

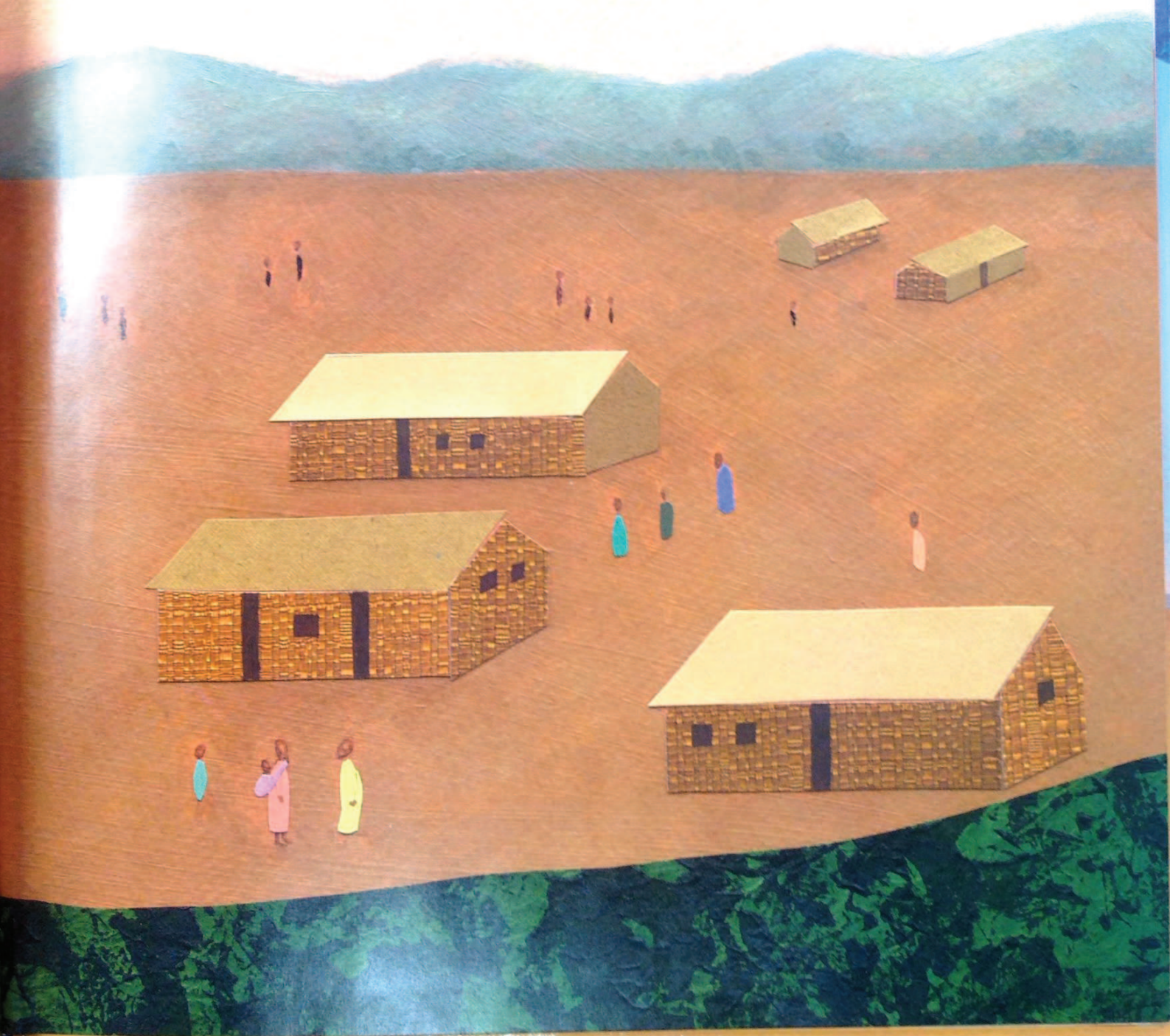
# THE BOY WHO HARNESSSED THE WIND



William Kamkwamba  
and Bryan Mealer  
pictures by  
Elizabeth Zunon



In a small village in Malawi, where people had no money for lights,  
nightfall came quickly and hurried poor farmers to bed.  
But for William, the darkness was best for dreaming.







He dreamed of building things and taking them apart,  
like the trucks with bottle-cap wheels parked under his bed  
and pieces of radios that he'd crack open and wonder,  
*If I can hear the music, then where is the band?*





His grandpa's tales of magic also whispered in the pitch-black of his room. Witch planes passed through the window while ghost dancers twirled around the room, as if a hundred men were inside their bodies.





At dawn in the fields,  
William scanned the maize rows for magical beings,  
then wondered as a truck rumbled past,  
*How does its engine make it go?*  
“Pay attention where you throw that hoe!” his father shouted.  
“You’ll cut off your foot.”



For all its power over dancers and flying things,  
magic could not bring the rain.

Without water, the sun rose angry each morning and  
scorched the fields, turning the maize into dust.

Without food, Malawi began to starve.







Soon William's father gathered the children and said,  
"From now on, we eat only one meal per day. Make it last."  
In the evenings, they sat around the lantern and ate their handful,  
watching hungry people pass like spirits along the roads.





Money also disappeared with the rain.

*"Pepani,"* his father said. "I am sorry. You will have to drop out of school."

Now William stood on the road and watched the lucky students pass, alone with the monster in his belly and the lump in his throat.

For weeks he sulked under the mango tree, until he remembered the library down the road, a gift from the Americans.



He found science books filled with brilliant pictures.  
With his English dictionary close by, William put together  
how engines moved those big trucks,  
and how radios pulled their music from the sky.  
But the greatest picture of all was a machine  
taller than the tallest tree with blades like a fan.



A giant pinwheel?  
Something to catch magic?




Slowly, he built the sentence:  
“Windmills can produce electricity and pump water.”





He closed his eyes and saw  
a windmill outside his home,  
pulling electricity from the breeze  
and bringing light to the dark valley.





He saw the machine drawing cool water from the ground,  
sending it gushing through the thirsty fields,  
turning the maize tall and green,  
even when farmers' prayers for rain went unanswered.  
This windmill was more than a machine.  
It was a weapon to fight hunger.





*"Magetsì a mphepo," he whispered:*

*I will build electric wind.*