

## THE NEW ARABIAN NIGHTS

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[continues]

“The Fourth Voyage of Sindbad the Sailor”

Know, O my brethren, that after my return from my third voyage and forgathering with my friends, and forgetting all my perils and hardships in the enjoyment of ease and comfort and repose, I was visited one day by a company of merchants who sat down with me and talked of foreign travel and traffic till the old bad man within me yearned to go with them and enjoy the sight of strange countries, and I longed for the society of the various races of mankind and for traffic and profit. So I resolved to travel with them and, buying the necessaries for a long voyage and great store of costly goods, more than ever before, transported them from Baghdad to Bassorah, where I took ship with the merchants in question, who were of the chief of the town. We set out, trusting in the blessing of Almighty the Lord, and with a favoring breeze and the best conditions we sailed from island to island and sea to sea till one day there arose against us a contrary wind and the captain cast out his anchors and brought the ship to a standstill, fearing lest she should founder in midocean. Then we all fell to prayer and humbling ourselves before the Most High, but as we were thus engaged there smote us a furious squall which tore the sails to rags and tatters. The anchor cable parted and, the ship foundering, we were cast into the sea, goods

and all. I kept myself afloat by swimming half the day till, when I had given myself up for lost, the Almighty threw in my way one of the planks of the ship, whereon I and some others of the merchants scrambled and, mounting it as we would a horse, paddled with our feet in the sea. We abode thus a day and a night, the wind and waves helping us on, and on the second day shortly before the midtime between sunrise and noon the breeze freshened and the sea wrought and the rising waves cast us upon an island, well-nigh dead bodies for weariness and want of sleep, cold and hunger and fear and thirst. We walked about the shore and found abundance of herbs, whereof we ate enough to keep breath in body and to stay our failing spirits, then lay down and slept till morning hard by the sea. And when morning came with its sheen and shone, we arose and walked about the island to the right and left till we came in sight of an inhabited house afar off. So we made toward it, and ceased not walking till we reached the door thereof when lo! a number of naked men issued from it, and without saluting us or a word said, laid hold of us masterfully and carried us to their King, who signed us to sit. So we sat down and they set food before us such as we knew not and whose like we had never seen in all our lives. My companions ate of it, for stress of hunger, but my stomach revolted from it and I would not eat, and my refraining from it was, by the Lord's favor, the cause of my being alive till now. For no sooner had my comrades tasted of it than their reason fled and their condition changed and they began to devour it like madmen possessed of an evil spirit. Then the savages give them to drink of coconut oil and anointed them therewith, and straightway after drinking thereof their eyes turned into their heads and they fell to eating greedily, against their wont. When I saw this, I was confounded, and concerned for them, nor was I less anxious about myself, for fear of the naked folk. So I watched them narrowly, and it was not long before I discovered them to be a tribe of

Magian cannibals whose King was a Ghul. All who came to their country or whoso they caught in their valleys or on their roads they brought to this King and fed them upon that food and anointed them with that oil, whereupon their stomachs dilated that they might eat largely, wilst their reason fled and they lost the power of thought and became idiots. Then they stuffed them with coconut oil and the aforesaid food till they became fat and gross, when they slaughtered them by cutting their throats and roasted them for the King's eating, but as for the savages themselves, they ate human flesh raw. When I saw this, I was sore dismayed for myself and my comrades, who were now become so stupefied that they knew not what was done with them. And the naked folk committed them to one who used every day to lead them out and pasture them on the island like cattle. And they wandered amongst the trees and rested at will, thus waxing very fat. As for me, I wasted away and became sickly for fear and hunger and my flesh shriveled on my bones, which when the savages saw, they left me alone and took no thought of me and so far forgot me that one day I gave them the slip and walking out of their place, made for the beach, which was distant, and there espied a very old man seated on a high place girt by the waters. I looked at him and knew him for the herdsman who had charge of pasturing my fellows, and with him were many others in like case. As soon as he saw me, he knew me to be in possession of my reason and not afflicted like the rest whom he was pasturing, so signed to me from afar, as who should say, "Turn back and take the right-hand road, for that will lead thee into the King's highway." So I turned back, as he bade me, and followed the right-hand road, now running for fear and then walking leisurely to rest me, till I was out of the old man's sight. By this time the sun had gone down and the darkness set in, so I sat down to rest and would have slept, but sleep came not to me that night for stress of fear and famine and fatigue.

