

THE NEW ARABIAN NIGHTS

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[continues]

“The Fifth Voyage of Sindbad the Sailor”

Know, O my brothers, that when I had been awhile on shore after my fourth voyage, and when, in my comfort and pleasures and merrymakings and in my rejoicing over my large gains and profits, I had forgotten all I had endured of perils and sufferings, the carnal man was again seized with the longing to travel and to see foreign countries and islands. Accordingly I bought costly merchandise suited to my purpose and, making it up into bales, repaired to Bassorah, where I walked about the river quay till I found a fine tall ship, newly builded, with gear unused and fitted ready for sea. She pleased me, so I bought her and, embarking my goods in her, hired a master and crew, over whom I set certain of my slaves and servants as inspectors. A number of merchants also brought their outfits and paid me freight and passage money. Then, after reciting the fatihah, we set sail over the Lord's pool in all joy and cheer, promising ourselves a prosperous voyage and much profit. We sailed from city to city and from island to island and from sea to sea viewing the cities and countries by which we passed, and selling and buying in not a few, till one day we came to a great uninhabited island, deserted and desolate, whereon was a white dome of biggest bulk half buried in the sands. The merchants landed to examine this

dome, leaving me in the ship, and when they drew near, behold, it was a huge roc's egg. They fell a-beating it with stones, knowing not what it was, and presently broke it open, whereupon much water ran out of it and the young roc appeared within. So they pulled it forth of the shell and cut its throat and took of it great store of meat. Now I was in the ship and knew not what they did, but presently one of the passengers came up to me and said, "O my lord, come and look at the egg that we thought to be a dome." So I looked, and seeing the merchants beating it with stones, called out to them: "Stop, stop! Do not meddle with that egg, or the bird roc will come out and break our ship and destroy us." But they paid no heed to me and gave not over smiting upon the egg, when behold, the day grew dark and dun and the sun was hidden from us, as if some great cloud had passed over the firmament. So we raised our eyes and saw that what we took for a cloud was the roc poised between us and the sun, and it was his wings that darkened the day. When he came and saw his egg broken, he cried a loud cry, whereupon his mate came flying up and they both began circling about the ship, crying out at us with voices louder than thunder. I called to the rais and crew, "Put out to sea and seek safety in flight, before we be all destroyed!" So the merchants came on board and we cast off and made haste from the island to gain the open sea. When the rocs saw this, they flew off, and we crowded all sail on the ship, thinking to get out of their country, but presently the two reappeared and flew after us and stood over us, each carrying in its claws a huge boulder which it had brought from the mountains. As soon as the he-roc came up with us, he let fall upon us the rock he held in his pounces, but the master put about ship, so that the rock missed her by some small matter and plunged into the waves with such violence that the ship pitched high and then sank into the trough of the sea, and the bottom the ocean appeared to us. Then the she-roc let fall her rock, which was bigger than that of her

mate, and as Destiny had decreed, it fell on the poop of the ship and crushed it, the rudder flying into twenty pieces. Whereupon the vessel foundered and all and everything on board were cast into the main. As for me, I struggled for sweet life till Almighty the Lord threw in my way one of the planks of the ship, to which I clung and bestriding it, fell paddling with my feet. Now the ship had gone down hard by an island in the midst of the main, and the winds and waves bore me on till, by permission of the Most High, they cast me up on the shore of the island, at the last gasp for toil and distress and half-dead with hunger and thirst. So I landed more like a corpse than a live man, and throwing myself down on the beach, lay there awhile till I began to revive and recover spirits, when I walked about the island, and found it as it were one of the garths and gardens of Paradise. Its trees, in abundance dight, bore ripe-yellow fruit for freight, its streams ran clear and bright, its flowers were fair to scent and to sight, and its birds warbled with delight the praises of Him to whom belong Permanence and All-might. So I ate my fill of the fruits and slaked my thirst with the water of the streams till I could no more, and I returned thanks to the Most High and glorified Him, after which I sat till nightfall hearing no voice and seeing none inhabitant. Then I lay down, well-nigh dead for travail and trouble and terror, and slept without surcease till morning, when I arose and walked about under the trees till I came to the channel of a draw well fed by a spring of running water, by which well sat an old man of venerable aspect, girt about with a waistcloth made of the fiber of palm fronds. Quoth I to myself. "Haply this Sheikh is of those who were wrecked in the ship and hath made his way to this island." So I drew near to him and saluted him, and he returned my salaam by signs, but spoke not, and I said to him, "O nuncle mine, what causeth thee to sit here?" He shook his head and moaned and signed to me with his hand as who should say, "Take me on thy shoulders and carry me

