

A brother, a gazelle and moving the mountain to let the sun shine through.

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Once upon a time,

Three brothers lived not too far from here and they enjoyed a good hunt. Before I tell you about the hunt; a few words about their mother, the great Queen. Their mother was a great Queen, but she knew her time would soon be ending. She said to them, "Listen! I'm about to die. Promise me to rule as I have ruled, with fairness and compassion."

And sure enough, a day came and a day went,

and another day came and another went, and the Queen passed away. May she rest in peace.

They buried her alongside her fourth husband, a farmer in his boyhood, at the foot of the faultless water spring of 'Ein *Qiniya*. I don't know how many of you have been to the 'Ein *Qiniya* spring in Palestine but it is remarkably beautiful. A day came and a day went and a miraculous oak tree grew where her body lay buried.

And each day the three brothers would visit to honour and respect their deceased mother; and in her name, they would visit the oak tree, respecting the water she skirted with her massive trunk.

Then, one day (it might've been yesterday), a gazelle suddenly sprang before them and Oh, how she filled their eyes! All three brothers argued over who should hunt her. This one said, "She's my prey!" and that one said, "She's mine!" Finally, they agreed that if the gazelle passes near one of them, then she's his and his alone to hunt.

I have to tell you that she was not really a gazelle. You know how it is in such stories. She was a young lady from another world, and capable of transforming herself to her animal form at will.

So this young gazelle gazed at the three brothers, and, since a good person always stands out, she picked one of the brothers, the eldest, *Alqaader*, and she passed right under his nose, or his horse that is.

"All right, brothers," *Alqaader* announced. "You must go back now. She's mine."

He chased the gazelle and chased the gazelle, until he lost her in the wilderness of a new illegal settlement, and there, he came upon a lioness giving birth and having a difficult time with it. She begged the young man for help and so he did, and in return the lioness gave *Alqaader* three of her new born: *Swah*, *Lwah*, and the *Unnamed one*. And she said to him, "Listen, if you ever find yourself in a difficult situation, all you have to do is call out their names, they are your spiritual guardians, and they will come to the rescue anytime!"

In the morning, gazelle appeared again and they did as they had done before. She filled his eyes and ran. Forgetting the world and the word behind him, *Alqaader* jumped and chased after her, until, on the fourth day, gazelle led him into a very strange village that he had never been to before. And here I have to mention that *Alqaader* had three lovely sisters. We don't hear about them in the beginning of the story because he had not seen them for the longest time, after they were married off to very good respective families. So now, Losing sight of his gazelle, he saw his sister and he could not believe the wonderful surprise, for he had no idea where she lived after her marriage.

How happy they were to greet each other! They celebrated with singing and dancing and feasting.

"And what brought you this way, brother?" she asked.

"Gazelle brought me," he answered.

"Well no one is any match for that gazelle!"

In the morning *Alqaader* mounted his horse and moved on. Gazelle appeared and did as she had done before, slowing down, and then running away as soon as he came near, until she led him to the place where his other sister lived.

And the other sister also asked; "So brother, wat brought you here?"

"Gazelle brought me," he answered.

Alqaader's second sister told him "Well no one is any match for that gazelle!"

Now the next day it was the same. Gazelle led *Alqaader* to his third sister's town. And again, words of love were exchanged. Feasting singing, dancing.

Now, each of sisters had given *Alqaader* a hair, saying that "if you ever find yourself in a difficult situation, just rub this hair, and before you know it, we'll be there."

So, on the 30th day, gazelle jumped again before him, and when he chased her this time, it appears that she led him into her own city.

Now let me tell you, this gazelle has suitors all over the world. See her castle? Every time one of them comes asking for her hand in marriage, her father says, 'He who can move this mountain away from the front of my house can have her hand with my blessings; and whoever can't move it, well, I'll have his head!'

I told the same story to *Alqaader*, and do you know what he said? He said: I'm going to ask for her hand!!

Remembering the hairs his sisters had given him, they were magic hairs after all, he rubbed all three of them, he took them out of his pocket and he rubbed all three of them like this....and behold! six hundred hosts of jinn appeared. Gazelle, too, she loved him and came to his aid. He started on the mountain, and before day had risen, look! By the Lord Merciful, the Compassionate, it was as if there was no mountain there at all.

When the sun rose, it shone on her father's bed. And he cried out "Ahhh Alas, *Alqaader* will marry her after all!"

And let me tell you what a wedding it was! The wedding of *Alqaader* and gazelle.

All of the families of the noble courts, all the villagers, all animals, spirits and men from all around the globe were there.

Amen!