



The Silly Chicken

The Silly Chicken is the delightful tale of a chicken who learns to speak as we do.

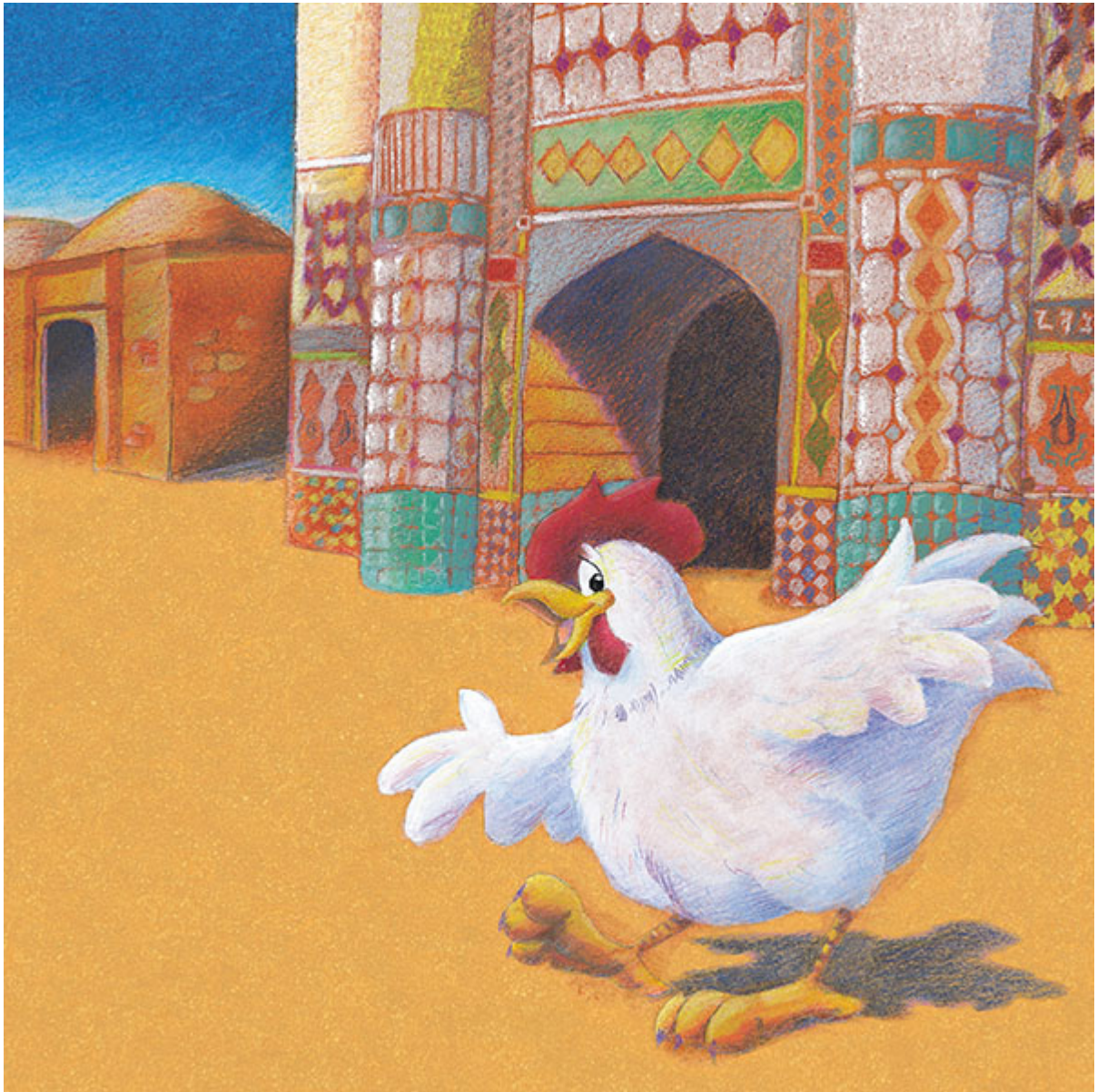


The Silly Chicken
Idries Shah

Let's Read



The Asia Foundation



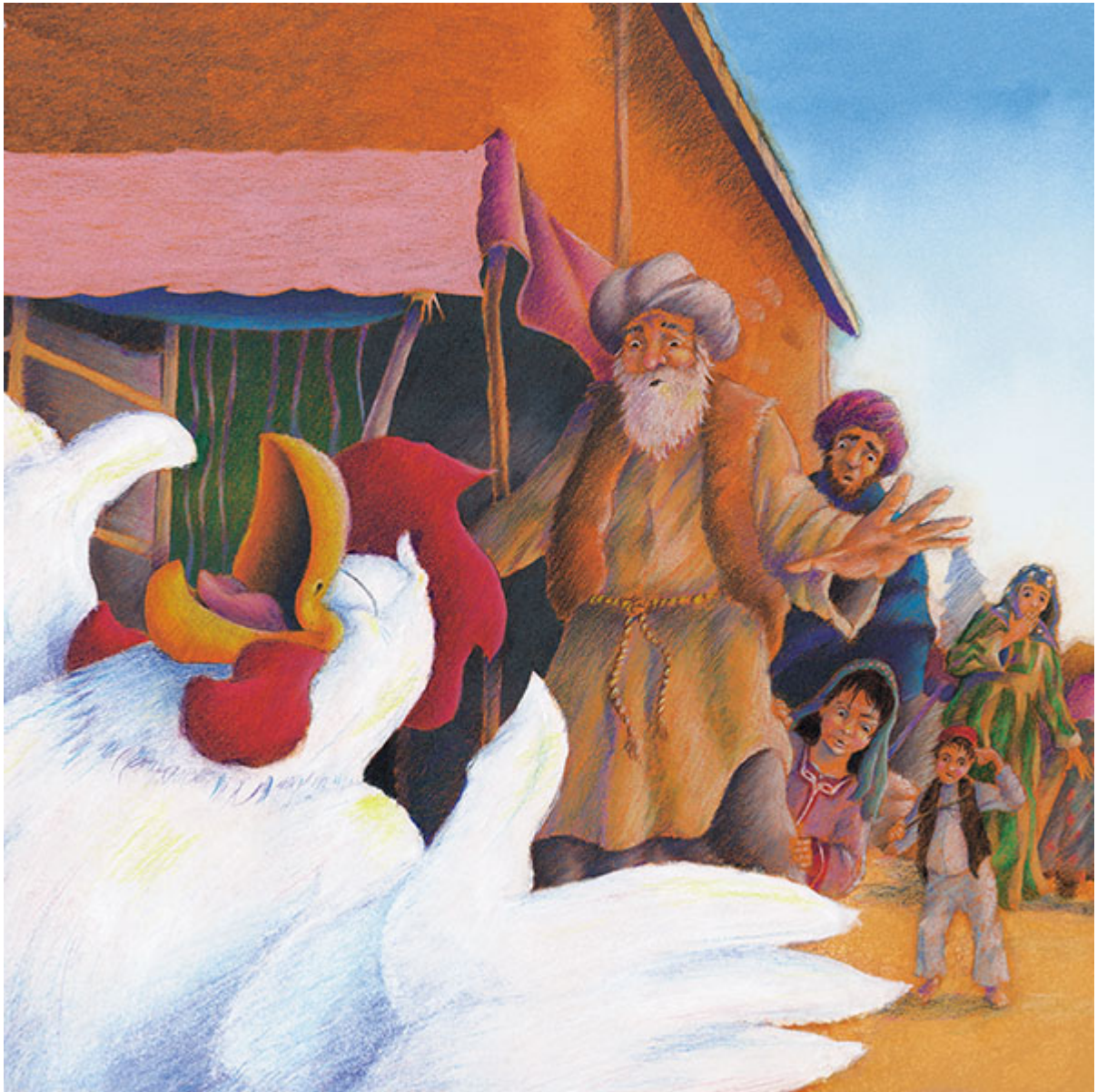
ONCE UPON A TIME in a country far away, there was a town, and in the town there was a chicken, and he was a very silly chicken indeed. He went about saying "Tuck-tuck-tuck, tuck-tuck tuck, tuck-tuck-tuck." And nobody knew what he meant. Of course, he didn't mean anything at all, but nobody knew that. They thought that "Tuck-tuck-tuck, tuck-tuck-tuck, tuck-tuck-tuck" must mean something.



