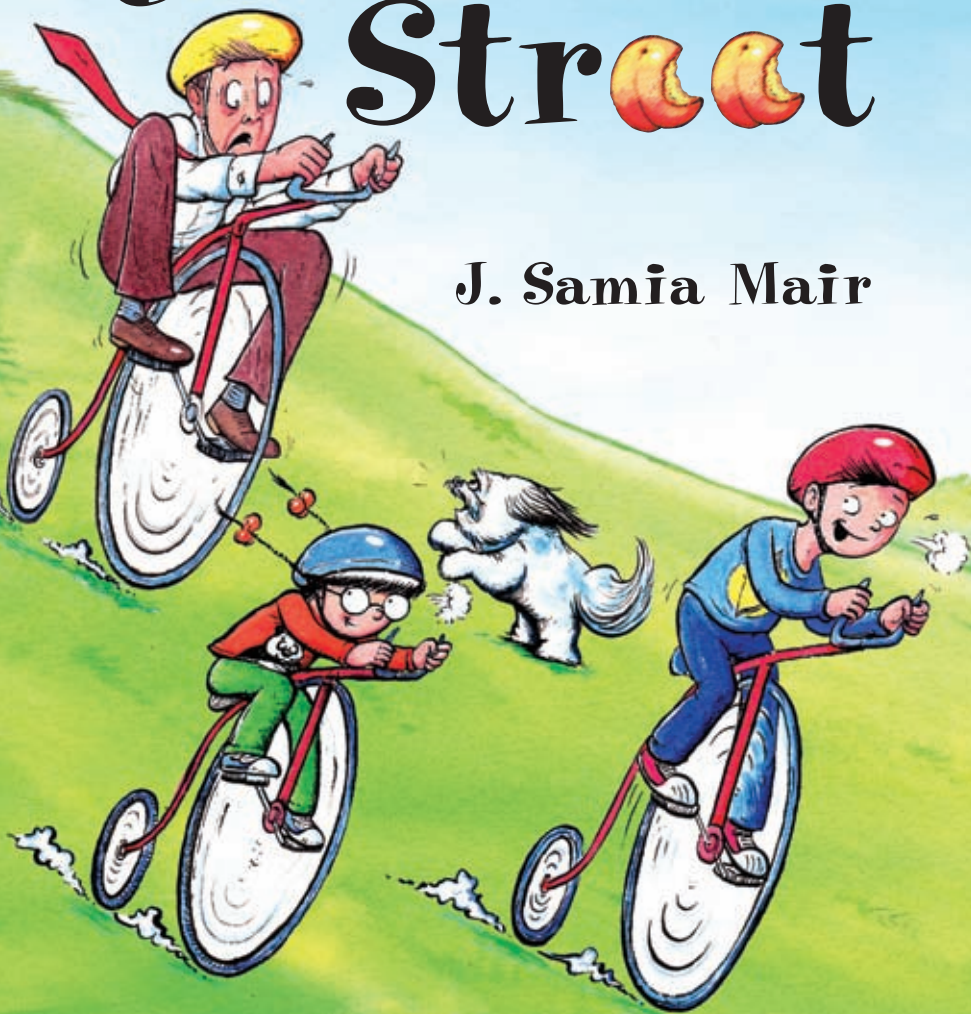


The Great Race to Sycamore Street

J. Samia Mair



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Sabotage

Chapter 6

Tad Walker ran as fast as he could through the thick jungle. Poison arrows flew all around him. He had two choices. Neither of them was good. He could either jump in the canoe and head down the rapids, risking falling into the river with its giant man-eating fish. Or, he could climb up the two thousand foot vertical cliff face without any ropes to stop him from falling. As always, he chose to...

"Amani, let's go! You can bring the book with you."

It was the third time Hude had called for her. After about an hour of practicing in the scorching heat, he was more than ready for a swim.

Good idea, Amani thought to herself.

She quickly shoved the book into her backpack. Already packed inside were Mr.

Panda, Band-Aids, a pen, a water bottle, and Crickety Crunch, a snack that could only be bought at the Reading Terminal Market in Philadelphia. As she was leaving her room, she noticed her grandmother's peach pie recipe on top of her dresser. The paper had turned a yellowish-brown from age and the handwriting was so faint, it was barely legible. Amani carefully folded the recipe and placed it in an inside pocket of her backpack. She wanted to study it at the lake. Her journal lay on her bed, forgotten.

"I'm coming. I'm coming," she called.