When the night was half spent, I rose and walked on till the day broke in all its beauty and the sun rose over the heads of the lofty hills and athwart the low gravelly plains. Now I was weary and hungry and thirsty, so I ate my fill of herbs and grasses that grew in the island and kept life in body and stayed my stomach, after which I set out again and fared on all that day and the next night, staying my greed with roots and herbs. Nor did I cease walking for seven days and their nights, till the morn of the eighth day, when I caught sight of a faint object in the distance. So I made toward it, though my heart quaked for all I had suffered first and last, and, behold, it was a company of men gathering pepper grains. As soon as they saw me, they hastened up to me and surrounding me on all sides, said to me, "Who art thou, and whence come?" I replied, "Know, O folk, that I am a poor stranger," and acquainted them with my case and all the hardships and perils I had suffered, whereat they marveled and gave me joy of my safety, saying: "By the Lord, this is wonderful! But how didst thou escape from these blacks who swarm in the island and devour all who fall in with them, nor is any safe from them, nor can any get out of their clutches?" And after I had told them the fate of my companions, they made me sit by them till they got quit of their work, and fetched me somewhat of good food, which I ate, for I was hungry, and rested awhile. After which they took ship with me and carrying me to their island home, brought me before their King, who returned my salute and received me honorably and questioned me of my case. I told him all that had befallen me from the day of my leaving Baghdad city, whereupon he wondered with great wonder at my adventures, he and his courtiers, and bade me sit by him. Then he called for food and I ate with him what sufficed me and washed my hands and returned thanks to Almighty the Lord for all His favors, praising Him and glorifying Him. Then I left the King and walked for solace about the city, which I found wealthy and populous,

abounding in market streets well stocked with food and merchandise and full of buyers and sellers. So I rejoiced at having reached so pleasant a place and took my ease there after my fatigues, and I made friends with the townsfolk, nor was it long before I became more in honor and favor with them and their King than any of the chief men of the realm. Now I saw that all the citizens, great and small, rode fine horses, high-priced and thoroughbred, without saddles or housings, whereat I wondered and said to the King: "Wherefore, O my lord, dost thou not ride with a saddle? Therein is ease for the rider and increase of power." "What is a saddle?" asked he. "I never saw nor used such a thing in all my life." And I answered, "With thy permission I will make thee a saddle, that thou mayst ride on it and see the comfort thereof." And quoth he, "Do so." So quoth I to him, "Furnish me with some woods." which being brought, I sought me a clever carpenter and sitting by him, showed him how to make the saddletree, portraying for him the fashion thereof in ink on the wood. Then I took wool and teased it and made felt of it, and, covering the saddletree with leather, stuffed it, and polished it, and attached the girth and stirrup leathers. After which I fetched a blacksmith and described to him the fashion of the stirrups and bridle bit. So he forged a fine pair of stirrups and a bit, and filed them smooth and tinned them. Moreover, I made fast to them fringes of silk and fitted bridle leathers to the bit. Then I fetched one of the best of the royal horses and saddling and bridling him, hung the stirrups to the saddle and led him to the King. The thing took his fancy and he thanked me, then he mounted and rejoiced greatly in the saddle and rewarded me handsomely for my work. When the King's Vizier saw the saddle, he asked of me one like it, and I made it for him. Furthermore, all the grandees and officers of state came for saddles to me, so I fell to making saddles (having taught the craft to the carpenter and blacksmith) and selling them to all who sought, till I

amassed great wealth and became in high honor and great favor with the King and his household and grandees. I abode thus till one day, as I was sitting with the King in all respect and contentment, he said to me: "Know thou, O such a one, thou art become one of us, dear as a brother, and we hold thee in such regard and affection that we cannot part with thee nor suffer thee to leave our city. Wherefore I desire of thee obedience in a certain matter, and I will not have thee gainsay me." Answered I: "O King, what is it thou desirest of me? Far be it from me to gainsay thee in aught, for I am indebted to thee for many favors and bounties and much kindness, and (praised be the Lord!) I am become one of thy servants." Quoth he: "I have a mind to marry thee to a fair, clever, and agreeable wife who is wealthy as she is beautiful, so thou mayest be naturalized and domiciled with us. I will lodge thee with me in my palace, wherefore oppose me not neither cross me in this." When I heard these words I was ashamed and held my peace nor could make him any answer, by reason of my much bashfulness before him. Asked he, "Why dost thou not reply to me, O my son?" and I answered, saying, "O my master, it is thine to command, O King of the Age!" So he summoned the kazi and the witnesses and married me straightway to a lady of a noble tree and high pedigree, wealthy in moneys and means, the flower of an ancient race, of surpassing beauty and grace, and the owner of farms and estates and many a dwelling place. Now after the King my master had married me to this choice wife, he also gave me a great and goodly house standing alone, together with slaves and officers, and assigned me pay and allowances. So I became in all ease and contentment and delight and forgot everything which had befallen me of weariness and trouble and hardship. For I loved my wife with fondest love and she loved me no less, and we were as one, and abode in the utmost comfort of life and in its happiness. And I said in myself, "When I return to my

