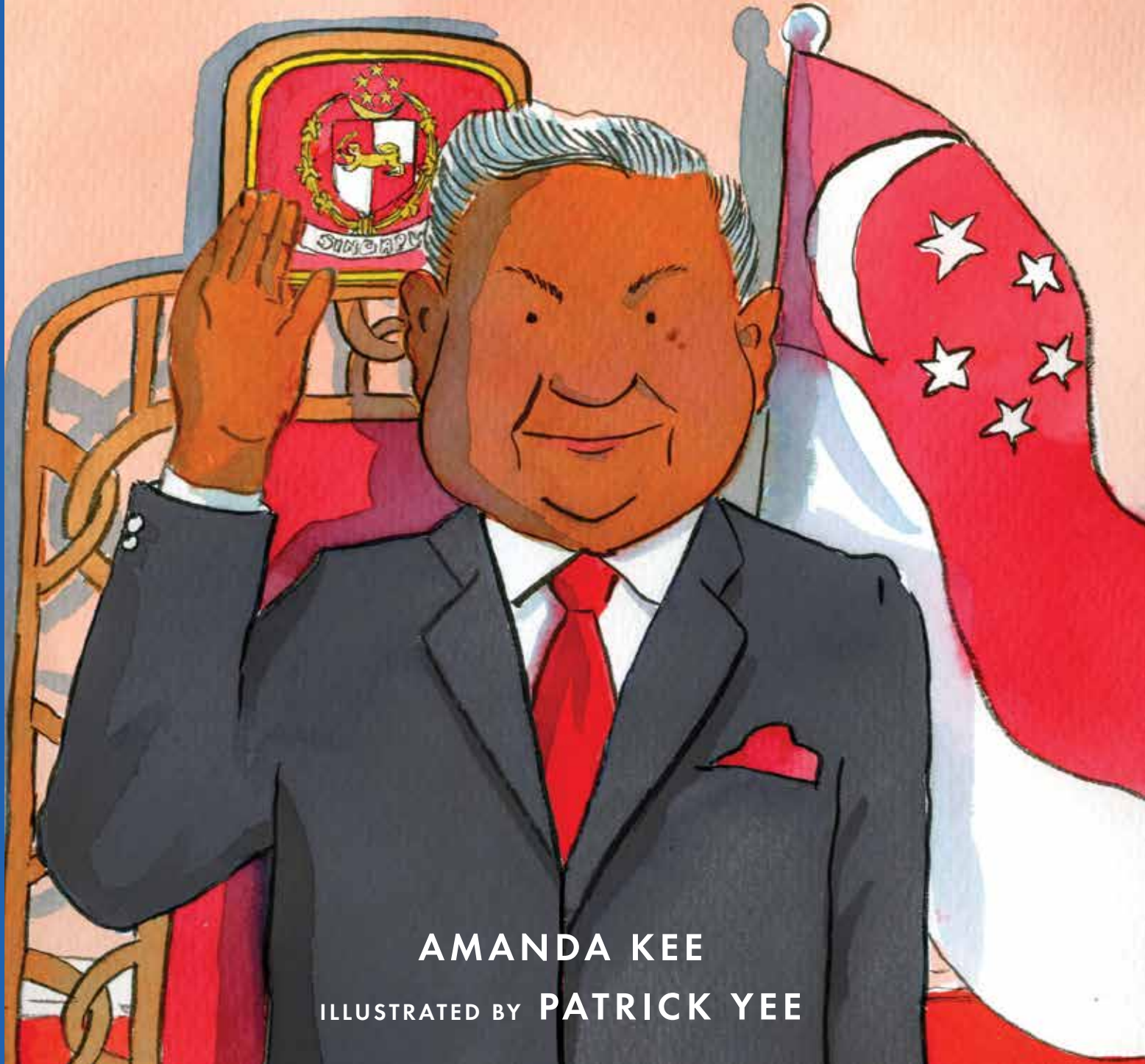


PROMINENT SINGAPOREANS

# The Runaway Who Became President

SR Nathan's Journey of Hope



AMANDA KEE

ILLUSTRATED BY PATRICK YEE



