# The Sons of Sultan Bey

LONG ago in Libya, the Sultan Bey had three sons and their names were Hussein, Hassan, and Ali. When they were grown to the flower of youth, and when they were finished with schooling and with books, and were trained in the arts of war, so that no man could stand up against them either with sword or with spear, the Sultan called his sons to him. Said the Sultan: "My beard is white and my arm grows weak. In the course of time, I will die and one of you will replace me. Therefore I will now hold a test to see which of you is the fittest to sit as Sultan in my place. Each of you will go out and travel and bring back that which you find in the world. And from that which you bring back, and from what you relate of your travels, I will judge you. Therefore take horses and depart, and may you all journey in health!" The eldest son Hussein took his horse and saddled it. He summoned servants and slaves and baggage animals, and he set out. He traveled and traveled through the world until he came to the Hill of Arafat. That night, he pitched his tents and slept with his servants by the hill. In the night a magical creature known in those parts as a Jinni (you may know it as a Genie) came out of the Hill of Arafat, awoke him and saluted him. The Prince sat up and his heart filled with fear, for he saw the Jinni, great and ugly and terrible, standing beside his bed. But the Jinni said, "You are my guest tonight, O son of Sultan Bey, and can a Jinni harm his guest? I regret I have no feast to prepare in your honor. But I bid you to partake of my gold, for this hill is full of gold, and I am its guardian. I will give you as much as you can carry away with all your servants and all your animals." The Jinni took the Prince to the hill, and showed him a great door that opened to a tunnel, and the tunnel led to caverns that were filled to the very top with gold. The Prince called his servants and commanded them to drop all his baggage and abandon it, and he commanded them to load every camel, every donkey, every bag, and every horse with gold. When his caravan was loaded, the Prince thought, "I have surely won the kingdom, and I shall sit as Sultan in my father's place, for can my brothers bring back what I am bringing?" He commanded his caravan to march, and returned to his father's country. In a similar manner the Sultan Bey's second son, Prince Hassan, set off from his country. He took servants, slaves and soldiers, as well as donkeys, horses, and baggage camels. He traveled and traveled through the world until he, too, came to the Hill of Arafat. By the hill, he saw the tents and baggage abandoned by his elder brother and he wondered, "What disaster has befallen my brother, that his tents and all his baggage lie abandoned here?" He commanded his servants and soldiers to pitch his tents, that he might rest from his journey and investigate in the morning the trouble that might have come to his brother. In the night he slept, and the Jinni came out of the hill, awoke him and saluted him. The prince sat up in his bed and his heart filled with fear, for he saw that the Jinni was great and ugly and terrible, and that he stood over his bed. But the Jinni bade him to put aside fear, for he said, "You are my guest tonight, O second son of the Sultan Bey, as was your brother before you, and can a Jinni harm his guest? I regret that I have no feast to prepare in your honor, but I bid you to partake of my gold, for this hill is full of it, and I am its guardian, and I will give you as much gold as you can carry away with all your servants and all your animals." The Jinni took the prince to the hill and showed him the great door, and he showed him the tunnel, as he had showed to his brother, and the caverns filled to the very top with gold, for so great was the amount of gold that all that was taken by his brother was as if some specks of dust had been brushed from the pile. The Prince called his servants and commanded them to drop all his baggage and tents and abandon them, and he instructed them to load every camel and donkey and horse with gold. When all this was done, the Prince ordered his caravan to march and he returned to his own country. He thought, "What more could I bring back with me, when I have every saddle bag and even every pocket filled with gold?" The youngest prince, who was called Ali, prepared for his journey. His servants and slaves came to him and asked him how many horses and camels and donkeys he required, but he replied, "Bring me only my mare and my sword, since I ride alone." Prince Ali mounted his mare and rode into the world. He traveled and traveled until he came to the Hill of Arafat, and he saw the baggage abandoned by both of his two brothers. He was amazed and thought, "What has become of my brothers, for this is their baggage, and yet there is no servant and no attendant either alive or dead?" He wrapped himself in his cloak and lay down to sleep so that he might rest, and investigate the fate of his two brothers in the morning. In the night a Jinni came out of the hill, awoke him and saluted him. There was no fear in the heart of Prince Ali and he greeted the Jinni by saying, "What service can I do for you?" The Jinni replied, "I come in your service, for you are my guest, as were your two brothers before you, O son of the Sultan Bey. And I regret that I