

A NOISE LIKE thunder woke Josie. She sat up and clutched the blanket. It felt warm and soft in her fingers, but the room had gone very cold. Josie shivered and pulled the blanket tight round her. The thunder rumbled again, and the room shook. Through the window Josie saw a patch of midnight sky, then a flash like lightning. 'Mum!' she whispered. She was too frightened to shout.

Chapter Three



There was a rustling sound on the other side
of the room, then a voice answered. But it
wasn't Mum's voice. And the room didn't look
like Josie's bedroom any more.
'Hello,' the voice said. 'Who are you?'

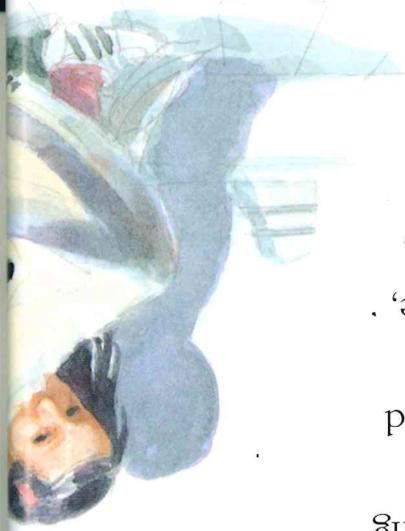


'Josie,' whispered Josie. 'Did the shells destroy your flat? Are you looking for shelter?' asked the voice. It sounded friendly. Josie

peered round the room and saw a dark bundle on the floor, against the wall. She wrapped the blanket tight round her and tiptoed

across to it. The floor felt like ice under her bare feet. 'You sound scared. You can stay here with me if you want, Josie,' said the voice.

Bright flashes like lightning lit the room. Josie saw that the bundle was a girl, curled up to keep warm. She was about the same age as Josie, and she had long dark hair, like Josie's.



Suddenly there was a terrible bang and the floor shook. Josie tripped up and fell onto the floor next to the girl.



'That shell came close,' said the girl. 'I hope it didn't hit any of my friends' flats. Ooh, what's that you've got? It's nice and warm and soft.'
'It's a blanket,' said Josie. 'You can put half of it over you if you want,' Josie wriggled close to the girl and spread the blanket over them both.



There was another bang and the wall trembled behind Josie's back. 'It's all right,' said the girl. 'That shell wasn't so close.'

'What's your name?' asked Josie.

'Amina.'

'Are you all on your own?'

'No,' said Amina. 'I've got a friend here. Give me your hand.' Amina took Josie's hand. 'Here, feel,' said Amina. Josie felt something soft and warm in Amina's hand. It was even softer than the blanket.

'Stroke him,' said Amina. 'He won't bite you. The something soft and warm was alive.

It wriggled under Josie's fingers. 'What is it?'

'A hamster?' asked Josie.

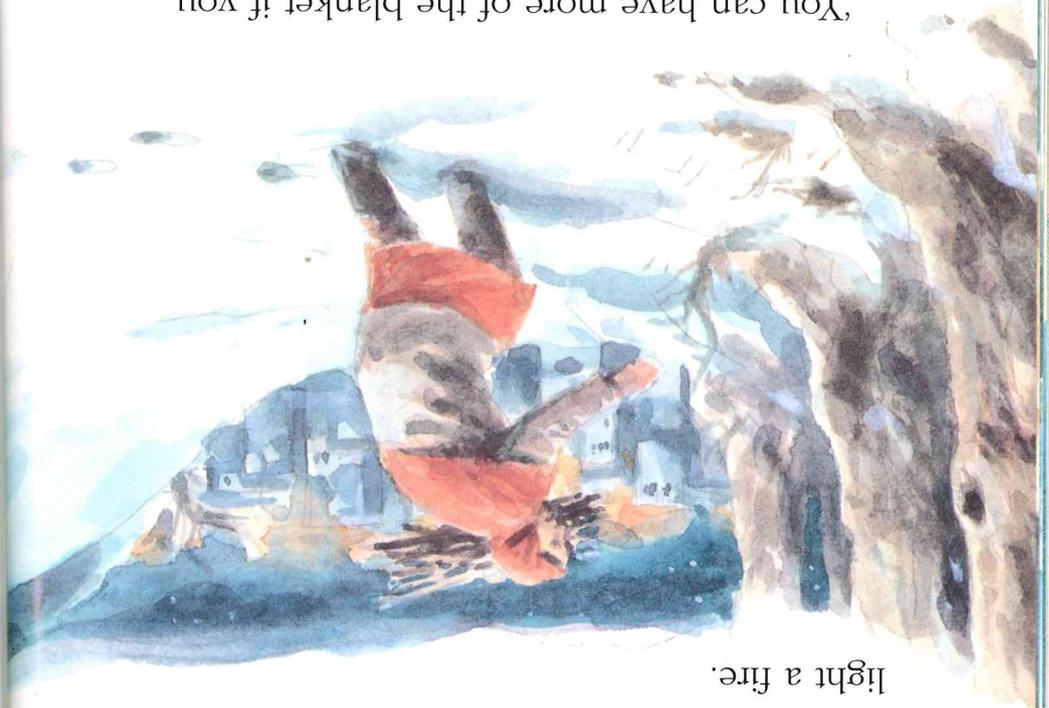
'No, he's my pet mouse. He used to be wild, but I tamed him. He's called Sinta. Only you

mustn't tell, because food is so short and Mum won't let me give him anything.'

