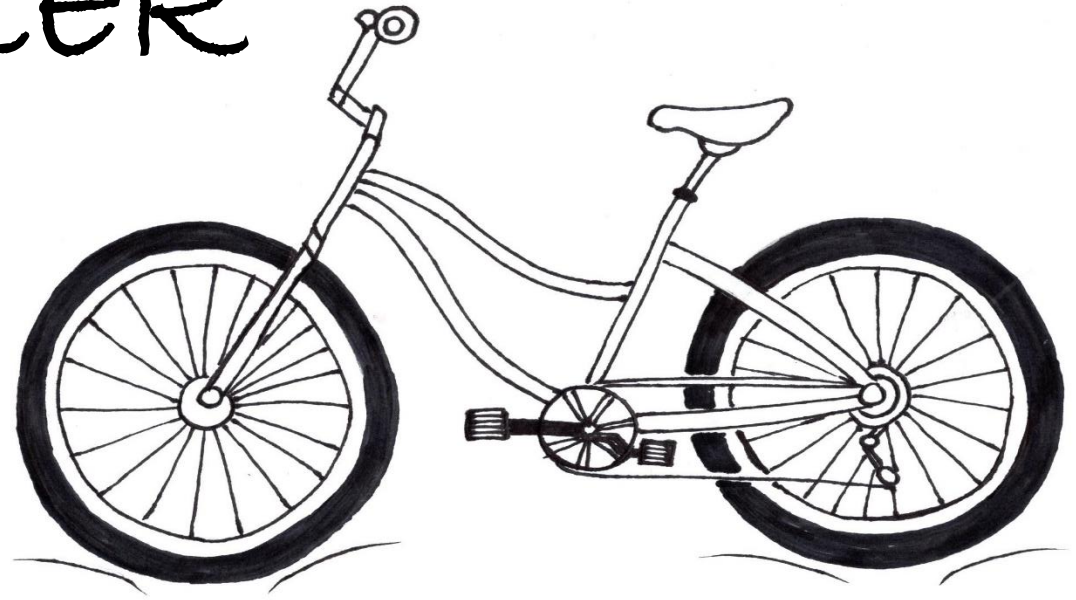


# THE GIRL BIKER



Author: Asma Darwish

Illustrator: Maryam Deniz Darwish



Tired and exhausted, came the road by feet to reach her house. The sun shone straight to her brown eyes and all her body filled with perspiration. The sun was intolerable, she put her steps faster and faster to end the dusty path. The girl opened the door and sighed; named "Shaqayeq".

(Afghanistan – 2014)

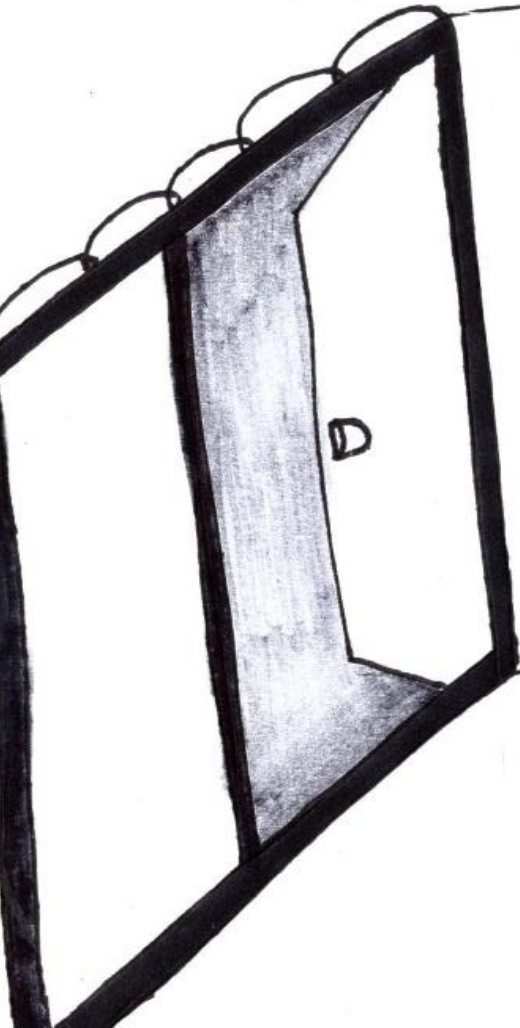
Shaqayeq was born in the city of Kabul, in the east of Afghanistan. Her father and her mother were from Bamyan (one of the most beautiful and historical provinces of Afghanistan), but because of civil wars, they moved to Kabul (capital city of Afghanistan). In the family; they were nine sisters and Shaqayeq was the sixth one. Shaqayeq was in her eighth grade. Her parents wanted their daughters to be educated and have comfortable lives while most of the other families did not let their daughters study because they were girls. Shaqayeq and all her siblings were very lucky for having the chance to learn and their parents always supported them in any step of their lives.



