



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

By Jean Sasson

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**Princess: A True Story of Life Behind the Veil in Saudi Arab** By Jean Sasson

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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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this consistently gripping work, a Literary Guild alternate selection in cloth, the American-born Sasson recounts the life story of a Saudi princess she met while living in Saudi Arabia, offering a glimpse of the appalling conditions endured by even privileged women in the Middle East. Photos.

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From Library Journal

One must keep in mind the context of time and place when reading this emotional and exciting book to alleviate some of the horror of the injustices endured by the women described here. Equality of men and women has not worked out in any society, but the status of women in Islam is more problematic in that canon law is applied according to the social climate. Consequently, countries influenced by the West, such as Egypt, are more relaxed than countries like Saudi Arabia that are ruled by strict Hanbali law, which subjects women to unwelcome marriages, execution at whim, and the boredom of purdah. In this book, Sasson (*The Rape of Kuwait*, Knightsbridge Pub. Co., 1991) tells the fascinating story of "Sultana," an unidentified Saudi princess who yearns for recognition in her own right, not as an adjunct of men. For those who wish to know more, Soraya Altorki's *Women in Saudi Arabia* (LJ 1/86) and Paryeen Shaikat Ali's *Status of Women in the Muslim World* (Aziz Pub., 1975. o.p.) are good. Recommended for popular collections. (Illustrations not seen.) Previewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 5/1/92.

- Louise Leonard, Univ. of Florida Libs., Gainesville

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From Kirkus Reviews

Sasson (*The Rape of Kuwait*, 1991--not reviewed) brings us "Sultana," a pseudonymous member of the Saudi royal family whose memoir documents the suffocating sexism that pervades Saudi life. From minute one, Sultana got the message that only men mattered. Her father had three wives in addition to her mother; her brother, Ali, had sovereignty over his ten sisters. Sultana, we learn, crafted constant rebellions, from smashing Ali's Rolex to leaving his pornographic slides--on which he'd printed his name--at the local mosque for the religious police to find. Arranged marriages were the norm: Sultana was lucky in being matched with a liberal, distant cousin (she was also lucky in being spared the common practice of ritual genital mutilation). She had children, battled her husband, and was thrilled during the Gulf War by reports of the 47 Saudi women who bucked the law and drove in the streets of Riyadh (although rumors persist that one of the group was put to death by her father). But Sasson's device of telling Sultana's story in the first person trivializes the princess's important material. Her voice echoes that of a pulp-fiction heroine ("I was drowning in Kareem's eyes..."), and the endless vignettes of her feistiness--especially the incident of her brother's pornography--verge on incredible. But when Sultana stops talking about herself and takes time to observe, we get amazing details: of Saudi wealth (British interior decorators were imported to redo Sultana's suite on the maternity ward), and of cultural brutality (one friend, caught propositioning foreigners, was drowned by her father in the family swimming pool; another, in punishment for having an affair with a Westerner, was confined to a darkened room for life). Worth paging past the trivial, then, to absorb a chilling and enraging portrait of women's absolute powerlessness in Saudi society. (Fifteen b&w photos, maps--not seen.) --

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## **Users Review**

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#### **Erin Chretien:**

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#### **Elliott Preciado:**

Exactly why? Because this Princess: A True Story of Life Behind the Veil in Saudi Arab is an unordinary book that the inside of the reserve waiting for you to snap this but latter it will jolt you with the secret it inside. Reading this book alongside it was fantastic author who else write the book in such remarkable way makes the content within easier to understand, entertaining way but still convey the meaning entirely. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this anymore or you going to regret it. This unique book will give you a lot of positive aspects than the other book have got such as help improving your ability and your critical thinking method. So , still want to hold up having that book? If I ended up you I will go to the publication store hurriedly.

#### **Carey Gilliam:**

Do you have something that you prefer such as book? The reserve lovers usually prefer to opt for book like comic, brief story and the biggest the first is novel. Now, why not trying Princess: A True Story of Life Behind the Veil in Saudi Arab that give your satisfaction preference will be satisfied by reading this book. Reading addiction all over the world can be said as the opportunity for people to know world better then how they react when it comes to the world. It can't be explained constantly that reading habit only for the geeky individual but for all of you who wants to be success person. So , for every you who want to start reading as your good habit, you are able to pick Princess: A True Story of Life Behind the Veil in Saudi Arab become your starter.

#### **Craig Palmer:**

This Princess: A True Story of Life Behind the Veil in Saudi Arab is great reserve for you because the content and that is full of information for you who also always deal with world and also have to make decision every minute. This specific book reveal it details accurately using great organize word or we can claim no rambling sentences in it. So if you are read that hurriedly you can have whole details in it. Doesn't mean it only gives you straight forward sentences but challenging core information with attractive delivering sentences. Having Princess: A True Story of Life Behind the Veil in Saudi Arab in your hand like keeping the world in your arm, information in it is not ridiculous one particular. We can say that no publication that

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