

“The Legend of the Bloody-Shouldered Mare” ... a Bedouin Legend

Long ago, on the sands of a great desert, lived a Bedouin chieftain, by the name of Ahmed, and his tribe. In the tents of Ahmed was his most prized possession, a beautiful grey mare who was renowned throughout the desert as the fleetest and most beautiful horse in the world. Many people coveted the mare, and kings and chieftains had tried to acquire her, but Ahmed could not be persuaded to part with his beloved mare. Ahmed decided to breed his mare, and searched the desert for a suitable mate for her. After a time the mare was bred to the premier stallion in the Sultan’s stables.

Months went by and the time for the mare to foal grew near. Riding across the desert one day, several miles from his tents, Ahmed was seen by a group of robber Bedouins. Fearing that he would lose his beloved mare, as well as his life, Ahmed turned and raced toward his tents, knowing in his heart that the mare, heavy in foal, could never out-distance the bandits. The mare seemed to realize that she was running for her master’s life, and slowly, very slowly, she began to gain ground on her pursuers. Shots rang out and bullets peppered the sand around them as the distance gradually widened.

They were almost out of rifle range, when a late shot rang out. A bullet pierced Ahmed’s heart and he fell forward over the neck of his beloved mare. The mare never slackened her stride, and carried her master back to his tents on their final ride together.

Ahmed’s people gathered around the mare and removed his lifeless body from her back. Down one of her shoulders his blood had dried a rusty brown in the desert heat. There the mark remained for no one could remove it.

That night, in the tent of her dead master, the mare foaled. The foal was acclaimed by all a perfect specimen of the Arabian breed, and on his shoulder was the same rusty red mark that his dam bore. And so it came to pass that every great horse descended from that mare carried the mark of the bloody shoulder, and it was a thing greatly prized in the desert.



