



शह्यायुडी Police Woman

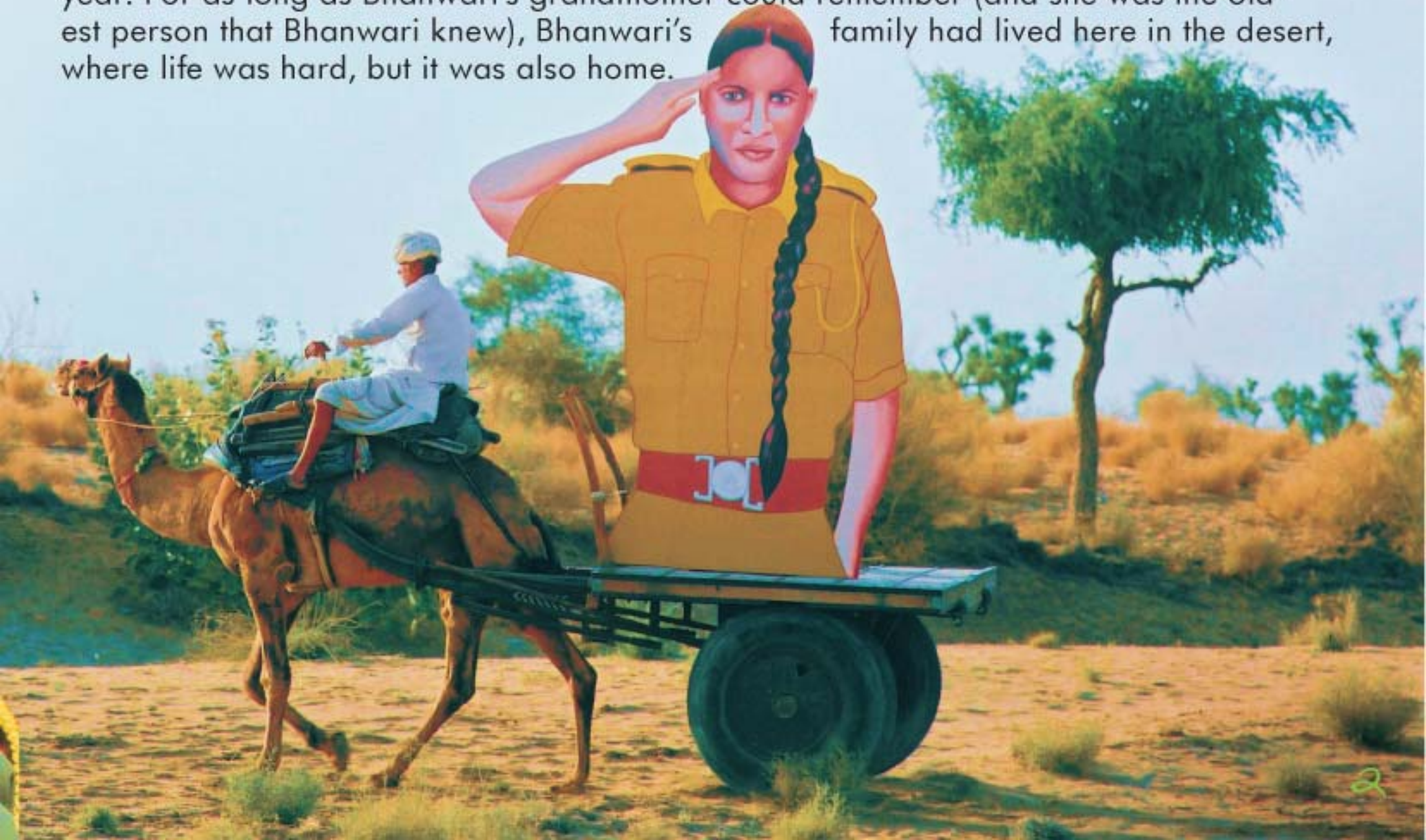


If you follow the footprints that lead across the desert of scorching sand, you will find stories that must be told again and again. This story begins in a small village in the desert of Rajasthan. This is Bhanwari's story.

