



The rich man and the farmer

– a folk tale from Morocco

A long, long time ago, far, far away, in the middle of a vast and quiet desert, lay a small Arabian city. In the middle of the city was a bazar – a big marketplace where people came to do all sorts of business. The bazar had thousands of narrow streets and alleys. In each alley were thousands of colourful shops where one could buy everything under the sun.



Here, on a crowded street, a rich man was out walking. He was wearing very fine and expensive clothes; a long silk cape from China, a gold chain from Persia, and a diamond ring from India. The man strutted like a peacock, his nose stuck up in the air and his chest sticking out, while his long cape was dragging behind him on the ground.

‘Watch out, watch out!’ someone was heard calling out. Suddenly, the rich man saw a poor farmer coming quickly towards him. The farmer had dirty, worn-out clothes. He was carrying a big and heavy bundle of firewood on his back. The farmer’s back was bent under the load, so he could not see the people in front of him. To avoid bumping into people, he was calling out loudly ‘Watch out, watch out!’ Everyone would make way for him, except for one man – the rich man.

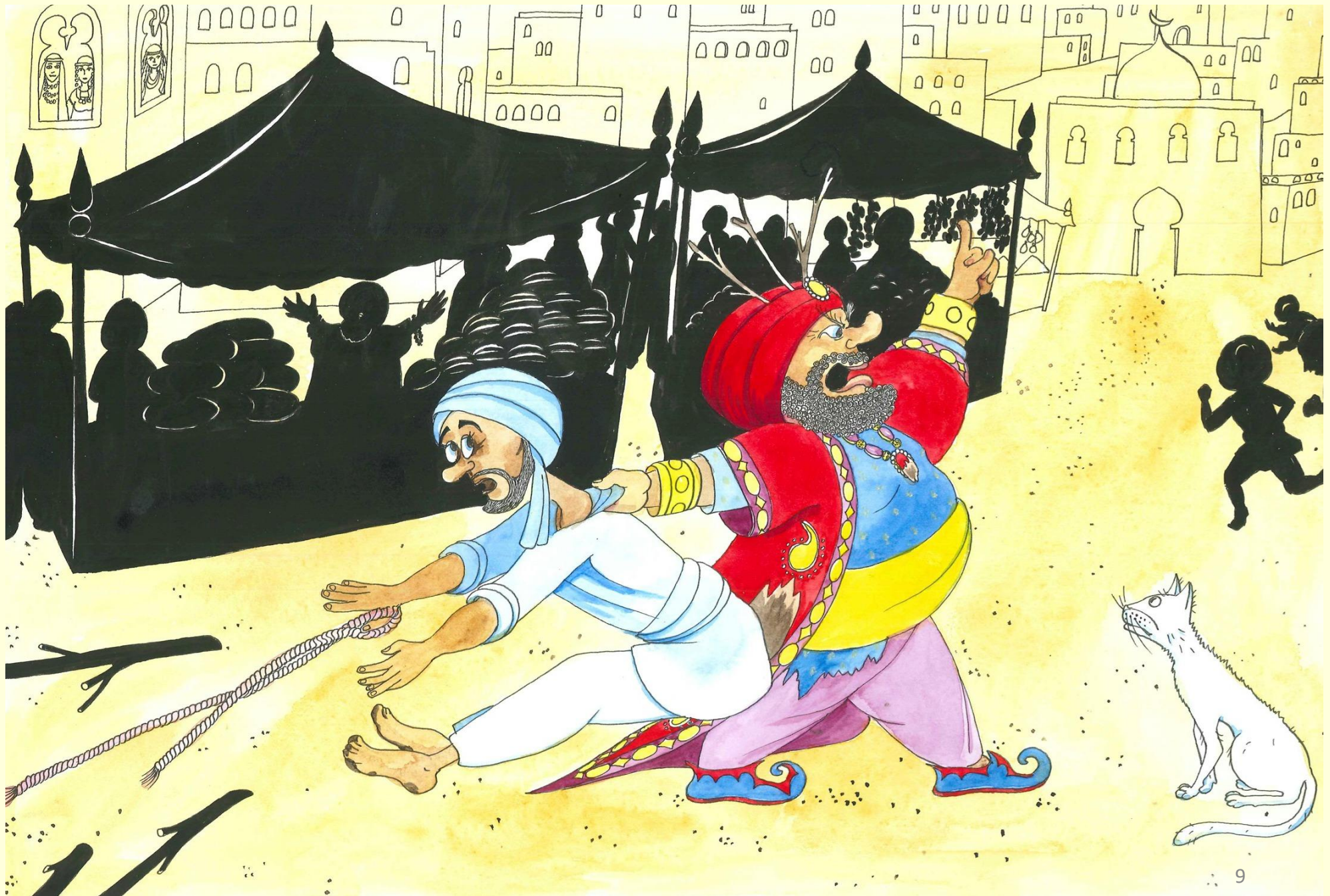
‘Why should I make way for a poor farmer in shabby clothes?’ the rich man thought to himself and kept standing in the way.



Suddenly, the farmer bumped into the rich man. The rich man fell down and the bundle of wood came crashing down on him. The rich man got mud all over him and his fine clothes were ruined.



'You will pay for this!' shouted the rich man angrily. 'Come with me!' The rich man grabbed the farmer by the collar and dragged him to the city judge.



