

'These teaching-stories can be experienced on many levels. A child may simply enjoy hearing them, an adult may analyse them in a more sophisticated way. Both may eventually benefit from the lessons within.' **ALL THINGS CONSIDERED, NPR**

'Shah has collected hundreds of Sufi tales... In this tradition, the line between stories for children and those for adults is not as clear as it seems to be in Western cultures... the lessons are important for all generations.' **SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL**

When three deaf men get into an argument, they have to call on the first passer-by to ask for help in resolving their conflict. This happens to be a little boy. But it also happens that he cannot speak. How will he communicate with three deaf men – let alone stop them arguing amongst themselves and see sense?

For more than 1,000 years this story has entertained children, helped them examine their own assumptions and think creatively.

Part of a rich body of literature from Central Asia and the Middle East, *The Boy With No Voice and the Men Who Couldn't Hear* is one of many tales collected by the late Afghan author and thinker, Idries Shah.



**The Idries Shah
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PRACTICAL WISDOM & PSYCHOLOGY

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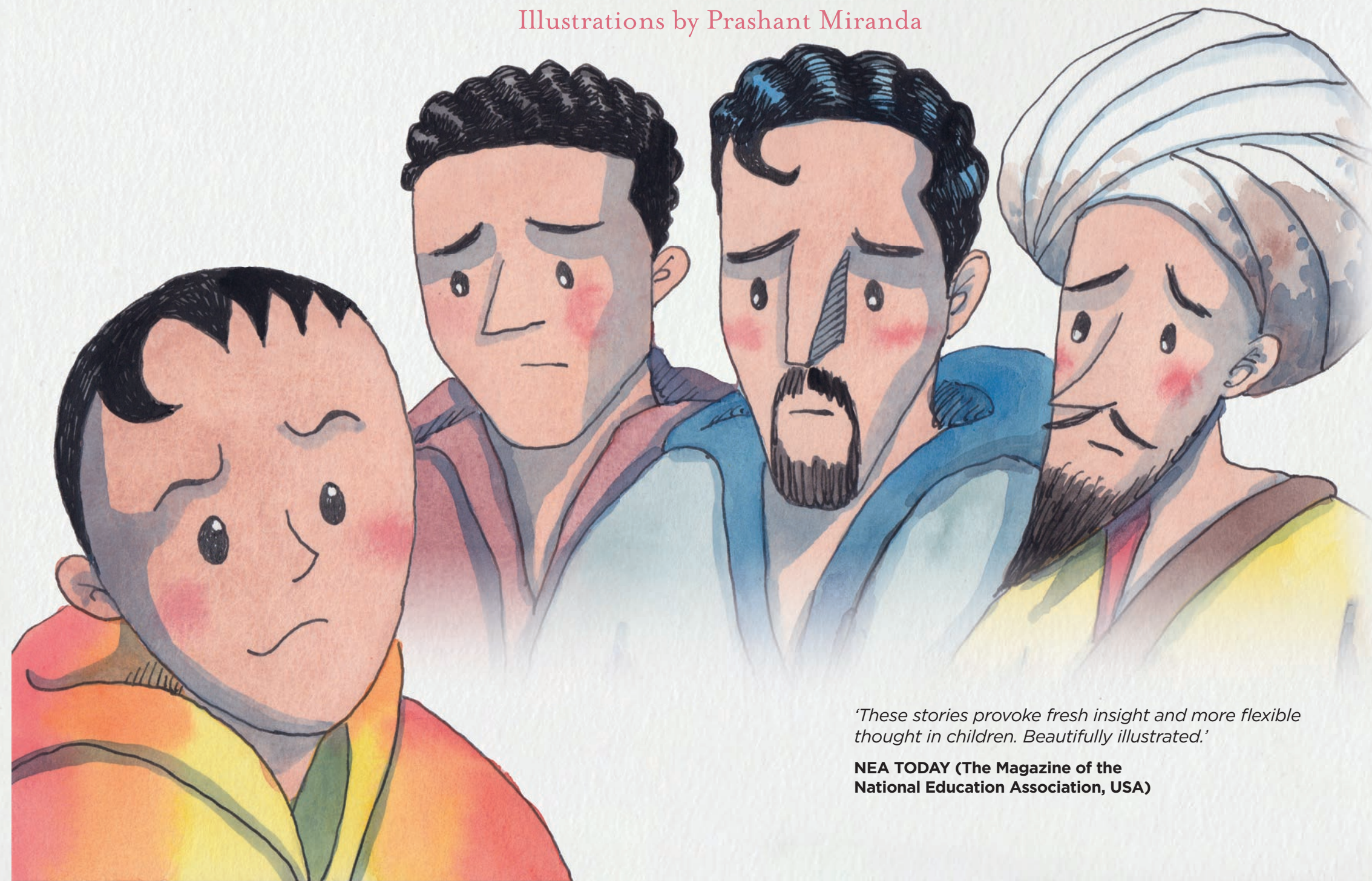