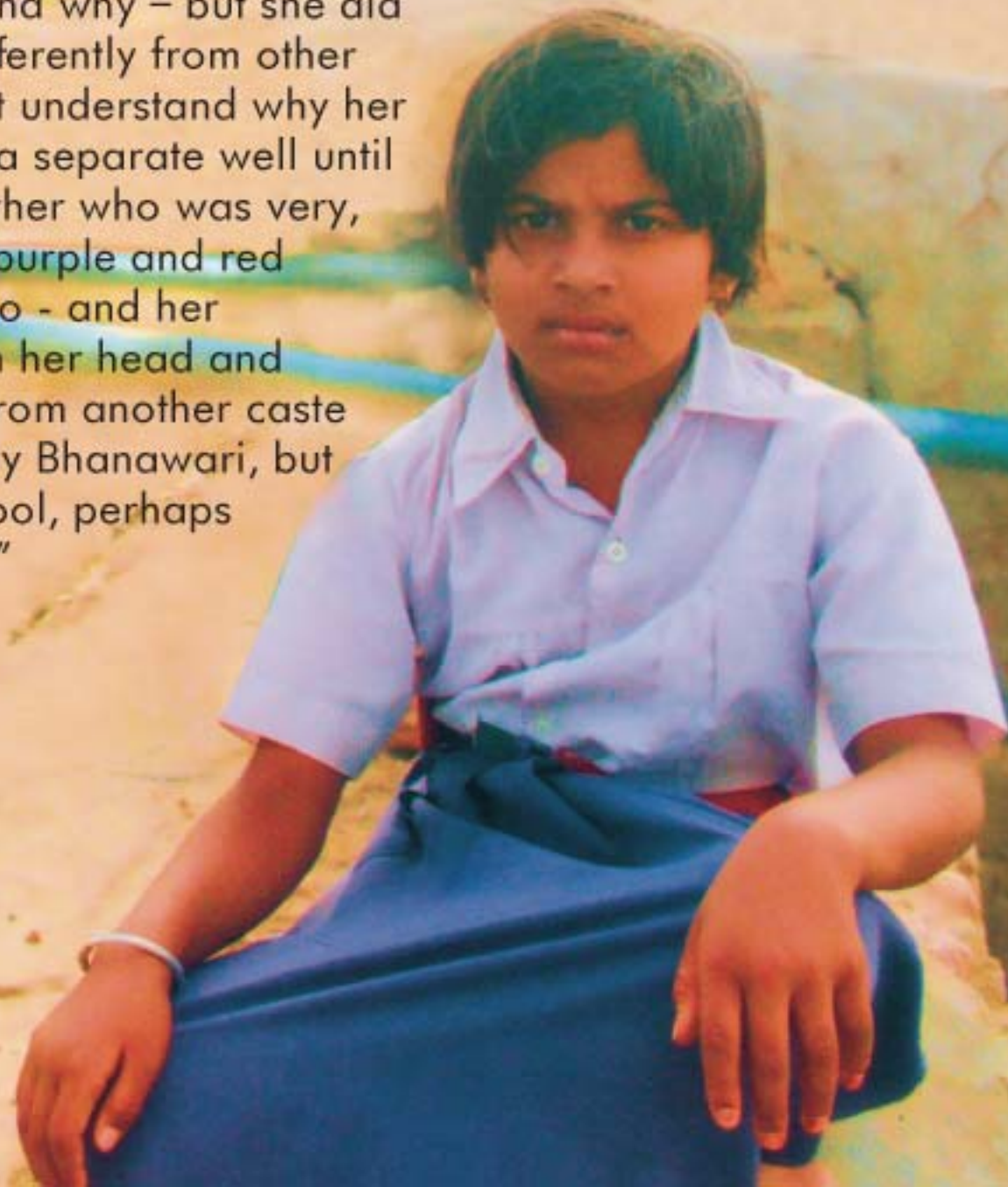
Bhanwari



Bhanwari grew up in a village in a desert in Bikaner district, Rajasthan where there was never very much water, and only a few trees whose branches were barren most of the year. For as long as Bhanwari's grandmother could remember (and she was the oldest person that Bhanwari knew), Bhanwari's family had lived here in the desert, where life was hard, but it was also home.



