

# **ALF LAYLAH WA LAYLAH**

## **(THE ARABIAN NIGHTS' ENTERTAINMENTS)**

**Translated  
By  
Sir Richard Francis Burton**

**Courtesy:  
Shahid Riaz  
Islamabad - Pakistan  
shahid.riaz@gmail.com**

## PART – 1

### STORY OF KING SHAHRYAR AND HIS BROTHER

*In the Name of Allah, the Compassionating, the Compassionate!*

*PRAISE BE TO ALLAH - THE BENEFICENT KING - THE CREATOR OF THE NIVERSE - LORD OF THE THREE WORLDS - WHO SET UP THE FIRMAMENT WITHOUT PILLARS IN ITS STEAD - AND WHO STRETCHED OUT THE EARTH EVEN AS A BED - AND GRACE, AND PRAYER BLESSING BE UPON OUR LORD MOHAMMED - LORD OF APOSTOLIC MEN - AND UPON HIS FAMILY AND COMPANION TRAIN - PRAYER AND BLESSINGS ENDURING AND GRACE WHICH UNTO THE DAY OF DOOM SHALL REMAIN - AMEN! - O THOU OF THE THREE WORLDS SOVEREIGN!*

AND AFTERWARD; Verily the works and words of those gone before us have become instances and examples to men of our modern day, that folk may view what admonishing chances befell other folk and may therefrom take warning; and that they may peruse the annals of antique peoples and all that hath betided them, and be thereby ruled and restrained. Praise, therefore, be to Him who hath made the histories of the past an admonition unto the present! Now of such instances are the tales called "A Thousand Nights and a Night," together with their far-famed legends and wonders.

Therein it is related (but Allah it is All-knowing of His hidden things and All-ruling and All-honored and All-giving and All-gracious and All-merciful!) that in tide of yore and in time long gone before, there was a King of the Kings of the Banu Sasan in the islands of India and China, a Lord of armies and guards and servants and dependents. He left only two sons, one in the prime of manhood and the other yet a youth, while both were knights and braves, albeit the elder was a doughtier horseman than the younger. So he succeeded to the empire, when he ruled the land and lorded it is over his lieges with justice so exemplary that he was beloved by all the peoples of his capital and of his kingdom. His name was King Shahryar, and he made his younger brother, Shah Zaman hight, King of Samarkand in Barbarian land. These two ceased not to abide in their several realms and the law was ever carried out in their dominions. And each ruled his own kingdom with equity and fair dealing to his subjects, in extreme solace and enjoyment, and this condition continually endured for a score of years.

But at the end of the twentieth twelvemonth the elder King yearned for a sight of his younger brother and felt that he must look upon him once more. So he took counsel with his Wazir about visiting him, but the Minister, finding the project unadvisable, recommended that a letter be written and a present be sent under his charge to the younger brother, with an invitation to visit the elder. Having accepted this advice, the King forthwith bade prepare handsome gifts, such as horses with saddles of gem-encrusted gold; Mamelukes, or white slaves; beautiful handmaids, high-breasted virgins, and splendid stuffs and costly. He then wrote a letter to Shah Zaman expressing his warm love and great wish to see him, ending with these words: "We therefore hope of the favor and affection of the beloved brother that he will condescend to bestir himself and turn his face usward. Furthermore, we have sent our Wazir to make all ordinance for the march, and our one and only desire it is to see thee ere we die. But if thou delay or disappoint us, we shall not survive the blow. Wherewith peace be upon thee!"

Then King Shahryar, having sealed the missive and given it to the Wazir with the offerings aforementioned, commanded him to shorten his skirts and strain his strength and make all expedition in going and returning. "Harkening and obedience!" quoth the Minister, who fell to making ready without stay and packed up his loads and prepared all his requisites without delay. This occupied him three days, and on the dawn of the fourth he took leave of his King and marched right away, over desert and hallway, stony waste and pleasant lea, without halting by night or by day. But whenever he entered a realm whose ruler was subject to his suzerain, where he was greeted with magnificent gifts of gold and silver and all manner of presents fair and rare, he would tarry there three days, the term of the guest rite. And when he left on the fourth, he would be honorably escorted for a whole day's march.

As soon as the Wazir drew near Shah Zaman's court in Samarkand he dispatched to report his arrival one of his high officials, who presented himself before the King and, kissing ground between his hands, delivered his message. Hereupon the King commanded sundry of his grandees and lords of his realm to fare forth and meet his brother's Wazir at the distance of a full day's journey. Which they did, greeting him respectfully and wishing him all prosperity and forming an escort and a procession. When he entered the city, he proceeded straightway to the palace, where he presented himself in the royal presence; and after kissing ground and praying for the King's health and happiness and for victory over all his enemies, he informed him that his brother was yearning to see him, and prayed for the pleasure of a visit.

He then delivered the letter, which Shah Zaman took from his hand and read. It contained sundry hints and allusions which required thought, but when the King had fully comprehended its import, he said, "I hear and I obey the commands of the beloved brother!" adding to the Wazir, "But we will not march till after the third day's hospitality." He appointed for the Minister fitting quarters of the palace and pitching tents for the troops, rationed them with whatever they might require of meat and drink and other necessaries. On the fourth day he made ready for wayfare and got together sumptuous presents befitting his elder brother's majesty, and stablished his chief Wazir Viceroy of the land during his absence. Then he caused his tents and camels and mules to be brought forth and encamped, with their bales and loads, attendants and guards, within sight of the city, in readiness to set out next morning for his brother's capital.

But when the night was half-spent he bethought him that he had forgotten in his palace somewhat which he should have brought with him, so he returned privily and entered his apartments, where he found the Queen, his wife, asleep on his own carpet bed embracing with both arms a black cook of loathsome aspect and foul with kitchen grease and grime. When he saw this the world waxed black before his sight and he said: "If such case happen while I am yet within sight of the city, what will be the doings of this damned whore during my long absence at my brother's court?" So he drew his scimitar, and cutting the two in four pieces with a single blow, left them on the carpet and returned presently to his camp without letting anyone know of what had happened. Then he gave orders for immediate departure and set out at once and began his travel; but he could not help thinking over his wife's treason, and he kept ever saying to himself: "How could she do this deed by me? How could she work her own death?" till excessive grief seized him, his color changed to yellow, his body waxed weak, and he was threatened with a dangerous malady, such a one as bringeth men to die. So the Wazir shortened his stages and tarried long at the watering stations, and did his best to solace the King.

Now when Shah Zaman drew near the capital of his brother, he dispatched vaunt-couriers and messengers of glad tidings to announce his arrival, and Shahryar came forth to meet him with his wazirs and emirs and lords and grandees of his realm, and saluted him and joyed with exceeding joy and caused the city to be decorated in his honor. When, however, the brothers met, the elder could not but see the change of complexion in the younger and questioned him of his case, whereto he replied: "'Tis caused by the travails of wayfare and my case needs care, for I have suffered from the change of water and air! But Allah be praised for reuniting me with a brother so dear and so rare!" On this wise he dissembled and kept his secret, adding: "O King of the Time and Caliph of the Tide, only toil and moil have tinged my face yellow with bile and hath made my eyes sink deep in my head."

Then the two entered the capital in all honor, and the elder brother lodged the younger in a palace overhanging the pleasure garden. And after a time, seeing his condition still unchanged, he attributed it is to his separation from his country and kingdom. So he let him wend his own ways and asked no questions of him till one day when he again said, "O my brother, I see thou art grown weaker of body and yellower of color." "O my brother," replied Shah Zaman, "I have an internal wound." Still he would not tell him what he had witnessed in his wife. Thereupon Shahryar summoned doctors and surgeons and bade them treat his brother according to the rules of art, which they did for a whole month. But their sherbets and potions naught availed, for he would dwell upon the deed of his wife, and despondency, instead of diminishing, prevailed, and leechcraft treatment utterly failed.

One day his elder brother said to him: "I am going forth to hunt and course and to take my pleasure and pastime. Maybe this would lighten thy heart." Shah Zaman, however, refused, saying: "O my brother, my soul yearneth for naught of this sort, and I entreat thy favor to stiffer me tarry quietly in this place, being wholly taken up with my malady." So King Shah Zaman passed his night in the palace, and next morning when his brother had fared forth, he removed from his room and sat him down at one of the lattice windows overlooking the pleasure grounds. And there he abode thinking with saddest thought over his wife's betrayal, and burning sighs issued from his tortured breast.

And as he continued in this case lo! a postern of the palace, which was carefully kept private, swung open, and out of it is came twenty slave girls surrounding his brother's wife, who was wondrous fair, a model of beauty and comeliness and symmetry and perfect loveliness, and who paced with the grace of a gazelle which panteth for the cooling stream. Thereupon Shah Zaman drew back from the window, but he kept the bevy in sight, espying them from a place whence he could not be espied. They walked under the very lattice and advanced a little way into the garden till they came to a jetting fountain a-middlemost a great basin of water. Then they stripped off their clothes, and behold, ten of them were women, concubines of the King, and the other ten were white slaves. Then they all paired off, each with each. But the Queen, who was left alone, presently cried out in a loud voice, "Here to me, O my lord Saeed!"

And then sprang with a drop leap from one of the trees a big slobbering blackamoor with rolling eyes which showed the whites, a truly hideous sight. He walked boldly up to her and threw his arms round her neck while she embraced him as warmly. Then he bussed her and winding his legs round hers, as a button loop clasps a button, he threw her and enjoyed her. On like wise did the other slaves with the girls till all had satisfied their passions, and they ceased not from kissing and clipping, coupling and carousing, till day began to wane, when the Mamelukes rose from the damsels' bosoms and the blackamoor slave dismounted from the Queen's breast. The men resumed their disguises and all except the

Negro, who swarmed up the tree, entered the palace and closed the postern door as before. Now when Shah Zaman saw this conduct of his sister-in-law, he said to himself: "By Allah, my calamity is lighter than this! My brother is a greater King among the Kings than I am, yet this infamy goeth on in his very palace, and his wife is in love with that filthiest of filthy slaves. But this only showeth that they all do it and that there is no woman but who cuckoldeth her husband. Then the curse of Allah upon one and all, and upon the fools who lean against them for support or who place the reins of conduct in their hands!" So he put away his melancholy and despondency, regret and repine, and allayed his sorrow by constantly repeating those words, adding, "'Tis my conviction that no man in this world is safe from their malice!"

When suppertime came, they brought him the trays and he ate with voracious appetite, for he had long refrained from meat, feeling unable to touch any dish, however dainty. Then he returned grateful thanks to Almighty Allah, praising Him and blessing Him, and he spent a most restful night, it having been long since he had savored the sweet food of sleep. Next day he broke his fast heartily and began to recover health and strength, and presently regained excellent condition. His brother came back from the chase ten days after, when he rode out to meet him and they saluted each other. And when King Shahryar looked at King Shah Zaman, he saw how the hue of health had returned to him, how his face had waxed ruddy, and how he ate with an appetite after his late scanty diet. He wondered much and said: "O my brother, I was no anxious that thou wouldst join me in hunting and chasing, and wouldst take thy pleasure and pastime in my dominion!" He thanked him and excused himself.

Then the two took horse and rode into the city, and when they were seated at their ease in the palace, the food trays were set before them and they ate their sufficiency. After the meats were removed and they had washed their hands, King Shahryar turned to his brother and said: "My mind is overcome with wonderment at thy condition. I was desirous to carry thee with me to the chase, but I saw thee changed in hue, pale and wan to view, and in sore trouble of mind too. But now, Alhamdolillah- glory be to God!- I see thy natural color hath returned to thy face and that thou art again in the best of case. It was my belief that thy sickness came of severance from thy family and friends, and absence from capital and country, so I refrained from troubling thee with further questions. But now I beseech thee to expound to me the cause of thy complaint and thy change of color, and to explain the reason of thy recovery and the return to the ruddy hue of health which I am wont to view. So speak out and hide naught!"

When Shah Zaman heard this, he bowed groundward awhile his head, then raised it and said: "I will tell thee what caused my complaint and my loss of color. But excuse my acquainting thee with the cause of its return to me and the reason of my complete recovery. Indeed I pray thee not to press me for a reply." Said Shahryar, who was much surprised by these words, "Let me hear first what produced thy pallor and thy poor condition." "Know, then, O my brother," rejoined Shah Zaman, "that when thou sentest thy Wazir with the invitation to place myself between thy hands, I made ready and marched out of my city. But presently I minded me having left behind me in the palace a string of jewels intended as a gift to thee. I returned for it alone, and found my wife on my carpet bed and in the arms of a hideous black cook. So I slew the twain and came to thee, yet my thoughts brooded over this business and I lost my bloom and became weak. But excuse me if I still refuse to tell thee what was the reason of my complexion returning."

Shahryar shook his head, marveling with extreme marvel, and with the fire of wrath flaming

up from his heart, he cried, "Indeed, the malice of woman is mighty!" Then he took refuge from them with Allah and said: "In very sooth, O my brother, thou hast escaped many an evil by putting thy wife to death, and right excusable were thy wrath and grief for such mishap, which never yet befell crowned king like thee. By Allah, had the case been mine, I would not have been satisfied without slaying a thousand women, and that way madness lies! But now praise be to Allah Who hath tempered to thee thy tribulation, and needs must thou acquaint me with that which so suddenly restored to thee complexion and health, and explain to me what causeth this concealment." "O King of the Age, again I pray thee excuse my so doing!" "Nay, but thou must." "I fear, O my brother, lest the recital cause thee more anger and sorrow than afflicted me." "That were but a better reason," quoth Shahryar, "for telling me the whole history, and I conjure thee by Allah not to keep back aught from me."

Thereupon Shah Zaman told him all he had seen, from commencement to conclusion, ending with these words: "When I beheld thy calamity and the treason of thy wife, O my brother, and I reflected that thou art in years my senior and in sovereignty my superior, mine own sorrow was belittled by the comparison, and my mind recovered tone and temper. So, throwing off melancholy and despondency, I was able to eat and drink and sleep, and thus I speedily regained health and strength. Such is the truth and the whole truth." When King Shahryar heard this he waxed wroth with exceeding wrath, and rage was like to strangle him. But presently he recovered himself and said, "O my brother, I would not give thee the lie in this matter, but I cannot credit it till I see it with mine own eyes." "And thou wouldst look upon thy calamity," quoth Shah Zaman, "rise at once and make ready again for hunting and coursing, and then hide thyself with me. So shalt thou witness it and thine eyes shall verify it." "True," quoth the King. Whereupon he let make proclamation of his intent to travel, and the troops and tents fared forth without the city, camping within sight, and Shahryar sallied out with them and took seat a-midmost his host, bidding the slaves admit no man to him. When night came on, he summoned his Wazir and said to him, "Sit thou in my stead, and let none wot of my absence till the term of three days."

Then the brothers disguised themselves and returned by night with all secrecy to the palace, where they passed the dark hours. And at dawn they seated themselves at the lattice overlooking the pleasure grounds, when presently the Queen and her handmaids came out as before, and passing under the windows, made for the fountain. Here they stripped, ten of them being men to ten women, and the King's wife cried out, "Where art thou, O Saeed?" The hideous blackamoor dropped from the tree straightway, and rushing into her arms without stay or delay, cried out, "I am Sa'ad al-Din Saood!" The lady laughed heartily, and all fell to satisfying their lusts, and remained so occupied for a couple of hours, when the white slaves rose up from the handmaidens' breasts and the blackamoor dismounted from the Queen's bosom. Then they went into the basin and after performing the ghusl, or complete ablution, donned their dresses and retired as they had done before.

When King Shahryar saw this infamy of his wife and concubines, he became as one distraught, and he cried out: "Only in utter solitude can man be safe from the doings of this vile world! By Allah, life is naught but one great wrong." Presently he added, "Do not thwart me, O my brother, in what I propose." And the other answered, "I will not." So he said: "Let us up as we are and depart forthright hence, for we have no concern with kingship, and let us overwander Allah's earth, worshiping the Almighty till we find someone to whom the like calamity hath happened. And if we find none then will death be more welcome to us than life."

So the two brothers issued from a second private postern of the palace, and they never

stinted wayfaring by day and by night until they reached a tree a-middle of a meadow hard by a spring of sweet water on the shore of the salt sea. Both drank of it and sat down to take their rest. And when an hour of the day had gone by, lo! they heard a mighty roar and uproar in the middle of the main as though the heavens were falling upon the earth, and the sea brake with waves before them and from it towered a black pillar, which grew and grew till it rose skyward and began making for that meadow. Seeing it, they waxed fearful exceedingly and climbed to the top of the tree, which was a lofty, whence they gazed to see what might be the matter. And behold, it was a Jinni, huge of height and burly of breast and bulk, broad of brow and black of blee, bearing on his head a coffer of crystal. He strode to land, wading through the deep, and coming to the tree whereupon were the two Kings, seated himself beneath it. He then set down the coffer on its bottom and out of it drew a casket with seven padlocks of steel, which he unlocked with seven keys of steel he took from beside his thigh, and out of it a young lady to come was seen, whiteskinned and of winsomest mien, of stature fine and thin, and bright as though a moon of the fourteenth night she had been, or the sun raining lively sheen. Even so the poet Utayyah hath excellently said:-

She rose like the morn as she shone through the night  
 And she gilded the grove with her gracious sight.  
 From her radiance the sun taketh increase when  
 She unveileth and shameth the moonshine bright.  
 Bow down all beings between her hands  
 As she showeth charms with her veil undight.  
 And she floodeth cities with torrent tears  
 When she flasheth her look of levin light.

The Jinni seated her under the tree by his side and looking at her, said: "O choicest love of this heart of mine! O dame of noblest line, whom I snatched away on thy bride night that none might prevent me taking thy maidenhead or tumble thee before I did, and whom none save myself hath loved or hath enjoyed. O my sweetheart! I would lief sleep a little while." He then laid his head upon the lady's thighs, and, stretching out hip legs, which extended down to the sea, slept and snored and snarked like the roll of thunder. Presently she raised her head toward the treetop and saw the two Kings perched near the summit. Then she softly lifted off her lap the Jinni's pate, which she was tired of supporting, and placed it upon the ground, then, standing upright under the tree, signed to the Kings, "Come ye down, ye two, and fear naught from this Ifrit." They were in a terrible fright when they found that she had seen them, and answered her in the same manner, "Allah upon thee and by thy modesty, O lady, excuse us from coming down!" But she rejoined by saying: "Allah upon you both that ye come down forthright. And if ye come not, I will rouse upon you my husband, this Ifrit, and he shall do you to die by the illest of deaths." And she continued making signals to them.

So, being afraid, they came down to her, and she rose before them and said, "Stroke me a strong stroke, without stay or delay, otherwise will I arouse and set upon you this Ifrit, who shall slay you straightway." They said to her: "O our lady, we conjure thee by Allah, let us off this work, for we are fugitives from such, and in extreme dread and terror of this thy husband. How then can we do it in such a way as thou desirest?" "Leave this talk. It needs must be so," quoth she, and she swore them by Him who raised the skies on high without prop or pillar that if they worked not her will, she would cause them to be slain and cast into the sea. Whereupon out of fear King Shahryar said to King Shah Zaman, "O my brother, do

thou what she biddeth thee do." But he replied, "I will not do it till thou do it before I do." And they began disputing about futtering her.

Then quoth she to the twain: "How is it I see you disputing and demurring? If ye do not come forward like men and do the deed of kind, ye two, I will arouse upon you the Ifrit." At this, by reason of their sore dread of the Jinni, both did by her what she bade them do, and when they had dismounted from her, she said, "Well done!" She then took from her pocket a purse and drew out a knotted string whereon were strung five hundred and seventy seal rings, and asked, "Know ye what be these?" They answered her saying, "We know not!" Then quoth she: "These be the signets of five hundred and seventy men who have all futtered me upon the horns of this foul, this foolish, this filthy Ifrit. So give me also your two seal rings, ye pair of brothers."

When they had drawn their two rings from their hands and given them to her, she said to them: "Of a truth this Ifrit bore me off on my bride night, and put me into a casket and set the casket in a coffer, and to the coffer he affixed seven strong padlocks of steel and deposited me on the deep bottom of the sea that raves, dashing and clashing with waves, and guarded me so that I might remain chaste and honest, quotha! that none save himself might have connection with me. But I have lain under as many of my kind as I please, and this wretched Jinni wotteth not that Destiny may not be averted nor hindered by aught, and that whatso woman willeth, the same she fulfilleth however man nilleth. Even so saith one of them:

"Rely not on women,  
Trust not to their hearts,  
Whose joys and whose sorrows  
Are hung to their parts!  
Lying love they will swear thee  
Whence guile ne'er departs.  
Take Yusuf for sample,  
'Ware sleights and 'ware smarts!  
Iblis ousted Adam  
(See ye not?) thro' their arts."

Hearing these words, they marveled with exceeding marvel, and she went from them to the Ifrit, and taking up his head on her thigh as before, said to them softly, "Now wend your ways and bear yourselves beyond the bounds of his malice." So they fared forth saying either to other, "Allah! Allah!" and: "There be no Majesty and there be no Might save in Allah, the Glorious, the Great, and with Him we seek refuge from women's malice and sleight, for of a truth it hath no mate in might. Consider, O my brother, the ways of this marvelous lady with an Ifrit, who is so much more powerful than we are. Now since there hath happened to him a greater mishap than that which befell us and which should bear us abundant consolation, so return we to our countries and capitals, and let us decide never to intermarry with womankind, and presently we will show them what will be our action."

Thereupon they rode back to the tents of King Shahryar, which they reached on the morning of the third day. And having mustered the wazirs and emirs, the chamberlains and high officials, he gave a robe of honor to his Viceroy and issued orders for an immediate return to the city. There he sat him upon his throne and, sending for the Chief Minister, the father of the two damsels who (Inshallah!) will presently be mentioned, he said, "I command thee to take my wife and smite her to death, for she hath broken her plight and her faith."

So he carried her to the place of execution and did her die. Then King Shahryar took brand in hand and, repairing to the seraglio, slew all the concubines and their Mamelukes. He also swore himself by a binding oath that whatever wife he married he would abate her maidenhead at night and slay her next morning, to make sure of his honor. "For," said he, "there never was nor is there one chaste woman upon the face of earth."

Then Shah Zaman prayed for permission to fare homeward, and he went forth equipped and escorted and traveled till he reached his own country. Meanwhile Shahryar commanded his Wazir to bring him the bride of the night that he might go in to her. So he produced a most beautiful girl, the daughter of one of the emirs, and the King went in unto her at eventide. And when morning dawned, he bade his Minister strike off her head, and the Wazir did accordingly, for fear of the Sultan. On this wise he continued for the space of three years, marrying a maiden every night and killing her the next morning, till folk raised an outcry against him and cursed him, praying Allah utterly to destroy him and his rule. And women made an uproar and mothers wept and parents fled with their daughters till there remained not in the city a young person fit for carnal copulation.

Presently the King ordered his Chief Wazir, the same who was charged with the executions, to bring him a virgin, as was his wont, and the Minister went forth and searched and found none. So he returned home in sorrow and anxiety, fearing for his life from the King. Now he had two daughters, Scheherazade and Dunyazade, hight, of whom the elder had perused the books, annals, and legends of preceding kings, and the stories, examples, and instances of bygone men and things. Indeed it was said that she had collected a thousand books of histories relating to antique races and departed rulers. She had purused the works of the poets and knew them by heart, she had studied philosophy and the sciences, arts, and accomplishments. And she was pleasant and polite, wise and witty, well read and well bred. Now on that day she said to her father: "Why do I see thee thus changed and laden with cark and care? Concerning this matter quoth one of the poets:

"Tell whoso hath sorrow  
Grief never shall last.  
E'en as joy hath no morrow  
So woe shall go past."

When the Wazir heard from his daughter these words, he related to her, from first to last, all that had happened between him and the King. Thereupon said she: "By Allah, O my father, how long shall this slaughter of women endure? Shall I tell thee what is in my mind in order to save both sides from destruction?" "Say on, O my daughter," quoth he, and quoth she: "I wish thou wouldst give me in marriage to this King Shahryar. Either I shall live or I shall be a ransom for the virgin daughters of Moslems and the cause of their deliverance from his hands and thine." "Allah upon thee!" cried he in wrath exceeding that lacked no feeding. "O scanty of wit, expose not thy life to such peril! How durst thou address me in words so wide from wisdom and unfar from foolishness? Know that one who lacketh experience in worldly matters readily falleth into misfortune, and whoso considereth not the end keepeth not the world to friend, and the vulgar say: 'I was lying at mine ease. Naught but my officiousness brought me unease'." "Needs must thou," she broke in, "make me a doer of this good deed, and let him kill me an he will. I shall only die a ransom for others." "O my daughter," asked he, "and how shall that profit thee when thou shalt have thrown away thy life?" And she answered, "O my father, it must be, come of it what will!" The Wazir was again moved to fury and blamed and reproached her, ending with, "In very deed I fear lest the same befall

thee which befell the bull and the ass with the husbandman." "And what," asked she, "befell them, O my father?" Whereupon the Wazir began the Tale Of The Bull And The Ass.

### The Tale Of The Bull And The Ass

KNOW, O my daughter, that there was once a merchant who owned much money and many men, and who was rich in cattle and camels. He had also a wife and family, and he dwelt in the country, being experienced in husbandry and devoted to agriculture. Now Allah Most High had endowed him with understanding the tongues of beasts and birds of every kind, but under pain of death if he divulged the gift to any. So he kept it secret for very fear. He had in his cow house a bull and an ass, each tethered in his own stall, one hard by the other. As the merchant was sitting near-hand one day with his servans and his children were playing about him, he heard and bull say to the ass:

"Hail and health to thee O Father of Waking! for that thou enjoyest rest and good ministering. All under thee is clean-swept and fresh-sprinkled. Men wait upon thee and feed thee, and thy provaunt is sifted barley and thy drink pure spring water, while I (unhappy creature!) am led forth in the middle of the night, when they set on my neck the plow and a something called yoke, and I tire at cleaving the earth from dawn of day till set of sun. I am forced to do more than I can and to bear all manner of ill-treatment from night to night. After which they take me back with my sides torn, my neck flayed, my legs aching, and mine eyelids sore with tears. Then they shut me up in the byre and throw me beans and crushed straw mixed with dirt and chaff, and I lie in dung and filth and foul stinks through the livelong night. But thou art ever in a place swept and sprinkled and cleansed, and thou art always lying at ease, save when it happens (and seldom enough!) that the master hath some business, when he mounts thee and rides thee to town and returns with thee forthright. So it happens that I am toiling and distress while thou takest thine ease and thy rest. Thou sleepest while I am sleepless, I hunger still while thou eatest thy fill, and I win contempt while thou winnest goodwill."

