

Sandblasters

The Paper Dhow

The illustration depicts a man in a white thobe and ghutra using a magnifying glass to inspect a large, white, paper dhow. In the foreground, two other men in traditional white attire are looking towards the dhow. The background features a desert landscape with palm trees under a warm, orange sky.

By Damian Morgan
Illustrated by Mark Guthrie

GREEN SET

Iqbal's taxi hurtled into the square; Iqbal saw the dhow at the last minute, wrenched the car into a tight turn that sprayed sand and gravel toward Obeid, then hurtled out the other side.

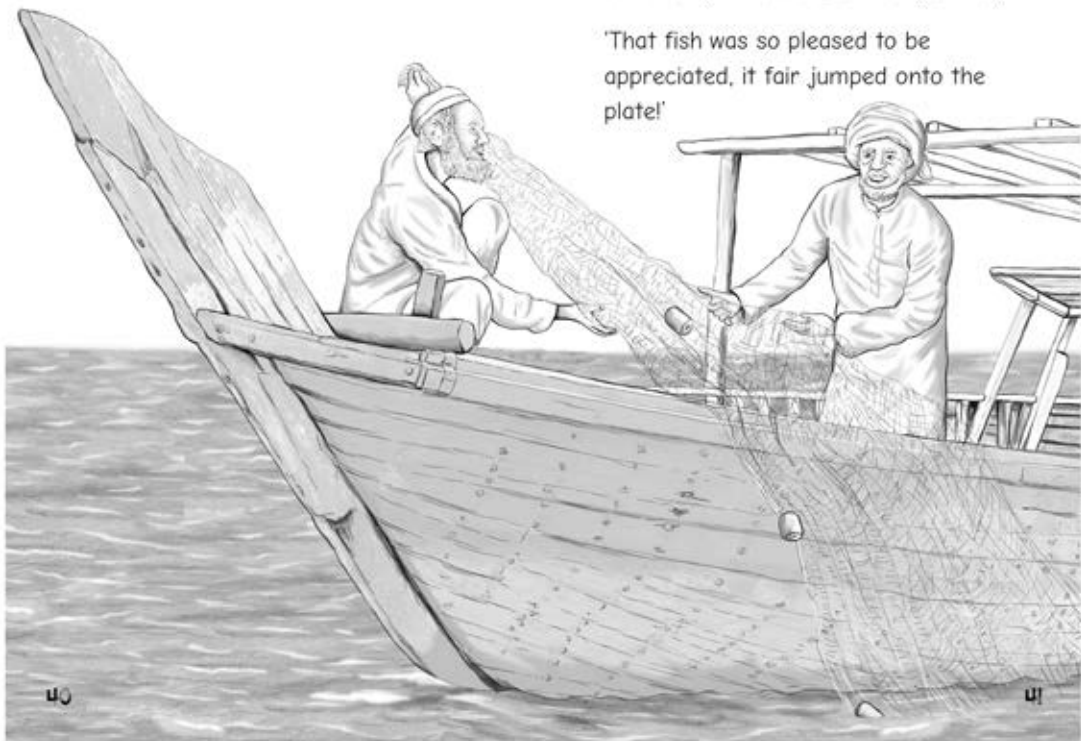
Usama's driver opened Usama's grand garage doors, and a moment later drove out the gleaming BMW with Usama seated beside him. Instead of accelerating across the square, the car stopped and Usama jumped from the air-conditioned interior. Slowly he circled the paper dhow, glaring at it. The old man wore a crisp white shirt and black suit. He stroked his thin grey beard, showing his irritation.

He strode over to Obeid. 'What is it?'



'And tasty,' Ali said. 'Don't forget tasty!'

'That fish was so pleased to be appreciated, it fair jumped onto the plate!'



'Remember the *Ifta* meals!'

'Ah!' The men almost sang the word.

Ali said, 'To edge the boat towards the shore and fold away the sail, smell the charcoal wafting from the beach, stomachs hollow, skin tight from the salt of the sea.'

'The voices of the children and the women, drifting over the calm water. Like they were with us.'

'They were with us.'

'The sun would set, we would pray and then we sat together, the whole village, and we broke our fast.'



An hour before dawn, when Obeid was fast asleep, a breeze drifted in from the Arabian Gulf. The breeze was gentle as it tugged at the paper dhow. It was gentle, but insistent. It tugged and fretted and pried until the brittle paper of the dhow folded away and into the air. Paper followed paper until not one piece was left in the sandy, gravelled open space. But all around the village, stuck in trees, wrapped around poles, caught in gaps in the walls, pieces of the paper dhow found a second home.