to the other side of the well channel." And quoth I in my mind: "I will deal kindly with him and do what he desireth. It may be I shall win me a reward in Heaven, for he may be a paralytic." So I took him on my back, and carrying him to the place whereat he pointed, said to him, "Dismount at thy leisure." But he would not get off my back, and wound his legs about my neck. I looked at them, and seeing that they were like a buffalo's hide for blackness and roughness, was affrighted and would have cast him off, but he clung to me and gripped my neck with his legs till I was well-nigh choked, the world grew black in my sight and I fell senseless to the ground like one dead. But he still kept his seat and raising his legs, drummed with his heels and beat harder than palm rods my back and shoulders, till he forced me to rise for excess of pain. Then he signed to me with his hand to carry him hither and thither among the trees which bore the best fruits, and if ever I refused to do his bidding or loitered or took my leisure, he beat me with his feet more grievously than if I had been beaten with whips. He ceased not to signal with his hand wherever he was minded to go, so I carried him about the island, like a captive slave, and he dismounted not night or day. And whenas he wished to sleep, he wound his legs about my neck and leaned back and slept awhile, then arose and beat me, whereupon I sprang up in haste, unable to gainsay him because of the pain he inflicted on me. And indeed I blamed myself and sore repented me of having taken compassion on him, and continued in this condition, suffering fatigue not to be described, till I said to myself: "I wrought him a weal and he requited me with my ill. By the Lord, never more will I do any man a service so long as I live!" And again and again I besought the Most High that I might die, for stress of weariness and misery. And thus I abode a long while till one day I came with him to a place wherein was abundance of gourds, many of them dry. So I took a great dry gourd and cutting open the head, scooped out the inside and

cleaned it, after which I gathered grapes from a vine which grew hard by and squeezed them into the gourd till it was full of the juice. Then I stopped up the mouth and set it in the sun, where I left it for some days until it became strong wine, and every day I used to drink of it, to comfort and sustain me under my fatigues with that froward and obstinate fiend. And as often as I drank myself drunk, I forgot my troubles and took new heart. One day he saw me and signed to me with his hand, as who should say, "What is that?" Quoth I, "It is an excellent cordial, which cheereth the heart and reviveth the spirits." Then, being heated with wine, I ran and danced with him among the trees, clapping my hands and singing and making merry, and I staggered under him by design. When he saw this, he signed to me to give him the gourd that he might drink, and I feared him and gave it him. So he took it, and draining it to the dregs, cast it on the ground, whereupon he grew frolicsome and began to clap hands and jig to and fro on my shoulders, and he made water upon me so copiously that all my dress was drenched. But presently, the fumes of the wine rising to his head, he became helplessly drunk and his side muscles and limbs relaxed and he swayed to and fro on my back. When I saw that he had lost his senses for drunkenness, I put my hand to his legs and, loosing them from my neck, stooped down well-nigh to the ground and threw him at full length. Then I took up a great stone from among the trees and coming up to him, smote him therewith on the head with all my might and crushed in his skull as he lay dead-drunk. Thereupon his flesh and fat and blood being in a pulp, he died and went to his deserts, The Fire, no mercy of the Lord be upon him! I then returned, with a heart at ease, to my former station on the seashore, and abode in that island many days, eating of its fruits and drinking of its waters and keeping a lookout for passing ships, till one day, as I sat on the beach recalling all that had befallen me and saying, "I wonder if the Lord will save me alive and restore

