

## THE NEW ARABIAN NIGHTS

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“The Story of the Ruffian and the Cook”

One of the ne'er do-wells found himself one fine morning without aught, and the world was straitened upon him and patience failed him. So he lay down to sleep, and ceased not slumbering till the sun stung him and the foam came out upon his mouth, whereupon he arose, and he was penniless and had not even so much as a single dirham. Presently he arrived at the shop of a cook, who had set his pots and pans over the fire and washed his saucers and wiped his scales and swept his shop and sprinkled it. And indeed his fats and oils were clear and clarified and his spices fragrant, and he himself stood behind his cooking pots ready to serve customers. So the ruffian, whose wits had been sharpened by hunger, went in to him and saluting him, said to him, “Weigh me half a dirham's worth of meat and a quarter of a dirham's worth of boiled grain, and the like of bread.” So the kitchener weighed it out to him and the good-for-naught entered the shop, whereupon the man set the food before him and he ate till he had gobbled up the whole and licked the saucers and sat perplexed, knowing not how he should do with the cook concerning the price of that he had eaten, and turning his eyes about upon everything in the shop. And as he looked, behold, he caught sight of an earthen pan lying arsy-versy upon its

mouth, so he raised it from the ground and found under it a horse's tail, freshly cut off and the blood oozing from it, whereby he knew that the cook adulterated his meat with horseflesh. When he discovered this default, he rejoiced therein, and washing his hands, bowed his head and went out. And when the kitchener saw that he went and gave him naught, he cried out, saying, "Stay, O pest, O burglar!" So the ruffian stopped and said to him, "Dost thou cry out upon me and call to me with these words, O comute?" Whereat the cook was angry, and coming down from the shop, cried: "What meanest thou by thy speech, O low fellow, thou that devourest meat and millet and bread and kitchen and goest forth with 'the peace be on thee!' as it were the thing had not been and down naught for it?" Quoth the lackpenny, "Thou liest, O accursed son of a cuckold!" Whereupon the cook cried out, and laying hold of his debtor's collar, said, "O Muslims, this fellow is my first customer this day, and he hath eaten my food and given me naught." So the folk gathered about them and blamed the ne'er-do-well and said to him, "Give him the price of that which thou hast eaten." Quoth he, "I gave him a dirham before I entered the shop," and quoth the cook: "Be everything I sell this day forbidden to me, if he gave me so much as the name of a coin! By the Lord, he gave me naught, but ate my food and went out and would have made off, without aught said." Answered the ruffian, "I gave thee a dirham," and he reviled the kitchener, who returned his abuse, whereupon he dealt him a buffet and they gripped and grappled and throttled each other. When the folk saw them fighting, they came up to them and asked them, "What is this strife between you, and no cause for it?" and the lackpenny answered, "Ay, by the Lord, but there is a cause for it, and the cause hath a tail!" Whereupon cried the cook: "Yea, by the Lord, now thou mindest me of thyself and thy dirham! Yes, he gave me a dirham, and but a quarter of the coin is spent. Come back and take the rest of

the price of thy dirham." For he understood what was to do, at the mention of the tail. "And I, O my brother," added Abu al-Hasan, "my story hath a cause, which I will tell thee." The King laughed at his speech and said: "By the Lord, this is none other than a pleasant tale! Tell me thy story and the cause." Replied the host: "With love and goodly gree! Know, O my lord, that my name is Abu al-Hasan al-Khali'a and that my father died and left me abundant wealth, of which I made two parts. One I laid up, and with the other I betook myself to enjoying the pleasures of friendship and conviviality and consorting with intimates and boon companions and the sons of the merchants, nor did I leave one but I caroused with him and he with me. And I lavished all my money on comrades and good cheer, till there remained with me naught. Whereupon I betook myself to the friends and fellow toppers upon whom I wasted my wealth, so perhaps they might provide for my case, but when I visited them and went round about to them all, I found no vantage in one of them, nor would any so much as break a bittock of bread in my face. So I wept for myself, and repairing to my mother, complained to her of my case. Quoth she: 'Such are friends. An thou have aught, they frequent thee and devour thee, but an thou have naught, they cast thee off and chase thee away.' Then I brought out the other half of my money and bound myself by an oath that I would never more entertain any save one single night, after which I would never again salute him nor notice him. Hence my saying to thee: 'Far be it, alas! that what is past should again come to pass, for I will never again company with thee after this night.'" When the Commander of the Faithful heard this, he laughed a loud laugh and said: "By the Lord, O my brother, thou art indeed excused in this matter, now that I know the cause and that the cause hath a tail. Nevertheless, The Lord-willing, I will not sever myself from thee." Replied Abu al-Hasan: "O my guest, did I not say to thee, 'Far be it, alas! that what is past should

again come to pass?’ For indeed I will never again forgather with any!” Then the King rose and the host set before him a dish of roast goose and a bannock of first bread, and sitting down, fell to cutting off morsels and morseling the King therewith. They gave not over eating till they were filled, when Abu al-Hasan brought basin and ewer and potash and they washed their hands. Then he lighted three wax candles and three lamps, and spreading the drinking cloth, brought strained wine, clear, old, and fragrant, whose scent was as that of virgin musk. He filled the first cup and saying, “O my boon companion, be ceremony laid aside between us by thy leave! Thy slave is by thee, may I not be afflicted with thy loss!” drank it off and filled a second cup, which he handed to the King with due reverence. His fashion pleased the Commander of the Faithful, and the goodliness of his speech, and he said to himself, “By the Lord, I will assuredly requite him for this!” Then Abu al-Hasan filled the cup again and handed it to the King, reciting these two couplets: “Had we thy coming known, we would for sacrifice Have poured thee out heart’s blood or blackness of the eyes. Ay, and we would have spread our bosoms in thy way, That so thy feet might fare on eyelids, carpet-wise.” When the King heard his verses, he took the cup from his hand and kissed it and drank it off and returned it to Abu al-Hasan, who made him an obeisance and filled and drank. Then he filled again, and kissing the cup thrice, recited these lines: “Your presence honoreth the base, And we confess the deed of grace. An you absent yourself from us, No freke we find to fill your place.” Then he gave the cup to the King, saying: “Drink it in health and soundness! It doeth away malady and bringeth remedy and setteth the runnels of health to flow free.” So they ceased not carousing and conversing till middle night, when the King said to his host, “O my brother, hast thou in thy heart a concupiscence thou wouldst have accomplished, or a contingency thou wouldst