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The Boy With No Voice and the Men Who Couldn't Hear

by IDRIES SHAH

Illustrations by Prashant Miranda



'These stories provoke fresh insight and more flexible thought in children. Beautifully illustrated.'

**NEA TODAY (The Magazine of the
National Education Association, USA)**

The Boy With No Voice
and the Men Who Couldn't Hear

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The Boy With No Voice And The Men Who Couldn't Hear

by IDRIES SHAH



Once upon a time there lived a poor goatherd.



Every day, to seek fresh grazing, he took his goats to a hill overlooking the village where he lived with his family. He was deaf, but this did not matter to him at all.





One day, he found that his wife had forgotten to give him the bundle containing his midday meal.

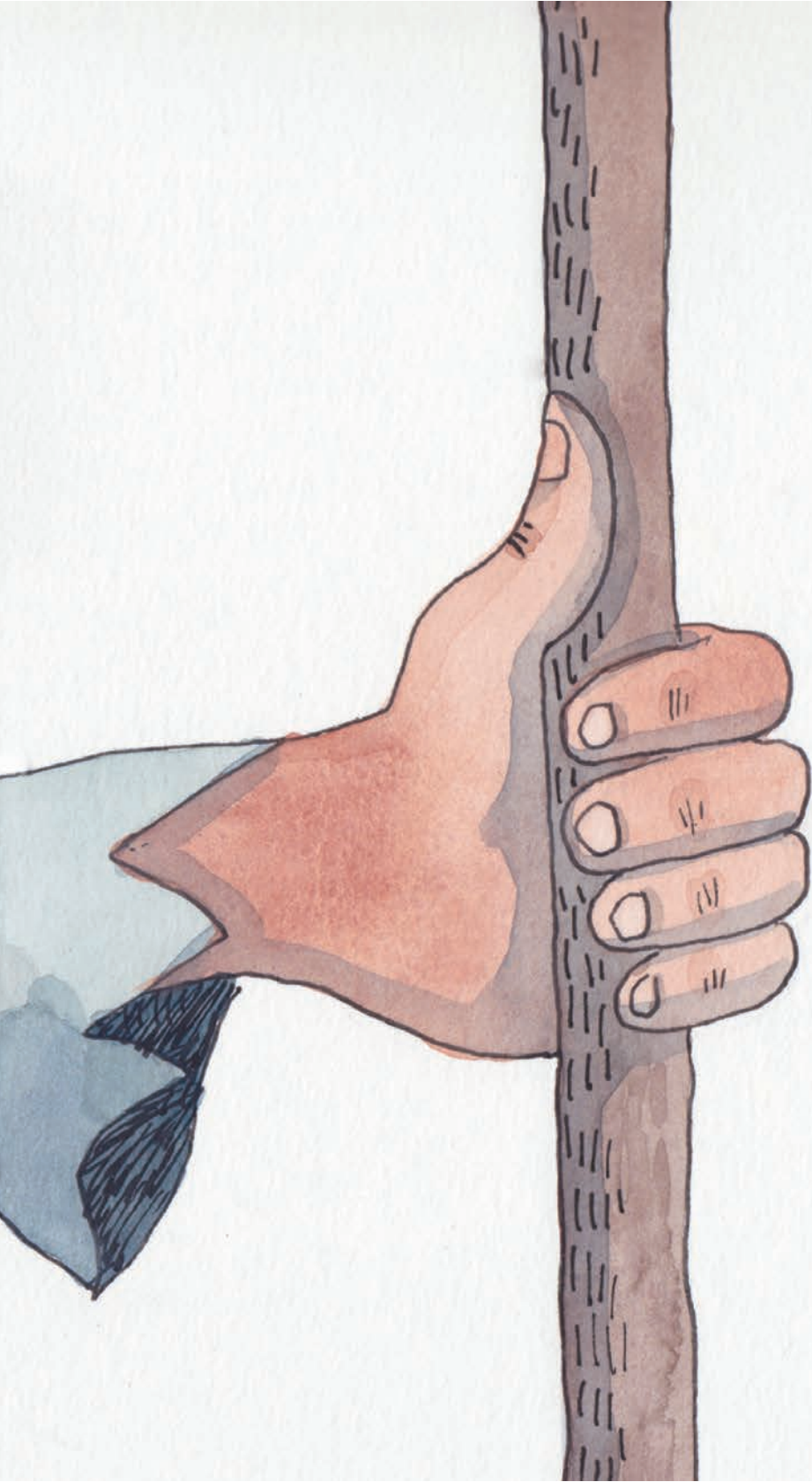


Nor did she send it with their little girl later in the day, as she usually did when she had forgotten his lunch in the past.