'Where's your Mum?'

'She went out to get wood, before it got dark,' said Amina. 'Only then they started shelling.'

'You can have more of the blanket if you want. I'm not cold,' said Josie, and she tucked the blanket in round Amina.
 'Poor little Sinta, I haven't got anything for you tonight,' said Amina. 'You'll have to wait till Mum gets back.'



As soon as they stop, she'll come back. She always does.' But Josie felt Amina shivering. How cold and frightened she must be, lying alone on the floor all night, waiting for her mum to come home with wood to light a fire.

warmer than a fire;
It must be the softest one in the city. It's even
Amina. 'Where did you get this blanket, Josie?

'He knows we're talking about food,' said

squeak from Sinta.

'Whatever Mum brings back.' There was a soft

'He hides in my pocket and has a little bit of

Amina laughed. 'The same as me!' she said.

'What does he eat?' asked Josie.



'You should see the colours!' said Josie. 'It's all made of squares of different colours. The

one I knitted is dark blue, just the same colour as that patch of sky in the window.'

'I like it when the sky is dark blue, with no

shell flashes,' said Amina. 'That means it's safe.

Tell me more about the colours. Everything's

so grey and dirty in the city now.'

'Well, there's a white like fluffy snow -'

began Josie.

'Brrr, don't talk about snow! You'll

make me feel cold again!'