avert?" Said he: "By the Lord, there is no regret in my heart save that I am not empowered with bidding and forbidding, so I might manage what is in my mind!" Quoth the Commander of the Faithful, "By the Lord, and again by the Lord, O my brother, tell me what is in thy mind!" And quoth Abu al-Hasan: "Would Heaven I might be King for one day and avenge myself on my neighbors, for that in my vicinity is a mosque, and therein four sheikhs, who hold it a grievance when there cometh a guest to me, and they trouble me with talk and worry me in words and menace me that they will complain of me to the Prince of True Believers, and indeed they oppress me exceedingly. And I crave of the Lord the Most High power for one day, that I may beat each and every of them with four hundred lashes, as well as the imam of the mosque, and parade them round about the city of Baghdad and bid cry before them: 'This is the reward and the least of the reward of whoso exceedeth in talk and vexeth the folk and turneth their joy to annoy.' This is what I wish, and no more." Said the King: "the Lord grant thee that thou seekest! Let us crack one last cup and rise ere the dawn draw near, and, tomorrow night I will be with thee again." Said Abu al-Hasan, "Far be it!" Then the King crowned a cup, and putting therein a piece of Cretan bhang, gave it to his host and said to him, "My life on thee, O my brother, drink this cup from my hand!" and Abu al-Hasan answered, "Ay, by thy life, I will drink it from thy hand." So he took it and drank it off, but hardly had it settled in his stomach when his head forewent his heels and he fell to the ground like one slain. Whereupon the King went out and said to his slave Masrur: "Go in to yonder young man, the housemaster, and take him up and bring him to me at the palace. And when thou goest out, shut the door." So saying, he went away, whilst Masrur entered, and taking up Abu al-Hasan, shut the door behind him, and made after his master till he reached with him the palace what while the night drew to an end and the cocks

began crowing, and set him down before the Commander of the Faithful, who laughed at him. Then he sent for Ja'afar the Barmecide and when he came before him, said to him, "Note thou yonder young man," pointing to Abu al-Hasan, "and when thou shalt see him tomorrow seated in my place of estate and on the throne of my Kingate and clad in my royal clothing, stand thou in attendance upon him, and enjoin the emirs and grandees and the folk of my household and the officers of my realm to be upon their feet, as in his service, and obey him in whatso he shall bid them do. And thou, if he speak to thee of aught, do it, and hearken unto his say and gainsay him not in anything during this coming day." Ja'afar acknowledged the order with "Hearkening and obedience" and withdrew, whilst the Prince of True Believers went in to the palace women, who came up to him, and he said to them: "When this sleeper shall awake tomorrow, kiss ye the ground between his hands, and do ye wait upon him and gather round about him and clothe him in the royal clothing and serve him with the service of the Kingate, and deny not aught of his estate, but say to him, "Thou art the King.'" Then he taught them what they should say to him and how they should do with him, and withdrawing to a retired room, let down a curtain before himself and slept. Thus fared it with the King, but as regards Abu al-Hasan, he gave not over snoring in his sleep till the day brake clear and the rising of the sun drew near, when a woman in waiting came up to him and said to him, "O our lord, the morning prayer!" Hearing these words, he laughed, and opening his eyes, turned them about the palace and found himself in an apartment whose walls were Painted with gold and lapis lazuli and its ceiling dotted and starred with red gold. Around it were sleeping chambers with curtains of gold-embroidered silk let down over their doors, and all about vessels of gold and porcelain and crystal and furniture and carpets dispread and lamps burning before the niche wherein men prayed, and slave

girls and eunuchs and Mamelukes and black slaves and boys and pages and attendants. When he saw this, he was bewildered in his wit and said: "By the Lord either I am dreaming a dream, or this is Paradise and the Abode of Peace!" And he shut his eyes and would have slept again. Quoth one of the eunuchs, "O my lord, this is not of thy wont, O Commander of the Faithful!" Then the rest of the handmaids of the palace came up to him and lifted him into a sitting posture, when he found himself upon a mattress raised a cubit's height from the ground and all stuffed with floss silk. So they seated him upon it and propped his elbow with a pillow, and he looked at the apartment and its vastness and saw those eunuchs and slave girls in attendance upon him and standing about his head, whereupon he laughed at himself and said, "By the Lord, 'tis not as I were on wake, yet I am not asleep!" And in his perplexity he bowed his chin upon his bosom, and then opened his eyes, little by little, smiling, and saying, "What is this state wherein I find myself?" Then he arose and sat up, whilst the damsels laughed at him privily, and he was bewildered in his wit, and bit his finger, and as the bite pained him, he cried "Oh!" and was vexed. And the King watched him whence he saw him not, and laughed. Presently Abu al-Hasan turned to a damsel and called to her, whereupon she answered, "At thy service, O Prince of True Believers!" Quoth he, "What is thy name?" and quoth she, "Shajarat al-Durr." Then he said to her, "By the protection of the Lord, O damsel, am I Commander of the Faithful?" She replied, "Yes, indeed, by the protection of the Lord thou in this time art Commander of the Faithful." Quoth he, "By the Lord, thou liest, O thousandfold whore!" Then he glanced at the chief eunuch and called to him, whereupon he came to him and kissing the ground before him, said, "Yes, O Commander of the Faithful." Asked Abu al-Hasan, "Who is Commander of the Faithful?" and the eunuch answered "Thou." And Abu al-Hasan said, "Thou