me to my home and family and friends!" behold, a ship was making for the island through the dashing sea and clashing waves. Presently it cast anchor and the passengers landed, so I made for them, and when they saw me all hastened up to me and gathering round me, questioned me of my case and how I came thither. I told them all that had betided me, whereat they marveled with exceeding marvel and said: "He who rode on thy shoulder is called the Sheikh-al-Bahr or Old Man of the Sea, and none ever felt his legs on neck and came off alive but thou, and those who die under him he eateth. So praised be the Lord for thy safety!" Then they set somewhat of food before me, whereof I ate my fill, and gave me somewhat of clothes, wherewith I clad myself anew and covered my nakedness. After which they took me up into the ship and we sailed days and nights till Fate brought us to a place called the City of Apes, builded with lofty houses, all of which gave upon the sea, and it had a single gate studded and strengthened with iron nails. Now every night as soon as it is dusk the dwellers in this city used to come forth of the gates and, putting out to sea in boats and ships, pass the night upon the waters in their fear lest the apes should come down on them from the mountains. Hearing this, I was sore troubled, remembering what I had before suffered from the ape kind. Presently I landed to solace myself in the city, but meanwhile the ship set sail without me, and I repented of having gone ashore, and calling to mind my companions and what had befallen me with the apes, first and after, sat down and fell aweeping and lamenting. Presently one of the townsfolk accosted me and said to me, "O my lord, meseemeth thou art a stranger to these parts?" "Yes," answered I, "I am indeed a stranger and a poor one, who came hither in a ship which cast anchor here, and I landed to visit the town. But when I would have gone on board again, I found they had sailed without me." Quoth he, "Come and embark with us, for if thou lie the night in the city, the apes will destroy

thee." "Hearkening and obedience," replied I, and rising, straightway embarked with him in one of the boats, whereupon they pushed off from shore, and anchoring a mile or so from the land, there passed the night. At daybreak they rowed back to the city, and landing, went each about his business. Thus they did every night, for if any tarried in the town by night the apes came down on him and slew him. As soon as it was day, the apes left the place and ate of the fruits of the gardens, then went back to the mountains and slept there till nightfall, when they again came down upon the city. Now this place was in the farthest part of the country of the blacks, and one of the strangest things that befell me during my sojourn in the city was on this wise. One of the company with whom I passed the night in the boat asked me: "O my lord, thou art apparently a stranger in these parts. Hast thou any craft whereat thou canst work?" and I answered: "By the Lord, O my brother, I have no trade nor know I any handicraft, for I was a merchant and a man of money and substance and had a ship of my own, laden with great store of goods and merchandise. But it foundered at sea and all were drowned excepting me, who saved myself on a piece of plank which the Lord vouchsafed to me of His favor." Upon this he brought me a cotton bag and giving it to me, said: "Take this bag and fill it with pebbles from the beach and go forth with a company of the townsfolk to whom I will give a charge respecting thee. Do as they do and belike thou shalt gain what may further thy return voyage to thy native land." Then he carried me to the beach, where I filled my bag with pebbles large and small, and presently we saw a company of folk issue from the town, each bearing a bag like mine, filled with pebbles. To these he committed me, commending me to their care, and saying: "This man is a stranger, so take him with you and teach him how to gather, that he may get his daily bread, and you will earn your reward and recompense in Heaven." "On our head and