Shaqayeq went to school in the early morning and came back home in the middle of the day. Every day she got very tired because of the long way she crossed and the hot weather. But still Shaqayeq loved her school and was always present in her classes.



One day while Shaqayeq was on her way home from school, she saw something unexpected in the yard (A BICYCLE). She never thought it was going to be hers, but because it was her biggest ambition to have one, she was nervous.

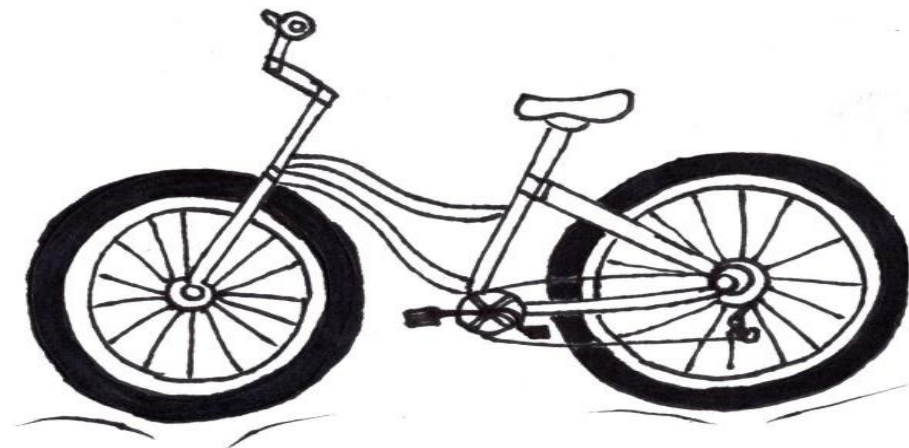


Girls were not allowed to ride bicycles on the streets of Kabul or other provinces of Afghanistan. And because this wrong belief was accepted in each family, no girl dared to have one to ride. Shaqayeq; thought about these stuff and still had hope to hear good news from her sisters and her parents' side.





Shaqayeq entered the room and impatiently asked: "WHOSE BICYCLE IS THAT?" Everyone in the room were speaking to each other but suddenly stared at Shaqayeq and no one said anything.



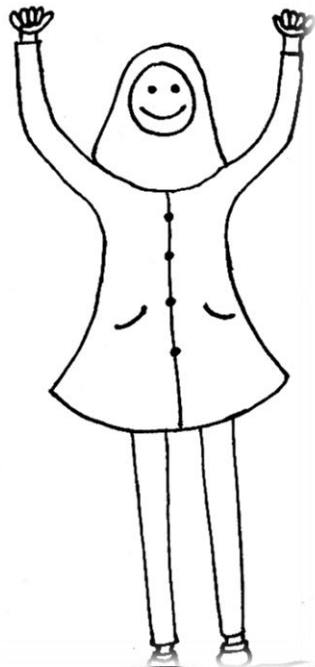
Shaqayeq was supposed to cry. It was very important for her to hear the good news that the bicycle was really hers and finally her elder sister screamed what she wanted to hear.

“YES, IT IS YOURS” said her sister.

Shaqayeq was very happy and excited for her new adventure, and her biggest dream came true. She thanked her two elder sisters who bought the bike for her and hugged them for giving the most beautiful gift ever in her life.







Shaqayeq was brave. She believed in herself. Every day, she just wanted to learn biking. One of Shaqayeq's sisters got her bachelors from the United States, and there she learned how to ride a bike. She helped Shaqayeq learn riding the bicycle, and finally, in less than a week Shaqayeq succeeded to ride her bike on her own without any fear!



Shaqayeq wanted all the girls around the world know about her beautiful moments and how she enjoyed and felt free when she biked. She wanted all the girls to have bikes and experience her good feelings.



Shaqayeq asked her dad: “Daddy, can I go to school with my bicycle, please?” Dad was very terrified of that people would hurt his daughter; he could not face this risk. He said to her “Beloved daughter: my dear Shaqayeq, you cannot go out with your bike because there is no other girl on the streets to bike, I am afraid that you will be hurt or hear something bad.”