Hest, thousandfold he-whore that thou art!" Then he turned to another eunuch and said to him, "O my chief, by the protection of the Lord, am I Prince of the True Believers?" Said he: "Ay, by the Lord, O my lord, thou art in this time Commander of the Faithful and Viceregent of the Lord of the Three Worlds." Abu al-Hasan laughed at himself and doubted of his reason and was bewildered at what he beheld, and said: "In one night do I become King? Yesterday I was Abu al-Hasan the Wag, and today I am Commander of the Faithful." Then the Chief Eunuch came up to him and said: "O Prince of True Believers (the name of the Lord encompass thee!), thou art indeed Commander of the Faithful and Viceregent of the Lord of the Three Worlds!" And the slave girls and eunuchs flocked round about him, till he arose and abode wondering at his case. Hereupon the eunuch brought him a pair of sandals wrought with raw silk and green silk and purfled with red gold, and he took them and after examining them, set them in his sleeve. Whereat the castrato cried out and said: "the Lord! the Lord! O my lord, these are sandals for the treading of thy feet, so thou mayst wend to the wardrobe." Abu al-Hasan was confounded, and shaking the sandals from his sleeve, put them on his feet, whilst the King died of laughter at him. The slave forewent him to the chapel of ease, where he entered, and doing his job, came out into the chamber, whereupon the slave girls brought him a basin of gold and a ewer of silver and poured water on his hands, and he made the wuzu ablution. Then they spread him a prayer carpet and he prayed. Now he knew not how to pray, and gave not over bowing and prostrating for twenty inclinations, pondering in himself the while and saying: "By the Lord, I am none other than the Commander of the Faithful in very truth! This is assuredly no dream, for all these things happen not in a dream." And he was convinced and determined in himself that he was Prince of True Believers, so he pronounced the salaam and finished



his prayers, whereupon the Mamelukes and slave girls came round about him with bundled suits of silken and linen stuffs and clad him in the costume of the Kingate and gave the royal dagger in his hand. Then the chief eunuch came in and said, "O Prince of True Believers, the Chamberlain is at the door craving permission to enter." Said he, "Let him enter!" whereupon he came in, and after kissing ground, offered the salutation, "Peace be upon thee, O Commander of the Faithful!" At this Abu al-Hasan rose and descended from the couch to the floor, whereupon the official exclaimed: "the Lord! the Lord! O Prince of True Believers, wottest thou not that all men are thy lieges and under thy rule and that it is not meet for the King to rise to any man?" Presently the eunuch went out before him, and the little white slaves behind him, and they ceased not going till they raised the curtain and brought him into the hall of judgment and the throne room of the Kingate. There he saw all curtains and the forty doors and Al-'Ijli and Al-Rakashi the poet, and 'Ibdan and Jadim and Abu Ishak the cup companion, and beheld swords drawn and the lions compassing the throne as the white of the eye encircleth the black, and gilded glaives and death-dealing bows and Ajams and Arabs and Turks and Daylamites and folk and peoples and emirs and Viziers and captains and grandees and lords of the land and men of war in band, and in very sooth there appeared the might of the House of Abbas and the majesty of the Prophet's family. So he sat down upon the throne of the Kingate and set the dagger on his lap, whereupon all present came up to kiss ground between his hands and called down on him length of life and continuance of weal. Then came forward Ja'afar the Barmecide and, kissing the ground, said: "Be the wide world of the Lord the treading of thy feet, and may Paradise be thy dwelling place and the fire the home of thy foes! Never may neighbor defy thee, nor the lights of fire die out for thee, O King of all cities and ruler of all

countries!" Therewithal Abu al-Hasan cried out at him and said, "O dog of the sons of Barmak, go down forthright, thou and the chief of the city police, to such a place in such a street, and deliver a hundred dinars of gold to the mother of Abu al-Hasan the Wag, and bear her my salutation. Then go to such a mosque and take the four Sheikhs and the imam and scourge each of them with a thousand lashes and mount them on beasts, face to tail, and parade them round about all the city and banish them to a place other than this city. And bid the crier make cry before them, saying: "This is the reward and the least of the reward of whoso multiplieth words and molesteth his neighbors and damageth their delights and stinteth their eating and drinking!" Ja'afar received the command and answered "With obedience," after which he went down from before Abu al-Hasan to the city and did all he had ordered him to do. Meanwhile, Abu al-Hasan abode in the Kingate, taking and giving, bidding and forbidding and carrying out his command till the end of the day, when he gave leave and permission to withdraw, and the emirs and officers of state departed to their several occupations and he looked toward the Chamberlain and the rest of the attendants and said, "Begone!" Then the eunuchs came to him, and calling down on him length of life and continuance of weal, walked in attendance upon him and raised the curtain, and he entered the pavilion of the harem, where he found candles lighted and lamps burning and singing women smiting on instruments, and ten slave girls, high-bosomed maids. When he saw this, he was confounded in his wit and said to himself, "By the Lord, I am in truth Commander of the Faithful!" presently adding: "Or haply these are of the Jinn, and he who was my guest yesternight was one of their kings who saw no way to requite my favors save by commanding his Giant-Demons to address me as Prince of True Believers. But an these be of the Jinn, may the Lord deliver me in safety from their mischief!" As soon as he

appeared, the slave girls rose to him, and carrying him up on to the dais, brought him a great tray bespread with the richest viands. So he ate thereof with all his might and main, till he had gotten his fill, when he called one of the handmaids and said to her, "What is thy name?" Replied she, "My name is Miskah," and he said to another, "What is thy name?" Quoth she, "My name is Tarkah." Then he asked a third, "What is thy name?" who answered, "My name is Tohfah." And he went on to question the damsels of their names, one after other, till he had learned the ten, when he rose from that place and removed to the wine chamber. He found it every way complete, and saw therein ten great trays, covered with all fruits and cates and every sort of sweetmeats. So he sat down and ate thereof after the measure of his competency, and finding there three troops of singing girls, was amazed, and made the girls eat. Then he sat and the singers also seated themselves, whilst the black slaves and the white slaves and the eunuchs and pages and boys stood, and of the slave girls some sat and others stood. The damsels sang and warbled all varieties of melodies and the place rang with the sweetness of the songs, whilst the pipes cried out and the lutes with them wailed, till it seemed to Abu al-Hasan that he was in Paradise, and his heart was heartened and his breast broadened. So he sported, and joyaunce grew on him and he bestowed robes of honor on the damsels and gave and bestowed, challenging this girl and kissing that and toying with a third, plying one with wine and morseling another with meat, till nightfall. All this while the Commander of the Faithful was diverting himself with watching him and laughing, and when night fell he bade one of the slave girls drop a piece of bhang in the cup and give it to Abu al-Hasan to drink. So she did his bidding and gave him the cup, which no sooner had he drunk than his head forewent his feet. Therewith the King came forth from behind the curtain laughing, and calling to the attendant who had