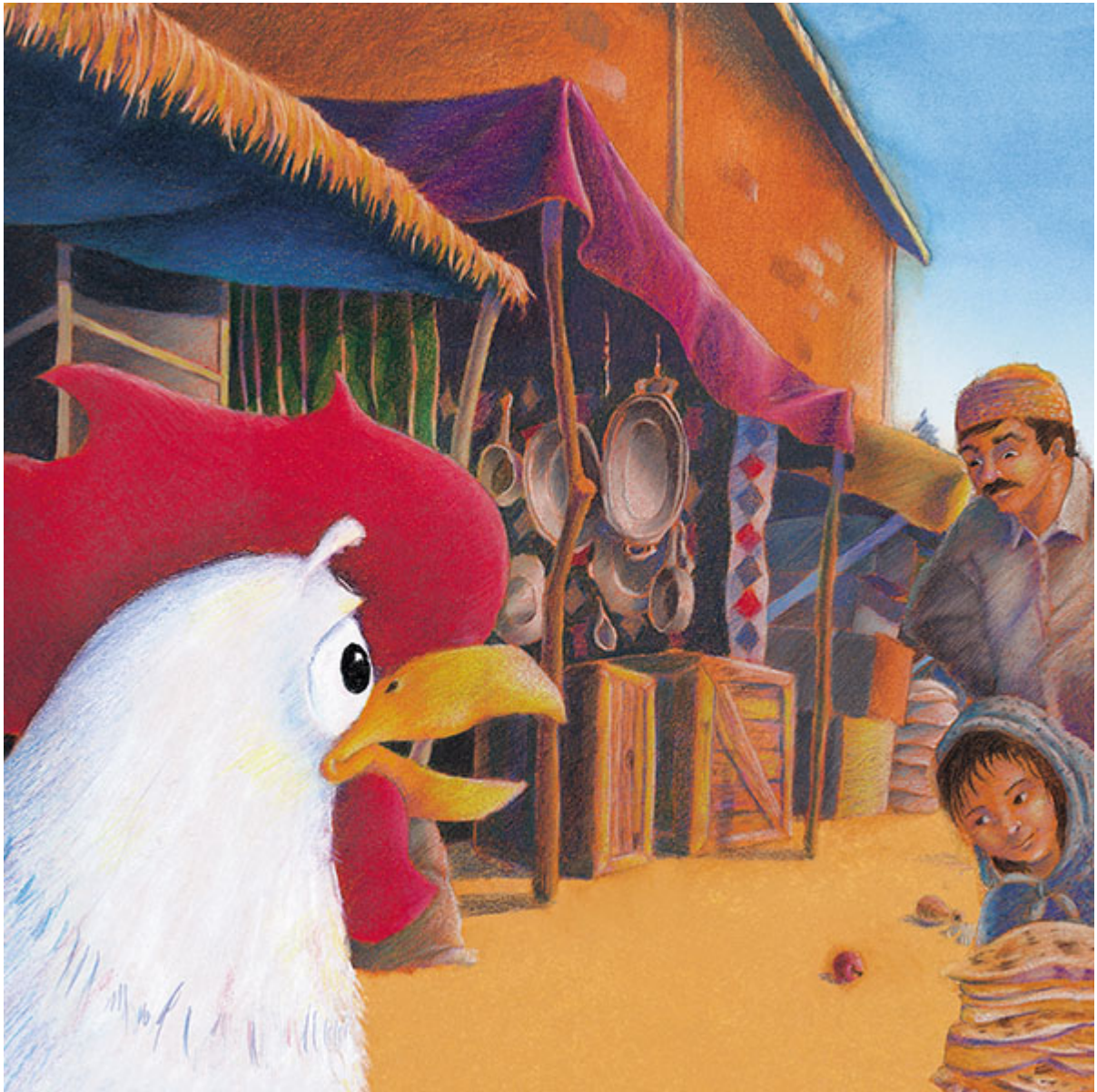
Now, a very clever man came to the town, and he decided to see if he could find out what the chicken meant by "Tuck-tuck-tuck, tuck-tuck-tuck, tuck-tuck-tuck." First he tried to learn the chicken's language. He tried, and he tried, and he tried. But all he learned to say was "Tuck-tuck-tuck, tuck-tuck-tuck, tuck-tuck-tuck." Unfortunately, although he sounded just like the chicken, he had no idea what he was saying.



