

THE NEW ARABIAN NIGHTS

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“The Third Voyage of Sindbad the Sailor”

As I told you yesterday, I returned from my second voyage overjoyed at my safety and with great increase of wealth, the Lord having requited me all that I had wasted and lost, and I abode awhile in Baghdad city savoring the utmost ease and prosperity and comfort and happiness, till the carnal man was once more seized with longing for travel and diversion and adventure, and yearned after traffic and lucre and emolument, for that the human heart is naturally prone to evil. So, making up my mind, I laid in great plenty of goods suitable for a sea voyage and repairing to Bassorah, went down to the shore and found there a fine ship ready to sail, with a full crew and a numerous company of merchants, men of worth and substance, faith, piety, and consideration. I embarked with them and we set sail on the blessing of the Lord Almighty and on His aidance and His favor to bring our voyage to a safe and prosperous issue, and already we congratulated one another on our good fortune and boon voyage. We fared on from sea to sea and from island to island and city to city, in all delight and contentment, buying and selling wherever we touched, and taking our solace and our pleasure, till one day when as we sailed athwart the dashing sea swollen with clashing billows, behold, the master (who stood on the

gunwale examining the ocean in all directions) cried out with a great cry, and buffeted his face and plucked out his beard and rent his raiment, and bade furl the sail and cast the anchors. So we said to him, "O Rais, what is the matter?" "Know, O my brethren (the Lord preserve you!) that the wind hath gotten the better of us and hath driven us out of our course into midocean, and Destiny, for our ill luck, hath brought us to the Mountain of the Zughb, a hairy folk like apes, among whom no man ever fell and came forth alive. And my heart presageth that we all be dead men." Hardly had the master made an end of his speech when the apes were upon us. They surrounded the ship on all sides, swarming like locusts and crowding the shore. They were the most frightful of wild creatures, covered with black hair like felt, foul of favor and small of stature, being but four spans high, yellow-eyed and black-faced. None knoweth their language nor what they are, and they shun the company of men. We feared to slay them or strike them or drive them away, because of their inconceivable multitude, lest if we hurt one, the rest fall on us and slay us, for numbers prevail over courage. So we let them do their will, albeit we feared they would plunder our goods and gear. They swarmed up the cables and gnawed them asunder, and on like wise they did with all the ropes of the ship, so that if fell off from the wind and stranded upon their mountainous coast. Then they laid hands on all the merchants and crew, and landing us on the island, made off with the ship and its cargo and went their ways, we wot not whither. We were thus left on the island, eating of its fruits and potherbs and drinking of its streams till one day we espied in its midst what seemed an inhabited house. So we made for it as fast as our feet could carry us and, behold, it was a castle strong and tall, compassed about with a lofty wall, and having a two-leaved gate of ebony wood, both of which leaves open stood. We entered and found within a space wide and bare like a great square, round which stood

many high doors open thrown, and at the farther end a long bench of stone and braziers, with cooking gear hanging thereon and about it great Plenty of bones. But we saw no one and marveled thereat with exceeding wonder. Then we sat down in the courtyard a little while, and presently falling asleep, slept from the forenoon till sundown, when lo! the earth trembled under our feet and the air rumbled with a terrible tone. Then there came down upon us, from the top of the castle, a huge creature in the likeness of a man, black of color, tall and big of bulk, as he were a great date tree, with eyes like coals of fire and eyeteeth like boar's tusks and a vast big gape like the mouth of a well. Moreover, he had long loose lips like camel's hanging down upon his breast, and ears like two jars falling over his shoulder blades, and the nails of his hands were like the claws of a lion. When we saw this frightful giant, we were like to faint and every moment increased our fear and terror, and we became as dead men for excess of horror and affright. And after trampling upon the earth, he sat awhile on the bench. Then he arose and coming to us, seized me by the arm, choosing me out from among my comrades the merchants. He took me up in his hand and turning me over, felt me as a butcher feeleth a sheep he is about to slaughter, and I but a little mouthful in his hands. But finding me lean and fleshless for stress of toil and trouble and weariness, let me go and took up another, whom in like manner he turned over and felt and let go. Nor did he cease to feel and turn over the rest of us, one after another, till he came to the master of the ship. Now he was a sturdy, stout, broad-shouldered wight, fat and in full vigor, so he pleased the giant, who seized him as a butcher seizeth a beast, and throwing him down, set his foot on his neck and brake it, after which he fetched a long spit and thrusting it up his backside, brought it forth of the crown of his head. Then, lighting a fierce fire, he set over it the spit with the rais thereon, and turned it over the coals