brought Abu al-Hasan to the palace, said to him, "Carry this man to his own place." So Masrur took him up, and carrying him to his own house, set him down in the saloon. Then he went forth from him, and shutting the saloon door upon him, returned to the King, who slept till the morrow. As for Abu al-Hasan, he gave not over slumbering till Almighty the Lord brought on the morning, when he recovered from the drug and awoke, crying out and saying: "Ho, Tuffahah! Ho, Rahat al-Kulub! Ho, Miskah! Ho, Tohfah!" And he ceased not calling upon the palace handmaids till his mother heard him summoning strange damsels, and rising, came to him and said: "the Lord's name encompass thee! Up with thee, O my son, O Abu al-Hasan! Thou dreamest." So he opened his eyes, and finding an old woman at his head, raised his eyes and said to her, "Who art thou?" Quoth she, "I am thy mother," and quoth he: "Thou liest! I am the Commander of the Faithful the Viceregent of the Lord." Whereupon his mother shrieked aloud and said to him: "Heaven preserve thy reason! Be silent, O my son, and cause not the loss of our lives and the wasting of thy wealth, which will assuredly befall us if any hear this talk and carry it to the King." So he rose from his sleep, and finding himself in his own saloon and his mother by him, had doubts of his wit, and said to her: "By the Lord, O my mother, I saw myself in a dream in a palace, with slave girls and Mamelukes about me and in attendance upon me, and I sat upon the throne of the Kingate and ruled. By the Lord, O my mother, this is what I saw, and in very sooth it was no dream!" Then he bethought himself awhile and said: "Assuredly, I am Abu al-Hasan al-Khali'a, and this that I saw was only a dream when I was made King and bade and forbade." Then he bethought himself again and said: "Nay, but 'twas not a dream, and I am none other than the King, and indeed I gave gifts and bestowed honor robes." Quoth his mother to him: "O my son, thou sportest with thy reason. Thou wilt go to the madhouse and become

a gazingstock. Indeed, that which thou hast seen is only from the Foul Fiend, and it was an imbroglio of dreams, for at times Satan sporteth with men's wits in all manner of ways." Then said she to him, "O my son, was there anyone with thee yesternight?" And he reflected and said: "Yes, one lay the night with me and I acquainted him with my case and told him my tale. Doubtless, he was of the devils, and I, O my mother, even as thou sayst truly, am Abu al-Hasan al-Khali'a." She rejoined: "O my son, rejoice in tidings of all good, for yesterday's record is that there came the Vizier Ja'afar the Barmecide and his many, and beat the Sheikhs of the mosque and the imam, each a thousand lashes, after which they paraded them round about the city, making proclamation before them and saying, 'This is the reward and the least of the reward of whoso faileth in goodwill to his neighbors and troubleth on them their lives!' And he banished them from Baghdad. Moreover, the King sent me a hundred dinars and sent to salute me." Whereupon Abu al-Hasan cried out and said to her: "O ill-omened crone, wilt thou contradict me and tell me that I am not the Prince of True Believers? 'Twas I who commanded Ja'afar the Barmecide to beat the Sheikhs and parade them about the city and make proclamation before them, and 'twas I, very I, who sent thee the hundred dinars and sent to salute thee, and I, O beldam of ill luck, am in very deed the Commander of the Faithful, and thou art a liar, who would make me out an idiot." So saying, he rose up and fell upon her and beat her with a staff of almond wood, till she cried out "Help, O Muslims!" And he increased the beating upon her till the folk heard her cries, and coming to her, found Abu al-Hasan bashing his mother and saying to her: "Old woman of ill omen, am I not the Commander of the Faithful? Thou hast ensorceled me!" When the folk heard his words, they said, "This man raveth," and doubted not of his madness. So they came in upon him, and seizing him, pinioned his elbows, and bore

him to the bedlam. Quoth the superintendant, "What aileth this youth?" and quoth they, "This is a madman, afflicted of the Jinn." "By the Lord," cried Abu al-Hasan, "they lie against me! I am no madman, but the Commander of the Faithful." And the superintendent answered him, saying, "None lieth but thou, O foulest of the Jinn-maddened!" Then he stripped him of his clothes, and clapping on his neck a heavy chain, bound him to a high lattice and fell to beating him two bouts a day and two a-nights, and he ceased not abiding on this wise the space of ten days. Then his mother came to him and said: "O my son, O Abu al-Hasan, return to thy right reason, for this is the Devil's doing." Quoth he: "Thou sayest sooth, O my mother, and bear thou witness of me that I repeat me of that talk and turn me from my madness. So do thou deliver me, for I am nigh upon death." Accordingly his mother went out to the superintendent and procured his release, and he returned to his own house. Now this was at the beginning of the month, and when it ended, Abu al-Hasan longed to drink liquor and, returning to his former habit, furnished his saloon and made ready food and bade bring wine. Then, going forth to the bridge, he sat there, expecting one whom he should converse and carouse with, according to his custom. As he sat thus, behold, up came the King and Masrur to him, but Abu al-Hasan saluted them not and said to Al-Rashid, "No friendly welcome to thee, O King of the Jinn!" Quoth Al-Rashid, "What have I done to thee?" and quoth Abu al-Hasan, "What more couldst thou do than what thou hast done to me, O foulest of the Jinn? I have been beaten and thrown into bedlam, where all said I was Jinn-mad, and this was caused by none save thyself. I brought thee to my house and fed thee with my best, after which thou dist empower thy Satans and Marids to disport themselves with my wits from morning to evening. So avaunt and aroynt thee and wend thy ways!" The King smiled and, seating himself by his side, said to him, "O my

