# Ali's wife

FATIMA was a beautiful young woman from Syria. One day she saw a big new shop in one of the streets in her home town. On the front of the shop was a **sign**. It said: *Women are* ***clever****, but men think faster*. 'Who wrote that?' she said angrily. 'Ali, the **shopkeeper**,' people told her. Fatima went into the shop.

'What a nice day!' said Ali.

'Not for me,' answered Fatima and she began to cry.

Ali was **surprised**.

'Why not?' Ali asked. 'What's the matter?'

'Every time a man wants to marry me, my father always tells him, "My daughter is **cross-eyed**, and has big, ugly feet." Is it true?'

She looked at Ali with her big, dark eyes.

'Your eyes are beautiful,' said Ali.

'What about my feet?' she asked sadly.

Ali looked at her feet.

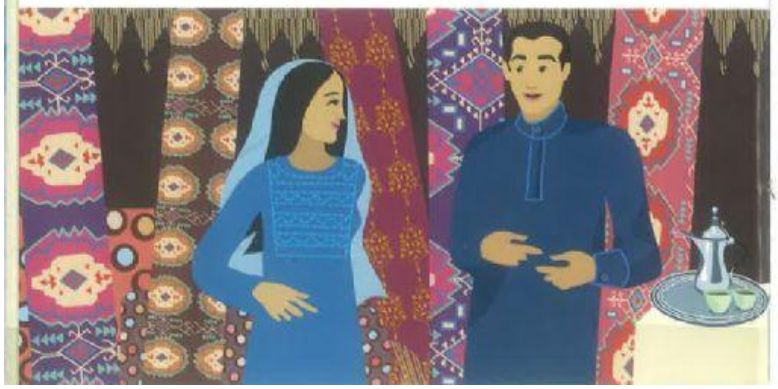
**sign** writing in a place that tells people something important

**clever** quick-thinking

**shopkeeper** somebody who has a shop

**surprised** feeling that something very new is suddenly happening

**cross-eyed** with eyes that look in



'They're wonderful feet,' he said. 'Who is your father? I must talk to him.'

'My father is the judge,' answered Fatima, 'the richest man in town.'

'Don't cry any more,' said Ali. 'I'm going to visit him tomorrow. Everything is going to change.'

'But what about when he calls me cross-eyed and talks about my big ugly feet?' said Fatima.

'I'm ready for his stories,' answered Ali. Fatima left the shop and went home.

Ali couldn't sleep all night. Every time he closed his eyes, he saw Fatima's beautiful, dark eyes.

The next day, he got up early and walked quickly to the judge's house. The judge was very surprised when Ali asked to marry his daughter.

'Do you know about my daughter?' he asked. 'She's cross-eyed and has big, ugly feet.'

'That doesn't matter to me,' said Ali.

'But can you pay for her?' asked the judge. 'You must pay 10,000 gold coins to marry her.'

'That's nothing to me,' said Ali. 'I have a big shop. Here's the money.'

So the judge said 'yes' to the wedding.

Later that day, a man came to Ali's door with a big basket. 'This basket is from the judge,' said the man.

'It's her things, I'm sure,' thought Ali. But when he opened the basket, there was an ugly young woman in it. She was cross-eyed and had big, ugly feet.

'Who are you?' asked Ali.

'I'm the judge's daughter,' she answered. 'But I'm going to be your wife.'

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Ali sat down suddenly next to the basket. 'So who was the beautiful girl in my shop?' he thought. He gave the ugly young woman something to eat and then went to his room. He didn't understand a thing.

The next morning he opened his shop at the usual time. He sat with his head in his hands. The door opened and Fatima came in.

'Good morning. What a nice day!' she said.

This time Ali cried.

'Not for me,' he said. 'Now I'm going to have an ugly wife. But I wanted to marry you. You're not the judge's daughter!'

'No, my father is the **blacksmith**,' said Fatima.

'Why are you doing this to me?' asked Ali.

'Who thinks faster,' asked Fatima, 'men or women?'

Ali looked at Fatima. 'Ah, now I understand!' he said. 'The sign on the front of my shop . . . !'

With that, Fatima left the shop and went home.

The next day Fatima walked past the shop and looked at the sign. *Men think fast, but women are cleverer*, she read.

She went into the shop. 'That's better!' she said. 'Now, listen to me. I can help you. You're going to have a big wedding for your new wife. Ask the poorest people in town to your house, and ask your bride's father too. When the poor people arrive, tell the judge: "These people are all in my family." He doesn't want any poor people in his family. I'm sure of that.'

Fatima was right. When the judge met the poor people at Ali's house, he was very angry.

'I don't want my daughter to marry someone from this family,' he cried. 'Give her back at once!'

**blacksmith** a man who works to make metal shoes for horses



'But I like her,' said Ali.

'You can have your 10,000 gold coins back' said the judge.

'No thank you,' said Ali.

'What about 20,000 gold coins, then?' asked the judge.

In the end, Ali took the 20,000 gold coins and gave the young woman back to her father.

The next day Ali went to the blacksmith's house. 'I want to marry your daughter,' he said.

'Oh yes?' said the blacksmith.

'But first,' said Ali, 'can I see her? Perhaps you have more than one daughter.'

Fatima's father smiled. 'Fatima,' he called, 'please bring our visitor some coffee.'

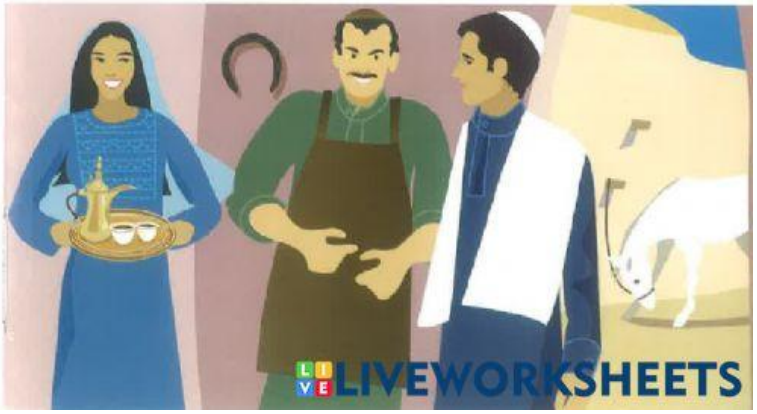
When Fatima came in and saw Ali, she laughed.

'Why are you here?' she asked.

'I want to marry the right woman this time,' he said.

Now everybody laughed.

'Let's have some of Fatima's coffee,' said her father.



LIVEWORKSHEETS

## READING CHECK

**Choose the correct pictures.**

a One day Fatima sees a . . . in a shop.

b When Fatima goes into the shop she begins to . . . .

c 'Fatima has beautiful . . . .' thinks Ali.

d At first Fatima says, 'My father is a . . . '

e Ali pays . . . gold coins to marry Fatima.

f When Ali opens the basket he finds a . . . .

g Fatima's father is really a . . . .

h When the judge sees the poor people at Ali's house he is . . . .

i At the end of the story, Fatima makes a . . . for Ali.

## WORD WORK

**1 Find four more words from the basket.**

**2 Use the words from Activity 1 to complete these sentences.**

a Fatima's father isn't a judge, he's a blacksmith.

b Ali has a shop; he's a . . . . . .

c One day Ali puts a . . . . . in the window of his shop.

d Fatima is a very . . . . . woman. She can think very quickly.

e Ali is very . . . . . when a woman comes out of the basket.

LIVEWORKSHEETS