till the flesh was roasted, when he took the spit off the fire and set it like a kobab stick before him. Then he tare the body, limb from limb, as one jointeth a chicken and, rending the fresh with his nails, fell to eating of it and gnawing the bones, till there was nothing left but some of these, which he threw on one side of the wall. This done, he sat for a while, then he lay down on the stone bench and fell asleep, snarking and snoring like the gurgling of a lamb or a cow with its throat cut, nor did he awake till morning, when he rose and fared forth and went his ways. As soon as we were certified that he was gone, we began to talk with one another, weeping and bemoaning ourselves for the risk we ran, and saying: "Would Heaven we had been drowned in the sea or that the apes had eaten us! That were better than to be roasted over the coals. By the Lord, this is a vile, foul death! But whatso the Lord willeth must come-to pass, and there is no Majesty and there is no Might save in Him, the Glorious, the Great! We shall assuredly perish miserably and none will know of us, as there is no escape for us from this place." Then we arose and roamed about the island, hoping that haply we might find a place to hide us in or a means of flight, for indeed death was a light matter to us, provided we were not roasted over the fire and eaten. However, we could find no hiding place, and the evening overtook us, so, of the excess of our terror, we returned to the castle and sat down awhile. Presently, the earth trembled under our feet and the black ogre came up to us and turning us over, felt one after other till he found a man to his liking, whom he took and served as he had done the captain, killing and roasting and eating him. After which he lay down on the bench and slept and night, snarling and snoring like a beast with its throat cut, till daybreak, when he arose and went out as before. Then we drew together and conversed and add one to other, "By the Lord, we had better throw ourselves into the sea and be drowned than die roasted for this is an abominable death!"

Quoth one of us: "Hear ye my words! Let us cast about to kill him, and be at peace from the grief of him and rid the Muslims of his barbarity and tyranny." Then said I: "Hear me, O my brothers. If there is nothing for it but to slay him, let us carry some of this firewood and planks down to the seashore and make us a boat wherein, if we succeed in slaughtering him, we may either embark and let the waters carry us whither the Lord willeth, or else abide here till some ship pass, when we will take passage in it. If we fail to kill him, we will embark in the boat and put out to sea. And if we be drowned, we shall at least escape being roasted over a kitchen fire with sliced weasands, whilst if we escape, we escape, and if we be drowned, we die martyrs." "By the Lord," said they all, "this rede is a right," and we agreed upon this, and set about carrying it out. So we haled down to the beach the pieces of wood which lay about the bench, and making a boat, moored it to the strand, after which we stowed therein somewhat of victual and returned to the castle. As soon as evening fell the earth trembled under our feet and in came the blackamoor upon us, snarling like a dog about to bite. He came up to us, and feeling us and turning us over one by one, took one of us and did with him as he had done before and ate him, after which he lay down on the bench and snored and snorted like thunder. As soon as we were assured that he slept, we arose and taking two iron spits of those standing there, heated them in the fiercest of the fire till they were red-hot, like burning coals, when we gripped fast hold of them, and going up to the giant as he lay snoring on the bench, thrust them into his eyes and pressed upon them, all of us, with our united might, so that his eyeballs burst and he became stone-blind. Thereupon he cried with a great cry, whereat our hearts trembled, and springing up from the bench, he fell a-groping after us, blindfold. We fled from him right and left and he saw us not, for his sight was altogether blent, but we were in terrible fear of him and made sure we

were dead men despairing of escape. Then he found the door, feeling for it with his hands, and went out roaring aloud, and behold, the earth shook under us for the noise of his roaring, and we quaked for fear. As he quitted the castle we followed him and betook ourselves to the place where we had moored our boat, saying to one another: "If this accursed abide absent till the going down of the sun and come not to the castle, we shall know that he is dead; and if he come back, we will embark in the boat and paddle till we escape, committing our affair to the Lord." But as we spoke, behold, up came the blackamoor with other two as they were Ghuls, fouler and more frightful than he, with eyes like red-hot coals, which when we saw, we hurried into the boat and casting off the moorings, paddled away, and pushed out to sea. As soon as the ogres caught sight of us, they cried out at us, and running down to the seashore, fell a-pelting us with rocks, whereof some fell amongst us and others fell into the sea. We paddled with all our might till we were beyond their reach, but the most part of us were slain by the rock-throwing, and the winds and waves sported with us and carried us into the midst of the dashing sea, swollen with billows clashing. We knew not whither we went, and my fellows died one after another till there remained but three, myself and two others, for as often as one died, we threw him into the sea. We were sore exhausted for stress of hunger, but we took courage and heartened one another and worked for dear life, and paddled with main and might till the winds cast us upon an island, as we were dead men for fatigue and fear and famine. We landed on the island and walked about it for a while, finding that it abounded in trees and streams and birds, and we ate of the fruits and rejoiced in our escape from the black and our deliverance from the perils of the sea. And thus we did till nightfall, when we lay down and fell asleep for excess of fatigue. But we had hardly closed our eyes before we were aroused by a hissing sound, like