Then he decided to teach the chicken to speak our kind of language. He tried, and he tried, and he tried. It took him quite a long time, but in the end, the chicken could speak perfectly well, just like you and me.



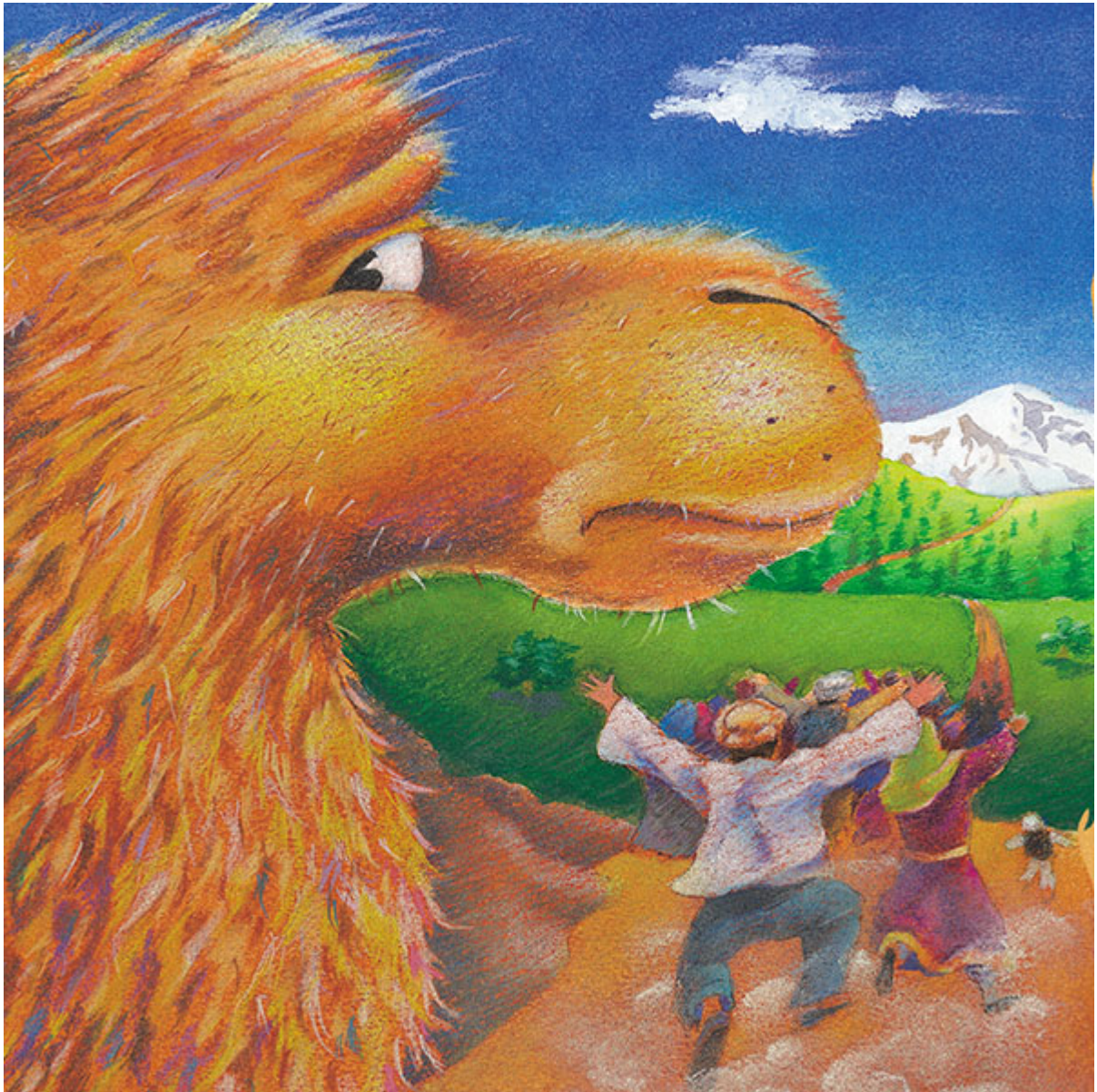
After learning to speak as we do, the chicken went into the main street of the town and called out, "The earth is going to swallow us up!" At first the people didn't hear what he was saying because they didn't expect a chicken to be talking human language.