When the bull ceased speaking, the ass turned toward him and said: "O Broad-o'-Brow, O thou lost one! He lied not who dubbed thee bullhead, for thou, O father of a bull, hast neither forethought nor contrivance. Thou art the simplest of simpletons, and thou knowest naught of good advisers. Hast thou not heard the saying of the wise?

"For others these hardships and labors I bear,  
And theirs is the pleasure and mine is the care,  
As the bleacher who blacketh his brow in the sun  
To whiten the raiment which other men wear.

But thou, O fool, art full of zeal, and thou toilest and moilest before the master, and thou tearest and wearest and slayest thyself for the comfort of another. Hast thou never heard the saw that saith 'None to guide and from the way go wide'? Thou wendest forth at the call to dawn prayer and thou returnest not till sundown, and through the livelong day thou endurest all manner hardships: to wit, beating and belaboring and bad language.

"Now hearken to me, Sir Bull! When they tie thee to thy stinking manger, thou pawest the ground with thy forehead and lashest out with thy hind hoofs and pushest with thy horns and bellowest aloud, so they deem thee contented. And when they throw thee thy fodder, thou fallest on it with greed and hastenest to line thy fair fat paunch. But if thou accept any advice, it will be better for thee, and thou wilt lead an easier life even than mine. When thou

goest afield and they lay the thing called yoke on thy neck, be down and rise not again, though haply they swings thee. And if thou rise, lie down a second time. And when they bring thee home and offer thee thy beans, fall backward and only sniff at thy meat and withdraw thee and taste it not, and be satisfied with thy crushed straw and chaff. And on this wise feign thou art sick, and cease not doing thus for a day or two days or even three days; so shalt thou have rest from toil and moil."

When the Bull heard these words, he knew the ass to be his friend and thanked him, saying, "Right is thy rede," and prayed that all blessings might requite him, and cried: "O Father Wakener! Thou hast made up for my failings." (Now the merchant, O my daughter, understood all that passed between them.) Next day the driver took the bull and, settling the plow on his neck, made him work as wont. But the bull began to shirk his plowing, according to the advice of the ass, and the plowman drubbed him till he broke the yoke and made off. But the man caught him up and leathered him till he despaired of his life. Not the less, however, would he do nothing but stand still and drop down till the evening. Then the herd led him home and stabled him in his stall, but he drew back from his manger and neither stamped nor ramped nor butted nor bellowed as he was wont to do, whereat the man wondered. He brought him the beans and husks, but he sniffed at them and left them and lay down as far from them as he could and passed the whole night fasting. The peasant came next morning and, seeing the manger full of beans, the crushed straw untasted, and the ox lying on his back in sorriest plight, with legs outstretched and swollen belly, he was concerned for him, and said to himself, "By Allah, he hath assuredly sickened, and this is the cause why he would not plow yesterday."

Then he went to the merchant and reported: "O my master, the bull is ailing. He refused his fodder last night- nay, more, he hath not tasted a scrap of it this morning." Now the merchant-farmer understood what all this meant, because he had overheard the talk between the bull and the ass, so quoth he, "Take that rascal donkey, and set the yoke on his neck, and bind him to the plow and make him do bull's work." Thereupon the plowman took the ass, and worked him through the livelong day at the bull's task. And when he failed for weakness, he made him eat stick till his ribs were sore and his sides were sunken and his neck was rayed by the yoke. And when he came home in the evening he could hardly drag his limbs along, either forehand or hind legs. But as for the bull, he had passed the day lying at full length, and had eaten his fodder with an excellent appetite, and he ceased not calling down blessings on the ass for his good advice, unknowing what had come to him on his account.

So when night set in and the ass returned to the byre, the bull rose up before him in honor, and said: "May good tidings gladden thy heart, O Father Wakener! Through thee I have rested all this day, and I have eaten my meat in peace and quiet." But the ass returned no reply, for wrath and heartburning and fatigue and the beating he had gotten. And he repented with the most grievous of repentance, and quoth he to himself: "This cometh of my folly in giving good counsel. As the saw saith, I was in joy and gladness, naught save my officiousness brought me this sadness. And now I must take thought and put a trick upon him and return him to his place, else I die." Then he went aweary to his manger while the bull thanked him and blessed him.

And even so, O my daughter (said the Wazir) thou wilt die for lack of wits. Therefore sit thee still and say naught and expose not thy life to such stress, for, by Allah, I offer thee the best advice, which cometh of my affection and kindly solicitude for thee. "O my father," she answered, "needs must I go up to this King and be married to him." Quoth he, "Do not this

deed," and quoth she, "Of a truth I will." Whereat he rejoined, "If thou be not silent and bide still, I will do with thee even what the merchant did with his wife." "And what did he?" asked she.

Know then (answered the Wazir) that after the return of the ass the merchant came out on the terrace roof with his wife and family, for it was a moonlit night and the moon at its full. Now the terrace overlooked the cow house, and presently as he sat there with his children playing about him, the trader heard the ass say to the bull, "Tell me, O Father Broad-o'-Brow, what thou purposest to do tomorrow." The bull answered: "What but continue to follow thy counsel, O Aliboron? Indeed it was as good as good could be, and it hath given me rest and repose, nor will I now depart from it one tittle. So when they bring me my meat, I will refuse it and blow out my belly and counterfeit crank." The ass shook his head and said, "Beware of so doing, O Father of a Bull!" The buff asked, "Why?" and the ass answered, "Know that I am about to give thee the best of counsel, for verily I heard our owner say to the herd, 'If the bull rise not from his place to do his work this morning and if he retire from his fodder this day, make him over to the butcher that he may slaughter him and give his flesh to the poor, and fashion a bit of leather from his hide.' Now I fear for thee on account of this. So take my advice ere a calamity befall thee, and when they bring thee thy fodder, eat it and rise up and bellow and paw the ground, or our master will assuredly slay thee. And peace be with thee!"

Thereupon the bull arose and lowed aloud and thanked the ass, and said, "Tomorrow I will readily go forth with them." And he at once ate up all his meat and even licked the manger. (All this took place and the owner was listening to their talk.) Next morning the trader and his wife went to the bull's crib and sat down, and the driver came and led forth the bull, who, seeing his owner, whisked his tail and brake wind, and frisked about so lustily that the merchant laughed a loud laugh and kept laughing till he fell on his back. His wife asked him, "Whereat laughest thou with such loud laughter as this?" and he answered her, "I laughed at a secret something which I have heard and seen but cannot say lest I die my death." She returned, "Perforce thou must discover it to me, and disclose the cause of thy laughing even if thou come by thy death!" But he rejoined, "I cannot reveal what beasts and birds say in their lingo for fear I die." Then quoth she: "By Allah, thou liest! This is a mere pretext. Thou laughest at none save me, and now thou wouldest hide somewhat from me. But by the Lord of the Heaven, an thou disclose not the cause I will no longer cohabit with thee, I will leave thee at once." And she sat down and cried.

Whereupon quoth the merchant: "Woe betide thee! What means thy weeping? Fear Allah, and leave these words and query me no more questions." "Needs must thou tell me the cause of that laugh," said she, and he replied: "Thou wettest that when I prayed Allah to vouchsafe me understanding of the tongues of beasts and birds, I made a vow never to disclose the secret to any under pain of dying on the spot." "No matter!" cried she. "Tell me what secret passed between the bull and the ass and die this very hour an thou be so minded." And she ceased not to importune him till he was worn-out and clean distraught. So at last he said, "Summon thy father and thy mother and our kith and kin and sundry of our neighbors." Which she did, and he sent for the kazi and his assessors, intending to make his will and reveal to her his secret and die the death; for he loved her with love exceeding because she was his cousin, the daughter of his father's brother, and the mother of his children, and he had lived with her a life of a hundred and twenty years.

Then, having assembled all the family and the folk of his neighborhood, he said to them, "By me there hangeth a strange story, and 'tis such that if I discover the secret to any, I am

a dead man." Therefore quoth every one of those present to the woman, "Allah upon thee, leave this sinful obstinacy and recognize the right of this matter, lest haply thy husband and the father of thy children die." But she rejoined, "I will not turn from it till he tell me, even though he come by his death." So they ceased to urge her, and the trader rose from amongst them and repaired to an outhouse to perform the wuzu ablution, and he purposed thereafter to return and to tell them his secret and to die.

Now, Daughter Scheherazade, that merchant had in his outhouses some fifty hens under one cock, and whilst making ready to farewell his folk he heard one of his many farm dogs thus address in his own tongue the cock, who was flapping his wings and crowing lustily and jumping from one hen's back to another and treading all in turn, saying: "O Chanticleer! How mean is thy wit and how shameless is thy conduct! Be he disappointed who brought thee up. Art thou not ashamed of thy doings on such a day as this?" "And what," asked the rooster, "hath occurred this day?" when the dog answered; "Dost thou not know that our master is this day making ready for his death? His wife is resolved that he shall disclose the secret taught to him by Allah, and the moment he so doeth he shall surely die. We dogs are all a-mourning, but thou clappest thy wings and clarionest thy loudest and treadest hen after hen. Is this an hour for pastime and pleasuring? Art thou not ashamed of thyself?"

"Then by Allah," quoth the cock, "is our master a lackwit and a man scanty of sense. If he cannot manage matters with a single wife, his life is not worth prolonging. Now I have some fifty dame partlets, and I please this and provoke that and starve one and stuff another, and through my good governance they are all well under my control. This our master pretendeth to wit and wisdom, and she hath but one wife and yet knoweth not how to manage her." Asked the dog, "What then, O Cock, should the master do to will clear of his strait?" "He should arise forthright," answered the cock, "and take some twigs from yon mulberry tree and give her a regular back-basting and ribroasting till she cry: 'I repent, O my lord! I will never ask thee a question as lon, as I live!' Then let him beat her once more and soundly, and when he shall have done this, he shall sleep free from care and enjoy life. But this master of ours owns neither sense nor judgment."

"Now, Daughter Scheherazade," continued the Wazir, "I will do to thee as did that husband to that wife." Said Scheherazade, "And what did he do?" He replied, "When the merchant heard the wise words spoken by his cock to his dog, he arose in haste and sought his wife's chamber, after cutting for her some mulberry twigs and hiding them there. And then he called to her, "Come into the closet, that I may tell thee the secret while no one seeth me, and then die." She entered with him and he locked the door and came down upon her with so sound a beating of back and shoulders, ribs, arms, and legs, saying the while "Wilt thou ever be asking questions about what concerneth thee not?" that she was well-nigh senseless. Presently she cried out: "I am of the repentant! By Allah, I will ask thee no more questions, and indeed I repent sincerely and wholesomely." Then she kissed his hand and feet and he led her out of the room submissive, as a wife should be. Her parents and all the company rejoiced and sadness and mourning were changed into joy and gladness.

Thus the merchant learnt family discipline from his cock and he and his wife lived together the happiest of lives until death. And thou also, O my daughter! continued the Wazir, unless thou turn from this matter I will do by thee what that trader did to his wife. But she answered him with much decision: "I will never desist, O my father, nor shall this tale change my purpose. Leave such talk and tattle. I will not listen to thy words and if thou deny me, I will marry myself to him despite the nose of thee. And first I will go up to the King myself and alone and I will say to him: 'I prayed my father to wive me with thee, but he refused, being

resolved to disappoint his lord, grudging the like of me to the like of thee'." Her father asked, "Must this needs be?" and she answered, "Even so."

Hereupon the Wazir, being weary of lamenting and contending, persuading and dissuading her, all to no purpose, went up to King Shahryar and, after blessing him and kissing the ground before him, told him all about his dispute with his daughter from first to last and how he designed to bring her to him that night. The King wondered with exceeding wonder, for he had made an especial exception of the Wazir's daughter, and said to him: "O most faithful of counsellors, how is this? Thou wettest that I have sworn by the Raiser of the Heavens that after I have gone into her this night I shall say to thee on the morrow's 'Take her and slay her!' And if thou slay her not, I will slay thee in her stead without fail." "Allah guide thee to glory and lengthen thy life, O King of the Age," answered the Wazir. "It is she that hath so determined. All this have I told her and more, but she will not hearken to me and she persisteth in passing this coming night with the King's Majesty." So Shahryar rejoiced greatly and said, "'Tis well. Go get her ready, and this night bring her to me." The Wazir returned to his daughter and reported to her the command, saying, "Allah make not thy father desolate by thy loss!"

But Scheherazade rejoiced with exceeding joy and get ready all she required and said to her younger sister, Dunyazade: "Note well what directions I entrust to thee! When I have gone into the King I will send for thee, and when thou comest to me and seest that he hath had his carnal will of me, do thou say to me: 'O my sister, an thou be not sleepy, relate to me some new story, delectable and delightsome, the better to speed our waking hours.' And I will tell thee a tale which shall be our deliverance, if so Allah please, and which shall turn the King from his bloodthirsty custom." Dunyazade answered "With love and gladness."

So when it was night, their father the Wazir carried Scheherazade to the King, who was gladdened at the sight and asked, "Hast thou brought me my need?" And he answered, "I have." But when the King took her to his bed and fell to toying with her and wished to go in to her, she wept, which made him ask, "What aileth thee?" She replied, "O King of the Age, I have a younger sister, and lief would I take leave of her this night before I see the dawn." So he sent at once for Dunyazade and she came and kissed the ground between his hands, when he permitted her to take her seat near the foot of the couch. Then the King arose and did away with his bride's maidenhead and the three fell asleep.

But when it was midnight Scheherazade awoke and signaled to her sister Dunyazade, who sat up and said, "Allah upon thee, O my sister, recite to us some new story, delightsome and delectable, wherewith to while away the waking hours of our latter night." "With joy and goodly gree," answered Scheherazade, "if this pious and auspicious King permit me." "Tell on," quoth the King, who chanced to be sleepless and restless and therefore was pleased with the prospect of hearing her story. So Scheherazade rejoiced, and thus, on the first night of the Thousand Nights and a Night, she began her recitations.

### **The Fisherman And The Jinni**

IT hath reached me, O auspicious King, that there was a fisherman well stricken in years who had a wife and three children, and withal was of poor condition. Now it was his custom to cast his net every day four times, and no more. On a day he went forth about noontide to the seashore, where he laid down his basket and, tucking up his shirt and plunging into the

water, made a cast with his net and waited till it settled to the bottom. Then he gathered the cords together and haled away at it, but found it weighty. And however much he drew it landward, he could not pull it up, so he carried the ends ashore and drove a stake into the ground and made the net fast to it. Then he stripped and dived into the water all about the net, and left not off working hard until he had brought it up.

He rejoiced thereat and, donning his clothes, went to the net, when he found in it a dead jackass which had torn the meshes. Now when he saw it, he exclaimed in his grief, "There is no Majesty and there is no Might save in Allah the Glorious, the Great!" Then quoth he, "This is a strange manner of daily bread," and he began reciting in extempore verse:

"O toiler through the glooms of night in peril and in pain,  
Thy toiling stint for daily bread comes not by might and main!  
Seest thou not the fisher seek afloat upon the sea  
His bread, while glimmer stars of night as set in tangled skein?  
Anon he plungeth in despite the buffet of the waves,  
The while to sight the bellying net his eager glances strain,  
Till joying at the night's success, a fish he bringeth home  
Whose gullet by the hook of Fate was caught and cut in twain.  
When buys that fish of him a man who spent the hours of night  
Reckless of cold and wet and gloom in ease and comfort fain,  
Laud to the Lord who gives to this, to that denies, his wishes  
And dooms one toil and catch the prey and other eat the fishes."

Then quoth he, "Up and to it. I am sure of His beneficence, Inshallah!" So he continued:

"When thou art seized of Evil Fate, assume  
The noble soul's long-suffering. 'Tis thy best.  
Complain not to the creature, this be 'plaint  
From one most Ruthful to the ruthlessest."

The fisherman, when he had looked at the dead ass, got it free of the toils and wrung out and spread his net. Then he plunged into the sea, saying, "In Allah's name!" and made a cast and pulled at it, but it grew heavy and settled down more firmly than the first time. Now he thought that there were fish in it, and he made it fast and, doffing his clothes, went into the water, and dived and haled until he drew it up upon dry land. Then found he in it a large earthen pitcher which was full of sand and mud, and seeing this, he was greatly troubled. So he prayed pardon of Allah and, throwing away the jar, wrung his net and cleansed it and returned to the sea the third time to cast his net, and waited till it had sunk. Then he pulled at it and found therein potsherds and broken glass. Then, raising his eyes heavenward, he said: "O my God! Verily Thou wetttest that I cast not my net each day save four times. The third is done and as yet Thou hast vouchsafed me nothing. So this time, O my God, deign give me my daily bread."

Then, having called on Allah's name, he again threw his net and waited its sinking and settling, whereupon he haled at it but could not draw it in for that it was entangled at the bottom. He cried out in his vexation, "There is no Majesty and there is no Might save in Allah!" and he began reciting:

"Fie on this wretched world, an so it be  
I must be whelmed by grief and misery.

Tho' gladsome be man's lot when dawns the morn,  
 He drains the cup of woe ere eve he see.  
 Yet was I one of whom the world when asked  
 'Whose lot is happiest?' would say, "Tis he!"

Thereupon he stripped and, diving down to the net, busied himself with it till it came to land. Then he opened the meshes and found therein a cucumber-shaped jar of yellow copper, evidently full of something, whose mouth was made fast with a leaden cap stamped with the seal ring of our Lord Solomon, son of David (Allah accept the twain!). Seeing this, the fisherman rejoiced and said, "If I sell it in the brass bazaar, 'tis worth ten golden dinars." He shook it, and finding it heavy, continued: "Would to Heaven I knew what is herein. But I must and will open it and look to its contents and store it in my bag and sell it in the brass market." And taking out a knife, he worked at the lead till he had loosened it from the jar. Then he laid the cup on the ground and shook the vase to pour out whatever might be inside. He found nothing in it, whereat he marveled with an exceeding marvel. But presently there came forth from the jar a smoke which spired heavenward into ether (whereat he again marveled with mighty marvel), and which trailed along earth's surface till presently, having reached its full height, the thick vapor condensed, and became an Ifrit huge of bulk, whose crest touched the clouds while his feet were on the ground. His head was as a dome, his hands like pitchforks, his legs long as masts, and his mough big as a cave. His teeth were like large stones, his nostrils ewers, his eyes two lamps, and his look was fierce and lowering.

Now when the fisherman saw the Ifrit, his side muscles quivered, his teeth chattered, his spittle dried up, and he became blind about what to do. Upon this the Ifrit looked at him and cried, "there is no god but the God, and Solomon is the prophet of God," presently adding: "O Apostle of Allah, slay me not. Never again will I gainsay thee in word nor sin against thee in deed." Quoth the fisherman, "O Marid, diddest thou say Solomon the Apostle of Allah? And Solomon is dead some thousand and eight hundred years ago, and we are now in the last days of the world! What is thy story, and what is thy account of thyself, and what is the cause of thy entering into this cucurbit?"

Now when the Evil Spirit heard the words of the fisherman, quoth he: "There is no god but the God. Be of good cheer, O Fisherman!" Quoth the fisherman, "Why biddest thou me to be of good cheer?" And he replied, "Because of thy having to die an ill death in this very hour." Said the fisherman, "Thou deservest for thy good tidings the withdrawal of Heaven's protection, O thou distant one! Wherefore shouldst thou kill me, and what thing have I done to deserve death, I who freed thee from the jar, and saved thee from the depths of the sea, and brought thee up on the dry land?" Replied the Ifrit, "Ask of me only what mode of death thou wilt die, and by what manner of slaughter shall I slay thee." Rejoined the fisherman, "What is my crime, and wherefore such retribution?" Quoth the Ifrit, "Hear my story, O Fisherman!" And he answered, "Say on, and be brief in thy sayinig, for of very sooth my life breath is in my nostrils."

Thereupon quoth the Jinni: "Know that I am one among the heretical Jann, and I sinned against Solomon, David-son (on the twain be peace!), I together with the famous Sakhr al-Jinni, whereupon the Prophet sent his Minister, Asaf son of Barkhiya, to seize me. And this Wazir brought me against my will and led me in bonds to him (I being downcast despite my nose), and he placed me standing before him like a suppliant. When Solomon saw me, he took refuge with Allah and bade me embrace the True Faith and obey his behests. But I refused, so, sending for this cucurbit, he shut me up therein and stopped it over with lead,

whereon he impressed the Most High Name, and gave his orders to the Jann, who carried me off and cast me into the midmost of the ocean. There I abode a hundred years, during which I said in my heart, 'Whoso shall release me, him will I enrich forever and ever.'

"But the full century went by and, when no one set me free, I entered upon the second fivescore saying, 'Whoso shall release me, for him I will open the hoards of the earth.' Still no one set me free, and thus four hundred years passed away. Then quoth I, 'Whoso shall release me, for him will I fulfill three wishes.' Yet no one set me free. Thereupon I waxed wroth with exceeding wrath and said to myself, 'Whoso shall release me from this time forth, him will I slay, and I will give him choice of what death he will die.' And now, as thou hast released me, I give thee full choice of deaths."

The fisherman, hearing the words of the Ifrit, said, "O Allah! The wonder of it that I have not come to free thee save in these days!" adding, "Spare my life, so Allah spare thine, and slay me not, lest Allah set one to slay thee." Replied the Contumacious One, "There is no help for it. Die thou must, so ask by way of boon what manner of death thou wilt die." Albeit thus certified, the fisherman again addressed the Ifrit, saying, "Forgive me this my death as a generous reward for having freed thee," and the Ifrit, "Surely I would not slay thee save on account of that same release." "O Chief of the Ifrits," said the fisherman, "I do thee good and thou requitest me with evil! In very sooth the old saw lieth not when it saith:

"We wrought them weal, they met our weal with ill,  
Such, by my life! is every bad man's labor.  
To him who benefits unworthy wights  
Shall hap what hapt to Ummi-Amir's neighbor."

Now when the Ifrit heard these words he answered: "No more of this talk. Needs must I kill thee." Upon this the fisherman said to himself: "This is a Jinni, and I am a man to whom Allah hath given a passably cunning wit, so I will now cast about to compass his destruction by my contrivance and by mine intelligence, even as he took counsel only of his malice and his frowardness." He began by asking the Ifrit, "Hast thou indeed resolved to kill me?" And, receiving for all answer "Even so," he cried, "Now in the Most Great Name, graven on the seal ring of Solomon the son of David (peace be with the holy twain!), an I question thee on a certain matter, wilt thou give me a true answer?" The Ifrit replied "Yea," but, hearing mention of the Most Great Name, his wits were troubled and he said with trembling, "Ask and be brief."

Quoth the fisherman: "How didst thou fit into this bottle which would not hold thy hand- no, nor even thy foot- and how came it to be large enough to contain the whole of thee?" Replied the Ifrit, "What! Dost not believe that I was all there?" And the fisherman rejoined, "Nay! I will never believe it until I see thee inside with my own eyes." The Evil Spirit on the instant shook and became a vapor, which condensed and entered the jar little and little, till all was well inside, when lo! the fisherman in hot haste took the leaden cap with the seal and stoppered therewith the mouth of the jar and called out to the Ifrit, saying: "Ask me by way of boon what death thou wilt die! By Allah, I will throw thee into the sea before us and here will I build me a lodge, and whoso cometh hither I will warn him against fishing and will say: 'In these waters abideth an Ifrit who giveth as a last favor a choice of deaths and fashion of slaughter to the man who saveth him!'"

Now when the Ifrit heard this from the fisherman and saw himself in limbo, he was minded to escape, but this was prevented by Solomon's seal. So he knew that the fisherman had cozened and outwitted him, and he waxed lowly and submissive and began humbly to say,

"I did but jest with thee." But the other answered, "Thou liest, O vilest of the Ifrits, and meanest and filthiest!" And he set off with the bottle for the seaside, the Ifrit calling out, "Nay! Nay!" and he calling out, "Aye! Aye!" Thereupon the Evil Spirit softened his voice and smoothed his speech and abased himself, saying, "What wouldst thou do with me. O Fisherman?" "I will throw thee back into the sea," he answered, "Where thou hast been housed and homed for a thousand and eight hundred years. And now I will leave thee therein till Judgment Day. Did I not say to thee, 'Spare me and Allah shall spare thee, and slay me not lest Allah slay thee'? yet thou spurnedst my supplication and hadst no intention save to deal ungraciously by me, and Allah hath now thrown thee into my hands, and I am cunninger than thou." Quoth the Ifrit, "Open for me that I may bring thee weal." Quoth the fisherman: "Thou liest, thou accursed! Nothing would satisfy thee save my death, so now I will do thee die by hurling thee into this sea." Then the Marid roared aloud and cried: "Allah upon thee, O Fisherman, don't! Spare me, and pardon my past doings, and as I have been tyrannous, so be thou generous, for it is said among sayings that go current: 'O thou who doest good to him who hath done thee evil, suffice for the ill-doer his ill deeds, and do not deal with me as did Umamah to 'Atikah.'"

Asked the fisherman, "And what was their case?" And the Ifrit answered, "This is not the time for storytelling and I in this prison, but set me free and I will tell thee the tale." Quoth the fisherman: "Leave this language. There is no help but that thou be thrown back into the sea, nor is there any way for thy getting out of it forever and ever. Vainly I placed myself under thy protection, and I humbled myself to thee with weeping, while thou soughtest only to slay me, who had done thee no injury deserving this at thy hands. Nay, so far from injuring thee by any evil act, I worked thee naught but weal in releasing thee from that jail of thine. Now I knew thee to be an evil-doer when thou diddest to me what thou didst, and know that when I have cast thee back into this sea, I will warn whosoever may fish thee up of what hath befallen me with thee, and I will advise him to toss thee back again. So shalt thou abide here under these waters till The End of Time shall make an end of thee." But the Ifrit cried aloud: "Set me free. This is a noble occasion for generosity, and I make covenant with thee and vow never to do thee hurt and harm- nay, I will help thee to what shall put thee out of want." The fisherman accepted his promises on both conditions, not to trouble him as before, but on the contrary to do him service, and after making firm the plight and swearing him a solemn oath by Allah Most Highest, he opened the cucurbit. Thereupon the pillar of smoke rose up till all of it was fully out, then it thickened and once more became an Ifrit of hideous presence, who forthright administered a kick to the bottle and sent it flying into the sea. The fisherman, seeing how the cucurbit was treated and making sure of his own death, piddled in his clothes and said to himself, "This promiseth badly," but he fortified his heart, and cried: "O Ifrit, Allah hath said: 'Perform your covenant, for the performance of your covenant shall be inquired into hereafter.' Thou hast made a vow to me and hast sworn an oath not to play me false lest Allah play thee false, for verily He is a jealous God who respiteth the sinner but letteth him not escape. I say to thee as said the Sage Duban to King Yunan, 'Spare me so Allah may spare thee!'" The Ifrit burst into laughter and stalked away, saying to the fisherman, "Follow me."

