



How Noor found her family

A story on Arabia

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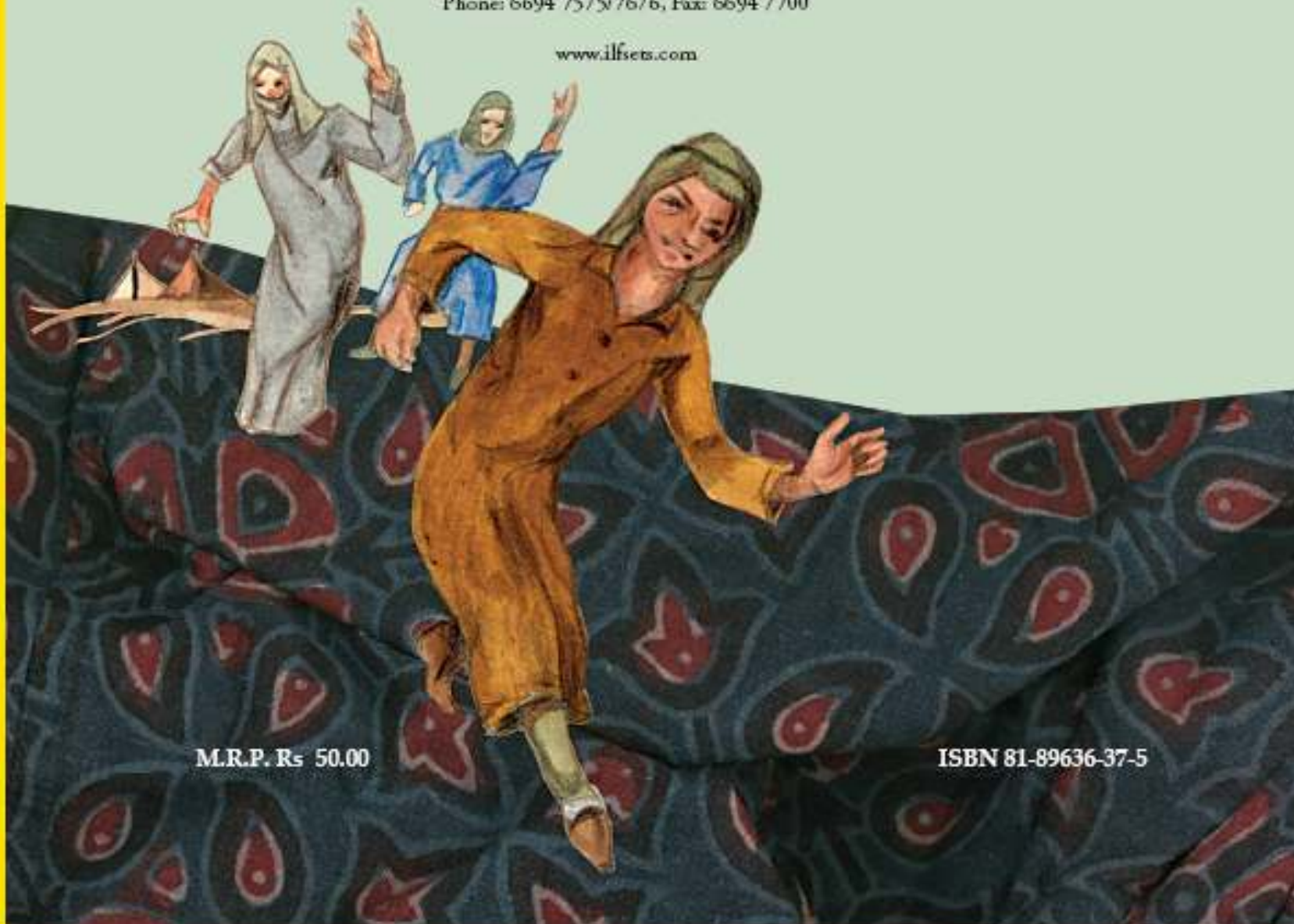
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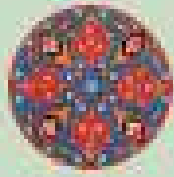
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M.R.P. Rs 50.00

