

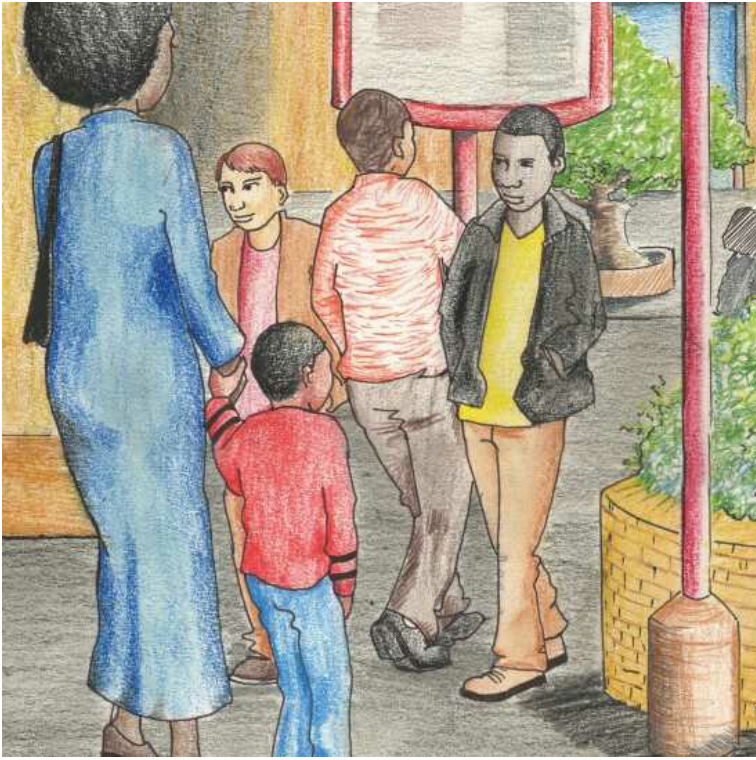
The whistling man

 Magda Swartz

 Petrus Amuthenu

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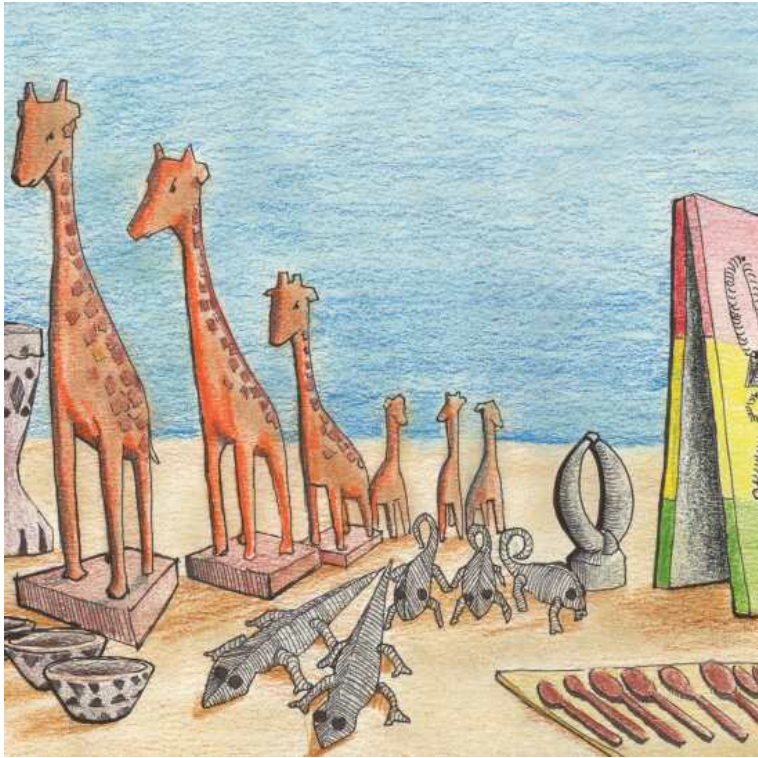
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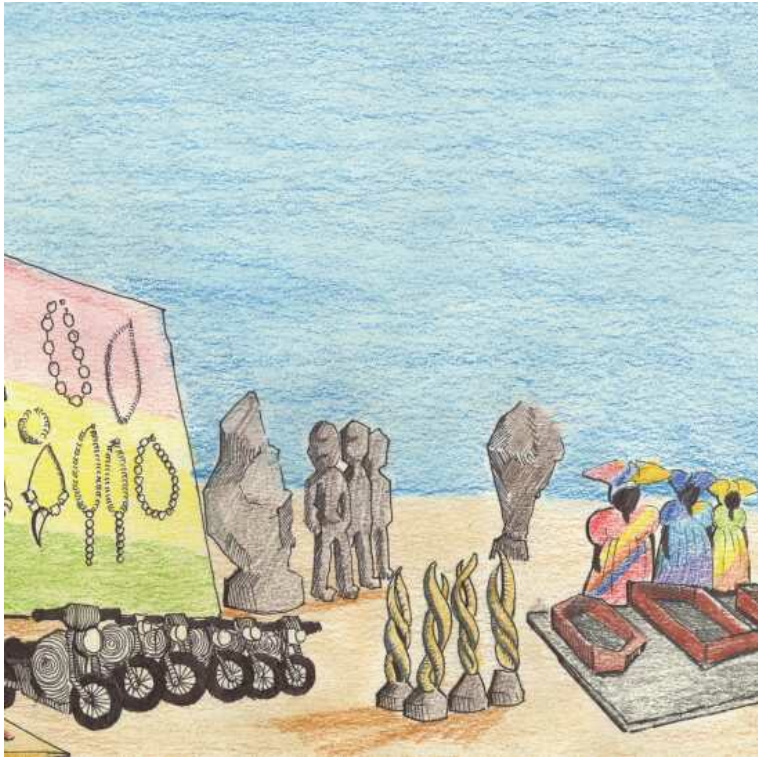
It's Saturday and Rico is going to town with his mother. He likes going to town. Town is exciting! There are lots of things to see.



