

# **How Anis Told His Story**

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*A Note to Parents*

*“How Anis Told His Story” describes the true story of a young boy who grew up during the Palestinian and Israeli conflict, a tragic time which our generation has sadly come to know all too well. In this book, I have intentionally excluded many words related to this conflict, including the country names of Israel and Palestine. This was done in order to respect the ways in which you wish to introduce the difficult and closely linked subjects of politics, religion, and war within your family.*

*This story does not strive to explain the conflict or provide a solution. Rather, I hope that it will share one particular child’s unique perspective on life in Palestine and tragedy around him, reveal to your children to the emotional power of music, and perhaps bring some hope for a peaceful future to the people of Palestine and Israel.*



Delicate snowflakes whirled and spun down from the sky to land on young Anis' hat, gloves, and the garden all around him. He laughed and jumped, narrowly missing a snowball thrown playfully by his father. His mother smiled as she looked down at her family, and then beyond them—at the snow powdered hills, valleys, and olive groves of Ramallah.

One warm day, when winter had come and gone, Anis asked his mother if she would take him and his little brother to the beautiful city of Jerusalem. She smiled, and agreed to try and bring them with her when she went work that day. It was, after all, such a rare treat to go—Anis loved getting to walk down the ancient, smooth stone walkways of Jerusalem, stopping for sweet treats at the many colorful candy booths. Anis knew it was a holy place too, for Christians, Jews, and Muslims like his own family.



At the end of the day, they stopped at the home of Anis' grandparents for some mint tea. There on the rug of their cozy living room, Anis listened closely as his grandfather recounted exciting tales and adventures from many years passed. Anis wondered when the day would come that he would be able to tell others his *own* stories.

It was not long, though, before Anis began to feel life change around him. In the evenings, he listened to his

parents as they talked in hushed voices about all of the roads that had been closed and security checkpoints that had been put up.

In the mornings, Anis could hear on the radio as important world leaders debated loudly about something called the “Roadmap to Peace.”

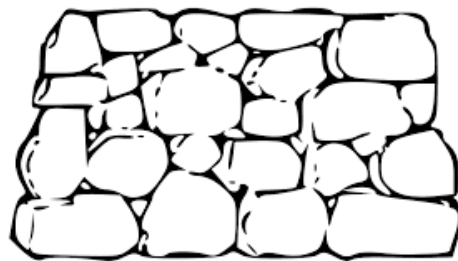
Anis couldn’t understand what all of this meant, but he knew that his world seemed anything but peaceful.

And at the end of the year, Anis graduated as top student in his first grade class, but his parents sadly told him he couldn't go to the ceremony; it was too dangerous for them to leave home.

Then, early one morning, Anis was up studying for a school exam, when a terrible event happened and filled his heart with fear. There in peaceful morning silence, a

sudden blinding light, deafening roar, and earth-shaking blast came from the street just below his window.

A rocket had hit and exploded a car outside. Anis screamed and ran to his parents in the other room. He shook with terror as they held him close, rocked him gently, and told him everything would be alright.





But things didn't get better. Anis felt like the violence was only getting worse. It was harder and harder for him to go to school, visit his grandparents, or play outside with his friends. He didn't understand why his school was so often closed. And finally one day Anis couldn't believe his eyes—a huge grey wall was being built all around the city of Jerusalem. It would be nearly impossible for him to go there anymore.

Anis finally had a story to tell—a sad, but important story to share with the world. But how could he tell it? Who would possibly listen to such a little boy?

Days, and then years, passed. Anis turned 12 years old, and though there less violence in Ramallah, he still felt fear. Anis carried so many sad stories with him, but still longed for a way to share them with others.

On one calm and peaceful day, his mother came and told him to put his shoes on—she was taking him to see a new music school in the city called Al Kamandjati.

“Why,” Anis thought, “would I want to play an instrument? I have my friends to hang out with, and sports to play after school.”



But off they went, down the street, through the open gates and friendly garden of the music school. Sounds of every kind of instrument floated above their heads. “You can choose to learn any instrument you want here,” Anis’ mother told him, smiling.

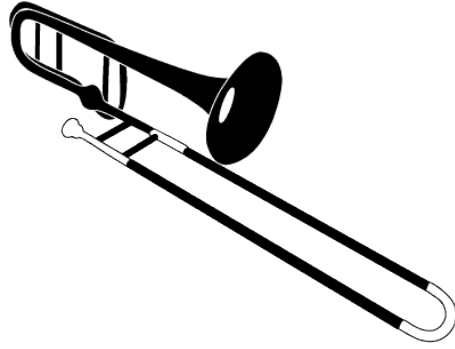
In the first room, Anis found all the flute players. He tried to play the flute, but couldn’t make any sound!

He then went to the room filled with accordions, but squirmed when they played—he didn't like the sounds they made one bit.

He then came to the room with people playing big, grand double basses. But little Anis asked his mother, "How could I ever play such a huge instrument?!"

When Anis had gone through all the different rooms, he still hadn't found any instrument that he wanted to play. But there was one more room he hadn't seen... there he found someone playing a long golden instrument called a trombone.

He put the trombone to his lips, blew out a big gust of air, and --- what a wonderful sound it made! He knew right away this was the instrument for him.



Soon Anis was taking lessons every week, getting better each time he practiced. He felt something in him moving and changing, as if he had found a way to share a part of himself that he hadn't been able to before.

As months passed, he learned many new songs.

Though there was still so much sadness and fear around him, Anis finally felt he had a voice to tell *his* story.

As Anis grew older, he always kept his trombone by his side. Even as he became a teenager, he often felt scared seeing violence and death that took place all around his community. Yet when Anis played his instrument, he felt brave and calm. Music gave him hope.

As Anis became a teenager, he discovered that he could use the power of music to open the minds and hearts of others. He and his friends even went and played music just outside Jerusalem in order to protest against the hatred that the big wall represented.

Anis became a great musician, performed in many orchestras, and learned to play music by famous composers like Mozart, Brahms, and Beethoven. He

made friends from around the world—other musicians from Europe, North and South America, and neighboring countries in the Middle East. Music became his voice when words could not describe what he was feeling.

Each time Anis played trombone, he thought of his home in Ramallah, the ancient winding streets of Jerusalem, the smell of the sweet mint tea at his grandparent's home, or the taste of snowflakes falling from the sky.

And through the music, Anis told his story.

*To learn more about the Al Kamandjati School of Music in  
the West Bank,  
I recommend the beautifully written book by Sandy Tolan  
called "Children of the Stone"*



SANDY TOLAN

Author of *The Lemon Tree*

# CHILDREN *of* the STONE

THE POWER OF MUSIC IN A HARD LAND



"Refreshing...  
Reflects one individual's  
belief in the power  
of music and culture to  
transform lives."

—YO-YO MA