

The daughter of the King



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It is a folk story of the Algerian heritage; it tells many events happened to the most cherished daughter of the king. Will her father hold to his promise of marrying her to the young man who will rescue her from redoubtable perils?

THE DAUGHTER OF THE KING

A long time ago, there was a king who lived with his only daughter named Kenza.

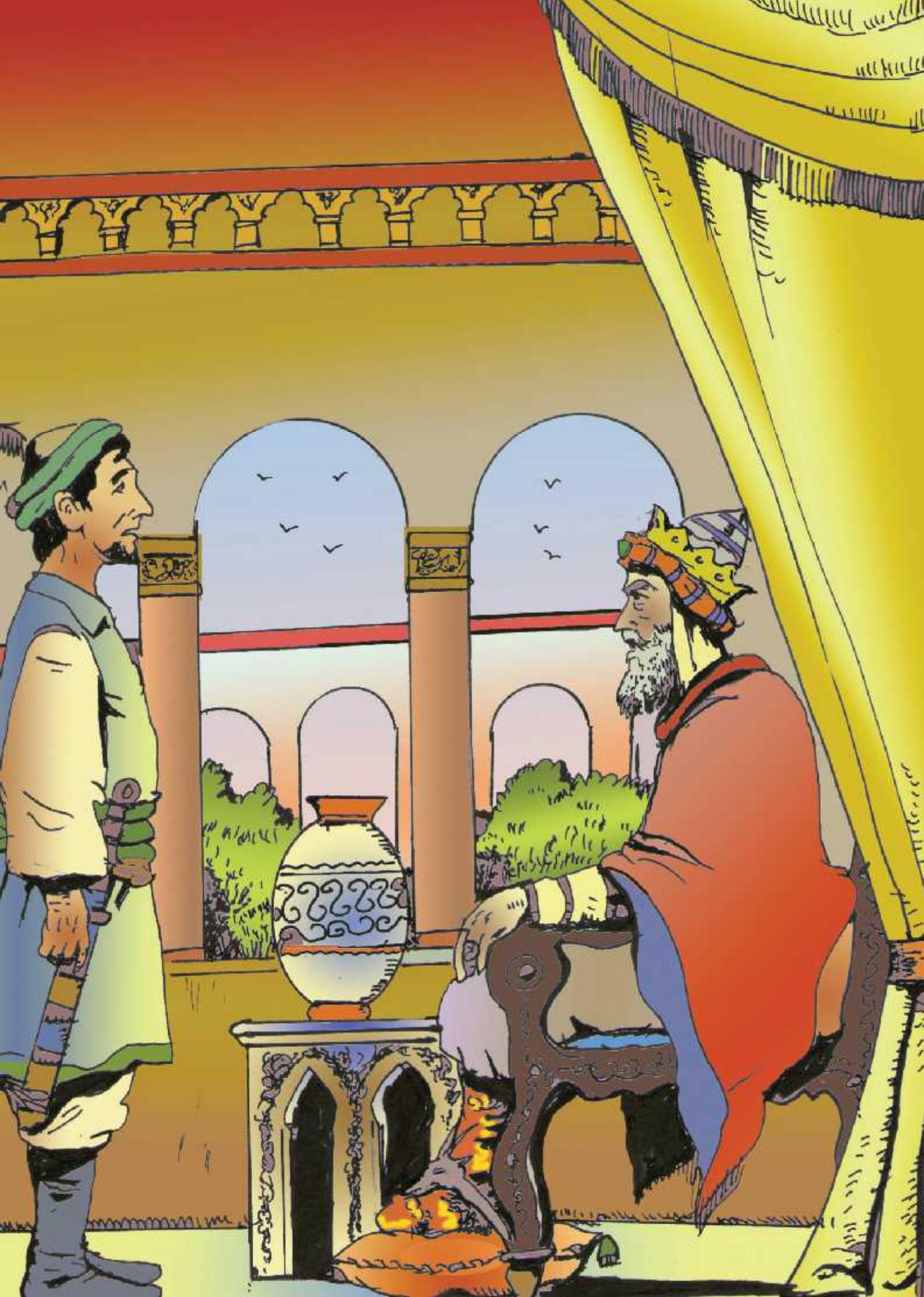
One day, the king sat on his throne, his daughter beside him. He was happy in his red burnoose, contented with the security and peace prevailing in his kingdom. He stared at his daughter and mulled about the fit husband for her.

