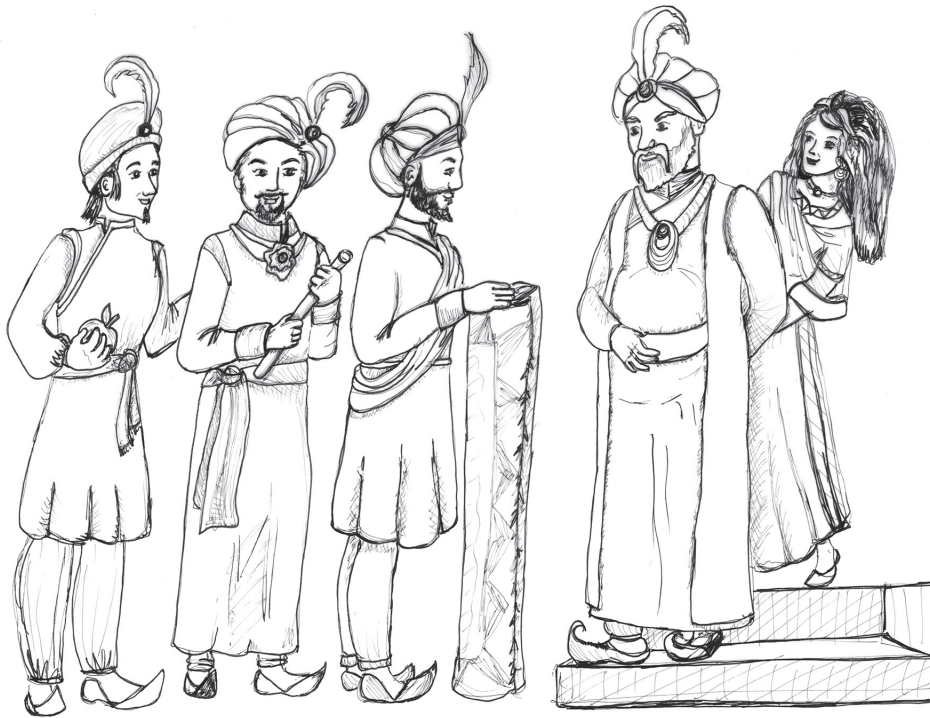


The Three Princes and the Princess

From 1001 Arabian Nights



There was once a sultan of India who had three sons. The oldest son was Hussein. The middle son was Ali. The youngest son was Ahmed. Like their father, all of the sons were smart and kind.

The sultan's brother ruled a neighboring kingdom. His brother had a daughter named Nouronihar. Sadly, when Nouronihar was still a little girl, the sultan's brother and his wife died. The sultan took in little Nouronihar and raised her in his palace. She grew to be as smart and kind as her uncle.

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As the children grew older, the sultan began to notice something. All three of his sons fell in love with Nouronihar. Soon, the princess was old enough to get married. Sure enough, all three sons went to the sultan to ask for her hand in marriage. The sultan found that he could not choose among his sons. So he gave them a challenge to win the princess's hand in marriage.

The sultan had a love for rare and unique items. He told the sons that they should go off into the world and each bring back one rare and unique item. The one who brings back the most unique item will get to marry the princess.

Before they left, the three sons met at an inn at the edge of town. They each agreed to meet again at this inn in exactly one year's time.

Hussein, the oldest son, traveled to Bisnagar. He had long heard of the splendor of this kingdom that was near the Indian coast. After three months of travel, he finally arrived. The city was even more splendid than he expected. He rented a room at an inn and spent a lot of time in the part of the city known as the merchants' quarter. Here, merchants sold goods from far and near. It was here, in the merchants' quarter that Hussein found what he was looking for.

A crier carrying a raggedy old rug passed through the market crying the price of the rug to be 30 gold coins. Hussein was intrigued. Thirty gold coins was an astronomical sum for such an old rug. He beckoned the crier over and asked him why the rug was so expensive. The crier explained that it was a magic rug. If you sat on it and imagined where you wanted to go, the rug would

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instantly transport you there. The crier let Hussein try it out to make sure it wasn't a trick. Hussein and the crier sat on the rug and were instantly transported to Hussein's room at the inn. Hussein immediately paid for the rug and was sure that he would win the princess's hand in marriage.

Prince Ali, the middle son, traveled for four months to Persia. He found a room at an inn in Schiraz, then the capital of Persia. Then he set about finding the object of his search in the same way his older brother had. He spent time with the merchants of Schiraz and looked high and low for an item that would win the hand of the princess.

One day a crier came through the market holding a thin ivory tube. The crier called the price of the tube at 30 gold coins, a price far too high for a simple ivory tube. Ali knew there must be something special about the tube and asked the crier to tell him about it. The tube,



which had glass at both ends, could show you anything you wanted to see. The crier let Ali try it. Ali, of course, wanted to see the princess and when he looked into the tube, he saw her laughing and talking with her friends. Ali knew he'd found the object of his search. He gladly paid the crier for the tube and set out on his long journey home.

Prince Ahmed, the youngest son, traveled to Samarcand. He set about finding his rare and unique object in the same way as his brothers. One day, in the market, a crier walked through selling a fake apple for 35 gold pieces. Like his brothers, Ahmed realized there must be more to this apple than meets the eye. And he

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was right. It was a magical apple. Smelling the apple could heal any person, even if that person was at the edge of death. After testing out the apple, Ahmed gladly paid the crier 35 gold pieces. Sure that he had found the item that would win him the princess's hand, Ahmed began his long journey home.

Exactly one year later, as planned, the brothers met once again at the inn in their father's kingdom. They began to show each other what they found on their journeys. Being the easiest item to show off, Prince Ali let Ahmed look through his ivory tube. Ahmed, of course, wanted only to see Princess Nouronihar. But what he saw surprised him. The princess was in bed, near death, with her handmaidens all around her. Ahmed let the other brothers look. The brothers knew they must work together to save her.

The princes got on Hussein's magic rug, which transported them immediately to the princess's room. Ahmed put his magic apple directly under her nose. As soon as she smelled the apple, Nouronihar was completely healed.

The sultan was impressed with the unique gifts that his sons brought. But because they'd all helped save the princess, he couldn't choose which son should marry her. So he made a different contest. He gave each of his sons a bow and one arrow. Whichever son shot the arrow the farthest could marry the princess. First Hussein shot his arrow. Then Ali, then Ahmed. No one could see where Ahmed's arrow landed, so they assumed he shot his arrow the farthest. That very day, Ahmed married Princess Nouronihar and they lived happily ever after.