Shaqayeq could not accept it. She did not want to wait for other girls to come out of their homes and ride their bikes so that she be able to do so. She wanted to start it. She wanted to be the change and voice of any other girl that wished for such a day. She knew it was difficult, but still she enjoyed to risk it and go out with her bike.



In the early morning, Shaqayeq wanted to go to school. She got her bicycle and hid it from others, then went to school with it. On the way to school people stared at her, told her bad and negative words, but Shaqayeq never got disappointed because of their bad sayings. There were people who encouraged her to do more, told her very good and shouted encouraging words. Shaqayeq got happier and moved forward.

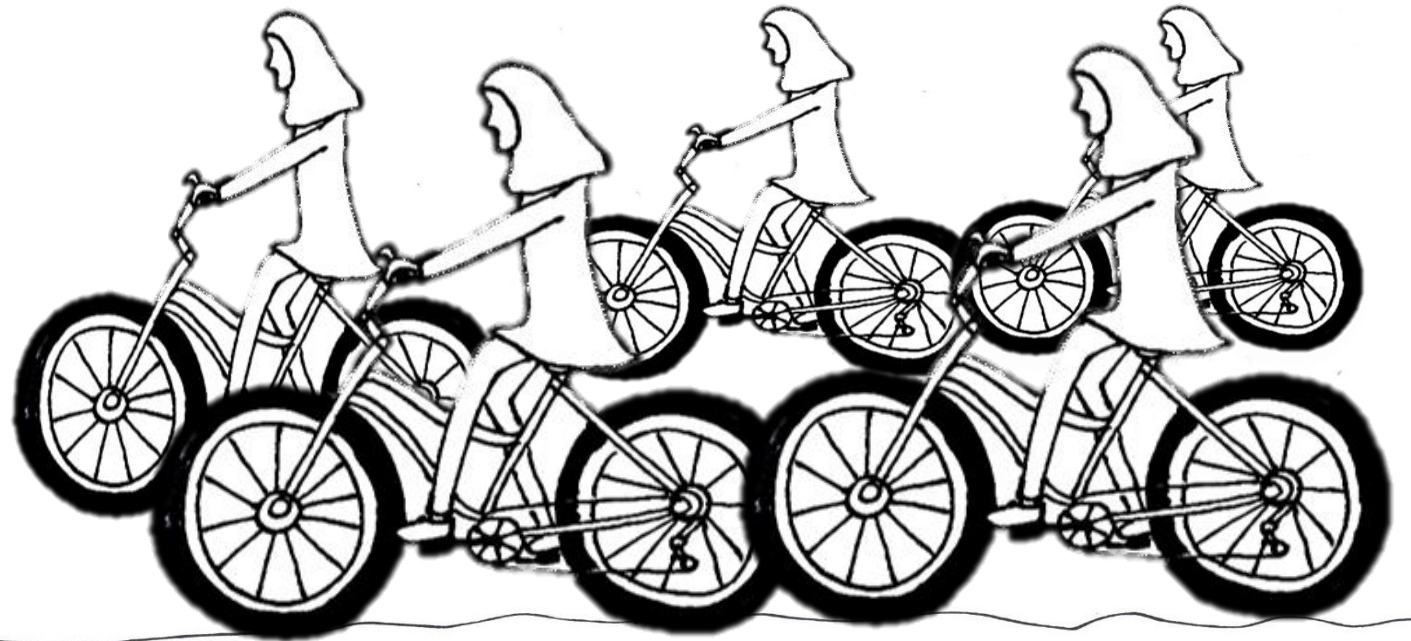
It was very surprising that for the very first time of going out with her bicycle, Shaqayeq came back home safe and healthy.



