

Zahra

The relentless sun beat cruelly down on the parched earth, as a small, slender girl rushed along the desert path. Her colourful skirts swung around her legs as she cradled the painted pot in her lean arms. She fell to her knees in front of a twisted, crooked tree and poured water on the dry roots. She paused. Her green eyes glistened with dismay. A dry leaf fell from the tree.

Rapidly, the determined girl turned on her heels, darting back towards her village on bare, painted feet, her jewellery clinked as she ran. She placed the pot under the water pump. She grasped the curved, metal handle of the village pump and pulled and pushed the handle. Water gushed into the pot. Clasp the heavy pot in her arms once more, she ran back along the path to feed the thirsty tree.

Zahra made multiple trips along the hot and dusty path. The blinding sun beat cruelly down on her. Her purple, braided hair hung limp in her face with sweat. Her arms shook as she dragged herself back towards the pump. With every visit the pump had less water, until only a trickle dripped into the pot.

Glumly, Zahra returned to the tree on shaking feet. The bright sun blinded her and caused spots to dance in her eyes. Determined, she trudged on through the endless heat. The path stretched out long and unending in front of her. She trudged some more, wiping the sweat that dripped into her squinting eyes. She staggered as she reached the tree and clung to the rough branch. Her shadow waved in front of her eyes. The pot hit the floor with a heavy thud. Empty. A bead of sweat dripped from her head and hit the dusty roots of the tree. She fell where she stood, her head rested on the roots of the tree, her painted hand stretched out on the burning sand.

Whilst the exhausted girl slept, something magical happened. It started with the hint of a cool breeze. Purple swirls rapidly spread across the tree in time with her heartbeat. As the swirls grew so did the length of the tree. It stretched strong branches towards the sun. Unfurled leaves of peacock blue and green and fought the sun. Under its protective shade, Zahra sighed in relief, turned into the breeze, and slept. Peace.