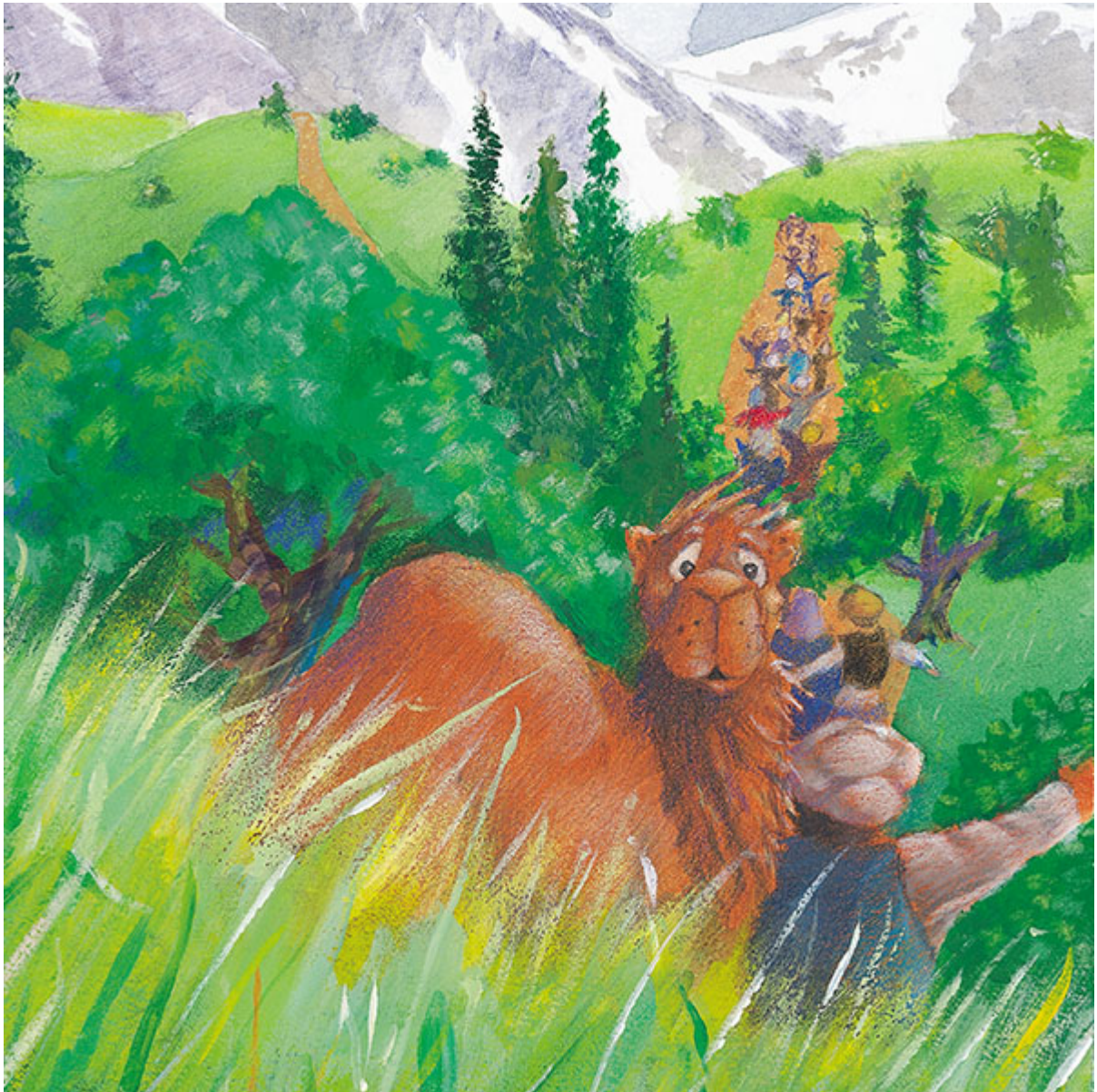
The chicken called out again, "The earth is going to swallow us up!" This time the people heard him, and they began to cry out. "Good Heavens!" "Good Gracious!" "Dear me!" "The earth is going to swallow us up!" "Yes, indeed! The chicken says so!"



Thoroughly alarmed, all the people packed up their most precious things and began to run to get away from the earth. They ran from one town...



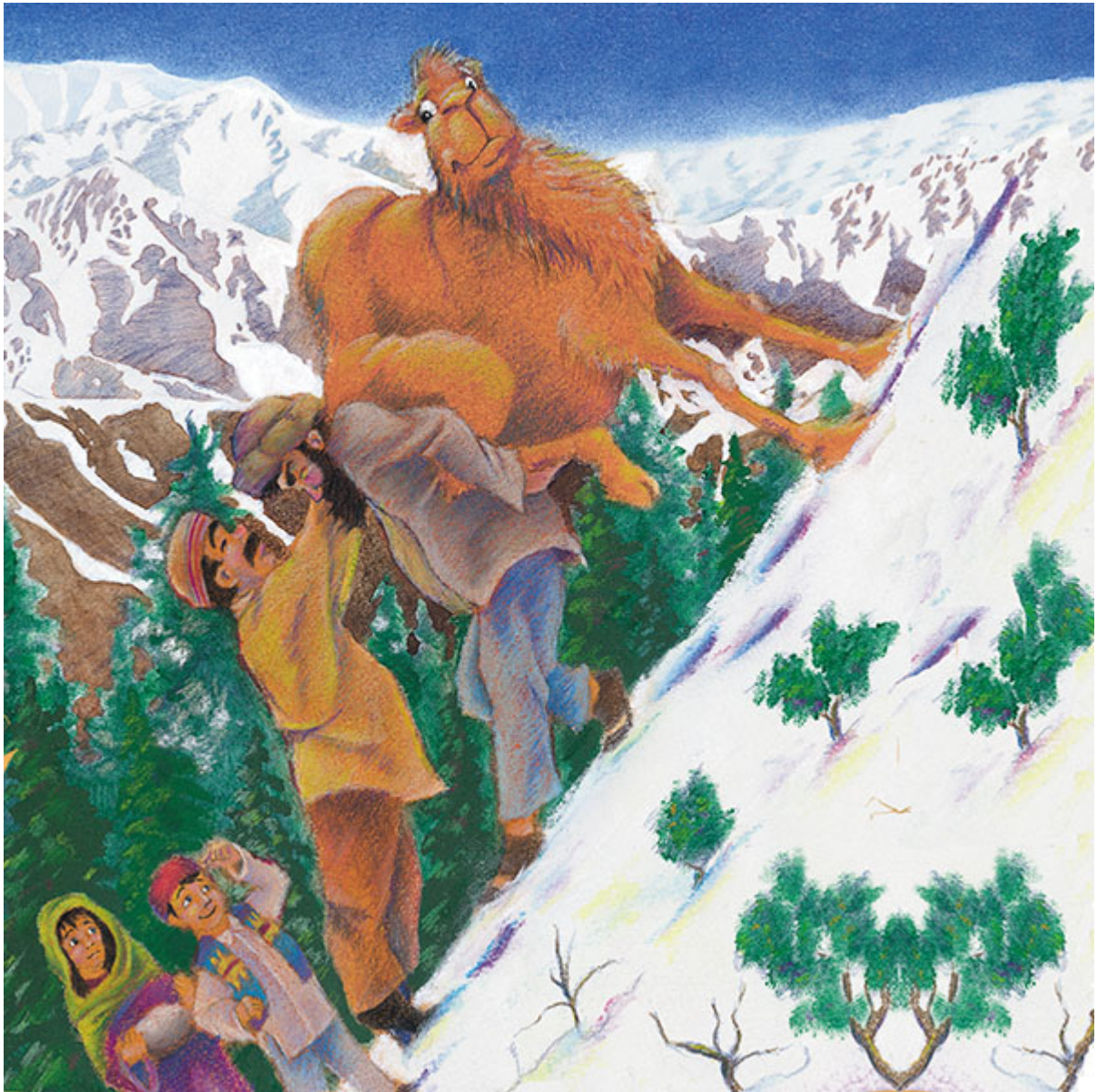
to another.



They ran through the fields and into the woods



and across the meadows.



They ran up the mountains...



and down the mountains.