native land, I will carry her with me." But whatso is predestined to a man, that needs must be, and none knoweth what shall befall him. We lived thus a great while, till Almighty the Lord bereft one of my neighbors of his wife. Now he was a gossip of mine, so hearing the cry of the keeners, I went in to condole him on his loss and found him in very ill plight, full of trouble and weary of soul and mind. I condoled with him and comforted him, saying: "Mourn not for thy wife, who hath now found the mercy of the Lord. The Lord will surely give thee a better in her stead, and thy name shall be great and thy life shall be long in the land, The Lord-willing!" But he wept bitter tears and replied: "O my friend, how can I marry another wife, and how shall the Lord replace her to me with a better than she, whenas I have but one day left to live?" "O my brother," said I, "return to thy senses and announce not glad tidings of thine own death, for thou art well, sound, and in good case." "By thy life, O my friend," rejoined he, "tomorrow thou wilt lose me, and wilt never see me again till the Day of Resurrection." I asked, "How so?" and he answered: "This very day they bury my wife, and they bury me with her in one tomb. For it is the custom with us, if the wife die first, to bury the husband alive with her, and in like manner the wife if the husband die first, so that neither may enjoy life after losing his or her mate." "By the Lord," cried I, "this is a most vile, lewd custom, and not to be endured of any!" Meanwhile, behold, the most part of the townsfolk came in and fell to condoling with my gossip for his wife and for himself. Presently they laid the dead woman out, as was their wont, and setting her on a bier, carried her and her husband without the city till they came to a place in the side of a mountain at the end of the island by the sea. And here they raised a great rock and discovered the mouth of a stone-riveted pit or well, leading down into a vast underground cavern that ran beneath the mountain. Into this pit they threw the corpse, then, tying a

rope of palm fibers under the husband's armpits, they let him down into the cavern, and with him a great pitcher of fresh water and seven scones by way of viaticum. When he came to the bottom, he loosed himself from the rope and they drew it up, and stopping the mouth of the pit with the great stone, they returned to the city, leaving my friend in the cavern with his dead wife. When I saw this, I said to myself, "By the Lord, this fashion of death is more grievous than the first!" And I went in to the King and said to him, "O my lord, why do ye bury the quick with the dead?" Quoth he: "It hath been the custom, thou must know, of our forebears and our olden kings from time immemorial, if the husband die first, to bury his wife with him, and the like with the wife, so we may not sever them, alive or dead." I asked, "O King of the Age, if the wife of a foreigner like myself die among you, deal ye with him as with yonder man?" and he answered, "Assuredly we do with him even as thou hast seen." When I heard this, my gall bladder was like to burst, for the violence of my dismay and concern for myself. My wit became dazed, I felt as if in a vile dungeon, and hated their society, for I went about in fear lest my wife should die before me and they bury me alive with her. However, after a while I comforted myself, saying, "Haply I shall predecease her, or shall have returned to my own land before she die, for none knoweth which shall go first and which shall go last." Then I applied myself to diverting my mind from this thought with various occupations, but it was not long before my wife sickened and complained and took to her pillow and fared after a few days to the mercy of the Lord. And the King and the rest of the folk came, as was their wont, to condole with me and her family and to console us for her loss, and not less to condole with me for myself. Then the women washed her, and arraying her in her richest raiment and golden ornaments, necklaces, and jewelry, laid her on the bier and bore her to the mountain aforesaid, where they lifted the cover of the pit and cast