the sough of wind, and awakening, saw a serpent like a dragon, a seldseen sight, of monstrous make and belly of enormous bulk, which lay in a circle around us. Presently it reared its head, and seizing one of my companions, swallowed him up to his shoulders. Then it gulped down the rest of him, and we heard his ribs crack in its belly. Presently it went its way, and we abode in sore amazement and grief for our comrade and mortal fear for ourselves, saying: "By the Lord, this is a marvelous thing! Each kind of death that threateneth us is more terrible than the last. We were rejoicing in our escape from the black ogre and our deliverance from the perils of the sea, but now we have fallen into that which is worse. There is no Majesty and there is no Might save in the Lord! By the Almighty, we have escaped from the blackamoor and from drowning, but how shall we escape from this abominable and viperish monster?" Then we walked about the island, eating of its fruits and drinking of its streams till dusk, when we climbed up into a high tree and went to sleep there, I being on the topmost bough. As soon as it was dark night, up came the serpent, looking right and left, and making for the tree whereon we were, climbed up to my comrade and swallowed him down to his shoulders. Then it coiled about the bole with him, whilst I, who could not take my eyes off the sight, heard his bones crack in its belly, and it swallowed him whole, after which it slid down from the tree. When the day broke and the light showed me that the serpent was gone, I came down, as I were a dead man for stress of fear and anguish, and thought to cast myself into the sea and be at rest from the woes of the world, but could not bring myself to this, for verily life is dear. So I took five pieces of wood, broad and long, and bound one crosswise to the soles of my feet and others in like fashion on my right and left sides and over my breast, and the broadest and largest I bound across my head and made them fast with ropes. Then I lay down on the ground on my back, so

that I was completely fenced in by the pieces of wood, which enclosed me like a bier. So as soon as it was dark, up came the serpent as usual, and made toward me, but could not get at me to swallow me for the wood that fenced me in. So it wriggled round me on every side whilst I looked on like one dead by reason of my terror, and every now and then it would glide away, and come back. But as often as it tried to come at me, it was hindered by the pieces of wood wherewith I had bound myself on every side. It ceased not to beset me thus from sundown till dawn, but when the light of day shone upon the beast it made off, in the utmost fury and extreme disappointment. Then I put out my hand and unbound myself, well-nigh down among the dead men for fear and suffering, and went down to the island shore, whence a ship afar off in the midst of the waves suddenly struck my sight. So I tore off a great branch of a tree and made signs with it to the crew, shouting out the while, which when the ship's company saw they said to one another: "We must stand in and see what this is. Peradventure 'tis a man." So they made for the island and presently heard my cries, whereupon they took me on board and questioned me of my case. I told them all my adventures from first to last, whereat they marveled mightily and covered my shame with some of their clothes. Moreover, they set before me somewhat of food and I ate my fill and I drank cold sweet water and was mightily refreshed, and the Lord Almighty quickened me after I was virtually dead. So I praised the Most Highest and thanked Him for His favors and exceeding mercies, and my heart revived in me after utter despair, till meseemed as if all I had suffered were but a dream I had dreamed. We sailed on with a fair wind the Almighty sent us till we came to an island called Al-Salahitah, which aboundeth in sandalwood, when the captain cast anchor. And when we had cast anchor, the merchants and the sailors landed with their goods to sell and to buy. Then the captain turned to me and

said: "Hark'ee, thou art a stranger and a pauper and tellest us that thou hast undergone frightful hardships, wherefore I have a mind to benefit thee with somewhat that may further thee to thy native land, so thou wilt ever bless me and pray for me." "So be it," answered I. "Thou shalt have my prayers." Quoth he: "Know then that there was with us a man, a traveler, whom we lost, and we know not if he be alive or dead, for we had no news of him. So I purpose to commit his bales of goods to thy charge, that thou mayst sell them in this island. A part of the proceeds we will give thee as an equivalent for thy pains and service, and the rest we will keep till we return to Baghdad, where we will inquire for his family and deliver it to them, together with the unsold goods. Say me then, wilt thou undertake the charge and land and sell them as other merchants do?" I replied, "Hearkening and obedience to thee, O my lord, and great is thy kindness to me," and thanked him. Whereupon he bade the sailors and porters bear the bales in question ashore, and commit them to my charge. The ship's scribe asked him, "O master, what bales are these, and what merchant's name shall I write upon them?" and he answered: "Write on them the name of Sindbad the Sailor, him who was with us in the ship and whom we lost at the roc's island, and of whom we have no tidings. For we mean this stranger to sell them, and we will give him a part of the price for his pains and keep the rest till we return to Baghdad, where if we find the owner we will make it over to him, and if not, to his family." And the clerk said, "Thy words are apposite and thy rede is right." Now when I heard the captain give orders for the bales to be inscribed with my name, I said to myself, "By the Lord, I am Sindbad the Sailor!" So I armed myself with courage and patience and waited till all the merchants had landed and were gathered together, talking and chattering about buying and selling. Then I went up to the captain and asked him, "O my lord, knowest thou what manner of man was this Sindbad