**The Runaway Who Became President**



For God, my family and Jon—who are always holding my hand. — AMANDA

To Mr and Mrs Nathan. — PATRICK

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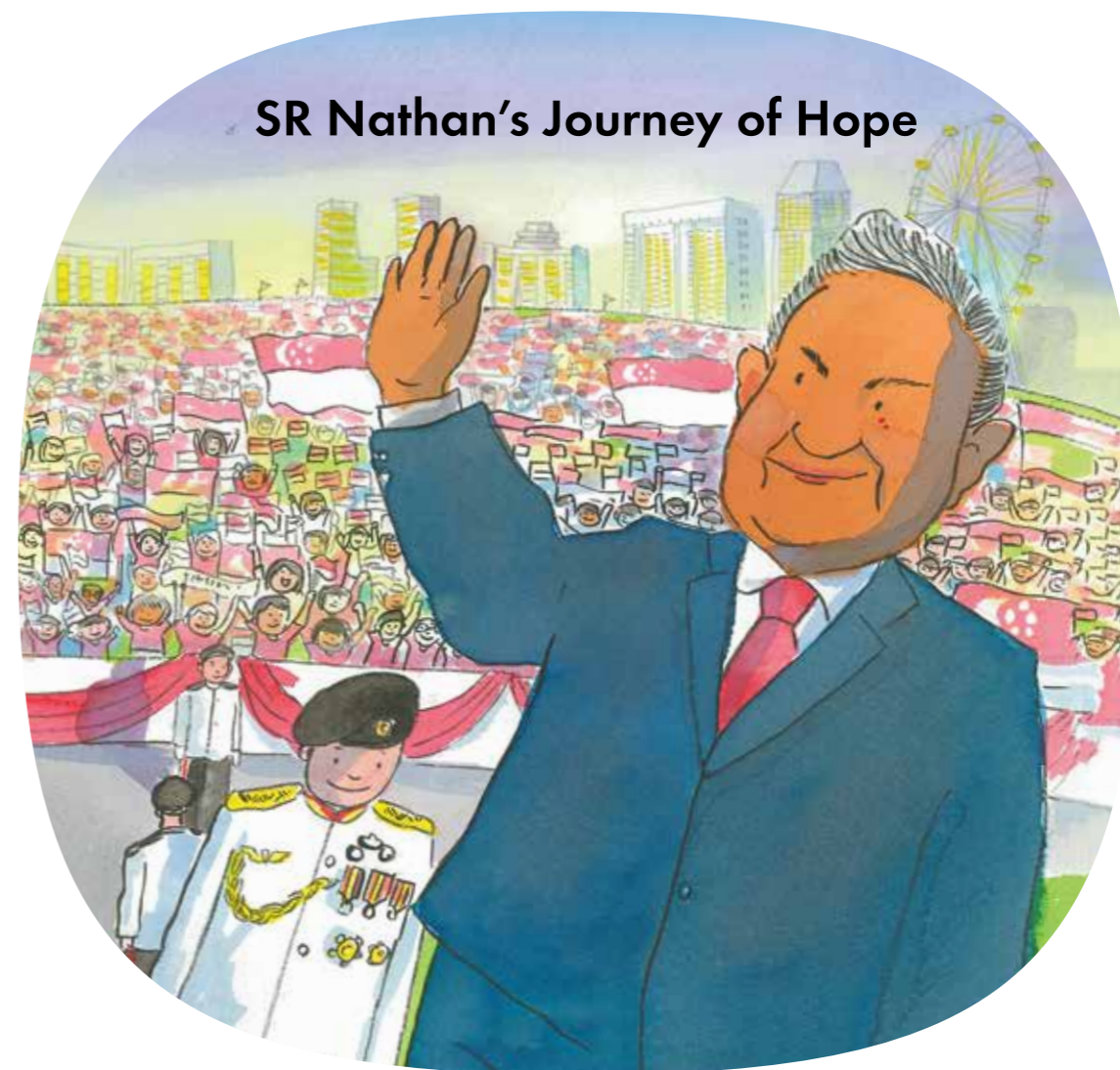
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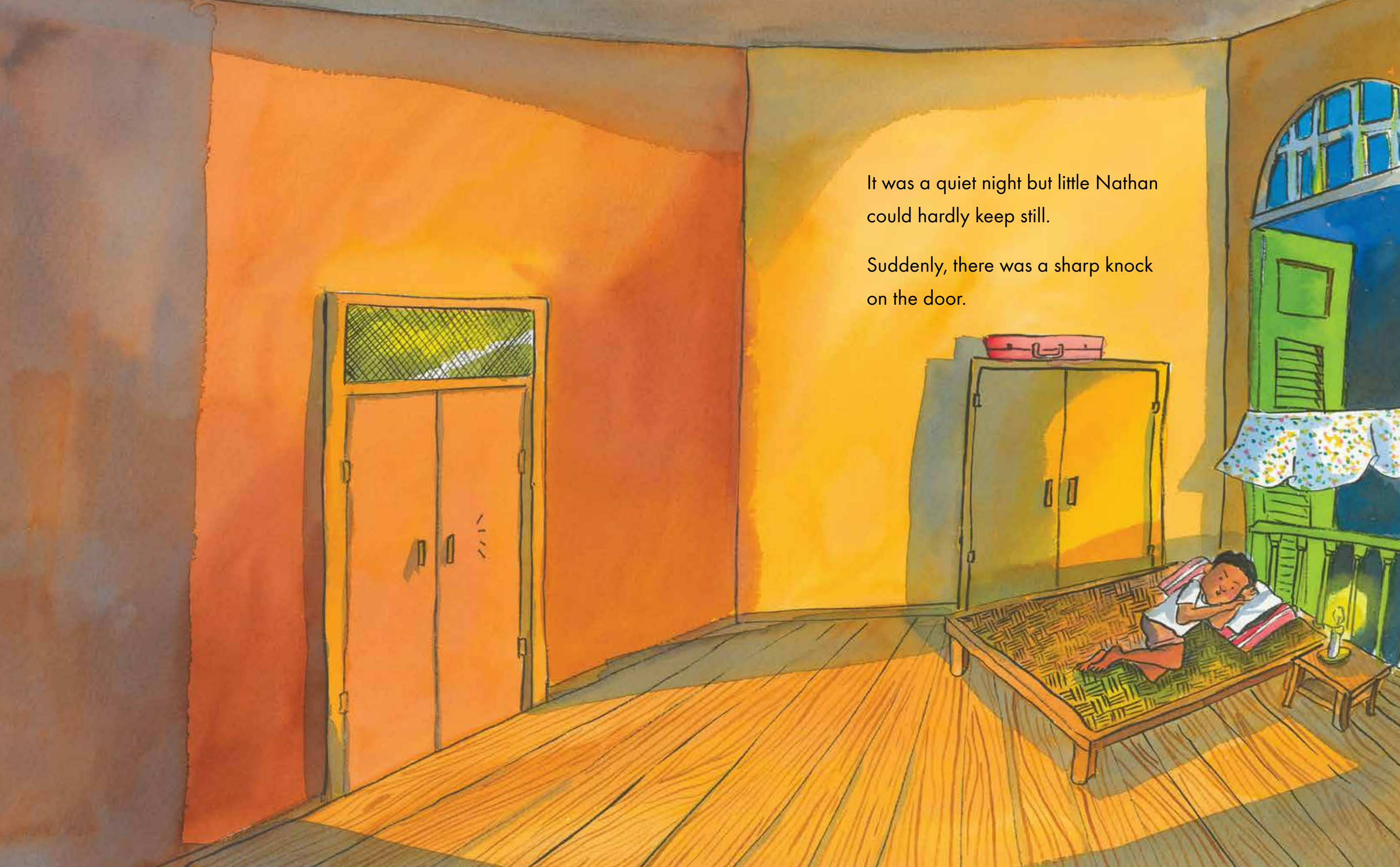
WRITTEN BY  
**Amanda Kee**