'OK,' said Josie, and she tried to think

of colours which would make Amina feel

warm. 'There's yellow and red like the

sun when it's going down on a holiday

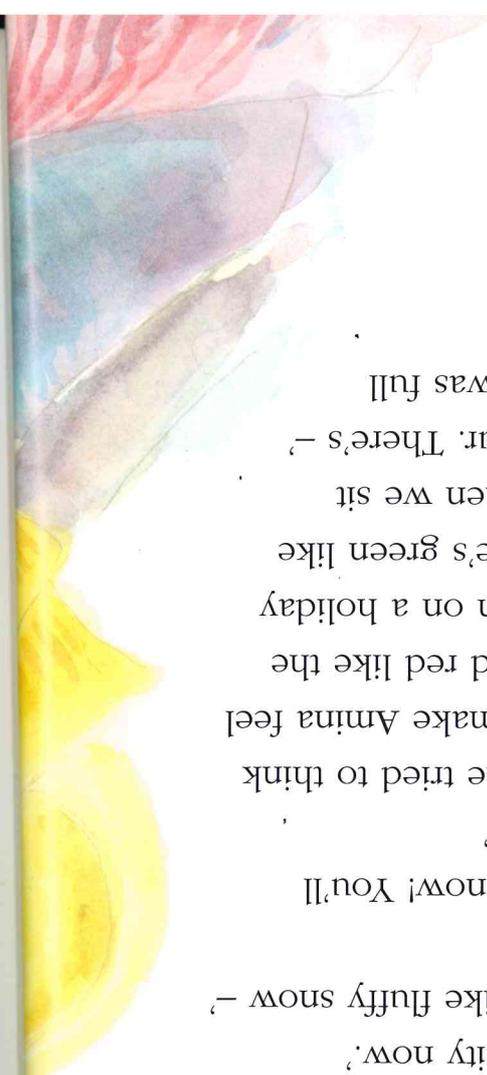
evening in summer. There's green like

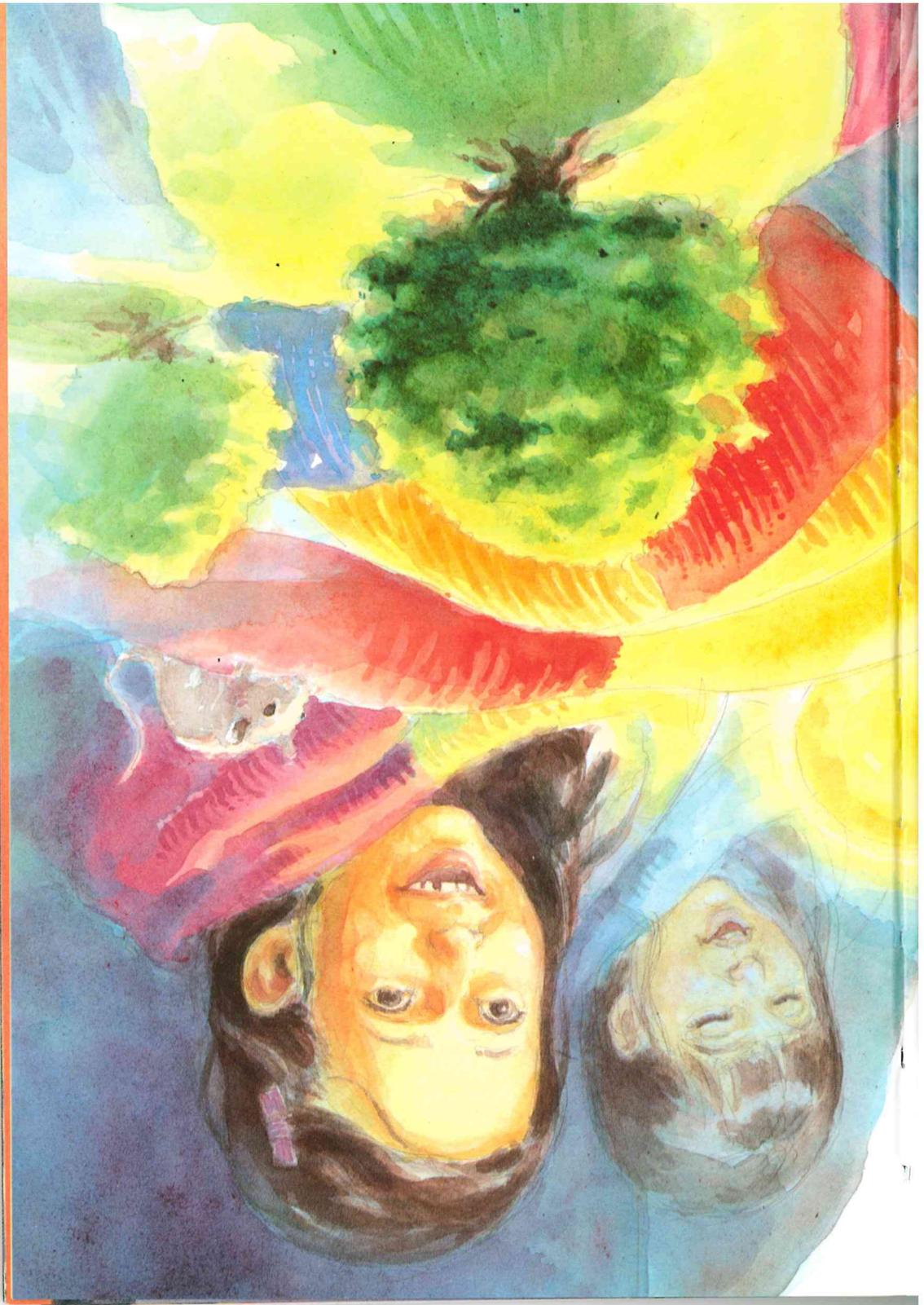
the shade of the trees when we sit

under them in dinner hour. There's -'

Suddenly the window was full

of a blinding white light.







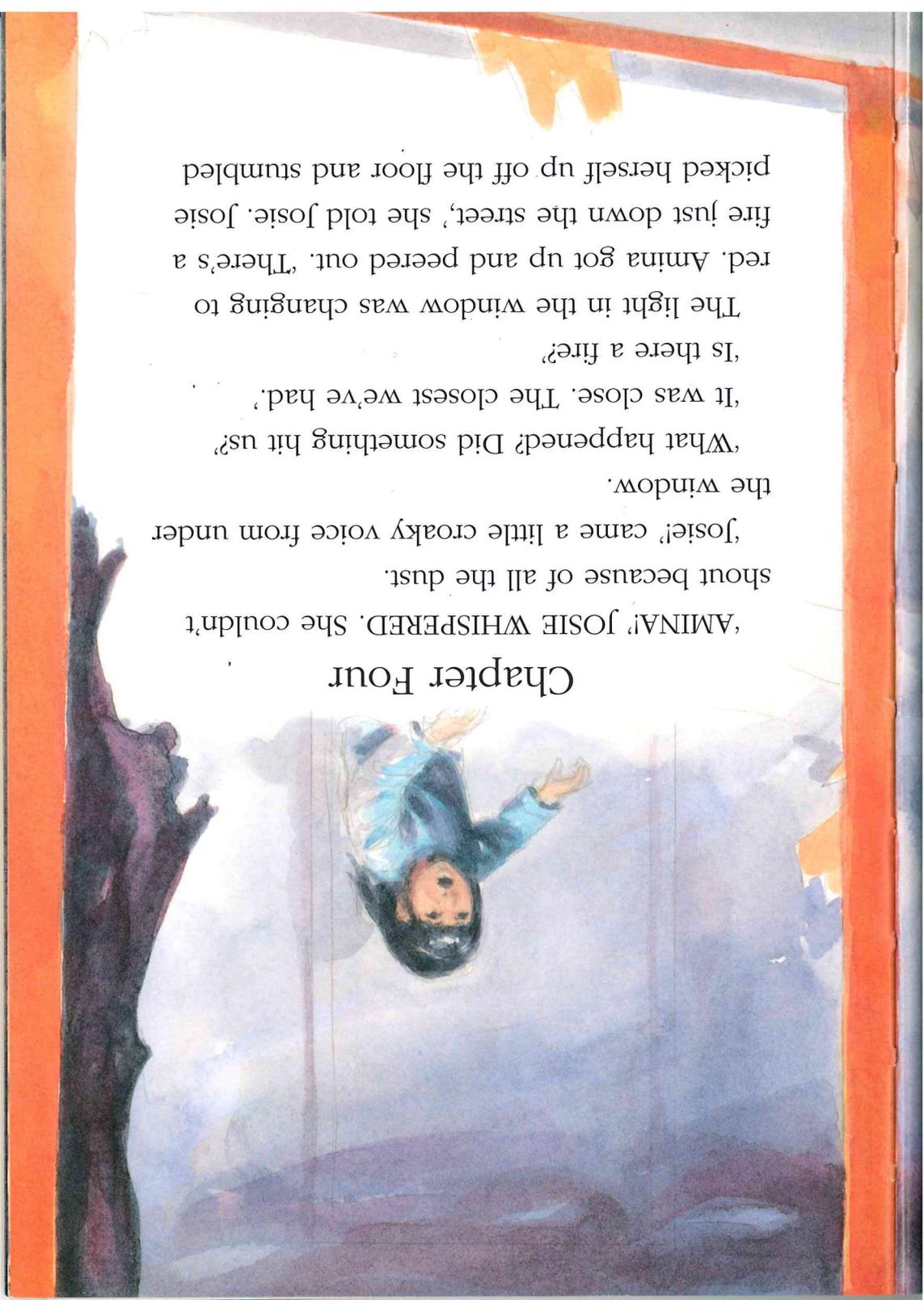
A second later the room rocked. A crash like
a thousand storms ripped through the building.
It picked up Josie and Amina and threw them
across the room. There was a terrible rumbling
as if the building were falling apart, and the
startlit sky showed where the window had once
been. Josie's mouth was full of dust and smoke.
She coughed and choked. The blanket was
gone, Amina was gone, Sinta was gone. She
could smell burning. How close was it? Was it
in the building?