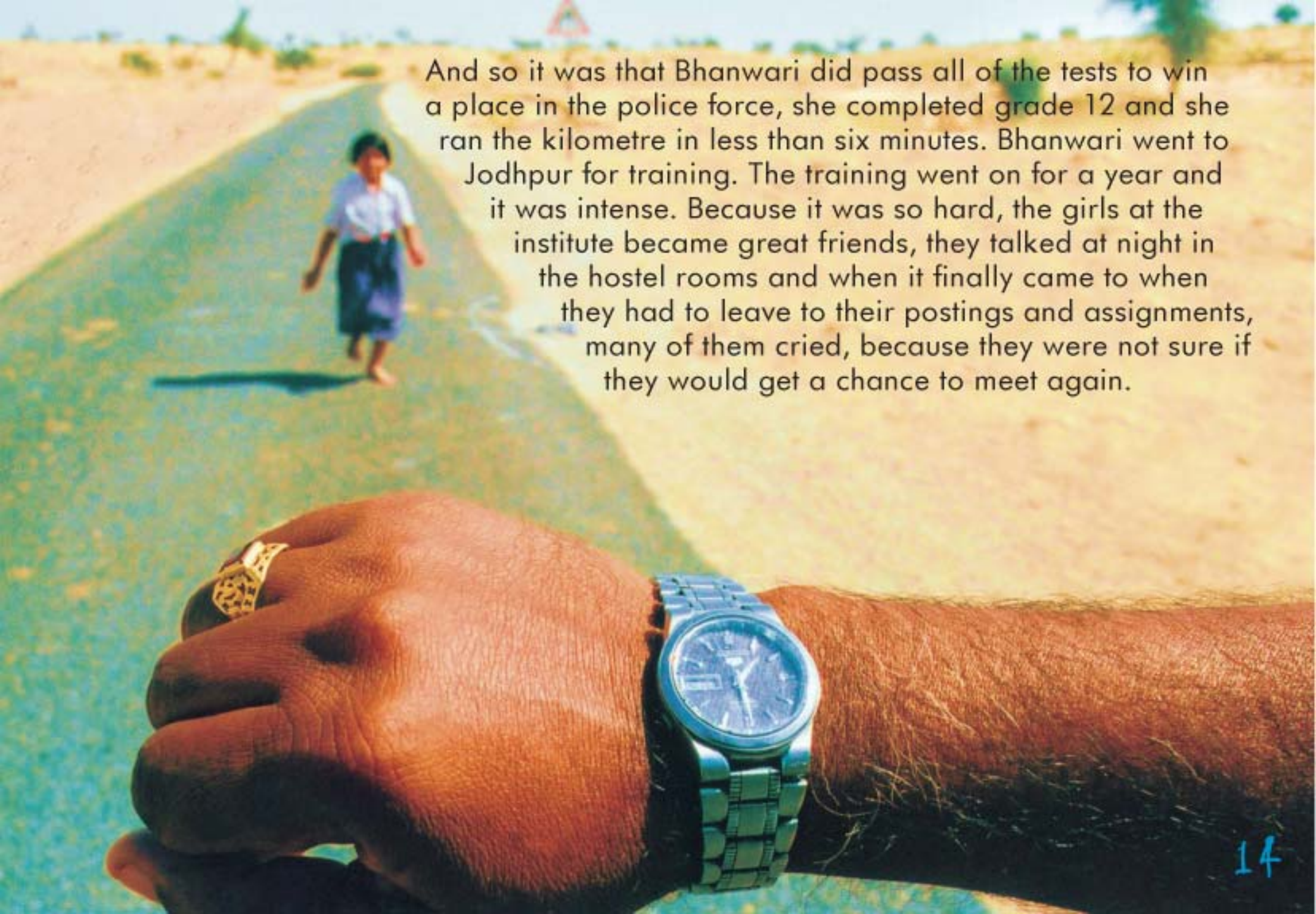
And there were other things that had to be obeyed that Bhanwari did not really understand why – but she did always feel they were treated differently from other people in her village. She did not understand why her family had to collect water from a separate well until one day she asked her grandmother who was very, very old but always wore bright purple and red lehengas just because she liked to - and her grandmother patted Bhanwari on her head and answered, "It's because we are from another caste and in our caste girls do not study Bhanawari, but you have been able to go to school, perhaps you can change other things too."





However, just like other girls in her village, Bhanwari too had had to give into the tradition of child marriages – she was married before she could even remember, when she was only two years old. However, Jetharam had only agreed that she would only go to her husband's house after she had completed her education.

But although she was married, Bhanwari was determined that she would complete her education no matter what. At the same time that Bhanwari was studying hard in school her husband-to-be, Heeraram, was playing on the streets.

A woman in a white school shirt and blue skirt is running on a green track in a desert landscape. In the foreground, a hand with a gold ring and a silver watch is visible. The background shows a sandy desert with sparse vegetation and a clear blue sky.

And so it was that Bhanwari did pass all of the tests to win a place in the police force, she completed grade 12 and she ran the kilometre in less than six minutes. Bhanwari went to Jodhpur for training. The training went on for a year and it was intense. Because it was so hard, the girls at the institute became great friends, they talked at night in the hostel rooms and when it finally came to when they had to leave to their postings and assignments, many of them cried, because they were not sure if they would get a chance to meet again.

Bhanwari is absolutely sure that her daughter Rupa, will not only go to school, she will complete her education. For Bhanwari knows that by going to school she hoped to be able to understand the world, that if she remained illiterate she wouldn't understand anything, and she says, whenever she meets young girls in schools, "Complete your education so you can be who you dream. I wanted to be a police woman and so I am, because I went to school."