ILLUSTRATED BY  
**Patrick Yee**



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It was a quiet night but little Nathan could hardly keep still.

Suddenly, there was a sharp knock on the door.



He jumped to his feet and threw the door wide open. Familiar faces greeted him. His family had arrived from Malaya. He was so happy to see them but his joy was short-lived. In the half-lit room, his father said, "I lost my job. We had no money for the rent. So Landlord Raja threw us out!"

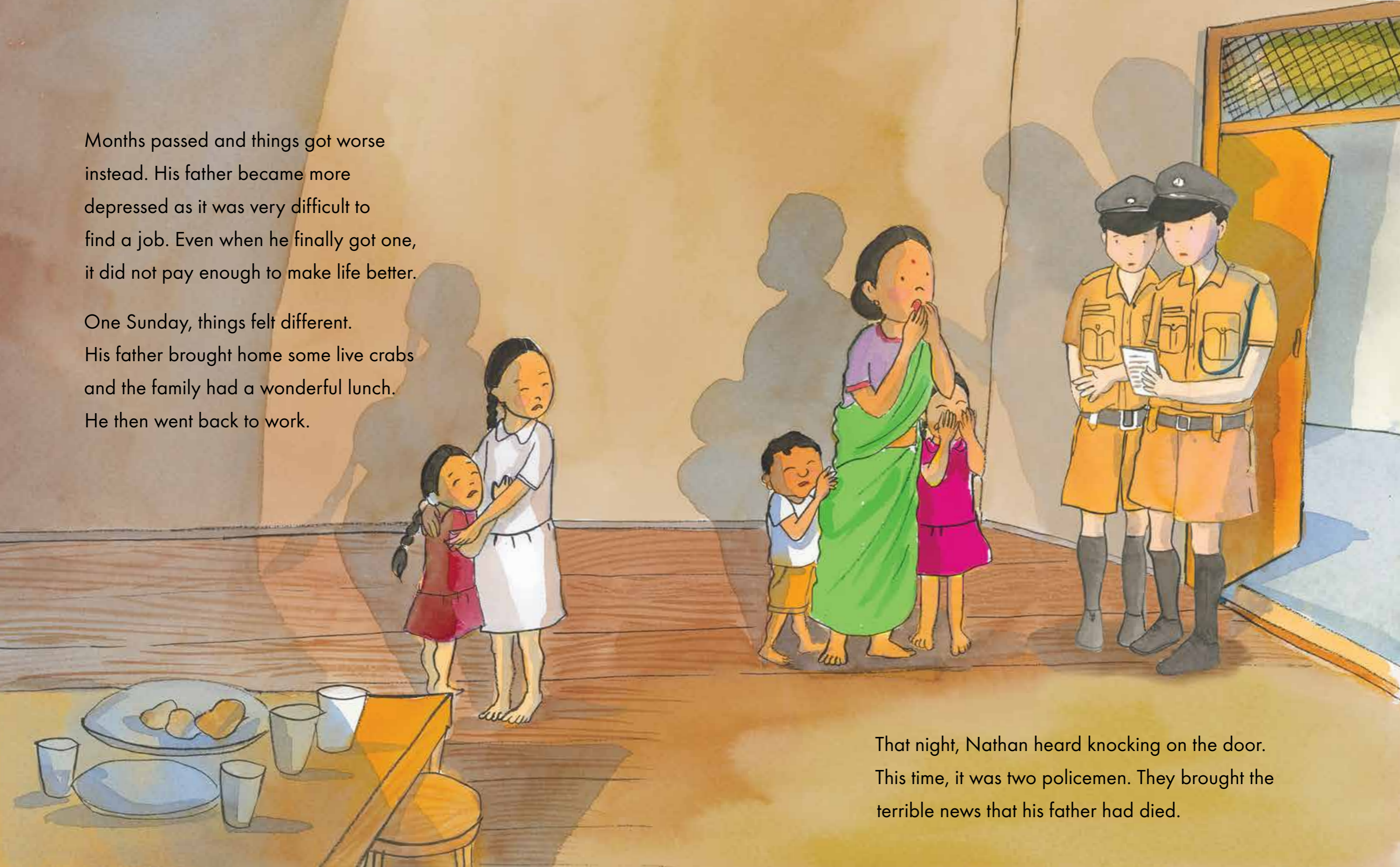
The seven-year-old Nathan had missed his family because he had been sent to school in Singapore. He hugged them and told his father, "Don't worry, Appa. It will be okay soon."





