

Stall-owner

You are late this morning, Sujata. It is rare; it is not in character. Surely something unusual must have happened, Sujata, even so early in the morning.

Sujata

Something has happened, indeed. Something sad and tragic and that is the cause of my being late.

Stall-owner

Never have you been late, Sujata. Three years have you worked for me in this store and you have always been here right on time. What has happened, Sujata?

Sujata

It is Kisa Gotami.

Stall-owner

Kisa Gotami, your friend. Kisa Gotami the Thin One. Kisa Gotami the Frail One.

Sujata

Kisa Gotami, my friend. Kisa Gotami, my neighbour.
Early this morning, even before the first rays of the sun, there was a scream. And sobbing.
Kisa Gotami, I learned later, woke up to find her only child dead beside her.
Kisa Gotami's only child, her son of six months, dead of cholera.
Kisa Gotami screams and cries.
And her husband says: *The child is dead.*
Kisa Gotami says: *No.*
And her mother-in-law says: *You are an orphan as you started – your son is dead. You have no one again - your son is dead. You came as an orphan, and you leave as an orphan. Your son is dead.*
Yet Kisa Gotami says: *No. He is sick. He is not dead.*
And she screams and she beats herself and she scratches her face, and she picks up her dead son, holds him propped up against her on her hip as mothers of Savtthi may carry their children, and she runs out into the streets.
Give my son some medicine, she screams. Cure him.