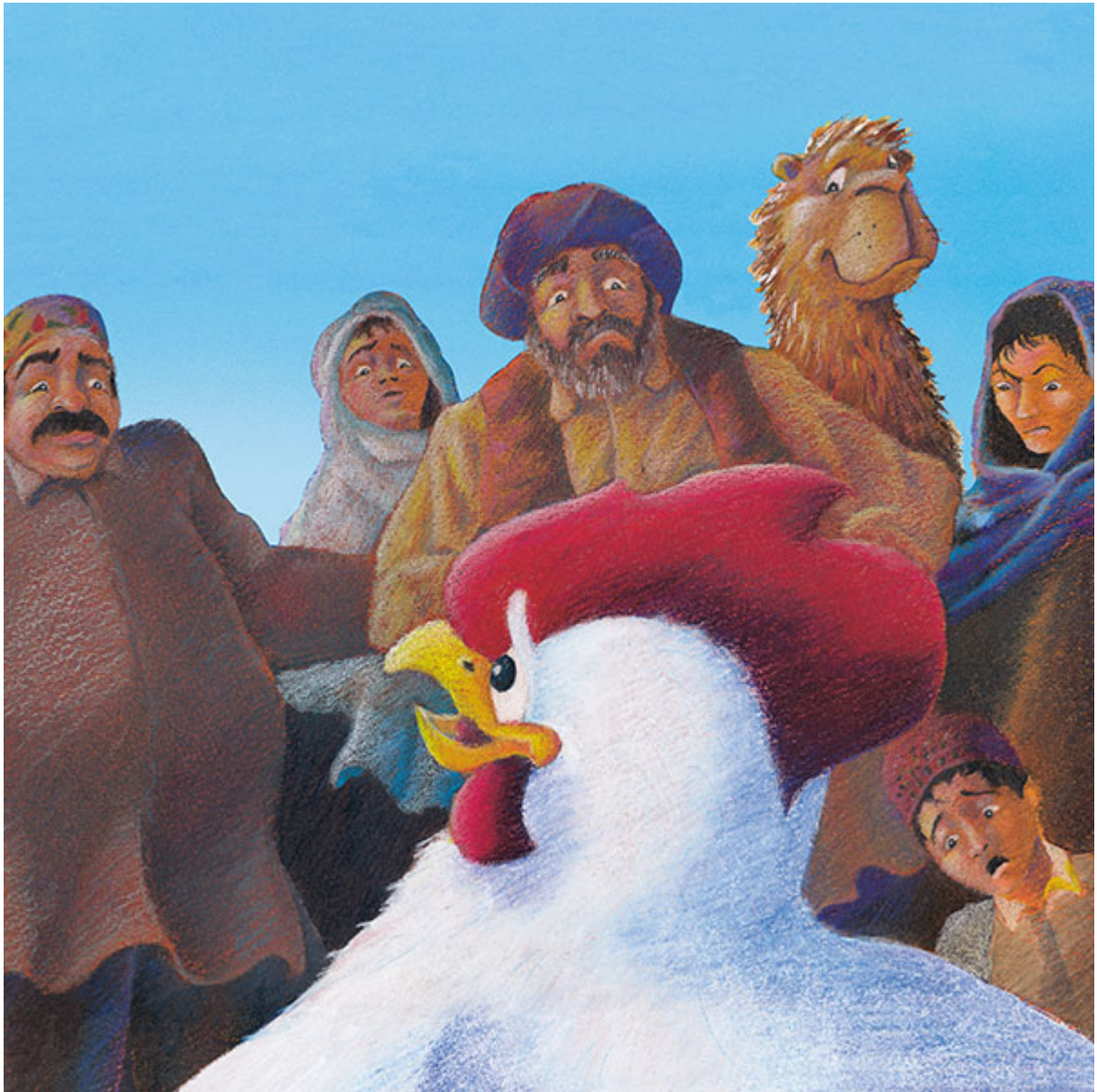
They ran down the world and up the world... and around the world.



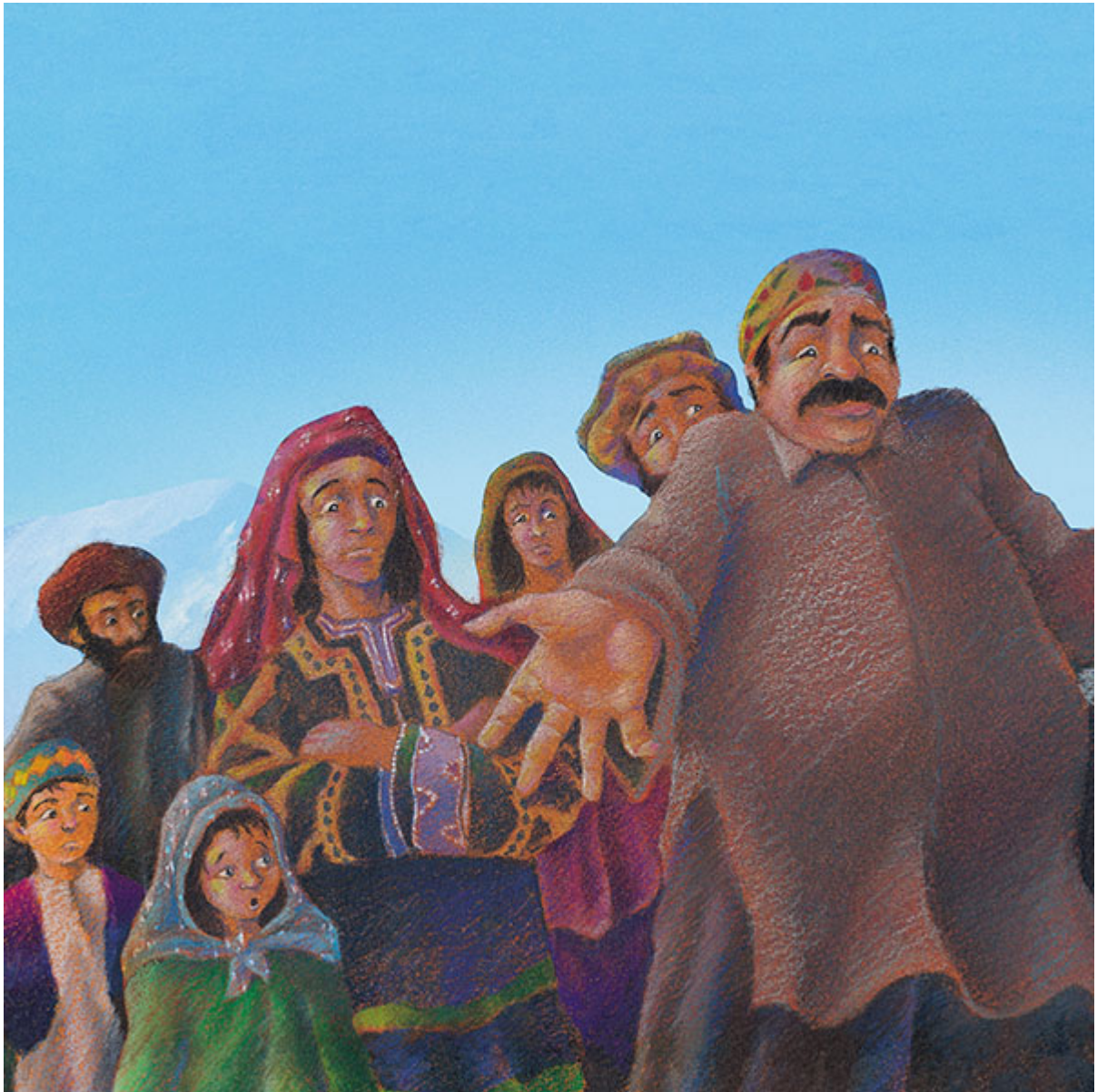
They ran in every possible direction.