have no feast to prepare in your honor, but I bid you to take as much gold as you will from my store, even as your brothers took before you." The Jinni took the Prince into the hill and showed him the great caverns filled to the very top with gold. The gold was as if untouched, for that taken by Hussein and Hassan was no more than a speck of dust in those mighty stores. Prince Ali now understood why his brothers had abandoned their tents and baggage and had departed. He said, "Gold I do not want, for it can disappear as quickly as it comes." The Jinni was amazed and said, "Command me then, and I will give you your heart's desire. For I have, indeed, great power, and I can give you anything from a sheep to a kingdom, and I lied when I said I had only gold, as a test for you, but now I see that you are honorable and not greedy as were your brothers. Shut your eyes then, and tell me that which is in your heart." The Prince shut his eyes and said, "I desire the daughter of the Sultan of the Hejaz, for she is the finest and the loveliest princess in the whole world." The Jinni struck the ground with his foot, and there was a crash as if of thunder. Prince Ali opened his eyes, hoping to see his bride. But the Jinni gave him only a ring and not a woman, saying, "You shall strive for her through many and strange adventures, and if you gain her in this manner she will seem sweet to you, and she also will love you. This ring is her father's ring. When you show it to him he will allow you to marry her, since he gave it to me as a pledge for his life." Prince Ali put the golden ring on his finger and thanked the Jinni with exceeding thanks. Then he saddled his mare and departed, taking as a gift from the Jinni only the golden ring, for he took no coin and no treasure. He rode out into the world, and his destination was an ancient kingdom called the Hejaz. Prince Ali rode until he came to the sea. By the shore he found a ship bound for the Hejaz. So the Prince approached the captain. The captain noted a young man whose clothing was of the richest fabric and who carried a heavy purse. He thought, "When we are at sea I will rob this youth, take his clothes, enslave him, and sell him." So the captain invited the prince to board his ship, and gave him a place to sleep in his own cabin. The ship set forth, sailing smoothly over the sea. At sunset the captain, in secret, mixed a sleeping powder with the spice called saffron and gave the mixture to the cook, so that he might use it to flavor the rice for the prince's dinner. At dinnertime, the prince ate heartily of the rice, and he soon felt a great drowsiness encloud his head. He dropped to the deck, heavy with sleep. The captain lifted him up and carried him back to his cabin. He took off the prince's silk clothes, took his purse and his ring of gold, and he dressed the prince in a ragged and torn shirt. Then he set shackles to bind his wrists and feet. After all this was done the prince awoke, and he was amazed when he realized the treachery of the captain. Though he tugged and tore at the shackles until his skin was torn from his wrists and ankles, he could not force the chains open. The captain laughed a great laugh. "Without your fine clothes, we'll see what you're worth! I'll take you to the land of the Abyssinians. There I will sell you as a slave!" For three days and three nights they sailed on, and Prince Ali remained in a wretched and miserable state. On the third night, a dreadful storm came, and thunder and hail and lightning and great waves overthrew the ship. The prince was flung, shackled as he was, into the sea, and he could not swim or move to save himself. The prince sank downward until he hit the rocks on the bottom of the sea, and water filled his lungs. Near where the prince fell on the rocks, there stood the cavern of the princess of the sea, who was called the Bride of the Sea by those who lived under the ocean. The Bride of the Sea saw the young man sink downward to the rocks, and she took pity on his terrible condition, chained as he was and unable to save himself. She instructed her castle nymphs to carry the youth to a great rock which rose out of the water, so he could again breathe the air. When the water emptied from his lungs, and when he could see and speak and breathe again, he saw that the cavern below the watery surface was lined with pink coral and pearls. On a golden throne was seated a lovely princess, with hair of jet-black silk, sea-blue eyes, with lips as the rose and cheeks as the lily, and with a slim body that ended in the tail of a fish, silver-green. Ali gazed at the young woman in astonishment, and all the more so when she rose out of the water to greet him, and settled on the rocks. She commanded that wines and fruits be brought for the youth's refreshment. Then she asked him his name, and he replied, "My name is Ali and I am a son of the Sultan Bey." She said, "I am the Bride of the Sea. Here you are my guest." She sent her servants to bring tools and they struck off the shackles binding his wrists and feet, and she commanded her maidservants to rub oil upon his wounds. Prince Ali gazed at the Bride of the Sea, and he saw that she was beautiful beyond all earthly beauty, and also that she was kind and gentle. Yet he said, "I go to marry the daughter of the Sultan of the Hejaz. She is the loveliest and the finest