



Princess: A True Story of Life Behind the Veil in Saudi Arab

Jean Sasson

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Sultana is a Saudi Arabian princess, a woman born to fabulous, uncountable wealth. She has four mansions on three continents, her own private jet, glittering jewels, designer dresses galore. But in reality she lives in a gilded cage. She has no freedom, no control over her own life, no value but as a bearer of sons. Hidden behind her black floor-length veil, she is a prisoner, jailed by her father, her husband, her sons, and her country. Sultana is a member of the Saudi royal family, closely related to the king. For the sake of her daughters, she has decided to take the risk of speaking out about the life of women in her country, regardless of their rank. She must hide her identity for fear that the religious leaders in her country would call for her death to punish her honesty. Only a woman in her position could possibly hope to escape from being revealed and punished, despite her cloak and anonymity. Sultana tells of her own life, from her turbulent childhood to her arranged marriage--a happy one until her husband decided to displace her by taking a second wife--and of the lives of her sisters, her friends and her servants. Although they share affection, confidences and an easy camaraderie within the confines of the women's quarters, they also share a history of appalling oppressions, everyday occurrences that in any other culture would be seen as shocking human rights violations; thirteen-year-old girls forced to marry men five times their age, young women killed by drowning, stoning, or isolation in the women's room, a padded, windowless cell where women are confined with neither light nor conversation until death claims them. By speaking out, Sultana risks bringing the wrath of the Saudi establishment upon her head and the heads of her children. But by telling her story to Jean Sasson, Sultana has allowed us to see beyond the veils of this secret society, to the heart of a nation where sex, money, and power reign supreme.

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