



A struggling life of a Saudi Arabian Princess

Written by Jing Cong in Natalie's Course: *Women's Lives*

"Ali slapped me to the ground, but I declined to hand over the shiny red apple just given to me by a Pakistani cook. Ali's face began to swell with anger as I hovered over the apple and quickly began to take huge bites and swallow them whole... I was lifted into the air and transported to father's study... Ali was allowed to speak but I was forbidden to respond... I shouted out the truth of the incident... As a punishment, Ali was given all my toys. To teach me that men were my masters, my father decreed that Ali would have the exclusive right to fill in my plate at meal time" (Princess, 5). This was a scene from Sultana's childhood when she was seven years old. The apple incident with her brother showed us an important thing; it was that women had absolutely no power in Saudi Arabia; it also showed the aggressiveness in her and her awareness of Women's extremely low status in Saudi Arabia. She was a female who was shackled by males. But she believed that one day women would be treated with justice in Saudi Arabia.

With that aggressiveness and awareness, she became a trouble-maker who always picked on her brother in her female hidden way to get him in trouble. In her childhood, she poured sand into the motorcycle of Ali's; she pinched money out of father's wallet; she buried Ali's gold coin collection in the backyard; she released green snakes and ugly lizards from jars into the family pool as Ali lay sleeping on his float. These things were obviously very childish, but it was her way of pouring her aggression out in Saudi Arabia men.

I think that as her age, she found the best suitable way to express the suffer of the unfairness out.

The biggest trouble she made was that she put her brother's secret "treasure" – Playboy and Penthouse. In the stairwell leading to the balcony in the mosques (private praying place for Saudi Arabia man in rich family). It was found and the religious elders decided that Ali should be arrested. His father was furious and struck Ali his hand. Because Ali was a royal prince, she wouldn't be charged in the country's court system. Therefore, he just got a few punishments instead of going to prison.

That shocked me a lot when I read that, the religious power

controlled the whole country, even the law. In China it is not allowed to sell porn magazines because the government thinks they will guide young people in the wrong way. But in Saudi Arabia, it isn't allowed to read them; you can be put into prison because of that. The man who supplied Ali the magazines was flogged and deported from the country. Sultana felt terrible about what she had done.

In 1968, when she was 12 years old, her father became very wealthy. Her mother decided to educate her daughters through the influence of auntie Iffat (Prince's wife). Iffat played a very important role in girls' education in Saudi Arabia. Without her efforts it wouldn't have come true. Finally Sultana's father agreed with the idea. An Egyptian tutor came and taught them in the palace, Sultana was doing fine on the school work and she had no interest in studying at all.

Her sisters were all perfect princess, quiet and restrained; only Sultana was loud and unruly. Sara was the most beautiful and intelligent daughter in the family. She did very well on her study, her dream was to study art in Italy and be the first one to open a gallery in Jeddah. She started to work for her dream at the age of 12, she had read many books in her spare time. But her father thought that his most beautiful daughter would marry a man with great prominence and wealth. Finally he decided that Sara was going to marry a sixty-two year old man with great wealth as his third wife. When Sara heard about this, she cried so hard and cursed her father, but he responded without emotion. In great disagreement, Sara called her father's office everyday and left messages that she was not going to marry. Because of that she was confined to her room.

Her mother couldn't do anything against her husband's idea. Her six daughters had married the chosen men already, the four who were left had no hope to choose at all.

I really can't understand the father, I doubt if he loved his daughters. For sure, by marrying a sixty-two year old man as his third wife, Sara wouldn't have any chance to be happy, to have a healthy normal love relationship. As a Saudi Arabia woman, Sara was supposed to listen to her father no matter what he said and he arranged for her, even if she tried to go

against it.

Watching the whole situation and the wedding, Sultana became horrified and sad. She was very sad for Sara – her lovely sister; she was horrified because this might happen to her in the future. After five weeks, Sara tried to commit suicide; she was totally hopeless about her life. Because of her mother's determination, the father agreed to the divorce.

After the tragedy passed away, another one came to her. Her mother died of cancer, within a month of her mother's death, her father planned another wedding for himself with a fifteen-year old girl who once was Sultana's playmate. Sultana was furious with her father.

I am very angry with this father and husband too, what did he consider women as? Sex toy? Tools of reproducing children? Was he a cold-blooded animal without emotion at all?

After her father's honeymoon, Sultana found out that her father's new bride, Randa, was in deep pain. She wanted to help Randa out of the awful, disgusting relationship. Her two friends, Nadia and Wafa, who were from prominent families and Randa and her formed a girls' club. They called it "Lively Lips", and vowed to uphold the following goals:

1. At every opportunity, let the spirit of women's rights move over our lips and guide our tongues.
2. Each member should strive to bring in one new member per month.
3. Our first goal would be to stop marriages of young women to old men.