Rico holds his mother's hand very tightly. Streams of people are passing by.



There are stalls selling beautiful handmade crafts.



There are small giraffes carved out of wood, chameleons and lizards made out of wire and coloured beads, and jewellery made from ostrich egg shell.



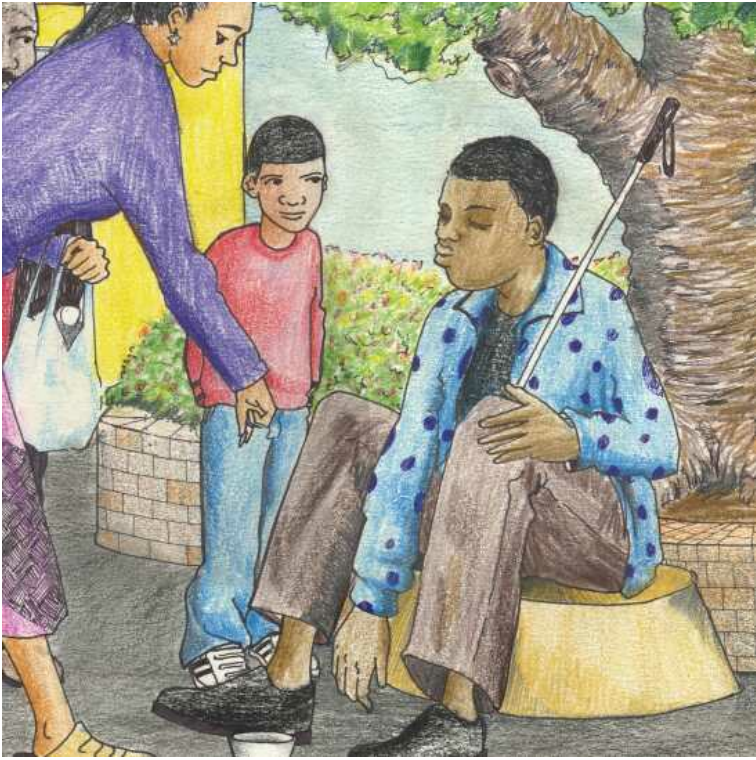
Then he hears it! Someone is whistling the sweet melody of 'Amazing Grace.' He stops to listen. Where is it coming from?



“I’ve never heard anyone whistle so beautifully before,” he thinks to himself.



He makes his way through the people. Then he sees the man who is whistling. People are putting coins into a small tin in front of him. But ... something is wrong ...