After a short while, a funny idea struck his mind. He decided to subject the suitors to a trial. The winner would become his son-in-law! On the big day, the king slumped into his imposing throne, a mysterious jar under his feet.

Cunningly, the king asked the young men to guess the content of the jar!

Scores of knights rushed into the palace to ask for the hand of the princess. They had nothing to lose! They tried to predict what was put inside the jar, but they all failed in the test. All their guesses were wrong: apple, gold, monkey's head, books, snake, and so on. They felt disappointed and heartbroken!

Yet unexpectedly, a handsome young man hurried into the castle. He wore humble clothes, beaming at the court.



When the princess caught a sight of him, she was pleased by his kindness and handsomeness. From behind the curtain, she waved with her hands the right answer. Excited, he said to the king:

- A red flower lies in this jar!

The king cheered up gladly, congratulated the young man, and married him his daughter Kenza, keeping the promise he had in public.

A sumptuous wedding was celebrated with exquisite music and boisterous drums, and the hungry guests stuffed themselves with countless royal gourmet meals, baskets of fruit and plates of cakes, and swigged kegs of drinks.





One peculiar day, early in the morning, the husband of the princess got back to his truest nature: monster of the woods. He gagged her with a piece of cloth to choke her cries, and then dragged her away from the castle to the mountaintop. There, he locked her up in a fortress, intimidated and threatened her if she would complained.

The king was at loss, for his only daughter was missing. What made him sadder and more mind-tortured was the lack of news about her fate. He strained his thoughts about the thorny issue till he came up with an idea. He remembered the white dove of peace; actually, the former carrier pigeon of his letters to kings and queens of the others countries. He then wrote a letter, curled it up and attached it to the left leg of the bird. He gave her a bunch of recommendations:

- You, dove of peace, take this special letter to my absent daughter. Look for my daughter everywhere, and don't let a stone unturned. Be very careful, it shan't get into mischievous hands. Don't fly back to my castle until you will have delivered her this letter.

The dove flapped her wings away, crossed over the mountains and the rivers, ferreted around castles, cities and hamlets, on the heels of the missing princess. The dove withstood pitiless storms, gusts of winds, and rain squalls. One day, the dove reached an impregnable fortress, and the sixth sense foretold her that the princess was detained inside that abandoned fortress. Therefore, the dove flew over the fortress, making a reconnaissance round persistently, until she perceived Princess Kenza enshrouded in utter sadness.

The captive Princess Kenza barely smiled at the dove.



Hopeful of an impending release from the fortress, the caged princess stared at the free dove, and then cheered:

- O white dove of peace, you the bearer of the fragrance of my family, the dove of the beloved king, do you remember the girl who used to care about you? Come closer to me, stand on my knee before the comeback of the fierce man, who lured me with his fake attractiveness and I didn't bother to enquire about his character and work.



The dove felt for the princess and then landed beside her. The princess hugged the dove and kissed her warmly, yet she shed tears of longing and pain. The princess discovered the letter, detached it from the leg of the dove, and read it. She understood its content well and she wept. At once, she wrote to her father a letter wherein she told her father the sour life and hardship she went through with the savage young man. She regretted having hastily chosen him as a husband. The luring beauty. The dove took the letter and flew away straight to the king...



The king was delighted at his daughter's letter. Once he had read it, he felt pretty bad about her news. He immediately ordered the Wise Sheikh be brought in front of him, to advise him about the right way to save his daughter from that ferocious young man.

The king asked him:

- Is the strength of my army necessary to free the princess from the kidnapper?

The Wise Sheikh was assigned a lavish room in the castle. When the king informed him of the plan, he did not agree to send the army to the inexpugnable fortress; because when the wild young man was the soldiers closing in on him, he might retaliate against us by killing the captive princess. So, the Wise Sheikh proposed that a group of dauntless and wary knights be sent there to sneak into that fortress. As a matter of fact, the knights were the sons of an old woman.

The king went to see the old woman and told her his sorrow after the abduction of his only daughter, and he promised her a life of wealth along with her sons should they bring Princess Kenza safe back to the castle.