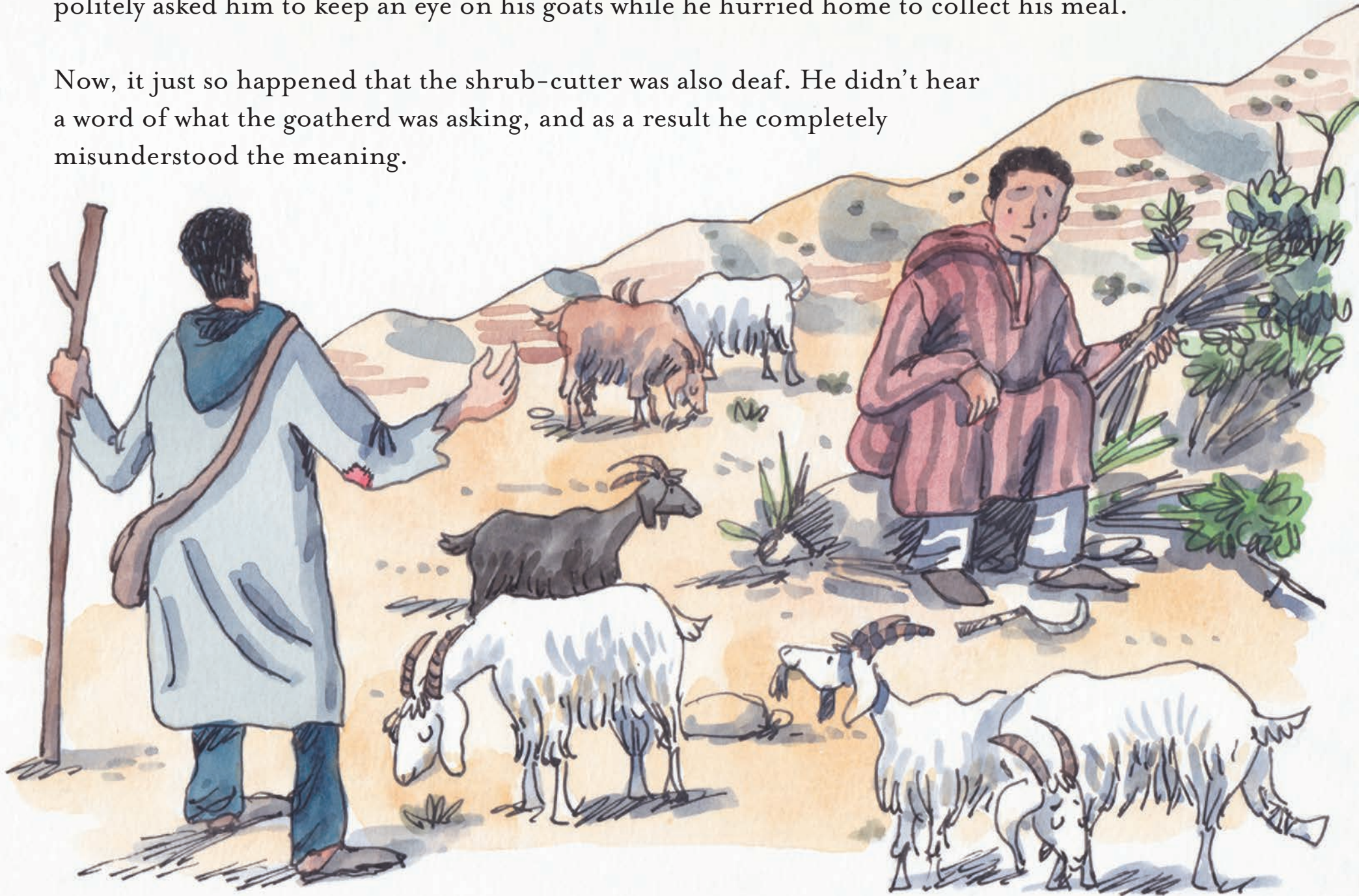


'I will go home and get it myself,' said the man,
'I can't stay out here all day without a bite to eat.'



Noticing a man cutting shrubs on the hillside nearby, the goatherd went up to him and politely asked him to keep an eye on his goats while he hurried home to collect his meal.

Now, it just so happened that the shrub-cutter was also deaf. He didn't hear a word of what the goatherd was asking, and as a result he completely misunderstood the meaning.



'Why should I give you any of the foliage that I am gathering for my own animals? I have a cow and two sheep at home, and as it is I have to search far and wide for food for them.

'Leave me alone, I want nothing to do with the likes of you, trying to get something for nothing in this shameless way.'



Not having heard a word the shrub-cutter had said,
the goatherd thanked him warmly and ran off to the
village to find his lunch.



There he found his wife sick with a terrible fever.



Seeing that the neighbour's wife was in attendance,
he took his bundle of food and dashed back to his goats,
carefully counting them and finding them all to be there.





The shrub-cutter was still busy with his task and didn't even look up upon the goatherd's return.

Filled with gratitude towards the man who had supposedly watched his livestock, without seeking a word of thanks for his service, the goatherd said to himself,

'What an excellent person this trustworthy shrub-cutter has proven himself to be!

'He's seen that my animals haven't strayed, while continuing his own hard work. I'll give him the lame goat that I had meant to eat at home. It will be a fine meal for him and his family tonight.'

Tucking the undersized goat upon his shoulders, he bounded down the hill, calling as he ran,



'Brother, here is a present for looking after my herd while I was away.
Roast this goat for a meal tonight. It has a lame leg and I meant to
have it myself, but your kindness means you deserve to have it!'





But the shrub-cutter, observing the shouting man and the bleating goat upon his shoulders, shouted angrily,

‘Vile goatherd, I never saw what happened while you were gone, so how can I be responsible for the injured leg of your infernal animal? Leave me to my work or I’ll thrash you on the head with this bunch of thorns!’