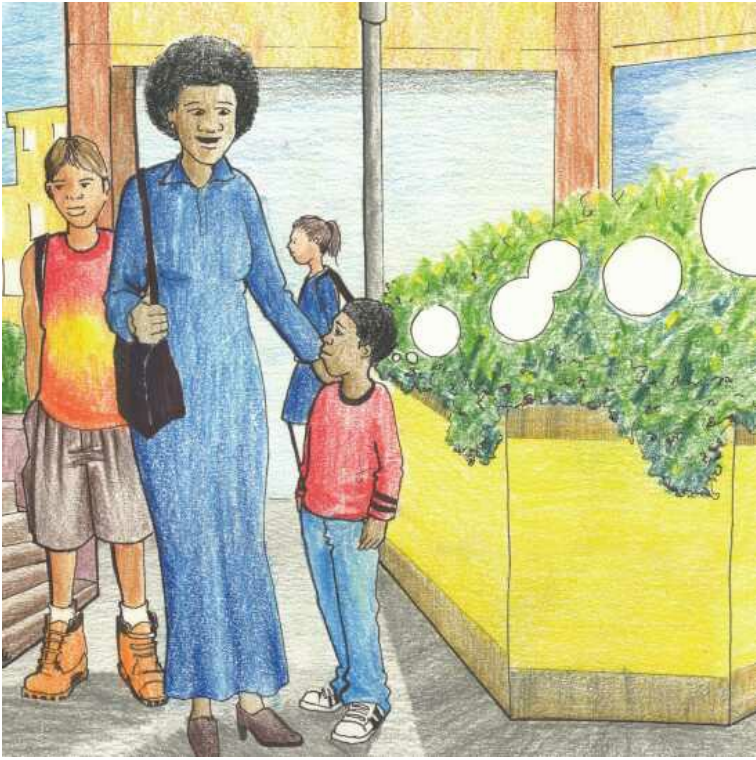
The whistling man is not looking at the people. He is not looking at the money. He is not looking at anything. He's searching for the coins in the tin and putting them into his pocket.



Rico stares at the whistling man and thinks, "Maybe he's blind." Rico has never seen a blind person before. He feels scared. He grabs his mother's dress and asks softly, "Mommy, is that man blind?"



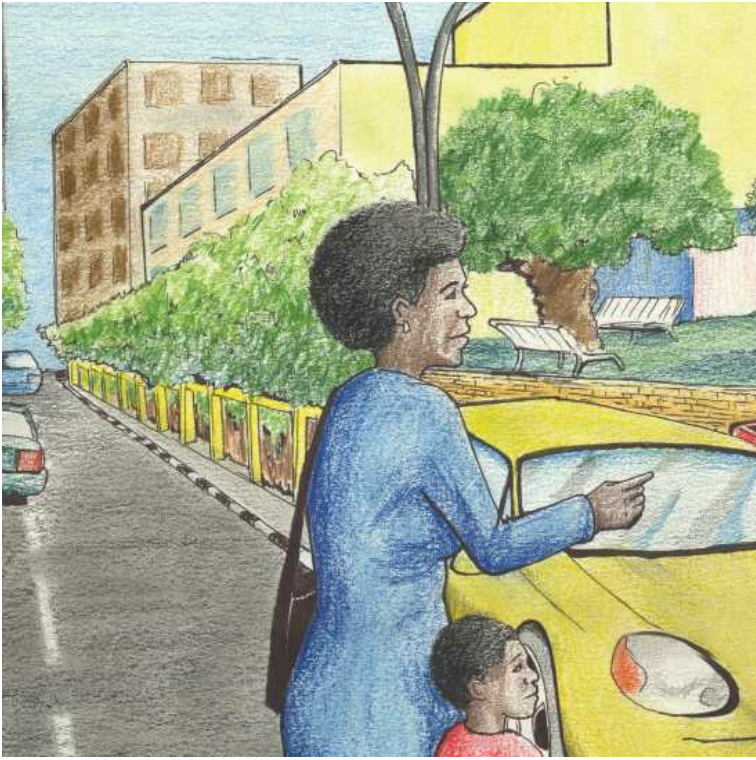
She takes his hand. "Yes," she answers, "yes, he's blind. Look, he has a white stick. Many blind people carry a white stick. He uses this stick to feel for holes and other obstacles."



“But how did he come to town? How did he find his way through all the people?” Rico asks.



