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04 Jul 2017



Doha, Qatar: Classic stories have a way of transcending time and place, and possess the ability to touch the lives of generations. These stories stay with the reader forever as they are marked with important lessons taught and learned through larger-than-life situations, spun with a touch of fantasy and imagination.

For local Qatari author, Dr. Kaltham Ali Al-Ghanim, the year was 1989 when she first heard the story of Ghosoun and her Brother the Gazelle from a wizened, eighty-year-old woman which stuck with her for over 25 years.

“The woman who told me the story knew a lot of traditional, Qatari folkloric tales and was a master storyteller,” explains Dr. Al-Ghanim. “She had a special way of bringing a story alive and this particular story stuck with me. I was attracted to the special relationship between a girl and her brother, and their relationship with a dog. Years later, when I started writing for children, I remembered this tale, and knew I wanted to share it with kids in a captivating manner so that it would stick with them as it had with me after all of these years.”

And so, Ghosoun and her Brother the Gazelle, an enchanting tale from Qatari heritage, newly published by Hamad Bin Khalifa University Press and available in bookstores in Qatar, has been passed on from one generation to the next.

The tale depicts a brother and sister who live with their parents in peace and harmony, along with their loyal dog, Salfa. But with the sudden death of their mother, the children’s father marries another woman who quickly conspires with an evil crow to be rid of the children and faithful Salfa.

The children embark on a mysterious journey away from their home fraught with hardships, deceit, and magical enchantment, in the hope to someday live, once again, happily ever after.

When it came to illustrating the story, Dr. Al-Ghanim and the editors at HBKU Press saw Ibtihaj Al-Harhi as the perfect match to illustrate the story.

“Her artistic touch had the ability to brilliantly bring the characters and their actions to life,” says Dr. Al-Ghanim.

The award-winning Omani author and illustrator of another HBKU Press Children’s book, Mah and Me, was also very enthusiastic to be a part of the project.

“I have always been passionate about fairytales and their cultural value. They fascinated me as a child and they still fascinate me as an adult,” explains Al-Harhi.

“I love this story, in particular, because of its cultural spirit,” she continues. “The author has smartly incorporated colloquial words in the narrative which gave it a sincere Gulf spirit. Having the opportunity to illustrate it was a true privilege.”

And if anything, it is that depiction of the Gulf, the concept of giving local talent a platform to share a regional story with new generation that is the goal of all three parties involved in creating this book. And with the published book, Ghosoun and her Brother the Gazelle, the author, the illustrator and the publisher successfully achieve this goal, as summarized by Dr. Al Ghanim herself:

“What I really hope is to connect the young generation with their cultural heritage and I want them to hear the stories that were produced by the people of this region,” she explains. “I want them to understand the nature of their lives in the past and to know that their cultural heritage contains treasures that they can benefit from and enjoy.”