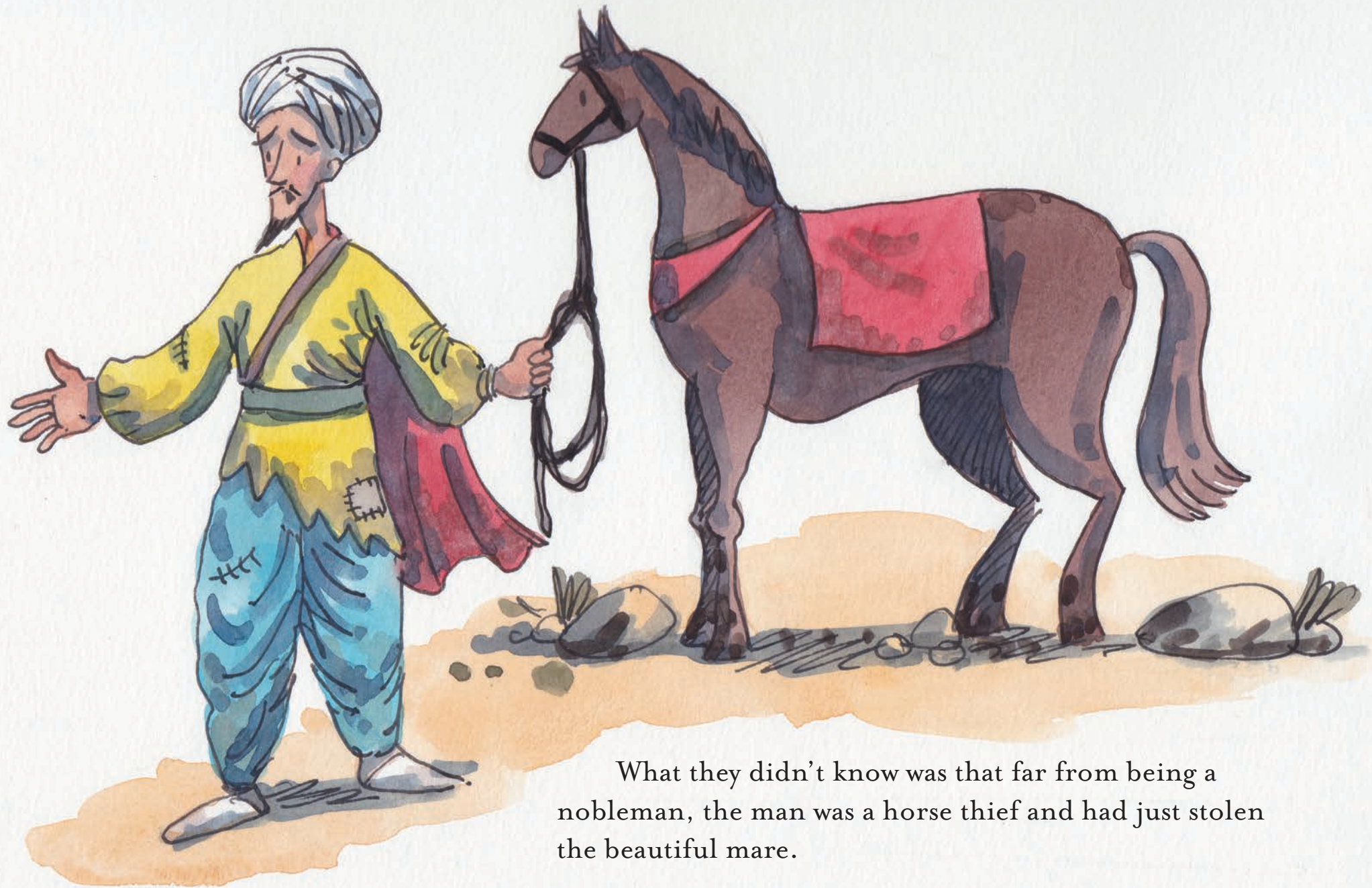
The goatherd was amazed by the man's enraged gestures, but he couldn't hear what he was saying, so he called to a passer-by who was riding a fine horse:





'Please, noble sir, could you possibly tell me what this shrub-cutter is talking about? I happen to be deaf and cannot fathom why he should refuse my gift of a goat with such obvious annoyance.'

By now both the goatherd and the shrub-cutter were shouting at the horseman, and he got off his horse and came towards them.



What they didn't know was that far from being a nobleman, the man was a horse thief and had just stolen the beautiful mare.

They also didn't know that by some remarkable coincidence, he, too, was profoundly deaf.

'I confess all,' he cried, 'but how could you know that I had stolen the horse?'



'I had nothing to do with the laming of the goat,' yelled the shrub-cutter.

'Ask him why he'll not take my generous gift,' yelled the goatherd.





At this moment a small boy came wandering along
the dusty village road.

Welcoming another witness, no matter how young,
the shrub-cutter rushed up to the startled boy.





‘Be a good lad and explain to me just what these other two are going on about,’ he instructed the boy.

‘Don’t let them tell the authorities that I stole the horse!’ begged the horse thief.

‘Tell me why the shrub-cutter is so angry,’ wailed the goatherd.

But what none of the three men knew was that the boy was unable to speak and was therefore quite unable to explain anything to any of them in words.

Instead of talking, he looked penetratingly at each one of them in turn, trying to think of a way in which to explain his inability to talk.



His stare was so fixed that each man in turn began to feel uncomfortable as the boy's honest, dark eyes bore into him.



The horse thief broke first, suddenly springing upon the mare and riding furiously away.

The shrub-cutter packed his shrubs in a net, hoisted it upon his shoulders, and started up the hill towards home.







And the goatherd, realising that he really should go and check on his ailing wife, began to round up his herd and drive them away.



With a sigh of relief, the boy reflected to himself what a muddled form of communication speech was, and off he went, feeling happier than ever to have nothing to do with it.



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The Boy With No Voice and the Men Who Couldn't Hear

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