

Contents

Chapter 1	The cyclone	4
Chapter 2	Dhaka: Three months later	8
Chapter 3	Mobirun	12
Chapter 4	The Paris Café	17
Chapter 5	Ma Rahman's Home for Boys	21
Chapter 6	The fisher boy	26
Chapter 7	The Angel	31
Chapter 8	The river dolphins	35
Chapter 9	Flood	42
Chapter 10	Rescued	48
Chapter 11	Together again	50
Chapter 12	The river of dreams	55
Chapter 13	Home	58
Activities		61
Glossary		69
Key		72

The cyclone

The black clouds over the village of Channua were turning day to night, and the wind was getting stronger by the moment. Bits of paper and palm leaves were blowing through the village. Soon the wind would be strong enough to lift pieces of tin from roofs and send them flying through the air. The sharp edges were dangerous.

Sultana Nahar had seen it too many times before. She knew time was short. She could hear the voice over the loudspeaker telling people to go to the cyclone shelter where they would be safe. She grabbed a bag of dried food and pushed her two children, Khushi and Mohammad, out of the door of their house.

‘Quick, we must go now. There’s no time to get your things.’

‘But Ma,’ said Khushi, ‘what about Baba?’

Mohammad watched his father tying the family’s two cows to a palm tree. ‘Yes, Baba must come.’

‘He will come after,’ Sultana told them.

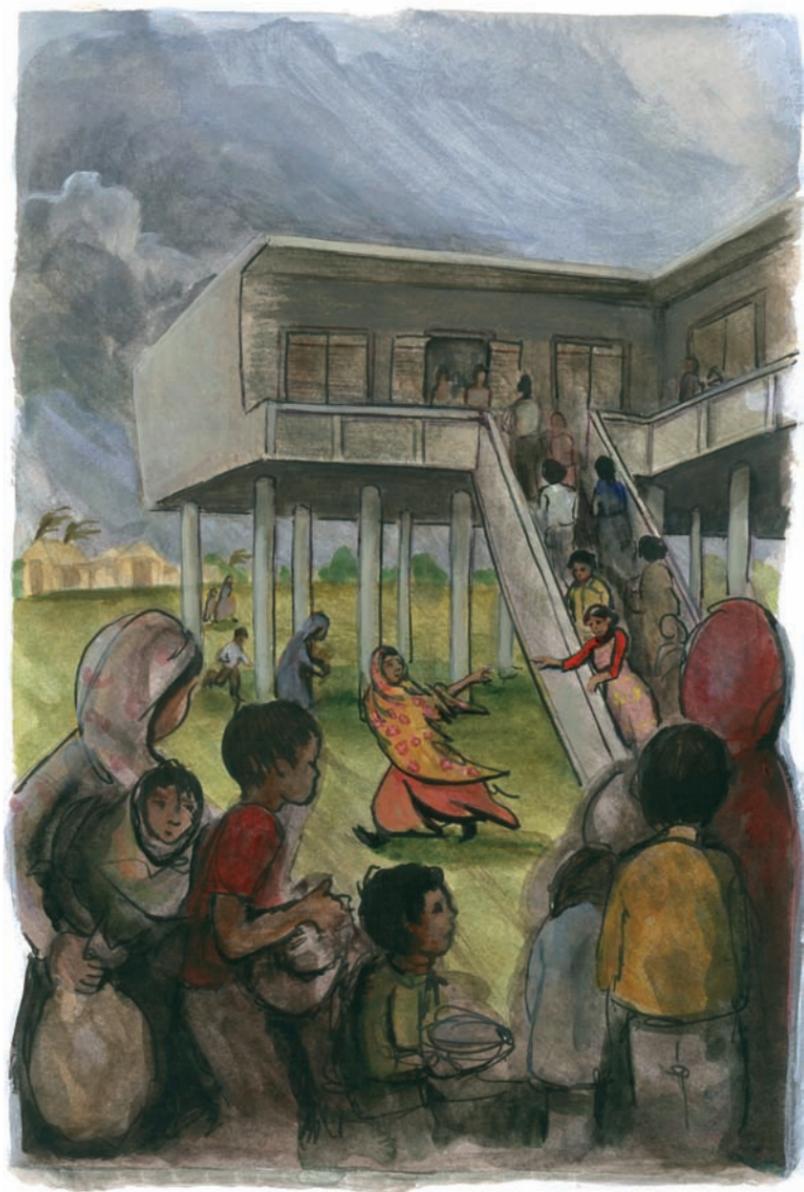
But she knew he wouldn’t come. This time her husband was going to stay with the house. The last time they had gone to the shelter, they had returned to find the house still standing, but everything they owned gone. Everything, including the chickens and cow, had been stolen.

This time, Sultana had tried to persuade him to come to the shelter, screaming, ‘Don’t be a fool. You are going to die here.’

But he had replied, ‘If I come back to nothing again, I might as well be dead.’

And so she had decided to save the children and herself.

Sultana and the two children ran towards the shelter. Everywhere, villagers were tying down their houses as best they could. They tied the roofs and outsides of their houses to



trees. They took anything they could carry – pots, clothes, bags of rice.

The cyclone shelter was a concrete building that stood five metres off the ground on pillars. It was strong enough to withstand 200 kilometre-per-hour winds and large enough for hundreds of people.

Sultana paused at the bottom of the steps. She could hear the voice through the loudspeaker telling people to go to safety. But she couldn't leave her husband to face the winds. This was the man she had married at fifteen, the man she had grown to love and could not live without.

'You two go up,' she said to the children. 'I'm going back to get your father.'

'Ma, Ma!' Khushi shouted.

Sultana quickly held her two children in her arms, then said, 'Go! I'll be back.'

In the shelter, Mohammad and Khushi held each other and listened to the roar of wind and rain. They could see the fear on the faces of the other people, all crowded together.

'Where's Ma, where's Baba?' Khushi shouted.

'They're coming,' replied Mohammad.

All night the wind roared. Halfway through the night a huge body of seawater hit the side of the shelter. The shelter shook and people screamed. 'Allah, save us!' someone shouted.

By sunrise, the winds had died down, but it was still raining lightly. When Mohammad and Khushi looked outside they saw a sea of brown water. The whole village was flooded. There were bits of wood, pots and dead animals floating in the water. Then they saw the human bodies.

Khushi turned to her brother and started crying in loud sobs that took her breath away.

'Don't look,' said Mohammad.

'Ma,' cried Khushi, 'Baba.'

'They're okay. They would have climbed onto a roof,' said Mohammad. Tears were running down his face.

When some in the shelter decided to leave and began walking through the chest-high water, Mohammad and Khushi stayed. There was nowhere to go. Where yesterday there had been houses, now there was only water. And there was the horrible truth they didn't want to face – their home was gone and their parents were almost certainly dead. They were alone in the world.