'AMINA!' JOSIE WHISPERED. She couldn't shout because of all the dust. 'Josie!' came a little croaky voice from under the window. 'What happened? Did something hit us?' 'It was close. The closest we've had.' 'Is there a fire?' The light in the window was changing to red. Amina got up and peered out. 'There's a fire just down the street,' she told Josie. Josie picked herself up off the floor and stumbled

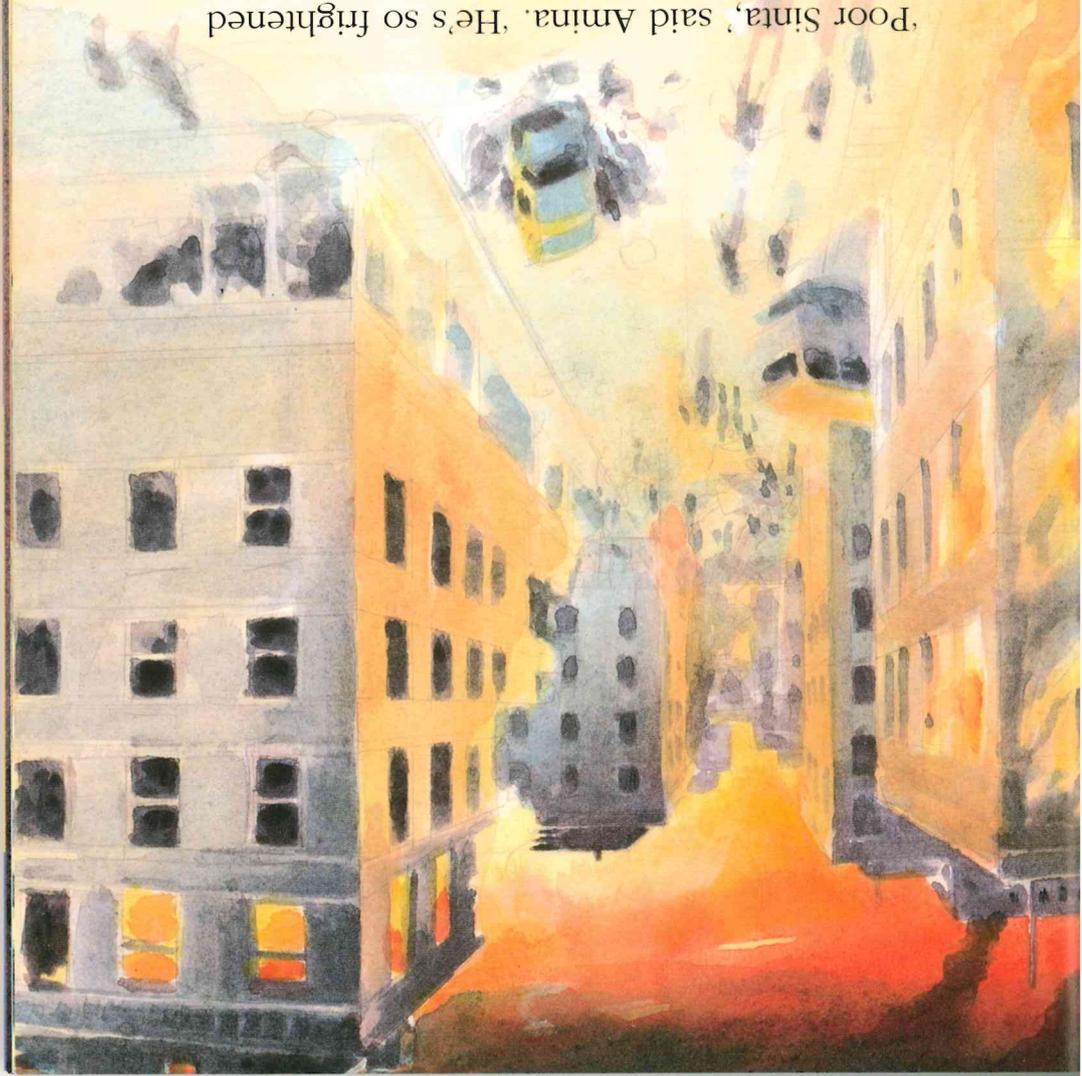
Chapter Four



over to Amina. She saw long red flames licking
out of a block of flats, and people, like black
ants, running in the streets. Fire leapt into the
sky, changing it from dark-blue to orange. It
was nearly as light as day.



'Poor Sinta,' said Amina. 'He's so frightened
of shells. He's afraid we'll get hit.'
'Where is he?'
'In my pocket, right down at the bottom.
Can you feel him?' Josie felt the little shivering
mouse, deep in Amina's pocket. The walls of
Amina's room were shivering too.