whose goods thou hast committed to me for sale?" and he answered, "I know of him naught save that he was a man from Baghdad city, Sindbad called the Sailor, who was drowned with many others when we lay anchored at such an island, and I have heard nothing of him since then." At this I cried out with a great cry and said: "O Captain, whom the Lord keep! know that I am that Sindbad the Sailor and that I was not drowned, but when thou castest anchor at the island, I landed with the rest of the merchants and crew. And I sat down in a pleasant place by myself and ate somewhat of food I had with me and enjoyed myself till I became drowsy and was drowned in sleep. And when I awoke, I found no ship, and none near me. These goods are my goods and these bales are my bales, and all the merchants who fetch jewels from the Valley of Diamonds saw me there and will bear me witness that I am the very Sindbad the Sailor; for I related to them everything that had befallen me and told them how you forgot me and left me sleeping on the island, and that betided me which betided me." When the passengers and crew heard my words, they gathered about me and some of them believed me and others disbelieved, but presently, behold, one of the merchants, hearing me mention the Valley of Diamonds, came up to me and said to them: "Hear what I say, good people! When I related to you the most wonderful things in my travels, and I told you that at the time we cast down our slaughtered animals into the Valley of Serpents (I casting with the rest as was my wont), there came up a man hanging to mine, ye believed me not and live me the lie." "Yes," quoth they, "thou didst tell us some such tale, but we had no call to credit thee." He resumed: "Now this is the very man, by token that he gave me diamonds of great value and high price whose like are not to be found, requiting me more than would have come up sticking to my quarter of meat. And I companied with him to Bassorah city, where he took leave of us and went on to his native

stead whilst we returned to our own land. This is he, and he told us his name, Sindbad the Sailor, and how the ship left him on the desert island. And know ye that the Lord hath sent him hither, so might the truth of my story be made manifest to you. Moreover, these are his goods, for when he first forgathered with us, he told us of them; and the truth of his words is patent." Hearing the merchant's speech, the captain came up to me and considered me straitly awhile, after which he said, "What was the mark on thy bales?" "Thus and thus," answered I, and reminded him of somewhat that had passed between him and me when I shipped with him from Bassorah. Thereupon he was convinced that I was indeed Sindbad the Sailor and took me round the neck and gave me joy of my safety, saying: "By the Lord, O my lord, thy case is indeed wondrous and thy tale marvelous. But lauded be the Lord Who hath brought thee and me together again, and Who hath restored to thee thy goods and gear!" Then I disposed of my merchandise to the best of my skill, and profited largely on them, whereat I rejoiced with exceeding joy and congratulated myself on my safety and the recovery of my goods. We ceased not to buy and sell at the several islands till we came to the land of Hind, where we bought cloves and ginger and all manner spices. And thence we fared on to the land of Sind, where also we bought and sold. In these Indian seas I saw wonders without number or count, amongst others a fish like a cow which bringeth forth its young and suckleth them like human beings, and of its skin bucklers are made. There were eke fishes like asses and camels and tortoises twenty cubits wide. And I saw also a bird that cometh out of a sea shell and layeth eggs and hatcheth her chicks on the surface of the water, never coming up from the sea to the land. Then we set sail again with a fair wind and the blessing of Almighty the Lord, and after a prosperous voyage, arrived safe and sound at Bassorah. Here I abode a few days, and presently returned

to Baghdad, where I went at once to my quarter and my house and saluted my family and familiars and friends. I had gained on this voyage what was beyond count and reckoning, so I gave alms and largess and clad the widow and orphan, by way of thanksgiving for my happy return, and fell to feasting and making merry with my companions and intimates and forgot while eating well and drinking well and dressing well everything that had befallen me and all the perils and hardships I had suffered. These, then, are the most admirable things I sighted on my third voyage, and tomorrow, an it be the will of the Lord, you shall come to me and I will relate the adventures of my fourth voyage, which is still more wonderful than those you have already heard. (Saith he who telleth the tale): Then Sindbad the Sailor bade give Sindbad the Landsman a hundred golden dinars as of wont, and called for food. So they spread the tables and the company ate the night meal and went their ways, marveling at the tale they had heard. The porter after taking his gold passed the night in his own house, also wondering at what his namesake the sailor had told him, and as soon as day broke and the morning showed with its sheen and shone, he rose and praying the dawn prayer, betook himself to Sindbad the Sailor, who returned his salute and received him with an open breast and cheerful favor and made him sit with him till the rest of the company arrived, when he caused set on food and they ate and drank and made merry. Then Sindbad the Sailor bespake them and related to them the narrative of