The rich man told the court that he was walking around the bazar and did not hear anything when the farmer came towards him, because the farmer failed to alert him. ,The farmer ruined my clothes on purpose’, said the rich man.

The judge asked: ‘But why would the farmer do something like that?’

‘The farmer was jealous of me because my clothes were finer than his’, answered the rich man.

Then, the judge asked the farmer: ‘Why did you ruin this gentleman’s clothes?’

The farmer just stood there and did not say a single word.

‘Did you not hear me? Why did you ruin this gentleman’s clothes?’ repeated the judge. The farmer still did not say anything

‘I’ll ask again: Why did you ruin this gentleman’s clothes?’ asked the judge loudly and annoyed.

But the farmer still did not make a single sound.



At this, the judge turned to the rich man and said in an annoyed tone: ‘Don’t you see that the farmer is dumb? How can you expect someone who cannot speak, to alert you?’ said the judge.

‘Oh no! He can speak! I know that he can! I heard him myself. He was calling out loudly: “Watch out, watch out!” Several times!’ answered the rich man, without thinking.



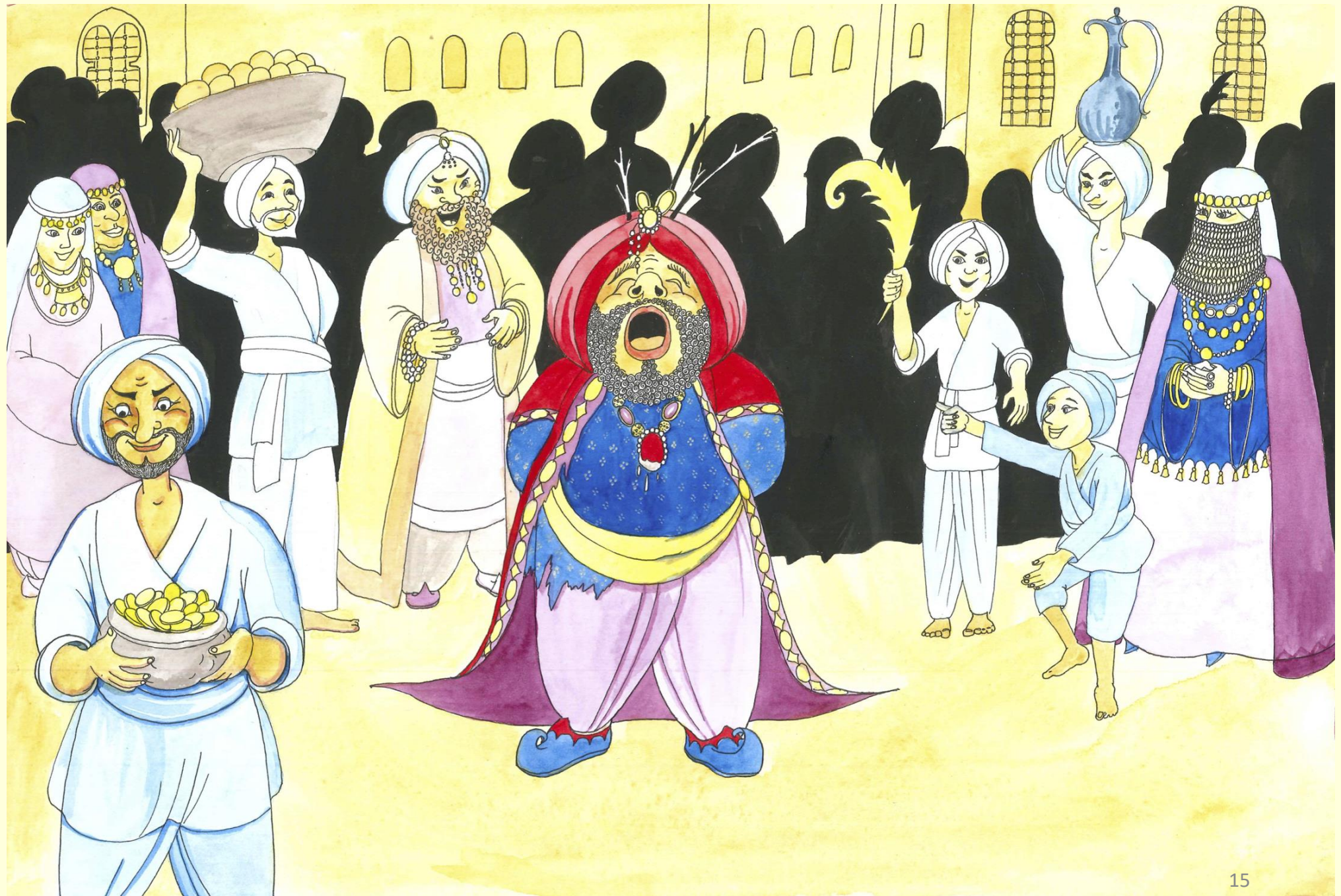
The judge punished the rich man for lying. He was ordered to pay 1000 gold coins to the farmer, and he was also made to stand in the square, with the entire bazar looking at him, to announce:

I was arrogant, unwilling to share. So I fell in the mud, to my disgrace

I was the one who ruined

my fine expensive attire.

And that is how the story ends.





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