'The fire is spreading,' said Amina. 'It's coming this way. I wish Mum was here.'

The fire crackled and rushed. It sounded

as if it was nearly in the room. Then Josie and Amina heard voices shouting. The voices were

coming nearer and nearer.

'Rescuers!' said Amina. 'They're coming

to get us out!

The fire was coming closer. Which

would get to them first, the fire or the

rescuers? Josie grabbed Amina's hand

and they stumbled to the broken

doorway. There was so much

smoke that their eyes hurt. Josie

coughed when she tried to

breathe, and the fire roared

like a lion outside. Suddenly

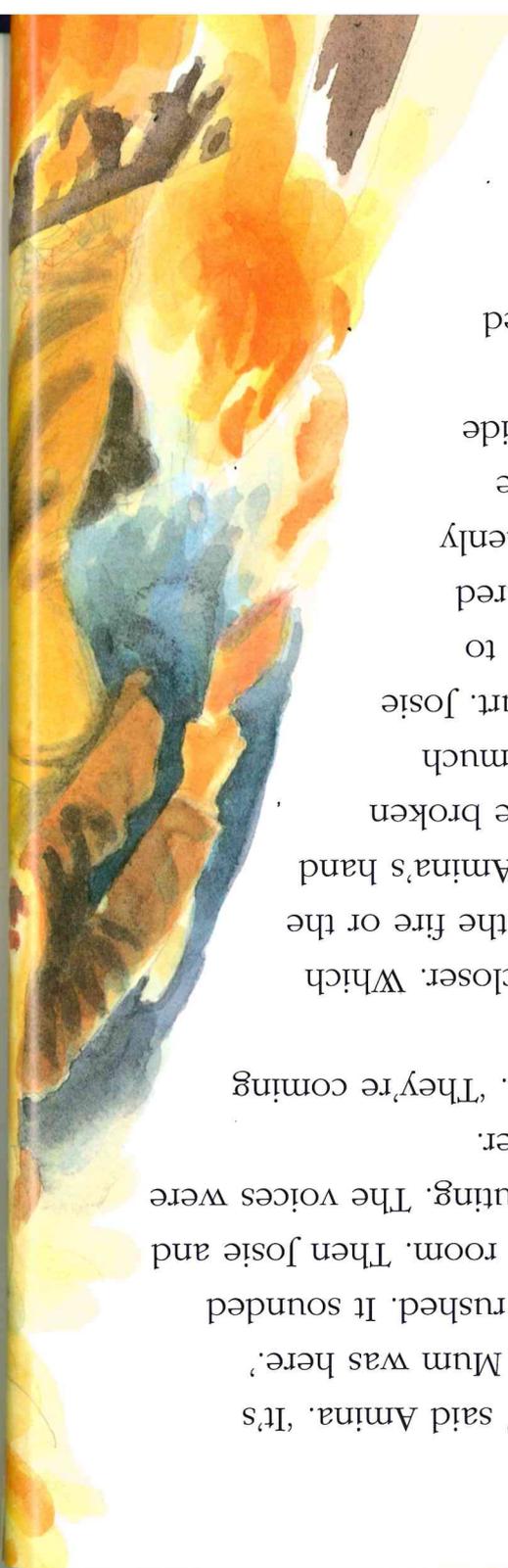
the rescuers' voices were

loud, just on the other side

of the door.

'We're in here!' shouted

Amina.





'Aminah' whispered Josie. Where was Aminah?
colours of the rainbow.

there, as bright and beautiful as ever, all the
Josie felt on the bed for the blanket. It was
in, remember;

said Mum, 'and you've got to take that blanket
'Come on, Josie, you'll be late for school,'

pulling back the curtains.

bright sun chased across her bed. Mum was
THE DOOR FLEW open. Josie blinked as the

Chapter Five



Josie picked up the blanket. It smelled of
smoke and danger. It smelled of war. Where
was Amina now?



chair. She had to get closer to the photograph.

she knew that face. Josie could not stay in her

age, with long dark hair. Josie stared. Surely

one of the beds, there was a girl, about Josie's

row of beds with blankets on them. And by

huddled together in a big hall. There was a

The photograph showed a crowd of people

beds. One of them is the blanket we made;

carefully, you can see the blankets on their

in a centre for homeless people. If you look

Their houses were shelled, and now they're

have lost their homes because of the war.

'Look,' she said. 'These are the people who

held up a big photograph.

Miss Heather rustled in the envelope and

about our blanket. And some photographs;

'Class Five!' she said. 'We've had a letter

envelope.

