



## The Half *Jinn* Infant and the King

*Egypt*

There was once a king who loved to sail along the Nile River at sunset, when the Sun creates shimmering golden sparkles on the surface of the water. One day, as he was on his way to moor his boat in front of his palace, still under the spell of the sparkling golden waters, he saw a beautiful young woman casting her net near the shore.

‘It couldn’t be said that she is the most beautiful woman I’ve ever seen’, the king thought to himself, ‘but she certainly has a special attraction. I like her.’

Without thinking twice, he said to his vizier, who was accompanying him on his sail:

‘Find out if that young fisherwoman is single, married or widowed.’

The next day, the vizier brought the required information.

‘The woman is married to a humble fisherman. Both are highly regarded among their neighbours.’

The king grimaced.

‘What a pity!’, he exclaimed.

‘Pity? Why, my lord?’ asked the vizier. ‘You are the king, sir, and you can possess whatever you want! We can always find a way to get rid of the husband.’

The king looked thoughtfully at his vizier with a smile on his lips.

‘What can we do?’ he finally asked the vizier, lowering his voice.

The next day the fisherman, a handsome and wiry young man, very tanned by the Sun, presented himself before the king.

‘What do you want from me, sir?’ he said, bowing before the ruler.

‘I want you to show me that you are really a good subject, fisherman’, said the king. ‘A foreign king, with whom I have my differences, has said that my subjects do not really love me. That has come to worry me, so I thought that the best thing I could do was to test the affection of my people.’

‘And how can I show you my affection, sir?’ asked the fisherman.

‘I want you to prove it to me by carrying out some impossible tasks.’

‘Like what, sir?’

‘I want you to appear before me tomorrow, riding and walking at the same time’, said the king, while the fisherman opened his eyes in disbelief.

‘But, sir, that’s impossible!’, the fisherman objected.

‘If you don’t, I’ll have your head chopped off’, said the king with a frosty smile.

The fisherman returned to his wife to tell her what had happened.

‘Don’t worry’, she said. ‘I will consult with my sister.’

Her older sister was a well-known seer in their part of the city.

‘What the king wants is to take you to bed, sister.’ This was the first thing the sister told her. ‘That’s why he wants to get your husband out of the way. But don’t worry. I’ll tell you what to do.’

The next day, the fisherman entered the reception hall of the palace riding a goat and walking at the same time. The king could not believe his eyes. The humble fisherman had outwitted him!

‘I see that you’re sharp’, said the king, unable to hide his frustration, ‘and that you love me enough to develop your ingenuity’, he added, remembering his excuse. ‘But I have to put you through one more test.’

‘Another?’ asked the fisherman hopelessly.

The king nodded smugly.

‘Tomorrow I want you appear before me naked and dressed at the same time’, and he added, ‘If you don’t, I’ll have your head cut off.’

The fisherman rushed home to tell his wife about the king’s new demand.

‘Now he wants me to appear before him naked and clothed at the same time’, he said in anguish.

‘Don’t worry’, she said, frowning. ‘I’ll talk to my sister.’

The next day, the fisherman appeared in the palace dressed only in a net, which in no way concealed his nakedness. The king was greatly annoyed, but had no choice but to smile.

‘I see that you love me very much, because you are always looking for a way to please my demands’, he said hypocritically. ‘But you will have to carry out one last test to prove your love for me.’

The fisherman felt faint. ‘I’m not getting out of this one’, he thought to himself. But the king, following the directions of his wicked vizier, said:

‘I want you to bring me an infant who tells stories and riddles.’

‘But ... that’s impossible!’, the fisherman protested.

‘Ah!’, replied the king shrugging. ‘You have to show me your love. Your head depends on it.’

The fisherman arrived home completely dejected.

‘I’m not going to get away with this one’, he said to his beautiful wife, sinking into a chair.

‘Don’t worry, dear’, she said tenderly. ‘I’ll talk to me sister.’

When the sister heard the last of the king's requests, she said:

'I know of a newborn baby that could do that. He is a half-human, half-*jinn* baby, the son of a desert genius and it turns out that he was born a few days ago in a nearby village.'

The next morning, the fisherman appeared before the king with an infant in his arms and the king, feeling triumphant, let out a tremendous laugh.

'You don't want me to believe that something so small is even capable of speaking!' he snapped.