her in. After which all my intimates and acquaintances and my wife's kith and kin came round me, to farewell me in my lifetime and console me for my own death, whilst I cried out among them, saying: "Almighty the Lord never made it lawful to bury the quick with the dead! I am a stranger, not one of your kind, and I cannot abear your custom, and had I known it I never would have wedded among you!" They heard me not and paid no heed to my words, but laying hold of me, bound me by force and let me down. into the cavern, with a large gugglet of sweet water and seven cakes of bread, according to their custom. When I came to the bottom, they called out to me to cast myself loose from the cords, but I refused to do so, so they threw them down on me and, closing the mouth of the pit with the stones aforesaid, went their ways. I looked about me and found myself in a vast cave full of dead bodies that exhaled a fulsome and loathsome smell, and the air was heavy with the groans of the dying. Thereupon I fell to blaming myself for what I had done, saying: "By the Lord, I deserve all that hath befallen me and all that shall befall me! What curse was upon me to take a wife in this city? There is no Majesty and there is no Might save in the Lord, the Glorious, the Great! As often as I say I have escaped from one calamity, I fall into a worse. By the Lord, this is an abominable death to die! Would Heaven I had died a decent death and been washed and shrouded like a man and a Muslim. Would I had been drowned at sea, or perished in the mountains! It were better than to die this miserable death!" And on such wise I kept blaming my own folly and greed of gain in that black hole, knowing not night from day, and I ceased not to ban the Foul Fiend and to bless the Almighty Friend. Then I threw myself down on the bones of the dead and lay there, imploring the Lord's help, and in the violence of my despair invoking death, which came not to me, till the fire of hunger burned my stomach and thirst set my throat aflame, when I sat up and feeling for the bread, ate a morsel and

upon it swallowed a mouthful of water. After this, the worst night I ever knew, I arose, and exploring the cavern, found that it extended a long way with hollows in its sides, and its floor was strewn with dead bodies and rotten bones that had lain there from olden time. So I made myself a place in a cavity of the cavern, afar from the corpses lately thrown down, and there slept. I abode thus a long while, till my provision was like to give out, and yet I ate not save once every day or second day, nor did I drink more than an occasional draught, for fear my victual should fail me before my death. And I said to myself: "Eat little and drink little. Belike the Lord shall vouchsafe deliverance to thee!" One day as I sat thus, pondering my case and bethinking me how I should do when my bread and water should be exhausted, behold, the stone that covered the opening was suddenly rolled away and the light streamed down upon me. Quoth I: "I wonder what is the matter. Haply they have brought another corpse." Then I espied folk standing about the mouth of the pit, who presently let down a dead man and a live woman, weeping and bemoaning herself, and with her an ampler supply of bread and water than usual. I saw her and she was a beautiful woman, but she saw me not. And they closed up the opening and went away. Then I took the leg bone of a dead man and, going up to the woman, smote her on the crown of the head, and she cried one cry and fell down in a swoon. I smote her a second and a third time, till she was dead, when I laid hands on her bread and water and found on her great plenty of ornaments and rich apparel, necklaces, jewels and gold trinkets, for it was their custom to bury women in all their finery. I carried the viviers to my sleeping place in the cavern side and ate and drank of them sparingly, no more than sufficed to keep the life in me, lest the provaunt come speedily to an end and I perish of hunger and thirst. Yet did I never wholly lose hope in Almighty the Lord. I abode thus a great while, killing all the live folk they let down into the

cavern and taking their provisions of meat and drink, till one day, as I slept, I was awakened by something scratching and burrowing among the bodies in a corner of the cave and said, "What can this be?" fearing wolves or hyenas. So I sprang up, and seizing the leg bone aforesaid, made for the noise. As soon as the thing was ware of me, it fled from me into the inward of the cavern, and lo! it was a wild beast. However, I followed it to the further end, till I saw afar off a point of light not bigger than a star, now appearing and then disappearing. So I made for it, and as I drew near, it grew larger and brighter, till I was certified that it was a crevice in the rock, leading to the open country, and I said to myself: "There must be some reason for this opening. Either it is the mouth of a second pit such as that by which they let me down, or else it is a natural fissure in the stonery." So I bethought me awhile, and nearing the light, found that it came from a breach in the back side of the mountain, which the wild beasts had enlarged by burrowing, that they might enter and devour the dead and freely go to and from. When I saw this, my spirits revived and hope came back to me and I made sure of life, after having died a death. So I went on, as in a dream, and making shift to scramble through the breach, found myself on the slope of a high mountain overlooking the salt sea and cutting off all access thereto from the island, so that none could come at that part of the beach from the city. I praised my Lord and thanked Him, rejoicing greatly and heartening myself with the prospect of deliverance. Then I returned through the crack to the cavern and brought out all the food and water I had saved up, and donned some of the dead folk's clothes over my own. After which I gathered together all the collars and necklaces of pearls and jewels and trinkets of gold and silver set with precious stones and other ornaments and valuables I could find upon the corpses, and making them into bundles with the graveclothes and raiment of the dead,