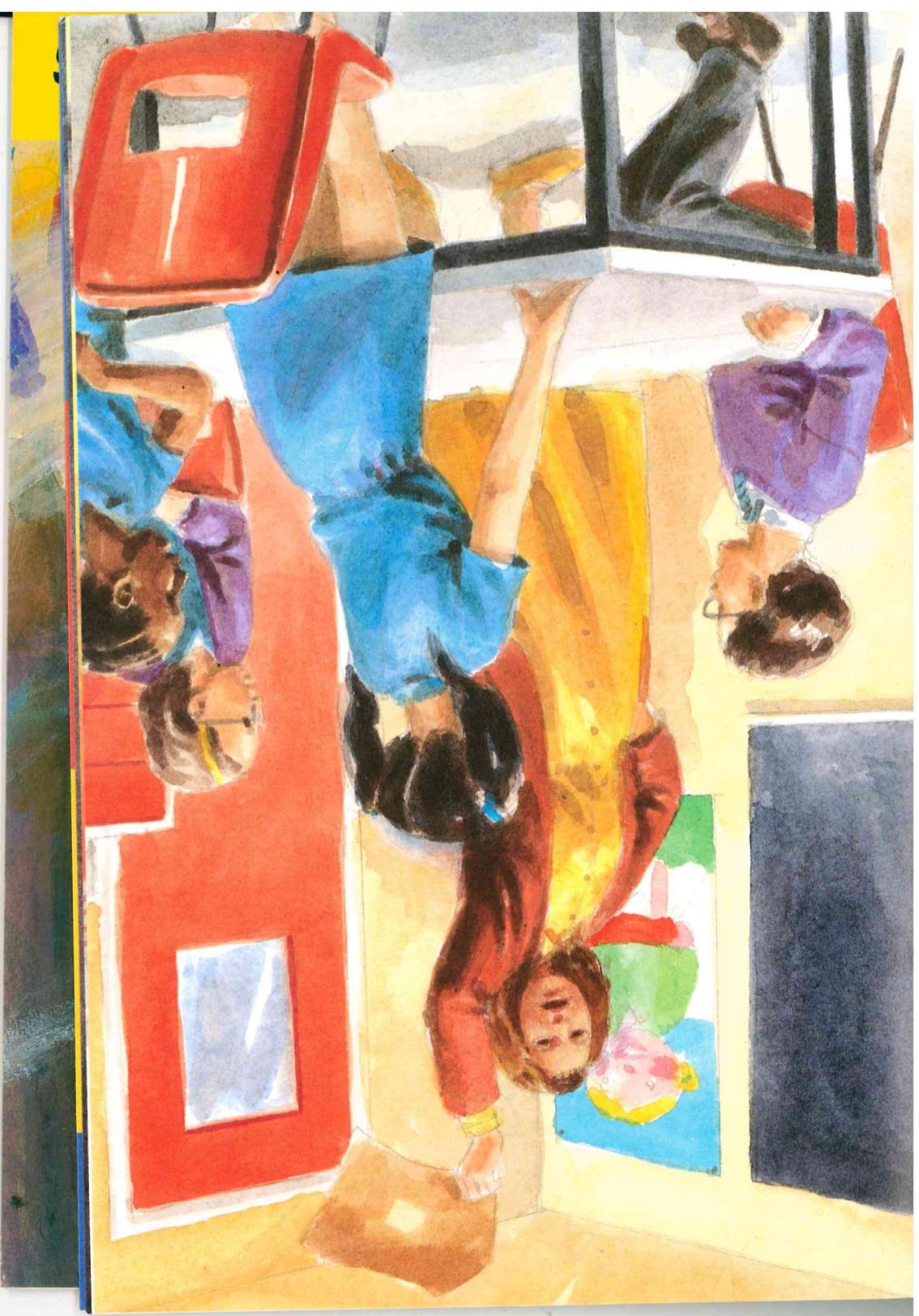
into the classroom waving a big brown

except Josie. But one day Miss Heather came

Everybody had forgotten about the blanket,

parcel and sent it away. Weeks passed.

Miss Heather packed the blanket up in a



'Josie!' said Miss Heather. But Josie was
staring at the face of the dark-haired girl.
'Amina!' she whispered. 'It's Amina! The girl
in my dream!'
It *was* Amina in the photograph. And one
hand was in her pocket. Josie knew she was
stroking Sinta.
'Sit down, Josie!' said Miss Heather crossly,
and Josie had to sit down.



'Our blanket is on one of those beds,' said

Miss Heather.

But Josie knew it was on Amina's bed.

