days on end, he escapes to the bamboo forest and warms by the fire with his friends. That's where he hears the story of a real prisoner, Brother Yun, who was punished for telling others about Jesus. But through a Christmas miracle, Brother Yun was able to lead others to find the greatest freedom of all, there within those prison walls.

TALES FROM FuFu's FOREST

True Stories Told by Fictional Characters

As you step through the swaying arch into the bamboo forest, you enter the warm, welcoming home of a rotund panda and a few quirky friends. There in FuFu's Forest, you will always find a bottomless cup of tea and true tales brought back from missionaries in the field.

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