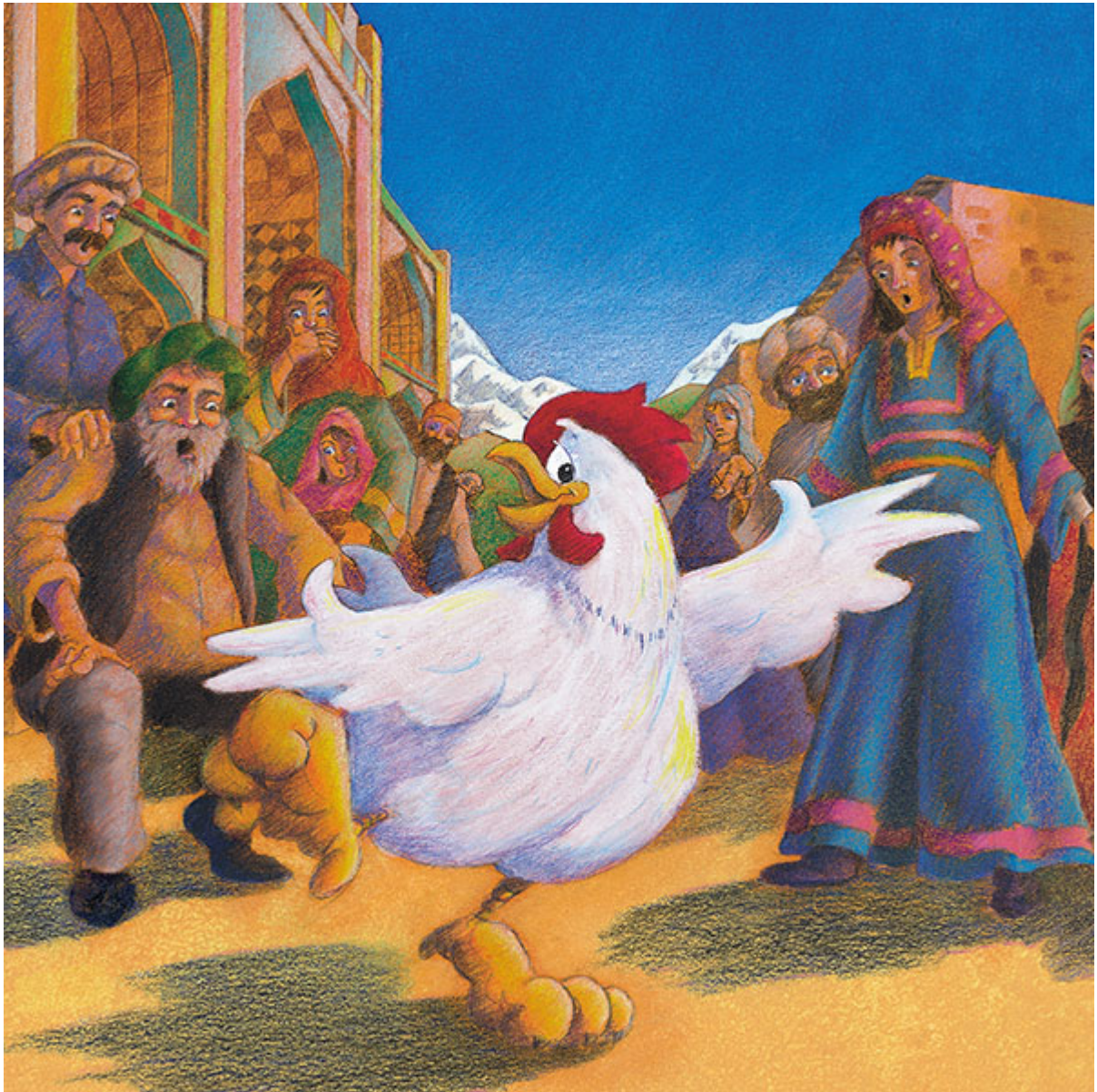
But they still couldn't get away from the earth.



Finally they came back to their town. And there was the chicken, just where they had left him before they started running.