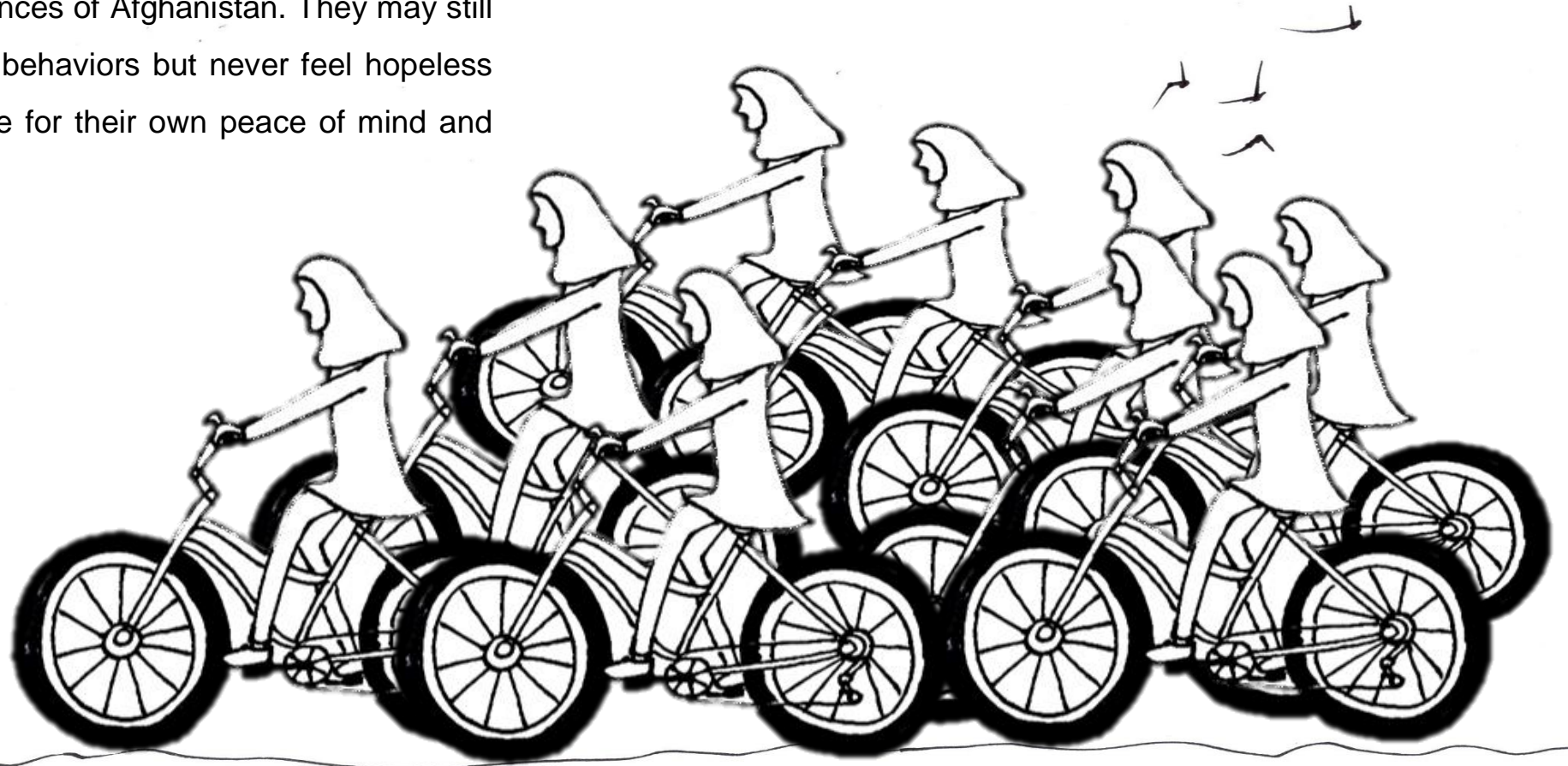
Her parents were extremely angry but happy that Shaqayeq is home. They advised Shaqayeq and told her not to go with her bike anymore because it will be dangerous, but Shaqayeq persisted to go with her bike to school and take the challenge. Shaqayeq succeeded to do so. She felt independent on her bike. It became her best friend and every day she rode to school and back to home.



Slowly, slowly young girls came out of their homes with their bikes. Shaqayeq's friends had their own bikes and started their journey along with Shaqayeq one friend at a time.



Today, there are hundreds of girls who ride on the streets of not only Kabul but even some provinces of Afghanistan. They may still hear bad words, face negative behaviors but never feel hopeless and never give up. They paddle for their own peace of mind and want all girls to experience it.





Shaqayeq believed in herself and accepted whatever hardship was on the way so that she is able to see girls be independent. She is happy and confident and still very brave to do more.

Life is not easy. There are sorrows and joys, downs and ups. You can never encounter joys unless you do face the sorrows. You can never reach the ups until you do go over the downs. You need to be brave, you have to be self-confident, you have to paddle extra miles of life and never give up so that you win!