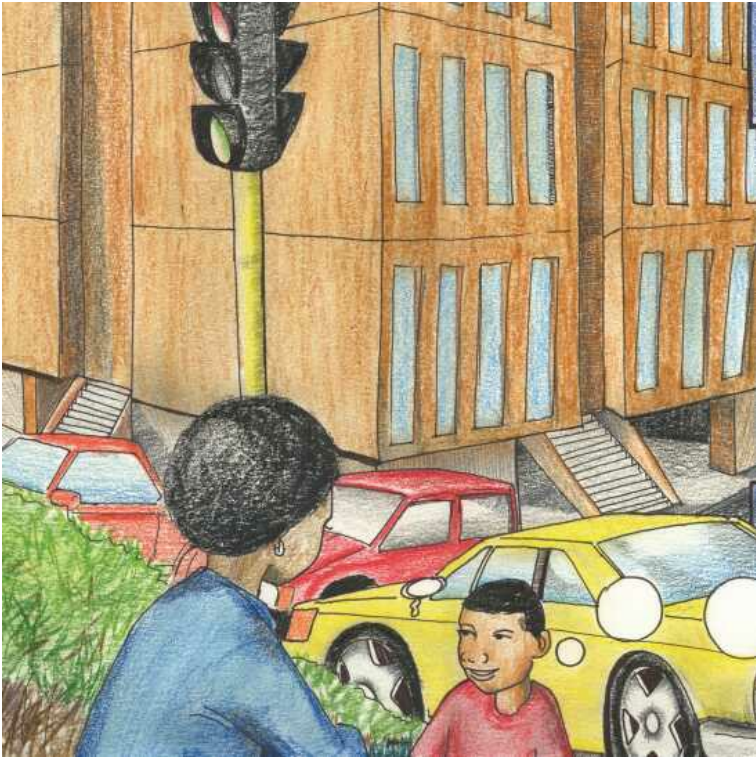
His mother tells him, "Maybe he has someone who helps him to find his way around. We call that person a guide."



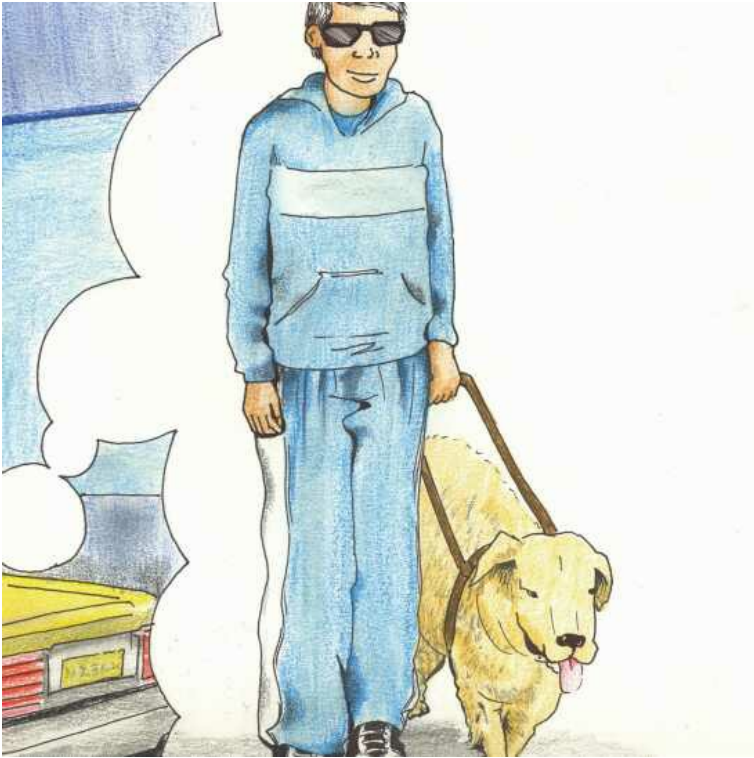
They walk to the zoopark. The traffic lights change to green, the cars stop and the pedestrians cross the street.