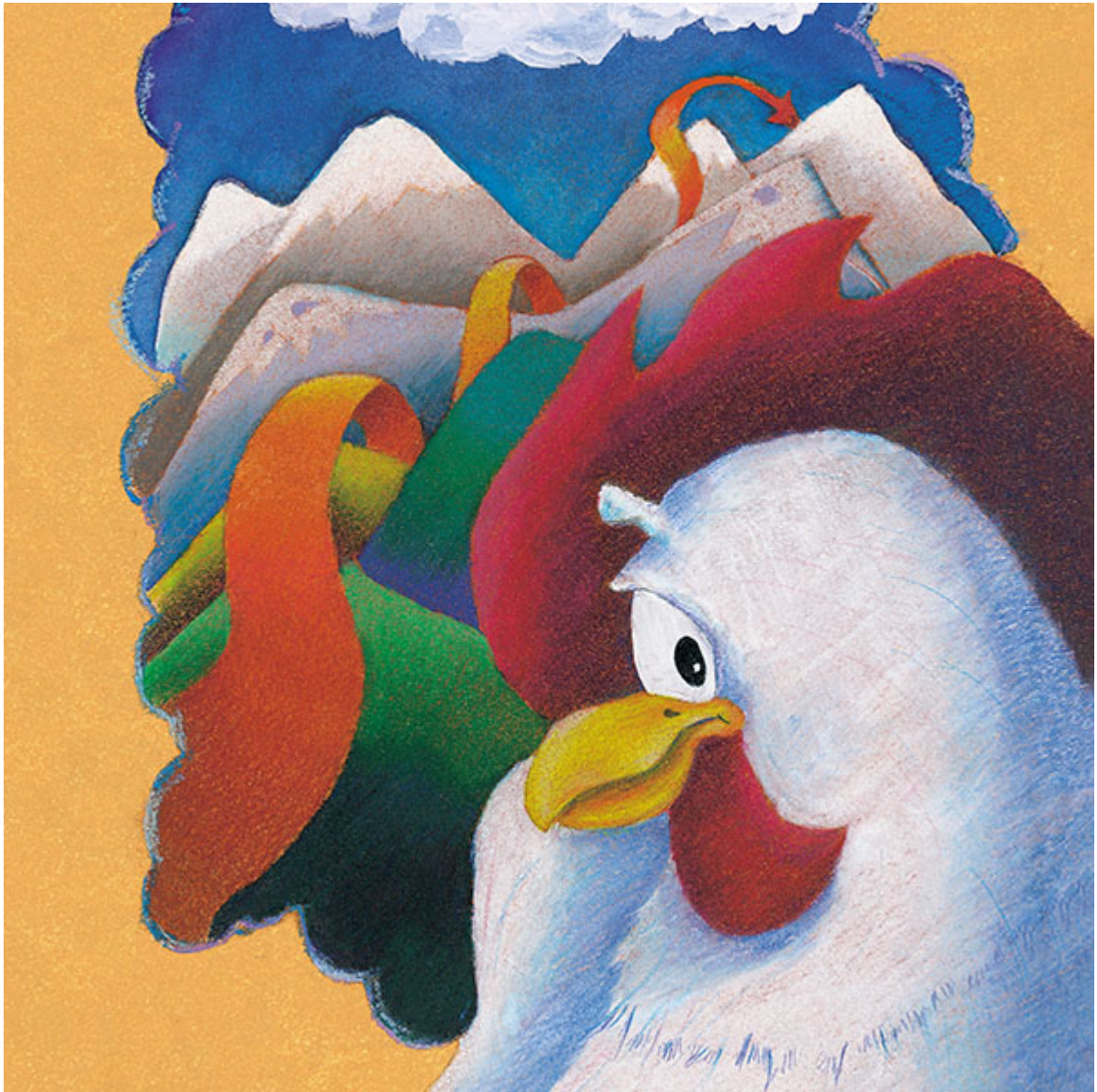
"How do you know the earth is going to swallow us up?" they asked the chicken.



"I don't know," said the chicken. At first the people were astonished, and they said again and again, "You don't know? You don't know? You don't know?" And then they became furious, and they glared sternly at the chicken and spoke in angry voices. "How could you tell us such a thing?" "How dare you!"



"You made us run from one town to another!"



"You made us run through the fields and into the woods and across the meadows!"



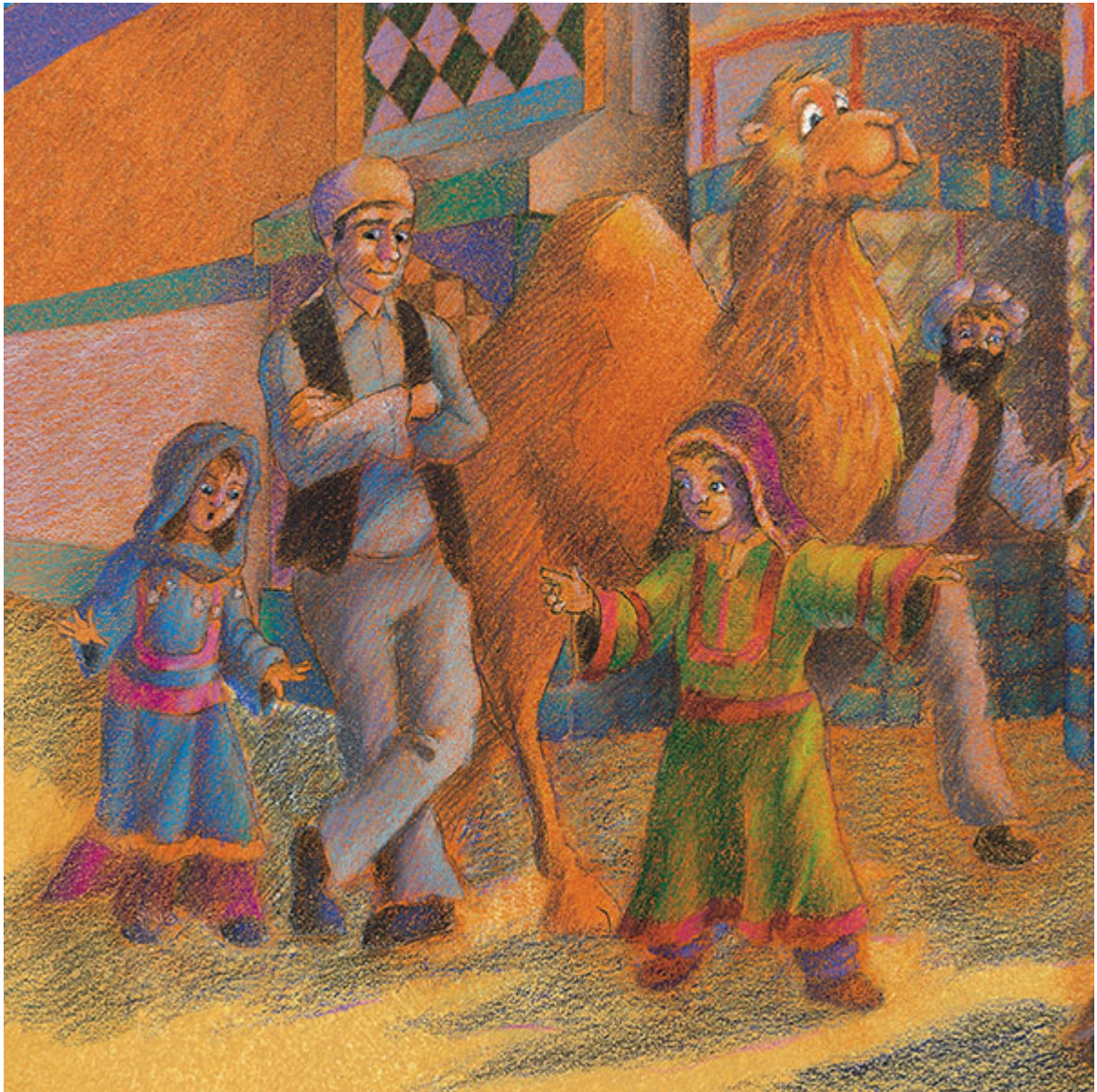
"You made us run up the mountains and down the mountains!" "You made us run down the world and up the world and around the world!"