brother, did I not tell thee that I would return to thee?" Quoth Abu al-Hasan, "I have no need of thee, and as the byword sayeth in verse: "Fro' my friend, 'twere meeter and wiser to part, For what eye sees not born shall ne'er sorrow heart." And indeed, O my brother, the night thou camest to me and we conversed and caroused together, I and thou, 'twas as if the Devil came to me and troubled me that night." Asked the King, "And who is he, the Devil?" and answered Abu al-Hasan, "He is none other than thou." Whereat the King laughed and coaxed him and spake him fair, saying: "O my brother, when I went out from thee, I forgot the door and left it open, and perhaps Satan came in to thee." Quoth Abu al-Hasan: "Ask me not of that which hath betided me. What possessed thee to leave the door open, so that the Devil came in to me and there befell me with him this and that?" And he related to him all that had betided him, first and last (and in repetition is no fruition), what while the King laughed and hid his laughter. Then said he to Abu al-Hasan: "Praised be the Lord who hath done away from thee whatso irked thee, and that I see thee once more in weal!" And Abu al-Hasan said: "Never again will I take thee to cup companion or sitting comrade, for the proverb saith, 'Whoso stumbleth on a stone and thereto returneth, upon him be blame and reproach.' And thou, O my brother, nevermore will I entertain thee nor company with thee, for that I have not found thy heel propitious to me." But the King coaxed him and said, "I have been the means of thy winning to thy wish anent the imam and the Sheikhs." Abu al-Hasan replied, "Thou hast," and Al-Rashid continued, "And haply somewhat may betide which shall gladden thy heart yet more." Abu al-Hasan asked, "What dost thou require of me?" and the Commander of the Faithful answered: "Verily, I am thy guest. Reject not the guest." Quoth Abu al-Hasan: "On condition that thou swear to me by the characts on the seal of Solomon, David's son (on the twain be the peace!) that thou wilt not suffer thine

Giant-Demons to make fun of me.” He replied, “To hear is to obey!” Whereupon the wag took him and brought him into the saloon and set food before him and entreated him with friendly speech. Then he told him all that had befallen him, whilst the King was like to die of stifled laughter. After which Abu al-Hasan removed the tray of food, and bringing the wine service, filled a cup and cracked it three times, then gave it to the King, saying: “O boon companion mine, I am thy slave, and let not that which I am about to say offend thee, and be thou not vexed, neither do thou vex me.” And he recited these verses: “Hear one that wills thee well! Lips none shall bless Save those who drink for drunk and all transgress. Ne’er will I cease to swill while night falls dark Till lout my forehead low upon my tass. In wine like liquid sun is my delight Which clears all care and gladdens allegresse.” When the King heard these his verses and saw how apt he was at couplets, he was delighted with exceeding delight, and taking the cup, drank it off, and the twain ceased not to converse and carouse till the wine rose to their heads. Then quoth Abu al-Hasan to the King: “O boon companion mine, of a truth I am perplexed concerning my affair, for meseemed I was Commander of the Faithful and ruled and gave gifts and largess, and in very deed, O my brother, it was not a dream.” Quoth the King, “These were the imbroglios of sleep,” and crumbling a bit of bhang into the cup, said to him, “By my life, do thou drink this cup,” and said Abu al-Hasan, “Surely I will drink it from thy hand.” Then he took the cup and drank it off, and no sooner had it settled in his stomach than his head fell to the ground before his feet. Now his manners and fashions pleased the King, and the excellence of his composition and his frankness, and he said in himself, “I will assuredly make him my cup companion and sitting comrade.” So he rose forthright, and saying to Masrur, “Take him up,” returned to the palace. Accordingly, the eunuch took up Abu al-Hasan, and carrying him to the palace of the Kingate, set



him down before Al-Rashid, who bade the slaves and slave girls compass him about, whilst he himself hid in a place where Abu al-Hasan could not see him. Then he commanded one of the handmaidens to take the lute and strike it over the wag's head, whilst the rest smote upon their instruments. So they played and sang, till Abu al-Hasan awoke at the last of the night and heard the symphony of lutes and tambourines and the sound of the flutes and the singing of the slave girls, whereupon he opened eyes, and finding himself in the palace, with the handmaids and eunuchs about him, exclaimed: "There is no Majesty and there is no Might save in the Lord, the Glorious, the Great! Come to my help this night, which meseems more unlucky than the former! Verily, I am fearful of the madhouse and of that which I suffered therein the first time, and I doubt not but the Devil is come to me again, as before. O the Lord, my Lord, put thou Satan to shame!" Then he shut his eyes and laid his head in his sleeve, and fell to laughing softly and raising his head betimes, but still found the apartment lighted and the girls singing. Presently one of the eunuchs sat down at his head and said to him, "Sit up, O Prince of True Believers, and look on thy palace and thy slave girls." Said Abu al-Hasan: "Under the veil of the Lord, am I in truth Commander of the Faithful, and dost thou not lie? Yesterday I rode not forth, neither ruled, but drank and slept, and this eunuch cometh to make me rise." Then he sat up and recalled to thought that which had betided him with his mother and how he had beaten her and entered the bedlam, and he saw the marks of the beating wherewith the superintendant had beaten him, and was perplexed concerning his affair and pondered in himself, saying, "By the Lord, I know not how my case is nor what is this that betideth me!" Then, gazing at the scene around him, he said privily, "All these are of the Jinn in human shape, and I commit my case to the Lord." Presently he turned to one of the damsels and said