And the man paced after him at a safe distance (for he was not assured of escape) till they had passed round the suburbs of the city. Thence they struck into the uncultivated grounds and, crossing them, descended into a broad wilderness, and lo! in the midst of it stood a mountain tarn. The Ifrit waded in to the middle and again cried, "Follow me," and when this was done he took his stand in the center and bade the man cast his net and catch his fish. The fisherman looked into the water and was much astonished to see therein varicolored fishes, white and red, blue and yellow. However, he cast his net and, hauling it in, saw that

he had netted four fishes, one of each color. Thereat he rejoiced greatly, and more when the Ifrit said to him: "Carry these to the Sultan and set them in his presence, then he will give thee what shall make thee a wealthy man. And now accept my excuse, for by Allah, at this time I wot none other way of benefiting thee, inasmuch I have lain in this sea eighteen hundred years and have not seen the face of the world save within this hour. But I would not have thee fish here save once a day." The Ifrit then gave him Godspeed, saying, "Allah grant we meet again," and struck the earth with one foot, whereupon the ground clove asunder and swallowed him up.

The fisherman, much marveling at what had happened to him with the Ifrit, took the fish and made for the city, and as soon as he reached home he filled an earthen bowl with water and therein threw the fish, which began to struggle and wriggle about. Then he bore off the bowl upon his head and, repairing to the King's palace (even as the Ifrit had bidden him) laid the fish before the presence. And the King wondered with exceeding wonder at the sight, for never in his lifetime had he seen fishes like these in quality or in conformation. So he said, "Give those fish to the stranger slave girl who now cooketh for us," meaning the bondmaiden whom the King of Roum had sent to him only three days before, so that he had not yet made trial of her talents in the dressing of meat.

Thereupon the Wazir carried the fish to the cook and bade her fry them, saying: O damsel, the King sendeth this say to thee: 'I have not treasured thee, O tear o' me! save for stress time of me.' Approve, then, to us this day thy delicate handiwork and thy savory cooking, for this dish of fish is a present sent to the Sultan and evidently a rarity." The Wazir, after he had carefully charged her, returned to the King, who commanded him to give the fisherman four hundred dinars. He gave them accordingly, and the man took them to his bosom and ran off home stumbling and falling and rising again and deeming the whole thing to be a dream. However, he bought for his family all they wanted, and lastly he went to his wife in huge joy and gladness. So far concerning him.

But as regards the cookmaid, she took the fish and cleansed them and set them in the frying pan, basting them with oil till one side was dressed. Then she turned them over and behold, the kitchen wall clave asunder, and therefrom came a young lady, fair of form, oval of face, perfect in grace, with eyelids which kohl lines enchase. Her dress was a silken headkerchief fringed and tasseled with blue. A large ring hung from either ear, a pair of bracelets adorned her wrists, rings with bezels of priceless gems were on her fingers, and she hent in hand a long rod of rattan cane which she thrust into the frying pan, saying, "O fish! O fish! Be ye constant to your covenant?" When the cookmaiden saw this apparition she swooned away. The young lady repeated her words a second time and a third time, and at last the fishes raised their heads from the pan, and saying in articulate speech, "Yes! Yes!" began with one voice to recite:

"Come back and so will I! Keep faith and so will I!  
And if ye fain forsake, I'll requite till quits we cry!"

After this the young lady upset the frying pan and went forth by the way she came in and the kitchen wall closed upon her. When the cookmaiden recovered from her fainting fit, she saw the four fishes charred black as charcoal, and crying out, "His staff brake in his first bout," she again fell swooning to the ground. Whilst she was in this case the Wazir came for the fish, and looking upon her as insensible she lay, not knowing Sunday from Thursday, shoved her with his foot and said, "Bring the fish for the Sultan!" Thereupon, recovering from her fainting fit, she wept and informed him of her case and all that had befallen her.

The Wazir marveled greatly and exclaiming, "This is none other than a right strange matter!" he sent after the fisher-man and said to him, "Thou, O Fisherman, must needs fetch us four fishes like those thou broughtest before."

Thereupon the man repaired to the tarn and cast his net, and when he landed it, lo! four fishes were therein exactly like the first. These he at once carried to the Wazir, who went in with them to the cookmaiden and said, "Up with thee and fry these in my presence, that I may see this business." The damsel arose and cleansed the fish, and set them in the frying pan over the fire. However, they remained there but a little while ere the wall clave asunder and the young lady appeared, clad as before and holding in hand the wand which she again thrust into the frying pan, saying, "O fish! O fish! Be ye constant to your olden covenant?" And behold, the fish lifted their heads and repeated "Yes! Yes!" and recited this couplet:

"Come back and so will !! Keep faith and so will !!  
But if ye fain forsake, I'll requite till quits we cry!"

When the fishes spoke, and the young lady upset the frying pan with her rod and went forth by the way she came and the wall closed up, the Wazir cried out, "This is a thing not to be hidden from the King." So he went and told him what had happened, whereupon quoth the King, "There is no help for it but that I see this with mine own eyes. Then he sent for the fisherman and commanded him to bring four other fish like the first and to take with him three men as witnesses. The fisherman at once brought the fish, and the King, after ordering them to give him four hundred gold pieces, turned to the Wazir and said, "Up, and fry me the fishes here before me!" The Minister, replying, "To hear is to obey," bade bring the frying pan, threw therein the cleansed fish, and set it over the fire, when lo! the wall clave asunder, and out burst a black slave like a huge rock or a remnant of the tribe Ad, bearing in hand a branch of a green tree. And he cried in loud and terrible tones, "O fish! O fish! Be ye an constant to your antique covenant?" Whereupon the fishes lifted their heads from the frying pan and said, "Yes! Yes! We be true to our vow," and they again recited the couplet:

"Come back and so will !! Keep faith and so will !!  
But if ye fain forsake, I'll requite till quits we cry!"

Then the huge blackamoor approached the frying pan and upset it with the branch and went forth by the way he came in. When he vanished from their sight, the King inspected the fish, and finding them all charred black as charcoal, was utterly bewildered, and said to the Wazir: "Verily this is a matter whereanent silence cannot be kept. And as for the fishes, assuredly some marvelous adventure connects with them." So he bade bring the fisherman and asked him, saying: "Fie on thee, fellow! Whence come these fishes?" And he answered, "From a tarn between four heights lying behind this mountain which is in sight of thy city." Quoth the King, "How many days' march?" Quoth he, "O our Lord the Sultan, a walk of half-hour." The King wondered, and straightway ordering his men to march and horsemen to mount, led off the fisherman, who went before as guide, privily damning the Ifrit.

They fared on till they had climbed the mountain and descended unto a great desert which they had never seen during all their lives. And the Sultan and his merry men marveled much at the wold set in the midst of four mountains, and the tarn and its fishes of four colors, red and white, yellow and blue. The King stood fixed to the spot in wonderment and asked his troops and an present, "Hath anyone among you ever seen this piece of water

before now?" And all made answer, "O King of the Age, never did we set eyes upon it during an our days." They also questioned the oldest inhabitants they met, men well stricken in years, but they replied, each and every, "A lakelet like this we never saw in this place." Thereupon quoth the King, "By Allah, I will neither return to my capital nor sit upon the throne of my forebears till I learn the truth about this tarn and the fish therein."

He then ordered his men to dismount and bivouac all around the mountain, which they did, and summoning his Wazir, a Minister of much experience, sagacious, of penetrating wit and well versed in affairs, said to him: "'Tis in my mind to do a certain thing, whereof I will inform thee. My heart telleth me to fare forth alone this night and root out the mystery of this tarn and its fishes. Do thou take thy scat at my tent door, and say to the emirs and wazirs, the nabobs and the chamberlains, in fine, to all who ask thee, 'The Sultan is ill at ease, and he hath ordered me to refuse all admittance.' And be careful thou let none know my design." And the Wazir could not oppose him. Then the King changed his dress and ornaments and, slinging his sword over his shoulder, took a path which led up one of the mountains and marched for the rest of the night till morning dawned, nor did he cease wayfaring till the heat was too much for him. After his long walk he rested for a while, and then resumed his march and fared on through the second night till dawn, when suddenly there appeared a black point in the far distance. Hereat he rejoiced and said to himself, "Haply someone here shall acquaint me with the mystery of the tarn and its fishes."

Presently, drawing near the dark object, he found it a palace built of swart stone plated with iron, and while one leaf of the gate stood wide-open, the other was shut. The King's spirits rose high as he stood before the gate and rapped a light rap, but hearing no answer, he knocked a second knock and a third, yet there came no sign. Then he knocked his loudest, but still no answer, so he said, "Doubtless 'tis empty." There upon he mustered up resolution and boldly walked through the main gate into the great hall, and there cried out aloud: "Holloa, ye people of the palace! I am a stranger and a wayfarer. Have you aught here of victual?" He repeated his cry a second time and a third, but still there came no reply.

So, strengthening his heart and making up his mind, he stalked through the vestibule into the very middle of the palace, and found no man in it. Yet it was furnished with silken stuffs gold-starred, and the hangings were let down over the doorways. In the midst was a spacious court off which sat four open saloons, each with its raised dais, saloon facing saloon. A canopy shaded the court, and in the center was a jetting fount with four figures of lions made of red gold, spouting from their mouths water clear as pearls and diaphanous gems. Round about the palace birds were let loose, and over it stretched a net of golden wire, hindering them from flying off. In brief, there was everything but human beings. The King marveled mightily thereat, yet felt he sad at heart for that he saw no one to give him an account of the waste and its tarn, the fishes, the mountains, and the palace itself. Presently as he sat between the doors in deep thought behold, there came a voice of lament, as from a heart griefspent, and he heard the voice chanting these verses:

"I hid what I endured of him and yet it came to light,  
And nightly sleep mine eyelids fled and changed to sleepless night.  
O world! O Fate! Withhold thy hand and cease thy hurt and harm  
Look and behold my hapless sprite in dolor and affright.  
Wilt ne'er show ruth to highborn youth who lost him on the way  
Of Love, and fell from wealth and fame to lowest basest wight?  
Jealous of Zephyr's breath was I as on your form he breathed,

But whenas Destiny descends she blindeth human sight.  
 What shall the hapless archer do who when he fronts his foe  
 And bends his bow to shoot the shaft shall find his string undight?  
 When cark and care so heavy bear on youth of generous soul,  
 How shall he 'scape his lot and where from Fate his place of flight?"

Now when the Sultan heard the mournful voice he sprang to his feet and following the sound, found a curtain let down over a chamber door. He raised it and saw behind it a young man sitting upon a couch about a cubit above the ground, and he fair to the sight, a well-shaped wight, with eloquence dight. His forehead was flower-white, his cheek rosy bright, and a mole on his cheek breadth like an ambergris mite, even as the poet doth indite:

A youth slim-waisted from whose locks and brow  
 The world in blackness and in light is set.  
 Throughout Creation's round no fairer show  
 No rarer sight thine eye hath ever met.  
 A nut-brown mole sits throned upon a cheek  
 Of rosiest red beneath an eye of jet.

The King rejoiced and saluted him, but he remained sitting in his caftan of silken stuff purpled with Egyptian gold and his crown studded with gems of sorts. But his face was sad with the traces of sorrow. He returned the royal salute in most courteous wise adding, "O my lord, thy dignity demandeth my rising to thee, and my sole excuse is to crave thy pardon." Quoth the King: "Thou art excused, O youth, so look upon me as thy guest come hither on an especial object. I would thou acquaint me with the secrets of this tarn and its fishes and of this palace and thy loneliness therein and the cause of thy groaning and wailing." When the young man heard these words he wept with sore weeping till his bosom was drenched with tears. The King marveled and asked him, "What maketh thee weep, O young man?" and he answered, "How should I not weep, when this is my case!" Thereupon he put out his hand and raised the skirt of his garment, when lo! the lower half of him appeared stone down to his feet while from his navel to the hair of his head he was man. The King, seeing this his plight, grieved with sore grief and of his compassion cried: "Alack and wellaway! In very sooth, O youth, thou heapest sorrow upon my sorrow. I was minded to ask thee the mystery of the fishes only, whereas now I am concerned to learn thy story as well as theirs. But there is no Majesty and there is no Might save in Allah, the Glorious, the Great! Lose no time, O youth, but tell me forthright thy whole tale." Quoth he, "Lend me thine ears, thy sight, and thine insight." And quoth the King, "All are at thy service!" Thereupon the youth began, "Right wondrous and marvelous is my case and that of these fishes, and were it graven with gravers upon the eye corners it were a warner to whoso would be warned." "How is that?" asked the King, and the young man began to tell the tale of the ensorcelled prince.

### **The Tale Of The Ensorcelled Prince**

KNOW then, O my lord, that whilom my sire was King of this city, and his name was Mahmud, entitled Lord of the Black Islands, and owner of what are now these four mountains. He ruled threescore and ten years, after which he went to the mercy of the Lord and I reigned as Sultan in his stead. I took to wife my cousin, the daughter of my paternal uncle, and she loved me with such abounding love that whenever I was absent she ate not

and she drank not until she saw me again. She cohabited with me for five years till a certain day when she went forth to the hammam bath, and I bade the cook hasten to get ready all requisites for our supper. And I entered this palace and lay down on the bed where I was wont to sleep and bade two damsels to fan my face, one sitting by my head and the other at my feet.

But I was troubled and made restless by my wife's absence and could not sleep, for although my eyes were closed, my mind and thoughts were wide-awake. Presently I heard the slave girl at my head say to her at my feet: "O Mas'udah, how miserable is our master and how wasted in his youth, and oh! the pity of his being so betrayed by our mistress, the accursed whore!" The other replied: "Yes indeed. Allah curse all faithless women and adulterous! But the like of our master, with his fair gifts, deserveth something better than this harlot who lieth abroad every night." Then quoth she who sat by my head, "Is our lord dumb or fit only for bubbling that he questioneth her not!" and quoth the other: "Fie on thee! Doth our lord know her ways, or doth she allow him his choice? Nay, more, doth she not drug every night the cup she giveth him to drink before sleeptime, and put bhang into it? So he sleepeth and wotteth not whither she goeth, nor what she doeth, but we know that after giving him the drugged wine, she donneth her richest raiment and perfumeth herself and then she fareth out from him to be away till break of day. Then she cometh to him and burneth a pastille under his nose and he awaketh from his death-like sleep." When I heard the slave girls' words, the light became black before my sight and I thought night would never fall.

Presently the daughter of my uncle came from the baths, and they set the table for us and we ate and sat together a fair half-hour quaffing our wine, as was ever our wont. Then she called for the particular wine I used to drink before sleeping and reached me the cup, but, seeming to drink it according to my wont, I poured the contents into my bosom and, lying down, let her hear that I was asleep. Then, behold, she cried: "Sleep out the night, and never wake again! By Allah, I loathe thee and I loathe thy whole body, and my soul turneth in disgust from cohabiting with thee, and I see not the moment when Allah shall snatch away thy life!" Then she rose and donned her fairest dress and perfumed her person and slung my sword over her shoulder, and opening the gates of the palace, went her ill way.

I rose and followed her as she left the palace and she threaded the streets until she came to the city gate, where she spoke words I understood not and the padlocks dropped of themselves as if broken and the gate leaves opened. She went forth (and I after her without her noticing aught) till she came at last to the outlying mounds and a reed fence built about a round-roofed hut of mud bricks. As she entered the door, I climbed upon the roof, which commanded a view of the interior, And lo! my fair cousin had gone in to a hideous Negro slave with his upper lip like the cover of a pot and his lower like an open pot, lips which might sweep up sand from the gravel floor of the cot. He was to boot a leper and a paralytic, lying upon a strew of sugar-cane trash and wrapped in an old blanket and the foulest rags and tatters.

She kissed the earth before him, and he raised his head so as to see her and said: "Woe to thee! What call hadst thou to stay away all this time? Here have been with me sundry of the black brethren, who drank their wine and each had his young lady, and I was not content to drink because of thine absence." Then she: "O my lord, my heart's love and coolth of my eyes, knowest thou not that I am married to my cousin, whose very look I loathe, and hate myself when in his company? And did not I fear for thy sake, I would not let a single sun arise before making his city a ruined heap wherein raven should croak and howlet hoot, and

jackal and wolf harbor and loot- nay, I had removed its very stones to the back side of Mount Kaf." Rejoined the slave: "Thou liest, damn thee! Now I swear an oath by the valor and honor of blackamoor men (and deem not our manliness to be the poor manliness of white men), from today forth if thou stay away till this hour, I will not keep company with thee nor will I glue my body with thy body. Dost play fast and loose with us, thou cracked pot, that we may satisfy thy dirty lusts, O vilest of the vile whites?"

When I heard his words, and saw with my own eyes what passed between these two wretches, the world waxed dark before my face and my soul knew not in what place it was. But my wife humbly stood up weeping before and wheedling the slave, and saying: "O my beloved, and very fruit of my heart, there is none left to cheer me but thy dear self, and, if thou cast me off, who shall take me in, O my beloved, O light of my eyes?" And she ceased not weeping and abasing herself to him until he deigned be reconciled with her. Then was she right glad and stood up and doffed her clothes, even to her petticoat trousers, and said, "O my master, what hast thou here for thy handmaiden to eat?" "Uncover the basin," he grumbled, "and thou shalt find at the bottom the broiled bones of some rats we dined on. Pick at them, and then go to that slop pot, where thou shalt find some leavings of beer which thou mayest drink." So she ate and drank and washed her hands, and went and lay down by the side of the slave upon the cane trash and crept in with him under his foul coverlet and his rags and tatters.

When I saw my wife, my cousin, the daughter of my uncle, do this deed, I clean lost my wits, and climbing down from the roof, I entered and took the sword which she had with her and drew it, determined to cut down the twain. I first struck at the slave's neck and thought that the death decree had fallen on him, for he groaned a loud hissing groan, but I had cut only the skin and flesh of the gullet and the two arteries! It awoke the daughter of my uncle, so I sheathed the sword and fared forth for the city, and entering the palace, lay upon my bed and slept till morning, when my wife aroused me and I saw that she had cut off her hair and had donned mourning garments. Quoth she: "O son of my uncle, blame me not for what I do. It hath just reached me that my mother is dead and my father hath been killed in holy war, and of my brothers one hath lost his life by a snake sting and the other by falling down some precipice, and I can and should do naught save weep and lament." When I heard her words I refrained from all reproach and said only: "Do as thou list. I certainly will not thwart thee." She continued sorrowing, weeping and wailing one whole year from the beginning of its circle to the end, and when it was finished she said to me: "I wish to build me in thy palace a tomb with a cupola, which I will set apart for my mourning and will name the House of Lamentations." Quoth I again: "Do as thou list!" Then she builded for herself a cenotaph wherein to mourn, and set on its center a dome under which showed a tomb like a santon's sepulcher. Thither she carried the slave and lodged him, but he was exceeding weak by reason of his wound, and unable to do her love service. He could only drink wine, and from the day of his hurt he spake not a word, yet he lived on because his appointed hour was not come. Every day, morning and evening, my wife went to him and wept and wailed over him and gave him wine and strong soups, and left not off doing after this manner a second year. And I bore with her patiently and paid no heed to her.

One day, however, I went in to her unawares, and I found her weeping and beating her face and crying: "Why art thou absent from my sight, O my heart's delight? Speak to me, O my life, talk with me, O my love." When she had ended for a time her words and her weeping I said to her, "O my cousin, let this thy mourning suffice, for in pouring forth tears there is little profit!" "Thwart me not," answered she, "in aught I do, or I will lay violent hands on myself!"

So I held my peace and left her to go her own way, and she ceased not to cry and keen and indulge her affliction for yet another year. At the end of the third year I waxed aweary of this longsome mourning, and one day I happened to enter the cenotaph when vexed and angry with some matter which had thwarted me, and suddenly I heard her say: "O my lord, I never hear thee vouchsafe a single word to me! Why dost thou not answer me, O my master?" and she began reciting:

"O thou tomb! O thou tomb! Be his beauty set in shade?  
Hast thou darkened that countenance all-sheeny as the noon?  
O thou tomb! Neither earth nor yet Heaven art to me,  
Then how cometh it in thee are conjoined my sun and moon?"

When I heard such verses as these rage was heaped upon my rage, I cried out: "Wellaway! How long is this sorrow to last?" and I began repeating:

"O thou tomb! O thou tomb! Be his horrors set in blight?  
Hast thou darkened his countenance that sickeneth the soul?  
O thou tomb! Neither cesspool nor pigskin art to me,  
Then how cometh it in thee are conjoined soil and coal?"

When she heard my words she sprang to her feet crying: "Fie upon thee, thou cur! All this is of thy doings. Thou hast wounded my heart's darling and thereby worked me sore woe, and thou hast wasted his youth so that these three years he hath lain abed more dead than alive!" In my wrath I cried: "O thou foulest of harlots and filthiest of whores ever fluttered by Negro slaves who are hired to have at thee! Yes, indeed it was I who did this good deed." And snatching up my sword, I drew it and made at her to cut her down. But she laughed my words and mine intent to scorn, crying: "To heel, hound that thou art! Alas for the past which shall no more come to pass, nor shall anyone avail the dead to raise. Allah hath indeed now given into my hand him who did to me this thing, a deed that hath burned my heart with a fire which died not a flame which might not be quenched!"

Then she stood up, and pronouncing some words to me unintelligible, she said, "By virtue of my egromancy become thou half stone and half man!" Whereupon I became what thou seest, unable to rise or to sit, and neither dead nor alive. Moreover, she ensorceled the city with all its streets and garths, and she turned by her gramarye the four islands into four mountains around the tarn whereof thou questionest me. And the citizens, who were of four different faiths, Moslem, Nazarene, Jew, and Magian, she transformed by her enchantments into fishes. The Moslems are the white, the Magians red, the Christians blue, and the Jews yellow. And every day she tortureth me and scourgeth me with a hundred stripes, each of which draweth floods of blood and cutteth the skin of my shoulders to strips. And lastly she clotheth my upper half with a haircloth and then throweth over them these robes. Hereupon the young man again shed tears and began reciting:

"In patience, O my God, I endure my lot and fate,  
I will bear at will of Thee whatsoever be my state.  
They oppress me, they torture me, they make my life a woe,  
Yet haply Heaven's happiness shall compensate my strait.  
Yea, straitened is my life by the bane and hate o' foes,  
But Mustafa and Murtaza shall ope me Heaven's gate."

After this the Sultan turned toward the young Prince and said: "O youth, thou hast removed

one grief only to add another grief. But now, O my friend, where is she, and where is the mausoleum wherein lieth the wounded slave?" "The slave lieth under yon dome," quoth the young man, "and she sitteth in the chamber fronting yonder door. And every day at sunrise she cometh forth, and first strippeth me, and whippeth me with a hundred strokes of the leathern scourge, and I weep and shriek, but there is no power of motion in my lower limbs to keep her off me. After ending her tormenting me she visiteth the slave, bringing him wine and boiled meats. And tomorrow at an early hour she will be here." Quoth the King: "By Allah, O youth, I will assuredly do thee a good deed which the world shall not willingly let die, and an act of derring-do which shall be chronicled long after I am dead and gone by."

Then the King sat him by the side of the young Prince and talked till nightfall, when he lay down and slept. But as soon as the false dawn showed, he arose and, doffing his outer garments, bared his blade and hastened to the place wherein lay the slave. Then was he ware of lighted candles and lamps, and the perfume of incenses and unguents, and directed by these, he made for the slave and struck him one stroke, killing him on the spot. After which he lifted him on his back and threw him into a well that was in the palace. Presently he returned and, donning the slave's gear, lay down at length within the mausoleum with the drawn sword laid close to and along his side. After an hour or so the accursed witch came, and first going to her husband, she stripped off his clothes and, taking a whip, flogged him cruelly while he cried out: "Ah! Enough for me the case I am in! Take pity on me, O my cousin!" But she replied, "Didst thou take pity on me and spare the life of my truelove on whom I doated?"

Then she drew the cilice over his raw and bleeding skin and threw the robe upon all and went down to the slave with a goblet of wine and a bowl of meat broth in her hands. She entered under the dome weeping and wailing, "Wellaway!" and crying: "O my lord! Speak a word to me! O my master! Talk awhile with me!" and began to recite these couplets:

"How long this harshness, this unlove, shall bide?  
Suffice thee not tear floods thou hast espied?  
Thou dost prolong our parting purposely  
And if wouldst please my foe, thou'rt satisfied!"

Then she wept again and said: "O my lord! Speak to me, talk with me!" The King lowered his voice and, twisting his tongue, spoke after the fashion of the blackamoors and said "Lack, 'lack! There be no Majesty and there be no Might save in Allauh, the Gloriose, the Great!"

Now when she heard these words she shouted for joy, and fell to the ground fainting, and when her senses returned she asked, "O my lord, can it be true that thou hast power of speech?" And the King, making his voice small and faint, answered: "O my cuss! Dost thou deserve that I talk to thee and speak with thee?" "Why and wherefore?" rejoined she, and he replied: "The why is that all the livelong day thou tormentest thy hubby, and he keeps calling on 'eaven for aid until sleep is strange to me even from evenin' till mawnin', and he prays and damns, cussing us two, me and thee, causing me disquiet and much bother. Were this not so, I should long ago have got my health, and it is this which prevents my answering thee." Quoth she, "With thy leave I will release him from what spell is on him," and quoth the King, "Release him, and let's have some rest!" She cried, "To hear is to obey," and, going from the cenotaph to the palace, she took a metal bowl and filled it with water and spake over it certain words which made the contents bubble and boil as a caldron seetheth over the fire. With this she sprinkled her husband saying, "By virtue of the

dread words I have spoken, if thou becomest thus by my spells, come forth out of that form into thine own former form."

And lo and behold! the young man shook and trembled, then he rose to his feet and, rejoicing at his deliverance, cried aloud, "I testify that there is no god but the God, and in very truth Mohammed is His Apostle, whom Allah bless and keep!" Then she said to him, "Go forth and return not hither, for if thou do I will surely slay thee," screaming these words in his face. So he went from between her hands, and she returned to the dome and, going down to the sepulcher, she said, "O my lord, come forth to me that I may look upon thee and thy goodness!" The King replied in faint low words: "What thing hast thou done? Thou hast rid me of the branch, but not of the root." She asked: "O my darling! O my Negroling! What is the root?" And he answered: "Fie on thee, O my cuss! The people of this city and of the four islands every night when it's half-passed lift their heads from the tank in which thou hast turned them to fishes and cry to Heaven and call down its anger on me and thee, and this is the reason why my body's balked from health. Go at once and set them free, then come to me and take my hand, and raise me up, for a little strength is already back in me."

