

A Sense of Water: Highlighted Story Example

The south of Morocco is officially classified as semi-arid; for most of us that means just plain dry. Rainy season here is at the time most people in the United States are having winter. Contrary to my initial understanding, rainy season around here means the only season when it possibly might rain, but there are no guarantees that it will. During this season, every conversation I began with comments on whether there had been any rain in the past few days, its abundance, and if any other neighboring villages had had rain.

In the springtime, the nomads from the Sahara roam into my region. They come to graze their camels on the stalks of the barley that have been left after harvest. As I sit and watch the camels herded by, black silhouettes against the setting sun, I believe it is the closest I will ever come to anything from the *Arabian Nights*. These tribes have sustained their traditional pastoral lifestyle for centuries, with a few minor adjustments—I watch some of them drive their camels with rickety white mini-trucks.

One of the most sacred of social rules can be traced to these nomads. It is absolutely forbidden to ever deny water to anybody asking for a drink. It is quite customary to see someone walk into a store, ask for water, drink it, and move on; it's just how life works. This stems from the nomads traveling around the desert for centuries; they depended on the wells and villages they knew to provide them with water.

So, in my dry region, where water is scarce and the farmers are perpetually looking to the sky and Allah for rain, I see these same farmers handing a family that has set up camp for a week or two a few gallons of water. Water is the scarcest and most precious of resources and yet their religion and culture have made people generous with it.

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