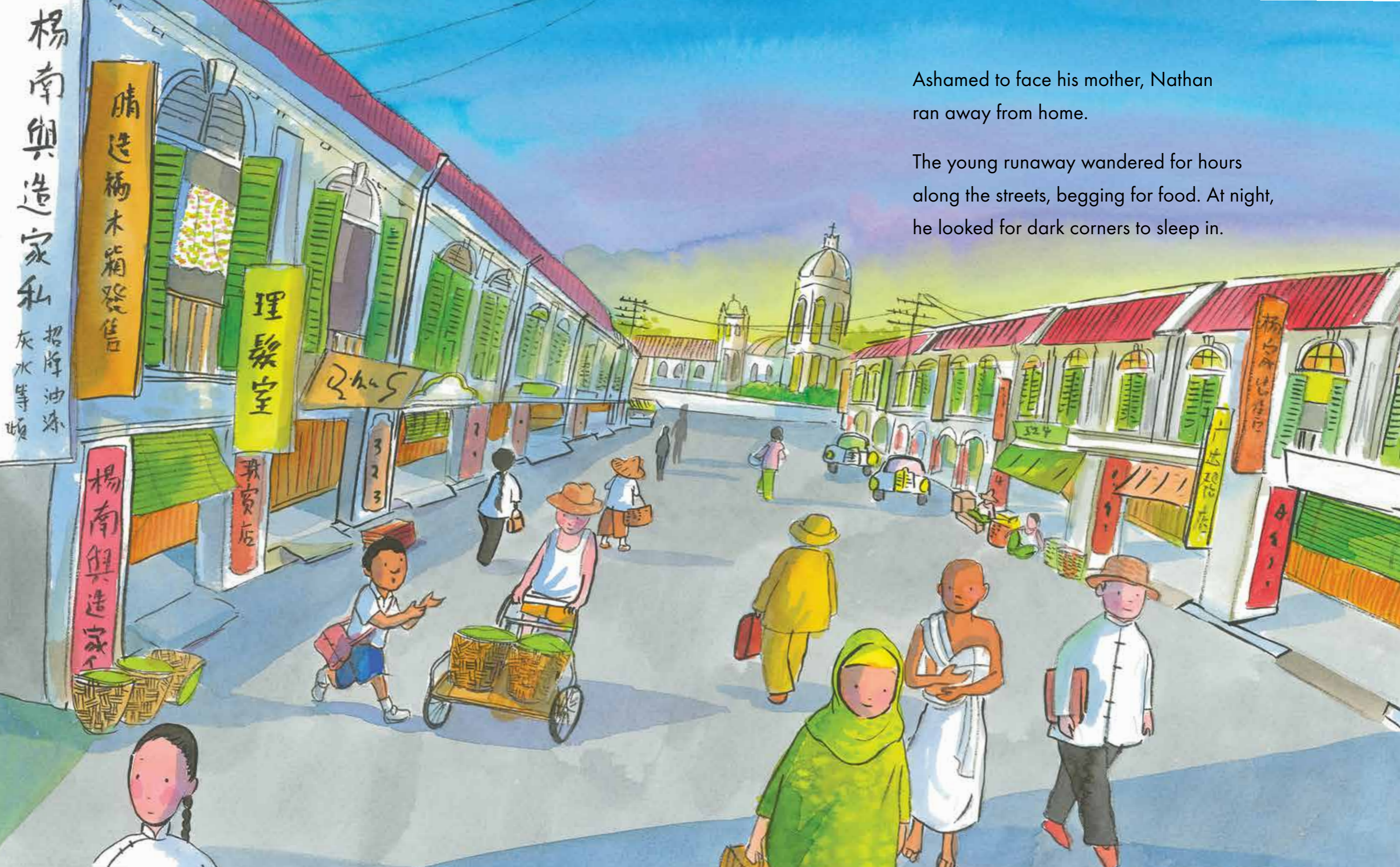
Months passed and things got worse instead. His father became more depressed as it was very difficult to find a job. Even when he finally got one, it did not pay enough to make life better.

One Sunday, things felt different. His father brought home some live crabs and the family had a wonderful lunch. He then went back to work.



That night, Nathan heard knocking on the door. This time, it was two policemen. They brought the terrible news that his father had died.





Ashamed to face his mother, Nathan ran away from home.