When she heard the King's words (and she still supposed him to be the slave) she cried joyously: "O my master, on my head and on my eyes be thy command. Bismillah!" So she sprang to her feet and, full of joy and gladness, ran down to the tarn and took a little of its water in the palm of her hand and spake over it words not to be understood, and the fishes lifted their heads and stood up on the instant like men, the spell on the people of the city having been removed. What was the lake again became a crowded capital. The bazaars were thronged with folk who bought and sold, each citizen was occupied with his own calling, and the four hills became islands as they were whilom.

Then the young woman, that wicked sorceress, returned to the King and (still thinking he was the Negro) said to him: "O my love! Stretch forth thy honored hand that I may assist thee to rise." "Nearer to me," quoth the King in a faint and feigned tone. She came close as to embrace him, when he took up the sword lying hid by his side and smote her across the breast, so that the point showed gleaming behind her back. Then he smote her a second time and cut her in twain and cast her to the ground in two halves. After which he fared forth and found the young man, now freed from the spell, awaiting him and gave him joy of his happy release while the Prince kissed his hand with abundant thanks.

Quoth the King, "Wilt thou abide in this city, or go with me to my capital?" Quoth the youth, "O King of the Age, wettest thou not what journey is between thee and thy city?" "Two days and a half," answered he, whereupon said the other: "An thou be sleeping, O King, awake! Between thee and thy city is a year's march for a well-girt walker, and thou haddest not come hither in two days and a half save that the city was under enchantment. And I, O King, will never part from thee- no, not even for the twinkling of an eye." The King rejoiced at his words and said: "Thanks be to Allah, Who hath bestowed thee upon me! From this hour thou art my son and my only son, for that in all my life I have never been blessed with issue." Thereupon they embraced and joyed with exceeding great joy. And, reaching the palace, the Prince who had been spellbound informed his lords and his grandees that he was about to visit the Holy Places as a pilgrim, and bade them get ready all things necessary for the occasion.

The preparations lasted ten days, after which he set out with the Sultan, whose heart burned in yearning for his city, whence he had been absent a whole twelvemonth. They journeyed with an escort of Mamelukes carrying all manners of precious gifts and rarities,

nor stinted they wayfaring day and night for a full year until they approached the Sultan's capital, and sent on messengers to announce their coming. Then the Wazir and the whole army came out to meet him in joy and gladness, for they had given up all hope of ever seeing their King, and the troops kissed the ground before him and wished him joy of his safety. He entered and took seat upon his throne and the Minister came before him and, when acquainted with all that had befallen the young Prince, he congratulated him on his narrow escape.

When order was restored throughout the land, the King gave largess to many of his people, and said to the Wazir, "Hither the fisherman who brought us the fishes!" So he sent for the man who had been the first cause of the city and the citizens being delivered from enchantment, and when he came into the presence, the Sultan bestowed upon him a dress of honor, and questioned him of his condition and whether he had children. The fisherman gave him to know that he had two daughters and a son, so the King sent for them and, taking one daughter to wife, gave the other to the young Prince and made the son his head treasurer. Furthermore, he invested his Wazir with the Sultanate of the City in the Black Islands whilom belonging to the young Prince, and dispatched with him the escort of fifty armed slaves, together with dresses of honor for all the emirs and grandees. The Wazir kissed hands and fared forth on his way, while the Sultan and the Prince abode at home in all the solace and the delight of life, and the fisherman became the richest man of his age, and his daughters wived with the Kings until death came to them.

And yet, O King! this is not more wondrous than the story of the porter and the three ladies of baghdad.

### **The Porter And The Three Ladies Of Baghdad**

ONCE upon a time there was a porter in Baghdad who was a bachelor and who would remain unmarried. It came to pass on a certain day, as he stood about the street leaning idly upon his crate, behold, there stood before him an honorable woman in a mantilla of Mosul silk broidered with gold and bordered with brocade. Her walking shoes were also purred with gold, and her hair floated in long plaits. She raised her face veil and, showing two black eyes fringed with jetty lashes, whose glances were soft and languishing and whose perfect beauty was ever blandishing, she accosted the porter and said in the suavest tones and choicest language, "Take up thy crate and follow me."

The porter was so dazzled he could hardly believe that he heard her aright, but he shouldered his basket in hot haste, saying in himself, "O day of good luck! O day of Allah's grace!" and walked after her till she stopped at the door of a house. There she rapped, and presently came out to her an old man, a Nazarene, to whom she gave a gold piece, receiving from him in return what she required of strained wine clear as olive oil, and she set it safely in the hamper, saying, "Lift and follow." Quoth the porter, "This, by Allah, is indeed an auspicious day, a day propitious for the granting of all a man wisheth." He again hoisted up the crate and followed her till she stopped at a fruiterer's shop and bought from him Shami apples and Osmani quinces and Omani peaches, and cucumbers of Nile growth, and Egyptian limes and Sultani oranges and citrons, besides Aleppine jasmine, scented myrtle berries, Damascene nenuphars, flower of privet and camomile, blood-red anemones, violets, and pomegranate bloom, eglantine, and narcissus, and set the whole in the porter's crate, saying, "Up with it."

So he lifted and followed her till she stopped at a butcher's booth and said, "Cut me off ten pounds of mutton." She paid him his price and he wrapped it in a banana leaf, whereupon she laid it in the crate and said, "Hoist, O Porter." He hoisted accordingly, and followed her as she walked on till she stopped at a grocer's, where she bought dry fruits and pistachio kernels, Tihamah raisins, shelled almonds, and all wanted for dessert, and said to the porter, "Lift and follow me." So he up with his hamper and after her till she stayed at the confectioner's, and she bought an earthen platter, and piled it with all kinds of sweetmeats in his shop, open-worked tarts and fritters scented with musk, and "soap cakes," and lemon loaves, and melon preserves, and "Zaynab's combs," and "ladies' fingers," and "Kazi's titbits," and goodies of every description, and placed the platter in the porter's crate. Thereupon quoth he (being a merry man), "Thou shouldest have told me, and I would have brought with me a pony or a she-camel to carry all this market stuff." She smiled and gave him a little cuff on the nape, saying, "Step out and exceed not in words, for (Allah willing!) thy wage will not be wanting."

Then she stopped at a perfumer's and took from him ten sorts of waters, rose scented with musk, orange-flower, water-lily, willow-flower, violet and five others. And she also bought two loaves of sugar, a bottle for perfume-spraying, a lump of male incense, aloe wood, ambergris, and musk, with candles of Alexandria wax, and she put the whole into the basket, saying, "Up with thy crate and after me." He did so and followed until she stood before the greengrocer's, of whom she bought pickled shallots and olives, in brine and in oil, with tarragon and cream cheese and hard Syrian cheese, and she stowed them away in the crate, saying to the porter, "Take up thy basket and follow me." He did so and went after her till she came to a fair mansion fronted by a spacious court, a tall, fine place to which columns gave strength and grace. And the gate thereof had two leaves of ebony inlaid with plates of red gold. The lady stopped at the door and, turning her face veil sideways, knocked softly with her knuckles whilst the porter stood behind her, thinking of naught save her beauty and loveliness.

Presently the door swung back and both leaves were opened, whereupon he looked to see who had opened it, and behold, it was a lady of tall figure, some five feet high, a model of beauty and loveliness, brilliance and symmetry and perfect grace. Her forehead was flower-white, her cheeks like the anemone ruddy-bright. Her eyes were those of the wild heifer or the gazelle, with eyebrows like the crescent moon which ends Sha'aban and begins Ramazan. Her mouth was the ring of Solomon, her lips coral-red, and her teeth like a line of strung pearls or of camomile petals. Her throat recalled the antelope's, and her breasts, like two pomegranates of even size, stood at bay as it were. Her body rose and fell in waves below her dress like the rolls of a piece of brocade, and her navel would hold an ounce of benzoin ointment. In fine, she was like her of whom the poet said:

On Sun and Moon of palace cast thy sight,  
 Enjoy her flowerlike face, her fragrant light.  
 Thine eyes shall never see in hair so black  
 Beauty encase a brow so purely white.  
 The ruddy rosy cheek proclaims her claim,  
 Though fail her name whose beauties we indite.  
 As sways her gait, I smile at hips so big  
 And weep to see the waist they bear so slight.

When the porter looked upon her, his wits were waylaid and his senses were stormed so

that his crate went nigh to fall from his head, and he said to himself, "Never have I in my life seen a day more blessed than this day!" Then quoth the lady portress to the lady cateress, "Come in from the gate and relieve this poor man of his load." So the provisioner went in, followed by the portress and the porter, and went on till they reached a spacious ground-floor hall, built with admirable skill and beautified with all manner colors and carvings, with upper balconies and groined arches and galleries and cupboards and recesses whose curtains hung before them. In the midst stood a great basin full of water surrounding a fine fountain, and at the upper end on the raised dais was a couch of juniper wood set with gems and pearls, with a canopy like mosquito curtains of red satin-silk looped up with pearls as big as filberts and bigger.

Thereupon sat a lady bright of blee, with brow beaming brilliancy, the dream of philosophy, whose eyes were fraught with Babel's gramarye and her eyebrows were arched as for archery. Her breath breathed ambergris and perfumery and her lips were sugar to taste and carnelian to see. Her stature was straight as the letter I and her face shamed the noon sun's radiancy; and she was even as a galaxy, or a dome with golden marquetry, or a bride displayed in choicest finery, or a noble maid of Araby. The third lady, rising from the couch, stepped forward with graceful swaying gait till she reached the middle of the saloon, when she said to her sisters: "Why stand ye here? Take it down from this poor man's head!" Then the cateress went and stood before him and the portress behind him while the third helped them, and they lifted the load from the porter's head, and, emptying it of all that was therein, set everything in its place. Lastly they gave him two gold pieces, saying, "Wend thy ways, O Porter."

But he went not, for he stood looking at the ladies and admiring what uncommon beauty was theirs, and their pleasant manners and kindly dispositions (never had he seen goodlier). And he gazed wistfully at that good store of wines and sweet-scented flowers and fruits and other matters. Also he marveled with exceeding marvel, especially to see no man in the place, and delayed his going, whereupon quoth the eldest lady: "What aileth thee that goest not? Haply thy wage be too little?" And, turning to her sister, the cateress, she said, "Give him another dinar!" But the porter answered: "By Allah, my lady, it is not for the wage, my hire is never more than two dirhams, but in very sooth my heart and my soul are taken up with you and your condition. I wonder to see you single with ne'er a man about you and not a soul to bear you company. And well you wot that the minaret toppleth o'er unless it stand upon four, and you want this same fourth, and women's pleasure without man is short of measure, even as the poet said:

"Seest not we want for joy four things all told-  
The harp and lute, the flute and flageolet-  
And be they companied with scents fourfold,  
Rose, myrtle, anemone, and violet.  
Nor please all eight an four thou wouldst withhold-  
Good wine and youth and gold and pretty pet.

"You be three and want a fourth who shall be a person of good sense and prudence, smart-witted, and one apt to keep careful counsel." His words pleased and amused them much, and they laughed at him and said: "And who is to assure us of that? We are maidens, and we fear to entrust our secret where it may not be kept, for we have read in a certain chronicle the lines of one Ibn al-Sumam:

"Hold fast thy secret and to none unfold,

Lost is a secret when that secret's told.  
 An fail thy breast thy secret to conceal,  
 How canst thou hope another's breast shall hold?"

When the porter heard their words, he rejoined: "By your lives! I am a man of sense and a discreet, who hath read books and perused chronicles. I reveal the fair and conceal the foul and I act as the poet adviseth:

"None but the good a secret keep,  
 And good men keep it unrevealed.  
 It is to me a well-shut house  
 With keyless locks and door ensealed."

When the maidens heard his verse and its poetical application addressed to them, they said: "Thou knowest that we have laid out all our moneys on this place. Now say, hast thou aught to offer us in return for entertainment? For surely we will not suffer thee to sit in our company and be our cup companion, and gaze upon our faces so fair and so rare, without paying a round sum. Wettest thou not the saying:

"Sans hope of gain  
 Love's not worth a grain"?

Whereto the lady portress added, "If thou bring anything, thou art a something; if no thing, be off with thee, thou art a nothing." But the procuratrix interposed, saying: "Nay, O my sisters, leave teasing him, for by Allah he hath not failed us this day, and had he been other he never had kept patience with me, so whatever be his shot and scot I will take it upon myself."

The porter, overjoyed, kissed the ground before her and thanked her, saying, "By Allah, these moneys are the first fruits this day hath given me." Hearing this, they said, "Sit thee down and welcome to thee," and the eldest lady added: "By Allah, we may not suffer thee to join us save on one condition, and this it is, that no questions be asked as to what concerneth thee not, and frowardness shall be soundly flogged." Answered the porter: "I agree to this, O my lady. On my head and my eyes be it! Look ye, I am dumb, I have no tongue." Then arose the provisioneress and, tightening her girdle, set the table by the fountain and put the flowers and sweet herbs in their jars, and strained the wine and ranged the flasks in rows and made ready every requisite. Then sat she down, she and her sisters, placing amidst them the porter, who kept deeming himself in a dream. And she took up the wine flagon and poured out the first cup and drank it off, and likewise a second and a third. After this she filled a fourth cup, which she handed to one of her sisters, and lastly, she crowned a goblet and passed it to the porter, saying:

"Drink the dear draught, drink free and fain  
 What healeth every grief and pain."

He took the cup in his hand and, Touting low, returned his best thanks and improvised:

"Drain not the bowl save with a trusty friend,  
 A man of worth whose good old blood all know.  
 For wine, like wind, sucks sweetness from the sweet  
 And stinks when over stench it haply blow."

Adding:

"Drain not the bowl, save from dear hand like thine,  
The cup recalls thy gifts, thou, gifts of wine."

After repeating this couplet he kissed their hands and drank and was drunk and sat swaying from side to side and pursued:

"All drinks wherein is blood the Law unclean  
Doth hold save one, the bloodshed of the vine.  
Fill! Fill! Take all my wealth bequeathed or won,  
Thou fawn! a willing ransome for those eyne."

Then the cateress crowned a cup and gave it to the portress, who took it from her hand and thanked her and drank. Thereupon she poured again and passed to the eldest lady, who sat on the couch, and filled yet another and handed it to the porter. He kissed the ground before them, and after drinking and thanking them, he again began to recite:

"Here! Here! By Allah, here!  
Cups of the sweet, the dear!  
Fill me a brimming bowl,  
The Fount o' Life I speer."

Then the porter stood up before the mistress of the house and said, "O lady, I am thy slave, thy Mameluke, thy white thrall, thy very bondsman," and he began reciting:

"A slave of slaves there standeth at thy door,  
Lauding thy generous boons and gifts galore.  
Beauty! May he come in awhile to 'joy  
Thy charms? For Love and I part nevermore!"

Then the lady took the cup and drank it off to her sisters' health, and they ceased not drinking (the porter being in the midst of them) and dancing and laughing and reciting verses and singing ballads and ritornellos. All this time the porter was carrying on with them, kissing, toying, biting, handling, groping, fingering whilst one thrust a dainty morsel in his mouth and another slapped him, and this cuffed his cheeks, and that threw sweet flowers at him. And he was in the very paradise of pleasure, as though he were sitting in the seventh sphere among the houris of Heaven. And they ceased not to be after this fashion till night began to fall. Thereupon said they to the porter, "Bismillah, O our master, up and on with those sorry old shoes of thine and turn thy face and show us the breadth of thy shoulders!" Said he: "By Allah, to part with my soul would be easier for me than departing from you. Come, let us join night to day, and tomorrow morning we will each wend our own way." "My life on you," said the procuratrix, "suffer him to tarry with us, that we may laugh at him. We may live out our lives and never meet with his like, for surely he is a right merry rogue and a witty." So they said: "Thou must not remain with us this night save on condition that thou submit to our commands, and that whatso thou seest, thou ask no questions thereanent, nor inquire of its cause." "All right," rejoined he, and they said, "Go read the writing over the door."

So he rose and went to the entrance and there found written in letters of gold wash:

WHOSO SPEAKETH OF WHAT CONCERNETH HIM NOT SHALL HEAR WHAT PLEASETH HIM NOT! The porter said, "Be ye witnesses against me that I will not speak on whatso concerneth me not." Then the cateress arose and set food before them and they ate. After which they changed their drinking place for another, and she lighted the lamps and candles and burned ambergris and aloe wood, and set on fresh fruit and the wine service, when they fell to carousing and talking of their lovers. And they ceased not to eat and drink and chat, nibbling dry fruits and laughing and playing tricks for the space of a full hour, when lo! a knock was heard at the gate.

The knocking in no wise disturbed the seance, but one of them rose and went to see what it was and presently returned, saying, "Truly our pleasure for this night is to be perfect." "How is that?" asked they, and she answered: "At the gate be three Persian Kalandars with their beards and heads and eyebrows shaven, and all three blind of the left eye- which is surely a strange chance. They are foreigners from Roumland with the mark of travel plain upon them. They have just entered Baghdad, this being their first visit to our city, and the cause of their knocking at our door is simply because they cannot find a lodging. Indeed one of them said to me: 'Haply the owner of this mansion will let us have the key of his stable or some old outhouse wherein we may pass this night.' For evening had surprised them and, being strangers in the land, they knew none who would give them shelter. And, O my sisters, each of them is a figure o' fun after his own fashion, and if we let them in we shall have matter to make sport of." She gave not over persuading them till they said to her: "Let them in, and make thou the usual condition with them that they speak not of what concerneth them not, lest they hear what pleased them not."

So she rejoiced and, going to the door, presently returned with the three monoculars whose beards and mustachios were clean-shaven. They salaamed and stood afar off by way of respect, but the three ladies rose up to them and welcomed them and wished them joy of their safe arrival and made them sit down. The Kalandars looked at the room and saw that it was a pleasant place, clean-swept and garnished with flowers, and the lamps were burning and the smoke of perfumes was spiring in air, and beside the dessert and fruits and wine, there were three fair girls who might be maidens. So they exclaimed with one voice, "By Allah, 'tis good!" Then they turned to the porter and saw that he was a merry-faced wight, albeit he was by no means sober and was sore after his slappings. So they thought that he was one of themselves and said, "A mendicant like us, whether Arab or foreigner!"

But when the porter heard these words, he rose up and, fixing his eyes fiercely upon them, said: "Sit ye here without exceeding in talk! Have you not read what is writ over the door? Surely it befitteth not fellows who come to us like paupers to wag your tongues at us." "We crave thy pardon, O Fakir," rejoined they, "and our heads are between thy hands." The ladies laughed consumedly at the squabble and, making peace between the Kalandars and the porter, seated the new guests before meat, and they ate. Then they sat together, and the portress served them with drink, and as the cup went round merrily, quoth the porter to the askers, "And you, O brothers mine, have ye no story or rare adventure to amuse us withal?"

Now the warmth of wine having mounted to their heads, they called for musical instruments, and the portress brought them a tambourine of Mosul, and a lute of Irak, and a Persian harp. And each mendicant took one and tuned it, this the tambourine and those the lute and the harp, and struck up a merry tune while the ladies sang so lustily that there was a great noise. And whilst they were carrying on, behold, someone knocked at the gate, and the portress went to see what was the matter there.

Now the cause of that knocking, O King (quoth Scheherazade) was this, the Caliph Harun al-Rashid had gone forth from the palace, as was his wont now and then, to solace himself in the city that night, and to see and hear what new thing was stirring. He was in merchant's gear, and he was attended by Ja'afar, his Wazir, and by Masrur, his Swarder of Vengeance. As they walked about the city, their way led them toward the house of the three ladies, where they heard the loud noise of musical instruments and singing and merriment. So quoth the Caliph to Ja'afar, "I long to enter this house and hear those songs and see who sing them." Quoth Ja'afar, "O Prince of the Faithful, these folk are surely drunken with wine, and I fear some mischief betide us if we get amongst them." "There is no help but that I go in there," replied the Caliph, "and I desire thee to contrive some pretext for our appearing among them." Ja'afar replied, "I hear and I obey," and knocked at the door, whereupon the portress came out and opened. Then Ja'afar came forward and, kissing the ground before her, said, "O my lady, we be merchants from Tiberias town. We arrived at Baghdad ten days ago and, alighting at the merchants' caravanserai, we sold all our merchandise. Now a certain trader invited us to an entertainment this night, so we went to his house and he set food before us and we ate. Then we sat at wine and wassail with him for an hour or so when he gave us leave to depart. And we went out from him in the shadow of the night and, being strangers, we could not find our way back to our khan. So haply of your kindness and courtesy you will suffer us to tarry with you this night, and Heaven will reward you!"

The portress looked upon them and, seeing them dressed like merchants and men of gave looks and solid, she returned to her sisters and repeated to them Ja'afar's story, and they took compassion upon the strangers and said to her, "Let them enter." She opened the door to them, when said they to her, "Have we thy leave to come in?" "Come in," quoth she, and the Caliph entered, followed by Ja'afar and Masrur. And when the girls saw them they stood up to them in respect and made them sit down and looked to their wants, saying, "Welcome, and well come and good cheer to the guests, but with one condition!" "What is that?" asked they, and one of the ladies answered, "Speak not of what concerneth you not, lest ye hear what pleaseth you not." "Even so," said they, and sat down to their wine and drank deep.

Presently the Caliph looked on the three Kalandars and, seeing them, each and every blind of the left eye, wondered at the sight. Then he gazed upon the girls, and he was startled and he marveled with exceeding marvel at their beauty and loveliness. They continued to carouse and to converse, and said to the Caliph, "Drink!" But he replied, "I am vowed to pilgrimage," and drew back from the wine. Thereupon the portress rose and, spreading before him a tablecloth worked with gold, set thereon a porcelain bowl into which she poured willow-flower water with a lump of snow and a spoonful of sugar candy. The Caliph thanked her and said in himself, "By Allah, I will recompense her tomorrow for the kind deed she hath done." The others again addressed themselves to conversing and carousing, and when the wine gat the better of them, the eldest lady, who ruled the house, rose and, making obeisance to them, took the cateress by the hand and said, "Rise, O my sister, and let us do what is our devoir." Both answered "Even so!"

Then the portress stood up and proceeded to remove the table service and the remnants of the banquet, and renewed the pastilies and cleared the middle of the saloon. Then she made the Kalandars sit upon a sofa at the side of the estrade, and seated the Caliph and Ja'afar and Masrur on the other side of the saloon, after which she called the porter, and said: "How scant is thy courtesy! Now thou art no stranger- nay, thou art one of the household." So he stood up and, tightening his waistcloth, asked, "What would ye I do?"

And she answered, "Stand in thy place." Then the procuratrix rose and set in the midst of the saloon a low chair and, opening a closet, cried to the porter, "Come help me."

So he went to help her and saw two black bitches with chains round their necks, and she said to him, "Take hold of them," and he took them and led them into the middle of the saloon. Then the lady of the house arose and tucked up her sleeves above her wrists and, seizing a scourge, said to the porter, "Bring forward one of the bitches." He brought her forward, dragging her by the chain, while the bitch wept and shook her head at the lady, who, however, came down upon her with blows on the scone. And the bitch howled and the lady ceased not beating her till her forearm failed her. Then, casting the scourge from her hand, she pressed the bitch to her bosom and, wiping away her tears with her hands, kissed her head. Then said she to the porter, "Take her away and bring the second." And when he brought her, she did with her as she had done with the first.

Now the heart of the Caliph was touched at these cruel doings. His chest straitened and he lost all patience in his desire to know why the two bitches were so beaten. He threw a wink at Ja'afar, wishing him to ask, but the Minister, turning toward him, said by signs, "Be silent!" Then quoth the portress to the mistress of the house, "O my lady, arise and go to thy place, that I in turn may do my devoir." She answered, "Even so," and, taking her seat upon the couch of juniper wood, pargetted with gold and silver, said to the portress and cateress, "Now do ye what ye have to do." Thereupon the portress sat upon a low seat by the couch side, but the procuratrix, entering a closet, brought out of it a bag of satin with green fringes and two tassels of gold. She stood up before the lady of the house and, shaking the bag, drew out from it a lute which she tuned by tightening its pegs; and when it was in perfect order, she began to sing these quatrains:

"Ye are the wish, the aim of me,  
 And when, O love, thy sight I see,  
 The heavenly mansion openeth,  
 But Hell I see when lost thy sight.  
 From thee comes madness, nor the less  
 Comes highest joy, comes ecstasy.  
 Nor in my love for thee I fear  
 Or shame and blame, or hate and spite.  
 When Love was throned within my heart  
 I rent the veil of modesty,  
 And stints not Love to rend that veil,  
 Garring disgrace on grace to alight.  
 The robe of sickness then I donned,  
 But rent to rags was secrecy.  
 Wherefore my love and longing heart  
 Proclaim your high supremest might.  
 The teardrop railing adown my cheek  
 Telleth my tale of ignomy.  
 And all the hid was seen by all  
 And all my riddle ree'd aright.  
 Heal then my malady, for thou  
 Art malady and remedy!  
 But she whose cure is in thy hand  
 Shall ne'er be free of bane and blight.  
 Burn me those eyne that radiance rain,

Slay me the swords of phantasy.  
 How many hath the sword of Love  
 Laid low, their high degree despite?  
 Yet will I never cease to pine,  
 Nor to oblivion will I flee.  
 Love is my health, my faith, my joy,  
 Public and private, wrong or right.  
 O happy eyes that sight thy charms,  
 That gaze upon thee at their gree!  
 Yea, of my purest wish and will  
 The slave of Love I'll aye be hight."

When the damsel heard this elegy in quatrains, she cried out "Alas! Alas!" and rent her raiment, and fell to the ground fainting. And the Caliph saw scars of the palm rod on her back and welts of the whip, and marveled with exceeding wonder. Then the portress arose and sprinkled water on her and brought her a fresh and very fine dress and put it on her. But when the company beheld these doings, their minds were troubled, for they had no inkling of the case nor knew the story thereof. So the Caliph said to Ja'afar: "Didst thou not see the scars upon the damsel's body? I cannot keep silence or be at rest till I learn the truth of her condition and the story of this other maiden and the secret of the two black bitches." But Ja'afar answered: "O our lord, they made it a condition with us that we speak not of what concerneth us not, lest we come to hear what pleaseth us not."