The mother of the chosen knights thought over the matter, and after a long moment of ponderings she asked the guards of the king to bring her in wool and silk. Without delay, they fetched her materials she had requested.

The old widow sat down on the bare ground, stuck the spindle between her knees and started to spin wool and silk and then wove them altogether to make a flamboyant multihued shirt. As her seven sons came closer to the house, she told the king to hide behind the wooden door!

The seven young men rushed in home, finding their mother worn-out from spinning and weaving. They were pleased by her exuberance, wondering why she was weaving the nice shirt and for whom she did it. They did not feel the presence of a man behind the door...



The mother beamed at them:

- The elegant shirt goes to the bravest and wisest of you seven? The knight who will fulfill a death-defying mission!

The seven brothers bragged about their bravery and might, as the king himself was eavesdropping on their internecine rivalry. The king frowned here, and grinned there. At last, the king came out from behind the door, sending them flabbergasted. He addressed them:

- Thanks God I found the most valiant knights. You have just to save my daughter from the grip of the wild young man, and I promise you wealth and power. Ask for whatever you want should you pull this mission off.

The eldest of them led his six brothers, for he was sharp-eyed, sagacious, heedful and astute. They all walked behind the low-flying dove, athirst to spot the princess. After days of trudge, the seven brothers perceived a fortress atop a cloud-shrouded mountain. Upon sunset, they saw bats circling over the fortress, as if watching over its high walls.

The fortress looked tenebrous and scary. Nevertheless, the seven brothers were not afraid of the ominous external features of the stronghold.

The seven brothers consulted with each other, determined to devise a successful incursion strategy. First and foremost, they had to lurk for the savage young man when he got back into the fortress.

In the evening, the kidnapper of the princess came back, opened the seven harden doors and then locked them with different keys. The seven brothers had already conjured up a plan of work.

At midnight sharp, once the bats had gotten back to their caves, the seven brothers broke into the formidable fortress by the help of long ropes.





They prudently descended to the court of the fort. When they crept up on the savage young man's sleeping room, they heard the savage young man snoring boisterously as if it were a sound of waterfalls. They then went up the stairs of the fortress. With great dexterity, the firstborn brother succeeded to open the closed doors and reached the bed of the wheezing monster. He found the princess lying in deep sleep beside the monster, her hair held firmly by his strong hand. She looked compliant, desperate, pale-faced and skinny....

The primogenital brother of the siblings reached out his hand and tried to untangle the hair of Princess Kenza from the wild man's handgrip. She woke up frightened, but the knight silenced her with the palm of his hand. He assured her with a smile, and she got excited at the thought of being set free. He was compelled to cut her hair at the hand of the sleeping monster. The seven brothers and the princess hurried up running away the dark fortress, taking a path through the forest.

The fierce young man did not feel the princess adjacent to him. He just touched tufts of hair. He was scared and infuriated, yelling out to awaken the dead from their graves. He disturbed animals in their retreats and birds in their nests instead. He was foaming at the mouth like an irked ox, as he searched for her in the fortress and its vaults. He then went out to the woods, cutting the twigs off with his teeth and smashing them with feet, the bats spinning over the furious human monster.

The ground quaked under the feet of the seven brothers, hence their perplexity. The human monster edged closer to them, his eyes sparkling with revenge.

The last-born brother said:

- I have an idea. We set the forest afire and then we let the monster burn down till death. This way, we will have saved the princess!

The first-born brother disapproved of the proposal:

- Are you crazy? Would you like that we burn down alive, too? Don't you know that the tree is sacred in our culture and it is thus forbidden to destroy it without purpose? I call on your courage, my dear brothers! Show me you are the intrepid knights the king is proud of!

No sooner the human monster had come up than the seven young brothers attacked him with lion-heartedness and swiftly. They stabbed him with their swords until he dropped dead.

After their deed, they walked back to the castle, the princess safe and sound as a trophy. The king was tremendously delighted upon seeing his only daughter back home, and he held an unforgettable banquet. He fittingly rewarded the seven brothers for their incredible feat.

Yet, the discord among the siblings flared up as to whom the princess would wed. But when Princess Kenza was asked to give her pick, she chose the first-born brother who had detached her hair from the grip of the human monster. She explained her choice as saying:

- The loveliness of a man lies in his brains and not in his body or pockets.



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