princess on earth, and now you dazzle me with the beauty of the sea." The Bride of the Sea said to him, "I know of her. Though her beauty is famed far and wide, what do men know of her heart?" Prince Ali said, "Is not what is in her heart that which is shown in her face?" Said the Bride of the Sea, "You shall go and see her, yet you shall go in disguise as a girl, that you may see her heart." The Sea-Bride sent her maidens to recover the golden ring from the wreck of the ship, and she returned the ring to the prince. She said, "Turn around three times, then go to your beloved." Ali turned around three times and he was amazed, for he found himself a girl. The sea-maidens took him by the arm and swam with him to the surface of the sea. They mounted him on a dolphin and said, "This dolphin shall be your steed; ride him to the Hejaz." Ali rode the dolphin until the shores of the Hejaz came into view. Yet he wept, for he thought, "Now I am a girl and only the Bride of the Sea can turn me back into my proper state!" The girl Ali reached the shores of the Hejaz and he went to the palace of the king. The king and the people of his court were amazed that a beautiful young maiden should come alone, without any friends or company, and they asked her from whence she came. Ali did not know how to answer. So the king commanded that the strange maiden be put to serve his daughter in the harem. In the harem, Ali served the princess, the daughter of the king of the Hejaz, combing her hair and bringing her food and clothes according to her commands. The princess was truly beautiful with exceeding beauty, for she outshone the moon. Ali swooned at her beauty and yet he grew to love her not. For the princess cursed and swore at her maidens and scolded them always, whipping and beating Ali and the rest of the maidens, and pinching them and tearing their hair, though the rest of the court and the world, and even her father, thought her a model of sweetness and of love. In this manner it came about that Ali grew to hate the daughter of the king of the Hejaz. One day, as the girl Ali was drawing water at the well, she saw in her water jar a fish. The fish stuck its head out of the water and spoke to her in Arabic, saying, "You have seen the princess. Do you now know love?" Ali replied, "No, I do not!" Then the fish said, "Turn around three times and you shall be a man once more." So Ali turned around three times, and he was amazed, for he had become his former self again, but dressed in a cloak of silk, with a dagger and a sword of gold. When the maiden, the drawer of water, did not return to the palace, the soldiers and attendants searched for her, thinking she had run away. When they saw Ali, they saluted him as a prince. Ali went to the market and bought a fine horse, for he meant to leave that land. In the marketplace, he saw a beggar, and he threw him the gold ring, saying, "Take this ring to the king, and he will be bound to give you his daughter in marriage!" The beggar took the ring, and, though he had no legs, he crawled to the palace. The king, when he saw the ring, was compelled to give his daughter in marriage, for thus he had promised the Jinni. Ali rode away on his horse until he came to the sea. Sea-maidens frolicking on the waves cried out to him, "Our mistress awaits you!" So Ali plunged into the sea, fully clothed, and they bore him away to the deep cave beneath the sea, to the throne of the Bride of the Sea. Though he was underwater, he could breathe easily. Ali saw her, the Bride of the Sea, and he saw that her beauty was greater than that of the princess, and that she was sweet and gentle besides, and that her maidens adored her. So Prince Ali and the Bride of the Sea were married. The Bride of the Sea commanded her attendants to bring a ship of gold and silver. Prince Ali and his bride sat on thrones in the stern of the ship, and the sea-maidens tied ropes to the ship and pulled it through the sea. In time they came to the country of the Sultan Bey, the father of Ali. The Sultan and all his court were astonished to see a ship of gold and silver being pulled out of the sea by sea-maidens. The Sultan Bey came out with all his court to meet the ship as it grounded on the beach. His troops and all the people of the town followed behind. Prince Ali lifted his bride and carried her from the ship onto the shore. The moment he set her down and her fish-tail touched the sands, it turned into two legs, slim and white and beautiful, and she became a complete and perfect woman. Then the Sultan Bey judged between his three sons. He saw that two of them had brought great stores of gold, while the third had brought a ship of gold and silver and the Bride of the Sea. He commanded each of his sons to relate their adventures, and they obeyed his command. The Sultan gave judgement, saying, "Those who love gold shall live with gold." He commanded that his sons Hussein and Hassan should be put as clerks in the treasury, and that they should spend their days counting gold. Then he got down from his throne and he set his son Ali in his place, for he said, "Gold is but gold, and any man can have it, but my son Ali has found for himself the best of the brides of the world, and he has shown himself to be the finest of men."

## http://www.fairytales247.com/catalog/libyan-folktales/skazka-the-sons-of-sultan-bey-667/