Then said the portress, "By Allah, O my sister, come to me and complete this service for me." Replied the procuratrix, "With joy and goodly gree." So she took the lute and leaned it against her breasts and swept the strings with her finger tips, and began singing:

"Give back mine eyes their sleep long ravished,  
 And say me whither be my reason fled.  
 I learnt that lending to thy love a place,  
 Sleep to mine eyelids mortal foe was made.  
 They said, 'We held thee righteous. Who waylaid  
 Thy soul?' 'Go ask his glorious eyes,' I said.  
 I pardon all my blood he pleased to shed.  
 Owing his troubles drove him blood to shed.  
 On my mind's mirror sunlike sheen he cast,  
 Whose keen reflection fire in vitals bred.  
 Waters of Life let Allah waste at will,  
 Suffice my wage those lips of dewy red.  
 And thou address my love thou'lt find a cause  
 For plaint and tears or ruth or lustilied.  
 In water pure his form shall greet your eyne,  
 When fails the bowl nor need ye drink of wine."

Then she quoted from the same ode:

"I drank, but the draught of his glance, not wine,  
 And his swaying gait swayed to sleep these eyne.  
 'Twas not grape juice gript me but grasp of Past,  
 'Twas not bowl o'erbowled me but gifts divine.  
 His coiling curllets my soul ennetted

And his cruel will all my wits outwitted."

After a pause she resumed:

"If we 'plain of absence, what shall we say?  
Or if pain afflict us, where wend our way?  
An I hire a truchman to tell my tale,  
The lovers' plaint is not told for pay.  
If I put on patience, a lover's life  
After loss of love will not last a day.  
Naught is left me now but regret, repine,  
And tears flooding cheeks forever and aye.  
O thou who the babes of these eyes hast fled,  
Thou art homed in heart that shall never stray.  
Would Heaven I wot hast thou kept our pact  
Long as stream shall flow, to have firmest fay?  
Or hast forgotten the weeping slave,  
Whom groans afflict and whom griefs waylay?  
Ah, when severance ends and we side by side  
Couch, I'll blame thy rigors and chide thy pride!"

Now when the portress heard her second ode, she shrieked aloud and said: "By Allah! 'Tis right good!" and, laying hands on her garments, tore them as she did the first time, and fell to the ground fainting. Thereupon the procuratrix rose and brought her a second change of clothes after she had sprinkled water on her. She recovered and sat upright and said to her sister the cateress, "Onward, and help me in my duty, for there remains but this one song." So the provisioneress again brought out the lute and began to sing these verses:

"How long shall last, how long this rigor rife of woe  
May not suffice thee all these tears thou seest flow?  
Our parting thus with purpose fell thou dost prolong  
Is't not enough to glad the heart of envious foe?  
Were but this lying world once true to lover heart,  
He had not watched the weary night in tears of woe.  
Oh, pity me whom overwhelmed thy cruel will,  
My lord, my king, 'tis time some ruth to me thou show.  
To whom reveal my wrongs, O thou who murdered me?  
Sad, who of broken troth the pangs must undergo!  
Increase wild love for thee and frenzy hour by hour,  
And days of exile minute by so long, so slow.  
O Moslems, claim vendetta for this slave of Love,  
Whose sleep Love ever wastes, whose patience Love lays low.  
Doth law of Love allow thee, O my wish! to lie  
Lapt in another's arms and unto me cry 'Go!'  
Yet in thy presence, say, what joys shall I enjoy  
When he I love but works my love to overthrow?"

When the portress heard the third song, she cried aloud and, laying hands on her garments, rent them down to the very skirt and fell to the ground fainting a third time, again showing the scars of the scourge. Then said the three Kalandars, "Would Heaven we had never entered this house, but had rather nighted on the mounds and heaps outside the city!

For verily our visit hath been troubled by sights which cut to the heart." The Caliph turned to them and asked, "Why so?" and they made answer, "Our minds are sore troubled by this matter." Quoth the Caliph, "Are ye not of the household?" and quoth they, "No, nor indeed did we ever set eyes on the place till within this hour." Hereat the Caliph marveled and rejoined, "This man who sitteth by you, would he not know the secret of the matter?" And so saying he winked and made signs at the porter. So they questioned the man, but he replied: "By the All-might of Allah, in love all are alike! I am the growth of Baghdad, yet never in my born days did I darken these doors till today, and my companying with them was a curious matter." "By Allah," they rejoined, "we took thee for one of them and now we see thou art one like ourselves."

Then said the Caliph: "We be seven men, and they only three women without even a fourth to help them, so let us question them of their case. And if they answer us not, fain we will be answered by force." All of them agreed to this except Ja'afar, who said, "This is not my recking. Let them be, for we are their guests and, as ye know, they made a compact and condition with us which we accepted and promised to keep. Wherefore it is better that we be silent concerning this matter, and as but little of the night remaineth, let each and every of us gang his own gait." Then he winked at the Caliph and whispered to him, "There is but one hour of darkness left and I can bring them before thee tomorrow, when thou canst freely question them all concerning their story." But the Caliph raised his head haughtily and cried out at him in wrath, saying: "I have no patience left for my longing to hear of them. Let the Kalandars question them forthright." Quoth Ja'afar, "This is not my rede." Then words ran high and talk answered talk, and they disputed as to who should first put the question, but at last all fixed upon the porter. And as the jangle increased the house mistress could not but notice it and asked them, "O ye folk! On what matter are ye talking so loudly?" Then the porter stood up respectfully before her and said: "O my lady, this company earnestly desire that thou acquaint them with story of the two bitches and what maketh thee punish them so cruelly, and then thou fallest to weeping over them and kissing them. And lastly, they want to hear the tale of thy sister and why she hath been bastinadoed with palm sticks like a man. These are the questions they charge me to put, and peace be with thee." Thereupon quoth she who was the lady of the house to the guests, "Is this true that he saith on your part?" and all replied, "Yes!" save Ja'afar, who kept silence.

When she heard these words she cried: "By Allah, ye have wronged us, O our guests, with grievous wronging, for when you came before us we made compact and condition with you that whoso should speak of what concerneth him not should hear what pleaseth him not. Sufficeth ye not that we took you into our house and fed you with our best food? But the fault is not so much yours as hers who let you in." Then she tucked up her sleeves from her wrists and struck the floor thrice with her hand, crying, "Come ye quickly!" And lo! a closet door opened and out of it came seven Negro slaves with drawn swords in hand, to whom she said, "Pinion me those praters' elbows and bind them each to each." They did her bidding and asked her: "O veiled and virtuous! Is it thy high command that we strike off their heads?" But she answered, "Leave them awhile that I question them of their condition before their necks feel the sword." "By Allah, O my lady!" cried the porter, "slay me not for other's sin. All these men offended and deserve the penalty of crime save myself. Now, by Allah, our night had been charming had we escaped the mortification of those monocular Kalandars whose entrance into a populous city would convert it into a howling wilderness." Then he repeated these verses:

"How fair is ruth the strong man deigns not smother!

And fairest fair when shown to weakest brother.  
By Love's own holy tie between us twain,  
Let one not suffer for the sin of other."

When the porter ended his verse, the lady laughed despite her wrath, and came up to the party and spake thus: "Tell me who ye be, for ye have but an hour of life. And were ye not men of rank and perhaps notables of your tribes, you had not been so froward and I had hastened your doom." Then said the Caliph: "Woe to thee, O Ja'afar, tell her who we are lest we be slain by mistake, and speak her fair before some horror befall us." "'Tis part of thy deserts," replied he, whereupon the Caliph cried out at him, saying, "There is a time for witty words and there is a time for serious work." Then the lady accosted the three Kalandars and asked them, "Are ye brothers?" when they answered, "No, by Allah, we be naught but fakirs and foreigners." Then quoth she to one among them, "Wast thus born blind of one eye?" and quoth he, "No, by Allah, 'twas a marvelous matter and a wondrous mischance which caused my eye to be torn out, and mine is a tale which, if it were written upon the eye corners with needle gravers, were a warner to whoso would be warned." She questioned the second and third Kalandar, but all replied like the first, "By Allah, O our mistress, each one of us cometh from a different country, and we are all three the sons of kings, sovereign princes ruling over suzerains and capital cities."

Thereupon she turned toward them and said: "Let each and every of you tell me his tale in due order and explain the cause of his coming to our place, and if his story please us, let him stroke his head and wend his way." The first to come forward was the hammal, the porter, who said: "O my lady, I am a man and a porter. This dame, the cateress, hired me to carry a load and took me first to the shop of a vintner, then to the booth of a butcher, thence to the stall of a fruiterer, thence to a grocer who also sold dry fruits, thence to a confectioner and a perfumer-cum-druggist, and from him to this place, where there happened to me with you what happened. Such is my story, and peace be on us all!" At this the lady laughed and said, "Rub thy head and wend thy ways!" But he cried, "By Allah, I will not stump it till I hear the stories of my companions!" Then came forward one of the monoculars and began to tell her *The First Kalandar's Tale*.

### **The First Kalandar's Tale**

KNOW, O my lady, that the cause of my beard being shorn and my eye being outtorn was as follows: My father was a king and he had a brother who was a king over another city; and it came to pass that I and my cousin, the son of my paternal uncle, were both born on one and the same day. And years and days rolled on and as we grew up I used to visit my uncle every now and then and to spend a certain number of months with him. Now my cousin and I were sworn friends, for he ever entreated me with exceeding kindness. He killed for me the fattest sheep and strained the best of his wines, and we enjoyed long conversing and carousing. One day when the wine had gotten the better of us, the son of my uncle said to me, "O my cousin, I have a great service to ask of thee, and I desire that thou stay me not in whatso I desire to do!" And I replied, "With joy and goodly will." Then he made me swear the most binding oaths and left me, but after a little while he returned leading a lady veiled and richly appareled, with ornaments worth a large sum of money. Presently he turned to me (the woman being still behind him) and said, "Take this lady with thee and go before me to such a burial ground" (describing it, so that I knew the place) "and enter with her into such a sepulcher and there await my coming." The oaths I swore to him made me keep silence and suffered me not to oppose him, so I led the

woman to the cemetery and both I and she took our seats in the sepulcher. And hardly had we sat down when in came my uncle's son, with a bowl of water, a bag of mortar, and an adze somewhat like a hoe. He went straight to the tomb in the midst of the sepulcher and, breaking it open with the adze, set the stones on one side. Then he fell to digging into the earth of the tomb till he came upon a large iron plate, the size of a wicket door, and on raising it there appeared below it a staircase vaulted and winding. Then he turned to the lady and said to her, "Come now and take thy final choice!"

She at once went down by the staircase and disappeared, then quoth he to me, "O son of my uncle, by way of completing thy kindness, when I shall have descended into this place, restore the trapdoor to where it was, and heap back the earth upon it as it lay before. And then of thy great goodness mix this unslaked lime which is in the bag with this water which is in the bowl and, after building up the stones, plaster the outside so that none looking upon it shall say: 'This is a new opening in an old tomb'. For a whole year have I worked at this place whereof none knoweth but Allah, and this is the need I have of thee," presently adding, "May Allah never bereave thy friends of thee nor make them desolate by thine absence, O son of my uncle, O my dear cousin!" And he went down the stairs and disappeared for ever.

When he was lost to sight, I replaced the iron plate and did all his bidding till the tomb became as it was before, and I worked almost unconsciously, for my head was heated with wine. Returning to the palace of my uncle, I was told that he had gone forth a-sporting and hunting, so I slept that night without seeing him. And when the morning dawned, I remembered the scenes of the past evening and what happened between me and my cousin. I repented of having obeyed him when penitence was of no avail. I still thought, however, that it was a dream. So I fell to asking for the son of my uncle, but there was none to answer me concerning him, and I went out to the graveyard and the sepulchers, and sought for the tomb under which he was, but could not find it. And I ceased not wandering about from sepulcher to sepulcher, and tomb to tomb, all without success, till night set in. So I returned to the city, yet I could neither eat nor drink, my thoughts being engrossed with my cousin, for that I knew not what was become of him. And I grieved with exceeding grief and passed another sorrowful night, watching until the morning. Then went I a second time to the cemetery, pondering over what the son of mine uncle had done and, sorely repenting my hearkening to him, went round among all the tombs, but could not find the tomb I sought. I mourned over the past, and remained in my mourning seven days, seeking the place and ever missing the path.

Then my torture of scruples grew upon me till I well-nigh went mad, and I found no way to dispel my grief save travel and return to my father. So I set out and journeyed homeward, but as I was entering my father's capital a crowd of rioters sprang upon me and pinioned me. I wondered thereat with all wonderment, seeing that I was the son of the Sultan, and these men were my father's subjects and amongst them were some of my own slaves. A great fear fell upon me, and I said to my soul, "Would Heaven I knew what hath happened to my father!" I questioned those that bound me of the cause of their so doing, but they returned me no answer. However, after a while one of them said to me (and he had been a hired servant of our house), "Fortune hath been false to thy father. His troops betrayed him, and the Wazir who slew him now reigneth in his stead, and we lay in wait to seize thee by the bidding of him." I was well-nigh distraught and felt ready to faint on hearing of my father's death, when they carried me off and placed me in presence of the usurper.

Now between me and him there was an olden grudge, the cause of which was this: I was

fond of shooting with the stone bow, and it befell one day, as I was standing on the terrace roof of the palace, that a bird lighted on the top of the Wazir's house when he happened to be there. I shot at the bird and missed the mark, but I hit the Wazir's eye and knocked it out, as fate and fortune decreed. Now when I knocked out the Wazir's eye, he could not say a single word, for that my father was King of the city, but he hated me ever after, and dire was the grudge thus caused between us twain. So when I was set before him hand-bound and pinioned, he straightway gave orders for me to be beheaded. I asked, "For what crime wilt thou put me to death?" Whereupon he answered, "What crime is greater than this?" pointing the while to the place where his eye had been. Quoth I, "This I did by accident, not of malice prepense," and quoth he, "If thou didst it by accident, I will do the like by thee with intention." Then cried he, "Bring him forward," and they brought me up to him, when he thrust his finger into my left eye and gouged it out, whereupon I became one-eyed as ye see me.

Then he bade bind me hand and foot, and put me into a chest, and said to the sworder, "Take charge of this fellow, and go off with him to the wastelands about the city. Then draw thy scimitar and slay him, and leave him to feed the beasts and birds." So the headsman fared forth with me, and when he was in the midst of the desert, he took me out of the chest (and I with both hands pinioned and both feet fettered) and was about to bandage my eyes before striking off my head. But I wept with exceeding weeping until I made him weep with me and, looking at him I began to recite these couplets:

"I deemed you coat o'mail that should withstand  
The foeman's shafts, and you proved foeman's brand.  
I hoped your aidance in mine every chance,  
Though fail my left to aid my dexter hand.  
Aloof you stand and hear the railer's gibe  
While rain their shafts on me the giber band.  
But an ye will not guard me from my foes,  
Stand clear, and succor neither these nor those!"

And I also quoted:

"I deemed my brethren mail of strongest steel,  
And so they were- from foes to fend my dart!  
I deemed their arrows surest of their aim,  
And so they were- when aiming at my heart!"

When the headsman heard my lines (he had been sworder to my sire and he owed me a debt of gratitude), he cried, "O my lord, what can I do, being but a slave under orders?" presently adding, "Fly for thy life and nevermore return to this land, or they will slay thee and slay me with thee." Hardly believing in my escape, I kissed his hand and thought the loss of my eye a light matter in consideration of my escaping from being slain. I arrived at my uncle's capital, and going in to him, told him of what had befallen my father and myself, whereat he wept with sore weeping and said: "Verily thou addest grief to my grief, and woe to my woe, for thy cousin hath been missing these many days. I wot not what hath happened to him, and none can give me news of him." And he wept till he fainted. I sorrowed and condoled with him, and he would have applied certain medicaments to my eye, but he saw that it was become as a walnut with the shell empty. Then said he, "O my son, better to lose eye and keep life!"

After that I could no longer remain silent about my cousin, who was his only son and one dearly loved, so I told him all that had happened. He rejoiced with extreme joyance to hear news of his son and said, "Come now and show me the tomb." But I replied, "By Allah, O my uncle, I know not its place, though I sought it carefully full many times, yet could not find the site." However, I and my uncle went to the graveyard and looked right and left, till at last I recognized the tomb, and we both rejoiced with exceeding joy. We entered the sepulcher and loosened the earth about the grave, then, upraising the trapdoor, descended some fifty steps till we came to the foot of the staircase, when lo! we were stopped by a blinding smoke. Thereupon said my uncle that saying whose sayer shall never come to shame: "There is no Majesty and there is no Might save in Allah, the Glorious, the Great!" and we advanced till we suddenly came upon a saloon, whose floor was strewed with flour and grain and provisions and all manner necessaries, and in the midst of it stood a canopy sheltering a couch. Thereupon my uncle went up to the couch and, inspecting it, found his son and the lady who had gone down with him into the tomb, lying in each other's embrace.

But the twain had become black as charred wood. It was as if they had been cast into a pit of fire. When my uncle saw this spectacle, he spat in his son's face and said: "Thou hast thy deserts, O thou hog! This is thy judgment in the transitory world, and yet remaineth the judgment in the world to come, a durer and a more enduring." I marveled at his hardness of heart and, grieving for my cousin and the lady, said: "By Allah, O my uncle, calm thy wrath. Dost not see that all my thoughts are occupied with this misfortune, and how sorrowful I am for what hath befallen thy son, and how horrible it is that naught of him remaineth but a black heap of charcoal? And is not that enough, but thou must smite him with thy slipper?" Answered he: "O son of my brother, this youth from his boyhood was madly in love with his own sister, and often and often I forbade him from her, saying to myself, 'They are but little ones.' However, when they grew up sin befell between them, and although I could hardly believe it, I confined him and chided him and threatened him with the severest threats, and the eunuchs and servants said to him: 'Beware of so foul a thing which none before thee ever did, and which none after thee will ever do, and have a care lest thou be dishonored and disgraced among the kings of the day, even to the end of time.' And I added: 'Such a report as this will be spread abroad by caravans, and take heed not to give them cause to talk or I will assuredly curse thee and do thee to death.'

After that I lodged them apart and shut her up, but the accursed girl loved him with passionate love, for Satan had got the mastery of her as well as of him and made their foul sin seem fair in their sight. Now when my son saw that I separated them, he secretly built this souterrain and furnished it and transported to it victuals, even as thou seest, and when I had gone out a-sporting, came here with his sister and hid from me. Then His righteous judgment fell upon the twain and consumed them with fire from Heaven, and verily the Last Judgment will deal them durer pains and more enduring!" Then he wept and I wept with him, and he looked at me and said, "Thou art my son in his stead." And I bethought me awhile of the world and of its chances, how the Wazir had slain my father and had taken his place and had put out my eye, and how my cousin had come to his death by the strangest chance. And I wept again and my uncle wept with me.

Then we mounted the steps and let down the iron plate and heaped up the earth over it, and after restoring the tomb to its former condition, we returned to the palace. But hardly had we sat down ere we heard the tom-toming of the kettledrum and tantara of trumpets and clash of cymbals, and the rattling of war men's lances, and the clamors of assailants and the clanking of bits and the neighing of steeds, while the world was canopied with

dense dust and sand clouds raised by the horses' hoofs. We were amazed at sight and sound, knowing not what could be the matter. So we asked, and were told us that the Wazir who had usurped my father's kingdom had marched his men, and that after levying his soldiery and taking a host of wild Arabs into service, he had come down upon us with armies like the sands of the sea. Their number none could tell, and against them none could prevail. They attacked the city unawares, and the citizens, being powerless to oppose them, surrendered the place. My uncle was slain and I made for the suburbs, saying to myself, "If thou fall into this villain's hands, he will assuredly kill thee."

On this wise all my troubles were renewed, and I pondered all that had betided my father and my uncle and I knew not what to do; for if the city people or my father's troops had recognized me, they would have done their best to will favor by destroying me. And I could think of no way to escape save by shaving off my beard and my eyebrows. So I shored them off and, changing my fine clothes for a Kalandar's rags, I fared forth from my uncle's capital and made for this city, hoping that peradventure someone would assist me to the presence of the Prince of the Faithful, and the Caliph who is the Viceregent of Allah upon earth. Thus have I come hither that I might tell him my tale and lay my case before him. I arrived here this very night, and was standing in doubt whither I should go when suddenly I saw this second Kalandar. So I salaamed to him, saying, 'I am a stranger' and he answered, - 'I too am a stranger!' And as we were conversing, behold, up came our companion, this third Kalandar, and saluted us saying, 'I am a stranger!' And we answered, 'We too be strangers!'

Then we three walked on and together till darkness overtook us and Destiny drove us to your house. Such, then, is the cause of the shaving of my beard and mustachios and eyebrows, and the manner of my losing my left eye. They marveled much at this tale, and the Caliph said to Ja'afar, "By Allah, I have not seen nor have I heard the like of what hath happened to this Kalandar!" Quoth the lady of the house, "Rub thy head and wend thy ways." But he replied, "I will not go till I hear the history of the two others." Thereupon the second Kalandar came forward and, kissing the ground, began to tell The Second Kalandar's Tale.

### **The Second Kalandar's Tale**

KNOW, O my lady, that I was not born one-eyed, and mine is a strange story. And it were graven with needle graver on the eye corners, it were a warner to whoso would be warned. I am a king, son of a king, and was brought up like a prince. I learned intoning the Koran according the seven schools, and I read all manner books, and held disputations on their contents with the doctors and men of science. Moreover, I studied star lore and the fair sayings of poets, and I exercised myself in all branches of learning until I surpassed the people of my time. My skill in calligraphy exceeded that of all the scribes, and my fame was bruited abroad over all climes and cities, and all the kings learned to know my name.

Amongst others, the King of Hind heard of me and sent to my father to invite me to his court, with offerings and presents and rarities such as befit royalties. So my father fitted out six ships for me and my people, and we put to sea and sailed for the space of a full month till we made the land. Then we brought out the horses that were with us in the ships, and after loading the camels with our presents for the Prince, we set forth inland. But we had marched only a little way when behold, a dust cloud up flew, and grew until it walled the horizon from view. After an hour or so the veil lifted and discovered beneath it fifty

horsemen, ravening lions to the sight, in steel armor dight. We observed them straightly and lo! they were cutters-off of the highway, wild as wild Arabs. When they saw that we were only four and had with us but the ten camels carrying the presents, they dashed down upon us with lances at rest. We signed to them with our fingers, as it were saying, "We be messengers of the great King of Hind, so harm us not!" But they answered on like wise, "We are not in his dominions to obey nor are we subject to his sway."

Then they set upon us and slew some of my slaves and put the lave to flight. And I also fled after I had gotten a wound, a grievous hurt, whilst the Arabs were taken up with the money and the presents which were with us. I went forth unknowing whither I went, having become mean as I was mighty, and I fared on until I came to the crest of a mountain, where I took shelter for the night in a cave. When day arose I set out again, nor ceased after this fashion till I arrived at a fair city and a well filled. Now it was the season when winter was turning away with his rime and to greet the world with his flowers came prime, and the young blooms were springing and the streams flowed ringing, and the birds were sweetly singing, as saith the poet concerning a certain city when describing it:

A place secure from every thought of fear,  
Safety and peace forever lord it here.  
Its beauties seem to beautify its sons  
And as in Heaven its happy folk appear.

I was glad of my arrival, for I was wearied with the way, and yellow of face for weakness and want, but my plight was pitiable and I knew not whither to betake me. So I accosted a tailor sitting in his little shop and saluted him. He returned my salaam, and bade me kindly welcome and wished me well and entreated me gently and asked me of the cause of my strangerhood. I told him all my past from first to last, and he was concerned on my account and said: "O youth, disclose not thy secret to any. The King of this city is the greatest enemy thy father hath, and there is blood wite between them and thou hast cause to fear for thy life." Then he set meat and drink before me, and I ate and drank and he with me, and we conversed freely till nightfall, when he cleared me a place in a corner of his shop and brought me a carpet and a coverlet. I tarried with him three days, at the end of which time he said to me, "Knowest thou no calling whereby to will thy living, O my son?" "I am learned in the law," I replied, "and a doctor of doctrine, an adept in art and science, a mathematician, and a notable pen-man." He rejoined, "Thy calling is of no account in our city, where not a soul understandeth science or even writing, or aught save money-making." Then said I, "By Allah, I know nothing but what I have mentioned," and he answered, "Gird thy middle and take thee a hatchet and a cord, and go and hew wood in the wold for thy daily bread till Allah send thee relief, and tell none who thou art lest they slay thee."

Then he bought me an ax and a rope and gave me in charge to certain woodcutters, and with these guardians I went forth into the forest, where I cut fuel wood the whole of my day and came back in the evening bearing my bundle on my head. I sold it for half a dinar, with part of which I bought provision, and laid by the rest. In such work I spent a whole year, and when this was ended, I went out one day, as was my wont, into the wilderness and, wandering away from my companions, I chanced on a thickly grown lowland in which there was an abundance of wood. So I entered and I found the gnarled stump of a great tree and loosened the ground about it and shoveled away the earth. Presently my hatchet rang upon a copper ring, so I cleared away the soil and behold, the ring was attached to a wooden trapdoor. This I raised, and there appeared beneath it a staircase.

I descended the steps to the bottom and came to a door, which I opened and found myself in a noble hall strong of structure and beautifully built, where was a damsel like a pearl of great price, whose favor banished from my heart an grief and cark and care, and whose soft speech healed the soul in despair and captivated the wise and ware. Her figure measured five feet in height, her breasts were firm and upright, her cheek a very garden of delight, her color lively bright, her face gleamed like dawn through curly tresses which gloomed like night, and above the snows of her bosom glittered teeth of a pearly white. When I looked upon her I prostrated myself before Him who had created her, for the beauty and loveliness He had shaped in her, and she looked at me and said, "Art thou man or Jinni?" "I am a man," answered I, and she, "Now who brought thee to this place where I have abided five-and-twenty years without even yet seeing man in it?" Quoth I (and indeed I found her words wondersweet, and my heart was melted to the core by them), "O my lady, my good fortune led me hither for the dispelling of my cark and care."

Then I related to her all my mishap from first to last, and my case appeared to her exceeding grievous, so she wept and said: "I will tell thee my story in my turn. I am the daughter of the King Ifitamus, lord of the Islands of Abnus, who married me to my cousin, the son of my paternal uncle. But on my wedding night an Ifrit named Jirjis bin Rajmus, first cousin- this is, mother's sister's son- of Iblis, the Foul Fiend, snatched me up and, flying away with me like a bird, set me down in this place, wither he conveyed all I needed of fine stuffs, raiment and jewels and furniture, and meat and drink and other else. Once in every ten days he comes here and lies a single night with me, and then wends his way, for he took me without the consent of his family. And he hath agreed with me that if ever I need him by night or by day, I have only to pass my hand over yonder two lines engraved upon the alcove and he will appear to me before my fingers cease touching. Four days have now passed since he was here, and as there remain six days before he come again, say me, wilt thou abide with me five days, and go hence the day before his coming?" I replied "Yes, and yes again! O rare, if all this be not a dream!"