Amani hurried down the stairs. Hude was waiting for her at the front door.

"About time," he muttered. "Here, can I put these in your backpack?"

Hude handed her their grandfather's archery notebook and his handheld video game. Amani looked at him with another look he knew well.

"What?" Hude said defensively. "Mama and Baba said I couldn't play any video games at Grandma's house. They didn't say anything about the lake."

"But you know that's what they meant," Amani pointed out.

"But that's not what they said."

Hude took the backpack from Amani and packed his things inside it.

"Let's go. It's late already," Hude said.

"I remember that hill being a lot bigger," Amani commented as they walked along the path that led to the lake.

"That's because we were a lot smaller," Hude said. "Remember how scared we used to be near this part. We thought there were trolls living over there."

"That's right! I forgot completely about the trolls," Amani laughed. "Stop, for a second." Amani grabbed Hude's hand. "Did you hear that?"

"Hear what? Trolls?" he laughed.

"No, I'm serious. I thought I heard voices."

Hude listened for a few seconds.

"I don't hear anything. If it's anyone, it's probably just kids from the new development. No big deal."

A few minutes later they were at the lake.

"It's still here!" Hude said happily.

Their Baba had chosen the perfect tree to set up the rope swing. The tree sat on a small hill near the edge of the lake. They would run down the hill, fly into the air and land in the water.

"But that's new," Amani said.

In another tree not too far away, someone had built a tree fort.

"Wow, that's high. Isn't it?" Hude commented.

"Too high for me. That's for sure," Amani said.

Amani didn't like heights, along with not liking bugs. Reading about Tad Walker's insect and climbing adventures was enough for her.

"Anyway, it's not ours," Hude said. "I call the swing first."

Hude grabbed the end of the thick rope. It had a large knot on it. The other end was tied to one of the higher branches in the tree. He walked up the hill, holding on to the rope. He ran down as fast as he could, and swung high into the air. When he was over the water, he let go. He landed in the lake with a big splash.

"This feels great," he said when his head popped out of the water.

"My turn!" Amani said.

She put her backpack down and ran up the hill. She also landed with a big splash.

"I'm starting from farther up this time," Hude announced.

He flew even higher in the air and landed with an even bigger splash, but something felt wrong.

"That was weird," he said when he surfaced.

"What was weird?" Amani asked. "It looked

pretty good to me."

"Just before I let go, I dropped a couple of inches. That's never happened before."

"The rope was probably tangled and straightened itself out," Amani said. "Anyway, it's my turn."

Amani grabbed the rope and climbed up the hill, almost as far as Hude. She ran down as fast as she could, passing Hude on his way up.

Snap!

Hude heard a loud sound and heavy splash in the water. The thick rope had crashed down on top of Amani. She was tangled up in it and her head was underwater.

Hude started running down the hill to help her but he tripped. He tumbled head-over-heels until he hit the water. Amani still had not surfaced.

"Amani, Amani!" he yelled, thrashing his way towards her. He grabbed whatever he could find and pulled it to the surface. Amani tried to catch her breath, as he dragged her to the shore. The rope was still wrapped around her.

"Are you okay?" he asked.

"I'm fine. I'm fine," she said, trying to catch her breath. "I couldn't figure out which way was up. The rope kept pulling me under. That was terrifying."

"You're telling me!" Hude said.

Hude plopped himself on the ground. His heart thumped loudly in his chest. Amani walked over to get the fallen rope.

"Look at this," she called back to Hude from the water. "Someone did this on purpose."

Amani walked back and handed Hude the end of the rope that had snapped. It had been cut with a knife part of the way through.

"Did you hear that, Bobby?" a boy laughed from the tree fort. "Someone did this on purpose," he said, mocking Amani.



Hude and Amani looked up. Three boys were standing outside the tree fort on a platform. It was the boy named Bobby and his two friends from the train. Bobby was holding a bow.

"That wasn't funny. Someone could get hurt," Amani yelled to them.

"By someone, do you mean you?" the boy said.

"See, it's funny. We're laughing," another boy said.

Hude was really angry, but he remembered what the Prophet said about who is truly strong. The strong person is not the one who uses his strength to overcome someone else, but the one who controls himself when angry. His Baba also told him that sometimes it is better to walk away. And this was one of those times. No good could come from fighting with these boys in the woods.

"Just ignore them, Amani," Hude told her. "It's not worth it. We'll come back later and fix the tree swing. Mr. Fenby will help us."