carried them out to the back of the mountain facing the seashore, where I established myself, purposing to wait there till it should please Almighty the Lord to send me relief by means of some passing ship. I visited the cavern daily, and as often as I found folk buried alive there, I killed them all indifferently, men and women, and took their victual and valuables and transported them to my seat on the seashore. Thus I abode a long while till one day I caught sight of a ship passing in the midst of the clashing sea swollen with dashing billows. So I took a piece of a white shroud I had with me, and tying it to a staff, ran along the seashore making signals therewith and calling to the people in the ship, till they espied me, and hearing my shouts, sent a boat to fetch me off. When it drew near, the crew called out to me, saying, "Who art thou, and how camest thou to be on this mountain, whereon never saw we any in our born days?" I answered: "I am a gentleman and a merchant who hath been wrecked and saved myself on one of the planks of the ship, with some of my goods. And by the blessing of the Almighty and the decrees of Destiny and my own strength and skill, after much toil and moil I have landed with my gear in this place, where I awaited some passing ship to take me off." So they took me in their boat, together with the bundles I had made of the jewels and valuables from the cavern, tied up in clothes and shrouds, and rowed back with me to the ship, where the captain said to me: "How camest thou, O man, to yonder place on yonder mountain behind which lieth a great city? All my life I have sailed these seas and passed to and fro hard by these heights, yet never saw I here any living thing save wild beasts and birds." I repeated to him the story I had told the sailors, but acquainted him with nothing of that which had befallen me in the city and the cavern, lest there should be any of the islandry in the ship. Then I took out some of the best pearls I had with me and offered them to the captain, saying: "O my lord, thou hast been the

means of saving me off this mountain. I have no ready money, but take this from me in requital of thy kindness and good offices.-But he refused to accept it of me, saying: "When we find a shipwrecked man on the seashore or on an island, we take him up and give him meat and drink, and if he be naked we clothe him, nor take we aught from him— nay, when we reach a port of safety, we set him ashore with a present of our own money and entreat him kindly and charitably, for the love of the Lord the Most High." So I prayed that his life be long in the land and rejoiced in my escape, trusting to be delivered from my stress and to forget my past mishaps, for every time I remembered being let down into the cave with my dead wife I shuddered in horror. Then we pursued our voyage and sailed from island to island and sea to sea till we arrived at the Island of the Bell which containeth a city two days' journey in extent, whence after a six days' ran we reached the Island Kala, hard by the land of Hind. This place is govemed by a potent and puissant King, and it produceth excellent camphor and an abundance of the Indian rattan. Here also is a lead mine. At last by the decree of the Lord we arrived in safety at Bassorah town, where I tarried a few days, then went on to Baghdad city, and finding my quarter, entered my house with lively pleasure. There I forgathered with my family and friends, who rejoiced in my happy return and give me joy of my safety. I laid up in my storehouses all the goods I had brought with me, and gave alms and largess to fakirs and beggars and clothed the widow and the orphan. Then I gave myself up to pleasure and enjoyment, returning to my old merry mode of rife. Such, then, be the most marvelous adventures of my fourth voyage, but tomorrow, if you will kindly come to me, I will tell you that which befell me in my fifth voyage, which was yet rarer and more marvelous than those which forewent it. And thou, O my brother Sindbad the Landsman, shalt sup with me as thou art wont. (Saith

he who telleth the tale): When Sindbad the Sailor had made an end of his story, he called for supper, so they spread the table and the guests ate the evening meal, after which he gave the porter a hundred dinars as usual, and he and the rest of the company went their ways, glad at heart and marveling at the tales they had heard, for that each story was more extraordinary than that which forewent it. The porter Sindbad passed the night in his own house, in all joy and cheer and wonderment, and as soon as morning came with its sheen and shone, he prayed the dawn prayer and repaired to the house of Sindbad the Sailor, who welcomed him and bade him sit with him till the rest of the company arrived, when they ate and drank and made merry and the talk went round amongst them. Presently, their host began the narrative of