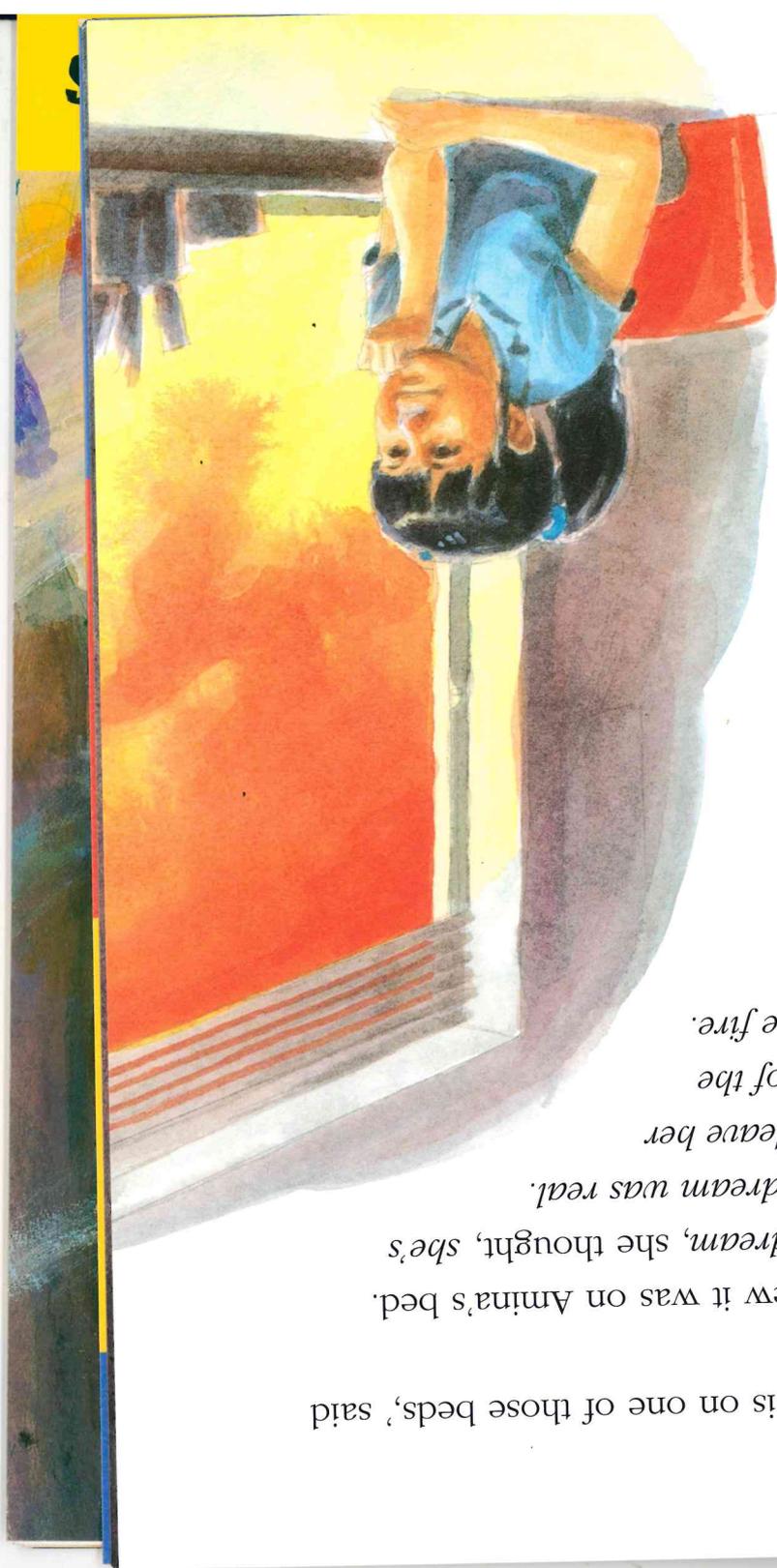
Amina isn't a dream, she thought, she's

a real girl. My dream was real.