The fisherman did not respond. But the infant did.

'*Salam aleikum*, my king!' exclaimed the infant. 'Peace be with you!'

The king, wide-eyed, was lost for words.

'Allow me, sir, to tell you the story of my life', said the infant, raising an eyebrow. 'Although I am currently a well-off guy, I wasn't always wealthy. For forty years ago I was as poor and miserable as this fisherman. Worse still, I was starving!

'One day, while sitting under the shade of a date palm, I was hungry and began to throw clods of earth at the clusters of dates on the top of the tree, to see if any dates would detach from the clusters and then I could, at least, satisfy my hunger. But, no matter how many clods I threw on the clusters, no dates fell. Quite the opposite. They were so sticky that the clods of earth just stuck to them.

'I threw many clods up. However, all of them stuck to the clusters of dates so that in the end, there were twenty bushels of earth on the top of the palm tree.'

'Certainly reasonable', commented the king, who loved tall tales. 'Go on, little one, go on ...'

'So I got a plough and an ox, and I borrowed a few sesame seeds, and I climbed the palm tree and ploughed and sowed. After that the rains came and the crops grew and grew, and I became a rich infant. I

bought more land and hired labourers, and now here I am. I don't have great needs.'

'That's is incredible!' exclaimed the king, marvelling at the infant.

'But I have a thorn in my side', the infant added making a sad gesture.

'What's upsetting you, little one?' asked the king.

'On the palm tree, there was a sesame seed which stuck to a date, and I have not been able to release it to add it to my crops.'

'So, great king', he continued, 'here I am with a riddle for you. Should I forget about that sesame seed and move on with my life, or should I continue to obsess over it?'

And the king, who loved riddles, answered:

'Of course, little one, you should just forget about that seed and move on with your life. You are a rich infant! Why do you want a tiny sesame seed? Forget about it!'

And, from the arms of the fisherman, the baby replied:

'Then take into account this story, sir ... and follow your own advice. You are a king, and you have whatever you desire. You have all the pleasures in the world and there are dozens of beautiful women who would probably fall in love with you if only you addressed them with tenderness and sensitivity. So forget what you cannot have, let go of it!'

The king suddenly went silent and there was a heavy silence while he tugged at the corner of his moustache as if in reflection. Finally, he gave a shy smile and said:

'You really are an amazing infant. Be as you say!'

And, addressing the fisherman, he added:

'And you, good fisherman, go to your wife and be happy.'

But the half-*jinn* infant said from the fisherman's arms:

'Oh, my king and lord! If you allow me, I would like to offer you one more thought ...

‘Of course, little one’, replied the king. ‘Tell me.’

‘My lord, *having* is not as important as *being*. Lord, do not think so much about *having*. Think more about *being*, and *be* a good king.’

For many days afterwards, the king was seen crestfallen and thoughtful while roaming through the rooms and halls of his palace; and his gaze lost in the distance when sailing on the Nile. They say that, not long after, his character seemed to change and he became a king who was truly loved by his subjects, the best king they ever had. □

Adapted by Grian A. Cutanda (2020).

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## Comments

If only many rulers of our planet had the opportunity to meet a half *jinn* infant –that is, a half genie of the lamp– who would make them perceive their despotic acts, their outrages, their arbitrariness and their merciless decisions ...

## Sources

Meade, E. H. (2001). *The Moon in the Well: Wisdom Tales to Transform Your Life, Family and Community*. Chicago, IL: Open Court.

Meade, E. H. (2012). The Sesame Seed and the Date Palm Tree. Spirit of Trees: Educational resources website. Recuperado de:  
<http://spiritoftrees.org/the-sesame-seed-and-the-date-palm-tree>

## *Associated text of the Earth Charter*

Preamble: The Challenges Ahead.- Fundamental changes are needed in our values, institutions, and ways of living. We must

realize that when basic needs have been met, human development is primarily about being more, not having more.

### *Other passages that this story illustrates*

Principio 13e: Eliminate corruption in all public and private institutions.

Principio 16f: Recognize that peace is the wholeness created by right relationships with oneself, other persons, other cultures, other life, Earth, and the larger whole of which all are a part.

The Way Forward.- Life often involves tensions between important values. This can mean difficult choices. However, we must find ways to harmonize diversity with unity, the exercise of freedom with the common good, short-term objectives with long-term goals.