ISBN 81-89636-37-5

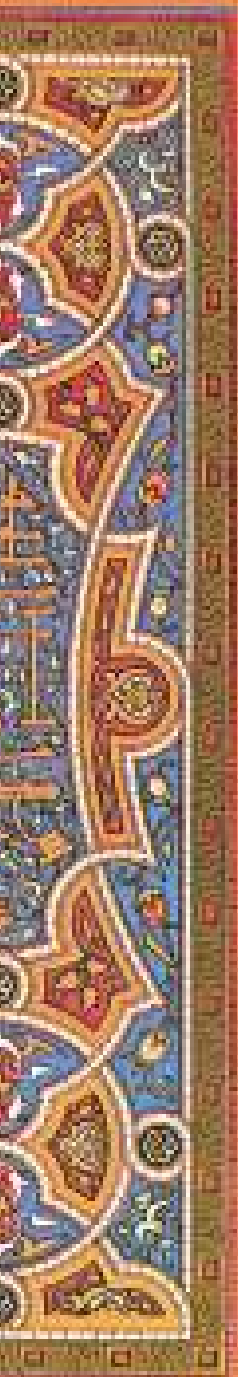
Lost and Found



How Noor found her family

— A story on Arabia —







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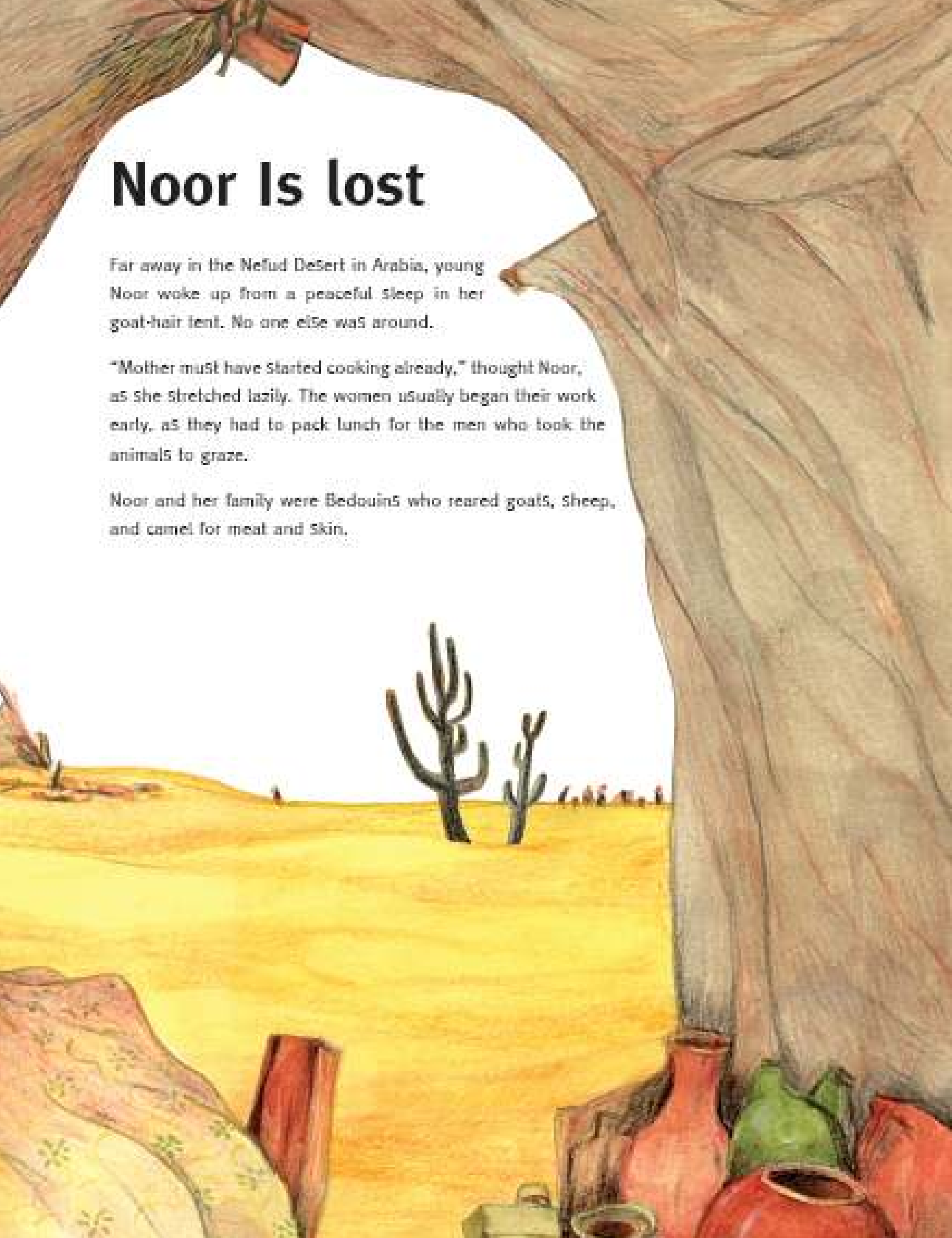