Hereat she was glad and, springing to her feet, seized my hand and carried me through an arched doorway to a hammam bath, a fair hall and richly decorate. I doffed my clothes, and she doffed hers, then we bathed and she washed me. And when this was done we left the bath, and she seated me by her side upon a high divan, and brought me sherbet scented with musk. When we felt cool after the bath, she set food before me and we ate and fell to talking, but presently she said to me, "Lay thee down and take thy rest, for surely thou must be weary." So I thanked her, my lady, and lay down and slept soundly, forgetting all that happened to me. When I awoke I found her subbing and shampooing my feet, so I again thanked her and blessed her and we sat for a while talking. Said she, "By Allah, I was sad at heart, for that I have dwelt alone underground for these five-and-twenty years, and praise be to Allah Who hath sent me someone with whom I can converse!" Then she asked, "O youth, what sayest thou to wine?" and I answered, "Do as thou wilt." Whereupon she went to a cupboard and took out a sealed flask of right old wine and set off the table with flowers and scented herbs and began to sing these lines:

"Had we known of thy coming we fain had dispread  
The cores of our hearts or the balls of our eyes,  
Our cheeks as a carpet to greet thee had thrown,  
And our eyelids had strown for thy feet to betread."

Now when she finished her verse I thanked her, for indeed love of her had gotten hold of my heart, and my grief and anguish were gone. We sat at converse and carousal till

nightfall, and with her I spent the night- such night never spent I in all my life! On the morrow delight followed delight till midday, by which time I had drunken wine so freely that I had lost my wits, and stood up, staggering to the right and to the left, and said "Come, O my charmer, and I will carry thee up from this underground vault and deliver thee from the spell of thy Jinni." She laughed and replied: "Content thee and hold thy peace. Of every ten days one is for the Ifrit and the other nine are thine." Quoth I (and in good sooth drink had got the better of me), "This very instant will I break down the alcove whereon is graven the talisman and summon the Ifrit that I may slay him, for it is a practice of mine to slay Ifrits!" When she heard my words, her color waxed wan and she said, "By Allah, do not!" and she began repeating:

"This is a thing wherein destruction lies.

I rede thee shun it an thy wits be wise."

And these also:

"O thou who seekest severance, draw the rein

Of thy swift steed nor seek o'ermuch t' advance.

Ah stay! for treachery is the rule of life,

And sweets of meeting end in severance."

I heard her verse but paid no heed to her words- nay, I raised my foot and administered to the alcove a mighty kick, and behold, the air starkened and darkened and thundered and lightened, the earth trembled and quaked, and the world became invisible. At once the fumes of wine left my head. I cried to her, "What is the matter?" and she replied: "The Ifrit is upon us! Did I not warn thee of this? By Allah, thou hast brought ruin upon me, but fly for thy life and go up by the way thou camest down!" So I fled up the staircase, but in the excess of my fear I forgot sandals and hatchet. And when I had mounted two steps I turned to look for them, and lo! I saw the earth cleave asunder, and there arose from it an Ifrit, a monster of hideousness, who said to the damsel: "What trouble and pother be this wherewith thou disturbest me? What mishap hath betided thee?" "No mishap hath befallen me," she answered, "save that my breast was straitened and my heart heavy with sadness. So I drank a little wine to broaden it and to hearten myself, then I rose to obey a call of nature, but the wine had gotten into my head and I fell against the alcove." "Thou liest, like the whore thou art!" shrieked the Ifrit, and he looked around the hall right and left till he caught sight of my ax and sandals and said to her, "What be these but the belongings of some mortal who hath been in thy society?" She answered: "I never set eyes upon them till this moment. They must have been brought by thee hither cleaving to thy garments." Quoth the Ifrit, "These words are absurd, thou harlot! thou strumpet!"

Then he stripped her stark-naked and, stretching her upon the floor, bound her hands and feet to four stakes, like one crucified, and set about torturing and trying to make her confess. I could not bear to stand listening to her cries and groans, so I climbed the stair on the quake with fear, and when I reached the top I replaced the trapdoor and covered it with earth. Then repented I of what I had done with penitence exceeding, and thought of the lady and her beauty and loveliness, and the tortures she was suffering at the hands of the accursed Ifrit, after her quiet life of five-and-twenty years, and how all that had happened to her was for cause of me. I bethought me of my father and his kingly estate and how I had become a woodcutter, and how, after my time had been awhile serene, the world had again waxed turbid and troubled to me. So I wept bitterly and repeated this couplet:

"What time Fate's tyranny shall most oppress thee

Perpend! One day shall joy thee, one distress thee!"

Then I walked till I reached the home of my friend the tailor, whom I found most anxiously expecting me. Indeed he was, as the saying goes, on coals of fire for my account. And when he saw me he said: "All night long my heart hath been heavy, fearing for thee from wild beasts or other mischances. Now praise be to Allah for thy safety!" I thanked him for his friendly solicitude and, retiring to my corner, sat pondering and musing on what had befallen me, and I blamed and chided myself for my meddlesome folly and my frowardness in kicking the alcove. I was calling myself to account when behold, my friend the tailor came to me and said: "O youth, in the shop there is an old man, a Persian, who seeketh thee. He hath thy hatchet and thy sandals, which he had taken to the woodcutters, saying, I was going out at what time the muezzin began the call to dawn prayer, when I chanced upon these things and know not whose they are, so direct me to their owner. Tie woodcutters recognized thy hatchet and directed him to thee. He is sitting in my shop, so fare forth to him and thank him and take thine ax and sandals."

When I heard these words I turned yellow with fear and felt stunned as by a blow, and before I could recover myself, lo! the floor of my private room clove asunder, and out of it rose the Persian, who was the Ifrit. He had tortured the lady with exceeding tortures, nathless she would not confess to him aught, so he took the hatchet and sandals and said to her, "As surely as I am Jirjis of the seed of Iblis, I will bring thee back the owner of this and these!" Then he went to the woodcutters with the pretense aforesaid and, being directed to me, after waiting a while in the shop till the fact was confirmed, he suddenly snatched me up as a hawk snatcheth a mouse and flew high in air, but presently descended and plunged with me under the earth (I being a-swoon the while), and lastly set me down in the subterranean palace wherein I had passed that blissful night.

And there I saw the lady stripped to the skin, her limbs bound to four stakes and blood welling from her sides. At the sight my eyes ran over with tears, but the Ifrit covered her person and said, "O wanton, is not this man thy lover?" She looked upon me and replied, "I wot him not, nor have I ever seen him before this hour!" Quoth the Ifrit, "What! This torture and yet no confessing?" And quoth she, "I never saw this man in my born days, and it is not lawful in Allah's sight to tell lies on him." "If thou know him not," said the Ifrit to her, "take this sword and strike off his head." She hent the sword in hand and came close up to me, and I signaled to her with my eyebrows, my tears the while flowing a-down my cheeks. She understood me and made answer, also by signs, "How couldest thou bring all this evil upon me?" And I rejoined after the same fashion, "This is the time for mercy and forgiveness." And the mute tongue of my case spake aloud saying:

Mine eyes were dragomans for my tongue betied,  
And told full clear the love I fain would hide.  
When last we met and tears in torrents railed,  
She signed with eye glance while her lips were mute,  
I signed with fingers and she kenned th' implied.  
Our eyebrows did all duty 'twixt us twain,  
And we being speechless, Love spake loud and plain.

Then, O my mistress, the lady threw away the sword and said: "How shall I strike the neck of one I wot not, and who hath done me no evil? Such deed were not lawful in my law!" and she held her hand. Said the Ifrit: "'Tis grievous to thee to slay thy lover, and, because he hath lain with thee, thou endurest these torments and obstinately refuseth to confess. After this it is clear to me that only like loveth and pitieth Eke." Then he turned to me and asked

me, "O man, haply thou also dost not know this woman," whereto I answered: "And pray who may she be? Assuredly I never saw her till this instant." "Then take the sword," said he, "and strike off her head and I will believe that thou wettest her not and will leave thee free to go, and will not deal hardly with thee." I replied, "That will I do," and, taking the sword, went forward sharply and raised my hand to smite. But she signed to me with her eyebrows, "Have I failed thee in aught of love, and is it thus that thou requitest me?" I understood what her looks implied and answered her with an eye glance, "I will sacrifice my soul for thee." And the tongue of the case wrote in our hearts these lines:

How many a lover with his eyebrows speaketh  
 To his beloved, as his passion pleadeth.  
 With flashing eyne his passion he inspireth  
 And well she seeth what his pleading needeth.  
 How sweet the look when each on other gazeth,  
 And with what swiftness and how sure it speedeth.  
 And this with eyebrows all his passion writeth,  
 And that with eyeballs all his passion readeth.

Then my eyes filled with tears to overflowing and I cast the sword from my hand, saying: "O mighty Ifrit and hero, if a woman lacking wits and faith deem it unlawful to strike off my head, how can it be lawful for me, a man, to smite her neck whom I never saw in my whole life? I cannot do such misdeed, though thou cause me drink the cup of death and perdition." Then said the Ifrit, "Ye twain show the good understanding between you, but I will let you see how such doings end." He took the sword and struck off the lady's hands first, with four strokes, and then her feet, whilst I looked on and made sure of death and she farewelled me with her dying eyes. So the Ifrit cried at her, "Thou whorest and makest me a wittol with thine eyes," and struck her so that her head went flying. Then turned he to me and said: "O mortal, we have it in our law that when the wife committeth advowtry, it is lawful for us to slay her. As for this damsel, I snatched her away on her bride night when she was a girl of twelve and she knew no one but myself. I used to come to her once in every ten days and lie with her the night, under the semblance of a man, a Persian, and when I was well assured that she had cuckolded me, I slew her. But as for thee, I am not well satisfied that thou hast wronged me in her. Nevertheless I must not let thee go unharmed, so ask a boon of me and I will grant it."

Then I rejoiced, O my lady, with exceeding joy and said, "What boon shall I crave of thee?" He replied, "Ask me this boon- into what shape I shall bewitch thee? Wilt thou be a dog, or an ass, or an ape?" I rejoined (and indeed I had hoped that mercy might be shown me), "By Allah, spare me, that Allah spare thee for sparing a Moslem and a man who never wronged thee." And I humbled myself before him with exceeding humility, and remained standing in his presence, saying, "I am sore oppressed by circumstance." Said the Ifrit: "Lengthen not thy words! As to my slaying thee, fear it not, and as to my pardoning thee, hope it not, but from my bewitching thee there is no escape." Then he tore me from the ground, which closed under my feet, and flew with me into the firmament till I saw the earth as a large white cloud or a saucer in the midst of the waters. Presently he set me down on a mountain, and taking a little dust, over which he muttered some magical words, sprinkled me therewith, saying, "Quit that shape and take thou the shape of an ape!" And on the instant I became an ape, a tailless baboon, the son of a century.

Now when he had left me and I saw myself in this ugly and hateful shape, I wept for myself, but resigned my soul to the tyranny of Time and Circumstance, well weeting that Fortune is

fair and constant to no man. I descended the mountain and found at the foot a desert plain, long and broad, over which I traveled for the space of a month till my course brought me to the brink of the briny sea. After standing there awhile, I was ware of a ship in the offing which ran before a fair wind making for the shore. I hid myself behind a rock on the beach and waited till the ship drew near, when I leaped on board. I found her full of merchants and passengers, and one of them cried, "O Captain, this ill-omened brute will bring us ill luck!" And another said, "Turn this ill-omened beast out from among us." The Captain said, "Let us kill it!" Another said, "Slay it with the sword," a third, "Drown it," and a fourth, "Shoot it with an arrow."

But I sprang up and laid hold of the rais's skirt, and shed tears which poured down my chops. The Captain took pity on me, and said, "O merchants, this ape hath appealed to me for protection and I will protect him. Henceforth he is under my charge, so let none do him aught hurt or harm, otherwise there will be bad blood between us." Then he entreated me kindly, and whatsoever he said I understood, and ministered to his every want and served him as a servant, albeit my tongue would not obey my wishes, so that he came to love me. The vessel sailed on, the wind being fair, for the space of fifty days, at the end of which we cast anchor under the walls of a great city wherein was a world of people, especially learned men. None could tell their number save Allah. No sooner had we arrived than we were visited by certain Mameluke officials from the King of that city, who, after boarding us, greeted the merchants and, giving them joy of safe arrival, said: "Our King welcometh you, and sendeth you this roll of paper, whereupon each and every of you must write a line. For ye shall know that the King's Minister, a calligrapher of renown, is dead, and the King hath sworn a solemn oath that he will make none Wazir in his stead who cannot write as well as he could."

He then gave us the scroll, which measured ten cubits long by a breadth of one, and each of the merchants who knew how to write wrote a line thereon, even to the last of them, after which I stood up (still in the shape of an ape) and snatched the roll out of their hands. They feared lest I should tear it or throw it overboard, so they tried to stay me and scare me, but I signed to them that I could write, whereat all marveled, saying, "We never yet saw an ape write." And the Captain cried: "Let him write, and if he scribble and scrabble we will kick him out and kill him. But if he write fair and scholarly, I will adopt him as my son, for surely I never yet saw a more intelligent and well-mannered monkey than he. Would Heaven my real son were his match in morals and manners!"

I took the reed and, stretching out my paw, dipped it in ink and wrote, in the and used for letters, these two couplets:

Time hath recorded gifts she gave the great,  
But none recorded thine, which be far higher.  
Allah ne'er orphan men by loss of thee  
Who be of Goodness mother, Bounty's sire.

And I wrote in Rayhani or larger letters elegantly curved:

Thou hast a reed of rede to every land,  
Whose driving causeth all the world to thrive.  
Nil is the Nile of Misraim by thy boons,  
Who makest misery smile with fingers five.

Then I wrote in the Suls character:

There be no writer who from Death shall fleet  
But what his hand hath writ men shall repeat.  
Write, therefore, naught save what shall serve thee when  
Thou see't on Judgment Day an so thou see't!

Then I wrote in the character of Naskh:

When to sore parting Fate our love shall doom,  
To distant life by Destiny decreed,  
We cause the inkhom's lips to 'plain our pains,  
And tongue our utterance with the talking reed.

Then I gave the scroll to the officials, and after we all had written our line, they carried it before the King. When he saw the paper, no writing pleased him save my writing, and he said to the assembled courtiers: "Go seek the writer of these lines and dress him in a splendid robe of honour. Then mount him on a she-mule, let a band of music precede him, and bring him to the presence." At these words they smiled and the King was wroth with them and cried "O accursed! I give you an order and you laugh at me?" "O King," replied they, "if we laugh 'tis not at thee and not without a cause." "And what is it?" asked he, and they answered, "O King, thou orderest us to bring to thy presence the man who wrote these lines. Now the truth is that he who wrote them is not of the sons of Adam, but an ape, a tailless baboon, belonging to the ship Captain." Quoth he, "Is this true that you say?" Quoth they, "Yea! by the rights of thy munificence!" The King marvelled at their words and shook with mirth and said, "I am minded to buy this ape of the Captain."

Then he sent messengers to the ship with the mule, the dress, the guard, and the state drums, saying, "Not the less do you clothe him in the robe of honour and mount him on the mule, and let him be surrounded by the guards and preceded by the band of music." They came to the ship and took me from the Captain and robed me in the robe of honour and, mounting me on the she-mule, carried me in state procession through the streets whilst the people were amazed and amused. And folk said to one another: "Halloo! Is our Sultan about to make an ape his Minister?" and came all agog crowding to gaze at me, and the town was astir and turned topsy-turvy on my account. When they brought me up to the King and set me in his presence, I kissed the ground before him three times, and once before the High Chamberlain and great officers, and he bade me be seated, and I sat respectfully on shins and knees, and all who were present marvelled at my fine manners, and the King most of all.

Thereupon he ordered the lieges to retire, and when none remained save the King's Majesty, the eunuch on duty, and a little white slave, he bade them set before me the table of food, containing all manner of birds, whatever hoppeth and flieth and treadeth in nest, such as quail and sand grouse. Then he signed to me to eat with him, so I rose and kissed ground before him, then sat me down and ate with him. Presently they set before the King choice wines in flagons of glass and he drank. Then he passed on the cup to me, and I kissed the ground and drank and wrote on it:

With fire they boiled me to loose my tongue,  
And pain and patience gave for fellowship.  
Hence comes it hands of men upbear me high

And honeydew from lips of maid I sip!

The King read my verse and said with a sigh, "Were these gifts in a man, he would excel all the folk of his time and age!" Then he called for the chessboard, and said, "Say, wilt thou play with me?" and I signed with my head, "Yes." Then I came forward and ordered the pieces and played with him two games, both of which I won. He was speechless with surprise, so I took the pen case and, drawing forth a reed, wrote on the board these two couplets:

Two hosts fare fighting thro' the livelong day,  
Nor is their battling ever finished  
Until, when darkness girdeth them about,  
The twain go sleeping in a single bed.

The King read these lines with wonder and delight and said to his eunuch, "O Mukbil, go to thy mistress, Sitt al-Husn, and say her, 'Come, speak the King, who biddeth thee hither to take thy solace in seeing this right wondrous ape!'" So the eunuch went out, and presently returned with the lady, who when she saw me veiled her face and said: "O my father, hast thou lost all sense of honour? How cometh it thou art pleased to send for me and show me to strange men?" "O Sitt al-Husn," said he, "no man is here save this little foot page and the eunuch who reared thee and I, thy father. From whom, then, dost thou veil thy face?" She answered, "This whom thou deemest an ape is a young man, a clever and polite, a wise and learned, and the son of a king. But he is ensorcelled, and the Ifrit Jirjaris, who is of the seed of Iblis, cast a spell upon him, after putting to death his own wife, the daughter of King Ifitamus lord of the Islands of Abnus." The King marvelled at his daughter's words and, turning to me, said, "Is this true that she saith of thee?" and I signed by a nod of my head the answer "Yea, verily," and wept sore.

Then he asked his daughter, "Whence knewest thou that he is ensorcelled?" and she answered: "O my dear Papa, there was with me in my childhood an old woman, a wily one and a wise and a witch to boot, and she taught me the theory of magic and its practice, and I took notes in writing and therein waxed perfect, and have committed to memory a hundred and seventy chapters of egromantic formulas, by the least of which I could transport the stones of thy city behind the Mountain Kaf and the Circumambient Main, or make its site an abyss of the sea and its people fishes swimming in the midst of it." "O my daughter," said her father, "I conjure thee, by my life, disenchant this young man, that I may make him my Wazir and marry thee to him, for indeed he is an ingenious youth and a deeply learned." "With joy and goodly gree," she replied and, hending in hand an iron knife whereon was inscribed the name of Allah in Hebrew characters she described a wide circle in the midst of the palace hall, and therein wrote in Kufic letters mysterious names and talismans. And she uttered words and muttered charms, some of which we understood and others we understood not.

Presently the world waxed dark before our sight till we thought that the sky was falling upon our heads, and lo! the Ifrit presented himself in his own shape and aspect. His hands were like many-pronged pitchforks, his legs like the masts of great ships, and his eyes like cressets of gleaming fire. We were in terrible fear of him, but the King's daughter cried at him, "No welcome to thee and no greeting, O dog!" Whereupon he changed to the form of a lion and said, "O traitress, how is it thou hast broken the oath we sware that neither should contraire other?" "O accursed one," answered she, "how could there be a compact between me and the like of thee?" Then said he, "Take what thou hast brought on thyself." And the lion open his jaws and rushed upon her, but she was too quick for him, and, plucking a hair

from her head, waved it in the air muttering over it the while. And the hair straightway became a trenchant sword blade, wherewith she smote the lion and cut him in twain. Then the two halves flew away in air and the head changed to a scorpion and the Princess became a huge serpent and set upon the accursed scorpion, and the two fought, coiling and uncoiling, a stiff fight for an hour at least.

Then the scorpion changed to a vulture and the serpent became an eagle, which set upon the vulture and hunted him for an hour's time, till he became a black tomcat, which miauled and grinned and spat. Thereupon the eagle changed into a piebald wolf and these two battled in the palace for a long time, when the cat, seeing himself overcome, changed into a worm and crept into a huge red pomegranate which lay beside the jetting fountain in the midst of the palace hall. Whereupon the pomegranate swelled to the size of a watermelon in air and, falling upon the marble pavement of the palace, broke to pieces, and all the grains fell out and were scattered about till they covered the whole floor. Then the wolf shook himself and became a snow-white cock, which fell to picking up the grains, purposing not to leave one, but by doom of destiny one seed rolled to the fountain edge and there lay hid.

The cock fell to crowing and clapping his wings and signing to us with his beak as if to ask, "Are any grains left?" But we understood not what he meant, and he cried to us with so loud a cry that we thought the palace would fall upon us. Then he ran over all the floor till he saw the grain which had rolled to the fountain edge, and rushed eagerly to pick it up when behold, it sprang into the midst of the water and became a fish and dived to the bottom of the basin. Thereupon the cock changed to a big fish, and plunged in after the other, and the two disappeared for a while and lo! we heard loud shrieks and cries of pain which made us tremble. After this the Ifrit rose out of the water, and he was as a burning flame, casting fire and smoke from his mouth and eyes and nostrils. And immediately the Princess likewise came forth from the basin, and she was one live coal of flaming lowe, and these two, she and he, battled for the space of an hour, until their fires entirely compassed them about and their thick smoke filled the palace.

As for us, we panted for breath, being well-nigh suffocated, and we longed to plunge into the water, fearing lest we be burnt up and utterly destroyed. And the King said: "There is no Majesty and there is no Might save in Allah the Glorious, the Great! Verily we are Allah's and unto Him are we returning! Would Heaven I had not urged my daughter to attempt the disenchantment of this ape fellow, whereby I have imposed upon her the terrible task of fighting yon accursed Ifrit, against whom all the Ifrits in the world could not prevail. And would Heaven we had never seen this ape, Allah never assain nor bless the day of his coming! We thought to do a good deed by him before the face of Allah, and to release him from enchantment, and now we have brought this trouble and travail upon our heart." But I, O my lady, was tonguetied and powerless to say a word to him.

Suddenly, ere we were ware of aught, the Ifrit yelled out from under the flames and, coming up to us as we stood on the estrade, blew fire in our faces. The damsel overtook him and breathed blasts of fire at his face, and the sparks from her and from him rained down upon us, and her sparks did us no harm. But one of his sparks alighted upon my eye and destroyed it, making me a monocular ape. And another fell on the King's face, scorching the lower half, burning off his beard and mustachios and causing his underteeth to fall out, while a third lighted on the castrato's breast, killing him on the spot. So we despaired of life and made sure of death when lo! a voice repeated the saying: "Allah is Most Highest! Allah is Most Highest! Aidance and victory to all who the Truth believe, and disappointment and

disgrace to all who the religion of Mohammed, the Moon of Faith, unbelieve." The speaker was the Princess, who had burnt the Ifrit, and he was become a heap of ashes. Then she came up to us and said, "Reach me a cup of water." They brought it to her and she spoke over it words we understood not and, sprinkling me with it, cried, "By virtue of the Truth, and by the Most Great Name of Allah, I charge thee return to thy former shape!" And behold, I shook and became a man as before, save that I had utterly lost an eye.

Then she cried out: "The fire! The fire! O my dear Papa, an arrow from the accursed hath wounded me to the death, for I am not used to fight with the Jann. Had he been a man, I had slain him in the beginning. I had no trouble till the time when the pomegranate burst and the grains scattered, but I overlooked the seed wherein was the very life of the Jinni. Had I picked it up, he had died on the spot, but as Fate and Fortune decreed, I saw it not, so he came upon me all unawares and there befell between him and me a sore struggle under the earth and high in air and in the water. And as often as I opened on him a gate, he opened on me another gate and a stronger, till at last he opened on me the gate of fire, and few are saved upon whom the door of fire openeth. But Destiny willed that my cunning prevail over his cunning, and I burned him to death after I vainly exhorted him to embrace the religion of Al-Islam. As for me, I am a dead woman. Allah supply my place to you!"

Then she called upon Heaven for help and ceased not to implore relief from the fire, when lo! a black spark shot up from her robed feet to her thighs, then it flew to her bosom and thence to her face. When it reached her face, she wept and said, "I testify that there is no god but the God and that Mohammed is the Apostle of God!" And we looked at her and saw naught but a heap of ashes by the side of the heap that had been the Ifrit. We mourned for her, and I wished I had been in her place, so had I not seen her lovely face who had worked me such weal become ashes, but there is no gainsaying the will of Allah.

When the King saw his daughter's terrible death, he plucked out what was left of his beard and beat his face and rent his raiment, and I did as he did and we both wept over her. Then came in the chamberlains and grandees, and were amazed to find two heaps of ashes and the Sultan in a fainting fit. So they stood round him till he revived and told them what had befallen his daughter from the Ifrit, whereat their grief was right grievous and the women and the slave girls shrieked and keened, and they continued their lamentations for the space of seven days. Moreover, the King bade build over his daughter's ashes a vast vaulted tomb, and burn therein wax tapers and sepulchral lamps. But as for the Ifrit's ashes, they scattered them on the winds, speeding them to the curse of Allah.

Then the Sultan fell sick of a sickness that well-nigh brought him to his death for a month's space, and when health returned to him and his beard grew again and he had been converted by the mercy of Allah to Al-Islam, he sent for me and said: "O youth, Fate had decreed for us the happiest of lives, safe from all the chances and changes of Time, till thou camest to us, when troubles fell upon us. Would to Heaven we had never seen thee and the foul face of thee! For we took pity on thee, and thereby we have lost our all. I have on thy account first lost my daughter, who to me was well worth a hundred men, secondly, I have suffered that which befell me by reason of the fire and the loss of my teeth, and my eunuch also was slain. I blame thee not, for it was out of thy power to prevent this. The doom of Allah was on thee as well as on us, and thanks be to the Almighty for that my daughter delivered thee, albeit thereby she lost her own life! Go forth now, O my son, from this my city, and suffice thee what hath befallen us through thee, even although 'twas decreed for us. Go forth in peace, and if I ever see thee again I will surely slay thee." And he cried out at me.

So I went forth from his presence, O my lady, weeping bitterly and hardly believing in my escape and knowing not whither I should wend. And I recalled all that had befallen me, my meeting the tailor, my love for the damsel in the palace beneath the earth, and my narrow escape from the Ifrit, even after he had determined to do me die, and how I had entered the city as an ape and was now leaving it a man once more. Then I gave thanks to Allah and said, "My eye and not my life!" And before leaving the place I entered the bath and shaved my poll and beard and mustachios and eyebrows, and cast ashes on my head and donned the coarse black woolen robe of a Kalandar.