Their thoughts were limited somehow because they were young and inexperienced. But I think that the consciousness of women started to raise from this generation. They could not bear this kind of situation any more. Because of the education they got, they realized that in other parts of the world, women had far more freedom than they. So they weren't satisfied with their life any more. They had a big plan to achieve as soon as Sultana got a veil.

When she got her period, it was the time for her to get covered. When

she first put on the abaaya (veil), Saudi boys started to become interested in her, she was excited about that, but after the excitement, the true feeling came out: she gasped for breath and sucked furiously through the sheer black fabric; the sky was no longer blue, the glow of the sun had dimmed.

Then it was time for their plan; they decided to use this time before their arranged marriage to have fun with foreign men in Saudi Arabia. They went to handsome men to ask if they wanted to have fun. They also dialed random phone number until a foreign man answered. They would ask for a date. They had different meetings with different men. It was a crazy action. If they were caught, they would be in big trouble even sentenced to death. But they tried and tried and enjoyed the crazy happiness.

After one year, Nadia and Wafa were arrested. All four of them were in deep trouble. Her father divorce Randa, Wafa's father arranged a harsh marriage for her to a fifty-three-year old man as his third wife. Nadia would be drowned in the family swimming pool. Sultana had to accept the future no matter what her father's arrangement for was.

I feel very sad for them. I think that it is not their fault of the sick society, sick rules for women in Saudi Arabia. That is the reason why they acted so radically.

When Sultana was old enough, it was time for her to marry. So her father arranged a marriage for her; she was going to marry Kareem – one of the royal cousins. It was said that he was exceptionally handsome, and was educated in London as a lawyer. After knowing that, she called Kareem's sister whom she knew slightly. She told her that if they got married he could not take other wives or she would poison them all. Sultana also told her that she had an accident in the school lab; she had dropped a flask of acid and her face was hideously scarred. Her stupid lie was found out by her father, but Kareem's family did not break the engagement. Instead Kareem wanted to meet her, it was very unusual for a woman to meet her groom before the wedding in Saudi Arabia. They had a very nice and romantic meeting, she mentioned that he wanted to know if she was circumcised she wondered what that was her biggest sister Nura had told her that it was terrible and about her experience of it. "Nura, nude from the waist down, was held by four women on bedsheet that had been spread on the ground. The oldest of the women raised her hand in the air; with horror Nura saw that she had a razor-like instrument in her hand. Nura screamed, she felt a sharp pain in her genital region... she saw blood pouring from the wound" (Princess, 160). Sex was always painful and caused bleeding after circumcision.

There were so many things that I couldn't understand in this country "circumcision" was such a terrible thing for girls, many

girls suffered and even died of that. When I got to know why they do that, I became furious about it. Men didn't want women to enjoy sex so that women could not betray their husbands.

That was pathetic.

After her nice wedding, she got along with her open-minded husband. She had freedom to do things she wanted to do. Until after giving birth to her third child, she got breast cancer and she became barren. Kareem wanted to wed again because he wanted more children. When he told her, the pain in her couldn't be expressed by words. She kicked and tried to kill this man. After her rage was spent, she wanted a divorce, but her husband declared that divorce would be out of the question unless she chosen to give up her children.

She was a woman who would never give up what she wanted. The aggression in her came out again because of her husband's decision. She wanted to escape from the place with her children. She organized a perfect plan to get to London, and in order to not let her husband find her easily, she fled to France and Rome and then fled to Zurich to empty the account in a Swiss Bank, with more than six million dollars in hand, she felt secure, then she went back to London. She called her sister and left a message to Kareem that he would never see them again. Five months later, she agreed to talk with Kareem over the phone, and they planned to meeting Venice to see her protected by four strong German bodyguards, she told him that she would return to Riyadh only if Kareem signed a legal document that as long as he and she were wed he would not take another wife. If he were to break this, she was to be given a divorce and all of her children and half of his fortune. One month later, the poor man gave up and wanted his family back.

I am amazed by the power she had, she was a brave women who dared to fight for herself and for what she want; she was also an intelligent woman who had great solutions to her problems.

Women in Saudi Arabia, women still don't have rights like we do; they have suffered the unfairness for long time. Such things as "circumcision" still exist today; women still have to wear veil in front of people; the men are still the masters, the ruler of women.

After finishing reading the book, I found out that the root of

the great unfairness between women and men is their religious beliefs. The Muslims control the whole country with their beliefs. It is a long way for women in Saudi Arabia to get equal rights.