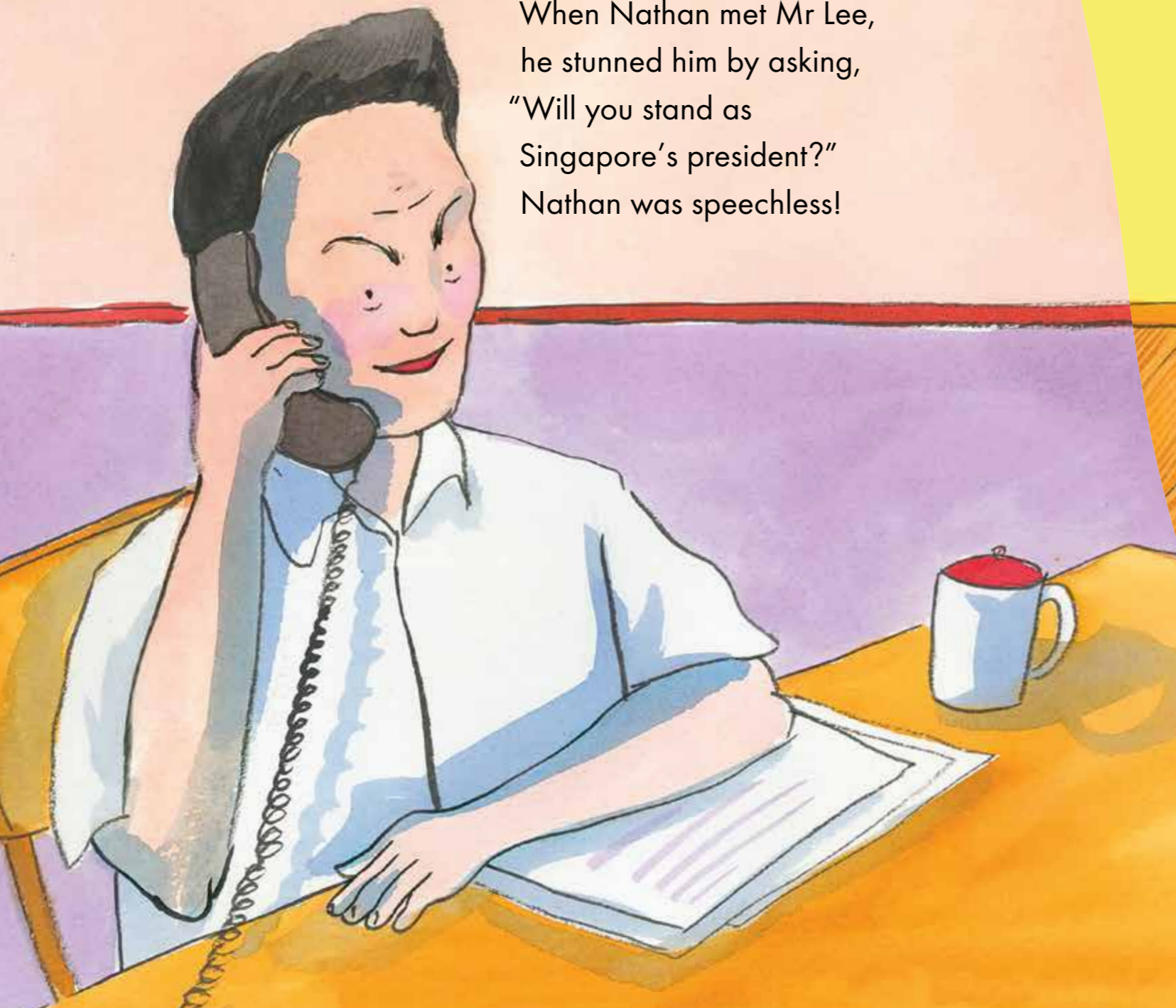
The young runaway wandered for hours along the streets, begging for food. At night, he looked for dark corners to sleep in.



Late one night, he got a strange phone call from Mr Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's first prime minister.

Nathan was curious because Mr Lee did not tell him why he was calling him. Finally, he asked Nathan to see him the next day.

When Nathan met Mr Lee, he stunned him by asking, "Will you stand as Singapore's president?" Nathan was speechless!



"President? Me?"

He went home and talked to Umi about it. She said, "How can you say no?" Nathan knew she was right. Mr Lee had played an important part in his working life. He made the biggest decision of his life.





President SR Nathan had a difficult childhood. His father died when he was only eight years old. He was twice kicked out of school. Ashamed to face his mother, he ran away from home, begging for food and sleeping on street corners. But each time he was in need, a stranger would help him. Nathan remembered these acts of kindness and never lost hope. So when he became president, he wanted people to know that a little kindness can go a long way.

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