to her, "Who am I?" Quoth she, "Thou art the Commander of the Faithful," and quoth he: "Thou liest, O calamity! If I be indeed the Commander of the Faithful, bite my finger." So she came to him and bit it with all her might, and he said to her, "It doth suffice." Then he asked the chief eunuch, "Who am I?" and he answered, "Thou art the Commander of the Faithful." So he left him and returned to his wonderment. Then, turning to a little white slave, said to him, "Bite my ear," and he bent his head low down to him and put his ear to his mouth. Now the Mameluke was young and lacked sense, so he closed his teeth upon Abu al-Hasan's ear with all his might, till he came near to sever it. And he knew not Arabic, so as often as the wag said to him, "It doth suffice," he concluded that he said, "Bite like a vice," and redoubled his bite and made his teeth meet in the ear, whilst the damsels were diverted from him with hearkening to the singing girls, and Abu al-Hasan cried out for succor from the boy and the King lost his senses for laughter. Then he dealt the boy a cuff, and he let go his ear, whereupon all present fell down with laughter and said to the little Mameluke, "Art mad that thou bitest the King's ear on this wise?" And Abu al-Hasan cried to them: "Sufficeth ye not, O ye wretched Jinns, that which hath befallen me? But the fault is not yours. The fault is of your chief, who transmewed you from Jinn shape to mortal shape. I seek refuge against you this night by the Throne Verse and the Chapter of Sincerity and the Two Preventives!" So saying, the wag put off his clothes till he was naked, with prickles and breech exposed, and danced among the slave girls. They bound his hands and he wantoned among them, while they died of laughing at him and the King swooned away for excess of laughter. Then he came to himself, and going forth the curtain to Abu al-Hasan, said to him: "Out on thee, O Abu al-Hasan! Thou slayest me with laughter." So he turned to him, and knowing him, said to him, "By the Lord, 'tis thou slayest me

and slayest my mother and slewest the Sheikhs and the imam of the mosque!" After which he kissed ground before him and prayed for the permanence of his prosperity and the endurance of his days. The King at once robed him in a rich robe and gave him a thousand dinars, and presently he took the wag into especial favor and married him and bestowed largess on him and lodged him with himself in the palace and made him of the chief of his cup companions, and indeed he was preferred with him above them, and the King advanced him over them all, so that he sat with him and the Lady Zubaydah bint al-Kasim, whose treasurers, Nuzhat al-Fuad called, was given to him in marriage. After this Abu al-Hasan the wag abode with his wife in eating and drinking and all delight of life, till whatso was with them went the way of money, when he said to her, "Harkye, O Nuzhat al-Fuad!" Said she, "At thy service," and he continued, "I have it in mind to play a trick on the King, and thou shalt do the like with the Lady Zubaydah, and we will take of them at once, to begin with, two hundred dinars and two pieces of silk." She rejoined, "As thou willest, but what thinkest thou to do?" And he said: "We will feign ourselves dead, and this is the trick. I will die before thee and lay myself out, and do thou spread over me a silken napkin and loose my turban over me and tie my toes and lay on my stomach a knife and a little salt. Then let down thy hair and betake thyself to thy mistress Zubaydah, tearing thy dress and slapping thy face and crying out. She will ask thee, 'What aileth thee?' and do thou answer her, 'May thy head outlive Abu al-Hasan the wag, for he is dead.' She will mourn for me and weep and bid her new treasurers give thee a hundred dinars and a piece of silk and will say to thee, 'Go, lay him out and carry him forth.' So do thou take of her the hundred dinars and the piece of silk and come back, and when thou returnest to me, I will rise up and thou shalt lie down in my place, and I will go to the King and say to him, 'May thy head outlive Nuzhat al-

Fuad,' and rend my raiment and pluck out my beard. He will mourn for thee and say to his treasurer, 'Give Abu al-Hasan a hundred dinars and a piece of silk.' Then he will say to me, 'Go, lay her out and carry her forth,' and I will come back to thee." Therewith Nuzhat al-Fuad rejoiced and said, "Indeed, this is an excellent device." Then Abu al-Hasan stretched himself out forthright and she shut his eyes and tied his feet and covered him with the napkin and did whatso her lord had bidden her. After which she tare her gear and bared her head and letting down her hair, went in to the Lady Zubaydah, crying out and weeping. When the Princess saw her in this state, she cried: "What plight is this? What is thy story, and what maketh thee weep?" And Nuzhat al-Fuad answered, weeping and loud-wailing the while: "O my lady, may thy head live and mayst thou survive Abu al-Hasan al-Khali'a, for he is dead!" The Lady Zubaydah mourned for him and said, "Alas, poor Abu al-Hasan the wag!" and she shed tears for him awhile. Then she bade her treasuress give Nuzhat al-Fuad a hundred dinars and a piece of silk and said to her, "O Nuzhat al-Fuad, go, lay him out and carry him forth." So she took the hundred dinars and the piece of silk and returned to her dwelling, rejoicing, and went in to her spouse and acquainted him what had befallen, whereupon he arose and rejoiced and girdled his middle and danced and took the hundred dinars and the piece of silk and laid them up. Then he laid out Nuzhat al-Fuad and did with her as she had done with him, after which he rent his raiment and plucked out his beard and disordered his turban and ran out, nor ceased running till he came in to the King, who was sitting in the judgment hall, and he in this plight, beating his breast. The King asked him, "What aileth thee, O Abu al-Hasan?" and he wept and answered, "Would Heaven thy cup companion had never been, and would his hour had never come!" Quoth the King, "Tell me thy case," and quoth Abu al-Hasan, "O my lord, may thy head outlive Nuzhat al-

Fuad!" The King exclaimed, "There is no god but God," and smote hand upon hand. Then he comforted Abu al-Hasan and said to him, "Grieve not, for we will bestow upon thee a bedfellow other than she." And he ordered the treasurer to give him a hundred dinars and a piece of silk. Accordingly the treasurer did what the King bade him, and Al-Rashid said to him, "Go, lay her out and carry her forth and make her a handsome funeral." So Abu al-Hasan took that which he had given him and returning to his house, rejoicing, went in to Nuzhat al-Fuad and said to her, "Arise, for our wish" is won." Hereat she arose and he laid before her the hundred ducats and the piece of silk, whereat she rejoiced, and they added the gold to the gold and the silk to the silk and sat talking and laughing each to other. Meanwhile, when Abu al-Hasan fared forth the presence of the King and went to lay out Nuzhat al-Fuad, the Commander of the Faithful mourned for her, and dismissing the Divan, arose and betook himself, leaning upon Masrur, the Swarder of his vengeance, to the Lady Zubaydah, that he might condole with her for her handmaid. He found her sitting weeping and awaiting his coming, so she might condole with him for his boon companion Abu al-Hasan the wag. So he said to her, "May thy head outlive thy slave girl Nuzhat al-Fuad!" and said she: "O my lord, the Lord preserve my slave girl! Mayst thou live and long survive thy boon companion Abu al-Hasan al-Khali'a, for he is dead." The King smiled and said to his eunuch: "O Masrur, verily women are little of wit. the Lord upon thee, say, was not Abu al-Hasan with me but now?" Quoth the Lady Zubaydah, laughing from a heart full of wrath: "Wilt thou not leave thy jesting? Sufficeth thee not that Abu al-Hasan is dead, but thou must put to death my slave girl also and bereave us of the twain, and style me little of wit?" The King answered, "Indeed, 'tis Nuzhat al-Fuad who is dead." And the Lady Zubaydah said: "Indeed he hath not been with thee, nor hast thou seen him, and none was with me but now save