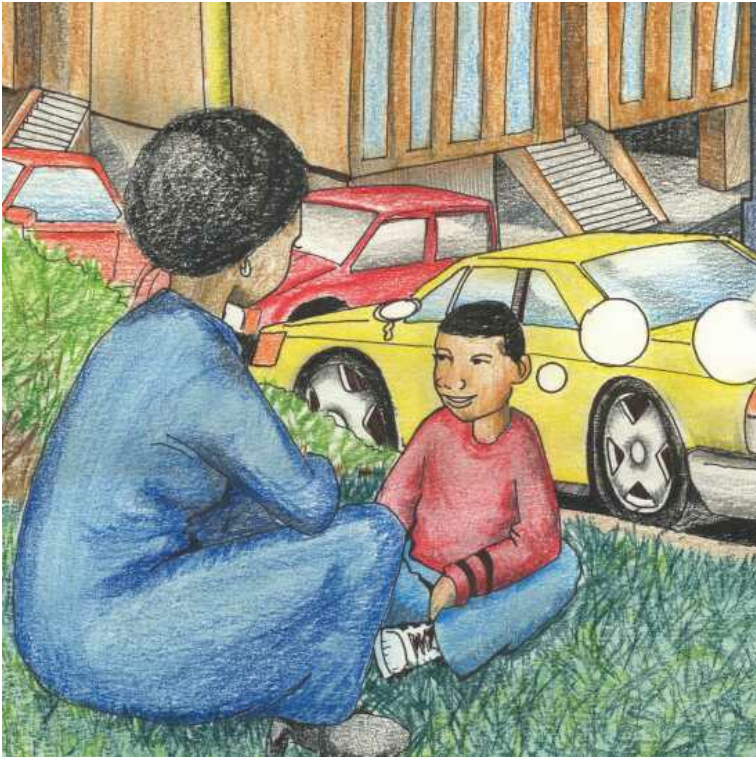
“Look at the green light. When it is green we can see it is safe to cross the road. In some countries there is also a beeping sound,” Rico’s mother says. “When blind people hear the beeping, they know it is safe to cross the road.”



They sit on the green grass of the zoopark and watch the people walking by. "Some blind people have a guide dog," his mother says. "These dogs are trained to guide their owner, but they are very expensive. There are very few guide dogs in Namibia."



“The blind man can’t watch TV,” Rico says. “He can hear the TV and radio,” Rico’s mother tells him. “Blind people can often hear things much better than people who can see.”



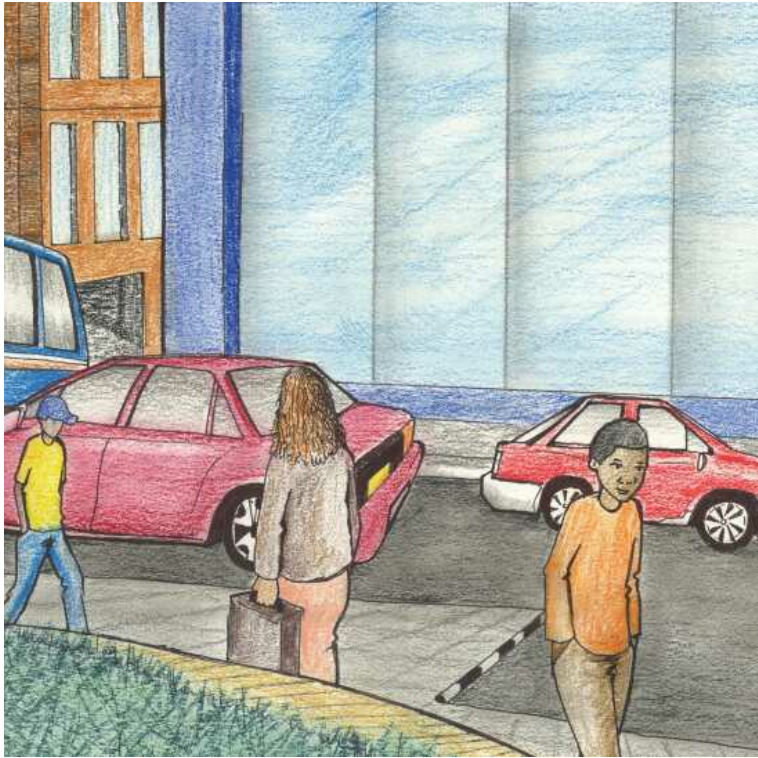
“But he can’t read books or newspapers,” says Rico. “There are books written in Braille. Instead of words printed with ink, there are raised dots which make letters. It’s like a code.”



“How can he read if he can’t see?” “He reads with his hands. He feels the raised dots with his fingers, just like you see the letters with your eyes.”



Rico is amazed to think that people who are blind can do everyday things; things like walking around in town, like whistling songs, like reading.




His mother tells him, "The only difference between you and a blind person is that you can see and a blind person can't see." "I can see, but I can't whistle as beautifully as that blind man," Rico smiles.



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