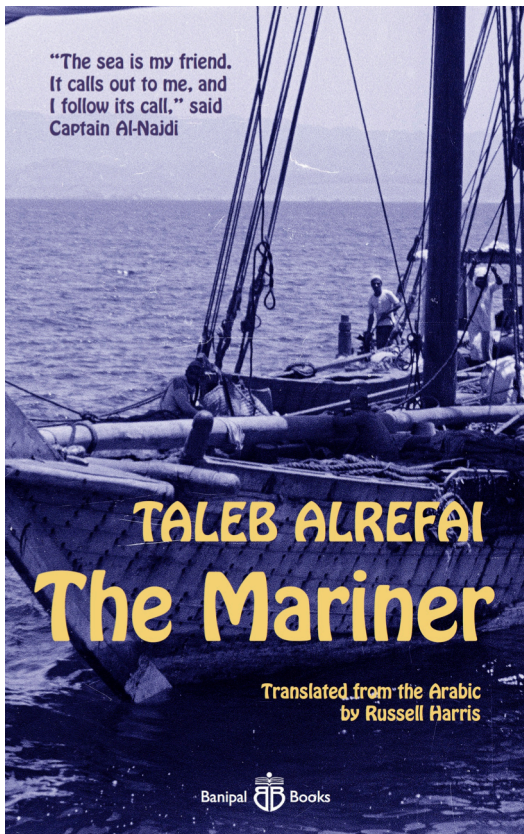


## The Mariner by Taleb Alrefai



In *The Mariner* Taleb Alrefai turns a spotlight on Kuwait's pearl-fishing history in an enthralling fictional re-telling of the fateful day, 19 February 1979, when the country's famous dhow shipmaster Captain Al-Najdi is lost at sea in a treacherous storm. With the sea at its heart, the author draws us in inexorably with his hour-by-hour account of Al-Najdi's last day. In between fishing for seabream with two friends, the retired mariner looks back on how the sea has been calling him since childhood, on the punishing work of pearl divers, and how he became a captain at 14 – he is surely a descendant of that other well-known sailor Sindbad. As Al-Najdi recalls his voyages around the Arabian Peninsula, some with renowned Australian sailor Alan Villiers, he meditates on how the sea was abandoned when pearl fishing ended with the discovery of synthetic pearls and oil.

**Taleb Alrefai** was born in Kuwait in 1958 and started writing short stories as an engineering student at the University of Kuwait in the mid-1970s,

publishing in local newspapers. *The Mariner* is his fourth novel, whose Arabic original, *Al-Najdi*, published in 2016 in Kuwait, was longlisted for the 2018 International Prize for Arabic Fiction. It has been published in French, Turkish, and Chinese translation, and is now joined by this English edition. In 2011 Taleb Alrefai founded Al-Multaqa (Cultural Circle), a regular literary discussion forum in Kuwait City, which led to his founding in 2016 the now annual AlMultaqa Prize for the Arabic Short Story. He lives in Kuwait City.

"*The Mariner* is a novel very close to my heart as it immortalizes a national hero of my country, Kuwait. It portrays the strong relationship between Kuwaitis and the sea in the era before oil was discovered. It is an adventure between man and sea." **Taleb Alrefai**

The wrap-around cover of *The Mariner* is an original photograph of a Kuwaiti dhow taken by the intrepid Australian sailor Alan Villiers.

**Translator:** Russell Harris is a translator of literary works from French and Arabic. His translations include works by Naguib Mahfouz, Alaa al-Aswany and Tawfiq al-Hakim.

First English edition • Paperback 978-1-913043-08-7 • eBook 978-1-913043-09-4  
Historical Fiction • 198 x 125 mm • 160pp • publication date: 27 April 2020  
To request a review copy, email [Margaret@banipal.co.uk](mailto:Margaret@banipal.co.uk)