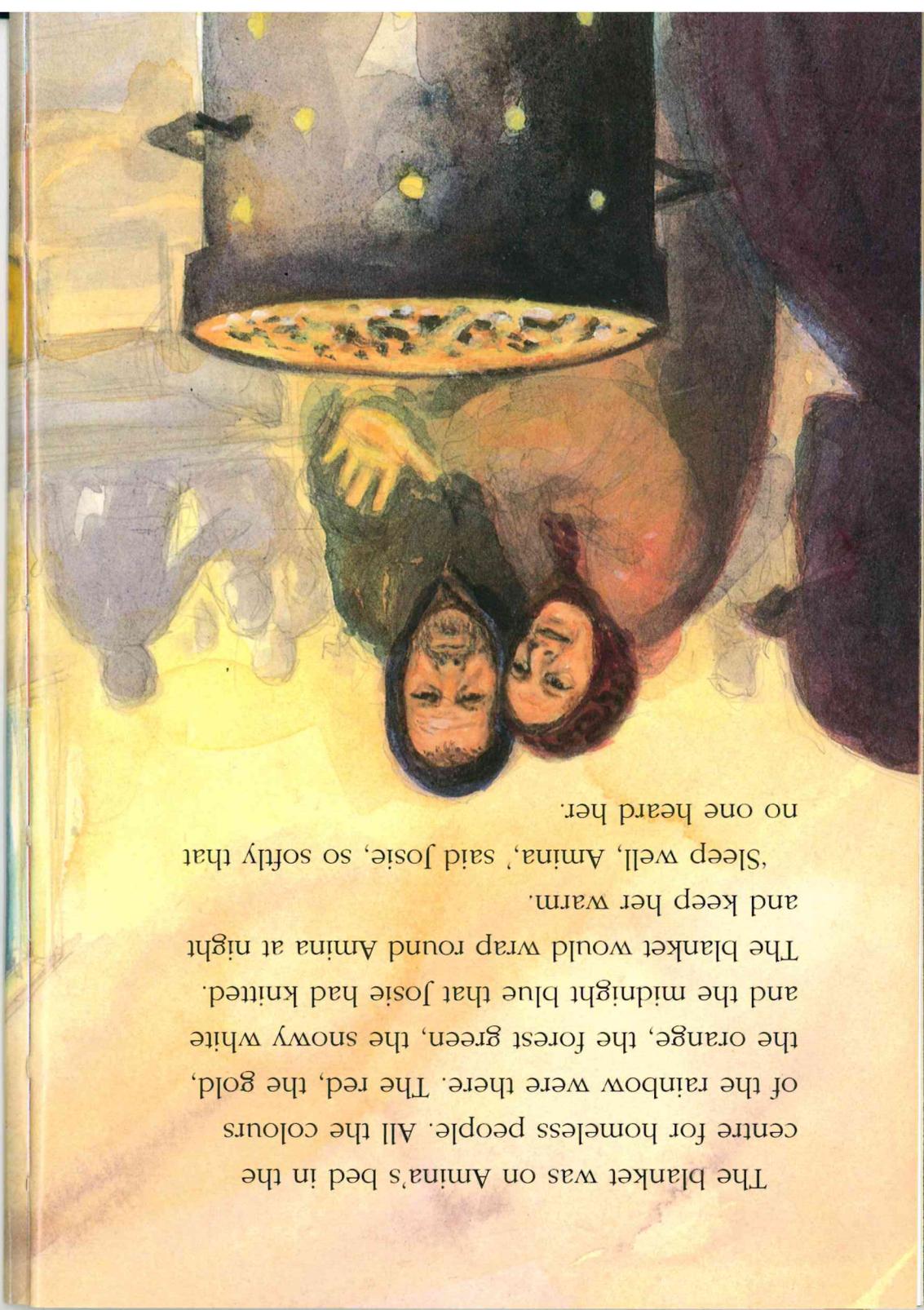
Amina had to leave her

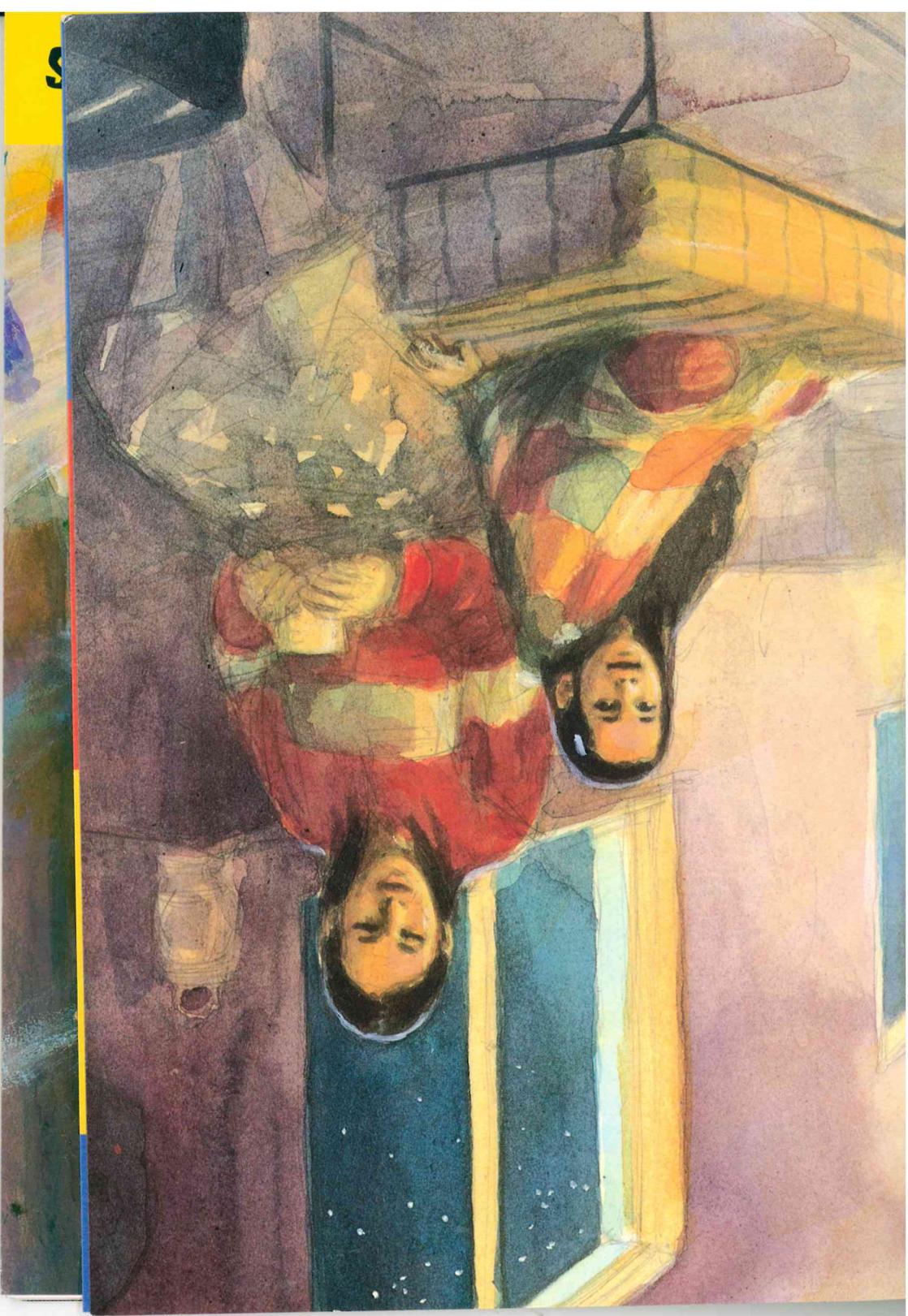
home because of the

shelling and the fire.



The blanket was on Amina's bed in the
centre for homeless people. All the colours
of the rainbow were there. The red, the gold,
the orange, the forest green, the snowy white
and the midnight blue that Josie had knitted.
The blanket would wrap round Amina at night
and keep her warm.
'Sleep well, Amina,' said Josie, so softly that
no one heard her.





As Josie's class make a patchwork quilt to send to a war-torn country, Amina shivers in her flat with shells exploding all around. But secretly in her dreams, Josie visits Amina and experiences the traumas of war.

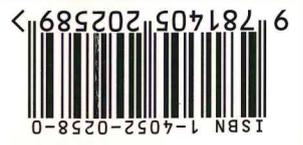


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