



## Arab Folktales

*Inea Bushnaq (Editor & Translator)*

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Out of alleys of Cairo and Bedouin tents, from the Moroccan laborers and Syrian peasants, this collection of 130 tales comes from Arab worlds from North Africa to the Holy Land.

## Arab Folktales Details

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Author : Inea Bushnaq (Editor & Translator)

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## From Reader Review Arab Folktales for online ebook

### Sally Rhett says

Some great stories, others short, not satisfying

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### Lexi says

A think book, it takes a while to get through. Many of the stories are captivating and they give one the ability to intuit pieces of the Arab mentality. A lovely read.

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### Angela Benedetti says

This is one of the best collections of folk tales I've ever read, not only for the stories (which are excellent, very readable and entertaining) but also for the introductory notes. The introductions, to the book as a whole and to each section, give information on specific stories, story types, different iconic characters, and also cultural notes that help the reader who is neither Moslem nor Arabic understand the customs and world view of the people in the stories.

Great book, both for the pleasure of the stories and the education on Arab culture.

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### Mary Catelli says

Some tales about simpletons or clever scoundrels, some animal tales, some Bedouin tales, some fairy tales. . .

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I was, of course, chiefly in the fairy tales. Not only do they pick up more local colors, you pretty much have to be familiar with many European tales to recognize parallels. (Greek and Italian ones in particular. I wonder why. 0:) Of the Top Twenty(ish), the only one in recognizable form is "The Little Red Fish and the Lost Clog", and that's one of the farther stretches of "Cinderella". ("The Princess in a Suit of Leather" is OTOH the other variant of the persecuted heroine, "All Kinds of Fur.")

But in a setting filled with Ghouls and Djinn, we have a bird with a golden feather instead of a golden bird, a bride having her place usurped by the a slave escorting her, a youngest daughter rejected by her father -- not for saying her love was like salt but that his wealth came from God -- and not going to three balls to win a prince, but marrying a mule driver on the grounds his poverty and her homelessness show that "the pot has found its lid" and bearing a marvelous daughter who spoke jasmines and lilies and when washed, dripped gold and is the main heroine, a prince cursed to love only the Full-Moon-Of-Night, and many more tales, some without parallel in Europe, most heavily local tales.

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### **Elizabeth Brooks says**

A collection of folktales is hard to rate, but I loved the way the editor tried to explain the relevant cultural quirks before each section. The tales were well-chosen, I thought, to help underscore the driving values that spawned them.

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### **Michael says**

While containing a broad sampling of folktales from the Arab people, there are a few problems that consistently bothered me about this book. The author, in her commentary, claims that "the true Arab is the desert nomad," an idea which folklorist Dwight Reynolds has said is culturally inaccurate and a romantic fallacy. The tales also feel embellished, edited, tidied-up, and the occasional verses have obviously been tampered with in order to rhyme in their English translations. Bushnaq herself admits to combining different versions of folktales to make an ideal form, something usually frowned upon in folklore studies. She calls the *Arabian Nights* folk literature, which is also false (see Reynolds' *Arab Folklore: A Handbook*), and also uses strange, outdated romanizations for some Arabic terms: Beni Hilal rather than Bani Hilal, djinn instead of jinn, Nasreddin Khodja instead of Nasruddin Koja, and Djuha rather than Juha. All this being said, Inea Bushnaq's collection was edifying, entertaining, and worth the read. I'd suggest reading Muhawi and Kanaana's *Speak, Bird, Speak Again* -- a wonderful and informative collection -- before this one, however, so that the reader better understands certain errors that are present in this text.

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### **Yacin says**

subtract 1 star if you aren't interested in arab culture or were born into it. the djuha stories are the best hands down, i just wish there were more. the tales give an interesting perspective into arab culture both bad (pervasive patriarchy) and good (taking in guests).

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### **Heather says**

This is fabulous, with well written tales and well researched background and collected by someone from the culture in question.

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### **Danelle says**

Arab Folktales is a volume of stories from Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Palestine, Lebanon, and Jordan. The book, as other volumes of fairy and folktales I've read, is divided into sections.

The first, 'Tales Told in Houses Made of Hair,' are tales from the nomadic herders and the stories focus on the "ideal conduct of noble men." They are mostly stories of adventures in love and in war.

The second, 'Djiin, Ghouls, and Afreets,' are tales of magic. Whereas the previous section's stories were those that men told, here we have a section of tales that were more commonly told among women. These tales are for entertainment and though they are considered "women's tales" most men know them as well, as they heard them when they were young. This was probably my favorite section and seemed to have much in common with tales from other parts of the world. Djiin, created by God from smokeless fire, are said to be frightening and strong but are often outwitted. The Ghouls are considered the wildest and the most repulsive and are said to "feast on human flesh." BUT, if you are well-mannered and greet them politely, they will refrain from eating you. They will actually come to a hero's aid if the hero grooms them (for example, cutting their hair and bushy eyebrows, allowing the Ghoul to "gain back his sight.").

'Magical Marriages and Mismatches' is the 3rd section and contains stories of girls and their weddings - namely the precariousness of their positions as the newest member of their husband's family (and therefore, the lowest on the totem pole) and being placed into awful situations by jealous and/or evil family members (other wives of their husband, mother-in-law, sister-in-law, etc.). The stories in this one were also more fairytale-ish.

The 4th section was, 'Beasts That Roam the Earth and Birds that Fly with Wings' and were tales of animals that resembled fables. The stories were mostly about 2 animals (or 1 animal and 1 human) trying to trick each other. 'Famous Fools and Rascals' was the 5th section and contained stories of Djuha, the most popular and best known character in Arab folklore. The 6th section contained stories that were to teach and "improve" young people, titled: 'Good Men and Golden Words.' And the final section was stories of women who trick and deceive men, 'Wily Women and Clever Men.'

Overall, an interesting collection, though it did lag at times. There was one story that was similar to Cinderella, titled, 'The Little Red Fish and The Clog of Gold,' whereas the fairy godmother was the fish!

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### **Gabe says**

What I liked the most were the introductions before every part. they really helped me understand the tales and who used to tell them

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