Then I journeyed through many regions and saw many a city, intending for Baghdad, that I might seek audience in the House of Peace with the Commander of the Faithful, and tell him all that had befallen me. I arrived here this very night and found my brother in Allah, this first Kalandar, standing about as one perplexed, so I saluted him with "Peace be upon thee," and entered into discourse with him. Presently up came our brother, this third Kalandar, and said to us: "Peace be with you! I am a stranger," whereto we replied, "And we too be strangers, who have come hither this blessed night."

So we all three walked on together, none of us knowing the other's history, till Destiny drave us to this door and we came in to you. Such then is my story and my reason for shaving my beard and mustachios, and this is what caused the loss of my eye. Said the house mistress, "Thy tale is indeed a rare, so rub thy head and wend thy ways." But he replied, "I will not budge till I hear my companions' stories."

Then came forward the third Kalandar, and said, "O illustrious lady, my history is not like that of these my comrades, but more wondrous and far more marvelous. In their case Fate and Fortune came down on them unawares, but I drew down Destiny upon my own head and brought sorrow on mine own soul, and shaved my own beard and lost my own eye. Hear then The Third Kalandar's Tale.

### **The Third Kalandar's Tale**

KNOW, O my lady, that I also am a king and the son of a king and my name is Ajib son of Khazib. When my father died I succeeded him, and I ruled and did justice and dealt fairly by all my lieges. I delighted in sea trips, for my capital stood on the shore, before which the ocean stretched far and wide, and near hand were many great islands with sconces and garrisons in the midst of the main. My fleet numbered fifty merchantmen, and as many yachts for pleasance, and a hundred and fifty sail ready fitted for holy war with the unbelievers.

It fortuned that I had a mind to enjoy myself on the islands aforesaid, so I took ship with my people in ten keel and, carrying with me a month's victual, I set out on a twenty days' voyage. But one night a head wind struck us, and the sea rose against us with huge waves. The billows sorely buffeted us and a dense darkness settled round us. We gave ourselves up for lost, and I said, "Whoso endangereth his days, e'en an he 'scape deserveth no praise." Then we prayed to Allah and besought Him, but the storm blasts ceased not to blow against us nor the surges to strike us till morning broke, when the gale fell, the seas sank to mirrory stillness, and the sun shone upon us kindly clear. Presently we made an island, where we landed and cooked somewhat of food, and ate heartily and took our rest

for a couple of days. Then we set out again and sailed other twenty days, the seas broadening and the land shrinking.

Presently the current ran counter to us, and we found ourselves in strange waters, where the Captain had lost his reckoning, and was wholly bewildered in this sea, so said we to the lookout man, "Get thee to the masthead and keep thine eyes open." He swarmed up the mast and looked out and cried aloud, "O Rais, I espy to starboard something dark, very like a fish floating on the face of the sea, and to larboard there is a loom in the midst of the main, now black and now bright." When the Captain heard the lookout's words, he dashed his turban on the deck and plucked out his beard and beat his face, saying: "Good news indeed! We be all dead men, not one of us can be saved." And he fell to weeping and all of us wept for his weeping and also for our lives, and I said, "O Captain, tell us what it is the lookout saw."

"O my Prince," answered he, "know that we lost our course on the night of the storm, which was followed on the morrow by a two days' calm during which we made no way, and we have gone astray eleven days' reckoning from that night, with ne'er a wind to bring us back to our true course. Tomorrow by the end of the day we shall come to a mountain of black stone hight the Magnet Mountain, for thither the currents carry us willy-nilly. As soon as we are under its lea, the ship's sides will open and every nail in plank will fly out and cleave fast to the mountain, for that Almighty Allah hath gifted the loadstone with a mysterious virtue and a love for iron, by reason whereof all which is iron traveleth toward it. And on this mountain is much iron, how much none knoweth save the Most High, from the many vessels which have been lost there since the days of yore. The bright spot upon its summit is a dome of yellow laton from Andalusia, vaulted upon ten columns. And on its crown is a horseman who rideth a horse of brass and holdeth in hand a lance of laton, and there hangeth on his bosom a tablet of lead graven with names and talismans." And he presently added, "And, O King, none destroyeth folk save the rider on that steed, nor will the egromancy be dispelled till he fall from his horse."

Then, O my lady, the Captain wept with exceeding weeping and we all made sure of death doom and each and every one of us farewelled his friend and charged him with his last will and testament in case he might be saved. We slept not that night, and in the morning we found ourselves much nearer the Loadstone Mountain, whither the waters drave us with a violent send. When the ships were close under its lea, they opened and the nails flew out and all the iron in them sought the Magnet Mountain and clove to it like a network, so that by the end of the day we were all struggling in the waves round about the mountain. Some of us were saved, but more were drowned, and even those who had escaped knew not one another, so stupefied were they by the beating of the billows and the raving of the winds.

As for me, O my lady, Allah (be His name exalted!) preserved my life that I might suffer whatso He willed to me of hardship, misfortune, and calamity, for I scrambled upon a plank from one of the ships and the wind and waters threw it at the feet of the mountain. There I found a practicable path leading by steps carven out of the rock to the summit, and I called on the name of Allah Almighty and breasted the ascent, clinging to the steps and notches hewn in the stone, and mounted little by little. And the Lord stilled the wind and aided me in the ascent, so that I succeeded in reaching the summit. There I found no resting place save the dome, which I entered, joying with exceeding joy at my escape, and made the wudu ablution and prayed a two-bow prayer, a thanksgiving to God for my preservation.

Then I fell asleep under the dome, and heard in my dream a mysterious voice saying, "O

son of Khazib! When thou wakest from thy sleep, dig under thy feet and thou shalt find a bow of brass and three leaden arrows inscribed with talismans and characts. Take the bow and shoot the arrows at the horseman on the dome top and free mankind from this sore calamity. When thou hast shot him he shall fall into the sea, and the horse will also drop at thy feet. Then bury it in the place of the bow. This done, the main will swell and rise till it is level with the mountain head, and there will appear on it a skiff carrying a man of laton (other than he thou shalt have shot) holding in his hand a pair of paddles. He will come to thee, and do thou embark with him, but beware of saying Bismillah or of otherwise naming Allah Almighty. He will row thee for a space of ten days, till he bring thee to certain islands called the Islands of Safety, and thence thou shalt easily reach a port and find those who will convey thee to thy native land. And all this shall be fulfilled to thee so thou call not on the name of Allah."

Then I started up from my sleep in joy and gladness and, hastening to do the bidding of the mysterious voice, found the bow and arrows and shot at the horseman and tumbled him into the main, whilst the horse dropped at my feet, so I took it and buried it. Presently the sea surged up and rose till it reached the top of the mountain, nor had I long to wait ere I saw a skiff in the offing coming toward me. I gave thanks to Allah, and when the skiff came up to me, I saw therein a man of brass with a tablet of lead on his breast inscribed with talismans and characts, and I embarked without uttering a word. The boatman rowed on with me through the first day and the second and the third, in all ten whole days, till I caught sight of the Islands of Safety, whereat I joyed with exceeding joy and for stress of gladness exclaimed, "Allah! Allah! In the name of Allah! There is no god but the God and Allah is Almighty." Thereupon the skiff forthwith upset and cast me upon the sea, then it righted and sank deep into the depths.

Now I am a fair swimmer, so I swam the whole day till nightfall, when my forearms and shoulders were numbed with fatigue and I felt like to die, so I testified to my faith, expecting naught but death. The sea was still surging under the violence of the winds, and presently there came a billow like a hillock and, bearing me up high in air, threw me with a long cast on dry land, that His will might be fulfilled. I crawled upon the beach and doffing my raiment, wrung it out to dry and spread it in the sunshine. Then I lay me down and slept the whole night. As soon as it was day, I donned my clothes and rose to look whither I should walk. Presently I came to a thicket of low trees and, making a cast round it, found that the spot whereon I stood was an islet, a mere holm, girt on all sides by the ocean, whereupon I said to myself, "Whatso freeth me from one great calamity casteth me into a greater!"

But while I was pondering my case and longing for death, behold, I saw afar off a ship making for the island, so I clomb a tree and hid myself among the branches. Presently the ship anchored and landed ten slaves, blackamoors, bearing iron hoes and baskets, who walked on till they reached the middle of the island. Here they dug deep into the ground until they uncovered a plate of metal, which they lifted, thereby opening a trapdoor. After this they returned to the ship and thence brought bread and flour, honey and fruits, clarified butter, leather bottles containing liquors, and many household stuffs; also furniture, table service, and mirrors; rugs, carpets, and in fact all needed to furnish a dwelling. And they kept going to and fro, and descending by the trapdoor, till they had transported into the dwelling all that was in the ship.

After this the slaves again went on board and brought back with them garments as rich as may be, and in the midst of them came an old old man, of whom very little was left, for Time had dealt hardly and harshly with him, and all that remained of him was a bone wrapped in

a rag of blue stuff, through which the winds whistled west and east. As saith the poet of him:

Time gars me tremble. Ah, how sore the balk!  
hile Time in pride of strength doth ever stalk.  
Time was I walked nor ever felt I tired,  
Now am I tired albe' I never walk!

And the Sheikh held by the hand a youth cast in beauty's mold, all elegance and perfect grace, so fair that his comeliness deserved to be proverbial, for he was as a green bough or the tender young of the roe, ravishing every heart with his loveliness and subduing every soul with his coquetry and amorous ways. They stinted not their going, O my lady, till all went down by the trapdoor and did not reappear for an hour, or rather more; at the end of which time the slaves and the old man came up without the youth and, replacing the iron plate and carefully closing the door slab as it was before, they returned to the ship and made sail and were lost to my sight.

When they turned away to depart, I came down from the tree and, going to the place I had seen them fin up, scraped off and removed the earth, and in patience possessed my soul till I had cleared the whole of it away. Then appeared the trapdoor, which was of wood, in shape and size like a millstone, and when I lifted it up, it disclosed a winding staircase of stone. At this I marveled and, descending the steps tier I reached the last, found a fair hall, spread with various kinds of carpets and silk stuffs, wherein was a youth sitting upon a raised couch and leaning back on a round cushion with a fan in his hand and nosegays and posies of sweet scented herbs and flowers before him. But he was alone and not a soul near him in the great vault. When he saw me he turned pale, but I saluted him courteously and said: "Set thy mind at ease and calm thy fears. No harm shall come near thee. I am a man like thyself and the son of a king to boot, whom the decrees of Destiny have sent to bear thee company and cheer thee in thy loneliness. But now tell me, what is thy story and what causeth thee to dwell thus in solitude under the ground?"

When he was assured that I was of his kind and no Jinni, he rejoiced and his fine color returned, and, making me draw near to him, he said: "O my brother, my story is a strange story and 'tis this. My father is a merchant jeweler possessed of great wealth, who hath white and black slaves traveling and trading on his account in ships and on camels, and trafficking with the most distant cities, but he was not blessed with a child, not even one. Now on a certain night he dreamed a dream that he should be favored with a son, who would be short-lived, so the morning dawned on my father, bringing him woe and weeping. On the following night my mother conceived and my father noted down the date of her becoming pregnant. Her time being fulfilled, she bare me, whereat my father rejoiced and made banquets and called together the neighbors and fed the fakirs and the poor, for that he had been blessed with issue near the end of his days. Then he assembled the astrologers and astronomers who knew the places of the planets, and the wizards and wise ones of the time, and men learned in horoscopes and nativities, and they drew out my birth scheme and said to my father: "Thy son shall live to fifteen years, but in his fifteenth there is a sinister aspect. An he safely tide it over, he shall attain a great age. And the cause that threateneth him with death is this. In the Sea of Peril standeth the Mountain Magnet hight, on whose summit is a horseman of yellow laton seated on a horse also of brass and bearing on his breast a tablet of lead. Fifty days after this rider shall fall from his steed thy son will die and his slayer will be he who shoots down the horseman, a Prince named Ajib son of King Khazib."

My father grieved with exceeding grief to hear these words, but reared me in tenderest fashion and educated me excellently well till my fifteenth year was told. Ten days ago news came to him that the horseman had fallen into the sea and he who shot him down was named Ajib son of King Khazib." My father thereupon wept bitter tears at the need of parting with me and became like one possessed of a Jinni. However, being in mortal fear for me, he built me this place under the earth, and stocking it with all required for the few days still remaining, he brought me hither in a ship and left me here. Ten are already past, and when the forty shall have gone by without danger to me, he will come and take me away, for he hath done all this only in fear of Prince Ajib. Such, then, is my story and the cause of my loneliness."

When I heard his history I marveled and said in my mind, "I am the Prince Ajib who hath done all this, but as Allah is with me I will surely not slay him!" So said I to him: "O my lord, far from thee be this hurt and harm and then, please Allah, thou shalt not suffer cark nor care nor aught disquietude, for I will tarry with thee and serve thee as a servant, and then wend my ways. And after having borne thee company during the forty days, I will go with thee to thy home, where thou shalt give me an escort of some of thy Mamelukes with whom I may journey back to my own city, and the Almighty shall requite thee for me." He was glad to hear these words, when I rose and lighted a large wax candle and trimmed the lamps and the three lanterns, and I set on meat and drink and sweetmeats. We ate and drank and sat talking over various matters till the greater part of the night was gone, when he lay down to rest and I covered him up and went to sleep myself.

Next morning I arose and warmed a little water, then lifted him gently so as to awake him and brought him the warm water, wherewith he washed his face, and said to me: "Heaven requite thee for me with every blessing, O youth! By Allah, if I get quit of this danger and am saved from him whose name is Ajib bin Khazib, I will make my father reward thee and send thee home healthy and wealthy. And if I die, then my blessing be upon thee." I answered, "May the day never dawn on which evil shall betide thee, and may Allah make my last day before thy last day!" Then I set before him somewhat of food and we ate, and I got ready perfumes for fumigating the hall, wherewith he was pleased. Moreover I made him a mankalah cloth; and we played and ate sweetmeats and we played again and took our pleasure till nightfall, when I rose and lighted the lamps, and set before him somewhat to eat, and sat telling him stories till the hours of darkness were far spent. Then he lay down to rest and I covered him up and rested also.

And thus I continued to do, O my lady, for days and nights, and affection for him took root in my heart and my sorrow was eased, and I said to myself: "The astrologers lied when they predicted that he should be slain by Ajib bin Khazib. By Allah, I will not slay him." I ceased not ministering to him and conversing and carousing with him and telling him all manner tales for thirty-nine days. On the fortieth night the youth rejoiced and said: "O my brother, Alhamdolillah!- praise be to Allah- who hath preserved me from death, and this is by thy blessing and the blessing of thy coming to me, and I prayed God that He restore thee to thy native land. But now, O my brother, I would thou warm me some water for the ghushl ablution and do thou kindly bathe me and change my clothes." I replied, "With love and gladness," and I heated water in plenty and carrying it in to him, washed his body all over, the washing of health, with meal of lupins, and rubbed him well and changed his clothes and spread him a high bed whereon he lay down to rest, being drowsy after bathing.

Then said he, "O my brother, cut me up a watermelon, and sweeten it with a little sugar

candy." So I went to the storeroom and bringing out a fine watermelon, I found there, set it on a platter and laid it before him saying, "O my master, hast thou not a knife?" "Here it is," answered he, "over my head upon the high shelf." So I got up in haste and, and, taking the knife, drew it from its sheath, but my foot slipped in stepping down and I fell heavily upon the youth holding in my hand the knife, which hastened to fulfill what had been written on the Day that decided the destinies of man, and buried itself, as if planted, in the youth's heart. He died on the instant. When I saw that he was slain and knew that I had slain him, mauger myself I cried out with an exceeding loud and bitter cry and beat my face and rent my raiment and said: "Verily we be Allah's and unto Him we be returning, O Moslems! O folk fain of Allah! There remained for this youth but one day of the forty dangerous days which the astrologers and the learned had foretold for him, and the predestined death of this beautiful one was to be at my hand. Would Heaven I had not tried to cut the watermelon! What dire misfortune is this I must bear, lief or loath? What a disaster! What an affliction! O Allah mine, I implore thy pardon and declare to Thee my innocence of his death. But what God willeth, let that come to pass."

When I was certified that I had slain him, I arose and, ascending the stairs, replaced the trapdoor and covered it with earth as before. Then I looked out seaward and saw the ship cleaving the waters and making for the island, wherefore I was afeard and said, "The moment they come and see the youth done to death, they will know 'twas I who slew him and will slay me without respite." So I climbed up into a high tree and concealed myself among its leaves, and hardly had I done so when the ship anchored and the slaves landed with the ancient man, the youth's father, and made direct for the place, and when they removed the earth they were surprised to see it soft. Then they raised the trapdoor and went down and found the youth lying at full length, clothed in fair new garments, with a face beaming after the bath, and the knife deep in his heart. At the sight they shrieked and wept and beat their faces, loudly cursing the murderer, whilst a swoon came over the Sheikh so that the slaves deemed him dead, unable to survive his son. At last they wrapped the slain youth in his clothes and carried him up and laid him on the ground, covering him with a shroud of silk.

Whilst they were making for the ship the old man revived, and, gazing on his son who was stretched out, fell on the ground and strewed dust over his head and smote his face and plucked out his beard, and his weeping redoubled as he thought of his murdered son and he swooned away once more. After a while a slave went and fetched a strip of silk whereupon they lay the old man and sat down at his head. All this took place and I was on the tree above them watching everything that came to pass, and my heart became hoary before my head waxed gray, for the hard lot which was mine, and for the distress and anguish I had undergone, and I fell to reciting:

"How many a joy by Allah's will hath fled  
With flight escaping sight of wisest head!  
How many a sadness shall begin the day,  
Yet grow right gladsome ere the day is sped!  
How many a weal trips on the heels of ill,  
Causing the mourner's heart with joy to thrill!"

But the old man, O my lady, ceased not from his swoon till near sunset, when he came to himself and, looking upon his dead son, he recalled what had happened, and how what he had dreaded had come to pass, and he beat his face and head. Then he sobbed a single sob and his soul fled his flesh. The slaves shrieked aloud, "Alas, our lord!" and showered

dust on their heads and redoubled their weeping and wailing. Presently they carried their dead master to the ship side by side with his dead son and, having transported all the stuff from the dwelling to the vessel, set sail and disappeared from mine eyes. I descended from the tree and, raising the trapdoor, went down into the underground dwelling, where everything reminded me of the youth, and I looked upon the poor remains of him and began repeating these verses:

"Their tracks I see, and pine with pain and pang,  
And on deserted hearths I weep and yearn.  
And Him I pray who doomed them depart  
Some day vouchsafe the boon of safe return."

Then, O my lady, I went up again by the trapdoor, and every day I used to wander round about the island and every night I returned to the underground hall. Thus I lived for a month, till at last, looking at the western side of the island, I observed that every day the tide ebbed, leaving shallow water for which the flow did not compensate, and by the end of the month the sea showed dry land in that direction. At this I rejoiced, making certain of my safety, so I arose and, fording what little was left of the water, got me to the mainland, where I fell in with great heaps of loose sand in which even a camel's hoof would sink up to the knee. However, I emboldened my soul and, wading through the sand, behold, a fire shone from afar burning with a blazing light. So I made for it hoping haply to find succor and broke out into these verses:

"Belike my Fortune may her bridle turn  
And Time bring weal although he's jealous hight,  
Forward my hopes, and further all my needs,  
And passed ills with present weals requite."

And when I drew near the fire aforesaid, lo! it was a palace with gates of copper burnished red which, when the rising sun shone thereon, gleamed and glistened from afar, showing what had seemed to me a fire. I rejoiced in the sight, and sat down over against the gate, but I was hardly settled in my seat before there met me ten young men clothed in sumptuous gear, and all were blind of the left eye, which appeared as plucked out. They were accompanied by a Sheikh, an old, old man, and much I marveled at their appearance, and their all being blind in the same eye. When they saw me, they saluted me with the salaam and asked me of my case and my history, whereupon I related to them all what had befallen me and what full measure of misfortune was mine. Marveling at my tale, they took me to the mansion, where I saw ranged round the hall ten couches each with its blue bedding and coverlet of blue stuff and a-middlemost stood a smaller couch furnished like them with blue and nothing else.

As we entered each of the youths took his seat on his own couch and the old man seated himself upon the smaller one in the middle, saying to me, "O youth, sit thee down on the floor, and ask not of our case nor of the loss of our eyes." Presently he rose up and set before each young man some meat in a charger and drink in a larger mazer, treating me in like manner, and after that they sat questioning me concerning my adventures and what had betided me. And I kept telling them my tale till the night was far spent. Then said the young men: "O our Sheikh, wilt not thou set before us our ordinary? The time is come." He replied, "With love and gladness," and rose and, entering a closet, disappeared, but presently returned bearing on his head ten trays each covered with a strip of blue stuff. He set a tray before each youth and, lighting ten wax candles, he stuck one upon each tray,

and drew off the covers and lo! under them was naught but ashes and powdered charcoal and kettle soot. Then all the young men tucked up their sleeves to the elbows and fell a-weeping and wailing and they blackened their faces and smeared their clothes and buffeted their brows and beat their breasts, continually exclaiming, "We were sitting at our ease, but our frowardness brought us unease!" They ceased not to do thus till dawn drew nigh, when the old man rose and heated water for them, and they washed their face and donned other and clean clothes.

Now when I saw this, O my lady, for very wonderment my senses left me and my wits went wild and heart and head were full of thought, till I forgot what had betided me and I could not keep silence, feeling I fain must speak out and question them of these strangenesses. So I said to them: "How come ye to do this after we have been so openhearted and frolicsome? Thanks be to Allah, ye be all sound and sane, yet actions such as these befit none but madmen or those possessed of an evil spirit. I conjure you by all that is dearest to you, why stint ye to tell me your history, and the cause of your losing your eyes and your blackening your faces with ashes and soot?" Hereupon they turned to me and said, "O young man, hearken not to thy youthtide's suggestions, and question us no questions." Then they slept and I with them, and when they awoke the old man brought us somewhat of food. And after we had eaten and the plates and goblets had been removed, they sat conversing till nightfall, when the old man rose and lit the wax candles and lamps and set meat and drink before us.

After we had eaten and drunken we sat conversing and carousing in companionship till the noon of night, when they said to the old man, "Bring us our ordinary, for the hour of sleep is at hand!" So he rose and brought them the trays of soot and ashes, and they did as they had done on the preceding night, nor more, nor less. I abode with them after this fashion for the space of a month, during which time they used to blacken their faces with ashes every night, and to wash and change their raiment when the morn was young, and I but marveled the more and my scruples and curiosity increased to such a point that I had to forgo even food and drink.

At last I lost command of myself, for my heart was aflame with fire unquenchable and lowe unconcealable, and I said, "O young men, will ye not relieve my trouble and acquaint me with the reason of thus blackening your faces and the meaning of your words, 'We were sitting at our ease, but our frowardness brought us unease'?" Quoth they, "'Twere better to keep these things secret." Still I was bewildered by their doings to the point of abstaining from eating and drinking and at last wholly losing patience, quoth I to them: "There is no help for it. Ye must acquaint me with what is the reason of these doings." They replied: "We kept our secret only for thy good. To gratify thee will bring down evil upon thee and thou wilt become a monocular even as we are." I repeated, "There is no help for it, and if ye will not, let me leave you and return to mine own people and be at rest from seeing these things, for the proverb saith:

"Better ye 'bide and I take my leave;  
For what eye sees not heart shall never grieve."

Thereupon they said to me, "Remember, O youth, that should ill befall thee, we will not again harbor thee nor suffer thee to abide amongst us." And bringing a ram, they slaughtered it and skinned it. Lastly they gave me a knife, saying: "Take this skin and stretch thyself upon it and we will sew it around thee. Presently there shall come to thee a certain bird, hight roc, that will catch thee up in his pounces and tower high in air and then

set thee down on a mountain. When thou feelest he is no longer flying, rip open the pelt with this blade and come out of it. The bird will be scared and will fly away and leave thee free. After this fare for half a day, and the march will place thee at a palace wondrous fair to behold, towering high in air and builded of khalanj, lign aloes and sandalwood, plated with red gold, and studded with all manner emeralds and costly gems fit for seal rings. Enter it and thou shalt will to thy wish, for we have all entered that palace, and such is the cause of our losing our eyes and of our blackening our faces. Were we now to tell thee our stories it would take too long a time, for each and every of us lost his left eye by an adventure of his own."

I rejoiced at their words, and they did with me as they said, and the bird roc bore me off and set me down on the mountain. Then I came out of the skin and walked on till I reached the palace. The door stood open as I entered and found myself in a spacious and goodly hall, wide exceedingly, even as a horse course. And around it were a hundred chambers with doors of sandal and aloe woods plated with red gold and furnished with silver rings by way of knockers. At the head or upper end of the hall I saw forty damsels, sumptuously dressed and ornamented and one and all bright as moons. None could ever tire of gazing upon them, and all so lovely that the most ascetic devotee on seeing them would become their slave and obey their will. When they saw me the whole bevy came up to me and said: "Welcome and well come and good cheer to thee, O our lord! This whole month have we been expecting thee. Praised be Allah Who hath sent us one who is worthy of us, even as we are worthy of him!"

Then they made me sit down upon a high divan and said to me, "This day thou art our lord and master, and we are thy servants and thy handmaids, so order us as thou wilt." And I marveled at their case. Presently one of them arose and set meat before me and I ate and they ate with me whilst others warmed water and washed my hands and feet and changed my clothes, and others made ready sherbets and gave us to drink, and all gathered around me, being full of joy and gladness at my coming. Then they sat down and conversed with me till nightfall, when five of them arose and laid the trays and spread them with flowers and fragrant herbs and fruits, fresh and dried, and confections in profusion. At last they brought out a fine wine service with rich old wine, and we sat down to drink and some sang songs and others played the lute and psaltery and recorders and other instruments, and the bowl went merrily round. Hereupon such gladness possessed me that I forgot the sorrows of the world one and all and said: "This is indeed life. O sad that 'tis fleeting!"