"You made us run in every possible direction!" "And all the while we thought you knew the earth was going to swallow us up!"



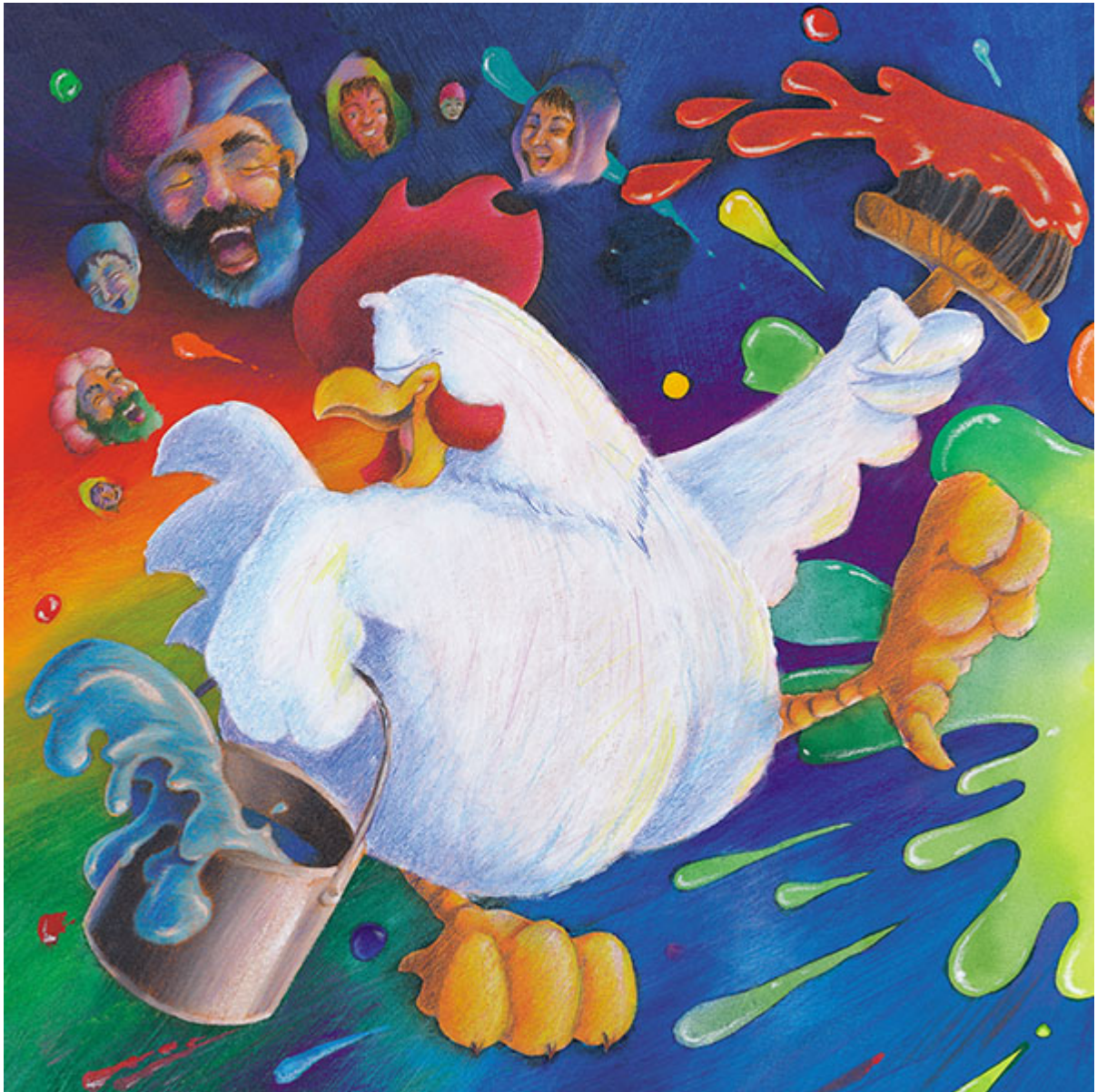
The chicken smoothed his feathers and cackled and said, "Well, that just shows you how silly you are! Only silly people would listen to a chicken in the first place. You think a chicken knows something just because he can talk?"



At first the people just stared at the chicken, and they began to laugh. They laughed, and they laughed, and they laughed because they realized how silly they had been, and they found that very funny indeed.



After that, whenever they wanted to laugh they would go to the chicken and say, "Tell us something to make us laugh." And the chicken would say, "Cups and saucers are made out of knives and forks!" The people would laugh and say, "Who are you? Who are you?" And the chicken would reply, "I am an egg." The people would laugh at this, too, because they knew he wasn't an egg, and then they would say, "If you're an egg, why aren't you yellow?"



"I am not yellow," the chicken would reply, "because I painted myself blue." The people would laugh at this, too, because they could see he was not blue at all, and then they would say, "What did you paint yourself with?" And the chicken would reply, "With red ink." And at this they laughed the hardest of all.



And now people everywhere laugh at chickens and never take any notice of what they say—even if they can talk—because, of course, everybody knows that chickens are silly. And that chicken still goes on and on in that town, in that far-away country, telling people things to make them laugh.



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