eyes be it!" answered they, and bidding me welcome, fared on with me till we came to a spacious wady, full of lofty trees with trunks so smooth that none might climb them. Now sleeping under these trees were many apes, which when they saw us rose and fled from us and swarmed up among the branches, whereupon my companions began to pelt them with what they had in their bags, and the apes fell to plucking of the fruit of the trees and casting them at the folk. I looked at the fruits they cast at us and found them to be Indian or coconuts, so I chose out a great tree full of apes, and going up to it, began to pelt them with stones, and they in return pelted me with nuts, which I collected, as did the rest. So that even before I had made an end of my bagful of pebbles, I had gotten great plenty of nuts. And as soon as my companions had in like manner gotten as many nuts as they could carry, we returned to the city, where we arrived at the fag end of day. Then I went in to the kindly man who had brought me in company with the nut-gatherers and gave him all I had gotten, thanking him for his kindness, but he would not accept them, saying, "Sell them and make profit by the price," and presently he added (giving me the key of a closet in his house): "Store thy nuts in this safe place and go thou forth every morning and gather them as thou hast done today, and choose out the worst for sale and supplying thyself; but lay up the rest here, so haply thou mayst collect enough to serve thee for thy return home." "the Lord requite thee!" answered I, and did as he advised me, going out daily with the coconut gatherers, who commended me to one another and showed me the best-stocked trees. Thus did I for some time, till I had laid up great store of excellent nuts, besides a large sum of money, the price of those I had sold. I became thus at my ease and bought all I saw and had a mind to, and passed my time pleasantly, greatly enjoying my stay in the city, till as I stood on the beach one day a great ship steering through the heart of the sea presently cast anchor

by the shore and landed a company of merchants, who proceeded to sell and buy and barter their goods for coconuts and other commodities. Then I went to my friend and told him of the coming of the ship and how I had a mind to return to my own country, and he said, " 'Tis for thee to decide." So I thanked him for his bounties and took leave of him. Then, going to the captain of the ship, I agreed with him for my passage and embarked my coconuts and what else I possessed. We weighed anchor the same day and sailed from island to island and sea to sea, and whenever we stopped, I sold and traded with my coconuts, and the Lord requited me more than I erst had and lost. Amongst other places, we came to an island abounding in cloves and cinnamon and pepper, and the country people told me that by the side of each pepper bunch groweth a great leaf which shadeth it from the sun and casteth the water off it in the wet season; but when the rain ceaseth, the leaf turneth over and droopeth down by the side of the bunch. Here I took in great store of pepper and cloves and cinnamon, in exchange for coconuts, and we passed thence to the Island of Al-Usirat, whence cometh the Comorin aloes wood, and thence to another island, five days' journey in length, where grows the Chinese lign aloes, which is better than the Comorin. But the people of this island are fouler of condition and religion than those of the other, for that they love fornication and wine bibbing, and know not prayer nor call to prayer. Thence we came to the pearl fisheries, and I gave the divers some of my coconuts and said to them, "Dive for my luck and lot!" They did so and brought up from the deep bright great store of large and priceless pearls, and they said to me, "By the Lord, O my master, thy luck is a lucky!" Then we sailed on, with the blessing of the Lord (Whose name be exalted!), and ceased not sailing till we arrived safely at Bassorah. There I abode a little and then went on to Baghdad, where I entered my quarter and found my house and forgathered

with my family and saluted my friends, who gave me joy of my safe return, and I laid up all my goods and valuables in my storehouses. Then I distributed alms and largess and clothed the widow and the orphan and made presents to my relations and comrades, for the Lord had requited me fourfold that I had lost. After which I returned to my old merry way of life and forgot all I had suffered in the great profit and gain I had made. Such, then, is the history of my fifth voyage and its wonderments, and now to supper, and tomorrow, come again and I will tell you what befell me in my sixth voyage, for it was still more wonderful than this. (Saith he who telleth the tale): Then he called for food, and the servants spread the table, and when they had eaten the evening meal, he bade give Sindbad the Porter a hundred golden dinars and the landsman returned home and lay him down to sleep, much marveling at all he had heard. Next morning, as soon as it was light, he prayed the dawn prayer, and, after blessing Praiseworthy the Cream of all creatures, betook himself to the house of Sindbad the Sailor and wished him a good day. The merchant bade him sit, and talked with him till the rest of the company arrived. Then the servants spread the table, and when they had well eaten and drunken and were mirthful and merry, Sindbad the Sailor began in these words the narrative of