Nuzhat al-Fuad, and she sorrowful, weeping, with her clothes torn to tatters. I exhorted her to patience and gave her a hundred dinars and a piece of silk, and indeed I was awaiting thy coming, so I might console thee for thy cup companion Abu al-Hasan al-Khali'a, and was about to send for thee." The King laughed and said, "None is dead save Nuzhat al-Fuad," and she, "No, no, good my lord; none is dead but Abu al-Hasan the wag." With this the King waxed wroth, and the hashimi vein started out from between his eyes and throbbed, and he cried out to Masrur and said to him, "Fare thee forth to the house of Abu al-Hasan the wag, and see which of them is dead." So Masrur went out, running, and the King said to the Lady Zubaydah, "Wilt thou lay me a wager?" And said she, "Yes, I will wager, and I say that Abu al-Hasan is dead." Rejoined the King: "And I wager and say that none is dead save Nuzhat al-Fuad, and the stake between me and thee shall be the Garden of Pleasaunce against thy palace and the Pavilion of Pictures." So they agreed upon this and sat awaiting Masrur's return with the news. As for the eunuch, he ceased not running till he came to the by-street wherein was the stead of Abu al-Hasan al-Khali'a. Now the wag was comfortably seated and leaning back against the lattice, and chancing to look round, saw Masrur running along the street and said to Nuzhat al-Fuad, "Meseemeth the King, when I went forth from him, dismissed the Divan and went in to the Lady Zubaydah to condole with her, whereupon she arose and condoled with him, saying, 'the Lord increase thy recompense for the loss of Abu al-Hasan al-Khali'a!' And he said to her, 'None is dead save Nuzhat al-Fuad, may thy head outlive her!' Quoth she, "'Tis not she who is dead, but Abu al-Hasan al-Khali'a, thy boon companion.' And quoth he, 'None is dead save Nuzhat al-Fuad.' And they waxed so obstinate that the King became wroth and they laid a wager, and he hath sent Masrur the Swarder to see who is dead. Now, therefore, 'twere best that thou lie down, so he

may sight thee and go and acquaint the King and confirm my saying." So Nuzhat al-Fuad stretched herself out and Abu al-Hasan covered her with her mantilla and sat weeping at her head. Presently, Masrur, the eunuch, suddenly came in to him and saluted him, and seeing Nuzhat al-Fuad stretched out, uncovered her face and said: "There is no god but God! Our sister Nuzhat al-Fuad is dead indeed. How sudden was the stroke of Destiny! the Lord have ruth on thee and acquit thee of all charge!" Then he returned and related what had passed before the King and the Lady Zubaydah, and he laughing as he spoke. "O accursed one," cried the King: "this is no time for laughter! Tell us which is dead of them." Masrur replied: "By the Lord, O my lord, Abu al-Hasan is well, and none is dead but Nuzhat al-Fuad." Quoth the King to Zubaydah, "Thou hast lost thy pavilion in thy play," and he jeered at her. and said, "O Masrur, tell her what thou sawest." Quoth the eunuch: "Verily, O my lady, I ran without ceasing till I came in to Abu al-Hasan in his house, and found Nuzhat al-Fuad lying dead and Abu al-Hasan sitting tearful at her head. I saluted him and condoled with him and sat down by his side and uncovered the face of Nuzhat al-Fuad and saw her dead and her face swollen. So I said to him, 'Carry her out forthwith, so we may pray over her.' He replied, "'Tis well,' and I left him to lay her out and came hither, that I might tell you the news." The Prince of True Believers laughed and said, "Tell it again and again to thy lady Little-wits." When the Lady Zubaydah heard Masrur's words and those of the King she was wroth and said, "None is little of wit save he who believeth a black slave." And she abused Masrur, whilst the Commander of the Faithful laughed; and the eunuch, vexed at this, said to the King, "He spake sooth who said, 'Women are little of wits and lack religion.'" Then said the Lady Zubaydah to the King: "O Commander of the Faithful, thou sportest and jestest with me, and this slave hoodwinketh me, the better to please thee. But I will send

and see which of them be dead." And he answered, saying, "Send one who shall see which of them is dead." So the Lady Zubaydah cried out to an old duenna, and said to her: "Hie thee to the house of Nuzhat al-Fuad in haste and see who is dead, and loiter not." And she used hard words to her. So the old woman went out running, whilst the Prince of True Believers and Masrur laughed, and she ceased not running till she came into the street. Abu al-Hasan saw her, and knowing her, said to his wife: "O Nuzhat al-Fuad, meseemeth the Lady Zubaydah hath sent to us to see who is dead and hath not given credit to Masrur's report of thy death. Accordingly she hath dispatched the old crone, her duenna, to discover the truth. So it behooveth me to be dead in my turn for the sake of thy credit with the Lady Zubaydah." Hereat he lay down and stretched himself out, and she covered him and bound his eyes and feet and sat in tears at his head. Presently the old woman came in to her and saw her sitting at Abu al-Hasan's head, weeping and recounting his fine qualities; and when she saw the old trot, she cried out and said to her: "See what hath befallen me! Indeed Abu al-Hasan is dead and hath left me lone and lorn!" Then she shrieked out and rent her raiment and said to the crone, "O my mother, how very good he was to me!" Quoth the other, "Indeed thou art excused, for thou wast used to him and he to thee." Then she considered what Masrur had reported to the King and the Lady Zubaydah and said to her, "Indeed, Masrur goeth about to cast discord between the King and the Lady Zubaydah." Asked Nuzhat al-Fuad, "And what is the cause of discord, O my mother?" and the other replied: "O my daughter, Masrur came to the King and the Lady Zubaydah and gave them news of thee that thou wast dead and that Abu al-Hasan was well." Nuzhat al-Fuad said to her: "O naunty mine, I was with my lady just now and she gave me a hundred dinars and a piece of silk, and now see my case and that which hath befallen me! Indeed I am bewildered, and how