"Why should we leave?" Amani said. "We have just as much right to be here as they do. I want to swim."

"Swim if you like," Hude said. "But I think it's a bad idea."

Amani jumped in the water.

"This feels great, Hude. You should join me."

"Hey, you," one of the boys yelled from the tree fort. "Tell your sister she can't swim here. This is our swimming hole."

Amani was about to respond but Hude stopped her.

"I'm telling you to ignore them. They are just trying to pick a fight."

"Did you hear him?" the other boy shouted. "We are telling you to leave!"

The boy had a stone in his hand and was tossing it up in the air and catching it.

"I heard you. But I'm not leaving!" Amani yelled back from the water.

"Really?" the boy with the stone said.

Without warning, he threw the stone at Amani. It didn't hit her but it was close enough.

"Hey," Hude said in angry tone. "Don't do that again."

"Or what? Are you going to stop me?"

The three boys laughed. Hude saw a large stone on the ground near him. He thought about picking it up but decided against it.

"Let's go, Amani."

This time she agreed. She started towards her backpack. The same boy took another stone from a pile on the platform and threw it at her.

It didn't hit her either, but the point had been made. They wanted a fight.

"Let's just go, Hude," she said when her brother's face turned red. "We can be halfway home by the time they get down from the tree fort."

"I remember you from the train," Bobby said. "I saw you carrying a bow case."

"Instead of playing with pebbles, why don't we settle this Saturday at the Fair," Hude said calmly, although he was very angry.

"You know I'm a pretty good aim. Watch this."

Bobby placed an arrow in the bow he was holding, pulled back and aimed at a makeshift target that had been hung on a tree on the other side of the lake. The arrow flew through the air and landed a little off from the center.

"That's okay, but I've seen better," Hude said.

"Oh, you think you can beat me?" Bobby asked.

"I think I can," Hude said confidently.

"Okay. The Fair it is. We'll see who's the better shot."

"Yes, we will." Hude turned to Amani and whispered, "Let's go now."

Hude grabbed Amani's hand and they started to walk away.

"That's it, Bobby? The Fair?" the boy who had been throwing the stones said. "That might be good enough for you, but I don't want to wait. I'm settling this now."

He took a rope that was tied to the tree and flung it over the platform.

"Are you guys, coming?" he said to Bobby and the other boy.

Hude looked back. One boy was half way down the rope, and Bobby and the third boy were waiting on the platform to follow.

"Amani, as soon as we get on the path, run as fast as you can."

Amani didn't have to be told twice. Once she started running she didn't stop until they reached their grandmother's property. "Hude, please give me some water out of the backpack. I'm so thirsty," Amani said. She was bent over, resting her hands on her knees and breathing heavily.

"I don't have the backpack. I thought you had it," Hude said.

"But I thought you had it. My book is in there. And my panda! And Grandma's recipe! I didn't even ask her if I could take it with me!"

"Grandpop's notebook is in there too and ... I can't believe it, my video game! Why did I ever take it with me? That was so dumb."

"We have to go back. Right now!" Amani pleaded.

"We can't go back now. Those boys are probably still there."

"But we have to try," Amani said.

"We'll go back tomorrow. We'll look for it then."

"This day couldn't get any worse," Amani said as they walked toward the house.

But she was wrong.

Good fences don't always make good neighbors

Chapter 7

GRANDMA Hana was in the backyard near the peach tree talking to Mr. Fenby. Both of them were acting strangely. Mr. Fenby was fidgeting with his hat in his hand. His head was bent down and he was staring at the ground. Grandma Hana's arms were folded in front of her and she had a serious look on her face.

"What's going on Grandma?" Hude said as they approached.

Amani didn't say anything, but she knew something was wrong.

Grandma Hana hesitated for a moment.

"It seems that our peach tree is definitely on Mr. Carr's property. Mr. Fenby double-checked with the county. It also seems that Mr. Carr still wants to put a fence around his property."

"So, that's okay. Isn't it Grandma? Mr. Carr could put the fence a few feet back." Amani asked.

Hude said nothing. He knew what was coming.

"Unfortunately, Amani...", Grandma Hana paused. "Unfortunately, Mr. Carr does not want to do that."

"What does that mean, Grandma? What does that mean?" Amani said.

"I'm afraid it means that he wants to cut down the peach tree," Grandma Hana said.

"He wants to cut down the tree?" Amani shouted. "That's not fair! Mr. Carr is so mean. Well, he's not going to do it. I won't let him!"