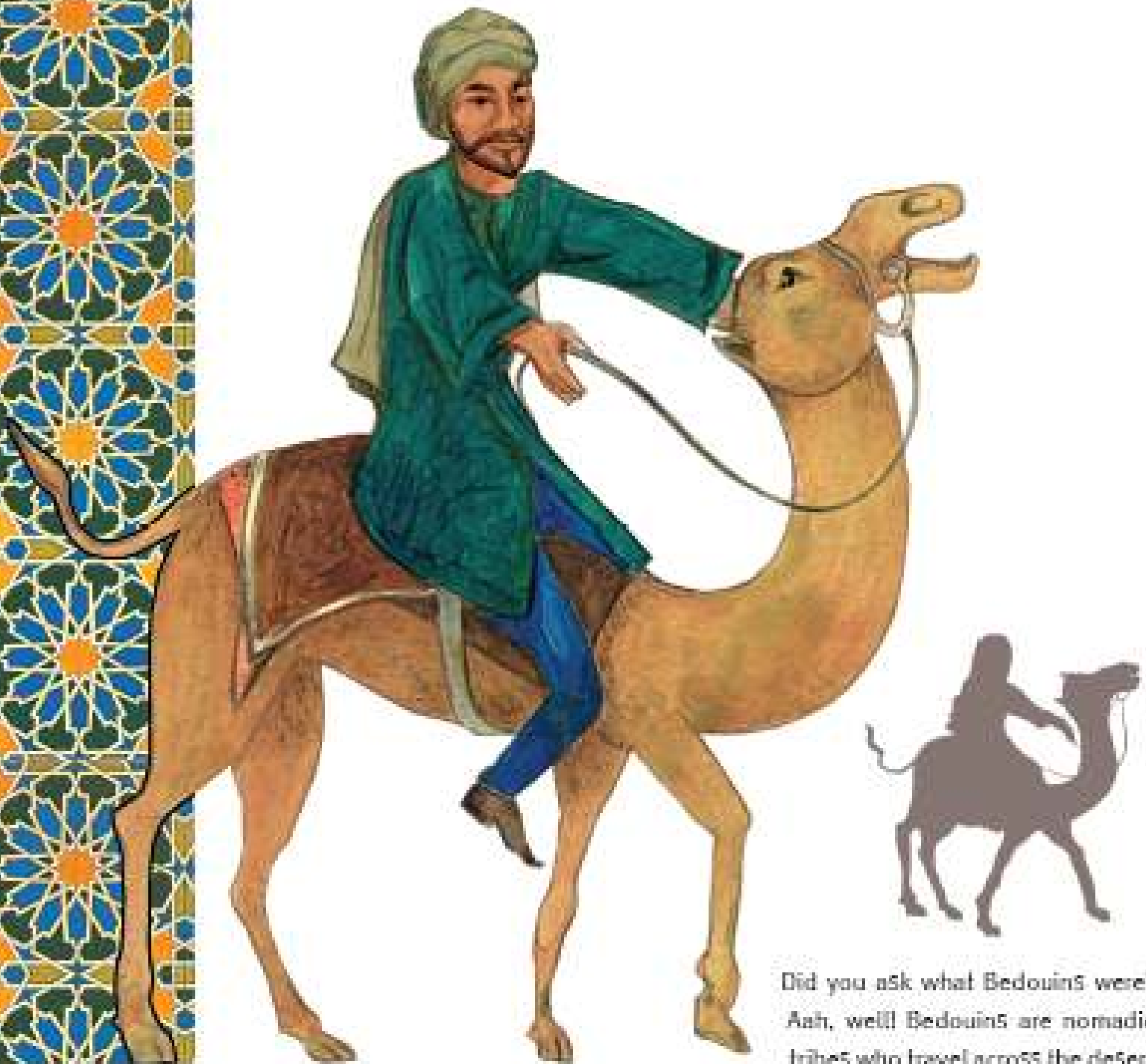
Noor Is lost

Far away in the Nefud Desert in Arabia, young Noor woke up from a peaceful sleep in her goat-hair tent. No one else was around.

"Mother must have started cooking already," thought Noor, as she stretched lazily. The women usually began their work early, as they had to pack lunch for the men who took the animals to graze.

Noor and her family were Bedouins who reared goats, sheep, and camel for meat and skin.





Did you ask what Bedouins were? Aah, well! Bedouins are nomadic tribes who travel across the desert

in big caravans, with their belongings and animals. Big, slow caravans consisting of dozens of camels, goats, sheep and scores of people and baggage were a common sight in the desert, long ago when this story happened.

In those days, the Arabian kingdom was being ruled by Caliph Al-Mamun of the Abbasid dynasty. Several generations before him, his family had been related to Prophet Mohammed, the founder of the religion of Islam. Prophet Mohammed had also established the first Muslim kingdom in Arabia. He was followed by many rulers or Caliphs, under whom the Islamic kingdom grew.

And now, even as Noor adjusted the scarf around her head in the Nefud desert, the Caliph was making great plans for his kingdom in his capital city Baghdad. Noor's caravan had reached the oasis only two days back, after a month of travelling. Bedouins usually stopped at oases, where they would find water for themselves and fresh grass for their animals. They would put up their tents and spend weeks – sometimes even months – while the pasture lasted. Then they would pack up and move in search of another grassy patch.

Noor's tribe had been thrilled to discover not only patches of fresh grass, but also a small, rare crystal clear pool of water! They had quickly pitched their tents and unpacked.

"Today there will be goodies," thought Noor suddenly. She remembered that her father Bilal and the other men had promised to take the children out to the village. The men were to make their first trip to the village that afternoon for provisions.

Then, something that had been nagging her for some time since she awoke, struck her. There was too much silence. Noor dashed out of the tent. The sight that met her made her freeze.

All around her were fallen and tattered tents, broken pans, knives, and vessels, crushed and torn clothes, bent poles and water spilling out of water bags. And no one in sight – man, woman, child or even animal. Not a camel. Not even a lamb. Noor looked around, again and again. It was as if a storm had swept through the camp, and carried everything with it. Everything except her.

What had happened at night, she asked herself. Where was everyone? Why had she been left behind? Noor fell to her knees in shock and panic under the merciless sun. She closed her streaming eyes and prayed, "Allah, save me from danger. Take me to my people!"



• The areas marked in red show the extent of the Arab Empire