shall I do, and I lone and lorn? Would Heaven I had died and he had lived!" Then she wept and with her wept the old woman, who, going up to Abu al-Hasan and uncovering his face, saw his eyes bound and swollen for the swathing. So she covered him again and said, "Indeed, O Nuzhat al-Fuad, thou art afflicted in Abu al-Hasan!" Then she condoled with her, and going out from her, ran along the street till she came into the Lady Zubaydah and related to her the story, and the Princess said to her, laughing: "Tell it over again to the King, who maketh me out little of wit, and lacking of religion, and who made this ill-omened liar of a slave presume to contradict me." Quoth Masrur, "This old woman lieth, for I saw Abu al-Hasan well and Nuzhat al-Fuad it was who lay dead." Quoth the duenna, "'Tis thou that liest, and wouldst fain cast discord-between the King and the Lady Zubaydah." And Masrur cried, "None lieth but thou, O old woman of ill omen, and thy lady believeth thee, and she must be in her dotage." Whereupon the Lady Zubaydah cried out at him, and in very sooth she was enraged with him and with his speech and shed tears. Then said the King to her: "I lie and my eunuch lieth, and thou liest and thy waiting-woman lieth, so 'tis my rede we go, all four of us together, that we may see which of us telleth the truth." Masrur said: "Come, let us go, that I may do to this ill-omened old woman evil deeds and deal her a sound drubbing for her lying." And the duenna answered him: "O dotard, is thy wit like into my wit? Indeed thy wit is as the hen's wit." Masrur was incensed at her words and would have laid violent hands on her, but the Lady Zubaydah pushed him away from her and said to him, "Her truthspeaking will presently be distinguished from thy truth-speaking and her leasing from thy leasing." Then they all four arose, laying wagers one with other, and went forth afoot from the palace gate and hied on till they came in at the gate of the street where Abu al-Hasan al-Khali'a dwelt. He saw them, and said to his wife, Nuzhat al-Fuad: "Verily,

all that is sticky is not a pancake they cook, nor every time shall the crock escape the shock. It seemeth the old woman hath gone and told her lady and acquainted her with our case and she hath disputed with Masrur, the eunuch, and they have laid wagers each with other about our death and are come to us, all four, the King and the eunuch and the Lady Zubaydah and the old trot." When Nuzhat al-Fuad heard this, she started up from her outstretched posture and asked, "How shall we do?" whereto he answered, "We will both feign ourselves dead together and stretch ourselves out and hold out breath." So she hearkened unto him and they both lay down on the place where they usually slept the siesta and bound their feet and shut their eyes and covered themselves with the veil and held their breath. Presently up came the King, Zubaydah, Masrur, and the old woman, and entering, found Abu al-Hasan the wag and wife both stretched out as dead, which when the Lady saw, she wept and said: "They ceased not to bring ill news of my slave girl till she died. Methinketh Abu al-Hasan's death was grievous to her and that she died after him." Quoth the King: "Thou shalt not prevent me with thy prattle and prate. She certainly died before Abu al-Hasan, for he came to me with his raiment rent and his beard plucked out, beating his breast with two bits of unbaked brick, and I gave him a hundred dinars and a piece of silk and said too him, 'Go, bear her forth, and I will give thee a bedfellow other than she and handsomer, and she shall be instead of her.' But it would appear that her death was no light matter to him and he died after her, so it is I who have beaten thee and gotten thy stake." The Lady Zubaydah answered him in words galore, and the dispute between them waxed sore. At last the King sat down at the heads of the pair and said: "By the tomb of the Apostle of the Lord (whom may He save and assain!) and the sepulchers of my fathers and forefathers, whoso will tell me which of them died before the other, I will willingly give him a thousand dinars!"

When Abu al-Hasan heard the King's words, he sprang up in haste and said: "I died first, O Commander of the Faithful! Here with the thousand dinars, and acquit thee of thine oath and the swear thou swore." Nuzhat al-Fuad rose also and stood up before the King and the Lady Zubaydah, who both rejoiced in this and in their safety, and the Princess chid her slave girl. Then the King and Zubaydah gave them joy of their well-being and knew that this death was a trick to get the gold, and the Lady said to Nuzhat al-Fuad: "Thou shouldst have sought of me that which thou neededst, without this fashion, and not have burned my heart for thee." And she, "Verily, I was ashamed, O my lady." As for the King, he swooned away for laughing and said, "O Abu al-Hasan, thou wilt never cease to be a wag and do peregrine things and prodigious!" Quoth he: "O Commander of the Faithful, this trick I played off for that the money which thou gavest me was exhausted, and I was ashamed to ask of thee again. When I was single, I could never keep money in hand, but since thou marriedst me to this damsel, if I possessed even thy wealth, I should lay it waste. Wherefore when all that was in my hand was spent, I wrought this sleight so I might get of thee the hundred dinars and the piece of silk, and all this is an alms from our lord. But now make haste to give me the thousand dinars and acquit thee of thine oath." The King and the Lady Zubaydah laughed and returned to the palace, and he gave Abu al-Hasan the thousand dinars saying, "Take them as a douceur for thy perservation from death," whilst her mistress did the like with Nuzhat al-Fuad, honoring her with the same words. Moreover, the King increased the wag in his solde and supplies, and he and his wife ceased not to live in joy and contentment till there came to them the Destroyer of delights and Severer of societies, the Plunderer of palaces, and the Gamberer of graves. And among tales they tell is one touching