I enjoyed their company till the time came for rest, and our heads were all warm with wine, when they said, "O our lord, choose from amongst us her who shall be thy bedfellow this night and not lie with thee again till forty days be past." So I chose a girl fair of face and perfect in shape, with eyes kohl-edged by nature's hand, hair long and jet-black, with slightly parted teeth and joining brows. 'Twas as if she were some limber graceful branchlet or the slender stalk of sweet basil to amaze and to bewilder man's fancy. So I lay with her that night. None fairer I ever knew. And when it was morning, the damsels carried me to the hammam bath and bathed me and robed me in fairest apparel. Then they served up food, and we ate and drank and the cup went round till nightfall, when I chose from among them one fair of form and face, soft-sided and a model of grace, such a one as the poet described when he said:

On her fair bosom caskets twain I scanned,  
Sealed fast with musk seals lovers to withstand.  
With arrowy glances stand on guard her eyes,

Whose shafts would shoot who dares put forth a hand.

With her I spent a most goodly night, and, to be brief, O my mistress, I remained with them in all solace and delight of life, eating and drinking, conversing and carousing, and every night lying with one or other of them. But at the head of the New Year they came to me in tears and bade me farewell, weeping and crying out and clinging about me, whereat I wondered and said: "What may be the matter? Verily you break my heart!" They exclaimed, "Would Heaven we had never known thee, for though we have companied with many, yet never saw we a pleasanter than thou or a more courteous." And they wept again. "But tell me more clearly," asked I, "what causeth this weeping which maketh my gall bladder like to burst?" And they answered: "O lord and master, it is severance which maketh us weep, and thou, and thou only, art the cause of our tears. If thou hearken to us we need never be parted, and if thou hearken not we part forever, but our hearts tell us that thou wilt not listen to our words and this is the cause of our tears and cries." "Tell me how the case standeth."

"Know, O our lord, that we are the daughters of kings who have met here and have lived together for years, and once in every year we are perforce absent for forty days. And afterward we return and abide here for the rest of the twelvemonth eating and drinking and taking our pleasure and enjoying delights. We are about to depart according to our custom, and we fear lest after we be gone thou contraire our charge and disobey our injunctions. Here now we commit to thee the keys of the palace, which containeth forty chambers, and thou mayest open of these thirty and nine, but beware (and we conjure thee by Allah and by the lives of us!) lest thou open the fortieth door, for therein is that which shall separate us for ever." Quoth I, "Assuredly I will not open it if it contain the cause of severance from you." Then one among them came up to me and falling on my neck wept and recited these verses:

"If Time unite us after absent-while,  
The world harsh-frowning on our lot shall smile,  
And if thy semblance deign adorn mine eyes,  
I'll pardon Time past wrongs and bygone guile."

And I recited the following:

"When drew she near to bid adieu with her heart unstrung,  
While care and longing on that day her bosom wrung,  
Wet pearls she wept and mine like red camelians rolled  
And, joined in sad riviere, around her neck they hung."

When I saw her weeping I said, "By Allah, I will never open that fortieth door, never and nowise!" and I bade her farewell. Thereupon all departed flying away like birds, signaling with their hands farewells as they went and leaving me alone in the palace. When evening drew near I opened the door of the first chamber and entering it found myself in a place like one of the pleasaunces of Paradise. It was a garden with trees of freshest green and ripe fruits of yellow sheen, and its birds were singing clear and keen and rills ran wimpling through the fair terrene. The sight and sounds brought solace to my sprite, and I walked among the trees, and I smelt the breath of the flowers on the breeze and heard the birdies sing their melodies hymning the One, the Almighty, in sweetest litanies, and I looked upon the apple whose hue is parcel red and parcel yellow, as said the poet:

Apple whose hue combines in union mellow

My fair's red cheek, her hapless lover's yellow.

Then I looked upon the pear whose taste surpasseth sherbet and sugar, and the apricot whose beauty striketh the eye with admiration, as if she were a polished ruby.

Then I went out of the place and locked the door as it was before. When it was the morrow I opened the second door, and entering found myself in a spacious plain set with tall date palms and watered by a running stream whose banks were shrubbed with bushes of rose and jasmine, while privet and eglantine, oxeye, violet and lily, narcissus, origane, and the winter gilliflower carpeted the borders. And the breath of the breeze swept over these sweet-smelling growths diffusing their delicious odors right and left, perfuming the world and filling my soul with delight. After taking my pleasure there awhile I went from it and, having closed the door as it was before, opened the third door, wherein I saw a high open hall pargetted with particolored marbles and pietra dura of price and other precious stones, and hung with cages of sandalwood and eagle wood, full of birds which made sweet music, such as the "thousand-voiced," and the cushat, the merle, the turtledove, and the Nubian ringdove. My heart was filled with pleasure thereby, my grief was dispelled, and I slept in that aviary till dawn.

Then I unlocked the door of the fourth chamber, and therein found a grand saloon with forty smaller chambers giving upon it. All their doors stood open, so I entered and found them full of pearls and jacinths and beryls and emeralds and corals and carbuncles, and all manner precious gems and jewels, such as tongue of man may not describe. My thought was stunned at the sight and I said to myself, "These be things methinks united which could not be found save in the treasuries of a King of Kings, nor could the monarchs of the world have collected the like of these!" And my heart dilated and my sorrows ceased. "For," quoth I, "now verily am I the Monarch of the Age, since by Allah's grace this enormous wealth is mine, and I have forty damsels under my hand, nor is there any to claim them save myself." Then I gave not over opening place after place until nine and thirty days were passed, and in that time I had entered every chamber except that one whose door the Princesses had charged me not to open.

But my thoughts, O my mistress, ever ran on that forbidden fortieth, and Satan urged me to open it for my own undoing, nor had I patience to forbear, albeit there wanted of the trusting time but a single day. So I stood before the chamber aforesaid and, after a moment's hesitation, opened the door, which was plated with red gold, and entered. I was met by a perfume whose like I had never before smelt, and so sharp and subtle was the odor that it made my senses drunken as with strong wine, and I fell to the ground in a fainting fit which lasted a full hour. When I came to myself I strengthened my heart, and entering, found myself in a chamber whose floor was bespread with saffron and blazing with light from branched candelabra of gold and lamps fed with costly oils, which diffused the scent of musk and ambergris. I saw there also two great censers each big as a mazer bowl, flaming with lign aloes, nadd perfume, ambergris, and honeyed scents, and the place was full of their fragrance.

Presently, O my lady, I espied a noble steed, black as the murks of night when murkiest, standing ready saddled and bridled (and his saddle was of red gold) before two mangers, one of clear crystal wherein was husked sesame, and the other also of crystal containing water of the rose scented with musk. When I saw this I marveled and said to myself, "Doubtless in this animal must be some wondrous mystery." And Satan cozened me so I led him without the palace and mounted him, but he would not stir from his place. So I

hammered his sides with my heels, but he moved not, and then I took the rein whip and struck him withal. When he felt the blow, he neighed a neigh with a sound like deafening thunder and, opening a pair of wings, flew up with me in the firmament of heaven far beyond the eyesight of man. After a full hour of flight he descended and alighted on a terrace roof and shaking me off his back, lashed me on the face with his tad and gouged out my left eye, causing it roll along my cheek.

Then he flew away. I went down from the terrace and found myself again amongst the ten one-eyed youths sitting upon their ten couches with blue covers, and they cried out when they saw me: "No welcome to thee, nor aught of good cheer! We all lived of lives the happiest and we ate and drank of the best. Upon brocades and cloths of gold we took our rest, and we slept with our heads on beauty's breast, but we could not await one day to gain the delights of a year!" Quoth I, "Behold, I have become one like unto you and now I would have you bring me a tray full of blackness, wherewith to blacken my face, and receive me into your society." "No, by Allah," quoth they, "thou shalt not sojourn with us, and now get thee hence!" So they drove me away.

Finding them reject me thus, I foresaw that matters would go hard with me, and I remembered the many miseries which Destiny had written upon my forehead, and I fared forth from among them heavy-hearted and tearful-eyed, repeating to myself these words: "I was sitting at mine ease, but my frowardness brought me to unease." Then I shaved beard and mustachios and eyebrows, renouncing the world. and wandered in Kalandar garb about Allah's earth, and the Almighty decreed safety for me till I arrived at Baghdad, which was on the evening of this very night. Here I met these two other Kalandars standing bewildered, so I saluted them saying, "I am a stranger!" and they answered, "And we likewise be strangers!" By the freak of Fortune we were like to like, three Kalandars and three monoculars all blind of the left eye.

Such, O my lady, is the cause of the shearing of my beard and the manner of my losing an eye. Said the lady to him, "Rub thy head and wend thy ways," but he answered, "By Allah, I will not go until I hear the stories of these others." Then the lady, turning toward the Caliph and Ja'afar and Masrur, said to them, "Do ye also give an account of yourselves, you men!" Whereupon Ja'afar stood forth and told her what he had told the portress as they were entering the house, and when she heard his story of their being merchants and Mosul men who had outrun the watch, she said, "I grant you your lives each for each sake, and now away with you all." So they all went out, and when they were in the street, quoth the Caliph to the Kalandars, "O company, whither go ye now, seeing that the morning hath not yet dawned?" Quoth they, "By Allah, O our lord, we know not where to go." "Come and pass the rest of the night with us," said the Caliph and, turning to Ja'afar, "Take them home with thee, and tomorrow bring them to my presence that we may chronicle their adventures."

Ja'afar did as the Caliph bade him and the Commander of the Faithful returned to his palace, but sleep gave no sign of visiting him that night and he lay awake pondering the mishaps of the three Kalandar Princes, and impatient to know the history of the ladies and the two black bitches. No sooner had morning dawned than he went forth and sat upon the throne of his sovereignty and, turning to Ja'afar, after all his grandees and officers of state were gathered together, he said, "Bring me the three ladies and the two bitches and the three Kalandars."

So Ja'afar fared forth and brought them all before him (and the ladies were veiled). Then the Minister turned to them and said in the Caliph's name: "We pardon you your

maltreatment of us and your want of courtesy, in consideration of the kindness which forewent it, and for that ye knew us not. Now however I would have you to know that ye stand in presence of the fifth of the sons of Abbas, Harun al-Rashid, brother of Caliph Musa al-Hadi, son of Al-Mansur, son of Mohammed the brother of Al-Saffah bin Mohammed who was first of the royal house. Speak ye therefore before him the truth and the whole truth!" When the ladies heard Ja'afar's words touching the Commander of the Faithful, the eldest came forward and said, "O Prince of True Believers, my story is one which were it graven with needle gravers upon the eye corners, were a warn for whoso would be warned and an example for whoso can take profit from example." And she began to tell The Eldest Lady's Tale.

### **The Eldest Lady's Tale**

VERILY a strange tale is mine and 'tis this: Yon two black bitches are my eldest sisters by one mother and father, and these two others she who beareth upon her the signs of stripes and the third our procuratrix, are my sisters by another mother. When my father died, each took her share of the heritage and after a while my mother also deceased, leaving me and my sisters german three thousand dinars, so each daughter received her portion of a thousand dinars and I the same, albe' the youngest. In due course of time my sisters married with the usual festivities and lived with their husbands, who bought merchandise with their wives' moneys and set out on their travels together. Thus they threw me off. My brothers-in-law were absent with their wives five years, during which period they spent all the money they had and, becoming bankrupt, deserted my sisters in foreign parts amid stranger folk.

After five years my eldest sister returned to me in beggar's gear with her clothes in rags and tatters and a dirty old mantilla, and truly she was in the foulest and sorriest plight. At first sight I did not know my own sister, but presently I recognized her and said, "What state is this?" "O our sister," she replied, "words cannot undo the done, and the reed of Destiny hath run through what Allah decreed." Then I sent her to the bath and dressed her in a suit of mine own, and boiled for her a bouillon and brought her some good wine, and said to her: "O my sister, thou art the eldest, who still standest to us in the stead of father and mother, and as for the inheritance which came to me as to you twain, Allah hath blessed it and prospered it to me with increase, and my circumstances are easy, for I have made much money by spinning and cleaning silk. And I and you will share my wealth alike."

I entreated her with all kindness and she abode with me a whole year, during which our thoughts and fancies were always full of our other sister. Shortly after she too came home in yet fouler and sorrier plight than that of my eldest sister, and I dealt by her still more honorably than I had done by the first, and each of them had a share of my substance. After a time they said to me, "O our sister, we desire to marry again, for indeed we have not patience to drag on our days without husbands and to lead the lives of widows bewitched," and I replied: "O eyes of me! Ye have hitherto seen scanty weal in wedlock, for nowadays good men and true are become rareties and curiosities, nor do I deem your projects advisable, as ye have already made trial of matrimony and have failed." But they would not accept my advice, and married without my consent. Nevertheless I gave them outfit and dowries out of my money, and they fared forth with their mates.

In a mighty little time their husbands played them false and, taking whatever they could lay hands upon, levanted and left them in the lurch. Thereupon they came to me ashamed and in abject case and made their excuses to me, saying: "Pardon our fault and be not wroth

with us, for although thou art younger in years yet art thou older in wit. Henceforth we will never make mention of marriage, so take us back as thy handmaidens that we may eat our mouthful." Quoth I, "Welcome to you, O my sisters, there is naught dearer to me than you." And I took them in and redoubled my kindness to them. We ceased not to live after this loving fashion for a full year, when I resolved to sell my wares abroad and first to fit me a conveyance for Bassorah. So I equipped a large ship, and loaded her with merchandise and valuable goods for traffic and with provant and all needful for a voyage, and said to my sisters, "Will ye abide at home whilst I travel, or would ye prefer to accompany me on the voyage?" "We will travel with thee," answered they, "for we cannot bear to be parted from thee." So I divided my moneys into two parts, one to accompany me and the other to be left in charge of a trusty person, for, as I said to myself, "Haply some accident may happen to the ship and yet we remain alive, in which case we shall find on our return what may stand us in good stead."

I took my two sisters and we went a-voyaging some days and nights, but the master was careless enough to miss his course, and the ship went astray with us and entered a sea other than the sea we sought. For a time we knew naught of this, and the wind blew fair for us ten days, after which the lookout man went aloft to see about him and cried, "Good news!" Then he came down rejoicing and said, "I have seen what seemeth to be a city as 'twere a pigeon." Hereat we rejoiced, and ere an hour of the day had passed, the buildings showed plain in the offing, and we asked the Captain, "What is the name of yonder city?" and he answered: "By Allah, I wot not, for I never saw it before and never sailed these seas in my life. But since our troubles have ended in safety, remains for you only to land where with your merchandise, and if you find selling profitable, sell and make your market of what is there, and if not, we will rest here two days and provision ourselves and fare away."

So we entered the port and the Captain went up town and was absent awhile, after which he returned to us and said, "Arise, go up into the city and marvel at the works of Allah with His creatures, and pray to be preserved from His righteous wrath!" So we landed, and going up into the city, saw at the gate men hending staves in hand, but when we drew near them, behold, they had been translated by the anger of Allah and had become stones. Then we entered the city and found all who therein woned into black stones enstoned. Not an inhabited house appeared to the espier, nor was there a blower of fire. We were awe-struck at the sight, and threaded the market streets, where we found the goods and gold and silver left lying in their places, and we were glad and said, "Doubtless there is some mystery in all this."

Then we dispersed about the thoroughfares and each busied himself with collecting the wealth and money and rich stuffs, taking scanty heed of friend or comrade.

As for myself, I went up to the castle, which was strongly fortified, and, entering the King's palace by its gate of red gold, found all the vaiselle of gold and silver, and the King himself seated in the midst of his chamberlains and nabobs and emirs and wazirs, an clad in raiment which confounded man's art. I drew nearer and saw him sitting on a throne encrusted and inlaid with pearls and gems, and his robes were of gold cloth adorned with jewels of every kind, each one flashing like a star. Around him stood fifty Mamelukes, white slaves, clothed in silks of divers sorts, holding their drawn swords in their hands. But when I drew near to them, lo! all were black stones. My understanding was confounded at the sight, but I walked on and entered the great hall of the harem, whose walls I found hung with tapestries of gold-striped silk, and spread with silken carpets embroidered with golden flowers. Here I saw the Queen lying at full length arrayed in robes purpled with fresh young

pearls. On her head was a diadem set with many sorts of gems each fit for a ring, and around her neck hung collars and necklaces. All her raiment and her ornaments were in natural state, but she had been turned into a black stone by Allah's wrath.

Presently I espied an open door, for which I made straight, and found leading to it a flight of seven steps. So I walked up and came upon a place pargeted with marble and spread and hung with gold-worked carpets and tapestry, a-middlemost of which stood a throne of juniper wood inlaid with pearls and precious stones and set with bosses of emeralds. In the further wall was an alcove whose curtains, bestrung with pearls, were let down and I saw a light issuing therefrom, so I drew near and perceived that the light came from a precious stone as big as an ostrich egg, set at the upper end of the alcove upon a little chryselephantine couch of ivory and gold. And this jewel, blazing like the sun, cast its rays wide and side. The couch also was spread with all manner of silken stuffs amazing the gazer with their richness and beauty. I marveled much at all this, especially when seeing in that place candies ready lighted, and I said in my mind, "Needs must someone have lighted these candles." Then I went forth and came to the kitchen and thence to the buttery and the King's treasure chambers, and continued to explore the palace and to pace from place to place. I forgot myself in my awe and marvel at these matters and I was drowned in thought till the night came on.

Then I would have gone forth, but knowing not the gate, I lost my way, so I returned to the alcove whither the lighted candles directed me and sat down upon the couch, and wrapping myself in a coverlet, after I had repeated somewhat from the Koran, I would have slept but could not, for restlessness possessed me. When night was at its noon I heard a voice chanting the Koran in sweetest accents, but the tone thereof was weak. So I rose, glad to hear the silence broken, and followed the sound until I reached a closet whose door stood ajar. Then, peeping through a chink, I considered the place and lo! it was an oratory wherein was a prayer niche with two wax candles burning and lamps hanging from the ceiling. In it too was spread a prayer carpet whereupon sat a youth fair to see, and before him on its stand was a copy of the Koran, from which he was reading. I marveled to see him alone alive amongst the people of the city and entering, saluted him. Whereupon he raised his eyes and returned my salaam. Quoth I, "Now by the truth of what thou readest in Allah's Holy Book, I conjure thee to answer my question." He looked upon me with a smile and said: "O handmaid of Allah, first tell me the cause of thy coming hither, and I in turn will tell what hath befallen both me and the people of this city, and what was the reason of my escaping their doom." So I told him my story, whereat he wondered, and I questioned him of the people of the city, when he replied, "Have patience with me for awhile, O my sister!" and, reverently closing the Holy Book, he laid it up in a satin bag. Then he seated me by his side, and I looked at him and behold, he was as the moon at its full, fair of face and rare of form, soft-sided and slight, of well-proportioned height, and cheek smoothly bright and diffusing light. I glanced at him with one glance of eyes which caused me a thousand sighs, and my heart was at once taken captive-wise, so I asked him, "O my lord and my love, tell me that whereof I questioned thee," and he answered:

"Hearing is obeying! Know, O handmaid of Allah, that this city was the capital of my father who is the King thou sawest on the throne transfigured by Allah's wrath to a black stone, and the Queen thou foundest in the alcove is my mother. They and all the people of the city were Magians who fire adored in lieu of the Omnipotent Lord and were wont to swear by lowe and heat and shade and light, and the spheres revolving day and night. My father had ne'er a son till he was blest with me near the last of his days, and he reared me till I grew up and prosperity anticipated me in all things. Now it is fortun'd there was with us an old

woman well stricken in years, a Moslemah who, inwardly believing in Allah and His Apostle, conformed outwardly with the religion of my people. And my father placed thorough confidence in her for that he knew her to be trustworthy and virtuous, and he treated her with ever-increasing kindness, believing her to be of his own belief.

"So when I was well-nigh grown up my father committed me to her charge saying: 'Take him and educate him and teach him the rules of our faith. Let him have the best instructions and cease not thy fostering care of him.' So she took me and taught me the tenets of Al-Islam with the divine ordinances of the wuzu ablution and the five daily prayers and she made me learn the Koran by rote, often repeating, 'Serve none save Allah Almighty!' When I had mastered this much of knowledge, she said to me, 'O my son, keep this matter concealed from thy sire and reveal naught to him, lest he slay thee.'" So I hid it from him, and I abode on this wise for a term of days, when the old woman died, and the people of the city redoubled in their impiety and arrogance and the error of their ways.

"One day while they were as wont, behold, they heard a loud and terrible sound and a crier crying out with a voice like roaring thunder so every ear could hear, far and near: 'O folk of this city, leave ye your fire-worshiping and adore Allah the All-compassionate King!' At this, fear and terror fell upon the citizens and they crowded to my father (he being King of the city) and asked him: 'What is this awesome voice we have heard; for it hath confounded us with the excess of its terror?' And he answered: 'Let not a voice fright you nor shake your steadfast sprite nor turn you back from the faith which is right.' Their hearts inclined to his words and they ceased not to worship the fire and they persisted in rebellion for a full year from the time they heard the first voice. And on the anniversary came a second cry, and a third at the head of the third year, each year once.

Still they persisted in their malpractices till one day at break of dawn, judgment and the wrath of Heaven descended upon them with all suddenness, and by the visitation of Allah all were metamorphosed into black stones, they and their beasts and their cattle, and none was saved save myself, who at the time was engaged in my devotions. From that day to this I am in the case thou seest, constant in prayer and fasting and reading and reciting the Koran, but I am indeed grown weary by reason of my loneliness, having none to bear me company."

Then said I to him (for in very sooth he had won my heart and was the lord of my life and soul): "O youth, wilt thou fare with me to Baghdad city and visit the Ulema and men teamed in the law and doctors of divinity and get thee increase of wisdom and understanding and theology? And know that she who standeth in thy presence will be thy handmaid, albeit she be head of her family and mistress over men and eunuchs and servants and slaves. Indeed my life was no life before it fell in with thy youth. I have here a ship laden with merchandise, and in very truth Destiny drove me to this city that I might come to the knowledge of these matters, for it was fated that we should meet." And I ceased not to persuade him and speak him fair and use every art till he consented. I slept that night at his feet and hardly knowing where I was for excess of joy.

As soon as the next morning dawned (she pursued, addressing the Caliph), I arose and we entered the treasuries and took thence whatever was light in weight and great in worth. Then we went down side by side from the castle to the city, where we were met by the Captain and my sisters and slaves, who had been seeking for me. When they saw me, they rejoiced and asked what had stayed me, and I told them all I had seen and related to them the story of the young Prince and the transformation wherewith the citizens had been justly

visited. Hereat all marveled, but when my two sisters (these two bitches, O Commander of the Faithfull!) saw me by the side of my young lover, they jaloused me on his account and were wroth and plotted mischief against me. We awaited a fair wind and went on board rejoicing and ready to fly for joy by reason of the goods we had gotten, but my own greatest joyance was in the youth. And we waited awhile till the wind blew fair for us and then we set sail and fared forth.

Now as we sat talking, my sisters asked me, "And what wilt thou do with this handsome young man?" and I answered, "I purpose to make him my husband!" Then I turned to him and said: "O my lord, I have that to propose to thee wherein thou must not cross me, and this it is that, when we reach Baghdad, my native city, I offer thee my life as thy handmaiden in holy matrimony, and thou shalt be to me baron and I will be femme to thee." He answered, "I hear and I obey! Thou art my lady and my mistress and whatso thou doest I will not gainsay." Then I turned to my sisters and said: "This is my gain. I content me with this youth and those who have gotten aught of my property, let them keep it as their gain with my goodwill." "Thou sayest and doest well," answered the twain, but they imagined mischief against me.

We ceased not spooning before a fair wind till we had exchanged the sea of peril for the seas of safety, and in a few days we made Bassorah city, whose buildings loomed clear before us as evening fell. But after we had retired to rest and were sound asleep, my two sisters arose and took me up, bed and all, and threw me into the sea. They did the same with the young Prince, who, as he could not swim, sank and was drowned, and Allah enrolled him in the noble army of martyrs. As for me, would Heaven I had been drowned with him, but Allah deemed that I should be of the saved, so when I awoke and found myself in the sea and saw the ship making off like a flash of lightning, He threw in my way a piece of timber, which I bestrid, and the waves tossed me to and fro till they cast me upon an island coast, a high land and an uninhabited. I landed and walked about the island the rest of the night, and when morning dawned, I saw a rough track barely fit for child of Adam to tread, leading to what proved a shallow ford connecting island and mainland.

As soon as the sun had risen I spread my garments to dry in its rays, and ate of the fruits of the island and drank of its waters. Then I set out along the foot track and ceased not walking till I reached the mainland. Now when there remained between me and the city but a two hours' journey, behold, a great serpent, the bigness of a date palm, came fleeing toward me in all haste, gliding along now to the right, then to the left, till she was close upon me, whilst her tongue lolled groundward a span long and swept the dust as she went. She was pursued by a dragon who was not longer than two lances, and of slender build about the bulk of a spear, and although her terror lent her speed and she kept wriggling from side to side, he overtook her and seized her by the tail, whereat her tears streamed down and her tongue was thrust out in her agony. I took pity on her and, picking up a stone and calling upon Allah for aid, threw it at the dragon's head with such force that he died then and there, and the serpent, opening a pair of wings, flew into the lift and disappeared from before my eyes.

I sat down marveling over that adventure, but I was weary and, drowsiness overcoming me, I slept where I was for a while. When I awoke I found a jet-black damsel sitting at my feet shampooing them, and by her side stood two black bitches (my sisters, O Commander of the Faithfull!). I was ashamed before her and, sitting up, asked her, "O my sister, who and what art thou?" and she answered: "How soon hast thou forgotten me! I am she for whom thou wroughtest a good deed and sowedest the seed of gratitude and slewest her foe, for I

am the serpent whom by Allah's aidance thou didst just now deliver from the dragon. I am a Jinniyah and he was a Jinn who hated me, and none saved my life from him save thou. As soon as thou freedest me from him I flew on the wind to the ship whence thy sisters threw thee, and removed all that was therein to thy house. Then I ordered my attendant Marids to sink the ship, and I transformed thy two sisters into these black bitches, for I know all that hath passed between them and thee. But as for the youth, of a truth he is drowned."

So saying, she flew up with me and the bitches, and presently set us down on the terrace roof of my house, wherein I found ready stored the whole of what property was in my ship, nor was aught of it missing. "Now (continued the serpent that was), I swear by all engraven on the seal ring of Solomon (with whom be peace!) unless thou deal to each of these bitches three hundred stripes every day I will come and imprison thee forever under the earth." I answered, "Hearkening and obedience!" and away she flew. But before going she again charged me saying, "I again swear by Him who made the two seas flow (and this be my second oath), if thou gainsay me I will come and transform thee like thy sisters." Since then I have never failed, O Commander of the Faithful, to beat them with that number of blows till their blood flows with my tears, I pitying them the while, and well they wot that their being scourged is no fault of mine and they accept my excuses. And this is my tale and my history!

***Continue. . . . . , read part 2.***