"Sweetheart," Grandma said lovingly, "everything will be okay, alhamdulillah. We will get through this."



"I won't let him do it, Grandma. I won't let him!" Amani said through a waterfall of tears. "Mr. Fenby, you have to stop him. Please, stop him!"

"I tried, Amani. I tried. He just wouldn't listen to reason. I even asked him if he would sell that part of his property. He won't budge."

"Can't you move the tree then?" Amani asked.

"It's too old and too big. It would die if we tried to move it," Mr. Fenby said.

"Amani, Mr. Fenby has done all that he can," Grandma Hana started to explain. "Mr. Carr wanted the peach tree cut down today. Mr. Fenby convinced him to wait until Sunday, after the pie contest."

"I also told him that he could hire someone else to put up his fence," Mr. Fenby added. "I can't bear to do it. I tried, Hana. I really tried to save the peach tree."

"I know you did. We all know you did," Grandma Hana told him. "Amani, we will save a pit from this year's harvest and plant a new peach tree in the middle of the yard."

"It's not the same. It's not the same," Amani cried.

Grandma Hana pulled Amani close and held her tight. Amani buried her face in her grandmother's arms and sobbed.

References

Islam is based on two primary sources, the Qur'an and *Hadith*. Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the speech of God revealed through the Archangel Gabriel, peace be upon him, to the Prophet Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him, over a period of 23 years. *Hadith* (capitalized) refers to collections of statements and actions of the Prophet Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him, as well as what he silently approved in other people's actions. An individual *hadith* (lowercase), among other things, may explain a verse in the Qur'an, teach good character or conduct, or how best to practice Islam. Specific verses in the Qur'an and *ahadith* (plural of *hadith*) are mentioned in *The Great Race to Sycamore Street* because Muslim parents and guardians often refer to these two sources when instructing children on how to behave and what constitutes good character. Thus, it would be unusual for a story involving Muslim characters not to mention the Qur'an or some *ahadith*. The *Hadith* of Gabriel is a particularly important because it sets forth the three dimensions of the Islamic religion, submission to God (Islam), faith (*Iman*) and beautiful conduct (*Ihsan*).

References to the Qur'an

The Cow 2:216	102, 106, 179
The Family of Imran 3:103	102
The Family of Imran 3:146	102
Abraham 14:24–26	37
The Night Journey 17:44	104
The Joint Forces 33:21	37
Verses Made Distinct 41:53	42, 76
Mutual Neglect 64:1	104
The Pen 68:4	37
The Resurrection 75:22–23	41
The Earthquake 99:1–5	104

References to ahadith

Numerous sayings and actions of the prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, were referred to in *The Great Race to Sycamore Street* relating to social and moral virtues. They include feeding God's creatures (p99), being slow to anger and quick to calm (p33), being good to neighbors (pp36–37), following a bad act with a good one (p85) and controlling one's anger (p55). To see the full list of references to ahadith in *The Great Race to Sycamore Street* please visit www.kubepublishing.com, or request it from info@kubepublishing.com.

Due to it's importance, the *Hadith* of Gabriel, referred to on P37, is quoted in full below.

'Umar ibn al-Khattab said:

As we sat one day with the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace), a man in pure white clothing and jet black hair came to us, without a trace of travelling upon him, though none of us knew him.

He sat down before the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) bracing his knees against his, resting his hands on his legs, and said: "Muhammad, tell me about Islam." The Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace) said: "Islam is to testify that there is no god but

Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and to perform the prayer, give *zakat*, fast in Ramadan, and perform the pilgrimage to the House if you can find a way."

He said: "You have spoken the truth," and we were surprised that he should ask and then confirm the answer. Then he said: "Tell me about true faith (*iman*)," and the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) answered: "It is to believe in Allah, His angels, His inspired Books, His messengers, the Last Day, and in destiny, its good and evil." "You have spoken the truth," he said, "Now tell me about the perfection of faith (*ihsan*)," and the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) answered: "It is to worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you see Him not, He nevertheless sees you."

He said: "Now tell me about the Hour." The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) answered: "The one who is asked about it knows no more than the questioner."

He said: "Then tell me about its signs." The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) answered: "That a slave girl shall give birth to her mistress, and that you see barefoot, naked, destitute shepherds vying to build tall buildings."

Then the visitor left. I waited a long while, and the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said to me, "Do you know, 'Umar, who was the questioner?" and I replied, "Allah and His messenger know best."

He said, "It was Gabriel, who came to you to teach you your religion"
(Sahih Muslim)