

Hana, the Girl Who Caught the Sun

by Rovena Rrozhani

Once upon a time, there was a beautiful village. But one day, a Jinni passed by and everything changed. He could not bear the happiness of the people, so he surrounded the village with seven high mountains. Then he froze the river and the forest. When the sun came up, the Jinni fought the light with ice, and the top of the mountains got higher and higher, so the light could not reach the ground any more. The whole village sloped dramatically into a deep abyss, and no light could reach it.

Without the sun, the village decayed. No more trees, no more grains, no more flowers to be found. The wild animals and the birds ran away. No one could pass the mountains, neither to enter the village nor to leave it. To bring an end to this misery, it was decided that the strongest men should fight the Jinni. So they went to face it one by one and never came back. It was said the Jinni's wrath turned them into ice sculptures.



Darkness consumed the villagers, and they squabbled over mere trifles. Poverty reigned everywhere. Even the rich mirror-maker became quite desperate. Nobody wanted to buy mirrors any more because nobody wanted to see their own sad reflection. One day, the mirror-maker fell ill. He had only a daughter, named Hana, who he nursed with lots of love through hard times. He kept her by his side in the workshop and taught her every skill and trick about mirrors. As Hana grew up discovering new things, her curiosity to learn more increased.

When she saw her father so ill, Hana could not bear it any longer. The girl crouched in the workshop and out of desperation began to cry. Her tears fell on one of the mirrors where the dim light of the candle was reflected. Suddenly, she had an idea. Hana wiped away the tears and went to her room. She thought long and hard through the night. The next day, she told her father that she was going to defeat the Jinni. Her father was really frightened by her decision, begging Hana to change her mind because it was too dangerous, but the girl insisted on going.

“You are just a girl. The Jinni froze all those men. No one came back alive,” he said.

“Father, if we keep living like this, we will all die frozen pretty soon,” she answered.

“Who knows? It might not last forever. The Jinni might calm down.”

“You know better. That is never going to happen. Do not be afraid for me. Do you remember what you told me, when you taught me how to make my first mirror?”

The mirror-maker recalled that day clearly and whispered the words he had told his daughter:

“You can achieve anything.”

Then he added:

“But I was referring to a mirror.”

“I will handle it. I will defy the Jinni, and I will catch the sun. But I need the strongest horse and seven mirrors.”

The mirror-maker blinked in disbelief, but he said, “So be it! You can take the best horse, and as for the mirrors, no one buys them any more, so you can take as many as you want.”

The mirror-maker prepared the best horse, exactly like his daughter asked for, and fastened seven big mirrors to the saddle. As she parted, she looked once more at her father, then at the ruined streets and houses. Suddenly, renewed strength and determination warmed her. Hana started for the first mountain. Trotting through the frozen forest, she saw a snake stuck under a log.

“Save me, please, and I will reward you,” he told the girl.

She managed to move the log, and the snake wriggled free.

“Where are you headed to?” the snake asked her.

“I am going to defeat the Jinni,” she answered.

“This is impossible. You are just a tiny girl.”

“A tiny girl who just saved your life.”

“Right,” said the snake, noticing her firmness. “I will tell you a secret. The Jinni sits on top of the seventh mountain. When it sees you, it will start screaming loudly to scare you, but you shouldn’t stop. Keep going, and look at it straight in the eyes. Don’t look away; that’s how to defeat it. Then get the bottles it keeps under its armpits. The one with the white potion freezes things; the one with the red potion melts them.”

The snake finished and went on his way. The girl continued on her track. She climbed the mountains one by one and placed a mirror on top of each. On the seventh mountain, she picked up two pebbles and stuck



them in her ears. As she went up the track, it was true, she saw all the men who had turned into ice sculptures. She recalled the snake's words; she got two small pieces of ice and used them to glue her eyelids open.

The Jinni faced her all of a sudden and whirled, unleashing such fury and mayhem that the mountain shook. But the smart girl heard nothing, thanks to the pebbles in her ears. She kept walking, never turning her gaze away. The Jinni looked her straight in the eyes, but she never blinked as the ice kept her eyelids stuck open. The Jinni kept screaming, and the girl kept walking towards it, until its powers faded. Eventually the Jinni gave in. The girl took the bottles and opened the one with the white potion. She poured it over the Jinni and it froze. Then she placed the last mirror on top of the last mountain. When she was done, she sprinkled all the ice sculptures with the red potion. The village men melted and stretched as if awakening from a long sleep. They were really astonished at the sight of the frozen Jinni and the small girl holding the empty bottle.

“How did you manage to defy it?” they asked.

“I will tell you all the details on the way back home. The Jinni is frozen now, and we have to smash it to pieces so it can no longer do harm,” said the girl.

After smashing the Jinni, they set out for the village. Word of the defeated Jinni spread in a heartbeat. The villagers welcomed the girl cheering, with the high honours worthy of a real hero. Everybody was enjoying the return of the men and the smashing of the Jinni, until someone said:

“The Jinni is dead, and our sons are back home, but there is still no sun.”

The village remained in the womb of a dark abyss. But the girl said, “Let's wait for the morning. It is still midnight.”

And she went back home, sitting the whole night by her father's bed. The girl didn't sleep at all. She just kept looking at the big clock on the bedroom wall, to the slice of the sky she could glimpse from the window, and to her father's calm face. He was so happy at the sight of her coming back home! The girl looked at the clock and then back to the sky.

The dawn broke, and the sun started rising behind the mountains. The girl kept waiting anxiously until the rays touched the mirror on the first mountaintop. Then one by one, the rays struck all the mirrors and reflected all over the village. The light flooded the roads, and people found happiness again. They rushed to the mirror-maker's house to thank the girl once more. And they started to buy mirrors so they could keep the sun in their homes.

Day after day, the ice melted and the mountaintops lowered bit by bit until one day, a year after the Jinni's disappearance, the sun finally shone over all the mountains. The melted ice brought back the waterfalls, so beautiful that there are no words to describe them. The river thawed, and life started again. The animals returned, and people planted and harvested the best fruits and grains.

Hana's story spread over the mountains and raised curiosity all over the world. People flooded the village from everywhere. They wanted to meet the girl, who was now a mirror-maker of her own, and see the village surrounded by the mountains. Before leaving, they bought a mirror at her workshop, to take home a piece of the courage and wisdom of the girl that managed to defy the Jinni and catch the sun.